Relative clauses in Kyirong Tibetan[1]

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INTRODUCTION[2]

Relative clauses in Central Tibetan dialects have been described in detail by Mazaudon 1977 and very recently by DeLancey 1999 for Lhasa Tibetan, and by Kim 1989 for Shigatse Tibetan. The three studies agree on several points: first, that relative clauses in these dialects are constructed with a set of nominalizers differing from dialect to dialect. And, second, that there are several syntactic ways of constructing relative clauses. In each of the cases, the rules determining the choice of the nominalizers turned out to be very complex.

The purpose of this paper is to describe the construction of relative clauses in the dialect spoken in the Lende valley, which is a variety of the Kyirong dialect.[3] It will be shown that the set of nominalizers used in this dialect and the rules of their distribution, again, is different.

In this paper, I will first give an overview on the four nominalizers which are part of the Kyirong system, *-kẽ̀:*, *-pa*, *-sā*, and *-tɕὲ:*, and illustrate their use. A special section will be dedicated to negated relative clauses. Second, the different word orders possible in Kyirong

3.   Kyirong lies in western Central Tibet (today's Tibetan Autonomous Region), about 70 km north of Katmandu. The Lende valley, where the variety described here is spoken, lies west of Kyirong, on the border to Nepal.

relative constructions will briefly be described. Furthermore, throughout the paper, the relative clauses in the Kyirong system will be compared to systems of other Central Tibetan dialects described so far.

1. The inventory of nominalizers – overview

The four nominalizers used in the Kyirong system are -kẽ:, -pa, -sā, and -tcὲ:.[4] The frequency of use of these four relativizers varies greatly, as Table 1 illustrates. The nominalizer -kẽ: is the most widely used nominalizer in relativization. It can be used to nominalize almost all the roles, except the oblique roles for *location, goal,* and *source.* As can be seen from the table, there are overlaps in the use of -kẽ: and -pa. -pa can relativize *instrument, patient* and *agent,* but the latter only in few cases. The nominalizer -sā is used with head-nouns that are *locations, sources,* or *goals,* and *recipients.* The nominalizer -tcὲ:, finally, is the most restricted of all in terms of the role of the head-noun it relativizes (only *patient*), as well as in terms of tense and aspect. Each of the nominalizers will be described in more detail in the subsections below.

	Agent	Patient	Instrument	Recipient	Location, Goal, Source
-kē̃:	================================				
-pa		================================			
-sā				================================	
-tcè:		====			

Table 1: Distribution of the nominalizers.

1.1 The nominalizer *-kē̃:*

The morphological characteristics of the nominalizer *-kē̃:* are the following. It behaves like the second element of a compound as far as its intonation is concerned. That means that it is not an atonal clitic, but carries a high tone.[5]

The nominalizer *-kē̃:* is attached to the imperfective stem of the verb.[6] Etymologically, it goes back to the Classical Tibetan nominalizer

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5.   The morpheme is either pronounced with or without nasalization of the vowel, according to the native village of the speaker. There is a homophone verbal morpheme used for habitual actions and general statements. It has not been possible to determine so far, however, whether the two share the same etymological origin.

6.   In Kyirong Tibetan, three verb stems can be differentiated: an imperfective, a perfective, and an imperative stem. Stem alternations, however, only occur with a restricted number of verbs. In Kyirong Tibetan, the following four types of stem alternations occur:

	imperfective		perfective		imperative	
3 stems	*mā*		*mè:*		*mȯ̀:*	'to speak'
2 stems a	*prị*		*prị:*	=	*prị:*	'to write'
2 stems b	*cāp*	=	*cāp*		*cōp*	'to protect'
1 stem	*lōp*	=	*lōp*	=	*lōp*	'to teach'

mkhan. This nominalizer is part of the nominalizer inventories of the majority of Tibetan dialects.

In Kyirong Tibetan, *-kẽ̀:* can be used to relativize a big range of roles, as illustrated in table 1 above. It can thus be called the default nominalizer of this dialect. The different uses of this nominalizer are exemplified below, example 1) shows *-kẽ̀:* relativizing an *agent* head noun:

1)   *dimî: tẽ(r)-kẽ̀: pi̜mè:-de   ka̜:   pỳ:-so:?*
      key   give-NOM   <u>woman-DEF</u>   where   went-PAST
      'Where is the woman who was giving the key (to so.)?'

