

A NOTE ON THE PHONETIC EVOLUTION OF *YOD-PA-RED* IN CENTRAL TIBET

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Despite the current inconsistent spellings such as *yod-red* (Tournadre 1996: 229-231 et passim, 2003), *yog-red* (Denwood 1999: 158 et passim), and *yoḥo-red* (Hu et al. 1989: 64 et passim) of the existential copula and auxiliary verb which is pronounced as $y\underset{\cdot}{\text{ɔ}}\underset{\cdot}{\text{r}}\underset{\cdot}{\text{e}}$ (Chang and Shefts 1964: 15) or $yo:re'$ (Tournadre 1996: 229-231) there is widespread agreement that *yod-pa-red* is the etymological origin of this morpheme (Chang and Chang 1968: 106ff, Tournadre 1996: 229). It is regularly spelled *yod-pa-red* in the newspaper articles collected from the *Mi dmañs brñan par* (人民畫報 *Peoples Pictorial*) by Kamil Sedláček (1972, e.g. p. 27, *bsam-gyi yod-pa-red* ‘he was thinking’).

The pronunciation of this auxiliary is not what one would predict from the spelling. In all likelihood it is the frequency and unstressed syntactic position of the word which led to this deviant phonetic development. The existence of studies and handbooks for the language of Lhasa over more than a century permits us to trace the phonetic development of *yod-pa-red* with surprising precision.

$y\underset{\cdot}{\text{o}}'pa\ re'$ [$j\underset{\cdot}{\text{o}}\underset{\cdot}{\text{p}}a\ re'$]¹ (Sandberg 1894: 46)²
 $yo-wa-re$ [$j\underset{\cdot}{\text{o}}wa-re$] (Bell 1905: 37)
 $y\underset{\cdot}{\text{o}}-wa-re$ [$j\underset{\cdot}{\text{o}}wa-re$] (de Roerich and Phuntshok 1956: 49-50)
 $[jo:^3.ɛ^3]$ (Jin 1958: 145)
 $y\underset{\cdot}{\text{ɔ}}\underset{\cdot}{\text{r}}\underset{\cdot}{\text{e}}$ [$j\underset{\cdot}{\text{o}}\underset{\cdot}{\text{r}}\underset{\cdot}{\text{e}}$] (Chang and Shefts 1964: 15)³
 $yo:re'$ [$jo:re'$] (Tournadre 1996: 229)

It seems unlikely that the change from $j\underset{\cdot}{\text{o}}wa-re$ to $jo:^3.ɛ^3$ took place in the two years between the publication of de Roerich and Phuntshok on the one hand and Jin on the other. What is more likely is that de Roerich and Phuntshok, without direct access to Tibet, were describing a more conservative dialect of Central Tibet, whereas Jin would have had access to speakers from Lhasa itself.

Miller highlights the distinction between retroflex affricates in Lhasa as opposed to retroflex stops in Central Tibetan as a major diagnostic isogloss separating these two forms of Tibetan (1955). One might therefore expect that the language described by Jin has retroflex affricates whereas that described by de

¹ Sandberg specifies earlier that $y\underset{\cdot}{\text{o}}'$ is low tone (1894: 15).

² The only earlier manual of ‘colloquial’ Tibetan, Lewin (1879), makes no mention of *yod-pa-red*. Hendersen (1903) is not available to me.

³ Compare Chang and Chang (1978: xx) and Tournadre and Dorje (2003: 24-25) for the discussion of falling tone, which I analyze as a final glottal stop.

Roerich and Phuntshok has retroflex stops. This is not quite the case; Jin reports retroflex affricates (1958: 9), but Roerich and Phuntshok report a “consonantal diphthong in which the chief element is a cacuminal dental articulated by the tongue-tip against the hard palate” (1956: 7), which they transcribe as tʂ, probably also a retroflex affricate.

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