

Six New Inscribed Potsherds from Kara-tepa

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Introduction

One of the most important genres of early Gandhāran epigraphy, both in terms of sheer number and in its ubiquity, are donative and ownership inscriptions on pottery. The *Catalog of Gāndhārī Text* (Baums and Glass 2002–b) has altogether 406 entries for Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions on the medium “pottery,” including the group of about 45 Tor Dherai potsherds in a single entry, bringing the total number of relevant items to about 450 (or 39 percent of all known Gāndhārī inscriptions). The publication of a further 56 Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions on potsherds from Barikot and other sites in Swat is forthcoming (Baums forthcoming). Prominent findspots include, in addition to Tor Dherai and Barikot, Peshawar (24 pieces) and Saidu Sharif (11 pieces) in Pakistan, but above all Termiz in Uzbekistan (249 pieces). The excavations carried out at Termiz by Rissio University between 2014 and 2018 have brought to light an additional six pieces of inscribed pottery, two of them definitely in Kharoṣṭhī script and Gāndhārī language, two probably so, and two with only small traces of ink that do not allow determination of the script used. The two larger pieces make important contributions to our knowledge of the epigraphic formulae used at ancient Termiz, and in early Buddhist epigraphy more generally. Previous editions of Buddhist inscriptions from Termiz include Vertogradova 1983 (published in small circulation), Воробьева–Десятковская 1992, Вертоградова 1995 and Fussman 2011; compare also the review article Scherrer–Schaub, Salomon and Baums 2012.

Sherd 1

///.uyartha ///

This potsherd (illustrated in PL.27, no. 47 of this book) preserves part or all of three Kharoṣṭhī akṣaras. Of the first akṣara, only a clear, angular vowel mark *u* remains at the foot of a vertical stem, cut off by the edge of the sherd. The second akṣara is clearly either a *ya* or a *śa*. While the shapes of these two letters tend to merge in Kuṣāṇa-period Kharoṣṭhī, here the still slightly triangular shape is in favor of a reading *ya*. The very top right of the akṣara is cut off by the edge of the sherd, but enough is visible to exclude the original presence of a vowel mark *e* in this position. The third and last preserved akṣara is an intact *rtha* with decorative swirl at the right end of the *r* subscript. Given these clear remains, the identity of the word is beyond doubt, and one can reconstruct either *(*p)uyartha* (in the adverbial direct case) or *(*p)uyartha(*ya)* (in the adverbial dative case), both meaning “for the sake of honor of,” which would then have been preceded by a noun designating the person or persons honored in the genitive case. Such expressions are well-known from Gāndhārī donative inscriptions, where they usually occur at the end of the formula and mention most often family members of the main donor. The most frequent construction is with the genitive of the person followed by the dative of the simple noun *puya*– “honor,” but two cases from Gandhāra proper (both reliquaries with unknown findspot) have the same compound as the present potsherd: ... *matapitinam puyartha* “... for the sake of honor of mother and father” (CKI 226 in Baums and Glass 2002–b, no. 35 in Baums 2012).

and ... *matapitina pujartha sarvasatvana pujartha Utarapuya* < *rtha > “for the sake of honor of mother and father, for the sake of honor of all beings, for the sake of honor of Utara” (CKI 225, no. 34 in Baums 2012). While both of these examples use the adverbial direct case, there are another two instances of the compound found in inscriptions at Termiz (Qoratepa) itself, both of them in the adverbial dative case, which may thus be the most likely reconstruction for the present sherd too. The first of these I read /// ? *lagada* «ma»halika [te]ṭhati pujarthai [sa] ? /// (CKI 781; Fussman 2011, 83 read /// ? *laghada* «ma»halika devoti pujarthai [sam] ? ///). While the inscriptions remains largely obscure, the word *pujarthai* (dative case) at least is clear. The other previous attestation from Termiz presents no such problems: (*ma)///[hadha]ṁrmakathikasya pujartha[ya] /// “for the sake of honor of the great reciter of the dharma ...” (CKI 782). The four parallels discussed show the range of possible employments of this formula, and the identity of the recipient of honor in the present case – possibly a family member, possibly another worthy of ancient Termiz – has to remain open.

