

Tocharian A *ṣurm*, B *ṣarm* ‘cause’ and A *ṣul*, B *ṣale* ‘mountain’

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§1. As is well-known, the correspondence between Tocharian A *u* and B *a / ä* is generally due to the East Tocharian labialization of a reflex of a Proto-Tocharian (PT) *ə* by a labiovelar stop, *k^w*, which is contiguous to the *ə* or separated from it by an *n*: PT *ə* > A *u* / __ (*n*)*k^w*, *k^w*__. The PT *k^w* may reflect an Indo-European labiovelar or go back to a combination of a palatovelar with *w*. The clearest examples of this labialization rule are:¹

- A *tuñk*, B *tañkw* ‘love’ < PT **tənk^w* < PIE **tṅg^w*-;
 A *ṣuñk*, B *ṣañkw* ‘throat’ < PT **ṣənk^w* < PIE **seṅg^w*-;
 A *yuk*, B *yakwe* ‘horse’ < PT **yək^we* < PIE **H₁ek^uo-*;
 A *puklā*, B *pikwala* pl. ‘year’ < PT **p’ək^wəla* < PIE **pek^w*-;
 A *kumnäṣ*, B *känmaṣṣäm* 3sg. ‘to come’ < PT **k^wəm-* < PIE **g^wm-*;
 A *pukmäṣ* impv.act. ‘to come’ < PT **pə-k^wəm-*;
 A *kuryar*, B *karyor* ‘trade’ < PT **k^wəryor* < PIE **k^wriH₂-ōr*.

There are but two words with A *u*, B *a/ä*, where no labiovelar seems to be at stake: A *ṣurm*, B *ṣarm* ‘cause’ and A *ṣul*, B *ṣale* ‘mountain’. The current analyses of these words cannot account for the vocalism of East Tocharian, so that *ṣurm* / *ṣarm* and *ṣul* / *ṣale* are considered exceptions (cf. Krause – Thomas 1960: 49). However, the similar anlaut of *ṣurm* / *ṣarm* and *ṣul* / *ṣale* suggests that the unusual vocalism has the same origin, which has somehow escaped the notion of scholars.

As a matter of fact, the initial *ṣ-* may reflect not only palatalized PIE **s-*, but also the cluster **sk^(w)*- in the position before **ē* (for an example cf. Hilmarsson 1988: 37 on the etymology of B *ṣewi*, pl. *ṣewauna* ‘pretext’ < **skēu(H)-*). The labialized cluster **sk^we-* must regularly yield A *ṣu-*, B *ṣa-* through the intermediate stages **ṣṣ^wə-* > PT **ṣṣ^wə-* (for the details see below, §4). In the following I intend to show that for both words there are indeed etymologies which involve this initial cluster and which are preferable to the earlier ones.

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¹ The less clear cases unmistakably involve a labiovelar, too, cf.:

A *suk*, B *sakw* ‘happy, happiness’ < PT **sək^w*- (← Skt. *sukha-*) (Kortlandt 1988: 81);
 A *ṣukṣ-*, B *kwaṣ-* / *k^uṣ-* ‘village’ < PT **ṣək^wəṣ* < PIE **sek^w-us-ī* (Van Windekens 1976: 464f.);
 A *kursär*, B *kursar*, *kwarsär* ‘mile, vehicle’, Skt. *yojana-* < PT **k^wərsər* < PIE ?;
 AB *kur-* ‘to grow old, weak’ < PT **k^wər-* < PIE *(*d^h*)*g^{hw}er-* (Hilmarsson 1986).

§2. A *ṣurm*, B *ṣarm* ‘cause’.

From Thomas 1964 we can gather the following relevant information:

A *ṣurm* (*ṣrum*) a., Pl. III,1 *ṣurmant*. The ablative *ṣurmaṣ* and the adj. *ṣurmaṣi* (+ a hapax *ṣārmaṣi*) serve as a postposition ‘because of’, ‘for the sake of’.

B *ṣarm* (*ṣärm*) a., Pl. II,1 *ṣarmana* (*ṣārmana*) or II,2 *ṣārmanma*. The perlative of this word (*ṣarmtsa*) is also used as a postposition in the meaning ‘because of’.

These forms suggest that the Tocharian word reflects an IE neuter in **-mṇ*, which is in agreement with the e-vocalism in the root.

The current etymology, going back to Pedersen 1941: 62, connects A *ṣurm*, B *ṣarm* with Lat. *sermo* ‘conversation, discussion’.² This etymology, leaving the vocalism of Toch. A unexplained, is also semantically troublesome. Van Windekens’ (1976: 466) link ‘discours suivi, propos’ → ‘cause, motif, raison’ does not substantially clarify the matter.

Consultation of Buck’s *Dictionary of Selected Synonyms* (p. 1242f.) shows that in Indo-European languages the word for ‘cause’ is either a secondary lexical development of words for ‘fault’ and ‘legal strife, charge’, or of words for ‘matter, material’, mostly derived from a root for ‘to do, act’, as in Slavic (Russ. *príčína* from *čínít’* ‘to do, cause’), Germanic (Olc. *éni* ‘stuff, material, subject, cause’, OE *intinga* ‘matter, affair, cause’), or Sanskrit (*kāraṇa-* ‘cause’ from the caus. to $\sqrt{kr-}$ ‘to do, make’).

