

- a. Cluster dialects (those with extreme clusters)
- b. Transitional dialects (those with fewer clusters)
- c. Non-cluster dialects (with no clusters).

Róna-Tas (1966) calls these groups archaic, transitional and non-archaic respectively. The majority of valley dialects including Rgyalthagang exhibit features of the transitional group: most initial consonant clusters have lost yielding tonal contrasts. In addition, final consonants are not usually pronounced: final stops are replaced by glottal stops and final nasals tend to disappear leaving their traces in nasalized vowels. Nomad dialects are clearly of the first group.

1.2.2 Linguistic works on Kham Tibetan

Most linguistic works on Kham Tibetan are still not accessible to the academic community; they are published in either Chinese or Tibetan. Those published in English and other western languages are out of date or difficult to obtain (Kraft and Hu Heng 1999; Migot 1957). Furthermore, most work focus mainly on phonological systems (Gesang Jumian 1989; Ray 1965; Olson 1974; Wang 1996; Yu 1948). An exception is Causeman's (1989) study of the Nangchen dialect published in German.

Among all of the Kham varieties, the Derge dialect, which is considered the most prestigious form of Kham Tibetan has been studied most. This is not surprising, given the important role Derge plays on Kham history and culture. It used to be a great kingdom of Kham, and has served as Kham's cultural center. The Derge dialect was described by Gesang Jumian (1969; 2002) in Chinese and subsequently by Häsler (1999) in English. The second part of Kraft and Hu Heng also contains materials from this dialect. Other major works on Kham Tibetan, which are more pedagogical in nature focusing on basic phrases and sentences include Kraft and Hu Heng (1990), Ma and Hu (1987) and most recently Nielson (1997).

A lexicological work worth mentioning here is Gō et al (1954). Based on the

dialect spoken in Hsining (Xining), this work claims to provide the first dictionary of "Modern Eastern Tibetan" with an emphasis on initial consonants as compared to those in Written Tibetan and Lhasa Tibetan. The dialect described in this book is probably an Amdo dialect, as Hsining (Qinghai Province) is generally regarded as homeland of Amdo speakers. In addition, its phonological system is considerably different from most sound systems reported for Kham dialects.

Apart from Derge, other Kham Tibetan dialects that have been studied include Bathang (Gesang Jumian 1969, 1989) and Rgyalthang (Hongladarom 1996, 1998, 2000a, 2000b; Wang 1996). Sociolinguistic works touching upon Kham Tibetan are relatively few. The most recent one is Hanny (1999) examining greeting strategies by Rgyalthang and Naxi speakers.

1.3 Ethnohistory of Kham

Kham territories, along with present-day Gansu Province, have been labeled "the frontier zone" of southwestern China (Makley et al 1999), "the Tibetan Borderlands" (Aris 1992), East Tibet, as well as "Greater Tibet."⁴ This zone has been a fascinating area of contact among Kham Tibetan, Amdo Tibetan and other non-Tibetan languages such as Monguor in Qinghai, rGyalrong in Sichuan (cf. Sun 2000) and other related languages like Minyak (Muya), Prmi (Pumi) and Naxi.⁵ Similarly, although the Tibetans form the dominant population in Rgyalthang, other ethnic groups have also co-inhabited the county for centuries. They are Sinitic languages speaking groups, e.g. Han and Bai; Tibeto-Burman languages speaking groups, e.g. Naxi, Lisu and Yi; and Qiang languages speaking groups, most notably Prmi.

East Tibet, in the past, represents the extent to which Tibetan power expanded in the heyday of the Tibetan Yarlung kings beginning with Srong-btsan sgam-po in the 7th century A.D. and ending with the collapse of the dynasty in the 9th century (Makley et al 1999: 99-100). Many communities in these eastern frontier regions, who had enjoyed their semi-independent states (Aris 1992), trace their ancestry to garrisons set

up during military campaigns on what was then the border between the Tibetan empire and the dominions of the Tang (618-907) rulers of China. This fact rightly justifies the feeling of Rgyalhang speakers nowadays, who view themselves as direct descendents of the soldiers of this great king. They believe that their language has an independent development from other modern dialects, and it closely resembles Old Tibetan.⁶

According to Dge-'dun chos-'phel (1978), the word "kham" means a boundary, as the area borders between Central Tibet and China. In his *deb-ther dkar-po* (the white chronicles), he proposed to call Kham and Amdo "Greater Tibet" to contrast with Ü-tsang, where the main administration of Tibet was located. After the collapse of the Tibetan empire in the 10th century A.D. until 1950s, Kham remained independent from the Central administration of Lhasa. It consisted of several principalities and small kingdoms ruled by hereditary kings, local chieftians, appointed regents and lamas (Teichman 1922). The three counties of southern Kham, namely Lithang, Bathang and Rgyalhang were ruled by the Naxi kings of Lijiang. These three counties were known as "three cousins" (Rgyalhang Tib. *papei sun*). This conception reflected in old proverbs is still prevalent to these days.⁷

Because of their independent status from Lhasa and other parts of Tibet, Kham has a distinctive culture and the Khampas develop a strong regional identity. A number of books and travel documents talk about the Khampas as Tibetan warriors who speak bluntly. It is said that their speech is rough and impolite when compared with that of Lhasa speakers. Undoubtedly, they form a distinctive group whose values and attitudes are different from those shared by the Lhasans or speakers of other parts of Tibet.

Most Khampas do not use the term ཐོད་པ་ *phöpa* 'Tibetan people' when there is a need to identify themselves. To them, the term designates people from Central Tibet. Therefore, when asked what language they speak, they tend to say ཁམ་སྐད་ *khāmke* 'Kham language,' instead of ཐོད་སྐད་ *phökē* 'Tibetan language'. The latter usually refers to the Lhasa dialect. It is interesting to note that since the change of the political system in China and subsequent changes in Tibet, the term ཐོད་རིགས་ *phöri* 'Tibetan nationality' has become widely used. This term is in contrast with such terms as "Yi nationality" or

"Hui nationality" referring to other ethnic groups in China. The Khampas thus describe themselves as being *phōri* as well as *khāmpa*, but not *phōpa*.

Rgyalthang folks are proud of where they live and have described it as a place for husbandry. They also describe their hometown as a trading place between the Tibetan and the Chinese when they engage in tea and horse trade. To them, it is an abundant place where there are forests on the mountains and where the sun shines early, as is evidenced in the following རྩེ་ *jaŋ* (a kind of song):

གར་རྩེ་ཐང་འོ་མའི་མཚོ་ཁ་ལ།

ནམ་གསལ་སྐད་མཚོ་རྩི་མ་གསལ།

ṣuī dʒědāŋ ʔōmē tshūə khă la

nām ɕi kè mǎ tshū jǐwāŋ ṣuī

The Rgyalthang of the east is at the bank of the milky sea

The sun shines at daybreak before any sound can be heard.

1.4 Objectives

The objectives of this book are three-fold: (1) it gives an introduction to the sound system of the Rgyalthang dialect, (2) it discusses its morpho-syntax with a special reference to nouns and verbs, and (3) it describes clausal characteristics of this dialect. As little work has been done on Rgyalthang Tibetan, the book also aims at providing as much linguistic information on this dialect as possible. This is done in form of texts and glossary in the appendices. In order to demonstrate the degree of affinity with other Tibetan languages, I have chosen to compare and contrast the similarities and differences between the Rgyalthang dialect and the Lhasa dialect.⁸ Comparisons are also made with other Kham dialects when data are available.

Apart from being a direct development from Old Tibetan, as claimed by the speakers (see § 1.2), Rgyalthang is the non-described Tibetan dialect with the largest number of speakers in Yunnan. As materials on Kham Tibetan are generally not

accessible to the academic community, an in-depth study of this dialect is indeed necessary. This book is also aimed to illustrate features characteristic to Modern Spoken Tibetan which are deviant from those in Old Tibetan and Classical Tibetan. These features are, for example, the lesser role ergative marking plays in the nominal morphology, and development of indexical categories (i.e. speech act participants, tense/aspect and evidentiality markings, replacement of tense inflections by auxiliaries) in the verbal morphology. These modern features are worth studying more thoroughly both from diachronic and typological perspectives in an attempt to understand how grammatical categories develop and what grammaticalization paths are involved. This will lead not only to a full understanding of Tibetan grammar but also to processes and motivations involving syntactic development in various languages.

The monograph is geared to make material on a Tibetan dialect spoken in the Tibetan borderlands available to the linguistic community at large. This will enhance our understanding of Tibetan languages, especially in the area where previous fieldwork was not possible, and facilitate the task of comparing and contrasting linguistic patterns of Central Tibetan and Kham Tibetan dialects. Finally, the grammar adds to the growing body of knowledge on descriptions of modern spoken dialects of Tibetan, several of which are becoming endangered.

