

Survey article

Tibeto-Burman replaces Indo-Chinese in the 1990s:
Review of a decade of scholarship[☆]

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Abstract

Tibeto-Burman is one of the world's greatest language families, second only to Indo-European in terms of populations of speakers. Advances made in the course of the decade have led to a major paradigm shift in Tibeto-Burman historical linguistics and phylogeny. The numerous contributions to the field in the 1990s are reviewed in a statement on the current state of the art. © 2002 Elsevier Science B.V. All rights reserved.

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1. A *fin de siècle* paradigm shift

The last decade of the 20th century saw a revival of the old Tibeto-Burman theory and its slow but steady ascendancy above the Indo-Chinese or Sino-Tibetan theory. Tibeto-Burman dates from the 18th century when scholars observed that Burmese and Tibetan were genetically related. The contours of the language family were delineated by Julius Klaproth in 1823. In its original formulation, the language family encompassed Tibetan, Burmese and Chinese and those languages which

[☆] Lingua is launching a series of survey articles called 'The decade in ...'. We aim to publish overview articles that will give nonspecialist linguists an insight into the way in which specific areas of expertise have developed in the last 10 years. Survey articles will be devoted to developments in different theoretical schools, as well as to developments in the study of particular languages, areas and families. The editors of Lingua remain open to suggestions from readers for topics for the series.

The following article by George van Driem on Tibeto-Burman opens the series.

could be shown to be genetically related to them, whilst it excluded Thai and other Daic languages as well as Vietnamese, Mon and other Austroasiatic languages. The Tibeto-Burman theory has in principle always been agnostic about subgrouping and the precise genetic position of Chinese within the family. In the past decade, however, subsidiary hypotheses of the Tibeto-Burman theory have been proposed, such as Sino-Bodic and Sino-Kiranti, which present specific testable hypotheses about the place of Chinese within the Tibeto-Burman family.

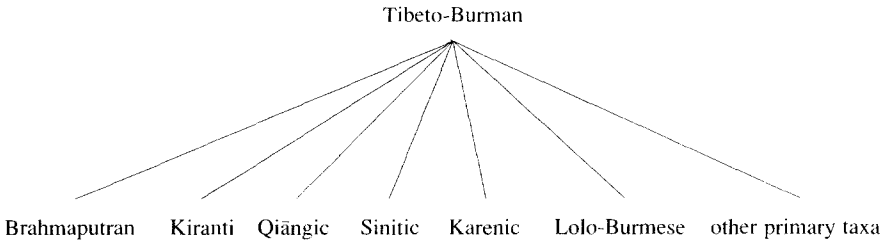


Fig 1. The Tibeto-Burman theory.

By contrast, the Indo-Chinese theory has always been a more pretentious construct. Its originator John Leyden delineated the family as comprising the languages spoken by “the inhabitants of the regions which lie between India and China, and the greater part of the islanders of the eastern sea” (1808: 158). In this all-encompassing formulation, the Indo-Chinese theory has always been a shifting conglomerate of hypotheses about the genetic relationship of the languages of eastern Eurasia. The Indo-Chinese or Sino-Tibetan family has constantly changed shape in the course of two centuries as all of its constituent hypotheses have slowly but surely been disproved and abandoned. Yet the decade began with its last reincarnation, the most recent version of Sino-Tibetan, being propagated as orthodoxy by Jim Matisoff, who first adopted the paradigm from his mentor Paul Benedict in 1968. I have recounted the history of Indo-Chinese in considerable detail elsewhere (van Driem, 1997c, 2001), but the story is told in a nutshell here.

Tibeto-Burman became one of the many ingredients of the Indo-Chinese construct from the very outset. However, adherents of the Turanian theory, which went defunct at the end of the 19th century, such as Müller (1855) and Hodgson (1849), as well as proponents of the Indo-Chinese theory, such as Ernst Kuhn (1889) and August Conrady (1896), removed Chinese or Sinitic from the original Tibeto-Burman family and grouped Chinese together with Daic. At variance with the original Tibeto-Burman theory, therefore, the ‘Tibeto-Burman’ subgroup which became an ingredient in both the Turanian and the Indo-Chinese or Sino-Tibetan theory was a truncated construct from which Chinese had been excised. The Austroasiatic languages were removed from Indo-Chinese by Emile Forchhammer and Ernst Kuhn in the 1880s, but this only became generally appreciated in the first half of the 20th century and only completely accepted in 1954. Just as the proponents of Indo-Chinese had taken Chinese out of the original Tibeto-Burman, they soon likewise

mistakenly removed Vietnamese from Austroasiatic. Vietnamese became a plaything tossed back and forth between Austroasiatic and Daic or Sino-Daic. Vietnamese was finally put back into the Austroasiatic language family definitively by André-Georges Haudricourt, who published the first tonogenetic sound laws in 1954.

