Patterns of relativization in Austronesian and Tibetan

Michael Yoshitaka Erlewine (mitcho)

mitcho@nus.edu.sg

Goethe University Frankfurt

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NUS
National University of Singapore

Introduction

Today I discuss the grammars of “Philippine-type” Austronesian languages — illustrated here with Tagalog — and Tibetan and highlight one striking similarity (at least on the surface):

- Both languages/groups use **verbal affixes to mark the choice of relative clause pivot**.

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(1) **Agent and theme relatives in Tagalog:**

a. bata=ng [**b<um>ili** ng tela]
child=LK <PRF.AV>buy GEN cloth

‘child who bought cloth’

b. tela=ng [**b<in>ili-Ø** ng bata]
cloth=LK <PRF>buy-PV GEN child

‘cloth that the child bought’

Introduction

(2) **Agent and theme relatives in Tibetan:**

a. [deb **'bri-mkhan**] mi
book write-MKHAN person

'person(s) who wrote/writes book(s)'

b. [pad.ma-s **'bri-pa**]-'i dep
Pema-ERG write-PA-GEN book

'book(s) that Pema wrote'

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Each language/group is known for having a rich inventory of such affixes:

(3) **Verbal morphology on relativized verbs, by choice of pivot:**

a. Tagalog: (perfective)

<um>	agents
-an	locatives/goals
i-	instruments/ben.
-∅	themes

a. Tibetan: (perfective)

-mkhan མཁན་	agents
-sa ས་	locatives/goals
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Today

These patterns continue to exhibit striking parallels when we consider the behavior of *long-distance relativization*, previously undescribed in Tibetan.

- Such data challenge the analysis of Tibetan relativization as built exclusively on nominalizations (DeLancey 1999, 2002, Noonan 2008).
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Roadmap

§2 Relativization in Philippine-type languages

§3 Relativization in Tibetan

§4 Synthesis and discussion

§2 Philippine-type languages

Austronesian voice systems

The morphological alternation observed in Tagalog relative clauses above reflects a more general alternation between different clause types:

(4) **Tagalog voice alternation:**

a. Actor Voice (AV):

B**<um>**ili **ang bata** ng tela sa palengke para sa nanay.
<PRF.AV>buy ANG child GEN cloth DAT market for DAT mother
'**The child** bought cloth at the market for mother.'

b. Patient Voice (PV):

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d. Benefactive/Instrumental Voice (BV/IV):

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- Every verb has one of these "voice" markers, *not just in relative clauses*.
  - The choice of voice marker correlates with the choice of ***ang*-marked argument** (4), which I call the **"subject"** today.

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Clause-embedding verbs

Clause-embedding verbs such as ‘say’ also participate in voice alternations.

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a. **Nag**-sabi ang kalabaw [na masarap ang bulaklak].
PRF.AV-say ANG water.buffalo that delicious ANG flower
‘The water buffalo said [that the flower is delicious].’

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Now consider relativization over an embedded clause argument — *"long-distance" relativization*:

(6) **Long-distance (LD) relativization of an embedded goal:**

kalabaw [na ...*said the teacher*
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[na bi-bigy-**an** ng lalaki ng bulaklak __]]
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'water buffalo [that the teacher said
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Summary

1. Relative clauses in Philippine-type Austronesian languages reflect the choice of pivot because of (a) their rich inventory of “voices,” including options for some oblique arguments to be “subject,” together with (b) a “subject-only” restriction on relativization.
2. In LD relativization, the embedded clause is required to be the higher verb’s “subject”; i.e. the subject-only restriction holds for each verb in a complex chain of relativization.

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§3 Tibetan

The Tibetan verb complex

Verbs in Tibetan end with a series of auxiliaries — glossed AUX together here — encoding tense/aspect/evidential values (Tournadre and Jiatso 2001, Vokurková 2008). Relativization involves a distinct verb form where the auxiliaries are replaced by a “nominalizer” ending.

(7) བཀྲ་ཤིས་ཀྱིས་དེབ་འབྲི་གི་དུག།

bkra.shis-kyis deb **’bri-gi.dug**.

Tashi-ERG book write-AUX

‘Tashi is writing a book.’

(8) དེབ་འབྲི་མཁན་མི་

[$_{RC}$ ____ deb **’bri-mkhan**] mi

book write-MKHAN person

‘person who wrote/writes/is writing a book/books’

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Relativization as nominalization

Relativization in Tibeto-Burman languages has been studied almost exclusively under the umbrella of *nominalization*, a major topic of study in Tibeto-Burman linguistics.

