

THE IRANIAN INSCRIPTIONS OF SHATIAL*

The site of Shatial on the Upper Indus, some 50 km downstream from Chilas, is remarkable for the presence of more than 550 Sogdian inscriptions, as well as a few written in other Iranian languages: nine in Bactrian, and two each in Middle Persian and Parthian. In contrast, the other sites along the banks of the Indus upstream from Shatial, together with the isolated site of Haldeikish in Hunza, have so far yielded hardly more than a hundred Sogdian inscriptions in all (plus four in Bactrian, and none in the other Middle Iranian languages). The inscriptions, almost all of them very short, are typical "visitors' inscriptions", usually containing a personal name, with or without a patronymic or other personal details such as a family name or title.

The fact that Middle Persian and Parthian inscriptions are restricted to this one site may be a matter of chance, since the numbers are too small to be statistically significant. For the same reason, one can hardly draw any definite conclusions from the

* The Iranian inscriptions of Shatial have been edited in: N. SIMS-WILLIAMS, *Sogdian and other Iranian inscriptions of the Upper Indus*, Vol. I, II (Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum, Part II, Vol. III/II/1-2), London, 1989, 1992, and (together with the inscriptions in other languages and the rockcarvings) in: G. FUSSMAN - D. KÖNIG, "Die Felsbildstation Shatial", in *Materialien zur Archäologie der Nordgebiete Pakistans*, Vol. II, Mainz, 1997, pp. 119-356. The present paper was first published in German translation, *ibid.*, p. 62-72.

presence of nine Bactrian inscriptions at Shatial, beside two at Dadam Das and two at Hunza-Haldeikish. On the other hand, the large number of Sogdian inscriptions found at Shatial – five times as many as the total of those found at all other sites along both banks of the Indus between Shatial and Chilas – clearly requires explanation, as does the fact that all but two of the Iranian inscriptions are in the western part of the site, where they are chiefly concentrated on a few large rocks¹.

Description of the material

Many inscriptions consist of no more than a personal name, e.g. Sogdian *nyprn* “Nanai-farn” (1:6), Bactrian *μoζδο* “Muzd” (34:120), Parthian *wryhrn* “Warhrān” (50:30). Middle Persian *'dw'hšy* “Ēwakhsh(?)” (34:118). A patronymic expression is often added: Sogd. *nyprn ZK nyβntk BRY* “Nanai-farn the son of Nanai-vandak” (105:10), *nyδβ'r kwnt BRY* “Nanai-dhvār (the) son of Kund” (39:44), Bactr. *παβορο σοηο πορο* “Shābūr the son of Suwē (?)” (54:31), Parth. *wryhrn šhyppwlyrn* “Warhrān the son of Shāhpulr” (39:105). Occasionally the grandfather's name is also given: Sogd. *nyynzt ZK kwnt'kk BRY δ'ndmt(?) npyšn(?)* “Nanai-nazd the son of Kundakk, grandson of . . .” (36:55). Such texts are unambiguous if the words for “son” and/or “grandson” are present, as in the Sogdian and Bactrian inscriptions just cited, or if the father's name is provided with a patronymic suffix, as in the Parthian example. In the Sogdian inscriptions, however, *BRY* “son” is often omitted, as in *nyprn ZK nyβntk* “Nanai-farn the (son of) Nanai-vandak” (106:1). Sometimes such an omission results in ambiguity. For instance, *βrzyr'k m'ymr'yc* (34:70) could in principle mean “Varzirak (the son of) Māymarghch”, “Varzirak (and) Māymarghch”, or – since Māymarghch is in origin an ethnic

¹ For instance, there are nearly seventy Iranian inscriptions on Rock 31 and more than eighty on each of Rocks 34, 36, and 39.

adjective – “Varzirak (the) native of Māymargh”². Similarly, *wn'yptbntk ZK krzt'yk m'ymr'yc* (31:86) could mean “Wanēpat-vandak the (son of) Karzhtik, (grandson of) Māymarghch” or “W. the (son of) K., (the) native of Māymargh”, while *cx'pk ZK rzmwnwn BRY rysn* (50:17) could mean “Chakhāpak the son of Razm-wanwan, (grandson of) Rēsan” or “Ch. the son of R., (of the family) Rēsan”³.

In the hope of finding objective criteria for distinguishing between personal names and other terms such as family names, titles, occupational designations, or adjectives indicating the ethnic or geographical origin of the persons named, I once made a systematic survey of the structure of the Sogdian inscriptions, distinguishing twelve basic “formulae”, ranging from a single word to a sequence such as *x ZK y BRY z npyšn* “X. the son of Y., grandson of Z.”, together with a number of “extended” or “inverted” variants⁴. The outcome, however, is hardly proportionate to the effort expended. The only positive result which seems fairly secure is the definition of the term *γ'tk* (fem. *γ'th*) or *ZK γ'tk*, which occurs at the end of several texts, as a title or occupational designation⁵. For convenience I have adopted the translation “noble”, but the exact

² In this case comparison with the unambiguous *βrzyr'k ZK m'ymr'yc BRY* “Varzirak the son of Māymarghch” (31:57) shows that the first interpretation is correct.

³ See N. SIMS-WILLIAMS, *Sogdian and other Iranian inscriptions of the Upper Indus*, Vol. II (Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum, Part II, Vol. III/II/2), London, 1992, p. 35, on the possible existence of a group of family names “derived from etymologically opaque bases by means of a suffix -n”.

⁴ N. SIMS-WILLIAMS, *Sogdian and other Iranian inscriptions of the Upper Indus*, Vol. II, *cit.*, pp. 29-33. It seems that I failed to make the purpose and methodology of this study sufficiently explicit. Thus H. HUMBACH, (Review of N. SIMS-WILLIAMS, *Sogdian and other Iranian inscriptions of the Upper Indus*, Vol. I, II (Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum, Part II, Vol. III/II/1-2), London, 1989, 1992, in ZDMG 144 (1994), pp. 179-80; cf. also Ph. HUYSE, Review of *idem*, in *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 8 (1996), p. 326) reproaches me for attributing too much significance to the “inverted formula”; whereas my reason for listing all examples of an (apparently) inverted formula was not that I attributed any significance to them as a group but merely to ensure a comprehensive presentation of the evidence.

