

## THE CHORESMIAN DOCUMENTS

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## I

It is pleasant to be able to report that good progress has been made with the decipherment of the indigenous Choresmian script. The work, initiated by I. M. Diakonoff and completed by V. A. Livshitz, owes much to the recent discovery of fresh material – inscriptions on ossuaries found at *Toq-qal'a*, a ruined city on a hill (*Toq-tau*) 14 km to the NW of Nukuz, therefore in the northern part of Choresmia. The language of the inscriptions using the indigenous script, which like Sogdian, Parthian, etc., descends from the Aramaic script, has a good claim to being called *Choresmian* without further epithet; but so has the later language written with Arabic letters, for which the Soviet scholars have coined *Arabo-Choresmian*, a clumsy term. I shall use *Choresmian* for either, adding "old" or "late" whenever a distinction is needed.

The Choresmian material in which the indigenous script is employed falls into four categories:

(1) Coins with Choresmian legends. Vast numbers have been found in excavations in the course of the last thirty years, but few have been published in a satisfying manner. Hardly any of them are available in collections outside the Soviet Union; complaints about the withholding of the material have had little response. Our chief source remains an article by S. P. Tolstov in *Vestnik drevney Istorii*, 4 (5), 1938, 120–145; substantially reproduced in *Drevniy Xorezm*, 1948, 173–195. The illustrations accompanying *Drevniy Xorezm* (pl. 84 and 85) show a remarkable collection of ill-favoured, badly photographed and poorly printed specimens. S. P. Tolstov's readings of some of the legends have been discussed on earlier occasions.<sup>1</sup>

(2) Inscriptions from *Topraq-qal'a*, a royal palace that was abandoned shortly after A.D. 300, according to Tolstov, in favour of *Pil-qal'a* (*Fir*). The inscriptions consist of a large number of well-written and splendidly preserved wooden tablets; and a small number of fragmentary documents on leather. Some of the latter bear dates in an unknown era, ranging from 207 to 231 (or 232).<sup>2</sup> Of this rich material, which was discovered in 1948 and 1949, little has been made accessible to the public. In the second

volume of the *Trudi Xorezmskoy Arxeologo-Etnograficheskoy Ekspedicii* (1958) two of the leather documents and a single specimen of the wooden tablets (= *Topraq-q.* No. 10) were published (pp. 208 sqq.), accompanied by unsatisfactory reproductions (fig. 97).<sup>3</sup> They were re-published, with improved readings and reproductions, in S. P. Tolstov, *Po drevnim del'tam Oksa i Yaksarta*, 1962, 217 sqq., where a second wooden tablet (= *Topraq-q.* No. 8) is added; it is a misfortune that in the illustration this important document has been so strongly reduced that some of the letters can no longer be distinguished with assurance. In the same book there is a reference to a fresh find of documents at a fort called *Yakke-Parsan*, p. 257, and one of them, containing the beginnings of seven lines, is reproduced, fig. 165; those documents are attributed, on unknown grounds, to the 8th century.

(3) The ossuary inscriptions of *Toq-qal'a*. One notes with gratification that, thanks to the infusion of fresh blood into Soviet Choresmian studies, their publication has been tackled on the heels of their discovery; they were found as recently as 1962. In an article by S. P. Tolstov and V. A. Livshitz that appeared in *Sovetskaya Etnografiya* 1964, 2, 50–69, nine of those inscriptions are edited; an English version, printed in the *Acta Antiqua Ac. Sc. Hung.*, xii, 1964, 231–251, is provided with a plate that is wholly satisfactory.<sup>4</sup> At the same time the excavator of the site, A. V. Gudkova, published a report (*Tok-kala*, Tashkent 1964) which on seventeen plates brings an additional mass of material.<sup>5</sup> It is a great pity that Mme Gudkova's noble effort at thus making the material readily usable has been partly spoiled in the printing, by selection of too wide a "screen", which blurs the delicate distinctions of letters, severs connected letters, and even causes them to disappear without trace on occasion. Many of the ossuary inscriptions are dated in an unknown era; the earliest year is 658, the latest 753.

(4) A few inscriptions on silver vessels. Most of them are depicted in Smirnov's *Vostochnoe Serebro*; since his monumental work appeared (in 1909), two further specimens have been published, see *Toq-q.* 233 [52] n. 12. As Livshitz has justly observed, several of the inscriptions are dated, viz. Smirnov No. 42: a. 570; No. 43: a. 700; Bader-Smirnov, *Serebro Zakamskoe*<sup>6</sup>: a. 9 (= a. 709, presumably); Bader, *Kamsh. Eksp.* fig. 50: a. 714 (?).

<sup>3</sup> Better reproductions are available in articles printed outside the Soviet Union. Thus the dated leather document (= *Topraq-q.* No. 4), unusable in *Trudi*, is clear enough in Tolstov's article in *J. As. Soc. Bombay*, 33, 1960, fig. 2c. The difference is caused by more advanced printing technique.

<sup>4</sup> The article is quoted here as *Toq-q.* with the page of the English version, followed by the page of the Russian text in square brackets.

<sup>5</sup> Professor Otto Maenchen most kindly brought this book to my notice and lent me his copy.

<sup>6</sup> The readings suggested *Mitteliranisch*, p. 58, must be withdrawn now.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Mitteliranisch* (= *Handb. d. Orientalistik*, iv, 1), pp. 57 sq.

