

BARBARA MEKARSKA

AN ATTEMPT AT THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE BACTRIAN LANGUAGE SYSTEM

There has been a French archeological expedition in Afghanistan operating since 1924. The investigations have been carried out in Surh-Kotal, near Baghlan (the ancient Bagolango), north of Kabul.

During the excavations in the ruins of the temple of fire from the time of Kushan dynasty (1st—3rd century A. D.) the French scholars have found some plates with inscriptions written in the Greek alphabet¹. Some of them cannot be deciphered at all, on the others particular letters and words are legible.

It has been assumed on the grounds of both fragments as well as the fairly numerous Kushan coins² that it is a hitherto unknown Iranian language.

On 6th May 1957 a plate with a clearly visible text consisting of 25 lines was discovered. The plate was built into the facade of the temple. Later on another two, nearly identical texts were found. They differed only in initials (*tamya*) at the end and were probably the copies of the inscription.

Such specialists on Iranian as A. Maricq, B. Henning, H. Humbach and others have studied the newly discovered language, however, no explicit pronouncements have been made.

Considering the time when the inscription was written³ and

¹ The process of Hellenization of Bactria after the conquest by Alexander the Great. (329 B. C.) was a rapid one. E.g. from the very beginning the legends on the coins were written in the Greek alphabet.

² See the catalogue of the Kushan coins in Göbl's, „Dokumente zur Geschichte der iranischen Hunnen...“

³ Presumably in 2nd cent. A. D. The date will depend on the period which be accepted as the date of the reign of the Kushan

the place of its discovery the language has been included among the east group of the Middle Iranian languages in the fairly early phase of their development. It seems to be one of the Bactrian dialects placed by Henning and Maricq between Pashto and Yidha-Munji on one side and Sogdian, Khorasmian and Parthian on the other.

Already the very name of the language provoked a violent dispute. Maricq, who was the first to study the language referred to it as *Ethéo-Tokharian*⁴ explaining it by the fact that the language was used throughout Tokharistan of those days and that this name was applied by Bīrūnī (tuxāriy) ⁵ and the Chinese pilgrim from 7th century, Hiuen-Tsang ⁶.

Henning opposes to calling the language „Tokharian” for the sole reason that the Kushans gave Bactria the name of Tokharistan. In fact they adopted the language of the natives and though they were sure to influence it strongly it is not a sufficient reason to apply the name „Tokharian” to the language spoken by the inhabitants of Bactria. Therefore he prefers the name Bactrian.

O. Klima suggests the name Kushan-Bactrian.

H. Humbach includes it into the Old Iranian languages. He uses the name Kushan on the assumption that the Kushan people did not adopt the language of the Bactrians but they retained their own old tongue. It is possible, of course, that the latter assimilated some local, Bactrian elements, it retained, however, its Old Iranian character.

The scholars have been convinced about it ever since the research started. They all, except Humbach, describe it as a language with all the features of the early stage of development of Middle Iranian languages.

king Kanishka (A. D. Bivar „The Kanishka dating from Surh-Kotal”).

