

CASE MARKERS OF PERSONAL PRONOUNS
IN TIBETO-BURMAN LANGUAGES

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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 ⁵⁵	qo ⁵⁵	qa ⁵⁵
<i>2nd sing. pronoun</i>	no ⁵⁵	ko ⁵⁵	kuə ⁵⁵

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 ⁵⁵	ŋa ⁵⁵	qo ⁵⁵ or qa ⁵⁵	qa ⁵⁵	ŋa ⁵⁵
<i>2nd sing.</i>	no ⁵⁵	no ⁵⁵	ko ⁵⁵	kuə ⁵⁵	no ⁵⁵
<i>interrogative</i>	sɿ ⁵⁵	sa ⁵⁵ or sɿ ⁵⁵	so ⁵⁵	sa ⁵⁵ or sɿ ⁵⁵	si ⁵⁵
<i>indefinite</i>	mə ³³	mi ⁵⁵	mo ³³	mə ³³	mi ³³

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>	ŋuɿ ⁵⁵	ŋi ⁵⁵	ŋge ³⁵ ni ³³	ŋge ³⁵
<i>2nd sing.</i>	ne ⁵⁵	ne ⁵⁵ i ⁵⁵	ne ⁵⁵ ɣuɿ ³⁵ ni ⁵⁵	ne ⁵⁵
<i>3rd sing.</i>	e ³³ tsuɿ ⁵⁵	e ³³ tsi ⁵⁵	e ³³ tse ³⁵ ni ⁵⁵	e ⁵⁵ tse ⁵⁵
<i>1st dual (exclusive)</i>	ŋuɿ ³³ nuɿ ⁵³ nuɿ ³³	ŋuɿ ³³ ni ⁵³ nuɿ ³³	ŋuɿ ³³ ne ⁵⁵ ni ³³	ŋuɿ ³³ ne ³⁵
<i>1st dual (inclusive)</i>	je ³³ nuɿ ⁵⁵ nuɿ ³³	je ³³ ni ⁵⁵ nuɿ	je ³³ ne ⁵⁵ ni ³³	je ³³ ne ³⁵
<i>2nd dual</i>	ne ³³ nuɿ ⁵⁵ nuɿ ³³	ne ³³ ni ⁵⁵ nuɿ ³³	ne ³³ ne ⁵⁵ ni ³³	ne ³³ ne ⁵⁵
<i>3rd dual</i>	e ³³ tsuɿ ⁵⁵ nuɿ ³³	e ³³ tsi ⁵⁵ nuɿ ³³	e ³³ tse ⁵⁵ ni ³³	e ³³ tse ⁵⁵
<i>1st plural (exclusive)</i>	ŋuɿ ³³ nuɿ ⁵³	ŋuɿ ³³ ni ⁵⁵	ŋuɿ ³³ ni ⁵⁵ ne ⁵⁵ ni ³³	ŋuɿ ³³ nuɿ ⁵⁵
<i>1st plural (inclusive)</i>	je ³³ nuɿ ⁵³	je ³³ ni ⁵⁵	je ³³ ni ⁵⁵ ne ⁵⁵ ni ³³	je ³³ nuɿ ⁵⁵
<i>2nd plural</i>	ne ³³ nuɿ ⁵³	ne ⁵⁵ ni ⁵⁵	ne ³³ ne ⁵⁵ ni ³³	ne ⁵⁵ nuɿ ⁵⁵
<i>3rd plural</i>	e ³³ nuɿ ⁵³	e ³³ ni ⁵⁵	e ³³ ne ⁵⁵ ni ³³	e ³³ nuɿ ⁵⁵

Figure 3. Muya.

The case marking in Muya is stricter and more regular for the nominative and accusative, as compared with the possessive, which in fact sometimes occurs without its suffix *-ni*³³ or *-ni*⁵⁵.

1.3. *Ergong*

Ergong is an atonic language with a case system of nominative, possessive and accusative for personal, interrogative and indefinite pronouns, and where these inflections involve the rhyme. See Figure 4.

