PROBLEMS OF EARLY LINGUISTIC CONTACT AND ETYMOLOGY OF INDO-ARYAN AND CENTRAL ASIAN IRANIAN LANGUAGES: FACT, STEREOTYPE AND DISINFORMATION

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the linguistic contact and etymological relationships between Ancient Indo-Aryan languages—Sanskrit, Prakrit, and Pāli—and Ancient Iranian languages, including Avestan, Bactrian, Sogdian, and Old Persian. The research aims to identify shared lexical and grammatical elements, reconstruct patterns of mutual influence, and clarify misconceptions arising from stereotypical assumptions and disinformation. The study employs comparative-linguistic and etymological methods, analyzing textual materials ranging from religious and epic sources to everyday documents. Special attention is given to phonological forms, semantic development, and historical context to distinguish between inherited cognates and genuine borrowings. Results indicate substantial grammatical and lexical parallels, supporting the hypothesis of a common Proto-Indo-Iranian heritage rather than unilateral borrowing. Grammatical features include three genders and three numbers in the nominal system, while the lexicon exhibits hundreds of cognate words with semantic broadening or narrowing over time. The research demonstrates that assumptions of direct borrowing from Sanskrit are often overstated, particularly when shared lexemes reflect the common ancestry of Indo-Aryan and Iranian speakers.

Analysis of historical, cultural, and religious factors reveals that active linguistic contact intensified from the Hellenistic period and reached its peak during the spread of Buddhism in Central Asia. Lexical borrowing occurred across domains such as religion, administration, commerce, social terminology, and material culture. Middle Indo-Aryan languages influenced Eastern Iranian languages, while some Iranian terms entered Prakrit and Pāli. The study also highlights the methodological challenges of differentiating inherited cognates from borrowed terms and emphasizes the need for careful historical and etymological scrutiny. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of Indo-Aryan and Iranian linguistic interactions, demonstrating that shared features are rooted in historical connections, cultural

exchange, and regional developments. The research provides a scientifically grounded reconstruction of Indo-Iranian lexical and grammatical correspondences and offers a critical correction of persistent stereotypes in the study of ancient languages.

Keywords: *Indo-Aryan languages, Ancient Iranian languages, Sanskrit, Prakrit, Pāli, Avestan, Bactrian, Sogdian, lexical borrowing, comparative linguistics.*

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Die vorliegende Studie untersucht den sprachlichen Kontakt und die etymologischen Beziehungen zwischen den altindoiranischen Sprachen – Sanskrit, Prakrit und Pāli – und den altiranischen Sprachen, darunter Avestisch, Bactrisch, Sogdisch und Altpersisch. Ziel der Arbeit ist es, gemeinsame lexikalische und grammatische Elemente zu identifizieren, Muster gegenseitiger Beeinflussung zu rekonstruieren und Missverständnisse aufgrund stereotypischer Annahmen und Fehlinformationen aufzuklären. Die Forschung verwendet vergleichend-linguistische und etymologische Methoden zur Analyse von Textmaterialien aus religiösen, epischen und alltäglichen Quellen. Besonderes Augenmerk liegt auf der phonologischen Form, der semantischen Entwicklung und dem historischen Kontext, um zwischen vererbten Kognaten und echten Entlehnungen zu unterscheiden. Die Ergebnisse zeigen erhebliche grammatische und lexikalische Parallelen, die die Hypothese eines gemeinsamen proto-indoiranischen Erbes bestätigen, anstatt einseitiger Entlehnungen. Zu den grammatischen Merkmalen zählen drei Geschlechter und drei Numeri im Nominalsystem, während der Wortschatz hunderte von Kognaten mit Bedeutungsverschiebungen über die Zeit aufweist. Die Studie zeigt, dass Annahmen über direkte Entlehnungen aus dem Sanskrit häufig übertrieben sind, insbesondere wenn gemeinsame Wörter die gemeinsame Abstammung der indoiranischen Sprecher widerspiegeln.

