In descriptions of Tibetan grammar it is common to treat -las and -nas together in the discussion of case marking, signaling merely that -las is capable of forming comparisons whereas -nas is not. Similarly, in the discussion of comparison most authors make no distinction between the suffixes -bas and -las. A look at a few examples of these three morphemes demonstrates that they have quite distinct syntax and semantics.

Key words: Tibetan case, ablative, elative, comparative

Dans les descriptions de la grammaire du tibétain, il est courant de traiter -las et -nas comme des marques casuelles similaires, en signalant simplement que -las peut former des comparaisons alors que -nas ne le peut pas. De même, la plupart des descriptions n’opèrent aucune distinction entre les suffixes -bas et -las en ce qui concerne la comparaison. Nous montrons à travers divers exemples illustrant l’emploi de ces trois morphèmes qu’ils ont des fonctions syntaxiques distinctes et présentent également des différences sémantiques.

Mots-clés : les cas du Tibétain, ablatif, élatif, comparatif
1. THE TIBETAN CASE SYSTEM

The Tibetan indigenous grammatical tradition posits eight cases to mirror the eight cases of Sanskrit, but this analysis does violence to Tibetan morphophonemics, drawing distinctions where none are warranted and failing to draw them where they are (cf. Schiefner 1865:178-180, Hill 2004:79-81, Tournadre 2010:92-96).1

Distributional considerations are the correct criteria on which to describe linguistic phenomena (Harris 1951:5-6).2 In Tibetan bound morphemes are postpositional. Such morphemes divide neatly into two categories: case morphemes are those that follow noun phrases and converbial morphemes are those that follow verbs.3 For Tibetan there are twenty phonetically distinct suffixes that occur after noun phrases: Ø, -kyi, -gyi, -gi, -hi, -kyis, -gyis, -gyi, -s, -la, -na, -r, -su, -tu, -du, -las, -nas, -dañ, -bas, and -pas. However, only a subset of these forms may be found after any particular noun phrase. Depending on its auslaut, a given noun phrase selects one member from the three subclasses (1) -kyi, -gyi, -gi, -hi, (2) -kyis, -gyis, -gyi, -s, and (3) -tu, -du, -su, -r. The members of these respective subclasses are allomorphs of three distinct morphemes, which one can represent as {-kyi}, {-kyis}, and {-tu}.4 The suffixes -bas and -pas, are also allophonic variants

1 Here I employ the Library of Congress system for Tibetan transliteration, with the exception that the 23rd letter of the Tibetan alphabet is transliterated ‘ḥ’ rather than with an apostrophe. Cited examples are glossed following the ‘Leipzig Glossing Rules’, with the addition of the following abbreviations: ASS ‘associative’, COMP ‘comparative’, ELA ‘elative’, FIN ‘finite verb’, SEM ‘semi-final converb’, and TRM ‘terminative’. In the transcription of Tibetan a hyphen indicates a tsheg, which often—but not always—corresponds to a morpheme boundary.

2 This discussion of how to define ‘case’ and enumerate the cases of Tibetan relies directly on Hill (2011:3-5).

3 How to distinguish nouns from verbs and other part of speech classes in Tibetan is no trivial question, and lies outside the scope of this paper.

4 I use braces {} to enclose one member of a category, when it is being used to represent that category as a whole.
of a single {-bas} morpheme, although the phonetic conditioning is less strictly observed. Thus, on morphophonemic grounds ten separate Tibetan cases may be distinguished: $\emptyset$, {-kyi}, {-kyis}, -la, -na, {-tu}, -las, -nas, -dai, and {-bas}.

Many authors however follow the traditional analysis in collapsing -la, -na, and -du, -tu, -su, -ru, -r under the rubric la don 'equivalent to la' and also collapsing -las and -nas under the rubric hbyuins 'source'. Hill (2004:83) mistakenly identifies Scott DeLancy (2003) as the first researcher to correctly separate these morphemes into five distinct cases, namely -la, -na, {-tu}, -las and -nas. In fact, on June 24, 1864 Franz Anton Schiefner put forward this analysis in a presentation to the Imperial Saint Petersburg Academy of Sciences (Schiefner 1865). It appears that Palmyr Cordier's manual is the only subsequent work to have directly followed Schiefner's analysis (1907:15-16). Hill (2004) and Tournadre (2010) also divide these forms into five separate cases. Although Schiefner, Cordier, DeLancy, Hill, and Tournadre all self-consciously reject the traditional analysis, they do not quite agree among themselves, neither on the names of these five cases nor on the names and number of the Tibetan cases overall (cf. Table I).

Hahn (1994:373) credits Schiefner with describing a "Kasus absolutus" in Tibetan. Although I have been unable to locate Schiefner's use of this term, his explicit statement that Tibetan lacks an accusative (1855:418) does suggest as much. Schiefner's argument against the accusative is recognizable today as an argument that Tibetan is an ergative language. His account of Tibetan ergativity proceeds by 60 years Giradeau's description of the nominativus simplex and nominativus instrumentalis (1916:iv), which Hill mistakenly claims is "la première explication correcte de l'ergativité en tibétain" (2004:80). One may see the following comment of Schmidt's as an even earlier account of Tibetan ergativity:

