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TRACE FOUNDATION

# TIBETAN AS A DOMINANT SPRACHBUND LANGUAGE:

## ITS INTERACTIONS WITH NEIGHBORING LANGUAGES

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### ABSTRACT

The Amdo plateau is well known as a language convergence area (Dwyer 1995, Slater 2003, Janhunen 2004). But what kind of influence has Tibetan had on the languages of that region? What cultural contacts have facilitated or hindered convergence? This paper presents an overview of contacts among varieties of Tibetan and the languages of western China and Chinese Turkestan, and then focuses on the Amdo Sprachbund as a site of intensive contact with Mongolic, Turkic, and Sinitic. Typically as a superstrate language, Tibetan has contributed to creolization processes in the many unrelated local languages, and even in northwestern Mandarin. In addition to phonological and lexical convergence, many of these languages—Monguor, Baonan, Santa, Wutun, Kangjia, and Salar—show evidence of syntactic-semantic convergence. Most of these nondominant languages now have a modified Tibetan evidential system. Cultural convergence is also evident in kinship relations, life-cycle practices, and oral folklore. Most of the above non-Tibetan groups, for example, tell varieties of the Gesar epic. This paper explores the extent to which cultural convergence facilitated linguistic convergence and illustrates the degree to which Tibetan linguistic and cultural practices are embedded in these non-Tibetan languages and cultures.

### CULTURAL CONTACTS AND TIBETICIZATION

In this paper, I argue that Tibetan has had a major influence on the convergence of the non-Tibetan languages of the Amdo plateau in specific language domains. Even though Tibetan was linguistically dominant in the area until recently, studies of language contact have continually focused on the influence of Chinese in the region and largely ignored the considerable influence of Tibetan. I will outline the major strands of this influence and argue that cultural contacts have facilitated convergence.

The Amdo region is the area between northern Sichuan to the Qilian Mountains in Gansu and encompasses much of modern eastern and central Qinghai province. I focus on northern Amdo, particularly the Tibetan regions of Tsongkha and Rongwo. Tsongkha stretches northward from the Yellow River (Ma Chu, rma chu) over a mountain range to the Tsong Chu (Huangshui River 湟水), and includes Kumbum monastery 塔尔寺, as well as the headwaters of the Tsong Chu and surrounding areas, thus encompassing modern-day counties of Huangyuan 湟源 (stong 'khor), Huangzhong 湟中 (ru shar), Datong 大通 (gser khog), Huzhu 互助 (dgon lung), Ping'an 平安 (tsong kha mkhar), Ledu 乐都 (gro tshang), and Minhe 民和 (bka' ma log), and the city of Xining 西宁 (zi ling) (Gruschke 2001, 27). Central Tsongkha is home to a number of Tibeticized peoples, including Northern and Southeastern Monguors in Huzhu/Datong and Minhe, respectively, and Sinophone Muslims (Hui) in most of these counties. (The northern Monguors have assimilated Tibetan religious practice so that the largest number of Tibetan Buddhist novices and monks in the Huzhu county monasteries are Monguor, not Tibetan, and even Kumbum monastery has a number of Monguor practitioners.)

### TURKO-MONGOL CONTACT AREAS IN AMDO TIBET (AMNYE MACHEN INSTITUTE 2001)



South of Tsongkha, the Rongwo river valley (rong po, Ch. Longwu 隆务) extends within the northern bend of the Yellow River. Today the Rongwo area is coterminous with modern Huangnan 黄南 (Malho) Tibetan Autonomous prefecture, including the counties of Rebgong (Ch. Tongren 同仁), Centsha (gcan tsha, Ch. Jianza 尖扎), Rtsekhog (Zekog, Ch. Zeku 泽库), and Arig (Ch. Henan 河南) to the south; close relationships also exist with neighboring Dowi (rdo sbis, Ch. Xunhua 循化) and Bayan khar (Ch. Hualong 化隆). The heart of the Rongwo valley is inhabited by Tibeticized Mongols (Baonans) and Tibeticized Hans (Wutun), while Xunhua and Hualong are by Tibeticized Turkic (Salars) and Chinese (Hui) speakers. Their assimilation is both cultural and linguistic, though there was also some resistance to Tibeticization.

Cultural contacts began at least 2100 years ago. Qiangic peoples migrated onto the Tibetan highlands from the first millennium BCE. An early Han Chinese military garrison was established as early as 121 BC near what is today Xining, which facilitated Chinese colonization (Hermanns 1949, 26). The Han in-migration would accelerate during the fourteenth through seventeenth centuries.

Between the seventh and ninth centuries, Songtsän Gampo (618–650 CE), who unified Tibet also defeated the 'A-zha (Tuyühun). Even through the intervening centuries, the Amdo plateau area remained linguistically conservative, with varieties of Amdo Tibetan preserving Old Tibetan consonant clusters and lacking lexical tone. Meanwhile, political upheaval and territorial expansion resulted in waves of different ethnic groups and polities arriving in the northeastern fringes of this area. The collapse of the Old Uyghur khanate in 840 resulted in the resettling of some Turkic speakers in the Hexi Corridor in northeastern Amdo. They eventually established a small Ganzhou kingdom, which became vassal to the Tibetic-speaking Tanguts/Minyak/Xixia (1038–1227). Their descendants became Buddhist and came to be known as Yellow Yugurs (the Mongolic-speaking ones, Shera Yugur,<sup>1</sup> and the Turkic-speaking ones, Sarig Yugur). Roughly contemporaneously, from the tenth to the thirteenth centuries, a new northern Chinese koiné based on northeastern Chinese emerged (Norman 1988, 48).

