

UNESCO INTERNATIONAL MEMORY OF THE WORLD REGISTER

NOMINATION FORM

1.0 Title of item or collection being proposed

*Stone Inscriptions of Tsogtu Khung-Taiji,
Prince of Khalkha.*

2.0 Summary (max 200 words)

The Stone Inscriptions of Tsogtu Khung-Taiji are regarded as one of the most iconic and important symbols of Mongolian script and literature.

The monument consists of three stone inscriptions carved by the same people, in the same year. The inscriptions are amazing not only because of their clarity and the beauty of the clean lines of the letters but also how well they have been preserved to this day.

The main inscription, dated 1624, is a poem carved on the smooth, vertical rock, which was composed by Prince Tsogtu, who is one of the most prominent figures of the 17th-century history of Mongolia. This poem is often considered by scholars to be the finest example of pre-Qing Mongolian poetry composed according to the canons of Buddhist poetry. They are written in Classical Mongolian and use Mongolian script.

The importance of the inscriptions is that they stood as a witness to a turbulent and dramatic time in the history of 17th century Mongolia, when Ligdan Khan, the last Great Khan of the Mongols, was desperately struggling to maintain unity among the Mongols as they faced the rising power of the Manchus. Prince Tsogtu was a staunch supporter of Ligdan Khan and fought and died for this cause in the battle near Kukunor in 1637.

3.0 Nominator contact details

3.1 Name of nominator (person or organisation)

The Mongolian National Memory of the World Committee;

The National Library of Mongolia;

3.2 Relationship to the nominated material

Mongolian National Committee for Memory of the World Programme of UNESCO was established in 2010 by the order of the Minister of Education, Culture, and Science of Mongolia with the aim of developing cooperation among members, identifying a list of national heritage, and nominating the most significant heritage that meets the criterion of regional and world registers of UNESCO. The National Library of Mongolia is responsible for the committee's activities in Mongolia, and the director of the National Library takes responsibility as the Chair of the Committee.

Currently, Mrs. Ichinkhorloo Bayarkhuu, Director of the National Library of Mongolia, is Chairwoman of the Mongolian National Committee for Memory of the World Programme of UNESCO.

3.3 Address

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Email

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Foreign Relations Specialist of the National Library of Mongolia

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4.0 Declaration of Authority

I certify that I have the authority to nominate the item, or items, described in this document to the Memory of the World Register.

Signature



Full name and position

B. Ichinkhorloo, Director of the National Library of Mongolia;

Chairwoman of the Mongolian National Committee for Memory of the World Programme of UNESCO

Date: November 25, 2021

5.0 Legal information

5.1 Name of owner (person or organisation)

The Governor's Office of Delgerkhan Soum of Tuv Aimag, Mongolia

5.2 Address

The Governor's Office of Delgerkhan Soum of Tuv Aimag, Mongolia

5.3 Telephone

Mrs. Jargalmaa. D, Governor of Delgerkhan Soum of Tuv Aimag,
Cell phone: 976 9518 1199,

Mrs. Tsetsegee. D, Head of the Municipal Council,
Cell phone: 976 9986 5361,

5.4 Email

delgerkhaan1923@yahoo.com

5.5 Legal status

According to the Government Resolution No. 13 of 2020, the Stone Inscriptions of Tsogtu Khung-Taiji, Prince of Khalkha are included in the list of the immovable historical and cultural monuments under the Mongolian Government protection.

The immovable historical and cultural monuments are protected under the provisions of the Law on the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Mongolia. Within the framework of this law, the heads of municipal administrative units, where heritages are located, are responsible for its protection.

5.6 Copyright status

The Stone Inscriptions of Tsogtu Khung-Taiji, Prince of Khalkha are not subject to any copyright protection.

5.7 Accessibility (note any restrictions, including cultural restrictions)

The stone inscriptions are in a deserted steppe under the open sky without guards and any fences. The stone inscriptions stand 320 km south-west of Ulan Bator, in Delgerkhan Soum of Tuv Aimag, Central Mongolia. Therefore, anybody who is willing to spend some money on gasoline can visit the site and will be able to see and explore it without any restrictions.

