

The simplification of the Archaic Tocharian B clusters *ltk* and *rtk* – with a note on the vowel assimilation in Late Tocharian B *oñkorño*¹

Michaël Peyrot

In the Tocharian B clusters *rtk* and *ltk*, the *t* was lost after the archaic stage, as for example in *speltke* ‘zeal’. This change is reminiscent of the older variant *tken* of *kem* ‘earth’, which appears to have lost its initial *t*- already during the archaic stage. The vowel assimilation in Late Tocharian B *oñkorño* ‘porridge’ for classical *oñkarño* can be formulated as a sound change thanks to two further examples.

It is well known that the frequent Tocharian B word *speltke* ‘zeal’ is often attested as *spelke*, without the *t*. Below, I will try to show that the loss of *t* in the cluster *ltk* is a regular sound change, parallel to the loss of *t* in the cluster *rtk*. The latter sound change is attested in more, but less well known words. The loss of *t* in these clusters is perhaps to be compared with the loss of initial *t*- in *kem* ‘earth’, for which an intriguing older variant *tken* is now attested. A note about the vowel assimilation in Late Tocharian B *oñkorño* ‘porridge’ is added.

1 This article is adapted from parts of “Notes on variation and change in Tocharian B” (presented at *Farewell symposium Michiel de Vaan*, 19 June 2014, Leiden). The same topics were also treated in “On possible links of the chronology of Tocharian B with archaeology and art history” (presented at *Kucha on the Silk Road: Art, Archaeology and Literature of the Buddhist Culture in the Kingdom of Kucha*, 12 May 2015, Munich).

1 The sound change *ltk* > *lkk*, *lk*

There seems to be only one lexical item in which this sound change can be observed: *speltke*, *spelke* ‘zeal’. The Tocharian A cognate² *spaltäk* confirms that the variant with *t* is original. The textual distribution, too, clearly shows that *speltke* is the older form and *spelke* is a later variant. Interestingly, the older form is found in archaic and only rarely in classical texts, while the later form is rare in archaic texts and frequent in classical texts. This adds the sound change Archaic Tocharian B *ltk* > Classical Tocharian B *lk* to the rare phonological features separating the archaic from the classical stage (Peyrot 2008).

The word *speltke* and its derivatives are frequent. I have found the following attestations:

speltke and derivatives:

- arch.: IOL Toch 263 a2, IOL Toch 285 a5, Or. 8212/163 a1, PK AS 12G a5, SI B 113 b6, THT 132 b6, THT 140 a6, THT 342 b6, THT 344b a1, THT 1563a b1, THT 1585a a2, THT 1595f a2, THT 1860 b5, THT 3214a a1
- arch.~class.: THT 333b5
- class.: IOL Toch 764 b3 (but fragm.), PK AS 7H a4, PK NS 25+26 a5–b1
- fragm.: THT 2274 a1

spelkke and derivatives:

- arch.: THT 1180 a3
- class.: IOL Toch 11 b7, IOL Toch 197 a2, IOL Toch 274 a4, IOL Toch 744 a4, PK AS 6B b6, PK AS 16.2 b1, PK NS 55 b2, THT 30 b5, THT 305 a2, THT 590 b4, THT 600 a1, THT 1573j a4, THT 1597b a3
- late: THT 581 a3

2 Possibly, the Tocharian A word has been borrowed independently from Old Iranian. In any case, the sound correspondences are regular, and as far as these are concerned, the words could be cognate.

spelke and derivatives:

- arch.: IOL Toch 39 a5, PK AS 12Cb4, THT 262 a4, THT 1449e a5, THT 2959 a4
- arch.~class.: THT 203 b3
- class.: IOL Toch 12 b5, IOL Toch 221 b5, IOL Toch 308 b2, PK AS 5C b5, PK AS 7E b1, PK AS 17E a2, THT 3 a6, THT 12 b6–7, THT 15 a7, THT 17 b1, THT 23 b2, THT 27 b5, THT 28 a3, THT 31 b3, THT 32 a5, THT 42 b2, THT 169 a4, THT 204 a3, THT 537 b2, THT 542 b5, THT 575 b6, THT 1106 a4, THT 1415c a2, THT 1537e a1
- late: G-Su 2, G-Su 15, G-Su 31, G-Su 38, THT 1404h a3 (but fragm.), THT 1574 b3,
- fragm.: IOL Toch 629 a4

The forms with *t* are clearly archaic, and those without *t* are classical or late. Forms without *t* do occur in archaic texts 6 times, but forms with *t* occur only 3 times in classical texts, which is highly significant for such a frequent word. Since there are no other lexical items with *lkk*,³ the spelling with *lkk* must be significant, preserving a trace of the earlier *t*. However, I have not been able to find a distribution between the forms with *lkk* and the more frequent forms with *lk*.

