STUDIES IN ARAMAIC EDICTS OF AŚOKA

B. N. MUKHERJEE
M.A. (Cal.), Ph.D. (Lond.), F.S.A. (Lond.)

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PREFACE

Since the discovery of an Aramaic inscription at Taxila in 1914-15 scholars have gradually realised the importance of Aśokan edicts in Aramaic as a complementary source of our knowledge of the history of the Maurya age. To the same category of source one may attribute the Greek inscriptions referring to Piodasses (i.e. the Maurya emperor Priyadarśī Aśoka), the first of which came to light in 1957.

We may reasonably hope for discoveries of several more epigraphs of Aśoka in Aramaic and Greek. Nevertheless, the materials already at our disposal calls for a comprehensive assessment of the available edicts in one place. This is a desideratum for understanding properly an important period of history of the Indian subcontinent and its borderlands. An attempt has been made in the present monograph to fulfil this need.

The monograph, which is divided into four chapters, contains a detailed evaluation of the Aramaic edicts of Aśoka. It also notices the salient features of his Greek edicts. In Chapter I two Aramaic edicts of Priyadarśī have been edited and discussed. The texts and translations of the Aramaic and Greek edicts are furnished in Chapter II, which has also critically assessed their relevance to the study of the history of the Maurya period. Chapter III deals with the linguistic and palaeographic features of Aramaic as revealed by the Aśokan edicts. Some connected historical problems have been studied in depth in Chapter IV.

The number of writings on Aśoka's Aramaic and Greek edicts is fairly large. I intend to publish elsewhere a complete and annotated bibliography of the relevant publications. Here I have listed only the most important ones (according to my judgement) in the sections called Select Bibliography in Chapter II.

The name of the non-Brāhmī Indian script used in Aśokan inscriptions has been spelt in this monograph as *Kharoshṭhī*. Though, for the sake of convenience, we have adopted the conventional spelling, the correct spelling, as shown by us elsewhere and also indicated here, should be *Kharosti* or *Kharoshṭi*.

I have been fortunate enough to discuss some of the relevant problems with such eminent scholars as the Late Radha Govinda Basak, Prof. D. C. Sircar and Dr. A. D. H. Bivar. Dr. S. R. Banerjee and Sri Shilanand Hemraj have enlightened me on certain linguistic and palaeographic points. I acknowledge my indebtedness to all these savants.

The manuscript of the monograph has been carefully typed by Mr. S. De. Mr. P. Ghosh has supplied photographs of the inscriptions illustrated here. The palaeographic chart, appearing at the end of the monograph, has been prepared, under my supervision, by Mr. N. Ray of the Indian Museum. The latter has also designed the cover of the book. I offer my sincere thanks to these friends.

Dr. S. Ray, the Director of the Indian Museum, has kindly arranged for publication of the monograph. Dr. A. Sarkar and Mr. G. Ghosh of the same institution have seen it through the press with great care and caution. Dr. S. Mukherjee has ably prepared the index. The book has been printed as nicely as possible by the authorities and the employees of M/s Nabamudran Private Ltd. I am grateful to all of them.

Inspite of our best efforts some printing mistakes may have crept in. For these I crave indulgence of readers.

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B. N. Mukherjee

III

A NOTE ON AŚOKAN ARAMAIC

A

The term *Aramaic* is derived from the name *Aram,* which in the *Bible* seems to allude to (i) a person, described as a son of Shem or Kemūel, (ii) an ethnical group, and (iii) the territory occupied by it.[1] Aram, the supposed son of Shem or Kemūel, was probably considered as the ancestor of the Aramaeans.[2]

The original habitat of the Aramaeans is not known. Though an Accadian inscription of the second half of the 3rd millennium B.C. mentions A-ra-am and the Tell el-Amarna Tablets (of the 15th and 14th centuries B.C.) refer to the Aramaeans as Akhlame or Akhlamu (identifiable with the Akhlame Armaya of certain sources of the 12 century B.C.), they do not clearly locate the habitat of the Aramaeans.[3] "It is generally held that they moved from north-eastern Arabia into Syria on one side and into Mesopotamia on the other."[4] Significantly enough the terms *Syria* and *Syrians* are known to have been used in Greek as indicating Aram and the Aramaeans.[5]

Small Aramaean states came into existence in north-western and south-western Mesopotamia towards the close of the 13th century B.C. and with the end of the hegemony of the Hittites and the Mitanni. By about the end of the 12th century B.C. tiny Aramaean kingdoms were established in western Syria. The most important of them was Damascus. The end of the Hittite and Minoan powers and the decline of the might of Egypt (after Rameses III, 1198-1167 B.C.) and Assyria (after Tiglath-pileser I, 1113-1074 B.C.) helped the growth of the political strength of the Aramaeans, which reached its climax in the closing years of the 11th century and the first half of the 10th century B.C. Later in the 9th and 8th centuries B.C. the Aramaean states succumbed to the revived prowess of Assyria.[6]

The thriving trading activities of the Aramaeans, which resulted in the establishment of rich trade depots in the heyday of their political power, did not decline with the end of their political independence. On the other hand, their commercial enterprises and settlements in different parts of Asia made their culture, language and alphabet popular among non-Aramaeans. In the Assyrian empire the Aramaic language and alphabet were commonly used from about the end of the 8th century B.C.[7] An Assyrian invasion of Bactria was referred to by Diodorus Siculus,[8] while Arrian wrote about the Assyrian rule over the Indian tribes called Astakenoi and Assakenoi, who lived in the area lying to the west of the Indus and up to the river Kophen (Kabul).[8a] If the statements of these writers contained a core of truth, there was a possibility of the advent of Aramaic knowing families in the Indo-Iranian borderlands in the

age of the Assyrians. "At the end of the 7th century B.C., all Syria and a great part of Mesopotamia became thoroughly Aramized."[9] In the Achaemenid empire Aramaic was one of the official languages and "the principal speech of traders from Egypt and Asia Minor to India."[10] Thus at least during the Achaemenid rule in parts of the north-western section of the Indian subcontinent and its borderlands there could have been settlements of Aramaic speaking (or knowing) families of merchants and administrators.

