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# Notes and observations on newly published Bactrian documents from Southern Afghanistan

**Sims-Williams, Nicholas:** *Bactrian Documents IV: Documents from South of the Hindukush, I* (with a contribution by Frantz Grenet). London: School of Oriental and African Studies 2025 (= Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum Part II: Inscriptions of the Seleucid and Parthian Periods and of Eastern Iran and Central Asia, vol. VI/4). £ 80.00. ISBN 978-1-916762-02-2.

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In an article from 2023, Nicholas Sims-Williams published a preliminary edition and translation of “five of the most legible and comprehensible letters” from “[a] group of some twenty-nine Bactrian letters” belonging to “a private collection in London”.<sup>1</sup> The recently published *Bactrian Documents IV* (henceforth: BD IV), a continuation of *Bactrian Documents I–III* (BD I–III),<sup>2</sup> is a full-scale edition of all of these letters.<sup>3</sup> Because Sims-Williams managed to join some fragments (see BD IV: p. 1), the number of separate texts now amounts to twenty-six letters, which have been given the signatures **ka–kz**. Also incorporated into BD IV is a lightly revised edition of the Bactrian contract **Uv**;<sup>4</sup> this text was included because it probably hails from the same region as **ka–kz**, i. e. Southern Afghanistan.

The core of the book consists of five sections: (i) an introduction discussing linguistic, philological, and historical topics (pp. 1–13); (ii) the actual edition (pp. 15–53); (iii) a study of the epistolary formulae recurrently encountered in Bactrian letters (pp. 55–86); (iv) a commentary on the edited texts (pp. 87–101); and (v) a glossary with etymologi-

cal discussions of Bactrian words (pp. 103–132). The reader will additionally find a preface (p. ix); a list of abbreviations (p. xi); a bibliography (pp. xiii–xvii); a catalogue of the documents that are edited in the book with notes on their physical format (pp. xix–xxii); an *index verborum*, including a reverse index of Bactrian forms (pp. 133–139); and photographic reproductions of the edited texts (pp. 141–143; Plates I–LXII).<sup>5</sup>

The introduction (pp. 1–13) gives the reader a clear idea of the significance and the most remarkable features of the Bactrian letters **ka–kz**.<sup>6</sup> Except for the Buddhist text **zd**,<sup>7</sup> these letters are so far the only Bactrian texts written on birchbark, and they are relatively early, being datable to the late fourth century CE (see pp. 2–3). They contain several Indian loanwords (see below) and Indian personal names like  $\sigma\alpha\nu\sigma\iota\delta\delta\sigma$  ← *Saṃsiddha*- (see p. 3). Their language attests some dialectal forms (pp. 3–4), e. g.  $\gamma\sigma\sigma\beta\sigma\gamma\sigma$  ‘prince’ < \**wisah puθra-ka*- with fortition of \**w-* to Bactr.  $\gamma$ - (contrast  $\sigma\sigma\beta\sigma\gamma\sigma$  ‘idem’; see also below).<sup>8</sup> One encounters orthographic peculiarities (pp. 5–6) like the (inconsistent) use of < $\sigma\sigma$ > to write /ts/ (also /tś/? ) as the outcome of OIr. \*č, e. g.  $\rho\omega\sigma\sigma$  next to  $\rho\omega\sigma\sigma$  ‘day’ < \**raučah*-. And the texts also contain hitherto unattested morphosyntactic features (pp. 6–7): for instance, a 1sg. form in - $\eta\delta\sigma$  ( $\alpha\zeta\sigma$  ...  $\beta\eta\eta\delta\sigma$  ‘I ought’ in **kh**7, 8) that seems to be cognate with the Sogdian

1 N. Sims-Williams, “A new collection of Bactrian letters on birchbark (with an additional note by Frantz Grenet)”, in: *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 31 (2023), pp. 135–144. The quotations are from p. 135.

2 N. Sims-Williams, *Bactrian documents from Northern Afghanistan, I: Legal and economic documents* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), London 2012. N. Sims-Williams, *Bactrian documents from Northern Afghanistan, II: Letters and Buddhist texts*, London 2007. N. Sims-Williams, *Bactrian documents from Northern Afghanistan, III: Plates*, London 2012.

3 Revised versions of the five letters published in the 2023 article have been included as well.

4 Document **Uv** had previously been published in N. Sims-Williams, “A Bactrian document from Southern Afghanistan? (with an appendix by Étienne de la Vaissière)”, in: *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 25 (2015 [2011]), pp. 39–53.

