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**A Half Century Later:
Following in Władysław Kotwicz's Turkic Footsteps in Mongolia**

Abstract

Paper discusses Professor Władysław Kotwicz's influence on the activities of his successors in the field of Altaic studies. Main focus is put on Edward Tryjarski's expedition to Mongolia in 1962 and his findings related to Turkic monuments and inscriptions.

Keywords: W. Kotwicz, Mongolia, Turkic inscriptions, Turkic monuments

It is generally agreed that Professor Władysław Kotwicz achieved an unquestionable high rank among the researchers of Inner Asian cultures and languages, especially of those belonging to the Altaic group, Mongolian in the first place. His fundamental “*Studia nad językami ątajskimi*” [Studies on the Altaic languages]¹ and *Contributions aux études altaïques*² brought in his arguments into the discussion on the so-called “Altaic theory”. His influence on the development of Altaic philology was of the utmost importance. One can ask, however, whether and to what degree, this influence can be observed in the activities of his successors, particular representatives of two or three generations of Inner Asia researchers. This question should be taken into account with regard to the present remarks.

It seems that both Prof. Kotwicz's contemporaries and later researchers were inclined to underestimate his contribution to Turkology. It is true that in his analytical studies Mongol and Manchu-Tungus constituted the majority with regard to the Turkic material which was restricted in respect of time and area. On the other hand, the latter played an equivalent part in all kinds of Prof. Kotwicz's comparative analyses. In order to bring out

¹ Władysław Kotwicz, “*Studia nad językami ątajskimi*”. Published by Marian Lewicki, *Rocznik Orientalistyczny* XVI (1950), 1953, pp. 1–214.

² *Collectanea Orientalia* 2, 1932, pp. 1–54; *Rocznik Orientalistyczny* XVI (1950), 1953, pp. 327–368.

his merits for Turkology fully, I published in 1973 a note entitled “*Studia turkologiczne Władysława Kotwicza (1872–1944)*” [Professor Władysław Kotwicz’s (1872–1944) Turkological Studies].³ There I tried to point out the sources of his Turkological knowledge and its extent.

I regret to have never met the eminent scholar in person. Practically speaking, it was hardly possible since the time space and a generation gap were too extensive: when, in 1944, he was ending his days at Czarny Bór, some fourteen kilometers from Vilna (today Vilnius), I was a student of the clandestine University of Warsaw and an apprentice in Oriental studies. Only a few years later I had a good occasion to learn more about his special scientific merits, also in his capacity as one of the founders and the first editor of *Rocznik Orientalistyczny*. Besides, Prof. Ananiasz Zajączkowski (1903–1970), my mentor in Turkology and my superior, used to emphasize Prof. W. Kotwicz’s merits using words of great respect and friendship. A few years ago, owing to the kindness of Mrs. Maria Emilia Łopatto, who had given me access to her father’s correspondence, I learnt about an episode that was evidence of friendly contacts between the two Orientalists. In March 1943, Prof. A. Zajączkowski, who at that time lived and worked in Warsaw, the city occupied by the Germans, received an official permission to visit Vilna and Troki (today Trakai) for ten days. On his return, he wrote to Professor Tadeusz Kowalski what follows:

“I regret very much that I was unable to pay a visit to Professor Kotwicz. He lives at Czarny Bór, there is no public transport, one must go afoot and it would take me about two days – such a trip.”⁴

Now coming to my personal experience, I must confess that when starting off my Turkish studies I had no real intention to deepen my knowledge of the oldest Turkic texts and that by a strange coincidence I had to change my mind which resulted in many complicated academic and practical problems facing me. The point of the matter was that, much to my surprise, one day I was given an opportunity to follow in the footsteps of Władysław Kotwicz in Mongolia.