With Chinggis Khan's early-thirteenth-century incursion into the area, his Mongolic- and Turkic-speaking troops settled in garrisons, particularly along the Yellow River from Chabcha (Gonghe 共和, then Jishi commandery 积石郡) to what is now Gansu province to the east (Taozhou, now Lintan). These garrisoned Turko-Mongol troops settled in Amdo and assimilated to Tibetan language and culture, creating the preconditions for the ethnogenesis of the Turkic Salars and the Mongolic Monguors, Baonans, and Santa (Dongxiang).

Sinophone Hans continued their in-migration, particularly during the reestablishment of Chinese rule during the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) and after the fall of the Mongol Yuan period (1271–1368); many Amdo toponyms indicate former Chinese garrisons (e.g., Zhoutun, Wutun, tun 屯 being "garrison," and included the use of state farms 屯田 to colonize areas, at least since 87 BCE) (Hucker 1985, 550). The town of Baonan 保安 'preserve the peace,' in a prime location in the Rongwo valley, is another example of a former Chinese garrison. These are now primarily Tibetan and Monguor areas—indeed, Baonan is now a Mongolic ethnonym—but the linguistic influence of Chinese is clear, particularly in the Wutun language. During the Ming dynasty, Chinese rulers continued to use local

religious and political systems (e.g., bestowing titles on lamas and using local *tusi* 土司 rulers), but also exerted direct control from the Chinese court, especially in east and central Amdo. Evidence of Chinese control via the remains of walled towns (Gruschke 2001, 107), includes county seats of Xining, Datong, Huzhu, Tumenguan, Ledu, and Guide.

The seventeenth century saw several non-Chinggisid Mongols settle in Amdo: Khoshot and Torghut Oirat. An overambitious Ordos Chakhar prince and one hundred thousand followers were forced by other Mongols and Manchu Qing troops to flee southwestward, where in 1631–1632, they took over the Kokonor (Kuke nuur) area in western Amdo and continued south to the headwaters of the Ma Chu (modern Henan Mongol Autonomous Country), together with Khalkha Mongols. The Mongols remaining in Kokonor were Khoshot Oirat (Gruschke 2001, 15). Two groups of Torghuts also settled near Kokonor, one after the collapse of the Four Oirat Alliance; another group of 500 pilgrims to Tibet was resettled by the Manchu Kangxi emperor in 1698, after their homeland was conquered. Beginning in the early nineteenth century, Tibetans began to repopulate the Kokonor and Ma Chu areas taken by Mongols two centuries earlier. Today, Ma Chu Mongols are small in number and Tibeticized (especially to the north); Kokonor Mongols are also few in number.

Over the centuries, Amdo Tibetans and local groups interacted not only with one another and with Central Tibetans and Han Chinese but also over longer distances with Turkic and Mongolic speakers in Chinese Turkestan and greater Mongolia. Interactions with Chinese Turkestan include brief Tibetan rule there in the last half of the eighth century and trade and religious communication (largely between Turkophone and Sinophone Muslims, respectively). Interactions with greater Mongolia were primarily religious via Tibetan Buddhism, though during the Mongol Yuan dynasty, administrative interactions were common.

By far the largest cultural and linguistic contact for Amdo residents was with speakers of Chinese, both Muslim (Hui) and non-Muslim (Han). China's so-called Little Mecca, Hezhou 河州 (now Linxia 临夏), is located in eastern Amdo. In addition to the steady colonization of Amdo by Han Chinese, Sinophone Hui Chinese moved in large numbers into Tsongkha during the Yongzheng reign of the Manchu Qing dynasty (1723–1735). They intermarried with the Turkic Salars, and induced Tibetans and Sinophone Han to convert to Islam upon marriage. Moving along trade routes and connected throughout the region by often-powerful religious orders, a family of Sinophone Muslims known as the Ma clan came to dominate most of

Amdo until the midtwentieth century. However, Northwestern Chinese, whether spoken by Muslims or Daoists, had long since converged in several linguistically drastic ways with Turko-Mongolic languages and Tibetan.

## AMDO AS A SPRACHBUND

### MODERN AMDO LANGUAGES IN CONTACT

Today, the major language families represented (Tibetan, Sinitic, Mongolic, Turkic) remain, but their relative dominance has shifted. The Mongolic and Turkic groups are numerically small (I estimate about 60 percent of the population are actual speakers, i.e., about 120,000 speakers for all varieties of the Mongolic languages Monguor [ISO 639-3: mjg, including northern (Mongghul) and southeastern (Mangghuer)], 8000 for Baonan [peh], ca. 60,000 Turkic Salar [slr], and ca. 2000 Sinitic-Tibetic Wutun [wuh] speakers.) The Amdo Tibetan language [adx] is a regional lingua franca with about a million speakers, including 810,000 native speakers (Lewis 2009), and I estimate up to 150,000 L2 speakers from the above groups. The numerically and sociolinguistically dominant language of the area is northwestern Mandarin, which has about 43.5 million speakers (as extrapolated from census data [2000 China census]) and serves as the regional standard language.

Both Amdo Tibetan and Northwest Mandarin serve as regional lingua francas. Most of these languages are unrelated and originally had very distinctive typology: Turko-Mongolic languages are agglutinating, head-final, non-tonal, and stress-based, while Sinitic and Tibetan are isolating; Tibetan is head-final and originally did not have phonemic tone, whereas Sinitic was originally head-initial and is without exception tonal. Despite the dissimilarity of these languages, they have come to share a similar patterning and constitute a typological convergence zone.

