

Nugae Sogdicae

ILYA YAKUBOVICH
University of Chicago

This article examines the meanings and etymologies of several problematic Sogdian lexemes.¹

1. *Sogd. 'nš'yp-* 'to collect; to bury': *Skt. √ kṣep* 'to throw'.²

The Sogdian verb *'nš'yp-* (S) [anšēp-], occurring in the Buddhist and magical texts, is normally taken to be the same lexeme as *'šyp-* (C) 'to bury' (impf. *mšyp-*). The meaning of *'šyp-* (C) is established beyond any reasonable doubt but, oddly enough, the meaning of *'nš'yp-* (S) remains a matter of speculation. The relevant occurrences of *'nš'yp-* (S) and its nominal derivative *'nš'yp* (S), together with their original translations, are listed in Table 1.

Benveniste's (1940) uncertainty was apparently caused by his being unaware of *'šyp-* (C) 'to bury'. He later realized that 'to bury' is the most natural translation of *'nš'yp-* in both his examples (Benveniste, 1955: 308). To stop the rain caused by a magic ritual one must bury one's magic tools. It may be less clear to the uninitiated why one needs to bury a sheep's marrow in the house to make the sun shine but, on the whole, such a procedure does not seem unsuitable for magic. On the other hand, we can only admire the perspicacity of Benveniste, who suggested the translation 'to collect' for one of the occurrences of *'nš'yp-*. Although it is probably inaccurate in this context, it reflects the basic meaning of the verb, as we shall see below.

MacKenzie's decision (1976) to translate *'nš'yp-* as 'to envelop' is more tenuous in my opinion. Although the parallel Chinese version of the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra* clearly mentions the four kinds of 'attraction' (Skt. *saṃgraha-*), MacKenzie replaces them with the mysterious 'four kinds of envelopment' in the Sogdian version, attributing the discrepancy to a scribal error. It is equally mysterious why one must 'envelop' one's mind in order to learn something, especially if this thing is righteous.

Fortunately for modern scholars, the recently discovered Chinese version of the *Dhūtasūtra*⁵ provides us with the reliable translation of *'nš'yp-*. It is 攝 [*shè*], whose normal meaning is 'to collect' or 'to gather', but with mental objects it means 'to consolidate the mind', 'to concentrate'. The verb is used in the latter meaning in the *Dhūtasūtra*, but its original meaning is preserved in the nominal derivative *'nš'yp* occurring in the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra*. The four kinds of 'attraction' are four skilful means of assisting a bodhisattva in gathering his followers and leading them on the path of liberation; 'singing girls' is, indeed, an apt metaphor, albeit a somewhat banal one.

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² My abbreviations generally correspond to those of Gharib (1995). For reasons of clarity, I accompany her bibliographic abbreviations by more explicit references. I do not use (B) to refer to the texts of the Buddhist content. Otherwise I use the standard abbreviations: (S)ogdian script, (M)anichaeic script and (C)hristian/Estrangelo script. (MD) refers to the Mugh Documents.

TABLE 1.

... rty pts'r ZKw p'styt pr'yβ'k 'sxw'y ZY ZKw snkt rtšw 'nš'ypy	(If one wants the rain to stop), one must now take away the clouds of ... and the stones and collect (?) them. ³	TSP 3, 266–7 Benveniste (1940: 71)
... rtwx m'yδ rwrh δ'wn 'psβr'yc xypδ mγzy pr'yw 'yw wy'kh ptr'yδ rtyšw ZKw γ'n'kyh 'nš'yp'y	(If one wants the sun to appear again) one must mix the balm with the sheep's marrow and apply it to the house.	TSP 3, 275–7 Benveniste (1940: 71)
ywn'yδ dynδ'r k'mt nyzy'y ZKZY mn' δrγwšky βwt rty ZKw p'zn 'nš'ypt ZKw 'rt'wspy <ZKw 'rt'wspy> ywxsty	Immediately the pious man wishes to go out (from his home) to become my disciple and he envelops the mind and learns the righteous (...?).	BSTBL, Dhu, 274–5 MacKenzie (1976: 48–9) ⁴
'PZY ZK wyspw wkry wx'rš'k pδkh 'pstk'r'k 'PZY ZNH ctβ'r 'nš'yp 'psrwyh	All kinds of liberation rule are his helpers and the four kinds of envelopment his singing-girls.	BSTBL, Vim, 74–6 MacKenzie (1976: 24–5)

