

# Patterns of development, patterns of syncretism of relational morphology in the Bodic languages

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In this paper, I present the results of an examination of the relational morphology in 76 Tibeto-Burman languages, primarily from the Bodic section of Tibeto-Burman. I will discuss a set of etymons used to express relational functions and show how the meanings of the reflexes of these etymons have evolved. I will then go on to discuss overall patterns of syncretism of relational markers in these languages. Finally, the relation between the observed overall patterns of syncretism and the evolution of the reflexes of the etymons will be discussed.

1. INTRODUCTION: In this paper, I will present the results of a study of relational morphology from 76 Tibeto-Burman languages primarily from the Bodic section of Tibeto-Burman.<sup>1</sup> By relational morphology I mean both markers of grammatical function and location, collectively referred to as 'relational functions': the forms that express these relational functions are referred to as 'relational markers'. In the grammatical descriptions of these languages, these markers have been variously analyzed as adpositions, particles, case clitics, and case affixes. I will consider all these forms together and will not be concerned here with their grammatical status but only with their function as relational markers: etymologically related forms have been analyzed as belonging to all of these grammatical classes.

The method employed in this study involves 1) looking at the reflexes of individual etymons and noting how they are used to express an array of relational functions, and 2) examining overall patterns of syncretism in the expression of those relational functions. These two approaches yield somewhat different results, shedding light on how the evolution of individual forms relates to the overall patterns one observes in a given speech area. Other studies have looked at relational morphology in Tibeto-Burman [e.g. Delancey (1984) and LaPolla (1995, 2003, 2004)] but no previous study has focused on Bodic and surveyed as many relational markers.

In Section 2, the sample of languages used in this study will be discussed, while Section 3 will be concerned with the modes of relational marking employed in Tibeto-Burman languages. Section 4 deals with the meaning of the term 'syncretism' as it is used in this paper. In Sections 5 and 6, I will discuss a set of commonly occurring etymons used for relational functions in the sample, while in Section 7 I will discuss overall patterns of syncretism for the relational functions independent of the particular etymons that happen to encode them. Section 8 deals with relational marker compounding, while section 9 deals with the connection between the two major of this paper,

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namely patterns of syncretism found with the individual etymons and the overall patterns of syncretism. Some general conclusions are discussed in Section 10.

2. **SAMPLE:** As noted, the sample of languages used in this paper are drawn from a set of 76 languages<sup>2</sup>, mostly from the Bodic section of Tibeto-Burman. As with most things concerning the Sino-Tibetan family, the assignment of languages to the Bodic section is controversial. The sample of Bodic languages is reasonably comprehensive: only East Bodish, generally assigned as a branch of the Tibetan Complex<sup>3</sup>, is unrepresented. The non-Bodic languages in the sample are a heterogeneous set included mostly to determine if the patterns and etymons found in Bodic are also found outside this group. The languages in the sample are listed in Appendix 1, which includes also a tree diagram presenting the assumed relationships among those languages taken here to be included in the Bodic section.<sup>4</sup> The non-Bodish languages are provided only a single-node classification.

3. **RELATIONAL MARKING IN TIBETO-BURMAN:** The Tibeto-Burman languages are generally treated as being either agglutinative or isolating in their morphological structure.<sup>5</sup> Relational markers for either sort are postposed, following the noun phrases whose grammatical or locational/directional status they mark. In the descriptions of these

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<sup>2</sup> The sample actually contains more than 76 entries since there are three cases where dialects of a single language having distinct sets of relational markers are represented separately. It's probably worth noting here that the distinction between 'language' and 'dialect' is often more reflective of socio-cultural considerations than linguistic ones. Considerations like mutual intelligibility are often not considered: for example, in Nepal some of the Kham 'dialects' are not mutually intelligible, whereas some Tamangic 'languages' are.

<sup>3</sup> The East Bodish languages, along with Tshangla, are members of the Tibetan Complex that are not descended from the language whose literary form is called Classical Tibetan: those that are referred to as the Central Bodish languages.

<sup>4</sup> It is far from clear that the three subdivisions of Bodic – Central Himalayish, Bodish, and rGyalrong – should be grouped exclusively under a single genetic node. Further, it isn't clear that Central Himalayish represents a genetic grouping at all as opposed to a geographic assemblage of TB languages that have been in contact in the sub-Himalayan region of Nepal for a long period. rGyalrong was traditionally not assigned to Bodic, but LaPolla (2003) suggests that this group should be grouped together with a number of Central Himalayish languages in a newly defined 'Rung' family. A propos of this study, Bodish and rGyalrong show interesting similarities in their relational morphology, much more than either group does with Central Himalayish – or, indeed, many Central Himalayish subgroups do with each other. The basic groundwork that would establish or contradict the relationships proposed in Appendix 1 within the three subdivisions of Bodic or within Central Himalayish has simply not been done.

<sup>5</sup> The treatment of these languages as either agglutinative or isolating has often been dependent on the background of the scholars describing these languages: those whose training or interests lie within the Sinitic tradition have tended to treat them as isolating, while those whose training or interests lie within the Indic (or Indo-European) tradition have tended to treat them as agglutinative. This is not to say that there are no substantive differences between isolating and agglutinative languages, even (or especially) in Tibeto-Burman, but only that the issue of whether a given language should be treated as one or the other is typically not discussed explicitly in the grammatical descriptions of these languages. In any case, the distinction is not relevant for our limited purposes here.

languages, or at least for those in the Bodic languages, these relational markers are usually referred to as *case markers*, though some are described as postpositions. Given the goals of this study, I will not distinguish between case markers and postpositions, referring to both sorts as relational markers.

