

Max Deeg and Samuel Lieu both render their philological and historical studies of certain terms in Chinese documents and inscriptions, e.g. Lieu's discussion on the names of *Da Qin*, *Tarsāg*, *Jingjiao*, *Zhongguo* (the Middle Kingdom), etc. Particularly disputed is the title of Chorepiscopus and its Chinese equivalents in the Xi'an inscription, *p'pš* and *šingtsw'*. The former could be the Greek title *Papas* for "father" or a bishop in this context, but interpreted to be the Buddhist title *fashi* 法師 ("Lord of the law") by Lieu. *šingtsw'* is the parallel title of Mar Sargis, Chorepiscopus in the Xi'an inscription. Previous studies suggested this to be the phonetic translation of the Chinese title *Shangzuo* (上座) corresponding to the Buddhist term *Sthavira* (head monk, abbot, etc.), the view also held by Lieu (p. 134). However, few are aware of the work "Das Nestorianische Denkmal von Singan Fu" (Budapest, 1897) by J.E. Heller, who subtly but rightly pointed out that the term was the Chinese word for Chorepiscopus 鄉主(教), exactly corresponding to Mar Sargis' title in Syriac.

Articles by Glen Thompson and David Wilmshurst deal with the teaching of the Church of the East in China and the interfaith conflicts encountered by Christians in the Tang and Yuan periods. Thompson wrestles with the question of Christianity being regarded as "foreign" by contemporary Chinese, but also points out that modern scholars try to prove the *Sitz im Leben* of Syriac Christianity using newly discovered artefacts.

The final part begins with a brief study of an unearthed bronze mirror with a Syriac inscription by Niu Ruji, which does not provide a clear provenance of the object. Ken Parry's article traces the history of icon usage in the Church of the East, with evidence suggesting that this church in general felt comfortable with images (pp. 197–8). The final paper, by Patrick Taveirne, explains the provenance of the bronze crosses in the collection of the University of Hong Kong Museum and the related scepticism about their possible relationship to Christian crosses. The volume ends with a general index of all subjects and names with indiscriminate choices of entries; it would be more helpful if historical names and names of current authors or contributors had been put in different categories.

This volume is a very welcome, informative and useful addition to the corpus of scholarship on Syriac Christianity in Central Asia and China.

doi:10.1017/S0041977X24000077

## 時建 **Shi Jian**: 隴川阿昌語參考語法 **A Reference Grammar of Longchuan Achang**

社会科学文献出版社 **Beijing: Social Science Literature Publishing House, 2021. ISBN 978 752018838 8.**

Ruiyao Li

Trinity Centre for Asian Studies, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland  
Email: [lir4@tcd.ie](mailto:lir4@tcd.ie)

In this recent reference grammar of Achang, Shi Jian investigates the phonology, word classes, morphosyntax, and discourse structure of the Husa dialect of Achang spoken in



Longchuan county, Yunnan province, China. The book is divided into five parts: an introduction, followed by the phonology, word formation, syntax, and an appendix.

A *Sketch of Achang* 阿昌语简志 (Dai Qingxia, Beijing: Publishing House of Minority Nationalities, 1985) was the first grammatical sketch of the Achang language. Compared to Dai, Shi's work offers a significant improvement. It is worth mentioning that both focus on the Husa dialect, but present phonological differences of diachronic interest. In Dai's analysis, /l/ and /x/ are presented as different phonemes, while they have merged into /x/ in Shi's system. These two systems, separated by almost four decades, demonstrate phonological merging over time. Shi makes a contrast between /u/ and /ə/, but Dai's system only has /ə/, possibly because Dai did not notice this contrast. Additionally, Shi's classification of words, phrases, and sentences is more specific with more detailed analyses, as well as more natural data.

The first chapter introduces the background to the research, including an overview of the Achang ethnic group and a literature review. The author mentions that Achang belongs to the Burmish sub-branch of the Tibeto-Burman branch, closely related to Burmese and Bola, which is in line with recent phylogenetic analyses by Sagart et al. ("Dated language phylogenies shed light on the ancestry of Sino-Tibetan", *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 116/21, 2019, 10317–10322). However, it would be more convincing to show substantial evidence to support the affiliation of Achang, such as shared phonological and morphological innovations. Similarly, the author mentions three dialects in Achang – Lianghe, Luxi, and Longchuan – without giving supporting evidence.