This was the result of an agreement signed by the Polish Academy of Sciences and the Academy of Sciences of the Mongolian People’s Republic which opened new frames for mutual collaboration of those institutions also in the domain of humanities. Foreign scholarships, especially for younger scholars, were at that time much desired in Poland, the more so that not all disciplines had equal chances. A proposal of a one month’s research sojourn in Mongolia which I received in 1962 from Prof. A. Zajączkowski, the then manager of the Centre for Oriental Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences, made me feel uneasy in a certain way. I was not a Mongolist myself and my Turkological interests were relatively far from the Orkhon-Yenisei-Talas area. I was convinced that I would neither be able to add a word of comment to the knowledge of the celebrated

³ *Nauka Polska* XXII, 2, 1973, pp. 139–145.

⁴ A letter dated “Warszawa, 24 III 1943”. Typescript.

Orkhon inscriptions explored decennaries ago nor discover a single Runic sign. Besides, I had no experience in organizing field expeditions. As for myself, I considered the above proposition as an unfortunate idea and a waste of time. When, however, I heard from my much respected supervisor the argument that “all Turkologists keep dreaming about visiting the homeland of the Turks and you seem to hesitate!”, my reservation faded away and I began hasty preparations, the more so because only a short time separated me from the stated date of departure. The principal thing was of course to work out my itinerary in Mongolia. I was pretty sure that I would be given a possibility to visit Khöshöö-Tsaidam, customarily shown to hundreds of foreign tourists, but this did not feed my ambition. Now I wanted to do something really useful for Turkological studies and I decided to prepare on the spot a supplementary documentation in form of new hand-copies, squeezes, photographs and a film. For that purpose, I became interested in instructions and documentation left by the great explorers like Wilhelm Radloff or Władysław Kotwicz. The expedition of 1912, crowned with the discovery of a precious monument at nowadays Ikh Khöshööt, written in his articles as Ikhe-khuchotu, became the focus of my attention. Here my decision was prompt: I would visit the place, check the state of preservation of the inscription and, by means of a modern camera and squeezes, fill up the gaps existing in the text in old photographs. There was a rather small chance to implement all points of that plan.

At first I referred to the paper written by Władysław Kotwicz in cooperation with A.N. Samoilovich and published in 1928 in *Rocznik Orientalistyczny*.⁵ I could learn from it that the old Turkic inscribed stone column was discovered at Ikh Khöshööt on 19th July 1912 and that the information which Prof. Kotwicz had got both in Russia from the administrators and in Mongolia from the local population was very conducive to the discovery he made.

His expedition was supported by the Russian Committee of Central and East Asia Research (belonging to the International Association for Exploring Central Asia and the Far East), by the Russian Consul General in Urga V. Lyuba who assured safety of the expedition by delegating to it an escort composed of Cossacks, and also by the Government of Mongolia which delegated an official holding the rank of *meiren* and called Boro.⁶ Władysław Kotwicz was accompanied by his old Buriat friend Tsyben Jamtsarano, an ex-lector of the Petersburg University, a future world-merited researcher of the Mongolian past, as well as by a young teacher from Troitskosavsk, named Konstantin A. Maskov. The latter was soon afterwards killed on the Mongolian frontier during the struggles between the “Whites” and the “Reds”.

⁵ W. Kotwicz et A. Samoilovitch, “Le monument turc d’Ikhe-khuchotu en Mongolie centrale”, *Rocznik Orientalistyczny* IV (1926), 1928, pp. 60–107.

⁶ J. Tulisow 2012. “About the Kotwicz Expedition: It Sometimes Happens That We Have to Visit Mongolia”, In: J. Tulisow, Osamu Inoue, A. Bareja-Starzyńska, E. Dziurzyńska (eds.) *In the Heart of Mongolia. 100th Anniversary of W. Kotwicz’s Expedition to Mongolia in 1912. Studies and Selected Source Materials*, Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences, Cracow 2012, p. 37. More information on the expedition see on pp. 21–129.

