THE INSCRIPTION OF TIRAVHARNA KŠATRAPA

Summary: The Karosthï inscription of Tiravharna ksatrapa (discovered in the suburb of Jalālābād in 1923, kept in the Kabul Museum) was set up in honour of the satrap by a man bearing the Indian name Malasua. The purpose of the inscription was to commemorate the building of a lotus tank and its inauguration by the ceremony of libation with running water (udagajaladhobuvena), as well as to express the chief desire of the donor to have a son (putrestaparena). Tiravharna was of Indo-Parthian descent and he did not acknowledge the authority of the Saka king Moga, ruling in Gāndhāra at that time (83 BC).

Key words: Karosthï, Tiravharna kṣatrapa, Malasua, Saka, Moga, Gāndhāra.

In spite of its shortness, the Karosthï inscription of Tiravharna kṣatrapa aroused keen interest in Indian epigraphic research. This inscribed stone, discovered during the opening of an irrigation channel in the southern suburb of Jalālābād in 1923, is currently kept in the Kabul Museum. S. Konow was the first to publish it on the basis of an excellent photo made by B. Rowland. He proposed the following reading and interpretation of the inscription (Figs 1–2):

line 1  Tiravharna kṣatrapasa Puspa[ura]*
line 2  vasa 20 20 20 20 III u[taravi*] [ha]raṇi
line 3  cobuvena Puspap[ura]*
line 4  Malasuena karavida
line 5  ia p[u]karani

Translation: "This tank was caused to be made by Malasua, Puspapura’s co-buva, in the North Monastery, year 83, under Tiravharna, Puspapura’s kṣatrapa".1

It was already clear from the first publication that the main difficulty in reading and interpreting the inscription is in part due to the damage of the inscribed stone surface, as a result of which several characters disappeared, and in part to the uniden-

1 Konow, S.: Kabul Museum Stone Inscription of the Year 83. AO 16, 1938, 234–240.
Fig. 1. The inscription of Tiranzharpa kṣatrapa (after G. Dj. Davary)

Fig. 2. Autography of the inscription, based on Fig. 1

tified word, read as *cobuvena* by Konow. All scholars who later studied this stone inscription tried to offer a plausible reading of its text and a convincing interpretation of the enigmatic form *cobuvena*.

Unaware of S. Konow’s publication, H. Humbach again published the inscription thirty years later. He read and interpreted its text as follows:

| line 1 | Tiravharnasa ksatrapa p?asa(h)a |
| line 2 | vasa XX XX XX XX III U?1? |
| line 3 | dhoburanaputres-Tap?-a[? |
| line 4 | majhasuena karavida |
| line 5 | ia pukara

Translation: line 1 “Under Tiravharṇa the kṣatrapa, in the Paśaha year 83, by U-
line 2 dhoburanāśa’s son, Tapa-
line 3 majhasua was caused to be made
line 5 a tank here”.

Somewhat later, however, Humbach became acquainted with S. Konow’s paper and again studied this inscription. He noted that the reading and restoration *Puspa[urasā]*, proposed by Konow cannot be accepted and replaced it as well as his own initial proposal of *p?asa(h)a* with the undoubtedly correct reading *puyae*.

Soon afterwards, G. Fussman again took up the study of this inscribed stone and being unaware of the second paper by Humbach, he proposed the following reading and interpretation of its text:

| line 1 | Tiravharnasa ksatrapa sr[va][e] |
| line 2 | vasa 20 20 20 20 III u[…]
| line 3 | cobuvena Putrespa[…]
| line 4 | Malasua karavida |
| line 5 | ia pukara

Translation: line 1 “For the prosperity of the kṣatrapa Tiravharṇa year 83, at U[…]
line 3 the cobuva Malasua, the son of Putrespa(?)
(alternately “the cobuva Putrespa […] and Malasua” or “the cobuva Putrespa[…] Malasua”
line 4 caused to be made
line 5 this tank.”

