

***āks-* and it shall be given:
The etymology of Toch. *āks-* ‘announce, proclaim’**

I. Introduction

A. The forms (after Malzahn 2010):

TB		TA
pres. XI 1sg. <i>aksaskau</i> , 3sg. <i>-saššām</i> , etc.	=	pres. XI 1sg. <i>āksisam</i> , 3sg. <i>-siš</i> , etc.
subj. II 1sg. <i>āksau</i> , 3sg. <i>ākšäm</i> , etc.	≠	subj. XII 1sg. <i>ākšiññam</i> , etc.
pret. I 1sg. <i>akšāwa</i> , 3sg. <i>ākša</i> , etc.	≠	pret. V 3sg. <i>ākšiñña</i>
impv. VI 2sg. <i>pokse</i>	≠	impv. V 2sg. <i>pākšiñ</i>

B. Preliminary observations:

1. the starting point for the Tocharian forms was a thematic present **akse/o-*, which survives as the TB subjunctive (*āksau*, etc.);
2. from **akse/o-* was formed a recharacterized *sk*-present **aksəske/o-*, which gave the actual TB and TA presents (*aksaskau*, *āksisam*, etc.);
3. also from **akse/o-* was formed the “palatalizing *a*-preterite” CT **/akša-/*, which gave the TB preterite (*akšāwa*, etc.);
4. the subjunctive, preterite, and imperative in *-ññ-* were an innovation specific to TA.

II. The standard view and its problems

A. For more than a century, CT **aks-* has been taken to be an *s*-extended form of **h₂eǵ-* ‘say’ (: Lat. *aiō*, Gk. ἤ). The *s*-extended root is also seen in Lat. *axāre* ‘nominare’ and *axāmenta* ‘songs sung by the Saliarian priests’.

☞ Nussbaum (2007) sees *axāre* and similar forms (e.g., *rapsāre* ‘urge on’, *taxāre* ‘assess’, *rixārī* ‘quarrel’) as denominatives to abstracts in **-sā*, these in turn being based on desiderative *s*-presents.

B. Semantic and formal difficulties

1. Words meaning ‘announce/proclaim/teach’ don’t ordinarily go back to simple verbs meaning ‘say’. Etymologically, words meaning ‘announce’ commonly refer to some aspect of the delivery of the message — either how it is brought to the senses (Ger. *verkünden*, Ru. *объявить*) or who delivers it (Gk. ἀγγέλλω, Lat. *nuntiō*). When a verb meaning ‘say’ is involved, there is usually a preverb that converts the sense to something like ‘broadcast’ (Ved. *pra vac-*, Lat. *ē-dīcō*).
2. The **h₂eǵ-* etymology cannot account for the *-o-* of the synchronically irregular TB imperative *pokse*. Adding the imperative particle *p(ā)-* [p(ə)-] to a root beginning with *ā-* [a-] should have given **pā-* [pa-], as in *pāsa* (: *ās-* ‘bring’); cf. (with other vowels) *peñksa* (: *eñk-* ‘seize’), *paum* (: *au-n-* ‘wound’), etc.

III. More about impv. *pokse*

A. The etymologically obscure ending *-e*, recalling about a half-dozen other forms (*pete* ‘give!’, *pīrpe* ‘be careful!’, etc.), marks the form as a probable archaism. Cf. V below.

B. Possible ways to explain the unexpected *-o-*:

1. influence of *poñ* < **pə-we-*, the phonologically regular 2sg. impv. of **we-* (: PIE **uek^w-*) ‘say, tell’.

Conceivable, but given the archaic look of *pokse* and the failure of the forms to assimilate in any other way, not very likely.

2. contraction of the root initial **a-* with a PIE full-grade prefix variant **po-*, giving pre-Toch. **pāks-* > CT **pāks-* > TB *pokse-*.

Entirely ad hoc, since there is no independent evidence for a preverb shape **po-* (> TB **pe-*) in Tocharian. The handful of forms cited in support of **po-* are better explained in other ways, e.g.,

peplyanke ‘sell!’: *pe-* is the reduplication syllable of an etymological reduplicated aorist
pepiltso ‘listen (pl.)!’: formation unclear, but probably also reduplicated
pete ‘give!’: anything goes; e.g., could be < **pot’do* < **poti-dh₃-o* (and TA *paš* < shortened **poti*)

3. phonetic change of the prefix vowel to TB *-o-* under the influence of neighboring rounded consonants.

Cf. TB impv. *pokkāka* ‘call!’ (: *kāk-*), from the CT root **k^wak-*. In CT, the labiovelar caused rounding of the prefix vowel to **-u-* or a rounded schwa; cf. TA 2 pl. *p_ukāks-äm* ‘call him!’. In TB the **-u-/rounded schwa* was lowered to *-o-* between two labials, as in *kokale* ‘chariot’ beside TA *kukäl* (< **k^wek^wlo-*).