In this sentence, the relative clause precedes the head noun "the woman", we are thus dealing with a prenominal relative clause. This is the most widely used word order – we will come back to this point later. The head noun is mostly followed by the definite article *-de.*

The next sentence, example 2), at first sight seems to be almost identical to the above sentence. Here, however, the relativized head-noun is the recipient of the relative clause:

2)   *kʰò̜:   dimî: tẽ(r)-kẽ̀: pi̜mè:-de   ka̜:   pỳ:-so:?*
      he.ERG key   give-NOM   <u>woman -DEF</u>   where went-PAST
      'Where is the woman to whom he was giving the key?'

The main clause is completely identical with example 1), and again "the woman" is the head noun. However, due to the presence in the relative clause of an *agent,* "he" in the ergative case, the head-noun "the woman" obviously cannot be the agent of the relative clause.

In example 3) the role of the head-noun is different again. Here we are dealing with a *patient* or *theme.*

3)   *ŋè̜:   ta̜ndā lò:-gẽ̀:   tep-de   ja:bō nù̜:.*
      I.ERG now   read-NOM   <u>book-DEF</u>   good   COP
      'The book I am reading now is good.'

And, finally, in example 4) the relativizer *-kẽ:* is used with an instrument:

4)   *ŋ̀:*   *jìgē*   *prì-gẽ̀:*   *jūgū-de*   *sãmbā jĩ:.*
     I.ERG   letter   write-NOM   <u>pen-DEF</u>   new   COP
     'The pen I am writing a letter with is new.'

Another example for the use of *-kẽ:* nominalizing an instrument is the following sentence:

5)   *jù:*   *mi-prọ-gẽ̀:-de*   *tʰūŋ-gena:?*
     <u>sleep</u>   <u>NEG-feel-NOM-DEF</u>   drink-IPFV
     'Will you drink the (drink) that prevents you from feeling sleepy?'

The drink alluded to, of course, is coffee. According to my informant, coffee is available in Kyirong. But, as people do not know its name, they usually refer to it with this paraphrase.

As we have seen now, the relativizer *-kẽ:* in the Kyirong dialect can be used with almost all kinds of head nouns roles, with the exception of *location, goal,* and *source,* which require the relativizer *-sā,* cf. below. This stands in clear contrast to the use of this same nominalizer in Lhasa Tibetan, where, according to DeLancey 1999, the corresponding nominalizer *mkhan* is restricted to relativize *agent* headnouns, and can only occasionally be used to relativize *patient* headnouns.[7]

Relative clauses using *-kẽ:* always refer to imperfective aspect, either in the present, in the past or in the future. This is in accordance with the general pattern described for the other dialects, cf. e.g. DeLancey (1999:235), who says that the construction with *mkhan* is "inherently neutral with respect to time reference".

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7.   According to Mazaudon (1978:406 and 407, example 19) this nominalizer can be used for "direct objects" in Lhasa Tibetan, but only in certain cases. DeLancey 1999 could not elicit such sentences from his main informant. But he admits that a relativization of patient does occur with some speakers.

The use in the present is illustrated in example 4), the past in example 6) below.

6)   *dā̤:*   *pṛ̣-gē̃:*   *ɲūgū-de*   *ŋōmbō*   *ɟɪ̰̄.*
yesterday wrote-NOM <u>pen-DEF</u>   blue   COP
'The pen I was writing with yesterday is blue.'

1.2 The nominalizer -pa

The morpheme *-pa* is attached to the perfective stem of the verb, and the aspectual reference of verbs nominalized with *-pa* is perfective. It can be used to relativize *patients*, *instruments*, and, in restricted cases, *agents* (only with certain verbs and with negation, cf. below). The two nominalizers *-pa* and *-kē̃:* are fully exchangeable in sentences where a copula or a non-controllable verb is used, cf. below.

To start with the more common use of *-pa*, in sentence 7) the relativization of a *patient* is given:

7)   *dā̤:*   *ʈē̤:bā-lɛ:*   *tsa̤(r)-pi:*   *mḭ-de*   *dḭ*   *ɟɪ̰̄.*
yesterday stairs-ABL fall-NOM.GEN <u>man-DEF</u> this   COP
'This is the man who fell down the stairs yesterday.'

