

Linguistic Characteristics of the Tani (Mirish) Branch of Tibeto-Burman*

Jackson T.-S. Sun

喜馬拉雅山東麓，藏、印、緬、不丹的交界地帶，有一群散布遼闊，少為人知的語言，屬藏緬語族下的獨立語支。本文遵照本民族意願，稱其為達尼語支。

達尼語支包括阿迪語、尼西一崩尼語、德根語、嘎龍語、米朗語、阿巴達尼語、米興語，以及山米里語，大多分布在印佔區，總人口約五、六十萬。

達尼語支在藏緬語族中，與周圍語言涇渭分明，而內部一致性較大，具有若干共同特徵。本文參考大量材料，加以作者在藏南親身考察之認識，嘗試全面探討達尼語支在語音、詞彙、形態，以及句法各層面之顯著共性，目的在勾繪出達尼語支之核心特點，並求拋磚引玉，為日後達尼語支語言深入調查奠定基礎。

1. Introduction

At the eastern end of the Himalayas, in a mountainous region bounded on four sides by Tibet (China), Assam (India), Bhutan, and Burma, are

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situated a chain of closely related Tibeto-Burman languages and dialects, known collectively under the name Tani (= Mirish, Mishingish).¹ The tribal groups that speak Tani languages are now found mainly in Indian territory, comprising the Adi (paleo-exonym: Abor; with many culturally and

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- 1 Thangi Chhange (who is working on Nishi and Adi) and I have agreed to jointly adopt herewith the more appropriate appellation Tani (as proposed by Pegu 1981: 102 and Padun 1971:87), which is derived from Abo Tani, the legendary common ancestor of all Tani-speaking tribes, in place of its older equivalents Mirish (Benedict's term) or Mishingish (Shafer's term). The Na Bengni (hereafter Bengni S) and Smin-gling Bokar (hereafter Bokar S) data included in this paper results from my recent field work in Tibet. Both of my Bengni consultants are originally from the small Na tribe of the Taksin area in the Upper Subansiri District, which uses a dialect of Bengni (quite similar, in fact, to Yano Bengni as described in Bor 1938), which is a widely spoken western Tani language. My Bokar consultant comes from the Saji clan, as Ouyang Jueya's two informants on whose speech the Bokar Luoba data in Sun et al. 1980 was based. The other data cited here represent the following specific varieties (referred to loosely as 'languages') of Tani, denoted also by binomes consisting of ethno-linguistic names plus initials of the surnames of the authors of the respective sources:

Adi A	Anonymous 1973	Apatani S	Simon 1972
Apatani W	Weidert 1987	Bangni R	Robinson 1851
Bokar OY	Ouyang 1985	Bori M	Megu 1988
Damu OY	Ouyang 1985	Gallong DG	Das Gupta 1963
Gallong W	Weidert 1987	Hill Miri S	Simon 1976
Lel Dafla R	Ray 1967	Milang T	Tayeng 1976

linguistically related subtribes), Nishi-Bengni (paleo-exonym: Dafla),² Hill Miri, Tagin, and Apatani (paleo-exonym: Apa Tanang) of the Kameng, Subansiri, Siang, and Lohit Districts of Arunachal Pradesh,³ and the Mising of northern Assam. A small number of Adi and Bengni communities spill over into adjacent areas on the Tibetan side of the Sino-Indian border, chiefly at Me-tog (Miguba, Misinba), Smin-gling (Bokar, Tagin), and Lhun-rtse (Bengni, Na, Bayi, Dazu, and Mara)⁴ Counties of Tibet.

Both phonological and lexical criteria suggest subgrouping the Tani languages into two major divisions: an Eastern group (consisting of dialects spoken by many of the Adi tribes), and a Western group (consisting of dialects spoken by the Nishi, Bengni, Tagin, Gallong, and Hill Miri tribes). Bokar and Damu represent transitional types between the two major groups and thus are more difficult to subclassify. In addition, the two aberrant Tani

Minyong DG	Das Gupta 1977a	Mising L	Lorrain 1907
Mising N	Needham 1886	Mising T	Taid 1987a, 1987b
Nishi Ch	Chhange 1990, 1992	Nising DG	Das Gupta 1969
Nyisi J	Jolly 1970	Nyisu H	Hamilton 1900
Padam L	Lorrain 1907	Padam T	Tayeng 1983
Tagin DG	Das Gupta 1983	Yano B	Bor 1938

- 2 The Daflas do not have a unified term for themselves, either. They are now known officially as Nishi, based on the various local names of the Daflas of the Lower Subansiri District (Nising, Nishang, Ni, Nusuu, etc.). The Daflas of the East Kameng District (and perhaps also some Daflas of the Upper Subansiri District), however, call themselves Bangni or Bengni [bəŋ-ni], and are often considered to form a separate tribal entity. Of the Dafla groups treated in the older sources, Robinson's 'Dophla' (Robinson 1851) as well as Bor's Yano Dafla (Bor 1938) represent the latter branch.
- 3 These four Arunachal Pradesh districts underwent re-delimitation (June 1980) into the following eight districts (from west to east): West Kameng, East Kameng, Lower Subansiri, Upper Subansiri, West Siang, East Siang, Dibang Valley, and Lohit. This Tani-speaking area covers some 40,000 square kilometers, or roughly half of the area of Arunachal Pradesh (Simon 1978).
- 4 The Bengni speakers of Lhun-rtse County are found mainly at Douyu, a small village of about twenty households, abutting the Tibetan-Indian border.

languages Apatani and Milang show overall affinities with respectively the Western and Eastern groups.⁵

Despite considerable internal diversification, Tani languages constitute one of the most coherent major nuclei within the Tibeto-Burman family, sharing a number of important linguistic features. It is the aim of this paper to make a preliminary survey of these features, to the extent permitted by the linguistic data available, in order to bring into sharper focus the essential characteristics of the Tani nucleus in Tibeto-Burman.

2. Phonological Characteristics

2.1. Syllable Structure and Segmental Inventory

The syllable canon in Tani, as in many other Tibeto-Burman languages, is (C)(C)V(C). The overwhelming majority of syllables in Tani languages, however, manifest either the CV or CVC syllable structure. Tani languages diverge greatly with respect to initial consonant clusters. Eastern Tani languages tend to have no initial consonant clusters at all (as in Mising L), or at most a few labial plus -j clusters (as in Padam T); Proto-Tani consonant clusters are better preserved among some western languages, e.g. the large set of Cj- and Crj- clusters in Apatani W, and Cl- vs. Cr- clusters in Nyisu H.⁶ Non-original consonant clusters may also be introduced from

5 For more detailed discussion on the subrelations of the Tani languages, please see Sun 1933: chapter III.

6 Cl- clusters seem to be preserved also in Bangni B data; for instance, Bangni R *a-pli*, Apatani *pur-lje*, Bokar *a-pi*: (< Proto-Tani **pri*) 'four'; Bangni R *plok*, Apatani *prju* Bengni S *pjuk* (< Proto-Tani **pruk*) 'to sell'. However, we do not have enough evidence for a proto-contrast between *Cr- and *Cl-, because these two cluster types seem to exhibit complementary distribution at least in Nyisu H (i.e. Cl- if C- is a labial, Cr- elsewhere). Apatani also seems to have only a single

loanwords (e.g. Nishing DG *klas* < English *class*) or from syllable contraction (e.g. *tlo* < *to-lo* 'up there' in some dialects of Tagin (Das Gupta 1983: viii)).

Tani languages also tend to have relatively simple segmental systems. Typically, we find a seven-vowel vocalic system, which includes two back unrounded vowels /ə/ and /ʊ/ in addition to the five typologically unmarked vowels: /a, i, u, e, o/. Languages with fewer (e.g. Apatani W, with six vowels /a, i, u, e, o, ʊ/) or more basic vowels (e.g. Damu OY, with as many as ten vowels /a, i, u, e, o, ə, ʊ, y, ø, ɿ/) also exist. The presence of two contrastive back unrounded vowels in the vocalic system is relatively rare in Tibeto-Burman, and their prevalence in Tani is noteworthy. All Tani languages appear to distinguish vowel length. Vowel length, however, differs in contrastive function from language to language. Thus, although in Bokar OY and Bengni S vowels contrast in length regardless of position in a word, vocalic length seems to be distinctive only in non-final open syllables in Gallong W and Apatani W (Weidert 1987:215-223), and only in the first syllable of polysyllabic words in such Nishi dialects as Sagali, South Aya, and Leli (Chhangte 1992:13). True (tautosyllabic) diphthongs are not well developed. Secondary diphthongs may result from contracted disyllables, as shown in the following examples from Bokar OY: 'body' a-ʊ(:) → [əʊ], 'heavy' ə-i → [əi]; the a- and ə- syllables here being allomorphs of the same prefix (Ouyang 1985:12). Such derived diphthongs are however systematically avoided in such languages as Mising T, in which glide insertion rules and vowel deletion rules conspire to remove potential vowel sequences (Taid 1987b:141-6).

type of cluster, namely Crj- (varying with Cr- in Apatani S). Hence only *Cr- is recognized in our Proto-Tani reconstruction, *-r- here standing for a liquid medial of indeterminate quality.

