

A contact linguistic approach to reflexive pronominal adjectives in Niya Prakrit and Bactrian

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Niya Prakrit is a Middle Indo-Aryan chancellery language, which was used in the 3rd-4th century AD in NW China. Ever since the discovery of administrative documents in this language, it has been clear that Niya Prakrit had been heavily influenced by non-Indic languages. So far, most of the research has focussed on the identification of the many, mainly Iranian, loanwords in Niya Prakrit (cf. Weber 1997). More recently, our increased understanding of the Bactrian language, a Middle Iranian language used in Afghanistan, has proven helpful in identifying further loanwords from this language specifically (cf. Schoubben 2021) and it now appears that Niya Prakrit and Bactrian have been in close contact, even though the sociolinguistic scenario in which these contacts have taken place still has to be worked out in more detail.

Less attention has so far been paid to contact-induced changes in the morphosyntax of Niya Prakrit. One area of the grammar for which such influence has been hinted at concerns reflexives and reciprocals (Burrow 1935: 790; 1937: 100), but this has never been properly studied. Yet, such an investigation seems promising, as contact-induced changes in the domain of reflexives and reciprocals are known from other languages (cf. e.g. Meyer 2013 on Parthian and Armenian or Dutch *zich* which is borrowed from German). In order to show the fruitfulness of morphosyntactic research on Niya Prakrit, I thus intend to concentrate in my contribution on the hitherto unnoticed formal and morphosyntactic parallels between the Niya Prakrit reflexive pronominal adjectives *tanuvaga* and *tanu* ‘one’s own / property’ and Bactrian $\chi\omicron\beta\iota\gamma\omicron$ / $\chi\upsilon\upsilon\tilde{\gamma}\omicron$ / and $\chi\omicron\beta\omicron$ / $\chi\upsilon\upsilon\tilde{\upsilon}$ / ‘idem’. In doing so, close attention will be paid to phraseological parallels.

On the basis of these similarities, I aim to argue, with due caution, that the use of reflexive pronominal adjectives in Bactrian and Niya Prakrit is the result of linguistic convergence. As both languages belong to the Indo-Iranian language family, this case-study offers the opportunity to reflect on the methodological problems inherent to the study of morphosyntactic convergence between closely related languages. Therefore, I will also take the historical background of Niya Prakrit *tanu(vaga)* into account, that is to say its formal and morphosyntactic relation to the (R̥g)Vedic reflexive *tanú-* (Orqueda 2019: 145–184 with further lit.). Besides, I plan to briefly address why on linguistic grounds Bactrian is a better match than, for instance, Khotanese for the morphosyntactic changes that have happened in Niya Prakrit.

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