<sup>2</sup> S. P. Tolstov, *Problemy Vostokovedeniya*, 1961, 1, pp. 54 sqq.

## II

The material reveals the existence of an indigenous Choresmian era of long duration; its initial term is in dispute and must be discussed first. Al-Beruni, indeed, had spoken of an indigenous era, but he attributed it to one *Afriy*, the legendary founder of the royal house of Choresmia, and placed its beginning in A.D. 304. Clearly, al-Beruni was wrong, for once. That is not surprising; for he himself states that the old era was abandoned after the conquest by Qutaiba (A.D. 712) and replaced by Muslimic dating. Living about three hundred years later, he was forced to rely on inaccurate reports<sup>7</sup> in which the era was wrongly associated with the alleged ancestor of the family whose members enjoyed the dignity of kingship still at the time of his youth.

Tolstov seeks the origin of the Choresmian era in the Kushan era introduced by Kanishka, which in its turn, following older practice, he identifies with the Indian Śaka era (beg. A.D. 78). The latest dates then would be: Topraq-qal'a a. 231 = A.D. 308; Toq-qal'a a. 753 = A.D. 830. Severally, these are disconcertingly late; they would be even later, by fifty years, if we adopted the dating of Kanishka favoured by the majority of historians nowadays (A.D. 128). There are many reasons speaking against the assumption of so late dates, among them considerations of palaeography, the spread of Islam in Choresmia, and the statements of al-Beruni.

The necropolis of Toq-qal'a was violently destroyed by war: it is natural to attribute that destruction to the "second campaign" which was undertaken by command of Qutaiba to avenge the murder of his nominee.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, Toq-qal'a a. 753 preceded A.D. 712, and the foundation of the era cannot be later than 42 B.C. On that assumption the earliest and latest dates are:

Topraq-qal'a	A.D. 165-189
Toq-qal'a	A.D. 616-711
Silver vessels	A.D. 538(?); <sup>9</sup> 658-672.

The "older era" of Northwestern India is too early for our purposes if, with Konow, we attribute its beginning to 84 B.C.; even the Vikrama era (beg. 57 B.C.) is on the early side. Presumably the Choresmian era owed its inception to some event of Choresmian history, perhaps a gaining of some measure of independence. Its immediate model may have been the Arsacid era.

Tolstov himself appears to have been uneasy at the result of his calculations; for he also mentions (only to reject it) the Christian era as a candidate

<sup>7</sup> If al-Beruni had possessed any direct knowledge of such an era, he would surely have made some use of it in his work; yet even in dealing with Choresmian history he has recourse to Seleucid dates.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. H. A. R. Gibb, *The Arab conquests in Central Asia*, p. 43.

<sup>9</sup> One is bound to suspect an engraver's mistake (570 for 670). On these dates see Livshitz, *Vestnik Drevn. Ist.*, 1964, 3, p. 160.

for consideration. Since that era did not come into use before the 6th century, it need not detain us; however, the opportunity is welcome to point out that Tolstov's supposition of the existence of large Christian communities in Choresmia, at the time of al-Beruni, is based on unsafe premises.<sup>10</sup>

The date gained, with the help of Toq-qal'a, for the documents of Topraq-qal'a, A.D. 165-189, is consonant with all that has been made known about that site. I fail to find any clear evidence in favour of Tolstov's attribution of the documents to the 3rd and 4th centuries. The palace of Topraq-qal'a itself, however, doubtless continued to be occupied for some decades after A.D. 189, yet hardly beyond the middle of the 3rd century. The coins found there are mostly of the 1st and 2nd centuries, among them a small number (22) of Kushan coppers (Vima Kadphises, Kanishka, Vasudeva);<sup>11</sup> some of those were discovered in the top layer of the ruins,<sup>12</sup> hence were still in circulation at the time when the site was abandoned. It is doubtful whether any of the indigenous issues owe anything to the imitation of certain Sassanian coins.<sup>13</sup>

It seems to me that Tolstov has made insufficient allowance for the influence which the rising power of Sassanid Persia exercised upon its neighbours. Higher civilization had come to Choresmia in the first two centuries of our era. It had already some modest achievements to its credit - Tolstov understandably overrates their value - when it suddenly came to a full stop. Everything ceased abruptly, the country relapsed into primitivity whence it had barely risen. If Tolstov's investigations have shown one thing, it is this complete break in the development. It began closely to the beginning of the Sassanian state; as soon as the Sassanians collapsed, civilization resumed its march on the Oxus. We cannot join Tolstov and view the development in Persia and Choresmia as unconnected.

<sup>10</sup> In *Sovetskaya Etnografiya*, 1946 (2), 87 sqq., Tolstov sought to demonstrate that the name of the Christian (orthodox) New Year's day supplied by al-Beruni, "kalandas", must have come to Choresmia through Southern Russia, carried to the land of al-Beruni by a wave of Orthodox migrants travelling the northern route. In truth, al-Beruni's spelling, *qlnd's*, *q'inds Chron.* 292<sup>17</sup> sqq., merely represents the Syriac rendering of Lat. *calendae*: *qlnds*, *q'indus*, *qlndys*, etc.; Payne Smith s.v. even cites *qlnd's* in Arabic script. Al-Beruni adduces the term as an integral part of a full calendar list, every single item of which is Syriac; and he says in the clearest possible words that he is describing the calendar of the Syrian Melkites ("the Syriac months" 288; "the months of the Syrians" 288<sup>18</sup>). In a flourishing trade centre, such as the capital of Choresmia was in al-Beruni's day, the presence of a handful of Syrian merchants and artisans need not cause undue surprise. On orthodox Christians in Central Asia see B. Spuler, *Die Morgenländischen Kirchen (Handb. viii/2)*, 154 sq.