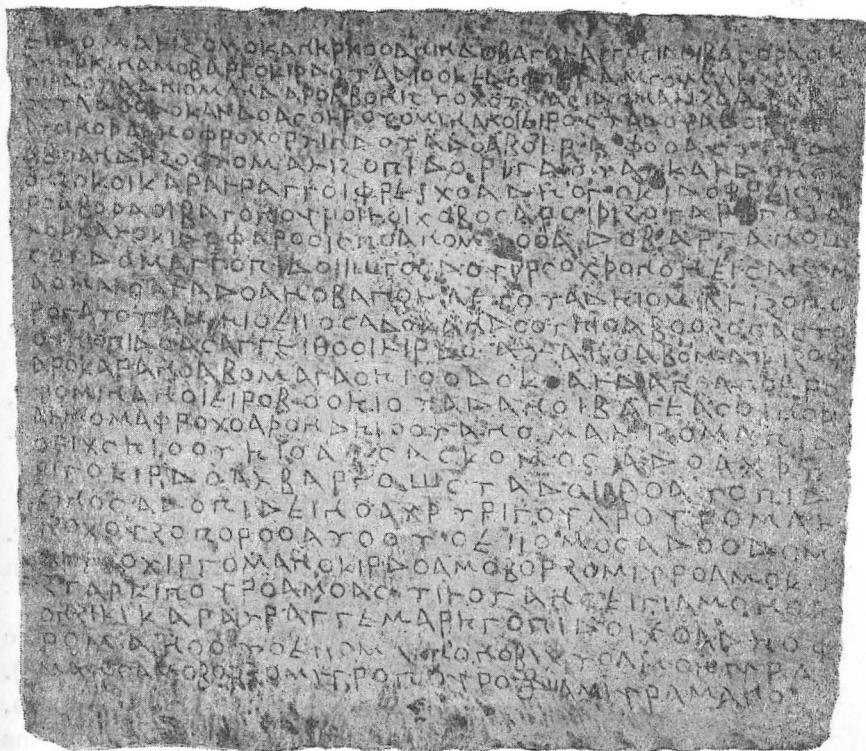
⁴ Eteo (Gr.) — ‘true, real; lasting’, as opposed to the pseudo-Tokharian from the Kentum group, the monuments of which were found in Kutchi and Karasharu in Chinese Turkestan. The name is also used by Bailey.

⁵ al-Bīrūnī „Kitāb as-saidanā”.

⁶ Hiuen-Tsang writes that Tokharian literature represented a higher level of development than Sogdian (Oranskij „Iranskije jazyki”).

All the studies on Bactrian are based, almost exclusively, on the short text from Surh-Kotal. Some system generalizations are permissible thanks to the fact that the language phenomena of Bactrian can be compared with numerous closely related languages.

The closest lexical and grammatical analysis of the new language has been made by Maricq. Taking into considerations the



later works of other authors and through comparisons with the related Middle Iranian languages as well as the earlier Iranian languages we can explain in terms of Iranian nearly all the Bactrian words from both lexical and morphological point of view.

In the list below the words are given in the order in which they appear in the text. The different grammatical forms of the same word have been compared and discussed together. The comparative material presented below is a selection.

1. Εἶδο
(eido)μαλίζο
(malizo)μο
(mo)Κανήσκο
(Kaneško)
Οανινδο
(Oanindo)βαγολαγγο
(bagolango)σιδο-ι
(sido(i))βαγο
(bago)παο
(šao)2. ναμο
(namo)
παργο
(bargo)κίρδο
(kirdo)
ταδιοκεδο
(tadiokedo)

Ir. (pre-Iranian) *aita, Av. (Avestic) aēta, O. Per. (Old Persian) aita — demonstr. pron. 'this, that, it'

Ir. *dīza 'fortress', Khot. (Khotanian) malysaka, cf. Skr. (Sanskrit) gr̥ha-pati — s. nom-acc. 'acropolis'.

shorter form of μο 'so, just the same, thus'. Acc. to Maricq it is pers. pron. for 1st person (gen). He translates the first sentence of text in the 1st person.

In line 11: μο Ir. *hama 'the same'. Ir. *kan 'young'. Proper name, nom. (Acc. to Maricq — gen.).

Ir. *vanant 'victorious'. The royal title, presumably adopted after Seleukos Nikator.

Ir. *baga-dānaka, cf. Skr. deva-kula 'temple'.

cf. σιδο (line 3). Ir. *ā-sita 'existing, reclining, based on'. 3rd prs. sg praet.

Ir. *baga, Av. бага 'God'.

In line 5: βαγε inflex. form.

Ir. *χšāvan, O. Per. χšāydiya, M. Per. (Middle Persian) šāh 'king, ruler'. In line 8: παο inflex. form.

Ir. Av. O. Per. nāman 'name' (Livshic derives from Ir. nam 'homage, bow'). Acc. to Maricq Ir. *bārg, M. Per., Parth. (Parthian) b'rg 'protection, wall'. It seems to be more correct to derive it from Av. O. Per. bara, M. Per. bar- 'bear. carry'. 3rd prs. sg praet. In line 9: παργανο conjugation form.

