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Melanie Malzahn

A Contrastive Survey of Genres of Sanskrit and Tocharian Buddhist Texts

Abstract: Most Buddhist documents discovered from the 1st millennium Silk Road cultures are random manuscript fragments from what must once have been huge monastic libraries and archives. This is especially true for the Sanskrit and Tocharian texts in this corpus. The methodological advances in digital humanities now make it possible to investigate the whole available data (that is even very small pieces) by quantitative analysis. The present paper examines the literary genres of Sanskrit and Tocharian fragments found side by side in the remains of Buddhist sites. While the distribution of genres is astonishingly even in most cases, there is a predominance of canonical literature in Sanskrit on the one hand and a predominance of narrative literature in Tocharian on the other. The latter fact supports the assumption that the Tocharian culture freely adopted the Buddho-Indian model beyond mere translation work and established a distinctive narrative/dramatic genre that incorporates pre-Buddhist elements.

Key words: Tocharian, Sanskrit Buddhist texts, Buddhist genres

The Buddhist manuscripts of the Silk Road cultures, mostly discovered by various expeditions at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th cc., are of inestimable value for various areas of study, notably philology and the spread of Buddhism. Unfortunately, in the majority of cases, only manuscript fragments from single leaves from what must once have been voluminous books stored in Buddhist libraries are preserved. However, surveying the preserved material can still reveal much about the use and spread of literacy in the Northern Tarim region during the first millennium CE. The following survey will compare the content of literary Sanskrit and Tocharian (B) fragments that have been discovered side by side in the remains of ancient Buddhist monasteries.

Despite the fragmentary status of both corpora, some facts are certain: both Sanskrit and Tocharian fragments can usually be dated according to their script type;¹ many fragments can be localized thanks to the recording of find spots by the excavators; due to the effort of one hundred years of meticulous philological work, the contents of many, even small fragments, can be identified.

The following survey of Sanskrit texts is based on the eleven volumes of *Sanskrihandschriften aus den Turfanfunden*, where 13.530 fragments from the German Turfan Collection are catalogued and described by various editors.² This survey of the Tocharian texts is based on the database of my own project *A Comprehensive Edition of Tocharian Manuscripts*.³ From the corpus of 13.530 Sanskrit fragments, 7.564 were identified by the editors of SHT with respect to text genre, nearly all were assigned to a certain script type, and for 6.430 of them the find spot has been recorded. For Tocharian, there are currently 8.612 TB and 1.832 TA fragments stored in the CEToM database; for 4.234 of them find spots have been recorded, and all of them can be dated according to script type; 1.292 TB fragments have so far been identified with respect to text genre. In the following, these 1.292 TB fragments will be compared with the 7.564 identified Sanskrit ones. The TA corpus will not be treated because it is statistically less reliable due the smaller size of the (identified) corpus in general; further, TA texts hail from far fewer find spots and are more homogenous with respect to language stage and script type. On the other hand, the distribution of TB and Sanskrit texts is arguably comparable.

The various find spots can be subsumed under three main regions which in the case of Tocharian B also show specific dialectal traits: the western region around the capital Kuča and its important monastic area Qizil Miñ-Öy,⁴ the central region around Šorčuq,⁵ and the Turfan

¹ See the groundbreaking work by SANDER 1968; for Tocharian, see MALZAHN 2007, TAMAI 2011 and SANDER 2013.

² WALDSCHMIDT 1965; WALDSCHMIDT 1968; WALDSCHMIDT 1971; SANDER/WALDSCHMIDT 1980; SANDER/WALDSCHMIDT 1985; WILLE 1989; WILLE 1995; WILLE 2000; WILLE 2004; WILLE 2008; WILLE 2012. I would like to thank my student Dimitri Robl for his help in collecting the material.