The language of the Aramaeans is indicated in the *Bible* as 'arāmīt.[11] It belonged to the group of Semitic languages. Of the various Aramaic dialects, that used by the Aramaeans settled in Assyria became the most dominant one from the 8th century B.C. It was employed in the administration of the Achaemenid empire. The use of this "Official Aramaic" outlasted the Achaemenids by several centuries. "Official Aramaic, when written by people whose native language was not Aramaic, showed considerable divergences in a number of aspects, especially in the syntax and vocabulary. When it was used by native speakers of Aramaic, local dialectical differences made themselves felt."[12] Gradually these differences led to the growth of distinct dialects. These were in addition to the Aramaic dialects known perhaps from the second millennium B.C.[13] A number of the latter developed later into literary dialects (like "Palestinian Jewish Aramaic, Samaritan, and Syro-Palestinian Christian Aramaic along the Eastern border of the Mediterranean, and Syriac, Babylonian Talmudic Aramaic, and Mandaic in Mesopotamia").[14] The Armazi variety of Aramaic, known from a record of the 1st or 2nd century A.D. found at Armazi near Tiflis, represents a "stage when the originally completely Aramaic text was admitting Persian words".[15] Some extant documents are written in a "kind of Dog Aramaic, that is Aramaic mixed with a foreign language or strongly influenced by a foreign form of speech".[16]

Aramaic is not a completely dead language even in modern age. There are small groups speaking "Aramaic dialects, such as the inhabitants of some villages in Anti-Lebanon, and Christians and Jews living in or originating from Azerbaijan and Kurdistan."[17]

The widely known vehicle of the Aramaic language, called Aramaic alphabet, belonged to a branch of the North Semitic alphabet.[18] It was initially closely related to and was perhaps derived from the Phoenician script (adopted by the Aramaeans).[19] It consisted of 22 letters, written horizontally from right to left.[20] The earliest known Aramaic documents written in the script recognisable as Aramaic are datable to the 9th century B.C.[21] The script, like the language, gradually began to be used also by non-Aramaeans and became the official script of the Assyrian, Babylonian and Persian (Achaemenid) empires.[22] The Aramaic script was employed for writing even non-Aramaic languages. For an example, we can refer to a Naqsh-i-Rustam inscription written in the Old Persian language and the Aramaic script.[23] In the Indian provinces of the Achaemenid empire (including the lands of the Gandarians and "Indians") the Kharoshṭhī or rather Kharostī or Kharoshṭī script was developed largely from the Aramaic script for writing Prakrit.[24] In the post-Achaemenid period, the Aramaic alphabet as well as the dialects gradually began to be diversified (in the period ranging from c. 300 B.C. to A.D. 200 or 300). Recognisable groups of the Aramaic script were employed for writing eastern and western Aramaic dialects and various non-Semitic languages like Parthian, Pahlavi and Sogdian (and sometimes even Bactrian).[25] The origins of several other scripts of much later ages have been traced to the Aramaic alphabet.[26]

The ultimate wide difussion of this alphabet was possible largely due to the employment of the "Official" Aramaic language for writing in the Assyrian, Babylonian and Achaemenid empires.[27] "The Official Aramaic language adopted various eastern elements, such as Akkadian and Persian loan words, and was influenced by the grammar and syntax of those languages." Thus Official Aramaic can be, to some extent, "regarded as an eastern dialect."[28]

The Aramaic language and script, used in administration and also in trading circles in the Achaemenid empire, could have been continued to be known to a class of population in parts of the north-western section

of the Indian subcontinent and its borderlands in a period, when not long after the fall of the Achaemenids in 330 B.C., the Mauryas began to rule there.[29] It was *prima facie* possible for the Aramaic language, as used in the Indo-Iranian borderlands, to contain in its vocabulary many Iranian and even a few "Indian" words, and for the script, as employed there, to have features comparable with certain traits of writing witnessed in the Achaemenid documents.

B

The known Aramaic epigraphs of Aśoka do indeed betray certain features noticeable in the Aramaic records of the Achaemenids. Palaeographic features of the majority of the letters have affinity to those of the characters used in the latter documents,[30] and most of the palaeographic traits in question are actually attested to in the Egyptian Aramaic inscriptions of the 4th and 3rd centuries B.C.[31] (see also fig. 10).

