Iranian *L, and Some Persian and Zaza Etymologies

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Abstract

This paper aims to establish Proto-Iranian *l by focusing on a variety of words in (I) Persian and (II) Zaza, many of which are of intrinsic etymological interest. In addition, (III) other etymologically noteworthy Zaza words are discussed.

Keywords

Persian Etymology, Zaza Etymology, Proto-Iranian *l, Median.

I.

I shall here address the problem of the Indo-Iranian outcome of Proto-Indo-European *l, via evidence from Persian (I) and Zaza (II). The systematic change of PIE *l to Proto-Iranian *r is a common assumption for Iranian (note, e.g., Cheung 2007, in which there are no Pr. etyma given with *l). A similar view prevails for Indo-Aryan; the complexities of the distribution of r and l in Old Indian is beyond the scope of the present article. However, as I mean to show, PIE *l is frequently reflected as l in Iranian languages (as against PIE *r > Iran. l in simple environments). This indicates that PIE *l was reflected as l in Proto-Aryan. It is conceivable that *l > r began in early Iranian dialects contiguous with Proto-Indo-Aryan dialects in Central Asia. Eventually, PIE *l was preserved only sporadically in Iranian, with both regional and psycho-os- tensive (expressive) factors having a role in the preservation. In Av-

1 I thank Garnik Asatrian for his erudite editorial interventions, which have improved this paper in many ways. I also thank my student Vahdet Avci for his kind assistance with Zaza lexical material, confirmation of linguistic forms, and other help in the preparation of this paper.
estan there is no phoneme l, which agrees with the relative paucity of *l-preservation in East Middle and New Iranian.

In the Old Persian inscriptions, the sign la is formed only for some exotic proper names (e.g., the place names Izalā-, Dūbāla-, and Labanāna-, and the personal names Ḩaldīta, whereas the renditions of more familiar foreign names, such as Niditbairā ("Nidit_Bel"), Arbelā, and Bābirūš ("Babylon") have r < l; similarly pīru- “ivory” < Akkadian pilu- “elephant”). However, an OPers. l-dialect (if not Aramaic) may have given Middle Persian pī, whence we have Sogdian piḍ and thence Khwarezmian pīz.

Toward the existence of OPers. l, Gershevitch (1969a: 205) takes the Elamite proper name Mirinzali from OPers. *mrnča(t)-a-li- “he who destroys the false”, comparing *a-li- with OPers. arīka-, Sanskrit a-li-ka, Sogd. rīk “false”. He writes that the PIE *l phoneme “survived dialectally in Western Iran (as in any case was always clear from the OPers. evidence)”, and goes on to refer to Paper (1956) on l(a) in the OPers. script (for further Elamite renditions of Iranian names with l, see Gershevitch, ibid., s.v. Lakṣa).

The existence of l and r dialects for OPers. proposed by Paper and Gershevitch seems corroborated by Middle Persian. Thus Pahlavi and NPers. have larz- “to tremble”, but Manichean Middle Persian has rarz-. Similarly, secondary l < *rd is found in Pahl. And NPers. sāl “year”, but Man. MPers. sār, and Pahl. and NPers. sār “chieftain, general”, but Man. MPers. sārēr (cf. also Man. MPers. arab = Aram. ālep/p “Aleph”).

The locus classicus for NPers. preservation of PIE *l is that of Horn 1901: 55-56, who lists lab “lip”; lang “lame” (for which the Old Indian cognates should be supplemented by, e.g., Swedish lanka, linka “to limp somewhat”), lištān, pres. liż- (Av. raēz-) “to lick”; alēxtan “to jump up”, ālūdan “to stain”; kal “bald”; kul “bent”; galū, gūl “throat”, etc. Many of these words have l-cognates in Kurdish and Zaza.