Die Analyse historischer, kultureller und religiöser Faktoren verdeutlicht, dass der aktive sprachliche Kontakt ab der hellenistischen Periode intensiviert wurde und während der Verbreitung des Buddhismus in Zentralasien seinen Höhepunkt erreichte. Lexikalische Entlehnungen betrafen religiöse, administrative, wirtschaftliche, soziale und materielle Bereiche. Mittelindoarische Sprachen beeinflussten die östiranischen Sprachen, während einige iranische Begriffe ins Prakrit und Pāli übernommen wurden. Die Arbeit hebt auch methodologische Schwierigkeiten bei der Unterscheidung von vererbten Kognaten und Entlehnungen hervor und betont die Notwendigkeit sorgfältiger historisch-etymologischer Analysen. Die Ergebnisse tragen zu einem tieferen Verständnis der indoiranischen

Sprachinteraktionen bei, zeigen, dass gemeinsame Elemente auf historische Verbindung, kulturellen Austausch und regionale Entwicklungen zurückzuführen sind, und liefern eine wissenschaftlich fundierte Rekonstruktion lexikalischer und grammatischer Entsprechungen.

Schlüsselwörter: Indoarische Sprachen, Altiranische Sprachen, Sanskrit, Prakrit, Pāli, Avestisch, Bactrisch, Sogdisch, lexikalische Entlehnungen, vergleichende Linguistik.

АННОТАЦИЯ

В настоящем исследовании рассматриваются вопросы языкового контакта и этимологических отношений между древнеиндийскими языками — санскритом, пракрити и пали — и древнеиранскими языками, включая авестийский, бактрийский, согдийский и древнеперсидский. Цель работы — выявить общие лексические и грамматические элементы, реконструировать модели взаимного влияния и прояснить заблуждения, возникающие из стереотипных предположений и дезинформации. В исследовании применяются сравнительно-исторический и этимологический методы анализа текстовых источников, включая религиозные, эпические и бытовые материалы. Особое внимание уделяется фонологической форме, семантическому развитию и историческому контексту для различения наследованных когнатов и заимствований. Результаты показывают существенные грамматические и лексические параллели, подтверждающие гипотезу о существовании общего праиндо-иранского наследия, а не односторонних заимствований. Грамматические особенности включают три рода и три числа в системе имён существительных, а лексика демонстрирует сотни когнатов с расширением или сужением значений со временем. Исследование выявляет, что предположения о прямых заимствованиях из санскрита часто преувеличены, особенно когда общие слова отражают общее происхождение индоарийских и иранских носителей.

Анализ исторических, культурных и религиозных факторов показывает, что активный языковой контакт усилился с эллинистического периода и достиг пика с распространением буддизма в Центральной Азии. Заимствования затронули религиозную, административную, торговую, социальную и материальную сферу. Языки среднеиндийского периода влияли на восточноиранские языки, тогда как отдельные иранские термины проникали в пракрити и пали. Работа также подчеркивает методологические сложности различения наследованных когнатов и заимствований и необходимость

тщательного историко-этимологического анализа. Полученные данные способствуют более глубокому пониманию индоарийско-иранских языковых взаимодействий, показывая, что общие элементы обусловлены исторической связью, культурным обменом и региональными процессами. Исследование предлагает научно обоснованную реконструкцию лексических и грамматических соответствий и критически корректирует устойчивые стереотипы в изучении древних языков.

