

From Bhakti to Bon

Festschrift for Per Kværne

Edited by
Hanna Havnevik and Charles Ramble



The Institute for Comparative Research
in Human Culture

Novus Press

SOME TIBETAN FIRST-PERSON PLURAL INCLUSIVE PRONOUNS

NATHAN W. HILL

INTRODUCTION

In three previous papers I have explored the development of the personal pronoun system in different periods of Tibetan literature (Hill 2007; 2010; 2013). I offer a further contribution in this direction to Per Kværne with deep regard and admiration. Abel Zadoks may be the first to have noticed an inclusive-exclusive distinction in the personal pronouns of Tibetan texts (2004). In Old Tibetan he notes two inclusive first person plural pronouns *'u-bu-cag* ~ *yu-bu-cag*, which he refers to as “plain diction”, and *'o-skol*, which he sees as “elegant/honorific” (2004: 2). These two inclusive pronouns he regards as corresponding respectively to the exclusive first person plurals *nged* and *bdag-cag* (2004: 2). In the *Mi la ras pa'i rnam thar* Zadoks notes three inclusive first person plural pronouns *'o-skol* “hapax, not honorific”, *'u-cag* ~ *'o-cag* “mostly used within the nuclear family”, and *rang-re*, used with “equals or inferiors” (2004: 2). Unfortunately, Zadoks’ observations on Tibetan pronouns have not reached publication and the observations on his conference handout are not exemplified with specific textual passages.

Independently of Zadoks, I also studied the behavior of personal pronouns in both Old Tibetan (Hill 2010) and the *Mi la ras pa'i rnam thar* (Hill 2007). In Old Tibetan I identified *'o-skol* as the only first person plural inclusive pronoun (Hill 2010: 559). In the *Mi la ras pa'i rnam thar* I observed *rang-re* and *'u-cag* as two first person plural inclusive pronouns, but failed to distinguish their function, and did not notice that this text also uses *'o-skol* (Hill 2007: 278–81). Here I attempt to augment these findings with gleanings from version A and (where the passage in question is missing in A) version E of the Old Tibetan *Rāmāyaṇa* (de Jong 1989), the *Mdzang-blun*, and sections of the *Mi la ras pa'i rnam thar* (de Jong 1959) not considered in Hill (2007).

OLD TIBETAN

Old Tibetan texts display at least the two inclusive plural pronouns *yu-bu-cag* and *'o-skol*. The pronoun *yu-bu-cag* occurs twice in the story of Rama, both in the same episode of version E.

(1) *Byī-snu'i zhal-nas // « khyed yi-bu-cag gnyis kyang gzhan-las 'phags-pa yin-bas // khyī phrad-du 'thab-par myi rigs-pas //*

Viṣṇu said, “we two are superior to others and it is not proper to fight like dogs that meet each other...” (Rama E 73–75)

(2) *Mda'-sha-grī-ba khros-nas // tshur shog ! yu-bu-cag gnyis 'thab-mo 'gyed » ces zer-ba-dang /*

Daśagrīva became angry and said: “Come here! We two will fight.” (Rama E 77)

In example 1, Viṣṇu’s (ironic) use of the honorific plural *khyed* (cf. Hill 2013: 249–51, 254–59) conflicts with Zadoks’ interpretation of *yu-bu-cag* as non-honorific.

Both examples 1 and 2 have dual antecedents. Other evidence supports the interpretation of *yu-bu-cag* as an inclusive first person dual. In the story of Dbyig-pa-can in the *Mdzangs-blun*, known to generations of first year Tibetan studies from Michael Hahn (1994), the pronoun *'u-bu-cag* occurs five times as a first person inclusive dual; it appears in nearly identical passages (cf. example 3), when the hapless Dbyig-pa-can harms someone and that person insists that the two of them appear before the king to adjudicate their dispute.

