

## A Further Discussion on Verb Agreement in Tibeto-Burman Languages

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## A Further Discussion on Verb Agreement in Tibeto-Burman Languages

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It has been ten years since I presented my paper, "Verb Agreement in the Tibeto-Burman Languages of China," to the 12th International Conference on Sino-Tibetan Languages and Linguistics held in Beijing in 1982, which gave a sketch of the agreement paradigms in Trung, Qiang, Gyarong, Jingpo, Geman, Xixia and others, including their forms and interrelations. In the past ten years, many new data and viewpoints about it have been put out by scholars abroad, and my own knowledge has deepened in accordance with that discussion.

Some scholars have tried to reconstruct the original form of verb agreement, as well as describing of the specific verb agreement of each language (DeLancey 1992: 315-333). In recent years, discussion about the historical development of verb agreement, such as whether it was a secondary development and whether its original form can be reconstructed, has led to a dispute which, in essence, involves the Proto-Tibeto-Burman (PTB) grammatical system, features, forms and many other problems. Therefore, I would like to express my own viewpoints on this dispute with the purpose of casting a stone to make a few ripples and thus further the development of research on the grammatical problems of the TB languages.

### 1. THE DISTRIBUTION OF VERB AGREEMENT IN THE TB LANGUAGES

"Distribution" here means: (a) the geographical distribution of verb agreement and (b) its distribution in the branches or sub-branches of the TB family.

Before discussing distribution, the contents of verb agreement should first be defined. Generally only agreement marking on the verb in the declarative sentence is discussed, but I intend to consider imperative sentences also.

Verb agreement in the declarative sentence is found in most of the Qiangic languages within China, such as Qiang, Gyarong, Ergong, Zhaba, Queyu, Muya and Xixia, and in the Kachin languages, such as Jingpo, Trung, Anong and Geman. In the newly investigated Sangkong, in the south of Yunnan Province, which belongs to the Yipo branch, a trace of simple agreement (the first person) marked on the verb is also found (Li 1992: 137-160). This means that features of verb agreement in the declarative sentence exist in three branches of the TB family within China.

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I will now make an analysis of the personal markers on the verb in the imperative sentence. The verb has an imperative mood in many languages, and its forms are somewhat related to the forms of the declarative mood. Because the imperative mood is usually used together with 2p., the 2p. suffix is used as well as any prefix or suffix marking the imperative mood. Let me compare the prefixes and suffixes of the 2p. in the declarative and imperative moods in Trung by taking the verb "la<sup>55</sup>" (look for) as an example:

|          | DECLARATIVE  | IMPERATIVE   |
|----------|--|--|
| SINGULAR | nɯ <sup>31</sup> la <sup>55</sup>                  | pɯ <sup>31</sup> la <sup>55</sup>                  |
| DUAL     | nɯ <sup>31</sup> la <sup>55</sup> ɕɯ <sup>31</sup> | pɯ <sup>31</sup> la <sup>55</sup> ɕɯ <sup>31</sup> |
| PLURAL   | nɯ <sup>31</sup> lan <sup>55</sup>                 | pɯ <sup>31</sup> lan <sup>55</sup>                 |

These paradigms show that only the prefixes differ between declarative and imperative: the suffixes are identical. It should be noted that the 2p. plural suffix -n is clearly an abbreviated form of the personal pronoun, whether in the declarative or in the imperative mood. A similar situation is also found in Qiang. Take the Qiang verb "guə<sup>33</sup>" (put on [clothes]) for example:

|          | DECLARATIVE (PRESENT T.)                            | IMPERATIVE  |
|----------|---|---|
| SINGULAR | guə <sup>31</sup> nə <sup>31</sup>                  | kuə <sup>31</sup> guə <sup>31</sup>                                   |
| DUAL     | guə <sup>31</sup> sɿ <sup>31</sup> nə <sup>31</sup> | kuə <sup>31</sup> guə <sup>31</sup> sɿ <sup>31</sup> nə <sup>31</sup> |

The Qiang paradigms are a little more complicated than those of Trung. The declarative mood is marked by person and number suffixes. The person suffix is similar in form to the subjective personal pronoun. The imperative mood is marked with the prefix kuə<sup>31</sup>- which is identical to the 2p. objective form, and most suffixes marking the imperative mood are identical to those marking the declarative mood. The consistency of the forms marking the declarative and imperative moods is indubitable.

