Animal names in the history of the Indo-Aryan languages

Hereditary traits and innovative trends

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Animal names represent a privileged field of research for the study of the lexicon of both ancient and modern Indo-Aryan languages. This is particularly true with regard to lexical enrichment strategies, as certain animals, occupying a prominent position in Indian culture (*i.e.* cow, elephant, monkey, etc.), acted as true centers of synonymic attraction. The main goal of the paper is therefore to explain one specific lexical enrichment strategy of Indo-Aryan starting by showing the difference, in this respect, between Vedic and Sanskrit and then highlighting the role of Middle Indo-Aryan in shaping the lexicon of New-Indo-Aryan. It will thus be possible to observe how alongside borrowings from the alloglot element there are other means in the inception of new words or new meanings of ancient words. Can these means be considered "areal trends" (i.e. concerning not only Indo-Aryan languages, but also Dravidian and Munda languages in particular), thus providing further evidence of South Asia as a "linguistic area"? An attempt to answer such a question will be also considered in this paper.

Keywords: taboo, linguistic avoidance, animal names, Indo-Aryan lexicology, Indo-European.

1. Introduction[1]

It is, perhaps, obvious that the Indian Subcontinent is a paradise for research on animals, especially on the relationship between humans and animals. However, it is not so obvious that this is also true for how this relationship has been represented over the centuries through the various figurative arts and, particularly, for what we can find in the huge textual production composed in the various, especially ancient, South-Asian literary languages. Within the context of the present collection of essays, the aim of this paper is to advance some observations on specific Indo-Aryan (hereafter IA) words relating to animals in order to search the possible trends/lexical strategies in the use, evolution or construction

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of this particular kind of words. It is common knowledge that IA is a privileged group of languages to make such an analysis, because we are in possession of an unbroken textual tradition for more than 3000 years. Therefore, I decided to focus my attention in the comparison of the earliest strata of Indo-European (hereafter IE) South-Asian languages represented by the language of the *Ṛgveda*, and the subsequent means found especially in what we know about Sanskrit, Middle Indo-Aryan (hereafter MIA) and New Indo-Aryan (hereafter NIA) languages. In pursuing such an analysis, I chose the words for 'bear,' thanks especially to its low number of synonyms in IA languages (see below). My idea is that a similar analysis can be done for a good part of words relating to animals. This is why, the present research can be replicated for future studies on other animal names.

The paper is structured as follows. In the second section, after a brief introduction to the richness of Sanskrit and Prakrit lexicon, I advance some preliminary methodological observations necessary in considering Vedic, Sanskrit and MIA texts. Then, starting from these observations and from Burrow's remarks (1955), I offer some examples of Old Indo-Aryan (hereafter OIA) animal names, with the purpose of showing the lexical difference and enrichment of Sanskrit compared to Vedic (section 3). Taking into consideration the words for 'bear' in IA, the evolution of these words in MIA and NIA is the focus of section 4, whereas in section 5, following previous scholars' works, I briefly outline their etymology. In section 6 a conspectus of the reasons behind the choice to replace the typical old, and original IE word for 'bear' with a new one which is more descriptive and/or attenuated is provided. Section 7 is devoted to the conclusions of the study.

2. The mutual relationship between OIA, Vedic, Sanskrit and MIA literary varieties

In order to show how words to name the various animals play an extraordinary role in ancient Indian literature, it is quite natural to start with OIA. For this reason, I would like to begin by showing how in the Sanskrit lexicon some animal names represent true 'centers of synonymic attraction.'[2] Taking Monier-Williams English-Sanskrit dictionary (1851) as a starting point of my analysis,[3] it is possible to see that 'elephant,' for example, has more than 150 synonyms in Sanskrit. The same is true for 'cow,'

[2] The concept of 'centers of synonymic attraction' was first used by Ullmann (1962) to define those concepts/objects, referents in general, that in a language attract a large number of synonyms, because in the respective culture these concepts have the greatest importance. Cf. also Balandina (2009: 52).

[3] For the search I used the online version of the dictionary:
https://www.sanskrit-lexicon.uni-koeln.de/scans/MWEScan/2020/web/webtc2/index.php

whereas 'horse' has more than 80 synonyms and so on. The following list gives a more precise picture of the amount of synonyms available for some animal names:

elephant = more than 150 words
horse = more than 80 words
cow = more than 150 words
donkey, ass = 5 words
tiger = approximately 30 words
lion = approximately 50 words
monkey = more than 50 words
dog = more than 50 words
jackal = approximately 50 words
fox = approximately 20 words

A similar abundance of synonyms is probably found in the literary varieties of MIA. For instance, a situation similar to that of Sanskrit can be seen if we refer to Hemacandra's *Deśīnāmamālā*, the unique traditional and today available dictionary of regional words (i.e. *deśī*)[4] used in Prakrit literature. If we take, as an example, the group of *jarāyuja* animals,[5] this is the current state of affairs:[6]

jackal = 11 words
tiger = 9 words
elephant = 8 words
deer = 8 words
mongoose = 7 words
lion = 6 words
monkey = 3 words
rhinoceros = 3 words

[4] The meaning of the technical term *deśī* in the context of Indian grammatical tradition is strictly linked with the meaning of two other terms, *tatsama* and *tadbhava*. These three terms form what is normally known as the tripartite classification of Prakrit words (and grammatical features), that, as Pollock (2006: 93) says, "emerge as a cornerstone of Indian philological thought." Its aim was to describe words mentioned in literary works written in Prakrit by a comparison with words attested in Sanskrit works. *Tatsama* ('the same as that', i.e. Sanskrit) words are Prakrit words with the same Sanskrit form and meaning, whereas *tadbhava* ('of the nature of that', i.e. Sanskrit) are Prakrit words the corresponding Sanskrit word of which can be found out with implementation of specific transforming rules described in traditional Prakrit grammars. *Deśya* / *deśī* words are local, regional words used in Prakrit literature. The heterogeneous class of *deśī* words can include: i) words of ancient IA or even IE origin which, although not used in the OIA literary works (i.e. Vedic and/or Sanskrit)—because regarded, for example, as too vulgar—were later inherited or borrowed by some MIA literary language varieties, and thus perhaps also by Prakrit; ii) genuine loanwords from South-Asian non-IA languages; iii) loanwords from non-South-Asian languages; iv) all those words that can be classified as Prakrit neologisms which, though corresponding to Sanskrit forms in their constituent parts, nevertheless do not have a corresponding complex Sanskrit form; v) words that are phonologically linked to a corresponding Sanskrit form according to the 'transformation phonological rules' (see above) explained in the principal Prakrit grammars, but whose Prakrit meaning is not attested in Sanskrit. For all the problems connected with the correct interpretation of the tripartite classification of Prakrit words see Kahrs (1992), Drocco (2012), Ollett (2017) and to some degree also Pollock (2006). For the typology of the group of *deśī* Prakrit words see Drocco (2006, 2024).

