Tocharian A *si* 'tail'[1]

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In this article, we posit a new Tocharian A noun *si* 'tail' and discuss its Indo-European etymology.

The first pāda of the verse in lines A 12 b3–5, depicting a dead lion lying on the ground, reads as follows, according to Sieg *&* Siegling (1921: 11), with restorations and translation as per Sieg (1944: 16):

kākropu puk ś(twar pe)yu lyäṣknaṃ ywārśkāsi cacp$_u$ku :

'Alle vier Füße hatte er zusammengelegt und zwischen den Weichen (?) versteckt'

Two problems arise here. Firstly, the word *ywārśkāsi*, implicitly taken by the editors as some variant of *ywārśkā* 'between', is not found anywhere else. Secondly, the metrical structure of this tune, called *ṣälyp-malkeyaṃ*, is 4/3/4/3; therefore, we must expect a caesura between *ywārśkā* and *si*. As *si* must be a separate word, we can — in the context of the story — suppose that it means 'tail' and translate *lyäṣknaṃ*

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ywārśkā si cacp{ᵤ}ku as 'he hid [his] tail between [his] *lyäṣkäṃ**[2]'.

This suggestion is supported by line A 162 a1, transliterated as follows in Sieg &

Siegling (1921: 85):

||| *c· ma{ṟ}a(ṃ) o[p]s· si y[ā]* |||

Leaf A 162 contains the episode in which the Buddha takes Nanda to the

Himalayas, where he shows him a singed monkey (see *mkowy arämpāt* 'monkey's

appearance' in line b5). This episode has Sanskrit parallels in Aśvaghoṣa's

Saundarananda and Kṣemendra's Sundarīnandāvadāna (chapter 10 of the

Bodhisattvāvadānakalpalatā). In both versions the descriptions of the mountains

are accompanied with artful images involving yak tails:

Saundarananda 10.11:

calatkadambe himavannitambe tarau pralambe camaro lalambe

chettuṃ vilagnaṃ na śaśāka vālaṃ kulodgatāṃ prītim ivāryavṛttaḥ

'On the slope of the mountain with its waving *kadamba* trees a yak was

entangled in a hanging tree and could not cut off his tail which was caught in it,

just as a man of noble conduct cannot give up a hereditary friendship.' (Johnston

1932: 55)

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[2] The loc. du. (or pl., depending on the interpretation) *lyäṣknaṃ* is a hapax

legomenon (the expected singular form would be *lyṣäk**). Since the tail is hidden

there, perhaps it means 'buttocks', 'thighs' or the like, not necessarily 'groin'

('Weichen') as in Sieg (1944: 16).

Sundarīnandāvadāna 10.96:

atha nandaṃ samādāya bhagavān gandhamādanam

yayau girīndraṃ camarīvālavyajanavījitam[3]

'Then the Blessed One took Nanda and went to Gandhamādana, Indra among mountains, fanned with fans of yak tails.'

On the basis of these parallels, we can propose the following reading for A 162 a1:

||| – c(a)mar-o[p]s(i) siy[ā] ||

There is no trace of a virāma between *ma* and *r* (hence Sieg and Siegling's reading *rä(ṃ)*), but there is no anusvāra either). We suppose that it was either lost in the small rupture or, perhaps more likely, omitted by mistake.

We take *c(a)mar* to be a borrowing from Sanskrit *camara* 'yak'. In our text, it is extended by the Tocharian A *opäs** 'ox', literally 'yak-ox'.[4] Previously the word

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[3] The text is restored on the basis of the corrupt transliteration in Tibetan script: *a tha nandi sa mā da ya bha ga bān gandha ma da nil̤ |ya yau gī rindraṃ tsa ma rī bā la bya dza na bī dzi taṃ/* (Derge Tangyur, Ke 108a5– b1). Some restorations were proposed already in Dās & Vidyābhūṣaṇa (1888: 335) and de Jong (1996: 15). The metaphor here is that yaks wag their tails on Gandhamādana, Indra among mountains, as if fanning it, and it is thus compared to the actual god Indra being fanned with chowries (whisks made of yak tails).

[4] The meaning 'yak-ox' may be compared with Toch.A *kayurṣ* 'yak-bull'. On Tocharian A terms related to the yak, see Pinault (1999: 467–468).

*opäs** was only known from YQ I.4 a4 *opsi* (nom. pl.). Here we have either the same form or a derived adjective 'belonging to an ox' — cf. the same ambiguity in *kowi*: YQ I.4 a4 *kowi opsi kayurṣāñ* 'cows, oxen, bulls' (nom. pl.) alongside A 456 a1 /// *kowi ṣälypaṣi* /// 'of cow butter' (adjective).

As for *siy[ā]* ///, it must contain the newly found word *si* 'tail', discussed above. If there is a word boundary, we have nom./obl. sg. *si* plus some word starting with *yā*-; if not, it is either a perl. sg. *siy[ā]* or some plural form, e.g., obl. pl. *siy[ā](s)*. In the two latter cases we have the *i* retained before *yV*, just like it is in the only other known noun with the structure *Ci — ri* 'city': cf. perl. sg. *riyā* (not ***ryā*).