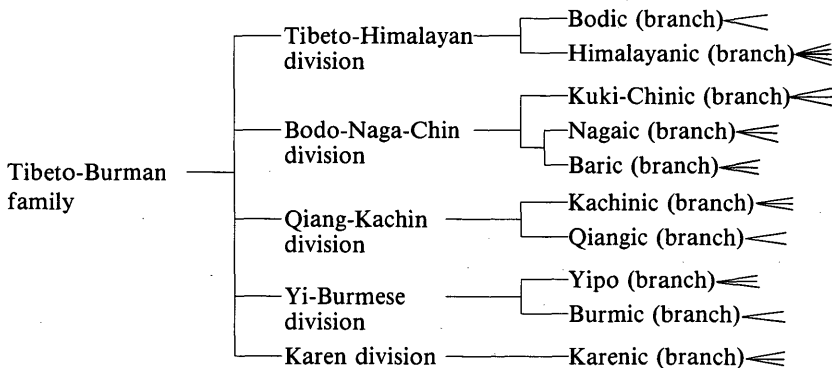
It is obvious that, in most cases, a language with verb agreement in the declarative mood has agreement of similar form in the imperative mood as well. On the other hand, in some languages, such as Tibetan, Canglue Menba and Baima, no trace of verb agreement can be found, although a certain trace of 2p. is retained in the imperative mood. For instance, in Canglue Menba, -tɕo, -ɕo, and -jo are used to mark the imperative mood, all containing a vowel [o], and in Pumi -u is suffixed to the verb in the singular and plural imperative. The suffix [u] and the suffix component [o] in Canglue Menba are cognate, while the nasalized vowel [ə̃] of the suffix -u obviously has a close relation to the -n marking the plural imperative in Trung. They may be of the same origin, namely derived from the second person pronouns. The main form marking the imperative mood in Tibetan is the flection of verb roots, and the most common flection is to change the vowels of verb roots into [o]. It should be noted that in the past tense in Qiang, the 2p. suffix is also [o]

while the 1p. suffix is [a].

What is the origin of the [o]? According to *Phonologies and Vocabularies of Tibeto-Burman Languages* (『藏緬語語音和詞匯』1991, 北京), in 20 of the 40 Tibeto-Burman languages or dialects within China, the singular second person pronoun is “no” or “nu” (including “nv”). So we might more or less assume that the form “o” marking the imperative mood on the verb is the final sound of the personal pronoun.

It is thus at least arguable that verb agreement occurs not only in the declarative sentence but also in the imperative sentence. This phenomenon accounts for the following two problems at least. (1) It occurs more extensively than we had expected that the abbreviated (or original) forms of personal pronouns are used as prefixes and suffixes to mark agreement on the verb. If the possessive personal prefixes on nouns are included, the grammatical forms and categories resulting from abbreviated forms of personal pronouns used as affixes would be an important subject in Tibeto-Burman research. (2) Verb agreement has developed in an unbalanced way in the TB languages. It is fully retained in some while in others it has been lost completely, or only some remnants are found.

The distribution of verb agreement in the TB languages looks rather different when re-examined in the light of the above argument. I sort the TB languages into ten branches, whose genealogical relations can be illustrated as follows:



Each of the ten branches can be divided into several groups (or sub-branches: e.g. the Himalayanic branch can be divided into the eastern, central and western groups, the Qiangic branch into the southern and northern groups, and the Kuki-Chinic and Baric branches into a few small groups each. That is what the bars after the branches in the diagram indicate. In the Bodic branch, only some remnants of verb agreement are retained in the imperative mood. Agreement has developed in an imbalanced way in the Himalayanic branch: it is comparatively fully retained in some languages but has been lost in a considerable number of languages. In the Kuki-Chinic, Nagaic, and Baric branches there are some languages where it is retained, such as Lakher and Konyak of the Kuki-Chinic

branch and Nocte of the Baric. The Kachinic and Qiangic branches are taken as more conservative ones, for they contain a considerable number of languages in which agreement seems rather complete and conservative, e.g. Jingpo, Trung, Anong, Geman and other languages of the Kachinic branch, and Qiang, Gyarong, Muya, Ergong, Xixia, Queyu and other languages of the Qiangic branch. Personal markers can be found in only a few Yipho languages, e.g. Sangkong within China. Therefore, agreement features are found in eight of the ten branches. Agreement features seem more universal than the causative category of the verb, which has been generally accepted as an original form of PTB. As regards its geographical distribution, agreement is not merely confined to the so-called minority corridor, but is scattered over the whole area of the TB languages.

