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Bonan Grammatical Features
in Wutun Mandarin

Introduction

Wutun Mandarin is a small Sinitic language heavily influenced by Amdo Tibetan. However, the language also exhibits clear signs of having been influenced by certain Mongolic languages of the Gansu-Qinghai region. The aim of this article is to give an overview of the morphosyntactic features that Wutun shares with Bonan. These features are not found in Mandarin Chinese or Amdo Tibetan, and thus they most probably represent neither genetically inherited Sinitic features nor contact features acquired from Amdo Tibetan. Instead, the existence of these features suggests that Wutun has been in contact with certain Mongolic languages and has acquired some Mongolic features through language contact. Because the languages and dialects of the Gansu-Qinghai region form a Sprachbund, it is difficult, if not impossible to identify one single language as the actual source of borrowings or structural interference. Nonetheless, since both Wutun and Bonan are minority languages spoken at the local level and in the immediate vicinity of each other, the comparison of these two languages provides information on how Mongolic languages have influenced the development of local Sinitic languages of Gansu-Qinghai.

1. Cultural and geographical context

Wutun Mandarin, or Wutun (*Wutunhua* 五屯话 in Standard Mandarin (SM), *Seng ge gshong ge skad* in Written Tibetan(WT)) is a little documented Sinitic language spoken by about 4,000 people in Wutun 五屯 （WT *Seng ge gshong*), a rural locality located a few kilometres north of Longwu 龙务 （WT *Rong bo*) town. Longwu town is the county centre of Tongren County (SM *Tongren Xian* 同仁县, WT *Reb gong*), Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (*Huangnan Zangzu Zizhizhou* 黄南藏族自治州), Qinghai Province (*Qinghai Sheng* 青海省), People's Republic of China. The Wutun area consists of three administrative villages, Upper Wutun (*Wutun Shangzhuang* 五屯上装), Lower Wutun (*Wutun Xiazhuang* 五屯下装) and Jiacangma 加仓玛 （WT *rGya tshang ma*), which to-

gether contain eight original villages. Wutun is spoken only in these three administrative villages, and nowhere else.

In terms of genetic taxonomy, Wutun can be classified as a distinct local form of Northwest Mandarin. Its basic vocabulary and grammatical morphemes also have unambiguous cognates in other varieties of Mandarin Chinese. Regionally, however, Wutun belongs to the language union best termed *Amdo Sprachbund* or *Qinghai Linguistic Complex* (c.f. Janhunen 2007). Due to language contact with neighbouring non-Sinitic languages, Wutun has acquired many features that are quite atypical for Sinitic languages. These include loss of tonal distinctions, a highly reduced system of numeral classifiers, agglutinative morphology and grammaticalized evidentiality. The dominant regional language in the Tongren area and the second language for almost all the speakers of Wutun is Amdo Tibetan, and Tibetan influence is apparent in all levels of Wutun linguistic structure, in phonology, morphology, syntax and the lexicon. Therefore Wutun can be characterized as a heavily Tibetanized variety of Northwest Mandarin. The speakers of Wutun are also culturally close to local Tibetans and follow the *Gelukpa* school of Tibetan Buddhism.

The first descriptions of Wutun were written by the Chinese linguist Chen Naixiong (1982, 1986). Chen also wrote two more specific studies, one on Wutun phonology (1988) and one on verb forms (1989). There is also a less professional description by a local cultural officer, Xi Yuanlin (1983). Wutun material is also discussed by Yixiweisa Acuo, who mainly focuses on the Dao language (*Daohua*), another Tibetanized variety of Mandarin. In general linguistics, Wutun has been discussed by Mei W. Lee-Smith and Stephen A. Wurm (1996) and Charles N. Li (1983, 1984, 1986). The first general grammatical description was published by Janhunen et al. (2008). Janhunen (2008, 2009) has also written two articles on Wutun phonology and transcription.

