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CONTENTS

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

MARK TURIN AND BETTINA ZEISLER

The greater Himalayan region is the principal meeting point for the two largest language families of the world, Indo-European and Tibeto-Burman. The same massifs have also been home to two smaller language families (Austroasiatic and Dravidian), and to two language isolates (Burushaski and Kusunda). Despite their physical prominence, the Himalayas constitute not so much an insurmountable barrier but rather a region of interaction between these various language families. Indo-Iranian languages, and perhaps also Burushaski, were in all probability spoken along the northern slopes of the western Himalayas before the spread of Tibetan to this area in the second half of the first millennium CE. Much earlier still, Tibeto-Burman languages established themselves on the southern slopes, while the speakers of Indo-Aryan and Iranian languages entered these mountainous regions along the river valleys from the south and, then again, from the northwest.

Whether such incursions were motivated by conquest or were rather of a more peaceful nature, the resulting linguistic situation was usually characterised by coexistence, with specific niches supporting the survival of specific languages. In those instances where speech forms were abandoned, and where a shift to a dominant language occurred, as in the case of Balti and Shamskat Ladakhi (from Eastern Iranian and/or Dardic languages to Tibetan), the transition took much longer than allowed for by the standard three-generation model for languages under extreme pressure. Multilingualism was surely the norm rather than the exception in many parts of the Himalayas, and this linguistic pluralism left traces in the languages involved. For example, a significant proportion of the lexicon of Newar, a Tibeto-Burman language spoken in Nepal, derives from Indo-Aryan; while Ladakhi, spoken in Jammu & Kashmir (India), and Balti spoken in Pakistan, have not only acquired and retained certain traits from Dardic languages, but have even influenced the latter.

The geopolitical shifts brought about by the British colonisation of the Indian subcontinent, and the subsequent introduction of English-medium education together with the spread of modern mass communi-

cation, helped Indo-European (whether in the form of Hindi, Urdu or English) to gain ground, furthering the decline of many regional and local languages.

While the diversity of the sub-groupings within Tibeto-Burman is on a par with that of the Germanic or Romance languages of Europe, (even if their speaker numbers are relatively low), this richness in variation and the opportunity for original, fundamental research has not yet translated into a profusion of linguists working in Himalayan areas. Furthermore, while the Himalayan region is the nucleus for languages of the Tibeto-Burman family, and also the area of their greatest diversity, this mountainous territory remains somewhat peripheral for scholars working on other language families. This is reflected in the interests of the participants of the Himalayan Languages Symposia held to date, with the majority of researchers focussing on Tibeto-Burman languages. This collection, too, originating at the 11th Himalayan Languages Symposium, held at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, Thailand, in December, 2005, brings together a number of papers on the sub-groupings of Tibeto-Burman, such as Kiranti, Lepcha, Newar and Tibetan, one paper on Indo-Aryan, and another which addresses data from Austroasiatic. The present volume contains a selection of six of the best papers first presented at the Bangkok meeting, albeit fundamentally revised and significantly updated with more recent field data, and all situated in a wider conceptual and comparative context. Three additional papers were invited on the basis of topical interest and new research findings coming to light (van Driem, Huysmans and Plaisier). Each of these nine contributions highlight the results of primary research, whether from the field or based on comparative material.

THE HIMALAYAS IN HISTORY

Focussing on the eastern Himalayas, George van Driem provides a helpful introduction to the background context and macro-history of two Himalayan language families, Austroasiatic and Tibeto-Burman. In so doing, he draws on archaeology, population genetics, and linguistic reconstruction, and what may be termed linguistic paleontology (the attempt to understand the material culture of a language family on the basis of its inherited lexicon). According to van Driem, these two language families hold the key to understanding the population prehistory of northeastern India and the Indo-Burmese borderlands.

