Linguistic Coding of Generic Human Arguments in rGyalrongic Languages*

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(Draft version, comments appreciated)

Languages generally have expressions that depict the participation of generic human arguments (GHA) in an event. Reference to ‘people in general’ may be achieved by using generic nouns (e.g. people), generic pronouns (e.g. one) and ordinary personal pronouns used impersonally (e.g. we, you, they), by zero expression (e.g. To see is to believe), or by morphological marking on the verb (e.g. the Tariana impersonal verbal prefix pa-). The present study highlights the encoding of generic human arguments in the verbal morphology in rGyalrong, a cluster of closely related Tibeto-Burman languages spoken in Sichuan, comprising rGyalrong and its morphologically less conservative next-of-kin, Horpa and Lavrung. By examining the various derivational and person-marking functions of GHA prefixation in these languages, significant formal and functional commonalities in their mechanism for GHA representation are uncovered. The implications of our findings on rGyalrongic as a valid genetic subgroup, and the evolution of nominal and impersonal verbal marking and related morphosyntactic phenomena in rGyalrongic and beyond will be suggested.

1. Preliminaries

Languages generally have expressions that depict the participation of generic human arguments (GHA) in an event. In English, reference to ‘people in general’ is achieved by generic nouns (man, people), the generic pronoun one, and ordinary personal pronouns used impersonally, e.g. we, you, and (excluding speaker and addressee) they:

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1 ‘Argument’ here refers to participants in the semantic representation, i.e. semantic rather than syntactic arguments (or actants). Universal reference to humans in general may sometimes be left unstated. The semantic agent of the Mandarin Chinese example in (2) is a case in point.

2 The term ‘impersonal’ is open to a number of interpretations in linguistics: (a) zero-valency, as in It is hot here; (b) non-canonically marked A/S, as in Middle English me thinketh ‘it seems to me’; and (c) generalized human reference (Stiewierska 2004: §5.5). Only the third sense of the term is intended in this article.
(1) **English**
   a. It is amazing what PEOPLE can get used to.
   b. ONE must free ONESELF from stereotyped opinions.
   c. WE/YOU can never be too careful with chemicals.
   d. THEY don’t allow handguns in Chicago.

   GHA’s can be implicit as well, in which case the meaning has to be recovered from context. Zero expression is exemplified with the following translational equivalent of (1c) in Mandarin Chinese:

   (2) **Mandarin Chinese**
   Ø chú lí hu à xu wù Ø yào ju é dũ xi ào ùn
   handle chemical must absolutely be careful
   ‘One can never be too careful with chemicals.’

Implicit GHA’s are prevalent in non-finite structures in Indo-European languages:

(3) **English**
Ø Seeing is Ø believing.

(4) **German**
Ø Betreten des Rasens verboten. ‘Keep off the grass.’

(5) **French**
Il faut Ø le faire. ‘It is necessary to do it.’

GHA’s can also be conveyed through morphological means, illustrated below from the Tariana (an Arawak language of northwest Amazonia; Aikhenvald 2003) impersonal verbal prefix pa-, the Spanish reflexive formation in se (Siewierska 1984: 174), and the Finnish *impersonal inflection* (Blevins 2003: 487):

(6) **Tariana**
hiku-nha pa-ni pa-inu pa-ñha-ka tfari be.like.this-PAUS IMPRS-do IMPRS-kill IMPRS-eat-REC.P.VIS man
‘Men (in general) hunt and eat like this.’

(7) **Spanish**
Se vive bien en América
REFL live:PRS:3SG well in America

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3Covert GHA’s appear to be the norm in many Sino-Tibetan languages, as seen in: **Qiang** (LaPolla 2003: 230)
coco-wa Ø zì-ne-zì dze-zì Ø
school-LOC Qiang-language speak-CAUS allow
‘Speaking Qiang is allowed in schools.’

**Dulong** (HK Sun 1982: 164)
Ø âŋbù lâi-sâ-şā mā-tûcâ
rice plant-NMLZ-DET NEG-be.difficult
‘It is not hard to plant rice.’

4The original morpheme glosses are retained.
‘One lives well in America.’

(8) Finnish
Suomessa ollaan niin totisia
finland:INES be:IMPRS.PRES so be.serious:NOM
‘In Finland, we/they/people are so serious.’

This article studies the linguistic expression of generic human arguments in rGyalrong, Lavrung,5 and Horpa,6 three languages of the ethnic rGyalrong Tibetans of northwestern Sichuan that form a compact rGyalrongic subgroup in Tibeto-Burman.7 It will be shown that GHA-marking via verbal morphology, though cross-linguistically less common, is one of the predominant strategies for realizing GHA’s in these languages. The morphologically rich rGyalrong language, as represented by its Caodeng dialect, serves as our point of departure. Examined in detail are the use of the generic noun for ‘person, human being’, as well as morphological encoding of GHA through derivational, nominalizing, and impersonifying prefixes. The ensuing section proceeds to consider Lavrung and Horpa, two next of kin of rGyalrong which likewise make use of nominal and, to a smaller extent, morphological means for expressing GHA’s. The concluding section discusses the significant formal and functional commonalities uncovered in the morphological mechanism for GHA representation in these languages. The implications of our findings on the development of GHA-marking and related morphosyntactic phenomena in rGyalrongic and beyond will also be presented.

The rGyalrong, Lavrung and Horpa examples cited in this paper are from my extended fieldwork in Sichuan. All three languages show considerable internal differentiation. The specific dialects treated herein are Caodeng (rGyalrong), Puxi and Guanyinqiao8 (Lavrung), and Shangzhai (Horpa).

2. rGyalrong

5Lavrung has only recently been recognized as a separate language (J. Sun 2000a; 2000b; Huang Bufan 2003). We have discovered three distinct, mutually unintelligible dialects: Guanyinqiao, Yelong, and Puxi (see Huang 2003: 60). The variety of Puxi dialect represented here is spoken in Luoxi (lofxi) and Luosituo (lofxisutu) hamlets in Xiaoyili Village, Se’erya (fsesiya) Hamlet of Puxi Village in Puxi Township, and also barys Hamlet in Shili Township, Rangtang County. My Puxi consultant Mr. Hua Wenjun originates from Luoxi Hamlet. The variety of Gunayinqiao dialect represented here is Mu’erzong. My consultant Ms. Rubi (zopi) comes from spo Village in Mu’erzong Township, Ma’erkang County.

6Horpa is also known as Ergong or Daofu. I once adopted the label Horpa-Shangzhai (J. Sun 2000b) but now prefer the time-honored, simpler appellation Horpa, following Hodgson 1853. Horpa is internally diversified, but its precise dialectal ramifications still await fuller investigation. The Shangzhai dialect is spoken in a number of villages in Puxi, Shili, and Zongke townships in southern Rangtang County. My Shangzhai consultant Ms. Zhongcheng originates from fajrga Hamlet of Puxi (p孢si) Village in Puxi Township.

7This subgrouping proposal was put forth recently by this author (J. Sun 2000a; 2000b) based on morphological evidence. It has since been met with approval by prominent Tibeto-Burmanists working extensively on these and related languages (Huang 2003: 60; HK Sun 2004: 313).

8Mu’erzong variety.
The devices utilized to encode GHA’s in rGyalrong are limited to either the generic noun ‘person, human’⁹ or various GHA-marking verbal prefixes. The other typologically common strategies, generic pronouns, impersonalized personal pronouns, and zero expression, do not appear to play a role.

2.1 Lexical encoding

The word for ‘person, human’ הקגנ is used in certain types of generic statements, such as:

(9) הקגנ הקגנ(tk)oz te? people NMLZ-die-SUB be.the.rule be:EMPH ‘All men die.’

