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More than a hundred years after Vilhelm Thomsen deciphered the Old Turkic runiform inscriptions in 1893 (Thomsen 1894, 1896), these first written sources of the Turkic peoples remain one of the most exciting fields of study in Turcology. Although thousands of publications have been devoted to problems related to the inscriptions (see the 3051 publications listed in Aydın 2010), many questions remain unsolved regarding palaeography, orthography, lexicon, grammar, and other domains. Even the Orkhon inscriptions, the most thoroughly investigated group of sources, continue to hold unexplored mysteries. The further west we move from the Orkhon region, the more problematic it becomes to decipher and interpret the inscriptions: glyphs with uncertain or even unknown value increase in number outside the Orkhon region, and even the interpretation of clearly visible signs can be difficult. In some areas we cannot be sure whether the language underlying the inscriptions is Turkic at all, or if it is so, what kind of Turkic. This is the case, for instance, with the inscriptions of the Avar and Khazar Khaganates of Europe. See further aspects in Károly & Rentzsch 2016.

Accordingly, new studies have the potential not only to make significant contributions to the field, but might radically change our understanding of the emergence, development, and spread of the runiform writing system(s), just to name the biggest questions about which we have more hypotheses than well-founded statements.

Runiform studies is a relatively small branch within Turcology, and the list of scholars, especially in Western Europe, who have specialist knowledge of it does not exceed a few dozen names. Therefore it is a rare occurrence – once or twice in a decade – that a symposium is exclusively dedicated to this topic, or that a volume of papers on runiform inscriptions gets published. The volume under review here is one such rare highlight, gathering together in one place the questions that are at the centre of discussion, what governs the research, and the latest results in the field.

The volume presents the proceedings of a symposium held in Gorno-Altaiisk in the spring of 2009. The symposium was organized within the framework of an international collaboration on the runiform inscriptions of the Altai Republic founded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft and the Russian Foundation for Basic Research. Apart from the volume under review, the most important result of the collaboration is the new catalogue of the Altai inscriptions; see Тыбыкова, Невская & Эрдал 2012.

The volume comprises nineteen research papers and a bibliographical sketch of Vladimir Dmitrievič Kubarev, briefly outlining his life and major accomplishments. Kubarev
was a Russian archaeologist who discovered many runiform inscriptions in the Altai region. The editors dedicated the proceedings to him because he participated at the symposium but passed away before the publication of the volume.

The papers cover various research areas ranging from archaeological, palaeographical, and philological descriptions of already known or newly discovered inscriptions to philological and linguistic investigations of textual materials, and from religious-cultural analysis to database technologies.

The individual papers are discussed below in thematic categories, although there is some overlapping:

**History of research**
Kubarev (pp. 25–34) describes the history of research concerning the famous Kalbak-Tash complex, which is the largest petroglyph site in the Altai region.

Larisa N. Tybykova and Alexandra T. Tybykova (pp. 186–200) provide a detailed summary of the research on the runiform inscriptions of the Altai Mountains. The paper starts with D. G. Messerschmidt, a researcher of Danish origin, who discovered a stele in Khakassia in 1721. A long section is devoted to the fruitful research activities during the Soviet period. The final part contains the actual research results with numerous new findings during the last two decades.

**Descriptions of sites and individual inscriptions**
Toshio Hayashi (pp. 46–54) provides a comparative description of the Tsetsüüh and Bugut sites in Mongolia, and analyses the runiform letters <Illk> carved in a roof tile fragment. He concludes that the word in question is *illik* meaning ‘ruler’. The question remains open, however, of how, if at all, *illik* ‘ruler’ and the better known Old Turkic word *el(l)ig* ‘ruler’ are related to one another.

Gleb V. Kubarev (pp. 55–63) describes two silver vessels from the Bratsk Reservoir in Irkutsk Oblast, Russia, and their place within the material culture of Old Turkic peoples of Inner Asia. One of the vessels has the well-known ‘mountain goat’ tamga on its bottom, suggesting its nomadic origin. The other contains about 46 runiform signs. Kubarev (p. 61) provides a tentative transliteration of the signs, but the inscription remained undeciphered.

