Historical Development of the Tibetan Evidential *tuu*¹

Krisadawan Hongladarom
Chulalongkorn University

INTRODUCTION

The term “evidential” refers to a linguistic unit that encodes the speaker’s sources of knowledge, such as direct experience, hearsay, or inference. Evidentials hardly constitute a coherent linguistic category, as the forms often carry multiple functions. In many languages, they not only express epistemic meanings but also are obligatory tense/aspect markers. Furthermore, they are used as discourse markers with pragmatic extensions to surprise, irony, and compliments (Slobin & Aksu, 1982).

It is interesting to note that almost all evidentials that are obligatory markers in many languages have grammaticalized from lexical verbs. The inventory of lexical verbs that have developed into evidential markers consists of motion verbs, perception verbs, and verbs of speaking. This is not surprising, given the fact that these verbs are related to actions, and they are primary means by which speakers acquire knowledge. The verb ‘see,’ for example, has a tendency to become a marker of visual evidence. Likewise, the verb ‘say’ often develops into a hearsay evidential. For a fuller account, see Matlock, (1989).

Tibetan presents an interesting case of the grammaticalization of the verb *tuyu*.² The Modern Spoken Tibetan *tuyu* has grammaticalized from *duyug* meaning ‘to sit, stay’; ‘to have, possess,’ whose earliest usages are attested in late Old Tibetan. In this paper, I discuss meaning shifts of this verb from Old Tibetan (ca. 650–950 A.D.), Classical Tibetan, to Modern Spoken Tibetan (central dialect). Based on the cognitive approach, I have attempted to explain the grammaticalization of *tuyu* in terms of spatialization metaphor which seems to pervade Tibetan language and thought. Finally, I argue that evidentiality is a novel development in Modern Spoken Tibetan. As a grammaticalized feature found in several Tibeto-Burman languages, it can be a result of language contact, not a genetic feature derived from Proto-Tibeto-Burman.

The paper consists of three major sections. Section 1 gives an introduction to the existential verb system of which *tuyu* is a main part. Section 2 discusses the historical development of this existential verb in comparison with other lexemes that have similar meanings. The path of semantic change of this verb from Old Tibetan to Modern Spoken Tibetan will be proposed. Section 3 demonstrates how *tuyu* has come to be associated with evidentiality by means of spatialization metaphor.

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²Modern Spoken Tibetan (Central and Lhasa dialects) has two phonemic tones: high tone, represented by a line above the first vowel, and low tone, represented by a line below the first vowel. The second identical vowel of the word is generally pronounced with falling tone. However, to facilitate tonal markings in this paper, the falling tone is not marked.
TIBETAN EXISTENTIAL VERBS

Students of Tibetan are often confused by the perplexing usage of existential verbs which not only express the concepts of existence, location, or possession but also function as markers of aspect and evidentiality. These verbs are: tuu, ylo ree, and yöö. Most textbooks written by Western scholars (e.g., Goldstein & Normang, 1978) and by native grammarians (e.g., Skalbzan 'Gyurmed, 1981) seem to agree that tuu and ylo ree differ from yöö in terms of person agreement. tuu and ylo ree are generally used with third person subjects, whereas yöö is used with first person.³

As evidential markers, tuu is used contrastively with ylo ree in two dimensions: direct vs. indirect source of knowledge, and new vs. old knowledge. In the first dimension, tuu connotes the speaker’s direct source of knowledge, whereas ylo ree implies that the reported information is obtained via hearsay or inference, such as the speaker’s knowledge of the population of monks in Tibet in 1994 from reading a newspaper or being told by recent travelers in Tibet.⁴ In the second dimension, the use of tuu indicates that the speaker has just learned the information reported in the utterance, such as upon unexpectedly finding a $20 bill in his pocket. The use of ylo ree, on the other hand, suggests that the information is not new. The speaker has learned about it a long time ago. That is, the knowledge has already been assimilated in the speaker’s consciousness. Table 1 demonstrates both dimensions of the evidential usage of tuu and ylo ree.

Table 1. Two Dimensions of tuu and ylo ree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Knowledge</th>
<th>Type of Knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>New</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect</td>
<td>Old</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>tuu</th>
<th>√</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ylo ree</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

yöö does not convey any evidential function. This is not surprising given the fact that the form is generally used with the first person subject. The speaker has no need to make an assertion of what he or she has personally experienced (Givón, 1982). More

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³This distinction, however, is an understatement, as it has been pointed out that tuu and ylo ree can also occur with first person and yöö with third person.

⁴There is another set of evidentials in the perfective system of Modern Spoken Tibetan: sön, -po ree, and shaa. These verbs typically convey a three-way evidential distinction: direct (visual) experience, hearsay, and inference. It is beyond the scope of this paper to deal with these evidentials. For more information, see Hongladarom (1993) and DeLancey (1991).
will be said on evidential and discourse functions of tuu and yə∅ rəe in the next section. Given the periphrastic construction of yə∅ rəe, it is clear that the form is a new development in Modern Tibetan. yə∅ rəe consists of existential yod [yöö] + verbal noun suffix -pa [pɔ] + copula rəe. Moreover, the form is not attested in Old Tibetan texts.

**HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF TUU**

**Old Tibetan**

In Old Tibetan (OT) there are at least three verbs that express the concept of existence: (1) mchis; (2) yod [yöö], and (3) dūg [tuu]. Jäschke (1881) defined mchis as an "elegant form of yod meaning 'to be, exist." Since most available materials in OT are concerned with the history of Tibetan kings, it is not surprising to find that mchis occurs more frequently than yod or dūg. Dūg is attested in late OT with the meanings of 'to sit, to stay, to remain' as well as 'to have, possess.' The honorific counterpart of these three existential verbs is gzung, another common verb in OT texts.

Because of the relatively low rate of the occurrences of dūg and yod in OT, it is hard to draw a conclusion as to whether these verbs and mchis were used contrastively. Mchis in Modern Tibetan (at least in the central dialect) has become obsolete, whereas dūg and yod have developed contrastive usages in terms of evidential meanings, and person agreement, as mentioned in Section 1.

Yod and dūg are found in both monoclusal (as finite verbs often attached by the sentential finite vowel /o/) and multiclusal constructions (as non-finite verbs followed by conjunctive suffixes). (1) demonstrates the existential usage of yod as appeared in OT; (2) and (3) are among earliest examples of dūg. The verb in (2) means 'to have' and in (3) 'to stay'.

(1) **Old Tibetan Chronicle** (P1283:0598)

\[\text{de-}^{i} \text{nub phyogs na, sde bchu tsham yod-e,}^{5}\]

that-GEN west side if country ten about EXIST-CS^{6}

'the western direction of that (place), there were about ten nations,'

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^{5}Notes on the transliteration system: hyphens are used only in agglutinate constructions when free morphemes are attached by bound ones. Commas are used to represent clause boundaries as indicated by single shad in Tibetan written texts. Period mark sentential boundaries. Note that in OT aspirated and non-aspirated initial obstruents are often used interchangeably. For example, the word phyogs 'side, direction' has two orthographic variants: phyogs and pyogs. /t/ and /n/ represent voiced glottal fricative and nasal velar respectively.

^{6}Abbreviations used in this paper: COP copular; CS conjunctive suffix; ERG ergative; EXIST existential; GEN genitive; H honorific; IDS indefinite suffix; IPF imperfective; NEG negative; PF perfective; PN proper noun; Q interrogative suffix; QS quotative suffix; SFS sentence-final suffix; VN verbal noun suffix.
Old Tibetan Chronicle (P1287:0037)
myi-'i
human-GEN
myig bya
eye
myig ltar 'dug-pa
bird
'og nas
like
EXIST-VN
under from
'gebs-pa
gchig 'dod-ces zer nas,
cover up-VNS
one
want-QS
say from
'(He) said, "I want the one having human eyes (whose eyelids)
cover upwards like a bird's."

Old Tibetan Chronicle (P1287:0159)
ri'i
I-GEN
srinmo-zhiṅkyam,
daughter-IDS
zinporje'iṅa
na 'dug
PN
mod-kyi,
in
EXIST
indeed-though
khyed zer-ba
PN
bzhin
say-VN
bya'o-zhes
like
dkarstsal 'dus-te,
do-SFS-QS
you
say
(H)
'(The king) said, "Though indeed one of my daughters is staying at
Zinporje'iṅa, I will do as you said."

Classical Tibetan

The difference between 'dug and yod in Classical Tibetan (CT) is not clear. Chang
and Chang (1984) argue that yod is used in a subordinate clause when followed by a
conjunctive suffix, such as -ste. This could have been a modern usage of the form
because in CT examples of 'dug in multiclausal constructions are attested, as in (4).

The Story of Yugpaca the Brahman (Jäschke, 1972, p. 92)
yul-zhig na bramse
dbyugpacan-zhes
place-IDS
bya-ba-zhig 'dug-ste,
PN
...
do-VN-IDS
In a certain place there being a brahman called 'Dbyugpaca, ...

'dug' in (4) carries an existential function and is followed by the conjunctive suffix
-stes. In Modern Tibetan, yod will be preferred in this construction.

The Story of Yugpaca the Brahman (Jäschke, 1972, p. 95)
dedag
they
rgyalpo-'i
king-GEN
rkaṅpa
foot
la
at
mgo-bo-s
head-ERG
phyag'tshal-te,
prostrate-CS
phyogs
side
gcig-tu
'dug-go.
sit-SFS
They prostrated themselves with their head at the king's feet and sat
down in one direction.'

(5) illustrates that 'dug still retains its original meaning in CT, which is, in this case,
'to sit.' Dug in Modern Tibetan is no longer used as a lexical item meaning to sit or to
stay. That is, it has lost its lexical meanings and is used only as an existential verb
marking evidentiality. In modern usage, the verb sdod [tŏ] will be employed to denote
the meaning of to sit or to stay.