Although the most important contact language of Wutun is Amdo Tibetan, Wutun also shares several grammatical features with the Bonan language, which is spoken in four neighbouring villages. Bonan (also Baoan, Baonan) belongs to the Shirongolic branch of Mongolic languages (c.f. Janhunen 2003). It has two main dialects, Qinghai Bonan spoken in Tongren County, Qinghai Province, and Gansu Bonan spoken in Jishishan County, Gansu Province. Originally, the ancestors of Bonan speakers all lived in the town of Baoan located in modern Tongren County. Because of the increasing influence of the Hui and Salar Muslims of the region, some of the Bonan speakers converted to Islam, while others remained within the sphere of Tibetan Buddhism. This religious divide lead to the emigration of the Muslim part of the population to Gansu province around 1860. Today, the two dialects of Bonan are quite distinct. The Qinghai dialect is heavily influenced by Amdo Tibetan, while the Gansu dialect has been influenced by local varieties of Northwest Mandarin and also has some Arabic loanwords. Qinghai Bonan has about 4,000 speakers living in the villages of Baoan, Nianduhu (WT *gNyan.thog*), Guomari (WT *sGo.dmar*) and Gasari (WT *rKa.gsar*) in Tongren County. Gansu Bonan has about 12,200 speakers living in the villages

of Ganhetan, Dadun and Lijiacun located in Dahejia Township, Dongxiang Salar Jishishan Autonomous County, Linxia Hui Autonomous Prefecture.

The Wutun examples are mainly based on my field material collected in spring 2006, summer 2007 and summer 2010. My data includes elicited examples, conversational data and examples from descriptive and narrative texts. I have identified these in the citations. The Bonan examples are taken from published sources on Qinghai Bonan, mainly Wu (2003) and Fried (2010). Wu Hugjiltu and Chen Naixiong collected field material on Qinghai Bonan from 1980 to 1981. Based on this material, Chen published a vocabulary (1985) and a volume of texts (1986), accompanied by a diachronic study together with Chinggeltei (1986) and a dialectological study (1994). Wu (2003) is a summary of these four studies. The descriptive grammar by Fried (2010) is the most comprehensive grammatical description of Qinghai Bonan to date. Because both Wutun and Bonan still remain inadequately documented languages and many details of their grammatical structures are not yet fully understood, my observations should be considered preliminary.

2. Nominal number

Number marking is optional in both Wutun and Bonan. Thus unmarked nominal stems can have either a singular or plural reference. Number marking is absent in nominals when preceded by numerals or quantifiers that express number. Unmarked nominal stems are also often used in general statements. However, in both languages it is possible to mark the singular, paucal and plural forms of the noun. The singular marker in Wutun is *-ge,* which may represent a reanalysis of the Mandarin Chinese classifier *ge* (个) under the influence of Bonan. Bonan has a functionally very similar clitic *=ge,* which according to Chen & Chingeltei (1986: 84) arose through the use of the post nominal form of *nəgə,* 'one'. In Wutun and Bonan, the singular marker expresses both singular number and indefiniteness and can be termed the indefinite singular.

Wutun:
(1) *je   nian   nga-n-de   Dorje qhichai-ge mai-she-lio*
  this   year   1-COLL-ASS   Dorje car-SG.INDEF buy-get-PRF.EGO
  'This year our Dorje bought a car. (Field notes, conversational data)

Qinghai Bonan:
(2) *da   deda=gə=da*   *hko natʰoŋ   kʰər-tɕə*
  also grandfather=SG.INDEF=LOC big festival be.required-IMPF
  saga-tɕə *ər-tɕə* *da*
  choose-IMPF come-PRF also
  'And a grandfather wanted a big festival and chose (it), and…'
  (Fried 2010: 67)

The paucal marker is *-jhege* in Wutun and *=ʁula* in Bonan. The distinction be-tween paucal and plural is not clear-cut, but the paucal basically indicates small numbers (usually three to four entities). The origin of the Wutun paucal marker is the Mandarin Chinese quantifier *jǐ-ge* (几个),'several', while the Bonan pau-cal marker might be connected to the number *ʁuran* 'three' + plural enclitic *=la* (Chen & Chingeltei 1986: 87).

