

A comparative study of phonological correspondences in Rgjal Rong and Written Tibetan cognates

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The Rgjal Rong area lies in the northwest of Sichuan Province, at north latitude 33 and east longitude 101. The language spoken by the people, who consider themselves Tibetan, is called the Rgjal Rong, and belongs to the TB family.¹ The people, however, refer to themselves as *kə-rə* or *ku-ri*, not as "Rgjal Rong people". The Rgjal Rong people appear in historical records in Chinese and Tibetan; in the Sui and Tang dynasties they were called *Jia Liang* in Chinese, and were formerly referred to as *Rgjal Mo Tsha Wa Rong* in Tibetan.

The Rgjal Rong language is made up of two dialects: the eastern one is mainly spoken in Xiaojin, Markom, and parts of Lixian, Baoxing and Jinchuan counties. The western one is spoken in the following places: Tsaoden, Dawei, Ribu, Longerjia county (all in Markom), Kersgja (or Tsosjia), Guanjinchiao (in Jinchuan county) and some places in Danba (in the Gantse area), etc. Around it, there is the Amdo dialect of Tibetan to the north and northwest, the Khams dialect of Tibetan on the southwest, and the Qiang language in the east.

In phonology, Rgjal Rong has a rich array of consonant cluster initials. The construction of the clusters is very similar to those of Tibetan, e.g. *pt*, *pht*, *pk* *pkh*, *pts*, *ptš*, *phs*, *phc*; *bd*, *bg*, *bz*, *br*; *kp*, *kt*, *kts*, *ktš*, *khs*, *khc*, *gd*, *gz*; *mp*, *mph*, *mb*, *mt*, *md*, *mk*, *mg*, *mts*, *nt*, *nth*, *nd*, *ng*, *nts*, *ntsh*; *rp*, *rph*, *rb*, *rt*, *rd*, *rk*, *rkh*, *rg*, *rts*; *lp*, *lt*, *ld*, *ldz*, *ltc*; *sp*, *st*, *sth*, *sk*, *skh*, *sts*, *zb*, *zd*. In general, these preconsonants can be stops, nasals and continuants. Meanwhile, Written Tibetan, for instance, also has the preconsonant stops *b-*, *d-*, *g-*, the nasals *m-*, *ŋ-*, and the continuants *r-*, *l-*, *s-*.

As for glides, both languages have the post-consonants *-j-*, *-r-*, *-l-*. The glide *-w-* was absorbed into the vowels in the Rgjal Rong language. We can thus say that not only are there many similarities in phonological structure but also some close internal relations between the two languages. However, Rgjal Rong grammatical developments are not close to Tibetan, but are more similar to those of the languages in the Qiang linguistic branch, and the grammatical features of the languages in the Himalayan areas.

¹ This language name has been spelled in many ways, including rGyarong, Jyarung, Jiarong, rGyalrong, etc. [Ed.]

In this paper, I will discuss the correspondence relations of the simple initial consonants, as well as those of the pre- and post-consonants, to see whether they show a cognate or a borrowing relationship between the two languages; I will also try to analyze why the changed forms have come about. For example, Rgjal Rong *pak* 'pig' corresponds to Today's Written Tibetan (TWT) *phag*, but from Dunhuang documents we know that the Old Written Tibetan (OWT) word was once written *pag*. Similarly, Rgjal Rong *kə-mto* 'high' is cognate to TWT *mthon*, but in OWT documents of the Royal Period we find the spelling *mton*. The Rgjal Rong word *kə-ŋgu* 'nine' corresponds to TWT *dgu*, but other variations between a nasal prefix (*h-*) and prefixal *d-* occur in WT "aberrant" forms, e.g. *hgrol* ≠ *dgrol* 'untie; release'.

These variations perhaps reflect Old Tibetan phonological features which might have been widespread in the old TB languages. Some prefixes of Rgjal Rong even correspond with pre-consonants of WT, e.g. 'die' Rgy. *kə-çi*/OWT *gçi* (TWT *çi*); 'two' Rgy. *kə-nes*/OWT *gŋis* (TWT *ŋis* 'two [instrumental]'); 'eye' Rgy. *tə-mŋek*/OWT *dmjig* (TWT *mig*), etc.

