

**JOURNAL OF TURKISH STUDIES**  
**TÜRKLÜK BİLGİSİ ARAŞTIRMALARI**

**ORHAN OKAY ARMAĞANI - I**  
**FESTSCHRIFT IN HONOR OF ORHAN OKAY - I**  
**VOL. 30/I (2005), s. 121-125**

A NEWLY FOUND OLD TURKIC RUNIC INSCRIPTION  
ON A BOULDER FROM TALAS

Rysbek Alimov, Kubat Tabaldiev

The Talas valley is one of the basic places of concentration of old Turkic runic monuments. The prevailing majority of texts of the inscriptions found here carry epitaphial character and they are considered as valuable documents for the history of writing of the Central Asian Turkic tribes of the early Middle Ages. Unlike inscriptions of other centres of runic writing, the Talas inscriptions are usually engraved on ordinary river boulders. Eleven inscriptions on stones from Talas have been known in Turkology literature so far, the first of which was found in 1896 by well-known regional specialist V. A. Kallaur<sup>1</sup> and the last one in 1977 by expedition of Institute of Language and Literature of Academy of Science of Kyrgyz SSR led by Ch. Dzhumagulov.<sup>2</sup>

In 2002 the number of the monuments has increased by one stone with such an inscription on it. The twelfth inscription engraved on a boulder was coincidentally found by local residents on suburb of village Zhon-Aryk in Talas *rayon* (region). Afterwards the monument was transported to Bishkek where it is preserved in a building of the Faculty of History of Kyrgyz National University.

The monument that has lengthened form is a coarse-grained grey sandstone of strong breed, approximately 83x40 cm. On one more or less flat side of the stone there are five lines of a Turkic runic inscription, consisting of 65 marks and one colon. At the end of the first and second lines there are small cuts, where according to the text there could be at least one more letter. Marks are carved superficially, however all marks, except for two initial ones and one in the middle in the final line are in very good condition, that, unlike earlier found


---

<sup>1</sup> Каллаур, В. А., “Камень с древнетюркской надписью из Аулиеатинского уезде”, *Записки Восточного Отделения Русского Императорского Археологического Общества*, XI, 1897, с. 79-83.

<sup>2</sup> Джумагулов, Ч. - Карагулова, Г., “Новый таласский древнетюркский памятник”, *Советская Тюркология*, 1978/1, с. 86-88.

inscriptions, makes their decoding easier and interpretation of the text of the inscription more convincing.

The order of reading of lines is from right to left. The lines have precise beginnings, but their ends sometimes pass in lateral parts of the stone. The fourth and fifth lines of the inscription are shorter than others. Last marks of the final line represent, as it seems to us, continuation and an ending of the text of the third line. In terms of paleographic features this inscription does not differ from the others in the region. However it is necessary to note cases of variation which occur in spelling of certain marks, in particular for "G<sup>1</sup>" and "M".

The first attempts of interpretation of the text of the monument were undertaken by K. Tabaldiev, who has described them as "author's own attempts of translation".<sup>3</sup> They have a preliminary character. Undoubtedly, the present interpretation of the text is not final. It should be noticed, that in a course of future studying of not only this, but also other inscriptions in Talas area, special attention should be given, as it seems to us, to finding out exact phonetic value of the mark , so-called " with a canopy ".

Transliteration:

1. W̄T<sup>2</sup>G<sup>2</sup> : T<sup>1</sup>ŞY 'S<sup>2</sup>YZ N<sup>1</sup>YG<sup>1</sup>,
2. W̄ZY ' K<sup>1</sup>L<sup>1</sup>Y G<sup>1</sup>L<sup>1</sup>YG<sup>1</sup>Y ' K<sup>1</sup>L<sup>1</sup>MD<sup>1</sup>[Y]
3. S<sup>2</sup>YZ ' K<sup>2</sup>Ş NT Ç ' YNGK<sup>2</sup>W 'NT Ç [K<sup>1</sup>]L<sup>1</sup>MŞ
4. L<sup>1</sup>Y ' T<sup>1</sup>S<sup>1</sup>Y B<sup>2</sup>YL<sup>2</sup>,
5. (K<sup>1</sup>?) (L<sup>1</sup>?) MYŞ

Transcription:

1. öt(ü)g : t(a)şı : (e)siz (a)mga
2. özi : k(u)lı (a)g(ı)lıgı : k(a)lm(a)d[ı]
3. (e)siz : k(i)ş(i) (a)nt(a) (a)ç : iñ(e)kü : (a)nt(a) (a)ç [k](a)lm(ı)ş
4. (e)l<sup>1</sup>i : (a)t(ı)sı bile
5. k?(a)l?mış

Translation:

1. (This) prayer stone, what grief, is for Any.

