A Web of Relations

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A Web of Relations

A grammar of rGyalrong
Jiăomùzú (Kyom-kyo) dialects

Marielle Prins
September 2011
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ABBREVIATIONS AND CONVENTIONS

1  first person
2  second person
3  third person

num /num  a slash between two numbers, e.g. 1/2 indicates the relationship between a subject and object of the respective numbers. It is in linguistic papers more conventional to signal such relationships with other symbols such as arrows, e.g. 1→ 2 or 1 > 2. But because in the Jiǎomùzú dialects many prefixes tend to jostle for space in front of a verb root I have chosen the shorter notation with the slash.

1/2  the transitive relation between a first person subject and second person object
1/3  the transitive relation between a first person subject and a third person object
2/1  the transitive relation between a second person subject and a first person object
2/3  the transitive relation between a second person subject and a third person object
3/1  the transitive relation between a third person subject and a first person object
3/2  the transitive relation between a third person subject and a second person object
3/3  the transitive relation between a third person subject and a third person object

AZ/BY  a slash between two abbreviations in small capitals indicates a merging of two markers, e.g. PFT/AF signals the merger of a perfective marker and attention flow marker no-

gloss1  a small number subscribed to the gloss of a verb indicates the root of an irregular verb, as in: /leʔt/ hit1 and /laʔt/ hit2

…¤  this symbol after a word indicates a loanword from Chinese, as in: bawbaw¤

*  an asterisk followed by a space before a word or sentence indicates ungrammaticality, as in * mamətop

?  a question mark followed by a space before a word or sentence indicates doubt about the grammaticality of the construction, as in ? tamar kəsam

-  a hyphen indicates a morpheme boundary in the phonemic transcription.

.  a. in the phonology chapter, a full stop indicates a syllable boundary as in: ka.pə.lor.lor
b. in glosses throughout the study a full stop connects entities that correspond to the same morpheme in the transcription, as in: go.down

\[  \]  a. a stress mark in phonetic transcriptions indicates primary stress, as in [təˈskraːʔ]
b. a stress mark in phonemic transcription indicates grammatically contrastive stress, as in /kə-vi-ŋ/

[ ]  a. phonetical transcription, as in: [təˈskraːʔ]
b. square brackets indicate the extent of a constituent, as in: [təza w-apa]
c. in glosses square brackets can indicate implied or non-overt arguments or information, as in: that [demon] went and ate lots of people

/ / phonemic transcription, as in /tə-skruʔ/

**italics**

a. italics in glosses and free translations of examples indicate transliterated data, as in: *como*

b. italics in the main body of the text indicate rGyalrong language data, as in: …the verb *kaleʔt,* ‘hit’…..

c. italics also occur for translations of Chinese and Tibetan words, as in: statue or image of a deity; deity; lit. Tibetan: ི་ lha

A aspect

ADJ adjective

ADV adverb

ADVLS adverbialiser

AF attention flow marker

AG agent

AP applicative

ASP aspect marker

C contrast marker

CAUS causativity marker

be:CD be, condescending

CL classifier

COMP comparative

CON conjunction

COND real conditional

d dual

D distal marker

DEM demonstrative

DIM diminutive marker

DIR direction marker

DUR durative time

e exclusive

EMP emphatic

EQ equalitative

EREFL emphatic reflexivity marker

EV evidentiality marker for reliability based on conventional wisdom or generally accepted truth

EXH exhortatory marker

EXP expressive

FIL filler word

FL female

FPFT future perfective aspect; past-in-the-future relative tense
The Jiàomùzú dialects make extensive use of genitive constructions. These constructions consist of a possessor followed by the possessed, which is marked as the head of the construction by a genitive marker. In many cases the possessor does not occur overtly in the phrase or clause. But the genitive marker on the head of the genitive construction is obligatory and is a clear indication of a genitive construction even if one of the elements of the construction is covert.
In the phonology, examples in section 2.2 on phonemes are all presented in word form, without indication of morpheme or syllable boundaries: [təˈskruʔ], /təskruʔ/. All other examples have hyphens between morphemes and dots between syllables, if the syllable break does not coincide with morpheme break, as in /kʰ-o.roʔk/ or if clarity improves by indicating syllables. In the rest of the chapters all the transcriptions are phonemic and occur without slashes. Hyphens indicate morpheme breaks, while syllable boundaries are not indicated in the transcriptions, as in: ta-miʔ.

When there are two morpheme breaks within one syllable only the one grammatically significant is marked. Such cases are numerous especially in genitive forms of nouns. The phonemic transcription for ‘body’, consisting of a noun marker tə- and a nominal root skruʔ is therefore tə-skruʔ. The genitive form ‘his body’ occurs as w-əskruʔ, with the third person genitive morpheme w- connected to the noun with a hyphen, and the morpheme cum syllable break after the noun marker left
unmarked. In the same manner, ‘tail’ is transcribed ta-miʔ for the generic form. The genitive has w-amiʔ but not w-a-miʔ.

