

THE INFLECTIONAL CLASSES OF THE RTAU VERB

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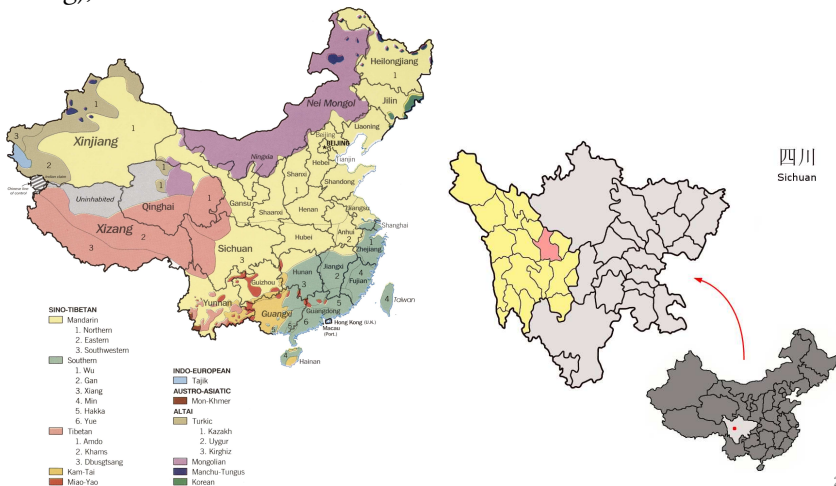
*Workshop 3: Synchrony and Diachrony of Inflectional Classes:
Theoretical and Empirical Considerations*

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THE RTAU LANGUAGE

- Rtau (locally known as *rəʃnəske*) is a Rgyalrongic language spoken in Rtau county (道孚县 Dào fú xiàn), Sichuan province (四川省 Sì chuān shěng), China.



STATE OF THE ART

- Previous work on Rtau includes Huang (1991), Sun (2007) and especially Sun and Tian (to appear).
- The variety presented here represents the dialect of Khang.gsar (*q^hərŋe*) village spoken in the North of Rtau county, and differs slightly from the varieties studied by other authors.
- The data presented here is based on ongoing fieldwork by the authors.

RTAU VERBS

- From a morphophonological point of view, there are two main verb conjugation classes: class I verbs (mostly intransitive) and class II verbs (transitive)
- Class I verbs distinguish (at most) two forms
- Class II verbs have (up to) four distinct stems which combined with the inverse prefix make up to six different forms

ZBU RGYALRONG TRANSITIVE AND INTRANSITIVE PARADIGMS

Table: Zbu Rgyalrong transitive paradigm (data adapted from Gong 2014)

	1SG	1DU	1PL	2SG	2DU	2PL	3SG	3DU	3PL	3'
1SG				tw- Σ_1	tw- Σ_1 -ndzə	tw- Σ_1 -ŋə	Σ_3 -ŋ	Σ_3 -ŋ-ndzə	Σ_3 -ŋ-ŋə	
1DU							Σ_1 -tɕə			
1PL							Σ_1 -jə			
2SG	tə-wə- Σ_1 -ŋ	tə-wə- Σ_1 -tɕə	tə-wə- Σ_1 -jə				$tə$ - Σ_3	tə- Σ_1 -ndzə	tə- Σ_1 -ŋə	
2DU	tə-wə- Σ_1 -ŋ-ndzə									
2PL	tə-wə- Σ_1 -ŋ-ŋə									
3SG	wə- Σ_1 -ŋ	wə- Σ_1 -tɕə	wə- Σ_1 -jə	tə-wə- Σ_1	tə-wə- Σ_1 -ndzə	tə-wə- Σ_1 -ŋə			Σ_3	
3DU	wə- Σ_1 -ŋ-ndzə								Σ_1 -ndzə	
3PL	wə- Σ_1 -ŋ-ŋə								Σ_1 -ŋə	
3'							wə- Σ_1	wə- Σ_1 -ndzə	wə- Σ_1 -ŋə	
INTR	Σ_1 -ŋ	Σ_1 -tɕə	Σ_1 -jə	tə- Σ_1	tə- Σ_1 -ndzə	tə- Σ_1 -ŋə	Σ_1	Σ_1 -ndzə	Σ_1 -ŋə	

