

THE MEANING OF THE AUXILIARY MORPHEME 'DUG IN THE ASPECT SYSTEMS OF SOME CENTRAL TIBETAN DIALECTS

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1. INTRODUCTION¹

The topic of this paper is a historical-comparative investigation of the meaning of the auxiliary morpheme *'dug* in some Central Tibetan dialects. The interesting point about this morpheme is that it is used in apparently opposite meanings in the imperfective and perfective aspects. In the imperfective aspect, *'dug* is used in many dialects for, roughly speaking, a “plus evidential” (+EVID) meaning, in order to express that the communicated information is based on the speaker's own experience or eyewitnessing. In the perfective aspect, on the other hand, *'dug* appears in some dialects with a “minus evidential” (-EVID) meaning. In at least one case, namely Lhomi, these opposite meanings are even to be found within the same dialect.

In order to explain this surprising situation, we shall discuss in some detail the relevant parts² of the auxiliary morpheme systems of those dialects for which a -EVID meaning of *'dug* in the perfective aspect has been described. These are Kagate (Höhlig 1978), Southern Mustang (Kretschmar 1995), Lhomi (Vesalainen/Vesalainen 1980) and Jirel (Maibaum/Strahm 1973, Strahm 1975). Sherpa (Schöttelndreyer/Schöttelndreyer 1973, Schöttelndreyer 1975, 1978, Woodbury 1986) will also be included for comparison, since Sherpa *-nok*, which is etymologically unclear, behaves in a manner exactly comparable to *'dug* in the other dialects.

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² “Relevant parts” are those morphemes which directly belong to the evidentiality phenomenon in question, i.e. *'dug* in all its uses as well as its respective immediate constituents. This definition excludes, among other things, discussion of special morphemes used for first person actor in declaratives (and often for second person actor in questions), as well as the related phenomenon of a “conjunct/disjunct” opposition in embedded speech (as defined by Hale).

The exact features that make up the evidentiality system seem to vary for each dialect and will be described in more detail in section 2 below. The following table shows the -EVID position of 'dug and -nok in the perfective auxiliary morpheme systems of the dialects mentioned:

	+EVID	-EVID
Kagate	-si: witnessed	-tu/-du: unwitnessed
<i>Southern Mustang</i>	-sur/-so: direct observation, certain knowledge	-tuk/-ruk: no certain knowledge, assumption, conjecture
<i>Lhomi</i>	-sor: "simple past disjunct"	-tuk: "stative past disjunct" -pa pət: "remote past"
<i>Jirel</i>	-sur: certainty, visibility, proximity	-duk: uncertainty, invisibility, non-proximity
<i>Sherpa</i>	-sur: proximity, certainty, visibility	-nok: non-proximity, uncertainty, non-visibility

Table 1. Morphemes used for the evidentiality opposition in the perfective aspect

The +EVID morphemes are cognates of Written Tibetan (WT) *song* in Southern Mustang, Lhomi, Jirel and Sherpa, and of *zin* in Kagate. In Lhomi a third morpheme -pa pət is involved in the evidentiality opposition; see the description below (section 2.3). In Southern Mustang, there are two additional morphemes, labelled "preterite" and "durative preterite", which seem to have some reference to evidentiality, but since, unlike in Lhomi, they do not directly interfere with the opposition between -sur and -tuk, they have been omitted from the table and will be discussed only later (see sections 2.2. and 3.2.2.).

The key to the apparently contradictory uses of 'dug in the perfective vs. the imperfective aspects lies perhaps in an inferential meaning of 'dug in the perfective aspect at an earlier stage of the language.³ But before explaining this idea more precisely, we need to look at how the functioning of 'dug, and its equivalent -nok, is described for the individual dialects.

³ No investigation about the historical development of -nok can be made due to its unclear etymology. However, cf. section 3.1. for discussion of its evidential meaning.

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE PHENOMENON IN THE INDIVIDUAL DIALECTS

2.1. Kagate

For Kagate, Höhlig 1978 describes a set of three morphemes *-si*, *-tu* (appearing as *-du* after nasals, laterals, and long vowels) and *lo*, all belonging to the “completive aspect”, which according to her is “a simple indefinite past which indicates that an event has been accomplished” (p. 20). These morphemes give information about the speaker's relation to the story he is telling. The use of the morpheme *-si* means that the speaker was an eyewitness to the information he is giving. With the first person, this form is obligatory, “for obvious reasons, since first person use implies that one is an eyewitness” (p. 20),⁴ but *-si* is possible also with second and third person. If the speaker is not an eyewitness, he can use either *-tu*, which means that he has not seen the event himself,⁵ or he can be more precise as to his source of information by using *-si lo* (if his information comes from an eyewitness) or *-tu lo* (if his source of information is not an eyewitness). *lo* is a particle indicating “secondhand information”, which is also found in other dialects. *-tu* is also used when the speaker has figured out the information by deduction (see n. 5); this corresponds to the inferential meaning, which interests us in this paper. The use of *-si* and *-tu* in Kagate is further illustrated by the way one speaker combined these morphemes when describing a fire. The speaker had come to the burning house, and in his report he used *-tu* for those events which had happened before his arrival, e.g. the origin of the fire, and *-si* for the stages he had observed himself.

