IT IS A GREAT PLEASURE to offer in honor of my good friend Stanley Fischer the following modest contribution towards elucidating the etymology of an obscure Sanskrit lexeme. The first appearance of *sārdigṛdhi- in the (difficult to place the Advināda Ritual where various participles receive verses with very explicit sexual content while the queen has intercourse under a blanket with the just-sufficed stallion. Until recently, all that was known about *sārdigṛdhi was that it refers to some part of the female sexual organs.

Rahul Peter Das has now shown in a 1998 article that *sārdigṛdhi- (also with later variants sārdigṛdhi- and sārdi-grāha-), surely refers specifically to the posterior vaginals of the uterus. He does not discuss a possible *mythology for the word, but he offers one crucial observation that helps direct the search for a source: he cites evidence (1998: 305) that both Indian and Western medical traditions the posterior vaginals is often regarded as a penis within the vagina. This fact first of all strongly supports the suggestion of Hoffmann (1975: 547), cited by Das, that the second part of the word is to be identified with Vedic *gaδh- 'penis'. It furthermore suggests that *sārdi-grāha- is an ordinary determinative compound *vācig-penis, *penis of the vagina. We are thus led to a preform *sārdi-āka- 'vagina'.

To my knowledge, no one has suggested any PIE source for this first element of our compound, but I believe there are comparanda available. First, there is the

West Germanic strong verb *serdelan 'future', attested in Old Norse with (with a metathesized variant sērde) and Middle High German sērden. As per Seebold (1970: 396), the Germanic stem points to a PIE *serd-. The addition of Welsh sērh 'third, obscene' (Pokorny 1959: 911; Johansson 1956: 768; de Vries 1961: 470, et al.) is false, and there is thus no basis for supposing a preform *serdi- and generalization of a Verber variant in Germanic.

Two difficulties stand in the way of the comparison of Sanskrit *sārdi-āka- with Germanic *serd-, one phonological and one semantic. The first, the discrepancy between the voiced stop of Sanskrit *sārdi-āka- and the voiced aspirate presupposed by Germanic *serdi-, is not a serious obstacle to connecting the two. Such variation in the quality of root-final "enlargements" is not unusual. Even if one eliminates the more questionable material cited by Pokorny (1959: 1011f.), it is in my

1 For the context of this occurrence see Jamison (1996: 658, esp. 69-69).
2 I was pleased to have the organ presentation of this paper at the American Oriental Society meeting in New Orleans in April, 1998. I am grateful to Professor Das for generously sharing with me a draft of his article in advance of its publication.
3 I have nothing new to offer on the prehistory of *gaδh-. Cf. Mayrhofer (1969: 494). Alexander Lobstny (pers. comm.) points out that the succession of two plain voiced stops suggests a non-Indo-European loanword.
4 Ästger Blau-Magnussen, "Finnisch verdi-jak" (1989), also cites a noun serd (13th cent.), which he guesses with a modern Icelandic slang word for 'undeserved'. I am indebted to Galatea Thürlein (for this and other references to Magnussen's work, which is not directly accessible to me. Old English serdum is a loanword from Old Norse 'and thus not an independent witness, but its attestations clearly confirm the existence of the PIE verb that the particular association of ON serd with sodomy is a secondary specialization.
5 The Welsh adjective serd "unsatisfactory, insulting, vulgar, coarse, obscene'' is in all likelihood merely a specialized use of the homophonous adjective sērth 'tense, sloping' (see the alternative derivation by Pokorny 1959: 1023). From a base meaning "slanted' one can easily obtain both attested meanings (cf. German gebeugt). In any case, the oldest attested example of sērd in the 14th-century Šármazin Bélor de Flaman has no sexual connotations and hardly means 'obscene'. There is thus no reason to suppose any direct connection between serd and sodomy. My thanks go to Stefan Sczuchit for his help on this point. On Old Frisian serd 'loref' see below.
view difficult to dissociate Germanic *stęp, -eř* seen in English *step* (up) from the *stęp* that appears in Sanskrit śrubbhī (block, group up), or to associate *serp* and *srubbh* (burn) (Pokorny 1959: 1154). Compare further the doublets *dhevah* - *dhevah- and *srubh*- cited in Witzkins (2000), among others.