<sup>11</sup> *Problemi Vost.* 1961, 1, 57.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Tolstov, *Po sledam drevne-xorezmiyskoy tsivilizatsii*, 1948, 165 sq.

<sup>13</sup> The resemblance of the crowns of "Artamux" and Shapur I (cf. *Problemi Vost.* 1961, 1, 60) is only partial; the helmet of the beardless head (allocated by Tolstov to "Artamux" 's wife) clearly recalls Arsacid models. All the older silver issues bear, like Arsacid coins, debased Greek inscriptions.

The Sassanians were notoriously harsh towards the small kingdoms on the periphery of the dominions they claimed; they were either incorporated as provinces (or nominal "kingdoms"), or subdued and ruined. That was the policy laid down by Ardashir and put into effect by himself and, most energetically and successfully, by his son Shapur I. How can one suppose that Shapur, who took possession of Transoxiana up to Tashkend and the limits of Kashghar,<sup>14</sup> overlooked the existence of little Choresmia on his flank? He did not; for Choresmia had been disposed of before. Tabari mentions a campaign in which Ardashir conquered Choresmia as well as Gurgān, Marv, etc.<sup>15</sup> Thanks to the *Chronicle of Arbela*<sup>16</sup> we know that a second defeat, a crushing blow, was inflicted on the Choresmians by Shapur in the first year of his rule, i.e., A.D. 239/40.<sup>17</sup> That should be the true date for the abandonment of Topraq-qal'a; no coins were struck in Choresmia thereafter, until the dissolution of the Sassanid empire in the 7th century.<sup>18</sup> Clear proof of the loss of Choresmian independence is provided by the inscription of Paikuli (A.D. 293) in which the king of Choresmia (*hwrym MLK'*, Parthian line 42) is mentioned among the subject rulers, after the *Kušānshāh* (himself a Sassanian prince).

### III

The ossuary inscriptions of Toq-qal'a generally open with the dates, in which the words for year, month, and day are expressed ideographically, by *BŠNT*, *YRH'*, and *BYWM* respectively. Those ideograms, together with the indigenous names of months and days (which follow the model of the "Younger Avestan" calendar), have supplied a secure basis for the decipherment. After the date, the words "this (*ZNH*) ossuary" (*tnbryk*<sup>19</sup> according to Livshitz) are followed by the name and father's name of its occupant (sometimes also further designations) and the whole is on occasion concluded by a pious wish.

Some of the calendar terms have assumed strange shapes. Thus the name of the 1st day and 10th month, convincingly read by Livshitz as *'hwrym*, compared with al-Beruni's *rēmazd* or *rīmazd* (MSS. with *-š-*). Of the basic form, *ahurahe mazdā* in Avestan, the first half is splendidly preserved, so well indeed that the spelling is only attributable to the principle

of historical orthography; while the second half is unaccountably reduced to a mere *m-*. Al-Beruni's *rēmazd*, on the contrary, is more consonant with our expectations; *-h-* was an unstable consonant, and short vowels at the fringe of words could be lost successively, especially in longish terms, hence *rē-* from *ahurahe* (*ahurahya*); and *mazd* from *mazdā* is normal. It seems to me that the only way to account for *'hwrym* is by understanding it as a conventional scribal abbreviation (as we may write *Sept.*).

Some of the letters coincide in form altogether (thus R, D, and 'Ain); some others resemble each other so strongly that there is no reliable distinction (as Y and W; or B and N). As a consequence, the reading is apt to be uncertain, in some points, as soon as we leave the safe precincts of the dating formulae. It becomes then all the more important to observe, in the strictest manner, certain scribal conventions that arise from the material, in particular the rules of linking and separating letters. It seems to me that by refusing any licence in such matters we can improve the security of reading. A similar situation exists in Pahlavi, where many letters are indistinguishable from each other, but well-established rules of linking powerfully assist the reader; he would indeed be lost without them. Attempts have been made from time to time to arrogate to oneself some licence, so as to assert: "in this word *W* has been connected to the left"; in the long run they have invariably been rejected. I am conscious of the difficulty of writing on a subject where a part of the material (some of it essential to my argument) is not available to me, and shall not be surprised if some of the suggestions I am about to make will be found wanting; however, it may be useful to open a discussion, which is likely to lead ultimately to a clarification of points as yet obscure.<sup>20</sup>

A case in point is the reading *'yt*, believed to mean "son", in Topraq-q. Nos. 8 and 10, for a group of letters that to all appearances should be read *'yt*. The letter *G* has not markedly changed from its Old Aramaic shape – an angle with its point at the top. In Chor. the angle has turned a little to the left, so that its first side approaches the vertical, its second side the horizontal. The Chor. scribe made the second side last, and since it went towards the left would join the next letter to its end. That is how *G* is produced still in the later material: *βγγ* (an excellent reading we owe to

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *BSOAS.*, xii, 1947, 54.

<sup>15</sup> Nöldeke, *Tabari*, p. 17.

