A Manchad grammar

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Many Tibeto-Burman languages and cultures are rightly called endangered, due to socio-economic circumstances forcing speakers to adapt to more influential groups. The present study – a grammar of Manchad – will provide an in-depth description of this endangered and hardly studied Tibeto-Burman language, and hopes to facilitate a better understanding of the linguistic diversity of the northwestern Himalayas. The grammar is based on extensive field research on several Tibeto-Burman languages of the northwestern region carried out over the past two decades.

Manchad, also known as Patani or Lahauli, is spoken by about 10,000 people in the western Himalayas. More specifically, Manchad is spoken in the Patan valley of the Lahaul subdivision of the Lahaul-Spiti district of Himachal Pradesh in northwestern India. The Patan valley, at an altitude of approximately 2,700 meters above sea level, borders Tibet to the east and the Ladakh district of Jammu and Kashmir to the north while the western and southern sides of the Patan valley join the Chamba and Kullu districts of Himachal Pradesh.

The name Manchad is a toponym given by the people of the Tod valley who live in the same area as the Manchad. Their socio-economic position has improved considerably in recent years thanks to modern agricultural methods and the cash cropping of seed potatoes, hops and medicinal plants. Hindi is the medium of instruction in schools. As a result of education and contact with outsiders, most members of the Manchad group are bilingual and use Hindi and English in public while the use of the Manchad language is now restricted to life at home. While there is no written literary tradition in the Manchad language, individuals have recently begun to write down Manchad stories using either Hindi or Tibetan orthography. No detailed study of the Manchad language currently exists, except for a few articles and a short grammatical sketch.

The grammar begins by describing and analysing the phonetics and phonology of Manchad, followed by discussion of the nominal morphology. Manchad has a three-way contrast in number, ie, singular, dual and plural; gender is not grammatical and is lexically based. The case system provides descriptions and discussions of the Manchad ergative, objective, instrumental, sociative, locative, and genitive cases. Pronouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs are analysed and presented in detail, as is the verbal agreement system where person-number elements are incorporated in verb forms. A discussion of phrase types and the basic syntactic structure of the Manchad language in terms of simple, compound and complex sentences is part of the grammar, which also includes analysed texts and a glossary.

Speakers of Manchad worship both Hinduism and Buddhism; temples are shared by the two groups. This kind of cultural fusion has left complex linguistic traces. It is evident that the Manchad people have interacted with speakers of Tibetan languages as well as with Hindu populations for a long time, as the linguistic traces these cultures have left behind in the Manchad language are much deeper than mere loanwords.

Although Manchad is a pronominalized Tibeto-Burman language, it shares certain linguistic features with Indo-Aryan, Dravidian and Munda languages. The language has also retained some features of the ancient Zhangzhung language, spoken in western Tibet before the establishment of the Tibetan empire. For example, the patterns of verb stem alternation in Manchad remind us of the well-known alternation between four verb-stems in classical Tibetan, which is no longer faithfully preserved in modern Tibetan dialects. With four stems in the present, past, pluperfect, and future tense, stem alternation is still fully preserved in Manchad.

Manchad has been classified in the western sub-group of the complex-pronominalised group of the Himalayan branch of the Tibeto-Burman subfamily of languages. Tibeto-Burman languages are generally considered to be of an isolating and monosyllabic nature, but the Manchad language is of a highly complex inflectional character, exhibiting complex pronominalisation and a complex verbal system. Syntactically, Manchad is of the subject-object-verb (SOV) type, like many other languages in South Asia. Manchad has a two-way tonal contrast, like standard Tibetan, and has extensively borrowed vocabulary from Indo-Arayan languages, apparently ever since the time the people came into contact with people from the neighbouring districts of Chamba and Kullu where Indo-Aryan languages are spoken.

The other languages spoken in the Lahaul valley are Khoksar, Patnam Bhoti and Tod (all Tibetan languages), and Rangloi, Tinan, and Bunan, which can be classified as pronominalising Tibeto-Burman languages. Among the languages of the Lahaul valley, Manchad is predominant, and is sometimes understood by people from neighbouring areas. There are two main dialects, or socio-geographical variants. One group of speakers are Buddhist and call themselves Bodh, and are found mostly in the upper valley. The other dialect is spoken in the lower valley by a group of people who call themselves Swangla and who practice the Hindu religion. The Tinan dialect is considered to be very close to the Swangla variant of Manchad. The present study takes the dialectal variations into account, while dialectal differences are noted in the glossary. ‹

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The lure of (prosodic) typology

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In any study of empirical phenomena, the unusual holds special attraction. The Bird of Paradise with its amazing feathers, the monolithic baobabs, and the joint nursing of emperor penguins are phenomena that catch the imagination of the specialist and the interested lay person alike. The scientific study of 'outliers' holds particular promise, often revealing a system's complexity that is not evident when studying simpler phenomena.

