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An Inscription of Darius I from Phanagoria (DFa): Preliminary report of a work in progress

Abstract

The present paper is a preliminary study of an Achaemenid fragmentary inscription recently discovered from Phanagoria, southwestern Russia. After a brief introduction to the discovery of the inscription, the preserved Old Persian text will be analysed and reconstructed.²

Keywords

Achaemenid royal inscriptions, Old Persian, Darius I, Phanagoria, Black Sea

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² The present paper is an improved version of a talk given at the Written Heritage Research Institute, Tehran, in January 2018. Later, an earlier draft of my historical interpretation of the inscription was read at the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Saint Petersburg, in February 2019. Here, I would like to express my special thanks to the discoverer and the first editor of the inscription, respectively, Dr Vladimir D. Kuznetsov (Moscow) and Dr Alexander B. Nikitin (Saint Petersburg), for their kind permission to reproduce their photographs and drawing of the inscription. Only after the preparation of the present analysis and reconstruction of the text, I learnt about an article on this inscription by Dr Eduard V. Rung (Kazan) and Dr Oleg L. Gabelko (Moscow), which is recently published in Russian. My best thanks are due to both of them for providing me with a copy of their work when it was in press. Again, I wish to thank Dr Nikitin for his instructive discussions during our meeting at the State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg, in April 2018, as well as Dr Gabelko and Dr Archil S. Balakhvantsev (Moscow) for their helpful remarks during a meeting in the freezing cold Moscow in February 2019.



Introduction

The ancient Greek city of Phanagoria/Phanagoreia is located on the Taman Peninsula of the present-day Krasnodar Krai (Kuban region) in southwestern Russia, *i.e.*, on the eastern coast of the Taman Gulf, near the Kerch Strait (*Cimmerianus Bosphorus*) which connects the Sea of Azov (*Palus Mæotis*) to the Black Sea (*Pontus Euxinus*). Phanagoria, along with the city of Abdera in Thrace, is traditionally believed to be founded as a colony by the former inhabitants of the city of Teos in Ionia, who abandoned their home and sailed off the Ionian coast after the Persian King Cyrus the Great (r. ca. 558–530 BCE) marched into Lydia and Ionia around 540 BCE.³ The archaeological finds from Phanagoria corroborate the dating of the city's foundation in the middle of the 6th century BCE.

In summer of 2016, the archaeological excavations of the Upper City (Acropolis) of Phanagoria, under the direction of Vladimir D. Kuznetsov, led to the unexpected discovery of a fragmentary Old Persian inscription bearing the name of the Achaemenid King Darius I (r. 522–486 BCE), for which I use the abbreviation DFa in the present article.⁴ The inscription, engraved on a grey marble slab, is unearthed in a stratigraphic context in the Upper City of Phanagoria, which, according to the excavator of the site, is a small mud-brick building above the ruins of the fortifications of the ancient city. While the defensive structures were apparently burnt and destroyed at the turn of the second quarter of the 5th century BCE, the mud-brick building in question also seems to have been ruined by fire in the middle of the same century or a bit later.⁵ The latter date furnishes a *terminus ante quem* for the inscription's arrival at the site.

The extant marble slab, measuring 41.2 × 35.9 × 11.8–14.8 cm, seems to be only a small fragment of a large Achaemenid royal stela. The front surface of the stone is elaborately polished and the cuneiform characters are quite deeply engraved (up to 1.2 cm) (Fig. 1). The back side of the slab, however, is unpolished and the above, below,

³ For a rather different opinion, see Kuznetsov 2000-2001.

⁴ Neither Кузнецов/Никитин 2017 nor Рунг/Габелко 2018 have given any abbreviated title to this inscription. It is true that the toponym Phanagoria is written with initial *Ph*- in Latin alphabets; but, since Darius' inscriptions from Persepolis are already titled with DP, I decided to follow the Greek spelling of the name Φαναγόρεια (in Russian Фанагория), and abbreviate the toponym with *F*. Thus, the abbreviation for the inscription of Darius I from Phanagoria will be DFa.