Examples of convergence include Turko-Mongolic morphology and syntax in Northwest Mandarin (Dwyer 1992, 1995, Zhang and Zhu 1997), tonogenesis in Mongolic (Dwyer 2008), and Sinitic-Tibetic retroflex obstruents and Tibetan evidentiality in Salar (Dwyer 2007) and Southeast Monguor (Slater 2003). The three intertwined (Bakker 2000, a.k.a. 'mixed') languages of the area, Wutun (a Sinitic-Tibetic blend), Kangjia (a Tibeto-Mongolic blend with some Mandarin lexis), and Tangwang (a Sinitic-Mongolic blend, [Zhong 2007]) exemplify the heavy contact that is characteristic of this region.

## CONVERGENCE TYPOLOGY: SHARED FEATURES OF THE AMDO SPRACHBUND

The Amdo Sprachbund is a site of intensive contact with Mongolic, Turkic, and Sinitic. Dwyer (1992, 1995) first proposed applying the term Sprachbund to the area, which was adopted by Slater (2003) and Janhunen (2004), the latter discussing convergence features.

All the region's languages share object-verb (OV) constituent order, serial verb constructions, and coronal spirantization. Many of these contact-induced changes have occurred on at least the phonological, morphological, and lexical levels. This convergence has led to individual Amdo languages appearing atypical for their own language families, with Northwest Mandarin having Turko-Mongol-like OV constituent order, Salar having Tibetan-like (Bodic) evidential particles, and Southeast Monguor developing Chinese-like lexical tone.

TABLE 1. AREAL FEATURES OF MOST LANGUAGES (adapted from Slater 2001)

| Feature  | Possible source                           |
|--|---|
| OV constituent order, including head-final typology (postpositions, suffixing/cliticizing)         | Bodic/Turko-Mongol                        |
| Case-marking (even in Chinese)   | Bodic/Turko-Mongol                        |
| Comitative case (usually formed with the Mongolic clitic =la)                                      | Mongolic                                  |
| Consonant spirantization and vowel devoicing   | areal, origin unknown                     |
| Verb serialization—clause chaining   | Turko-Mongol                              |
| Grammaticization of directional auxiliaries (originally motion verbs) into aspect/actional markers | Turkic?                                   |
| Lexical quotative markers  | Turko-Mongol                              |
| Perspective/evidentials (particles; verb suffixes; binary perspective distinction)                 | Bodic                                     |
| Shared utterance-final pragmatic particles   | Sinitic/Bodic/unknown                     |
| Person marked by PNs rather than verbal agreement  | impact of Bodic/Sinitic on Turko-Mongolic |

TABLE 2. STRONG TENDENCIES (i.e., in most languages of a given subarea):

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Favored initial obstruent contrasts via aspiration, not voicing (at least in the east) | Mandarin                                   |
| CV syllable structure, maximally CVN, especially in the east                           | Mandarin                                   |
| Postpositive indefinite article 'one' (Sinitic, Mongolic, not Turkic)                  | Bodic                                      |
| Tense-aspect as verbal suffixes rather than particles                                  | Turko-Mongol some Sinitic, Bodic varieties |
| Lexical terms for animal husbandry, hunting, Tibetan Buddhism                          | Bodic                                      |

Of these features and tendencies, half are exemplars of the Tibetan superstrate. As is apparent in Tables 1 & 2 above, features of all Amdo languages have shifted multidirectionally, including from nondominant to dominant languages. The current article restricts its focus to the shift of Tibetan features. Four of these convergence features and tendencies will be exemplified in more detail in section 3.3 below.

### TIBETAN SUPERSTRATE CONVERGENCE FEATURES

This section examines four levels of language, in which the influence of the Tibetan superstrate is clearly apparent: phonotactics, lexis, the indefinite article, and evidentiality (perspective).

### PHONOTACTIC COPYING AND INNOVATION

Mongolic phonotactics are typically restricted to CVC syllables, as exemplified by Khalkha Mongolian. In the Amdo region, syllable structure has been particularly subject to language-contact effects. At one extreme, Mongolic CVC syllables have been simplified to CV(N) in ^Amdo data from Sun 1986 [Ndzorge Šæma] and Haller 2004 [Themchen also has an  $\phi$  series].

TABLE 3. PREINITIALS IN AMDO MONGOLIC

| pre-initial | Mang-ghuer | Baonan (peh)  | Mongghul (mjg-n)                  | Amdo Tibetan (adx) <sup>a</sup>  | Kangjia (Sechen-chogt 2002)    |
|-------------|------------|---|-----------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| m           | mb         | mb  | --                                | (mp <sup>h</sup> mt <sup>h</sup> mts <sup>h</sup> mtʂ <sup>h</sup> mtɕ <sup>h</sup><br>mb md mɕ mdz mɕ mn<br>mj mŋ)  | mb, mg                         |
| n           | ---        | nd nɕ<br>ndz nj<br>ŋg   | nd nj ng ng<br>nt <sup>h</sup>    | nb np <sup>h</sup> nd nɕ nɕ ntɕ <sup>h</sup> ndz<br>ntʂ <sup>h</sup> nt <sup>h</sup> nts <sup>h</sup> ng nk <sup>h</sup>   | nb, nd, nɕ, ndz, ng; ŋg,<br>ŋg |
| s           | ---        | --  | sb sd sz sg<br>sg sm              |  | st, stɕ, sg, sx                |
| ʃ           | ---        | --  | ʃb ʃd ʃz ʃg ʃg                    | (ʃp ʃt ʃts ʃtɕ ʃk)   | ʃt, ʃtɕ, ʃk                    |
| x           | xk         | --  | xɕ                                | (çt çts çts çtɕ çs çç)   | xt                             |
| r           | ---        | r <sup>h</sup> p <sup>h</sup> r <sup>h</sup> b r <sup>h</sup> m<br>r <sup>h</sup> t <sup>h</sup> r <sup>h</sup> d r <sup>h</sup> ɕ <sup>h</sup><br>'k <sup>h</sup> 'g 'ŋ  | 'm 'd 'z 'g 'G                    | ('b 'd 'ɕ 'ɕ 'g 'm 'n 'ŋ 'ŋ)   | rd, rɕ                         |
| h (ɣ)       | ---        | h <sup>h</sup> t <sup>h</sup> h <sup>h</sup> d h <sup>h</sup> l<br>h <sup>h</sup> n h <sup>h</sup> ts <sup>h</sup><br>h <sup>h</sup> ɕ h <sup>h</sup> z<br>h <sup>h</sup> ts <sup>h</sup> h <sup>h</sup> dz<br>h <sup>h</sup> ɕ <sup>h</sup> h <sup>h</sup> j h <sup>h</sup> z <sup>h</sup><br>h <sup>h</sup> ŋ h <sup>h</sup> j h <sup>h</sup> k <sup>h</sup><br>h <sup>h</sup> g h <sup>h</sup> ŋ | h <sup>h</sup> g h <sup>h</sup> G | h <sup>h</sup> t h <sup>h</sup> k h <sup>h</sup> ts h <sup>h</sup> m h <sup>h</sup> m h <sup>h</sup> ŋ h <sup>h</sup> ŋ h <sup>h</sup> l<br>h <sup>h</sup> j h <sup>h</sup> w<br>(ɣd ɣz ɣz ɣdz ɣɕ ɣn ɣn<br>ɣŋ ɣl ɣj) | hdɕ, ɣɕ                        |

