

ARTICLE

Prasun historical linguistics: new etymologies and the fate of the Indo-Iranian morphemes **-am* and **-ka-*

Julian Kreidl

Indiana University, Bloomington, USA
Email: jkreidl@iu.edu

Abstract

In this article, I touch on some lexical and morphological aspects of Prasun historical linguistics. I propose six new etymologies for Prasun words that have not been etymologized at all (*üžóg* “resin”, *čawā* “rhubarb”, *wulóg* “footprint”, *žíma* “tent, camp”) or differently (*wuzógrog*, *zógrog* “knee”, *wuznúg*, *wuzéj* “salt”), and add further remarks to three words (*üžü* etc. “ice; cold”, *lümü*, *lümü* “tail”, *was* “day”) with whose traditional etymologizations I basically agree. Furthermore, it is argued that the common epenthetic *wu-* ~ *ü-* and the final (usually) *-u* ~ *-ü* have the same origin and largely go back to the acc.sg.m/n, nom.sg.n **-am* of the Indo-Iranian *a*-stems. Additionally, while the **-ka-* suffix is present in all Nuristani languages in various functions, there is a noticeable split between Prasun, where **-ka-* is added to many nouns of the inherited basic vocabulary while it is absent in the cognates in the other Nuristani languages.

Keywords: Prasun; Nuristani; Indo-Iranian; etymology; historical phonology; historical morphology; **-am*; **-ka-*

Sources and transcription

The Prasun words are generally cited from the vocabulary list in Buddruss and Degener (2015), which is the most precise work available on Prasun now. Morgenstierne (1949) is used when it contains additional information. Comparative data from other Nuristani languages stem, mostly, from Ashkun (described by Morgenstierne 1929, 1934; Strand 2011c), the Kati varieties (described by Strand 2011a, 2011b) and Waigali (described by Morgenstierne 1954). Regarding Kati, I usually cite Kati (that is, western Kati) and Kamviri (eastern Kati). While I do not want to imply that Kati and Kamviri are distinct languages, the research by Strand (2011a–2011d) has made available to us some Kati varieties in such detail that it seems appropriate to make use of the data where needed. Data from my own research with native speakers of Nuristani languages are only cited when they can provide clarification or further information not found in previously published literature.

The transcription follows, by-and-large, the academic transcription also used by other authors for Nuristani languages. Where the authors disagree – specifically for the sounds [ts] and [dz] – I have opted to use *č* for [ts] and *j* for [dz].

Abbreviations

I use abbreviations for some language names when they have been established in the literature.

Av	Avestan
IA	Indo-Aryan
MIA	Middle Indo-Aryan
OIA	Old Indo-Aryan
PIE	Proto-Indo-European
PIIr	Proto-Indo-Iranian
Pkt	Prakrit
PNur	Proto-Nuristani

üzű etc. “ice; cold”

The general etymological connection of the Prasun word has been clear for a long time, but the Proto-Indo-European reconstruction shows some variation in the literature. Because the Nuristani data can help clarify the situation, I shall make some brief remarks on *üzű* “ice; cold”. Its Nuristani cognates are Waigali *yoz* “coldness; cold”, Kati *yuz* “cold”, Kamviri *üć* “cold” (Turner 1973: no. 10396), and the word can further be connected with various words denoting “ice” or the like in other Indo-European languages (for example, Hittite *eka-* “cold, frost, ice”, Old Norse *jaki* “icefloe”, Old Irish *aig* “ice”), going back to Proto-Indo-European **yeǵ-* (Morgenstierne 1949: 280). As kindly pointed out by an anonymous reviewer, Wakhi *yaz*, Sariqoli *yoz* “glacier” also point to **yeǵ-*. But this root has also been prominently reconstructed as **yeg-* in the Indo-European literature, such as in Pokorny (1969: 503; Kloekhorst 2008: 279; Matasović 2009: 435). In light of the Nuristani and Iranian data, I would like to emphasize that the correct PIE root can only be **yeǵ-*. From **g* (assuming it precedes **e* or **i*), we could expect PIIr **ǵ* > PNur **ǵ* (possibly [dz]), whence Kati, Waigali *ǵ* and Ashkun, Prasun *ž*. PIE **ǵ*, on the other hand, yields PIIr **ǵ* > PNur **ǵ* [dz], giving southeastern Kati/Kamviri *ǵ* / *ć*#, western Kati *z* ~ *j* and Waigali, Ashkun, Prasun *z* (cf. also Halfmann 2022). While there can certainly be – especially in Prasun, as I argue in the etymology for *žima* below – individual oscillations between *z* and *ž*, the situation for this etymon is clear: all cognates in Nuristani and Iranian clearly point to PIIr **ǵ*. Therefore, PIE **yeǵ-* must be reconstructed with a voiced palatal stop **ǵ* and not with a plain **g* – using the traditional interpretation of the PIE phoneme inventory.¹

üzóg “resin”

The Prasun word for “resin”, *üzóg* (Buddruss and Degener 2015: 617) is related to the “resin” word in Waigali, *jöw* < **jatu-*. The word is of Indo-European origin with a good but not overwhelming representation in Indo-Iranian. We have, for example, OIA *jātu-* “lac”, with a few continuants in MIA and beyond (Turner 1973: no. 5093; Mayrhofer 1992: 565) and Pashto *žáwla* “resin” on the Iranian side (Morgenstierne 2003: 105). The root also seems absent in the Nuristani languages other than Waigali and Prasun – or, at least, any possible continuant is not used in the sense of “resin”.² The development in Prasun is regular, as PIIr **ǵ* yields the voiced sibilant *ž* in Prasun, and intervocalic **t*

¹ **g* can also explain, for example, Lithuanian *yžià* “icefloe”, if indeed from **iǵ-ieh₂-* (Kroonen 2013: 273), while **g* cannot.