MORPHOPHONOLOGY OF CLASS I (INTRANSITIVE) VERBS

- At most two different forms, one with a 1SG/PL reference, the other with a 2/3 SG/PL reference
- The 1 form has a limited array of possible rhymes: no front or central vowels, only open syllable nasal rhymes $-\tilde{a}$ and $-\tilde{o}$, velarized vowels $-o^y$ and $-a^y$ or the back rounded $-u$
- In the 2/3 form almost all possible rhymes are attested, including open and closed syllables

Table: Class I open-syllable verbs in Rtau

1	<i>scəqã</i>	<i>mbəçã</i>	<i>rgã</i>	<i>fkõ</i>	<i>ŋõ</i>	<i>c^hu</i>	<i>ɲã</i>	<i>spã</i>
2/3	<i>scəqi</i>	<i>mbəçe</i>	<i>rga</i>	<i>fkə</i>	<i>ŋɛ</i>	<i>c^hu</i>	<i>ɲɛv</i>	<i>spar</i>
	look at	move	like	be full	be ill	be hot	sleep	be thirsty

MORPHOPHONOLOGY OF CLASS I (INTRANSITIVE) VERBS

- Vowel alternations (or the lack thereof) allow us to posit the existence of six inflectional subclasses for verbs ending in open syllables, with class 6 including verbs exhibiting no alternations, whose rhyme can be any of $-u$, $-o^y$, $-a^y$, $-\tilde{o}$ and $-\tilde{a}$ (Table 3)
- The alternations can be stated in a straightforward way: centralized vowels $-\partial$ and $-\epsilon$ change to $-\tilde{o}$, and front and open (unrounded and non-velarized) vowels change to $-\tilde{a}$

Table: Vowel alternations in open-syllable intransitive verbs in Rtau

	A i : \tilde{a}	B e : \tilde{a}	C a : \tilde{a}	D ∂ : \tilde{o}	E ϵ : \tilde{o}	F
1	<i>scəqã</i>	<i>mbəçã</i>	<i>rgã</i>	<i>fkõ</i>	<i>ŋõ</i>	<i>c^hu</i>
2/3	<i>scəqi</i>	<i>mbəçe</i>	<i>rga</i>	<i>fkə</i>	<i>ŋɛ</i>	<i>c^hu</i>
	look at	move	like	be full	be ill	be hot

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- The alternations can be stated in a straightforward way: centralized vowels $-\text{ə}$ and $-\text{e}$ change to $-\tilde{o}$, and front and open (unrounded and non-velarized) vowels change to $-\tilde{a}$.

Table: Vowel alternations in open-syllable intransitive verbs in Rtau

	A i : \tilde{a}	B e : \tilde{a}	C a : \tilde{a}	D ə : \tilde{o}	E e : \tilde{o}	F
1	<i>scəqã</i>	<i>mbəçã</i>	<i>rgã</i>	<i>fkõ</i>	<i>ŋõ</i>	<i>c^hu</i>
2/3	<i>scəqi</i>	<i>mbəçe</i>	<i>rga</i>	<i>fkə</i>	<i>ŋe</i>	<i>c^hu</i>
	look at	move	like	be full	be ill	be hot

MORPHOPHONOLOGY OF CLASS I (INTRANSITIVE) VERBS

- In the case of verb stems ending in *-r* or *-v*, the first person is always derived by replacing the entire rhyme by *-ã* or *-õ* depending on the main vowel of the rhyme.
- Stems ending in *-m* (the only other final consonant available) are always Tibetan loanwords and do not present any alternation.

Table: Vowel alternations in closed-syllable intransitive verbs in Rtau

	B e : ã	C a : ã
1	<i>ɲã</i>	<i>spã</i>
2/3	<i>ɲev</i>	<i>spar</i>
	sleep	be thirsty

MORPHOPHONOLOGY OF CLASS I (INTRANSITIVE) VERBS

Table: Irregular intransitive verbs in Rtau

<hr/>		
<i>ə : ã</i>		
<hr/>		
1	<i>çã</i>	<i>jã</i>
2/3	<i>çə</i>	<i>jə</i>
<hr/>		
	go	say
<hr/>		

MORPHOPHONOLOGY OF CLASS II (TRANSITIVE) VERBS

- At most six different forms, illustrated by the perfective paradigm of the verb 'to kill' (cf. Table 8).
- If we disregard the inverse prefix $v-/f-$, there are four distinct forms:
 - 1SG→3
 - 2→3
 - 1PL→3 and 2/3→1 (with the inverse prefix)
 - 1→2 and 3→2/3 (with the inverse prefix).