(10) jle-k והקגנ הקגנ(t)z o-dzo-ERG often people gore³¹ ‘Dzos often gore people.’

The use of the generic human noun is most appropriate when the speaker’s intended reference is to humans in general. Contrast (11) with (12):


Unlike (11), an objective statement about people and bovines in general, (12) specifically includes the speaker and the addressee within the set of possible referents, hence the exhortative verb form in the second clause. In such ‘subjective impersonal’ sentences, the use of the generic noun is disfavored. Likewise, sentence (10) above is uttered as an objective, non-committal statement, whereas if the speaker wishes to make an assertion based on subjective personal experience, verbal GHA-marking would be used instead.¹²

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⁹Cf. Chinese rén; German man.
¹⁰R-Gyalrongic languages are unusual among Tibeto-Burman in having well-differentiated verb stems. From a comparative perspective, three stems can be set up: STEM1 or verb base and the two marked stems: STEM2 or past stem and (in R-Gyalrong) STEM3 or singular transitive non-past stem (J. Sun 2004). The marked stems are indicated in the gloss with subscript numerals.
¹¹A male crossbreed between yaks and common cattle.
¹²On the use of the portmanteau prefix ko-, which represents a fusion of GHA and inverse marking, see section §2.2.2.2.
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(13) koʔ zɔʔ kɛmɛm kɔy-tʃuʔ
    this bovine often GHA:INV-gore
    ‘This bovine often gores people (I know from personal experience).’

Thus, the functional range of the lexical strategy or the use of the generic noun ‘person, human’ is rather restricted. The dominant strategy of GHA encoding in this language is the morphological option, to which we now turn.

2.2 Morphological encoding

Involvement of generic human participants is obligatorily registered on the verbal morphology with the help of prefixes in rGyalrong, in particular sv-, kɔ-, kv-, and (in the Situ dialect) ɲa-.

2.2.1 Detransitivizing sv-\(^{13}\)

GHA-marking is involved in valency-decreasing derivation in rGyalrong. Unlike in English or French where transitivity can be reduced simply by suppressing the object, e.g. *Have you eaten? He drinks all day; Ce chien, il mord.* (Humphreys 1999),\(^ {14}\) omission of generic objects in rGyalrong must be registered on the verbal morphology with the detransitivizing prefixes rv- and sv-. For example:

(14) ku-ntʃbe ‘to kill’
    ku-re-ntʃbe ‘to do killing of animals, to do butchering’
    ku-ʃ-ntʃbe ‘to do killing of people’

It is clear from the semantics of the derived intransitives that rv- and sv- represent suppressed generic non-human and human patients, respectively. In (15), the main-clause verb ‘to stop’ is complemented by a nominalized intransitive verb of this type:

(15) ku-sv-nɛkboj  v-tɔ-tɔ-znåne
    NMLZ-DETR:HUM.PAT-bully    IRR-IMP-2-stop\(_3\)
    ‘Stop bullying people!’

An additional application of verb stems detransitivized by sv- produces stative verbs that describe potential properties (with citation form in kɔ-) affecting human patients:

(16) ku-a-dze ‘to eat; to bite’
    kɔ-s ə-a-dze ‘to be prickly (as of thorny plants)’

\(^{13}\)Not to be confused with the homophonous causative prefix sv- (e.g. kɔ-sv-re ‘to be laughable, amusing’ from ku-re ‘to laugh’), the oblique participant nominalizer sv- (e.g. sv-ədzentbi ‘dining place’, from ku-ədzentbi ‘to dine’), and the converb marking sv- (e.g. sv-kɛxe ‘happily’, from ku-kɛ? ‘to be happy’).

\(^{14}\)Using a strategy termed ‘patientless antipassive’ by Dixon & Aikhenvald (2000: 10).
kə-tʃʰuʔ  ‘to gore’
kə-sɯ-tʃʰuʔ  ‘to be prone to gore people (as of bovines)’

(17) təⁿ-dzan⁴ ⁿ-denaʔ  koʔ  pa  sɯ-ʃsɯ
IMP-be.careful for this pig DETR:HUM:PAT-bite¹⁵
‘Be careful, this pig bites (people).’

2.2.2 Prefixation in kə- and kʋ-

These two prefixes are among the most versatile in the language, serving a wide range of morphosyntactic purposes. Their distribution, governed by strict functional and structural principles, has yet to be fully elucidated in the literature owing to their extremely complicated usage. Jin et al. (1957-1958: 80-81) classified verbs in the Suomo variety of Situ rGyalrong into six classes with Class II (i.e. cidôngcí or ‘spontaneous verbs’) and Class V (xiànxiàng dôngcí or ‘phenomenal verbs’) taking the prefix kə- while the other classes taking kʋ-, without supplying any explanation. In an earlier paper (Lin 1983: 51-52), Lin Xiangrong suggested a semantic characterization for the Zhuokeji variety of Situ rGyalrong in terms of volitionality, but subsequently left the contrast unanalyzed in his full-fledged grammar (Lin 1993: §3.1.1 & §3.1.2). Huang Liangron’s contrived attempt to clarify the usages of kə- vs. kʋ- (Huang 1993) only obfuscates the issue by introducing confounding uses of kʋ- and kə- as complementizers, where their inherent semantic distinction is neutralized. Wei 2002, an MA thesis devoted entirely to differentiating kə- and kʋ- in Zhuokeji rGyalrong, represents a significant advance over the traditional treatment. Guillaume Jacques’ data-rich and theory-informed dissertation on the phonology and morphology of Chabao (in Tibetan Japhug) dialect (2004) also contains many gems of insight into the forms and functions of the reflexes of these prefixes in that particular dialect. However, all the previous work on rGyalrong (including my own earlier writings on these subjects) still leaves much ground uncovered; above all, the important non-nominalizing, GHA-marking function of kə- and kʋ- has yet to be properly reckoned with.

To forestall confusion, clarification on the diverse uses of kə- and kʋ- will proceed in terms of separating their nominalizing and non-nominalizing functions.

2.2.2.1 Nominalizing uses

The two predominantly nominalizing prefixes allow various elements of the clause to undergo reification, resulting in deverbal participant nouns, action/state nouns, and nominalized complements. The distribution of kə- and kʋ- in various nominalized contexts can be tabulated as follows:

¹⁵ As pigs and wild boars do.
## Participant nominalization

Participant nominalization derives deverbal nouns referring to the arguments of the source verbs. With participant nominals, the single intransitive argument (S) and the transitive actor argument (A) are marked by the same nominalizing prefix \( k\dot{o} \)-, as opposed to the transitive undergoer argument (O) marked with a different nominalizing prefix \( k\dot{e} \)-:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{a. } \text{S (} k\dot{o} \text{-)} & \quad \text{n}^\text{\#} \text{gi} \text{‘be ill’} \\
& \quad \text{k}-\text{n}^\text{\#} \text{gi} \text{‘sick person; patient’}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{b. } \text{A (} k\dot{o} \text{-)} & \quad \text{m} \text{ó} \text{rk} \text{u} \text{‘steal’} \\
& \quad \text{k}-\text{m} \text{ó} \text{rk} \text{u} \text{‘thief’}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{c. } \text{O (} k\dot{e} \text{-)} & \quad \text{n} \text{d} \text{z} \text{e} \text{‘eat’} \\
& \quad \text{k}\dot{e} \text{-n} \text{d} \text{z} \text{e} \text{‘that which is eaten; food’}
\end{align*}
\]

In other words, semantic roles of the clausal arguments are neutralized in an accusative pattern, with \( k\dot{o} \)- marking a (S/A) subject relation and \( k\dot{e} \)- marking an object (O) relation.