The most promising approach, but incompatible with the *āks-* < **h₂eg^s-* etymology.¹

IV. An alternative etymology

A. My proposal: *āks-* < CT **ak^ws-* < preverb **a-* + “root” **k^ws-*, where

1. the preverb (PIE “**ō-*”) was the same as in *ākl-* ‘learn’ (< **ō-klei-*; Jasanoff 2016); and
2. the verb proper was originally **k^wék^s-*, the *s*-present seen in Ved. *cáṣṭe* ‘sees’ (3 pl. *cákṣate*) and YAv. *cašte* ‘teaches’. As always, the *s*-present is represented in Tocharian by what looks like a subjunctive (**k^wék^s-e/o-*).

B. Semantics

The meaning ‘announce, proclaim’ matches the sense in Iranian (YAv. ‘teaches’) and contrasts with the sense in Vedic (‘sees’). The ‘see’ meaning is original; compare WGmc. **skauwōn* ‘look’ (OE *scēawian*, Ger. *schauen*) > NE *show*.

¹ Though the exact conditioning is obscure, phonetically induced rounding was probably also responsible for TB 2 sg. impv. mid. *porcañnar* (: *ārc(-^aññ)-* ‘be obliged’). As a denominative to an Iranian(?) loanword, the verb is unlikely to preserve anything old.

☞ For the development cf. Nussbaum (2014: 221): “. . . ‘look at, behold’ etc. can be conceived as something like ‘make visible (to oneself)’ — as if setting eyes on something is like putting “head-lights” on it and making it appear. With the foregrounding of ‘make visible’ and the fading of ‘to oneself’, the way is clear for a verb meaning ‘look at’ to develop to ‘make visible’ and thus ‘reveal, show’: ‘look at’ >> ‘make visible (to oneself)’ >> ‘make visible’ >> ‘reveal, show, demonstrate’.”

C. Phonology

CT **a-k^ws-* was regularly syncopated from **a-k^wəks-* < **-k^wék-s-*. The absence of root-initial palatalization (**a-k^wəks-*, not **a-śaks-*) is normal in *s*-presents, which never show initial palatalization before a historical simple **-e-*. Cf. *nāks-* ‘destroy’ < **nek-s-*, *tsäks-* ‘burn’ < **d^heg^{wh}-s-*, *nāms-* ‘bend’ < **nem-s-*, etc.

[EXCURSUS: THE LACK OF PALATALIZATION IN *S*-PRESENTS]

The absence of palatalization can be and usually is explained by analogy to extra-presential forms. But this is not entirely satisfying. In the present case, for example, it is hard to see how analogy could have worked in **k^wék-s-*, where there *were* no other forms. Could there have been a phonological component to the phenomenon?

Possible scenario: in the inflection of *s*-presents, the *-s-* was palatalized to *-š-* before the thematic vowel *-e-*. If this *-š-* was phonetically retroflex (not known, but not implausible), it could have caused allophonic backing of the **-e-* ([ɛ]) of the root, such that the allophonic palatalization of the root initial consonant was allophonically eliminated (i.e., **nekse-* > **n^yekšɛ-* > **n^zəkšɛ-*). Later, when [ɜ] and [ɛ] fell together as [ə], the unpalatalized initial consonant was generalized at the expense of the palatalized variant proper to the forms where the thematic vowel was **-o-*. There seem not to be any exceptions to the proposed allophonic rule [ɛ] > (depalatalizing) [ɜ] / *_Cš-*.]

V. *pokse*

A. The *-o-* of *pokse* (for expected TB **pākse*) was produced by rounding in the *p.k^w* environment, either within the CT period or in TB proper. TA impv. *pākšiñ* sheds no light on the situation.

B. Two possible explanations for the final *-e* (< pre-Toch. **-o*):

1. the starting point was some variant of **-so* / **-suo* / **-sh₂uo*, the 2sg. mid. impv. ending familiar from Gk. *-σο* and Ved. *-sva* (Jasanoff 2006). On this theory, *pokse* < **-ks-s((h₂)u)o* would form a word equation with Ved. 2sg. mid. impv. *caḥṣva*. The homophony of the *-e* of *pokse* and the *-e* of the other “*e*-imperatives” (*pete*, *pīrpe*, *peplyaṅke*, etc.) would be accidental.
2. the more economical position: *pokse* was not an etymological middle like *caḥṣva*, but a real “*e*-imperative” (Malzahn 507ff.), whatever these may go back to.

In my tentative opinion, **-o* (> TB *-e*) was the 2sg. impv. ending of the PIE *h₂e*-conjugation/protomiddle. The key Tocharian form is *ptänwäññe* (MQ) ‘love!’, from a *h₂e*-conjugation present in **-nH-i-* (the “*iyannai*-type”). If this is correct, *pokse* and the whole paradigm of *āks-* would go back not to a middle like Ved. *caṣṭe*, but to its companion *h₂e*-conjugation (< protomiddle) active.

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