<sup>16</sup> E. Sachau, *Die Chronik von Arbela*, p. 64, "... *Sāpōr, ein Mann von sehr harter Natur. Im ersten Jahr hatte er einen Krieg mit den Chorasmiern und den Bergmedern und besiegte sie in einer gewaltigen Schlacht. Von dort zog er weiter und unterwarf die Gelen, die Dailemiten und die Hyrkanier . . . Alle Welt fürchtete sich vor ihm . . .*"

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *Asia Major*, vi, 1957, 119.

<sup>18</sup> The reading of *'purg = Afriy* is not acceptable. Cf. *Mitteliranisch*, p. 57.

<sup>19</sup> In order to strengthen the link with the late Choresmian orthography, and also to clarify certain points, I shall use *β γ δ* and *x* in the transliteration of indigenous words, in the place of *b g d* and *h*, reserving those for ideograms.

<sup>20</sup> One has to bear the risk of being reproached for ignorance of the material by those who retain it for their private use. Thus I find myself reproached (*Toq-q.* 236 [54] n. 19) for not realizing that certain late coins which, as I had claimed, bear the king's name in Sogdian letters on the obverse, nevertheless have Choresmian inscriptions on the reverse. Apart from the question of access, one must observe, firstly, that my remarks had been directed against Tolstov's allocation of the Sogdian inscriptions to a non-existing late form of the Choresmian script; secondly, that the reproachful annotation constitutes an admission that I was right about their Sogdian nature; and thirdly, that my remarks were expressly confined to the inscriptions on the obverse ("die Namen der Könige . . . auf dem Avers vor dem Königshopf", *Mitteliranisch*, 57).

Livshitz) on Smirnov No. 42, and *ywšt*, Toq-q. No. 52, are good examples; and that is precisely how the second letter of the disputed word is formed.

The assumption that one could substitute *'zt* for *'yt* is moreover not in accord with the few certain examples of *Z*. Notably *ZK* in Topraq-q. Here *Z* is a slightly wavy vertical, standing by itself (No. 8) or leaning to the next letter, but not deliberately linked (in the sense of being formed without lifting the pen from the writing material). If it were to be linked, it would naturally be linked at its lower end, and so it is in *ZNH*, frequent in Toq-q. Yet the old separate form persists in another ideogram, *ZWZN'*, common on the silver vessels.<sup>21</sup> The ideograms, which the later scribes could no longer analyse,<sup>22</sup> are admittedly an unsafe guide, and here they give contradictory information; yet we may infer that the letter was linked, if at all, from its bottom, very differently from the letter in the alleged Topraq-q. *'zt*. For *z* in Iranian words there are no wholly clear cases in Toq-q. We find *'ztyk* No. 52, interpreted as "son", but the letter and the place of junction are smudged;<sup>23</sup> the word apparently recurs, Gudkova pl. xvi, 1 b line 2, where the junction is certain and the letter resembles the *Z* of *ZNH* (or *N/B* generally). In *zyt* (?), No. 39, also explained as "son", no junction is discernible, but that inscription is not sufficiently well preserved to give a decision. Dubious readings, such as *'zrwmy-n* No. 52 line 4, a patronymic (*'zrwmy* "having magic power from *Zrvan*") do not come into account.

To return to Topraq-q., I fail to find convincing cases in which an apparent *G* must be read as *Z*. I do not count *rym'ztk* among them, a personal name derived from *\*Ahuramazdaka*, with the help of al-Beruni's *rēmazd* (on which see above p. 170). Since five hundred years later, at Toq-qal'a, one still spells not only *'hwry-m.*, but also *'hwrk* = *\*Ahuraka* (*'hwrk* *'zrwyn'ny* "son of *Azruwēn*")? Gudkova pl. xvi, 2), so early a shortening seems improbable; moreover, the redundant *-'* would by itself shake our confidence in the proposed explanation. Adhering to the identity of *G*, we obtain a good name with ease: *rzm'γtk* = *razm-āyatak*<sup>24</sup> "he who has come to the battle-line".<sup>25</sup>

While it may be difficult to define the meaning of *'yt*, "son" and "free" (as has also been proposed, on the basis of *'zt*) seem equally excluded. If,

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Livshitz, *Vestnik Drevney Istorii*, 1964, 3, p. 160 n. 34.

<sup>22</sup> The various misspellings of *ZWZN'* (*ZWZN*, *ZZN'*) show that clearly.

<sup>23</sup> The independent photograph *apud* Gudkova, *Toq-q.* pl. xiv, favours the presence of full junction.

<sup>24</sup> *Razm-* also in No. 8 line 22 *rzmβywrk* "(as forceful as a whole) myriad in the battle" or *rzmβywdk* "a fury in battle".

<sup>25</sup> The illustration does not allow us to express more than hesitant opinions on names occurring in No. 8. In lines 2 and 5 names beginning with *y'w-* seem likely (*5 y'w-prnk?*); line 17 prob. ends *-βytk*; line 27 *Prn-βy'wk* "increase of fortune". In No. 10 line 10 *'prt-γrywk* deserves consideration.

as Tolstov assumes, the wooden tablets contain lists of the members of families arranged according to their status (from householder to slaves), a kind of census reports, then *'yt* appears (on the last line of Doc. No. 8) after the name of a slave<sup>26</sup> belonging to the category "son of —".<sup>27</sup> Applied to persons, *'yt* lit. "having come" could mean either "adult" (as e.g. Arabic *bāliy*, Pers. *raside*) or "present" (in accord with the Late Chor. abstract *'ydk'wk* "presence").

