Loss of $l$ or $r$ in Tibetan Initial Consonantal Clusters

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In (a) the preposition \( l + \) suffix is added to the verb in which the vowel of the suffix is lengthened. The penultimate vowel is always prominent. In (b) where \(-u\) is elided the anaptyctic vowel \(-a-\) is inserted in the singular but not in the plural. In this paradigm the penultimate vowel is always prominent.

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LOSS OF \( l \) OR \( r \) IN TIBETAN INITIAL CONSONANTAL CLUSTERS

The paucity of sounds in Sino-Tibetan words constitutes one of the major difficulties of etymological research in this field. Initial clusters with \( l \) or \( r \) are therefore of great importance as they appear to offer safe guidance in assembling Tibetan word families. Though in general they may be regarded as stable elements, this stability, as the following examples will show, is by no means absolute. While making due allowance for a possibly secondary nature in some cases of an \( r \) preceding a guttural stem-initial \(^1\)—see p. 443, nn. 6 and 7—there would still seem to be more than 40 examples where there is clear evidence for the loss of \( l \) or \( r \). It will be noted that in these cases \( l \) and \( r \) occur either in shifted position (I) or when the clusters are preceded by an \( s \)-prefix (II). In an appendix a few cases have been added where, owing to the presence of an original \( s \)-prefix, we witness \( l \)-clusters in which the (dental) stem-initial itself has disappeared.

I

\( l \) or \( r \) preceding the stem-initial

(1) \( l \)

A. Guttural stem-initial

\( lq\)a/sqa ' ginger'
\( lq\)an-bu/gan-bu ' husk, pod'
\( ld\)o/dgo ' puff-ball' (dgo occurring in \( p'a\)-ba dgo-dgo ' puff-ball ')

B. Palatal stem-initial

\( lc\)ud/pa/gcud-pa ' to twist' \(^2\)
\( lc\)e-spyan/ce-spyan ' jackal' (lit. ' tongue—wolf ')
\( lj\)i-ba/lji-ba ' flea'
\( lj\)en-pa/zen-pa ' to penetrate '
\( lj\)ons/gions ' valley, region '

C. Dental stem-initial

\( lt\)am(s)-pa/gtam(s)-pa ' to be full', \( t'am-pa \) ' full' \(^3\)

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\(^1\) It should be noted that Professor P. K. Benedict, in his recent work *Sino-Tibetan: a conspectus*, Cambridge, 1972, 109–10, assumes a ' prefixed \( r \) of uncertain function ' in some of his Tibeto-Burman roots.

\(^2\) cf. also below, IIA(a).

\(^3\) cf. also \( ltem-pa/l'em-pa \) ' (to be) full '.

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NOTES AND COMMUNICATIONS

ltotŋ-ga/tonŋ ‘notch, indentation’ (tonŋ occurring in ri-tonŋ and la-tonŋ ‘ridge of mountains’ and ‘indentation of a mountain pass’
ldag-pa/lhag-pa ‘to lick’
ldu-gu l/dgu-gu ‘ring, bracelet’
ldum ‘vegetable’ / sdu-m in sdm-ra ‘(vegetable) garden’
ldum-po l/dum-po ‘(large) piece’
ldhe-gu/lhe-gu ‘ointment’
ldhe-ba/lhe-ba ‘treasurer’
lde-ga/lde-ga ‘to lift, raise’
ldehu/sdehu ‘kind of peas’
ldebs/ldebs ‘side’

D. Labial stem-initial
lbu-ba/dbu-ba ‘bubble’

(2) r

A. Guttural stem-initial
rkan/dkan ‘palate’
rkam-pa/skam-pa ‘to long for’
rked/sked ‘waist’
rgod-pa l/dgod-pa ‘to laugh’

B. Palatal stem-initial
rje-sa/gze-sa ‘deference’
rjo-bo l/jo-bo ‘master’
rnyil/snyil ‘gums’
rnyog-pa l/nyog-pa ‘dirty’

C. Dental stem-initial
(a) Dental plosive
rta/t’a ‘horse’ (t’a occurring in the compound t’a-skar 10)
rtuŋ-ba ‘to shorten’ / tuŋ-ba ‘short’, stuŋ-ba ‘to shorten’
rten-pa/sten-pa ‘to adhere to’
rtopa/gtopa, btopa ‘a stake’
brtan-pa ‘firm’ / ht’an-pa ‘firmness’

4 Also gdu-bu/gdub-bu/gdub. Cf. also zlum-po ‘round’ < *slum (see below Appendix, item 4). Ldum ‘piece’ may belong to the same word family, then meaning originally a ‘round piece’.
5 See Mahāvyutpatti (ed. Sakaki), No. 5121.
6 r may be a secondary development when alternating with a d-prefix, but see n. 7.
7 cf. also brgad-pa ‘to smile’.
9 See, however, under C(b) below and n. 11 of the article quoted in p. 444, n. 11 below.
10 Professor F. K. Li was the first to point out that t’a in t’a-skar belongs with rta. See his article ‘Certain phonetic influences of the Tibetan prefixes upon the root initial’, Academia Sinica, Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology, iv, 2, 1933, 150.
rdān/gdaṅ 'clothes-stand'
rdar-ba/bdar-ba 'to rub'
rdal-ba/gdal-ba, bdal-ba 'to spread'

(b) Dental nasal
rna-ba 'ear', rno-ba, rnon-pa 'sharp' / nyang-pa11 'to hear'
rnaŋ 'matter, pus' / nyag-nyig, nyag-nyog 'filth, dirt', nyog-pa 'soiled'
rnam-pa 'piece', rnam-'s 'sign of plural' / mnyam-pa 'like, equal'
rnal(-ma) 'rest' / mnal 'sleep', nyal-ba 'to lie down, to sleep'

(c) Dental affricate
rtsi-can 'sticky' / ts'i-ba 'sticky matter'
rtsi 'calculation' / ts'is (also ts'igs) in so-ts'is (ts'igs) 'housekeeping, husbandry'
rtsub-po 'rough' / (h)ts'ub-ma 'storm'
rtsol-ba 'to endeavour' / hts'ol-ba 'to seek, search, try to obtain'
rtshib(s)-ma/ts'ib-ma12 'rib'
rdziṅs/geṅs 'ship'

II

Clusters with an s-prefix

A. Guttural stem-initial
(a) Both skr- and skl- are simplified to sk-:
skras > skas 'staircase'
*sklud > skul 'thread'

In the second example the l-cluster is to be inferred from the obvious cognate
lcud-pa < *clud-pa (with palatalized stem-initial) 'to twist', adduced above under I(1)B.

