

Not having access to the Persian original I could only detect a few minor errors: the death date of Ibn Taymiyya given as 653/1255 (pp. 29, 52); Isrāfīl identified with Rafael instead of Seraphiel (p. 273); and occasional mistakes in transliterations from Arabic, e.g., *muḥayṭan* instead of *muḥīṭan* (p. 112); *fa-aslamu* and *fa-islamu* instead of *fa-uslimu* and *fa-aslama* (p. 229).

In addition to consulting previous translations in various languages of the Islamic world and Urdu commentaries to the *Maktūbāt*, Buehler benefited from the assistance of living Mujaddidī masters deeply grounded in the study of the text. As an outsider translating Sufi literature (*adab*) and opening his ears to its “music,” Buehler attunes himself to Sufi good manners (*adab*), bridging somehow the gap between being an outsider and an insider. He gives a lesson in nuancing through both his account of Sirhindī and his translation of the *Maktūbāt*.

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Phonetic Ambiguity in the Chinese Script: A Palaeographical & Phonological Analysis. By CHRISTOPHER BUTTON. LINCUM Studies in Chinese Linguistics. Munich: LINCUM EUROPA, 2010. Pp. 103. \$54.40.

This seventy-odd-page essay revises the author’s 2004 Master’s thesis at the University of British Columbia. It consists of twenty-three vignettes on common Chinese words, ancient and modern. The vignettes are compact and composed with welcome attention to readability, often a gross obstacle in historical linguistics. In all, some 285 morphemes are discussed with varying levels of depth, but the discussion always centers on the original subject of the vignette, a useful organizing strategy.

Button’s attention in this essay is on the hypothesis of polyphony—coexistence of more than one etymologically productive reading per graph, and particularly what I have called the “crypto-phonogram” aspect of the hypothesis—as proposed by Peter A. Boodberg (1903–72) and developed by William G. Boltz. (There are also two vignettes originating with proposals of Paul K. Benedict [1912–97] and Father Paul L.-M. Serruys [1912–99].) The essay has no summary but Button states his verdict in the introduction:

Any notion that polyphony was a fundamental driving force in the creation and development of the script differs fundamentally from sporadic cases of graphic convergence or synonymic interchange. (p. 9)

So each vignette involves a graph for which early polyphony has been proposed, and Button then considers other graphic and phonological evidence and, most of the time, argues against the plausibility of a polyphonic interpretation.

The power of the arguments varies. Most often Button cites oracle bone forms and whole inscriptions to show that the polyphonic proposal is not true to the full range of graphic evidence, and he sometimes introduces Old Chinese reconstructions to show that other phonological interpretations can be made. Of all of the arguments, none seems to me utterly damning; most of the time he can only show a preponderance of suggestive evidence. That is worth a great deal, but there is an inherent weakness in it, too, because many of his preferred decipherments and reconstructions are due to scholars who, from the outset, did not believe in the polyphonic model. Particularly in the case of bone graphs, few in China or Japan have been well acquainted with Boodbergian crypto-phonograms until very recently. That means that the work of those scholars may be no less speculative than that of the polyphonists, but speculates along different lines, with the effect that it is not evidence against polyphony so much as a set of differing explanations belonging to separate interpretive traditions. Button studied with Ken’ichi Takashima, known for his scholarly substance and gentle, critical readings of varied points of view; the book shows both Button himself and the Takashima atelier in an admirable light.

Button's care for evidence is meticulous in the main but some of his explanations are thin: he may say simply that a proposal is "infelicitous," which sounds as though he is making appeal to his own aesthetic values, or he may baldly assert some other explanation (*sōng* 嵩 'high mountain' is an "amalgamation" of *sōng* 崧 'high mountain' and 高 'high'). Here and there he also offers support for specific polyphonic proposals, for instance in connection with Boltz's suggestions that 肅 **tsə* may be abbreviated phonetic in 刪(則) **tsək* (p. 54) or that 來 **(m-)r* is phonetic in 每 **məʔ* (pp. 67–68). On balance, I think the arguments fair. What Button is offering is not a rebuttal to the whole polyphonic hypothesis but a substantial counterinterpretation of the evidence, case by case.

Surely there has been no speculation in Chinese etymology more creatively plausible than the polyphonic hypothesis. Stepping back and taking a large view of things, I consider this book's criticisms of it the most extensive and credible of any I have seen. They are grounded in the philology of excavated materials, reviving the approach with which Herrlee G. Creel (1905–94) assaulted Boodberg's panoply in the 1930s (though effecting little damage). There are other angles from which one may undertake productive criticism of this model—I have argued from the points of view of continuity of literacy and of experimental neurolinguistics—but no doubt excavated evidence will produce the soundest improvements to it in time. It appears that Button's work goes a long way to showing the extent of explanations competing with the polyphonic model, and I look forward to the next developments in the conversation. This book deserves a response of some kind from the polyphonic camp.

Chinese historical phonology in this book uses the 1991 vintage of Edwin Pulleyblank's Early Middle Chinese and, for the crucial early period, recent ideas by William H. Baxter and Laurent Sagart. Both are handled with a sophistication surprising in an MA thesis (but one sees that the thesis was substantially reworked for publication after the author completed his dissertation). Few books to date have taken Pulleyblank's Early Middle system so seriously, and even put it into an older phonological context. The author has drawn here on his own published study of proto-Northern Chin, which contributes to the sharpening of our view of that hazy phantom, proto-Sino-Tibetan, through the lenses of several other proto-language reconstructions of his own. (Christopher Button, *Proto Northern Chin in Old Burmese and Old Chinese Perspective*. STEDT Monograph 10. Berkeley: Univ. California STEDT, 2011.) In this Chin study Button's several reconstruction systems make productive use of Pulleyblank's vision of an ablaut contrast between vowels *a* and *ə*, as against the far more widely accepted four- and six-vowel systems of Fang-Kuei Li (1902–87) and Baxter. The present book actually presents the bare outline of an Old Chinese reconstruction system derived from the Chin study, but that system is not elaborated here, despite its appearance on every page for the early-period reconstructions.

