Lhasa Tibetan Predicates

Yasutoshi Yukawa

Introduction

This paper provides an overview of Tibetan predicates. The structures of Tibetan predicates per se are not overly complex. However, non-Tibetans find it relatively difficult to grasp the meanings expressed by the various predicate structures. When discussing the Tibetan language, the term ‘predicate’ should be taken to refer to the immediate constituents of a sentence that occur at the end of the sentence and can constitute a sentence by itself. In Tibetan, all other constituents are not essential elements of the sentence and do not occur in a grammatically determined order. Thus, these can be thought to fall into the same grammatical category. The following includes an outline of Tibetan predicates while classifying them by structure.

1. Predicates of type I auxiliary verbs

The term ‘type I auxiliary verb’ refers to auxiliary verbs that denote the existence of an object or its existence in a certain state. Type I auxiliary verbs take on different phonetic forms in affirmative sentences, negative sentences, polar questions (yes–no questions), and nonpolar (wh-questions) or choice questions. Their various forms are shown in the following table:

Table 1

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1 Editor’s note: This article is a translation of Yukawa (1975). The editors thank the Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa at the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies for permission to publish this translation. We also thank Ulatus for preparing the translation of the original article under the

2 This outline is based on research conducted at the Toyo Bunko. The informants were Tshering Dolma and Sonam Gytso. In particular, Sonam answered various questions, thus helping me to revise the content of this article immediately before and after writing it.

3 In Yukawa 1971 entire sentences such as ‘teb ’zig ’yoo-re ‘There is one book’ are regarded as predicates. However, an immediate constituent may occur between ‘teb ’zig ‘one book’ and ’yoo-re ‘there is’, which does not lead to a change in the grammatical function of the sentence. Therefore, the previous conceptualization is not appropriate; in the example in question only ’yoo-re ‘should be regarded as the predicate.

4 These verbs can be used for any given time range if the speaker is clearly aware of the existence at the present moment (in other words, if the sentence can be asserted).
Next, let us demonstrate the meanings of these auxiliary verbs using specific examples. First, yöö, mää etc., denote the existence of an object with which the speaker (or the listener in interrogative sentences) feels familiar at a given time (not necessarily at the present).

(1) 

\[ \text{ŋaa} \ '\text{teb} ' \text{yago} ' \text{zig yöö}. \]

me.DAT book good a is

‘I have a good book.’

(2) 

\[ \text{ŋaa} \ '\text{bugu} ' \text{ńii yöö}. \]

me.DAT child two is

‘I have two children’

Examples (1) and (2) are an ordinary statements, because the speaker is referring to an essentially familiar object or person as familiar. A legitimate sentence is also formed when ᦐ༨ 'ŋaa is replaced with a different pronoun or noun phrase.

(3) 

\[ \text{ŋāa} \ '\text{togoo} ' \text{teb} ' \text{yago} ' \text{zig yöö}. \]

me.GEN friend book good a is

‘My friend has a good book.’

(4) 

\[ \text{ŋāa} \ 'ažaa-la-a-la ' \text{bugu} ' \text{ńii yöö}. \]
‘My elder sister has two children’

In (3) the speaker feels familiar with the fact that the friend has a good book. For example, the speaker may expect that the friend would be willing to lend the book upon request, thus expressing familiarity concerning the book. Indeed, this sentence will particularly occur when the friend is a close one. Similarly, example (4) may be used when the speaker expresses familiarity with the fact that his/her own elder sister has children.

There is no need for གོ་ལ་དེབ་ཡག་པོ་ཞིག་ཡོད། to express possession; it may also express simple existence, if the situation is compatible with the semantics of the verb.

Example (5) is used if the speaker feels familiar with the fact that the book exists, for example, if she placed it over there.

Next, གོ་རེད་, གོ་མ་རེད་, etc., denote the objective existence of an object that was not directly perceived through the senses (or is not specified as such) at a given time.

Example (6) is an ordinary statement, denoting that a certain person does not have a particular book, whereas (7) is used if the speaker wishes to emphasize the objective nature of the existence. Therefore, it often includes a somewhat special nuance. For example, it can be used to suggest that there is an especially good or rare book (i.e., emphasizing its objective existence).
Next, འདུག་ duu, etc., indicate that the speaker has directly perceived the existence of an object through
the senses (sight, hearing, touch, etc.) at a given time (present or past).\(^5\)

(8) མཐའམ་མཐུ་དེ་ཤེག།

pagee ^medoo duu.
yonder flowers is
‘There are flowers over there.’

(9) མཐའམ་མཐུ་དེ་ཤེག།

'sanjuoo kabaa doo? pagaa ^dugaa?
restroom where? is over.there isQ
‘Where is the restroom? Over there?’

(10) མཐའམ་མཐུ་དེ་ཤེག།

'teb 'yago zig duu.
book good a is
‘There is a good book.’

In (8) the speaker is referring to flowers that she has already seen and knows to exist or flowers that are
visible at the present moment. The question in (9) is often used when the addressee has gone to a restroom
before the speaker, who wants to know where that restroom is.\(^6\) Example (10) shows that duu does not only
indicate that the speaker simply perceives an existence through the senses. This sentence is used when the
speaker has read the book well enough to know that it is good.

The speaker may also use ལེག་ 'yaa... when indicating that she perceived the existence through the
senses.

(11) མཐའམ་མཐུ་དེ་ཤེག།

\(^5\) In general, existential verbs are rarely used when describing a future state, because at the present
moment, the speaker can assert that an object will exist at a future point in time only in very limited cases, for
example, when asserting that she has a class the following day. Because of its meaning of sense perception duu
is never used when describing a future state.

\(^6\) The speaker might instead ask 'sanjuoo 'kabaa yoo?, if she is in the addressee’s house. In other words,
if she presupposes that the addressee feels familiar with the location of the restroom. The speaker might also
have asked 'sanjuoo 'kabaa 'yoo-raa?, if she presupposes that the addressee does not feel that familiar with the
location of the restroom and is likely not to have visited it previously.
‘ŋaa ‘niü duu.
I.DAT money is
‘I have money’

This sentence is used, for example, when the speaker reaches into her pocket, touches the money, and realizes it is there.

The next auxiliary verb རོལ་ yoŋ is actually a pair of homonyms in which one expresses an existence about which the speaker has seen or heard in the past, whereas the other expresses a future existence (prediction).

(12) རོལ་ལ་རྣམ་པོ་ཡོང་།
‘pöö-la ‘ya ‘mango yoŋ.
Tibet-DAT yak many is
‘There were many yaks in Tibet.’

(13) ཐེ་ཉིན་ག་རེ་ཡོང་།
’saño ‘kare yoŋ?
tomorrow what? is
‘What will happen tomorrow?’

Lastly, བྱུང་ čuŋ indicates that the speaker acquired a certain object in the past, or rather, that an object happened to come in her possession.

(14) སང་ཉིན་ག་རེ་བྱུང་།
‘kääsa ‘män ‘dää-ze čuŋ
yesterday medicine some is
‘Yesterday, I got some medicine.’

In addition, type I auxiliary verbs also have negative interrogative forms, such as མདོ་ ‘mäbää (cf. ‘mää) and མི་འདུག་གས་ ‘mindu-gää (cf. ‘minduu).
It is also possible to say འ༔ ཡོད་ བྱེ་་ ‘I wonder if there is/was…’ (present or past) and འ༔ ཡོང་ ‘I wonder if there will be…’ (future), as well as འ༔ ཡོི་ ’There is…’ (assertive). However, unlike འ༔ ཡོི་, the use of འ༔ ཡོད་ is not restricted to familiar existences, but it denotes conjectural questions about existences in general.

2. Predicates of nouns (or noun phrases) and type II auxiliary verbs

Here the term ‘type II auxiliary verb’ refers to auxiliary verbs that denote an attribute in a similar manner to ‘is’ or ‘was.’ The affirmative, negative, polar question, and nonpolar/choice question that are forms of the type II auxiliary verbs are shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Affirmative</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Negative</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Polar question</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Nonpolar/choice question</strong></td>
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Of these, *yin*, etc., denote a state that exists at a given time and with which the speaker (or the listener in interrogative sentences) feels familiar.

(15) ལྷོས་ སྣ་ཐམས་ཅྱིག་ཅིག་

'ི་ སྤོན་ དིལ་ དིི' ཤུ་ yin

I school this.GEN student is

‘I am a student of this school.’

