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# ***Hinc sunt leones* — two ancient Eurasian migratory terms in Chinese revisited<sup>1</sup>(1)**

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Medieval European maps usually show Africa as a tiny annex to either Europe or Arabia. It is only during Renaissance cartography, that the lumpy mass named “Africa” starts to resemble a shape more familiar from our college atlas. During this period and well into the seventeenth century, many maps mark large parts of Africa as well as Eurasia with the curious phrase *hi(n)c sunt leones*. Looking closer at the regions so classified, one starts to wonder how it is possible that the lion apparently had such an enormous geographical distribution during the Medieval

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period, sometimes covering not only the whole of Africa, but South-East Asia, Tibet, and large parts of Northern and Western China as well. Of course, your fellow geographer will soon enlighten you, by pointing out that *hi(n)c sunt leones* was nothing but a simple stock phrase for *terra incognita*.

## 1. Non-linguistic evidence

### 1.1 Historical distribution of the lion

What then, was the actual distribution of the lion in prehistorical and historical times? The lion, *panthera leo* or *felis leo* (Linnaeus, 1758), emerged in South-East Africa, and the early history of its dispersion, reaching back to the *panthera gombaszoergensis* of the Olduvai Gorge early pleistocene (i.e. 1,5 million years B.P.), is not fully understood.<sup>2</sup> What is clear, however, is that roughly around 100,000 B. P., the Asiatic lion (*panthera leo persica*, Meyer 1826) separated from the African stock<sup>3</sup> and slowly spread across the coastal forests of northern Africa (*panthera leo leo*, the now extinct ‘Barbary lion’), into South-West Asia and more distant parts of Eurasia. Until 10,000 years B.P. cave lions (*panthera leo spelaea*, Goldfuß 1826), which are distantly related to the *panthera youngi* lion known from Northeastern Chinese paleolithic sites such as Zhæk. udiàn 周口店, lived all across Eurasia in the steppelike regions from Siberia to England.<sup>4</sup> They are closely related to the mighty

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<sup>2</sup>) On the biodiversity and dispersion of the Asiatic lion see Guggisberg (1975) and, more recently, Nowell & Jackson (1996: 37-38). Cf. also with regularly updated information “The Asiatic lion information center<sup>2</sup> (<http://wkweb4.cableinet.co.uk/alice/distrib.html>) and the World Conservation Union’s (IUCN) Cat Specialist Group species account on the Asiatic lion (<http://lynx.uio.no/catfolk/asaleo01.htm>).

<sup>3</sup>) I.e., not long enough for reproductive incompatibilities to have evolved — see the genetic study by O’Brien, Martenson, Packer et al. (1987).

<sup>4</sup>) Hemmer (1974: 262-264).

American lion (*panthera leo atrox*, Leidy 1853, extinct since 10,000 B.P.), and probably spread across Bering strait to the Americas during the second-last (Illinoian) glaciation to reach as far south as Mexico and Peru.<sup>5</sup> Within historical times, but possibly already since the late Eneolithic, the Asiatic lion is known in the whole Near and Middle East, South-Eastern Europe, prehistoric Spain, the Balkans (mentioned in Aristotle and Herodotus), Western Ukraine, the North-West Pontic region, and parts of the Caucasus and Eastern Transcaucasia.<sup>6</sup> Until very recently, we even have eye-witness reports and textual evidence on the lion in Azerbaijan and Armenia, large parts of Eastern Turkey (until 1870), Syria (until 1891), Iran (until 1930) and Iraq (until 1942), Turkmenistan, Kurdistan, parts of Afghanistan, Baluchistan, Bihar, Orissa, the district of Delhi (until the 1950ies), the Kathiawar peninsula and Northern India in general up to Rampur and Rohilkhand (28°30' N.).<sup>7</sup> Today, the animal's habitat is restricted to the Gir National Park and Wildlife sanctuary in Gujarat, the former private hunting grounds of the Nawab of Junagadh.<sup>8</sup> In India, the lion has been known as “the king of animals” since early Vedic times<sup>9</sup> and it was equally prominent

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<sup>5</sup>) Harington (1969), Kurten (1980), Hemmer (1974: 264-5) and references therein. Although /er (1971) does not deal with the American lion, it offers a wealth of valuable geological and ecological background information on early mammal dispersions from Siberia to the Americas.

<sup>6</sup>) Guggisberg (1975), Heptner & Naumov (1980: 80-83), Hemmer (1974), Mallory (1982: 208), Mallory & Adams (1997: 356), Karttunen (1997: 169), Kleingütl (1997: 51-57).

<sup>7</sup>) Pocock (1930, 1939: 213). References to the ‘lion’ in classical texts have been collected by Steier (1926: 969-971) and Karttunen (1997: 168-70), many of them connected with Alexander the Great's hunting activities in Bactria.

<sup>8</sup>) Kinnear (1920), Pocock (1930), Hemmer (1974: 186-88). The Gir lion from Kathiawar peninsula is sometimes also referred to as *leo goojratensis* (Smee 1833).

<sup>9</sup>) ṣh-w feb(X.28.1).

further west in the Germanic world as a heraldic battle shield symbol since the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>10</sup>

## 1.2 Archaeological and art historical evidence

Yet crucially, the lion is never mentioned as anything but an *exotic* animal in early Chinese texts, nor have its remains been reported from archaeological excavations of pre-Qín sites in China, nor is it prominent as an early art motif. Reconstruction of the occurrence of the lion in Asia based on art historical data<sup>11</sup> is seriously impeded by the fact that — apart from the sexual dimorphism — it is sometimes rather difficult to distinguish a lion depiction from that other *felidae*<sup>12</sup>, because *panthera leo persica* has a much shorter mane than the North African lion, *panthera leo leo*.<sup>13</sup> These observations on the historical distribution of the Asiatic lion are in marked contrast to the attestation of the tiger, which is to be found all over the place in archaeological, art historical, as well as datable inscriptional materials from China. It confirms the claim, often made by paleozoologists, that with the possible exception of a very small zone in Northern India, the geographical distributions of the lion and the tiger *never* overlapped.

The alleged absence of the lion-motif from pre-Buddhist Chinese art is still standard textbook wisdom, but it fails to take into account the more recent developments in Chinese archaeology, which have changed the picture quite remarkably during the last two decades or so. Traditionally the Altai has been seen as a kind of West-East

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<sup>10</sup> Gamkrelidze & Ivanov (1984, II: 509).

<sup>11</sup> See Hemmer (1974) for the most comprehensive attempt in this direction.

<sup>12</sup> Cf., for instance, many of the plates in Dittrich (1963) or the beast of burden on the 'Chùnrì' bronze belt-buckle excavated in Wújiā Gāoquān 吴家沟圈, Qíngyáng 庆阳 district, Gānsù 甘肃 province, in 1984 (cf. Liú Dézhōn & Xū Jùnchén 1988: 419-20, ill. 12.7, 14, pl. 4.II).

<sup>13</sup> See Hemmer (1974). Other peculiarities, not easily noticed in art work, include the longitudinal fold of skin running along the belly and bifurcated infraorbital foramina in *p.l. persica*.

watershed for the distribution of the lion, and it is certainly striking that no lion depictions are found in zoomorphic neolithic pottery<sup>14</sup> in China, that the lion is not attested among the eighteen plus names of mammals recorded in oracle bone inscriptions or known from Shàng 商 excavations<sup>15</sup>, and that it is absent from the the 26 animals known from Shàng jade carvings as well.<sup>16</sup> Nonetheless, in 1984 six small bean-sized lion figures were found at Zhènǎn 斟鄩 the famous Èrlǎóu 二里头 III-IV site sometimes assumed to be the last capital of the “Xià 夏 dynasty”, and to be dated at least to the late third millenium B.C. Lions are also known as trimmings on the royal cloak of the Persian king Darius I (*fl.* fifth century B.C.), they are well attested in the Pazyryk grave decorations from the high Altai<sup>17</sup> and figure certainly among the most prominent motifs in pre-Christian Scythian art.<sup>18</sup> It was probably from the East Iranian plateau<sup>19</sup> that lion depictions, especially in the form of the lion-bull combat scene ubiquitous in Central Asia<sup>20</sup>, finally reached several Xīnjiāng 新疆 sites contemporary to the Central Plains Warring States period, where the lion motif has been sporadically recorded during the 1980’s and 1990’s.<sup>21</sup> Within “China proper” (if there ever was such an entity at all), the lion (re-)appears as a gryphon or winged leophoric chimera in the tomb of King ?Cuò of Zhāngshān 中山 during the fourth century B.C., and a western Sīǎnyǔ 陝西 site from the first century B.C.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Sùn Zuòyún (1980), Wagner (1992).

<sup>15</sup> Kolb (1992: 28-30), Xiàng Xǔ (1993, A: 369).

<sup>16</sup> Sùn Zuòyún (1980: 33).

<sup>17</sup> See Dittrich (1992) with a discussion of the relevant sources.

<sup>18</sup> Jacobson (1995: 196-200, as well as plates 11, 15, 21-22, 25, 28, 32, 67-68, 78-79, 88-89, 93, 167-68).

<sup>19</sup> On the early spread of various lion motifs via Sogdiana to China and Japan see, among others, Tanabe (1991, 1996) and Berthier (1996).

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Kuzmina (1987).

