

Reconstruction of stress in Proto-Tibetan

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Since the time of the earliest publications on Tibetan (e.g., Jaeschke 1881), scholars have been engaged in an exploration of the similarities and differences among the various dialects. A particularly rich area of research has been tonogenesis – the innovation of tone from the non-tonal parent language, arising as consonant clusters were reduced (Matisoff 1973; Mazaudon 1977; Sprigg 1966, 1972; YANG 1974; Nishida 1975; Takata 1981; Bielmeier 1982, 1985, 1988; HUANG 1995; and Sun 2001; among many others). With all of this focus on consonant clusters and tone, however, the significance of stress patterns has been largely overlooked (though see Bielmeier 1988). My own research contributes to our understanding of this underappreciated area.

The objectives of my work are to document stress patterns in representative dialects, to identify the acoustic correlates of stress, and – ultimately – to determine the role played by stress in the evolution of tone. In this talk, I will present the results of the initial step of the investigation: I will offer a hypothesis for the patterns and acoustic properties of stress in Proto-Tibetan. This reconstruction will be based on the patterns and acoustic properties of stress in Balti Tibetan (northern Pakistan) and Rebkong Amdo Tibetan (Qinghai, China).

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