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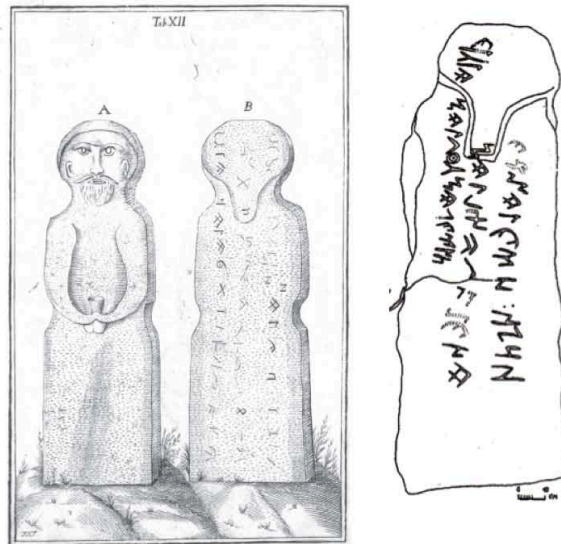
Notes on the Old Turkic Script System and New Runic Inscriptions

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1. Origin of the Old Turkic Writing system

Since the Old Turkic inscriptions were discovered in Siberia and Mongolia, there have been many suggestions about the origin of the Turkic runic script. The most acceptable suggestion about the Turkic alphabet belongs to Sir Gerard Clauson (1962: 73-74; 1970).¹⁾ “It is obvious that the inventor took as his principal model some form of the late Semitic (Aramaic) alphabet which had been adapted for use in writing some Iranian language” (Clauson 1962: 74). There are also other views on the origin of Old Turkic writing system by A.C. Emre, Guzev-Kljaštomyj, Ščerbak, Róna-Tas (see bibliography; for details see T. Tekin 1968: 25-30).

First news about Turkic inscriptions at western sources goes back approximately 300 years from now. Philipp Johann Strahlenberg published some pictures of Yenisei Inscriptions:



Left, Strahlenberg 1730: table XIII, right Bazilhan 2005 (same inscription)

1) See also appendix for Clauson's comparison Old Turkic runic alphabet and Hebrew alphabet.

3. Old Turkic Writing System

The Old Turkic writing system includes 4 letters for 9 vowels (*a, ä, e, i, o, ö, u, ü*). There are 34 letters for consonants. But it doesn't mean that there are 34 consonants in Old Turkic; in Old Turkic there are only 18 consonants. For some consonants there are 2 letters and for a certain consonant, *k*, there are 5 different signs according to their vowel combinations: ^a*k*, ^e*k*, ^o*k*, ^ö*k*, ^ü*k*.³⁾ There are two signs seen only once in Tunyukuk inscription. Because there are different views about their phonetic values, further explanation is required:⁴⁾

⌘ *baš* or *lik*

□ *aš*

4. Turkic Inscriptions

There isn't any inscription in Turkic language from the first Turkic Qaghanate (AD 552-630). We have at least two readable inscriptions from the first Turkic Qaghanate but they weren't written in Turkic: Bugut inscription and Khüis Tolgoi inscription.⁵⁾ The first known Turkic inscriptions in Turkic language belong to the second Turkic Qaghanate. The most famous inscriptions are in Mongolia today. For other inscriptions (also on rocks and sculptures) from Yenisei basin, from Gorno-Altai and from Kyrgyzstan see Kormušin 2016, Ölmez 2015a and Battulga 2005.

5. New Runic Turkic Inscriptions after 2011

The following inscriptions found after 2011 are written in Turkic runic alphabet:

1. Chang'an inscription from Xi'an (from Uighur period).⁶⁾
2. Delgerkhaan inscriptions from southeast Mongolia.⁷⁾

3) For details see Tekin 1968: 30-48; Ölmez 2015a: 48-53.

4) See Tekin, Clauson, Ölmez.

5) For the last editions on Bugut see Ölmez 2015a: 65-76 (mainly newest editions belong to Yoshida Yutaka); for Khüis Tolgoi see A. Vovin, D. Maue, E. de la Vaissière, M. Ölmez (in preparation).

6) For details and different studies on Chang'an or so-called Qarī Ćor inscription see Mehmet Ölmez, "Discussions on Old Uighur Runic Inscription from Chang'an", *12th Seoul International Altaistic Conference, Seoul, July 16-19, 2015*.

7) Two inscriptions from Sükhbaatar Aimag (close to Дэлгэрхаан / Delgerkhaan mountain). It must be from the second Turkic Qaghanate, for details see Ts. Bolorbat (Ц. Болорбат) 2013; Kunihiro IMAI, 17th July

4. Wooden tablets from Hotan(?).⁸⁾
5. An inscription from Inner Mongolia.

The last one in this list is the newest Turkic inscription from the southernmost border of Tujue Empire. The inscription was found at the middle of the steps in Darkhan Moomingyan (达尔罕茂明安 *Daerhan Maomingan*), close to Hohhot (for details see Bai Yudong and Bao Wenshen 2012). The content of the inscription was published by Bai Yudong and Bao Wenshen as following:

mgisbñčRWQ / qurčibänsigim “骑士像我似的”

I went to see this inscription in November 2016 with Hasbaatar, Jorigtu and Muren. According to the photo which I took, it can be read as following without any translation:



g ä i ? b ä i č r U y.?

