

TYPOLOGICAL INTERACTION IN THE QINGHAI LINGUISTIC COMPLEX

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The Gansu or *Hexi* Corridor in the Upper Yellow River region forms the natural contact zone between four major cultural and linguistic realms: China (proper) in the east, Mongolia in the north, Turkestan in the west, and Tibet in the south. Populations and languages from these four regions have since ancient times penetrated into Gansu, where they have been integrated into the local network of ethnolinguistic variation. In particular, the fragmented landscape of the southern part of the region, historically known as the Amdo (Written Tibetan *xA.mdo*) Province of Tibet and today mainly administered as the Qinghai Province of China, has recurrently provided a refuge for intrusive populations speaking a variety of different tongues.

The greatest diversity of languages is found in a relatively small territory located to the east and north of Lake Qinghai, or Kuku Nor (Written Mongol *Guiganaqhur*), areas today known as Haidong and Haibei, respectively. A general characteristic of all the languages involved is that they have undergone rapid differentiation as compared with their genetic relatives spoken elsewhere. At the same time, they have developed common features shared areally across genetic boundaries. Moreover, many of these common features are structurally so important and typologically so idiosyncratic that it is well motivated to view them as manifestations of a single areal entity. This entity may be termed the *Qinghai Linguistic Complex*, or also the *Qinghai Sprachbund*. Other equally possible names include the *Amdo Sprachbund*, the *Amdo Linguistic Region*, or the *Yellow River Plateau Language Union*. Geographically it has to be noted that the Qinghai Linguistic Complex is not fully congruous with the borders of Qinghai Province, nor with those of the historical Amdo Province of Tibet.

THE GENETIC TAXONOMY

Altogether, some fourteen to fifteen separate linguistic entities can be distinguished today within the Qinghai Linguistic Complex. Genetically, they represent four different language families: Sinitic (Chinese), Bodic (Tibetan), Mongolic, and Turkic. In this connection, the fact that Sinitic and Bodic are ultimately likely to be genetically related in the context of Sino-Tibetan is irrelevant, as both groups represent clearly distinct lineages. In spite of certain structural similarities, Sinitic and Bodic are typologically very different and may be regarded as representing two distinct language types, which may also be identified as *Sinitic* and *Bodic*, respectively. On the other hand, Mongolic and Turkic, contrary to a common misconception, are likely *not* to be genetically related, but they are typologically very similar and may be regarded as representing a single language type, which is best termed *Altaic*.

The currently known Sinitic languages of the Qinghai Linguistic Complex are: (1) Qinghai Mandarin, (2) Hezhou, (3) Tangwang, (4) Gangou, and (5) Wutun. Of these, only Qinghai Mandarin can be regarded as a regular “dialect” of (Northern) Chinese, while Hezhou, Tangwang, Gangou, and Wutun are more separate entities that have also been called “creoles”. Qinghai Mandarin is the dominant local variety of Chinese all over the region, but Hezhou also has a strong regional position in the part of southern Gansu that borders Qinghai. Tangwang and Gangou are two more localized idioms in the Gansu-Qinghai borderland, while Wutun is spoken in a single locality in Qinghai (Tongren County). The speakers of Wutun are officially classified as *Tu*, but they tend to identify themselves as Tibetans (*Zang*). The other Sinitic idioms in the region are spoken as first languages by populations officially identified as *Han* or *Hui*, with the *Hui* dominating in most localities.

The Bodic family is represented in the region by basically only one language, (6) Amdo Tibetan. Amdo Tibetan is, however, divided into a large number of dialectal varieties, differentiated according to locality (including highland vs. lowland) and occupation (nomadic vs. agricultural). Some of these varieties, notably those spoken on the modern Sichuan side of the Qinghai-Sichuan border, are rather marginal to the Qinghai Linguistic Complex, although they certainly do share a number of diagnostic features with the rest of Amdo Tibetan.

