

Directives in rGyalrong Bola dialect

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Summary

This paper describes the directive prefixes and their syntactic functions in the Bola dialect of rGyalrong. rGyalrong is a Tibeto-Burman language spoken in the northwestern part of Sichuan Province, China. This language has attracted the attention of scholars since long because it has strikingly similar, even identical, shapes to some lexical items of written Tibetan. On the basis of this fact, some scholars have regarded rGyalrong as representing a substratum of Old Tibetan. It is true that the rGyalrong area and people have historically and culturally been under the strong influence of Tibet. However, Wolfenden and subsequent research revealed that the language has no direct genetic linguistic relationship with Tibetan and that it shares common features with the Qiangic languages. On the other hand, rGyalrong shares some characteristics with several subgroups of the Tibeto-Burman family and is thus considered one of the “link languages” that connect languages that are genetically interrelated. In this sense, a further approach to its typological features is indispensable.

Among the syntactic features of rGyalrong, the complex structure of verb phrases has long attracted scholars’ attention. For this reason, many Tibetologists have tended to recognize the parallelism of rGyalrong’s system to the prefixes of the verb roots of Written Tibetan. Some people have asserted that this is a reflex of the Proto-Tibeto-Burman morphosyntax, and others have thought that it was a later development. This paper attempts to focus on directive prefixes and to determine where we should locate this language.

The most characteristic feature of the directives of rGyalrong may be the fact that they are the markers of not only the direction that a particular verb root specifies, but also the tense and/or aspect. This phenomenon is observed among a limited number of Tibeto-Burman languages and might be reminiscent of Proto-Tibeto-Burman morphosyntax. This paper discusses this possibility.