---

<sup>3</sup> Табалдиев, К., "Новые древнетюркские рунические надписи Кочкорской и Таласской долин", *Труды факультета истории и регионоведения Кыргызского Государственного Университета имени Жусупа Баласагына*, Выпуск X, Бишкек, 2002, с. 137-138.

2. He himself, (his) slaves, (his) treasury has not remained.
3. What grief, the wife (and) her cow then have remained hungry.
4. (His) realm together with the son of the younger brother
5. has remained behind.

Notes:

Except for a colon in the first line, the mark ᵚ in seven cases serves as a punctuation mark in the inscription and is used to separate words and word groups from each other.

The first line:

**öt(ü)g:** “the request, prayer”.<sup>4</sup> G. Clauson: “request, memorial to a superior”.<sup>5</sup> The given group of marks together with marks T<sup>1</sup>ᵚY is interpreted by us as " prayer stone ".

**(a)m:** In Tonyukuk inscription (northern side of the first stone, third line) this word performed as hydronim: **(a)m** sub “river Any”.<sup>6</sup> Besides, it also has similar spelling: N<sup>1</sup>Y. The authors of these lines think that here it acts as a person’s name. However it is not a single variant of possible phonetic transfer of the given group of marks. The initial vowel of the word “a” can also be replaced by back low labial vowel “o” or back high labial vowel “u”. We have chosen the first variant.

The fourth line:

**(e)l<sup>1</sup>i:** Our variant of reading is conditional. It is known that the word el/il in all runic inscriptions where it takes place is written with L<sup>2</sup>. However we know that in some cases, the mark for L<sup>2</sup> was used to designate L<sup>1</sup>. It’s most likely that here we deal with a circumstance of contrary character. However, we should recognize that it will be the first and only case of using mark L<sup>1</sup> instead of mark L<sup>2</sup> in a Turkic runic script, if our variant of reading will be accepted.

The fifth line:

**k?(a)l?mıᵚ:** First two marks are unreadable. However, if to take into account, that the sentence in the fourth line to give it completeness in the semantic attitude demands a predicate and also to notice the circumstance, that the group of marks MYᵚ in Talas inscriptions always takes part in structure of a word *kalmıᵚ* it is more possible to assume, that these marks are K<sup>1</sup> and L<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> *Древнетюркский Словарь*, Ленинград, 1969, с. 393.

<sup>5</sup> Gerard Clauson, *An Etymological Dictionary of Pre-Thirteenth-Century Turkish*, Oxford, 1972, p. 51.

<sup>6</sup> *Древнетюркский Словарь*, Ленинград, 1969, с. 45.

The same things can be written about final marks of the same line of the inscription. As stated above, authors of these lines are inclined to think, that they are the continuation of the sentence in the third line. What is confusing is that the marks for M and L<sup>1</sup> stand as changed places with each other, and the mark K<sup>1</sup> used in back-vocalic words is not marked here at all. However it could be earlier, on the place of lower cut on the stone.

As it appears from the text of the monument the narration is conducted by third person. In the inscription there is no so-called " author's note ", i.e. change of the person from the third to the first which we could see in some monuments from Talas and Yenisei. The inscription represents an interesting sample of epitaphial genre by early Turks settled once at the basin of r. Talas.

