

Writing Chinese in Tibetan: On the alternatives for an Wutun orthography

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Abstract.

Wutun is a distinct local form of Northwest Mandarin spoken in a restricted locality in rural Qinghai Province, P.R. China. Although genetically a Sinitic language, Wutun has developed under strong structural influence of Amdo Tibetan, which is the second language of virtually all Wutun speakers. Wutun remains an unwritten language, but for practical and linguistic purposes there is a growing need to record Wutun language material in writing. For this aim, adaptations of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) as well as the Chinese Pinyin system have been applied, but due to the Tibetanization of the Wutun sound system the Tibetan script also remains an alternative. There is evidence suggesting that educated Wutun speakers can, even without much previous practice, write down their language using the Amdo Tibetan conventions of writing and reading Tibetan. The present paper will discuss the prospects of this option.

Wutun, or *Wutunhua* 五屯話, is a distinct Sinitic language spoken by a compact population of c. 4,000 people in the locality of Wutun 五屯, or *Sanggaixong* (Written Tibetan **Seng.ge.gshong**), located a few kilometres north of Longwu 龍務 (Written Tibetan **Rong.bo**), the county centre of Tongren (同仁), or Rekong (Written Tibetan **Reb.gong**), Huangnan Prefecture 黃南州 *Huangnan Zhou*, Qinghai Province 青海省 *Qinghai Sheng*, P.R. China. Strictly speaking, Wutun is the language of three ‘administrative’ villages: Lower Wutun 五屯下裝 *Wutun Xiazhuang*, Upper Wutun 五屯上裝 *Wutun Shangzhuang*, and Jiancangma 加倉瑪, which together comprise eight ‘natural’ villages.

In the Sinitic context, Wutun is an aberrant local form of Northwest Mandarin, which may or may not also incorporate a substratal layer of some other form of

Mandarin Chinese. Areally, Wutun is a member of the Amdo Sprachbund, which comprises more than a dozen languages spoken in the eastern part of the Amdo Province of Ethnic Tibet, today divided between the Qinghai 青海, Gansu 甘肅, and Sichuan 四川 Provinces of China. The sprachbund also comprises several other local varieties of Chinese, while its other members belong to the Mongolic, Turkic, and Bodic (Tibetan) families. The languages spoken in the immediate vicinity of Wutun include Amdo Tibetan (Bodic) and Bonan (Mongolic).

Structurally, Wutun is best characterized as a strongly Tibetanized form of Chinese, though it has also interacted with the neighbouring Bonan language. The Tibetan features of Wutun cover all levels of linguistic structure and substance, including phonology, morphosyntax, syntax, and lexicon. As far as the lexicon is concerned, native Chinese elements dominate in the basic vocabulary, while a large proportion of the non-basic vocabulary, including most cultural items, all personal names and many toponyms in the local environment, are of a Tibetan origin. The grammatical elements are mainly of a Chinese origin, though their use is regulated by rules reminiscent of Amdo Tibetan grammar. In spite of the strong Tibetan influence, however, Wutun does also retain some non-Tibetan typological features, such as a nominative-accusative (and not an ergative-absolutive) argument structure, as well as certain details of word order.

The earlier history of the Wutun language is unknown, but it seems that the language has been spoken in its current area for some centuries, where it also has developed its idiosyncratic features. Its separation from the general context of Northwest Mandarin must be of a relatively old date. The Amdo Tibetan influence is connected with the fact that Amdo Tibetan has long been the dominant regional language of the locality, and it is also the oral language of local Tibetan Buddhism, to which the Wutun speakers adhere. As a result, virtually all Wutun speakers today are bilingual in Amdo Tibetan, while Written Tibetan, rather than Written Chinese, serves as their basic medium of written communication.

Due to the combination of a Chinese basic vocabulary with a Tibetan grammar and cultural vocabulary, Wutun used to cause problems for linguistic taxonomy and was tentatively regarded as a 'mixed' language until it was definitively, and correctly, classified as Sinitic by Chen Naixiong, who wrote the first descriptions of the language (Chen 1981, 1982). Most of the subsequent work on Wutun has also been by Chen (1986, 1988, 1989), though there is also a treatise by Xi Yuanling (1983) and a secondary comment by Mei W. Lee-Smith and Stephen A. Wurm (1996). The first overall grammatical description of Wutun was

published by Juha Janhunen & Marja Peltomaa & Erika Sandman & Xiawu Dongzhou (2008).