Key words: rGyalrong, Qiangic, directive, verb phrase, Tibeto-Burman

关键词：嘉绒语、羌语支、方向前缀、动词组、藏缅语

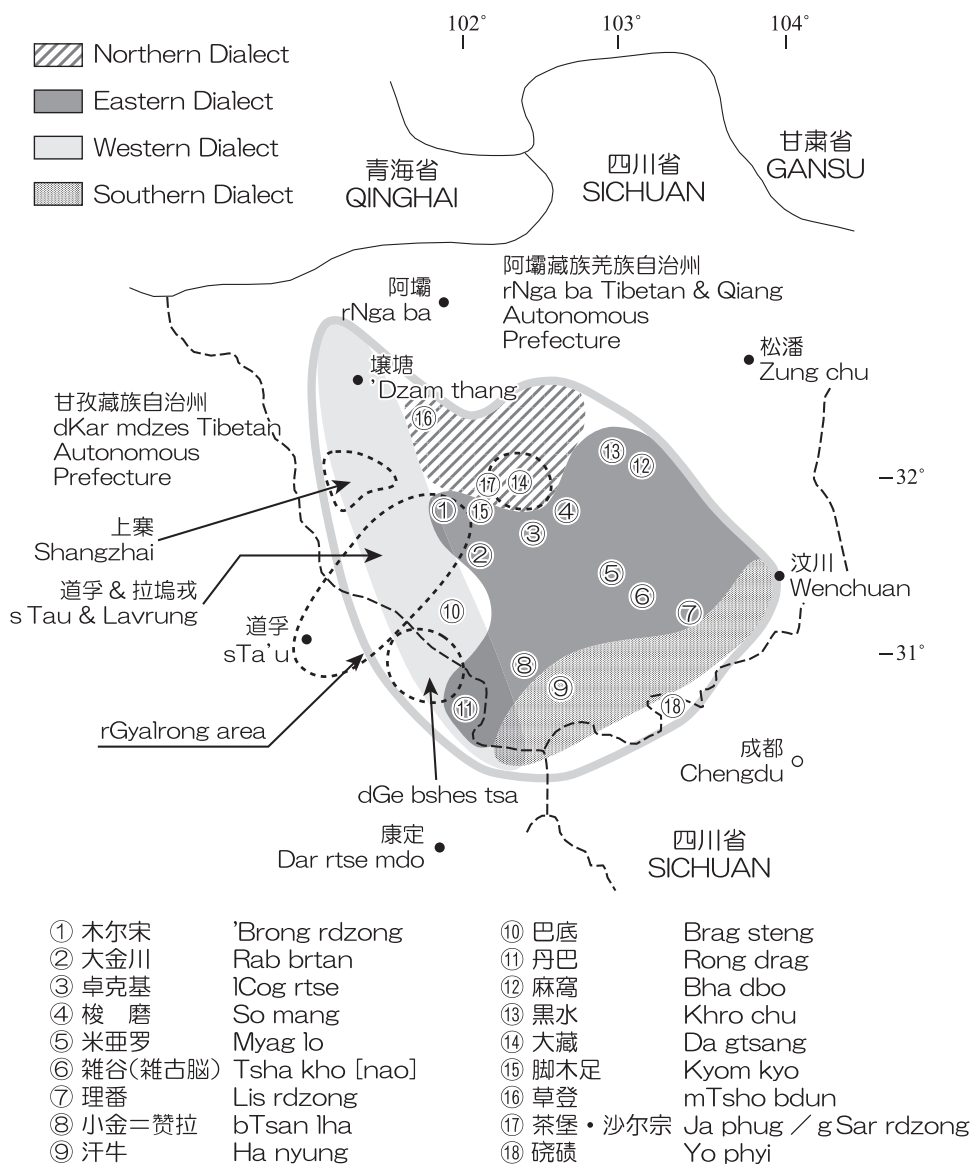
1. Introduction

rGyalrong (*rgyal rong* in Written Tibetan; 嘉戎 or 嘉絨 in Chinese) is one of the Tibeto-Burman languages spoken in the northwestern part of Sichuan Province, China. It shares some characteristics with several subgroups of the Tibeto-Burman family and thus is considered to be one of link languages that connect languages that have genetic relations among them. While existing link languages are diverse in type, many of them still retain their ancient forms at different levels, and their descriptions are thought to be indispensable for the reconstruction of Proto-Tibeto-Burman. The rGyalrong area has had close connections with Tibet, both historically and culturally. Especially, this area is known for its religious importance, as it served as a major shelter for Bon followers and produced many great Tibetan Buddhist scholars. Mainly for this reason, many written Tibetan words along with Tibetan affixes were incorporated into the language spoken by the rGyalrong people. For this reason, the rGyalrong language was once considered to represent an ancient form of Tibetan. However, Wolfenden (1929, 1936) and consequent studies denied any direct genetic relation between Tibetan and rGyalrong based on the analysis of a larger inventory of lexical items collected, while discovering the fact that rGyalrong retains lexical forms and morphosyntactic mechanisms as old as those of Proto-Tibeto-Burman, and that a number of its grammatical characteristics, such as its sophisticated personal affix system (and their agreement) can be thought to have been invented in later times. Also, the theory that rGyalrong shares a common origin with the Qiangic languages, not with Tibetan, is now widely accepted. It is true that rGyalrong has numerous words similar or sometimes identical to WT, but almost all of those are cultural words likely to be loans. In contrast, the basic lexical items such as body parts, adjectives, and verb roots are more comparable to the Qiangic languages as well as Benedict's PTB forms.

The majority of rGyalrong people inhabit the Aba (=阿坝: WT *rnga ba*) Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture and the Gantse (=甘孜: WT *dkar mdzes*) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Sichuan Province. The exact population is unknown since they are not officially recognized as an independent nationality in China but are categorized as being of the Tibetan nationality. But the number of native speakers of rGyalrong is estimated at least at 150 thousand. Unlike Tibetan, their native language is not used in education in this region, and consequently, bilingualism with rGyalrong at home and Chinese in public places has become rather dominant.