³ CEToM at <http://www.univie.ac.at/tocharian> (retrieved 2017-09-13)

⁴ Dō-shamba-bāzār, Duldur-Akhur, Hiçar, Jigdalik, Khitai-bāzār, Kuča, Kuča Miñ-Öy, Qizil, Qizil Sayram, Qizil Miñ-Öy, Qizil Qargha, Qumtura, Šaldiraŋ, Simsim, Subeši, Tajik and Tonguzbaš.

⁵ In addition, there are the find spots Khōra (Khorabagh Miñ-Öyi), Qarašāhār and Qigexing (Yanqi).

region.⁶ TB texts have also occasionally been found at Dunhuang, Endere, Loulan, Maralbeši, Miran and Tumšūq but in these cases it is likely that texts were brought there from one of the three main dialectal areas.

The following literary genres are attested on paper (or occasionally wooden) fragments⁷ in both Sanskrit and Tocharian:⁸

1. Canon: Doctrine, Vinaya, Abhidharma (including Yoga).
2. Para-canonical literature:
 - a. Poetry: Buddhastotras, Kāvya.
 - b. Narratives/drama: Jātakas/Avadānas, Buddha legend.
3. Scientific and technical literature:
 - a. Medicine/magic, divination, and calendar.
 - b. Annals (only attested in TB).
 - c. Grammar: Grammatical treaties, word lists, syllabaries, writing exercises.
4. Varia: Confessions, donations, blessings.

The analysis of script types applied in SHT is based on Lore Sander's work.⁹ The earliest texts show Kuṣāṇa and Gupta ductus and can be dated from the 2nd/3rd up to the 5th cc. (classified as Types I–III by Sander); we do not have vernacular Tocharian manuscripts from this period, and it is likely that the Tocharians only started writing their own language by establishment of a vernacular version of the Brāhmī script parallel to the establishment of the so-called Turkestan Brāhmī script (Type IV ~ Early Turkestan Brāhmī).¹⁰ Accordingly, Sanskrit texts written in script Types I–III are to be dated before the production of Tocharian vernacular manuscripts, while Sanskrit manuscripts in script Type IV are roughly contemporary with TB manuscripts in archaic ductus, and Sanskrit script Types V, VI and late-style manuscripts are roughly contemporary with TB classical texts. In the statistical analysis below, these groups are therefore singled out.

⁶ Bezeklik, Khočo (Dakianus), Murtoq, Qarakhoja, Siṅgim, Toyuq, Turfan foothills and Yar-khoto.

⁷ Not included is the occasional graffito or painting caption.

⁸ Cf. PINAULT 2016, 174.

⁹ SANDER 1968.

¹⁰ SANDER 1968, 186; MALZAHN 2007, 277.

Table 1: SHT texts from the western region

Western region																	
Text type	Script type			I-III	%	Script type			IV	%	Script type			V-late	%	total	%
	I	II	III			I-III	IV	V			VI	late	V				
Doctrine	0	7	148	155	6,1%	87	27,1%	462	39	216	717	36,2%	959	19,9%			
Vinaya	0	0	12	12	0,5%	31	10,0%	424	2	0	426	21,5%	469	9,7%			
Abhidharma	1559	106	20	1685	66,6%	9	2,8%	155	7	7	169	8,5%	1863	38,6%			
Canon total	1559	113	180	1852	73,2%	127	39,6%	1041	48	223	1312	66,3%	3291	68,1%			
Poetry	0	116	10	126	5,0%	116	36,1%	572	15	1	588	29,7%	830	17,2%			
Narratives/Drama	437	68	2	507	20,0%	27	8,4%	2	0	0	2	0,1%	536	11,1%			
Medicine	2	4	31	37	1,5%	21	6,6%	40	1	0	41	2,1%	99	2,1%			
Grammar	0	0	1	1	0,1%	24	7,5%	3	0	0	3	0,1%	28	0,6%			
Varia	0	3	3	6	0,3%	6	1,9%	34	0	0	34	1,7%	46	1,0%			
unknown	30	42	85	186				388	4	13							
Total_1 ¹¹	2028	346	312	507				2080	68	237							
Total_2¹²	1998	304	227	2529	100%	321	100%	1692	64	224	1980	99,9%	4830	100%			

¹¹ Total including unknown text genres.¹² Total excluding unknown text genres.

