

**A Preliminary Investigation into the Relationship Between
Qiong Long (邛崃) and the Languages of the
Qiang Branch of Tibeto-Burman**

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In the summer of 1956, I went to the Aba (阿坝) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan Province to investigate the Qiang language. Our car drove north along the bank of the Min River. When we reached the border of Wenchuan (汶川) County, I looked through the window and saw clearly the mountain villages of the Qiang nationality on both sides of the river. Some villages were in the river valleys, others on mountain ridges. What puzzled me was that inside or at the edge of many villages were stone structures over 100 feet high which resembled the chimneys of big factories at a distance. In some places three or four such structures were clustered together, while in other places a single structure stood alone. Some of those structures were badly damaged, and only broken walls remained. Out of curiosity I asked the local cadres accompanying me what these buildings were. They told me they were the "watchtowers" of Qiang villages.

In the years since then, I have investigated Qiang languages in different areas and found similar watchtowers in the Maowen (茂汶) Qiang Autonomous County (formerly Mao (茂) County), and in Heishui (黑水), Songpan (松潘), Wenchuan and Li (理) Counties. All of the watchtowers were alike except for slight differences in architecture or other characteristics. However, none of the people in the local area, whether Qiang or Han, could clearly explain the origin and function of these watchtowers. This mystery has been on my mind for the past 20 years. As time has gone by, I have acquired a growing body of information. In this paper, I would like to present some clues to the solution of the "watchtower mystery." Hopefully my presentation will stimulate further research on the Qiang "watchtowers."

**I. Geographic Distribution
and Architectural Characteristics**

In 1958, I went to Maerkang (马尔康) County in the Aba Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture and found a large number of watchtowers in the villages where the Jiarong (嘉绒) language is spoken. In 1964 and 1965, I went to Lanping (兰坪) and Weixi (维西) in Yunnan Province to investigate the Pumi (普米) language

and found a few watchtowers in the villages where Pumi is spoken. From 1978 to 1982, I went to Muli (木里), Xichang (西昌), and Mianning (冕寧) in Liangshan (涼山) Prefecture, and to Jiulong (九龍), Kangding (康定), and Yajiang (雅江) in Ganzi (甘孜) Prefecture, all in the western part of Sichuan province, to investigate the Muya (木雅), Ergong (爾龔), Guiqiong (貴瓊), Namuyi (納木義), Shixing (史興), Ersu (爾蘇) and Zhaba (扎巴) languages. Many watchtowers exist in the areas where these languages are spoken.

In terms of geographical location, watchtowers are basically distributed along the upper reaches of the Min River, the middle reaches of the Dadu River, the middle-lower reaches of the Yalong River and along the middle reaches of the Jinsha and the Lancang Rivers. They are most concentrated along the Min, Dadu and Yalong Rivers. In some areas almost all the villages have watchtowers, while in other areas there is only one for several villages. They are particularly scarce along the Jinsha and Lancang Rivers in Weixi and Lanping in Yunnan Province; only one or two watchtowers can be found in the heavily populated villages of the Pumi nationality.

Watchtowers are usually built at the intersection of river valleys, which are key points of transportation, or on the ridges of mountains, which are strategic locations. Most of them are in close proximity to villages. Some are even in the center of villages. At some locations, several watchtowers are clumped together, forming a row.

Watchtowers are built with irregular stones and mud. Their shape is trapezoidal—the lower part is wide and the upper part narrow, with a hollow center. The diameter of the lower part is about four meters and that of the upper part is about two to 2.5 meters. The lower wall is about one meter thick and the top wall about 50 to 60 centimeters. The highest watchtower is about 200 feet high, while the lowest is probably over 100 feet. In each watchtower there are several floors made of wood, with a simple wooden ladder to get to the top. Most of the present watchtowers are old and have not been repaired for a long time, so the wooden structures have rotted away, leaving only the outer shell.

Externally, most watchtowers are square, with a hollow square cross section. Some have six or eight corners, the cross sections of which look like six or eight-pointed stars, respectively. Though they are all built with irregular stones from the mountains, their vertical edges, whether square, hexagonal or octagonal, are very sharp and clear. They look magnificent at a distance.

It is hard to date the watchtowers precisely. However, it is clear that their builders were highly skilled. Some of the watchtowers have withstood large earthquakes and sustained no damage. The degree of their strength is astonishing.

While visiting various places we learned from the stories told us by some of the old people that watchtowers were built to guard against aggression from external enemies and to protect the people from surprise attacks. They were also used to watch enemy activity, command battles, and make contact with other villages. We are lacking information about whether or not they also served as beacon towers, so the answer to this must await further research.