Relational markers in Tibeto-Burman may occur singly or may combine in a construction that can be referred to as *relational marker compounding* (RMC): the RMC construction is also found with some other languages in the Central Asian speech area, for example the Mongolic languages. By RMC, I mean the combination of relational markers, usually by simple juxtaposition, to form complex semantic units. These combined forms may become grammaticalized and then enter into evolutionary paths and evolve into morphologically and conceptually simplex forms; they may also combine in an *ad hoc* way.<sup>6</sup> An example of RMC from the Tamangic language Chantyal can be seen in (1):

- (1) dhun-phyarəŋ-mar-gəmsə  
 tree-SUBESSIVE-CIRCUMLATIVE-ABLATIVE  
 ‘from down around the roots of the tree’ (= ‘from around beneath the tree’)

It turns out that all three of the relational markers in (1) are themselves complex in origin, containing at least one other relational marker compounded with one or two additional etymons. While some languages make more use of RMC than others do, the fact that the construction exists has to be taken into account in any discussion of relational markers in Bodic. There will be a brief discussion of RMC in Section 8.

4. SYNCRETISM: The term *syncretism* is used here to refer to a situation where a given relational marker is used to mark more than one relational function. The set of relational functions considered here include the following set, determined on the basis of functions which may be given independent morphological expression in Bodic languages:

- (2) ABLATIVE: ‘from’  
 ADESSIVE: ‘near, around, in the vicinity of’  
 ALLATIVE: ‘to, toward’  
 CIRCUMLATIVE: ‘around, around within’  
 COMITATIVE: ‘with, together with, accompanied by’  
 COMPARATIVE: ‘than’  
 DATIVE: indirect object or primary object<sup>7</sup>  
 ELATIVE: ‘out of’  
 ERGATIVE: marker of the A argument in transitive clauses, or marker of agents<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See Noonan (2008) for a typology of case-compounding and a discussion of case-compounding within the Bodic languages.

<sup>7</sup> Many of the languages in our sample use a relational marker labelled *dative* to mark ‘primary objects’ in the sense of Dryer 1986. These datives frequently also mark experiencer arguments generally. Few languages in our sample have distinct *accusative* markers that are not also datives (=primary object markers).

<sup>8</sup> Almost all the languages in our sample (including all the Bodic ones) have been analyzed as either consistently ergative or split-ergative, though in a few cases the languages have been analyzed as having an ‘agentive’ case, which can be used in some intransitive clauses. Here, I interpret true ergatives and agen-

GENITIVE: possessor

INESSIVE/ILLATIVE: 'in, into'

INSTRUMENTAL: 'with, by means of'

LOCATIVE: when used in opposition to other, more specific names, refers either to the 'unmarked locative' (*i.e.* it has a generic locative sense, including allative, static locative, and perhaps other senses), or to a case indicating static location ('at', 'on')

PATH: 'along, via, through'

SUBESSIVE/SUBLATIVE: 'under'

SUPERESSIVE/SUPERLATIVE: 'over'

Where a language marks more than one of these relations with the same marker, I will consider that an instance of syncretism. So, for example, the ergative and instrumental may be marked by different forms in Bodic languages, *e.g.* in Sherpa and Pattani; in Chantyal the clitic **-sə** marks for both ergative and instrumental senses and thus is taken as an instance of syncretism.

One difficulty one encounters in working with relational functions such as these in a large sample of languages is that most descriptions are relatively inexplicit about just what functions a given marker expresses. So, for example, a data source might note a relational marker X and label it 'locative', with perhaps an example or two illustrating its use. These examples and the accompanying description may be inadequate to determine whether or not the form has dynamic locative (*i.e.* allative) or only stative locative senses. Another difficulty is that some data sources provide markers only for a few relational functions (typically ergative, instrumental, ablative, genitive, dative, and locative) and neglect to say how the other relational functions are expressed. These problems limit the sorts of conclusions one can draw from a language sample like the one assembled for this paper.

5. ETYMONS: Reflexes of a number of etymons with relational marker senses were examined for this paper. Some of these are commonly found throughout Bodic; some are limited to specific subgroups. The forms examined in this paper are listed in (3):

- |     |     |       |          |     |      |         |
|-----|-----|-------|----------|-----|------|---------|
| (3) | *ka | *ki   | *(g-)lam | *na | *naŋ | *nyampo |
|     | *Vŋ | *r/la | *ri      | *sV |      |         |

The forms are listed in (3) in their presumed proto-forms (so far as can be determined<sup>9</sup>), though the level in the genetic hierarchy at which these forms can be reconstructed var-

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tives as ergatives. With either sort of language, the absolutive is invariably unmarked. In split-ergative languages, when the ergative construction is not found in transitive clauses, the A and the U arguments are in the absolutive, *i.e.* there is no special nominative case. In the sole accusative language in this sample, Apatani, the nominative is unmarked, while the U argument in transitive constructions is marked with the *dative marker*, which doubtless functions as a marker of primary object (Dryer 1986).

