

CORIANDER

by W. B. HENNING

And diff'ring judgements serve but to declare
The truth lies somewhere, if we knew but where
(Cowper)

Among the problems touched on by E. G. Pulleyblank in his comprehensive study of Old Chinese phonology is the origin of 胡荽 (葫 |) *hu-suei* "coriander",¹ long suspected of concealing an Iranian word and connected by Laufer with Middle Persian "gošniz", Persian "kišniz", "kušniz", etc.² The origin of that Iranian word, in its turn, has remained obscure; Pulleyblank has made some progress towards its elucidation with the help of H. W. Bailey and I. Gershevitch, who supplied some related forms, especially Armenian *ginj* and Baluchi *gēnič* (*kīnič*), and proposed *gašnič* as the reading of the Middle Persian (Pahlavi) term.

In view of Laufer's argumentation³ it must be maintained that the correct Persian form is *gišniz*: the word is given with *g-* in all indigenous Persian dictionaries of repute, with *-i-* (rather than *-a-*) in most, and it is pronounced *gišniz* nowadays.⁴ That the vowel of the first syllable was *-i-* from the beginning is guaranteed by the vocalization in the oldest Persian manuscript (*K. al-abniyah*, 46¹⁸, 87^{8, 14}, 199¹⁰, 202¹⁰, 212⁵).⁵ Beside *gišniz* an older or dialect form *gišnif* is occasionally⁶ found, and for this some dictionaries do indicate *kišnif*: that pronunciation is doubtless due to Turkish influence; for the word was widely adopted and spread by speakers of Turkish who, as often in such cases, substituted *k-* for *g-*: hence⁷ Turkish

¹ *Asia Major*, ix, 132 sq.

² *Sino-Iranica*, 298 sq.

³ *šiniz* (with its equivalent *būyanj*) = *Nigella sativa* should not have been mentioned.

⁴ Thus Haim, Wollaston, and Schlimmer. There is a strong tendency towards replacing short *-i-* and *-u-* in unstressed syllables by *-a-* in modern Persian; *gašniz* is therefore secondary to *giš-*.—The Syriac lexicographer Bar Bahlūl (10th century) had, it seems, *gešniz*, cf. Löw, *Aram. Pflanz.*, 210.

⁵ The single occurrence with *-u-* (202⁷) is probably due to the immediately preceding *kuzbarah*; three lines further with *-i-*.

⁶ e.g. *Muqaddamatu 'l-Adab*, 168¹⁰.

⁷ Characteristically, Achundow (whose mother-tongue was Azerbaijanian Turkish) in his German translation of the *K. al-abniyah* transcribed the Persian word as *Kesch-niz* (p. 258). E. Castellus, *Lex. heptaglotton* (1669), 459 sq., gave *gašniz/gišniz* as Persian (with citations from the Jewish translation of the Pentateuch) and, incorrectly, *gašnif/kašnif* as Turkish.

kišniš, *kišniš*, *kišniš* (Zenker), Russian *kišnec*, Kurdish *kišniš* (Jaba-Justi), Tajiki *kašniš*, *kašniš* (beside *gašniš*; Bertel's), Hindustani *kišniš* (Platts), and also Baluchi *kišniš*. A genuine Persian dialect form, unaffected by foreign influence, is Rīšahri *gešni*.

As the Persian word is *gišniš*, there is no good reason why one should interpret the Pahlavi (Middle Persian) spelling *gšnyč*⁸ other than as *gišnič*. A short *-i-* would not be expressed in that situation; e.g., Pahl. *npštn* is universally read as *nipištan*, not **napaštan*. Pahlavi orthography is reticent, one has to call in outside evidence. It is clear that Baluchi *gēnič* (etc.) derives from the Middle Persian word, with simplification of the internal consonant cluster and balancing lengthening of the preceding vowel. Thus we have only two mutually independent forms: Armenian *ginj* and Middle Pers. *gišnič*; all others descend from the latter.

