

Tangut 𐞰𐞱𐞳 *ja*¹ as a Constituent Question Particle

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ABSTRACT

The Tangut character 𐞰𐞱𐞳 *ja*¹ (#1718) is usually glossed as Chin. *nuò* 诺 ‘(to) promise; yes’ in dictionaries. Given the fact that it does occur in rhetorical questions, this article argues that Tangut 𐞰𐞱𐞳 *ja*¹ is instead a constituent question particle and thus not restricted in rhetorical use. The conclusion is based on a detailed philological investigation, employing multilingual parallel texts where applicable. Comparisons with other Qiangic languages reveal several candidates for cognates. Nonetheless, their similarity is more likely to be an areal typological feature, rather than an etymological relation.

KEYWORDS

Tangut language, constituent question, content question, interrogative particle

1. INTRODUCTION

Tangut is a Tibeto-Burman language mainly used in the Western Xia 西夏 Empire (1038–1228) that became extinct no later than the 16th century. Although since the early 20th century much effort has been made to decipher the language and script, many of its aspects remain enigmatic, especially in its morphosyntax.

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Methodologically, the traditional approach to Tangut linguistics relies mostly on either Tangut native philological works, or (secular¹) Chinese-Tangut bilingual texts. These materials, although helpful at first, are not satisfactory enough for further linguistic analysis: On the one hand, the native sources, strongly influenced by traditional Chinese philology (*xiaoxue* 小學), had so little interest in grammatical details that the glosses are often ambiguous. On the other hand, it is often difficult to find appropriate correspondences of certain particles in Chinese parallels, since the morphological categories of Chinese are much more limited than those in Tangut. In recent years, the rapid progress in Tibeto-Burman linguistics (in particular, Qiangic and Gyalrongic) has doubtlessly shed light on Tangut studies. However, some of the results still merit a more detailed philological examination.

Parallel texts in Tibetan (and Sanskrit if available) have so far not received much attention from the Tangut linguists, while philological studies have revealed a strong coherence between Tangut translations and their Tibetan sources (even including the particles, cf. Solonin & Zhang 2022: 132–134). The multilingual parallels can also be crucially helpful to understand Tangut texts, even when there is no specific correspondence, not to mention that both Tibetan and Sanskrit are especially rich in morphology. Consequently, their enormous potential for linguistic studies still awaits to be fully achieved.

As a case study, this article will concentrate on Tangut 𐞑𐞑𐞑 *ja'* which is usually glossed as Chin. *nuò* 诺 '(to) promise; yes' (Li 1997: 328, #1718, *inter alia*). After reviewing the previous scholarship on this character (§2), I will argue that 𐞑𐞑𐞑 *ja'* is, in fact, a *constituent question* (also known as *content question*) particle, and thus not restricted in rhetorical use noted by Beaudouin (2023). I base this conclusion on a detailed philological investigation employing parallel texts in Chinese, Tibetan and Sanskrit where applicable (§3).² In the following section, some problems with the etymology of 𐞑𐞑𐞑 *ja'* will be discussed (§4), and the conclusions are summarised at the end of this article (§5).

2. AN OVERVIEW OF THE PREVIOUS ANALYSIS

The glosses for 𐞑𐞑𐞑 *ja'* among Tangut native philological works, especially the *Sea of Characters* (Chin. *Wenhai* 文海) and the *Homophones* (Chin. *Tongyin* 同音), are opaque.³

On the one hand, the *Sea of Characters* analyses 𐞑𐞑𐞑 *ja'* as a combination of components in 𐞑𐞑 *sjij*² 'wise', 𐞑𐞑 *we*¹ 'clever', and 𐞑𐞑 *gja'* 'glad' respectively, with the following gloss:

¹ The secular texts were believed to be less Sinicized and thus more 'Tibeto-Burman' compared with the Buddhist translations (see, for example, Matisoff's foreword of Kepping 1975). Such distinction, however, is now considered as an overemphasis (cf. Solonin 2022: 6).

² In this article, the Tibetan texts are cited in Wylie transcription, with only the exception of *ṇ* transcribed as *ḥ* instead of *ḥ* in order not to confuse with quotation marks. The Sanskrit texts are cited in IAST transcription.

³ In the *Tangut-Chinese Timely Pearl in the Palm* (Chin. *Fanhan heshi zhangzhong zhu* 番漢合時掌中珠), the character 𐞑𐞑 *ja'* is only attested once as a phonetic transcription of Chin. *yāo* 腰 'waist' (Jing & Bobowa 2018: 78).



(1) *Sea of Characters*, rime 21 (Shi, Bai & Huang 1983: 186)

𠂔, <i>ja</i> ¹	𠂔, <i>sjij</i> ²	𠂔, <i>we</i> ¹	𠂔, <i>gja</i> ¹	𠂔, <i>nijj</i> ¹	𠂔, <i>ja</i> ¹	𠂔, <i>tja</i> ¹	𠂔, <i>gja</i> ²
<i>ja</i> ¹	wise	clever	glad	middle	<i>ja</i> ¹	TOP	glad
𠂔, <i>lji</i> ¹	𠂔, <i>gja</i> ²	𠂔, <i>lji</i> ²	𠂔; <i>lji</i> ¹	𠂔, <i>gjwi</i> ¹	𠂔, <i>dja</i> ² -	𠂔, <i>we</i> ¹	𠂔, <i>niow</i> ¹
SFP	glad	willing	SFP	word	DIR1-	lose	then
𠂔, <i>da</i> ²	𠂔, <i>bji</i> ²	𠂔, <i>jij</i> ¹	𠂔, <i>tsji</i> ¹	𠂔, <i>ji</i> ²			
word	help	OBJ	FOC	say			

‘The character 𠂔 *ja*¹ means to be glad, be willing to, have spoken out of a word (?); it is also used as a particle.’

