

## Tangut and Tibeto-Burman Morphology

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Since the earliest serious Tangut studies (Laufer 1916) it has been generally accepted that Tangut is a Tibeto-Burman language, with particular links to the Lolo-Burmese branch of the family. Despite certain embarrassing problems at the outset (Pelliot 1926), nothing has emerged in Tangut studies since that time which seriously challenges this view, which is subscribed to by both the Leningrad and Kyoto factions.<sup>1</sup> Recently, however, a dissent to this view has been voiced by Professor Kwanten, who suggests that there may be problems with currently available reconstruction schemes for Tangut which invalidate the evidence for its TB affiliation. In a recent paper in this journal (1982) Kwanten specifically calls into question the reliability of some of the work of K.B. Kepping on Tangut verb morphology. My purpose in this paper, which is intended as a reply both to Kwanten's specific claims in that paper and to his general scepticism on the matter, is to demonstrate that the aspect of Tangut syntax which he discusses, and two other morphosyntactic systems explored in recent work by Kepping, are of indisputable TB provenience, and thus provide strong evidence for the TB affiliation traditionally claimed for that language. I will first discuss two aspects of what I will, following Wolfenden (1929), call the 'directive' category in Tangut, and then discuss the verb agreement system which is the focus of Kwanten's article.

### I. The Tangut directive prefixes

Kepping (1979a) has identified a set of seven verb prefixes which serve in Tangut as markers of perfective aspect. The distribution of the prefixes is lexically governed, so that as a rule any given verb takes only one of the seven prefixes. It turns out that the classes of verb defined by the distribution of the prefixes tend to have certain semantic features in common, and from this Kepping has been able to reconstruct the original values of the prefixes. (The general line of argument, and exemplification for six of the prefixes, are given in Kepping 1971, which however was written before the discovery of the *ndI*<sup>2</sup> prefix, which turns out for our purposes to be crucially important). The seven prefixes, in the Sofronov reconstruction, are:

<i>a</i> <sup>1</sup> 'upwards'	<i>na</i> <sup>1</sup> 'downwards'
<i>kI</i> <sup>1</sup> 'toward a reference point'	<i>viə</i> <sup>2</sup> 'away from a reference point'
<i>ndI</i> <sup>2</sup> 'hither'	<i>tha</i> <sup>2</sup> 'hence'

and *riə*<sup>2</sup>, the meaning of which is unclear.<sup>2</sup>

Now, without even looking at the forms, any Tibeto-Burmanist will immediately recognize this as describing an example of the type of 'directive' system exhaustively catalogued by Wolfenden in his classic Outlines of Tibeto-Burman Linguistic Morphology (1929). The morphosyntactic indication of deictic orientation of a verb, and the grammaticalization of such systems and their absorption into the tense/aspect system, are universal and recurrent throughout the TB family (see also DeLancey 1980, 1983).<sup>3</sup>

When we do examine the actual forms, the TB provenience of the system is immediately obvious. First of all, the deictic pair, ndI/tha, are obviously related to a well-attested TB deictic demonstrative system<sup>4</sup> exemplified by Tibetan 'di, Jinghpaw ndai 'this', Tibetan de, Jinghpaw dai 'that'.<sup>5</sup> The remaining prefixes, and the system as a whole, bear comparison with strikingly similar systems in Qiang (from Sichuan; long reputed to be a likely close cousin, both linguistically and ethnically, of Tangut), its neighbor rGyarong, and the little known Primi of Yunnan, all indisputably Tibeto-Burman (Qiang and rGyarong forms from Sun 1981a, Primi from Lu 1980):

	rGyarong	Qiang	Tangut	Primi
'up'	to-	tə-	a <sup>1</sup>	tə
'down'	na	a	na <sup>1</sup>	nə
'hither'		dze	ndi <sup>2</sup>	də
'hence'		tha	tha <sup>2</sup>	t'ə

The source and connections of the Tangut a<sup>1</sup> are not clear,<sup>6</sup> but for the other three terms the relationship of the Tangut to the rGyarong, Qiang and Primi forms is obvious. Since all four systems are verbal prefixes with a directive and/or aspectual function (see below), it is clear that we can reconstruct not merely individual morphemes, but a prefixed directive system encoding at least deictic and vertical orientation, for the common ancestor of the four languages -- which is to say that it is clear that there is such a common ancestor. It is also clear that this common ancestor is considerably younger than Proto-TB, as no such close match can be found in other branches of the family.