## Action nominalization

Action nominals are derived via attaching the nominalizing prefixes \( k\dot{o} \)- or \( k\dot{e} \)- to the verb base. They fall into two semantically based classes defined by the associated nominalizing prefix. The relevant contrast can be appreciated by examining the following action nominals:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{a. } & \text{ke-} \text{ver} \quad \text{‘to be afraid’} \\
& \text{ke-siz} \quad \text{‘to know’} \\
& \text{ke-n}^{\text{\#}} \text{gu} \quad \text{‘to become poor’} \\
& \text{ke-s}^{\text{\#}} \text{gu} \quad \text{‘to cause to become poor’} \\
& \text{ke-zgom} \quad \text{‘to meditate in seclusion’}
\end{align*}
\]
b. ko-naŋe ‘to come into estrus (as of female bovines)’
ko-r²di ‘to curdle’
ko-var ‘to become moldy’
ko-zgom ‘to hibernate’
c. ko-we³dʒi ‘to be cold (as of weather)’
ko-yram? ‘to be white’
ko-ŋu ‘to be poor’
ko-ŋqra ‘to be intelligent’

The nominalizing prefix kə- applies to verbs denoting typically human states, processes, and actions (19a), whereas typically non-human processes and actions (19b) as well as all properties (19c) require ko-. The crucial semantic distinction between ko- and kə-, therefore, appears to be presence versus absence of human involvement, hence our proposed distinction kə- [+HUM] (involving GHA) vs. ko- [-HUM].

In addition to serving as citation forms of verbs, action nominals figure importantly in rGyalrong complementation. Specifically, verbs in complement clauses serving as sentential subjects may take the form of action nominals differentially marked with kə- [+HUM] vs. ko- [-HUM]; contrast (20a-b), (21a-b):


b. zoŋa? tajtse-naŋ kʊ-/kʊ-ŋeŋo-ŋŋaŋ? sqŋŋɛŋ? cattle field-in NMLZ:NONHUM-eat.crops-SUB be.annoying ‘It is annoying for cattle to eat crops in the field.’

(21) a. kœdrye koɔŋi? mʊ-kʊ-/ko-/dze-ŋŋaŋ? serv-ce PN candy NEG-NMLZ:HUM-eat-DET be.strange-MED ‘It is strange that Dorzhe did not eat the candy.’

b. koŋ? preŋi? paʃk⁶ŋɔ-ntʃon mʊ-ko-/kʊ-ŋqra-ŋŋaŋ? this bear now-even NEG-NMLZ:NONHUM-hibernate-DET serv-ce be.strange-MED ‘It is strange that this bear is not in hibernation even now.’

Non-finite verb forms in rGyalrong lack morphological markings of tense, person, and number, but may be minimally specified for aspect. This has to do with action nominals optionally taking an imperfective non-past prefix, as illustrated by:

16This generalization drawn on the basis of Caodeng data may be readily applied to the other major rGyalrong dialects we have investigated (Showu, Situ, and Chabao).
In the above examples, the verb forms marked with the present imperfective places more emphasis on the gradual process of becoming impoverished.

2.2.2.1.3 Infinitival nominalization in -kë

This particular type of nominalization involves the invariant prefix kë-, where the [±HUM] distinction is nullified. The verb form will be termed ‘infinitive’, in order to differentiate it from other nominalized forms.

At least three disparate functions of the infinitive have been noted, namely as a converb, as a deranked verbal topic, and above all, as an infinitive object complement.

2.2.2.1.3.1 Converb use

The infinitival form of a verb can be used as a converb (verbal adverbial), providing background for a simultaneous verbal event, as in:17

(23) a. tjéle ydënbe me-ké-tso o-vzär fá-te-mdzu-cɔ anything at.all NEG-INF-say 3SG:POSS-side go.and-PFV-sit-MED ‘Not saying anything, (the one-legged demon) went over and sat down by his side.’

b. kóxse ydënbe me-ké/*kɔ*-Gor? nəoséfsɔt leopard at.all NEG-INF-raor like.that kaxtʃipu-pɔa ke-rju? na-wɛ? small.child-to INF-run PFV:WEST-come2 ‘Not uttering a roar at all, the leopard came running toward the small child.’

2.2.2.1.3.2 Deranked verbal topic

In another usage, an infinitival predicate precedes an inflected predicate. The infinitive indicates the general verbal event, while the inflected verb further specifies how the verbal act is to be executed. The infinitive here actually functions as a kind of sentential topic, as it can also take an optional topicalizer, e.g. -na? . This construction is illustrated by (24):

(24) qacbʉ kə-ni?(-na?) tʰə-səsəʋŋ? hoe-wedge INF-drive-TOP IMP:IN-cause.to.be.tight ‘Drive the hoe-wedge in tightly (lit: As for driving the hoe-wedge in, make it tight!’

17Alternatively, one can also express the same meaning using the present imperfective verb form:

tjéle ydënbe me-té-tso o-vzär fá-te-mdzu-cɔ anything at.all NEG-INF-say 3SG:POSS-side go.and-PFV-sit-MED ‘Not saying anything, (the one-legged demon) went over and sat down by his side.’
2.2.1.3.3 Nominalizing object complements

Aside from the uses mentioned above, the primary application of the infinitive appears to be for nominalizing object complement clauses. In the example that follow, the complement-taking verb kv-çhe ‘to be able to’ takes an infinitive complement clause marked uniformly by -ke irrespective of [±HUM]:

(25) a. tə-kə-smêt kəmarku-na?
   PFV-NMLZ:SBJ-be.wounded thief-DET
   kɛ-pbi ma-na-çheʔ-cə
   INF-flee NEG-PFV-be.able2-MED
   ‘The wounded thief could not run away.’

   b. tə-kə-smêt puxjut-nə?
   PFV-NMLZ:SBJ-be.wounded hoopoe-DET
   kv-/*/ko-qelbjomʔ ma-na-çheʔ-cə
   INF-fly NEG-PFV-be.able2-MED
   ‘The wounded hoopoe could not fly away.’

2.2.1.3 Finite complement-clause nominalization

In rGyalrong, complement clauses may also be finite, involving a lesser degree of nominalization via the optional non-GHA-marking nominalizer kə-, while retaining the full array of tense, aspect, and person/number inflections. Consider the following examples showing a finite subject complement to the verb kə-pe ‘to become’ (26) and a finite object complement to the verb kv-mti ‘to see’ (27):

(26) në-rgɛm kə-natsomʔ mə-kɛ-kʉt
   2SG:POSS-trunk NMLZ-take.back NEG-NMLZ-be.allowed
   poj  nə?
   become3 be
   ‘You will end up not being able to take your trunk home (lit. It will transpire that your trunk will not allow itself to be taken back.).’

(27) nəjiʔ-kə ləm u tewa? kə-əsə-thi-naʔ?
   2SG-ERG Lamu liquor NMLZ-PROG:HTR-drink-SUB
   nə-tə-mti
   PFV-2:Q-see
   ‘Did you see Lamu drinking liquor?’

2.2.1.4 Supine nominalization in kə-

Supine clauses nominalized uniformly by kə- function as purposive adverbial adjuncts accompanying mainly motion verbs. A non-motion verb kv-rëntsʔa ‘to try’ has been noted to take supine complement clauses in -kə.

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18 A non-motion verb kv-rëntsʔa ‘to try’ has been noted to take supine complement clauses in -kə.
(28a); expressing the patient as a free pronominal would result in ungrammaticality (28b):

(28) a. v-ka-q\^ro  v-je-tw-wi  
    1SG:POSS:OBJ-NMLZ:PURP-welcome  IRR-IMP-2-come

b. *v\^ji?  k\^o-q\^ro  v-je-tw-wi
    1SG NMLZ:PURP-welcome  IRR-IMP-2-come

‘Come and welcome me.’

