SOGDIAN NOTES

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This article deals with new interpretations of words occurring in the Sogdian 'Ancient Letters' (AL)¹.

The basic work on these texts has been done by Reichelt and by W. B. Henning in various publications.

1. A Sogdian word for 'hope'

In AL III, ll. 5 sq. (Reichelt p. 22) the following sentence occurs: 'XRZY 'krtym 'pw / prmy nwkh t'βk s'r. Reichelt translates: 'So bin ich geworden ohne jede Neuigkeit von dir'. The words *prmy nwkh* could be read as *prmy-nwkh* and so be connected with Parthian *frmnywg* 'hope'². For the palatalisation of *-mny-* > *-myn-* cf. GMS § 183³. I would then translate: 'and I have become without-hope towards you' i.e. 'I have lost all hope of seeing you'.

The meaning 'hope', 'expectation' (or another related meaning) would also fit the Buddhist Sogdian word *myn(ʼ)y* which occurs in the *Vessantara Jātaka* (VJ) and the Sogdian texts of Paris (P)⁴. In the VJ this word occurs ten times in the same expression: 'γw wntn myn(ʼ)y (ʼP)ZY my n'myt'k 'β'. Benveniste translates: 'Ce . . . m'a été trompeur' and in the note to l. 429 (p. 93) suggests

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¹ H. Reichelt, *Die soghdischen Handschriftenreste des Britischen Museums*, II. Teil, Heidelberg 1931, pp. 1–56. (I quote this book: Reichelt p. 0.)

² Cf. M. Boyce, *The Manichaean hymn-cycles in Parthian*, London 1954, p. 187.

³ GMS refers to I. Gershevitch, *A grammar of Manichaean Sogdian*, Oxford 1961.

⁴ E. Benveniste, *Vessantara Jātaka*, Paris 1946 and E. Benveniste, *Textes sogdiens*, Paris 1940.

the meaning 'idée' or 'apparence' for *myn*(^o)*y*. With the translation 'hope' we get: 'Such a great hope has come to nought (?) for me'. In *P* 2,299 sq. the following sentence occurs: *ZKwh pš'yeykh myn'y w'st* which Benveniste translates: 'La pensée . . . s'en va'. I take *pš'yeykh* to be the same word as *pšyeyk Dhu*. 281 and to mean 'future' (adj.) (cf. 'pyštr'yck', *pyštryeyk* 'future' in *SCE*). So I translate the sentence: 'He abandons his future hope' i.e. 'he abandons his (good) hopes for the future'⁵. Finally the word occurs in the Rustam fragment *P* 13 II,6 sq. (Reichelt p. 63): 'kδry *ZK n srd'nk' γw myn'y 'nyw'st* which Benveniste translates: 'Maintenant le courage du chef est brisé' with the precisation: *myn'y* 'décision, autorité' in the note p. 228⁶. I suggest that the sentence should be translated: 'Now the hope of the chief has been broken'.

2. The Sogdian ideogram ^e*L* = *pr*

The *AL* all have the same introductory formula. It starts with a word which has commonly been read as ^e*R* and equated with the Pahlavi ideogram ^e*L*. The underlying Sogdian preposition is supposedly 't 'to'. In *BSOAS* 38/1, 1975, pp. 134–139 N. Sims-Williams has shown that the ideogram ^e*R* should be read as ^e*D*. He also points out that the ideogram ^e*L* would be written "rδ" in Sogdian writing. The word *rδ* actually occurs several times in the *AL*, read by Reichelt as *kδ*.

The existence of the ideogram ^e*L* in the *AL* is shown by a comparison of the dating of the letters. The date in *AL IV* (Reichelt p. 28 last line) is read by Reichelt: *kδ . . . m'xw kδ . . . sxt h*. Correspondingly *AL II*, *III* and *V* have *pr . . . m'xw (YRX)*

⁵ A different interpretation is found in W. B. Henning, *BSOAS* 11/4, 1946, p. 718.

⁶ See also E. Benveniste, *BSOAS* 9, 1937, p. 513 (= *Notes IV*). For Benveniste's interpretation of XSo *myn'bry* (*STii* p. 604) cf. W. B. Henning, *BSOAS* 12/2, 1948, p. 309 n. 1. D. N. MacKenzie (*BSOAS* 33/1, 1970, p. 117) takes it to mean 'simile'. As for BSo. 'myny *Dhy*. 403 it is possibly another form of the pronoun 'myn (*GMS* § 1478), which also occurs in *Padm*. 8 (cf. E. Benveniste, *Essai de grammaire sogdienne II*, Paris 1929, p. 126).

