The Grammatical Categories of the Classical Tibetan Verbs
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ABSTRACT
This paper discusses the grammatical categories of the Classical Tibetan verbs. Morphologically, Classical Tibetan verbs can be categorized into tense, mode, valence and aspect, while the category of Ergative verb VS. unergative verbs are based on syntactical distribution, which should replace the category of transitive VS. intransitive contrast. The category of Valence is traditionally referred as causative and non-causative, which is not a very accurate term.

Keywords: Tibetan verb, morphology, grammatical category

I. INTRODUCTION
Traditionally, Classical Tibetan verbs are classified on two parameters: the ones that indicate tense (past, present and future) and mode (imperative) and the others that indicate causation (e.g. Qu 1996:163). In addition, they are also classified into transitive, intransitive, volitional, non-volitional (e.g. Huang 1981; Gesang 2000; Zhang 1989). Based on these studies and with a careful examination of the Tibetan verb data, this article engages in a systematic study of the grammatical categories of Classical Tibetan verbs by carefully distinguishing between morphological, syntactical and semantical aspect, since there is still data that has not been fully considered by modern linguists. In addition, this article argues that much of the terminology used while analyzing Tibetan verbs is inappropriate and possibly misleading.

As far as this paper concerns, on the morphological base, Classical Tibetan verbs can be analyzed into four major grammatical categories, i.e., TENSE, MODE, VALENCE and ASPECT. The tense and the mode, which are the so-called “four-form verbs”, are frequently mentioned by both indigenous Tibetan grammarians and modern linguists. The category of valence refers to the traditional concept of causation. The reason for using the term of “valence” will be clear soon. Some linguists do not carefully distinguish aspect and tense regarding to modern Tibetan dialects, but this distinction is crucial while analyzing Classical Tibetan verbs.

II. OVERVIEW OF THE GRAMMATICAL CATEGORIES
Before going into detail, we should give a general picture of the grammatical categories of the verbs by using two verb classes. The first verb class is “cut”-related. The following is the “morph-function” diagram of this verb class, as shown in "Fig. 1":

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This verb class has a total of seven forms in relation to its functions, belonging to the four grammatical categories mentioned above. Modes include declarative and imperative. Based on the number of arguments embedded within the verb forms, the declarative forms can be placed into high-valence and low-valence categories. In this case, the high-valence forms are included with two arguments; namely, the “cutter” and the thing that should be cut. Meanwhile, the low-valence forms are included with only one argument which is the thing that goes under “break”. This alternation has nothing to do with causation besides adjusting the number of arguments. According to the internal temporal structure of actions, the high-valence verbs can be divided into activities and achievement, in which the “activity” form emphasizes the process of the “cutting” action, but the “achievement” form indicates the action has reached an endpoint, i.e., it has been cut off. The form of the achievement is the same form as the imperative. The fourth layer of this verb class is tense, in which the high valence can be divided into the future, present and past, namely *gʃad, *gʃod and bʃad, and its low-valence verbs only has the non-past and past forms, namely *nʃhad and *ʃhad.

Without doubt, these seven forms are related morphologically. In the alternation process, the place of the articulation of the root initial and the coda remain consistent, and these functions are indicated by prefixing, adjusting the distinctive features of the root initial, and alternating vowels. Therefore, the root of this verb can be analyzed as -Tʃ-d, where Tʃ denotes the place of articulation, i.e. the postalveolar affricate, if we use the feature “+ aspiration” and “+o” to modify the root, we can get the imperative form, namely *ʧod.

Let's look at the ‘morph-function’ diagram of another verb. This verb class is related to the meaning of “contract”, as shown in "Fig. 2":

![Diagram](image-url)
This verb also has seven forms with the grammatical categories of tense, mode, valence and aspect. The difference between this verb and the above verb lies in the opposite of their “aspect”, i.e., “activities” contrast with “state”. The “state” form is *kum, which means the state of being "curled", and generally this category corresponds to adjectives in many other languages.