5 Confer note 19 below.
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-Ø</td>
<td>[absolutive]</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>zero marking</td>
<td>absolutive</td>
<td>absolutive</td>
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<tr>
<td>{-kyi}</td>
<td>[genitive]</td>
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<td>genitive</td>
<td>genitive</td>
<td>genitive</td>
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<tr>
<td>{-kyis}</td>
<td>[instrumental]</td>
<td>instrumental</td>
<td>ergative/instrumental</td>
<td>agentive</td>
<td>agentive</td>
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<tr>
<td>-la</td>
<td>allative</td>
<td>allative</td>
<td>locative/allative</td>
<td>allative</td>
<td>dative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-na</td>
<td>inessive</td>
<td>inessive</td>
<td>locative/illative</td>
<td>locative</td>
<td>locative</td>
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<tr>
<td>{-tu}</td>
<td>illative</td>
<td>illative</td>
<td>terminative</td>
<td>terminative</td>
<td>purposive</td>
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<tr>
<td>-las</td>
<td>ablative</td>
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<td>-nas</td>
<td>elative</td>
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<td>-dari</td>
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<td>associative</td>
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<td>{-bas}</td>
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<td>comparative</td>
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</table>

Table 1: A comparison of case analyses among five authors
Tibetan -las, -nas, and -bas / CLAO 41(2012) 3-38

"Sehr oft trifft man auch den Nominativ in seiner Subjekteigenschaft mit der Partikel des Instrumentals an, ohne dass er deshalb die Bedeutung des letztgenannten Casus übernehmen" (1839:61).6

Schiefner acknowledges and does not argue with the tradition of identifying {-kyi} with the Sanskrit genitive, and {-kyis} with the Sanskrit instrumental; one may thus infer that he accepts these rubrics as names for these cases in Tibetan. Although Schiefner does not explicitly list the absolutive, genitive, and instrumental as Tibetan cases,7 they can be directly inferred from his presentation. Consequently, in Table 1 these three are put in brackets in Schiefner's (1865) column. Cordier (1907:15-16) omits the absolutive and explicitly includes the genitive and instrumental, otherwise his presentation is identical to Schiefner's.

For -la and -na DeLancey employs compound case names (e.g. 'locative/allative'). This is an unfortunate decision.

Such terminology suggests that these cases do not exist in their own right, but rather consist of combinations of more basic components. The opposite is true: the case marked with -kyis and the case marked with -la are structural components of Tibetan; how one chooses to analyze the semantics of these cases is a matter of taste. The Greek dative combines the functions which in Sanskrit are covered by the dative, instrumental, and locative. The Sanskrit instrumental combines the functions which in Finnish are covered by instructive (instrument of means) and comitative (instrument of accompaniment). It would be silly to call the Greek dative the 'dative-instructive-

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6 For a historical discussion of Tibetan ergativity see Vollmann (2008).
7 At least neither in Schiefner (1855) nor Schiefner (1865).
comitative-locative’. To do so would be to confuse a case with its use, and to describe one language by implicitly comparing it to others rather than by accepting the language on its own terms (Hill 2010b:258).

Schiefner, Cordier, Hill, and Tournadre avoid the infelicity of compound case names. Other terminological disagreements among these authors, such as ‘allative’ versus ‘dative’ or among ‘illative’, ‘terminative’, and ‘purposive’, are of little consequence. After all, the relationship between *signifiant* and *signifié* is arbitrary and these variations identically describe the number and nature of the cases they label.

Both Schiefner and DeLancey omit -*dañ*. This morpheme has two uses, one to connect two noun phrases (*rgyal-po-* *dañ* *rgyal-mo* ‘king and queen’) and the second called for by the rection of some verbs (such as *mjál* ‘to meet’, e.g. *rgyal-mo-* *dañ* *mjál* ‘meet with the queen’). Two factors have led -*dañ* to be overlooked as a case marker: (1) it is not reckoned as a case marker in the indigenous tradition; (2) the translation equivalents of -*dañ* in Western European languages are generally not case markers. Nonetheless, distributionally -*dañ* behaves like other cases. In addition, Tournadre and Dorje point out that in many Tibetan dialects -*dañ* takes on other case functions or other cases take on the functions of -*dañ*.

Dans d’autres dialectes, notamment en Ladakhi, -*dañ* correspond à l’instrumental et à l’associatif. En tibétain central, -*dañ* peut être remplacé par d’autres cas tel

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8 Beyer (1992:270) presages the accounting of -*dañ* as an independent case, but he does not recognize case as such in Tibetan grammar (cf. note 12 below). Hannah (1912:73-81) recognized -*dañ* as a case marker, but does not clearly separate it from other cases.

Since no author has presented arguments that -dañ is not a case marker, at a minimum, the benefit of the doubt has shifted in favour of -dañ as a case.

Tournadre proposes a tenth ‘comparative’ case for the suffix -bas (2010:98), a suggestion considered below.

It is one thing to correctly group case suffixes according to morphophonemics and quite another to account for the syntax and semantics of each case so arrived at. DeLancey (2003:258), Hill (2004:83-84, 2011:3-5), and Tournadre (2010:110-113) recognize the need to draw the distinction between -las and -nas and accord in naming -las ‘ablative’ and -nas ‘elative’, but do not provide cited examples testifying to any syntactic or semantic differences. 9 Schiefner (1865:191-192) does include cited examples, some of which I incorporate below; the small attention his article has garnered and the considerable lapse of time since its appearance warrants renewed exploration.

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9 Tournadre (2010) does provide textual examples but does not cite them in a manner that permits verification. Hill (2011) discusses syntactic and semantic grounds for distinguishing the allative (-la), locative (-na), and terminative {-tu}; here the focus is on the need to distinguish -nas and -las. I exclude from discussion the use of -nas and -las after verbal stems and verbal nouns. For a discussion of -las after verbal nouns compare Hill (2010a). Hill’s decision to describe this use of -las as a ‘converb’ is unfortunate. The term ‘converb’ should be restricted to morphemes suffixed directly to verb stems rather than to verbal nouns.
2. THE TEXTS EMPLOYED IN THIS STUDY

The Tibetan texts cited in this study reflect my own experience and interests. Those texts with shelf numbers beginning with IOL Tib J or PT are Old Tibetan documents unearthed at Dunhuang and currently housed respectively in the British Library and Bibliothèque nationale de France (cf. Imaeda et al. 2007). As an aide-mémoire, I add prose titles to individual Dunhuang documents, whenever to do so is relatively conventional. Outside of the Dunhuang corpus, I primarily cite two other texts. The *Mdzaris-blun* and the *Mi-la-ras-paḥi rnam-thar*.


