

Acknowledgment

 <https://doi.org/10.1075/cilt.54.01ack>

Pages v–vii of

Tibeto-Burman Tonology: A Comparative Analysis

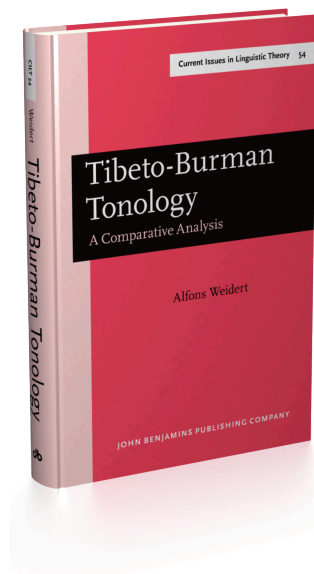
Alfons Weidert

[*Current Issues in Linguistic Theory*, 54] 1987. xvii, 512 pp.

© John Benjamins Publishing Company

This electronic file may not be altered in any way. For any reuse of this material written permission should be obtained from the publishers or through the Copyright Clearance Center (for USA: www.copyright.com).

For further information, please contact rights@benjamins.nl or consult our website at benjamins.com/rights



ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This work owes its origin to two research projects sponsored by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (German Research Council) in Bonn:

- (1) 'Reconstruction methods for unwritten languages' (We 626/3) from April 1975 to March 1977, and
- (2) 'Sino-Tibetan tone languages' (We 626/4) from July 1977 to June 1978.

These projects enabled me to gather word and syntax collections for over forty Sino-Tibetan languages, especially within the Kuki-Naga-Chin and Barish divisions of this language family. A concise analysis of the prosodological reconstruction of Sino-Tibetan languages based on these collections was presented in my "Sino-Tibetan Tonogenetic Laryngeal Reconstruction Theory" (in: *Linguistics of the Tibeto-Burman Area*, vol. 5, Berkeley 1979). In another exposure to concretely spoken Tibeto-Burman languages, I have been privileged to participate, from 1982 to 1984, in a project termed 'The Lesser-Known Languages of Nepal', which was also financed by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft.

In the present work I have tried to extend the prosodological framework laid down in the earlier article to all Tibeto-Burman language divisions to which I have meanwhile had access. The work therefore also benefits from the researches I have been able to carry out in Nepal on the Tibetan, Tamang/Gurung/Thakali/Mananggi, and Kiranti groups, and on such isolated languages as Newari, Magar, Dhimal, Thami, and Chepang (but unfortunately not Lepcha). Chapter 2 on the phonation types of Chepang, Chap. 3 on the synchronic reflexes of the *creaky category in Limbu, and Chap. 7 on phonation and tone in the Tamang/Gurung/Thakali nucleus are the direct upshot of one part of my linguistic activities in Nepal.

The work itself was written over several periods from 1978 to 1986, but the main bulk dates from 1986. During the final analysis of this year, and

while I was especially concerned with a comparative treatment of *breathy phonation (whose traces are visible everywhere in Sino-Tibetan, but which has an extremely dubious status on the reconstructional level of analysis), I discovered *intensional meaning correlates* on what could be called the hardware level of linguistic word formation. A precise analysis of a handful of features that steer human perception and cognition on the micro-physical level of the *faculté de langage* would have required me to write the same book over again.

I therefore limited myself to pointing out, at various and scattered places, at least the relevance of the (physically/physiologically) FUNCTIONAL meaning correlate whose veiled existence is seen behind all seemingly heterogeneous and incompatible occurrences of Sino-Tibetan *breathy/TC-III.

There is no reason for not including Chinese within the format of the present analysis. I nevertheless decided to postpone this for the time being, knowing that the wide gulf that separates Chinese from the other Sino-Tibetan languages would make itself visible, within the prosodological domain, in a stunning amount of tonological irregularities. As the final remarks on future avenues of tonogenetic research in Chap. 10 indicate, there is now the likelihood of discarding prosodological units at the level of Proto-Sino-Tibetan altogether. A simple and straightforward comparison of phonation types or tonal categories in Chinese and Tibeto-Burman would therefore incur the risk of a both completely irrelevant and ill-founded treatment that is unsuitable in view of the involved time depths for which reconstructional identity must be presupposed. In order to shed more light on this point, I have included scattered remarks and analyses of presumably disyllabic and plurisyllabic proto-roots in various places (but cf. especially 3.3.6, where the polysyllabic nature of some TB roots as corroborated by Limbu is exemplified). This angle of consideration dictates the necessity of another historico-reconstructional analysis because the established canons of Sino-Tibetan reconstruction that culminate in the concept of monosyllabism and, *ceteris paribus*, in the conceptualized rigidity of a monosyllabic PST reconstruction base, would be vitiated under the impact of a plurisyllabic approach. Note that in this alternative framework, whose outlines have yet to be sketched, both Chinese and Tibeto-Burman (including Karen) can only be considered as emanations from a

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

linguistic core structure that is no longer preserved as such in any of the recorded Sino-Tibetan languages but seems to converge on a common meeting point where, structurally and typologically, the Fenno-Ugric and Altaic languages have already assembled.

I hereby express my deep-felt gratitude to the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, whose generous support over the years encouraged me to continue this line of research. Of course it goes without saying that the people I consulted as language informants over many years bear no responsibility for errors of either fact or representation.

May 1986

A.W.