Its root can be analyzed as -Kum-, in which “K” represents the place of articulation, i.e., the velar. The different forms are generated by prefixing, suffixing and with the changing of distinctive feature of the root initial (here is aspiration).

These two verb families embody all the grammatical categories of classical Tibetan verbs.

### III. MODE AND TENSE

Modes of classic Tibetan verbs include declarative and imperative, in which the declarative mode could have three tenses: future, present, and past. These two categories—the most productive ones—are well discussed by previous linguists. By considering the consistence and the difference of the forms, verbs only belonging to these two categories have 6 paradigms. The first paradigm differentiates the four forms, as shown in “Table I”.

**TABLE I.  THE PARADIGM WITH FOUR DIFFERENT FORMS**

| Future   | Present | Past | Imperative | Glossary |
|----------|---------|------|------------|----------|
| <dkrab>  | <vkhrab>| <bhkrabs> | <khrobs> | Choose   |
| <gdam>   | <vdebs> | <bts> | <ts>       | Plant    |
| <bts>    | <vjog>  | <bts> | <ts>       | Collect  |
| <bts>    | <bts>   | <bts> | <ts>       | Strike   |
| <bts>    | <vchib> | <bcib> | <kchibs> | Ride     |
| <bts>    | <bts>   | <bts> | <ts>       | Ladle    |
| <bts>    | <bts>   | <bts> | <ts>       | Wash     |
| <bts>    | <bts>   | <bts> | <ts>       | Do       |
| <bts>    | <bts>   | <bts> | <ts>       | Gobble   |
| <bts>    | <bts>   | <bts> | <ts>       | Load     |
| <bts>    | <bts>   | <bts> | <ts>       | Extract  |
| <bts>    | <bts>   | <bts> | <ts>       | Record   |
In the second paradigm, the future tense has the same form with the present tense, as shown in "Table II":

| Future | Present | Past | Imperative | Glossary |
|--------|---------|------|------------|----------|
| <vtshab> | <vchol> | - | <vchol> | - |
| <cham> | <cham> | - | <cham> | - |
| <vphya> | <vphya> | - | <vphya> | - |
| <bgrang> | <vcham> | - | <vcham> | - |
| <gla> | <vchol> | - | <vchol> | - |
| <bcol> | <vchol> | - | <vchol> | - |

In the third paradigm, the future tense has the same form as the past tense, as shown in "Table III":

| Future | Present | Past | Imperative | Glossary |
|--------|---------|------|------------|----------|
| <vchol> | <vchol> | - | <vchol> | - |
| <vchol> | <vchol> | - | <vchol> | - |
| <vchol> | <vchol> | - | <vchol> | - |

In the fourth paradigm, the past form is the same as the imperative, as shown in "Table IV":

| Future | Present | Past | Imperative | Glossary |
|--------|---------|------|------------|----------|
| <bcol> | <bcol> | - | <bcol> | - |
| <bcol> | <bcol> | - | <bcol> | - |
| <bcol> | <bcol> | - | <bcol> | - |

In the fifth paradigm, the present form is the same as the imperative, as shown in "Table V":

| Future | Present | Past | Imperative | Glossary |
|--------|---------|------|------------|----------|
| <vchol> | <vchol> | - | <vchol> | - |
| <vchol> | <vchol> | - | <vchol> | - |
| <vchol> | <vchol> | - | <vchol> | - |

TABLE II. 

The paradigm in which the future form is the same with the present form

| Future | Present | Past | Imperative | Glossary |
|--------|---------|------|------------|----------|
| <vjab> | <vjab> | - | <vjab> | - |
| <vcham> | <vcham> | - | <vcham> | - |
| <vphya> | <vphya> | - | <vphya> | - |
| <bgrang> | <vcham> | - | <vcham> | - |
| <gla> | <vchol> | - | <vchol> | - |
| <bcol> | <vchol> | - | <vchol> | - |

TABLE III. 

The paradigm in which the future form is the same with the past form

| Future | Present | Past | Imperative | Glossary |
|--------|---------|------|------------|----------|
| <vchol> | <vchol> | - | <vchol> | - |
| <vchol> | <vchol> | - | <vchol> | - |
| <vchol> | <vchol> | - | <vchol> | - |

TABLE IV. 