2.2.2.2 Non-nominalizing uses

In an extended, hitherto little explored impersonalizing usage, the prefixes k\^o- and k\^e- serve to introduce GHA’s in generic clauses. In example (29a), the impersonal meaning is contributed by the prefix k\^e-, without which the conditional clause would have a referential reading (29b).

(29) a. v-ne-k\^e-n\^gi?-na?  m\^len  k\^e-znas\^man  re?
    IRR-PFV-GHA-be.ill-SUB without.fail GHA-treat be.necessary

    ‘If one gets ill, it is necessary to treat him.’

b. v-ne-n\^gi?-na?  m\^len  k\^e-znas\^man  re?
    IRR-PFV-be.ill-SUB without.fail GHA-treat be.necessary

    ‘If s/he gets ill, it is necessary to treat her/him.’

There is solid syntactic evidence that this particular use of k\^e- by no means instantiates nominalization. First, k\^e- cannot appear if the clause already contains an overt referential subject (30), whereas a truly nominalizing k\^e- co-occurs freely with clausal subjects (31):

(30) kr\^efi-ni  te-(\^k\^e-)-n\^gi?-dza-na?
    Trashi-DL IMPFV-be.ill-3DL-SUB

    sm\^nk\^a\^n  v-je-ta-tsom?
    hospital    IRR-IMP-2-take.thither

    ‘If Trashi and the other person get ill, take them to the hospital.’

(31) v-ts\^u-k\^o
    v\^ji?  k\^e-nk\^h\u0143\^el?-na?
    1SG:POSS-son-ERG  1SG NMLZ-talk.back.to-DET

    v-sni
    1SG:POSS-heart IMPFV-hurt

    ‘I am hurt at my son’s talking back to me.’

The non-nominal, GHA-marking nature of the impersonal k\^e- is further revealed by its ungrammaticality in clauses with non-human subjects (32-35):

(32) q\^pper?-k\^o  z\^a?  n\^ge-(\^k\^e-)-m\^n-na?
    dhole-ERG bovine IMPFV-catch\_3-SUB

    st\^ore  6-f\^qor  k\^e-\^dz\^e  te-(\^k\^e-)-s\^je  \^no?
    first  3SG:POSS-rear.end INF-eat IMPFV-begin be
‘When dholes catch a bovine, they begin eating it from the rear end.’

(33) tarmókbe \(\text{z}^\text{d}\text{im}?\) ne-(\(\ast\)\(\text{k}_{\text{e}}\)-)qerå?-na?
dusk cloud IMPFV-be.yellow.SUB
naofsáfsi tám\(\text{u}\) let t\(\text{f}^\text{boz}\)?
next.day rain release be.the.rule
‘When clouds become yellow at dusk, it will rain the following day.’

(34) t\(\text{a}-\text{ko}?\)-ta scazday? \(^{\text{b}}\text{ge}(\(\ast\)\(\text{k}_{\text{e}}\))-\text{bèv}{^?}\text{-}\text{sc}^\text{höna}\)?
SELF:POSS-head-on death IMPFV-fall-SUB:EMPH
ta-te \(\text{t}_{\text{e}-\text{ku}}\)-sesay? \(\text{re}\)?
SELF:POSS-efforts IMPFV-GHA-tighten be.necessary
‘When deaths befall (one’s family members), one must toughen up.’

(35) k\(\text{h}^\text{ext}o\)-ta snorme \(\text{v-ta-}\text{wi-na}\)?
rooftop.platform-on weed IRR-PFV:UP-come-SUB
\(\text{t}^\text{f}^\text{tsa}\) (*\(\text{k}_{\text{e}}\)-)sawë \(\text{t}^\text{boz}\)?
leaking cause.to.come be.the.rule
‘If weeds grow up on the rooftop platform, they will cause leaking (in the living room downstairs).’

The impersonal usage also extends to the prefix \(\text{k}^\text{ø}\)-. Its semantic opposition with \(\text{k}^\text{e}\)- is demonstrated by the following examples:

(36) na?-na\(\text{j}\) \(\text{v-ne}\)-\(\text{k}^\text{ø}\)-\text{nkulu?-na}\)?
forest-inside IRR-PFV-GHA-be.lost-SUB
st\(\text{h}^\text{ø}r\)-na? \(\text{ne}\)-\(\text{k}^\text{e}\)-\(\text{ng}^\text{g}^\text{z}^\text{g}^\text{e}\) \(\text{t}^\text{boz}\)?
first-DET IMPFV-GHA-call:RDPL be.the.rule
‘If one gets lost in the forest, one should first call repeatedly for help.’

(37) ko? \text{tëwa}\)? \(\text{k}^\text{ø}-\text{lden}\) v\(\text{n}^\text{a}-\text{k}_{\text{e}}\)-t\(\text{b}^\text{i-na}\)?
this liquor NMLZ-be.much IRR-PFV-GHA-drink-SUB
\(\text{f}^\text{la}\) \(\text{k}^\text{ø}-\text{lde}\)? \(\text{f}^\text{te}\)?
immediately GHA-be.drunk be:EMPH
‘If one drinks too much of this liquor, one quickly gets drunk.’

(38) t\(\text{c}^\text{i}\)? v\(\text{ne}-\text{më-na}\)? t\(\text{f}^\text{pa}?\)-\(\text{k}^\text{ø}\) \(\text{k}^\text{ø}\)^{-}\text{Gît}
water IRR-PFV-not.exist-SUB thirst-INST GHA-die.from.thirst
‘Without water one will die from thirst.’

(39) qërtsu \(\text{te-we}^\text{d}^\text{zi}\) orjå\text{̄}n\(\text{az}\) re\(\text{g}^\text{o}-\text{z}\) \(\text{k}^\text{ø}-\text{qijpm}\)? \(\text{t}^\text{boz}\)?
winter IMPFV-be.cold when plateau-LOC GHA-freeze be.the.rule
‘When it gets cold in winter, one may freeze to death on the plateaus.’

(40) k\(\text{n}-\text{lde}\)? \(\text{ne}\)-\(\text{t}^\text{boz}^\text{em-na}\)? \(\text{k}^\text{ø}-\text{qjo}\)? \(\text{t}^\text{boz}\)?
INF-be.drunk IMPFV-be.excessive-SUB GHA-vomit be.the.rule
‘When one gets too drunk, one throws up.’
As can be seen from the above, \( k\overline{v} \)- is associated with events that feature human agents (‘to call’, ‘to drink’) whereas \( k\overline{a} \)- is associated with events that do not (‘to lose one’s way’, ‘to be drunk’, ‘to die from thirst’, ‘to vomit’, ‘to cough’). Thus, the impersonal prefixes \( k\overline{v} \)- and \( k\overline{a} \)- contrast in volitionality, standing respectively for volitional and non-volitional generic human actants.

The status of \( k\overline{v} \)- and \( k\overline{a} \)- as syntactic arguments receives further corroboration in the interaction between impersonal and inverse morphology. Since impersonal \( k\overline{v} \)- and \( k\overline{a} \)- denote arbitrary human referents, they must co-occur with the inverse prefix \( o(\gamma) \)- in marked configurations where non-human agents act upon generalized human patients:

(42) \( kojle-k\overline{a} ko\gamma t\overline{h}u? \)
\( \text{this } dzo-\text{ERG GHA:INV-gore} \)
‘This dzo goes people.’