It is therefore of great importance for historical TB phonology to undertake this comparative study.

I Correspondences of root initial consonants in Rgjal Rong/Written Tibetan cognates.

1.1 Identical Correspondences

In many cases the Rgjal Rong/Written Tibetan root initials correspond exactly, e.g. *p:p*, *ph:ph*, *b:b*, *t:t*, *th:th*, *d:d*, *k:k*, *kh:kh*, *g:g*, *ts:ts*, *tsh:tsh*, *dz:dz*, *tç:tç*, *tch:tch*, *dz:dz*, *m:m*, *n:n*, *ŋ:ŋ*, *ŋ:ŋ*, *r:r*, *l:l*, *l:lh*, *s:s*, *z:z*, *f:f*, *w:w*, *j:j*, *?:?*, etc:

	Rgjal Rong	Written Tibetan	Meaning
<i>p:p</i>	par khaŋ tə-kpə ka-pa	par khaŋ dpe	Buddhist sutra house drawing an analogy
<i>ph:ph</i>	pha rə	pha ri	opposite bank; a mountain on the other side
<i>b:b</i>	kə-mphəl kə-zbəm mbres	fiphel sbom po fibras	develop thick (in diameter) rice
<i>t:t</i>	rtak tə-çtə	rtaq stu	mark vagina
<i>th:th</i>	thok kə mtho	thog mtho	thunder; lightning first class
<i>k:k</i>	pə iku ka-ska	rka skol	trough cook

kh:kh	ke-sə-khə tə-mkhrə	khag po mkhris	difficult law
g:g	ta-grə ta-rga	dgra po gar	enemy dance
ts:ts	ka-tsa ha-rtsis	rtswa rtsis	grass calculate
tsh:tsh	tshi rə tshət	tshu ri tshə tshə	bank/mountain on this side goat
dz:dz	mdzot tə-jek mdzo	mdzod mdzub	storehouse finger
tɕ:tɕ	kə-tɕe ka-ktɕət	tɕog sgo btɕad pa	all; every close the door
tɕh:tɕh	tɕhək ke-ntɕhət (to kill)	tɕhag tshə mtɕhad	feed grain; fodder jab/kill with knives
dz:dz	kə-ndzem kə-na-ndzak	fidzam po fidzug	harmony leak (liquid)
m:m	ta-mar ko-rmok	mar rmugs	butter fog
n:n	tə-nə tə-ɕna	nu sna	breast nose
ŋ:ŋ	lŋa (the fifth) ŋa	lŋa ŋa	five I
ŋ:ŋ	ta-ko rɕe kə-vŋə	mgo ŋal rŋil	hair wither
r:r	res tə-ru	ras rwa	clothing horn (of animal)
l:l	sər lek tɕhəi-ləs	sar lag lug srol (lus)	finger ring habit; custom
s:s	soŋ lə ta-sa	sog le so ma	saw (n.) hemp
z:z	tə-za ta-zom	za zam	meal; food bridge
ɕ:ɕ	ɕa ka-phɕel	ɕa bɕal	meat have diarrhea
z:z	zek ka-zu (rebuke)	zag zu	all night please; ask
h:h	mbe he	ma he	water buffalo
j:j	kə-jo ja wu	g-jan (or gjan) jan phji	sheep grandfather's father
?:?	?a ma	?a ma ?a pha (or ?a pa)	mother father

The above correspondent forms show identical reflexes.

1.2 *Non-identical correspondences*

When the initials of Rgjal Rong and WT cognate words do not correspond exactly, this is of special interest for what it might reveal about earlier phonological developments in TB.