The paradigm in which the past form is the same with the imperative form

| Future | Present | Past | Imperative | Glossary |
|--------|---------|------|------------|----------|
| <vchol> | <vchol> | - | <vchol> | - |
| <vchol> | <vchol> | - | <vchol> | - |
| <vchol> | <vchol> | - | <vchol> | - |

TABLE V. 

The paradigm in which the present form is the same with the imperative form

| Future | Present | Past | Imperative | Glossary |
|--------|---------|------|------------|----------|
| <vchol> | <vchol> | - | <vchol> | - |
| <vchol> | <vchol> | - | <vchol> | - |
| <vchol> | <vchol> | - | <vchol> | - |

TABLE VI. 

The paradigm in which the imperative form is the same with the present form

| Future | Present | Past | Imperative | Glossary |
|--------|---------|------|------------|----------|
| <vchol> | <vchol> | - | <vchol> | - |
| <vchol> | <vchol> | - | <vchol> | - |
| <vchol> | <vchol> | - | <vchol> | - |
The sixth paradigm has the same forms for the tenses, as shown in "Table VI":

| Declarative (future present past) | Imperative | Glossary |
|----------------------------------|------------|---------|
| <kyal>  རྐྱལ་ | <kyal>  རྐྱལ་ | Swim |
| <snar>  རྐྱོལ་ | <ngor>  རྐྱོལ། | Do the work of a craftsmith |
| <bsgrad> རྐྱོལ། | <bsgrad> རྐྱོལ། | Open wide |
| <gear>  རྐྱོལ། | <geor>  རྐྱོལ། | Hit |
| <mjal>  རྐྱོལ། | <mjol>  རྐྱོལ། | Visit |
| <nyar>  རྐྱོལ། | <nyor>  རྐྱོལ། | Save |

In addition, because of the semantic constriction, many verbs have no imperative mode; i.e., the semantically controllable verbs have imperative forms while the uncontrollable verbs do not. This is clear by comparing the following two groups of verbs, as shown in "Table VII":

| Controllable | Imperative | Glossary |
|--------------|------------|---------|
| Future | Present | Past | imperative | Future | Present | Past | imperative | Glossary |
| རྐྱལ། | རྐྱོལ། | རྐྱོལ། | རྐྱོལ། | རྐྱོལ། | རྐྱོལ། | རྐྱོལ། | རྐྱོལ། | རྐྱོལ། |
| རྐྱོལ། | རྐྱོལ། | རྐྱོལ། | རྐྱོལ། | རྐྱོལ། | རྐྱོལ། | རྐྱོལ། | རྐྱོལ། | རྐྱོལ། |
| རྐྱོལ། | རྐྱོལ། | རྐྱོལ། | རྐྱོལ། | རྐྱོལ། | རྐྱོལ། | རྐྱོལ། | རྐྱོལ། | རྐྱོལ། |
| རྐྱོལ། | རྐྱོལ། | རྐྱོལ། | རྐྱོལ། | རྐྱོལ། | རྐྱོལ། | རྐྱོལ། | རྐྱོལ། | རྐྱོལ། |

The reason is very simple: you cannot literally order someone to do something that one is not able to control.

IV. VALENCE

Valence refers to the number of core arguments of verbs. Many verbs of Classical Tibetan operates between high valence and low valence through morphological means, while many other languages operate this by syntactic means. This grammatical category is traditionally referred as causation, which is not very accurate as far as this paper considers. The reason is that the real causation - the action of the modality represents at least the cause and the permission (Comrie 1978: 164)- in Classic Tibetan is operated paraphrastically by using the pattern of “V+pa + r + <byed>”", in which "V" stands for a verb,"-pa" is a nominalizer, the bound morpheme"-r" is an adverbial maker."<byed>" is an auxiliary verb meaning “doing". For example:

1: rta- rgyug-pa-r- byed རྐྱལ་རྐྱོལ་བ་ཅིག་བེད།
"to make the horse run"

2: shes-pa-r- bya རྐྱལ་པ་འཇུག
"to let self or others know "

3: goms-pa-r- byas རྐྱོལ་བ་ཅིག་བེད།
"to let self or others get used to something"

Get used-nominalizer-Adverbializer- Do: Past

As you can see from example 1, 2 and 3, the function of causation in Classical Tibetan is operated analytically. In addition, the allowance is also operated in a similar pattern, i.e., “V+ adverbializer + vjug”.