The most striking feature of typical Tani initial consonant systems, on the other hand, is the absence of distinctive aspiration in stop/affricate phonemes. In this regard, Tani resembles Bodo-Garo, Nungish, and such individual TB languages as Magar, Zeme, and Ao. Paucity of spirants and affricates is another notable trait of the Tani initial system.⁷ While many languages have only a single supraglottal spirant, represented in the sources as either /s/ or /ʃ/, and a glottal spirant /h/ (or /ɦ/), some languages (e.g. Nishi C and Damu OY) distinguish an additional velar spirant /x/; others (e.g. Bengni S) have labiodental spirants /f/ and /v/ instead. Phonetically, most Tani languages have two palatal affricates (/č/ and /j/) corresponding to the two stop slots in the other articulatory series. An additional set of dental/alveolar affricates are reported in Apatani W and Damu OY, which occur, at least in the latter language, only in loanwords. Contrastive voicing in the spirants may seem alien to modern Tani languages, but may have existed in the proto-system, (Sun 1993: 4.2.2). Most languages contrast only four places of articulation for the stops and nasals; i.e. bilabials, dental/alveolars, palatals, and velars. The other three common initial consonants are the two liquids /l/, /r/, and the semivowel /j/.⁸

7 The lack of contrast between dental vs. alveopalatal spirant/affricates, together with the existence of the back unrounded phonemes /u/ and /ə/ are reminiscent of the typical Mon-Khmer system. Other Tibeto-Burman languages with Mon-Khmer-like phonological systems include Burmese (Bradley 1980), Sulung, and many Tibeto-Burman languages of North-Eastern India, an area which could have once been occupied by speakers of Austroasiatic languages.

8 The phonemic status of /j/ is beyond dispute at least in Bokar S, as shown by the following minimal pair: 'bow (weapon)' /i:/ vs. 'to bury' /ji:/.

Tani languages vary tremendously in their inventories of final codas. The language that preserves the largest number of the original Proto-Tani (henceforth PT)⁹ codas is Padam T, with -p, -t, -k, -m, -n, -ŋ, -r, and -l. While the -l coda seems to be lost elsewhere (another exception being Milang T), the other seven codas are what we find commonly in Tani. While the velar nasal -ŋ and the dental/alveolar stop -t codas are the ones most prone to loss (especially among the western group), the drop of -ŋ has not reached the same rhymes in the various Tani languages. The tendency of coda attrition epitomizes in Apatani S, where only two of the original PT codas remain, i.e. -ʔ (from the original stop codas) and -r.¹⁰ Incidentally, it is important for the comparative linguist to be able to tell original codas apart from secondary codas. First, new final consonants, including -s, -l, and -m, have been imported from Indo-Aryan and English loans in the Tani languages spoken on the Indian side. Second, in many varieties of Nishi (e.g. Nyisu H and Nishi C), Gallong W, and Hill Miri S, non-original codas are created via clipping short final vowels from original disyllables (e.g. Hill Miri S and Nishi C *pol*, cf. Bokar S *poŋ-lo* 'moon'), one important phonological consequence of which is the development of contrastive voicing in the stop/affricate codas (e.g. Nishi C *ab* 'father' vs. *tap* 'pumpkin'; cf. Bengni S *a-bu*: 'father' vs. *ta-pur*: 'pumpkin').¹¹

9 For a preliminary phonological reconstruction of Proto-Tani, see Sun 1933, chapter II.

10 The original nasal codas have been replaced by nasalization on the preceding vowel, which usually also undergoes compensatory lengthening. The variety of Apatani reported in Abraham 1985 seems to have lost even the glottal stop coda.

11 A similar monosyllabification process has also occurred in Northern Qiang; cf. Southern Qiang (Taoping) 'sickle' /ɕi³³dɛ²⁴¹/, Northern Qiang (Mawo) /sad/ (Sun 1981:203).

2.2. Tonality

Probably no other topic in Tani diachronic phonology is as intriguing as tonality. Distinctive tones, as in Bodo-Garo, West Himalayish, and Tibetan, are generally speaking not well-developed in Tani. We do, however, find an interesting cline of tonality. On the one hand, many Tani languages, such as Bokar, Padam, and Mising, are definitely atonal. And yet, contrastive tones have been found in Bengni S, Tagin DG, Lel Dafla R, Gallong W, and Apatani W/A.¹² In certain varieties of Bengni, firstly, a few word pairs are now distinguished solely by tones, which however do not seem to have affected the rest of the lexicon.¹³ Moreover, while Apatani is described as a syllable-tone language in which each syllable can potentially bear a two-way (Weidert 1986) or three-way (Abraham 1985) tonal contrast, in Gallong W, interestingly enough, the domain of the three distinctive tonal contours (or 'contouremes' in Weidert's terminology) is the phonological word. Thus, Tani provides an ideal laboratory for examining processes of tonogenesis, for,

12 Our authorities are, for both tonal and non-tonal Tani languages, well-trained linguists experienced in hearing tone languages (Zhang Jichuan, Ouyang Jueya, and Lu Shaozun for Bokar and Damu; Marrison, Bodman, and Chhangte for Padam; Tabu Taid (a native linguist) for Mising; and Alfons Weidert for Gallong and Apatani).

13 For instance, Tayi, my main consultant for Na Bengni, distinguishes the following pair by pitch height: 'ramie' /tā-nu:/ vs. 'snail' /tā-nū:/. What is fascinating is that the same pair is distinguished in different ways in the other two varieties of Bengni I worked on. Thus, for Tatek (also a Na Bengni, who supplied the Bengni data found in Ouyang 1985), it is vowel length that distinguishes the pair: 'ramie' /ta:-nu:/ vs. 'snail' /ta-nu:/; whereas Agang (an ethnic Sulung, who also speaks a variety of Bengni) uses different vowels in the final syllables instead: 'ramie' /ta-no:/ vs. 'snail' /ta-nu:/. Incidentally, this primeval phase of tonogenesis has also been reported in certain dialects of rGyarong (Dai and Yan 1991), Ergong, and Northern Qiang (Sun Hongkai, p.c.).

unparalleled anywhere else in Tibeto-Burman, an unusually rich array of tonogenetic stages are actually attested.

2.3. Sandhi

Another salient phonological characteristic of Tani languages is their extensive sandhi changes, which are mostly motivated by syllable-structure adjustment or assimilatory mechanisms. These morphophonemic processes were already noted by the discerning author of the classic Abor-Miri Dictionary (Lorrain 1907:4-10), under the rubric of 'rules of euphony'. Taid 1987 is to date the most detailed study of this phenomenon in Mising; his results are generally comparable to those reported by Lorrain. The importance of keeping track of these synchronic sandhi changes for diachronic studies is self-evident: since the data in our sources are not always given in 'systematic phonemic' representations, morphemic identities are sometimes hard to recognize unless we are able to decipher the morphophonemics involved.¹⁴ To cite a pertinent example, the Bokar form 'fingernail' is recorded as *lugin* (phonetically [luʃin]) in Ouyang Jucya's (taxonomic) phonemic notation; three sandhi rules have to be undone to retrieve the original shapes of the component morphemes *lok* (< PT **lak*) 'hand' and *jīn* (< PT **zin*, cf. PTB **m-čen*, STC #74) 'nail',¹⁵ namely initial *j-* simplification (*lok-jīn* -> **lok-in*), final obstruent voicing assimilation (**lok-in* -> **log-in*), and vowel harmony (**log-in* -> *lug-in*); cf. *a-lok* 'hand';

14 Failing to factor out the effects of sandhi has caused Benedict to mis-identify the first element of the Mising L compound 'beard' *nam-mur* with the root 'smell' *nam-* instead of with the etymologically correct PT root 'mouth' **nap-* (Shafer and Benedict 1937-41, Vol 7:45), cf. Bokar OY 'beard' *nap-mu*.

15 Proto-Tibeto-Burman reconstructions along with their set numbers are taken from Benedict 1972.

lə-jin 'bird's foot'; cf. also Bengni *S lak-šin* 'fingernail').

