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Linguistic evidence for Kuśāṇa trade routes

Bactrian *λιρτο ‘load, cargo’ and Sanskrit lardayati ‘to load’

Abstract: Late Sanskrit lardayati ‘to load’ is probably not inherited from a PIE root *lerd-, as has recently been argued by Kaczyńska (2020), but can be explained as a denominative of *larda- ‘load, cargo’. This noun *larda- could be a borrowing from Bactrian *λιρτο /lirtə/ ‘load, cargo’ < Old Iranian *drštə-. This etymology fits well with the fact that lardayati is phrased together with sthora- ‘pack-animal’, likely another instantiation of the Iranian collocation of *staura- ‘animal’ and *vdarz- ‘to load’, for which I discuss evidence from Niya Prakrit, Parthian and Khotanese. In addition, further support is drawn from the independent historical evidence for the domination of the main trade routes of Central and South Asia by the Kuśāṇa dynasty in the first centuries of our era.

Keywords: Sanskrit; Bactrian; Etymology; Language Contact; Divyāvadāna; Kuśāṇa empire

1 The attestations of Sanskrit lardayati in the Divyāvadāna

The Sanskrit Divyāvadāna can hardly be considered a standard source for Indo-Iranian historical linguistics, even though this collection of Buddhist stories contains some Sanskrit words which are otherwise hard to come by and deserve some more attention than they usually receive. A case in point is the Sanskrit verb lardayati ‘to load’, which forms the main topic of the present paper. This verb occurs a few times in the Divyāvadāna (cf. Edgerton 1953: 2, 461), but apparently nowhere else in Sanskrit literature. Derivatives of this verb are well attested in later strata of Indo-Aryan: e.g. Prakrit laddeï ‘to load’ < lardayati and laddaṇa- ‘loading’ < *lardaṇa-, Kashmiri ladun ‘to raise, to set up, to send, to dispatch’, inf. in -un from vlad- < vladd- < vlard- (cf. padun ‘to fart’ from vpard) and Hindi lādnā ‘to load, to pile up’, inf. in -nā from vlād- < vladd- < vlard- (cf. pādnā ‘to fart’ from vpard) (see Turner 1966: 636; Kaczyńska 2020: 416f.). In view of the absence of this word from older Buddhist literature and Indian literature in general, Burrow (1973: 61) suggests that we are dealing with a “vernacular” or “provincial” word.
In this short paper, I will critically evaluate an Indo-European etymology of \textit{lardayati} which has recently been proposed by Kaczyńska (2020) (see §2), and I will, as an alternative, argue in favour of a Bactrian etymology (see §§3–4). Before doing so, I first want to make a few notes on the actual attestations of \textit{lardayati} and its connection to the word \textit{sthora}- ‘pack-animal’.

The relevant passages from the \textit{Divyāvadāna} are cited below (exx. 1–3), accompanied by my own translations.\footnote{Here and below, Cowell & Neil’s orthography has been adapted to modern standards and I have adopted Cowell & Neil’s (1886: 703) minor emendation \textit{sthorāṃl} instead of the \textit{sthorāṃ} of the manuscripts, because I agree with them that this word is acc.m.pl. rather than acc.f.sg. (see below) and because the language of the \textit{Divyāvadāna} is, apart from its vocabulary, close to standard Classical Sanskrit. The acceptance or non-acceptance of the emendation, however, does not affect my argument in any way.}

\begin{itemize}
\item[(1)] \textit{yāvat paśyati} \textit{sthorāṃl lardayantaṃ} sārtham so ‘pi \textit{sthorāṃl lardayitum ārabdhaḥ}
\begin{quote}
When he saw that the caravan was \textbf{loading the pack-animals}, he started \textbf{to load his pack-animals} as well.
\end{quote}

\item[(2)] \textit{sa sārthaḥ sarātrim eva sthorāṃl lardayitvā samprasthitāḥ}
\begin{quote}
The very night \textbf{they had loaded the pack-animals}, the caravan departed.
\end{quote}

\item[(3)] \textit{te ‘pi vanijaḥ sarātram evotthāya sthorāṃl lardayitvā samprasthitāḥ}
\begin{quote}
The merchants woke up during that very night and once \textbf{they had loaded their pack-animals}, they departed.
\end{quote}
\textit{Saṃgharṣitāvadāna} I; Cowell & Neil 1886: XXIII 334, l. 18f.
\end{itemize}

In contrast to the general practice in the recent English translations of (parts of) the \textit{Divyāvadāna} by Tatelman (2005) and Rotman (2008–2017), I have translated \textit{lardayati} as ‘to load’ and not as ‘to unload’, because the translation ‘to unload’ is not consistent with the meaning of the Middle Indo-Aryan and New Indo-Aryan forms and because it lacks good support from the context. Moreover, both Tatelman and Rotman follow the glossary of Cowell & Neil (1886: 695) and translate \textit{sthora}-, the default object of \textit{lardayati} (cf. infra), with ‘cargo’, but this word more likely means ‘pack-animal’, as I will discuss now.