[5] The Sanskrit term *jarāyuja* has different meanings according to the Indian religious tradition. In Hinduism signifies 'viviparous beings' (Monier-Williams 1899: 414), specifically animals born from the womb, like humans and cows.

[6] In Hemacandra's *Deśīnāmamālā* approximately 5000 words are reported. For my search I used Ramanujaswamy's second edition (Ramanujaswamy ed. 1938) of this text.

antelope = 3 words
porcupine = 2 words
hare = 1 word
wild boar = 1 word
cow = 14 words
ox = 7 words
bull = 16 words
buffalo = 15 words
horse = 11 words
pig = 9 words
goat = 7 words
dog = 6 words
donkey = 3 words
mouse = 2 words
ram = 3 words
camel = 1 word

Starting from this simple analysis, one can already note the tendency of some nouns to be more represented than others. It is quite obvious that the high number of synonyms of these centers of synonymic attraction represents a rich field of research for the study of words for animals. It is instead not obvious that, with respect to Sanskrit for example, they can be used for searching the various lexical layers of this language. In this regard, as it is now well known, when we speak of Sanskrit, in many cases we tend to understand it as a monolithic entity,[7] fixed in time, space and genres and/or understood according to a panchronic approach (Deshpande 1993). However, already in 1955, Thomas Burrow wrote in his well-known *The Sanskrit Language* (Burrow 1955: 42):

> A number of old IE words which are currently in the Veda are no longer used in the classical period. In contrast to the losses of the old vocabulary, classical Sanskrit has acquired a large number of 'new' words from various sources.

For this reason, taking into account Burrow's words and other more recent linguistic studies on OIA (i.e., among many others, Witzel 1986, 1995; Hock 2016, 2021; Kulikov 2012, 2013), we can say that Vedic is not Sanskrit, because these two OIA literary varieties are characterized by their own history. As a result, within both these languages we must distinguish between different diachronic and diatopic varieties (see Renou 1956; Witzel 1986 for Vedic; Burrow 1955, Salomon 1986, and Houben 1996 for Sanskrit). Moreover, Vedic and/or Sanskrit are not equal to OIA (Burrow 1955, but see, interestingly, the position of Chatterji 1960, 1983: 99). Therefore, it is necessary to take into account the possible influence of those non-Sanskritic varieties (using a definition dear to Burrow (1955: 44-47); cf. also

[7] In particular, some scholars use the name "Sanskrit" for various forms of Vedic as well, cf. Thieme (1994), Wezler (1996: 346, note n. 73), and Pollock (2006). Not all scholars agree with this usage (for example, Mayrhofer, 1986-). Cf. also Aklujkar (1996: 70, note n. 18).

Katre 1943), and thus a marked variability within OIA (Emeneau 1966; Witzel 1989; Norman 1989, 1992a: 225-243, 1992b: 115-125, 1995). In the majority of cases, such variability is especially visible in:

i. MIA forms and uses as the result of original unattested OIA forms (cf. Burrow 1955; Pischel 1965) and/or

ii. in particular non-sanskritic forms and uses attested in Sanskrit as borrowing from MIA, for example, the various MIA features attested in the so-called Epic Sanskrit (cf. Oberlies 2003). In fact, it is important to remember that Sanskrit works were written during the MIA stage of IA evolution, a period in which this language shared the literary domain with other IA varieties, namely Pāli, Ardhamāgadhī, Prakrit (alongside its main varieties, i.e. Śaurasenī, Māgadhī, and Paiśācī) and Apabhraṃśa (cf. Pollock 2006; Ollett 2017); in the majority of cases these varieties served as vehicles for the mediation of popular IA and non-IA forms (Bubenik 1998, 2001; Drocco 2024).

3. Vedic and Sanskrit lexicon in comparison: The example of some animal names

Bearing in mind these preliminary remarks, it is worth mentioning that many words for animals attested in the *Ṛgveda*, typically of IE origin and frequently present also in other ancient and modern IE languages, are still used in Sanskrit (see below). However, if we consult a Sanskrit dictionary such as the above-mentioned Monier-Williams (1851),[8] it would seem that they are stand side by side with other words, the latter, in the majority of cases, not attested in the *Ṛgveda* or even Vedic. To illustrate this point, let me start by mentioning the following examples:

- Bear

Ṛgveda and other Vedic and/or Sanskrit texts	Attested especially in Sanskrit and possibly in other Vedic texts, except the *Ṛgveda*	
	Texts	Lexicons
ṛkṣa m. 'bear' (*Ṛgveda*) (Monier-Williams 1899: 224)	*ṛkṣī* f. (*Mahābhārata*) (Monier-Williams 1899: 224)	*accha* m. (Monier-Williams 1899: 9)
	bhalla m. 'bear' (*Hitopadeśa*)	*bhallūka* m.

[8] Thanks to the digitalization of the majority Sanskrit dictionaries, the same analysis can be done using the following links for a faster searching:
Monier-Williams (1899): https://www.sanskrit-lexicon.uni-koeln.de/scans/MWScan/2020/web/index.php
Monier-Williams (1851): https://www.sanskrit-lexicon.uni-koeln.de/scans/MWEScan/2020/web/index.php

	(Monier-Williams 1899: 748), *bhallaka* (*Pancarātra*) (Monier-Williams 1899: 748), *bhallūka* m. 'bear' (*Mahābhārata, Bhagavata Purāṇa*) (Monier-Williams 1899: 748).	(Monier-Williams 1899: 748), *bhallāṭa* m. (Monier-Williams 1899: 748), *bhāllūka/bhālluka* m. (Monier-Williams 1899: 754), *bhālŭka-* m. (Monier-Williams 1899: 754).