3. Lexical-Semantic Characteristics

The Tibeto-Burman affinities of Tani vocabulary were fully recognized in the last century by the early amateur linguists who assembled our first wordlists of the 'Abor-Miri-Dafla' languages. A sizable portion of the Tani core vocabulary clearly belongs to the Tibeto-Burman common lexical stock, as demonstrated in the following short representative list:

(1)

Bokar S:

'person'	mi:	'water'	i-ši	'fire'	ə-mə
'fish'	o-ŋo	'stone'	u-luŋ	'tree'	u-šuŋ
'dog'	i-ki:	'sun'	doŋ-ñi	'name'	a-min
'to sleep'	jup	'to buy'	rə:	'to weep'	kap
'to drink'	tuŋ	'to die'	ši:	'to give'	bi:

The list can go on and on. Given this body of shared basic Tibeto-Burman lexical material, plus the regular sound correspondences between Tani and Proto-Tibeto-Burman that can be clearly identified even from the restricted lexical sample above,¹⁶ it is hard to share the doubt Marrison (1988:215-6) casts on the place of Tani within Tibeto-Burman on account of its relatively low lexical cognacy rate with other Tibeto-Burman groups. On

16 Thus, the Proto Tibeto-Burman rhyme *-əy corresponds regularly to Bokar S -i:, (< PT *-i(:)), cf. /i-ki:/ (PT *ki: < PTB *kwəy; STC #159) 'dog', /ši:/ (PT *si < PTB *səy; STC #232) 'die', /bi:/ (< PT *bi < PTB *bəy; STC #427) 'give', /mi:/ (< PT *mi < PTB *r-mi-r-məy; STC footnote 301) 'person/human being'; /doŋñi/ (< PT *ñi; < PTB *nəy; STC #81) 'sun'.

the other hand, Tani languages, as with any other distinct subgroup of Tibeto-Burman, do have a set of unique lexical items that seem rare outside of this group, a sample of which are given below in (2):

(2)

Gloss	Bokar OY	Padam T	Apatani S	Gallong DG
'day'	lo:	a-lo	a-lo	a-lo
'leaf'	a-nə	an-nə	(j)a-nə	a-nə(~o)
'meat/flesh'	i-din	a-duun	----	a-din
'pig' ¹⁷	ə-jək	ek	i-lji?	e-rek~e-jek
'to ascend'	čaŋ	saŋ	-ča	ha~sa
'to look' ¹⁸	koŋ	kaŋ	ka	ka:
'to sell'	puk	----	prju?	puk
'to be ill/hurt'	a-či	ki	a-č ^{hi} i	a-či~a-si
'to steal'	-pjoŋ	-pjoŋ	-prjo	-čo~so

Yet it should not be too perplexing to find a fair amount of unique vocabulary specific to any Tibeto-Burman branch, considering that Tibeto-Burman is 'as vast and ramified a linguistic family as Indo-European' (Matisoff 1978:2). Furthermore, these branch-specific vocabulary items not only help justify establishing Tani as a distinct branch within Tibeto-Burman, but also constitute one of the handy criteria for determining whether or not

17 This PT root is unlikely to be cognate to the major TB 'pig' root **pwak*, rather, it may be a cultural loan from Mon-Khmer, cf. Proto-Waic **lik* (Diffloth 1980: 120); Hu *lək*, Pangpin U *lik*³¹, Mok *leek* (all Anguic languages, Svantesson 1988), Lamet *lik*, *liik* (Lindell et al. 1978); Danaw *kālək*; Mon *klik* (Luce 1965); Pear *srouk*; Kuy *qa-liik* (Thomas and Headley 1970). Cognates from this origin are found also in such neighboring Tibeto-Burman languages as Kaman (*li*⁵⁵), Idu (*bi*⁵⁵*li*⁵⁵), and Taraon (*bu*²¹*liai*⁵⁵).

18 This root is also found in Kiranti (Boyd Michailovsky, p.c.).

a given language should qualify as a member of Tani.¹⁹

Tani languages are also characterized by culturally-conditioned lexical differentiations, some of which seem to be Tani-internal innovations. For instance, in our sources two forms are often given for the gloss 'to go' (e.g. *in* and *gu* in Hill Miri, *ən* and *gu* in Bori M, *ən* and *gu* in Padam L, and *en* and *gu* in Minyong DG), it is in Das Gupta 1977a:19 that we find a clue to the possible semantic distinction involved: in Minyong at least, *gu* is the general word meaning just 'to go', whereas *en* means specifically 'to go to more distant places'.²⁰ Moreover, many common adjectives and verbs lexicalize distinctions according to the specific real-world denotata.²¹ A good example is the verb 'to wash'. In Padam L, the following (phrasal) verbs occur, all conveying some sense of 'to wash'.²²

(3)

'to wash oneself, bathe'	mo-š u
'to wash another, give bath to'	mo-bi
'to wash one's own face'	mo-mik-š u

19 Consider the value of such unique Tibetan roots as 'to laugh' *dgod*, 'to go' 'gro', 'seven' *bdun*, 'stone' *rdo*, 'blood' *khra*, etc. in sharpening our conception of what is and what is not Tibetan. One important task for Tibeto-Burmanists is to prepare a list of such uniquely shared isoglosses for each distinct Tibeto-Burman group.

20 The same distinction is also reported in Milang T: *ji* 'to go (general sense)' vs. *jap* 'to go beyond the village to the field or the jungle'. Both of these forms seem distinct from the 'to go' roots in the other Tani languages.

21 This phenomenon, extremely common in Kamarupan (i.e. North-Eastern India) Tibeto-Burman languages, goes under the rubric 'lexical incorporation', defined as 'integration of an argument or arguments into the lexical space of verbs without any morphological reflex', in Giridhar 1992.

22 Distinct 'wash' roots: *mo*, *šuk*, *ət*, *nu*, and *ar*; *š u* = reflexive marker; *bi* = transitivizer (grammaticalized from the verb root meaning 'to give'); *mik* = 'face'; *lak* = 'hand'.

'to wash another person's face'	mo-mik-bi
'to wash one's own hands'	lak-šuk-šu
'to wash another person's hands'	lak-šuk-bi
'to wash clothes'	ət, nu
'to wash, clean up'	ar

Here are some other striking examples from Bori M and Nishing DG:

(4)

Gloss	Bori M	Nishing DG
'cold (weather)'	si-kur	si-kir
'cold (water)'	rə-jiŋ	si-rek
'cold (ice)'	----	he-rek
 'dry (firewood)'	 (si-)sən	 ha-raŋ
'dry (grain)'	hor	siŋ
'dry (cloth)'	pu-tur	pi-teŋ

The various specific verbs with the general meaning 'to boil v.t.' provide other typical examples of referent-specific lexicalizations in Tani:

(5)

'to boil (water)' ²³	Apatani S	čar-grju
	Bengni S	ku: /fu:

23 The Apatani S (čar-), Milang T, and Padam T forms for 'to boil (water)' trace back to a good Proto-Tani root which can be reconstructed as *kil (cf. also WT skol 'to boil (v.t.)'; Sunwar 'khir 'to boil (food)'). Apatani S has another form hu-grja?, the second morpheme of which may be a reflex of PTB *glak~klak (STC #124).

	Bokar S	ke:
	Milang T	kal
	Nyisu H	xru
	Padam T	kil
'to boil (rice)' ²⁴	Bengni S	mut
	Bokar S	mo:
	Milang	lu
	Nyisu H	ma
	Padam T	mo
'to boil (e.g. potato)'	Bengni S	kuŋ
	Bokar S	kəŋ
	Milang	ham
	Nyisu H	hum
	Padam T	raŋ

Another remarkable lexical feature in Tani is the large number of (structurally) transitive verb phrases in which the verb heads are identical to the final syllables of the preceding nominals. Consider the Bengni S examples below:²⁵

(6)

'to lay egg'	pu-pu pu	('egg' = pu-pu)
'to spit'	ta-čur čur	('spittle' = ta-čur)

24 The Bokar S, Milang T, Nyisu H, and Padam T forms for 'to boil (rice)' actually mean 'to make'.

25 This construction is found in many other Tibeto-Burman languages (e.g. Sulung, Bangru, Lolo-Burmese, Jingpho, Dulong, Tujia, Lepcha, etc.). Hansson (1992) refers to it as the 'ABB object-verb pattern' in her extensive treatment of the same phenomenon in Akha (Hani).