⁵ Кузнецов/Никитин 2017, p. 154; Кузнецов 2017, p. 167.



Fig. 1. The Old Persian inscription of Phanagoria (DFa)
(Photograph after Кузнецов/Никитин 2017, p. 156, fig. 2).



Fig. 2. The right side of the Old Persian inscription of Phanagoria (DFa)
(Photograph after Кузнецов/Никитин 2017, p. 158, fig. 4).

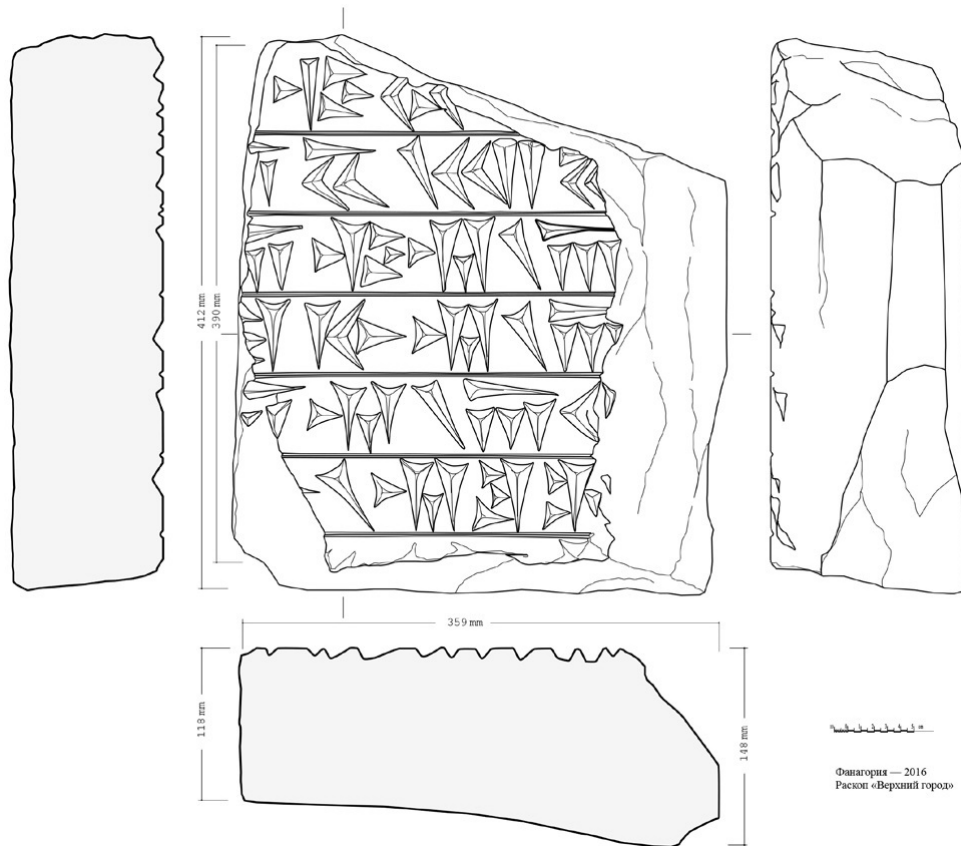


Fig. 3. The Old Persian inscription of Phanagoria (DFa)
(Drawing after Кузнецов/Никитин 2017, p. 155, fig. 1).

and left sides are broken. Polishing traces can only be seen on a part of the right side of the extant slab, which defines the right margin of the inscription (Fig. 2). But the frontal edge of the right side is damaged and no marginal line is preserved.⁶

Lexical Analysis

The preserved text, composed in Old Persian cuneiform, contains merely a small number of characters from the beginning or ending of several words in six lines (Fig. 3), which hardly gives any hint of the inscription's subject, the occasion of its erection, and the original location of the monument. It was first read, interpreted, and published by Alexander B. Nikitin and Vladimir D. Kuznetsov in the excavation

⁶ Кузнецов/Никитин 2017, p. 154.



