

**Watch out for number ONE:
Jingpho ṇāi 'I' and ləṇāi 'one'
(with some speculations about Jingpho number TWO)**

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1. *Innovative nature and uniqueness of the Jingpho forms for ONE and TWO*

The Jingpho (Jg.) word ləṇāi 'one' has always had a special place in my heart, since it was the very first form I ever elicited in a Tibeto-Burman (TB) language, in the summer of 1963, when working with LaRaw Maran. The next word to emerge in that elicitation session was of course ləkhōṇ 'two'. Already these two forms led me to a couple of false assumptions: (a) that the prefix lə- was very common, especially with numerals; and (b) that the high-to-low falling tone, "51" (symbolized here as /[^]/) was likewise. Both assumptions were of course premature. lə- occurs with no other numerals, except HUNDRED, where it seems to mean ONE; and "51" turned out to be by far the rarest of the Jg. tones, occurring mostly as a sandhi variant of the low tone "31"¹ -- though it does in fact occur with one other numeral, d̥zəkhū 'nine'.

More importantly, the Jg. words for ONE and TWO are completely isolated from the comparative point of view, with no known cognates elsewhere in Sino-Tibetan (ST).² See Figure 1.

¹ Several morphophonemic subclasses of these "51" words may be distinguished: (a) verbs in the low tone (31) regularly acquire "51" when preceded by the high-toned negative prefix, syllabic fɿ-: lù 'have' > fɿ-lù 'not have'; (b) low-tone verbs sometimes change to "51" when they are preceded by a nominalizing or causativizing prefix (e.g. the syllabic nasal, or shwa, or consonant plus shwa): tà 'build a house' > fɿ-tà 'a house'; thòi 'be light' > ɔthòi 'illumination'; tùm 'be squandered (as time)' > ʒɔtùm 'to squander (as time)'; (c) adverbial expressions derived by a prefix from 31 verbs sometimes acquire "51": nì 'be near' > ɔnì nì ʒà 'nearly', tèm 'be closely shut', ɔtēm ʒà 'soberly'; (d) kinship terms in the 31 tone become 51 when used vocatively: kəwà 'father' > wà 'O father!; hey, dad!'. See Matisoff 1974:159-60.

² In general the numerals ONE and TWO seem to have a special status in the world's languages. Irregularities, allofamic variations, and suppletions are more readily tolerated here than with the higher numerals (e.g. English *one* ≠ *an* ≠ *only*; *two* ≠ *twain* ≠ *between* ≠ *twinn*; *one* <-> *first*; *two* <-> *second*).

Figure 1. PTB and Jingpho numerals³

	PROTO-TIBETO-BURMAN	JINGPHO
ONE	*it; *k(y)at; *g-t(y)ik ⁴	lən̄ai
TWO	*g-ni-s	ləkhôn̄
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THREE	*g-sum	məsūm
FOUR	*b-ləy	məlī
FIVE	*l-ŋa ~ *b-ŋa	məŋā
SIX	*d-ruk	krúʔ
SEVEN	*s-nis	sən̄it
EIGHT	*b-r-gyat ~ *b-g-ryat	mətsát
NINE	*d-kəw ~ *s-kəw ~ *d-gaw	džəkhú
TEN	*gip; *ts(y)i(y) ~ *tsyay	ši
TWENTY	*m-kul	khūn
HUNDRED	*r-gya	lətsā

With respect to PTB, Jg. preserves the numeral prefixes fairly well. In FOUR, FIVE, and EIGHT, PTB *b- is reflected by Jg. mə-. Jg. SIX, SEVEN, NINE, and HUNDRED reflect PTB *d-, *s-, *d- or *s-, and *r-, respectively. The prefix of THREE has been influenced by the mə- in FOUR and FIVE, so that 3-5 show a "prefix run".⁵

2. Variant forms of Jingpho lən̄ai 'ONE'

(a) lən̄ai

The standard citation form of this numeral has a lateral prefix, occurring in such collocations as məsā lən̄ai 'one person', lən̄ai mī 'one',⁶ lən̄ai n̄ai 'some; a few; one now and then', lən̄ai n̄ai s̄a 'only some; only a few', lən̄ai thēʔ lən̄ai 'one by one', lən̄ai phāŋ lən̄ai 'one after another'.

Whence this lateral prefix, which occurs also with ləkhôn̄ 'two'? A plausible source is the well-attested PTB etymon *lak⁷ 'hand', which appears in

³ See Benedict 1972:93-5, and Matisoff 1995a, *passim*.