1.5 Theoretical Approaches

The present work has benefited enormously from the approaches employed in Caughley (1982), Genetti (1994), van Driem (1987, 1993, 2001) and Agha (1993) in describing Tibeto-Burman languages (Chepang, Newar, Limbu, Dumi, Dzongkha, and Lhasa Tibetan respectively). All these works emphasize the importance of natural data at both sentential and discursive levels and stress the role of context which shapes them. For Caughley (1982:12), the functional approach requires a description which pays attention to the various speech functions, e.g. the establishment of role, reference, and cohesion, rather than syntactic level or unit (word, phrase, clause and so on) as in a

Tagmemic grammar, or other formal theories. Genetti (1994:15) looks at the functional approach as closely related to diachronic study of language, as she notes, "The subtleties of the relationship between form and function thus become enriched through the study of the historical development of grammar. At the same time, the forces affecting diachrony in turn become clearer through insightful functional analysis." Centering on the role of indexical categories in grammatical description, Agha (1993) finds the functional approach most suitable for an analysis of an isolating and fusional language like Lhasa Tibetan.⁹

¹ Note that speakers of other languages such as the Primi and the rGyalrong are also classified as belonging to the zàngzù (see Harrell 1995; 2001). Similarly, the Rangpa people of northern Garhwal in India are called "Bhotia" (Tibetan) but speak a non-Tibetan language (Denwood 1999: 2).

² In connection with the project on Comparative Dictionary of Tibetan Dialects (CDTD), Roland Bielmeier and his team at the University of Berne have developed a new classification of Tibetan verbs and dialects based on geographical and linguistic criteria. This renders Tibetan dialects into five basic groups: Western Archaic Tibetan, Western Innovative Tibetan, Central Tibetan, Eastern Kham Tibetan, and Eastern Amdo Tibetan. The first two are spoken mainly in the western Himalayas.

³ Tournadre (2001:50) suggests to distinguish between ཡལ་ལྗོང་ *gyke* 'dialect' and རོག་ལྗོང་ *roṅke* 'sub-dialect'. To him, these varieties are called dialects because they share the same written system, comparable to the situation in Chinese. But in this work I simply adopt the term dialect, though the status of Rgyalthagang would be a sub-dialect if we look at it from Tournadre's point of view.

⁴ The region has various names: "China's Inner Asian Frontier" (Fletcher 1979), "Frontiers of China" (Latimore 1974), and "Inner Asia's Borderlands" (Li 1995). According to Makley et al (1999: 97, f.1), this frontier zone is "...the rugged stretch of mountainous and desert land from modern Yunnan province in the south to modern Gansu province and Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region in the north, which for

centuries formed a shifting zone of frontier politics and trade. This "zone" marked the outer limits of Chinese state power and cultural influence over, among others, Tibetan, Tangut, and Mongolian steppe polities all the way up in 1949.

Aris (1992: 13) points out that contrary to expectations and common knowledge, the zone does not exhibit a sense of marginality or alienation. In contrast, it is a contested territory of local rulers, which assumes a strong sense of centrality. Aris rightly urges us to look at the notion 'frontier' as a zone, not a hard line drawn on paper, as he said (1992: 13): "It seems best, then, to conceive of the frontier as a zone rather than a line, one in which all possible boundaries of geography, race, and culture cross and overlap to form a broad north-south transitional area of great complexity separating the Tibetan and Chinese states of the past."

⁵Traditional views hold that rGyalrong is a dialect of Tibetan, as some lexical items of this language are close to the Written Tibetan orthography (Nagano 1992: 1). But the current view is that it belongs to the Qiangic branch of Tibeto-Burman. The relationship between rGyalrong and Tibetan, especially Kham, which is spoken in the same area, is an interesting issue, which deserves research in its own right. Naxi is a Tibeto-Burman language, well known for its ancient pictographic writing system. The main location of Naxi is Lijiang, but there are also a number of Naxi speakers in the neighboring Rgyalhang.

⁶See Wang (1996), for example, which shows the resemblance of the Rgyalhang dialect with Old Tibetan.

⁷This historical relationship is the reason why immigrants from these three counties in Zurich hold an annual gathering together.

⁸Recent accounts of Lhasa Tibetan are Agha (1993), Denwood (1999), and Tournadre (1998). The dialect is an object of investigation in a number of papers by DeLancey (1982, 1984, 1985a, 1985b, 1985c, 1986, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1999), which address a wide range of topics such as development of contour tones,

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Grammatical Peculiarities of Two Dialects of Southern Kham Tibetan¹

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1. Introduction

Recent years have witnessed major developments in Tibetan linguistics: a growing number of grammatical studies are devoted to the investigation of eastern and northeastern Tibetan dialects spoken in two traditional provinces of Tibet, namely Kham and Amdo.² Also significant to the developments is the study of non-Tibetan languages in the same areas such as rGyalrong, Qiang and Minyak spoken by ethnic minorities who have historically come into contact with the Tibetans. These works have expanded the scope of Tibetan linguistics by taking it away from the confines of Lhasa Tibetan and Central Tibetan dialects and have shed more light on Tibetan grammar as a whole. They also enhance our understanding of linguistic diversity and language contact in the Tibetan borderlands. Apart from these theoretical implications, the works indicate the possibility of more oral texts from poorly-studied and unknown dialects and languages being collected, transcribed and made accessible to the public, thus contributing to the cultural vitality of the Tibetans and other ethnic minorities.

This paper discusses certain grammatical peculiarities of Kham Tibetan. It has grown out of my previous research on the Rgyalhang dialect, a southernmost variety of Kham Tibetan spoken in Rgyalhang (Zhongdian/Shangri-la), Dechen (Diqin) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan Province.³ Rgyalhang shows a number of striking discrepancies from Lhasa Tibetan or what Tournadre (1998, 2001) labels “Standard Spoken Tibetan”. This prompted me to examine whether the peculiarities found in Rgyalhang characterize this major dialectal group, or are unique only to this specific variety. The latter assumption is motivated by the fact that Rgyalhang is spoken in an area of high contact with Chinese and other non-Tibetan languages such as Naxi, Yi, Pumi, and Lisu. Therefore, it may show linguistic features which are different from those in other Kham dialects. To answer this question, I chose to examine the grammar of Bathang Tibetan, a Kham dialect spoken in Sichuan Province which has a lesser degree of contact with these languages and higher contact with other Kham dialects. More specifically, I want to find out whether Bathang shares the features which characterize Rgyalhang grammar. The paper is a preliminary report of this comparison and contrast, addressing two salient morpho-syntactic features—case marking patterns and secondary verb constructions.

Gesang Junian (1964; 1989) divides Kham Tibetan into four groups: Northern group, southern group, central group and the (sub-) dialects spoken by cattle breeders. This classification is obviously based on two criteria: geographical areas, and occupations of the speakers, whether the varieties are རྫོང་སྐད་ *ronke* ‘valley dialects’ or རྒྱུ་སྐད་ *droke* ‘nomad dialects’. It is generally agreed among the Khampas that the former consist of a number of local varieties (vernaculars) which are mutually unintelligible. The latter, on the other hand, pose fewer internal differences and are reported to be quite similar to the nomad dialects spoken in Amdo.

The facts that there are a number of mutually unintelligible dialects in Kham and that there is no common language (ཐྱི་སྐད་) which functions in the same way as Mandarin Chinese separate the Khampas further and promote Chinese as one of the *linguae francae* in this area. Lhasa Tibetan plays a little role in Kham. Only educated speakers and those who have stayed in Lhasa can converse in this variety. Even though there exists a regional dialect known as Kham Koiné—a mixed language drawn from Written Tibetan and Derge (Dege), the dialect considered most prestigious in Kham, it lacks support from the central government and has a long way to go before it can become a well-established common language of this region.

Both Rgyalhang and Bathang are valley dialects and belong to the southern group of Kham Tibetan. They share a number of phonological, lexical and grammatical features with other Kham dialects (see Section 3 below). However, they also exhibit internal differences, as will be shown in the various examples throughout the paper.

The structure of the paper is as follows: Section 2 gives background information about the Khampas in general, and the Rgyalhangwas and the Bawas in particular.⁴

Section 3 addresses general characteristics of Kham Tibetan. Section 4 examines in detail the peculiarities of the two morpho-syntactic features in question. 4.1 looks at case marking patterns with a particular focus on subject and object markings (ergative and dative markings respectively). 4.2 investigates secondary verb constructions. Attention will be paid to the semantics of causation, aspect and modality. Section 5 summarizes salient grammatical features of these two southern Kham dialects, discusses the preliminary answer to the question posed above, and attempts to make some generalization about Kham Tibetan grammar.