## 2. THREE PRIMARY MODES OF MARKING THE PERSON CATEGORY

The mode of marking verb agreement is to prefix and suffix the verb. The close relationship between the affixes and the personal pronouns is affirmed in all the relevant literature. However, while there is a general consensus about the forms of the PTB personal pronouns, there is a considerable divergence of view about PTB verb agreement. This is because there are various modes of marking verb agreement, which results in a great variety of affixes. There are three primary models:

2.1 Using the initial segment of the personal pronoun as the prefix, suffix or tail vowel of the verb. Which is common to most of the TB languages? The following paradigms show the modes of marking verb agreement in the main TB languages.

### (1) In Trung (Dulong or Rawang):

| PERSON | SINGULAR | DUAL        | PLURAL |
|--------|----------|-------------|--------|
| 1st    | V-ŋ      | V-ɕu, V-ɕiŋ | V-i    |
| 2nd    | nu-V     | nu-V-ɕu     | nu-V-n |
| 3rd    | V-       | V-          | V-     |

#### Remarks:

- (a) Tone plays a minor role in verb agreement and, can therefore be omitted from discussion.
- (b) The above paradigm illustrates the simplest variable forms of the verb, e.g. the original form with a prefix or with a suffix or both. There may also be regular phonetic changes in the verb root or in the prefix. For details, see the paradigm of sound changes in Sun 1982: 89-90.
- (c) The 3p. is not marked.
- (d) Under certain conditions, verb agreement also depends on the object, the attribute of the subject and other things as well as the subject.

(2) Gyarong (Jiarong), as determined by a 1987 investigation. The material records Gyarong as spoken in Wangjia Village, Suomo Township, Maerkang

County. The main forms of the verb paradigm are:

| PERSON | SINGULAR  | DUAL      | PLURAL  |
|--------|-----------|-----------|---------|
| 1st    | V-ŋ       | V-tçh     | V-i     |
| 2nd    | tə-V-n    | tə-V-ntçh | tə-V-in |
| 3rd    | V-u (vt.) | V-ø       | wu-V-ø  |

**Remarks:**

- (a) The 2p. and 3p. affixes on the transitive verb (vt.) and the intransitive verb (vi.) are somewhat different.
- (b) Rather complicated sound changes occur depending on whether suffixes are added to open syllable or closed syllable verbs. For details, see Jin Peng et al. (1958)
- (c) In conjugation, all or part of the prefix of a prefixed verb may undergo change.
- (d) Verb agreement is related, under certain conditions, to the object and the attribute of the subject as well as the subject.
- (e) In a sentence with a coordinated subject, verb agreement is consistent with dual if the actors are two, and with plural if more than two. If the coordinated subject contains the 1p., verb agreement is consistent with the 1p., and similarly for the 2p.

(3) Ergong (western dialect in Danba County, Sichuan Province):

| PERSON | SINGULAR  | PLURAL  |
|--------|---|---|
| 1st    | V-u   | V-uŋ  |
| 2nd    | V-i   | V-n   |
| 3rd    | V-si (present & past tenses)<br>V-zɛ (future tense) | V-si (present & past tenses)<br>V-zɛ (future tense) |

**Remarks:**

- (a) Because of differences in the vowels and terminal sounds of the verb roots, regular sound changes take place in the suffixed verb roots. I will discuss the details later.
- (b) There are no dual forms.
- (c) The suffix of the verb is consistent with the object and the attribute of the subject under certain conditions.

(4) Queyu, also called Zhaba in Sun (1983a). In the process of sound change, the -ŋ and -n suffixes of the verb have developed into nasalization of the verb root, among other things. Let us take as an example the verb “tɕ<sup>55</sup> (drink)”:

| NUMBER   | PERSON | FUTURE T.                          | PRESENT T.                        | PAST T.  |
|----------|--------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| Singular | 1st    | tõ <sup>55</sup> dʒɿ <sup>35</sup> | tõ <sup>55</sup> rɛ <sup>53</sup> | kə <sup>55</sup> tõ <sup>55</sup> si <sup>53</sup> |
|          | 2nd    | tõ <sup>55</sup> tʂɿ <sup>35</sup> | tõ <sup>55</sup> rɛ <sup>53</sup> | kə <sup>55</sup> tã <sup>55</sup> si <sup>53</sup> |
|          | 3rd    | tɕ <sup>55</sup> tʂɿ <sup>35</sup> | tɕ <sup>55</sup> rɛ <sup>53</sup> | kə <sup>55</sup> tɕ <sup>55</sup> si <sup>53</sup> |

