

The Grammatical Categories of the Classical Tibetan Verbs

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the grammatical categories of the Classical Tibetan verbs. Morphologically, Classical Tibetan verbs can be categorized into tense, mode, valence and aspect, while the category of Ergative verb VS. unergative verbs are based on syntactical distribution, which should replace the category of transitive VS. intransitive contrast. The category of Valence is traditionally referred as causative and non-causative, which is not a very accurate term.

Keywords: Tibetan verb, morphology, grammatical category

I. INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, Classical Tibetan verbs are classified on two parameters: the ones that indicate tense (past, present and future) and mode (imperative) and the others that indicate causation (e.g. Qu 1996:163). In addition, they are also classified into transitive, intransitive, volitional, non-volitional (e.g. Huang 1981; Gesang 2000; Zhang 1989). Based on these studies and with a careful examination of the Tibetan verb data, this article engages in a systematic study of the grammatical categories of Classical Tibetan verbs by carefully distinguishing between morphological, syntactical and semantical aspect, since there is still data that has not been fully considered by modern linguists. In addition, this article argues that much of the terminology used while analyzing Tibetan verbs is inappropriate and possibly misleading.

As far as this paper concerns, on the morphological base, Classical Tibetan verbs can be analyzed into four major grammatical categories, i.e., TENSE, MODE, VALENCE and ASPECT. The tense and the mode, which are the so-called "four-form verbs", are frequently mentioned by both indigenous Tibetan grammarians and modern linguists. The category of valence refers to the traditional concept of causation. (The reason for using the term of "valence" will be clear soon). Some linguists do not carefully distinguish aspect and tense regarding to modern Tibetan dialects, but this distinction is crucial while analyzing Classical

Tibetan verbs.

II. OVERVIEW OF THE GRAMMATICAL CATEGORIES

Before going into detail, we should give a general picture of the grammatical categories of the verbs by using two verb classes. The first verb class is "cut"-related. The following is the "morph-function" diagram of this verb class, as shown in "Fig. 1":

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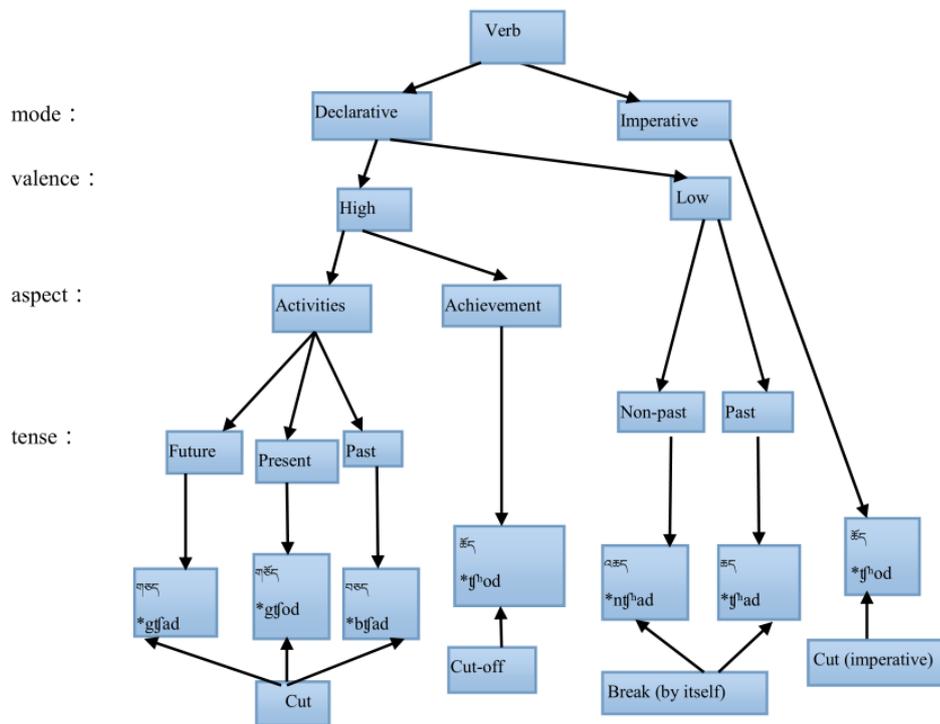


Fig. 1. The "morph-function" model diagram of classical Tibetan verbs (1).

This verb class has a total of seven forms in relation to its functions, belonging to the four grammatical categories mentioned above. Modes include declarative and imperative. Based on the number of arguments embedded within the verb forms, the declarative forms can be placed into high-valence and low-valence categories. In this case, the high-valence forms are included with two arguments; namely, the “cutter” and the thing that should be cut. Meanwhile, the low-valence forms are included with only one argument which is the thing that goes under “break”. This alternation has nothing to do with causation besides adjusting the number of arguments. According to the internal temporal structure of actions, the high-valence verbs can be divided into activities and achievement, in which the “activity” form emphasizes the process of the “cutting” action, but the “achievement” form indicates the action has reached an endpoint, i.e., it has been cut off. The form of the achievement is the same form as the imperative. The fourth layer of this verb class is tense, in which the high valence can be divided into the future, present and past, namely *gʃʃad, *gʃʃod and bʃʃad, and its low-valence verbs only has the non-past and past forms, namely *nʃʃad and *ʃʃad.