This evidence for the connection of the Tangut with the Primi system gives both of them particular importance in the study of TB historical morphosyntax, since together they form a hitherto missing link between young directive systems which still retain their original motional significance and old fossilized morphology of the Tibetan type, thus validating the seminal hypothesis of Wolfenden (1929). We find, preserved in Tibetan orthography, verbal prefixes of apparently aspectual force, the origins of which have been the subject of considerable but not always productive speculation. There is some reason to believe that the attested distribution of the prefixes

is not identical to the original system, which has been obscured by assimilation and dissimilation between prefix and initial. Nevertheless the distribution of the prefixes is clearly lexically governed. The original semantic force of the prefixes has likewise been obscured over time, but on the basis of internal and comparative evidence Wolfenden was able to infer an original directive sense for several of the prefixes, most particularly for the r- and l-, whose association with verbs that have some sort of motional sense is especially striking.<sup>7</sup> However, while productive directive systems abound in TB, as does the development of aspect marking from grammaticalized motion verbs (see DeLancey 1980, ch. 4, for copious examples of the former and several clear examples of the latter), we have until now lacked attestation of the necessary intermediate stage between a productive directive system and the thoroughly lexicalized system found in Tibetan. Tangut, in which the distribution of the prefixes is completely lexically governed, is an example of the system which would have had to exist in the ancestor of Classical Tibetan if Wolfenden's theory is correct, and the existence in Tibeto-Burman of such a system thus provides indirect support for Wolfenden's claim. Primi represents a slightly earlier stage of this line of development, and thus represents a link between younger systems and the Tangut and, eventually the Tibetan situation. In Primi many verbs can occur with any of the directive prefixes, so that for example the verb stó 'look' can occur in the constructions te-stó 'look up', ne-stó 'look down', t'ə-stó 'look there', de-stó 'look hither', k'ə-stó 'look outwards', and xə-stó 'look inwards'. Other verbs are restricted to only one prefix -- in some cases, at least, on fairly obvious semantic grounds. Thus gy 'buy' can take only de- 'hither'. Lu does not explicitly discuss the aspectual force of these prefixes, but he glosses, for example, de-gy as mǎi-le 'buy-PERFECTIVE', suggesting at least an incipient perfective sense for the directive prefixes. Thus in Primi we have the initial stages of lexicalization of what are still primarily directive morphemes (i.e. still retain a primarily directional sense) with some perfective force, while in Tangut we find a more thoroughly lexicalized set with strong perfective force but recoverable directive sense. In Tibetan, of course, we find the final stage, a completely lexicalized set of prefixes with purely aspectual force, but where the pattern of association of prefixes with lexical verb sets still vaguely suggests an origin in an older directive system.

For the remaining three Tangut prefixes we do not have obvious TB etymologies. ki<sup>1</sup> 'towards' might well be related to Qiang kua 'toward the mountains',<sup>8</sup> and, lacking a gloss for rie<sup>2</sup>, there is nothing to stop us from speculating about a relationship to rGyarong ro 'toward the mountains' and/or ri 'toward the river'. However, the semantic equations here are not compelling, and since we do not yet have sufficient control of the phonological correspondences among these languages, we cannot confidently suggest etymological equations without a solid semantic argument.

