Typology of Generic-Person Marking in Tshobdun Rgyalrong

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All languages have expressions that refer to the generic person (GP), or ‘people in general’. This paper investigates from a typological perspective GP-representation in Tshobdun Rgyalrong, a morphologically complex Sino-Tibetan language spoken in Sichuan. Tshobdun marks GP predominantly with cross-linguistically the least common GP-encoding device, namely dedicated verbal morphology evolving from erstwhile nominalizers. The integration of GP into the inflectional person category as a ‘fourth person’ is a manifestation of the remarkable prominence of humanness marking in Rgyalrong grammar.

Key words: Sino-Tibetan, Rgyalrong, morphosyntax, generic person, verbal person-marking

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1. Introduction

All languages make use of generic statements that depict the participation of the general body of humans, or a loosely defined subset thereof, in an event. In English, reference to the generic person (hereafter: GP) is by generic nouns (men, mankind, people), the generic pronoun one, and ordinary personal pronouns used impersonally, e.g. we, you, and (excluding speaker and addressee) they:\(^1\)

\[
\begin{align*}
(1) & \quad \text{a. } \text{It is amazing what PEOPLE can get used to.} \\
& \quad \text{b. } \text{ONE must free ONESELF from stereotyped opinions.} \\
& \quad \text{c. } \text{WE/YOU can never be too careful with chemicals.} \\
& \quad \text{d. } \text{THEY don’t allow handguns in Chicago.}
\end{align*}
\]

However, universal reference to ‘people in general’ commonly goes unstated in English non-finite constructions. The missing semantic argument is symbolized here with \(Ø\):

\[
\begin{align*}
(2) & \quad \text{a. } \text{Ø Seeing is Ø believing.} \\
& \quad \text{b. } \text{Ø To be or Ø not to be: that is the question.}
\end{align*}
\]

Another method of realizing GP is via verbal inflectional morphology. It will be the goal of this article to explore from a typological perspective this particular GP-marking strategy in Tshobdun Rgyalrong (hereafter Tshobdun), a morphologically complex Sino-Tibetan language of northwestern Sichuan.\(^2\)

An overview of Tshobdun morphosyntax (§1.1) and a survey of the cross-linguistically attested strategies for GP representation (§1.2) serve as our point of departure. Against this backdrop, §2 examines in detail how GP is realized in the target language, with a focus on encoding GP by verbal prefixal morphology. Special efforts are made to tease the non-nominalizing, GP-marking function apart from the various

\(^1\) The term ‘impersonal’ is open to a number of interpretations in linguistics: (a) zero-valency, as in \textit{It is hot here}; (b) non-canonically marked A/S, as in Middle English \textit{me thinketh} ‘it seems to me’; and (c) generalized human reference (Siewierska 2004:§5.5). Only the third sense of the term is intended in this article.

\(^2\) The name ‘Rgyalrong’ actually denotes several closely related but distinct languages (which in my earlier publications were called ‘dialects’): Situ (Eastern), Japhug (Northeastern), Tshobdun (Northwestern) and Showu (Western). The Tshobdun data under analysis here represent the speech of qve\(^\text{w}\)eri? Village in Tshobdun Township, Ma’erkang County, Aba Prefecture, Sichuan Province. See J. Sun (2003) for a brief description of Tshobdun Rgyalrong, and Jacques (to appear) for an overview of the Rgyalrong cluster of languages.
nominalizing uses of these prefixes. Following a typologically common tendency, GP-marking in Tshobdun is further integrated into the person system by allowing an extended first person reference. This is discussed and exemplified in §3. An excursus is made in §4 into comparative data in the Rgyalrong language group and beyond in order to elucidate the historical evolution of Tshobdun GP-markers from nominalizers. The concluding section sums up our findings and discusses the typological significance of inflectional GP-marking in Rgyalrong grammar.

1.1 Typological overview

Tshobdun has a highly complex grammar that is characterized by strong head-marking tendencies, agglutinative morphology with some degree of fusion, preference for prefixes over suffixes, and extensive stem alternation. The syntax is head-final with pragmatically determined variations. The major word classes are nouns, verbs, ideophones, and particles. Property words form a subclass of verbs. Nominal inflectional categories include number, case, and possession. Dependent case marking is not well-developed and subject to ellipsis when the absence of case markers does not cause ambiguity. Verbs undergo abundant derivational processes via prefixes that alter lexical categories or manipulate argument structure. With a few exceptions, verbs are rigidly sub-classified as either transitive or intransitive. Inflectional categories coded on the verb comprise person, direction (direct vs. inverse), orientation (topography-based spatial deixis), transitivity, tense-aspect, and evidentiality. Person-number marking is dictated by a hierarchical, empathy-based system. Non-finite verb forms abound in dependent clauses. Despite its (weakly) ergative nominal case marking, the language exhibits an accusatively aligned system of grammatical relations, with a S/A subject and a primary object (Dryer 1986). The internal syntax of relative and complement clauses exploits deverbal nominalization to a high degree. Several types of nominalized structures are distinguished, and they vary in degrees of deverbalization and nominalizing scope (lexical vs. clusal) (J. Sun 2012).