2. Background information

2.1 General information on the Khampas

Presently, there are approximately 1.3 million Khampas concentrated in three western provinces of China, namely Qinghai, Sichuan and Yunnan, and in the eastern prefectures of the Tibet Autonomous Region. Comprising 18 counties including those belonging to the former Derge Kingdom, the Kandze (Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture is generally considered the heart of Kham. Major towns in eastern and northern Kham include Chamdo (Qamdo), Nachu (Naqu), Jyekundo (Yushu), Dzachukha (Serqu), Sertha, Kandze, Derge, Nyarong (Xinlong), and Dartsedo (Kangding), the Prefecture's seat. Important towns in the south are, for example, Lithang (Litang) and Bathang (Batang) in Sichuan, Dechen (Deqin) and Rgyalthang in Yunnan.

After the collapse of the Yarlung dynasty in the tenth century A.D., the province of Kham was divided into several semi-autonomous kingdoms and principalities. Geographical isolation and historical independence explain why Kham regionalism has been strong and why the Khampas in general have considered themselves to be a distinct group from people of Central Tibet or those of the Amdo region.⁵ This isolation is also due to the fact that they hardly travel out of their region except when they go on a pilgrimage or undertake a long-distance trade. The combination of these factors has a linguistic impact by rendering a high degree of mutual unintelligibility in the area. This is why Gesang Jumian (1989: 331) comments that internal difference is relatively great within the Kham dialect.⁶

2.2 The Rgyalthangwas and the Bawas

The Rgyalthangwas, totaling approximately 130,000 (41% of whom are Tibetans), are concentrated in Zhongdian, the seat of the Dechen Prefecture in Northwest Yunnan. The Bawas, approaching 50,000 (94% of whom are Tibetans), are the residents of Bathang, a low-level county situated at the far western end of the southern Kham borderland in the Kandze Prefecture in Sichuan. Like most Khampas, the Rgyalthangwas lead their lives as ས་མ་འདྲོག་ *sa-ma-drok* 'semi-nomads,' doing agriculture in the valley plains and tending cattle on the alpine grasslands. The main livelihood of the Bawas is farming, as the climate in Bathang is mild, and two crops are grown twice a year.

The distance between Rgyalthang and Bathang is not very far. Traveling by car usually takes only one and a half days. But as they are administered by different provincial governments, both groups do not interact with each other much. Besides, there is no direct public transportation between Rgyalthang and Bathang. The Bawas travel more to the North of the region and conduct businesses with other groups of Khampas. The Rgyalthangwas, on the other hand, travel more to the south and interact with other ethnic groups such as the Naxi in Lijiang or the Han in Dali and Kunming.⁷ This pattern of interaction has had an impact on language maintenance and education. As there is no need to use Written Tibetan or converse in the standard dialect in everyday life, most Rgyalthangwas are illiterate in Tibetan. Although it is much easier to find a Bawa who can read and write in Tibetan, changes do take place there and several native speakers comment that the dialect is changing too quickly. One local teacher remarks: "The Bathang language is loaded with Chinese words. The Bawas do not speak 'clean Bathang speech' any more."

3. General characteristics of Kham Tibetan

The dialects of Kham Tibetan differ drastically from Lhasa Tibetan and other Central Tibetan dialects. Phonetically speaking, they possess several sounds which are lacking in Central Tibetan such as voiced obstruents, aspirated fricatives, voiceless nasals and prenasalized consonant clusters. Consider the following word མདུག་ *mda* 'arrow' in Written Tibetan and its cognates in Lhasa, Bathang, and Rgyalhang.

(1)				
'arrow'	Written Tibetan <i>mda</i>	Lhasa <i>ta</i>	Bathang <i>nda</i>	Rgyalhang <i>nda</i>

In both Kham Tibetan varieties the prenasalized initial /nd-/ is preserved; in Lhasa it is lost and the initial stop is unaspirated.⁸

In terms of lexicon, Kham Tibetan contains a number of special idioms and expressions, including discourse markers. Here are some examples of such idioms which are used widely from Bathang up to Jyekundo:

- དྲུག་ཅི་ལྟོ་ *ka ?athe* (Lit. 'Are (you) tired?') as a greeting conveyed especially when a visitor arrives at one's home.⁹

- བདེ་མོ། *temo* as a greeting as well as a leave-taking utterance.

- བཟ་བཟ་ཅེ་ *sama sa ?atsha* 'Have you eaten?,' which can be a question as well as a greeting.

Most varieties of Kham Tibetan possess only a few honorific words which are used to lamas, high-ranking officials and the elderly. This is one of the most important features which distinguishes it from the Lhasa dialect. The little use of honorific vocabulary and the direct and blunt way of speaking render Kham speech into an object of disdain by Lhasa speakers.

Kham Tibetan develops a number of grammatical features which are also attested in several modern spoken varieties. They are, for example, evidential and mirative markings, participant marking, development of serialized construction, and the use of auxiliaries to convey tense, aspect and modality.¹⁰ However, they also show several attributes which differ from the grammar of Central Tibetan, such as the consistent use of the ergative marker (as in Bathang and Derge), object marking (particularly in Rgyalhang), the grammaticalization of different verbs from those in Lhasa Tibetan to function as aspectual auxiliaries and secondary verbs. Although this paper focuses only on case marking patterns and secondary verb constructions, it is important to note that there are other striking features that can be claimed to define Kham Tibetan. These are, for example, the use of double possessives, the existence of complicated pronominal paradigms, and the peculiar forms and functions of existential verbs.

The following examples illustrate the phonological, lexical and grammatical peculiarities of Spoken Kham (i.e. the Derge and Kandze dialects) and Written Kham (a modified version of Written Tibetan):¹¹

(2) Written Kham (Ma and Hu 1987: 7-8)

- a. ཇུ་ཅུ་མུ་ལྟོ།
tchu tshamə *?ə-re*¹²
 water hot Q-COP: OTHER¹³
 'Is the water hot?'
- b. རྩོད་ཀྱིས་ལྟོ་བཟང་ཟིག་ཅི་བྱུང་།
tchə-dzi lozan ri? *?ə-cuŋ*
 2s-ERG PN see Q-AUX: SELF
 'Did you see Lobsang?'

(3) Dartsedo (Kraft and Hu Heng 1999: 53, phonetic transcription my own)

ཇཱ་	ནདི་	ཀཎམིཏེ་	ཇཎོ་	རེ་
<i>dza</i>	<i>ndi</i>	<i>kanmitshe</i>	<i>jamo</i>	<i>re</i>
tea	this	very	good	AUX: OTHER
'This is a very good tea.'				

(4) Kandze (my fieldnote, January 2001)

ཁ་ཕམ་དེ་རིང་ལྷག་བཟང་འོང་ལ་རེད།

?avi derij lu? xa fioŋ-la re
father.ERG today sheep slaughter come-FUT AUX: OTHER
'Today father will slaughter a sheep.'

These examples show that one of the striking characteristics of Kham Tibetan is the use of special words and expressions such as *ri?* 'see' (in the sense of meeting a person) in (2b) and *kaŋmitse* 'very' in (3). Moreover, certain words which are also used in other Tibetan varieties are pronounced differently in Kham dialects. Example (4) from the Kandze dialect clearly illustrates this: the morpheme ?avi is a cognate (in ergative form) of the word ཁ་ཕམ་ 'father.ERG'. Similarly, the verb 'slaughter' is pronounced in the Lhasa dialect as *ca* but in this dialect as *xa*. In addition, the above examples demonstrate how tense/aspect is conveyed differently in Kham Tibetan. In Lhasa Tibetan, the auxiliary *soŋ* (grammaticalized from the verb *soŋ* 'go, went') is the common perfective (i.e. aorist) and evidential marker. In Kham Tibetan, the same function is conveyed by the auxiliary *the* or *thi*, which is grammaticalized from the verb *thal* 'go; cross'.

4. Grammatical peculiarities of Rgyalhang Tibetan and Bathang Tibetan

4.1 Case marking patterns

There are six morphological cases in the Rgyalhang dialect and the Bathang dialect, as shown in Table 1. Like other Tibetan dialects, the cognates of Written Tibetan ergative marker *kyis/gvis/gis/-s* (realized in Bathang as *ke* and in Rgyalhang as *kə*) have dual functions, marking agents and instruments. In Rgyalhang, another morpheme *ji* is also used to convey these functions, though its use is restricted mainly in instrumental contexts and when the agentive nouns consist of open syllables. The ergative-instrumental case marker and the genitive case marker are homonyms.¹⁴ The absolutive case has zero marking.