Thus we are left with the two basic meanings, 'to collect' and 'to bury'. I believe that their mutual relationship can be understood in the context of Zoroastrian ritual: to bury a person meant to collect his bones into an ossuary.⁶ The semantic development 'to collect' > 'to bury' was as natural in this area as is the development 'to dig in' > 'to bury' in some other cultures.⁷

So much for semantics. With regard to etymology, Skt. *sam-kṣep-* 'to pile together' (from √ *kṣep* 'to throw') represents an impeccable cognate of Sogd. 'nš'yp-.⁸ Mayrhofer (1986–, I: 437) connects √ *kṣep* with Av. √ *xšuuib* 'to vibrate, to move back and forth', but this comparison is not satisfactory either phonetically or semantically. In all probability, we are dealing with two different Indo-Iranian roots: √ **kšip* 'to throw' and √ *kšwib* 'to move back and forth', which could sometimes influence each other (thus Ved. *kṣiprā-* 'quick, fast' and MPers. *šēb-* 'to move quickly' may result from their contamination). The Sogdian data represent the key evidence for the separation of these two roots.

³ Here and below all translations are given in English. I preserve, however, the original interpretation of the Iranists and abstain from making any corrections in the text, reserving this task for the comments.

⁴ In another attestation in *Dhūtasūtra* (Dhu. 45; MacKenzie, 1976: 36–7) we also encounter 'enveloping the mind'.

⁵ For more details of this manuscript and its significance for Sogdian studies see Yoshida (1996).

⁶ Cf. a Sogdian word for 'grave' 'sks'kw (S) / sqsy (C), which, according to Gershevitch (1975), represents an old Zoroastrian technical term, literally 'that which has a bone-pit'.

⁷ Cf. e.g. Serb. *u-kopati* 'to bury' vs. Russ. *za-kopat'* 'to dig in'.

⁸ Professor Schwartz informs me that he has independently reached the same conclusion.

2. Sogd. $\gamma'mkyn$ 'rich': Sogd. $\gamma'm$ 'torture'

Szemerényi (1951: 219) connected MParth. $'bg'm$ [abgām] 'torture, agony', along with its cognates $'bj'm'dn$ [abjāmādan] 'to torture, agonize' and $'bj'myšn$ [abjāmišn] 'agony', with the other reflexes of IE \sqrt{gem} 'to grab, squeeze' (Pokorny, 1949–59, I: 368–9). Gk. $\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\nu\tau\omicron$ (aor) 'he grabbed'; OCS. $\acute{z}eti/\acute{z}emetv$ 'to press, squeeze' and Arm. $\acute{c}im, \acute{c}em$ 'harness' will suffice as examples illustrating the range of meanings of this root.⁹ There is no doubt that Sogd. $\gamma'm$ (S) 'torture' also belongs together with its Parthian synonym, as Gharib (1995: #1876) informs us. It is, however, possible to demonstrate that more derivatives of the same Indo-European root are attested in Sogdian.

Let us start with the light-stem adjective $\gamma my-$ that is attested in the three contexts shown in Table 2.

On the strength of the first example, the translation of which is confirmed by the Syriac and Armenian versions of the same text, Sims-Williams (1985: 167) is able to establish the meaning 'humbled, disgraced' for Sogd. $\gamma my-$, but the earlier translations 'despicable, abhorrent' may reveal a more archaic meaning of this word. The derivation of Sogd. $\gamma my-$ from the future passive participle $*\gamma amy-$ 'opprimendus' appears to be very plausible. Neither does the semantic change $*\text{'to press, squeeze'} > \text{'to oppress'} > \text{'to humble'}$ violate common sense.

The noun $\gamma'm_1$, which occurs twice in the expression *pr* $\gamma'm$ (S, C) 'by force' (Gharib, 1995: #4053 with ref.) ought to be distinguished from the homonymic *hapax* $\gamma'm_2$ (S) which, according to Benveniste (1940: 253), means 'burglar'. The presumption that both nouns have a deverbative origin allows one to regard them as the old name of action $*\text{'oppression'} > \text{'power, force'}$ and name of agent $*\text{'oppressor, violator'}$, derived from one and the same root. Needless to say, this is the same $\sqrt{*}\gamma m-$ 'to humble, oppress', as per Bailey (1979: 79), who also compares Khot. *ggamuna-* 'robber'. Sims-Williams (2000: 188) adduces here the newly discovered Bactr. $\gamma\mu\alpha\nu$ 'violence'.

