

from the achievements of his study and may, to some, cast doubt on the reliability of its content. Having gone through the book in detail, I have found no grounds for such scepticism. The depth of his analysis, probably aided by the counsel he received from the Tibetan scholars working at the sMan rtsis khaṅg (Lhasa) with whom he co-operated on this project (p. 12), establishes beyond doubt Dorje's outstanding grasp of Tibetan divination and the cultural context in which it flourishes. To communicate his knowledge, Dorje went to great lengths to make the book accessible to experts and non-experts alike. Technical terms are routinely provided in Tibetan as well as in Sanskrit. On occasion, however, the author's aspiration to cater to two types of reader backfires. I have noted several places where the same (or similar) ground is covered twice (e.g. pp. 11, 16; 342, 344) or where the reader is overwhelmed with a wealth of examples. Rather than elucidating his analysis, these tend to distract from the core principles at the heart of a particular divinatory practice and render the presentation a little unwieldy. Finally, and somewhat inexplicably, Dorje chose to ignore Dieter Schuh's ten-page descriptive catalogue entry of the *vaidūrya dkar po* (*Tibetische Handschriften und Blockdrucke*, 11/5, Verzeichnis der Orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland, Wiesbaden, 1973, no. 299, pp. 266–77). Surely, this pioneering contribution would have deserved to be acknowledged beyond a plain (but misspelled) entry in the bibliography.

Dorje's explanations are complemented by hundreds of diagrams and detail reproductions from the two illuminated manuscripts. The illustrations of the first set in particular, obviously prepared by an artist of great talent, are a pleasure to behold. The quality of the reproductions is truly superb, vibrant in colour and design. Virtually every page of the book boasts exquisite photographic reproductions, carefully referenced and analysed in the main body of the text. The descriptions and illustrations themselves are complemented by dozens of charts, tabulating the various divinatory combinations. The layout, juxtapositioning illustrations, diagrams and text passage side by side without ever losing the link between the three components, is a great achievement. From a technical and aesthetic point of view, this book is certain to rank among the most accomplished publications in Tibetan studies. While I would hesitate to extend such unqualified praise to its scholarly content, mainly because of its narrow focus and Dorje's disregard of past research on the topic, let us recall that *Tibetan elemental divination paintings* is virtually the first detailed study of its kind and, in spite of its flaws, one cannot but congratulate the author and publisher for their inroads into what has hitherto been largely uncharted territory.

ULRICH PAGEL

GRAHAM THURGOOD and RANDY J. LAPOLLA (ed.):

The Sino-Tibetan languages.

(Routledge Language Family Series.) xxii, 727 pp. London and New York: Routledge, 2003. £125.

The very title of this most recent addition to the Routledge Language Family Series begs the question of the identity of the language family under consideration. The volume is a collection of papers on Tibeto-Burman languages, but this new and expensive book still propagates the Indo-Chinese or 'Sino-Tibetan' conception of language relationships. The original Tibeto-

Burman language family model, which includes Sinitic as another constituent branch, continues to represent the phylogenetic view that is paradoxically both more agnostic and more well-informed. The antique Sino-Tibetan view survives doggedly in the literature as a ‘truth by assertion’. The more state-of-the-art title would have been *The Tibeto-Burman languages*.

The book consists of 43 contributions, beginning with three ‘overview chapters’. In the first chapter, on subgrouping, volume editor Graham Thurgood professes the ‘Sino-Tibetan’ article of faith, which holds that the language family divides into two main trunks, one Sinitic and the other Tibeto-Burman minus Sinitic. No evidence has ever been adduced to support the hypothesis that truncated ‘Tibeto-Burman’ (i.e. Tibeto-Burman minus Sinitic) shares common innovations that would define it as a coherent branch vs. Sinitic. Sinitic is a valid subgroup, but truncated ‘Tibeto-Burman’ is not. Because I am acquainted with most of the contributors, I can state with confidence that many do not subscribe to the antiquated Indo-Chinese model espoused by the editors.

The second ‘overview chapter’ is a synopsis of Tibeto-Burman derivational morphology, which lists a number of affixes that have largely been known for over half a century. Volume editor LaPolla ignores the large body of relevant work on Tibeto-Burman flexional morphology and instead uses the book as a platform to refer to his earlier egregious ruminations on conjugational morphology. The one interesting and novel idea is a totally revamped version of Thurgood’s Rung hypothesis, whereby rGyal-rongic, Nungish, Kiranti, Magaric and West Himalayish are stuck into the same supergroup. Yet this is a poorly veiled attempt on the part of LaPolla to relegate to a single branch all languages showing verbal agreement morphology and so bolster his *idée fixe* that shared morphological retentions are shared innovations.

A third overview chapter, by Dryer, corroborates what we already knew about word order typology: observed variation is readily accounted for as resulting from contact. Two treasure troves are the brilliant phylogenetic discussions by Jackson Sun on Tani and by Robbins Burling on the numerous Tibeto-Burman languages of north-eastern India. The volume also offers a short discussion of Kiranti by Ebert.