'to dream'	jip-ma: ma:	('dream' = jip-ma:)
'(lightning) to flash'	do: -rjak rjak	('lightning' = do: -rjak)
'to give a feast'	duu -rom rom	('feast' = duu -rom)
'to wear belts'	pu-šu šu	('belt' = pu-šu)
'to wear shoes'	luu -kjam kjam	('shoes' = luu-kjam)

As in other tribal Tibeto-Burman languages, deictic expressions are well-developed in Tani. Many languages distinguish a three-way contrast in the demonstratives: proximal, near distal, and far distal.²⁶ For example:

(7)

Gloss	Bokar S	Mising N	Apatani A	Gallong DG	Bengni S
'this'	ši:	si	sik-si	huu -guu	ši:
'that'	a:	a-da	in-si	e-gə	u:
'yon'	a: -to	a-la	in-to-si	a-ə	a-lo: u:

In many if not all Tani languages, the demonstratives can be further distinguished along the vertical dimension, yielding (at least) the following contrasts:²⁷

26 Apatani has incorporated yet another type of distinction into the deictic system by adding the term *huu*, which means 'that (unknown/invisible)', resulting in a four-way contrast (Abraham 1984:367-8).

27 The following construction in Bengni S shows that the vertical terms *buu* 'down' and *tuu* 'up' and the distance-based tripartite demonstrative system form parallel systems (ñi: = 'person'):

buu ši: ñi: buu :	'this person down here'
buu ñi: buu :	'that person down there'
buu lo: ñi: buu :	'that person farther away down there'

(8)

Gloss	Bokar S	Bengni S	Tagin DG
'that (same level)'	a:	u:	a-lo
'that (up there)'	tə:	tu:	tə-lo
'that (down there)'	bə:	bu:	bə-lo

Furthermore, in some languages, demonstrative pronouns along with their deictic differentiations can also function as third person pronouns. Consider the following distinct ways of saying 'him/her':

(9)

Nishing DG	Bokar S	Bengni S	Position of referent
a-sa-m	ʃu-m	a-ʃo-m	nearby
a-la-m	a-m	a-lo-m	at some distance
tə-la-m	tə-m	tu-lo-m	at some distance uphill
bə-la-m	bə-m	bu-lo-m	at some distance downhill

4. Morpho-Syntactic Characteristics

Tani agrees with other Tibeto-Burman groups in overall grammatical features. The following sections present a survey of some specific areas in Tani morpho-syntax which seem to typify this particular branch of Tibeto-Burman.²⁸ Owing to the paucity of good reference grammars on Tani, the

28 The following abbreviations are used in the glosses:

adv	adverbial marker	all	allative case
evd	evidential marker	caus	causative marker
cl	classifier	conn	clause connective
cop	copula	decl	declarative particle
def	definite article	exp	experiential aspect

scope of the discussions will be largely restricted to Bokar S/Bokar OY and Bengni S, of which I have gathered some first-hand data, as well as some other Tani varieties on which grammatical descriptions are now available.

4.1. Word Structure and Word-Formation Processes

Words in Tani are typically disyllabic (or quadrisyllabic in some reduplication constructions, see below), consisting most usually of an affixed root or a compound. Affixation and compounding are then the two predominant word-formation processes in Tani.

Extensive prefixation is an important morphological trait in this branch of Tibeto-Burman; unlike such neighboring languages as Taraon and Kaman, however, Tani has a much smaller inventory of prefixes, which are restricted in application to only nominal and adjectival roots.²⁹ The four most commonly attested prefixes are (in reconstructed PT forms): **a-*, **sa-*, **ta-*, and **pa-*. The distribution of these prefixes seems to be largely grounded in semantics: **sa-* is attached to roots referring to higher animals; **ta-* is used for lower animals, insects, diseases, trees, and small objects in general;

fut	future	gen	genitive case
imp	imperative marker	impf	imperfective aspect
indef	indefinite article	inst	instrumental case
loc	locative case	neg	negator
nom	nominalizer	num	numerical particle
obj	object case	part	particle
pf	perfective aspect	prog	progressive aspect
proh	prohibitive marker	Q	interrogative marker
quot	quotativesfp	sfp	sentence-final particle

²⁹ Verb roots in Tani rarely take prefixes. This characteristics sets Tani apart from many neighboring Tibeto-Burman groups, such as Taraon-Idu (Digarish), Kaman, (Midžuish) and Dhammai-Bangru-Hrusso (Hrusish).

**pa-* is confined mainly to bird names and related nouns (e.g. Bokar OY *pur-tur* 'coop'). As for **a-*, it is found not only on kinship terms, body parts, and nominal roots from a wide variety of semantic areas, but also on adjective roots. This is, in other words, the all-purpose prefix in Tani. Some of these prefixes, especially **sa-* and **pa-*, could have been reduced from first components of earlier compounds, reflecting perhaps PTB **sa* 'flesh/meat/animal' and **bya~bra* 'bird', respectively (Shafer 1966-73:192-3). Comparative evidence supports this observation with reference to the 'weather prefix' **doŋ* (cf. Bengni S *do:-muk* 'cloud'; *do:-ri* 'wind'; *do:-ñi hu:* 'to rain'; *do:-gum* 'thunder'), which is still recognizable as stemming from the PT root **doŋ* 'sky, rain' in the light of eastern Tani forms where the nasal coda -ŋ is still intact. Another interesting example of this type of lexical reanalysis as an ongoing process in modern Tani is the prefix-like element *du-* in Bengni S. Etymologically a reduced form of the root *du:* (< PT **do:*) 'to eat', *du-* now occurs not only in compounds related semantically to eating (e.g. *du-rom* 'feast'; *du-gam* 'food'; *du-mu:* 'curry'; *du-duk* 'poison'), but by extension also in verbal compounds depicting actions involving the mouth: *du-rjak* 'to lick'; *du-bjuŋ* 'to suck'; *du-či:* 'to gnaw'; *du-mit* 'to swallow'. In fact, so frequent is the occurrence of *du-* in Bengni S that it is now competing with the full form *du:* as the main verb form for 'to eat'.³⁰ In some languages, these prefix morphemes exhibit considerable phonological variation owing to extensive sandhi processes; observe for instance the effects of vowel harmony on the allomorphy of the **a-* prefix in Bokar S: *a-ŋa:* 'child'; *i-ki:* 'dog'; *u-puk* 'arrow'; *c-če* 'clothes'; *o-ŋo:* 'fish'; *ə-jək* 'pig';

30 These semantically based first elements resemble what Burling terms *categorizers* in Garo nominal compounds (Burling 1984), except that the Garo categorizers form a much larger set (around forty), and in general show less phonological reduction.

ur-luŋ 'stone'. The function of affixes in Tani is restricted mainly to the lexicon, unlike such TB languages as Classical Tibetan, rGyarong or Dulong in which affixes participate actively in derivational or even inflectional morphology.

Compounds, as elsewhere in Sino-Tibetan, abound in the Tani lexicon. What with the distorting effects of sandhi, and what with the preservation of obsolete roots in compounds, morpheme identification in Tani compounds is far from straightforward, particularly in the phonologically more innovative western languages. A nice example of such synchronically opaque 'orphan morphs' (Matisoff 1978:61) is the obscure second element in the Tani word for 'ear' (e.g. Bokar S *ña-ruŋ*, Mising L *ña-ruŋ-jə-ruŋ*). Apparently this root should mean 'hole', as this is the current meaning of this form in modern Tani languages. Even if this is the correct semantics of the compound from a diachronic point of view, there are indications that make it a dubious synchronic analysis. First of all, speakers are no longer certain what the individual components mean in this compound. Furthermore, *-ruŋ* has now usurped the status of the representative root for 'ear' from *ña*, the historically 'legitimate' root for 'ear' (< PTB **rna~na* 'ear' STC #453), and is what actually appears in compounds related to 'ear', e.g. Mising L *ru-buŋ* (< *ruŋ-buŋ*) 'a kind of tube-like ear ornament'; *ru-bə* (< *ruŋ-bə*) 'deaf'; *ruŋ-gok* (literally: 'ear-cry') 'tinnitus', *ru-dar* (< *ruŋ-dar*) 'hear well'. Another interesting example is *-laŋ* (or its dialectal equivalents) found in compound words referring to liquids (e.g. Bengni S *po:-la*: 'liquid rice-wine, as opposed to the fermented rice in the wine jug'; *ñik-la*: 'tears'; *ru-la*: 'resin'; *pum-ši pum-la*: 'nasal mucus'). It seems possible that *-laŋ* is an older Tani root for 'water, liquid' (Matisoff, p.c.) which, supplanted by the current 'water' root *-ši*: everywhere in Tani, is now preserved only in

compounds. Much more work in comparative Tani morphology and phonology is needed before such puzzles can be satisfactorily solved.³¹

Words in Tani can also contain four syllables, consisting often of two disyllabic 'couplets' with some duplicated material. One interesting subtype of this word formation pattern is what may be termed the 'superordinate-hyponym' nominal construction where names of specific entities are preceded by names for the general category. This derivational device is most commonly seen in, but by no means limited to, the formation of nouns denoting male, female, and young animals:³²

(10)

Bengni S:

'horse'	su - ki:	'dog'	u - ki
'stallion'	su - ki: ki: - pu:	'dog (male)'	u - ki ki - pu:
'mare'	su - ki: ki: - nu:	'bitch'	u - ki ki - nu:
'colt'	su - ki: ki: - wu:	'puppy'	u - ki ki - čiq
'wave'	u - ši ši - lap		
'spring (water)'	u - ši šo - ko:		
'small intestines'	a - ki ki - čiq		
'large intestines'	a - ki ki - ru:		

The other important subtype of quadrisyllabic words in Tani are the so-called

31 We currently recognize **laŋ* as one of the rare TB roots for 'water'. Possible cognates elsewhere in Tibeto-Burman include the Kathmandu Newari word *la*: 'water'.

