

EDITORIAL FOREWORD

Anton Lustig first visited the village of 雷弄 (Léinòng) as a student and continued to return to his friends in the Zaiwa area during his research fellowship with the Himalayan Languages Project at Leiden University. The stature of this contribution to the Zaiwa language community is not to be measured just in terms of the sheer girth of these two volumes. The author's profound insight into the workings of the language is evident in the details.

The most valuable achievement is perhaps the documentation of the conceptual universe expressed through the language. Such penetrating thoroughness in charting native categories of meaning is seldom seen in language descriptions, and this degree of mastery bears witness to the author's finely honed semantic sensibilities. His years of assiduous work were not just aimed at ascertaining the precise meaning of numerous grammatical and lexical categories, for the author has striven to be holistic and all-encompassing.

Lustig identifies typologically interesting Zaiwa morphemes that are purely suprasegmental in shape, such as the factitive marker. These tonal morphemes, though central to the grammar, might well have escaped the scrutiny and understanding of any lesser linguist. In the same painstaking detail, Lustig documents the intricate patterns of tone switching triggered by the agentive/instrumental, oblique genitive and imperfective suffixes, the latter two themselves tonal morphemes.

Diachronic observations include the historical relationship between the factitive, oblique genitive and imperfective markers, which are shown to reflect an etymon of good Tibeto-Burman pedigree. The fine description of individual meanings and the sizeable corpus of natural discourse mirrors and preserves facets of Zaiwa culture and ethnopsychology. This grammar and dictionary will remain an enduring monument to Anton Lustig's passion and perseverance.

George van Driem, Amsterdam, 21 March 2010