

A WORKSHOP ON TOCHARIAN:
AN INTRODUCTION

Tocharian studies today are both promising and difficult. Progress in the historical interpretation of the language is still slow: every inch must be fought for. This is due to the complex remodelling that took place in the course of the development of Tocharian. It is also due to the limited material we have, and to the fact that there are only a few good handbooks.

In spite of this the results often give a new impetus to Indo-European linguistics when they provide the missing link to the solution of a problem, or quite unexpected incentives to research. There is no other Indo-European language, the study of which is so full of surprises: Hittite is much better known; only the minor Anatolian languages may similarly provide new facts, but their material is much less complete. Prospects are moreover good, as there are still many Tocharian texts to be published.

Following a suggestion of my colleague Frederik Kortlandt we organized an – all too short – workshop at Leiden in order to bring together a number of scholars in the field. The major aim of this meeting was to stimulate contacts among those working on Tocharian, and I think we have succeeded in this respect.

I was very happy that Dr. Hilmarsson was prepared to publish the papers in his new journal. I think that articles are often more easily accessible when published in a journal than in a separate volume. This also gives me the opportunity to express the hope that the journal for Tocharian linguistics will find many readers and contributors.