Among these non-exact correspondences are the following:

	<i>Rgjal Rong</i>	<i>Written Tibetan</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
p:ph	pak kə-par	phag fiphar	pig fox
ph:b	tə-phu ka-wa-phu	bu (<i>Khams dial.</i>) fibur	price blow
w:b	təwaŋ sŋə wə	dwaŋ smjug bu	power bamboo pen
t:th	mbo tu ka-mto	thoŋ pa mthoŋ	forehead have seen
t:d	tək tər sa	dug dur sa	poisonous tomb
k:kh	ta-kab čkra	khab khrol	needle sifter
k:g	kə-kək ta-ko	gog (<i>Amdo dial.</i>) mgo	cut into (a nutshell) head
kh:k	kho snəm	rkan snam	trousers
kh:g	khuj (tiger) tə-khrəl	gun gral	kind of tiger line up
ts:tsh	tə-tsi tčhəstso (boiled water)	tshe tshos	life; longevity cook; boil
ts:dz	kə-ktsəm tə-mŋək m-rts	fidzum mig rdzi	blink eyebrow
tš:dr	kə-tšop kə-tšok	fidrub-pa drug	sew six
tš:br	tšo	bre	container for measuring grain
tš:kr	ko-mtšo	krun krun	wild goose
tš:gr	ka-tšəl kə-mtšo	dgril bgres po	roll up old man or woman
tšh:gr	ta-tšho	sgron-ma	lamp; lantern
dz:dr	kə-ndzok ndzə čək	fidrogs fidre cig	shy, be skittish (of horse) bedbug
tč:tch	tə-tci kə-mtčet	tču tčhad	water break; separate
tč:dz	tčo mo ka-mə-stčup	dzo mo fidzib	nuns suckle; squeeze out milk

tc:phj	tcor we	phjur ba	sour (milk or food)
tc:bj	kə-tcor	bjor figro	narrow
tc:kj	kə-tcor	skjur po	sthg. sour; sthg. pickled
tc:khj	tə-tcəm	khjim	home; family
dz:tch	mdzəkət	mtchin	liver
cç:kj	ke-sçor	skjor	hold up; prop up
	cçak cçal	skja ka	magpie
cç:gj	ke-cçar	sgjur	change; reform
cçh:kj	cçhə	skjems	wine
cçh:khj	kə-mcchem	fikhjam	vagabond
	kə-mcchen	mkhjen	person of foresight; wise person
jj:gj	ke-rjjur	figjur	reform; transform
	rjje	rgja	net; fishnet

The above correspondence types can be summarized as follows:

	<i>Rqjal Rong</i>	<i>Written Tibetan</i>
A.	Voiceless Unaspirated	: Voiced
B.	Voiceless Unaspirated	: Voiceless Aspirated
C.	Voiceless Aspirated	: Voiced
D.	Voiceless Aspirated	: Voiceless Unaspirated

These correspondence types are also exemplified when we compare the spellings of standard WT with the aberrant forms to be found in Old WT documents and inscriptions of the Royal Period:

A.	<i>Old WT</i>	<i>Standard WT</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
p:b	par	bar	middle
t:d	gtan	gdan	wooden bolster used as doorstep
ts:dz	mtsad	mdzad	do; act
k:g	rkjaŋ	rgjaŋ ²	ass; wild donkey

² This word is evidently spelled *rkjaŋ* in standard WT as well, as in Jäschke's dictionary, p. 17. [Ed.]

B.	<i>Old WT</i>	<i>Standard WT</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
	par	phar	opposite side/bank
	pag	phag	pig
	pul	phul	devotion
	tos	thos	hearing
	mtoŋ	mthoŋ	have seen
k:kh	kjed	khjed	you
	koŋ ṭɕo	khon ṭche	princess
s:tsh	tsal	fitshal	wish; desire; ask for
	tse	tshe	life; longevity
ṭɕ:ṭch	ṭɕuŋ	ṭchun	small
	ṭɕen po	ṭchen po	big
C.	<i>Old WT</i>	<i>Standard WT</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
g:kh	gob (cover)	khab	cover
	bkafi grims	bkafi khirms	law

Similar relationships hold between certain aberrant forms and the standard forms of today's Written Tibetan, e.g.