In spite of the small number of speakers, Wutun is not immediately endangered, for it is still spoken by more or less the entire population in its native area, including the growing generation. It has to be noted that the Wutun speakers themselves generally tend to play down the importance of the separate status of their language, and prefer to identify themselves as ethnic ‘Tibetans’, rather than as ‘Chinese’. The Wutun term for the Wutun language is simply *nga-n-de-hua* ‘our language’. Officially, however, the Wutun speakers are, together with the neighbouring Bonan speakers, classified as members of the Tu ‘nationality’ or *Tuzu* 土族, which is inherently a negative definition, implying any population in the Gansu-Qinghai region that is neither Chinese nor Tibetan, nor Moslem.

Due to the use of Written Tibetan as the principal written medium of all Wutun speakers, Wutun itself remains an unwritten and unnormalized language. Even so, there is a distinct and growing need of writing down Wutun language material both for practical and linguistic purposes, including the purposes of collecting folklore and information on local history. For linguistic documentation Wutun has most often been transcribed in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), though the variety of this transcription conventionally used by many Chinese linguists, including Chen Naixiong, incorporates a number of non-standard features. Most notably, the IPA materials published so far on Wutun tend to render the distinction between aspirated and unaspirated stops in terms of separate basic letters, that is, by using the letters <k p t> for the aspirated sounds [k^h p^h t^h] and the letters <g b d> for the unaspirated sounds [k p t], as in the Pinyin system for Chinese.

An internationally more adequate version of the IPA system has been applied for Wutun by Yixiweisa Acuo (2004), whose basic object is, however, *Daohua* 倒話, another Tibetanized variety of Mandarin Chinese (spoken in Sichuan, and with no immediate relation to Wutun). The published Wutun data of Acuo (2004: 212-250) are confined to a basic word list and a few phrases, and in spite of the correct notational principles they contain a number of observational inconsistencies and errors, caused by the insufficiency of the underlying field experience. Moreover, it is obvious that the IPA system with its special symbols, diacritics, and other graphic conventions, is cumbersome in use and cannot conveniently serve as a notation system for recording any longer samples of the Wutun language.

As an alternative to the IPA system, the Chinese Pinyin system has also been applied to Wutun. Since the basic vocabulary of Wutun is of a Sinitic origin, many

lexical items of the language have a cognate in Standard Mandarin, and even the phonological relationships between the Wutun items and their Standard Mandarin cognates are, in general, regular. A problem is, however, that the Wutun phonological system is very far from Standard Mandarin. Not only does Wutun have several segments and segmental oppositions absent in Standard Mandarin, but it also has restructured many native Mandarin features in terms of Tibetan phonology. The rules of correspondence between Wutun and Standard Mandarin are not always trivial (on this, cf. also Janhunen 2008), and in any case they are not immediately obvious to the native-speaking Wutun user of the Pinyin system, who has only learnt to apply the system mechanically to Standard Mandarin.

The result is that when an Wutun speaker writes his or her native language in terms of the Roman letters as used in the Pinyin system, he or she tends to follow the spelling conventions of Romanized Standard Mandarin. The Standard Mandarin model is followed to the extent that most syllables are written with a tone mark, although Wutun has no distinctive tones. Also, Wutun bi- and polysyllabic words tend to be written in terms of separate syllables. All of this points to the fact that the Pinyin syllables have an inherent iconic value for non-Standard Mandarin speakers, with each written syllable being treated as an indivisible and impermutable entity dictated by the normative phonemic structure of Standard Mandarin.

Even so, it is possible to design a phonologically adequate Pinyin-based Roman transcription for Wutun. Such a system is used in the above-mentioned grammatical description (Janhunen & *al.* 2008). Most problems in designing the system are caused by the exceptionally large and coherent paradigm of initial consonants in the language, which, among other things, necessitates the frequent use of graphic sequences (digraphs and trigraphs) for the notation of single phonological segments. For most younger speakers, at least, the initial consonant system seems to have the following configuration with 35 phonemes (Table 1):

<i>bb</i>	<i>dd</i>	<i>zz</i>	<i>zzh</i>	<i>jj</i>	<i>jjh</i>	<i>gg</i>
<i>b</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>zh</i>	<i>j</i>	<i>jh</i>	<i>g</i>
<i>p</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>c</i>	<i>ch</i>	<i>q</i>	<i>qh</i>	<i>k</i>
<i>f</i>	<i>lh</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>sh</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>xh</i>	<i>h</i>
<i>w</i>	<i>l</i>	<i>ss</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>xx</i>	<i>y</i>	<i>gh</i>

