

## Notes on Tocharian-Tibetan lexical contacts not shared by Middle Chinese

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Although it had been assumed at least since Eduard Hermann's (1869–1950) review [1] of SIEG & SIEGLING's *Tocharische Sprachreste I* [2], that Tibetan not only had lexical contacts with the Tocharian languages, but also exerted considerable morphological and morphosyntactic influence upon them, Edward Sapir's (1884–1939) downright enthusiastic assessment that Tocharian was "[I]n brief ... a Tibetanized Indo-European idiom", whose "notoriously difficult" phonology would receive "abundant light from the treatment of Tibetan loan-words" [3], found but few followers [4] in mainstream Indo-European linguistics, and the announced sequels to his pathbreaking article consequently never appeared. Rather, the enigmatic non-Indo-European component of Tocharian AB was "temporarily removed" to Ainu in the work of the Belgian linguists Albert Joris van Windekens (1915–1989) and Pierre Naert (1916–1964) during the fifties and sixties of the last century (for an overview of the pertinent literature see [5]). Loan relationships with Uralic [6–7], Turkic and wider Altaic [8–11] continued to be discussed in several scattered studies during the second half of the 20th c., and some of the implied contact scenarios have – despite pronounced criticism [12] – not been abandoned so far.

Triggered by the archaeological discovery of the so-called "Tarim mummies" [13], commonly assumed to be identifiable with an early Indo-European speaking community in the vicinity of Tocharian in what is now Xinjiang, and based on improved six-vowel systems in Old Chinese reconstruction, a new interest in Sino-Tocharian lexical comparison has been ushered in more recently [14, 15], and the oldest layer of Turco-Tocharian contacts has likewise been thoroughly reanalysed against this background [16]. Apart from a side remark on typological parallels between the Classical Tibetan and Tocharian gender distinction in the first person personal pronoun [17] and more far-reaching theories about early Indo-European-Tibetan linguistic contacts [18], Tibetan played no role in the elucidation of Tocharian lexical peculiarities any longer.

In my talk I will attempt to revisit Hermann's and Sapir's proposal about early Tocharian-Tibetan lexical contacts, concentrating on a few isoglosses with Old Tibetan as represented by the Dunhuang documents, which are not shared by Middle Chinese. Apart from the light these loan equations might shed on the moot question of Indo-European-Tibetan contacts beyond the better documented influences of Iranian language and religious culture on Tibetan [19], they might prove useful as diagnostic tools for current discussions about the position of Tibetan *within* the Tibeto-Burman family and, *a fortiori*, its relationship vis-à-vis Old Chinese in the recently proposed Sino-Bodic branch of Sino-Tibetan [20].

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