The Qiangic Subgroup from an Areal Perspective:
A Case Study of Languages of Muli[*]

Katia Chirkova

CRLAO, CNRS

In this paper, I study the empirical validity of the hypothesis of "Qiangic" as a subgroup of Sino-Tibetan, that is, the hypothesis of a common origin of thirteen little-studied languages of South-West China. This study is based on ongoing work on four Qiangic languages spoken in one locality (Muli Tibetan Autonomous County, Sichuan), and seen in the context of languages of the neighboring genetic subgroups (Yi, Na, Tibetan, Sinitic). Preliminary results of documentation work cast doubt on the validity of Qiangic as a genetic unit, and suggest instead that features presently seen as probative of the membership in this subgroup are rather the result of diffusion across genetic boundaries. I furthermore argue that the four local languages currently labeled Qiangic are highly distinct and not likely to be closely genetically related. Subsequently, I discuss Qiangic as an areal grouping in terms of its defining characteristics, as well as possible hypotheses pertaining to the genetic affiliation of its member languages currently labeled Qiangic. I conclude with some reflections on the issue of subgrouping in the Qiangic context and in Sino-Tibetan at large.

Key words: Qiangic, classification, areal linguistics, Sino-Tibetan

1. Introduction

This paper examines the empirical validity of the Qiangic subgrouping hypothesis, as studied in the framework of the project "What defines Qiang-ness: Towards a

phylogenetic assessment of the Southern Qiangic languages of Muli". The project focuses on four Qiangic languages, as spoken in Muli Tibetan Autonomous County 木里藏族自治縣 (WT *mu li rang skyong rdzong*). This county is part of Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture 涼山彝族自治州 in Sichuan Province, People's Republic of China.
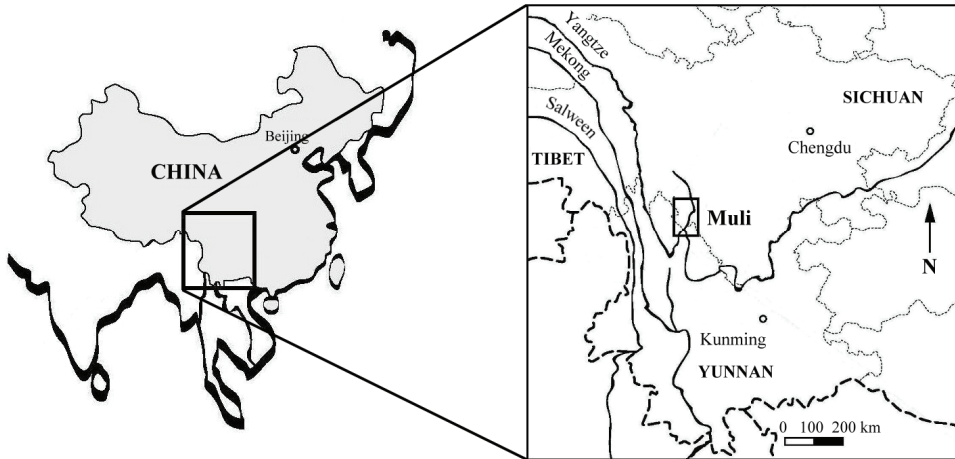
Map 1: Location of Muli Tibetan Autonomous County

The four studied languages are: (1) Shixing (spoken in Shuiluo 水洛 township), (2) Lizu [a.k.a. Ersu] (spoken in Kala 卡拉 and Luobo 裸波 townships),[1] (3) Namuzi [a.k.a. Namuyi] (spoken in Luobo 裸波 township), and (4) Pumi [a.k.a. Prinmi] (spoken

---

The following abbreviations and conventions are used: 3 = third person singular pronoun; PRF = perfective; WT = Written Tibetan; - = morpheme boundary within a lexical word; = = clitic boundary; ~ = free variation between two forms; * = unattested form which has been historically reconstructed.

Data from secondary sources are provided in the original transcription. In clusters, "N" stands for a nasal that is homorganic to the following consonant. Tone notation in Shixing, Lizu, Kami, and Pumi is provided in superscript letters, where "H" stands for high tone and "L" for low tone. In these languages, the tone of the metrically prominent first syllable spreads rightward, and tones in non-prominent positions are not pronounced (see Chirkova & Michaud 2009, Jacques 2011, Chirkova ms, for details). Tone notation is hence provided to the left of the lexical word. On monosyllabic words, "HL" stands for the falling tone, whereas "LH" stands for the rising tone. On words of two syllables or more, "H" is realized as a sequence of H tones; "HL" is realized as H on the first syllable and L on all following syllables; "LH" is realized as L on all syllables up to the penultimate and H on the last syllable.

[1] Lizu is held to be the western dialect of the Ersu language.

in the central part of the county). Pumi is the language of the ethnic majority of Muli and a local lingua franca.[2]

These four Qiangic languages are studied in the context of the local Tibetan dialect (Kami Tibetan), the local Chinese dialect (South-Western Mandarin), and the local Na languages (with a special focus on the little-studied Laze language, spoken in Xiangjiao 項腳 township of Muli and locally known as Muli Shuitian 木里水田 or Lare 拉熱).[3]

The goals of the project are: (1) in-depth documentation of the selected languages; and on that basis (2) reflection on the validity of Qiangic as a phylogenetic unit (i.e. stressing genetic relationship and common inheritance over surface similarities) and as a monophyletic unit (i.e. assuming a single common ancestor for all subgroup languages).

This paper is organized as follows. Section 1.1 provides a brief overview of the essential features and challenges of the Qiangic hypothesis (Qiangic as a genetic unit). Section 2 summarizes the first results of documentation work. It essentially focuses on the synchronic similarities observed between the languages under study. Based on these data, I argue that features presently held as probative of membership in the Qiangic subgroup are rather indicative of a linguistic area, as these features are also found in the local varieties of the languages of other genetic subgroups (e.g. the local Tibetan dialect) and are absent from their nearest relatives outside of the area. Given that the reason for salient similarities shared by the languages of Muli is demonstrably due to diffusion

---

[2] While Shixing is restricted in distribution to Muli, the remaining three languages are also spoken beyond the borders of this county. Namuzi is also spoken in Mianning 冕寧, Xichang 西昌, Yanyuan 鹽源, and Jiulong 九龍, all in Sichuan Province. Pumi is further spoken in neighboring Yanyuan and Jiulong, in Sichuan Province, as well as in Lanping 蘭坪, Ninglang 寧蒗, Yongsheng 永勝, Lijiang 麗江, Yunxian 雲縣, Weixi 維西, all in Yunnan Province. Finally, the Ersu language, which appears to be closely related to Lizu, is spoken in Ganluo 甘洛 and Yuexi 越西 of Liangshan Prefecture, as well as in Ganzi *dkar mdzes* 甘孜 Tibetan Autonomous Region and Ya'an 雅安 District, all in Sichuan Province.

[3] The term "Na languages" is an alternative to the term "Naxi language" in Chinese linguistic classification. Both comprise Naxi proper (or in Chinese classification, the western dialect of Naxi) and Moso (or in Chinese classification, the eastern dialect of Naxi) (He & Jiang 1985: 104-116, Gai & Jiang 1990:70). The designation "Na" derives from the fact that the relevant ethnic groups all have "Na" as their group name in their respective autonyms (Yang 2006). Na languages are held to be transitional between Yi-Burmese and Qiangic languages, sharing lexical material with both groups, but lacking the extensive morphology of (Northern) Qiangic (e.g. Bradley 1997:37, Sun 2001a).

The hypothesis of a close relationship between Laze and Na languages essentially relies on the history, culture, and self-awareness of the group (based on Guo & He 1994:6-7 and fieldwork by Alexis Michaud). The assumption of a close genetic relationship between Laze and Na is equally supported by regular sound correspondences between these languages, as discussed in Jacques & Michaud (2011).

across genetic boundaries, I furthermore argue that, contrary to the received view, the four local languages currently labeled Qiangic are highly distinct. That is, they are not likely to be closely genetically related. Section 3 discusses the defining characteristics of Qiangic as an areal grouping. It also reviews alternatives for drawing genetic conclusions about the areal languages of uncertain affiliation, currently labeled Qiangic. Section 4 concludes this paper with some reflections on the issue of subgrouping in the Qiangic context and in Sino-Tibetan at large.

1.1 Qiangic as a genetic unit: summary and challenges

Qiangic is the hypothesis of a common origin of thirteen, geographically adjacent and little-studied Sino-Tibetan languages of South-West China. Twelve of these languages are still spoken; one (Tangut) is extinct.

The idea that some languages of the Chinese Southwest cohere to form a Sino-Tibetan subgroup can be traced to F.W. Thomas (1948:88-109), who proposed a "Hsifan group" based on wordlists of Qiang, rGyalrong, Pumi, Ergong, Ersu, and Namuyi. The label "Qiangic", under which the group is currently known, was introduced by the eminent Chinese linguist Sun Hongkai in the 1960s as an umbrella term for the Qiang, Pumi, and rGyalrong languages (Sun 1962:561, 1982; for the history of Qiangic subgroup, see Sun 2001b:160-164). The Qiangic group was expanded in the 1970s, when new languages discovered and explored in pioneering work by Sun Hongkai in Western Sichuan (e.g. Shixing, Guiqiong, Namuyi, and Ersu) were also seen as Qiangic (Sun 1983a, 1983b, 2001b; further elaborated in Huang 1991). Finally, Tangut was added to the group in the 1990s (Sun 1991).

According to Sun (1983a, 2001b), the thirteen Qiangic languages are subdivided, mainly on geographical grounds, into: (1) a more phonologically and morphologically complex, and relatively better-studied northern branch: and (2) a less phonologically and morphologically complex, and virtually unexplored southern branch. The northern branch includes Qiang proper, Pumi, Muya, Ergong (Horpa), rGyalrong, Lavrung, and Tangut. The southern branch comprises Zhaba, Queyu, Guiqiong, Ersu, Namuyi, and Shixing.

The Qiangic languages occupy a compact, contiguous geographical area in the borderlands of Tibet. Chinese historiographic sources claim that this area was historically populated by a host of nomadic tribes, traditionally labeled "Hsifan" and closely linked to Tibetan culture and religion.[4] The Qiangic hypothesis entails that Qiangic languages share

---

[4] In Chinese historiographic sources, the label "Hsifan" mostly points to peripheral groups in the circumference of ethnic Tibet, sharing with ethnic Tibetans their religions and culture, but speaking their own languages. The same label is also occasionally used as a collective name

a number of common features due to their descent from a (recent) common ancestor.

The Qiangic hypothesis essentially relies on shared lexical items and typological similarities, of which directional prefixes (topography-based spatial deixis) is de facto the essential feature probative of Qiang-ness (e.g. Matisoff 2004). After Sun (2001b: 166-170), a complete list of Qiangic features probative of the membership in this subgroup includes: (1) shared vocabulary, (2) large number of consonant clusters, (3) large consonant and vowel inventories, (4) uvular phonemes, (5) contrast between prenasalized and plain initials, (6) three medials: *i*, *y*, *u*, (7) vowel harmony (mostly in languages of the northern branch), (8) few or no consonantal codas, (9) tones, (10) reduplication as important means of word formation, (11) singular-dual-plural distinction in nouns, (12) diminutive formation with a suffix derived from the morpheme for 'child' or 'son', (13) numeral classifiers, (14) case forms of personal pronouns, (15) dual and inclusive-exclusive forms of personal pronouns, (16) person and number agreement in verbs (in languages of the northern branch), (17) directional prefixes, (18) reciprocal forms, (19) differentiation of existential (locative) verbs, (20) rich inventories of case markers.

Yet, the Qiangic subgroup has been controversial since it was first proposed, for the following four reasons:

(1) The restricted nature of the supporting evidence. This evidence is essentially limited to typologically common features, which are also found with considerable frequency in non-Qiangic languages of the area (see §2 for discussion). The probative value of the evidence is furthermore substantially outweighed by the conspicuous absence of cognate-ness among the shared systems. This has led some scholars to straightforwardly identify some putative Qiangic features as parallel developments (e.g. LaPolla 2003:30 for case marking and existential verbs) or areal phenomena (e.g. Shirai 2009 for directional prefixes).