5 I noticed only few typographical errors: p. xvi: “Alram *et al.* 2010: 219–27” for “Alram *et al.* 2010: 203–11”; p. xix third line up from the bottom: “Razz-shams” for “Razz-shamsh”; p. 3: “to be be repeated” for “to be repeated”; p. 4 bottom of the page: “in same ways” for “in some ways”; p. 27 note i: “reafing” for “reading”; p. 30 note d: “altered o altered to” for “altered o to”; p. 31 note d: “detatched” for “detached”; p. 58: “ $\sigma\sigma\beta\sigma\gamma\sigma$ ” for “ $\sigma\sigma\beta\sigma$   $\epsilon\iota\rho\alpha\nu\sigma$ ” (cf. p. 19; p. 20 note c); p. 119b s. v.  $\nu\sigma\beta\alpha\rho\sigma$  / p. 130b s. v.  $\beta\alpha\sigma\sigma\alpha\delta\sigma$ : “Neils” for “Niels”.

6 Pages 11–13 contain a discussion of document **Uv**.

7 Edited in N. Sims-Williams, “Two late Bactrian documents”, in: M. Alram *et al.*, *Coins, art and chronology II. The first millennium C.E. in the Indo-Iranian borderlands*, Vienna 2010, pp. 203–211, at pp. 203–205. A high-quality picture of document **zd** is now available online at <https://www.invisible-east.org/corpus/10/?tab=details&textfolio=19>.

8 Some Iranian names attested in Gāndhārī sources provide further evidence for the dialectal fortition of OIr. \**w-* to Bactr.  $\gamma$ -; see N. Schoubben, “The Iranian sound change \**w-* > \* $\gamma w$ - in the Indo-Iranian borderlands and a new etymology for Gāndhārī and Sanskrit *guśura(ka)*”, in: *Iran and the Caucasus* 27/3 (2023), pp. 285–298, though the etymology of *guśura(ka)*- proposed there is proved incorrect by Bactr.  $\gamma\sigma\sigma\beta\sigma\gamma\sigma$  (on which see also below).

middle 1sg. opt. (“precativ”) in *-ytw*. On pp. 8–11 of the book, Frantz Grenet has contributed a note on the historical and geographical context of the letters, which will be very useful for historians of the region.

The Indian loanwords mentioned above are particularly interesting because they provide us with new data to study language contact in the Indo-Iranian borderlands. I would therefore like to add a few observations on them.

In my opinion, these loanwords can be divided into three categories: (i) loans from Gāndhārī, e.g. *κασπιρο* ‘Kashmir’ ← Gāndh. *Kaspira*/\**Kāspira*- (contrast Skt. *Kāśmīra*-); (ii) words for which it is uncertain whether they were borrowed from Sanskrit or Gāndhārī, e.g. *βισταρο* ‘detail’ ← Skt./Gāndh. *vistara*-<sup>9</sup> and *αβιπραλο* ‘wish’ ← Skt. *abhiprāya*- (thus BD IV: 3; 88; 103) or Gāndh. *\*avhipraya*-; and (iii) Sanskrit loans like *βραυμανο* ‘brahmin’ ← Skt. *brāhmaṇa*- (contrast Khot. *braṃmana*- which probably comes from Gāndhārī because of the absence of *-h*). It is indeed expected to find loanwords from both Sanskrit and Gāndhārī, given that the Bactrian birchbark letters come from an archive which also includes texts in both of these Indo-Aryan languages.<sup>10</sup>

Two of the Indian loanwords contain a sequence *-ζζ-*: the PN *παζζοπαυβο* and *βποζζο\** ‘birchbark’ as attested in the compound *βποζζοβιστογο* ‘sheet of birchbark’. *παζζοπαυβο* is explained by Sims-Williams as Skt. *Rāja-śamsa*- “with assimilation of the two sibilants” (BD IV: 123b). This assimilation shows *παζζοπαυβο* to be a loan from Gāndhārī, where *√śams* ‘to praise’ regularly undergoes this type of assimilation.<sup>11</sup> Before eventually becoming /y/, as in Niya Pkt. *raya*, the intervocalic *-j-* in Skt. *rāja(n)*- developed in Gāndhārī to /ζ/ (spelled, e.g., with Kharoṣṭhī *ζ ja*). Therefore, it is possible that the sequence *-ζζ-* in *παζζοπαυβο* was intended to approximate the Gāndhārī fricative /ζ/ rather than an affricate, as Sims-Williams seems to suggest in his discussion of <ζζ> (BD IV: 5).<sup>12</sup> Also *βποζζο\** ‘birchbark’ does not appear to be a direct loan from Skt. *bhūrja*- ‘idem’, but from a Gāndhārī form that has undergone “Dardic” metathesis of

the *-r-* (cf. BD IV: 110a).<sup>13</sup> In this case, the *-ζζ-* may indicate a real geminate, since it has been argued on the basis of modern languages that “Dardic” metathesis was concomitant with gemination of the consonant that was originally adjacent to the metathesised *-r-*.<sup>14</sup>

