

# From Classifier to Stance Marker: On the Diachronic Development of Cantonese *go*<sup>3</sup>

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# General Classifier 個

- Cantonese: *go<sup>3</sup>* [kɔ˥˩]
- Mandarin: *gè* [kɤ˥˩]

(1) 一 個 人  
Jat1 **go3** jan4  
Yī **gè** rén  
one **CL** person  
'one person'

- 个/箇/個

# Research Questions

- How did the general classifier 個 *go<sup>3</sup>* develop diachronically and acquire other functions (including stance marking) in Cantonese?
- Is there an etymological relation between the classifier 個 *go<sup>3</sup>* and adnominal marker 嘅 *ge<sup>3</sup>* in Cantonese?

# Previous Studies

- Shí (2002) and Wāng (2008) explores the inter-relation among the classifier, demonstrative and genitive marker among the southern dialects.
- Yao (2009) identifies similar inter-related functions of 個 in Hakka.
- Sio (2012) explores the usage and properties of the Cantonese adnominal marker and SFP 嘅 *ge<sup>3</sup>*.

# Etymology of 个 / 箇 / 個

- 箇
- Radical: 竹 = bamboo

(2) zhú      gān      wàn      gè  
竹      竿      萬      个  
bamboo    pod    myriad    GE  
'Ten thousand pieces of bamboo pod'

《史記》卷129〈貨殖列傳〉

W. Han, 1<sup>st</sup> c. B.C.

Sam WONG & Foong Ha YAP



竹竿萬个 (六) 箇  
竹竿萬个 (七) 箇  
竹竿萬个 (八) 箇  
竹竿萬个 (九) 箇  
竹竿萬个 (十) 箇

〔七〕集解 徐廣曰：「古賀反。」 〔索隱〕竹千萬个。釋名云：「竹曰箇，木曰枚。」

# As a Measure Word

(3) *lù*      *pí*      *sì*      *gè*  
鹿      皮      四      个  
deer    leather    four    GE  
'Four pieces of deer leather'

- — 《國語》 (Warring States, ca 5<sup>th</sup> c. B.C.)

# As a Demonstrative

- 德正徑造坐席，連索熊白。之才謂坐者曰：「**箇人諱底？**」眾莫知。之才曰：「生不為人所知，死不為人所諱，此何足問？」  
—《北齊書》卷三十三：列傳第二十五 (NSD, 6<sup>th</sup> c.)

- 箇 人 諱 底 ？

(4) DEM person name what

‘What is **this/that** person’s name?’

Lit. ‘**This/that** person names what?’

之才謂坐者曰：「箇人諱底？」眾莫知。〔二四〕

## As a Adnominalizer?

(5) *hǎo gè rénjiā nán nǚ yǒu shénme zuì guò*  
好 个 人家 男 女 , 有 什麼 罪 過 ?  
good GE family male female have what guilt error  
'A good family of male and female, what guilt do they have?'

— 《祖堂集·丹霞和尚》 (Five Dynasties, 10th c.)

- Potential source: 好一个人家男女 > 好个人家男女 ?
- Classifier > adnominalizer (also known as modification marker, association marker, genitive marker or relativizer)



# Cantonese historical documents used in this study

- 《花箋記》, *Anonymous*, 17<sup>th</sup> c.
- 《二荷花史》, *Anonymous*, 17<sup>th</sup> /18<sup>th</sup> c.
- 《粵謳》, by 招子庸 Chiu Tsz-yung, 1828
- *Vocabulary of the Cantonese Dialect*, by Morrison, 1828
- *Cantonese Made Easy*, by Ball, 1888

花 箋

*Hwa - tsien*

**CHINESE COURTSHIP.**

**IN VERSE.**

—  
TO WHICH IS ADDED,

**A N A P P E N D I X,**  
TREATING OF THE REVENUE OF CHINA,  
*&c. &c.*

—  
BY

**PETER PERRING THOMS.**

LONDON :

PUBLISHED BY PARBURY, ALLEN, AND KINGSBURY, LEADENHALL-STREET,  
SOLD BY JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE-STREET; AND BY THOMAS  
BLANCHARD, 14, CITY-ROAD.

—  
MACAO, CHINA :

PRINTED AT THE HONORABLE EAST INDIA COMPANY'S PRESS.

1824.