<sup>21</sup> Dittrich (1992). For a recent overview of Xīnjiāng Neolithic and bronze age sites see G. ng Guóqiáng (1997: 18).

<sup>22</sup> Dittrich (1992: 2).

These two dates roughly mark the beginnings and the end of a time frame in Chinese art and literature during which the depiction of hybrids was very common, before it fell out of fashion under the pressure of ‘northern’ Confucian cosmology.<sup>23</sup> Some of these winged leophoric creatures, usually described as *bìxié* 辟邪 (“guardians against evil influences, heresies”) by modern archaeologists, with reference to glosses in Ancient Chinese texts and to the many monumental *bìxié*-stone sculptures erected since the renaissance of the motif since the Eastern Hàn period<sup>24</sup>, sometimes bring to mind Near-Eastern chimera depictions. It is especially the mythological motif of the lying lion with a bowl on its back, attested in China since 300 A.D., which is strikingly similar to much older Assyrian Kybele-plus-lion-statues<sup>25</sup> Realistic lion portraits in China, on the other hand, are known only since the second century A.D., when we find the depiction of a lion in the X ũ-family stone chamber (X ũshì shíshì 吳氏石室) of Sì'Ànyŭ 山西<sup>26</sup> and several other shrines in Hé'nán 河南, as well as bangle-shaped stone-ring lions from the late Western Hàn period<sup>27</sup>

In short, we have a very peculiar distribution here, which clearly shows that, although the lion must have been known as an exotic creature during the pre-Qín era, it was probably *not* held in China until the first centuries A.D.

## 2. Linguistic evidence

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<sup>23</sup>) Loewe (1994).

<sup>24</sup>) For an overview of pertinent finds and an art historical appreciation see Sì Jiàn (1995).

<sup>25</sup>) Hentze (1966: 57-58).

<sup>26</sup>) I.e. the famous Wŭliáng shrine (武梁祠) in Jiàxiáng 嘉祥 district, ca. 25 km southwest of Jīníng 濟寧, bearing an inscription of 147 A.D. For a book-length study of its monuments see recently Wù Hóng (1989).

<sup>27</sup>) Boerschmann (1938), Láng Shènyuǎn (1995).

How are these findings reflected in the linguistic record? Let us first take a closer look at *shŭà* 師子, the word for ‘lion’, which eventually survived into the Modern Chinese language.

## 2.1 Reconstruction of *shŭà*

Chinese *shŭà* 師 疏夷切, 生脂平三開 子 師子即里切, 精止上三開 —the first graph of the compound has been augmented with the ‘dog’-determiner only since the fifth century A.D. (→ 獅)<sup>28</sup> — is represented below in three of the most prominent competing current reconstructions

- (1) Pulleyblank (1995: 428):  
Early Middle Chinese (EMC) \* $\text{ʃ} = \text{t} \text{y} /$  < Western Han Chinese (WHC) \* $\text{ʃ} = \text{c} \text{à} \text{}$ <sup>29</sup>
- (2) Starostin (1989):  
Post-Classical Chinese \* $\text{ö} \text{j} \text{ɛ} = \text{t} \text{ɬ} \text{y} \text{}$  < Eastern Han Chinese (EHC) \* $\text{ɔ} \text{à} \text{ɛ} = \text{t} \text{ɬ} \text{y} \text{}$  < WHC \* $\text{ɔ} \text{à} \text{ɛ} = \text{t} \text{ɬ} \text{y} \text{}$  < OC +  $\text{t} \text{s} \text{j} \text{ɛ} = \text{t} \text{à} \text{}$ !
- (3) Baxter (1992, 1995 with emendations proposed in Sagart 1999):  
Middle Chinese transcription (MC) \* $\text{t} \text{s} \text{j} \text{ɛ} = \text{t} \text{y} \text{}$  < Old Chinese (OC) +  $\text{b} \text{t} \text{-r} \text{-j} = \text{b} \text{t} \text{-à} \text{-}$ !

It will be readily observed that there is much notational but little substantial difference involved in these reconstructions.

### 2.1.1 Transcriptional evidence on 師子

It is well known that Bernhard Karlgren took the equation between Chinese *shŭà* and Persian 𐭪𐭥 ‘lion’ as one of the main arguments for generalizing a final \*-s in his reconstruction of the Archaic Chinese *zhŭ*

<sup>28)</sup> The same graphical evolution has occurred in the rare meaning ‘dog-whelps or piglets in a litter of two’ of *shŭ* 師 → 獅, cf. "ryǎ (18.6: 332, 19.34: 351).

<sup>29)</sup> Morpheme boundaries are marked by single, syllable boundaries by double hyphens.



脂部 rhyme group. But, as Pulleyblank has pointed out on a number of different occasions since 1962, no clear correspondance for the final \*-s can be found in foreign loan sources of words assigned to this rhyme group. Compare, for instance, the following attestations of *shÛ* 師 as a transcriptional character:

- (4) *shÛi* 師利 EMC \*<sup>4</sup>ʃ-rjɪ : Skt. -*śri* for \*-tʃɹj? <sup>30</sup>
- (5) *qúshÛuó* 瞿師羅 EMC \*<sup>h</sup>vɔ<sup>±</sup> <sup>4</sup>ʃ-rjɔ : Skt. *Ghoära* <sup>31</sup>
- (6) *èrshÛ* 貳師 EMC \*<sup>4</sup>ʃ-rjɪ = <sup>4</sup>ʃ Mlr. *Nesef*, *Na<sup>k</sup>sab* <sup>32</sup>
- (7) *shÛà* 師比 EMC \*<sup>4</sup>ʃ-[q,c]kjɪ ~ *xÛà* 犀比 \*<sup>t</sup>ʃ-[q,c]kjɪ ~ *xiÀnbÛ* 鮮卑 \*<sup>t</sup>ʃɔɔ=qkjɔ<sup>1</sup> ~ *xÛpi* 胥紕 \*<sup>t</sup>ʃɔ<sup>±</sup>=ckjɔ<sup>1</sup> ~ *xÛpi* 犀毗 \*<sup>t</sup>ʃ=ckjɔ<sup>1</sup>? <sup>33</sup>
- (8) *shÛ* 師 EMC \*<sup>4</sup>ʃ : Uygur <tʒ> = óɸ <sup>33</sup>

Now, whatever we are to make out of (6), which supposedly transcribes the Middle Iranian place name later known as *Nesef*, where *shÛ* would seem to represent a final bilabial fricative (!), the only common item, in which *shÛ* could have represented foreign \*-s or \*-o is one of the versions of the ethnic name best known in the dynastic histories as *XiÀnbÛ* (7). Since there is no scholarly consensus whatsoever, as to who these people were and what kind of language they spoke, it would be, to say the least, rather bold to base the reconstruction of a rhyme group on this single aberrant case. Taking the other transcriptions into account it would seem that *shÛ* is most adequately reconstructed by Middle Chinese \*-j going back to a central unrounded vowel, and ultimately a *schwa* during the Western Han period. This is also in agreement with most Hàn

<sup>30</sup> Pulleyblank (1983: 85).

<sup>31</sup> Personal name in *Taishó* 196.157.1, cf. Coblin (1993: 898), who writes *ghoäla* [sic].

<sup>32</sup> *Shài* (49: 1980, 109: 2877, 110: 2915-8 etc.); cf. Pulleyblank (1962: 120, 218), Skjærvø (1990, vol. V: 451). For its location see also Pulleyblank (1966: 26-27), Hulsewé & Loewe (1979: 76, n. 41).

<sup>33</sup> Barat (1996: 57).

Buddhist transcriptional materials for *zhǐbù* 脂部-words, which point to the following pattern of Old Northwest Chinese (ONWC) – Sanskrit correspondances.<sup>34</sup>

ONWC	*-j*-jj	:	Skt. -i,
ONWC	*-vjj *-vjj *-vC	:	Skt. -vi

### 2.1.2 子 as a suffix?

The next important question is whether *zà* 子 in *shǐà* was already construed as a suffix at the period of the first attestation of the compound. Contrary to Pulleyblank<sup>35</sup>, most recent authors agree that *-zà* was already incipient as a suffix during the pre-Qin period.<sup>36</sup> Incidentally, Sofronow, Yáng & Hé, as well as Xiàng, all explicitly mention *shǐà* as a paradigm case for the complete “bleaching” of the original semantics of *zà* and thus consequently assign it the status of a noun-suffix. Other early examples with suffixal *-zà* include designations of humans (9), small and round objects (10), and animal names (12):

#### (9) AFTER DESIGNATIONS OF HUMANS

*bìzà* 婢子 (*Zu zhuàn* • *Xǔ* 15, *Shǐ* 39: 1655) ‘[I, the] maid-servant’ (deprecativ) — *hǎizà* 孩子 ‘child’ (*Mòzà* 31: 53.89) — *nánzà* 男子 ‘men, guy’ (*Zhànguócè* • *Yàn* 231 = 413: 197.5) — *nǚzà* 女子 ‘women’ (*Shǐjǐng* 39.2, 54.3) — *qǐzà* 妻子 (*Shǐjǐng* 164.7) ‘wife’ — *tóngzà* 童子 (*Shǐjǐng* 60.1; *Lùnyü* 7.29, 11.24, 14.44) ‘child(ren)’, *érzà* 兒子 (*Shǐ* 52: 2001, *Hànshù* 1: 5) ‘son(s)’

#### (10) AFTER SMALL & ROUND OBJECTS

<sup>34)</sup> Coblin (1993: 906-8).

