17

LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE IN THE KUSHAN EMPIRE*

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Contents

An unknown language in an unknown script

Since 1954 a striking series of linguistic documents written in an unknown language and in an unknown script have come to light in the territory of Central Asia of the Graeco-Bactrian and the Kushan periods. The following documents are known:

1. *Surkh Kotal*, three lines, written with black ink on a small fragment of stone.
2. *Dasht-i Nawur*, stone inscription, nine lines.
3. *Khalchayan*, one inscription on a potsherd, another on a tile.
4. *Kara-tepe*, three fragmentary inscriptions on potsherds.
5. *Ay Khanum*, inscription on a silver ingot.
6. *Issîk* (50 km to the east of Alma Ata), inscription on a silver cup.

* See Map 4.

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7. *Khatîn-Rabat* (in southern Tajikistan), fragmentary inscription on a potsherd.

8. *Tekkuz-tepe* (in southern Tajikistan), inscription on a potsherd, unpublished.

9. *Old Merv*, inscription (s?) on a potsherd, unpublished.

10. *Fayaz-tepe* (near Termez), several inscriptions on earthenware, unpublished.

11. *Kafirnigan-tepe* (40 km to the south of Dushanbe), fragment of a wall inscription (?), unpublished.

Consequently, the spread of this unknown script and language covers a vast territory from Alma Ata up to Merv, Dasht-i Nawur and Ay Khanum.

There have been speculations about the character and ethnic background of the script, but only one suggestion really deserves consideration – the theory that the script goes back to the Kharoṣṭhī alphabet and the language written in this script may be a Saka dialect, perhaps also spoken by the Kushans. In fact, in spite of the similarity of several letters to the characters of the Orkhon–Yenisey Türk runic script, it is clear that the number and shape of the letters, the system of vowel mātrās and the presence of compound akṣaras prove without any doubt the Kharoṣṭhī origin of the alphabet. The coincidence of some akṣaras with runic characters is restricted to the cases where the Aramaic prototypes of both the Kharoṣṭhī and the Sogdian letters (the latter serving as models for the Türk runic signs) were similar.

If we tentatively substitute the syllabic values of the Kharoṣṭhī alphabet, the resulting text has a Saka character. So one of the two inscriptions from Khalchayan, containing only one compound akṣara, can be read as *lya*. This reading can be interpreted as a personal name and compared to the well-known Saka name *Liaka* (cf. Khotanese Saka*rya* 'young'). The reading of the other inscription from Khalchayan is more uncertain because it is not clear whether it is to be read in the position given by the publication or upside down. In the first case, its reading may be *jha-yi-ka* (i.e. **Zayika*, a name to be compared with the Middle Iranian name *Zīk*); in the second, it can be read as ⌊*ja(ṃ)–*⌋ *mi(ṃ)-pa(ṃ)* (i.e. **Zāmipa*, similarly a name, representing the same type as *Denipa*). Both names could be, however, equally of Saka origin.

One fragment from Kara-tepe can be read as]*śī(ṃ)-mśi*[and connected with Khotanese Saka *śīṃja* 'the thorny jujube' used for preparing juice in Khotan. The other fragment from Kara-tepe may be read as]*nā(ṃ)-sā(ṃ) kṣa*[, i.e.]*nāsā kṣa*[']portion six[' and *nāsā* may be the same word as Khotanese Saka *nasā-* 'portion', while *kṣa*[can be compared to Khotanese Saka *kṣa*, *kṣäṣă* 'six'. Nor is the fragmentary text from Khatîn Rabat longer: *e 1*

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yo[*sa* 'whole [is] *1* musk', *e* being equal to Khotanese Saka *ī* (one, whole), and the spelling *yo*[*sa* representing the same word as Khotanese Saka *yausa* 'musk'.

The texts of the inscriptions from Dasht-i Nawur and Surkh Kotal are rather long and reading them presents great difficulties because of their being poorly preserved. Line 1 of the inscription of Dasht-i Nawur (DN III) can tentatively be read as follows: *sa-*[*li*]*mi paṃ-ja-sa*[*bra*]*-ka-śiṃ mi ma-ste*[*paṃju*]*-sa*[*ha*]*-ḍa* 'The year [is] now 50, Brakaśi [is] now the month, 15 days'. To illustrate the character of the language, we may compare the same text in Khotanese Saka (in Brāhmī orthography) with it:

> Dasht-i Nawur: *sail mi paṃjasa brakaśiṃ mi maste paṃjusa haḍa* Khotanese Saka: *salä mī paṃjsāsä braṃkhaysji mī māstä paṃjsūsa haḍa*.

The similarity is obvious and if the proposed reading of the date proves to be correct, it follows that the Southern Sakas (or the Kushans) had a knowledge of the month names used also in Khotan and of the time reckoning by cycles of sixty years or by another era, different from the one used in the Bactrian inscription (DN I) of Dasht-i Nawur.

The text of lines 2–9 of the inscription DN III runs as follows:

1. *ye rva-da-ti ri a-*[*ja*]*-ti vi(ṃ)-ja-rka ka-*[*tvi-sa*] [*ku*]*-ṣa-ṇa*
2. *mi mri pa(ṃ)-ra-mmi-na sta-naṃ pa(ṃ)-ri-vāṃ śi-ḍa va-*[*ri*]*kāṃ hāṃ*
3. *sa gra-vāṃ ti-rma da-bha sa-di pa ka(ṃ)-pi-sa(ṃ) śa-di-ña*
4. *ha-mri(ṃ)-ja kaṃ-*[*ḍ*]*a vaṃ-yi-ñām kaṃ-ju-vāṃ śi-kṣa-śi dha-kaṃ*
5. *jhaṃ-saṃ ka-*[*ḍ*]*a ta-rma pa a-jaṃ naṃ-vāṃ ha-mri-ka sa-ṇa śi-jha*
6. *mri-kaṃ śi kaṃ-*[*ju*]*-vaṃ mi-*[*śta ha-ra*]*-*[*sta*]*ha-mi ha-mi ha-ya-ḍa ja-sta ha-sa*
7. *he-ko mri(ṃ)-ka mi ho-kaṃ jyoṃ pa-pāṃ-sa vāṃ-ta haṃ-mi-ga-śa*
8. *mla ka-ña e-śi haṃ-da-*[*ḍa*]*paṃ-mri pu-*[*ḍa*]*taṃ-ka u-da*[*da-ri ja*]*-rmi*[*ja*]*-sta ja*.

On the basis of the far-reaching agreement of the language of this inscription with Khotanese Saka and with the aid of its Bactrian version (see later) its text can be interpreted in the following way:

1. Behold! [We] King of Kings, the noble, great Katvisa, the Kuṣāṇa,
2. now, here, we order to erect the commanded text for the welfare as heroic words:
3. He [Katvisa] mounted on the mountains, [he] was able to cross the high region. He inspected Kāpiśa.

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4. [He] put relief to [his] advancing domestics, moved forward [his] forces,
5. fought a battle, crossed the region, pursued, captured the crushed Sanas [= Avestan *Sāini-*], destroyed [them].
6. Graciously he rested [his] servants, he offe[red] pres[ents] to all of them. He celebrated a feast for the god,
7. being devoted and gracious. Then he held feastings for the officers and the warriors altogether.
8. He ordered to engrave on the rock the favourable report [that] he removed the tax and contribution from [the sanctuary of] the supreme god.

The content of this inscription coincides in all essential details with that of the Bactrian version (discussed below) of the epigraphic monument at Dasht-i Nawur. However, a remarkable phenomenon is that the relation of this inscription is much more detailed than the Bactrian text. Obviously, the most important version of the report about the campaign led by Vima Kadphises to the region of Dasht-i Nawur was represented precisely by this text. From the repeated mentions of the domestics, their rewards, and the festive banquet given in honour of the officers and warriors, it follows that this was the language spoken and understood in the royal court of Vima Kadphises and among his retinue and army, whether this was some Saka dialect adopted by the Kushans or the original language of the Kushans themselves. The central position and the detailed text of this inscription clearly speak in favour of the latter assumption.

Another interesting document, written in the same language and with the same script, is represented by the inscription from Surkh Kotal. The character of the record is striking. It was written in black ink on a stone fragment, measuring 22.5 × 11 × 4.9 cm. This fact excludes the possibility of an official document and renders the assumption of an occasional record probable. The text of the inscription, also coming very likely from the Kushan age, can tentatively be read as follows:

1. *hi-yo e-se ho ta-na*: *mva-ra ha-mu-di a-ja hi-rya pa-śi da-pa va-rya*
2. *ka-vā-gyo ja-rya da-ja ho-la cha-ḍa gyo-rmi va-gyo dha-na cha-ka mo-śa ja-na*
3. *va-hī da-hu daṃ-na*.