	<i>original pronoun</i>	<i>nominative</i>	<i>possessive</i>	<i>accusative</i>
<i>1st sing.</i>	ŋɛ	ŋa	ŋɛi	ŋɛke
<i>2nd sing.</i>	ŋi	ŋu	ŋi	ŋike
<i>3rd sing.</i>	xu	xu	xui	xuke
<i>1st dual</i>	ŋɛɛ	ŋɛɛu	ŋɛɛi	ŋɛɛke
<i>2nd dual</i>	ŋine	ŋineu	ŋinei	ŋineke
<i>3rd dual</i>	xuɛ	xuɛu	xuɛi	xuɛke
<i>1st plural</i>	ŋɛŋu	ŋɛŋu	ŋɛŋi	ŋɛŋuke
<i>2nd plural</i>	ŋiŋu	ŋiŋu	ŋiŋi	ŋiŋuke
<i>3rd plural</i>	xuŋu	xuŋu	xuŋi	xuŋuke
<i>interrogative “who”</i>	su	su	si	suke
<i>indefinite “others”</i>	lmaŋu	lmaŋu	lmaŋi	lmaŋuke
<i>indefinite “all”</i>	ɛɛlo	ɛɛlu	ɛɛle	ɛɛle

Figure 4. *Ergong*.

The case agreement is rather regular in Ergong pronouns, where the nominative can be used as an ergative and the accusative is consistently marked by adding *ke*, an agglutinative suffix, to the original pronoun.

1.4 *Pumi (Qinghua, southern dialect)*

The case system of personal pronouns in Pumi is a bit different from those of Qiang and Muya since it has an emphatic ergative apart from the ordinary nominative, possessive and accusative forms. It should be pointed out that Pumi still has collective pronouns for the family unit, with the same case declension as the interrogative pronoun “who”.

	<i>nominative and accusative</i>	<i>possessive</i>	<i>ergative ("emphatic causative")</i>
<i>1st sing.</i>	ɛ ⁵⁵	ã ³⁵	ɛ ⁵⁵ niɛ ⁵⁵
<i>2nd sing.</i>	nɛ ¹³	nã ⁵⁵	ni ⁵⁵ iɛ ¹³
<i>3rd sing.</i>	tə ⁵⁵ gu ⁵⁵	tə ⁵⁵ ga ⁵⁵	tə ⁵⁵ gue ⁵⁵
<i>1st dual</i>	ɛ ⁵⁵ zã ⁵⁵	ɛ ⁵⁵ zã ⁵⁵	ɛ ⁵⁵ zã ⁵⁵ iɛ ¹³
<i>2nd dual</i>	nɛ ¹³ zã ⁵⁵	nɛ ¹³ zã ⁵⁵	nɛ ¹³ zã ⁵⁵ iɛ ¹³
<i>3rd dual</i>	tə ⁵⁵ zã ⁵⁵	tə ⁵⁵ zã ⁵⁵	tə ⁵⁵ zã ⁵⁵ iɛ ¹³
<i>1st plural</i>	ɛ ⁵⁵ zə ⁵⁵	ɛ ⁵⁵ za ⁵⁵	ɛ ⁵⁵ zue ⁵⁵
<i>2nd plural</i>	nɛ ¹³ zə ⁵⁵	nɛ ⁵⁵ za ⁵⁵	nɛ ¹³ zue ⁵⁵
<i>3rd plural</i>	tə ⁵⁵ zə ⁵⁵	tə ⁵⁵ za ⁵⁵	tə ⁵⁵ zue ⁵⁵
<i>1st collective</i>	ɛ ⁵⁵ by ⁵⁵	ɛ ⁵⁵ ba ⁵⁵	ɛ ⁵⁵ biɛ ⁵⁵
<i>2nd collective</i>	nɛ ¹³ by ⁵⁵	nɛ ¹³ ba ⁵⁵	nɛ ¹³ biɛ ⁵⁵
<i>3rd collective</i>	tə ⁵⁵ by ⁵⁵	tə ⁵⁵ ba ⁵⁵	tə ⁵⁵ biɛ ⁵⁵
<i>interrogative</i>	ɛ ¹³ gu ¹³	ɛ ¹³ ga ¹³	ɛ ¹³ gue ⁵⁵ iɛ ¹³

Figure 5. Pumi.

