



HAL
open science

Influence of the Indian cultural area in Ladakh in the 1st millennium AD: the rock inscriptions evidence

Laurianne Bruneau

► **To cite this version:**

Laurianne Bruneau. Influence of the Indian cultural area in Ladakh in the 1st millennium AD: the rock inscriptions evidence. *Puratattva. Journal of the Indian Archaeological Society*, 2011, 41, pp.179-190. halshs-00747732

HAL Id: halshs-00747732

<https://shs.hal.science/halshs-00747732v1>

Submitted on 24 Jan 2024

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.



Distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution - NonCommercial - NoDerivatives 4.0 International License

परिक्र
पुरातत्त्व
PURĀTATVA

Number 41

2011

JOURNAL OF THE INDIAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Editor

K. N. DIKSHIT

INDIAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY
NEW DELHI

PURĀTATTVA

CONTENTS

Obituaries	vii
Editorial	xix
ARTICLES	
Changing Perspectives of the Indus Civilization: New Discoveries and Challenges <i>Jonathan Mark Kenoyer</i>	1
Gujarat Harappans: An Overview <i>V. H. Sonawane</i>	19
Art Infuses life in Archaeology <i>G.B. Deglurkar</i>	43
Changing Pattern of Lower Palaeolithic in South Asia and Recent Researches in Belan Valley (U.P) and Mid-Son Valley (M.P). <i>Radha Kant Varma</i>	49
Geoarchaeology of Acheulian Sites in the Deccan Trap Region of the Upper Krishna Basin with Special Reference to Acheulian Site at Yedurwadi, Karnataka <i>Jayendra Joglekar, Sushama G. Deo, S.N. Rajaguru and Sheila Mishra</i>	71
Environmental Backdrop of the Harappans in the Chautang Basin <i>Tejas Garge</i>	81
New Archaeology's Role in the Emergence of Quantitative Methods <i>K. Paddayya</i>	105
Revisiting the Cultural Landscape of Junagadh in the Time of the Mauryas <i>Nayanjot Lahiri</i>	115
Early Coins and their Chronology in the Ganga – Yamuna Lower Doab <i>Sanju Shukla, J.N. Pandey, Ramabhilash Shukla, Anshu Goel and C.L. Dubey</i>	131
Jain Metal Images at Sonagir-Sinaval (M. P.) <i>S. K. Dwivedi and Navneet Kumar Jain</i>	142
Preliminary Archaeological Investigations of the Site Kotasur and its Adjoining Areas, District Birbhum, West Bengal <i>Sayan Bhattacharya and Sharmistha Chatterjee</i>	149

A Preliminary Report on the Excavation at Wakav, Solapur District, Maharashtra (2010-2011) <i>P.P. Joglekar and Maya Patil-Shahapurkar</i>	159
Excavations at Mitathal, District Bhiwani (Haryana) 2010-11: A Preliminary Report <i>Manmohan Kumar, Akinori Uesugi, V.S. Shinde, Vivek Dangi, Vijay Kumar, Sajjan Kumar, Arun K. Singh, Rajeev Mann and Rajesh Kumar</i>	168
Influence of the Indian Cultural area in Ladakh in the 1 st Millennium AD: The Rock Inscription Evidence <i>Laurianne Bruneau</i>	179
NOTES & NEWS	
A Stylo-Chrono Appraisal of the Torana in Nasik Cave-3 <i>Ajit Kumar</i>	191
Architecture and Iconography of Padhaval Gadhi Temple <i>Yashwant Singh and Sujata Gautam</i>	198
Megalithic Anthropomorphs in Chittoor District, Andhra Pradesh: Significance to Archaeological and Geological Aspects <i>V. Ramabrahmam and K. Raghubabu</i>	204
Oldest Sky-Chart with Supernova Record <i>Hrishikesh Joglekar, M. N. Vahia and Aniket Sule</i>	207
A Unique Yaudheya Gold and Some Copper Coins with a New Legend <i>Devendra Handa</i>	212
Reflections on the Ecological Aspect of Animals Depicted in Rock Art of Satpura-Tapti Valley and Nearby Region <i>Vineet Godhal and Ashis S. Shende</i>	216
Newly Discovered Rare Icon of Ganesha from Shergarh, Baran District <i>Ambika Dhaka</i>	224
Man's Earliest Ancestor Found? Primitive Creature Dubbed as Missing Link between Apes and Humans <i>Times of India</i>	226
BOOK REVIEWS	
From Harappa to Hastinapur <i>D.P. Agrawal</i>	228
Excavations at Jhusi <i>Purushottam Singh</i>	
Kampil-Archaeological Study of a Site in the Ancient Kingdom of Panchala <i>B.R. Mani</i>	

Influence of the Indian Cultural Area in Ladakh in the 1st Millennium AD: The Rock Inscription Evidence

LAURIANNE BRUNEAU*

Ladakh (Jammu and Kashmir) constitutes the northernmost extension of India. It borders the western boundary of China and more particularly Xinjiang (Uyghur Autonomous Region) and Xizang (Tibet Autonomous Region) respectively lying to the north and southeast. In the west Ladakh borders the northern territories of Pakistan (Gilgit-Baltistan province) and in the south the Lahul and Spiti district of the state of Himachal Pradesh (Fig. 1). The geographical position of Ladakh as 'crossroads of High Asia' (Rizvi 1996) is evidenced from the 10th century onwards in textual and artistic sources (Bray 2005; Luzcanits 2005). However we know little about the past of the region before the 10th century and the establishment of the first kingdom of Ladakh, as recorded in the royal Chronicle (Petech 1977: 1-3). Even if explorers such as George Roerich noted the archaeological potential of Ladakh very early on research has not been conducted on a large scale (Roerich 1931: 22). Most archaeological sites published to date were discovered by Francke during his tour for the Archaeological Survey of India in 1909 (Francke 1914). This Morovian missionary was the first scholar to show interest in the rock art of Ladakh

and published several articles on the rock inscriptions and images of the region (Francke 1902, 1903, 1905, 1906, 1907, 1907a, 1907b, 1914a, 1925; Francke and Jina 2003). Since then about 400 rock inscriptions have been documented and caught the attention of specialists (Denwood 1980, 2007; Denwood and Howard 1990; Orofino 1990; Sander 1994; Sims-Williams 1993; Vohra 1994, 1995, 1999). The diversity of the scripts found engraved all over the region (*kharoṣṭhī*, *brāhmī*, *śāradā*, Chinese, Sogdian, Tocharian, Tibetan, Arabic) proves that during the 1st millennium AD Ladakh already was in contact with its powerful neighbours, including India.

The present article intends to review *kharoṣṭhī*, *brāhmī* and *śāradā* rock inscriptions of Ladakh. Along reconsidering well-known inscriptions, new inscriptions in *kharoṣṭhī* and *brāhmī* discovered by the author during fieldwork are published for the first time. Based on the spatial distribution of the inscriptions as well as discoveries in neighbouring areas an assessment of the influence of the Indian cultural world in Ladakh will be proposed.