² For example, “resin” is called *časkú*, *čaškú* in Kamviri, obviously unrelated to Prasun *üzóg* and Waigali *jöw*. Strand (2011a) notes the Kamviri “resin” word with a retroflex *š*, which is confirmed by one of my informants from Kamdesh, but another native speaker who was from the Nangal village in the Kamdesh district pronounced it with plain *s*. Two men from Wama provided me with the Wamai word for “resin”, *žikú*. This, too, is unrelated to **jatu-* and rather belongs to OIA *cikka-* “gummy matter in eyes, birdlime” (Turner 1973: no. 4780).

generally undergoes lenition in all Nuristani languages. The initial *ū* constitutes an epenthetic vowel, the addition of which is quite common in Prasun (see discussion under *wuzógrog*, *zógrog* “knee” below).

Note the **-ka-* suffix in the Prasun continuant, which is also present in the OIA variant *jatuka-* “lac”, but absent in all other known Indo-Iranian cognates. It is common for Prasun to use the **-ka-* suffix even when other Nuristani languages lack it, as shown in Table 1. Although there are counterexamples – with the **-ka-* suffix present in all or some other Nuristani languages, with or without Prasun showing **-ka-*, depending on the word – there is a strong general tendency. A few examples should be enough:

Table 1. The **-ka-* suffix in Nuristani languages

English meaning	Ashkun	Kati	Waigali	Source	Prasun	Source
“granddaughter”	<i>nōt</i>	<i>nut</i>	<i>nūt</i>	<i>*naptī-</i>	<i>natíg</i>	<i>*napti-kā-</i>
“moon”	<i>mas</i>	<i>mus</i>	<i>mās</i>	<i>*mās-</i>	<i>masíg</i>	<i>*mās-a-ka-</i> or rather <i>*mās-i-kā- (?)</i> ³
“spinning wheel”	<i>čātr</i>	<i>čotr</i>	<i>čātr</i>	<i>*čātra-</i>	<i>žitíg, žitəg</i>	<i>*čātra-ka-</i>
“star”	<i>istá</i>	<i>što</i>	(<i>tāra</i> < IA)	<i>*stār-</i>	<i>istík</i>	<i>*stār-a-ka-</i> or rather <i>*stār-i-ka- (?)</i>
“sun”	<i>so</i>	<i>su</i>	<i>soy</i>	<i>*sāurī-</i>	<i>ūsük</i>	<i>*sāuri-kā-</i>
“tongue”	<i>žū</i> ⁴	<i>diz, Km dić</i>	(<i>jīp</i> < IA)	<i>*dij^hwáH-</i>	<i>luzúg, wulzúg, ūljúk</i>	<i>*dij^hwáH-kā-</i>

It is unclear how recent the addition of **-ka-* in these Prasun words is. Additionally, it must be emphasized that the morpheme has remained productive for a long time in all Nuristani languages, leading to several waves of **-ka-* which is therefore preserved in different shapes in one and the same language. But despite the complex questions involving **-ka-*, there is a striking difference between Prasun and non-Prasun Nuristani regarding the usage of the morpheme in inherited (often basic) vocabulary. Given the many other peculiarities of Prasun, this could be yet another feature which shows the primary (genetic) or secondary (areal) split between Prasun and the other Nuristani languages. Nevertheless, we cannot say if the presence of the **-ka-* suffix in *ūžóg* is as old as in OIA *jatuka-*: it could go back to Old Indo-Iranian times, or it could be somewhat recent.

³ The second vowel in Prasun *masíg* could be from an original **i* (as in **mās-i-kā- ?*), because the “moon” word clearly became feminine in Nuristani at some point in history (and remains feminine in all Nuristani languages with gender distinction, including Wamai *mas* which is not listed in Table 1, but is very close to Ashkun). But given the uncertainties and some seemingly inexplicable oscillations in Prasun historical phonology, the high vowel in *masíg* should not be overinterpreted.

⁴ The Ashkun (and Wamai) word for “tongue” is probably inherited (accepted by Turner 1973: no. 5228), despite its very different shape compared to, for example, the Kati cognate. This might be due to the different stress patterns at an earlier stage (with Ashkun preserving the original stress in **dij^hwáH-*), although the sound changes would probably still not be regular (why *ū*, and why not initial *z*?). But there is no obvious IA donor language which could provide Ashkun with a “tongue” word in the shape of *žū*, as the potential local IA donor languages all exhibit a bilabial plosive (cf. Pashai *jīb, jəp*, Morgenstierne [1973b: 81], and also found in Waigali *jīp*). However, Morgenstierne (1929: 288) derives the word from earlier **žiū, *ziw*, and Morgenstierne (1934: 114) first and foremost compares the word with Dameli *žip*, which implies that the scholar thinks of an IA origin of *žū*. If *žū* were indeed a borrowing from IA, then it must have been borrowed at a much earlier date than Waigali *jīp*.

čawá “rhubarb”

čawá “rhubarb”, recorded by Buddruss and Degener (2015: 642) for the dialect of Paški, is certainly a loanword from Kati čawó. The fact that Kati *o* shows up as Prasun *ā* should probably not be overinterpreted, but it suggests that the word was loaned at a time when Indo-Iranian (and Proto-Nuristani) **ā* was still **ā* in Kati and not yet raised to *o*.⁵ The change PNur **ā* > Kati *o* is confined to the Kati varieties, as other Nuristani languages generally do not undergo **ā* > *o*, which means that it is an inner-Kati change. In any case, the genuine Prasun word is *učápar*, *učápər*, known from all Prasun dialects (Buddruss and Degener 2015: 516). Morgenstierne (1949: 256) derives the native Prasun word from **čwātware-*, and the Kati form from **čwātara-*, both possibly related with OIA *śvātrá-* “invigorating” (of soma and other food; Turner 1973: no. 12762). In line with ancient Indo-Aryan evidence, but also with both Kati and Khowar (*išpār*) – the latter being the only Dardic language for which this etymon is attested so far – we can reasonably assume that the original shape of the word in Nuristani had initial **čw* and medial simple **t*. Therefore, Prasun *učápar*, *učápər*, which requires a medial cluster **tw* (compare *čpū* “four” < **čātware-*), is a secondary form. It cannot be totally ruled out that the protoforms in Prasun and Kati also differ from each other regarding the vocalic situation, although this is unlikely. Prasun *učápar*, *učápər* presupposes **čātware-* (or, with Morgenstierne 1949, **čwātware-*), with a short vowel (already cautiously proposed by Morgenstierne 1949: 207), but the fact that the rhotic element was lost in Kati could suggest that **r* was preceded by a long vowel **ā* in Kati (cf., for example, *štawó* “four” < **čātware-*, *do* “mountain; forest” < **dhārā-* “edge”, versus *kyur* “leg” < **khura-*, *sur* “fountain” < **sáras-* “lake”, but then again *bor* “burden, load” < **bhārā-*). In theory, the Kati word might therefore go back to **čwātāra-*, but this would remove it further from OIA *śvātrá-*. Therefore, as an anonymous reviewer suggested, we could assume that the long vowel before **r* is a straightforward result of the loss of the intervocalic dental in **čwātara-* > **čwāra-*. This line of development has the advantage that we do not need to create another protoform which is not directly attested anywhere.⁶