- Horse

Ṛgveda and other Vedic and/or Sanskrit texts	Attested especially in Sanskrit and possibly in other Vedic texts except the *Ṛgveda*	
	Texts	Lexicons
aśva m. 'horse', *aśvā* f. (*Ṛgveda*) (Monier-Williams 1899: 114)	*aśvaka* m. 'small horse' (*Vājasaney-Saṁhitā*) (Monier-Williams 1899: 115), *aśvikā* f. 'small mare' (Pāṇini) (Monier-Williams 1899: 115)	
	ghōṭa m. 'horse' (*Āpastamba-Śrautasūtra*) (Monier-Williams 1899: 379), *ghōṭī* f. (*Aśvad*) (Monier-Williams 1899: 379), *ghōṭaka* m. (*Pañcatantra*) (Monier-Williams 1899: 379)	*ghōṭikā* f. (Monier-Williams 1899: 379)

- Dog

Ṛgveda and other Vedic and/or Sanskrit texts	Attested especially in Sanskrit and possibly in other Vedic texts except the *Ṛgveda*	
	Texts	Lexicons
śván m. 'dog' (*Ṛgveda*) (Monier-Williams 1899: 1105)	*kurkurá* m. 'dog' (*Atharvaveda*) (Monier-Williams 1899: 294), *kukkurá* m. (*Mṛcchakaṭikā*) (Monier-Williams 1899: 287), *kurkurī* f. (Varāhamihira's *Bṛhatsaṃhitā*) (Monier-Williams 1899: 294)	

- Goat / Sheep

Ṛgveda and other Vedic and/or Sanskrit texts	Attested especially in Sanskrit and possibly in other Vedic texts except the *Ṛgveda*

	Texts	Lexicons
aja m. 'he-goat, ram' (*Ṛgveda*) *ajā-* f. (Monier-Williams 1899: 9)	*ajakā*, *ajikā* f. 'small or young goat' (Pāṇini) (Monier-Williams 1899: 9)	
avi m. f. 'sheep' (*Ṛgveda*), *avikā* f. (*Ṛgveda*) (Monier-Williams 1899: 107)	*avika* m. (Pāṇini) (Monier-Williams 1899: 107), *avíkā* f. (*Atharvaveda*) (Monier-Williams 1899: 107)	*avilā* f. (Monier-Williams 1899: 110)
	uraṇa m. 'ram, sheep, young ram' (*Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa*) (Monier-Williams 1899: 217)	
	ēḍa m. 'a kind of sheep' (*Kātyāyana-Śrautasūtra*) (Monier-Williams 1899: 231), *ēḍī* f. (Monier-Williams 1899: 231), *ēḍaka* m. 'a sheep or goat', *aiḍa* 'coming from the sheep *ēḍa*' (*Mahābhārata*), *aiḍaka* m. 'a kind of sheep' (*Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa*) (Monier-Williams 1899: 233).	*iḍikka* f. 'wild goat' (Monier-Williams 1899: 164)
	chagala m. 'goat' (*Taittirīya-Saṁhitā*) (Monier-Williams 1899: 404).	*chagalaka* m. 'goat,' *chagalalikā* f. (*Divyāvadāna*) (Monier-Williams 1899: 404)
	barkara m. 'kid, lamb' (*Āpastamba-Śrautasūtra*) (Monier-Williams 1899: 722)	*barkara* m. 'goat' (Monier-Williams 1899: 722)
		bhēḍa, bhēḍra-, *bhēṇḍa-* m. 'ram' (Monier-Williams 1899: 766) *bhēḍi* f. 'ewe' (Monier-Williams 1899: 766)
		mēṇḍha m., *mēṇḍhaka* m. 'ram' (Monier-Williams 1899: 832)

mēṣa m. 'ram', *mēṣī* f. 'ewe' (*Ṛgveda*) (Monier-Williams 1899: 833)		*mēha* m. 'ram' (Monier-Williams 1899: 834)

From these few examples it is already possible to advance the following observations:

- As already said, there are words attested in Sanskrit, but not in the *Ṛgveda* and in general in the Vedic *corpus*; this is the case, for example, of *bhalla*, *bhallaka*, *bhallūka* 'bear,' *kukkura* 'dog,' *ghōṭaka*- m. 'horse,' etc.
- If it is true that from the Sanskrit dictionaries we possess is possible to say if a word is attested in Sanskrit, but not in Vedic, it is also true that using the same sources it is not clear the real occurrence of the old and new word in all Vedic and Sanskrit texts and their respective frequency. Consequently, we cannot understand if in Sanskrit or in a Sanskrit text the new word is more used comparing to the old one or even if the new word replaces the old one.
- Quite interestingly a good part of the new words attested in Sanskrit, but not in Vedic, are merely mentioned in lexicons. For this reason, it can be inferred that they recur on rare occasions in Sanskrit literature and/or they recur in Sanskrit texts unimportant and/or little known. I am quite sure that these 'rare' Sanskrit words are borrowings from Prakrit or other attested/unattested MIA languages, although the counting of such words from modern Sanskrit dictionaries is yet to be done as well as a detailed study of even a portion of them.

While, as anticipated, starting from Sanskrit data we cannot clearly understand if ancient words are already replaced in Sanskrit by new words, taking into account MIA and NIA languages, however, we can make safer conclusions in this respect. This can help us to advance other interesting observations. For instance, it can help us understand whether the innovation started with Sanskrit or with MIA/NIA languages. This is in part the goal of the present paper and can form, in my opinion and as I said at the beginning, the starting point for the analysis of other words.

4. The names for 'bear' in Indo-Aryan

As I have shown, *ṛkṣa* and *bhallūka* are two words used in literature referring to the 'bear.' From the dictionaries we can infer that *ṛkṣa* is an ancient term, whereas *bhalla*, *bhallaka* and *bhallūka* are more recent terms, since *ṛkṣa* is attested in the *Ṛgveda* and then in other Vedic and Sanskrit texts, whereas the other words are attested in Sanskrit texts such as the *Hitopadeśa*, the *Mahābhārata*, etc., but not in

Vedic and in particular not in the *Ṛgveda*. Similar observations can be advanced taking into consideration Mayrhofer's works (1986-: Volume I, 247-248, 1958-: Volume II, 485, respectively).