Finally, NPers. lagad (Gilaki layat, Sorani Kurdish laqa “a kick”) is inseparable from Greek *lak- in láks, lągdēn “kicking with the heel”, laktizō “I kick”. The Greek words were assigned to a PIE root *lek (lēk) “to bend, etc.” in Pokorny 1959: 673. Gershevitch (1959: 182, also 324) reconstructs the PIIran. etymon of NPers. lagad, from this same PIE root, as *lakah- (IE = *lekh-to-).

Horn’s (ibid.: 56) examples of NPers. l from *r all are faulty. Alborz has l via dissimilation of r ... r in Harā Bayz-; NPers. āluh (āloḥ) “eagle” has l from rd, OPers. *rdifya-, Av. arzifiiya-, cf. Arm. arciv; NPers. Bālāx, MPers. Bāhl, Bāx̄l represent an East Iranian, ultimately Bactrian, outcome of *Bāx̄tri-, cf. Late Av. Bāx̄dō (with δ-l, as in Sogdian!); NPers. kalāy “crow”
II.

1. Zaza լզգա [m.] “branch” (Özcan 1997: 118), լիզգե (Berz 2004 s.v. լազգե). Compares with a series of Baltic and Slavic forms given by Pokorny (1959: 660) under a general definition “twig” (Zweig, with original reference to branches of the hazel bush): Latvian լազդա “hazel bush”, Old Prussian լաու (laxde) “id.”, kel-laxde “shaft of a spear”; Lithuanian լազդà (< *lazgà) “stick, hazel, shrub”, Polish լազ “stick”, etc. The latter forms appear to derive from PIE *lH1g(h)sdH(-) > PIran. *ldà > *ldgà- > Zaza լզգա?

2. Zaza լի [m.] “fox” (Özcan, ibid.: 119). A Proto-Iranian etymon *lupi- “fox” would also give Avestan urupi-, a member of the “dog family” (spā. ciθra-), which is sharp-toothed, tīzī.datā-, and whose pelt provides a garment, perhaps as a shamanic covering, whence the epithet urup(ā) azinau. For *lupi- ~ *rupi- note also Kurd. ɾuvi “fox” (cf. also Pahl. ɾwpk, gloss on urupi-., via metathesis?). The nom. urupā (like kaua and haxā) indicates a stem in PIE *-eH1- as in variant forms of the “fox” words: Lat. vulpēs “fox” (cf. Lith. vīlpišys “wildcat”; NPers. gorbe “cat”). The PIE *-eH1- compares with PIE *-eH1o- suffixation found for “fox” in Pīrān. լապասա- (OInd. lopāsā-), Gr. αλπής, Arm. alōūs. Proto-Indo-Iranian լապասա- (for -au- cf. Av. raopi-., another animal of the “dog family”), is generally reflected in Iranian with r-, but *l is preserved in Gilaki lavās and Danesfani (a Southern Tati dialect) luwās (see also De Vaan 2000: 279ff.).

3. Zaza չալ [f.] “lamp” (Vahman/Asatrian 1990: 270). The l is also found in Gilaki, Mazandaran, and Semnani չալ “id.”. The base is Pīrān. *cāl-, preserved with -l- in Saka languages: in Khotanese Saka չալ / կուլье “splendid”, hanjśāl- “to kindle”, Digorān Ossetic իզլու “be bright”, with *-u-/w- preserved in Psalter Pahlavi կուլ / wəl/ “curā”; cf. Man. MPers. ċr’h, Judeo-Pers. cr’ for the /-ā/ (Schwartz 1975: 412, with fn. 27; and idem 1982: 344), to which I now add Afghan Persian چرای (= Iranian Persian ďerāy). In Schwartz 1975: 412, I further connected the Iranian root *cāl- with Lith. kūlē “blast on grain” (following Bailey, who, however, proposed separate lemma from ċir for the “lamp” word). In Schwartz

2 Asatrian and Livshits (1994: 98-100, § XXII) maintain a radically different view concerning the preservation of the PIE *l- in Iranian; they think that the Iranian forms with l are mostly the result of secondary developments, especially in the expressive lexemes.
1982: 342-4, I also analysed the “lamp” word from *čūl- plus a suffix of agency *-āga-, whence not only –ā(y) with “lamp” words, but also in Judeo-Pers. darāy, Pers. darā(y) “bell” < *drāwāga- and Pers. damāy “nose” are derived.