To account for this opposition Arm. *ginj*: MPers. *gišnič* is by no means easy.⁹ We should first discard the final of the MPers. term and recognize in it the common diminutive suffix *-ič*; the seeds of coriander are small enough to deserve such an enlargement. That leaves us with *ginj*: *gišn*. In loanwords from Iranian Arm. *-nj* (= *ndz*) generally reflects Middle Ir. *-nz*, which was presumably produced or apprehended as *-n^hz* (with a gliding consonant). An example is Arm. *anjuk* "narrow", from M.Ir. **anzūk*, testified to by Man. MPers. *hnzwg-* = *hanzūg-* and Parthian *'njwg-* = *anjūg-*;¹⁰ here *-nz-*, unusual in Parthian, has been replaced by the common group *-nj-*, but there is no doubt that *-nz-* is original (Skt. *amhu*, Slav. *qzūkū*, cf. Av. *qzah-* etc.). A similar replacement has occurred in Persian in a series of words (*ganj* "treasure", *birinj* "bronze", *birinj/gurinj* "rice") where the Armenian loans (*ganj*, *pinj*, *brinj*) presuppose Middle Iranian forms with *-nz*.¹¹ Some of them are attested, notably *gnz*, possibly *brynz* and *gwrync* = **gurinz*.¹²

Of all such words there is only one that possesses cognates in which the sibilant precedes the nasal: that is Armenian *ganj* "treasure". Middle Pers. (etc.) *gnz* = *ganz* contrasts with Parthian (etc.) *gzn* = *ganzn*. Indeed, the forms with *-zn-* are widely distributed; they are found, beside in Parthian, in Sogdian (*γzn-*), in the unknown Eastern Iranian language that was responsible for the name of *Ghazna*, and by inference, if H. W. Bailey's

suggestion (*Asica*, *Tr. Phil. Soc.*, 1945, 15) is accepted,¹³ in Khwarezmian (*γzdk* "rich" with *-zd-* < *-zn-*) and Ossetic (*γāzduk*). *Ganz*, in contrast, belongs only to the western edge of the Iranian field. The distribution compels the assumption that *ganzn-* is the general Iranian form, but *ganz* a product of metathesis in some Western dialect. It is remarkable that both E. Benveniste (*J.A.*, 1935, 141 sq.) and H. W. Bailey (*Asica*, 15) have expressed precisely the contrary opinion. Possibly the great currency of *ganz-* and its derivatives in foreign languages has produced that presumption of its originality. It was caused by the adoption of *ganz-* into the language of the Achaemenian administration, by whose agency it migrated far and wide into almost all Semitic languages (*ganzā*, *ginzā*, *gazzā*, *kanz*, etc.), into Armenian, Greek (*γάζα*, *γαζοφύλαξ*),¹⁴ Sanskrit (*gañja*), even as far as Krorayin (*gamñi* = *gañji*). One should consider the following points: (1) Sogd. etc. *γ-* attests ancient possession; (2) *-nz-* is not altered in Sogd. (e.g., *δβ'nz*, *'nz'n-*), where in the corresponding voiceless group *n* on the contrary tends to precede (see Gershevitch, *Gramm.*, 66 § 435 on *-ns-* from *-sn-*); (3) *-nz-* in Parthian may be replaced by *-nj-* (see *'njwg-* above); (4) a metathesis of *-nz-* into *-zn-* is unknown in Iranian; (5) a metathesis of *-zn-* into *-nz-* is known, e.g., in Ossetic (Digor *γāvanz*: general Ir. *gavanzn-*).¹⁵

The presence of *ganz* in Manichaean Middle Persian, dialectologically the purest type of "Persian", should not delude us into attributing the metathesis of *-zn* to *-nz-* to the Persian branch of the Western Iranian languages; for it is long established that in that branch Ir. *-zn-* appears as *-šn-*. Middle Persian naturally inherited the word from Old Persian, where *ganza-* must have been a loanword. As is well known, the administrative vocabulary of Old Persian was largely borrowed from Median. It is, therefore, likely that *ganza-* originated in Media. This conclusion was reached long ago by Hübschmann,¹⁶ on the basis of far less evidence than we have now at our disposal; he rightly pointed to the name of the famous city of Atropatenian Media: *Ganzaca*.¹⁷ We may, therefore, add the metathesis

¹³ In *Mitteliranisch*, 109, n.1, I expressed dissent, on the ground that this word for "rich" was not confined to Ossetic; yet there is no reason why the development of *-zn-* to *-zd-* should not have been common to several Eastern Ir. languages.