In the edition itself (pp. 15–53), Sims-Williams has adopted the same conventions as in earlier volumes of BD. Yet in contrast to BD I–II, the Bactrian text and English translation are not given on facing pages; instead, the translations are printed in between the lines of Bactrian text. In my opinion, this new format makes for an easier read. Notes in a smaller font size that follow the text and translation draw attention to possible variant readings and orthographic/palaeographic peculiarities. The high-quality colour plates added at the end of the book (pp. 141–143; Plates I–LXII) moreover allow the reader to verify every uncertain reading.

As is typical for pre-modern epistolary traditions, Bactrian letters are full of formulae: to greet people, to introduce topics, to round off letters, and so forth. Paying close attention to these epistolary formulae helps editors and readers of Bactrian letters in their understanding of these texts, even when they are only fragmentarily preserved. For this reason, Sims-Williams has included in BD IV a study of the epistolary formulae occurring in the birchbark letters (pp. 55–75). This study is largely descriptive: it gives an overview of the different formulae and it makes occasional comparisons with epistolary formulae in Sogdian (e.g. p. 57 fn. 13; p. 61 fn. 25) and Niya Prakrit (e.g. p. 56 fn. 6; p. 58 fn. 15); but it remains a task for future scholarship consistently to trace the Aramaic and Mesopotamian precursors of these formulae.<sup>15</sup> A distinctly helpful feature of this section of BD IV is the comparative tables on pp. 65–75, where variants of formulae occurring in several letters are printed beneath each other to allow for easy comparison.

Sims-Williams had previously written an article on the epistolary formulae occurring in the Bactrian letters from Northern Afghanistan,<sup>16</sup> and this article is reprinted (with

9 On the etymology of Bactr. *βισταρο*, see the more detailed discussion in N. Schoubben, “Gāndhārī light on Eastern Middle Iranian and vice versa: Three new examples”, forthcoming in a volume in the *Beiträge zur Iranistik* (Wiesbaden) edited by Ching Chao-jung and Michaël Peyrot.

10 The Sanskrit and Gāndhārī texts (respectively written in Brāhmī and Kharoṣṭhī) are being prepared for publication by Mark Allon, Richard Salomon, and Ingo Strauch (BD IV: 1 fn. 3).

11 See S. Baums, *A Gāndhārī commentary on early Buddhist verses: British Library Kharoṣṭhī fragments* 7, 9, 13 and 18, doctoral dissertation, University of Washington 2009, at pp. 187 f.

12 Contrast also *αρζοβο* ← *Arjuna*- (BD IV: 106b) where only one *-ζ-* is used to render the non-intervocalic Indian *-j-*, which was probably still pronounced as an affricate.

13 On this type of metathesis in Gāndhārī, cf. now Y. Suzuki, “Rhotic metathesis in Gandhari”, in: *Indogermanische Forschungen* 129/1 (2024), pp. 1–31.

14 See G. Morgenstierne, “Metathesis of liquids in Dardic”, in: G. Morgenstierne (ed.), *Irano-Dardica*, Wiesbaden 1975, pp. 231–240 [originally published in 1947]. I thank Hamza Khwaja for discussion on this point.

15 For a comparative study on the legal formulae occurring in Bactrian contracts, see now H. Sheikh, *Studies of Bactrian legal documents*, Leiden/Boston 2023.

16 N. Sims-Williams, “Bactrian letters from the Sasanian and Hephthalite periods”, in: A. Panaino and A. Piras (eds.), *Proceedings of the 5th Conference of the Societas Iranologica Europaea held in Ravenna, 6–11 October 2003, Vol. I: Ancient & Middle Iranian studies*, Milan 2007 [2006], pp. 701–713.

minor updates) on pp. 77–86 of BD IV “to facilitate comparison between the formulae used in the letters from south of the Hindukush with those from the north” (p. 77 fn. \*). I might have preferred to see the data from this article incorporated into the new chapter, because the similarities and differences between the various formulae could then have been made explicit.<sup>17</sup>

In his commentary on the texts (pp. 87–101), Sims-Williams focuses on non-formulaic parts, so that this section of the book nicely complements the section on epistolary formulae. The commentary mainly concerns the content and structure of the texts edited; linguistic issues are covered in the introduction and the glossary, to which frequent cross-references are made. As acknowledged in the book’s preface (p. ix), the commentary on document Uv has been taken over nearly verbatim from Sims-Williams’ 2015 edition of this text.<sup>18</sup> This has caused a minor inconsistency. Regarding Uv26 f., Sims-Williams comments (p. 100) that the verb αζοβαρ- is typically used “to refer to the production of a contract in order to assert a legal claim” and that he has hesitantly translated the preposition ασο, literally ‘from’, as ‘against’. Yet these comments only apply to the 2015 edition: there αζοβαρ- + ασο is indeed translated as ‘to produce against’; but in BD IV the same phrase is rendered as ‘to take away from’, which leaves the reader curious about the reasoning behind the new translation.