2 The sound change *rtk* > *rkk*, *rk*

This sound change, clearly parallel to the preceding, is shown by more words, but these are all less well attested: *mǎrtka*- ‘shave’; *kǎrtkǎlle* ‘pool, swamp’; *kǎrtk*-^{caus.} ‘gush out, rise, sprout?’; **kǎrtka*- ‘sprout’; *tskertkane* ‘calves of the leg’; *artkiye* ‘in abundance’.

3 THT 602 b2 *mā walkke* ‘not for long’ is clearly a wrong spelling because the word *walke* is well known and cannot have had *ltk*.

2.1 *mər̥tka-* ‘shave’

The verb *mər̥tka-* ‘shave’ is attested only a few times, but the textual distribution clearly shows that the forms with *t* belong to the archaic stage and those without *t* to the classical and late stages. The Tocharian A cognate *mär̥tkā-* confirms that the *t* was original:

with *rtk*

- arch.: THT 365 a5 (*mä*)*rtkā(t)e*, THT 1859 a3 *mär̥tkantr*
 fragm.: THT 3080 a3 *mär̥tkausai*

with *rk*

- class.: THT 309 a4 *markalñ(esa)*
 late: Cp 35.46 *markasi*, Cp 38.41 (*ma*)*r(ka)si*

2.2 *kär̥tkälle* ‘pool, swamp’

For *kär̥tkälle* ‘pool, swamp’, the distribution is not that neat. There is only one form with *t*, from a classical text, and there are no archaic attestations. The Tocharian A cognate *kär̥tkāl* ‘fountain’ shows that the *t* was original (cf. Pinault 2006: 109–110):

with *rtk*

- class.: PK AS 15A a5 *kär̥tkällemem̄*

with *rkk*

- class.: PK NS 107 b4 *kär̥kkälle*, THT 8 a4 *kär̥kkällemem̄*, THT 408 a7 *kär̥kkälle(n)e*

with *rk*

- late: THT 331 a1 *kär̥källene*

2.3 *kär̥tk-*^{caus.}: *kekär̥tkor̥ṣṣe* and *kär̥tkäṣṣäm̄*

Two verbal forms with *rtk* are both from archaic texts: PK AS 12K b5 *kekär̥tkor̥ṣṣe*, THT 259 a1 *kär̥tkäṣṣäm̄*. Unfortunately the meaning is

unclear. On the basis of the connection with *kärtekälle* ‘pool, swamp’, Malzahn (2010: 575) and Adams (2013: 173) opt for ‘decay, moulder’. The passages themselves are difficult to interpret. In my view, the passage in which PK AS 12K b5 *kekärtkorṣṣe* is found cannot refer to “the Bodhisattva’s encounter with the dead on the vehicle”, as suggested by Malzahn (l.c.). Rather, it seems to be part of a positive description of perfumes and splendour, and ‘blossom’ would be an option. This meaning is backed up by the possible connection with *kārka-* ‘sprout’, for which see immediately below. My earlier suggestion (2013: 733) to set up the verb as *kärtk-*^{caus.} ‘gush out, rise?’ is based on the same connection with *kärtekälle* ‘pool, swamp’, but takes the meaning of TA *kärtekāl* ‘fountain’ to be primary.

2.4 *kārkoṣ* ‘sprouted’

In my view, Adams (2013: 172; and already 1999: 162) has rightly posited a verb *kārka-* ‘sprout’ for IOL Toch 305 a4 (class.) *kārkoṣ* ‘*virūdha*, sprouted’, different from the better attested *kārka-* ‘rob’. Since *kārkoṣ* is from a classical text, it is possible that the original root shape was **kärtk-*, which allows a connection with TA *kärtekāl* ‘fountain’, as well as with *kärtk-*^{caus.} ‘sprout, rise, gush forth (?)’ (Peyrot 2013: 733).⁴ The existence of two homonymous roots *kārka-*, at least from the classical stage onwards, invites to reconsider some attestations traditionally connected with *kārka-* ‘rob’.