4: za-ru- <vjug> རྐྱོལ་འཇུག
"Eat- adverbializer-let"

Thus, the traditionally so-called causation is actually the adjustment of valence, which is just increase or decrease the number of core arguments and not on the point of causing anyone or anything to do something. For example, as shown in "Table VIII":

"Let it (or someone) eat"
TABLE VIII. EXAMPLES OF VERBS OF HIGH VALENCE AND LOW VALENCE

| High valence | Low valence |
|--------------|-------------|
| Future       | Present     | Past | Imperative | glossary | nonpast | past | glossary |
| <vphud>      | <vphud>     | <phud> | <phud>     | Expel    | <vbud>  | <bud> | exit     |

In the high valence forms in Table 8, two arguments are included namely the agent that release something and the patient which is the thing that is released. What is emphasized here is the process of the agent's action on the patient, not the impact of the agent on the patient, so it has nothing to do with causation. In the low valence form, on the other hand, only one argument is embodied, which usually means that someone leaves or exit.

In addition to the alternation between the univalent and bivalent verb forms, some verbs operate between bivalence and trivalence, which adjust the number of arguments between 2 and 3. For example, as shown in "Table IX":

TABLE IX. EXAMPLES OF VERBS OF TRIVALENCE AND BIVALENCE

| trivalent | bivalent | glossary |
|-----------|----------|---------|
| Future    | Present  | Past    | Imperative | Present/imperative | Past/future | wear |
| <bskon>   | <skon>   | <bskon> | <skon>     | <gon>     |          |     |
| <bskyon>  | <skyon>  | <bskyon>| <skyon>    | <zhon>    | <bshon>  | ride |

For the verb family "to wear" in "Table IX", its trivalent form means that it, at this deep level, contains three arguments which normally are the agent who does the action of wearing, the patient who is receive the action of wearing and the thing that is been worn (i.e., clothes or hat). Again, there is nobody causing or make any other wear the clothes. The action is always focused on the agent. This is not causation. For the bivalent forms, they contain two arguments which are the agent and the thing that should be worn.

For the verb family "to ride", its trivalent verb forms generally mean that a person helps another person to ride a horse or something, which generally indicates the circumstance that an adult puts a child on a horseback about to ride. These three arguments are the adult, the child and the horse. The bivalent form means that someone rides a horse, in which the rider and horse are the two arguments.

English verbs don’t make this distinction, so it’s difficult to have precise equivalent translations. There are more examples of the valence alternation, as shown in "Table X":

TABLE X. EXAMPLES OF VERBS IN ALTERNATION OF VALENCE

| bivalent | univalent |
|----------|----------|
| Future   | Present  | Past | Imperative | glossary | Future | Present | Past |
| <dpyang> | <dpyon>  | <dpyangs> | hang     | <vphyang> | <vphyangs> | Is hanged |
| <bstab>  | <stob>   | <bstabs> | Give     | <shob>   | <shob>   | Receive |
| <gtul>   | <gtul>   | <gtul> | grind    | <vthul>  | <vthul>  | Smell |
| <dbyung> | <byung>  | <dbyungs> | Take out | <vbyung> | <vbyung> | occur |
| <dgro>   | <vgro>   | <bkro> | loosen sth. | <grol> | Loosen by itself |
| <dgad>   | <vgad>   | <bkad> | Explode sth. | <gad> | Is Exploded |
| <sprad>  | <vprod>  | <spcad> | Give     | <vprod>  | Reach |
| <gtug>   | <gtug>   | <gtugs> | move     | <bhuug>  | Meet |
| <bstim>  | <stim>   | <bstims> | penetrate | <vthim>  | fade |