The original Tibeto-Burman homeland nominates itself on account of the density of its speakers in the northeastern segment of the Indian subcontinent. The location of the ancestral Austroasiatic homeland, however, lying somewhere between South Asia and Southeast Asia, in the area around the northern coast of the Bay of Bengal, may be posited on the basis of linguistic palaeontology, the distribution of modern Austroasiatic language communities and the deep phylogenetic divisions in the family tree. Linguistic palaeontology further identifies the ancient speakers of Austroasiatic as likely being the earliest cultivators of rice, since a rich repertoire of reconstructible roots representing ancient rice agriculture is robustly reflected in all branches of this language family.

<center>PHONOLOGY AND SCRIPT</center>

Closer to the ground, the second section opens with a discussion of how spoken and written languages are best transcribed and transliterated.

Due to India's colonial heritage and the wide reach of English medium education, many speakers of languages indigenous to the subcontinent rely on conventions of English orthography when giving their tongues written form in Roman script. On occasion, this can result in arbitrary transcriptions signalling contrasts where there are none. A standardised system of transcription, then, based on linguistic criteria and understanding, would be beneficial for both native speakers and concerned fieldworkers. Heleen Plaisier discusses these issues in detail for the case of Lepcha (spoken in Sikkim and Kalimpong), carefully evaluating three established orthographic systems (two introduced by Western authors, the other by a native scholar), each of which have different shortcomings, and contrasts them with her own more systematic approach.

Tibetan languages and dialects vary considerably in the degree to which they preserve the original phonological complexity documented in Old or Classical Tibetan orthography. Initial clusters, for example, are best preserved in West Tibetan (Balti and Ladakhi), followed by the Eastern Tibetan Amdo dialects spoken in nomadic regions. The non-nomadic Amdo dialects, as well as the Khams Tibetan dialects, typically occupy an intermediate position between the phonologically conservative dialects and the phonologically most innovative Central Tibetan dialects, where practically all clusters are reduced to a single

consonant in word-initial position. Such rough classifications will need further qualification and nuancing, however, as more hitherto undescribed Tibetan dialects are documented and analysed.

While Sogpho Tibetan, as described by Hiroyuki Suzuki in this volume, is classified as a Khams Tibetan dialect by virtue of its location (it is spoken in Danba County in western Sichuan), it nevertheless shows several conservative features which are otherwise only recorded among the phonologically conservative Amdo dialects. Examples include preaspiration resulting from former clusters with dental and velar preinitials, the retention of clusters with labial stop initials as prelabialised consonants and the partial retention of clusters with a labial initial followed by a palatal glide or alveolar trill. In most Tibetan dialects, these clusters have developed into palatal or alveopalatal affricates and retroflex stops or affricates. Sogpho and the nomadic Amdo dialects are examples of an intermediate stage: while the initial remains unaffected or simply weakened, the post-initial glide or trill undergoes the major change, and the final stage is reached only by dropping the initial labial. Such findings are extremely important for our understanding of the mechanics and history of sound changes in Tibetan, and this paper is therefore an original and important contribution to this end.

SEMANTICS (WORDS AND WORD CLASSES)

Following a more traditional philological approach, Brandon Dotson offers a precise study of an item of the Old Tibetan legal and ritual lexicon: *khrin*. Philology and linguistics diverged from one another long ago, and while pertinent linguistic issues are almost entirely neglected in Tibetan studies, most modern linguists lack the experience and skills to make sense of Tibetan texts, which are often opaque even to the specialist. The rare vocabulary and lack of lexical resources in Old Tibetan add to the difficulties of decoding the syntax of a language that is as yet imperfectly understood.

Dotson's contribution is an important step in the re-integration of linguistics with philology, in that he demonstrates the context-sensitivity of lexical items, particularly when used in a technical context. As a legal term, *khrin* should be translated as 'judicial punishment', even though the most basic meaning of the word *khrin* is 'lead' or 'tether', an instrument for leading (sacrificial) animals along as well as the recipients of legal punishment. The noun *khrin* 'tether' can be

analysed as a derivation of the verb *'khrid* in Dotson's transliteration 'lead along', with an archaic, unproductive derivational suffix (*-d/ -n*) added to the root *khri. Beyond the ideological reshaping of concepts and meanings, Dotson's paper also offers insights into the daily practice of ancient Tibetan bureaucrats, who, under certain circumstances at least, decided legal cases by rolling dice.

