From Motion Verbs to Evidentiality in Tibetan

Guillaume Oisel

- Motion verbs are an important component of explaining the emergence of the evidential system in Middle Tibetan (Classical Tibetan) and its full establishment in Colloquial Tibetan.

- I will present it through 3 verb systems:
  - Middle Tibetan (15th century)
  - Modern Literary Tibetan (2 genres)
  - Standard Colloquial Tibetan (Lhasa)

1. Motion Lexical Verbs in Middle Tibetan

- There are two verbs both for 'to go' and 'to come' with the (past) perfective:
  - phyin vs song on the one hand
  - and 'ongs/yongs vs byung, on the other hand.

- While there is only one verb for 'to go' and 'to come' with the imperfective:
  - 'gro
  - 'ong or its spelling variant yong

- I will only focus on the perfective in my presentation.

/phyin/ and /song/ 'to go'

- These verbs at first glance reflect a grammatical opposition based on deixis.

  - The verb phyin is used in general with the first person participant (the asserter), but not only.
  - and the verb song with the third and the second person (the other).

- This phenomenon may appear odd in Tibetan since it is a language without verb agreement according to grammatical person.

- The observed correlation between verb choice (or auxiliary) and person cannot be generalized to classical Tibetan. Instead, it is a tendency which is strongly marked in my corpus: the life of Milarepa.

/phyin/ with the first person

- In general
  - nga sngon.la phyin-pas thog.mar yum-dang mjal
  - I went ahead and first met the lama’s wife. (Mila 2.2) (Quintman 2010: 74)

  - phyag.phyi-la nga-yang phyin
  - servant-OBLOC. I-THEM to go(past)
  - One day I accompanied my master to the lower valley of Tsa where he was invited to preside over a great wedding feast. (Mila 1.3) (Quintman 2010: 27)

- Exception
  - pe.ta-s mthong-ste myur.du a.ma-'i sa-r phyin-nas
  - Peta-ERLOC to see-LOC rapidly mother-GEN. place-OBLOC. to go(past)-LOC
  - Seeing the calamity that filled the area outside, Peta rushed to my mother and gave an account. (Mila 1.3) (Quintman, 2010: 34)

1. Motion Lexical Verbs in Middle Tibetan

- The speaker is Rechungpa seeing Bharima in his vision/dream.
  - The speaker is Mila, was not present in the village when his sister Peta saw his spell of black magic. Mila also wondered how it went few lines before.

/song/ with the third person

- de.nas Bha.ri.ma na.re tsha.bo rang 'dir re.zhig xodod-cig
- then Bharima CIT. nephew you here a moment to say(imp)-IMP.
- nga-s sangs.rgyas-la gnang.ba zhus-long-gis zer
- I-ERG. Buddha-OBLOC. permission to ask(past)-AUX. -PRM. to say
- sang.ba.las gnang.ba thob-ste
- to go(past)-CO. permission to obtain-CO.

- Then Bharima said, “Nephew, stay here a moment. I will ask for permission from the buddha [Lit.: I promise I am going to ask]. She went to make her request and was granted permission. (Mila 1.1) (Quintman 2010: 12)

- The speaker is Rechungpa seeing Bharima in his vision/dream.

/longs/ and /byung/ 'to come'

- The verb /ongs/ does not indicate any grammatical opposition based on the deixis.
- The verb /byung/ occurs with the second and third person only but it does not occur with the first person participant.

/longs/ with EVERY person

- bla.ma-'i rin.po.che da bdag-gis /ongs-pa
- Lama-GEN. precious now to come(past)-NOM.
- dam.pa-'i chos-la /ongs-nas
- pure-GEN. teaching-OBL. to come(past)-NOM

- Precious Lama, I came here for the genuine dharma, (but have done only evil deeds) (Mila 2.2) (Quintman 2010: 72)

- khyod dang.po lan zhiug yul-du /ongs-pa-’i
- you first time ART. village-OBLOC to come(past)-NOM-GEN.

- It was said that you once returned to the village, but that was many years ago. (Mila 2.7) (Quintman 2010:139)

- ngya ma la thos.pa.dga’ yin byas-pas
- I Mila Thöpaga to be to say(past)-CO.

- skad ngo.shes-te nang-du /ongs nga-la ’jus-nas
- voice to recognize-CO. inside-OBLOC to come(past) I-ERLOC to embrace(past)-CO.

- "Are you a man or a ghost?" she asked, “I am Mila Töpaga,” I replied.

- In general

- nga sngar las slob.ma ji.neyed.cig byung-ste
- l-ERLOC. before disciple so many to come(past)-CO.