With respect to the origin of the word *ṛkṣa*, according to the most important IE linguistic studies this term has a clear IE origin; we can compare it with Avestan *arša*, Latin *ursus*, Ancient Greek *ἄρκτος* (*árktos*), Lithuanian *iršt̃và*, etc. (Meillet 1926; Pokorny 2007; Monier-Williams 1899; Mayrhofer 1986-; Höfler 2024).

What about the evolution, in modern IE languages, of this original IE word? Modern European IE languages testify two paths of lexical development as for to name the 'bear:'

- The exclusive continuation of the original IE word, obviously with the appropriate diachronic formal changes. For instance, the source of the all words for 'bear' in Romance languages is the Latin word *ursus* (Italian *orso*, Portuguese *urso*, Romanian *urs*, Franco-Provencal *ourse*, etc.; see Gottlieb 1931 and Blazek's 2017 recent summary).
- The total replacement of this word in favor of a lexical innovation (even in this case see Gottlieb 1931 and Blazek's recent summary 2017):
    - For example, the Germanic languages show words deriving from a Proto-Germanic form **beran-*, perhaps with the original meaning of 'the brown one' (English *bear*, German *Bär*, Dutch *beer*, Norwegian *bære*, see Kroonen 2013: 60-61; see also below),
    - The same is true for Slavic languages where we have Russian *medvéd'*, Czech *medvd*, Ukrainian *vedmid'*, all deriving from a Proto-Balto-Slavic form **medwḗ?d* is equivalent to **medъ* ('honey') + **(j)ěsti* ('to eat'), hence literally the epithet 'honey-eater.'

Understanding the reasons underlying this lexical replacement with a more descriptive word is the aim of section 6, in which I will discuss the same kind of substitution that occurred, however, in IA languages.

As for the situation found in ancient and modern IE South Asian languages, in what follows I provide an account of the evolution of *ṛkṣa* and *bhalla/bhallaka/bhallūka* (the first one derived from Vedic). The data are taken from Turner's *Comparative Dictionary of the Indo-Aryan languages* (Turner 1966).[9]

The list below shows the attested MIA and NIA words evolved from Sanskrit *ṛkṣa* (Turner 1966: 117), therefore IA words deriving from the IE noun for 'bear.'

MIA literary languages:

[9] If not stated differently, the meaning of the words listed is 'bear.'

Pāli: *accha*, *acchaka*, *ikka* m.

Prakrit: *accha*, *riccha*, *rimcha*, *rikkha* m.

Romani languages:[10]

Asiatic: *hirč* (Pers. *xirs*?), *rič*

European (Germany): *rič* m.

Russian: *ryč* 'wolf', (Sofia) *ričhiní* f.

Nuristani languages:

Ashkun: *īċ*, Kati: *īċ*, *iċ*, Waigali: *ōċ*, Dameli: *ẽ̄ç*, *ẽ̄ṣ* m., *ẽ̄çi* f.

Dardic languages:

Pashai: Darrai-I Nur: *ẽ̄č*, Chilasi: *ēċ*, Areti: *yã̄ič*, *žã̄ič*, Uzbini: *ōç* (Laurowani: *āç* < *ārkṣa-*)

Shumashti, Gawar-bati: *ĩ̄ç*

Kalasha: Urtsun: *īç*, Rumbur: *īċ*

Khowar: *orċ*

Bashkarik: *iċh* m.

Torwali: *īṣ* m.

Savi: *ĩ̄ç*

Phalura: *ĩ̄ç*, *ĩ̄ṣ* m., *inçí* f.

Shina: Gilgiti dialect: *ĩ̄ç* m., Guresi dialect: *īċh*, Jijelut dialect: *iċhíni* f.

Kashmiri: Dodi dialect: *icch* m.

NIA languages (other than Romani, Nuristani and Dardic):

Sindhi: *richu* m.

Lahnda: Awankari dialect: *rich*

Panjabi: *ricch* m., Bhateali dialect: *rikkh*

Western Pahari languages: Bhadrawahi: *iċh* m. 'black bear,' Bhalesi: *iċh* m., *eċhɛ̃̄ṇ* f., Pangwali, Curahi, Khashali: *rikkh* m.

Garhwali: *rīkh*

[10] In mentioning the name of the various NIA languages, I use the most common form found in literature, hence without any diacritics.

Kumaoni: *rīkh*

Maithili: *ricch*

Hindi: *rīch* m., *rīchin*, *rīchnī* f.

Gujarati: *rĩch* m.

Marathi: *rīs*, *rĩs*

We now turn to the other group of IA words for 'bear' taken into analysis, i.e., those related to Sanskrit *bhalla/bhallaka/bhallūka*. As for the word *ṛkṣa*, the data given below are taken from Turner's *Comparative Dictionary of the Indo-Aryan languages* (Turner 1966: 536):

Prakrit: *bhalla* m., *bhallū*

Kumaoni: *bhālū*

Nepali: *bhālu*

Oriya: *bhālu*

Bihari: *bhāul*

Maithili: *bhālu*

Bhojpuri: *bhālu*

Old Awadhi: *bhālŭ*

Hindi: *bhālū* m.

Marathi: *bhālū* m.

Hindi: *bhāl* m.

Garhwali: *bhāllu̇*

Assamese: *bhāluk*

Bihari: *bhāluk*

Hindi: *bhālŭk* m.

Marathi: *bhālūk* m.

If we present the same data in a table entering:

- in the first column the languages in which there is the exclusive evolution of the ancient word (*group 1*),
- in the second main column the languages in which the ancient word is used together with the other word, which should be considered a lexical innovation (*group 2*),
- in the third column the languages displaying the exclusive use of this lexical innovation (*group 3*)

we get the following situation:

Group 1	*Group 2*		*Group 3*
ṛkṣa related words	*ṛkṣa* related words	*bhalla/bhallaka/bhallūka* related words	*bhalla/ bhallaka/ bhallūka* related words
Pali: *accha*, *acchaka*, *ikka* m. Romani languages: Asiatic: *hirč* (X Pers. *xirs*?), *rič* European german: *rič* m. Russian: *ryč* 'wolf' (Sofia), *ričhiní* f. 'bear' Nuristani languages: Ashkun: *īċ*, Kati: *īċ*, *iċ*, Waigali: *ōċ* Dameli: *ẽ̄ç*, *ẽ̄ṣ* m., *ẽ̄ḉi* f. Dardic languages: Pashai: Darrai-I Nur: *ẽ̄č* Chilasi: *ēċ*, Areti: *yə̃̄ič*, *žə̃̄ič* Uzbini: *ōç* (Laurowani: *āç* < *ā rkṣa-*) Shumashti, Gawar-bati: *ĩ̄ç* Kalasha: Urtsun dialect *īç*, Rumbur dialect *īċ* Khowar: *orċ* Bashkarik: *iċh* m. Torwali: *īṣ* m. Savi: *ĩ̄ç* Phalura: *ĩç*, *ĩṣ* m., *inḉi* f.	Prakrit. *accha*, *riccha*, *riṁch*, *rikkha* m. Garhwali: *rīkh* Kumaoni: *rīkh* Maithili: *ricch* Hindi: *rīch* m., *rīchin*, *rīchnī* f. Marathi: *rīs*, *rĩ̄s*	Prakrit: *bhalla* m., *bhallū* Kumaoni: *bhālū* Maithili: *bhālu* Hindi: *bhālū* m. Marathi: *bhālū* m. Hindi: *bhālŭk* m. Marathi: *bhālūk* m. Hindi: *bhāl* m. Garhwali: *bhāllu̇*	Nepali: *bhālu* Oriya: *bhālu* Bihari: *bhāul* Bhojpuri: *bhālu* Old Awadhi: *bhālŭ* Assamese: *bhāluk* Bihari: *bhāluk*

Shina: Gilgiti dialect: *ĩ̆ç* m., Guresi dialect: *īch* Jijelu dialect t: *içhĩ́ni* f. Kashmiri: Dodi dialect: *icch* m. Western Pahari languages: Bhadrawahi: *iċh* m. 'black bear' Bhalesi: *iċh* m., *eċhẽ̆ṇ* f. Pangwali, Curahi, Khashali: *rikkh* m. Other NIA languages: Sindhi: *richu* m. Lahnda: Awankari dialect: *rich* Panjabi: *ricch* m., Bhateali dialect: *rikkh* Gujarati: *rĩ̆ch* m.			

As the table shows, the situation offered by the words for 'bear' in IA languages is in part similar to the one found in other IE languages. Indeed, in IA there is a new word for 'bear,' beside the IE one. Notably, this word is found not only in MIA, but also in OIA, as attested by Sanskrit, and MIA, as attested by Prakrit and Apabhraṃśa, but not by Pāli. However, the situation found in IA is only in part similar to the one of other European languages because among the latter we find either i) languages testifying only the evolution of the ancient word or ii) languages testifying only the evolution of the lexical innovation. On the contrary, in IA, besides these two groups of languages analogous to the two groups of European languages seen above, another group is present (see Group 2 in the Table above). In the languages belonging to this group the ancient word is used together with the lexical innovation; the latter is the same found in the third group of languages.

To put it more precisely:

1. As for the *first group*, OIA is represented by Vedic, whereas MIA by Pāli, because only forms deriving from *ṛkṣa* are attested in this language; these are *accha*, *acchaka*, and *ikka* m. With respect to NIA, it

is noteworthy that especially North-Western languages show the exclusive evolution of the ancient word. Therefore, this is the case of the Dardic languages (i.e. Kashmiri, Shina, etc.), but also of the various so-called Nuristani languages and of some Romani languages. Quite interestingly, also in Gujarati, in Panjabi, in Lahnda (i.e. Western Panjabi) and in Sindhi only words connected with *ṛkṣa* are attested. Consequently, this group is made up by Western and North-Western NIA, as well as by some Romani languages and by the group of the Nuristani languages.

2. The *second group* of languages show a quite different situation. If in Vedic only *ṛkṣa* is attested, in Sanskrit beside *ṛkṣa*, *bhalla/bhallaka/bhallūka* are also attested.[11] Similarly, in Prakrit beside *accha*, *riccha*, *riṁcha*, *rikkha* m., all deriving from *ṛkṣa*,[12] *bhalla* and *bhallū* m. (the latter only in Hemacandra's *Deśīnāmamālā*) are attested (see above). The situation found in Sanskrit and Prakrit is also true for some modern IA languages. In particular, Hindi, Marathi, Maithili and also Central Pahari languages (Garhwali and Kumaoni) display both a form deriving from Sanskrit *ṛkṣa* and/or Prakrit *riccha/rikkha* and a form deriving from Sanskrit *bhalla/bhallaka/bhallūka* and/or Prakrit *bhalla/bhallū*.[13] In conclusion, the second group is made up by Central NIA.
3. Languages of the *third group* display only words connected with Sanskrit *bhalla/bhallaka/bhallūka* and/or Prakrit *bhalla/bhallū*. Interestingly these are only Eastern IA languages or Eastern Hindi linguistic varieties; the only exception is Nepali. This means that in these languages no words derived from *ṛkṣa* are attested. As a result, the third group is made up especially, if not only, by Eastern NIA.

5. On the possible etymology of Prakrit *bhalla/bhallū* 'bear'

Given how widespread in NIA the evolution of Prakrit *bhalla/bhallū* as a lexical substitution is, let me now move on to understand its etymology and the possible reason behind the choice to use it as a new word for 'bear' in place of the original IE word reflected by Vedic and Sanskrit *ṛkṣa*.

The Prakrit *deśī* word *bhallū* 'bear,' reported in Hemacandra's *Deśīnāmamālā*, and the Prakrit word *bhalla* 'bear' are undoubtedly linked with the Sanskrit words *bhallūka* and *bhalla* both meaning 'bear;'

[11] It is possible to find in Sanskrit also the words *accha* 'bear' and *acchabhalla* 'bear,' both attested in the *Bālarāmāyaṇa* (Monier-Williams 1899: 9). *Acchabhalla* 'bear' is also attested in Prakrit alongside *ricchabhalla* and *acchahalla* both meaning 'bear' (cf. Turner 1966: 117). Sanskrit *accha/acchabhalla* 'bear' are clear prakritism (cf. Monier-Williams 1899: 9; Mayrhofer 1986-). For a discussion on the reasons behind the needs of combining two words with the same meaning see Chatterji (1983).

[12] As regards *accha* see also Setha (1923-28: 21), whereas for *riṃcha*, *rikkha*, *riccha* see Setha (1923-28: 711-712).