The glossary on pp. 103–132 includes all the words attested in the texts edited in BD IV. The format is the same as in BD II, and Sims-Williams proposes etymologies for most of the previously unattested words.<sup>19</sup> Below, I offer additional notes on twelve of the glossary entries.

1. p. 105b s. v. αλορωδο; p. 123b s. v. ρωδογο. The adjectives αλορωδο ‘with love’ (< αλο ‘with’ < \**hadā* + \**rautā*–) and ρωδογο ‘loving’ (< \**rautaka*–) occur once each and in nearly identical contexts: ιτο χοαδη φρομανο βαδο αλορωδο αλοπιδοφαρο σπημανο “... your lordship’s command happily, with love [αλορωδο] (and) with respect, I shall give satisfaction (?)” (kk7; BD IV: 29); οδο σιδο βαγο[ασο το χο] αδη φρομαγο αβιρανο ταδιοιη αβο μο σαρο πι [δο]ροβανο οτουιη βαγο βαδο ρωδογο ... [αλο]πιδοφαρο σπημανο “And, sir, whatever com[mand] I may receive [from your] lordship, I shall receive it on my head and, sir, happily, lovingly

[ρωδογο] [and with] respect I shall give satisfaction (?)” (ki8–10; BD IV: 28). I suggest we further compare cq10 f., edited and translated as follows in BD II (pp. 96 f. with fn. ††; cf. also BD IV: 83): οδο σιδο ασο το χοηοι φρομανο αβιρανο ταδο αβο σαρο πιδοροβανο βαδο αλο ρωδο κιρανο “... and whatever order I may receive from your lordship, I shall receive (it) on (my) head (and) perform it happily with ... [αλο ρωδο]”. In the glossary of BD II (p. 285), ρωδο is said to be a “noun of unknown meaning”. Yet comparison with kk7 and ki8–10 renders it likely that αλο ρωδο is merely another instance of αλορωδο ‘with love’, the -p- being due to a perseverative scribal error induced by the p- of the preceding βαδο ‘happy’. A glance at the facsimile of document cq (BD III: Plate 161) indeed suggests that the scribe first wrote αλοβα- but then realised his mistake, smudging the sequence -βα- and altering it to -ρω-. ρωδο is thus a ghost word and αλορωδο no longer a hapax but a dis legomenon.

2. p. 106a s. v. ανδαροαλοβαρ(γ)ο. The contexts (kg2 f.; ku3) in which the previously unknown word ανδαροαλοβαρ(γ)ο occurs are consistent with its being a title ‘superintendent of the gynaeceum’ (cf. BD IV: 90; 92). Etymologically, ανδαροαλοβαρ(γ)ο is probably a compound of ανδαρο ‘interior’ < \**antara*- and αλοβαρ(γ)ο ‘court’ < \**dwara*-(ka)-, possibly with *vṛddhi* in the initial syllable as in MP *śābestān* ‘eunuch’ ← *śābestān* ‘place of the night > women’s quarters’ (BD IV: 106a).<sup>20</sup> Given that the birchbark letters “come from somewhere within the Indian cultural sphere” (BD IV: 1), it could be that ανδαροαλοβαρ(γ)ο is a calque of Skt. *antaḥ-pura*- ‘interior castle/town > gynaeceum’, as suggested to me by Federico Dragoni.

3. p. 108b s. v. αρτοοαλγο. Although the birchbark letters contain more than ten new attestations of αρτοοαλγο (also αρτιοαλγο), the exact semantics of this official title still remain enigmatic (cf. also BD IV: 8). I have been wondering whether *daṇḍanāyaka*-, a military title that occurs in Sanskrit and Gāndhārī inscriptions from the Kuṣāṇa period, could be a loan-translation of αρτοοαλγο.<sup>21</sup> The cooccur-

<sup>20</sup> Compare also αβανδαρο < αβο ‘in, to’ + ανδαρο ‘interior’, which in bb10 may be used as a noun meaning ‘inner’ (i. e. women’s) quarters’ (BD II: 181a).