Ir. *krta 'done, made'. 3rd prs. sg praet. τadio rare alternative form beside τadio, ταιοι (see below). Intervocalic 'k' which appeared οκεδο late in the time. The meaning of the word obscure.

φορδαμο
(fordamso)
φρογίρδο
(frogirdo)3. ταδηιο
(tadeio)μανδαρο
(mandaro)αβο
(abo)νιστοχοτο
(nistoxoto)
αβαβγο
(ababgo)4. σταδο
(stado)
οδο
(odo)
καλδο
(kaldo)ασολροχομινανοι
(asolrohominanoi)ειρο
(eiro)5. ασοινοβαλμο
(asoinošalmo)
φροχορτινδο
(frohortindo)

Av. frātama, O. Per. frātama, M. Per. fratum 'first'. σο adj. or adv. suffix.

Ir. *fra-kṛta 'finished'. 3rd prs. sg praet.

Inflex. form of τadio (line 5). Av. tat-demonstr. pron. 'such'. In line 4: ταιοι in 15: ταιοι inflex. forms.

Form and meaning obscure. Livshic translates 'inside' as av. añtare, o. per. antar, mid. per. andar.

Ir. *ābi, āpi, Av. āp 'water' or Ir. *abi 'towards, to'. Henning perceives both the meanings in the text, Maricq interprets it as a prefix only.

χοτο Av. χušta 'dried up'. 3rd prs. sg praet. The meaning of νιστο is not clear. Ir. *ap-āpaka 'waterless, without water'.

Ir. *stāta 'standing, placed'. 3rd prs sg praet.

Ir. *ūta, Khor. (Khorasmian) ud, Khot. (Khotanian) u 'and'.

Ir. *kada + do Sogd. (Sogdian) kdw — time part. 'when, then, thus'. Acc. to Maricq — relat. pron.

ασο Ir. *hačā 'from, away'. Cas. obl. plur. The meaning of the whole word remains obscure ('mighty, terrible'?).

Av. ira 'energy, impetus'. Livshic translates 'heat'.

ασοι cas. obl. sg of ασο. νοβαλμο Ir. *nišadman 'abode, seat'.

Ir. *fra-χ^uarta. 3rd prs. pl praet. The meaning in the context: 'they went away'. In line 16: μαφροχορπονδηιο neg. form 3rd prs. pl praes.

- αβολραφο
(abolrafo)
- οαστινδο
(oastindo)
6. ανδηζο
(andezo)
οτο
(oto)
- πιδοριγδο
(pidorigdo)
- τα
(ta)
Νοκονζοκοι
(Nokonzokoi)
7. καραραγγοι
(karalrangoi)
- φρει
(frei)
χοαδηο
(choadeo)
γο
(go)
κιδο
(kido)
φρεισταδ
(freistado)
- αβο prefix. λραφο presumably from ir. **drapsa* 'drawing'. The meaning 'towards the drawing > a picture' and analogically below αβοανδηζο 'towards the wall > a sculpture' (?).
- οαστο Av. *vašta* 'the one who went away, who was carrying'. 3rd prs. pl prae.
- Ir. **handaiza* 'wall'.
- Acc. to Henning and Humbach = οδο, acc. to Maricq — relat. pron. In line 12: οτηο, in line 13: ατανο (?), in 16: οτανο — inflex. forms.
- Ir. **pati* 'to, towards' + weak form of **riχta* (raik) 'to leave', Sogd. *p'rχs* 'to stay', Khot. *pars* 'to be liberated'. 3rd prs. sg praet. In line 16: μαπιδορικσηο neg. form 3rd prs. sg praes.
- Av. *ta* 'that is why, so'. A particle introducing a sentence.
- A proper name. Cas. obl. sg.
- O. Per. *kāra* 'army' + *drang* 'to dominate'. It might have been a military title. Cas. obl. sg. In line 22: καραραγγε inflex. form.
- Ir. **friya* 'nice, pleasing'. The royal title. Cas. obl. sg.
- Ir. **χvatāvya* 'ruler'.
- Ir. **ka* — suffix or particle.
- Parth. *cy:ky*, Sogd. *kyty* 'who'. Acc. to Maricq from Ir. **kati* 'very, very much'.
- Av. *friya*, Sogd. *frystr* 'friendly'.