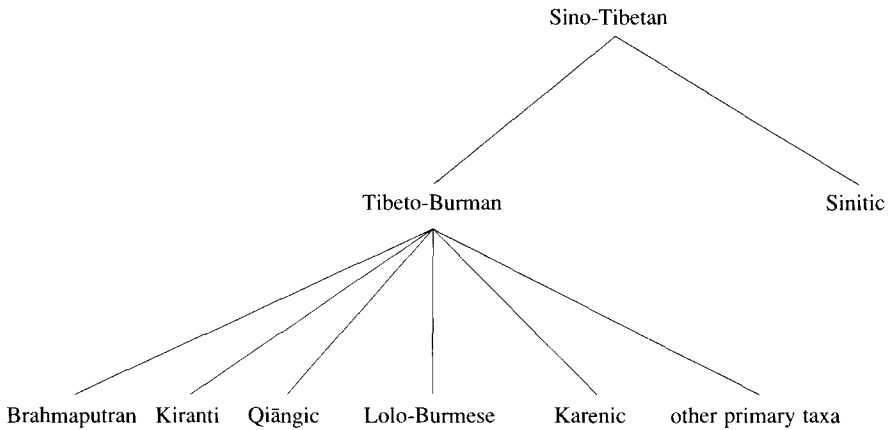


Fig. 2. The truncated Sino-Tibetan or Indo-Chinese hypothesis, incorporating truncated 'Tibeto-Burman'.

So, at the beginning of the 20th century, Indo-Chinese consisted of truncated Tibeto-Burman (i.e. Tibeto-Burman minus Chinese) and Sino-Daic (Sinitic plus Daic). Indo-Chinese was renamed 'sino-tibétain' by Jean Przyluski in 1924, and the name entered English in 1931 as 'Sino-Tibetan' when Przyluski and the British scholar Gordon Hannington Luce wrote an etymological note on the 'Sino-Tibetan' root for the numeral 'one hundred'. During the Second World War, Daic was removed from Sino-Daic, leaving Chinese out on a limb by itself alongside truncated 'Tibeto-Burman', and this view became generally accepted in the 1970s. For a brief spate in the 1970s, Sino-Tibetan even consisted of a Chinese trunk and a Tibeto-Karen construct, which in turn was divided into a Karen branch and an even more mutilated 'Tibeto-Burman'. Just as Sino-Tibetan is in essence a truncated version of the Indo-Chinese theory, so too Sino-Tibetan itself still incorporates truncated 'Tibeto-Burman', i.e. a subgroup hypothesis consisting of the Tibeto-Burman family from which Chinese has been excised. The realisation that truncated Tibeto-Burman was an untenable construct and that Chinese shows greater genetic proximity to some Tibeto-Burman languages than to others led to a major paradigm shift in the last decade of the 20th century, heralding a return to the original Tibeto-Burman theory. The dethroned Sino-Tibetan theory still incorporates many of the same mistaken assumptions entertained by proponents of Indo-Chinese in the last decade of the 19th century.

The last decade of the 20th century saw a fundamental change in scholarly thinking about Tibeto-Burman, the language family which after Indo-European counts the largest number of speakers on the planet. The new paradigm makes much more sense of the archaeological record in China, Southeast Asia and the Himalayan

region. It is important, however, that linguistically-informed interpretations of the dispersal of cultural assemblages be kept distinct from the historical linguistic picture of genetic relationships (van Driem, 1997a,c, 1998b, 1999a). The Sino-Tibetan or Indo-Chinese theory has effectively been superseded by the original Tibeto-Burman theory because (1) the Tibeto-Burman character of Sinitic has been amply demonstrated, (2) no uniquely shared innovations have been adduced which could define Proto-Tibeto-Burman as a separate coherent taxon that would exclude Chinese and would be coordinate with Proto-Sinitic, (3) evidence has been adduced suggesting that Sinitic is in fact more closely allied with certain Tibeto-Burman groups, e.g. Bodic or Kiranti, than with others, and (4) evidence in the form of isoglosses has been identified which may represent possible lexical innovations indicating that a more primary bifurcation in the language family is between certain other subgroups, e.g. Brahmaputran or 'Sal', and the rest of the Tibeto-Burman family including Sinitic. This fourth emerging insight has recently been bolstered by the identification of uniquely shared morphological innovations in Brahmaputran.