1.2 Typology of GP-marking strategies

A number of strategies are cross-linguistically utilized for GP realization. The generic person may simply be unstated (zero strategy), represented by lexical forms (lexical strategy), or instantiated by the verbal morphology (morphological strategy).
1.2.1 Zero strategy

GP can be implicit, in which case the meaning has to be recovered from context. This is the normal strategy used pervasively in many Sino-Tibetan languages (3), and in non-finite structures across Indo-European languages (4):

(3) a. Mandarin Chinese
\[ \emptyset \text{chǔlǐ} \ \text{huà xué wù} \ \emptyset \text{yào} \ \text{juéduì} \ \text{xīǎoxīn} \]
GP handle chemical GP must absolutely be.careful
‘One must be absolutely careful when one handles chemicals.’

b. Mawo Qiang (own fieldwork data)
\[ nəχʃə \ \emptyset \text{ma-ki-ni} \ .i \]
person-debt GP NEG-carry-SEQ be.rich
\[ \text{rgi-nə} \ \text{ma-ʒi-ni} \ \text{afī} \]
be.ill-NMLZ NEG-exist-SEQ be.happy
‘To be rich is not to carry debt; to be happy is not to have a sick family member [Qiang proverb].’

c. Dulong (HK Sün 1982:164)
\[ \emptyset \ \text{āŋbū} \ \text{lái-sā-ājā} \ \text{mā-tūcà} \]
GP rice plant-NMLZ-DET NEG-be.difficult
‘It is not hard to plant rice.’

(4) a. German
\[ \emptyset \text{Betreten des Rasens verboten.} \]
‘Keep off the grass.’

b. French
\[ \text{Il faut } \emptyset \text{le faire.} \]
‘It is necessary to do it.’

1.2.2 Lexical strategy

Generic person is very commonly expressed lexically by a generic noun or a generic or personal pronoun.

1.2.2.1 Nominal representation

The generic person is represented by a generic human noun usually meaning ‘person’ or ‘people’ (e.g. English people, Spanish la gente; el hombre, Chinese rén ‘person’), but not always.\(^3\) In some languages, the overt use of a generic human noun is avoided

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\(^3\) Manambu uses a compound composed of ‘man’ and ‘woman’ (Aikhenvald, personal communication in 2008).
except where the intended meaning is under contrastive focus. In the following Classical Chinese example, the generic human noun rén occurs in contrast with shuǐ ‘water’:

(5) **Classical Chinese** (The Works of Mencius 6.1)

\[
\text{réнь} \text{xìng-zhī} \text{shàn} \text{yě} \text{yóu} \text{shuǐ-zhī} \text{jiù} \text{xì} \text{yě}
\]

\[
\text{man} \text{nature-GEN} \text{be.good} \text{DM} \text{be.like} \text{water-GEN} \text{go down} \text{DM}
\]

‘Man’s nature is naturally good, just as water naturally flows downward.’

1.2.2.2 Pronominal representation

The generic person is represented by a generic pronoun (e.g. English *one*, French *on*, German *man*) or a personal pronoun used impersonally (e.g. English *we*, *you*, *they*). The preferred cross-linguistic choices are first and second person non-singular forms. The extended impersonal usage of personal pronouns constitutes a prevalent GP-marking strategy found in many language families. Further examples of such pronouns are the indefinite third-person pronoun *kee:* in Khmer, and the first-person inclusive pronoun *ee* in Jarawara:

(6) **Khmer** (Mon-Khmer: Southeast Asia; Haiman 2011:§1.6.3)

\[
\text{Kh:ng kaeut cungruk kee: khew:nj mian ando:ng teuk muaj}
\]

side east granary 3 see exist well water one

‘East of the granary, one could see a well.’

(7) **Jarawara** (Arawá; Brazil and Peru; Dixon 2004:77)

\[
\text{Ee} \quad \text{kaba-tee} \quad \text{awa}
\]

\[
\text{INSG.INCL} \quad \text{eat-HABITUAL} \quad \text{seems.MAS evidence}
\]

‘Does one eat it?’

1.2.3 Morphological strategy

GP is encoded morphologically, usually via verbal inflection. GP-marking is carried out either through existing morphological categories or specialized forms dedicated to this particular function.

1.2.3.1 Exploiting existing morphological categories

GP-marking is an extended function of morphological categories already operating in the grammar, typically of the reflexive or passive types, as in the Spanish reflexive, the Kham imperfective passive, and the Tariana passive of active intransitive:
(8) **Spanish** (Siewierska 1984:174)

\[ \text{Se vive bien en América} \]

`REFL live:PRS:3SG well in America`

‘One lives well in America.’

(9) **Kham** (Sino-Tibetan: west-central Nepal; Watters 2002:251)

\[ \text{gidd}ə\text{ syakəri ma-koi-si-i} \]

`vulture meat NEG-eat-DETRANS-IPFV`

‘One doesn’t eat vulture meat (lit. Vulture meat is not eaten).’

(10) **Tariana** (Arawak: northwest Amazonia; Aikhenvald 2003:261)

\[ \text{nha nawiki ma-\text{kana-wani-se-pidana}} \]

`they people NEG+go-PASS-CL:ABSTR-LOC-REM.P.REP`

‘It was a place where people do not go.’

### 1.2.3.2 Dedicated GP-marking morphology

Coding GP by specialized morphological material, this strategy is typologically least common and hence most interesting. The Finnish *impersonal inflection*, the Tariana *impersonal*, the Matses *antipassive*, and the Navajo *fourth person*, are illustrative:

(11) **Finnish** (Finno-Ugric: Northern Europe; Blevins 2003:487)

\[ \text{Suomessa ollaan niin totisia} \]

`Finland:INES be:IMPRS:PRES so serious:NOM:PL`

‘In Finland, we/they/people are so serious.’

(12) **Tariana** (Arawak: northwest Amazonia; Aikhenvald 2003:127)

\[ \text{hiku-nha pa-ni pa-inu pa-i\text{ňha-ka tʃaɾi}} \]

`be.like.this-PAUS IMPRS-do IMPRS-kill IMPRS-eat-REC.P.VIS man`

‘Men (in general) hunt and eat like this.’

(13) **Matses** (Panoan: Peruvian and Brazilian Amazon; Fleck 2006:559)

\[ \text{aid opa pe-an-e-k} \]

`that.one dog bite-ANTIP-NPAST-INDIC`

‘That dog bites (people, among other readings).’