Southeastern Monguor under Mandarin influence, which also has CV(N). At the other extreme, other varieties of Monguor have large numbers of syllable-initial consonant clusters. Mangghuer has one, mb; Mongghul has twenty-three initial clusters, with preinitials n, s, sh, x, r, and h; and Baonan adds preinitial series with n, r, and h for thirty-two initial clusters. Kangjia is reported to have about twenty consonant clusters (Sechenchogt 2002: 67<sup>1</sup>). If we compare local and regional varieties of Amdo Tibetan, preinitials number between twenty-two (Sun 1986) and circa eighty (Haller 2004).

The preinitials in Amdo Mongolic languages derive from two sources: from Amdo Tibetan and from vocalic deletion between consonants. The former, which we term primary consonant clusters (or preinitials), derive primarily from Bodic lexical items; the latter, termed here secondary consonant clusters, derive mostly from Mongolic lexemes.

Examples of primary clusters include in Mongghul (1) and Gansu Baonan (2):

1 Sechenchogt (2002:67) also lists the mistranscribed preinitials ʃd, ʃɕ, ʃG, which are actually ʃt, ʃts, and ʃk, and also unverified tsr, tx, dr. None of these have been included in Table 3.

smanba(a), "doctor," and rgompa, "monastery"  
ngar (cf. Qinghai Baonan hgar) "temple" < \*hgar (Amdo hgar, WT sgar)

Mongghul, Baonan, Kangjia, and Wutun all have a number of primary clusters in Tibetan loans. Mangghuer resyllabifies primary clusters into CVC or C (via epenthesis or deletion). Secondary consonant clusters are found in all the Amdo Mongolic languages, e.g., Mongghul:

ʿgon, "wide" < Mongolian ørgen  
nguasi, "wool" < Mongolian \*ungasun (Svantesson et al. 2005)

Further examples are given in Table 4 below:

TABLE 4. SECONDARY PREINITIALS IN AMDO MONGOLIC

| English gloss | written Mongolian (Svantesson 2005) | Mongghul   | Baonan | Mangghuer          | Kangjia (Sechenchogt 2002) |
|---------------|-------------------------------------|------------|--------|--------------------|----------------------------|
| big           | *jek <sup>h</sup> e                 | ʃka        | ʃke    | ʃŋg <sup>w</sup> ɔ | ʃqɔ                        |
| tooth         | *sityn                              | ʃdɔ        | ʃton   | ʃudun              | ʃidun/ʃtun                 |
| pig           | *kak <sup>b</sup> ai                | hkai~ xqai | qai    | xqai               | qakai                      |

Mongolic lexical stress is assigned to the final syllable of the word, and this has facilitated the weakening and deletion of vowels in initial syllables, leading to initial consonant clusters (Wu 2003: 331).

Both primary and secondary preinitials in Amdo Mongolic were facilitated by contact with Tibetan; primary preinitials are the result of the direct copying of Tibetan lexemes, while secondary preinitials, though largely Mongolic in origin, reflect a Tibetan-like phonotactic innovation (CV(C) to CCV(C), where the preinitial is restricted to language-specific subsets of the same preinitials as in Amdo Tibetan (m, n, s, ʃ, x, ʀ, and h).

## LEXICAL COPYING

As expected for an area with intensive and long-term language contact, lexical items tend to have been transmitted primarily from the dominant Amdo Tibetan and Amdo Mandarin varieties into the Turko-Mongolic languages. A preliminary survey appears below in Table 5. These results give us an overview of lexical contact, though the percentages should be regarded as estimates.<sup>2</sup>

2 Available lexicons are incompletely etymologized, and the number of lexical items available for this survey varied from 200 to 11,500 (in the third column of Table 5). These lexicons are based on a provisional perusal of my own unpublished

The languages in Table 5 below are organized according the percentage of Tibetan loans, from highest to lowest. The percentage of borrowings from Tibetan are highest in the variety of Baonan spoken in Qinghai, with 43 to 54 percent of the three thousand surveyed lexical items of Tibetan origin. The Turko-Mongolic Amdo language with the least Tibetan loans is Mangghuer (Southeastern Monguor) with 0.04 percent. (The Mangghuer sample has 51 percent Mandarin loans, with Gansu Baonan and Salar not far behind with 40+ percent and 38 percent Mandarin loans, respectively; these are the Turko-Mongolic languages showing the heaviest contact effects from Sinitic.)

