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RUSSIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES



Manuscripta Orientalia

International Journal for Oriental Manuscript Research

Vol. 29 No. 1 2023

St. Petersburg

Manuscripta Orientalia

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The journal is registered by North-Western regional office of the RF State Committee for Press.

Date of registration: . Registration number: .

E-mail (subscription): manuscripta.orientalia@mail.ru

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TWO NESTORIAN GRAVESTONES IN THE INSTITUTE OF HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE ACADEMY OF SCIENCES OF TURKMENISTAN, ASHGABAT. WITH AN APPENDIX ON THE *KAYRAKS* OF ALMALIQ [1]

Abstract. The article aims to provide a detailed stylistic and palaeographic study of the two Nestorian gravestones with Syriac inscriptions (*kayraks*), published first by Masson in 1978 without images, making recourse to recent photos. One of the gravestones results to be one of the *kayraks* found in Semirechye in about 1886, already known to D. Chwolson, who published its epitaph in 1897. For the second *kayrak* a new reading is suggested, different from Masson's; besides, the place of origin of the gravestone is recognized as Almaliq. In the appendix all *kayraks* found in Almaliq are presented, and their artistic and linguistic peculiar features are commented upon.

Key words: Almaliq, Syro-Turkic gravestones, Syriac epigraphy, Syriac writing in Central Asia, Nestorians in Central Asia, Semirechye

In 1978 M. E. Masson published two Nestorian gravestones from the collections of the Museum of Ashgabat, Turkmenistan [2]. He had first seen them on exhibit in Ashgabat in 1929, but only managed to find them several years later, after the exhibition had been deinstalled, in the Museum's storage rooms. Masson made estampages of the gravestones and sent them to I. M. Dyakonov, who, in turn, forwarded the materials to A. V. Paykova, a scholar of Syriac epigraphy, and a pupil of N. V. Pigulevskaya.

To the best of our knowledge, after Masson's article, the two gravestones were only mentioned by W. Klein in 2000 [3], V. S. Minasyants in 2013 [4], and M. Dickens in 2016 [5]. Both Klein and Minasyants simply report Masson's information (Klein reproduces the drawings), while Dickens publishes the photograph of one of the gravestones, pointing out that its epitaph was published in 1897 by D. Chwolson [6]. As for the other, according to him — or his informers — it “vanished during the regime of former Turkmen President Saparmurat Niyazov (1991—2006)” [7]. In fact, according to updated information by R. G. Muradov, both gravestones are at present (December 2022) in the Institute of History and Archeology of the Academy of Sciences of Turkmenistan. Since Dickens does not significantly add to

Masson's edition, the latter remains the best point of departure for research on the Ashgabat gravestones.

Masson's article is largely concerned with the historical and archaeological evidence of Nestorian communities in Central Asia, while his discussion of the two gravestones is limited to a description of their main characteristics (dimensions, form of the engraved crosses, and inscriptions). Masson notes that the two specimens are consistent with the Nestorian gravestones found in Semirechye, near Pishpek [8], and Burana [9], near Tokmak [10]. The short texts engraved on them in the Syriac language and script, were deciphered and translated by Paykova based on Masson's estampages [11], are presented only in Russian, and the drawings are limited to the cross and the inscription, while images or photographs of the gravestones are not included. Masson says, he did not find information on how the gravestones reached Ashgabat, because the Museum has no record of their accession.

In this article we aim to provide a more detailed stylistic and palaeographic study of the two *kayraks*, with a different reading for one of the epitaphs, pointing to the origin of the gravestones.

In keeping with the typology of the Semirechye gravestones, known as *kayraks* (кайрак [12]), both epi-

taphs are engraved on naturally flattened, irregularly shaped stones. Masson points out that the crosses and the epitaphs were carved roughly, suggesting the work of an unexperienced craftsman [13].

The first *kayrak* (Inv. No. N-310; *figs. 1a–c*) is described by Masson as follows:

A slightly fissured pebble, with a maximum length of 27.5 cm, a maximum width of 18.5 cm [14] and a thickness of 6 cm. A four-pointed decorative Nestorian cross is placed on top of it (*fig. 1b*). Its lower elongated part after the bevel ends with a circle. The upper and side parts, expanding outward, end with a flare. To the right of the cross below, the image of a crescent is carved. On both sides of the cross, the words of the epitaph are positioned from top to bottom: on the left — “This grave”, and on the right — “of the boy Petyon” [15].

A comparison with the photograph confirms in the main both the description and the reading of the short, formulaic Syriac text. The reproduction of the engraving is exact as far the inscription is concerned, but the “crescent” is more likely a natural fissure in the stone, like the curved line directly below it, represented by a dotted arc in the drawing. Indeed, both are closely comparable to the other fissures visible on the gravestone in the photograph.

The layout is the simplest among the variety of designs represented in the Semirechye corpus. According to the practical and useful descriptive formula devised by S. S. Slutsky [16], it may be described as an “ab” layout, that is, a cross in the centre, flanked by one vertical line of text to the left (a) and one vertical line to the right (b) [17].

The Syriac text, to be read vertically from left to right and from top to bottom (here reproduced horizontally, from right to left, for convenience), reads:

ܚܢܘ ܩܒܪܗ ܡܬܝܬܝܢ ܬܝܠܝܐ

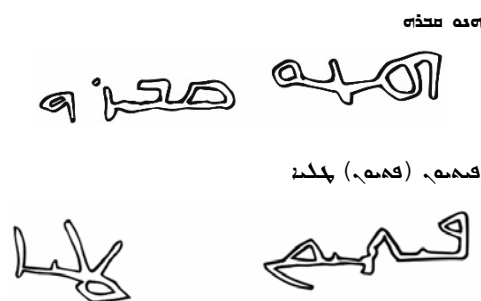
hnw qbrh pytywn tly'

hānaw qābrēh Petyon talyā

This is the grave of the boy [18] Petyon

The short inscription deserves a brief palaeographic analysis. Masson's remarks on the engraver's poor skills hit the mark. It looks like the layout was not carefully designed, and no care was taken to arrange the two lines

of text symmetrically; the individual words, in turn (especially the first two) do not rest on a straight writing line. The letters vary in shape (compare the first *h* in *hnw* to the last one in *qbrh*), and the *n* of *hnw* is incorrect, breaking the writing line with a descendent trait that does not pertain to the form of the letter. Below, the original epitaph is presented alongside its reproduction in the standard “East Syriac” script [19], which, for our comparative purposes, provides a better model than the “Estrangelo” script.



The letters *he* (ܚ), *waw* (ܘ), and *taw* (ܬ), which by rule do not connect to the left, are here linked to the following letter by means of a horizontal trait. This is a feature of the Syriac script employed in Semirechye and is found in all of the region's epitaphs [20]. The two *yodhs* of *pytywn* are barely hinted at. The first may even be absent: indeed, the name Petyon appears to be defectively spelled as *pytywn*. The Syriac word for “boy”, *talyā*, occurs twenty-nine times in the Semirechye corpus. Palaeographic comparison is possible only in a limited number of instances, since only thirteen original *kayraks*, or reproductions thereof, are available. For the remaining gravestones, all we have are transcriptions of the epitaphs. Based on available evidence, there seem to be three different variants. In the first (No. 1 in the following Table 1), the two initial letters, *tet* and *lāmadh*, are written distinctly but connected at their baseline; the ascending strokes of both *tet* and *lāmadh* are vertical or have a slight left slant. Form No. 2 may be considered intermediate, or a variant of No. 1: the two letters are still separate, but the ascending stroke of the *tet* is inclined to the right. In form No. 3, the ascending stroke of the *tet* is lost, or developed into a horizontal stroke. No. 3 looks like a ligature, since *tet* and *lāmadh* coalesce, especially in #0683.