Ключевые слова: *индоарийские языки, древнеиранские языки, санскрит, пракрити, пали, авестийский язык, бактрийский язык, согдийский язык, лексические заимствования, сравнительная лингвистика.*

INTRODUCTION

Issues concerning linguistic contact and etymology between Ancient Indo-Aryan and Iranian languages have long constituted a subject of sustained scholarly interest in linguistics. This topic is frequently accompanied by stereotypical assumptions and erroneous hypotheses. For instance, when lexical units of Sanskrit, as well as those of Middle Indo-Aryan languages such as Prakrit and Pāli, exhibit phonological or semantic similarities to forms found in Ancient Iranian languages, they are often automatically assumed to be borrowings from Sanskrit. However, historical and linguistic analyses demonstrate that such assumptions are not always well-founded, since Ancient Indo-Aryan and Iranian peoples shared a common ancestry and naturally preserved numerous cognate lexical items within their respective languages. Consequently, determining which language exerted a more active lexical influence upon the other constitutes a complex and multi-layered scholarly problem.

The present article focuses on the question of how the process of linguistic contact unfolded between the ancient Indo-Aryan languages—Sanskrit, Prakrit, and Pāli—and the Ancient Iranian languages—Avestan, Bactrian, Sogdian, and Old Persian; how their etymological relationships were formed; and how stereotypes and instances of disinformation emerged in this context. This issue defines the central direction of the research, and the article seeks to provide a substantiated answer to it.

The aim of the study is to conduct a systematic analysis of shared lexical and grammatical units in Sanskrit, Prakrit, and Pāli in comparison with Ancient Iranian languages, to identify patterns of mutual linguistic influence, and to interpret these processes within their historical, cultural, and religious contexts. Within this framework, several tasks are undertaken: a comparative analysis of shared lexical and grammatical units in Ancient Indo-Aryan and Iranian languages; an explanation of borrowing processes between Indo-Aryan and Eastern Iranian languages in relation to

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political, economic, cultural, and religious factors; the identification of stereotypical and disinformative interpretations and the demonstration of their refutation on a scientific basis; and the reconstruction of linguistic contact processes in the regions of Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent.

METHODS

The study employs comparative-linguistic and etymological methods in an integrated manner. Textual materials in Sanskrit, Prakrit, Pāli, and Ancient Iranian languages (Avestan, Bactrian, Sogdian, and Old Persian), including religious, epic, and everyday sources, were analyzed. In identifying cases of linguistic interference and borrowing, attention was paid to phonological form, semantic development, and historical context. Furthermore, the article aims to detect stereotypical and disinformative interpretations, thereby providing a scientifically grounded explanation of the etymological relationships between Sanskrit and the Middle Indo-Aryan languages on the one hand, and the Ancient Iranian languages on the other.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

When the lexicon of a given language exhibits phonological and semantic proximity to Sanskrit vocabulary, it is often assumed to constitute a borrowing from Sanskrit. The primary justification advanced for such an assumption lies in the elevated status of Sanskrit in world scholarship, culture, and philosophy—in short, in its high prestige. However, scientific inquiry operates on the basis of specialized analysis, clearly defined principles, and established methodological frameworks. For this reason, modern scholarship rejects such stereotypical interpretations.

According to the theories of prominent linguists, the study of Sanskrit and Avestan in Europe played a decisive role in the emergence and development of linguistics as an academic discipline. This field enables scholars to identify linguistic roots, similarities, and transformations occurring across different historical periods and geographical contexts [Lotfi: 272].

At the end of the eighteenth century, when European scholars began systematic research on Sanskrit, they relied extensively on the renowned grammatical treatise of Pāṇini. It was after engaging with this foundational work that the linguist William Jones, in 1786 in Calcutta, announced that Sanskrit, Greek, and Latin had originated from a common source that no longer existed as a living language [Lotfi: 274]. This declaration marked a turning point in comparative linguistics and laid the groundwork for Indo-European studies.

With regard to the shared features between Ancient Iranian languages and Sanskrit, their number is considerable. From a grammatical perspective, both language groups possessed three grammatical genders in the nominal system:

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masculine, feminine, and neuter. Both also exhibited three grammatical numbers: singular, dual, and plural. Although certain pronouns displayed distinctions in gender, personal pronouns themselves were not marked for gender and did not express it. Adjectives, when syntactically linked to nouns, agreed with them in gender and number.

