Morphological transitivity in some Amdo Mongolic languages

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Mongolic languages including those of Amdo Tibet regularly derive transitive verbs from intransitives via a causative suffix. Although we would expect primarily valence-changing voice suffixes to be the most productive in deriving intransitives and ditransitives, transitivity is also expressed by syntactic and suppletive means. This divergence from the typical Mongolic pattern may well be due to language contact. For example, common Mongolic passive suffixes are not found in these languages, possibly due to Tibetan influence (Georg 2003: 294).

This paper explores prototypical and less-prototypical transitivity patterns in Northern and Southeastern Monguor, as well as Baonan, for signs of language contact. It examines the relationship of case marking and verb type to non-prototypical transitivity and compares these to transitivity in Northwestern Mandarin and Northern Tibetan, the two main contact languages. The paper also investigates the association of the highly productive verb /ge- /'say, do' with verbs of high transitivity. It concludes with an evaluation of these basic and anomalous patternings in light of the typology of transitivity from north to south Asia.