<sup>9</sup> For the reconstructions, see Benedict (1972), DeLancey (1984), LaPolla (2003, 2004), Matisoff (2003), and some other sources cited below. The precise form of the reconstructions is not the issue we are concerned with here. Note that though many of these forms may be reconstructed back to Proto-Tibeto-Burman, they may not necessarily have expressed relational meanings at that stage. Further, no claims are made here concerning the antiquity of case-marking in Tibeto-Burman languages, a controversial issue that is

ies with each etymon. Some might go back to Proto-Tibeto-Burman; others clearly do not. The level at which they should be reconstructed and the precise form that the reconstruction should take is not directly relevant to this study. More relevant is the identification of the reflexes of these etymons in the languages of the sample, and here a number of difficulties present themselves, particularly since the details of the lines of phonetic development in most branches of Tibeto-Burman are so poorly worked out. No doubt, misidentifications were made in assembling the data for this paper, but my hope is that by using a relatively large sample of languages, the problems of identification would not have serious consequences. Some of the problems in identifying reflexes are discussed with the individual etymons below.<sup>10</sup>

6. PATTERNS OF SYNCRETISM WITH INDIVIDUAL ETYMONS: Each of the etymons I am considering here has a characteristic profile *vis-à-vis* the relational functions. In Appendix 2, the array of relational functions found with the reflexes of the etymons are laid out numerically. Below, the core relations (enclosed within double lines) and the main non-core relations (enclosed within single lines) are presented, along with comments on the distribution of the reflexes among the languages of the sample and a discussion of the origin of the etymon where it is possible to make an informed guess.

**\*ka**

GEN	ABL	LOC
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*Attested:* In all branches of Bodic, as well as Apatani.

*Origin:* Unknown.

*General comments:* As shown in Appendix 2, the reflexes of **\*ka** are well distributed among the relational functions, though they center on genitive, ablative and locative.

The reflexes of **\*ka** and **\*ki** are sometimes difficult to distinguish.

**\*ki**

GEN	ERG	INST
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*Attested:* This is found in Bodish, widely if the phonological developments described below are correct. It is also likely present in Baric.

*Origin:* Benedict (1972) proposes that this is the only nominal-relational particle that might be reconstructable to Proto-Tibeto-Burman. DeLancey (1984) disputes this,

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beyond the scope of this paper. It is clear, however, that case-marking is widespread in the family at this stage in its history and that relational marking, broadly defined, must have been a feature of Proto-Tibeto-Burman, as it is, one presumes, in all languages.

<sup>10</sup> One potential difficulty is the problem of borrowing of specific forms. Borrowing is especially difficult to identify among related languages, particularly in families like Tibeto-Burman where the lines of phonetic development are poorly understood. It is clear that borrowing of relational markers is not uncommon in Bodic languages, and this is especially easy to identify when the source is from outside Sino-Tibetan, *e.g.* from Indo-European Nepali. The dative/primary object marker (along with the syntax of primary object marking) and the comparative marker are the most commonly borrowed forms. Published grammars, sketches, dictionaries, and wordlists tend to underreport such borrowings when the source is not Tibeto-Burman, but even so examples of such borrowings are not uncommon in the sample.

claiming a large number of particles are so reconstructable. DeLancey (1984), following Thurgood (1981), suggests that **\*ki** may have derived from a nominalizer: for a discussion of attributives and nominalizations, see Noonan (1997).

*General comments:* There is evidence, particularly from the Tibetan Complex, that the reflexes of **\*ki** have undergone a series of phonological developments: *ki>či>yi>ye/i*. If this is the case, then the reflexes of **\*ki** could well be widely distributed in Bodic, well beyond what is shown in Appendix 2. Even including those presumed to have undergone this phonetic development, **\*ki** centers on genitive, with ergative and instrumental constituting the main non-core uses.

**\*(g-)lam**

ABL	PATH
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*Attested:* In Tamangic this is a fairly recent grammaticalization which is found only in Chantyal and Dhankute Tamang (Poudel 2005). Outside Tamangic, is certain only in Kiranti.

*Origin:* Ebert (1994) proposes that the Kiranti forms in **\*lam** derive from **\*lam** ‘road’. (Matisoff (2003) posits **\*lam** ‘road’ for Proto-Tibeto-Burman.) The Chantyal form, which is likely an independent development given the physical distance that separates the Chantyls from the Kiranti region, derives from a prefixed form of the root **\*(g-)lam**, which Watters (2002) gives as protoform for all of Bodic.<sup>11</sup>

The semantic development is as follows: ‘road’ together with an instrumental or comitative marker is juxtaposed to a place name resulting in a construction meaning ‘by means of/with the road (of) X’. Path senses are primary, with ablative senses developing from these.

*General comments:* It is possible that Dzongkha ABL *-lä* attests this development; most likely Dolokha Newari ABL *-lān* does too.

**\*na**

ABL	ERG	INST
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*Attested:* This is found in Bodish (Ghale, Tibetan Complex, West Himalayish), Newari, Baric, Mishmi, and Akha.

*Origin:* LaPolla (2004) claims that this is the only nominal-relational particle reconstructable to Proto-Tibeto-Burman. (This statement contradicts DeLancey (1984); it is in line with Benedict’s (1972) claim that such morphology was not part of the grammatical system of Proto-Tibeto-Burman, though Benedict does posit one relational marker, **\*ki**, for Proto-Tibeto-Burman, but not **\*na**.)

Peterson (ms) suggests a **\*s-naak** ‘side’ which could account for a set of forms with relational senses, in particular ergative senses, in Chin languages. He provides evidence for a noun with this meaning in Chin, evidence for an ergative case marker in

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<sup>11</sup> It should be noted that only the Tamangic group, to which Chantyal belongs, attests the prefix. Mazaudon posits **\*<sup>b</sup>gjam** for Proto-Tamangic ‘road’, but within this group Nar-Phu attests a form with **\*l**, **kflâm**, which suggests that **\*kl** in Tamangic became /ky/ everywhere except Nar-Phu.

