

Encyclopedia of Chinese Language and Linguistics

Volume 4

Shā–Z

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Simon, Walter (1893–1981)

Walter Simon was born in Berlin on June 10, 1893 as the son of the librarian Heinrich Simon (1858–1930) and his wife Cläre (*née* Abraham, d. in Theresienstadt concentration camp). From 1911 to 1914 he studied Romance and Classical philology at Friedrich-Wilhelms University, Berlin. After a hiatus serving Germany in military intelligence during the first World War (1915–1918), Simon earned his doctorate in 1919 with a dissertation on the Saloniki (Thessaloniki) dialect of Ladino (Judeo-Spanish) (1920), as well as a diploma in library science in 1920. After a year in Kiel working as a librarian (1921–1922), he returned to Berlin, where he studied Chinese with Otto Franke (1863–1946) and Tibetan with August Hermann Francke (1870–1930). Starting in 1926, he taught as a Privatdozent, with “Tibetisch-chinesische Wortgleichungen. Ein Versuch” (1929) as his habilitation. In 1929, Simon undertook a research trip to England. In 1932, he was promoted to Professor *extraordinarius* and thereupon undertook an exchange trip to the National Library in Běijīng during the 1932–1933 academic year (cf. Walravens 1993). After losing both his position as professor and as librarian on account of his Jewish heritage in the wake of the National Socialists’ rise to power, Simon fled Germany for England in 1936 together with his wife Kate (*née* Jungmann, 1902–1984) and his two sons Helmut (Harry) Felix (b. 1923) and Peter Walter (1929–2011). An anonymous donation enabled the School of Oriental Studies, University of London, to hire Simon as Lecturer in the year of his arrival to the U.K.; he rose to Reader in 1938. Shortly after the War’s conclusion Simon was offered professorships both back in Berlin and in Cambridge. He chose to remain in London, becoming Professor in 1947, the same year that he and his son Harry took British citizenship. The 1948–1949 academic year Simon spent on a book buying trip to China and Japan. From 1952 until his retirement in 1960, Simon served as department chair and oversaw a massive expansion in Chinese studies in the wake of increased government investment. In 1956, Simon was made a Fellow of the British Academy. In retirement he undertook various visiting

appointments and received further honours and accolades, including being named Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 1961. Simon was instrumental in the rebirth of *Asia Major* in its new series in 1949 (cf. Walravens 1997), which he edited from 1965 through its final issue in 1975. Simon passed away on February 1981. Simon’s son Harry also pursued a career in Chinese Linguistics, serving as professor of Oriental Studies at Melbourne from 1961 to 1988. The National Library of Australia holds Walter Simon’s library and papers, which it acquired between 1972 and 1981 (cf. Gosling 2000).

In the 1920s and 1930s Simon’s research primarily focused on Chinese historical phonology and Sino-Tibetan comparison. Simon proposed a revision of → Karlgren’s reconstruction of **-p*, **-t*, **-k* in Archaic Chinese to **-b*, **-d*, **-g*, as well as an additional series of fricatives **-β*, **-ð*, **-γ*. Karlgren accepted the evidence for some of Simon’s final fricatives, reconstructing them as **-b*, **-d*, **-g*, but in many cases saw an open syllable as more judicious (cf. Simon 1938). → Li Fang-Kuei’s system of Old Chinese, which lacks open syllables altogether (1971), thus shows a debt to Simon. Today, however, most researchers prefer → Haudricourt’s proposal (1954) that replaces Karlgren’s **-b*, **-d*, **-g* with **-ps*, **-ts*, **-ks* (cf. Sagart 1999). Simon also contributed to the study of more recent phases of Chinese historical phonology with studies on Chinese texts written in Tibetan characters (1958, 1960).

