

NEW ANALYSES ON SOME KALBAK-TASH INSCRIPTIONS

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This paper focuses on Kalbak-Tash Inscriptions Nos XX, XXI and XXII which belong to the group of the Mountainous Altai Inscriptions. It provides an analysis of the problematic issues of these three inscriptions having emerged in previous studies, as well as to some new reading proposals for some parts of the inscriptions. The words *kara* and *égil* in Inscription No. XXI are interpreted as “commoner, an ordinary person”; and the word *igen* “deer” (< Old Turkic *ingen* “she-camel”) in Inscriptions No. XX and No. XXI is explained with the correspondence of Old Turkic *teve* “camel” = Yakut *taba* “reindeer”. In addition, the study lays emphasis on the fact that the antepenultimate sign of Inscription No. XXII could be s^1 , and the word *asnar-* which includes this sign could be interpreted as “(he) stopped (work) on the affair and sat down”. Another proposal which is put forward for Inscription No. XXII is that the signs $g^2t^2r^2$ are explained as *éget er* “servant, retainer”.

Key words: Old Turkic Inscriptions, Mountainous Altai Inscriptions, Kalbak-Tash XX, Kalbak-Tash XXI, Kalbak-Tash XXII.

1. Introduction

It was more than 120 years ago that Vilhelm Thomsen deciphered (1893) the alphabet of runic inscriptions in the Orkhon and Yenisei regions. During this period, a variety of runic inscriptions belonging to Old Turkic communities have been continuously searched and discovered. Today, the first thing that comes to mind about Old Turkic runic inscriptions is the Orkhon Inscriptions, primarily those of Kül Tëgin, Bilge Kagan and Tuñukuk, all from the Second Eastern Turkic Khaganate. However, the inscriptions of the Uighur Khaganate, the Yenisei Inscriptions and the Talas Inscriptions, the runic inscriptions found in Turfan and its neighbourhood, some runiform inscriptions of the Old Bulgarian Turks, and the Mountainous Altai Inscriptions must also be reckoned with when treating the monuments of the Old Turkic runic inscriptions.

The history of the studies regarding the Mountainous Altai Inscriptions can be traced back to the 1720s. The first Altai inscription was found near the River Charysh by Messerschmidt in 1721, followed by Spasskii's discovery in 1818, and Radloff and Melioranskii's discoveries in the second half of the 19th century. The research carried out in the Mountainous Altai region accelerated after the second half of the 19th century, and *ninety* inscriptions have been found so far (Tybykova–Nevskaya–Erdal 2012). Some of these inscriptions were analysed by Tennishev, Baskakov, Kubarev, Nadeliaev, Vasil'ev, Kyzlasov, and all the inscriptions were collected in the study of Tybykova–Nevskaya–Erdal (2012). In that work all previous readings and interpretations of the Mountainous Altai Inscriptions were evaluated, and the transliteration, transcription and translation of all inscriptions were provided. However, both in that monograph and in the previous studies related to the Mountainous Altai Inscriptions, it has become apparent that some readings and interpretations do not harmonise with the orthographical rules, the grammar and the semantics of the other Old Turkic (Orkhon and Yenisey) inscriptions.

This paper attempts to reconsider some problematic parts of the Kalbak-Tash Inscriptions Nos XX, XXI and XXII, and provides new readings and interpretations based on phonotactical, grammatical and semantic evidence. First, the analyses carried out so far on these three inscriptions will be assessed, and some new readings will be proposed, then the lessons drawn from these findings will be summarised in the Conclusion.

2. Notes on the Kalbak-Tash Inscriptions

The Kalbak-Tash Inscriptions, which constitute the largest group among the inscriptions of the Mountainous Altai region (Useev 2014, p. 2), are located at the 721st km of the Chuy road leading to Mongolia over the Novosibirsk border (Tybykova–Nevskaya–Erdal 2012, p. 69). This group of inscriptions consists of 31 pieces in total (Tybykova–Nevskaya–Erdal 2012, p. 69). In this section, three Kalbak-Tash inscriptions referred to as XX, XXI, XXII in Tybykova–Nevskaya–Erdal (2012) will be discussed. Kalbak-Tash XXI, which was written prior to Kalbak-Tash XX (Useev 2014), will be discussed first, then Kalbak-Tash XX will be considered, and finally reading proposals will be provided regarding some parts of Kalbak-Tash XXII.

