

A Study of Nouns in Tocharian

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Introduction to Tocharian

- Discovered as a PIE daughter language in 1907, relatively late compared to PIE's many other daughter languages.
 - French, German, and British expeditions into Chinese Turkestan (now Xinjiang province) found documents written in Middle Iranian and Tocharian.
- Once believed to have been the language of the Tokharoi people.
 - Now not an accepted theory, but the name Tocharian has remained.
- Furthest east PIE daughter language.
- Most of the Tocharian texts that survive are in the form of Buddhist votive offerings.
 - These texts date from the 5th to the 8th century AD.
- Likely died out after 840 AD, when the Uyghur people moved into the Tarim Basin.





Centum-Satem

- Tocharian is hypothesized to be a *centum* language, meaning the PIE palatovelars evolved into regular velars.
- This comes as a massive shock to the linguistic world, as all of the other proposed *centum* languages existed near western and central Europe, whereas the *satem* languages existed in central and eastern Europe.
- Before Tocharian, it was theorized that both the *centum* and *satem* speakers had their own regional dialect groups, yet since Tocharian is believed to be a *centum* language and is spoken so far to the east, it certainly throws a wrench in the cogs.

Regular vowel and other signs

						
va	vi	vu	vṛ	ve	vo	vā
						
vā	vī	vū	vṛ	vai	vau	vaṃ
						
vāḥ	ḥva	ḥva	v	vañ		

Tocharian A and B

- Tocharian is subdivided into Tocharian A and Tocharian B.
 - Tocharian A (aka Agnean; East Tocharian) was likely used in the Tarim Basin in the Xinjiang province of northwest China.
 - Tocharian B (aka Kuchean; West Tocharian) was likely used in the area further southwest of the Tarim Basin, near the city of Kucha.
 - It has been devised that Tocharian A was used as a poetic and liturgical language, whereas Tocharian B was used as a more official, administrative language. Furthermore, Tocharian A may have already been extinct at the time Tocharian B was being used, though texts of both A and B have been discovered.
 - There also exist 3rd-century Loulan Gāndhārī Prakrit documents that appear to borrow words from a closely related language referred to as Tocharian C, theoreticized by Klaus T. Schmidt. However, in 2018, his translations were deemed incorrect and this theory was subsequently discredited.



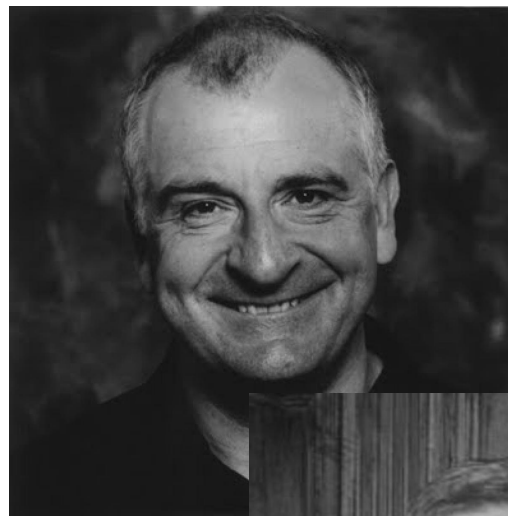
For reference, the Tocharian consonant inventory:

	Labial	Dental	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Labiovelar
Stop	p	t			k	k ^w
Affricate		ts	c			
Sibilant		s	ʃ	ś		
Nasal	m	n		ñ	ŋ	
Liquid		l	r			
Glide				y		w

This inventory remains the same in both Tocharian A and B.

Tocharian study today

- Tocharian still has vast amounts of missing information left to discover.
- Tocharian research is spearheaded by Dr. Douglas Q. Adams of the University of Idaho, one of the most renowned experts in the field.
 - Wrote the *Dictionary of Tocharian B*
- Another expert in Tocharian, credited with discrediting Klaus T. Schmidt's theory of Tocharian C, is Georges Pinault.
- The University of Texas has an excellent website on Tocharian that covers everything from manuscript translations to tenses and moods for anyone desiring to learn more:
 - <https://web.archive.org/web/20150702133103/http://www.utexas.edu/cola/centers/lrc/eieol/tokol-TC-X.html>