*Archaeological Research Centre for Indus, Central and Eastern Asia (UMR 9993, CNRS), Panthéon Bouddhique, 19 avenue d'Iéna, 75116 Paris, France, E-mail: bruneaulaurianne@yahoo.com

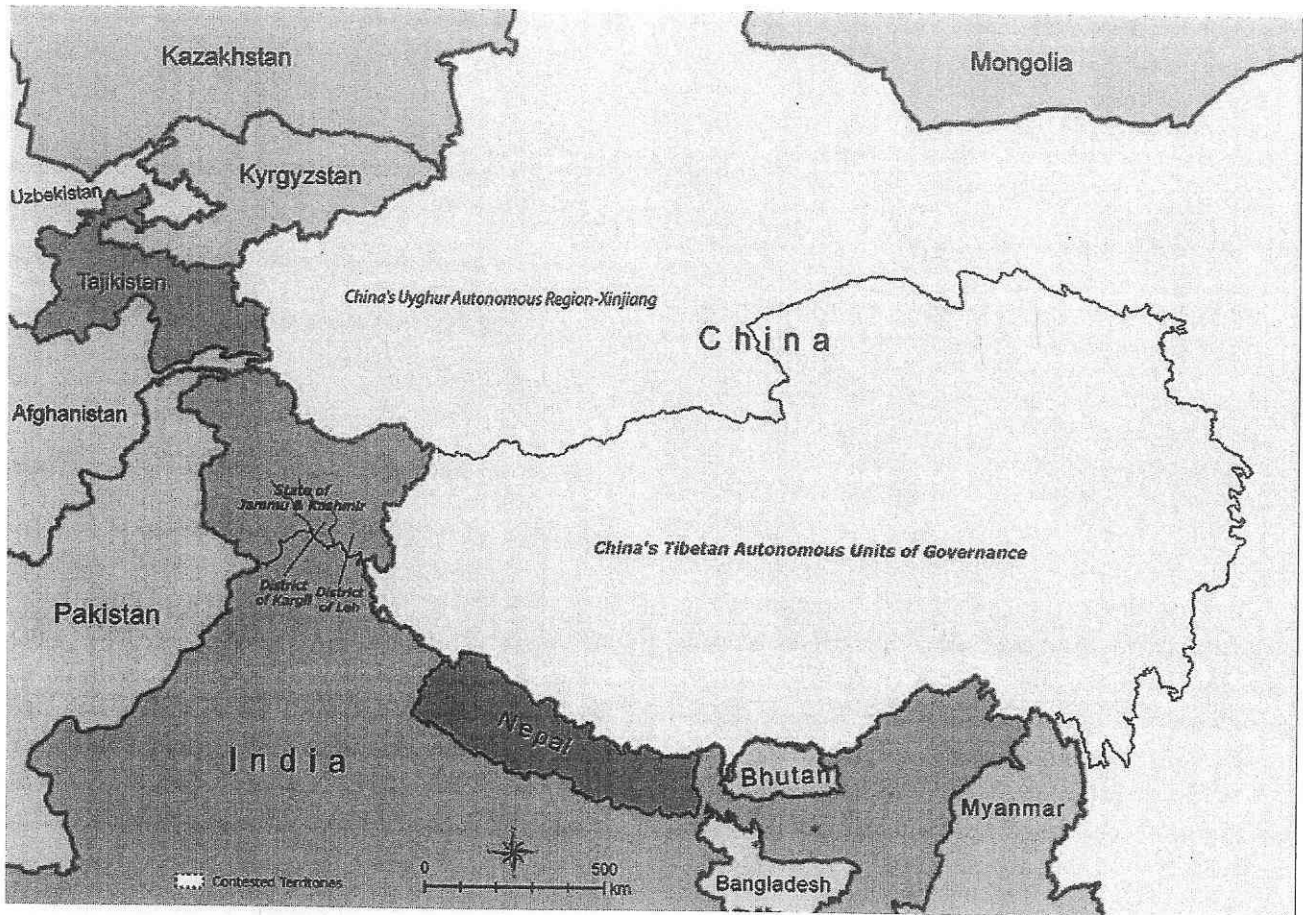


Fig. 1: Location of Ladakh in Asia

Kharoṣṭhī rock inscriptions

An inscription discovered by Francke in Spring 1905, engraved on a boulder on the right bank of the Indus at Khalatse (also mapped as Khalsi, Khaltse, Kaltze and Kaltse) in west Ladakh, is well-known to epigraphists since it was used for decades, until the discovery of the Rabatak inscription in 1993, to establish the chronology and genealogy of early Kushana rulers. The two-line inscription of Khalatse was identified as *kharoṣṭhī* of the Kushana period by Vogel in 1906 (Vogel 1906: 32). The following year Francke published a rough copy of the inscription and, in 1909, during another visit to Khalatse he took a photograph, which he sent to Prof.

Rapson (Francke 1907a: 592, Tafel II Nr.3). The latter proposed a first reading of the inscription in a letter dated 23rd of September 1910 in which he identified the title Maharajasa along with a date: 184 or 187 but he did not decipher the accompanying name (Francke 1914: 94). The inscription was officially published only in 1927 by Konow who read the date 187 and the name Vima Kadphises (Konow 1927: 31-33, 1929: 79-81). He identifies the era used for the inscription as what he calls the old Śaka era. However the reading of Konow is questioned by experts: the name, date and era contained in the inscription are still the object of much debate. As Osmund Bopearachchi writes regarding this particular inscription one should not extract more information

from it than what it actually contains (Bopearachchi 2008, note 156). Sircar does not acknowledge the reading of the name *Vima* and for Fussman only the date and the word *maharajasa* are readable (Sircar 1965: 134; Fussman 1980: 34). More recently Fussman questioned the date and even made the hypothesis, based on his study of similar rock inscriptions in the northern areas of Pakistan, that the two lines might be two distinct inscriptions (Fussman 1998: 625-26, 1989). As for Cribb he accepts the equivalence of *Uvima Kavthisa*, as read by Konow, and *Vima Kadphises* but proposes to read the date 287 and the Greek era (Cribb 2005: 213-14). For Salomon the name of the Great King (*maharajasa*) mentioned in the Khalatse inscription is not beyond question but it seems to him to be a variant of that of the well-known *Vima Kadphises* (Salomon 2005: 376). After consideration of a photograph of the inscription published by Paul this scholar states that the date can now be tentatively understood as 287, as proposed by Cribb (Paul 1986: pl.1). Salomon proposes to attribute the year to the Indo-Greek era, identical to Cribb's Greek era (Salomon 2005: 376). According to latest researches this era would have been founded in 176/175 BC by the Graeco-Bactrian ruler Antimachus I giving a date of 111/112 AD for the Khalatse inscription (Rapin 2010). Nevertheless, for Mac Dowall the reading 287 is an emendation in an attempt to match the Khalatse inscription with the era known for the *Vima*, now identified as *Vima Takto*, mentioned in the inscription of Dasht-e Nāwur (Mac Dowall 2007: 109, note 98). According to the same scholar, in view of the new evidence of the Yuga of Sphujiddhavaja, the inscription should be placed in the Azes era. The date for the foundation of this era by the Indo-Scythian ruler Azes I accepted until recently was 58 BC, thus providing a range of 126/129 AD for the Khalatse inscription, if one accepts the reading as 184 or 187 (Bopearachchi 2008: 43). Mac Dowall chooses to read 184 corresponding to 126 AD, the year preceding the accession to the throne by Kaniska, the son of *Vima Kadphises* (Mac Dowall 2007: 116). However, latest researches tend to identify

the year 1 of Azes as 48/47 BC providing a range of 136/140 AD for the Khalatse inscription which does not match the dates acknowledged for *Vima Kadphises* (100-127 or 105-127 AD) (Bennett and Falk 2009; Bopearachchi 2008: 43). These dates imply that one accepts the date of accession to the throne of Kaniska and creation of the Kushana era as 127 AD. Both issues have been the object of discussion for decades but since the reassessment of the Yuga of Sphujiddhavaja by Falk the date of 127 AD is widely accepted (Falk 2001). One is tempted, for the time being, to lean towards the attribution of the Khalatse inscription of the Greek era and date it from 111/112 AD. Nevertheless, it seems no definite answer to this matter will ever be provided since the inscription has long been destroyed. No copy or study on the spot was ever made by an epigraphist. Francke wrote that, already in 1909, he reached Khalatse just in time to prevent the destruction of the inscriptions threatened by the building of a new bridge (Francke 1914: 94). The most recent documents consist in two photographs taken either in 1928 or 1935 during an expedition led by the Italian Tibetologist Giuseppe Tucci (Tucci 1958: fig.8; Orofino 1990: 181, note 15, fig.33) (Plate 2 and 3).