According to native grammarians, the dative and locative cases are lumped together, as they are conveyed by the same forms traditionally known as *la don*. But in these two dialects they are expressed by distinct forms and this serves as a justification to divide them into two different classes. One of the locative particles *la* (realized as *la* in Rgyalhang and *lou* in Bathang) seems to be borrowed from Lhasa Tibetan or Written Tibetan, as it is found mainly in the speeches of those who have socialized with Lhasa speakers or who are literate in Tibetan. The ablative particle in Bathang is a cognate of Written Tibetan *nas*; the same case in Rgyalhang has a distinct form. Contrary to the ablative in Written Tibetan, its function as a subject marking particle is rare.

Table 1. Cases in Bathang Tibetan and Rgyalhang Tibetan

Case	Bathang	Rgyalhang
Ergative-instrumental	ke	kə, ji
Genitive	ke	kə
Absolutive	ø	ø
Dative	naŋ	ko, la, ko la, tsa
Locative	lou/nə, naŋla	nə, la
Ablative	ne	re

4.1.1 Ergative marking/ subject marking

Tibetan is often said to be an ergative language. This is especially true when we consider Old Tibetan, Classical Tibetan, and certain modern dialects such as Ladakhi (Koshal 1979), Shigatse (Haller 2000b) and Derge (Häsler 1999). However, the degree of ergative marking varies from one dialect to another. For example, in the Lhasa dialect only transitive subjects in perfective clauses are marked with the ergative case marker (DeLancey 1990), whereas in Ladakhi ergativity is an obligatory feature of all transitive clauses. As for the southern Kham dialects, it will be demonstrated that most Bathang

transitive subjects appear in the ergative, whereas most Rgyalthang transitive subjects remain in the absolutive.¹⁵ Unlike the Lhasa dialect, both Bathang and Rgyalthang do not mark ergative subjects in intransitive clauses (hence they do not exhibit characteristics of an active type).

Some linguists (e.g. Agha 1993; Denwood 1999) do not consider Lhasa Tibetan an ergative language, as split ergativity is not determined by aspect or person, as is the case in other ergative languages. In contrast, it is conditioned by a pragmatic factor—the speaker's want to emphasize the agent. Hence, ergativity in this dialect is re-labeled “subject marking”. This is similar to the notion “agentive marking,” which LaPolla (1992) found to characterize some Tibetan and other Tibeto-Burman languages. The data below will show that Rgyalthang also exhibits a subject marking phenomenon whereas Bathang reflects the vestige of the ergative system.

4.1.1.1 Bathang Tibetan

In the Bathang dialect, ergative marking is an important characteristic of most transitive clauses.

(5) Bathang

ཁོ་གཅིག་སྦྱུང་གཅིག་བསད་ཐུག།

<i>təʔ-ki</i>	<i>dzɿ</i>	<i>tɕiʔ</i>	<i>sɛʔ</i>	<i>thɛ</i>
tiger-ERG	snake	one.ABS	kill	AUX: OTHER

‘The tiger killed a snake.’

(6) Bathang

སྨན་པ་གཅིག་ངའི་ལོ་སྨན་མང་པོ་སྤྲོ་རྩུང་།

<i>mənba-ki</i>	<i>ŋi-lou¹⁶</i>	<i>mənɿ</i>	<i>mõŋbò</i>	<i>tɛ</i>	<i>cũŋ</i>
doctor-ERG	1s.GEN-DAT	medicine	a lot of.ABS	give	AUX: SELF

‘The doctor gave me a lot of medicine.’

So far I found only one instance (Ex. 7) whose subject is not marked with the ergative. This may be because this sentence is a reflexive construction which already emphasizes the fact that the speaker has done the work himself, and because the patient, not the agent, is the focus of this sentence (note the sentence's marked word order).

(7) Bathang

ལས་ཀ་དེ་ང་ནང་ལས་ཡིན།

<i>lɛkhə</i>	<i>dɔ</i>	<i>ŋə-nor</i>	<i>lɛ</i>	<i>jɿn</i>
work	that.ABS	1s-self.ABS	work	AUX: SELF

‘He did the work himself.’

The following examples additionally demonstrate that ergativity in Bathang is not conditioned by aspect. That is, it does not exhibit a split pattern. Imperfective clauses (i.e. those describe an action in progress [Ex. 8], a future event [Ex. 9] or a present state [Ex. 10]) all take ergative marking.

(8) Bathang

ལོ་བཟང་གཅིག་ཇ་སྦྱུང་ཞིང་ཟེད།

<i>lōzəŋ-ki</i>	<i>tɕa</i>	<i>kɿ-ɣo</i>	<i>rɛ</i>
PN-ERG	tea	boil-IMPF	AUX: OTHER

‘Lobsang is boiling tea.’

(9) Bathang

པ་ལན་ངས་ཁང་པ་ཆེ་བོ་གཅིག་གྱུ་གྱུ་ཡིན།

<i>phālɛŋ</i>	<i>ŋɛ</i>	<i>khõŋbà</i>	<i>tɕhəu</i>	<i>tɕiʔ</i>
next year	1s.ERG	house	big	one.ABS

kəuʔ-dzi *jɿn*
build-FUT AUX: SELF

'I'll build a big house next year.'

Ergative marking occurs even when the degree of transitivity is low. The incorporated noun ཡིད་ *dzif* 'mind' in (10) is treated as if it were the direct object of the sentence: it appears in the absolutive case, whereas the indirect object 'me' receives dative marking.

(10) Bathang

ཁོས་ང་ལི་ཡིད་མི་ཆད་དོ།

<i>khə</i>	<i>ŋi-lou</i>	<i>dzif</i>	<i>mə-tchê?-to</i>
3s.ERG	1s.GEN-DAT	mind.ABS	NEG-cut-SFP

'He doesn't trust me.'

Examples (9) and (10) further demonstrate that the person of the agent (whether first or non-first person) does not affect ergative marking.

4.1.1.2 Rgyalthang Tibetan

Unlike Bathang, most subjects in Rgyalthang transitive clauses are not marked with the ergative case. Ergative subjects occur only when the predicates express causativity or volitionality, that is, when there is a need to highlight the agent who has a volition to perform the act described (Hongladarom 1998). In other words, the Written Tibetan ergative marker *kyi* (together with their allomorphs) becomes a subject marker in this dialect. Anyway, to facilitate the comparison with Bathang and other dialects, I will still use the terms ergative marker and ergative marking.

Examples (11)–(13) all contain ergative subjects.

(11) Rgyalthang

ང་ས་བྱིས་གཅིག་བཟོས་ཡིན།

<i>ŋɛ</i>	<i>tchūŋ</i>	<i>tɕi</i>	<i>zɔ</i>	<i>zɪ</i>
1s.ERG	house	one.ABS	make	AUX: SELF

'I built a house.'

(12) Rgyalthang

ཁུ་གཅིག་གིས་ང་ལོ་ཡང་ཡུའུ་ཕྱེ་ར་བྱང་།

<i>pɔ</i>	<i>tɕi-kə</i>	<i>ŋə-ko</i>	<i>jǎŋjū</i>	<i>tɕ</i>	<i>cǎŋ</i>
boy	one-ERG	1s-DAT	potato.ABS	give	AUX: SELF

'A boy gave a potato to me.'

(13) Rgyalthang

བྱིས་ཇ་གིས་བྱིས་ཏུ་བཅུག་ཐལ།

<i>cɪtshə-kə</i>	<i>ɕi</i>	<i>ŋɔ</i>	<i>tɕə</i>	<i>thi</i>
babysitter-ERG	child.ABS	cry	cause	AUX: OTHER

'The babysitter made the child cry.'

On the contrary, the subjects of (14)–(16) below appear in the absolutive case, despite the fact that the predicates are transitive and describe past events. Note that the object in (16) is marked with the dative case.

(14) Rgyalthang

ང་ཚོ་གིང་ཕུང་གཅིག་བཅུགས་ཀྱི་གིས།(པ་ཡིན།)

<i>ŋǎtshē</i>	<i>ʂɪŋphūŋ</i>	<i>tɕi</i>	<i>tsə-tɕi</i>	<i>kū</i>
3p.ABS	tree	one.ABS	plant-PF	AUX: SELF

'We planted a tree.'

(15) Rgyalthang

ང་གིང་འཕུ་བཟང་དེ་ཚེ་ར་ས་གཅིག་ཟུག་ཀྱི་བྱང་།

<i>ŋǎ</i>	<i>ṣiŋ</i>	<i>thə̌-derɛŋ</i>	
1s.ABS	wood.ABS	collect-CON	
<i>tshāwàŋ</i>	<i>tci</i>	<i>sô-tci</i>	<i>ǎŋ</i>
splinter	DET.ABS	pierce-PF	AUX: SELF
'While collecting wood, I got pierced by a splinter.'			