Table 1. *Wutun initial consonants: the Pinyin option.*

In this system, the sequences *bb dd zz zzh jj jjh gg* express phonetically voiced stop obstruents representing seven distinct types of articulation (labial, dental, sibilant, retroflex, laminal, palatal, velar). The sequences *ss xx* represent two corresponding voiced continuant obstruents (sibilant and laminal). The basic letters *j q x* represent laminal obstruents phonetically similar to (but diachronically not always identical with) the sounds rendered by the same letters in Pinyinized Standard Mandarin. These segments contrast in Wutun not only with the retroflexes *zh ch sh* (and *zzh*), but also with the palatals *jh qh xh* (and *jjh*), of which the palatal continuant *xh* is, however, normally pronounced as a diffuse dorsopalatal fricative [ʃ]. The digraph *lh* stands for a voiceless dental lateral (with some fricativization), while the digraph *gh* stands for a voiced postvelar (uvular) spirant or trill.

As may be seen, the Wutun system of initial consonants exploits to the full the possibilities of a matrix of 5 x 7 possible slots. This system is more or less identical with that attested in Amdo Tibetan. The principal Amdo Tibetan dialect spoken in the neighbourhood of Wutun is that of Rekong (Roerich 1958), but a virtually identical system is present in most other Amdo Tibetan dialects, especially those spoken by farming village populations (cf. e.g. Janhunen & Kalsang Norbu 2000). Some forms of Amdo Tibetan, especially those spoken by pastoral nomadic populations, do, however, possess additional segments or sequences, including voiced prenasalized and voiceless preaspirated stops. There are indications that these may also exist (or may have existed) in some idiolects of Wutun, but for most speakers today the ‘simple’ system of 35 initials seems to be a reality.

It should be noted that not all initial consonants occur in the inherited Chinese (Sinitic) vocabulary of Wutun. The voiced segments *bb dd zz zzh jj jjh gg* and *ss xx*, for instance, are only present in the Tibetan (Bodic) elements of the language. The same is true of the voiceless lateral segment *lh*. On the other hand, the segments *f sh* occur only in items of a Chinese origin, though *f* is ultimately absent also in the inherited Chinese vocabulary of Wutun and occurs only in recent Standard Mandarin borrowings (some of which may actually have been transmitted by local Amdo Tibetan). Even so, the Chinese (inherited) and Tibetan (borrowed) elements in Wutun are ‘mixed’ to the extent that the native speaker is unlikely to be aware of the difference. The synchronic system of initial consonants in Wutun is an indivisible whole, to which both Chinese and Tibetan have contributed.

The system of vowels is considerably more simple and comprises only six basic entities, Pinyinized by the basic letters *a e o u i* and the digraph *ai*. In this system, the basic letter *e* stands for a qualitatively indistinct ‘reduced’ vowel [ə], while the digraph *ai* stands for a mid-high unrounded front vowel [e]. Altogether,

this system is identical with that of local Amdo Tibetan, though, for diachronic reasons, the frequencies of the individual vowels are very different in Wutun and Amdo Tibetan. The vowels can be further combined with two distinct finals, one of them nasal, Pinyinized as *n* or *ng*, and the other non-nasal, Pinyinized as *k*.

The only true differences between the phonological systems of Wutun and Amdo Tibetan are concerned with the medials. Although both Chinese and Tibetan are syllable-oriented languages with a slot for medial segments in the syllable, medials are synchronically more important in Chinese, and this Sinitic property is to some extent retained by Wutun, which has two medials, Pinyinized as *i* and *u* (palatal vs. labial). The medials occur basically before the vowel (*)*a*, both with and without a nasal final, as in the sequences *ia ua ian iang uan*. Similar sequences are only marginally present in Amdo Tibetan. However, Wutun additionally has the sequences *in un*, as well as two special high vowels, Pinyinized as *ii uu* (phonetically long or tense), which are possibly best analyzed as also containing medials and which, in any case, have no counterparts in Amdo Tibetan.

Although the differences in the medial systems are diachronically important, they do not obscure the fact that Wutun is still phonologically much closer to Amdo Tibetan than it is to any form of Chinese. For this reason, and due to the many idiosyncratic processes of diachronic phonology that have taken place in Wutun, the Pinyinized image of Wutun is often surprisingly different from Standard Mandarin. Even if both languages were orthographically written in the Pinyin system they would remain mutually just as unintelligible in writing as they are in speaking.