The second chapter is about the phonology of Achang. The author summarizes 36 consonants, nine vowels, and four tones in Achang. Additionally, the author describes six types of phonological process in Achang: Sandhi, epenthesis, lenition, assimilation, fusion, and deletion. The description of the phonological processes in Achang is particularly remarkable, as it provides a diachronic perspective for the understanding of the linguistic processes that have shaped a language over time.

In the third chapter, the author analyses the word formation of Achang, and presents various affixes in Achang with explanations of their usage and origins. Furthermore, the author presents Burmese, Mandarin, and Dai loanwords in Achang, which is significant for tracing language contact.

Chapter 4, which covers the grammatical system of Achang, is the most extensive part of the book, including word classes, phrases, and sentences, showcasing grammatical features with natural data collected from fieldwork. Compared to the most conservative languages in the Burmo-Qiangic branch, Achang does not have much inflectional morphology. Instead, it usually employs sentence-final particles to indicate tense, aspect, and modality. However, Achang has preserved traces of derivational morphology for the causative voice. The author presents four strategies to derive causative forms in Achang: 1) derivation from unaspirated to aspirated initials; 2) from "non-devoiced" to devoiced initials; 3) from voiced fricative initials to voiceless fricative initials; 4) from zero-initial to voiceless fricative-initial. There are several issues in this classification. First, Strategy 2 and Strategy 3 can be merged as voicing alternation. Second, Strategy 4 can be summarized as prefixation. Third, the given example for Strategy 3 ʒo "be scared" > x-ʒo "scare" should be an example for prefixation instead of voicing. Fourth, the author sees x- and ɛ- as two distinct prefixes, but they can be further analysed as two varieties of a single type. The process of e > ɛ-e comes from e > \*x-e, as e is a high vowel that triggers the palatalization from \*x-e to ɛ-e. Therefore, the four strategies could be further synthesized into three: aspiration alternation, voicing alternation, and prefixation. While language-internal description is generally sufficient for a reference grammar, it would still be desirable for the author to look into similar phenomena in related languages. According to

Yanson (“Aspiration in the Burmese phonological system: a diachronic account”, *Medieval Tibeto-Burman Languages IV*, Leiden: Brill, 2012, 17–21), Burmese has a phonological system with a two-way contrast of aspiration: pre-aspiration and post-aspiration, to differentiate causative and non-causative verbs, which is very similar to Achang. For example, in Achang and Lashi Burmese researched by Hill (*The Historical Phonology of Tibetan, Burmese, and Chinese*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), the derivational processes from “be scared” to “scare” are both achieved by adding a pre-initial, Achang: *zɔ* “be scared” > *x-zɔ* “scare”, Lashi: *kju:k<sup>31</sup>* “be scared” > *ʔkju:k<sup>55</sup>* “scare”. The author could have compared them to explore the origin of aspiration alternation in Achang to see if pre-aspiration and post-aspiration proposed by Yanson are indeed separate processes that occurred at different times, or whether they are just the same process with different conditioned realizations.

In addition to word formation, chapter 4 describes an analysis of the formation of phrases and sentences. The author begins by classifying Achang phrases into nine types based on the internal structure. Concerning sentential constructions, the author proposes two independent ways to classify sentences according to their moods and structures.

The final part of the book contains an appendix that includes three original texts and a rich word list of over 4,000 words. These natural data based on the field research provide readers with a reliable resource for further research on Achang.

In conclusion, Shi here offers a clear analysis of the grammar of Achang. It not only highlights typological features exhibited in Achang with fresh and original data, but also serves as a valuable reference for the study of related languages or other Tibeto-Burman languages.

doi:10.1017/S0041977X24000089

## **Fuhai Zhang 張富海: *Essays on Chinese Palaeography and Old Chinese Phonology* 古文字與上古音論稿**

**(Excavated Documents and Studies on Ancient Chinese Scripts Series.) 320 pp. Shanghai: Shanghai Chinese Classics Publishing House, 2021. ISBN 978 7 5732 0072 3.**

Jinqi Ying

Trinity Centre for Asian Studies, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland  
Email: [yingj@tcd.ie](mailto:yingj@tcd.ie)

Using newly excavated Chinese texts for linguistic reconstruction has become a twenty-first century trend: phonologists have paid increasing attention to the newly abundant evidence to examine previously proposed hypotheses and to put forward new ones, whereas philologists have helped to provide a reasonable morphological analysis of the texts. *Essays on Chinese Palaeography and Old Chinese Phonology* is a captivating and enlightening work by Professor Fuhai Zhang, which delves deep into the interpretations of excavated ancient Chinese texts, the analysis of Chinese characters, and some particular issues