THT 26 b6

/// *s* *entwe* *kärkän**te*-*ne* *kle*(*śanma*) ///

‘raubten ihm dann die Trübungen’, or ‘passions sprouted for him?’

THT 1419g a3

waiptāyar *kārkoṣ* *tākam*

‘if they have been robbed apart/ if they have sprouted apart’

4 Formally, a connection with Ved. *chṛṇatti* ‘vomit, eject’ and Khot. *āsal-*, *pasal-* ‘besmear’ < **skerd-* (Lubotsky 2001: 35; LIV2: 547, **skerd-*) is possible, but the reconstruction of this root is problematic because of its limited distribution.

This example remains difficult, but ‘rob’, to say the least, is not in any way obvious.

THT 115 b2

/// *k· meṃ kārkkauwwa ke – tā ·iyemṃ·* ///

The context is hopelessly fragmentary, but in this case the spelling *rkk* suggests appurtenance to *kārka-* ‘sprout’ (< **kārtka-*) rather than *kārka-* ‘rob’.

2.5 *tskertkane* ‘calves of the leg’

The word *tskertkane* ‘calves of the leg’ is attested, according to my search, only three times. The variant with *t* is from a classical text and the variant without *t* from a late text:

with *rtk*

THT 74 a4, a5 *tskertkane*

with *rkk*

THT 1576f b2 *tskerkkane*

2.6 *artkye* ‘in abundance’ and *arkiye*

In view of the soundlaw *rtk* > *rk*, it is to be expected that *artkye* ‘in abundance’ (Adams 2013: 25) has a variant *arkiye*. A word of this shape is indeed attested, and can be found as *arkiye* in Adams (2013: 24–25), who translates it as ‘obligatory’ based on a supposed connection with *ārka** ‘obligation’.⁵ Unfortunately, the passages in which *arkye*, *arkiye* occurs are largely unclear, but with this soundlaw in mind, there is no longer any compelling reason to keep *artkye* apart from *arkye*.

with *rtk*

PK AS 7J a3 *artkye* ‘in abundance’

5 This word, attested as *arkañ*, has been interpreted quite differently by Pinault as ‘in the dark; darkness’ (2014).

with *rk*

THT 176 b2

śikṣapātāntse śpā arkiye putkalñe nesalle śai

‘... and of the śikṣāpada there would have been an abundant portion’
(?)

THT 373d = THT 1596a a3

/// (ka)rsoy arkye pelai(kn)e ///

‘he would know the law in abundance (?)’

Cf. further THT 3987 a5 *arkye* or *arkyena* in unclear context.

This is not the place to discuss the verb *arcāññ-* ~ *arccāññ-* ‘have to’, of which the semantics, the morphology and the etymology are notoriously difficult. However, I would like to note that *arc*^o may be derived from a palatalised variant of *artk-*.

2.7 Final notes

I could find only two other occurrences of the spelling *rkk*, both most certainly without etymological significance: THT 295 a3 *tsetsärkkoṣ*, THT 600 a3 *yärkkessu*. It seems to me that, just like *lkk*-spellings, *rkk*-spellings are significant indeed, pointing in principle to original *rtk*.

One might expect a parallel development of *ntk* to *nk*, but this is not attested. In the word *sāñtike* ‘medicine’, this cluster develops to *tk* instead. I could not establish a clear textual distribution between forms with and without the nasal (Peyrot 2008: 66).

3 Archaic Tocharian B *tken*

In his article in this volume, Athanaric Huard convincingly analyses THT 1859 b2 *tkentsa* and THT 1859 b6 *tkentsa-k* as the perlocative singular of *kem* ‘earth’, following Adams (2013: 205) and Ogihara (2015: 125). The initial *t-* is historically expected, because of the Tocharian A cognate *tkam* ‘earth’,

and, of course, because of its Indo-European etymology. Nevertheless, these forms are striking, because the word for ‘earth’ is well attested in Archaic Tocharian B as *kem*, and these are, so far, the only occurrences of the apparently “very” archaic variant *tkem*. As recognised by Adams, it is even more striking, not to say problematic, that *tkentsa* occurs next to THT 1859 b1 *kenne* in the same fragment. Thanks to Huard’s investigation, we can now add THT 1599f b3 *kem* and THT 274 a2 *kentsa*, which are from different leaves of the same manuscript.