6.0 Identity and description of the documentary heritage

6.1 Name and identification details of the items/collection being nominated

Stone Inscriptions of Tsogtu Khung-Taiji, Prince of Khalkha.

nominated by the Mongolian National Committee for Memory of the World Programme of UNESCO and The National Library of Mongolia

6.2 Type of document

Stone Inscription

6.3 Catalogue or registration details

The monument consists of three separate stone inscriptions laying close to each other. The inscriptions are carved on very hard rocks; they lie among the granite loose stone on the surface. Adjacent to the main inscription, there are two more rock carvings both of which are smaller in size. Therefore, scholars conventionally call them the Large, the Middle, and the Small inscription of Tsogtu Khung-Taiji according to the stone sizes. The inscriptions are written in the Classical Mongolian and use Mongolian script.

The Large inscription, dated 1624, is a poem carved on the smooth surface of the solid vertical rock, measures about 95-96cm in height and 75-77 cm in width, and contains 17 lines of writing, all clearly legible.

English translation of the poem:

On the twenty-first day of the First Month of Autumn in the Year of the White-Rooster, Tsogtu Taiji rode his caparisoned roan to the northern mountain of Tsetserlig in the Khangai Khan, hunting. He ascended on high and upon stopping there, looking to the east, his spirit deeply moved. Pining for his dear paternal aunt, he spoke thus and wept:

*Although a distinction exists above and below
Between the Khan of Supernal Heaven
And the rulers and saints on earth,
In the air of joyfulness and love, they are one and the same.*

*Although separate are the places
Of the bodhisattvas in their grottos in Akaniṣṭha Heaven
And those Awakened upon this golden Earth,*

In the air of care and compassion, they are one and the same.

*Although there exists a difference in manner and appearance
Between the good ministers of the rulers and saints here
And the great lords of Yama, the Inquisitor,
In the air of judging right from wrong, they are one and the same.*

*Although different is the apparent bodily forms
Of a thief who robs you from near or from afar
And a wolf prowling the edge of the camp,
In the air of hunger for sustenance, they are one and the same.*

*Although distant are the lands of the Khalkha and the Onniγud
Between my dear elder sister on the Onon
And sickly me who abides here on the Orkhon and the Tula,
In the air of loving and longing for each other, we are one and the same.*

*Should we never meet again in these bodies of ours,
From now on throughout each future birth,
As a mother loves her only child,
By our various deeds, let us help each other.*

This that he spoke while weeping was memorized by Page Erke who was with him. Later, four years have passed, on the eighteenth day of the First Month of this same Rat year, what [Page Erke] recorded Page Daiching and Knight Gūyeng inscribed in stone.

(Translated by Professor Brian Baumann, University of California, USA)

The Middle Inscription

The second, the Middle inscription, in 8 lines, all legible, is carved on a nearby rock, dark blue, the rock is significantly inclined. It measures about 75.5-56.2cm in height and 36.6-33.3 cm in width.

The English translation of the Middle Inscription:

*Homage to Samantabhadra, and Amitabha and Buddha Sakayamuni.
Homage to Hevajra and mother Varahi and Vajrapani.*

*Homage to God above, to the Emperor and Empress, and to all benevolent people.
Om Mani Padme Hum, Om Mani Padme Hum, Om Mani Padme Hum, Om Mani Padme Hum, Om Mani*

Padme Hum, Om Mani Padme Hum (6 times)

By the order of Tsogtu, Prince of Khalkha, offspring of Genghis Khan and grandson of Vajra Khan, for the case of Khutugtu Khan of the Mongols (Ligdan khan), written on the rock like a gem of jade by Page Daiching and Knight Güyeng on the great white day, the fifteenth of the month of the fire tiger, which is the first of the months, in the wood mouse year (1624), which is the first of the years, when four hundred and sixty-four years have gone since the year of the water horse year in which Genghis khan was born”.