In sentences like (15) ཡིན་ 'yin' does not denote a state at the present moment, but it expresses the state of being a student as a continuous and unchanging state. When an adverb of time is added, ཡིན་ 'yin' expresses the continuous and unchanging state that exists in the given time range. Therefore, one can also say ཡིན་ལྟ་ ར་.
ཁྱེད་རང་སུ་ཡིན་པཱ། – keraŋ ’su ’yin baa?
you who? is Q
‘Who are you?’

The auxiliary ཀིན ’yin can also be used in the second or third person if the speaker deems the thing or person referred to as a familiar state.

མོ་ཊ་འདི་ཡག་པོ་ཡིན། – moḍ ’di ’yago yin
car this good is
‘This car is good.’

ཁོང་སློབ་ཕྲུག་ཡིན། – koŋ ’labṭuu yin.
he/she student is
‘He is a student.’

ཁྱེད་རང་གྱི་འོག་ལགས་བདེ་པོ་ཡིན་པས། – keraŋ-gi ’oo-laar ’debo ’yinbää?
you-GEN younger.sibling well is Q
‘Is your younger brother (or sister) well?’

Sentence (17) is used, for example, when the speaker is boasting about her own car. In (18) the person denoted by ཕྱིན ’kony is often a family member or a close friend, but the essential meaning here is that the speaker feels familiar with the fact that the person is a student. Its use does not depend on whether the person denoted by ཕྱིན ’kony is close to the speaker (because ག་’ya ‘I’ is not always used with ཀིན ’yin), but it

‘tanda ’labṭuu yin ‘(I am) a student now’, སྲིད་པར་ཏ་ ’labṭuu yin ‘(I was) a student until last year’, སྲིན་ཊོ་ ’labṭuu yin ‘(I will be) a student from tomorrow’, etc.
depends on whether the speaker feels familiar with the situation as a whole. As a result, the person denoted by ཇོ་ལྕམ་སུའི་སྲས་མོ་རས་ (20) ཁོང་གི་ལྕམ་སུའི་སྲས་མོ་རས་ ཟོ་ browser does not support the <video> tag. depends on whether the speaker feels familiar with the situation as a whole. As a result, the person denoted by ཇོ་ལྕམ་སུའི་སྲས་མོ་རས་ (20) ཁོང་གི་ལྕམ་ངང་སུའི་སྲས་མོ་རས་ ཟོ་ browser does not support the <video> tag. depends on whether the speaker feels familiar with the situation as a whole. As a result, the person denoted by ཇོ་ལྕམ་སུའི་སྲས་མོ་རས་ (20) ཁོང་གི་ལྕམ་ངང་སུའི་སྲས་མོ་རས་ ཟོ་ browser does not support the <video> tag. depends on whether the speaker feels familiar with the situation as a whole. As a result, the person denoted by ཇོ་ལྕམ་སུའི་སྲས་མོ་རས་ (20) ཁོང་གི་ལྕམ་ངང་སུའི་སྲས་མོ་རས་ ཟོ་ browser does not support the <video> tag. depends on whether the speaker feels familiar with the situation as a whole. As a result, the person denoted by ཇོ་ལྕམ་སུའི་སྲས་མོ་རས་ (20) ཁོང་གི་ལྕམ་ངང་སུའི་སྲས་མོ་རས་ ཟོ་ browser does not support the <video> tag.
Whereas a sentence such as (15) above is used to simply report that the speaker is a student (a fact she is imminently familiar with), sentence (24) is used, for example, when the speaker is invited to gamble or asked to marry but wishes to refuse, because as a student, such an action would be wrong or impossible. Here the meaning is attained by describing something that the speaker would normally feel familiar with as an objective state. In other words, the speaker objectively emphasizes the fact that she is a student; thus, the meaning of the sentence subsumes a nuance of obligation associated with being a student. Indeed, in addition to obligation, the meaning of the sentence could include a feeling of pride or inferiority because the speaker is still not fully an adult.

In addition to the forms given in Table 2, type II auxiliary verbs also include the following negative interrogative forms: མིན་པས་ ‘mänbää’, མིན་པཱ་ ‘män-bää (cf. མིན་ män), མ་རེད་པས་ ‘mare-bää, and མ་རེད་ ‘marää (cf. མ་རེད་ ‘maree). They also occur in the following forms: མ་ཡིན་ ‘a-yin ‘I wonder…’, མ་ཐང་ ‘reba ‘It must be’, མ་ཐང་ ‘redag ‘It is, isn’t it?’, and མ་ཐང་ ‘redaa ‘asserts a state’. Unlike yin, etc., the use of ‘a-yin is not restricted to states with which the speaker or listener feels familiar. Moreover, there are no forms such as *‘a-ree or *‘yinba. Furthermore, these auxiliary verbs form predicates in conjunction with nouns and noun phrases.

3. Predicates of adjectives and type I (and type II) auxiliary verbs

Adjectives (or adjectival phrases) can form predicates by combining with type I or type II auxiliary verbs. However, the instance of དབུ་ yon that expresses a past event does not have this function.

Both adjective + དབུ་ yin and adjective + དབུ་ yöö denote a state with which the speaker (or the listener in interrogative sentences) feels familiar; however, the former indicates an unchanging state, whereas the latter indicates a temporary state. For example, sentence (25a) expresses an unchanging state, whereas (25b) implies that the speaker feels well at the given time, but may have been unwell (or was unwell) at other points in time. Used by the speaker to refer to herself either (25a) or (25b) simply mean she is healthy, presenting a familiar state as something familiar. However, adjective + -yin can also be used to refer to a third person (26) when the speaker feels familiar with the state being described and is therefore often used when the third person is someone close to the speaker.9

9 Editor’s note: Yukawa does not mention whether མིན་པས་ ‘koj debo yöö is possible.
(25) a. ང་བདེ་པོ་ཡིན།

'ŋa 'debo yin
me well is

b. ང་བདེ་པོ་ཡོད།

'ŋa 'debo yöö
me well is
'I am well.'

(26) མི་སོགས་པའི་ཡོད།

koŋ 'debo yin
he well is
‘He is well.’

It is important to note that the familiar state expressed by yöö must have a specific relevance to the speaker, because yöö cannot express a general state regardless of how familiar the speaker feels. For example, if the speaker wants to say, ‘It is cold today,’ then she cannot use (27).

(27) བོད་ཡོད་ཡོད།

* térin 'tangg yöö.
today cold is
*‘Today is cold.’

Adjective + ree objectively asserts a certain state (and in interrogative sentences asks whether that assertion can be made.)

(28) a. མི་སོགས་པའི་ཡོད།

koŋ 'debo ree
he well is
‘He is well.’

b. མི་སོགས་པའི་ཡོད།

'ŋa 'debo ree
me well is
‘I am well.’
Sentence (28a), referring to a third person, simply expresses an objective state; (28b), used by the speaker to refer to herself, objectively emphasizes the fact that she is healthy and could contain a nuance of pride or self-deprecation in that the speaker is so busy that she wants to become ill but cannot. It could also be used to emphasize the fact that she is healthy after being told to visit a doctor. Since a speaker is normally familiar with her own well-being, དེས་yin and དེས་yoo are more usually verbs to use (cf. 25a).

Adjective + རེད་yoo-ree informs (or asks) the listener (or the speaker in interrogative sentences) about a certain state that he does not know about; generally, neither the speaker nor addressee can observe the state at the present moment.

(29)  

a. སྗེན་པ་ལེ་ཨོ་ས་ཀ་ལ་གྲང་མོ་རེད།  
Osaka-la ལ་ཏྱྱོང་yoo-ree  
Osaka-DAT cold is

b. སྗེན་པ་ལེ་ཨོ་ས་ཀ་ལ་གྲང་མོ་རེད།  
Osaka-la ལ་ཏྱྱོང་ree.  
Osaka-DAT cold is

‘Osaka is cold.’

When (29a) is used to make the general statement that Osaka is cold, the speaker may have experienced this state before. However, when used to describe a present state, the speaker has, for example, heard this information from someone else or on the radio. In (29b), the speaker makes a general assertion about a continuous and unchanging state. Accordingly, རེད་yoo-ree is not used to state a general truth. For example, if the speaker wants to state the general truth that summer is hot one cannot say (30a), which either presupposes that the listener does not know that summer is hot (perhaps occasionally acceptable in jest) or informs the listener what summer is like somewhere else; to communicate the general truth, normally known to the listener, one must use (30b).