The Mongolic family is the most diversified in the region, and comprises at least six separate idioms: (7) Huzhu Mongghul, (8) Minhe Mangghuer, (9) Bonan, (10) Kangjia, (11) Santa, and (12) Shira Yughur. Of these, Huzhu Mongghul and Minhe Mangghuer are traditionally known by the collective name *Monguor*, which roughly corresponds to the official *Tu* minority nationality. The *Tu* “nation-

ality” comprises also the speakers of Wutun as well as the Buddhist Bonan speakers in Qinghai (Tongren). Another group of Bonan speakers are Muslims and live in Gansu (Dahejia), and these are officially classified as a separate minority nationality under the name Bonan (*Baoan*). The idioms spoken by the two groups of Bonan might also be classified as two separate entities: (9a) Qinghai Bonan and (9b) Gansu Bonan. Gansu Bonan appears to be closely associated with the small entity of Kangjia, whose speakers live in Qinghai (Jianzha) and are officially classified as *Hui*. The Santa speakers form a separate minority nationality, today known by the official name *Dongxiang*. The Shira Yughur speakers form part of the Yughur (*Yugu*), or “Yellow Uighur”, nationality and are today officially known as the “Eastern Yughur” (*Dongbu Yugu*).

Finally, the Turkic family has two representatives in the region: (13) Salar and (14) Sarygh Yughur. The speakers of Salar are recognized as a separate minority nationality (*Sala*), while the speakers of Sarygh Yughur form officially the “Western Yughur” (*Xibu Yugu*) division of the same Yughur nationality as the Shira Yughur. The two groups of Yughur live separately, and they do not have a common ethnic language. For historical reasons, the Yughur nationality has also two other (smaller) divisions, speaking Amdo Tibetan and Chinese, respectively, as their first languages.

Apart from the languages participating in the Qinghai Linguistic Complex, each of the families concerned has one or more additional members in the region. These are either geographically marginal or chronologically recent and therefore not integrated into the areal framework. The four most important of these idioms are: Modern Standard Mandarin (*Putonghua*, Sinitic), Kham Tibetan (*Khams*, Bodic), Qinghai Oirat (Mongolic), and Kazakh (Turkic). Kham Tibetan is spoken in the southern periphery of the region, while Qinghai Oirat and Kazakh are mainly restricted to the Tsaidam (*Qaidam*) basin in the western part of Qinghai Province.

THE SOCIOLINGUISTIC HIERARCHY

There is no question that the single most prestigious language in Gansu and Qinghai today is Modern Standard Mandarin, a recent newcomer to the region. The two older regional languages are, however, local Chinese and Amdo Tibetan, both of which retain their position as second languages among considerable parts of the smaller speech communities, especially among the male sections of the ethnic populations. The total number of speakers (as either the first or the second language) of local Chinese, which includes both Qinghai Mandarin and Hezhou, is probably several millions, while Amdo Tibetan is spoken by at least a million people (including second-language speakers).

The use of the regional languages basically follows the religious division between Buddhism and Islam, with the Buddhist Wutun, Qinghai Bonan, and (Sarygh and Shira) Yughur populations using Amdo Tibetan as their main regional language, while the Muslim Kangjia, Santa, and Salar populations use of local Chinese in a similar role. There is, however, also bilingualism between the speakers of local Chinese and Amdo Tibetan both among the main populations concerned and among local crosscultural groups (Tibetanized Muslims, Muslim Tibetans). The two regional languages overlap also for many of the smaller speech communities, with widespread trilingualism as the result (ethnic language + Amdo Tibetan + local Chinese). The most important non-Muslim populations today contained within the sphere of Chinese regional dominance, but remaining largely outside of the modern sphere of Amdo Tibetan, are the Huzhu Mongghul and Minhe Mangghuer.

The use of regional languages is necessitated by the fact that most of the more localized idioms are mutually more or less unintelligible. This is, specifically, also true of the two varieties of *Monguor* (Huzhu Mongghul and Minhe Mangghuer), which have traditionally been regarded as dialects of a single language. The question concerning the mutual intelligibility of Qinghai Bonan and Gansu Bonan remains to be clarified. Both entities function today as separate speech communities with hardly any mutual contacts, but the linguistic difference is historically very shallow (not more than 150 years) and appears also synchronically rather small (except in the lexicon). Among the Sinitic languages, some mutual intelligibility may exist between, at least, speakers of Qinghai Mandarin and Hezhou (also known as the "Linxia dialect" of Chinese). Intelligibility between these idioms might be increased at the local level by the presence of transitional dialects, diglossia, or bilingualism, but the possible impact of these factors remains uninvestigated.

After the regionally dominant Qinghai Mandarin, Hezhou, and Amdo Tibetan, which are all used by speech communities in the million class, the next language in the region in terms of the number of speakers is Santa (close to 500,000), followed by Salar (probably over 100,000), Huzhu Mongghul (over 50,000), and Minhe Mangghuer (c. 30,000). The remaining idioms are spoken by smaller populations, probably in the following diminishing order: Tangwang (probably less than 20,000), Gangou (possibly more than 10,000), Gansu Bonan (around 10,000), Sarygh Yughur (probably less than 5,000), Qinghai Bonan (less than 4,000), Shira Yughur (less than 3,000), Wutun (less than 2,000), and Kangjia (c. 300, with less than 100 active speakers).