## As a Adnominalizer(?) in Cantonese

(6) 好個蠟蠟懵大仙，你休兩眠睜睜將姐看，  
唔止倚花人懵望天孫，算起數來該五注，  
快斟令酒請嬌完。

—《二荷花史》(17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> c., opera lyrics)

- ‘What a Haam-Ma Silly god!’
- 好一個蠟蠟懵大仙 > 好個蠟蠟懵大仙？
- cf. 好一個人家男女 > 好個人家男女？

## As an Adverbializer in Cantonese

- (7) 紫玉即時抽個氣： “講奴真個好傷心，我係  
姓秦年十七，世家原係北京人。”  
—《二荷花史》(17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> c.)

- 講 奴 真 個 好 傷心  
talk 1SG real GE very heartbraking  
‘Talking about me, it is really heartbreaking!’
- Cf. Mandarin 講奴真的好傷心

# As a Nominalizer in Cantonese

- (8) 你睇池畔這雙穿白個，  
唔止月中飛下兩雲仙！  
—《二荷花史》(17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> c.)

- ‘Look at these two who dress in white in the poolside...’

- (9) 穿 白 個  
dress white GE  
‘the ones who dress in white’

# As a Nominalizer in Cantonese

- Cantonese

(10) 穿 白 個

dress white GE

'the ones who dress in white'

- Mandarin

- \*穿白個

- possible in Early Mandarin??

(11) 穿 白 的

dress white NMZ

'the one who dress in white'

# Sentence Final Pa

(12) 但係娶老婆呢種福，我

‘But for the fortune of getting a w

— 《難兄難弟》 (a HK film pr



個！  
are it!’

- 個嗰: affirmative and remind
- \*我哋唔可以同享個！ (modern Cantonese)

13. { Ká, 啲 } emphatic-affirmative.

14. Ká', 嘍 }

15. Ke', 嘅, somewhat similar to the last, or simply euphonic.

16. Ko', 个, same as last.

Ball 1888: *Cantonese Made Easy*



# Nominalizer as Sentence Final Particle

- **Southern Dialects**
- **Cantonese**
- 個-type SFP
- 的 is not used in colloquial Cantonese
- “唔係咁樣嘅！”
- Cantonese use *go3* (attested in the 19<sup>th</sup> century) and 嘅 *ge3* (attested from the 20<sup>th</sup> century).
- **Northern Dialects**
- **Mandarin**
- \*個-type SFP
- 的-type SFP
- “不是這樣子的！”

# Frequency Usage of 個 in 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> c.

個	classi- fier	demon- strative	adver- bializer	nomi- nalizer	classifier ~ adnominalizer	SFP	Σ
花箋記 (17 <sup>th</sup> c.)	40	17	/	/	/	/	57
二荷花史 (17 <sup>th</sup> /18 <sup>th</sup> c.)	111	7	10	8	3	/	139
粵謳 (1-52) (1828)	16	12	/	/	/	/	28
Bridgman (1844)	152	93	/	/	/	/	245
Contemporary Cantonese	✓	$go^2$	*	*	*	$ge^3$	

# Contemporary Cantonese

- 兩個
  - \*個邊 /go<sup>3</sup> bin<sup>1</sup>/
  - \*真個好傷心
  - \*穿白個
  - \*我哋唔可以同享個！
  - 啲邊 /go<sup>2</sup> bin<sup>1</sup>/
  - 真係好傷心
  - 着白衫嘅
  - 我哋唔可以同享嘅！
- † 嘅: functional counterpart of Mandarin 的

# 嘅 in Cantonese

- Nominalizer: 着白衫嘅 ‘one dressing in white’
- Adnominalizer
  - Relativizer: 我做嘅事 ‘the thing that I do’
  - Associative marker: 我嘅叔叔 ‘My uncle’
  - Genitive marker: 我嘅蘋果 ‘My apple’
- Modification marker: 好嘅貓 ‘good cat’
- Sentence final particle: 我哋唔可以同享嘅 !
- Pronunciation:
  - Stressed [kɛ˥]
  - Unstressed [kə˥]

]

廣東省土話字彙 既

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VOCABULARY

OF THE

CANTON DIALECT.

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BY R. MORRISON, D. D.

---

PART. I.

ENGLISH AND CHINESE.