⁴ Other roots for ONE reconstructed in Matisoff 1995a (sections 3.11-3.15) include: *ka/*ko; *d/tay ✕ *d/tan; *tir ✕ *tur; *a; *k-IV(N), etc.

⁵ For a detailed discussion of this phenomenon in TB numeral systems see Matisoff 1995a, §§ 5.2-5.5.

⁶ For a discussion of this morpheme mī, see §4, below.

⁷ See STC #86 and note 102.

reduced form in many Jg. nouns relating to the limbs (hands or feet), e.g. *lɔ́táʔ* 'hand', *lɔ́khrá* 'righthand', *lɔ́phàn*, 'palm', *lɔ́phùm* 'forearm', *lɔ́khôn* 'bracelet' (note 51 tone; < *khôn* 'wear bracelets'), *lɔ́gō* 'foot; leg', *lɔ́phùt* 'knee', *lɔ́thìn* 'heel', *lɔ́khrùʔ* 'hoof', *lɔ́nū* 'thumb; big toe' (lit. "limb-mother"). The semantic connection would be via the practice of counting on the fingers.⁸

Once this prefix was firmly established with this numeral, it was eligible for trans-semanticization, so that in several common time-expressions *lɔ́-* has come to mean ONE all by itself: *lɔ́nī* 'one day', *lɔ́náʔ* 'one night', *lɔ́nīn* 'one year', *lɔ́phòt* 'one morning'.⁹ The same morpheme is probably to be adduced in other quantified expressions like *lɔ́lām* 'a fathom', *lɔ́tsā* 'one hundred'¹⁰, *lɔ́mùn* 'ten thousand (one myriad)', *lɔ́mā*, *lɔ́ma-ma*, *lɔ́ma-mi* 'some; something; few'. (In the Hkauri dialect of Jingpho, these expressions have *rɔ́-* rather than *lɔ́-*: *raning* 'one year', *rani* 'one day', *ranaʔ* 'one night').

(b) ʔŋâi

This variant with preglottalized initial is supplied by Maran (870), though it is spelled simply as "ngai" in Hanson (513).¹¹ It appears in collocations like the following: ʔŋâi mī 'one; a unit' (e.g. *mərâi ʔŋâi mī* 'one person'), ʔŋâi (mī) šâ 'only one'¹², ʔŋâi ŋâi (note 31 tone in 2nd syllable) 'someone [indef. pron.]' (e.g. *məšâ ʔŋâi ŋâi dù sâi* 'Someone has come').

(c) âi

Complete loss of initial consonant is a common enough phenomenon with TB functors, including high frequency items like numerals and pronouns,¹³ so it is not too surprising to find a vowel-initialled variant "âi 'one; same as *lǎngai*'" (Hanson, p. 55; tone from Maran), as in *kəwá âi mī jòʔ rít* 'Give me a bamboo.'

⁸ This "digital computational" practice is by no means confined to TB peoples (cf. English expressions like *on the one hand*, *on the other hand*). The PTB etymon for FIVE, the handlike numeral par excellence, is reconstructed with either of two prefixes, *b- or *l-. Perhaps Jingpho selected the non-lateral prefix here (*məŋā*) because of analogical pressure from FOUR. See Matisoff 1995a, § 4.14.

⁹ Hanson (p. 358) calls the prefix in these forms "a shortened form of *lǎngai* 'one'".

¹⁰ It seems possible that the liquid prefix set up for the PTB form for HUNDRED (*r-gya) may itself derive ultimately from *lak 'hand'. Cf. the Hkauri forms with r- instead of l- (just below).

¹¹ This form is lacking in Dai et al 1983, as are the variants with zero- and syllabic nasal initials cited in (c) and (d), below.

¹² This Jingpho morpheme 'only' seems clearly cognate to a Kamarupan root *(t)sa 'one' (Matisoff 1995a:§ 3.152 and note 75).

¹³ As random examples we may cite Lahu â (< mā) 'negative', ā (< tã) 'durative particle', etc. See Matisoff 1973:38.

(d) *ń-ńai*

Finally, Hanson (498) cites a variant with syllabic nasal prefix: "nngai 'one; same as *lǎngai*." The tones are supplied by Maran (842): *ń-ńai*.

Here we approach the main point of this paper. This prenasalized variant of the numeral ONE is homophonous (except for tone) with the **first person** singular agreement marker,¹⁴ used in sentences like the following: *ńai sǎ ń-ńai* 'I am eating' (Hanson 498); *ńai gò jòngmà rái ńai* 'I am a student' (Dai 624).

