

External Examiner's Report on the Dissertation of Štěpán Pavlík

“ The Description of Namuzi Language

(Popis jazyka Namuzi)”

Submitted in 2017 at the Institute of South and Central Asia

I. Brief summary of the dissertation

The present dissertation is the first comprehensive grammatical description of the Namuzi language, spoken by a community of more than 5000 in Sichuan Province of China and considered as endangered. This unique piece of work is the only one in a Western language and has been researched through two years of field-work, providing robust first-hand language and cultural data and its analysis. The dissertation is subdivided into ten units, Chapter 1 dealing with the social, geographical and linguistic embedding of the language, then chapters 2 to 8 provide the main body of description, arranged in traditional order from sounds to syntax, and chapter 9 includes three thoroughly transcribed original recordings with interlinear translations and explanations and the work is concluded by chapter 10 on selected references.

II. Brief overall evaluation of the dissertation

This work is a well-proportioned description and primary analysis of the Namuzi language. The arrangement of data follows a typologically salient system and each sample has the proper relevant explanation. Beside the universal linguistic categories, the individual characteristics of Namuzi can be understood, introduced clearly through chapter 3. The present dissertation is an invaluable contribution to the subgrouping of Tibeto-Burman languages, provides opportunities for scholars of the international linguistic community to elaborate further on individual grammatical aspects and is a ground-work, basic research for anyone going to do Tibeto-Burman linguistics. This grammatical description is a culmination of decades of preparatory scholarly work. The skills needed were not only the survival and endurance efforts in China, but a flawless knowledge of Chinese combined with great interpersonal talents for the data elicitation, excellent understanding of linguistic typology, its problem areas, and a creative use of English by a non-native speaker in producing the final work. Finally let us not forget the particular language skills in Namuzi, learned during the time in Sichuan, or gathered from shorter Chinese-language publications. This in itself demonstrates the great value of the present dissertation. This work is also a cornerstone of arising documentary linguistic studies by Czech scholars.

Detailed evaluation of the dissertation and its individual aspects

1. *Structure of the argument*

The dissertation shows the same lucidity all over the work. A huge amount of data

is packed into the individual statements, especially in the interlinearly transcribed phrases. Some data could have been left out, the work would still be clear (e.g. fig.2 on page 38). Pp. 42-43 give a condensed picture of data arrangement, consequently followed through the rest of pages. The closing appendix of thoroughly transcribed speech are very useful for further studies and language revitalization.

2. Formal aspects of the dissertation

The author is indeed coherent in the use of abbreviations, syntax of bibliographical references, transcriptions of foreign terms, the footnotes are formatted correctly. The language of the dissertation is grammatically correct and easy to read for the specialist. The dissertation is visually well-presented, we can only find some typos (e.g. footnote on p.42 'immidiate'). The typographical needs for transcription put a special load on the author which he mastered well. He also paid attention to the linguistic needs of non-Chinese readers, as all statements are translated into English, when relevant (s. footnote 53 on p. 55, or footnote nr. 56, p. 58)

3. Use of sources and/or material

Before the author brings his own elicitation examples, he exhaustively analyzes the previous secondary sources. Through his broad background knowledge in linguistic typology, illuminates the ensuing points through the statements of other linguists, so his categories are well fitting the universal frame (p. 85, point 4.3.4.1) All the primary sources are used properly and reference is made to their original language wherever appropriate. As the dissertation is based on data collection, the author has taken great care of the methodology used for data collection and he did a coherent analysis on all levels. His individual steps in data analysis are justified and well executed. The author uses real spoken data, so there was no need to make up hypothetical or ungrammatical sentences. The interpretation of the results proposed by the author follow from the results of the empirical research and modifies, explains and expands the sources on which the work relies (e.g. p. 85 introduction on top of page) .

4. Personal contribution to the subject

The dissertation is the cumulative result of creative efforts by the author. He employs the primary and secondary sources to propose an original, organically formulated contribution to the field, all the more so as the linguistic data collected by himself make up the greatest proportion of the work. Those secondary sources are only used to put the fresh data in context and bind them organically into a

typologically coherent dissertation with highest degree of approximations.

III. Questions for the author

Pages 169 to 173 summarize well the author's observations. Would it be possible to insert systematic references to the pages or to the numbers in the dissertation and add indices? Would it be possible to add a small dictionary of words used in the dissertation, possibly with examples, according to entries? Or a wordlist English/NMZ and vice versa? Would it be possible to add an index and finderlist of grammatical concepts and list of authors cited?

Suggestion for the appendix and the transcribed stories: Would it be possible to provide the sound data as .wav or mp3 file? Also, the recorded speech will be archived somewhere in the future. What is your plan for the archiving of sound data and how to make it accessible for other researchers or native speakers?

IV. Conclusion

Having read, studied and recognized the great efforts and merits of the work, I recommend the submitted dissertation with the tentative grade of **pass**.

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