|        |     |                                     |                                    |   |
|--------|-----|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|
|        | 1st | the <sup>55</sup> dzi <sup>35</sup> | the <sup>55</sup> rə <sup>53</sup> | kə <sup>55</sup> the <sup>55</sup> si <sup>53</sup> |
| Plural | 2nd | the <sup>55</sup> tʂi <sup>35</sup> | the <sup>55</sup> re <sup>53</sup> | kə <sup>55</sup> the <sup>55</sup> si <sup>53</sup> |
|        | 3rd | te <sup>55</sup> tʂi <sup>35</sup>  | te <sup>55</sup> rə <sup>53</sup>  | kə <sup>55</sup> te <sup>55</sup> si <sup>53</sup>  |

**Remarks:**

(a) Verb agreement is marked mainly by flection of the verb root itself. However, it can obviously be inferred that the flections are remnants of “-ŋ” and “-n” after historical change.

(b) Verb agreement is mingled with tense and number, marked by prefixes and suffixes as well as by flection.

(c) Verb agreement is consistent only with the subject, not with the object or the attribute of the subject.

(d) This illustration shows that the verb agreement consists of remnants of the initial segments of personal pronouns used as suffixes, and that it is on its way to extinction.

Besides the above four there are many other TB languages adopting similar paradigms, which I will not illustrate further.

**2.2** Using the final vowel of the personal pronoun as prefix and suffix of the verb. The final vowel is usually combined with a consonant marking number or tense into a syllable, which is the most obvious personal marker in some Qiangic languages. Now let me illustrate briefly the paradigms of several languages.

**(1) Qiang (Taoping speech):**

| NUMBER   | PERSON | FUTURE T.         | PRESENT T.      | PAST T. |
|----------|--------|-------------------|-----------------|---------|
| singular | 1st    | -a                | -a              | -a      |
|          | 2nd    | -u-nə             | -nə             | -o      |
|          | 3rd    | -u                | ∅               | -i      |
| plural   | 1st    | -u-E <sup>R</sup> | -ə <sup>l</sup> | -i      |
|          | 2nd    | -sɪ-nə            | -sɪ-nə          | -sɪ-nə  |
|          | 3rd    | -u                | ∅               | -i      |

**Remarks:**

(a) The 1p. and 3p. suffixes and the singular 2p. past tense suffix are related to the final segment, and the 2p. present tense and future tense suffixes are related to the initial segment.

(b) Tone has a grammatical function in tense, but has no relation to person.

(c) The personal suffix is combined with the number and tense suffix into a syllable, and sometimes with the verb root, resulting in flection of the final segment of the verb root.

(d) The retroflex vowels of the 1p. plural are common to most Qiang dialects, and their origin needs further exploration.

(2) Pumi. I take the verb “dzə<sup>55</sup> (eat)” in the Qinghua speech of the southern dialect as an example.

| NUMBER   | PERSON | FUTURE T.                           | PRESENT T.                          | PAST T.  |
|----------|--------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Singular | 1st    | dzə <sup>55</sup> je <sup>55</sup>  | dzə <sup>55</sup> ʒo <sup>55</sup>  | khə <sup>13</sup> dzi <sup>55</sup> sā <sup>55</sup>   |
|          | 2nd    | dzə <sup>55</sup> fo <sup>55</sup>  | dzə <sup>55</sup> ʒu <sup>55</sup>  | khə <sup>13</sup> dziuu <sup>55</sup> si <sup>55</sup> |
|          | 3rd    | dzə <sup>55</sup> qa <sup>55</sup>  | dzə <sup>55</sup> ʒuu <sup>55</sup> | khə <sup>13</sup> dzy <sup>55</sup> si <sup>55</sup>   |
| Plural   | 1st    | dzə <sup>55</sup> fjə <sup>55</sup> | dzə <sup>55</sup> ʒu <sup>55</sup>  | khə <sup>13</sup> dzi <sup>55</sup> si <sup>55</sup>   |
|          | 2nd    | dzə <sup>55</sup> fjə <sup>55</sup> | dzə <sup>55</sup> ʒu <sup>55</sup>  | khə <sup>13</sup> dzi <sup>55</sup> si <sup>55</sup>   |
|          | 3rd    | dzə <sup>55</sup> qa <sup>55</sup>  | dzə <sup>55</sup> ʒuu <sup>55</sup> | khə <sup>13</sup> dzy <sup>55</sup> si <sup>55</sup>   |

**Remarks:**

(a) The personal suffix the personal suffix has combined into one syllable with the tense and number suffixes, so that its phonetic features have almost disappeared. However, we can still more or less distinguish the sounds of the personal suffixes.