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V. ASPECT

Regarding to aspect of verbs, Vendler (1957) classified this in a useful way on the semantic domain, namely STATES (e.g., loving), ACTIVITY (e.g., running), ACCOMPLISHMENT (e.g., drawing a circle) and ACHIEVEMENT (e.g., reaching the top). Beside ACCOMPLISHMENT, Classical Tibetan happens to uses morphological process to alternate between three aspects of the four. The following contains verbs that have all three aspects, as shown in “Table XI”:

### Table XI. Example of the Aspectual Category of the Classical Tibetan Verbs

| Activity | Future | Present | Past | Imperative | glossary | Achievement | glossary | State | glossary |
|----------|--------|---------|------|------------|----------|-------------|----------|-------|----------|
| <gzung>  | <ddul> | <dul>   | <tul> | <shul>     | conquer  | <shul>       | Have conquered | <dul> | gentle   |
|          | ཞྲོགས། | སྲན།   | ཉླུ། | དོན།      | བཤིགས། | བཏུལ།       | བཤིགས། | བཤིགས། | བཤིགས། |
|          | བཙུམ། | བཙོུས། | བཙོས། | བཙོས། | བཙུམ། | བཙུམ།       | བཙུམ། | བཙུམ། | བཙུམ། |
|          | བཅོམ། | བཅོམ། | བཅོམ། | བཅོམ། | བཅོམ། | བཅོམ།       | བཅོམ། | བཅོམ། | བཅོམ། |
|          | བཛུགས། | བཛུགས། | བཛུགས། | བཛུགས། | བཛུགས། | བཛུགས།       | བཛུགས། | བཛུགས། | བཛུགས། |
|          | བསྟུགས། | བསྟུགས། | བསྟུགས། | བསྟུགས། | བསྟུགས། | བསྟུགས།       | བསྟུགས། | བསྟུགས། | བསྟུགས། |

For the “conquer” related verb family in “Table XI”, the activity forms merely signify the process of the “conquering” action, while the achievement forms focus on the complement of the “conquering” action, meaning whatever has been conquered. The state form is the description or modification of the static state, which is equivalent to the adjective category in many other languages.

### Table XII. Example of Contrast Between Activity and Achievement in Classic Tibetan Verbs

| Activity | Future | Present | Past | Imperative | Bivalence | Achievement | Univalence | Univalence | Achievement | Bivalence | Achievement |
|----------|--------|---------|------|------------|-----------|-------------|------------|------------|-------------|-----------|-------------|
| <gzung>  | <ddul> | <dul>   | <tul> | <shul>     | <gzung>   | <gzung>     | <gzung>    | <gzung>    | <gzung>     | <gzung>   | <gzung>     |
|          | ཞྲོགས། | སྲན།   | ཉླུ། | དོན།      | བཙོས།   | བཙོས།      | བཙོས།    | བཙོས།    | བཙོས།      | བཙོས།   | བཙོས།      |
|          | བཙུམ། | བཙོུས། | བཙོས། | བཙོས། | བཙུམ། | བཙུམ། | བཙུམ། | བཙུམ། | བཙུམ། | བཙུམ། | བཙུམ། |
|          | བཙུམ། | བཙུམ། | བཙུམ། | བཙུམ། | བཙུམ། | བཙུམ། | བཙུམ། | བཙུམ། | བཙུམ། | བཙུམ། | བཙུམ། |
| <gzung>  | <ddul> | <dul>   | <tul> | <shul>     | <gzung>   | <gzung>     | <gzung>    | <gzung>    | <gzung>     | <gzung>   | <gzung>     |
|          | ཞྲོགས། | སྲན།   | ཉླུ། | དོན།      | བཙོས།   | བཙོས།      | བཙོས།    | བཙོས།    | བཙོས།      | བཙོས།   | བཙོས།      |
|          | བཙུམ། | བཙོུས། | བཙོས། | བཙོས། | བཙུམ། | བཙུམ། | བཙུམ། | བཙུམ། | བཙུམ། | བཙུམ། | བཙུམ། |
|          | བཙུམ། | བཙུམ། | བཙུམ། | བཙུམ། | བཙུམ། | བཙུམ། | བཙུམ། | བཙུམ། | བཙུམ། | བཙུམ། | བཙུམ། |