It is noteworthy that names for the watchtowers have been around a long time, and places named for watchtowers are distributed throughout the areas with watchtowers. The names of many places simply take the name "watchtower", e.g. the villages named "Diao Fang" (碉房) in Ganluo (甘洛) and Jiulong Counties. Some are named according to the building materials used in the watchtower, such as "Shidiaolou" (石碉樓) [stone watchtower] Village in Heishui County and "Tudiaolou" (土碉樓) [earth watchtower] Village in Muli County. Some names are based on the appearance of the watchtower, such as "Gaodiao" (高碉) [high watchtower] Village and "Landiao" (爛碉) [broken watchtower] Village in Jiulong County and "Diaotou" (碉頭) [watchtower-head] Village in Wenchuan County. Some are based on its color, such as "Bai Diao" (白碉) [white watchtower] Village in Muli County and "Heihu Diao" (黑虎碉) [black tiger watchtower] Village in Jinchuan (金川) County. Some are based on the shape of the watchtower, such as "Baguadiao" (八卦碉) [hexagram watchtower] Village in Dajin (大金) County and "Bajiaolou" (八角樓) [eight-corner building] in Yajiang County. There are also villages which gave themselves new names based on the local watchtower, such as "Diaolouping" (碉樓坪) [watchtower plain] and "Wangjiadiaofang" (王家碉房) [Wang family watchtower] Villages in Mianning County. It is even more interesting that some places are named after the word for "watchtower" in the language of the local minority. For instance, Luhua town (蘆花), which the Red Army passed by during the Long March, is the county seat of Heishui County in the northwestern part of Sichuan Province. The name "Luhua" is a transliteration of the local Qiang name "Uluqhua". "Ulu" means "watchtower", while "qhua" means "leaning." "Luhua," therefore, means "leaning watchtower" in Qiang. Long ago there was a high watchtower stretching up to the sky in the center of Luhua town, at the intersection of the Heishui River and the Boluo (波洛) canal. Because the watchtower was slightly leaning, it was given the name "Luhua". It was still undamaged when I went to Heishui County in 1960. It is a great pity that this relic was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. Other places which take their names from the local word for "watchtower" can be found in the areas of Kangding County where the Muya language is spoken. There are places there named "Eluo" (俄洛), "Wolong" (窩龍) and "Wu" (悟), all of which are words for "watchtower" in the Muya language.

II. Watchtower — "Qiong Long"

The term "Qiong Long" was first found in the book *Hou Han Shu* (後漢書). In the section about the Ran Mang Yi (冉駝夷) in the volume *Nan Man Xi Nan Yi Zhuan* (南蠻西南夷傳) it is recorded that "the people all lived near mountains and built their houses with stones; the high ones are more than 100 feet high and are called 'Qiong Long'." (Jian et al. 1958:564). The Ran Mang (冉駝), one of the minority nationalities of the southwest in ancient times, lived in Wenshan (文山) Prefecture, in what is now the eastern counties of the Aba Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. Historians believe that the present day Qiang people are descendants of the ancient Ran Mang tribe. The custom of the Ran Mang tribe to build Qiong Long was widespread in the western part of Sichuan Province. In the section on Fu Guo (附國) in the chapter on the western territories in the book *Sui Shu* (隋書) there is the following record of the customs and habits of Fu Guo: "Having a habit of revenge, people built their homes with stones so that they could protect themselves against any kind of attack. The highest was over 100 feet high with a base 50 to 60 feet deep. Each floor was about 10 feet high, separated with wood. The lower part had an area of three to four square meters and the upper part two to three square meters. It looked like a pagoda. There was a small door in the lower part. People could go up to the top from inside. The door was closed at night out of fear of thieves" (Jian et al. 1958:2119). There is a similar record of the dwellings of Fu Guo in *Xin Tang Shu* (新唐書): "There were no fences around the villages. People lived in the river valleys and built their homes of piled stones, which were over 100 feet high. The door was between the upper part and the base. People could go up to the top from inside" ("Lie Zhuan" Di 147 Xia (列傳第147下), p. 6328). Historian Ding Qian (丁謙), of the Qing Dynasty, said: "The territory of Fu Guo was outside the border of Dajianlu (打箭爐) in Sichuan Province, in the area of tribes which belonged to Duke Ming Zheng (明正宣慰使). The people there built their homes with stones. From their appearance we believe they were the Qiong Long mentioned in the section on the Ran Mang tribe in *Hou Han Shu* and were the Diao She (碉舍) mentioned in the Piao Guo (標國)¹ section of *Xin Tang Shu*, and what are now commonly called 'Diao Fang' (碉房). The tribes from various areas of western Sichuan to Tibet all lived in this same style of building. 'Chao' (寨), [the word used in the earlier writings for the homes of the Ran Mang], developed out of the word 'Diao' (碉), and '碉' is the original form of '碉'" (Jian et al. 1958:2120).

From the quotations above, we can see clearly that what are called "Diao Lou" today and "Chao" in *Sui Shu Xi Yu* are the "Qiong

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Long" of ancient times. Many historians have come to the same conclusion.

In the Tang Dynasty, Li Xian (李賢) studied the expression "Qiong Long" written in *Hou Han Shu* and said: "The local people of the tribe now called them 'Diao'" (Jian et al. 1958:565).