No further instances of \textit{sthora}- are attested in the \textit{Divyāvadāna} (Edgerton 1953: 2, 611), but some related forms are known from Sanskrit lexica. An entry \textit{sthaurī} is glossed as \textit{prṣṭyaḥ} ‘pack-animal’ in two of the most famous dictionaries of Sanskrit synonyms, i.e. in the \textit{Amarakośa} (2.8.2.14 ed. Colebrooke) and in Hemacandra’s...
Abhidhānacintāmaṇi (verse 1263). Later lexica only add variants such as sthorī and sthūrī to this. In addition, Wilson (1819: 1027) quotes an entry sthaura- ‘a sufficient load for a horse or an ass’ from a late lexicon, the Śabdārthakalpataru.2

Still more important for our purposes is the testimony provided by Niya Prakrit stora- ‘large animal’ and Khowar istōr ‘horse’ and istōri ‘mounted, horseman’ (cf. Turner 1966: 796). For a discussion of the Khowar words, the reader is referred to Morgenstierne (1936: 659), but the Niya Prakrit evidence deserves to be examined here in somewhat more detail. The first person to relate Niya Prakrit stora- to the sthora- from the Divyāvadāna was Burrow (1934: 514), who at the same time suggested that these words are borrowed from a Middle Iranian reflex of *staura- ‘large animal’, which because of geographical and historical reasons one may wish to identify as Bactrian (α)στωρο/(ə)stōrə ‘idem’ (Sims-Williams 2007: 266).3 Niya Prakrit stora- can refer specifically to 1) a ‘horse’, so for instance in CKD: 13, where the plural form storamca is paired together with vaḍ̱ avi ‘mares’ and taken up in the following sentence by aśpa ‘horse’, or 2) a ‘camel’, as in CKD: 367, where uṭa ‘camel’ is taken up in the sentence after it by stora. Yet a more general meaning ‘animal’ should also be posited, e.g. in CKD: 435 manuśa atha vā stora ‘a man or a beast’. These animals were used, for instance, for military aims (cf. e.g. CKD: 292 seni storasā ‘cavalry’), but more relevant to our concerns are references to their use as pack-animals. I cite two examples below (exx. 4, 5) to make this clear, but still more evidence exists.4

(4) [..] tavigi storasā nadha Caḍodade giṁnidavo aśi tanuvagade Calmatançci amña darṣitaṇṭi ... taṇ kalāṇmi yatma Caũl(*e)sa tade nadha darṣitavo huati

2 I cite the first edition of Wilson’s work since he no longer includes the bibliographical reference in the enlarged second edition from 1832. If all these forms from indigenous lexica are to be trusted, one could interpret sthaura- as a vrddhi-derivative from sthora- ‘pack-animal’ (see below) and sthaurin- and its variants as derivatives with the possessive suffix -in from sthaura-, i.e. ‘possessing a load > pack-animal’. The word sthūrikā- in Manusmrī 8.325 does not mean ‘a load placed on an ox’, as one sometimes finds in the literature, but probably ‘heel’, see Olivelle 2005: 320.

3 For the rendering of Iranian #st- with Indo-Aryan #sth- one may want to compare Vedic sṭhūṇā-, which is possibly an early loanword from Old Iranian *stūnā- ‘pillar’ (so e.g. Sadowski 2017: 716). I use # to indicate word boundaries. By contrast, the Khowar forms cited above should, on account of their accent, go back to a pre-form with #st- (cf. Morgenstierne 1932: 49), which would be in accordance with the spelling of the Niya Prakrit form. It is difficult to say whether the Khowar word was also borrowed in Middle Iranian times from e.g. Bactrian, or only at a later stage.

4 See, for instance, CKD: 159, where ghee has to be unloaded from the storas; CKD: 272, where all privately owned beasts have to help in transporting the taxes; CKD: 333, where mention is made of yo masuāṃmi stora ‘horse(s) (employed in transporting) the wine’, and CKD: 435, where a loaded camel dies on the road.
[...] **the load of the (?) beast(s)** was to be taken from Caḍ̱ ota. The people of Calmatana **loaded** the corn from their own. ... At that time the *yatma* Caïle **had to pack his load** from that. (tr. Burrow 1940: 55).