The adjective $\gamma'mkyn/\gamma'mqyn$ 'rich' is attested in all kinds of Sogdian texts. I believe that this word must be analysed morphologically as 'having $\gamma'm_1$ ' and reconstructed semantically as $*\text{'oppressive'} > \text{'powerful'} > \text{'rich'}$. This development of the type '*propriété c'est le vol*' is not linguistically self-evident, and yet it finds good parallels in Iranian languages. For the shift

TABLE 2.

xwny qy $\gamma my'(w)n't$ x(y)pθ [$\gamma\gamma w$] ptrztyq' (C).	... he who humbles himself will be exalted.	C2, 94R.27–8 Sims-Williams (1985: 166)
[...] s'nty γmy wβy-k'm ZY šyr(x)[wzty'ntw](x)chβwtk'm (S).	If you are despicable [even] to your enemies and if your friends have sorrow ...	Tiα, 1 Obv. 1–2 Henning (1945: 480–81)
$\gamma'mkyn$ δšt'w'n prw'rtt ZY wyspw w'tδ'r-ty sx'ntcyk 't γmy βwt (S).	... the rich man turns poor and becomes ridiculous and abhorrent to all living beings.	BSTBL, Intox, 9–10 Mackenzie (1976: 8–9)

⁹ The reflexes of this root in various Iranian and non-Iranian languages are discussed in Schwartz (1975: 202–3). Schwartz proposes to regard Arm. $\acute{c}im$ as a product of a contamination between IE. $\sqrt{*}\gamma em$ 'to press' and $\sqrt{*}\gamma em$ 'to grasp'.

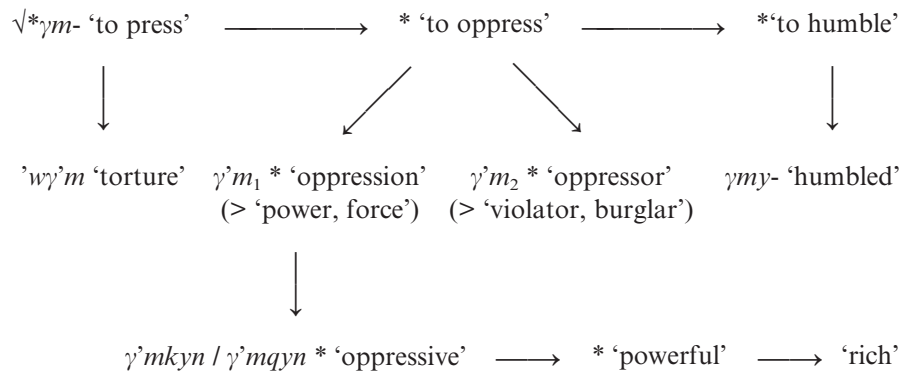


FIG. 1.

‘*powerful > rich’ cf. Classical Persian *tawāngar* ‘(1) powerful; (2) strong; (3) rich’ from Ir. $\sqrt{tū}$ ‘to be powerful, able’. The last meaning was especially frequent in the Eastern variety of Classical Persian and one cannot rule out the possibility that this development indicates the loan translation from Sogdian. For the ambiguity between ‘oppression’ and ‘power’ it is instructive to consider Av. *təuuiš* (from the same Ir. $\sqrt{tū}$) in Yasna 29.1b. This word denotes one of the forces oppressing the Soul of the Cow. Humbach and Ichaporia (1994: 27) translate it as ‘violence’, but Insler (1975: 29) translates it as ‘might’. A similar ambiguity is attested in Sogdian: Sogd. (B) *twnt* < **tuwant-* (Gharib, 1995: #9718), from the same Ir. $\sqrt{tū}$, means ‘strong, violent’, with regard to rain and wind, and its derivative Sogd. (M) *twndy*’ denotes ‘violence’ as a negative psychological feature.¹⁰

The relationship between the various derivatives of $\sqrt{*γm-}$ in Sogdian can be illustrated by the scheme shown in Figure 1.

3. Sogd. *sy-* ‘to appear’: Germ. *scheinen* ‘to seem’

Gershevitch (1954: §550) glossed the Sogdian verb *sy-* (used in all kinds of texts) as ‘to show, to appear’, and this translation was later adopted in Gharib (1995).¹¹ This is rather unfortunate since the transitive meaning, if it can be justified at all, is clearly secondary. The confusion was probably caused by the fact that the idiom *z’ry sy-* can be used with the meanings both ‘~to pity’ and ‘~to be pitiful’, as per Gershevitch. One must, however, distinguish between the ambiguous adjective *z’r’k/z’r’y/z’ry* ‘compassionate; pitiful’ (Gharib, 1995: #11161; #11163; #11173) and the noun *z’ryh/z’ry* ‘sorrow, pity’ (Gharib, 1995: #11177). There is no evidence that *z’ry sy-* could be formed with the noun *z’ry(h)*. Depending on the meaning of the underlying adjective, *z’ry sy-* could originally have meant ‘to grow compassionate, to show oneself sympathetic’, hence ‘to take pity’ (cf. Sims-Williams, 1985: 237) or ‘to appear pitiful’. In other words, the ambiguity of meaning comes from *z’ry* and not from *sy-*.