[13] In Hindi also *ṛkṣa* is attested (cf. McGregor 1993: 139), but this is clearly a Sanskrit loanword.

the former, as already said, is attested in the *Mahābhārata* and in the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, the latter in the *Hitopadeśa* (cf. Monier-Williams 1899: 748), and perhaps only there. I think that in this case we are facing a typical borrowing from Prakrit or from some other MIA literary language. Nevertheless, it is not easy to understand conclusively if, even in this case, Prakrit is the donor or the recipient language (but see what reported in footnote 11).

Be that as it may, as for the origin of Sanskrit *bhalla/bhallaka/bhallūka* and/or Prakrit *bhalla/bhallū* 'bear' two hypothesis have been put forward so far.

The first one, advanced by Mayrhofer (1956-: 485), suggests the probable derivation of this Prakrit/Sanskrit word from a PIE form **bher-/*bher-u* 'brown' (cf. also Pokorny 2007: 417-418).

The second hypothesis considers *bhalla* 'bear' as a semantic evolution of Prakrit *bhalla* 'good,' 'excellent,' 'best' (Setha 1923-38: 646; Turner 1966: 535).[14] According to this hypothesis, the latter probably derives from an OIA form **bhadla*, understood by Mayrhofer (1956-: 483-484) as a vulgar, corrupted variant of the correct and widely attested Vedic and Sanskrit form *bhadra* 'blessed,' 'auspicious,' 'fortunate,' 'prosperous,' 'happy,' 'friendly,' 'kind,' 'gracious' (see Monier-Williams 1899: 745). The unattested OIA word **bhadla* is considered corrupted, because showing the consonant group *-dl-* in the place of *-dr-*, therefore a variant of this Sanskrit consonant group, according to the well-known *-r-/-l-* alternation present in IA.[15]

Although it is not possible to come to a definitive conclusion—this is quite usual in doing etymological research—as to which of the above two hypotheses is at least the more plausible, what is interesting to note here is that in both cases the meaning 'bear' for *bhalla* seems to be a secondary

[14] As for the meaning 'good', the variant *bhallaya* is also reported. The word *bhalla* with the meaning 'auspicious,' 'favorable' is also attested in Sanskrit, but only in lexicons (Monier-Williams 1899: 748). Even in this case, it is quite difficult to understand if Sanskrit is the donor or the recipient language.

[15] In the ancient verses of the *Ṛgveda*, the use of *-r-* is almost exclusive; in this text, there are very few words that contain the liquid *-l-*. In classical Sanskrit, *-r-* is still dominant, although in a less exclusive way than in (Early) Vedic; as a consequence, both *-r-* and *-l-* are present in Sanskrit. The same phenomenon occurs also in Pāli and in the various varieties of Prakrit and of scholarly MIA, where the change of *-r-* into *-l-* is very common. Sometimes, both in Pāli and in Sanskrit, there is the presence of double forms (e.g. Pāli *lohita*, *rohita* 'red'): in some cases, the classical Sanskrit used different meanings for these duplicates. Eastern MIA varieties show the predominance of *-l-*, and, contrary to the Western varieties, have totally absorbed the *-r-*. This fact is documented by the epigraphy. In particular, the Aśoka inscriptions found in the Ganges basin and on the Odisha coast show almost exclusively *-l-*. The fact that in classical Sanskrit and in Pāli there is the presence of both liquids, and that in the Eastern varieties there is the presence of only *-l-*, with the complete exclusion of *-r-*, suggests that the liquid *-l-* did not disappear in OIA only to reappear later, but rather, that it survived only at the spoken dialect level. Its extreme rarity in *Ṛgveda* is an index of style with respect to dialects, while its rare use in classical Sanskrit clearly shows a distinction from the spoken language, as desired by the Brahmanic tradition. For an in-depth discussion of this question, see, among others, Bloch (1934), Chatterji (1960: 51, 1983: 67-69), Pischel (1965: 210-212) and Geiger (1969: 88-89).

semantic evolution, quite certainly originally to Prakrit/MIA, from the primary meaning 'brown' (in the case of < PIE **bheru*) or 'good' (in the case of < OIA **bhadla*, as a variant of the Vedic/Sanskrit word *bhadra*). As a consequence, it seems quite evident that also in Prakrit/MIA and in some NIA languages—similarly to what we have seen for European IE languages—the 'bear' is named through a substitute word—descriptive in the case of < **bheru*, even a euphemism in the case of < **bhadla*—formed and used in order to avoid mentioning the ancient word. However, why the necessity to call the bear 'the brown (one)' or 'the good (one)?' Answering this question, as well as understanding the reasons why some European languages have chosen to avoid/interdict an ancient term and consequently to use a new descriptive (attenuate) term or a euphemism is the purpose of the next section.

6. Linguistic avoidance/interdiction as a cause for lexical substitution

Linguistic avoidance/interdiction usually refers to the phenomenon whereby certain words or names were avoided/interdicted and replaced with other expressions for magical-religious, social or decency reasons. This phenomenon, known also as 'taboo replacement,' is present in many if not all languages and is manifested through various types of linguistic and lexical substitutions, such as the use of euphemisms, circumlocutions, metaphors, litotes, and other expedients (see, among many others, Meillet 1926; De' Paratesi 1969; Hock 2023: 380-383). In particular, euphemism, namely the use of more attenuated or less direct word compared to the original one, is very common, especially in the history of the IE languages (Meillet 1926; Bonfante 1939). The use of this means, along with the other aforementioned, reflects deep-seated beliefs and fears of ancient peoples towards referents considered dangerous, sacred or unpleasant, which means it could involve names of deities, animals, body parts, natural phenomena, and concepts related to death and illness (Farrell 1911; De' Paratesi 1969).