The Taxila, Pul-i-Darunta and Shar-i-Kuna inscriptions of Aśoka indicate a tendency to leave more space between two separate words than between letters of a word (figs. 4 and 7). This tendency is more pronounced in the first Laghman edict, particularly in its fourth, fifth and sixth lines (fig. 1). This feature is noticeable also in the Aramaic documents of the Achaemenid age including the Aramaic text of the Bisitun inscription of Darius I discovered at the Jewish military colony in Elephantine, Egypt.[32]

In the Pul-i-Darunta and Kandahar records one may notice a tendency "to distinguish the final letters from their peers by making them a little larger than the others (chiefly by prolonging the downstrokes)"[33] (figs. 4 and 9). This peculiarity is witnessed in a few cases also in the Taxila and Shar-i-Kuna inscriptions (figs. 3 and 7). Twice in the Taxila inscription and in a few cases in the Kandahar record the larger form of *lāmedh* is indicated by extending upward the vertical (or semi-vertical) stroke (figs. 3 and 9). The habit of using larger forms of letters at the end of words is betrayed by Aramaic inscriptions of the 5th century B.C. and later ages.[34] It has already been remarked that the appearance of the "capital" form of final letters in Aśokan inscriptions was a continuation and development of tendencies manifested in the Aramaic writing of the "Persian epoch."[35]

A. Dupont-Sommer thinks that certain "vertical bars" appearing in the Kandahar and the first Laghman edicts are to be taken as marks of separation, each of them, occurring between two words, separates one from the other.[36] But, as pointed out by S. Shaked, in the Kandahar inscription the so-called vertical word divider, "which is a straight or somewhat wavy downstroke", can be better read as *lāmedh*[37] (fig. 9). Two "vertical" strokes in line 1 of the first Laghman record, considered by Dupont-Sommer as word-dividers, may denote numeral "1", and one such stroke should be deciphered as *zayin* (fig. 1). Thus no "vertical bar" seems to have been employed in known Aramaic inscriptions of Aśoka as a word-divider.

Different forms of Aramaic letters, appearing in different Aśokan records, are indicated in fig. 10. The forms of a few of them have sometimes remarkable similarity with one another. For examples, we can refer to *dāleth, kaph,nūn* and *reš* (fig. 10).[38] As pointed out by G. Garbini, *beth* in the Pul-i-Darunta record has a more archaic form than the same letter in other records.[39] *Pe* has an acute angle in its upper part in the Pul-i-Darunta edict, and occasionally also in the Taxila, Shar-i-Kuna, Kandahar and the first Laghman inscriptions[40] (figs. 3, 4, 7 and 9).

The style of writing is not always the same in Aśokan edicts. The script of the Pul-i-Darunta inscription "is formal"[41] (fig. 4). The treatment of the letters is neat and angular in the Taxila record (fig. 3). The characters in the Shar-i-Kuna record are fairly neatly engraved. Some of the letters have cursive forms (fig. 7). The letters are hastily and carelessly incised and are written in a little cursive style in the Kandahar epigraph (fig. 9). In the first Laghman inscription the lines are not straight and the scribe does not appear to have been careful in following the text. Lines 2 and 5 were apparently added after engraving lines 1, 3, 4

and 6. The forms of the letters are, however, often bold and clear (fig. 1). Palaeographically, the second Laghman edict has resemblance to the first Laghman inscription (see above p. 13). However, here the figure for hundred is little different from that in the first Laghman epigraph. Moreover, at least some of the letters are not well engraved in the second Laghman inscription (fig. 2).

Inspite of these differences in forms of letters and styles of writing,[42] there is no doubt that the contents and broadly also the palaeographic features date the records to the 3rd century B.C. and to the reign of Aśoka. The Aśokan Aramaic script, as indicated above, evolved out of the "standard Aramaic writing of the Persian period".[43] Local differences in style of writing and forms of letters may suggest that the script was fairly well used in the areas of the provenances of the records in questions, particularly in the territories now including the Kandahar region and the Laghman area of Afghanistan. The Aśokan script exhibits, according to a considered opinion, "the first steps towards an eastern development of the Aramaic script"[44] (see also above).

C

The language of the edicts of Aśoka is interesting for various reasons. One of the most important features is the presence of a fairly large number of Iranian words[45] (Chapter I and Chapter II, inscriptions I, III and V) and perhaps also a few terms of Indian origin (see above p. 14; see also Chapter II, inscription no. I). In certain cases the Iranian words "assume an Aramaic vesture"[46] (for examples *'dwšy'* in line 2 and *mzyšty'* in line 6 of the Shar-i-Kuna edict, *dmy dty* in line 2 of the Taxila inscription, etc.). But "more frequently, they retain an Iranian form even when Aramaic would have required the use of particular suffixes."[47] Several words of Iranian origin, however, do not require suffixes in Aramaic, "since they are singular nouns in the absolute state."[48] (For examples we can refer to *ptytw* in line 1, and *prbsty* and *hwptysty* in line 6 of the Shar-i-Kuna edict, *hwptysty* in line 6 of the Taxila inscription, *ptysty* in line 5 of the Kandahar record, etc.). This type of evidence shows, in the opinion of G. Garbini, that Aramaic as used in the edicts of Aśoka alludes to a form of that language "which has gone beyond the stage" when it could accept terms from foreign languages (primarily from Iranian, but also from Egyptian and Greek) and could absorb them into its "own phonological and morphological system."[49] Garbini further observes that "the conservation of historical forms of writing (*zy* for *ry, zbh* for *rbh,* causatives with prefix *-h* instead of *'* and *'rq'* for *'r'*), in contrast with the use of an orthography closer to the phonological state of the language (*mr'*, *'ḥdz, 'wsp,* the prefix-*'t*) proves that Aramaic is better known as a written and cultural than a spoken language."[50]