---

MACAO, CHINA.

PRINTED AT THE HONORABLE EAST INDIA COMPANY'S PRESS,

BY G. J. STEYN, AND BROTHER.

---

1828.

# Earliest Examples of 嘅

nominalizer

AUTHOR, 作書既 Tsok shu kay; 著書立說 Chu shu-  
lap shuet. To publish with original notes, 做書既人  
Tsow shu kay yun; Is only the Book maker, the Printer  
and Publisher.

relativizer

Genitive marker

BELIEVE, what he says, 信佢既說話 Sun kuy kay shuet;  
wa. Believe firmly, 篤信 Tuk sun.

今日 Kum yat. Each day, 每日 Mooy yat. One day's  
work, 一日既工夫 Yat yat kay kung foo. Day time,

Associative marker

FALSE, 假既 Ka kay. Adjective suffix

廣東省土話字彙  
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1828.

Morrison 1828

# Why 嘅 can be a SFP?

- Morrison (1828): *VCD*
- 或者係咁嘅
- 歷來都係咁嘅
- 上下係咁嘅
- 應理係咁嘅
- 係咁嘅
- 有咁嘅
- 本性天生嘅，不是學  
來嘅
- Nominalizer ~ SFP
- Adjective suffix?? ~ SFP

## Why 嘅 can be a SFP?

(13) 或者 係 咁 既  
waak6ze2 hai6 gom2 ge3  
perhaps COP DEM NMZ~SFP  
'May be it's like this.'

- In Cantonese, we virtually utterance every sentence with SFP, the sentence-final nominalizer was reanalyzed as a stance marker with affirmative/emphatic meaning.



## Source of 嘅?

13. Ká, 咖, } emphatic-affirmative. Ball 1888  
14. Ká', 嘍, }  
15. Ke', 嘅, somewhat similar to the last, or simply euphonic.  
16. Ko', 个, same as last.

- 個 *go<sup>3</sup>* versus 嘅 *ge<sup>3</sup>*: very similar in pronunciation
- 我哋唔可以同享個啲 ≡ 我哋唔可以同享嘅啲
- SFP: 個 > 嘅
- What about the nominalizer and adnominalizer?

# 個 > 嘅

(14) 尋日 嘅 蛋糕 呢? ≡ 尋日 個 蛋糕 呢?

Yesterday GE cake Q      yesterday GO cake Q

‘Where is yesterday’s cake?’ Lit. ‘Yesterday’s cake [Q]?’

- $\emptyset$ : zero marker for adnominal marker
- N +  $\emptyset$  + 個 + N: CL 個 looks like adnominal usage
- 渠個花園 (花箋記)、你個家翁 (二荷花史)
- Mandarin
  - 好的人 ‘good [’s] person’
  - Adj + 的 + N: 的 looks like an associative marker

