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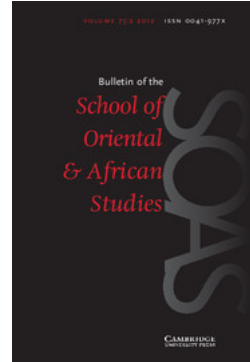
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Some Tibetan Etymologies of Semantic Interest

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NOTES AND COMMUNICATIONS

SOME TIBETAN ETYMOLOGIES OF SEMANTIC INTEREST

The Tibetan etymologies that are to be adduced below have been divided into four groups, according to the nature of the particular semantic or phonological considerations that can be invoked in support of them. They all contain features of semantic interest which will readily be recognized as having parallels elsewhere, notably in the Indian and European languages.

In group I, the probability that two words are connected is strengthened by the observation that their antonyms are to be derived in similar fashion from a common root.

Group II is directly concerned with parallels in other languages. Here a number of etymological connexions derive their main support from the observation that identical categories of derivative may be adduced from other unrelated languages.

The next group, III, comprises examples where iotization and palatalization are postulated, and group IV is characterized by vowel alternation, which has been studied in a previous article.¹ Support is drawn from the fact that the words concerned exemplify regular patterns of alternation. In the case of group IV, the vowel alternation is often combined with other features, such as iotization and palatalization (as exemplified in group III), prefixation and affixation, alternation of voiced and voiceless initials, or alternation of final vowels with consonantal finals. These additional changes have, however, been ignored in the presentation below.

I. Opposites

This first group is dealing with support to be gained from opposites. In the examples listed below, particles such as *pa*, *ba*, *ma*, *po*, *mo* have not been included.

1. *mt'o* 'to be high' ~ *stod* ' (to raise =) to praise '. This should be compared with *ma* 'below' ~ *smad* (or *smod*) 'to blame'. The second example is less obvious and brings in Chinese as well:
2. *mt'on* 'to see' ~ Chin. *tīng* 聽 (archaic *t'ieng*, GSR,² 835 d') 'to hear'. From the phonological point of view, cf. *sdoñ* 'stalk of a plant' ~ Chin. *tíng* 莖 (archaic *d'ieng*). The 'inability to see' is in Tibetan *loñ* or *ldoñ* 'blind', and support for equation 2 may be gained from the fact that in Chinese we find 'inability to hear' expressed by *lóng* 'deaf'.

II. Analogies in other languages

A. Latin

3. *rgal* 'to step or pass over, to ford, cross' ~ *rgyal* 'to be victorious' (and *brgyal* 'to faint'), cf. Latin *superare* 'id.' (and German *hinüber sein*).
4. *hbrañ* 'to follow' ~ *hbrin* 'middle, middling, moderate', cf. Latin *secundus* 'second' from *sequi* 'to follow'.
5. *rdza* 'clay' ~ *rdzi* 'to press, knead', *rdzu* 'to give a deceptive appearance'.

¹ See *Asia Major*, XIX, 1974, 86-99.

² GSR B. Karlgren, *Grammata Serica Recensa*, Stockholm, 1957. Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities. (Bulletin No. 29.)

The Latin parallel is: *fungo* 'to knead, mould, shape' and 'to devise, contrive, invent, feign', *figulus* 'potter', *fictilis* 'made of clay'.

6. *sra* 'hard' ~ *sran* 'to endure, suffer'. Cf. *durus* 'hard', wherefrom English 'to endure, suffer'.

B. Greek

7. *rna* 'ear' ~ *rno*, *rnon* 'sharp'. Cf. Greek *akouo* and *akrodomai* 'I hear': Schwyzer has *ak-ous* 'sharp ear',³ and Kretschmer compares *akrodomai* with *akros* 'sharp'.

C. German

8. *srel* 'to bring up, rear, nurse, train' ~ *srol* 'usage, custom, habit'. We find in German *pfliegen* 'to nurse' and the noun *Gepflogenheit* 'habit, custom'. (See also no. 3 above: *brgyal* ~ *hinüber sein*.)

D. French

9. *rko* (dial. *rkod*) 'to dig, dig out' ~ *rked* '(dug out part of the body =) waist'. We have a parallel in French *la taille* 'waist' and *tailler* 'to cut, cut out'.

E. Chinese

10. *do* '(two equivalent =) two, a pair, couple' ~ *don* '(equivalent =) sense, meaning, signification', *dod* 'equivalent'. But for the latter two obviously related words, which fit in well with a number of other Tibetan words⁴ showing alternation of final vowel with dental nasal or plosive, one might be tempted to compare Latin *duo*, or rather related Indian words like Skt. *dva-*, old dual *dvā*, and try to make out a case for Tibetan borrowing of the numeral 'two' from neighbouring India, much as we find in Romanian the numeral 'one hundred' being borrowed from neighbouring Russian *sto*. But apart from *don* and *dod*, we find a counterpart for *do* in Chinese, viz. *duì* 對, according to Karlgren (*GSR*, 511) archaic (*twēb* >) *twəd* 'to correspond to, a counterpart', with the meaning 'pair, couple' still common in modern Chinese. (Incidentally the relation with Tibetan *do*, *dod* shows that the surmise of an earlier **twəb* from which *twəd* would have developed by dissimilation, as proposed by Karlgren, is unlikely.)