The collective pronouns for the family unit in Pumi distinguish their case forms in terms of rhyme inflection. It is usual for the ergative form to be employed for emphasizing the actor in a sentence with an indirect object.

1.5 Ersu (also called T’osu)

Ersu is a newly-rediscovered language. According to the Japanese linguist Tatsuo Nishida’s research (Nishida 1973), this language’s autonym *do⁵⁵ɕu⁵⁵* indeed refers to the central dialect of Ersu, belonging to the Qiangic branch of TB. Its personal pronouns are also inflected for case. See Figure 6.

	<i>nominative</i>	<i>possessive</i>	<i>accusative</i>
<i>1st sing.</i>	a ⁵⁵	ɛi ⁵⁵ or ai ⁵⁵	a ⁵⁵ (va ⁵⁵)
<i>2nd sing.</i>	nɛ ⁵⁵	ni ⁵⁵ or nei ⁵⁵	na ⁵⁵ (va ⁵⁵)
<i>3rd sing.</i>	thɛ ⁵⁵	hti ⁵⁵ or thei ⁵⁵	tha ⁵⁵ (va ⁵⁵)
<i>indefinite pronoun “others”</i>	su ⁵⁵	sui ⁵⁵	sua ⁵⁵ (va ⁵⁵)

Figure 6. Ersu.

These rhyme-inflected forms bear a strong resemblance to the Pumi personal pronouns. The meanings of the cases in Ersu, however, are somewhat different from Pumi in that Ersu has ergative forms. The three cases in Ersu are strictly separated, but the structural particle *va⁵⁵* is loosely

attached to the accusative. Furthermore, Ersu and Qiang have the same kind of indefinite pronoun marked by rhyme inflection. It also needs to be pointed out that Ersu and Qiang have dual and plural pronouns with the grammatical meaning of case indicated by rhyme inflexion rather than by adding a structural particle.

1.6 Jinuo

	<i>nominative</i>	<i>possessive</i>	<i>accusative</i>
<i>1st sing.</i>	ŋɔ ⁴²	ŋɔ ³⁵ , ŋui ³³ , ŋui ³⁵ , ŋue ³⁵	ŋɔ ³⁵
<i>2nd sing.</i>	nə ⁴²	nɛ ³⁵	na ³⁵
<i>3rd sing.</i>	khə ⁴²	khə ⁴² ɛ ⁵⁵	khə ³⁵
<i>1st dual</i>	ɑ ³³ ŋ ⁵⁵	ɑ ³³ ŋ ⁵⁵ nɛ ⁵⁵	ɑ ³³ ŋ ⁵⁵ na ³³
<i>2nd dual</i>	ni ⁵⁵ ŋ ⁵⁵	ni ⁵⁵ ŋ ⁵⁵ nɛ ⁵⁵	ni ⁵⁵ ŋ ⁵⁵ na ³³
<i>3rd dual</i>	khə ⁴² ŋ ⁵⁵	khə ⁴² ŋ ⁵⁵ nɛ ⁵⁵	khə ⁴² ŋ ⁵⁵ na ⁵⁵
<i>1st plural (exclusive)</i>	ŋɑ ⁵⁵ vu ³³	ŋɑ ⁵⁵ vɛ ⁵⁵	ŋɑ ⁵⁵ vu ³³ ɑ ³³
<i>1st plural (inclusive)</i>	ŋu ⁵⁵ vu ³³	ŋu ⁵⁵ vɛ ⁵⁵	ŋu ⁵⁵ vu ³³ ɑ ³³
<i>2nd plural</i>	ni ⁵⁵ vu ³³	ni ⁵⁵ vɛ ⁵⁵	ni ⁵⁵ vu ³³ ɑ ³³
<i>3rd plural</i>	khə ⁴² ma ⁵⁵	khə ⁴² mɛ ⁵⁵	khə ⁴² ma ⁵⁵ ɑ ³³

Figure 7. Jinuo.