(30)  

a. ནུལ་ན་ཀུན་ཚ་པོ་རེད།  
yaaga མ་ཚབ་yoo-ree  
summer hot is

b. ནུལ་ན་ཀུན་ཚ་པོ་རེད།  
yaaga མ་ཚབ་ree

10 It is possible to use རེད་ree irrespective of whether the listener knows about the subject; in either case ree is used by the speaker to assert her opinion.
summer hot is
‘The summer is hot.’

Adjective + ཆད་ duu is used when the speaker (or the listener in interrogative sentences) directly perceives a certain state through the senses and experience some type of emotion or feeling; duu is often used with adjectives that describe subjective phenomena (such as hot and cold).

(31) a. དེ་རིང་གྲང་མོ་ལུགས་

terin 'tauyo duu
today cold is

b. དེ་རིང་གྲང་མོ་ཆེད།

terin 'tauyo ree
‘It is cold today.’

Sentence (31a) refers to the speaker’s own perception, whereas (31b) is generally used while observing the temperature on a thermometer. Thus, it is also possible to say the following:

(32) དམ་ཆེད་

'na 'tauyo duu
me cold is
‘I am cold.’

In sentence (33), the speaker is not simply stating that the flower is red (ཉེད་ ree would be used in this case), but that she experienced a (not necessarily good) feeling about this ‘redness.’

(33) དམ་ཆེད་

'medoo 'di 'maamo duu
flower this red is
‘This flower is red.’

This point is further illustrated through the following comparison:

(34) a. དམ་ཆེད་

'mi pagi 'nago duu
person yonder black is

b. དམ་ཆེད་

'mi 'pagi 'nago ree
person yonder black is
‘That person has a dark complexion.’
Generally, (34a) is used when the speaker personally observes the complexion and feels that it is dark, whereas (34b) is used to assert that the person’s complexion is dark rather than light; consequently, the person described in (34a) tends to have a much darker complexion than the person described in (34b). Thus, འདུག་ duu is not used when the property denoted by the adjective can be confirmed by observing the object, but when that property is deeply ingrained in the speaker’s own perception. In addition, འདུག་ duu is still used in such cases, even when describing a familiar state; (32) is another example of this, as is (35):

(35)  a. ཤ་ 'debo duu
me well is
I’m (feeling) good.

b. མོ་ 'debo duu
he well is
‘He is (looking) good.’

When ལེག་ debo occurs with འདུག་ duu and describes the speaker (35a), it can mean that the speaker feels good because it is cool or because she has begun to recover from an illness. When used to describe the state of a third person (35b), it infers that the person has a healthy complexion and looks well.

Now, འདུག་ duu does not occur with adjectives such as གོར་མོ་ googoo (round). Of course, we determine whether an object is round through the sense of sight. However, in this case, the shape of the object is captured objectively because one hardly experiences a compelling sense of roundness when viewing an object.

All three verbs (ཡོའོ་རེད་ yoo-ree, རེད་ ree, and འདུག་ duu) describe a state at a given time and they do not necessarily refer to the present moment. Example (36) conveniently contrasts these three verbs as used with adjectives.

(36)  a. མོ་ Ryzen yoo-ree
-kon-gi žam ’zeebo yoo-ree

b. མོ་ Ryzen ree
-kon-gi žam ’zeebo ree

c. མོ་ Ryzen duu
-kon-gi žam ’zeebo duu
‘His wife is beautiful.’

In the first sentence (36a), the speaker is informing someone who is not well acquainted with the woman that she is beautiful. In the second sentence (36b), the question of whether the woman is beautiful has been raised and the speaker asserts that she is beautiful. In the final sentence (36c), the speaker sees the woman and experiences a compelling sense of beauty.

Adjective + འོང་ yon denotes a state that the speaker thinks will occur in the future, whereas adjective + ཟུང་ cuŋ denotes a passive state experienced by the speaker (or the listener in interrogative sentences) in the past.

(37) སང་གཞན་གནམ་གཤིས་ཡག་པོ་ཡོང་།

‘I am sure the weather will be good tomorrow.’

(38) a. སང་བདེ་པོ་ཡིན།

‘I felt well yesterday.’

b. སང་བདེ་པོ་བྱུང་།

‘I felt well yesterday.’

Whereas with འིན་ yin (38a, cf. 25a) the state of ‘feeling well’ is captured as a continuous and unchanging state, thus implying that although the speaker may feel unwell at the present moment, she did not feel unwell during the relatively long period of the past to the previous day, in contrast, with ཟུང་ cuŋ (38b) the implication is that the speaker does not normally feel that well, but happened to feel well on that particular day; ཟུང་ cuŋ expresses that a certain state befell the speaker (or the listener in an interrogative sentence), rather than occurring as the result of her effort.11

11 Moreover, when viewed in this light, the ཟུང་ cuŋ that follows a noun and the ཟུང་ cuŋ that follows an adjective can be regarded as the same linguistic unit. However, although the state that befalls the speaker usually involves acquisition of an object, ཟུང་ cuŋ can also be used, for example, in the event of an earthquake. This use of
Of course, in addition to the affirmative form, the other forms shown in Tables 1 and 2 can also be used with adjectives.

Adjectives can occur in superlative form (for example, ཡག་པོ་′yago becomes ཡག་ཤོས་′yagšöö [the best]) in which case they are used as normal adjectives. Adjectives also occur in comparative form (for example, ཡག་པོ་′yago becomes ཡག་ག′ya-ga). However, when these comparative forms occur with affirmative duu, then for example, *ya-ga duu becomes ཡག་ག′ya-gaa. In contrast, there is a separate comparative form in which ཡག་པོ་′yago becomes ཡག་གི་′yaagi by combining with the gi infinitive (see Section 7), although this construction only occur with གེ་ree.

4. Predicates of negative verb forms

There are some Tibetan verbs for which the perfect and imperfect stems (both single-syllable) can be distinguished. For example, the verb ‘to eat’ has two separate forms བཟས་′sää (perfective) and ས་′sa (imperfective), and the verb ‘to go’ occurs as གྲིན་′čin (perfective) and གྲོ་′ḍo (imperfective). Those verbs that lack this distinction employ a single invariant stem in both perfective and imperfective contexts. A perfect stem negated with the ma prefix indicates that the speaker (or a group to which she belongs) did not (of her own will) perform a certain action in the past.¹²

¹² The negative prefix མ་′ma when it precedes verbs beginning with /p, t, k, ʰ, č, r, l, ʰl, ŋ/ is pronounced voiceless as /m/ and /m/.

９. བཟས་འདི་འཇོག་ལས་གྱི་འཇོག་གི་རེད།

¹° བཟས་འཇོག་ལས་གྱི་འཇོག་གི་རེད།
‘I did not go yesterday.’

(41) ཐ་ལག་མ་བཟས།

‘kalaa ‗masää
food NEG.ate
‘I did not eat food.’

This construction indicates that the speaker failed to perform the action out of her own will, such as a situation in which she did not eat because she did not want to eat, i.e. it describes the speaker’s own past action.

5. Predicates of verbs and sentence-final particles

Here the term “sentence-final particle” refers to the three particles that denote an interrogative meaning; that is, ཐ་ལག་ bää, མ་ baa, and འ་ gaa. First, when ཐ་ལག་ bää follows a perfective verb stem (or མ་ ma + perfective verb stem), it forms an interrogative predicate that inquires whether the listener (or a group to which he belongs) performed a certain action in the past, i.e. it is used for polar questions.

(42) བས་པས།

‘keran ‗kon-gi ‗simśaa-la ‗tää bää?
you he-GEN house.HON-DAT go.HON Q
‘Did you go to his house?’ (honorific)

(43) གི་ལེགས་བཟོ་

‘šālaa ‗čöö bää?
food.HON eat.HON Q
‘Did you eat?’ (honorific)

(44) སྐེར་དེ་ཀློག་པས།

‘teb ‗te ‗loo bää?
book that read Q
‘Did you read the book?’
When མ་ baa occurs with a perfective verb, it forms a predicate expressing a nonpolar question (wh-question) that inquires about an action performed by the listener (or a group to which he belongs) in the past.