From a lexical standpoint, the number of common and cognate words is likewise substantial [Sa'dullayev 2022: 96]. These parallels further substantiate the hypothesis of a shared Proto-Indo-Iranian heritage rather than unilateral borrowing, thereby reinforcing the necessity of a rigorous comparative and etymological approach in evaluating linguistic correspondences.

In analyzing the similarities between these two ancient languages, one fundamental question remains unresolved: which of the two exerted a greater lexical influence upon the other? Providing a definitive answer to this question is complicated by the additional fact that the ancestors of the peoples who spoke Ancient Iranian and Sanskrit were closely related, both belonging to the ancient Aryan community. This common origin increases the likelihood that numerous shared or similar lexical items occurred naturally in both languages [Sa'dullayev 2022: 96].

Nevertheless, on the basis of available historical evidence, it is possible to propose a tentative reconstruction of linguistic influence by taking into account the respective spheres of achievement attained by the populations of these regions up to the beginning of the Common Era. For example, when compared to the populations of ancient Iran and Central Asia, the peoples of ancient India appear to have achieved a higher level of development in the field of medicine. In light of this, it may be assumed that a significant portion of the shared or similar medical terminology found in Iranian and Sanskrit sources is of Sanskrit origin [Sa'dullayev 2022: 96].

The ancient Indo-Iranians preserved their historical traditions not only through their languages but also within epic and religious texts [Skjærvø: 188]. Such materials provide a unique opportunity to reconstruct aspects of Indo-Iranian material culture on the basis of textual evidence [Kuz'mina: 304].

Research on Sanskrit has been more extensive and systematic than that on many other ancient languages, largely because Sanskrit textual sources were not lost over time; on the contrary, they continued to be transmitted and multiplied. By contrast, the earliest extant written monument of the Iranian tradition—the Avesta—suffered severe destruction: a substantial portion of its so-called "golden pages" is reported to have been burned and destroyed in Persepolis by Alexander the Great [Lotfi: 273].

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One of the most widespread stereotypes regarding Sanskrit and Iranian languages is the view that the Vedic and Avestan languages represent two dialects of a single language. Some scholars consider Vedic Sanskrit and Avestan as two dialects of a common Proto-Indo-Iranian language. However, it is important to emphasize that although the creators of the Veda and the Avesta belonged to related peoples, the two languages emerged in different regions, under different conditions, at different times, and within distinct areal contexts. All Vedic periods are generally dated to approximately 1500–500 BCE [Witzel: 4].

Orientalist scholars, when comparing Avestan language and mythology, place the oldest part of the Avesta—the Gathas—on a linguistic level comparable to the earliest Vedic source, the Rigveda. The pronounced differences between Old Avestan and Young Avestan indicate that a considerable period elapsed between them; otherwise, the two would have been spoken simultaneously in the same area [Hintze: 38]. Consequently, modern scholars estimate the age of the Avesta to be roughly between 1000 and 500 BCE [Bryant: 130].

Both the Avesta and the Vedas were preserved orally over several centuries before the advent of writing. Some researchers, however, argue that both texts were documented almost immediately upon their composition. For instance, Lotfi proposes the hypothesis that the Veda and the Avesta were written down during nearly the same period—when the Iranian Aryans had just diverged from the Indian Aryans [Lotfi: 272]. As observed, there is a significant distinction between the period of oral transmission and the period of textual documentation. Only by the middle of the first millennium BCE did the conditions exist for recording both texts in written form. Moreover, whether Avestan or Vedic, the languages in their documented forms no longer had active communities of native speakers and were restricted to use within the circles of religious leaders.

Taking such factors into account, the scholar Kuz'mina cautiously states: "Vedic Sanskrit is indeed so closely related to the ancient Iranian languages, particularly Avestan, that the two often resemble two dialects rather than two entirely separate languages" ("not strictly" two separate dialects, but rather "similar to two distinct dialects") [Kuz'mina: 304].

