

THE LINGUISTIC FEATURES OF TOCHARIAN A MANUSCRIPT *MAITREYĀVADĀNAVYĀKARAṆA* *

Despite the outstanding results that Tocharian studies have achieved in the 100 years since they came into existence, many key questions about the history, grammatical structure and functioning of the Tocharian languages remain unanswered. This is hardly surprising, as we deal here with languages that vanished over 1,000 years ago and are known to us only through a few poorly preserved texts. It is, however, important to stress that in addition to lacunae that result from objectively insurmountable difficulties (the absence of certain roots, grammatical forms, the paucity and obscurity of the texts, etc.), one notes certain omissions for which Tocharian scholars themselves are, to a certain extent, responsible. The most serious argument in favour of this view is the striking asymmetry between the study of Tocharian A and Tocharian B. By 1955, P. Poucha had already published a thesaurus for the texts in Tocharian A [1]. Unfortunately, it is not free of technical and sometimes substantive errors, and is now somewhat outdated, remaining however an irreplaceable source of information on the grammar and lexicon of Eastern Tocharian. No corresponding work for Tocharian B exists. Also in 1955, W. Winter in his standard work demonstrated that various groups of texts in Western Tocharian display significant differences in graphics and phonetics that are most easily interpreted as dialectical [2]. To the best of our knowledge, no one has conducted similar research on Tocharian A despite the fact that the body of Eastern Tocharian manuscripts, although smaller than that of Western Tocharian, is large enough, containing texts created over a period of several centuries to render dubious the tacitly accepted thesis of their linguistic uniformity.

The present work aims to show that differences do exist between texts written in Tocharian A and should be considered in deeming this or that form “standard”, “rare”, “anomalous”, etc. The basic material for the study provide texts Nos. 219—242 from the Berlin collection [3]; they are fragments of a translation of the Sanskrit work *Maitreyāvadānavyākaraṇa* (henceforth, *MAV*), a large poetic composition dedicated to the Buddha Maitreya. As our very preliminary examination of the entirety of Tocharian A texts shows, this manuscript contains perhaps the largest number of non-trivial linguistic oddities, sometimes unique, and sometimes shared by other manuscripts [4]. Unfortunately, the Tocharian translation of *MAV* has not been well preserved. In a number of places it is difficult to understand, as we see from several mistakes in word division committed by E. Sieg and W. Siegling in their publication of the text [5].

The text has been of little interest to Tocharian scholars, and the literature treats *MAV* in terms of its content exclusively [6]. (The brief description of the manuscript found in Ivanov lacks its linguistic characteristics as well [7].) The present article aims to enumerate and analyse in detail all of the most important linguistic features of *MAV* that we were able to discover. They are divided, somewhat arbitrarily, into five sections — graphics, phonetics, morphonology, morphology, and lexicon. Various statistic calculations are based here on both Tocharian A texts, published by Sieg and Siegling in 1921, and on the manuscript of *Maitreyasamiti-Nāṭaka* (henceforth, *MSN*) discovered in 1975 in the region of Yanqi in China and recently introduced in full into scholarly circulation thanks to the remarkable work of Ji Xianlin in collaboration with W. Winter and G.-J. Pinault [8].

Graphics

1. High-frequency usage of signs for $\bar{i}$ and $\bar{u}$.

Manuscript *MAV* is distinguished only by one graphic feature, that is, by the frequent use of signs for the vowels $\bar{i}$ and $\bar{u}$, much more often than is the average for Eastern Tocharian texts: approximately every seventh i and every

third u is long. (It is all the more striking if one considers that in some manuscripts signs for $\bar{i}$ and $\bar{u}$ are missing altogether.) This is a purely graphic feature: as we know, Tocharian A had no long-short opposition for narrow vowels. Further, long and short i and u can be found in the same

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