Table 1

Palaeographic Comparison of the Word *Talyā*

1	2	3
#0048; 1611 AG, Pishpek	#0678; undated, Burana	#0167; 1653 AG, Pishpek
#0192; undated, Pishpek	#0525; undated, Burana	#0292; 1626 AG, Pishpek

1	2	3
 #0182; undated, Pishpek	 #0162; 1653 AG, Pishpek	 #0683; undated, Burana
 #0597; undated, Burana	 #0480; undated, Pishpek	
 #0654; undated, Almaliq		
 #0171; Year of the Rat, Pishpek		

This variability in form cannot be explained as the outcome of evolution over time from No. 1 to No. 3, since No. 3 occurs as early as 1626 AG; #0162, and #0167 are both dated to 1653 AG. Only four examples can be dated precisely, and the quantitative preponderance of No. 1 might be accidental. Evidence suggests that the three forms coexisted in time and space, that is, in Pishpek and Burana between the 13th and 14th centuries AD. Therefore, palaeography cannot provide, at least in this case, a decisive argument for the dating of undated epitaphs.

The cross looks like that of Slutsky's *kayrak* No. 148 [21], found in Pishpek and dated to 1612 AG [22]; another *kayrak* featuring a circle / triangle at the base of the cross is #0608 (figs. 2a–c).

Based on its epitaph, the gravestone kept in Ashgabat can be securely identified with that published by D. Chwolson in 1897 as No. 262 (#0480) of his second main edition of epitaphs from Semirechye [23]:

N. 262. “Dies ist das Grab des Knaben Pithion”,

ܡܝܬܝܢ

The source of Chwolson's edition of the epitaph was not the original *kayrak* but a rubbing, or an estampage, he received from Verny (see below) [24]. In his 1897 book, known as the “Second Series” because a first book containing 206 epitaphs had appeared in 1890 [25], Chwolson changed his editorial policy: in the “First Series” of 1890, most of the epitaphs had been published in the Syriac script; but in the “Second Series” of 1897, the use of Syriac fonts is rarer. Because of the high number of recurring, formulaic phrases, Chwolson decided to present most of the epitaphs in a German translation, providing a Syriac transcription only for those personal names and phrases which deviate from the standard formulae [26]. This is the case of No. 262: a simple “ab” layout with a very common formulaic phrase, where the only individual, specific feature is the name of the deceased.

Chwolson's sources for his “Second Series” were limited to reproductions: about a thousand photographs, ink prints, and rubbings he received from Verny, where more than 500 gravestones were kept [27]. We may reasonably infer that *kayrak* N-310 of the Museum in Ashgabat was one of them. Most of the gravestones collected in Verny came from the near-Pishpek cemetery, while some probably came from Burana.

The second *kayrak* (Inv. No. N-2; figs. 3a–d) [28]

is smaller: maximum length — 23.5 cm, maximum width — 15.0 cm. On three sides it has a more regular, almost rectangular shape. The cross and epitaph are somewhat cruder than those on the first *kayrak* (Fig. 1v). The cross is not symmetrical. Where the arms intersect, a small square with circles in its corners is marked. The lower arm, after an almost imperceptible shrinkage, ends in a straight line. The side arms, which extend unequally towards the outer edges, end with dovetails. The upper arm looks like an upside-down triangle with a straight base. The Syriac epitaph, running from top to bottom on both sides of the cross, contains only two words — the name and ecclesiastical title: “Alka periodeut” [29].

The engraving method, clearly visible in the photographs but not evident from Masson's description, declares at first sight the origin of the gravestone, as it is typical of those found in Almaliq. The cross and inscription are highlighted in reserve against a roughly chiseled out background. As the photo shows, Masson's drawing and description do not accurately reflect the engraving, which depicts a cross with four dovetailed arms, standing on a pedestal. Masson's evaluation of the engraver's skills is not entirely accurate, either: working in reserve requires more care and planning than the engraving in *kayrak* N-310, which is simply etched out with a hard point. Thirty-nine gravestones from Almaliq are known (including the present one). For thirty of them, the original stones or images are available. Twenty-two of the said thirty instances are engraved according to this

method; on the remaining eight, the inscription is engraved as in Semirechye's *kayraks* [30].

Nestorian gravestones were also found from 1901 onwards near Guldja, the capital of Xinjiang's Ili Prefecture and the site of the old city of Almaliq, the former capital city of the Chaghatay Khanate [31]. Only eight of them are dated, between 1602 and 1683 AG (1290—1372 AD). A report on the discovery of Nestorian *kayraks* from Almaliq was published by N. Pantusov in 1902. These *kayraks* were first published by Kokovtsov between 1905 (eleven epitaphs, six from the original stones and five from “estampages”) and 1907 (ten, apparently from the original stones) [32]. Besides, in 1910 a posthumous paper by Pantusov, after repeating the story of the discovery as first reported in 1902, reproduced eleven images (ink rubbings) of the *kayraks*. Ten of them correspond to gravestones previously published by Kokovtsov, while one is new [33].

Masson's drawing of the inscription does not offer clues for a reading: the shape of the alleged “letters” hardly allows one to read the words “Alka periodēt” [34], that is, “الحمد لله المجدد”, according to the orthography of the words found in the *kayraks* from Semirechye. The inscription of the epitaph in *kayrak* N-2 is easily legible in the photographs.

الحمد لله المجدد

šlyh' mlpn'

Šliḥā malpānā

Šliḥa the teacher.

The layout is “ab”, which recurs twenty-three times out of a total thirty-seven stones from Almaliq [35]. This layout is associated with very short epitaphs, often occurring in Almaliq stones, consisting of the deceased's name and his or her age (or their professional qualification). In fact, more than half of the Almaliq corpus consists of epitaphs of that kind (twenty out of thirty-seven stones). Both the personal name, *Šliḥa*, and the professional qualification, *malpānā* “master”, “teacher”, feature frequently in the Semirechye corpus: each appears eleven times.

A review of the published stones from Almaliq in Kokovtsov's editions, by contrast, yields no comparisons [36]. Consequently, we may consider *kayrak* N-2 of the Ashgabat Museum as unpublished, and unknown, before Paykova–Masson's (defective) edition.

Another feature of the stone deserving consideration is the decorated square at the centre of the cross, which finds no comparison in the *kayraks* from Almaliq [37].

Masson discusses the later history of the two gravestones and the way they reached Ashgabat. Since there are no documents concerning their acquisition, Masson reports Paykova's opinion: according to her, based on their palaeographic and stylistic features, the *kayraks* are without any doubt from Semirechye, and they reached Ashgabat “by chance” [38]. Masson does not, apparently, accept Paykova's opinion, suggesting the region of Samarkand, more specifically Urgut, as the original site of the two *kayraks*, based on geology and on an anecdote about stones with crosses allegedly found in Urgut [39].

Our analysis shows that Paykova was right, at least about the *kayrak* N-310: Chwolson, as mentioned, published its short epitaph in 1897 based on a reproduction. The gravestone was among those found in Pishpek and stored in Verny, from where a reproduction reached St. Petersburg in early 1891, along with a thousand others [40]. There is evidence that some gravestones were left behind in Semirechye and stored in Pishpek, where someone made paper estampages of them in 1916 [41]. The “Catalogue of the Archaeological Collection” of the Semirechye Provincial Museum (*Semirechensky oblastnoy muzey*), compiled in 1922 by Ivan Chekaninsky [42], mentions forty-seven *kayraks*, which are listed along with a brief description [43]. Among them, forty are Nestorian and seven are Muslim, with Arabic inscriptions. In July 1929, the gravestones were probably transferred with the rest of the Museum's collection to Alma-Ata (Almaty) and placed in the former Ascension Cathedral. Of these, only nineteen Nestorian gravestones can be found today in the Central State Museum of Kazakhstan, where they have been kept since 1985 [44]. The whereabouts of the remaining twenty-one are unknown.