In the chapter "Sichuan II" in volume 66 of the book *Tian Xia Jun Guo Li Bing Shu* (天下郡國利病書), Gu Yanwu (顧炎武) of the Ming Dynasty described the Qiong Long as follows:

The ancient tribe Ran Mang of the Wei (威) and Mao (茂) areas built houses with stones and lived in them. They looked like stupas of several stories. Inside the door there were stairs leading up and down. Belongings were stored on the upper floor; people lived on the middle floor; livestock were raised on the ground floor. A house of 20 to 30 feet in height was called a Ji Long (a chicken coop), while a house of over 100 feet in height was called a 'Diao' (watchtower). (Li 1980:88-9)

There are also Qing Dynasty records. For instance, the chapter "Yi Customs," in volume 4, "Bian Fang" (邊防), of the book *Za Gu Ting Zhi* (雜谷廳志), written in the Tong Zhi period (同治) of the Qing Dynasty, mentions: "The people lived near mountains and built their houses with stones. The highest were over 100 feet high and were called 'Qiong Long'. The local people of the tribe called them 'Diao'" (Li 1980:88-9). In his supplementary notes to *Hou Han Shu*, Wang Xianqian (王先謙) says: "The expression 'Qiong Long' has no special meaning. It is from a local dialect. If the height of the Qiong Long is considered, this expression might be regarded as an alternate form of 'Qiong Long' (邛籠) 'vault'" (Jian et al. 1958:565). Wang Mingsheng (王鳴盛) believed that "there were watchtowers in Dajinchuan (大金川) and Xiaojinchuan (小金川), outside the border of present-day Sichuan Province. The word 'Diao' (碉) is not found in the dictionaries. It probably refers to what Li Xian (李賢) called 'Diao' (雕)" (Jian et al. 1958:565).

Since the Han Dynasty, records of Qiong Long have been made continuously, though after the Sui and Tang Dynasties the term "Qiong Long" was gradually replaced by "Diao" or "Chao." Moreover, both general and local history books always describe the Qiong Long in detail when they introduce the customs and habits of the minorities in these areas. It is obvious that the Qiong Long are an important cultural feature of the minorities in these areas.

We have compared the Qiong Long recorded in history books with the Diao (watchtowers) which still exist in various areas. They show no difference in shape, function, architectural features, or geographic distribution. We may, therefore, reasonably conclude that these two are one and the same thing. Nevertheless, a few points should be further explained:

1. Although in the paragraph of *Hou Han Shu* where it is stated that "people built houses with stones; the high ones were over 100 feet high and were called 'Qiong Long'" the author seems to be distinguishing "houses" from "Qiong Long", the meanings of these two words are ambiguous. He points out that the high ones were Qiong Long, but does not mention what the low ones were. The underlying meaning is that these are "houses." Later on, many scholars, while investigating the Qiong Long, tended to lump the houses of the Qiang nationality together with the Qiong Long and called them all "Diao Fang" (watchtowers). Only Gu Yanwu, of the late Ming Dynasty, in his book *Tian Xia Jun Guo Li Bing Shu*, distinguished between the two. He considered that "A house of 20 to 30 feet in height was called a 'Ji Long' (雞籠) (chicken coop); a building of over 100 feet in height was called a 'Diao' (watchtower)." He thus drew a clear distinction between "Ji Long" and "Diao." The expression "Ji Long" which Gu Yanwu used does not literally mean a chicken coop used to raise chickens. The Qiang never built houses 20 to 30 feet high just to raise chickens! The so-called "Ji Long" here refer to the common stone houses of the Qiang nationality because they called their houses "tɕi", i.e., "Ji." We can see that the term "Ji Long" is derived from a transliteration of a Qiang expression. The "Ji" of the Qiang nationality usually has three stories. The upper floor is used to store grain, firewood and other articles, the middle floor is the living quarters and the lower floor is for cattle, sheep and fowl. This corresponds exactly with the "Ji Long" described by Gu Yanwu.

2. With regard to the origin of the term "Qiong Long," later generations have had various explanations. Wong Xianqian, of the Qing Dynasty, believed that "the expression Qiong Long has no special meaning. It is from a local dialect." Li Xian, of the Tang Dynasty, believed that the local minorities called Qiong Long "Diao." These explanations fall far short of the truth. First of all, in the languages of the minorities in these areas, Qiong Long are not called "Diao." (Diao) 碉 / 雕 and 碉楼 (Diao Lou) are all from the local Han language. Of course, those minorities who know the Han language also call Qiong Long "Diao." Second, "Qiong Long" is not a local dialect word. I previously wrote a paper on the term "Qiong Long." (Sun 1981) showing that the expression "Qiong Long" is a transliteration from the Qiang language. In the northern dialect of Qiang, Qiong Long are now called "ɣlu", a word with an initial consonant cluster, rendered by the Chinese transliteration "Elu" (俄魯). Its first consonant (a prefix) is [ɣ]. From the development of consonant clusters in Tibeto-Burman, we can see that most of the words with the prefix [ɣ] in the Qiang language correspond to words with the prefix [g] in related languages. Hence, the proto form of the word [ɣlu] should be [*gəlu] or [*glu]. The word "Qiong" is in the "qun" (ɣβ) group of initials, whose initial consonant is reconstructed as [g]. This

corresponds well with the first syllable of [*gəlu]. As for the final of the word "Long," its main vowel corresponds to that of the Qiang word, and the loss of the final consonant is in accord with the regular phonetic development of the Qiang language (Liu 1984). This shows that [ɰlu] in the northern dialect of Qiang has a clear phonetic correspondence with the Chinese expression "Qiong Long." This correspondence is very similar to the phenomenon whereby "ku long" (喀隆) in Chinese is pronounced as [kɰɯŋ] or [kɰluŋ] in some of the minority languages.