Original translation: 然、诺、智聪乐中。此者，乐也，乐意也；词已应。又语助之亦谓。(Shi, Bai & Huang 1983: 437)

While 𠂔 *gja*¹ ‘glad’, 𠂔𠂔 *gja*¹ *lji*¹ ‘be willing to’, and 𠂔𠂔𠂔 *gjwi*¹ *dja*² *we*¹ ‘have spoken out of a word (?)’ may refer to an affirmative particle ‘yes’ (see examples 3 and 4 below), the so-called 𠂔𠂔 *da*² *bji*² ‘helping word’ is simply an umbrella term for most, if not all, particles. Comparable with Chin. *cí* 辞 ‘(grammatical) word’ or *xūcí* 虚词 ‘empty word’ in traditional Chinese philology, such terms offer scant information on their morphosyntactic functions.

On the other hand, the gloss in the *Homophones* is different; here 𠂔 *ja*¹ and the interrogative pronoun 𠂔 *wa*² ‘what’ are used to mutually gloss one another (i.e. *huxun* 互训):

(2) *Homophones* (Li 1986: 676, 747)

a. f. 11b

b. f. 46b

According to the common opinion on the structure of *Homophones*, a smaller glossing word in the lower-left corner is supposed to be added *after* the glossed word in order to constitute a disyllabic word, while that in the lower-right is added *before*. Thus, example 2 can be read as a disyllabic word 𠂔𠂔 *wa*² *ja*¹ and often translated as Chin. *nàihé* 奈何 ‘how’ (Li 1997: 328, 2012: 204; Han 2021: VI 308).⁴ Unfortunately, we could not find any occurrence of 𠂔𠂔 *wa*² *ja*¹ in the current corpus, let alone confirm the translation.⁵ Similarly, Nishida’s (1966) dictionary offered a unique gloss, *jojutsu* 叙述 ‘to describe’ (#116–061, Li 2008: 385), but no philological evidence was given, either.

⁴ Initially, Li (1986: 431) proposed this translation for entry 2a, but he inconsistently translated 2b as Chin. *héwèi* 何谓 ‘what to say’ and *héqù* 何去 ‘where to go’ (1986: 251). The latter interpretation was not accepted in his later dictionaries (Li 1997, 2012).

⁵ Notably, the entry 2a is annotated on its verso as 𠂔𠂔𠂔 *mji*¹ *xu*¹ *mej*¹ / *jir*¹ *da*² ‘not understanding / (an) interrogative word’ in the version 𠂔 (dingzhongben 丁种本) of the *Homophones* (Han 2011: 168). Unfortunately, there is no extant annotation for the entry 2b in question.



In a preliminary investigation into the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* in Tangut translation, Nevsky & Ishihama (1933: 250) glossed 𐞗𐞢𐞣𐞤 *ja'* as Chin. *hé* 何 ‘what, how’, presumably according to the *Homophones*, but there is also a Chin. *xuān* 宣 ‘to announce’ in brackets next to it.⁶ Such uncertainty seems to be continued in Nevsky’s draft dictionary: despite citing the *Homophones* and two examples from the *Biography of Sunzi* (Chin. *Sunzi zhuan* 孫子傳) as follow, Nevsky failed to offer any glosses for this character (Nevskij 1960; Li 2007: 758).

(3) *Biography of Sunzi* (Nie [1991] 2012: 157)

a.	𐞗𐞢𐞣𐞤	𐞗𐞢𐞣𐞤	𐞗𐞢𐞣𐞤	𐞗𐞢𐞣𐞤	𐞗𐞢𐞣𐞤	𐞗𐞢𐞣𐞤	𐞗𐞢𐞣𐞤
	<i>sjɪ²</i>	<i>dzjwo²</i>	<i>njɪ²</i>	<i>ja'</i>	<i>ji²</i>	<i>niow¹</i>	<i>bo'</i>
	female	people	PL	yes	QUOT	then	line
	𐞗𐞢𐞣𐞤	𐞗𐞢𐞣𐞤	𐞗𐞢𐞣𐞤	𐞗𐞢𐞣𐞤			
	<i>wji¹</i>	<i>lhji².wji¹</i>	<i>a⁰</i>	<i>lhjiwi¹</i>			
	do	axe	DIR1-	continue			

‘The women said, “Yes.” Then, (Sunzi) [proclaimed] the lines and set up the axes.’