**\*naa(k)**, and crosslinguistic evidence for the development of such a noun into a case marker. See also Hartmann (2001). In Bodish, **\*s-na** means ‘inside, interior’ with suffixed relational etymon **\*Vŋ** (see below). Matisoff (2003) reconstructs **\*ʔ-nam** ‘side, rib’ for Proto-Tibeto-Burman.

*General comments:* As seen in Appendix 2, this form is found with a large number of relational functions, though the core is clearly ablative, with ergative and instrumental as common non-core meanings.

<b>*naŋ</b>	INES	COM

*Attested:* This is found throughout Bodish, also in Thangmi, Hayu, rGralong, and Ao. *Origin:* As noted in the discussion of **\*na** above, **\*naŋ** likely derives from **\*s-na** ‘inside, interior’ with suffixed relational etymon **\*Vŋ**.<sup>12</sup> **\*naŋ** also appears throughout Bodish as a noun meaning ‘inside, interior’; as a relational marker it is frequently, though not invariably, combined with a locative, as in Chantyal inessive **-nŋaŋ-ri**.

*General comments:* The basic sense here is inessive, with comitative a not-too-common non-core sense.

<b>*nyampo</b>	COM	INST

*Attested:* Found only in the Tibetan Complex and Western Himalayish (though the Western Himalayish forms might have been borrowed from Tibetan). If Newari *nāpa* is cognate, then it is found in Central Himalayish too.

*Origin:* This might be **\*naŋ** plus **-po**.

*General comments:* This is essentially a comitative which has occasionally developed into an instrumental. In many of the western languages within the Tibetan Complex, it occurs after **\*naŋ** (see above) in the combination **naŋ-nyampo**, which usually has a comitative sense. In some languages, however, it occurs un-compounded.

<b>*Vŋ</b>	ABL	DAT	LOC	COM	ADES	SUPER

*Attested:* Found throughout Bodish and sporadically elsewhere, e.g. in Kham-Magar. Peterson (ms) finds it in Kuki-Chin also.

*Origin:* The distribution in Tamangic would indicate that **\*Vŋ** is an earlier locative which was replaced by the **\*r/la** and **\*ri** forms and is retained there only in relic forms. Peterson reconstructs **\*iŋ** for Kuki-Chin, though the vowel in Bodic is not easily reconstructable.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Starostin & Pejros (*n.d.*) reconstruct **\*naŋ**/**\*nak** ‘inside’ for Proto-Sino-Tibetan.

<sup>13</sup> Starostin & Pejros (*n.d.*) reconstruct **\*ʔān** ‘in, inside’ for Proto-Sino-Tibetan. If this is cognate, the evolution of /n/ to /ŋ/ would have to be explained.

*General comments:* May be present in **\*nanj** (see above). Peterson (ms) characterizes **\*inj** as a ‘generalized oblique case marker’. Its uses in Bodic provide more evidence for this characterization since there is no obvious basic sense other than this.

<b>*r/la</b>	DAT LOC ALL			COM INES	

*Attested:* Found throughout Bodish. Likely also in Qiangic, Baric, and Loloish, and possibly in Kham (Central Himalayish).

*Origin:* Unknown.

*General comments:* Found in both <r> and <l> forms, though never in the same language (except Classical Tibetan).

<b>*ri</b>	LOC ALL		DAT

*Attested:* Definitely attested only in Tamangic. Dura **-re** might be from **\*ri**, as might Pattani **-rə/-re**.

*Origin:* **\*ri** perhaps is **\*r/la** followed by another affix. It only exists in an <r> form, unlike **\*r/la** which is found in both <r> and <l> forms even within the same grouping. If this is connected with **\*r/la**, the lack of an <l> form suggests that **\*r/la** is older. This suggestion is reinforced by its distribution, since it is only definitely attested in the Tamangic group.

*General comments:* This seems to have originated as a locative, and is just developing into a dative.

<b>*sV</b>	ERG INST ABL			COM

*Attested:* Abundantly throughout Bodish and sporadically elsewhere.

*Origin:* DeLancey (1980, 1984) claims that this derives from the Proto-Tibeto-Burman verb **\*sa** ‘go, leave’.<sup>14</sup>

*General comments:* In the Tibetan Complex, this form is often suffixed to **\*ki**, **\*na**, and **\*r/la**. This could be taken to imply that **\*sV** is newer, at least in these functions. However, in other members of the Tibetan Complex, and in Tamangic and Western Himalayish, the form occurs independently with ergative and instrumental meaning.

7. OVERALL PATTERNS OF SYNCRETISM: Here I will consider overall patterns of syncretism for the relational functions independent of the particular etymons that happen to

<sup>14</sup> Matisoff (2003) doesn’t reconstruct such a verb for PTB, but Starostin & Pejros (*n.d.*) reconstruct Proto-Sino-Tibetan **\*sak** ‘go, go away’. Derivation of a relational marker with this profile from a verb would seem to require that the verb had assumed the form of a sequential converb, at least given the syntax of the contemporary Bodic languages. Syntactic markers for sequential converbs vary throughout Bodic, but in the Bodish group, in which **\*sV** is best attested, the sequential converb suffix is probably reconstructable as **\*si**. The reflexes of **\*sV**, however, show no evidence of a suffixed **\*si** or any alternative converbal affix.



encode them. Because of the limitations of the sample noted in Section 4, I will be concerned here only with some relational functions, the ones that were most reliably noted in the data sources. Relational markers that were (almost) always noted were:

(4) ergative, instrumental, ablative, genitive, dative, locative

Additional markers that were noted with a high degree of regularity were:

(5) allative, comitative, inessive

Both sets will be considered in what follows, though it should be kept in mind that those in (5) are not as reliably reported in the data sources as those in (4).