<sup>21</sup> The possibility that *daṇḍanāyaka*- is a calque of a Bactrian official title has previously been raised by R. Bracey, “The limits of Kushan power and the limits of evidence”, in: R. E. Payne and Rh. King (eds.), *The limits of empire in ancient Afghanistan: Rule and resistance in the Hindu Kush, circa 600 BCE–600 CE*, Wiesbaden 2020, pp. 113–155, at p. 121, but without indication of a possible donor form. On the same page, Bracey also points to another calque, viz. *devakula*- ‘deity-house > temple’; this term is used in the Sanskrit inscriptions from the Kuṣāṇa period to refer to the Mat shrine near Mathura and is probably a loan-translation of Bactr. βαγολαγγο ‘temple’ < \**baga-dāna-ka*-, literally ‘containing gods/deities’. For further discussion on *daṇḍanāyaka*-, cf. e. g. H. Albery, *Buddhism and society in the Indic North and North-*

<sup>17</sup> Incorporating the article into the chapter would also have allowed for the reduction of unnecessary repetitions, including verbatim ones like “[t]he body of the letter is naturally the least formulaic part of the letter. Nevertheless, formulae and clichés continue to be found” (both p. 60 and p. 82).

<sup>18</sup> Full reference given in fn. 4.

<sup>19</sup> The glossary does not repeat etymologies that can be found in BD II or in N. Sims-Williams, *Bactrian personal names*, Vienna 2010 (*Iranisches Personennamenbuch* II/7).

rence of ἀρτο[οαλγο] and ζηνοβιδο ‘armourer’ in the Palamedes inscription (SK3),<sup>22</sup> and the fact that the famous Kuṣāṇa official Nukunzūk was promoted from ἀρτοοαλγο to καρἀλραγγο ‘margrave’<sup>23</sup> suggest that ἀρτοοαλγο, like *daṇḍanāyaka-*, may have been a military title;<sup>24</sup> and Skt. *nāya-ka-* ‘leader’, agent noun to *√nī* ‘to lead’, would be a one-to-one correspondent of Bactr. -οαλγο ‘leader’ < \**wāda-ka-*. I have sadly been unable to come up with a fully convincing etymology of ἀρτο- that would make it parallel to Skt. *daṇḍa-*, literally ‘(wooden) stick’ but also ‘(unit of an) army’. Yet one could perhaps consider that ἀρτο- (ἀρτι-) continues OIr. \**r̥šti-* ‘spear’ (OP *aršti-*; YAv. *aršti-*). In that case, ἀρτοοαλγο may have been the ‘leader of the spear-(bearers)’, or the word for ‘spear’ could have been used metonymically for ‘(part of the) army’: a metonymic extension that also happened in the case of Greek δόρυ ‘piece of wood > spear, javelin > army’ and which would not be unlike the polysemy of Skt. *daṇḍa-* ‘(wooden) stick > (unit of an) army’.<sup>25</sup> It must be admitted, though, that the required phonological development of ἀρτο- (ἀρτι-) < \**aršti-* < \**r̥šti-* would be at odds with that of the day name ριρτο < \**r̥štāt-* (BD II: 260b), which makes the etymology less attractive. Still, there may at least be a parallel for the change of OIr. initial \**r̥-* to Bactr. ap- in the form of the PN αρδαμο\* < OIr. \**R̥tama-* (attested via the patronymic αρδαμανο; BD IV: 106b).<sup>26</sup>

4. p. 108b s. v. βαγοζινο. The male anthroponym βαγοζινο is tentatively analysed by Sims-Williams as a compound of βαγο ‘god, lord’ and \*ζινο < ζηνο ‘weapon,

arms’. Since the birchbark letters contain several Indian names (cf. supra), I deem it more likely that βαγοζινο is a transcription of the Gāndhārī name *Bhagaṣena-* (< theonym *Bhaga-* + *senā-* ‘army’) as attested in the Niya documents (CKD 253). The <ς> in *Bhagaṣena-* stands for /z/, thus nicely explaining the -ζ- in βαγοζινο, and the required rendering of -e- as Bactr. -ι- would be paralleled by the PN σιναπιδο\*, patronymic σιναπιδανο, as the latter seems to represent Skt. *Senā-pati-*.<sup>27</sup> See further below on βιαροζινο.

5. p. 109a s. v. βακτιπο. According to Sims-Williams, the male PN βακτιπο could perhaps be “an Indian form of the adj. ‘Bactrian’”. It should be noted, however, that the default word for “Bactrian” in (later) Sanskrit is *Bāhlika-* (cf. also ins.sg. *Bahaliṇa* in the Gāndhārī inscription CKI 60), which cannot be the source of βακτιπο.