(43) \( t\overline{h}uxci?-c\overline{a}-k\overline{a} ko-n\overline{a}j\overline{kotse} t\overline{h}oz? \)
\( \text{something-\text{INDEF-ERG GHA:INV-throw.rock.at } be.the.rule} \)
‘Something throws rocks at people.’

(44) \( t\overline{t}jm\overline{o}v o-t\gamma? k\overline{a}-to? t\overline{e}k\overline{v}^\text{-}\text{n }dze-n\overline{a}? \)
\( \text{mushroom }3\text{SG:POSS-poison NMLZ:exist IMPFV-GHA-eat-SUB} \)
\( ko-san^\text{-}\text{gi}? \)
\( \text{GHA:INV-cause.to.be.ill not.only} \)
\( v-n\text{-}\text{t}u-n\overline{a}? ko-nt\overline{f}h e t\overline{h}oz? \)
\( \text{IRR-PFV-be.serious-SUB GHA:INV-kill be.the.rule} \)
‘If one eats poisonous mushrooms, one gets sick or even dies if the poisoning is serious.’

2.2.3 The impersonalizing prefix \( \eta^\text{-}/\eta\underline{a}\text{-} \)

Although the non-finite [+human] nominalizer and impersonalizer \( k\overline{v} \)- is synchronically opaque in the Caodeng dialect, comparative data from the Situ dialect demonstrate that \( k\overline{v} \)- in comparable functions came from the coalescence of the nominalizer \( k\overline{a} \)- and an earlier GHA-marker \( v \)- (<Proto-rGyalrong \( \gamma\eta \)-).\(^{20}\) The Caodeng rGyalrong prefix \( k\overline{v} \)- has undergone reanalysis as a new GHA marker, \(^{19}\)On inverse-marking as one of the manifestations of an empathy hierarchy in rGyalrong grammar, see Sun and Shi 2002: §2.3. Incidentally, despite the absence of an overt object the sentence (35) is morphologically transitive, with a non-human agent /\( jle \) ‘male dzo’ marked with the ergative case and a generic human object (people) represented by the verbal prefix \( k\overline{v} \).\(^{20}\) Homophonous to the Proto-rGyalrong root for ‘I’ and the lexicalized stem augment \( \gamma\eta \)-, the latter occurring as part of the stem in certain intransitives, e.g. Zhuokeji \( k\overline{a}-\gamma\eta\text{-}\text{st}\overline{o} \) Caodeng \( k\overline{v}\text{-}\text{sto} \) ‘to be straight’. The stem-augmenting \( \gamma\eta \)- of unclear function may have once constituted a paradigm with other augments of this type, e.g. \( ma \)- exemplified by Zhuokeji \( k\overline{a}-ma-\text{rts\overline{a}p} \) Caodeng \( k\overline{a}\text{-}\text{m\overline{e}-rt}t\overline{se}v \) ‘to be spicy'.
replacing *v*- even in non-nominalizing contexts. The independent morpheme status of the original GHA-marking *ga*- still survives in Situ rGyalrong, as can be seen in these Zhuokeji examples showing *ga*- in non-nominalized (45a) and nominalized (45b) contexts (Wei 2001: 47-49).\(^21\)

(45) **Situ rGyalrong**

   \begin{enumerate}
   \item a. na-ŋā-ği-s ti
       PFV-GHA-die-STEM2 SUB
       ʟɛm-ka rgawɛ ka-sa-pā rā
       lama-ERG sutra NMLZ:GHA-CAUS-do be.necessary
       ‘When one dies, it is necessary to send for lamas to chant sutras.’
   \item b.  majɛr tæzɛ kə-ŋa-skā ti
       yesterday food NMLZ-GHA-cook SUB
       kām wa-tsʰɛlliŋ to-rjô-s
       3SG:POSS-bell PFV-speak-STEM2
       ‘As one was preparing food yesterday, the doorbell rang.’
   \end{enumerate}

2.2.4 Replacement of the first person by impersonal prefixes

Impersonal verb forms sometimes acquire a personal reading, replacing first-person non-singular forms in such languages as French and Kiranti (Siewierska 2004: 211; Ebert 1994: 28-29). In the following Limbu (Eastern Kiranti, Tibeto-Burman family) example, the word *yapmi* is used as a pronominal, representing a 1st-person plural exclusive patient (Michailovsky 2001: 148).\(^22\)

(46) **Limbu (Mewa/Maiwa dialect)**

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{anigɛ} & \text{nurik memettige-əŋ} \text{ ciṭṭi} \\
1PL:EXCL & \text{well do:3PL>1PL:EXCL-and letter} \\
\text{yapmi} & \text{məhaktə} \\
1PL:EXCL:PAT & \text{send:3PL} \\
\text{‘They treated us well and they sent us letters.’}
\end{align*}
\]

Notably, this construction calls for a morphologically intransitive verb (Michailovsky 2001: 147).

Likewise, the generic subject pronoun *on* in French is often used in place of a first person plural (47a)\(^23\) and a second person plural (47b):

(47) **French**

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{a. Viens, on va mang-er dehors!} \\
\text{come:IMP:2SG one go:IMP:2SG eat-INF out} \\
\text{‘Come! Let’s go out to eat!’}
\end{align*}
\]

---

\(^{21}\) The phonetic transcriptions and glosses have been slightly modified.

\(^{22}\) The meanings ‘human being, (definite) man’ are conveyed by a separate lexical item *məna* (Michailovsky 2001: 145).

\(^{23}\) This example was kindly suggested by Elizabeth Zeitoun.
b. Alors les enfants, que veuont faire?
   OK DEF:PL children what want:PRS:3SG-one do:INF
   ‘OK, children, what do you want to do?’

In rGyalrong, a personal interpretation is also available to structures marked by the impersonalizing prefixes $k_\delta$- and $k_\varepsilon$-.

In the following sentences, uttered by the demon in the folklore [One-legged Demon and A Young Man], the verb form showing the impersonal $k_\varepsilon$- actually refers to the speaker, the demon himself:

(48) $\text{tārj}_\text{u}$latf$\text{he}$ t$\text{f}_\text{a}$ re? tā-tsa$\text{-na}$?
   property what be.desired IMP-say-SUB
   n$\text{ū}$yu k$\text{a}$-to? $\text{k}_\varepsilon$-pe $\text{f}_\text{te}$?
   2SG:POSS NMLZ-exist GHA-make be:EMPH
   ‘Say what goods are desired, and one (i.e. I) will make you possess them.’

Thus, transferred personal reference of impersonals in rGyalrong characteristically denotes the first person, preferably the speaker.

The prefix $k_\varepsilon$- is additionally observed to occur with apparently volitional predicates.

The following example illustrates:

(49) a. ko? tēl$\text{o}$ mā-je-tn-tsom?$\text{?}$
   this milk NEG-IMP-2-take.thither
   kādē $\text{k}_\varepsilon$-(*$k_\delta$-)t$\text{b}_\text{i}$ re?
   in.a.while GHA:VOL-drink be.necessary
   ‘Don’t take this milk away, for one (i.e I/we) will drink it later.’

b. kādē$\text{a}$? $\text{k}_\varepsilon$-(*$k_\varepsilon$-)mtser tā?
   in.a.while GHA:INVOL-be.hungry be.certain
   ‘One (i.e. I/we) will certainly get hungry in a while.’

The prefix $k_\varepsilon$- is also noted to exhibit a person-marking function, especially in combination with copular and existential verbs. More research is needed before this usage is better understood. Two examples are:

(50) jos$\text{p}_\text{ji}$? tomde $\text{k}_\varepsilon$-let tā?
   today gun GHA:INVOL-shoot be.certain
   One is (i.e I am/we are) certainly going to do some shooting today.