Kayraks found in the cemetery of Pishpek, and rubbings or estampages thereof, were given out to foreign explorers or travellers [45]. In 1894–1895, the French mission to Central Asia led by Jean Chaffanjon was given thirteen *kayraks*, now stored in Paris and Lyon [46]. Before Chaffanjon's visit, the British traveller Henry Lansdell (1841–1919) met Pantusov in Verny; the latter provided him with rubbings of some of the gravestones [47]. Then, in 1896, a French explorer, Édouard Blanc (1858–1923), brought to Paris about four hundred rubbings or estampages [48]. Two stones, meanwhile, reached Finland, brought by Baron Carl Munck and Magister Otto Donner, who visited Semirechye in 1896 [49].

Stones and estampages were sent by Pantusov to museums and institutions around Russia as well: right after they were first discovered, two of the stones were sent to the Imperial Archaeological Commission in St. Petersburg, two to the bishop of Turkestan and Tashkent, Neofit, three to the West Siberian Branch of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society, and one to the Kazan Historical, Archaeological and Ethnographical Society [50]. Other *kayraks* were sent to the Imperial Archaeological Society in Moscow [51]. In the course of time, some of these stones were moved from their original destination: the West Siberian Branch of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society, for example, presented two *kayraks* to the Regional Museum of Novosibirsk “sometime between 1920 and 1930” [52]. A *kayrak* from Kara-Dzhigach, published by Chwolson in the “Second Series”, is now in the Museum of Panjakent, Tajikistan [53]. As mentioned, nineteen gravestones are in the collections of the Central State Museum of Kazakhstan in Almaty. Thirteen *kayraks* are in the State Historical Museum of Uzbekistan, in Tashkent [54], and two more *kayraks*, along with two estampages, are in the Omsk Museum of History and Local Lore [55].

Since several *kayraks* originating from Pishpek were scattered between various cities and institutions across the Russian Empire and the Republics of Soviet Central Asia

between 1886 and about 1930, and possibly even later, it is not surprising if one of them found its way to Ashgabat.

As for the second stone, N-2, which was without any doubt produced in Almaliq, we may presume that the gravestones from Almaliq shared the same destiny as those from Pishpek — that is, some were dispersed, others bought by, or given out to travelers. Pantusov had access to original stones, which he took with him and sent to St. Petersburg, where they are still preserved, in the State Hermitage Museum. But for some other epitaphs he only had photographs and estampages: the original stones remained in situ, kept by local people who shared the findings with Pantusov. One of those *kayraks*, published by Kokovtsov in 1905 based on an estampage, was brought to Finland by Baron Gustav Mannerheim, who visited Guldja on his journey from Tashkent to Peking in 1906–1908 [56]. Another stone from Almaliq is now in Germany, in Munich's Museum Fünf Kontinente, formerly known as the Staatliches Museum für Völkerkunde [57]. Two are in Tashkent [58] and one in the Museum of the University of Kazan [59], while more recent findings from Xinjiang have not left China and are now, reportedly, in local museums. In light of those instances, it is not sur-

prising if a *kayrak* from Almaliq reached Ashgabat. What is puzzling is that the epitaph does not appear among the stones published by Kokovtsov, at variance with the stone acquired by Mannerheim. It would seem to have escaped the attention of Pantusov and other people interested in such relics, or may have been found after 1909 (the year N. Pantusov died and publication was discontinued — save for the cited posthumous paper, published in 1910). The same might be said of two other gravestones, the one now in Munich and the one in Moscow, whose epitaphs are published here for the first time.

We may conclude that the two *kayraks* in Ashgabat's Museum shared the fate of several other gravestones from Semirechye and Almaliq, being dispersed across various institutions and museums — a dispersion due to political and cultural exchanges, or just chance, and the ethnographic interests of foreigners. Both are important evidence of Syriac epigraphy in Central Asia: one is resurfacing material evidence of a previously published epitaph from Semirechye (Pishpek), while the other is a new addition to the corpus of gravestones from Almaliq — all the more important because of its specific features.

Appendix

The Corpus of *Kayraks* from Almaliq

Having added an item to the corpus of *kayraks* of Almaliq, the old capital city of the Chaghatay ulus, it makes sense to present a brief overview of the corpus, with basic information about published editions and descriptions. An in-depth study will hopefully follow soon.

The majority of the 39 *kayraks* [60], that is, 33 of them, are preserved in museums and other cultural institutions. The latest information available on those kept in China dates from 2010, the year of a comprehensive survey published by Niu Ruji. In September 2014, P. G. Borbone studied and photographed all the Nestorian *kayraks* kept in the State Hermitage Museum, with the kind permission of the keeper A. I. Torgoev, and the cooperation of A. D. Pritula and P. B. Lurie, of the Hermitage State Museum. Therefore, the epitaphs of the Hermitage collection have been read on the original stones. Other published epitaphs have been checked using the images included in the relevant publications. The layout of the epitaph is described according to the “Slutsky formula”; since the formula was devised in reference to the cross, when there is no cross but only a (presumably vertical) inscription, we adopted the letter “k” followed by the number of written lines (e. g.: k = one vertical line, k₂ = two vertical lines etc.)

Some other gravestones were published by Kokovtsov, whose whereabouts are unknown. Apparently, none of them corresponds to one of the two *kayraks* in Tashkent.

Most puzzling is the case of the first stone, which was kept at the Imperial Archaeological Commission when Kokovtsov read it: all the stones sent to the Commission are now in the Hermitage Museum, except that one.

Since Kokovtsov describes the form of the crosses by comparing them to gravestones published by Chwolson or himself, we may to a certain extent infer what they looked like and how they were engraved. The crosses Kokovtsov refers to are reproduced in the left column of the *Table 2.2*.

The corpus of *kayraks* from Almaliq shows peculiar artistic, linguistic, and cultural features, whose detailed discussion is beyond the scope of the present essay.

Although some of the gravestones are simple and bare (Nos. 1, 3, 7, 17, 27 for instance), others are quite elaborate artefacts (Nos. 5, 8, 19, 20, 33 — No. 20 being by far the most relevant because of its figural iconography, comprising a cross flanked by two “angels”). Carved frames and cross pedestals, sometimes in the form of a lotus flower (Nos. 2, 5, 8, 20, 25), feature on some of the stones. The deeply carved cross of No. 18 stands out from the corpus, as its shape and the deep engravings are much more consistent with the gravestones from Burana [61]. In the Almaliq corpus, the stone surface is typically scratched to create a lighter, opaque background against which the cross and inscriptions stand out in reserve. The technique recurs in twenty-two of the instances listed in *Table 2.1*, and certainly in one of the seven lost gravestones, F. The *kayraks* A, B, and 33 were engraved in the “Semirechye” style, as is shown by the ink estampages; the style of C, D, and E cannot be determined. In two *kayraks*, No. 32 and F, the epitaphs were lightly engraved into the stone before the background area was cleared out, resulting in two reserve “bubbles”, which follow the contours of the inscriptions, on either side of a cross, also in reserve. The results are

uneven: sometimes the cross and the inscription stand out neatly against the *sgraffito* background, but in other cases the reading of the text is not straightforward and may even prove difficult. Apparently, the best results are obtained from very smooth and shiny stones (Nos. 5, 8, 9, 19, 20), on which shallow scratches produce a lasting contrast. This technique has parallels both to the West and East of Almalīq; for example, an Arabic funerary stele from Iran, dated 617/1220 (Paris, Musée du Louvre) (*fig. 4*). East of Almalīq, a good example of this technique is a Mongol stele dated post-1627, called the “Bogd Chagan Lama Monument”, now kept in the University of Inner Mongolia in Hohhot (*fig. 5*) [62]. To date, no specimens of this technique have been found in Semirechye proper or Ush–Aral (Ilibaliq) for Nestorian *kayraks* [63].