Without doubt, these seven forms are related morphologically. In the alternation process, the place of the articulation of the root initial and the coda remain consistent, and these functions are indicated by prefixing, adjusting the distinctive features of the root

initial, and alternating vowels. Therefore, the root of this verb can be analyzed as -Tʃ-d, where Tʃ denotes the place of articulation, i.e. the postalveolar affricate, if we use the feature “+ aspiration” and “+o” to modify the root, we can get the imperative form, namely *ʃʃod.

Let's look at the ‘morph-function’ diagram of another verb. This verb class is related to the meaning of “contract”, as shown in "Fig. 2":

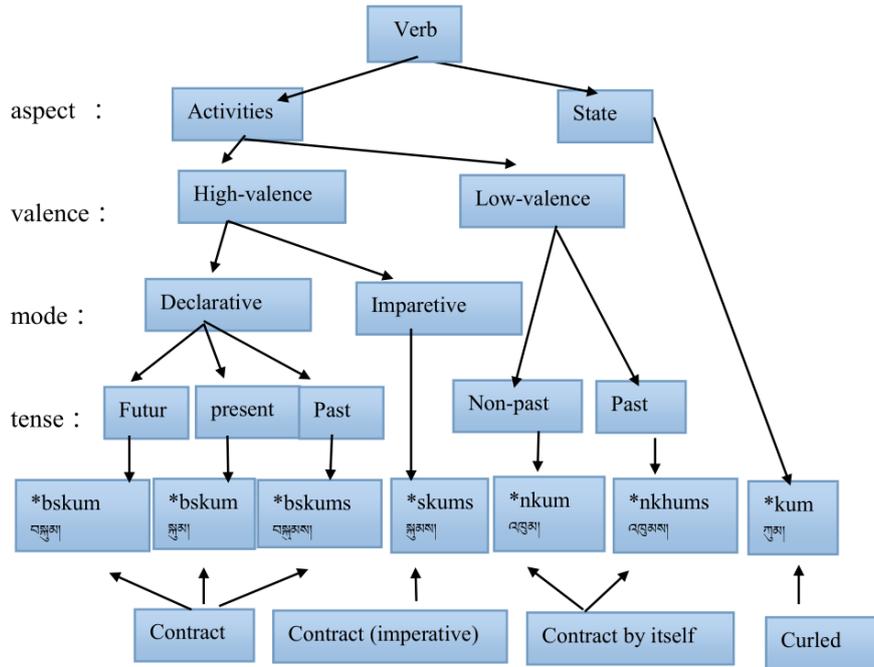


Fig. 2. The ‘morphology-function’ diagram of classic Tibetan verbs (2).

This verb also has seven forms with the grammatical categories of tense, mode, valence and aspect. The difference between this verb and the above verb lies in the opposite of their “aspect”, i.e., “activities” contrast with “state”. The “state” form is *kum, which means the state of being “curled”, and generally this category corresponds to adjectives in many other languages.

Its root can be analyzed as -Kum-, in which “K” represents the place of articulation, i.e., the velar. The different forms are generated by prefixing, suffixing and with the changing of distinctive feature of the root initial (here is aspiration).

These two verb families embody all the grammatical categories of classical Tibetan verbs.

III. MODE AND TENSE

Modes of classic Tibetan verbs include declarative and imperative, in which the declarative mode could have three tenses: future, present, and past. These two categories—the most productive ones—are well discussed by previous linguists. By considering the consistence and the difference of the forms, verbs only belonging to these two categories have 6 paradigms. The first paradigm differentiates the four forms, as shown in "Table I":

TABLE I. THE PARADIGM WITH FOUR DIFFERENT FORMS

Future	Present	Past	Imperative	Glossary
<dkrab> དཀྲལ	<vkhrab> འཕྲལ	<bkrabs> བཀྲལ	<khrobs> རྫོབས	Choose
<gdab> གདབ	<vdebs> འདབས	<btab> བཏབ	<thobs> རྫོབས	Plant
<gzhag> གཞག	<vjog> འཇོག	<bzhag> བཞག	<zhog> རྫོག	Put
<btu> བཏུ	<vtthu> འཏུ	<btus> བཏུས	<thus> རྫུས	Collect
<btsog> བཙོག	<vtshog> འཙོག	<btsogs> བཙོགས	<tshogs> རྫོགས	Strike
<bcib> བཙེབ	<vchib> འཙེབ	<bcibs> བཙེབས	<chibs> རྫེབས	Ride
<bcu> བཙུ	<vchu> འཙུ	<bcus> བཙུས	<chus> རྫུས	Ladle
<bkru> བཙུ	<vkhrud> འཙུད	<bkrus> བཙུས	<khrus> རྫུས	Wash
<bgvi> བཙུའི	<bgvid> འཙུའི	<bgyis> བཙུའིས	<gyis> རྫུའིས	Do
<bgam> བཙམ	<vgam> འཙམ	<bgams> བཙམས	<vgoms> འཙོམས	Gobble
<dgas> དགས	<gas> འགས	<bkas> བགས	<khos> རྫོས	Split
<dgal> དགལ	<gel> འགལ	<bkal> བགལ	<khol> རྫོལ	Load
<dgog> དགོག	<vgog> འགོག	<bkog> བགོག	<khogs> རྫོགས	Extract
<dgod> དགོད	<god> འགོད	<bkod> བགོད	<khod ~'khod> རྫོད འཕྲོད	Record

In the second paradigm, the future tense has the same form with the present tense, as shown in "Table II":