⁵ N. SIMS-WILLIAMS, *Sogdian and other Iranian inscriptions of the Upper Indus*, Vol. II, *cit.*, pp. 31-2.

meaning of the term is unknown⁶. Not a single case could be found in which an ethnic adjective is demonstrably used in its primary function rather than as a personal name, although it can be argued on statistical grounds that some ethnic adjectives are probably used as such⁷.

A few of the Sogdian inscriptions mention two or more members of a family who presumably visited Shatial, either separately or together. Two brothers are named in 31:63 (“Varzirak (and) Avyāman-vandak the sons of Māymarghch”) and in 31:87 (“Ruthā the son of Pēsakk; Wakhu-nām the {son of Pēsakk}”). The most detailed text of this sort is 36:88: “Chuzakk the son of Wanēnak (came here)(?), and his brother Shans(?) (and his) father(?) (and) the heads(?) the family”. Sometimes two adjacent inscriptions which share a name may jointly provide information of the same sort. For example, 31:97 (“Induk the son of Srāwakk”) and 31:98 (“Vaghāvyart the son of Srāwakk”) probably name two brothers, while 39:99 (“Dhakh the son of Rēw-dhvār”) and 39:96 (“Tish-vandak the (son of) Dhakh”), which stand one above the other, may record the visits of a father and son.

Several inscriptions contain a past tense form of the verb “to come” and/or an expression indicating the date of arrival, e.g. *'pzymyδ ' 'yt nnyβntk ZK γwšprn BRY* “Nanai-vandak the son of Ghōsh-farn came the day before yesterday(?)” (34:115, 105:8)⁸. In some cases the date seems to be indicated by a numeral, but it is not clear whether this refers to a year in some unspecified era or to the

⁶ For some etymological speculations see N. SIMS-WILLIAMS, *Sogdian and other Iranian inscriptions of the Upper Indus*, Vol. II, *cit.*, p. 52 and H. HUMBACH, *op. cit.*, p. 182.

⁷ See N. SIMS-WILLIAMS, *Sogdian and other Iranian inscriptions of the Upper Indus*, Vol. II, *cit.*, pp. 30-31.

⁸ See N. SIMS-WILLIAMS, *Sogdian and other Iranian inscriptions of the Upper Indus*, Vol. II, *cit.*, pp. 32-3, where all such texts are individually discussed. On *'pzymyδ* “the day before yesterday(?)” see *ibid.*, p. 42 (differently H. HUMBACH, *Review cit.*, p. 181).

day of a journey⁹, e.g. *s's ZK ršnδys BRY kw 100* "(I), Sās the son of Rashn-dhēs, (came here) in/on (the day/year) one hundred" (36:56). The longest and most informative of all the Sogdian inscriptions is 36:38, which may be translated as follows: "(I), Nanai-vandak the (son of) Narisaf, came (here) in/on (the day/year) ten and asked a boon from the spirit of the sacred place Kārt (that) I may arrive at Kharvandan (=Tashkurgan) very quickly and see (my) brother in good (health) with joy".

Almost all of the Iranian inscriptions of Shatial belong to the category of "visitors' inscriptions", whose chief purpose is to commemorate a visit by the individual named. Inscriptions of other kinds are virtually unknown¹⁰. A number of inscriptions consist solely of the name of a deity, e.g. Nanai (30:7 etc.) or Wishaghn (34:173), but it is probable that in all such cases the divine name is used as a personal name¹¹. The long Sogdian inscription translated in the previous paragraph (36:38) refers to the worship of the "spirit of the sacred place Kārt", but this too is primarily a visitors' inscription, recording the arrival at Shatial of Nanai-vandak the son of Narisaf. Thus the only Iranian inscription which is exclusively religious is the Bactrian *ναμω βοτο* "hommage to the Buddha" (27:3), to be compared with Brahmi *namo buddhāya* (132:1 etc.).

Although it is in some respects disappointing that the Iranian inscriptions consist almost exclusively of personal names, the names are in themselves informative. In particular, as I wrote in my preliminary report on this material, "for the first time it provides a corpus of Sogdian names large enough to be regarded as a typical cross-section – at least, of names used by males of a particular social group"¹². On that occasion I drew attention to two favoured styles of

⁹ For both possibilities see N. SIMS-WILLIAMS, *Sogdian and other Iranian inscriptions of the Upper Indus*, Vol. II, *cit.*, p. 33. The second solution is preferred by Ph. HUYSE, *Review cit.*, p. 327, but his reasoning is not clear to me.

¹⁰ On a few possible but quite uncertain instances of Sogdian inscriptions which do not contain a personal name see N. SIMS-WILLIAMS, *Sogdian and other Iranian inscriptions of the Upper Indus*, Vol. II, *cit.*, p. 33.

¹¹ I see no basis for the suggestion of H. HUMBACH, *Review cit.*, p. 178 that the repeated *ywrm 'n(?) ywrm 'n(?)* of 50:3 may represent "die Anrufung eines Gottes".

¹² N. SIMS-WILLIAMS, "The Sogdian Inscriptions of the Upper Indus: a

name, the theophoric names referring to Zoroastrian and other deities, including Nanai, Wakhushu “the Oxus”, Mākh “the Moon”, Chēt “the Spirit”, Vagh-rēw “the Rich God” and Vagh “the God” (i.e. Mithra?), Avyāman, Takhsīch, and Anākhīt, to name only the most popular¹³, and the “heroic” style exemplified by names containing elements such as *mēw* “tiger”, *spādh* “army”, *wanwan* “victorious”, and *khans* “strong”.