## IV

We cannot be wholly certain about the distribution of *G* and *Z*; for the great lapse of time, from Topraq-q. to Toq-q., makes it possible that scribal practice thoroughly changed. Thus in Sogdian, for example, the letters *z* and *y*, once linked, came to be written separately at various late stages, for the purpose of recapturing their lost individuality. We should be more reluctant to assume such scribal vagaries within homogeneous material emanating from the same time and place. Such vagaries have been claimed for the letter *W* in the inscriptions of Toq-qal'a.

Ordinarily, both *W* and *Y* are left unconnected; that applies to ideograms (e.g. *BYWM*) no less than Iranian words (e.g. *'rw'n*, *'hwrym*, *ywšt*, *βrwrtn*, *tyšy'n*). An important, and certain, case of *W* is *nwš'yrδm'n* (No. 25) "eternal paradise". There is, however, a recurrent word which appears in the transliteration as *nwšy*, but in which the 2nd letter is linked to the following and in fact looks like another *n* or *β*. I hasten to add that Livshitz (*Toq-q.* 244 sq. [61]) was fully alive to the incongruity and himself remarked that *BNŠY* or *NBŠY* would be "more justified", yet ultimately settled on *NWŠY* and, moreover, gave serious consideration to *NYŠY*. For my part, I should say that *BNŠY*, *NBŠY*, *NNŠY*, or *BBŠY*, any one of those would be preferable, because they constitute potentially possible readings; while *NWŠY* and *NYŠY* are warranted impossible, whether or not they supply a semblance of harmonious meaning.

*Nβšy* – to adopt provisionally the least unlikely reading – has a side-form *nβšy'*, which is found associated with *y'*, the feminine article,<sup>28</sup> as

<sup>26</sup> *'BD-n'* may be the best of the various readings suggested for this word.

<sup>27</sup> There are two compounds of ideograms, both distorted in the scribal tradition. One of them may have been originally *\*BRY-BRTYH* (cf. *'NTTYH* "woman"), i.e. "son (and) daughter" = "children"; the other perhaps *\*BRY-'MTYH* = "son (of) slavegirl". The latter stood in the line preceding the last of Doc. No. 8. It would make no sense to add "son" or "free" after the name of a person placed in the category "slaves—son of slavegirl".

<sup>28</sup> We may hardly assume that *ZNH* served as ideogram for *y'*, cf. *Toq-q.* 243 [59]; the order of the words (*ZNH mβryk* against *t. y' . . .*) by itself disproves the suggestion. *ZNH* should be a demonstrative pronoun, = *nā(n)* in Late Chor., where *nā(n)* before a noun produces a verbless sentence, but after a noun is a demonstrative adjective. Accordingly, *ZNH t.* "this is the ossuary", *t. ZNH* "this o.", *t. y'* "the ossuary of (the woman) . . ." (lit. "the ossuary of her who is . . ."). There is no "post-positive article" in Chor.

*nβšy* is with 'y, its masc. equivalent. Hence, *nβšy* may be an adjective capable of possessing a feminine form, yet to judge by Late Chor. such adjectives do not ordinarily end in -y. This consideration causes one to suspect that *nβšy* may be an ideogram. As such the obvious choice would be נפש *naffi* (lit. "my soul, my self"), which may have been used in the same way as Pahl. *NPŠH* "own", to which it would be related as *BRY* "son" is to Pahl. *BRH*. The postulated meaning, which would be "own, belonging, property", fits well enough;<sup>29</sup> in some inscriptions we read *ZNH tnβryk nβšy 'y* . . . "this is the ossuary belonging to . . .", there are also short ones (as Gudkova pl. viii, 2) consisting merely of the words *ZNH tnβryk NN. nβšy* "this ossuary belongs to NN." (lit. "this is the o. belonging to NN.").

If that is the true meaning of *nβšy*, we are compelled to alter the reading of that word and replace it by *NPŠY*; for the question whether the Aramaic was once uttered with -f- or -p- is immaterial for the orthography. With this we have arrived at the principal defect of the decipherment: the absence of *P*. In the 35 lines of Toq-qal'a inscriptions published by Tolstov and Livshitz *P* figures only a single time, or since I cannot accept that particular reading<sup>30</sup> I should say it occurs never at all. That is hardly compatible with the structure of Middle Iranian languages, in all of which *P* is among the most frequent consonants. In orthographic systems adhering to historical principles *P* should be particularly frequent, as reflecting not only actual *p* but also *b* (deriving from Old Ir. *p*), perhaps also *f*. We shall have to assume that the letter *P* had merged (or largely merged) into a single shape with *N* and *B* (and, at least in part, *Z*).



In the more ancient documents of Topraq-qal'a the form of the letter *P* cannot be easily ascertained either. In the transliterations the three letters *P*, *S*, and *X* (*H*) appear in competition for two-stroke letters, but there is no truly convincing reading with *P*. Thus *βywrsrk* (myriad + head) or *βywδsrk* (fury + head), a personal name (No. 8 line 18), seems as good as -*prk*; and *pt'ywyrk*, approved *Toq-q.* 235 [53] and quoted as exemplifying -'y- for short -i-, is questionable just because of the unsuitability of so late an orthographic feature and should be read *st'ywδk* = *Sat-āyōdak* or *Satāyu-dak* (from OIr. \**satāyu-dā-*, cf. Av. *satāyu-*). A more likely-seeming

<sup>29</sup> It is not intended to discuss here all the passages, some of which are a little obscure.

