

From Directional to Past Imperfective: A Case from rGyalrong

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By examining related data from all three major dialects of rGyalrong, this paper documents a case in which two semantically opposing categories, i.e. perfective and past imperfective, are descended from the same source: a directional meaning “down”. It is proposed that “down”, with its potential to code telicity and limit, first developed in a herd with the other five orientation prefixes in rGyalrong to become perfectivizers. Afterwards, the inherent sense of continuity in “down” and the common temporal property (i.e. past) shared by perfective and past imperfective in semantic content triggered “down” to go further than the other directionals, and eventually generalized to a past imperfective. Such a particular process of grammaticalization, never mentioned before in the literature, is evidenced in all the reported dialects of rGyalrong, thus very possibly is their common heritage from Proto-rGyalrong.