Whatever the date, era and name of the Khalatse inscription, the use of *kharoṣṭhī* script in the west of Ladakh testifies to the links between the region and the Indian world and more precisely Kushana, during the first centuries AD, since the official use of the *kharoṣṭhī* alphabet ends with the reign of Huviska in the second half of the 2nd century AD (Fussman *et. al.* 1994: 42).

Before considering other *kharoṣṭhī* inscriptions from Ladakh, one should look at the figure engraved in between the lines of the Khalatse inscription rightly identified by various authors as a warrior or a king (Francke 1929: 110; Konow 1929: 80; Tucci 1958: 295). As discussed by Paul the contemporaneity of the inscription and figure is beyond doubt (Paul 1986: 28-29). Represented standing, as seen from the front, hands

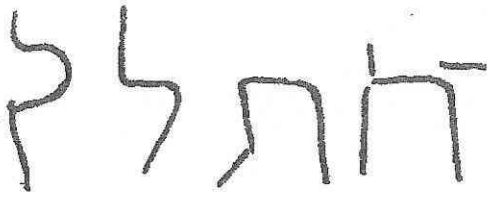


Fig. 2: *Kharoṣṭhī* rock inscription, Khalatse (copy by Francke 1907a: Tafel II Nr. 2)



Fig. 3: *Kharoṣṭhī* rock inscription, Khalatse (copy by Francke 1907a: Tafel II Nr. 4)

at the waist, the figure wears a knee-length coat or tunic and a headgear. He holds a long object, possibly a club or a sword, at his waist in his left hand whereas his right hand holds an unidentified object. The composition of this figure matches that of Kushana rulers (frontality, Indo-Scythian outfit, sword at the waist) known from coins and sculpture since Vima Kadphises (Rosenfield 1967: 176, 214, coins n°30, 33, 34, 36, 37-41, fig.2). It is under his reign that proper Kushana coinage and dynastic art were created (Bopearachchi 2008: 42). Neelis noted the connection between royal portraits on Kushana coins and the Khalatse figure (Neelis 2007: 86). Other authors even recognize the Khalatse figure as the effigy of Vima Kadphises but as seen previously the reading of the name is still the object of debate and one should cautiously identify the figure rather as a type than a portrait (Orofino 1990: 181; Paul 1986: 30). In any case the engraved figure of Khalatse attests, to the same extent as the inscription, to the links between Ladakh and the Kushana world.

Two other *kharoṣṭhī* inscriptions from Khalatse copied and published by Francke were partly read by Vogel (Francke 1907a: Tafel II, Nr. 2/4) (Fig. 2 and 3).

But as Konow notes the paucity of the material makes it pointless to discuss their reading and interpretation, their only historic interest lies in the alphabet used (Konow 1929: 81). These inscriptions have also been destroyed.

While conducting fieldwork on the rock art of Ladakh in 2006 the present author discovered two previously unknown *kharoṣṭhī* inscriptions on the right bank of the Indus in between the villages of Domkhar and Sanjak in western Ladakh. Both inscriptions are engraved on the same boulder, one above the other. They are in fact two versions of a same text: one is correct whereas the other is probably a first attempt of engraving or a subsequent copy by an illiterate (Plate 3 and 4). The reading and dating of these new inscriptions are those of Prof. Harry Falk (Freie Universität, Berlin), published here with his kind permission. The correct inscription reads: *varṣarturajahasta* that can be translated as ‘The hand of the king of the seasons of the year’ or ‘Hasta is the king of the seasons of the year’. The “king of the seasons” is Spring, called this way in many instances in Sanskrit literature. Although Indian literature does not contain the idea of a spring-god raising his hands, a figure with raised “hands” is engraved next to the inscription. According to Falk, the form of the preconsonantal r-hooks look rather archaic, and the text could have been written in the first century either BC or AD. The renowned epigraphist makes the hypothesis that the *nakṣatra hasta* is meant, our constellation Corvus, which at that time was seen in the West after sunset in Spring, in the first part of March. The second inscription reads: *...ja-va-rṣa-rta-ha* and is obviously composed of the same letters, but some missing and some out of place. Even if the meaning of the inscription remains enigmatic, it stands as one of the oldest written record for the whole region of Ladakh.

***Brāhmī* rock inscriptions**

Vogel read two *brāhmī* inscriptions copied and photographed by Francke that the latter found



Fig. 4: Exclusive *brāhmī* rock inscription, Laidoh, correct version (Copy on transparent plastic sheet by the author and Martin Vernier)

engraved at Khalatse also (Vogel 1906: 31-32). The first inscription, composed of five letters, Vogel read as *Bharad[v]ayasa*, being the genitive of a brahmanic name from north-west India and proposed to date the inscription from the Maurya period (about 200 BC) (Francke 1907, Pl. II, Fig.2, 1907a: 592: Tafel II Nr.1) (Plate 5). The second, two-lines, fragmentary inscription is composed of six letters, Vogel proposed the reading (*sri?*) *saca ma / tisyā* and the Kushana period (200-400 AD). According to him the inscription mentions a king (Francke 1905-1907: 418-419, Plate XVI, No.5) (Plate 6). However, F.W. Thomas read this second inscription *srima(c) Carpa / tisyā*; Carpati being a Buddhist name (Francke 1907a: 594). Francke is inclined to favour Vogel's reading because local tradition speaks of a Suryamati and considers this inscription as the proof of a king bearing a Sanskrit name in the first half of the 1st millennium AD. Francke links this name to the ruins of a defensive settlement opposite Stakna's monastery, on the right bank of the Indus, locally known as Suramati's castle and surveyed by Howard (Francke 1914: 14; Howard 1989: 266-69, Fig. 46-47). Although the *brāhmī* inscriptions of Khalatse have been destroyed, a new consideration by experts in the light of latest epigraphic researches would be most valuable to settle the issue.

Francke discovered two other *brāhmī* rock inscriptions: one below Khalatse, on the left bank of the Indus, before Narmu (Francke's *Nyermu*) located opposite Haritse and another above Khalatse, on the

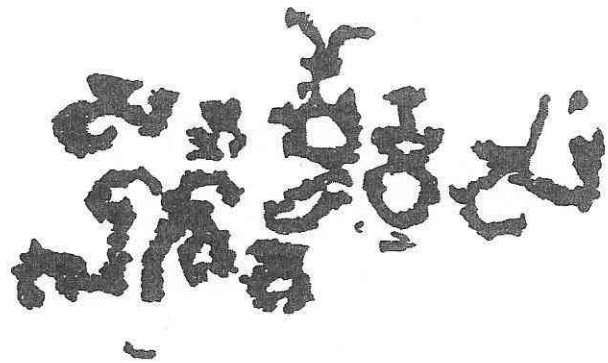


Fig. 5: Exclusive *brāhmī* rock inscription, Laidoh, first attempt of engraving or subsequent copy (Copy on transparent plastic sheet by the author and Martin Vernier)

right bank of the Indus, in between Katpa Ngonpo (Francke's *Gadpa sngonpo*) and Ulle Tokpo (Francke's *Ullu drogpo*) but no copy or photography are known (Francke 1905-07: 416).

