Several researchers draw attention to the ability of Tibeto-Burman languages to use nominalized verb forms in finite contexts (Matisoff 1972, Coupe, ed. 2008, DeLancey 2011), but the reverse pattern—morphologically finite forms occurring in nominal contexts—has received less attention. Here I collect a few examples from Classical Tibetan and Old Tibetan texts of affixless verb forms occurring in syntactically nominal contexts.

In example (1) the nominalized present verb stem ḡdzin-pa 'taker' is coordinated with gzun, the finite future stem of the same verb. The meaning of gzun in this passage is unequivocally 'that which is taken', as if the form were gzun-pa or gzun-bya. The choice of -daṅ as coordination marker guarantees the interpretation of gzun as a nominal form, since -daṅ occurs only after nouns and never after verbs (Schwieger 2008: 161, 274-276). The expected phrase gzun-pa-daṅ ḡdzin-pa is attested, as seen in example (2).

(1) gzun-daṅ ḡdzin-paḥi sgrib gṇis bral
   'free from the two obscurations of 'taken' and 'taker'. (Marpa 67a)

(2) de ltar yoṅs-su sbyaṅs-nas gzun-pa-daṅ ḡdzin-pa-las rnam-par grol-ziṅ
   'being thus completely purified, one is liberated from 'taken' and 'taker' (Tenjur, vol. 13, p. 229)

One might suppose that in example (1), although the form in question looks verbal, in fact it is a noun derived from a verb just as 'a run' derives from 'to run' in English or gnas 'place' form gnas 'to stay' in Tibetan. Although 'zero nominalization' is a fine term for this type of derivation of nouns from verbs, it is a derivational rather than an inflectional process and may not be synchronically productive. Nonetheless, there are other examples in which the zero-nominalized form functions verbally to the left and nominally to the right, just as in the case of productive inflectional nominalization such as -pa suffixation.

The noun phrase rtse-la dgah daṅ sdug-pa 'amorous play and beauty' of example (3) consists of two component phrases rtse-la dgah 'amorous play' and sdug-pa 'beauty', coordinated by the associative case -daṅ. The first constituent of the coordination, rtse-la dgah 'play and love', itself clearly consists of two finite verbs coordinated by the converb -la. Thus, dgah functions as a verb to the left (taking the verbal coordinator la) and a noun to the right (taking the nominal coordinator daṅ).

(3) nad-kyis ḡjigs-pa ḡdi ltar śin-tu mi bzag-pa // skyes-bu mkhas-pas gṇas ḡdi mthoṅ-nas ji lta-bur // rtse-la dgah daṅ sdug-paḥi ḡdu-śes bskyed-par ḡyur //
The threats of illness are thus quite unbearable. The wise man, having seen this circumstance, how will he engender the notion of amorous play and beauty?

(D. 96, vol. 46, p. 94a)

To my taste the passage should have read \textit{rtse-la dgaḥ-žiṅ sdug-paḥi}, with the verbal coordinator-žiṅ in place of the nominal coordinator case -\textit{daṅ}. Tshogs drug raṅ grol (1781-1851) shares this preference, as seen in his quotation of the passage in example (4).


The threats of illness are thus quite unbearable; the wise man, if he sees this circumstance, how will the notion of amorous play and beauty arise? (Tshogs drug raṅ grol 2002, vol 4, p. 413)

In example (5) the phrase \textit{ma rig} looks like a finite 'didn't know', but functions as an attribute 'ignorant' as if the text had \textit{gsuṅ ma-rig-pa}. The presence of the negation marker \textit{ma} ensures that \textit{rig} is acting verbally to the left.

(5) \textit{bla-mahi gsuṅ // ma-rig min-pa dbyiṅs-su dag /}

The words of the guru, which are not ignorant, are as pure as space. (Marpa 67a)

The expected phrase \textit{*ma-rig-pa min-pa} appears not to be attested. The ninth Karmapa Dbaṅ phyug rdo rje (1556- c. 1603) employs the finite equivalent \textit{ma-rig-pa min} (example 6). The non-occurrence of \textit{*ma-rig-pa min-pa}, together with the use of \textit{gsuṅ-daṅ ḥdzin-pa} (example 1) in place of \textit{gsuṅ-pa-daṅ ḥdzin-pa} (example 2), suggest that the Tibetans do not like a construction to contain too many \textit{pa}'s and omit the first when two appear in quick succession.