<sup>30</sup> *pr'ny'ty* (No. 25 line 5) "may he be sent" should probably be read as *m'ny'ty* (*m'ny'ty?*) "may he rest, stay" (Late Chor. has *m'ny-* "stay, live", but does not know *pr'ny-*, which would not be expected to have passive meaning in any case); the first letter does not differ significantly from *m* as in *yrδm'n*. — *L* does not necessarily mean "towards". Its Iranian equivalent was (as elsewhere) presumably the descendant of Old Ir. *abi* "towards", Late Chor. *fi*, which however developed the meaning "in" in addition to "into, towards"; ultimately *fi* mostly = "in". The ideogram inevitably would follow the meaning of its Iranian equivalent.


name is *whwmnp't*, quoted *Toq-q.* 235 [53], unfortunately from an unpublished document.

Two varieties of two-stroke letters occur in the name of the king whose coins have been found in masses at Toq-qal'a, most of them in a single hoard. The specimens illustrated by A. V. Gudkova p. 113, fig. 33, show

its normal form as ; the central letter is sometimes (fig. 33 Nos. 3 and 6) open or almost open at the SW corner (.

The 2nd and 5th letters are *W* or *Y*; the 4th is *R*; the 1st and 3rd are candidates for *S/P/X*. The name was originally read by Tolstov as "Xangiri", *xnyry* or *xnkry*,<sup>31</sup> of which *ny* and *nk* are equally unacceptable. Following the indications supplied by the Soviet scholars on Topraq-qal'a, I at first assumed that the name was *Sypry*, which would agree neatly with *Sibrī* (*Sbry*, vocalised *Sibrī* in one MS.), one of the kings of the 7th century in al-Beruni's list. However, this cannot be maintained; for the first letter is *prima facie X* (as indeed Tolstov had claimed), while the 3rd is proved to be *S* by another coin legend; that is also in agreement with the Toq-qal'a *S* as read by Livshitz. The name thus was *Xwsrw* = *Xusrw*.<sup>32</sup>

The decisive legend belongs to *Šāwāšfan* (middle of the 8th century), one of the kings who issued coins with bilingual inscriptions, cf. above p. 171, n. 20. On the obverse *š'wšprn* in Sogdian letters,<sup>33</sup> on the reverse, as has become clear now (see *Toq-q.* 251),<sup>34</sup> *sy'wršprn* in Choresmian script. To judge partly by the specimens published,<sup>35</sup> partly by the drawing given by Tolstov,<sup>36</sup>

the Chor. lettering is  (*sy-'w-r-š-pr-n*). The first letter is consonant with the *S* of *Xwsrw* above, and, most importantly the letter *P*, joined with *R* in *pr*, is a simple right angle turned to the left, not

<sup>31</sup> *Drevniy Xorezm*, 191 b.

<sup>32</sup> It is unlikely that that Persian name was used so early in appellative sense in Choresmia (so that the coins would bear but three titles, *xwsrw MR'Y MLK'*), yet no king of that name is known. It is, however, possible that al-Beruni failed to mention the name of the king ignominiously murdered by his compatriots in A.D. 712 ("Askajamūk" was probably the king ultimately appointed); his reign may have been of short duration. According to Gudkova, p. 114, many of the "Xangiri" coins are overstrikes of the coins of 'Abdullāh (who however belongs to the early part of the 9th century). I have shown long ago (cf. *Mitteliranisch* 57 sq.) that the coins attributed to 'Abdullāh are in fact those of "Askajawār", who was either the murdered king or, more probably, his immediate predecessor. If we assume the latter and place Xusrw in about A.D. 710-712, all difficulties will be resolved.


<sup>33</sup> Cf. *Mitteliranisch*, p. 57.

<sup>34</sup> The readings are not given in the Russian version (p. 68).

<sup>35</sup> *Drevniy Xorezm*, pl. 84 Nos. 14, 16, 22.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 188a. The 2nd letter is badly represented and induced me to seek *MR'Y* in the first half of the name (*Mitteliranisch*, 57 n. 3); actually, both *MR'Y* and *MLK'* follow the name in the legend.

materially different from *N* (or *B*). That is precisely the shape we had to postulate for *P* in *NPŠY*. We note that Tolstov (*loc. cit.*) transliterates *sy'wrsfn*, adhering even now to his erroneous supposition<sup>37</sup> that *P* was a two-stroke letter. It seems to me on the contrary that even in Topraq-qal'a *P* was barely distinguishable from *B*, cf. e.g. *'wpryštk* No. 10 line 11; *pšk ibid.* line 4; *wdršpk ibid.*, line 20; and the names for which readings have been proposed above p. 172, n. 25. Possibly *P* possessed a heavier beginning than *B*, and had a fairly well-marked angle. Whether those features separated *P* from *B* (and *N*) still at the later stage is doubtful. At Toq-qal'a we should read *P*, e.g., in *tnp'r* (*tnβ'r* being very improbable); one wonders whether (even if *βrwrtin* is the true reading) one should not substitute *prwrtyk*<sup>38</sup> for *βr-*.