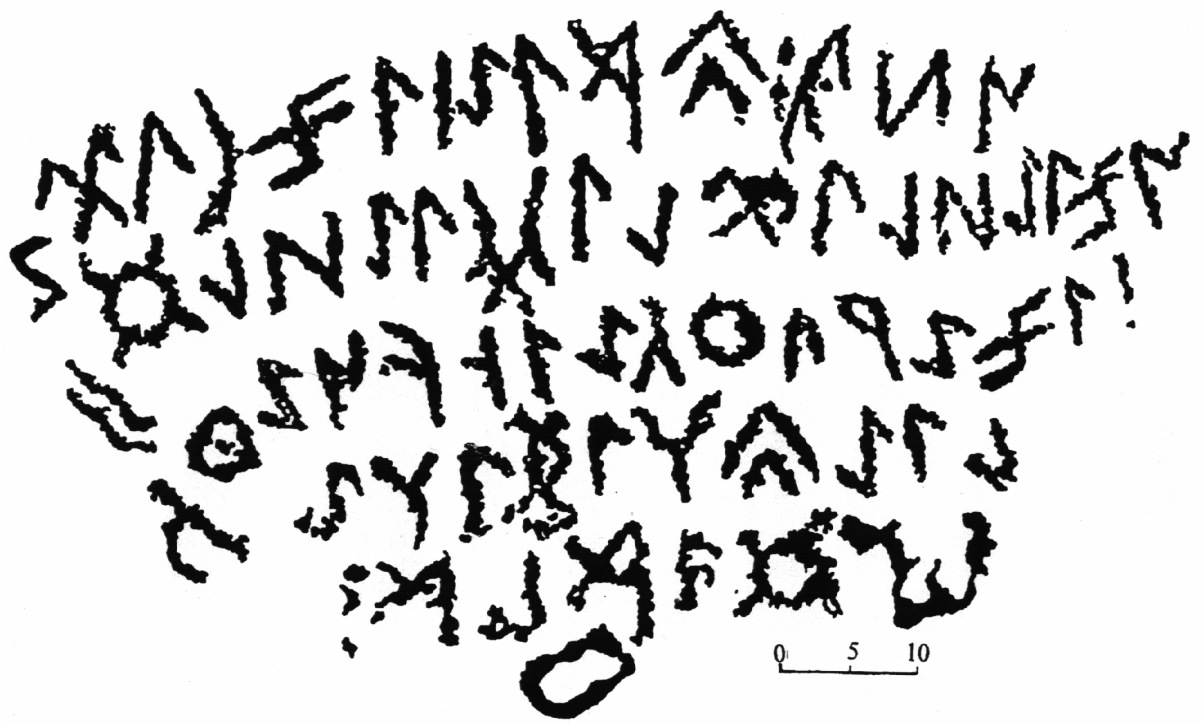
In spite of the fact that in the inscription there are no direct or indirect indications on dating, as the date of creation of the monument we consider the first half of the VIII<sup>th</sup> century as recent researches of Talas<sup>7</sup> and Kochkor<sup>8</sup> inscriptions, which are paleographically identical to the first ones, have shown that the basic group of Turkic runic monuments found within Ti'en-Shan region should date from the period of Turgesh dominations in the region.

Discovery of a new stone with an inscription, and also positive results received in last years during purposeful searches of monuments of writing of Old Turks, firmly allow us to assert that in Talas valley and the adjoining areas, more new runic inscriptions will come to light henceforth and the area of distribution of written tradition of Turkic tribes of early Middle Ages will extend.

