A note on the history of the term "pronomenalisation"

Randy J. LaPolla
Nanyang Technological University

This short note discusses the origin and development of the use of the term "pronomenalisation" (pronominalization) in Sino-Tibetan linguistics, point-ing out that the concept was originally a typological one, and that the phe-nomenon was seen as the result of grammaticalization, i.e. the free pronouns being copied onto the verb.

In doing the research for LaPolla 2018, I re-read many older works in Sino-Tibetan linguistics. In re-reading Brian H. Hodgson's work on what he called "pronome-nalisation"[1] [*sic*], and Henderson 1957, which was based on Hodgson's work, I was struck by how clear it was that these authors saw pronomenalisation as a typolog-ical feature of having copies of the free personal pronouns of the language appear-ing after the verb, either as a suffix or as a free form. This is why it was given the

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1. The word "pronomenalisation" appears in a footnote on page 501 in Hodgson 1856, and in another footnote on page 135 in the revised version of the 1856 paper in 1880, Vol. II. In the original version of Hodgson 1847 the term "pronomenalisation" was not used, though he made the distinction between two types of language, saying that "the Bodo and Dhimál languages belong pretty evidently to the aboriginal Indian tongues and not to the Indo-Chinese or mono-syllabic". In the revised version of the 1847 paper published in Hodgson 1880 Vol. I (p. 101), this sentence was changed to "the Bodo and Dhimál languages belong pretty evidently to the aboriginal Indian tongues of the pronomenalised type". A footnote was also added to page 105 in the later version: "I divide the Himalayan races primarily into two groups, distinguished by the respective use of simple or non-pronomenalised, and of complex or pronomenalised lan-guages". In Hodgson 1857 (originally written in 1846), p. 65 he used the expression "the abo-riginal Indian (Dravirian) [*sic*] and Indo-Chinese populations", with the former being of the "complex or pronomenalised type" and being "traceably akin alike to the Altaic branch of the North and to the Dravirian of the South".

name with the *-ised* and *-isation* suffixes: it was seen as a relatively recent process, what we now call grammaticalization, not something that was a shared retention from the parent language of the family, yet he and Konow (in the *Linguistic Survey of India*) used typological features for categorizing language families.

In his description of Dhimál, Hodgson (1847:120) describes the tense system as involving copies of the free pronouns. He gives the following forms of the auxiliary used with all verbs (1847:120/1880:86; here only including the present tense indicative):

	Singular	Plural
1st person	Ká khika	Kyél khi kyel
2nd person	Ná khina	Nyel khi nyel
3rd person	Wá khi̇	Ubal khi̇

In a footnote he says of the suffixed forms, "Is this inflection, after all, nothing more than the reduplicated pronoun, added to the root, after the manner of the plural? Bopp says all personal inflection was originally pronominal, and Bunsen in his Egypt gives us samples from the oldest language on earth of pronouns used indifferently either as independant prefixes or as servile postfixes" (1847:120). He then goes on in the main text (p.120) to refer to this comment and say that, if this were the case, "we should then have the whole process of conjugation of Dhimál verbs accomplished by affixing an invariable auxiliary verb or verb particle (viz. khi̇ or hi̇ or áng) to the root of the primary verb, with reduplication of the 1st and 2nd pronouns, both singular and plural".

As quoted in footnote 1 above, Hodgson divided the "Himalayan races", as he called them, into two groups based on whether they spoke what he called "simple or non-pronomenalised" languages or "complex or pronomenalised" languages (1880:105). That is, he wasn't dividing the languages by the manifestation of some cognate features or shared innovations, but dividing the people based on the typological nature of their language as simple or complex, and judged their intellectual and cultural levels accordingly.