The personal pronouns of Jinuo are inflected for nominative, possessive and accusative; the possessive and accusative forms are marked by rhyme inflection and tone shift. The vowel alternations for dual and plural possessive vs. accusative occur in the final syllable of the Jinuo forms. See Figure 7.

1.7 Bai

	<i>nominative and accusative</i>	<i>possessive</i>
<i>1st sing.</i>	ŋo ³¹	ŋu ⁵⁵
<i>2nd sing.</i>	no ³¹	nu ⁵⁵
<i>3rd sing</i>	mo ³¹	mu ⁵⁵

Figure 8. Bai.

Compared with Jinuo, Bai has a simple case paradigm in which the nominative and accusative forms are the same. Possessive forms are denoted

by a vowel mutation and tone shift. Most of the personal pronouns in Bai have no inflected case forms. See Figure 8.

1.8 Zaiwa

Zaiwa is quite similar to Jinuo and Bai with a case system marked by rhyme inflection and tone shift. See Figure 9.

	<i>nominative</i>	<i>possessive</i>	<i>accusative</i>
<i>1st sing.</i>	ŋo ⁵¹	ŋa ⁵⁵	ŋo ³¹
<i>2nd sing.</i>	naŋ ⁵¹	naŋ ⁵⁵	naŋ ³¹
<i>3rd sing</i>	jaŋ ³¹	jaŋ ⁵¹	jaŋ ³¹

Figure 9. Zaiwa.

Clearly the first person nominative reflects the original PTB pronoun *ŋa.¹ The possessive form of the first person pronoun in Zaiwa, on the other hand, is marked by means of rhyme inflection as well as tone shift.

1.9 Nusu and Jingpo

Both these languages have case declension by rhyme inflection which is only apparent in their possessive forms. Tone shift usually occurs in the possessive forms of Nusu, but the third person pronoun also undergoes mutation of the initial from a medio-palatal nasal into an alveolar one. In the Jingpo possessive pronouns, the tone is raised from mid-level to high along with rhyme inflection. See Figure 10.

	Nusu		Jingpo	
	<i>original</i>	<i>possessive</i>	<i>original</i>	<i>possessive</i>
<i>1st sing.</i>	ŋa ³⁵	ŋe ³⁵	ŋai ³³	ŋjeʔ ⁵⁵
<i>2nd sing.</i>	no ⁵⁵	ne ⁵⁵	naŋ ³³	naʔ ⁵⁵
<i>3rd sing</i>	ʔno ⁵⁵	ʔne ⁵⁵	khji ³³	khjiʔ ⁵⁵

Figure 10. Nusu and Jingpo.

¹ PTB *-a > Zaiwa -o. [Ed.]

1.10 Lhasa Tibetan, Cuona Menba, Baima

The case declensions of these three languages are quite similar to each other. The case paradigm for their first singular personal pronouns are indicated in Figure 11.

	<i>original pronoun</i>	<i>ergative</i>	<i>possessive</i>	<i>accusative</i>
<i>Tibetan</i>	ηa^{12}	$\eta \epsilon^{12}$	$\eta \epsilon^{14}$	ηa^{14}
<i>Cuona Menba</i>	ηe^{35}	$\eta a i^{35}$	ηu^{35} (ko ³¹)	ηe^{35}
<i>Baima</i>	ηa^{35}	ηa^{35}	ηo^{35}	$n a^{35}$

Figure 11. First person singular pronoun in Tibetan, Cuona Menba and Baima.

The figure shows that the possessive in Baima is signified by vowel mutation. The personal pronouns in Cuona Menba have both possessive and ergative forms; and Lhasa Tibetan even has a distinctive form for the accusative. Grammatically speaking, all the case forms in the three languages are not quite uniform in their functions in sentences. The ergative of Lhasa Tibetan, for example, can be used to refer to instrument, direction and cause of action. As for the accusative, it can be employed in a sentence to mark adverbials of time or place.