The current language situation varies greatly among the speech communities concerned. The large Muslim communities of the Santa and Salar seem to retain their native ethnic languages exceptionally well (up to 95 per cent of the ethnic

population). By contrast, the idioms spoken by some of the smallest communities are today becoming rapidly assimilated by local Chinese and Amdo Tibetan; this is the case, in particular, with Sarygh and Shira Yughur, as well as Kangjia. Assimilation by (various forms of) Chinese is also rapidly proceeding among the Huzhu Mongghul, Minhe Mangghuer, and Gansu Bonan, though the details are unknown. On the other hand, some small speech communities, like those of the Qinghai Bonan and Wutun, are still relatively well preserved, and seem to be in no immediate danger.

HISTORY OF THE PROBLEM

The phenomena of linguistic interaction within the Qinghai Linguistic Complex were long almost impossible to approach because of the insufficient level of documentation of the relevant individual languages. Typically, the many Sinitic and Mongolic idioms of the region used to be regarded merely as degenerated “dialectal” varieties of regular Chinese and Mongol. This view is also reflected by the term *Shirongol*, which was applied by G. N. Potanin (1893) to the whole complex of Gansu-Qinghai Mongolic languages (with the exception of Shira Yughur). It is therefore surprising to note that the first Western traveller in the region, the French Catholic missionary Évariste-Régis Huc as early as 1845 rather well understood the regional linguistic situation, which he describes for the local varieties of Chinese (with reference to either Hezhou or simply to Qinghai Mandarin) as follows (Huc 1850, II: 34–35):

Pour peu q'on ait des rapports avec les habitants du *Kan-Sou*, il est facile de voir qu'ils ne sont pas de pure origine chinoise. Parmi eux, c'est l'élément tartaro-thibétain qui domine. Il se manifeste plus particulièrement dans le caractère, les mœurs et le langage des habitants de la campagne. On ne trouve point parmi eux cette politesse affectée qui distingue les Chinois; mais en retour, ils sont remarquables par leur franchise et leur hospitalité. Dans leur idiome chinois, on rencontre une foule d'expressions appartenant aux langues tartare et thibétaine. La construction de leur phrase est surtout particulière; on n'y reconnaît presque jamais la manière chinoise, c'est toujours l'inversion usitée dans le mongol. Ainsi, par exemple, ils ne disent pas, comme les Chinois: Ouvrez la porte, fermez la fenêtre ...; mais: La porte ouvrez, la fenêtre fermez.

Huc, who was fluent in both Chinese and Mongol, makes also remarks concerning the language of the Mangghuer speakers of the Sanchuan (Minhe) region, whom he called *Dschiahour* (Tibetan *rGya.hor*) (Huc 1850, II: 36):

Ils parlent une langue particulière, qui est un mélange de mongol, de chinois, et de thibétain oriental. A les en croire, ils sont d'origine tartare.

Thus, Huc concludes that Minhe Mangghuer is a Mongolic (“Tartar”) language with a Chinese and Tibetan mixture, while the local forms of Chinese have

received strong influence from Mongolic ("Tartar") and Tibetan. These conclusions are basically correct even from today's point of view. It has, however, taken the efforts of several generations of linguists until the picture has become more detailed.

Apart from occasional minor contributions, such as that by C. G. E. Mannerheim (1911) on Sarygh and Shira Yughur, the subsequent documentation of the languages of the Qinghai Linguistic Complex has proceeded in four stages. At the first stage, the Huzhu Mongghul language, especially one of its dialects (Naringhol), was carefully studied by the Belgian Catholic missionaries Albrecht de Smedt and Antoine Mostaert, who made its phonological (1929–1931), morphological (1945), and lexicological (1933) properties available for wider research. At this stage, information on the other languages of the region was still virtually non-existent with the exception of Amdo Tibetan, which was described relatively early by Georges de Roerich (1958) with the focus on one specific dialect (Rebgong).