---

24The prefix $s$- is also noted to exhibit a person-marking function, especially in combination with copular and existential verbs. More research is needed before this usage is better understood. Two examples are:

s$\text{t}_\text{d}$-smo-$z$
NMLZ:OBL-stay2-LOC PROG:LTR-GHA-SPON-stay2
I am where I usually am.

c$\text{b}_\text{e}$z$\text{c}_\text{?}$ $\text{k}_\text{a}$-gu-c$\text{ø}$
formerly NMLZ:SBJ-be.poor-INDEF IMPFV-GHA-be2:EMPH
I used to be a poor man.

25The plural reading is allowed, given proper context. Incidentally, Lyons (1999: 186; footnote 9) reports a restricted usage in English where some speakers can use the generic pronoun one to indicate the speaker: They told me about it yesterday; well, what could one say, one was rather embarrassed.
A soldier who anticipates doing some target practice in his daily training schedule would say the foregoing sentence, for instance. Here, the involitional \textit{kσ-appropriately conveys the idea that the speaker performs only passively in the predicated event in compliance with arrangements made by others.}

### 2.2.5 Summary

Presented above are the lexical and the morphological exponents of GHA-marking accessible to rGyalrong. A number of verbal prefixes are examined that serve to index people in general. The detransitivizing prefix \textit{sν-} represents suppressed generic human objects in derived intransitives. The prefix \textit{kν-} represents generic human arguments in action nominals and non-nominalized impersonal structures in Caodeng rGyalrong. For these last two functions, internal evidence from the Situ dialect (see §2.2.2.2.1) helps tease out an old GHA morpheme \textit{ŋa-} that has become fused with the nominalizer \textit{kσ-} in the Caodeng dialect. The principal nominalizing prefix \textit{kσ-} is also exploited to register non-volitional human arguments in the impersonal function with the meaning shifted from [-human] to [-volition]. In an extended usage, these semantically distinct impersonal markers are utilized to replace first person pronouns, in particular the first person singular ‘I’. The generalizations concerning the prefix pair \textit{kσ-} and \textit{kν-} can be summarized in a more comprehensive table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nominalizing use</th>
<th>Participant nominalization</th>
<th>Action/state nominalization</th>
<th>Non-finite infinitive nominalization</th>
<th>Finite complement-clause nominalization</th>
<th>Supine nominalization</th>
<th>Non-Nominalizing, Impersonal use (extended as marker of 1st person)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Table II. Distribution of Nominalizers/Impersonalizers \textit{kσ-} and \textit{kν-}**

### 3. Lavrung and Horpa

In comparison with rGyalrong proper, these rGyalrongic languages are far more innovative in morphosyntax. Still, they retain lexical and morphological strategies of GHA indication that parallel in part those operating in rGyalrong.

#### 3.1 Lexical encoding

The Lavrung and Horpa generic nouns, obvious cognates to Caodeng rGyalrong \textit{kσ-r\textsuperscript{bjo}} ‘person, human’, are also used with reference to people in general:

(51) a. **Lavrung (Puxi)**

\begin{verbatim}
\textit{vù űs-pə ræpə}
people die-NMLZ be:OTHER.PERSON
\end{verbatim}
b. **Lavrung (Guanyinqiao)**

\[ \text{vjo} \text{ sə ntf_{\text{FAS}}} \]
people die be.the rule

---

c. **Horpa**

\[ \text{vdzǐ shê(-pr) dāŋ} \]
people die-NMLZ be:OTHER.PERSON
All men die.

---

(52) a. **Lavrung (Puxi)**

\[ çê-γwə \text{ vjū } \chi t^{\text{ḅt}} \]
dzo-ERG people gore

b. **Lavrung (Guanyinqiao)**

\[ le?-γə \text{ vjo} \text{ } \chi t^{\text{ḅt}} \]
dzo-ERG people gore

c. **Horpa**

\[ çê-γə \text{ vdzǐ } f-ltō \]
dzo-ERG people TR-gore
Dzos gore people.

---

3.2 **Zero expression**

An important difference from rGyalrong lies in the general non-expression of generic human agents in both Lavrung and Horpa:

(53) a. **Lavrung (Puxi)**

\[ Ø \text{ bār } shā \text{ njūntf_{\text{he}}} \text{ mə-ŋən} \]
snake kill very NEG-be.doable

b. **Lavrung (Guanyinqiao)**

\[ Ø \text{ bār sæ njūntf_{\text{he}}} \text{ mə-ts}\text{ḅaχ} \]
snake kill very NEG-be.doable

c. **Horpa**

\[ Ø \text{ pʰrō shēɣ} fi\text{ntf_{\text{h}}a} \text{ mi-ŋən} \]
snake kill very NEG-be.doable
‘It is most unacceptable to kill snakes.’

(54) a. **Lavrung (Puxi)**

\[ jām-nəŋ-gə Ø \text{ mkḅa } tʰe mə-ŋəu } \text{ house-inside.LOC cigarette drink NEG-be.allowed} \]

b. **Lavrung (Guanyinqiao)**

\[ jām-gə Ø \text{ mkḅə? } tʰe mə-jəu } \text{ house-LOC cigarette drink NEG-be.allowed} \]
c. **Horpa**  
\[ \text{jō-noŋ} \text{ Œ mkʰ̥ə} \text{ tʰ̥} \text{ mi-ldōŋ} \]  
house-in cigarette drink NEG-be.allowed  
‘Smoking in the house is not allowed.’

A relevant observation is that the absence of overt agent arguments in both languages is consistently associated with an agentless passive reading to the exclusion of ‘specific agent’ or even ‘indefinite agent’ readings:

\[(55)\]

a. **Lavrung (Puxi)**  
\[ \text{ŋə̱jì-ja} \text{ brō kʰu-fkʰ-sə} \]  
1PL:INCL-GEN horse PFV:TR-steal2-MIR

b. **Lavrung (Guanyinqiao)**  
\[ \text{gə̱jì-jo} \text{ brēʔ nə-fkəʔ-sə} \]  
1PL:INCL-GEN horse PFV:TR-steal2-MED

c. **Horpa**  
\[ \text{jə̱̊nə̱-jo} \text{ rī gə-f-rkʰ-si} \]  
1PL:INCL-GEN horse PFV:TR-TR-steal2-MED  
‘Our horse got stolen.’  
*‘S/he stole our horse.’  
*‘Someone stole our horse.’

On the other hand, generic non-agents may be introduced not only lexically by generic human nouns but also through morphological prefixation, to which we now turn.

### 3.3 Morphological encoding: the prefix \( χ \)-

Lavrung and Horpa are rather impoverished with respect to prefixal morphology. Among the few extant verbal prefixes, the prefix \( χ \)- (with a voiced positional variant \( s \)-occurring before voiced onsets) is shared in both languages. No nominalizing use of this prefix has been observed, as nominalization morphology has undergone drastic revamping in both languages.\(^{26}\) Instead, the prefix plays a role in valency-reducing derivation and impersonal marking.