As for the semantic development, I cannot cite a direct parallel for a noun of a *vagina* from a verbal root affecting to sexual intercourse. I do not regard this absence as particularly grave, given the relative dearth of reference works that offer full access to maim extensive areas of the lexicon. Such a derivation is in any case typologically unremarkable. While concretization of action nouns often leads to result nouns, it is also common enough for such nouns to refer to the patient (person or thing) upon which the action is performed, not the product of the action. Poon Sanskrit a-stem action nouns one may cite adya- (dwelling-place or cara- (choline) in the sense of the person or thing chosen). Such a development is normal with what one may term "experimental" verbs: Gk. βδός (food), εύς (drink), δός (right thing seen) (likewise the last two English glosses). The English noun "lay" is the sexual sense; refer not only to the act of intercourse, but also to the person who is "laid." Sanskrit *sera/s* "organ" may thus also be etymologically the recipient of the act of intercourse. A notoriously wide range of verbs may be used for the sex act in colloquial speech or slang, and a similar origin seems likely for *serkha*. Besides Old Norse xerba and xarlic cited above, there is also xarba, attested since the eighteenth century with the meanings "polish, finish; touch, handle" (Johannesson 1956: 98). This stem is so little likely an Old Norse innovation based on the productive pattern seen in sets like ON hrufr (turn, meal); instead, some have xarlic "wandered and hrufr disappearance." Nevertheless, Johannesson's connection of xerba with xarba is quite plausible, and the attested meaning "polish" of the former suggests that the meaning "having sexual intercourse" of the latter is derived from an original sense "rub, scrape." 

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6 I thank Gabriele Thaelhaldtordt for valuable advice on this and other aspects of the Old Norse evidence for the verbs discussed here. While there seems to be some evidence for a weak verb sense "doin" in Old High German (notably in the "Poe" Gnaupera), this most likely represents a "stative" weak inflection of the strong verb (see Kneissl 1996: 106), not a genuine "vandri" meaning ON xaric. See work recently on the forms in the "Gnepidn", Gnaupera (1999: 169) with references.

7 Magallana (1989), see (c), also suggests a connection between xerba and xarba, as well as with Old Norse xarlic and other more distant cognates discussed below.

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Parallels for such a semantic development are easy to fi nd. German uses (ausnehmen, rubben, and) (en)reiben for sexual intercourse (see Borromini 1971). Compare also Italian freccare (see Battaglia 1970: 328, also on freggreens) and French (ce) frouter (see Robert 1965: 7441). While the supposed shift in meaning is trivial, one would admittedly like to have rather better evidence for a *serkha* "rub, scrape" than the very late-attested ON xarba.

Fortunately, such is available—in Hindi. There we have a verb har-, whose original infection is that of an abstractive *har- verb (pres. 3rd sg. hara, past. 3rd pl. hara). We find also innovative stems harali(-) and haratia(-) (en-conjugation). The *verb is poorly attested, and the few available contexts are not always complete, but the basic sense is reasonably clear. In the Old Hitite ritual text KBO 17.43 i 14 (an Old Hitite manuscript), one functionary performs the action of har- on the feet of others: (1)br(k)az-lu.lam,-front GIB 312. A-IL-ENK Hezi Haria "The beast-man's feet at the (adorer's) back with its (head/shoulder) ... the beast-man's back as puffed up (Kalu Zeka)" (The beast-man holds [ ] and its forehead, and he wipes his lips.) The restorations are assumed by KBO 19.163 i 22-23. Neu, loc. cit., tentatively interprets hara- as a purifying substance and assumes a meaning "beneath" for harar-.

However, as noted by Burde (1974: 45), one could equally well take hara- as a debtor or similar impure term and interpret harar- as "wipecle off." Either meaning would also fit the general context of kama saraisci (the do, warder) in KBO 21.20.4 (1), which describes a medical treatment (unfortunately the immediate context is lacking). Likewise, pending a convincing restoration of the missing noun in KBO 3i.81.34, our verb there may (likewise refer either to wiping the tongue with a substance or wiping it clean with some instrument: na- wazem zadad x.e. da-en khangam EMD-ŠU hadda EGER donawaš Ištu lin (Shekel namman Ištu LAL-I-IE EME-ŠU arba anaela "Let the k.-woman take [ ] and her tongue. Afterwards, let her anoint it with huter. Then let her wipe off its tongue with honey." A