(16) Rgyalthang

ང་མི་ཏོག་གི་སྒྲུབ་ཅུག་ཡིན།

<i>ŋǎ</i>	<i>mĩndiu-ko</i>	<i>ŋǎŋ</i>	<i>tsò</i>	<i>zĩn</i>
1s.ABS	flower-DAT	smell	like this	AUX: SELF
'I smelled at the flower like this.'				

4.1.2 Object marking

Denwood (1999: 193) mentions that there is no object marking particle or any other morphological means of marking objects in Tibetan. The data in Kham Tibetan counteracts this statement. The morphological marking of objects by means of the dative case is attested in both Rgyalthang and Bathang (as well as Standard Spoken Tibetan).

Tournadre (2001: 55; 120) established four classes of transitive verbs for Standard Spoken Tibetan, as follows:

- Ergative verbs, e.g. *mthong* 'see'
X (ERG) Y (ABS) V
- Mixed ergative verbs, e.g. *lta* 'look'
X (ERG) Y (DAT) V
- Possessive-benefactive verbs, e.g. *rnyed* 'find'
X (DAT) Y (ABS) V
- Accusative-affective verbs, e.g. *dga'* 'like'¹⁷
X (ABS) Y (DAT) V

Classes (a) and (c) differ from (b) and (d) in that objects in the former appear in the absolutive case whereas in the latter they are marked with the dative case. These classes trigger specific case patterns which Tournadre considers to be features of particular verbs.

However, the data from Kham dialects show deviations from this model, and this raises a question of how we can account for such variations. In other words, do case patterns belong to the lexical/semantic domain alone (i.e. they are properties of verbs) or are there other factors involved?

(17) Rgyalthang

ཁོ་མ་ས་ཀྱང་ང་གི་བདེང་ས་བྱུང་།

<i>khōnàkein</i>	<i>ŋǎ-ko</i>	<i>dǎŋ</i>	<i>ǎŋ</i>
3p.ABS	1s-DAT	hit	AUX: SELF
'All of them hit me.'			

(18) Bathang

ཁོས་ང་བདེང་ས་བྱུང་།

<i>khə̌</i>	<i>ŋǎ</i>	<i>dūŋ</i>	<i>cǔŋ</i>
3s.ERG	1s.ABS	hit	AUX: SELF
'He hit me.'			

(19) Bathang

ང་མ་དྲང་ཨོལ།

<i>ŋǎ</i>	<i>ma-dūŋ-ʔo</i>
1s.ABS	NEG-hit-SFP
'Don't hit me.'	

The verb 'hit' is a controllable verb. In general, it requires an ergative subject, as seen in the Bathang sentence in (18). But in Rgyalthang the ergative marker is omitted. Another

difference is that the patient in Rgyalthang as in (17) is marked with the dative case, whereas the one in Bathang is not. So we see a variation regarding the case pattern of the verb 'hit,' as follows:

Bathang:	X-ERG	Y-ABS	V (hit)
Rgyalthang:	X-ABS	Y-DAT	V (hit)

The situation is more complicated when we examine the following examples in Derge which show object marking variation [X-ERG Y-ABS V (hit)/ X-ERG Y-DAT V (hit)].

(20) Derge (Häsler 2001: 16)

ངས་ཁོ་ལ་བདེང་ས་ཟིན་རེད།

<i>ŋɛ</i>	<i>khō</i>	<i>dō:-zī</i>	<i>rɛ:</i>
1s.ERG	3s.ABS	hit-PF	COP: OTHER
'I hit her.' (The speaker cannot really remember having done so.)			

(21) Derge (Häsler 1999: 193)

ངས་ཁོ་ལ་བྲབས་ཐུག།

<i>ŋɛ</i>	<i>khō-la</i>	<i>dzɛ:</i>	<i>thē:</i>
1s.ERG	3s-DAT	hit	AUX: OTHER
'I hit him.' (It was an accident.)			

Note that in (20) and (21) the ergative marker is obligatory and both utterances express non-volitionality. Häsler did not give an account for this variation. More examples of this type are needed before we can attempt to make a generalization concerning object marking in this dialect.

At this stage of research, the following points regarding case marking in Kham Tibetan can be concluded:

1. Ergative marking is consistent in several Kham dialects such as Bathang and Derge. Kham speakers are aware of this fact, as transitive subjects are always marked with the ergative when they write. In addition, informants tend to produce transitive sentences with ergative subjects. Rgyalthang, however, displays a divergence from this model. Most transitive subjects appear in the absolutive case and the ergative marker in this dialect is best regarded as a subject marker.

2. Object marking is common in Rgyalthang but plays a marginal role in Bathang. However, more investigation on this phenomenon in Bathang as well as in other Kham dialects is needed before any definite conclusion can be made.

3. Although verbs have underlying case frames, these frames are not always fixed. This is why we encounter such phenomena as split ergativity and split accusativity.

4. The common case pattern of Rgyalthang transitive clauses is X (ABS) Y (ABS) V. This pattern is triggered when the speaker simply reports an event without highlighting the agent or the patient.

4.2 Secondary verb constructions

Verbs in the Rgyalthang dialect and Bathang dialect are classified into four major classes: lexical verbs, verbs of being (copulas and existential verbs), auxiliary verbs and "secondary verbs" (the term proposed by Tournadre 2001: 88). Verbs of being also function as evidential-aspectual auxiliaries and this is one of the most striking aspects of the grammar of Modern Spoken Tibetan.¹⁸ Transitivity and control are two most important semantic elements which characterize lexical verbs.

Auxiliary verbs such as *thal* (realized as *the* in Bathang and *thi* in Rgyalthang) occupy the final position of the sentence, in case no attitudinal particles (i.e. final sentence particles) are present. Most of these auxiliaries are grammaticalized from verbs—motion verbs and action verbs in particular. They are often preceded by aspectivizers (also grammaticalized from verbs or derived from case markers) such as the future-marking suffixes *dzi* in Bathang and *zə* in Rgyalthang.¹⁹ They can also be preceded by secondary verbs and together with them indicate aspectual meanings.²⁰ As there have been excellent accounts of auxiliary verbs in Tibetan dialects, including Kham Tibetan (see Tournadre 2001 and other articles in Bickel's two edited volumes on person and evidence in

Himalayan Languages) and due to the limit of the scope of this paper, I will have nothing more to mention about them.

Secondary verbs such as *gro* ‘go’ and *yon/’on* ‘come’ still contain lexical meanings and function as main verbs. When used as secondary verbs, they occupy the position between main verbs and auxiliaries. In assertions they are placed after main verbs in a concatenation pattern—often with no intervening morphemes and are followed by aspectual suffixes and/or auxiliaries. In questions the interrogative particle can insert between the main verb and the secondary verb, and the auxiliary is omitted. The negative particle, if any, is attached either to the secondary verb or the auxiliary verb.

Assertions: MV + SV + (Aspectivizer) + AUX
 Questions: MV + Q + SV

These verbs are called by native grammarians *bya tshig phal ba* (Skal-bzang ‘Gyur-med 1981) and by linguists “serial verb” (DeLancey 1991; Denwood 1999). To me, the term secondary verb is more appropriate because this kind of verb occupies the secondary position in the verb phrase. Furthermore, they belong to a closed set. That is, only a restricted number of verbs can occur in serialized constructions and this is a major feature that distinguishes them from serial verbs in Southeast Asian languages such as Thai, Vietnamese and Cambodian. In addition, Tibetan is a clause chaining language. When several events are reported simultaneously, there is a need to employ conjunctive suffixes which link the clauses together. Hence, it is hard to find a single clause which contains several serial verbs as is the case in prototypical serialized languages.

Most secondary verbs have developed grammatical meanings indicating various aspectual meanings, causativity, and modality. Skal-bzang ‘Gyur-med (1981) listed about 20 verbs of these which range from motion verbs to modal verbs. Denwood (1999: 171-178), after DeLancey (1991), distinguished five groups of Lhasa serial verbs depending on increasing degrees of grammaticalization. The verbs that have acquired grammatical meanings are, for example, *tshar* indicating perfect aspect and *bcug* functioning as causative marker. Häslér (1999) classified Derge secondary verbs into two groups in accordance with their potential to combine with each other: Group 1 includes motion verbs and finishing/completion verbs and Group 2 consists mainly of modal verbs. She made an interesting observation that Group 1 verbs could be followed by Group 2 but not vice versa.