#### 3.3.1 Detransitivizing use

---

\(^{26}\)In both Lavrung and Horpa, action/state nouns and complement clauses occur in non-nominalized forms, while participant nominalization have resorted to marking by a set of distinct suffixes.
The prefix χ-, first of all, serves to detransitivize transitive verb roots. The valency-reduction operation characteristically yields statives with demoted agents or ‘anti-causatives’ (in the sense of Dixon and Aikhenvald 2000: 7-8). Examples are:

(56) a. **Lavrung (Puxi)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TR</th>
<th>DETR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>vzjĕr ‘to mix’</td>
<td>χ-vzjĕr ‘to be mixed’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fsōχ ‘to accumulate’</td>
<td>χ-fsōχ ‘to be accumulated’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b. **Lavrung (Gunayinqiao)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TR</th>
<th>DETR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>vzdaræ ‘to mix’</td>
<td>χ-vzdaræ ‘to be mixed’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rdua ‘to accumulate’</td>
<td>χ-rdua ‘to be accumulated’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

c. **Horpa**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TR</th>
<th>DETR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>vzjĕr ‘to mix’</td>
<td>χ-vzjĕr ‘to be mixed’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fsōχ ‘to accumulate’</td>
<td>χ-fsōχ ‘to be accumulated’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(57) a. **Lavrung (Puxi)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>rbō-gə</th>
<th>jʰɔ̌</th>
<th>na-χ-kʰɔ-sə</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>threshing.floor-LOC</td>
<td>highland.barley</td>
<td>PFV:INTR-DETR-sun.dry2-MED</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b. **Lavrung (Guanyinqiao)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>rbɔwua-mŋo</th>
<th>jɔ</th>
<th>na-χ-kʰe-sə</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>threshing.floor-on</td>
<td>highland.barley</td>
<td>PFV:INTR-DETR-sun.dry2-MED</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

c. **Horpa**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>rbō-jʃʰi</th>
<th>jí</th>
<th>və-χ-ki-si</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>threshing.floor-LOC</td>
<td>highland.barley</td>
<td>CONT-DETR- sun.dry2-MED</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘Highland barley is sun-drying on the (rooftop) threshing floor.’

3.3.2 Impersonalizing use

In the Puxi dialect of Lavrung, the prefix χ- also functions as an impersonal marker embodying *non-agentive* GHA’s. Lexical and morphological GHA-representation is interchangeable, but double marking (58c) is ill-formed:

(58) **Lavrung (Puxi)**

a. cə kətɛ-ywə χ-Nrɛhá
   this dog-ERG GHA-bite

b. cə kətɛ-ywə vjü Nrɛhá
   this dog-ERG people bite

27 The same prefix exists in such varieties of the Guanyinqiao dialect of Lavrung as Mu’erzong (personal research) and Guanyinqiao proper (Huang 2003). Huang (2003: 71) treats it as a kind of passive.
Generic human agents, we recall from §3.2, are obligatorily omitted in Lavrung and Horpa. This semantic constraint is evident in Puxi Lavrung where the impersonal $\chi$-appropriately applies to denote patients (see 58a above) or experiencers (e.g. subjects of ‘to be drunk’, ‘to be poisoned’, and ‘to lose way’), but not agents (e.g. subjects of ‘to drink’, ‘to eat’, and ‘to yell’):

(59) **Lavrung (Puxi)**  
\begin{itemize}
  \item c. *cô katóภาวะยู ฅ-Nrcňã  
  this dog-ERG people GHA-bite  
  ‘This dog bites people.’
\end{itemize}

Interestingly, GHA-marking $\chi$- has fallen into disuse in the Guanyinqiao dialect of Lavrung as well as in Horpa. An unprefixed verb form occurs instead to express the same meaning:

(60) a. **Lavrung (Guanyinqiao)**  
  cô ฅ-งณิษฎ์-ยู ฅ-Nrcňã  
  this dog-ERG bite  
  ‘This dog bites people.’

b. **Horpa**  
  thô ฅ-งณิษฎ์ (vdźí) ฅ-cnâ  
  this dog-ERG people GHA-bite  
  ‘This dog bites people.’

---

28 These sentences are syntactically transitive, as evidenced by the ergative case marking. Contrast this with the rGyalrong example (17) undergoing genuine detransitivization by se-.
In contrast, absence of the GHA-marker χ- in the Puxi dialect of Lavrung forces a definite-patient reading. Compare (61a) vs. (61b):

(61) **Lavrung (Puxi)**

a. cô kâtē-γwə χ-nrcbā
   this dog-ERG GHA-bite
   ‘This dog bites people.’

b. cô kâtē-γwə nrcbā
   this dog-ERG bite
   ‘This dog will bite him/her.’

Consider the following Guanyinqiao Lavrung and Horpa equivalents of the illustrative sentences (59a-c) above:

(62) a. **Lavrung (Guanyinqiao)**
   cô vau?-tə qaʔ? the mtə-tsʰəχ-mə
   this liquor-DET be.much drink NEG-be.doable-or.else
   nvau? ntfʰausible
   be.drunk be.the.rule

b. **Horpa**
   tʰə vû-tə sðû tʰə mi-ŋn-mə
   this alcohol-DET be.much drink NEG-be.doable-or.else
   n-vû (ntfʰ audible)
   GHA-be.drunk be.the.rule
   ‘One cannot drink too much of this alcohol or one will get drunk.’

(63) a. **Lavrung (Guanyinqiao)**
   cô lmu?-dze? mtə-tsʰəχ-mə lmaʔu?
   this mushroom eat NEG-be.doable-or.else be.poisoned

b. **Horpa**
   tʰə lmû-y-tə dzû mi-ŋn-mə n-dôɣ
   this mushroom-DET eat NEG-be.doable-or.else be.poisoned
   ‘This kind of mushroom cannot be eaten lest one should be poisoned.’

(64) a. **Lavrung (Guanyinqiao)**
   náχtʃen-ɡə tʃi ni-ncʰit-ʃə
   forest-LOC way IMPFV-lose-COND
   sôdʒəmâne ɡiə ruat?
   first yell be.necessary

b. **Horpa**
   náχ-nonj tʃə ɣə-pê-sə
   forest-inside way PFV-lose2-COND
   zəʔono kʰûja fʃi
   first yell be.necessary
'If one loses one’s way in the forest, one must first yell (for help).'

3.3.3 Marking first person

In Puxi Lavrung, the impersonal prefix ✱- can be pressed into service to represent a non-agentive, non-volitional first person. This usage is likewise attested in Guanyinqiao Lavrung and Horpa, where ✱- has ceased to function as a marker of arbitrary human reference.

In (65), the experiencer of thirst is construed to be the speaker (and maybe others), as is plain from the explicit first person plural verbal marking in the preceding clause:

(65) a. Lavrung (Puxi)
   ᵒdā  dʒɛ-j-mandí  s₀kʰʃʃʰ  ❄-svi-kʰð
   water take-1PL-or.else later GHA-be.thirsty-FUT:INVOL

b. Lavrung (Guanyinqiao)
   ᵒda  ndje-ja-mde  pʰjatsatsat  k-nsvi'y?
   water take-1PL-or.else later GHA-be.thirsty

c. Horpa
   grè  ndzú¹-ja-mà  ækʰɔɾɔersistent  ❄-spár-kʰrɔ
   water take-1PL-or.else later GHA-be.thirsty-FUT:INVOL
   ‘Let’s take some water or one (i.e. we) will be thirsty.’

In (66) below, this referential use of ✱- is apparently compatible with an agentive predicate ‘to shoot’. Here, however, the person-marking ✱- conveys rather lack of volition on the part of the speaker who causes the gun to go accidentally off:

(66) a. Lavrung (Puxi)
   mɔntájøn-skɔ  mɔndø  nɔ-Ϯ-lì
   inadvertent-when gun PFV-GHA-shoot₂

b. Lavrung (Guanyinqiao)
   vdzɔmɛt?  memdɔ  nɔ-Ϯ-let-sɔ
   inadvertently gun PFV-GHA-shoot₂-MED

c. Horpa
   ᵐdè  rɔ-mø-ŋjɔɾɔ-ŋʃkæsɔ  pɔ  yɔ-Ϯ-vlɔ
   at.all PFV-NEG-be.aware₂-1SG-when gun PFV-GHA-shoot₂
   ‘I inadvertently fired the gun.’