Table 2: SHT texts from the central region

Central region													
Text type	Script type			I-III	%	Script type			V-late	%	unknown	total	%
	I	II	III			IV	V	VI					
Doctrine	0	0	4	4	22,2%	28	100%	316	141	3	2	494	52,1%
Vinaya	0	0	0	0	0%	0	0%	27	2	0	0	29	3,1%
Abhidharma	3	4	0	7	38,9%	0	0%	9	6	0	0	22	2,3%
Canon total	3	4	4	11	61,1%	28	100%	352	149	3	2	543	57,3%
Poetry	1	0	5	6	33,3%	0	0%	144	169	0	0	319	33,6%
Narratives/Drama	0	0	1	1	5,6%	0	0%	2	0	0	0	3	0,3%
Medicine	0	0	0	0	0%	0	0%	8	5	1	0	14	1,5%
Grammar	0	0	0	0	0%	0	0%	65	0	0	0	65	6,9%
Varia	0	0	0	0	0%	0	0%	2	0	0	0	2	0,2%
unknown	0	3	21			18		47	15	2	15		
Total_1 ¹³	4	7	31			46		620	338	6	17		
Total_2¹⁴	4	4	10	18	100%	28	100%	573	323	4	2	948	100%

¹³ Total including unknown text genres.¹⁴ Total excluding unknown text genres.

Table 3: SHT texts from the Turfan region

Turfan region														
Text type	Script type			Script type			Script type			V-late	%	unknown	total	%
	I	II	III	I-III	%	IV	%	V	VI					
Doctrine	0	0	1	1	50%	5	100%	11	203	46	260	4	270	41,4%
Vinaya	0	0	0	0		0		7	150	0	157	0	157	24,1%
Abhidharma	0	0	0	0		0		2	86	0	88	1	89	13,7%
Canon total	0	0	1	1	50%	0	100%	20	439	46	505	5	511	78,4%
Poetry	0	1	0	1	50%	0		3	30	4	37	0	38	5,8%
Narratives/Drama	0	0	0	0		0		0	5	27	32	0	32	4,9%
Medicine	0	0	0	0		0		0	23	30	53	0	53	8,1%
Grammar	0	0	0	0		0		1	5	1	7	0	7	1,1%
Varia	0	0	0	0		0		0	6	0	6	0	6	0,9%
unknown	0	78	4			11		18	266	15		12		
Total_1 ¹⁵	0	79	5			5		42	774	123		17		
Total_2¹⁶	0	1	1	2	100%	5	100%	24	508	108	640	5	652	100%

¹⁵ Total including unknown text genres.¹⁶ Total excluding unknown text genres.

Table 4: SHT texts from unidentified find spots

Text type	Unknown find spots														
	Script type			Script type			Script type			Script type					
	I	II	III	I-III	%	IV	%	V	VI	late	V-late	%	unknown	total	%
Doctrine	0	0	33	33	44,0%	43	58,1%	150	256	10	416	42,8	3	495	43,7%
Vinaya	0	1	1	2	2,7%	10	13,5%	49	149	0	198	20,3	1	211	18,6%
Abhidharma	14	0	24	38	50,7%	1	1,4%	4	86	2	92	9,5	0	131	11,6%
Canon total	14	1	58	73	97,3%	54	73,0%	203	491	12	706	72,6	4	837	73,8%
Poetry	0	0	1	1	1,3%	12	16,2%	146	53	1	200	20,6	8	221	19,5%
Narratives/Drama	0	0	0	0	0%	0	0%	6	21	0	27	2,8	0	27	2,4%
Medicine	0	0	0	0	0%	7	9,5%	4	20	0	24	2,5	0	31	2,7%
Grammar	0	0	1	1	1,3%	0	0%	0	1	2	3	0,3	0	4	0,4%
Varia	0	0	0	0	0%	1	1,6%	10	3	0	13	1,3	0	14	1,2%
unknown	1	182	117			183		645	3347	60			158		
Total_1 ¹⁷	15	183	177			257		1014	3936	75			170		
Total_2¹⁸	14	1	60	75	99,9%	74	100%	369	589	15	973	100	12	1134	100%

¹⁷ Total including unknown text genres.¹⁸ Total excluding unknown text genres.