(14) **Navajo** (Southern Athabaskan, southwestern United States; Willie 1991:119)

\[ \text{'}.abini=}\text{go hojitaal=}\text{go yá’át’ée} \text{h} \text{morning=}\text{while 4.sings=}\text{while 3.good} \]

‘It is good for one to sing in the morning.’
1.2.4 Interaction among multiple GP-marking strategies

The boundaries between various strategies for generic-person representation are often fuzzy, since generic nouns tend to develop into pronominal forms, and eventually into bound verbal affixes. The Yaqui object GP prefix yée-, stemming from the generic noun yo(r)éme ‘person’, supplies an example:

(15) **Yaqui** (Uto-Aztecan; Sonoma State, Mexico; Arizona; Dedrick & Casad 1999)

\[ mi\textit{si} \ y\textit{ée}-sú\textit{ke}\? \]

\[ \text{cat GP:OBJ-scratch} \]

‘A cat scratches people.’

Another striking example is found in Taiwanese Southern Min, where a phonologically reduced variant of the generic noun laŋ²⁴ ‘person’ fuses with a preceding agentive or patientive coverb, resulting in monosyllabic morpheme complexes; compare (16a) with (16b), and (16c) with (16d):

(16) **Taiwanese** (Southern Min; Sinitic; Taiwan)

a. \[ i\text{³³} \ e\text{²¹} \ ka\text{²¹} \ la\text{ŋ}\text{²¹} \ p\text{ʰa}\text{³¹} \]

3SG will COVERB:PAT people beat

‘He will beat people.’

b. \[ i\text{³³} \ e\text{²¹} \ ka\text{ŋ}\text{²¹} \ p\text{ʰa}\text{³¹} \]

3SG will COVERB:PAT:GP beat

‘He will beat people.’

c. \[ i\text{³³} \ e\text{²¹} \ ho\text{²¹} \ la\text{ŋ}\text{²¹} \ p\text{ʰa}\text{³¹} \]

3SG will COVERB:AGT people beat

‘He will be beaten by people.’

d. \[ i\text{³³} \ e\text{²¹} \ ho\text{ŋ}\text{²¹} \ p\text{ʰa}\text{³¹} \]

3SG will COVERB:AGT:GP beat

‘He will be beaten by people.’

Stacking of GP expressions is acceptable in some languages, as seen in the Tariana sentences (10), (12) and the Tshobdun Rgyalrong example (18) below.

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*4 An example of a generic noun that has so evolved is the French generic pronoun on, which is grammaticalized from the generic noun homme ‘human being; person’ (reflecting the accusative singular form hominem of Latin homo). I thank one of the reviewers for pointing this out to me.*
When more than one strategy of GP-marking occurs in a single language, the strategies often display functional differentiation. For example, Chinese allows nominal and zero realizations of GP in S/A function, but requires the GP in O function to be instantiated by the generic noun \( r\text{èn} \) ‘person, people’:

(17) **Mandarin Chinese**

\[
\text{zhë-zhǐ gòu huì yào *(rèn)}
\]

this-CL dog will bite people

‘This dog bites people.’

2. GP expression in Tshobdun

2.1 Nominal GP representation

The word for ‘person, human’ \( kəⁿbjo? \) occurs in generic statements referring to mankind as opposed to deities or animals, as in:

(18) \( kəⁿbjo? \) \( ká-set \) \( tʃ'oz? \) \( fte? \)

people GP-die be.the.rule be:EMPH

‘All men die.’

(19) \( cʰəɣja?=kə \) \( kəmpwm \) \( kəⁿbjo? \) \( tʃ'e? \)

bull=ERG often people gore\(_3\)

‘A bull often gores people.’

Consider (20) in contrast with (21):

(20) \( kəⁿbjo? \) \( kəⁿ-džëtʰi=nə? \) \( re? \) \( fte? \)

people GP-dine=SUB be.necessary be:EMPH

zə? \( naru=nə? \) \( re? \) \( fte? \)

bovine graze=SUB be.necessary be:EMPH

‘Humans must eat; bovines must graze (Proverb).’

(21) \( (?kəⁿbjo?) \) \( kəⁿ-džëtʰi=tsə \) \( tʰ=ɾe \) \( fte? \)

people GP-dine=TOP:EMPH CONT:LTR-be.necessary be:EMPH

\( qʰónə \) \( stʰre \) \( fəⁿ-džëqʰónə=kə \)

SEQ:EMPH first AND-dine-1PL=DM

‘People must eat, so let’s go eat first.’

Unlike (20), an objective statement about people and bovines in general, (21)
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 (19) above would be uttered as an objective, non-committal statement, whereas if the speaker wishes to make a generalized assertion based on subjective personal experience, a verb form inflected for GP person (see further on) occurs instead:

(22) koʔ ɛbɒyjaʔ kumum ku-oy-tʃuʔ.
   this bull often GP-INV-gore
   ‘This bull often goes 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.

2.2 Morphological GP representation

This is the predominant strategy for expressing the generic person in Tshobdun Rgyalrong. Involvement of generic human participants must be registered on the verb with the derivational prefix kə-, and the inflectional prefixes kə-, ku- and sw-.

2.2.1 The antipassive sw-

Unlike English or French, in which transitivity can be reduced by a ‘patientless antipassive’ strategy (Humphreys 1999, Dixon & Aikhenvald 2000:10) that simply suppresses the object (e.g. Have you eaten? He drinks all day; Ce chien, il mord), in Tshobdun covert generic patients must be marked on the verb with derivational antipassive morphology as part of the valency-decreasing derivations in the language, much as the Matses detransitivizing strategy shown in (13) above. In the example below, the main-clause verb zənəne ‘stop’ is complemented by an infinitive intransitive verb carrying an antipassive prefix sw- which signals demoted [+HUMAN] generic patients:

The GP-marking antipassive sw- prefix is to be kept distinct from the homophonous oblique participant nominalizing (e.g. sw-"dzətɨi ‘dining place’ < "dzətɨi ‘dine’), verb (e.g. sw-ʃəxe ‘happily’ < ʃe ‘be happy’) as well as propensity stative (e.g. sw-re ‘be laughable, amusing’ < re ‘laugh’) uses of sw-. See, however, Jacques’ (2014) view that the Rgyalrong antipassive prefixes are grammaticalized out of formally identical denominal prefixes.