(3) *tshur shog rgyal-po'i drung-du 'dong-dang/ des 'u-bu-cag-gi zhal-che gcod-du 'ong-ngo zhes smras-nas*

Come here! We shall go before the king and he shall decide our dispute. (*Mdzangs blun*, Derge Kanjur, vol. 74, p. 272a)

The Old Tibetan funerary ritual PT 1070 provides further support for interpreting *'u-bu-cag* as a dual form, by placing the numeral *gnyis* “two” after the word on the three occasions it occurs in the text (ll. 66–73). I am aware of no Old Tibetan examples of *'u-bu-cag ~ yu-bu-cag* with explicitly non-dual antecedents, so one may tentatively conclude that this pronoun is specifically a dual form.

The inclusive first person pronoun (*'o-*)*skol* occurs four times in version A of the story of Rama, three times as *skol* and once in the more familiar form *'o-skol*. Three of the attestations occur in the speech of Marīcī to his lord Daśagrīva (examples 4 and 5).

(4) 'o-*skol*-gyis kho-'i chung-ma / prog-du lta ga-la thob-kyi / brkur yang myi thob-pa-'i steng-du // brgya'-la thob-na yang / slad rjesu *skol*-kyi srid ni brlag-par mchi-bas myi rung. » zhes bgyis-na /

How would **we** be able to steal his wife? Not only are we not able to steal her, but in the very rare case that we could do it, then afterward **our** realm would be destroyed. (Rama A 136–38)

(5) Ma-ru-tse na-re / « de ltar do-gal ched-po-dang bsdos-te / myi thob-du myi rung-na / re shig ni thob-par 'gyur-te / *skol*-kyi srid ni de kho-nar myed-pa lta » zhes zer-nas //

Marīcī said, “If thus the importance is great and it is not possible not to get hold of her, then sometime we shall get her, and **our** realm in that will cease.” (Rama A 139–40)

The fourth example occurs when Hanumanta defends Sīta's honor before Rama (example 6).

(6) lo brgya' prag-gi bar-du // srin-po-dang nyal-du lta ga-la bthub-kyi / bltar yang ma bthub-las / *skol*-kyis slar khugs-pa lag-ste //

How during a hundred years would it be possible to sleep with the demon? He could not even look at her. **We** have brought her back. (Rama A 428–29)

The four examples of ('o-)skol in the story of Rama occur in the mouths of inferiors addressing superiors, so Zadoks' interpretation of ('o-)skol as an honorific appears to be valid for this text. However, in *The Envoys from Phywa to Dmu* (ll. 165–168) the use of 'o-skol is explicitly non-honorific. The lord of Dmu uses *nged* to refer to himself and his kinsmen while addressing the messengers of Phywa (example 7), whereas the messengers refer to themselves with the humble *bdag-cag* (example 8). When the lord of Dmu uses an inclusive pronoun to address the envoys, he chooses 'o-skol (example 9), thus, at least in this text, 'o-skol is the inclusive equivalent of *nged*, and not as Zadoks posits, the inclusive equivalent of *bdag-cag*.¹

(7) « *nged*-kyi Dmu yul 'di dag-na ...

In this **our** land of Dmu... (l. 105, also cf. ll. 126, 132, 140)

(8) « *bdag-cag* ni 'Phywa-'i 'bangs /

We are the subjects of 'Phywa. (ll. 110–11, also cf. ll. 114, 120, 129, 131,

¹ Example 9 also shows that 'o-skol is not always dual, although the examples from the story of Rama (examples 4–6) are compatible with analysis as a dual.

135, 152, 159, 161, 163, 168)
 (9) « *de-lags khyed 'o-skol mchis-pa yang /*
phu ni stong sde / mda' ni rgya-sde /
rje gcig-gi 'bangs-la
yul cǐg-gi ni myi /
sa cig-gi 'bras /
ri cig-gi rdo /
khyed 'o-skol-la dbyar myed-pas /

« You are **us**.