(5) *ede jaṃna*[sa *sto]*ra nasti huati yatra udaga pačevara *darṣeyāti*[^5^]

These people did not have a **beast** at their disposal on which **they could load** water and provisions. (tr. mine).

Both of these examples bear witness to a collocation *stora* - + *√darṣ* ‘to load’ < Iranian *√darz* - (cf. infra), which finds a close parallel in a passage in Manichaean Parthian, where ‘*stwr’n ‘pack-animals’ and *drznd/*bdrzynd ‘they load’/’they un-load’ are used together, cf. ex. 6.

(6) *cw’γwn kd wd’nm’n’n ky ’d wxybyh wd’[’]n ‘stwr’n ’wt gr’mg[^6^] c wy’g ’w wy’g *drznd ’wt ’bdrzynd[^7^]*

..., just like nomads who, (moving) with their own tents, **pack-animals** and wealth from place to place **load** and **unload** (their stuff). (tr. mine).[^8^]

From Khotanese, one can furthermore cite the phrase *drąysi-barā stūra* (nom. pl.) ‘animals who carry a load’ (Pelliot chinois 5538a; ed. KT II 127.34) and one may also note that example (4) combines Niya Prakrit *stora*- with *nadha*- < Skt. *naddha*- ‘bound’, the word that is usually used in the Niya documents to refer to a burden bound around a transport animal and which can alternatively be denoted as *darṣa*- ‘load, cargo’.

It is because of the etymological identity between Niya Prakrit *stora*- ‘large animal’ and Sanskrit *sthora*- and in view of the collocation *√staura*- ‘animal’ + *√vdarz* ‘to load’ that I agree with Burrow that Sanskrit *sthora*- + *vlard* should be translated as ‘to load the pack-animals’. The fact that *sthora*- is likely borrowed from Bactrian will also become an important argument in section 3, where I will argue that *vlard* is borrowed from a Bactrian cognate of the same Iranian root *√vdarz* - ‘to load’ that underlies Niya Prakrit *vdarṣ*. Before coming back to this, I will first evaluate Kaczyńska’s (2020) recent Indo-European etymology of *lardayati* on its own terms in section 2.

[^5^]: It seems possible to me that we should rather read *darṣeyaṃti* here, but the akṣara in question is somewhat different from a standard (yaṃ), so (yā) cannot be excluded.

[^6^]: Incidentally, some of the Iranian cognates of *gr’mg* ‘wealth, possession’ still mean ‘load, burden’ (e.g. Ossetic Iron *ærgom*/Digoron *ærgon* < *grāma* -; cf. also Vedic Sanskrit *gráma*- ‘heap, multitude’ > Classical Sanskrit ‘village’), which may be relevant for the collocation of *gr’mg* with *stwr’n* in the Parthian passage under discussion.

[^7^]: Incorporating a correction from Henning 1944: 139 fn. 5.

[^8^]: Cf. Durkin-Meisterernst 2014: 335
Having cleared up some philological details in the previous section, we can proceed to a discussion of the etymology of *lardayati*. With regard to this, Mayrhofer (EWAia: 3, 438) only notes that the etymology is “nicht klar”. Recently, Kaczyńska (2020) has argued for explaining *lardayati* as a further trace of a PIE root *lerd-*. This root has been reconstructed on the basis of nominal forms in a couple of Indo-European languages:

- Greek λορδός ‘bent forwards’ < *lerd-ó- with a denominaive verb λορδόομαι ‘to bend oneself supinely’ and other secondary derivatives; Armenian lorcʿ-’kʿ (pl.) ‘spasmodic inward curvature of the upper body’ < *lor(d)sk-i; Welsh lurc m. ‘crooked foot’ < *lor(d)sk-o-; Gaelic loirc f. ‘deformed foot’ < *lor(d)sk-eh₂;-

Old English lort/lyrt ‘crooked’ and Middle High German lorz/lurz ‘left, sly’ < Proto-Germanic *lurt- < PIE *ldr-, with a different ablaut grade, next to Old High German lerz fuoz ‘clubfoot’ with lerz < *lerd-ó- (see Nussbaum 2017: 245). According to Kaczyńska (2020: 419–422), Sanskrit *lardayati* comes from an old causative of this root, i.e. *lor-éi̯e-ti*. The noun *larda-‘load, cargo’, which is presupposed by New Indo-Aryan etyma (see below), comes, according to this analysis, from a τόμος-type nomen actionis *lor-d-o-‘loading’. Kaczyńska furthermore argues that *lerd- would originally have meant ‘to carry a burden’, out of which the Indo-Aryan meaning ‘to load’ could develop. In the other languages, *lerd- would have come to mean ‘to bend backwards due to a heavy burden’ and later ‘to contort, to deform’.