6 For a systematic treatment of valency decreasing derivations in Tshobdun, see J. Sun (to appear:§34.3.1.2).
(23) \textit{kwe-\text{-nëkəj}} \textit{bi\-tə-\text{-znənə}}
\textit{INF-\text{-ANTIP}}\text{-bully} \textit{IRR:IMP-2-stop}_{3}
‘Stop bullying people!’

In a related usage, the prefix \textit{se\-} transforms a transitive action verb into a stative one meaning ‘have a propensity for V-ing (people)’. Likewise, the unexpressed object of this derived intransitive verb must be [+HUMAN]. The following sentence exemplifies one such stative propensity verb \textit{se\-\text{	ext{-χsu}} ‘be prone to gore or bite (people)’ derived from \textit{\text{	ext{-χsu ‘gore; bite (as of pigs)}}}:

(24) \textit{tə\-n\text{-dzəj}} \textit{\"dənə? ko? pa se\text{	ext{-χsu}}}
\textit{IMP-be.careful for this pig be.prone.to.bite(people)}
‘Be careful, this pig bites people.’

2.2.2 Generic-person inflection

The verbal prefixes \textit{kə-, kə-, and se-} are among the most versatile grammatical morphemes in the language, serving a wide range of uses. Their core morphosyntactic function is to derive various types of verbal nominalizations. In Tshobdun, these prefixes have developed a disparate \textit{GP-marking function}. This non-nominalizing function must be carefully teased apart from the various nominalizing uses of these prefixes.

2.2.2.1 Nominalizing function of prefixes \textit{kə-, kə-, se-}

Tshobdun makes extensive use of \textit{kə-, kə-, and se-} to form distinct clausal nominalization types which function as deverbal nominals and various subordinate clauses. The required nominalizers and syntactic functions of these nominalization types are summarized in the table below.\footnote{Semantically defined classes of complement-taking predicates play an important role in determining the selection of appropriate complementation structures (J. Sun 2012).}
Table 1: Tshobdun nominalization types, functions, and selected prefixes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NOMINALIZATION TYPE</th>
<th>SYNTACTIC FUNCTION</th>
<th>VERBAL PREFIX</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant nominalization</td>
<td>Deverbal nominals referring to arguments of source verbs</td>
<td>(subject) $k\alpha$- (object) $kv$- (oblique) $sv$-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerund (action/state) nominalization</td>
<td>Citation form of verbs; Verbal complement clauses</td>
<td>$[-\text{HUMAN}]$ $k\alpha$- $[+\text{HUMAN}]$ $kv$-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infinitival nominalization</td>
<td>Converbs; Nominal complement clauses; Verbal complement clauses</td>
<td>$kv$-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purposive (supine) nominalization</td>
<td>Adverbial purposive clauses</td>
<td>$k\alpha$-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finite nominalization</td>
<td>Verbal complement clauses</td>
<td>$k\alpha$-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 shows that the distribution of nominalizers is determined by nominalization types, grammatical relations, as well as semantic factors. It is important to note that, as pure nominalizers these prefixes are accessible to clauses with both $[-\text{HUMAN}]$ and $[+\text{HUMAN}]$ arguments, seen in the following examples of the various nominalization types tabulated above:

(25) **Participant nominalization**

a. $[+\text{HUMAN}]$
   
   $k\alpha-n"giʔ 'sick person; patient' (< n"giʔ 'be ill')
   
   $kv-n"dze 'food' (< n"dze 'eat')
   
   $sv-n"dzɛ̃ti 'restaurant' (< n"dzɛ̃ti 'dine')

b. $[-\text{HUMAN}]$
   
   $k\alpha-cʰiʔ 'sweets (lit. sweet one)' (< cʰiʔ 'be sweet')
   
   $sv-rɛlɔ 'place for nesting' (< rɛlɔ 'use as nest')

(26) **Gerund (action/state) nominalization**

a. $[+\text{HUMAN}; +\text{DYNAMIC}]$
   
   $kv-nvr 'become afraid' (< nvr 'be afraid')
   
   $kv-n"gu 'becoming poor' (< n"gu 'be poor')

b. $[+\text{HUMAN}; -\text{DYNAMIC}]$
   
   $k\alpha-n"gu 'being poor' (< n"gu 'be poor')

c. $[-\text{HUMAN}]$
   
   $k\alpha-nəjε 'coming into estrus (as of female bovines)' (< nəjε 'come into estrus')
   
   $k\alpha-vər 'being moldy' (< vər 'be moldy')
(27) **Infinitival nominalization: converbs**

a. [+HUMAN]

\[ tʃiə \ kə-pə \ ə \ -\ vəzər \ jə-tə-əmdaʔə? \ = ə ə \ \]

anything at.all NEG-NMLZ:INF-say 3SG:POSS-side AND-PFV-sit2=MED

‘Not saying anything, (he) went over and sat down by his side (Wild Man Saved a Pilgrim, 9).’

b. [–HUMAN]

\[ kəsə \ ə \ kə-pə \ ə \ -\ gərʔə? \ nəəsəfət \]

leopard at.all NEG-NMLZ:INF-roar like.that

\[ kətʃiə-pə \ jə-rəʔə? \ nə-neʔə? \]

small.child-direction NMLZ:INF-run PFV:WEST-come2

‘Not uttering a roar at all, the leopard came running toward the small child.’