Above a chiliarchy, below, a hecatontarchy
 As subjects of a ruler,
 men of the land,
 rice of the earth,
 stone of the mountain,
 you are not distinguished from **us**. » (ll.165–67)

With example 9 in mind, Shiho Ebihara suggests that although both “Zadoks (2004) and Hill (2010) state that *'o skol* is an INCL pronoun ... it is doubtful that it can be used as an INCL pronoun on its own, without the second-person singular [*sic*] pronoun *khyed*” (Ebihara 2013: 94).² Nonetheless, examples 4–6 show that there is no cause for this doubt; the inclusive pronoun *'o-skol* can and does occur without an accompanying *khyed*.³

Although much remains to learn about *'u-bu-cag ~yu-bu-cag* and *'o-skol*, it appears that *'o-skol* is the generic Old Tibetan first personal inclusive pronoun, whereas *'u-bu-cag ~yu-bu-cag* has a more specifically dual meaning.

THE *MI LA RAS PA'I RNAM THAR*

In a study of personal pronouns in chapter three of the *Mi la ras pa'i rnam thar*, I was unable to distinguish the use of the inclusive first person plural pronouns *'u-cag* (a clear descendant of Old Tibetan *'u-bu-cag*) and *rang-re* (Hill 2007). Because my earlier study was restricted to chapter three, I failed to notice that *'o-skol* occurs as a third first personal plural inclusive in this text.

² The pronoun *khyed* is a second person plural, not a second person singular (cf. Hill 2007: 284–86, 2013: 249–51).

³ Even in example 9 my own understanding of the syntax is that *khyed* and *'o-skol* are treated as distinct noun phrases; their juxtaposition is fortuitous.

In light of the evidence that *'u-bu-cag ~ yu-bu-cag* is a dual in Old Tibetan, the hypothesis presents itself that *'u-cag* is also a dual form. Three instances of *'u-cag* occur when Mila's mother takes him aside to advise him before he departs for Central Tibet; these occurrences of *'u-cag* have explicitly dual antecedents (examples 10–12). His mother also addresses Mi-la with *rang-re* (examples 20–22).

(10) *bu 'u-cag ma-smad-kyi las-skos-la ltos-lal*

“Son, attending to **our** fate mother and children...” (*Mi la*, p. 38, l. 6)

(11) *khong-tsho'i mthu-dang 'u-cag-gi mthu mi 'dra'o*

“Their magic and **our** magic are not the same.” (*Mi la*, p. 38, l. 8)

(12) *'u-cag ma-smad sdug thug-pa'i mthu yin-pas*

“Since **our** magic is on account of we mother and children having met misfortune.” (*Mi la*, p. 38, l. 9)

Later in the text a passage of dialogue occurs between Mar-pa and his wife Bdag-med-pa, in which the pronoun *'u-cag* appears in the spelling *'o-cag* (example 13); here also the antecedent is dual.

(13) *yum-gyis « Mthu-chen-gyis 'o-cag blos ma thongs-par log byung / phyag 'bul-du yong-bas chog lags-sam ? » zhus-pas / « 'o-cag blos ma thongs-pa min / kho-rang blos ma thongs-pa yin / phyag 'tshal-du thong na'ang thong » gsung /*

The lady said, “Great magician has not abandoned **us**, but has returned. Will you allow him to come and prostrate himself?” “It is not that he hasn't abandoned **us**, it is that he has not abandoned himself. If you (want to) send him to prostrate, then send him,” [Marpa] said (*Mi la*, p. 69, ll. 22–24).

There are two cases in the text in which the context does not specify a dual meaning for *'u-cag*. First, near the end of chapter three some hunters hankering to do Mi-la harm use the pronoun (example 14).

(14) *gzhon-pa rnam na-re / « thos-pa-dga' kho yin thag chod / khos 'u-cag mthong-ba med-pas ... »*

The youngsters said, “Certainly he is Thos-pa-dga'. He has not seen **us**...” (*Mi la*, p. 48 l. 21).

The context gives no indication as to the number of youths. In light of the mounting evidence that *'u-cag* is a dual form, one might suspect that only two hunters are present. Nonetheless, much later in the *Mi la ras pa'i rnam thar* is an example of *'u-cag* that cannot be interpreted

as dual. A group of hungry hunters happen upon Mi-la meditating in a cave and are irritated that he has no provisions to offer them. When some of the hunters lift him up to see whether he is sitting on any provisions another hunter objects in the words of example 15.