Table 5: Total of SHT texts

Text type	Total														
	Script type			Script type			Script type			Script type					
	I	II	III	I-III	%	IV	%	V	VI	late	V-late	%	unknown	total	%
Doctrine	0	7	186	193	7,4%	163	38,0%	939	639	275	1853	41,3%	9	2218	29,3%
Vinaya	0	1	13	14	0,5%	41	9,6%	507	303	0	810	18,0%	1	866	11,5%
Abhidharma	1576	110	44	1730	65,9%	10	2,3%	170	185	9	364	8,1%	1	2105	27,9%
Canon total	1576	118	243	1937	73,8%	214	50,0%	1616	1127	284	3027	67,4%	11	5189	68,6%
Poetry	1	117	16	134	5,1%	128	29,9%	865	267	6	1138	25,3%	8	1408	18,6%
Narratives/Drama	437	68	3	508	19,4%	27	6,3%	10	26	27	63	1,4%	0	598	7,9%
Medicine	2	4	31	37	1,4%	28	6,5%	52	49	31	132	2,9%	0	197	2,6%
Grammar	0	0	2	2	0,1%	24	5,6%	69	6	3	78	1,7%	0	104	1,4%
Varia	0	3	3	6	0,2%	7	1,6%	46	9	0	55	1,2%	0	68	0,9%
unknown	31	305	227			398		1098	3632	90			185		
Total_1 ¹⁹	2047	615	525			826		3756	5116	441			204		
Total_2²⁰	2016	310	298	2624	100%	428	99,8%	2658	1484	351	4493	99,9%	19	7564	100%

¹⁹ Total including unknown text genres.²⁰ Total excluding unknown text genres.

Table 6: TB texts from the western region

Text type	Western region					
	Script type		Script type		Total	
	Archaic	%	Classical	%		%
Doctrine	6	6,2%	49	13,0%	55	11,6%
Vinaya	13	13,4%	34	9,0%	47	9,9%
Abhidharma	1	1,0%	24	6,4%	25	5,3%
Canon total	20	20,6%	107	28,4%	127	26,8%
Poetry	42	43,2%	136	36,1%	178	37,6%
Narratives/Drama	19	19,6%	99	26,3%	118	24,9%
Medicine	16	16,5	26	6,9%	42	8,9%
Annals	/	0	1	0,2%	1	0,2%
Grammar	/	0	7	1,9%	7	1,4%
Varia	/	0	1	0,2%	1	0,2%
Total	97	99,9%	377	100%	474	101%

Table 7: TB texts from the central region

Central region						
Text type	Script type		Script type		Total	
	Archaic	%	Classical	%		%
Doctrine	/		24	14,6%	24	14,6%
Vinaya	/		1	0,6%	1	0,6%
Abhidharma	/		2	1,2%	2	1,2%
Canon total			27	16,5%	27	16,5%
Poetry	/		85	51,8%	85	51,8%
Narratives/Drama	/		37	22,6%	37	22,6%
Medicine	/		10	6,1%	10	6,1%
Annals	/		/	0	/	0
Grammar	/		5	3,0%	5	3,0%
Varia	/		/	0	/	0
Total			164	99,9%	164	99,9%

