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Traces of language contact in Niya Prakrit: Bactrian and other foreign elements

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Propositions appended to the dissertation

Traces of language contact in Niya Prakrit: Bactrian and other foreign elements

Niels Schoubben

1. Most formerly identified Iranian loanwords in Niya Prakrit and several so far etymologically obscure words are loans from Bactrian.
2. The orthographic idiosyncrasies of the Kharoṣṭhī script complicate the identification of regular sound substitutions in the case of the Bactrian loanwords in Niya Prakrit.
3. Bactrian influence on Niya Prakrit is not limited to loanwords but also manifests itself in morphosyntactic borrowings.
4. Burrow's hypothesis of Tocharian substrate influence on Niya Prakrit lacks compelling proof, though, ironically, Niya Prakrit was influenced by a language spoken in ancient Τοχαροιστανο 'Tocharistan', i.e. Bactrian.
5. Niya Prakrit descends from a Gāndhārī dialect used for administration in the Kuṣāṇa empire, comparable to how the Achaemenids adopted Aramaic as a chancellery idiom.
6. Since Indian and Iranian languages share a common ancestor and have been in contact for over three millennia, more scholars should acquaint themselves with both Indology and Iranian studies.
7. Investigations into the historical contact linguistics of lesser-known languages like Gāndhārī and Bactrian are best modelled after similar studies on better-researched languages like Greek and Latin.
8. The British usage of "comparative philology" to denote "historical linguistics" nicely illustrates that the study of languages with a long written history cannot be separated from the study of texts.
9. As both require the combination of detailed linguistic knowledge and strict methodology with creativity and inspiration, etymology and textual criticism are partly a form of science, partly a form of art.
10. Universities should offer more courses on the history of scholarship.

11. Excessive use of laptops and smartphones has dramatically reduced students' appreciation for the beauty and value of writing by hand.
12. Niya document CKD 272—where we read that 'finance officers and office holders of the wine department have wasted all this wine'—suggests that there has always been a danger of bureaucratic corruption.