I have given¹⁴ an analysis of the formal structure of the attested Sogdian names, distinguishing the following types: possessive compounds, e.g. *Satāsp* “having a hundred horses” (34:85), *Wakhunām* “having a good reputation” (5:29 etc.); dependent compounds, e.g. *Nanai-vandak* “servant of Nanai” (*passim*), *Razm-wanwan* “victorious in battle” (50:17); appositional compounds, e.g. *Khwar-mēw* “sun-tiger” (53:33), *Fatmī-wāch* “first-sent” (34:31 etc.); governing compounds, e.g. *Wan-kawāy* “conqueror of giants” (34:88); “*Satznamen*” (names consisting of a sentence), e.g. *Āghat-zāk* “a child has come(?)” (34:44); simple or compound appellatives used as names, e.g. *Astkēn* “bony” (34:41 etc.), *Spādh-kharsh* “army-leader, general” (31:59 etc.); “*Kurznamen*” (abbreviated names), e.g. *Nanai* (as a masculine name) (30:7 etc.), *Farn* “glory” (36:65 etc.); hypocoristic names, mostly formed with the suffixes *-akk* and *-ch*, e.g. *Nanayakk* (17:19 etc.), *Farnch* (5:32 etc.)¹⁵; propatronymics and family names formed with suffixes *-(k)ān(ak)*, *-ēn(ak)*, etc., e.g. *Mēthakan* (31:82 etc.), *Kānakk* (34:78 etc.); and

Preliminary Report”, in K. JETTMAR (ed.), *Antiquities of Northern Pakistan, Reports and Studies*, I, Mainz, 1989, pp. 131-7, partic. p. 135.

¹³ See also H. HUMBACH, “Die sogdischen Inschriftenfunde vom oberen Indus (Pakistan)”, in *Allgemeine und vergleichende Archäologie. Beiträge [of Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts]*, Vol. II, 1980 (1981), pp. 201-228, partic. p. 203-4 and N. SIMS-WILLIAMS, “Mithra the Baga”, in P. BERNARD - F. GRENET, *Histoire et cultes de l'Asie centrale préislamique*, Paris, 1991, pp. 177-186.

¹⁴ N. SIMS-WILLIAMS, Sogdian and other Iranian inscriptions of the Upper Indus, Vol. II, cit., pp. 34-6.

¹⁵ It is not clear whether a hypocoristic is ever used as an alternative name for the same person. One might suspect that a single man is referred to by the forms *Tāw* and *Tāwch* in the adjacent inscriptions “Tāw the son of Tāw” (25:2) and “Khūn the son of Tāwch” (25:3; cf. also “Khūn the son of Tāwakk”, 36:73?), but there seems to be no way of testing this hypothesis.

ethnic names formed with *-ch* and other suffixes (including zero), e.g. *Māymarghch* “native of *Māymargh*” (31:57 etc.), *Induk* “Indian” (31:97, 33:12), *Khūn* “Hun” (25:1 etc.).

Although the great majority of the personal names attested in the Sogdian inscriptions appear to be genuine Sogdian names, Western Iranian names, such as *Kartīr* (39:32), *Khwadhāwanakk* (65:1), *Mīrēn* (20:2, 36:76), *Pāpakk* (17:18), *Sāsān* (53:4), *Shāpūr* (20:2), *Tīr* (34:82), and perhaps *Stāyīdh* (36:74, 40:17)¹⁶, are not rare. Most of these names are probably Persian in origin. Though a few of them could equally well be Parthian, the only unambiguously Parthian form is *Narisaf* (36:38, 85). The female name *Ranisā* (39:31) may derive from Bactrian¹⁷. Only two Indian names have been noted, namely *Buddha-dāsa* (34:86) and *Deva-dāsa* (31:68, 71)¹⁸.

The Bactrian inscriptions also contain some foreign names, the clearest being the Persian name *Shābūr* (54:31). *Wanu-sāw* (47:16) may be Sogdian (cf. Sogd. *wnws'w*, 36:32) while 34:122 may contain an Indian name, possibly to be read *σρι βιρνο* (cf. *śrī viṣṇ[u]*- in the Brahmi inscription 17:5). The two Parthian inscriptions (“*Warhrān*”, 50:30; “*Warhrān the son of Shāhpuhr*”, 39:105) may both name the same person, who was evidently a Persian.

Since the Sogdian inscriptions contain many patronymics, they provide information not only about individual names but also about naming traditions within Sogdian families.

Absolute identity of the names of father and son seems to occur only in the case of monosyllabic names such as *Kund* (30:12),

¹⁶ From Middle Persian *stāyīd* “praised” (N. SIMS-WILLIAMS, *Sogdian and other Iranian inscriptions of the Upper Indus*, Vol. II, *cit.*, p. 70)?

¹⁷ N. SIMS-WILLIAMS, “The Sogdian Merchants in China and India”, in *Cina e Iran da Alessandro Magno alla dinastia Tang (Orientalia Venetiana 5*, ed. A. CADONNA, L. LANCIOTTI), Florence, 1996, pp. 45-67, partic. p. 56.

¹⁸ In N. SIMS-WILLIAMS, *Sogdian and other Iranian inscriptions of the Upper Indus*, Vol. II, *cit.*, p. 70, I proposed that the first element of the name *σργδβ'r* (53:27) might be the Indian *Śrī*. I now prefer to read *Sari-dhvār*, a purely Sogdian name meaning “gift of the chief (god)” (cf. *καμυρδο* “head, chief” as the name or title of a god in unpublished Bactrian documents).

Shirch (24:3), and Tāw (25:2). On the other hand, it is common to find a shared element in the names of father and son, as in the cases of “Anghat-nāw the son of Anghat-spādih” (34:74), “Takhsīch-vandak the (son of) Wakhushu-vandak” (36:80 etc.), “Wan-kawāy the son of Kawāy” (34:88), “Khwasaw(?) the son of Khwasawch(?)” (108:6), and perhaps “Nāw-chirth the son of Rāz-nāw(?)” (39:34)¹⁹.