(9) ***-pa* event nominalization:** (Tournadre and Sangda Dorje 2003:282)

བོད་སྐད་ཤེས་**པ**་དེ་གལ་ཆེན་པོ་རེད།

[[bod.skad shes-**pa**] de] gal chen.po red.

Tibetan language know-PA DEM importance great COP.AUX

‘Knowing Tibetan is very important.’

Relativization as nominalization

From this perspective, relative clauses simply represent another use of nominalizations, as *verbal argument nominalizations*.

(10) ***-pa* theme nominalization:**

པད་མས་བཟོས་**པ་**དེ་

pad.ma-s bzos-**pa** de

Pema-ERG make-PA DEM

‘what Pema made’

(11) ***-pa* object relative:**

པད་མས་བཟོས་**པ**འི་མོག་མོག་དེ་

[pad.ma-s bzos-**pa**]-’i

Pema-ERG make-PA-GEN

mog.mog de

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‘the momo that Pema made’

-pa.’i > -pe

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Relativization as nominalization

Noonan 2008: “in adnominal modification... at least in Bodic, they are probably best viewed as NPs juxtaposed to the NPs they are modifying, the two NPs constituting, therefore, a sort of appositional structure”

(12) **Relativization = argument nominalization modifier + NP:**
argument nominalization$_i$(=GEN) + NP$_i$ (based on Noonan 1997:383)

The genitive marker is strongly preferred for all pre-nominal relatives, except for subject relatives with *-mkhan* (DeLancey 1999).

Semantically, we could cash out this intuition with intersective modificational semantics:

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(14) **“Nominalizers” by choice of pivot:** expanding on (3a)

-mkhan མཁན་	agents/subjects
-sa ས་	locatives/goals
-yag ཡག་	instruments and imperfective themes
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- There is an interaction with aspect for theme relativization, which will be relevant later.

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Locative relatives

(15) **-*sa* locative relative:**

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[$_{RC}$ pad.ma-s ___ mog.mog bzo-**sa**]-'i sa.cha de

Pema-ERG dumpling make-SA-GEN place DEM

'the place that Pema made/makes dumplings' *-sa.'i* > *-se*

-sa reflects a gap with e.g. dative/locative (*-la*) or elative (*-nas*) case.

Instrumental relatives

(16) ***-yag* instrumental relative:**

པད་མས་མོག་མོག་བཟོ་**ཡག**འི་མོག་ཟངས་དེ་

[$_{RC}$ pad.ma-s ___ mog.mog bzo-**yag**]-'i mog.zangs de

Pema-ERG dumpling make-YAG-GEN steamer DEM

'the steamer that Pema made/makes dumplings with' *-yag.'i* > *-ye*

-yag reflects an instrumental (*-gis/kyis/gyis/s*, homophonous with ergative) gap, or imperfective theme gap.

-pa vs the other nominalizer endings

1. Classical Tibetan used only *-pa*. Cognates of *-pa* are found across the Tibeto-Burman family (DeLancey 2002, Noonan 2008). Non-*pa* endings originated as various nominal endings, with their function later extended to productive relative clauses (DeLancey 2002):
    - In Classical Tibetan, *-mkhan* had only one use, as a derivational suffix for trades: *shing-mkhan* = wood-MKHAN 'carpenter'
    - The locative nominalizer *-sa* derives from the root *sa* 'place.'
2. DeLancey 1999:234: *-pa* is "unstressed and subject to drastic phonological reduction... the other three show compound phonology; this is consistent with their derivational origin."
3. For verbs with distinct perfective and imperfective stems, *-pa* takes the perfective stem while all others take the imperfective stem: e.g. 'make' = PRF *bsos-* /sø/; IMPF *bso-* /so/.

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Embedding under ‘say’

(17) **Embedded clause under ‘say’:**

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bkra.shis-kyis [pad.ma-s mog.mog bzos-song] lap-song.

Tashi-ERG Pema-ERG dumpling make-AUX say-AUX

‘Tashi said [that Pema made dumplings].’

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[$_{RC}$ bkra.shis-kyis [pad.ma-s ____ bzos-song] lap-**pa**]-'i mog.mog de-tso

Tashi-ERG Pema-ERG make-AUX say-PA-GEN momo DEM-PL

'those momo [that Tashi said [that Pema made ____]]'

- ***-pa* only goes on the *higher* verb of the relative clause.** The embedded clause with a gap is a regular, finite clause.