Traditionally, the rGyalrong language is said to have eighteen dialects. This number corresponds to the number of persons who held the post of *tusi* (土司) under the administrative system that emerged during the Ming period and established in the Qing period. From a linguistic point of view, however, it suffices to identify three dialects, northern, western and eastern, as argued by 林 (1993). The northern dialect is spoken by about 10,000 people mainly in 大藏 (WT *da gtsang*), 康山 (WT *stod pa*), 日部 (WT *rdzong 'bur*) and 草登 (WT *mtsho bdun*), while the western dialect is spoken by 50,000 people mainly in 壤塘 (WT *'dzam thang*) and 丹壩 (WT *rong brag*). The eastern dialect is spoken in a wider area, with

卓克基 (WT lcoḡ rtse), 马尔康 (WT 'bar khams) and 梭磨 (WT so mang) at the center, 雜谷〔腦〕 (WT bkra shis gling), 理县 (WT lis rdzong) and 小金川 (WT btsan lha) to the south, 大金川 (WT rab brtan) to the west and 黑水 (WT khro chu) and 麻窩 (WT bha dbo) to the east. In addition, the eastern dialect is also in use in 硤磧 (WT yo phyi) in 雅安市宝興 located further south. The number of speakers of the eastern dialect is estimated at 80,000.



Map Distribution of the rGyalrong dialects and rGyalrongic languages © Yasuhiko Nagano 2018

2. Outline of Phonology

2.1 Consonant phonemes

Consonant phonemes are the following:

	Labial	alveolar	post-alveolar	retroflex	palatal	velar	glottal
plosive	p ph b	t th d		ʈ ʈh ɖ		k kh g	ʔ
affricate		ts tsh dz	ʧ ʧh ʝ		c ch j		
fricative		s z	ʃ ʒ				h ɦ
nasal	m	n			ɲ	ŋ	
tap		r					
approximant	w	l			y		

Palatal plosives [c c^h ɟ] may appear as the allophones of /c ch j/. Some monographs describe these sound as [cç cç^h ɟɟ].

/ɦ/ is voiced glottal fricative, [ɦ], which occurs only at the syllable final position.

/r/ is voiced alveolar tap; voiced alveolar trill [r] among younger speakers.

In addition, there is a prenasal phoneme to the stops and affricates, /N/. It appears as [m-] before bilabial plosives.

Final consonants are: -p, -t, -k, -ʔ, -ɦ, -č, -s, -m, -n, -ɲ, -ŋ, -l, -r, -w, -y.

2.2 Vowel phonemes

Vowels are /a, i, u, e, o, ə, ɐ/.

2.3 Tone

Tone is not distinctive. Several minimal pairs have been reported, but when they were checked with my elder informant, who passed away at the age of 85 in 1986, they were homophones in his speech. With my younger informant whose speech forms the basis of this present monograph, however, several pitch patterns are observed. And, I understand that, in some southern dialects, a limited number of pitch contrast is observed. This phenomenon might be a tonogenesis in this language.

3. Verb phrases

rGyalrong sentences are either simple or compound. Simple sentences have one verb complex that is necessarily the final one, while compound sentences have any number of non-final verb complexes and a final one. The structure is illustrated schematically as:

[(NP) + VPnon-final]ⁿ(particle)[(NP) + VPfinal] (AUX) (n is 0, 1 or 2)

VPfinal has the following general structure, making a word:

VPfinal → P1 - P2 - P3 - P4 - P5 - ROOT - (s) - S1

In this structure, P1 is the mood marker, and P2 is the tense/aspect marker (standing for past vs. non-past distinction and direction of act). P3 is the evidential marker while P4 is the pronominal marker, pairing up with S1. P5 is the voice marker and (s) is the perfective marker.

4. The P2 affix: Tense markers cum Directives

The directives at P2 position specifies past whereas Ø- marking means non-past. rGyalrong people are sensitive to the direction of act, but the shapes and meaning of directives show an ample variety depending upon geographical and social features as well as speakers' generation. My first informant's distinctive features were: uphill vs. downhill, upstream vs. downstream, front vs. back, and honor's seat vs. regular seat. Besides these, he had P2 affixes of general movement and 'go and come back' action.

The above-mentioned system seems quite old and the following P2 system is rather common among the rGyalrong eastern dialects of the present day. These directives have corresponding adverbs and verbs (meaning 'to go to the particular direction').