Already this is rather persuasive phonological evidence for the connection between ONE and FIRST PERSON in Jingpho. The fact that the first person agreement marker and an alloform of the numeral ONE are virtual homophones makes it highly likely that the same etymon is involved.

3. *The Jingpho first person pronoun ńai*

Just as the Jg. numeral ONE is highly distinctive in the context of TB/ST as a whole, so is the Jingpho independent first person pronoun *ńai* 'I; me'. While virtually all TB languages that have inherited this etymon reflect the simple vowel *-a (PTB **ɲa*: STC #406), STC is obliged to set up a separate root **ɲai* (#285) largely to accommodate this Jg. form.¹⁵

I have recently become convinced that the ST/TB pronouns for all three persons have been suffixable by palatal and/or nasal elements at various times and places in the family,¹⁶ so that a palatal suffix is typical of the PST pronominal system in general:

¹⁴ Jingpho is a "pronominalized" or "head-marking" language, using morphemes in the VP to specify the person and number of the subject of the clause. Hanson, who provides no tonal indications, writes both the numeral and the agreement marker as "nngai". Maran (*ń-ńai*) and Dai (*n³¹ńai³³*) agree that the tones of the two syllables of the agreement marker are low and mid, in that order.

¹⁵ See the discussion in Matisoff 1985 "GSTC" (set #182).

¹⁶ Though it must be admitted that the semantic increment provided by the "suffixal" elements is unclear and inconsistent across languages. See Matisoff 1994, §3.3: "Open, palatally-suffixal, and nasal-suffixal pronouns". For a more detailed and general study of ST/TB palatal suffixes, see Matisoff 1995b, *passim*.

	Open	With -y	With -N
1st Person	* <i>ŋa</i>	* <i>ŋay</i>	* <i>ŋaŋ</i>
2nd Person	* <i>na</i>	* <i>nay</i>	* <i>naŋ</i>
3rd Person	* <i>ta</i>		* <i>taŋ</i>
(PLB) ¹⁷	* <i>za</i>		* <i>zaŋ</i> ≠ * <i>yaŋ</i>

The semantic connection between the number ONE and a FIRST person pronoun is too obvious to belabor, so we do not even need to cite the common egotistical slogan "Watch out for number one" (i.e. "Charity begins at home"; that is, one should take care of oneself before presuming to consider the interests of other people). We are all the centers of our own universes.

On the phonological side, there is a (very slight) problem. The Jg. independent first person pronoun *ŋai* is mid tone, but the numeral is high-to-low falling tone, *-ŋai*, which seems to bespeak an underlying low tone (cf. also the reduplicated form *lənai nai*, above §2a, where the reduplicate is in the low tone). But this should not cause undue distress. In the first place, it is by no means the case that all "51" syllables come from low tone;¹⁸ and in any case tonal variation is the norm in functors and other grammaticalized morphemes.¹⁹

4. *Survival in Jingpho of a more general TB root for ONE*

Aside from *lənai*, Jg. also preserves in certain contexts an etymon for ONE with rather more widespread affiliations elsewhere in TB, of the shape *mī* (ma in the Hkauri dialect).²⁰ It is not used in counting, but functions something like an indefinite article, in post-nominal position, e.g. *má mī* 'one/a meal', *láp mī* 'one rupee'. Often it is used redundantly in expressions that already contain the trans-semanticized prefix *lə-* (above §2a): *lənai mī* 'one unit' (≠ *lənai ma* [Hkauri]), *lənīŋ mī* 'one year', *ləphòt mī* 'one morning', *lətsā ma* '100' (Hkauri).

¹⁷ No single root for '3rd person' may be reconstructed for PTB or PST. As in other language families, ST/TB third person pronouns are related to demonstratives and deictic words like 'other'.

¹⁸ Cf. e.g. *lakhôn* 'bracelet' < *khôn* 'wear bracelets' (above §2a).

¹⁹ Familiar examples include the three Lahu co-allofams *là* (V) 'come' ≠ *la* (Pv) 'motion toward' ≠ *lā* (Pv) 'non-3rd person benefaction'. See Matisoff 1973:319-30.

²⁰ See Hanson 386, 394. Probable cognates (cited in Matisoff 1995a:83.156b, where the Jg. form is not mentioned) include Deng Geman *ku³¹mu³³*, Rengma *me*, Tiddim *a-ma-sa* 'first', Lotha *ma-tsa-nga* 'one', Meithei *ama* 'one', *ma-pan* 'nine' (subtractive: "one from ten"). Since there are reflexes with both front and nonfront vowels, a good reconstruction might be **ma-y*.