In my opinion, it is not necessary to assume an original shape **čwātware-* (Morgenstierne 1949) for the Prasun word, as **čātware-* (with a simple metathesis of *w*) would yield the same result.

lümí, lümű “tail”

The difficulties in reconstructing the precise protoform and the dissemination of this very etymon throughout the Indo-Iranian world could well be the topic of an article on its own, so I shall only make some short remarks on the “tail” word regarding Prasun. *lümí*, *lümű* “tail”, with cognates in other Nuristani and Dardic languages (Turner 1973: no. 6419), is obviously related to Iranian **dum(b)a-* “tail”,⁷ but a protoform **dumbha-* given by

⁵ Final *-o* is rather rare in Prasun nouns, but appears, for example, in loanwords from Persian, where it corresponds to the dark, open *ā*, for example, *nikó* “marriage” < Persian *nikāh* (colloquial *nikā*). But it sometimes oscillates with *ā*, for example, in *mullo* ~ *mullā* < Persian *mullā(h)* (Buddruss and Degener 2017: 57).

⁶ The derivation from a Proto-Nuristani form directly parallel to OIA *śvātrá-* (**čwātra-*) is not possible, as the cluster **tr* remains in Kati (cf. Kt *řotr* ~ OIA *rātri-* “night”).

⁷ It is difficult to reconstruct a single Iranian protoform. Rastorgueva and Edel'man (2000: 479) leave it open by writing **dum(b)a-* as the lemma, but they reconstruct PIIr **dumba-*, which implies that they consider **dumba-* original. As an anonymous reviewer points out, Av *duma-* and Kurmanji *dûv* clearly point towards simple **-m-*, but the evidence from other Iranian languages is less clear. Sogdian has both *δwm-* (in Manichaean Sogdian) and *δwnph* (in Buddhist Sogdian). Persian *dumb* is loaned from Parthian, requiring **dumba-*. Pashto *lam* could be from either **duma-* or **dumba-*, although the change **u* > *ə* might point to an open syllable, thus **duma-*. Munji *lum*, Yidgha *lam* can only stem from **duma-*, as **-mb-* yields *-b-* in Munji-Yidgha. Note that

Turner (1973) cannot be accepted for Prasun. PIIr **mb(h)* always yields *b* in Prasun, for example, *üştyüb* “tree” < PIIr **stamba-* “stem, post” (while it gives *m* in the other Nuristani languages, for example, Kati *štum*, Waigali *üştüm* “tree”). The forms in the Nuristani and Dardic languages are not easily reconcilable – not, in any case, if we assume that they are all genuine inherited words, neither regarding their initial consonant (*l* appears also in some Dardic varieties without **d > l*) nor their medial consonant(s) (simple *m* versus cluster *mb(h)*) nor the presence versus absence of suffixes. If we suppose that *lümǘ, lümü̃* “tail” is an inherited word from Proto-Indo-Iranian, then only a protoform **duma-* is possible for Prasun. Morgenstierne (1949: 257) also records a form *dümǘ* from a man from Pronj, but it is not found in Buddruss and Degener (2015). Because of the initial dental stop, it cannot be genuine Prasun and must be a loanword after the change **d > *δ > l*. It might be a borrowing from a Kati dialect, which could point to a more widespread dispersal of direct continuants of **duma-* in Nuristani, but none of the recorded “tail” words in the Kati varieties (*dramří* in Strand [2011b], *damáři* in Strand [2011a], under “Zoology: External Body Parts”) seem particularly close. Loanwords from Ashkun and Waigali into Prasun are less frequent, but in both languages the “tail” words look more like that of Kati than that of Prasun anyway (for example, Ashkun *dimaší* also with some suffix, Morgenstierne [1934: 89]; Zhönchigali *dümər* with the same suffix as in Kati, Tāza [1396/2017: 1079]); therefore, they can be excluded as donor languages.

Phonologically, *lümǘ, lümü̃* “tail” could be a loan from a neighbouring Iranian language, either before or after the change **d > *δ > l*, because a number of Eastern Iranian languages (Bactrian, Munji-Yidgha, Pashto) also undergo lambdacism.⁸ Geographically, both Bactrian and Munji are potential source languages for Prasun,⁹ but it is unclear if we can assume that such a loanword would also reach Gawar-Bati, Shumashti and Pashai (which all have “tail” words with a lateral instead of a dental), while at the same time seemingly leaving out all other Nuristani languages. Possibly, the Dardic words are not even cognates of the Iranian “tail” etymon: Morgenstierne (1973b: 109) cautiously derives Pashai *līm* “tail” from OIA **lumbī-* “bunch” (cf. Pkt *lumbī-*, Turner [1973: no. 11089]). Alternatively, we could assume that the Pashai and other Dardic cognates of **dumba-* with initial lateral have acquired the *l* from association with words such as Pashai *lūm* “hair, wool” < OIA *lōman-* “hair on body of animals or men” (Turner 1973: no. 11154).