At the second stage, the Sino-Russian linguistic expedition of 1955–1956 carried out, for the first time, a systematic survey of all the Mongolic and Turkic (but not the Sinitic or Bodic) languages of China, including Gansu and Qinghai. The results were published on the Russian side in a series of books authored mainly by B. Kh. Todaeva, with separate volumes on Santa (1961), Bonan (1966), and "Monguor" (1973). The materials on Sarygh and Shira Yughur were published jointly with E. R. Tennishev (1966), who also described Salar (1963). Using also materials collected earlier by S. Ye. Malov, Tennishev later published more comprehensive monographs on both Salar (1976a) and Sarygh Yughur (1976b). On the Chinese side, similar volumes, based on the same field work, were published after the Cultural Revolution in the collective series *Zhongguo Shaoshu Minzu Yuyan Jianzhi Congshu* ('Collection of Brief Grammars of the Languages of the Minority Nationalities of China').

The third stage was marked by the renewed systematic field work carried out by Inner Mongolian scholars in the early 1980s on all the Mongolic languages of China, including again Gansu and Qinghai. As a result, a three-volume set, comprising a collection of texts, a vocabulary, and a comparative grammar, was published on "Monguor", Bonan, Santa, and Shira Yughur, in the collective series *Muvghul Tuirul uv Gala vAyalqhuv u Sudulul uv Cuburil* ('Collection of Studies of Mongolic Languages and Dialects'). In this context, the comparative grammars authored by Buhe & Chingeltei (1985), Chen Naixiong & Chingeltei (1986), Chingeltei & Li Keyu (1988), as well as Bulchulu & Jalsan (1990), are particularly significant, since they represent the first comprehensive diachronic generalizations of the languages concerned. It may also be noted that, although the Turkic, Sinitic, and Bodic languages remained outside of the focus of this research,

important work on the Wutun language was carried out by Chen Naixiong (1982, 1986).

At the fourth stage, the Qinghai Linguistic Complex has become the target of modern international field research, often involving cooperation with educated native speakers. The results of this work are exemplified by the descriptions of Santa by Kenneth L. Field (1997), Minhe Mangghuer by Keith W. Slater (2003), and Qinghai Mandarin by Keith R. S. Dede (1999ab, 2003), complemented by the important monograph on Kangjia by Sechenchogtu (1999). Recent material publications include those by Üjiyediin Chuluu & Li Keyu (1994) on Huzhu Mongghul, and by Zhu Yongzhong, Üjiyediin Chuluu & Kevin Stuart (1995) on Minhe Mangghuer. In this connection, the works by Jackson T.-S. Sun (1986), Charlene Makley et al. (1999), as well as Juha Janhunen & Kalsang Norbu (2000) on Amdo Tibetan dialectal phonology may also be mentioned.

Recently there have also been growing efforts to develop a written norm for some of the languages concerned. The two most important “normative” works so far are the dictionaries of Huzhu Mongghul by Li Keyu (1988) and of Santa by Chen Yuanlong & Ma Guozhong (2001). From the dialectal diversity of Amdo Tibetan, there is also emerging a new increasingly uniform and standardized idiom, which may be termed Modern Amdo Tibetan (both oral and written), as described by Kalsang Norbu et al. (1999).

ON THE STATUS OF “CREOLES”

Compared with the Bodic, Mongolic, and Turkic languages of the region, the Sinitic languages participating in the Qinghai Linguistic Complex are generally much less well researched, though important contributions have been made by, in particular, Ma Shujun (1984) and Arienne M. Dwyer (1992) on Hezhou, Chen Yuanlong (1985) on Tangwang, and Feng Lide & Kevin Stuart (1992) as well as Zhu Yongzhong et al. (1997) on Gangou. The secondary treatments of Hezhou and Tangwang by Mei W. Lee-Smith (1996ab) and Mei W. Lee-Smith & Stephen A. Wurm (1996) should also be mentioned.

The main issue to be solved regarding the Sinitic languages of the region concerns their taxonomic status. The possibility that they should be recognized as “creoles” or “hybrid languages” calls for a discussion of what the concept of “creole” or “hybrid language” might mean in this specific areal context. Basically, all languages of the region are “hybrid” in the sense that they incorporate typological features developed in areal connection with the other members of the complex. However, the question is whether or not the Sinitic languages, or some of them, can be classified as “creoles” in a more specific sense.