Kaczyńska’s etymology would add an additional example to the list of Sanskrit words where a PIE *l* has possibly been preserved unchanged and could thus be quite important, but how likely is Kaczyńska’s proposal, in fact? First of all, one does not really expect the preservation of Indo-European material in a late source

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9 The non-exhaustive presentation of the evidence which follows is mainly based on a comparison between Pokorny (IEW: 679), Beekes (EDG: 871f.), and Kaczyńska (2020: 418) and is not identical in every detail to Kaczyńska’s overview. For instance, I use *-sk- and not *-sḱ- in my reconstructions, following Lubotsky (2001) in this respect.

10 I leave Latin luscus ‘blind in one eye, one-eyed’ aside, because, as Kaczyńska rightly notes, it is not generally accepted that this form also belongs here.

11 Because of their feminine gender, Kashmiri lad ‘heaped-up load’ and Hindi lād ‘load, burden’ are derived by Kaczyńska from *larda- and so from a PIE nomen rei actae *lord-éh₂ (the notation with a laryngeal is mine). As the meaning of these nouns is so close to their masculine counterparts in other New Indo-Aryan languages, it seems better to me to assume that the feminine gender is secondary and to simply put them together with the other words from *larda-. In this, I follow Turner (1966: 636). Masculine forms derived from *larda- can also have the meaning of a nomen rei actae; cf. e.g. Punjabi ladd ‘load’. 
like the Divyāvadāna and, precisely for this reason, Mayrhofer’s etymological
dictionary makes a clear break between material from Vedic and Classical Sanskrit,
as loanwords are much more frequent than inherited material in the latter, with
some notable exceptions like Classical Sanskrit parut ‘last year’ ~ Greek πέρυο
‘idem’ < PIE *perut(i). Mayrhofer’s etymological
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some notable exceptions like Classical Sanskrit parut ‘last year’ ~ Greek πέρυο
‘idem’ < PIE *perut(i).12 Kaczyńska furthermore assumes that lardayati would be
the only vestige of the original verbal use of the root *lerd-, but as τόμος-type nouns
(for which see now Nussbaum 2017) are generally derived from verbal bases, this
is not too much of a problem and it would also be possible to explain lardayati
as a denominative formation from *larda-,13 which would mean that only *lórd-o-
‘loading’ would have to be reconstructed for PIE.

The main argument against Kaczyńska’s etymology is rather of a semantic
nature. If one compares the meanings of the outcomes of PIE *lerd in the various
branches, it is clear that they have two things in common. On the one hand, these
cognates seem to point to an underlying meaning ‘to curve’. On the other hand, words
referring to various bodily defects are particularly common among them. Armenian lorc‘-k’ (pl.), for instance, translates Ancient Greek ὀπισθότονοι in the
Armenian translation of Plato, Timaeus 84e (cf. Lidén 1906: 46f.), which in this
case refers to a disease that is also called ὀπισθοθετία and which is “a disease
in which the body is drawn back and stiffens, tetanic recurvation” (LSJ⁹: s.v.
emphasis mine).10 Likewise, Greek λορδός and the derived noun λόρδωσις refer
to “a curvature of the spine which is convex in front” (LSJ⁹: s.v.), the antonym
of which is κυφός/κύφωσις, referring to hunchbacks. These types of curvatures
are explicitly described as bodily defects in the Greek medical tradition, given
that the Graeco-Roman physician Galen (Commentary on Hippocrates’ de articulis
18a.493.17; 18a.553.5) defines λόρδωσις as “διαστροφῆ τῆς ῥάχεως εἰς τὸ πρόσω”,
i.e. ‘a forward distortion of the spine’.15 In the same vein, the Germanic and
Celtic evidence generally has to do with the notion ‘crooked’ and contains forms
specifically referring to distorted feet. Semantically, Welsh lurc m. ‘crooked foot’,
Gaelic loirc f. ‘deformed foot’ and Old High German lerz fuoz ‘clubfoot’, a gloss of Latin scaurus ‘idem’ (Köbler 1993: 717), form a particularly close match and the Germanic denominative verb *hurtjan ‘to deceive’ (cf. e.g. Old English belyrtan and Middle High German lürzen) fits a basic meaning ‘crooked’ as well, in that ‘crooked’ can be a synonym of ‘deceitful’ in English. Sanskrit lardayati, on the other hand, has no direct relation to either a meaning ‘to curve’ or to the category of ‘bodily defects’, as a result of which Kaczyńska’s suggestion to reconstruct an earlier meaning ‘to bend backwards due to a heavy burden’ is but an *ad hoc* postulate.

