

Preface

The Tangwang language was first reported by Chen Yuanlong (Ibrahim 1985) in the *Minzu yuwen* [Minority languages of China]. Two decades later, the Tangwang language started attracting the curiosity of many researchers. My French colleagues Alain Peyraube, Redouane Djamouri, and I have participated in two projects funded and supported by the French government: ANR-07-BLAN-0023 “*Language contact and linguistic change: the case of Chinese and Altaic*” led by Djamouri, then ANR-12-BSH2-0004-01 “*Do languages and genes correlate?—A case study in Northwestern China*” directed by myself.

In 2014, my book *Tangwanghua yanjiu* [Studies of the Tangwang language] was published in Chinese by Minzu chubanshe [The Ethnic Publishing House]. However, this work is not accessible to scholars who do not read Chinese but are interested in language contact and language mixing. Languages inside China are still less known by linguists outside of China. Eventually I decided to provide a simplified version in English instead of a translated one. In the present volume, Chaps. 3–5 summarize the main results of Chaps. 2–4 which make up 244 pages in the Chinese book.

From 2014 to 2016, our interdisciplinary research has advanced significantly, collaborating with genetic researchers. Chapters 1, 2, and 6 present new and current findings with different approaches. Some results have been published in scientific journals, and others will appear very soon. The aim of the book is clear: it attempts to combine different domains combining human sciences and natural sciences to break down the barriers between these two fields. Despite difficulties encountered in the reconstitution of languages and genes, it is amazing to read so many articles published by biologists and archeologists in different scientific journals on the coevolution of genes and languages. Linguists seem to be too prudent and careful to avoid making mistakes. If we work on linguistic data together with archeological and genetic evidence, we may be able to reconcile them to produce a more reliable picture of the history of different peoples and their languages. This book will not be limited to describing the language but will also attempt to explore the social context of the target language including genetic, historic, and anthropological approaches to better understand the Tangwang language. One of the major difficulties in human

sciences is quantification of data. The book has also made some tentative research into the methodology of data quantification, hoping to make linguistic conclusions verifiable.

Thanks to grant ANR-12-BSH2-0004-01 by the French government, many Ph.D. students have contributed to the project of digitizing our data. Gratitude goes to Saiyinjiya Caidengduerji (for Mongolian and Manchu-Tungusic groups), Barbara Kozhevina (for Turkic groups), Li Ting (for Tibetan languages), Liu Keyou, and Wang Cong (for Sinitic languages). I am also very grateful to Profs. Xie Xiaodong (Lanzhou University, Gansu) and Li Hui (Fudan University, Shanghai) who have given me great help in taking part in this project and providing me with genetic documents. I am indebted to Prof. Li Hui, who not only checked the paragraphs related to genetics, but also permitted me to reprint his laboratory's graphs and figures and to use the laboratory's statistics. Wen Shaoqing, Wei Lanhai, Wang Chuan-Chao, and Zhang Menghan have given me substantial assistance: helping me learn and understand the field of genetics and their work method.

I have to express my recognitions to Chen Yuanlong (Ibrahim), the author of the first study of the Tangwang language. He gave me important information during my investigations, and his feedback and remarks about my book in Chinese on the Tangwang language were especially pertinent and constructive. I have had discussions and exchanges with linguists such as Alain Peyraube, Redouane Djamouri, Laurent Sagart, Sun Hongkai, Huang Xing, Wu Anqi, and Yixiweisa Acuo, and their comments have been very helpful and valuable to this book. I would like also to express my warm gratitude to my teachers, Professors Jacques Legrand, Tumurbaatar, Tumenjargal, and Dr. Saiyinjiya Caidengduerji for their Mongolic language teaching, and to Prof. Françoise Robin for Tibetan language teaching. I have learned a lot with them, and it is very beneficial for my research. My thanks also go to Craig Baker who has corrected my English with patience and efficiency. I owe so much to my family: Shiqi Song, Antoine Song, and Anna Song listened patiently to my questions about quantification of the data and offered me solutions from a mathematical perspective. Without the support and help of these people, this book would never have been published. It is evident that all faults are mine.

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