In 2007, while conducting fieldwork in Ladakh with her colleagues Martin Vernier and Quentin Devers the author discovered two unknown *brāhmī* inscriptions near the newly constructed bridge of Laidoh village in western Ladakh, on the left bank of the Indus. A copy of these inscriptions on transparent plastic sheet was made on the spot. As for the newly discovered *kharoṣṭhī* inscriptions, both *brāhmī* inscriptions are engraved on the same boulder, close to each other, and are two versions of a same text (Plate 7, Fig. 4 and 5). The reading and dating of the *brāhmī* inscriptions is also that of Prof. Falk. There are two possible readings of the correct inscription: a) *satirthyor vasā / likhita* or b) *satirthyo vesā / likhita*. The difference lies in the interpretation of the stroke above the letter *va*, which could be a pre-consonantal *r* or an *-e*-vowel marker. The first reading seems to be preferable for paleographical reasons, since the stroke above the *va* with its serif looks much more like an *r* than like an *-e*. In this case we have a feminine dual of *satīrthī* and a feminine personal name *vasā*. The construction is odd: instead of an instrumental ("was written by...") we see a nominative ("NN written"), not even by an apposition

(“NN is the writer”). This oddity is present, no matter if we prefer reading a) or b). Possibility (a) suffers from the assumption that two female students are responsible for the text, which is unexpected and remarkable. A feminine form *satīrthī* is not attested, but possible in the light of parallels like *sodara/sodarī*, although sa-compounds more often use the -ā- ending for the feminine, e.g. *sajātā, salohitā*. Possibility (b) would have the advantage to provide first a well-known term *satīrthya*, masc. nominative *satīrthyo*, but we then have the difficulty to explain a feminine ending coming with a masculine name, *vesā*. Contrasting the two possibilities, a name *vasā* is much superior to *vesā*, since it is attested in its masculine form *vasa* several times, for example in an inscription from the time and era of Azes, around 47 BC in the Peshawar valley, and on two seals in the Aman-ur Rahman collection one or two centuries later. In two of the three cases Vasa is called a *ksatrapa*. *Vesa*, however, is not attested at that time. So, despite the unexpected two girls present, everything speaks in favor of them and nothing, apart from the more usual general situation, speaks for the one student Vesa. The second inscription on the site is a complete blunder of the same text, where we first find *sa*, then *likhita* in barbarous letters, then *tirthyorvasā*. Preferring possibility (a) we can say that the scribe wanted to write: *satīrthyor vasā likhita*, “Of the two girl co-students, Vasā (has this) written.” Although the meaning of the inscription is not totally clear, it dates most probably from the first half of the 1st millennium AD.

Protośāradā and śāradā inscriptions

In Khalatse Francke also documented two short *śāradā* inscriptions engraved next to a *stūpa* (Francke 1907a: 596, Tafel II Nr. 7/9) (Fig. 6). The boulder has been destroyed. In Tangtse, east of Ladakh, there is a *śāradā* inscription engraved within a *stūpa* (Plate 8 and Fig. 7). Although discovered in 1906, this seven-lines inscription was deciphered only in 1994 and identified as *protośāradā* of the 8th-9th century AD (Francke 1925:



Fig. 6: *śāradā* inscriptions engraved next to a *stūpa*, Khalatse (Francke 1907a: 596, Tafel II Nr. 7 & 9)

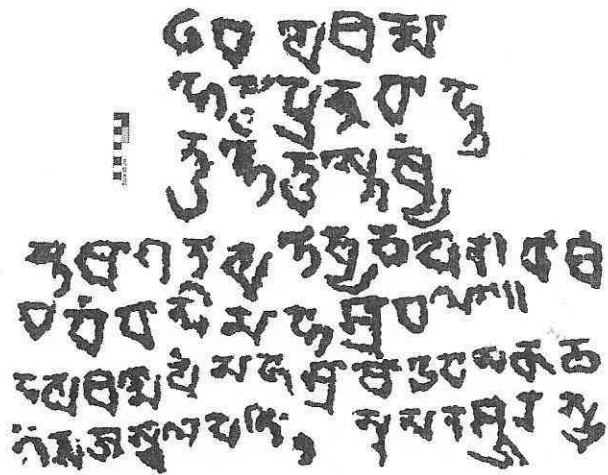


Fig. 7: Copy of Tangtse *śāradā* inscription (Copy on transparent plastic sheet by Quentin Devers and Martin Vernier)

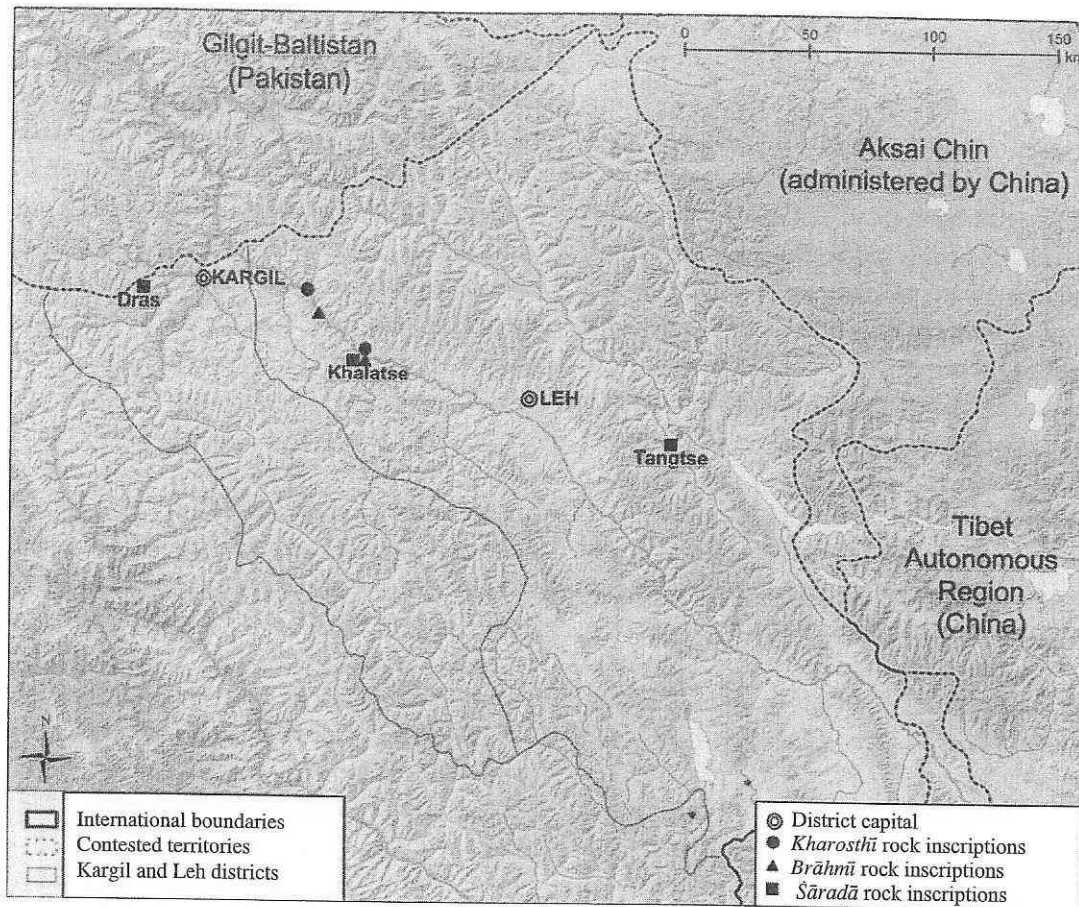


Fig. 8: Spatial distribution of Indian scripts rock inscriptions in Ladakh (Map by the author and Quentin Devers)