2.1. Kalbak-Tash XXI

The Kalbak-Tash XXI Inscription that contains 25 signs was discovered by Kubarev in 1987 (Tybykova–Nevskaya–Erdal 2012, p. 88) and studied by Vasil'ev (1995) for the first time. Further studies on this inscription were put forward by Kyzlasov, Tybykova and Useev. First, these four publications will be assessed, then new readings will be offered for some parts of the inscription.

2.1.1. *igü bičig ili kara bölöŋ ili* “Tanrıyı öven yazıtlar ülkesi, Kara Tibetli ülkesi(dir).” [country of inscriptions that praise God, country of the Black Tibetans] (Vasil’ev 1995, p. 93).

This is the first sentence of a three-line inscription registered as A-48 in Vasil’ev’s publication (1995, p. 93). No transliteration of the inscription is given in his publication, but the inscription is rearranged in runic letters (see Vasil’ev 1995, p. 92). Vasil’ev (1995, p. 93) read the first word of the inscription as *igü* and interpreted the phrase *igü bičig ili* as “Tanrıyı öven yazıtlar ülkesi [country of inscriptions that praise God]”. It is a rather free translation which avoids to ascribe a direct meaning to **igü* as a word, since no parallel word can be found in old or modern Turkic languages.

In Vasil’ev’s notation, one can see that the sign that comes after the first three letters can clearly be identified as b^2 . The two signs that come after b^2 and cannot be clearly seen were interpreted as ζ and g^2 by Vasil’ev, and the word was read as *bičig* “yazıt [writing, inscription]”. However, when Vasil’ev’s reading is checked in the original, it turns out that the sign k^2 occurs at the end of the word, so instead of *bičig*, the word must have been read as *bičik*.

In the following, Vasil’ev assumed that the following l^2 and i/i signs initiate another word and this word is read by him as *ili* < *il+i* and interpreted as “ülkesi [its country]”. In the remarks, Vasil’ev points out that “Tibet” might have been referred to by *bičig ili*. Vasil’ev reads the following signs as *kara bölöŋ ili* and translates this part as “Kara Tibetli ülkesi(dir) [the country of the Black Tibetans]”; however, he did not make any explanation about the adjective “kara” that qualifies *bölöŋ*.

Vasil’ev’s aforementioned research is significant in terms of being the first study ever on the inscription. However, in the subsequent studies, it turned out that a few points did not match with Vasil’ev’s reading of the letters. Nevertheless, I still think that Vasil’ev identified the word *kara* correctly in the inscription. I will put forward its semantic analysis below.

2.1.2. *igü bezegeli karamin yegiŋ (?)...yegiŋ (?)* “S momenta, kak rezets (?) vyrezal (?) (nadpis’), moiü skvernu tvoja blagost’, moiü (?)...tvoia blagost’ (ochistila) (?)” (Tybykova–Nevskaya–Erdal 2012, p. 88 quoted from Kyzlasov 2002, p. 124).

Kyzlasov’s transliteration on this reading is $i g ü(\ddot{o}) : b^2 z g l^2 i : q r^1 m n^2 j^2 g l^2 : s^2 (\ddot{s}^2) k b^2 (m?) n^2 j^2 g \eta(\ddot{a}?)p?$. Kyzlasov analysed the first signs of the inscription as i/i , g^2 , \ddot{U} , b^2 as Vasil’ev did; however, he identified the following two signs as z and g^2 . This identification of Kyzlasov was adopted by subsequent researchers and the phrase $b^2 z g^2 l^2 i$ in the inscription was read as *bezegeli/bezegli* thereafter. Another point in which Kyzlasov’s transliteration complies with that of Vasil’ev’s is $k^1 r^1$, the signs coming after $b^2 z g^2 l^2 i$. These two signs are adopted by the researchers after Kyzlasov in exactly the same way.