The *Mi-la ras-paḥi rnam-thar* by Gtsaṅ smyon he-ru-ka rus-paḥi rgyan-can (1452-1507) is probably the best known work of literature in the Tibetan language. The edition of de Jong’s (1959) is cited here.10 To the translations listed in Hill (2007:227 note 2) one may now add Quintman (2010). Linguistic studies of the text include the rather flawed Saxena (1989), together with Dempsey’s rejoinder (1993), Hill (2007), and Haller (2009).

3. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN -LAS AND -NAS

Schiefner’s teacher Philippe Edouard Foucaux may be forgiven for following the traditional presentation of cases (1858:

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10 One should note (contra Tournadre 2010:112 note 59), that de Jong’s edition (1959) lacks a translation whether into English or another language.
but the mistake of collapsing -nas and -las together as exponents of the same ‘ablative’ case has continued unabated to our own day (Bacot 1946:26-28, Schwieger 2006:157, Sommerschuh 2008:147-151). The suffixes -las and -nas are not in complementary distribution and therefore must be separated into two separate cases.

Meaning ‘from within’, the elative -nas encodes “eine aus Innen hervorgehende Bewegung” (Schiefner 1865:192), which suggests the crossing of some boundary or threshold, whereas -las, meaning ‘from the side/surface of’, has no such implication. Examples (1) to (3) exhibit the use of -nas as ‘from within a container’, whether the container be a grave, ocean, river, or mouth.

(1) “na śi dur khuri-nas bltaho”
I-[ABS] die grave hole-ELA see-FIN
gsurti-nas grois-so
say-then die-FIN
(The father) said ‘I will watch from within the grave hole’ and then he died. (Mila, de Jong 1959:31, l. 25)

(2) khyim-bdag dehi khyim-du rgya-mtsho-nas
householder-[ABS] that-GEN house-TRM ocean-ELA
mi zig bois-nas
man a-[ABS] came-then

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11 Gyurmé (1992:45-50) and Hahn (1994:105-111) list several differences between the use of -las and that of -nas, but fall short of differentiating them as separate cases.
12 Beyer refers to this distinction as ‘bounded’ versus ‘unbounded’ in an analysis essentially identical to that presented here, but unfortunately unsupported by examples (1992:267-270). Beyer describes these morphemes as marking ‘roles’ (of which he counts five) rather than cases (1992:263). Simon also recognizes this distinction between -las and -nas (1941:385).
To the house of that householder there came from the sea a man. (*Mdzaïs-blun, Derge Kanjur LXXIV, 269b = Schmidt 1843:268, l. 17, cf. Schiefner 1865:192)

(3) chu dehi naï-nas tshur
water-[ABS] that-GEN inside-ELA thither
šiñ-mkhan žig
carpenter a-[ABS]
stel;ru kha-nas khyer-te ḥoï-ño //
axe-[ABS] mouth-ELA carry-SEM come-FIN
A woodsman came thither out from within a river, carrying an axe from his mouth. (*Mdzaïs-blun, Derge Kanjur LXXIV, 271b = Schmidt 1843:273, l. 2)

The woodsman emerges from the container of the river, and the axe protrudes from the container of his mouth.¹³ The expression ‘from the mouth’ is also used to introduce direct quotes, e.g. yum-gyi žal-nas ‘from mother’s mouth’ (*Mila, de Jong 1959:61, l. 5), and bla-mahi žal-nas ‘from the lama’s mouth’ (*Mila, de Jong 1959:62, l. 24). This construction reflects the perception of the mouth as a container. This meaning of ‘from within’ accounts for the label ‘elative’ (*ex latere ‘out of the side’).

A search of the Old Tibetan Documents Online database¹⁴ suggests that only -nas can be used with spatial nouns, in constructions which are sometimes called postpositions. One finds naï-nas ‘from within’ (14 examples), steñ-nas ‘from above’ (3 examples) and ḥog-nas ‘from below’ (45 examples), but not a

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¹³ A reviewer citing Hahn (1994:106-107, §12.2 c. and e.) objects to this treatment of kha-nas, suggesting instead ‘carried in /with the mouth’. Perhaps, but if one carries an axe in / with one’s mouth, the axe will protrude from the container of the mouth. Thus, this instance of the elative is consistent with a ‘from inside of’ interpretation, even if another analysis is preferred.

single example of *naṅ-las, steṅ-las, or ḥog-las*. Because such phrases suggest the crossing of a threshold (something was low and is now high, etc.), -lasi is excluded as an option.

When light emerges from an object, the difference between -nas and -las concretely reflects a different image of the light in the mind’s eye, a single shaft of light shining out of a Buddha’s navel (4) versus a pillar or stūpa effulgent across its whole surface (5 and 6).