Tournadre (2001: 88-101) offers a detailed account of the grammaticalization of secondary verbs in Standard Spoken Tibetan. Among the questions raised are, for example, how verbs རྟུན་ *jon* ‘come’ and འགྲོ་ *tṣō* ‘go’ have developed inchoative and progressive aspects, directional meaning, modality, and subjective and objective meanings. To illustrate the latter function, he gave the following examples. To say that the speaker will lose something, he/she would have to say འགྲོ་ཆོས་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ལྷོ་ *la tṣōki re* (with the secondary verb ‘go’). Conversely, to say a positive thing about something, the speaker will have to resort to the verb ‘come’, as in བར་གསལ་པོ་ཆགས་ཡོང་གིས། *pār sēpo tchà jon ki* ‘The picture is becoming clear.’ (Tournadre 2001: 92, phonetic transcription my own).

In the following sub-sections, I will illustrate the various meanings and functions of secondary verbs in Bathang and Rgyalhang. One point worth noting is that secondary verbs occur with auxiliaries only in non-first person constructions. When the subject is first-person, the auxiliary can be omitted. That is, the sentence will end with the secondary verb.

4.2.1 Directional marking

Among the most common secondary verbs in Tibetan are basic motion verbs ‘come’, ‘go’, ‘bring’ and ‘take’. They indicate direction towards or away from the speaker (or the deictic center). The examples from Bathang and Rgyalhang in (22) and (23) involve the secondary verb *’on* ‘come’ indicating the direction towards the speaker (i.e. the location where the speaker is). This direction can also be conveyed by another secondary verb *khur* ‘carry’ as shown in (24) and (25).

(22) Bathang

ཁོས་ང་ལ་རྒྱ་ཆ་མོ་ཅིག་བྲལ་འོང་ཟེད།

<i>khə</i>	<i>ŋi-lou</i>	<i>tchù</i>	<i>tshāmù</i>	<i>tai?</i>	<i>khù</i>
3s.ERG	1sp-DAT	water	hot	one.ABS	bring
<i>ʔōŋ</i>	<i>rē?</i>				
come	AUX: OTHER				

'He brought me hot water.'

(23) Rgyalthag

ཁྱི་ཡིས་ང་གི་ཕྱུ་མ་འོང་ན།

<i>tshō-ji</i>	<i>ŋā-ko</i>	<i>ŋāŋ</i>	<i>ʔōŋ</i>	<i>nō</i>
dog-INS	1s-DAT	snif	come	AUX: OTHER

'The dog sniffed at me.'

(24) Rgyalthag

ཁོ་ཚོ་གིང་ནྟག་རྒྱས་པ་ཉི་མ་ཁྲ་བྱང་།

<i>khōtshē</i>	<i>cŷithù</i>	<i>dzēpā</i>	<i>ŋyō</i>	<i>khō</i>	<i>cāŋ</i>
3p.ABS	fruit	a lot.ABS	buy	bring	AUX: SELF

'They bought me a lot of fruits.'

(25) Rgyalthag

ཞི་བ་དགུ་པ་ན་(ཤིང་)ཡུལ་ན་སྤྱོད་ཁྲ་བ།

<i>dāwā</i>	<i>gōbā-nō</i>	<i>sū</i>	<i>jī-nō</i>	<i>pō</i>	<i>khō</i>
month	ninth-LOC	down	village-LOC	move	bring

'In September we move down to the village.'

4.2.2 Experiential construction

Another secondary verb which is found in many Tibetan dialects is the verb *myoŋ* (realized as *ŋūŋ* in Bathang and as *ŋōŋ* in Rgyalthag) 'experience'.

(26) Bathang

ཁོས་རི་དྭགས་གི་མང་པོ་བཟའ་ཐྱིང་རེད།

<i>khə</i>	<i>ritsā-ke</i>	<i>xhà</i>	<i>mōŋbò</i>	<i>sā</i>
3s.ERG	hoof animal-GEN	meat	a lot	eat
<i>ŋūŋ</i>	<i>rē?</i>			
experience	AUX: OTHER			

'He has eaten a lot of hoof animal's meat.'

(27) Rgyalthag

ཞོ་འདི་གནའ་གཏམ་ཐོན་མ་ཚོར་ཕྱིང་།

<i>ʔōndō</i>	<i>nālāŋ</i>	<i>hēŋē</i>	<i>tshū</i>	<i>ŋōŋ</i>
this	story	before	hear	experience

'I have heard this story before.'

4.2.3 Purposive construction

Purposive clauses in Lhasa Tibetan are marked by the post-verbal suffix *-ka* and in the Derge dialect by the suffixes *-sa* and *-ji*, as shown in (28) and (29).

(28) Lhasa Tibetan (Hu Tan 1999, transcription, gloss and translation my own)

<i>theŋsāŋ</i>	<i>riŋe phōtshāŋ-la</i>	<i>ʔadze lamo</i>	<i>tshap-ki</i>
nowadays	cultural center-LOC	opera	perform-IMPF
<i>yo re-ta</i>	<i>khērāŋ</i>	<i>si-ka</i>	<i>thē-be</i>
EXIST-SFP	2s.ABS	see (HON)-PUR	go (HON)-Q

'These days the opera is on at the cultural center. Did you go to see it?'

(29) Derge (Häsler 1999: 249 with the glosses modified)

ང་འདི་ན་ལས་ཀ་ལས་ཡི་འོང་བེན་ཡིན།

<i>ŋa</i>	<i>ndēna</i>	<i>lɛ:ka</i>	<i>lɛ:-ji</i>	<i>ō:-zi:</i>	<i>ji:</i>
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1s here work work-PUR come-PF AUX
 'I came here to work.'

In Bathang and Rgyalthang (and perhaps other southern Kham dialects), the purposive marker is omitted. Gesang Jumian (1964)/Skal-bzang 'Gyur-med and Skal-bzang Dbyangs-can (2002) regards this feature as one of the salient characteristics of Kham Tibetan.

(30) Bathang

ཟ་ཁང་ལ་ཟ་མ་ཟ་འགྱོ།
sākhōŋ-lou sāmā sâ ndzû
 restaurant-LOC food eat go
 'Let's eat in a restaurant.'

(31) Rgyalthang

རི་ན་གཞི་འབྱ་འགྱོ་ཟེ། (གྱ)
rǐ-nə šũŋ t̪shō ngūə-zə
 mountain-LOC mushroom-ABS pick go-FUT
 '(I)'ll go to pick mushroom on the mountain.'

4.2.4 Conditional construction

The secondary verb *byuŋ* 'happen, emerge' appears in a conditional clause, as seen in the example from Rgyalthang below (32). Note that the verb is losing its lexical content and becoming a fully grammaticalized morpheme marking a condition.

(32) Rgyalthang

ཕུགས་ན་རི་སྐྱུ་གཙང་ལོན་བྱང་ན་ཕུགས་ན་གསོ་སྤྱི།
ɔtā rǐ pōtsāŋ lüi cǎŋ-nə
 cattle mountain good (able) receive happen-if
ɔtā sūə lā ji
 cattle tend easy COP: OTHER
 'If we can find a good mountain (for) the cattle, tending them is very easy.'

4.2.5 'Want'/'like' construction

To express the speaker's wanting or liking of something, the secondary verbs 'want' and 'like' are used. It is worth mentioning that these verbs are less common in non-first person constructions. When there is a need to describe or report somebody else's wants or aspirations, the speaker tends to do so using modal constructions. (33)

demonstrates the use of the verb མོ་ *m̥ʂ* 'want' in Bathang. In Rgyalthang, the verb དགོས་ *gyō* 'want; have to' is used instead.²¹

(33) Bathang

ནྟེ་འ་བྱ་ཆེ་ལས་མོ་དྲི།
hə ʔāzù? t̪chō ẽ m̥ʂ-to
 2s.ERG now what do want-SFP
 'What do you want to do now?'

(34) Rgyalthang

ཐྱོད་ཆེ་བྱེད་དགོས།
t̪chō t̪shō ʔu gyō
 2s.ABS what do want
 'What do you want to do?'

(35) Rgyalthang

ང་ག་བཟའ་ཁྱི་དགལ།

ŋǎ *sā* *tshā* *ni-gǎ*
1s.ABS meat.ABS eat NEG-like
'I don't like meat.'

4.2.6 Causative construction

Similar to purposive constructions, the causative verb *bcug* 'cause someone to do something; let, permit' appears right after the main verb, without any intervening morpheme. In Lhasa Tibetan the causative verb is preceded by the particle *-ru*:

Bathang & Rgyalthang:	X-ERG	Y-DAT	V	<i>bcug</i>
Lhasa:	X-ERG	Y-DAT	V- <i>ru</i>	<i>bcug</i>

(36) Bathang

ཁོས་ངའི་ལོ་ཡི་གེ་གཅིག་བྲི་བཅུག་རེད།

khø *ŋi-lou* *jyi* *tci?* *tshi* *tci?*
3s.ERG 1sp-DAT letter one.ABS write cause
re?
AUX: OTHER
'He made me write a letter.'