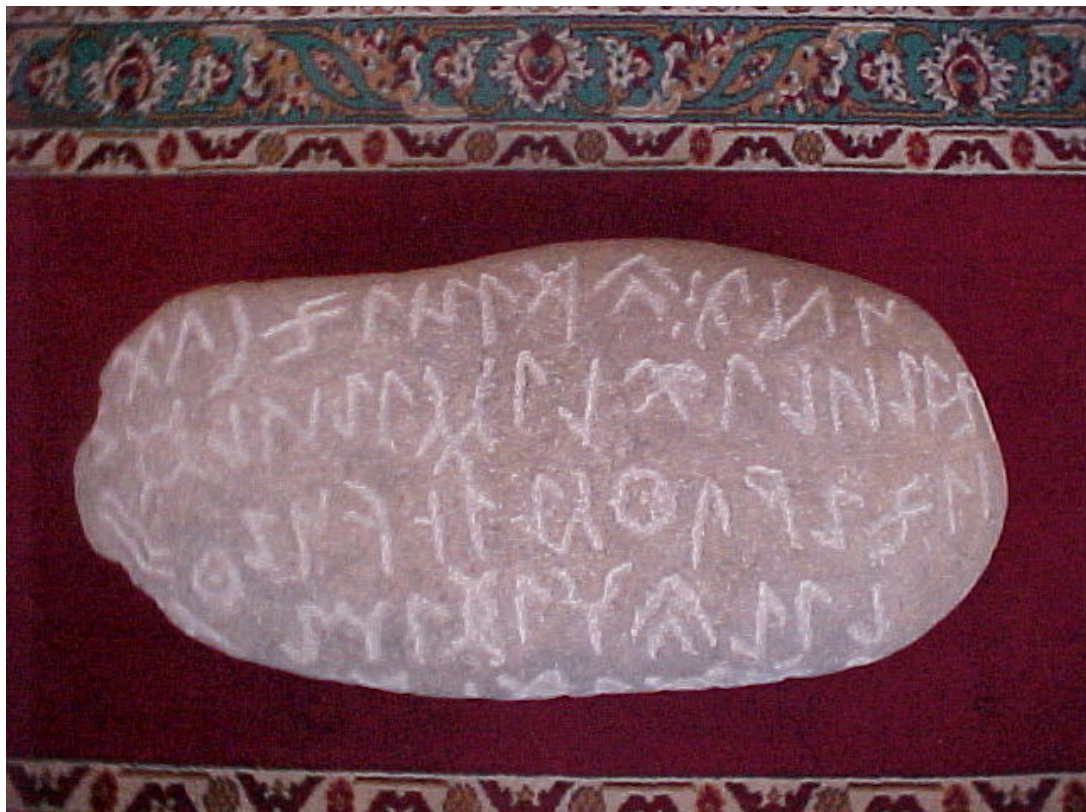
---

<sup>7</sup> Кляшторный, С. Г., "О датировке таласских рунических памятников", *Бартольдовские чтения. Тезисы докладов и сообщений*, V, Москва, 1974, с. 43-44.

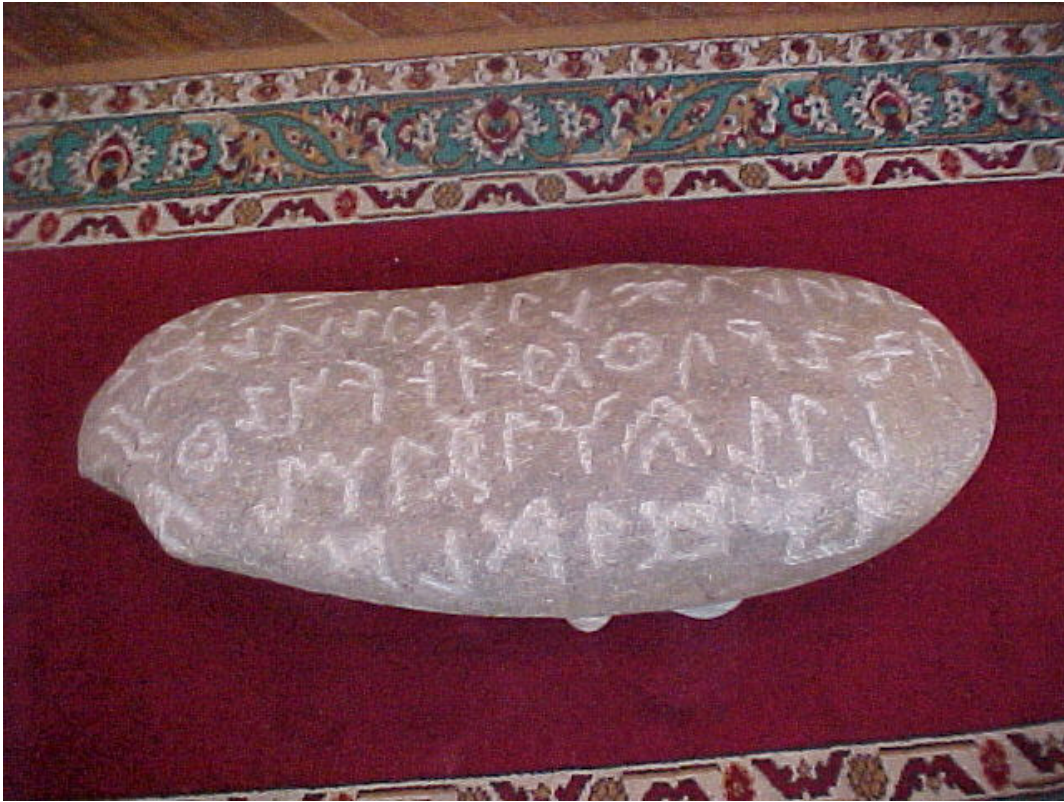
<sup>8</sup> Кляшторный, С. Г., "Новые открытия древнетюркских рунических надписей на Центральном Тянь-Шане", *Известия Национальной Академии наук Кыргызской Республики*, No.1-2, Бишкек, 2001, с. 73-75; Alimov, R., "Koçkor'daki Türgeş Yazıtları", *İstanbul Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 2003/1.



A portrayal of the newly found Old Turkic runic inscription from Talas



A photo of the stone with a runic inscription.



A photo of the stone with a runic inscription