Yet the longevity of defunct hypotheses is a force to be reckoned with, both in secondary sources and in popular scientific literature. For example, Joseph Longford blithely stated that both Korean and Japanese were 'of the same Turanian family' (1911: 30), although even the author of the theory, Friedrich Max Müller, had abandoned Turanian before his death in 1900. Similarly, the old Indo-Chinese or Sino-Tibetan family espoused by August Conrady (1896) lives on today in popular science, with Michel Malherbe only just recently presenting this defunct version of Indo-Chinese under the name 'sino-thai', a family comprising 'le chinois, le thaï, le tibétain et le birman' (2001: 35). Likewise, the major *fin de siècle* paradigm shift heralding the revival of the original Tibeto-Burman theory will take some time to set in, and the two-headed Indo-Chinese dragon will inevitably continue to splutter and breathe fire in its death throes.

One such parting gasp is Matisoff's inability to provide a refutation of the Sino-Bodic hypothesis (2000a). In addition to the evidence for uniquely shared lexical isoglosses adduced by Walter Simon (1929), Robert Shafer (1955, 1974), Nicholas Bodman (1980) and myself (van Driem, 1997c), I have described morphological features which bolster the identification of Sino-Bodic as a subgroup. Recently, Laurent Sagart reconstructed an Old Chinese 'voicing prefix' *<N-> (1994: 279–281). This reconstruction was also adopted by William Baxter (Baxter and Sagart, 1998: 45), thus replacing Baxter's earlier *<fi-> (1992). Sergej Anatolevič Starostin has maintained that this prefix is best reflected in Kiranti, Bodish, Sinitic and West Himalayish. If this is correct, the shared morphological element may likewise bolster the case for Sino-Bodic. However, if the feature is a shared retention rather than a shared innovation, then the distribution of the phenomenon is merely suggestive. Far from being either proved or fanciful, Sino-Bodic is a worthwhile and testable subsidiary hypothesis of the Tibeto-Burman theory. This contrasts sharply with the Sino-Tibetan subgrouping paradigm which Matisoff has propagated since 1968. The Sino-Tibetan phylogenetic model still features a truncated Tibeto-Burman subgroup for which no evidence has ever been adduced. Matisoff now defends three subgrouping hypotheses which have fared poorly, i.e. Sino-Tibetan incorporating truncated

‘Tibeto-Burman’ and his ‘Jiburish’ and ‘Kamarupan’ constructs, whereby the latter has even been presented as a non-hypothesis from time to time. It is healthy to maintain a critical attitude with respect to new theories about linguistic relationship and new interpretations of the archaeological record in light of linguistic insights. By the same token, however, it is equally wholesome to maintain a skeptical attitude towards antiquated and epistemologically flawed theories such as Sino-Tibetan and not to let oneself be beguiled by the fact that such theories have been presented as received knowledge.

2. New frontiers

The developments which brought about this paradigm shift were threefold. The first major development was that in the last decade of the 20th century a significant number of new grammatical and lexical descriptions became available of hitherto undescribed Tibeto-Burman languages. Secondly, the decade saw a number of new historical and comparative studies. Thirdly, great advances in Chinese historical phonology have led to a growing consensus about Old Chinese.