<sup>35)</sup> Pulleyblank (1962, 1966, 1995).

<sup>36)</sup> Sofronow (1964: 119-20), Yáng Bójùn & Hé Lèshì (1992: 502-3), Xiàng Xǔ (1993, B: 29, 175). In the same vein see already Pelliot (1931: 449).

- (11) *móuzà* 眸子 (*Mèngzà* 4A16: 28, *Zhuàngzà* 14: 39.78, Wéi Zhào 韋昭, 204-73, on *Shàì* 7: 339) ‘pupil of the eye’<sup>37</sup>; cf. *tóngzà* 瞳子 (*Shàì*, 11 occurrences) ‘id.’

In the sections on animal names of the "szǎ 爾雅 there are at least four animal names with a suffix -{ǎ which clearly has lost its original semantic function:

(12) IN ANIMAL NAMES

- (13) a. "szǎ (18.6: 332): “豕子，豬。”  
“*Shǎ* means ‘pig’ (ǐù).
- (14) b. "szǎ (18.13: 334): “狸子，豺。”  
“*Lí* means ‘wildcat’ (sì).<sup>38</sup>
- (15) c. "szǎ (18.14: 334): “貉子，貍。”  
“*Héz* means ‘badger’ (*huán*).<sup>39</sup>
- (16) d. "szǎ (18.14: 334): “貓子，獾。”  
“*Huàn* means ‘raccoon’ (ǐǎ).<sup>40</sup>

Just *tuàn* — *héz* ‘badger’ and *tuàn* ‘raccoon’ are the earliest occurrences for the animals in question, and it is only much later in the chronology of texts that the suffix may be dropped. As Xiào Líming has argued<sup>41</sup>, -zi as a suffix already had a rather wide geographic distribution during the time of Guā Pú 郭璞 (276-324), although it was semantically still restricted to animal names, plant names and names of household objects of daily usage.

*Shǐ* ‘lion’ does not appear in the *Shǐ* 史記 (completed around 90 B.C.). The oldest safely datable attestations come from the *Hànshù* 漢書 (completed, with minor exceptions, in 92 A.D.), a gloss in the

<sup>37</sup>) Pace Pulleyblank, *Asia Major* (1966: 130).

<sup>38</sup>) I.e. the ‘long-haired animal’, according to *ryǎ* (18.31).

<sup>39</sup>) Cf. *Zhèngjǐ* on *Shǐ* (112.1): “貉子，曰貍。” .

<sup>40</sup>) Cf. *Fàngy. n* (8, 1b3, Luǎ ed.: 51): “獾，關西謂之貍。” .

<sup>41</sup>) Xiào Líming (1991).

*Shuæx* 說文解字 (finished 100 A.D.), the *Hòu Hànsù* 後漢書 (completed mid 5th century A.D.) and its commentaries, as well as several early medieval poems in the *Yuèfù Shījī* 樂府詩集. Consider the following early examples, in most of which the ‘lion’ still has strong associations with Central Asia:

(17) *Hànsù* (96A: 3889):

“烏弋地...有桃拔、師子、犀牛。”

“In the territories of Wùyì (EMC \*0-ɸkɿ, Alex[andria, i.e. A. in Afghanistan<sup>42</sup>]) ... there are *táobás* (?‘long-tailed deer’<sup>43</sup>), lions, and rhinoceroses.”

(18) *Hànsù* (96B: 3928):

“鉅象、師子、猛犬...食於外園。”

“Great elephants, lions, wild dogs ... are reared in the outer parks.”

(19) Mèng Kàng’s 孟 (*fl.* ca. 250) commentary on (13), cf. also (*Hànsù* 96B: 3889):

“東觀記曰：「疏勒國王盤...遣使...獻師子、封牛。」師子似虎，正黃髯，尾端茸大如斗。”

“The *Records compiled in the Eastern Lodge* say<sup>44</sup>: ‘The king of the state of Shùlè (EMC \*ʃɸ-nàl, i.e. Kàlóar) sent an envoy, who presented a lion and a zebu.’ The lion (*shǔzǐ*) is similar to the tiger, pure yellow, with a long mane, and a tuft on its tail which is as big as a bushel.”

(20) *Shuæwén* (5A18: 103):

“虓，虎名也。一曰師子。从虎九聲。”

“*Xiào* (EMC \*yɸɸ, OC \*a<sub>Y</sub>-ɸv) means ‘tiger’s roar’. One

<sup>42</sup> For possible locations of this ‘Alexandria’ see Hulswé & Loewe (1979: 112, n. 250).

<sup>43</sup> Possibly to be identified with the antelope, cf. discussion of this passage in Hulswé & Loewe (1979: 114, n. 262).

<sup>44</sup> The quotation is from *Dængguàn Hànjì* (3.3: 20.12), compiled in five instalments between 22 and 220 A.D.

[commentator] says: ‘lion’. Derived form ‘tiger’, ‘*jiū*’ (EMC \**l̥vɣ*’, OC \**b̥l(-s)v-*) is phonophoric.<sup>45</sup>

- (21) *Hòu Hànshù* (3: 158):  
 “月氏國遣使獻扶拔、師子。”  
 “The kingdom of Yuèzhǐ (EMC \**ʋvbu=ũǰ*) dispatched an official who presented a *fúbá* (‘hornless unicorn’?<sup>46</sup>) and a lion. (87 A.D.)
- (22) *Hòu Hànshù* (4: 168):  
 “安息果遣使獻師子、扶拔。”  
 “The kingdom of ǰnxǔ (EMC \**ʋbo=ɕǰ*, \**Arák*, i.e. Parthia) dispatched an official who presented a lion and a *fúbá* (a ‘hornless unicorn’).
- (23) *Hòu Hànshù* (4: 171):  
 “遣左谷蠡王師子...擊北匈奴於河雲北，大破之。”  
 “They sent ‘Lion’, the *lǔlíwáng* of the left [EMC \**l̥awk=li<sup>h</sup>-wua*]<sup>47</sup>, to attack the Xiāngnú in the North of Héyún, and he inflicted a crushing defeated upon them.
- (24) *Yuèfū Shǐjì • Shǎng yún lè* (51.8, 3: 746):  
 “鳳凰是老胡家雞，師子老胡家狗。”  
 “A phoenix — *that* is the chicken of old Hú’s family, a lion is their dog.”
- (25) *Yuèfū Shǐjì • Shǎng yún lè* (51.8, 3: 747):  
 “五色師子、九苞鳳凰。”  
 “The five-coloured lion and the nine-times gifted phoenix ...”

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<sup>45</sup> This is but one example from a larger group of characters usually glossed as ‘sound of a tiger’ (*hūshēng* 虎聲) in the *Shuāwén*, without any etymological connections to the name(s) of the tiger itself, cf. Serruys (1967: 264).

<sup>46</sup> Sometimes considered identical with the *táobá* mentioned above (cf. n. 11).

<sup>47</sup> A title of high-ranking Xiāngnú military officials. It has not been conclusively shown that *wáng* was intended as part of the transcription rather than as the epithet ‘king’ in the earliest Chinese attestations of this title during the Hàn period.

(26) *Yuèfù Shǐjī • Shàonián xíng* 少年行 (66.6, 3: 957)

“帶金師子小，裘衿麒麟瓘。”

“Small was the golden lion on his girdle, fiercely glaring the unicorn embroidered on his fur garment.”

Judging from these passages and the attestation of *-zà* in the mammal name series of the *ryǎ*, it would seem that the *-zà* in *shǔà* could well have been a suffix already during the late pre-Qín period, and, given the usually conservative nature of the written language, possibly even earlier in the spoken vernacular underlying it. James A. Matisoff has gone so far as to claim that Old Chinese 子 \* *b*<sub>1</sub>ʔǎ-0 is the avatar of a “general diminutive morpheme” which he reconstructs as \* N-(ə){ǎ-[z, 1] to the Proto-Sino-Tibetan level<sup>48</sup>, although the evidence for this assumption is far from conclusive. Conversely, the first example of monosyllabic *shǔ* meaning ‘lion’ is very late as well — a poetic enumeration of exotic animals in the *Hòu Hàncshù*, where it appears along with the leopard (*bào* 豹).<sup>49</sup>

The ‘lion-dance’ (*shǔ(zà)wǔ* 師~獅子舞), often described as being associated with the introduction of lions to China in popular works, is first indirectly referred to in another commentary by Mèng Kàng 孟康 to a passage on the so-called *xiàng rén* 象人 ‘imitators’ in the *Monograph on Etiquette and Music* (*Lǎyüè zhì* 禮樂志) of the *Hànshù*<sup>50</sup>, where he explains that

## (27) “象人，若今戲蝦、魚、師子者也。”

“*Xiàng rén* are like those [dancers] who act as frogs, fish, or lions today.<sup>51</sup>”

<sup>48</sup>) Matisoff (1995: 72-73).

<sup>49</sup>) *Hòu Hàncshù* (40/30A, 5: 1348). The commentary (1350, n. 11) says: “師，師子也。”

<sup>50</sup>) *Hànshù* (22/2, 4: 1075, n. 16).