However, in most cases, the scope of aspect is mainly two-way contrast, of activity VS. achievement, or of activity VS. state. “<bshad> (བཤེད་)” VS “<shod> (ཞེད་)” is an example of the former, in which <bshad> means “speak” while <shod> means “be able to speak out”. This contrast retained in Amdo dialect. There are more examples, as shown in “Table XII”.

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"Table XIII" contains verbs contrasting between activity aspect and state aspect, as shown in "Table XIII".

| Activity | Achievement |
|----------|-------------|
| Bivalence | Univalence |
| Future | Present | Past | Imperative | glossary | Future | Present | glossary |
| <shkag> | <vkyog> | <shkays> | <kyog> | <skkyog> | Lift | <khys> | Lift up |
| <vshag> | <vchags> | <bskyogs> | <khyogs> | regret | <bshogs> | confess |

There is another to be noted is that the static forms can be nominalized, when modifying nouns, by means of duplicating:

- <kum> གཅད "huddle" → <kum.kum> གཅད གཅད
- <leb> མི "flat" → <leb.leb> མི མི
- <nyung> རྫོད "little" → <nyung.nyung> རྫོད རྫོད

VI. INTERACTION BETWEEN VALENCE AND ASPECT

In general, valence and aspect are independent of each other and belong to different levels of operations, for instance, as shown in "Table XIV":

| Activity | Achievement |
|----------|-------------|
| Bivalence | Univalence |
| Future | Present | Past | Imperative | glossary | Non-past | Past | glossary |
| <gchad> | <gchod> | <bchad> | <chad> | cut | <vchad> | <chad> | break |
| <gcag> | <gcog> | <bca> | <chag> | break | <chag> | Beak by itself | <chog> | Have broken |

As you can see from "Table XIV", the operation of valence is specific to the aspect of activity.

For some verbs however, the valence and aspect operations will overlap, indicating that the valence operation, at the same time, will shift the aspect of the verb in question. This is mainly due to the semantic features of the action. Specifically, if the semantic feature of the aspect of a high-valence verb is a accomplishment, that is, its action has a continuous process and has an endpoint, then its corresponding low-valence verb is an achievement or a state aspect, that is, the action reached the relevant endpoint or some state. For example, as shown in "Table XV":

TABLE XIV. MUTUAL INDEPENDENCE BETWEEN VALENCE AND ASPECT
TABLE XV. EXAMPLES VERBS THAT INTERACT BETWEEN VALENCE AND ASPECT (1)