Contrary to the inscription of Dasht-i Nawur, here we have no support for the understanding of this text. In spite of this apparent difficulty, however, the interpretation is not impossible because some terms and phrases can clearly be identified again with the aid of Khotanese Saka. Thus, the inscription can be interpreted in the following way:

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1. The lord gives orders so: The procedure happened. It is possible to release the non-perished wealth: the mantle,

2. the coat of mail, the armour, the flamc[-coloured] covering, the miler excellent race-horse, the grain, the goat will you quickly carry away!

3. The house is given to the man [or to Dahu].

This text obviously represents a report on a judgement about the division of property either in the case of divorce or by way of inheritance: one party obtained the movable wealth (the things enumerated in the report), the other one kept the immovable property (the house). This report was apparently sent by a person who belonged to the retinue of the 'lord' exercising the jurisdiction and who was personally acquainted with at least one of the parties. The use of the stone fragment for the purpose of this information is probably due to the lack of other writing materials in Surkh Kotal at that time.

All the records written in this variant of Kharoṣṭhī script and Saka language discussed so far date back to the Kushan age. Two inscriptions of this type, however, represent an earlier period. The inscription of Ay Khanum, engraved on a silver ingot, comes probably from the second half of the second century B.C., while the inscribed silver cup from Issîk was dated to the sixth-fourth centuries B.C. Nevertheless, there can be hardly any doubt that the latter dating is too early. Taking into consideration the fact that the inscription from Issîk cannot be separated from other inscriptions of this type and that it clearly presents the characteristics of the Kharoṣṭhī script, it cannot be dated before the second half or the end of the third century B.C. In any case, these two inscriptions present more archaic, more angular, simpler letter forms than the other.

Even though some of these features may be ascribed to the writing technique (engraving), they still indicate an earlier date.

The text of the silver ingot from Ay Khanum can be read as follows:

a-l-za-to mi-pa-zaṃ-na pa-ya a-mi-zaṃ-na pe | *pa-ya-di-na* | [. . .

Silver: smelt sort, mixed, greenish [?] | examined | [weight . . .

The text is probably incomplete as the end of the record is broken off.

The term *alzato* (silver) exactly coincides with Khotanese Saka*āljsata-* (silver) but except *amizaṃna* (< Old Iranian **āmaiĉa-na-*, Middle Persian *āmēxtan* 'to mix' all words or stems also occur in Khotanese Saka.

The inscription on the silver cup from Issîk can tentatively be transcribed again in the following way:

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1. *za(ṃ)-ri ko-la (ṃ) mi(ṃ)-vaṃ vaṃ-va pa-zaṃ pa-na de-ka mi(ṃ)-ri-to* The vessel should hold wine of grapes, added cooked food, so much, to the mortal,

2. *ña-ka mi pa-zaṃ vaṃ-va va-za(ṃ)-na vaṃ*
then added cooked fresh butter on.

The vocabulary of this inscription, too, has quite exact parallels in Khotanese Saka: *za(ṃ)ri* 'vessel' ~ Khotanese Saka *jsarā* 'receptacle', *kola* 'grapes' ~ Khotanese Saka *kūra* 'grapes', Vedic *kola* 'jujube', *mi(ṃ)va-* 'wine' ~ Khotanese Saka *meva*, *māya-* 'intoxicant drink', *vaṃva* 'added' (< **ava-nava-*) ~ Khotanese Saka *puṇvāña-* 'to be inserted' (< **pati-nava-nya-*), *pazaṃ* 'cooked' ~ Khotanese Saka *pajs-* 'to cook', *pa* < *ṃ* > *na* 'food' ~ Khotanese Saka *paṃna-* 'food', *deka* 'so much' ~ Khotanese Saka *deka* 'so much', *mi(ṃ)rita* 'mortal' (< **mṛy-ata-*) ~ Khotanese Saka *mär-* (< **mṛya-*) 'to die', *ñaka* 'fresh butter' ~ Khotanese Saka *nīyaka-* 'fresh butter', *mi* 'then, now' ~ Khotanese Saka *mi* 'now, then', *vaz-* 'to hold' ~ Khotanese Saka *vaj-*/*vāj-* 'to hold', *va(ṃ)* 'to, on, for' ~ Khotanese Saka *va* 'for'.

On the basis of these texts and of the close parallels between them and Khotanese Saka linguistic data, it is easy to recognize the close relationship of the two languages. In spite of some uncertainties in the reading and interpretation of these texts, written in a variant of the Kharoṣṭhī script, there can be hardly any doubt about the essential features of their language. They clearly represent a language of Saka type with some peculiar features. The question remains, however, whether the language of these texts was a Southern Saka dialect also adopted for their chancelleries by the Kushans or whether it represents the original language of the Kushans, which was closely related to the Saka dialects.

The Bactrian language in Greek script

The importance of Hellenism in Central Asia may be best illustrated by the fact that the Greek alphabet was adopted to write the Bactrian language. Earlier, it was generally assumed that Bactrian literacy came into existence under the Kushan king Kanishka I, because it was under his rule that the Kushan mints struck coins with partly Greek and partly Bactrian legends, written using Greek characters. In 1967, however, a trilingual inscription of Vima Kadphises was discovered at Dasht-i Nawur, one version of which was written in the Bactrian language using the Greek alphabet. It thus became clear that Bactrian literacy dates back to the time of Vima Kadphises or perhaps even earlier.

The Greek alphabet of Bactria was adapted with its contemporary sound values to the phonetic system of Bactrian. Thus, the Greek spellings ει and ου were used to denote Bactrian *ī* and *ū* respectively. The differences between the Greek and Bactrian phonetic

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systems, however, necessitated some changes in the sound values of the Greek letters, for example sigma (σ, ς) denoted beside *s* also *ć* and Greek zeta (ζ) had the sound values *z* and *j*. In Bactrian Greek the consonant cluster *ks* became assimilated to *ss*, *s*. Consequently, the Greek letter xi (ξ) was not suitable to represent Bactrian *xš*. Therefore, the consonant khi (χ) and the newly created *ṣ* (Þ) were introduced to denote this Bactrian consonant cluster. A striking peculiarity of the Bactrian alphabet is the new sign Þ for Bactrian *ṣ* and the use of Greek upsilon (υ) for Bactrian *h*.

Bactrian writing was widely used throughout the Kushan Empire both for official purposes and for everyday life. Accordingly, there are several types of records in Bactrian writing: (a) stone inscriptions; (b) wall inscriptions; (c) inscriptions on objects; (d) coin legends; and (e) seal inscriptions. The most important sites of Bactrian inscriptions are: (a) Surkh Kotal with six stone inscriptions; (b) Kara-tepe with inscriptions on potsherds (the short wall inscriptions, numbering about 100, were scratched on the corridor walls by visitors to the sanctuary during the Sasanian age; (c) Dasht-i Nawur with two stone inscriptions; (d) Dilberjin with two stone inscriptions from the Kushan period (some wall inscriptions and ostraca are of post-Kushan date); and (e) Ayrtam with one stone inscription.

According to the evidence of the Bactrian inscriptions known so far, it was the Kushan king Vima Kadphises who first had monumental rock or stone inscriptions prepared. Of his inscriptions, that of Dasht-i Nawur (DN I) seems to be the earliest. Consisting of thirteen lines containing 246 letters, the inscription was engraved on a rock at a height of 4, 320 m in the mountains. Its text can be read and interpreted in the following way:

1. ΣΟΘ Γορπιαιου ιε
   [Era-year] 279, 15th [day of the month] Gorpiaios.

2. Þαονανο Þαο ι αζαδο
   King of Kings, the noble,

3. οαζορκο Οοημο Τακπισο
   great Ooemo Takpiso,

4. κοÞανο ι μαυοζινιγο ι λαδο-
   the Kuṣāṇa protégé of the moon [god], the right-

5. γο ι βαγο οζολαδο ειδο
   cous, the Majesty had this prepared,

6. χοζογαργο αβο ζαχφαο
   he, the benefactor for the welfare.

