

THE VOLGA BULGARS – SCRIPT

OVERVIEW

| Estranghelo Syriac. | Bowl Texts | Mani-chuan Turkish. | Estranghelo Syriac. | Bowl Texts. | Mani-chuan Turkish. |
|---------------------|------------|---------------------|---------------------|-------------|---------------------|
| 𐤀 | ~ | ~ | 𐤁, final | 𐤁 | 𐤁 |
| 𐤂 | 𐤃 𐤄 𐤅 | 𐤆 | 𐤇, final | 𐤇 | 𐤇 |
| 𐤈 | 𐤉 𐤊 | 𐤋 | 𐤌 → 𐤍 → 𐤎 → 𐤏 | 𐤌 | 𐤌 |
| 𐤐 | 𐤑 𐤒 | 𐤓 | 𐤔 | 𐤔 | 𐤔 |
| 𐤕 | 𐤖 𐤗 | 𐤘 | 𐤙 | 𐤙 | 𐤙 |
| 𐤚 | 𐤛 | 𐤜 | 𐤝 | 𐤝 | 𐤝 |
| 𐤞 | 𐤟 𐤠 | 𐤡 | 𐤢 𐤣 | 𐤢 | 𐤢 |
| 𐤤 | 𐤥 𐤦 | 𐤧 | 𐤨 𐤩 | 𐤨 | 𐤨 |
| 𐤫 | 𐤬 | 𐤭 | 𐤮 | 𐤮 | 𐤮 |
| 𐤰 | 𐤱 𐤲 | 𐤳 | 𐤴 | 𐤴 | 𐤴 |
| 𐤶 | 𐤷 𐤸 | 𐤹 | 𐤺 | 𐤺 | 𐤺 |

An Arab writer, Ibn al-Nadim, in his book *Kitab al-Fihrist*, written in 987 talks about the scripts used by the Turks: "The Turks, the Bulgar, the Burghaz, the Khazar, the Liänhave no script, except that the Bulgarians and the Tibetans write with Chinese and Manichean (Uyghur), whereas the Khazar write Hebrew".

According to Ashmarin, the Volga Bulgars' language was the ancestor of Chuvash. He based this statement on the fragments of the Volga Bulgar language preserved by the Muslim and Russian sources and the Volga Bulgar inscriptions of the 13th -14th centuries.

Manichean Script

Between 8th and the 9th centuries, until the Volga Bulgars converted to Islam, they used the Old Turkic runic script. After the conversion, the Volga Bulgars began to use the Arabic script.

SCRIPT

After Islam became the part of the spiritual life of the Volga Bulgars in the 10th century, the Arabic script replaced the Turkic runic script and they began to utilize two types of Arabic calligraphy: Kufi and Thuluth.

White limestone with Kufi Arabic inscription from the Mountain Balinguz



There are examples of carved inscriptions in stones removed by the local landlord Arbuzov and used for the foundation of a wooden church built in his village Arbuzovka.

There are also tomb inscriptions written in Arabic. In 1973, researchers found white limestone with an Arabic inscription on the south part of Bolgari, on the road towards Triozero.



White limestone with Thuluth Arabic inscription from Bolgari

Discussion/Questions

1- The Volga Bulgars; shift from the runic Turkic to the Arabic script is an example of what widespread phenomenon in the Middle Ages?

Reading

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