<sup>51</sup>) Cf. Wáng Kěchǎn (1999: 4). For the later developments of ‘lion-dances’ in China and a translation of the earliest technical description of it by <sup>1</sup> uyáng Xiù 歐陽修 (1007-1072) see Thompson (1987). Kim (1975) is of little historical value.

It would thus seem that this peculiar dance, still popular at Chinese New Year celebrations today, was merely the refashioning of an indigenous tradition under the influence of Buddhist symbolism appropriated from Central Asia during the first centuries A.D.

## 2.2 Other early leophoric names

But *shǐ* is not the only ancient term for ‘lion’ we have in Chinese. In fact, there are at least five other ‘leophoric’ names mentioned in early Chinese texts, listed below in their Middle and Old Chinese reconstructions:<sup>52</sup>

- (28) *suàn* 狻 素官切, 心桓平一合 麿 ~ 狻 五稽切, 疑齊平四開  
 MC \**tx bo = OFk* (EMC \**tx bo = OFk*) < OC \**a<sub>tp</sub>[o, s] = a<sub>o</sub>f* (see below)
- (29) *zùn* 尊 祖昆切, 精魂平一合 耳 而止切, 日止上三開  
 MC \**utx po = oz X* (EMC \**utx ào = ý ý* (> \**= ý j*) < OC \**a<sub>ut</sub>vo = b<sub>o</sub>à-0* (Yi Zhæu shù, SBCK-ed. 7: 8a<sup>53</sup>)
- (30) *qiù* 酋 自秋切, 從尤平三開 耳 而止切, 日止上三開  
 MC \**e{kvx} = oz X* (EMC \**e{vx} = ý ý* (> \**= ý j*) < OC \**a<sub>e</sub>{v = b<sub>o</sub>à-0* (Yi Zhæu shù, var., -ed.7: 8a)
- (31) *zāyú* 驪 側鳩切, 莊尤平三開 虞 遇則切, 疑虞平三開  
 MC \**utskvx = ohk* (EMC \**u<sup>4</sup>vx = ov<sup>b</sup>*) < OC \**b<sub>ut-s-v</sub> = b<sub>ox(-s)</sub>b* (Shjüing 25.1, Shài 24: 1229, 117: 3065)
- (32) *zāyá* 駟 側鳩切, 莊尤平三開 牙 五加切, 夷麻平二開  
 MC \**utskvx = ohR* (EMC \**u<sup>4</sup>vx = ob<sup>y</sup>* > \**= OE*) < OC \**b<sub>ut-s-v</sub> = a<sub>o-s-a</sub>* (Shài 126: 3207)

<sup>52</sup>) Cf. Boodberg (1936), Guæ Mòruò (1962: 251-3).

<sup>53</sup>) The text was finished in the late fourth century B.C., according to Shaughnessy (1993).

- (33) *zæuwú* 駟 駟側鳩切，莊尤平三開 吾 吾五乎切，疑模平一合  
 MC \**utskvx=ohv* (EMC \**uʷvx=O-ŋ*) < OC \**b<sub>u-t-s-v</sub>= a<sub>o</sub>b*  
 (*Shànĥĭjĭng* 12: 59.9)

With the exception of *suÀnní* (21), all other items in this list of various notations for what seem to be two separate etyma *in fine*, are notoriously difficult to identify, since the early commentators more often than not describe them as longicaudal fantasy creatures, sometimes resembling a tiger, sometimes more like a lion or leopard, beasts of burden, often equipped with wings and other bird-like features, which, in a sense, seem like the mythological counterparts of the winged chimeras and griffins known from the Near East.<sup>54</sup>

### 2.2.1 *suanni* 狻麈~狻

However, for *suÀnní* (21) there is clear evidence in the *ryÄ* 爾雅 and the *Mù TìÀnzàzhuan* 穆天子傳 (two texts dating — at least in parts — from around the third century B.C.<sup>55</sup>), that the expression was used to designate the lion several centuries before the first attestation of *shĭà* In Old Chinese texts, the term is basically a *hapax* compound, and only rarely reoccurs in pretentiously archaizing literature during the Middle Chinese and Modern periods. Cf. the following pre-Middle Chinese attestations:

- (34) *ryÄ* (18.26, Xú ed.: 336): “狻麈如戲貓，食虎豹。”  
 “The *suÀnní* is like a *zhànĥào* [OC \**a<sub>e</sub>{-s-bo-t=a<sub>n</sub>-s-bx}*, a ‘light-haired tiger/ fierce cat’, cf. 18.7]; it eats tigers and leopards.”

<sup>54</sup>) For a careful study of the ‘white tiger’ and its variants, proceeding from the assumption that all forms except (23) are derived by dimidiation from an underlying monosyllabic cluster-initial root, cf. Serruys (1967: 273-4). For a handy collection of classical references to these creatures see *ryÄ,yì* (18: 185-6).

<sup>55</sup>) See on this dating Mathieu (1978, 1993), Frühauf (1998-99) and Behr (1999).



- (35) *Mù Tiānzàzhuàn* (1: 2b): “狻麈、野馬，走五百理。”  
 “The *suānní* and the wild horse travel 500 *lǎ*[per day].”
- (36) Guā Pú’s 郭璞 (276-324) commentary on(29)<sup>56</sup>  
 “狻麈，即師子也，出西域。漢順帝時，疏勒王來獻犂牛及師子。”  
 “*Suānní* stands for ‘lion’, it stems from the Western territories. During the time of Emperor Shùn of Hàn [reg. 126-145], the king of Shùlè [EMC \* $\text{ʃ}^{\text{h}}\text{-n}^{\text{h}}\text{ɿ}$ , i.e. KÀÓÓar <sup>57</sup>] came to present a zebu and a lion.”
- (37) Yán Shǐgǔ’s 顏師古 (581-645) commentary on *Hànshù* (96A/66A: 3889):  
 “師古曰：「師子即爾雅所謂狻猊也」。”  
 “Shǐgǔ says: *Shǐzǐ* stands for what is called ‘*suānní*’ in the *ryǎ*.”

In China, the puzzling relationship of *-shǔ* in *shǐzǐ* to *suānní* was first analyzed by the famous Qng polymath Gù Yánwǔ 顧炎武 (1613-1682) in his essay on the autochthonous genesis of the *fǎnqiè* 反切-method<sup>58</sup> as an “allegro” pronunciation of the underlying “dimidiated” or “lento” form<sup>59</sup>. This ingenious explanation was later endorsed by the most important *ryǎ*-commentator during the Qǐng dynasty — Hǎo Yìxíng 郝懿行 (1757-1825), who writes:<sup>60</sup>

- (38) “...狻麈，合聲為師，故郭云「即師子」矣。”  
 “... as to *suānní* [OC \* $\text{a}^{\text{h}}\text{t}^{\text{h}}\text{s}^{\text{h}}\text{a}^{\text{h}}\text{f}$ ], combining the sounds/

<sup>56</sup>) Finished 317 a.d., cf. Xiào Líming (1997: 314 n. 2).

<sup>57</sup>) For a rather fanciful attempt at etymologizing this nomen tribus see Bailey (1985: 52-54).

<sup>58</sup>) Included in Gù’s *Yīn lùn* 音論 (*Discussion of Phonetics*) of 1667, which in turn forms part of the *Yīn xué wǔ shū* 音學五書, Zhāu Zǔmó 周祖謨 et al. eds., Bōjǐng : Zhānghuá, 1982: 50.

<sup>59</sup>) I.e. Chin. *héshēng* 合聲 and *huǎnshēng* 緩聲. For these terms and the passage in question see Behr (1994, 1998).

<sup>60</sup>) *ryǎyishù* (B6: 12r, vol. II: 1301).

initials [of the two characters] results in *shü*[\*<sup>b</sup>ɬ-r-ŋ], and that is why Guæ says: ‘it stands for lion’.”

Yet in view of Old Chinese reconstruction as we see it today, and indeed, even from the perspective of Gù’s own system of ten rhyme groups, this hardly seems to be a convincing explanation.

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## (PART B)

**4. Designations for ‘lion’ in neighbouring languages, loan proposals in the literature**

Since — as we saw above — that the Asiatic lion was probably never native to China, let us now turn to possible loan sources of *suanzi* and *shūzì* and briefly review some names for the ‘lion’ in the languages and language groups adjacent to the Old Chinese speaking territory.

**4.1 Altaic**

To the North and Northwest, in the ‘Altaic’ languages, we find a totally unrelated word in Turkic *arslan*, which was in turn borrowed by Mongolian<sup>61</sup>, Manchu and most other Tungusic languages, Cheremis, Hungarian, and even Balkan languages such as Serbian, Macedonian and several Bulgarian dialects.<sup>62</sup>

- (39) Turkic *arslan* → Mongolic *arslan*, *arsalan*, *aslan*, *arsalaŋ*; → Manchu *arsalan*; → Persian *arslān*, *ārslān*, → Kurdish *eslan*, *e’slan*, *ârslân*, *arslân*, *ârslân*, *aslan* etc.; → Cheremis *arsalan*; → Hungarian *oroszlán* (*arszlán* ‘social lion, carpet knight’)

It is readily apparent, that this widespread word for the lion is neither related to the Indo-European nor to the Chinese designations, although Persian and Kurdish borrowings from Turkic eventually superseded earlier Iranian forms (on which see below) in several Middle Iranian languages and survived into some of their modern descendants.