There are two possible ways to define the phenomenon of "creolization". In a more moderate framework, "creolization" can be viewed as a gradual (though often rapid) process which involves the incorporation of alien structural (grammatical) and material (lexical) influences into a language. In this framework, languages can be more "creolized" or less "creolized", and no language is completely free of the effect of "creolization". In a more radical framework, "creolization" is defined as a historically unique event, termed "abrupt creolization", in which two or more languages are hybridized both structurally and materially to yield an entirely new entity, which is in no direct genetic relationship to its source languages. The latter framework has been prominently propagated by Sarah Thomason & Terrence Kaufman (1988), who, incidentally, also discuss the cases of Bonan and Wutun.

Basing on the interpretations of Charles N. Li (1983, 1984), Thomason & Kaufman (1988: 90–92) conclude that Wutun is not a "creole", but, rather, a case of "heavy borrowing", while Bonan is a case of "moderate borrowing". Needless to say, such a conclusion is arbitrary. There is nothing in the linguistic structure of either Wutun or Bonan that would not allow these languages to be viewed as "creoles" in the sense of Thomason & Kaufman. We simply have no information as to whether the formation of these languages took place gradually or abruptly. The general historical context of Qinghai suggests, however, that the structural peculiarities of Bonan and Wutun might very well reflect the impact of abrupt imperfect learning by an original multilingual non-Mongolic and non-Sinitic (and possibly non-Turkic and non-Bodic) population, making a good case for speaking of actual "creoles".

Obviously, there is not much reason to use the term "creole" in the specific sense proposed by Thomason & Kaufman. Since there is no unambiguous criterion to see whether a language whose historical context is unknown is a "creole" or not, it is better to avoid drawing a sharp line between "creoles" and "non-creoles". In the Qinghai Linguistic Complex, all languages may be said to be "creoles", though the degree of their "creolization" varies. Unfortunately, there is also no unambiguous criterion to measure the degree of "creolization" present in any given language, which means that it is difficult to say which languages, exactly, are more "creolized" than others. One thing may be taken for certain, however: the effect of "creolization" tends to be strongest in the structural component of a language, while the material component, especially the basic vocabulary (however it is defined), remains the most reliable indicator of the true genetic identity of a language.

As far as the genetic adherence of the Sinitic "creoles" of the Qinghai Linguistic Complex is concerned, there is, indeed, no uncertainty about their Sinitic status. This conclusion is valid also for Wutun, though it cannot be denied that

this very idiom would seem to be particularly strongly “creolized”. As Sinitic languages, the Sinitic “creoles” operate mainly with genetically inherited Sinitic language material, and even their non-Sinitic structural features, such as suffixal morphology, involve the use of Sinitic material. However, the Sinitic “creoles” should not be regarded as Mandarin “dialects”, for they are too far away from the normal dialectal variation of Mandarin Chinese. Although there is no doubt that they derive from the context of Mandarin, they have clearly undergone a process of rapid and fundamental restructuring, which allows them to be classified as separate Mandarin-related languages. In fact, their relationship to Standard Mandarin is very similar to the relationship of, for instance, the Qinghai Mongolic languages to Mongol proper.

Another issue connected with “creolization” is *which* language has influenced *which* in each actual case of intensive language contact. In the Qinghai Linguistic Complex, it seems that the exact areal partners of the larger entities, notably Qinghai Mandarin, Hezhou, and Amdo Tibetan, are difficult to specify, while the smaller entities are more transparent in this respect. Most of the smaller entities are today immersed within the areal sphere of a larger partner, but there are also cases of low-level areal relationships between two more or less equal partners. The two most obvious areal unions of this type are those existing between Minhe Mangghuer and Gangou, on the one hand, and Santa and Tangwang, on the other.

THE SPHERES OF INTERACTION

Although insights into the historical background of the Qinghai Linguistic Complex can be gained from regional anthropological and ethnohistorical studies such as those by Robert B. Ekvall (1939) and Sabira Ståhlberg (1996), little is still known of the actual mechanisms underlying the interactive phenomena. Most of the diachronic work carried out so far has focussed on identifying the effects of interaction in one particular language or language family, especially Mongolic, as discussed by Antoine Mostaert (1931), András Róna-Tas (1960; 1962ab; 1966), and Hitoshi Kuribayashi (1989). The only other language in the region whose historical background is relatively well researched is Salar, as discussed by Reinhard F. Hahn (1988).