Despite the rich harvest of language descriptions in the 1990s, there is no room for complacency because most Tibeto-Burman languages remain undocumented, and most are endangered with imminent extinction. It is germane to first discuss the languages which have received the most substantial grammatical documentation in the course of the decade. We shall begin in the southeast and thence move northwest. One of the Karen languages, Red Karen or Eastern Kayah Li spoken in southern Thailand, has been documented in a beautiful study by David Solnit (1997). Smaller studies include the phonological study devoted to Pwo Karen dialects by Kato (1995), and several studies were devoted to Akha by Inga-Lill Hansson (1991, 1996a,b). In southwestern China, two major studies were devoted to Qiāngic languages. A new detailed study was devoted to the rGyal-rong language of Sichuān province by Lín Xiāngróng (1993), adding to the earlier work conducted by Jīn Péng et al. (1957, 1958) and Nagano Yasuhiko (1984). Aside from this major work by Lín, Jackson Sun of Táiwān has published several minor studies on rGyal-rong, based primarily on the northwestern sTod-pa dialect (1994, 1998b, 2000a,b). In Sichuān, Mariëlle Prins has prepared a preliminary draft of a rGyal-rong grammar and dictionary and is working towards the completion of her study. The second major Qiāngic language study of the decade is the grammatical study of Prinmi by Picus Ding (1998), who defended the work as a doctoral dissertation at Australian National University in Canberra. Prinmi is spoken in a portion of Yúnnán province. Jim Matisoff also devoted a minor study to the phonology of a Prinmi dialect (1997). A definitive study of Tangut conjugational morphology was presented by Ksenija Borisovna Kepping (1994). Tangut, a language written in its own ideogrammatic script, is the extinct tongue of the Xīxià kingdom which was annihilated by Genghis Khan in 1227. The Tsaiwa or Zaiwa language is a major Lolo-Burmese tongue of Yúnnán. The decade saw the completion of Anton Lustig’s monumental grammar of this language. This document is currently being reformatted for publication.

In northeastern India, the decade saw the appearance of three major grammars. After two earlier studies (Chelliah, 1990a,b), a splendid grammar appeared by Shobhana Chelliah (1997) of the Meithei language spoken in Manipur in northeastern India. In the same year, a slightly reworked version was published of the Meithei grammar by Bhat and Ningomba (1997), which had been disseminated earlier, in 1986 at Imphal as a hefty mimeograph. A minor study on deixis in Meithei was also written by Ningomba (1993). Finally, Rabha, a language of the Bodo-Koch group, is spoken in the region around the bend of the Brahmaputra to the northwest of the Meghalaya. The language has now been described for the first time in a lovely grammar by Thatil Umbavu Varghese Joseph (1998). Phonological studies and word lists appeared on two Konyak languages, i.e. Wancho by Burling and Wangso (1998) and Phom by Burling and Phom (1998).

In Bhutan, several grammatical studies have appeared of hitherto undescribed languages. Dzongkha, the national language of the kingdom, is a South Bodish language. The language has been studied phonologically (van Driem 1991c, 1994a), and at the behest of the Royal Government of Bhutan both an official system of romanisation was designed for the language and the grammar was codified. The grammar exists in a first edition and in a revised and much expanded second edition, in which much attention is devoted to the epistemic and evidential system of the language and with which three audio compact disks are provided (van Driem 1992b, 1998a). Stephen Watters has devoted an interesting phonetic study to the highly aberrant Pāsakha dialect of Dzongkha spoken by a small community on the Bhutanese duars (1997), which tragically was devastated by an avalanche in the summer of 2000. A second major grammatical study of a Bhutanese language is the splendid grammar of Tshangla by Erik Andvik (1999). Tshangla is a Bodic language spoken in eastern Bhutan and adjacent portions of Arunachal Pradesh. After completing earlier studies on the language (Andvik 1992, 1993), Andvik produced his Tshangla grammar based on work with expatriate Bhutanese in India and Nepal. Also in Bhutan, a grammatical sketch and bilingual glossary has appeared of the Bumthang language (van Driem, 1995a), and a study of the conjugational morphology of the Black Mountain language (van Driem, 1994b, 1995b). In the erstwhile kingdom of Sikkim, the largest ever Lepcha dictionary was compiled by Kharpú Tamsang (1994). Heleen Plaisier completed a preliminary draft of her Lepcha grammar.