4. Zaza k’šla [m.] “flame” (Vahman/Asatrian 1990: 273). This word may now be explained as a cognate of č’šlā “lamp” and Lith. kūlē (see the preceding entry). It is tempting to reconstruct, with *-r- from *-l-, an early Parth. *kūraḵ or *kūraḵ as the source of Arm. krak “fire, flame”.3 The Iranian *kūl- forms match the Lithuanian and explain the evidence for the etymon, hitherto adduced only from Greek and Lithuanian (for the etymon, see Pokorny 1959: 595, where *k should be replaced by *k); in laryngeal terms, zero-grade *kuHI- (> *kūl-) stands alongside *keH1wl-—similarly the words for “hernia” (see Pokorny 1959: 536-537), “sun” (ibid.: 882-829)—, where *-eHwC- ~ *-uHC- > *-ūC- show regular metathesis. Possibly, Iran. *čūl- is analogical zero-grade to *čōw- (< *čēw- < *keH1wla-), but may alternatively be an analogical variant of *kūl-.

5. Zaza lōzan(al)f. “opening, hole in roof for letting out smoke” (Vahman/Asatrian 1990: 273); the Siwerek dialect of Zaza has forms with ī and ī (Berz 2004, s.v. lojīn, lojin, locīn). Equivalents are Av. raocana- and Pers. rauzan (rouzan) “hole in wall for letting light in”—from PIE root *leuk- (with velar k); note also OInd. loka- “open space”, but rōcīs- “light”, etc.

6. Zaza polōsak [m.] “thunderbolt, flash of the lightning” (Vahman/Asatrian 1990: 274). The PIE root is *leuk- (with palatal final), well represented by Arm. loys “light” (< *louko-). A vestige of the verb is found in OInd. ruśánt- “brilliant, flashing”; Khotanese Saka has ruus- and parrus- “to shine”. The latter form, with preverb *pati-, points to deriving Zaza polōs- from *pati-lausa-. With reflection of different preverb, Kurmangi has birīs- “to flash, sparkle”, birūs “lightning”; cf. Sorani Kurdish birőske- “to flash, sparkle”,Ormuri brāš “lightning” (*apa-rausya-?). The Khotanese and Kurdish forms are wrongly derived from Iranian root *rauč- in Cheung 2007 (s.v.).

The one example I have noted of Zaza l for *r in a simple environment is mūlaka “ant. emmet” (Vahman/Asatrian 1990: 273); here the l probably has an expressive diminutive function, cf. the variant mōrfīla (ibid.).

1 Eilers (1974: 320ff., also 318) derives the Arm. krak, along with a number of NIran. words for “fireplace”, from PIran. *kar- (< PIE *ker- “to burn”). However, at least kūlaŋ in NPers. and kālak in Anaraki in the list of Eilers (ibid.: 320), may derive, I suppose, from PIran. *kūl-.
III.

I conclude with a few examples of the list in Vahman/Asatrian (op. cit.: 269-275), showing the interest of Zaza for Middle Iranian etymology.

A. Zaza bečk “finger”, Pahl. bčk, evidently a finger measurement, gloss to Av. ṭbišš- and baši-drājah-

B. Zaza daža “pain, suffering”; Man. Parth. džg ‘id.’ < “burning”.

C. Zaza (Siwerek) gart “big, great”; cf. MPers. gird “collection” and “round” (= Pers. gerd); further Sogd. yyart “wide, broad” < *wi-grta-. Note also Sogd. yurs “around” (*grt-s-u-). The base *grt-s- could also explain Zaza (Erzinjan, Dersim) gars “big, great”. The basic notion is “comprehensive, capacious”.

