

「KŪŃŪGA」, 「KŪŃŪ(L)Š」, 「KŪJŪL」 《LETTER; TEXT; BOOK》

During the digging operation in the Novgorod city, Russia, on July 13, 2000, V.L. Yanin, an academician of the Russian Academy of Sciences, discovered wax tablets fastened to each other. The inscription on one of them identified the found object as “This K’NIGĬ (orig.: КЪНИГЫ) is the Psalms” (V. Yanin, 2001). This finding allegedly confirmed the previously proposed semantic interpretation of the Russian word КЪНИГА “book” as a code that included the idea of combining surfaces intended for writing into a single whole. See: “*Book – sheets of paper or parchment sewn into one binding*” (V. Dahl). This made it possible to express the idea that the morphological side of the book is based on *kon-ig-ĭ (plural verbal noun form in -a with the prefix *kon-), and the evolution of semantics came from the verb *igti with the meaning “to bind, connect” (cf. Russian *ig-l-a*) to a name with the resultant meaning “that which is binded” → “book” (N. N. Kazansky, Yu. K. Kuzmenko, “Etymology”, 2003).

In our opinion, the main obstacle to this etymology is that in the Old Slavic monuments, the word КЪНИГА was also used in the meaning of “a letter, alphabet”. See: “*For there...it is written by the alphabet (originally: КЪНИГАМИ) of Hellenic, Roman, Jewish*” (“Life of Methodius XII”). This greatly weakens the plausibility of the proposed interpretation.

Due to the fact that even the first versions regarding the Slavic origin of the word КЪНИГА were not sufficiently reliable and satisfactory, the opinion about the foreign language origin of this lexeme began to seem more acceptable. The development of this direction is a merit of the Finno-Ugric scholars. J. Mikkola suggested that the Hungarian *könyv* “book” and the Mordovian *końov* “paper” go back to the Ugric protoform *kijńijŋ. He believed that neither the Slavs nor the Hungarians borrowed this word from each other and suggested looking for a common source of borrowing. Such a source was found by the Finnish scientist M. Räsänen, who linked the Old-Hungarian *kijńijŋ to the Old-Bulgar form *küniġ, which in turn (*according to the author*) originates from the Chinese *küen (see Korean *kŭən* “classifier for books”).

It seems to us that the appearance of **künig* did not occur under the influence of the Chinese **küen* but is a result of a phonetic transformation of the Turkic nominal derivative **künüga*. The latter is divided into a root **künü-*, with a later change of the final **ü* into **i* under the influence of a soft **ń*, and the suffix **-ga*, corresponding to the Indo-European **-ga//*-ge*. Unfortunately, the correspondence of the Turkic verb **künü-//*küni-* is yet to be found. This fact does not allow us to accurately determine the original meaning of **künüga*.

We believe that the Korean *kil* “a letter, written sign” has an exceptional value for establishing the semantics of **künüga*. The key point for an explanation of *kil* is its ancient form **künül*. Functionally, the final **-l* is matched with earlier mentioned **-ga//*-ge* (Engl. *devil, soul*, etc.). As a result of the dropping of palatal **ń* in **künül* and the contraction of two **ü* into one long sound **ū*, the other Korean form **kūl* > modern *kil* was formed. There are no visible obstacles for associating *kil* and MKor. *kiši-* < **künü-* “to draw a line, to draw”. With this interpretation, the initial meaning for **künüga//*künül* should be considered as “*that what is drawn*”, i.e. “a letter, written sign//text, book, literature” (Chinese 文).

A valuable confirmation of the existence of **künül* along with **künüga* in the common Turkic era is the Koguryeo identity 文 : 斤尸 in the geographical descriptions of “*Samguk sagi*” (see “County 文峴, some call it 斤尸波衣”). From the correspondence 文 : 斤尸, the Koguryeo word 斤尸 [AC **kin-šij*, MKor. *kin-ši*] “a written sign, letter, literature” is reconstructed. For 斤尸, the form **kün(ü)š* can be restored with great reliability. We admit the connection with the Turkic **-š* and assume that Koguryeo 尸 borrowed from the Turkic version of the Proto-Altaic **-l̄*. The later Korean notation for 斤尸 was *kil*. Mongols or Tungus-Manchus are involved in its appearance (see: PA **l̄* > Turk. *š*, but Mong., TM. *l*). Comparison of *kil* with TM **gerbū* “name”, Mongol. **gerege* “testimony” [EDAL, 541] is thus to be rejected.