

The diachrony of tone: connecting the field

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Tone, that is the use of pitch to distinguish lexical and/or grammatical forms, is an integral feature of many—possibly a majority of—languages across the world (Yip 2002). Despite this, tonal phenomena are conspicuously absent from most studies on language change, so that interest and progress in the understanding of the origins and evolution of suprasegmental contrasts lags behind that of segmental contrasts (Janda & Joseph 2003, Dockum 2019, Campbell 2021).

Nevertheless, starting in the latter half of the 20th century, steady progress has been made in the investigation of tonogenesis, i.e. in the emergence of tonal contrasts. This research has identified various pathways for a language to acquire tonal contrasts from segments. Haudricourt's (1954) model of tonogenesis in the so-called *Sinospheric Tonbund* (Matisoff 2001) connects the emergence of tonal contrasts with originally segmental material and processes of simplification of syllable structure. Similar progressions, from segmental contrast to tonal, can be observed in other languages and language families, such as Athabaskan (Kingston 2005), Mayan (see discussion in Bennett 2016, 497-499), Uto-Aztecan (Manaster-Ramer 1986; Guion et al. 2010), Punjabi/Northwest Indo-Aryan (Baart 2014; Evans et al. 2018), Malagasy (Howe 2017), and Afrikaans (Coetzee et al. 2018), among others. Prosodic contrasts can also give rise to tones, as in Cushitic (Kießling 2004). Formerly predictable stress patterns, for which pitch has become salient, became unpredictable in conjunction with syllable or word structure reduction. Tonal contrasts can also be acquired through contact and bilingualism of a non-tonal language with a tonal one. Such developments have been observed in languages such as Southern Qiang (Evans 2001) and Mal (L-Thongkum & Intajamornrak 2008), for example.

There are, however, language families in which tonality has such a long history that its origins might not ever be discoverable. This is the case in Otomanguean, where all the daughter families are reconstructed as tonal, e.g. proto-Mixtecan (Longacre 1957) and proto-Mixtec (Dürr 1990), proto-Chinantec (Rensch 1968), proto-Oto-Pamean (Bartholomew 1965), proto-Mazatec (Gudschinsky 1958; Kirk 1966), proto-Popolocan (Gudschinsky 1959), proto-Zapotec (Benton 2001), and proto-Chatino (Campbell 2013). It is thus assumed that proto-Otomanguean also had tonal contrasts (Rensch 1976, Kaufman forthcoming). Proto-Niger-Congo has also been reconstructed with tonal contrasts (Hyman 2016). Tone change *per se* is much less well studied than tonogenesis, and often not addressed even in language families with old tone systems. This can be at least partially attributed to impressionistic statements on the volatility of tones (Ratliff 2015; Cahill 2011; Beam de Azcona 2007; Morey 2005; Dürr 1990, among others), leading to the assumption that tones play at best a minor role in unraveling the history of a language family.

There is thus a considerable gap in the field of historical linguistics when it comes to the diachronic study of tones. A welcome exception to this is the recent collected volume on tone neutralization and phonetic tone change, Kubozono and Giriko 2018, and see also the overview by Yang & Xu (2019) of existing tone change work in Asia. This gap also applies to computer-assisted

methods, such as automatic alignment and cognate detection (List et al. 2018), and quantitative methods, such as Bayesian phylogenetics (Greenhill et al. 2020), which have gained traction in the field over the past two decades. Studies using such methodologies have been applied to few language families with tonal contrasts (e.g. Sagart et al. 2019 and Zhang et al. 2019, both on Sino-Tibetan) and none have addressed tone, despite evidence of historical tone categories having significant phylogenetic signal (Dockum 2019).

Workshop content and goals

As a result of the issues described above, comparatively few linguists focus on the diachronic study of tone. Individual specialists tend to sort themselves into regional and language family niches, leaving the field fragmented with little dialogue or cross-pollination between interested scholars. Given that the diachronic study of tone is in need of intensified research, the absence of exchange between scholars creates a further impediment to progress in this area.

This workshop brings together linguists from different regions and language families who work on tone diachrony and initiating an ongoing dialogue. Our goal is to form and strengthen collaborations between participants and attendants to advance this research area in the future. Presentations address topics including but not limited to:

- phonological environments that condition the emergence of tone contrasts or tone changes in existing tones;
- morphosyntactic patterns involving the innovation of new tone contrasts or changes to existing tone contrasts;
- underlying articulatory, acoustic, and perceptual mechanisms of tonogenesis and/or tone change;
- methodological considerations in the study of tone diachrony, e.g. the comparability of tonal systems in the absence of detailed phonetic studies, and the creation of reusable datasets and databases;
- addressing similarities and differences, both theoretically and empirically, in the study of tonal and segmental change;
- the contribution of tone to our understanding of the linguistic past, including subgrouping and classification in a language family, explaining historical contact phenomena between languages and language families, etc.;
- the relationship of historical tone studies with language documentation and description of tonal languages and language families;
- descriptions of tone change in under-described languages

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