(4) *sprul-baḥi saris-rgyas de dag-gi*
 magically.manifest-gen Buddha that-pl-gen
 *lta-ba-nas ḥod-zer byuṅ-ste*
 navel-ela light-ray-[abs] arise-sem
 A ray of light arose from out of the navel of those magically manifest buddhas. (*Mdzais-blun, Derge Kanjur LXXIV, 163b = Schmidt 1843:68, l. 15, cf. Schiefer 1865:192)*

(5) *bdag-gi khyim-na ka-ba žig-las rtag-par*
 me-gen home-loc pillar a-abl always
 *ḥod ḥbyuṅ-ste*
 light-[abs] arise-sem
 In my house light constantly arises from (the surface of) a pillar. (*Mdzais-blun, Derge Kanjur LXXIV, 142b = Schmidt 1843:26, l. 1, cf. Schiefer 1865:191)*

(6) *mchod-rten de-las ſi zla lta-buḥi ḥod*
 stūpa that-abl sun moon like-gen light
 *chen-po-daṅi mchod-rten de ḥdra*
 big-ass stūpa that-like
 *mar-po ḥphros-te*
 many-[abs] disperse
From (the surface of) that stūpa emerged great light like the sun and moon, and many similar stūpas. (Mila, de Jong 1959:54, ll. 6-7)

In the metaphor of Samsāra as a wheel, since wheels are more or less flat, we are bound to the wheel rather than within it.

(7) “ḥkhor-ba-las tshe ḭdir grol-baḥi chos
wheel-ABL that-ABS this-TRM release-GEN dharma
šiṅ žu” byas-pas /
a-[ABL] request say
(I) said, ‘(I) request the dharma which releases one in one life from (being on) the wheel (of life).’ (Mila, de Jong 1959:52, l. 15)

The ground is the paragon of surfaces, so it is no surprise to meet -las in example (8).

(8) sa-las sri laṅ-ste chags
earth-ABL demon-[ABS] raise-SEM be
The demon rose from the ground. (IOL Tib J 0731 recto, l. 121 = Imaeda et al. 2007:267).

An elegant instance of the contrast between -las and -nas is found in example (9), in which birds come from (within) the sky and rats come from (the surface of) the earth. The contrasting use of gnam-nas ‘from the sky’ and sa-las ‘from the earth’ makes clear that the sky is imagined as a vessel and the earth imagined as a surface.

(9) de kun gcig-daṅ yaṅ ma phrad-na /
that all one-ASS also not meet-if
khyed-cag gnam-nas ḍloṅs-na ni /
you heaven-ELA come-if emphasis
phur-bahi  hdab-sog  myed-la /
fly-GEN  wing-[ABS]  not.exist-and
sa-las  hdzul-te  horis-na  ni
earth-ELA  enter-SEM  come-if  emphasis
byi-ba  ma  yin-na/
mouse  not  is-if
khyed-cag-gi  tshig-la  zol  mañ-bas
you-GEN  word-ALL  lie-[ABS]  be.many-because
slar  gsseg-sig !"  ///
back  go-IMP
If [you] did not meet with one of them all although you had
come from the heavens [you] have no wings although [you]
had come scurrying from across the earth [you] are not
mice. Since there are many lies in your words, go back!
(Envoys of Phywa to Dmu, PT 126 II, ll. 127-129 = Imaeda
et al. 2007:23)

But the sky is not always a container. Gods it seems do not swim
about in the container of the sky like birds, but rather live on the
surface of the sky.

(10)  deḥi  tshe  tshari-s-ris-kyi  lha  rnams-khyis
that-GEN  time-[ABS]  brahmakāyika-GEN  god  PL-ERG
bcom-ladan-ḥdas-kyi  dgoṅs-pa  ṣes-šiṅ
Bhagavan-GEN  thought-[ABS]  know-and
rtog-nas  nam-mkhaṅ-las  babs-te /
understand-then  heaven-ELA  descend-SEM
At that time, the gods of brahmakāyika knew and
understood the thought of the Bhagavan, and came down
from heaven. (Mdzaṅs-blun, Derge Kanjur LXXIV, 129a =
Schmidt 1843:3, l. 7, cf. Schiefer 1865:191)
Other uses of -nas and -las are analogical extensions of the core meanings so far elaborated. When leaving a place the elative -nas is called for because one must pass through a boundary between the location departed and its adjoining location.

(11) blon-che Stoñ-rtsan Ḥa-ţa yul-nas
prime.minister Stoñ-rtsan-[ABS] Ḥa-ţa land-ELA
slar ḥkhord-te
back return-SEM
Prime minister Stoñ-rtsan returned from the land of Ḥa-ţa
(Old Tibetan Annals 666, l. 46 = Imaeda et al. 2007:232)\(^\text{15}\)

(12) btsan-po dbyard Moñ-kar-nas chab-srd-la
emperor-[ABS] summer Moñ-kar-nas-ELA campaign-ALL
Ša-gu-niĩ-sum-khol-du gšegs-šīṭə/
Ša-gu-niĩ-sum-khol-TRM go-and
In the summer the emperor went from Moñ-kar to Ša-gu­niĩ-sum-khol on campaign. (Old Tibetan Annals 700, l. 132 = Imaeda et al. 2007:236)

When leaving a person or group rather than a place the ablative -las is favoured, because no boundary is crossed; one leaves from next to another person rather than from within that person.

(13) btsan-mo Mañ-mo-rje-las myĩ mañ-po bkug
queen Mañ-mo-rje-ABL person many-[ABS] summon
Many men were summoned from (the side of) queen Mañ-mo-rje. (Old Tibetan Annals 697, l. 124 = Imaeda et al. 2007:235)

\(^{15}\) During the writing of this paper, Brandon Dotson kindly made his translation of the Old Tibetan Annals available to me prior to its publication (cf. Dotson 2009).
(14) *Ho-lde-spu-rgyal gnam-gyi lha-las myiḥi*  
*Ho-lde-spu-rgyal* heaven-GEN *god-ABL person-GEN  
*rjer gsseg-sa yoṭi*  
lord-TRM come come  
*Ho-lde-spu-rgyal* came from the gods of heaven as ruler of men. *(Prayers for the foundation of the De ga g.yu tshal monastery, IOL Tib J 751, folio 35 verso, l. 2 = Imaeda et al. 2007:12)*

This discussion of the uses of -nas and -las is not exhaustive. A lengthy study would be necessary to account for such examples of -nas as “*ḥgram- lcag brgyab / skra-nas bzuṅ phyir bton* [(He) slapped me on the face, grabbed (me) from the hair, and pulled (it) out]” *(Mila, de Jong 1959:62, ll. 27-28, also cf. Beyer 1992:267 note 12)*, and the use of the -las to indicate “the origins of a transformation” *(Tournadre 2010:111)*, a usage seen in (15) and (16).