On the other hand, it may be noted that the Tibetan elements in Wutun are virtually identical with their counterparts and originals in local Amdo Tibetan. This means that a literate Wutun speaker cannot possibly ignore their orthographic image in the Tibetan script. In this connection, it is important to recall that Amdo Tibetan itself has no officially standardized written norm, but there are several conventions that are widely used by Amdo Tibetan speakers to write down their language, and to read Written Tibetan in Amdo Tibetan pronunciation (cf. e.g. Kuo-ming Sung & Lha Byams Rgyal 2005). These conventions are well known also to the Wutun speakers literate in Tibetan. Essentially, it is a question of interpreting the archaic Written Tibetan segmental structure in the light of the diachronic processes that have shaped the phonology of the extant Amdo Tibetan dialects.

Due to the abundance of Tibetan loanwords and grammatical structures in Wutun, and thanks to the dominance of Written Tibetan in the scriptal environment of the Wutun speakers, the Tibetan script is, in fact, both linguistically and

culturally the most natural choice when it comes to writing the Wutun language. In spite of its archaic orthographical features, the Tibetan script is a resilient alphabetic, or, more exactly, alphasyllabic (cf. Bright 1996: 384), system of writing that can easily be applied to non-Tibetan languages, including Wutun, while the logographic Chinese script, which is often used by Chinese scholars in dialectological studies, would not function at all in the Wutun case.

Thus, it is relatively simple to give each Wutun phoneme a Tibetan ‘spelling’. It has to be noted, however, that the Tibetan script, when applied to Amdo Tibetan, involves many homophonic segments and sequences. For instance, the postvelar consonant *gh* can for historical reasons be spelled both as **w** and as **db**. Similarly, the consonant letters **d g** and **t k**, which originally denote segments belonging to two different stop series (voiced vs. voiceless), are in Amdo Tibetan ‘read’ invariably as *d g* (basic unaspirated dental and velar stop). The diachronic developments are, however, not always symmetric. For instance, the consonant letters **b p** have not yielded homophonic readings but continue to represent two distinct segments, *w* (voiced labial continuant) and *b* (voiceless labial stop).

It goes without saying that if Wutun is to be written in the Tibetan script, any Tibetan elements in the language will have to be written according to the established Tibetan orthographical conventions. This is particularly obvious in the case of the voiced stops *bb dd zz zzh jj jjh gg*, which have a variety of orthographical renderings in Amdo Tibetan (mainly sequences with originally different preinitials). For the Sinitic elements of Wutun, however, no a priori conventions exist, and the choice is often open as to how any given sound segment or syllabic type is best written. A possible set of choices for all the 35 initial consonants of Wutun is shown below (Table 2), but it is important to realize that for many segments several alternative orthographical images are possible.

vb	vd	vdz	vdr	vj	vgy	vg
p	d	ts	tr	c	ky	k
ph	th	tsh	thr	ch	khy	kh
hph	lh	s	hr	zh	sh	h
b	l	gz	r	gzh	y	db

Table 2. *Wutun initial consonants: the Tibetan option.*

Practical linguistic fieldwork with Wutun native speakers has shown that it is,

indeed, surprisingly easy for an Wutun speaker to record his or her language in the Tibetan script. The result is both more systematic and more reliable than if the speaker would use Roman letters (Pinyin) or phonetic symbols (IPA). Moreover, the Tibetan script is inherently more suitable to reveal certain crucial and areally typical phonetic distinctions that have no immediately obvious expression in terms of Roman letters. For instance, the opposition between the laminal stops *j q* and the palatal stops *jh qh* involves a distinction that is present in many Amdo Tibetan dialects but absent in others. The opposition is present in Wutun and is written by Wutun speakers systematically as **c ch** vs. **ky khy** when Tibetan letters are used. When, however, the Pinyin values of the Roman letters are used, Wutun speakers write both sets of sounds as *j q*. This is simply because Standard Mandarin has only one set of consonants (laminals) in this range, and, consequently, the standard version of the Pinyin system has only one set of symbols for the segments concerned.

Sample text

Below is a brief experimental sample of Wutun, as written in the Tibetan script. The elements of the Tibetan script are here expressed in terms of a fully reconvertible Romanized transliteration (for the system of Romanization, see further below). The sample consists of several casual sentences in the Wutun language, written down in Xining, Qinghai Province, in May, 2007, at the request of the author, by a 17-year old female native speaker from the village of Jiancangma. Importantly, this speaker had no previous experience of using the Tibetan script for her language, but, in spite of this, she was quickly able to produce a coherent text that remarkably well reflects the phonological properties of the Wutun language.