Wutun:
(3) *Jiashi-de   zhawa-jhege   zang   li   wanlan-di-li*
     Jiashi-ASS   worker-PAUC   Tibet   in   do-PROGR-SEN.INF
     'A couple of Jiashi's workers are working in Tibet.' (Field notes, conver-sational data)

Qinghai Bonan:
(4) *au=ʁula   silaŋ=da   o=tɕo*
     man=PAUC   Xining=LOC   go=IMPF.OBJ
     'A few men are going to Xining.' (Fried 2010: 71)

The plural marker is *-dera* in Wutun and *=la* in Bonan. The plural indicates large numbers, usually more than three to four entities.

Wutun:
(5) *ren-dera   xaige   ho-li*
     person-PL very   good-SEN.INF
     'The people [in this country] are very good.' (Field notes, elicited)

Qinghai Bonan:
(6) *au=la   silaŋ=da   o=tɕo*
     man=PL   Xining= LOC   go=IMPF.OBJ
     'The men are going to Xining.' (Fried 2010: 74)

Number marking is intertwined with definiteness in Wutun and Bonan. In Bonan, the plural marker *=la* indicates both large numbers and definiteness, as in example (6). In Wutun, the plural marker *-dera* often indicates a definite and limited group (definite plural), while the paucal marker *-jhege* can be used to indicate an indefinite and unlimited group (indefinite plural).

Wutun:
(7) *je nguiwo-dera   ngu ngu-de pa-dera   ka-gu-lio*
     this thing- PL   1SG 1SG-ASS friend- PL give-COMPL-PRF.EGO
     'I gave these goods to my friends.' (Field notes, elicited)

(8) *ha-jhege*   *kuize-liangge*   *huan*   *he-di-li*
    Chinese-PAUC chopstick-SOC   food   drink-PROGR-SEN.INF
    'Chinese people eat with chopsticks. (Field notes, elicited)

Chen & Chinggeltei (1986) and Wu (2003) analyze the Bonan number system as consisting of only singular, paucal and plural. According to Fried (2010) Bonan also has a dual number. Dual is marked by the enclitic =ʁala (*ghwala*) based on the numeral ʁar (*ghwar*), 'two'. In earlier work (see Wu 2003), this marker has been analyzed as a collective numeral 'two together.'

Qinghai Bonan:
(9) *au=* *ʁala*   *silaŋ=da*   *o=tɕo*
    man=DU   Xining= LOC   go=IMPF.OBJ
    'The (two) men are going to Xining.' (Fried 2010: 68)

In Wutun, the numeral -*liang-ge*, 'two' can also be used both as a basic numeral and as a collective numeral meaning 'two together'.

Wutun:
(10) *nga-ha*   *ma*   *liang-ge* *yek*
     1SG.OBL-FOC horse   two-CLF   EXIST.EGO
     'I have two horses.' (Janhunen et al. 2008: 55, *my glosses*)

(11) *da ngu liang-ge*   *wa-ge*   *she-la*
     then 1   two together   hill-SG.INDEF   climb-EXT
     'Then we two climbed to a hill…' (Field notes, textual data)

It still remains unclear whether the collective use of the Wutun numeral 'two' could be analyzed as a grammaticalized dual.

3.   Collective personal pronouns

In Wutun, plural personal pronouns are formed from singular stems by two markers: the paucal marker -*jhege* and the collective marker -*mu*. With personal pronouns, unlike nouns, the paucal marker -*jhege* gives a general plural reading and does not differentiate between small or large groups. Thus, in example (12) *ngu-jhege* may mean both we (a few people) or we (a large group). Plural pronouns formed by the paucal marker have non-collective reading - emphasis is on each individual of the group.