(37) Rgyalthang

བྱིས་ལོ་མ་བཅུག

ci-go *ŋɔ* *ma-tso*
child-DAT cry NEG-cause
'Don't make the child cry.'

The causative verb in Rgyalthang also conveys the agent's non-volitionality, as is shown in (38) and (39). Note that when conveying the same states of affairs, the causative verb is not required in the standard dialect.

(38) Rgyalthang

ང་བརྗེད་བཅུག་གི

ŋǎ *dzur* *tso-tci*
1s.ABS forget cause-PF
'I forgot.'

(39) Rgyalthang

ང་ཇ་ཕོ་བཅུག་མལ།

ŋǎ *tšǎ* *phō* *tso* *thi*
1s.ABS tea.ABS spill cause AUX: OTHER
'I spilled tea (inadvertently).'

4.2.7 Aspectual meanings

4.2.7.1 *thon* 'complete'

The verb *thon* as a marker of perfect aspect is found in both Bathang and Rgyalthang, as shown in (40) - (42) below. In a non-controllable sentence as in (42) the verb is best translated as 'already'.

(40) Bathang

ཁྱིས་ཇ་འཇུག་ཨ་ནི།

hø *tšǎ* *thün* *?ə-thün*
2s.ERG tea.ABS drink Q-complete
'Have you had tea yet?'

(41) Rgyalthang

ཕིན་གྱིས་ཕྱིས་བཟའ་ཐོན་ཐུག།

phĩŋko *cĩ-kə* *tshǎ* *thũin* *thĩ*
apple.ABS child-ERG eat complete AUX: OTHER
'The child has eaten the apple.'

(42) Bathang

མ་དེ་ཟུལ་ཐོན་རེད།

xhā *dɔ* *rũi* *thũn* *rẽ?*
meat that.ABS spoil complete AUX: OTHER
'The meat is already spoiled.'

Apart from functioning as a perfect marker, the verb *thon* [*thũin*] in Rgyalthang has also developed its discursive function as a conjunctive suffix: *thuinreg* 'after' (*thuin* + *reg* 'when').

(43) Rgyalthang

ཇ་ཅིག་ཡར་འཕྱང་ཐོན་རན་དེ་རིལ་གྱི་ཅིག་ཡར་འབགས།

tṣǎ *tcĩ* *phũ* *thāŋ-thuinreg-tə*
tea one away drink-after-TOP
rɔ̃-lo *ṣũŋ* *tcĩ* *phũ* *nbā*
mountain-LOC wood one away carry
'After drinking (another) tea, (we) carry wood from the mountain.'

4.2.7.2 *tshar* 'finish'

The verb *tshar* in Bathang and Rgyalthang is used in a similar manner as the verb *thon* discussed above. The difference is that the verb *tshar* focuses on the end point of the event, whereas the verb *thon* emphasizes the fact that an act has already been completed and is often used with verbs which are inherently durative corresponding to Vendler's (1967) accomplishment terms.²²

(44) Bathang

ངས་ཡིག་བྲིས་ཆ་ར་ན་ཡར་ནང་འགྱུ་བྱེ་ཡིན།

ŋɛ *jĩyĩ* *tshĩ* *tshā-na* *phānāŋ* *ndzũ-dzi*
1s.ERG letter write finish-CON outside go-FUT
jĩn
AUX: SELF
'After I finish writing the letter, I'll go outside.'

(45) Rgyalthang

ཅུག་གད་མནའ་བཞགས་ཆ་ར་རེད།

tsò *ṣɛ* *nā* *zā* *tshǎ* *rê*
like that say vow keep finish COP: OTHER
'Saying like that, they have made the vow.'

4.2.7.3 'dug/ bsdad 'sit, stay'

Two Written Tibe verbs with related meanings have developed into markers of imperfective (progressive) aspect: the verb 'dug [*ndũ?*] 'sit, stay' in Bathang and *bstad* [*dɛ*] (the past tense of *sdod* 'stay, sit') in Rgyalthang. Note that the former becomes an existential verb in Rgyalthang but it is not used as an aspectual marker. Both verbs describe ongoing states of affairs.

(46) Bathang

ངའི་ཡ་གན་ཉལ་འདུག་ཡོད།

ŋĩ *phāgēn* *jɛ* *ndũ?* *jø*
1s.GEN father sleep sit EXIST: SELF
'My father is sleeping.'

(47) Rgyalthang

འག་ཐོམ་ཅིག་ན་རི་ཁྲོད་ཅིག་ན་ཐོམ་གྱི་པ་བསྐྱེད་གྲག

<i>ts̥agāŋ</i>	<i>tc̥i-nə</i>	<i>r̥əʈshy̥i</i>	<i>tc̥i-nə</i>	<i>gōm</i>
rock cave	one-LOC	hermitage	one-LOC	meditate

<i>do</i>	<i>dē</i>	<i>tc̥a</i>
do	stay	AUX: OTHER, HS

‘It was said that he was mediating in a hermitage, a rock cave.’

In (48) below the Rgyalthang verb ‘stay’ is combined with the particle *-nə* rendering the compound *dēnə* which functions as an existential verb and is hence in a paradigmatic contrast with other existentials (i.e. *ndô*, *ndô rê*, *jy̥*, *jy̥ rê*, *p̥āŋ*).²³

(48) Rgyalthang

ཁྱེ་བྱང་བཅོང་ཕྱི་རྒྱལ་པ་བསྐྱེད་ནི།

<i>?ūbūŋ</i>	<i>tshōŋ</i>	<i>nə</i>	<i>dzêpā</i>	<i>dē</i>	<i>nə</i>
wild asparagus	sell	person	several	stay	COP: OTHER

‘There are several people who sell wild asparagus.’

An interesting point to consider is that in Bathang there are two ways to indicate imperfective aspect: (1) by means of the secondary verb *ndû?* as shown above, and (2) by the suffix *-yo* as illustrated below (49). When the speaker wants to emphasize the fact that an act is being performed continuously, both means may be used simultaneously. In that case, the suffix is attached to the secondary verb, as in (50).

(49) Bathang

ལི་ལི་ཁེས་ཨ་ཀག་ལ་ལྟ་ཞིང་རེད།

<i>lil̥-ki</i>	<i>?ākà?-lou</i>	<i>tā-yo</i>	<i>rē?</i>
cat-ERG	baby-DAT	look-IMPF	AUX: OTHER

‘The cat is looking at the baby.’

(50) Bathang

གླ་ཐྱིལ་གྱི་འཁོར་ལོ་འཁོར་འདྲག་ཞིང་རེད།

<i>gād̥z̥f-ki</i>	<i>khōlò</i>	<i>khō</i>	<i>ndû?-yo</i>	<i>rē?</i>
car-GEN	wheel	spin	sit-IMPF	AUX: OTHER

‘The car’s wheel is spinning.’

An important distinction between the secondary verb *ndû?* and the imperfective marker *-yo* is that only the former can appear in a non-controllable construction.

(51) Bathang

ཁོ་ན་འདྲག་ཡིན་ས་རེད།

<i>khō</i>	<i>nà</i>	<i>ndû?</i>	<i>jīn-sa</i>	<i>rē?</i>
3s	sick	sit	AUX-MOD	AUX: OTHER

‘She must still be sick.’

4.2.7.4 *ren* ‘be about to’

The secondary verb *ren* [r̥ɛŋ] in Rgyalthang has developed its function as a marker of inceptive aspect.

(52) Rgyalthang

ཕྱི་ན་གྱི་ཨ་ལོ་གཟུགས་རེན་རེད།

<i>tūnk̥hā</i>	<i>?ālūə</i>	<i>sā</i>	<i>r̥ɛŋ</i>	<i>rē</i>
autumn	leaf	fall	be about	COP: OTHER

‘Autumn leaves are about to fall.’

4.2.8 Modal meanings

Several secondary verbs express deontic modality such as necessity, permission, suggestion and ability. The following examples demonstrate complexity of these verbs. In Lhasa Tibetan modal meanings are conveyed mainly by the secondary verbs *dgos* ‘must; have to’ and *thub* ‘be able to’.

4.2.8.1 Necessity

(53) Rgyalthang

ཁོ་ལག་དགོས་ཀྱི་རེད།

khūə *ngūə* *gyə-zə* *rē*
3s go must-FUT COP: OTHER
‘He will have to go.’

4.2.8.2 Suggestion

(54) Bathang

ཁོ་ལག་ལྟ་མི་ཟུག་དོ།

ʔendē *tā* *mi-zūʔ-to*
this look NEG-hurt-SFP
‘(You) shouldn’t look at this.’ (Because it is not appropriate to see it.)