The Small Inscription

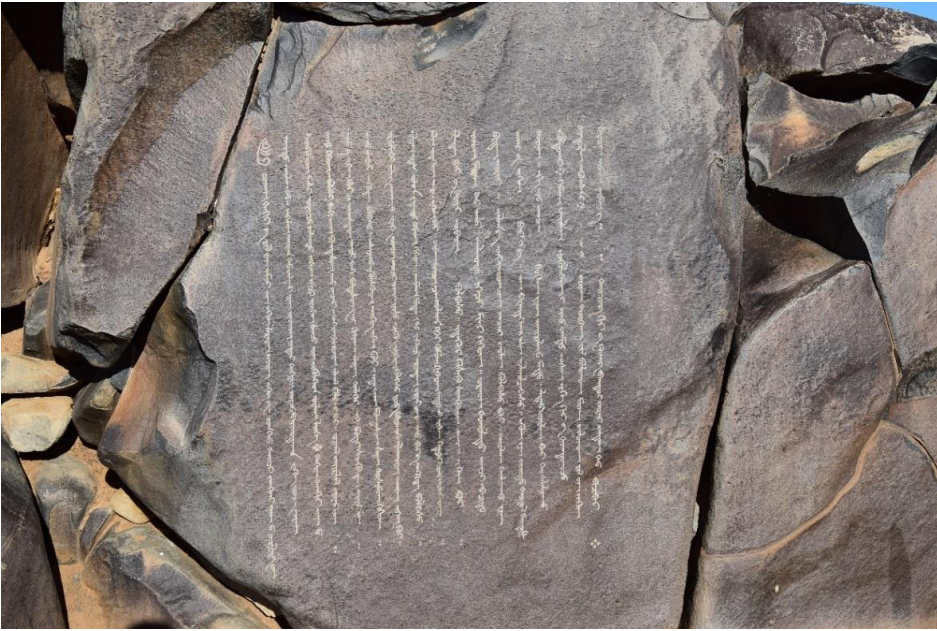
The Small Inscription contains the Buddhist mantra- Om Mani Padme Hum depicted using the letter of Ranjana, Tibetan, a Chinese Hanzi, and the name of one person in Mongolian.

Words in Mongolian, “*it is written by Page Amur, a younger brother of Page Daiching*”. The Mongolian inscription, in two lines, measures about 20.0-20.7cm in height.