D.	<i>Aberrant Form</i>	<i>Standard Form</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
ph:p	dphjaŋ	dpjaŋ	hanging
tsh:ts	gtshe	gtse	hurt; cut
ṭch:ṭɕ	bṭchu	bṭɕu	ten
kh:k	bkhra çis	bkra çis	lucky

The above analysis and comparisons lead us to these conclusions:

(1) The irregular forms which we find in the comparison of Rgjal Rong and Written Tibetan root initial consonants actually represent features of the historical phonological development of Old Tibetan. They also show that the so-called erroneous spellings of Written Tibetan were correct in the past, especially around the Royal Period.

(2) The Rgjal Rong language has retained some old phonological features of the Tibeto-Burman languages.

Interesting correspondences involving initials other than stops include Rgjal Rong *w*: WT *b* and RR *n*: WT *ŋ*:

	<i>Rgjal Rong</i>	<i>Written Tibetan</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
w:b	nor wu ta-waŋ	nor bu dbaŋ	treasures power
n:n̥	na-wa kə-nəs tə-ɕnə	fi-ba gŋis sŋiŋ	shout two heart

The development to *w* may be due to influence from the Amdo dialect of Tibetan, because the sound [b] is always pronounced as [w] in Amdo dialect. The *n:n̥* correspondence is very similar to phonological alternations we find between the aberrant forms and the standard forms of Written Tibetan, e.g. [AF/SF] *bsnems/mŋen* 'soft', *gnam/mŋam pa* 'equal', etc.

Other non-exact correspondences include [Rgjal Rong: Written Tibetan], *tʂ,dʒ:br,dr,kr,gr; tʂh:gr; tɕ:phj; ɕɕ:bj,kj,gj; ɕɕh:kj,khj,jj*, etc. These irregular correspondences will be discussed below in connection with the post-initial consonants *-j, -r, -l, -w*.

II. Comparison of the pre-initial consonants in Rgjal Rong and Written Tibetan cognates.

2.1 Exact pre-initial correspondences

Both Rgjal Rong and Written Tibetan have abundant arrays of "preconsonants", with many examples of regular correspondences between them, i.e. *b:-b-, g:-g-, m:-m-, n:-fi- (*n-), r:-r-, l:-l-, s:-s-*. For example:

	<i>Rgjal Rong</i>	<i>Written Tibetan</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
b:-b-	bdək bzaŋ blis	bdag po bzaŋ bzi	host kindly; good four
g:-g-	gdan gzi	gdan gzi	cushion agate
m:-m-	ka-mto mthər kə-mtu mŋər	mthoŋ mthur mdod mŋar	have seen horse halter knit sweet
ŋ:-fi (*n-)	ŋthəl səm ŋjot	fi-thol hgjod	surplus regret
r:-r-	ta-rgot tə-rna	rgod rna	wild; violent ear
l:-l-	ka-ltəp lŋe pe	ldeb lŋa	to fold five
s:-s-	spos ka-ska	spos skol	fragrance; perfume cook; boil

The above pre-initial correspondences are merely representative, not exhaustive. The dozens of possible combinations of pre-initial plus initial consonants in Rgjal Rong include the following:

<i>Pre-Initial</i>	<i>Initial</i>
w-	d l z ʒ
g-	d z
m-	t th kh tsh dz dʒ cç ɲ
n-	th d dz dʒ
r-	t d k g ts cç n ɲ
l-	p t tç ɲ
s-	p t k cç m n ɲ

The seven pre-initials are more or less the same as those of WT, except for the absence of d- in Rgjal Rong.

2.2 *Non-exact pre-initial correspondences*

These irregular correspondences are actually the result of the interaction between the pre-initials and the voicing and/or aspiration of the root-initial consonant, as well as their positions of articulation.