Kyzlasov interpreted the mn^2 signs that come after $k^1 r^1$ as a first person singular possessive suffix (+m) and the accusative case suffix special to possessive conjugation in Old Turkic (+n). It is obvious here that Kyzlasov attributed to the Old Turkic word *kara* a figurative and abstract “skverna [sin]” meaning. However, it is better to be sceptical about the fact that the Old Turkic word *kara* is used in the meaning

“skverna [sin]” by getting completely abstract in this inscription. It must be noted that Kyzlasov read the signs $y^2 g^2 l^2$, which follow the letter group that he read as *karamin*, as *yegin* with nasal consonant for some reason, and translated it as “tvoia blagost’ [your goodness]” based on this wrong reading. However, by identifying z correctly that comes after b^2 in the inscription, Kyzlasov’s research provided the correct reading of *bezegeli/bezegli* for the following researchers.

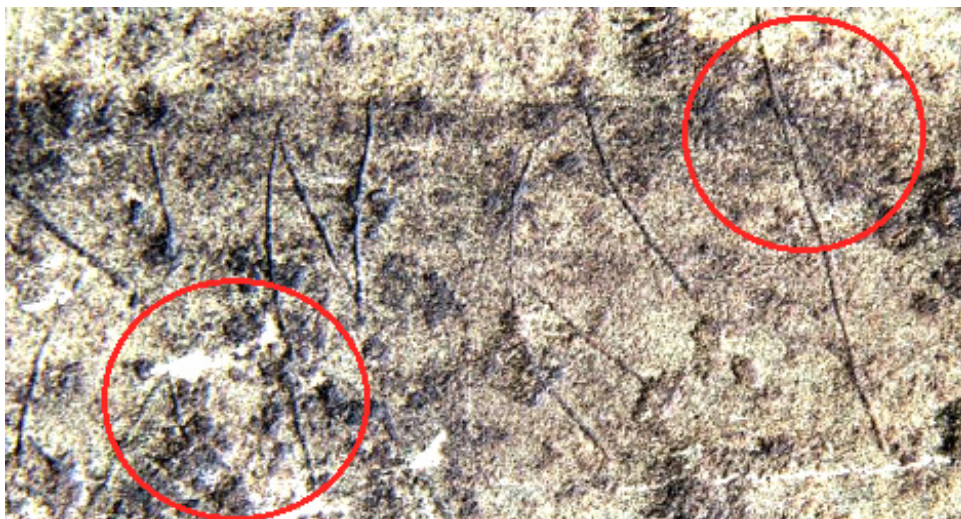
2.1.3. *ešgü bezegeli korum ne yeg öl ...* “Kak khorosha massivnaia skala dlia vyreza-niia koz! ... [how nice the massive rock is for carving <the figure> of a goat]” (Tybykova–Nevskaya–Erdal 2012, p. 89).

The transliteration of the inscription in the publication of Tybykova–Nevskaya–Erdal (2012, p. 88) is as follows: $I/s^2 g^2 \ddot{U} : b^2 z g^2 l^2 I : k^1 r^1 m n^2 y^2 g^2 l^2 : s^2 k^2 b^2 n^2 y^2 g^2 p$. One can see that only the first part ($I/s^2 g^2 \ddot{U} : b^2 z g^2 l^2 I : k^1 r^1 m n^2 y^2 g^2 l^2$) was translated. According to the transliteration, the first sign of the inscription might be read as I or s^2 ; however, the researchers gave preference to the sign s^2 that must have been pronounced as s or \dot{s} . The signs $k^1 r^1 m$ coming after $b^2 z g^2 l^2 i$ were read and interpreted as *korum* “skala [rock, cliff]”. The reading *korum* by Tybykova–Nevskaya–Erdal was discussed and rejected in Useev’s publication (2014, p. 7) on semantic grounds. He emphasised that this word means “piece of rock, piece of stone” in Old Turkic, instead of “rock”, and cannot be used to refer to the large rock where the inscription was situated. Moreover, the lack of the sign U after k^1 also speaks against the reading *korum*. Another problem in this publication is that the sign subsequent to the signs $y^2 g^2$ is read as **öl*, although there is no \ddot{U} sign before l^2 and it is interpreted as a copula. In addition, the closing group of signs ($s^2 k^2 b^2 n^2 y^2 g^2 p$) was left without an interpretation and translation.

2.1.4. *igen bezegeli/bezegli karım ne yeg ol ešik ben yeg er* “Geyikleri bezemek için/bezeyen elim ne iyi! Ešik ben iyi erim. [How good are my hands for imaging deers! I, Eshik am a good man.]” (Useev 2014, p. 7).