The definition of parts of speech has long been the awkward stepchild of Tibeto-Burman studies. Word classes are typically established rather loosely according to the intuition of mostly non-native scholars, following in broad strokes the classifications found in dominant European languages of which they are native speakers.

Adjectivals, namely words describing qualia, constitute a particularly intricate class, oscillating between their more state-like properties, which are linked with nominals, and their more dynamic properties, which are linked with verbs. In some languages, such as Tibetan, adjectivals are split between basic verbal forms used as predicates and derived nominal forms used attributively. Newar, spoken in the Kathmandu valley of Nepal, exhibits an even more complex picture. While some researchers of Newar have denied the existence of a separate class of adjectives altogether, Kazuyuki Kiryu argues for the existence of a distinct word class and, based on morphosyntactic criteria, proposes that Newar adjectives be divided into three subclasses. Discussing thirteen conceptual domains usually associated with adjectivals, Kiryu identifies nine concepts that are realised as adjectives. He further distinguishes between verb-like adjectives, non-verb-like adjectives, and non-predicative adjectives.

MORPHOLOGY AND SYNTAX

In many Tibeto-Burman languages, and among the Tibetan languages in particular, the distinction between *conjunct* information related to an (intentionally acting or controlling) 'informant' (that is, speaker in assertions, addressee in questions) and *disjunct* information not related to such an informant has become grammaticalised along with the concept of evidentiality, namely the distinction between varying sources of knowledge. Ellen Bartee reports on the Southern Khams Tibetan dialect of Dongwang, spoken in Shangri-la County in north-west Yunnan, which, like most other modern Tibetan varieties, shows a conjunct/disjunct system besides evidential marking. Unlike all other Tibetan dia-

lects, however, Dongwang, and possibly other Southern Khams dialects also, displays an animacy distinction in existential linking verbs and auxiliaries based on these very verbs. This distinction operates on S and O (more precisely possessed) arguments and interacts with the conjunct/disjunct system.

Having discussed all possible combinations of conjunct/disjunct and animacy marking and their uses in various non-existential clauses, Bartee investigates the possible origins of the animacy distinction. A similar animacy distinction is found in Lolo-Burmese languages, such as Naxi, and since the speakers of Dongwang Tibetan have been in contact with the Naxi people for several centuries, the innovation in Dongwang most likely results from intensive linguistic contact. Bartee briefly outlines the history of interaction between the two communities, and also provides a short description of the animacy distinction in Naxi. According to her analysis, the combination of the Dongwang conjunct/disjunct opposition with the animacy distinction has resulted in something akin to a cross-referencing agreement system, thus distinguishing itself from other evidential systems in modern Tibetan.

Nepal's Kiranti languages are known for their intricate verbal agreement systems, perhaps the most complex in Tibeto-Burman. In his paper, René Huysmans provides the first published analysis of the verbal agreement system of Sampang, a Kiranti language spoken in eastern Nepal. While Sampang intransitive verbs agree with their only argument, transitive verbs show agreement both with the agent, i.e. transitive subject, and the non-agent, i.e. the undergoer, recipient, patient, or beneficiary. Singular, dual, and plural number is marked on all actants, and non-singular first person actants are further distinguished for inclusion or non-inclusion of the addressee. The Sampang verbal string is home to eleven affixal slots (one prefixal, the rest suffixal) for cross-referencing, tense marking, negation, and for additional copy morphemes. Many of the morphemes in question have several allomorphs, including zero-allomorphs, and, to complicate the picture further, several morphemes have fused into *portmanteau* morphemes. As a side effect, there is even more complex marking for combinations of first person patient with third person agents in past tense, reflecting a higher level of semantic transitivity.

After laying bare the elaborate verbal morphology of Sampang, and having discussed several analytical alternatives, Huysmans demonstrates that a large portion of its morphemic inventory can be re-

lated in a straightforward manner to the Proto-Kiranti verbal agreement model. Sampang verbal morphology is particularly reminiscent of the verbal agreement system of Kulung, but also shows similarities to the verbal morphology of Limbu and Lohorung. In short, Kiranti morphological change can be seen to be primarily semantically driven: while the formal systems are indices of meaning, their re-analysis and re-modelling are propelled by ever re-interpreted shades of meaning.