The language concerned, according to H. Humbach, is not strictly Aramaic. It should be considered as "Aramo-Iranian."[51]

No doubt, the language of the Aramaic inscriptions of Aśoka does not indicate it as a flourishing one with full of vitality. At the same time, it must be admitted that had there been no section of Aramaic speaking (or knowing) people in the north-western area of Aśoka's empire there would have been no necessity for issuing edicts in Aramaic. It is clear from RE XIV that certain subjects were repeatedly discussed in the edicts so that the people might act accordingly.[52] The edicts inscribed at important places and by the sides of roads were obviously meant to be read by public and also in public. One of the separate rock edicts (SRE II) states categorically that "this edict should be recited for hearing on the Tishya day during all the (three) seasons of four months. On a particular occasion it may be recited (for hearing by) even one person. By acting thus you (i.e. high state officials like Mahāmātras) will be able to fulfil (my directions)."[53] It is obvious that this edict, original drafts of which were addressed to at least high officials at Tosali and Samāpā, were meant for its ultimate communication to the subjects.[54] It appears that the local officials received (Prakrit) drafts of edicts from the king, which they edited or altered to suit local needs and couched them in local dialects or locally known languages and scripts.[55] Otherwise we cannot explain the differences in the details of grammar of Prakrit edicts of different zones,[56] use of the Kharoshṭhī script

(in the known Kharoshṭhī using zone), and of Greek and Aramaic in the extreme north-western section of the empire. The name *Yona* applied to a province of Aśoka's empire[57] suggests the existence of persons of *inter alios* Ionian (or Greek) origin in that region. As it appears from RE V, the Yonas lived near the Kambojas and the Gandhāras (whose territory occupied the Peshawar district area of Pakistan and sometimes also the area of Takshaśilā to the east of the Indus).[58] Not very far to the south-west of the habitat of the latter people is the Kandahar region in S.E. Afghanistan, which has yielded the Greek edicts of Aśoka. So in this area, referred to as Arachosia in classical sources, may have been situated the Yona province, where a number of Greek speaking people could be expected to be have resided.[59] Alexandropolis, the metropolis of Arachosia, was referred to by Isidore of Charax even as late as in the closing years of the 1st century B.C. as "Greek" (i. e. Hellenic or Hellenistic in culture ?).[60] These data surely lead us to infer that Aśoka caused the issue of his edicts in Greek for the benefit of at least a section of his subjects speaking Greek in Arachosia or the Yona province. Similarly the appearance of an Aramaic as well as a Greek version in the Shar-i-Kuna bilingual edict definitely indicates the presence of Aramaic-knowing people in the population of the Yona province. The existence of non-Greek culture and ethnic elements in this territory is alluded to by the Iranian name *Tushāspha,* denoting a Yavanarāja serving under Aśoka.[61] Tushāspha was probably a man of Iranian (or Graeco-Iranian ?) origin having his family settled in the Yona (Yavana) province of the empire. For the benefit of similar persons knowing Aramaic, but not Greek, Aramaic inscriptions were engraved. If the Aramaic inscription of Aśoka found at Taxila was issued for that locality, then there should have been Aramaic knowing subjects in that city.

The claim of Aramaic to be considered as a spoken language or as an exclusive official language of a region of the empire is supported by the discoveries of only Aramaic edicts (and not a single Greek epigraph or a Prakrit inscription in the Kharoshṭhī script) of Aśoka in the Laghman or Lamghan valley. This area, situated to the west of Gandhāra and to the north of Yona (Arachosia), was probably within the territory of the Kambojas, who were mentioned together with the Yonas and Gandhāras in RE V. Aramaic must have become known there at least from the days of the Achaemenid administration,[62] if not from a still earlier period.[63]

The insertions of transliterations of portions of a Prakrit passage of PE VII in the Kandahar Aramaic inscription may be explained in two different ways. The inscription might have been meant to be read by both the Aramaic and Prakrit-knowing subjects. However, since the transliterations are in the Aramaic script and in the midst of Aramaic text, it is better to surmise that these were introduced to make the Aramaic-knowing subjects to be acquainted with the passage of an edict written in Prakrit or in the "first" official language of the empire. There might have an official policy to encourage Aramaic-knowing subjects to learn Prakrit. It should be borne in mind that one of the reasons for inventing the Kharoshṭhī (or Kharoshṭrī) or rather Kharoṣṭī (or Kharoshṭī) alphabet (in the Achaemenid age) might have been the urge to write Prakrit in a script derived largely from Aramaic[64] and obviously for the benefit of the people including those who spoke (or at least knew) Aramaic and used the Aramaic script.[65]

All these data militate against any theory that Aramaic of Aśoka's empire was not at all a spoken language. No doubt, a large number of Iranian words were incorporated in Aramaic[66] and that the latter's phonological and morphological systems were weakened. Nevertheless, as V.A. Livshitz and I. Sh. Shifman have pointed out,[67] there is a total absence of Iranian grammatical elements from Aramaic edicts of Aśoka. So the language of the edicts concerned is to be considered as Aramaic and not Aramo-Iranian. Similarly presence of quotations from Prakrit edicts in the inscriptions concerned do not make their language Indo-Aramaic or Aramo-Indian.[68]

D

As noted above, Aramaic could have reached the Indian borderlands even in a pre-Achaemenid age, through traders and also in the wake of the alleged Assyrian invasion of Bactria.[69] It is well-known that

the Aramaic language and alphabet were "commonly employed in Assyria from the end of the eighth century B.C. onwards."[70]