3 A new explanation of lardayati

In view of the problems with Kaczyńska’s etymology, I want to propose in this section a different and, in my opinion, more straightforward etymology of Sanskrit lardayati and its derivatives. lardayati looks like a productive denominative tenth-class verb based on an underlying noun *larda- ‘load, cargo’, which, even though not attested as such in Sanskrit, can be safely reconstructed on the basis of various New Indo-Aryan cognates such as Punjabi ladd ‘load’ or Assamese lād ‘an elephant’s load’ (cf. Turner 1966: 636). As noted above, the late attestation of lardayati/*larda- speaks against them being directly inherited from PIE, because of which we may rather be dealing with a loanword.

In section 1, it has already been hinted at more specifically that the collocation of sthora- and √larda suggests that √larda is a Bactrian loanword, which would also fit well with the typically Bactrian phoneme -l- in √lard. Indeed, a derivative of the Iranian root *√darz, inter alia ‘to load pack-animals’ (e.g. Avestan √daraz; Khotanese √dalś and Pashto √leğ and see EDIV: 62–64), also underlies Niya Prakrit √darṣ (cf. Burrow 1934: 510f.), which can likewise be phrased together with stora-.

Speaking more generally, several parallels can be adduced for borrowings in this semantic field. First of all, Khowar drazēik ‘to load up’ is, just like Niya Prakrit √darṣ, borrowed from a derivative of the Iranian root *√darz (Morgenstierne 1936: 667). In the same vein, Tocharian B perpente* ‘burden, load’ has been convincingly compared to Sogdian prβnty ‘burden’ < *paribandaka- and is thus also Iranian in origin, whatever its exact source (cf. Adams 2013: 426f.). From Armenian, one can cite beṙnawor ‘burdened’, which is calqued on Parthian (or, less likely, Middle Persian) b’rwr ‘loadened, burdened’ < OIr. *bāra-bara- ‘he who carries a load’ (cf. Olsen 1999: 364), which is also indirectly preserved by way of the Elamite title ba- ra-bar-rāš (cf. Tavernier 2007: 417). In addition, Armenian grast ‘beast of burden’ has been identified as a loanword from Parthian grst*, indirectly attested in grstpty < *grasta-pati-, an official in charge of transporting provisions and supplies (Olsen...
1999: 873f.), while, somewhat more speculatively, Armenian *patat ‘camel’s load’ has been argued to come from an Iranian *patāta- (Olsen 1999: 901). Outside the Iranian domain and closer to our times, another example is furnished by English ‘cargo’, which was borrowed in early modern times from Spanish cargo ‘load, burden’.

In view of these considerations, it seems plausible that Sanskrit *larda- ‘load, cargo’ is borrowed from a so-far unattested Bactrian *λιρτο /lirtə/. This *λιρτο would be the regular outcome of the past participle *dṛṣṭa- ‘that which is loaded > load, cargo’ from this same Iranian root *vdarz ‘to load’. *d > l is, of course, a typical feature of Bactrian (e.g. λάδο /lāda/ ‘law’ < *dāta-), and for the second part of the word, one can compare γιρτο /girtə/, past stem of ‘to complain’ < *grṣṭa- (vgarz) and ιρτο /hirtə/, past stem of ‘to set free, to permit etc.’ < *hrṣṭa- (vharz) (cf. Sims-Williams 2007: 207, 272f.). Once borrowed as *larda-, a verb lardayati can easily be made within Indo-Aryan (cf. supra).

Two notes on the phonetic correspondences are still worth making. First, it may initially seem unexpected that Bactrian ι would have been borrowed with Sanskrit a. This is less of a problem, however, when we take the ancient descriptions of the phonetic character of a in Sanskrit into account. Pāṇini and other sources make it clear that a was a more closed vowel (saṃvr̥ta-) than ā, which they describe as more open (vivr̥ta-), from which we may infer that a stood for some kind of schwa (cf. Allen 1953: 57–61 and especially 58 fn. 4). Bactrian ι may, at least in some phonetic environments, represent a central vowel as well (perhaps [i̯]?), as is suggested by a couple of other loanwords where Bactrian ι is substituted by a schwa.17 For instance, Bactrian φρομιγγο /frəmiŋgə/ ‘hope’ is borrowed into Tocharian A/B as pärmaṅk ‘hope’ (e.g. Sims-Williams 2007: 276), where according to the orthographic rules of classical Tocharian B, a stands for /ə́/.