An even greater number of grammatical studies was produced on the languages of Nepal. Chantyal is a Tamangic language of mid-western Nepal, and Micky Noonan's hefty compilation of a Chantyal dictionary and texts (1999a) has catapulted Chantyal from being the least known to one of the best documented Tamangic languages. Noonan has also devoted a minor study to Chantyal gerunds or converbs (1999b). After an important earlier study by Rudra Lakṣmī Śreṣṭha (1987), Carol Genetti produced a detailed grammatical account of Dolakhā Newar (1990, 1994) and one subsequent minor study on Dolakhā Newar grammar (1997). Newar is the native Tibeto-Burman language of the Kathmandu Valley, but the Newar language spoken in Dolakhā is entirely distinct and has undergone many centuries of independent development. Genetti's grammar has shed much light both on the genetic

position of Newar within the Tibeto-Burman family as well as on the historical morphology of the Tibeto-Burman verb. The other most momentous contributions to Newar studies this decade are the comparative morphology of six Newar dialects by Dayā Ratna Shākya (1992) and the study of the verbal system of the Baḍikhel Paharī dialect of Newar by Rudra Lakṣmī Śreṣṭha (1999). Fascinating minor studies included the contributions on Classical Newar by Tej Ratna Kansakār (1995, 1996, 1997, 1999) and the study of the Bandipur dialect of Newar by Nevāhmi (1993). Dumi, a Kiranti language endangered with imminent extinction, has been documented in a grammar, including a dictionary, native texts and conjugational paradigms (van Driem, 1993b). David Watters, a Christian missionary who has been working amongst the Kham since the 1960s, has produced a large grammar of Kham (1998), which supersedes his many preliminary studies. The decade also saw three important minor grammatical studies on Kham (Thāpā Magar, 1993; Watters, 1993; Rempt, 1994). Gānkhu Rāi (1992) wrote the first ever Kulung dictionary. Gerard Tolsma wrote a number of minor studies on Kulung (1994, 1997, 1999a), which culminated in the first ever Kulung grammar (1999b). In the wake of the Limbu grammar (van Driem, 1987), a number of minor studies on Limbu appeared in the 1990s, i.e. van Driem (1997b, 1999b) and Michailovsky (1997). In view of the numerous anthropological studies devoted to the Thakali community of the Kālī Gaṇḍakī valley, it was about time that the language too was documented. This has finally happened in the shape of a fine grammar by Ralf-Stefan Georg (1996). A preliminary study was subsequently devoted to the Seke dialect, spoken further up the Kālī Gaṇḍakī valley, by Isao Honda (1999). Perhaps the most detailed grammatical description of any Kiranti language is the meticulous study of Yamphu by Roland Rutgers (1998). This hefty grammar follows his earlier study on Yamphu verbal morphology (Rutgers, 1992).

The decade also saw a number of grammatical sketches and partial descriptions of languages of Nepal. The Athpahare language is a poorly documented language of the Yakkha cluster in eastern Nepal. Arno Loeffen wrote an analysis of Athpahare conjugational morphology (1997), and Karen Ebert wrote a sketch containing new data which she collected (1997a). Karen Ebert also published a compilation of Chamling data which she collected on the basis of her own fieldwork as well as from other sources (1997b). The verbal morphology of Dhimal was first documented by John Timothy King (1994), and this account was followed by a similar study by Kathrin Cooper (1998). Other minor studies on Dhimal were contributed by A. Dhimāl (1991), B. Dhimāl (1991), John King (1998, 1999, 2000), Toba and A. Dhimāl (1996), Toba and N. Dhimāl (1999), Cooper (1999) and Khatiwada (1999). Both John King and Kathrin Cooper each continue to work towards comprehensive grammars of Dhimal. Data were collected on the now extinct Dura language from one of its last speakers by Mukti Nāth Ghimire (1992). This decade saw a description and analysis of the Lohorung verbal system (van Driem, 1992a). A number of grammatical studies were devoted to the Magar language of central Nepal, i.e. Buḍā Magar (1993a, 1993b), Āṅdembe (1996, 1999a, 1999b), Pokhrel (1997), Grunow-Hårsta (1998), Subbā (1999b), Regmī (1999). Despite the attention which the language is getting, this major Tibeto-Burman language of Nepal is still one of the least

documented and most poorly understood. The decade saw a number of substantive grammatical studies on Tamang composed by Amṛt Hyoñjan Tāmān (1991, 1992, 1993, 1995, 1997a, 1997b). Some lesser studies were contributed by Muktān (1992), Varenkamp (1996) and Chalise (1999a, 1999b). A description of Thangmi verbal morphology was completed by Mark Turin (1998). Minor contributions on Thangmi were made by Toba (1996), Turin (1999a, 1999b) and Subbā (1999a).