	Directives (past)	Directives (non-past)	Verb (INF)	Adverb
up	to-/ta-	to-	ka-tho	(s)to
down	no-/na-	na-	ka-ǰə	na
uphill	ro-/ra-	ro-	ka-ro	ro
downhill	ri-	re-	ka-ri	re
upstream	ko-/ka-	ku-	ka-ŋo	(s)ku
downstream	nə-	di-	ka-ndə	nu
general movement	yi- (ya-)	yi-		

The shape before a slash is the direct recognition while that after a slash is an indirect recognition or hearsay. An imperative marker which appears at the P1 slot (mood marker) is identical to that shape before the slash. When it is needed to specify a direction of act in a non-past sentence, the directive markers in the second column appear or verbs and/or adverbs in the figure above are used.

Let us examine simple examples.

- (1) **nəʃo tərʃap təsarn {Ø-tə-sar-n} mə-ńos?**
 2s wife 2-draw-2s Q-LKV
 ‘Are you going to marry?’
- (2) **nəʃo tərʃap nətsarn {nə-tə-sar-n} mə-ńos?**
 2s wife PST-2-draw-2s Q-LKV
 ‘Did you marry?’
- (3) **ńa din {Ø-dit-ń}.**
 1s Ø-give-1s
 ‘I will give.’
- (4) **ńa nədin {nə-dit-ń}.**
 1s PST-give-1s
 ‘I gave.’
- (5) **ńa ń-əmñak ro {Ø-ro}.**
 1s 1s:GEN-eye Ø-awake
 ‘I wake up.’
- (6) **ńa ń-əmñak nəros {nə-ro-s}.**
 1s 1s:GEN-eye PST-awake-PFV
 ‘I woke up.’
- (7) **kəčet wastot nə-kə-sko-s.**
 all very PST-3p-kind-PFV
 ‘Everyone was very kind.’

The **nə-** in the examples above is originally an affix meaning ‘downstream’, but it generally stands for PST. Although there is no direct logicity between directives and the meaning of verbs, particular verbs have their neutral PST markers, and they tend to be lexicalized to be part of verb root.

The directions vary depending upon the places where informants reside. Bola township is located 3 kilometers west of Maerkang, the capital of Aba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, on the northern bank of Somang River which runs from the east to the west. The southern bank of this river is too narrow for people to cultivate, and the most population

inhibit on the northern bank. The mountain on people's back faces to the north, and *ka-ro* 'go uphill' stands practically for 'go to the north', *ka-ri* 'go downhill' for 'go to the south'. Similarly, *ka-ngo* 'go upstream' means 'go to the east' while *ka-ndə* 'go downstream' means 'go to the west'. *ka-tho* and *ka-ʃə* stands simply for a vertical movement.

A short note on a morpho-phonemic rule: As is seen in the underlying form {Ø-dit-ŋ} of (3) and (4), the [t-ŋ] cluster appears as [n] instead of [ŋ]. This fact is attested in Lin (1993: 68, 73) too.

4.1 UP (to-) and DOWN (no-)

- (8) *wuyoʃis* *tothanč* {**to**-thal-nč}.
3d PST-go-3d

'They two climbed (the mountain).'

- (9) *wuyoʃis* *nothanč* {**no**-thal-nč}.
3d PST-go-3d

'They two descended.'

We have a pair of 'uphill' and 'downhill', but when we refer to a pure motion of 'up' and 'down', **to-** and **no-** are used. 'Up' and 'down' are usually distinguished by a physical height, but, a recognition of cultural and/or social values may be a key. 'Go', 'climb' and 'descend' have a common PST root, *thal*, and they can be expressed as **yi**-*thal*, **to**-*thal*, and **no**-*thal* respectively. The root *thal* is solely for past tense, and its non-past roots are: *čhe*, *tho*, *ʃə*.

The appearance of **to-** and **no-** are rather fixed. For instance, we have **to-** with *rwas* 'get up', *mphat* 'vomit' and *kte* 'grow', where the meaning of verb necessarily includes the concept of UP.

The verbs that contains the meaning of 'finish something thoroughly, do it completely' also take **to-**; *səyok* 'finish', *pka* 'fill up', *pram* 'dry up', *pa* 'collect, make'. This seems to be similar to English expressions, 'eat *up*', 'write *up*', 'finish *up*' and so on. Thus;

- (10) *yijə* *tosəyowy* {**to**-səyok-y}.
1p PST-finish-1p

'We finished (our work).'