⁷ Cf. Reichelt p. 55, W. B. Henning, *Handbuch der Orientalistik*, ed. B. Spuler, Erste Abteilung IV/1, Leiden 1958, p. 34 n. 1, *idem*, *BSOAS* 11/4, 1946, p. 717 and *GMS* § 1632.

pr ... *syth*. Reichelt translated *kδ* ... *kδ* with 'als ... als'⁸. However, the facsimile of *AL IV* shows that the *k* in *kδ* in this case is different from the *k* in *kδ* e.g. in *AL IV* l. 8 (*kδ L*'). In the latter case the tail of the *k* is pulled down and to the left; in the former the tail is much shorter and the letter looks like an *r*. I propose that this word should be read *rδ* i.e. the ideogram ^c*L* and equate it with the Sogdian preposition *pr*. It would follow that other *kδ*'s should also be read *rδ*=^c*L*.

I have found the following instances where the meaning fits and the facsimile favours the reading *rδ* (^c*L*) instead of *kδ*:

AL IV l. 3 (Reichelt p. 38): 'XRZY *cnn ZK* / *n'n'kk zyrrn pr'δ(t)* ^c*L* 8-100 'and thereof the (*n'n'kk*) gold was sold for 800' (or, if *n'n'kk* is a proper noun: 'and thereof *N'n'kk* sold the gold for 800'). ^c*L* here seems to denote price. For this there is a parallel in *VJ* 1334: *pr 'cw* 'for how much' and *VJ* 1336 *pr 1-LPW γ'w* 'for a thousand cows' (cf. *GMS* § 1626).

AL IV l. 7: 'XRZY ^c*L δrw't'nh L* *my(ny)* 'and you should not remain in (*δ rw't'nh*)'.

AL IV l. 8: 'XRZYšw ^c*L wxw'n wny* 'you should make a proclamation about it (?)'. Here ^c*L* can be taken with the preceding -šw (cf. *GMS* § 1368) or with the following *wxw'n*⁹.

AL VI ll. 5 sq. (Reichelt p. 38): 'XRZY(*m*)šw *pr pyrcyk xryny* 'XRZY *kδ pyrcyk* / (*L*)['... 'X](*R*)[*ZYšw*] ^c*L kprwh xryn(y)* 'XRZY*m*šw ('['](β*r*))*y*. Here the parallel expressions -šw *pr pyrcyk xryny* and ^c*L kprwh xryn(y)* seem to guarantee the reading and interpretation of ^c*L*=*pr*. However, the reading and interpretation of this sentence as a whole is hampered by several textual difficulties. The sentence seems to be part of a direct quotation introduced by 'XRZY*m m'δ wxwtw* / [...] (ll. 4 sq.). The speaker may be [δβ]*npnyh* l. 4 (read as [δβ]*npnwh* by Henning in *BSOAS* 12/3, 1948, p. 604 n. 10; the *y/w* is not clear).

The reconstruction of the sentence is dependent on how far one accepts the arrangement of the fragments on the facsimile. The fragment with the word [δβ]*npn^wh* and (š)*w*' is to be moved

⁸ Cf. A. A. Frejman, *Opisanije, publikaciji i issledovanije dokumentov s Gory Mug*, Moscow 1962, p. 28: 'kogda ... kogda'.

⁹ Henning read this sentence 'XRZYšw *KL wxw'n wny* 'then you may call it all in'. *GMS* § 218.

up one line, as was done by Reichelt in his transcription of the text. The bigger fragment to the right contains nine lines according to Reichelt p. 37 (fr. b). It seems clear that the placement of the fragment on the facsimile cannot be correct since traces of letters appear *between* ll. 3 and 4 and ll. 4 and 5, and the fragment according to the facsimile contains only eight lines. It may have been squeezed together and parts of it may be slightly out of place. Thus l. 6 (on the facsimile) which contains the letters (r)zy (.) may actually belong to l. 7 of the letter. It is impossible to be sure in this matter without examining the letter itself. On the first fragment mentioned the letter below (š)w' may be an r which could be part of a [ʼX](R)[ZYšw] (l. 6). The traces to the right of this letter may be the lower part of the tail of the k in βy(k) (fr. b l. 5). Then the first part of the sentence in ll. 5 sq. reads as follows: 'XRZYm m'δ wxwtw / [δ'r?] (kδ) βy(k) [?.] (š)w' [ʼ]t kr'wr'n. The translation of the whole sentence thus becomes: 'And she (?) told me thus: if you go (GMS § 698) out to Kr'wr'n¹⁰, then you shall buy for me in it (=there) (pyrcyk – fabric?); and if you do not [find any?] (pyrcyk) then you shall buy in it (=there) (kprwh – camphor?)¹¹, and you shall bring it to me'.