While the agreement patterns of Indo-Aryan languages are certainly less complicated than those of their Tibeto-Burman counterparts, there are variations in whether a verb agrees only with the least agent-like argument (always in the absolutive/nominative) or also with further arguments. In his contribution, Khawaja A. Rehman discusses three different languages spoken in the Neelam Valley in Pakistan-administered Kashmir: his own native language Kashmiri, the dominant language Hindko and the highly endangered Kundal Shahi. All three languages show full agreement with the least agent-like argument, while Kashmiri, as spoken in the Neelam valley, displays additional agreement in person and number with third person plural and second person agent-like arguments. In contrast to other Indo-Aryan languages, where intransitive verbs may display alternations between absolutive and ergative marking, Neelam Kashmiri further shows obligatory ergative marking for a set of more agentive or volitional one-place verbs, including reflexives such as 'bathe', sound production verbs such as 'laugh', and motion verbs such as 'dance'. Interestingly, most of these verbs do not display gender-based agreement, that is, they only exhibit masculine agreement markers.

Dialect classifications are often based on the most evident differences in phonology and lexicon. With respect to the Tibetan varieties, Bettina Zeisler shows that such an approach may be misleading. In the case of the two dialect groups spoken in Upper and Lower Ladakh (Jammu & Kashmir, India), Kenhat and Shamskat, the essential difference is not between the dialects that preserve a conservative phonology with initial clusters, close to 9th century Old Tibetan, and those that have lost all clusters, but rather between the dialects that distinguish morphologically between agents and possessors, and those that do not. Other differences at the level of syntax include various ways of marking tense and evidentiality.

In terms of phonology, the Kenhat dialects are particularly intriguing as their minor differences provide a model for the progressive stages

of the loss of initial consonant clusters, in the vocalisation of the final sibilant and in the trans-phonologisation from voice to register tone distinctions. More importantly, even though their phonology is less conservative than that of the Shamskat dialects, Kenhat dialects show more lexical and grammatical archaisms, allowing us to trace the morphological developments that both dialect groups, along with other Tibetan varieties, must have undergone.

This is an important lesson in itself, since historical reconstruction in general, and that of the Tibeto-Burman languages in particular, tends to be based on somewhat superficial aspects of phonology and neglects the development of grammatical systems. The phonologically innovative Central Tibetan varieties, to date largely disregarded in attempts at reconstruction, may be as rich in lexical and syntactic archaisms as the Kenhat dialects of Upper Ladakh, while the phonologically most conservative dialects might not necessarily represent the oldest layers of the language.

Where van Driem focuses on the most southeasterly section of the Himalayas and their prolongation into the Bay of Bengal, Rehman and Zeisler focus on the extreme north-west and its extension into the Hindu Kush. Towards the center of these geographical extremes, Suzuki and Bartee lead us to the northern and southern regions of Tibet, Plaisier to Sikkim, and Huysmans and Kiryu to eastern and central Nepal respectively. Between the two poles of macro-history, as represented by van Driem's overview of tens of thousands of years of language development and population migration, and micro-history, as embodied in Dotson's careful reconstruction of the semantics of a specific lexical item used in the bureaucratic jargon of the Tibetan Empire around one thousand years ago, we find Bartee's description of the last one thousand years of interaction between two communities speaking Tibeto-Burman languages, and Zeisler's analysis of the Upper Ladakhi varieties, offering us a glimpse into the prehistory of Tibetan speech forms.

This volume has been a long time in the making. Five years have elapsed since the initial conference that brought many of the contributors together and the final publication of this edited book. While the delays are regrettable, and remain our responsibility alone, we believe that the collection has matured in the oak and is the better for the wait. In our capacity as editors, we wish to thank Dr Krisadawan Hongladarom, a linguist at Chulalongkorn University and founder of the impressive Thousand Stars Foundation that promotes understanding of

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