3. With regard to the distribution of Qiong Long, *Hou Han Shu* mentions that the Qiong Long were mainly distributed in Wen Shan Prefecture, i.e., the present-day Min River valley. The *Fu Guo* section of *Sui Shu* mentioned that Jialiang (嘉良) had a river 600 to 700 feet wide and *Fu Guo* had a river over 100 feet wide which flowed south. Li Shaoming (李紹明) (1980:80) has shown that "the river in Jialiang was called the Dadu Waters (大度水) during the Tang Dynasty. It is now called the Dadu River (大渡河). The river in *Fu Guo* then should refer to the Yalong River." This inference is well founded. If language is taken into account, the Ergong speaking people centered around Daofu (道孚) are likely to be descendants of the *Fu Guo* people. The name "Daofu" is pronounced [ta vu] in Ergong; [ta] is a prefix and [vu] is the root. [vu] and [fu] (附) have an obvious genetic relationship, though whether the name of the country is based on the place name or, conversely, whether the place name is based on the country name is not known at present. Wang Mingsheng, of the Qing Dynasty, mentions in his book *Shiqi Shi Shangque* (十七史商榷) that "in *Dajinchuan* and *Xiaojinchuan*, outside the borders of Sichuan, all of the local tribes had Diao Fang (watchtowers)." We can see that the history books record that the distribution of the Qiong Long was in the river valleys of the Min, Dadu and Yalong Rivers, and this more or less corresponds to the situation in those areas today. The watchtowers in areas of the Jinsha River valley such as Lanping, Weixi and Zhongdian (中甸), in the western part of Yunnan Province, were built during the Yuan Dynasty when Mongolian troops pushed south. It was because of the southward march of the Mongols that a great number of people of the Pumi nationality in the Yalong River valley were forced to migrate south. The oral folk literature also records that it was only after the Yuan Dynasty [was established] that the people of the Pumi nationality settled in Lanping. They can clearly point out the route of the southward migration from Muli and Jiulong in Sichuan Province. After settling down, the Pumi continued their traditional customs and built Qiong Long around their villages. But they were smaller in scale and fewer than those along the Min, Dadu and Yalong Rivers.

III. Who Were the Creators of the Qiong Long Culture?

As we have pointed out above, the Qiong Long have a close relationship with the speakers of the Qiang language; the expression "Qiong Long" in Chinese is a transliteration of a Qiang word. Furthermore, we have inferred that the geographical location and the name of the Fu Guo tribes have a close relationship with the people now speaking the Ergong language. Now I want to further confirm that the creators of the Qiong Long culture are, indeed, the various nationalities who speak the languages of the Qiangic branch of Tibeto-Burman. The arguments are as follows:

1. Analysis of the geographical distribution of languages shows that the valleys of the Min, Dadu and Yalong Rivers, and some areas of the Jinsha, that is, all the places where there are Qiong Long, are now areas where people speak the languages of the Qiangic branch of Tibeto-Burman.² For example, Qiang and Jiarong are distributed along the upper reaches of the Min; Jiarong and Guiqiong are distributed along the upper reaches of the Dadu; Ersu along the lower reaches of the Dadu; Ergong and Zhaba are distributed in the valleys of the upper reaches of the Yalong; Muya, Pumi and Namuyi are distributed in the valleys of the middle reaches of the Yalong; and Shixing and Pumi are distributed in the valleys of the middle reaches of the Jinsha. Moreover, all residents who speak Qiangic languages, no matter what nationality they belong to, have special feelings for the Qiong Long. During our investigation, we visited the old people in various places. They were all proud of this cultural heritage left by their ancestors. We did not find any Qiong Long in villages where the residents do not speak one of the Qiangic languages. Nor did we find anyone among the other nationalities who live with speakers of one of the Qiangic languages who looked at the Qiong Long as the historic relics of their own nationalities. We therefore believe that the Qiong Long are relics of the ancestors of the present-day peoples who speak Qiangic languages.