Fanuza Š. Nurieva’s (pp. 112–121) contribution is the only paper in the volume that treats the Eastern European runiform inscriptions. According to Nurieva (p. 112), altogether ten inscriptions have been discovered in the broader Volga area. The author presents seven already-known inscriptions, dividing them into two groups: (1) sources belonging to the early Bolgar period (the Afanas’ev, Sanjar, and Jur’evo inscriptions); and (2) sources from the pre-Mongol and Golden Horde period (the Murzixin, Sarabykkulovo, Imenkovo, and Biljar inscriptions). Although the texts are short and fragmentary, they can contribute to understanding linguistic conditions and developments of the region between the eighth and fourteenth centuries.

Peter Zieme (pp. 215–224, in German) describes a runiform inscription at one of the Kumtura caves situated twenty-five kilometres from Kucha, Xinjiang. According to Zieme’s interpretation, the short runiform text contains three or four personal names. Parallels are provided from other Old Uigur sources.
Decipherment
Ryzbek Alimov (pp. 35–41) attempts to reinterpret the much disputed runiform sign ¥ found in various inscriptions from Talas, Kochkor, South Siberia, and even Eastern Europe. He argues that the former interpretations, that is /r/ in back-vocalic environments, /r/ or /b/ in front-vocalic environments, or /z/, are not convincing. According to him, the sign ¥ is a somewhat modified and rotated variant of f, and thus has the phonemic value /nč/. By means of this interpretation, Alimov provides more convincing readings for three instances of the sign. Further cases, however, still remain open for discussion. Alimov’s proposal might help us in the decipherment of the Eastern European runiform inscriptions, which also use the same sign; see, e.g., Szalontai & Károly 2013.

Palaeography, writing systems, orthography
Marcel Erdal (pp. 42–45) discusses one of the most highly disputed questions regarding the runiform writing system as a whole: did it or did it not have segmental (called ‘syllabic’ by Erdal) signs, e.g., <wk>, <ẅk>, <ɨk> ? According to his rather concise reasoning, “the vowel + consonant signs serve only to show the quality of consonants when pronounced in the vicinity of particular vowel features; they are mere consonant letters showing coarticulation and are not syllabic in character.” (p. 45) It is unfortunate that the author does not provide detailed argumentation in favour of his hypothesis.

Irina Nevskaya (pp. 103–111) devotes her paper to the orthography of the Altai inscriptions. She states that the Altai variant of the runiform writing system contains “40 characters including a punctuation sign” (p. 103) and then divides them into seven classes: “vowels, labial, dental and velar consonants, sibilants, sonorous consonants and syllabic characters” (p. 103). The actual use of the signs is illustrated with well-selected examples. This classification does not, however, seem to be appropriate for the given study, since it is unclear to the reviewer how, for instance, characters representing labial or velar consonants differ from one another in terms of orthography. Distinguishing between “a classical Runic orthography […] and a pseudo-Runic orthography” (p. 107) is a misleading classification by the author. This is not because the rather pejorative prefix pseudo- ‘false; deceptive’ would imply that a group of inscriptions uses an inappropriate orthography, but rather because the chosen name (pseudo-Runic) presupposes that a strict and consistent distinction between a set of consonantal signs in velar and palatal environments was an inherent property of the runiform writing system at the time of its creation, and that it thus represents the norm. The Altai orthography might, however, just as easily reflect an earlier stage of development (which does not necessarily imply its anteriority in absolute chronology).

Mehmet Ölmez (pp. 122–130) compares regional varieties of the runiform writing system. His focus is on peculiarities of the inscriptions found in South Siberia (chiefly in the Yenisei region), namely unique signs and orthographical conventions, and differences in the lexicon.