Useev’s publication differs from the other publications in one letter, namely the third sign of the first word in the inscription. Useev identifies the third sign as n^2 instead of \ddot{U} and points out that this sign is “the form of the letter N that is used in other parts of the inscription with its underline on the left erased” (Useev 2014, p. 7). As a matter of fact, in the photograph of the inscription (see next page), an abrasion is noticed in the left bottom part of the third sign which seems like \ddot{U} at a first glance, while the first and second signs of the inscription are clearly I and g^2 .

In this case, it seems reasonable to agree with Useev’s suggestion and read the first word of Kalbak-Tash XXI as *igen*. Useev read the signs $k^1 r^1$ as *kari* without any addition and interpreted as “el [hand]”. However, this word does not mean “hand” in Old Turkic, but “forearm; a cubit, the distance from the elbow to the finger tips” (Clauson 1972, p. 644b), “1. loktevaia chast’ ruki; 2. lokot’, arshin” (Nadeliaev–Nasilov–Tenishev–Shcherbak 1969, p. 426). Hence, it is obvious that the context of Kalbak-Tash XXI is not suitable for the word *kari*. It is also odd that the man “Ešik” who painted or carved the deer praises his talent for handicrafts. As in Tybykova’s



Useev (2014, p. 14), photograph no. 5

study (Tybykova–Nevskaya–Erdal 2012), Useev read l^2 as $*[o]l^2$ and evaluated it as a copula even though there is no U sign before l^2 .

2.1.5. Evaluations

As seen above, there are four publications written on Kalbak-Tash XXI. Vasil'ev's research, the first publication on this inscription, is totally different from the other three in terms of transliteration and represents an outdated state of research. The transliterations of the other three publications are very similar, with the exception of a few minor details. A comparative table of the transliteration of these three publications written by Kyzlasov (K), Tybykova–Nevskaya–Erdal (T) and Useev (U) is as follows.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
<i>K</i>	<i>ī</i>	g^2	\ddot{U}	b^2	z	g^l	l^2	<i>ī</i>	k^l	r^l	<i>m</i>	n^2	y^2	g^l	l^2	s^2	k^2	b^2/m^2	n^2	y^2	g^2	<i>p</i>
<i>T</i>	Is^2	g^2	\ddot{U}	b^2	z	g^2	l^2	<i>ī</i>	k^l	r^l	<i>m</i>	n^2	y^2	g^2	l^2	s^2	k^2	b^2	n^2	y^2	g^2	<i>p</i>
<i>U</i>	<i>ī</i>	g^2	n^2	<i>b</i>	z	g^2	l^2	<i>ī</i>	k^l	r^l	<i>m</i>	n^2	y^2	g^2	l^2	s^2	k^2	b^2	n^2	y^2	g^2	r^2

According to this table, the transliteration of the investigated three publications is different only in the case of *four* signs; these are 1, 3, 18 and 22.

- In Tybykova–Nevskaya–Erdal's publication, the sign no. 1 could be *I* or s^2 . However, on the photograph that Useev used in his research (2014, p. 14, photograph no. 5, also above), it can clearly be seen that the first sign of the inscription is *I*.
- Sign no. 3, the third and last sign of the first word in the inscription cannot be $*\ddot{U}$, since a word like $*ig\ddot{u}$ cannot be interpreted on the basis of old or modern

Turkic languages. A correct reading regarding the first word of the inscription can be obtained only if the missing bottom left part of \ddot{U} is rounded to n^2 (Useev 2014, p. 7). This is the best solution we have got so far.

- It is not of vital importance whether sign no. 18 is read as b^2 or m since it does not affect the interpretation of the inscription. This sign that was given as b^2 in the last two publications can be accepted as b^2 .
- The last sign of the inscription must be r^2 , not p . This will be explained in detail below.