- (11) *ña təjɪm-ke to-pa-ñ.*
 1s house-IDEF PST-make-1s

‘I built a house.’

- (12) *mə totəpkañ {to-tə-pka-ñ}.*
 Q PST-2-eat full-2p

‘Have you eaten your fill?’

On the contrary to the above, the following is the examples where the meaning of verb necessarily includes the concept of DOWN.

- (13) *wuyo nomjɪt {no-mjɪt}.*
 3s PST-fall

‘He fell down.’

- (14) *təji norkow {no-rko-w}.*
 water PST-pour-3s

‘He poured water.’

- (15) *ñiʝo notərtsuñ {no-tə-rtsu-ñ} mə-ño?*
 2p PST-2-pound-2p Q-LKV

‘Did you pound?’

If we use a marked direction marker against the natural situation and usage, we can have the following expression:

- (16) *ña miʃthit nopšin {no-pšin-ñ}.*
 1s saliva PST(down)-spit-1s

‘I spat.’

- (16a) *ña miʃthit topšin {to-pšin-ñ}.*
 1s saliva PST(up)-spit-1s

‘I spat upward.’

Since we normally spit downward, (16) is an unmarked utterance while in (16a) saliva was spat upward, turning back to myself as a result. The latter sentence means “The wheel has come full circle.”

The following examples show a typical contrast of **no-** and **to-**:

- (17) *nəʃo* *ʃtə* *wu-smen* *tə-ndza-w* *w-ənkhu-y,*
 2s this 3s:GEN-drug 2-take-2 3s:GEN-after-LOC

kuzok mə-nə-tə-ptshe-n.
 a bit Q-PST-2-cure-2s

‘Have you cured after taking this medicine?’

- (18) **no-ptshe-n̄.**
 PST(down)-cure-1s

‘(I) cured.’

- (19) **to-ptshe-n̄.**
 PST(up)-cure-1s

‘(I) cured thoroughly.’

(18) is the unmarked answer to (17), while in (19) **to-** is prefixed, standing for ‘cured completely’.

4.2 UPSTREAM (**ko-**) and DOWNSTREAM (**nə-**)

ko- specifies ‘upstream’ direction while **nə-** ‘downstream’.

- (20) *jiʃo* *tham* *kotəponč* {**ko-tə-po-nč**} *mə-nos?*
 2d now PST-2-come -2d Q-LKV

‘You two have come up now?’

nə- originally means ‘downstream’, but as you see in (2), it is also a general marker of PST. When you wish to emphasize the meaning of ‘to go downstream’, its corresponding verb *ka-ndə* is used. Thus,

- (21) *ña* *soʃe* *comco* *ka-ndə* *nos.*
 1s next year Kyomkyo INF-go downstream LKV

‘I will go to Kyomkyo next year.’

Kyomkyo (脚木足) is located towards the downstream (practically to the west) of Bola, and *ka-ndə* is used.

4.3 UPHILL (ro-) and DOWNHILL (ri-)

Compare the following:

- (22) wuyo gyagar nəne nənayas {nə-na-ya-s} mə-ño.
 3s India ABL PST-APP-return-PFV Q-LKV

‘He returned from India?’

- (23) wuyo repkoñ nəne rinayas {ri-na-ya-s} mə-ño.
 3s Rebkong ABL PST(downhill)-APP-return-PFV Q-LKV

‘He returned from Rebkong?’

- (23a) wuyo gyagar nəne ronayas {ro-na-ya-s} mə-ño.
 3s India ABL PST(uphill)-APP-return-PFV Q-LKV

‘He returned from India?’

In (22), PST is expressed by **nə-**, a neutral PST marker. Any particular direction of that person’s travel is not shown and, at the same time, we cannot predict where this utterance was made. In (23), **ri-** appears at the same slot. If someone says this sentence in Bola, it means that that person travelled downhill (pragmatically from the north to the south) from Amdo area (Rebkong = 同仁) to rGyalrong Bola. In (23a), **ro-** appears, where the agent came back uphill to rGyalrong from India (from the south to the north).