Lexicographically speaking, certain Tibeto-Burman languages are decidedly better documented than others. The decade saw the appearance of at least four new Newar dictionaries by Kölver and Śreṣṭhācārya (1994) and Śreṣṭhācārya (1994, 1995, 1997), whereas the year 1996 saw the publication of the 5th new edition of Momin's English-Garo dictionary and the 13th new edition of Nengminza's Garo-English dictionary. A truly novel and momentous lexicographical contribution was the Ghale dictionary compiled by Larry Seaward (1994). Ghale is spoken in the high alpine northern portion of Gorkhā district in central Nepal. A phonological report on the language by Holly Smith (1998) has shed much light on the phonological status of tone in Ghale. It can only be hoped that Smith will go on to complete a comprehensive grammar of the language and that a phonologically adequate reworking of Seaward's dictionary will be undertaken. A lovely dictionary of Tiwa, a Bodo-Koch language of northeastern India, was prepared by Valentine Kholar (1995). Finally, the decade was crowned by the long-awaited first ever dictionary of Classical Newar compiled under the direction of the two eminent Newar scholars Kamal Prakāś Malla and Tej Ratna Kansakār (2000). Likewise hot off the press is the long-awaited monumental Chepang dictionary produced by Ross Caughley (2000), a Christian missionary who has spent decades of his life amongst the Chepang in the lower hill tracts of central Nepal.

Tibetan received much attention again this decade, with grammars and grammatical studies by Tashi (1990), Goldstein (1991), Beyer (1992), Kesang Gyurme (1992), Hongladarom (1993), Tournadre (1996), Tournadre and Sangda Dorje (1998) and Denwood (1999). Of these, Krisadawan Hongladarom's study of Tibetan evidentials deserves special mention as well as the textbook and soundtrack by Tournadre and Sangda Dorje. The latter is without a doubt the best textbook published to date for gaining an active command of the living language of Lhasa. Major studies on the indigenous Tibetan grammatical tradition were contributed by Roy Andrew Miller (1991, 1992a,b 1993) and Pieter Verhagen (1994, 2001). Novel studies documenting Tibetan dialects which deviate markedly from the standard language are the exquisite contributions by Felix Haller on the Themchen, Kham and Zhigatse dialects (1998, 1999, 2000). Last but not least, an awesome four-volume study was published on the Tibetan dialect of Mustang in mid-western Nepal by Monika Kretschmar (1995).

Quite a number of smaller contributions and papers were presented in the 1990s on various Tibeto-Burman languages: Adi (Tayeng and Megu, 1990; Tayeng, 1990a; Deb, 1993), Ao and Sema kinship terms (Sreedhar, 1990), Bái (Edmondson and Li, 1994; Lee and Laurent Sagart, 1998), Bantawa (Hanßon, 1991a; Bāntavā, 1993; Rāi, 1994; Rāi and Winter, 1997), Belhare (Bickel, 1995, 1996, 1997); Bhujeli (Caughley, 1999), Bokar (Megu, 1990), Bugun (Rinchin Dondrup, 1990),

Chepong (Caughley, 1995; H. Upādhyāy, 1995), Deuri (Goswami, 1994), Garo lexical organisation (Burling, 1995), a history of the Garo language (Sangma, 1995), Gurung (Guruṅg, 1995; M.S. Upādhyāy, 1995; Glover, 1997), a comparison of rGyal-rong and Tibetan by Li (1995), Hmar (Dutta and Bapui, 1996), a comparison of Idu and Padam by Landi (1992), Jero (A.D. Rāi, 1996), Jinghpaw (Dài, 1995, 1999, Dài Qingxià and Wu, 1995), Jirel (Strahm and Maibaum, 1999), Karbi (Mariae et al., 1996), Khaling (Khālīn, 1995), Kinnauri (Takahashi, 1999), features of Lepcha orthography (Sprigg, 1997, 1998), the Tamangic language of Manang (Hildebrandt, 1999), Meithei (Singh, 1995), Mewahang (Gaenszle, forthcoming), Mising (Taid, 1995), Nah (Pertin, 1992), Nishi (Tayeng, 1990b; Chhangte, 1992a, 1992b), Ombule (A. Rāi, 1995a,b, 1996, 1997, 1998; Toba, 1995; Opgenort, 1998), Rawang (Sarep, 1996), Sulung (Tayeng, 1990c; Rutgers, 1999), Sunwar (DeLancey, 1992b; Rāpacā, 1995), Taraon (Pulu, 1991), Tangut phonology (van Driem and Kepping, 1991; van Driem 1993e), Tiddim Chin (Bhaskararao, 1994), Toto (Majumdar, 1991) and Zhangzhung (Hummel, 1995; Martin, 1999; van Driem, 2000; Matsoff, 2000b). Obviously, this list of minor studies, articles and squibs does not pretend to be exhaustive.