Be this as it may, two things are certain: the default word for “tail” in Prasun is *lümǘ, lümü̃*, which, if genuine and not borrowed, requires a protoform with simple medial **-m-*.

wulóg “footprint”

Phonologically and semantically, a derivation of Prasun *wulóg, wológ* “footprint” (Buddruss and Degener 2015: 839) from **pada-ka-*, cf. OIA *padá-* “footstep, track, place” is obvious. Turner (1973: no. 7747) also lists under *padá-* a Prasun continuant *wəl* as in *tə wəl* “foot sole” (*tə* being the general term for “foot, leg” in contemporary Prasun). Despite the fact that it is notoriously difficult to come up with general rules regarding the exact

Morgenstierne (1973a: 78), agreeing that a derivation from **dumba-* is not possible, derives the Munji-Yidgha word from **dumbma-* (likely via **dumma-*). This seems unnecessarily complicated, as **duma-* would also yield Munji *lum*, Yidgha *lām*.

⁸ For this very reason, they can, incidentally, be excluded as donors of the aforementioned *dümǘ*. With the exception of Persian in very recent times, Iranian languages without lambdacism have not been shown to have exerted influence on Prasun.

⁹ Pashto can be excluded because its influence on Prasun is more recent. A word for “tail” is not (yet?) attested for Bactrian, but starting from **duma-*, we would expect *†λoμo /lumə/*. Phonologically, this would be a fit for Prasun *lümǘ, lümü̃*.

development of the Indo-Iranian vowels in Prasun, we may be allowed to make further assumptions about *wulóg* and *wəl*. There seems to be a tendency that Prasun *ə* more often goes back to old **ā* (including **ā* < **aH*), while *u* is the more common outcome of **a*:

Table 2. The outcomes of **a* and **ā* in Prasun

Prasun <i>u</i>	protoform <i>*a</i>	Prasun <i>ə</i>	protoform <i>*ā</i>
syus “sister”	<i>*swásar-</i> “sister”	<i>zət, zət</i> “night”	<i>*rātrī-</i>
<i>wutús, utús</i> “avalanche”	<i>*trasa-</i> “trembling”	<i>nəm, nəmā</i> “name”	<i>*nāman-</i>
<i>wusčú, woso</i> “year”	<i>*watsá-</i> “year; yearling”	<i>gəm, gim</i> “village”	OIA or MIA <i>grāma-</i> “village” (rather than inherited from PIIr?)
<i>wusté, wustí,</i> <i>wustú</i> “spring”	<i>*wasantá-</i> “spring” ¹⁰	<i>wəs</i> “day”	<i>*wāsá-</i> “*dawn” ¹¹
<i>-úg</i> ¹² as in <i>úrjúg</i> “dawn”	<i>*-a-ka-</i> as in <i>*rawča-ka-</i> “light”	<i>əzn(a)-</i> “to know, to understand, to be able”	<i>*ā-jnā-</i> “to understand”, cf. OIA <i>ājñā-</i>

In Table 2, I have not included words whose exact derivation or origin remain unclear, for example, *sətá* “seven” could be a loanword or inherited from PIIr **saptá-* and either directly from **saptá-* > **sat(t)á-* or via **sātá-* with compensatory lengthening, and words that underwent umlaut, for example, *misü* in *t-əwa misü* “fish” < **mátsya-* (?),¹³ and words in which **a* or **ā* are, at least historically, in a nasal environment, for example, *(wu)zógrog* “knee” < **zang(h)ra-ka-* (see below), *wuč, wučú* “five” < PIIr **pánča*.

But even if we do not count such special environments or cases with unclear etymology, numerous examples remain where, for example, **ā* yields neither *ə* nor *u*, but other vowels: for example, *āw, ā* “water” < **Hāp-*, *čpū* “four” < **čatwāras*. Nevertheless, if we are willing to follow the argument that there is a tendency **a* > *u*, **ā* > *ə*, then we might be

¹⁰ In origin, *wusté* could represent a declined form, possibly an original oblique of a nominative *wustú*. Or it results from a wrong analysis of the contemporary oblique (< genitive) *wústěš* (also note *wustěš* “in the spring”, Buddruss and Degener 2015: 861, 862), as the idiosyncratic ending of the latter case is a simple *-š* in the contemporary language.

¹¹ See discussion under *wəs* “day”.

¹² **-a-ka-* also appears often as *-og* and *-ig* in Prasun. Notably, in *wulóg* itself, the suffix appears as *-og*. In many such cases we may be dealing with assimilations and dissimilations of the vowels in the last and second to last syllable.

¹³ Given that PIIr **ts* generally undergoes the same development as PIIr **č* in Nuristani languages (yielding *č*), we would expect *fmicü* (or *fmiscü* ?) instead of *misü* “fish” in Prasun. Several explanations are possible: 1. Unlike in Iranian and other Nuristani languages, but as in Indo-Aryan, PIIr **ts* and **č* did not yield the same outcome in Prasun. This would show an extremely early split between Prasun and the other Nuristani languages, and is, given a lack of good parallels, an audacious assumption; 2. In all Nuristani languages, **ts* yielded an intermediary **šć* (still preserved in Prasun *wusčú, wasčú* ~ *woso* “year”), which was simplified to **č* in all Nuristani languages except for Prasun, where it oscillates between *šć* and *s*, depending on the etymon; 3. The change *fm(s)čü* > *misü* in Prasun is specific to this word, possibly influenced by words with a similar phonological shape referring to “meat” and/or “flesh” (for example, *musúk*, Buddruss and Degener 2015: 718).

allowed to assume that *wulóg* “footprint” derives from **pada-ka-* with short **a*, while *wəl* “sole” continues **pād(a)-* with long **ā*.

was “day”

