

### **How long was Sogdian spoken in Transoxiana? (a Toponymical Approach)**

1. It is known that the East Iranian Sogdian language or some of its dialects were spoken by the inhabitants of Zaravshan and Kashkadarya valleys and Tashkent oasis from the deep antiquity until the 11<sup>th</sup> century. The last dated texts and the notes about this language in the foreign sources are attributed to this time. A descendant of a dialect very close to literary Sogdian, namely the Yaghnobi language is still surviving in the highland valley of Yaghnob. But, as for the main oases, such as Samarkand, Bukhara, Tashkent, Qarshi, we have no information on the language from the 11<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Yet the absence of evidence is not the evidence of absence. A more precise information on this subject can be useful for the ethnic history of Central Asia. In this paper, I shall try to use the toponymical data in order to show that Sogdian was probably spoken in rural areas around Bukhara till the 16<sup>th</sup> century, while large towns, such as Bukhara and Samarkand were already persianized in the 10<sup>th</sup> century.
2. It is a known rule of toponymy that the names of minor objects (microtoponyms) are much less stable than the names of large ones, and that they usually mutate after every ethnic change in an area. This rule works in Iranian world as well. For example, some 50 years after the loss of the 'Old-W\_n\_' language and expansion of Tajiki in the W\_n\_ valley (Southern Tajikistan), 30% of village-names, 60% of block-names and more than 80% of plough-ground-names are of Tajiki origin (my calculations are based on the data of A.Z. Rozenfeld, *Vandzhskie govory tadjikskogo jazyka*, Leningrad, 1964, p. 142-148). Fortunately, we have the vast collections of the names of minor objects (gates, canals, blocks, mosques) inside the large towns of the 10-12<sup>th</sup> century Sogdiane, as well as the names of small geographical objects (plough-fields, second-stage canals, gutters, blocks, hills) of the rural areas available from the land-ownership documents of the 14-16<sup>th</sup> century. Such place-name collections can undergo the statistical and etymological analysis. Our method here is taking collection of microtoponyms, proposing etymologies or at least a language provenance for all the names, and then counting the quantity of place-names of Sogdian, Persian, Turkic, Arabic origins and the unclear cases in order to give the percentage of these layers. This work must obviously operate with the bulk of the material (more than 500 toponyms as a whole), which can not be fully represented either in this abstract or in a lecture. Those who are interested in obtaining the whole text of this research are invited to contact me at [pavlvslyria@mail.ru](mailto:pavlvslyria@mail.ru).
3. The main part of the names of the gates, blocks and other objects inside the walls of Bukhara, Samarkand, Kish (Shahrisabz), Nakhshab (Qarshi), Akhsikat and Osh in Farghana are Persian already in the 10-11<sup>th</sup> century. Some of these names represent even not a New Persian, but rather a Middle Persian form. The names of canals inside Bukhara and Samarkand are of more archaic, Sogdian outlook, but they are always accompanied with Persian *j\_y, j\_yb\_r* 'canal'. We can suppose that Sogdian was still spoken inside Bunjikath of Ustrushana (the streams inside the town bear Sogdian names with no Persian attributives) and probably the town of Ispijab (although our material from there is limited to the three gate-names). I failed to interpret a large part of gate-names of Binkath (Tashkent). Nowadays only *M\_tur\_d* in Samarkand and *Ma\_\_k-i 'At\_t\_\_r* in Bukhara remain the monuments of the Sogdian past of these cities.
4. According to the 14<sup>th</sup> century *waqf*-document for the mausoleum of Sayyid Bakharzi (see O.D. Chekhovich, *Bukharskie Dokumenty XIV veka*), in the description of lands on the

- canal of Shahrud (4-10 km to the East of Bukhara), there are 26 Sogdian place-names, 15 toponyms of Persian, Arabic or Turkic origin 15 unclear names (some of the names of the last group can be either Sogdian or Persian, while I cannot propose any reliable etymology for the others). Some of the Sogdian names define small hills, blocks, estates.
5. The same proportion was reached in investigating the 15<sup>th</sup> century place-names to the south of Nasaf (O.D. Chekhovich, *Samarkandskie dokumenty XV-XVI v.*, doc. 11, line 120-137): 13 Sogdian names (including plough-fields and a gutter) vs. 6 Persian and 7 unclear ones.
  6. As for a rich list (69 units) of the place-names of the Ghijduw\_n and Kharq\_n-r\_d districts to the northeast of Bukhara taken from the 16<sup>th</sup> century documents of J\_yb\_ri shaikhs (*Iz arkhiva sheikhov Dzhujbari*, doc. 286-298), there are 31 Persian place-names, 32 Sogdian toponyms, 1 Jaghatai name and the other 5 are unclear.
  7. The published medieval documents concerning the regions of Samarkand and Tashkent do not show the areas characterized by the domination of Sogdian place-names, although even here one can find several assured Sogdian microtoponyms in the Persian or Turkic milieu.
  8. Sometimes in Bukhara and Karm\_na (Navoi) regions we meet place-names with graphic variation of *w\_w* and *f\_*. I have no other explanation of this phenomenon than the assumption that in the local dialects there was a labiovelar *v* (*\_*), rendered as either *w* or *f*. Moreover, in the three cases this *w/f* is evidently a reflex of Sogdian *\_*: *Fa\_m\_tan* and *Wa\_m\_tan* to the north of Kermine clearly correspond to Sogdian *\*\_-my\_n* 'the dwelling of the god, lord', while in the second part of *Ust\_fa\_na/Ust\_wa\_na* near Ghijduw\_n one can see Sogd. *\_n- 'k* 'temple' (the first part is so far unclear); in one case we meet the form *wada\_* of the more common term *afdaq* 'minor irrigation canal', which goes back to Sogd. *'\_t'k/TMvda@Yk/*, OIr. *\*fra-taka-* 'flowing'. Thus, we learn that in these districts one of the chief distinctive features of Sogdian phonology, the phoneme *v* (*\_*), was preserved till the 16<sup>th</sup> century.