Transcriptions of data in the body of the text rather than in the examples are in italics and do not indicate morpheme or syllable boundaries, as in: ….however, the verb phrase marmpop, ‘I have not experienced’ …. Some Tibetan terms that are familiar to western audiences or have entered the lexicon are given in a current transcription of the original Tibetan spelling, such as ‘rGyalrong’ and ‘yak’. All other terms are transcribed according to the conventions set out here.

For ease of reference to other resource materials, especially maps, all geographical terms, administrative and political designations and personal names are in Chinese pinyin marked for tone in the body of the text, as in: Zhuōkèjī. Chinese simplified characters, the literary Tibetan form and a Wylie transcription, where available, appear in a footnote on first occurrence. The place name Zhuōkèjī thus occurs with a footnote showing: 桌克基, ཆོག་ Cog-tse. Wylie transcriptions of Tibetan names have a hyphen between syllables and a space between words, as in: Cog-tse, bKra-shis Tshe-ring. Following international custom, Chinese names of scholars from the People’s Republic of China (PRC) have tone marks whereas those hailing from other places are referred to without tone marks, e.g. Jackson Sun and Sūn Hóngkāi. Authors who publish in several languages under different names are referred to by the name used in their publication. Thus for Guillaume Jacques who publishes in Chinese as well as English: Jacques 2010 but Xiàng 2008.

For the spelling of place names I follow the Dimínglù for both Chinese and Tibetan. Tibetan spelling of place names is famously haphazard. If there is a widely used variant on the spelling as used in the Dimínglù I give the variant in a footnote. Some place names have changed entirely over the years and are no longer compatible with names as found in older literature. In these cases the body of the text gives the name as it occurs in the source material within the footnote the reference to the source and the contemporary place name for the location. In keeping with contemporary use of Chinese administrative terms I use xiāng (乡, གཞང་ shang) for ‘township’, xiàn (县, མཉམ་ shan) for ‘county’ and zhōu (州, རོ་ khul) for ‘prefecture’. I have added a list of all place names in Chinese pinyin, Chinese simplified characters, literary Tibetan and Wylie transcription here, for ease of reference.

Proper names are phonetic in transcriptions of examples, with Wylie transcriptions of literary Tibetan or pinyin for Chinese in glosses. The phonetic transcription [pкраʃis ʦʰeraŋ] is thus glossed as bKra-shis Tshe-ring and found in the translation as bKra-shis Tshe-ring.

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1 Sìchuānshěng Ābà Zàngzú zìzhīzhōu dimínglù (四川省阿坝藏族自治州地名录 [Record of placenames for Ābà Tibetan Prefecture]).
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² Tibetan spelling of place names is famously haphazard and can have several widely accepted variants. *Cog-tse* also often occurs as *lCog-rtse*, see for example the early work of Nagano.
The writing of this study has been a very long process with lots of interruptions. In fact, I can no longer remember when the idea to write a grammar of rGyalrong first took hold. Perhaps the best starting point for the journey is the memorable day when my friend Yāngqiān, who was like me a student in Chéngdū at the time, simply announced that she was taking me home, to her rGyalrong village in the heart of Jiāomùzú Township. It was the summer of 1993. I have been in and out of the rGyalrong world ever since, and it has profoundly changed and shaped my life.

Over the years I have pestered numerous people with questions about their language and their world in general. Many have generously and good-naturedly spent days on end trying to answer my incessant and often incomprehensible queries. For the completion of this grammar I owe a debt of gratitude to many people. Here I mention only those without whose contribution the book could not have been written: Yāngqiān and all her people of the House of Renbamila, as well as Yon-tan, Mo-mo, sKar-ma Tshe-ring and Tāěrmū from Kǒnglóng, Lha-rgyal and all his people from Pàěrbā, teacher rDo-rje from Púzhì and Tshe-dbang sGron-ma and her family from the high altitude grasslands. Though I have tried my best, I have never managed to out-give them in warmth, graciousness, patience, generosity, hospitality and sheer love of life.

The slow pace of writing has been a blessing in disguise, since I have benefitted tremendously from the studies on rGyalrongic languages that others have produced over the last decade or so. My
thinking has been especially sharpened by the work of Lín Xiàngróng,¹⁷ Sūn Hóngkāi,¹⁸ Jackson Sun,¹⁹ Lin You-Jing,²⁰ Guillaume Jacques and Yasuhiko Nagano.

The rGyalrong world, and the language that reflects it, is of great beauty. My hopes are that this study will give a glimpse of that beauty not only to linguists but also to other interested readers. I have therefore tried to keep the grammar as much as possible free from technical terms. I have also added more examples than perhaps might be expected in a linguistic dissertation. A general description such as this study can provide only a mere glance at many issues of interest. If the grammar provides language learners with a basic outline and generates the interest of scholars to do more in-depth research, it will have fulfilled its purpose.

¹⁷ 林向荣.
¹⁸ 孙宏开.
¹⁹ 孙天心.
²⁰ 林幼菁.