- One day I accompanied my master to the lower valley of Tsa where he was invited to preside over a great wedding feast. (Mila 2.2) (Quintman 2010: 74)

- nga mi.la thos.pa.dga’ yin byas-pas
- I Mila Thöpaga to be to say(past)-CO.

- skad ngo.shes-te nang-du /ongs nga-la ’jus-nas
- voice to recognize-CO. inside-OBLOC to come(past) I-ERLOC to embrace(past)-CO.

- "Are you a man or a ghost?" she asked, “I am Mila Töpaga,” I replied.

- Recognizing my voice, she came in and embraced me, crying, “Brother, brother”. (Mila 2.7) (Quintman 2010: 142)
Deixis versus Non-deixis In Middle Tibetan

- It is more precisely the emergence of a double system of orientation (Oisel, 2013):
  - a deictic one (the assyerter)
  - versus a non-deictic one.

- Randy LaPolla (at SEALS 24, in May 2014) suggested naming it (personal) deixis versus relative deixis (other participant deixis, object deixis).

Different kinds of deixis

- **Real deixis:** the speaker was really present (in theory).
  - *Oneric deixis:* the speaker was conscious in his own dream or vision
  - Hypothetical deixis: the speaker imagines if he were present
  - Fake deixis: the speaker pretends to be present (lies) in order to probably get the reader or the listener to imagine a specific sequence of a story.
  - This is what probably lies behind the indirect evidential category proposed by Zeisler (2014:10) which may convey a borrowed deixis (i.e. a fictive deixis).

- These subcategories of deixis depend on the context.

Fictive Deixis

- Hypothetical deixis
  - *nan.tar ma-song-na khang.ba yang nged dbang-bas*
  - really NEG.to.leave(past)-CO. house also ours sovereignty-CO.
  - *ma.smad-tsho phyir-r song*
  - mother and children-PL. outside-OBL. to go(imp.)
  - If (I see) all of you haven’t really left the house, the house will be ours. You, mother and your children, get out!

- Fake deixis

- Mila the narrator who is not born yet did not see the scene of his father leaving hence the notion of fictive/fake deixis.
  - *mi.la shes.rab rgyal.mtshan lho rdzas mang.po khyer-te*
  - Mila Sherab Gyalsen south merchandise a lot to bring-CO.
  - *byang stag.rte-i phyogs-su tshong-la song-nas*
  - north Takse-GEN. surrounding-OBL. to sell(pres.)-CO. to leave(past)-CO.
  - *Mila Sherab Gyalsen having brought numerous goods from the South, set out to sell them in the vicinity of Taktse in the North. (Mila 1.1) (Quintman, 2010:18)*

Relative deixis

- The verb pair *phyin* ‘to go’ and *ongs* ‘to come’ does not depend on a deictic landmark
- It therefore explains why *phyin* may occur sometimes with the third person.

Different motion auxiliaries:

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<td><em>phyin</em></td>
<td>to go: <em>I went out (and I walked away from this place).</em></td>
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<td><em>ongs</em></td>
<td>to come: <em>My sister went out (and she came toward me).</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>song</em></td>
<td>to go: <em>I went out (and I came back toward this place).</em></td>
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</table>

Fake deixis

- Mila the narrator who is not born yet did not see the scene of his father leaving hence the notion of fictive/fake deixis.

2. Motion auxiliary verbs In Middle Tibetan

- *kho.rang thon-song*
  - he to go out-AUX.TR.
  - He also went out (and he walked away from me)

- *srin.go yang thon-byung*
  - sister also to go out-AUX.CIS.
  - My sister went out (and she came toward me)

- *(nga) phyir thon-phyir*
  - (I) outside to go out-AUX.AND.
  - I went out (and I walked away from this place).

- *(nga) phyir thon-’ongs*
  - (I) outside to go out-AUX.VIN.
  - I went out (and I came back toward this place).

- Those auxiliaries are also used with metaphorical motion verbs (to say /zer/ to give /gnang/, to look /gzigs/, etc.).

- *bla.ma geims.khang-gi yang.thog-na zhal shar-la gzigs-nas*
  - lama room-GEN. terrace-OBL. face east-OBL. to look(hum.past)-CO.

- *thugs.dam-la.bzugs-dug-pas phyag-dang dar.yug phul-bas*
  - to seat in meditation practice(hum.past)-CO. salutation-ASS. bolt of silk to offer(hum.past)-CO.

- *zhal nub-tu gzigs-song*
  - to come west-OBL. to look(hum.past)-CO.

- *nub-tu phul-bas lho-r gzigs-song-ba.la*
  - to look(hum.past)-CO. south-OBL. to offer(hum.past)-CO.