(2) The small percentage of shared common vocabulary. While this feature, in contrast to the typological characteristics above, could provide more reliable support for the hypothesis of a common origin of these languages, the percentage of shared vocabulary is relatively small. It ranges from 25% between any two random Qiangic languages in more optimistic estimations (Sun 1983a:103-105) to less than 20% in more conservative assessments (Huang 1991:355). In addition, this percentage includes many widespread Sino-Tibetan cognates and there is considerable overlap with other subgroups of the area (most notably, Yi, Na, and Tibetan). To compare, a geographically adjacent non-

---

for everything that is non-Chinese in the western periphery. The term is non-committal as to the genetic relationship between the groups in question, which, while most likely all Sino-Tibetan, are therefore for all purposes to be considered as not closely genetically related.

Qiangic language Moso (Na) shares no less than 26.9% of cognates with Qiang (estimation based on a sample of 1,017 basic vocabulary items, excluding 141 Chinese loanwords, in Gai & Jiang 1990:71).

(3) The absence of common innovations. The Qiangic subgroup has so far not been supported by common innovations, i.e. unique events common to the histories of all the languages in the subgroup, as distinct from (a) diffusion across language boundaries, (b) independent, parallel developments, (c) retention from an earlier state or, finally, (d) chance. Common innovations are held to be the only reliable basis for a linguistic subgroup (e.g. Thurgood 2003:5). In other words, the Qiangic subgroup is essentially based on synchronic features, rather than on evidence from historical comparison.[5]

(4) The historical, ethnic and linguistic complexity of the geographical area occupied by Qiangic languages.

Historically, the area of distribution of the Qiangic languages lies in the zone of mixed Tibetan and Chinese influence, at the intersection of three superpowers that became dominant in the 7th and 8th centuries AD:

- the Tibetan Empire, instituted by Srong-btsan sgam-po (620-649 or 650)
- the Tang Chinese court (618-907)
- the Nanzhao kingdom (730-902) with its capital in Dali, later succeeded by the Dali kingdom (937-1253), related to modern Yi and Bai groups.

---

[5] The only (phonological) innovation for the Qiangic subgroup proposed so far is brightening, that is, a strong tendency for the Proto-Sino-Tibetan rhyme *-a to be raised and fronted to -i or -e in Tangut and modern Qiangic languages, as proposed by James A. Matisoff (2004). Matisoff discusses this development essentially in relation to Tangut, but he also points out a number of parallels in modern Qiangic languages. He argues that this development is unusual in the Sino-Tibetan context, and it is therefore a valuable criterion for membership in the Qiangic group. At the same time, Matisoff (2004:350) notes that modern Qiangic languages do not display brightening to the same degree, and that the phenomenon is not regular, either within the same language or cross-linguistically. The following observations regarding this development can furthermore be made. Relatively few items shared by both Tangut and modern Qiangic languages have so far been proposed (33 words in total, Matisoff 2004). Of these, even fewer are shared by more than four Qiangic languages at a time. Conversely, those that are shared by most Qiangic languages, such as 'salt' (in 12 languages) and 'rabbit' (in 9 languages) appear to be good candidates for cultural loanwords, and are hence inconclusive as to the genetic relatedness between the languages in question. Finally, this phenomenon is equally attested in non-Qiangic languages of the area, such as Na and Yi. For example, both 'salt' and 'rabbit' also display the effects of brightening in Naxi and Moso as well as in Nosu (Northern Yi): 'salt', Naxi and Moso, both ts^he^{33}; Nosu $ts^h\mu^{33}$ (Zhu 2005:236); 'rabbit': Naxi $t^ho^{33}le^{33}$, Moso $t^ho^{33}li^{33}$; Nosu $t^h\mu^{21}\dagger\mu^{21}$ (Zhu 2005:162).

These three superpowers were succeeded by a federation of small tribal states, kingdoms, and dependent districts (such as the kingdoms of Nangchen, Lithang, rGyalthang, or rMili), some of which maintained a de facto independent status until well into the 20th century.

Ethnically and linguistically, the area lies at the intersection of, most importantly, Bodic and Yi-Burmese, as well as some unclassified groups, such as Na and Bai. The area of distribution of Qiangic languages is characterized by long-standing multilingualism. Long-standing multilingualism suggests diffusion as the key factor in the formation of the languages of the area. It equally poses an important challenge to the subgrouping of local languages as based on common innovations and shared cognates, as no objective criteria have yet been found either to distinguish independent innovations from shared retentions, or to factor out parallel developments or effects of diffusion (see Harrison 2003:232-239 for discussion).

Not surprisingly, in view of the problems above, the membership of the Qiangic subgroup is fluid and has many times been adjusted and remains undecided for some languages.

The Baima language (also known as Baima Tibetan) of Northern Sichuan and Southern Gansu provinces was added to Qiangic in the 1980s, because it displays features that are held to be typical of this subgroup, such as directional prefixes (Sun 1980). Currently, opinions are split between Baima being a separate Bodic language (e.g. Nishida & Sun 1990, Sun et al. 2007:207-223) and an aberrant Tibetan dialect (Huang & Zhang 1995, Zhang 1994).

The relationship of the Tangut and rGyalrong languages to Qiangic is equally a matter of ongoing debate. LaPolla (2003:30), for instance, argues that the relation of rGyalrong to the Rawang and Kiranti groups is much clearer than to the Qiangic group, and that similarities shared by rGyalrong and Qiangic may simply be areal influence. Notably, three northern Qiangic languages, rGyalrong, Lavrong, and Horpa-Shangzhai (Ergong or Daofu 道孚 in different classifications) have been demonstrated by Jackson T.-S. Sun (2000a, 2000b) to be an independent and coherent subgrouping in its own right, namely, rGyalrongic.

The Namuyi language, held as one of Southern Qiangic languages, is argued to be genetically related to Yi and Na languages, rather than to Qiangic languages (Lama 1994, Huang 1997:13-15). This conclusion is essentially based on the large amount of related words between Yi, Na, and Namuyi.[6] Notably, the same conclusion has been reached on the basis of historical, cultural, and anthropological evidence (Yang 2006).

---

[6] Inferences that can be drawn from lexical comparisons of some local languages of uncertain affiliation with Yi and Na are complicated by the lack of well-defined diagnostic criteria to distinguish between Yi and Na groups, which share much lexical material. Hence some local

The Shixing language is likely to be related to Na languages, given that speakers of Shixing are considered by Naxi historians as part of the Na ethnos (Guo & He 1994:8-9).[7]

On the whole, the Qiangic hypothesis remains problematic. The two major interrelated challenges are: (1) establishing an objective foundation for subgrouping in an area that is historically, ethnically, and linguistically complex, and whose languages have not been previously documented; and (2) gathering sufficient evidence to generate and evaluate hypotheses related to the genetic affiliation of those local languages (currently held as Qiangic) that cannot be straightforwardly integrated into the neighboring genetic subgroups.

2. Qiangic as a genetic unit, as examined on the basis of four Qiangic languages of Muli

The project "What defines Qiang-ness" takes on the challenging task of assessing the validity of the Qiangic hypothesis. The approach is to focus on little-studied Qiangic languages spoken in one locality, Muli Tibetan Autonomous County, and to view these languages in the context of equally little-known local varieties of the Tibetan and Na languages. Given that one of the major challenges of the Qiangic hypothesis is the historical, ethnic, and linguistic complexity of the area occupied by Qiangic languages, the choice of one locality allows one to restrict to a manageable size the scope of the contact situation and the number of involved languages in order to coherently assess the impact of both internal (genetic) factors and external (contact) factors. The choice of Muli as the single locality to be studied is additionally supported by these factors: (1) Muli displays one of the highest concentrations of Qiangic languages; combining within its borders several Southern Qiangic languages (Shixing, Lizu, Namuzi) and one Northern Qiangic language (Pumi); (2) Muli is a historically stable administrative entity (the semi-independent kingdom of rMili), which guarantees recoverability of relevant sociolinguistic and historical information.

Muli is a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual county. Speakers of the four Qiangic languages of Muli are officially classified, together with the local ethnic Tibetans (Kami Tibetans), as members of the Tibetan nationality. Together, they account for 32.59% of the county population (Muli Tibetan Autonomous County Gazetteers Editing and Compiling Committee, forthcoming). Their most important historical neighbors include Nosu (28%

---

languages of Muli, e.g. Namuyi (Lama 1994, Huang 1997:13-15) or Laze (Huang 2009), are ambivalent between these two groups in terms of their respective shared vocabulary.

[7] Notably, Sun (2001b:167) also points to a large percentage of shared lexical items between Shixing and Na languages, which he argues to be borrowings in Shixing. In a similar vein, Sun interprets numerous lexical sharings between Ersu and Yi languages as results of contact (ibid.).

of the county population) and Na groups (Naxi and Moso together 9.96%). Historically more recent new comers to this area are Sinitic (South-Western Mandarin) (21.32%), Miao (6.96%), as well as Buyi, Zhuang, Bai, and some other groups (altogether about 1.17%).

The project initially operated under the assumption that the four Qiangic languages of Muli are closely genetically related. In line with practices of mainstream historical linguistics, the initial goals were accordingly set: (1) to stratify loanwords in the four studied languages from languages whose historical development is well-documented and understood (most importantly in the areal historical and cultural context, Tibetan), (2) to find regular sound correspondences over sets of putative cognates, and (3) to search for common phonological and lexical linguistic innovations between the surveyed Qiangic languages.

In contrast to the original assumption of relatedness, the first results of documentation work reveal diversity as a salient feature of the Qiangic languages of Muli. In fact, contrasts between the languages are so sharp that they cast considerable doubt on the assumed genetic relationship between them (see discussion below). This warrants a closer investigation of newly collected data to further evaluate this diversity, prior to proceeding with work that relies on the assumption of relatedness of the group.

The following subsections (§§2.1-2.4) discuss similarities between the four Qiangic languages of Muli, as seen in the context of their most important genetic neighbors (Tibetan, Yi, Na, Sinitic). The proposed comparison is based, on the one hand, on available data on well-described varieties of Tibetan, Yi, Na, and Sinitic; and, on the other hand, on newly collected data on the local Muli varieties of these languages (for the time being, excluding the local variety of Nosu (Northern Yi)). Lexical data are not included in the present overview; suffice it to say that the four languages share relatively few lexical items in their basic vocabulary. Overall, the percentage of shared lexical items is estimated around the customary Qiangic threshold of 20%, with cultural (Tibetan) lexicon accounting for a sizeable part of related words between the four languages.[8]

---

[8] Consider some examples from basic vocabulary: 'man, person': Pumi ^{HL}mə, Lizu ^{HL}tsʰo, Namuzi ^{HL}tsʰo, Shixing ^{H}hĩ; 'food; cooked rice': Pumi ^{HL}bei, Lizu ^{HL}kʰa, Namuzi ^{LH}dzæ, Shixing ^{H}hɑɔ. Some examples from more culturally oriented vocabulary include: 'deity' (WT *lha*), Pumi ^{H}ɬa, Lizu ^{LH}ɬa, Namuzi ^{LH}ɬæ, Shixing ^{LH}gi-ɬa; 'flag' (WT *dar*), Pumi ^{LH}tiɛ, Lizu ^{LH}ta, Shixing ^{LH}tiɛ. A side observation is that Tibetan loans in the four Qiangic languages appear to derive from distinct donor dialects. For example, 'flower' is ^{LH}Nburu in the local Tibetan dialect (Kami), but ^{LH}metɕo or ^{LH}meto in Lizu, and mi^{55}tɕo^{31} in Namuzi, all related to WT *me tog*.

2.1 Similarities between the four Qiangic languages of Muli

The present list of similarities is not intended to be exhaustive or final, but rather represents work in progress that will have to be modified when more comparative data become available. The list was initially intended as an overview of all shared features between the four Qiangic languages studied in the project (Shixing, Lizu, Namuzi, Pumi). Coincidentally, the shared features turned out to be essentially restricted to features postulated as characteristic of the membership in the Qiangic subgroup (such an overlap is indicated below as "Qiangic feature"). Notably, the list does not include such common features shared by the majority of local genetic subgroups (excluding only the later arrival into the area, Sinitic), as SOV or Noun-Adjective word orders. I have also omitted some relatively non-committal Qiangic features, such as "large consonant and vowel inventories", especially because those of the four examined languages do not appear to be significantly larger than those of their genetic neighbors.[9] And in order not to detract from the main line of argument, illustrative examples are deferred to the appendix at the end of the paper.