Disinformation can also occur in discussions regarding the etymology of lexemes with common roots. This is often due to a somewhat superficial approach by the researcher. For example, consider the following citation: "The word 'ruz' in Persian is pronounced 'rôž' in Kurdish, 'ruž' in Kermanshah[1],

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[1] It seems that the Old Persian language is being referred to.

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'rôč' in Balochi, and 'roja' in Naeen[2]. In French, it appears as 'jor,' which is considered the reverse form of 'roz,' and in Italian it appears as 'giorno.' In Dari Persian[3], the word is pronounced 'rôz' or 'rôž,' while in Old Pahlavi it was pronounced 'rôč.' All of these derive from the Avestan root word 'roâča' or 'raôčang,' meaning 'light'" [Lotfi: 275].

As the quotation shows, the scholar implies that Avestan influenced not only Iranian languages but also Western European languages. Scientifically, given the religious and ritual context of Avestan, such cross-continental linguistic contact is impossible. The apparent similarities in word roots across these languages are better understood through anthropological analysis: the speakers of these languages belonged to a single population in ancient times, which later dispersed across Eurasia, preserving their lexical items with minor phonetic or semantic modifications. This interpretation highlights the significance of historical lineage and shared ancestry in explaining linguistic correspondences rather than assuming direct borrowing across geographically distant languages.

Thousands of cognate words exist between Sanskrit and the ancient Iranian languages (Avestan, Old Persian, Median, and Scythian). Notably, these languages were not in significant direct linguistic contact during the periods in which they were actively spoken. The fragmentation of the common Indo-Iranian unity and the subsequent formation of distinct linguistic areas gave rise to lexemes that were formally cognate but semantically divergent.

Comparative analysis indicates that Sanskrit and the ancient Iranian languages share several hundred cognate words whose meanings either broadened or narrowed over time. Most of these belong to the nominal category, with a significant number also occurring among verbs. Studying the semantic properties of these cognates provides insight into how the lexicon of their modern descendants—Indo-Aryan and Iranian languages—developed, as well as the semantic potential retained in contemporary vocabularies [Sa'dullayev 2024: 955].

Considering the evidence of mutual lexical exchange, it can be argued that active linguistic contact between Iranian and Indo-Aryan languages began as early as the Hellenistic period. This process became particularly prominent from the Middle Indo-Aryan period (3rd–2nd centuries BCE) onward, coinciding with the widespread dissemination of Indian philosophy, religion, and cultural values across the ancient world, including Central Asia, Eastern Turkestan, and China.

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[2] The author (A. Lotfi) does not specify which language is being referred to. Based on the form of the given word, it appears that Niya Prakrit is intended.

[3] Is Dariy a form of Persian, or a separate Iranian language? If it is a variant of Persian, why is it referred to as a language rather than a dialect? (A citation or explanatory note is required).

From the 3rd century BCE, the prestige of Classical Sanskrit, which had previously dominated literary norms in Northern and Central India, began to decline. It was gradually supplanted by Pāli, Prakrit, and their various regional dialects. As a result, the scope of lexical exchange expanded further, and the dialectological interrelations among Indo-Aryan languages, as well as their regional diversification, became increasingly pronounced.

During this period, the Central Asian region was home to Bactrian, Sogdian, Khwarezmian, Saka (primarily the Khotanese variety), and Tocharian languages. These languages differed significantly in their dialectal and structural features from the Western Iranian group, namely the Middle Persian languages (including Pahlavi and Parthian). For this reason, linguists have conventionally grouped them under the term "Eastern Iranian languages" [Shimin: 8].

Middle Indo-Aryan languages (Pāli, Prakrit, and their dialects) maintained regular linguistic contact with the contemporary Eastern Iranian languages due to geographic proximity and socio-cultural and economic interactions. The intensity of these contacts is clearly reflected in the volume of mutual lexical borrowings.