A similar explanation can account for the fact that some of the New Indo-Aryan derivatives of *larda- have the meaning of a nomen actionis, i.e. ‘loading’, seen e.g. in Odia ladā/nadā, whereas I assume *larda- to have been in origin a nomen rei actae, i.e. ‘that which is loaded’. Just as kara- from √kar ‘to do’ can mean ‘doing’, *larda- from a theoretical root *vlard ‘to load’ can have been understood by native speakers to mean ‘loading’ next to ‘load, cargo’.

16 The same is true about Prakrit laddana- ‘load’ < *lardaṇa-, which can easily have been made on the basis of *larda-: cf. e.g. doublets such as kara- and karanya-, inter alia meaning ‘doing, acting’. A similar explanation can account for the fact that some of the New Indo-Aryan derivatives of *larda- have the meaning of a nomen actionis, i.e. ‘loading’, seen e.g. in Odia ladā/nadā, whereas I assume *larda- to have been in origin a nomen rei actae, i.e. ‘that which is loaded’. Just as kara- from √kar ‘to do’ can mean ‘doing’, *larda- from a theoretical root *vlard ‘to load’ can have been understood by native speakers to mean ‘loading’ next to ‘load, cargo’.

17 The vowel should in origin still have been palatal, because of the palatalisation of dental sibilants adjacent to -i- which is suggested by Bactrian in Manichaean script (cf. Sims-Williams 2011). Bactrian ι can also be rendered with -i- in loanwords, e.g. Niya Prakrit -vital-vida ‘lord’ < -βιδο /vida/ < *-pati.
/listugə/, i.e. a derivative of λιστο /lista/ ‘hand’ < *dasta-.\(^{18}\) this would be nicely parallel to Sanskrit *larda- corresponding to Bactrian *λιρτο /lirtə/.

Second, the discrepancy between Bactrian -ρτ- /rt/ and Sanskrit -ṛd- should be briefly addressed because both Bactrian and Sanskrit normally keep -rt- and -ṛd- distinct. Admittedly, no cogent explanation for this peculiarity has presented itself so far, and I will only make a tentative suggestion. Given that Bactrian *λιρτο /lirtə/ may have entered Sanskrit and other Indo-Aryan languages through the intermediary of Gāndhārī,\(^{19}\) an explanation involving Gāndhārī phonetics may not be out of the question. Old Indo-Aryan consonant clusters of the type -ṛC- were regularly affected in Gāndhārī, as in other Middle Indo-Aryan languages, by assimilation of the preconsonantal -r- to the following consonant, resulting in a long version of the second consonant. As a result, clusters with preconsonantal -r- preserved in writing are best seen as historical spellings (see Baums 2009: 162f.). This probably means that /rt/ and /ṛd/ were no longer part of native Gāndhārī phonology, which in turn makes it conceivable that speakers of Gāndhārī unconsciously applied voice assimilation in this type of cluster when pronouncing e.g. Bactrian or Sanskrit. In other words, /rt/ may have become /ṛd/ in the mouths of Gāndhārī speakers, even though the evidence for this is unfortunately meagre.\(^{20}\)

In theory, an alternative solution could be to assume a Bartholomae variant *ḍṛžda- ‘loaded’.\(^{21}\) Although the outcome of *-ṛžd- does not appear to be attested in Bactrian, *ḍṛžda- would probably, through an intermediary *liržda-, eventually yield *λιρδο.\(^{22}\) However, a Bartholomae variant *ḍṛžda- would be without close

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\(^{18}\) This interpretation goes in nuce back to Burrow 1935: 786 and is generally accepted (cf. e.g. Weber 1997: 31). It could not have been known at the time that the Bactrian word for ‘hand’ had this deviating vocalism, but the comparison with pārmanik makes clear that this poses no problem for this etymology.

\(^{19}\) For the role Gāndhārī played as an intermediary language in the adoption of Iranian loanwords by other Indo-Aryan languages, see also Burrow 1973: 389.