The occurrence of the ideogram ^eL in the AL can throw some light on the hitherto unidentified word rδnk(-w) which occurs several times in the AL (Reichelt p. 35)¹²:

AL II ll. 11–13 (Reichelt p. 12): 'XRZYš / rδnk š'yknw 'PZY rδnk knδh '(tr)wh wγt 'XRZY swγt 'xw / š'ykn 'PZY 'xh knδh w(y)[knt]¹³. Here 'xw (š'ykn) and 'xh (knδh) seem to indicate that rδnk should not be much different from the definite article. Furthermore rδnk š'yknw shows that rδnk causes a following noun to be put in the accusative case. In the sentence the first -š is a possessive pronoun and goes with š'yknw. '(tr)wh must be the

¹⁰ See W. B. Henning, *BSOAS* 12/3, 1948, p. 611.

¹¹ The Sogdian word for 'camphor' is found in *P* 3,171,270; 7,109 where it is written *kp'wr*, and in a Manichaean Sogdian fragment quoted in *GMS* § 807 where it is written *kpwr-y*.

¹² For earlier interpretations of this word see W. B. Henning, *BSOAS* 12/3, 1948, p. 605 with n. 4 and M. Schwartz, *Studies in the texts of the Sogdian Christians*, Ann Arbor, University Microfilms, 1968, p. 112.

¹³ See Henning, loc. cit. pp. 604 sq.

grammatical subject for *wyt*, although the ending *-wh* is puzzling; possibly *-wh* here is an old neuter ending. Thus the sentence is passive ("non-agential") and should not have a direct object in the accusative. Therefore I suggest that *rōnk* should be read as ^e*LZK* i.e. *pr*(^o)*w*=*pr* + *def. art.* which governs the accusative (*GMS* § 1625, 2). This sentence may then be translated: 'And fire was lighted in (or: on) his palace and in (his) town. The palace burnt down and the town was [destroyed]'¹⁴.

AL II ll. 49 sq. (Reichelt p. 16): 'PZY 'δh KSP *prtr* / β't *rōnk* (= ^e*LZK*) 'And any (?) worth (or: profit?) will be higher thereby'. [The preceeding word which Reichelt reads *myzδ* is *mynd*: 'To whom you (pl.) consider it fitting'. Also in l. 48].

AL II l. 55. Here *rōnk* occurs after a lacuna and at the end of the sentence as in the previous case.

AL IV ll. 7 sq. (Reichelt p. 28): 'XRZY . . . / *rōnkw* (= ^e*LZKw*) *rwdk* 'βy'tw *wy* 'And you must remind . . . of the copper (?)'.

Although the accusative of *ZK* usually appears as *ZKw* the *AL* seem to provide a few instances where it is written only *ZK*: in *AL IV* l. 7 and *AL II* l. 46 *ZK* seems to introduce the direct object. Besides the *-w* in ^e*LZKw* is redundant since only the accusative form is allowed after *pr*, and the *w* can therefore be omitted. Thus both ^e*LZK* and ^e*LZKw* can apparently be read as *pr*(^o)*w*.

So we come to the conclusion that the orthographic merging of *r* and ^e*ain* came prior to the 'Ancient Letters', contradicting Sims-Williams' statement (loc. cit. p. 132) that *r* and ^e*ain* are distinguished from each other in all positions in the 'Ancient Letters'. ^e*Ain* is distinguished from *r* only in the word ^e*D*. Similarly in Buddhist Sogdian script ^e*ain* is distinguished from *r* in the word ^e*N^eYW* (cf. Henning, *Handbuch*, p. 34 with n. 1), but is identical with *r* in the word ^e*M*¹⁵. The reason for retaining the special shape

¹⁴ I have preferred connecting the participle *wyt* with Parthian *wxš-* 'to be kindled, blaze' in Boyce, op. cit. p. 197, Parthian *whl* which occurs in 'trwht ŠKZ 5, 12 (corresponding to Middle Persian 'twrswhty) and finally with Sāmnanī *dāmāvāž-*, *dāvāt-* 'to make fire (with a flint)' (A. Christensen, *Le dialecte de Sāmnanī*, København 1915, p. 31). Henning (loc. cit. p. 605 n. 5) takes *wyt* to be from So. *w'e-*, *wyt* 'emit, let'.

¹⁵ Cf. N. Sims-Williams, *BSOAS* 35/3, 1972, pp. 614 sq.

of *ain* in the two words *°D* and *°N°YW* is surely a calligraphic one. It need not surprise us that the Sogdian should use two varieties of *ain* in ideograms. One can compare the unique forms of the letters *l* and *k* in the Pahlavi ideograms *AHL*, *OL* and *AYK*.

In the case of *r* and *ain* the script of the 'Ancient Letters' had already reached the same point of evolution as the Buddhist Sogdian script.