(45) བཱ་བི་འཇིག་ཤིང་ལྷན་པོ་བསྐྱུར།

`keraj `kare-`cää-nää `mapee baa?
you why? NEG.go Q

‘Why didn’t you go?’ (honorific)

(46) བཱ་བི་འཇིག་ཤིང་ལྷན་པོ་བསྐྱུར།

`pee baa? `mapee baa?
go.HON Q NEG.go.HON Q

‘Did you go?’ or ‘Didn’t you go?’

(47) བཱ་བི་འཇིག་ཤིང་ལྷན་པོ་བསྐྱུར།

`kare `sää baa?
what eat Q

‘What did you eat?’

(48) བཱ་བི་འཇིག་ཤིང་ལྷན་པོ་བསྐྱུར།

`teb `kagi `loo baa?
book which read Q

‘Which book did you read?’

When མ་ gaa occurs with a perfective verb, it forms a polar or nonpolar question (wh-question) requesting the listener’s opinion about the speaker’s future action (or that of a group to which she belongs).

(49) བཱ་བི་འཇིག་ཤིང་ལྷན་པོ་བསྐྱུར།

`ya `čin gaa?
me go Q

Should I go?
Where should I go?

In addition, there is another instance of ག་ gaa, which from a semantic viewpoint accords with that described above. When this ག་ gaa follows an imperfective stem, it forms a nonpolar question (wh-question) requesting the listener’s opinion about a future action performed by the listener (or a group to which he belongs) or a group to which the listener and speaker belong.13

‘Where should we (two) go?’

‘What will you (plural) eat?’ (honorific)

6. Predicates of Verbs and Auxiliary Verbs

Here the term ‘auxiliary verb’ refers to type I auxiliary verbs (except the past form of ཝོང་ yoŋ) and ཝོང་ soŋ, ཆོང་ čoo, བཅོད་ caa, གོང་ ñoŋ, and དུ་ du. First, let us examine sentences in which these auxiliary verbs follow a perfective verb stem. When ཝོང་ yoŋ follows a perfective verb stem, the predicate indicates a state in which the results of a past action still remain and with which the speaker (or the listener in interrogative

13 In the case of verbs for which the perfective and imperfective forms cannot be distinguished, this construction requests the listener’s opinion regarding an action performed by the speaker, the listener, or the speaker and listener. ག་ gaa occurs with an honorific verb, it is not used as a question about the speaker’s own action: ག་ gaa? ‘What will you have?’ or ‘What shall we eat?’ (honorific). In Tibetan, when referring to an action that will occur in the future, the speaker can use an honorific expression even if she is one of the actors, provided that the listener is also an actor. This is why ‘What shall we eat?’ is a possible interpretation.
sentences) feels familiar. Accordingly, the person who performed the action is someone with whom the speaker has a close relationship (including the speaker herself).

(53) ་དང་བཟས་ཡོད།

'ŋää  'sää  yöö.
me-ERG eat  is
‘I have eaten.’

(54) རུ་ལུ་ཐཾཾ་ཡོད་པ།

'bugu  'di  'sää  yöö.
child  this  eat  is
‘This child has already eaten.’

(55) དེ་དུས་དེབ་དེ་ཀློག་ཡོད་པས།

'tetűü  'teb  'te  'loo  yöbää?
that.time  book  that  read  is.Q
‘Had you already read the book at that time?’

Sentence (53) is used, for example, when the speaker politely refuses food because she has already eaten, asserts that she is not or will not be hungry, or apologizes for eating someone else’s food. Sentence (54) is a case where a third person who performed the action has a close relationship with the speaker; either he has already finished his dinner or has eaten so much he cannot eat more. Sentence (55) is possible as a question when the listener is being asked about a certain book in an oral examination; it shows that perfective verb form + yöö is not only used when the action occurred at a point in time before the present moment but also when the action occurred earlier than a point of time in the past.14

When དེ་དུས་ 'yoo-ree follows a perfective verb form, the clause expresses an action that occurred in the past, the result of which can be presumed or known to remain in some form; the predicate denotes that the state described is objective and not directly perceived through the senses.

14 The possibility of a pluperfect reading also exists for perfective verb + དེ་དུས་ 'yoo-ree or དུ་ 'dau. Note that these constructions are only rarely used to refer to an action that occurred before a point of time in the future, because it is difficult to assert the completion of this action at the present moment. They can be used when describing definite plans such as when you want to say that you “will have finished work” when someone arrives tomorrow.
(56) གང་ཐེགས་བྱིན་པོས།

'canma 'pee 'yoo-ree.
everyone come.HON is
‘Everyone is here.’ (honorific)

(57) གང་ཐེགས་བྱིན་པོས།

'kon-gi 'səlaa 'cōo 'yoo-ree.
he/she-ERG food.HON eat.HON is
‘He will have already eaten (it seems).’

(58) གང་ཐེགས་བྱིན་པོས།

'teb 'pagee 'tii 'yoo-ree.
book yonder.DAT write is
‘It is written in that book.’

The assertion in (57) is based on the assumption that the man has already eaten, because it is past dinner time, which implies that it would not be rude to visit him now. In (58), the speaker is teaching the listener something that she knows to be true.

This form can also be used to refer to the speaker herself if it denotes an objective state. In particular, it is normal to use such a sentence when the speaker cannot accomplish the action according to her own will. Sentence (59) denotes that the action of ‘getting used to’ has occurred. It is often used because the speaker cannot ‘get used to something’ of her own will.

(59) གང་ཐེགས་བྱིན་པོས།

'ŋa 'lāāga 'dindā-a-la 'kom 'yoo-ree.
me job like.this-DAT get.used.to is
‘I am used to this kind of job.’

In addition, when ’dnu follows a perfective verb, the predicate denotes a action the result of which is directly perceived through the senses. However, ’saa is used in affirmative sentences.

(60) གང་ཐེགས་བྱིན་པོས།
"ki 'di 'ši šaa.
dog this die is
‘This dog is dead.’

(61) དེ་འདྲ་བྲིས་མི་འདུག
'denḍää 'dii 'minduu
like.that written NEG.is
‘Such a thing is not written.’

Example (60) is used when the speaker is looking at or touching a dog lying on the ground, and (61) is used when she is looking at the section of a book being referred to.

This form can also be used when describing the speaker’s own action if she feels the result of a past action at the present moment or perceives (through the senses) a change in the self that has occurred external to her own will.

(62) དྲག་བཞག
'kalaa 'sää šaa
food eat is
‘(Come to think of it) I have already eaten.’

(63) བཟས་བཞག
'ṭaa šaa
recover is
‘I have recovered.’

In (62), the speaker has forgotten that she had already eaten and recalls this when she attempts to eat again but does not feel hungry. In this case, the notion that the speaker ‘discovered’ something is permissible. However, this nuance is external to the idiosyncratic meaning of the verb + དུ་ duu (སོགས་ šaa) construction and can be explained through the situation in which the speaker (who ought to know that she has already eaten) claims to have perceived this anew through a different sense; a situation that cannot occur unless forgetfulness has occurred. In (63), something has happened to the speaker that is external to her will and can be perceived because she feels well at the present moment (cf. exx 74 and 81).

Next, when འབྲིད་ a-yöö follows a verb, it expresses a meaning similar to “I wonder…” (about a past event) and bears no relation to whether the speaker feels familiar with the event.
(64) **ཁོང་ཕེབས་ཨ་ཡོད།**

‘*kon  ′pee  ′a-yŏo*

he/she go is

‘I wonder if he was there.’ (honorific)

Next, when བྱུང་*ču* follows a perfective verb form, it expresses the notion that a certain action somehow befell or happened to the speaker (or the listener in interrogative sentences). Also note that *ču* (still written བྱུང) is the form that is generally used in an affirmative sentence.

(65) **ཁོང་གིས་དེབ་ཀློག་བྱུང་།**

‘*kon-gi  ′teb  ′loo  ěu*

he-ERG book read is

‘He read the book.’

(66) **ཁོང་གིས་མཆོད་བྱུང་།**

‘*kon-gi  ′čöö  ěu*

he-ERG eat.HON is

‘He ate with us’ (honorific).

(67) **བྱིའུས་འབྲས་བཟས་བྱུང་།**

‘*čiüü  ′dāa  ′sāa  ěu*

small.bird-ERG rice eat is

‘The rice was eaten by a small bird.’