In view of the fact that the Qinghai Linguistic Complex involves interaction between three clearly different linguistic types – Sinitic, Bodic, and Altaic – it seems reasonable to assume that each of these types (representing four genetic groups) has made some specific contributions to the overall typological picture of the complex. These contributions are, however, not likely to have been congruent with each other chronologically or areally, for the political and demographic

balance between speakers of the languages belonging to the three types has varied in both time and space. In particular, there are reasons to conclude that the Altaic typological contribution is chronologically and areally more basic than the Sinitic and Bodic contributions, while in some localities, at least, the Bodic contribution seems to be more basic than the Sinitic contribution. This would mean that the region has experienced three waves of typological impact: Altaic, Bodic, and Sinitic, in this order.

However, the chronological relationships may turn out to have been, the two most fundamental Altaic contributions to the Qinghai Linguistic Complex are (1) verb-final clause structure (SOV), and (2) suffixal morphology, both of which are more or less universal in the idioms of the region. The suffixal morphology of the Qinghai languages typically comprises a system of case endings, nominal plural markers, voice markers (especially causative), finite temporal-aspectual markers, and non-finite verbal markers (participles and converbs). All of these features were originally present in both Turkic and Mongolic, though the presence of a single uniform (inflectional) nominal plural marker seems to be a feature more characteristic of Turkic than of Mongolic. The Bodic and Sinitic languages of the region have adapted to the Altaic patterns of suffixal morphology mainly by using their own internal resources, rather than by borrowing suffixal elements from Turkic or Mongolic. It is true, occasional examples of possible suffix borrowing have been registered in the region.

The two most obvious Bodic contributions to the Qinghai Linguistic Complex are (3) word-initial consonant clusters, and (4) the category of perspective. Neither of these features is, however, universal in the region, for both are restricted to idioms that until recent times (or up to the present day) have been in contact with local forms of Amdo Tibetan. Thus, initial clusters seem to occur, apart from all dialects of Amdo Tibetan, only in Wutun, Huzhu Mongghul, Bonan, Kangjia, and Shira Yughur (as well as more marginally in Sarygh Yughur and Salar), while the category of perspective is with certainty attested in Huzhu Mongghul, Minhe Mangghuer, Bonan, and Wutun, though it is likely to be present also in Gangou, Shira Yughur, and Sarygh Yughur (as well as possibly Salar). Languages that have neither initial clusters nor the category of perspective include Santa, Hezhou, and probably Tangwang.

It may be noted that, in a wider Central Eurasian context, both initial clusters and the category of perspective are non-trivial features. Both are, however, Common Tibetan, and there is no doubt that they were introduced to the Qinghai Linguistic Complex by Amdo Tibetan. Importantly, the adoption of these features by non-Bodic, especially Mongolic, languages can again be shown to have involved the use of native resources, as elaborated in Chingeltei (1989) and Janhunen (2001). The Tibetan category of perspective, or “viewpoint” (subjective vs.

objective), as most recently described by Philip Denwood (1999: 120–125), is originally a feature of copular clauses, and its most typical manifestations in Qinghai Mongolic are also connected with the use of copular particles, though in Huzhu Mongghul and Minhe Mangghuer it has also been incorporated into the finite paradigm of regular verbs. In the adaptation process, the new category has absorbed the earlier (and more widespread) category of evidentiality, with which it is connected also in Tibetan.

Compared with the Altaic and Bodic language types, it is more difficult to specify what general features the Sinitic language type has contributed to the Qinghai Linguistic Complex. Although the whole entity of Northern Chinese (Mandarin) may be described as “Altaicized” in the sense of Mantaro J. Hashimoto (1976: 61–63), the Sinitic languages of the Qinghai Linguistic Complex are conspicuously strongly “Altaicized”, while the non-Sinitic languages of the region show relatively few Sinitic features. Sinitic features are, however, present locally in all those idioms, notably Minhe Mangghuer, Gansu Bonan, and Santa, whose immediate environment is today dominated by Sinitic languages. Three Sinitic features shared by all these idioms are: (5) simplified segmental structure, (6) numeral classifiers, and (7) medial copula (*shi*). Minhe Mangghuer and Santa, in particular, have almost completely adapted their phonological systems to those of their Sinitic neighbours. Also in both languages, the adoption of the Chinese numeral classifiers has been accompanied by the borrowing of the Chinese numerals, which in Minhe Mangghuer have replaced the original Mongolic numerals (with the exception of ‘one’).