Besides all these major and minor contributions to the documentation of Tibeto-Burman languages, a number of new Tibeto-Burman languages were discovered and, in one case, rediscovered in the 1990s. The languages and language communities of Bhutan were mapped for the first time at the beginning of the decade (van Driem, 1991d). In the process, the previously unreported Gongduk language of central Bhutan and the Lhokpu language of southwestern Bhutan were discovered, each representing a distinct branch of the Tibeto-Burman family in its own right. The Barām language, which had been presumed to have gone extinct in the 1830s, was rediscovered in central Nepal, where the language is still spoken by a small community esconced in the hills of Gorkhā district. Drafts of analytical reference grammars have been submitted in Leiden on the Barām and the Black Mountain languages by George van Driem, the Byangsi language by Suhnu Rām Sharmā, the Chulung or Chiling language by Henrica Francisca van Hoorn, the Dhimal language by John Timothy King, the rGyal-rong language by Mariëlle Prins, the Lepcha language by Heleen Plaisier, the Manchad language by Suhnu Rām Sharmā, the Ombule language by Jean Robert Opgenort, the Sampang language by René Baptist Huysmans, the Sunwar language by Dörte Borchers, the Thangmi language by Mark Turin, the Toto language by George van Driem and the Zaiwa language by Anton Lustig.

Finally, a number of surveys and miscellaneous studies appeared in the 1990s. For example, a study of fifteen different Tibeto-Burman languages in southwestern China was published by Dài (1991), and a survey of languages in southwestern China is provided by Sūn (1990, 1999). Useful surveys and historical studies of Tibeto-Burman languages of eastern Nepal were written by Werner Winter (1991, 1992, 1993, 1999). Somewhat confusing surveys of the languages of eastern Nepal appeared by Gerd Hanßon (1991b, 1994). An eclectic survey of the Kiranti languages was written by Karen Ebert (1994). Two instalments giving an incomplete linguistic overview of northeastern India were authored by Grewal (1991, 1992).

Two surveys of the western Indian Himalayas by Devī Datta Sharmā (1990, 1992) are of limited utility in view of the unreliability of the data and questionability of the analyses. The same must be said for his *Brok-skad* grammar and dictionary (1998). A tantalising study on Nepalese hydronymy in view of a possible Tibeto-Burman substrate was presented by Michael Witzel (1993). Another new work on Nepalese epigraphy of the Licchavī period was presented by Verma and Singh (1994). A listing of dialect names is provided by Matisoff et al. (1996). Finally, a new compendium of the Tibeto-Burman languages and language communities in the greater Himalayan region has recently appeared in two volumes, containing an historical overview of the development of the discipline and a reconstruction of the population prehistory of the region (van Driem, 2001).

The second major development contributing to the paradigm shift which took place in Tibeto-Burman linguistics in the 1990s was the appearance of new historical and comparative studies. The greatest advances were made in our understanding of Tibeto-Burman historical morphology, and these new insights were perhaps most immediately instrumental in precipitating the change in perspective. In the 1970s, Paul Benedict (1972), James John Bauman (1975) and Eugénie Henderson (1976) had shown that a large variety of morphological processes were once widespread native features of Tibeto-Burman verb. After a hiatus in the 1980s, the last decade of the 20th century saw a number of studies which have borne out that the desinences and individual agreement etyma, a subset of which are grammaticalised pronominal elements, are reconstructible to the Tibeto-Burman level and demonstrably native to that family because they are well reflected in far-flung branches of the family, even to the northeast of the Himalayan divide, e.g. DeLancey (1989, 1992a), van Driem (1990a, 1991a,b, 1992a, 1993a,c,d, 1994b,c, 1995b, 1997b,c), Saxena (1992, 1997a,b), Rutgers (1993), Suhnū Rām Sharmā (1994, 1996), Rempt (1994), Benedict (1994), Kepping (1994), Sūn (1995), Āngdembe (1996, 1999a, 1999b), Jacquesson (1996, 1997, 1998), Turin (1998), Sun (1998, 2000a), Kansakār (1999), Michailovsky (1999). The comparative morphological evidence led Frederik Kortlandt to propose “that Proto-Sino-Tibetan had an elaborate inflectional system which was lost in Chinese ... it is probable that Proto-Sino-Tibetan looked somewhat like present-day Limbu” (1996: 31). Comparative studies have been careful to point out that portions of, for example, Kiranti and Magaric verbal agreement morphology are innovative and have distinguished between acquired morphological elements and inherited, shared conjugational and agreement morphology. Recent accretions to the verbal agreement system can be observed, for example, in Kham Magar and in Tiwa.