TABLE II. THE PARADIGM IN WHICH THE FUTURE FORM IS THE SAME WITH THE PRESENT FORM

Future		Present		Past		Imperative		Glossary
<vjab>	འཇབ	<vjab>	འཇབ	<vjabs>	འཇབས	<vjobs>	འཇོབས	Sneak
<vcham>	འཚམ	<vcham>	འཚམ	<vchams>	འཚམས	<vchoms>	འཚོམས	Dance
<gtam>	གཉམ	<gtam>	གཉམ	<gtams>	གཉམས	<gtoms>	གཉོམས	Bargain
<vtham>	འཐམ	<vtham>	འཐམ	<vthams>	འཐམས	<vthoms>	འཐོམས	embrace
<gla>	གླེ	<gla>	གླེ	<glas>	གླེས	<glos>	གློས	Employ
<bgag>	བགག	<bgag>	བགག	<bgags>	བགགས	<bgogs>	བགོགས	obstruct
<bgrang>	བགྲང	<bgrang>	བགྲང	<bgrangs>	བགྲངས	<bgrongs>	བགྲོངས	Calculate
<vphya>	འཕྱ	<vphya>	འཕྱ	<vphyas>	འཕྱས	<vphyos>	འཕྱོས	Tease
<mngag>	མངག	<mngag>	མངག	<mngags>	མངགས	<mngogs>	མངོགས	Send
<vtshab>	འཚབ	<vtshab>	འཚབ	<tshab>	ཚབ	<tshobs>	ཚོབས	replace
<vbal>	འབལ	<vbal>	འབལ	<bal>	བལ	<bol>	བོལ	remove

In the third paradigm, the future tense has the same form as the past tense, as shown in "Table III":

TABLE III. THE PARADIGM IN WHICH THE FUTURE FORM IS THE SAME WITH THE PAST FORM

Future		Present		Past		Imperative		Glossary
<brgal>	བརྒལ	<rgal>	རྒལ	<brgal>	བརྒལ	<rgol>	རྒོལ	Cross
<barnngan>	བརྒན	<rngan>	རྒན	<brngan>	བརྒན	<rngon>	རྒོན	bribe
<bsnyad>	བསྟད	<snyad>	སྟད	<bsnyad>	བསྟད	<snyod>	སྟོད	Say
<bldad>	བཟད	<ldad>	ཟད	<bldad>	བཟད	<ldod>	ཟོད	chew
<bsar>	བསར	<gsar>	གསར	<bsar>	བསར	<gsor>	གསོར	arrange
<bsran>	བསརན	<sran>	སརན	<bsran>	བསརན	<sron>	སོན	bear
<bsal>	བསལ	<sel>	སལ	<bsal>	བསལ	<sol>	སོལ	clear away
<dral>	དལ	<vdral>	འདལ	<dral>	དལ	<drol>	དོལ	rend

In the fourth paradigm, the past form is the same as the imperative, as shown in "Table IV":

TABLE IV. THE PARADIGM IN WHICH THE PAST FORM IS THE SAME WITH THE IMPERATIVE FORM

Future		Present		Past		Imperative		Glossary
<byug>	ལྷུག	<vbyug>	འལྷུག	<byugs>	ལྷུགས	<byugs>	ལྷུགས	anoint
<brim>	ལྷིམ	<vbrim>	འལྷིམ	<brims>	ལྷིམས	<brims>	ལྷིམས	distribute
<bru>	ལྷམ	<vbru>	འལྷམ	<brus>	ལྷམས	<brus>	ལྷམས	dig
<brub>	ལྷུབ	<vbrub>	འལྷུབ	<brubs>	ལྷུབས	<brubs>	ལྷུབས	overflow
<breg>	ལྷག	<vbreg>	འལྷག	<bregs>	ལྷགས	<bregs>	ལྷགས	Cut
<dri>	དྲི	<vdri>	འདྲི	<dris>	དྲིས	<dris>	དྲིས	Ask
<dru>	དྲུབ	<vdru>	འདྲུབ	<dru>	དྲུབས	<dru>	དྲུབས	sew

In the fifth paradigm, the present form is the same as the imperative, as shown in "Table V":

TABLE V. THE PARADIGM IN WHICH THE PRESENT FORM IS THE SAME WITH THE IMPERATIVE FORM

Future		Present		Past		Imperative		Glossary
<bsdur>	བསྟར	<sdur>	སྟར	<bsdur>	བསྟར	<sdur>	སྟར	Compare
<bskul>	བསྟལ	<skul>	སྟལ	<bskul>	བསྟལ	<skul>	སྟལ	urge
<bskyur>	བསྟུར	<skyur>	སྟུར	<bskyur>	བསྟུར	<skyur>	སྟུར	Leave
<bskyod>	བསྟོད	<skyod>	སྟོད	<bskyod>	བསྟོད	<skyod>	སྟོད	Move
<brtol>	བརྟོལ	<rtol>	རྟོལ	<brtol>	བརྟོལ	<rtol>	རྟོལ	pierce
<bcol>	བརྟོལ	<vchol>	འརྟོལ	<bcol>	བརྟོལ	<vchol>	འརྟོལ	entrust

The sixth paradigm has the same forms for the tenses ,as shown in "Table VI":

TABLE VI. THE PARADIGM THAT HAS NO DISTINCTION FOR THE THREE TENSES

Declarative(future present past)		Imperative		Glossary
<rkyal>	རྒྱལ།	<rkyol>	རྒྱལ།	Swim
<mgar>	མགར་	<mgor>	མགོར་	Do the work of a craftsman
<bsgrad>	བསྐྱད་	<bsgrod>	བསྐྱོད་	Open wide
<gcar>	གཅར་	<gcor>	གཅོར་	Hit
<mjal>	མཇལ་	<mjol>	མཇོལ་	Visit
<nyar>	ཉར་	<nyor>	ཉོར་	Save