1.11 Shixing

Shixing is a recently-found language belonging to the Qiangic branch of the TB group. It has case inflection for personal pronouns by vowel mutation. See Figure 12.

	<i>nominative</i>	<i>possessive</i>	<i>accusative</i>
<i>1st sing.</i>	ηa^{55}	$\eta \epsilon^{55}$	ηo^{55}
<i>2nd sing.</i>	ηi^{55}	$\eta \epsilon^{55}$	ηo^{55}
<i>3rd sing.</i>	$th i^{55}$	$th \epsilon^{55}$	$th a^{55}$

Figure 12. Shixing.

The nominative form of the personal pronoun in Shixing is the same as that of the original pronoun, but the possessive is usually loosely followed by a possible particle. The plural pronoun has no case declension.

Zhaba resembles Shixing in its inflexion for the possessive. Bogar Luoba uses a suffix *-m* to indicate the accusative case. The case concord in Dulong does not clearly distinguish between possessive and ergative.

1.12 Yi and Achang

The form and content of case in these two languages are quite similar. The nominative and accusative are usually the same, with the possessive being distinguished by tone shift. See Figure 13.

	Yi		Achang	
	<i>nominative and accusative</i>	<i>possessive</i>	<i>nominative and accusative</i>	<i>possessive</i>
<i>1st sing.</i>	ŋa ³³	ŋa ⁵⁵	ŋɔ ⁵⁵	ŋɔ ⁵¹
<i>2nd sing.</i>	nur ³³	ni ⁵⁵	nuaŋ ⁵⁵	nuaŋ ⁵¹
<i>3rd sing.</i>	tshɿ ³³	tshɿ ³¹	ŋaŋ ³¹	ŋaŋ ¹³

Figure 13. Yi and Achang.

The first and third singular personal pronouns in Yi signify case declension by tone shift alone; while the possessive of the second person pronoun is formed by both vowel mutation and tone shift. The possessive case is only marked in the first and second singular pronouns of Achang, with no inflection for the possessive of the third person pronoun; in this aspect Achang is quite similar to Naxi.

1.13 Hani

The nominative form of Hani pronouns is usually the same as the underlying etymological form, while the possessive and accusative cases are indicated by allotones.

	<i>nominative</i>	<i>possessive</i>	<i>accusative</i>
<i>1st sing.</i>	ŋa ⁵⁵	ŋa ³³	ŋa ³¹
<i>2nd sing.</i>	no ⁵⁵	no ³³	no ³¹
<i>3rd sing.</i>	a ³¹ jo ³¹	a ³¹ jo ³¹	a ³¹ jo ³¹

Figure 14. Hani.

The three case forms of Hani are only distinguished in the first and second person singular, with no case declension for the third person, or for plural pronouns at all.

2.0 DISCUSSION

The above paradigms of personal pronouns in more than 10 TB languages give us a bird's eye view. In this section we intend to delve into some detailed problems concerning the case category of personal pronouns.

2.1 It is widely believed among all scholars of comparative Sino-Tibetan languages that personal pronouns in TB are genetically related to those of Sinitic languages. Nevertheless, not all scholars are quite agreed about the case category of personal pronouns in TB languages. We are using the term 'case' to refer to the inflexional and agglutinative affixed increments to pronominal roots, as opposed to analytic markings of grammatical relationships by particles. The case forms in the above fourteen figures may be grouped into four types:

- a) The grammatical meanings of case vary with the initial (consonant) inflection.
- b) The grammatical meanings of case are marked by rhyme (nuclear vowel) inflection.
- c) The grammatical meanings of case are denoted by change of tone.
- d) The case reference is indicated by adding an agglutinative suffix to the personal pronouns.

The four types are differently distributed in TB languages. For example, Qiang, Muya etc. in the Qiangic branch indicate case by both initial and rhyme alternations. Pumi, Ersu, Shixing and Zhaba (Qiangic); Baima, Cuona Menba (Bodic) and Dulong (Jingpo-Nung), all indicate case type by rhyme inflection; Lhasa Tibetan, Jingpo, Zaiwa, Bai and Jinuo indicate case by vowel mutation and tone shift. Yi, Hani and Naxi in the Yi branch, and Achang in the Burmish branch signify case by change of tone. In Ergong and Bogar Luoba, case is denoted by rhyme inflection and the addition of an agglutinative suffix.