New Tibeto-Burman subgrouping hypotheses were both advanced and more precisely defined in the 1990s, such as Mahakiranti (van Driem, 1992c, 1997d, Turin 1999), Tani and Qiāngic (Sun, 1993a,b, forthcoming), northeastern India (Bradley 1994a,b), East Bodish (Mazaudon and Michailovsky, 1992, 1994; van Driem, 1994b, 1995b), Sino-Bodic (van Driem, 1995b, 1997c, 1999a) and Sino-Kiranti (Starostin, 1994). Little support has been found for two other hypotheses, i.e. Rung, first proposed by Graham Thurgood (Ebert, 1990) and Jiburish (Matisoff, 1991). Meanwhile relatively little progress was made in the last decade of the 20th century on Tibeto-Burman historical phonology and the reconstruction of Proto-Tibeto-Bur-

man lexicon. New contributions to Tibeto-Burman historical phonology include Huáng (1995), Mazaudon (1996), Tolsma (1990a), Michailovsky (1994), van Driem (1990b, 1994a), Caughley (1997) and Evans (1999), whilst a fresh new look at Proto-Tibeto-Burman was presented by Sergej Anatolevič Starostin and Il'ja Iosifovič Pejros (1996). New light has been shed on the process of tonogenesis in recent studies by Anju Saxena (1991), Michel Ferlus (1998, 1999) and Marc Brunelle (1999) as well as on the phonological status of tone in Garo (Burling, 1992; Duanmu, 1994), rGyal-rong (Dài and Yunmuchu, 1992) and Tiddim Chin (Ostapirat, 1998). It is sobering to realise that Tibeto-Burman linguistics is still in its infancy when compared to, say, Uralic or Altaic studies. Probably today's busiest Tibeto-Burman etymologist, Jim Matisoff, characterises the deplorable state of the art by calling our attention to "the absence of well-worked out historical phonologies for most branches of TB", and he feels compelled to make the methodological confession: "I have to make (more or less) educated guesses all the time" (2000a: 367). If more languages are not documented before they vanish, there will not be enough detailed analytical descriptions of Tibeto-Burman languages to furnish the epistemological basis for sounder linguistic comparison in the future.

Finally, the third major development which was catalytic in bringing about a new way of looking at Tibeto-Burman was the major advance in the historical phonology of Chinese, accompanied by new insights into Chinese historical morphology. In sequel to his earlier work, Edwin George Pulleyblank completed major new contributions to Chinese historical phonology (1991, forthcoming) as well as a new grammar of Classical Chinese, which has superseded the seminal works of Georg von der Gabelentz (1881) and Dobson (1959, 1960). Moreover, a major new synthesis of Old Chinese historical phonology was presented by William Baxter (1992, 1995a,b), which expanded on earlier work by Bernard Karlgren, Sergej Evgenievič Jaxontov, Edwin Pulleyblank and Sergej Anatolevič Starostin. New contributions by Starostin on Old Chinese have appeared (1995a,b). Novel insights into Old Chinese morphological processes were presented both by Sagart (1994), by Baxter and Sagart (1998) and by Pulleyblank (1999, 2000). The growing consensus which has emerged is characterised by the convergence of the competing reconstructions of Old Chinese. The new face of Old Chinese has given the language a decidedly more Tibeto-Burman appearance and, in fact, made Old Chinese look like just another Tibeto-Burman language, closer to the Bodic languages in countenance and certainly far less eccentric from the mainstream Tibeto-Burman point of view than, say, Gongduk or Toto.

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