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Secrets of the Runic Monuments found in Central Asia

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Abstract

The article examines monuments of Turkic ancient letters found in South Siberia, Middle Asia and Kazakhstan. It gives a short survey of history learned ruined monuments ruined letters. The author undertook an attempt to give interpretation of some monuments ruined letters. The article underlines the idea, that discovery and interpretation of ruined letters permitted will refute difference of opinion about absence of writing culture of Turkic people. The Mongolian written tradition and the history of the written languages of the Turkic peoples has its origins in ancient times. Turkic tribal federations living in latter-day Central Asia and Siberia during from the V to VII centuries left later generations a remarkable inheritance of runic written monuments: the Orkhon-Yenisey and Talas runes. These monuments are found in southern Siberia, Mongolia, in the mountains and foothills of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

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1. Main text

The first data concerning the Orkhon-Yenisey and Talas were provided by N. Witzen, burghomeister of Amsterdam. Further information on these monuments is found in the works of the captured Swedish officer Starlenburg, who describes stones with indecipherable inscriptions, found in the Yenisey Basin. From that time, material regarding the Orkhona-Yenisey and Talas runes steadily accumulated, although none were deciphered. In the first quarter of the XIXth century Spassky published a summary of monuments found at that time (in the journal Sibirskij Vestnik, also published by Spassky). His article was translated into Latin and read by scientists in other countries.

From 1887-1888 the Finnish scientist Aspelin gathered material on an expedition and then published an article in Helsingfors under the title «Yenisey Writings». Following this, Finnish scientists in

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collaboration with Aspelin published an atlas of the Yenisey inscriptions. Until the discovery of the alphabet of these inscriptions, they were inclined to consider the monuments relics of the Yenisey culture of the early Finnish people.

In 1889 the Russian researcher Yadrintsev found a large, bilingual inscription with the same runic alphabet as the Yenisey runes, in the Kosho Tsajdam valley by the Orkhon river in Mongolia, far from the original discoveries. Apart from certain unknown symbols, the monument had Chinese inscriptions as well.

In due course, as will be seen below, the dispersion of these monuments, and the places where they have been discovered has extended far beyond the limits of Mongolia and the Yenisey basin. Following the discoveries of Yadrintsev, in 1890 a Finnish archeological expedition was organized to the Orkhon, and in 1891, an expedition led by Radlov from the Academy of Science in St. Petersburg, being organized as well.

The results of these two expeditions were published in 1892 in the form of two large atlases with photographs of the indecipherable inscriptions, site plans, and geographic maps. Thereupon, the scientific community had the opportunity to attempt to read these inscriptions. The Danish researcher Thomsen, professor, Copenhagen University, succeeded in doing so in 1893. The noted linguist Radlov also made an attempt to decipher the monuments. Radlov gave the first translation of the inscriptions, based on Thomsen's work. The monument found on the banks of the Orkhon turned out to be in honor of the Turkic Khan of Mongolia and his brother, Prince KjuF-Tegina.

In 1891, Yadrintsev found another large monument (the Onginsky monument) on the banks of the Orkhon. In 1897, on the banks of the Seleng, another large monument in honor of Ton'jukuka was found.

The Russian Hermitage has a wooden stick with runic inscriptions from the village of Achik-tash. Thus far, the stick is unique.

The study of the monuments of the Talas valley began comparatively early. The first work giving information about the Talas valley in an archeological sense, and containing nearly all early summaries about the valley, was the collected work of Academician V. V. Barthold, still relevant to this day. An outstanding scientist, Academician Barthold studies the monuments of Semireche from 1893-1894, including the monuments of the Talas valley. His expedition had an immense influence on further research on the written monuments of the Talas valley, and on the study of Central Asian written monuments in general. In the records of the Turkestan archeology circle, V.A. Kallaur (scientific director of the group) makes repeated reference to the monuments of the Talas valley.

The deciphering of the Proto-Turkic inscriptions stands as one of the outstanding successes of Turkology, and the discovery of such inscriptions in the Talas valley, in the territory of present day Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, gave a special import to the work of the Turkestan Archeology circle in Tashkent.

In the following several decades, the leading scientists of the Turkestan Archeology Circle have died out, and their archival materials have been lost. No summary of the discoveries of runic inscriptions in Central Asia was ever made. As a result, even specialists in this area have lost track of the full extent of the Turkic runic monuments found in Central Asia.

In the spring of 1896, V.A. Kallaur, on an expedition to the Talas Alatau, found a stone with an unknown inscription, at a distance of 8 km. from the village of Dmitrievsky.

In 1896-1897, in the Talas Basin, near the city of Aulie-Ata (Taraz) V. A. Kallaur and the Finnish archeologist Gejkel found five stones with runic inscriptions. The scientific circles of St. Petersburg were so interested, that upon receiving word of the discovery and copies of the inscriptions in 1897, Prof. Rozen was led to send a telegram to the governor general of Turkestan, A. B. Vrevsky, and then a special letter, requesting that the governor general make known and safeguard from perishing the antiquity relics of Turkestan (Protocol of a session of general meeting of the members of Tashkent circle of archeology amateurs, 1897). Concerning the inscription itself, which turned out to be an epitaph, academician V.V. Radlov had deciphered and translated it by March of 1897. Radlov considered the discovery to be particularly interesting because it proved the use of runic scripts by the Turkic tribes of Central Asia: «This fact is so

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