

## On the Plural Morpheme in Cantonese



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## Was [ti] derived from [tik]?

- It has been suggested that the Cantonese plural classifier [ti<sup>55</sup>] (*di1* ‘啲’) was associated with ‘的’ historically (余靄芹 2000).

- Evidence for the claim:
- The plural classifier was written as ‘的’ in the 19th century Cantonese, for instance, in 《麥仕治廣州俗語〈書經〉解義》.

[ti<sup>55</sup>] (*di1* 啲)

- In the 19th century, 的 was used as a plural classifier and an attributive marker.

個堯帝個人的事績  
百姓下頭就有一個未曾娶老婆的人

- The plural classifier used in demonstratives was written as ‘的’:

呢的 ‘these’ (rendered [tik])

E. C. Bridgman (1841) *Chinese Chrestomathy in the Canton Dialect*  
(Yue 2004)

- The plural classifier ending with the velar stop [-k] is still preserved in some modern Yue dialects:

[tik<sup>55</sup>] in 個[tik<sup>55</sup>] ‘those’  
連縣清水，廉江  
(詹伯慧等 1994，2002)

- 余靄芹 (2000 : 506) :

「的」字的用法亦有可能與現在不同，當時可能不限於指複數。……「的」字可能仍是個限定詞，但以有可能是當時最通用的定語標誌；尤其在書寫方面，「的」字的幾個用法——可作限定詞、可指數量少——都用同一個漢字代表，無法解決這個模稜兩可的問題。

- If 啲 was derived from 的, then what was the ancestor of 的?

底 → 的

(see the discussion in 曹廣順 1995)

- A possible historical path:

底 → 的 → 啲

- Questions:

1. How did 底 get the plural meaning?
2. Where did the [k] sound come from?

## [ti<sup>55</sup>] derived from 等

- Claim:

The Cantonese plural classifier [ti<sup>55</sup>] (*di1*) was derived from ‘等’ historically.

- ‘等’ was a plural morpheme in classical Chinese since Han Dynasty.

公等皆去，吾亦從此逝矣！  
(《史記 高祖本紀》，轉引自楊伯峻、何樂士 2001 : 137)

是以竇太后滋不說魏其等。  
(《史記 魏其武安侯列傳》，轉引自楊伯峻、何樂士 2001 : 137)

- ‘等’ and ‘底’ could be homophones in some southern dialects in middle Chinese, without the nasal coda.

■ 等

《廣韻》：多肯切。 \*teŋ

《廣韻》：多改切。 \*tai

■ 底

《廣韻》：都禮切。 \*tsei

■ (唐) 顏師古《匡謬正俗》：

「等」本音都在反，轉音丁兒反。  
今吳越人呼齊等皆爲丁兒反。

「底」讀丁兒反。

(轉引自志村良治 1995 : 151)

■ 志村良治 (1995)：

都在反的「等」*tei* 跟「底」讀音同，在吳越地區爲丁兒反 *ti*。……由上可知「等、底」之音相近，……尤其是吳越之地，也即南方，「等、底」音近，同樣通用。(p. 151)

這個「底」可認爲是南方音，現暫借丁兒反 *ti* 作這一群推定音的代表。(fn 3, p. 159)

- The plural classifier [ti<sup>55</sup>] (*di* 啲) in Hong Kong Cantonese could be derived from 等 \*ti directly.

- The \**tei* sound of 等 may still be preserved in some modern Yue dialects.

<sup>55</sup>dai 斗門、台山、開平、恩平

(詹伯慧，張日昇 1988 : 427)

## [-k] derived from 物

### ■ Claim:

The coda [-k] of the plural classifier [tik] (的) in the 19th century was derived from ‘物’ historically.

- Historically, ‘物’ could be grammaticalized as a plural marker.

### ■ 江藍生（1995）：

……「物」（類也）原則上也應該可以用在人稱代詞或指人名詞之後，表示某一類人，進而虛化為複數詞尾。

### ■ 物

《廣韻》：文弗切。 \*mīwət

### ■ The historical path of the derivation of [tik]:

等 ti + 物 mīwət → tit → tik

- The [-t] coda of the plural morpheme 物 can be found in some Yue dialects.

‘these’

k<sup>het</sup>21 lit<sup>55</sup> 江門

k<sup>hui</sup>22 n<sup>d</sup>it<sup>55</sup> 新會

k<sup>hai</sup>21 nit<sup>55</sup> 鶴山

（詹伯慧，張日昇 1988：427）

- The [-t] coda of the plural morpheme 物 can also be found in some Hakka dialects.

'these'

nai tit                    連南，河源

ni tit                      香港

(李如龍，張雙慶 1992 : 423)

- Is there any evidence for the sound change from [-t] to [-k] of the morpheme 物?