TABLE 5. LEXICAL SURVEY OF NONDOMINANT AMDO LANGUAGES

| Language  | Family  | Lexical items | Tibetan (%) | Sinitic (%) | Turko-Mongolic (%) | Other* (%) | Source   |
|-----------|---------|---------------|-------------|-------------|--------------------|------------|--|
| Baonan-qh | Mong    | 3000          | 43–54       | 9–14        | 22                 | 10–13      | Wu (2003), Xi et al. (1983), Chen (1985), Dwyer (n.d.)         |
| Wutun     | Sinitic | 200           | 31          | 65          | 3                  | 1          | Xi (1983), Dwyer   |
| Kangjia   | Mong    | 2384          | 30          | 30          | 35                 | 5          | Sechenchogt (1999)   |
| Baonan-gs | Mong    | 3000/700      | 17          | 40+         | 23–44              | 1–20       | Li (1986)  |
| Mongghul  | Mong    | 4091          | 7           | 24          | 61                 | 8          | DeSmedt and Mostaert (1933), Hasbatur (1986), Li (1991), Dwyer |
| Salar     | Turkic  | 11,500        | 3           | 38          | 51                 | 8          | Dwyer, Lin (1992), Tenishev (1976)                             |
| Mangghuer | Mong    | 1590          | .04         | 51          | 31                 | 17         | Dwyer, Slater (2003)   |

\*Many of these await etymological analysis and a more detailed study; at least 50% are expected to be assigned to the previous categories.

Many of the terms copied from Tibetan are in expected semantic domains such as animal husbandry, hunting, and Tibetan Buddhism. But Tibetan, together with Sinitic, has also played a role in the typological shift of the Turkic Salar language from an agglutinative and clause-chaining language to a more isolating one. By comparing aspectual and actional semantics in the more prototypically Turkic Western Salar variety (spoken outside of Amdo in Chinese Turkestan/Xinjiang) with Eastern (Amdo) Salar, we can see that in Western Salar, the inchoative aspect ("suddenly") is expressed by means of the coverb *jyr*, "go," which directly follows the main verb *kyl*, "laugh." In

Salar, Monguor, and Wutun lexicons, as well on Li 1991 and Hasbatur 1986 for Mongghul; Li 1986 for Gansu Baonan; and Sechenchogt 1999 for Kangjia.

Eastern Salar, however, the main verb is preceded by the adverbial *lortc<sup>h</sup>uqq<sup>h</sup>a*, “suddenly,” which is derived from Amdo Tibetan *hlo dzak ya* :

Adverbials in Eastern Salar: Agglutinative to Isolating Typology (Dwyer 1995)

|                  |                                       |                        |  |
|------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------|--|
| a. Western Salar |                                       |                        |  |
| u                | k <sup>h</sup> yl                     | jyr-miʃ                | “S/he burst out laughing” <sup>3</sup> |
| s/he             | laugh                                 | go-PST.INDIR           |  |
| b. Eastern Salar |                                       |                        |  |
| u                | lortc <sup>h</sup> uqq <sup>h</sup> a | k <sup>h</sup> ule-miç | “S/he burst out laughing”              |
| s/he             | suddenly                              | laugh-PST.INDIR        |  |

Example (5) is one of a number of examples in which Bodic and Sinitic adverbials occur preverbally in Eastern Salar, replacing the Turkic V<sub>1</sub>V<sub>2</sub> verb-coverb pattern. Sharply divergent contact environments in Amdo and Chinese Turkestan brought about these changes (Dwyer 1995, Dwyer forthcoming 2013).

#### MORPHOLOGICAL COPYING: THE POSTPOSITIVE INDEFINITE ARTICLE

The Amdo Tibetan numeral *zæg*, “one,” is postposed after a head noun as an indefinite article:

|       |            |                     |       |       |                    |   |
|-------|------------|---------------------|-------|-------|--------------------|---|
| ŋə    | ndaŋ       | [t <sup>h</sup> aŋ] | zæg   | ma    | nt <sup>h</sup> oŋ | (Sun 1986, 957)                         |
| I.erg | last.night | [liquor             | indef | ] neg | drink              | “I didn’t drink any liquor last night.” |

Many of the Amdo Turko-Mongolic languages have created a loan translation (calque) and copied the postpositive syntactic pattern, replacing Tibetan *zæg* with Mongolic *nige*-*nege*, “one”; the following example (7) is from Mongghul (Northern Monguor; mjg-n200201):

|  |           |     |        |        |       |      |            |
|--|-----------|-----|--------|--------|-------|------|------------|
| t <sup>h</sup> e                                       | sghaudini | dii | [Lang  | rgenni | Gesar | nige | ] gule-ja. |
| now  | a.little  | AZR | [Ntopo | king   | Npr   | one  | ] say-impf |
| “Now [we’ll] mention a [certain] Gesar of Lang a bit.” |           |     |        |        |       |      |            |