Sentence (65) may express various states. The person may have read the book for the speaker, read it upon the request of the speaker, or inconvenienced the speaker by reading it aloud in her vicinity. Examples (66) and (67) exhibit the same types of interpretations; in (66) the speaker feels herself benefited by the dinner guest’s presence, in (67) she is annoyed at the bird’s activity. Incidentally, བྱུང* ču* can be used when none of the above conditions are present, that is, if the nature of the verb is such that it denotes an action directed
toward the speaker as in example (68)\textsuperscript{15} and (69). However, this usage is limited to situations where ‘directionality affecting the speaker’ is rather specific. It cannot be used to say, ‘I lost my father.’

(68) \begin{scriptsize}
\begin{verbatim}
ཁོང་ཕེབས་བྱུང་།
\end{verbatim}
\end{scriptsize}
‘konŋ pee ču
he come.HON is
‘He came.’ (honorable)

(69) \begin{scriptsize}
\begin{verbatim}
ཡི་གེ་ལྔ་འབྱོར་བྱུང་།
\end{verbatim}
\end{scriptsize}
‘yigi ŋa zoo ču
letter five receive is
‘Five letters arrived.’

Now, even when the event described relates to the speaker, it expresses a change that befell or happened to the speaker, as the following examples show.

(70) \begin{scriptsize}
\begin{verbatim}
ཁོང་མཐོང་བྱུང་།
\end{verbatim}
\end{scriptsize}
‘konŋ toŋ ču
he see is
‘(I) met him.’

(71) \begin{scriptsize}
\begin{verbatim}
d་ལྟ་ཨོ་ས་ཀ་ལ་སླེབས་བྱུང་།
\end{verbatim}
\end{scriptsize}
‘tanda Osaka-la ˇlee ču
now Osaka-DAT arrive is
‘(I) just arrived in Osaka.’

(72) \begin{scriptsize}
\begin{verbatim}
ཐུབ་བྱུང་།
\end{verbatim}
\end{scriptsize}
‘tub ču
able is

\textsuperscript{15} Sentence (68) can also be used when the person was invited by the speaker or caused inconvenience by his/her arrival; although these uses appear to differ, the meaning of \texttt{pee ču} is the same.
‘(I) did it’ (could do it).

(73) རི་ཏུ་

‘ŋa ‘na ṡu
me ill is
‘I fell ill.’

If the speaker becomes ill, she uses (73). However, when the speaker has recovered from an illness she may use (74); it implies that she did not recover naturally but was treated by a doctor or with medicine. Although it is easy to interpret illness as a state that befalls the speaker, recovery can be interpreted in two ways: either as a naturally occurring state or a state that is achieved through some external factor (that is, a factor that befalls the speaker, also cf. ex. 63).

(74) རི་ལུ་

‘taa ṡu
recover is
‘(I) recovered.’

Because use of རི་ ṡu includes the nuance that the event has occurred because of some external factor, asking someone who had caught a cold the following question would generally not be appropriate.¹⁶

(75) རི་ཏ་ལྡ་

‘taa ‘cuŋāā?
recover is-Q
‘(Have you) recovered?’

The correct way to ask someone if they have recovered from a cold is as follows:

(76) རི་ཏ་ལྡ་

‘taa ‘dugāā?
recover is-Q
‘(Are you) feeling better?’

¹⁶ Such a sentence might be used if the illness is ongoing and the speaker has not seen the listener for a while. Furthermore, in terms of nuance, this sentence implies that the “recovery” has happened as a whole or that the person has made a complete recovery.
Next, the auxiliary verb སོང་ so (normally so in the affirmative, which is still written སོང་, སོང་’maso in the negative, སོང་’sonāā in polar questions, and སོང་ so in nonpolar/choice questions) indicates that the speaker directly perceived a certain past action through the senses at the time that this action was performed.

(77) སུ་གཞས་བཏང་སོང་། — su ’šāa ’day soŋ?
who? song sang is
Who sang the song?

(78) མཁོ་ཕེབས་སོང་། — koŋ ’pee so
he came.HON is
‘He came.’ (honorific)

(79) མཁོ་ཕེབས་སོང་ངས། — koŋ ’pee ’sonāā?
he come.HON is-Q
‘Did he come?’

Sentence (78) is used when the speaker was present and saw (or guessed from a noise) the person arrive; in (79) the speaker asks whether the addressee saw him come.

The form སོང་ so can also be used to denote an action performed by the speaker or the listener if the action is perceived objectively.

(80) སྣང་ལམ་འི་ལེ་སོང་། — ’ŋa ’ŋān-la ’lee so
me earlier-DAT arrive is
‘I got there earlier.’

(81) སྣང་སེ་། — ’ŋa ’tāa so
me recover is
‘I have recovered.’

(82) ་ཆམས་པ་བརྒྱབ་སོང་།
‘(I) caught a cold.’

cold get is

Sentence (80) is used, for example, in a race when two people cross the finish line roughly at the same time and then contest who crossed the finish line first. Thus, the speaker in this case is stating an objective fact. Sentence (81) simply means that the speaker has recovered (cf. examples 63 and 74). Sentence (82) is used, for example, when the speaker goes outside after being in a warm room and sneezes. Let us compare (82) with the following sentence.

(83) ་ཆམས་པ་བརྒྱབ་བྱུང་།
‘(I) caught a cold.’

cold get is

Sentence (83) suggests that such an event happened to the speaker because of an external factor and is often used when the speaker is confined to her bed with a cold. It is not used when the speaker experiences a minor symptom such as a sneeze. In example (84), if climbers reach the top of a mountain and say (84a) it simply means ‘we are at the top,’ but if they say (84b) then it includes a strong nuance of relief about finally making it to the summit.

(84) a. སླེབས་སོང་།
‘We arrived.’
b. སླེབས་བྱུང་།
‘arrive is

In general, the auxiliary verb སོང་ sogn is used quite frequently.
Next, when ཉ་ ཆོོ (negative form ཉ་ ཆོོ 'me ཆོོ') occurs, the speaker is reasoning that it would be permissible for him/her to perform a certain action.

(85) ཉ་ མི་ཆོོ འཛིན་པོ་

`ŋa` me-ERG fish.meat this eat is

'I can eat this fish.'

Next, ཁྲ་ caa indicates the completion of an action performed by the speaker.

(86) ཉ་ མི་ཞེས་ཞིང་

`ŋa` me-ERG book this read is

'I have finished reading this book.'

Although ཉ་ ཆོོ and ཁྲ་ caa also exist as main verbs, it can be thought that the stems of these two particular verbs have been used as auxiliary verbs.

Next, let us examine sentences in which auxiliary verbs follow imperfective stems. First, when ཉླ་ དོ དོག (negative form ཉླ་ དོ དོག 'mañö, polar question ཉླ་ དོ དོག, and nonpolar/choice question ཉླ་ དོ དོག) follows an imperfective stem, the predicate marks the speaker’s (or the listener’s in interrogative sentences) experience, thus indicating that she “has done” something.

(87) ཉླ་ དོ དོག དོག དོག དོག དོག

`ŋa` me Tibet-DAT go NEG.is

'I have never been to Tibet.'

Next, when བླ་ བླ་ duu follows an imperfective stem, it produces a meaning similar to “let’s” (or “let’s not” when it is preceded by the negative marker ཁྲ་ ma).
he/she-GEN house.HON-DAT go.HON is
‘Let’s go to his/her house.’ (honorific)17

7. **Predicates of infinitives and auxiliary verbs**

The term “infinitives” is here used as a general name for all forms in which connective morphemes, such as བ་ ba and བི་ gi, directly follow verb stems. I will call each of these the བ་ ba infinitive and the བི་ gi infinitive, respectively.

The བ་-ba infinitive, which is formed from the perfect stem (e.g. བཟས་ bää becomes བཟས་པ་ bää-ba), can take the auxiliary verbs ིན་ yin, རེད་ ree, and དྷོད་ yöö. Expressions affixed with yin express the past actions of the speaker (or the speaker’s group). Note that བ་ཡིན་ -ba-yin cannot, for example, refer to the actions of the speaker’s child or others with whom the speaker is familiar (as can yin alone).

(89) ཉ་ ’teb ’pagi ’loo-ba yin.
I book yonder read-INF is
‘I read that book.’

(90) ཆེན་འཇོག
’cin-ba yin
went-INF is
‘(I) went.’

