SYNTACTIC, SEMANTIC, AND PRAGMATIC-EPISTEMIC FUNCTIONS OF AUXILIARIES IN WESTERN TIBETAN

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There are two basic auxiliary verbs for ‘to be’ which seem to be used in all Tibetan varieties including, of course, Written Tibetan (WT). In terms of WT, one yin and the other is yod. In a sentence they occur either as finite verb forms (usually in final position), or enter as auxiliary morphemes into complex predicate structures. In this paper, only the first usage will be exemplified.

Syntactically, in most spoken varieties the (etymological) correspondences of WT yin seem to be mainly used to link a subject, usually in first position, with a predicative complement, usually in second position, both marked by absolutive case on the syntactic level. Both the subject and the predicative complement are usually either a noun or a pronoun, but adjectives also occur sporadically as predicative complements. On the syntactic level, therefore, the correspondence of WT yin in a given spoken variety may be called a “linking auxiliary verb.”

Semantically, in the spoken varieties the correspondences of WT yin often denote the identity of the subject or else an intrinsic and unchangeable quality of the subject, with the predicative complement describing the subject in its totality or giving a definition of the subject. This is the reason why we find mainly nouns or pronouns as predicative complements on the syntactic level. This linking function is called “equivative” on the semantic level. On the syntactico-semantic level, we may speak of a “linking equative function” and concisely refer to a correspondence of WT yin as an “equivative auxiliary verb.”

With the (etymological) correspondences of WT yod in the spoken varieties we find various syntactic constructions. The basic syntactic pattern is that of a

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1 An earlier version of this paper was presented at the third meeting of the European Cooperation Project on Himalayan Languages in Heidelberg (4 - 6 June 1998).
2 The material of the discussed dialect varieties has not been collected with special regard to the topic of this paper. Therefore, it is possible that there are gaps in this respect. Only after more field research will it become possible to recheck some results. For the same reason, it is not possible at present to discuss the usages of these auxiliaries in questions or in embedded speech.
3 Properly speaking, in the discussed dialect varieties, the first argument on the semantic level is the patient, but for the sake of convenience, I will hear use the syntactic notion “subject” on the syntactico-semantic level.
4 Compare van Driem 1998: 125, 135 and Brigitte Huber's paper in this volume and her note 6 for further references.
subject marked in the absolutive case followed by a correspondence of WT yod. This basic sentence can be extended by adding a locative or a dative argument in first or second position. In such cases we cannot speak of a "linking function."

Semantically, the basic pattern denotes existence, as e.g., in English 'there is water.' This can be extended to express location by adding a locative argument, e.g., 'there is water in the milk,' or possession by adding a dative argument, e.g., 'there is water with me,' in the sense of 'I have water'. In the last case, the dative argument often takes the first position. Since these functions are based on denoting existence they are called "existential" on the semantic level. On the syntactico-semantic level, we may concisely label a correspondence of WT yod as an "existential auxiliary verb."

In all dialects considered so far, the correspondences of WT yod are used in existential functions. However, in most dialects they may also be used quite similarly to the correspondences of WT yin, by extending the basic syntactic pattern with a second absolutive argument, thus linking a subject, usually in first position, with a predicative complement, usually in second position. In this case, the speaker uses the correspondence of WT yod to ascribe a particular quality, expressed through the predicative complement, to the subject. This is the reason why we find usually only adjectives as predicative complements on the syntactic level. This linking function is called "attributive" on the semantic level. On the syntactico-semantic level, we may speak of a "linking attributive function."

Sometimes it is difficult to make a clear-cut distinction purely on the semantic level between the equative and linking attributive function. On the syntactic level, as already mentioned, with the equative function expressing identity a noun or pronoun is used as the predicative complement, but to express an intrinsic quality an adjective is used as the predicative complement. In the same way, the attributive function expressing a particular quality also uses an adjective as predicative complement. Therefore, in the case of an adjective as predicative complement we have to decide on the semantic level whether we are dealing with the equative or with the attributive function. According to the available material, there are only very few examples with a correspondence of WT yin used in the attributive linking function. On the other hand, again according to the available material, we do not find correspondences of WT yod in the equative function using nouns or pronouns as predicative complements. However, we have to consider further auxiliaries occurring in the various spoken varieties with regard to their equative, existential and attributive functions on the syntactico-semantic level.

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5 Compare van Driem 1998:135 and Brigitte Huber's paper in this volume.
6 But compare example (11) of Brigitte Huber's paper in this volume on Lende Tibetan (Kyirong) where joq is used with a noun as predicative complement.
**BALTI**

Excluding derivations, *in* (WT *yin*) and *jot* (WT *yod*) are the only auxiliaries used in Balti Tibetan, the westernmost Tibetan dialect, situated in northern Pakistan and belonging to Western Archaic Tibetan (WAT).