Original translation: 婦人曰：諾。約束既布，乃設斧鉞。

b. Parallel Text: 婦人曰：諾。約束既布，乃設斧鉞。 (*Shiji* 史記)

(4) *ibid.*

a.	𐞗𐞢𐞣𐞤	𐞗𐞢𐞣𐞤	𐞗𐞢𐞣𐞤	𐞗𐞢𐞣𐞤	𐞗𐞢𐞣𐞤	𐞗𐞢𐞣𐞤	𐞗𐞢𐞣𐞤
	<i>thijj¹</i>	<i>khji²</i>	<i>ja'</i>	<i>ji²</i>	<i>ji²</i>	<i>nji²</i>	<i>ljɪ¹</i>
	Tian	Ji	yes	QUOT	again	king	and
	席	𐞗𐞢𐞣𐞤	𐞗𐞢𐞣𐞤	𐞗𐞢𐞣𐞤	𐞗𐞢𐞣𐞤		
	<i>nji²</i>	<i>gji²</i>	<i>rjir²</i>	<i>kie¹</i>	<i>lju¹</i>		
	king	son	COM	gold	gamble		

‘Tian Ji said, “Yes.” Then, he gambled gold with the king and the princesses.’

Original translation: 田忌曰：然。与王及诸公子逐射千金。 With note: 夏译脱“千”字 ‘the Tangut translation omits *qiān* 千 “thousand”’ (Nie 2012: 159)

b. Parallel Text: 田忌信然之，與王及諸公子逐射千金。 (*Shiji* 史記)

As is correctly glossed in Li’s (1997: 328) dictionary, Tangut 𐞗𐞢𐞣𐞤 *ja'* in the two examples above should be translated as an affirmative particle: in example 3 it directly corresponds with Chin. *nuò* 諾 ‘yes, right’, while in 4 the *Shiji* 史記 was paraphrased into a direct speech in the Tangut translation.

In addition, there are several occurrences of a disyllabic word 𐞗𐞢𐞣𐞤𐞗𐞢𐞣𐞤 *ja' gjwi'* ‘promise (n.)’, lit. ‘*jaa*-word’, in the *Codex of the Tiansheng Era* (Chin. *Tiansheng lǐng* 天盛律令), suggesting that 𐞗𐞢𐞣𐞤 *ja'* also has a lexical meaning of ‘promise’ as its Chinese counterpart *nuò* 諾. However, such usage is rather limited as far as we see, and it may be a calque from Chin. *nuòyán* 诺言 ‘promise (n.)’, lit. ‘promise-word’.

Furthermore, there are still some examples of 𐞗𐞢𐞣𐞤 *ja'* not yet amenable to explanation. Offering a citation of the following example from the *Forest of Categories* (Chin. *Leilin* 類林), Han’s (2021: 308) latest dictionary glosses the character as Chin. *kě* 可 ‘can, be able to’:

⁶ This example is somehow irregular and will be discussed below as example 14 (§3.3).



(5) *Forest of Categories* (Shi, Huang & Nie 1993: 159)

a.	𪛗	𪛗	𪛗,	𪛗	𪛗:	𪛗	𪛗	𪛗
	<i>dzjwi¹</i>	<i>mji¹</i>	<i>niow¹</i>	<i>jow²</i>	<i>ɲwu¹</i>	<i>thji²</i>	<i>gji²</i>	<i>wji¹</i>
	emperor	hear	then	gasp	say	this	verse	compose
	𪛗	𪛗	𪛗	𪛗	𪛗	𪛗?		
	<i>-mji²</i>	<i>dzjwo²</i>	<i>sjo²</i>	<i>rji¹</i>	<i>ja¹</i>	<i>ji²</i>		
	-NMLZ	people	how	get	<i>ja¹</i>	QUOT		

‘After hearing it, the Emperor gasped [in admiration] and said, “How to enlist the author of this prose poem (*fu* 賦)?”’

Original translation: 帝聞之，嘆曰：作此賦者何人？可得乎？

- b. Parallel text: 帝聞之，嘆曰：恨不得見此人。(*Leilin zashuo* 類林雜說)

Presumably, the gloss originates in Shi, Huang & Nie’s (1993) translation 可得乎 ‘can (he) be enlisted’, but it is hardly acceptable. Despite its incoherence with the Chinese parallel (5b), the interrogative pronoun 𪛗 *sjo²* ‘how’ strongly suggests a constituent question, instead of a polar one in their translation. As will be further analysed below, Chin. *kě* 可 ‘can’ is an *ad hoc* reading that does not apply elsewhere, and example 5 should instead be read as a rhetorical question.

3. RHETORICAL OR NOT: A PHILOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

In a recent paper, Beaudouin (2023: 648–649) correctly, albeit rather cursorily, points out that Tangut 𪛗 *ja¹* is a modal particle in rhetorical questions. Beginning with a brief illustration of his point (§3.1), this section will focus on the non-rhetorical examples (§3.2) and then two problematic examples (§3.3), in order to demonstrate that 𪛗 *ja¹* is in fact a constituent question particle.