first of all, one may think of <d-a-r-y-v-h-u-š> = *Dārayavahauš*, the genitive form of the name of Darius, which appears not only in the genealogy of Xerxes in his inscriptions at Persepolis, Susa, Elvend/Alvand, and Van, but also in a number of Darius I's inscriptions (DB III.58f.; DNc 1f.; DNd 1; DPc 1; DPd 10; DPi 1; DSac 1; DZc 3).¹² Based on a tentative comparison of the genitive form of Darius' name in this inscription with the attestation of this form in Xerxes' inscription at Van (XVa 14f.), a possible attribution of the Phanagoria inscription to Xerxes is proposed by Gian Pietro Basello.¹³ However, as mentioned above, the genitive form of the name is also attested in Darius' inscriptions. Moreover, for certain historical reasons, this attribution seems far from possible.¹⁴ A plausible parallel for the first extant line of the Phanagoria inscription – if we assume that it is made by the order of Darius (and not his son Xerxes) – might be a passage in Darius' inscription at Suez (DZc 3f.), where his name in genitive case is attested: ... *haya Dārayavahauš xšāyaθiyahyā xšačam frābara* '...[Ahuramazdā] who conferred the sovereignty upon King Darius'¹⁵.

(x+2) ...] 𐎠𐎡𐎣 𐎠𐎡𐎣 𐎠𐎡𐎣 𐎠𐎡𐎣 𐎠𐎡𐎣 𐎠𐎡𐎣 𐎠𐎡𐎣 𐎠𐎡𐎣 𐎠𐎡𐎣 𐎠𐎡𐎣 [... ...] u'-š : x-'š' [...

This line contains the two final characters of one word and the two initial characters of another word with a word-divider in between. Since the first character is damaged from the left side, the ending of the first word can be read as 𐎠𐎡𐎣 𐎠𐎡𐎣 = <a-š>, 𐎠𐎡𐎣 𐎠𐎡𐎣 = <u-š>, or 𐎠𐎡𐎣 𐎠𐎡𐎣 = <d-š>. No word ending to <a-š> is attested in the Old Persian

living' (Schmitt 2014, pp. 97, 197) attested in *utā jīvahyā utā mṛtahyā* 'both (while) living and (when) dead' (cf. DB V.19f., V.35f.); *patiyāvanhyai* – 1st sg. fut. mid. from prep. (here verbal prefix) *pati-* + prep. (here verbal prefix) *ā-* + verb root *van* = *pati-ā-van* 'ask for help, implore' (Schmitt 2014, pp. 106, 123, 230–231, 275); *vahištam* – nom. sg. n. from adj. *vahišta-* 'best' (Schmitt 2014, pp. 114, 273); as well as the personal names *Dātavahya-* (gen.: *Dātavahyahyā*); *Dārayavau-* (nom.: *Dārayavauš*, acc.: *Dārayavaum*, gen.: *Dārayavahauš*, *Dārayavauš(a)hyā*); *Vahuka-* (gen.: *Vahukahyā*); *Vahyasparuva-* (gen.: *Vahyasparuvahyā*); *Vahyazdāta-* (nom.: *Vahyazdāta*, acc.: *Vahyazdātam*, gen.: *Vahyazdātahya*). Except for the name of King Darius, all other personal names are only attested in DB. Therefore, it can be safely assumed that in the first extant line of the Phanagoria inscription, most probably, none of them should be the case.

12 For a list of the attestations of the genitive form of this name, see Schmitt 2014, p. 89.
13 Basello *apud* Кузнецов/Никитин 2017, pp. 157–158. This attribution is followed and fostered by Кузнецов 2017, p. 160.
14 Cf. Рунг/Габелко 2018. I shall discuss this issue in my forthcoming monograph.
15 Cf. Kent 1953, p. 147; Schmitt 2009, p. 149.