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7. Οοημο Þαο ασο Ανδηζο ατο
   King Ooemo came both here from
8. μαλο αγαδο ατηο Σανιγε
   Andezo and the Sanigos
9. νομορδανδο οδο μαλο
   were destroyed by him. And here
10. φρομαδο Ανδηζο πορσο
    he ordered: ‘Be the tax paid by Andezo
11. βοοηιο χιβδο αβο βαγανο
    its own for the sanctuary
12. οδο ιαζαδο ι χαρισαρο αβο αμειγο
    and the warlike divinity for ever!’
13. ατο οτανο μολο χοανδο
    For that because he was called by them here.

As can be seen, the content of the Bactrian inscription (DN I) agrees with the Kushan version (DN III) discussed above in all essential points. The epigraphic record was prepared to commemorate the crossing of the high mountains and the victory won by Vima Kadphises when he came from Andezo (Qunduz) over the Sāinis (*Sanige* in the Bactrian text, *Saṇa* in the Kushan version) dwelling in the region. The date of the inscription is ‘[Year] 279, 15th [day of the month] Gorpiaios’. Very likely, the era concerned is the so-called Graeco-Bactrian or Eucratides era, beginning with the accession of Eucratides about 170 B.C. The last epigraphic record of Vima Kadphises dating from the same era is the unfinished inscription of Surkh Kotal (discussed below) from Year 299. Obviously, this inscription was left unfinished because of the death of Vima, so that Year 299 may correspond to the year before the accession of Kanishka. Accordingly, the date of DH I would approximately correspond to a day in September A.D. 113 and the accession of Eucratides would be in 166 B.C.

The date of the Kushan inscription of Dasht-i Nawur (DN III) is consisttent with this: like Gorpiaios, *Brakaśi* is an autumn month and if Year 50 represents the fiftieth year of a sixty-year cycle, it would fall in A.D. 113 according to the Chinese sixty-year cycle time-reckoning and in A.D. 117 according to the Indian one. The former conversion exactly corresponds with the date of the Bactrian inscription DN I. Hence, the Kushans probably became acquainted with the Chinese sixty-year cycle while they were still in their ancient home in Gansu.

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The other Bactrian inscription of Dasht-i Nawur is hardly legible and is still to be deciphered, but all five inscriptions of this site were probably engraved at the same time and can be ascribed to Vima Kadphises.

At the Dilberjin site several epigraphic fragments were found which belong to two inscriptions. Their texts are rather fragmentary: in inscription 1 only one complete word has been preserved, while in inscription 2 no complete sentence can be found. In spite of the fragmentary state of both inscriptions, their texts can tentatively be restored and their contents roughly understood. The name of Vima can probably be recognized in both records.

Consisting of at least ten lines and of 200–220 letters, the tentatively restored text of inscription D 1 runs as follows:

1. [.....]
   [Era-year ..., ... [day of month] ...]

2. [Þαονανο Þαο ι αζαδο]
   [King of Kings, the noble,]

3. [οαζορκο Ooη][μο] [Tακπισο]
   [great Ooe]mo [Takpiso,]

4. [κοÞονο ι] λαδε[ιγο ι βαγο]
   [the Kuṣāṇa, the] right[eous, the Lord]

5. [ειδο πιδογαρο] σαγδο [αβο OηÞο]
   [had this image] prepared [to Oeṣo]

6. οδο φρομαδο ι]θα α[τ][ανο κιδο]
   [and he ordered] thus that [by them who]

7. [αβο μαλι]ζι βαγα[νοβιδο οδο]
   is in the fort]ress pries[t and]

8. [κιδο μαλο] ναχσε[ι][ροβιδο βαγο]
   [who is here master of] the hunt [, care]

9. [λαγγο πιδορι][χσ]ηο οδ[ο πορooαρ]
   [should be] taken [for the sanctuary] and

10. [σηο πιδο ι β][ο]ργ[ο] ο[δο ι ληνο]
    [the cult should be performed according to the] rite [and the religion].

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The inscription was discovered in the sanctuary lying in the north-eastern corner of the Dilberjin fortress and decorated with a wall-painting representing Śiva and Parvatī. The wall-painting was prepared in the reign of Vima Kadphises.

The other inscription from Dilberjin consists of at least twenty-four lines comprising about fifty letters each. Thus, it must have had altogether about 1,200 letters and represented the most considerable Bactrian epigraphic text known so far. Unfortunately, in the three fragments discovered only 442 letters, that is, about a third of the original text, have been preserved. Happily, important terms such as φαρο, αβ[ο], σαδ[ο], αβο ι ωραο[νο] and [ωρα]ονο μο ι αβγο 'abundant water', 'well', 'waterflow' clearly reveal the main topics of the inscription: the water supply of the Dilberjin stronghold and sanctuary. It seems that the stronghold was at first provided with water from a source lying outside the walls where later a sardoba was built. When the water of the source began to fail, a well was dug in the bastion flanking the gate and the use of the water was strictly regulated. These and other measures were apparently taken by order of King Vima Kadphises. In view of the rather fragmentary state of the inscription, its text can only partly and tentatively be restored.

The conjecturally completed text of the inscription runs as follows:

1. [χϷονο .....βαγο Ϸαονανο Ϸαο ι αζαδο οαζορκο] [Era-year ..., ... [day of the month] ... King of Kings, the noble, great]

2. [Οοη]μο [Τα][κπισο κοϷανο ι μαυοζινιγο ι λαδογο ειδο βαγολαγγο] [Ooe]m[o Ta][kpiso, the Kuṣäṇ, protégé of the moon [god], the lord dedicated this sanctuary]

3. αβο ΟηϷο [ι βορζαοανδο ιαζαδο .....] to Oēṣo, [the exalted divinity .....]

4. οισπα ανα[γρο .....] the eter[nal lord of] the universe [.....]

5. οισπο σα[σταρο λαδο τα καλδο μαλιζο φρογιρδο ταδηιο καρανο ο] Ma[ster of] all beings. [At that time, when the fortress was completed, there was no pure]

6. δο φαρο αβ[ο νιστο χοτο ταδι ασο μαλιζο αβαβγο φροχορτο ΟηϷ-] and abundant water [in it to drink. Then, the god Oëṣo wanted to leave the waterless fortress.]

7. ο βαγο σι[δι αβ][ο βαγολαγγο ασο ανο χα]νο α[βο οαστσηιο ταδι ασο] In order [to conduct the water from the old spr]ing to [the sanctuary, then]

8. [Οζην]η Ϸαορο ο[αρζιγε οδο κιρωγε οαστι]νδο κα[λδι μο Ϸαο Οοημο] [from] the land Ujjayinī w[orkers and artisans] were led here. When [King Ooēmo]

9. [Τοχ][μο]δανε α[βαρμαγγο μαλο ζιδο ταδ]ηο σαδ[ο μο ανδαρο φροοαρο] [sent Tox]modane as su[perintendent here, then] he [had] a well [dug in the bastion]

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10. [ϰανδο] οδο ζ[ιδο μο ωραονο ι αβγο ασο] ανο χ[ανο αβο μαλιζο ιθα ατι and [he had the running water] con[ducted from the old spring to the fortress so that]

11. [αβο μαλιζο ϰαρανο οδο φαρο αβο μα γαοηιο οδο ταδι] [Οη]Þο βαγο] [the abundant and pure water should not be missing in the fortress and then the god] Oē[ṣo should]

12. [ασο βαγολαγγο μα φροχοαþηιο οδο ϰαλδι ειρο μα πα][δη]ο α[τι ϰαρα-] [not want to leave the sanctuary and even when the waterflow] would [not be stream]ing, [then from the well pure]

13. [νο οδο φαρο αβο ασο σαδο αβο μαλιζο βοοηι]ο ωλδα ατι φραρ[αονο] [and abundant water shall be for the sanctuary] there. But the right[eous]

14. [Þαο Οοημο ωζανδο σιδι ϰαρανο αβο] [ο]βοδραγγα πιδο ανο χ[ανο ταδ-] [King Ooēmo learned that the pure water] is scanty in the old sp[ring. Therefore,]

15. [ηιο Λιια][γο] [μα][λο] α[βαρμαγ]γο λαδο ταδι αγδο αβαρ[μανδο αβο σαδο] he appointed [Liia]go to su[perintend]ent [he]re. He received the supervisory [authority over the well]

16. [οδο χανο][ο]τηο ι βρηοαρο βοε σι ειρο οαρ ηλι ωο[αρρ][ονδηιο ταδι λ-] [and the spring so] that it should be his decision that the domestics of the fortress [should] cover the drinking water.

