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NATHAN W. HILL

Tibetan Part-of-speech Conundrums: mañ and yun riñ

Abstract

This paper discusses two Tibetan expressions, mañ and yun-riñ, which give rise to vexing problems of part of speech analysis.

Keywords: corpus linguistics, Tibetan grammar, parts-of-speech

The student of Tibetan and the working Tibetologist function quite well in the absence of an explicit theory of Tibetan word breaking and part-of-speech analysis. In contrast, in a part-of-speech tagged corpus of Tibetan texts, such as the project ‘Tibetan in Digital Communication’ at SOAS (University of London) is building, one must decide where each word begins and ends and assign each word a word-class. The analysis of a few constructions are particularly vexing; here I discuss mañ and yun-riñ.

mañ

The root mañ ‘be many’ is most familiar in the guise of the adjective mañ-po ‘many’ (example 1).

(1) g.yem-pa rgyas-par spyad-nas lo mañ-po ma lon-par glan-pa-dañ mchin-pa skams-so /
After practicing excessive fornication, after not many years her brain (glan-pa) and liver dried out. (D. 236, Vol. 64, 275b).2

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1 See more on the project in Garrett et al. 2013, Garrett et al. 2015. I would like to gratefully acknowledge the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council’s support for this project.

2 Citations from the Kanjur and Tanjur use a D., for Derge, followed by the text’s number in the Tōhoku catalogue.
However, *maṇi* ‘be many’ also occurs as a finite intransitive verb (example 2) and as a subordinate verb in the indirect infinitive construction (example 3).

(2) *de-nas rgya-mtshohi lhás chu sňim-pa gañ bcus-nas dge-bsťñen de-la sňim-pa gañ-gi chu maṇ-ňam / rgya-mtshohi chu maṇ ? / ţes dris-pa-daň*

Then, the god of the sea, scooping up a handful of water asked the upāsaka “Are the waters of a handful many, or are the waters of the ocean many?” (D. 341, vol. 74, 144b).

(3) *de bsod-nams-kyi phuň-po ches maṇ-du skyeňo /*  
His collection of merit became exceedingly great. (Buton 7a).4

In example (4) *lo maṇi* is not amenable to analysis as a noun followed by an adjective, because such an explanation would yield an inexplicable variation between the two adjectives *maṇi* and *maṇ-po.*5 However, it would also be incorrect to see *lo maṇi* as a noun followed by a verb, because *lo-maṇ zig* is a noun phrase that the verb *lon* governs. Consequently, *lo-maṇi* like the German ‘Jahrmenge’ must be a compound.

(4) *phyis lo-maṇ zig lon-pa-daň / hdi sňam-du sems-so /
Later, after some many years had passed, he thought thus... (D. 341, Vol. 74, 147b).

The direct suffixing of *-maṇi* to form compounds is not uncommon. Witness *dge-sloň-maṇi* like the German ‘Mönchmenge’ in example (5).

(5) *de tshe gañ daň-gis ni dge-sloň-maṇ dkrugs-nas /
At that time, some people agitated the clergy (D. 13, vol. 34, 8a).

In the light of the foregoing discussion *hbul-ba maṇ dag* ‘many gifts’ (in example 6) and *yig-cha maṇ dag* ‘many texts’ (in example 7), appear likewise to be the compounds *hbul-ba-maṇi* and *yig-cha-maṇi* followed by the plural marker *dag.*

(6) *Nag-tshos gser-gyi hbul-ba maṇ dag phul-bahi khar /
When Nag-tsho offered many offerings of gold... (Marpa 30b).6

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3 For more on the indirect infinitive construction see Garrett et al. 2013.

4 ‘Buton’ refers to the digital version of the Bu ston chos hbyun available at Otani University (http://web1.otani.ac.jp/cri/twrpw/results/e-texts/ [accessed 24 February 2015]). The Bu ston chos hbyun consists largely of quotations from previous works. I have not troubled to locate the original passages, as this is not relevant to the current project. The reader should however be aware that the linguistic usage attested in citations from this text may date to earlier periods.

5 To ward off this danger our project forbids monosyllabic adjectives.

6 ‘Marpa’ refers to the digital version of the Mar pa rnams thar available at Otani University (http://web1.otani.ac.jp/cri/twrpw/results/e-texts/ [accessed 24 February 2015]).
(7) dpon-slob gnis-kas Rgya-dpe rnams gzigs-pas hpho-bahi yig-cha man dag ḭdag-ste
When the two, teacher and student, looked at the Indian books, there were many texts about Transference of Consciousness. (Marpa 34b).

