

Allomorphic variation in Khotanese nominal morphology: The Indo-Iranian background of the nominative-accusative plural of the a-declension

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The aim of the lecture is to trace the origin and evolution of a group of Khotanese nouns and endings whose historical analysis has always been a matter of debate. The lecture will be divided into three sections.

The first section aims at giving some introductory remarks to the Khotanese language and literacy. It will discuss the typology of the extant corpus, the periodisation of the Khotanese language as well as the inflectional morphology of Khotanese nouns and adjectives.

The second section will deal with the nominal morphology of nouns. The presentation will focus on a group of Khotanese masculine nouns — the so-called *kīra*-type — that display an inflection partially merging with that of the masculine *a*-stems, with the relevant exception of the nominative-accusative plural *-e*. This ending is at odds with the regular nominative-accusative plural of the *a*-declension which ends in *-a*. Through a new survey of the members of this class and an etymological investigation of the relevant endings and forms, it will be argued that at least three Old Iranian stem-types merged their inflections into the Khotanese *kīra*-type: (1) the Old Iranian thematic neuter (neuter *a*-stems) (where NAP *-e* < **-āh*, cf. YAv. *-ā*); (2) a few Old Iranian thematic masculine nouns (masculine *a*-stems) (where NAP *-e* < **-āhah*); (3) the Old Iranian masculine *i*-stems (where NAP *-e* < **-ajah*).

The third section of the lecture will investigate the supposed allomorphy of the adjectival inflectional ending of the nominative-accusative plural masculine in Khotanese. For this ending, Emmerick was able to identify an impressive number of allomorphs (SGS § 28 p. 281, § 35 pp. 283–284): *-a*, *-añā*, *-añä*, *-añi*, *-ä*, *-i*, *-añi*, *-iñä*, *-e*, *-yi*. Through a survey of the passages in which the relevant forms occurred, it is argued that the only regular marker is *-a* for both Old and Late Khotanese, as all other adduced forms require alternative explanations. Some such forms should instead be regarded as belonging to the feminine declension, others to a different part of speech, and others yet as different case forms.