No form related to Toch.A *si* is known from Tocharian B.[5] If the Toch.A plural was nom. *siyāñ**, obl. *siyās**, the Toch.B word might have been ***siyo* or ***siya*, otherwise, ***siye* would also be possible.

As for the etymology, an obvious option is to compare *si* with Hittite *šišai-*, because this has been proposed to mean 'tail'. PIE ***sis-* may have yielded ***səs-* > *s-* in Tocharian, cf. A *ṣar*, B *ṣer* 'sister' from ***səser* (Burlak 2000: 111). Either one would have to assume that PIE ***i* does not cause palatalization in Tocharian, as argued in Burlak (2000: 122–123) and Hackstein (2017: 1312), cf. B *wase** 'poison' (not ***yase*) next to Sanskrit *viṣa*, or the palatalised initial ***ṣ-* was assimilated to the second, which was not palatalised, i.e. ***ṣəs-* > ***ṣs-* > *s-*. As for *-i*, it may be a suffix or, in some as yet unclear way, correspond to the Hittite *-ai*. However, the meaning

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[5] According to Pinault (1994: 208–213), *-pkai* in Toch.B *kauᵤrṣa-pkai* 'chowry', lit. 'bull *p.*' is to be interpreted as 'tail'.

'tail' of the Hittite word is only one of several possibilities: "A š[išai-] is something that is powerful, heavy or thick (daššu-) and characteristic of large carnivores" (chd: 449). Although the fact that šišai- of different animals can be "united" seems to be in favor of 'tail', the fact that it is a body part of a bear that can be thick or powerful makes this less likely.

Another option is based on a derivation of Tocharian initial si- from *suei-, a possible phonological source as assured by Toch.B siya- 'sweat' < *sueid-; probably, the root was in the zero grade so that the sequence *su̯i- could develop to *səy- > si-. A root with a suitable structure is posited by liv2 (p. 606), with a question mark, as *sueh₁(i)- 'schwanken, sich schwingen'. The problem is that this etymology has to be based only on Germanic and Slavic, e.g. Du. zwaaien 'wave, swing' and Russ. xvéjat'sja 'waver' (Russ. CS xvějati sja; Vasmer 4.230). The Germanic verb is problematic because it has a limited distribution and lacks early attestations. According to Kroonen (2013: 496), it cannot go back to *swējan < *sueh₁i- because of Dutch Low Saxon forms like Stellingwerfs zwaaien, since *-ē(j)an is in this dialect regularly reflected as -i'jen.[6] To account for the different

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[6] It should be noted that mi'jen 'mow' < *mēan has a variant maaien too (Bloemhoff 1994–2004: 3.284), but zwaaien is nevertheless clearly different because it has aai everywhere and no variant zwi'jen (o.c. 4.972). In other dialects that keep old long â < *ē apart from lengthened ā < *a, like that of Vriezenveen, zweejən does rhyme with e.g. meejən 'mow' (Entjes 1970: 178). Sassen (1953: 61, 204), on the other hand, seems to have zwaain̥ with adifferent vowel than meejn̥ for the dialect of Ruinen.

vocalism of *zwaaien* in Stellingwerfs, Kroonen reconstructs **swanhan*. However, it is doubtful whether this explains Stellingwerfs *zwaaien*, since both **ah* and **anh* are there reflected as *ao*, e.g. *taoi* 'tough' < **tanhu-* or *slaon* 'beat' < **slahan* (Bloemhoff 1994–2004: 4.169, 4.423; Kroonen 2013: 452, 509). Theoretically, a derivation from **zwaden* 'mow with a scythe' could work in view of Stellingwerfs *maaien* 'maggots' < **maden*, but **zwaden* is extremely rare and semantically far off.[7] Perhaps Stellingwerfs *zwaaien* has been borrowed from Frisian *swaaie*,[8] or from Dutch, as has been suggested for other matches like Danish *svaje*.

If the reconstruction of a root **sueh$_1$-i-* for Proto-Indo-European is really warranted, Toch.A *si* could be from **suh$_1$-i-eh$_2$* or **suh$_1$-i-o-*, depending on the stem class in Tocharian, which we cannot establish with certainty. The meaning 'tail' can be derived from this verb as "the swinger";[9] compare the image of the yaks

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[7] On *zwaaien* and *zwaden*, see the discussion in ewn.

[8] Note the match in the specific expression Fri. *de auto swaaie* and Stell. *de waegen zwaaien* 'to turn the car', not found in Standard Dutch.

[9] For parallels, see Buck (1949: 210). Georges-Jean Pinault suggests to us that *si* may be borrowed from a Middle Indic cognate of Skt. *śita-* 'sharp', similar to Pāli *siya-*. Admittedly, there are parallels for the semantic development of 'tail' from 'sharp', but the meanings are nevertheless quite far apart, and the form would not fit the most likely source dialect Gāndhārī, where we expect *śida* (with *d* probably representing *ð*).

wagging their tails in the Sundarīnandāvadāna.

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