(b) Loss of l or r may also occur as a result of iotization:
*sklyun-ka > skyun-ka13 'jackdaw'; cf. the palatalized variant leuṅ-ka
< *cuṅ-ka
*skyribs > skyibs 'shelter'

The original r-cluster must be inferred from sgrib 'shadow', which (in the modern language) occurs also in the meaning of 'shelter'.

11 This and the other examples under C(b) have been set out in more detail in 'Ear, sharp, and hearing—a Tibetan word family', in M. Boyce and I. Gershevitch (ed.), W. B. Henning memorial volume, London, 1970, 406–8.
12 See Mahāvyuttpatti (ed. Sakaki), No. 4005.
13 The verb skyuṅ-ba 'to diminish' (this meaning to be added to the entry in Jäschke's dictionary) seems to go back to an earlier *sknyun-ba, belonging with cuṅ, c'uṅ, and nyuṅ 'little'. A passage in the Vinayavibhanga, concerned with the monks going quietly from house to house (Narthang, h'Dul, N'ya 378 = Tib. Tripitaka, xlIII, 233a2), which shows sgra skyuṅ-ba followed by the synonymous ts'iṅ nyuṅ-ba, would appear to confirm this etymology. The Mahāvyuttpatti (ed. Sakaki, No. 8537) renders alpaśabda by sgra skyuṅ-ba.
We observe both loss of the r and absorption of the s-prefix in the process of palatalization in

\[ *sgyre\text{-}ba \ (\text{< } sgre\text{-}ba) \rightarrow b\text{\'echo}\text{-}ba \] 15 to raise'

B. Labial stem-initial

We observe simplification of smr- to sm-:

\[ *\text{smro}\text{-}ba \rightarrow \text{smo}\text{-}ba \ 'to talk', \text{cf. smra}\text{-}ba 'idem', \text{smran 'word, speech'} \] 16

\[ *\text{smras}\text{-}pa \rightarrow \text{smas}\text{-}pa \ 'wound, wounded', \text{cf. rmas}\text{-}pa 'idem' \] 17

APPENDIX

It will have been noticed that examples of clusters with an s-prefix and dental stem-initial are missing in section II. In clusters of that kind not the l or r, but the dental stem-initial is lost. In the case of r this development is well known, cf., e.g., sron-ba (pf. bsrans, fut. bsran) 'to straighten' by the side of draft-po 'straight', or sro-ba 'to warm' by the side of dro-ba 'warm'. But cases with s-prefix and l are less easily recognized, as we witness at the same time a voicing of the prefix:

1. zla-ba \(< *sdla ' to deliver ', causative 18 of hda-pa \(< *(h)da 19 < *(h)dla 'to pass over, go beyond'.

2. zlo-ba \(< *sdlo ' to say ' (= zla-ba 'idem') listed by Csoma and Schmidt as synonymous with hdo-bo 20 \(< *(h)do < *(h)dlo.

3. zlog-pa \(< *sdlog ' to cause to return' from ldog-pa \(< *dlog-pa 'to return'.

4. zhum-po (also zhum-pa) \(< *sdhum 'round', variant of ldum-po 'idem'.

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14 Note, however, the retention of r in the palatalized variant cjen(-pa) of sgren(-mo) 'naked'.

15 cf. also gson 'to put astride' (wrongly doubted by Jäschke, Did., 566, and therefore left out by Das, see, e.g., Tib. Tripitaka, XXXIX, 56-8) by the side of skyon-pa, and ion-pa 'to mount', which clearly belong with gyon-pa 'to put on, wear', the latter word being a derivative of gon-pa 'idem'.

16 Note also the variant rmo-snags of smre-sAags 'to wail, lament', listed by Schmidt and Jäschke, and the metathesis of the r, as in rgyal 'to cross' \sim sgrai 'to ferry across' and rgya 'old' \sim dgren 'to grow old' (see Asia Major, NS, 1, 1949, 12 ff.).

17 The entry smus-pa, taken over by Jäschke from I. J. Schmidt's Wörterbuch, can be confirmed in its verbal meaning by a passage from the Vinayavastu (Narthang, bDul, Kha, 306b = Tib. Trip., xlII, 178c): lus dnas shi rnag byau-bas mna bzhag la. Cf. also Divyadāna (ed. Cowell and Neil), 463'. Note also sme-ba 'spot, mark, mole' by the side of rme-ba (and dme-ba) 'idem'.


19 For the loss of the l cf., e.g., ldag-pa/hdag-pa in I(1).C.

20 Both hdo-bo and zlo-ba are listed by Csoma and Schmidt. The example ma hdo-par 'unspeakable', rightly queried by Jäschke, who has referred to Schiefner's correction ma hos-par (now see Tib. Trip., xiii, 107a6), has been taken over by Das (Did., 689) without question mark and without reference to either Jäschke or Schiefner.

21 cf. also the doublet slog.

22 See also above, p. 443, n. 4.