In (6) are listed all the instances of syncretism found in the sample among the nine relational functions listed in (4) and (5): the entries record the most inclusive set and show the number of languages which instantiate that set. In order to count as an instance of syncretism, the relational markers for the functions have to be identical: if relational markers share a morpheme but are otherwise not identical (as in cases of RMC), they are not counted. It should also be noted that in some languages a particular relational function may be expressed by more than one relational marker: I will still count such cases as instances of syncretism as long as a given relational marker is used for more than one relational function.

It should be noted at the outset that the numbers associated with the instances of syncretistic sets in (6)-(8) should not be taken as more than suggestive of the syncretistic patterns found in these languages because of the nature of the sample, which was a convenience sample based on all the materials available to the author at the time of writing and not on any scientific sampling procedure. Still, the number of languages sampled was large (76 languages) and fairly inclusive, so the numbers given below provide a reasonable impression of the relative frequency of the sorts of syncretistic sets observable in these languages.

<u>(6) syncretistic sets</u>	<u>number attested</u>	<u>syncretistic sets</u>	<u>number attested</u>
erg, inst, abl, loc, all	1	dat, loc, all, abl	1
erg, inst, abl, com	1	dat, loc, all	21
erg, inst, gen, ines	1	dat, loc, gen	1
erg, inst, abl	15	dat, all, abl	1
erg, inst, gen	8	dat, loc	3
erg, inst, loc	2	dat, all	3
erg, inst	34	dat, gen	1
erg, abl	3	loc, all, gen	2
erg, gen	1	loc, all, abl	1
inst, abl, gen, com, ines	1	loc, all	20
inst, com, gen	1	loc, abl	1
inst, com, abl	1	loc, gen	1
inst, abl, loc	1	all, abl	1
inst, com	1	ines, all	1
inst, abl	2	ines gen	1
dat, loc, all, com, inst	1		

From the data in (6), commonly occurring sets of three relational functions can be extracted by combining all instances in (6) where the three cooccur. These are listed in (7):

- (7) erg, inst, abl            17  
       erg, inst, gen            9  
       dat, loc, all            23

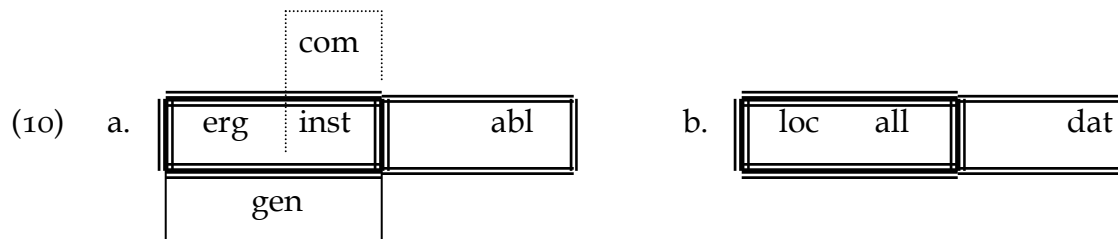
In (8) are listed all instances of pairings of relational functions in syncretism, in order of frequency:

- (8) erg, inst    62            loc, all    46            dat, all    27  
       dat, loc    27            inst, abl    22            erg, abl    20  
       erg, gen    10            inst, gen    10            inst, com    6  
       loc, abl    5            all, abl    4            loc, gen    4  
       erg, loc    3            ines, gen    3            abl, com    3  
       abl, dat    2            all, gen    2            dat, gen    2  
       gen, com    2            inst, ines    2            abl, gen    1  
       abl, ines    1            all, ines    1            com, all    1  
       com, ines    1            com, loc    1            dat, com    1  
       erg, com    1            erg, ines    1

The non-occurring pairings are listed in (9):<sup>15</sup>

- (9) erg, dat                            erg, all                            inst, dat  
       inst, loc                          inst, all                          dat, ines  
       loc, ines

The more robust pairings in (8) suggest relationships among the relational functions that are represented graphically in (10):



The relationships between the ergative and instrumental, and the locative and allative, are very strong and are symbolized by triple lines. Each has a weaker, but still strong relationship with another relational function: ablative in the case of the ergative and instrumental, and dative in the case of the locative and allative.<sup>16</sup> The ergative and instrumental in turn have a weaker relationship to the genitive, but this relationship is not

<sup>15</sup> It should be noted that there were no exceptions in the data to Blansitt's (1988) 'functional contiguity hypothesis', which states that the relations OBJECT—DATIVE—ALLATIVE—LOCATIVE form a continuum such that if a single marker codes object and allative in a language it will always code dative; if it codes dative and locative with a single marker it will also code allative; and if it codes object and locative with the same marker, it will code dative and allative with that marker also.

<sup>16</sup> Since relational markers referred to here as dative are routinely used as markers of 'primary object', datives have the potential to develop into direct object markers. This possibility is not discussed further here since the languages in our sample are primary object, not direct object, languages.

shared by the ablative: there was only one ablative-genitive syncretic pairing in the sample. The instrumental, however, has a relatively weak relation with the comitative which is not shared by the ergative.