The following two sentences both mean ‘They pulled my shoulder’, but the location of the agents and patient is rather apart:

- (24) wuyoñe ña ñ-ərpak riwntheñ {ri-wu-nthen-ñ}.
 3p 1s 1s:GEN-shoulder PST(downhill)-3>1-pull-1s

- (24a) wuyoñe ña ñ-ərpak rowntheñ {ro-wu-nthen-ñ}.
 3p 1s 1s:GEN-shoulder PST(uphill)-3>1-pull-1s

In (24), the agents and patient sat face to face, and ‘my shoulder’ was pulled towards them. In (24a), on the contrary, I was located behind the agents, who stretched their hands and pulled my shoulder towards them.

The following shows the situation of the speaker and the vendor as well as the shop’s setting:

- (25) štə(t) wu-rni-tə ridinñ {ri-dit-ñ}.
 this 3s:GEN-red-DEF IMP(≡ downhill)-give-2p(HON)

‘Please give me that red one.’

(25) looks a conversation between ‘I’ and the vendor, who are facing each other in front of a shop. The merchandise is behind the vendor, and ‘I’ am asking him/her to bring down the red good from his/her back towards me.

4.4 GENERAL MOVEMENT (yi-)

A general movement marker **yi-** always prefixes ‘go’ and ‘come’ when the particular direction of act is not specified. Thus,

- (26) wuyo yikthal {yi-kə-thal-Ø} ños.
 3s PST-NOM-go-Ø LKV

‘He went.’

- (27) kərti yitənbinc̣ {yi-tə-nbi-nč} mə-ño?
 When PST-2-come(HON)-2d Q-LKV

‘When did you two come?’

kə-nbi is a honorific form of **kə-we** ‘to come’.

Examine the following examples of **yi-** as a part of compound root:

- (28) nəšis{nə-Ø-ši-s-Ø}.
 PST-die-PFV

‘He/She died.’

- (29) ñišis{nə-Ø-yi-ši-s-Ø}.
 PST-Ø-DIR-die-PFV-Ø

‘He/She passed away.’

yi-ši in (29) is the honorific form of ‘to die’.

yi-mer ‘to forget’ and **yi-dzum** ‘to gather’ are also compound roots.

- (30) ña yiməñ {yimer-ñ}.
1s forget-1s

‘I will forget.’

- (31) tərmi tokəydzum {to-kə-yidzum}.
man PST-NOM-gather

‘People gathered.’

- (32) ña tərmi tosəydzun {to-sə-yidzum-ñ}.
1s man PST-CAUS-gather-1s>3

‘I collected people.’

4.4.1 A VARIANT OF yi- (ya-)

ya- as a variant of **yi-** exclusively appears with ‘to go’ and ‘to come.’ **ya-** and **yi-** are free variants with ‘to come’, but, with ‘to go’, **yi-thal** is acceptable while ***ya-thal** is not. Also, **ya-čhe** is grammatical but ***yi-čhe** is not.

5. Afterword

The above is an outline of direction markers of rGyalrong Bola dialect. As far as we compare the directives of some dialects of rGyalrong, they seem to be somewhat related with motion verbs. However, it is hard to determine whether motion verbs are first or directives came first. At the same time, the history and grammatical functions of the markers (and the structure and syntactic hierarchy of affixes in the VP’s) are so crucial, but we must be always cautious of whether they are reflexes of PTB or later developments. In order to approach the answer to the above, we are requested to compare similar markers in a wider range.

Abbreviations

1	first person	d	dual
2	second person	DEF	definite
3	third person	DIR	directive/direction
ABL	ablative	GEN	genitive
APP	applicative	HON	honorifics
AUX	auxiliary verb	IDEF	indefinite
CAUS	causative	IMP	imperative

INF	infinitive	PST	past
LKV	linking verb	PTB	proto-Tibeto-Burman
LOC	locative	Q	question
NOM	nominalizer	s	single
NP	noun phrase	S	suffix
p	plural	TB	Tibeto-Burman
P	prefix	VP	verb phrase
PFV	perfective	WT	Written Tibetan

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