The Prasun word for “day”, *was*, is clearly related to the word for “day” in the other Nuristani languages, for example, Ashkun *wās*, Waigali *wās*, Kati *wos*. Already Morgenstierne (1929: 284) compares them to OIA *vāsá-* “abode; staying”. Phonologically, this etymologization is attractive because the vowels in this word – Ashkun *ā*, Kati *o*, Waigali *ā* – clearly and undoubtedly point to **ā*. However, the semantic connection between the Nuristani “day” words and **Hwāsá-*, if it indeed had the meaning “abode; staying” also in Proto-Nuristani, is not immediately obvious. Because of this, some specialists (for example, Fussman 1972: 199, Degener 1998: 559, Buddruss and Degener 2015: 858) have considered a derivation from or influence by **Hwasar-* “dawn”, cf. OIA *vasar-* “dawn”. But phonologically, **Hwasar-* is a bad match, which is already noted by Fussman (1972), who thinks that the missing **-r-* in the contemporary Nuristani words is the biggest obstacle in connecting the Nuristani “day” words with OIA *vasar-*. I would not rule out that, regarding the disappearance of **-r-*, we may have a good parallel in Prasun *syus* “(younger) sister”, Ashkun, Waigali *sos* “sister”, Kati, Kamviri *sus* “sister” < PIIr **swásar-* (OIA *svásar-*). However, I agree with the objection of an anonymous reviewer who notes that the disappearance of **-r-* in the “sister” word can easily be attributed to the nom.sg **swásā* or other cases without **-r-* in the paradigm of feminine (and masculine) r-stems, which we cannot assume for a neuter r-stems like **Hwasar-*. The problem could be solved by reconstructing an n-stem **Hwasan-*, as n-stems are often influenced by, or merge into, the a-stems in Early Middle Indo-Iranian times (von Hinüber 1986: 153). But even there, the problem that the protoform requires a long **ā* would remain.

As a solution, we could assume the existence of an ancient **Hwāsá-* with the meaning “dawn” in the PIIr dialect that would eventually become Nuristani. This **Hwāsá-* would have been homonymous with **Hwāsá-* “abode; staying” which lived on in OIA. Just as the latter is a derivative of PIE **h₂wes-* “to remain, to stay”, the former would be a derivative of the homonymous but semantically different **h₂wes-* “to become bright, to dawn” (Rix et al. 2001: 292f). This approach would enable us to combine the advantages of both OIA *vāsá-* “abode; staying” and *vasar-* “dawn”, while eliminating the downsides which come with a connection to either one.

Whatever approach one might prefer, Prasun *was* is in line with its cognates in the other Nuristani languages which unanimously point towards ancient **ā* in the etymon.

wuzógrog, zógrog “knee”

The Prasun word for “knee” differs from that of all other Nuristani varieties (for example, Ashkun *zā*, Kati *zū*, Kamviri *jō*, Waigali *zā*). A connection with the latter is unlikely for phonological reasons. PIIr **jānu-*, the source of the non-Prasun “knee” words, would yield something like *ʃzən* in Prasun, which is far removed from the actual *wuzógrog*, *zógrog*. Morgenstierne (1949: 253) was the first one who cautiously connected it with OIA *jānghā-* “lower part of the leg, shin”, Av *zəŋga-*, *zaŋga-* “ankle”. Turner (1973: 1660a) reconstructs **ujjānghura-* “above the shank” as a more precise OIA counterpart of the Prasun term, and points to a structurally similar *údbāhu-* “with raised arms”. The (likewise unattested) **jānghura-* is probably conceived of as a derivative of *jānghā-* by means of the morpheme *-ra-*, but the precise process and motivation behind its addition to the root are unclear. We do not know if Buddruss and Degener (2015) agree with the more general connection with OIA *jānghā-* or the specific form **ujjānghura-*, since the entries for

wuzógrog and *zógrog* (Buddruss and Degener 2015: 881, 888) do not, unlike other generally agreed-on etymologies, contain a reference to Turner.¹⁴

I generally agree with the direction taken by Morgenstierne and, subsequently, Turner. However, in light of Av *caθβara.zəŋgra-* “four-legged”, one may wonder if the reconstruction **ujjaŋghura-*, especially regarding the prefix *úd-*, but also the vowel *-u-* between the root and *-ra-*, is unnecessarily complicated.

Prasun often adds an epenthetic vowel **u* (in the variants *wu ~ ü*) to etyma in which such an initial syllable is clearly unetymological. For example, Prasun *ügiür* “hoof” versus, for example, Ashkun *kur* “foot, hoof” and OIA *khura-* “foot”, Prasun *wəltəm* versus Prasun *latəm*, *letəm* “tooth”, Prasun *wuznúg* “salt” (whether to **rawka-* or **rawana-ka-*, see below). It could well be that this epenthetic vowel was in origin the final *-ǔ* we see in so many Prasun words, and that this final *-ǔ* was analysed as the anlaut of the following word instead of as the auslaut of the preceding one. Possibly, this *-ǔ* is a remnant of some case ending, perhaps the acc.sg.m/n, nom.sg.n **-am > *-um > *-u* of the a-stems and the acc.sg **-um > *-u* of the u-stems. We see the same sound change in the Sogdian *-w /u/* as the marker of the acc.sg.m/n and nom.sg.n of the light stems, the Kushan Bactrian *-o /-u/* and Khotan Prakrit *-u < *-am*.¹⁵

Therefore, Prasun *wuzógrog*, *zógrog* might simply go back to the same PIIr form as Av *zəŋgra-* (< **janghra-*). Such a connection would have the advantage that we do not need to suppose yet another, albeit related, form PIIr **janghura-* or, with prefix, **ud-janghura-* (> Turner’s **ujjaŋghura-*) for Prasun only. Prasun *-og* shows that **janghra-* was later extended by the common suffix **-ka-*. Given that **-ka-* is much more frequent in Prasun than in other Nuristani languages, the addition of **-ka-* could, of course, be a rather late, for example, post-Proto-Nuristani, feature (see discussion further above regarding **-ka-*).