It seems more than coincidental that there is also a post-verbal particle of similar shape, in the low-stopped tone, *mǐʔ*, which indicates a first person indirect object, e.g.:

Shánthē nǎi phèʔ tsūn mǐʔ ăi 'They told me'
Shǐ ánthē phèʔ jòʔ mǐʔ ăi 'He gave us'
Nánthē nǎi phèʔ jòʔ mǐʔ 'You (pl.) give to me'
Anthē phèʔ jòʔ mǐʔ 'Give to us' [Hanson 394-5]

This seems to furnish one more bit of evidence to confirm the conceptual connection between ONE and the FIRST PERSON in Jingpho.

5. Some speculations on Jingpho *lǎkhôn* TWO

Perhaps at this point I should leave well enough alone. Yet it is tempting to try to explain Jingpho *lǎkhôn* 'two' along similar lines: if ONE is derivable from a first person pronoun, could TWO possibly be derived from a morpheme with second person reference? This might seem implausible *prima facie*, unless we assume that the morpheme in question had the force of a first person inclusive plural, i.e. "you and I; the two of us; both of us". If the lateral prefix *lǎ-* had truly become "trans-semanticized" to mean ONE all by itself (above §2b), then perhaps the innovative numeral TWO could originally have meant something like "one [plus] you".

At any rate, before trying to establish an etymology for *-khôn*, we should note certain striking parallels in the historical and synchronic behavior of the Jingpho morphemes for ONE and TWO:

(a) Just as a historically older form for ONE (*mī* ≠ *ma*) survives in certain set expressions (see §4, above), so does there survive in composition a Jg. morpheme *nī* 'two', an unmistakable reflex of the most widespread TB etymon for TWO, **g-ni-s/k*, as in: *nī nīj* 'two years', *nī náʔ* 'two nights', *nī ní* 'two days', *nī phòt* 'two mornings', *nī tsā* '200'.²¹ In post-nominal position this same morpheme has been further grammaticalized into a sort of plural or collective suffix: *ʔwórà nī* 'those over there', *gwì nī* 'the dogs', *Mankang nī* 'the people of Mankang' (Maran 817).

(b) Just as the innovative form for ONE occurs synchronically with other onsets than the lateral prefix, so does the parallel innovative form for TWO

²¹ Contra STC:16(n. 60), this open midtoned form does *not* descend from the **nik* allofam (that underlies, e.g. WB *hnac*), but rather from **ni* (like, e.g. Lahu *ní*).

occur with the syllabic nasal prefix (ń-khôn), or with no prefix at all (khôn; note mid tone, Maran 1262). The prenasalized allofam is explicitly cross-referenced to "archaic *lanhkawng*" by Maran (847), though he does not give this latter form as a head entry, nor does he indicate its tone in the cross-reference. See Figure 2.

Figure 2. Variational allofamy of ONE and TWO compared

	lǝ- + ⁵¹	ŋ-	lǝn-	ʔ-/Ø-	#V-
ONE	lǝŋâi	ń-ŋâi		ʔŋâi	âi
1st PERSON		ń-ŋâi		ŋâi	
TWO	lǝkhôn	ń-khôn	lanhkawng	khôn	

Where then can we find a plausible morpheme of 2nd person reference to underlie Jg. -khôn? The most likely candidate I have found is not exactly a personal pronoun, but rather an etymon whose semantic center of gravity lies in the notion of *master*; *lord*; *authority*.²² I would like to reconstruct this putative new root as *k(w)an̄:

Of the modern Burmese reflex of Written Burmese (WB) *səkhaŋ* 'master; lord' Judson remarks, "this term is often applied in a most indiscriminate manner, and has lost its original value; it has now become the equivalent of the English *Mister*" (J.977).²³ Compounded from this same root is the polite pronoun *khaŋ-byâ* 'you', defined by Judson as "sir, or madam; a term of appellation used by men to persons rather superior, whether men or women; a very polite term if used by a superior to an inferior" (J. 259).^{24/25}

²² There is surely no need to cite examples of words for 'lord' or 'lady' being pejorated into polite second person pronouns in the world's languages: *Est-ce que monsieur/madame détrairait déguster un petit apéritif?* 'Would milord/milady care to try a little preprandial libation?'

