**Foreword**

Fuzhou boasts quite an interesting linguistic history. Seeking a more favourable balance to their early 19th century trade with China, the British established the first state-sponsored drug cartel to pump opium into it instead of silver. After the first Opium War the Qing dynasty was forced by the 1842 treaty of Nanking to open for free trade a group of ports down its south-eastern seaboard. Fuzhou was one, and descriptions of its dialect by western missionaries date from the mid 19th century (Branner 1997).

Like the speech in the other treaty ports, Fuzhou dialect was very different from the Mandarin spoken at the Qing court much further to the north, but linguists did not discover until the 1930's how intriguing the differences were. In one of the great scholarly linguistic papers (Chao 1934), Fuzhou figures prominently. The Chinese linguist and polymath Chao Yuen Ren cited many examples from Fuzhou dialect in his argument (against the optimistic mainstream Structuralist assumption of 'discovery procedures' which would result in a unique analytic solution) that there was always going to be more than one phonemic way to skin the phonetic cat.

Fuzhou, with its complex morpho-phonological tone and vowel alternations - it looked like the tone sandhi changes triggered rather big changes in vowel quality, for example - furnished Chao with many examples of how different considerations result in different analytical solutions. Chao was actually claiming no unique solution within a single paradigm (we now call it Classical Phonemics, discarding it in the dustbin of failed theories). If you are convinced by his argument, and apply it *a fortiori* to our current multiplicity of phonological paradigms, you might be encouraged to see how different phonological perspectives make your data look (varieties of SE Asian languages, in particular, have a habit of exposing the procrusteanism of our western theories). You will find a nice echo of Chao's exemplification from Fuzhou in this book, where its author compares and contrasts two very different ways of accounting for its tone sandhi in disyllabic utterances. Both approaches, curate's egg-like, have their pros. Neither, I think, she finds totally convincing, pointing out for example that a surface form resulting from neutralisation of different tones is not insightfully modelled by different changes operating on different underlying forms. Better, perhaps, not to steamroller the nut but just get your tonology to say "all tones change to tone x"? I hope that we will soon be at a stage where we can assess the relative probability of the acoustic data under competing phonological models, thus comparing them properly, with Bayes' Theorem.

But the main contribution of this book is descriptive, not theoretical. Given the phonological significance of Fuzhou dialect, it is surprising that its major phonological analyses, e.g. Chan (1985) or Yip (1990), have depended almost exclusively on auditory descriptions, of which there are certainly no dearth, but also no verification. It looked as if we had to wait until barely three years ago for the proper multispeaker acoustical quantification and verification of some of its acoustics (Peng 2011). But actually that is not quite correct. About two decades...
before that, in 1992, an undergraduate thesis was written describing the acoustics of Fuzhou tones on carefully controlled segmental material from four carefully chosen speakers.

This book is that thesis. As its supervisor, and believing firmly that you cannot have too much empirical data, I have been pestering Cathryn to publish it for the last twenty years (one of the reasons why I am pleased to see it finally emerge). It gives us an empirical picture of what the tones of thirty-year old Fuzhou speakers were like in 1992. It is encouraging, but perhaps not surprising, to see they do not differ very much from the fifty-year old speakers' tones Peng was to describe twenty years later. The first thing I would do now would be combine the data from both studies for a better normalised representation of Fuzhou tonal acoustics, made possible because both studies include the actual quantified observations.

You will also find in this book a description of tone sandhi in disyllabic utterances from the same four speakers whose citation tones are so nicely quantified. The author points out that the sandhi is more complicated than the existing descriptions. This is a good thing, as there is less chance of underdetermination of theory by data. Alas! they are not quantified acoustically. But I bemoan without criticising. I'm not sure I have another twenty years to await the normalised disyllabic tonal acoustics, and how they relate to the citation tones, but I don't expect it will take that long: it is possible to process such data very quickly nowadays, compared to when the thesis was written. It took a long time in those analog days and a great deal of patience and dedication - measuring by hand and eye from freshly burnt, malodorous spectrograms - to quantify tonal acoustics. Which brings me to my last point.

This book is historical in another, non-linguistic sense. I invite you to look at it also as a reflection of the state of tertiary education in Australia in the early 90's, and remind you that it was not an M.A, nor a Ph.D, but an undergraduate thesis. In order to be able to embark on the research described in her thesis, Cathryn had to complete, in addition to the normal linguistics units, demanding courses in descriptive phonetics, instrumental phonetics and Chinese linguistics. And of course she also had to teach herself sufficient Chinese to understand the source material.

The reduction in both range and content of university courses resulting from continuous slashing of tertiary education budgets over the last decade or so (at least in Australia) means the probability is now very low that our students are given sufficient knowledge to do this kind of work this early. A very great pity: students could then either draw on greater expertise and knowledge for their post-graduate research, or change tack and do something completely different for their doctorate, thus doubling their expertise. It won't come as a surprise that Cathryn has a doctorate; but no, it is not in Phonetics, but mirabile dictu Basque morphosyntax. A long way from Fuzhou, whichever way you look at it. But now, it seems, she has returned.
These then are the reasons why I am pleased to be writing this little introduction to Cathryn Donohue’s book on Fuzhou tones. I only wish I could have done this sort of work in my undergraduate years. Be inspired!

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Canberra, Australia, 2013

References


