A Newly Discovered Turkic Inscription in the Tian Shan Region: The CHIYIN TASH Rock Inscription

Rysbek ALIMOV (Eastern Mediterranean University)
Kubat TABALDIEV (Kyrgyz-Turkish Manas University)
Kayrat BELEK (Kyrgyz-Turkish Manas University)


This paper presents a study of a newly found Turkic runic inscription nearby Ak-Ölön village, Yssykköl Province of Kyrgyzstan. The inscription carved on the rock is the 35th inscription of Early Medieval Turks discovered in the Tian Shan Region. The authors give a description of the monument and supply it with transliteration, transcription and translation. What makes this inscription important is that it is closer to the inscriptions of the Yenisey region rather than the other inscriptions of the region both with regards to its palaeographical and contextual features. This is particularly prominent in the orthographical characteristics of the signs for G, T and \( \tilde{w} \). The parallel usage of *tenride* and *yerd* in the Yenisey Inscriptions also support this view. Due to its palaeographical features it can be said that this inscription belongs to the earlier period of Turkic runic writing than any other found in the Tian Shan region.

*Keywords*: Turkic runic inscription, Tian Shan, Chiyin-Tash, Kyrgyzstan

1. Introduction

In 2009 a new Old Turkic inscription, written in the runic script,
was discovered in Ak-Ölön village of Ton District of Yssyk-köl Province in Kyrgyzstan. It is located at the western edge of the Teskey Ala-Too mountain range. Ak-Ölön is also on the way to Köksay Region, where the runic inscriptions known as the Kochkor Inscriptions were discovered in 1998 and 2002. The location, where the new inscription is discovered, is named as Chi'ya-Tash “the pictorial stone” by the local residents.

The massive rock, the surface of which is burnt by solar beams, is covered with many petroglyphs. The archaeologist K. Tabaldiev, who has studied the drawing techniques of the images, states that it is possible to date some of them to the Bronze and Early Iron Ages and the rest to relatively later dates.

The figures depicting a hunting scene including a hunter, a hound and chamois stand out among the images (Figure 1).

Two tamghas, written with line technique, are noteworthy (Figure 2).1) Similar to these tamghas, which bear a resemblance to the classic Greek musical instrument lyre, can be noted on Türkish coins and the Talas and Kochkor Inscriptions (see Alimov 2008).

2. Description of the Inscription

Two inscriptions are discovered on the south part and at the centre of a massive rock. The first one of these is an inscription made up of 26 (twenty six) signs engraved irregularly (Figure 3). Tabaldiev reckons that the signs in the first inscription are engraved by inscriber, exercising to write the second inscription. Although the signs, which range from 1 cm to 5 cm, appear to be in groups they cannot be read convincingly. The recent Cyrillic letters engraved at beginning part of the inscription covered up some of the runic signs and created difficulty to read and interpret the runic signs.

The second inscription can be found at top section of the southern

1) Tamgha is an abstract seal used by Eurasian nomadic peoples and by cultures influenced by them. The tamgha was normally the emblem of a particular tribe, clan or family.