Features shared by the four Qiangic languages of Muli include:

(1) Pronunciation of the vowel /u/ (in Pumi ə) as a syllabic bilabial trill after bilabial and apical stops;

(2) Uvular phonemes: (a) contrastive with velars, as in Shixing, Lizu, Namuzi, or (b) allophones of velar phonemes, as in Pumi (Qiangic feature);

(3) Common principles of prosodic organization: tone systems characterized by culminativity—a restriction of not more than one pronounced lexical tone per prosodic word with one tonal assignment (mostly restricted to the first syllable of the word) affecting much or all of the prosodic word (Qiangic feature "tones", see Evans 2008 for discussion);

---

[9] For example, Pumi has a total of 42 initials (40 initial consonants and 2 consonant clusters) and 34 rhymes (7 oral vowels, 5 nasal vowels, 22 diphthongs). To compare, Nosu has 44 initial consonants and 10 rhymes (8 syllabics, 2 non-syllabics) (Li & Ma 1983:83-84). Batang 巴塘 *'ba' thang* Tibetan has 48 initials (42 initial consonants, 6 consonant clusters) and 31 rhymes (9 oral and 8 nasal vowels, 5 diphthongs and 9 rhymes ending in a glottal stop) (Gesang 1989:332, 342).

The Qiangic feature "case forms of personal pronouns" is not included in the present list. In the surveyed languages, these forms are transparent combinations of a relevant personal pronoun and a case marker. For this reason, this feature is subsumed on the list under "case marking". The Qiangic feature "reciprocal" is included on the list under "reduplication".

(4) Identical principles of word-formation, including: (a) extensive use of reduplication (Qiangic feature), (b) compounding, and (c) affixation. The latter comprises:

    (i)   Kinship prefix *a-* (for older kin);

    (ii) Diminutive suffix derived from the morpheme for 'child' or 'son' (Qiangic feature, non-related forms);

    (iii) Gender suffixes for animals;

(5) Numeral classifiers (Qiangic feature, for the most part non-related forms, see §2.2 for discussion);

(6) Directional Prefixes (Qiangic feature, for the most part non-related forms);

(7) Past/non-past distinction (suppletive forms) in some high frequency verbs and nominalization markers (for the most part non-related forms);

(8) Multiple existential verbs (Qiangic feature, for the most part non-related forms).

On the whole, similarities—whether phonological, morphological, or syntactic—among the four languages are strikingly few. Furthermore, given the apparent non-relatedness of relevant markers in shared systems, the majority of similarities are symptomatic of parallel developments. The observed phenomena can also be interpreted as pattern-borrowings, that is, replications of the abstract organizational pattern of the model construction of an external source using suitable elements in the replica language (Matras & Sakel 2007). Put differently, the structural similarities observed between the four languages are likely to be instances of grammaticalization, where only the patterns of the other language are replicated (i.e. the organization, distribution, and mapping of grammatical or semantic meaning), while the form itself is not borrowed. Overall, this type of grammaticalization is typical for linguistic areas.

2.2 Differences between the four Qiangic languages of Muli

The range of differences between the four surveyed languages is far more extensive and involves virtually all linguistic sub-systems. Differences can further be divided into two types: (1) overall dissimilarities (non-overlapping systems), and (2) dissimilarities among overlapping systems (non-cognate marking).

The former type of differences can be illustrated by distinct orders of demonstrative and noun in the four languages. The four Qiangic languages of Muli have no less than three distinct orders for demonstrative and noun, namely:[10]

---

[10] Pumi data are from Guillaume Jacques (p.c.) and Lu (2001); Lizu and Shixing data are from personal research; Namuzi data are from Huang & Renzeng (1991) and from personal research.

Katia Chirkova

(1) Dem-N (Pumi and Lizu), e.g. Pumi [LH]uti [HL]m̥ə 'that woman', Lizu [H]ku-t[h]ɛ [H]jaqɑ 'this child'

(2) N-Dem (Namuzi), e.g. ju[31] tæ[55] = ly[55] 'this house'

(3) Dem-N-Dem (Shixing), e.g. [H]hɑ [H]tõpi [H]hɑ 'this story', [H]t[h]i [H]hĩ [HL]t[h]i 'that man'. Notably, Shixing also has an alternative order, N-Dem, as in [HL]pu-mi [L]hɑ 'this frog', [H]hĩ [L]t[h]i 'that man'. There appears to be a semantic distinction between the two variant orders, with the latter rather more specifically denoting definiteness of the modified noun, e.g. [H]bõ [LH]p[h]u-tɕi-tɕi [HL]t[h]i 'the (or that) white yak' (Chirkova 2009).[11]

As to the latter type of differences (dissimilarities among overlapping systems), none of the overlapping structural features listed in §2.1, has cognate marking in all four languages (see the appendix at the end of the paper). In addition to the apparent non-relatedness of relevant markers, the structural features shared by the four languages vary widely with respect to specific semantic and syntactic contexts and the degree of grammaticalization per language. Let us take numeral classifier systems in the four languages as an example. (I shall restrict the comparison to a more grammaticalized category of classifiers, namely sortal classifiers, i.e. those that individuate whatever they refer to in terms of the kind of entity that it is.) Based on the overall number of classifiers and their morphosyntactic environments and functions, the following patterns emerge.

Namuzi has the most developed system among the four languages. In terms of the overall number of sortal classifiers, Namuzi has most classifiers of the four compared languages (ca. 10 in the collected data). Some frequent forms include: (a) mo for people and large animals, (b) p[h]æ for cattle, (c) jæ for small animals, (d) po for trees, plants, (e) ly, general classifier for inanimate entities. Classifiers in Namuzi can directly modify nouns, which use serves to increase precision of reference. That is to say that if a classifier occurs as the only determinative of the noun, it expresses singularity and referentiality (specificity or definiteness). For example, bu[55] = p[h]æ[51] '(that, definite) yak', Nbrə[31] = mo[55] '(that, definite) wife, woman'. Finally, nouns in Namuzi cannot be modified by numerals without an accompanying classifier, and Namuzi classifiers are obligatory with both numerals and demonstratives.

Pumi also has relatively many sortal classifiers (9 listed in Lu 2001:151-152). For example, [LH]m̥ĩmə [H]tʒ = [H]tsə 'one beggar', [LH]sʒkʒradʐuĩ [H]tʒ = [H]tsa 'one stick', [H]zəpə [L]tʒ = [H]pɛ̃ 'one axe'. As a rule, Pumi classifiers cannot modify a noun without an

---

[11] The demonstrative pronouns in the four languages are as follows: Pumi [LH]təbie 'this', [LH]ubie/ [LH]uti 'that'; Lizu [H]ku-t[h]ɛ 'this', [H]wo-t[h]ɛ 'that'; Namuzi tæ[55] = ly[55] 'this', tʂho[31] = ly[55] 'that'; Shixing [LH]hɑ 'this', [LH]t[h]ʒ 'that'. Demonstratives in Namuzi are obligatorily followed by the general classifier ly, the etymology of the second syllable of Lizu demonstratives is uncertain.

accompanying numeral and numerals cannot modify a noun without an accompanying classifier. A classifier is not required with a demonstrative.

Quite dissimilar to the relatively well-developed classifier systems in Namuzi and Pumi, those of Lizu and Shixing are fairly restricted and consist each of only two shape-based sortal classifiers. These two classifiers are furthermore only used with numerals and are not required with demonstratives.

In Lizu, the two sortal classifiers are: (1) ka 'strip', a classifier for elongated objects, e.g. ^{H}dzɛ ^{L}tɛ = ^{L}ka 'river', ^{H}bɹa ^{H}tɛ = ^{H}ka 'one rope'; and (2) pu, a more general classifier, widely used with non-human and, more specifically, flat objects, e.g. ^{H}rwa ^{L}tɛ = ^{L}pu 'one chicken', ^{HL}Nbuto ^{L}tɛ = ^{L}pu 'one knife'. A classifier is not required to follow a numeral in Lizu, if the noun that it modifies is animate, e.g. ^{HL}Ndzɑ ^{HL}tɛ 'one Chinese', ^{HL}tsʰo ^{HL}zɛ 'four people'. In the case of inanimate nouns, a classifier is not required with the numeral ^{HL}tɛ 'one', e.g. ^{HL}sɛ-dzumɛ ^{L}tɛ 'one log'.

Finally, the two sortal classifiers in Shixing are (1) the general classifier ku 'item', e.g. ^{LH}li ^{L}ɲa = ^{L}ku 'two hands', ^{LH}ɕi-bɜ ^{LH}guɜ = ku 'nine pans'; and (2) the classifier for elongated objects rɛ̃ 'strip', e.g. ^{HL}lɜsi ^{L}dʑi = ^{H}rɛ̃ 'one arrow', ^{LH}qʰɑɔwu ^{L}ɲi = ^{H}rɛ̃ 'two sticks'. A classifier in Shixing cannot modify a noun without a numeral, whereas the numeral ^{LH}dʑĩ 'one' can co-occur with nouns without a classifier, to denote indefiniteness and singularity. The following table summarizes the observed patterns:

Table 1: Number, morphosyntactic environments and functions of sortal classifiers in the four Qiangic languages of Muli

	Number	Can a classifier modify a noun without a numeral? (Related function)	Can a numeral modify a noun without a classifier? (Related function)	Are classifiers obligatory with demonstratives?
Namuzi	many	+ (singularity, definiteness)	−	+
Pumi	many	−	−	−
Lizu	2	some can (singularity, definiteness)	+ (mostly with animate nouns; numeral 'one', indefiniteness)	−
Shixing	2	−	+ (numeral 'one', indefiniteness)	−

The observed degree of variation between the four Qiangic languages of Muli (both in terms of overall disparity of their respective lexical, phonological, morphological, and syntactic organization and of scalability and non-cognateness of shared systems) is unusual for a low-level subgroup, which Qiangic is purported to be, especially given the

contiguity of the geographical area occupied by the four surveyed languages.[12] In contrast to the observed diversity, the expectation would rather be that similar organization of these purportedly closely genetically related languages is reinforced through contact, as it is generally held that areal influence contributes to retaining ancestral characteristics (e.g. Dryer 2008:24). Alternatively, in linguistics, as in biology, overall similarity and recentness of ancestry are usually proportional (e.g. Sokal & Sneath 1963:223, Nichols 1992:250). This is to say that groups characterized by a large number of similarities are more likely to be more recently evolved from a common ancestor, whereas groups that have few similarities in common are more likely to have diverged from a common ancestor at a much older date. The striking diversity of the four Qiangic languages of Muli is hence critically in need of explanation when generating hypotheses concerning the relationship between these languages and their linguistic history.[13]

2.3 Similarities between the four Qiangic languages of Muli in an areal context

Let us now turn to an examination of the similarities between the four Qiangic languages of Muli from an areal perspective, as compared to their genetic neighbors Yi, Na, Tibetan, and Sinitic (South-Western Mandarin). I shall compare the four Qiangic languages first to well-documented varieties of these latter languages and then to newly-documented varieties of these languages spoken in Muli. On the whole, the majority of similarities between Lizu, Namuzi, Pumi, and Shixing are non-specific to the Qiangic languages of Muli and, instead, are shared with their genetic neighbors.

---

[12] Conversely, a comparable degree of variation is possible in geographically discontinuous groups. For instance, in relation to the order of demonstrative and noun and differences in classifier use as evoked above, comparable examples can be found, respectively, among Chin languages, which combine Dem-N, N-Dem and Dem-N-Dem orders within one group, Dryer (2008:41-42), and Sinitic languages. In the latter group, Cantonese exhibits a number of unusual characteristics in the syntax and semantics of its classifiers, such as the possessive classifier construction, which are not paralleled in other Sinitic languages (Matthews 2006). Crucially, such instances of deviation from one common type in a geographically discontinuous group are generally attributed to language contact with other genetic groups. For example, in the case of Cantonese, the unusual characteristics of its classifier systems are argued to be due to contact with Tai-Kadai and Hmong-Mien languages (Matthews 2006).