**4.2 Indo-European**


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<sup>61</sup>) Monguor, however, borrowed 𐰽𐰺𐰍 ‘lion’ from Tibetan, cf. Róna-Tas (1966: 84/#555).

<sup>62</sup>) Cf. Doerfer (1963-75, TMEN 2: 39-49).

### 4.2.1 Indic

One possible source for *shūzà* which had been already mentioned in early Sinological studies of the nineteenth century, is Sanskrit *tj ib* (attested since ūh.Vedic *tj ié*). The nasal infix root \**tjohApA* ('wild cat') underlying Skt. *tj ib*. had permissible phonotactics for Indo-European according to Eichner<sup>63</sup>, but this is not undisputed. Petersson, for instance, who hesitatingly analyzed \**tjohApA* as a heteroclitic root noun with secondary nasalization in analogy to the oblique cases, still considered the Indo-European word, as well as its Japanese counterpart *shishi*, to be borrowed from an unknown third language.<sup>64</sup> Japanese *shishi* is, of course, usually considered a loanword from Chinese<sup>65</sup>, but Austerlitz speculates that it might rather be a re-semanticization of the homophonous *shishi* 'wild boar; deer; meat', in a word formation similar to Old Finnish *jalopeura* which is transparently derived from *jalo* 'noble' + *peura* 'reindeer'.<sup>66</sup> Sanskrit *tj ib* on the other hand, has been compared to Armenian *inj/inc* 'leopard, panther' since Meillet.<sup>67</sup> Recent authors would go so far as to link the posited Indo-Armenian root — freehandedly incorporating Tocharian A *ššäk*, *ššak-*, B *ššcake* 'lion' (on which see below) as well — to Hamito-Semitic, Altaic and Dravidian forms to suggest a Proto-Nostratic root \**Sjx VohE* 'leopard'.<sup>68</sup> The

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<sup>63</sup>) Eichner (1982: 20 n. 18).

<sup>64</sup>) Petersson (1923: 12).

<sup>65</sup>) Martin (1987: 527).

<sup>66</sup>) Austerlitz (1989: 3).

<sup>67</sup>) Meillet (1936: 142), Kammenhuber (1961: 57, n. 2). Polomé (1989: 24)

remains sceptical about this connection, and instead follows Thieme (1953: 589) in proposing a connection with Skt. *piñjara-* 'reddish yellow, golden' (from IE \**qfjñ-* 'paint', which can not be separated from \**qfjñA* 'mark by engraving, dye', cf. Pokorny 1959, IEW I: 794-5, Rix et al. 1998, LIV: 418-9 for discussion), while Olsen (1999: 110) classifies *inc* as a *loanword* into Armenian. Incidentally, the Armenian word for 'lion' is *aršvc* < IE \**reugA* 'to roar' (Hom., *ῥῆζω* / *ῥῆζω* 'roar, growl; vomit', Lat. *rugīæ* 'roar', OCS *siāati* 'neigh, roar' etc.), cf. Gamkrelidze & Ivanov (1984, II: 511).

<sup>68</sup>) Dolgopolsky (1998: 21/#4).

meanings of the reflexes of this all-encompassing proto-form would *einzel sprachlich* range from ‘leopard’ (Chadic, Cushitic, Dravidian) through ‘wolf’ and ‘mythical dog’, to ‘bear’ (Tungusic) or even ‘hyena’ (Dravidian), while it is not even clear if Armenian and Greek, let alone Tocharian, can be derived from *one* Indo-European root. Indeed, Paul Thieme saw Sanskrit *tj̥ iḅ* as new formation totally unrelated to Armenian, derived from tabooistic replacement of *iḅ̥ t̥̥:fnoxious, dangerous, bloody, deadly etc.*<sup>69</sup> On the other hand, this explanation seems utterly *ad hoc*, so most authors, including Mayrhofer in his *Indo-Aryan etymological dictionary*, still prefer to view Sanskrit *tj̥ iḅ* as a loanword, albeit from an unspecified source.<sup>70</sup> As Polomé (1989) has conclusively shown, the often noted *Anklang* with Swahili *simba* ‘lion’ is purely fortuitous. In fact, *simba* belongs to a large set of mainly East African terms going back to (Guthrie’s) Proto-Bantu \*-cimbà ‘wild-cat, feline’, which was semantically specified as ‘lion’ in the savannah region.<sup>71</sup>

#### 4.2.2 Iranian

In Iranian, the group of Indo-European languages which was located most closely to the Old Chinese territory besides Tocharian, we find the following forms for the ‘lion’:<sup>72</sup>

- (40) Buddhist Sogdian *tšóx*, Manichean Sogdian *tšx ó*, Parthian *tbs̥h*, *t̥hs* Zoroastrian Pahlavi *t̥z̥s* Khwarezmian *tbs̥ó*, Khotanese *tbs̥v* (Bailey < \*tbs-h-b̥w̥b- ‘to pounce and creep’ with unexplained deletion of \*-h-!), New Persian *šōr* (Bailey: from *sar-* < \*haiz- ‘to pounce’; but notice irregular

<sup>69</sup>) Thieme (1953: 55-56, 1972, 1994: 327-328).

<sup>70</sup>) Mayrhofer (1996, II: 727), Witzel (1995: 101). The word is also included in Kuiper’s list of “Foreign Elements in the Rigvedic Vocabulary<sup>2</sup> (1991: 93/#373).

<sup>71</sup>) *Contra* Autran (1946: 217), who speaks of “relations inévitables et immémoriales<sup>2</sup> between India and Africa in this context.

<sup>72</sup>) Bailey (1967: 358, 1979: 421).

correspondances between Khotanese and Sogdian)<sup>73</sup>; Old Persian name compounds with *čarku-* since the seventh century B.C.<sup>74</sup>

Notice that no convincing Indo-European etymology for any of these forms has been advanced in the literature, although it has been argued quite forcefully by Henning that a Middle Iranian form like Khwarezmian *tbsó* (reflecting \**tbsɬf* > \**tbsóf* ▷ \**tbsój*) could be the ultimate source of Chinese *suÀnní*, thus effectively making it “one of the first, perhaps even the first, of the Iranian words that found a home in China”.<sup>75</sup> From the viewpoint of Old Chinese reconstruction, this proposal crucially hinges upon the possibility of positing a final \*-s in the subclass of the traditional *wén* 文-rhyme group to which *suÀn* belongs. This split, motivated by rhyming data, homophonophoric-patterns, and a root-structure constraint against the appearance of two rhotics within a mono- or sesquisyllabic Old Chinese root, was first proposed by Starostin<sup>76</sup>, and, as I have tried to show in detail elsewhere<sup>77</sup>, is very plausible despite the fact that it can not *yet* be corroborated by inscriptional evidence.

In any case, a Middle or even Old Iranian language would then also underlie several Tibeto-Burman reflexes of the same root in Written Tibetan and dialects, as well as Stau, úaÉ-úuÉ, Lepcha, rGyarong, Ménba, Dèng, Pümà Zàbà, Mùyǎ, Guiqióng, Shǎǎng and other modern

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<sup>73</sup>) The Burushaski forms Yasin *čós* ‘lion’ and Werchikwar *čf-s* ‘lion, tiger’ all derive from Modern Persian or Urdu, cf. Berger (1974: 177), Lorimer (1938: 326a, 1962: 219a). This is also the case of Nepali *ser*, which is the common designation for the ‘lion’, besides *čj* *ibin* name compounds and popular *čhib* (← Hindŭ) and *čč* (← W. Tibetan ?), cf. Turner (1931: 749.a).

<sup>74</sup>) Gershevitch (1970: 90).

<sup>75</sup>) Henning (1977: 614). See also Là Gào et al. (1984: 315, 329), Xú Wénkàn (1993).

<sup>76</sup>) Starostin (1989: 228-41).

<sup>77</sup>) Behr (1997: 504-515). For an earlier hint at the OC distinction between \*-r : \*-l : \*-n cf. Unger (1986).

Tibeto-Burman languages<sup>78</sup>, which all show phonetically similar forms and geographically form a rather compact “Northern” Tibeto-Burman cluster. Cf. for instance —

- (41) Classical Tibetan *tʃɛ̃.hɛ̃*, *tʃɛ̃.hɛ̃*, Amdo *tʃɛ̃.hɛ̃*, Balti *tʃɛ̃.hɛ̃*, Mustang *tʃɛ̃.lɛ̃*<sup>79</sup>; Stau *tʃɛ̃.li*; úaÉ-úuÉ *sang-go*<sup>80</sup>; Lepcha *süŋ-gi*; rGyarong *sʌO-ge*; Mùyǎ *si<sup>55</sup>-Ogi<sup>53</sup>*; Cuònà Ménba *seO<sup>55</sup>ke<sup>55</sup>*; Jiùlóng Pümàsi *O<sup>55</sup>gi<sup>55</sup>*, Gémàn Dèng *sʌO<sup>55</sup>gi<sup>55</sup>* etc.