For Balti *in*, compare the following examples:

1. \(kʰ\text{j}aŋ\) \(\text{su}\) \(\text{in}\)  
   *you.ABS who.ABS be*  
   ‘Who are you?’ (R. 15, GHL 41)

2. \(\text{ŋa}\) \(\text{ahmat}\) \(\text{in}\)  
   *I.ABS Ahmad.ABS be*  
   ‘I am Ahmad.’

3. \(\text{ladax}\) \(\text{ŋati}\) \(pʰ\text{ajul}\) \(\text{in}\)  
   *Ladakh.ABS we.INCL.GEN fatherland.ABS be*  
   ‘Ladakh is our fatherland.’ (GHL 38)

4. \(kʰ\text{o}\) \(\text{legi}\) \(\text{rixmet}\) \(\text{in}\)  
   *he.ABS very of.low.status.ABS be*  
   ‘He is of very low status.’

5. \(\text{ŋa}\) \(\text{antfan}\) \(\text{men}\)  
   *I.ABS strong.ABS NEG.be*  
   ‘I am not strong.’ (R. 78)

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7 The examples are taken from Read 1934 (= R.), Lobsang 1995 (= GHL) and from the story in my book (= RC = Bielmeier 1985: 28ff.). The transcriptions have been adapted and the glosses are mine. For all remaining material I am gratefully indebted to the late Wezir Ghulam Mehdi, to Mohammad Abbas Abdul Karim, and to S. Bahadur Ali Salik.

8 In all spoken varieties there are inferential, modal and different tense forms morphologically derived from the simple auxiliaries, which cannot be dealt with here systematically. Compare for example the inferential derivations *insuk* and *jotsuk* in Balti. A further auxiliary is Balti *naŋ* ‘apparently is, seems to be’ with its negative correspondence *medaŋ* and the affirmative past *narka* ‘was’ (cf. R. 61ff.); cf. e.g., *di gonmo lijaxmo naŋ* ‘This garment appears to be nice.’ (R. 62), *de tʰanpikʰa stayʒi tʃik san medaŋ* ‘There is apparently not a single tree on that plain.’ (R. 62). In the following examples we can see the gradual transformation of *duk* towards an auxiliary, which, however, unlike *jot*, is still conjugated like an ordinary verb:  
   \(kʰ\text{osı }\text{nana bronəŋ duget}\)  
   *‘He keeps on (lit. “remains” R.B.) annoying me.’* (R. 65)

   \(\text{de rila ridaq ogen jot}\)  
   *‘Ibex are coming (continually) on that mountain.’* (R. 39)

9 For the classification and the linguistic geography of the Tibetan dialects see Bielmeier et al. 1998.
On the syntactic level, \textit{in} is exclusively used as a linking auxiliary verb, with the subject usually in first position and the predicable complement in the second position, both in the absolutive case.

Sometimes the predicable complement may be marked by a case other than the absolutive. Compare the following example with the predicable complement in the genitive:

(6) \begin{align*}
dju & \quad \eta j & \quad \text{in} \\
\text{this.abs} & \quad \text{i.gen} & \quad \text{be} \\
\end{align*}

‘This is mine.’ (R. 15).

This sentence is apparently abbreviated from a structure like

(7) \begin{align*}
dju & \quad \eta j & \quad \text{karol} & \quad \text{in} \\
\text{this.abs} & \quad \text{i.gen} & \quad \text{cup.abs} & \quad \text{be} \\
\end{align*}

‘This is my cup.’ (R. 36).

A further syntactic exception is the possibility of ellipses (subject deletion) in cases like:

(8) \begin{align*}
diri & \quad \text{tf} & \quad \text{o} & \quad \text{zaq} & \quad \text{in} \\
\text{today} & \quad \text{great} & \quad \text{day.abs} & \quad \text{be} \\
\end{align*}

‘Today is a great day.’ (R. 81),

(9) \begin{align*}
\text{mentax} & \quad \text{in} \\
\text{true.abs} & \quad \text{be} \\
\end{align*}

‘(It) is true.’ (RC 2,10)

(10) \begin{align*}
su & \quad \text{in} & \quad \eta & \quad \text{in} \\
\text{who.abs} & \quad \text{be} & \quad \text{i.abs} & \quad \text{be} \\
\end{align*}

‘Who is (it)? I am (it is I)’ (R. 36).

But compare:

(11) \begin{align*}
dju & \quad su & \quad \text{in} \\
\text{this.abs} & \quad \text{who.abs} & \quad \text{be} \\
\end{align*}

‘Who is this?’ (R. 53)

(12) \begin{align*}
dju & \quad \text{tf} & \quad \text{i} & \quad \text{in}? & \quad dju & \quad \text{voybu} & \quad \text{in} \\
\text{this.abs} & \quad \text{what.abs} & \quad \text{be} & \quad \text{this.abs} & \quad \text{book.abs} & \quad \text{be} \\
\end{align*}

‘What is this? This is a book.’ (R. 36)

On the semantic level, in the above sentences \textit{in} is used to denote identity between subject and predicable complement, or else the predicable complement