Wutun:

(12) *ngu-jhege   hai lai-de   kuli   zhai- lio*
    1- PAUC   still come-ASS time pick- PRF.EGO
    'And we (each of us) even picked (wheat from the field) while coming
    back (from the school)...' (Field notes, conversational data)

Collective plural pronouns, on the other hand, refer to 'person and his/her as-
sociates.' They are used to indicate intimately connected groups, like village or
family. When followed by the associative marker *-de*, the suffix *-mu* is changed
to *-n-* and the vowel alternation *u: a* takes place in the first person pronominal
stem, resulting in the variant *nga* before the collective marker.

Wutun:

(13) *nga-n-de   je-ge   sanggeshong   sho-de   je-ge*
    1-COLL-ASS this-CLF Wutun   say- ASS this-CLF
    'This (village) of ours is called Sanggeshong (Wutun)…'
    (Field notes, textual data)

(14) *gu-n-de   awu-ha huaiqa-ge   yek-li*
    3-COLL-ASS boy-FOC book-SG.INDEF EXIST-SEN.INF
    'Their boy (the boy of their family) has a book.' (Field notes, elicited)

In Bonan, all the personal pronouns have singular, dual, paucal and plural forms,
and the inclusive/exclusive distinction is made in first person dual, paucal and
plural pronouns. In addition, Bonan has a set of collective plural pronouns that
are functionally very similar to the Wutun collective plural pronouns. Collec-
tive plural pronouns are distinguished from non-collective plural pronouns by
the absence of the plural marker = *la*. In example (15), the first person inclusive,
locative plural pronoun *manda* does not include the plural marker = *la*, so the
sentence allows for a collective reading. In example (16), the first person inclu-
sive, locative plural pronoun *maŋɡəlada* includes the plural marker = *la* and the
sentence has a non-collective reading.

Qinghai Bonan:

(15) *ɕoŋɡə   manda   da   tsʰa   wi-saŋ*
    originally 1PL.INCL.COLL.LOC also   land   COP₁.SUBJ-POS
    'Originally, we (the whole village) also owned this land.' (Fried 2010:
    117)

(16) *atɕaŋ   maŋɡəlada   tsʰamhtoχ=ɡə   oχ-tɕo*
    3SG   1PL.INCL.LOC gift=SG.INDEF   give=IMPF.OBJ
    'He gave us a gift.' (allows for the reading, 'He gave us each a gift.')
    (Fried 2010: 118)

There are some differences in the use of Wutun and Bonan collective personal pronouns. In Wutun, it is common to use the collective plural with third person while in Bonan the use of collective numerals is mostly limited to the first person inclusive plural.

4. Sociative case

Wutun has a sociative case based on the numeral *-liang-ge* (SM *liǎngge* 两个) 'two'. The sociative case combines functions of both the comitative and the instrumental. The sociative case indicates accompaniment (example 17), instrument (example 18), or inanimate causal agent (example 19).

Wutun:
(17) *ngu ngu-de   tixang-liangge   qhi-zhe*
     1SG 1SG-ASS   younger brother-SOC   go-CONT
     'I will go together with my younger brother.' (Janhunen et al 2008: 60, *my glosses*)

(18) *adia   xian-ha   daijhe-liangge   ge-duan-lio   ze-li*
     monk   thread-FOC   knife-SOC   cut-short-PRF   EXEC-SEN.INF
     'The monk cut the thread with a knife.' (Field notes, textual data)

(19) *qho-ha   qelok-liangge gang-gu-lio   ze-li*
     bridge-FOC   flood-SOC   flush-COMPL-PRF   EXEC-SEN.INF
     'The bridge was flushed away by the flood.' (Janhunen et al 2008: 61, *my glosses*)

Bonan has a functionally very similar marker =ʁala (*ghwala*) based on the numeral ʁar (*ghwar*), 'two'. Wu (2003) analyzes this marker as a sociative case marker. According to him, the sociative marker in Qinghai Bonan is mainly used in its instrumental function, while in Gansu Bonan the same marker is also used in the comitative function (Wu 2003: 344). Sociative case based on the numeral 'two' is common in the Mongolic languages of the Amdo Sprachbund and it has also been transmitted into several Sinitic languages of the region (c.f. Dwyer 1992).