The virtual lack of connection between the ablative and the genitive and the weak relationship between the instrumental and comitative are surprising given the strong connection between these functions found in other speech areas, *e.g.* Western Eurasia: Romance *de* and English *of*, both of which developed genitive senses from original ablatives; English *with*, Spanish *con*, German *mit*, etc., which have both instrumental and comitative senses. This suggests that certain syncretisms are areally favored, an hypothesis supported by data presented in Noonan & Mihas (*ms*), which showed areal patterns in the syncretistic sets participated in by ablatives and genitives in Eurasia.

8. RELATIONAL MARKER COMPOUNDING: Broadly, RMC in the Bodic languages occurs under three conditions (see Noonan (2008) for more discussion and exemplification):

- (11) 1. COMPLEX TRAJECTORIES: By ‘complex trajectories’, I refer to instances like those illustrated in (1), which describes a trajectory involving more than one reference point.
2. ENTRY POINT FOR ETYMONS: When etymons first enter the set of relational markers, they may be accompanied by an already established relational marker. So, for example, **\*nan**, which derives from a noun meaning ‘inside, interior’, is initially accompanied by a locative, as it still is in the Chantyal inessive **-nfa-ri**, which consists of **\*nan** followed by locative **-ri**; the locative may eventually be lost as in the Nar-Phu inessive **-nfan**.
3. REINFORCING NEW RELATIONAL MEANINGS: When the reflexes of an etymon acquire new relational senses, compound markers may be employed to reduce potential ambiguity of the now polysemous marker. These compound forms may be grammaticalized for the expression of particular relational functions. So, for example, in the West Himalayish languages, the historic ergative-instrumental-ablative derived from **\*sV** is often replaced by a form derived from **\*ki**. The ablative function seems to be the entry point for **\*ki** into these new functions, but as the form has come to be the usual marker for ergative and instrumental functions along with others, the ablative may be reinforced, as in Chhitkuli (Sharma 1992), which now marks the ablative with **-da-či** (**-či** < **\*ki**; **-da** appears to derive from a genitive).

9. SYNCRETISM & HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT: It remains now to connect the two parts of this paper: the patterns of syncretism found with the individual etymons and the overall patterns of syncretism. How are the overall patterns of syncretism observed in the previous section related to the historical development of the reflexes of the individual etymons discussed in Section 6 and displayed in Appendix 2?

First, a few of the etymons have reflexes centering on the main loci of syncretic patterns displayed in (10): the ergative-instrumental nexus in (10a) and the locative-

allative nexus in (10b). Of the ten etymons considered, five have profiles that center, more or less, on one or the other nexus, based on the distributions of their reflexes as displayed in Appendix 2. These are listed in (12):

- |      |                             |                         |
|------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| (12) | ERGATIVE-INSTRUMENTAL NEXUS | LOCATIVE-ALLATIVE NEXUS |
|      | <b>*ki, *na, *sV</b>        | <b>*r/la, *ri</b>       |

The remaining five either have no strong set of core relations, or have one centering on some other set of relational functions.

Even among those etymons having reflexes within both the ergative-instrumental nexus and the locative-allative nexus, within any given language there is a strong tendency to have reflexes in one or the other, with little or no overlap. This is reflected in the low frequency pairings in (8) and the non-occurring pairings in (9), which essentially reflect the unlikely syncretism of forms within these two sets. In other words, even with etymons like **\*ka**, whose reflexes span both sets in (10), the reflexes in any given language would tend to conform to the general patterns observed in Section 7. The reason for this may reside in the considerable possibility for contextual disambiguation within either set, but not across the sets. When an etymon evolves senses that span the two sets – and there are a number of pathways through which this can happen – there would be a strong tendency to remove the potential for disambiguation through any of the available mechanisms: introduction of new etymons, semantic evolution of old ones, and RMC.

An additional factor is the historical ‘point of origin’ of the etymon into the set of relational functions, resulting in a locus with a very individual profile. In only a few cases is the point of origin known with reasonable certainty. Two such cases are **\*naŋ** and **\*(g-)lam**, both derived from nouns still current in their respective languages. In the case of **\*naŋ**, this etymon entered into the set of relational functions with the meaning ‘inside’, having derived from a noun meaning ‘interior, inside(s)’ as noted above. The chain of developments in the various languages was likely similar to the following:

- |      |          |   |                |   |              |   |          |   |          |   |      |
|------|----------|---|----------------|---|--------------|---|----------|---|----------|---|------|
| (13) | ‘inside’ | → | ‘within/among’ | → | ‘with’       | → | ‘by’     | → | ‘at’     | → | ‘to’ |
|      | INESSIVE |   |                |   | COMITATIVE   |   | LOCATIVE |   | ALLATIVE |   |      |
|      |          |   |                |   | ↓            |   |          |   |          |   |      |
|      |          |   |                |   | INSTRUMENTAL |   |          |   |          |   |      |

Attestations of these stages are found in (14):

- |      |              |  |
|------|--------------|--|
| (14) | MEANING      | ATTESTATION  |
|      | ‘inside’     | widely attested with this meaning throughout Bodish and in other languages as well, <i>e.g.</i> Lepcha <b>नोंŋ</b> ‘interior’. |
|      | inessive     | Nar-Phu <b>-nɦaŋ</b>   |
|      | comitative   | Ladakhi <b>-nəŋ</b>  |
|      | instrumental | Ladakhi <b>-nəŋ</b>  |
|      | locative     | Hayu <b>-noŋ</b> (also comitative)   |
|      | allative     | Central Monpa <b>-naŋ</b> (also inessive)  |

**\*(g-)lam**, derived from the noun ‘road’, has not yet evolved beyond its original path/ablative senses.<sup>17</sup>

The last factor I will discuss here are specifically areal factors. These are of two sorts: 1) the development of areally favored relational functions (*e.g.* ergative markers and dative-primary object markers in the Himalayan region), and 2) locally favored syncretisms such as the ablative-genitive relation in Western Eurasia and the instrumental-ablative relation in Bodic. This last reflects a tendency to reproduce form/function alignments in relational markers where there is longstanding bilingualism, a tendency which may even cross genetic lines as in the realignment frequently observed in the relational markers of Tibeto-Burman languages toward those of Indo-European Nepali in Nepal.