Yet this scenario is rather unlikely, since *all* of the languages quoted show a velar nasal in the offset of the first syllable, despite the fact that the phonotactics of *some* of them, including Written Tibetan, do certainly *not* preclude a final \*-s. Since it cannot be assumed in this case that we are dealing with an instance of linguistic “drift” (in the sense of Sapir), and because it is also not to be expected, that *all* of the languages would have borrowed their word for ‘lion’ from Chinese during the rather small time-window *after* the shift from \*-s > \*-o, but *before* the lexical replacement of *suʌnni* by *shǔ̀à*, the most reasonable explanation is that the majority of the languages in question borrowed their word for ‘lion’ directly from Tibetan.

The possibility, considered by Laufer<sup>81</sup>, that Tibetan *tʃɛ̃.hɛ̃* itself was a loanword from a *Late Middle Indian* Prākṛit (i.e. Aphabrahā, ranging, roughly, from the fourth to the twelfth century A.D.) form of Sanskrit *tj ib.* like *tʃɛ̃hiv.\**, *tj hiv.\** has to be seriously entertained as well, despite the apparent problems of the final vocalism. The nominative singular ending in *-u* in Sanskrit *a*-stems is a diagnostic feature of Aphabrahā, while *-e*, which would be needed to account for the Tibetan form, is a typical *Middle Indo-Aryan* ‘Maghadism’, i.e. a form predominantly appearing in eastern Indian inscriptional Prākṛits

<sup>78</sup>) See the entries in Huáng Bùfán et al. (1992: 102).

<sup>79</sup>) Kretschmar (1995: 487).

<sup>80</sup>) Haarh (1968: 41).

<sup>81</sup>) Laufer (1916: 464/#63).

between the second and fourth centuries A.D.<sup>82</sup> While Sanskrit *tj ib.* develops regularly into Middle Indo-Aryan with lengthening of the nasalized vowel before -i-, whence Skt. *tj ib.* > Pāli *ṭṭib*, Pkt., *ṭṭib*, *tj ib.*, Pañjaṣṭ *ṭṭ*. etc., several Prākritis produce *g*-forms with an *unconditioned* “Verschärfung<sup>2</sup>, which also survive as alternatives in Hindū *ṭṭiṭṭi*.<sup>83</sup> Māgadhī however, does not belong to these Prakrits and would, if anything, undergo lenition and spirantization, rather than strengthening to -*g*-.<sup>84</sup> In fact, *none* of the languages listed in Turner’s *Comparative Dictionary* displays a combination of *Verschärfung* and nominative u-vocalism<sup>85</sup>, while typical Aphabra. *ṣa*-forms encountered in texts are *ṭib.* or *ṭiv*.<sup>86</sup> In any case, most of these developments would be much too late to explain a Tibetan word attested since the earliest texts in that language, let alone its Chinese parallels. Since we simply do not know, if Old Tibetan final *-É* ultimately derives from a dental nasal, which was assimilated to the velar initial of the second syllable, after evolving from *\*-s* under unknown conditions, Occam’s razor would certainly rather lead us to the provisional assumption, that Old Chinese and most of the Tibeto-Burman languages quoted, *as well as* Iranian received their forms from an unknown underlying “donor<sup>2</sup> language of Central or Southern Asia.

### 4.2.3 Tocharian

Coming back to *shūshūṭà* it is quite obvious that this term, if from an Iranian source, could only have been borrowed during a rather late period, allowing for a phonetic proximity with New Persian *ṣṣ*.<sup>87</sup> Since

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<sup>82</sup>) Bubenik (1996: 19, 72-74).

<sup>83</sup>) Von Hinüber (1986: 74).

<sup>84</sup>) Bubenik (1996: 54-58).

<sup>85</sup>) Turner (1962-66, I: 772/#13884).

<sup>86</sup>) Pischel (1902: 406, 418).

<sup>87</sup>) Indeed, Forrest (1948: 120), following Giles, saw *shūsa* as a loanword from Persian.

this is not in accordance with the textual evidence given above, let us first reconsider the possibility of a Tocharian loan source.

Apart from Toch. B *tj iɬ*, a loan from Sanskrit *tj iḅ* ‘lion’, and the possible Toch. A reflex *lu* ‘beast’ (gen. *lw-es*, nom.pl. *lw-À*, instr.pl. *lw-À-yo* etc.) of the most widespread Indo-European root for ‘lion’ \**leu-* (cf. Latin *leæ*, gen. *leænis*, borrowed from Greek ἰῶν, gen. ἰῶνος < \**lewont-*, cf. already Mycenaean Instr. pl. *re-wo-pi*, Germanic \**liuwaz* < PIE \**leu-os*; Homeric ἰῶν is unrelated<sup>88</sup>), the indigenous word for ‘lion’ in Tocharian is A *ččäk*, *ččak=* (in compounds), B *čecake*. This word, in its Toch. A shape, was first likened to Chinese *shü* by Paul Pelliot in his review of Sieg/Siegling’s *Tocharische Grammatik*<sup>89</sup>. With typical philological prudence Pelliot wrote:

“Bien que je croie que le chinois 獅 *che* (ou 師子 *che-tseu*, où *tseu* est un affixe substantif chinois), „lion“, se rattache aux formes iraniennes qui ont abouti à pers. *šōš*, le tokh. *ččäl*, d’origine obscure, ne peut être encore écarté complètement.<sup>90</sup>

Shortly after Pelliot, the direction of the loan contact was reversed in Heinrich Lüders’ discussion of the origins of zodiac systems in East Asia, who claimed that the name for the lion was borrowed by the Tocharians from Chinese.<sup>91</sup> As it is well-known, E.G. Pulleyblank first rejected the

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<sup>88</sup>) Cf. Gamkrelidze-Ivanov (1984, II: 507-08) with explanations and a list of modern reflexes. Both Greek roots have *Anklänge* in several “Afroasiatic<sup>2</sup> and Kartvelian languages, and have been rightfully described as Ancient Near Eastern *Wanderwörter* by Gamkrelidze-Ivanov (1984, II: 510). For a possible Hamito-Semitic parallel cf. Orel & Stolbova (1995: 355/#1636, s.v. \**ṛbcjɬ\**mjcbQ**), for a careful and comprehensive treatment of the interconnections implied by this type of migratory term see Kammerzell (1994), while Heimpel (1987-1990) is an excellent sketch of the cultural and religious background. Cf. also Dolgopolsky (1998: 20/#3, s.v. ‘\**ṛ*ü<sup>1</sup>ḏwv<sup>1</sup>’).

<sup>89</sup>) Göttingen : Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1931.

<sup>90</sup>) Pelliot (1931: 449).

<sup>91</sup>) Lüders (1933: 1018, n. 1).



interpretation of 𑖃𑖅𑖆𑖇 as a suffixed hybrid compound in 1962, arguing that the Tocharian word, especially in its B shape, should be interpreted as the source of Chinese 𑖃𑖅𑖆𑖇 (EMC \*𑖃𑖅𑖆𑖇 < WHC \*𑖃𑖅𑖆𑖇), where 𑖆𑖇 was an *integral part* of the transcription.

In order to evaluate this hypothesis, which has figured largely in recent discussions about the antiquity of Chinese-Tocharian lexical and cultural contacts triggered by the discovery of the *Xūnjiàng mummies*, it would be desirable to know, whether the Tocharian word has a solid Indo-European pedigree, or whether it has to be analyzed as a loanword itself. Unfortunately, the etymology of Toch. A *ǎǎk*, B *ǎǎke* is far from clear, although there has been no lack of attempts to tackle the problem, which I will briefly review here:

- (a) Schwentner (1939) derives Toch. A *ǎǎk* from a non-attested Skt. \**𑖃𑖅𑖆𑖇*\* ‘having a mane’, pointing to the lexicographically attested *𑖃𑖅𑖆𑖇*. In this he is followed Pokorny<sup>92</sup> who relates the Tocharian words to the IE root \**𑖃𑖅𑖆𑖇*- ‘hair, mane’, although he still views both words as *loans* from Sanskrit.<sup>93</sup>
- (b) Pedersen (1941: 246-7) points out that the B-form must be older than A *ǎǎk*, for which he proposes a derivation *𑖃𑖅𑖆𑖇* < \**𑖃𑖅𑖆𑖇* by long-distance assimilation. He refutes Schwentner’s etymology (“dafür spricht nichts<sup>2</sup>) but does not deny the loan status of the word in Tocharian.
- (c) Van Windekens (1941: 120-121), sees both forms A and B as related to IE \**𑖃𑖅𑖆𑖇*- ‘to attach to’ (i.e. Ved. «*t’kuj* -*𑖃𑖅𑖆𑖇*, *𑖃𑖅𑖆𑖇* etc., Old Persian *ha<sub>(n)j</sub>-*; Lith. *segù, sègti* ‘to attach to, clip, baste’; also Old Church Slavonic *pri-sôgoβ-sôti* ‘to touch,

<sup>92</sup>) Pokorny (1959, IEW II: 520).