[13] One possible explanation of the striking diversity of the Qiangic languages of Muli, if these are taken to be members of one lower genetic subgroup, would be a recent abrupt migration. This, however, does not appear to be the case, according to the respective oral histories of the groups (as outlined in Xie 1992:48).

On the whole, among the similarities shared by the four Qiangic languages of Muli, as considered in the context of their neighboring languages, three types of situations can be distinguished: (1) similarities shared across several local subgroups; (2) similarities shared by the four Qiangic languages with only one of the local subgroups (either Yi, Na or Tibetan); and (3) features more specific to the languages of Muli (both Qiangic and non-Qiangic) and not shared with the languages spoken in the neighboring areas.

The first type includes features that are shared with most neighboring subgroups, essentially with Yi, Na, and Sinitic. These include: extensive use of reduplication in word formation, gender suffixes for animals, diminutive formation with the morpheme for 'child' or 'son', kinship prefix *a-* and numeral classifier systems.

The second type includes features that are shared either with the southern genetic neighbors of the four Qiangic languages (i.e. Yi and Na languages), or with their northern genetic neighbor (Tibetan). Features shared with Yi and Na include: (1) pronunciation of /u/ as a bilabial trill after bilabial and apical stops, as characteristics of all Northern Yi varieties as well as of Na languages (see Li & Ma 1983:52-53, 77 for Northern Yi; and Yang 2009:3, for Yongning Na); and (2) multiple existential verbs (see Zhu 2005:160-161 for Northern Yi; and He & Jiang 1985:51-53, for Na). The feature shared with Tibetan is the past/non-past distinction in some high frequency verbs. Finally, while held to be essentially exclusive to Qiangic languages and not typical in well-documented, standard varieties of Yi, Na, and Tibetan, uvular phonemes are equally attested in Moso (Gai & Jiang 1990:71-72), in some varieties of Nosu (Lama 1994:51), as well as in a number of Tibetan dialects spoken in the zone of distribution of Qiangic languages (for example, Yajiang 雅江 *nyag chu kha*, Acuo 2008; Shibazi 石壩子 *kun sngon*, Hua & Gazangta 1997; Zhongu 熱務溝 *zho ngu*, J. Sun 2003:782-783).

The third type comprises: (1) tone systems characterized by culminativity, and (2) directional prefixes. These are features that appear exclusive to the local linguistic varieties of Muli (both Qiangic and non-Qiangic).

Let us now examine the similarities between the four Qiangic languages in the context of the previously unrecorded local varieties of Tibetan, Na, and Sinitic, spoken in Muli, as studied in the context of the Qiang-ness project. These local varieties are, respectively, Kami Tibetan (data from personal research, Chirkova ms.), Laze (based on Huang 2009), and the local Chinese dialect (based on Li 2010).

Kami Tibetan is spoken by the historically oldest inhabitants of Muli.[14] This dialect appears to posses almost the precise combination of similarities, as shared by the

---

[14] According to Kessler (1986:20, 46), Muli has been settled by Tibetans since ca. 680 AD, i.e. after the unification of the Tibetans with the Hsifan nomadic tribes, who settled in the areas to the East of Tibet between 618 and 906 AD. However, it was only after 1253 that Muli formed the southeastern corner of the at-that-time-still-existing Tibetan empire.

four Qiangic languages of this county, including even those that are generally held to be exclusive to Qiangic languages (such as directional prefixes), and only excluding pronunciation of /u/ as a bilabial trill after bilabial and apical stops and the precise categorization of existential verbs (see Appendix for examples). In fact, spoken in the geographic zone occupied by Qiangic languages, the Kami Tibetan dialect appears to possess almost an entire set of features which are held as diagnostic of the membership in the Qiangic subgroup. It even exhibits such strikingly non-Tibetan features as extensive use of reduplication in word formation and an incipient classifier system.

Laze, which is likely to be closely related to Na languages, is said to have arrived in Muli approximately six generations ago from the neighboring Yanyuan County (Guo & He 1994:6-7). It likewise exhibits a number of diagnostic Qiangic features. For example: (1) directional prefixes, namely (a) gɐ- 'upward', (b) a more general prefix tʰia- or tʰiɐ- that can indicate several distinct directions, and (c) a perfective prefix lɑ-; and (2) case forms of personal pronouns distinguished by tonal alternation. For example, the first person pronoun: absolutive form ŋɑ^{53} 'I', ergative/agentive form ŋɑ^{31}, genitive form ŋɑ^{33} 'mine'; the second person pronoun: absolutive form nu^{33} 'you', ergative/agentive form nu^{31}, genitive form nu^{33} 'your' (Huang 2009).

Similar to Laze, the local dialect of Chinese arrived into the area relatively recently (estimated at around 2 to 3 centuries ago). Nevertheless, this local Chinese dialect has demonstrably undergone considerable restructuring. The most striking non-Sinitic morphosyntactic features acquired by this dialect in Muli, as compared to its kin varieties outside Muli (including even those spoken in the neighboring counties of Yanyuan and Xichang, Li 2010), are a variant verb-final word order, accompanied by the Noun-Numeral-Classifier order, and the development of several cases marked by postpositions.[15] Case marking in the Muli dialect of Chinese is yet another example of pattern-borrowing, in which one native Chinese morpheme, ʂaŋ^{213} or xaŋ^{213} 上, is used to denote various relations within the noun phrase, approximating those of cases in the local languages, most importantly, animate patient (primary object or anti-ergative), instrumental and locative cases.[16] The ongoing restructuring of Chinese and Laze,

---

[15] Consider the following example of the S-O-Num-Cls-V word order in this dialect (Li 2010:130):

i^{21}	tʰiɛn^{44}	ten^{53}	lao^{53}	ʂ̩,	tʰa^{44}	tɕiəu^{213}	tʂu^{44}	tso^{213}tər^{44}	i^{21}	ko^{213}
一	天	等	了	是	他	就	豬	坐墩兒	一	個
one	day	wait	PRF	be	3	just	pig	rump	one	item

ɕiaŋ^{53} iao^{213}.
想   要
think   want

'He waited one whole day, he really wanted to buy a piece of pig's rump.'

[16] For example, (1) animate patient marking: ŋo^{53}men^{44} ɲi^{53} ʂaŋ^{213} taŋ^{44} fan^{44}i^{21} 我們你上當翻譯 'We will translate for you.'; (2) instrumental marking: tɕiəu^{213} ken^{44} ŋo^{53}men^{44} niaŋ^{53} ko^{213}

witness of the intensity of language contact situation in Muli, are equally remarkable for their evident rapidity, which is quite contrary to the assumption that processes of convergence take millennia to complete.

In sum, a preliminary comparison of the four Qiangic languages of Muli in an areal context yields diversity as the most characteristic feature of these languages and no features that are exclusively shared by these languages as opposed to the neighboring genetic subgroups. At the same time, the process of contact-induced restructuring, as observed in the latter languages, is suggestive of Muli as a zone of active contact-induced structural convergence.

2.4 Some preliminary conclusions

The following conclusions to the discussion in this section can be made.

First, the Qiangic hypothesis in its southern end is based on insufficient evidence. Notably, it overlooks the fact that features postulated as probative of Qiang-ness are equally attested in the local varieties of languages of the neighboring genetic subgroups (Yi, Na, Tibetan, Sinitic).

Second, the profound restructuring of the local non-Qiangic languages (e.g. the Tibetan and Chinese dialects of Muli) indicate that Muli is an active convergence area, which includes languages that are genetically unrelated, but share a number of distinctive traits. In other words, the fact that genetically unrelated local languages share a number of distinctive traits is precisely because of contact-induced diffusion.

Third, given the intensity and extent of the convergence process, as glimpsed through the local varieties of languages of known affiliation, convergence cannot be excluded as a (non-genetic) factor which has contributed to the formation of the little-known and highly distinct languages of Muli, currently labeled Qiangic. Furthermore, given that cross-linguistically, no cases of completely isolated structural interference in just one linguistic subsystem have so far been attested (e.g. Thomason & Kaufman 1988:60), the degree of restructuring as observed in languages of Muli is symptomatic of comparable interference affecting a range of linguistic subsystems of the languages labeled Qiangic, including also their respective lexicon (cf. Thomason & Kaufman 1988:207). In this context, the diagnostic value of lexical comparisons, if lexical correspondences are taken to be the only or the weightiest indication of genetic relatedness, is at best uncertain.

---

tʂei²¹³ nian⁵³ tʰian⁴⁴ tʰiao²¹ken⁴⁴ ʂaŋ²¹³ tʂʰʅ²¹fan²¹³ iaŋ²¹³ lei⁴⁴ 就跟我們兩個這兩天調羹上吃飯樣的 'just like the two of us were eating with a spoon this couple of days', (3) locative marking: pan²¹³ tʰi⁴⁴ ʂaŋ²¹³ loŋ⁵³ lao⁵³ ʂʅ²¹³ 半梯上攏了 'reached half the stairs'.

In sum, in view of the salient dissimilarities in all linguistic subsystems and the demonstrable similarities with genetically unrelated local languages, it appears prudent to err on the side of caution and, therefore, not consider these four Qiangic languages of Muli to be closely related.

3. Qiangic as an areal grouping: defining features and member languages

The preceding discussion suggests that the initial research goals and the related methodology of the Qiang-ness project are in need of adjustment. In my personal work, the main objective of the project remains related to the Qiangic hypothesis, albeit in a new understanding, that is, as an areal grouping. I propose to investigate the history and the (respective) affiliation of the languages currently labeled Qiangic as critically related to the history of the area in which they are spoken, and which is typified by a number of salient traits. The two newly formulated objectives, namely (1) studying the Qiangic area and (2) inferring the relationship between its little-studied member languages currently labeled Qiangic, are discussed in turn below.

Linguistic or convergence areas (such as Muli or, broader, Qiangic) have been argued to be essentially analogous to geographical dialect continua, with different features (isoglosses) extending over different areas (e.g. Dahl 2001, Bisang 2004, 2006:88). Given this parallel, convergence areas can be profitably studied using methods and major insights of dialectology, of the latter, most importantly, a contrast between the typologically more consistent core and more diverse periphery. The relevant approach consists in: (1) defining characteristic local features, (2) describing their geographical distribution and local configurations, (3) adducing reasons for this distribution: arriving at an understanding of the (socio)linguistic mechanisms that lie behind the geographical distribution of linguistic phenomena, the location of isoglosses, and the diffusion of linguistic innovations.

In the area under discussion, the defining areal features considerably overlap with those established for the Qiangic subgrouping hypothesis (Qiangic as a genetic unit), but they are not limited to them. A new understanding of Qiangic as an areal grouping naturally entails that a coherent understanding of its linguistic history as well as that of its member languages necessitates moving beyond the current practice of restricting the scope of examined languages to those labeled Qiangic. Increasing the scope of languages naturally increases the number of relevant characteristic traits. For example, characteristic features of Muli are essentially those outlined for Shixing, Lizu, Namuzi, and Pumi in §2, but not limited to these. When all local languages are taken into account, a complete list of features is likely to be larger, with some features non-overlapping for some

languages. For instance, pronunciation of /u/ as a syllabic bilabial trill after bilabial and apical stops is equally common for Nosu, Shixing, Lizu, Namuzi, and Pumi (after ə), but this feature is not attested in Kami Tibetan. Also, an egophoric-non-egophoric (conjunct-disjunct) system is shared by Kami, Lizu and Pumi (and possibly, Laze), but not by Namuzi or Nosu.