32 This construction has also been reported in Hani (Li and Wang 1986:44-8) and, to a much more limited extent, also in Jingpho. C.f. the following Jingpho examples: 'water buffalo' *wă loi³³*, 'female water buffalo' *wă loi³³ wă ji³¹*, 'male water buffalo' *wă loi³³ wă la³¹* (Liu 1982:31).

'elaborate expressions',³³ which we illustrate with the following Bengni S examples: *a-tuŋ a-juŋ* 'garbage'; *a-bak a-jak* 'thick (liquid)'; *ǰi-šit ǰi-mit* 'to pass something around'; *ǰip-mi: ǰip-ma:* 'sleepy'; *mu:-ruk mu:-rak* 'to sleepwalk'.

The preceding sections demonstrate how partial reduplication functions in Tani derivational morphology.³⁴ Productive reduplication also occurs in Apatani A in a few formal idioms such as *V-si V-ha* 'difficult to V', e.g. *lu-si lu-ha* 'difficult to tell' (Abraham 1985:90). Stem-modification, another common morphological device in Tibeto-Burman, is only sporadically attested in Tani.³⁵

4.2. Nominal Morphology

Tani nominals are inflected mainly for case. The case markers are enclitics attached to the end of noun phrases. The major cases formally

33 Also known as 'echo-formations', elaborate expressions appear to be an extremely wide-spread areal feature in languages of India and Southeast Asia; see for example Matisoff 1973:3.39, Trivedi 1990:51-82.

34 We have also shown in (6) above how some verbs are derived from corresponding nouns by reduplicating the nominal root. For another application of reduplication in Tani, see (21-2) below.

35 The following Bokar OY pairs exemplify irregular stem-modification involving vowel length: *t-si* 'water' vs. *i-ši:* 'urine' (a euphemistic shift?); *a-gu* 'to be hot' vs. *gu:* 'to burn v.i.'. Occasionally, we can even find cases of the familiar TB intransitive-transitive (causative) derivation via voicing alternation: Padam-Mising L *dir* '(of something stiff) to be broken' vs. *tir* 'to break (something stiff) with hand'; cf. also Apatani S *dar* (-i) 'to break (v.i.?)' vs. *tar* 'to break (v.t. ?)'; Padam-Mising L *ben~bet* '(of ropes, etc.?) to break' vs. *pen~pet* 'to break (ropes, etc.?)'. However, such morphological alternations appear to have been largely obliterated in modern Tani languages. Thus, Bengni S uses the same roots for both the transitive and intransitive meanings: *tuur* 'to break (of something stiff), v.t. and v.i.'; *puur* 'to break (of ropes, threads, etc.), v.t. and v.i.'.

marked are the genitive, locative, instrumental, and the 'object' cases.³⁶ The last mentioned multifunctional object case is used not only to mark patients (including nominal clauses) and recipients, but also temporal adverbials, for which see further on. In some languages, object case morphology is optional with inanimate arguments; furthermore, only definite noun phrases are marked with the object case, which becomes one of the formal indicators of definite reference. The examples below illustrate this use of the *-həm* 'object' marker in Bokar S:³⁷

(11)

Bokar S

(i) ɲo: pətaŋ koŋpoŋ-pa.

I bird see-pf

'I saw birds (indefinite nonspecific).'

(ii) ɲo: pətaŋ ako koŋpoŋ-pa.

I bird one see-pf

'I saw a certain bird (indefinite specific).'

(iii) ɲo: pətaŋ-həm koŋpoŋ-pa.

I bird-obj see-pf

'I saw the bird (definite).'

The realizations of some (e.g. the genitive and 'object' cases), but not all, of the major cases are cognate across Tani, as can be seen in the following comparative table:

36 The allative cases are often identical to, or built on, the locative case; similarly, the ablative and comitative cases are often derived from the genitive case.

37 This phenomenon, reminiscent of Turkish, was first observed by Chhangte for Nishi (Chhangte 1990: 3-4).

(12)

Case	Padam T	Bokar S	Apatani A	Bengni S
genitive	gə/kə	ka	ka/kuu	kuu:
locative	lo	gə/a-lo	o	buu:/luu:
instrumental	lok	nuuŋ	lo	guu
ablative	lok	ga	kuu	lu-guu:
allative	lo	lə/bo	o	buu:
object	əm	həm/-m	mi	ŋi:/-m

Unlike neighboring Tibeto-Burman languages like Takpa, Tshangla, Kaman, Tibetan, and Sherdukpen, nominals bearing the agentive case role are typically not case-marked in Tani languages.³⁸ This 'non-actor' or 'anti-ergative' case marking pattern turns out to be extremely widespread in Tibeto-Burman (LaPolla 1992). Additional 'nominative' case forms are reported in Mising N, Nyisu H (a) and Yano B (e), which may be more properly reanalyzed as articles instead.³⁹

38 In passive constructions reported in a few languages, the demoted agent is marked with the instrumental case. E.g.

Bokar OY:

oŋo: ali:-nuuŋ do:-gəŋe.

fish cat-inst eat-pf/evd

'The fish was eaten by the cat.'

Apatani A:

mo kago-lo meŋ-ko-bune

he Kago-inst kill-passive-pf

'S/he was killed by Kago.'

This kind of restricted agent-marking in marked passive constructions (note the passive marker *-ko* on the Apatani A verb) is entirely different from true ergative structures in other TB languages.

39 Cf. the cognate indefinite (-ə) and definite (ə) articles in Nishi C (Chhangte 1990:4ff). In Bokar S, the indefinite and definite articles are respectively (a)ko (which is also the numerical particle, related ultimately to the numeral 'one' PT *kon) and hə: (cf. also their Mising L parallels *-ko* and *-ə*), exemplified as follows:

4.3. Verbal Morphology

Tani is one of the few major Tibeto-Burman branches with no verb agreement. Tense/aspect and modality, instead, are the important verbal categories expressed in the morphology of these languages. The Tani verb is however characterized by a special type of structural complexity. In the verb phrase, the verb root can combine with a huge set of verbal auxiliaries⁴⁰ which cover a wide range of functions. While some of these combinations exemplify verb serialization (e.g. Bokar OY *gok-oŋ* 'to send for (lit. 'call-come')'; *jit-ke*: 'to beat to death (lit. 'beat-die')'; *ge:čaŋ* 'to crawl up (lit. 'crawl-ascend')'), the versatility of this pattern can be better appreciated by considering the following examples from Gallong DG, all built on the verb root *men* 'to speak': *men-pak* 'to refuse, to disagree'; *men-tur* 'to cure by chanting'; *men-sir* 'to advise'; *men-tum* 'to stop someone from saying something'; *men-tom* 'to explain'; *men-bo* 'to impose one's authority over another person in speech'. Some of these verbal auxiliaries have clearly aspectual functions, as illustrated in the examples below: *men-ro* 'to have spoken before'; *men-kur*, *men-tu* 'to speak again'; *men-ngam* 'to finish saying something'. Consider some further examples from Apatani A based on the verb root *lu* 'to speak, talk' (corresponding to Gallong *men*): *lu-xa* 'to

-
- (i) mi: (a)ko oŋ-ŋe: 'A (certain) man came.'
 person indef come-pf/evd

- (ii) mi: hə: oŋ-ŋe: 'The man came.'
 person def come-pf/evd

40 In Tani most, if not all, of these 'particles' have verbal origins. They are most fully treated in Abraham's Apatani grammar, in which more than sixty of them are listed (Abraham 1985:73-89). The exuberance of such 'compound verbs' in Tani reminds one of Lolo-Burmese, Tshangla (Andvik 1992) and Garo (Burling 1961:2.13), rather than Bodic.