We have noted earlier that Aramaic became one of the official languages of the Achaemenid empire. When the Achaemenids conquered Gadāra (territory of the Gandarians = Gandhāra, including at least the Peshawar district area and sometimes also Takshaśilā to the east of the Indus),[71] Harauvati (Arachosia = a region on the Sarasvatī or Helmand river, incorporating the Kandahar area),[72] Thatagu (Sattagudia),[73] Maka (Makran area of Baluchistan)[74] and Hidu (Sindhu, a land on the lower Indus),[75] Aramaic received an official status in the north-western section of the Indian subcontinent and its borderlands. It was certainly used by the administrators and those outsiders to whom it was the mother tongue or an adopted language. It would have been natural also for sections of Indians or Iranians (or Indo-Iranians), having transactions with the government or commercial connections with other parts of the empire, to learn Aramaic. With the decline of the Achaemenid administration, the importance and the vitality of the language gradually waned in Indo-Iranian borderlands, and it received increasing number of Iranian words in its vocabulary. It became somewhat mechanical. But it continued to be used in certain areas of the borderlands probably for its commercial importance. At least in one area (in the Laghman or Lamghan valley) it was the only language (or the principal language) chosen officially by the Maurya administration to communicate Aśoka's ideas to his subjects.

This line of argument suggests the continuity of an official language of an earlier region as a link language in certain areas of the Maurya empire. It was, however, more than matched by Greek, Prakrit and Iranian languages. Under the presence of the last its vitality was weakened, though vocabulary was further enriched. So there was some sort of regional developments in the language. The script as employed in the edicts concerned show different styles of writing within the north-western section of the Maurya empire. The Aramaic alphabet influenced the origin and development of a number of scripts in the Iranian world in the Post-Maurya age.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AI	: Basak, R. G., *Aśokan Inscriptions,* Calcutta, 1959.
AIU	: Majumdar, R. C. (editor), *The History and Culture of the Indian People,* vol. II, *The Age of Imperial Unity,* Bombay, 1951.
AW (or *AIW*)	: Bartholomae, C., *Altiranisches Wörterbuch,* Strassburg, 1904.
BSOAS	: *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies,* London.
CII, vol. I	: Hultzsch, E., *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum,* vol. I, *Inscriptions of Aśoka,* Calcutta, 1929.
cm.	: centimetre or centimetres
CRAIBL	: *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres,* Paris.
DISO	: Hoftijzer, C-F. J-J., *Dictionnaire des Inscriptions Sémitiques de l'Quest,* Leiden, 1965.
EI	: *Epigraphia Indica,* Ootacamund and New Delhi.
GBA	: Rosenthal, F., *A Grammar of Biblical Aramaic,* Wiesbaden, 1974.
HELBA	: Brown, F. and others, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament with an Appendix on Biblical Aramaic,* Oxford, 1952.
JA	: *Journal Asiatique,* Paris.
JAIH	: *Journal of Ancient Indian History,* Calcutta.
JCA	: *Journal of Central Asia,* Islamabad.
JRAS	: *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Ireland and Great Britain* (or *Great Britain and Ireland*), London.
m.	: metre or metres.
MRE (or ME)	: Minor Rock-Edict.
PE	: Pillar-Edict.
PHAI	: Raychaudhury, H. C., *Political History of Ancient India,* 5th edition, Calcutta, 1950.
RE	: Rock-Edict.
SRE	: Separate Rock-Edict.
Taxila (or J. Marshall, *Taxila*)	: Marshall, J., *Taxila, An Illustrated Account of Archaeological Excavations Carried Out at Taxila under the Orders of the Government of India between the Years 1313 and 1934,* 3 vols, Cambridge, 1951.
VDI	: *Vestnik Drevniey Istorii,* Moscow.