(b) The personal suffixes of different tenses are different in form, as in Qiang. Whether the different forms reflect some historical development needs further exploration.

(c) There is no difference between the 1p. and 2p. plural suffixes. This is one piece of evidence for the gradual loss of features of verb agreement in Pumi.

(d) From the distinguished singular personal suffixes of the future tense -e (1p.) and -o (2p.), and the past tense -ē (ā) and -u, we can still get a hint of the historical development of the personal suffixes in Pumi.

The above two languages are typical examples of agreement between the verb and the personal pronoun. We can also find other examples in the TB languages which are not so typical, e.g. the suffixes of Nocte and Jingpo. What should be especially noted is that, as I mentioned in the first part, it is quite obvious that TB languages use the 2p. suffix of the verb as the suffix in the imperative mood.

**2.3 Affixing the personal pronoun directly to the verb to mark agreement.** Some of these languages are complicated in verb agreement, and some are very simple. For instance:

(1) Kham. This is one of the TB languages distributed in west Nepal, with 40,000 speakers. It uses the personal pronoun as a prefix to mark verb agreement (van Driem 1993: Table 39).

| NUMBER   | PERSON | INTRANSITIVE | REFLEXIVE   |
|----------|--------|--------------|-------------|
| Singular | 1st    | ngə- V-ke    | ngə- V-sike |
|          | 2nd    | nə- V-ke     | nə- V-sike  |
|          | 3rd    | V-ke         | V-sike      |
| Dual     | 1st    | gin- V-ke    | gin- V-sike |
|          | 2nd    | jin- V-ke    | jin- V-sike |
|          | 3rd    | V-kini       | V-sikini    |



|        |     |     |        |     |          |
|--------|-----|-----|--------|-----|----------|
|        | 1st | ge- | V-ke   | ge- | V-sike   |
| Plural | 2nd | je- | V-ke   | je- | V-sike   |
|        | 3rd |     | V-kerə |     | V-sikera |

**Remarks:**

- (a) The personal pronoun is used as a prefix to mark verb agreement.  
 (b) The verb agrees with the object under certain conditions, as well as with the subject.

## (2) Xixia (Tangut).

| NUMBER   | PERSON | SUFFIX           |   |
|----------|--------|------------------|---|
| Singular | 1st    | -ŋɑ <sup>2</sup> | 𐽄 |
| Singular | 2nd    | -nɑ <sup>2</sup> | 𐽅 |

**Remarks:**

- (a) Only singular and plural 1p. suffixes and a singular 2p. suffix are used, and their Xixia characters are the same as those of the personal pronouns.  
 (b) Verb agreement is not strict.  
 (c) The three suffixes marking the person agree with the object under certain conditions.

(3) Besides the above two languages, there are also some TB languages which use the personal pronoun as a suffix to mark verb agreement. Observe the following sentences of several languages:

## Jingpo:

ŋaj<sup>33</sup> lai<sup>31</sup>a<sup>33</sup> fǎ<sup>3</sup>ʒin<sup>55</sup> ŋ<sup>31</sup>ŋaj<sup>33</sup>.  
 I book study (suf.)  
 I study.

## Geman Deng:

ki<sup>53</sup> dur<sup>31</sup>ɿoŋ<sup>35</sup> ɕat<sup>53</sup> ɕa<sup>55</sup>thoŋ<sup>55</sup>ki<sup>55</sup>.  
 I hen-paw-like grain meal eat (suf.)  
 I ate meal of hen-paw-like grain.

## Sangkong:

ŋa<sup>55</sup> naŋ<sup>33</sup> la<sup>55</sup> mjaŋ<sup>55</sup> pi<sup>55</sup> ŋa<sup>55</sup>.  
 I you (aux.) see (aux.) (suf.)  
 I saw you.

