The etymology of Toch. āks- ‘announce, proclaim’

I. Introduction

A. The forms (after Malzahn 2010):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TB</th>
<th>TA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pres. XI 1sg. aksaskau, 3sg. -saṣṣām, etc.</td>
<td>= pres. XI 1sg. āksisam, 3sg. -siṣ, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>subj. II 1sg. aksau, 3sg. ākṣāṃ, etc.</td>
<td>≠ subj. XII 1sg. ākṣiṇṇam, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pret. I 1sg. akṣāwa, 3sg. akṣa, etc.</td>
<td>≠ pret. V 3sg. ākṣiṇa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>impv. VI 2sg. pokse</td>
<td>≠ impv. V 2sg. pākṣiṅ</td>
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</table>

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 *aksoske/o-, which gave the actual TB and TA presents (aksaskau, āksisam, etc.);
3. also from *akse/o- was formed the “palatalizing a-preterite” CT */akṣa-/ , which gave the TB preterite (akṣāwa, etc.);
4. the subjunctive, preterite, and imperative in -ṅṅ- were an innovation specific to TA.

II. The standard view and its problems

A. For more than a century, CT *afs- has been taken to be an s-extended form of *h:eg- ‘say’ (: Lat. aiō, Gk. ἀγγέλλω). 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. о́звестить) 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 *h:eg- 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) peiṅka (: eṅk- ‘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 < *pa-we-, the phonologically regular 2sg. impv. of *we- (: PIE *u ek₁w-) ‘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. *pâks > CT *pâks > TB *poks-.
   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.,
   *peplyañe ‘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-dh-o (and TA paṣ < 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 *kʷak-. In CT, the labiovelar caused rounding of the prefix vowel to *-u- or a rounded schwa; cf. TA 2 pl. pākāks-ām ‘call him!’ In TB the *-u/-rounded schwa was lowered to -o- between two labials, as in kokale ‘chariot’ beside TA kukāl (< *kʷekʷlo-).
   The most promising approach, but incompatible with the āks- < *h₂eg-s- etymology.¹

IV. An alternative etymology

A. My proposal: āks- < CT *akʷ-s- < preverb *a- + “root” *kʷ-s-, where
   1. the preverb (PIE “*ō”) was the same as in ākl- ‘learn’ (< *ō-kleī-; Jasanoff 2016); and
   2. the verb proper was originally *kʷék-s-, the s-present seen in Ved. cáṣte ‘sees’ (3 pl. cákaṣate) and YAv. caṣte ‘teaches’. As always, the s-present is represented in Tocharian by what looks like a subjunctive (*kʷék-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. porcaññar (: ārc(⁻ññ)- ‘be obliged’). As a denominative to an Iranian(?) loanword, the verb is unlikely to preserve anything old.
Two possible explanations for the situation

The palatalization before a historical palatalization (Phonology ☞ [h]) of the forms where the thematic vowel was palatalized initial consonant was generalized at the expense of the palatalized variant proper (Phonology ☞ [h]). It could have caused allophonic backing of the initial consonant of the root, such that the allophonic palatalization of the root initial consonant was allophonically eliminated (i.e., *nekse > *n'ekse > *n3kse). Later, when [s] and [e] fell together as [σ], 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 [e] > (depalatalizing) [ʒ] / _ς-.

C. Phonology

CT *a-kw*s- was regularly syncopated from *a-kwaks- < *-kwek-s-. The absence of root-initial palatalization (*a-kwaks-, not *a-awks-) is normal in s-presents, which never show initial palatalization before a historical simple *-e-. Cf. nāks- ‘destroy’ < *nek-s-, tsāks- ‘burn’ < *d'egw-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-presidential forms. But this is not entirely satisfying. In the present case, for example, it is hard to see how analogy could have worked in *kwék-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 -ʃ- before the thematic vowel -e-. If this -s- 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'ekse > *n3kse). Later, when [s] and [e] fell together as [σ], 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) [ʒ] / _ς-.

V. pokse

A. The -o- of pokse (for expected TB *pākse) was produced by rounding in the p..kw environment, either within the CT period or in TB proper. TA impv. pāksiñ is 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 / *-suø / *-sh₂uø, the 2sg. mid. impv. ending familiar from Gk. -σo and Ved. -sva (Jasanoff 2006). On this theory, pokse < *-ks-(h₂)uø would form a word equation with Ved. 2sg. mid. impv. caksya. The homophony of the -e of pokse and the -e of the other “e-imperatives” (pete, pīrpe, peplyanke, etc.) would be accidental.

2. the more economical position: pokse was not an etymological middle like caksya, 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 ptānwāññe (MQ) ‘love!’, from a h₂e-conjugation present in *-NH₂I- (the “tyannai-type”). If this is correct, pokse and the whole paradigm of āks- would go back not to a middle like Ved. cáṣte, but to its companion h₂e-conjugation (< protomiddle) active.
WORKS CITED