The layouts are simpler than in Semirechye. The extremely concise epitaphs may explain the prevalence of the “ab” layout. The “Aab” layout, often employed in Semirechye, (line[s] above the cross, and lines on both sides of it), never occurs, nor does the “Aabc” layout, in its various combinations (same as the previous one, plus one or more lines below the cross). In turn, the choice of simple epitaphs may be a response to linguistic incompetence, or practical issues related to the use of the cited engraving method. It is perhaps no coincidence if the longest epitaph from Almalīq is written in Turkic (No. 19). The Syriac texts are generally formulaic, and employ phrases borrowed from the liturgical language of the Church of the East. An example is the phrase *’nad(t) wa-npaq(t) men ’almā hānā*, “He / she passed away and went out of this world”, which occurs eight times. While it is not unique to Almalīq, since it features in four epitaphs from Pishpek [64], statistics suggest an impressive popularity of the phrase in Almalīq. It recalls the funerary formula which occurs in the oldest dated Syriac funerary inscription, from Amida (Diyarbakır), dated 759–760 AD [65], and afterwards in epitaphs of Tur ‘Abdin (South–Eastern Turkey).

Twelve stones mention a date, invariably according to the Seleucid reckoning (called “of Alexander”, and once “of the Greeks” — No. 14). The year is usually written in letters / numbers (Nos. 3, 5, 6, 9, 11, 15, 20, 21, 33), only rarely in words (Nos. 8, 14, 19 [in Turkic] — No. 26 features on the verso an unfinished attempt at spelling a date using words). Only one epitaph, written in Turkic, mentions the corresponding year of the twelve animals’ cycle (No. 19). The syntax of datings appears to be freer than in Semirechye, where the date generally occurs at the beginning of the text. In Almalīq the date is sometimes written at the end of the epitaph.

The chronological sequence is:

	No.	AG	AD
1.	6	1602	1290–1
2.	20	1613	1301–2
3.	33	1620	1308–9
4.	3	1654	1342–3
5.	5	1677	1365–6
6.	15	1678	1366–7
7.	19	1679, Year of the Monkey	1368
8.	9	1683	1371–2

Some details might cast doubt on the fluency in Syriac of the Christians of Almalīq. First, the incorrect spelling of the epitaph No. 22, **mymn*’ instead of *mhymn*’ “believer, i. e. Christian”. The same word, which occurs with great frequency as an epithet of the dead, is first spelled incorrectly, then repeated with a correct spelling, on stone No. 18. Another puzzling case is the phrase *hn’ qbr’...* (No. 18, for a female dead), *hn’ qbrh...* (No. 22 and D, both for a male dead) [66], which obviously means “this is the grave of...”. Two anomalies are worth noting. First, the phrase recurs only in three out of thirty-seven epitaphs, while in Semirechye it is found in almost all the inscriptions. In Semirechye the phrase involves — as Syriac grammar demands — the demonstrative element followed by the pronominal copula, and in most cases the word *qbr*’ “grave” takes on the possessive ending *-h* (*qbrh*: “his grave” [*qabrēh*] or “her grave” [*qabrāh*]). Moreover, the phrase is gender-marked, that is, masculine forms are employed (*hn’ hw qbr’ / qbrh*) for male individuals, and feminine forms for female individuals (*hd’ hy qbr’ / qbrh*) [67]. The rare instances when the phrase occurs in Almalīq invariably involve the masculine demonstrative *hn*’ “this”, without indication of gender, and they also lack the copula. A translation as “This is the grave...”, while demanded by the context, is grammatically impossible. This broken–Syriac phrase shows lack of fluency in the language of the Church. A final observation pertains to a lexical item. The epitaph on gravestone No. 20 features, after the genuine Syriac word *mpaššqānā* “exegete”, a unique *’ysgst*’ (“esegeštā”?) [68], which does not appear in Syriac dictionaries, but may be understood as an attempt to spell out “exegete”. We dare suggest this was a gloss on (that is, an explanation of) the preceding Syriac word, probably pointing to contacts with Western residents in Almalīq — Franciscan friars or merchants — who spoke Latin or Italian [69].

Later research will bring to light further aspects of the Almalīq *kayraks*, and the Christians who produced them. Albeit limited in quantity, this corpus contains stones which are masterpieces of Syro–Turkic art and epigraphy, such as No. 19 and No. 20.



Fig. 1a



Fig. 1b



Fig. 1c

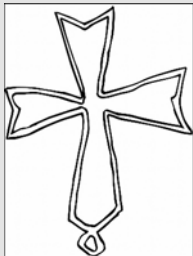


Fig. 2a



Fig. 2b

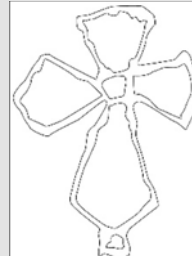


Fig. 2c



Fig. 3a



Fig. 3b



Fig. 3c



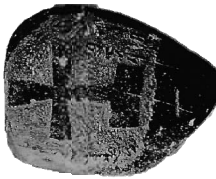
Fig. 3d

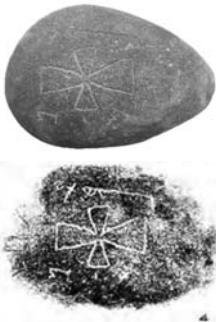
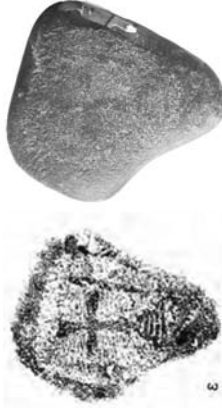


Fig. 4



Fig. 5

	Storage Place	Publication	Dimensions (cm)	Layout	Date	Epitaph	Image
6.	Huocheng, Cultural Relics Office. Inv. No. unknown	Niu, 2010: 156—157, No. 5 [#0656]	25.5 × 20.0 × 7.0	ab	1602 AG (<i>'trb</i>) = 1290–1 AD	Niu's reading: ܐܡܢ ܕܝܗܝܐ ܕܡܪܝܢ ܕܡܪܝܢ ܐܡܢ ܕܝܗܝܐ ܕܡܪܝܢ ܕܡܪܝܢ ܐܡܢ ܕܝܗܝܐ ܕܡܪܝܢ ܕܡܪܝܢ our reading: ܐܡܢ ܕܝܗܝܐ ܕܡܪܝܢ ܕܡܪܝܢ ܐܡܢ ܕܝܗܝܐ ܕܡܪܝܢ ܕܡܪܝܢ	
7.	Ürümqi, Xinjiang Regional Museum. Inv. No. unknown	Niu, 2010: 159—160, No. 7 [#0658]	18.0 × 11.0	ab	Undated	ܐܡܢ ܕܝܗܝܐ ܕܡܪܝܢ ܕܡܪܝܢ	
8.	Ürümqi, Xinjiang Regional Museum. Inv. No. unknown	Niu, 2010: 160—161, No. 8 [#0553]	12.0 × 29.0 × 10.0 (fragment)	a ₂ b ₂	Originally dated according to the AG	Niu's reading: ܐܡܢ ܕܝܗܝܐ ܕܡܪܝܢ ܕܡܪܝܢ our reading: ܐܡܢ ܕܝܗܝܐ ܕܡܪܝܢ ܕܡܪܝܢ ܐܡܢ ܕܝܗܝܐ ܕܡܪܝܢ ܕܡܪܝܢ ܐܡܢ ܕܝܗܝܐ ܕܡܪܝܢ ܕܡܪܝܢ	
9.	Helsinki, Museum of Cultures, VK 4803:535	Kokovtsov, 1905, No. 8 (from an estampe); Borbone, 2020: 107—111 [#0633] Ink estampe: Pantusov, 1910: “Kamen' No. 10”	25.5 × 20.0 × 7.0	k ₄	1683 AG (<i>'trpg</i>) = 1371–2 AD	ܐܡܢ ܕܝܗܝܐ ܕܡܪܝܢ ܕܡܪܝܢ ܕܡܪܝܢ ܐܡܢ ܕܝܗܝܐ ܕܡܪܝܢ ܕܡܪܝܢ ܕܡܪܝܢ ܐܡܢ ܕܝܗܝܐ ܕܡܪܝܢ ܕܡܪܝܢ ܕܡܪܝܢ	
10.	Munich, Museum Fünf Kontinente, 23–15–128	<i>Dschingis Khan</i> , 2006: 327, No. 381; <i>Cengiz Han</i> , 2006: 504, No. 381 [#0722]	22.5 × 21.5 × 4.0	ab	Undated	ܐܡܢ ܕܝܗܝܐ ܕܡܪܝܢ ܕܡܪܝܢ ܕܡܪܝܢ	