The above pattern is also attested in Qinghai Baonan, Salar, and even Sinitic (Northwest Mandarin); it is not attested in Mangghuer. We observe a similar pattern in Turkic Salar (Turkic languages typically have NU N). In (8)a, the Tibetan pattern with a postposed numeral “one” is present, interpretable only as an indefinite object. Unlike in Mongghul, however, the postpositive “one” co-occurs in the language with a prepositive “one”

as in (8)b. Example (8)b can be interpreted either as an indefinite (“a tree”) or as a numeral (“one tree”) and is disambiguated in sentential context. (Salar has a disambiguating strategy for count nouns as in [8]c, where *pir*, “one,” is only interpretable as a numeral, never as an indefinite article; this syntax is likely a calque from Mandarin *yi ke shu one cl tree*):

|    |                   |    |                       |    |                         |
|----|-------------------|----|-----------------------|----|-------------------------|
| a. | tal pir, “a tree” | b. | pir tal, “one/a tree” | c. | pir typ tal, “one tree” |
|    | tree one          |    | one tree              |    | one cl tree             |

Northwest Mandarin also postposes the numeral one (*yi*) together with a generic counter/ classifier (*ge*). In the following example (9), *yige* has been shortened to *ge* (unpublished Hua’er song excerpt recorded by Dwyer in 2002):

|                 |         |                    |  |
|-----------------|---------|--------------------|--|
| Aiyao, wo ni-ha | dianhua | ge da sha ya . . . | [cmn200206_Bkthuar]                      |
| excl I you-foc  | phone   | cl call prt prt    | “Aiya, I’ll give you a call so uh . . .” |

Thus many but not all non-Bodic languages of Amdo have calqued the Tibetan postpositive numeral as an indefinite article.

#### SEMANTIC COPYING: EVIDENTIALITY

In addition to phonotactic, lexical, and morphosyntactic convergence, many of these languages—Monguor, Baonan, Santa, Wutun, Kangjia, and Salar—show evidence of syntactic-semantic convergence. The most striking is that most of these nondominant languages now have a modified Tibetan evidential system. In these languages, evidentials refer to the factual basis for assertions, as well as to the completeness of the speaker’s knowledge.

Tibetan evidentiality or mirativity (DeLancey 1997, Sun 1993) expresses subtleties of the speaker’s perspective that distinguish speaker certainty, perception (visual, auditory, etc.), and (un)expectedness. Events that are certain, known as true to the speaker, personally perceived, and/or expected receive direct verbal marking (sometimes termed “subjective”); events that are uncertain, less-known to the speaker, hearsay, inferred and/or unexpected receive indirect marking (a.k.a. “objective”). In both Standard and Amdo Tibetan (the latter here represented by the Rebong variety), direct and indirect experience in the copular and future constructions receive distinct marking, as can be seen in Table 6:

<sup>3</sup> Glossing abbreviations used in this paper: azr: averbializer, cl: classifier, dat: dative, dir: direct, erg: ergative, excl: exclamation, foc: focus, exist: existential, exp: experiential, impf: imperfective, indef: indefinite, indir: indirect, neg: negative, Npr: proper noun, Ntopo: toponym, p: plural, pn: pronoun, prt: particle, pst: past, s: singular.



TABLE 6. COPULAR AND FUTURE CONSTRUCTIONS (GARRETT 2001: 99)

|          | Copula |              | Future         |             |
|----------|--------|--------------|----------------|-------------|
|          | StdTb  | Rebgong Amdo | StdTb          | RebgongAmdo |
| Ego      | yin    | yin          | V-gi-yin       | V-rgyus     |
| Direct   | *'dug  | *yin-gi      | *V-gi-yin-'dug | *V-rgyus-gi |
| Indirect | red    | red          | V-gi-red       | V-rgyu-red  |

In Amdo Tibetan, nonobservable events cannot be marked with direct evidentials (Garrett 2001: 99), as can be illustrated in (10): (10)a, with the direct evidential *gi*, is ungrammatical because the speaker cannot possibly know the internal, nonobservable state of another person. But the direct evidential is appropriate when speaking about one's own internal state as in (10)b.

Rebgong Amdo Tibetan (Garrett 2001: 99)

- |    |                      |    |                   |
|----|----------------------|----|-------------------|
| a. | *khur.ge da ltogs-gi | b. | nga da ltogs-gi   |
|    | *he now hunger-dir   |    | I now hunger-dir  |
|    | "He's hungry now."   |    | "I'm hungry now." |

The Turko-Mongolic Amdo languages distinguish *ego*/direct verb forms from indirect forms in both imperfective and perfective. Salar direct imperfectives are marked with the plain verb (e.g., the existential *var*), and indirect imperfectives add the particle *a* (e.g., *var a*), as in (11) below:

Salar (Dwyer 2000)

- |    |                             |  |
|----|-----------------------------|--|
| a. | *U bečij-a var-yan var      | "S/he has been to Beijing" (indirect)      |
| b. | U bečij-a va-ryan var a     | "S/he has been to Beijing" (indirect)      |
|    | s/he Beijing-DAT go-PST.EXP | exist PRT.indir                            |
| c. | Men bečij-a var-yan var     | "I have been to Beijing" (direct)          |
|    | I Beijing-DAT go-PST.EXP    | exist                                      |
| d. | Men bečij-a var-yan jox     | "I haven't been to Beijing" (direct)       |
|    | I Beijing-DAT go-PST.EXP    | exist.neg                                  |
| e. | U bečij-a var-yan jox       | a "S/he hasn't been to Beijing" (indirect) |
|    | s/he Beijing-DAT go-PST.EXP | exist.neg prt.indir                        |

A speaker referring to a nonobserved event (as in [10]a, which is based presumably on hearsay) must employ the evidential particle *a* for a grammatical utterance; . . . *varyan var* would be grammatical there. Perfective/past perspective distinctions in Salar are marked by suffixes, however.