6.4 Visual documentation (if available and appropriate)



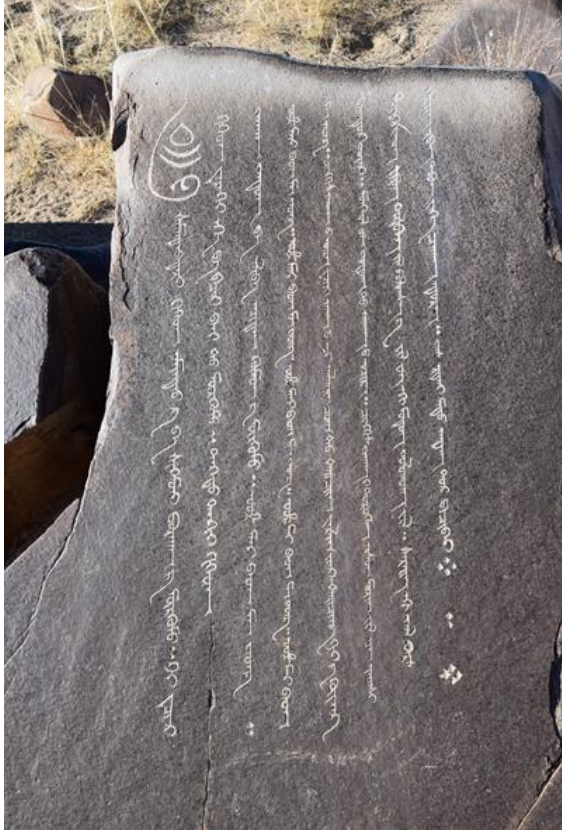
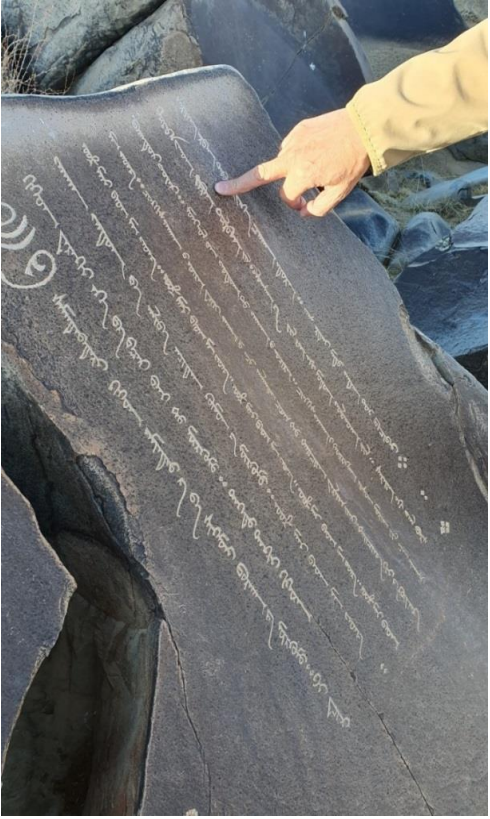
The overall view of the Large Inscription



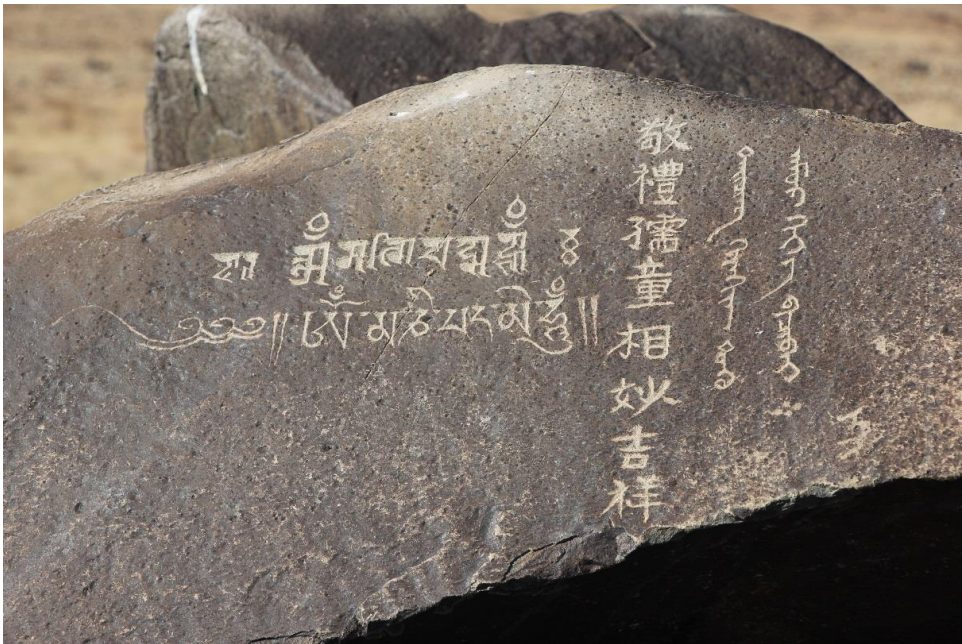
Close up image of the Large Inscription



Image of the Large Inscription



Images of the Middle Inscription



Images of the Small Inscription



View of the steppe from the Stones



The Northern side of the Stones



The overall view of the Stones from the southwest side

6.5 History/provenance

The main hero of the stone inscriptions is Tsogtu Khung-Taiji, Prince of Khalkha (1581–1637), an enlightened ruler of his time, a poet, and a translator of works of ancient Indian sages. He was a direct descendant of Genghis Khan in the 19th generation and is regarded as one of the most brilliant and prominent figures of 17th-century Mongolian History. He mostly went down to the history of Mongolia as a great statesman who sacrificed his life for the unification of the Mongol khanates.

