REVIEW ARTICLE

Untersuchungen zu den sigmatischen Präsensstammbildungen des Tocharischen.
By Olav Hackstein. Historische Sprachforschung Ergänzungshefte, vol. 38.
Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995. Pp. xxii+401. DM 140.

Reviewed by

H.Craig Melchert

The present work is a revised version of the author's 1993 Freiburg dissertation.
A brief introduction presents the topic and anticipates the principal results, and
a short chapter on "preliminaries" orients readers to the author's views on key
issues of Tocharian historical grammar. The heart of the book consists of two
large sections, the first on present stems in *-se/o-*, the second on those in
-ske/o-, organized into chapters according to the synchronic inflectional class
in Tocharian. An impressive bibliography and very useful indices complete the
volume.

The overall quality of the presentation is excellent. Hackstein commands
the latest developments in Tocharian studies, and his working assumptions are
in the mainstream of current thinking. The preliminary section on the devel-
opment of roots with and without final laryngeal will be useful for purposes well
beyond his current topic. I personally was persuaded by his arguments for the
development of $*-uh_{2U}-$ in Tocharian, but not by those dealing with initial
laryngeal plus nasal.

An outstanding strength is that Hackstein fully controls the primary
Tocharian texts. His analyses are not based on data slavishly lifted from the
standard handbooks. On the contrary, he critically sifts all the relevant material
and is able to offer new, original interpretations of some lexical items and to
correct the synchronic analysis and assignment of various verbal forms. I cite
as merely one example his explanation of Tocharian B /tas/- 'resemble' and A
täskmāṃ 'resembling' as forms of /ta-/ 'put, place' (p. 56ff. and p. 189f.). In
exemplary fashion, he provides generous textual citations supporting the
semantic interpretation for every verbal stem, so that readers may judge each
case for themselves.

Predictably, one cannot follow the author in his assessment of the Proto-
Indo-European status of every verbal stem, nor in all of his etymological
assignments. In many of these cases the disagreement stems from very different
views on larger issues of PIE grammar. These do not for the most part affect
Hackstein's major claims about the Tocharian stems under discussion.

In only two instances do I find that an inadequate recognition of facts
outside Tocharian seriously undermines his treatment. First, having shown the
inadequacy of most alternative accounts of the prehistory of the Tocharian *s*-
presents (see below), Hackstein too readily dismisses the possibility that they are

developed from a PIE class of athematic s-presents (see p. 178, note 22, e.g.). One misses in this connection any mention of the seminal work of Kuiper.[1] I do not claim that such a derivation is necessarily correct, but it certainly deserves explicit and thorough recognition.

A second problem is Hackstein's historical analysis of Tocharian B ste/skente and other forms of the copula (p. 272ff.). Puzzled by the use of historically "secondary" endings with a present value, he claims that the PIE present $*h_1(s)$-ske/o- had an inchoative function, allegedly shown by Palaic imperative 2nd singular iška and Old Latin escere. This entire analysis is based on a false notion of copula vs. substantive verb. As I have argued,[2] the Palaic verb is not a copula, but the substantive verb in construction with the dative expressing possession. Likewise, Old Latin escere does not express future tense, despite the assurances of the handbooks, but in all six instances in the Laws of the Twelve Tables expresses existence, four times in the possessive construction as in Palaic![3] All available evidence points to a durative value for PIE $*h_1(s)$-ske/o-, as Hackstein himself concedes for Greek. The use of ste/skente with secondary endings for the present may simply reflect an old injunctive, as already seen by others.

These two criticisms in no way affect the validity or value of Hackstein's major conclusions about the sigmatic presents in Tocharian. He shows beyond doubt that the presumed parallelism of s- and sk-presents is a mirage. No genuine s-presents (i.e., excluding s-presents in Tocharian A descending from sk-presents due to sound change and analogy) show causative value. Nor do they have any iterative function: a parallel with similar formations in Anatolian, as long entertained by me and others, simply does not exist. The s-suffix transitivizes roots with inherently intransitive meaning, but has no effect on transitive roots. For the Tocharian s-presents as they truly are (with zero-grade root and accented thematic suffix), no account offered thus far is remotely satisfactory. He also demonstrates that the $*$-ske/o- suffix enters Tocharian only with the meanings that are traditionally assigned to it for PIE. The causative function is clearly a secondary development and in any case probably resides in the accent of the given stems, not in the suffix itself.

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[1] F. B. J. Kuiper, Zur Geschichte der indogermanischen s-Präsentia. Acta Orientalia 12 (1934) 190-306.

[2] Zeitschrift für Vergleichende Sprachforschung 97 (1984) 30f.

[3] See Calvert Watkins, in To honor Roman Jakobson ... (1967) 3.2192, following already Eduard Fraenkel, Kleine Beiträge zur klassischen Philologie II.444-445. Fraenkel shows that the example in I,3 is not a copula, and neither is that in X,8: '(to) whoever has teeth fastened with gold.'

Hackstein has provided the sorely needed foundation for all future analysis of the sigmatic presents in Tocharian, and we are indebted to him for this significant accomplishment.

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