Linguistic Substratum in Tibet

Synchronic survey of undescribed Tibeto-Burman languages and reconstruction of Zhangzhung language

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Outline of survey

Tibeto-Burman(TB) is a large language group, which extends from Qinghai of China to the northeast Pakistan. Recent research succeeded in outlining the genetic relationship among the TB languages, but we have many languages that are not fully described and some undeciphered languages. In Tibet, for instance, the area was not at all mono-linguistic, but several languages, which made linguistic substrata, influenced the pre-Tibetan language. This project aims at grasping the linguistic dynamism through descriptive linguistic survey of particular TB languages and at, as a result, deciphering Zhangzhung.

This approach is an attempt to reconsider the comparison method and to grope for a new methodology of historical linguistics.

Expected results

This project enables us to decipher the Zhangzhung language and to know the missing history of Tibet. It also leads us to cumulating the linguistic data of undescribed TB languages and to constructing international database of TB grammars. Through those approaches, a new perspective towards historical linguistics methodologies.

References by the principal researcher

2001 *New Research on Zhangzhung and Related Himalayan Languages.* Senri Ethnological Report No.15, National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka.

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2003 *A Catalogue of the Bonpo Kanjur.* Senri Ethnological Report No.40, National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka.

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