(28) **Infinitival nominalization: nominal complements**

a. [+HUMAN]

\[ təhəndəʔə? \ "gə-kə-fə \ nə-qə \ ə \ -\ to \]

Chengdu DOWN-NMLZ:INF-go 2S:POSS-free.time Q-exist

‘Do you have time to go to Chengdu?’

b. [–HUMAN]

\[ pyətʃi \ tə-kə-smət=naʔə? \ o-əvənəzəm \]

bird PFV-NMLZ:SBJ-be.wounded2=DET 3SG:POSS-wing

\[ kə-ʃiəpə \ o-jə-ər \ nə-neʔə? \ = ə ə \]

NMLZ:INF-flap 3SG:POSS-strength-even PFV-not.exist2=MED

‘The wounded bird didn’t even have the strength to flap its wings.’

(29) **Infinitival nominalization: verbal complements**

a. [+HUMAN]

\[ kə-rəje \ tə-tə-je.ə \ də\]

NMLZ:INF-like PFV-1>2-begin2-2DL

‘I have begun to like you two.’

b. [–HUMAN]

\[ kəməqə-nəʔə? \ təkəʃənə \ o-ənəʔə? \ kə.ə \ də \ tə-je \]

afterwards-ADV opium 3SG:POSS-yen NMLZ:INF-cling PFV:TR-begin2

‘Afterwards, a yen for opium began to take hold (How Opium Came to Our Land, 20).’
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(30) **Purposive nominalization**
a. [+HUMAN]
\[v-kə-qʰro\]  \[vj-v-tw-wi\]
‘Come and meet me!’
b. [–HUMAN]
\[qʰo\]  \[ʃʰor\]  \[jvrm\]
SEQ  midnight  about
\[qye\]  \[kəta\]  \[bʰe\dʒi\]  \[kaʰdze\]  \[jv-weʔ=cə\]
tiger  really  horse.skin  NMLZ:PURP-eat  PFV-come2=MED
‘And, at around midnight, the tiger really came to eat the horse’s skin
(The Rangdzem Family Killed a Tiger, 12).’

(31) **Finite nominalization**
a. [+HUMAN]
\[koʔ\]  \[təga\]  \[paʃkʰ-on\]  \[mu-ka-tʰgu=nəʔ\]  \[səɾə=cə\]
this  child  now-even  NEG-NMLZ-go.to.bed=DET  be.funny=MED
‘It is funny that this child hasn’t gone to bed even now.’
b. [–HUMAN]
\[qʰertsu\]  \[tʰ-e-zjot=ntfɔn\]  \[prɛʔ\]  \[mu-ka-zgœm=nəʔ\]  \[mu-tʃʰozʔ\]
winter  TEL-arrive=even  bear  NEG-NMLZ-hibernate=SUB  NEG-be.the.rule
‘It is unexpected for bears not to go into hibernation when winter arrives.’

2.2.2.2 Person-marking function of prefixes \(kə\), \(k\), \(s\)

In an extended, hitherto under-explored *impersonalizing* usage, the prefixes \(k\), \(k\), and \(s\)- serve a person-marking rather than nominalizing function, introducing a human argument to a clause expressing a generic statement. Unlike in their various nominalizing uses seen in the previous section, the occurrence of the impersonalizers \(k\), \(k\), and \(s\)- is restricted to sentences predicking states and activities of *generic human subjects*. In the following example, impersonal meaning is conveyed by \(k\)- in (32a); without this prefix, the conditional clause would have a non-generic, referential reading (32b):

(32) a. \(təma=pʰa\)  \(kv-namtsʰŋayʔ=nəʔ\)
woman=place  GP-visit.girl.at.night=SUB
\[zde\]  \[təɾrm=ntfʰon\]  \[o-zəɾvʔ\]  \[məɾdʒəɾ\]  \[reʔ\]
other person=also  3SG:POSS-heart  IRR-go  be.necessary
‘When one visits a girl at night, the other person (i.e. the girl) has to be willing too.’
b. ˈtome=ɐ  nəmtə Whaleɪʔʔ=nəʔ
   woman=place  visit.girl.at.night=SUB
   zde  tərmə=ntə’on  o-ʒəʔ  əvəʔ  reʔ?
   other.person=also  3SG:POSS-heart  IRR-go  be.necessary
   ‘When he visits a girl at night, the other person (i.e. the girl) has to be willing too.’

The following examples illustrate the contrast between the impersonalizers kə- and kə-:

(33)  naʔ=nəʔ  enə-kə/*kə-nkulu=nəʔ?
   forest=inside  IRR-GP-be.lost=SUB
   stʰər=nəʔ  ne-ku>*kə-ne’goz’gez”ge  tʃəʔ?
   first=DET  IMP-GP-call:RDPL  be.the.rule
   ‘If one gets lost in the forest, one should first call repeatedly for help.’

(34)  koʔ  tvəʔaʔ  kə-lden  enə-kə̍-tʔi=nəʔ?
   this.liquor  NMLZ-be.much  IRR-GP-drink=SUB
   flə  kə-ldəʔ  fləʔ?
   immediately  GP-be.drunk  be:EMPH
   ‘If one drinks too much of this liquor, one quickly gets drunk.’

It is clear from the preceding examples that the opposition between these prefixes is semantically based: kə- is associated with events that involve sentient, volitional human S/A subjects (‘visit (a girl) at night’, ‘call’, ‘drink’) whereas kə- is associated with events that do not (‘lose one’s way’, ‘be drunk’). The impersonal prefixes kə- and kə-, therefore, represent respectively volitional and non-volitional generic human subjects.

The third GP-marking prefix sə- occurs with copular verbs, for example:

(35)  cʰəʔ?  kə̍*-gu=cə  nə-ku̍-fle
   formerly  NMLZ:SBJ-be.poor=INDF  IPFV:PST-GP-be2:EMPH
   ‘I (lit. ‘one’) used to be a poor man.’