<sup>93</sup>) Cf. Latin *caesaries* ‘hair on the head’. Notice that Toch. A also sometimes metaphorically uses *𑖃𑖅𑖆𑖇* (← Skt. *𑖃𑖅𑖆𑖇*) ‘the maned one’ for ‘lion’, as in the Tocharian version of the list of the ‘32 physiognomical characteristics of a Great Man’ (*ewwusj 𑖃𑖅𑖆𑖇 bi<qvsv; 𑖃𑖅𑖆𑖇, 𑖃𑖅𑖆𑖇*) discussed by Ji Xiánlín (1982: 16).

grab', i.e. IE \*~~t-nfAn-nf-~~<sup>94</sup> thus deriving them from an original meaning "animal à crinière<sup>2</sup>, without further elaboration of the sound changes involved.<sup>95</sup>

- (d) Van Windekens (1964: 227-229), claims that both A and B, as well as Sanskrit *tj ib* 'lion' and Armenian *inc* 'leopard' "trouvent leur origine dans quelque langue asiatique<sup>2</sup>.
- (e) Twelve years later (1976: 480-1), he reconsiders his own etymology, deriving Toch. A *ǎǎik* !< PIE \*~~t#f-rp-~~ (and the variant A *ǎǎak* = < \*~~tj#f-rp-~~), Toch. B *ǎǎake* !< \*~~tf#f-rp-~~ (cf. Lat. *saeta* 'soies, crins, poil (rude) d'un animal, piquants crinière'), i.e. ultimately from PIE \*~~tf(š)-/tÀj-/si-~~ 'to bind'<sup>96</sup>, with a proposed semantic extension ⇒ 'bound' ⇒ 'band' ⇒ 'bristle of an animal'.<sup>97</sup>
- (f) Adams (1984) proposes a derivation of Toch. A *ǎǎik* by 'contamination' with *ǎǎri* 'mane' and through long-distance assimilation < \*~~tj#l~~ < \*~~tb#tbl f-~~ < \*~~tb#tbl f-~~ < \*~~tb#l j#l f-~~ < \*~~tj#h#flp-~~ vs. B *ǎǎake*, through loss of nasal < \*~~tfodbl f~~ (Proto-Toch. Ablaut variant:) \*~~tj#st#l f-~~.<sup>98</sup>
- (g) Kitson (1996: 215 n. 3), reviewing Adams' ingenious derivation, relates that "... professor [Werner] Winter insists that the Tocharian alleged cognate (of Skt. *tj ib*, Arm.

<sup>94</sup>) See the discussion of this root in Rix, Kümmel et al. (1998: 468) and Werba (1997: 249-50, s.v. *tb³k*).

<sup>95</sup>) The derivation from an etymon meaning 'mane' was also envisaged by Poucha (1955: 324), who compared Cymr. *hoenyn* (\*~~tphop-~~), *hwynyn* 'hair; hunting net', but did not refer to van Windekens' proposal.

<sup>96</sup>) I.e. laryngealist \*~~tfi₂(j)-~~, cf. Ved. *tj u* (< \*~~tj#fo-i₂-~~) 'ties up, binds', Lith *sienu*, *siet* 'to bind'. For other derivations of this root see Rix, Kümmel et al. (1998: 471).

<sup>97</sup>) This idea is hesitatingly accepted by Miliutõ-Chomiẽnienkienõ (1990: 141-2).

<sup>98</sup>) Adams (1999: 660) sticks to the idea of a contamination with *ǎǎri*. Notice however, that he apparently does not consider the derivation from IE \*~~tj#h#flp-~~ valid any longer.

*inj/inc*) will not sustain Adams reconstruction beyond the initial letter, so it must be definitely discarded.<sup>299</sup>

- (h) Donald Ringe (p.c.) considers all etymologies, including Adams', unbelievable, and I will try to summarize some of his arguments in the following section.

The main problem with *the* etymology of the Tocharian words is that the forms in A and B cannot be reasonably reconciled. In fact, assuming that the final syllable was accented in B, as is very likely, the only parts showing regular correspondances between the two “dialects<sup>2</sup> are the suffixes A *-äk* : B *-ake*. Toch. A *ǝ* reflects a palatal dorsal which could go back to pre-Proto-Tocharian (PPT) *\*kʸ-*, *\*gʸ-*, *\*kʷʸ-*, or *\*hʷʸ-*, since palatalized velars and labiovelars merged before undergoing affrication, delabialization and devoicing in an unclear chronological order.<sup>100</sup> Alternatively, Toch. A *ǝ* might also have developed from affricated PPT *\*e-* > *\*eʒ-* — if it could be traced that far at all —, with subsequent devoicing to PT *\*tʂ-*.<sup>101</sup> Toch. B *ö* on the other hand, can only reflect palatalized *\*sʸ-*<sup>102</sup>, B *-c-*, of the second syllable, a palatalized voiceless PT dental *\*-t-* < *\*-t-*<sup>103</sup> or *\*-tʰ-* < *\*-dʰ-*<sup>104</sup> (but not < *\*-e-*, which would have yielded PT *\*-tʂ-* or *\*-ǝ-*).<sup>105</sup> As far as the vowels are concerned, Toch. A *-i-* may reflect PPT long *\*-3-* going to Proto-Tocharian (PT) *\*-i-*, PT *\*-äy-* < PPT *\*-ey-*, or, eventually, a short PPT *\*-i-*, *\*-e-* or *\*-u-* followed by a nasal, which went to *\*-y* before the following palatal (i.e. PPT *\*CiN-*, *\*CeN-* > PT *\*CYÀN-* > Toch. A *\*CYin-* > *Cʸi-*, *\*CuN-* > *\*CÀN-* > *\*CÀy-* > *Ci-*). Yet Toch. B *-e-* must go back to a non-high vowel, i.e. either PT *\*-ò-* > *-e-* or PPT *\*-o-* > PT *\*-ñ-*

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<sup>99)</sup> This verdict was confirmed by Professor Winter in a letter to the author (October 6, 1998).

<sup>100)</sup> Ringe (1996: 148-150, § 59).

<sup>101)</sup> Ringe (1996: 146-48, § 57).

<sup>102)</sup> Ringe (1996: 145-46, § 56).

<sup>103)</sup> Ringe (1996: 102-103, § 46).

<sup>104)</sup> Ringe (1996: 106, § 46).

<sup>105)</sup> Ringe (1996: 104, § 46). Cf. for all of these developments also Winter (1962).

> *-e-*.<sup>106</sup> Adding to these phonological mismatches is the morphological fact that the *only* other Tocharian noun showing a similar pattern of inflection, i.e. a Toch. A word which behaves as though the stem vowel, lost in the singular, had originally been PT *schwa*, whereas the stem vowel of the presumed Toch. B counterpart is *-e*, is A *räake* : B *riäk* ‘~~seer~~ seer’<sup>107</sup>, an obvious Iranian loanword. Notice also, that the ablaut variants, posited to account for the diverging vocalism in the first syllable, would be highly unusual for an *unanalyzable* noun. It is thus clear that Adams’ etymology can not be upheld without acceptance of considerable irregularities.

Indeed, the whole situation looks strongly as if the words for lion were borrowed *into* Tocharian only considerably *after* A and B had begun to diverge.<sup>108</sup> Judging from the chronology of Iranian loanwords in Tocharian and glottochronological considerations, a conservative estimate for the time of the split of the two dialects would be the first century A.D.<sup>109</sup>, i.e. roughly the time when the first attestations of Chinese *shū* start to appear. Shortly after this period, East Tocharian was already moribund, a kind of church or book language of the Tocharian Buddhists, which was also used as a prestigious medium of mission among the Turks.<sup>110</sup> In any case, a possible late PPT matrix of reconstructions accounting for Toch. A *riäk* —

$$* \left| \begin{array}{c} \hat{E}^y \\ d^{zy} \end{array} \right| \left| \begin{array}{c} \ddot{U} \\ ey \end{array} \right| \left| \begin{array}{c} \hat{E}^y \\ d^{zy} \end{array} \right| \left| \text{äkŋ!} \right.$$

<sup>106</sup> See Ringe (1996, chap. 6 & 8 on the development of vowels, chap. 7 on palatalization). Cf. also Penney (1976-77: 80-85).

<sup>107</sup> Krause & Thomas (1960 129, § 180.1c), Ringe (1996: 85 n.1).

<sup>108</sup> The idea of Blažek (1984: 392) that both Tocharian forms might be borrowed from a compound derived from a combination of an (unattested!) Sino-Tibetan \*si ‘lion’ + a reflex of the Tibeto-Burman root for ‘leopard’ \*zik (Benedict & Matisoff 1972: 27/# 61 with reflexes), cannot be verified.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. K.T. Schmidt (1985: 765).

<sup>110</sup> Cf. Winter (1984: 4-16, 32-35, *passim*).

i	N		
e			
u			

can certainly not be easily reconciled with the Chinese reconstruction. Tocharian B —

*	s <sup>y</sup>	ñ!	t	àkñ!
		ò!	t <sup>h</sup>	

on the other hand, located further away from the Chinese speaking territories than A, might with some goodwill be considered a possible source for Chinese *shǔ̀à if and only if*, *zà* was not already a suffix at the time of the loan transfer, which is overwhelmingly likely.

So, on balance, I think that while Tocharian A can be safely excluded as the donor language, it is likely that Tocharian B, as well as Chinese borrowed the term for the ‘lion’ from a *third* substrate language<sup>111</sup>, most likely spoken in a region where the lion was native. We must assume that the Chinese had knowledge of the lion very early on, which survived in the semi-*hapax* form of *su`anni* that ultimately goes back to Iranian predecessors. It remains to be shown whether the younger word for the lion, *shǔ̀à* had Iranian affiliations as well. Apparently neither of the forms is related to another root attested in Tibeto-Burman, and reconstructed for the Proto-Loloish level as \*k-rong1 ‘leopard cat’ (> Written Burmese *khrang-se*, where *-se* is possibly a suffix used in animal names<sup>112</sup>, Modern Burmese *u`á-f̂2-u`f̂3*) by

<sup>111</sup>) Cf. for a similar position already Brough (1970: 82 n. 5).