That this was a typological rather than cognate feature was also understood by Eugénie J. A. Henderson when she wrote her article "Colloquial Chin as a pronominalized language" (1957). Kuki-Chin had already been recognised as having a prefixal paradigm, though it was analysed in the *Linguistic Survey of India* (Konow 1904) as nominal prefixing and not a system of pronomenalisation,[2]

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2. Hodgson had limited the characterization of pronomenalisation to nominal prefixing and verbal suffixing of pronouns, possibly so that it would fit with the typological features he saw as characteristic of Dravidian (1856:508/1880:136), and so Konow did not include languages with only prefixes on verbs in the pronomenalised category, and he also considered the verb in Tibeto-Burman languages to be nominal and so the prefixed forms were seen as possessive

because it was not seen to have suffixes or post-verbal pronouns. But Henderson found that in some of her data from colloquial contexts pronominal suffixes appeared on the verb, like in Dhimál, though with different pronominal suffixes from the Dhimál system (she didn't do any comparison of forms, just of typological patterns), leading her to think that colloquial Tiddim Chin might also be a pronomenalised language. To evaluate this idea, Henderson created a list of typological features that a language should have to be considered a pronomenalised language, based on Hodgson's work and also notes by Konow and *Les langues du monde* (Henderson 1957:323–324):

a. 'marks of genuine inflection' in the pronouns
b. the frequent occurrence of pronominal forms at the end of the sentence
c. the 'reduplication' of the first and second personal pronouns in verbal constructions
d. the use of conjunct and disjunct pronominal forms
e. the prefixation and/or suffixation of conjunct pronominal forms
f. 'dual' pronominal forms
g. inclusive and exclusive forms of the first person plural
h. the absence of pronominal forms to mark the third person subject

She then showed that colloquial Tiddim Chin manifests eight of these typological characteristics. On the basis of this she argued that, like Dhimál, colloquial Tiddim Chin could also be considered a pronominalized language, and so she argued that more languages than Hodgson had originally assumed manifest this typological phenomenon.

James Bauman (1974, 1975) was the first to look at pronomenalisation as anything other than a typological feature. As with Hodgson, Konow, and Henderson, in his dissertation (1975), Bauman initially talked about pronomenalisation as a typological feature (Chapter 2), e.g. stating that "It is the presence or absence of a verbal affix system for person-number agreement which is criterial for designating a language as pronominalized or not" (1975:78). He also mentions Henderson 1957 as arguing "that the term pronominalization, in the sense of a packet of features typically found together in certain languages, was appropriate to the colloquial (though not literary) standard of Tiddim Chin" (p. 51).

Bauman's main goal in his dissertation was to argue against the idea current at the time that the systems found in the pronomenalised languages were the result of contact with the Munda language. In this he was successful, as that idea was no longer current after Bauman's work appeared. To replace that hypothesis with

forms used as if they were clauses, e.g. 'my going' used as 'I am going' (1904:16–18, see also Müller 1854 on the idea that predicate roots in Tibeto-Burman are nominal).

another possible origin for the system, he argued that it is possible that the patterns found were due to native development. He compared a small set of mostly closely related languages which manifest pronomenalisation to show commonalities, ignoring those, like Dhimál, with obviously non-cognate affixes, but did not try to reconstruct a paradigm to Proto-Tibeto-Burman. Although he mentions the possibility that different systems were innovated more than once (p. 52), he did not investigate this possibility, even given the obvious historical transparency of the Dhimál suffixes as clearly copies of the Dhimál free pronouns and their lack of similarity to forms in the other languages he was comparing.

In trying to make his case that the languages that currently do not manifest any trace of pronomenalisation must have had such systems in the past but lost the pattern, he also looked at the free pronouns and compared them with the affixes, and found commonalities, showing that there was a clear grammaticalization relationship between some of them, i.e. that the suffixes were derived from the pronouns, as Hodgson had argued, or obvious sources such as the number 'two' for duals, but he did not see this as a problem for assuming a deep history for the forms. He says (1975:106) of his use of the free pronouns to make his argument that, "The claim that pronominalization reverts to the level of PTB entails that the roots of any pronominalized language must be in conformity with the roots set up with the entire family in mind. For this reason, the independent pronouns, rather than just the affixal roots of the pronominalized languages, are considered. In this way all of TB is encompassed and the standard of proof is thus set at a higher peg than if only the pronominalized languages were included in the comparison". But his argument here is flawed in that although it is correct to say that the pronouns are the source of the affixes and for the affixes to be cognate the source pronouns should be cognate, it is problematic to assume that free pronouns necessarily must grammaticalize into affixes and so we only need to show the cognacy of the free pronouns to be able to reconstruct the affixal system to the deepest level proto-language.

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Address for correspondence

Randy J. LaPolla
Nanyang Technological University
HSS-03-45
48 Nanyang Avenue, 639818
Singapore

randy.lapolla@gmail.com