In addition, because of the semantic constriction, many verbs have no imperative mode; i.e., the semantically controllable verbs have imperative forms

while the uncontrollable verbs do not. This is clear by comparing the following two groups of verbs, as shown in "Table VII":

TABLE VII. EXAMPLES OF CONTROLLABLE VERBS VS UNCONTROLLABLE VERBS

Controllable					uncontrollable				
Future	Present	Past	imperative	Glossary	Future	Present	Past	imperative	Glossory
<blta>	<lta>	<bltas>	<ltos>	Look	<mthon>	<mthon>	<mthon>	-	See
བརྟུན་	རྟུན་	བརྟུས་	རྟུས་		མཚོང་	མཚོང་	མཚོང་		
<bsnyal>	<snyal>	<snyal>	<snyol>	lie down	<gnyid>	<gnyid>	<gnyid>	-	Fall asleep
བསྐྱལ་	སྐྱལ་	བསྐྱལ་	སྐྱལ་		གཉེད་	གཉེད་	གཉེད་		
<vgro>	<vgro>	<song>	<song>	Walk	<vthon>	<vthon>	<thon>	-	Arrive
འགྲོ་	འགྲོ་	སོང་	སོང་		འཚོན་	འཚོན་	ཚོན་		
<gcad>	<gcod>	<bcad>	<chod>	Cut	<vchad>	<vchad>	<chad>	-	Break
གཅད་	གཅད་	བཅད་	ཚོད་		འཚད་	འཚད་	ཚད་		

The reason is very simple: you cannot literally order someone to do something that one is not able to control.

IV. VALENCE

Valence refers to the number of core arguments of verbs. Many verbs of Classical Tibetan operates between high valence and low valence through morphological means, while many other languages operate this by syntactic means. This grammatical category is traditionally referred as causation, which is not very accurate as far as this paper considers. The reason is that the real causation- the action of the modality represents at least the cause and the permission (Comrie 1978: 164)- in Classic Tibetan is operated paraphrastically by using the pattern of “V+pa + r + <byed>”, in which "V" stands for a verb, "-pa" is a nominalizer, the bound morpheme "-r" is an adverbial maker. "<byed>" is an auxiliary verb meaning “doing”. For example:

1: rta- rgyug-pa-r- byed རྩ་རྒྱལ་པར་བྱེད།

horse -run - nominalizer- adverbializer - doing

"to make the horse run"

2: shes-pa-r- bya ཤེས་པར་བྱ།

Know - nominalizer- adverbializer - do: Future

"to let self or others know "

3: goms-pa-r- byas གོམས་པར་བྱས།

Get used-nominalizer-Adverbializer- Do: Past

"have making self or others get used to something"

As you can see from example 1, 2 and 3, the function of causation in Classical Tibetan is operated analytically. In addition, the allowance is also operated in a similar pattern, i.e., “V+ adverbialzer + vjug”. For example:

4: za-ru- <vjug> ཟ་རུ་འབྲུག།

Eat- adverbialzer-let

“Let it (or someone) eat”

Thus, the traditionally so-called causation is actually the adjustment of valence, which is just increase or decrease the number of core arguments and not on the point of causing anyone or anything to do something. For example, as shown in "Table VIII":

TABLE VIII. EXAMPLES OF VERBS OF HIGH VALENCE AND LOW VALENCE

High valence					Low valence		
Future	Present	Past	Imperative	glossary	nonpast	past	glossary
<vphud>	<vphud>	<phud>	<phud>	Expel	<vbud>	<bud>	exit
འཕྱེད	འཕྱེད	ཕྱད	ཕྱད		འཕྱེད	ཕྱད	

In the high valence forms in Table 8, two arguments are included namely the agent that release something and the patient which is the thing that is released. What is emphasized here is the process of the agent's action on the patient, not the impact of the agent on the patient, so it has nothing to do with causation. In the low valence form, on the other hand, only one argument is

embodied, which usually means that someone leaves or exit.

In addition to the alternation between the univalent and bivalent verb forms, some verbs operate between bivalence and trivalence, which adjust the number of arguments between 2 and 3. For example ,as shown in "Table IX":

TABLE IX. EXAMPLES OF VERBS OF TRIVALENCE AND BIVALENCE

trivalent				bivalent		glossary
Future	Present	Past	Imperative	Present/imperative	Past/future	
<bskon>	<skon>	<bskon>	<skon>	<gon>		wear
བསྐྱོན།	སྐྱོན།	བསྐྱོན།	སྐྱོན།	གོན		
<bskyon>	<skyon>	<bskyon>	<skyon>	<zhon>	<bzhon>	ride
བསྐྱོན།	སྐྱོན།	བསྐྱོན།	སྐྱོན།	ཞོན	བཞོན	

For the verb family "to wear" in "Table IX", its trivalent form means that it, at this deep level, contains three arguments which normally are the agent who does the action of wearing, the patient who is receive the action of wearing and the thing that is been worn (i.e., clothes or hat). Again, there is nobody causing or make any other wear the clothes. The action is always focused on the agent. This is not causation. For the bivalent forms, they contain two arguments which are the agent and the thing that should be worn.

ride a horse or something, which generally indicates the circumstance that an adult puts a child on a horseback about to ride. These three arguments are the adult, the child and the horse. The bivalent form means that someone rides a horse, in which the rider and horse are the two arguments.