The Prince ruled over the Khalkha Mongols in what today is the country of Mongolia. On the banks of the Tula River, north of the west of Ulan Bator, the ruins of the palace that was built by him still exist. As one of the senior princes of Genghisids, he participated in the settlement of the Great Code (Yeke čayaža), the principal legislation of Khalkha Mongols at that time. We can find his name on the list of participants of the Great Code Assembly of 1616 and 1620. Being a staunch supporter of the united Mongolian state and Ligdan Khan, the Prince was an advocate of the Sakya School of Buddhism which had been the State religion of Mongols since the time of revered Kublai Khan and 'Phags-pa Lama. He initiated building several Sakya Buddhist temples and schools.

However, he was the only one among the Khalkha Mongol aristocrats who supported the unifying policy of Ligdan Khan and was forced to leave his ancestors' land to unite with his subjects and troops with Ligdan Khan. They planned to meet at Qinghai Lake, the land geographically far from the Manchus, then to establish political control over Tibet. But Ligdan Khan died due to smallpox before the two could meet after suffering the crushing defeat from Manchus. Tsogtu Khung-Taiji, without his powerful ally,

was killed in the battle near Kokonur (Qinghai lake) few years later in 1637.

The Large Inscription contains one of the finest examples of Buddhist poetry ever written in Mongolian literature. It is a uniquely personal poem, an elegy of the Buddhist world, the impermanence of beings, expressing love and longing for his aunt because they are far away from one another. According to the text of the inscription, the poem was recited first by Prince Tsogtu in 1621, while he was enjoying a hunting expedition at the Khangai mountains; after that, his comrades inscribed the poem on a solid rock in 1624.

It was a critical time in the history of Mongolia. In 1624, Uba Khorchin Khan, a descendent of Genghis Khan's brother Khasar, a ruler one of the most powerful Mongol khanates at the time, swore an oath of allegiance to Nurhachi, the founder of the Qing Dynasty, which marked the starting point of a long 131 year period of yielding of the Mongols to the Manchus.

6.6 Bibliography

As a result of numerous field expeditions by Western researchers in Mongolia at the turn of the 20th century, a lot of pieces of information about the stone inscriptions of Tsogtu Khung-Taiji appeared in Europe and Russia.

The first information about the inscription was published in 1891 in a report of the expedition led by German Turkologist V.V. Radloff. Then a brief report about the inscriptions was made by the Polish scholar V.L. Kotvich (1872-1944) at a meeting of the Russian Archaeological Society on May 31, 1923.

Kotvich learned about the inscriptions while staying in Mongolia in 1912. However, at that moment he was going back to Europe; therefore he approached the Mongolian Foreign ministry with a request to send an experienced scribe there to write down the text of the stone inscriptions for him. His request was fulfilled and the text copy had been sent to him. In September 1925, Russian scholar P.K.Kozlov took photos of the stone inscriptions for the first time.

In 1926, B.Ya.Vladimirtsov, the Great Soviet Mongolist and academician, published his famous research article titled 'Inscriptions on the rocks of the Prince of Khalkha Tsogtu' in the journal 'The Bulletin de L'Academie des Sciences de l'URSS' with photographs taken by P.K.Kozlov and a copy of the text he received from V.L. Kotvich.

- Надписи на скалах халхаского Цокту-тайджи. Статья первая Б. Я. Владимирцов

Известия Академии наук СССР. VI серия, 1926, 20:13-14, 1253–1280

- Надписи на скалах халхаского Цокту-тайджи. Статья вторая Б. Я. Владимирцов

Известия Академии наук СССР. VI серия, 1927, 21:2, 215–240

The content of the descriptions is consulted with the above mentioned Vladimirtsov's works (in Russian)

and interviews.