In this example, the nominalizer *-pa* is in the genitive. This is the usual form of an attribute standing **before** the head noun in Tibetan. In Kyirong relative clauses, this rule applies only in the case of the nominalizers *-pa* and *-sā̤*, the other nominalizers never appear in the genitive.

Furthermore, the use of the morpheme *-pa* is also possible if the head noun is an *instrument*, as illustrated in example 8):

8)   *dā̤:*   *ŋa̤*   *ɲūgū*   *pṛ̰:-ba-de*   *ŋōmbō*   *ɟɪ̰̄.*
yesterday I   <u>pen</u>   write-NOM-DEF   blue   COP
'The pen I wrote with yesterday is blue.'

One of the few cases where the nominalizer *-pa* can be used to relativize an *agent* is given in sentence 9):

9)   *dą̃:*   *pǫdzā*   *tụ^hŋ-bi:*   *amā-de*   *di̧*   *jụmba.*
      yesterday child   beat-NOM.GEN   <u>mother-DEF</u>   this   COP
      'This is the mother who beat the child yesterday.'

Only a restricted number of examples are at my disposition, the elicitation of the nominalizer *-pa* was not possible in all cases. Most of the examples where the combination of *agent* with nominalizer *-pa* is possible contain verbs such as "to beat" and "to kill". With verbs such as "to give" or "to eat", such a construction does not seem to be possible, except with negation, cf. below.

And furthermore, in sentences containing an agent relativized with *-pa*, the *agent* AND the *patient* have to be explicitly mentioned, otherwise the participant relativized with *-pa* will be interpreted as the *patient*, and not as the *agent*, as in example 10):

10)   *dą̃:*   *sɛ̃(d)-pi:*   *mi̧-de*   *di̧*   *ji̧:.*
       yesterday kill-NOM.GEN   <u>person-DEF</u>   this COP
       'This is the man who was killed yesterday.'

-pa is also used to relativize the agent in sentence 11), which was uttered in a narrative:

11)   *ǫrã̃-la*   *p^hēmbō*   *pȩ̀:-bi:*   *mi̧-tçik*   *ji̧:.*
       we-DAT beneficial did-NOM.GEN   <u>person-INDEF</u>   COP
       'He is a person who has done good work for us.'

The question about the determining factor for the use of the nominalizer *-pa* in such constructions requires further research.

1.3 The nominalizers *-kɛ̃:* and *-pa used with copulas*

In sentences where the nominalized verb is a copula, the perfective-imperfective distinction seems to be neutralized. This means that in these sentences either the nominalizer *-kɛ̃:* or *-pa* is used, without any change of meaning.

As far as relativizations with the nominalizer *-pa* are concerned, the Kyirong informants quite often say that "they are okay", but that a nominalization with *-kẽ:* would be preferred. This stands in contrast to DeLancey's description of Lhasa Tibetan, where such sentences can only be formed with *-pa*.

Sentence 12) is just such an example, where, first, the sentence was given with *-kẽ:*, but where it was also possible to elicit the use of the nominalizer *-pa*.

12)   mi̱   nạ̄:-la   jo̱-k ẽ̱:-de   kɛ̀:   tcʰūmmō   cāp-konu:.
      man   inside-LOC   be-NOM-DEF   voice big   do-IPFV
      'The person who is inside is making a noise.'

1.4 Negation

There are two negation particles in Kyirong Tibetan,   *mi-* and *ma-*. With *mi-*, imperfective verb stems are negated, whereas *ma-* is used for negating perfective verb stems.[8]

As far as forms with the nominalizer *-kẽ:*, which is typically imperfective, are concerned, only the negation particle *mi-* can be used, of course always in combination with the imperfective stem. A construction combining the nominalizer *-kẽ:* and the negation particle *ma-* is not possible. The use of this negated nominalizer extends to all roles that can also be relativized with *-kẽ:* in non-negated clauses, that is *agent, patient, instrument,* and *recipient.*

Sentence 13) has an example with a relativized *instrument:*

13)   kʰō   ji̱gē   mi-pri̱-gē: ɲūgū-de   ŋōmbō-tcik   jọ̀:.
      he   letter NEG-write-NOM   pen-DEF   blue-INDEF   COP
      'The pen he is not writing a letter with is blue.'