3.1. The rhetorical use of 𪛗 *ja¹*

As is cited by Beaudouin (2023: 649), the following example from the *Twelve Kingdoms* (Chin. *Shi’er guo* 十二國) is a rhetorical question that the speaker, Ji Sun 季孫, was so ashamed that he was too embarrassed to meet Fuzi Jian 宓子賤 again:

(6) *Twelve Kingdoms*, the Kingdom of Lu 魯 (Solonin 2012: 44)

a.	𪛗	𪛗	𪛗	𪛗	𪛗,	𪛗	𪛗	𪛗
	<i>kjwi¹</i>	<i>swē¹</i>	<i>do²</i>	<i>rji²</i>	<i>tshji¹</i>	<i>kjwi¹</i>	<i>swē¹</i>	<i>dja²</i>
	Ji	Sun	ALL	DIR1-	say	Ji	Sun	DIR1-
	𪛗	𪛗,	𪛗	𪛗	𪛗	𪛗	𪛗	𪛗𪛗
	<i>zar²</i>	<i>-ɲa²</i>	<i>thja¹</i>	<i>xwji¹</i>	<i>tsə¹</i>	<i>tshja²</i>	<i>rji²</i>	<i>thji².sjo²</i>
	ashamed	-1SG	that	Fu	Zi	Jian	COM	how
	𪛗	𪛗	𪛗	𪛗?				
	<i>ber²</i>	<i>-ɲa²</i>	<i>ja¹</i>	<i>ji²</i>				
	meet	-1SG	Q	QUOT				



‘After being told to Ji Sun, he said, “I am ashamed. How am I meeting with that Fuzi Jian again?”’

Original translation: 为什么我会为季孙感到惭愧，而为见到宓子贱而高兴呢⁷

- b. Parallel text: 季孫聞之，赧然而愧曰：地若可入，吾豈忍見宓子哉！ (Kongzi jiaayu 孔子家語)

Similarly, we can add the other occurrence of 𢇛 *ja*¹ in the *Twelve Kingdoms*, which is also a rhetorical question that the Wen 文 Duke of Jin 晉 gasped that there was no one to enjoy the pleasure together:

(7) *Twelve Kingdoms*, the Kingdom of Jin 晉 (Solonin 2012: 53)

a.	𢇛𢇛	𢇛	𢇛	𢇛	𢇛𢇛	𢇛	𢇛
	<i>thjij².sjo²</i>	<i>tshja²</i>	<i>dzjwo²</i>	<i>gji²</i>	<i>rjir²</i>	<i>gu².gu²</i>	<i>ljejr²</i>
	how	worthy	man	INDF	COM	together	pleasure
	𢇛 ⁸	𢇛	𢇛?				
	<i>-gji²</i>	<i>ja¹</i>	<i>ji²</i>				
	-1DU	Q	QUOT				

‘How do I enjoy such pleasure together with a worthy man?’

Original translation: 与可敬之人一起分享快乐是多么惬意呀！

- b. Parallel text: 嗟乎！安得賢士與共此樂者？ (Xinxu 新序)

Following Beaudouin’s (2023) point of view, example 5 from the *Forest of Categories* should also be read as a rhetorical question. Instead of asking how, the Emperor indeed thought that it was impossible to enlist the author, as is indicated in the Chinese parallel 恨不得見此人 ‘regrets that he could not meet this person’. The difference only lies in that the description was paraphrased into a direct quotation in the Tangut translation, as is exactly the case of example 4b.

3.2. The non-rhetorical use of 𢇛 *ja*¹

When further examining the Tangut texts, it is notable that some other examples of 𢇛 *ja*¹ cannot be explained as rhetorical but rather plain constituent questions, although sometimes the distinction is hard to draw.

For example, in the Chapter *Anantamukha-pariśodhana-nirdeśa-parivarta* (Chin. *Wubian zhuangyan hui* 無邊莊嚴會) of the *Mahāratnakūṭa-sūtra* (Chin. *Dabaoji jing* 大寶積經), the Tathāgata wonders how to transfer his merit (*pariṇāmanā*, Chin. *huixiang* 迴向, Tangut 𢇛𢇛 *ji*¹ *tshwew*¹) to the sentient beings as follows:⁹

⁷ Solonin (2012) translates 𢇛 *ja*¹ as Chin. *gāoxìng* 高兴 ‘happy’ here and as *qièyì* 惬意 ‘pleasant’ in example 7 respectively. Presumably, it originates in 𢇛 *gja*¹ ‘glad’ and 𢇛𢇛 *gja*¹ *lji*¹ ‘be willing to’ from the *Sea of Characters* (see example 1 above). However, it is not supported by the Chinese parallel.

⁸ Tangut 𢇛 *gi*² is interchangeable with 𢇛 *kji*¹ as a 1st dual verbal agreement, but the condition is still unclear so far (Zhang 2021: 164–168).

⁹ Cf. 如來今為汝等天人世間常演說法不生勞倦，由佛往昔行菩薩道時，於無量億劫精勤修學此甚深法，既修學已，方便迴向。



(8) *Mahāratnakūṭa-sūtra*, vol. 4

a.	𣪠𣪠	𣪠	𣪠𣪠	𣪠	𣪠	𣪠	𣪠	𣪠
	<i>thji².sjo²</i>	<i>rjur¹</i>	<i>dziā².tshju¹</i>	<i>jij¹</i>	<i>zji²</i>	<i>phju²</i>	<i>zji²</i>	<i>thjo¹</i>
	how	many	being	OBJ	most	supreme	most	excelled
	𣪠	𣪠	𣪠	𣪠,	𣪠𣪠	𣪠	𣪠	𣪠
	<i>tsjir¹</i>	<i>dziej²</i>	<i>dej¹</i>	<i>niow¹</i>	<i>dziā².tshju¹</i>	<i>jij¹</i>	<i>zji²</i>	<i>phju²</i>
	dharma	wheel	turn	then	being	OBJ	most	supreme
	𣪠	𣪠	𣪠𣪠	𣪠𣪠𣪠𣪠	𣪠𣪠	𣪠𣪠	𣪠	𣪠
	<i>ljij²</i>	<i>sjij²</i>	<i>wji¹.śja²</i>	<i>ḡowr².ḡowr².sjij².sjij²</i>	<i>sjwi¹.tsjir²</i>	<i>mji¹</i>	<i>bja²</i>	
	great	wise	show	omniscience	lineage	NEG-	break	
	𣪠	𣪠	𣪠	𣪠?				
	<i>-phjo²</i>	<i>-ḡa²</i>	<i>ja¹</i>	<i>ji²</i>				
	CAUS[B]	-1SG	Q	QUOT				