6.7 Names, qualifications and contact details of up to three independent people or organisations with expert knowledge about values and provenance of the nominated material.

Name	Qualifications	Contact details(email)
Isabelle Charleux	Research Director at French National Centre for Scientific Research, Paris, France	isacharleux@orange.fr
Agata Bareja-Starzyńska	Head of the Department of Turkish Studies and Inner Asian Peoples, Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Warsaw. Poland	a.bareja- starzynska@uw.edu.pl
Krisztina Teleki	Faculty Member, Eötvös Loránd University, Department of Mongolian and Inner Asian Studies, Budapest, Hungary	krisztinateleki@yahoo.com

7.0 Assessment against the selection criteria

7.1 Primary criteria - significance value to the world. Comment on one or more of the following significance criteria.

7.1.1 Historic significance

The significance of the inscriptions relates directly to the names of two outstanding statesmen in the history of Mongolia- Prince Tsogtu and Ligdan Khan and the time when scripts had been inscribed. Prince Tsogtu and Ligdan Khan dedicated themselves to the cause of unification of all Mongols spread over a vast area ranging from the Greater Khingan Range to the Altai Mountains, from Lake Baikal to the Great Walls of China, and sacrificed their lives for this cause in the fight against the foreign invaders.

The Middle inscription was carved in 1624 celebrating the 20th anniversary of the ascending the throne

of Ligdan Khan (1588-1634), the last Great Khan of all Mongols and the last nominal emperor of the Northern Yuan dynasty. This is one of the very few surviving monuments directly related to Ligdan Khan whose dramatic and tragic life became a synonym for desperate struggle. The inscription provides evidence of Prince Tsogtu's connection to Ligdan Khan and the idea of Imperial restoration. At that time, Ligdan Khan made attempts to unify a rather loose confederation of Mongol khanates and to establish the Mongol empire again. This led to a conflict with the rising power of the Manchus and local Mongol nobles.

7.1.2 Form and style

The inscription is written in a Mongolian script that belongs to the Classical Mongolian language. The letters of the script have been inscribed resembling the style of letters of Il-Khans documentation that was preserved at the National Library of France (Bibliothèque Nationale de France) in Paris and Vatican Archives in Rome. In other words, the font that was used in the chancelleries of the Great Mongol Empire (Yeke Monggol Ulus) in the 13-14th centuries. This particular font is characterized by the letters *a*, *e*, *n* and *d* at the end of a word are always depicted with a vertical line curled to the left. There are no diacritical marks at all. The letters, in terms of grapheme, *ᠵ* and *ᠴ* in the middle of words do not differ; for initial *ᠵ* and *ᠴ*, there is no grapheme difference. Though there are sharp strokes of curves to the left and without any diacritical marks.

Thus the stone inscriptions reveal to us the fact that in the first half of the 17th century the Mongols preferred the style of writing of the 13th century.

7.1.3 Social, community or spiritual significance

Local nomads treat the stone inscriptions of Tsogtu Khung-Taiji with reverence and as a place of worship. They call the stone inscriptions “Dagutai Kara Chilagu” which means “Ringing Black Stone” in English. This place is considered traditionally as a “furious place” so-called a holy place where visitors must not move a stone or cut grasses not to disturb the spirit of the land. Also, there is strictly forbidden to make any kind of noise, otherwise, the spirit would get irritated and get “furious”.

One of Mongolia's first feature films was dedicated to Prince Tsogtu. The film “Tsogtu Taiji” (1945) was an epic movie with spectacular settings, period costumes, and massive battle scenes with a cast of thousands. There is a scene in the film which depicts, in some detail, how the words of Prince Tsogtu were carved into the Rock.

The Hu, a popular Mongolian rock group, produced a song called “Sameness”, the lyrics of which are entirely taken from the poem on the Large Inscription of Tsogtu Khung-Taiji.

