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Phonology

Complexity in
the Phonology
of Tone

Lian-Hee Wee
and Mingxing Li

ISSN 2633-0064 (online)
ISSN 2633-0056 (print)

Cambridge Elements[™]

Elements in Phonology

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COMPLEXITY IN THE PHONOLOGY OF TONE

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 CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS



Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
New Delhi – 110025, India

103 Penang Road, #05–06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment,
a department of the University of Cambridge.

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education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781009078061

DOI: [10.1017/9781009086707](https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009086707)

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First published 2023

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-1-009-07806-1 Paperback

ISSN 2633-9064 (online)

ISSN 2633-9056 (print)

Additional resources for this publication at www.cambridge.org/wee-li

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DOI: 10.1017/9781009086707

First published online: October 2023

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Abstract: The complexity of tone can only be appreciated through phonological patterning that unveils structures beyond differences in pitch heights and contour profiles. Following an introduction on tone's ability to express lexical and grammatical contrasts, Section 2 explains that phonetically, fundamental frequency profiles make the best descriptors. From these descriptions, Section 3 explains how, through postulations of subatomic entities that comprise tones, a language's tone inventory can be quite symmetrical. In looking at tone's independence from the syllable and segments, Section 4 establishes tone as an autosegment. Sections 5, 6, and 7 go on to discuss a myriad of complexities where tones interact with one another and with other phonological entities. Here, the authors offer a suggestion on how some of these interactions can be captured within the same analytical umbrella. Section 8 then peeks into tone's phonological properties through music and poetry.

This Element also has a video abstract: www.cambridge.org/complexity_abstract

Keywords: tone, sandhi, tonology, phonology, phonetics

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ISBNs: 9781009078061 (PB), 9781009086707 (OC)

ISSNs: 2633-9064 (online), 2633-9056 (print)

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