The Sanskrit parallel makes it probable that the Tocharian word is a derivative of the same root, PIE $*\sqrt{(s)k^{wer-}}$ ‘to do, make’. For the labiovelar in the root cf. MW. *paraf* ‘to produce, procure’, Lith. *kuriù*, *kùrti* ‘to create, found’, Latv. (*ùguni*) *kuĩrt* ‘to kindle (fire)’, OPr. *kùra* ‘baute’. I believe that the Tocharian words reflect $*sk^{wer-mṇ}$ and are thus identical (except for the movable *s*) with Skt. *kárman-* n. ‘action, activity, result’, with a typical semantic development to ‘cause’. For the phonetics see below, §4.

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§3. A *ṣul*, B *ṣale* ‘mountain’.

Thomas 1964 provides the following grammatical information:

A *ṣul* m. (V,1), derivatives: *ṣuliñc* adj. ‘mountainous’, *ṣulyi* adj. ‘of the mountains’.

B *ṣale* m. (V,1), gen. *ṣlentse*, derivative *ṣl(y)iye* adj. ‘of the mountains’.

Van Windekens (1976: 465) connects these words with Lat. *silva* ‘forest’, but in view of the vocalism he is forced to postulate two different pre-forms for the Tocharian words: A < $*selu-$, but B < $*selo-$, which is hardly attractive. Moreover, the *u*-stem for A does not account for the vocalism (cf. fn. 2) either. The same holds for the old etymology, deriving *ṣul* / *ṣale* from the root $*suel-$ ‘to swell’, which is difficult from the semantic point of view, too.

² Van Windekens (1976: 466) posits IE $*sermu-$ and explains A *u* by the *u*-umlaut. However, all his other examples of the *u*-umlaut concern a labiovelar.

I believe that *ṣul* / *ṣale* must be derived from the IE root $\sqrt{sk^{(w)}el-}$ ‘to cut’. Semantically, this fits perfectly, cf. OCS *skala* ‘rock, stone’ (< **skōl(H)o-* with lengthened grade, as follows from the accentuation of Russ. *skalá*, acc. *skalú*), and, probably, Mlr. *sceillec* ‘rock’ and Goth. *hallus* ‘rock’ (< **kol-nu-*), OIc. *hallr* ‘rock, stone’ (< **kol-no-*), all derivatives of the same root.

However, it is difficult to demonstrate that the root in question has a labiovelar. It must be borne in mind that already in PIE palatovelars and labiovelars merged into a velar *-k-* after **s-* (cf. Meillet 1894: 294ff. and Steensland 1973: 30ff.). Hence, the cluster **sk^w-* is only possible if the labiovelar was reintroduced from forms where it was not preceded by an *s*. This could occur in roots with the so-called movable *s* (with the alternation **sk-* : **k^w-*) or in zero grade of the root $\sqrt{sek^w-}$.

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As to the root $\sqrt{sk^{(w)}el-}$, there are several traces of a labiovelar: Lith. *kuliù*, *kùlti* ‘to thrash, thresh’ < **k^wIH-* and, possibly, MW. *chwalu* ‘to disperse’, cf. MW. *chwedl* ‘tale, fable’ < **sk^wetlon* (Morris Jones 1913: 159), Gr. σκύλλω ‘schinde, zerreiße’ (with the same irregular *-v-* as in γυναικός). In Tocharian, this Indo-European root may be represented by AB *kul-* ‘to cease, diminish’ (inf. B *k^ulātsi*, pr.III A *kulatār*, B *kuletār* < PT **k^w(ə)letr*, etc.) < PIE **k^wIH-*.

Prof. Winter recently told me that, in his opinion, the West Tocharian adverb *oṣ(ṣa)le* ‘in the evening’ is derived from the word for ‘mountain’. This is corroborated by the context of several unpublished texts, where *oṣ(ṣa)le* rather has the meaning ‘in the mountains, in the north’ which is likewise possible elsewhere (K.T. Schmidt, p.c.). This etymology is very attractive and provides strong confirmation of the proposed derivation of A *ṣul*, B *ṣale* from PIE **sk^welo-* because it requires an initial cluster containing a labial sound in the word for ‘mountain’. For *oṣṣale* we must then reconstruct PT **e(n)ṣṣ^wəle*³ (< *(*H*₁)*n-sk^welom*).

§4. The PIE **sk^we-* must have undergone palatalization in Proto-Tocharian: **ṣṣ^wə-* > **ṣṣ^wə-*, cf. the verbal suffix PIE **-ske-* > PT **-ṣṣə-* > A *-ṣ-*, B *-ṣṣ-*. As to the labial element, one must assume that in East Tocharian it was preserved in *ṣ^w*, but lost in *ṣ^w*, as can be seen from A *ṣām* ‘wife’ < PT **ṣ^(w)əna* < PIE **g^wenH₂*, or A *ṣāmlune* abstr. ‘to come’ < PT **ṣ^(w)əṃ-* < PIE **g^wem-*, without labialization. This assumption is phonetically understandable because labialization is more easily retained with "back" consonants: velars, gutturals, etc. than with "front" consonants.

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Note added in proof:

For the meaning and attestations of Toch. B *oṣṣale* and A *ṣulīnc*, cf. now W. Winter, Cardinal points and other directions in Tocharian A and B, *Languages and Cultures, Studies in Honor of Edgar C. Polomé*, edited by M. Yazayery and W. Winter (Berlin, New York, Amsterdam 1988).

³ For the labialization of PT **c* to B *o* cf. B *okt* ‘eight’ < PT **ek^wt* < **ektu* < PIE **oktō*; B *orkamo* ‘dark’ < PT **erk^wəmo* < **H₁rg^w-mōn(ts)*, etc.

References

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