Table: *fse* 'to kill'

	1SG	1PL	2	3
1SG			<i>nə-se</i>	<i>nə-sow</i>
1PL			<i>nə-se</i>	<i>nə-sã</i>
2	<i>nə-f-sã</i>	<i>nə-f-sã</i>		<i>nə-sej</i>
3	<i>nə-f-sã</i>	<i>nə-f-sã</i>	<i>nə-f-se</i>	<i>nə-f-se</i>

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1PL			<i>nə-se</i>	<i>nə-sã</i>
2	<i>nə-f-sã</i>	<i>nə-f-sã</i>		<i>nə-sej</i>
3	<i>nə-f-sã</i>	<i>nə-f-sã</i>	<i>nə-f-se</i>	<i>nə-f-se</i>

- As with intransitive verbs, vowel alternations allow us to posit six inflectional classes, depending on the final vowel of the verb stem. Table 9 presents all six classes (verb forms are shown without the inverse prefix $v-/f-$.)
- Class 6: all verbs with stems ending in $-u$, $-o^y$, $-a^y$, $-\tilde{o}$ and $-\tilde{a}$.

Table: Vowel alternations in open-syllable transitive verbs in Resnyeske

	A [i] : i : [ā] : u	B [e] : j : [ā] : ow	C [a] : j : [ā] : ow	D [ə] : i : [ō] : u	E [ə] : ej : [ō] : ow	F ∅
1SG>3	<i>t^hu</i>	<i>sow</i>	<i>nq^hgrow</i>	<i>zgu</i>	<i>k^how</i>	<i>tsu</i>
1PL>3, 2/3>1	<i>t^hā</i>	<i>sā</i>	<i>nq^hgrā</i>	<i>zgō</i>	<i>k^hō</i>	<i>tsu</i>
2>3	<i>t^hi</i>	<i>sej</i>	<i>nq^hgrej</i>	<i>zgi</i>	<i>k^hej</i>	<i>tsu</i>
3>3, 1>2	<i>t^hi</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>nq^hgra</i>	<i>zgə</i>	<i>k^hə</i>	<i>tsu</i>
	drink	kill	dig	dress up	give	cut

- As with intransitive verbs, vowel alternations allow us to posit six inflectional classes, depending on the final vowel of the verb stem. Table 10 presents all six classes (verb forms are shown without the inverse prefix $v-/f-$.)
- Class 6: all verbs with stems ending in $-u$, $-o^y$, $-a^y$, $-\tilde{o}$ and $-\tilde{a}$.

Table: Vowel alternations in open-syllable transitive verbs in Resnyeske

	A [i] : i : [ā] : u	B [e] : j : [ā] : ow	C [a] : j : [ā] : ow	D [ə] : i : [ō] : u	E [ə] : ej : [ō] : ow	F ∅
1SG>3	<i>t^hu</i>	<i>sow</i>	<i>nq^hgrow</i>	<i>zgu</i>	<i>k^how</i>	<i>tsu</i>
1PL>3, 2/3>1	<i>t^hā</i>	<i>sā</i>	<i>nq^hgrā</i>	<i>zgō</i>	<i>k^hō</i>	<i>tsu</i>
2>3	<i>t^hi</i>	<i>sej</i>	<i>nq^hgrej</i>	<i>zgi</i>	<i>k^hej</i>	<i>tsu</i>
3>3, 1>2	<i>t^hi</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>nq^hgra</i>	<i>zga</i>	<i>k^hg</i>	<i>tsu</i>
	drink	kill	dig	dress up	give	cut

MORPHOPHONOLOGY OF CLASS II (TRANSITIVE) VERBS

- Final *-v* drops in first person forms, but stays in the 2SG→3 form
- Final *-r* drops in the first and second person but is preserved in the third person and in 1→2 forms.
- Final *-m* is immune to any changes

Table: Vowel alternations in closed-syllable transitive verbs in Rtau

	A [i] : i : [ã] : u	B [e] : e : [ã] : ow	C [a] : j : [ã] : ow	D [ə] : i : [õ] : u	E [ɛ] : ej : [õ] : ow	F ∅
1SG>3		<i>xsow</i>		<i>zgru</i>	<i>stow</i>	<i>zdəm</i>
1PL>3, 2/3>1		<i>xsã</i>		<i>zgrõ</i>	<i>stõ</i>	<i>zdəm</i>
2>3		<i>xsev</i>		<i>zgriv</i>	<i>stej</i>	<i>zdəm</i>
3>3,1>2		<i>xsev</i>		<i>zgrəv</i>	<i>stər</i>	<i>zdəm</i>
		give back		accomplish	rob	close