D. Zaza yanī “source, well”. Turgut’s (2006: 141) dictionary for the Bingöl area gives hêne, yene, hyena; cf. Av. xqniia- ‘id.’.

E. Zaza ḥ(y)lagā “field”. Turgut (ibid.) gives héga, yega, hyega. The parallelism with Turgut’s forms for item D. suggests that this word is cognate with Pers. xāk [*x(q)ay-] “land” (for etymology and semantics of the Persian word, see Gershevitch 1962: 76-78). For both items D. and E., reflection of OIran. *-y- is possible.

F. Zaza hīt(a) “moist” is from *hixta-; cf. Av. hixtaíaē “to moisten” (cf. Zaza pot- < poxt- “cooked”). The form is remarkable because of the great rarity of MIran. and NIran. forms without preverb (see list in Cheung 2007: 127, to which the Zaza should now be added).

G. Finally, Zaza k’anj “clothing”. My student Vahdat Avcı, who speaks the central Zaza of the Bingöl area, insists on the voicelessness of the final consonant, i.e. –c. In any case, the final –j (=dz) reflects –j, as in Kurmanji we have k’inj. Further cognates, referring to upper garments, are Man. Parth. qnjw, Sanskrit kañcuka- (< Iran.?), Khwar. knck (“shirt” and “snake-skin”, also occurring among the meanings of Skt. kañcuka-), and OPers. *kandu- (Greek kándus “a Median garment with loose sleeves”) < Median *kanzu-, attested in Elamite script as kansuka (cf. Schwartz 1969: 447 with reference to Gershevitch 1969b: 172).4 Ossetic k’anjol (= k’ándzol) is from Russian kamožl (= German Kamisöl), but Arm. dial. kanjul (= kandzul) “shirt” (Vahman/Asatrian, ibid.: 273) can be a NW Middle Iranian form with the Arm. diminutive suffix -ul, from Middle Median

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4 For Kurmanji k’inj Asatrian/Livshits (op. cit.: 86, § VII) reconstruct further the OIran. proto-form *kañcuka-, probably on the basis of the Skt. kañcuka-. However, regarding the parallels in OPers. and Median I mentioned above, the Piran. etymon of k’inj must be, rather, *kanzuka-, where, likely, the Skt. form comes from. Moreover, the intervocalic *-z- in Kurmanji regularly gives -z-, not -j- (see Asatrian/Livshits, op. cit.: 89, § XI, 2).
*kanz, as in case of Arm. ganj “treasure” and ginj “coriander” (cf. Henning 1963), which are presumably borrowings from the same source (the -a- in the first syllable of the Arm. word is from -a- in preaccented position). For etymology of Median *kanzu-, I suggest metathesis from *kaznu- (like *ganza < *gazna-). For the root, cf. PIE *kaŋh-/ *kaŋh-, with the basic meaning “to enclose” (Pokorny 1959: 518), whence for enclosing structures; and note especially Welsh cæan “covering, skin” < *kaŋh-nã- (ibid.). The root may rather be *kaŋh- or *kaŋh-, with -nu- suffixation in Iranian. The Median word could have spread through Persia, Parthia, and Chorasmia to India. From the same root may derive Sogd. k’z’kh/kāzē/“hut, small house (of wood)”, NPers. kāz(e) “cow-shed”, also kāza “shelter for ibices in the mountains” in Kashan dialects (Asatryan 2009, s.v.).

I have no doubt that the further study of Zaza by scholars more competent than I in the study of New Iranian languages (and particularly those of northwestern Iran) will bring forth abundant material of interest for Iranian historical linguistics.

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5 The metathesis *-zn- > -nz- was one of the “special features of the ancient Median language” (Henning 1963: 197-198).


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