(15) « *'u-cag ltogs-pa khong-gis lan-pa ni min de 'dra ma byed !* » *zer /*
He is not responsible for **our** hunger. Do not do that! (*Mi la*, p. 128, ll. 9–10).

After desisting from their harassment of the yogin the others (i.e., not the one who objected) ask for Mi-la's blessing (example 16).

(16) *gzhan rnams na-re* « *nged-kyis kyang khyed bteg yod-pas nged-tsho yang chug-cig !* » *zer /*

The others said, "Because **we** have lifted you up, protect us!" (*Mi la*, p. 128, ll. 12–13).

Because there is a disagreement among one hunter and others (*gzhan rnams*), the total number of hunters must be more than two, so the antecedent of *'u-cag* in example 15 cannot be dual.

If *'u-cag* is not specifically a dual, it is necessary to find some other explanation for its use. Ebihara suspects that *'u-cag* "might be a dialectal feature" (2013: 94), but this explanation is not very satisfactory, because some characters use *'u-cag* in contexts where they also use other pronouns. For example, of the three times that the first person plural inclusive *'o-skol* occurs in the *Mi la ras pa'i rnam thar*,⁴ the first is in a speech of Mar-pa to his wife Bdag-med-ma (example 17), but Mar-pa also refers to himself and his wife with *'o-cag* (example 13).

(17) *bdag-med-ma 'o-skol-la g-yu 'di ga-nas byung gsung-ba*
He said, "Bdag-med-ma, this turquoise of **ours**, where did we get it from?" (*Mi la*, p. 66, 28–29).

The other examples of *'o-skol* occur in a song that Mi-la addresses to his sister (example 18) and in an address of Mi-la to his disciples shortly before his death (example 19).

(18) *chos brgyad spongs-la La-phyi Gangs-la gshegs // 'o-skol lcam-sring bsdebs-la La-phyi Gangs-la gshegs // ... 'o-skol lcam-sring bsdebs-la La-phyi Gangs-la gshegs // lcam-sring skal-ldan gnyis bsdebs-la La-phyi Gangs-kyi ra-ba-la gshegs //*

⁴ The occurrence of *'o-skol* in the *Mi la ras pa'i rnam thar* three times shows that Zadoks is mistaken to call it a hapax in this text (2004: 2).

Give up the eight worldly dharmas and come to La-phyi Gangs. **We** brother and sister together, shall go to La-Phyi Gangs. ... **We**, brother and sister together, shall go to La-phyi Gangs. Brother and sister, both fortunate, shall go together to the court of La-Phyi Gangs (*Mi la*, p. 146–48, ll. 25–29).

(19) 'dir tshogs-pa'i grwa-pa bu-slob lha mir bcas-pa rnams / 'o-skol
tshe sngon smon-lam bzang-pos mtshams sbyar-bas / da lan phrad-nas
dkar-po'i chos-kyis 'brel-ba yin-no //

Monks and students assembled here as gods and men, it is by virtue of the excellent prayers **we** made in precious lives that we meet today and are connected through the pure dharma (*Mi la*, 169, ll. 11–14).

Example 18 is in verse and example 19 is nearly in verse. Perhaps these are passages that Gtsang smyon He-ru-ka incorporated directly from his source material and the use of 'o-skol will be more convincingly accounted for within the context of this source material.

Whereas the pronouns 'o-skol and 'u-cag (< 'u-bu-cag) have antecedents in Old Tibetan, the inclusive first person pronoun *rang-re*, found in the *Mi la ras pa'i rnam thar*, appears to lack an Old Tibetan ancestor. This pronoun occurs in the speech of his mother to Mi-la (example 20, 21, and 22), Mi-la to his friends (23), his friends to Mi-la (24), elders to a crowd (25), and townspeople to Mi-la's uncle (26).