2.2 Why are the personal pronouns in most TB languages represented by several case forms like nominative, accusative, possessive and so on?

Actually, some TB languages have much more elaborate case systems than the above charts might imply. Tibetan, for example, has a rich system of eight case categories: nominative (basic form), accusative, ergative, objective, genitive, possessive, dative and vocative. Only a few of the case particles

cause flexional changes in the pronoun. I think the following questions need further clarification in analysing the conditions for inflectional change of personal pronouns in TB languages:

2.2.1 The origin of case for personal pronouns in most of the languages is caused by the combination of the root with case particles, which led to fusional morphophonemic changes (of rhyme and tone) in the root. In an earlier article (Sun 1992), I showed that agglutinative prefixes or suffixes have developed into inflectional changes in vowels, consonants and tones throughout the history of grammatical categories in TB languages.

2.3 The inflexional processes involved in case marking can be roughly classified into three types: vowel mutation, tone shift, and suffixation. When agglutinative case suffixes are combined with the root in the course of phonetic evolution, they usually exert influence on the root vowel and tone, which can finally result in vowel mutation and/or tone shift in the pronoun root. The following example from Ersu will illustrate these processes:

possessive	original pron. + i^{55}	accusative	original pron. + va^{55}
ϵi^{55}	< $a^{55} + i^{55}$	a^{55}	< $a^{55} + va^{55}$
ni^{55}	< $n\epsilon^{55} + i^{55}$	na^{55}	< $n\epsilon^{55} + va^{55}$
thi^{55}	< $th\epsilon^{55} + i^{55}$	tha^{55}	< $th\epsilon^{55} + va^{55}$

Figure 15

The possessive pronouns have evolved from the juncture of the personal pronouns with the enclitic i^{55} signifying possession. The accusative results from the combination of the pronoun with the enclitic va^{55} denoting the object.

The same is true in Tibetan if we explore the phonetic change of personal pronouns in Lhasa colloquialisms. In Lhasa Tibetan, e.g., the original first singular ηa^{12} becomes $\eta \epsilon^{12}$ (< ηas) in the ergative, $\eta \epsilon^{14}$ (< $\eta afii$) in the possessive and ηa^{14} (< ηar) in the accusative or locative.

It is surely not necessary to catalogue the formative processes in inflectional paradigms for pronouns in every particular language. The two examples above are quite enough to indicate the main causes of rhyme (vowel) or tone change in pronominal case-systems. It obviously shows that the changes have resulted from syllabic coalescence. We can learn more if we correlate this with other phonemic changes brought about by syllabic coalescence in the grammatical forms of Tibetan or most other TB languages (Tan 1983). The coalescence has paved the way for the transition from agglutinative forms into inflectional ones.

A few languages like Qiang and Muya distinguish cases by means of inflectional change of vowel, consonant and tone all together. The only possible correct explanation for this complex is that it is older and more primitive compared to the single process of only rhyme (vowel) inflection. In a paper presented to the 26th International Conference on Sino-Tibetan Linguistics in Osaka, Japan in 1993 (published as Sun 1994), I pointed out that personal agreement suffixes on the verb can relate not only to the independent nominative pronoun but also to the accusative pronoun, so that the agreement suffix can share the initial (consonant) or rhyme (vowel) of the personal pronoun in some TB languages; a few languages even attach the entire personal pronouns as affixes to the verb root. This phenomenon provides us with proof that the nominative/accusative distinction in PTB has often left its trace in initial consonant alternations. Moreover, the northern (Taoping) dialect of Qiang has lost the nominative form of the first person pronoun *ŋa*; Mawo Qiang, however, keeps the cognate *qa* for first singular and *kuə* for second singular which corresponds systematically with Taoping Qiang's accusative form. This can be used to account for the first person forms in most of the TB languages where they do not descend from **ŋa*: e.g. *a*³⁵ (Pumi), *a*⁵⁵ (Ersu), *a*³³ (Lotha Naga and Angami Naga), *dzaŋ* (Cangluo Menba), *ki*⁵³ (Geman Deng), *go* (Bahing), *goh*⁵⁵ (Sulong Luoba), *ga* (Bisu), *ka* (Dhimal), *ka* (Kuki), *anga?* (Limbu), *aŋ* (Kiranti), etc. The second person pronoun is *kuə* in the northern dialect, *khjod* in Tibetan, *kxi* in Gurung, *gon* in Hayu, *chi* in Newari, *ga* in Bahing. It seems natural to infer that the grammatical categories of case are much older than the morphophonemic processes of rhyme or tone inflection.