Non-identical pre-initial correspondences are to be found before both voiceless and voiced root-initial consonants:

	<i>Rgjal Rong</i>	<i>Written Tibetan</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
p-:b-	ka-ptak	btag	weave
ph-:b-	ke-phçəl	bçal	have diarrhea
	ka-phsruŋ	bsruŋ	protect
b-:b-	bdak po	bdag po	host
k-:g-	ka-ktçer	gtçir	press
kh-:g-	khser	gser	gold
	khsəl	gsal po	bright
g-:g-	gzi	gzi	agate
s-:s-	spos	spos	fragrant
z-:s-	zgar	sgar	tent
ç-:s-(*c-)	tə-çtə	stu	vagina
ʒ-:s-(*z-)	ke-ʒdər	sdar	fear
m-:fi-(*n-)	kə-mphəl	fiphel	develop
	mbər lən	fibur len	planer

Similar pre-initial correspondences can be observed between the Dao Wu language (some say this is just a Tibetan dialect) and WT:

	<i>Dao Wu</i>	<i>Written Tibetan</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
ph-:b-	phtcu	btçu	ten
f-:b-	fsoŋ	bsoŋ	fragrant
v-:b-	vdum	bdun	seven
	vzi	bzi	four
x-:g-	xtər ma	gtor ma	devotion (in religion)
	xaer	gser	gold
κ-:g-	κ.dan	gdan	cushion
	κ.zu pu	gzug po	body
s-:s-	spəŋ	spaŋ	grassland
	skrəŋ	skraŋ	swell up
z-:s-	zdəŋ pu	sdoŋ pu	trunk of tree
	zgu	sgo	door
s-:s-	skja pa	skjag pa	manure
r-:s-	r.gam	sgam	box

Many other inexact pre-initial correspondences are to be found. We will mention a few of special interest:

A. Rgjal Rong *m-*, *w-*, *ç-*: WT *b-*

	<i>Rgjal Rong</i>	<i>Written Tibetan</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
m-:b-	kə-mtšo	bgres	old man or woman
	mdə-scçət	bde skjid	happy
w-:b-	kə-wdə	bde po	safe; healthy
	çəŋ wzo wə	çiŋ bzo ba	carpenter
ç-:b-	çtçə	btçu	ten

The *w-* in Rgjal Rong might be due to influence from either the Amdo or the Khams dialect of Tibetan. (The WT suffix *-ba* is pronounced /ba/ in Lhasa but /wa/ in Amdo and Khams.)

B. Rgjal Rong *r-*, *n-*, *k-*: WT *d-*

	<i>Rgjal Rong</i>	<i>Written Tibetan</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
r-:d-	kə-rkun	dkun	high price
	rgən pa	dgon pa	monastery
n-:d-	kə-ngu	dgu	nine
	kə-nmən	dmafi	low
k-:d-	tə-kpe ka-pa	dpe	draw an analogy

Similar variants can be found in the aberrant forms of Written Tibetan:

	<i>Aberrant Form</i>	<i>Standard Form</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
r:-d-	rkan	dkan	upper jaw
h(*n-):d-	figrol	dgrol	untied; open
b:-d-	bgad	dgad	have fought
m:-d-	mṅar mo	dṅar mo	sweet

Again we find analogous correspondences between Dao Wu and WT:

	<i>Dao Wu</i>	<i>Written Tibetan</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
r:-d-	r.nuul (ṅ.nwl)	dṅul	silver
	r.gen pa (b.gen pa)	dgon pa	monastery
x:-d-	xkhi	dkjil	middle
	xku	dkol	cook
ka:-d-	kaṃab	dmag	army

C. Rgjal Rong s- : WT m-

	<i>Rgjal Rong</i>	<i>Written Tibetan</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
s:-m-	ka snar	mṅar	knead; rub

There are similar variations between the standard and "aberrant" forms of Written Tibetan:

	<i>Aberrant Form</i>	<i>Standard Form</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
s:-m-	snoms pa	mṅam pa	equal
bs:-m-	bsnems	mṅen pa	soft
	bsnog	mṅed pa	rub; crumble