Where one finds the same pair of names in the opposite order in different texts, e.g. “Anākhīt-vandak the son of Pēkakk” (31:102, 34:45) and “Pēkakk the son of Anākhīt-vandak” (37:2, 39:35(?)), it is possible that the inscriptions record the visits of a father and son, the latter having been named after his grandfather (although there is no way of telling whether the line of descent is P.–A.–P. or A.–P.–A.)²⁰. The case for such an assumption is particularly strong if the names concerned are uncommon or if the inscriptions occur in close proximity. Both conditions are fulfilled in the case of 34:51-2, which contain the rare names Azdīk and Khsēnakk. The strongest case of all is perhaps that of 36:96-7, where the inscriptions naming “Chēt-vandak the son of Martī” and “Martī the son of Chēt-vandak” appear to be written in the same hand. The adjacent inscriptions naming “Nanai-khsay the (son of) Nanai-dhvār” and “Nanai-khsay the (son(?) of) Patrōdhan” (39:87-8) could be connected on the assumption that one Nanai-khsay was the grandfather of the other. A rather different case is represented by the inscriptions of “Nanai-farn the son of Nanai-vandak” (105:10 etc.) and “Nanai-vandak the son of Ghōsh-farn” (105:8 etc.). Neither the presence of both inscriptions on the same rock, nor the occurrence of the name Nanai-vandak – the most common of all Sogdian names – is significant in itself. However, the fact that the name Nanai-farn shares one element with the name of his father Nanai-vandak and one element

¹⁹ For further examples see R. SCHMITT, Review of N. SIMS-WILLIAMS, *Sogdian and other Iranian inscriptions of the Upper Indus*, Vol. I, II (Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum, Part II, Vol. III/II/1-2), London, 1989, 1992, in *Kratylos* 38 (1993), pp. 56-61, partic. p. 59.

²⁰ See R. SCHMITT, *ibid.* For further possible cases of this kind see 31:73 + 36:78, 36:86 + 42:2, 39:48 + 39:50, 39:58 + 47:12, each of which involves a doubtful reading and/or a pair of names which are too common to be distinctive.

with the name of Ghōsh-farn is at least consistent with the supposition that the latter was his grandfather.

Unfortunately it is impossible to know how far any of the above remarks on name-types and naming traditions may be applicable to women's names, since only three of the Sogdian inscriptions contain identifiable references to women: "Sanākhram, the (daughter of) Frī-..., (the) noblewoman(?)" (17:13), "Ranisā" (39:31), and "Chīnānch, (the) daughter of Khansch" (39:66).

Historical evaluation

The Iranian inscriptions of Shatial raise many questions. Who were the writers and whence did they come? When and why did they visit Shatial? Why did they leave so many inscriptions in one small area of a single site? What connection, if any, is there between the inscriptions and the carvings associated with them on the rocks? Such questions can be approached from various angles and many types of evidence – epigraphic, linguistic, topographic, archaeological, and historical – can be brought to bear on them²¹. In the present section I shall focus primarily on the inscriptions themselves and the evidence which they contribute towards the solution of these problems.

None of the Iranian inscriptions contains a date of a meaningful kind. However, a variety of considerations strongly suggest that most – probably all – of them belong to the Sasanian period (ca. 224-651 A.D.).

The two Parthian inscriptions can be dated fairly precisely. Since they contain distinctively Persian names, they can hardly be earlier than the Sasanian period; on the other hand, they cannot have been written much later than the end of the third century A.D., when

²¹ See the contributions by G. FUSSMAN, K. JETTMAR, and D. KÖNIG in G. FUSSMAN / D. KÖNIG, *Die Felsbildstation Shatial* (Materialen zur Archäologie der Nordgebiete Pakistans, II), Mainz, 1997.

the Parthian script seems to have gone out of use²². We will not go far wrong in assigning them to the period 225-325 A.D., most probably to the second half of the third century²³.

The two Middle Persian inscriptions are also written in a script characteristic of the early Sasanian period, though in this case it is impossible to specify a *terminus ante quem*²⁴. However, one of them (34:118) can be approximately dated in view of the fact that it is clearly earlier than a carving ("Scene 34:A"), by which it is partially obliterated. According to Fussman this work of art was probably created some time between 300 and 350 A.D., or at any rate during the fourth century²⁵. In that case, the inscription 34:118 must belong to the third century or at the latest the earlier part of the fourth century. If 'dw 'hšy "Ēwakhsh" is correctly read in the other Middle Persian inscription (34:118), it may be relevant that this name is otherwise attested only in a third-century inscription²⁶. Indeed, the Parthian, Bactrian, Sogdian, and even Brahmi inscriptions of Shatial

²² M. BOYCE, "Parthian Writings and Literature", in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol. III (ed. E. YARSHATER), pp. 1151-1165, partic. p. 1165.

²³ The tentative suggestion of H. HUMBACH, (Review, *cit.*, p. 178) that "Warhrān the son of Shāhpuhr" (39:105) might be the Sasanian ruler Warhrān (Bahrāsm) I (273-6), the son of Shāhpuhr (Shāpūr) I, is quite possible from the chronological point of view, though one would hesitate to assume that the king himself visited Shatial!

²⁴ J. HARMATTA, ("Languages and Literature in the Kushan Empire", in *History of civilizations of Central Asia*, Vol. II (ed. J. HARMATTA), Paris, 1994, pp. 417-4, partic. p. 438) dates both the Parthian and Middle Persian inscriptions on palaeographical grounds to "about A.D. 230-60", but it is not obvious to me that the script of the Middle Persian inscriptions of Shatial is more archaic than, for instance, that of the fifth-century inscription of Mihr-narseh at Firuzabad (for which see W. B. HENNING, "The Inscription of Firuzabad", in *Asia Major*, New Series 4/1 (1954), pp. 98-102, fig. 1-2.).