Having arrived at the locality of Davastu, the expedition split into two groups: Ts. Jamtsarano and K. Maskov continued on the post route while W. Kotwicz together with a larger group headed across the steppe to Ikh Khöshööt where, to his great joy he perceived an inscribed stela. The results of the expedition appeared very fruitful. The measurements of all elements of the monument, especially of the blocks and stone figures, were made and squeezes of the inscription (which up to the present day are being kept in the Asiatic Museum in Saint Petersburg) along with photographs taken. Thus, the whole material, except for the eastern part of the inscription, was ready for deciphering. This, however, had to wait for another couple of years.

After his return to Petersburg, Prof. Kotwicz informed the academic world about his discovery delivering at the meeting of the Eastern Department his paper entitled *Poezdka v dolinu Orkhona letom 1912 goda* [A travel to the Orkhon Valley in the summer of 1912]. During the discussion spoke A.N. Samoilovich (1880–1938) whose report “Ob otkrytom V.L. Kotvichem pamyatnike s orkhonskimi pis'menami” [On the monument with the Orkhon signs discovered by W.L. Kotwicz] appeared in the 22nd volume of the *Zapiski Vostochnogo otdeleniya (imperatorского) Russkogo arkheologicheskogo obshchestva* for the years 1913–1914. The turbulent years that followed were unfavourable for scientific research and undertaking a difficult task of reading the inscription. Only when the turmoil of the war was over and, Kotwicz's moving to independent Poland and taking a chair at the John Casimir University in Lvov took place, was Prof. Kotwicz able to start his work on preparing the *editio princeps* of his newly found text. He did not hesitate to invite to the collaboration his younger Russian colleague who at that time was separated from him by a hostile political frontier. He chose as the publishing place *Rocznik Orientalistyczny*, edited in Lvov by himself. This above mentioned important edition appeared in French in 1928 under the title: “Le monument turc d'Ikhe-khuchotu en Mongolie centrale.”⁷ The article was composed of two parts. The first, written by Prof. Kotwicz himself, was called “Description du monument” and bore the date and place indication “Lvov 30. VII. 1927” while the second, written (most probably in Russian and translated into French) was called “Essai de déchiffrement de l'építaphe” and dated “Leningrad, 25.V.1927”. A.N. Samoilovich's part had to wait until its modern Russian translation was made seventy-seven years later: it was prepared by V.D. Arakina and published in 2005 by G.F. Blagova and D.M. Nasilov in the collected works of this eminent scholar and victim of the Stalinist mass murders.⁸

Preparing my own mini-expedition in 1962, I analyzed scrupulously W. Kotwicz's report and several similar descriptions left by eminent explorers like Wilhelm Radloff and his pupils or rivals, but my qualifications as a future chronicler or documentalist were still more than meagre. I was able to take only amateurish pictures and for the first time I held in my hands a rented cinécamera. I had, of course, no idea how to take paper squeezes

⁷ See note 5.

⁸ “Турецкий памятник из Ихе-Хушоту в Центральной Монголии”, in: А. Н. Самойлович, *Тюркское языкознание Филология Руника*. Составители и ответственные редакторы тома Г.Ф. Благова, Д.М. Насилов, «Восточная литература» РАН, Москва 2005, pp. 164–175.

from stone objects. Notwithstanding, following some of Wilhelm Radloff's indications, I ordered from a brush-maker a special type of brush for this purpose. Professor Omelian Pritsak was kind enough to send me a special paper produced in Japan. Only after my return from Mongolia did I realize that modern epigraphists and archaeologists made use of plastic for this purpose.

After a long flight and stopover in Irkutsk, I reached Ulan Bator on 22nd September and sojourned in Mongolia until 18th October 1962. My field research was divided into two stages: from 28th September to 7th October I wandered by car across four central *aimags* and then I designated one day for visiting the Toñuquq's monument at Nalaikh.