6. p. 109b s. v. βιαροζινο. If one accepts my argument that βαγοζινο stands for *Bhagaṣena-*, it seems worth investigating whether further names ending in -ζινο could be Gāndhārī, or at least Indian, loans.<sup>28</sup> This may, for instance, be the case with βιαροζινο, a male name attested in the contract Uv; for I wonder whether βιαροζινο represents \**Viyaraṣena-* /*viyārazēna-* < \**Vihārasena-* (cf. Skt. *vihāra-* ‘Buddhist monastery’), a name that would be comparable to the attested *Samg(h)asena-* (CKD 100; 140; cf. Skt. *saṃgha-* ‘Buddhist community’).<sup>29</sup> For the assumed development of *vihāra-* to \**viyara-*, cf. Gāndh. *sadaviyari-* ‘co-resident’ < *sārdham-vihārin-* (e. g. CKI 111). Contract Uv is from the eighth century (BD IV: xxii; 11), at a time when Gāndhārī was no longer used as a literary language;<sup>30</sup> but it is conceivable that βιαροζινο was adopted from an unwritten daughter language of Gāndhārī or a local “Dardic” dialect sharing phonological features with Gāndhārī.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, I

west: 2<sup>nd</sup> Century BCE–3<sup>rd</sup> Century CE, doctoral dissertation, LMU Munich 2020 at p. 394 *et passim*. The Gāndhārī attestations are in CKI 149, 3 (dir.sg. *daḍanayago*) and CKI 244, 3 (gen.sg. *daḍanayagasya*).

22 See N. Sims-Williams, “Bactrian historical inscriptions of the Kushan period”, in: *The Silk Road* 10 (2012), pp. 76–80, at p. 78.

23 See N. Sims-Williams, “A new Bactrian inscription from the time of Kanishka”, in: H. Falk (ed.), *Kushan histories: Literary sources and selected papers from a symposium at Berlin, December 5 to 7, 2013*, Bremen 2016 [2015], pp. 255–264, at p. 259.

24 Note also the parallel with the Khotanese military title *hīna-bāyaa-* ‘leader of the army’, whose second part is an exact cognate of -οαλγο ‘leader’ < \**wāda-ka-*.

25 Interestingly, when portrayed on their coins, Kuṣāṇa kings often hold a spear in their hand as a symbol of “power and protection” and “ideal kingship” (Y. Sh. Shim, “The origins and symbolism of Vaiśravaṇa iconography and the impact of the royal image as donor and protector”, in: *Religions* 16/2 (217) [2025], 28pp., at pp. 19 f.).

26 One could also object to my etymology that ἀρτοοαλγο must go back to a form with initial \**h-* (\**uap̥toαλγο*), as has been argued on the basis of the superscript line over the α of ἀρτοοαλγο in ck2, i. e. ἀρτοοαλγο (see BD II: 200a). Yet in my view, this argument is not cogent, because (i) none of the new attestations of ἀρτοοαλγο appears with a superscript line, and (ii) superscript lines can be used “redundantly in conjunction with an unabbreviated spelling” (BD II: 39; cf. also BD IV: 6).

27 On the etymology of σιναπιδο\*, see N. Sims-Williams, *Bactrian personal names* (as in fn. 19), at p. 129 (no. 432). There are also cases where -e- is rendered with Bactr. -η-, e. g. the divine name μασηνο (e. g. Rabatak 10) ← Skt. *Mahāsena-*.

28 I do not wish to imply that *all* names ending in -ζινο would be Indian loans. Contrast voζινο which is certainly inherited from \**hu-zaina-* ‘well-armed’; see N. Sims-Williams, *Bactrian personal names* (as in fn. 19), at p. 140 (no. 483).

29 Note the co-existence in Gāndhārī of the names *Samghavala* / *Samg(h)apala* < *Samghapāla-* (e. g. CKD 474) and *Viharavala* / *Vyarpala* < *Vihārapāla-* (e. g. CKD 187).

30 On the replacement of Gāndhārī as a literary language by Sanskrit, see I. Strauch, “The character of the Indian Kharoṣṭhī script and the ‘Sanskrit revolution’: A writing system between identity and assimilation”, in: A. de Voogt and J. F. Quack (eds.), *The idea of writing: Writing across borders*, Leiden/Boston 2012, pp. 131–168.