‘How do I turn the most supreme, unexcelled Dhamra wheel for the beings, then show the most supreme great wisdom to the beings, and keep the omniscient wisdom unbroken?’

- b. Parallel text in Chinese: 云何為諸有情當轉無上微妙法輪，及為有情而得示現無上大智，令一切智智種性不斷？(T11n0310p24b8–13)
- c. Parallel text in Tibetan: *bkod pa mthaḡ yas de bzhin gshegs pa ni ci nas kyang sems can thams cad kyis chos kyi ḡkhor lo bla na med pa yang dag par skor bar ḡgyur ba dang/ sems can thams cad kyis ye shes chen po bla na med pa mthong bar ḡgyur ba dang/ thams cad mkhyen paḡi ye shes kyi rigs rgyun mi gcad par bya baḡi phyir chos kyi tshul ḡdi ston par mdzad/* (sGo mthaḡ yas pa rnam par sbyong ba bstan pa, D46, f. 56b)

If example 8 were a rhetorical question, it would imply that the Tathāgata does not want to benefit the beings, which is clearly not acceptable according to both its context and the Tibetan parallel (8c) in declarative.

In another example from the *Mahāratnakūṭa-sūtra* (Chapter *Bodhisattva-piṭaka-sūtra*, Chin. *Pusazang hui* 菩薩藏會), it is also impossible to see the question as rhetorical. Otherwise, it would mean that the Bodhisattva does not have anything to preach, which obviously contradicts the following clause:

(9) *Mahāratnakūṭa-sūtra*, vol. 43

a.	𣪠𣪠	𣪠	𣪠	𣪠	𣪠	𣪠	𣪠
	<i>dziā².tsjij²</i>	<i>thji²</i>	<i>wji²</i>	<i>wa²</i>	<i>sju²</i>	<i>tsjir¹</i>	<i>tshij¹</i>
	bodhisattva	this	now	what	like	dharma	say
	𣪠?	𣪠	𣪠	𣪠	𣪠	𣪠𣪠	𣪠
	<i>ja¹</i>	<i>ḡa²</i>	<i>-nji²</i>	<i>mji¹</i>	<i>ku¹</i>	<i>tśji¹.tsjij²</i>	<i>-lew²</i>
	Q	1	-PL	hear	COND	enlightened	-NMLZ
	𣪠	𣪠。					
	<i>dju¹</i>	<i>ji²</i>					
	have	QUOT					

‘What kind of Dharma is the Bodhisattva going to preach now? If hearing it, we will become enlightened.’

- b. Parallel text: 菩薩今者將何所演？我等聞已當有開悟。(T11n0310p249b23–24)



In the Tangut translation of the *Foshuo jinyao tongzi jing* 佛說金耀童子經, a poor man wonders how to become as rich as the king with whom he just talked:

(10) *Foshuo jinyao tongzi jing* 佛說金耀童子經 (Huang 2011: 124)

- a.

𐰇𐰏𐰣	𐰇𐰏𐰣	𐰇𐰏𐰣	𐰇𐰏𐰣	𐰇𐰏𐰣	𐰇𐰏𐰣	𐰇𐰏𐰣	𐰇𐰏𐰣
<i>thji².sjo²</i>	<i>bu².thjo¹</i>	<i>lji¹</i>	<i>ja⁰</i>	<i>piej².rjor¹</i>	<i>-ŋa²</i>	<i>niqʷ¹</i>	<i>mə².mə²</i>
how	outstanding	land	one	get[B] (?)	-1sg	then	all.kinds.of
𐰇𐰏𐰣	𐰇𐰏𐰣	𐰇𐰏𐰣	𐰇𐰏𐰣	𐰇𐰏𐰣	𐰇𐰏𐰣	𐰇𐰏𐰣	𐰇𐰏𐰣?
<i>thjo¹.ŋa²</i>	<i>jir²</i>	<i>wji¹</i>	<i>tji¹.dzji²</i>	<i>rjor¹</i>	<i>-ŋa²</i>	<i>ja¹</i>	<i>ji²</i>
wonderful	hundred	taste	food	get[B]	-1sg	Q	QUOT

'How do I get a distinguished farmland, and get all kinds of wonderful food with hundreds of tastes?'
- b. Parallel text: 云何得一片殊妙田地? 又得多般美妙飲食百味具足? (T14n546p852b27-28)

While thinking so, the man was tripped by a round stone where he found an iron jar filled with gold and jewelry.¹⁰ One may argue that this could be a rhetorical question (i.e. the poor man thinks that he will never get either wonderful farmland or nice food), but in the end, it is revealed that the poor man is indeed the *jinyao tongzi* 金耀童子 'golden child' who has obtained the *shan'gen* 善根 'virtuous root' by venerating the Self-enlightened one (*pratyekabuddha*) so that all his wishes can be accomplished.¹¹ Consequently, it makes more sense to read example 10 as a constituent question.