| High valence          | Low valence/achievement or state |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| Future | Present | Past | Imperative | Glossary | Non-past | Past | Glossary |
| <bshow> | <skol> | <bshow> | <skol> | Boil | <khol> | <khol> | Is boiled |
| <bshow> | <skum> | <bshow> | <skums> | Shrink | <vkhum> | <vkhum> | Is shrunk |
| <bsgom> | <bsgoms> | <bsgom> | <sgoms> | Cultivate | <goms> | <goms> | Familiarize |
| <bsugr> | <bsgrig> | <bsugr> | <bsgrigs> | Set up | <vgug> | <vgug> | Symmetrical |
| <bsgrub> | <bsgrubs> | <bsgrub> | <bsgrubs> | Do | <vgrub> | <grub> | Finish |
| <spad> | <sprod> | <spad> | <sprod> | Give | <vphrod> | <vphrod> | Receive |
| <stum> | <stims> | <stum> | <stims> | Penetrate | <him> | <him> | Fade |
| <sgugs> | <sugugs> | <sgugs> | <tgugs> | Move | <thug> | <thug> | Meet |
| <skum> | <skums> | <skum> | <skums> | Set up | <skhum> | <skhum> | Take out |
| <skyum> | <skyul> | <skyum> | <skyul> | Accumulate | <vkhyul> | <vkhyul> | Accumulate by itself |
| <skyu> | <skogs> | <skyu> | <skogs> | Spread | <vgo> | <vgo> | Infect |
| <sgril> | <sgril> | <sgril> | <sgril> | Roll sth | <vgril> | <vgril> | Roll by itself |
| <skur> | <skur> | <skur> | <skur> | Send | <vkhur> | <vkhur> | Carry |
| <skyl> | <skyl> | <skyl> | <skyl> | Accumulate | <vkhyil> | <vkhyil> | Accumulate by itself |
| <skyu> | <skogs> | <skyu> | <skogs> | Spread | <vgo> | <vgo> | Infect |
| <vgril> | <vgril> | <vgril> | <vgril> | Roll sth | <vgril> | <vgril> | Roll by itself |
| <vkhur> | <vkhur> | <vkhur> | <vkhur> | Send | <vkhur> | <vkhur> | Carry |
| <vkhyil> | <vkhyil> | <vkhyil> | <vkhyil> | Accumulate | <vkhyil> | <vkhyil> | Accumulate by itself |
| <vgo> | <vgo> | <vgo> | <vgo> | Spread | <vgo> | <vgo> | Infect |

For example, in the “boiling” related verb family of "Table XV", because the high valence form can “expect” an result of been boiled in the semantic field, so the low valence form <khol> means “have boiled”. The same rule applies for all verbs in the table.

TABLE XVI. EXAMPLES VERBS THAT INTERACT BETWEEN VALENCE AND ASPECT (2)

| High valence, activities(achievement) | Low valence, activities(achievement) |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Future | Present | Past | Imperative | Glossary | Non-past | Past | Glossary |
| <bshow> | <skol> | <bshow> | <skol> | Turn around | <vkhor> | <khor> | Circle |
| <bsgum> | <bsgoms> | <bsgum> | <sgoms> | Move sth | <vgul> | <vgul> | Move by itself |
| <bsgril> | <bsgrils> | <bsgril> | <bsgrils> | Roll sth | <vgril> | <vgril> | Roll by itself |
| <skum> | <skums> | <skum> | <skums> | Send | <skhum> | <skhum> | Carry |
| <skuels> | <skuels> | <skuels> | <skuels> | Accumulate | <vkelus> | <vkelus> | Accumulate by itself |
| <skum> | <skums> | <skum> | <skums> | Spread | <vgo> | <vgo> | Infect |
| <vgril> | <vgril> | <vgril> | <vgril> | Roll sth | <vgril> | <vgril> | Roll by itself |
| <vkhur> | <vkhur> | <vkhur> | <vkhur> | Send | <vkhur> | <vkhur> | Carry |
| <vkhyil> | <vkhyil> | <vkhyil> | <vkhyil> | Accumulate | <vkhyil> | <vkhyil> | Accumulate by itself |
| <vgo> | <vgo> | <vgo> | <vgo> | Spread | <vgo> | <vgo> | Infect |

In the “circle” related verb family of "Table XVI", the high valence forms are activity, so the low valence forms does not lead to aspectual change, which is still a continuous process.

VII. ERGATIVE VERBS VS. UNERGATIVE VERBS

The category of ergative verbs vs. unergative verbs in Classical Tibetan is syntactically based. Before going to detail with this, we should first address the problem of transitivity of Classical Tibetan verbs. In the past, the division of transitive and intransitive verbs was considered to be the most important grammatical categorization for Written Tibetan verbs (such as Shefer 1951; Uray 1953:45; Huang 1981; Jacques 2012). Grammatically speaking, transitivity is not an accurate parameter for classical Tibetan verbs. First, either a subject or a direct object can be deleted on the sentence level, so it’s difficult to decide the transitivity of a verb. Secondly, on the matter of transitivity, Huang pointed...
that the transitivity of a verb depends on the ergative maker in the sentence, that is, if the subject can carry an ergative maker, then the verb is transitive or intransitive. This claim works in a large extent, but we can still find counter-examples. Even if the subject is labeled with ergativity, the verb is not necessarily transitive, even semantically. For example, in the case of the verb *<khyab>* "spread", in the Tibetan Verb Dictionary (Shi Xueli, 2002: 34), its subjects are not marked with ergativity:

5a: nor-lug-rtswa.thang-du-khyab ཕྱུག་བུགས་མཐུན་པས།
Yaks- Sheep – grassland– abl. – spread

"Yaks and sheep spread over the grassland"

Based on Huang’s claim, this verb is intransitive because its subjects do not carry an ergative maker and it does not have a direct object. However, in the Monlam Tibetan Electronic Dictionary, with the same verb, its subjects are marked with ergativity:

5b: nor-lug-kis-rtswa.thang-khyab ཕྱུག་བུགས་མཐུན་པས།
yak- sheep-erg. – grassland-spread

"Yaks and sheep spread over the grassland"

Even the sentence carries an ergative maker, but it can’t be a transitive verb because there is no direct object both syntactically and semantically. So Huang’s rule doesn’t apply here; that is, ergative markers cannot always be used to indicate transitivity.

But more importantly, we are arguing here that while transitivity is not a grammatical category of the classical Tibetan verbs, ergativity is. The ergativity of a verb can be tested by inserting an ergative maker to the subject. Thus, any verb of which one of the core arguments can carry an ergative maker is an ergative verb, and that otherwise it’s an unergative verb, irrespective of the sentence surface structure. For example, Sentence (6) contains only one word:

(6) vgro.

“Go”

You can’t insert a core argument with an ergative maker into sentence(6), so this verb is always an unergative verb. For the verb of *<za>* “eat”, whatever the sentence surface structure is like, it’s always an ergative verb, because you can insert a core argument with an ergative maker, for example (7):

(7) nga-s-za.
I –erg. eat: present.

“I eat.”

For some other verbs, the ergativity depends on the surface structure. like (5a) and (5b). With or without carrying an ergative maker, of course, is different in meaning. In (5b), having the subject carried an ergative maker, the sentence emphasize the initiativity of subjects(yaks and sheep). In (5a), without the ergative maker, this sentence is more likely to describe a scene, which is the yaks and sheep being spread over the grassland, when compared to (5b). So this depends on the speaker.

In addition, high-valent verbs are always ergative verbs, but the univalent verbs can be either ergative or unergative depending on the context. For example:

8a: rtsaw-skye.
Grass-grow

“the grass grows”

8b: mkhas.pa-s-blun-la-snyig.rje-skye
མཁས་པས་བླུན་ལ་སྙིང་རྩོམ་ལྡན་རྡོ་རྗེ།

The Wise - ergative - fools – abl. - compassion - grow

“The wise men feel compassionate towards the fools”

The verb *<skye>* “grow”, both in 8a and 8b, is a univalent verb (its bivalent form is *<skyed>*), but in 8a, it’s an unergative verb, while in 8b, it’s an ergative verb because 8b carries an ergative maker.

In fact, indigenous linguists have made such a distinction, namely byed.vbrel.las.tsig . The former refers to verbs which have the distinctions of agents and patients, while the latter refers to verbs that have only one argument. This classification is by far the most basic classification of verbs in Tibetan dictionaries. Many linguists translate this classification into the opposition of transitive and intransitive verbs (such as Gesang et al. 2004: 419), but it should correspond to ergativity and unergativity.

VIII. CONCLUSION

This paper re-analyzes the grammatical categories of Classic Tibetan verbs by differentiating the semantic, morphological, and syntactic aspect. Morphologically, the verbs in Classical Tibetan can be divided into four categories: tense, mode, valence, and aspect. Based on the syntactic distributional criteria, it can be divided into grammatical categories such as ergative verbs and unergative verbs.

The traditionally called causation should have better term namely valence, because the real causation in Classic Tibetan is exhibited paraphrastically. In addition to the operation between univalence and bivalence, we have operation between trivalence and bivalence.

Transitivity is not a grammatical category in classical Tibetan.
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