2.1.6. A New Reading Proposal and Explanations

I think the most acceptable transliteration of Kalbak-Tash XXI belongs to Useev (2014). The phrase *igen bezegli kara men ey égil ešik ben yeg er* can be interpreted as “I am a regular guy imaging the deer! A commoner Eshik, I am a good man”. A further explication of the reasons for this reading and interpretation is as follows:

igen: The idea that the first word can be read and interpreted as *igen* “deer”, with the complementation of the missing lower left side of the third sign, thereby reading it as n^2 belongs to Useev (2014). Useev (2014, p. 9) interprets the word as “deer”; but he does not make any comments on the word. Sertkaya (2014, p. 1) connects the signs Ig^2n^2 in Kalbak-Tash XX with the word *ingen* meaning “she-camel” in Yenisei-28 and Irk Bitig (Omen 5) and demonstrates the development of *igen* as $< *ijen < ingen$. Sertkaya (2014, p. 2) asserts that *igen* means “she-camel” in Kalbak-Tash XX as well and explains the reason why Useev attempted to interpret the word as “deer”, namely a few drawings of deer were found near the inscription. But I think in this case it was Useev who gave the correct meaning to the word because there is piece of solid showing that Old Turkic *ingen/*ijen* “she-camel” may have adopted the meaning of “deer” afterwards. This evidence is the equation of Old Turkic *teve* “camel” (Clauson 1972, p. 447b) = Yakut *taba* “olen” (Pekarskii 1925, column 2509; Sleptsov et al. 1972, p. 371), and this equation makes it reasonable to comprehend a semantic development in Old Turkic: *ingen* “she-camel” $> *ijen$ = KalbakTash XXI *igen* “deer”.

bezegli: The second word of the inscription was read as *bezegli* in both Kyzlasov (2002) and Tybykova–Nevskaya–Erdal (2012). However, in Useev (2014) the word is given as *bezegli/bezegli* and he affirms that both readings are probable. In my opinion, instead of *beze-geli*, it is more reasonable to read and interpret the word as *beze-gli* “one who makes images”.

kara: In the 250th, 256th, 778th and 988th couplets of the Kutadgu Bilig (Clauson 1972, p. 643b), Yenisei-11 (Aydin 2015, p. 56) and Yenisei-45 (Aydin 2015, p. 114), the word *kara* is used as the shortened form of the phrase *kara bodun* “the public”. Based on this, it is understood that the word *kara* in Kalbak-Tash XXI is a nominalised adjective used not in the meaning of “public” directly, but “a commoner, an ordinary person”.

égil: The word *égil* used in Old Turkic as an adjective that qualifies “common, ordinary, lower class” people (Clauson 1972, p. 106a) is also used as a nominalised

adjective just like *kara* in Kalbak-Tash XXI. The synonymous words *kara* and *égil* identified in Kalbak-Tash XXI were used in the meaning of “a commoner, an ordinary person”. These two words provide evidence that some Mountainous Altai Inscriptions were inscribed by common people (Tybykova–Nevskaya–Erdal 2012, p. 17), not by scribes of the ruling elite.

er: The last sign of the inscription is given as *p* in both Kyzlasov (2002) and Tybykova–Nevskaya–Erdal (2012), but as *r*² in Useev (2014). Thus, the last word of the inscription which actually is formed of one sign must be read as *apa* or *er*. In the Mountainous Altai Inscriptions, several data are found regarding both *apa* and *er*; such as *Apa er* “a male name” (Tybykova–Nevskaya–Erdal 2012, pp. 61, 79), *Bert Apa* “a male name” (Tybykova–Nevskaya–Erdal 2012, p. 86), *Temir Apa* “a male name” (Tybykova–Nevskaya–Erdal 2012, p. 122); *er* (Tybykova–Nevskaya–Erdal 2012, pp. 89, 56, 62, 72) etc. The above data show that the word *apa* was used as part of male names in the Mountainous Altai Inscriptions.

As for Kalbak-Tash XXI, I read and interpreted it as *igen bezegli kara men ey égil ešik ben yeg er* “I am a regular guy imaging deer! A commoner Ešik, I am a good man”. One can see that the scribe writes his own name as “Ešik” before the word “ben”. Therefore, a second proper name like **Yeg Apa* cannot be placed at the end of the inscription. Accordingly, I suspect that the last sign of the inscription is *r*² as in Useev (2014), and the sign whose right curve is not clear in the inscription can be identified as *p*, like in the publications of Kyzlasov (2002) and Tybykova–Nevskaya–Erdal (2012).