Table 8: TB texts from the Turfan region

Turfan region						
Text type	Script type		Script type		Total	
	Archaic	%	Classical	%		%
Doctrine	/		34	18,9%	34	18,9%
Vinaya	/		10	5,6%	10	5,6%
Abhidharma	/		32	17,8%	32	17,8%
Canon total			76	42,2%	76	42,2%
Poetry	/		24	13,3%	24	13,3%
Narratives/Drama	/		43	23,9%	43	23,9%
Medicine	/		9	5,0%	9	5,0%
Annals			25	13,9%	25	13,9%
Grammar	/		3	1,7%	3	1,7%
Varia	/		/	0	/	0
Total			180	100%	180	100%

Table 9: TB texts from unidentified and external find spots

Unknown and external find spots						
Text type	Script type		Script type		Total	
	Archaic	%	Classical	%		%
Doctrine	/	0	29	6,4%	29	6,1%
Vinaya	/	0	130	28,9%	130	27,4%
Abhidharma	/	0	59	13,1%	59	12,4%
Canon total	0	0	218	48,4%	218	46,0%
Poetry	10	41,7%	85	18,9%	95	20,0%
Narratives/Drama	13	54,1%	89	19,8%	102	21,5%
Medicine	1	4,2%	42	9,3%	43	9,1%
Annals	/	0	/	0	/	0
Grammar	/	0	14	3,1%	14	3,0%
Varia	/	0	2	0,4%	2	0,4%
Total	24	100%	450	99,9%	474	99,9%

Table 10: Total of TB texts

All find spots						
Text type	Script type		Script type		Total	
	Archaic	%	Classical	%		%
Doctrine	6	5,0%	136	11,6%	142	11,0%
Vinaya	13	10,7%	175	15,0%	188	14,6%
Abhidharma	1	0,8%	117	10,0%	118	9,1%
Canon total	20	16,5%	428	36,5%	448	34,7%
Poetry	52	43,0%	330	28,2%	382	29,6%
Narratives/Drama	32	26,4%	268	22,9%	300	23,2%
Medicine	17	14,0%	87	7,4%	104	8,0%
Annals	/	0	26	2,2%	26	2,0%
Grammar	/	0	29	2,5%	29	2,2%
Varia	/	0	3	0,3%	3	0,2%
Total	121	99,9%	1171	100%	1292	99,9%

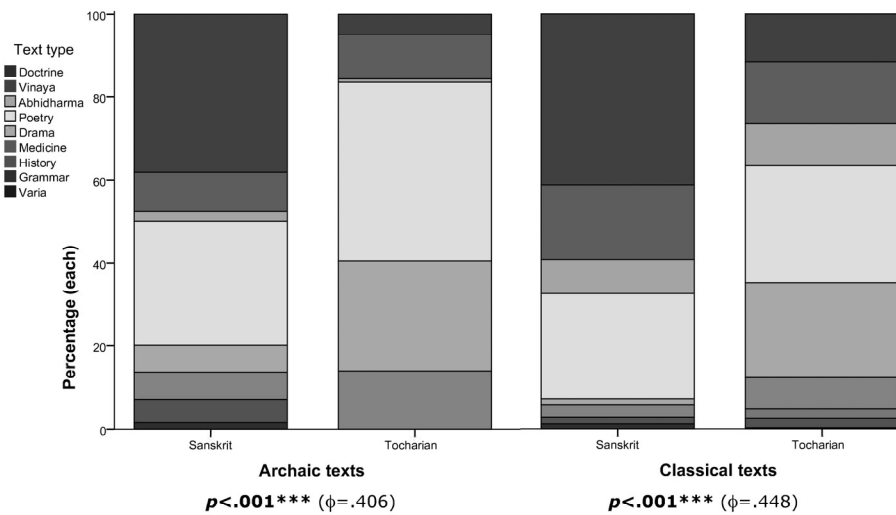
Table 11: Comparison of Sanskrit and TB texts