Such usage of 𐰇𐰏𐰣 *ja¹* is, of course, not restricted to Buddhist texts. In a sending-off song lyrics (*zengbie ci* 贈別詞) recently noticed by Nie (2022), one finds the following example:

(11) *Didijin* 滴滴金 (ИДБ. № 4186)

- a.

𐰇𐰏𐰣	𐰇𐰏𐰣	𐰇𐰏𐰣	𐰇𐰏𐰣	𐰇𐰏𐰣	𐰇𐰏𐰣	𐰇𐰏𐰣	𐰇𐰏𐰣
<i>lhejr²</i>	<i>lhju²</i>	<i>bo¹</i>	<i>zja¹</i>	<i>ɣjiw²</i>	<i>ŋwər¹</i>	<i>bji²</i>	<i>niqʷ¹</i>
plum	bamboo	forest	within	cuckoo	blue	chirp	then
𐰇𐰏𐰣	𐰇𐰏𐰣	𐰇𐰏𐰣	𐰇𐰏𐰣	𐰇𐰏𐰣			
<i>zji¹</i>	<i>dju¹</i>	<i>zji¹</i>	<i>lhjwo¹</i>	<i>ja¹</i>			
what.time	long	when	return	Q			

'While the cuckoo chirps in the forest of plums and bamboos, at what time are you coming back?'
- Original translation: 竹梅林内杜鹃啼, 待几时归去?

It would be quite strange to read example 11 as a rhetorical question, as if the author were expecting his friend will never come back again.

So far, it can be concluded that Tangut 𐰇𐰏𐰣 *ja¹* is not restricted to rhetorical uses, but is rather a constituent question particle. Accordingly, this must be what the term 𐰇𐰏𐰣 *da² bji²* 'helping word' in the *Sea of Characters* refers (example 1). It also clarifies the mutual glossing in the *Homophones*, since it, as a constituent question particle, always co-occurs with interrogative pronouns like 𐰇𐰏𐰣 *wa²* 'what' (example 2).

¹⁰ Cf. 思維未已, 足蹈圓石忽然倒地, 於其彼處得一鐵甕滿中金寶。

¹¹ Cf. 當時貧人者, 今婆羅門子金耀童子是, 供養緣覺得彼善根, 快樂無邊, 一切願心皆得成就。



Given the fact that constituent questions can be redundantly marked by interrogative pronouns and particles in approximately half of the world's languages (Siemund 2001: 1018; König & Siemund 2007: 299–300), it is reasonable to assume that Tangut 𐰇𐰆 *ja'* expresses a stronger interrogation, as is the case of Old Chinese particle *hū* 乎 'Q' (cf. Li & Yang 2021). This helps explain the reason why 𐰇𐰆 *ja'* is often attested in rhetorical questions, while most constituent questions do not require an interrogative particle at all (cf. example 13).

3.3. Two difficult examples

In the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya-kṣudraka-vastu* (Chin. *Genben shuoyiqieyoubu pinaiye zashi* 根本說一切有部毘奈耶雜事), we notice a minimal pair of whether 𐰇𐰆 *ja'* occurs or not (compare examples 12 and 13): there was a young monk (*bhikṣu*) who damaged the earth in a temple ground while walking about (*jingxing* 經行).¹² Seeing the damaged earth, a householder thought:

(12) *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya-kṣudraka-vastu*, vol. 13 (cited from Duan 2019: 7)

- a. 𐰇𐰆 *thji*² 𐰇𐰆 *sju*² 𐰇𐰆 *wji*² 𐰇𐰆 *ljir*² 𐰇𐰆 *lji*¹ 𐰇𐰆 *tsji*¹ 𐰇𐰆 *thji*² 𐰇𐰆 *sju*²
 this like DIR1- think earth FOC this like
 𐰇𐰆 *dja*²- 𐰇𐰆 *we*² -*sjj*¹ *wja*¹ *šjjj*¹ -*mjjjr*² 𐰇𐰆 *rewr*² *wji*²
 DIR1- be -PRF let.alone holy -NMLZ foot bottom
 𐰇𐰆 *wa*² 𐰇𐰆 *dja*²- 𐰇𐰆 *we*² 𐰇𐰆 *ja*¹ *ji*²
 what DIR1- be Q QUOT
 '[The householder] thinks, "If the earth has been damaged to such extent, what will the sole of the saint be!"'
- b. Parallel text in Chinese: 便作是念：地尚如此，聖者之足其狀若何？(T24n-1451p262c17–18)
- c. Parallel text in Tibetan: *des bsams pa/ re zhig yang gnas skabs ḥdi lta bur gyur na ḥphags pa ḥdiḥi rkang pa ci ḥdra ba zhig tu gyur snyam nas smras pa/* (ḥDul ba phran tshesgyi gzhi, D6, f. 160a)

After meeting the young monk, then, the householder was so compassionate that he wanted to see how the monk's sole has been:

¹² Cf. 時有年少苾芻，隨於一處而作經行，彼經行時令地損壞。

¹³ Tangut 𐰇𐰆 *wja*¹ is usually glossed as a verb 'say' in dictionaries, while Duan (2019) correctly points out that it is a conjunction that regularly corresponds with Tibetan *na* in a contrastive or concessive context. Its specific function, however, still merits further studies.