8. βαγοποηροι
(bagopohroi)
- λοιχοβοσαροι
(loiχobosaroi)
- βιζογαργοι
(sizogargoi)
9. αλοσρχαλο
(aloσχalo)
- φαρο
(faro)
- οισπο
(oispo)
ανομοοαδο
(anomooado)
- οσογδο
(osogdo)
10. μαγγο
(mango)
- πιδοι
(pidoi)
ιωγο
(iogo)
χιρσο
(hirso)
χρνοο
(χšono)
- Ir. **baga* 'God' + *puθra* 'son'. Cas. obl. sg. ποηρο appears in the text with patronymics.
- οβοσαροι Ir. **upačāra* 'subordinate'. The meaning of the whole word is obscure, not translated (probably an attribute of Nokonzoko). Cas. obl. sg.
- γαργοι Ir. **karaka* 'doing'. Henning translates the whole word as 'beneficial, charitable'. Cas. obl. sg.
- (?) Ir. **hada* 'with' + s. as in sogd. 'χšd'. The word is not translated, presumably attr. of Nokonzoko.
- Ir. **fra-* 'forward' (preposition), appears in the text also in the form φοο. Acc. to Maricq — Av. *pouru*, O. Per. *paru*, Khot. *buro* 'a lot of'.
- Ir. **vispa* 'every, each'.
- The word as yet not translated. It is possible that the initial ανο indicates the plural of the preceding word.
- Ir. **avasuxta*, Sogd. *w-swyt*, Khot. *vasuta* 'burnt, clean'. 3rd prs. sg praet.
- Av. *banha*, Skr. *bangha*, M. Per. *mang* 'hemp'. Acc. to Herodot the hemp played an important role in the ceremonies of purification with Scythians. Thus οσογδο μαγγο 'of pure thought'.
- Ir. **pati* 'to, towards'.
- Ir. **aiva-ka*, Av. **aēvo*, M. Per. *yv*, *yk*, Pashto *yau* 'one' (numeral).
- Av. *θrisas* 'thirty'.
- Ir. **χšāivana*, Khot. *kšuna*, Scyth. *χšane* 'the year of reign'.

- Νεισανο
(Neisano)
μαο
(mao)
11. μαιο
(malo)
αγαδο
(agado)
προγοατο
(prorogato)
12. ειιο
(eiio)
σαδο
(sado)
- κανδο
(kando)
οζοοαστο
(ozooasto)
13. ασαγγε
(asange)
ιθο
(iθo)
- οιλιρδο
(oilirido)
- ατανο
(atano)
14. καρανο
(karano)
μαγαοειο
(magaoeio)
- καλδανο
(kaldano)
- The name of a Babylonian month, used also in Sogdian.
Ir. **māh* 'month'.
- Ir. **madhya* 'middle'.
- Ir. **ā-gata* 'one who has come, came'
3rd prs. sg praet.
Sogd. *prkšt* 'going (walking) forward'
3rd prs. sg praet.
- The same ethymology as for ιωγο 'some, simple'.
Acc. to Maricq — Sogd. *s't*, M. Per. *satak* 'simple'. It is more probable that it is Ir. **čād*, Sogd. *č't* 'well'.
Ir. **kanta*, N. Per. (New Persian) *kandeh* 'dug out'. 3rd prs. sg praet.
οζο Ir. **uz-* 'upwards'. οαστο Ir. **vašta* 'carrying'.
- Av. *asənga* 'stone'. Cas. rect. pl.
- I am adopting Henning's ethymology of Av. *qibṛyā* 'pillar, pole' (the object of action expressed by οιλρδο). Acc. to Maricq — Av. *iθa* 'so, in this way'.
Av. *dar-* (part. *dyrd*) 'reign', 'establish'. Maricq derived it from Ir. **vi-drta*, Av. *darata* 'split up'. 3rd prs. sg praet.
inflex. form of οτο or ατο.
- Sogd. *kr'n* 'clean'. Sg or pl of καρο.
- Av. *gav-* 'to deliver'. 3rd prs. sg praes. prohibitive negation by μα (Ir., Av., O. Per. *mā*, Pashto *ma-*, Osset. *ma-*).
The meaning similar to καλδο