[1] *Genesis*, X, 22; XXII, 21; XXV, 20; XXVIII, 2; XXXI, 18; D. Diringer, *The Alphabet—A Key to the History of Mankind*, 2nd edition, reprint, London, etc. 1953, p. 253.
[2] *Genesis*, X, 31; see also above n. 1.
[3] D. Diringer, *op. cit.*, p. 253.
[4] *Ibid.*; see also C. G. Starr, *A History of the Ancient World*, 2nd edition, New York, 1974, p. 125.
[5] *Ibid.*; D. Diringer, *op. cit.*, p. 253.
[6] *Ibid.*; H. R. Hall, *The Ancient History of the Near East*, 11th edition, London, 1950, pp. 400f.
[7] D. Diringer, *op. cit.*, p. 254; C. G. Starr, *op. cit.*, pp. 127-129.
[8] Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliothekes Historikes*, II, 2-7.
[8a] Arrian, *Indike*, I, 1-3. See also below n. 63.
[9] D. Diringer, *op. cit.*, p. 254.
[10] *Ibid.*; J. C. Greenfield and B. Porten, *Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum*, pt. I—*Inscriptions of Ancient Iran, vol. V—The Aramaic Versions of the Achaemenid Inscriptions, etc.—The Bisitun Inscription of Darius the Great, Aramaic Version*, London, 1982, pp. 1f; C. G. Starr, *op. cit.*, p. 280.
[11] The name "is indicated by the (Hebrew) gloss 'arāmīt" (*Ezra*, IV, 7; *Daniel*, II, 4), "introducing Aramaic passages in about the same manner in which the Aramaic papyri from Egypt use, for instance, *mṣryt* to indicate use of an Egyptian term" (F. Rosenthal, *A Grammar of Biblical Aramaic*, 4th print, Wiesbaden, 1974, p. 5).
[12] F. Rosenthal, *op. cit.*, p. 6.
[13] *Ibid.*
[14] *Ibid.*, p. 5.
[15] D. Diringer, *op. cit.*, p. 260.
[16] *Ibid.*, p. 259.
[17] F. Rosenthal, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-6; see also D. Diringer, *op. cit.*, p. 254; J. Naveh, *Early History of the Alphabet*, Leiden, 1982, p. 127; etc.
[18] D. Diringer, *op. cit.*, p. 255.
[19] J. Naveh, *op. cit.*, pp. 78-80.
[20] *Ibid.*, p. 54; D. Diringer, *op. cit.*, pp. 241 and 262.
[21] D. Diringer, *op. cit.*, p. 255; A. R. Millard and P. Bordreuil, "A Statue from Syria with Assyrian and Aramaic Inscriptions", *Biblical Archaeologist*, 1982, vol. 45, no. 3, p. 140.
[22] J. Naveh, *op. cit.*, p. 125. "According to Dr. Rosenthal, the Aramaic script of the Achaemenian empire (which in the opinion of some scholars originated not in the west but in the eastern portion of the empire), down to about the second century B.C. *(sic)* was throughout uniform, whether it was engraved on stone or written on papyrus or perchment; this uniformity was due to the fact that Aramaic was the official language of some regions where it had never been a spoken tongue. Prof. Albright distinguishes four classes in the early Aramaic cursive script: (1) the writing of the seventh century B.C.; (2) and (3) the scripts of the first half and the second half of the sixth century B.C.; (4) the script of the early 5th century B.C." (D. Diringer, *op. cit.*, p. 257).
[23] *Ibid.*, p. 259; J. Naveh, *op. cit.*, p. 130.
[24] A. H. Dani, *Indian Palaeography*, Oxford, 1963, p. 260; D. Diringer, *op. cit.*, p. 301; B. N. Mukherjee, "A Note on the Name *Kharoshṭhī*", *Asiatic Society, Monthly Bulletin*, August, 1980, vol. IX, no. 8, p. 5.
[25] J. Naveh, *op. cit.*, pp. 127f and p. 151; D. Diringer, *op. cit.*, pp. 267f and 304f. For a hypothesis about the origin of the offshoots of the East Aramaic script family, see J. Naveh, *op. cit.*, p. 151.
[26] D. Diringer, *op. cit.*, pp. 314f.
[27] See above n. 22.
[28] J. Naveh, *op. cit.*, p. 125. "The use of western dialect in the Persian period was confined to private letters and other texts written or composed by Aramaeans" *(ibid.)*.
[29] E. J. Rapson (editor), *The Cambridge History of India*, vol. I—*Ancient India*, Cambridge, 1922, pp. 330f and 467f; S. Chattopadhyaya, *The Achaemenids in India*, 2nd edition, New Delhi, 1974, pp. 28-29. In this connection see also B. N. Mukherjee, "Darius I and Gadāra", *Journal of the Asiatic Society*, 1974, vol. XVI, nos. 1-4, pp. 149-150.
[30] J. C. Greenfield and B. Porten, *op. cit.*, pll. IIf; D. Diringer, *op. cit.*, fig. 127.
[31] S. Shaked "Notes on the New Aśoka Inscription from Kandahar", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, 1969, pt. I, p. 118; D. Diringer, *op. cit.*, fig. 127.
[32] See above n. 30.
[33] W. B. Henning, "The Aramaic Inscription of Aśoka found in Lampaka", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 1949, vol. XIII, no. 1, p. 81; *Journal Asiatique*, 1966, vol. CCLIV, p. 441.
[34] *JA*, 1966, vol. CCXLIV, pp. 443-444.
[35] *Ibid.*
[36] *Ibid.*, p. 445.
[37] *JRAS*, 1969, p. 118.
[38] See also *Ibid.*, p. 118.
[39] G. P. Carratelli and others, *A Bilingual Graeco-Aramaic Edict by Aśoka*, Roma, 1964, p. 59.
[40] *Ibid.*
[41] *JRAS*, 1969, pt. I, p. 118.
[42] See also *JA*, 1958, vol. CCXLVI, pp. 19-20; G. P. Carratelli and others, *op. cit.*, pp. 58-59; *JRAS*, 1969, pt. I, p. 118.
[43] *JA*, 1966, vol. CCLIV, p. 444; *JRAS*, 1969, pt. I, p. 118.
[44] *JRAS*, 1969, pt. I, p. 118. The forms of Aramaic letters used for writing coin-legends and some Bactrian inscriptions in Bactria and the Sogdian script might have their prototypes in (*inter alia* ?) Aśokan Aramaic (B. N. Mukherjee, "A Gold Coin from Tillya-Tepe (Afghanistan)", *The Journal of the Numismatic Society of India*, 1981, vol. XLIII, pt. I, pp. 41f; B. Lit-

vinsky, "Problems of the History of Central Asia and its Culture in Soviet Science", *International Association for the Study of the Cultures of Central Asia, Information Bulletin,* no. 1, 1982, p. 22; D. Diringer, *op. cit.*, p. 31). The latter might have also contributed to the growth a hybrid script consisting of letters from *inter alia* Aramaic and Kharoshṭhī or Kharoshṭī in an area (or areas) now included in Afghanistan and Soviet Central Asia (B. N. Mukherjee, "Observations on an Unknown Script", *Journal of the Epigraphical Society of India,* vol. III, p. 20; *The Journal of the Numismatic Society of India,* 1981, vol. XLIII, pt. I, pp. 41f).

