

The Iranian words for ‘witness’ and the morphophonology of roots in *^oā(y)-

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While Avestan *vīkaiia-* and Middle Persian (MP) Pahlavi *gwk’y*, Manichaean *gwg’y* ‘witness’ apparently continue Common Iranian **wi-kāya-* (cf. also Armenian *vkay*), the New Persian (NP) word گواه *guwāh* as well as MP Pahlavi *wyk’s* and Parthian *wyg’h* presuppose early Middle West Iranian **wikāh* with *h* instead of *y*. That this *h* goes back to **θ* is now proven by **wi-kāθ(a)wan-* in Bactrian ογαλφο, and we thus arrive at a peculiar variation between **kāya-* and **kāθa-* as the second member of these synonymous and obviously related compounds.

The same variation is also found in at least two other compounds, cf. MP Pahl. *cšmk’s*, Man. *cšmg’h* ‘notorious’ vs. Pahl. *cšmk’y*, *cšmk’d-*, Man. *cšmg’yh*; MP Pahl. *tlsk’s*, *tlsk’d-* ‘respectful’. In addition, similar compounds in **kāθa-* without attested variation are also found, e.g. **ā-kāθa-* ‘aware, knowing’ > MP Pahl. *’k’s*, Man. *’g’*, NP آگاه *āgāh*, loanword Armenian *akah*; **ni-kāθa-* ‘look, observation’ > MP Pahl. *nk’s*, Parthian *ng’h*, NP نگاه *nigāh*; **niš-kāθa-* ‘contempt’ only in Armenian *nškah-*. Avestan *kāθa-* may also be of interest if it belongs here which will be discussed.

Nyberg (1974: 12f., 53f., 85f., 139) had already reconstructed **kā-θa-* and derived this stem from the root of Sanskrit *cāya-* ‘to be aware’, assuming variation with a derivative **kāy-a-*. However, this root was reconstructed as Proto-Indo-European (PIE) **k^wei-* by Mayrhofer (1992: 531 and in LIV² (p. 377f.)) and it would then be difficult to explain the Iranian root shape **kā-*. Now Weiss 2016 has shown that there is good evidence for a root shape PIE **k^weh₁i-*, Proto-Indo-Iranian **kaHi-*, and so we are apparently dealing with a „long diphthong“ root showing variants with or without a final **i/y*. The behaviour of such roots in (Indo-)Iranian will be investigated more closely, and it is shown that the distribution **kāy-a-* ~ **kā-θa-* is probably regular.

References

- LIV² = *Lexikon der indogermanischen Verben. Die Wurzeln und ihre Primärstamm-bildungen*. Unter der Leitung von Helmut Rix und der Mitarbeit vieler anderer bearbeitet von Martin Kümmel, Thomas Zehnder, Reiner Lipp, Brigitte Schirmer. Zweite, erweiterte und verbesserte Auflage bearbeitet von Martin Kümmel und Helmut Rix. Wiesbaden: Reichert 2001.
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