- *nub-tu phul-bas west-OBL.*
3. Relative deictic Motion Lexical and Auxiliary Verbs In Modern Literary Tibetan

- Two different corpuses:
  - The facetious tales of the corpse “les contes facétieux du cadavre”, Robin (2005). It has been translated from Chinese to MLT in Amdo –Qinghai and Gansu provinces:
    - The asserter is the narrator which is NOT present since he is telling a tale (i.e. there is an extended use of the fictive deixis with the ‘indirect’ sensory evidential song).
    - Exile newspapers and social media written in India and the US.
    - The asserter is the reporter and is present since he is interviewing someone.

In Tales

- The Middle Tibetan deictic opposition with the perfective is not relevant anymore.
  - song indicates a translocative motion based on a relative deixis. It works as an auxiliary and lexical verb.
    - It also conveys a sensory evidential with non-motion verbs.
    - physir is not used.
    - byung indicates a cislocative motion based on a relative deixis.
    - ‘ongs is only used as an equivalent of byung.

**lexical verbs**: song (relative deixis, translocative)

- nyo gcig ni bo don.grub.kyis rgyags.bro bskyal.nas der song ste/
- 'ong byung to carry-CO. there to go(past)-CO.
- elder brother-ASS. with to stay
- One day his younger brother Thöndrup went there carrying some supplies and stayed with him. (Fictive deixis: the narrator speaking)

- gros.byed-rgyu-r da.bar.du nga-tsho lhan.cig song-nas
- to discuss(pres.)-NOM-OBL. till now 1-PL. together to go(past)-CO.
- lha.cat mo mang.po mthong (Robin, 2005: 44)
- scenery a lot to see
- They said: «Till now we have walked along together (lit.: went together) and have seen a lot of scenery. » (Real deixis: the seven brothers speaking)

- nyin gcig mu bo don.grub.kyis rgyags.bro bskyal.nas der song ste/
- day one younger brother Thöndrup-ERG. supply to carry-CO. there to go(past)-CO.
- nyo gcig nu bo don.grub.kyis rgyags.bro bskyal.nas der song ste/
- day one younger brother Thöndrup-ERG. supply to carry-CO. there to go(past)-CO.
- nyo gcig nu bo don.grub.kyis rgyags.bro bskyal.nas der song ste/
- day one younger brother Thöndrup-ERG. supply to carry-CO. there to go(past)-CO.

In Newspapers

- In newspapers, the relative deictic motion system is mixed with an evidential system.
  - song indicates a sensory evidential with verbs of saying. It only works as an auxiliary, but NOT as a lexical verb.
  - physir is still used as a lexical verb.
  - byung indicates a cislocative motion based on a relative deixis with (metaphorical) motion verbs.
    - It may also indicate the inchoative aspect (appearance of sth.) with other verbs. In this case only it may be combined with evidential final auxiliaries i.e. byung is a secondary verb (not an auxiliary).
    - ‘ongs is NOT used anymore.

**auxiliary verbs**: song (sensory)

- ngo.rgol.byed dgos-pa'i [...] rgyu.mtshyan 'gbrel.brjod.gnam-song
- to demonstrate(pres.)-NOM-GEN reasons to explain(hon)-AUX.
- In addition, a Tibetan named Dorje explained [...] why they should demonstrate.


Chinese General Cao Gang Chuan met each other

‘There was an earthquake’ [I was there and felt it] (ibid)

Nyima stayed at home’. (Tournadre, 2003)

The earth has (just) shaken a second time (this morning) at 10:14 with a force of 5.3 on the Richter scale.

The receptive egophoric auxiliary, which is used only in the past, implies that the subject-speaker of a sentence has undergone the action [or the state], has perceived it (involuntarily) or has been its goal/the recipient of it. It may also indicate a proximal past.

The cislocative /byung/ (perfective) became a receptive egophoric (evidential). It may also indicate a distal past or an endopathic (evidential).

One would probably expect the translocative (away from) implies a distal and the cislocative (towards) a proximal. But that is not the case.

Contrary to Middle Tibetan, song and byung are used with various verbs i.e. not only motion verbs.

4.1. Translocative > Sensory

It is also called the sensorial, testimonial or constative.

Tournadre (2003: 558) : ‘...specifies that the speaker was himself witness to what he is stating. The testimony is usually visual, but also based on hearing or any of the other senses (tough, smell or taste).’

[the whole process or at some point of it]

char.pa babs-song

rain to come down(past)-AUX.SEN.

‘It rained’ [I saw the rain falling] (Tournadre, 2001: 72)

[post-processual aspect]

nga-s brjed-song

I-ERG to forget-AUX.SEN.