2. In the last 100 years the people speaking Qiangic languages have not been building Qiong Long. However, their architectural style has been preserved in the building of houses, bridges and water conservation projects. Most of the speakers of Qiangic languages now live among Han, Tibetan, Yi, Naxi, and Bai peoples. However, none of these other nationalities know how to build such magnificent, strong and durable watchtowers using irregular stones. Only the people of the various nationalities speaking Qiangic languages have carried forward the traditional architectural skills and have widely used irregular stones as building materials for their houses, wells, ditches and bridges. Apparently, these high architectural skills are possessed only by those speaking Qiangic languages. After the Tang Dynasty, the Tu Fan (吐蕃) (Tibetan) force marched east to this area and mixed with

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the local people. Based on how the people now refer to themselves, it seems that most of the Qiangic speaking residents have already mixed with the Tibetans. But the languages, customs and habits which they have preserved are different from the Tibetans, and reflect certain aspects of the historical relationship between the nationalities (see Li 1980). Hence, the Tibetans of this area also possess the architectural skills of the residents speaking Qiangic languages.

3. An analysis of the name "Qiong Long," as mentioned above, shows that it has a close relationship with the Qiang language. I want to verify further that the different forms of the term "Qiong Long" used by people speaking Qiangic languages have a cognate relationship. Following is a diagram which compares the forms of the term "Qiong Long" in 10 Qiangic languages and gives the reconstructed ancient forms to illustrate the development of the term.

Early Ancient (Qin and Han Dynasty)	Middle Ancient (Sui and Tang Dynasty)	Recent Ancient (Song and Yuan Dynasty)	Present language
	**/Gəlonj/ ->	*/Gəlǒ/ -> /ɣa ⁵⁵ la ⁵⁵ / */gəlǒ/ -> /gə ³³ lɛ ⁵⁵ dzu ³³ /	Namuyi E. dialect of Muya
	**/glonj/ ->	*/grǒ/ -> /tɕu ⁵³ / */glǒ/ -> /lɰ ³³ tsi ⁵³ / */glǒ/ -> /laydze/ */gjonj/ -> /(ta)jonj/	Shixing Guiqiong Ergong Suomo Jiarong
***/Glonj/			
or			
***/Gəlonj/	**/rGonj/ ->	*/rgǒ/ -> /rɣie/ */ɣlǒ/ -> /ɣɛ ³⁵ / */ɣlǒ/ -> /ɣuɛ ³⁵ / */Glonj/ -> */ɣlǒ/ -> /ɣuɛ ³⁵ / */ɣlǒ/ -> /ɣo ²⁴¹ / */ɣlǒ/ -> /ɣlu/	Danba Jiarong Zhaba No. dialect of Pumi W. dialect of Ersu So. dialect of Qiang No. dialect of Qiang

From the pronunciation of the expression "Qiong Long" and the historical processes tabulated above, we can see clearly that the Proto-Qiangic word */Glonj/ "Qiong Long" has been changed beyond recognition in the pronunciation of the modern Qiangic languages. However, we may roughly describe the path of its development in light of the phonetic correspondences in the different languages and

dialects. This development conforms completely to the rules of the phonetic evolution of the Tibeto-Burman languages. A few main points are as follows:

1. The initial consonant cluster [*G1] of [*G1oŋ] "Qiong Long" in Namuyi and Muya split into two syllables, which is in accord with the principle of the bifurcation or "dimidiation" of consonant clusters. In Shixing, [*1] became [r], then the two consonants combined to become [tʂ]. The changes that took place in Guiqiong and Ergong are opposite to those of Zhaba, Pumi and Ersu and the southern dialects of Qiang. [*G] has been dropped from the former, while [*1] has been dropped from the latter. Evidence for this type of development can be seen from a comparison of Qiang dialects.³ Following are a few examples:

	wheat	late	stone	tear	batten	look after
Southern Dialect	ɣuə ²³¹	ɣue ³³	ɣo ³³	ɣo ³³	ɣuə ²³¹	ɣua ³³
Northern Dialect	ɣlə	ɣla	ɣlu	ɣləq	ɣlə	ɣləɣla

2. As for the change in the finals, most of the final consonants of the Qiangic languages have already been lost, including [ŋ]. It is only in the Suomo Jiarong language that we find a trace of the final consonant. After the final consonant was lost, the main vowel became lower and fronter in some languages, such as Namuyi, Muya, Guiqiang, Ergong and Danba Jiarong.

3. In some languages, in addition to the native word used originally, a borrowed Tibetan word is also used. For instance, [dzu³³] in Muya, [tʂi⁵³] in Guiqiong and [ɣdze] in Ergong all borrow the form for "watchtower" from Tibetan.

4. Some of the Yi, Tibetan, and Naxi languages in the areas where people are mixed with residents speaking Qiangic languages do not have the term "Qiong Long". Others do have a word for this concept, but it is not cognate.

From the preceding arguments we can see that the expression "Qiong Long" is not only a transliteration from Qiang, but also reflects an etymon that can be reconstructed for the Proto-Qiangic period. Thus we may ask: why do people speaking the Qiangic languages all use the term "Qiong Long" even though they have had no contact with each other for thousands of years?

