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The Tocharian subjunctive

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5 SUMMARY

In this study, it has been argued that the Tocharian subjunctive can in broad outline be characterised as a second present formed from the preterite stem. In main clauses, it denotes future tense, while in subclauses it has several functions such as conditionality, iterativity, finality, etc. In essence, the subjunctive is a creation of Tocharian, ultimately reflecting the Proto-Indo-European perfective aorist stem.

5.1 MORPHOLOGY

The main question to be answered in chapter 2 was whether the subjunctive is a second present formed from the preterite stem. After an introduction (2.1, p 21) and a short description of the verb in general (2.2, p 26), the concept of a stem pattern was discussed in 2.3 (p 39): a Tocharian verb consists of five basic stems, i.e. present, subjunctive, preterite, preterite participle and imperative. Mostly, the present stem is marked with an additional suffix compared to the non-present stems.

In addition to the important distinction between monosyllabic roots ending in a consonant (“Nicht-A-Wurzeln”, Hackstein 1995: 16–37) and disyllabic roots ending in *-a* (“A-Wurzeln”, Hackstein l.c.), verbal roots must be divided into gradable roots with basic *ə*-vocalism, “*ə|x*-roots”, and non-gradable roots with basic *a*-vocalism, “*a|x*-roots” (2.4, p 44). These two distinctions yield the four root types *ə|Ø* and *a|Ø* (“Nicht-A-Wurzeln”), and *ə|a* and *a|a* (“A-Wurzeln”).

In 2.5 (p 47), the morphological distinctions of the verb were investigated, while 2.6 (Tocharian A, p 94) and 2.7 (Tocharian B, p 117) contain an inventory of verbal stem patterns based on the stem suffixes. With the important distinction of present-subjunctives, i.e. presents that can also be used as subjunctives, it turned out that presents are often distinguished by a separate suffix, whereas subjunctives are formed from the same stem as the preterite. The differences between the subjunctive and the preterite stems are confined to inflectional peculiarities, in particular slightly different gradation and palatalisation patterns, and an accent contrast in Tocharian B. Sections 2.8 and 2.9 were devoted to the derivation of the imperative (2.8, p 137) and the preterite participle (2.9, p 146) from the subjunctive and preterite stems, and the chapter is concluded with a small summary in 2.10 (p 152).

5.2 SYNTAX AND MEANING

The central point of chapter 3 was to establish the meanings of the Tocharian A and B subjunctives on the basis of their use. The two languages were described separately, with main clause uses in 3.2 (p 166) for Tocharian A and in 3.5 (p 231) for Tocharian B, subclause uses in 3.3 (p 191) for Tocharian A and in 3.6 (p 250) for

Tocharian B, and other uses in 3.4 (p 216) for Tocharian A and in 3.7 (p 276) for Tocharian B.

An important guideline in the description has been that the meaning of the subjunctive is to be extracted from its use rather than equated with it. As it turned out, the basic meaning in main clauses of the Tocharian subjunctive – in both languages – is future tense. The subjunctive is not modal, not deontic: it is not used in wishes of the type *God save the queen!*, which would in Tocharian rather be expressed with the optative.

In subclauses, the subjunctives takes on a variety of functions, which may be summarised as “uncertainty”: it is used in the protasis of conditions, where it may be the only explicit marking of the conditional; it is further found in eventual, iterative, indefinite, comparative, concessive, and final clauses. Compared to present subclauses, subjunctive subclauses denote events that are not well known, or do not need to be known precisely, or of which it is uncertain whether they actually take place, or events that are irrelevant for the main clause. Compared to optative subclauses, subjunctive subclauses often have present or future rather than past reference, or their realisation is more probable than that of the optative clause.

Whereas the subjunctive has no modal uses, the optative and the imperative are preeminent modal verb forms, and different types of modality are in addition expressed by large sets of particles (3.4.5, p 222, and 3.7.5, p 287).

5.3 ORIGIN

In the search for the origins of the Tocharian subjunctive in chapter 4, I have been led principally by stem patterns rather than separate inflexion classes. A major role was reserved for present-subjunctives (4.4, p 377), which were analysed as presents without accompanying subjunctive. The high frequency of typical present suffixes in this category, as well as good correspondences with presents elsewhere in Indo-European, suggests that present-subjunctives go back to older presents, often to presents without accompanying aorist stem. This in turn suggests that if there is a distinct subjunctive, it ultimately goes back to the aorist stem. This assumption explains neatly why the subjunctive stem is so similar to the preterite stem: *both* derive from the aorist stem.