(6) \textit{gal-te bu ńan-pa-la bu ma-yin zer-ba bźin-du šes-rabs ńan-pa ni ma rig-paḥo ześ-na / šes-rab ńan-pa ni ma rig-pa min-te/ Ṉon-moṅs-can-du gyur-pahi lta-ba yin-pahi phyir}

If one says 'evil knowledge' is ignorance, like one says to an evil son 'he is not (my) son', evil knowledge is not ignorance because it is a view that gives rise to kleśas. (Dbaṅ phyug rdo rje 2001)

Analogous to the \textit{ma-rig 'ignorance'} of example (5) is \textit{ma-dad 'lack of faith'} in example (7); the negation of the verb stem suggests it must be understood verbally to the left, but the use of the noun coordinator -\textit{daṅ} requires it to be understood nominally to the right.

Pride and lack of faith, lack of interest and being distracted outward, being withdrawn inward and dejection, (these) are flaws of listening. (Bu ston 22b)

Example (7) offers a second more interesting case of zero nominalization, viz. don-du gñer-ba-med-nid. The clitic -níd typically follows a noun phrase; a phrase don-du gñer-ba med-pa-níd 'non-existence of searching after meaning' would pose no problem. This example is in meter, but a causa metri explanation for the lack of -pa is unsatisfying, since one could have swapped the -níd with a -pa and thereby improved the syntax without substantially changing the meaning.

In example (8) bźugs looks like a finite verb 'sits', but in context it means 'those who sit', as if the form were bźugs-pa. Because bźugs 'sit' governs the ḥdir 'here' to its left, it cannot be analyzed as a noun. Example (9) is exactly analogous, but with the verb tshogs 'assemble'. The expected phrases ḥdir bźugs-pa (10) and ḥdir tshogs-pa (11) also occur. In these cases, the explanation for the zero-nominalized forms is certainly that the passages in examples (8) and (9) are verse whereas examples (10) and (11) are prose.

(8) ḥdir bźugs gsan-cig!

'listen, O you who sit here!' (Marpa 50a)

(9) ḥdir tshogs grwa-pa bu-slob kun //

'O all you monks and disciplines gathered here!' (Marpa 83a)

(10) dkyil-ḥkhor chen-po ḥdir bźugs-pa-la snod-du gyur-pa-daṅ / snod-du ma gyur-pa brtag mi ḥtshal-lo

There is no need to examine whether or not those sitting at this great maṇḍala are suitable for taking prātimokṣa vows. (Tenjur, vol. 29, p. 300)

(11) bdag-cag mched-lcam-dral ḥdir tshogs-pa rnams-kyis mchod-paḥi žal-zas ḥdi-dag tshul bźin-du byin-gyis brlabs-nas

We siblings assembled here, having blessed in this way these victuals which we offer (D 846, vol. 99, p. 192a)

In example (12) the verb lta 'watch' acts verbally to the left, governing gar 'dance' in the allative case, and it acts nominally to the right, as an argument of mtshuñas 'be similar'. A nominalized form lta-ba, as seen in example (13), would have been expected.

(12) ḥgro-bahi skye-ḥchi gar-la lta daṅ mtshuṅs //
The birth and death of creatures is like watching a dance. (D.96, vol. 46, page 88a)

(13) pha-mas bu gcig-pa la lta-ba dañ mtshuṅs //

Like parents looking at their only child (D.120, vol. 53, page 130b)

Zero-nominalization is also attested in Old Tibetan, although the smaller size of the corpus limits one's abilities to find closely parallel passages with and without the zero-nominalization. In example (14) the word dÑos-grub 'siddhi' is modified by the verb phrase srid-pa gsum-la dbañ byed 'rule over the three worlds'.

(14) srid-pa gsum-la dbañ byed dÑos-grub gṣum //

The three siddhis (which) rule over the three worlds (Rama C l. 12).

One would usually expect a nominalized clause to modify its head to the right, i.e. dÑos-grub gṣum srid-pa gsum-la dbañ byed-pa, or, if the modifier is to the left of its head, one expects both nominalization and the genitive case, i.e. srid-pa gsum-la dbañ byed-pahi dÑos-grub gṣum.

The examples given above suffice to demonstrate the existence of zero-nominalization in Classical and Old Tibetan.

**Primary sources**


D = Derge Kanjur


Rama = de Jong 1989


**References**

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<td>Rje žabs dkar tshogs drug rañ grol gyi gsun hbum.</td>
<td>Xining: mtsho sṅon mi rigs dpe skrun khañ.</td>
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