	Storage Place	Publication	Dimensions (cm)	Layout	Date	Epitaph	Image
16.	St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum, SA 14406	Kokovtsov, 1905: No. 3; Zhumagulov, 2010: 308—309 [#0548] Ink estampage: Pantusov, 1910: “Kamen’ No. 4”	20.0 × 14.0 × 4.0	ab	Undated	ܠܝܘܢܐ ܕܥܝܪܐܢܐ ܕܥܝܪܐܢܐ	
17.	St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum, SA 14376	Kokovtsov, 1905: No. 4; Zhumagulov, 2010: 374—375 [#0549] Ink estampage: Pantusov, 1910: “Kamen’ No. 3”	29.0 × 19.0 × 4.0	ab	Undated	(?) ܠܝܘܢܐ ܕܥܝܪܐܢܐ	
18.	St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum, SA 14377	Kokovtsov, 1905: No. 5; Zhumagulov, 2010: 275—276 [#0550] Ink estampage: Pantusov, 1910: “Kamen’ No. 5”	33.0 × 30.5	a ₂ b ₂	Undated	ܠܝܘܢܐ ܕܥܝܪܐܢܐ ܕܥܝܪܐܢܐ (the penultimate word looks as a first, unsuccessful attempt at writing the last word)	
19.	St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum, SA 14408	Kokovtsov, 1905: No. 11; Zhumagulov, 2010: 60—61 [#0556]	29.0 × 19.5 × 5.0	k ₆	1679 AG (<i>ming alii yiz etmis doquz</i>), Year of the Monkey = 1368 AD	ܠܝܘܢܐ ܕܥܝܪܐܢܐ ܕܥܝܪܐܢܐ ܠܝܘܢܐ ܕܥܝܪܐܢܐ ܕܥܝܪܐܢܐ ܠܝܘܢܐ ܕܥܝܪܐܢܐ ܕܥܝܪܐܢܐ ܠܝܘܢܐ ܕܥܝܪܐܢܐ ܕܥܝܪܐܢܐ ܠܝܘܢܐ ܕܥܝܪܐܢܐ ܕܥܝܪܐܢܐ	
20.	St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum, SA 14296	Kokovtsov, 1907: No. 1; Zhumagulov, 2010: 260—261 [#0557]	38.0 × 33.0 × 13.0	a ₃ b ₂	1613 AG (<i>tryg</i>) = 1301–2 AD	ܠܝܘܢܐ ܕܥܝܪܐܢܐ ܕܥܝܪܐܢܐ ܠܝܘܢܐ ܕܥܝܪܐܢܐ ܕܥܝܪܐܢܐ ܠܝܘܢܐ ܕܥܝܪܐܢܐ ܕܥܝܪܐܢܐ ܠܝܘܢܐ ܕܥܝܪܐܢܐ ܕܥܝܪܐܢܐ	

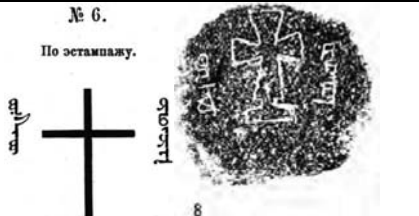
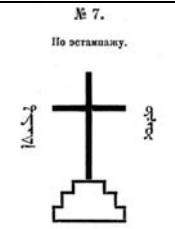
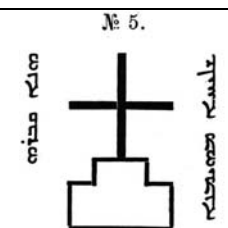
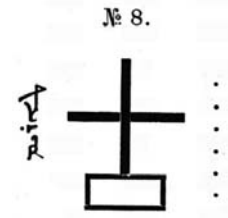
	Storage Place	Publication	Dimensions (cm)	Layout	Date	Epitaph	Image
21.	St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum, SA 14415	Kokovtsov, 1907: No. 2; Zhumagulov, 2010: 270—271 [#0558]	30.5×23.0	ab ₃	Dated according to the AG but number of the year illegible	[.]א[.] [ח] לאהבתי את אבי ואםיחי ואלוהי ישראל יתן לה פרי רבות	
22.	St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum, SA 14359	Kokovtsov, 1907: No. 3; Zhumagulov, 2010: 266—267 [#0559]	22.0×18.0×8.0	ab ₂	Undated	משה בן מרים חיה שנה כז' תשס"ד	
23.	St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum, SA 14342	Kokovtsov, 1907: No. 4 [#0560]	Unknown	ab	Undated	[...] חיה	
24.	St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum, SA 14380	Kokovtsov, 1907: No. 6; Zhumagulov, 2010: 310—311 [#0562]	22.0×18.0×8.0	ab	Undated	רחל בת משה חיה שנה כז'	
25.	St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum, SA 14333	Kokovtsov, 1907: No. 7 [#0563]	23.5×22.5	ab	Undated	רחל בת משה חיה שנה כז'	

	Storage Place	Publication	Dimensions (cm)	Layout	Date	Epitaph	Image
26.	St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum, SA 14393	Kokovtsov, 1907: No. 9; Zhumagulov, 2010: 272—274 [#0565]	29.0 × 19.0	k ₂ / k ₂	Undated	recto ܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ verso ... ܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ	
27.	St. Petersburg, State Hermitage Museum, SA 14439	Kokovtsov, 1907: No. 10; Zhumagulov, 2010: 258—259 [#0566]	22.0 × 16.0	ab	Undated	ܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ	
28.	Ashgabat, Institute of History and Archeology of the Academy of Sciences of Turkmenistan, N-2	Masson, 1978; Borbone & Mikheeva, 2023 (the present paper) [#0724]	23.5 × 15.0	ab	Undated	ܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ	
29.	Tashkent, State Historical Museum, 312/5	Minasyants, 2013: No. 5 [#0685]	35.5 × 20.0 × 5.0	ab	Undated	ܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ (the reading of the proper name is most probable but not sure)	
30.	Tashkent, State Historical Museum, 312/6	Minasyants, 2013: No. 6 [#0686] Ink estampage: Pantusov, 1910: “Kamen’ No. 7”	30.5 × 16.0 × 12.5	ab	Undated	ܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ (the reading is doubtful)	

[illegible]

Table 2.2

Six Untraced Almaliq *Kayraks*

	Publication	Layout	Date	Epitaph	Image
A.	Kokovtsov, 1905: No. 1 [#0546] Ink estampage: Pantusov, 1910: "Kamen' No. 2"	ab		ܕܢܝܢܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ	№ 1. Подлинный камень находится в Императорской Археологической Комиссии 
B.	Kokovtsov, 1905: No. 6 [#0551] Ink estampage: Pantusov, 1910: "Kamen' No. 8"	ab		ܕܢܝܢܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ	№ 6. По эстампу. 
C.	Kokovtsov, 1905: No. 7 [#0552] Cross comparable to <i>idid.</i> : No. 4 [here Table 2.1 No. 23], "resting on such a stepped pedestal": 	ab		ܕܢܝܢܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ	№ 7. По эстампу. 
D.	Kokovtsov, 1907: No. 5 [#0561] No information about the cross.	ab		ܕܢܝܢܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ	№ 5. 
E.	Kokovtsov, 1907: No. 8 [#0564] No information about the cross.	ab		ܕܢܝܢܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ	№ 8. 
F.	Pantusov, 1910: "Kamen' No. 11" [#0733]	ab		ܕܢܝܢܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ?	