wuznúg, wuzéhj “salt”

Prasun *wuznúg*, *wuzéhj* “salt” is traditionally, since Morgenstierne (1949: 254), connected with the other Nuristani words for “salt”, for example, Ashkun *zök*, Kati *zúk*, Waigali *wřak*.¹⁶ Morgenstierne (1949) compares Skt *rucaka-* “sharp, acid; sochal salt”, followed by Turner (1973: no. 10761) and Buddruss and Degener (2015: 884). Fussman (1972: 333), too, basically agrees but thinks that a direct derivation from a protoform **ručaka-* is impossible and assumes an intermediary **ručka-*, because “[l]a conservation de *-k-* [in the contemporary Nuristani languages, A/N] ne peut s’expliquer que par la disparition ancienne du *-a-*”. Even then, however, it remains unclear if ancient **čk-* could even yield simple *k* in non-Prasun Nuristani and *-g-* in Prasun. Additionally, old **ǔ* gives

¹⁴ Buddruss and Degener (2015: 881) do refer to Morgenstierne (1949: 253), but without mentioning his proposed etymology, although in other cases, Morgenstierne’s tentative proposals are frequently mentioned, cf. *imú*, etc. “ear” (Buddruss and Degener 2015: 540). It remains unclear if the connection of (*wu*)*zógrog* “knee” with the Avestan and OIA counterparts was simply overlooked or actually disagreed on by the authors.

¹⁵ Morgenstierne (1949: 225) explains *-ǔ* from **-aka-*, but given that this very suffix appears to be preserved in Prasun as *-og/k*, *-ug/k* (and further varieties) – as in *wuzógrog*, *zógrog* –, *-ǔ < *-aka-* is rather unlikely.

¹⁶ The “salt” words in Kati and Nuristani Kalasha varieties exhibit some irregularities regarding their anlaut. While Waigali has *wřak* (but Nishey, Kegali *wřuk* “salt” is regular with its vowel and **r- > wř-*) and not the expected *řzuk*, Kati has *zúk* and not *řruk*. This could be due to dialect mixing (Morgenstierne 1954: 158), in the sense that the word for a commodity like salt acquired some phonological features of the dialect of the place where it was produced or of the people that sold it. This, however, cannot easily be verified, and a final answer is still outstanding. Nevertheless, while the *z ~ wř* irregularities are definitely an interesting question, they are post-Proto-Nuristani developments within some Kati and Waigali varieties (the dialects of the villages of Waigal and Zhönchigal, for example) which are only of secondary relevance to the question of the Indo-Iranian protoform(s) of the Nuristani “salt” words.

Ashkun *ü*, Kati *yü* (after *b*, *p* changed to *i*), Kamviri *ü*, Waigali *ü*,¹⁷ so the vowels in the abovementioned Nuristani “salt” words strongly disagree with the assumption that the etymon contained **ũ*. Therefore, it may be feasible to look for alternative etymologies.

Phonologically, the “salt” word in the Nuristani varieties could go back to PIIr **rawká-*, cf. OIA *roká-* “light, brightness”. Such a derivation would cause fewer problems and would, in fact, constitute an entirely regular development (other than the initial variation in some contemporary Nuristani dialects; see footnote 16) from **rawká-* > **rōk* > Ashkun *zōk*, Kati *zūk*, Nishey, Kegali *wruk*, etc. If the Nuristani word for “face” (Ashkun *mok*, Kamviri *mük*, Prasun *müg*, Waigali *mük*) is an inherited word from PIIr **mukha-* (cf. OIA *múkha-*) and not a borrowing (albeit old) from Indo-Aryan, **rawká-* > **rōk* > Ashkun *zōk*, etc. could show that **k(h)-* is occasionally preserved as a velar stop in contemporary Nuristani (depending on stress and syllable structure). In the case of the “salt” and “face” words, the velar stop might have been preserved because of the monosyllabic quality of the etyma in Proto-Nuristani or another early stage of the languages.

Concerning Prasun *wuznúg*, *wuzéj*, however, a protoform **rawka-* only constitutes a slight improvement over **ručaka-*, since in both cases, the nasal is left unexplained. We could assume that **rawka-* > **zug* with the regular sound changes of initial **r* > *z* (for example, *zət*, *zət* “night” < **rātri-*) and monophthongization of **awa-* (for example, *wulús* “earlier” < **dawsa-* ~ **dawša-*). But the reason for the nasalization in **zug* > **zung* would be unclear. Nasalization is a well-attested feature in Prasun (Buddruss and Degener 2015: 61), but the actual insertion of a nasal consonant – not simply the nasalization of the preceding vowel – is somewhat rare. If we nevertheless want to pursue this path, we would arrive from **zung* at *wuznúg* via metathesis and addition of the epenthetic *wu-* (like in *wuzógrog*; see above). For *wuzéj*, we would need to assume that the vowel in *zung* was palatalized at some point.¹⁸

However, given the mystery of the inserted nasal in this word, we should not rule out a different source for Prasun *wuznúg*, *wuzéj*, even if this comes at the cost of splitting the Prasun word from the other Nuristani “salt” words. Looking at the various Indo-Iranian words for “salt”, there is one word which seems phonologically promising: OIA *lavaṇá-* “salt” (Turner 1973: no. 10978), whose early Nuristani counterpart could be **rawana-*. The changes **r* > *z* and **awa-* > *-u-* are again regular; **n* generally remains (for example, 2pl ending *-n* < **-thana*). Adding the **-ka-* suffix, which is so common in Prasun, we would arrive at **zunúg*. From there, it is only a small step to *wuznúg* via the common initial epenthetic *wu-*. *wuzéj* requires the assumption of further changes, namely the shift of stress from the final to the medial syllable, umlaut and elision (possibly **zinúg* > **wuzíj*), but given what we know from Prasun, these are hardly insurmountable obstacles.¹⁹

While it is impossible to give a final answer regarding the etymology of the Nuristani “salt” words, there is good reason to be sceptical about the traditional derivation from **ručaka-*. At least for most Nuristani languages, a derivation from **rawká-* is preferable.