corpus. As for <-d-š>, two rare adverbs are to be found: <a-v-d-š> = *avadaš* ‘from there, from then’, and <d^u-u-r-d-š> = *dūradaš* ‘from afar’. The ending <-u-š> is attested in a great number of word forms¹⁶, most of which are nominative, genitive, and ablative cases of the singular masculine -u-stem nouns and adjectives, as well as nominative cases of the singular feminine -u-stem and -ū-stem nouns¹⁷. If not a verb¹⁸, the word in question is most probably one of the aforementioned cases of a singular -u-stem noun or adjective. The most frequently attested word forms of these cases in the Achaemenid inscriptions are <d-a-r-y-v-u-š> = *Dārayavauš*, the nom. case of the name Darius, and <d-h-y-a-u-š> = *dahyāuš*, nom. sg. f. from *dahyu-* ‘land, country, people’. From the second extant word in this line, only the first character <x> is fully legible. The second character is damaged, but can be restored as <š>. There are again a big number of possible words starting with these two consecutive characters.¹⁹ Looking for attestations of two consecutive words with these ending and beginning characters helps us to limit the number of options. In the Old Persian corpus, there is no word beginning with xš- ever attested right after the word *dahyāuš*.²⁰ If we still take *dahyāuš* as the first word, it should most probably precede a country name; however, there is no toponym known from the Old Persian corpus beginning with Xš-. The most plausible option for the first word remains *Dārayavauš*, and we empirically know that a king’s name in Achaemenid inscriptions is followed by a royal title. Therefore, the most probable reconstruction of this line of DfA would be <: d-a-r-y-v]-u-š : x-š-[a-y-θ-i-y :> = *Dārayava]uš xš[āyaθiya* ‘Darius the King’.²¹

(x+3) ...]ʿ? 𐎧 𐎠 𐎡𐎴𐎠𐎶𐎠𐎶 [...]ʿ aʿ/ʿuʿ/ʿdʿ?-v-m : a[...

16 Cf. the reverse indices for transliterations and transcriptions of the Old Persian word forms in Schmitt 2014, pp. 306–307, 322.

17 Cf. Kent 1953, pp. 62–63.

18 The verb form *adṛšnauš*, 3rd sg. impf. act. from the verb root *darš* is the only attested verb form ending to <-u-š>; cf. Schmitt 2014, p. 165.

19 Cf. Schmitt 2014, pp. 72–73.

20 Nikitin reads the first word as gen. sg. *dahyauš* ‘страны’ (= ‘of the land’) and reconstructs the next word as *xašiyam* ‘правда’ (= ‘truth’) (*sic*); cf. Кузнецов/Никитин 2017, p. 157. The latter word seems to be simply a confusion of the word in question with *hašiyam*, acc. sg. n. from adj. *hašiya-* ‘true’, which is only once attested in DB IV.44; cf. Schmitt 2014, pp. 94, 190–191.

21 Basello *apud* Кузнецов/Никитин 2017, p. 158, and Рунг/Габелко 2018, p. 851, have also come to the same conclusion for restoring this line.



In the third extant line, the three final characters of one word, a word-divider, and the first character of another word are preserved. The first character of the second word is <a> which can be the beginning of many words in different forms; thus, a restoration of this word is impossible.

From the three extant final characters of the first word, only the last two can be read with certainty as <-v-m>. The first one is damage from the left side, and, like the first character of the second line, can be read as $\overline{\text{𐎠}}$ = <a>, $\overline{\text{𐎡}}$ = <u>, and $\overline{\text{𐎢}}$ = <d>. The ending of this word (or the full word) is, therefore, one of the followings: <(-)a-v-m>, <-u-v-m>, or <-d-v-m>. The latter has never been attested in the corpus of Old Persian word forms, so either <(-)a-v-m> or <-u-v-m> should be the case. Before consulting the corpus materials, Old Persian grammar permits, *a priori*, some safe assumptions. There are five grammatical possibilities for the ending of the word in question: **1.** <a-v-m> = *avam* – acc. sg. m. form of the demonstrative pronoun *hau/ava-* ‘that’²²; **2.** <^tu-v-m> = *tuvam* ‘thou’ – nom. form of the personal pronoun for the 2nd person singular²³; **3.** the acc. sg. form of the masculine and neutral -a-stem nouns and adjectives comes with the case-suffix -am.²⁴ So if a stem ends to -*āva-* or -*uva-*, its acc. sg. form will hypothetically be ending to -*āvam* or -*uvam*, respectively; e.g., <p-r^u-u-v-m> = *paruvam* from adj. *paruva-* ‘earlier’, used as adverb meaning ‘formerly, previously’²⁵; **4.** the acc. sg. form of the feminine -u-stem nouns and adjectives comes with the case-suffix -*āum/-āvam*²⁶; e.g., <d-h-y-a-u-m> = *dahyāum* or <d-h-y-a-v-m> = *dahyāvam* from *dahyu-* ‘land, country, people’; **5.** the secondary verbal ending (imperfect) for the 1st person sg. active in Old Persian is -am²⁷; e.g., *abavam* ‘(I) was’, *akunavam* ‘(I) did/made/built’, *ašiyavam* ‘(I) went off/marched’.