persist in talking'; *lu-ti* 'to talk repetitively'; *lu-ɲo* 'to stop talking'; *lu-raŋ* 'to continue to talk' (Abraham 1986). Another class of the auxiliaries contribute various adverbial meanings to the main verb root, as shown in the following examples from Gallong DG and Apatani A: (Gallong DG) *men-tup* 'to falter in one's speech'; *men-kap* 'to speak distinctly'; *men-gap* 'to speak positively'; *men-si-men-rup* 'to whisper'; (Apatani A) *lu-miŋ* 'to talk aimlessly'; *lu-po* 'to talk succinctly'; *lu-la* 'to talk skillfully'; *lu-ljo* 'to talk improperly'. A particularly noteworthy subset of this subclass of auxiliaries express the speaker's attitude toward the predicated event and hence denote various modal meanings; thus, in Apatani A, the auxiliaries *-pjo* (< PT **pro* 'good') and *-su* indicate respectively the speaker's approval and disapproval of the event. Causative and reflexive meanings, likewise, are conveyed via the same postverbal auxiliary system.⁴¹ The causative morpheme *mo(:)* found in many Tani languages derives transparently from the verb root 'to do, make'. The causee argument usually takes the object case, except in Apatani where the instrumental case is used instead. Contrast the following sample causative sentences from Mising N, Bokar OY, and Apatani A:

41 The causative morpheme *mo(:)*- can sometimes be attached in front of the verb root to express more direct causation. Thus, in Mising L, *mo-ke* is 'to kill', but *si-mo* is 'let die', as in the example sentences below:

- (i) *ulu-əm ɲolu mo-ke-kur- maŋ* 'We never kill gibbons.'
 gibbon-obj we caus-die-exp-neg
- (ii) *ɲo-m si-mo-jo-ka* 'Do not let me die.'
 I-obj die-caus-proh-imp

The absence of similar forms for the meaning 'to kill' in many Tani languages (cf. Bengni S *min*, Bokar OY *men*) makes it clear that this prefix-like use of *mo-* (like *-en* in English) is lexicalized and unpredictable. Incidentally, no traces whatsoever of the prevalent Sino-Tibetan **s-* causative prefix have been reported in Tani.

(13)

Mising N:

nə bui-m kapila kap-mo-to yu?

you s/he-obj why weep-caus-pf Q

'Why did you make her/him cry?'

Bokar OY:

šo: lo loŋ-to, ŋo-m koŋ-mo: -to

here take-imp I-obj look-caus-imp

'Bring it over here (and) let me look at (it)!'

Apatani A:

ŋo mo-lo aki-mi me-ko-to

I s/he-inst dog-obj search for-caus-pf

'I made her/him search for the dog.'

The next example illustrates the use of reflexive auxiliaries in Mising N:

(14)

jokšik puu-dodem ŋo-ka alak-əm gat-šu-to

knife sharpen-while I-gen hand-obj cut-reflexive-pf

'I cut my own hand while sharpening the knife.'

The tense/aspect system in Tani languages consists of a set of tense-aspect markers attached to the verb stem (i.e. the verb root plus the various particles discussed above). The so-called 'tenses' are in all likelihood really aspects which may by implication have relative tense meanings.⁴² Most Tani

42 The aspectual nature of the Tani 'tenses' has been noticed by a few discerning authors, such as Das Gupta (1977a:31), Roy (1960:47), and above all, Ouyang Jueya, who rightfully chooses the term 體 (aspect) in his discussion of the Bokar system in question (Ouyang 1985:35-41).

languages are said to distinguish present, past, and future 'tenses', the first two of which probably refer rather to imperfective and perfective aspects, respectively. The imperfective markers throughout Tani seem to be based on the existential copula PT **duŋ/dak* (cf. WT *'dug*, see also section 2.3.4 below), on the basis of which a distinct progressive aspect (known as the 'definite present' in the older sources) is formed (e.g. Mising N *-la duŋ*, Bokar OY *də-na*, Yano B *don-na*, Gallong DG *-du*, Tagin DG *duh-do*, Nishing DG *duŋ-du-ne*, etc.). As for the 'past tenses' described in the literature, the real distinction could be between a perfective (e.g. Mising N *-ai*) and a perfect (e.g. Mising N *-to*). This assumption, however, must remain uncertain until better syntactic descriptions of these languages become available.

There are indications that the Tani verb also conveys some evidential contrasts. In some of our sources, certain verbal particles are said to be restricted to, or at least preferred by, certain persons. Thus, Das Gupta 1963: 24 reports the following contrast in Gallong DG:

(15)

- (1) *ŋo ačín do-to-ba*
 I rice eat-part-pf
 'I have finished eating rice.'
- (2) *muu ačín do-gui-ba*
 s/he rice eat-part-pf
 'S/he has finished eating rice.'

Consider also the sentence pairs below from Nishing DG (Das Gupta 1969: 20-1):

(16)

- | | | |
|-------|--|--------------------|
| (i) | no do-duŋ-dene.
I eat-prog-part | ‘I am eating.’ |
| (ii) | Talam do-duŋ-do.
Talam eat-prog-part | ‘Talam is eating.’ |
| (iii) | no təlam te-tə-ne.
I him ask-pf-part | ‘I asked him.’ |
| (iv) | Tani təlam te-pə-ne.
Tani him ask-pf-part | ‘Tani asked him.’ |

The Nishing DG examples in (16) are very suggestive. The distinction seems to lie in the epistemological status of the speaker’s report about his own (volitional) acts vis-à-vis other people’s acts, and different markers are used to reflect this evidential contrast. In Nishi C, a remarkably similar distinction is found:

(17)

Aspect	1st person	other persons
Progressive	du-den	du-do
Perfective	ten	num

The fact that the person-based distinction is not found in the future tense in Nishi C (Chhangte 1990:4) further confirms the epistemological nature of the phenomenon: since one’s own future events and those of other people are equally unknowable, it stands to reason that no evidential distinction is made here.⁴³ While the distinction mentioned above may be comparable to the

⁴³ Chhangte treats the phenomenon as a kind of person agreement. In the same

'conjunct-disjunct' distinction in Tibetan and Newari, there may also be, in some Tani languages at least, a more typical evidential contrast. In Mising N, there are two 'past tense' forms, *tu(ŋ)-ai* (termed 'imperfect') and *duŋ-ai* (termed 'imperfect definite'), in addition to the perfect form *-to/-kaŋ*, the differences between these past tense forms are left unaccounted for by Needham, but in Roy's comments on cognate forms in the closely related Padam-Minyong dialect we find a clue to the possible distinction: '...*ai* added to *dung* implies the reporter saw the agent do the action while (*ai* added to) *tung* implies just the opposite' (Roy 1960:47-8). Thus, if this is the correct interpretation of Roy's observations, we may be dealing with an evidential contrast between witnessed vs. non-witnessed events.⁴⁴ The marking of the direct (i.e. witnessed events) evidentiality also turns out to underlie the

paper, a different kind of phenomenon is described by Chhangte to be evidentially based (morpheme-glossing mine):

- (i) *ŋo mindur-ŋam ka: -dum.* 'I have seen buffalos.'
 I buffalo-obj see -evd (?)
- (ii) *ŋo mindur-ŋam ka: -tun* 'I saw buffalos (today, yesterday).'
 I buffalo-obj see -evd (?)

Although the exact nature of the distinction is not spelled out in the paper, we may surmise that the distinction may be associated with what DeLancey calls **assimilated knowledge** vs. **new knowledge**, which is strictly speaking not a true evidential distinction, however.

- 44 A similar evidential distinction may underlie the following Tagin sentences pairs (Das Gupta 1977b:9):

- (i) *kotoki acin de-to.*
 interpreter rice eat-pf/evid
 'The interpreter ate rice.'
- (ii) *kotoki acin de-ro*
 interpreter rice eat-pf:evid
 'The interpreter ate rice (not seen by the speaker).'

distinction between the two perfective markers *-gəŋe* and *-pa(na)* in Bokar, left unaccounted for in Ouyang 1985:38ff. As the following Bokar S examples show, while *-gəŋe* adds to the statement the claim that the reported event was directly witnessed, *-pa(na)* does not:

(18)

- (i) Tamə ʃəkɯ -ko rə: -gəŋe
Tame horse-indef buy-pf/evd (direct)
'Tame bought a horse (I saw it).'
- (ii) Tamə ʃəkɯ -ko rə: -pa(na)
Tame horse-indef buy-pf/evd (unmarked)
'Tame bought a horse.'