An interesting aspect of negating is the more extensive use of the nominalizer -*pa* in negated clauses: it is not restricted to the use with perfective stems and the negation particle *ma*-, but it can also be combined with imperfective stems, which is not possible in positive clauses. In these cases, the nominalized verb is negated with the particle *mi*-. Thus, on the one hand, there are perfective constructions with the negation particle *ma*- and perfective stem, such as example 14):

14) *ta: di̱   luŋbā-la   tci̱ri̱:   ma-sè̱:-bi: mi̱   jo̱:ṭoŋā:?*
    now   this place-LOC   candy NEG-ate-NOM.GEN   person   COP
    'Is there possibly someone in this place who has never eaten candy?'

On the other hand, there seem to be two sets of constructions expressing imperfective meaning. They are illustrated in sentences 15) and 16). In sentence 15), the nominalizer -*kɛ̃* is used, in sentence 16) the nominalizer -*pa*. Both are attached to the imperfective stem, and both are negated with *mi*-. According to my consultant, both sentences express the same meaning:

15) *di̱   luŋbā-la   tci̱ri̱:   mi-sa̱-gē: mi̱   jo̱kēna:?*
    this place-LOC   candy   NEG-eat-NOM   person   COP
    'Is there someone in this place who doesn't eat candy?'

16) *di̱   luŋbā-la   mi̱   tci̱ri̱:   mi-sa̱-wa   jo̱kēna:?*
    this place-LOC   person   candy NEG-eat-NOM   COP
    'Is there someone in this place who doesn't eat candy?'

Both construction types can also be formed with postnominal or prenominal word order respectively.

The following pair of examples will further illustrate these constructions. Again there are two negated sentences, perfective and imperfective, and both can be relativized with -*pa*. In addition to the different negation particles, again, there is a difference in the stems:

perfective stem with long vowel and falling tone in example 17),
imperfective stem with short vowel in example 18):

17) *kʰō jīgē   ma-pri̧-bi:*   *ɲūgū-de   ŋōmbō-tcik   jə̀:.*
     he   letter   NEG-wrote-NOM.GEN   pen-DEF   blue-INDEF   COP
     'The pen he didn't write a letter with is blue.'

18) *ṭandā kʰō   jīgē   mi-pri̧-wi :*   *ɲūgū-de ŋōmbō-tcik jə̀:.*
     now   he   letter   NEG-write-NOM.GEN   pen-DEF blue-INDEF   COP
     'The pen he isn't writing a letter with is blue.'

Kim (1989:74) makes a statement which seems to be based on
the observation of a similar phenomenon. She says that "when the rel-
ative clause is in the negative, the relativizer is always /-pa/". Her
examples, however, are all negated with *ma-*, even the example she
translates with an imperfective, as *ma-* is the only negation particle
used in Shigatse dialect (cf. Haller 2000:100).

1.5 The nominalizer -sā

The nominalizer *-sā* represents the grammaticalization of the
noun *sā* 'place'. This word goes back to Classical Tibetan *sa* with the
same meaning. According to its original meaning, the nominalizer *-sā*
can be used in Kyirong Tibetan to relativize head-nouns indicating
location, *source*, and *goal*, but also in cases where the head-noun is a
recipient. This use is also attested for other Central Tibetan dialects.

The fact that *-sā* is marked with tone shows that the nominalizer
behaves as if it was the second part of a compound, and thus always
carries a high tone. This nominalizer is neutral with regard to tense or
aspect reference. Sentence 19) is an example for the use of this nom-
inalizer with a *source*:

19) *kʰə̀:   ṭep   lȩn-sā-de   tɕɔʰ.mā ī̧:.*
     he.ERG book   take-NOM-DEF   Drolma COP
     'The person whom he took the book from is Drolma.'

As was the case with the nominalizer *-pa, -sā* also appears in the genitive whenever it occurs in prenominal position:

20) *kʰō tʊ̄(d)-sī̄:*   *cʰīm-de*   *tcʰūmmō jʊ kē̄:*
he stay-NOM.GEN house-DEF big COP
'The house where he lives is big.'