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8 Ottiger (1979: 476) suggests a *bi-verb with final -s, but as he himself points out, pres. 3rd pl. hara argues against this, while pres. 3rd sg. hara is ambiguous. The shift to the bi-verb type in -s, -s, (en)reiben makes for more sense if the original pattern was hara, *harata. The usual shift of an ablautic *bi-* verb to a stem type may be misleading. The hapax haratias (VBYT 120 i 10) may be a nonce construction based on karam in the immediately preceding sequence.
sense 'wiper/wiper on' seems to be for the occurrence in Völ. 106 in 19-20 in 2 of E.GAMEM. DÖGGA tär schnurianum "touched therewith fine oil of the palace." Likewise the name of a festival with verbal noun points to 'itself'. I think the putative *starnwarw "a festival of smearing blood" (KUB 46.2 Yo 5). A derived noun *svernwarv is attested in OBE 22.142 in 11 in a list of tools. This could be either a kind of 'scraper' or a tool used to apply fine substance.9

9 A basic sense 'wiper' is also suitable for the rather different context of KUB 36.110 Yo 1-21 (to Old Hit-
tite mn.): *svarisnum *E-[-svaris] *starnwarv piyan we[saan] karonj zī.[gā] ... mət pāri tartē nē[t] uranv  [ ] "But the house of the deluded self is built before the flood. The flood pours out (or 'pours out') and wipes it away and (Obe)wipes it into the sea." The restorative action is assured by the contrast with the previously mentioned house of the Hitite king, which is built firmly on a rock. Since the agent removing the house is water, a context-
ual translation 'wash away' (that Stecke 1977: 143 and 171) is quite in order.10 The fundamental meaning, how-
ever, remains that of removing by a wiping or scraping action, with the seventh 'pord' 'forth, out' indicating the direction of movement (out into the sea).

More problematic is the contextual meaning of the remaining occurrence, in the second paragraph of the so-called Old Hitite 'Palace Chronicle' (KUB 36.104 Ro 3, with restorations from the deplorable KUB 48.77.3 and KUB 12.44 1 7, all Neo-Hittite mm.): *svernwarv 10svarisnum *tartē tartē[teri] "They s-ve up Pappu, the ariōs. The context makes clear that this is no act of punishment or humiliation Stecke (1977; 143) stresses literally as 'spills each other's' and likewise Durand (1997: 78 and 145) as 'scrapes out' with an indication that the real meaning is unclear. While certainty is not possible, I believe the solution lies in assuming that the core meaning of *svernwarv is 'move the surface of the object obliquely against that of another'. The degree of violence and the precise angle of the contact could vary considerably. There are angle parallels for such a wide range of variability in roots of

this meaning: modern German streichen generally means 'touch, gently spread, cloth, what, no, against', but the noun *streich can also mean 'blow, lash'. The English cognate 'stroke' is now a verb of violence, but it once had a more gentle sense, as still seen in 'strike'. One can also compare Hintie nīsaa'ig 'gaze against' with Oldhit nīsaa'ig 'strikes' (but finn sligg 'smears') and German schreiben 'crawl, creep'.11 French pattre 'rub', also used for sexual intercourse as noted above, was once also used in mean sense, a sense preserved in *fertér te svernwarv 'the one's 'upheread'. I tentatively suggest that Hintie tartē tartē- likewise refers to slapping someone about the face. The verb pertē reflects the fact that in such an action the motion of the hands is inevi-
tably upward.

As already proposed by Johanneson and Magneisson, a root *svern- is defined above may be related to other

enlarged forms of a root *sver-, whose basic sense was that of 'bringing one object up against the surface of another' with varying degrees of violence. One may compare with them the Icelandic verb *targa 'rap, scrape; try to cut repeatedly with a dull knife; play (a violin) and *targa 'make a rasping sound', reflecting a virtual FEL *targi- (or possibly *targi-).12 As they further suggest, one should also relate Latin *targī 'to hoe, weed' and *avern 'swat', probably *avern- (for this preform see Schrijver 1991: 493). An enlarged form *avern- furnishes the word for 'sickle', appearing in Greek tyrē, OCS avra, Latuan avra, and Latin avra 'sickle'. Of course it is possible to 'lap, wipe, scrape' (possibly also 'lap, rough up') is thus not isolated but part of a quite extensive set of words for similar actions. The use of such a verb to refer to sexual intercourse is typolog-
ically so trivial that we have no way to determine whether this usage in Gemanic tradition and (indirectly) in Sanskrit *avardā. *Vagina is an inheritance or the result of independent innovation.

10 There is no justification for deriving the Oldhit verb from different roots, contra Vendryes (1974: S-92), the particular meaning of Breton *sverc 'conceive' may very easily be due to euphemism and carries no special weight. For a better alternative etymology for *avern see most recently Langel (2000: 182).