D. Rgjal Rong ṅ-, n- : WT fi- (*n-)

	<i>Rgjal Rong</i>	<i>Written Tibetan</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
ṅ-:fi(*n-)	tə-ṅgo	figo ba	be affected by illness
	ṅkhor man	fikhor ba po	everyone; all the living
n-:fi-	ndo	fidug	have

E. Rgjal Rong s-, l-, j- : WT r-

	<i>Rgjal Rong</i>	<i>Written Tibetan</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
s:-r-	sṃo we	rme	nevus; mole
	sṅam	rṅam	greedy
	sṅet	rmed	saddle
l:-r-	tə-lwek	rba	waves
		lba ba	brook
j:-r-	ke-jdut	rdol ba	leak; burst

In the aberrant forms of Written Tibetan, there are some similarities too, e.g. *s-r-*, *sna ba/rjafi ba* 'camel', *sten figro/rten figro* 'kind of musician'; *l-r-*, *lba ba/rba~dba* 'wave'.

F. Rgjal Rong *m-* : WT *r-*

	Rgjal Rong	Written Tibetan	Meaning
<i>m-l-</i>	ke- <i>mtsak</i>	rtsag	jump (heart)

Within Written Tibetan itself, there are such preinitial alternations as *m-l-*, *mdan/ldan* 'cheek', and *r-l-* *rba* 'waves' / *lba ba* 'brook'.

G. Rgjal Rong *ç-, z-, r-* : WT *s-*

	Rgjal Rong	WT	Meaning
<i>ç-s-</i>	tə- <i>çtə</i>	stu	vagina
	kha <i>çpa</i>	sbal	frog
<i>z-s-</i>	ke- <i>zder</i>	sdar	fear
	kə- <i>zbom</i>	sbom	thick
<i>r-s-</i>	rmuk	smugs pa	fog

Alternations between *r-* and *s-* are also to be found in WT itself, e.g. *rmed/smed* 'ask'.

2.3 Correspondences between Rgjal Rong prefixes-plus-vowel and WT preinitials

Sometimes Rgjal Rong prefixes like *wə-*, *po-*, *tə-*, *kə-*, *sə-*, etc. correspond to the pre-consonants of Written Tibetan, e.g.:

	Rgjal Rong	WT	Meaning
<i>wə-b-</i>	wə- <i>rjet</i>	brgjad	eight
	ka- <i>wə-rlak</i>	brlags	destroy
<i>po-b-</i>	po- <i>rja</i>	brgja	hundred
<i>ta-d-</i>	ta- <i>waŋ</i>	dbaŋ	the power
	ka- <i>gur</i>	dgur	bend
	tə- <i>mŋək</i>	dmjig	eye
	ta- <i>grə</i>	dgra	enemy
<i>tsə-z-</i>	tsə- <i>la</i>	zla	moon
<i>kə-g-</i>	kə- <i>nəs</i>	gnis/nis	two
	kə- <i>sem</i>	gsum/sum	three
	kə- <i>so</i> (living)	gso	bring up; nourish
	kə- <i>jo</i>	g-jaŋ	sheep
	kə- <i>çi</i>	gci gci	dye

Sometimes the "aberrant forms" of WT have a prefix which is lacking in standard WT spelling, e.g.:

	<i>Aberrant Form</i>	<i>Standard Form</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
b-:Ø-	bstsogs bthub	stsogs thub	so on and so forth be able
d-:Ø-	dbar dmjig dkrum	bar mig krum	middle eye pork ³
tə-:Ø-	tə-mtɕik	me	fire
g-:Ø-	gŋi gnam gnag	ŋi ma nam nag	sun sky black

Perhaps old Tibetan used to have similar prefixes in these words also, which disappeared subsequently. Maybe the development of tone in many dialects involved these prefixes gradually disappearing.