¹⁷ For example, Ashkun *bum*, Kati *bim*, Kamviri *büm*, Waigali *büm* “earth, ground” < **bhuHman-* “earth, world” (cf. OIA *bhūman-*, Turner 1973: no. 9556), Ashkun *utr* in *břáutr* “brother’s son”, Kati *pitr*, Kamviri *pütr*, Waigali *pütr* “son” < **putra-* (cf. Skt *putrá-*, Turner 1973: no. 8265). In Prasun, **ũ* tends to yield *ü*, cf. *ügü* “finger” < **anguri-*, cf. Skt *aṅgúri*. Prasun *bim*, *büm* “ground” may be a loanword from Kati.

¹⁸ The changes *i* ~ *ə* ~ *u* ~ *ü* and *i* ~ *ε* ~ *e* ~ *ə*, both of which are assumed here to arrive at *wuzéj* (via a vowel change **u* > **i* and then **i* > **ε*), are attested in certain phonological environments in contemporary Prasun (Buddruss and Degener 2017: 56).

¹⁹ The stress shift from a final to a medial syllable is also attested for Prasun *ižéj*, *žej* “snake” (via **jang*, **jong* or similar) < **jantu-ka-* < PIIr **jantú-*.

žíma “tent, camp”

Buddruss and Degener (2015: 895) record *žíma* “Zelt” for the dialect of Dewa, noting that the word was unknown in Paški and Ištewi and obsolete in Dewa in 1970, the time of Buddruss’s second field trip to the Prasun valley. The word does not seem to have any cognates in other Nuristani languages. Given that our knowledge of the Nuristani vocabulary is – depending on the variety – still limited, it could be that the word does indeed exist in one or the other dialect and simply has not been recorded yet. But it seems we can exclude the possibility that the word is related to any common word in any other Nuristani language meaning “tent”, “house”, “camp” or, if the original meaning referred to the material, “cloth” or the like.²⁰

However, it may still be possible to find cognates of this word in Indo-Iranian, albeit outside of Nuristani. Prasun *ž* in genuine vocabulary typically goes back to PIIr **j* > PNur **ǰ* (for example, *žur*- “to grieve” < PIIr **jvara*-, OIA *jváṛati* “is feverish”, Turner 1973: no. 5304), PIIr **ǰh* > PNur **ǰ* (for example, *žūt* “leopard” < PIIr **ǰhántar*-, Av *jañtar*- “killer”, OIA *han̄tar*- “killer”, Turner 1973: no. 13969) and PIIr **č* > PNur **č* (for example, *žitig*, *žitəg* “spindle” < PIIr **čātra*-, OIA *cātra*-, Turner 1973: no. 4743), but also PIIr **j* (for example, *ižej*, *žej*, etc. “snake” < PIIr **jantu*-, OIA *jantú*- “living being”, Av *zañtu*- “county, region”, Turner 1973: no. 5110). Intervocalic *m* can go back to PIIr **m* (*zamá*, *zemá*, *zimá* < PIIr **ǰhimá*-, Av *zama*- in *hazañrō.zama*- “thousand winters”, OIA *himá*- “cold, frost, snow”, Turner 1973: no. 14096) and certain combinations like **rm* (*īma*, *yamā* “blacksmith” < PIIr **karmín*-, OIA *karmín*- “doing”, Turner 1973: no. 2900) and **mr* (*omo*- “to die” < PIIr **mriyátay* “dies”, Av *miriieite*, OIA *mriyáte* “dies”, Turner 1973: no. 10383).

In light of this, I propose that Prasun *žíma* “tent, camp” can be connected with OIA *harmiyá*- “large house” and Av *zairimiia*° “cover; house” < PIIr **ǰharmiya*-. The word is also found in MIA (Prakrit *hammia*-, Pali *hammiya*- “large building with an upper story”) and Sindhi *hamiya* “palace” (a borrowing from Pali?, Turner 1973: no. 13998). It is not known from any other New Indo-Aryan language. The word has also been marginalized in the Iranian group, only surviving in Khotanese as *asīmā* “covered place: pavilion, roofed building” (Bailey 1979: 351)²¹ and in Pashto as *zérma* “preparation, stockpiling, reserve” (Kreidl 2019).

Phonologically, PIIr **ǰharmiyá*- could yield *žíma* through the sound laws of Prasun. Nevertheless, we need to emphasize that *žíma* would not be the only possible outcome of a protoform **ǰharmiyá*-. This is because PIIr **ǰh* > PNur **j* [dz] usually yields *z* [z] in Prasun, for example, *zamá*, *zemá*, *zimá* < PIIr **ǰhimá*- (Av *zama*- in *hazañrō.zama*- “thousand winters”, OIA *himá*- “cold, frost, snow”); *zir* “heart” < PIIr **ǰhṛdaya*- (Av *zərədaiia*-, OIA *hṛdaya*-). However, Proto-Nuristani **j* can also show up as *ž* [ʒ] in Prasun, as I have mentioned above.²² PIIr **a* in **ǰharmiyá*- underwentumlaut in Prasun because of the palatal element in the following syllable (just like in the Khotanese and Pashto cognates).

²⁰ Neither in Strand (2011a–2011d) (under “Habitation” and “Material items”) nor in Tāza (1396/2017) was I able to find phonologically and semantically suitable cognates. So far at least, I also have not been able to adduce any promising related words during my own work with native speakers of Nuristani languages.

²¹ As already noted in Kreidl (2019: 222, fn 7), and also stressed by an anonymous reviewer, Khotanese *-m*- is not a regular outcome of **-rm*-. The Proto-Iranian cluster is usually preserved as such in Khotanese (for example, *tāṛman*- “skin” < **čarman*-). The problem can also not be solved by assuming a metathesized **-mr*-, as this yields *-mbr*- (Emmerick 1989: 215). Bailey (1979) does not mention this issue, and seems to think it does not constitute a problem for the proposed etymologization. Obviously, one needs to find an explanation for this irregularity, but it does not (yet?) affect the reconstruction of PIIr **ǰharmiyá*-, which is supported by the Avestan, Pashto and Indo-Aryan evidence.