Evidentials also figure prominently in the Amdo Mongolic languages, even though this perspective category is not found in other Mongolic languages. Prototypically, evidential suffixes coincide in declarative utterances with first-person subjects. Nonevidential suffixes co-occur prototypically with second- and third-person subjects in declarative utterances, also as in

the Salar example (11) above. Mangghuer evidentiality is also prototypically associated with first-person subjects. For present and imperfective declaratives, for example, Mangghuer employs the suffix *-lapi* for direct evidentials as in (12)a and *-lan* for indirect evidentials, as in (12)b below:

Mangghuer (Dwyer 2004, unpublished interview notes)

- a. pi/dasi gen-ni t<sup>h</sup>awt<sup>h</sup>a-lapi "I/we invite him/her" (direct evidential)  
pn1s/p pn3s-gen invite-impf.dir

Nonevidential, II, III person imperfective declarative:

- b. tci/t<sup>h</sup>asi ~ gen/gensi gen-ni t<sup>h</sup>awt<sup>h</sup>a-lan "You(sg/pl)~He/She/They invite him/her." (indir.)  
pn2s/p ~ pn3s/p pn3s-gen invite-impf.indir

Other Amdo Mongolic languages such as Mongghul and Baonan are similar. These perspective categories are less flexible and more rigidly applied than in Tibetan; first person is always associated with subjective/direct suffixes (e.g. Baonan *pu čjikua*, "I'll go"), whereas second and third person are associated with objective/indirect suffixes (e.g., t<sup>h</sup>i čjikuni, "you will go" [Wu 2003]). Early grammarians of both Salar and Mongghul mistook these perspective suffixes for person endings. As Turko-Mongol Amdo languages come to be better understood, however, speakers seem to be able to deploy evidentials more flexibly to express nuances of perception, e.g., an indirect form associated with a first-person speaker when the speaker is surprised (Salar, Mongghul); or to use a direct form with a second-person subject when the assertion is contrary to expectation (Mongghul, Georg 2003: 303).

Nonetheless, in all the Turko-Mongolic languages of Amdo (at least Salar and all varieties of Monguor and Baonan), the strong—even rigid—association of first-person subjects with direct perspective (and second- and third-person subjects with indirect perspective) is prototypical. In Tibetan, such a rigid association is not present. Tibetan perspective distinctions appear to be more nuanced and flexible (cf. DeLancey 1997, Garrett 2001, Sun 1993). Since perspective distinctions were not originally present in Mongolic, and since Amdo Mongolic has otherwise copied very few if any features from Salar, the source of Amdo Mongolic perspective distinctions must be Tibetan.

#### TIBETAN AS A SUPERSTRATE LANGUAGE

A superstrate language is culturally and economically dominant, and contributes features to nondominant languages at all levels of grammar. Tibetan has contributed to admixture of its dominant-language features into many unrelated local languages. Above are four examples of the process of transfer of numerous Tibetan features (phonemes, syllable structure, morphemes, syntax, and semantics) to the Turko-Mongolic languages

of the Amdo region. Tibetan phonotactics (in the form of preinitials) and lexical items (even adverbs) were largely copied directly; and Tibetan indefinite articles were copied as loan translations (calques). Tibetan perspective categories were conceptually copied into Amdo Turko-Mongol languages, although the morphosyntax of perspective marking in these languages diverges from that of Tibetan. Like Tibetan, these languages have direct and indirect copulae and imperfective verbal affixes; unlike Tibetan, Amdo Turko-Mongolic languages have developed a range of direct and indirect tense-aspect distinctions, and in the case of Salar, imperfective indirect perspective is marked by a particle, not a verbal suffix.

The Turko-Mongolic language varieties most affected by contact with Amdo Tibetan are Qinghai Baonan, Mongghul, and Kangjia, based on the above data. Unsurprisingly, these languages are located in areas in which Amdo Tibetan is sole dominant cultural force, as well as the most dominant language. The other Turko-Mongolic varieties (Mangghuer, Gansu Baonan, and Salar), located in more eastern areas, experience Sinitic language and Chinese culture as the dominant force (particularly in the last hundred years); additionally, the latter two groups are not (or no longer) coreligionists with speakers of Tibetan. These cultural, sociopolitical, and geographic factors contribute to the weaker transfer of Tibetan features to these latter groups.

Even under such heavy contact, some major grammatical features of the dominant languages were not adopted by the Turko-Mongol Amdo languages. For example, ergativity is prominent in Tibeto-Burman, yet not even one non-Tibetan Amdo language has developed ergativity (Janhunen 2004). Amdo Turko-Mongolic (and Amdo Sinitic) have retained nominative-accusative alignments. Sinitic influence here seems unlikely, since Amdo Turko-Mongolic has been otherwise particularly susceptible to Tibetan (not Sinitic) influence in the syntax-semantics interface (e.g., evidentiality and perspective).<sup>4</sup> Possibly the relative typological similarity of Tibetan and Turko-Mongolic languages encourages convergence, as at least a range of Turkic languages, like Tibetan, mark evidentiality as verb suffixes or suppletive copulas.

In a convergence area such as Amdo, the copying of linguistic features is multidirectional, as Tables 1 and 2 imply. Sinitic features have been copied to Turko-Mongolic and Tibetan, and Turko-Mongolic features to Sinitic and Tibetan, but these are beyond the scope of this article. Instead, I've

4 This question was posed differently, but with equal validity, by Janhunen 2004, who asks why the category of person has receded, and that of perspective has become so important: due to power relations between the groups or to universal properties of convergence?

focused on the adoption of Tibetan linguistic features into these non-dominant languages; the next section addresses the adoption of Tibetan cultural features.

## CULTURAL CONVERGENCE

Cultural convergence is also evident in kinship relations, life-cycle practices, and oral folklore. Even the word for "language" in some of these languages is borrowed from Tibetan: Salar, Mongghul *gatɕ<sup>h</sup>a*, cf. Amdo *hka tɕ<sup>h</sup>a* "talk," Written Tibetan *skad tɕha* (Hua and Bo 1993).