---


*Acta Ant. Hung. 41, 2001*
Finally, G. Dj. Davary who published excellent photos of both the inscription and its latex squeeze also revised the reading of the inscription of Tiravharna. He rejected the reading *si[va][e]* proposed by Fussman and confirmed the reading *puyae* preferred by Humbach. On the basis of the photos published by him, it is now possible to establish the text of the inscription of Tiravharna reassuringly.

Remarks on the reading:

Line 1. The reading of the word *puyae* (*K^püßyai*, dative of *püjä*- ‘honour’) is absolutely certain. The misreading *sifvae* can be ascribed to taking the aksaras *pu* and *ya* for one character instead of two and by neglecting the *u*-mātrā in the aksara *pu*. However, both characters can be clearly identified and the *u*-mātrā can also be well discerned on Figs 3 and 4 published by Davary.

Line 2. At the beginning of the line, the second aksara should be read as *se* in the word *vasa* because the *e*-mātrā can be clearly seen on Fig. 3 published by Davary. Otherwise, this line was correctly read already by Konow up to the gap caused by the broken surface of the stone in the form *vasa XXXXXXXX III u*[. Even so, his reading and restoration of the text after the clearly visible *m*-aksara, namely [taravi-ha]ra[nnmi], cannot be accepted. First of all, the gap is only sufficient for three aksaras. Moreover, after the gap only the traces of one aksara can be well observed. This is a vertical stroke that cannot be restored as *mi* because in this case the upper ends of the aksara would be visible on the stone. The little damaged surface in the middle of the vertical stroke only suffices for the left side stroke of the aksara *la*. Thus, the correct reading of this passage is *u[...]*la.

As regards the disappeared three characters, several traces of their figures can still be observed. A short vertical stroke can be seen at the edge of the gap, after the *u*-aksara. In view of its resemblance to the character *da* of the word *karavida* in line 4, it can also be considered the remains of the middle part of an aksara *da*. Similarly, two short strokes can be observed on the opposite edge of the gap, too. The lower stroke slants slightly to the right, the upper one slants to the left and their inclination to each other is about 120°. The aksara to be restored on the basis of these rests may be mostly *ja*. Even the faint contours of a third one can be discerned between these two letters. This character was incised so deeply that its faint traces remained visible even after the surface of the stone was broken. The contours of this aksara resemble the Greek letter *phi*, accordingly it can be read as *ga* in the Kharoṣṭhī alphabet. Thus, the whole word can be read as *udaga-ja*la.

Line 3. The enigmatic word *cobuvena* does not exist here. The first aksara can only be read as *dho*. True enough, the forms of *ca* and *dha* are similar, but the upper stroke of *ca* is curved, while that of *dha* is straight. Consequently, the character in question can only be read as *dho*. At the same time, the reading *dhoburena* of the whole word is again impossible because the third aksara can only be read as *ve*. The forms of the characters *va* and *ra* are also similar, but the upper stroke of *va* is a straight horizontal one, while that of *ra* curves upwards at the end.

---

6 Davary, op. cit., Plate II.

The next word was read as *puspap[ by Konow, as *putreṣ-Tapaf by Humbach and as *putrespap[ by Fussman. These readings are rather divergent. Regarding the second character, there can be no doubt that its correct reading was found by Humbach and Fussman because the same aksara can also be observed in line 1, in the word *ksatrapa. The readings of the third letter also differ. This represents a compound aksara whose upper part is the character *sa, while its lower part may be regarded as *ta or *ra. However, taking into consideration that the consonant cluster -sr- cannot occur in Gândhāri Prakrit, the language of the inscription, the character in question should be identified as *ta and the compound aksara should be read as *sta. Thus, the correct reading of the surviving part of the second word should be *putreṣtapaf.

The surface of the stone is broken after this word, but even so, traces of two aksaras can still be discerned. The first aksara appears to be a *ra with e-māträ, i.e. *re, while the second one can be regarded as *ma. Consequently, the whole word can be read as *putreṣtapaf[rena].