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IV. Qiong Long Culture and the Qiangic Branch of Tibeto-Burman

We have already shown that in geographic location and architectural style, Qiong Long culture is common to the speakers of the Qiangic languages. These common cultural features enable us to gain some insight into their historic evolution and their close relationship to each other. Here I would like to further confirm from linguistic evidence that those peoples who possess the Qiong Long culture have languages that are closely related to each other. Though these languages are all within Tibeto-Burman, and so share many general features of that language family, and though the people speaking Qiangic languages live near speakers of Yi, Tibetan, and Naxi, and so reflect some outside linguistic influence, they have preserved many of their unique features. These features are the basis for setting up a separate Qiangic branch of Tibeto-Burman distinct from the Tibetan branch or the Yi branch languages. Following is a discussion of some features common to 10 of the Qiangic languages—Qiang, Pumi, Jiarong, Muya, Ersu, Ergong, Namuyi, Shixing, Guiqiong, and Zhaba—in the realms of phonology, vocabulary and grammar:

A. *Phonology*. General phonological features of Qiangic languages: a large number of simple initial consonants—generally over 40; all of the languages have initial consonant clusters; the consonant clusters of some languages still retain features of the proto-language; the vowel systems in most languages do not distinguish between tense and lax vowels, but contrast retroflex vs. non-retroflex vowels; diphthongs are mostly rising; most languages have the medials [i], [u], and [y]; final consonants have largely been lost, and only a few languages still preserve them; tone plays only a small role in the phonological system and some languages have not yet developed phonemic tones at all. Following is a more detailed description:

(1) All the Qiangic languages have the uvular stops [q] and [qh]. Some even have [G], and most languages have the fricatives [x] and [ʁ]. Some Yi branch languages also have uvulars. The words with uvular initial consonants have cognates throughout Tibeto-Burman, which implies that uvulars were a feature of the proto-language. Uvulars in different languages of Sino-Tibetan have developed either into the velars [k], [kh] and [g], or into glottals, that is, either into glottal stops or zero initials.

(2) Most Qiangic languages have four groups of affricates: dental, retroflex, palato-alveolar, and alveo-palatal. Materials on the Qiang dialects show that these four groups of affricates developed out of consonant clusters consisting of nonhomorganic stops and fricatives.⁴ Neither the Tibetan branch languages nor the Yi branch languages have this type of consonant cluster. Therefore, they have only two groups of affricates, or at most three.

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(3) The consonant clusters of the Qiangic languages have certain unique features: first, velar and uvular stops in some of the languages can combine with dental, retroflex, palato-alveolar and alveo-palatal fricatives to form consonant clusters. This kind of consonant cluster does not exist in the structure of Written Tibetan or in any modern Tibetan dialects. Second, bilabial stops in most of the Qiangic languages can be combined with dental, retroflex and alveo-palatal fricatives to form consonant clusters. Such consonant clusters also do not exist in Written Tibetan or modern Tibetan dialects.

(4) Qiangic languages have abundant rising diphthongs. This is from the effect of the final consonants of initial clusters on the main vowels. From a comparison of different languages and dialects we can see that various final consonants in clusters have gradually mutated into the medial vowels [i], [u], and [y] in the process of phonetic evolution. For instance, in some languages there are examples of [r] becoming [i] and of [l] becoming [u]. There are fewer diphthongs in the Tibetan and Yi branch languages. Their medial systems generally have only [i] and [u]. Few of those languages have [y].

(5) Qiangic languages generally have no final consonants. Certain languages have final consonants in a few words, but these result mostly from borrowing or mutation (Liu 1984). Few of them are inherited from the proto-language. Looking at the entire Tibeto-Burman language family, we can see that at present the Tibetan and Jingpho branch languages have preserved more final consonants. The Yi branch has completely lost its final consonants, so the Qiangic languages are similar to the Yi languages in this respect. However, in the Yi branch languages the dropped final stops have often been compensated for by a secondary tense-lax distinction in the vowel inventory. Also, nasal, lateral, and trill finals have been dropped and replaced by tonal distinctions. These developments are not obvious in the Qiangic languages.

B. Vocabulary. The lexicons of Qiangic languages absorb forms from foreign languages easily, and have a higher proportion of cognate words among them than with the languages of any other branch. The following is a more detailed description of these features:

(1) Most people speaking Qiangic languages are engaged in agriculture, some of them in both agriculture and animal husbandry, and in some areas they are engaged solely in animal husbandry. Nevertheless, in the vocabulary of the Qiangic languages, 70% of the words related to animal husbandry are borrowed from Tibetan. Only a few of the words are native Qiang creations, e.g. the word for "(cow's) milk". Most of the languages have no specific word for this. Instead, a compound is formed by combining the two words "cow" and "breast," i.e., "cow-breast." In addition, most of the people speaking Qiangic languages believe in Lamaism. Some of them believe in primitive polytheism. Most religious terms, therefore, are borrowed from

Tibetan. A majority of the new words related to the production of agricultural crops, tools, and everyday articles are borrowed from Chinese. According to incomplete statistics, the obvious foreign words of the Qiangic languages altogether account for over 30% of their vocabulary.

(2) With respect to word-formation, words in Qiangic languages are formed mainly by adding prefixes and compounding, whereas the words in the Tibetan branch languages are formed mainly by adding suffixes and compounding. The Yi branch languages do not usually add prefixes or suffixes in word-formation. Besides this, the roots of the basic adjectives in the Qiangic languages are generally reduplicated. This feature distinguishes the Qiangic languages from the Tibetan and Yi branch languages.