As for the imperfective aspect, no systematic information about its auxiliary system can be drawn from Höhlig's paper, because her topic is not a complete description of the Kagate aspect system. It is, however, possible that 'dug exists in the imperfective, too, since Höhlig (p. 21, n. 4) indicates that there are other

⁴ This statement certainly corresponds to what one would expect, and it is apparently confirmed by the Kagate usage of the evidential morphemes. However, it is not valid as a general principle, since in Shigatse, e.g., the occurrence of “evidential” forms, implying direct perception by the speaker, is not strictly obligatory with the first person; cf. the examples (14) and (15) in Felix Haller's contribution to this volume.

⁵ There is some confusion in the description of the function of *-tu*, but on the whole it becomes clear that *-tu* must have the meaning given above. Cf. Höhlig 1978:21: “*-tu* states that the speaker got his information from someone other than an eyewitness, or that he figured it out by deduction.” This phrasing seems to exclude the use of *-tu* in the case of information received from an eyewitness. But when illustrating the use of *-si*, *-tu* and *lo* by describing how the report of a certain event is passed on from the eyewitness A to another person B, and thence from B to C, and from C to D, Höhlig comments: “B has the choice between *-si lo* and *-tu*, since both forms indicate that B was not the eyewitness himself” (23). From the fact that B can use *-tu*, it follows that *-tu* does not necessarily imply a source “other than an eyewitness”. *-tu* therefore only means that the speaker himself has not seen the event.

forms with which *-tu* should not be confused. These forms are *-kudu* (*-gudu* after nasals and laterals, *-wdu* after long vowels), which expresses the meaning “incomplete progressive, non-habitual stative”, and *du*, which means “nonhabitual stative”. The latter is also used as an existential verb. But even if these forms descend from Written Tibetan *’dug*, we don’t know anything about their possible implications as to evidentiality.

2.2. Southern Mustang

For Southern Mustang the phenomenon dealt with here is described by Kretschmar 1995/1:155ff. in terms of the opposition of an observed perfect (“beobachtetes Perfekt”) indicating direct observation or certain knowledge on the part of the speaker, marked with the auxiliary verb *-sūŋ* or *-so*, versus a perfect of assumption (“Perfekt der Annahme”) with *-tuk* (appearing as *-ruk* after verbs ending in a vowel), meaning that the speaker’s knowledge is not certain, but rather that the description of the event is based on an assumption or conjecture. The opposition between the observed perfect and the perfect of assumption has been explained and illustrated by some sentence pairs by Kretschmar’s informants; according to her it is not always easy to see the difference in the material. Kretschmar does not mention an inferential use of the “Perfekt der Annahme”, but most of the examples could be understood in this way, as e.g. the following sentences:⁶

- (1) *sompā* *tōr-tūk*
 Tibetan.boot.ABS lose-PF.ASS
 ‘(My) shoe has/had been lost.’ (assumption)

as compared to

- (2) *sompā* *tōr-sūŋ*
 Tibetan.boot.ABS lose-PF.OBS
 ‘I have /had lost (my) shoe.’ (observation/statement)⁷

The “assumption” of having lost one’s shoe is very probably an inference from perceiving that the shoe is not there anymore.

⁶ In all examples throughout this paper, the phonological representation of the Tibetan sentences is my interpretation of an original transcription (very similar in the case of Southern Mustang, rather different in Jirel and Sherpa). The glosses for the Southern Mustang sentences are mine (based on Kretschmar’s respective entries in her dictionary, vol. 4 of Kretschmar 1995); in Jirel and Sherpa, the original glosses have as a rule been used. The translations for Southern Mustang are my translations of the German originals; in Jirel and Sherpa the original translations are given if not otherwise indicated.

⁷ In most of the sentence pairs, the opposite of “assumption” (“Annahme”) is “observation” (“Beobachtung”) alone, but in two cases, “statement” (“Feststellung”) is added, viz. in those sentences where the speaker’s statement concerns himself.