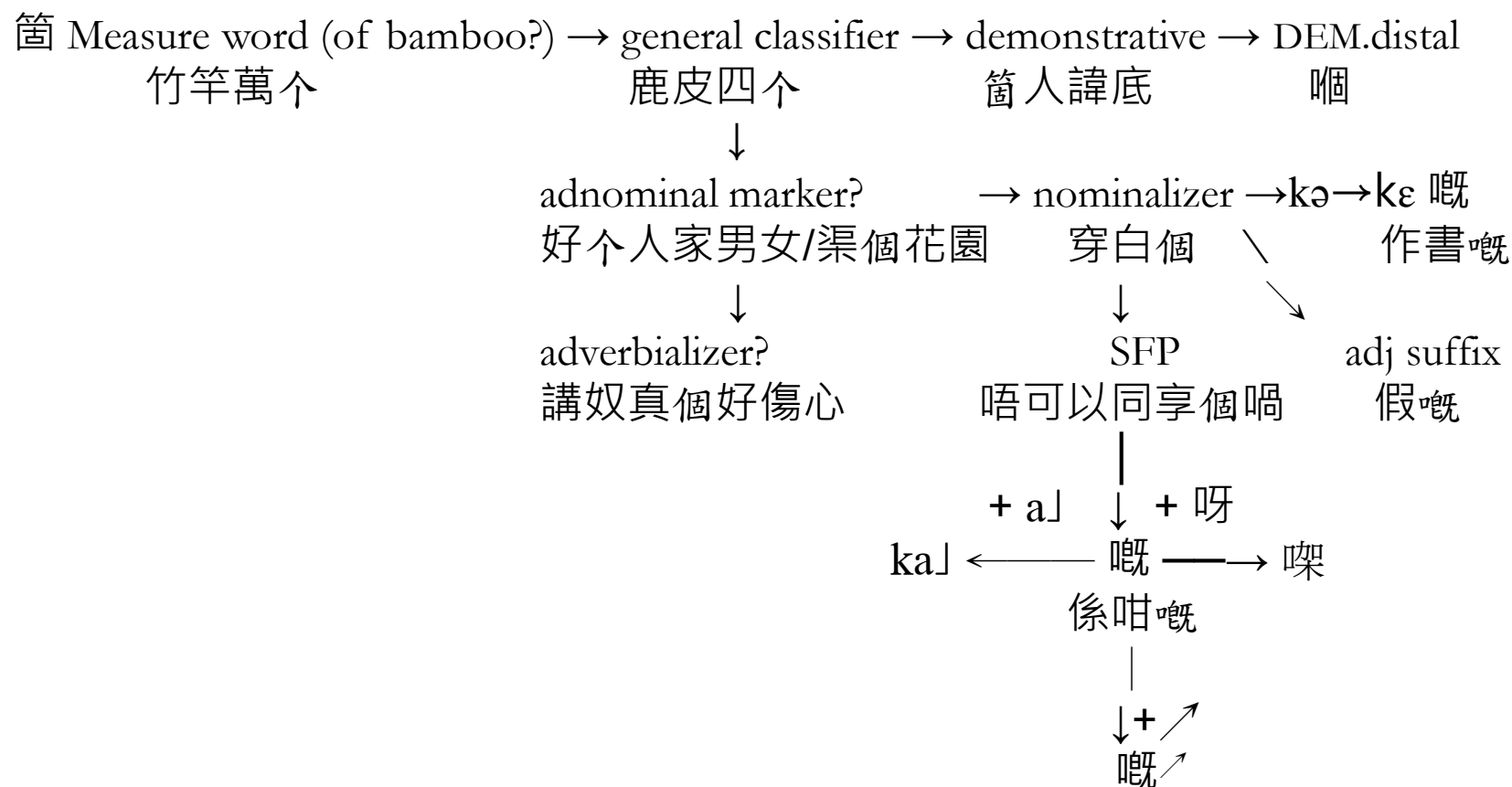
# 個 > 嘅

- 尋日 嘅 蛋糕呢？ ≡ 尋日 個 蛋糕呢？
- Function words tend to be unstressed over time
  - English: of /ɒv/ > /əv/
  - Mandarin: 的 [ti] > [tə]
- 嘅: Stressed [kɛɫ]                      Unstressed [kəɫ]
- Hypothesis
  - 個 frequently appears in N + CL + N context ⇒ reanalyzed as a productive adnominal marker
  - 個 [kɔ] > [kʌ] > [kə] 嘅 (vowel centralized and weakened)
  - Stressed > unstressed, suggesting greater integration
  - [kə] > [kɛ] in stressing context

# The family of 嘅 as SFP

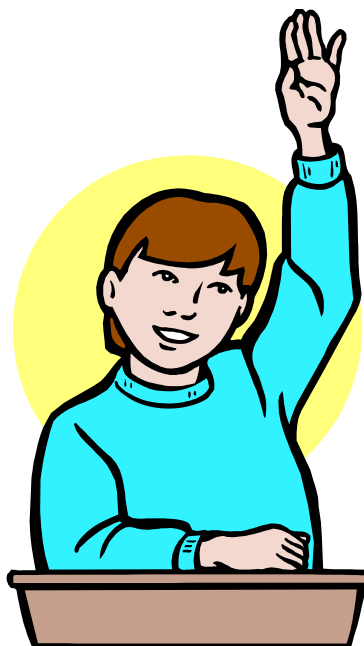
- 嘅 keɪ <factual>
- 嘅 keɪ + ↗ > keɪ <complain; defense; Q>
- 嘅 keɪ + 呀 aɪ > 㗎 kaɪ <factual+mild tone>
- 嘅 keɪ + aɪ > kaɪ <factual+question>

# Semantic Map of 個



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# Thank you!

## Q&A

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