THE RELIQUARY INSCRIPTION OF UTARA:
A NEW SOURCE FOR THE HISTORY OF
THE KINGS OF APRACA

I. THE INSCRIPTION

The inscription in question is on the lid of a relic box which was described in Spink & Son Ltd's sale catalogue of *Indian and South East Asian Art* (London, 1978), catalogue no. 1, as follows [italics mine]:

A unique circular gold reliquary casket with domed cover, the whole decorated in gold filigree with lotus designs, the base an eight petalled flower picked out with a seeded ground. The lid with petal shaped panels in similar work surmounted by a knob with formal pattern. The casket contains a small circular silver gilt box. [This casket is illustrated on the cover of the catalogue.]

Height of casket: 2 1/4 in. (5.5 cm.)
Diameter: 1 3/4 in. (4.7 cm.)

The whole contained in an extremely rare and important circular schist box decorated with concentric lines. The cover incised with an inscription in Kharosthi, the letters inset with gold. In the centre a lotus finial in gold.

Gandhara: 1st–2nd century.
Height: 4 3/4 in. (11.8 cm.)
Diameter: 7 in. (18.0 cm.)

The original find-spot and present location of the inscription are not known. The inscription is written along the outer edge of the box cover in well-formed Kharoṣṭhī characters of the Indo-Scythian era. The language is the usual northwestern or “Gāndhārī” Prakrit. In paleographic characteristics as well as in content, style, and language it resembles the other relic casket inscriptions from unknown sites (probably in northern Pakistan) which have recently been published. (See List of Inscriptions, p. 64, nos. 2–5.)

The inscription was first published by B. N. Mukherjee in 1981 (see Bibliography).¹ It is here re-edited from the photograph accompanying Mukherjee’s edition and from the rubbing reproduced here (Figure 1):

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urā stre(?)egabharya imu thubh pratiḥaveti apratiḥ(a?)["vi|dapruvami pradeśami
tvamāṇospamī savabudha puyita utida añagada pracegasabudha puyida rahata puyita.²
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Utara, wife of the *stretega* [stratega], establishes this stūpa in a previously unestablished place, in Tvamanospa. All the Buddhas are honored, past and future; the solitary enlightened ones are honored; the Worthy Ones are honored.

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Paleographic Notes

Although the readings are for the most part quite clear, the inscription displays some interesting paleographic peculiarities. Mukherjee reads the peculiar fourth akṣara as strai, taking the horizontal line at the lower right as a long vowel marker of the type occasionally used in Indian and central Asian Kharoṣṭhī. This he takes to indicate, in combination with the apparent e diacritic at the top of the letter, the diphthong vowel ai. He then reads the whole word as straitega, ‘relating to a Stratega.’ There are, however, several difficulties with this interpretation. First of all, such a secondary adjectival formation from the Greek loan word stratega/stretega (see n. 4) (στρατηγός, ‘military commander’, ‘general’) would be unlikely (especially in compound with -bharya) even in Sanskrit, not to speak of Gāndhārī. Secondly, the representation of the so-called long diphthongs is extremely rare in Kharoṣṭhī, occurring only a few times in Sanskrit texts such as that in Boyer, Rapson, andSenart 1927, 185—6, no. 511, obv.,