However, determining which lexical items the Eastern Iranian languages of Central Asia borrowed from Middle Indo-Aryan is one of the more complex challenges for etymological analysis. A large proportion of words in both language groups derive from common proto-lexical roots, and traditional comparative-linguistic methods based on formant and semantic similarity alone are often insufficient to distinguish between true borrowings and inherited linguistic features.

The adoption of Middle Indo-Aryan lexicon into Eastern Iranian languages of Central Asia occurred through a complex, multi-stage process of linguistic contact, closely tied to political, economic, and particularly religious and cultural factors. The initial active phase corresponds to the Hellenistic period. Following the campaigns of Alexander the Great, political structures established in Central Asia—such as the Mauryan, Greco-Bactrian, and later Kushan empires—intensified contacts with India. During Ashoka's reign, the official status of Prakrit (through the Ashokan edicts) facilitated the wider spread of Middle Indo-Aryan elements. It is precisely during this period that the earliest traces of an Indo-Aryan layer appear in Bactrian.

The most productive phase of lexical borrowing is associated with the spread of Buddhism into Central Asia. At the beginning of the Common Era, following the conquest of Northern India by the Kushans, Buddhism first entered Central Asia. Consequently, during this period, Sanskrit-based Buddhist religious terminology began to appear in Sogdian and other Eastern Iranian languages [Sa'dullayev 2021: 908]. Religious and philosophical terms were actively adopted through Buddhism.

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For example, the Sanskrit word *vihāra* was borrowed as *vahar* in Bactrian and *farxār* in Sogdian; *nirvāṇa* became *nirβān* in Sogdian; and *upāsaka* appeared as *upāse* in Sogdian. This period represents the most active linguistic interface between Indo-Aryan and Eastern Iranian languages.

Borrowings are also evident in administrative and commercial domains. For instance, the Prakrit word *draṃga* was borrowed as *dranga* ("administration") in Bactrian; the compound *raja-kula* became *rajogolo* ("royal court"); and the economic term *harga* was rendered as *harg* ("rent") in Bactrian. Commercial vocabulary shows similar patterns: the Sanskrit/Prakrit word *pana* appears as *pan* ("money") in Sogdian, and *sārtha* as *sārt* ("caravan") in Sogdian.

Social and professional terminology also exhibits Indo-Aryan influence. The Buddhist Sanskrit *ācārya* was borrowed as *ācariya* in Bactrian and *ācārē* ("teacher") in Sogdian; Prakrit *dutā* became *dut* ("envoy") in Bactrian. The Sanskrit/Pāli term *śramaṇa* appears as *šaman* ("monk") in Sogdian, while the later Sanskrit word *vadhu* was adopted as *wauδ* in Sogdian and *wud* ("wife") in Khwarezmian. From the Prakrit verb *moṣati*, the Tocharian form *muśśa* ("thief") is attested.

Philosophical concepts were also transmitted: Sanskrit *ākāśa* became *ākāč* ("cosmos") in Sogdian, and *parāloka* appeared as *paraδok* ("the next world"). Among material culture terms, Sanskrit *śaṅkha* became *šunk* ("conch") in Sogdian and later *sund* in Parthian; *ratṇa* became *ratn* ("gem") in Sogdian; and *ghantikā* appears as *kantik* ("bell") in Sogdian and Tocharian.

Other areas of borrowing include administrative and geographical vocabulary: Pāli/Prakrit *pattana* became *pattan* ("small city") in Sogdian; Sanskrit *loka* ("world") was borrowed as *δoka* in Buddhist Sogdian; *samudra* became *smutr* ("ocean") in Sogdian; Prakrit *arisam* appeared as *arsanx* ("hemorrhoid"); and Pāli/Gandhāri *yojana* was rendered as *yučan* (a distance measure of approximately 12 km) in Sogdian.

In the subsequent period, the rise of Turkic political structures in Central Asia and the introduction of Islamic civilization led to the predominance of Arabic and Persian lexical layers. As a result, the process of Indo-Aryan borrowing slowed, and many Eastern Iranian languages gradually fell out of use.