III. Medial glides in Rgjal Rong and Written Tibetan

In the Rgjal Rong language, the medial consonants *-j*, *-r*, *-l* and *-w* can occur after the following types of initial consonants: bilabials, velars, a few of the alveolars, some labiovelars, and glottals. The possible combinations include: *pj*, *phj*, *bj*, *kj*, *rj*, *sj*, *wj*; *pr*, *phr*, *br*, *kr*, *chr*, *gr*, *sr*, *cr*; *pk*, *kl*, *rl*, *sl*, *zl*, *fl*, *wl* and *zw*. But these clusters in Rgjal Rong are not as numerous as those of Written Tibetan. The clusters *tr* and *dr* of Written Tibetan correspond to Rgjal Rong *tʂ*, *tʂh* or *dz*; the initial velars plus *-j* have mostly changed into palatals (e.g. *tc*, *cç*, *cçh*, *jj*) in Rgjal Rong. The medial *-w* of Written Tibetan has almost disappeared in Rgjal Rong.

3.1 Identical clusters of initial plus medial

	<i>Rgjal Rong</i>	<i>Written Tibetan</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
pj-:pj-	spjaŋ khə	spjaŋ ki	wolf
phj-:phj-	tə-phjə	phji sa	human excrement
bj-:bj-	rmo bjə	rmo bja	peacock
pr-:pr-	prak sprət	brag sprad	rock donate
phr-:phr-	mphrəs	phrug	fine woolen cloth
kr-:kr-	kə-pkrə	bkra pa	bright; clear
chr-:chr-	khro	khro	pig iron; kind of bronze
gr-:gr-	ka-nə-gral	gral	line up

³ Jäschke (p. 491) has *khrum-zla* 'intercalary month of the Pig'. [Ed.]

sr-:sr-	ka-sræ ka-phsrung	sri srung	entwine; wind protect
kl-:kl-	rje klun	klun	river
rl-:rl-	rlun	rlun	madness
sl-:sl-	slo we	slob pa	teacher
zl-:zl	zle lek	zla lhag	leap month; intercalary month

3.2. Different clusters in Rgjal Rong and WT

These irregular correspondences are of particular interest for comparative TB phonology:

	<i>Rgjal Rong</i>	<i>Written Tibetan</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
rj-:rgj-	wərjet po-rja	brgjad brgja	eight hundred
Ø-: -j	kə pa khə khii (<i>Xiaojin</i> <i>dial.</i>)	rgja pa khji	Chinese dog
m: mj	tə-rmi tə-rme mei kun (<i>Xiaojin</i> <i>dial.</i>)	mi miŋ~mjın mju gu	person name blood relatives; sprout
n, n̥: mj	kə-mnu ka-wa-mn̥e	smjun bu smjun ba	awl reduce
ʒ: sr	ʒap sççok ʒam mde	srab skjogs srab mdafi	reins rope of stirrup; reins
tsə-: sl	tsə-lə	zla ba	moon
Ø-: -w	tə-ru	rwa	horn

The words for EIGHT and HUNDRED had *-rj-* in some ancient WT documents discovered in the Dunhuang Caves, leading Li Fang Kuei (1976) to conclude that the *-g-* in standard WT *brgjad* and *brgja* is secondary. Rgjal Rong thus reflects the more archaic forms of these words.

In Rgjal Rong *-j* disappears after the velars /k kh g/ and nasals /m n ŋ/, often causing a development to palatal consonants like /tç cç cçh jç jç/. Sometimes a medial is absorbed into the nuclear vowel, as in HORN.

WT clusters of dental or velar consonant plus *-r-* often correspond to retroflex initials (e.g. affricates) in Rgjal Rong. Similar developments may be observed within the Tibetan dialects themselves (e.g. Lhasa, Khams, Amdo). These changes occurred a long time ago, perhaps around the Royal Period.

Conclusion

Through the comparison of the initial consonantal clusters of cognate words, one can see that there are many similarities in the pronunciation and the phonological structures of Rgjal Rong and Written Tibetan. One can surmise that the Tibetan dialects used to pronounce clusters similarly to modern Rgjal Rong. By analyzing both the regular and the irregular correspondences between these languages, we may learn much about Old Tibetan, as well as about older stages of Tibeto-Burman languages in general.

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