²⁵ G. FUSSMAN, "Une peinture sur pierre: le triptyque au stūpa de Shatial", in G. FUSSMAN, K. JETTMAR, (ed.) *Antiquities of Northern Pakistan, Reports and Studies*, Vol. III, Mainz, 1994, pp. 1-55, fig. 1-16, partic. pp. 37-43. The extension of the later limit from ca. 350 to ca. 400 would be a necessary consequence of placing Year 1 of Kanishka nearer to 128 than to 78 A.D. (cf. *ibid.*, 43 n. 165).

²⁶ See Ph. GIGNOUX, *Noms propres sassanides en moyen-perse épigraphique* (Iranisches Personennamenbuch, ed. M. MAYRHOFER - R. SCHMITT, II/2), Wien, 1986, pp.25-26 s.v. Abdaxš; N. SIMS-WILLIAMS, *Sogdian and other Iranian inscriptions of the Upper Indus*, Vol. II, *cit.*, p. 27.

all attest names which are known from the Middle Persian inscriptions of the third century. Some such names may have continued in use for a long period, but taken as a group they appear to be characteristic of the early Sasanian period²⁷.

The cursive Greek script of the Bactrian inscriptions is attested throughout the Sasanian period and beyond; the small amount of legible material at Shatial does not permit a more precise dating.

All scholars who have discussed the matter have noted the similarity between the script of the Sogdian inscriptions and that of the so-called "Ancient Letters" found near Tun-huang²⁸. In addition, the two groups of texts resemble one other in certain grammatical archaisms²⁹, and in their range of personal names³⁰. The date of the Ancient Letters is itself a matter of dispute, but I take it as proved that they belong to the early fourth century³¹. Since a significantly different form of the script is found in the documents from Mt. Mug (early eighth century), the next major group of Sogdian manuscripts after the Ancient Letters, I argued in my preliminary report that the Sogdian inscriptions of the Upper Indus "seem most likely to belong

²⁷ The significance of names such as Kartīr, Pāpakk, Sāsān, Shāpūr, and Warhrān for the dating of the inscriptions is emphasized by H. HUMBACH, *Review cit.*, p. 178; Ph. HUYSE, *Review cit.*, p. 325 (cf. already N. SIMS-WILLIAMS, "The Sogdian Inscriptions of the Upper Indus: a Preliminary Report", *cit.*, p. 133-4).

²⁸ H. HUMBACH, "Die sogdischen Inschriftenfunde vom oberen Indus (Pakistan)", *cit.*, p. 201; N. SIMS-WILLIAMS, *Sogdian and other Iranian inscriptions of the Upper Indus*, *cit.*, p. 134; J. HARMATTA, *op. cit.*, p. 438.

²⁹ See N. SIMS-WILLIAMS, *Sogdian and other Iranian inscriptions of the Upper Indus*, Vol. II *cit.* pp. 36-37. The relevance of these archaisms for the dating of the inscriptions is rightly underlined by Ph. HUYSE, *Review cit.*, p. 325.

³⁰ See YOSHIDA YUTAKA, *Review of N. SIMS-WILLIAMS, Sogdian and other Iranian inscription of the Upper Indus*, vol. I, London, 1989, in *Indo-Iranian Journal* 36 (1993), pp. 252-6, partic. p. 255; J. HARMATTA, *op. cit.*, p. 438 has even suggested that certain individuals mentioned in the inscriptions might be identified with persons bearing the same names in the "Ancient Letters", but the names in question are not sufficiently distinctive to make this suggestion compelling.

³¹ See W. B. HENNING, "The Date of the Sogdian Ancient Letters", in *BSOAS* 12/3 (1948), pp. 601-615; F. GRENET - N. SIMS-WILLIAMS, "The Historical Context of the Sogdian Ancient Letters", in *Transition Periods in Iranian History, Actes du Symposium de Fribourg-en-Brisgau (22-24 Mai 1985)*, Leuven, 1987, pp. 101-22.

to the fourth to sixth centuries A.D., or to some part of that period”³².

This conclusion is in need of revision. The (approximate) upper limit of the sixth century seems reasonable, even if not demonstrable. Even the few inscriptions which seem to attest a style of writing later than the rest (e.g. 32:1, 36:65) need not be later than the inscriptions of Bugut and Mongolküre³³, which belong to the end of the sixth and the very beginning of the seventh century. However, there is no real basis for the implied assumption that none of the Upper Indus inscriptions can be earlier than the Alten Briefe. On the contrary, the morphological archaisms of the inscriptions include one form which is not attested even in the Alten Briefe, namely, the gen. sg. in *-ky* seen in *txs'ycβntk ZK wx(w)šβntky BRY* “Takhsich-vandak the son of Wakhushu-vandak” (39:73, 105:11). Therefore it can by no means be excluded that some Sogdian inscriptions may date from as early as the third century. Amongst those for which an early date is probable are 34:82 and 34:84. Like the Middle Persian inscription 34:118 (on which see above), these inscriptions are contiguous to “Scene 34:A” and partially obliterated by it. Presumably, therefore, they too may be assigned to the fourth century at the latest.

Finally, it should be noted that where Sogdian and Brahmi inscriptions stand side by side on the same rock surface, they usually display a similar degree of patination. Since the Brahmi inscriptions are thought to date from the fourth to the seventh century³⁴, this observation, which seems to indicate that the two groups of inscriptions are roughly contemporary, is at any rate consistent with

³² N. SIMS-WILLIAMS, “The Sogdian Inscriptions of the Upper Indus: a Preliminary Report”, *cit.*, p. 134.