J. Naveh thinks that the Aramaic alphabet used in Aśoka's edicts on stone "can perhaps be regarded as an early ancestor of the North Semitic branch" of Aramaic (as betrayed by *inter alia* the inscriptions found at Hatra) and also South Semitic branch of Aramaic (as indicated by Mandaic inscriptions) (*op. cit.*, pp. 132f and 143).

[45] In this connection see G. Ito, "Iranological Contributions of Aśokan Aramaic Inscriptions", *Acta Iranica,* s. II, vol. VII, pp. 308f.

[46] G. P. Carratelli and others, *op. cit.*, pp. 59-60.

[47] *Ibid.*, p. 60.

[48] *Ibid.*

[49] *Ibid.*

[50] *Ibid.*

[51] *Akademie der Wissenschaften und des Literatur, Abhandlungen der Geistes-und Sozialwissenschaftlichen Klasse,* 1974, no. 1, p.10.

[52] R. G. Basak, *Aśokan Inscriptions,* Calcutta, 1959, p. 78.

[53] *Ibid.*, pp. 125-126.

[54] G. Fussman thinks that the Separate Rock Edicts, the first of which refers to prince of Ujjayinī and (perhaps) of Takshaśilā, were also despatched to them ("Quelques problèmes aśokéens", *Journal Asiatique,* 1974, vol. CCLXII, pp. 381 and 389).

[55] See also *ibid.*, pp. 369f.

[56] *AI,* pp. XXVIII—XXXI.

[57] RE V and XIII (*AI,* pp. 23 and 68). In RE XIII the territory of the Yonas has been referred to as within Aśoka's *rājavisaya* ("royal dominion") and so as a province of his empire.

[58] H. C. Raychaudhuri, *Political History of Ancient India* (5th edition), Calcutta, 1950, p. 59.

[59] Alexandria in Arachosia was obviously founded by Alexander. He must have settled a part of his troops there, as he did in case of Alexandria in the land of the Paropamisadai (Arrian, *Anabasios Alexandrou,* IV, 22, 4-5). See also *ibid.*, V, 1, 1-6 for information on a Greek colony from a pre-Alexandrian age at Nysa, between the Cophen (Kabul) and the Indus.

[60] Isidore of Charax, *Stathmoi Parthikoi,* sec. 19; B. N. Mukherjee, *An Agrippan Source—A Study in Indo-Parthian History,* Calcutta, 1970, pp. 211f.

[61] *Epigraphia Indica,* vol. VIII, pp. 44. *Tusa* is the name of an Iranian hero, while Iranian *aspha* < *aspa* (Sanskrit *aśva*) means "horse".

[62] D. Diringer, *op. cit,*. p. 254; J. C. Greenfield and B. Porten, *op. cit.*, pp. 1f. Aramaic was used by the Jewish mercenaries in the service of the Achaemenid empire and stationed at Elephantine in Egypt. The Aramaic papyri found there are from the 5th century B.C. and they include an Aramaic recension of the Behistun inscription of Darius I (S. Sandmel, *The Hebrew Scriptures, An Introduction to Their Literature and Religious Ideas,* New York, 1963, p. 513; J. C. Greenfield and B. Porten, pp. 1f; D. Diringer, *op. cit.*, p. 258, fig. 127). This clearly hints at the employment of Aramaic in the Achaemenid administration.

[63] The Aramaeans could have visited the Indian borderlands even from the first period of their great activities in caravan trade from about the end of the 12th century B.C. (D. Diringer, *op. cit.*, p. 254). The intrusion into and settling in the Indian borderlands by Aramaic speaking people could have been a distinct possibility, if some of these areas were really invaded by the Assyrain empire, where the Aramaic language and alphabet had "become commonly employed.... from the end of the eighth century B.C." (Diodorus Siculus, *op. cit.*, II, 2-7; Arrian, *Indike,* I, 1-3; H. G. Rawlinson, *Bactria, From the Earliest Times to the Extinction of Bactrio-Greek Rule in the Punjab,* reprint, Delhi, 1978, pp. 6-7; D. Diringer, *op. cit.*, p. 254; see also above nn. 8 and 8a).

Prof. C. D. Chatterjee believes that sections of the Aramaic speaking Jewish community migrated to the territory now in Afghanistan "in the wake of Assyrian invasion, towards the middle of the seventh century B.C." (C. D. Chatterjee, "The Aramaic Language and its Problems in the Early History of Iran and Afghanistan", *Ācārya-Vandanā, D. R. Bhandarkar Birth Centenary Volume* (edited by S. Bandyopadhyay, Calcutta, 1983, p. 224). No doubt, the Jews used Aramaic and from the 6th century B.C. it largely supplemented Hebrew as their spoken language (S. Sandmel, *op. cit.*, p. 226). But we are not sure of the migration of the Jews in the wake of the Assyrian invasion.