(13) *ibid.*

- a.

𐰇𐰏𐰤	𐰇𐰏	𐰇𐰏:	𐰇𐰏	𐰇𐰏	𐰇𐰏	𐰇𐰏	𐰇𐰏
<i>bji¹.bji¹</i>	<i>ku¹</i>	<i>dā²</i>	<i>lji¹</i>	<i>tja¹</i>	<i>thji²</i>	<i>sju²</i>	<i>dja²</i>
householder	answer	say	earth	TOP	this	like	DIR1-
𐰇𐰏	𐰇𐰏	𐰇𐰏	𐰇𐰏	𐰇𐰏	𐰇𐰏	𐰇𐰏	
<i>we²</i>	<i>-sji¹</i>	<i>rewr²</i>	<i>wji²</i>	<i>wa²</i>	<i>dja²</i>	<i>we²</i>	
be	-PRF	foot	sole	what	DIR1-	be	

‘The householder answered, “As for the earth, it has been [damaged] as so; what will [your] sole be like?”’
- b. Parallel text in Chinese: 長者報曰：地既如此，足如之何？ (T24n1451p262c20)
- c. Parallel text in Tibetan: *khyim bdag gis smras pa/ ḥphags pa re zhig yang gnas skabs ḥdi lta bur gyur na/ khyod kyi zhabs ci ḥdra bar gyur/* (ḥDul ba phran tshegs kyi gzhi, D6, f. 160a)

Duan (2019: 7) analyses example 12 as a rhetorical question and 13 as a plain constituent one, which coincidentally supports Beaudouin’s (2023) argument. This reading is, albeit possible, not the only solution. While example 12 is indeed likely to be rhetorical with respect to 𐰇𐰏 *wja¹*, example 13 could also be a rhetorical question that the householder simply repeated his thoughts from above. From the Tibetan parallel, we do not see any significant differences between the pair, either.

As is mentioned above, 𐰇𐰏 *ja¹* is also attested in the Tangut translation of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, but here the situation is somehow unexpected:

(14) *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, Chapter 20 (Ji 2023: 19–21)

- a.

𐰇𐰏	𐰇𐰏𐰏𐰤	𐰇𐰏𐰏𐰤	𐰇𐰏	𐰇𐰏	𐰇𐰏	
<i>thji²</i>	<i>po¹.tji¹.kji¹.sji²</i>	<i>lji².kji¹.sji²</i>	<i>tja¹</i>	<i>tsja¹</i>	<i>khwə¹</i>	
this	bodhisattva	mahāsattva	TOP	way	half	
𐰇𐰏	𐰇𐰏	𐰇𐰏	𐰇𐰏	𐰇𐰏	𐰇𐰏	
<i>yiē².mji¹</i>	<i>lji¹</i>	<i>tji¹.dwewr¹</i>	<i>lji¹</i>	<i>ya²</i>	<i>žji¹.bju²</i>	<i>lja¹</i>
śrāvaka	ground	pratyekabuddha	ground	LOC	reality-limit	attain
𐰇𐰏?	𐰇𐰏	𐰇𐰏-𐰇𐰏	𐰇𐰏	𐰇𐰏-𐰇𐰏	𐰇𐰏	
<i>mo²</i>	<i>tji¹</i>	<i>zji².phju²</i>		<i>žji¹.yie¹</i>	<i>žji¹.džjwa¹</i>	
or	if	most-supreme		real-true	perfect	
𐰇𐰏	𐰇𐰏	𐰇𐰏	𐰇𐰏	𐰇𐰏	𐰇𐰏	𐰇𐰏?
<i>po¹.tji¹</i>	<i>mjor¹.ju²</i>	<i>žji¹.džjwa¹</i>	<i>swew¹.sə¹</i>	<i>lja¹</i>	<i>ja¹</i>	<i>ji²</i>
awakening	obvious	perfect	enlightenment	attain	Q	QUOT

‘Will this Bodhisattva Mahāsattva attain the limit of reality halfway on the ground of the Śrāvaka or the Pratyekabuddha? Or, will he perfectly attain the full enlightenment?’
- b. Parallel text in Tibetan: *byang chub sems dpah sems dpah chen po ḥdi ci bar ma dor nyan thos kyi sa ḥam rang sangs rgyas kyi sa la yang dag paḥi mthaḥ mngon sum du byed dam ḥon te bla na med pa yang dag par rdzogs paḥi byang chub mngon par rdzogs par ḥtshang rgya bar ḥgyur snyam mo/* (ḥPhags pa shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa brgyad stong pa, D12, f. 226a)¹⁴

¹⁴ Ji (2023) argues that the Tangut translation was based on a *bZo sbyangs* or *sDe can* version in Tibetan, instead of today’s dominant *ḥPhreng ba can* one (cf. Torricelli & Dudka 1999). These translations agree on this sentence; thus, the commonest Derge version is cited for the sake of convenience and consistency.