As pointed out in §2, features shared by Lizu, Namuzi, Pumi, and Shixing can be further divided into those shared by these languages (1) with several neighboring genetic groups, (2) with either the southern or the northern genetic neighbors of these languages, and (3) those, mostly restricted to the languages of Muli (of all local genetic subgroups). Discarding the non-committal first type, the second and third types appear most telling as to the linguistic history of the local Muli languages. Namely, the second type is suggestive of a link (either genetic or through contact) with either Yi, Na, or Tibetan, whereas the third type that is essentially restricted to the Qiangic area (exemplified by directional prefixes, and possibly also uvulars) is potentially indicative of some features that may originate in the local languages, that are unrelated to any of the better known local genetic subgroups (Yi, Na, Tibetan).

Furthermore, the precise inventory and the scalability of the structural (typological) features that are shared by the languages of Muli are symptomatic of a transition in the area between two widely divergent typological types, namely (1) Tibetan and (2) Yi and Na. Of these two types, Tibetan is agglutinative with complex suffixal morphology (e.g. well-developed case marking systems). It does not have numeral classifiers or multiple existential (locative) verbs. Tibetan has template word-tone systems (J. Sun 1997). The typologically close Yi and Na, on the other hand, are predominantly isolating. Yi expresses syntactic relations essentially by means of a rigid word order, whereas Na makes restricted use of case marking. Both Yi and Na have well-developed systems of numeral classifiers and multiple existential (locative) verbs. The two groups have omni-syllabic tonal systems. In addition, the recent arrival into the area, Sinitic, represents yet another typological type. Similar to Yi and Na, Sinitic is isolating, it has omnisyllabic tones, and a well-developed numeral classifier system. On the other hand, Sinitic has a predominant verb-medial word order and no multiple existential verbs.

Language contact in the research area leads to the mutual rapprochement of these distinct types, yielding a number of transitional subtypes in the languages of Muli. This development can be clearly detected in the local languages of known genetic affiliation. For example, Kami Tibetan acquires such a non-Tibetan trait as an incipient classifier system, whereas the local Chinese dialect develops such a non-Sinitic feature, as a system of postpositional case markers. Notably, in Sino-Tibetan at large, those structural features that are common in the languages of Muli (e.g. numeral classifiers, multiple existential verbs) are held to be recent, largely independent and subject-to-contact effects

from nearby languages (e.g. LaPolla 1994, Bradley 2005:224 for classifier systems). This entails that in local Muli languages of uncertain affiliation, these linguistic systems are likewise likely to have been affected by language contact, potentially obscuring the relationship of these languages with their possible relatives outside of the area.

Let us now turn to the issue of inferring the genetic affiliation of the local phylogenetically more obscure languages (Shixing, Lizu, Namuzi, Pumi). Two possibilities are conceivable:

(1) These languages are related to the neighboring genetic subgroups and are considerably restructured through contact in the area to obscure the original relatedness.

(2) These languages are genetically unrelated to the neighboring genetic subgroups and, possibly, also to each other, with a further possibility of distinct subgroups among them, similar to rGyalrongic, and/or isolates. These languages may likewise be considerably restructured through contact to make them more similar to their non-genetic areal neighbors.

Reliance on areal characteristic features confounds the two types (the current Qiangic hypothesis, Qiangic as a genetic unit). Conversely, differentiation between the two possibilities necessitates new subgrouping that will take into account (1) areal tendencies, as gleaned through restructuring of local varieties of languages whose genetic affiliation is not disputed, and (2) typological profiles of the neighboring genetic subgroups to serve as reference points for comparison. In sum, it calls for an interdisciplinary approach, combining studies on language typology, language contact, and comparative-historical linguistics.

The conventional subgrouping procedure based on prioritizing a limited number of similarities that may be indicative of common ancestry (common innovations) and essentially favoring one linguistic subsystem (lexicon), in the absence of objective criteria to factor out diffusion, cannot guarantee objectivity of results in an area of considerable historical, ethnic, and linguistic complexity (such as the one discussed presently), especially in the absence of previous attestations of its languages. A reliable alternative consists of subgrouping based on a maximally large number of synchronic similarities, that are further not prioritized as to their historical significance, that is, overall synchronic similarities, whatever these similarities may signify (genetic inheritance or results of diffusion). Overall similarity between any two languages or groups of languages is a function of the similarity of the many traits in which they are being compared. (Note that the use of a broad range and variety of correlated similarities, both in structure and form, effectively eliminates chance and parallel developments as their possible origins.) Distinct subgroups can be constructed because of diverse trait correlations in the groups

under study. Notably, this procedure yields natural groups, that is, groups whose members share many correlated features and which are, for that reason, likely to be monophyletic. Finally, overall synchronic (or phenetic) similarity and phylogenetic history are treated as formally independent of one another, and phylogenetic information is obtained by conjecture from synchronic type of evidence.[17]

A natural objection to this approach may be that reliance on synchronic similarities runs the risk of confounding among similarities those due to genetic inheritance and those due to convergence. Fortunately, in linguistics, as in biology, phenetic groups are usually monophyletic and there is as yet no acceptable evidence that overall convergence or convergence in phenetic resemblance does take place to any marked extent (e.g. Sokal & Sneath 1963:97). Furthermore, in linguistics, mixed languages, such as pidgins and creoles (e.g. Ma'a [Mbugu] or Media Lengua), whose origins are non-genetic, represent an extremely rare and unusual effect of societal contact, so that, in most cases, it is possible to distinguish mixed languages, whose origins are non-genetic, from languages whose development has followed a more common genetic line (cf. Thomason & Kaufman 1988:3). The local Tibetan dialect of Muli is a case at hand. While considerably restructured due to areal convergence (acquiring many non-Tibetan features and loanwords), its lineage is beyond dispute (given overall clear continuity in its phonology, morphology, lexicon, and syntax with its nearest relatives outside of the area).

I propose to use this procedure as a hypothesis-generating tool in connection to the (respective) affiliation of Shixing, Lizu, Namuzi, and Pumi. This procedure can rely on existing hypotheses based on impressionistic or more systematic and grounded assessments of the overall respective similarities of these languages with their various neighbors. According to these previous hypotheses, Pumi is conceivably related to Qiang and Muya, as argued to be fully substantiated by cognate sets (Thurgood 2003:17). Shixing, on the other hand, is likely to be related to Na languages (Guo & He 1994:8-9). Finally, on the strength of, for the time being, impressionistic lexical and structural similarities, Lizu and Namuzi may be more closely related to Yi languages than they are to their remaining linguistic neighbors (for Namuzi, see Lama 1994; Huang 1997:13-15).[18] Needless to say, at this stage, these are merely working hypotheses, to be either

---

[17] The approach is that of numerical taxonomy in biology, based on the ideas of Michel Adanson and developed in Sokal & Sneath (1963). Applied in linguistics, this approach is an excellent candidate for quantitative methods, such as NeighbourNet, which is argued to favor a phenetic, rather than a cladistic approach (McMahon & McMahon 2006:72), or statistical methods, as, for instance, used in dialectometry. A similar approach is advocated in Kessler (2001), where it is however restricted to the domain of lexicon, to allow application of statistical methods in historical linguistics.

[18] For example, Lizu shares with Yi many lexical items (cf. Sun 2001b:167). It also shares with Nosu many grammaticalizations (both form and function), such as (1) grammaticalization

confirmed or falsified by systematically taking into account a variety of linguistic subsystems and features.

In the following section, I shall elaborate on the hypothesized close relationship between Shixing and Na languages, as this relationship appears to be most straightforward among all aforementioned cases. This relationship is assessed against the background of areal typological tendencies, as discussed above.

3.1 On the similarity between Shixing and Na languages

Shixing displays significant similarity with Na languages in all its linguistic subsystems and no comparable similarity with any other local language or group of languages. Most importantly, there is substantial continuity between Na languages and Shixing in terms of their morphology and syntax (as a productive combination of meaning and form), namely:[19]

(1) Derivational morphology. Gender suffixes for animals, 'male': Naxi p^hv^{33}, Shixing $p^h\mathfrak{z}$; 'female' (feminine and augmentative): Naxi mi^{33}/mv^{33}, Shixing mi. Naxi male suffix zo^{33} corresponds to the male and diminutive suffix $z\tilde{o}$ in Shixing. Both forms stem from morphemes for 'male, son'.

(2) Aspectual marking:

   (a) progressive aspect marker (grammaticalized in Moso and Shixing from the locative verb 'to exist'), i.e. Yongning Na $d\mathfrak{z}o^{31}$; Shixing $d\mathfrak{z}\tilde{o}$. Compare, 'to exist': Yongning Na $d\mathfrak{z}o^{33}$, Shixing $^Hd\mathfrak{z}\tilde{o}$
   (b) perfective aspect marker: Naxi $si\mathfrak{d}^{33}$, se^{31}; Yongning Na ze^{33}; Shixing $s\mathfrak{l}$. For example, 'have eaten': Naxi $ndz\mathfrak{w}^{33}se^{31}$; Yongning Na $dz\mathfrak{w}^{55}ze^{31}$; Shixing $^Ll\mathfrak{z}$-$dz\mathfrak{z} = ^Hs\mathfrak{l}$ (with the perfective prefix l$\mathfrak{z}$-)

---

from 'man, person' (Lizu su, Nosu su) to a nominalizer, e.g. Lizu $^{HL}\mathfrak{s}\varepsilon$-ts^{h}u-su 'blacksmith' (from $^{HL}\mathfrak{s}\varepsilon$ 'iron', ^{HL}ts^{h}u 'to forge'), or (2) that from the verb 'to make' (Lizu ^{LH}mu, Nosu $\underset{.}{m}^{33}$) to an adverbalizer, e.g. Lizu ^Ha-za$=$mu ^{LH}ji 'take care', literally 'go slowly', a conventional expression of farewell). Overall, many Lizu function words have formally and functionally close counterparts in Nosu (based on Hu 2002).

[19] This overview is based on the list of diagnostic morphological and syntactic similarities between Naxi and Moso in Jiang (1993), to which I added my Shixing data. Some additional features shared by Naxi, Moso, and Shixing are cited, for Naxi and Moso, from He & Jiang (1985), Lidz (2006), and Yang (2009). Some similarities between Shixing and Na languages are also discussed in Chirkova (2009).

(c) possibly, also the experiential marker: Naxi dʑi³³, Yongning Na dʑi³³, Shixing dʑɜ. For example, 'have once eaten': Naxi ndzɯ³³dʑi³³, Yongning Na dzɯ⁵⁵dʑi³³, Shixing ᴸdzɜ = ᴴdʑɜ

(3) Nominalizer, grammaticalized in Moso and Shixing from the morpheme for 'person'. For example, 'wood-cutter': Yongning Na sɯ³³dɑ³¹xĩ³³ (from xĩ³³ 'person'), Shixing ᴴᴸsĩ-ti-hĩ (from ᴴhĩ 'person').

(4) Reduplication in adjectives with the prefix *a-* (to signal intensification). For example, Lijiang mbe³³ 'thin' vs. ə³³mbe³³mbe¹³ 'very thin'; Guabie bi³³ 'thin' vs. ɑ³¹bi⁵⁵bi³³ 'very thin', Shixing ᴸᴴbə 'thin' vs. ᴸᴴa-bə-bə 'very thin'.

(5) Suppletive forms of the verbs 'to come' and 'to go':

'to come'	Lijiang Naxi	Yongning Na	Shixing
past	tsʰɯ³¹	tsʰɯ³¹	ᴸᴴtɕʰũ
non-past	tsʰɯ³¹, lɯ³³, lə³³	ʑi³³, ʐu³³	ᴴlɜ, ᴸᴴliu
imperative	lu³³	ʐu³³	ᴸᴴliu
'to go'			
non-past	bɯ³³, bə³¹	bi³³	ᴸᴴbi
past	kʰɯ⁵⁵, xɯ³³, xə¹³	kʰe¹³, xɯ³³	ᴸᴴxɑ
imperative	fa³³	xv³³	ᴸᴴxu

(6) Some continuity in the system of existential verbs (even though that in Shixing is more elaborate than those in Naxi and Moso, with some unrelated forms), namely: 'to have, to possess; to exist': Lijiang Naxi dʑy³³ (inanimate entities), ndʑy³³ (animate entities); Yongning Na dʑo³³; Shixing ᴸᴴdʑõ (inanimate entities), ᴸᴴjĩ (animate entities); 'to exist (inside a container)': Lijiang Naxi ʑi³³, Yongning Na ʑi³³, Shixing ᴴkʰuɜ; 'to exist (attached to an entity)': Lijiang Naxi dzɯ³¹, Yongning Na di³¹, Shixing ᴸᴴdzi.