1.6 The nominalizer -tcè:

The nominalizer *-tcè:*, finally, is the most specific and, accordingly, a rare relativizer. It is only used to relativize patients, and the relative clauses formed with *-tcè:* denote prospective aspect. Thus *-tcè:* is the only relativizer that can never be replaced by another relativizer in Kyirong Tibetan. As far as its phonological properties are concerned, it behaves like the second element of a compound as does *-sā*.

-tcè: is also used in verbal morphology, as a finite aspect marker expressing prospective aspect. Its use as a nominalizer is thus in accordance with its function as a morpheme in verbal morphology. An example of its use in relativization is given in sentence 21):

21) *kʰʊ̀:*   *sē̄(d)-tcè:*   *tà:-de*   *mapō jī̄:*.
he.ERG kill-NOM tiger-DEF red COP
'The tiger he is going to kill is red.'

-tcè: is the only nominalizer in the Kyirong relative system that does not have a clear etymology.[9]

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9.   Jäschke (1995:142) gives Classical Tibetan *ces* as etymology for the infinitive termination of Western Tibetan dialects, which is probably cognate to the Kyirong form we are dealing with here. He points out, however, that he cannot account for it etymologically. The same statement is made by Bielmeier (1982:417), who observes that related forms exist in Balti, Purik, and Ladakhi (*chas* or *ches*). "Whether this etymologically obscure marker is peculiar to the Western Tibetan Dialects, or can be traced back beyond WT, cannot yet be decided."

1.7 Different word orders

The different syntactic constructions of relative clauses usually found in descriptions of Tibetan are prenominal, postnominal, internally headed, and headless. These denominations refer to the position of the subordinated clause with regard to the head noun. In Kyirong Tibetan, examples for all four types can be found.

Some prenominal constructions have already been listed in this paper, e.g. 21), where the relative clause stands before the head-noun. As in Tibetan in general, also in Kyirong the prenominal construction is by far the most frequently used. For most sentences, however, correct postnominal sentences with the same meaning can be elicited.

An example for a postnominal construction is sentence 12). DeLancey (1999:244) suggests that the "difference between the pre- and post-head relative construction is roughly a restrictive/non-restrictive distinction". The prenominal construction would be restrictive, the postnominal non-restrictive. At present, my data are not sufficient to permit me to confirm his analysis for the Kyirong dialect.

A headless construction can be seen in example 19), where, in fact, the relative clause does not modify the head-noun, but represents it.

And, finally, an example of an internally headed relative clause is given in 22):

22)   *kʰə̀:   dị̄mî: tē(r)-kə̃̀:-de   kạ: pỳ:-so:?*
      he.ERG   <u>key</u>   give-NOM-DEF   where go-PAST
      'Where is the key he gave (to so.)?'

Mazaudon (1977:402) suggests that this type of construction is closely related to the postnominal type, namely, that the postnominal construction is just a variant of the internal construction. In Kyirong Tibetan, the internal type occurs even less frequently than the post-

nominal type. It seems to be restricted to the use with *patient* and *instrument* head-nouns, whereas the postnominal construction is not.

CONCLUSION

This description of the relativizer system of Kyirong Tibetan has shown the properties of the four nominalizers used in Kyirong Tibetan, *-kẽ:*, *-pa*, *-sā* and *-tcè:*. As in Lhasa Tibetan, their choice depends partially on the semantic case role of the head noun and partially on aspect, and it has been pointed out briefly that in Kyirong Tibetan the same syntactic type of constructions can be used as in the other dialects described so far.

The most striking difference with Lhasa Tibetan is the fact that the nominalizer *-pa*, in other dialects, is a "default nominalizer" (e.g. DeLancey 1999:234), whereas in Kyirong Tibetan, obviously, the default nominalizer is *-kẽ:*. Indeed, whereas in Lhasa Tibetan this nominalizer *-mkhan* can be used ONLY to relativize an agent, in Kyirong Tibetan, as has been demonstrated in this paper, it is the most widely used relativizer.

On the other hand, in Lhasa Tibetan, there is no way of using *-pa* for agent relative clauses. But in Kyirong Tibetan, in a few cases, this is possible. More research is needed to find out about the exact conditions for the use of *-pa* with *agent* head-nouns.

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