[64] D. Diringer, *op. cit.*, p. 302. There is absolutely no foundation for C. D. Chatterjee's hypothesis that the similarities between the Kharoshṭhī and Aramaic scripts are "purely nominal" from "palaeographical point of view" (*op. cit.*, p. 213). Like Aramaic, Kharoshṭhī or Kharoshṭī or Kharostī was written from right to left. Some of the letters of Kharoshṭhī had almost identical form and sound like those of some Aramaic characters. There were great similarities between certain Kharoshṭhī letters and Aramaic characters. Like Aramaic Kharoshṭhī had one basic form of initial vowel *(a);* other initial vowels (*i, u, e* and *o*) were formed by adding medial signs (indicated by a stroke or a loop) to *a*. It has been pointed out that seventeen out of twenty-two Aramaic letters formed the basis of Kharoshṭhī letter forms. There were also great affinity of several signs for numerals in Kharoshṭhī with those for identical numerals in Aramaic. However, since Kharoshṭhī was employed for writing Prakrit, letter forms denoting sounds unknown to Aramaic had to be introduced. Here influence might have come from the direction of Brāhmī, which might already have been known to be used for writing Prakrit. Kharoshṭhī experienced influence of Brāhmī in the development of certain signs, phonology and the rules underlying the conjuncts and vocalized consonants (A.H. Dani, *op. cit.*, pp. 256-259; D. Diringer, *op. cit.*, 303-304).

It should be noted here that either *Kharoshṭī* or *Kharostī* (or *Kharostrī*), and not the oft repeated *Kharoṣṭhī,* is the correct spelling of the name of the script concerned. The appellation may literally mean "empire put" or "empire-placed", i.e. "the one who or which is placed or put in the service of the empire ("*Kshathra*>**Kshahara*>*Khara,* "empire"+*ost*<*ostāt,* "placed", "put") (*AW,* col. 542; *JRAS,* 1978, p. 4; I. Gerschevitch, *A Grammar of Manichaean Sogdian,* London, 1963, pp. 87-88; B. N. Mukherjee, "A Note on the Name Kharoshṭhī", *Journal of the Asiatic Society,* 1981, vol. XXIII, pp. 144 f.). Since the script was used by Aśoka for communicating to his subjects in a section of his empire, it must have already been popular there from an earlier age. Its beginning could well have been in the period of the Achaemenid empire, when Aramaic played a distinct role in administration. The script was evolved to help the administrators of the empire to read the local Prakrit dialect and to communicate easily with local officials, chiefs, scribes and others. It was helpful to the foreigners and also to the native people in their communication with one another. "At first, the intercourse between the

Persian and Indian offices probably led to the use of the Aramaic letters for the north-western Prakrit, and later to modifications of this alphabet, which were made according to the principle of the older Indian Brāhmī" (D. Diringer, *op. cit.*, pp. 301-3; A. H. Dani, *op. cit.*, pp. 256-257; G. Bühler, *Indische Palaeographie*, Strassburg, 1896, sec. II, 8).

[65] See above n. 64.

[66] For examples, see G. Ito, *op. cit.*, pp. 308f.

[67] V. A. Livshtiz and I. Sh. Shifman, "K Tolkovaniu Novikh Arameyskikh Nadpisey Asoki", *Vestnik Drevniey Istorii*, 1977, no. 2, p. 23.

[68] For other arguments connecting Aśokan Aramaic with Imperial official Aramaic of the Achaemenid empire, see G. Ito, *op. cit.*, p. 308; *JA*, 1958, vol. CCXLVI, p. 20; 1966, vol. CCLIV, pp. 338f; etc.

[69] See above nn. 8, 8a, and 63.

[70] D. Diringer, *op. cit.*, p. 254; see also above n. 63.

[71] R. G. Kent, *Old Persian Grammar, Texts, Lexicon*, reprint, New Haven, 1953, p. 117; Herodotus, *History*, III, 91; H. C. Raychaudhuri, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

[72] R. G. Kent, *op. cit.*, pp. 117 and 213; B. N. Mukherjee, *An Agrippan Source—A Study in Indo-Parthian History*, Calcutta, 1970, pp. 2-3. Arachosia had within its limits one Alexandria (Ptolemy, *Geographike Huphegesis*, VI, 20, 4), obviously from the days of Alexander. It has been identified with the present Kandahar area (W. H. Schoff, *Parthian Stations of Isidore of Charax*, Philadelphia, 1912, pp. 9 and 38). So Arachosia was in South-Eastern Afghanistan. According to the Behistun inscription of Darius I, the fort called Kāpišakani or Kapišakana was within Arachosia (R. G. Kent, *op. cit.*, p. 126). If this name was connected with the name of the people of Kāpiśa or Kapiśa (Kapiśakas), i.e. Kapiśā, then Arachosia in the Achaemenid age could have temporarily included parts of Kapiśā. The more well-known name of the most of the region of Kapiśā of the Maurya period [including Opiane or modern Opian and the city of Kapiśā (i.e. Kāpiśī) or modern Begram] was perhaps Kamboja.

[73] R. G. Kent, *op. cit.*, pp. 117 and 187; Herodotus, *op. cit.*, III, 91.

[74] R. G. Kent, *op. cit.*, p. 117; *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. LVI, pp. 217-18; P. Sykes, *A History of Persia*, vol. I, 3rd edition, London, 1963, p. 163.

[75] R. G. Kent, *op. cit.*, p. 117; *Journal of Ancient Indian History*, 1975-76, vol. IX, p. 180. See also Herodotus, *op. cit.*, III, 94.