Ultimately I discovered a splendid word in which every one of the troublesome letters *S*, *P*, and *X* occurs, yet which can be read with perfect assurance. It forms part of an uncommonly short inscription of a silver jug, Smirnov No. 84; Livshitz recently drew attention to it (*Vestn. drevn. ist.*, 1964, 3, 160). It concludes with the usual determination of the weight of the object (*[Z][W]ZN<sup>3</sup>* + figures, see Livshitz *loc. cit.*), which is preceded merely by the owner's name and our word: . Numerous

similar Pahlavi inscriptions on silver ware have long shown how such texts are constructed: the short form consists of owner's name + *NPŠH* ("own") + determination of the weight. Therefore, the word we seek to read must be the equivalent of Pahl. *NPŠH*, yet our expectation to find *NPŠY* here is disappointed. Nevertheless, it is as it were the soul of *NPŠY*, the Iranian word itself which otherwise was expressed by that ideogram. In Late Chor. that was *xbsk* = *xubisk*,<sup>39</sup> and as its *-b-* reflected OIr. *-p-* (Av. *x<sup>a</sup>ēpaiθya-*) it was necessarily spelt just as it is, *xwpsk*.

## V

Similar argument can be offered in the case of *R*, which letter is never linked to the left (e.g. *'hwrym*, *'rw'n*) yet has been supposed to be so linked for the purpose of reading *tnβryk* "ossuary". It seemed an attractive as well as convincing word and one regrets having to part with it, but there is no legitimate way of retaining it. It is written most clearly in Toq-q. No. 26, where it stands immediately above *k'k'ny*,<sup>40</sup> the juxtaposition showing the perfect identity of the alleged *R* with interior *K*; in several of the Iranian

forms of Aramaic script *K* and *R* resembled each other strongly and were kept distinct only by some artifice. We have now to reconsider the two letters intervening between *t-* and *-kyk*. From No. 26 and some other specimens one may gather the impression that the first of the two letters possesses a trace of that heaviness and angularity in which the specific quality of *P* resides, but other, more carelessly written examples hardly support that; on the whole, one would be inclined to prefer *tpnkyk* or *tpnkwk* to *tnpk-* or *tnβk-*.

The Choresmian script being too ambiguous to afford a decision, related forms in other languages have to be called on for help; they speak unquestionably in favour of *tpnkwk* = *tapankōk*. Nearest is classical Persian *tabangōy*, variously explained by the lexicographers, but chiefly as *šandūq* "box, chest", often as one made of earthenware. If one wants to describe the ossuaries of Toq-qal'a, as depicted by A. V. Gudkova, fig. 25, p. 91, "chest" is probably the first word that will come to mind; they are made of stone, alabaster, or pottery. Persian *tabangōy* represents precisely earlier *tapankōk*, a derivative (with slightly diminutive sense)<sup>41</sup> of *tapan*, which first occurred within Iranian in a Sogdian tale, as *tp'n* or *tpn'*.<sup>42</sup> When I edited it I made a great effort to establish its meaning from the context, arriving at "coffin", but could have saved myself trouble by recalling the Armenian loanword *tapan* "large chest, coffin".<sup>43</sup> In Buddhist Sanskrit, too, *tapanā* came to be used, in the sense of "a box or basket in which infants are enclosed and thrown into a river".<sup>44</sup> The first derivative of *tapan* was *tapanak*, which exists not only in Armenian (as "a box or chest of moderate size") but also in Pahlavi, there possibly in a slightly developed form, *tapang*, if the spelling can be trusted (*Pahl. Vd.* vii 48, p. 93 line 9 Sp., *ka andar tpng [t] rōyēn nihād* "if placed within a metal box").<sup>45</sup> It is part of the essential meaning of the word in all its forms that it refers primarily (sometimes exclusively) to receptacles for the disposal of human remains,<sup>46</sup> yet "ossuary" seems too uncompromising and direct.

Some consequent changes will have to be introduced into the reading. Thus *'rw'zd* (?), No. 39, begins with *'kw-* or *'ky-*; and *t'β'n'n'k* (?), No. 52, may be *tknp'n'-k* (?). Since *K* was linked to the left, apparently unlinked *K*

<sup>41</sup> *tapan* : *tapanak* : *tapankōk* as MPers. *nēw* : *nēwak* : *nēwkōk* (Pers. *nē* : *nēk* : *nēkō*).

<sup>42</sup> *BSOAS.*, xi, 479.

<sup>43</sup> The agreement was also noticed by E. Benveniste, *J.A.*, 1951, 120 sq.

<sup>44</sup> So Edgerton *s.v.*; cf. H. W. Bailey, *BSOAS.*, xxvi, 85.

<sup>45</sup> Parthian *tbng* does not belong here. It probably means "image, prototype", originally "mould", and is connected with Syr. *tpnk*, Pers. *tabang*. The Parthian term is found in Waldschmidt-Lentz, *Stellung Jesu*, 118 (*R* 1). However, a genuine derivative of *tapanak* exists in Pashto *tawang*, *tawangai* "band-box; reed-basket for the clothes of women". Yidgha *toṽnyo*, Morgenstierne, *IIFL.*, ii, 257, is allied with Persian *tabangōy*.

<sup>46</sup> The association was loosened in Christian Armenia, severed in Islamic Persia.

<sup>37</sup> Exemplified by his earlier readings of this very name (*pr'rxšn*, *pr'rxzrn*, etc.).