For the grammatical possibility **5**, no example ending to <-a-v-m>, <-u-v-m>, or <-d-v-m> is attested in the Old Persian corpus. For **3** and **4**, the aforementioned examples are the only available instances with final <-a-v-m> and <-u-v-m> in the corpus. Returning to the acc. sg. form of the feminine -u-stem nouns and adjectives (**4**), it should be noted that the case-suffix -*āvam* is only attested twice in the so-called

22 Kent 1953, p. 69.

23 Kent 1953, p. 67.

24 Kent 1953, p. 58.

25 Kent 1953, p. 196; Schmitt 2014, pp. 228–229. Basello *apud* Кузнецов/Никитин 2017, p. 158, considers this possibility in his restoration of the word.

26 Kent 1953, p. 62.

27 Kent 1953, pp. 74–75.



‘Daiva’ inscription of Xerxes from Persepolis (XPh 33, 58f.), whilst the inscriptions of Darius as well as other Achaemenid inscriptions always attest the acc. sg. form of *dahyu-* with the suffix *-āum*. There is also another variant for the acc. sg. form of *dahyu-* with the ideogram DH, normally appearing as $\text{𐎠𐎡𐎢𐎣} = \langle \text{DH}_1\text{-u-m} \rangle$ and $\text{𐎠𐎡𐎢𐎣} = \langle \text{DH}_2\text{-u-m} \rangle$ (DSf 58; DSj 6; DSz y+14), and in a rare case as $\text{𐎠𐎡𐎢𐎣} = \langle \text{DH}_1\text{-y-u-m} \rangle$ (A³Pa^a 26; A³Pa^b 34),²⁸ which can by no means be the case in the fragmentary inscription of Phanagoria. Therefore, the rare case-suffix *-āvam* can hardly be a plausible option for reconstructing the word in question. This word in DFa should have been, most probably, *avam* ‘that (acc. sg. m.)’ or *tuvam* ‘thou’ or *paruvam* ‘formerly, previously’ (possibilities 1, 2, and 3).

(x+4) ...]𐎠𐎡𐎢𐎣𐎤𐎥𐎦𐎧𐎨 [...]r’?-y-m : a[...

In the fourth extant line, again we have the three final characters of one word, a word-divider, and an initial <a> belonging to the next word. The second word can hardly be identified. Here, I try to examine the possible solutions for the first word. The last two characters of the first word are 𐎡 = <y> and 𐎢 = <m>. The character before them is damaged from the left side, but yet can be identified as 𐎠 = or, most probably, 𐎠 = <r>.²⁹ Thus, the word should be ending to <-b-y-m> or <-r-y-m>. Grammatically, there are three possibilities for this ending: 1. the acc. sg. form of the masculine and neutral *-a*-stem nouns and adjectives ends to the case-suffix *-am*³⁰; thus, if the stem ends to *-baya* or *-raya*, its acc. sg. form should be ending to *-bayam* or *-rayam*, respectively; 2. the nom. sg. form of the neutral *-a*-stem nouns and adjectives comes with the case-suffix *-am*; thus, in the case of stems ending to *-baya* or *-raya*, the nom. sg. form should end to *-bayam* or *-rayam*; 3. the 1st person sg. active verbs in Old Persian come with the secondary verbal ending (imperfect) *-am*.