17. [αδο ασιδ]ι ιθα σι ειο μανο Κοβειρηο Λιιαγο αλο [πιδοριχσηιο ατι Þα-] [Then it was also ordered] so that Liiago should continually [take care] for the Kuberean house. [Then King]

18. [ο Οοημ]ο λαοδηο ι αλογδα λαδο σιδι με ασο υαζιδο [μα αλο βοοηιο] [Oōēm]o gave the verbal instruction that ‘From my possessions water-conduit [never should be made!] Because otherwise

19. [ωρα]ονο μο ι αβγο ταδι μα αλο ειμο ανο αβο ι ωραο[ν]ο [ατι βαγανοβι-] this never will be a water-flow!’ [Then to priest]

20. [δο Τ]οχμοδανι λαδο οτι ειμο χοαδηο νε χιδι αβα[ρ][μαγγο οδο πιδορ] [T] oxmodani was appointed. Thus it is our king who exercises the super[vision and] should [take care] of us.

21. [ιχσ]ηο ταδι ι μανο νινδιρατο ασιδι ιθα αγδινδι φρη[σ][ε ατανο λαÞν-] Then the house was assigned and at that they obtained the duties [so that they pres[ented

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22. [ο λα]δο ϰαλδι αβο μο φιγαγγο Þαο Οο[ημ]ο οατηιο [ϰιδι αβαρμανδο] [a gift] when King Ooēmo turns to the master [of the merchants?]

23. [ιθα] αγδο ατανο νοπαχτε αβο ναμω σι α[β][ο] φροζα[μο οδο φροÞογιρδο] [who] received [the privilege so] that the duties of them arc pledged for the cult which [should be] to the end of time and eternity.

24. [βοε] οτ[ι βο]οηιο ΟηÞο οορο οισποοανανο ϰιδ[ι] μο χ[οαδηο νε] Then be the chosen of Oēṣo, who is [our] k[ing], victorious over all!

In spite of its fragmentary state, the Bactrian inscription D2 of Dilberjin gives us an interesting insight into the religious policy and the organizational work of Vima Kadphises. The propagation of the Śiva cult at Dilberjin and elsewhere presupposes the conquest of the north-western part of the Indian subcontinent by Vima, and this might have happened soon after his accession to the throne. Similarly, the crossing of Mount Qarabayu rising to a height of 4,500 m and the victory over the Sāinis as well as the preparation of the inscriptions at Dasht-i Nawur could only take place after the campaign he had led into the Indian subcontinent. The crossing of the high mountains is commemorated on his gold coins with Śiva and Nandi on their reverse, that is, the event was preceded by the spread and the propagation of the Śiva cult in Bactria. Thus, the building activity of Vima Kadphises at Dilberjin and the preparation of inscriptions D1 and D2 can be dated to the period between A.D. 110 and 120.

It seems that the religious policy of Vima underwent some modification towards the end of his reign. According to the testimony of the so-called unfinished inscription from Surkh Kotal (SK 2) he also extended his building activity to that region but apparently his intention was to build a sanctuary for a Bactrian or Kushan deity there. The text of the unfinished inscription from Surkh Kotal can be read in the following way:

> χÞονο σχθ διουˡθ Þαο]ναvο Þαο ⌈Οοη]μο Τ⌈αχ]πισο ⌈β]αγο ⌈ϰ]οÞονο λρου ν[ογονδο μαλο]
> Era-year 299, on the 9th [day] of [month] Dios. King of Kings Ooēmo Takpiso, the Majesty, the Kuṣāṇa, had the canal d[ug here].

Very likely, Vima Kadphises died after the completion of the canal and before the finishing of the inscription. Thus, he assured the water supply for the building operations which were probably continued by his successor Kanishka with out interruption. Therefore, the inscription witnessing the building activity of Vima Kadphises at Surkh Kotal was never finished.

None of the Bactrian inscriptions set up during the reign of Kanishka (Years 1–23 of the Kanishka era = A.D. 134–56) was preserved completely. At Surkh Kotal, the monumental

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wall inscription (SK 1) must have been prepared at the time of the first Great Kushan king. Unfortunately, however, only one fifth of the whole inscription (124 letters altogether) was preserved.

But the fragments permit us to form an idea about the contents of this important Bactrian record, which might originally have been composed of some 700 letters.

At the beginning of the inscription, the names and titles of the Kushan king were probably mentioned:

]βαγ[ο Þαονανο Þ]αο οβ[οσαρο Καννηþχο. . .]
the lord, Ki[ng of Kings], the mi[ghty Kaneṣko . . .] (Fragment 1 + b)

The context is not clear; perhaps the passage can be restored in the following way: ‘The lord, Ki[ng of Kings], the mi[ghty Kaneṣko, the Kuṣāṇa, had this stronghold built]’. Then, very likely, a date followed (Fragment k + t + v):

[πιδο ι ι]ωγο [χÞον]ο Τ[. . . . .] ειλο α[γαδο. . .]
[in the] first [era ye]ar T [an officer of the king] c[ame] here.

Apparently, the next section of the inscription described the building of the stronghold (Fragment m + c + g + a):

οτη[ιο ειδο μαλιζο οδο βαγολαγγο πιδ]ο σαβ[αρο] σαρλ[ο] ανδι[Þτο]
Then [this stronghold and the sanctuary] were built by him in four years.

It seems that further building operations were mentioned in the following passage (Fragment p + w + aa + u + s + y + q + n + j + x + f + r):

[οδο ϰ]εδο ι μ[αλιζ]ο φρ[ογιρδο ταδηιο ειιο μο μα]Þτο [οδο] παγ[δο ι ω]λε σ[αγωγι ϰιρδο οτηιο πιδο ασαγγε λρουο υαρο]υγο ο[ιλιρδο ιθα ατηιο ϰαρ]ανο αβο [πιδο λρου]ο αβο [βαγανο νοÞα]λμ[ο φροοα]στο [ατηιο βαγολαγγο π]ορο- [γατο]

[And] when the st[rongho]ld was com[pleted, then this falçade [and] the stairs l[eading th]ere [were built by him. Moreover, the canal was wh]olly bu[ttressed with stones so that p]ure water was [provid]ed by [him in the can]al for the ab]ode of the gods. Thus he] took care of the sanctuary].

The last passage of the inscription obviously summarized the activity of the royal officer or of his attendants and gave information about the preparation of the record. (The end of the inscription was preserved *in situ*):

[ορο ειιο μο μαλιζο οδο λρουο So-and-So ϰιρδο πιδο ι χοαδηο φρομανο ορο So-and-So] νοβιχτο μο μαÞτο ουβε μο παγδο ι ωλε σαγωγι

[Moreover, this stronghold and the canal were built by So-and-So by the order of the king]. Then So-and-So inscribed the façade and the stairs leading there.

Thus, on the basis of the preserved fragments about three-fifths of the inscription (altogether about 400 letters) can be restored, while Fragments d, e, h, i, o, z = 23 letters were