(20) mi khyim-mtshes **rang-re** ma-smad-la sdug-po gtong-mkhan

“The neighbors who do evil to **us** mother and children” (*Mi la*, p. 37, l. 12).

(21) bu **rang-re** ma-smad-pas sdug-pa sa thog-na med-pa-la khyod glu
len-pa dran-pa rang 'dug gam /

“Son, since **we** mother and children have nothing but suffering, how do you even think of singing”. (*Mi la*, p. 37, l. 3).

(22) **rang-re** ma-bu gnyis-ka'i phyir-du srog zon dam-par gyis ! /

“For both **our** sakes, mother and son, watch out for our lives!” (*Mi la*, p. 46, ll. 3).

(23) nga yang mthu slob-tu 'gro-bas **rang-re** rnams bsdebs 'gro » byas-
pa

“I said, ‘because I am also going to study curses, let **us** go together’” (*Mi la*, p. 37, l. 24).

(24) khong rnams na-re « **rang-res** bsnyen-pa skyel nus-na gdams-ngag
de kun zab-mo rang dug ...

They said, “if **we** are able to use these teachings, they are all rather profound instructions ...”

(25) *rgan-pa rnams na-re/ « mo bsad-pas ci-la phan/ yang rang-re tsho-la mo'i bus 'di 'dra-ba zhig 'ong-ba de-ka yin mod/ »*

The elders said, “what good is it to kill the woman? her son will bring us destruction similar to this” (*Mi la*, p. 43, ll. 23–25).

(26) *da yang mo'i bu ma sod-par las 'di byed-na/ rang-re tsho 'thab » byas pas*

“If you do this without killing the woman’s son, then we [i.e., the group of we villagers and you] shall fight” (*Mi la*, p. 43, ll. 30–31, cf. Hill 2007: 281).

All of the examples of *rang-re* in the text occur in the speech of characters from *Mi-la*’s home region of Gung-thang. Perhaps this distribution indicates that this pronoun is a dialect feature of Gung-thang. In contrast, both *'u-cag* and *'o-skol* are used by speakers both from Gung-thang and from Lho-brag.

Unfortunately, the occurrences of *rang-re*, *'u-cag*, and *'o-skol* in the *Mi la ras pa'i rnam thar* are insufficient to make the difference in usage among these words clear. One can, however, hope that examination of other narratives will help to further elucidate the picture.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ebihara, Shiho 2013. “The inclusive-exclusive distinction in spoken and written Tibetan.” In Tsuguhito Takeuchi *et al.* (eds), *Current Issues and Progress in Tibetan Studies: Proceedings of the Third International Seminar of Young Tibetologists, Kobe 2012*, pp. 85–102. Kobe: Research Institute of Foreign Studies Kobe City University of Foreign Studies.
- Hahn, Michael 1994. *Lehrbuch der klassischen tibetischen Schriftsprache*. Swisttal-Odendorf: Indica et Tibetica Verlag.
- Hill, Nathan W. 2007. “Personalpronomina in der Lebensbeschreibung des *Mi la ras pa*, Kapitel III.” *Zentralasiatische Studien* 36: 277–87.
- 2010. “Personal Pronouns in Old Tibetan.” *Journal asiatique* 298(2): 549–71.
- 2013. “The Emergence of the Pluralis Majestatis and the Relative Chronology of Old Tibetan Texts.” In Franz-Karl Ehrhard and Petra Maurer (eds), *Nepalica-Tibetica: Festgabe for Christoph Cüppers*, pp. 249–62. Andiaast: International Institute for Tibetan and Buddhist Studies GmbH.
- de Jong, Jan Willem 1959. *Mi la ras pa'i rnam thar: texte tibétain de la vie de Milarépa*. ‘S-Gravenhage: Mouton.
- 1989. *The Story of Rāma in Tibet: Text and Translation of the Tun-huang Manuscripts*. Stuttgart: F. Steiner.
- Zadoks, Abel 2004. “Evidentials in Middle Tibetan Texts.” Unpublished manuscript read at the 37th International Conference on Sino-Tibetan Languages and Linguistics, Lund, September 2004.