(15) *btsan-po mtsan Rgyal-gtsug-ru-las* /  
emperor-GEN name-[ABS] Rgyal-gtsug-ru-ABL  
*Khrī-lde-gtsug-rtsan-du gsold* /  
Khrī-lde-gtsug-rtsan-TRM give  
The name of the emperor was changed from Rgyal-gtsug-ru to Khrī-lde-gtsug-rtsan. *(Old Tibetan Annals 712, ll. 185-186 = Imaeda et al. 2007:238)*

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16 Similar contexts related to the arrival of Tibet’s first emperor from the heavens with parallel grammar occur throughout Tibetan literature. For example, among the Old Tibetan inscriptions instances occur in the Rkon-po inscription *(Li and Coblin 1987:198, 205)*, the inscription at the tomb of Khri Lde-sroṅ-brtsan *(Li and Coblin 1987:241 and 246)* and the Sino-Tibetan treaty inscription of 821-822 *(Li and Coblin 1987:47, 95)*.
The examples cited suffice to demonstrate that -nas means 'from within', and suggests the crossing of a boundary, while -las means 'from the side/surface of', and suggests that no boundary is crossed. This contrast parallels the contrast between -na 'inside of' and -la 'on the surface of' (cf. Simon 1941:385, Beyer 1992:268).

4. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN -LAS AND -BAS

In one function, -las has generally been distinguished from -nas, namely that -las can be used to form comparisons whereas -nas cannot (Foucaux 1858:36-37, Bacot 1946:28). However, in this use -las is collapsed with another morpheme, namely -bas. For example, Bacot (1946:36), Hahn (1994:107, 201), Hodge (1990: 57), and Sommerschuh (2008:179-180) draw no distinction between -las and -bas used to form the comparative. Even Tournadre, who reckons -bas to be a tenth case (2010:98), fails to elaborate on how it differs syntactically or semantically from -las.

H.A. Jäschke notes that -las is frequently used with a negative verb meaning 'except for' and -bas is suffixed to verbal nouns to compare two clauses (1883: 27). Here are four examples of -las with negative verbs (17-20).

(17) sñii-i-la  sems-pa  khar  tor
heart-ALL thought mouth-TRM escape

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17 It is not possible for -las to compare two clauses, because when suffixed to a verb -las takes on a different meaning (cf. Hill 2010a).
Passing in front [of Tsen-sku’s house], Dbyi-tshab heard and understood with clarity these thoughts of [Tsen-sku’s] heart that escaped from his mouth (sniûn-la sans-pa khar tor ches byuûn nas). Dbyi-tshab held high (the meaning of) those words (tshig de tog ces blaûs nas),18 and swore, “Tsen-sku, there is no truth apart from what you’ve said. As my own disaffection is nothing apart from this, I shall never differ from you in mind!” (Old Tibetan Chronicle, PT 1287 ll. 150-153 = Imaeda et al. 2007:206)

18 The phrase thog ces blaûs is a fixed expression wherein ces should not be understood to indicate direct speech (cf. line 92 also in the Old Tibetan Chronicle, and line 164 in version A of the Râmâyana, i.e. IOL Tib J 0737/1, cf. de Jong 1989:115).
With thunder and lightning rain down meteors; that which is not harder than a cliff is rent asunder. Both Tibet’s divine emperor and the heavens eradicate demons; though a child not larger than Ĥbal Lji-rmaṅ be hidden below the nine-tiered earth, they seize and kill him. *(Old Tibetan Chronicle, PT 1287 ll. 518-520 = Imaeda et al. 2007:228)*

(19) *khoṅi grogs-po rnams ni phyag-rten*

those friends -PL-[ABS] emphasis presents

*sna-re tsam-las mi gtoṅ-bar ḥdug/*

few mere-ABL not send give

Those friends offered nothing but some mere presents. *(Mila, de Jong 1959:39, ll. 1-2)*
(20)  ... bkah-bkyon-dan phyag-hhebs-las
       scolding-ABS physical.punishment-ABL
mi yoni" byas iu-ziñ bsdad-pas /
not come say cry-and sit
"Nothing comes (to me) except scolding and physical
punishment..." (I) said, sitting and weeping. (Mila, de Jong
1959:80, ll. 16-17)

The story of Dbyig-pa-can in the Mdzains-blun, provides
particularly good evidence of -bas used to compare two clauses.
The tale includes a total of five similar examples in one passage, in
each case a plaintiff before the king bemoans his own legal victory.
I give one example here.