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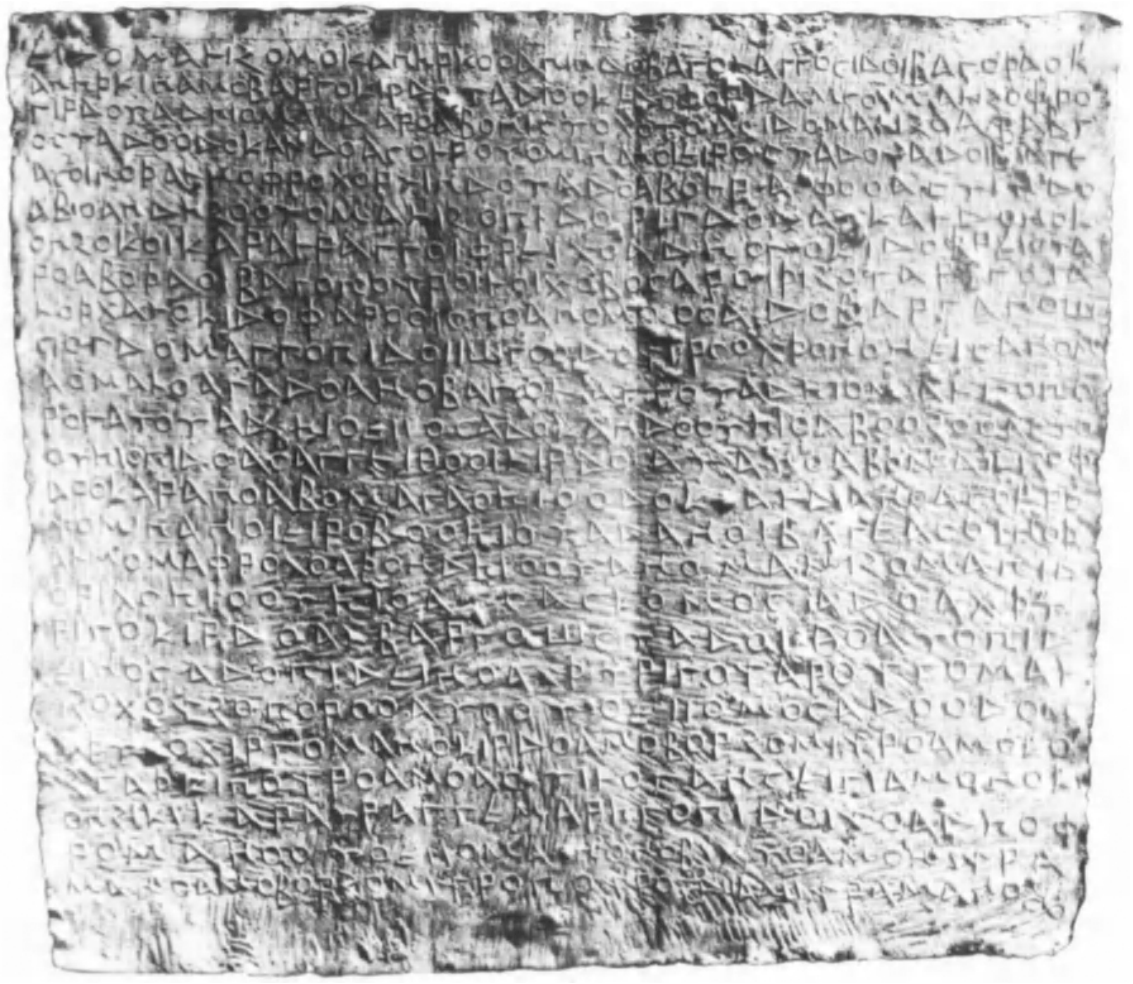

FIG. 1. Bactrian inscription SKM from Surkh Kotal.

not used for the restoration. The missing passages, consisting of some 270 letters, might have mentioned the preparatory work and earlier building operations of Vima Kadphises and perhaps the intended purpose of the stronghold and the consecration of the sanctuary.

The third inscription of Surkh Kotal (SK 4) was prepared in three versions (SK 4A, SK 4B and SK 4M; see Fig. 1) shortly after Year 31 of the Kanishka era, probably under the joint rule of the Kushan kings Vāsishka, Kanishka II and Huvishka, as Huvishka is already mentioned in Year 28 of the Kanishka era while the two former kings are jointly attested in the inscription from Kamra dated from Year 30 of the same era.

The three versions of the inscription differ from one another in both language and content. Version A describes the earlier fate of the stronghold and the arrival of Nokonzoko, the *karalrango*, who had a well dug to provide drinking water for the stronghold. Besides this officer, nobody else is mentioned; even the scribe and the mason, preparing the record,

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are only indicated by their personal devices (Device 1 and Device 2). The language of the inscription is correct Bactrian.

Version B was prepared by another scribe and mason who are both indicated by Device 3 and Device 4 and also mentioned by name – Liiago and Adego – who can be regarded as Kushans or Sakas on the basis of their names. This version already mentions the name of the architect who dug the well. Apart from this, the text of Version B coincides with that of Version A. From a linguistic viewpoint, however, there is an important difference. In Version B, some verbal forms, the particles, the relative pronouns and some nouns terminate in *-i* instead of *-o*. This striking phenomenon cannot be explained by orthographic variation or instability because it only occurs in one and the same Version B, while Version A and Version M offer no instances of it. In view of the fact that the scribe and mason of Version B were probably of Kushan or Saka origin and in their language the outcome of Old Iranian *-ah* was *-i* instead of *-o* in Bactrian, this linguistic feature of SK 4B can probably be regarded as the interference of the Kushan or Saka language. If, therefore, the term Kush-ano-Bactrian or Sako-Bactrian had a real linguistic background, it could best be applied to the language of the inscription SK 4B.

The reason for the preparation of Version B can only have been the lack of any reference in Version A to the architect and to the order of the king by which he had the well dug. However, it seems that further essential building operations were executed later on. Another architect, Xirgomano by name, had the lower façade of the sanctuary built. To commemorate this event, the scribe of Version A, indicated by Device 2, and a third mason represented by Device 5, were again commissioned to prepare a new inscription – Version M. They copied the text of Version A but added two passages, one mentioning the building of the façade by Xirgomano, the other indicating the names of the scribe and mason.

The text of SK 4 (A, B, M) runs:

1. (M) ειδο μαλιζο μο Καvηϸκο Οανινδο βαγολαγγο σιδο [B: σιδι] ι βαγο ϸαο [B: ϸαᾳυυο] Καvηϸκι [B: Καvηϸκᾳϸκι] vαμοβαργο κιρδο [B: κιρδι].
   This stronghold is the ‘Kancṣko’ Oanindo sanctuary which the lord king made the namebearer of Kaneṣko.

2. ταδιοο κεδο [A: κιδο, B: κεδι] φορδαμσο μαλιζο φρογιρδο ταδηιο μανδαρο αβο νιστο [B: νιστι] χοτο ασιδο [B: ασιδι] μαλιζο [B: μαλιζα] αβαβγο σταδο. οδο καλδο ασο λρουο [B: λρου] μιvανο ι ειρο σταδο, ταδο [B: ταδι] ι βαγε ασο ι νοϸαλμο [B: ια νιϸαλμο] φροχορτινδο [B: φροχορτινδι] ταδο αβο Λραφο οαοτινδο [B: οαστινδδ̣]ιι̣] αβο Ανδηζο οτο [B: οτι] μαλιζο πιδοριγδο [B: πιδοριγδι].

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At that time when the stronghold was first completed, then its inner water to drink was missing, therefore the stronghold was without water. And when the water-flow disappeared from the canal, then the gods wished themselves away from the abode. Then they were led to Lrafo, [namely] to Andēzo. Afterwards the stronghold became abandoned.

3. τα ϰαλδο [B: ϰαλδι] Νοϰονζοϰο [B: Νοϰονζιϰο] ι ϰαραλραγγο ι φρει χοαδηααγο ϰιδο [B: πιδδιι φρεισταρο αβο Þαο ι [A: Þαυο] βαγοπουρο [B: βαγοποορο] ιλο [B: αλι] ι χοβοσαρο ι Þιζογαργο [B: Þιζογαργε] ι αλοÞχαλο [A: αλαχÞαλο] ϰιδο [B: ϰι̯διδι] φαρο οισποανο μο οαδο βαργανο ωσογδομαγ γοπιδο ι ωγο οδο υιρσο [A: ιωγο οδο, B: ιωγο υιρσο] χρονο Νεισανο μαο [A: μαυο] μαλο αγαδο αμο [B: αβο μο] βαγολαγγο ταδηιο μαλιζο πορογατο [B: ποργα[το]]. ταδηιο ειιο [B: ειο] σαδο ϰανδο οτηιο [B: ατηιο] αβο οζοοαοτο [A: αζοοαστο B: ζοοαστι] οτηιο πιδο ασαγγε ιθο [B: ιθα] οιλιρδο ατανο αβο μαλιζο φαρο ϰαρανο αβο μα γαοηιο οδο ϰαλδανο ασο λρουο [B: λρου] μινανο ι ειρο βοοηιο ταδανο ι βαγε [A: β[αγ]ο] ασο ι νοβαλμο [B: ια νιÞαλμο] μα φροχοαÞονδηιο [B: φροχωÞινδηιο] οτανο μαλιζο μα πιδοριχσηιο

Then, when Nokonzoko, the *karalrango*, the king's favourite who is most devoted towards the king, the Son of God, the patron, the benefactor, the merciful as well, who wishes glory, all-winning strength from pure heart, came here to the sanctuary in the 31st Era-year, in the month *Nisān*, then he took care of the stronghold. Then he had a well dug, thus he provided water. Thereafter, he buttressed [the well] with stones so that the fine, pure water should not be missing for the stronghold. And when for them the water-flow would disappear from the canal, even then the gods should not wish themselves away from their abode, thus the stronghold should not become abandoned by them.