\(^{20}\) Circumstantial support may perhaps be found in occasional writings of ⟨rt⟩ instead of ⟨rd⟩ in Gāndhārī. Compare, for instance, loc. sg. caturtiśāmi (CKI: 219) vs. the more common and expected loc. sg. caturdiśē (CKI: 165, 223, 371, 373) < Sanskrit caturdiś- ‘belonging to the four directions’ or the Iranian loanword khakhorda/khakhordi ‘witch’ (reading and interpretation by Burrow (1935: 780f.)); cf. also Bailey 1955: 14 fn. 1), for which a variant spelling khakhorti(ya) with ⟨rt⟩ has turned up in a recently published Niya document (CKI: 880). Note also Niya Prakrit sujinakirta ‘needle-work’ (~ Persian sōzankard ‘idem’), where an Iranian -kird(ə) is rendered with -kirta. However, it cannot be excluded that these spellings have a different explanation.

\(^{21}\) I owe this alternative reconstruction to Sasha Lubotsky (p.c.).

\(^{22}\) This would be parallel to the development of *-ṛśt- to -irt- in a non-/labial environment. A past stem ḫṛṇdo is in fact attested in Bactrian, but in an unclear context, so its meaning and hence etymology remain in doubt (Sims-Williams 2007: 227). As remarked upon by de Blois (2013: 269), *-d- is not changed to -l- in the position after a voiced sibilant or a nasal.
parallel in Bactrian and forms such as γιρτο /γιρτα/ < *giršta- < *gršta- (vgarz) and υιρτο /υιρτα/ < *hṛšta- < *hṛṣṭa- (vharz), already cited above, make it clear that the voiceless variant is the default in Bactrian for these verbal adjectives. This is in accordance with the general tendency of Middle Iranian languages to eliminate these voiced Bartholomae variants (cf. Harmatta 1964: 406–408). So, while *λιρδο < *dr̥žda- is not to be excluded as such, it still seems safer to assume that *lardo- comes from *λιρτο, despite the uncertainty which in that case remains concerning the rendering of -rt-.

4 Some notes on the larger historical context

This new analysis of lardayati also fits well with the compositional history of the Divyāvadāna and the larger historical context. However, an important caveat is necessary here because it can neither be deduced with certainty when, where and by whom the Divyāvadāna was composed, nor can the stories contained within this collection be used as historical sources in any straightforward way. According to the communis opinio, the Divyāvadāna was compiled in the early centuries of our era by Buddhists of the Mūlasarvāstivādin-school in the northwest of South Asia (cf. Rotman 2008–2017: 6, 15–19). A Bactrian loanword is most likely to have entered Indo-Aryan languages in more or less this time frame and at the northwestern borders of South Asia. It would thus not be surprising if a Bactrian borrowing is attested for the first time in precisely the Divyāvadāna.

The larger historical context in which such a borrowing fits has to do with the trade routes connecting Central and South Asia. The Divyāvadāna is an important witness to the connection between Buddhism and mercantilism, as nine of the stories contained in this compilation contain descriptions of caravans and maritime trade. While one cannot confidently say more than that these accounts of trade

23 If Niya Prakrit avalika derives from a Bactrian *αβαλιþκο /əvališkə/ ‘swaddle’ < *upadr̥štaka-, as I have recently argued (Schoubben 2021: 55), *αβαλιþκο would also show the expected form with *-r̥št-. Alternatively, one could also reconstruct a Bactrian *αβολιþκο /avəliškə/, also meaning ‘swaddle’, < *abidr̥štaka-, which would then be an exact cognate of Sogdian βδ’yštk ‘swaddled’. Both /əvališkə/ and /avəliškə/ could have been rendered as avalika in Niya Prakrit.

24 See Rotman 2008–2017, where the reader can easily find references to older literature.

25 It is also possible that the Divyāvadāna was composed slightly later than this period, which is, for instance, the opinion of Neelis (2011: 28 fn. 82), who suggests the third to fifth century. No scholar seems to assume that the Divyāvadāna, which is generally taken to be based on the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādins, was composed before the start of the Christian era. In general, the text probably contains material from different layers which cannot be easily stratified.
are in some way connected to historical reality, one option is that the *Divyāvadāna* mirrors the blooming trade of the Kuṣāṇa empire (cf. Rotman 2009: 12–14).

More significantly, there is secure historical evidence that the complex of trade routes in the northern part of South Asia, which was called the *Uttarāpatha* ‘northern route’ at the time, had been unified under Kuṣāṇa control. At the same time, the *Uttarāpatha* was connected to Bactria, which functioned as the major node for connecting the different trade routes of South and Central Asia, including those nowadays known under the name “Silk Road(s)”.

