

# Orkhon alphabet

## Origin

The earliest known examples of writing in any Turkic language were found in the Orkhon river valley in Mongolia in the 19th century. They date from the early 8th century AD and the script in which they are written is known as the Orkhon alphabet. Inscriptions dating from the later 8th century AD in a slight variant of the Orkhon alphabet, known as Yenisei or Siberian runes, have also been found around Yenisei and other parts of Siberia.

Because of a superficial resemblance to the Runic alphabet, the alphabet is also known as Orkhon or Turkic runes. This resemblance is probably a result of the writing materials used - most inscriptions are in hard surfaces, such as stone or wood, and curved lines are difficult to inscribe in such surfaces.

The Orkhon alphabet is thought to have been derived from or inspired by a non-cursive version of the Sogdian script. By the 9th century AD, the Orkhon and Yenisei alphabets were replaced by the Uighur alphabet, which developed from the cursive version of the Sogdian script.

## Notable features

- Written mainly from right to left in horizontal lines, though some inscriptions are written vertically with the letters rotated by 90°. When written vertically, it read from bottom to top and right to left.
- Some consonants have two forms, one of which was used with front vowels, the other with back vowels.