4. οτηιο ασασϰο μο σαδο αχÞτριγο ϰιρδο αλβαργο ωσταδο ιθο [AB: ιθα] ατο [B: ατι] πιδεινο [B: πιδεινι] σαδο πιδεινο [B: πιδεινι] αχÞτριγο υαρουγο [A: υαρουγο] μαλιζο χουζο πορооατο.
Moreover, he appointed an inspector over the well, he placed a helper there, so that a separate [inspector] took good care of the well and a separate inspector of the whole stronghold.

5. οτο ειιο μο σαδο οδο μαÞτο Χιργομανο ϰιρδο αμο Βορζομιυρο αμο Κ οζγαÞϰιπουρο αμο Αστιλογανσειγι αμο Νοϰονζιϰι ϰαραλραγγε μαρηγο πιδο ι χοαδηο φρομανο [A: –, B: οτιι ειι̯ο σαδο Βορζομιορο ϰιρδι, Κ οζγαÞϰιπ[ο]υρο, Υαστιλογανζειγο, Νοϰονζιϰι ϰαραλραγγι μαρηγι πιδο

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χοαδηο φρομανο]
. Moreover, this well and the façade were made by Xirgomano and Borzomihro, the son of Kozgaṣko, the citizen of Astilogan, the attendant of Nokonzoko, the *karalrango*, by the order of the king. [B: Moreover, this well was made by Borzomioro, son of Kozgaṣko, citizen of Hastilogan, attendant of Nokonziko, the *karalrango*, by the order of the king.]

6. οτο ειιομανο νοβιχτο αμο Μιυραμανο αμο Βορζομιυροπουρο, Device 5, αμιυραμανο, Device 2 [A: Device 1, αμιορα μανο, Device 2, B: λιιαγο, Device 3, Aδηγο Device 4].

Moreover, Eiiomano inscribed [this] together with Mihramano, the son of Borzomihro [Device 5] jointly [Device 2]. (A: Device 1 jointly, Device 2, B: Liiago, Device 3, Adego, Device 4).

In the historical context of inscription SK 4 of Surkh Kotal, the question may be raised: Which of the Kushan kings is mentioned by the modest titles βαγο þαο in this record? According to the testimony of the Kharoṣṭhī inscription from Kamra, in Year 30 of the Kanishka era, it was Vāsishka who bore among others the titles *mahārāja rājatirāja* while his son Kanishka was probably styled only *mahārāja*. Similarly, Huvishka only bore the title *mahārāja* in Brāhmī inscriptions between Years 23 and 40 of the same era. Corresponding with the Brāhmī inscriptions, on the inscription of Ayrtam, written in Bactrian and dated Year 30 of the Kanishka era (see below), he is styled þαο and βαγο þαο which apparently correspond to the title *mahārāja* on the one hand, and coincide with the title βαγο þαο used in inscription SK 4 of Surkh Kotal on the other. Thus in Year 31 of the Kanishka era (A.D. 164) three Kushan kings, namely Vāsishka I with the Indian titles *mahārāja rājatirāja* (∼ Bactrian βαγο þαουαυο þαο), Kanishka II bearing the Indian title *mahārāja* (∼ Bactrian βαγο þαο), and Huvishka I with the same Indian title *mahārāja* and with the Bactrian title βαγο þαο, respectively, were ruling. Obviously, the king styled βαγο þαο in inscripion SK 4 of Surkh Kotal could only be either Kanishka II or Huvishka (I). In view of the fact that according to the text of the inscription ‘the lord king made [the sanctuary] name-bearer of Kaneṣko’, it is perhaps more likely that ‘the lord king’ was Kanishka II, who was able to revive the cult of Oanindo/Victory in Surkh Kotal with good reason after his victory over the Parthians about A.D. 162, attested by the *Śrīdharmapiṭakanidānasūtra*.

An important inscription in the Bactrian language was discovered in 1979 at Ayrtam, 18 km east of Termez on the northern bank of the Amu Darya. The inscription was engraved on the front side of a square base of a monumental relief representing the deities Farro and Ardoxṣo. Its text runs as follows:

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1. [Þα]ọọọι χÞọ λ χα[λδ]ị ι ạ[ρδο]χρο φαρρ[ο πιδογαρα] μαλ[ιι] βα[γ]ο Þαο βαγδο οδο ωστασδ[ο]

   King [is] Ooeṣko, the Era-year [is] 30 when the lord king presented and had the Ardoxṣo-Farro image set up here.

2. [τα χ]αλ[δι] φρογι[ρδ]ο μạ̣ḷịζα οταδο Þοδιλα [.....]ι γανζαβạ̣ṛạ̣αβο βαγ ολαγγο ζιδο ατι

   At that time when the stronghold was completed then Ṣodila [. . . . . .] the treasurer was sent to the sanctuary. Thereupon

3. [ειδο πιδ]ογαρα Þδ̣ị̈λα χιρδο<ο>τι ανι<ι>α αβο μαλιζα ωοταδο ατ̣ị̈χ̣ạ̣λδι ι [α]βο φρολβαρδο

   Ṣodila had this image prepared, then he [is] who had [it] set up in the stronghold. Afterwards when the water moved farther away,

4. [τ]αδι [ι ι αζαδε] οαṣ̣ṭ̣ị̈νδο ạ̣[σ]ο [ι] μ[α]λ[ιζ]α αβαβο ατι<ι>δι οδιλα σạ̣δ̣ι νιγανδο ατι

   then the divinities were led away from the waterless stronghold. Just therefore, Ṣodila had a well dug, then

5. Þοδιλα αβο μλζα αβογανδο ριζδι οτι οβει ι ιαζαδε μạ̣ḷị̈ạ̣βο βα[γ]ολαγ[γ]ο αβ[α-]

   Ṣodila had a water-conduit dug in the stronghold. Thereupon both divinities returned back here

6. [σ]ṇ̣ị̈ạ̣ṭ̣ị̈νδο οτι ειμο μιιροζαδα ντβιχτο πιδο ια Þοδιλα φρομανα

   to the sanctuary. This was written by Miirozada by the order of Ṣodila.

The Bactrian inscription of Ayrtam allows us an interesting insight into the inner organization and religious policy of the Kushan kingdom. The Kushan gods represented on the coins were for a long time shadowy figures. The situation changed when the sanctuary of Oanindo was discovered at Surkh Kotal, and the sanctuary of Oaxṣo was found at Takht-i Sangin. Now the cult of Farro and Ardoxṣo is firmly attested by the relief and inscription from Ayrtam.

The Bactrian script and language were used for a long time after the Kushan age but only small fragments of Bactrian literary works have been discovered so far. The latest known examples of Bactrian script date from the end of the ninth century A.D. and were found in the Tochi valley in Pakistan.

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Sanskrit and Prakrit

The territory of the Kushan Empire included important parts of modern Pakistan and India with a large population speaking Indian languages. Long before the Kushan age two scripts – Brāhmī and Kharoṣṭhī – and several literary languages – Sanskrit and different Prakrits – came into being and were highly developed in the Indian subcontinent. Of the two scripts, Kharoṣṭhī was used in the north-west, its eastern limit running across the Panjab with only exceptional examples further east, for example, in Mathura. Variants of Brāhmī spread in the other parts of the subcontinent. The language, written in the Kharoṣṭhī script, was the Gāndhārī Prakrit spoken in Gandhāra and adjacent regions; Brāhmī was used for Sanskrit and, except for Gāndhārī, for the other Prakrit languages.

The use of Kharoṣṭhī had already reached Bactria during the time of the Graeco-Bactrian kingdom. The Graeco-Bactrian kings used Kharoṣṭhī and Gāndhārī Prakrit as well as Greek for their coin inscriptions. This can be explained partly by the fact that the Graeco-Bactrian kingdom included Gandhāra, a territory where Gāndhārī Prakrit and Kharoṣṭhī script were used, partly by their spread towards Central Asia across Bactria. Evidence of such a process can be seen in the coins with the Gāndhārī legend in Kharoṣṭhī:, *Kaviśiye Nag aradevata* (âIJ¡*Kāpisika Nagaradevatā* city-goddess of Kāpiśa). There is also a Kharoṣṭhī inscription on the smoothing knob of a potter from the Graeco-Bactrian level of Bcgram (Kāpiśa): *pu-ña-mi-tra-sa* ‘[property] of Punyamitra’. The name *Punyamitra* has a clear, Buddhist character and so this inscription attests not only the spread of the Kharoṣṭhī script and Gāndhārī Prakrit, but also the appearance of Indian Buddhists in Graeco-Bactria.