Nonetheless, in example (8) because the genitive case marker precedes man, the option to see it as the second element of a compound and the option to see it as a verb are both unavailable.

(8) Bod-la ma grags-pahi man dag cig byun-ziṅ /
There were many (translators) who are not famous in Tibet. (Buton 145a).

The phrase  gzan dag (‘others’) offers a model to analyze man dag and to speculate about its origin. Many things may follow  gzan ‘other’ in a noun phrase including  žig (9), kun (10), rnams (11) and dag (12).

(9) gnas  gzan žig na śiṅ Śa-ko-ta-ka-la bya-rog cig ḭdag-pa des Dbyig-pa-can de mṭhoṅ-nas
In another place there was a crow on a Śakotaka tree, which saw Dbyig-pa-can (D. 341, vol. 74, 272a).

(10)  gzan kun ni chuṅ-ma-daṅ ḥgrogs-te ḥoṅs-na blon-po de ḭbāṅ  žig-gi chuṅ-ma ma ḥoṅs-pa ḥgrogs-po dag the-tshom-du gyur-te /
When all others came with their wives and that the wife of that lone minister did not come, his friends began to have doubts. (D. 341, vol. 74, 148b).

(11) de min-gyi gdams-ṇag  gzan rnams khyod-raṅ-la byin tshar-ro
I have finished giving to thee other instructions than those. (Mila, de Jong 1959: 77).

(12) sman de btsun-mo chuṅ-ṇu  gzan dag-gis ḥthuṅs-te /
The other, junior queens, drank that medicine. (D. 341, vol. 74, 74a).

In contrast to this syntactical promiscuity of  gzan in classical literature, in Lhasa dialect  gzan-dag has become a single word and is the only common occasion on which the morpheme dag still occurs. One may suspect that man dag has undergone a similar ossification as a locution figée.

The difficulty with man dag for our corpus project is that on the one hand it would feel uncomfortable to regard it as a single word and thereby obfuscate that dag in this combination is very much the usual plural marker dag, but on the other hand treating man as a determiner (N  gzan dag : N man dag :: N  gzan [d.det] dag : X = man [d.det] dag),

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7 We tag  gzan ‘other’ as [d.det] ‘determiner’ along with sogs, raṅ, ka ~ kha ~ga, re, re-re, sna-re, ḭbāṅ, śa-stag, ya, ya-re, and la-la.
would make this determiner analysis of mañ available in all of the word’s occurrences. The solution our project employs is to regard mañ-po as an adjective, mañ as a verb or second element of a compound except in the expression mañ dag, in which we treat it as a determiner. We make no pretense that better solutions are not possible, but they are not known to us.

yun(-)riñ

The phrase yun riñ-po ‘a long time’ is readily analyzable as a noun yun ‘time’ followed by an adjective riñ-po ‘long’. The phrase yun riñ-po normally functions adverbially in a way that can be translated as ‘for a long time’; the phrase can be case marked with at least four different cases: ablative (-nas), terminative (-r), absolutive (-Ø), and locative (-na).

The ablative case is used when an activity began in the past and continues into the present (example 13).

(13) bdag ni yun riñ-po-nas khkor-ba-na lus grañs med-pa chud gsan-te
I, for a long time, have wasted countless bodies in Samsāra. (D. 341, vol. 74, 132b).

The terminative is used when an activity began and ended in the past (example 14) or for a hypothetical activity that will occur in the future (example 15).

(14) bcom-ladan-hdas yun riñ-por hijig-rien-na bţugs-te
The Bhagavan stayed in the world for a long time. (D. 341, vol. 74, 197b).

(15) khyod de-bţin-gśegs-pa-la tshe-dan-ladan-pa ma zer cig / yun riñ-por mi bde-bar gyur-ta-re/
Thou, say not ‘venerable’ to the Tathāgata, lest thou beest unhappy for a long time. (Buton 96b).

8 One may wonder whether it is right to see mañ as a determiner, and recognize mañ-po, mañ, and mañ-dag as parallel to gzan-po, gzan, and gzan-dag. From such a perspective, either gzan will be seen as a verbal root ‘be otherwise’ that frequently occurs in compound or mañ will be seen as a determiner alone, and the analysis of phrases like lo-mañ as a compound is to be rejected. However, this proposed parallelism fails because whereas mañ-po is an adjective gzan-po is a noun ‘another one’. For example, gañ-du rai-gi kyo yah gsod-na gzan-po ga-la hdu-ste / ‘If somehow you kill your husband, where will you meet another’ (D 2256, vol. 51, 202b).