While བི་ män may take the place of ིན་ yin with negatives, in a question about the past actions of an interlocutor, the verb + final particle ིན་ bää (for polar questions) or བི་ baa (for nonpolar questions) are used, as we saw in section 5.

When the བ་ ba infinitive occurs with རེད་ ree, the speaker knows (regardless of through what means) about someone’s past action that has had some lasting effect in the present.

(91) གཟེན་ལ་ནམས་པས་ལ་གཤེགས་པ་རེད།
’ŋää ’baa-la’ ʼgagaa-la ʼśaa-ba ree.
me-father-India- die-INF is
GEN hon. DAT
‘My father died in India.’

17 As discussed in note 13, in Tibetan, the speaker can still use an honorific form (in this case ʼtää) even if she is involved in the action provided that the listener is also an actor.
Sentence (91) is not to mean that the speaker witnessed the final moment (in that case one would say, གཤེགས་སོང་ 'saa so), but rather means that the results of the death have had some lasting effect in the present (as with verb + yōö, etc., note that this is not a direct effect). Sentence (92) is used, for example, as an answer to a question about what happened to the food that was left on the table. However, this sentence is not used to assert that the speaker saw the man eat the food but to state that the food was gone because the man ate it. The form verb + yoo-ree discussed above indicates that a certain action occurred in the past and denotes its direct result. For example, སའི་yoo-ree implies that a person ought to be full because he/she has eaten, whereas the བ་ ba infinitive + ree indicates that a certain action occurred and that its influence affects the current situation in some way. Therefore, (92) includes the nuance that the food has gone.

However, because the perfective and imperfective forms of regular verbs cannot be distinguished, a single infinitive can have more than one meaning:

(93) དགེ་ཆེ་རེ་'yago staa ree
well eat is
‘(He) eats a lot.’

(94) ངེ་ཆེ་སྣྲོ་།'kong gi shedaa loo-ba ree
he-ERG very read is
‘He reads a lot’ or ‘He read a lot.’
This could either mean that the man is a keen reader or it implies that his extensive reading in the past is affecting his current situation. In a question, རེད་ ree may be replaced with རེད་པས་ rebää or རས་ rää, but there are two types of negative forms.

(95)  a. རེད་པས་ སྲེ་ཆེབས་པ་ རེད།
     he/she yesterday NEG.come-INF is
     ‘He did not come yesterday.’

Whereas the former implies ‘did not come’ in the normal sense (with, of course, the nagging sense of a lasting effect), the latter has the sense that yesterday was (simply) not the day that the person came.

Next, where ཡོད་ yöö is affixed to the perfective བ་ ba infinitive, it expresses an inference as to someone’s apparent past action(s).

(96) ཡོད་ཆི་བ ཡོད།
     he/she come-INF is
     ‘It seems like he went.’

Unlike the case wherein ཡོད་ yöö affixes directly to the stem, this has no relation as to whether said action can be regarded to be familiar.

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18 The question arises whether these two cases of རེད་པས་ loo-reed or ‘loo-reed’ are homonyms. In the first meaning, the speaker knows about a past action and feels its effects in some form at the present moment, whereas in the second, the speaker describes a person’s habitual action. However, even in the second meaning, the speaker must have some form of knowledge of the person’s past actions. Moreover, neither of the meanings includes the notion that the speaker has directly observed the action. Thus, these cases of ‘loo-reed’ do not appear to be homonyms, but a unified form in which the speaker (while recalling a past action) recognizes the continuation and effects of that past action in some form at the present moment. Furthermore, it is reasonable to conclude that the expression includes cases that focus more on the point of time in the past or the state at the present moment. To be sure, there are times when the speaker uses (94) without thinking about which point in time she is focusing on. In other words, it is uninterrupted and continuous.

One may note that རེད་པས་ ‘loo-reed’ has two negative forms རེད་པས་ ma-loo-reed, which may be translated ‘He did not read’ and རེད་པས་ ‘loo-reed’ which denotes habitual action. However, the different position of ma suffices to explain the difference between these two forms in structural terms. Moreover, note that in the case of habitual actions, this form can also be used to refer to an action before or after the given point in time if it is included in the habit: རེད་པས་ ‘loo-reed’ which explains that, ‘Yesterday was the day that he does not come’ and རེད་པས་ ‘loo-reed’ which explains that, ‘Tomorrow is the day that he does not come.’

19 In this case, ཤུ་ duu is not used, since the inferential meaning of the construction is incompatible with the sensory evidence encoded by ཤུ་ duu. If one had seen a past event one would know it occurred and not speculate about whether or not it occurred.
There are also examples where the བ་-ba infinitive is created from the imperfect stem (when affixing to single-syllable stems, e.g. བ་sa, བ་do, or བ་ce ‘do’, these take forms such as བ་sa, བ་do, and བ་ce, and when these are affixed with འྱོོ yöö or འ་duu, they become predicates expressing inference. Examples affixed with འྱོོ yöö express general inferences about past or future actions, whereas those affixed with འ་ duu express the case where the basis for an inference about a future action is understood directly from one’s own senses.

20 Examples affixed with འྱོོ yöö express general inferences about past or future actions, whereas those affixed with འ་ duu express the case where the basis for an inference about a future action is understood directly from one’s own senses.

21 Now, འྱོོ yoo-ree does not follow the imperfective བ་ ba infinitive. The omission can be understood as semantically motivated; when making an inference, it is likely that the speaker either regards the event as something familiar (thus making the inference familiar) or perceives through the senses the evidence on which the inference is based.

21 The reason why the imperfective བ་ ba infinitive + འ་ duu cannot be used to make inferences about past events is explained in note Error! Bookmark not defined. Conversely, the བ་ ba infinitive + འ་ duu can be used when discussing future events because, quite naturally, although a future action itself cannot be confirmed, any amount of evidence suggesting that a certain action will be performed can be directly perceived through the senses.

(97) བ་ doo yöö.
he/she come-INF is
‘It looks like he will go.’ or ‘It looks like he went.’

(98) བ་ teriŋ kalaa saa duu.
he/she today food eat-INF is
‘It looks like he will eat the food today.’

Note that the བ་ ba infinitive, in addition to its functions in the formation of predicates, also has nominal uses.

(99) བ་pee ba te su rää?
person come.HON-INF that who is
‘Who was that person who came?’ (honorific).
In sentence (99) 'pee-ba is used as an adjective (cf. མི་ན་ ‘mi nago ‘te ‘that black-skinned person’). In sentence (100) 'pee-ba occurs as a noun. This is the reason why I have chosen to regard these forms as ‘infinitive’ predicates.

Next, the གི་-gi infinitive, which is formed from the imperfect stem (e.g. གྲོ་ ‘sa → གྲོ་ ‘sagi, དོ་ ‘do → དོ་ ‘dogi), may take ཕིན་ yin, རེད་ ree, ཡོོ་ yoo, འདུག་ duu.

The གི་-gi infinitive affixed with yin express a future action on the part of the speaker (or the group to which she belongs).

While བོད་ནས་ཕེབས་པ་ ‘mi from come.HON-INF.GEN person ‘The person who came from Tibet.’ (honorific)

It deserves emphasis that this construction can never be used with actions of a third or second person (except of course for interrogative sentences for the second person).
‘Will you go to school?’

(104) ཐལ་གི་པས།

pagee  གäägi  bää?
over.there  go.INF  Q
‘Are you going to go there?’ or ‘Shall we go?’

(105) ག་པར་ཐལ་གཱ།

kaba  ‘tää  gaa?
where?  go  Q
‘Where will you go?’

When རི་ ree follows the བོ་ gi infinitive, this expresses an objective action in the future or something that lasts from the present into the future.

(106) དེབ་ཞེ་དྲགས་ཀློག་གི་རེད།

koŋ  ‘sain  peegi  ree.
he/she  tomorrow  come.INF  is
‘He will come tomorrow.’
(honorific)

(107) དཔེར་ལུགས་ཀློག་གི་རེད།

‘ribin-la  ‘caaba  ‘mango  ‘dangi  ree.
Japan-  rain  lots.of  fall.INF  is  DAT
‘Lots of rain fall in Japan.’

(108) དེབ་ཞེ་དྲགས་ཀློག་གི་རེད།

koŋ  ‘teb  ‘seela  ‘loogi  ree.
he  book  a.lot  read.INF  is
‘He reads a lot of books.’