Some additional features include:

(1) grammaticalization of the verb 'to make' into an adverbializer, e.g. Lijiang tʂʰu³¹ be³³ ndʑi³³ 'go quickly' (from be³³ 'to make'), Shixing ᴸtʂʰõ ᴸbɜ = ᴴsi ᴸᴴpʰæ̃ 'precipitously escape' (from ᴸᴴbɜ 'to make', followed by the clause connector si)

(2) deliminative verbal prefix related to the numeral 'one', Yongning Na dɿ³³- from dɿ³³ 'one' (Lidz 2006), Shixing dʑi- from ᴸᴴdʑĩ 'one'. For example, Yongning Na dɿ³³-di¹³ 'to follow (for a while)'; Shixing ᴸᴴdʑi-çĩ 'to have a look'.

At the same time, internal divergence between Shixing and Na languages is manifested in the lack of agreement between lexical and some grammatical subsystems.[20] Divergences between grammatical subsystems are furthermore essentially restricted to those systems that appear to be particularly prone to restructuring in the Muli area, as observed in its languages of known genetic affiliation, or to those salient phenomena that are exclusive to the area, namely:

(1) Shixing's system of case markers is more developed than that in other Na languages. More precisely, Shixing has more cases than Naxi and Moso; and case markers that overlap between these languages appear unrelated.

(2) Shixing has a highly reduced classifier system with only two sortal classifiers (one general and one for elongated entities, see §2.2). The development of its classifier system furthermore fits within the context of the overall south-north gradual reduction of classifier systems in Na languages. Thus, Naxi has slightly over 40 sortal classifiers (as counted from Pinson 1998:245-251), Yongning Na has approximately 15 sortal classifiers (Lidz 2006:8-14, Yang 2009:24-25), whereas Laze has only 5 to 10 sortal classifiers (Huang 2009, Alexis Michaud, p.c.). This transition appears further accompanied by that (also south to north) from omnisyllabic tone systems (Naxi) to restricted tone systems, characterized by neutralization of tonal contrasts (Yongning Na, Laze). A correlated development is that of classifiers: from free forms (Naxi) to bound forms (enclitics to numerals, as in Laze).

(3) Shixing also has a better developed (than in other Na varieties) system of existential (locative) verbs.

(4) Shixing has directional prefixes.

---

[20] While systematic lexical comparison between Shixing and Na languages is yet to be undertaken, pending also a rigorous phonological analysis of Shixing, two observations regarding shared lexical items between Shixing and Na languages can be made. First, on an impressionistic level, lexical similarities between these languages are substantial, but they are expected to be significantly fewer than 60%, as shared between Naxi and Moso. Notably, in comparison to the latter languages, Shixing has an extensive number of Tibetan and Pumi loans. Second, some diagnostic regular correspondences between Naxi and Moso (such as that between a prenasalized initial in Naxi and a non-nasal initial in Moso) may be paralleled in Shixing (a non-nasal initial followed by a nasalized vowel). For example, 'bridge': Naxi ndzo³¹, Moso dzo³³, Shixing ᴴzɛ̃; 'to sit; to live': Naxi ndzɯ³¹, Moso dzɯ¹³, Shixing ᴴdzũ; 'short': Naxi ndər³³, Moso da³³, dər³³; Shixing ᴸᴴdɛ̃.

(5) Shixing has a tone system characterized by culminativity (as discussed in detail in Chirkova & Michaud 2009).

The reason for these dissimilarities between Shixing and its supposed Na relatives outside of the area is likely to be contact influence from the areal neighbors of Shixing, most importantly, its closest geographical neighbors in Shuiluo Tibetan and Pumi. So, as a first approximation, Shixing can be hypothesized to be a Na language that has undergone considerable restructuring in Muli.[21]

More fine-grained studies, including the largest possible range and number of similarities between Shixing and Na, accompanied by careful lexical comparisons, will reveal whether these languages form one natural group and will further lead to the conclusion of the precise nature of the relationship between them (genetic or contact-induced).

4. Subgrouping in the Qiangic area and Sino-Tibetan at large

It is a lasting contribution of Sun Hongkai to the field of Sino-Tibetan studies to single out the Qiangic area, and to identify some of its key features, while focusing on its languages of uncertain affiliation. Follow-up investigations, such as the ongoing work on the languages of Muli, as discussed presently, suggest that the initial interpretation of the nature of similarities between the more obscure languages of the Qiangic area as genetic requires adjustment, and that a coherent understanding of the relationship between these languages critically relies on that of the complex multi-lingual area, in which they are spoken. To adduce an explanation to the many salient areal features, some of which are truly unique in the Sino-Tibetan context, we shall need to move beyond the usual practice of restricting the scope of studied languages to those labeled Qiangic. This new approach will increase both the number of concerned languages and the number of relevant areal features. As a result, Baima Tibetan will rightfully reclaim its place as a valid and telling member of the Qiangic *Sprachbund*.

Needless to say, the unique features of the Qiangic area are likely to provide new insights into the history of Sino-Tibetan at large. Not surprisingly, related comparative and reconstruction work can only be revealing, if it is performed on coherent, natural

---

[21] Notably, the two putative Na languages of Muli, Laze and Shixing, both exhibit salient areal Muli features and differ essentially in their respective degree of restructuring. Namely, Shixing is more profoundly (lexically, prosodically, and syntactically) restructured than Laze. As a first approximation, this may be simply due to a longer time of residence in Muli, and consequently, a longer time of exposure to convergence: ca. 500 years for the Shixing group (Xie 1992:48) vs. ca. 200 years for the Laze (Guo & He 1994:6-7).

groups, whereas the issue of the precise subgrouping in the complex Qiangic area is far from resolved, as I have tried to show.

On a broader scale, the problem of subgrouping, as discussed in relation to Qiangic, is emblematic for Sino-Tibetan at large, where the precise subgrouping of constituents remains in many cases controversial. In addition to outstanding challenges of subgrouping in historical linguistics in general, such as lack of objective criteria to distinguish retentions from innovations or absence of objective criteria to factor out diffusion or identical independent change (see Harrison 2003:232-239 for discussion), added challenges to subgrouping in the Sino-Tibetan context comprise (Handel 2008:426, 431, 435):

(1) absence of a complete reconstruction of Proto-Sino-Tibetan, that makes it difficult to identify shared innovations with certainty between proposed subgroups (at the same time, a complete reconstruction in turn requires a clear subgrouping, without which it is difficult to properly weight and evaluate data from the daughter languages);

(2) insufficient documentation of many Sino-Tibetan languages;

(3) complex migration histories and areal convergence, obscuring recognition of genetic relationships (e.g. LaPolla 2001);

(4) existence of many languages with monosyllabic roots that increases the probability of chance resemblances leading to the false identification of cognates.

Yet one more momentous challenge of the Sino-Tibetan family is the pervasive absence of previous attestations (direct historical evidence) of many of its languages.

Solutions to these fundamental problems may or may not be found. For instance, no previous attestations of genetically obscure languages of the Qiangic area are in all likelihood forthcoming. While steadily working towards solutions and hoping that some obstacles can eventually be overcome, in my opinion, studies on the linguistic history of Sino-Tibetan languages have in the meantime everything to gain by turning to a broad range and variety of available and steadily growing body of empirical evidence, including that which is normally discarded by the conventional comparative method (such as typological features) for many clues that they can provide on specific scenarios of diachronic change.

The initial phase of classifying Sino-Tibetan languages now appears to be complete. It consists of "classification from above" (family into subgroups) and is based on a small number of criteria (cognate vocabulary, common innovations). This allows scholars

to isolate groups of a manageable size for study. Due to the use of a small number of criteria, this type of classification unavoidably runs the risk of yielding groups that are not natural (not monophyletic), and hence are neither complete nor sufficiently discrete to be used for precise purposes, such as reconstruction work. The next logical step to be taken is to refine proposed subgroups to ensure completeness and accuracy of information that can be obtained from each of them on their respective ancestral states. In my opinion, this can be profitably done by changing the approach to that of "classification from below" (languages to subgroups), especially at the often fuzzy boundaries of already proposed subgroups, to arrive at groups that are defined by overall synchronic similarities, in other words, groups that are likely to be monophyletic. An added bonus of the classification from below is that definition of each natural group is intrinsically relational to that of its kin. Consequently, pursuit of boundaries of each and every natural group is bound to shed light on the nature, scope, and history of many of its areal neighbors.

Katia Chirkova

Appendix: Features shared by the four Qiangic languages of Muli (Pumi, Lizu, Namuzi, Shixing) exemplified and compared to Kami Tibetan (related to §§2.1 and 2.3)

(1) Pronunciation of the vowel /u/ (in Pumi ə) as a syllabic bilabial trill after bilabial and apical stops. For example, Lizu ᴴᴸtu [tʙ⁵¹] 'bean', Namuzi tu¹³ [tʙ¹³] 'to slaughter', Shixing ᴴdu [dʙ⁵⁵] 'oil', Pumi ᴴpə [pʙ⁵⁵] 'to dig'. This feature is not attested in Kami.

(2) Uvular phonemes: (a) contrastive with velars, as in Lizu, Namuzi and Shixing, e.g. Lizu ᴸᴴne-ko 'to put (inside something)' vs. ᴸᴴne-qo 'to be blind'; Shixing ᴴkʰɜ 'foot' vs. ᴴqʰɜ 'feces', or (b) allophones of velar fricatives, as in Pumi and Kami Tibetan. For example, Pumi: ᴸᴴxa [χɑ²⁴] 'to bite', ᴴɣã [ʁã⁵⁵] 'fang'; Kami, ᴴxɔ [χɔ⁵⁵] 'meat, flesh' (WT *sha*), ᴸxu [χu¹³] 'yoghurt' (WT *zho*).

(3) Common principles of prosodic organization: tone systems characterized by culminativity—a restriction of not more than one pronounced lexical tone per prosodic word with one tonal assignment (mostly restricted to the first syllable of the word) affecting much or all of the prosodic word, see Chirkova & Michaud (2009) for the prosodic organization of Shixing, Chirkova (2008) for the prosodic organization of Lizu, and Chirkova (ms.) for the prosodic organization of Kami.

(4) Identical principles of word-formation, including:

(a) Extensive use of reduplication. Reduplication involving dynamic verbs expresses frequentative or iterative meaning, e.g. Lizu ᴴᴸka 'to hit' vs. ᴴka-ka 'to fight', Namuzi ᴸᴴqæ-qæ 'to scratch an itch', Shixing ᴸᴴdzõ-dzõ 'to run'. An additional meaning of reduplication is reciprocity, e.g. Shixing ᴸᴴqɑo-qɑo 'to help (each other)'. The meaning of reduplication for stative verbs (adjectives) is intensification, e.g. Lizu ᴴʑy 'thick' vs. ᴴʑy-ʑy '(very) thick'; Shixing ᴴguɜ-guɜ '(very) round'; Kami ᴸʒõ 'light' vs. ᴸᴴʒõ-ʒõ '(very) light'.