English verbs don't make this distinction, so it's difficult to have precise equivalent translations. There are more examples of the valence alternation, as shown in "Table X":

TABLE X. EXAMPLES OF VERBS IN ALTERNATION OF VALENCE

bivalent					univalent		
Future	Present	Past	Imperative	glossary	Future	Present	Past
<dpyang>	<dpyon>	<dpyangs>	<dpyongs>	hang	<vphyang>	<vphyangs>	Is hanged
དཔྱང	དཔྱོད	དཔྱངས	དཔྱོངས		འཕྱེད	འཕྱེདས	
<bstab>	<stob>	<bstabs>	<stobs>	Give	<vthob>	<thob>	Receive
བསྐྱབ	སྐྱོབ	བསྐྱབས	སྐྱོབས		འཕྱོག	ཕྱོག	
<gtul>	<gtul>	<gtul>	<gtul>	grind	<vthul>	<thul>	Smell
གཏུལ	གཏུལ	གཏུལ	གཏུལ		འཕྱིལ	ཕྱིལ	
<dbyung>	<vbyin>	<phyung>	<phyungs>	Take out	<vbyung>	<byung>	occur
དཔྱུང	འཕྱིན	ཕྱིན	ཕྱིནས		འཕྱིང	ཕྱིང	
<dgrol>	<vgrol>	<bkrol>	<khrol>	loosen sth.	<grol>		Loosen by itself
དཔྱོལ	འཕྱོལ	བཏོལ	ཞོལ		ཕྱིལ		
<dgar>	<vger>	<bkar>	<khor>	Separate sth.	<gar>		Separate by itself
དག་	འག་	བག་	ཞོ་		ག་		
<dgad>	<vgad>	<bkad>	<khod>	Explode sth.	<gad>		Is Exploded
དག་	འག་	བག་	ཞོ་		ག་		
<sprad>	<sprod>	<sprad>	<sprod>	Give	<vphrod>		Reach
སྐྱད	སྐྱོད	སྐྱད	སྐྱོད		འཕྱོད		
<gtug>	<gtug>	<gtugs>	<gtugs>	move	<thug>		Meet
གཏུག	གཏུག	གཏུགས	གཏུགས		ཕྱོག		
<bstim>	<stim>	<bstims>	<stims>	penetrate	<thim>		fade
བསྐྱེམ	སྐྱེམ	བསྐྱེམས	སྐྱེམས		ཞིམ		

bivalent				univalent		
Future	Present	Future	Present	Future	Present	Future
<gzugs>	<dzugs>	<btugs>	<tshugs>	Build	<tshugs>	Is built
གཟུགས	འདྲུགས	བཟུགས	ཚུགས		ཚུགས	

V. ASPECT

Regarding to aspect of verbs, Vendler (1957) classified this in a useful way on the semantic domain, namely STATES (e.g., loving), ACTIVITY (e.g., running), ACCOMPLISHMENT (e.g., drawing a

circle) and ACHIEVEMENT(e.g., reaching the top). Beside ACCOMPLISHMENT, Classical Tibetan happens to uses morphological process to alternate between three aspects of the four. The following contains verbs that have all three aspects ,as shown in "Table XI":

TABLE XI. EXAMPLE OF THE ASPECTUAL CATEGORY OF THE CLASSICAL TIBETAN VERBS

Activity				Achievement		State	
Future	Present	Past	Imperative	glossary		glossary	
<gdul>	<vdul>	<btul>	<thul>	conquer	<thul>	Have conquered	<dul>
གདུལ	འདུལ	བདུལ	ཐུལ				དུལ
<dgang>	<vgengs>	<bkang>	<khongs>	fill	<khengs>	Filled up	<gang>
དགང	འགངས།	བགང།	ཁོངས།		ཁོངས།		གང

For the “conquer” related verb family in "Table XI", the activity forms merely signify the process of the “conquering” action, while the achievement forms focuses on the complement of the “conquering” action, meaning whatever has been conquered. The state form is the description or modification of the static state, which is equivalent to the adjective category in many other languages.

However, in most cases, the scope of aspect is mainly two-way contrast, of activity VS. achievement, or of activity VS. state. “<bshad> (བཤད)" VS “<shod> (ཤོད)" is an example of the former, in which <bshad> means “speak” while <shod> means “be able to speak out”. This contrast retained in Amdo dialect. There are more examples, as shown in "Table XII":