As can be seen from the distribution of the relevant typological features, the Qinghai Linguistic Complex is today divided between a Bodic (Tibetan) sphere and a Sinitic (Chinese) sphere. While Altaic features characterize the region as a whole, Bodic and Sinitic features have a more restricted distribution. Moreover, both Bodic and Sinitic features are likely to be at least partly due to parallel influences, received separately by the languages affected. For instance, the Sinitic segmental structure of Minhe Mangghuer and Santa is certainly not a feature inherited from the common ancestral form of these two languages (they have no immediate common ancestor). It is also possible that the initial clusters exhibited by several of the Mongolic languages of the region were not present in their common ancestral form (though they are likely to have had a common ancestor); rather, they may represent parallel structural borrowings from the same source (Amdo Tibetan). It can only be hoped that a better understanding of the absolute and relative chronology of the relevant innovations will emerge from a future more comprehensive analysis of the comparative data.

The possibility should also be reckoned with that some languages of the region may incorporate successive Bodic and Sinitic influences. This is particu-

larly likely in the case of Minhe Mangghuer, which exhibits both Bodic features (the category of perspective) and Sinitic features (segmental structure, numeral classifiers, medial copula). In this case, it would seem that the Bodic influence took place earlier and possibly in a context that also comprised Huzhu Mongghul, while the Sinitic influence took place later and affected only Minhe Mangghuer. It is even likely that Minhe Mangghuer, like Huzhu Mongghul, once had initial clusters of the Tibetan type, though they were lost in the subsequent process of Sinicization.

THE PATTERNS OF ADAPTATION

Although the presence of shared *positive* isoglosses in the languages of the Qinghai Linguistic Complex serves as the most obvious manifestation of areal interaction, the coherence of the complex is also evident from shared *negative* isoglosses, i.e. features that are absent in the languages of the region. Moreover, it is necessary to distinguish between cases of *active* adaptation (the borrowing or loss of a structural feature) and cases of *passive* adaptation (the non-introduction or retention of a structural feature). Altogether, this yields four different patterns of adaptation, all of which are observed in the region: (1) active positive adaptation, (2) active negative adaptation, (3) passive negative adaptation, and (4) passive positive adaptation.

Active positive adaptation is illustrated by the adoption of all the positive isoglosses listed above by the languages that originally did not have them. Thus, for instance, the development of suffixal morphology in all the local forms of Sinitic represents a case of active positive adaptation to the Altaic model. The same is true of the borrowing of the verb-final clause structure from the Altaic type to local Sinitic, while the borrowing of a medial copula from Sinitic to Minhe Mangghuer, Gansu Bonan, and Santa represents a case of active positive adaptation of these Mongolic idioms to the Chinese pattern of copular clause structure. The adoption of the category of perspective by several languages of the region is a case of active positive adaptation to the universally very specific Tibetan discourse pattern.

Active negative adaptation is perhaps best illustrated by the loss of verbal predicative conjugation in the two Turkic languages of the region, Salar and Sarygh Yughur. Unique in the Turkic context, this feature can only be explained as a case of active negative adaptation to the models provided by all the other languages of the region, especially Sinitic and Bodic. It is possible that the absence of verbal personal conjugation in Qinghai Mongolic is also due to active negative adaptation, since predicative personal endings, although a feature originally alien to Mongolic, were developing from enclitic pronouns already in Proto-Mongolic.

In parallel with the predicative personal endings, the Qinghai Mongolic and Turkic languages have tended to lose their original systems of possessive suffixes (with the important exceptions of the third person suffix and the reflexive marker), though full possessive paradigms are still marginally present in Shira Yughur and Santa.

Passive negative adaptation can be illustrated by the fact that Amdo Tibetan, unlike most other forms of Tibetan (including both Kham Tibetan and Central Tibetan) remains a non-tonal language. Without the areal support provided by the non-tonal Turkic and Mongolic languages of the region, Amdo Tibetan would certainly have been under a pressure to develop tonal distinctions. It has to be noted that Qinghai Mandarin, Hezhou, and Tangwang still synchronically remain tonal languages, though their tonal systems are somewhat reduced as compared with Standard Mandarin. Tones cannot, however, be considered a feature generally characteristic of the Qinghai Linguistic Complex, and it is therefore not surprising that they seem to have been lost in both Wutun and Gangou – a case of active negative adaptation. Clearly, tones have been a receding, rather than an expansive feature in the region.