Nouns





Declension Types

- Tocharian has a large number of phonological changes resulting from its evolution from PIE. As a result, the PIE declension types have been largely restructured in Tocharian, and the nouns in Tocharian fall into two declensional classes, known as Type A and Type B.
- These types differ based on how the plural is formed in relation to the nominative and oblique cases.
 - In Type A nouns, the nominative plural formation is **different from** the oblique plural formation.
 - In Type B nouns, the nominative plural formation is **the same as** the oblique plural formation.
- Additionally, in many cases, but certainly not all, Type A nouns also have **nominative singular** formations that **differ** from the **oblique singular** formations.
- Furthermore, Type B nouns also have **nominative singular** formations that are **the same** as the **oblique singular** formations in many cases, but certainly not all.



Synthetic vs. Agglutinative

- Another aspect of Tocharian that differentiates it from many other PIE daughter languages is its **agglutinative** tendencies. This can be explained by a helpful example:
 - In the first declension of Latin, there exists the nominative singular ending -a, the genitive singular ending -ae, the nominative plural ending -ae, and the genitive plural ending -arum.
 - Each of these endings are different depending on the case. Furthermore, the genitive singular and nominative plural endings are the same. This goes to show that one cannot decipher what a particular Latin noun with an ending actually means without having the context of the sentence. This is called a **synthetic** language, in which **form denotes grammatical function**.
 - Continuing on, in Tocharian, the ending -aśśäl is used in the comitative case regardless of number. This is an **agglutinative** tendency, in which **grammatical function denotes form**.



Tocharian Noun Cases

- Interestingly, Tocharian has more noun cases than originally reconstructed for PIE.
 - Tocharian first reduced the number of cases originally inherited when it first broke off, then developed new case endings as it evolved.
 - Originally lost the dative, instrumental, ablative, and locative.
 - Only 4 original cases survived in Proto-Tocharian: nominative, vocative, genitive, and accusative (primary cases).
 - Accusative continues in a case called the oblique, and the vocative exists only in Tocharian B.



Tocharian Noun Cases (continued)

- 7 secondary cases later evolved in Tocharian by adding different invariant suffixes to the oblique case. These secondary cases are:
 - Locative and perlative, which likely served as cognates to one another; comitative; allative; ablative; instrumental, which only existed in Tocharian A; and causal, which only existed in Tocharian B but served essentially the same function as that of the instrumental in Tocharian A.
 - Locative and perlative are used when an action is accomplished by way of someone's agency.
 - Comitative is often used with the word 'with', in terms of accompaniment.
 - Allative is used when expressing motion towards something.
 - Ablative is used when expressing motion away from something. It implies a separation.
 - Instrumental and causal are also often used with the word 'with', but in terms of referencing the tool in which something is accomplished.



Gruppenflexion

- Tocharian contains the concept of Gruppenflexion, which is when phrases in a secondary case often only exhibit a secondary case ending on the last word.
 - For example, Consider the phrase “*kektseñ reki palskosa*” in Tocharian B, meaning “*with body, word, and thought*”.
 - ‘*kektseñ*’ and ‘*reki*’ are both in the oblique, a primary case. However, ‘*palskosa*’ is in the perlativ, a secondary case.



Number

- Tocharian contains both the concept of the singular and the dual, as well as a third concept known as a “**paral**”.
 - The paral is a dual signifier, yet it is used to represent only naturally occurring pairs, such as hands, feet, eyes or ears.
- Additionally, Tocharian B has made use of the ending -aiwenta, known as a **plurative**, which signifies something as occurring “once at a time” or “individually”.



Gender

- In Tocharian, the neuter case exists only in pronoun usage, though the masculine and feminine exist in both pronouns and other nouns.
 - The PIE neuter endings became masculine endings in the singular, and feminine endings in the plural.
 - These nouns with masculine endings in the singular and feminine endings in the plural are referred to as having **alternating gender**.
- Tocharian A also has the strange feature of distinguishing gender in the first personal pronoun "I".



