A GRAMMAR OF ORKHON TURKIC

by Talât Tekin

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DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY

OF

REŞİD RAHMETİ ARAT

(1900-1964)

FOREWORD

The corpus of the present work includes the five inscriptions left by the ancient Turks (T'u-kües of the Chinese annals), i.e., the Kül Tigin, Bilgä Kagan, Tonyukuk, İšbara Tarkan (Ongin) and Küli Čor (Ikhe-Khushotu) inscriptions. The Moyun Čor (Shine-Usu), Kara-Balgasun and Suği inscriptions left by the Uigurs are excluded from the scope of this study. However, I have frequently referred to the Uigur inscriptions for comparison and when suitable examples were not found in the Orkhon inscriptions. Similarly, the Yenisei inscriptions, Ïrq Bitig and other manuscripts in the old Turkic "runic" script have often been referred to, although they, too, have been excluded from the corpus of this work.

The book consists of four parts. Part one contains a grammar written mainly along the lines of the system suggested in Philologiae Turcicae Fundamenta, I, Wiesbaden 1959, for the Turkic languages. It was submitted as a doctoral dissertation to the University of California at Los Angeles in 1965. This part also contains a chapter dealing with the "runic" script and spelling rules. The basic a priori assumptions which guided my reevaluation of the old Turkic script were the following: (1) any given sign, with the exception of the vocalic and syllabic signs, represents only one and the same sound wherever it occurs; (2) use of the front-vocalic consonant signs in back-vocalic words is, in most cases, phonetically significant; and (3) vowel signs indicate long vowels as well as short ones. It will be seen, however, that, except for a few cases, I carefully avoided making generalizations with regard to the indication of vowel lengths in

transcription. Throughout the book, long vowels are indicated as such only when it is evident from the orthography that they are long.

The second and third parts contain the texts and their translations. In order to reproduce more accurate and complete texts of the inscriptions, I referred to all the published squeezes, copies, photographs and reproductions. When this work was almost completed, I was informed that the Polish Academy of Sciences has in its possession the new rubbings of the Orkhon inscriptions. None of these copies, however, has so far been published, nor has any work based on them yet appeared.

The texts and translations are followed by an exhaustive glossary, containing the entire lexical material of the five inscriptions. The words occurring in other inscriptions and given as examples in the grammar section are not listed in the glossary.

In conclusion, I wish to express my sincere thanks to Professors János Eckmann and Andreas Tietze of the University of California at Los Angeles who both encouraged me to take up Orkhon Turkic as a topic for my dissertation and made a number of valuable suggestions with regard to the improvement of this work. My thanks are also due to Dr. F.D. Ashnin of the Institute of Linguistics, Moscow, who provided me with some important publications which otherwise would have been unavailable to me.

Berkeley, California
May 29, 1967

Talât Tekin

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