366-69; Sander 1994: 566). It can be translated as ‘This is a religious gift, the deep reverence of a lay follower. This is for Ascalapati Sumanasura’, Sander suggests that the scribe was Tibetan. Another, four-lines inscription, is known in Tangtse but the state of decay of the rock on which it is engraved makes it unreadable (Vohra 1999: plate 18). The most well-known *śāradā* inscription of Ladakh is located at Dras, in the west on the region, on the way to Kashmir (Cunningham 1970: 381, Plates XXIX-XXXI; Vigne 2008, vol.2: 393); Francke 1907b: 52; Roerich 1931: 10) (Plate 9). There are three steles: one bears the figure of a horseman and at the reverse a *śāradā* inscription commemorating the installation of images of Avalokitesvara and Maitreya by a rider, probably the figure represented, named Atha belonging

to the Tharana family (Deambi 1997). Each of the two other steles shows an image of the Bodhisattvas, Avalokitesvara and Maitreya (Francke 1914: 106). There might be faint inscriptions on the reverse of the Bodhisattva images but the steles are now cemented in a walled enclosure and are difficult to examine. A 10th-12th century date is assigned to the steles (Vogel 1906: 32; Francke 1907:98, 1914: 106).

Conclusion

Based on the evidence of *kharosthī*, *brāhmī* and *śāradā* rock inscriptions, one can assert that Ladakh had contacts with the Indian cultural world during the whole 1st millennium AD. However, the nature of these

contacts, either political, commercial or religious is difficult to identify.

The only inscription containing political information is the questionable *kharoṣṭhī* inscription referring to Vima Kadphises. In the light of the discussion above it does not prove that this particular ruler conquered Ladakh nor does it attest Kushanas' presence in the region as is often written (Paul 1986: 29; Petech 1977: 7; Goepfer *et. al.* 1996:11; Luczanits 2005: 66 note 5). Both hypotheses are acceptable, Kushana material has been unearthed from the neighbouring areas of Kashmir and the Tarim Basin and Ladakh provides routes in between, but evidence is too slim at the present state of research. At the most, one can acknowledge that a person using *kharoṣṭhī* and therefore belonging to the Kushana cultural world passed through Ladakh, and more specifically Khalatse. The number rock inscriptions engraved in Indian scripts and their location reinforce this point of view (Fig. 8).

During researches on the rock art of Ladakh the author has documented in collaboration with her colleagues about 20,000 petroglyphs. As stated in the introduction Chinese, Sogdian, Tocharian, Tibetan, Arabic inscriptions have also been documented totalling 415 inscriptions for the whole region. One notices that rock inscriptions engraved in Indian scripts are exceptional. If Ladakh had been conquered by the Kushanas one would reasonably expect to find more inscriptions engraved in *kharoṣṭhī* and *brāhmī*. Moreover, Indian scripts inscriptions are found only in lower Ladakh, in between Dah and Khalatse. Khalatse has been over time an important crossing place as *kharoṣṭhī*, *brāhmī*, *śāradā* but also Tibetan inscriptions indicate. The ruins of several ancient bridges are seen on both banks of the Indus and until the middle of the 20th century a customs post was marking the place (Francke 1905-1907: 415-16; Vohra 2005: 18; Sheikh 2010: Fig.3). The *brāhmī* inscriptions recently discovered at Laidoh are also located near a crossing point while the

kharoṣṭhī ones are engraved on a huge boulder, along with hundreds of petroglyphs, marking a halting place. The *kharoṣṭhī* inscription mentions 'a King of the seasons', most probably referring to Spring, time when snow melts and traffic can be resumed. The location of the inscriptions in lower Ladakh seems to indicate an itinerary along the Indus stopping at Khalatse. One may presume that the territory upstream was not accessible to people coming from Baltistan and beyond. Downstream, in what is now the Gilgit-Baltistan province of northern Pakistan, hundreds of *kharoṣṭhī* and *brāhmī* rock inscriptions have been documented (Fussman 1989; von Hinüber 1989). The region was clearly integrated into the Kushana empire: along with inscriptions there are figures matching those of Kushana rulers and engravings of Gandharan types of *stūpa* (Neelis 2007: 86; Fussman and König 1997: 9-10; Bruneau 2007: 66-67). Material evidence points out a route through the Karakoram passes north of actual Pakistan connecting the heart of the Kushana Empire with the Tarim Basin. Apart from rock inscriptions the only monument in Ladakh that could be linked to the Kushanas is the so-called 'Kanika chorten' erected in the back courtyard of Sani monastery in Zanskar, in the south of Ladakh. It is traditionally held that the name of the monument refers to Kaniska (Snellgrove and Skorupski 1980: vi, 6 and 9, illustration 4; Crook and Low 1997: 150). This remote origin is not unlikely since Zanskar is geographically close to Jammu where a hundred of Kushana sites are known but only an archaeological study of the *stūpa* would enable to ascertain it (Chaudhary 2005: 254).

As for the *śāradā* rock inscriptions they demonstrate religious links between the Indian cultural world and Ladakh in the late 1st millennium AD. The *śāradā* script is native from Kashmir and all rock inscriptions (7th - 12th century) are found in a Buddhist environment (engraved next or within a *stūpa*, steles dedicated to Avalokitesvara and Maitreya). Consequently at that time Kashmiri Buddhism had already crossed the Zoji pass. The first mention of the route from Kashmir to Tibet via this pass

is that of the Chinese pilgrim Wu-k'ung who visited Kashmir from 751 to 790 (Chavannes and Lévi 1895). In contrast with *kharoṣṭhī* and *brāhmī* inscriptions, *śāradā* rock inscriptions are found engraved all over Ladakh, from Dras in the west to Tangtse in the east. Other material evidence of Kashmiri Buddhism is attested in the region. According to Francke five or six *śāradā* inscriptions were painted in black ink in the hall of the old monastery of Chigtan, in the west of Ladakh (Vogel 1906: 32; Francke 1914: 100). Unfortunately the place has been destroyed since. Along painted and engraved inscriptions there are *śāradā* inscriptions inscribed on Buddhist clay tablets (*tsha-tsha*) found all over Ladakh. Vogel and Tucci proposed to date some of the *tsha-tsha* from the 8th-12th centuries (Vogel 1906: 32, illustration: 35; Francke 1905-1907: 418; 1907a: 595; 1914: 111-117, 1930: 45; Tucci and Lokesh 1988: 73-109). A comprehensive understanding of the religious and artistic influences of Kashmir in Ladakh will only be possible through a iconographical, stylistic and technical

analysis of the dozens of the Buddhist stone sculptures (steles and reliefs) spread over the territory. About thirty stone sculptures from Ladakh have been published, the most well-known being that of Mulbekh (Denwood 2007; Dorjay 2010; Fontein 1979; Francke 1907, 1914: plates XXXII, XXXIV; Snellgrove and Skorupski 1977: illustrations 3, 4, 5, 109, 1980 illustrations 2, 7, 8, 19). The author and her colleagues have gathered data (photographs, drawings and maps) of more than a hundred original sculptures. A catalogue is under preparation and will no doubt throw new light on the contacts between Ladakh and the Indian cultural world.

