Invited Comment on 'This and that in TB/ST'
Graham Thurgood

Of necessity, Benedict's discussion of Tibeto-Burman deitics is complex and far-
ranging. At one point or another in the history of TB, the deictics have been incorporated,
on the nominal side, into pronominal systems, ergative case marking systems, and topicalization;
on the verbal side, deictics have been incorporated into pronominal agreement systems, tense-
aspect systems, and copular systems. As a consequence, the very complexity of that paper makes
it difficult in a short space to do much more than comment on isolated parts.

The copula *way [p.85]. It is not clear that the difference between the rhymes of
Thurgood's Proto-Lolo-Burmese *way and Bradley's Proto-Loloish *way reflects anything more
than the fact that the reconstructions are for different levels; however, Benedict's reconstruction
of PLB *s-wan[1] for Lahu ve is a different matter. Thus far attempts to derive Lahu ve, Lisu
rgh[3], and Akha eu from a single etymon have never been totally satisfactory, perhaps because
three reflexes derive from two phonologically similar but distinct etymons: PLB *s-wan[1] and
*way. [Note: the PLB *-an rhyme will not work for Akha eu; PLB *-ay does not normally give
the rhyme reflex found in Lahu ve]

Pronouns, pronominalization, and PTB *ga [pp. 85-6, P. 96, fn. 15]. Bauman (1975)
equated the *ga found in Kiranti as the initial element in the disyllabic first person
independent pronoun [PTB *ga + *ya 'I' > Proto-Kiranti *gaya 'I'] and as the first person
subject agreement marker [PK *ka- '1st'] with the Chin *ga also found as the first element
of a disyllabic first person pronoun [PC *kai 'I' < *ga + *i] and as the first person
subject agreement marker [PC *ka- '1st']. In Kiranti, the evidence for the reconstruction
of a disyllabic first person pronoun *gaya 'I' is overwhelming. The Eastern Branch shows
transparently obvious reflexes of *gaya, while Dumi of the Western Branch requires only a
*gaya > *ganu >   *aŋu   shift; only the Bahing unit no longer shows a disyllabic
root, but even here the vowel quality suggests the former presence of *ya [*gaya > *ganu
> *goyu > *goy> *go 'I']. In Chin, the *ga appears again in *kai 'I' [< *ga + *i] but with
little evidence of an accompanying *ya 'I'.

However, Benedict's contention that pronominalization is a recent innovation is
supported not undermined by the nature of the comparative evidence. Within Kiranti, the
majority of the languages still preserve the disyllabic pronoun *gaya 'I' often with the
component parts still readily identifiable on inspection; here, the very pervasiveness and
lack of degeneration in the modern roots argues strongly for the recency of the system.
Within Chin, the *kai 'I' [<*ga + *i] root is found as such not just in each subgroup but
also in almost every language; again, the extreme pervasiveness and uniformity of the modern
reflexes as well as the roots of the pronominalization system argues strongly for its
recency. The independence of the Kiranti and the Chin systems is obvious from the fact
that a distinct second element occurs in both disyllabic roots.

The pronominal use of *ga has developed out of an earlier topicalizer use [cf. WB
ka' for a topicalizing use; cf. Karen for an example where a topicalizer wé has merged
with a first person subject but not object pronoun ('I': Ja (O), jé (S) < Ja 'I' + wé].

Jones, Robert B. Jr. 1961. **Karen Linguistics Studies: Description, Comparison, and Texts**.
     UCPL 25.