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(19) བཀྲ་ཤིས་ཀྱིས་མོག་མོག་བཟོ་**མཁན་**ལས་**པ**འི་མི་དེ་

[$_{RC}$ bkra.shis-kyis [____ mog.mog bzo-**mkhan**] lap-**pa**]-'i mi de

Tashi-ERG momo make-MKHAN say-PA-GEN person DEM

'the person [that Tashi said [____ made/makes momo]]'

- **For LD subject relatives, there is *subject relativization marking -mkhan on the embedded verb*, then *-pa on the higher clause*!**

LD subject relatives

(19) བཀྲ་ཤིས་ཀྱིས་མོག་མོག་བཟོ་**མཁན་**ལས་**པ**འི་མི་དེ་

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LD locative relative

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[$_{RC}$ bkra.shis-kyis [pad.ma-s ____ mog.mog bzo-**sa**/*__song__] lap-**pa**/*__sa__]-'i

Tashi-ERG Pema-ERG momo make-SA/*AUX say-PA/*SA-GEN

sa.cha de

place DEM

'the place [that Tashi said [Pema made/makes momo ____]]'

LD instrumental relative

(21) བཀྲ་ཤིས་ཀྱིས་པད་མས་མོག་མོག་བཟོ་**ཡག**་ལ་པ་**པ**འི་མོག་ཟངས་དེ་

[$_{RC}$ bkra.shis-kyis [pad.ma-s ____ mog.mog bzo-**yag**/*__song__] lap-**pa**/*__yag__]-'i

Tashi-ERG Pema-ERG momo make-YAG/*AUX say-PA/*YAG-GEN

mog.zangs de

steamer DEM

'the steamer [that Tashi said [Pema made/makes momo with ____]]'

Interim summary and analysis

-pa fundamentally differs in syntactic function from the other "nominalizers."

- ***-pa* marks the edge of entire relative clauses** (to be revised), whereas **the other markers reflect a particular kind of *local* gap.**
  - *-pa* and the other "nominalizers" cannot cooccur on the same verb, e.g. **bso-sa-pa*. In local (non-LD) relatives with a marked (subject/locative/instrument) gap, the marked, non-*pa* "nominalizer" (*-mkhan/so/yag*) wins out.

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Another word order

Long-distance relativization can also take another form:

(22) **Another LD subject relative:**

བཀྲ་ཤིས་ཀྱིས་ལཔ་**པ**འི་མོག་མོག་བཟོ་**མཁན**་མི་དེ་

[$_{RC}$ bkra.shis-kyis ___ lap-**pa**]-'i [___ mog.mogbzo-**mkhan**] mi de

Tashi-ERG say-PA-GEN momo make-MKHAN person DEM

'the person [that Tashi said [___ made/makes momo]]' =(19)

This word order appears to involve **optional movement of the embedded clause**; cf (19).

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'the person [that Tashi said [___ made/makes momo]]' =(19)

This word order appears to involve **optional movement of the embedded clause**; cf (19).

An argument against the nominalization hypothesis

- The semantics of (22) forms an argument against each V-“nominalizer” being a pre-built argument nominalization which intersectively modifies the NP:

  $[\![(22)]\!] = [\![\text{the person that Tashi said made momos}]\!]$

  $\neq \textsc{the}([\![\text{what Tashi said}]\!] \cap [\![\text{who made momos}]\!] \cap [\![\text{person}]\!])$

Another word order

Now consider this word order variant for LD object relativization:

(23) **Another LD object relative:**

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[$_{RC}$ bkra.shis-kyis lap-**pa**]-’i [pad.ma-s bzos-**pa**]-’i mog.mog de-tso

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- **Now both clauses get *-pa* marking!** Cf (18)

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'those momo [that Tashi said [that Pema made ___]]' =(18)

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Another word order

It then cannot be that *-pa* marks the highest verb / edge of the entire relative clause.

- The contrast between (23) and (18) above teaches us that **each *-pa* corresponds to its own step of movement**, with the optional movement of an embedded clause counting as a separate step from the movement of the head itself.

On the position of embedded clauses

(24) **Embedded clauses generally cannot be postposed:**
བཀྲ་ཤིས་ཀྱིས་ལབ་སོང་པད་མས་མོག་མོག་བཟོས་སོང།

* bkra.shis-kyis ___ lap-song, [pad.ma-s mog.mog bzos-song].
Tashi-ERG say-AUX Pema-ERG dumpling make-AUX
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On the choice of “nominalizer” suffixes

- We’ve concluded that (a) *-mkhan/sa/yag* indicate a marked local gap, and (b) *-pa* marks the final position of an unmarked movement, including all relative clause edges.