These factors may be summarized in (15):

- (15)
1. Preference for syncretisms where specific senses can be contextually disambiguated.
  2. Areal preferences, even micro-areal preferences.
  3. The specific meaning of the etymon when it enters the set of relational functions, particularly where this meaning can be recovered from cognate forms within the language.
  4. Semantic extensions, which may follow well-documented tendencies.<sup>18</sup>

## 10. CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, I’ve tried to document patterns of syncretism of individual etymons involved in the expression of relational meanings and connect them with overall patterns of syncretism within the Bodic languages. Perhaps the most striking finding in this paper for those not familiar with other studies of this sort is the amount of semantic territory a single etymon may come to express over time.<sup>19</sup> Patterns of grammaticalization of individual etymons are well documented, for example in Heine & Kuteva (2002), though how a single etymon may evolve in different directions in different languages is only now being studied, especially when cognate languages are under different areal influences. Over a sufficiently long period of time and within a large and dispersed language family such as Tibeto-Burman, a given etymon may eventually come to express a wide variety of relational meanings, as the results of this paper show. The consequences of this sort of semantic development for historical and genetic linguistics, as well as for contact linguistics, will need to be worked out over the next few years.

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<sup>17</sup> Shobhana Chelliah as pointed out to me that **\*(g-)lam** has developed into a perfect and then an indirect evidence marker in Meithei (Chelliah 1997: 221-224).

<sup>18</sup> DeLancey (1984), Heine & Reh (1984), Heine & Kuteva (2002).

<sup>19</sup> Other studies showing significant semantic diversity among relational markers include Stolz (1996), Koptjevskaja-Tamm (2001), and Noonan & Mihas (*ms*).

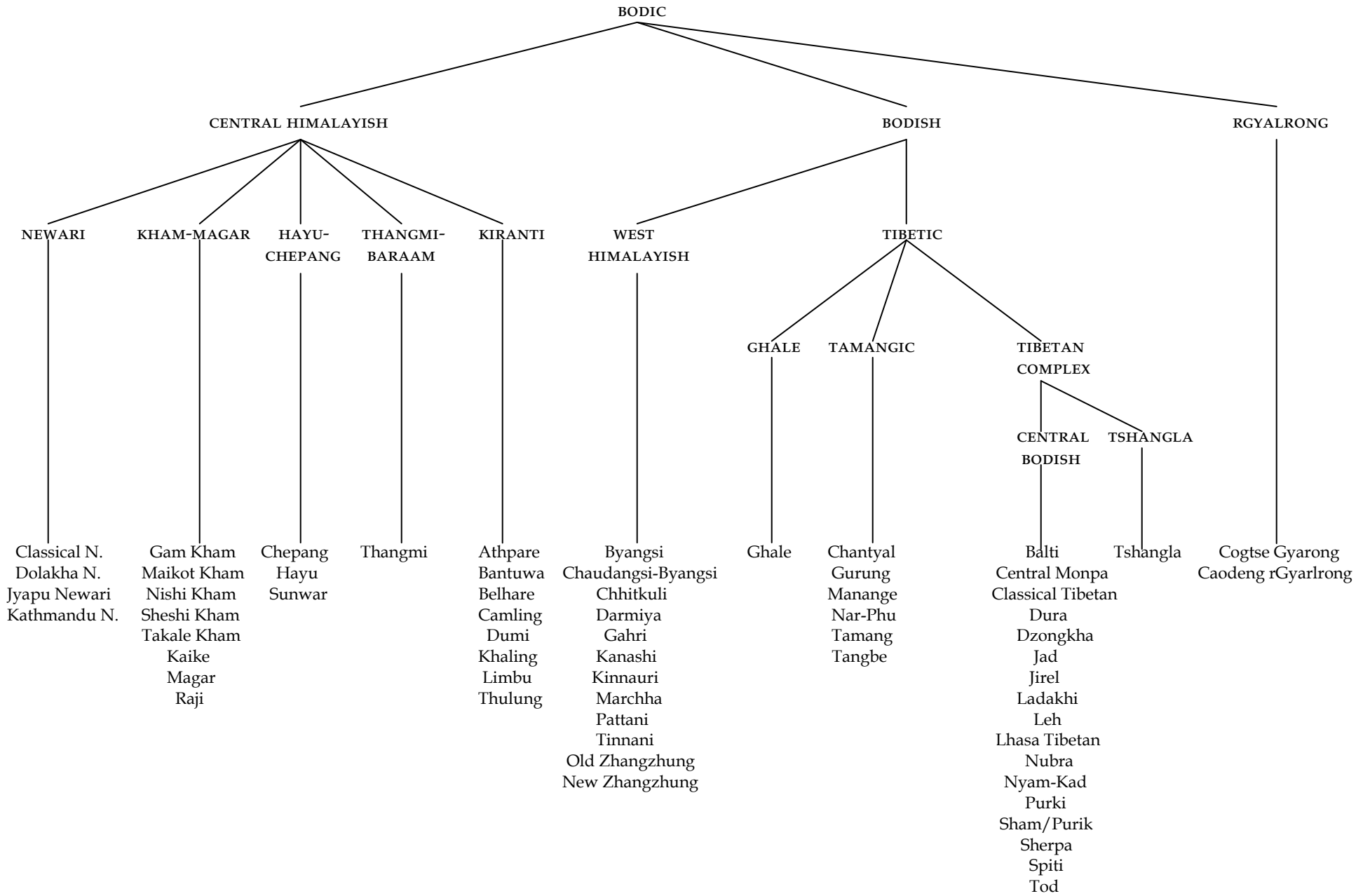
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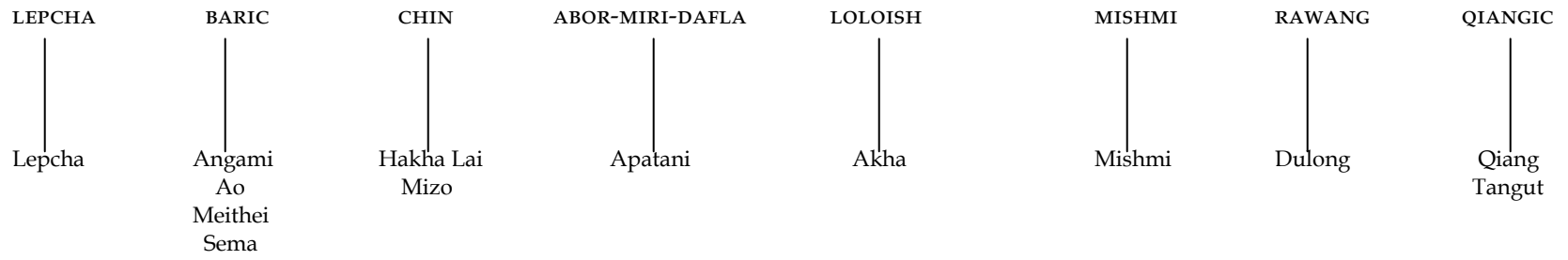
Appendix 1