## Muya:

ŋi<sup>55</sup> ɕi<sup>55</sup>liē<sup>55</sup>phē<sup>33</sup> khu<sup>35</sup> ji<sup>35</sup>te<sup>53</sup> to<sup>55</sup>ko<sup>33</sup>po<sup>33</sup>ŋe<sup>33</sup>.  
 I basin (aux.) face (pref.) wash (suffix)  
 I washed my face in a basin.

**Remarks:**

(a) The above four languages all use the singular first personal pronoun as a suffix. In some of them, the suffix is completely identical to the initial and final segments and tone of the personal pronoun, while others are partly identical.

(b) Muya is considered the closest relative of Xixia. Its first person pronoun has four forms:  $\eta u^{55}$  (original),  $\eta i^{55}$  (subjective case),  $\eta g e^{35} n i^{33}$  (possessive case),  $\eta g e^{35}$  (objective case). The  $\eta e^{33}$  suffix is the closest to the sound of the first person pronoun.

(c) The agreement systems of some of these languages are complicated, such as those of Jingpo and Geman Deng, while those of others are simple, as in Sangkong and Muya. The simple ones seem to be on the verge of extinction, and are not strictly observed. The suffix on the verb marks the person, but not all verbs are relevantly suffixed in sentences with first person pronouns as subjects.

It is hard to say which of the above three primary modes of marking verb agreement are older, and which are later. In those languages where verb agreement is strict, the subject of a sentence can often be omitted in the spoken form, and the person of the subject can be judged from the form of the verb (prefix and suffix).

Prefixes as well as suffixes are used to mark verb agreement. Prefixes are primary in some languages such as Gyarong and Kham, but in most languages, suffixes are primary. Both may be used concurrently, as in Trung where 2p. plural is marked by the -n suffix together with the nu- (or na-) prefix. This concurrent use may mark more complex grammatical forms, such as the imperative mood or tense and aspect. Agreement with object as well as subject, and even possessives of subject or object may be expressed in this way. Some people consider the prefix more ancient and more original than the suffix. Although the evidence is hardly ample at present, it can be seen that in the TB languages the suffix becomes extinct before the prefix at an historical stage where agglutinative forms are decreasing and analytical ones increasing. What should be noted is that the extinction of a suffix marking grammatical category and the loss of the pre-consonant of a consonant cluster (the consonant before the main one in a consonant cluster) are simultaneous, that is to say, that in those languages where consonant clusters (especially those with a pre-consonant) are being lost, suffixes marking grammatical categories are hardly ever used.

**3. DISCUSSION**

In the light of the exposition and illustrations of the last two parts, I would now like to discuss the following problems:

**3.1** The system of verb agreement is related directly to the personal pronouns, and its forms are initial or final segments of these pronouns. I wonder whether the

concept of pronominalization should not be extended to include such grammatical meanings and forms related to the personal pronouns, as well as the pronouns themselves. If this were to be accepted, then pronominalization would come to include at least the following aspects:

- (1) The prefixes and suffixes marking the person of the declarative mood;
- (2) The 2p. prefixes and suffixes of the imperative mood, including flecational forms integrated with the root;

(3) The personal possessive category of the noun. This is a grammatical form often neglected, and is only a remnant in ten TB languages within China. If we also include the prefix on kinship terms, which has developed from the final -a of the first person pronoun, there will be even more remnants of personal possessive markings on nouns (Sun 1984). There has been no report on this fact concerning the TB languages outside China, and yet it should be seriously considered.

If these three aspects are accepted, the concept of pronominalization should be extended, and the number of languages possessing it will increase a great deal. The next question is why there should be so many TB languages with a tendency to pronominalization. Geographically, the pronominalization is distributed across the whole TB area, from Hunan in China in the east to west Nepal in the west, and from the north of Thailand in the south to Gansu and Qinghai in China in the north. Since it is distributed across such an extensive area, we can only explain it as a remnant of PTB. Language contact and interaction cannot account for it.