(3) The percentage of cognates shared among the languages of the Qiang branch is higher than the percentage of cognates common to both the Qiangic languages and other languages. In our comparisons, the number of words compared generally was from 1500 to 2000. Following is a chart of numbers and percentages from a comparison of words in Qiang with those of other Qiangic languages, and also with Yi, Tibetan, and Jingpho:

Base Language	Compared Language	No. of Compared Words	Cognates		Non-cognates	
			Number	%	Number	%
Qiang	Tibetan	1967	219	11	1748	89
	Yi	2018	276	13.7	1742	86.3
	Jingpho	1439	168	11.7	1271	88.3
	Pumi	1639	474	28.9	1165	71.1
	Jiarong	2372	422	17.8	1950	82.2
	Muya	1607	400	24.9	1207	75.1
	Ergong	1515	395	26.1	1120	73.9
	Guiqiong	1506	378	25.1	1128	74.9
	Ersu	1885	403	21.4	1482	78.6
	Zhaba	1501	309	20.6	1192	79.4
	Namuyi	1603	354	22.1	1249	77.9
Shixing	1488	284	19.1	1204	80.9	

C. Grammar. The Qiangic languages have certain grammatical categories which are completely different from those in the Yi and Tibetan branches. Qiangic languages are comparatively rich in morphology for the expression of grammatical categories, in that they have both prefixes and suffixes, and are richer in inflectional morphology. Auxiliary words are also an important means of expressing grammatical categories. Within Tibeto-Burman, few languages use a large number of prefixes to express grammatical categories. In the Tibetan and Yi branch languages very few of the

grammatical forms of various parts of speech are expressed with prefixes. Only the Qiangic languages have many prefixes. The main grammatical features of the Qiangic languages are as follows:

(1) *The diminutive of nouns.* Qiangic languages express the diminutive by adding a suffix after the noun. The suffix added is generally derived from the word for "son." Since "son" is cognate in the Qiangic languages, the suffixes are also cognate.

(2) *The case of personal pronouns.* The personal pronouns in most Qiangic languages have "cases," which in general are the nominative, genitive and objective. All these cases are expressed by means of inflection of the initial or final.

(3) *The usage of the classifier.* The classifiers in the Qiangic languages have three features different from other language branches: first, classifiers are more abundant; second, classifiers and numerals are closely combined—in some of the languages numerals cannot be used without classifiers; third, when classifiers are used together with numerals, numerals are always placed in front of classifiers. The first and third features distinguish the Qiangic languages from the Tibetan and Jingpho branch languages, while the second distinguishes them from the Yi branch languages.

(4) *The personal category of verbs.* Verbs in most of the Qiang branch languages are inflected for person (Sun 1983b). The personal category is formed by adding a contracted form of the personal pronoun as a prefix or suffix before or after verbs. The first and second person of this kind of affix tend to have a more obvious relation to the personal pronouns, whereas the third person is only marked with one distinctive feature. Since the constitution of the personal category has much to do with the independent personal pronouns, the grammatical forms for expressing the personal category in different languages apparently have a common origin. It has been argued that verbs in Tibetan also inflect for person, but Tibetan's personal category and those of the Qiangic languages have nothing in common.

(5) *The mutuality category of verbs.*⁵ Verbs in Qiangic languages usually have a category of "mutuality" (Sun 1984). The grammatical meanings and morphological forms are generally the same in the various Qiangic languages. The Tibetan and Yi branch languages do not have this category.

(6) *The directional category of verbs.* Verbs in Qiangic languages usually have a category of "directionality," which is realized by adding various prefixal elements to the verb root. I discussed the similarities and differences in directional categories among Qiang, Pumi, and Jiarong in an article in *Minzu Yuwen*, 1981.1. Soon after that we found that the same use of prefixes to express directionality in verbs also exists in Muya, Ergong, Ersu, Guiqiong, Zhaba, and Shixing. In addition to directionality, this category of the Qiangic languages is sometimes also used to express time reference or the imperative, and

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plays an important role in the whole grammatical system. It is for this reason that the directional category has become one of the important distinguishing features of the Qiangic languages. It has been argued that Tibetan also has this category. Some grammarians consider certain initial consonants in the consonant clusters of Tibetan as prefixes of directionality, but this inference lacks practical and realistic proof and is therefore untenable.

We could list other features of the Qiangic languages which distinguish them from other language branches, but this would weaken our main thesis. The facts listed above are sufficient to illustrate that the existence of a separate Qiangic branch of Tibeto-Burman is an objective historical fact. Although the members of this branch split from each other and developed independently, through comparison we can clearly see their basic form and the tortuous road they have traveled in their development.