- Instead of being a constituent question, example 14 is an alternative question between the halfway (*śrāvaka* or *pratyekabuddha*) and the full enlightenment (*samyaksambodhi*), which can be analysed as a reduction of two polar questions due to ellipsis (Siemund 2001: 1012; König & Siemund 2007: 291–292). Instead of attributing ꞑꞑ ꞑꞑ' to polar questions, we propose that here Tangut ꞑꞑ ꞑꞑ' corresponds with Tibetan *ci* ‘what’, a replica of Sanskrit *kim* ‘what; Q’, in order to imitate the source text during translation.¹⁵

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836).¹⁶ Neither of the two particles, however, co-occurs with interrogative pronouns as the case in Tangut, let alone the fact that Tangut 𐞊𐞃𐞐 *ja'* is not restricted to rhetorical use.

Further, a more serious problem lies in the sound correspondence between Tangut and Gyalrongic languages. In addition to Tangut 𐞊𐞃𐞐 *ja'* :: Geshiza *jo* :: Ersu *jê* as is mentioned above, Beaudouin (2023: 659, 667) also proposes that Tangut 𐞊𐞃𐞐 *tshja'* 'on' :: Geshiza *te^ha* :: Ersu *te^ho* (pp. 661–662), while Tangut 𐞊𐞃𐞐 *niow'* 'then' :: Geshiza *jo* 'then, because' :: Ersu *jo* 'outside' (pp. 664–665), making the correspondences less convincing. Since the number of cognates identified by Beaudouin (2023) is relatively limited, such irregularity (i.e. Tangut *ja'* :: Geshiza *jo/a* :: Ersu *jê/o*, while Ersu *o* :: Geshiza *o* :: Tangut *iow'*) may be due to the difference of initials. Thus, it still awaits further studies to set up concrete sound correspondences between Tangut and Gyalrongic languages with more cognates.

It is noteworthy, however, that /a/ is the most frequently attested vowel for interrogative particles among languages in China (Luo 2016: 100–102). As a result, a more economic explanation to the phonetic similarity of these particles would be an areal typological feature and are not necessarily inherited cognates.

4.2. From affirmative to interrogative particle?

Concerning its two synchronic functions, it is reasonable to propose that 𐞊𐞃𐞐 *ja'* grammaticalized from an affirmative particle to a constituent question particle, possibly through a tag question, i.e.:¹⁷

(17) AFFIRMATIVE 'yes' (> tag question) > CONSTITUENT INTERROGATIVE 'Q'

Assuming this development, we do find several candidates for cognates for affirmative particles, for example Japhug *ya* 'yes', *woja* 'yes, right', *ja* 'come on; speech filler', and *ye*, a particle 'inviting the addressee to confirm what the speaker has said' (Jacques 2021: 453, 461). The affirmative particles in other Gyalrongic languages, e.g. Geshiza *oja*, *jaja* (Honkasalo 2019: 354) and Khroskyab *ôja* (Lai 2017: 225), also appear to be potential cognates.

However, Tangut rime category *-a* regularly corresponds with closed syllables *-aC* in Japhug and Tibetan (as opposed to Tangut *-e* with open syllables in Japhug *-a*), and Tangut *j-* usually corresponds with Japhug *z-*, as is observed by Jacques (2014: 133–116). Bearing this in mind, one should expect the cognate to be *†zaC* in Gyalrongic languages, but such form has not been attested so far. Consequently, none of the items discussed can be considered unproblematic cognates of 𐞊𐞃𐞐 *ja'* either as an interrogative particle or an affirmative particle.

¹⁶ Occasionally, Ersu *jê* can occur after a verbal predicate, while the question is also rhetorical (private communication with Chirkova), e.g.:

zêjê *læ=bô* *jê?*
daughter come=PROG.EGO Q
'Daughter, are you coming?'

¹⁷ Tag questions often serve as the bridge environment from interrogative pronouns to polar question particles, e.g. Polish *czy* 'what', Tocharian A *asîi* (Hackstein 2004: 174–175; Metslang, Habicht & Pajusalu 2017: 513). However, affirmative particles can be directly grammaticalized into polar question particles as well, e.g. Latin *-ne* (cf. Schrickx 2017: 251–253 with bibliography).



5. CONCLUSION

Tangut 𐽄𐽆 *jq'* is traditionally glossed as Chin. *nuò* 诺 ‘(to) promise, yes’, and has recently been proposed to be a rhetorical question particle. By making full use of the parallel texts in various languages including Chinese, Tibetan, and Sanskrit, this article argues that 𐽄𐽆 *jq'* is in fact a constituent question particle and not restricted to rhetorical use; despite that, it may express a stronger interrogation. Although there are a handful of candidates in Gyarlongic languages that seem alike, their similarity is more likely to be an areal typological feature, both because of the difficulties in sound correspondences and their differences in morphosyntactic functions. As a case study, this article also illustrates the importance of multilingual parallel texts as well as their contribution to Tangut linguistics.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACC	accusative	LOC	locative
ALL	allative	NEG	negative
ANM	animate	NMLZ	nominalizer
CAUS	causative	OBJ	objective
Chin.	Chinese	PL	plural
COM	comitative	PRF	perfect
COND	conditional	PROG	progressive
D	Derge Kanjur	Q	interrogative particle
DIR	directional prefix	QUOT	quotative
DU	dual	SG	singular
EGO	egophoric	SFP	sentence final particle
FOC	focus	T	Takakusu & Watanabe 1924–1934
FUT	future	TOP	topic
INDF	indefinite	VOC	vocative



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