In literature classes in secondary schools, Mongolian children study the poems of Tsogtu Khung-Taiji since the 1980s. Therefore, the spirit and memory of Tsogtu Khung-Taiji as a great man of letters and a patriot are still alive among the Mongolians.

The natural landscape surrounding the monument is breathtakingly beautiful. Many people who visit the stones usually experience a sense of surrealness at the sight of this endless and deserted steppe with rocky hills and ravines. Nothing much has changed here over the centuries, as if time has stopped.

The rock itself deserves a special mention, on which the Large Inscription is carved. The rock is dark brown, almost black, and with white pigments inside. If one chisels away the outside layer of rock, then white appears from within. Therefore, local nomads like to say that the stone inscription looks as if it were written with white chalk on a blackboard. Besides the stone inscriptions, on other related stones, there are more than a dozen stone carvings from the Stone and Bronze age depicting various wild animals such as ibexes, bighorn rams, and wild donkeys.

7.2 Comparative criteria. Comment on one or more of the following comparative criteria:

7.2.1 Rarity

The Stone Inscriptions of Tsogtu Khung-Taiji finds its rarity from being of only known stone inscriptions that contain a full-length poem carved on the bedrock in Mongolia. Other well-known Mongolian inscriptions were usually depicted on steles, or on the walls of grottoes.

Though the poem is an elegy inspired by the Buddhist worldview speaking of mundane life and impermanency of suffering compared with the human's morality and compassion, paradoxically, we can feel the real life of the Mongols in this poem. As Vladimirtsov described, in the poem "there is an aroma of the steppe". In it, there is a big round-up hunt in which the Prince rides his dark chestnut battle horse, and the hunting place is precisely indicated - Mount Tsetserlig in the Khangai range. The poem also contains other geographical names such as the river Onon, Tula, Orkhon, the land of the Khalkhas, and the remote country of the Onniuts. The inscription says that Tsogtu Khung-Taiji recited stanzas of the poem upon ascending to the top of a lofty mountain and the poem was transcribed by a page named Erke who was in the Tsogtu Khung-Taiji's entourage at that time and then etched it on the rock four years later by Page Daiching and Knight Guyeng. The day and year of the poem's composition and when it was inscribed into the rock have been recorded meticulously. Therefore, the amount of information about Mongolia of that time is quite amazing considering the modest size of the poem.

In the Middle Inscription, the name of Genghis Khan is mentioned explicitly, pointing out the exact year of his birth, "four hundred and sixty-four years have gone since the year of the water horse year in which Genghis Khan was born". This in particular makes the inscription unique and rare source material for historians. According to the Gregorian calendar, the year of water horse is 1162, the universally accepted birth year of Genghis Khan (though there are several other dates outlined in Chinese, Arab, and Tibetan chronicles). The inscription proves that the Genghisids used to record an exact right chronicle of their clan and knew very well the birth year of the founder of the Mongol statehood and the Golden Lineage clan (mong. Altan Urug).

7.2.2 Integrity, completeness, condition

Stone Inscriptions of Tsogtu Khung-Taiji , Prince of Khalkha are one of the best-preserved heritage sites linked to pre-Qing Mongolian history. The inscriptions are preserved in their original looks without any damages. They look like if inscriptions were carved yesterday, although almost four centuries have passed since then.

7.3 Statement of significance

The importance of the inscriptions is that they stood as a witness to a turbulent and dramatic time in the history of 17th century Mongolia, when Ligdan Khan, the last Great Khan of the Mongols, was desperately struggling to maintain unity among the Mongols as they faced the rising power of the Manchus. Prince Tsogtu was a staunch supporter of Ligdan Khan and fought and died for this cause in the battle near Kukunor (Köke Nayur) in 1637. The stone inscription is evidence that Tsogtu Khung-Taiji devoted his life to the cause of Ligdan Khan.