Text type	Archaic		Classical	
	Skt.	TB %	Skt.	TB %
Doctrine	38,0%	5,0%	41,3%	11,6%
Vinaya	9,6%	10,7%	18,0%	15,0%
Abhidharma	2,3%	0,8%	8,1%	10,0%
Canon total	50,0%	16,5%	67,4%	36,5%
Poetry	29,9%	43,0%	25,3%	28,2%
Narratives/Drama	6,3%	26,4%	1,4%	22,9%
Medicine	6,5%	14,0%	2,9%	7,4%
Annals	/	0	/	2,2%
Grammar	5,6%	0	1,7%	2,5%
Varia	1,6%	0	1,2%	0,3%
Total	99,8%	99,9%	99,9%	100%

Statistical analysis²¹

The survey reveals that in general, Tocharian and Sanskrit text genres show roughly the same distribution with two notable exception. The data is reliable because a statistic analysis makes it likely that the distribution of text genres is not due to chance: the p -value for the archaic period is $< .00$, the effect size significant ($\phi = .406$), the more for the classical period ($p < .001$ and $\phi = .448$), see table 12.

Table 12: Percentual distribution of the frequency rate by text genres

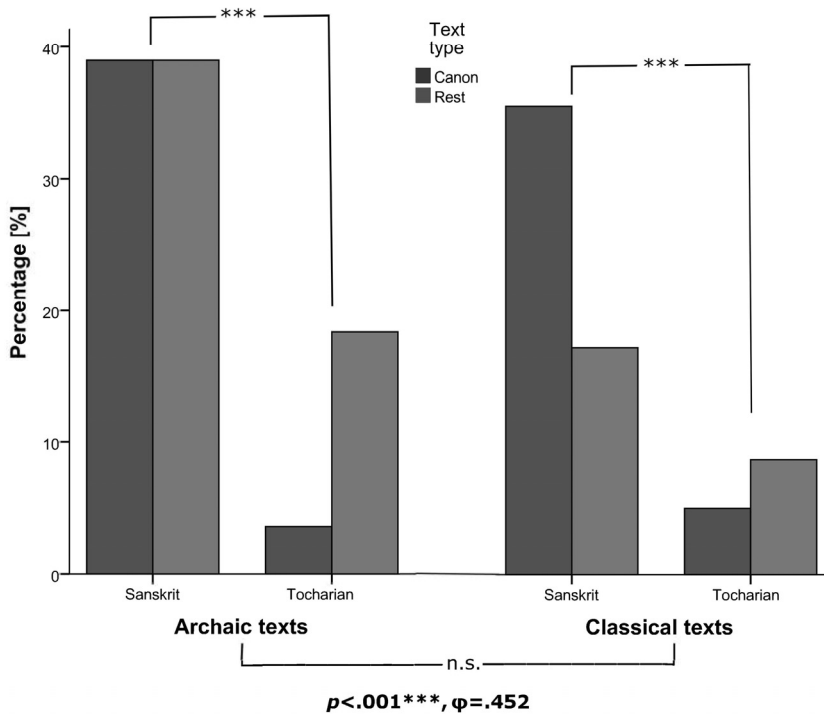


On average, around two thirds of Sanskrit fragments belong to canonical texts; in the earliest period (western region script Types I–III) this proportion is even higher with 73.8%. In contrast, the proportion of canonical texts in TB is usually lower, especially in the western region (21.7% in the earlier and 36.0% in the classical period). Interestingly enough, this disproportion is mostly due to doctrinal texts, while the number of Vinaya and Abhidharma texts is somewhat constant and evenly distributed: TB Vinaya 10.7% (Archaic period) and 14.6% (classical period) beside Sanskrit Vinaya 9.6% (script Type IV) and 18% (classical period); TB Abhidharma 0.8% (Archaic period) and 10% (classical period) beside Sanskrit Abhidharma is 2.3%

²¹ I would like to thank Marik Roos for his kind help with the statistical analysis.

(script Type IV) and 8.1% (classical period). On the other hand, there is a clear predominance of para-canonical in Tocharian B. Again, this distribution is not due to chance ($p < .000$ and $\phi = .452$), and interestingly enough the statistical parameter is roughly the same for the archaic and classical corpus (see table 13).