³³ See S. G. KLJAŠTORNYJ - V.A. LIVŠIČ, “The Sogdian inscription of Bugut Revised”, in *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 26/1 (1972), pp. 69-102; and YOSHIDA YUTAKA, “Reports on the Sogdian Texts Newly Discovered in Xinjiang” [in Japanese], in *Studies on the Inner Asian languages* 6 (*Annals of Foreign Studies*, 23), Kobe, 1990, pp. 57-83, partic. pp. 73-6, respectively.

³⁴ See the contribution by O. von HINÜBER in G. FUSSMAN - D. KÖNIG, *Die Felsbildstation Shatial*, *cit.*, p. 59.

the dating proposed here for the Sogdian inscriptions³⁵.

The most comprehensive explanation so far proposed for the presence of so many Sogdian inscriptions in the western part of the Shatial site is that put forward by Jettmar. He suggests that the Sogdians who left their names at Shatial and elsewhere in the region were merchants, who visited this region in order to engage in trade, and that Shatial was the site of a major crossing-point (probably a bridge) over the Indus. A "sort of trade fair", where the Sogdians would have met their partners to exchange their goods, may have been located near Shatial. If this trade centre was the furthest point to which the Sogdian merchants were permitted to travel, the western part of the Shatial site, where all but two of the Sogdian inscriptions are found, might have been their camping-place, watched over and controlled by a nearby fort³⁶.

That the Sogdian and other Iranian inscriptions are the work of visitors rather than residents is evident from their contents, especially in the case of those texts which contain verbal forms with meanings such as "I have come" or expressions indicating a date of arrival. The fact that no Sogdian inscriptions of this type are known from other sites in the region may support the suggestion that Shatial rather than any other place was the Sogdians' ultimate destination.

The assumption that the Sogdians who visited Shatial were merchants is inherently plausible in view of the ubiquitous reputation of the Sogdians as a mercantile people, though it cannot be said that the inscriptions provide any specific evidence in its favour³⁷. On the other hand, it is difficult to imagine that the

³⁵ In one or two cases (discussed below) there is reason to suspect that the same person may be named in inscriptions both in Sogdian and in Brahmi.

³⁶ See K. JETTMAR, "Sogdians in the Indus Valley", in P. BERNARD, - F. GRENET, *Histoire et cultes de l'Asie centrale préislamique*, Paris, 1991; pp. 251-253, pl. CIII-CVI, and other articles, including his contribution to G. FUSSMAN - D. KÖNIG, *Die Felsbildstation Shatial*, *cit.* cf. also the discussions by G. FUSSMAN and D. KÖNIG, *ibid.*

³⁷ One Brahmi inscription (39:23) refers to a "caravan-leader", but his name is not Sogdian. My tentative suggestion that the Sogdian name šyww' (105:9) might contain an element *wā meaning "trade" (N. SIMS-WILLIAMS, *Sogdian and other Iranian Inscriptions of the Upper Indus*, Vol. II, *cit.*, p. 73) is very likely wrong (see

Sogdians came as pilgrims or missionaries, the only other potentially plausible explanation for their presence, since in that case one would expect the inscriptions to refer directly to religious matters. In fact, the Sogdian inscriptions do not include a single one which is primarily religious in content, in marked contrast with the Brahmi inscriptions and even with the much less numerous Bactrian inscriptions (cf. *ϑαμω βοτο* “homage to the Buddha”, 27:3). The only Sogdian inscription which contains any direct religious reference is 36:38, whose author asks the *k'rt βγνcytk* “the spirit(s) of the sacred place Kārt” to grant him a safe onward journey. The context makes it likely that the “sacred place” referred to is the Shatial site itself³⁸. Even so, these words can hardly be taken to imply that Shatial was a place of pilgrimage for the Sogdians. It seems most natural to suppose that the writer was a non-Buddhist, who was sufficiently impressed by the Buddhist carvings around him to regard the site as a “sacred place” inhabited by a “spirit” or “spirits”. At any rate, the term *cytk*, which is used elsewhere to refer to local *genii*, suggests a being viewed in terms of the Sogdian religion rather than a Hindu or Buddhist deity³⁹.

A few of the carvings at Shatial, such as the depiction of a sun-god in Sogdian style⁴⁰, or that of a Sogdian worshipping before a

H. HUMBACH, Review, *cit.*, p. 183). Jettmar has suggested that the “heroic tinge” of the Sogdian personal names is “quite compatible with the profession of a Sogdian merchant adventurer” (K. JETTMAR ed., *Antiquities of Northern Pakistan*, *cit.*, p. xlv), but this seems to me an over-interpretation of the evidence. The heroic style of name, which is paralleled in many Indo-European languages, is an inherited feature of Sogdian onomastics.

³⁸ It is not clear whether *k'rt* is the name of the *βγν-* “sacred place” or of its *cytk* “spirit”, see N. SIMS-WILLIAMS, “The Sogdian Inscriptions of the Upper Indus: a Preliminary Report”, *cit.*, p. 133; N. SIMS-WILLIAMS, “Mithra the Baga”, *cit.*, p. 177. H. HUMBACH, Review, *cit.*, p. 182 prefers the former solution and suggests that the original meaning of the name was “abgetrennter Bezirk, (militärisch:) Zitadelle, (sakral:) Tempelbezirk”.

³⁹ The suggestion that the words *'pzyynyδ-'yt* in the Sogdian inscriptions 34:115 and 105:8 (according to my interpretation: “came the day before yesterday(?)”) “als Anspielung auf b. sogd. *m'yδ''ytk*, Tathāgata . . . verstanden werden” – thus H. HUMBACH, Review *cit.*, p. 181 – seems to me quite fanciful.