According to Melanie Malzahn (apud Adams l.c.), *tkentsa* occurs phrase-internally after a vowel, and *kenne* phrase-initially. Such a distribution would make sense, and it could explain why *tken* is such a rare variant of *kem*. Indeed, THT 1859 b2 *tkentsa* and THT 1859 b6 *tkentsa-k* are clearly found in the middle of a clause after a vowel, and in Huard’s analysis, THT 1859 b1 *kenne* is the beginning of a clause, even if it is found in the middle of a verse line. THT 274 a2 *kentsa* is found at the beginning of a verse line and a sentence (Pinault 2008: 269–270). THT 1599f b3 *kem* is too fragmentary to assess.

The change of initial *tk-* to *k-* is clearly reminiscent of the loss of *t* in the clusters *ltk* and *rtk*, but not exactly parallel, since *ltk* and *rtk* are well attested in Archaic Tocharian B, while *tk-* is a rare variant of regular *k-* at this stage. Also, it is questionable whether the changes are phonologically parallel, since this would require an unlikely syllabification of *ltk* and *rtk* as *l.tk* and *r.tk*. Finally, as is well known, a new *tk-* arose in Tocharian B that remained throughout Classical Tocharian B and was simplified to *k-* only at the late stage, as exemplified by *tkācer* ‘daughter’, Late Tocharian B *kācer* (Peyrot 2008: 61). It is more likely, therefore, that Archaic Tocharian B *tkentsa* did not lose its *t-* by sound law, but by analogy. The *t-*less forms, which themselves had come about by sound law before the attestation of Tocharian B, were apparently generalised during the archaic stage.

4 The vowel assimilation in Late Tocharian B *oñkorño* ‘porridge’

The vowel assimilation in Late Tocharian B *oñkorño* ‘porridge’ from Classical Tocharian B *oñkarño* was noted by Winter (1988: 785). Although this assimilation is clearly a sound change, it was treated as a lexical change in Peyrot (2008: 172–173) because there was only one example. Later I identified two further examples (Peyrot 2014: 157): *ompalskoññe* ‘meditation’ > Late TB *ompolskoññe*, and *postanont*, obl.sg.m. of *postanu* ‘later’ > Late TB *postonont*. This sound change can now be analysed as a regular vowel assimilation of original *o_a_o* to *o_o_o*. In all three attested instances, the vowel *a* is /ǎ/. Examples are rare because the sequence *o_a_o* was rare.⁶

ompolskoññe is attested in four clearly late texts: THT 296 b6 *mpolskoññe* (= THT 297.3 b7 *ompolskoññe*); THT 586 7; SHT 2250+2054a r.y gen.sg. *ompols(k)o(ññetse)* (glossing gen.sg. *samādher*; Peyrot 2014: 156); U 102 r3 (= Bil 268) <’wmpwls/> *ompols(koññe)* (Pinault 2008: 105 with fn. 26). The fact that *ompalskoññe* is also found in late texts, e.g. THT 112 b5, suggests that this change occurred “very” late, or, more probably, became acceptable in the written language relatively late. Unprefixed *palsko* ‘thought; mind’ is never attested as ***polsko*, obviously because it lacks the necessary preceding syllable with *o*.

postonont is cited by Adams (2013: 436), without press mark, as a variant of regular *postanont*. Ogihara Hirotoši has kindly pointed out to me that he may refer to SHT 1656 b2 *posn[o]nomt* (Ogihara 2011: 27; with *n* for *t* in the akṣara <sn[o]>). The text is clearly late, compare *śikañce* ‘tenth’ in the same line, for *śkañce* with *ə*-epenthesis in #*śk*- and *i*-colouring after *ś*-. On the same fragment there are two further attestations with medial *a*: *postanont*. In view of the alternation in the paradigm of late *oñkorño*, which originally still had an obl.sg. *oñkarñai* besides, it may be supposed that the paradigm of *postanu* also became irregular: nom.sg.m. *postanu*, obl.sg.m. *postonont* etc., nom.sg.f. *postanuntsa**, pl.f. *postononta**.

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6 I have not found a late *okoro** for *okaro* ‘sweet flag / aloë’; *olyopo** for *olyapo* ‘more’; *olyopotse** for *olyapotstse* ‘very’; nor *orkomo** for *orkamo* ‘dark’.

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