2.2. Kalbak-Tash XX

This short inscription was read and interpreted by Vasil’ev (1995, pp. 92–93) as *igening bediz kan eli uz ermiš* “Tanrıya ait güzel han ülkesi ustaca yaratılmış [The country of The Beautiful khagan that belongs to God, was created in a masterly way]”; by Kyzlasov as *(y)ig (i)n(i)g b(e)d(i)zg(a)l(i) uz (e)rm(i)š* “S tex por, kak vyrezal xoroshuiu tamgu, on stal iskusen [As he carved a good tamgha he became artist(ic)]” (Tybykova–Nevskaya–Erdal 2012, p. 86 quoted from Kyzlasov 2002, p. 120); by Tybykova–Nevskaya–Erdal (2012, p. 86) as *ešginig bedizegli/bedzegeli uz ermiš* “On, okazyvaetsia, masterski risuet skachushchix zhivotnyx [He seems to image springing animals in a masterly way]”; by Useev (2014, pp. 5–6) as *igenig bedizgeli uz ermiš* “Geyik (resimlerini) resim etmek için (resim etmede) ustaymış [He was a master in imaging deers]”; by Sertkaya (2014, p. 3) as *igenig bedizegali uz ermiš a!* “Dişi deveyi resimlemede (= resimlemek için) mahir imiş hey! [In imaging she-camels he was very skilled]”.

Earlier I agreed with Useev’s (2014) idea regarding the reading of the first word in Kalbak-Tash XX as *igen* and Sertkaya’s (2014) explanations about the etymology of the word, while pointing out that this word cannot mean “she-camel” in this inscription. This statement is based on some grammatical evidence of the word

igenig. The latter, with the suffix of accusative case, refers to a [specific] animal or [specific] animals. The fact that it was inscribed in the space between the legs of a deer makes it probable that the animal in the image is a deer. Furthermore, no image representing a camel can be seen in the periphery of the inscription Kalbak-Tash XX. The above-mentioned equation of Old Turkic *teve* “camel” with Yakut *taba* “reindeer” also allows us to comprehend the semantic development of Old Turkic *ingen* “she-camel” > **ijen* = Kalbak Tash XX, XXI *igen* “deer”. Hence, it is more appropriate to read the second word of the inscription as *bedzegli* and interpret the entire inscription XX as *igenig bedzegli uz ermiş* “the person who imaged the deer was skillful”. To my mind, this is the most reasonable interpretation of this part of inscription XX.

2.3. Kalbak-Tash XXII

Kalbak-Tash XXII, which comprises 19 signs, was inscribed vertically (Tybykova–Nevskaya–Erdal 2012, p. 89). The inscription was discovered by Kubarev in 1987 (Tybykova–Nevskaya–Erdal 2012, p. 89) and published by Kyzlasov (2002) for the first time. A further study of the inscription was put forward in Tybykova–Nevskaya–Erdal’s publication (2012). In the following section, these two publications will be evaluated and some new readings will be proposed for certain parts of the inscription.

2.3.1. $y^2 r^2 d^2 q \ddot{i} (i) g \acute{t}^2 r^2 b^2 \eta k \ddot{u}(\ddot{o}) j^2 r^2 d^2 k i(\ddot{i}) \eta r^1$ (Tybykova–Nevskaya–Erdal 2012, p. 89 quoted from Kyzlasov 2002, p. 128).

Kyzlasov’s reading and interpretation for this transliteration are: *yerdeqi ig itir benkü yerdeki aḡar* “(Esli) na zemle naxodiashchiesia bolezni ischeznut, na vechnoi zemle naxodiashchiesia (liudi – sushchestva) pridunt v zameshatel’stvo [(If) the diseases on earth disappear, (people) on eternal soil will be perplexed]” (Tybykova–Nevskaya–Erdal 2012, p. 89 quoted from Kyzlasov 2002, p. 128). The words *yerdeki* and *benkü* are not problematic. However, Kyzlasov’s reading can be criticised in a few points: (1) Kyzlasov wished to see *ig* “bolezni’ [disease, malady]” after the first word *yerdeki*; but the sign *I* that comes before g^2 , which Kyzlasov thought it must belong to *ig*, actually belongs to *yerdeki*. (2) As Tybykova–Nevskaya–Erdal (2012, p. 89) also pointed out, if the meaning “disappear” is considered, its transcription must not be **itir*, but *iter*. (3) In addition, it is not convenient to read the word as **itir* or *iter*, since the sign *I* does not exist before t^2 . (4) There has been no verb like **aḡ-¹* “to be perplexed” in ancient or modern languages. (5) Moreover, there is another sign in the inscription which stands as the antepenultimate sign and comes before n^2 (see Tybykova–Nevskaya–Erdal 2012, p. 89, photo no. 85) and Kyzlasov read and interpreted the inscription as if this sign did not exist.