Most of the book, i.e. 33 out of 43 contributions, consists of brief grammatical sketches of individual Tibeto-Burman languages, which were assigned by the editors to the contributors. These accounts are too abbreviated to do justice to the languages in question, notwithstanding the excellent quality of the individual contributions. The serious student will consult the detailed reference grammars produced by many of the same authors rather than these superficial accounts. Yet in a few cases, these sketches are sadly the most complete accounts of the Tibeto-Burman languages in question, which is a telling statement about the state of the art in Tibeto-Burman linguistics.

The current state of our knowledge enables us conservatively to identify at least 37 branches of Tibeto-Burman by my reckoning. The sketches in the volume cover only 18 branches, i.e. Bodish, Tshangla, Tamangic, Kiranti, Newaric, Magaric, Lepcha, rGyal-rongic, Bái, Sinitic, Lolo-Burmese, Qiāngic, Kachinic, Brahmaputran, Meithei, Karenic, Kukish and Nungish. Some of the internally most diverse branches are represented by just a single sketch, e.g. Garo for Brahmaputran. The sketches in the volume leave 19 primary branches or most of the phylogenetic diversity of the language family uncovered, i.e. West Himalayish, Raji-Raute, Dura, Chepangic, the Kho-Bwa cluster, Gongduk, Hrusish, Tani, Digarish, Midzuish, Karbí, Zeme, Lhokpu,

Tangkhu, Angami-Pochuri, Ao, Pyu, Mru and Tūjiā. This is a reflection of the state of the art, no shortcoming of the editors.

Three sketches deal with extinct Tibeto-Burman languages, i.e. late Zhōu Chinese, Classical Tibetan and the extinct Tangut language. The languages of Sikkim and Bhutan are represented by grammatical sketches of Lepcha and Tshangla. One Magaric language of western Nepal is included in the form of a sketch of Kham. Three sketches are provided of Kiranti languages of eastern Nepal, i.e. the Belhara dialect of Athpahariya, Chamling (consistently misspelt 'Camling') and Hayu. The Tamangic branch is represented by sketches of Tamang, Chantyal and Nar-Phu. The Newaric branch is represented by an account of Dolakhā Newar and Kathmandu Newar, with the indigenous name of the language incorrectly transliterated as 'Nepāl Bhāṣā' [*recte* Bhāṣā]. Two sketches of Karenic languages are included, i.e. Eastern Kayah Li and Pwo Karen, and four sketches of Lolo-Burmese languages, i.e. Burmese, Lisu, Lahu and Akha. Accounts are provided of the rGyal-rongic languages of lCog-rtse and Caodeng. Sketches from the north-eastern corner of the Indian subcontinent are presented for Garo, Hakha Lai and Meithei. Languages of Tibet, Yúnnán and Sīchuān are represented by sketches of Bái, Trung (which the author sinicizes to 'Dulong'), Lhasa Tibetan, Prinmi, one Northern Qiāng dialect and the Jinghpaw dialect of Yíngjiāng county (*Jīngpō* is Mandarin for Jinghpaw, and the authors half-sinicize the language name to 'Jingpo'). Sinitic is represented by sketches of Shanghai Chinese and Cantonese.

The Sinocentric slant of the volume is not only evinced by the antiquated phylogenetic conception advertised in the title and editorial contributions. In addition to the sketches of Zhōu Chinese, Shanghai Chinese and Cantonese, the volume also contains four discussions dealing specifically with only the Sinitic branch, viz. comparative Chinese phonology, comparative Chinese syntax, characteristics of Mandarin dialects and the Chinese writing system.

The book is an amalgam of gems and chaff. I wager that in the long run it will be safer to place our bets on the subgrouping insights of Sun and Burling than on those of the editors.

GEORGE VAN DRIEM

THE SOCIETY OF CENTRAL EURASIAN STUDIES:

Studies on the Inner Asian Languages, XVII: Papers in honour of Professor Masahiro Shogaito on his 60th birthday.

iv, 249 pp., 7 plates. Osaka: The Society for Central Eurasian Studies, 2002.

This particularly substantial issue of a consistently excellent periodical celebrates both twenty years of its existence and the work of one of its founders, who is accorded both a helpful introductory note by Y. Yoshida and a six-page bibliography of his work at the end. As a result of his primary interest (after initial training in Mongolian) in the language of the Uighurs and of their later descendants, the contents (as the Japanese subtitle indicates) are in this issue devoted entirely to the Turkic languages and, apart from excursions into Dolgan by S. Fujishiro and Turkish by K. Röhrborn, chiefly the language of medieval Uighur textual materials at that. Given that the main holdings of these materials now lie in Germany, Japanese is less prominent in this issue than has usually been the case in the past amongst the