⁴⁰ 27:7, see the contribution by D. KÖNIG in G. FUSSMAN / D. KÖNIG, *Die Felsbildstation Shatial*, *cit.*, pp. 15-16.

fire-altar⁴¹, seem to allude to the native cults of the Sogdian visitors. Depictions of stūpas and other Buddhist carvings are of course much more common, and Sogdian inscriptions are often found on the same rocks, but there are very few cases in which there is any apparent association between the carvings and inscriptions. One such case may be “Scene 31:A”, where the layout of the Sogdian inscription, with one word on either side of the stairway to a stūpa, suggests a deliberate composition. On the other hand, the inscription 53:10 appears to be more recent than the stūpa-drawing (53:44) within which it is written⁴². Similarly, the Sogdian inscriptions 34:90-94, which have been carefully placed in the spaces left blank by the artist of the Buddhist “Scene 34:A”, must be later in date than that composition. It is possible that the writers of such inscriptions may have wished “to appropriate the merits resulting from the realization of this pious work”⁴³; even so, it would not necessarily be implied that they were Buddhists or that the motive for their visit was primarily religious.

Numerous theophoric names attesting devotion to Zoroastrian and other Iranian divinities strongly suggest that most of the Sogdian visitors to Shatial adhered to their traditional religion. No Christian names have been found, and only one name which has been very dubiously interpreted as Manichaean⁴⁴. The unambiguously Buddhist name *pwttδ's* “servant of the Buddha” occurs in 34:86; however, although this name is written in Sogdian script, it is not a Sogdian name but merely a transcription of the Indian name Buddha-dāsa. This Buddha-dāsa seems to be described as a Kushān; at any rate, he was probably at least partly Indian or Bactrian rather

⁴¹ 17:29 and 17:26, see *idem*, pp. 11-12, 34-5.

⁴² *Ibid.* p. 31.

⁴³ G. FUSSMAN, “Une peinture sur pierre: le triptyque au *stūpa* de Shatial”, *cit.*, p. 38. The fact that “writing the names across the image was carefully avoided” is hardly an indication of the writers’ reverence for Buddhism, as implied by Ph. HUYSE, *Review cit.*, p. 325, since it was technically impossible to write legibly on an area of rock already bruised.

⁴⁴ *nβyγβntk* (31:77), meaning “servant of the Book” according to H. HUMBACH, “Die sogdischen Inschriftenfunde vom oberen Indus (Pakistan)”, *cit.*, p. 203.

than a pure-blooded Sogdian. A name, of course, is not necessarily an accurate guide to the religion of its bearer (or of those who named the child), since traditional names may continue in use despite a change of religion. However, if a significant number of the Sogdians were devotees of Buddhism or any other Indian religion, one might reasonably expect to find at least a few names which reflect this fact, as one does in the later Sogdian texts from Dunhuang and Turfan. The names thus point towards the same negative conclusion as the texts and carvings: whatever the motivation which brought the Sogdians to Shatial, it was not primarily a religious one.

If we may deduce, by a process of elimination, that the Sogdians who recorded their names at Shatial must have come there in pursuit of trade, there remains the question whether they were inhabitants of Sogdiana engaged in trade between India and the west or residents of the Sogdian settlements in Xinjiang trading between India and China.

In a recent article on “The Sogdian merchants in China and India”⁴⁵ I have developed the hypothesis of a “triangle” of trade routes with India, China, and Sogdiana as its three corners, the routes which make up the three sides of this triangle being in the hands of various groups of Sogdian merchants. The inscriptions of Shatial naturally provide no information on the trade route linking China and Sogdiana, which is well known from the Ancient Letters and other sources, but they do contain some indications suggesting that Sogdians were active both on the route between India and Sogdiana and on that between India and China.

An unambiguous piece of evidence for a Sogdian travelling northwards from Shatial towards China is provided by the Sogdian inscription 36:38, in which Yutaka Yoshida has identified the ancient name of Tashkurgan in the west of Xinjiang⁴⁶. The statement

⁴⁵ N. SIMS-WILLIAMS, “The Sogdian Merchants in China and India”, *cit.*

⁴⁶ YOSHIDA YUTAKA, “Sogdian miscellany III”, in *Corolla Iranica: Papers in Honour of Prof. Dr. David Neil MacKenzie . . .* (ed. R. E. EMMERICK, - D. WEBER), Frankfurt, 1991, pp. 237-44- partic. pp. 237-8.

of a Brahmi inscription (5:2-5) that a man with the characteristic Sogdian name Pekako (cf. Sogd. Pēkakk, 31:102 etc.) had “gone to the Khāśa kingdom” is less helpful, since the identification of the place referred to is disputed⁴⁷. No other inscription refers directly to the routes used by the Sogdian merchants, though many derivatives of place-names are attested as ethnic adjectives or as personal names. In assessing the significance of such names one must distinguish between names referring to towns and villages in Sogdiana, which are presumably the native places of the bearers or at least of their families, and names referring to foreign peoples and cities, which “need not necessarily refer to the origin of their owners, but – as in Greek onomastics – may simply indicate for example that the bearers of these names or their fathers had at one time made a (business) trip into those countries”⁴⁸.

Names of the first group include Chāch “(native of) Tashkent” (4:3 etc.), Māymarghch “native of Māymargh” (31:57 etc.), and Nāfakhs “(native of) Nāfakhs” (34:103)⁴⁹. Less certain instances are Farn-mēthan “(native of) Farn-mēthan”(?) (31:46, 51), Shāwgharchīnī “native of Shāwgharch”(?) (34:55), Tōdhīch “native of Tōdh”(?) (31:74, 75). Since many of these names seem to allude to places in the vicinity of Samarkand, it seems likely that this was the centre of operations of the Sogdian merchants⁵⁰. The tamgas found

⁴⁷ See contributions by G. FUSSMAN in G. FUSSMAN - D. KÖNIG, *Die Felsbildstation Shatial*, cit., p. 82 and by O. von HINÜBER, *ibid.*, pp. 123-4, with references.

⁴⁸ Thus PH. HUYSE, Review *cit.*, p. 326.