   An alternative interpretation is presented by Fried (2010). According to his analysis, the Qinghai Bonan marker =ʁala (*ghwala*) has two distinct functions: it can mark either instrumental case or dual number. Fried analyzes examples like (21) as dual number marking instead of the comitative use of the sociative case.

Qinghai Bonan:

(20) *atɕaŋ   jəɕə=la=ʁala   daŋ=nə   ne-tɕo*
    3SG   key=PL=INST   door=ACC   open-IMPF.OBJ
    'He used the keys to open the door.' (Fried 2010: 61)

(21) *dʐoma=tɕə   tɕaɕi=ʁala   hkərkə-tɕo*
    Drolma=and   Jiashi= DU   kiss- IMPF.OBJ
    'Drolma and Jiashi kissed.' (Fried 2010: 69)

5.   Morphological topic marking

The pragmatic role of topic plays an important role in both Sinitic and Mongolic languages, and sentences are often organized on the basis of topic-comment structure. The topic is a definite or generic element that the sentence is about. Unlike the subject, the topic does not have to be an argument of the verb - topic selection is independent of the verb (Li & Thompson 1976: 461–463; 1981: 85–88). Wutun is a topic-prominent language like other forms of Mandarin Chinese. However, while the topic in other forms of Mandarin Chinese remains morphologically unmarked, in Wutun it can be marked with the topic particle *mu*.

Wutun:

(22) *gu-de   aba   mu*
    3SG-ASS   father   TOP
    'As for her father,

    xaitang li   dianno   yek   da   ho-li   sho-ma-li
    school in   computer EXIST   then good-SEN.INF   say-RES-SEN.INF
    [he] said that there should be some computers in the school.' (Field notes, conversational data)

Morphological topic marking in Wutun has a parallel in Bonan. Like Wutun, Bonan makes use of both topic fronting and morphological topic marking. The topic particle in Bonan is *ma*.

Qinghai Bonan:

(23) *kʰoŋ   ma oloŋ   wa*
    people   TOP many   COP$_1$.OBJ
    '(The people), there were many.' (Fried 2010: 255)

6.   Second person imperatives

Unmarked verbal stems can be used to indicate the second person imperative mood in Wutun and Bonan. Both languages also make use of verbal suffixes. Wutun uses the suffix *-da* in second person imperatives.

Wutun:
(24) *ane   tiema-ge-li   ana   ni   kan-da*
         EXCL bike-SG.INDEF-SEN.INF   mother 2SG   look-IMP
         'Oh, it's a bike! Mother, look!' (Field notes, textual data)

In Bonan, the second person imperative suffix is *-de.*

Qinghai Bonan:
(25) (*tɕʰə*)   *kʰəl-də*
         (2SG)   say-IMP
         '(you) speak!' (Fried 2010: 264)

7.   The terminative serial marker *-tala*

Wutun has several serial markers that indicate the relationship between serialized verbs in describing complex events. The terminative serial marker *-tala,* meaning 'until, in order to', represents a possible borrowing of the Bonan terminative converb.

Wutun:
(26) *zang   li   do-tala   san-ge yai-ma*
         Tibet   in   arrive-TERM   three-CLF month-and
         'They say that, in order to arrive in Tibet,

         shewu   tian xhen-dio-de   re   sho-li
         fifteen   day go-NEC-ASS   FACT   REP-SEN.INF
         you had to walk three months and fifteen days.'
         (Janhunen et al 2008: 92, *my glosses*)

The terminative converb *-tala* is well-documented in Mongolic languages. The Bonan converb has several forms: *-tala* (Gansu *-tela ~ -tele*), *-la* (*-le)* and *-sala* (*-sele*). The form *-sala* arose to disambiguate it from the conditional marker *-sa* (Wu 2003: 339).