(b) Compounding, e.g. Namuzi ɬie⁵⁵-bie³¹ lo⁵⁵-χo³¹ 'carrot', from ɬie⁵⁵-bie⁵⁵ 'turnip', lo⁵⁵-χo³¹ 'red'; Lizu ᴴtsʰo-mo 'elderly person', from ᴴᴸtsʰo 'person', ᴸᴴtʰe-mo 'old' (with the directional prefix tʰe-); Shixing ᴴᴸtsʰɜ-χɑo 'salty', from ᴴᴸtsʰɜ 'salt', ᴴqʰɑosõ 'bitter' (the initial qʰ- in 'bitter' undergoes lenition in the intervocalic position, see Chirkova 2009)

(5) Affixation. This type comprises:

(i) Kinship prefix *a-* (older kin), e.g. Lizu, ^Ha-ja 'older sibling (brother or sister)', Namuzi: æ⁵⁵-jæ⁵⁵ 'older sibling (brother or sister)', Shixing and Kami: ^{LH}a-jy 'older brother', ^{LH}a-ʑi 'older sister'

(ii) Diminutive suffix derived from the morpheme for 'child' or 'son':

	Diminutive suffix	**Meaning**	**Examples**
Pumi	^Htsuə	'son'	^{LH}mɜtsə 'cat': ^{LH}mɜtsə-tsuə 'kitten'
Lizu	1. jɛ	'small'	^{HL}tɕʰɛ 'dog': ^{HL}tɕʰɛ-jɛ 'pup'
	2. ^Hjaqɑ	'child'	^{LH}mutsɹ 'cat': ^{LH}mutsɹ jaqɑ 'kitten'
Namuzi	zə⁵⁵	'child'	jo⁵⁵ 'sheep': jo⁵⁵-zə⁵⁵ 'lamb'
Shixing	^{LH}zõ	'child, male'	^{LH}mazɹ 'cat': ^{LH}mazɹ-zõ 'kitten'
Kami	1. ka	'child'	^Htʃʰə 'dog': ^{LH}tʃʰə-ka 'pup' ^Hwu-li 'cat': ^{LH}wu-ka 'kitten'
	2. tʂʰə (WT *phrug*)	'child'	^Hwu-li 'cat': ^{LH}wu-tʂʰə 'kitten'

(iii) Gender suffixes for animals (in Kami, prefixes):

	Female	**Male**	**Examples**
Pumi	mã	pu	^{LH}mɜtsə 'cat': ^{LH}mɜtsə-mã 'female cat' ^Lkʰə^{LH}dza 'dog': ^Hkʰiə-mã 'bitch, female dog'; ^{LH}kʰiə-pu 'male dog'
Lizu	mæ	1. Npʰe 2. bu	^{HL}tɕʰe 'dog': ^{HL}tɕʰe-ma 'bitch, female dog'; ^{HL}tɕʰe-Npʰɛ 'male dog' ^{LH}mutsɹ 'cat': ^{LH}mutsɹ-ma 'female cat'; ^{LH}mutsɹ-bu 'male dog'
Namuzi	mie	1. (N)phu 2. (ta⁵⁵-)bu⁵⁵	firæ⁵⁵ 'chicken': firæ⁵⁵-mie⁵⁵ 'hen'; firæ⁵⁵-phu⁵⁵ 'rooster' χa³³la⁵⁵ 'cat': χa³³la⁵⁵ a⁵⁵-mie⁵⁵ 'female cat'; χa³³la⁵⁵ ta⁵⁵-bu⁵⁵ 'male dog'
Shixing	mi	pʰɜ	^{HL}kʰuɜ 'dog': ^{HL}kʰuɜ-mi 'bitch, female dog'; ^{HL}kʰuɜ-pʰɜ 'male dog' ^{LH}mazɹ 'cat': ^{LH}mazɹ-mi 'female cat'; ^{LH}mazɹ-pʰɜ 'male dog'
Kami	mu (WT *mo*)	pʰu (WT *pho*)	^Htʃʰə 'dog': ^{LH}mu-tʃʰə 'bitch'; ^{LH}pʰu-tʃʰə 'male dog' ^Hwu-li 'cat': ^{LH}mu-li 'female cat'; ^{LH}pʰu-li 'male cat'

(6) Numeral classifiers (see §2.2)

Kami has an incipient system of numeral classifiers, in which classifiers are optional and restricted to animate nouns. Consider, for instance, the optional use of the (incipient) classifier ^HNgu (WT *mgo* 'head') in the expression ^Lɲə = ^HNgu ^Ltɕi (WT *mi mgo gcig*) 'one person'.

(7) Directional Prefixes:

	up	down	inside	outside	towards oneself	from oneself
Pumi	tə⁵⁵-	nʒ-	hʒ-	kʰə-	də-	tʰʒ-
Lizu	dɛ-	nɛ-	kʰɛ-	tʰɛ-		
Namuzi	lo-	mi-		tɕʰi-		
Shixing	dʑi-	miɛ-	kʰu-	bə-		
Kami	ja-	ma-			tsʰa-	pʰa-

In addition, Shixing has an aspectual (perfective) prefix lʒ-.

(8) Past/non-past distinction (suppletive forms) in some high frequency verbs and nominalization markers. Consider, for instance, past and non-past stems of the verb 'to go':

	Past stem	**Non-past stem**
Pumi	^{HL}ʂɤ̃	^{HL}çə
Lizu	^{LH}da	^{LH}ji
Namuzi	hũ⁵⁵	bie³⁵
Shixing	^{LH}xɑ	^{LH}bi
Kami	^Hsʰɤ̃ (*song*)	^LNdʐu (*'gro*)

In addition, patient nominalizers in Lizu and Shixing have distinct past and non-past forms, namely, in Lizu: (a) past -mi, e.g. ^{LH}ne-dzɿ = ^{LH}mi 'those that have been eaten', and (b) non-past -ly, e.g. ^{LH}dzɿ-ly 'edibles, things to eat'. In Shixing: (a) past -li, e.g. ^Hdʑõ = li ^{LH}zõ ɲi ^{LH}biʒ-tsʰʒ 'rice and bacon that he used to have', and (b) non-past -gʒ, e.g. ^{LH}dzʒ = gʒ 'edibles, things to eat'.

(9) Multiple existential verbs:

Existential verb	Pumi	Lizu	Namuzi	Shixing
to have, to possess	^{HL}bõ⁵¹	^{LH}bo	bo⁵⁵	^{LH}dʑõ
to exist (of animate entities)	^{HL}ʑɛ	^Hdzo	dzo⁵⁵	^{LH}jĩ
to exist (of inanimate entities)		^{LH}ha	ndzæ³¹	^{LH}dʑõ
to exist (of movable entities)		^{LH}dzwa	zə³¹	

to exist (inside a container)	^{HL}kui or ^{HL}tei	^{HL}dzɛ		^{H}kʰuʒ
to exist (attached to an entity)	^{HL}diã			^{LH}dzi
to exist (of abstract entities)	^{LH}çi	^{LH}njɛ	dzʐə^{55}-gi^{55}	

Existential verbs in Kami fall into two contrastive types, on the one hand, those that belong to the personal sphere of the speaker (egophoric), and, on the other hand, those that do not. For example, for the verb 'to exist; to be', the egophoric form is ^{L}Ndə ('*dug*) and the non-egophoric form is ^{H}n̥ɔ̃ (*snang*); for the verb 'to have, to possess', the egophoric forms are ^{L}ʒu (*yod*) (old knowledge) and ^{L}ʒã (*yod.*?) (new knowledge), whereas the non-egophoric form is again ^{H}n̥ɔ̃ (*snang*).

References

Atshogs, Yeshes Vodgsal. 2008. Chengzhang Zangyu de yinxi [The phonological system of Chengzhang Tibetan]. Paper presented at the Workshop on Tibeto-Burman Languages of Sichuan, November 21-22, 2008. Taipei: Academia Sinica. (In Chinese)

Bisang, Walter. 2004. Dialectology and typology—An integrative perspective. *Dialectology Meets Typology: Dialect Grammar from a Cross-linguistic Perspective*, ed. by Bernd Kortmann, 11-45. Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Bisang, Walter. 2006. Linguistic areas, language contact and typology: some implications from the case of Ethiopia as a linguistic area. *Linguistic Areas: Convergence in Historical and Typological Perspective*, ed. by Yaron Matras, April McMahon & Nigel Vincent, 75-98. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire & New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Bradley, David. 1997. Tibeto-Burman languages and classification. *Tibeto-Burman Languages of the Himalayas*, ed. by David Bradley, 1-71. Pacific Linguistics A-86. Canberra: The Australian National University.

Bradley, David. 2005. Why do numerals show 'irregular' correspondence patterns in Tibeto-Burman? Some Southeastern Tibeto-Burman examples. *Cahiers de Linguistique – Asie Orientale* 34.2:221-238.

Campbell, Lyle. 2006. Areal linguistics: a closer scrutiny. *Linguistic Areas: Convergence in Historical and Typological Perspective*, ed. by Yaron Matras, April McMahon & Nigel Vincent, 1-31. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire & New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Chirkova, Katia. 2008. Essential characteristics of Lizu, a Qiangic language of Western Sichuan. Paper presented at the Workshop on Tibeto-Burman Languages of Sichuan, November 21-22, 2008. Taipei: Institute of Linguistics, Academia Sinica.

Chirkova, Katia. 2009. Shixing, a Sino-Tibetan language of South-West China: a grammatical sketch with two appended texts. *Linguistics of the Tibeto-Burman Area* 32.1:1-89.

Chirkova, Katia. Manuscript. Phonological profile of Kami, the Tibetan dialect of Muli. Submitted for publication in a monograph on the phonology of lesser-known Tibetan dialects, ed. by Jackson T.-S. Sun. Language and Linguistics Monograph Series.

Chirkova, Katia, and Alexis Michaud. 2009. Approaching the prosodic system of Shixing. *Language and Linguistics* 10.3:539-568.

Dahl, Östen. 2001. Principles of areal typology. *Language Typology and Language Universals: An International Handbook*, Vol. 2, ed. by Martin Haspelmath,

Ekkehard König, Wulf Oesterreicher & Wolfgang Raible, 1456-1470. Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter.

Dryer, Matthew S. 2008. Word order in Tibeto-Burman languages. *Linguistics of the Tibeto-Burman Area* 31.1:1-83.

Gai, Xingzhi, and Zhuyi Jiang. 1990. Naxiyu zai Zang-Mianyu zhong de diwei [The position of Naxi within Tibeto-Burman]. *Minzu Yuwen* [*Minority Languages of China*] 1990.1:63-73. (In Chinese)

Gesang Jumian (skal bzang 'gyur med). 1989. Phonological analysis of Batang Tibetan. *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 43.2-3:331-358.

Guo, Dalie, and Zhiwu He. 1994. *Naxizu Shi* [*History of the Naxi*]. Chengdu: Sichuan Nationalities Publishing House. (In Chinese)

Evans, Jonathan P. 2008. Structured privativity and the complexity of simplicity, or the ups and downs of privative tone. Manuscript.

Handel, Zev. 2008. What is Sino-Tibetan? Snapshot of a field and a language family in flux. *Language and Linguistics Compass* 2.3:422-441.

Harrison, Shelly P. 2003. On the limits of the comparative method. *The Handbook of Historical Linguistics*, ed. by Brian D. Joseph & Richard D. Janda, 213-243. Malden: Blackwell.

He, Jiren, and Zhuyi Jiang. 1985. *Naxiyu Jianzhi* [*A Brief Description of the Naxi Language*]. Beijing: Nationalities Press. (In Chinese)

Hu, Suhua. 2002. *Yiyu Jiegou Zhuci Yanjiu* [*Research on Yi Structural Particles*]. Beijing: Nationalities Press. (In Chinese)

Hua, Kan, and Gazangta. 1997. Zangyu Songpanhua de yinxi he yuyin de lishi yanbian [Sound system of Songpan Tibetan and its historical development]. *Zhongguo Zangxue* [*China Tibetology*] 1997.2:134-150. (In Chinese)

Huang, Bufan. 1991. Qiangyuzhi yuyan [Qiangic languages]. *Han-Zangyu Gailun* [*A General Introduction to Sino-Tibetan Languages*], Vol. 2, ed. by Xueliang Ma, 208-369. Beijing: Peking University Press. (In Chinese)

Huang, Bufan. 1997. Tongyuanci bijiao cibiao de xuanci fanwei he biaozhun—yi Zang-Mianyu tongyuanci bijiao cibiao de zhiding wei li [On the scope and criteria of word selection for comparative cognateness lists, exemplified by a draft list of cognate words in Tibeto-Burman languages]. *Minzu Yuwen* [*Minority Languages of China*] 1997.4:10-16. (In Chinese)

Huang, Bufan. 2009. Muli Shuitianhua gaikuang [An outline of the Shuitian language of Muli]. *Han-Zangyu Xuebao* [*Journal of Sino-Tibetan Linguistics*] 3:30-55. Beijing: The Commercial Press. (In Chinese)

Huang, Bufan, and Renzeng Wangmu. 1991. Namuziyu [The Namuzi language]. *Zang-Mianyu Shiwu Zhong* [*Fifteen Tibeto-Burman Languages*], ed. by Qingxia Dai,

Bufan Huang, Ailan Fu, Renzeng Wangmu & Juhuang Liu, 153-173. Beijing: Beijing Yanshan Press. (In Chinese)

Huang, Bufan, and Minghui Zhang. 1995. Baimahua zhishu wenti yanjiu [A study of the genetic affiliation of Baima]. *Zhongguo Zangxue* [*China Tibetology*] 1995.2: 79-118. (In Chinese)

Jacques, Guillaume. 2011. Tonal alternations in the Pumi verbal system. *Language and Linguistics* 12.2:359-392.