Another early trace of Kharoṣṭhī can be seen at Ay Khanum, where on a potsherd a Kharoṣṣṭī record came to light: [*sa* x+]I *daṃ* III *dha* III ‘[stater x+]I *draṃma* III *dbana* III’. It is likely that Kharoṣṭhī script and Gāndhārī Prakrit were brought by Indian merchants and artisans to Transoxanian Bactria in the Graeco-Bactrian period if the Kushan script (the ‘unknown script’, see above) can really be derived from the Kharoṣṭhī alphabet, and if the dating of the inscription from Issîk (see above) to the end of the third century B.C. proves to be correct. In any case, the use of Kharoṣṭhī and Gāndhārī became more and more extensive in the Saka and Indo-Parthian periods. The Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions on the gold ingots of the hoard from Dalverzin-tepe in northern Bactria bear witness to this development.

The reasons for the quick spread of Kharoṣṭhī and Gāndhārī Prakrit in Bactria and Central Asia are easy to see. The first was that literacy was widely spread among both Buddhist monks and Brahmans, and it was much easier to find Indian scribes acquainted with Kharoṣṭhī than experts in other scripts. So Saka and Indo-Parthian and later Kushan administration became based, to a certain extent, on Indian scribes. Then, from the beginning of

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the silk trade about 100 B.C., Indian merchants travelled to China across Central Asia and contributed to the spread of Kharoṣṭhī in the Saka and Indo-Parthian kingdoms and later in the Kushan Empire. As a trace of their travels in the western Pamirs, the Kharoṣṭhī inscription of Dayr-Asan, dated to the beginning of the first century B.C., may be mentioned. Last but not least, Buddhism appeared in Central Asia, and Buddhist monks also followed the Silk Route in the tracks of the merchants, did active missionary work, found patrons and established monasteries. The growth of the silk trade, the spread of Kharoṣṭhī script and Gāndhārī Prakrit and the propagation of Buddhism reached a peak under the Kushans.

As a result of this development, Kharoṣṭhī script and Gāndhārī Prakrit conquered new territories in northern Bactria in the region of Termez, Chilas and Gilgit as well as in Chinese Turkestan. According to Hsüan-tsang, there were ten Buddhist monasteries in the neighbourhood of Termez in the first half of the seventh century A.D. Some of them must have been founded in the Kushan age, and among them the cave monastery of Kara-tepe (excavated during the last twenty years) was the most important. The numerous Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions found there mostly represent records of donors written on earthenware vessels. On the basis of the letter forms, they can be dated to the Kushan period.

The Kharoṣṭhī rock inscriptions from Chilas and Gilgit, discovered as the result of explorations since 1979, can similarly be dated to the Kushan period. They are of three types: (a) records of pious donations (the image of a stupa or the Buddha, etc. carved on the 'Sacred Rock of Hunza'); (b) records of personal names followed by the good-wish formula *subratu* (with *bra* instead of *bhra* like *dra* instead of *dhra* in the Kharoṣṭhī inscription of Kamra; thus < * *su-bhratu* < * *su-bhartu* < Old Indian *su-bharatu* or *su-bharatān* 'So-and-So may be well!'); and (c) personal names. These are of great importance from both the historical and cultural points of view. They bear witness to Saka and Kushan suzerainty in Gilgit, and provide clear evidence of both the penetration of Buddhism and the spread of Kharoṣṭhī script and Gāndhārī Prakrit into the northernmost Indus valley.

The third region, that is Chinese Turkestan, was penetrated by Kharoṣṭhī and Gāndhārī Prakrit in the Late Kushan period. The numerous Kharoṣṭhī administrative documents (about 800), written on wood, leather and paper, were found mainly at Niya and Lou-lan. Earlier researchers thought that they were introduced into the administration of the Kingdom of Shan-shan as a result of Kushan rule there. Later, however, it became clear that the Tarim basin had never been subject to the Kushans and the emergence of Kharoṣṭhī script there cannot be explained by that theory. Kushan chronology also makes any such connection impossible because the western part of the Kushan Empire was annexed by the Sasanians in A.D. 234, while Kharoṣṭhī script was introduced into the administration of the Kingdom of Shan-shan about A.D. 245. This can probably be explained by the

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assumption that when the Sasanians conquered Balkh, many Indian staff who had worked in the Kushan administration escaped by the Silk Route to the Kingdom of Shan-shan, entered the service of King Tajaka who in about A.D. 245 was reigning there, and played an important role in creating its state organization, introducing Gāndhārī chancellery practice.

Compared with the Kharoṣṭhī script of Gandhāra, the alphabet of the Kharoṣṭhī documents from Niya and Lou-lan has some peculiar features, of which the most striking is the indication of long vowels by a short stroke written below the line at Niya. The same phenomenon can only be observed in the Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions of Kara-tepe and Fayaz-tepe near Termez. However, the origin of this sign is explained, as its earlier emergence in northern Bactria proves that it was from there that Kharoṣṭhī script spread to Shan-shan by the Silk Route, that is, it did not reach Niya directly from Gandhāra via Gilgit and the Karakorum.

The indication of the length of vowels is fully developed in the Brāhmī script which was used to write Sanskrit and Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit. It therefore seems obvious that the indication of vowel length in Kharoṣṭhī developed under the influence of the Brāhmī script in a religious or administrative centre, where the two scripts were used side by side. The spread of Brāhmī towards the north-west had already begun in the Saka period. Indian merchants using Brāhmī script for Gāndhārī Prakrit had already reached China about the middle of the first century B.C., as their presence is attested by the Brāhmī inscription on a silk strip found on the Chinese limes at Tun-huang.

The role played by Buddhist monks in the spread of Brāhmī was even greater. The decisive turning-point was the synod of the Sarvāstivāda school held in Kashmir during the reign of Kanishka, which, according to the tradition, compiled the *Jñānaprasthānam* and entrusted Aśvaghoṣa, the famous poet from Sāketa, with providing for the correct language form of the commentary written by Kātyāyana. In view of the fact that Aśvaghoṣa wrote his works in standard Sanskrit, his commission obviously meant the preference of Sanskrit to Prakrit, which was also used earlier by the Sarvāstivādins. Earlier, both the Mahāsārighika and the Sarvāstivāda schools used Kharoṣṭhī and Brāhmī equally in the territories where the two scripts spread. Thus, in Mathura, both the Mahāsāṅghikas and the Sarvāstivādins used Brāhmī script for their inscriptions, while both schools adopted Kharoṣṭhī for their epigraphic monuments in Gandhāra.

After the synod of Kashmir, however, the Sarvāstivādins preferred Sanskrit or Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit and Brāhmī script, and when they penetrated Bactria on the tracks of the Mahāsāṅghikas, Brāhmī also appeared in the Buddhist monasteries. This development can be seen clearly at Kara-tepe, where inscriptions written in both Kharoṣṭhī and Brāhmī

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occur on earthenware vessels. The Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions belonged to the Mahāsāṅghika school as is proved by the texts themselves. Therefore, the inscriptions written in Brāhmī probably represent the Sarvāstivādins. This connection between script and sect after the synod of Kashmir is further proved by the fact that the first wave of Buddhism brought the Mahāsāṅghika school together with Kharoṣṭhī and Gāndhārī to Khotan, while the second transferred the Sarvāstivādins there together with Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit and Brāhmī script.

There can be no doubt that the indication of vowel length in Kharoṣṭhī script came into being under the influence of Brāhmī script in the Buddhist monasteries of northern Bactria, especially in the region of Termez, where Mahāsānghikas and Sarvāstivādins lived side by side, and Kharoṣṭhī and Brāhmī were used side by side in the Kushan period. Thus, at Kara-tepe, the spellings *kāśi* 'cup' and [*ma*]*hāsamghikānaṃ* 'of the Mahāsānghikas' occur while in Fayaz-tepe the spelling *sarvasatvāna* 'of all beings' is attested.

Gāndhārī Prakrit, the language spoken in Gandhāra and used for administrative and economic purposes by the Kushans, was also one of the literary languages of Buddhism, and before the synod of Kashmir it had produced a relatively rich Buddhist literature which was later thrust into the background by Buddhist works written in Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit. Of Buddhist works in Gāndhārī Prakrit, only the Kharoṣṭhī *Dhammapada* has been preserved, and this was discovered in Khotan, far to the east of ancient Bactria. The fate of the *Dhammapada* shows what happened to Buddhist Gāndhārī Prakrit literature. It was slowly driven out by the Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit works written in Brāhmī, and only survived to a limited extent in the city-states of the Tarim basin, while even there the local languages, Khotanese, Agnean and Kuchean, used Brāhmī instead of Kharoṣṭhī. Kharoṣṭhī was only retained for administrative purposes in Kucha, where the latest documents are dated between A.D. 618 and 647.