Solid syntactic evidence confirms that in this particular use the three prefixes are true inflectional person markers and, despite the formal identity, are by no means nominalizers. First, these prefixes cannot appear if the clause already contains an overt referential subject, as in (36) below. Contrast this example with properly nominalized clauses such as (37), where the true nominalizer kə- co-occurs freely with the clausal subject kəʔi=nt.

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8 Verbal morphology also provides an important clue: certain verbal inflectional categories are neutralized in a true nominalized clause. Notice the obligatory absence of person-number marking in example (37).
(36)  krēfi=ni  te-(*ka-)n̥ giʔ^"dz̥=n̥?
Krashi=DL  TEL-(*GP-)be.ill-3DL=SUB
smun^kʰaŋ  νʒv-tw-tsom?
hospital  IRR-2-take.thither
‘If Trashi and the other person become ill, take them to the hospital.’

(37)  krēfi=ni  tēkʰu  te-ka-skiʔ^"dz̥  mw-vde
Krashi=DL  cigarette  TEL-NMLZ-smoke-*3DL  NEG-be.good
‘It is not good for Krashi and the other person to smoke.’

Second, the nominalizing prefixes kv- and kə- are accessible to both [–HUMAN] and [+HUMAN] subjects, as demonstrated in §2.2.2.1. However, as personal markers these prefixes are disallowed in generic clauses with non-human subjects:

(38)  qaperʔ=kə  zə?  "ge-(*kv-)m̥v=n̥?
dhole=ERG  bovine  TEL-catch3=SUB
stʰre  Ə-fqor  kvʰ-dze  te-(*kv-)m̥vʔ  ɣo?
first  3SG:POSS-rear.end  INF-eat  TEL-begin  be
‘When dholes catch a bovine, they begin eating it from the rear end.’

(39)  tərmökʰe  zʰdimʔ  ne-(*kv-/*ka-)ŋeʔʔ?=n̥?
dusk  cloud  TEL-be.yellow=SUB
naofsiɹsi  tóm额度  tʃʰozʔ?
next.day  rain  release  be.the.rule
‘When clouds become yellow at dusk, it will rain the following day.’

The following examples are particularly revealing, where kv- occurs in the clauses with a human subject (‘one’), but is absent in the clauses with non-human subjects (‘death’, ‘hog badger’):

(40)  tə-koʔ=ta  scəzdayʔ?  "ge-(*kv-/*ka-)b̥vʔ?=scə̄nə?
GP:POSS-head=top  death  TEL-fall=SUB:EMPH
tə-rfe  te-kv-səsəʔʔ?  reʔ?
GP:POSS-efforts  TEL-GP-tighten  be.necessary
‘When deaths befall (one’s family members), one must toughen up.’

(41)  γvez  kv-sù^dze  vnv-(*kv-/*ka-)c^v=n̥?
hog.badger  INF-bite.(people)  IRR-be.able=SUB
*ge-ku-m̥vʔ=mtʃʰon  mw-twʔ  tʃʰozʔ?
TEL-GP-kill=even  NEG-let.go3  be.the.rule
‘If (a hog badger) manages to bite people, it does not let go even after one has killed it (How to Kill Badgers in Our Country, 20).’
The status of the prefixes in question as inflectional person markers receives further corroboration in their interaction with verbal inverse marking, one of the hallmarks of the empathy hierarchy in Rgyalrong grammar (Ebert 1987, J. Sun & Shi 2002:§2.3). Since they index an arbitrary human argument, inverse marking is required in sentences describing inverse situations, for instance in this sentence about poisonous mushrooms causing people to become ill or die:9

(42) \[\text{tějmoj} \quad o-təy? \quad kə-to? \quad te-kv-"dze=nə?\]
mushroom 3SG:POSS-poison NMLZ:SBJ-exist TEL-GP-eat=SUB
\[kə-so\text{ŋ}^\text{"}gi? \quad m̥ikats\text{št}e \quad enu-tu=nə? \quad ko-ntf\text{e} \quad tf\text{ŋ}z?\]
GP:INV-cause.to.be.ill not.only IRRT-be.serious=SUB GP:INV-kill be.the.rule
‘If one eats poisonous mushrooms, one is made ill or is even killed if it is serious.’

The generic-person markers *kə-, kə-, and sə- comprise a paradigm with the other inflectional person markers of the language, occupying the same morpheme slot as the other prefixal person indexes. As markers of what is effectively ‘the fourth person’, they always combine with a distinct verb stem (STEM1 or verb base), and even boast a unique, corresponding nominal possessive form *tə- seen earlier in example (40), repeated below as (43):10

(43) \[\text{tə-koʔ=ta} \quad scəzədəy? \quad "\text{ge-"buv?=scənəʔ}\]
GP:POSS-head=top death TEL-fall=SUB:EMPH
\[tə-rf\text{e} \quad te-kv-sesəy? \quad reʔ?\]
GP:POSS-efforts TEL-GP-tighten be.necessary
‘When death befalls (one’s family members), one must toughen up.’

The following table of (singular) personal pronouns, all consisting of possessed forms of *-jiʔ ‘self’, bears witness to the integration of the generic nominal possessive prefix

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9 The *GN prefix *ko- here is a fusion of the *GN prefix *kv-/*kə- and the inverse prefix *o(ŋ)-.