9 The parallel construction yun thun-nu ‘a short time’ is also attested, although much more rarely, e.g. sais-rgyas-kyi žiñ phun-sum tshogs-pa-la ser-ba bab-pas / lo ston tshan-bar gnas-pa yun thun-nur thag-ma tsam-du byas so / ‘Because [you] brought down hail on the excellent realm of the Buddha, [you] shortened the duration of [the Doctrine of the Buddha and] have reduced [it] to mere remainder that was [otherwise supposed] to endure for a complete [period of] 1000 years’ (Buton 91a).

10 As modern English does not distinguish singular and plural second person pronouns, I prefer to translate in a somewhat antiquated form of English with singular khyod as ‘thou’ and plural khyed as ‘you’.
To say ‘not long’ the head noun yun is typically omitted and rin-por is used with the negated verb lon ‘pass (of time)’.

(16) btsun-mos de-dag ḡthun-ba rin-por ma lon-par so-so-nas sms-can-dan ldan-par gyur-te
The queens, after having drunk these [medicines], before long respectively became with child. (D. 341, vol. 74, 74a).

With an example like (16) in mind, it is a bit surprising that when used in the positive the verb lon ‘pass’ governs the absolutive rather than the terminative (examples 17 and 18).

(17) bdag-gis lus kun-tu sdu-g-bsna snas bshogs myoṅ-nas yun yāṅ rin-po ḡig lon-te
It has been a long time that I have experienced various sufferings in all bodies. (D. 341, vol. 74, 132b).

(18) ston-pa ḡdas-nas lo bhrγya-dan sum-cu-ṛtsa-bdun lon-pa-na
(...) when, after the liberation of Muni, 137 years had passed... (Buton 99a).

Although the pattern of the positive verb with the absolutive and the negative verb with the terminative prevails, the absolute also occurs with a negated verb (example 19). This alternation between rin-po ma lon-par and rin-por ma lon-par merits further study.

(19) rin-po ma lon-par rluṅ chen-po laṅs-te
After not long, a great wind arose. (D. 341, vol. 74, 197b).

In examples (18) and (17) the absolutive is selected because the rection of the verb lon demands so. However, in examples such as (20) the absolutive case is used adverbially, i.e. does not participate in the rection of a verb.

(20) Bi-bhu-tī-daṅ Dā-na-śī-śas Bod-du yun riṅ-po bṛṅgs te
Vibhuti and Dānaṣṭha stayed in Tibet a long time. (Buton 156a).

The locative case is used with regard to a single moment in the past.

(21) sṇon ḡdas-pahi dus yun riṅ-po-na / ḡdzam-buṅi gliṅ ḡdir ῥgyal-po chen-po Kha-dog-dam bgyi-bal ῥjig-ṛten ῥdi-la ḡbaṅ sgyur-ba ʒig byuṅ-ste /
In a former long time past, there was in this world a great king called Kha-dog-dam, who ruled this world. (D. 341, vol. 74, 130a).11

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11 Example 21 juxtaposes the two nouns dus and yun, both referring to spans of time, but dus the more appropriate thing to ‘pass’ (ḥdas) and yun the more appropriate to be ‘long’ (riṅ-po).
The adjective *rin-po* is not the only means available for saying that the time (*yun*) is long. In examples (22) and (23) the imperfective converb -*ziṅ*, which can only be affixed to a verb, makes clear that there is an intransitive verb *rin* ‘be long’ to mirror the adjective *rin-po*.

(22) *mi de phyugs-kyi šin-rtsa-la ŋon-te lam der žugs-nas / de yun rin-ziṅ dus rin-mo žig-na dpag-tshad brgyar phyin-pa-las /
That man boarded the cattle cart and set off on his way. He, in a long time, the time being long, had gone a hundred miles, when... (D. 202, Vol. 62, 64a).

(23) *rnam-par rtse-ba snon byun-ba ḡdas-paṅi dus na bskal-pa graṅs med-pa-bas kyaṅ ches graṅs med-pa / yun rin-ziṅ tshad med/ bsam-gyis mi khyab / dpag-tu med-paṅi sna-rol deṅi tshe deṅi dus-na
In a time past, the pinnacle of what is early, countless greater than countless eons, the time being long, without measure, unpervaded by the mind, in that time, that time of yore which is measureless... (D. 198, vol. 61, 277b).