Figure 1: Proposed Genetic Relationships Within the Bodic Section of Tibeto-Burman





**Figure 2: *Non-Bodish Languages in Sample***



## Appendix 2

### Distribution of the Reflexes of Selected Etymons

Numbers refers to the number of languages having a reflex of a given etymon with a given relational function.

*ka	Erg	Inst	Abl	Gen	Dat	Loc	All	Com	Comp	Circ	Ines	Ades	Elat	Sub	Super	Path
<i>overall usage</i>	1	3	11	12	4	19	3	2	1	1	2	1	1	2	1	5
<i>uncompounded</i>	1	1	1	8	3	14	2			1		1				1
*ki	Erg	Inst	Abl	Gen	Dat	Loc	All	Com	Comp	Circ	Ines	Ades	Elat	Sub	Super	Path
<i>overall usage</i>	9	7	3	14	1						1		2		1	
<i>uncompounded</i>	7	6	1	13	1										1	
*(g-)lam	Erg	Inst	Abl	Gen	Dat	Loc	All	Com	Comp	Circ	Ines	Ades	Elat	Sub	Super	Path
<i>overall usage</i>			6													6
<i>uncompounded</i>			1													1
*na	Erg	Inst	Abl	Gen	Dat	Loc	All	Com	Comp	Circ	Ines	Ades	Elat	Sub	Super	Path
<i>overall usage</i>	8	11	19	4	2	6	2	7	2		1					1
<i>uncompounded</i>	7	9	10	4	1	5	1	4			1					
*naŋ	Erg	Inst	Abl	Gen	Dat	Loc	All	Com	Comp	Circ	Ines	Ades	Elat	Sub	Super	Path
<i>overall usage</i>		1				1	1	6			23		2	1		
<i>uncompounded</i>		1				1	1	3			13			1		
*nyampo	Erg	Inst	Abl	Gen	Dat	Loc	All	Com	Comp	Circ	Ines	Ades	Elat	Sub	Super	Path
<i>overall usage</i>		2						10								
<i>uncompounded</i>								4								
*Vŋ	Erg	Inst	Abl	Gen	Dat	Loc	All	Com	Comp	Circ	Ines	Ades	Elat	Sub	Super	Path
<i>overall usage</i>		1	9	1	5	4		6	3		1	5		3	6	1
<i>uncompounded</i>			3		2	4					1	5				
*r/la	Erg	Inst	Abl	Gen	Dat	Loc	All	Com	Comp	Circ	Ines	Ades	Elat	Sub	Super	Path
<i>overall usage</i>		2	6	3	24	19	14	9	3	1	10	1	1	1	3	
<i>uncompounded</i>		1	3	3	21	14	13	1			6				1	
*ri	Erg	Inst	Abl	Gen	Dat	Loc	All	Com	Comp	Circ	Ines	Ades	Elat	Sub	Super	Path
<i>overall usage</i>			1		3	8	6				3	1	1	1		
<i>uncompounded</i>					3	8	6									
*sV	Erg	Inst	Abl	Gen	Dat	Loc	All	Com	Comp	Circ	Ines	Ades	Elat	Sub	Super	Path
<i>overall usage</i>	33	28	22	2		3	4	11	3		1		1			2
<i>uncompounded</i>	28	25	15	2		2	2	5								1