¹⁰ Professor Schwartz suggests an alternative etymology of *γ’mkyn* that we both regard as possible but less likely. *γ’mkyn* ‘rich’ could be formed from **γ’m* < **gāuman-* ‘property’, a derivative of Ir. $\sqrt{jaw/gaw}$ ‘to acquire, increase’. Among its reflexes one can mention Pers. *afzūdan* ‘to increase’ and Parth. *frg’w*, Sogd. *βrγ’w* ‘riches’. For the development *āu* > *ā/m* in Sogdian one can compare Sogd. *xšn’m* < **xšnāuman-* ‘forgiveness, absolution’ (Gershevitch, 1954: §130). The extended grade of the root in **gāuman-* and **xšnāuman-* remains, however, unexplained.

¹¹ Gharib, 1995: #1725; #9102; #9110, etc.

Other than that, the only context known to me that possibly supports the transitive usage of *sy-* is found in SCE 331–3 (MacKenzie, 1970: 20–21).

'XRZY xwnx mrtxm'k ZKZY δ'tkn'k βwt rty γδ'wny wnty rty prw γr'm'k ''zwh βrt' 'PZY šy tr'nγw syt rty šy L' pntw 'sty L' δwr rty c'wn mwš ''zwn 'γt'k.	The man who breaks walls and commits theft, who is greedy for riches and shows his *rancour, and has neither close nor distant (relatives), comes from the existence of a mouse.
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The passage above can also be translated as: '... and *tr'nγw* is apparent in him ...'. The latter translation is actually borne out by the parallelism with the following clause, literally '... and there are neither close nor distant relatives to him ...'. MacKenzie's translation is supported by the transitive construction in the Chinese version of the *Sutra of Causes and Effects*, but there is virtually no other grammatical way of saying the same thing in Chinese. Whatever translation we choose, this example cannot outweigh numerous intransitive occurrences of *sy-* 'to appear'.¹²

The relationship between Sogd. *sy-* 'to appear' and Parth. *sy-*; *s'y-* 'to seem, to appear' (Sundermann, 1981: 170–71) involves an interesting etymological problem. For obvious reasons Parth. *sy-* 'to seem' must be regarded as etymologically distinct from Parth. *sy-* 'to lie' (which goes back to IE * \sqrt{kei} 'id.', Mayrhofer, 1986–, II: 613–4 with ref.). Ghilain (1966: 91) attributes to Henning the plausible idea of connecting the Parthian word with MPers. *sahistan* 'to appear, to be visible, to seem, to please' (Nyberg, 1974: 172) on the assumption of the common Iranian protoform **sadaya-* (\sqrt{sand} 'to seem / to find seemly, approve'). This etymology, however, is not viable for Sogd. *sy-* since the phonetically regular reflex of Ir. **sadaya-* in Sogdian is *syδ-*, which is, in fact, attested in the Turfan documents (Sims-Williams, 1985: 85–6). If *sy-* in Parthian and Sogdian are connected, then neither of them appears to have an established etymology.

I derive Sogdian *sy-* 'to appear' and, possibly, Parth. *sy-* 'to seem, to appear' from IE * $\sqrt{skei\alpha_2}$ (vel sim.) 'to shine' (Pokorny, 1949–59, I: 917–8, * $\sqrt{skāi}$; cf. Adams, 1999: 706 under Toch. B *skiyo*). The verbal forms of this root are otherwise attested only in Germanic and Slavic (Goth. *skeinan* 'to shine', Slav. **sbjati* 'id.'), although its possible archaic nominal derivative meaning 'shadow' can be traced in most branches of IE (cf. Skt. *chāyā-*, Sogd. (S) *sy''kh*, Mayrhofer, 1986–, I: 559–60). The semantic development in Sogdian (and Parthian?) was the same as in German *scheinen* 'to seem', *erscheinen* 'to appear' vs. Engl. *shine*.

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¹² Mugh, H16.4 (Livšic, 1962: 174); SCE 80 (MacKenzie, 1970: 6); SCE 524 (MacKenzie, 1970: 30) etc.

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