The meaning of the subjunctive can be explained as a perfective present from the preterite stem (see 4.9, p 480): a present of the perfective aorist could not remain a regular present, but had to take on a derived notion, in this case uncertainty and futurity. The rationale behind the rise of the second perfective present is probably that at a pre-stage of Tocharian the primary (present tense) endings and secondary (non-present tense) endings of the Indo-European present-aorist system merged. The replacement of the past endings with the perfect endings led to the creation of an aorist stem with perfect endings: the Tocharian preterite. The only trace of the perfect stem is to be found in the preterite participle and in a couple of isolated presents.

The Tocharian subjunctive has often been compared with the Proto-Indo-European perfect, a present tense denoting a state that is the result of a recent change. Although the perfect was no obvious source for the meaning of the Tocharian subjunctive, and of no help for the interpretation of its stem patterns, it seemed to offer an explanation for two formal characteristics of two subjunctive subtypes: *e* : *ə* gradation and initial accent. While the former appeared to reflect the **o* : *Ø gradation of the perfect, the latter was taken as an indirect reflex of lost perfect reduplication, which would have caused accent placement on the root, the eventual first syllable.

In 4.5 (p 403), it has been argued that the *e* : *ə* gradation can also be derived from the **ē* : **e* gradation of the Proto-Indo-European *s*-aorist. The comparison of the stem allomorphs of the root subjunctive without root-final *-a* with the corresponding preterite suggests an older gradation pattern *'*e* : **ə*: in the subjunctive the unpatalalised initial was levelled. The **ə*-grade so reconstructed is not compatible with the **e*-grade of the *s*-aorist, but it may have been introduced from the accompanying *s*-present, where **ə*-grade was regular. The *s*-element of the *s*-aorist was lost in key forms of both the subjunctive and the preterite, so that levelling resulted in *s*-less stems. Nevertheless, the 3sg. preterite in *-sa* is clearly built on an original *s*-aorist form. As argued in 4.6 (p 430), the *e* : *ə* gradation of the *x|Ø*-root subjunctive spread to the *x|a*-root subjunctive, where it was subject to *a*-affection in Tocharian B, which yielded the attested *a* : *ə* gradation.

5.4 OUTLOOK

It will be clear from the lay-out of this study, its approach and the investigations carried out, that Tocharian studies cannot be a purely linguistic exercise. Although the language contains a fascinating wealth of synchronic and diachronic linguistic puzzles, its attestation and description are needy to such an extent that no fruitful study can be undertaken without the philological manual work. The meaning of many words is uncertain and needs to be established or refined and of many more the morphological patterns are unclear. Since there are hardly any parallel texts, interpretations may well come to depend on one manuscript reading only and it is always worthwhile to check whether a form is correctly transliterated; even more often, fragmentary remains allow for more than one restoration, so that the manuscript must always be taken into account.

On the linguistic level, the importance of the synchronic analysis of the language can hardly be overemphasised. Although scholars nowadays may make use of an ever-growing shelf of thorough and reliable publications on the grammar and lexicon of Tocharian, the synchronic analysis is by no means finished. Many grammatical patterns are still to be explored and regularities and irregularities to be discovered, while numerous individual words are still waiting for a correct morphological classification. As noted on several occasions in the present work, any diachronic investigation must build on a solid basis in the linguistic synchrony of the

language, especially because far-reaching changes in phonology have entailed heavy restructurings in morphology. The closed surface of morphological regularities can only be scratched away through recognition of the productive patterns.

Despite the many prerequisites to the study of Tocharian,

"below the rather forbidding surface of our Tocharian data there are some real treasures to be found. One's first impression of the languages tends to be that they are oddities in the concert of Indo-European idioms; one is tempted, and some of us remain tempted, to ascribe all kinds of features to Non-Indo-European influence and interference. Closer inspection shows in almost all instances that actually the languages are not so very queer from an Indo-European point of view, and this means that their thorough investigation can yield results not only fascinating, but essential for our endeavors to work toward the reconstruction of Proto-Indo-European." (Winter 1982: 11)