Tangut *via*<sup>2</sup> 'away' is suggestive of the Lahu postverbal "particle of transportatory motion" *va* (Matisoff 1973:317-8), and both are ultimately related to the widespread TB motion verb *\*wa* (DeLancey 1980); but the details of the etymology remain to be worked out. Nevertheless the cognates which can be identified, the general congruity of the system with a well-attested TB morphosyntactic category, and its perfect congruence with the Qiang-rGyarong systems, establish the Tibeto-Burman provenience of the system beyond reasonable doubt.

## II. The secondary directive system

Like many other TB languages, Tangut has a younger, more transparently motional directive construction which has developed as the older system became morphologized and passed into the aspectual system. This system, described in Kepping 1982, involves the use of independent deictically specified motion verbs to provide deictic specification for other verbs. In this construction these verbs may provide either the sense 'go/come and V', as in (1), or 'V in this/that direction', as in (2):

- 1)   *ɿon*<sup>1</sup> *nga*<sup>1</sup> .*u*<sup>1</sup>   *.in*<sup>1</sup> *ldie*<sup>1</sup> *la*<sup>1</sup> *ɿie*<sup>1</sup>  
       Yue army Wu OBJECT destroy come when  
       'When the Yue army comes to destroy Wu ...'
- 2)   *ɿu*<sup>1</sup> *ɿe*<sup>1</sup> *ɿie*<sup>1</sup>       *ni* *la*<sup>1</sup> *ɿie*<sup>1</sup>  
       Shu send messenger arrive come when  
       'When the messenger sent from Shu arrives [here] ...'

The verbs which enter into this construction are *la*<sup>1</sup> and *ldie*<sup>2</sup> 'come' and *ɿie*<sup>1</sup>, *ta*<sup>1</sup>, *rie*<sup>2</sup>, and *vie*<sup>1</sup> 'go'. (More precise glosses are not yet available. It is worth pointing out that a multiplicity of motion verbs is a common feature of TB languages, and one which must be reconstructed for PTB and for the proto-language of each of the modern branches of the family (DeLancey 1980). Among the distinctions which are commonly lexicalized in the basic motion verb set are vertical orientation -- a distinction between 'go', 'go upwards', and 'go downwards' -- and boundedness -- the distinction between 'go off' and 'go somewhere in particular'. It would also be common to find a directive construction like this one in Tangut including such verbs as 'arrive', 'leave', 'enter', and 'emerge').

Of these verbs, *la*<sup>1</sup> and *ta*<sup>1</sup> have straightforward TB etymologies. *\*la* is clearly reconstructible as a Proto-Lolo-Burmese verb 'come' (Burling 1967:77, Bradley 1979:356).<sup>9</sup> The same etymon is apparently found in Qiang *ly* 'come' (Sun 1981b:212; cp. Proto-Loloish *li*<sup>3</sup> 'come down' (Bradley 1979:356)). As far as I can determine this form is not found elsewhere outside of LB,<sup>10</sup> which supports the traditional classification of both Tangut and Qiang as close to the LB branch, and thus confirms their association with one another. *\*ta* is a widespread TB root,

attested in e.g. Empeo ta 'go', Boro tang 'go', Central Tibetan t'as 'go',<sup>11</sup> Darmiya ta 'go', and arguably related to PLB \*Ntak -<sup>12</sup>ak 'ascend'. The other members of the set lack indubitable etymologies, in part because Tangut lexicography has not progressed to the point where we can assign explicit glosses to them. However, the vie<sup>1</sup> is probably related to TB \*wa, as is the directive prefix vis<sup>2</sup> 'away', and ldre<sup>2</sup> is probably related to Rawang di, Lisu dye, Mōnpa di, Bahing dī, Aka de 'go', perhaps reflecting an earlier compound \*la-di with the proximal \*la providing deictic specification for the deictically neutral \*di. Obviously these latter etymologies remain speculative.

