

From Orhun to Canaan

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After the disappearance of the Hittite empire by 1,000 BC the Central Anatolian city-states lost their important position. Instead the cities by the sea shores of western and southern Anatolia became important and dominant. The two main reasons for this change were the flourishing sea trade and the milder climatic conditions of the Mediterranean and Aegean coasts.

There is a period of 500 years, from 1,000 BC to 500 BC, which is omitted in the history of Anatolia. This period of half a millennium is part of the forgotten past. It is a period of transition during which the Indo-European languages replaced almost all Altaic languages of the region. By 500 BC the Greek language was the dominant language of western and southern Anatolia, but few traces of the ancient culture and language continued to exist as proper city names and locations.

I have already mentioned in the previous chapter (**Hittite and Sumerian**), that the Luwili language of Central Anatolia transformed in time to Lycian of the southern coast. The ancient Egyptians refer to the Lycians as the **Lukka** and mention them among the Sea People.



Luwili is a name referring to **Ulu-illi** meaning “belonging to the holy city” in Altaic and **Lukka** is similarly the name of the **Ulu-Ok** “the holy Ok” people. **Lukkia**, can therefore be

understood as meaning **Ulu-Ok-Öyü** (the region of the holy Ok), which became Lycia or Likia as time went by. On the map of Chapter 12, **The Anatolian expansion**, we can see the region called Likia, located on the southern cost of present Turkey. The Lycian alphabet is accepted to be a modified form of the Greek alphabet, but it is quite the opposite that actually happened. The Lycians, who were seafarers were trading with the Phoenicians and brought the Phoenician alphabet to southern Anatolia. The Phoenician alphabet was adapted for writing an Afro-Asiatic language and did not fit Greek, which is an Indo-European language. It was therefore modified first by Lycians and then by the Greek speakers. But Phoenician was preceded by a script known as Proto-Phoenician. Below we see an inscription in Proto-Phoenician, which is still a language not yet deciphered (1).

There are certain letters in this script (encircled in blue) that are almost identical to some of the characters of the Orhun Valley script (above right). The Orhun syllabary has been discussed in **23-The Orhun Valley Script**. The general belief exists that the Orhun script is an offshoot of the Phoenician alphabet. But, as mentioned before, the Orhun script is not an alphabet it is a syllabary, furthermore, the evolution of writing systems started from symbolic seals and after many trials finally reached the level of phonetic letters. We already saw that the original location of symbolic seals has been Central Asia, from which the concept of recording thoughts dissipated in all directions.

Since all Afro-Asiatic languages are well known and thoroughly investigated, how come that the Proto-Phoenician script still remains as a non-deciphered enigma? The reason being that, most probably, the Proto-Phoenician script was designed for recording an Altaic language that came to the region from the north (see Chapter 18, **Towards Sümer and Elam**). Trying to decipher the Proto-Phoenician with the help of the Semitic languages will be, to a large extent, unsuccessful.

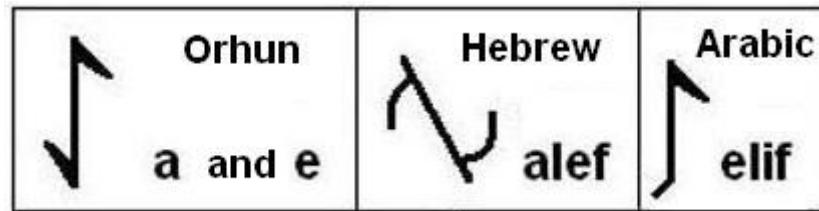
The Phoenician letters were originally Proto-Sinaitic pictographic signs. They became letters after the concept of seal-writing came to the region. Below we see the transformation of the letter A. It was initially the picture of an ox-head (2). We already saw that the ox was a symbol representing the Ok leader (see chapter 7, **The Minoan Culture**). The bull symbolism came to the Eastern Mediterranean region from both the south-east and also from the north. This is why the first letter of the Phoenician alphabet became aleph, meaning ox, which is a stylized form of an ox head.

Proto-Sinaitic	Egyptian	Phoenician	Hungarian
		 Aleph (Ox)	
Early Greek	Alpha	Etruscan	Latin
			

The ancient Hungarians had also a script very similar to the Orhun Valley script. This script was not borrowed from the Greek script, as many still believe, but originated from the Ural region. The Uralic languages developed from the bordering Altaic languages as mentioned in Chapter 2, **Diversification of Languages**.

Early Greek letter A was similar to both the Hungarian as well as to the Phoenician aleph. This is because the ancient north-western Anatolian region, where Asiatic Thracians settled, was a melting pot of northern and southern cultures speaking languages that originated from a common source. The Semitic people who remained in the vicinity of Canaan did not adopt

the Phoenician aleph but selected to keep the Orhun character for “a” and “e”, changing it as shown below.



Canaan was known as Kana'n or more understandably Khan'yn meaning “belonging to the Khan” in Altaic. Languages spoken in Canaan became extinct around the first millennium BC. They included Phoenician, Punic, Ammonite, Moabite, Edomite and Hebrew. Hebrew has been revived during the last century and is presently the official language of Israel. Although the residents of ancient Ugaritic did not consider themselves as Canaanites, they were the first to develop an alphabetical script and had a strong influence on Canaanites, and especially on Phoenicians (see **20-The Ugaritic script**). The reason for the disappearance of all Canaanite languages, except Hebrew, needs to be investigated; because they make part of our forgotten past.

References

- (1) Ref. 3 of Chapter 19, page 164.
- (2) Idem, page 161.