TABLE XII. EXAMPLE OF CONTRAST BETWEEN ACTIVITY AND ACHIEVEMENT IN CLASSIC TIBETAN VERBS

Activity				Achievement				
Bivalence				Univalence				
Future	Present	Past	Imperative	Future	Present	glossary		glossary
<dgab>	<vgebs>	<bkab>	<khobs >	<gab>	<gob>	cover	<khebs>	Have covered
དགའ།	འགའས།	བགའ།	ཁོབས།	གའ།	གོབ།		ཁེབས།	
<dgag>	<vgog>	<bkag>	<khog>	<vgag>	<vgags>	stop	<khog>	Have stopped
དགག།	འགོག།	བགག།	ཁོག།	འགག།	འགགས།		ཁོག།	
<dgad>	<vgad>	<bkad>	<khod>	<gas>		explode	<khod>	Have exploded
དགང།	འགང།	བགང།	ཁོང།	གས།			ཁོང།	
<dgrol>	<vgrol>	<bkrol>	<khrol>	<grol>		loosen	<khrol>	Have loosened
དགྲོ།	འགྲོ།	བགྲོ།	ཁོར།	གྲོ།			ཁོར།	
<btsum>	<vtshum>	<btsums>	<tshums>			close	<zum >	Have closed
བཙུམ	འཙུམ	བཙུམས	ཚུམས				ཙུམ	
<gzugs>	<vdzugs>	<btzugs>	<tshugs>			insert	<zug>	Have inserted
གཟུགས	འདྲུགས	བཟུགས	ཚུགས				ཙུག	
<gzung>	<vdzin>	<bzung>	<zung>			catch	<zin>	Have caught
གཟུང	འདྲོན	བཟུང	ཙུངས				ཙུན	
<gzhom>	<vjoms>	<bcom>	<choms>			defeat	<zhom>	Have defeated
གཞིམ	འཇོམས	བཞོམ	ཚོམས				ཞིམ	
<gzhig>	<vjig>	<bshigs>	<shigs>			destroy	<zhig>	Have destroyed
གཞིག	འཇིག	བཤིགས	ཤིགས				ཞིག	
<btso>	<vtshod>	<btsos>	<tshos>			boil	<tshos>	have cooked
བཙོ	འཚོད	བཙོས	ཚོས					
<bshad >	<vchad>	<bshad>	<shod>			speak	<shod>	Is able to speak
བཤད།	འཚད།	བཤད།	ཤོད།				ཤོད།	
<dbug>	<vbig>	<phug>	<phugs>			pierce	<phugs>	Have pierced
དབུག	འབོགས	ཕུག	ཕུགས				ཕུགས	
<bsran>	<sran>	<bsran>	<sron>			bear	<sron>	Is able to bear
བསྐྱེད	སྐྱེད	བསྐྱེད	སྐྱེད				སྐྱེད	

Activity				Univalence			Achievement	
Bivalence								
Future	Present	Past	Imperative	Future	Present	glossary		glossary
<bkyag>	<vgyog>	<bkyags>	<khyogs>			lift	<khyogs>	Lift up
བརྟུག	འབྱོག	བརྟུགས	རྟུགས				རྟུགས	
<bshag>	<vchags>	<bshags>	<bshogs>			regret	<bshogs>	confess
བཤག	འཆགས	བཤགས	བཤགས				བཤགས	

"Table XIII" contains verbs contrasting between activity aspect and state aspect ,as shown in "Table XIII":

TABLE XIII. EXAMPLE OF CONTRAST BETWEEN ACTIVITY AND STATE IN CLASSIC TIBETAN VERBS

Activity				Univalence			State	
Bivalence								
Future	Present	Past	Imperative	Non-past	Past	glossary		glossary
<bskyog>	<skyog>	<bskyogs>	<skyog>	<vkyog>	<vkhyogs>	bent	<kyog>	curved
བརྟུག	རྟུག	བརྟུགས།	རྟུགས།	འབྱོག	འབྱོགས		རྟུག	
<bskyom>	<skyom>	<bskyoms>	<skyoms>	<khyom>	<khyoms>	shake	<kyom>	lax
བརྟུམ།	རྟུམ།	བརྟུམས།	རྟུམས།	འབྱོམ།	འབྱོམས།		རྟུམ	
<sbyang>	<sbyong>	<sbyangs>	<sbyongs>	<vbyong>	<vbyongs>	practice	<byang>	skilled
སྟང	སྟོང	སྟངས	སྟོངས	འབྱོང	འབྱོངས		ཟླང	
<dgang >	<vgengs>	<bkang >	<khongs>	<kheng >	<khengs>	fill	<gang>	full
དགང།	འགངས།	བགང།	ཁོངས།	ཁོང།	ཁོངས།		གང	
<dgug>	<vgugs>	<bkug>	<khug>	<khug>	<khugs>	bent	<gug>	crooked
དགུག	འགུགས།	བགུག	ཁུག	ཁུག	ཁུགས		གུག	
<gleb>	<gleb>	<glebs>	<glebs>			make flat	<leb>	flat
ཆོབ།	ཆོབ།	ཆོབས།	ཆོབས།				ལེབ	
<bsnar>	<snor>	<bsnar>	<snor>			cross	<nor>	wrong
བསྐྱར	སྐྱར	བསྐྱར	སྐྱར				རྩོར	
<bsnyung>	<snyung>	<bsnyungs>	<snyungs>			decrease	<nyung>	few
བསྐྱང	སྐྱང	བསྐྱངས	སྐྱངས				ལུང	

There is another to be noted is that the static forms can be nominalized, when modifying nouns, by means of duplicating:

<kum> ཀུམ “huddle” → <kum.kum> ཀུམ་ཀུམ་

<leb> ལེབ “flat” → <leb.leb> ལེབ་ལེབ་

<nyung> ལུང “little” → <nyung.nyung> ལུང་ལུང་

TABLE XIV. MUTUAL INDEPENDENCE BETWEEN VALENCE AND ASPECT

Activity					Univalence			Achievement	
Bivalence									
Future	Present	Past	Imperative	glossary	Non-past	Past	glossary		glossary
<gcad >	<gcod>	<bcad >	<chod>	cut	<vchad>	<chad>	break	<chod>	Have cut
གཅད	གཅོད	བཅད	ཚོད		འཚད	ཚད		ཚོད	down
<gcag>	<gcog>	<bcag>	<chog>	break	<chag>		Beak by itself	<chog>	Have broken
གཅག	གཅོག	བཅག	ཚོག		ཚག			ཚོག	

As you can see from "Table XIV", the operation of valence is specific to the aspect of activity.