Acknowledgements

The author wishes to thank Abram Pointet for providing geographical information but also Martin Vernier and Quentin Devers for their friendship during fieldwork and publication. She also wishes to thank Dr. B.R. Mani for his invitation to submit this paper.

References

- Bennett, C. and H. Falk. 2009. Macedonian Intercalary Months and the Era of Azes. *Acta Orientalia* 70:197-216.
- Bopearachchi, O. 2008. Les premiers souverains kouchans: chronologie et iconographie monétaire. *Le Journal des Savants*: 3-56.
- Bray, J. 2005. Introduction: locating Ladakhi History. In *Ladakhi Histories: Local and Regional Perspectives*, ed. J. Bray, 1-29. Leiden: Brill.
- Bruneau, L. 2007. L'architecture bouddhique dans la vallée du Haut Indus: un essai de typologie des représentations rupestres de *stūpa*. *Arts Asiatiques* 62: 63-76.
- Chaudary, P. 2005. Some important Trade Routes and Trading Centres of Jammu from Ancient Times to the 10th Century AD. In *South Asian Archaeology 2003: Proceedings of the Seventeenth International Conference of the European Association of South Asian Archaeologists (7th-11th July 2003, Bonn)*, vol. 1, eds. Franke-Vogt, U. and H. J. Weisshaar, 254-259. Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag.
- Chavannes, E. and S. Lévi. 1895. L'itinéraire d'Ou k'ong. *Journal Asiatique* 6: 341-384.
- Cribb, J. 2005. The Greek kingdom of Bactria, its coinage and its collapse. In *Afghanistan: ancien carrefour entre l'est et l'ouest: Actes du colloque international organisé au Musée archéologique*

- Henri-Prades-Lattes, eds. Bopearachchi, O. and M. F. Boussac, 207-225. Turnhout: Brepols.
- Crook, J. and J. Low. 1997. *A review of The Yogins of Ladakh: A Pilgrimage among the Hermits of the Buddhist Himalayas*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers.
- Cunningham, A. 1970. *Ladák, physical, statistical, and historical: with notices of the surrounding countries*. New Delhi: Sagar Publications. (First edition 1854).
- Deambi, B.K. 1997. The Pillar Inscription at Dras in Ladakh. In *Recent Researches on the Himalaya*, ed. Jina P.S. 53-55. New Delhi: Indus Pub. Co.
- Denwood, P. 1980. Rock Inscriptions. In *The cultural heritage of Ladakh: Zangskar and the cave temples of Ladakh*, vol. 2, eds. Snellgrove, D. and T. Skorupski, 155-163. Warminster: Aris & Phillips.
- 2007. The Tibetans in the Western Himalayas and Karakoram, Seventh-Eleventh Centuries: Rock Art and Inscriptions. *Journal of Inner Asian Art and Archaeology* 2: 49-58.
- Denwood, P. and N.F. Howard. 1990. Inscriptions at Balukhar and Char Zampa and Archaeological Observations on the Fort of Balukhar and its Environs. In *Indo-Tibetan Studies: papers in honour and appreciation of Professor David L. Snellgrove's contribution to Indo-Tibetan studies*, ed. Skorupski, T., 81-88. Tring: Institute of Buddhist Studies, Buddhica Britannica.
- Dorjay, P. 2010. Penetration of Buddhist Ideology in Ladakh: A study through Early Rock Sculptures. In *Pictures in Transformation: Rock art Researches between Central Asia and the Subcontinent*, eds. Olivieri, L.M., L. Bruneau and M. Ferrandi, 43-58. Oxford: BAR International Series 2167, ArchaeoPress.
- Falk, H. 2001. The yuga of Sphujiddhvaja and the era of the Kusanas. *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* 7:121-136.
- Fontein, J. 1979. A Rock Sculpture of Maitrey in the Suru Valley, Ladakh. *Artibus Asiae* 41(1): 5-12.
- Francke, A.H. 1902. Notes on rock-carvings from Lower Ladakh. *Indian Antiquary* 31:362-363.
- 1903. Some more rock-carvings from Lower Ladakh. *Indian Antiquary* 32: 361-389.
- 1905. The rock inscriptions at Mulbe. *Indian Antiquary* 34:72-81.
- 1905-07. The Dards at Khalatse in Western Tibet. *Memoirs of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 1:413-419.
- 1906. Archaeology in Western Tibet. Khalatse. (I-Inscriptions at Khalatse, II-Inscriptions at Saspol). *Indian Antiquary* 35: 237/325-241/333.
- 1907. Archaeology in Western Tibet (III-Inscriptions at Basgo and Nyemo, IV-Inscriptions at Daru, V-The Rock inscriptions at Sheh, Appendix: The Age of the Buddhist Stone Images of Ladakh). *Indian Antiquary* 36: 85-98.
- 1907a. Historische Dokumente von Khalatse in West-Tibet (Ladakh). *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenlandischen Gesellschaft* 61: 583-614.
- 1907b. *A history of western Tibet: one of the unknown empires*. Delhi: Pilgrims Book Pvt. Ltd.
- 1914. *Antiquities of Indian Tibet, volume I*. Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing.
- 1914a. Historical Documents from the Borders of Tibet. In *Archaeological Survey of India Annual Report 1909-10*: 104-112. Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing.
- 1925. Felseninschriften in Ladakh. *Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 31: 366-370.
- 1929. Notes on Khotan and Ladakh (I-From a Tibetan point of view, II-Notes on the Second Advance of the Chinese to Turkestan, III-The Time of Tibetan Dominion in Turkestan). *Indian Antiquary* 58: 108/147-112/152.
- Francke, A.H. and P.S. Jina. 2003. *First collection of Tibetan historical inscriptions on rock and stone from Ladakh Himalaya*. Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications.
- Fussman, G. 1980. Nouvelles inscriptions Saka: ère d'Eucratide, ère d'Azès, ère Vikrama, ère de Kaniska. *Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême Orient* 67: 1-44.
- 1989. Les inscriptions *kharoṣṭhī* de la plaine de Chilas. In *Antiquities of Northern Pakistan*, vol. 1, ed. Jettmar, K., 1-39. Mainz: Philipp von Zabern.
- 1998. L'inscription de Rabatak et l'origine de l'ère saka. *Journal Asiatique* 288 (2): 571-651.

