

History of tonal interaction across paradigms: new findings from Khoisan tonology

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Khoisan phonology is a field apparently less known to historical linguistics despite its potential importance as a resource of research questions in a wider context of historical phonology, e.g. the sound changes relating to the clicks (Traill and Vossen 1997) and the tonal alternation type called “flip-flop” (Haacke 1999) that has been diachronically little-investigated.

This talk will present historical linguistic findings from my recent study in Khoisan phonology, focusing on the tonology of Glui, a Kalahari Khoe language of the Khoe-Kwadi family. Glui has a relatively rich derivational morphology which involves tonal alternations. The tonal alternations are mostly productive and regular, but there are two types of reduplication (iterative and causative), which exhibit extreme irregularities and asymmetries in tonal rule sets.

The talk will first demonstrate that a traditional method of historical linguistics, specifically, internal reconstruction, allows for a better understanding of the two messy sets of tonal rules, by reconstructing two regular sets of tonal paradigms and proposing a scenario from the earlier regular stage to the present stage of irregular paradigms. In discussing this reconstruction, I will point to the importance of the cross-paradigm interaction of tones and the synchronic variation as representing speakers’ knowledge about history. By using Glui data, the talk will also explore the issue of the historical origin of the so-called “flip-flop” which is attested in Chinese dialects (Wang 1967) and Khoe languages (Haacke 1999), i.e. the process where tone X switches into tone Y, and the same time Y switches into X.

Haacke, Wilfrid H. G. 1999. *The Tonology of Khoekhoe (Nama/Damara)*. Cologne: Rüdiger Köppe.

Traill, Anthony and Rainer Vossen. 1997. Sound change in the Khoisan languages: New data on click loss and click replacement. *Journal of African Languages and Linguistics*. 18.1:21–56.

Wang, William S-Y. 1967. Phonological features of tone. *Journal of American Linguistics*, 33, 2: 93-105.