In the following, each sentence of the sample text (1-9) is quoted first in the Romanized Tibetan spelling (in boldface, with the syllable boundaries indicated as in the Tibetan script), then in the non-standard version of the Pinyin system as adapted for Wutun (in italics, with the morpheme boundaries indicated by a hyphen), then in an interlinear glossing (for the abbreviations of the grammatical terms, see further below), and, finally, in an English free translation.

- (1) **ngan.du.hri.las.rin.lugs.gi.ring.yig /**
nga-n-de she-li ren lek-ge rang yek
1P-ASS-GEN home-LOC person six-CL people EXIST
'In our home there are six people.'
- (2) **xa.pa.yin.hangs.las.by.a.ba.ban.lan.dus.yig**

aba yenhang-li xawa wanlan-di-yek
father bank-LOC work do-PROGR-SUBJ
'My father works in the bank.'

- (3) **xa.na.ha.bya.ba.mis.yig**
ana-ha xawa mi-yek
mother-FOC work NEG-EXIST
'My mother has no job.'
- (4) **ka.tse.ra.yin.hangs.las.bya.ba.ban.lan.dus.yig**
gazai-ra yenhang-li xawa wanlan-di-yek
middle:sister-also bank- LOC work do-PROGR-SUBJ
'My middle sister also works in the bank.'
- (5) **ka.ka.thang.ka.ban.lan.dus.yin /**
gaga tangga wanlan-di-yen
younger:brother thangka do-PROGR-SUBJ
'My younger brother makes thangkas.'
- (6) **nguvu.da.mus.tsi.lin.ki.zhe.thing.las.khyi.dus.yig**
ngu-da mize-liangge xaitang-li qhi-di-yek
1P-and youngest:sister-SOC school-LOC go-PROGR-SUBJ
'Me and my youngest sister go to school.'
- (7) **nguvu.kyi.nyin.hri.chi.had.yin /**
ngu-jhi nian she-qi hai-yen
1P-self year ten-seven COP-SUBJ
'I myself am seventeen years old.'
- (8) **nguvu.dbyin.yig.sbyangs.la.ma.yi.nyan.ko.la.ma.yig**
ngu yen-yek jjang-la-ma yi-nian go-la-ma-yek
1P English-language study-NCOMPL-SER one-year pass-NCOMPL-RES-SUBJ
'I have studied English for one year.'
- (9) **nguvu.dbyin.yig.sbyangs.la.du.dgav.la.las**
ngu yen-yek jhang-la-de gga-la-li
1P English-language study-NCOMPL-NMLZ pleasant-NCOMPL-OBJ
'I like studying English.'

Comments

A few general observations concerning the orthographical principles applied in the sample are in place here. First, as could be expected, Tibetan words are rendered according to the established principles of the Amdo Tibetan orthography. For instance, the phrase *yen-yek jjang-la* ‘to study the English language’ (8-9) is written as **dbyin.yig sbyangs.la**, just as in Tibetan. Similarly, the word *xawa* ‘work’ (2-4), borrowed from Amdo Tibetan, is written as **bya.ba**. Chinese words are, however, written on a more case-to-case basis, and it is often difficult to see why a certain orthographical image has been preferred in favour of other possibilities. For instance, the Chinese word *xaitang* (6), which represents a borrowing to Wutun from Standard Mandarin *xuetang* 學堂, is written as **zhe.thing**, although several other options would also have been available. It may be noted that similar, seemingly arbitrary choices are often made also when Chinese terms and toponyms are written in the Tibetan script for use by local Amdo Tibetan native speakers.