So I found myself alone in a country I had never visited before. At the same time I had also no detachment of the Russian Cossacks at my disposal as it was the case of my predecessor. On the other hand, I was a guest of the Institute of the Language and Literature of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences and profited from the rare hospitality of all the Mongols I met. I was accompanied by Sodnom Čoyvon, a young Mongol ethnographer, very competent and kind towards me. Just owing to his assistance, I was able to take measurements and pictures, to spread and dry in the sun and in a strong steppe wind great sheets of squeezes. The organizers equipped us with a small ladder, more or less precise charts and additional clothes. The driver of our jeep proved to be a pleasant and skilled specialist and an experienced companion. As soon as our car got stuck in the riverside sullage of the Man'tiin-gol, affluent of the Daramaliin river, that brave man was able, in a seemingly uninhabited steppe, to call in for help local people who appeared soon with their camels and pulled the car out.

Still in Ulan Bator, a new detailed itinerary was prepared. I put there Ikh Khöshööt in the first place having still in mind the necessity of eventual revising of the east side of the inscription. Then we had to visit the Ongin monument and the celebrated grave complexes in honour of Bilgä-kagan and Köl-tegin at Khöshöo-Tsaidam. Much to my regret, a precise repetition of the itinerary of Władysław Kotwicz and his companions appeared practically impossible in many details. The reason was a discrepancy between the present-day geographical names and those indicated by Władysław Kotwicz in his transcription adapted to the French way of spelling. As a result, some of the old geographical names indicated by himself were incomprehensible or unknown to the questioned local *arats*. On leaving Ulan Bator we reached the locality of Büren and then, continued in south-western direction, Delgerkhaan. Having passed a night in a yurt of a hospitable family and following the western direction, we happily reached the stone complex at Ikh Khöshööt and began its examination. The time left was scarce and we were obliged to come back again another day and continue the research.⁹

⁹ Selection of photographs taken by E. Tryjarski in 1962 in Mongolia was presented at the exhibition accompanying The 3rd International Conference of Oriental Studies: *Exploring Languages and Cultures of Asia. Professor Władysław Kotwicz in Memoriam* at the Archive of Science of PAN and PAU in Cracow, 2012 entitled: *W sercu Mongolii. Stulecie wyprawy Władysława Kotwicza do Mongolii w 1912 r.* [In the heart of Mongolia. One hundred years anniversary of Władysław Kotwicz's expedition to Mongolia in 1912].

This is not the best moment to relate all details of my modest mini-expedition, or rather a scientific trip to Mongolia, imitating, in some measure, W. Kotwicz's large-scale expedition. After my return to Warsaw, I published in "Sprawozdania z prac naukowych Wydziału Nauk Społecznych PAN [Reports on scientific works of the Social Sciences Faculty of the Polish Academy of Sciences]" a general report entitled *O stanie zachowania zabytków starotureckich w Mongolii i potrzebie ich ochrony (Sprawozdanie z podróży do Mongolii)* [On the state of preservation of old Turkic relics in Mongolia and the need for their conservation (A report on a travel to Mongolia)]¹⁰ and some notes on Mongolia to-day in *Przegląd Orientalistyczny*.¹¹ Several serious scientific centers abroad were also interested in the results obtained by myself. In this connection I lectured and printed a number of texts in Italy, Holland, Germany and Turkey. I demonstrated also my amateurish movie which was appreciated by Turkish specialists so much that one of them borrowed it in order to copy it in Paris. My papers appeared in *East and West*, *Türk Kültürü el-Kitabı*, in *Türk Kültürü Araştırmaları*, *Central Asiatic Journal*, *Journal de la Société Finno-Ougrienne* and others.¹² At the same time, the collections of the Centre for Oriental Studies of PAN made new acquisitions in the form of copies and/or squeezes of all five big runic inscriptions and about 400 photographs presenting 80% of the same objects. Their complete analysis and evaluation have not been done up to the present day.¹³

The most important and pressing postulate was to prepare an improved edition of the Ikh Khöshööt or Ikhe-khuchotu inscription. And also here Władysław Kotwicz's idea to establish a co-editorship with a specialist deeply and personally engaged in these types of texts seemed to me noteworthy. My choice was the eminent British Turkologist Sir Gerard Clauson (1890–1974) who showed keen interest in my new documentation, studied it during his stay in Warsaw and accepted the idea of our collaboration. It proceeded harmoniously and soon proved fruitful. As a result, there appeared under two names

¹⁰ Published in *Sprawozdania z prac naukowych Wydziału Nauk Społecznych PAN* V, 5(27), 1962, pp. 125–145.