The same holds in the study of a particular aspect of language – prosody. The same holds in the study of a particular aspect of language - prosody. Prosody refers to any dimension of speech communication other than the sequence of vowels and consonants. Defined in this way, prosody comprises the pitch of the voice (tone), the voice quality, loudness (intensity), and the duration of segments. The function of these phenomena varies from one language to the other. For example, some languages, like Thai or Chinese are tone languages; others, like English, have a lexical stress system. Are there more typological patterns? Are combinations of tone and stress possible? And what can the study of the unusual phenomena tell us about the nature of speech prosody?

One such outlier is the prosodic system of the Curaçao dialect of Papiamentu, a Caribbean creole. Papiamentu has both distinctive lexical stress (like English) *and* a lexically distinctive tone contrast, very similar to the one found in Stockholm Swedish. This is illustrated in the minimal-set evidence in Figure 1. Panels A and B illustrate the lexical tone contrast. Tone pattern I (panel A) has rising pitch on the stressed syllable; tone pattern II has low or falling pitch on the initial syllable and a high or rising pitch on the final syllable. Panels B and C illustrate the stress contrast on words that have the same tone pattern. The initial syllable is more prominent in II 'lora 'to turn', the final syllable in the participle form of the same verb. Stressed syllables have a greater duration (cf. segmentations in Figure 1), and also stand out in terms of intensity and vowel quality.

Curaçao Papiamentu and a small number of similarly 'hybrid' prosodic systems reveal that languages do not necessarily have one and only one prosodic contrast – stress or tone – as traditionally assumed. Instead, it is possible for languages to combine contrasts. In this way, the study of little-known and sometimes endangered languages expands the range of known variation, and contributes to a better understanding of the phenomenon of language prosody. Undoubtedly, many possible configurations remain to be charted.

There are two driving forces behind the development of prosodic typology. First, there are the phenomena. As a result of increasingly sophisticated research, often focusing on minority languages, we know more and more about the kinds of systems that are possible in human language. The accumulation of data blindly sets an agenda, as phenomena challenge us to come up with typological frameworks and with phonological theories that can accommodate them. From this accumulation there emerges an ever richer picture. As a result, prosodic typology is moving from a stage where systems were pigeonholed into two or three vaguely defined categories, to a more fundamental fine-grained typological analysis based on the structural properties that distinguish between systems (cf. Hyman 2006).

The second driving force is linguistic theory, in particular the axiom that the sound system of any human language includes a hierarchical structure of headed constituents – syllables, words, phrases etc. – likely to be reflected in the prosodic system (cf. van der Hulst 2005). These and other theoretical views are a valuable conservative force, challenging linguists to postulate as little language-specific processes as possible. As with any belief system, theoretical tenets constitute bias, with the potential to distract researchers from the correct analysis should the data ultimately be incompatible with them. It is obvious, then, that typology is both data-driven and theory-dependent, and that the interaction between these two approaches is vital to its development. ‹

References
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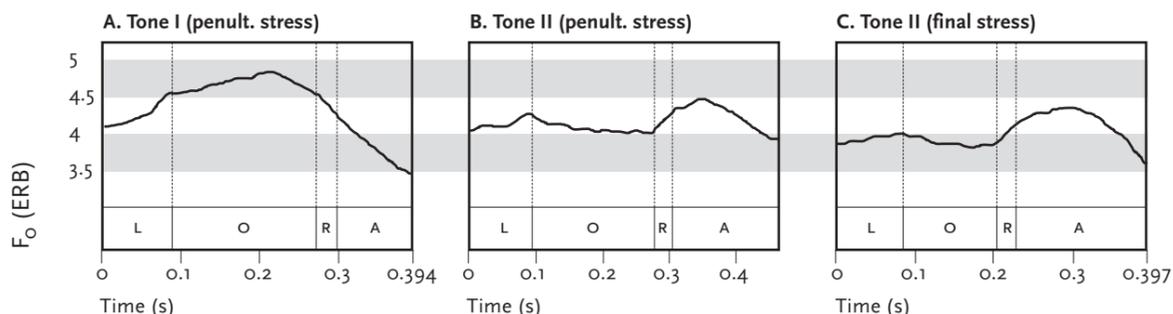bert@ling.ed.ac.uk

Figure 1

Figure 1 panels A, B, C: Pitch/Fo tracks and segmentations of a two-syllable minimal set for stress and tone in Curaçao Papiamentu: I '*lora* 'parrot' (A) vs. II '*lora* 'to turn' (B) vs. II *lo'ra* 'turned' (C). Tracks A, B, C are averaged over 18, 17, and 16 tokens, respectively. Data from 9 speakers elicited in citation form.

Remijsen, Bert and Vincent J.van Heuven. 2005. 'Stress, Tone, and Discourse Prominence in the Curacao Dialect of Papiamentu'. *Phonology* 22-2, pp.205-235.

The IIAS-sponsored conference 'Between Stress and Tone' was held in Leiden, 16-18 June 2005. A thematic issue of the Cambridge University Press journal Phonology, based on the conference and including some of the leading research on the topic, is forthcoming (2006, vol. 26-2).