Concordance

**Kayraks Mentioned in This Essay, Listed According to Our Database,
With Their Corresponding Edition(s)**

- | | |
|--|---|
| #0004 Slutsky, 1889: 33 (142); Chwolson, 1890: 61 (142) | #0556 Kokovtsov, 1905: No. 11; Dzhumagulov, 1971: 120—123; Zhumagulov, 2010: 60—61 |
| #0008 Slutsky, 1889: 31 (102); Chwolson, 1890: 75 (102); Zhumagulov, 2010: 294—295 | #0557 Kokovtsov, 1907: No. 1; Zhumagulov, 2010: 260—261 |
| #0011 Chwolson, 1890: No. 78; Zhumagulov, 2010: 392—393 | #0558 Kokovtsov, 1907: No. 2; Zhumagulov, 2010: 270—271 |
| #0048 Slutsky, 1889: No. 160; Chwolson, 1890: No. 11,3 (160); Zhumagulov, 2010: 316—317 | #0559 Kokovtsov, 1907: No. 3; Zhumagulov, 2010: 266—267 |
| #0052 Slutsky, 1889: No. 148; Chwolson, 1890: No. 12,2 (148) | #0560 Kokovtsov, 1907: No. 4 |
| #0092 Slutsky, 1889: No. 68; Chwolson, 1890: No. 38,1 (68); Zhumagulov, 2010: 429—430 | #0561 Kokovtsov, 1907: No. 5 |
| #0121 Chwolson, 1890: No. 48,5; Malov, 1959: 84—85; Dzhumagulov, 1971: 114—118; Zhumagulov, 2010: 51—53; Mansuroğlu, 1959: 112 | #0561 Kokovtsov, 1907: No. 5 |
| #0162 Slutsky, 1889: No. 14; Chwolson, 1890: No. 53 (14); Zhumagulov, 2010: 304—305 | #0562 Kokovtsov, 1907: No. 6; Zhumagulov, 2010: 310—311 |
| #0167 Slutsky, 1889: No. 18; Chwolson, 1890: No. 53,5 (18) | #0563 Kokovtsov, 1907: No. 7 |
| #0171 Slutsky, 1889: No. 198; Chwolson, 1890: No. III (198) | #0564 Kokovtsov, 1907: No. 8 |
| #0182 Slutsky, 1889: No. 110; Chwolson, 1890: No. XIII (110); Zhumagulov, 2010: 286—287 | #0564 Kokovtsov, 1907: No. 8 |
| #0192 Chwolson, 1890: No. XXIII (B); Zhumagulov, 2010: 246—247 | #0565 Kokovtsov, 1907: No. 9; Zhumagulov, 2010: 272—274 |
| #0231 Chwolson, 1897: No. 21 | #0566 Kokovtsov, 1907: No. 10; Zhumagulov, 2010: 258—259 |
| #0291 Chwolson, 1897: No. 77 | #0597 Klein 2000: No. 2; Zhumagulov, 2010: 279—280 |
| #0292 Chwolson, 1897: No. 78 | #0598 Klein, 2000: No. 7 |
| #0480 Chwolson, 1897: No. 262; Masson, 1978 | #0599 Klein, 2000: No. 8 |
| #0525 Slutsky, 1889: No. 195; Chwolson, 1897: No. 308; Zhumagulov, 2010: 425—426 | #0600 Klein, 2000: No. 6; Zhumagulov, 2010: 268—269 |
| #0527 Chwolson, 1897: No. 310 | #0601 Klein, 2000: No. 9; Dzhumagulov, 1987: 133 (Tab. XIV, fig. 24); Zhumagulov, 2010: 378—379 |
| #0533 Chwolson, 1897: No. 316 | #0608 Klein, 2000: No. 17; Zhumagulov, 2010: 143—144; Borbone, 2022: 233—241 |
| #0546 Kokovtsov, 1905: No. 1 | #0633 Kokovtsov, 1905: No. 8; Hjelt, 1909: No. 3; Borbone, 2021 |
| #0547 Kokovtsov, 1905: No. 2; Zhumagulov, 2010: 376—377 | #0652 Huang, 1963: No. 2; Niu, 2010: No. 1 |
| #0548 Kokovtsov, 1905: No. 3; Zhumagulov, 2010: 308—309 | #0653 Niu, 2010: No. 2 |
| #0549 Kokovtsov, 1905: No. 4; Zhumagulov, 2010: 374—375 | #0654 Huang, 1963: No. 3; Niu, 2010: No. 3 |
| #0550 Kokovtsov, 1905: No. 5; Zhumagulov, 2010: 275—276 | #0655 Huang, 1963: No. 1; Niu, 2010: No. 4 |
| #0551 Kokovtsov, 1905: No. 6 | #0656 Niu, 2010: No. 5 |
| #0552 Kokovtsov, 1905: No. 7 | #0657 Kokovtsov, 1909: No. 1; Dzhumagulov, 1971: 87—90 |
| #0553 Niu, 2010: No. 8 | #0658 Niu, 2010: No. 7 |
| #0554 Kokovtsov, 1905: No. 9 | #0678 Zhumagulov, 2010: 170—171 |
| #0555 Kokovtsov, 1905: No. 10 | #0683 Tabaldiyev & Belek, 2008: 147; Klein & Tabaldiyev, 2009: 88—90 |
| | #0685 Minasyants, 2013: No. 5 |
| | #0686 Minasyants, 2013: No. 6 |
| | #0722 <i>Dschingis Khan</i> , 2006: 327, No. 381; <i>Cengiz Han</i> , 2006: 504, No. 381 |
| | #0724 Masson, 1978 |

Notes

1. The search for the images, and the information about the gravestones, are due to A. A. Mikheeva, while P. G. Borbone took care of the epigraphic and linguistic study. The authors are indebted to V. I. Artemyev, V. N. Pilipko and R. G. Muradov, who kindly granted permission to study and publish their photographs. Attentive readers, as Lin Lijuan (Beijing) and P. Zieme (Berlin, Turfanforschung), corrected mistakes and provided information, and L. E. Parodi significantly improved the quality of the English. To them we are grateful. The four digits between [#...] correspond to unique reference numbers adopted in a database of the corpora of Syro-Turkic inscriptions from Semirechye, Almaliq and Inner Mongolia we prepared. The database, which aims at assembling information on all known gravestones, is not yet pub-

lished, but it seemed useful to include a reference to it in view of its future publication online or in print.

2. Masson, 1978.

3. Klein, 2000: 225—227, 429.

4. Minasyants, 2013: 620—621.

5. Dickens, 2016: 120—121.

6. Chwolson, 1897: 47 (see below).

7. Dickens, 2016: 121.

8. The site of the Nestorian cemetery (N42°48'21.68" E74°41'8.77") became known after the name of the city of Pishpek (from 1926 to 1991 Frunze, now Bishkek), to the south of which it was located. In the scholarly literature it is often called the “near-Pishpek cemetery” or “the cemetery of Kara-Dzhigach” (Kara-Zhygach — Кара-Жыгач, accord-

ing to the Kyrgyz spelling), referring to the name of the district. See Kolchenko, 2017.

9. In 1885 and 1886 two areas were excavated: one about 1.6 km to the south of the Burana tower (coordinates: N42°44'55.22" E75°15'02.73") and another immediately north-west of it. See Kolchenko, 2019.

10. The history of the findings and excavations of the Nestorian cemeteries of Pishpek and Burana in 1885 and 1886 has been told many times. The reader may find basic information in English in Thacker, 1966—1967 (with reference to the primary sources in Russian); Dickens & Avtushkova, 2021. An in-depth search on the history of the discoveries may profit from the documents collected by Samigulin, 2011.

11. Masson, 1978: 50.

12. For this Kyrgyz, Kazakh, and Uzbek (кайрок) word, Gerard Clauson suggests a derivation from Old-Turkic "*kad-rak* ... 'something hard, rough' and the like. Survives as *kayrak* 'whetstone' in NC Kir., Kzx; SC Uzb. (*kayrok*) and several NW languages" (Clauson, 1972: 640). The same word is used for the musical instrument *kayrak*, which consists of small stones (castanets). We owe this information to P. Zieme.

