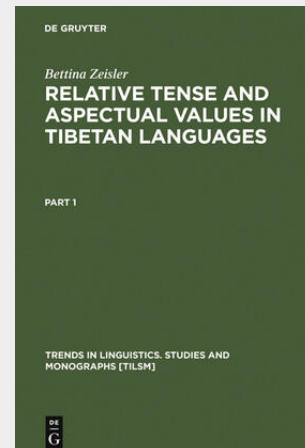


Zeisler

Relative Tense and Aspectual Values in Tibetan Languages

A Comparative Study

This study presents a comparative approach to a universal theory of TENSE, ASPECT and MOOD, combining the methods of comparative and historical linguistics, fieldwork, text linguistics, and philology. The parts of the book discuss and describe (i) the concepts of TENSE, ASPECT and MOOD; (ii) the Tibetan system of RELATIVE TENSE and aspectual values, with main sections on Old and Classical Tibetan, "Lhasa" Tibetan, and East Tibetan (Amdo and Kham); and (iii) West Tibetan (Ladakhi, Purik, Balti); Part (iv) presents the comparative view. Discussing the similarities and differences of temporal and aspectual concepts, the study rejects the general claim that ASPECT is a linguistic universal. A new linguistic concept, FRAMING, is introduced in order to account for the aspect-like conceptualisations found in, e.g., English. The concept of RELATIVE TENSE or taxis, may likewise not be universal. Among the Tibetan varieties, West Tibetan is unique in having fully grammaticalized the concept of ABSOLUTE TENSE. West Tibetan is compared diachronically with Old and Classical Tibetan (documented since the mid 8th century) and synchronically with several contemporary Tibetan varieties. The grammaticalized forms of each variety are described on the basis of their employment in discourse. The underlying general function of the Tibetan verbal system is thus shown to be that of RELATIVE TENSE. Secondary aspectual functions are described for restricted contexts. A special focus on the pragmatic or metaphorical use of present tense constructions in Tibetan leads to a typology of narrative conventions. The last part also offers some suggestions for the reconstruction of the Proto-Tibetan verb system.



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