<sup>38</sup> For late Chor. *hwrd'c* (etc.), Toq-q. 249 [66], read *hawr w'c* (two words) "good things". If preceded by "son", *prwrtyk* may mean "adopted" (lit. "nourished"; Late Chor. *prwr-*, not necessarily loan-word from Pers.).

<sup>39</sup> *Mitteliranisch* 113.

<sup>40</sup> Fortified by *k'k* Topraq-q. No. 8 line 26, and *k'k'nk* Topraq-q. No. 10 line 9.

becomes in its turn suspect. One of the strong points of the Toq-qal'a decipherment is Livshitz' recognition of the form and function of *H*; in shape it is barely distinguishable from unlinked (or final) *K*. Accordingly we should read *hy NPSY* "his own" for *kw nwy* in No. 69; and probably *hy'n-* in the place of *kw'n(y)* in No. 25. The latter may constitute an admittedly strange spelling of the Gen. Pl. of the enclitic pronoun *-hy*, and thus correspond with Late Chor. *hina*.<sup>47</sup> If *kw'n(y)* cannot be maintained, *GD* (an attractive reading) is unfortunately thrown into doubt in turn and may have to be replaced by prosaic '*D*', a conjunction familiar from Pahlavi. Its Chor. equivalent was probably *dā* (cf. Pahl. *tā*, Man. MPers. *dā*) or its emphatic form *d's*. The Toq-qal'a phrase resembles a certain Late Chor. sentence in its structure, viz., *mk'mn'h 'y mr'dh : d'sh θbrkk 'β'c* "we have fulfilled her wish : may it then be blessed for her"<sup>48</sup> (*dās-hi* as '*D-hy'n-*').

A curious circumstance remains to be noticed relating to the linking of letters: its suspension before certain vocalic endings. This affects even the Alef at the end of ideograms. Thus in *ZWZN'* (silver vessels) and *MLK'* (frequently on coins) *N* and *K* appear in their final forms, with long tails, and the Alef stands by itself.<sup>49</sup> A single example in the Topraq-qal'a documents, '*BDn'*' (of doubtful analysis, cf. above p. 173, n. 26), suffices to show that the practice was of long standing in Choresmia. In Toq-qal'a the letter expressing the final vowel is generally much reduced in size, compared with the rest of the script, and in fact often has the aspect of a vocalization mark. Several different shapes may have to be distinguished, thus a tiny *-'* (deprived of its tail) as in *hy'n-* and *tknp'n'-k*<sup>50</sup> (No. 52); a rounded form reminiscent of an Arabic *ḍamm* as in *tyšy'n'n-w* (No. 25) and *wxwnt'n-w* (No. 69), both possessives functioning as patronymics; elsewhere apparently *-y*.<sup>51</sup> Further exploration of the unpublished material is needed to bring clarity here.

<sup>47</sup> The following *'y 'rw'n* would then necessarily be pluralic, if not in form at least in sense, and similarly the verb (on which see above p. 174, n. 30). Its ending is unfortunately not clearly written; objections can be raised equally against *-'ty*, *-''ty* and *-nty*. A plural form *-nty* would constitute a considerable dialectological difference from Late Chor. (which has only *R*-plurals), yet it would find a close parallel in the differences separating Sogdian from Yaghnobi, its only surviving dialect (the proper name *tyfy'n*, against Late Chor. *cyry*, is best explained as a loan from Sogdian). If the verb is formally singular, we may compare the handling of *ravān* "soul" in Pahlavi. E.g., in *Ardā Virāf* ch. xii sqq. the souls of groups of persons are introduced, but *ravān* is stubbornly singular, as *um . . . dād* [not *dād hēnd*] *hān-i rādān ravān kē brāzdāg raft* [not *r. hēnd*] . . . *um guft hu nēwk tō [sic] kē rādān ravān hē ēdūm azabar-i abārig ravānān* ["other (groups of) souls",] *um burzīšnīg sahīst . . .*

<sup>48</sup> Glossed by Arabic *ja'alnd murādahā : falyakum dā-barakatin lahā*.

<sup>49</sup> The dissimilarity of *K* to *R* is not decreased in that situation, *R* being cut off abruptly.

<sup>50</sup> Only example with an additional consonant (perhaps a noun built on a case-form).

<sup>51</sup> It is not certain that these distinctions were actually intended by the scribes.

The following is a specimen of the readings I would favour:

Toq-qal'a No. 25

- 1 BŠNT vii C vi YRH'
- 2 βrwrtn BYWM βrwrtn ZNH tṛnkwk
- 3 NPŠY 'y srwywk tyšy'n'n-w 'rw'n
- 4 'D hy'n-' 'y 'rw'n 'L nws' ṛdṁ'n
- 5 m'ny'(')ty

Translation

"In the year 706, on the 19th day of the 1st month. This chest is the property of the soul of *Sraw-yōk*, the son of *Tīš-yān*. May their<sup>52</sup> souls rest in the eternal Paradise."

This inscription, which is probably the most interesting of those published, may also serve to show that the various alterations proposed in this article hardly affect the essentials of Livshitz' decipherment. In my opinion, his work is not merely competent, but even inspired; the more closely I have studied it, the more have I come to feel that it deserves admiration.

The late Dr. Schindler, who softened my inclination to harsh criticism, would have been glad to know that remembering him had driven my thoughts to a subject where I could readily praise.

<sup>52</sup> The pious wish encompasses also the dead man's father. Cf. Muslimic formulae.