The linguistic interference between Middle Indo-Aryan and Eastern Iranian languages—particularly during the Hellenistic and Kushan periods—was shaped by political, commercial, and Buddhist factors, leaving a lasting imprint on the history of language and culture in Central Asia. The remarkable intensity of the contact between now-extinct Sogdian and Sanskrit demonstrates that the speakers of these languages were in continuous communication with one another [Sadullayev 2021: 912]. In some

instances, Sanskrit-derived words entered Sogdian and other languages, while in other cases, Bactrian and Sogdian words were adopted into Sanskrit, Prakrit, and Pāli [Sa'dullayev 2024: 908].

The study of words borrowed from Eastern Iranian languages into Indo-Aryan (primarily Middle Indo-Aryan) has been undertaken by scholars such as Nicholas Sims-Williams, Tremblay, Hitch, and Schoubben. Notably, Schoubben examined the Niya Prakrit corpus and identified 131 words borrowed from Eastern Iranian languages, primarily from Bactrian, for detailed analysis [Schoubben: 25].

Importantly, the researcher rejected the etymology of 24 of these 131 borrowed words, and also examined 10 proper nouns, concluding that they were not borrowings. Schoubben confidently argued that 56 words were directly borrowed from Bactrian, while 24 others entered Prakrit via Bactrian mediation from other Iranian languages.

According to Schoubben, words such as *avimdama* ("punishment, fine"), *kṣuna* ("date, reign period"), *guśura* ("prince"), *laṣi* ("gift"), *ṣada* ("joyful, pleased"), and *amtagi* ("local") were borrowed directly from Bactrian into Prakrit.

Words such as *ajhate* ("free, noble"), *spaṣa* ("observe, guard"), and *tavastaga* ("carpet") were derived from Parthian or Sogdian, while *namata* ("felt, thin woolen fabric"), *parivanae* ("load, to load"), and *raji* ("woolen garment") may have entered Prakrit from Sogdian or the Khotanese dialect of Saka.

CONCLUSION

This study addressed the complex problem of linguistic contact and etymological relationships between Ancient Indo-Aryan languages—Sanskrit, Prakrit, and Pāli—and Ancient Iranian languages, including Avestan, Bactrian, Sogdian, and Old Persian. The central question raised in the introduction concerned the determination of the direction and extent of lexical influence between these language groups, as well as the identification of misconceptions arising from stereotypical assumptions about borrowing.

Through a systematic application of comparative-linguistic and etymological methods, the research analyzed phonological, semantic, and historical aspects of textual materials from religious, epic, and everyday sources. This approach enabled the differentiation between inherited cognates and true lexical borrowings, while also clarifying the role of shared Proto-Indo-Iranian heritage in explaining lexical and grammatical parallels. Historical, cultural, and religious contexts were incorporated to reconstruct the dynamics of language contact, including the influence of political and economic structures, as well as the spread of Buddhism, on the diffusion of Indo-Aryan elements into Eastern Iranian languages.

The results demonstrate that a substantial portion of shared vocabulary and grammatical structures reflects a common ancestry rather than unilateral borrowing. Active linguistic interaction began during the Hellenistic period and peaked with the transmission of Buddhist terminology across Central Asia, particularly affecting Sogdian and Bactrian. The study also highlights reciprocal borrowing between Middle Indo-Aryan and Eastern Iranian languages, showing that linguistic exchange was multidirectional and context-dependent. Misinterpretations and disinformation, such as overstated assumptions of Sanskrit's unilateral influence, were critically evaluated and corrected.

In conclusion, the research provides a scientifically grounded resolution to the problem posed in the introduction: by combining comparative and historical analysis with careful consideration of sociocultural factors, it reconstructs the patterns of lexical and grammatical contact between Indo-Aryan and Iranian languages and refutes prevailing stereotypes, offering a nuanced understanding of ancient linguistic interactions.

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