There are some small typographical problems. Rare *kāishū* 楷書 (modern square script) characters appear in a font visibly different from that used for ordinary characters; beautiful typography has long been difficult for Chinese historical linguists to achieve, but by 2010 this particular problem could have been avoided by going to a little extra trouble. Oracle bone forms in this book look much smaller than *kāishū* forms, with thinner lines and narrower spacing between those lines so that they are harder to see—it would have been more effective to render them oversized, putting the lines and spaces onto a par with the *kāishū*. Overall that would have looked better than what Button has supplied. Type-A syllables in the Pulleyblank model are marked with a tiny dot so small and placed so close to the typographical "ascent line" (far above the bodies of most Roman letters) that it is not easily grasped as a part of the text—it looks like a speck on the page, unrelated to the reconstruction. Since Button does not intend his speck to have phonetic meaning, any arbitrary symbol or letter would have been just as good, and he should have used the one easiest to see. But none of these issues detracted from my enjoyment in reading the book. Above all, I was pleased by its combination of terse prose and neat presentation. This is altogether fun reading for any student of graphic structure and pre-medieval phonology, and we need more books like it. I would also like to recommend Button's proto-Chin study, which displays the same distinctive style of prose and organization, although the going is harder.

Button is one of a growing number of fully trained philologists of strategic languages who have had to abandon academia for other fields. He is now an executive in a gigantic multinational corporation—one which, bafflingly, has no interests in Chinese paleography or proto-Sino-Tibetan, or even

regional Burmese languages. Our fields can ill afford such losses, and in Button's case one hopes that if he cannot teach, then at least he will eventually find time to continue his research.

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Indic across the Millennia: From the Rigveda to Modern Indo-Aryan. 14th World Sanskrit Conference, Kyoto, Japan, September 1st–5th, 2009. Proceedings of the Linguistic Section. Edited by JARED S. KLEIN and KAZUHIKO YOSHIDA. Bremen: HEMPEN VERLAG, 2012. Pp. viii + 249.

Readers familiar with the often less than expeditious rate with which proceedings of the World Sanskrit Conference are published will thank the diligence and industry of the editors Jared Klein and Kazuhiko Yoshida in getting this volume published quickly and to a high standard of publication. The volume represents the papers of the linguistics sections (and one from the Vedic section) presented at the 14th World Sanskrit Conference held in Kyoto, Japan in 2009. The papers encompass a wide range of Indic linguistics, living up to the title's promise "Across the Millennia": treated herein are topics ranging from the developments of the Proto-Indo-European laryngeals in Indo-Iranian, to synchronic studies of Vedic poetry and prose, to studies of Parsi and Buddhist Sanskrit, and linguistic ergativity in Modern and Middle Indo-Aryan. In this review I can neither comment on all papers, nor do justice to this breadth. Of the sixteen papers included I will focus on those seven papers that contribute to Vedic linguistics.

Dahl's "Evidence for Evidentiality in Late Vedic" continues the author's earlier work on time, tense, and aspect in Vedic. Here the focus is on late Vedic (later Brāhmaṇas, early Upaniṣads). He seeks to show that the semantic dimension of "evidentiality," the information source on which the evidence for a given statement is based, is relevant to the description of the late Vedic verbal system. Specifically he argues that the perfect marked an indirect evidential category (where the speaker does not have firsthand knowledge of the state of affairs), against the underspecified imperfect (and possibly aorist). As rightly emphasized, evidentiality is grammatically expressed in some languages and so could be a relevant dimension to the Vedic verbal system, and in the case of late Vedic such a semantic distinction would chime nicely with Pāṇini's analysis of the perfect. However, the data do not divide as cleanly as Dahl would like, i.e., the imperfect, aorist, and perfect are interchangeable in certain clause types and in some kinds of narrative (pp. 18–19). His paper is more interesting and suggestive than conclusive (echoing Dahl's own sentiments, p. 20), and we may look forward to further research on this topic.

Gotō, based on work from his then forthcoming (and now published) translation of RV IV (Michael Witzel, Toshifumi Gotō, and Salvatore Scarlata, tr., *Rig-Veda: Das heilige Wissen. Dritter bis fünfter Liederkreis* [Berlin: Verlag der Weltreligionen, 2013]), discusses an important methodological issue, namely treating the grammar of the RV on a poet-by-poet basis when the poetry requires it. In this case he tackles "Grammatical Irregularities in the Rigveda, Book IV." I am in great sympathy with such an approach, which provides some avenues for thinking of forms aberrant to our grammatical rules as reflecting rather a "poetic grammar." His article is learned and informed, and he is able to bring forward a number of cases where we find grammatical exceptions of various kinds in book IV of the RV (the hymns attributed to the Vāmadeva family). In a sense, though, Gotō's title is somewhat misleading, for many of his analyses do not really highlight grammatical irregularities at all. For example, pp. 31–32 (with n. 15) lists the numerous *-tār-/tar-* formations in IV, noting especially six occurrences in the Indra hymn IV.20, though these are not to my mind grammatical irregularities (e.g., *jētā* 'winner', *hāntā* 'slayer', and *sānitā* 'winner' are irregular in neither formation nor use). In Gotō's conclusion I could not help but be a bit disappointed: he finds that grammatical irregularities are due to the "priest-scholars" (they might be better called "poets") who "studied" the grammar of the RV . . . but