According to Buddhist tradition preserved in the Pālī canon, monks of Brahmanic origin proposed to the Buddha that his words should be put into Sanskrit; and even though the Buddha ordained that everyone should use his own language in reciting the sacred texts, the Sanskritization of Buddhist texts began at an early date. The language, which came into being gradually by the increasing Sanskritization of Buddhist texts fixed in a Middle Indian dialect (Prakrit), became Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit.

Some Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit works already existed as early as the first century B.C., and the 'nucleus' of the *Mahāvastu* written with the aim of describing the life of the Buddha, may go back to the first century B.C., even though it was successively expanded by additions, the latest of which can be dated to the fourth century A.D. While the growth of Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit literature covers half a millennium, its golden age was the period

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of the Great Kushans. The most important Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit works were compiled or given their definitive form during this period. These include the *Mahāvastu* the *Lalitavistara* (a Vinaya text of the Lokottaravādins, a school of the Mahāsāṅghikas, originally a work of the Sarvāstivāda school giving a biography of the Buddha), the *Avadānas* (tales of great acts or of the fruits of man's actions, the oldest of which may be the *Avadānaśataka*), the *Divyāvadāna* (a collection of Buddhist legends), and the *Saddharma-Puṇḍarīka* (propagating the ideal and the worship of the Bodhisattva and glorifying the Buddha as a being of inconceivable might).

The perfection of Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit literature could hardly have taken place without the personality and activity of the great Indian poet Aśvaghoṣa. According to Buddhist tradition he lived at the court of the Kushan king Candana Kanishka, who is to be regarded as Kanishka II, ruling from Years 30 to 42 of the Kanishka era (i.e. A.D. 164–76).

He wrote the two *kāvya* epics, the *Saundarananda* (the legend of the conversion of Nanda, the half-brother of the Buddha) and the *Buddhacarita* (the story of the life of the Buddha himself). Unfortunately, the greater part of Aśvaghoṣa's poetic work has been lost or is only preserved in fragments, but it is clear from his two epics that he was one of the most important poets of Sanskrit literature, who exercised an influence even on Kālidāsa. The style of Aśvaghoṣa is relatively simple and obviously represents the so-called Vaidarbha style, but it is still impressive, sensuous and daintily elaborated. To illustrate this we may quote two verses from the *Buddhacarita* depicting a sleeping beauty of the harem:

> *vibabhau karalagnaveṇur anyā*: *stanavisrastasitāṃśukā śayānā rjuṣaṭpadapanktijuṣṭapadmā*: *jalaphenaprabasattaṭā nadīva*.
>
> One was gleaning, holding a flute in her hand: she was lying with a white garment slipping from her bosom
>
> like the river in whose lotuses whole swarms of bees delight: whose banks laugh with the foam of her waters.

The importance and the popularity of Aśvaghoṣa's poetic works are best shown by their influence on Kālidāsa and their spread beyond the borders of the Kushan Empire to the Tarim basin, and to China in Chinese translations. Gāndhārī Prakrit literature could not set anything of equal literary value against them, and it was not therefore by chance that the fragments of the *Śāriputraprakaraṇa*, a drama of Aśvaghoṣa, came to light in Turfan.

Sogdian

The territory of Sogdiana (the Zerafshan valley) did not belong to the Kushan Empire, but Sogdian merchants engaged in the silk trade often visited both Bactria and Gandhāra.

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In some periods they used the route across the Karakorum range to Gilgit, and left many hundreds of Sogdian inscriptions on the rocks at Thor and Shatial Bridge. These Sogdian records were written in the same alphabet as the Sogdian 'Ancient Letters' found on the Chinese limes at Tun-huang from the end of the second century A.D., so the bulk of the Sogdian inscriptions at Thor and Shatial Bridge should belong to the Kushan, or at most to the Late Kushan, period. They mostly consist of the proper name of an individual together with that of his father with some indication of his origin and the circumstances of his journey. Inscriptions with a longer text scarcely occur. It is interesting to note that some of the Sogdian names mentioned in the 'Ancient Letters' as *Nanēβandak*, *Nanēθβār*, *Δruvāspβandak*, *Taxsīcβandak* also occur in the inscriptions of Thor and Shatial. As most of the Sogdian names at Thor and Shatial have no parallel in the 'Ancient Letters', the occurrence of the quoted names may have particular importance. Perhaps Taxsīc*β*andak, father of Nanē*β*andak, may be identical with Taxsīc*β*andak, son of Nanē*β*andak, mentioned in Letter 2; and Δruvāsp*β*andak, father of Farnc, may be the same as Δruvāsp*β*andak, who is also mentioned in Letter 2. In this case the rock inscriptions of Thor and Shatial would be dated to the end of the Kushan and the beginning of the Late Kushan period in the third century A.D.

The same date can be proposed for the Parthian and Middle Persian inscriptions carved on the rock among the Sogdian records. Both the Parthian inscription (*wryḫrn šḫypwḫrn* < Varihrān Šāhipuhrān) and the Middle Persian one (*špyḥ* * *Šapīh* or * *Šipīh*) are written in the Pahlavīk and Pārsīk alphabets of Early Sasanian date, that is, they can also be dated to about A.D. 230–60. The chronological position of these inscriptions enables us to elucidate the historical background of their emergence in Thor and Shatial. Obviously the conquest of the western part of the Kushan kingdom by the Sasanians interfered with traffic and trade between Sogdiana and Kušānšahr (now belonging to Iran), and between Sasanian Kušānšahr and the north-western part of the Indian subcontinent. To keep away from Sasanian Kušānšahr, Sogdian merchants took the route through Gilgit and across the Karakorum range. Later, when political relations between Iran, Sogdiana and the Indian Kushan kingdom were consolidated, the difficult route across the Karakorum was abandoned.

The indications of origin in the Sogdian inscriptions deserve special attention because they considerably enlarge our understanding of trade relations in Central Asia. We may quote the following inscriptions:

4a. *pnšt pysk δβrtβγ'n BRY n'βc* 'Pisak, son of *θβartβaγān*, citizen of Na*β*, perished'. Na*β* can be identical with Nawa of the Arab geographers, a village 2 – 3 *farsakhs* from Samarkand.

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4b. *wnnysrδ ZK nrck BRY wrδnc* ‘Vananisarδ, son of Narcak, citizen of Warδan’. Warδan may be identified with Wardāna of the Arab geographers, an important village in the district of Bukhara.

45. . . .]*p’c BRY šxyβ’yc* ‘[So-and-So], son of [. . .] *p’c* citizen of Šāhβaγ’. The latter name may be compared to Šāhbāhš of Arab geography, a district in the area of Bukhara.

51. *βwxs’kk ZK wnxrk BRY p’yknδc* ‘Bōxsāk, son of Vanxarak, citizen of Paykand’. The town Paykand lay 5 *farsakhs* from Bukhara.

57c. *n’wrβ’ ZK* rwδ’ync ‘Nāwraβa, citizen of Rōδēn’. The toponym Rōδēn ‘Copper [Fort]’ may be another name for Paykand, the ‘Copper Fort’.

135. *xwt’wz’mk ZK kš’yknδc* ‘Xwatāwzāmak, citizen of Kašekanδ’. The latter toponym may be the forerunner of Kāyškan or Kāškan of the Arab geographers (< Kašikanδ), a village in the neighbourhood of Bukhara.

Most of the indications of origin refer to the territory of Bukhara and Samarkand. Besides, there are some remarkable indications:

9c. *xnsc δwyt’kk cyn’nch* ‘Xansacδuytāk, daughter of Xansac, citizen of Cinānc’. The fuller form of this toponym was Cinānckanδ; it was the Sogdian name for Turfan.

64b. This is the record of *wrβ’kk ZK ‘kwc’k* ‘Warβāk, the citizen of Kuča’. Warβāk seems to be a name of Kuchean origin (cf. Kuchean *wārw* -, to stimulate).

122b. This mentions *pysk ZK rxwtc* ‘Pisak, citizen of Raxwat’. Raxwat is the Middle Iranian name for Arachosia.

Thus the settlements of the Sogdians were already spread throughout the whole of Central Asia. From Bukhara and Samarkand to Turfan and from Arachosia to Kucha, they played an important intermediary role in the mutual exchange of both material and intellectual culture between Iran, India and China in the Kushan age.

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