31 Document Uv likewise contains the otherwise unattested Indian loan σακ(α)πο ‘witness’ (BD IV: 12; 124a). It would not be surprising to find a Buddhist name in an eighth-century document, given that the Bactrian inscription from Tang-i-Safedak, which records the restoration of a Buddhist stūpa, also dates from the eighth century, more spe-

consider it possible that καλοζινο, the name of an Indian prince (ινδανο χοδδηβορο) in the Jaghori inscription from the eighth century,<sup>32</sup> renders *\*Kalaṣena-* /kālazēna/ < *Kālasena-*, the latter attested as a PN in Pāli.<sup>33</sup>

7. p. 110a s. v. γοσοβοργο. The noun γοσοβοργο is a dialectal variant of οισβοργο ‘prince’ < *\*wisah puθra-ka-* and the donor form of the Gāndhārī title *guśura(ka)-* and similar forms in other Indian languages, e. g. Shina *gušpūr* and Burushaski *gušpūr* (BD IV: 4; 110a). Sims-Williams phonologically transcribes γοσοβοργο as “[yusvurg]” (p. 4), but this requires the assumption that Bactr. /sv/ was rendered with a palatal -ś- in *guśura(ka)-* (note also the palatal in Shina and Burushaski). In Manichaean Bactrian, OIr. \*-s- preceded by \*-i- undergoes palatalisation to -ś-, e. g. *wyś(p)* ‘all’ < *\*wispa-*. Since we have the same phonological environment in *\*wisah puθra-ka-*, I believe that the -σ- in γοσοβοργο could likewise stand for /ś/. If this is accepted, one only needs to assume that /v/ was lost before the back vowel /u/ when speakers of Gāndhārī borrowed γοσοβοργο as *guśura(ka)-*.<sup>34</sup>

8. p. 110b s. v. γωμιβορο. Sims-Williams cautiously etymologises the toponym γωμιβορο (**kr**24, **ks**10) as Skt. *\*Gomati-pura-* ‘city (on the banks of the river) Gomati’ (see also BD IV: 1). If the etymology is correct, γωμιβορο is probably not a direct loan from Sanskrit, but from a local Prakrit form, e. g. *\*Gomati-vura* with lenition of \*-t- to \*-Ø- and \*-p- to \*-v-. In that case, the -ι- in Bactr. γωμιβορο can be seen as an approximation of Pkt. \*-ai- and the -β- as a rendering of Pkt. \*-v-.

9. p. 111a s. v. ζηνο. There is a general consensus that Skt. *jena-/jayana-* ‘saddle; armour’ is a loan from a “Middle Iranian” outcome of OIr. *\*zaina-* ‘weapon, arms’.<sup>35</sup> Possibly, the donor form can now be specified as the newly attested Bactrian word ζηνο /zēnə/ ‘weapon, arms’. Note for this that Bactr. ζηνοβιδο /zēnəvidə/ ‘armourer’ is also the most likely source of the Niya Prakrit title *jenavida* (CKD 506); and compare further Skt. *khola-* ‘helmet’ ← Bactr. *\*χωλο* /xōlə/ ‘idem’ < *\*xaudā-*, which belongs to the same semantic field

as *jena-/jayana-* and may have been borrowed at the same time.<sup>36</sup>

10. p. 115a s. v. κοραγο. Sims-Williams does not offer an etymology of the PN κοραγο (**ki**10). I wonder whether it goes back to an OIr. hypocoristic *\*kura-ka-*, as indirectly attested by Elam. *Ku-rák-ka<sub>4</sub>* (*\*kura-* ‘family’ ~ Vedic *kūla-* ‘idem’).<sup>37</sup> One may also compare the Niya Pkt. name *Kurage* (e. g. CKD 278), which could be a loan from Bactr. κοραγο (or a cognate thereof).<sup>38</sup>

11. p. 119b s. v. νιταοανο. In his entry on νιταοανο (also νιτοοανο) ‘message, announcement’ < *\*ništāwan-*, Sims-Williams cites “Biblical Aram. *nštwn*” as one of the cognates. It may be worth adding that Aram. *nštwn* ‘instruction, command, rescript’ does not only occur in the Bible, but also in Achaemenid sources such as the Aramaic letters from Bactria (4<sup>th</sup> century BCE).<sup>39</sup> This suggests that the word *\*ništāwan-* was already a part of the epistolary jargon of the region many centuries before the Bactrian birchbark letters were written (4<sup>th</sup> century CE).

12. p. 130b s. v. βαλοχσο. The hapax βαλοχσο (**kg**3) cooccurs with the title ανδαροαλοβαρο, probably ‘superintendent of the gynaeceum’ (cf. supra), and can either be a female PN or a title meaning ‘princess’ (cf. also BD IV: 90). βαλοχσο consists of βα(υ)ο ‘king’ and a second element -λοχσο, which Sims-Williams compares to Elam. *dukšiš* ‘princess’ and Pashto *lur* ‘daughter’, reconstructing the Old-Iranian proto-form as *\*duxθrī-*. Some further elaboration on this etymology would have been useful, since the default Bactrian word for ‘daughter’ is λογδο, earlier λογδα < *\*duxtā* (also in οισλογδο ‘princess’; BD II: 247b), and Bactr. -χσ- is not the regular outcome of OIr. *\*-xθr-*; contrast βαχλο ‘Balch’ < *\*bāxθrī-* (BD II: 202). I see two options: (i) the element -σο in -λοχσο is the Bactrian feminine suffix -σο < -σα < *\*-čt-ā-* (or simply *\*-čā-*),<sup>40</sup> or, more likely, (ii) OP nom.

cifically 714 CE; see N. Sims-Williams, “Two late Bactrian documents” (as in fn. 7), at p. 203 fn. 1.