The Large Inscription contains an elegy about the impermanence of beings in the Buddhist perspective in the expression of love and longing for his aunt who had moved to a faraway land. This is one of the most uniquely personal Buddhist elegy ever written in Mongolian literature expressing love and sadness for loved ones. At the same time, the poem contains contemporary information and details about the nomadic life of the Mongols of the 17th century, which puts it in a very special place among other works in Mongolian literature. Its poetic composition, arranging lines and alliteration are aesthetically unique. The poem is praised by Mongolian and foreign scholars.

In addition, the stone inscriptions have great symbolic meaning not only for the Mongolians but also for mankind who believe in the importance of preserving traditional culture. This stone is one of the very few heritages left untouched by the Mongolian communists during the Red purge and destructions of the 1930s. In 1944 when the Mongolians were forced to switch into Russian Cyrillic and abandon their traditional script, the stones became an important symbol of national identity, self-conscience and cultural freedom.

8.0 Consultation with stakeholders

8.1 Provide details of consultation with relevant stakeholders about this nomination

The work of nominating the Stone Inscriptions of Prince Tsogtu, Prince of Khalkha to the World Memory register of UNESCO has been met with enthusiasm by Orientalist scholarship both here in Mongolia and abroad. Mongolian well-known scholars such as professor D. Tumurtogoo, Honorary President of the International Association for Mongolian Studies; writer Go. Akim, ex-chair of Mongolian National Committee for Memory of the World Programme of UNESCO, as well as leading international scholars on Mongolian Studies such as professor Bryan Baumann of the University of California; professor Isabelle Charleux of French National Center for Scientific Research, Dr Agata

Bareja-Starzynska of the University of Warsaw, Dr Krisztina Teleki of Eotvos Lorand University fully supports activities regarding the nomination and provided us with research materials.

Also, on the 28th of October 2021, there was a meeting with Mrs. D. Tsetsegee, the Chairwoman of Municipal Council, and other officials from the Governor's office of Delgerkhan Soum of Tuv Aimag, including Mr. B. Shinebayar, head of Duut Khurimt subdivision, where the Stones are located. They all expressed their support and agreed that the local population would be appreciated if the Stone inscriptions were nominated to the Memory of the World Register.

9.0 Risk assessment

9.1 Detail the nature and scope of threats to the nominated material

The Stone Inscriptions of Tsogtu Khong Taiji lie unattended, literally at the mercy of time and the elements of nature. Nature takes its toll on the stones slowly but steadily. Long lines of crack have already appeared on the surface of the Middle Inscription. As the inscriptions are unattended, the threat of vandalism is very real. There had been cases when the stone was splashed massively with an oily liquid. There are several modern time inscriptions on the surface of other parts of the rock made by vandals.

10.0 Preservation and access management plan

10.1 Describe or attach as a scanned document, any existing plans. If no plans exist, provide details about proposed conservation, storage and access strategies.

The prevailing opinion among restorers and other specialists in the field is to leave the stone inscriptions as it has always been, which means under the open sky, without fences. As mentioned above, the threat of vandalism is very real but technology can be a solution to the problem. A 24-hour surveillance camera or Closed-circuit television (CCTV) wireless system that can be viewed remotely can effectively deter crime and keep the inscriptions safe.

Considering fact that the nearest human settlement- the Center of Delgerkhan soum of Tuv aimag lies 20 kilometers from the monument, the question arises of creating long-distance point-to-point links of antenna stations in the steppe. It is said that with stations placed in the line of sight of each other the working range of the camera can be extended up to 20-40 km. Of course, this project will cost a significant amount of money, but one should agree that the monument is worth the money and work.

11.0 Any other information that may support the nomination

11.1 Note below or attach scanned documents as appropriate.



The film “Tsogtu Taiji” (1945) was an epic movie with spectacular settings, period costumes, and massive battle scenes with a cast of thousands. There is a scene in the film which depicts, in some detail, how the words of Prince Tsogtu were carved into the Rock.