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- Final *-v* drops in first person forms, but stays in the 2SG→3 form
- Final *-r* drops in the first and second person but is preserved in the third person and in 1→2 forms.
- Final *-m* is immune to any changes (cf. 12)

Table: Vowel alternations in closed-syllable transitive verbs in Rtau

	A [i] : i : [ã] : u	B [e] : e : [ã] : ow	C [a] : j : [ã] : ow	D [ə] : i : [õ] : u	E [ɛ] : ej : [õ] : ow	F ∅
1SG>3		<i>xsow</i>		<i>zgru</i>	<i>stow</i>	<i>zdəm</i>
1PL>3, 2/3>1		<i>xsã</i>		<i>zgrõ</i>	<i>stõ</i>	<i>zdəm</i>
2>3		<i>xsev</i>		<i>zgriv</i>	<i>stej</i>	<i>zdəm</i>
3>3,1>2		<i>xsev</i>		<i>zgrəv</i>	<i>stər</i>	<i>zdəm</i>
		give back		accomplish	rob	close

VOWEL FUSION IN NOUNS

- Table 14 illustrates some examples of vowel fusion in nouns involving the ergative (ERG) *-w* and genitive (GEN) *-j* case markers.

Table: Vowel fusion in Rtau nouns

	‘dog’	‘man’	‘yak (male)’
ABS	<i>kəta</i>	<i>vdzi</i>	<i>xə</i>
ERG	<i>kətow</i>	<i>vdzu</i>	<i>xu</i>
GEN	<i>kətej</i>	<i>vdzi</i>	<i>xi</i>

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GEN	<i>kətej</i>	<i>vdzi</i>	<i>xi</i>

VOWEL FUSION IN CLASS II (TRANSITIVE) VERBS

- The third person form is the base form
- 1PL→3 and 2/3→1 result from fusion with the first person $-ā$ suffix.
- Vowel rounding in 1SG→3 with an additional $-w$ glide with mid-low and low vowels can be accounted for by positing a suffix whose underlying form is $-w$.
- Vowel fronting in 2→3 and additional $-j$ glide with mid-low and low vowels prompts positing an underlying $-j$.

Table: Vowel fusion in Rtau transitive verbs

	1SG>3 $-w$	2>3 $-j$
<i>i</i>	<i>u</i>	<i>i</i>
<i>e</i>	<i>ow</i>	<i>ej</i>
<i>a</i>	<i>ow</i>	<i>ej</i>
<i>ə</i>	<i>u</i>	<i>i</i>
<i>ɔ</i>	<i>ow</i>	<i>ej</i>

VOWEL FUSION IN CLASS I (INTRANSITIVE) VERBS

- The first person form is generally predictable from the 2/3 form (except in a few isolated cases).
- The 2/3 form is then the base form and the 1 form is derived from it by fusion with a suffix $-\tilde{a}$, realized as $-\tilde{o}$ when the rhyme is centralized.
- Except in verb stems ending in a nasal or velarized vowel.

Table: Vowel fusion in Rtau intransitive verbs

2/3	1
<i>i</i>	\tilde{a}
<i>e</i>	\tilde{a}
<i>a</i>	\tilde{a}
<i>ə</i>	\tilde{o}
<i>ɜ</i>	\tilde{o}

VOWEL FUSION IN CLASS I & CLASS II VERBS

- All these morphophonological rules are summarized in Table 17.

Table: Vowel fusion in Rtau (in)transitive verbs

	1SG>3 -w	1 -ã	2>3 -j
<i>i</i>	<i>u</i>	<i>ã</i>	<i>i</i>
<i>e</i>	<i>ow</i>	<i>ã</i>	<i>ej</i>
<i>a</i>	<i>ow</i>	<i>ã</i>	<i>ej</i>
<i>ə</i>	<i>u</i>	<i>õ</i>	<i>i</i>
<i>ɔ</i>	<i>ow</i>	<i>õ</i>	<i>ej</i>

RTAU CLASS I & II PARADIGM

Table: Rtau transitive and intransitive paradigms

	1	2	3
1s		Σ	$\Sigma-w$
1p			$\Sigma-\tilde{a}$
2	$v-\Sigma-\tilde{a}$		$\Sigma-j$
3		$v-\Sigma$	
INTR	$\Sigma-\tilde{a}$	Σ	

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