- Fussman, G., K. Jettmar and D. König. 1994. *Antiquities of Northern Pakista*, vol. 3. Mainz: Philipp von Zabern.
- Fussman, G. and D. König. 1997. *Die Felsbildstation Shatial, Materialien zur Archäologie der Nordgebiete Pakistans*, vol. 2, Mainz: Philipp von Zabern.
- Goepper, R., R. Linrothe, K. Dasser and J. Poncar. 1996. *Alchi: Ladakh's hidden Buddhist sanctuary: the Sumtsek*. London: Serindia.
- von Hinüber, O. 1989. *Brāhmī inscriptions on the history and culture of the Upper Indus Valley*. In *Antiquities of Northern Pakistan*, vol. 1, ed. Jettmar, K., 41-71. Mainz: Philipp von Zabern.
- Howard, N.F. 1989. The development of the fortresses of Ladakh, c.950 to c.1650 AD. *East and West* 39: 217-288.
- Konow, S. 1927. Some new facts about the eras of the *kharoṣṭhī* inscriptions. *Acta Orientalia* 5: 28-38.
- 1929. *Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions with the exceptions of those of Asoka*, vol. 2, part 1, Calcutta: Government of India Central Publication Branch.
- Luczanits, C. 2005. The early Buddhist heritage of Ladakh reconsidered. In *Ladakhi Histories: Local and Regional Perspectives*, ed. Bray, J. 65-95. Leiden: Brill.
- Mac Dowall, D.W. 2007. Numismatic Evidence for a Chronological Framework for Pre-Kaniskan Art, from Kalchayan to Gandhara. In *On the Cusp of an Era-Art in the Pre-Kushana World*, ed. Srinivasan, D.M., 95-118. Leiden: Brill.
- Neelis, J. 2007. Three Passages to India: Sakas and Kusana Migrations in Historical Contexts. In *On the Cusp of an Era-Art in the Pre-Kushana World*, ed. Srinivasan, D.M., 55-94. Leiden: Brill.
- Orofino, G. 1990. A Note on some Tibetan Petroglyphs of the Ladakh Area. *East and West* 40:173-200.
- Paul, G. P. 1986. *Early Sculpture of Kashmir (before the middle of the eight century A.D.) An approach to art history and epigraphy of the Jhelum valley and its peripheral regions*. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Leiden.
- Petech, L. 1977. *The Kingdom of Ladakh c.950-1842 A.D.* Rome: Istituto italiano per il medio ed estremo oriente.
- Rapin, C. 2010. L'ère Yavana d'après les parchemins gréco-bactriens d'Asangorna et d'Amphipolis. In *The Traditions of East and West in the antique cultures of Central Asia. Papers in honor of Paul Bernard (Tradicii Vostoka I Zapada v antichnoj kul'ture srednej Azii. Sbornik statej v chest' Polja Bernara)*, ed. Abdullaev, K., 234-252. Tashkent: Noshirlik yog' dusi.
- Rizvi, J. 1996. *Ladakh: crossroads of high Asia*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Roerich, G.N. 1931. *Trails to Inmost Asia Five Years of Exploration with the Roerich Central Asian Expedition*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Rosenfield, J.M. 1967. *The dynastic arts of the Kushans*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Salomon, R. 2005. The Indo-Greek Era of 186/5 BC in a Buddhist Reliquary Inscription'. In: *Afghanistan ancien carrefour Entre L'Est et L'Ouest: Actes Du Colloque International, Musée Archéologique Henri-Prades-Lattes*, eds. Bopearachchi, O. and M.F. Boussac, 359-402. Turnhout: Brepols.
- Sander, L. 1994. 'A Graffito with the Quintessence of Buddhist Doctrine from Ladakh'. In: *Festschrift Klaus Bruhn zur Vollendung des 65. Lebensjahres*, Balbir, N. and J. K. Bautze, 561-570. Reinbek: Verlag für Orientalistische Fachpublikationen.
- Sheikh, A. G. 2010. *Reflections on Ladakh, Tibet and Central Asia*. New Delhi: Skyline Publications.
- Sims-Williams, N. 1993. The Sogdian Inscriptions of Ladakh. In *Antiquities of Northern Pakistan: Reports and Studies*, vol. 2, eds. Jettmar, K., D. König and M. Bemann, 157-163. Mainz: Philipp von Zabern.
- Sircar, D.C. 1965. *Select inscriptions bearing on Indian history and civilization. Vol. 1, From the 6th Century B.C. to the 6th Century A.D.* Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Snellgrove, D.L. and T. Skorupski. 1977. *The Cultural Heritage of Ladakh. Central Ladakh, vol. 1*. Aris & Phillips, Warminster.
- 1980. *The Cultural Heritage of Ladakh. Zangskar and the cave temples of Ladakh, vol. 2*. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House.
- Tucci, G. 1958. Preliminary report on an archacological survey in Swat. *East and West* 9, 4:279-328.
- Tucci, G. and C. Lokesh. 1988. *Stupa: art, architectonics and*

symbolism. New Delhi: Aditya Prakashan.

Vigne, G.T. 2008. *Travels in Kashmir, Ladakh, Iskardo, the countries adjoining the mountain-course of the Indus and the Himalaya, north of the Punjab, 2 volumes*. Srinagar: Gulshan Books. (First edition 1884).

Vogel, J.P. 1906. Epigraphy (part II) Ladakh (Jammu-Kashmir State). In *Annual Progress Report of the Superintendent of the Archaeological Survey, Northern Circle for the year ending 31st March 1906*: 31-32. Lahore: Economical Press.

Vohra, R. 1994. Sogdian Inscriptions from Tangtse in Ladakh. In *Tibetan Studies proceedings of the 4th seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies-Fagerne 1992*, vol. 2, ed. Kvaerne, P., 920-927. Oslo: The Institute for Comparative Research in Human Culture.

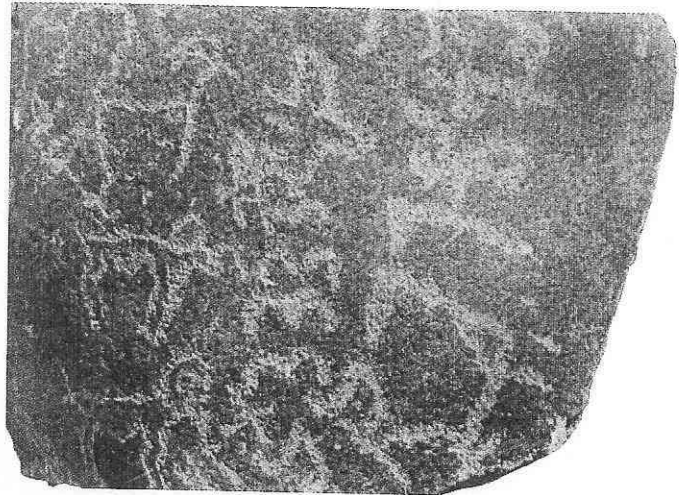
..... 1995. Arabic Inscriptions of the late first millennium A.D. from Tangtse in Ladakh. In *Recent Research on Ladakh 4 & 5: Proceedings of the Fourth and Fifth International Colloquia on Ladakh*, eds. Denwood, P. and H. Osmaston, 419-429. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

..... 1999. Tangas and Inscriptions from Tangtse in Ladakh. In *Studia Tibetica et Mongolica (Festschrift Manfred Taube) Redigenda curaverunt*, eds. Eimer, H., M. Hahn, M. Schetelich and P. Wyzlic, 279-303. Swisttal-Odendorf: Indica et Tibetica Verlag.