In any case, the set contains at least two unmistakably TB forms. Equally significantly for our argument, the grammaticalized construction into which they enter is typically Tibeto-Burman. I will not repeat here the extensive discussion of such constructions from my dissertation (DeLancey 1980); suffice it to note that grammaticalized uses of motion verbs supplying either the sense of 'go/come and V' or deictic specification for deictically neutral motion verbs, can be found in every branch of the family, and that the process of further grammaticalization of these into morphological directive systems, and their subsequent replacement by new syntacticized motion verb constructions, is a recurrent theme in the history of every branch, and of almost every language in the family (DeLancey 1980, 1983).

### III. Verb agreement in Tangut

We now come to our most impressive exhibit of Tibeto-Burman morphology in Tangut, which is also the direct focus of Kwanten's published attack: the system of pronominal agreement of the verb. Here much more than in the preceding cases the evidence for the Tibeto-Burman provenience of the Tangut system is complete and incontrovertible. The system, as described by Kepping (1976, 1979a,b, 1981, 1982) consists of three morphemes, first person nga, second person na, and plural ni, which occur following the verb to mark agreement with one of its arguments. This is not, however, subject agreement of the type familiar to students of European or African languages, but an interesting variant of the typical 'split ergative' pattern (DeLancey 1981a). There is no agreement with third person arguments; if either subject or object is third person and the other is first or second the verb will agree with the first or second person. If subject is first person and object second, or vice versa, agreement is with the object. Thus the sentences 'I hit him', 'He hit me', and 'You hit me' will all have first person agreement, while 'You hit him', 'He hit you', and 'I hit you' will all have second person agreement. As an added twist, agreement can also be with the first or second person possessor of a subject or object, so that, for example, 'He hit my child' would have first person agreement.

The first fact to note about this system is the obvious TB provenience of the morphemes. First person \**ŋa* and second person \**na-naŋ* are uncontroversially reconstructed not only for PTB but for Proto-Sino-Tibetan, and Bauman (1975) has shown the ubiquity of \**ni* as a plural index in the verb throughout the family. But even more striking is the congruity of the agreement pattern with that which must be reconstructed for PTB. The work of Bauman (1975, 1979) has demonstrated conclusively that the traditional classification of TB languages into "pronominalized" (i.e. manifesting verb agreement) and "non-pronominalized" groups has no genetic validity, and that agreement is a feature of PTB, and thus an inherited feature in those languages that retain it. It can also be shown that the structure of the agreement system found in Tangut -- i.e. agreement based on person rather than subjecthood, and lack of third person agreement -- can be traced back to PTB (Bauman 1979, DeLancey 1980, 1981b). The table below, which compares only a few of the most archaic systems, makes the TB nature of the Tangut system clear:

	Tangut	rGyarong	Nocte	Vayu	Chepeng
1-3	-nga	-ng	-ang	-ku-ng	-ng
3-1	-nga	-ng	-ang	-su-ng	-ng
2-3	-na	-u	-o	-ko	-te?
3-2	-na	-n	-o	-n	-te?
1-2	-na	-n	-e	-no	-ne?-naang
2-1	-nga	-ng	-ang	-su-ng	-te?-ci

Tibeto-Burman verb agreement patterns. The glosses in the lefthand column indicate person of subject and object in a transitive clause.

While we do not find complete homogeneity -- Nocte and Chepeng, for example, have innovated second person markers, and Vayu and rGyarong have what seems to be third person agreement in the 2-3 category<sup>13</sup> -- it is clear that the data require the reconstruction of a proto-system identical in structure to that of Tangut.<sup>14</sup> I have presented only the clearest data here, but supporting evidence for this conclusion is found in every major branch of the family except for Lolo-Burmese (DeLancey 1980, 1981b; cf. also the discussion of the Jinghpaw agreement system in DeLancey 1981c). Even the peculiar possessor agreement of Tangut has good Tibeto-Burman analogues in Chepeng and Jinghpaw (DeLancey 1980, 1981c).