²² The fact that *ž* in *ižej* “snake” stems from PIIr **j*, not **ǰh*, is irrelevant here because both would merge into Proto-Nuristani **j*, although one would wish for more examples that show PIIr **j* or **ǰh* > Prasun *ž*.

Despite the known difficulties of Prasun historical phonology, umlaut of **a* in palatal environments is actually rather well-attested, for example, *misü* in *t-əwa misü* “fish”, literally “water fish” < PIIr **mátsya-* (Av *masiia-*, OIA *mátsya-*²³) and *izí, izí* < PIIr nom.du **Hákših* (Av *aši* < **axši*,²⁴ OIA nom.du *akšī*, also *akšīnī*, *akšyau*) (cf. also Morgenstierne 1949: 213; Hegedús 2012: 151f). The assumption of a development **-rm-* > *-m-* is likewise unproblematic (for a further example, see above). Therefore, phonologically, the derivation of *žima* “tent” from **jharmiyá-* seems permissible.

Let us now discuss the semantic side. In light of Rigvedic *harmiyá-* (translated as “ein festes Gebäude: Burg, Schloss, Herrenhaus; Wohnhaus, Vorrathshaus” in von Böthlingk and Roth 1855–1875: 1560), it is traditionally believed that already in the oldest attestations, PIIr **jharmiyá-* refers to a solid structure. Av *zairimiia*° is more ambiguous, as it could potentially mean both “house” and a more general “cover”. The common example *zairimiianjura-*, most likely “tortoise”, could be translated more literally as either “who has its toes in a house” or “who has its toes in/under a cover”, and it seems the adjective *zairimiiauuant-*, referring to the moon, does not necessarily require a literal translation “with a (firm) house” either, as a slightly different “with a cover” may be permissible too. Despite the fact that with all other factors being equal, evidence from OIA such as Rigvedic weighs heavier than data from modern languages such as Pashto and Prasun, it could be that PIIr **jharmiyá-* in origin did not, or at least not exclusively, refer to a “firm structure”, but to any structure that can serve as housing. This is already hinted at in Kreidl (2019: 223), where the author notes that Pashto *žerma* f. “stockpiling etc.” < Old Iranian **zairmyā* n.pl. “huts, houses” does not imply an especially fancy or elaborate house, as the contemporary meaning emerged via “storages” or “storehouses”.

The discrepancy between the Rigvedic and the Prasun meaning is even bigger, because Prasun *žima* “tent” definitely does not refer – at least not in the material recorded by Buddruss during his field trips – to a firm structure built with stones or the like. However, it is not uncommon that words for “tent” are etymologically close to buildings of a firmer nature; compare, for example, Latin *taberna* “shop, store, hut” and the diminutive *tabernaculum* “tent” or Spanish *tienda* “tent; shop, store”. Therefore, both the phonological and semantic connections seem strong enough that we may see in Prasun *žima* “tent” one of the few continuants of PIIr **jharmiyá-* in modern Indo-Iranian.

Conclusion

Prasun, like other Nuristani languages, offers a treasure trove of ancient inherited vocabulary which still awaits retrieval and etymologization. But Prasun is especially interesting in this respect as it is spoken in the centre of Nuristan, surrounded only by other Nuristani languages – and Munji to the north – thus exhibiting less Indo-Aryan influence than, for example, Waigali. Most recorded Prasun words are still without clear and unambiguous etymologies, which certainly has to do with the many difficulties regarding Prasun historical phonology, but also its exact relationship to the other Nuristani languages. Even when a given Prasun word has been correctly identified with a certain OIA or PIIr root for decades, an exact etymologization can lead to more clarity. For example, we know now that Prasun *wuzógrog*, *zógrog* “knee” goes back to PIIr **janghra-*, otherwise only attested in Avestan in this very shape. Entirely new etymologizations

²³ See fn 13 for an etymological discussion of Prasun *misü*.

²⁴ It is only possible to derive the Avestan *aši* from **Hákš-* if we assume that *aši* (irregularly) derives from earlier **axši*. Most scholars (for example, Pokorny 1959: 776; Mayrhofer 1992: 43; Rastorgueva and Èdel'man 2000: 282) assume that original **axši* was influenced by *ušī* “ears”. The original cluster was preserved in the verbal root in, for example, *aiui.āxštar-* “observer”.

can shed light on some issues that are even relevant for both Indo-European linguistics at large and ancient Indo-Iranian substrate studies. For example, in the case of *žīma* “tent” < **jharmiyá-*, which is considered a loan from a BMAC language by, for example, Lubotsky (2001: 311), we might need to rethink the original PIIr meaning of the etymon.

Outside of etymology studies, Prasun can offer us some insights into the early history of Nuristani. While many aspects of Proto-Indo-Iranian morphology are lost forever in modern languages such as Prasun, a careful comparative study of Nuristani can bring to light at least some hitherto unknown forms and phenomena, such as the acc.sg.m/n **-am* > **-um*, which shows up as *wu-*, *ü-*, *-ũ*, etc., in the anlaut and auslaut of many Prasun nouns. Additionally, there is a noticeable split between Prasun and the other Nuristani languages regarding the usage of the morpheme **-ka-*. Although it is unclear in most cases how old the addition of **-ka-* is, it constitutes an interesting dichotomy, whether we think this is yet another argument for a primary split of Nuristani into Prasun and non-Prasun, or whether we think it merely shows a later, independent streak of Prasun.

Obviously, the present work is only a modest contribution to Prasun and Nuristani historical linguistics, but it is hoped that the article shows that a modern Hindukush language like Prasun can contribute to Indo-Iranian historical linguistics despite the complex, even contradicting, sound laws we find in the language.

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