The changes in a nationality's language, especially in basic vocabulary and grammatical structure, are slower than changes in other elements of their culture. The close relationship of the languages and the common cultural features enable us to picture one tight-knit tribal group in the valleys of the Min, Dadu, Yalong and Jinsha Rivers. They have settled in, developed, struggled, migrated, split up and mixed together in these mountain areas since the time of the Qin and Han Dynasties. During this long period of development, they sometimes rose in victory, sometimes withered away, sometimes ruled and at times were subservient to other tribes, yet they managed to survive through it all, and still retain certain native characteristics.

V. Other Considerations

The ancient Qiang people were a large nationality who competed for hegemony for a time in the areas of Gansu, Qinghai, and the Central Plains. After the Zhou and Qin Dynasties, a portion of the Qiang people were driven by the Qin Dynasty to the southwestern part of China, in river valleys thousands of miles from their homeland. They were separated from other Qiang people and had no contact with them. Later on, their descendants split into various tribes. For instance, the tribe known as the Maoniu (羴牛) were the Yuesui Qiang (越巂羌) people; the Balma (白馬) tribe were the Guanghan Qiang (廣漢羌) people; and the Canlang (參狼) tribe were the Wudu Qiang (武都羌) people. The Qiang people who migrated south during the Qin and Han Dynasties and settled in the western and northern parts of Sichuan were frequently written about because wars often broke out in those areas.

The Qiang people who migrated west or south, far from the Central Plains, were seldom recorded in history books. However, they did not simply disappear. Some of them migrated west to the river

valley of the Yaluzangbu (雅魯藏布江) River and mixed with the local people there. They gradually developed and became stronger. Some migrated south to the southern foothills of the Himalayas, settled and developed, and some went south along the Six Rivers and settled in the valley of the Irawaddy River. Using the distance between languages in Tibeto-Burman, we can estimate the order in which the various groups of these people who had once ruled the northern regions split up, and when. Generally speaking, the greater the differences among the languages of the same family, the longer the time since their split. From this it seems that the various nationalities who possess Qiong Long culture and speak Qiangic languages gradually began to split up after the Han Dynasty. Some of the nationalities and languages have experienced repeated processes of splitting and combination.

Besides their common features of language and culture, the speakers of the Qiangic languages have still kept some traces of their primitive religion (totem), customs and habits. For instance, all the residents speaking Qiangic languages look upon the "white stone" (flint) as an idol. This might have something to do with the Qiang people's use of fire. The Qiang call the stone which can be used to make fire by striking "xluphi", i.e., "white stone." They idolize and worship this stone and even have a folk legend about it, praising and deifying it as a weapon the Qiang nationality used to defeat foreign invaders.

In the winter of 1981, while I was investigating the Muya language in the Mengzong Brigade of the Xieluo People's Commune in Shimian (石棉) County, there occurred a festival at which sacrifices were offered to ancestors. The people not only enshrined a white stone on the roof, but also kept one in the house. During the periods of worship people burned incense and prostrated themselves. This custom was also seen in the Pumi areas. In the upper reaches of the Min River we have found the white stone used as a burial object in ancient tombs. More research needs to be done on this topic.

In addition, extended research on the Qiangic languages will play an important role in understanding certain languages which have died out. In the past, most of the specialists who studied the Xixia (西夏) language believed that Xixia was close to the Yi branch of Tibeto-Burman. However, in recent years, since certain features in the grammar of Xixia have been described, people have gained more insight into the language. I have contrasted Xixia with some of the Qiangic languages I have investigated and found that it is much closer to the Qiang branch, especially Muya, Ergong, Zhaba, and Guiqiong, than to the Yi branch, in terms of vocabulary. Research into the Qiangic languages is very helpful to the interpretation of southwestern minority languages written in Chinese (華夷譯語). For example, the "Tosu" in the paper "Tosu Yakugo Kenkyū" (多續譯語研究) by Professor Nishida is the central dialect of Ersu. Through fieldwork

and thorough investigation of the minority languages in these areas, many historical puzzles will gradually be solved.

Notes

- * Editor's note: Our thanks to Jackson T-S. Sun for carefully checking over this translation, and to Chang Suchen for writing in the Chinese characters.
- ¹In a check of the book *Xin Tang Shu, Piao Guo*, I did not find the word "Diao She", but under the section on "San Wang Man" (三王蠻) ("Three-King Tribe") is the record: "East of Li (黎) and Qiong (邛) Prefectures there was the Ling tribe (凌蠻) and in the west there was the 'Three-King Tribe' who were descendants of the Baima family (白馬氏) of the Zuodu tribe (作都夷). The three surnames Yang, Liu, and Hau inherited the leading positions in the tribe and made themselves kings, so they were known as the "Three-King" tribe. They built stone houses and lived in them. The houses were called 'Diao She' (窰舍)."
- ²For more detail, see Sun 1983a and 1983c.
- ³With regard to the rules for consonant cluster development in Tibeto-Burman, please see Sun 1985 and Sun 1987.
- ⁴For further discussion of the unique characteristics of the Qiang languages, please refer to Sun 1982 and Sun 1983c.
- ⁵ Editor's Note: "mutuality" here means that through a type of reduplication or other variation in the verb (usually transitive), the verb has the meaning that the agent and patient perform the action upon each other, or that the action is repeated.

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