In example (24) the verb takes on transitive morphology, with a *s*- prefix, although the meaning appears unchanged.

(24) *nas bla-ma ḡdiṅi drun-du yun bsṛiṅs-nas bsdad-ruṅ /
Although I stayed for a long time in the presence of that lama... (Marpa 4a).

With the use of *rin* as an intransitive verb in mind (as in 22 and 23), the most natural interpretation of the sequence of *rin-du* before a verb is as a subordinate verb in the indirect infinitive construction (examples 25 and 26).

when this wiseman had remained in the court of the queen for a long time (Buton 67a).

(26) *dge-baṅi las-daṅ/ sdig-paṅi las ni yun rin-du lon-kaṅ med-ciṅ žig-par mi ḡgyur-ro /
(His) good deeds and evil deeds will not fail to exist nor be destroyed for a long time. (D. 341, vol. 74, 190b).

The reader tempted to regard *rin* in examples 25 and 26 as an ‘adjective’ should note that *che* ‘be large’ (example 27) is also an intransitive verb and that this verb occurs as a subordinate in the indirect infinitive construction (examples 28). The intransitive verb *maṅ* ‘be many’ also occurs in both these usages (examples 2 and 3 above).

(27) *deṅi bsod-nams ni rab-tu cheṅo/ His virtue is very great. (D. 341, vol. 74, 174a).
Although the analysis of *rin as an intransitive verb is available for examples (27) and (28), in example (29) the presence of the indefinite marker *zig, which requires a preceding nominal, forbids this interpretation. In this passage *yun-rin is a compound.

(29) *hgros-*baḥi *yod-*byad *bsams-te / *ri-*nags-*tshal *ñam-*ṅa-*ba kun-*du *tshol-*du *son *son-*ba-*las *yun-*rin-*ţig *lon-*pas *šin-*tu *ñam thag-*nas / dbyar *tsha-*baḥi dus-*su bye-*ma tsha-*ba pus-*mo-*nub tsam *ţig tu phyin-*pa-*daṅ *nal chad-*de / skom-*gyis gdwuṅ-*pas srog chad-la thug-*pas

Arranging the necessities for travel, he went about in the fearsome mountain glades, after a while, he was very fatigued, in the hot summer he went knee-deep in hot sand, exhausted and stricken with thirst he was at the point of death... (D. 341, vol. 74, 172a).

In what must be a clipped version of the noun *yun-*rin `long time’ the syllable *rin can itself be used alone as a noun (example 30).

(30) lus sa-la brdabs-te brgyal-lo / *rin-*ţig *lon-*pa-*daṅ
They fell to the ground unconscious. A long while passed and... (D. 341, vol. 74, 139b).

A noun *yun-*rin in the absolutive case functioning adverbially is likely the best explanation for the word’s appearance in examples 31 and 32.

(31) bstan-*pa *yun-*rin *gnas-*byahi phyir / mdo-*yi de-*nīd-*don sduṅ byed /
In order for the teaching to remain a long time, the real meaning of the sūtra is outlined. (Buton 106a).

(32) *yun-*rin bde-*ba rje myon-*nas /
After experiencing bliss for a long time... (Buton 106a).

With the use of *yun-*rin as a noun in mind (as in examples 29–32), the most natural interpretation of the sequence of *yun-*rin-*du before a verb (as in examples 25 and 26) is as a noun case marked in the terminative for an adverbial interpretation. Thus, using the part-of-speech tags of our project (Garrett et al. 2015), the sequence *yun rin-du bzung may either be interpreted as *yun [n.count] rin [v.invar] du [cv.term] bzung [v.invar] or as *yun-rin [n.count] du [case.term] bzung [v.invar]. This structural ambiguity is an inherent characteristic of the Tibetan language. Because of it, the desire for an unequivocal analysis of Tibetan word breaking and part-of-speech must remain forever unrealized.12

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12 Because it is impossible to leave the analysis indeterminate in a corpus linguistics project, for the sake of consistency we have arbitrary chosen to treat *yun-*rin-*du as a case marked noun in examples such as 25 and 26.
d.det = determiner
n.count = count noun
v.invar = intransitive verb
cv.term = converb terminative
case.term = terminative case

References