(25) **LD agent relative, with higher *-yag*:**
བཀྲ་ཤིས་ཀྱིས་བསམ་**ཡག**་ཏེ་མོག་མོག་བཟོ་**མཁན་**མི་དེ་

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‘the person [that Tashi thinks [___ made/makes dumplings]]’

- *-yag* appears in (25) because the higher verb ‘think’ is imperfective.

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LD relatives with higher *-yag*

- Recall that theme relatives with perfective descriptions involve *-pa*; with imperfective descriptions involve *-yag*.

► **The choice of *-pa/yag* on 'say/think' behaves as if we are relativizing over the theme of the higher verb, 'say/think'!**
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§4 Synthesis and discussion

Summary

Both Philippine-type Austronesian languages and Tibetan utilize verbal morphology to distinguish relative clauses with different pivots.

- At first glance, it appears that this parallel may be only superficial, and due to two very different mechanisms:
  - Philippine-type languages have a “subject-only” restriction on $\overline{\text{A}}$-extraction, together with multiple “voices” to make different arguments the “subject.”
  - Tibetan relative clause forms are distinct from regular finite verbs.

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- However, the behavior of LD relativization in Philippine-type languages and Tibetan make these systems look even more similar:

> In LD relativization, each verb reflects the thematic role of its local pivot gap ***or*** the embedded clause containing the pivot gap.

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Towards a unification…

An alternative approach to Austronesian voice systems allows for an even clearer unification:

- Voice systems in Philippine-type languages are often described as *argument structure alternations* (e.g. Guilfoyle, Hung, and Travis 1992, Aldridge 2004, 2008, Legate 2012):
    - The choice of voice determines the choice of “subject.”
    - Only the subject can be relativized (Keenan and Comrie 1977).

Towards a unification…

- But there's another approach to voice systems on the market (see e.g. Chung 1994, Richards 2000, Pearson 2001, 2005, Chen 2017, Erlewine, Levin, and Van Urk 2017, in prep.):
  - (A) **Philippine-type voice morphemes are *responses* to extraction** (e.g. relativization) of a particular type of argument;
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Austronesian voice systems and Germanic V2

We can relate Ⓑ to the “prefield” requirement in Germanic V2:

(26) **Swedish V2 alternation:**

a. *Han* känner ___ faktiskt Ingrid.
he knows actually Ingrid
‘He actually knows Ingrid.’

b. *Ingrid* känner han faktiskt ___.
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- Ⓑ = A single argument in each clause — by default, a *topic* —
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  - (b) in Philippine-type languages: receives a particular marker/case (Tagalog *ang*);
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  - (c) in Dinka (Nilotic; Erlewine et al. 2015, 2017, in prep.): moves to clause-initial position *and* receives a particular case.

Austronesian voice systems and Germanic V2

- But Ā-extraction such as relativization or *wh*-movement proceeds through the Ⓑ-position/process, blocking movement of a topic:

(27) **Topicalization disallowed within Swedish relative clauses:**

a. den flicka [$_{RC}$ som har kammat sitt hår]
the girl that has combed her hair

b. *den flicka [$_{RC}$ som *sitt hår* har kammat ___]
the girl that her hair has combed

In Philippine-type languages, assuming that the assignment of *ang* and Ā-extraction underlyingly involve the same process (Chen 2017, Erlewine, Levin, and Van Urk 2017, in prep.), and both feed Ⓐ, we derive the apparent "subject-only" extraction restriction.

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- But Ā-extraction such as relativization or *wh*-movement proceeds through the (B)-position/process, blocking movement of a topic:

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Proposal

- **Tibetan relativization suffixes are *responses* to extraction** of a particular type of argument — just like in Philippine-type languages (A) — **but Tibetan has no requirement for some argument to participate in such a process** — unlike Philippine-type languages (B).
  - These verb forms in Tibetan thus appear only in relativization, not in regular clauses. — and for *-pa*, only when it is marks the position of a final movement.
  - This "response" mechanism (A) applies *per clause*, unifying the behavior of LD relatives in Tibetan and Philippine-type languages.

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Proposal

- **Tibetan relativization suffixes are *responses* to extraction** of a particular type of argument — just like in Philippine-type languages Ⓐ — **but Tibetan has no requirement for some argument to participate in such a process** — unlike Philippine-type languages Ⓑ.
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  - This "response" mechanism Ⓐ applies *per clause*, unifying the behavior of LD relatives in Tibetan and Philippine-type languages.

Thank you!

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