F. Sanskrit

11. *rgyu* 'to go, move, wander' ~ *rgyun* 'flow, current, stream', *rgyun-du* 'continually', *rgyud* 'string, cord, chain of mountain, thread of tradition'. We observe the alternation between final vowel and words ending in *n* and *d* as just seen in the case of *do*, *don*, and *dod*. From the semantic point of view, the idea of a continuous movement or, in the case of *rgyud*, that of an extended line is evident. For the meaning of an extended line, Skt. *tantu* 'thread, string, line, warp', belonging with *tan-* 'to extend, spread, stretch', was the obvious Sanskrit translation, and *tantra* 'loom, warp, string of a lute' another

³ See *W. B. Henning memorial volume*, ed. I. Gershevitch and M. Boyce, London, 1970, 406-8.

⁴ See 'Alternation of final vowel with final dental nasal or plosive in Tibetan', *BSOAS*, XL, 1, 1977, 52, no. 23.

possibility; when the Tibetans proceeded to translate Tantric works, it was therefore only natural that they assigned to *rgyud* this latter meaning of *tantra*. It is interesting to note that Jäschke in the German version of his dictionary attempted to explain the meaning *tantra* of *rgyud* as 'perhaps properly a series of points' (p. 113b: 'Abhandlung—wohl eigentlich als eine Reihe abgehandelter Punkte'), but left out this explanation in his English version.

12. *rañ* 'own, self' ~ *rañs* 'entire, complete, unimpaired'. The meaning 'own' would not be found under *rañ* in Jäschke, nor, for that matter, in Sarat Chandra Das who in so many cases depends on him; and *rañs-pa* in the meaning 'entire, complete, unimpaired' does not occur either in the two dictionaries, though Das has preserved the gloss *rañs-po* = *ts'añ-ma* 'all, whole, entire', without, however, revealing its source. It is remarkable that *rañs-pa* in the meaning of 'unimpaired' occurs in the lost chapter of the *mDzañs-blun* which was published by G. Baruch in the *Journal Asiatique* (CCLVIII, 1955), and one may well speculate whether the temporary loss of this chapter may be blamed for the word being missed out by Jäschke who in his dictionary gives so many examples from this text. In any case it is the meaning 'complete, entire, unimpaired' which establishes the semantic link between the meaning of 'own' and 'complete'. As Sanskrit *kevala* confirms, among the meanings of 'own' is that of being 'exclusively one's own, not common to others or shared by others', *kevala* being defined by Monier-Williams in his *Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (p. 309), as 'exclusively one's own (not common to others), alone, merely, sole' and also 'entire, whole, all'. It may be added that there are similar examples in other Indo-European languages, including English *whole*, German *heiß*, Icelandic *helga*, so that it may be justifiable to add the meaning of 'own' to Tibetan *rañ*.⁵ Further members of the word family are *grañ* 'number (= the total)', *bgrañ-ba* 'to count', *hgrañ-ba* 'to satiate', *hgrañs-pa* 'satiated, replete, full'.

G. English

13. *gsob* (< **gtsob*) 'to fill out, repay' ~ *ts'ab* 'representative, substitute', cf. English 'to fill in' ~ 'stop-gap'.

14. *mdzod* (holder =) store-house' ~ *hdzed* 'to hold out or forth', and *mjed* 'enduring'. Cf. English 'to hold, hold out' and 'to endure', which latter word was mentioned also in relation to *sra* 'hard' and *sran* 'to suffer' (see no. 6 above).

III. Iotization and palatalization⁶

15. *gos* 'garment, dress', *gon* 'to put on (clothes, etc.)' ~ *gyon* 'id.', *skyon* 'to put astride', *gson* 'id.', *zon* 'to mount', *bzon* 'riding beast, carriage'.

16. *rkañ* (stretcher =) leg, foot' ~ *rkyañ* 'to stretch, extend, stretch forth', *rgya* 'extent, size, width', *rgyañ* 'distance'.

17. *sman* 'medicinal herb, drug, medicine' ~ *smyon* '(drugged =) insane, frantic, mad', *smyo* 'to be insane, mad'.

⁵ See 'Cognates of Tibetan *rañs-pa* "entire, complete" with guttural stem initial', in *Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica, Taipei*, Taiwan, xxxix, 1969, 287-9.

⁶ See *BSOAS*, xxxviii, 3, 1975, 611-14. For no. 15, cf. I A 6 and note 7; for no. 16, cf. I A 2; for no. 17, cf. I B 3.

