

## CASE MARKERS OF PERSONAL PRONOUNS IN TIBETO-BURMAN LANGUAGES

**Sun Hongkai**

Institute of Nationality Studies  
Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing

### INTRODUCTION

Some Tibeto-Burman (henceforth TB) languages possess an inflectional category of case in their personal pronouns. These case distinctions are marked by morphophonemic changes affecting the initial consonant, rhyme, and/or tone of the pronoun. The present paper deals with the varying forms, origins and other problems concerning the case category for personal pronouns in TB languages.

### 1.0 THE INFLECTED FORMS OF PERSONAL PRONOUNS IN TB LANGUAGES

#### 1.1 *Qiang (Taoping dialect)*

Take the southern dialect of Qiang for example. The case declension involves both the initial and the rhyme of the first and second person singular pronouns. See Figure 1.

	<i>nominative</i>	<i>possessive</i>	<i>accusative</i>
<i>1st sing. pronoun</i>	ŋa <sup>55</sup>	qo <sup>55</sup>	qa <sup>55</sup>
<i>2nd sing. pronoun</i>	no <sup>55</sup>	ko <sup>55</sup>	kuə <sup>55</sup>

*Figure 1. Southern Qiang.*

What is worth noting is that the case category covers not only personal pronouns, but also interrogative and indefinite pronouns. See Figure 2.

	<i>original form</i>	<i>nominative</i>	<i>possessive</i>	<i>accusative</i>	<i>causative</i>
<i>1st sing.</i>	ŋa <sup>55</sup>	ŋa <sup>55</sup>	qo <sup>55</sup> or qa <sup>55</sup>	qa <sup>55</sup>	ŋa <sup>55</sup>
<i>2nd sing.</i>	no <sup>55</sup>	no <sup>55</sup>	ko <sup>55</sup>	kuə <sup>55</sup>	no <sup>55</sup>
<i>interrogative</i>	sɿ <sup>55</sup>	sa <sup>55</sup> or sɿ <sup>55</sup>	so <sup>55</sup>	sa <sup>55</sup> or sɿ <sup>55</sup>	si <sup>55</sup>
<i>indefinite</i>	mə <sup>33</sup>	mi <sup>55</sup>	mo <sup>33</sup>	mə <sup>33</sup>	mi <sup>33</sup>

Figure 2. Southern Qiang.

In the Taoping dialect of Qiang, we find that the first and second person pronouns and the indefinite pronouns have three forms respectively, while the interrogative pronoun has four inflected forms. The personal pronoun is marked by means of initial inflexion, whereas interrogative and indefinite pronouns inflect in terms of their rhymes. The nominative and accusative forms in a sentence are clearly distinguished, but less clearly so for possessive pronouns. Compared with the nominative and accusative forms of personal pronouns, the interrogative and indefinite are not strictly distinctive in their case form. Generally speaking, the northern dialect of Qiang keeps much more of proto-Qiang; nevertheless, certain northern and southern dialects only keep the accusative rather than the nominative. In the Mawo variety of the northern dialect of Qiang, for instance, the first singular personal pronoun is *qa* while *kuə* is the second singular.

### 1.2 Muya (western dialect of Liuba Village, Kangding County)

The morphophonemics of Muya pronominal forms are more complicated than those of Qiang, since they affect the initial, rhyme and tone all together. See Figure 3.

	<i>person pron.</i>	<i>nominative</i>	<i>possessive</i>	<i>accusative</i>
<i>1st sing.</i>	ŋw <sup>55</sup>	ŋi <sup>55</sup>	ŋge <sup>35</sup> ni <sup>33</sup>	ŋge <sup>35</sup>
<i>2nd sing.</i>	ne <sup>55</sup>	ne <sup>55</sup> i <sup>55</sup>	ne <sup>55</sup> ɣw <sup>35</sup> ni <sup>55</sup>	ne <sup>55</sup>
<i>3rd sing.</i>	e <sup>33</sup> tsuw <sup>55</sup>	e <sup>33</sup> tsi <sup>55</sup>	e <sup>33</sup> tse <sup>35</sup> ni <sup>55</sup>	e <sup>55</sup> tse <sup>55</sup>
<i>1st dual (exclusive)</i>	ŋw <sup>33</sup> nuw <sup>53</sup> nuw <sup>33</sup>	ŋw <sup>33</sup> ni <sup>53</sup> nuw <sup>33</sup>	ŋw <sup>33</sup> ne <sup>55</sup> ni <sup>33</sup>	ŋw <sup>33</sup> ne <sup>35</sup>
<i>1st dual (inclusive)</i>	je <sup>33</sup> nuw <sup>55</sup> nuw <sup>33</sup>	je <sup>33</sup> ni <sup>55</sup> nuw <sup>33</sup>	je <sup>33</sup> ne <sup>55</sup> ni <sup>33</sup>	je <sup>33</sup> ne <sup>35</sup>
<i>2nd dual</i>	ne <sup>33</sup> nuw <sup>55</sup> nuw <sup>33</sup>	ne <sup>33</sup> ni <sup>55</sup> nuw <sup>33</sup>	ne <sup>33</sup> ne <sup>55</sup> ni <sup>33</sup>	ne <sup>33</sup> ne <sup>55</sup>
<i>3rd dual</i>	e <sup>33</sup> tsuw <sup>55</sup> nuw <sup>33</sup>	e <sup>33</sup> tsi <sup>55</sup> nuw <sup>33</sup>	e <sup>33</sup> tse <sup>55</sup> ni <sup>33</sup>	e <sup>33</sup> tse <sup>55</sup>
<i>1st plural (exclusive)</i>	ŋw <sup>33</sup> nuw <sup>53</sup>	ŋw <sup>33</sup> ni <sup>55</sup>	ŋw <sup>33</sup> ni <sup>55</sup> ne <sup>55</sup> ni <sup>33</sup>	ŋw <sup>33</sup> nuw <sup>55</sup>
<i>1st plural (inclusive)</i>	je <sup>33</sup> nuw <sup>53</sup>	je <sup>33</sup> ni <sup>55</sup>	je <sup>33</sup> ni <sup>55</sup> ne <sup>55</sup> ni <sup>33</sup>	je <sup>33</sup> nuw <sup>55</sup>
<i>2nd plural</i>	ne <sup>33</sup> nuw <sup>53</sup>	ne <sup>55</sup> ni <sup>55</sup>	ne <sup>33</sup> ne <sup>55</sup> ni <sup>33</sup>	ne <sup>55</sup> nuw <sup>55</sup>
<i>3rd plural</i>	e <sup>33</sup> nuw <sup>53</sup>	e <sup>33</sup> ni <sup>55</sup>	e <sup>33</sup> ne <sup>55</sup> ni <sup>33</sup>	e <sup>33</sup> nuw <sup>55</sup>

Figure 3. Muya.