Human vs Non-Human

- Though, like most other PIE daughter languages, Tocharian contains a distinction of gender within its noun endings, there lies a further distinction when regarding human and non-human nouns.
- This distinction is made within the singular oblique case, in which human nouns are given the -m suffix, whereas non-human nouns do not receive this suffix.
 - For example, even though the Tocharian B 'yakwe', meaning 'horse', is animate, it would not receive the oblique singular -m suffix because it is not a human.
 - However, the Tocharian B 'procer', meaning 'brother', would receive the -m suffix, as it is a human noun.



Chart showing interesting comparisons between Tocharian and English

<i>English</i>	<i>Tocharian A</i>	<i>Tocharian B</i>
<i>one</i>	sas	še
<i>two</i>	wu	wi
<i>three</i>	tre	traï
<i>four</i>	śtwar	śtwēr
<i>five</i>	pāñ	piś
<i>six</i>	śāk	śkas
<i>seven</i>	špät	šukt
<i>eight</i>	okät	okt
<i>nine</i>	ñu	ñu
<i>ten</i>	śäk	śak
<i>hundred</i>	känt	kante
<i>father</i>	pācar	pācer
<i>mother</i>	mācar	mācer
<i>brother</i>	pracar	procer
<i>sister</i>	šar	šer
<i>horse</i>	yuk	yakwe
<i>cow</i>	ko	keu
<i>voice</i>	vak	vek
<i>name</i>	ñom	ñem
<i>to milk</i>	mālkā	mālkant



Activity





Activity

Below are several english phrases that closely, if not directly, describe/reference some of the various secondary cases found in Tocharian. For each phrase, see if you can determine which case is being used or referenced.

1. *I attended the show with my close friends.*
2. *I arrived at the village by way of the sherpa.*
3. *I drove to the bank with my new car.*
4. *We headed to the mountain from which we came.*
5. *She moved away from the table.*



Activity (continued)

1. *I attended the show with my close friends.*



Activity (continued)

1. *I attended the show with my close friends.*

← The key verb to recognize is 'with'.
Then, one must determine whether the 'with' is used to express a tool with which something is accomplished, which would be the instrumental/causative case, or to express accompaniment, which would be the comitative case.



Activity (continued)

1. I attended the show with my close friends.

← The key verb to recognize is 'with'. Then, one must determine whether the 'with' is used to express a tool with which something is accomplished, which would be the instrumental/causative case, or to express accompaniment, which would be the comitative case.

In this case, it expresses accompaniment, so 'friends' would receive the **comitative** case ending.



Activity (continued)

2. *I arrived at the village by way of the sherpa.*



Activity (continued)

2. I arrived at the village by way of the sherpa.

← 'I' arrived at the village via the agency of someone else.



Activity (continued)

2. I arrived at the village by way of the sherpa.

← 'I' arrived at the village via the agency of someone else.

Therefore, 'Sherpa' would receive the **locative/perlative** case ending.



Activity (continued)

3. *I drove to the bank with my new car.*



Activity (continued)

3. *I drove to the bank with my new car.*

← Again, the key word here is 'with'.
However, it is not the 'with' found in the comitative case, as it does not express accompaniment. Rather, it references the tool used to drive to the bank.



Activity (continued)

3. I drove to the bank with my new car.

← Again, the key word here is 'with'. However, it is not the 'with' found in the comitative case, as it does not express accompaniment. Rather, it references the tool used to drive to the bank.

Therefore, 'car' would receive the **instrumental/causal** case ending.

Note: Tocharian A rarely used the instrumental case when referring to humans.



Activity (continued)

4. We headed to the mountain from
which we came.



Activity (continued)

4. We headed to the mountain from which we came.

← We know that this case expresses motion, since it uses the verb 'to' and speaks of locations.



Activity (continued)

4. We headed to the mountain from which we came.

← We know that this case expresses motion, since it uses the verb 'to' and speaks of locations.

Since it expresses motion towards a place, then the word 'mountain' would receive the **allative** case ending.



Activity (continued)

5. *She moved away from the table.*



Activity (continued)

5. She moved away from the table.

← This sentence also expresses motion, noted in the word 'moved'.



Activity (continued)

5. She moved away from the table.

← This sentence also expresses motion, noted in the word 'moved'.

Since the direction of motion implies a separation ('moved away'), the noun 'table' would receive the **ablative** case ending.