13. Masson, 1978: 52.

14. Thus according to Masson; but the graduate scales in the image show that size most probably approximates 29.3×20.0 cm.

15. *Ibid.*, 1978: 52.

16. Slutsky, 1889: 22. This paper is based on the communication Slutsky presented to the Imperial Archaeological Society of Moscow in late February 1888.

17. The simple "ab" layout occurs in fifty-five of the 440 gravestones whose layout is known (many edited epitaphs, especially in Chwolson, 1897, are not accompanied by an image or a description of their layout). Further, more elaborate layouts, include, among others, "a₂b" = two vertical lines on the left, one vertical line on the right of the cross; "A₂a₂b₂c" = two horizontal lines above the cross, two vertical lines to the left and two vertical lines to the right of it, one horizontal line on the bottom of the cross.

18. The Syriac word *tlē, talyā*, means "*a child from seven to twelve years of age... a boy*", but also "*a lad, handmaid, servant*" (Payne Smith, 1903: 174).

19. Modern "East Syriac" typographical fonts reproduce the script employed by the "Nestorian" scribes of the region of Alqosh, in Northern Iraq, from the sixteenth century onwards (Coakley, 2006: 191—250; Borbone, 2014). The scripts of older "Nestorian" manuscripts from Iraq, dated between the twelfth and fourteenth century, and from China (Turpan), undated but possibly older (Hunter & Coakley, 2017), show a remarkable variety of letter forms, while sharing some distinctive "Eastern" features. A comparison of the old East Syriac scripts on parchment and paper with the writing of Semirechye would certainly be illuminating. A first approach is offered by Martina Galatello in her study of the scripts of the Syriac and Sogdian Turfan manuscripts (Galatello, 2023).

20. The same ligature often occurs for *he* and *taw* in the cursive East-Syriac script found in thirteenth-century MSS from Iraq, for instance MSS Vat. Syr. 417 (Baghdad, 1246); Vat. Syr. 148 (1267); Karamlesh, Church of Mar Addai (1294–5).

21. = Chwolson, 1890, No. 12,2 (148) [#0052]. Slutsky, 1889: Tab. IV.

22. Slutsky edited it based on a "big photograph" (Slutsky, 1889: 21), as did also Chwolson (Chwolson, 1890: 45, 12,2 [148]), who does not inform about the shape of the cross.

23. Chwolson, 1897: 47.

24. In the reproduction he saw, Chwolson read the first *yod* of the personal name, *pytywon*.

25. *Idem*, 1890.

26. *Idem*, 1897: 3—4. Out of 328 epitaphs, only 34 are entirely edited in Syriac.

27. *Idem*, 1897: 2.

28. This is the *kayrak* which, according to Dickens, 2016: 121, did disappear before 2006.

29. Masson, 1978: 52.

30. See the Appendix to this paper.

31. It was N. N. Pantusov, an archaeologist who explored the cemeteries of Pishpek and Burana, who first found Nestorian *kayraks* near Guldja, in Chinese territory, in a site called Mazar: Pantusov, 1902. Pantusov's report is briefly summarized in Kokovtsov, 1905; see also Pantusov, 1910: 172—175. The material collected by Pantusov comprised original gravestones as well as reproductions. More recently, from 1950 to 1985, Chinese scholars discovered other gravestones: Huang, 1963, and Chonglin & Niu, 2009.

32. Kokovtsov, 1905; *idem*, 1907.

33. Pantusov, 1910: unnumbered fascicle between pages 176—177.

34. A borrowing from Greek (περιοδευτής) into Syriac (*prydwṭ*, variably spelled): "*A visiting priest acting as the bishop's representative in visiting villages and monasteries*" (according to Payne Smith, 1903: 460). In the Church of the East by the thirteenth century the ecclesiastical offices of "periodeut", "visitor" and "chorepiscopus" were equated, so that the three titles are synonymous, as is shown by the title of a chapter of the "Collection of Synodical Canons" by 'Abdišo' of Nisibis (written before 1284): "On the election and consecration of a chorepiscopus (*kōrappesqōpā*), that is, a periodeut (*peryādewtā*), that is a visitor (*sā'ōrā*)" (Second Part, Treatise VI, Chapter 7; Mai, 1838, Syriac text: 282—283; Latin translation: 119—120. On the duties of a "visitor" see p. 235). In the corpus of the Semirechye and Almaliq epitaphs there is only a single mention of a periodeut (Chwolson, 1890: No. 78, dated 1578 AG; [#0011]), while "visitors" and the "chorepiscopoi" are frequently mentioned (nineteen and six times, respectively). The name "Alka" ('*lk*') is perhaps, but not surely, to be read in one inscription from Pishpek (*idem*, 1897: No. 316 [#0533]).

35. Indeed, most of the Almaliq epitaphs feature only the name of the deceased and his ecclesiastic qualification, or age.

36. Kokovtsov usually mentions the sources of his editions: either the original, or reproductions such as "estampages". Almost all the gravestones edited from the original can be traced to Museums in Russia, Uzbekistan, Finland, or Germany (see the Appendix). None of the epitaphs published in Kokovtsov's editions corresponds to the N-2 *kayrak* in Ashgabat.

37. See the Appendix for further details.

38. Masson, 1978: 52—53 (at p. 52 instead of "Baykova", read "Paykova").

39. Masson, 1978: 55. Masson also reports that provenance from Kattakurgan (a town located about 70 km west of Samarkand) had been suggested to the archeologist A. A. Ma-

rushenko by a museum employee, S. I. Bilkevich, in the 1920s. But this appears implausible — at least as the site of the finding. Kattakurgan might, at most, have been a stage in the itinerary of the *kayrak* from Verny / Alma Ata (see below) to Ashgabat. Kattakurgan provenance was accepted when inventorying the *kayrak*: the name “Katta Kurgan” is written on the stone, near to the inventory number “N–310”, in the same black ink, and the accession number (“Inv. No. 69”).

40. Chwolson 1897: 2.

41. Borbone & Smelova, forthcoming.

42. Ivan Chekaninsky (1891–1942), an archaeologist and ethnographer. The Catalogue, now kept in the archives of the Central State Museum of Kazakhstan, was consulted by P. G. Borbone on site in September 2019.

43. Chekaninsky Catalogue, Nos. 81–127; for all items the date of accession into the collection is given as 1908, in February (81–110), June (110–123), and August (124–127).

44. Inventory Nos. KP 21930/1–19. On the collection, see Myakisheva, 2014. See also Zhumagulov, 2010: 415–455.

45. A very good summary of information on the actual *kayrak* collections may be found in Klein, 2000: 152–157; see also idem, 1998.

46. Their epitaphs feature in Slutsky's and Chwolson's editions, respectively in 1889 and 1890, based on reproductions. The *kayraks* kept in France were republished by F. Nau (Nau, 1913) and Desreumaux (Desreumaux, 2000; idem, 2015). On Chaffanjon and his mission, see Chaffanjon, 1898; Vaissier, 2005.

47. Lansdell, 1894: 105–113.

48. So according to Chabot, 1906: 286. The whereabouts of these estampages are unknown. Our searches of the Blanc's mission documents in the French State Archives were unsuccessful. Chabot says that all the reproduced epitaphs were already published by Chwolson; therefore, they would probably provide no new evidence. Nevertheless, they could help double-check older readings and editions.

49. Hjelt, 1909. According to P. Vainonen, keeper at the Museum of Cultures, Helsinki, the whereabouts of the two gravestones are unknown. They were probably not acquired by public institution or museum, unlike the third of the “three” *kayraks* mentioned in the title of Hjelt's paper, as will be detailed below.