¹⁴ *γαζοφύλαξ* instead in the Greek text of the Great Inscription of Shapur I (line 66), doubtless under the influence of the Pahlavi version, in which *gnzwr*; here the Parthian version, too, has *gnzbr* (line 28), against *gznbr* in uninfluenced Parthian (*BSOS.*, ix, 83). On the alleged *gnz* in the inscr. of Paikuli see *Mitteliranisch*, 71 n. 3.

¹⁵ And probably Dig. *anz* "year" from **azna-*, see Miller, *Ossetisch*, 36 sq., Benveniste, *Ét. Oss.*, 42. The objections raised by Abaev, *Etim. Slov.*, are not cogent.

¹⁶ *Pers. Stud.*, 232.

¹⁷ Occasional forms with *-zn-* instead show that the metathesis was not universal in Media. M. Benveniste's assumption (*J.A.* 1935, 142) that Arab historians had been induced by the *célébrité* of *Ghazna* to generalize *-zn-* *comme pour affirmer l'identité onomastique des deux capitales* hardly accords with their mood. At the time when *Ganzak* was familiar to the Arab conquerors they had not heard of *Ghazna*.

⁸ An unambiguous occurrence in *Pahlavi Texts* 30²¹ (= *Khosrou* and page § 40).

⁹ A noteworthy, but unsuccessful, effort was made by de Lagarde, *Ges. Abh.* 57. Bailey and Gershevitch, *loc. cit.*, considered a loss of *-j-* (similar to that in the Baluchi form). However, any derivation from MPers. would leave Arm. *-j* unexplained (MPers. *-ič* would appear as *-ič* in Arm.).

¹⁰ Cf. *BSOAS.*, x, 510.

¹¹ Hübschmann, *Pers. Stud.* 231 sq.; cf. Bolognesi, *Fonti dial. d. imprestiti iranici in arm.*, 49.

¹² See *Sogdica*, 39, 45. In an unpublished fragment of MS. *h* (pp. 38-39), M 4164, occurs *brync* = *ryz* [clearly "rice" (cf. Sogd. *ryz'kh*, *BSOAS.*, xi, 724).

-zn- > -nz- to the short list of special features of the ancient Median¹⁸ language.¹⁹

An incidental advantage of positing *gazzn(a)-* as common Iranian is that the outcome of -zn- in most of the separate languages is well explored, thus Avestan -sn-, Old Pers. -šn-, etc. There can, therefore, be no doubt that we are entitled to claim classical Persian *gašn* (with a secondary form *gašan*) as the strictly Persian development of *gazzn(a)-*. True, *gašn* does not mean "treasure", but "plentiful, numerous" (so to say "a whole treasury full of"); yet this very deviation in meaning may account for its survival by the side of the imported *ganz*.

This excursus will, I hope, have justified itself now: the word for "treasure" is a guide to the history of the word for "coriander"; Arm. *ganj*: Pers. *gašn* as Arm. *ginj*: (M)Pers. *gišn(-)*. The common Iranian form of the latter must have been **gizn-*.