Line 5. Only one correction is necessary here. The third character *ra in the word *pukarani (*puskarini 'lotus tank') should be read as *ri because the i-māträ can be clearly discerned on the photo of the inscription. Thus, the corrected text of the inscription is as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tiravharnasa ksatrapasa puyae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>vase XX XX XX XX III u[dagaja]la-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>dhobuvena putreṣtapaf[rena]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>malasuena karavida</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>ia pukarini</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Remarks on the interpretation:

The inscription is written in Gândhāri Prakrit, the language of North-Western India. Konow, Humbach, and Fussman have already correctly interpreted the greater part of its text from linguistic viewpoint. Thus, there are only some phrases which still need to be explained.

Lines 2-3. One of these phrases is the enigmatic u[dagaja]ladhobuvena, the Old Indian antecedent of which can be restored in the form *udakajaladhavapūrvena on the basis of the phonetic development of Gândhāri Prakrit. This compound consists of four elements: udaka-jala-dhava-pūrva-. The first word, udaka-, represents a well-known term in Indian inscriptions meaning ‘libation (of water)’, the second and third one, jala-dhava-, means ‘running water’, while the fourth one is used to denote ‘together, with’. Accordingly, the meaning of the whole compound phrase is ‘with libation of running water’. The compound udakajaladhobava- has some parallels in Indian inscriptions. Such phrases with similar meaning include udakadhārā-.


udakapūrvam, and udakātisargena, meaning ‘with libation of water’. All these phrases refer to the ceremony of pouring water on the hand of the recipient, while making a ceremonial gift of an object that cannot be placed into his hands.

The other still unexplained phrase is putrestapareṇa. This is again a compound consisting of three elements: putra-ista-para-. Of these words putra- does not need any commentary. The meaning of ista- being ‘desire, wish’, the compound putresta- can be interpreted as ‘desire, wish to have a son’. Lastly, the meaning of para- may be ‘having as chief desire’. Thus, the whole phrase putrestapara- can be interpreted as ‘having the chief desire to have a son’.

Line 4. The name Malasua also requires some commentary. Konow and Fussman regarded this name as an Iranian one of unknown etymology. However, such an assumption would only be acceptable if one could propose a plausible Iranian etymology for this name. As a matter of fact, the name Malasua can be explained as a name of Indian origin without any difficulty. On the basis of the phonetic development of Gândhäri Prakrit, its Old Indian antecedent can be restored in the form *Māḷāśruta- which may be interpreted in the sense ‘renowned by wreath (or rose-wreath used in praying)’.

On the basis of the above remarks, the text of the inscription can be interpreted as follows:

line 1 “In honour of Tiravharna kṣatrapa.
line 2 In year XX XX XX XX III. With libations
line 3 of running water, having the chief desire to have a son,
line 4 Malasua has
line 5 this lotus-tank made.”

The inscription is dated to year 83 of the so-called Era of Eucratides, discovered by P. Bernard on the basis of an inscription at Ay Khanum. The beginning of this era can be put at 166 BC. Thus the date of the inscription corresponds to 83 BC. This was the historical period in the course of which the Sakas invading North-Western India across the Karakorum pass, established their first kingdom there. The first known Saka king was Moga, mentioned in the Taxila copper plate inscription of the era-year 78 (his name is spelt Maues in the Greek legend of his coins). Fussman had already noted that the inscription at Jalälâbâd did not mention the king Moga/Maues and he tried to explain this by assuming that he had perhaps already died in 83 or that his authority was never acknowledged by Tiravharna. For lack of historical data we cannot ascertain when Moga died, but in any case the name of Tiravhara-

9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
11 For the phonetic change śr > š and the disappearance of -t-, cp. Burrow, op. cit. 8,14.
14 Konow, op. cit. (note 7), 23 ff.
15 Fussman, op. cit. (note 4), 51.

ṇa is of Parthian origin and he may have belonged to the Indo-Parthian aristocracy that later established the Indo-Parthian kingdom under the leadership of Guduvhara/Gondophares. Thus, even through this short Kharoṣṭhī inscription, we can obtain a modest glimpse into the complicated history of Ancient North-Western India.

Eötvös Loránd University
Faculty of Humanities
H-1361 Budapest P.O.B. 107