(21)  śin-mkhan-gyis smras-pa / “geig-tu-na
carpenter-ERG say in.the.first.place
bdag-gi stēhu stor / gñis-su-na
I-ERG axe-[ABS] lose in.the.second.place
bdag-gi so bcag-pa-bas
I-ERG tooth-[ABS] break-COMP
Dbyig-pa-can rgyal-bar kyan blha’o”
Dbyig-pa-can-[ABS] win even better-FIN
The woodsman said “It would be better even for Dbyig-pa-
can to win than that in the first place I lose my axe and in the
second place have my teeth broken.” (Mdzains-blun,
Derge Kanjur LXXIV, 272b = Schmidt 1843:274, ll. 16-17)

Schwieger draws attention to another instance of clauses compared
byis-pa de dag-gis santis-rgyas-kyi
child that PL-ERG Buddha-GEN
mtshan sion thos-pa-bas ston-hgyur-gyis
mark previous hear-COMP thousand-times
lhag-par bza'i-ba mtho'i
more good-[ABS] see

The children saw the marks of the Buddha, a thousand times
more beautiful than they had heard tell of before. (Mdzaiblun, Derge Kanjur LXXIV, 288a = Schmidt 1843:303, l. 15)

The Mi-la-ras-paìi rnam-thar also has examples where -bas
is used to compare two clauses.

bcom-ldan-hdas Mi-bskyod-pa stìar
Bhagavan Akṣobhya previous
yid-kyis bsgoms-pa-bas kyan ches
mind-ERG meditate-COMP even thus
khyad-par-du ḥphags-pa žig/
particularly exulted a
A Bhagavan Akṣobhya that was even more exalted than (I)
had imagined previously. (Mila, de Jong 1959:24, ll. 3-4, cf.
Schwieger 2006:289)

Tournadre offers an additional uncited example of -bas used to
compare two clauses.

gzan-du yun riñ dge sbyor
other-TRM time long virtue-[ABS] practice
ḥbad-pa-las // sdig-paḥi las
strive-COMP sin-GEN action-[ABS]
sparis chos-dan bla-ma-la // mos-gus
abandon dharma-ASS guru-ALL devotion-[ABS]
byas-nas gnas ūdir ūal-ba yai
do-then place this-TRM sleep also
Rather than endeavour to practice virtues elsewhere, (it is better) to abandon negative acts, sleep here and develop faith for the dharma and guru... (Tournadre 2010:114)

In addition to its use to compare two clauses, Jäschke also notes a preference for -bas after adverbs (1883:27). Putting aside the question of what an adverb might be, his un-cited example of sīar-bas 'than before' is very similar to two examples (25-26) from Old Tibetan.

(25) ẖuñ-nas sīa-ma-bas kyaii tshe-duʃ then previous-COMP even time ūian-pa-la babste /
bad-ALL fall
Then there came a time even worse than before. (IOL Tib J 733, l. 39 = Imaeda et al. 2007:274)

(26) lha sras Lde-sroñ-gi sku rin-la//
divine son Lde-sroñ-GEN body time-ALL
gtṣīgs sīa-ma-bas bskyed-par /
edict previous-COMP expand
bkahs// gnañ-bah/
command-INS agree
In the life of the divine son, Lde-sroñ, it was granted by command that the edict be expanded more than before. (Rkoñ-po inscription, l. 13, Li and Coblin 1987:199)
The suffix -bas is not limited to verbal nouns and adverbs; there are also examples where -bas is suffixed to nouns. The lama wishes to verify Mila’s own account of his life story and sends a swift discipline.

(27) deši tshes bla-ma-la grwa-pa rta-bas
that-GEN time lama-ALL monk horse-COMP
bañ-mgyogs-pa/glani-po-che-bas stobs
fast elephant-COMP strong
che-ba žig yod-pa de lahti
great a have that-[ABS] I-GEN
yul-du bltar btañ-bas/
land-TRM look send
At that time the lama had a monk who ran faster than a horse and was stronger than an elephant; he sent him to my land to examine [the veracity of my account]. (Mila, de Jong 1959:40, I. 25-26, cf. Schwieger 2006:68)

In this example -bas is suffixed to the nouns rta ‘horse’ and glani­po-che ‘elephant’. In example (28) Mi-la-ras-pa’s erstwhile fiancée Mdzes-se criticizes his eccentric asceticism.

(28) khyed-kyi cha-lugs spran-po-bas
you-GEN conduct beggar-COMP
ḥdi ḭdraḥi chos-pa
this like-GEN religious.person-[ABS]
ma mthosī
not see
As for your conduct, more vile than a beggar’s, I have never before seen such a religious person. (Mila, de Jong 1959:120, I. 24-25, cf. Schwieger 2006:289)
In the *Envoy of Phywa to Dmu* (PT 126), the envoys flatter their host by speaking of the superlative quality of his sound and smell.

(29) **myi-dar mjal-na** /

man-ASS meet-then

**myi mgon-po-bas legs**

person lord-COMP good

**skad mdais ni hbrug skad-pas**

voice melody emphasis thunder voice-COMP

**che-la sñan** /

great-ALL hear

**dri-gsuñi ni spos-kyi dri-bas gdañ-ho** /

smell emphasis incense-GEN scent-COMP be-FIN

When we met with a man (i.e. you).
The man was better **than** a lord of men.
We heard the melody of his voice greater **than** a dragon’s voice (i.e. thunder).
His odour [better] **than** the smell of incense.

*(Envoy of Phywa to Dmu, PT 126 II, ll. 123-124 = Imaeda et al. 2007:23)*

Like -las, -bas is seen with a negative verb meaning ‘except for, none but’. The lama compliments Mila in his absence before a group of disciplines.

(30) **ma-gi-bas ša-tsha-ba ma byuñi** /

down.there-COMP sympathetic-[ABS] not arise

“No one has come who is more sympathetic **than** he down there.” *(Mila, de Jong 1959:39, ll. 27-28)*
Because of the misery of their household, his mother is astonished to hear Mila sing.

(31) "ci" zer "skad ḥdi ni inputEmail
what say voice this-[ABS] emphasis I-GEN
buḥi skad ḥdra / ḋed ma-smad-pas
boy-GEN voice similar we mother.child-COMP
sdug-pa ni sa thog-na med-pas
suffering-[ABS] emphasis earth above-ABS not.be-because
kho ni glu len mi thad"
he-[ABS] emphasis song-[ABS] take not appropriate (?)
snām-nas yid ma ches-par bltas-pas /
think.then mind not believe look
“What?” She said. Thinking, “This voice is like that of my son. Because there is no suffering on this earth except for we, mother and child, he cannot be singing.” in disbelief she looked... (Mila, de Jong 1959:36, l. 15)

In the Mi-la-ras-paḥi rnam-thar, -bas is also affixed to de as de-bas, meaning ‘other than that’ or ‘apart from that’.