With reference to the linguistic interdiction of words for specific animals (Meillet 1926; Emeneau 1948; Tuite and Schulze 1998; Blench 2007; Wacewicz-Chorosz 2023), there has been a great deal of discussion regarding the reasons behind this phenomenon. Over time three hypotheses have been advanced on the subject. The first is that of Meillet (1926),[16] later shared by Frazer (1911). It is interesting to point out that exactly the lexical substitution put in place by the Germanic and Balto-Slavic languages and related to the original Indo-European name for 'bear' underlies Meillet's hypothesis (1926) that some words in the languages of this linguistic family, and more generally in all languages, were replaced by other words for reasons linked to taboo replacement. According to Meillet

[16] As mentioned in the References, Meillet's paper was published privately in 1906.

and Frazer, one could not pronounce the names of the animals one was hunting because they, on hearing their name pronounced, would be able to get to safety. Emeneau (1948), in contrast to Meillet and Frazer, supported another hypothesis according to which all these animals, in addition to being animals to be hunted, would also and especially be animals connected with some cult or even god-animals, and thus it is their religious/symbolic power at the foundation of the replacement of their original name. Smal-Stocki (1950) proposes a third hypothesis, focusing more on the linguistic customs and taboos of a modern society, that of Carpathian communities, rather than on the analysis of ancient languages. In this society, the names of the bear, wolf and all other animals for which a lexical replacement is implemented at a very ancient stage due to linguistic interdiction, continue to be employed in present-day languages. However, in these communities, these animals are not feared for religious reasons, but because of their ferocity and because they are a danger to the herd. As a matter of fact, although Smal-Stocki's remarks concern modern Ukrainian hunters, his hypothesis is based on the magical power of words in evoking or disturbing animals—roughly analogous to what was advanced by Meillet—that are considered dangerous, but also endowed with power and a force that is certainly feared, but also respected.

Given that, as I just mentioned, underlying the three above-mentioned hypotheses seems to be the symbolic value of a certain type of animal within a specific culture, in what follows I take into account Emeneau's assumption (1948), because it is interesting for at least two reasons.

First, Emeneau tried to explain the reason why some languages, but not others, have felt the need to avoid certain words by introducing lexical substitutions accordingly. As claimed by this author, this would not be related only to hunting, because at this point we would have to think that languages such as Latin or Sanskrit were spoken in environments where the bear was not present, i.e. where this animal was not hunted and/or where there were no opportunities for encounters/clashes between this animal and humans. According to Emeneau this is not conceivable and for this reason he suggests that, on the contrary, the contact of some IE populations with other populations on the fringes of IE expansion where the bear had ritual, symbolic value would have led the former to substitute the word because of the influence of the latter. As a matter of fact, many references to the symbolic/religious power of the bear can be found in various cultures of the world (cf. Hallowell 1926; Barbeau 1946; Kitagawa 1961; Black 1998; Kwon 1999; Berres *et al.* 2004), and such power may be responsible for the necessity to avoid using or pronouncing the original name for taboo reasons (cf. Frazer 1911).

Second, starting from the name of the bear, and in particular from Frazer's material collected from some South-Asian languages, Emeneau tried to corroborate his hypothesis concerning the underpinnings of the lexical substitution of the original IE word for 'bear' by showing that, as in the

case of this animal, even for the 'tiger' in South-Asia there are some sort of lexical displacement or confusion, and this is the result of the symbolic and religious value of this beast of prey. Frazer's statement is reported below for completeness:

> While the Malayalies of the Shervaray Hills are hunting the tiger, they speak of the beast only as 'the dog.' The Canarese of southern India call the tiger either 'the dog' or 'the jackal;' they think that if they called him by his proper name, he would be sure to carry off one of them. The jungle people of northern India, who meet the tiger in his native haunts, will not pronounce his name, but speak of him as the 'jackal' (*gídar*), or 'the beast' (*janwar*), or use some other euphemistic term. In some places they treat the wolf and the bear in the same fashion... The Kols, a Dravidian (sic!) race of northern India, will not speak of death or beasts of prey by their proper names in the morning. Their name for the tiger at that time of day is 'he with the claws,' and for the elephant 'he with the teeth.' The forest of the Sundarbans [...] are full of man-eating tigers [...] Here accordingly the ferocious animal is not called a tiger but a jackal (*śial*)' (Frazer 1911: 402-403, quoted in Emeneau 1948: 61).

Therefore, it is interesting to note that in many cases the word used in some South-Asian languages to name the 'tiger' can serve to identify other beasts of prey and vice versa. This seems to be especially true for Dravidian languages, because among the speakers of these languages the tiger has a religious power[17] and, for this reason, together with the meaning of 'tiger,' 'lion' and 'hyena,' the meaning of 'jackal' is also attested for those words, even in this case as a sort of linguistic interdiction. In fact, following Frazer's statement, Emeneau (1948: 61-63) noted that while in Dravidian the typical word for 'tiger' is stable in all languages,[18] sometimes this animal is named with a word originally used for 'jackal' and 'fox.' As an example, Emeneau mentions the Dravidian words for 'jackal' (Tamil *nari*, Kolami *nayr*, Toda *nary*, Kannada *nari*, the latter also meaning 'fox,' Tulu *nari*, also 'fox'), pointing out that if the corresponding Tamil word (i.e. *nari*) means normally 'jackal,' its meaning in this language is also 'tiger' (cf. also Burrow and Emeneau 1984: 318). Moreover, he adds, in Kodava, a Dravidian language spoken in the Kodagu district of Southern Karnataka, the name of the 'tiger' is the same word that the neighboring languages used for the 'jackal,' i.e. *nari*.

As for the IA languages, it is not possible to make definite judgments on the lexical interdiction concerning the words typically used for some beasts of prey. For example, the word *siṃha*, already attested in the *Ṛgveda* and frequently used in other Vedic texts and in Sanskrit, has almost always the

[17] For other Asian, especially South-Asian, ethnolinguistic groups in which the tiger has a religious and symbolic value see Beggiora (2013), Hammond (1992/93), Kharmawphlang (2000/2001), Lingdom (2016) and Aiyadurai (2016).

[18] Tamil *puli*, *pul* 'tiger', Malayalam *puli* 'tiger,' Kannada *puli* 'tiger,' Telugu *puli* 'tiger,' Naiki *pul* 'tiger,' Gondi *pullī* 'tiger' (Burrow and Emeneau 1984: 380).

meaning of 'lion' (Monier Williams 1899: 1213). The evolution of this word in modern IA languages displays the meanings of 'lion,' 'tiger' and 'leopard' depending on the language (Turner 1966: 772).