Finally, passive positive adaptation is present in all the cases in which the goal of typological uniformity has been achieved by the simple retention of an original structural feature. To quote just one such non-trivial feature: All the languages in the region seem to have entered the areal union in possession of two series of obstruents (weak or *lenes* vs. strong or *fortes*), normally realized in terms of aspiration (unvoiced unaspirated vs. unvoiced aspirated). For this particular feature, there was no pressure to change the system in any of the languages concerned. It is true that at a deeper diachronic level, Bodic originally had three series of obstruents (voiced unaspirated vs. unvoiced unaspirated vs. unvoiced aspirated), and the loss of one series could be seen as a case of active negative adaptation. It is, however, more likely that the Bodic obstruent system was simplified already before the emergence of Amdo Tibetan as a separate entity, and before the formation of the current Qinghai Linguistic Complex.

Interestingly, most of the diachronic research done on the languages of the Qinghai Linguistic Complex has tended to emphasize the observed retentions (passive positive adaptation) at the expense of the innovations (active positive adaptation). Thus, in particular, both Amdo Tibetan and “Monguor” are conventionally regarded as exceptionally “archaic”, or “conservative”, languages in their genetic contexts. A closer look at the data offers no support to this view. In actual fact, all languages of the Qinghai Linguistic Complex are best characterized as exceptionally innovative. The speed of linguistic evolution in the region has been amazing, and there is no doubt that it reflects the impact of intensive linguistic interaction.

Indeed, the “archaic” features of the languages in the region are typically only isolated cases of retention under a general picture of massive innovation. For instance, the Qinghai Mongolic languages are well known for the fact that they retain a segmental trace of the original (Pre-)Proto-Mongolic initial strong labial stop $*p > h$ (as in $*parba/n > *harban$ ‘ten’), lost in most other Mongolic languages. However, as has been noted by Eugene Helimski (1984), even this feature is not unambiguously “original”, for it incorporates the effect of a secondary aspiration metathesis (as in $*ükü-$ [ükhü] ‘to die’ $> *hugu-$ [huku]). Incidentally, the paradigmatically analogous segment h in Amdo Tibetan has partially the same diachronic derivation ($*p > h$) as its Mongolic counterpart, suggesting an areal connection (active positive adaptation).

THE QINGHAI LINGUISTIC TYPE

The typological changes that have taken place in the individual languages of the Qinghai Linguistic Complex may be seen as accumulative steps towards a common idealized goal, which may be termed the *Qinghai Linguistic Type*. Within this language type, there are several layers of uniformity affecting all levels of linguistic structure: phonology and phonotactics, morphology and morphosyntax, as well as syntax and discourse. At the most general level, all languages of the complex share certain basic typological properties that may be classified as Altaic. At a slightly more localized level, several languages of the region share features that represent Bodic typological contributions to the complex. At an even lower level, some languages show features that may be identified as Sinitic. The Bodic and Sinitic features are occasionally contradictory, so that a single language can only have either a Bodic or a Sinitic orientation. For instance, the initial clusters of the Tibetan type are inherently incompatible with the Chinese rules of segmental structure.

The typological interaction operates most intensively within small groups or pairs of languages and dialectal entities, like those formed by Minhe Mangghuer and Gangou, or Santa and Tangwang. Minhe Mangghuer and Gangou, in particular, may clearly be seen as having moved towards a medium state in which, ultimately, both languages have an isomorphic (morpheme-to-morpheme) relationship to each other. This corresponds to the ideal picture of a sprachbund, as documented from similar language pairs elsewhere in the world (e.g. Korean and Japanese in Northeast Asia, or Turkic Chuvash and Uralic Cheremis in the Volga region). The Qinghai Linguistic Complex is therefore best understood as a hierarchic bundle of areal relationships, some more general and regional, and others more specific and local.

Since there are several layers of “Qinghai-ness”, there is no single language that would in all respects fill the idealized criteria of the Qinghai Linguistic Type. A very close approximation is nevertheless offered by Minhe Mangghuer: it is a language with a Sinitic segmental structure but without tones, with a suffixal morphology but without personal markers, and with a verb-final clause structure with the additional possibility of using the Chinese type of medial copula. It also has numeral classifiers (a Sinitic feature) and the category of perspective (a Bodic feature). Historically, it is likely to have once possessed initial clusters of the Tibetan type. Not surprisingly, it is spoken in the middle of the Qinghai Linguistic Complex.

Note and acknowledgement

An oral version of this paper was first presented at the 34th International Conference of Sino-Tibetan Languages and Linguistics, held in Kunming in 2001. The present paper is a slightly revised version of the original text. My work on this paper has been supported by the Academy of Finland and the Finnish Society of Sciences and Letters in the framework of the project “Patterns of Ethnic Adaptation and Interaction in Amdo Qinghai”.

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