- It has been assumed that the interrogative morphemes *me* in *shenme* (甚麼) and *zenme* (怎麼) in Mandarin, and *mat1* (乜) in Cantonese were all derived from 物 (呂叔湘 1985, 江藍生 1995).

- 呂叔湘 (1985 : 310) :

.....「怎麼」原來就是「作麼」，「作麼」就是「作甚麼」；「怎麼」的用法有一部分跟「作甚麼」相同，不是偶然的。.....當「何物」這個語詞一方面跟「是」字結合，造成一個新的疑問代詞「是物」（＝「什麼」）的時候，它在另一方面又跟「作」字結合，造成另一個疑問代詞「作勿」。

- 江藍生 (1995) :

「物」.....廈門話和潮州話還保持入聲。

廈門：甚物 *sim mi?*

潮州：乜個 *mi? kai*

- Yue dialects that have the interrogative morpheme with the [-t] coda:

*met*            香港，南海，.....

- Yue dialects that have the interrogative morpheme with the [-k] coda:

*mək*<sup>55</sup> (j)ie<sup>23</sup>            新界錦田

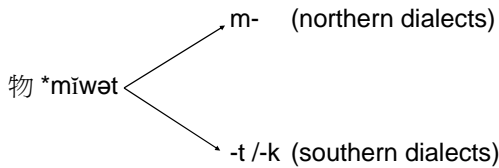
*mɛk*<sup>44</sup> zø<sup>13</sup>              東莞莞城

*mak*<sup>55</sup> kai<sup>33</sup>              東莞清溪

*mak*<sup>22</sup> kai<sup>35</sup>              從化呂田

(詹伯慧，張日昇 1988 : 429)

- The plural morpheme ‘物’ underwent two different paths of grammaticalization in Chinese dialects:



## Some consequences

有的 vs. \*有嘅

- The discrepancy between Cantonese *di* and Mandarin *de* on the one hand and Cantonese *ge* on the other hand in the formation of ‘有 + x’ partitives can be explained, given that grammaticalization of *di* and *de* was much earlier than that of *ge* (Tang 2004).

有的人走了。 (partitive)  
You de ren zou-le.  
 have DE person leave-Perf  
 ‘Some people left.’

有些人走了。 (indefinite)  
You xie ren zou-le.  
 have some person leave-Perf

\*有嘅人走咗。 (partitive)  
 \*Jau ge jan zau-zo.  
 have GE person leave-Perf  
 ‘Some people left.’

有啲人走咗。 (indefinite)  
Jau di jan zau-zo.  
 have some person leave-Perf

- Ge3 (嘅) was derived from a measure word/classifier 個/箇/个 (曹廣順 1995).
- Ge3 (嘅) entered Cantonese quite recently (余靄芹 2000) and has not yet been fully grammaticalized in modern Cantonese.

### Plural classifier & plural suffix

- In Hong Kong Cantonese, the plural classifier [ti<sup>55</sup>] (*di1* 啲) and the plural suffix [tei<sup>22</sup>] (*dei6* 哋) are cognate.
- The plural suffix [tei<sup>22</sup>] (*dei6*) was also derived from 等 historically.

- 江藍生 (1995) :

廣州話「我哋、你哋」的「哋」[tei] (《漢語方言詞匯》), 梅縣話「𠵼屋丁人、你丁人」的「丁」[ten] (黃雪貞 1994) 應是「等」的音變。(試比較唐五代西北方言「等」字藏文對音為 tin)。

- 劉鎮發 (2004 : 39) :

客語中的「deu1」跟粵語的人物複數後綴「dei6」, 和指示詞複數後綴「di1」是百分百對應的, 本字可能是「等」。

- In some Yue, Hakka, and Gan dialects, the plural classifier and the plural suffix are homophones.

Yue:            從化 [ti]  
Hakka:        秀篆 [teu]  
Gan:           邵武 [tai]

(詹伯慧, 張日昇 1988, 李如龍, 張雙慶 1992)

- The plural classifier and the plural suffix were homophones in Cantonese in the 19th century.

我的        𠵼ngo tí<sup>o</sup>  
呢的        𠵼ní tí<sup>o</sup>

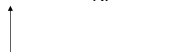
(Lobscheid, William. 1864. *Chinese-English grammar* 英語文法小引. Hong Kong)

- The observation here may support the synchronic movement approach to the derivation of Cantonese plural pronouns (Tang 1999).

啲學生  
佢哋  
\*學生哋  
\*啲佢哋

[ di        [NP ... N ... ] ]        (classifier)

[ N-dei [NP ... \_\_\_\_ ... ] ]        (suffix)







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