In order to restore the Old Iranian ancestral form of **gizn-* we have to bear in mind that *g-* may not precede a front vowel in Old Ir. Most likely would be **grzna-*; for an *r*-sonant later became -*ir* after velars (in most languages), and -*r-* tended to disappear before clusters of consonants: cf. e.g., MPers., Parth. *bašn* from OIr. *baršn-* for loss of -*r-*, and MPers. *gyšt* = *gišt* "he tied" from **grsta(graθ-)*²⁰ for *gi-* from *gr-*. The Avestan equivalent of **grzna-* would necessarily be **garasna-*, and that may confidently be allied with the actual word *zgarasna-*,²¹ the initial sibilant of which has ever been regarded as adventitious and detachable by etymologists, who have compared with it such words as Persian *gird* and Sogd. *γwrs*. All these words mean "round", "spherical" rather than "circular". The word for "coriander" is thus a simple adjective by origin, "round",²² i.e., "the round (seed)", or, more expressively, with a diminutive suffix (as in *gišnič*) "the little round (seed)". The name naturally envisages not the plant, but the seed; it is appropriate enough, for few things in nature are as determinedly spherical as the fresh fruit of coriander.

¹⁸ Attention should be drawn here to the existence of -nz in final position in the later language of Azerbaijan. Among dialect verses by the mystic poet *Maghribi*, of Tabriz, 2nd half of 14th century, there is a quatrain which has *anz* as rhyme-word. Its meaning is regrettably not clear to me (possibly = "origin", from **āzn-?*).—I owe my acquaintance with the *Maghribi* verses to the kindness of Professor H. Ritter; their language resembles that used by Shaikh Šafi (cf. *Transact. Phil. Soc.*, 1954, 176).

¹⁹ *mzdyan* (etc.) is, therefore, not Median in the narrow sense.

²⁰ *Le Muséon*, 50 (1937), 377.

²¹ In view of the uncertainty of its origin (Bartholomae's explanation of its -sn- as from -tsn- being generally favoured), we must reserve the possibility that **grzna-* is secondary to **grsna-*, such voicing of -s(ɳ)- being well-attested (e.g. Khq. *haysnāta* from *frasnāta-*; Sogd. *zinčaryā*, Parth. *zinfi(h)r* from *syn-*, *BSOAS.* xiv, 447, n. 2; Pers. *zānōyidan* "to whine"; Av. *snaoδant-*).

²² In Middle Persian **gišn-* "round" collided awkwardly with *gišnak* "short, small" (read, almost correctly, *gašnak*, by Zaehner, *BSOS.* x, 616 sq.), which is represented by *gyšng* = *gišng* in Man. Parthian and therefore cannot have yielded Median **ginz*.

The immediate source of the Chinese word, as Pulleyblank, *loc. cit.* 133, justly remarked, was probably Sogdian. In that language *grzna-* should have become **γs'zni* (Nom.), tending to **γszni*.²³ This agrees well enough with the Old Chinese pronunciation assumed by Pulleyblank (ḡh-snhwǝð). In particular, the existence of a cluster of consonants at the beginning of the second character has been confirmed; it had been postulated also by Karlgren, *Gramm. Ser. Rec.*, *g'o-sniwər* (49 a' or k', + 345 g). However, the posited Sogdian form shows no trace of the closing consonant claimed for Old Chinese; which may well have been lost by the time when the word for "coriander" entered the Chinese language.

Postscript. After completing this article I saw Professor Bailey's *Arya iv* (*BSOAS.*, xxvi/1, 1963), the first section of which (pp. 69-72) deals with the same subject-matter. Our interpretations of some of the basic word-forms differ in a seemingly trifling, but actually essential point (*gašn-* or *gišn-* ?), hence our conclusions are also different; this circumstance has emboldened me to proceed with the publication of this article without introducing fresh changes. (A similarly awkward coincidence occurred with my last-preceding contribution to *Asia Major*, x/1, "The Kurdish Elm", which was closely paralleled by a long article by W. Eilers and M. Mayrhofer, "Kurdisch büz und die indogermanische 'Buchen'-Sippe", *Mitt. d. Anthropologischen Ges. in Wien*, xcii, 1962, 61-92; as I learn from Professor Mayrhofer it was published in July, 1963, the very month in which *Asia Major* x/1 was ready for publication, although it was distributed only on 11 September 1963.)

²³ On the fate of Old Ir. *r*-sonant in Sogdian see Gershevitch, *Gramm.*, 19 sq. On account of the uncertainty alluded to above p. 198 n. 21 we may have to expect *γs'(?)smi* instead.