15. βοοειο
(booeio)
17. ασασκομο
(asaskomo)
αχρτριγο
(aχštrigo)
18. αλ, αλβαργο
(al, albargo)
- ωσταδο
(ostado)
ατο
(ato)
πιδεινο
(pideino)
19. ηαρογχο
(harohgo)
20. χοηζο
(xohzo)
ποροοατο
(porooato)
- μαρτο
(mašto)
21. χιργομανο
(Hirgomano)
βορζομihpo
(Borzomihro)
Κοζγαρκο
(Kozgaško)
22. Ασπιλογανσειγι
(Astiloganseigi)
- Ir. **bav-* 'to become'. 3rd prs. sg praes.
- Ir. **hačā-skamba* 'supported'.
- Av. *aivi-āχštar* 'supervising'. Gershevitch interprets it as 'a device for pulling up water, pump'.
- Acc. to Maricq αλ Av. *hada*, Sogd. 'd 'together'. Henning links it with the following βαργο. αλβαργο Ir. **hada-bara*, M. Per. *hdb'l* 'friend'.
Ir. **ava-stāta* 'put up'. 3rd prs. sg praet.
- Av. *at* 'here is, this is'.
- Ir. **patina*, Av. *paitina* 'other, different'.
- Ir. **haruva-ka* 'whole'.
- Sogd. *χwc*, Parth. *χwdž* 'pretty, fine'.
- Supposedly Ir. **parva(r)št*, Parth. *prwrz*, Sogd. *prwyj* 'taking care of'. 3rd prs. sg praet.
- Benveniste derives it from Av. *mišta* 'tower, turret or window'.
- A proper name.
- A proper name.
- A proper name. This and the following as well as Νοκονζοκο and Κανηρκο are typical Kushan names.
- A proper name.

23. μαρηγο (marego)
φρομανο (fromano)
Ir. *maryaka, O. Per. marika 'slave, subject'.
Ir. *framana 'to order'.
24. μανο (mano)
νοβιχτο (nobixto)
Μιηραμανο (Mihramano)
Av. manah 'soul'.
Ir. *ni-pišta, ni-pixšta 'written'. 3rd prs. sg praet.
A proper name.

The Bactrian phonological system is typical for the Middle Iranian languages. The values of phonemes are usually presented in the following way:

Vowels: ε i ω

Diphthong: ol

Consonants:

	Labials	Dentals	Palatals	Velars	Glottals
Voiceless plosives	π	τ		κ	
Voiced plosives	$(\beta)^7/$	$(\delta)^7/$		$(\gamma)^7/$	
Voiceless spirants	φ	θ		χ	
Voiced spirants	β	δ		γ	
Voiceless sibilants		σ	$\mathfrak{p}^8/$		
Voiced sibilants		ζ			
Nasals	μ	ν		the first γ in $\gamma\gamma$	
Liquids		$\rho\lambda$			
Semivowels	$\omicron$ (ω)		ι (y)		
Aspirates					h

Mariq did not notice any affricates in the inscription leaving open the question of their existence in the language. Henning.

⁷ Intervocalically.

^a p — the sign denoting the palatal voiceless sibilant 'š'; used for the first time in the inscription from Surh-Kotal. On the earlier coins it was written as 'p'.

however, maintains that the old palatal affricates 'č' 'j' turned into dental 'c' 'ž' (in the inscription σζ) or into 's' 'z' (e.g. ασο from *hačā*, -so from *č(y)*, γοηζο from *xwǰ*).