Because of this, it would not be too remarkable if the Bactrian language had also left its traces in the trade vocabulary of neighbouring languages such as Gāndhārī, Sanskrit or Sogdian, and *λιρτο* would be a good example of this. The same would be true of *st(h)ora*– ‘pack-animal’, if that is indeed borrowed from Bactrian (α)στωρο /<(α)stōra/. Sogdian *srtʿw* ‘caravaneer’ and Chinese *sàbǎo* ‘an official in charge of Iranian rituals’ could be yet another example of the role Bactrian played in the international trade routes of Central Asia, as Sims-Williams (1996: 51 with fn. 37; cf. also 2010: 126) has convincingly derived these from a Bactrian compound *σαρτοπαο(ο) /sārtəpəwə/ ‘protector of the caravan’.

These historical circumstances also explain why *lardayati* is, on the one hand, found in a Buddhist Sanskrit text as the *Divyāvadāna* and in later Middle and New Indo-Aryan languages, but, on the other, not in Classical Sanskrit. The *Uttarāpatha* stretched over much of northern India, splitting itself into at least three main branches connected to one another in Mathurā, a hallmark of Kuṣāṇa influence in South Asia (Neelis 2011: 197–200). As a result, a word like *λιρτο* can easily have been adopted into the various local vernaculars in northern India that form the

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**26** Cf. Neelis 2011: 132: “Kuṣāṇa control of a network of routes between western Central Asia and the northern Indian subcontinent accelerated patterns of cross-cultural exchange, long-distance trade, and religious transmission from the first to third centuries CE,” and Neelis 2011: 144: “From about the second half of the first century CE to the middle of the third century CE, the Kuṣāṇas maintained control over important nodes on a network of overland routes connecting Bactria in western Central Asia with the heartland of northern India. A chain of cities ... linked the multicultural empire of the Kuṣāṇas to the Northern Route (uttarāpatha).” In general, see Neelis 2011: 132–144, 186–204.

**27** Because Sogdian normally forms this type of compound with *-pʿk* < *-pāka* and not with *-pʿw* < *-pāwa(n)*, Sims-Williams infers that *srtʿw* cannot be genuine Sogdian. The first part of the compound is Indo-Aryan *sārtha*-, which has recently (Schwartz 2009) been connected to Semitic words like Arabic *sayyāra(t)*- and Aramaic *šayyārtā*- both ‘caravan’. The Sanskrit word could then go back to a South Arabic cognate of these etyma, folk-etymologically re-analysed as *sa-artha*- ‘having a goal’. This would mean that *sārtha*- reflects the maritime trade with Arabia and the Spice Road there, in a similar way as I argue *larda*- to be a linguistic remnant of the trade with Central Asia and the Silk Road.
basis of the New Indo-Aryan languages containing derivatives of the root √lard. In high-style Classical Sanskrit, a more technical and vernacular word of this type tended to be avoided, whereas the lexicon of Buddhist Sanskrit and Prakrit is more open to including such a word (cf. Burrow 1973: 61f.). One can compare the analogous case of Sanskrit mocaka-‘shoe’ and mocika-‘shoemaker’, also loanwords from Iranian (Bailey 1955: 21). These words and derivatives of them are attested in Buddhist Sanskrit and recorded in lexica, yet not found in Classical Sanskrit sources, but are still found in Prakrit (moca-‘shoe’) and are well attested in New Indo-Aryan languages (e.g. Hindi mocī ‘shoemaker’) (cf. Turner 1966: 597; Burrow 1973: 389).

5 Conclusion

To conclude, it seems best not to derive late Sanskrit lardayati ‘to load’ from a PIE root *lerd-. Rather, lardayati can be interpreted as an inner-Indo-Aryan denominate of *larda- ‘load, cargo’, conceivably borrowed from a Bactrian *λυρτό /lirta/ ‘that which is loaded > load, cargo’ < *dršta-. An important argument in favour of this etymology is the collocation of lardayati with sthora-‘pack-animal’ because of the evidence in favour of an Iranian collocation of *staura- and *vdarz-. If this etymology is accepted, lardayati is another piece of evidence for the role Bactrian played as one of the main languages in the international trade routes which were under the control of the Kuśāṇa dynasty.

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28 Similarly, the Greek loanword paristoma- ‘cushion’ < περιστρώμα is found in more vernacular sources such as the epics and the Arthaśāstra, but not generally in Classical Sanskrit. Iranian loanwords also often only occur in Sanskrit works that are restricted to the more western regions, for instance, in works from Kashmir (e.g. divira-‘scribe’) or in works connected to Harṣa’s court in 7th-century Kannauj (e.g. khola- ‘helmet’ < Bactrian χῶλο* < *xauda-, which is indirectly attested in a personal name, see Sims-Williams 2010: 153).
Abbreviations


Bibliography