I think it is important here to emphasize the unusual form of this system, and the perfect fit of the Tangut data.<sup>15</sup> If Kwanten is correct in suggesting that the assumptions which underlie the reconstructions of the Leningrad school are so seriously flawed as to invalidate their results, then it must follow that it is essentially by chance that Kepping's work on Tangut produced these results. Given the abundant independent evidence for a TB agreement system of this type, such a conclusion is absurd. Whatever problems Kwanten or anyone else may perceive in Kepping's work, the validity of her reconstruction in this case is irrefutably confirmed by its agreement with the results of completely independent work on TB historical morphology.

#### IV. Conclusion: Tangut and Tibeto-Burman

The main point to be noted in the facts presented here is the complete congruity between what we know about Tangut morphology from the work of Kepping and what we know about Tibeto-Burman morphology. This congruity serves simultaneously to confirm the validity of Kepping's results, the validity of the traditional classification of Tangut, and (as noted in DeLancey 1981d) the inestimable value of work such as Kepping's on Tangut for comparative Tibeto-Burman studies.

#### Notes

- 1) Nishida (e.g. 1976) has assembled lexical evidence for this classification.
- 2) I suspect from the available examples that the original meaning may be 'emerge', which would fit in with the semantics of the rest of the set, and is a common member of grammaticalized directive sets in TB.
- 3) 'Directive' specification of verbs, and its relation to aspect, are of course not limited to Tibeto-Burman, but as we will see the structure of the Tangut system and the etymologies of some of the directive markers are distinctively TB.
- 4) I use the indefinite article advisedly; there are other forms with attested demonstrative meaning and a good claim to PTB origins.
- 5) In DeLancey 1980 I noted that deictic demonstratives were a plausible but unattested source for directive marking in TB; with this Tangut data they are now both plausible and attested.
- 6) The other forms in this row are cognate with Proto-Lolo-Burmese \*Ntak \*ʔtak 'climb, ascend' (Matisoff 1972, Burling 1967). The aberrant Qiang a- 'down' is probably cognate to the \*ay 'go down' reconstructed for PL by Bradley (1979).
- 7) I suspect that some of the prefixes to which Wolfenden attributes "subjective" or "objective" force also originated in directive marking.
- 8) Qiang and rGyarong have elaborate demonstrative and directive systems incorporating geographical categories such as 'upstream',

'downstream', 'toward the mountains', 'toward the river'. This phenomenon is not widely attested in TB, and seems to be a fairly recent development. This is probably one source of divergence between the Qiang-rGyarong systems and the older Tangut pattern.

9) Again I say "a" advisedly; note for example that Bradley reconstructs two proximal motion verbs for PL, \*la 'come up' and \*li 'come down'.

10) In DeLancey 1980 I speculate about the relationship of this root to the \*ra 'come' found throughout the rest of the family. Whether or not they are related the fact remains that Tangut has the Lolo-Burmese form rather than the other.

11) This form may be questionable; it is given in Bell 1920, but I have no other evidence for its existence.

12) Many motion verbs in TB languages are etymologically compounds, as a result of lexicalization of earlier verb sequences like those discussed in II below. PTB \*ta was apparently not specified for vertical orientation, but there is another root, \*ga, which probably originally meant 'ascend' (cp. Tiddim Chin ka?, Tangkhul ka, Chutiya khaga 'ascend', Tamang kha 'come (not down)'). Thus a plausible origin for PLB \*?tak 'ascend' is \*ta-ga 'go-up'.

13) All of these in fact represent reanalyses of PTB material rather than complete innovations (DeLancey 1980, 1981b).

14) This statement is slightly too strong. There remains some question about the PTB marking in 1-2 and 2-1 configurations; there is some evidence that the original system might have had first person agreement in both.

15) The Tibeto-Burman nature of the Tangut agreement system is noted by Sofronov (1978). The fact that Prof. Kwanten has a paper published in the same conference proceedings as Sofronov's makes it almost embarrassing to have to point out the inaccuracy of his published statement (1982:55) that Sofronov does not agree with Kepping's conclusions on Tangut agreement.

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