32 An edition of the Jaghori inscription can be found in N. Sims-Williams, “The Bactrian inscription of Jaghori: A preliminary reading”, in: *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 30 (2021), pp. 67–73. For its date, see p. 67.

33 See G. P. Malalasekara, *Dictionary of Pāli proper names*, vol. 1: *A–Dh*, London 1937, at p. 581.

34 For a more detailed version of this argument, see N. Schoubben, *Traces of language contact in Niya Prakrit: Bactrian and other foreign elements*, doctoral dissertation, Leiden University 2024 at pp. 56; 80–83; 296.

35 See, e. g., M. Mayrhofer, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindoarischen III. Band*, Heidelberg 2001, at p. 212.

36 For the Iranian etymology of Skt. *khola-*, see M. Mayrhofer, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindoarischen III. Band*, Heidelberg 2001, at pp. 147 f.

37 J. Tavernier, *Iranica in the Achaemenid period (ca. 550–330 B.C.). Lexicon of Old Iranian proper names and loanwords, Attested in Non-Iranian texts*, Leuven/Paris/Dudley, MA, 2007, at pp. 234 f., where further OIr. names based on *\*kura-* ‘family’ can be found.

38 For other Bactrian names in Niya Prakrit ending in -e, see N. Schoubben, *Traces of language contact in Niya Prakrit* (as in fn. 34), at pp. 213–221; 320–323.

39 J. Naveh and Sh. Shaked, *Aramaic documents from ancient Bactria (fourth century BCE.): From the Khalili collections*. London 2012, at pp. 55; 75; 281a.

40 On the suffix -σο < -σα, see N. Sims-Williams, “The Sogdian merchants in China and India”, in: A. Cadonna and L. Lanciotti (eds.), *Cina e Iran da Alessandro Magno alla dinastia Tang*, Florence 1996, pp. 45–67, at p. 52 and N. Schoubben, *Traces of language contact in Niya Prakrit* (as in fn. 34), at pp. 443 f.

sg. \**duxčīš*, the source of Elam. *dukšiš*, was borrowed into a pre-form of Bactrian during the Achaemenid rule in the region and subsequently underwent lambdacism to result in -λοχσο.<sup>41</sup> If the latter option holds true, βαλοχσο would be comparable to Bactr. δοχβολογδο ‘princess’ (**ba1**), whose first element is a loan from MP *duxš* ‘princess; maiden’ < OP \**duxčīš* (BD II: 209b).

In short: Nicholas Sims-Williams has once again produced an excellent edition of important new materials, for which all Indo-Iranianists will be most grateful. I, for one, eagerly anticipate the appearance of *Bactrian Documents* v!<sup>42</sup>

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**List of abbreviations:** Aram. = Aramaic; Bactr. = Bactrian; CKD = Corpus of Kharoṣṭhī Documents; CKI = Corpus of Kharoṣṭhī Inscriptions; dir. = direct (case); Elam. = Elamite; fem. = feminine; Gāndh. = Gāndhārī; gen. = genitive; ins. = instrumental; Khot. = Khotanese; MP = Middle Persian; NP = New Persian; OIr. = Old Iranian; OP = Old Persian; opt. = optative; Pkt. = Prakrit; PN = personal name; pres. = present; sg. = singular; Skt. = Sanskrit; YAv. = Young Avestan.

<sup>41</sup> For more examples of Old Persian loanwords into Bactrian still undergoing lambdacism, see F. de Blois, “Bactria, Bāxδī-, Balx”, in: S. Tokhtasev and P. Lurje (eds.), *Commentationes Iranicae: Vladimiro f. Aaron Livschits nonagenario donum natalicium*, St. Petersburg 2013, pp. 268–271, at p. 269. For the required substitution of OP \*-č- as Bactr. -σ-/s/, cf. Bactr. τασκο, a unit of measurement ← OP \**taçuka*- ‘quarter’, whence NP *tasū* ‘idem’ (BD II: 269a).

<sup>42</sup> We may not have to wait for too long: in the preface to BD IV (p. ix), Sims-Williams notes that “[f]urther documents which appear likely to come from the same source [as those edited in BD IV] are known from other collections in several countries”, and I would not be surprised if he already started working on (some of) those.