When analysing the particular words of the inscription both the elements of the continuation of the Old Iranian languages in Bactrian and its similarity to the Middle Iranian languages become obvious; it is possible then to define the value of the phonemes of the language within the Iranian group of languages:

'a' was preserved, except when in the last syllable ($\alpha\beta o$, $\beta\alpha\gamma o$); $a > o$ between the labials ($\beta o o\eta i o < bav-$); $a > i$ in the group -ant ($O\alpha\nu\nu\delta o < vanant$)

'ā' preserved (αγαδο, ασιτο)

'i' preserved (ιθο, ηιργο); *i* > *o* under the influence of the labials
(νοβικτο < *nipišta*)

'i' preserved intervocally only in one case $\pi\iota\delta\epsilon\iota\nu\omicron$ < $\pi\alpha\tau\iota\eta\alpha$

'u' preserved (in spelling *o*) -οδο, βορζομυθο

‘r’ preserved only in the group -*rt-* > ιρδ (κίρδο, οιλίρδο), and -*rz-* > ορζ (βορζο-)

The only Iranian diphthong whose modifications can be watched throughout the text is 'ai'. It became 'e' (αυδηζο) and 'ei' (ειδο). It is possible that the ending -αι corresponded to '-ai'. The word ωγο presents a special case, where 'aiva' > 'yu'.

'v' was preserved in spelling ο (Θανινδο, οισπο, βοοηιο)

'y' was obsolescent undergoing some modifications (καθηο < xva-tāvyā)

'k' 't' 'p' were kept at the beginning of the word (κανδο, πιδο, τα),
become intervocally voiced and spirant (φοργιδο,
αβο)

'd' which in other Middle Iranian languages turned into 'h' or 'y' here became 'l' (βαγολαγγο, ολιρδο)

'g' 'b' became spirant as in all east Middle Iranian languages.

Voiceless spirants, sibilants, liquids were retained.

The letter most frequently occurring in the text is 'o' (used 233 times for 948 letters). It appears at the end of nearly each word representing sometimes the Iranian 'u'. On the coins of that period 'o' is an equivalent of the Middle Persian 'a' (𐭠𐭣𐭥𐭥𐭥—

M. Per. *ātaš*). It is possible that the final 'o' was not pronounced playing the role of the separator. There is however, no proof for it.

Maricq asserts that 'o' was the ending of the theme of both the verb, noun and inflected words (in the inscription there are no feminine nouns, on the other hand the feminine proper names on the coins end with an -α).

In the situation where the text material is so scarce it is very difficult to establish a total language system. It is much easier to classify the particular words within a language group but even this leads to many a controversy. The morphological system is even a more controversial matter since not all flectional forms appear in the text.

It was Mari'q who made an attempt to establish the inflection of the nouns and verbs; he approached the task by examining two similar sentences which differ in the form of words (line 4—6 and 14—17):

1. οδο καλδο ασολροχομινανοι ειρο σταδο ταδοι βαδε
2. „ καλδανο „ „ βοσηιο ταδανοι „
1. ασοινοβαλμο φροχορτινδο... οτο μαλιζο πιδοριγδο
2. „ μαφροχοαρονδηιο οτανο „ μαπιδοριχσηιο

Taking into account also the forms παοι, κανηρικι etc. he established the noun and pronoun declension in a three-case system:

	Sing.	Plur.
Nom-acc	Κανηρικ-ι	ποηρ-ο
Gen	Κανηρικ-ο	καλδ-αυο
Cas. obl.	Νοκονζοκ-οι	-ποηρ-οι

It is likely that the ending of the oblique case -οι was originated by Av. -ai, while the plural ending -αυο by Av. -ānām. According to Humbach the ending of Gen. sg. -ο was derived from the O. Per. -ahya.

These are the traces of the Old Iranian theme declension where a > o.

In the text there are a few examples of the consonant themes; they end with -n (ναμο < nāman, παο < χšavan — on the coins the form παοναο), as well as with -h (μανο < manah, μαο < māh).

Henning disagrees with Maricq's concept of declension. He says it is not in the spirit of the Middle Iranian in which the inflectional endings tended to disappear. He maintains that -ι which Maricq places at the end of the word is a separate word, an article similar to Khor. ī and Mid. Per. ī(g). He motivates it by pointing to the occurrence of the form πιδοι (πιδο is an uninflected part of the speech) which in his view, consists of πιδο + ι. He explains that 'i' plays the role of a conjunction between different parts of the sentence (e.g. the subject with the attribut: Νοκονζοκο ι καρκαργγο) or the article (ταδο ι βαγε).

Analysing the above quoted sentences Maricq establishes some conjugational forms. Since the whole inscription is written in the third person only the third person forms can be taken into consideration.