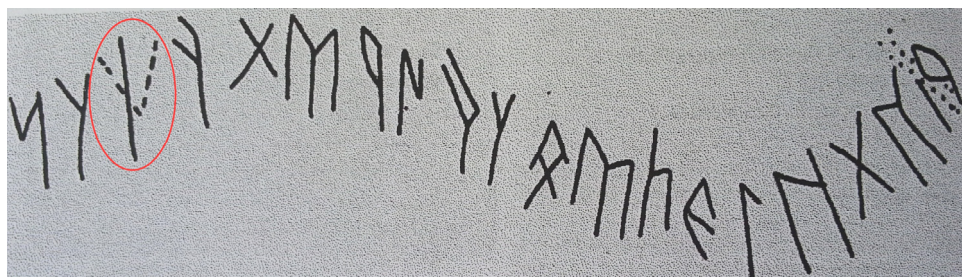
¹ In Old Turkic, there is a verb with front vowel such as *eḡ- I* “udivliat’sia, prikhodit’ v zameshatel’stvo [to wonder, to be perplexed]” (Nadelaiev–Nasilov–Tenishev–Shcherbak 1969, p. 46), *eḡ- I* “to be perplexed” (Clauson 1972, p. 168b), *eḡ- II* “in Furcht geraten” (Röhrborn 1998, p. 381).

2.3.2. $y^2 r^2 d^2 k^1 I g^2 t^2 r^2 b^2 \eta^2 / l^2 k^2 \ddot{U} y^2 r^2 d^2 k^2 ? \eta^2 / l^2 r^1$ (Tybykova–Nevskaya–Erdal 2012, p. 89).

Tybykova's reading of the above transliteration is *yerdeki igitir / yerdekig eter benkü yerdek[i] anar* "To, chto na zemle vskarmliwaetsia / on uporiadochivaet to, chto na zemle (sushchestvuet) – na vечноi zemle budut pomnit' / dlya nego. (?) [everything that is fed on earth, determines everything (that exists) on earth; on eternal soil it will be remembered (?)]". Tybykova's reading and interpretation are problematic in terms of the following reasons: (1) As Tybykova herself (Tybykova–Nevskaya–Erdal 2012, p. 89) pointed out, the form expected to appear in the inscription must be *igid-*; the form *igit-* occurs only in the past tense due to assimilation. (2) In addition, the verb *igit-* in Old Turkic does not render the reflexive verb "to be fed"², but "to feed" instead. (3) In Old Turkic, the present tense form of the verb *igit-* is conjugated with *-ür*, not *-ir*³. Even though the word is used with the function of a verbal adjective, the status must not be changed. (4) Regarding the reading of *an-ar* "budut pomnit' [they will remember]", researchers point out that the verb *an-* does not appear in Old Turkic or Karakhanid, and the word *anar* could be the dative case of the pronoun *ol* (Tybykova–Nevskaya–Erdal 2012, p. 89). However, apart from the fact that the verb *an-* cannot be attested in Old Turkic documents and accordingly reading it as *anar* is considered as an alternative, it must be taken into consideration that these researchers read and interpreted the inscription by ignoring the sign coming before n^2 , just as Kyzlasov did.

2.3.3. A New Reading Proposal and Explanations

The transliteration of the inscription in Kyzlasov's and Tybykova's publications (Kyzlasov 2002; Tybykova–Nevskaya–Erdal 2012) were shown above. However, there is another sign in Tybykova's transliteration that comes before the last two signs of the inscription and indicated with a question mark. I would like to show the sign indicated by a question mark in Tybykova's transliteration on the drawings of the inscription:

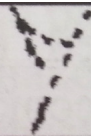



Tybykova–Nevskaya–Erdal (2012, p. 89, drawing no. 85)

² The reflexive meaning of *igit-* in Old Turkic becomes visible only when it is used with the reflexive pronoun *öz* "self".

³ This is the case also in Kashgarî, see Clauson (1972, p. 103b).