Sherd 2

/// ? *rvasatvana pari*[ṇ]. ///

This triangular potsherd (PL27, no. 50) contains traces of paint at its uppermost tip and in a strip running vertically down its middle. Eight Kharoṣṭhī akṣaras of an inscription, broken off at right and left, are visible. Of the first, only the tip of the stem, evidently bending slightly to the left, is preserved. This is followed by a clear *rva*. Only the top right of the *va* is broken off. The subscript *ra* consists of a tight loop on the left and a flourish (less elaborate than the one in inscription 12 above) on the right. The third akṣara is a *sa* of the paleographically intermediate type, written in a single stroke, with fully open but well-defined head. The fourth akṣara is a *tva* with the subscript *va* tailing off into a thin line. The next following akṣara could in principle be a very narrow *ra*, but contextually the interpretation as a dental *na* with ill-defined head is to be preferred. The very bottom of the foot of this and the following two akṣaras is cut off. The sixth akṣara is a clear, blocky *pa*. A short diagonal mark to the bottom left from the stem of this *pa* gives the appearance of a vowel mark *o*, but is probably no more than a slip of the writing instrument. The last clear akṣara is a *ri*. In the left tip of the sherd, part of the head of a final akṣara remains. The shape strongly suggests a *na* of which not enough remains to judge whether a vowel mark was present.

The preserved part of this inscription naturally divides into two words. The first of these can hardly be anything else but the compound *[sa]rvasatvana* “of all beings” (genitive plural), interpreting the trace of the first akṣara as the foot of a *sa* very similar to the third akṣara. The compound *sarvasatva-* is well-attested at Termiz, cf. the four entries in Fussman 2011, 254 s.v. and Baums & Glass 2002–a. In two of these occurrences, only the word itself in the genitive plural is preserved: (*sa*)*rvasatva[na]* (CKI 626 in Baums & Glass 2002– b) and *[sa]rvasatvānaṁ* (in Brāhmī, Fussman 2011, 99 no. 177). The third is an inscription on the rim of a large stone bowl from East Termiz that concludes *sarvasatvana hidaye suhaye saṁp* < *u > [r]yadu “may it be filled for the well-being (and) happiness of all beings” (CKI 234). The fourth and most relevant for present purposes is a long inscription on sherds from a single pot that concludes ... *sarvasatvanam dahovaceda bhavatu* “may there be cutting off of the burning of all beings” (CKI 635). A comparable formulation occurs near the end of the reliquary inscription of Ajidasena: *ayam edaṇi sabadukhovachedae nivaṇae sabatadu* “may this now be conducive to the cutting off of all suffering, to nirvāṇa” (CKI 334, no. 11 in Baums 2012), suggesting that in CKI 635 as well *dahovaceda* can be understood as a wish for the reaching of nirvāṇa of all beings.

And indeed the second word on the potsherd presently under discussion appears to be a reference to nirvāṇa with the prefix *pari-*. Since so little of this word is preserved, however, a survey of the formula is needed to narrow

down the range of possible reconstructions. The combination of the words *sarvasattva-* and *parinirvāṇa-* does not seem to be attested in Sanskrit or Pali Buddhist literature, but the epigraphical record provides several relevant examples. From Gandhāra itself (precise findspots unknown), we have *sarvasatva ya puyāita sarvasatva parinivāito* “and all beings are honored, all beings are brought to nirvāṇa” (past participle) in the reliquary inscription CKI 241 (no. 25 in Baums 2012), and *imīna kuśalamuleṇa sarvasatva «para»nivāiti* “through this root of good, all beings are brought to nirvāṇa” (present passive) in the halo inscription CKI 256. On our potsherd, however, a noun is required to govern the genitive plural *[sa]rvasatvana*. There are two relevant examples for such a construction involving the word *sarvasattva-*. The one (involving the noun *prati-* “attainment”) is *sarva[sva]tvaṇa puyae nivaṇasa pratīae hotu* “may it be in honor of all beings, for (their) attainment of nirvāṇa” in the reliquary inscription CKI 172 from Taxila (no. 29 in Baums 2012). This can be compared with *eva pariḥhaveataya eva paricaamtaya nivaṇapratī[e] bhotu* “may it be for the attainment of nirvāṇa of her who thus establishes, thus donates (the relics)” in another reliquary inscription (CKI 358, no. 23 in Baums 2012) from Dir District in Pakistan. The other example (involving the noun *sambhara-* “preparation”) is *sarvasatvana nirvanasambharae bhavatu* “may it be for the preparation for nirvāṇa of all beings” in the reliquary inscription CKI 155 (no. 41 in Baums 2012) from Hadda in Afghanistan. This can be compared with *apaṇasa hidasuhadaye nivaṇasabharadae* “for his own preparation for nirvāṇa and well-being and happiness” (twice) in the reliquary inscription CKI 564 (findspot unknown, no. 26 in Baums 2012). Three further parallels that do not involve the word *sarvasattva-* are *atvaṇo arogadaḥṣṇae nivaṇae hotu* “may it be for his own gift of health and nirvāṇa” (simple *nirvāṇa-*) in the reliquary inscription CKI 60 (no. 30 in Baums 2012) from Taxila, *Metreasa sammosa[na](e) tatra parinivayaṇae* “for the coming together with Maitreya and the reaching of nirvāṇa under him” (action noun **nirvāyana*) in the reliquary inscription CKI 564 (findspot unknown, compare above), and *sarvasatvaṇa ca <*a>[gra]bhagadae bhavatu n<i>rvanaparayana ca ... saha sarvināṇa nirvaṇaeda nirvaṇadae naye bhavatu* “may it be for the greatest share and the crossing to nirvāṇa for all beings ... all together may it be for the state of nirvāṇa” (compound with *parāyana-* and abstract noun, with some scribal confusion at the end) in the reliquary inscription CKI 509 (no. 44 in Baums 2012) from Wardak in Afghanistan. — Finally, I can here add a new reading that I am able to propose for the inscription on a relief from Bagram in Afghanistan (CKI 174), after inspecting the original in the Musée Guimet in July 2018: *imēna kuśalamuleṇa para[ni] ? [n]. [g].* + “through this root of good, (the donor) has gone to(?) nirvāṇa.”¹¹