Two themes can be distinguished: praesens and praeteritum (Old Persian partic. perf. pass.) The 3rd prs. praet. is a pure verb theme (σταδο, πιδοριγδο). 3rd prs. pl. praet. has the ending -ινδο (Ir. hanti): φροχορτινδο In the praesens the themes change: praet. πιδοριγδο praes. μαπιδοριχσηιο; φροχορτινδο μαφροχοαροννηιο. The ending of the 3rd prs. sg. praes. is -ηιο (Ir. causat. -aya); 3rd prs. pl. praes. -ονδηιο.

After considering both the tenses and the inflection of the nouns it can be assumed that the affix αν ιν ον is a characteristic feature of the plural.

In this short text there appear fairly often prefixes which are a continuation of the Iranian prefixes:

α-γαδο	: ir. a- 'to, towards'
ω-σογδο	: ir. ava- 'down'
φρο-γιδο	: ir. fra- 'forward, on'
νο-βιχτο	: ir. ni- 'low'
πιδο-ριγδο	: ir. pati- 'against'
αβο-οζο-οαστο	: ir. uz- 'up'
	: ir. abi- 'towards'
οι-λιρδο	: ir. vi- 'separate'.

With verbs there appears sometimes the verbal particle -μα (μαφροχοαρονδηιο). Maricq considers it to be an ordinary particle

while according to Henning it functions as a prohibitive negation (Ir. **mā-*). The differences in interpretation are reflected in the translations of the text.

In the text in question there are some other parts of the speech, such as pronouns declined as nouns (ταδο, καλδο), adverbs (κιδο, φαρο -acc. to Maricq), numerals (ιωγο, χιρσο) etc. There do not occur any undoubtedly pure adjectival forms.

The translation of the unique, so far, Bactrian text presented below has only a few gaps. It once again emphasises the fact that even such a scarce material as that allows to reconstruct the language:

„This is the acropolis of Kanishka the Victorious, the temple which bears the name of our Lords, the king. First, he erected walls here, the acropolis was completed and then, water dried up in it, the acropolis remained without water when the mighty heat set in so that the gods left the abode and the pictures of gods and the sculptures were raised up and the acropolis was left empty, till the time when Nokonzoko, the elder, the lord, the ruler, who was friendly to king, pious, ..., charitable, ..., who did well to everybody, with pure thoughts, in the 31th of kshuna, in the month of Nisan, came here to the temple. And then he surrounded the acropolis (with a wall), and after that he dug out (a well) very skifully and he led water out of it. He made a pillar of stones to let water flow to the acropolis and there was enough of clear water so that when mighty heat came the gods would not leave their abode and the acropolis would not be made empty. And over (the well) he built a fine aqueduct (?) of stones, he erected the pillar (of the well) straight. And owing to the aqueduct the whole temple was well supplied with water. And it was useful and a tower (!) Hirgoman built, he and Borzomihir and Kozgashka and Astiloganzeg and Nokonzoko, the elders obedient to king's orders — and that is why it was taken down by Mihraman and Borzomihir (and M)ihraman”.

After some very thorough studies in grammar and ethymology I have endeavoured to produce as close a translation as possible, a translation expressing faithfully the grammatical form and the meaning of the words. I have based my work on the incomplete translations of Maricq and Henning as well as the translation of

Livshic. The differences in opinions about the interpretation of the text sometimes concern rather fundamental matters. The translations produced till now have left some gaps to be filled up either by further close studies or by some new discoveries of the inscriptive materials.

Although the inscription discovered in Surh-Kotal is not big, it has a considerable significance. Thanks to these 25 lines we can, for the first time, say something about the language spoken over the vast area of East Iran under the Kushan dynasty. So far only the names of the kings and goods as well as few royal titles and words connected with religion have been known from the coins.

Now, owing to the text from Surh-Kotal an insight has been gained into the vocabulary of the language. The listing of the grammatical form coupled with the comparative studies upon the related languages of that period allow to produce a fairly precise outline of the Bactrian language. However, on the account of the small size of the text, not even the most general conclusions can be drawn as to the syntax of the language.