The other related (but often overlooked) category marked in Tani languages is the contrast between observable vs. non-observable events.⁴⁵ When the speaker reports other people's inner sensations and mental activities, which s/he cannot objectively observe, special verbal forms are required. Consider the following examples from Bokar S and Bengni S:

(19)

Bokar S:

- (i) ŋo: kinɔŋ da
I hungry decl
I am hungry.
- (ii) ko: kinɔŋ de-ju/*da
s/he hungry decl-quot
S/he is hungry (lit.: S/he is said to be hungry).

45 For detailed discussions on this category in Tibetan, see Sun to appear: 4.2.3.

Bengni S

(i) ŋu: kano: -pa

I hungry-pf

I am hungry.

(ii) tatu:k kano: -pu: -di: (*kano: -pa)

Tatek hungry-pf-quot

Tatek is hungry (lit.: Tatek is said to be hungry).

In short, the categories relevant to the Tani verb are, much as in Tibetan, aspect and information source rather than tense or pronominal agreement.

4.4. Constituent Order and Syntactic Categories

Morpheme order in Tani compounds is usually predictable: those composed of nominal roots are head-final, e.g. Bokar S *nap-mu* (< *nap* 'mouth' + *mu* 'hair') 'beard'; Bengni S *šiŋ-lak* (< *šiŋ* 'tree, wood' + *lak* 'hand, arm') 'branch'; whereas noun-adjective compounds are modifier-final, e.g. Gallong DG *je-ku* (= *je* 'cloth' + *ku* 'old') 'old cloth, rag'; *je-in* (= *je* 'cloth' + *in* 'torn') 'torn cloth'. Within the noun phrase, genitive nominals always precede the head nouns, as do demonstrative adjectives in most languages.⁴⁶ The preferred order of attributive adjectives varies from

46 The demonstrative adjectives in Bokar and Bengni, due probably to Tibetan influence, can also follow the head noun. A striking characteristic of Tani demonstrative adjectives is they can also occur both before and after the head noun. At least in some Eastern Tani languages, furthermore, both occurrences of the demonstratives can be case-marked, as shown in the following examples from Adi and Mising:

language to language: while in Bokar OY/S, Bengni S, Hill Miri S, Nishi C, and Apatani A/S adjectives follow the head nouns, in Tagin DG, Gallong DG, and Milang T, it is the opposite order that is found; in Mising N and Padam T, both orderings are reported, with no apparent difference in meaning. Numeral phrases, however, must occur after the head nouns. As for the sequential order of elements in the Tani verb phrase, the verb root is preceded by adverbials and followed by the various auxiliaries, the internal order of which is determined by their respective scope, as illustrated by the Bokar OY example below:

(20)

ko-m ɲepak-bo puk-čaŋ-kui-pana
s/he-obj slave-adv sell-ascend-exp-pf/evd
'S/he has been sold uphill as a slave before.'

The negator in Tani languages, all from PT **maŋ*, characteristically follows the verb. In this respect, Tani resembles Taraon-Idu, Tujia, Kuki-Chin, Bodo-Garo, Northern Naga, and some Nagish languages such as Sema.

Of the major clausal constituents, the verb phrase always occurs in the clause-final position; the relative order of the nominal arguments, on the other hand, does not seem to be rigid. While the unmarked order of the

Adi A

no sedur-kə uə mulo si-m əlu si-m etti-pə i-mo-to.
thou God-gen son if this-obj stone this-obj bread-all do-caus-imp
'If thou art the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.'

Mising N

no s-ɔk ami s-ɔk pa-to juw?
you this-abl person this-abl get-pf Q
'Did you get (it) from this man?'

major clausal participants is agent -> recipient -> patient, pragmatically conditioned ordering alternatives are also possible. Intracausally, adverbial as well as relative clauses precede the head in the majority of cases; in clause-chains, the order of the clauses mirrors the natural temporal sequence of the actual events.

In Tani, the following major syntactic categories are recognized: nouns, pronouns, verbs, adverbs, and particles.

Nominal classifiers are a minor syntactic category shared by all Tani languages; yet, the degree to which classifiers are utilized differs from language to language. In Bokar OY, Milang T, and Mising T their occurrences are rather restricted;⁴⁷ in contrast, classifiers are more fully grammaticalized in western Tani languages where, except for nouns denoting human beings (and animals in Tagin DG), the use of classifiers in the form of classifier-numeral compounds in numeral phrases seems to have become obligatory. Further, in many if not all Tani languages, a few common adjectives such as 'big' and 'small' must occur in combination with the same

47 In Bokar OY, classifiers do not occur with numerals higher than one, and even with the numeral one, their use is optional. Moreover, they always occur as disyllabic compounds in collocation with other elements in the numeral phrase, e.g.

uʃuŋ adoŋ aken go
tree cl one num part
'a tree'

In Mising T (Taid, p.c. in 1993), not only are classifiers more widely used but they seem to occur only in fused forms as first components of disyllabic classifier-numeral compounds, e.g.

simon dor-um ko
animal cl-three num part
'three animals'

However, they never occur with the numerals *kinit* 'seven', *piŋi* 'eight', and *kanəŋ* 'nine' (which have no monosyllabic allomorphs to combine with classifiers into classifier-numeral compounds) and numerals beyond 10.

classifiers as appropriate for the head nouns they modify.⁴⁸ This construction, which is rather unusual for Tibeto-Burman languages,⁴⁹ is exemplified below with examples from Bengni S and Nishi C, both Western Tani languages:

(21)

Bengni S:

afa: šo: -tu: -bu: šo: -ñi-gu 'two big ropes'

rope cl-big-nom cl-two-num part

Nishi C:

əki dəŋ-g dəŋ-t-bo 'a big dog'

dog cl-one cl-big-nom

Notice that, in (21), the same classifiers have to be attached to both the numerals and the adjective phrases *tu: -bu:* (Bengni S) and *-t-bo* (Nishi C), which are formally nominalized clauses (see below). Despite the functional importance of classifiers in western Tani, their innovative nature is revealed, among other things, by the prevalence of echo classifiers derived from copying one of the component morphemes of the head nouns. See the Nishi C examples below, note especially the word for 'book', which comes ultimately from Arabic:

48 Interestingly, distinct roots are sometimes used for these bound adjectival forms. For instance, the normal adjectives for 'big' are *kai* in Apatani S and *ka-ji* in Bengni S, but the bound forms are respectively *-ro* and *-tu:*.

49 A very similar construction (but note the word orders) is reported in Hani; remarkably, the same two adjectives 'big' and 'small' are involved, as for example (Li 1992:25-6):

a ⁵⁵ bo ⁵⁵	tçi ³¹ -bo ⁵⁵	bo ⁵⁵ -za ³¹
tree	one-cl	cl-small
'a small tree'		

(22)

Nishi Ch:

ñiru ru-kin 'one ear'

ear cl-one

kitab ta?-kin 'one book'

book cl-one

In many Tani languages, adjectives are formally a subset of verbs. When used attributively, they are nominalized just like stative verbs (see further on); as predicates, they also behave like stative verbs in taking the existential copulas (< PT *duŋ; *dak). Attributive adjectives in languages like Bokar OY no longer require the nominalization marker but must be postposed, possibly as a result of Tibetan influence; for example, *eče lunkaŋ (-na)* 'red clothes' (= clothes+red+nom).

The absence of equative copulas in most Tani languages is another prominent feature, which is also true of Taraon-Idu, Kaman, Dhammai-Bangru-Hruso, Sherdukpen, Bodo-Garo, Tujia, and some Naga languages. Existential copulas, though, are firmly established in Tani grammar; as in other Tibeto-Burman languages, existential copulas occur not only in existential sentences but also in sentences denoting possession. Unlike such languages as Tibetan, however, the possessor argument in such sentences takes the genitive (if at all) rather than the dative case.⁵⁰ While in many Tani languages an identical existential copula is used in existential and possessive sentences (*ka* in Padam T and Bori M, and *duŋ, da:*, etc. elsewhere),

⁵⁰ In Bokar OY and Hill Miri S, the possessor is not case-marked; the genitive case marker also seems omissible in Nyisu H and Tagin DG.

interesting cases of functional specialization are presented by Gallong DG and Bengni S. In Bengni S, both *do:* (< PT **duŋ*) and *ka:* can occur, but the latter has become a negative polarity item, occurring only in collocation with *ma:* ‘not’. The Gallong equivalents of these forms, *du* (< PT **duŋ*) and *ka*, on the other hand, are restricted respectively to existential and possessive contexts. It is in Apatani A that the fullest extent of grammaticalization of existential copulas is reached. Not only is the possessor argument marked with a distinct ‘possessive case’ *ku* related obviously to the normal genitive case marker *ka*, but the existential copulas themselves show a three-way lexical differentiation based on the ‘posture’ of the objects whose existence is predicated.⁵¹

Unlike many other Tibeto-Burman languages, adverbials in Tani are formally marked as distinct from adjectives, as revealed in the following examples: Bokar OY *po-bo lop* (lit.: good-adv learn) ‘learn well’; Mising N *ai-pu nitom mo* (lit.: good-adv song make) ‘sing well’.

