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В НОМЕРЕ:

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Graphemes for vowel expression in the ancient turkic runic script

There are four graphemes for transmitting vowel phonemes: α — a/ä, O — o/u, o — ö/ü, ι — y/i in the repertoire of runic writing. It is believed that these graphemes are used as normal signs for vowels. Nevertheless, the analysis of runic texts inclines the author more and more to the idea that these signs did not have an independent meaning yet. In our opinion, they were used in texts for "technical" purposes. Vocalic graphemes in runic monuments have not yet been used systematically, as is usually the case in alphabetical scripts. In this writing the need for independent using within words and word forms of signs for vowels was not yet felt, since each grapheme was itself a syllabogram, within which a certain vowel already existed.

Key words: Runic alphabet, runology, runic vowel graphemes.

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The purpose of this study is to analyze and identify the status of graphic signs for vowel transmission in ancient Turkic runic monuments. The signs for vowels have attracted the author's attention, because of their special significance for determining the internal form of the writing itself.

It is known that both ancient and modern writing systems have a certain internal structure, which is not very diverse. All writing systems are either word-syllabic, syllabic or alphabetic (phonetic). The difference between types of writing is what elements of the spoken language are transmitted using graphic signs, namely words, syllables, or individual sounds/phonemes.

This study is based on the position that the ancient Turkic runic script cannot be a borrowed consonant alphabet, since it contains a large number of graphemes-logograms. As a result, researchers from St. Petersburg State University V. G. Guzev and S. G. Klyashtorny, put forward a hypothesis about the independent origin of this writing and criticized the idea that it is an alphabet [Guzev, Kliashtornyi, 1993].

The main conclusions reached during the detailed study of this concept are the following:

1. Turkic writing was not borrowed; it is a product of its own invention and development.

2. The internal form of this writing is a mixture of techniques that are used both in pre-written sign systems (generic tamgas, pictorial writing), and in all other evolutionary and sequential stages of the development of written systems.

3. In this writing, 1) there are separate signs that continue to be used as logograms; 2) almost all Turkic runes are able to function as syllabograms (signs for syllables); 3) almost all signs have acquired the ability to transmit separate phonemes as it happens in alphabetic writing. Thus, according to its internal structure, the ancient Turkic script can hardly be classified as a pure alphabet, as it often happens among linguists. It would be more correct to define it as a word-syllabic system, which was still at the stage of Alphabetization [Guzev, Avrutina, 2007. P. 22].

Indeed, it can be argued that all runic signs are signs that have a syllabic structure. In this writing, unlike many other syllabic systems, the syllable structure is as follows: a certain vowel + a certain consonant, basically, the initial vowel is the vowel A, but there are exceptions, such as the syllabic signs *oq, yq, yc*. Thus, if all signs contain a vowel sound, why does this writing need special signs for vowels?

In order to answer this question, the author sets himself the task to determine the status of signs for vowels and identifying patterns of their use.

Studying this topic, the author came to the conclusion that the issue related to vowel graphemes is also fundamental from a theoretical point of view. Its exceptional significance stems from the axiomatic thesis for gram-

matology that, from the point of view of internal structure, the main sign that a letter is a pure alphabet is the presence of special characters, both for consonants and vowels, as well as the consistent use of signs for vowels in all those places of words where they should be expected. This makes it clear that only consistent, regular use of vowels in words can indicate that this writing can be called an alphabet. (Recall that the alphabet is a type of writing in which each sign transmits a single sound.)

Thus, with this study, the author seeks to refute two statements that exist in Turkology. Firstly, the fact that the available four characters represent letters for vowels, and secondly, that these "letters" are used according to the usual rules that do not require additional explanation, in other words, as vowels are used in most modern alphabets, namely, in those places of words where they are heard. This approach implies that signs for vowels have the same significance as signs for consonants, representing independent elements of writing. In alphabetic writing, vowel graphemes are used along with consonants every time in the places of words where their oral counterparts are located. If we assume that runic writing is an alphabet, and this can be observed in grammatology in the form of the "Sogdian hypothesis", then a similar conclusion should automatically apply to vowel graphemes.

Although it should be noted that usually all studies concerned exclusively runes for consonants, while signs for vowels did not cause any questions, which is very strange, since signs for vowels in runic texts are used extremely inconsistently. First of all, they are not used in every syllable, as is the case in most modern world alphabets. However, these signs are used much more often than in texts based on Semitic scripts, which do not have separate letters for vowels, and for ease of reading, special diacritics for vocalization may be added from time to time.

Thus, even a superficial digression into the history of this issue allows us to conclude that at the moment the problem associated with the analysis of graphemes related to vowel phonemes, and the rules for their use in the literature, has not yet been worked out so that we can finally put an end to it, coming to some specific conclusions.

In our opinion, the signs for vowels have not yet had an independent meaning. Turning again to the history of writing, we can see how Western Semitic scripts often used signs beginning with a "weak" consonant, such as *w* and *y*, to convey the longitude of a vowel after syllabic graphemes with the Consonant + Vowel structure. The described technique in grammatology was called *scriptio plena*, or "full-voiced spelling" [Gelb, 2004. P. 162]. Such signs, called *matres lectionis* in science, due to their inconsistent use, have not turned into vowel signs in Semitic scripts, but they are found throughout their history and have a very specific functional purpose, namely, to support the correct reading of words, especially when it comes to names and proper names.