¹¹ "Z wędrówki po centralnej Mongolii" [From a trip in central Mongolia], *Przegląd Orientalistyczny* 2(46), 1953, pp. 144–147.

¹² To cite some of them: Edward Tryjarski, "The Present State of Preservation of Old Turkic Relics in Mongolia and the Need for their Conservation", *Ural-Altäische Jahrbücher* 38, 1966, pp. 158–173 + 17 photos.; ditto, "Die heutige Mongolei und ihre alten Denkmäler", *Ural-Altäische Jahrbücher* 38, 1966, pp. 154–158; ditto, "On the Archaeological Traces of Old Turks in Mongolia", *East and West*, New series 21, 1–2, 1971, pp. 121–135 + 25 plates; ditto, "Orkun Türklerinin âbidelerine dâir düşünceler", in: *Türk Kültürü el-Kitabı* II, Ia, İstanbul 1972, pp. 29–34 + 7 ill., English version, l.c., pp. 35–43; ditto, "Zur neueren Geschichte des Ongin-Denkmal", in: *Sprache, Geschichte und Kultur der altaischen Völker. Protokollband der XII. Tagung der Permanent International Altaistic Conference in Berlin*, Berlin 1974, pp. 629–630 + 1 plate; ditto, "Новые исследования по древнетюркским памятникам в Монголии и методология издания рунических надписей", in: *Олон улсын монголч эрдэмтний II их хурал* II, Улаанбаатар 1973, The Second International Congress of Mongolists, II. Ulan-Bator, pp. 170–175; ditto, "Die alttürkischen Runen-Inschriften in der Arbeiten der letzten Jahre. Befunde und kritische Übersicht", in: *Altorientalische Forschungen* VIII, Berlin 1981, pp. 339–352. Schriften zur Geschichte und Kultur des Alten Orients.

¹³ Э. Грыярский, "Еще раз о методике издания рунических надписей", in: *Turcologica. К семидесятилетию академика А.Н. Кононова*, Ленинград 1976, pp. 325–333.

a completely new edition of the Ikh Khöshööt / Ikhe-khuchotu inscription, supplemented and in many points different from the previous one. It was entitled “The Inscription at Ikhe Khushotu” and by a strange coincidence it appeared in *Rocznik Orientalistyczny*, the same journal in which 43 years before the first edition by W. Kotwicz and A.N. Samoilovich had been printed.¹⁴

The new edition contained significant changes both in the system of transcription and translation with all consequences for the historical interpretation of the whole text. There were used *š* instead of *s*, *v* instead of *b*, *o* instead of *u*, along with some other changes, there were isolated new words, or their elements, which made the text more comprehensive. A more precise reading for the east side, postulated but not carried out by W. Kotwicz and A.N. Samoilovich, was presented. Sensation was caused by the newly proposed historical interpretation of the whole text which generally was regarded as devoted to a ruler called Küli-chur. Now it was suggested that the homage paid by the author, or authors, of the epitaph had been intended not to one but to two or even three persons: a supposed Küli-chur I, Küli-Chur II and Küli-Chur III. At the same time it was assumed that *küli-chur* should denote a title and not a proper name. These proposals aroused interest of Turkologists and historians. A positive opinion was recently expressed by G.F. Blagova and D.M. Nasilov, editors of the complete works of A.N. Samoilovich.¹⁵ Also my amateurish photographs met with their acceptance: “Неплохие фотографии памятника, а также новые прорисовки приложены к изд. Clauson-Tryjarski [...]” we can read in the same text.¹⁶ It may be noted that also some other parts of my documentation met with positive opinion. “E. Tryjarski made some admirable squeezes of the inscription [of Toñuquq – E.T.] in 1962 on behalf of the Polish Academy of Sciences and I was privileged to examine them when I visited Warsaw in 1968 as the guest of the Academy; some of these notes are based on that examination”, stated Sir Gerard Clauson in 1971.¹⁷