On the basis of variants like *ŋa*, *ka*, *ga* in the first singular of TB languages, one is led to reconstruct a prefixed form **g-ŋa* for PTB. Similarly, I feel strongly inclined to reconstruct the second person form as **k-no* or **k-naŋ*. In my view, we should take the initial inflection as the oldest, then the rhyme inflection. As for tone change, it might well become an even more common morphophonemic process in the future, as segmental markers of case disappear by fusion.

2.4 Analysis of the features of pronominal case systems impressed upon us the fact that case agreement between nominal arguments and the verb varies from language to language. Generally the most regular agreement is in the languages with initial inflection, while languages with rhyme and tone change are less strict. Languages with only tonal alternations are fairly free of agreement constraints. Languages with nominative and ergative differentiation are few in number; in any case, nominative is obligatory

whereas ergative is context-restricted in some languages. Most of the nominative and accusative forms agree quite strictly since there appear no grammatically passive verb forms in TB languages. Ergative always occurs in the subject slot regardless of word order.

The ergative system in TB languages is comparatively primitive, and seems to be in its formative stages, with restricted utilization. As time goes on, subtle changes of many kinds occur (e.g. widening and narrowing of grammatical meanings and evolution of forms and contexts) which in the end results in a great diversity of case forms in modern TB languages. We have little doubt of the ultimate success of attempts to reconstruct older PTB forms and variants. Nevertheless it is preferable at the present time to reconstruct proto-forms at lower (subgroup) levels. The main task is to distinguish among the earlier, later and most recently developed formulated case forms in TB languages.

3.0 The study of the case markers of the personal pronouns in TB is a difficult project. This paper is my preliminary exposition based on the materials available. Nevertheless my results are better considered as a cue rather than a conclusion. Several problems still remain unresolved, which I would like to call to the attention of interested scholars.

3.1 Case forms are reflected not only in pronouns but also in nouns. The central question is why the inflectional change occurs with pronouns rather than nouns. Does it indicate that nouns and pronouns once both underwent inflectional change, which has since disappeared with respect to nouns?

3.2 There is not the slightest doubt that Sinitic and TB languages are the two major branches of Sino-Tibetan. The possessive form of case particles in Chinese, as in TB languages, are assumed to have occurred after nouns or pronouns. The other case particles in the TB family, whether earlier or later forms, are located in post-pronominal or post-nominal position, as in Chinese. Chinese “empty words” like prepositions with similar grammatical functions, however, are transferred to a position preceding the noun or pronoun. Problems then arise over which of the two structures is the more ancient, and why there has been a change in word order.

3.3 We have seen how inflected pronouns have had a close relationship to agglutinative suffixes in TB languages. They remind us of the case declension in modern English, which bears a little resemblance to that in TB:

	<i>nominative</i>	<i>accusative</i>	<i>possessive</i>
<i>1st person</i>	I	me	my
<i>2nd person</i>	you	you	your
<i>3rd person</i>	he	him	his
<i>interrogative</i>	who	whom	whose

Figure 16. English.

Modern English pronouns usually have three case forms related by means of vowel mutation, consonant shift and agglutinative suffixes. We might gain insights into universal principles of grammatical evolution from the above comparison, which encourages us to make painstaking efforts to explore the typological congruence of origins.

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