(109) དཔེར་ལུགས་ཀློག་གི་རེད།

‘ña  ‘yago  ‘sagi  ree.
me a.lot eat.inf is

‘I eat a lot’ or ‘I am a big eater.’

As indicated by sentence (107-109), in addition to a straightforward future this form is also used to express generic facts.\(^{23}\) With negatives, རེད་ree is replaced by མ་རེད་maree, in polar questions it becomes རེད་པས་rebää and in nonpolar questions རས་rää. The form *mapeegi ree does not exist.\(^{24}\)

Next, when the གི gi infinitive is followed by ཨོ། yöö, this forms a predicate that expresses a habitual, repetitive, or sustained action on the part of the speaker (or in a question, on the part of the interlocutor) at a certain point in time.

(110) བོད་ཡོད། འ་ ‘tanda teb loogi yöö.
me now book read.INF is

‘I am reading a book at the moment.’

(111) བོད་ཡོད། ། བ་ ‘pee-düü ‘ya teb loogi yöö.
he/she come- me book read.INF is
time

‘When he came, I was reading.’

(112) བོད་ཡོད། ས་ ‘kääsa ko ‘pee-ba maree.

Note that in Japanese 6 時におきる is used to say both ‘I get up at 6’ and ‘I will get up at 6’ although the former denotes a genetic action and the latter denotes a future action.

As discussed in note (Error! Bookmark not defined.18) it is possible to say གཏོང་ཅ་ ‘kääsa ‘kon ‘pee-ba maree, but it is not possible to say *–kääsa ‘kon ‘peegi maree. The གི gi infinitive + རེད་ree categorically expresses a definite action that is not complete and is within the scope of a given time if a time marker is present or for an unrestricted period of time if a time marker is not present. Then, it expresses such a habit when it denotes an action within a period of time that is effectively unrestricted such as གཏོང་ཅ་ གཏོང་ཅ་ maaree. Conversely, when the བ་ ba infinitive + རེད་ree denotes a habit, it captures an action as a continuation of a past action and thus expresses a more temporary and unstable habit allowing an action to be expressed as if it were a part of a habit, even if it occurred on a certain day. Accordingly, the use of the གི gi infinitive + རེད་ree gives a sense that the speaker is more interested in that habit and has more conviction.
(113) ‘What are you doing?’ (honorific)

(114) ‘(I am) eating now.’

(115) ‘I swam day in and day out last summer’ or ‘I was swimming every day last summer.’

In negative cases, yöö is replaced by mää.

Next, affixing yöree to the gi- infinitive results in a predicate that expresses a habitual, repetitive, or sustained action at a certain point in time that is not understood directly from one’s own senses.

(116) ‘I guess he is studying, right?’

(117) ‘I am eating.’
The construction is also used to describe the speaker’s own action as an objective fact:

(119) འདུག་གི་འཕྲུག་གུ་འདི་སློབ་གྲྭ་འགྲོ་གི་ཡོའོ་རེ

‘I will be working at that time.’

Affixing བོད་ duu to the གི- infinitive results in a predicate that expresses a given action at a certain point in time that has been understood directly from one’s own senses. However, in a case where the གི infinitive is affixed with the affirmative བོད་ duu, the form -gii (still written གི etc.) is used instead.

(120) བོད་

‘He is weeping.’

(121) འདུག་གི་འཕྲུག་གུ་འདི་སློབ་གྲྭ་འགྲོ་གི་ཡོའོ་རེ

‘He is eating now.’ (honorific)

(122) འདུག་གི་འཕྲུག་གུ་འདི་སློབ་གྲྭ་འགྲོ་གི་ཡོའོ་རེ

‘What is that person saying?’

This construction can also be used with the first person as shown below:
(123) ༽ྨཱ༌‘ཐྱེ་‘ལཛིི་
‘ཤཾ སྐེ་‘ལཛིི
me.ERG well eat.INF.is
‘I eat a lot.’

(124) མཱ་‘ཐྱེ་‘ལཛིི
‘ཤ རྗེ་‘ལཛིི
me head ill.INF.is
‘I have a headache.’

Sentence (123) produces the sense that the speaker is viewing his/her own behavior from the outside, whereas (124) is used when the speaker perceives (through the senses) the occurrence of an event that is beyond her control.

Although the ངུ བུ infinitive is often used as a verbal noun denoting the target of a verb, apart from this, its use in predicates is relatively uncommon. It is used in the following three situations, viz. with མིན་ - yin, རེད་ - ree, and ལྷུ་ དུ་ ‘mačuŋ.

When yin affixes to the ངུ བུ infinitive, created when ངུ བུ affixes to the imperfect stem (e.g. ཟ ‘sa → ཟ བུ ‘sa, ཡོ ‘do → ཡོ བུ ‘do), this form expresses the speaker’s intention to perform an action in future the that he or she has not yet initiated.

(125) དུ་‘ཐླེ་‘ཤི་‘ཨི་
‘ཤ བཤེ་ སྐ་ དི་ yin.
me letter that write.INF is
‘I have still to write that letter.’

(126) དུ་‘ཐླ་ བུ་ yin
me food eat.INF is
‘I am still to eat.’
When རེད་ree follows the དོན་gu infinitive, it is often used to refer to the planned actions of the second or third person.\(^{25}\)

(127) མི་དེ་པ་རྒྱུ་རེད་པའི་ སྤྱད་ཀྱི་དོན་gu-yin or དོན་ནས་gu-ree.\(^{26}\)

There is no negative or interrogative equivalent of དོན་gu-ཡིན་or དོན་ནས་gu-རེད་.

Next, when ང་མ་བྱུང་'mačuŋ affixes to the དོན་gu infinitive, this forms a frequently used predicate that expresses a past action that the speaker did not take because of an external agency.

(128) བལ་སེམས་རྒྱུ་མ་སྡེ་བལྟ་པའི་ བོད་küaśa 'ca 'no gu 'mačuŋ.

yesterday tea buy.INF NEG.is

‘I did not buy tea yesterday.’

(129) བལ་སེམས་རྒྱུ་མ་སྡེ་བལྟ་པའི་ བོད་küaśa 'sagū 'mačuŋ

yesterday eat.INF NEG.is

‘I did not eat yesterday.’\(^{27}\)

However, when we look at བལ་སེམས་'sagū 'cuŋ, we find that this is not the affirmative equivalent of ང་མ་བྱུང་'mačuŋ but takes the meaning that the speaker was able to acquire something to eat (བལ་སེམས་'sagū).

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\(^{25}\) Note that the དོན་gu infinitive has a completely different meaning when it occurs with རེད་ree, as in ནམ་ཤར་'doŋu ree 'no choice but to go,' ‘have to go’, or བལ་སེམས་'doŋu 'mare 'must not go'. Etymologically speaking, དོན་gu originally denoted the nominal form or target of a verb. Therefore, this usage of དོན་gu has diverged to form two different meanings in modern Tibetan. Because a semantic category exclusively shared by both uses of དོན་gu cannot be presumed, this pair constitutes pure homonyms at the synchronic level.

\(^{26}\) Apparently, a child may be corrected for producing a sentence such as དོན་sagū 'mān.

\(^{27}\) The difference between this form and ང་མ་བས་'masāā observed in section 4 is that ང་མ་བས་'masāā implies that the speaker did not eat of his own will, whereas the དོན་gu infinitive + ང་མ་བས་'mačuŋ implies that circumstances did not allow the speaker to eat.
The རྩིས zii infinitive, formed by affixing རྩིས zii to the imperfect stem (e.g. ས་ sa → རྩིས zii sa'zii, འོ་ do → རྩིས zii do'zii) may be affixed with འབྲོ yoo, འབྲོ་རེད yoo-ree, or འདུག duu. Affixing འབྲོ yoo forms a predicate that expresses familiarity with respect to the intention of the action.

Affixing འབྲོ་རེད yoo-ree expresses the objective existence of an intention, whereas affixing duu implies that such a plan is understood directly from one’s own senses. The fact that the zii infinitive is not treated the same manner with normal nouns can be understood from a comparison of the following two sentences.

(130) བུག་ལོ་ལོ་ཞྟེིི zii འབྲོ yoo གུ་ འཇིག ཕྱོད། འཇིག ཕྱོད། བུག་ལོ་ལོ་ཞྟེིི zii འབྲོ yoo གུ་ འཇིག ཕྱོད། "My child will study (intention)."