With respect to the commonest words for 'tiger' in NIA, those developed from Vedic and Sanskrit *vyāghra* (Monier-Williams 1899: 1036), the meaning of 'tiger' is quite constant in OIA literary languages, and this also applies to MIA and NIA (Turner 1966: 706).[19]

Other IA words can identify in the same language the 'tiger,' the 'lion,' the 'leopard,' and also the 'hyena' (marginally the 'bear'). This is the case of the OIA literary word *tarakṣu* m. used in the majority of Vedic and Sanskrit works with the meaning 'hyena' (cf. Monier-Williams 1899: 439), but, according to Turner (1966: 324), in the *Śukasaptati*, with the meaning 'tiger.' The same meaning for *tarakṣu* is attested, according to Apte (1957-1959: 753), in the *Mahābhārata*. While Pāli, Prakrit, and almost all NIA words developed from OIA *tarakṣu* preserve the meaning 'hyena,' curiously in Oriya the same word is used to name the 'leopard' and 'a small tiger' (Turner 1966: 324).

To sum up, it seems that IA languages do not display, as I have already said, definite cases of linguistic interdiction for the 'tiger.' However, quite interestingly, if we look at Hemacandra's *Deśīnāmamālā* there are words that, borrowed from non-IA languages, are connected with original words that can be considered clear examples of this lexical phenomenon. For example, for the Prakrit *deśī* word *karaḍa*, Hemacandra gives the meanings of 'tiger' (*Deśīnāmamālā* II, 5). According to Burrow and Emeneau (1984: 106) this word is derived from Dravidian; in some languages the meaning given for the related words is 'tiger' (Burrow and Emeneau 1984: 106):

Kui *kṛāḍi*, *krānḍi* 'tiger,' 'leopard,' 'hyena'

Kolami *keḍiak* 'tiger'

Naiki *khaṛeyak* 'panther'

Gondi *khaṛyal* 'tiger,' *kariyāl* 'panther'

In other Dravidian languages the related words are used to name the 'bear' (Burrow and Emeneau 1984: 117):

Tamil *karaṭi* 'indian black bear'

Malayalam *karaṭi* 'bear'

[19] The only exception is represented by some Western Pahari and Panjabi dialects, where we find 'leopard' as a new meaning (cf. Turner 1966: 706). As far as *vyāghra* NIA related words are concerned, it is interesting to note that in Hindi the word *bagherā* m. is attested; its meaning, according to the *Hindī Śabda Sāgara* (Dasa 1965-1975: 3351), is 'hyena,' whereas according Ronald Stuart McGregor's Hindi-English dictionary the meaning of the same word is 'tiger cub,' 'leopard,' 'hyena' (McGregor 1993: 697).

Kannada *karaḍi*, *kaḍḍi* 'bear'

In addition, in Hemacandra's *Deśīnāmamālā* two other words, certainly related to each other, show the alternation of the two meanings 'tiger' and 'jackal,' namely the Prakrit *deśī* words *bheruṃḍa* 'tiger' (*Deśīnāmamālā* VI, 108) and *bhuruṃḍiā* 'jackal' (*Deśīnāmamālā* VI, 101). It is worth mentioning that if in Sanskrit and in the various MIA and NIA languages the various related words linked with these two *deśī* words are attested almost quite exclusively with the meaning of 'jackal' (cf. Turner 1966: 513), Hemacandra's *Deśīnāmamālā* is the unique primary source where it is possible to see a change of meaning similar to the change of meaning described by Farrell (1911) and Emeneau (1948) in discussing Dravidian languages. This is also true for the *deśī* word *pullī*, also attested in Hemacandra's *Deśīnāmamālā* (VI, 79) and clearly derived from Dravidian languages (Ramanujaswami ed. 1938: glossary: 63; Burrow and Emeneau 1984: 380; cf. Tamil *puli, pul*, Malayalam *puli*, Kannada *puli*, Telugu *puli*, Naiki pul, Gondi *pullī*, Burrow and Emeneau 1984: 380), but contrary to these languages where the meaning is fixed (see footnote 18), in Hemacandra's dictionary of *deśī* words is reported with the meanings 'tiger' and 'lion.'

7. Conclusion

Starting from the analysis given in the previous sections, we had the opportunity to see different layers and trends at work in the history of the two words for the 'bear' used in IA in the course of its evolution. It is not quite obvious to understand and explain the dynamics of these trends, namely how the different layers relate to each other. This is particularly true for the history of the OIA and MIA starting from the literary languages we know related to these diachronic stages of IA evolution. Quite surprisingly, the same also applies to NIA. In fact, even though in this case we are dealing with more recent languages, it is a fact that even today we do not possess an up-to-date comprehensive history of Hindi, as well as of Bengali, etc. In the same way, the relation of these languages with each other during NIA, i.e., throughout the 2nd millennium CE, is far from clear.

Starting from these premises, if we look at a Sanskrit dictionary, it would seems that *ṛkṣa* 'bear' (a Vedic word with cognates in other IE languages) was paired in the history of Sanskrit with *bhallūka*, a word that, although quite certainly etymologically connected with the Sanskrit word *bhadra* 'good,' derives from an unattested OIA form **bhadla* via MIA or from a PIE form **bheru* via popular OIA/MIA, in both cases as a result of a change of meaning occurred, perhaps, in MIA ('bear' < 'brown' or 'bear' < 'good'). At this point, the question arises as to whether the term now attested in contemporary IA languages is the result of the spread of the Sanskrit word or the MIA word. Are the Sanskrit/Prakrit *bhalla/bhallū/bhallūka* related words attested today in modern languages the result of diffusion from

Sanskrit, from Prakrit, or from colloquial languages? Unfortunately, we don't know the real frequency of *ṛkṣa* and *bhallūka* in every known Vedic and/or Sanskrit text, in order to understand if was Sanskrit, i.e., some particularly widespread Sanskrit texts, the language which plays a role in the diffusion of *bhalla/bhallū/bhallūka* related words in NIA, or if these words in contemporary IA languages derived through and thanks to Prakrit and/or a vulgar channel. What it would seem quite sure is the fact that beside Sanskrit, popular languages play a very important role, perhaps a major role, in shaping words for animals starting from their features and symbolism. And in suggesting a major role of IA popular languages, I have in mind not only the role of IA not attested Vedic/Sanskrit popular/regional varieties developed and used during throughout IA, but also non-IA languages, and, especially, non-Vedic/Sanskrit IA languages. This entire stock of linguistic/language varieties, which has constituted and must be considered the true repertoire of IA across its history and evolution, had the force to offer, in the OIA period, old popular IE and/or non-IA features, words and particular semantic association still present in modern IA languages, despite the prestige and thus the role of Sanskrit in shaping IA lexicon.

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