For some verbs however, the valence and aspect operations will overlap, indicating that the valence operation, at the same time, will shift the aspect of the verb in question. This is mainly due to the semantic features of the action. Specifically, if the semantic feature of the aspect of a high-valence verb is a

VI. INTERACTION BETWEEN VALENCE AND ASPECT

In general, valence and aspect are independent of each other and belong to different levels of operations, for instance ,as shown in "Table XIV":

accomplishment, that is, its action has a continuous process and has an endpoint, then its corresponding low-valence verb is an achievement or a state aspect, that is, the action reached the relevant endpoint or some state. For example, as shown in "Table XV":

TABLE XV. EXAMPLES VERBS THAT INTERACT BETWEEN VALENCE AND ASPECT (1)

High valence					Low valence/achievement or state		
Future	Present	Past	Imperative	glossary	Non-past	Past	glossary
<bskol>	<skol>	<bskol>	<skol>	boil	<khol>	<khol>	Is boiled
བསྐྱོད།	སྐྱོད།	བསྐྱོད་པ།	སྐྱོད།		ཁོ་	ཁོ་	
<bskum>	<skum>	<bskums>	<skums>	shrink	<vkhum>	<vkhums>	Is shrunk
བསྐྱུང།	སྐྱུང།	བསྐྱུང་པ།	སྐྱུང།		འཁྲུང།	འཁྲུང་པ།	
<bsgom>	<sgom>	<bsgoms>	<sgoms>	cultivate	<goms>	<goms>	familiarize
བསྐྱེད།	སྐྱེད།	བསྐྱེད་པ།	སྐྱེད།		གྲོ་མས།	གྲོ་མས།	
<bsgrig>	<sgrig>	<bsgrigs>	<sgrigs>	set up	<vgrig>	<vgrig>	symmetrical
བསྐྱེད།	སྐྱེད།	བསྐྱེད་པ།	སྐྱེད།		འབྲིག།	འབྲིག།	
<bsgrub>	<srub>	<bsgrubs>	<srubs>	do	<vgrub>	<grub>	finish
བསྐྱེད།	སྐྱེད།	བསྐྱེད་པ།	སྐྱེད།		འབྲུབ།	མྱེད།	
<sprad>	<sprod>	<sprad>	<sprod>	give	<vphrod>		receive
སྐྱད།	སྐྱད།	སྐྱད།	སྐྱད།		འཕྱོད།		
<gtug>	<gtug>	<gtugs>	<gtugs>	move	<thug>		meet
གྲུག།	གྲུག།	གྲུག་པ།	གྲུག་པ།		ཐུག།		
<bstim>	<stim>	<bstims>	<stims>	penetrate	thim		fade
བསྐྱུང།	སྐྱུང།	བསྐྱུང་པ།	སྐྱུང་པ།		ཐོས།		
<gzugs>	<vdzugs>	<btsugs>	<tshugs>	build	<tshugs>		Is built
གཟུགས།	འཛུགས།	བཟུགས།	ཚུགས།		ཚུགས།		

For example, in the “boiling” related verb family of "Table XV", because the high valence form can “expect” an result of been boiled in the semantic field, so the low-valence form <khol> means “have boiled”. The same rule applies for all verbs in the table.

If any verb family of which the semantic feature is inherently an activities aspect or achievement aspect, then the valence operation does not lead to an aspectual change. For example ,as shown in Table. XVI:

TABLE XVI. EXAMPLES VERBS THAT INTERACT BETWEEN VALENCE AND ASPECT (2)

High valence: activities(achievement)					Low valence: activities(achievement)		
Future	Present	Past	Imperative	glossary	Non-past	Past	glossary
<bskor>	<skor>	<bskor>	<skor>	Turn around	<vkhor>	<vkhor>	circle
བསྐྱོར།	སྐྱོར།	བསྐྱོར་པ།	སྐྱོར།		འཁོར།	འཁོར།	
<bsgul>	<sgul>	<bsgul>	<sgul>	Move sth.	<vgul>	<vgul>	Move by itself
བསྐྱུལ།	སྐྱུལ།	བསྐྱུལ་པ།	སྐྱུལ།		འཁྲུལ།	འཁྲུལ།	
<bsgril>	<sgril>	<bsgril>	<sgril>	Roll sth	<vgril>	<gril>	Roll by itself
བསྐྱེད།	སྐྱེད།	བསྐྱེད་པ།	སྐྱེད།		འབྲོག།	མྱོག།	
<bskur>	<skur>	<bskur>	<skur>	send	<vkhur>	<khur>	carry
བསྐྱུར།	སྐྱུར།	བསྐྱུར་པ།	སྐྱུར།		འཁྲུར།	ཁྲུར།	
<bskyil>	<skyl>	<bskyil>	<skyl>	accumulate	<vkhyil>	<vkhyil>	Accumulate by itself
ལྷུལ།	སྐྱེལ།	བསྐྱེལ།	སྐྱེལ།		འཁྲུལ།	འཁྲུལ།	
<bsgo>	<sgo>	<bsgos>	<sgos>	spread	<vgo>	<vgos>	Infect
བསྐྱེད།	སྐྱེད།	བསྐྱེད་པ།	སྐྱེད།		འགོ།	འགོས།	
<dgrol>	<vgrol>	<bkrol>	<khrol>	Untie	<grol>	<grol>	Is loosened
དངོས།	འཛོལ།	བཛོལ།	མོལ།		མོལ།	མོལ།	
<vphud>	<vphud>	<phud>	<phud>	Expel	<vbud>	<bud>	exit
འཕྱེད།	འཕྱེད།	ཕྱེད།	ཕྱེད།		འཕྱེད།	ཕྱེད།	
<dbyung>	<vbyin>	<phyung>	<phyungs>	Take out	<vbyung>	<byung>	occur
དབྱུང།	འབྱུང།	ཕྱུང།	ཕྱུང་པ།		འབྱུང།	ཕྱུང།	

In the “circle” related verb family of "Table XVI", the high valence forms are activity, so the low valence forms does not lead to aspectual change, which is still a continuous process.