Therefore we may conclude that the extempore trip to Mongolia in the footsteps of the great Polish scholar undertaken approximately fifty years later was possibly useful to the development of Turkic studies.

Sources of illustrations:

E. Tryjarski, “On the Archaeological Traces of Old Turks in Mongolia”, *East and West*, New series 21, 1–2, 1971, Fig. 26.

Sir Gerard Clauson, Edward Tryjarski, “The Inscription at Ikhe Khushotu”, *Rocznik Orientalistyczny* XXXIV, 1, 1971, Plate 2.

¹⁴ Sir Gerard Clauson, Edward Tryjarski, “The Inscription at Ikhe Khushotu”, *Rocznik Orientalistyczny* XXXIV, 1, 1971, pp. 7–33 + 6 plates.

¹⁵ *Турецкие памятники [...]*, ut supra, p. 165, note 3.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Sir Gerard Clauson, „Some Notes on the Inscription of Toñuquq”, in: *Studia Turcica*, Budapest 1971, p. 126.

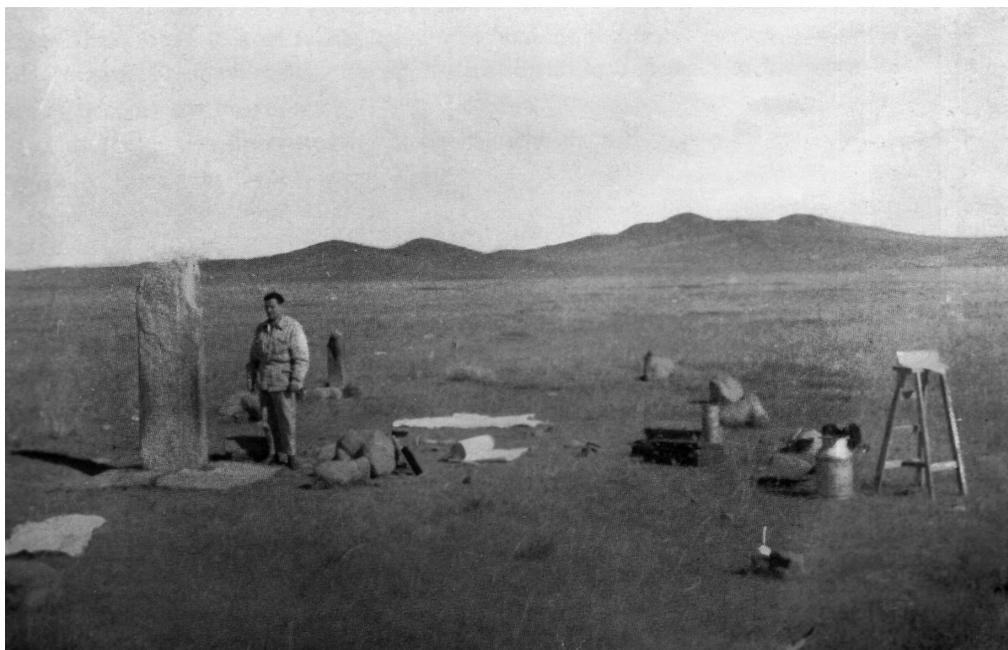


Photo 1. Edward Tryjarski at Ikh Khöshööt in 1962



Photo 2. Fragment of the stele at Ikh Khöshööt. Photograph by E. Tryjarski