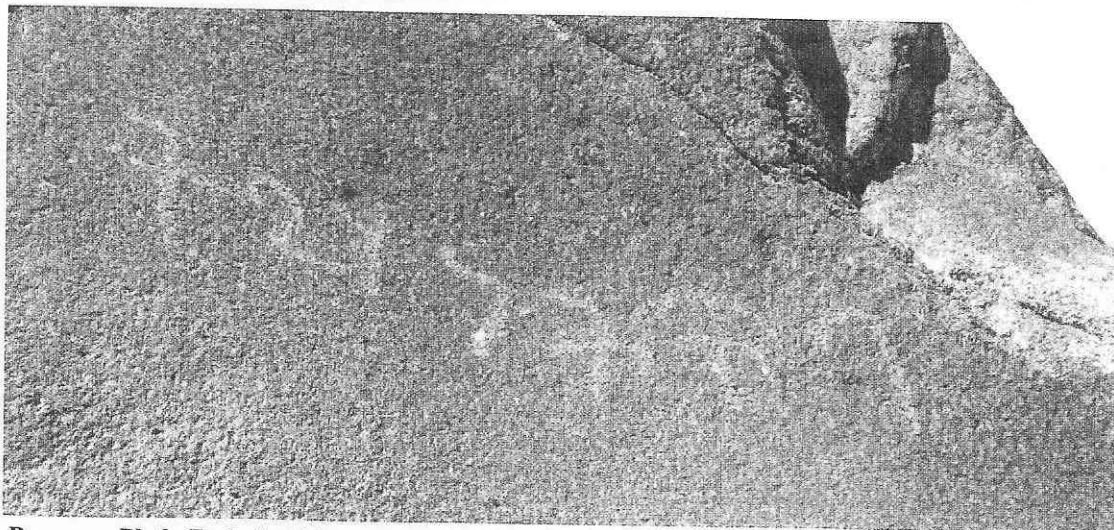
..... 2005. *Rock art in Ladakh*. Himalayan Studies Ladakh Series, vol. 4. Luxemburg: Ethnic Unlimited S.A.R.L.



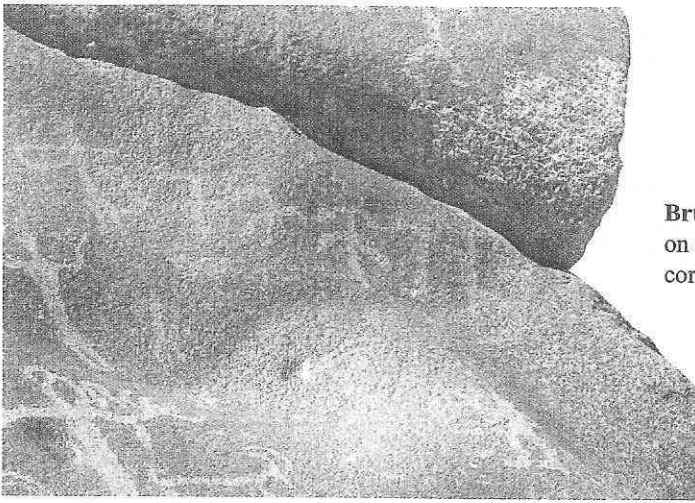
Bruneau, Pl. 1: Kharoṣṭhī rock inscription, Khalatse, possibly mentioning Vima Kadphises along a royal figure (Photograph kept in the Fondo Tucci, Museo Nazionale d'Arte Orientale, Rome, published by Tucci 1958: fig.8)



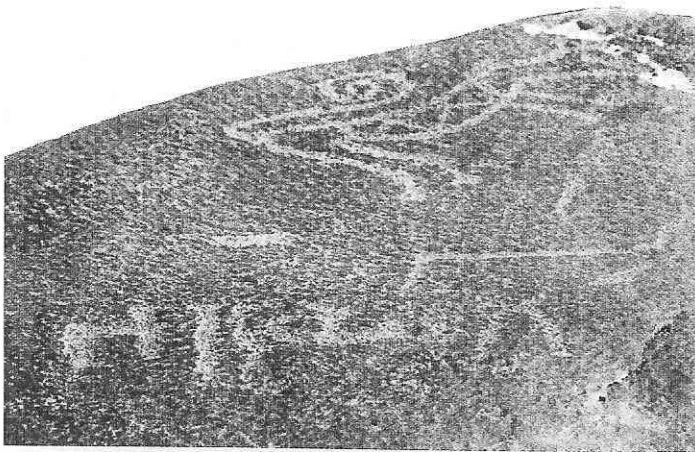
Bruneau, Pl. 2: Detail of the boulder (Photograph kept in the Fondo Tucci, Museo Nazionale d'Arte Orientale, Rome, previously unpublished)



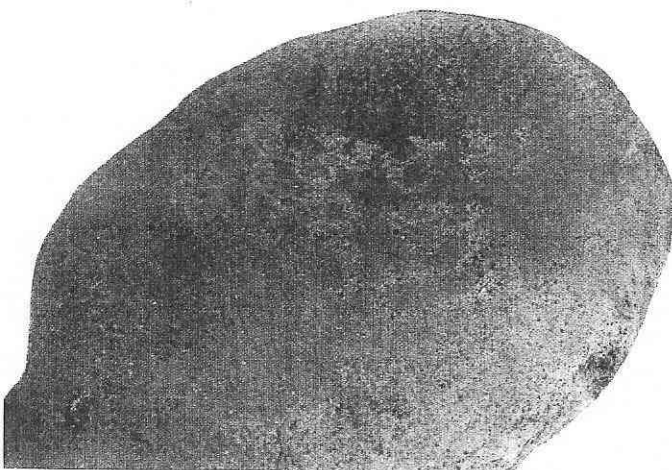
Bruneau, Pl. 3: Exclusive kharoṣṭhī rock inscription engraved on the left bank of the Indus in between Domkhar and Sanjak, correct version (Photograph by the author)



Bruneau, Pl. 4: Exclusive kharosthī rock inscription engraved on the left bank of the Indus in between Domkhar and Sanjak, correct version (Photograph by the author)



Bruneau, Pl. 5: Brāhmī rock inscription, Khalatse (Photograph taken by Babu Pindi Lal, 1909, photographic archive P-039017, Kern Institute, Leiden, Netherlands, previously unpublished)



Bruneau, Pl. 6: Brāhmī rock inscription, Khalatse. (Photograph taken by Babu Pindi Lal, 1909, photographic archive P-039016, Kern Institute, Leiden, Netherlands, previously unpublished)



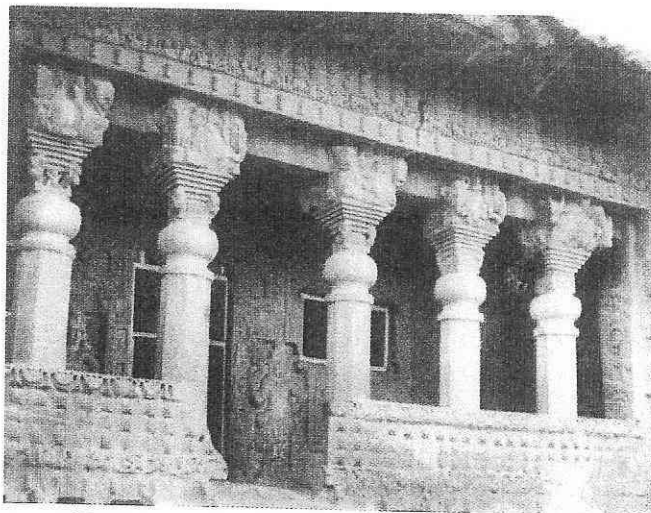
Bruneau, Pl. 7: Exclusive brāhmī rock inscriptions, Laidoh. (Photograph by the author)



Bruneau, Pl. 8: Śāradā inscription engraved within a stūpa, Tangtse. (Photograph by the author)



Bruneau, Pl. 9: Śāradā inscription engraved on a stele, Dras. (Photograph by Martin Vernier)



Kumar Ajit, Pl. 1: Nasik Cave 3 – General View