Book Review

Zhou, Chenlei. (2022). *Zhoutun*. London: Routledge. 176 Pages

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Ever since the initial paper by Li (1983), the significance of the border region between Gansu and Qinghai Provinces of Northwest China has been noticed in the language contact literature (see, e.g., Thomason & Kaufman, 1988; Wurm 1995; Dede 2003; Janhunen, 2007; Slater, 2021). The area lies in the intersection of China and Central Asia, where ancient silk road trade connected the two regions and where different linguistic and cultural groups have interacted for centuries. The linguistic diversity of the region today is represented by modern-day language varieties belonging to four groups: Chinese, Tibetan, Mongolic, and Turkic, which have developed shared features not found in their genetic relatives spoken elsewhere and become part of a linguistic area best termed *Qinghai-Gansu Sprachbund* or *Amdo Sprachbund.*

The understanding of the contact-induced features in Qinghai-Gansu Sprachbund has been complicated by the fact that there is still a dearth of information about the languages of the region, including comprehensive reference grammars. While several grammatical descriptions have been published during the past two decades (see Slater, 2003; Fried, 2010, Sandman, 2016; Xu, 2017), many of the languages of the area are still undocumented and virtually unknown for a wider audience. Against this background, *Zhoutun* is an important contribution to the field. It describes the phonology and grammar of Zhoutun (周屯话 *Zhoutunhua* in Chinese), a variety of northwest Mandarin deeply influenced by Amdo Tibetan, in a clear and accessible way. The description is also typologically informed, and it consistently discusses the most intriguing grammatical features of Zhoutun from a cross-linguistic perspective.

The introductory chapter (1-6) provides a short but adequate description of genetic affiliation, typological profile, sociolinguistic setting, as well as historical and areal context of Zhoutun. The theoretical framework of the study and the data collected during the fieldwork are also briefly discussed in the introduction. This information is necessary for understanding the unique typological profile of Zhoutun that clearly differs from most of the Chinese varieties.

The phonology discussion (7-13) covers consonants, vowels, tones, syllable-final r, which is a typical feature for varieties of northern Chinese, as well as reduplication and syllable structure. The highly reduced tonal system of Zhoutun that only consists of two tones is very unusual for a Chinese variety and can be attributed to language contact. Disyllabic phrases in Zhoutun show a rather rigid "low-high vs. high-low" pattern. In addition, Zhou notes that the tones in Zhoutun seem to work on the level of a word rather than a syllable and he calls them "word tones" (page 10).

Morphologically, Zhoutun has replicated many Amdo Tibetan grammatical structures, including a hybrid analytic-agglutinative pattern characterized by extensive use of clitics (such as postpositions and aspect markers). The word classes of Zhoutun include nouns (14-31), verbs (32-58), adjectives and adverbs (59-68), and minor word classes (69-115): pronouns, demonstratives, interrogative words, numeral classifiers, final particles, adpositions and coordinators. One of the most interesting features of Zhoutun nominal morphosyntax from both typological and areal perspective is its elaborate case marking system developed under Amdo Tibetan influence. Many case markers, such as the dative-accusative marker *=ha*/*=a* (page 22), have cognates in other Chinese varieties in the region and new information on their use in Zhoutun contributes to more general understanding of the mechanisms of language contact and change in the Sprachbund (see Zhou, 2020). The verbs have a rich system of aspectual and modal markers, and verb-complement constructions are common as in other Chinese varieties. As in the case of nominal markers, many verbal markers such as the reported evidential 说 *ʂuɤ* 'say' (page 44) do not occur in Standard Mandarin but their cognates are common in other Chinese varieties of the Qinghai-Gansu Sprachbund.

The final chapter of the grammar is devoted to clause structure, and it includes both main clauses and subordinate clauses (116-138). The word order in Zhoutun is consistently SOV and it is accompanied by a significant number of other head-final features that set Zhoutun apart from most of the Chinese varieties. Another typologically interesting feature of Zhoutun is its rich system of comparative clauses, which represents several different strategies for expressing comparative meaning (122-126). After the chapter on clause structure, the book concludes with a bibliography, a valuable sample text, list of abbreviations and an index of topics covered in the book.

All in all, *Zhoutun* is a welcome contribution which will be extremely helpful for those interested in Chinese studies in general and languages of northwest China in particular. The book will be of particular interest to those working on typology of Chinese varieties, as we continue to understand the diversity and variation among Chinese and the role of language

contact in shaping this variation. Thanks to its robust baseline description, the scholarly impact of the book has already become apparent in subsequent studies focusing on specific grammatical constructions in Zhoutun (e.g., Zhou, 2023) as well as in its contribution to comparative studies of Chinese and Sino-Tibetan languages from a broader areal perspective (e.g., Arcodia, 2023; Yurayong & Sandman, 2023).

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