IV. Vowel alternation ⁷A. *a* ~ *e* or *e* ~ *a*

18. (I B 2) *nyal* 'to sleep' ~ *bsnyel* 'to forget'.
 19. (I A 4) *gre* 'throat' ~ *hgrags* 'to utter a sound'.
 20. (I B 1) *ljags* 'tongue' (elegant word) ~ *lce* 'id.' (the elegant and ordinary word for 'tongue', belonging to *ldag* 'to lick', lit. 'the licker').
 21. (I C 6) *sna* 'nose' ~ *sne* 'extremity'.
 22. (I D 5) *sbed* 'to hide' ~ *sba* 'privy parts'.

B. *a* ~ *i* or *i* ~ *a*

(II B 2) *hbrañ* ~ *hbrin*: see no. 4 above.)

(II A 7) *rdza* ~ *rdzi*: see no. 5 above.)

23. *hbyin* 'to sink' ~ *byan* 'north'. This etymology was recently ⁸ proposed by Michael Hahn. It goes together with the words for the other three cardinal points, viz. *šar* 'east' (lit. 'rise'), *nub* 'west' (its verbal meaning being 'to sink gradually'), and *tho* 'south' which belongs with *tha* ' (the one on top =) god', *thag* 'more, beyond', *thag-pa* 'surpassing' and *thag-ma* 'remains, scraps'. It remains to be seen if the details of the sinking period of the sun can be discovered in Tibetan folklore, so that we learn more about the sinking of the sun inside the earth.

C. *a* ~ *o* or *o* ~ *a*

(III C 10) *rna* ~ *rno*, *rnon*: see no. 7 above.)

(III D 7) *sman* ~ *smyo*, *smyon*: see no. 17 above.)

24. (III A 8) *gar* 'dance' ~ *gor* 'round, circular', cf. French *une ronde*.

25. (III A 12) *hgro*, *bgrod* 'to walk', *hgrod* 'gait', *hgron* 'traveller, guest, foreigner' ~ *b(s)grad* 'to open wide (with as object *rkañ* "leg")', to part the legs wide, to straddle'.

26. (III C 13) *mts'an* 'sign, mark, token' ~ *mts'on* ' (marker, pointer =) forefinger, pointed instrument, weapon'. Cf. Chin. *cün* 寸 (archaic *ts'wən*, *GSR*, 43) 'thumb'.

27. (III E 3) *rlabs* ' (swell =) flood' ~ *rlom* 'have a swelled head =) to be proud'.

28. (III B 8) *šam* (in *šam-du* 'below') ~ *hjoms* ' (to lay low =) to conquer, subdue'.

D. *e* ~ *i* or *i* ~ *e*

29. (V A 4) *rtse* 'point, top, peak, summit', *rtseg* ' (to top =) to lay one thing on or over another' ~ *rtsi* ' (to add one thing to another =) to count', *rtsig* ' (to put one piece of earth or one stone or brick on top of another =) to build', and (with voiced initial aspirate, belonging with *rtsi* 'to count'), *rdzi* ' (the counter of sheep =) the shepherd'.

E. *e* ~ *o* or *o* ~ *e*

(VI A 1) *rko(d)* ~ *rke*: see no. 9 above.)

(VI C 12) *srel* ~ *srol*: see no. 8 above.)

(VI C 8) *mdzod* ~ *hdzed*: see no. 14 above.)

⁷ See the article quoted in note 1. Detailed references to nos. 18–34 have been given in brackets after each number.

⁸ *Zentralasiatische Studien*, VII, 1973, 437.

30. (VI C 2) *hded* 'to walk behind, pursue, run after' ~ *hdod* 'to desire'.
31. (VI D 4) *hbreg* 'to cut off' ~ *hbrog* 'solitude, wilderness, uncultivated land', *hp'rog* 'to rob, take away, deprive'.
32. (VI C 6) *ts'e* 'time' ~ *ts'o* 'to live, life', *gson* (< **gtson*) 'to live', *so* (< **stso*) in *so-si* 'life and death' (*Siddhasāra*). For *gson*, cf. Chin. *cún*, archaic *dz'wən* 存 'to exist, remain, survive' (*GSR*, 432a).
33. (VI E 1) *ren* (< **nren*) 'to be stiff, hard, rigid', *hgreñ* 'to stand', *sgreñ* 'to raise, erect' ~ *ro* < **nro* ' (a stiff =) dead body', *hgron* 'to die, be killed'. For *ren*, cf. Chin. *níng* 凝, archaic *ngiəng* 'to freeze, coagulate' (*GSR*, 956h).
34. (VI C 11) *sro* (< **snro*) 'to be warm' ~ *sred* (< **snred*) 'to desire'. For *sro*, cf. Chin. *rè* 熱, archaic *njat* (for which I would prefer *snjat*), *GSR*. 330j.

WALTER SIMON

CORRIGENDUM

Owing to inadvertence on the part of the author in cutting the photograph reproduced facing page 463, BSOAS XLII, 3, 1979, a small section of the relevant text was omitted. It is hoped to publish the complete version, together with a slightly revised translation, at an early date.