<sup>112</sup>) Rather than a reflex of a fictive Sino-Tibetan \*si ‘lion’, which would have formed a compound with ‘cat’ (*khrang*) in Burmese according to Blažek (1984: 392).

Bradley<sup>113</sup>. Despite the apparent semantic problems, this root had been compared to Chinese *shǔ* 獅 by Robert Shafer<sup>114</sup>, which was rightfully rejected by Benedict in the *Conspectus*.<sup>115</sup> The root has a marked southern (i.e. Loloish) distribution<sup>116</sup>, although Tangut \**lb-ʌ̄ʌ̄ʌ̄* (in Là Fànwén's reconstruction), transcribed as *gézhòng* 葛征 (EMC \**lb-ʌ̄ʌ̄ʌ̄* > LMC \**lb-ʌ̄ʌ̄ʌ̄*) in the *Tóngyǔn* 同音 (or \*\**óʌ̄ʌ̄*) of 1132<sup>117</sup>, could be a northern outpost of the same word.

## 5. Envoi

One does not have to turn to Sumer for a possible origin, as did Guà Mòruò 郭沫若 under the influence of the pan-diffusionist movement in Chinese historiography during the first quarter of this century.<sup>118</sup> In his discussion of the Babylonian origins of the 'heavenly stems and earthly branches' (*tiāngān dìzhī* 天干地支), as used in oracle bone inscriptions and early Chinese astronomy<sup>119</sup>, Guà claimed that *qiú'ér* 酋耳 (OC \**a<sub>e</sub>{v=b}oʌ̄-0*) was a disyllabic ('lento') rendering of Sumerian UR 'dog' (glossed by him as 'lion/sphinx'), i.e. the

<sup>113</sup>) Bradley (1978: 294/#16&17).

<sup>114</sup>) R. Shafer (1941-42, I: 324). See also Luce (1981:16/#106), who compared the Written Burmese form to *suànmi* and Tibetan *tṭɕ̣ɦɛ*.

<sup>115</sup>) Benedict & Matisoff (1972: 162, n. 439). This rejection apparently escaped Zhāu Fǎngào (1972: 214), who includes the comparison in his GSR-index to the *Conspectus*' Chinese equations.

<sup>116</sup>) For the Jàngpæ, ɿ chàng, Zàiwǎ, Lèqǔ and Bælà reflexes cf. Huáng Bùfān (1992: 102). The Qiàng, Hàni, Nù and Bái forms are all obviously late loans from Middle or Modern Chinese.

<sup>117</sup>) *Tóngyǔn* (20B5.7/36A1.3), Là Fànwén ed. (1986: 297, 376). Laufer (1916.a: 81/#198) considers the first syllable to be a prefix of unknown function and the second one (hypothesized to derive from < pre-Tangut \**č̣*) to be either borrowed from the same Iranian source as *shǔ* or "somehow<sup>2</sup> connected with the Tibetan and Sanskrit forms.

<sup>118</sup>) Cf. Lynn Porter (1996: 13, 174, n.51).

<sup>119</sup>) For an equally speculative recent treatment of the topic see Cook (1995).

Sumerogram UR.MAH1 ‘mighty carnivorous beast, lion’, which was predominantly used in official and judicial documents.<sup>120</sup> In a rather convoluted argumentation he tried to show, that *qiu* had been secondarily replaced by *zùn-* 尊 (OC \* $a_{\text{uv}o}$ ) in order to match it phonetically with *suàn-* 獾 (OC \* $a_{\text{tp}[o,s]}$ ), which he explained in turn as a *graphical* corruption for *náo* 獯~猯~獯 (OC \* $a_{\text{nu}}$ ). As it is commonly, albeit not unanimously, assumed since Wáng Guówéi’s famous study of ancestor names in scapulimantic texts and their counterparts in the edited literature<sup>121</sup>, this ‘monkey-shaped’ character, sometimes also transcribed as *kui* 夔 (OC \* $b_{\text{hxj}}$ ), was the personal name of the arch Kù 嚳 (OC \* $a_{\text{uf}1-s} a_{\text{kiv}1}$ ), the legendary progenitor of the Shàng 商 dynasty and highest ancestor mentioned in oracle bone inscriptions.<sup>122</sup> Finally, the nasal initials of *-ní* 麤~猯 (OC \* $=a_{\text{of}}$ ) and ǒr 耳 (OC \* $b_{\text{o}à-0}$ ) are claimed to be homorganic resonants, chosen to represent foreign *-r*. A quick glance at the resulting chain of phonological equations in their modern Old Chinese reconstructions (\* $a_{e\{v=b_{\text{o}à-0}} \approx a_{\text{nu}}=a_{\text{of}} \approx b_{\text{hxj}}=a_{\text{of}}$ ) shows that Guæ’s fanciful ramblings are well-nigh impossible, and do certainly not constitute “evidence of Sino-Babylonian linguistic contacts during the Yǐn and Zhæu periods”.<sup>123</sup> While far from conclusive, his observations on early iconographical parallels of felidae-depictions are more to the point.<sup>124</sup>

Notice also, that there are several imponderabilia on the Near Eastern side of the comparison. As Steinherr and Otten have shown, UR.MAH<sub>1</sub> was read *walwa-* in Hittite, *walwi-* in Luwian<sup>125</sup>, and the

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<sup>120</sup>) In literary texts, the lion was also referred to as *pirig* or *ug*, cf. Heimpel (1987-90).

<sup>121</sup>) Wáng Guówéi (1916, repr. 1959).

<sup>122</sup>) Guæ Mòruò (1931, B: 51r-v = 1962: 251-252). For an interesting discussion of these identifications see Allen (1991: 33-35, 51-53, 58-62 and *passim*).

<sup>123</sup>) Guæ Mòruò (1931, B: 51v = 1962: 252).

<sup>124</sup>) Cf. the plates in Guæ Mòruò (1931, B: 53v = 1962: 255).

<sup>125</sup>) Steinherr (1968) and Otten (1969, 1981: 143). For the cultural significance of the lion in the Hittite world see also Ünal (1987-90).

same root *walw-* also survives in Lydian coin-legends of the sixth century B.C.<sup>126</sup> UR ‘dog, beast’, on the other hand, read *taó* in Akkadian and probably *tió* in Hurritic<sup>127</sup>, is conventionally read *ur* by Sumerologists, and this was the form used as the target of Guæ’s comparison. There is some evidence, however, in lexicographical works and alternative spellings, that it might have had a reading *sur<sub>x</sub>*, at least in theophoric personal names of the third millennium B.C.<sup>128</sup> This reading *sur* was proposed early during this century by Theophilus Goldridge Pinches (1856-1934)<sup>129</sup> and later defended by Arno Poebel and Edmond Sollberger<sup>130</sup>, but did not find many followers. During the eighties there was a lively exchange on the matter, based on some new evidence for the reading *sur<sub>x</sub>*, between Steinkellner (1980) and Sollberger (1985) on the pro- and Lambert (1981, 1982) on the contra-side; however, recent text editions show that *ur* is clearly still the preferred reading among mainstream Sumerologists. Still, even if one accepted the phonetic possibility of a remote connection between the contentious reading *sur<sub>x</sub>* for UR and the first syllable of Old Chinese \*a<sub>1</sub>ʈʰ[ɔ, s] = a<sub>1</sub>ɔf, it is unclear why a word for ‘dog’ without its attribute ‘mighty’ would have borrowed for the lion. Moreover, it has recently been claimed that *ur* itself could

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<sup>126</sup>) Wallace (1986).

<sup>127</sup>) Rüter & Neu (1989: 116-7/#51). Eblaitic possibly had a word *na(-)ió* ‘lion’ which occurs in *na-ióqar<sub>3</sub>-ga-ri<sub>2</sub>-im* ‘earth-lion’ ⇒ ‘chamaeleon’ according to Sjöberg (1996: 20-21).

<sup>128</sup>) The reading *sur* was proposed early on by T.G. Pinches in the *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology* (1903: 200), defended by A. Poebel (1937: 55, n. 2) and E. Sollberger (1956: 11 n. 4, 24, additional note), but did not find many followers. During the 80ies there was a lively exchange on the matter, based on some new evidence for the reading *sur<sub>x</sub>*, between Steinkellner (1980) and Sollberger (1985) on the pro- and W.G. Lambert (1981, 1982) on the contra-side; however, recent text editions show that *ur* is clearly still the preferred reading among mainstream Sumerologists.

<sup>129</sup>) *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology* (1903: 200).

<sup>130</sup>) Poebel (1937: 55, n. 2), E. Sollberger (1956: 11 n. 4, 24, additional note).



be a loanword from an ‘Afro-Asiatic’ root \*wahar(-ab) ‘dog, fox, hyena’<sup>131</sup>, in which case the Pinches reading would be untenable.

Wherever the *urheimat* of the lion in Africa might have been, we will have to look to Iran and probably well beyond for the Chinese lion’s den.

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<sup>131</sup> See Militarew (1996: 20/#6) with alleged Egyptian, Demotic, Berber and Cushitic reflexes.

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