⁴⁹ Other sites along the Indus also attest Ashtēkhānch “native of Ashtēkhān” (cf. N. SIMS-WILLIAMS, in M. BEMMANN - D. KÖNIG, *Die Felsbildstation Oshibat (Materialien zur Archäologie der Nordgebiete Pakistans*, Vol. I), Mainz, 1994, p. 24) and Kashēkanthch “native of Kish” (cf. N. SIMS-WILLIAMS, *Sogdian and other Iranian inscriptions of the Upper Indus*, Vol. II, cit., 54; differently J. HARMATTA, *op. cit.*, p. 439).

⁵⁰ See the glossary in N. SIMS-WILLIAMS, *Sogdian and other Iranian inscriptions of the Upper Indus*, Vol. II, cit., s.vv. *štyx'nc*, *n'p'xs*, *š'wγrcyry*, *nwδ'yc*, etc. According to J. HARMATTA, *op. cit.*, p. 439 some of the Sogdian names refer to places in the Bokhara region, but unfortunately his identifications depend on superseded and unacceptable readings.

at Shatial tend to support this conclusion, as Jettmar has shown⁵¹.

Names referring to foreign peoples and cities include Akuchik "Kuchean" (17:15), Chinanch "Chinese woman" (39:66), Induk "Indian" (31:97, 33:12), Khun "Hun" (25:1 etc.), Kushan/Kushanakān(ak) "Kushan" (17:18, 31:119, 34:86, 43:1), Pārsak "Persian" (145:7), and Sūryakk "Syrian" (54:28, 105:6)⁵². Since all these names are attested, at Shatial or elsewhere, with purely Sogdian patronymics there is no reason to suppose that any of these persons were natives of the countries after which they were named, but one may at least deduce that some of them had family or business connections with places to the north-east (Kucha and China) or to the west (Persia and Syria).

Even if the man named Pārsak was not really a Persian, the presence of Persians at Shatial is attested not only by the two Middle Persian inscriptions but also by those in Parthian. Since it does not seem that Middle Persian names such as Kartir, Pāpakk, Sāsān, or Shāpūr ever became fashionable amongst the Sogdians – none of them is attested in any other Sogdian text – it is likely that the persons so named in the Sogdian inscriptions really are Persians, or possibly residents of Bactria, where such names are frequently attested in unpublished documents. Shāpūr in 20:2 is most likely a Persian, since his father too has a Persian name (Mīrēn), but "Pāpakk the son of Kushan" in 17:18 could well be a Bactrian.

The comparative rarity of Middle Persian, Parthian, and Bactrian inscriptions on the one hand and of Chinese inscriptions on the other suggests that the Sogdian merchants may have had a virtual monopoly of trade both between India and the West and between China and India. If Persians and other foreigners were

⁵¹ See D. KÖNIG in G. FUSSMAN - D. KÖNIG, *Die Felsbildstation Shatial*, *cit.*, pp. 49-51 (with references to Jettmar's studies). Note especially the tamga 34:166, which is incorporated in the Sogdian inscription 34:66.

⁵² Dhakh (34:108 etc.) and its derivatives may also belong here, if the basic meaning is "member of the Daha people" (thus R. SCHMITT, *Review cit.*, p. 60; Ph. HUYSE, *Review cit.*, p. 326; cf. also H. HUMBACH, *Review cit.*, p. 182; differently N. SIMS-WILLIAMS, "The Sogdian Inscriptions of the Upper Indus: a Preliminary Report", *cit.*, p. 135; N. SIMS-WILLIAMS, *Sogdian and other Iranian inscriptions of the Upper Indus*, Vol. II, *cit.*, p. 51).

sometimes able to attach themselves to the Sogdian caravans, it is natural enough that they should sometimes have recorded their names in Sogdian rather than in languages and scripts which would have been incomprehensible to their partners. The same reasons might of course have led them to write their names in Brahmi, the script most widely used by their Indian associates. That they did indeed do so is strongly suggested by the occurrence in the Brahmi inscriptions of Shatial of distinctively Western Iranian names such as Kirdira-peroysa (23:2, 30:2), Rostama or Rostamaka (54:12), and Šāburaka (if 34:25 may be so read)⁵³.

There was less reason for the Sogdians to record their names in Brahmi and it seems that they seldom did so. The Brahmi inscription 5:2-5 was probably not written by the Sogdian Pekako but by one of the Indians named therein. Vuvva (149:2) may perhaps be compared with Sogd. βwβ, 34:57, but the linguistic affiliation of the name is unclear. However, if Nenephara in 55:1 (cf. also Nanephara in 110:3) is the same person as "Nanai-farn the son of Nanai-vandak" in the nearby Sogdian inscription 55:3, his patronymic shows that he was in fact a Sogdian. Another case in which the same person may be named in both Sogdian and Brahmi inscriptions is found on Rock 31, where the Sogdian name Farn-mēthan (31:46) stands directly below the name śrī + r + methana in the Brahmi inscription 31:3⁵⁴. An intimate relationship between the Sogdians and Indians, perhaps including intermarriage, is suggested by 31:71, which refers to a Sogdian named Nanai-zanch whose father bears the Indian name Deva-dāsa. In such circumstances, it is not surprising to find that at least some of the Sogdian merchants may have been literate in Brahmi as well as in Sogdian.

⁵³ Although the writing with *ys* for [z] is characteristic of Khotanese, Pērōz is not a Saka but a Persian name. — For a general discussion of the Iranian names in the Brahmi inscriptions see O. von HINÜBER, "Zu einigen iranischen Namen und Titeln aus Brāhmī-Inschriften am oberen Indus", in *Studia grammatica iranica. Festschrift für Helmut Humbach* (ed. R. Schmitt - P. O. Skjærvø), München, 1986, pp. 147-162.

⁵⁴ See O. von HINÜBER in G. FUSSMAN - D. KÖNIG, *Die Felsbildstation Shatial*, *cit.*, p. 158.