The published version of Simon’s habilitation (1929), although somewhat criticized by Karlgren (1931), remains a touchstone for subsequent work on Sino-Tibetan lexical comparisons (cf. e.g., Gong 1995). In this work Simon notes the correspondence of Tibetan *br-* to Old Chinese **mr-* (1929:187, 197) in such pairs of words as Tibetan *hbras* ‘rice’ and Chinese *lat* < *(mǎ-)r^sat 糲 ‘rice’; Tibetan *sbrañ* ‘fly, bee’ and Chinese *yíng* < **m.rəŋ* 蠅 ‘fly’; and Tibetan *sbrul* ‘snake’ and Chinese *xjwíjX* < *[m̥r]uj[?] 虺; this correspondence now bears the name “Simon’s law” (cf. Hill 2011:448–449).

During the 1940s and 1950s, Simon produced many pedagogical works for the study of modern Chinese (cf. e.g., 1942, 1943, 1944, 1945, 1947). Unfortunately, his choice of the Gwoyewu

Romatzyh transcription system quickly made these works obsolete as pinyin rose to prominence. Simon also contributed to the description of specific grammatical morphemes in Classical Chinese; he produced studies of *yǐ* 矣 (1934), *bǐ* 比 (1948), and *ér* 而 (1951, 1952–1954).

Simon was a Tibetologist as much as a Sinologist, particularly after his retirement. He devoted numerous studies to Tibetan grammatical affixes and morphophonemic alternations in Tibetan “word families”. To a lesser extent, Simon also contributed to Manchu studies. Schindler (1963) provides a bibliography of Simon’s works until 1962, with Loewe (1982) covering the period from 1965 to 1980.

Loewe’s bibliography is, however, rather unsatisfactory, omitting all reviews and several important articles (Simon 1964, 1969, 1970, 1971).

For Simon’s generation, the insights of de Saussure were novel and poorly heeded; Simon’s work concomitantly fails at times to coherently distinguish synchrony from diachrony. However, even those of his hypotheses that seem today odd and untenable are uniformly learned and insightful.

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Nathan W. Hill

Singapore: Language Situation

As a relatively small territory geographically located in the Malay archipelago but with a population comprising a large majority of Chinese—the only country outside of Greater China where ethnic Chinese constitute a majority, and numerically the fifth largest country of Overseas Chinese—and with a linguistic ecology dominated by Chinese languages, Singapore presents a fascinating study in the field of Chinese language and linguistics. Of particular interest are issues in language contact and language policy, and the tension between Mandarin and the

other Chinese languages. This article explores the sociolinguistic situation in Singapore, also highlighting how this has changed dynamically over the different eras of the colonial period, independence, and late modernity (see Lim 2010 for a detailed account).

The establishment of Singapore as a British trading post in 1819 meant a rapidly expanding economy, which, coupled with a liberal open-door immigration policy, resulted in an influx of immigrants, the majority from southern China, the Malay Peninsula, the Malay/Indonesian archipelago, and South Asia. While Malays initially formed the bulk of the population, the Chinese population grew swiftly, forming the largest ethnic proportion within two decades (45.9% by 1836), and increasingly steadily and rapidly to reach its current proportion of three-quarters of the population by 1921. The vast majority hailed from cities and provinces on the southeastern coast of China, mainly Xiàmén 廈門 in southern Fújiàn (the Hokkiens, now about 40% of Chinese population), Cháo zhōu 潮州 in the east of Guǎngdōng (the Teochews, 20%) and Guǎngdōng itself (the Cantonese, 15%), and also including peoples of Hakka (11%), Hainanese (5%), Fúzhōu 福州, Shanghainese, and Hockchia origin. Also counted amongst the Chinese are the Peranakans or Straits Chinese, descendants of southern Chinese traders and Malay/Indonesian women who developed a unique hybrid culture, many originally coming from Malacca (and also found in Penang), whose vernacular was Baba Malay, a restructured Malay variety with Mǐn 閩 influences. While the Teochews constituted the largest proportion of Chinese in the early nineteenth century, being twice as numerous as the Hokkiens in 1848, it was the Hokkiens who were a strong economic power, especially from the late 1800s, establishing themselves as traders, importers, exporters, manufacturers and bankers, virtually monopolizing commercial activities by the end of the nineteenth century, becoming the most powerful *bāng* 幫 'clan'. Hokkien consequently became the main lingua franca amongst the Chinese community, and was also widely understood and spoken by other ethnic groups. At the same time, Bazaar Malay, a restructured Malay