On the basis of this survey, the text on our potsherd may tentatively be reconstructed *[sa]rvasatvana pari[n](irvaṇa-)*, although reconstructions with *pari[n](irvāyana-)* or *pari[n](irvaṇada-)* cannot be entirely ruled out. Whether the second word stood on its own or was combined in compound with *prati-*, *sambhara-*, *parayana-* or yet another term remains similarly unknowable. Neither *nirvaṇa-* nor *parinirvaṇa-* occurs in any of the other inscriptions at Termiz, simultaneously complicating the interpretation of the present inscription and increasing its value.

Sherd 3

The small traces of ink at the edge of this pentagonal sherd (PL.27, no. 53) could be part of an almost entirely lost inscription in either Kharoṣṭhī or Brāhmī script, but could also be ornamental.

Sherd 4

This irregularly shaped sherd (PL.27, no. 51) has a band of red paint at the top and ink traces at the bottom. The latter could be an illegible part of a Kharoṣṭhī or Brāhmī inscription or ornamental.

Sherd 5

This pentagonal sherd (PL.27, no. 52) shows faded traces of paint that apparently ran down the side of the vessel. At its upper edge the bottom half of a clearly Kharoṣṭhī akṣara is preserved, forming a wide bent shape open on the left. The most likely interpretations are *sa* or *ca*. Since the akṣara apparently occurred at the very end of an inscription, the former reading would suggest a genitive singular ending, the latter the conjunction ‘and.’

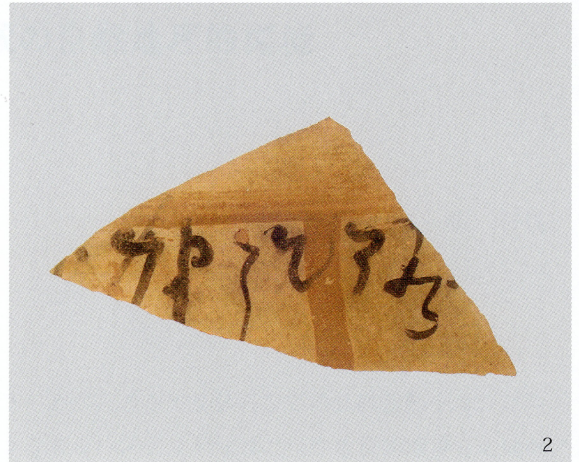
Additional Sherd (Sherd 6)

An image of this additional sherd (PL. 26. no.46) was provided to me by Professor Iwamoto Atsushi (email of 14 July 2018). The fragment was excavated from the northern mound of Kara-tepa, and the image taken in 2015. Ink traces are visible in what appears to have been the original upper corner of this triangular sherd. They form what is clearly a Kharoṣṭhī akṣara, and most likely a *ba*, *ra* or *ḍa*. Since the very top of the akṣara is missing, it is possible that a vowel sign *e* was attached to it.

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- 1) The end of this inscription is heavily damaged, but both the reading of Thomas 1933 (*sarvasatva* ...) and that of Konow 1933–34 (*pituno pujae [bhavatu]*) are untenable.



Карате́пе – буддийский памятник в Термезе
Kara Tepe–Buddhist Complex of Termez 2014—2017

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Rissho University Uzbekistan Academic Research Group



立正大学ウズベキスタン学術交流プロジェクトシリーズ 2

カラ・テベ テルメズの仏教遺跡

2020年 3 月 31日 初版発行

編 者 立正大学ウズベキスタン学術調査隊

発 行 者 八木 唯史

発 行 所 株式会社 六一書房

〒 101-0051 東京都千代田区神田神保町 2-2-22

電話 03-5213-6161 FAX 03-5213-6160 振替 00160-7-35346

<http://www.book61.co.jp> Email info@book61.co.jp

印刷・製本 藤原印刷株式会社

ISBN 978-4-86445-128-4 C3022 ©Rissho University

Printed in Japan