(32) lcebs-na de-bas sdig che-ba ci yod /?
kill.oneself-then that-COMP sin big what exist
If one kills oneself, what greater sin is there than that?
(Mila, de Jong 1959:79, l. 16)

(33) bla-ma raḥ-laḥaḥi de-bas lhag-pa med
lama self-ALL-even that-COMP remnant not.exist
gsuṅ-gin ḥdug-pas
say is
“Even the lama himself says there is no [magic] remaining apart from that.” (Mila, de Jong 1959:39, l. 18)
One story in the *Mdzaṅṣ-blun* abounds with both -las and -bas in comparisons. The god of the sea attempts to wrest a boat from a group of merchants. He appears before them and insists that they should give him their boat because he possesses a series of superlative qualities. A cleric in their midst each time refutes his claim, pointing to those in Buddhist cosmology who possess this quality even more than he.

(34) “gru ḥdi ṁa-la byin-cig!” ces smra-ste /
boat this-[ABS] I-ALL give-IMP thus said-SEM
* tshori-pa-la ḥdi skad ces driṅo /
merchant-ALL this speech thus ask-FIN
“ḥjig-rten-na gaṅ dag ḥjig su-ruṅ-ba
world-LOC where PL fear whoever
ṁa-las ḥdaḥ-ba yod-dam?” ŋes dris-pa-dāṅ /
I-ABL pass exist-INT thus ask
“Give me this boat!” (he) said, and asked the merchants thus. “Who in the world is more terrifying than I? (lit. in the world, who passes beyond me in being terrifying?)” (He) asked.

(35) dge-bsñen-gyis smras-pa/ “khyod-pas  śin-tu
Upāsaka-ERG say thou-COMP very
lhag-bar ḥjigs-pa yod-do/... de ni /
remain fearsome exist-FIN ... that emphasis
khyod-pas  śin-tu yan ḥag-bar ḥjigs-su-ruṅ-ṅo”
thou-COMP very even remain fearsome-FIN
ōes smras-pa-dāṅ/....
thus say-ASS
The Upāsaka said, “There are those much more terrifying
than you. ... Those are much more terrifying than you.”
(36) hjig-rten-na rid-ciṅ ņam-thag-pa ņa-las
world-LOC meagre-and afflicted I-COMP
lhag-pa yod-dam?" žes dris-pa-dañ/
remain exist-INT thus ask-ASS
(He) asked, "Is there anyone in the word who is more meagre and afflicted than I?" (lit. remaining other than me who is meagre and afflicted?)

(37) dge-bsṅen-gyis smras-pa/ "khyod-pas śiṅ-tu
Upāsaka-ERG say thou-COMP very
lhag-bar ņam-thag-ciṅ rid-ba yod-do/...
remain-TRM afflicted-and meagre exist-FIN
de ni khyod-bas kyaṅ śiṅ-tu lhag-bar
that emphasis thou-COMP even very remain-TRM
rid-do" žes smras
meagre-FIN thus say
The Upāsaka said, "There are those much more afflicted and meagre than you... Those are much more meagre even than you."

(38) hjig-rten miṅi naṅ-na ņa tsam-du
world person-GEN inside-LOC I as.much-TRM
gzugs-byad bzaṅ-la mdzes-pa yod-dam/?
physique good-ALL beautiful exist-INT
Among the men of the world, is there one beautiful in good physique like me?

(39) dge-bsṅen-gyis smras-pa/ "khyod-bas brgya
Upāsaka-ERG say thou-COMP hundred
ḥgyur-bas lhag-bar bzaṅ-ba yod-do/...
times-INS remain-TRM good exist-FIN
The Upāsaka said, “There are those a hundred times better than you... Those are a hundred and a thousand times more than you.” (Mdzais-blun, Derge Kanjur LXXIV, 144b = Schmidt 1843:29-30, ll. 7-14)

This passage contains six uses of khyod-pas\(^{19}\) or khyod-bas and two of ni-las. However, it is possible to analyse the instances of ni-las as normal uses of -las in the rection of the verbs ḡdah ‘pass’ and lhag ‘remain’, just as -las appears in the rection of the verbs byuṅ ‘arise’, ḡphros ‘disperse’, ḡgro ld ‘become free’, laṅ ‘arise’, hoṅ ‘come’, and ḡbab ‘fall’ in examples (4) to (10). As seen in examples (40) to (42) the verbs ḡdah ‘pass’ and lhag ‘remain’ often demand the ablative, even when no comparison is made.

(40) mya-ṭian-las ḡdah-paḥi yon-tan
sorrow-ABL pass-GEN quality
Qualities passing beyond sorrow... (Prayers for the foundation of the De ga yu tshal monastery, PT 16, l. 23r1)

(41) hjig-ṛten-dan hjig-ṛten-las ḡdas-paḥi loṅ-spyod
world-ASS pass-ABL pass-GEN enjoyment

\(^{19}\) The form khyod-pas demonstrates that Tournadre’s claim that “the comparative -bas does not have a form -pas” (2010:98 note 38) is not correct. Jäschke describes -bas as appearing after -ṅ, -r, -l and vowels, whereas -pas occurs after -g, -d, -n, -b, -m and -s, but he remarks that some texts "prefer, even after these consonants, the form -bas" (1883:26).
Mundane and supermundane (lit. which passes beyond the world) enjoyments... *(Prayers for the foundation of the De ga yu tshal monastery, PT 16, l. 31v4)*

(42) ḡdi-las lhag-paṭḍi nor
this-ABL pass-GEN wealth
The wealth which remains aside from this... *(Dialogue between two brothers, PT 1283, l. 411)*

It is difficult to confirm examples of -las used in a comparative function of the straightforward type rta-las khyi chuṭh-ba yin ‘a dog is smaller than a horse’, without an accompanying ḡdal or lhag. Nonetheless, this example is very popular in the manuals (Jäschke 1883:26; Hahn 1994:107, Hodge 1990:57; Sommerschuh 2008:179). Among Schiefner’s evidence example (43) comes closest to a straightforward comparison. A boy, after his parents refuse to let him take ordination, decides to kill himself.