²⁸ Cf. Schmitt 2014, p. 89.

²⁹ Рунг/Габелко 2018, p. 851, have only recognised the last vertical wedge of this character, thus they have left this character and, consequently, the whole word unidentified, because there are numerous options ending to the two final characters <-y-m>. Traces of two or three parallel horizontal wedges before the vertical one can be easily identified on some photographs of the inscriptions as well as its drawing in Кузнецов/Никитин 2017, p. 155; see above: Fig. 3. Given these traces, one may read the damage character as or <r>.

³⁰ Cf. Kent 1953, p. 58.



The last preserved line begins with a word-divider, after which three initial characters of a word are extant. The last character is damaged and looks like a 𐎠 = , but no word beginning with <m-r-b-> is known in the Old Persian corpus. Thus, this character should, with high probability, be a 𐎠 = <t> and the word should be beginning with <m-r-t->. Only two Old Persian words beginning with these characters are known: the noun *martiya-* ‘man, human’ and the adjective *mṛta-* ‘dead’. While the latter is rarely attested in the available Old Persian corpus³⁴, various forms of the former noun are frequently used in many Achaemenid inscriptions³⁵. *Martiya-* is also attested in the Bisotun inscription as a masculine personal name (probably a hypocoristic name from **Mart-* <**marta-* ‘mortal, human’ + *-iya-*)³⁶, but it can hardly be the case in DFa. Thus, most probably, an indeterminable grammatical form of the word *martiya-* should be the case.³⁷

Reconstructed Text

Given the lexical analysis presented above, the most plausible reconstruction of the extant fragment of the inscription would be as follows. This is, however, only a hypothetical reconstruction. Discovery of any new fragment of this inscription in future may change our understanding of the text. As mentioned above, the right margin of the inscription can be defined by the traces of polishing on this side of the extant slab (Fig. 2). Thus, it can be safely assumed that the final characters of the words which I reconstructed in the lines x+2, x+4, x+5, and x+6, as well as the missing part of the unknown word starting with <a-> at the end of the line x+3, should have been inscribed at the beginning of the following lines. For this reason, in the

³⁴ Only two cases of this adjective are attested in two Old Persian inscriptions: *mṛta* – nom. sg. (XPh 48, 55); *mṛtahyā* – gen./dat. sg. (DB V.20, V.36); cf. Schmitt 2014, p. 101.

³⁵ For the numerous examples of *martiya-* in different cases, see Schmitt 2014, p. 100–101.

³⁶ Schmitt 1997, pp. 164–166; also cf. Mayrhofer 1979, fasc. II, p. 25; Schmitt 2014, p. 213. For a list of the attestations of this name in DB, see Schmitt 2014, pp. 100–101.

³⁷ Кузнецов/Никитин 2017, pp. 155, 157, have read this word as *marata* (*sic*) and translated as ‘человек, люди’ (= ‘man, people’). Рунг/Габелко 2018, p. 852, also agree with reading this word as a grammatical form of *martiya-*. As Basello *opud* Кузнецов/Никитин 2017, p. 157, has also noted, the odd reading of the toponym Miletus – which was spread in the news before the publication of the inscription – is nothing but a groundless speculation and should not be taken as serious.



reconstruction below, I shift the ending characters of these words to the beginning of the next lines.

Old Persian Cuneiform:

(x+1)	[	...	𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎠𐎧𐎡𐎠] -𐎧𐎡𐎠 [𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎠]
(x+2)	[	...	𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎠𐎧𐎡𐎠] -𐎧𐎡𐎠 [𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎠] 𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎠 𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎠
	Variant I:	[𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎠 𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎠 ...	𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎠] -𐎧𐎡𐎠 𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎠
(x+3)	Variant II:	[𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎠 𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎠 ...	𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎠] -𐎧𐎡𐎠 𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎠
	Variant III:	[𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎠 𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎠 ...	𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎠] -𐎧𐎡𐎠 𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎠
(x+4)	[	...	𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎠𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎠] -𐎧𐎡𐎠 𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎠
(x+5)	[-𐎧𐎡𐎠	...	𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎠] -𐎧𐎡𐎠 𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎠
(x+6)	[𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎠 -𐎧𐎡𐎠	...	] -𐎧𐎡𐎠 𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎠
(x+7)	[𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎠 ?	...	]

Transcription:

(x+1)	| [	...	: d-a-r-y]-v-h-[u-š:] |
(x+2)	| [	...	: d-a-r-y-v]-r ^u -š : x-š ¹- |
	Variant I:	| [a-y-θ-i-y: ...	:] 'a ¹ -v-m : a- |
(x+3)	Variant II:	| [a-y-θ-i-y: ...	: t ^u]-r ^u -v-m : a- |
	Variant III:	| [a-y-θ-i-y: ...	: p-r ^u]-r ^u -v-m : a- |
(x+4)	| [	...	: d-r-y : v ⁱ -i-y-t]-r ¹ -y-m : a- |
(x+5)	| [v-d-a: ...	:	a]-r ¹ -d ¹ -m : a-'k ^u- |
(x+6)	| [u-n-v-m: ...	:	m-r-'t ¹- |
(x+7)	| [i-y-?: ...	:	|



Transliteration:

^(x+1) [... : Dāraya]vaha[uš^(x+2) ... : Dārayava]r̥u š̥ : x̥ š̥^(x+3) [-āyaθiya : ... :]r̥a`vam : a- /
... : t]r̥u`vam : a- / ... : par]r̥u`vam : a-^(x+4) [... : draya : viyata]r̥`ayam : a-^(x+5) [-vadā : ... :
a]d`am : a`ku^(x+6) [-navam : ...] : mar`t^(x+7) [-iya? : ...]

Translation:

... of/to Darius ... Darius the King ... that/thou/previously? ... (I) crossed [the sea.
Then?] ... (I) did/made/built? ... man ...

Interim Conclusions

The remnants of the name of Darius in the first two lines of the fragment may safely lead to an attribution of the inscription to Darius I. Therefore, I have chosen the abbreviation DFa for it. The discoverer of the inscription has ruled out this attribution. Instead, due to the appearance of the name in genitive case in the first preserved line, he has developed an alternative historical interpretation dating the inscription to the time of Darius' son and successor, Xerxes (r. 486–465 BCE), associating it with the speculation of Persian dominance over the northern Black Sea region.³⁸ His arguments are, however, not convincing at all and have been rightly criticised and rejected by other Russian scholars.³⁹

The most reasonable historical interpretation for this inscription would be in the context of the Scythian expedition of Darius I ca. 513 BCE. According to Herodotus (IV.87), Darius set up two stelae near the Thracian Bosphorus on the eve of his entrance to Europe. Given this account of Herodotus as well as further historical and archaeological evidence, a hypothesis would be put forward that this inscription had been erected elsewhere near the western shores of the Black Sea, *i.e.*, on Darius' path to Scythia. The present fragment of the stela could have found its way to Phanagoria at a later time, perhaps as a piece of ballast used in a ship travelling from the western Black Sea coast to the Cimmerian Bosphorus.⁴⁰

³⁸ Кузнецов 2017.

³⁹ Cf. Рунг/Габелко 2018; Балахванцев 2018.

⁴⁰ The same idea is advanced by Рунг/Габелко 2018. Also, A. B. Nikitin, in personal conversations and correspondences with the author, has maintained a dating of the inscription to the time of Darius I and agreed with the latter interpretation. A criticism of Kuznetsov's hypothesis, with a thorough discussion of the archaeological context of the Phanagoria inscription and its historical interpretation in the context of



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Darius' Scythian expedition, is the subject of a forthcoming monograph entitled *Miscellanea Persico-Scythica*, where I shall present a reassessment of the historical and archaeological evidence of the Achaemenids' presence in the western and northern Black Sea area during the time of Darius I and his successors.



http://www.achemenet.com/pdf/arta/ARTA_2019.005_Shavarebi.pdf

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Directeur de la publication : Pierre Briant

arta@cnrs.fr

ISSN 2110-6118

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