Takashi Ōsawa (pp. 131–148) provides a thorough analysis of inscriptions with the so-called ‘mirror’ writing. Besides providing a philological description of the given sources, Ōsawa undertakes to investigate the cultural background and motivation behind this seldom-seen writing habit.

Philological investigation
Volker Rybatzki and Hu Hong (pp. 149–173) present some new discoveries concerning
the internal structure and content of the booklet containing İrq Bitig, the famous Old Uigur Book of Divination. Before the actual analysis, the authors reconstruct the creation of the book as a physical object. They conclude that it represents an example of the so-called butterfly-binding manuscript booklet, type A (first writing then binding). Accordingly, the book was specifically designed for İrq Bitig, while the Chinese texts that precede and follow the Old Turkic divinations were added later. The authors emphasize that the order of the divinations is still unclear. In the final part of the paper, the Chinese texts and their cultural history are described.

L. N. Tybykova (pp. 180–185) presents the characteristic features of the epitaphs from the Altai Mountains. By means of some well-selected examples, the author shows the differences between the Yenisei inscriptions and those of the Altai.

Abdurishid Yakup (pp. 206–214) devotes his paper to the question of “lacuna filling”. This is the technique used by philologists when reconstructing missing, partly or entirely damaged sections of a text on the basis of the broader context, existing parallels, source texts, or other evidence. His examples are divided into four categories: (1) the context-based approach, (2) the historical evidence-based approach, (3) reconstruction of defective vowels, and (4) the source text-based approach. Each category is illustrated by well-selected examples.

Linguistic investigation
Dmitrij M. Nasilov (pp. 94–102) discusses the word ārinč appearing in the Yenisei inscriptions E-29, E-45, and E-109. He correctly points out that the interpretation ‘bad fortune’ is not acceptable and argues that it is the modal word, “a deplorative marker” (p. 98), with which we are familiar from other Old Turkic documents. In the second part of the paper, he discusses the genitive case marker +(n)λγ and concludes that it did not have a variant in +(n)λγ.

Fahima M. Xisamova (pp. 201–205) compares the functions and morphosyntactic properties of verbal nouns and verbal adjectives (participles) used in the Old Turkic runiform inscriptions and in modern Tatar.

Religious and cultural studies
Igor L. Kyzlasov (pp. 64–86, in Russian) discusses and analyses the religious nature of the Yenisei inscriptions. According to his interpretation, the inscriptions are almost always religious in nature.

Evgenij P. Matočkin (pp. 87–93) devotes his paper to those inscription of the Altai Republic which contain both textual materials and drawings. He argues that the drawings and the texts most often are in a strong symbiotic relation with one another. This is an important feature of the given inscriptions that is often neglected in the scholarly literature.

Database technologies
Oleg A. Sosedko (pp. 174–179) describes how an electronic database for the Altai runiform inscriptions has been developed. The data is now available at http://www.altay.uni-frankfurt.de.

Although the papers show great variation in terms of their quality and thoroughness, the volume as a whole provides a colourful tableau of current research questions, interests,
and tendencies regarding the runiform inscriptions once created by various Turkic-speaking peoples of Eurasia. Due to the diversity of topics and disciplines it contains, the volume will be of value to a wide range of scholars within and beyond Turkic studies. Moreover, we can hope that it will draw the attention of university students, as potential future scholars, to the study of the Old Turkic runiform inscriptions.

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Auf Foto 16 (S. 197) wird im Sommer 1922 Mustafa Kemal in Militäruniform und symbolträchtigem Kalpak von einem Journalisten interviewt, Ahmed Emin. Das war das erste lange – und stellenweise sehr persönliche – Interview mit Kemal überhaupt. Ahmed Emin war, wie Jäckh, am Vorabend und während des Ersten Weltkrieg Propagandist der Deutsch-Türkischen-Waffenbrüderschaft. Später beteiligte er sich an amerikanischen Investitionen in der Türkei und war Gründer der Türkische-Sektion der Liberalen Internationa-