(43) ḡdi sṇam-du lus ḡdi med-par
this-[ABS] thought-TRM body this-[ABS] not-exist-TRM
byas-la/ rigs tha-mal-ba cig-tu skyes-te/
make-ALL family ordinary one-ABS be-born-SEM
rab-tu-hbyur-ba gsal-na/ ḡdi-las sla
ordination-TRM request-if this-COMP easy
yat-srid sṇam-du bsams-nas/
rebirth-[ABS] thought-TRM think-then
(He) thought: ‘If having eliminated this body, I were born into an ordinary family and requested ordination, rebirth would be easier than this [life].’ *(Mdzatis-blun, Derge Kanjur LXXIV, 146a = Schmidt 1843:33-34, ll. 18-1, cf. Schiefner 1865:191)*
The evidence of this example not withstanding, it is tempting to propose that -bas is the default comparative morpheme whether suffixed to nouns, adverbs, or verbal nouns, whereas -las is favoured by negative verbs and in the recension of particular verbs.

5. IS -BAS A TENTH CASE?

Tournadre (2010:98) proposes -bas as a tenth case marker. However, as Tournadre himself points out (2010:114), the distinction between case marker and verbal suffix can be rather weak. For example, the verbal suffixes -tel/-ste/-de and -ho, etc. also occur suffixed to nouns.

Schwieger draws attention to an example of -tel/-ste/-de suffixed to a noun phrase in the Mi-la-ras-paḥi rnam-thar (2006: 267-268).

(44) Ti-lo Nā-ro Mar-pa la-sogs-te bla-magrub-thob
    Tilo Nāro Mar-pa and.so.on-SEM guru siddha
goī-ma rnam-kyis kyiān raiñ-raiñ-gi
    eminent PL-ERG even own-GEN
    rnam-thar gsuṅs-pas
    life.story-[ABS] say
    “The eminent gurus and siddhas, i.e. Tilo, Nāro, Marpa, etc. have told their life stories.” (Mila, de Jong 1959:26, ll. 9-10)

In Classical Tibetan it is perhaps reasonable to view la-sogs-pa ‘and so on’ as part of the nominal phrase, but this expression originates from Old Tibetan -las stogs-pa ‘gathered from’. It is consequently possible to see the -te, which occurs in la-sogs-te in the example above as the normal post verbal function of this affix. The Mdzañ blun offers a more clear cut example of -ste suffixed to a noun phrase.
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(45)  nä  ni  rgyal-po chen-po-ste  gliṅ
I-[ABS] emphasis king big-SEM continent
bzi-la dbaṅ-ka yin-na / khyod-kyi rgyal-po
4-ALL power-[ABS] is-if thou-GEN king
glen-pa des ciḥi phyir bkaḥ
stupid that-ERG what-GEN because command
mi  ñan/
not listen
“I am a great king; if I rule over the four continents, why
does that stupid king of yours not obey (my) commands.”
(Mdzaṅis-blun, Derge Kanjur LXXIV, 213a = Schmidt

Hahn (1994:151-153, §15.3-15.4), Schneider (1993:31), and
Zeisler (2004:276-277) offer further examples and discussion of
-te/-ste/-de suffixed to nouns.
Schwieger also offers examples of -ḥo suffixed to noun phrases.

(46)  dehi  sras Sum-ston  Ṇi-maḥo
that-GEN son Sum-ston Ṇi-ma-FIN
“His son [is] Sum-ston Ṇi-ma.” (Deb ther stion po 170, ll.
3-4 qtd. in Schwieger 2006:306)

Proposing that -ste and -ḥo are case markers would lead to a
total of twelve cases. However, since -ste and -ḥo are far more
typically used after verbs than after nouns it is preferable to exclude
them from the cases. In contrast, -bas never occurs directly suffixed
to a verb, but rather only ever to a noun or verbal noun. This
distribution is parallel to the other case markers, and sets it apart
from verbal suffixes or sentence adverbs like yaiṅ and ni. Thus,
Tournadre is correct to count -bas as a tenth case.
6. CONCLUSIONS

Although many researchers treat -nas and -bas as indistinct from -las, the three morphemes are as distinct in function as they are in form. The elative -nas means 'from within', and suggests the crossing of a boundary; the ablative -las means 'from the side/surface of', and suggests that no boundary is crossed. Distinguishing -las in its comparative function from -bas is not quite so straightforward. One may concur with Jäschke (1883:27) that typically -las is used after a noun with a negative verb and -bas is used to compare two clauses and after adverbs. Both -las and -bas are found affixed to nouns with positive verbs, but -bas is more typical in this function, the cases of -las often analysable as dictated by the rection of the accompanying verb. Tournadre (2010:98) is correct to posit -bas as a tenth 'comparative' case.

Distinguishing -las, -nas, and -bas is necessary not only for the correct description of Tibetan grammar and the typological and comparative contextualization of Tibetan, but distinguishing these morphemes will also enable philologists to better understand Tibetan texts, and thereby yield greater accuracy in the use of Tibetan sources in all academic disciplines.

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