Further, it is obvious that there is a preference to write the basic stops *b g* (labial and velar) by the letters **p k** (originally denoting segments of the unvoiced unaspirated series), as in **xa.pa aba** ‘father’ (2) and **ka.ka gaga** ‘younger brother’ (5), while the paradigmatically analogous basic stop *d* (dental) is written by the letter **d** (originally denoting a segment of the voiced series), as in the progressive tense-aspect marker **.di -di** (2, 4-6). Among the vowels, *u* (without a final) is written by the composite sequence **uvu**, as in **nguvu ngu** ‘I’ (6-9), while *i* (without a final) is normally written in one of three different ways, as also in Amdo Tibetan: **as**, as in the locative marker **.las -li** (1, 2, 4, 6) = Standard Mandarin *li* 里裏; **is**, as in the negative existential construction **mis.yig mi-yek** (3) = Standard Mandarin *meiyou* 沒有; and **us**, as in the word **mus.tsi mize** ‘younger sister’ (6) = Standard Mandarin *meizi* 妹子. Inconsistently, *i* is also written as **i**, especially after a palatal or a laminal consonant, as in **khyi qhi** ‘to go’ (6) = Standard Mandarin *qu* 去 and **chi qi** ‘seven’ (7) = Standard Mandarin *qi* 七, although **i** more properly stands for the vowel *e*, as in **hri.las she-li** ‘at home’ (1). Since in Amdo Tibetan the vowels **i* and **u* have both merged into *e* [ə], the vowel *e* can also be written as **u**, as in the genitive marker and nominalizer **.du -de** = Standard Mandarin 的 *de* (1, 9).

It is interesting to note that the choice made to write a given Wutun word in Tibetan letters is not always the most obvious or simple one. For instance, the word *lek* ‘six’ (1) is written as **lugs**, with an etymologically superfluous postfinal **s** — perhaps to avoid homography with the Amdo Tibetan word **lug lek** ‘sheep’.

Similarly, Standard Mandarin *yinhang* 銀行, which is borrowed into Wutun as *yenhang* is rendered as **yin.hangs** (2, 4). The vowel *ai* [e], which is most easily written by the letter **e**, can also be rendered as **ad**, as in the copula **had hai** (7).

As has been anticipated above, the only real problems in giving a Tibetan written image to Wutun words concern the medials, and perhaps especially the medial *i* (*y*) in connection with a nasal final. The final sequences *in ian iang* remain a challenge to the Wutun native speaker writing in Tibetan letters, and this is also evident from the present sample. Thus, the sociative ending *-liangge*, which is formally identical with the numeral-classifier construction *liang-ge* ‘(the) two (of them)’ = Standard Mandarin *liang ge* 兩個, is written in the sample as **.lin.ki** (6). The word *nian* ‘year’ is written both as **nyin** (7) and as **nyan** (8) = Standard Mandarin *nian* 年, of which only the latter represents an adequate solution. Altogether, the syllables with medials are not impossible to render in Tibetan letters, but they would require some innovative solutions that would not necessarily conform with the normal rules of Amdo Tibetan ‘orthography’.

It may be concluded that the Tibetan script, especially if modified with certain non-standard orthographical conventions, suits the Wutun language quite well. The Tibetan script therefore remains a serious option for Wutun cultural activists who wish to record their native folklore and casual texts without acquiring a sufficient proficiency in the Pinyin system (as adapted to Wutun) or the IPA transcription. A minor ‘danger’ in using the Tibetan script is that the script may in some cases increase the amount of Tibetan lexical and grammatical interference in Wutun. This possibility is suggested in the present sample by the fact that the Wutun subjective perspective marker **.yig -yek** (1-4, 6, 8) is on two occasions replaced by the functionally identical Amdo Tibetan marker **.yin -yen** (5, 7). The two markers are etymologically unrelated but materially almost identical, which is why it is easy to understand that a person used to end a sentence with the Tibetan marker tends to use the same graphic form also for Wutun. This seems to be an example of written interference, since there is no evidence of a similar replacement in the spoken language.

A note on Romanization

The Tibetan script is in this paper Romanized according to a modified version of the Wylie transcription. In this version, the Roman basic letter **x** is used for **xa.chen** (in the traditional version: *a-chen*) and the Roman basic letter **v** for **va.chung**. (in the traditional version: *'a-chung*). The period mark (.) is used for the

syllable divider (traditionally marked by the hyphen). Digraphs are used for **ng ny sh zh** (traditionally also *i ñ š ž*). The Tibetan alphabet (consonant letters) will, consequently, be Roman-ized as follows: **ka kha ga nga / ca cha ja nya / ta tha da na / pa pha ba ma / tsa tsha dza / wa zha za / va ya ra la / sha sa ha xa**. The Tibetan vowel letters are Romanized as **i u e o**.

Grammatical abbreviations

IP = first person	NEG = negative
ASS = associative plural	NMLZ = nominalizer
CL = classifier	OBJ = objective perspective
COP = copula	PROGR = progressive tense-aspect
EXIST = existential	RES = resultative tense-aspect
FOC = focus	SER = serial converb
GEN = genitive case	SOC = sociative case
LOC = locative case	SUBJ = subjective perspective
NCOMPL = non-completive voice	

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