‘I forgot’

shing tog nyo-shul.ring.kar tang.ga.ril rku.ma.la.shor-song

fruit to buy(pres.)-CO. bicycle to be stolen-AUX.SEN.

The bicycle was stolen while we were buying fruit’ (ibid 2003: 315)

Tournadre (2003: 557, 199) : ’The receptive egophoric auxiliary, which is used only in the past, implies that the subject-speaker of a sentence has undergone the action [or the state], has perceived it (involuntarily) or has been its goal/the recipient of it.’

I add to the definition he can also undergone a state which implies an proximal past.

The egophoric receptive is less grammaticalized than the sensory i.e. the distinction between receptive egophoric and cislocative is not every time easy to make. One can still see more and less the (deictic) cislocative motion in the receptive egophoric use.

The subject of the sentence is a state which implies an proximal past.

[has been the recipient of it –actually or metaphorically–]

kho-s nga-la kha.par+biang-byung

he-ERG 1-OBL to phone-AUX.EGO.REC.

‘He phoned me’ (Tournadre 2003: 172, 200)

khong nga-'i rtsa-la phebs byung

he(hon.) 1-GEN. place-OBL to come(hon.)-AUX.EGO.REC.

‘He comes to my place’ (Ibid 2003: 173)

Ibid 2003: 200)

The landmark would be the hospital and not the speaker if /byung/ were a relative deictic cislocative

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4. Motion > Evidentiality in Colloquial Tibetan

The translocative /song/ (perfective) became a sensory evidential. It may also indicate a proximal past.

The cislocative /byung/ (perfective) became a receptive egophoric (evidential). It may also indicate a distal past or an endopathic (evidential).

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[the whole process or at some point of it]

char.pa babs-song

rain to come down(past)-AUX.SEN.

‘It rained’ [I saw the rain falling] (Tournadre, 2001: 72)
• [undergone the state –endopathic–]
  – nga-s dran-kyung
  – I-ERG. to remember-AUX.EGO.REC.
  – ‘I remembered’
  [The endopathic with the imperfective in those cases is marked by the suffix –gi or –gi ‘dog’]

• The egophoric value is neutralized in combination with the sensory. This also supports the fact that byung is less grammaticalized than song.
  – [receptive egophoric]
    • V + dgos-byung ‘I had to’
    • V + ‘dod- byung ‘I wanted to’
    • V + long-byung ‘I got time to’
    • V + rgyu-byung, V + yag-byung ‘I have been able to’

  – [receptive + sensory]
    • V + dgos-byung-song ‘he had to’
    • V + ‘dod-byung-song ‘he wanted to’
    • V + long-byung-song ‘He got time to’
    • V + rgyu-byung-song, V + yag-byung-song ‘He has been able to’

4.3. Translocative > Proximal Past versus Cislocative > Distal Past (Remote Past)
• with some specific verbs (Tournadre 2003: 200; Ibid, 2001: 73)
  – (da) nga ha.go-song
  – (now) I to understand-AUX.SEN.
  – ‘I have understood (right now)’
  – versus
  – nga ha.go-byung
  – I to understand-AUX.EGO.REC.
  – ‘I understood (before)’

4.4. Still Motion
• The perfective translocative /phyn/ (and imperfective /gро/) is still used as a motion auxiliary.
  • bya phur-phyn-song
  • bird to fly(past)-SecV.TR.-AUX.SEN.
  • ‘the bird flew away from me’ (Tournadre 2001: 91)

• The perfective cislocative /yong(s)/ (and imperfective) is also still used as a motion auxiliary.
  • bya phur-yong(s)-byung
  • bird to fly(past)-SecV.CIS.-AUX.EGO.REC.
  • ‘the bird flew away toward me’ (Ibid)

• But they are NOT used anymore as final auxiliary verbs i.e. they are called secondary verbs (Gyurme, 1994). They are always combined with evidentials.

Conclusion
• Middle Tibetan uses a deictic versus relative deictic motion auxiliary system (song VS byung, phyin VS ‘ongs). It indirectly implies sensory evidential versus assumptive evidential. It is only combined with (metaphorical) motion verbs.

• Modern Literary Tibetan uses a relative deictic motion auxiliary system (song VS byung/ongs). It has grammaticalized the perfective sensory evidential from the deictic translocative song. Sensory occurs with non-motion verbs.

• Standard Colloquial Tibetan uses an evidential auxiliary system (song VS byung). It has grammaticalized the egophoric. The receptive egophoric comes from the deictic cislocative byung.

• The evidential system can be combined with a secondary verb system indicating motion (phyin VS yong-s-).

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Morphosyntax and semantics of ‘to go’ and ‘to come’ in Tibetan

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