²³ The prefixal minor syllable sǝ- may be a reduction of the morpheme *su* 'person'.

²⁴ The second syllable is from *bhūrā*, pronounced *phāyā* (*phārā* in Arakanese dialect) 'a god; object of worship, lord; master; a pagoda; sir' (J. 728).

²⁵ Another, phonologically unrelated TB etymon seems to reflect this same semantic association between MASTER and SECOND PERSON PRONOUN, a root we may set up as *s-raŋ on the basis of WB *əhraŋ* 'owner; proprietor; master; lord' and a group of Tamangic forms reflecting Proto-TGTM **raŋ*: Sahu (Tamang) *ʔraŋ* 'self'; Tukche (Thakali) *ʔraŋ* 'id.'; Taglung (Tamang) *ʔraŋ* 'you (polite)'; Risiangku (Tamang) *ʔraŋ* 'soi-même (réfléchi); employé comme pronom de la deuxième personne respectueux' (Mazaudon 1994, #837 [3.183.53]).

Despite a certain semantic overlap, this morpheme seems unrelated to WB **ʔəkhân** 'business; affair' (cf. **ʔəkhân thâ** 'treat with deference; regard as weighty'); this latter word is under the heavy tone (< PLB *Tone 2), and seems rather to be derived from the verb **khân** 'spread out; arrange in order'. Instead, I would like to suggest that **khân** 'master; lord' is allofamically related to a form with medial **-w-**, WB **(ʔə)khwanʔ** 'business, affair; commission, permission; right, reason' (J. 23; Bernot III:159).²⁶ The creaky tone here is no problem; to a large extent it is a secondary sandhi tone that roots under either of the principal tones (< PLB *1 or *2) may acquire by derivation.

To this group of WB forms I would like to compare Jingpho **khán** 'rule; exercise authority; govern' (H. 294),²⁷ and its derivative **əkhán** 'permission, commission' (H. 8). While it is certainly possible that these could be early loans from Burmese, the basic Jg. morpheme is a verb, while the Burmese forms seem to be underlyingly nominal.

At this point we can bring in Jg. **ləkhôn** 'two'. Its **-o-** vocalism corresponds regularly to WB **-wa-** (< ***-wa-**).²⁸ If all these forms do belong in the same word-family, both Jingpho and Burmese would directly reflect both the allofams with and without medial **-w-**, i.e. the rhymes **-aŋ** & **-waŋ**:

-aŋ**-waŋ**

WB **səkhân** 'lord; master'
khân-byâ 'you (deferential)'

(ʔə)khwanʔ 'business; permission'

Jg. **khán** 'govern; control'

ləkhôn 'two'

While we are at it, we might compare these forms to a phonosemantically similar Chinese etymon:

OC 官 **kwân** [GSR 157a] > Mand. **guān** 'official's residence; office, public charge; official, officer; function, to function'

OC 管 **kwân** [GSR 157h] > Mand. **guǎn** 'take care of; manage'

The problem with this comparison is of course the Chinese final **-n** versus the TB **-ŋ**, but perhaps that can be explained away as due to dissimilation of the

²⁶ In Chinese terms, I am claiming that **ʔəkhwanʔ** is a "hekou doublet" of **khân**.

²⁷ This comparison was not made in Matisoff 1974. This word, transcribed as **khân**⁵⁵, is glossed in Dai (1983:232) as (1) 'govern' *guān-lǐ* (2) 'drive (car)' *kāi (chē); jiàshǐ*.

²⁸ Cf. e.g. WB **lwat** 'be free, loose' / Jg. **lôt**.

feature [+grave] shared by the three proto-segments */k-, -w-, -ŋ/. The semantic development in Chinese seems to have been a metonymic shift from official residence to official occupying the residence,²⁹ so the locational meaning might well have been the original one in PST.

To all this it might be objected that while it seems natural in the socially stratified Burmese cultural context for a word meaning 'lord' to develop into a second person pronoun,³⁰ it appears unlikely that this would happen in the more egalitarian Jingpho society, and even more farfetched that such a pronoun could then develop into a numeral. Yet stranger things have surely happened in semantic history.

²⁹ This is quite similar to our metonymic expressions like "the White House denied the report...", or "the Quai d'Orsay was very upset by today's developments...", etc.

³⁰ The hierarchical nature of traditional Burmese society is reflected in the modern first person polite pronouns, which contain the morpheme *kywan* 'slave': (*kywan-to* 'I (male speaker)', *kywan-ma* 'I (female)').

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