10 It is useful to contrast the Rgyalrong ‘fourth person’ (i.e. generic person) with what is called ‘fourth person’ in Athabaskan languages. In Navajo, for example, ‘fourth person’ forms, as in Rgyalrong, constitute a paradigm with the other person forms, take the form of verbal prefixes, and serve predominantly to denote ‘people in general’. However, Navajo fourth person forms also have other distinct functions not found in Rgyalrong, such as marking disjoint reference across clauses, referring deictically to a third person in her/his presence (required by politeness etiquette in Navajo society), and focusing on the reported events under sentence focus (Willie 1991:§4).
Typology of Generic-Person Marking in Tshobdun Rgyalrong

Table 2: Tshobdun system of singular personal pronouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>GP-Prefix</th>
<th>Pronoun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>tə-</td>
<td>‘I’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>mə-</td>
<td>‘you [SG]’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>o-</td>
<td>‘he/she’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th (generic)</td>
<td>tə-</td>
<td>‘one’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. First-person reading of GP-marking prefixes

Generic-person verb forms sometimes acquire a referential reading, replacing first-person non-singular forms in such languages as French and Kiranti (Siewierska 2004:211, Ebert 1994:28-29). In the following example from Limbu (Eastern Kiranti, Tibeto-Burman family), the word yapmi ‘man, person, someone else’ is used as a pronominal, representing a 1st-person plural exclusive argument (Michailovsky 2001:148):

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

\[ \text{anige nūrik memettige-աչ ciṭṭhī yapmi mehakte} \]

1PL:EXCL well do:3PL>1PL:EXCL-and letter 1PL:EXCL:PAT send:3PL

‘They treated us well and they sent us letters.’

Likewise, the generic subject pronoun on in French is often used in place of a first-person plural (45a) and a second-person plural (45b):

(45) **French** (example courtesy of Elizabeth Zeitoun)

a. *Viens,* on va mang-er dehors!

\[ \text{come:IMP:2SG one go:IMP:2SG eat-INF out} \]

‘Come! Let’s go out to eat!’

b. *Alors les enfants, que veut-on faire?*

\[ \text{OK DEF:PL children what want:PRS:3SG-one do:INF} \]

‘OK, children, what do you want to do?’

In Tshobdun, a referential interpretation is also available to structures inflected for the generic person. In the following sentence, the verb form showing the GP-prefix ke- actually refers to the speaker himself:

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11 This is also true of the other Rgyalrong languages. I thank one of the anonymous referees for suggesting inclusion of the personal-pronoun paradigm here.
In Tshobdun, therefore, transferred reference of the generic person characteristically
denotes the first person, preferably the speaker.\footnote{The plural reading is allowed, given proper context. Incidentally, Lyons (1999:186; fn.9) reports a restricted usage in English where some speakers use the generic pronoun one to indicate the speaker: They told me about it yesterday; well, what could one say, one was rather embarrassed.} For example:

\begin{verbatim}
(47) a. ko? télo ma-je-tw-tsom? káde ké-(*)ká-)t\textsuperscript{i} re?
       this milk NEG-IMP-2-take.thither in.a.while GP-drink be.necessary
       ‘Don’t take this milk away, for I (lit. one) will drink it later.’

b. kádeno? ka-l*ku-mtser ta?
       in.a.while GP-be.hungry be.certain
       ‘I (lit. one) will certainly get hungry in a while.’

c. to-jì?-ntf\textsuperscript{on} ta-r̃ỹñi? t\textsuperscript{on}ntf\textsuperscript{a}?
       GP:POSS-self=also GP:POSS-learning of.sorts
       k\textsuperscript{a}-to=d=c\textsuperscript{a} sv-ŋo? fon\textsuperscript{o}=ntf\textsuperscript{on}
       NMLZ:SBJ-exist=INDF GP-be but=also
       mts\textsuperscript{k}ôt ta-k\textsuperscript{v}ede je=c\textsuperscript{a}
       be.much GP:POSS-inspiraron go=MED
       ‘As a person of some learning, one (i.e. I) still draws inspiration from it.’
\end{verbatim}

In the first-person referential usage, the three prefixes are distributed in the same way as
in their GP-marking function, but some fluidity of usage has been noted. For instance,
the [–VOLITIONAL] prefix k\textsuperscript{a}- is also attested to co-occur with volitional predicates:

\begin{verbatim}
(48) a. jos\textsuperscript{ı}d tomde ku-lut ta?
       today gun GP-shoot be.certain
       ‘I will certainly do some shooting today (I plan to do it).’

b. jos\textsuperscript{ı}d tomde ka-lut ta?
       today gun GP-shoot be.certain
       ‘I will certainly do some shooting today (e.g. at a training range).’
\end{verbatim}
Sentence (48b) would be appropriately uttered for instance by a soldier who anticipates doing shooting practice in his daily training schedule. Here, the non-volitional ko- conveys the meaning that in the predicated event the speaker acts without volition, only passively in compliance with arrangements made by others.

4. Diachrony of Tshobdun inflectional GP-markers

As discussed, generic person realization in Tshobdun is chiefly achieved via prefixal verbal morphology, as part of a formally intertwined system of argument deployment, nominalization, and person marking.

Comparative data from other Rgyalrong languages and other Sino-Tibetan languages may shed light on the evolution of inflectional GP-marking in Tshobdun. The primary nominalizing prefix ko- in Tshobdun (and in other Rgyalrong languages) is a conspicuous congener to the general nominalizer of highly comparable functions attested in the geographically distant Mizo-Kuki-Chin, Naga, and Kiranti languages (Konnerth 2009, 2012); e.g. Lamgang kV- (Thounaojam & Chelliah 2007:48, 97-99), Tangkhul ko-/kʰo- (Arokianathan 1987:63-64), Belhare ka- (Bickel 2003:558). This may point to shared retention from an old Sino-Tibetan prefix for marking nominalization, which must also be the original function of ko- in Rgyalrong. Although the Tshobdun [+HUMAN] gerund nominalizer and [+VOLITIONAL] GP-marker ko- is synchronically unanalyzable, comparison with Situ Rgyalrong suggests that ko- came from the coalescence of the nominalizer ko- and an earlier GP-marker *ŋa- still surviving in Situ as an independent morpheme with this function.13 In the Situ examples below, ŋa- occurs as a GP-marker in non-nominalized (49a) and nominalized (49b) contexts:

(49) Situ Rgyalrong
a. nə-ŋá-ʃi-s=ti lamę-kə rgowé ka-səpā rə PFV-GP-die-PST=SUB lama-ERG sutra NMLZ:GP-cause.to.do be.necessary
When one dies, it is necessary to send for lamas to chant sutras.’