Table 13: Percentual distribution of the frequency rate of canonical and para-canonical texts



This result is actually not too surprising, because one may safely assume that—especially at the beginning of TB vernacular writing—doctrinal texts were mostly still used in the Sanskrit original while the translation of para-canonical literature and scientific texts was more important to the communities.²² See also PEYROT 2017 who shows that “the speakers of Tocharian

²² Note that one of the most archaic TB manuscript is actually a medical one; see MALZAHN 2007, 267 and 274: here belong THT 2618, THT 2668, THT 2669, THT 2670, THT 2671, THT 2672, THT 2673, THT 2676, THT 2677, THT 3209, THT 3211, and THT 4122.

preferred the Udānavarga in Sanskrit”, while only the commentary text Udānālaṅkāra “became popular in Tocharian”.

What is striking, and that even from a statistical point of view, is the disproportion of narrative/drama texts in Tocharian, the more in the classical period. There are far more narrative/drama texts in Tocharian in the classical period in relation to the archaic period than can be due to mere chance ($\chi^2 = 20.154$; $p < .000$; $\phi = .227$).

In contrast, the number of Sanskrit narrative/drama texts is usually very low with the notable exception of the earliest period (western region, script Types I–III) with 20%. Among these very early texts, we find the so far only example of a drama text proper in the Turfan Sanskrit corpus, namely the very early fragments of plays by Aśvaghōṣa dated into the 2nd c.²³ In the later Sanskrit corpus, there is some evidence of narrative literature (Jātakas and Avadānas), but no play proper.²⁴

The case of poetry (Buddhastotras, Kāvya) is different. They actually constitute the majority of texts in the earliest TB period (in total 43%). During the classical period, the numbers of poetry fragments is even in TB and Sanskrit (28.2% and 25.3%), in the archaic period the number in TB is higher (43%), but, in Sanskrit, 29.9% is still a high number; this contrast, however, is statistically not relevant ($\chi^2 = 3.699$; $p = .054$), so one can say that there is no notable difference in the production/writing of poetic literature in both languages and periods.

Apart from the statistics presented here, there are other facts that speak in favor of noticable popularity of Buddhist narratives and their respective plays in the Tocharian culture. This is clear from numerous wall paintings in Buddhist sites that depict jātika and avādana scenes and which are regularly accompanied by captions informing the onlooker on the precise setting of the depicted scene.²⁵ The popularity of Tocharian drama can finally be concluded from its role in the development of the Chinese bianwen genre.²⁶

The fact that there is a mismatch between the popularity of narrative literature in Tocharian and the simultaneous scarcity of respective Sanskrit texts has already been noted by scholars before²⁷ and it has puzzled scholars

²³ LÜDERS 1911.

²⁴ That Sanskrit plays were read in the later period outside India is proven by the fragment of a play found in Afghanistan dated into the 6th century (FRANCO/SCHLINGLOFF 2012). See also PINAULT 2016: 174 and 2017: 479.

²⁵ PINAULT 2000; ARLT and HIYAMA 2015.

²⁶ MAIR 1988 and 1989; PINAULT 1989: 205–212.

²⁷ Most recently PINAULT 2017: 479.

for some time. The famous problem about the missing Indic original referred to in the Old Turkic version of the TA Maitreyasamiti-Nāṭaka is a case in point. The statistics presented above now shows beyond doubt that there is a clear mismatch and that this mismatch can be narrowed down to narratives/dramas and does not concern poetry in general or other genres of para-canonical literature.