VII. ERGATIVE VERBS VS. UNERGATIVE VERBS

The category of ergative verbs vs. unergative verbs in Classical Tibetan is syntactically based. Before going to detail with this, we should first address the problem

of transitivity of Classical Tibetan verbs. In the past, the division of transitive and intransitive verbs was considered to be the most important grammatical categorization for Written Tibetan verbs (such as Shefer 1951; Uray 1953:45; Huang 1981; Jacques 2012). Grammatically speaking, transitivity is not an accurate parameter for classical Tibetan verbs. First, either a subject or a direct object can be deleted on the sentence level, so it’s difficult to decide the transitivity of a verb. Secondly, on the matter of transitivity, Huang pointed

that the transitivity of a verb depends on the ergative maker in the sentence, that is, if the subject can carry an ergative maker, then the verb is transitive or intransitive. This claim works in a large extent, but we can still find counter-examples. Even if the subject is labeled with ergativity, the verb is not necessarily transitive, even semantically. For example, In the case of the verb <khyab> "spread", in the Tibetan Verb Dictionary (Shi Xueli, 2002: 34), its subjects are not marked with ergativity:

5a: nor-lug- rtswa.thang- du-khyab རྫོང་ལྷག་སྐྱ་ཐང་དུ་ཁྱེད།

Yaks- Sheep – grassland– abl. – spread

"Yaks and sheep spread over the grassland"

Based on Huang’s claim, this verb is intransitive because its subjects do not carry an ergative maker and it does not have a direct object. However, in the Monlam Tibetan Electronic Dictionary, with the same verb, its subjects are marked with ergativity:

5b: nor-lug-kis-rtswa.thang-khyab རྫོང་ལྷག་གིས་སྐྱ་ཐང་ཁྱེད།

yak-sheep-erg.- grassland-spread

"Yaks and sheep spread over the grassland"

Even the sentence carries an ergative maker, but it can’t be a transitive verb because there is no direct object both syntactically and semantically. So Huang’s rule doesn’t apply here; that is, ergative markers cannot always be used to indicate transitivity.

But more importantly, we are arguing here that while transitivity is not a grammatical category of the classical Tibetan verbs, ergativity is. The ergativity of a verb can be tested by inserting an ergative maker to the subject. Thus, any verb of which one of the core arguments can carry an ergative maker is an ergative verb, and that otherwise it’s an unergative verb, irrespective of the sentence surface structure. For example, Sentence (6) contains only one word:

(6) vgro.

“Go”

You can’t insert a core argument with an ergative maker into sentence(6), so this verb is always an unergative verb. For the verb of <za> “eat”, whatever the sentence surface structure is like, it’s always an ergative verb, because you can insert a core argument with an ergative maker, for example (7):

(7) nga-s-za.

I–erg. eat: present.

“I eat.”

For some other verbs, the ergativity depends on the surface structure. like (5a) and (5b), With or without carrying an ergative maker, of course, is different in

meaning. In (5b), having the subject carried an ergative maker, the sentence emphasize the initiativity of subjects(yaks and sheep). In (5a), without the ergative maker, this sentence is more likely to describe a scene, which is the yaks and sheep being spread over the grassland, when compared to (5b). So this depends on the speaker.

In addition, high-valent verbs are always ergative verbs, but the univalent verbs can be either ergative or unergative depending on the context. For example:

8a: rtsaw-skye.

Grass-grow

“the grass grows”

8b:mkhas.pa-s-blun-la-snyig.rje-skye

མཁས་པས་བློན་ལ་སྙིང་རྗེ་སྐྱེ། (Mipang 2006:11):

The Wise - ergative - fools – abl. - compassion - grow

“The wise men feel compassionate towards the fools”

The verb <skye> “grow”, both in 8a and 8b, is a univalent verb (its bivalent form is <skyed>), but in 8a, it’s an unergative verb, while in 8b, it’s an ergative verb because 8b carries an ergative maker.

In fact, indigenous linguists have made such a distinction, namely byed.vbrel.las.tshig vs. byed.med.las.tshig . The former refers to verbs which have the distinctions of agents and patients, while the latter refers to verbs that have only one argument. This classification is by far the most basic classification of verbs in Tibetan dictionaries. Many linguists translate this classification into the opposition of transitive and intransitive verbs (such as Gesang et al. 2004: 419), but it should correspond to ergativity and unergativity.

VIII. CONCLUSION

This paper re-analyzes the grammatical categories of Classic Tibetan verbs by differentiating the semantic, morphological, and syntactic aspect. Morphologically, the verbs in Classical Tibetan can be divided into four categories: tense, mode, valence, and aspect. Based on the syntactic distributional criteria, it can be divided into grammatical categories such as ergative verbs and unergative verbs.

The traditionally called causation should have better term namely valence, because the real causation in Classic Tibetan is exhibited paraphrastically. In addition to the operation between univalence and bivalence, we have operation between trivalence and bivalence.

Transitivity is not a grammatical category in classical Tibetan.

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