## KINSHIP RELATIONS

Culturally-significant Tibetan kinship terms were adopted by at least three neighboring languages: Salar, Northern Monguor (Mongghul), and Southeastern Monguor (Mangghuer) all refer to the maternal uncle as *atɕiu* but also accord him great social prominence. In Salar and Mangghuer weddings, for example, it is the *atɕiu* who is recognized in wedding speeches for his wisdom and modeling proper behavior for the bride and groom, cf. Amdo Tibetan *a tɕə* < Amdo *kə* < ?*a khu*. The adoption of the concept and associated cultural practices, partly via early intermarriage, must have necessitated the borrowing of the terms. Thus, when Salars say "Tibetans are our maternal uncles," it is meant both culturally and genetically.

Salar and Mongghul have also copied the Amdo Tibetan term *tɕ<sup>h</sup>əm ts<sup>h</sup>aj*, "family, household" as *tɕ<sup>h</sup>əmsaŋ~k<sup>h</sup>umsaŋ*, which in Salar and Mongghul refers to "clan." Early intermarriage must have played a role in the copying of this term.

## ADOPTION OF TIBETAN BUDDHISM

One simple measure of the impact of Tibetan culture is the widespread adoption of Tibetan Buddhism by the majority of Turko-Mongols in Amdo: the northern and southeastern Monguors, the Deed Mongols, Qinghai Baonans, and the Sarig and Shera Yugurs. They outnumber the remaining Amdo Turko-Mongols who are Muslims (Salars, Gansu Baonans, and the Santa). Several of the most influential Tibetan Buddhist monasteries in the region are founded and maintained by Tibetanized peoples. Rgolong Monastery (佑宁寺 *Youningsi*) in Huzhu county (the 'mother monastery' of all north of the Tsong Chu/Huangshui River, according to Schram 1954: 57) is overwhelmingly Monguor. Several of the great monasteries of the Rongwo/Rebgong area are Wutun (Tibetanized Chinese or vice-versa) and

Baonan (Tibetanized Mongols): the two Wutun monasteries (Senggeshong Yago Gompa, Mago Gompa); and two Baonan monasteries (Nyenthog and Gomar). Many Monguors are also part of Kumbum monastery.

#### ORAL FOLKLORE: GESAR

Many Mongols and Turks of Amdo tell varieties of the Gesar epic. Turkic-speaking Salars and Sarig Yugurs and the Monguors transform the Tibetan and Mongol Gesar (Geser) epic into an adventure narrative that is familiar yet foreign. In the non-Tibetan versions, the goal of the narration is to highlight exciting plot turns as isolated adventures, rather than telling the cultural history of the kingdom of gLing. In each case the narrator takes a different stance toward the religious, historical, and mythical meanings of the key characters.

The Salar, Sarig Yugur, and Monguor versions are not sung but rather spoken as dramatic narratives. When compared to Tibetan Gesar versions, which can run up to a million verses, they are of a very modest length, ranging from 130 to 1200 lines. One of the hallmarks of peripherally adopted narrative is its shift in genre from epic to narrative (confirming Heissig's 1991 assertion for Central Asian Mongolic versions).

Early adopters of the epic were coreligionists of Tibetans living beyond greater Tibet: the Buryats and Khalkha Mongols. For them, the epic was and still is central to narrative canon and performed by chanting and singing. Within Amdo, the non-Tibetan adopters of the epic were mostly Turks and smaller Mongolic groups; some are Tibetan Buddhists (the northern Monguors), some are Daoist-Buddhist (the southeastern Monguors), and some are Muslim (the Salars). For these latter groups, the epic is "just" a narrative and it is not sung but spoken. The narrative itself is not perceived to have religious import on the daily lives of tellers and hearers; it is recognized as external to the tellers' lives and adapted accordingly. Several Monguor versions focus on politics rather than the dharma and show a strong Chinese influence (cf. Heissig 1980 re Mongol versions). The Salar versions are quite short but are swashbuckling tales; some characters adopt Islamic practices, and Gesar has acquired Turko-Mongol protective spirits. The stories are thus localized for the specific Monguor or Salar cultures but at the same time foreign and external. Example (7) above ("Now [we'll] mention Gesar of Lang a bit") is the first line of a Mongghul Gesar telling, and marks it off as a foreign tale, much as Europeans might tell the 1001 Arabian Nights.

#### CONCLUSIONS

As an ethnolinguistic area, Amdo exhibits a high degree of linguistic and cultural convergence among largely unrelated groups. This convergence is multidirectional, although this article has highlighted the shift of highly salient Tibetan linguistic features and cultural practices features to other nondominant ethnolinguistic groups of the area. In language, a convergence is apparent at nearly every level of language: constituent order, phonology, prosody, and morphology. We observed the spread of Tibetan evidentiality and the Tibetan indefinite article *zög*, "a, one" to the local Mongolic languages of the area. Cultural convergence is readily apparent in the Salar and Monguor terms for "family," "language," and "maternal uncle," all of which are Tibetan in origin, as well as in other kinship terms. Furthermore, narrative versions of the Gesar epic are prevalent in the non-Tibetan peoples of Amdo, and Tibetan Buddhist practices such as circumambulation not proscribed by neighboring religions are also widespread in the region. One highly salient feature of Tibetan grammar not adopted by neighboring languages is its ergative alignment; the other languages of the region have accusative alignment systems. Nonetheless, overall Tibetan linguistic and cultural practices are remarkably embedded in these non-Tibetan languages and cultures, and cultural convergence may well have facilitated linguistic convergence.

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