It is too early to take this as a final reading of the inscription but it appears to begin with the word *yorčä*. There is a correction or something similar to a correction between the 7th and the 8th letters.

6. Conclusion

There is no genealogical relation between the Old Turkic runes and Scandinavian runes. The newly found inscription from Inner Mongolia shows us that the border of the Old Turkic runic inscriptions reaches up to Hohhot.

2013, *Asahi Shimbun* 朝日新聞; R. Mönkhtolga, T. Oosava, *Ertüny türegiyn tux, soyol*, Ulaanbaatar 2005.

8) Wooden tablets were discovered at Hotan some years ago. The age of inscriptions should be proved. There are some obscure points about these tablets. There is a recent publication about this issue: Bai Yudong and Yang Fuxue, *Xiyu Yanjiu*, 2016, Nr. 4.

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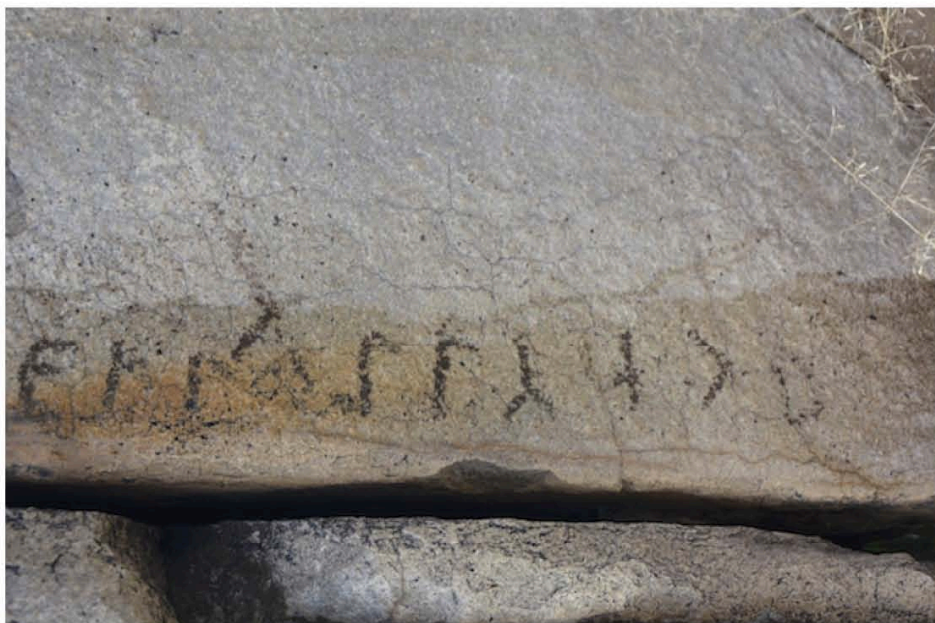
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Table VI.
The runic alphabet and the prototypes suggested.

Sounds	letters	associated vowels		
		back	front	all
a:/e:				aleph(א)
é/é:			alpha(Α) (?)	
i,i:/i,i:				yod(י)
o,o:/u,u:		vau(ו)		
ö,ö:/ü,ü:			upsilon(Υ)	
b,v		beth(ב)	beta(Β)	
ç(/c)				tsadde(צ)?
d/d		daleth(ד) (?)	(kappa K)?	
f see p				
ğ		gimel(ג) (?)		
g			gamma(Γ)	
velar k/x		cheth(ח)		
post palatal k			kaph(כ)	
l		lamed(ל)	lamda(Λ)	
m				mim(מ)
n		nun(נ)	nu(Ν)	
ñ				(invented)
ŋ				(invented)
p,f				pe(פ)
r		resh(ר)	rho(Ρ)	
s		samech(ס)	sigma(Σ)	
š		shin(ש)	(invented)	
t		tau(ט)?	tau(Τ)	
v see b				
x see k				
y		(pictogram)	iota(Ι)	
z				zeta(Ζ)



(from left to right) Jorigtu, Ömez, Hasbaatar



Appendix 2: Photos from Darkhan Moomingyan inscription area and details from the inscription

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Abstract

The Old Turkic writing system and Old Turkic alphabet are two of the unique writing systems. It was used from the beginnings of the 8th century to the 11th (or 12th?) centuries in from Mongolia to Kyrgyzstan. The name “runic” is a general term used for such alphabets. The Turkic runes aren’t related to the Scandinavian or German runes. After 2011, new inscriptions are discovered in Mongolia, Inner Mongolia and Xinjiang, and also in Xi’an. Here I summarize briefly the new Turkic inscriptions.

Key Words

Old Turkic, runes, Turkic Qaghanates, new inscriptions.

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