Affixing འབྲོ་རེད yoo-ree expresses the objective existence of an intention, whereas affixing duu implies that such a plan is understood directly from one’s own senses. The fact that the zii infinitive is not treated the same manner with normal nouns can be understood from a comparison of the following two sentences.

(131) ཅན་ཞག་ལས་ཞྟེིི zii ཤིག འབྲོ yoo གུ་ འཇིག ཕྱོད། འཇིག ཕྱོད། ཅན་ཞག་ལས་ཞྟེིི zii ཤིག འབྲོ yoo གུ་ འཇིག ཕྱོད། "I want to go to China’"

(132) རང་ཐུབ ལུང་ཞྟེིི zii ཤིག འབྲོ yoo གུ་ འཇིག ཕྱོད། འཇིག ཕྱོད། རང་ཐུབ ལུང་ཞྟེིི zii ཤིག འབྲོ yoo གུ་ འཇིག ཕྱོད། ‘There is one book for me.’

First, there is the difference between ས་ 'I' and ཤ་ 'for me'. Second, if རྩིས zii were a noun, then the phrase འཇིག ཕྱོད། "dozii should be impossible.

The འདོད döö infinitive, which can be created by affixing འདོད döö to the imperfect stem (e.g. ས་ sa → འདྲོད sandöö, འོ་ do → འདྲོད dondöö), may also take འབྲོ yoo, འབྲོ་རེད yoo-ree, and འདུག duu and expresses the hopeful desire (to do something). Their respective semantic differences are the same as those in the case of the རྩིས zii infinitive. However, there are two ways for the speaker herself to express desire:

(133) རང་བོད ལས་ཞྟེིི zii ཤིག འབྲོ yoo གུ་ འཇིག ཕྱོད། འཇིག ཕྱོད། རང་བོད ལས་ཞྟེིི zii ཤིག འབྲོ yoo གུ་ འཇིག ཕྱོད། ‘I want to go to Tibet.’

(134) རང་བོད ལས་ཞྟེིི zii ཤིག འདུག duu གུ་ འཇིག ཕྱོད། འཇིག ཕྱོད། རང་བོད ལས་ཞྟེིི zii ཤིག འདུག duu གུ་ འཇིག ཕྱོད། ‘I want to go to Tibet.’
The former expresses a somewhat rational desire, whereas the latter expresses a kind of inner desire “that springs from the heart.”

8. Other Predicates

There are various forms for giving orders or asking favors. Often used, as expressions for བོ་ ‘sa, for instance, are the rather rough imperative བོ་ ‘söö (‘Eat!’) (with བོ་ ‘masöö for the negative imperative ‘Don’t eat!’), the rather softer imperative བོ་ ‘söö ši and the polite request form བོ་ ‘roo nanj, which is suffixed to the honorific form of verbs that have such or the imperfect stem of verbs that do not.

(135) བོ་འོཾ་ བོ་ ‘roo nanj.
partake-INF do
‘Please partake’ (e.g., of a meal)

(136) བོ་ ‘roo nanj.
read-INF do
‘Please read.’

For the sense of ‘please don’t …’ there are two options:

(137) བོ་འོཾ་ བོ་ ‘roo nanj.
NEG.partake-INF do
‘Please do not partake.’

(138) བོ་འོཾ་ བོ་ ‘roo nanj.
read NEG.do-INF do
‘Please do not read.’

Generally in this construction, if a verb is to be negated with བོ་ ‘ma, in order to make the usage honorific the verb is accompanied by the suffix བོ་ ‘na, with བོ་ ‘ma prefixed to བོ་ ‘na. This particular case is

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28 The verb བོ་ ‘coö ‘partake’ is the honorific equivalent of ‘eat’, བོ་ ‘loo ‘read’ has no honorific form and when necessary may be affixed with བོ་ ‘na, the honorable form of a verb meaning ‘to do’ to form བོ་ ‘loo ‘na ‘do please read’.
odd in so far as, although one does not say *ˈloo ʰnaŋ-roo ʰnaŋ, the second ʰnaŋ ʰnaŋ does appear in the negative version.

Although there are various other predicate constructions, we will not touch on these here.

9. Some Features of Tibetan Predicates

The features of Tibetan predicates, in a word, are complicated.

For example, ʰyin affixes to nouns or adjectives to express a situation that feels familiar to the speaker (or in the case of a question, to the interlocutor). When affixing to the ʰra-ba or ʰgi infinitive, it expresses only the actions of the speaker. While we cannot completely rule out the possibility of explaining why this is so from the difference between a static state and the inherent dynamism that accompanies this difference, grammatically speaking, it may be best to consider these two instances of ʰyin as separate entities. In other words, it would seem better not to think of the latter ʰyin as a separate auxiliary verb but rather that the entire construction linked with the infinitive should constitute a variant (i.e., inflection category) of each verb. This has been a factor contributing to foreigners’ sense of the complexity of the language.

Next, it has been pointed out that the structure of predicates that give affirmative, negative, or interrogative expression to certain actions do not necessarily correspond clearly with one another, lending to a sense of further complexity even beyond that of the facts stated above.

\[a)\]
\[
ˈdogi\ yin.
\]
\[
ˈdogi\ ʰbaa?
\]
\[
ˈkaba\ ˈdo\ gaa.
\]
\[
‘(I) will go.’
\]
\[
‘Will you go?’
\]
\[
‘Where will you go?’
\]

\[b)\]
\[
ˈčin-ba\ yin.
\]
\[
ˈmači\n\]
\[
ˈdoğu
\]
\[
‘(I) went.’
\]
\[
‘(I) did not go.’
\]
\[
‘
\]

\[c)\]
\[
ˈdoğu
\]
\[
‘(He) went.’
\]
Here, the examples in a) lack any clear correspondence between the affirmative and interrogative uses, whereas those in b) lack a clear correspondence between the affirmative and negative usages. Finally, comparing b) and c), we find that though there are two types of negatives for the actions of a speaker and a third party, their respective structures are completely inconsistent.

10. Concluding remarks

Finally, let us consider what overall we may learn from the semantics of Tibetan predicates.

First, while researching Tibetan predicates, I have sensed the diversity of ways in which we organize real world phenomena and our own thoughts through a language. Not one of the methods of expression aforementioned includes a range of meaning that corresponds to those of English or Japanese. Such a situation is logically inevitable; nonetheless, when we actually engage in this type of research, its extent is revealed beyond our expectations.

Furthermore, only research on the structure and meaning of predicates has allowed us to clearly recognize that the semantic unities that give meaning to the concepts of internal linguistic factors are not purely objective; to varying degrees they also include subjective factors. It is also clear that the Tibetan language offers a rich variety of expressions that are governed by these subjective factors. In other words, when researching the meaning of these linguistic units, it is important to objectively identify what types of subjective elements express various events and, both objectively and subjectively, clarify the qualities upon which the concept of a semantic unity is grounded.

The second aspect that I have learned from Tibetan predicates is that when researching the meaning of a certain linguistic unit, it is generally not possible to reach an accurate conclusion about it without focusing on the unit itself. That is, it is not possible to accurately describe the meaning of that linguistic unit by inferring it from the meaning of another linguistic unit. For example, when the speaker refers to her own past action ‘I ate,’ she uses བཟས་པ་ཡིན་ (sää-ba yin) (sää-ba män cannot be used here), whereas the negation of the speaker’s past action can be expressed by the two forms མ་བཟས་ (masää) and ས་ུ། མ་གྱུན་ (sağı ‘mačɯng), which have different meanings. Incidentally, this clearly shows that certain divisions exist in some cases, but not in others. In other words, the meanings of linguistic units correspond
conceptually to individual semantic unities, thereby showing that individual research must be conducted for each one. Indeed, I do not propose that research on the meaning of other linguistic units is not useful as a reference. In fact, it goes without saying that the results of describing the meanings of \( \text{ yöö, mää} \), etc. in nominal and adjectival predicates was extremely helpful when looking into the meaning of their verbal counterparts. However, it is important to avoid superficial analogies by clearly recognizing that there is no reason why a difference in the meaning between two linguistic forms must also exist in other situations. In addition, it is theoretically invalid for a certain quality included in a semantic unity corresponding to a certain linguistic unit to also exist in an identical form in a semantic unity corresponding to a different linguistic unit.

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References