50. Pantusov, 1886: 4.

51. They were stored in the Imperial Historical Museum; Slutsky published seven of them, designated as “a, b, c, d, e, f, 1241”, in 1889 (Slutsky, 1889), and six more in 1891 (idem, 1891: 176–194), designated as “g, h, i, k, l, m”, plus two gravestones which feature only a cross, “n” and “ò/ò” — two in the latter case, on either side of the stone. The total number of Nestorian *kayraks* kept in Moscow in 1889–1891 and published by Slutsky amounts to fifteen; Slutsky also published the images of three other *kayraks*, with Arabic inscriptions (idem, 1889: Tab. VI — a *kayrak*, No. 1, features two inscriptions). At present, the collection of *kayraks* in the State Historical Museum of Moscow consist of nineteen gravestones (shelf mark 115581/1–19, Inv. No. Op. V [On. B] 3005/1–19). Three of them bear Arabic inscriptions (115581/7, 12, 16 — corresponding respectively to Nos. 2, 3, 1a–b of idem, 1889: Tab. VI); therefore, there were a total of sixteen Nestorian *kayraks* in Moscow — fifteen of which were published

by Slutsky. The current whereabouts of another *kayrak* which was in Moscow, a Turkic one, whose epitaph was published only by Chwolson (Chwolson, 1890: 81, 141–142, 167–168; No. 48,5 [#0121]) are unknown. The additional *kayrak* is No. 115581/10 (on which see Table 2.1, No. 31), curiously unknown to Slutsky and Chwolson. It might have joined the collection in more recent times.

52. Dickens & Avtushkova, 2021: 125.

53. Chwolson, 1897, No. 77 [#0291].

54. Dickens, 2009, and Minasyants, 2013: 615–628.

55. Fedotova, Dickens, Plakhuta & Avyshkova, 2020. Apparently the *kayraks* are Muslim Arabic gravestones, while the estampages pertain to two Syriac gravestones published by Chwolson in 1890. The first one (Inv. No. KP–3936/1) would correspond according to the authors to “idem, 1890: 42; No. 122”, but in fact the right correspondence is with idem 1890: 42: “No. 11,2 (144) Nach dem Originale (Tafel II, No. 11,2)”. As for the second estampage (Inv. No. KP–3936/2), it reproduces a *kayrak* now in Almaty (Central State Museum of Kazakhstan, Inv. No. KP 21930/7 [#0092]). The first publication is indeed Chwolson, 1890: 67 (not “77” as in the paper): “No. 38,1 (68). Nach einer Photographie”, subsequently corrected in idem, 1897: 58, based on a better estampage. The authors of the paper are apparently unaware of Chwolson's corrections because, based on the Omsk estampage, they suggest the same corrections to the first edition. Therefore, the *kayrak* was first photographed, and the image was sent to Chwolson, who published the epitaph based on it. Subsequently, at least two estampages, more legible than the photograph, were produced: one found its way to St. Petersburg (providing Chwolson with an opportunity to correct his first reading of the epitaph), the other to Omsk (giving the same opportunity to the authors of the article).

56. Mannerheim, 2008.

57. The *kayrak* is published (with a good image) in the catalogue of the exhibition “Gengis Khan and his Heirs. The Mongol Empire” (Bonn, München and Schallaburg, 2005–2006): *Dschingis Khan*, 2006: 327; No. 381, and in its Turkish edition: *Cengiz Han*, 2006: 504; No. 381. In both, while the connection with Guldja is correctly pointed out, the gravestone is dated to the ninth century and its language is said to be Sogdian; no reading of the short epitaph is offered. In fact, the language is Syriac, and the epitaph says “ܡܥܡܕܐ ܕܩܝܡܬܐ”, *qymt' 'lymt'* “The Maiden Qyamtā”. The gravestone was brought to Germany by the geographer and alpinist Gottfried Merzbacher (1843–1926); on his expeditions in Central Asia, see Merzbacher, 1905.

58. Minasyants, 2013: No. 5 and No. 6.

59. We owe this information to V. Kolchenko (e-mail dated 19 July 2022), to whom we are indebted.

60. When this paper was already in print, our colleague Lijuan Lin (Peking University) informed us that another gravestone from Almaliq, at present kept at the Xinjiang Autonomous Region Museum, was found. Since the epitaph does not correspond to any of those of the untraced *kayraks* published by Kokovtsov, the gravestone represents a new item in the Almaliq corpus. This newly found gravestone will be published by Lijuan Lin. The number of known gravestones from Almaliq must therefore be increased from 39 to 40.

61. Because of the form of the cross, at first sight one would include this gravestone among those of Burana. But the

label still pasted on it, and the Hermitage accession documents, confirm its provenance from Almaliq.

62. The stele was discovered in 1982 at Da'erjia Village. Written entirely in Mongolian, it dates to the late Ming or early Qing dynasty. The inscription is a eulogy for the Bogd Chagan Lama, who died in 1627.

63. Two Arabic *kayraks* engraved in reserve are known, both in Kyrgyzstan: one dated to 1910 (Tabaldiyev & Belek, 2008: 124, "Kichi Kemni", on site), and the other undated but most probably recent (Dzhumagulov, 1982: 80–81, and Plate XLII, 1–2; Tabaldiyev & Belek, 2008: 170, "Sakhoba Mazar" No. 14).

64. Chwolson, 1890: No. 66 (183) dated 1566 AG (#0004), and No. 75 (102) dated 1575 AG (#0008); idem, 1897: No. 21, dated 1596 AG (#0231), and No. 310, undated (#0527).

65. Vatican City, Vatican Museums, Inv. No. 31640 — reproduced in D'Arelli & Callieri, 2011: 99 (catalogue description by D. V. Proverbio). The expression is *nraq(t) men 'almā*

hānā, "He / she went out of this world": Palmer, 1987: 53–139: inscriptions A10, 11, 17, 20, C2, D1, 8, 10, 11, 12.

66. Since the form *qbrh* occurs for two male dead, possibly the ending *-h* was understood as a masculine marker by the engraver. The scant Almaliq evidence does not allow to proceed further, but a comparison with similar cases in the Semirechye corpus could be helpful.

67. Inconsistencies, that is, the masculine form for a female and vice-versa, happen. In fact, since the pronoun / copula is enclitic, in both cases a contracted orthography may replace the separate one in the epitaphs. In fact, the masculine *hn' hw* never occurs, being consistently replaced by the contracted *hnw*, while the feminine long form *hd' hy* occurs 145 times, the contracted forms *hdy* 22 times and *hdhy* 11.

69. This is our reading, based on the original gravestone; Kokovtsov reads 'ksgst'.

69. On the Catholic diocese of Almaliq, see Richard, 1998: 162–165, with further bibliography.

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Illustrations

- Fig. 1a.** The *kayrak*. Pishpek, undated. L_{max} — 27.5, W_{max} — 18.5, thickness — 6.0 cm. Institute of History and Archaeology of the Academy of Sciences of Turkmenistan, Ashgabat, call No. N-310. Drawing from Masson, 1978.
- Fig. 1b.** The same *kayrak*. Photo by V. I. Artemyev.
- Fig. 1c.** The same *kayrak* (detail). Photo by V. I. Artemyev.
- Fig. 2a.** The same *kayrak*, the cross.
- Fig. 2b.** The cross of *kayrak* #0052 (Slutsky, 1889: Tab. IV).
- Fig. 2c.** The cross of *kayrak* #0608 (Borbone, 2022: 239).
- Fig. 3a.** The *kayrak*. Almaliq, undated. L_{max} — 23.5, W_{max} 15.0 cm. Institute of History and Archaeology of the Academy of Sciences of Turkmenistan, Ashgabat, call No. N-2. Drawing from Masson, 1978.
- Fig. 3b.** The same *kayrak*. Photo by V. Pilipko.
- Fig. 3c.** The same *kayrak*. Photo by G. Muradov.
- Fig. 3d.** The same *kayrak*. Drawing by P. G. Borbone
- Fig. 4.** Arabic inscription from the funerary stele (detail). Iran, 617 AH /1220 AD. Musée du Louvre.
- Fig. 5.** The “Bogd Chagan Lama Monument” (detail). Da'erjia Village, post-1627 AG. University of Inner Mongolia in Hohhot.