**3.2** The prefixes and suffixes of pronominalization should be investigated in the grammatical systems of all the TB languages. As is generally known, the TB languages have developed historically in an imbalanced way. The disparities reflected by this sort of imbalance are good leads for linguists to study linguistic development, and to make up for the lack of literature in the TB languages. There still exist abundant agglutinative prefixes and suffixes in the TB languages, which are the bearers of the complicated TB grammatical systems, categories and forms, e.g. in the Qiangic and Kachinic languages within China. Yet it should not be denied that there are indeed some TB languages lacking in grammatical categories and forms and other (agglutinative or flecational) modes, e.g. the Yipho languages within China whose grammatical meanings are mainly expressed analytically just as in Chinese. I have already argued that there is a long historical development process from the complicated agglutinative or flecational form to the comparatively simple analytic form (Sun 1992: 5, 6). This process is like a chain whose links are the TB languages and dialects. When the links are made, the line of development is very clear. When the prefixes and suffixes on the verb marking person and other things, such as tense (present, future and past), aspect (perfective, imperfective), mood (imperative, interrogative), voice (reflexive, causative, reciprocal etc.), are considered together, they form a very complicated grammatical system. What we find about some grammatical forms from the ancient Tibetan writing of the 7th century, e.g. tense, mood, causative and other grammatical categories, also forms

one of the links on the chain, and a milestone in the historical development. Even those had been much simplified from those in the PTB grammatical system. We cannot at present go further into the history of the agglutinative or flectional forms of various grammatical categories, starting from the assumption that the remnant causative forms present in the Yipho languages are the oldest and most original ones, because it is a very hard task to make an analysis of the developing chain in reverse.

3.3 In the second part, I made an analysis of the three primary forms of the verb agreement. Some may wonder why the initial segment is used as the prefix and suffix in some languages, and the final segment in others. Here I would like to put out a few half-baked ideas on the subject for discussion. I think the answer might be related to the "case" forms of personal pronouns in PTB. The case forms of personal pronouns retained in most modern TB languages are marked with a flection of final segment (including tones). This paradigm has largely resulted from the influence of case the auxiliary on the root of the personal pronoun. The fact that in a few languages grammatical form is marked with a flection of the initial segment provides us with a lead to clear up our doubt. For instance, in the southern dialect of Qiang, nasals mark the subjective case and stops the possessive and objective cases:

|                 | SUBJECTIVE | OBJECTIVE & POSSESSIVE |
|-----------------|------------|------------------------|
| SING. 1P. PRON. | ŋa         | qa ro go               |
| SING. 2P. PRON. | no         | ko                     |

Since verb agreement can be related to the object and the attribute as well as the subject, it is not strange that their prefixes and suffixes are consistent with subject or object. In the TB languages, the dorsal and uvular stops and the glottal stop are often distinctive. In that case, it is not strange that the final segment is retained as the suffix in the historical phonological development.

In addition, this phenomenon can also account for the following two doubts:

(1) As to person prefixes and suffixes on the verb, some languages use "tə" to mark the 2p. (such as Gyarong), and some use "k, ʔ" to mark the 1p. (such as Jingpo, Nocte and Kham). These were also retained because of an original agreement with the object.

(2) The personal pronouns of some of the present TB languages do not appear to be cognate with those of others, e.g. the first singular and the second singular personal pronouns are \*ŋa and \*no respectively in most languages, but in some others are a<sup>35</sup> (Pumi), a<sup>55</sup> (Ersu), dzaŋ (Cangluo Mema), ki<sup>53</sup> (Geman Deng), goh<sup>53</sup> (Sulong Luoba), etc. These exceptions are all possibly remnants of the objective case of PTB. Note that the Tibetan 2p. singular is "khjed," whose origin is possibly related to the objective case of a pronoun.

3.4 TB verb agreement is related to the attributes of subject and object as well as

the subject. If more than one person occurs in the subject or object, then which is marked on the verb? Generally speaking, they are marked in an order of precedence, i.e. 1p.→2p. →3p., but 2p.→1p, →3p. in a few languages. Why does the verb have relations with other sentence parts besides the subject? I think this is related to the SOV structure of the TB languages. With the verb at the end of the sentence, the prefixes and suffixes on the verb and the sentence parts before the verb form a sort of repercussion, which reflects their status in the sentence and makes the core of the sentence move to the end. I think it is one of the main features that the verb is the core of a sentence in the TB languages.

3.5 When exploring the historical origin of the personal agreement paradigm and reconstructing its original forms, we should be skeptical about including Chinese grammatical forms. For the Sino-Tibetan family itself is merely a hypothesis, which remains to be verified. This verification involves the identification of cognates, the exploration of laws of sound development, the correspondence of grammatical categories and forms, etc. The study of the laws of historical development of the TB languages, and even eventually the Sino-Tibetan languages, will surely develop in depth through comparing a great deal of reliable data, if we take painstaking efforts in the research, starting from specific languages.

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