When this sign is compared with the table of runic signs in Tybykova–Nevskaya–Erdal (2012, p. 26), we may conclude that the antepenultimate sign of inscription XXII looks like s^2 and s^1 or it could even be a combination of these two signs. The flat and thick line of the sign in the middle is s^2 . The dashed lines that complete this sign belong to s^1 . Two ideas can be put forth regarding this sign: (1) This sign could be a direct variant of s^1 and was inscribed as it is by the scribe. (2) The scribe here inscribed s^2 instead of s^1 accidentally, then corrected it by adding the dashed lines of s^1 :

22	s^1	s	c	
23	s^2	s	c	

Tybykova–Nevskaya–Erdal (2012, p. 26, table 1)

Accordingly, the transcription of the inscription might be:

$y^2 r^2 d^2 k^1 I g^2 t^2 r^2 b^2 \eta^2 k^2 \ddot{U} y^2 r^2 d^2 k^2 s^1 \eta^2 r^1$.

If so, the inscription can be read and interpreted as *yerdek¹i éget er beŋkü yerdek[i] asŋ²ar[ar]* “Man on earth is a servant, yet the one in the eternal place stops (work) on the affair and sits down” My explanation for this reading and interpretation are as follows:

éget: In the inscription, three signs ($g^2 t^2 r^2$) are found between the sign groups of $y^2 r^2 d^2 k^1 I$ and $b^2 \eta^2 k^2 \ddot{U}$. I think the first two of these three signs indicate *éget*. This word is the same as *éget* “bride’s maidservant” (Dankoff–Kelly 1985, p. 20) in Kashgarî, and survived as *éget* “servant, retainer” in Sagay, and as *ekdi/ekti* “servant” in Anatolian dialects (Clauson 1972, p. 102a). However, the word was used in the inscription in the meaning “servant, retainer” regardless of the gender (feminine or masculine).

yerdek[i]: The word *yerdeki* occurs in the inscription twice. The first one was written as $y^2 r^2 d^2 k^1 I$ with *-i* at the end of the phrase in compliance with the orthography, while the second word was written as $y^2 r^2 d^2 k^2$ and must be completed as *yerdek[i]*. The fact that the first *yerdeki* was written with k^1 and the second with k^2 clearly shows that these two signs were used interchangeably.

asŋar[ar]: I think that the last three signs of the inscription ($s^1 \eta^2 r^1$) can be compared with the word written in the Arabic script as ‘ASKR in Kashgarî; however, since the present tense form is written as ‘ASNKRA’R and the infinitive form as ‘SNKRMA’Q (Dankoff–Kelly 1982, p. 239), it renders the verb *asŋar* “the man stopped (work) on the affair and sat down” (Clauson 1972, p. 249a).

As Kalbak-Tash XXII must end with a finite verb and on the basis of the fact that the present tense conjugation of the verb *asñar*-⁴ must be *asñarar*, I complete the inscription as $s^1\eta^2r[r^1] = asñar[ar]$.

3. Conclusion

In this study the Turkic runic inscriptions Kalbak-Tash XX, XXI and XXII were re-evaluated. Problematic issues concerning the orthography, the grammatical structure and the semantics of Old Turkic words were treated in detail and new solutions were offered for some problematic parts. The author suggests to read *kara* and *égil* in Inscription XXI as “commoner, an ordinary person”. The semantic development of *igen* “deer” (< Old Turkic *ingen* “she-camel”) in the Inscriptions No. XX and No. XXI was elucidated by the parallel examples of Old Turkic *teve* “camel” and Yakut *taba* “reindeer”. The antepenultimate sign of the inscription might be s^1 , and this sign might have been added to the runic alphabet of the Mountainous Altai Inscriptions as a variant of s^1 . A new reading as *asñar*- was also suggested for the word which contains s^1 . Finally, the word $g^2t^2r^2$, which is the key fragment in the interpretation of the inscription, was read and explained as *éget er* “servant, retainer”.

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⁴ Clauson states that the only vowel shown is *fatha* on *alif*, therefore he reads the verb as *asñar*-, but he adds that the verb may have derived from *osay* (*osa:l*). The same verb was read by Dankoff–Kelly (1982, p. 239) as *osñar*- with a question mark. I think that it is not correct to read the word as **osñar*-, since a word such as **osay*- cannot be attested in any of the old and modern Turkic languages, and even if it had existed, a connection between *osal* and **osñar*- would morphologically be explicable.

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