Data representing the Lcogrtse (卓克基) variety of Situ Rgyalrong are from Wei (2003:47-49). Transcriptions and glossing are slightly modified. Level and falling tones are marked respectively by ́ and ̀. In Lcogrtse, the GP-marker *ŋa- is homophonous to the word for ‘I’, the agentless passive (Jacques 2012:§4.1, J. Sun to appear:§3.1.2.1), and the lexicalized stem augment. The stem-augmenting *ŋa- occurring as part of the stem in certain intransitives (e.g. Lcogrtse ko-ŋa-stō, Tshobdun ko-v-sto? ‘to be straight’) is of unclear function, but may once have comprised a paradigm with other augment such as ma- (e.g. Lcogrtse ko-ma-rtsāp, Tshobdun ko-mə-rtsev ‘to be spicy’).
b. majār tazé  kə-ŋa-skā=ti  kām  wa-štěányiŋ  to-ŋi̞-s
yesterday food NMLZ-GP-cook=SUB door 3SG:POSS-bell PFV-speak-PST
‘As one was preparing food yesterday, the doorbell rang.’

The comparative data from Situ Rgyalrong are extremely illuminating. First, the nominalizer kə- and the GP-marker ŋa- may occur in a composite, coalesced form kə-ŋa- even in this conservative Rgyalrong language, as seen in (49a). Second, clausal nominalization may be optional in certain constructions, the case in point being temporal adverbial clauses in Situ, cf. (49a) vs. (49b).14 The optionality of nominalization, coupled with the tendency for GP-marking to fuse into the nominalizer kə-, may likewise have led to the creation of a composite nominalizer kə-ŋa- in other Rgyalrong languages imbued with the semantic value [+HUMAN]. With the gradual decline of the GP marker ŋa- in Rgyalrong, kə- eventually displaced ŋa- as the inflectional exponent of GP in non-nominalized structures. In Tshobdun Rgyalrong at least, the nominalizers kə- and sw- also developed a GP-marking function on analogy with the nominalizer kə-.15 Since in this innovated function the three prefixes kə-, kũ-, and sw- uniformly refer to generic human arguments, they became further differentiated in meaning and function, resulting in the distribution patterns described above.

5. Conclusions

The examination of generic-person representation in Tshobdun undertaken in this study reveals that the language selects a relatively uncommon cross-linguistic strategy—dedicated morphology—as its primary GP-encoding device. Nominal representation of GP is sparingly used, and pronominal or zero encoding does not occur at all.

The specialized verbal prefixes that Tshobdun employs for GP realization include the derivational prefix sw-, which represents demoted generic human objects, and the inflectional person-marking prefixes kə-, kũ-, and sw-, which index human arguments in generic sentences. Comparative evidence from other Rgyalrong languages suggests that none of these prefixes is an archaic form devoted to this function; rather, they all stem from, and still co-exist with, homophonous nominalizers in the language.

14 Nominalization is also optional in certain types of complement clauses in Tshobdun, see J. Sun (2012:§3).

15 A highly distinct generic-marking system is found in Japhug Rgyalrong. In this language, the distribution of the two generic prefixes wy- (homophonous to the inverse prefix) and ku- (cognate to Tshobdun kə-) displays an ergative pattern: A: wy- ↔ S/P: kũ-. Unlike in Tshobdun, moreover, Japhug inverse marking cannot co-occur with the prefix kũ- in inverse scenarios involving a generic-P (Jacques 2010:138).
The co-existence of verbal generic and inverse marking in Tshobdun is typologically noteworthy, and the presence of the inverse prefix o- in certain scenarios involving a generic argument in P role is probably unique.\footnote{I am grateful to one of the reviewers who supplied the relevant typological observations, especially as regards comparable facts from certain Amerindian languages.}

The integration of GP-markers into their person systems is another point of special interest. In contrast to the French impersonal on which, given proper context, can be used with reference to all persons, the personal use of the Tshobdun GP-markers 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 agentive subjects in Rgyalrong, one would appeal rather to a general discourse-pragmatic strategy speakers use to keep a low profile and avoid self-reference (Siewierska 2004:236-240).\footnote{The desire to downplay the self is particularly keen in direct verbal interactions with an addressee. This may explain the interchangeability of 1st ko- and 2nd to- prefixes in the Tshobdun 2>1 scenario marker complex ko- ~ to- (< ko- ~ ta- plus the inverse prefix o-). This would also exemplify ‘masking strategy (e)’ discussed in Siewierska (2004:237-238).}

The human versus non-human distinction permeates Rgyalrong grammar (J. Sun & Shí 2002). The salience of this distinction is manifested, among other things, by inflectional verbal morphology representing arbitrary human arguments as the ‘fourth person’. The findings of this study further underscore the uncommon prominence of humanness marking in this fascinating Sino-Tibetan language.
References


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人類語言都有「泛指人稱」，用以寬範圍引指「人們」。草登嘉戎語是四川境內一種形態複雜的漢藏語。本文從類型學的角度探討草登話泛指人稱，發現本語主要採用源自名物化成分之動詞形態標記泛指人稱，屬於較罕見之跨語言類型。此類形態標記已進一步融入人稱體系，成為動詞「第四人稱」，顯示嘉戎語形態句法充分反映「屬人」語意之醒目特徵。

關鍵詞：漢藏語系，嘉戎語，形態句法，泛指人稱，動詞人稱範疇