The fact that the inscription is vocalized is very important; it will certainly help in future to explain the sound system of Sogdian.

It has been assumed that in Bactria in 1st—3rd centuries there existed a separate language. Now it is known for sure that even though Bactrian belonged to the Middle Iranian languages, it developed an individual character of its own. It is highly probable that it was in use long before the Kushans came to Bactria.

The comparison of the writing on the coins with the inscription shows that the knowledge of the Greek alphabet was not very deep in Bactria, since sometimes the same words are spelled differently. In the areas controlled by India the Greek alphabet was not in use at all.

The text brings some information about the Kushan culture and religion, too. The very fact that the inscription was found in a non-buddhist temple reflects the approach of the sovereigns to the religion. It was the king who erected and renovated the temple of fire, so it seems that in spite of adopting buddhism the Kushans were supporting the old local religions.

The material culture flourished at that time. The construction of the aqueduct conveying water from the well to the temple provides an illustration of the fact.

The text introduces also some important people of that time, the governors of king Huvishka (Nokonzoko, Borzomihir, Kozgashka, Astiloganzeg).

The date seen on the inscription confirms the information from the Indian sources about a new era beginning at that time. The fact that king Kanishka's ascension to the throne started a new era is significant. It shows how important a role he played in East Iran.

It is obvious that numerous linguists and orientalists have studied such an interesting text. They have all tried to obtain the maximum of information from it in all possible ways, utilizing their extensive knowledge of Iranian languages, searching for similarities and, last but not least, making use of their linguistic intuition.

But the opinion about the inscription from Surkh-Kotal and the Bactrian language are still far from being unanimous and the discussion is still open.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Ch. Bartholomae, *Altiranisches Wörterbuch*, Strassburg 1904.
2. E. Benveniste, *Essai de grammaire sogdienne II* — Paris 1929.
3. E. Benveniste, *Inscriptions de Bactriane*, J. A. vol. 249, 1961, p. p. 113—153.
4. A. D. Bivar, *The Kaniška dating from Surkh Kotal*, BSOAS, vol. 26, 1963, p. 498—503.
5. A. D. Bivar, *The Kushano-Sassanian coin series*, INSI, vol. 18, 1956.
6. R. Göbl, *Dokumente zur Geschichte der iranischen Hunnen in Bactria und India*, Wiesbaden 1967.
7. R. Göbl, *Die drei Versionen der Kaniška-Inschrift von Surkh Kotal*, Wien 1965.
8. *Grundriss der iranischen Philologie*, Bd 1, Abt. 2, Strassburg 1885—1904.
9. *Handbuch der Orientalistik Iranistik*, Leiden—Köln 1958, p. 20—21, 130.
10. J. Harmatta, *Cusanica*, „Acta Orientalia Acc. Scient. Hungariae“, vol. 11, 1960, p. 191—221.

11. B. Henning, *The Bactrian inscription*, BSOAS, vol. 23, 1960, p. 47—56.
12. P. Horn, *Grundriss der neupersischen Etymologie*, Strassburg 1893.
13. H. Humbach, *Baktrische Sprachdenkmäler*, vol. 1, Wiesbaden 1966.
14. H. Humbach, *Die Kaniška-Inschrift von Surkh Kotal*, Wiesbaden 1960, and reviews of this work:
R. N. Frye, „Indo-Iranian Journal“, vol. 5, n° 3, 1962.
J. Gershevitch, BSOAS, vol. 26, 1963, p. 193—196.
O. Klíma, „Archiv Orientalni“, vol. 29, 1961, p. 694—696.
15. A. Maricq, *Bactrien ou étéotokharien?* J. A., vol. 248, 1960.
16. A. Maricq, *La grande inscription de Kaniška et l'éteotokharien l'ancienne langue de la Bactriane*, J. A., vol. 246, 1958, p. 345—441.
17. V. Masson, V. Romodin, *Istoria Afganistana*, Moskva 1964.
18. I. M. Oranskij, *Iranskije jazyki*, Moskva 1960.
19. D. Schlumberger, *La temple de Surkh Kotal de la Bactriane*, J. A., vol. 243, 1955, p. 269—281.