Gansu Bonan:
(27) *ta   xoro   ol-tele   saaghe*
     2PL evening   become-TERM   wait
     'You, wait until it becomes evening!' (Wu 2003: 339, *my glosses*)

Although grammatical borrowings from Bonan to Wutun are rare, they do exist and the terminative marker is among the most obvious examples.

8.   The interrogative marker *-mu*

The most commonly used interrogative marker in Wutun is *-a,* but questions can also be marked with less the frequently used interrogative marker *-mu*.

Wutun:
(28) *lhoma-jhege   jhan-lio-mu*
     student-PAUC   see-PRF-INTERR
     'Did the few students see [her]?' (Field notes, conversational data)

A formally and functionally similar interrogative marker *-mu* can also be found in Bonan.

Qinghai Bonan:
(29) *tɕʰə   liɛa=nə   pitɛə   maidə-mu*
     2SG   homework=ACC   write   know-NARR.INTERR
     'Will you know how to do the homework?' (Fried 2010: 259)

In Bonan, the most common interrogative marker is *-u*. The interrogative marker *-mu* is formed by attaching the interrogative marker *-u* to the narrative aspect marker *-m*. The narrative aspect marker indicates stative or habitual aspect in Bonan. The borrowing of the interrogative marker *-mu* is another example of grammatical borrowing from Bonan to Wutun.

9.   Conclusions

Although Wutun Mandarin has less shared grammatical features with Bonan than with Amdo Tibetan, Bonan grammatical features in Wutun are definitely not non-existent. Many of the shared categories in Wutun and Bonan are functionally very similar, although the markers are not etymologically related. A case in point is the nominal number. Wutun makes a paucal versus plural distinction in nouns and a collective versus non-collective distinction in personal pronouns. These features are not found in Mandarin Chinese or Amdo Tibetan and they are also absent in most of the Mongolic languages of the Amdo Sprachbund, but they are well-attested in Bonan. The Wutun sociative case based on the nu-

meral 'two' represents a regional grammaticalization pattern. A functionally similar case also based on the numeral 'two' is found in both Bonan and many other Mongolic languages of the region. Because varieties of Mandarin Chinese spoken outside the Amdo Sprachbund typically have no case system and the comitative and instrumental functions in these languages are expressed with serial verb constructions instead of sociative case, it is fair to say that Wutun has acquired the sociative case due to language contact with a Mongolic language, most probably Bonan. There also exist actual grammatical borrowings from Bonan to Wutun. The Wutun terminative marker -*tala* and the interrogative marker -*mu* have most probably been borrowed from Bonan, which has both formally and functionally similar markers. The shared grammatical features suggest that there was probably a period when speakers of Wutun and Bonan had more contact with each other than today, when only very few speakers are bilingual in Wutun and Bonan, and the language of intercultural communication is mainly Amdo Tibetan.

Abbreviations

1	first person	INTERR	interrogative
2	second person	OBJ	objective perspective
3	third person	OBL	oblique
ASS	associative	LOC	locative case
ACC	accusative	NARR	narrative
CLF	classifier	NEC	necessitative
COLL	collective	PAUC	paucal number
COMPL	completive	PL	plural number
CONT	continuative aspect	POS	epistemic possibility
COP	copula	PRF	perfective aspect
DU	dual number	PROGR	progressive aspect
EGO	egophoric evidential	REP	reported evidential
EXEC	executive auxiliary	RES	resultative aspect
EXIST	existential	SG	singular number
EXT	extension of action	SM	Standard Mandarin
FACT	factual evidential	SEN.INF	sensory-inferential evidential
FOC	focus		
IMP	imperative	SOC	sociative
IMPF	imperfective	SUBJ	subjective perspective
INCL	inclusive	TERM	terminative
INDEF	indefinite	TOP	topic
INST	instrumental	WT	Written Tibetan

When citing works by other researchers, I sometimes replace their abbreviations with the ones above, when it is clear that the same gloss is intended. Otherwise, the original glosses are retained.

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