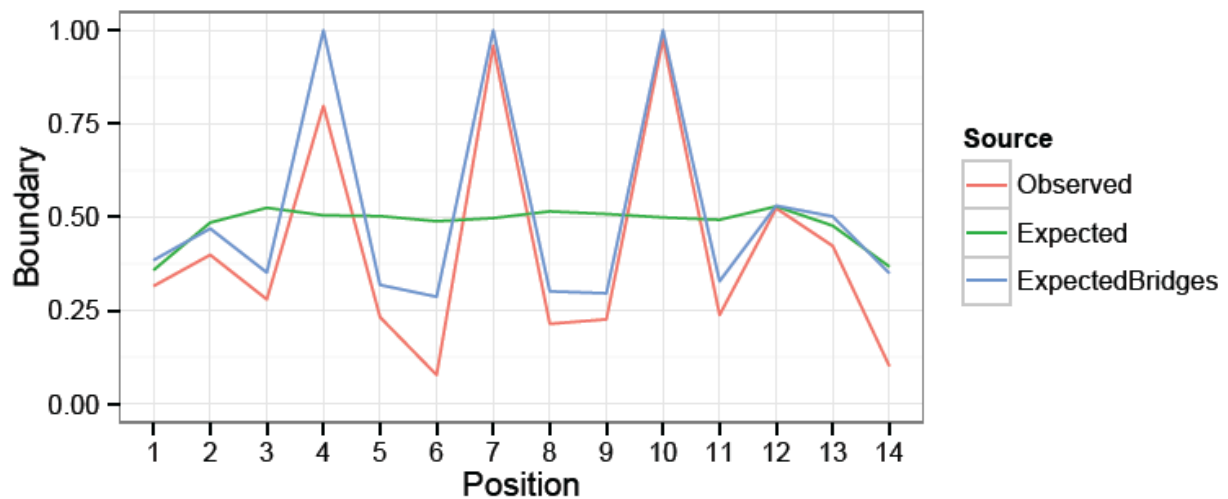


Tocharian B versification

Christoph Bross (LMU München), Dieter Gunkel (LMU München),
Olav Hackstein (LMU München), Kevin Ryan (Harvard University)

Thanks to the impressive progress of the CEToM project, it is becoming feasible for the first time to combine philology with corpus linguistic methods in order to significantly advance our knowledge of the relatively understudied language and culture of the Tocharians. We have applied this combined approach to the verbal art of the Tocharians, specifically to Tocharian B versification.

Using carefully designed observed vs. expected tests, we begin by reviewing the basic characteristics of the meters, including caesura location, the distinction between cola and subcola, major and minor caesurae, and which meters permit alternative caesura locations. The tests serve to confirm a number of generally accepted views and to bring new or lesser known characteristics to light. Let us take the metrical constituency of verse composed in strophes consisting of four fifteen-syllable pādas (4x15) as an example. On the one hand, when caesurae are defined as the positions in the verse where we observe word boundary significantly more often than we would expect it by chance, we see that they fall after the 4th, the 7th, and the 10th syllables with steadily increasing strictness, confirming the observation in Stumpf 1971:72. Compare the incidence of word boundary actually observed in the corpus (red) with what we would expect if Tocharian B poets composed 4x15 syllable verse without caesurae (green):¹



This makes the assumption of a single major division after 7 (e.g. the "7/8 rhythm" referred to in CEToM) problematic. On the other hand, there are strong, symmetrical bridges after the 6th and 14th syllables, which may well point to a major division after 7. The bridges emerge from the comparison of the observed boundaries (red) with the boundaries that one would expect if Tocharian B poets composed 4x15 syllable verse with precisely the same caesurae that we observe after 4, 7, and 10, but cared nothing for the distribution of word boundaries elsewhere. Assuming a major division after 7, both may be

¹ Note that the distribution of clitics has been taken into account.

explained as reflecting the cross-poetically common prohibition against locating a monosyllable in colon-final position known from the Finnish Kalevala (Kiparsky 1968:138), the South Slavic epic decasyllable (Jakobson 1952:418), etc. Finally, it is worth noting that in 4x15 syllable meter there is no evidence that a break after 8 served as an alternative to a break after 7 ("7/8 and 8/7 rhythm"), rather in the rare verses without a word boundary after 7, the incidence of a boundary after 8 is in all likelihood due to chance.

We also revisit whether the poets regulate accent. Since word boundaries are strictly regulated in versification and since the most words are accented on the first or second syllable, the distribution of accent in Tocharian B verse is dictated to a great extent by the distribution of caesurae. Initial tests that we designed to deconfound the distribution of word boundaries and stress and performed on a hand-accented corpus of 4x14 syllable verse suggest that the poets did in fact regulate accent, though less strictly than word boundary patterns and syllable count. The 4x14 syllable verse type apparently has the following accentual rhythm (S = strong, W = weak):

S W S W W S W S W S W W S W

Finally, we reexamine factors governing clitic placement (Winter 1959; Malzahn 2012) and constituent order in verse vs. prose (Stumpf 1971:70-76; Watkins 1999), asking *inter alia* to what extent word order in verse can be predicted by word shape (i.e. syllable count and accent position).

We would ask for two time slots in which to present our collaborative research.

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