Thus, the ancient Eastern word-syllabic writing systems, without going to the stage of Alphabetization,

know the ways in which some graphic signs were used for "technical purposes". In one way or another they were adapted for occasional transmission of certain vowels and supported their use of correct reading. In our opinion, Turkic vocal graphemes have exactly the same function, which, firstly, are not vowel letters, but signs for a syllable that has a structure V (Vowel) [Diakonov, 1979. P. 12], and secondly, they have a certain functional use — in one way or another to help the correct reading of other syllabic signs.

Let us now turn to the actual material of runic inscriptions. There are four signs for a vowel syllable in the considered script:

α — a/ä
O — o/u
o — ö/ü
ι — y/i

Cases of such "technical" use of vowels can be divided out of their purpose:

1. In order to change the differential sign of vowels in a syllable or in a whole word (the transition from an open vowel to a closed vowel), it was enough to use one sign in the first syllable

μΔTP<u>O</u>ϑ j<u>o</u>ry/utdy/um 'I brought' (otherwise the word can be read like *aj* + ***ar*** + *at* + *ad* + *am*)

]μ<u>o</u>κ k<u>ü</u>müš 'silver'

]μδγ<u>ι</u> <u>i</u>gidmiš 'risen'

2. To change the original vowel in a syllable:

λ<u>ι</u> <u>il</u> 'Il, state' (<u>il</u> instead of äl)

oργλ<u>ι</u> <u>il</u>gärü 'ahead, to the East' (<u>il</u> instead of äl)

ιχτλ<u>o</u> <u>öl</u>täči 'can die' (<u>öl</u> instead of äl)

νKτ<u>o</u> <u>öt</u>ükän 'Otukenskiy' (<u>öt</u> instead of ät)

3. In order to make up for the absence of some graphemes with the CV structure, to transmit the combination "consonant + specific vowel". As part of this goal, there were various cases of using vocal graphemes.

a. A vowel could be used after a grapheme with a VC structure in order to emphasize the need to read a vowel after a consonant, and not before it. V. G. Guzev points out this method, calling it "a flipped syllable" ("process when a syllable is flipped") [Guzev, 2004. P. 26]. The vowel itself did not change:

νιϑN<u>O</u>[q<u>o</u>najyn 'I'll settle down' (qo instead of oq)

π <u>O</u>[q<u>op</u> 'all' (qo instead of oq)

b. To indicate "a flipped syllable", but in these cases the original vowel usually had to be changed:

OB **bu** 'this' (äb + u => bu) (but compare: μBΣ s<u>ab</u>ym 'my word'

νoκ **kü**n 'day' (instead of äk + än)

νoτ **tü**n 'night' (instead of ät + än)

4. A vocal grapheme can also be used at the end of a word both to implement the CV syllable and to reinforce the correct unambiguous pronunciation:

<u>O</u>ϑΣ saju 'along the river'

This is also the case with syllabic graphemes with the VCC (vowel + consonant + consonant) structure:

α/ anta 'there'

ιΔΓ**T**θ qatygd<u>y</u> 'hardly'

<u>α</u>ηιΘσTB batsyqyŋ<u>a</u> 'to the place where it lands'

In the texts of runic writing, there are examples that approach the alphabetic expression for the sound form of the word:

νοχο üčün 'for'
ριφ jier 'land'
ολο ölü 'dead'.

In these examples, all signs are spelled out, including those used for vowels. However, based on these examples, it does not appear to be entirely correct to assume that the vocal signs in this writing received a regular character in use. The history of the development of writing shows one interesting regularity: in its environment, the transition from verbal-syllabic writing to purely alphabetic writing is practically impossible. Elements of phonetization are found in the earliest original writings, but there is no recorded data when word-syllabic writing turned into a purely phonetic one among the same people. In addition, there are no cases when signs for vowels would become independent letters, since it is from the moment when vowel graphemes begin to be used regularly and systematically, we can say that the alphabet originated. Based on this observation, we can conclude that in ancient Turkic writing — despite some cases of "alphabetic" use of signs — graphemes did not begin to be recognized as letters, and vowel syllabograms still perform purely technical functions.

In conclusion, it should be noted that the author continues her research in line with the stated concept of the autochthonous origin of the ancient Turkic runic writing and hypothesizes that the vocalic graphemes in this writing have not yet been used systematically, as it happens in the proper alphabetic writing.

In runic texts, there might not yet be a need for independent using signs for vowels, since each grapheme was a syllabogram with the structure "a particular vowel + consonant". Their independent significance could manifest itself only in cases of logographic use, when such graphemes conveyed a single word (ι y 'tree', o ö- 'think').

Nevertheless, in the ancient Turkic writing there were some difficulties which, in our opinion, consisted in the absence of signs for words or syllables with a structure CV. According to our assumption, it is precisely this circumstance that motivated the use of vocalic graphemes in most cases, which made it possible to overcome such moments.

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