4. Conclusions

All the three rGyalrongic languages examined in this study manifest nominal and prefixal coding of generic human participants in various morphosyntactic environments. In rGyalrong, GHA-expression forms part of an intricate system of representing nominalization, subordination, grammatical relations, as well as person
marking by means of verbal prefixes. With the original prefixal morphology in serious decay, 29 deverbal nominals in Lavrung and Horpa no longer register the involvement of human participants, encoded through the contrastive prefixes \( k\text{-} \) and \( k\text{=} \) in rGyalrong. The Lavrung/Horpa morphological exponent of GHA-marking is reduced to a single uvular fricative prefix \( \chi\text{-} \), which bears formal and functional resemblance to the rGyalrong nominizing/impersonal prefix \( k\text{=} \). 30 Devoid of a nominizing function, the prefix \( \chi\text{-} \) still matches rGyalrong \( k\text{=} \) in the impersonalizing function for representing generic non-agentive human arguments in the Puxi Lavrung. On the other hand, morphological encoding of generic human arguments has largely gone out of use in Guanyinqiao Lavrung and Horpa. However, the extension of the rGyalrong impersonal prefix \( k\text{=} \) to a marker of non-agentive first person does find a striking analog in the similarly employed prefix \( \chi\text{-} \) in both dialects of Lavrung as well as Horpa.

As for the detransitivizing \( sv\text{-} \) and the even more archaic GHA exponent \( ga\text{-} \) in rGyalrong, no direct traces of them have been noted in the other rGyalrongic languages.

Further, the rise of the middle (anti-causative) marked by \( \chi\text{-} \) in Lavrung and Horpa can also be linked with an analogous rGyalrong construction in \( k\text{-} \) for depicting entities undergoing non-telic transitive processes (J. Sun & Shi 2002: 90-91):

(67) a. **Lavrung (Puxi)**
   
   γmʊ-gə  ld\(\text{kʰē} \)  I\(\text{=}\text{-kû-vû}
   fire-LOC  bread  CONT:INTR-MID-bake\( _{2} \)

b. **Lavrung (Gunayinqiao)**
   
   sc\(\text{lʰkʰē-gə} \)  jax\(\text{li} \)  k-\(\text{vu?-sə}
   fireplace-LOC  bread  MID-bake-MED

c. **Horpa**
   
   t\(\text{ʰkâ-noŋ} \)  ld\(\text{lʰkʰē} \)  və-k-\(\text{vû-s}i \)
   fireplace-inside  bread  CONT-MID-bake\( _{2} \)-MED
   ‘(Some) bread is baking in the fireplace.’

cf. d. **rGyalrong**
   
   t\(\text{ʰfke-næ̤} \)  q\(\text{jǐ} \) wi  k\(\text{e} \)-\(\text{po} \)  \(\text{we} \)\(\text{jo} \)
   fireplace-inside  bread  MID-bake  be.seen

There is good comparative evidence, therefore, that the detransitivizing, impersonalizing \( \chi\text{-} \) in Lavrung and Horpa stems from a conflation of two erstwhile prefixes \( k\text{-} \) and \( k\text{=} \)\( (<*k\text{=}g\text{a})\) contrasting in the feature \( [\pm \text{human}] \), such as we still

\[ \]

29 The typological shift to largely suffixing morphology in Lavrung and Horpa is best in evidence in their nominalizing morphology which has become entirely suffixal. For an insightful early revelation on the repercussions of the loss of prefixes elsewhere in these rGyalrongic languages, see Qu 1990: 38-39 (where Lavrung and Horpa are relegated as a ‘western dialect’ of rGyalrong).

30 The cognacy between \( k\text{=}k\text{-} \) in rGyalrong and \( \chi\text{-} \) in the other rGyalrongic languages receives powerful support by the fact that rGyalrong syllabic prefixes with guttural onsets frequently correspond to non-syllabic guttural consonants in Lavrung and Horpa, as can be seen in these cognate sets:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caodeng</th>
<th>Puxi Lavrung</th>
<th>Shangzhai Horpa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>k(\text{ā-tʃo} )</td>
<td>x-tʃō</td>
<td>x-tʃō</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q(\text{e-per} )</td>
<td>(\chi)-(\text{pə} )</td>
<td>(\gamma)-(\text{və} )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
find in modern rGyalrong. The impersonalizing application of the nominalizing prefix *kø- should count as further morphological evidence (see J. Sun 2000a, 2000b) pointing to uniquely shared ancestry between the three languages rGyalrong, Lavrung, and Horpa.

Comparisons farther afield may help us track the evolution of GHA-marking in this Tibeto-Burman subgroup. The rGyalrong prefix kø- is a conspicuous congener to the general nominalizer k₢- of highly comparable functions in the geographically and genetically faraway Angami language in Tibeto-Burman (Herring 1991)."This points to shared retention from an old Tibeto-Burman prefix for marking nominalization, which no doubt must also be the original function of kø- in rGyalrongic. The combination and subsequent fusion of kø- with the GHA prefix Ꞃa- produced a composite nominalizer kë- imbued with the semantic value [+human]. Over time, the paradigmatic opposition of the plain nominalizer kø- with the GHA-coding nominalizer Ꞃv- caused the former to take on the meaning [-human]. With the gradual decline of the GHA marker Ꞃa- in certain rGyalrongic members (e.g. Caodeng rGyalrong, and probably also Lavrung and Horpa), Ꞃv- and/or kø- eventually displaced Ꞃa- as the innovated prefixal exponent(s) of GHA in non-nominalized structures. In this innovated impersonalizing function these prefixes, pertaining now exclusively to humans, came to acquire a shifted semantic interpretation, namely volition. The anti-causative usage of ꐗ- in Lavrung and Horpa may plausibly be regarded as a further grammaticalization of a [-volition] impersonalizer (cf. kø- in rGyalrong) into a marker for defocusing human agency.

The integration of GHA-markers into their person systems is another point of special interest in the languages under investigation. In contrast to the French impersonal on which, given proper context, can be used with reference to all persons, the personal use of the rGyalrongic impersonalizers is reserved for the first person. Ebert (1997: 41) notes the replacement of first person patients by impersonal forms in Kiranti languages, Sgaw Karen, and Chukchi and attributes the phenomenon to a tendency for speakers to avoid coding themselves as undergoers. In view of the fact that representation by impersonalizers also extends to first person non-volitional actors (as in Lavrung and Horpa) and even agents (in rGyalrong), one may appeal rather to a general discourse-pragmatic strategy speakers use to keep a low profile and avoid self-reference (Siewierska 2004: 236-240)."The human versus non-human distinction is a hallmark of rGyalrong morphosyntax, as we demonstrated earlier in J. Sun & Shi 2002. By analyzing in detail the obligatory coding of generic human involvement in Lavrung, Horpa, as well as rGyalrong proper, the present paper underscores the prominence of humanness marking in rGyalrongic languages in general, which must reflect an archaic grammatical trait inherited from Proto-rGyalrongic.

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31 Cf. also the Tangkhul Naga nominalizer kø- ~ kβø- (Arokianathan 1987: 63-64).
32 The desire to downplay the self is particularly keen in direct verbal interactions with an addressee. This may explain the interchangeability of 1st kø- and 2nd tø- prefixes in the Caodeng rGyalrong 2>1 scenario marker complex ko- ~ tø- (< kø- ~ tø- plus the inverse prefix o>). This would exemplify ‘masking strategy (e)’ discussed in Siewierska 2004: 237-238.
Abbreviations

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>first person</th>
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References


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