One solution to account for this fact has been to assume that the respective Sanskrit originals of plays and narratives have simply been lost. However, the statistics presented above highly speak against such an assumption. We rather have to conclude that neither as many narratives nor dramaturgic adoptions of narrative texts did ever exist *in written form* in Sanskrit to serve as *direct* models of Tocharian narrative/dramatic literature. The next obvious idea would be to assume a high proportion of *oral* literature in the narrative/drama genre. But it is difficult to find a reason why it was precisely Sanskrit narratives/dramas that were part of a vivid oral tradition in Turkestan²⁸ but not written down while their Tocharian translations were, when, in contrast, in the case of poetry there is an even distribution of Sanskrit and Tocharian texts.

On the other hand, the TB and TA literary and poetic language is in general based on the Buddho-Indian model, and this is basically also true for the story lines and stylistics of narratives. Many narratives attested in Tocharian are known from parallel texts in other Buddhist languages (Pāli, Sanskrit, Sogdian, Khotanese Saka, Tibetan, Chinese); in several detailed studies (see esp. PINAULT 2014, 2015a, 2016 and 2017), Georges-Jean Pinault has shown how Indo-Buddhist literary techniques were adapted in Tocharian, precisely with respect to the narrative/dramatic genre. This ranges from the term TA/TB *nāṭak* borrowed from Sanskrit *nāṭaka*- ‘play’, dramaturgic elements and structuring (prose/verse alternating *campū* style, schematic characters such as the *female door warden*, etc.) to the adaption of Sanskrit phrases and key terms. The detailed study by PINAULT 2015a on calques, for instances, shows the creativity of Tocharian writers when transporting terms, concepts and phraseology into their vernacular.

The most likely explanation for the prevalence of Tocharian vernacular narrative and dramatic literature, in my opinion, lies in the assumption of an inner-Tocharian development (see also PINAULT 2015b: 589). This is

²⁸ SKJAERVO 2009: 207 points out that the characteristics of oral performance was recomposition, “poets and performers of old [...] always produce a new song or tale, one that has not been heard before”.

supported by the fact that, whenever we do have a parallel for a narrative in another language, in most cases the Tocharian version differs, and very often the Tocharian text is characterized by more detail and lavish dialogues (see, e.g., PINAULT 2015). Most certainly the display of narratives and dramatic scenes was an effective way to make Buddhist teachings and ethics known to the general public and to laypersons (see also PINAULT 2015b: 584). This is in accordance with the statistic analyses since it is in the earliest period of Sanskrit texts, i.e. in the pre-vernacular period that the highest percentage of narratives/plays is attested: alongside the canon, narratives and plays were imported to spread the Buddhist faith. Once the Tocharian vernacular came into use as a literary language for Buddhism, the narrative genre was further developed for the same reason.

In this way one may also explain the differences between Tocharian and Sanskrit stylistics, the most notable being the meter. It is clear that the poetic TB language was developed in the earliest period of writing, i.e., in the archaic period. This is, for instance, clear from the verse colometry that follows the phonology of archaic TB.²⁹ Use and adaption of pre-Buddhist stylistic and performing arts³⁰ must certainly have been another way to make the Buddhist teachings more appealing to the general public as well.

Future research will have to discern more details about the adaption of Indo-Buddhist models of narrative/dramatic literature and their inner-Tocharian development and about whether one can detect (more) pre-Buddhist/Indo-Buddhist literary/poetic devices.

Abbreviations

CEToM: A Comprehensive Edition of Tocharian Manuscripts.

SHT: Sanskrithandschriften aus den Turfanfunden.

THT: Tocharische Handschriften aus den Turfanfunden.

TA: Tocharian A.

TB: Tocharian B.

²⁹ See MALZAHN 2012 and Malzahn in print.

³⁰ It is clear that music and performing arts and artists played an important role in the (Buddhist) Tocharian culture, as can be deduced from paintings, the mentioning of music and performing arts in the texts themselves as part of court life and also from TB business documents concerning the remuneration of musicians by a monastery (PK DA M 507.7 a 10 and PK DA M 507.42 and .40 a 11; for the texts see PINAULT 1994: 94 and 102, 104; for the text PK LC 10 see PINAULT 2008: 380–395).

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