51 The three existential copulas are derived from regular stance verbs: *da* ‘to stand’ (< PT **dak*), *du* ‘to sit’ (< PT **duŋ*), and *do* ‘to lie’ (PT **doŋ*). Abraham states that the choice of existential verbs with animate referents is based on the actually observed posture at the time of the speech act, whereas with inanimate referents the choice is ‘decided conceptually’ (Abraham 1985:70). Since there is considerable arbitrariness in the actual choices of these ‘verbal classifiers’ (e.g. fish in the water ‘stand’, bamboo plants ‘sit’, but mountains ‘lie’), Apatani existential-predication offers a fascinating opportunity for exploring categorization, prototype theory, and human cognition. Incidentally, although as far as I know Apatani A seems to be the only variety of Tani to actually implement the object-classifying potential of the existential verbs, more than one such existential copula is known to coexist in some other varieties (e.g. Mising N: *dak* ~ *duŋ*; Gallong DG: *du* ~ *do*) whose functional distribution has not been adequately described. Given the variety of existential verbs in the various modern Tani languages, it appears that what they have inherited from Proto Tani is the tendency to grammaticalize stance verbs into existential copulas, not the particular lexical forms.

Particles are a blanket category which include case markers, connectives, and a host of sentence-final particles expressing various illocutionary meanings. In Tani languages, sentence-final particles are of unusual syntactic importance, because many major sentence types (interrogative, imperative, prohibitive, etc.) are distinguished through these particles.

4.5. Clause-Linkage and Embedding

The Tani languages, as in many other members of the Tibeto-Burman family, are clause-chaining; complex events are most commonly depicted by means of a number of loosely organized non-finite clauses chained to a final main clause. These non-finite clauses are marked by a clause-connective attached to the verb root (e.g. Bokar S *-ge(-lo)/-lə*⁵² Mising H *-la*, Bengni S *-dwula*, Apatani A *-(la)la*); observe the following examples from Bokar S and Bengni S:

(23)

Bokar S:

ŋo: mi: rə-ge rə: tap-pa

I be dizzy-conn fall down-pf

'I fainted (lit.: I felt dizzy and fell down).'

52 Judging from the data supplied by My Bokar consultant, the clause connective *-lə*, unlike *-ge(lo)*, can only be used when a concessive meaning is expressed; e.g.

(i) si: lamtə nəče-da-lə in-ñiŋ-da
 this road near-decl-conn go-hard-decl
 'This road is near(er), but hard to travel on.'

(ii) si: lamtə nəče-da-ge(lo)/*-lə in-po-da
 this road near-decl-conn go-good-decl
 'This road is near(er), and easy to travel on.'

This distinction in usage is overlooked in Ouyang 1985:57-8.

Bengni S:

ŋu: du:gam du: -ña: -du:la, u:ji: ku:lu:k-du:la,

I food eat-finish-conn clothes put on-conn

arjap nu:ŋ-ko: -du:la, ni:ko lin-pu:nu:

door push-open-conn outside exit-pf/evd

'I finished eating, put on (some) clothes, pushed the door open,
and went out.'

Although clause-chaining is a common device for forming adverbial clauses, more specialized markings are also available (e.g. for conditional clauses, Bokar OY *banuŋ*, Bengni S *lukulu:...lu:*, Apatani A *koda*). The use of object-case marking on adverbials in temporal and circumstantial clauses, a notable Tani syntactic trait, is illustrated below:

(24)

Bokar OY:

i:ʃi tu:ŋ-ja-me [aruŋ du-nam]_{rel} mi: -ham

water drink-when-obj well dig-nom person-obj

mitpen moŋ-bo

forget NEG-fut

'When drinking water, we must not forget those who dug the well.'

Adi A:

Ko də-m bom-a-duŋ-əm u:ju-də bu: -m amo-lo

child def-obj bring-come-prog-obj demon-def he-obj ground-loc

əllət-la simat-mo-to

throw-down-conn have epileptic fits-caus-pf

'Even while the boy was coming, the demon threw him to the
ground in a convulsion.'

Nominalization of clauses seems very common in Tani. A few other syntactic operations, such as clefting and relativization, are based on nominalized clauses,⁵³ which are formed by adding nominalizers,⁵⁴ and often by marking the subject of the clause with the genitive case as well. In Mising N, for example:

(25)

dumai bu [no-ka ap-nam-əm]_{nom}

Dumai he thou-gen shoot-nom-obj

ai dak əm-to

good cop say-pf

'Dumai said that you shoot well (lit.: 'your shooting is good').'

Relative clauses in many Tani languages are formed simply by placing a nominalized modifying clause, from which the coreferential argument is deleted, in front of the relativized head noun. The main strategy of Tani relativization is then deletion or *gapping*, as in other verb-final languages (Nichols 1984:526). For example (the deleted argument is represented by Ø):

53 On the formal connection between these two syntactic patterns (and even genitive marking) in Sino-Tibetan, see Matisoff 1972.

54 The actual nominalizer morphemes vary from language to language. Two major roots are involved, namely *-na* (or the object case form *-nam* if the noun head is a semantic patient) in Bokar OY, Padam T, Mising N, Nyisu H, Gallong DG, Tagin DG (with dialectal variants such as *-nə* in Bori M and Hill Miri S, *-ni* in Milang T and *-nu* in Apatani A), and *-bu/-bo* in Bengni S, Nishing DG, and Nishi C.

(26)

Mising N:

[ŋo-ka Ø maloka ka-nam]_{rel} ami da si daku.

I-gen yesterday see-nom person def this cop

'This is the person I saw yesterday.'

Although this seems to be the fundamental Tani pattern, individual languages vary in various details of the construction. First, headless relative clauses are reported in Bokar and Mising N, where it is in the main clause that the deletion occurs (a head-marking feature according to Nichols 1984), e.g.:

(27)

Bokar OY:

ši: [mitur eče ko:-nam]_{rel} Ø ko.

this man clothing wear-nom cop

'This is men's clothes.'

The Bokar OY sentence in (27) above also shows that genitive marking in relative clauses is not required in some Tani languages (other such languages are Bengni S and Nyisu H). It is in Apatani A, again, that relative clauses have developed the most elaborate morphological marking. One important feature of Apatani relativization is the obligatory presence of the genitive marker *-ka*; this means that when the deleted noun in the relative clause is the subject, the genitive marker must still be left 'stranded', e.g.:

(28)

ŋo [sux-mi Ø -ka pa-nu bo]_{rel}

I cattle-obj -gen kill-nom (agent)

mju-mi kapa-to

person-obj see-pf

'I saw the person who killed the cattle.'

Thus it is possible that *-ka* is on its way to becoming grammaticalized into a **complementizer** in Apatani relative clauses. The other notable development in Apatani relative clauses is the differentiation of nominalizers for indicating the case role of the relative noun (agent: *-nubo*, patient/recipient: *-nu*, location: *-ko*; instrument *-nunanu*), a feature reminiscent of Tibetan.⁵⁵

5. Concluding Remarks

The Tani languages have been regarded as constituting a unique nucleus within Tibeto-Burman, based mainly on lexical criteria (Benedict 1972). The present survey, tentative as it is given the present immature state of Tani linguistics, is to the best of my knowledge the first attempt at globally characterizing Tani languages in terms of phonological, morphosyntactic, as well as lexical traits on the basis of a rather broad database incorporating results from fresh field work. Though any one of these features alone will probably not suffice to characterize the whole group, taken together they do offer us a good idea of what typological properties to look for among Tani languages. It is the author's wish that this work will pave the way for further in-depth research on all aspects of this fascinating group of languages of Arunachal Pradesh, the last frontier in the dwindling Tibeto-Burman tribal world.

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55 In many other Tani languages, nominalizers are also differentiated in similar but less elaborate ways, i.e. *-na* and *-nam* for respectively agentive and patient nominal heads.

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