Jacques, Guillaume, and Alexis Michaud. 2011. Approaching the historical phonology of three highly eroded Sino-Tibetan languages: Naxi, Na and Laze. *Diachronica* 28.4:468-498.

Jiang, Zhuyi. 1993. Naxiyu dongbu he xibu fangyan yufa yitong gaishu [Syntactic similarities and differences between Western and Eastern dialects of Naxi]. *Minzu Yuwen* [*Minority Languages of China*] 1993.4:43-50. (In Chinese)

Kessler, Brett. 2001. *The Significance of Word Lists*. Stanford: CSLI.

Kessler, Peter. 1986. *The Historical Kingdom of Mili*. Rikon: Tibet-Institut Rikon.

Lama Ciwo. 1994. Namuyiyu zhishu yanjiu [On the genetic affiliation of the Namuyi language]. *Minzu Yuwen* [*Minority Languages of China*] 1994.1:50-60. (In Chinese)

LaPolla, Randy J. 1994. Parallel grammaticalizations in Tibeto-Burman: evidence of Sapir's "drift". *Linguistics of the Tibeto-Burman Area* 17.1:61-80.

LaPolla, Randy J. 2001. The role of migration and language contact in the development of the Sino-Tibetan language family. *Areal Diffusion and Genetic Inheritance: Problems in Comparative Linguistics*, ed. by Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald & R.M.W. Dixon, 225-254. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press.

LaPolla, Randy J. 2003. Overview of Sino-Tibetan morphosyntax. *The Sino-Tibetan Languages*, ed. by Graham Thurgood & Randy J. LaPolla, 22-42. London: Routledge.

Li, Lan. 2010. Sichuan Muli Hanyu fangyan jilue [A sketch of Chinese dialect in Muli Tibetan Autonomous County in Sichuan Province]. *Fangyan* [*Dialect*] 2010.2: 114-133. (In Chinese)

Li, Min, and Ming Ma. 1983. *Liangshan Yiyu Yuyin Gailun* [*Introduction to the Phonetics of Liangshan Yi*]. Chengdu: Sichuan Nationalities Publishing House. (In Chinese)

Lidz, Liberty. 2006. A synopsis of Yongning Na (Mosuo). Paper presented at the 39th International Conference on Sino-Tibetan Languages and Linguistics, September 14-17, 2006. Seattle: University of Washington.

Lu, Shaozun. 2001. *Pumiyu Fangyan Yanjiu* [*A Dialectal Study of the Pumi Language*]. Beijing: Nationalities Press. (In Chinese)

Matisoff, James A. 2004. "Brightening" and the place of Xixia (Tangut) in the Qiangic

branch of Tibeto-Burman. *Studies on Sino-Tibetan Languages: Papers in Honor of Professor Hwang-cherng Gong on his Seventieth Birthday*, ed. by Ying-chin Lin, Fang-min Hsu, Chun-chih Lee, Jackson T.-S. Sun, Hsiu-fang Yang & Dah-an Ho, 327-352. Taipei: Institute of Linguistics, Academia Sinica.

Matras, Yaron, and Jeanette Sakel. 2007. Investigating the mechanisms of pattern replication in language convergence. *Studies in Language* 31.4:829-865.

Matthews, Stephen. 2006. Cantonese grammar in areal perspective. *Grammars in Contact: A Cross-Linguistic Typology*, ed. by Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald & R.M.W. Dixon, 220-236. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press.

McMahon, April, and Robert McMahon. 2006. Keeping contact in the family: approaches to language classification and contact-induced change. *Linguistic Areas: Convergence in Historical and Typological Perspective*, ed. by Yaron Matras, April McMahon & Nigel Vincent, 51-74. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire & New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Muli Tibetan Autonomous County Gazetteers Editing and Compiling Committee. (eds.) (forthcoming). *Muli Zangzu Zizhixian Zhi* [*Gazetteers of Muli Tibetan Autonomous County*]. Chengdu: Sichuan People's Publishing House. (In Chinese)

Nichols, Johanna. 1992. *Linguistic Diversity in Space and Time*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Nishida, Tatsuo, and Hongkai Sun. 1990. *Hakuba Yakugo no Kenkyū: Hakuba no Kōzō to Keitō* [*A Study of the Baima-Chinese Vocabulary 'Baima Yiyu': The Structure and Affiliation of the Baima Language*]. Kyoto: Shokado. (In Japanese)

Pinson, Thomas M. 1998. *Naqxi-Habaq-Yiyu Geezheeq Ceeqhuil: Naxi-Chinese-English Glossary with English and Chinese Indexes*. Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics.

Shirai, Satoko. 2009. Directional prefixes in nDrapa and neighboring languages: an areal feature of Western Sichuan. *Issues in Tibeto-Burman Historical Linguistics*, ed. by Yasuhiko Nagano, 7-20. Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology.

Sokal, Robert R., and Peter H. A. Sneath. 1963. *Principles of Numerical Taxonomy*. San Francisco & London: W. H. Freeman.

Sun, Hongkai. 1962. Qiangyu gaikuang [An outline of the Qiang language]. *Zhongguo Yuwen* [*Studies of the Chinese Language*] 1962.12:561-571. (In Chinese)

Sun, Hongkai. 1980. Baimaren de yuyan [The language of the Baima]. *Baima Zangren Zushu Wenti Taolunji* [*A Collection of Discussions on the Question of the Ethnic Classification of the Baima Tibetans*], ed. by Sichuan Nationalities Research Institute, 15-26. Chengdu: Sichuan Nationalities Research Institute. (In Chinese)

Sun, Hongkai. 1982. Qiangyu zhishu wenti chu tan [Preliminary explorations on the linguistic classification of Qiangic]. *Minzu Yuwen Yanjiu Wenji* [*Collection of*

Papers on Minority Language Studies], ed. by *Minzu Yuwen* Editorial Board, 189-224. Xining: Qinghai Nationalities Publishing House. (In Chinese)

Sun, Hongkai. 1983a. Liujiang liuyu de minzu yuyan ji qi xishu fenlei [Minority languages of the six river valley and their genetic classification]. *Minzu Xuebao* [*Scholarly Journal of Nationalities*] 3:99-273. (In Chinese)

Sun, Hongkai. 1983b. Chuanxi minzu zoulang diqu de yuyan [Languages of the ethnic corridor of Western Sichuan]. *Xinan Minzu Yanjiu* [*Studies on the Southwest Nationalities*], ed. by Association of Studies on China Southwest Nationalities, 429-454. Chengdu: Sichuan Nationalities Publishing House. (In Chinese)

Sun, Hongkai. 1991. Cong cihui bijiao kan Xixiayu yu Zang-Mian yuzu Qiangyuzhi de guanxi [The relationship between Tangut and the Qiang branch of Tibeto-Burman from the point of view of shared lexical items]. *Minzu Yuwen* [*Minority Languages of China*] 1991.2:1-11. (In Chinese)

Sun, Hongkai. 2001a. Naxiyu zai Zang-Mian yuzu yuyan zhong de lishi diwei [On the historical position of Naxi within Tibeto-Burman language family]. *Yuyan Yanjiu* [*Studies in Language and Linguistics*] 2001.1:90-99. (In Chinese)

Sun, Hongkai. 2001b. Lun Zang-Mian yuzu zhong de Qiangyuzhi yuyan [On the Qiangic branch of the Tibet-Burman language family]. *Language and Linguistics* 2.1:157-181. (In Chinese)

Sun, Hongkai, Katia Chirkova, and Guangkun Liu. 2007. *Baimayu Yanjiu* [*The Baima Language*]. Beijing: Nationalities Press. (In Chinese)

Sun, Jackson T.-S. 1997. Typology of tone in Tibetan. *Chinese Languages and Linguistics*, Vol. 4: *Typological Studies of Languages in China*, ed. by Chiu-yu Tseng, 485-521. Taipei: Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica.

Sun, Jackson T.-S. 2000a. Parallelisms in the verb morphology of Sidaba rGyalrong and Lavrung in rGyalrongic. *Language and Linguistics* 1.1:161-190.

Sun, Jackson T.-S. 2000b. Stem alternations in Puxi verb inflection: toward validating the rGyalrongic subgroup in Qiangic. *Language and Linguistics* 1.2:211-232.

Sun, Jackson T.-S. 2003. Phonological profile of Zhongu: a new Tibetan dialect of Northern Sichuan. *Language and Linguistics* 4.4:769-836.

Thomas, Frederick William. 1948. *Nam: An Ancient Language of the Sino-Tibetan Borderland*. London: Oxford University Press.

Thomason, Sarah Grey, and Terrence Kaufman. 1988. *Language Contact, Creolization, and Genetic Linguistics*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Thurgood, Graham. 2003. A subgrouping of the Sino-Tibetan languages: the interaction between language contact, change, and inheritance. *The Sino-Tibetan Languages*, ed. by Graham Thurgood & Randy J. LaPolla, 3-21. London: Routledge.

Xie, Jianyou. 1992. Muli duoyu shequ [On the multi-lingual community of Muli].

Minzu Yuwen Yanjiu Xin Tan [*Advances in Studies on Minority Languages of China*], ed. by Xueliang Ma et al., 47-58. Chengdu: Sichuan Nationalities Publishing House. (In Chinese)

Yang, Fuquan. 2006. "Namuyi" yu "Na" zhi zuqun guanxi kaolue [The ethnic relationship between the Namuyi and Na]. *Minzu Yanjiu* [*Ethno-National Studies*] 2006.3: 52-59. (In Chinese)

Yang, Zhenhong. 2009. An overview of the Mosuo language. *Linguistics of the Tibeto-Burman Area* 32.2:1-43.

Zhang, Jichuan. 1994. Baimahua yu Zangyu [Baima and Tibetan]. *Minzu Yuwen* [*Minority Languages of China*] 1994.2:11-24; 1994.3:58-67. (In Chinese)

Zhu, Wenxu. 2005. *Yiyu Fangyanxue* [*A Study of Yi Dialects*]. Beijing: Minzu University of China Press. (In Chinese)

Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique
Centre de recherches linguistiques sur l'Asie orientale
131 boulevard Saint-Michel
75005 Paris France
katia.chirkova@gmail.com

區域視野下的羌語支語言：
木里縣語言的個案研究

齊卡佳

CRLAO, CNRS

　　本文針對羌語支爲漢藏語系亞語族這一假設進行研究並考察其實證效度。該假設認爲中國西南地區的 13 種尚未得到充分研究的語言擁有一個共同的起源（即它們具有親緣關係）。本研究通過對四川省木里藏族自治縣內的四種羌語支語言的長時間實地調查及研究，並將其與相鄰的亞語族（彝語、納西語、藏語、漢語）作出比較。在搜集到的材料研究基礎上，本文對羌語支自成一支這個假設提出質疑，認爲目前被看作羌語支成員之定義特徵應該是由於相鄰的語言之間的特徵相互擴散。我們進一步提出木里縣內目前被同時劃分爲羌語支的四種當地語言各自相異，不大可能有密切的親緣關係，因此，我們認爲 "羌語支" 應被看作是一個以區域特徵來定義的概念，並提出有關目前被認爲是屬於羌語支成員的語言之間的親緣歸屬問題的幾個假設。本文反思羌語支作爲亞語族這一問題，並將這一思考推擴到漢藏語系語言之歸屬分類這一問題上。

關鍵詞：羌語支，語言歸屬分類，區域語言學，漢藏語系