(55) Bathang

ཕུར་ཕྱེ་ཁོ་ལག་ཟ་ལོ་མ་རེད།

tchūchē *ʔedē* *sā* *kou* *ma-rēʔ*
dried cheese this eat appropriate NEG-AUX: OTHER
‘(You) shouldn’t eat this dried cheese.’ (Because it may be old.)

(56) Rgyalthang

འཇུང་ཉན་མ་རེད།

tṣāŋ *jən* *ma-rē*
drink appropriate NEG-COP: OTHER
‘(You) shouldn’t drink (this).’ (Because it is not good for your health.)

4.2.8.3 Ability

In Bathang and Rgyalthang the notion ‘ability’ is conveyed either by the verb *thub* [*thūʔ*, *thū*] ‘be able to’ or by *shes* [*xhē*, *ʕʃ*] ‘know’. Let us examine the examples (57) and (58) in Bathang below. Both events are expressed in English using the same modal verb ‘can’, whereas in this dialect (and Rgyalthang) two events are distinguished: (1) those related to external factors as in the following scenario: One cannot go to a concert because he or she does not have time or because it rains very hard, and (2) those concerned with inherent ability as in the scenarios reported in (59) and (60): One does not know how to sing and one cannot eat chili. The distinction between external and internal factors is a complex issue particularly in Rgyalthang and deserves a separate discussion in its own right.

(57) Bathang

ཁ་དགེ་དྲན་མི་ཐུག་དོ།

khāpə *tṣən* *mə-thūʔ-to*
story think NEG-be able-SFP
‘I can’t think if a story (to tell you).’

(58) Bathang

ཁོས་གཞས་གཅིག་ལ་འཐེན་གསལ་མ་རེད།

khō *zē* *tɕʰʔ* *la* *thēn* *xhē* *ma-rēʔ*
3s.ERG song one.ABS even sing know NEG-AUX:
OTHER
‘She cannot sing well.’

The event in (58) can also be reported as in (59), which is more common in the Dartsedo dialect. In this alternative construction, the auxiliary verb is not required and the negative particle is prefixed to the main verb.

(59) Bathang

ཁོས་གཞས་གཅིག་འཐོན་མི་ཤིང་།

<i>khə</i>	<i>zɛ</i>	<i>tɕiʔ</i>	<i>thɛn</i>	<i>mi-xhɛ-to</i>
3s.ERG	song	one.ABS	sing	NEG-know-SFP

'She cannot sing well.'

(60) is an example of the use of the secondary verb 'know' in Rgyalthag Tibetan.

(60) Rgyalthag

ཞོག་དམར་མ་ཐུ་ཤིང་།

<i>kũmũ</i>	<i>tʂhã</i>	<i>ni-ci</i>
chili	eat	NEG-know

'I can't eat chili.' (I don't know how to eat it.)

4.2.9 Non-controllable construction

In Rgyalthag the secondary verb *shor* 'lose' may be attached to controllable verbs and make the whole predicates non-controllable.

(61) Rgyalthag

ང་ཤོར་གྱི་བྱང་།

<i>ŋɔ̃</i>	<i>ʂu-tɕi</i>	<i>ɔ̃ŋ</i>
weep	lose-PF	AUX: SELF

'(I) cried.'

(62) Rgyalthag

ངའི་གི་ལག་ཁྱེད་ལ་གེར་བརྩེད་བརྩེགས་ཐོན་པ་ལ།

<i>ŋi-kə</i>	<i>lãsũi</i>	<i>phɔ̃dũ</i>	<i>dzũ</i>	<i>lã</i>	<i>thũin</i>	<i>thĩ</i>
1s.GEN-GEN	glove	there	forget	lose	complete	AUX: OTHER

'I lost my glove(s) there.'

5. Conclusion

In this paper I have examined some grammatical peculiarities of Bathang Tibetan and Rgyalthag Tibetan, two southern Kham dialects spoken in Sichuan and Yunnan Provinces. I wanted to find out whether certain attributes in Rgyalthag will hold true for another Kham Tibetan and what common features Rgyalthag and Bathang may share which can be claimed to characterize grammar of southern Kham Tibetan or of Kham Tibetan as a whole. I attempted to answer these questions through an analysis of two interesting morpho-syntactic features of Bathang and Rgyalthag, namely case marking patterns and secondary verb constructions.

The dialects show significant variation of ergative marking. Most transitive subjects in Bathang are marked with the ergative case, whereas in Rgyalthag they occur mainly in the absolutive case. Rgyalthag transitive subjects are marked with the ergative only when there is a need to emphasize the agent. Hence, it is more appropriate to regard ergative marking in this dialect as subject marking.

I have also shown variation in terms of object marking (the marking of direct object with the dative case). The data collected so far suggest that object marking plays a marginal role in Bathang. Conversely, it is an important aspect of Rgyalthag grammar and is better treated along with subject marking. The data at hand tend to suggest that object marking in this dialect operates at the pragmatic level: when there is a need to highlight the patient. In this way, it is not sufficient to consider case marking patterns as simply features of lexical verbs (specified in terms of case frames). It is worth noting that most works on Tibetan grammar have paid attention to ergativity or subject marking and

seem to ignore object marking. Dative marking is regarded simply as a marking of indirect objects.

The other grammatical phenomenon addressed in this paper deals with secondary verbs. I argue that these verbs need to be distinguished from serial verbs because they behave quite differently. For example, they belong to a closed set and several of them have lost their lexical status becoming fully grammatical morphemes. Although various meanings and functions (e.g. aspectual distinctions, modalities, directional marking, and so on) of secondary verbs in Bathang and Rgyalthing have been discussed in this paper, more work needs to be done so that we will get a more thorough understanding of their synchronic usage and grammaticalization paths. In addition, interaction between these verbs and auxiliary verbs (together with aspectivizers) needs to be investigated.

The Bathang data are helpful in answering the question, posed at the beginning of the paper, whether the grammatical peculiarities originally found in Rgyalthing characterize Kham Tibetan, or are unique only to Rgyalthing itself. In terms of case-marking patterns of the agent and the patient, Rgyalthing differs significantly from Bathang, whereas the latter behaves quite similarly to other Kham dialects. This suggests that the use of the ergative marker as a subject marker may be a novel development within the Rgyalthing dialect. Alternatively, it may be a result of language contact, provided that this feature is found in neighboring languages (e.g. Naxi, Pumi) or is dominant in the same linguistic area. Unfortunately, due to the dearth of linguistic materials, definite conclusion cannot be drawn at the moment.

Regarding secondary verb constructions, the Rgyalthing and Bathang dialects share a lot of similarities both in the verb forms and their grammatical functions. The grammaticalization of secondary verbs and other grammatical features which are not discussed in this paper (i.e. the use of double possessives and the existence of complex pronominal paradigms) are found not only in southern dialects but also in other dialects of Kham Tibetan.

¹I am grateful to Thailand Research Fund for supporting the research project *Grammar of Southern Kham Tibetan* (1999-2003) on which this paper is based. I would like to acknowledge with thanks a grant from the Asian Scholarship Foundation which enabled me to conduct more substantial field research in Kham (August 2000-May 2001). In addition, I thank the Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University for the financial support which enabled me to present this paper at the 8th Himalayan Languages Symposium at University of Berne during 19-22 September 2002. I am grateful to Skälbzang Gyurme (Gesang Jumian) and Wang Xiaosong for their help with the Bathang and Rgyalthing data.

²This does not mean that I ignore the recent studies conducted on other Tibetan cultural areas such as northern Nepal (Huber 2000), Tabo/Spiti (Hein 2001) or Dzongkha (van Driem 1998). The fact that more grammatical works have been devoted to East Tibet is certainly a new phenomenon in Tibetan linguistics. See, for example, Häsler (1999) for the description of the Derge dialect in northern Kham; Hongladarom (1996; forthcoming) for the sketch of the Rgyalthing dialect in southern Kham; Makley et al (1999) for the study of the Amdo Labrang dialect; Haller (2000a) for the comparative study of the Amdo Themchen dialect and the Shigatse dialect, and LaPolla (2003) for a collection of papers dealing with Tibetan and non-Tibetan languages spoken in this area.

³Non-linguistic materials on Rgyalthing often use the terms Gyalthing or Gyethang to refer to the language name and place name. That is, the prefix /r/, which is silent, is not represented. Following a traditional convention in Tibetology, the name is also transliterated as rGyal-thang.

⁴The suffix *-pa/-wa* denotes a group of people who reside in a particular area. For example, the Khampas are the inhabitants of Kham, the Rgyalthingwas are those who live in Rgyalthing, the Bawas are Bathang residents and so on. Note that the term ཤོ་ཕོ *phöpa* refers to those who live in ཤོ་ཕོ *phö* (indigenous name for Tibet) but has been used by the Khampas with a restricted meaning: it refers mainly to those who are from Lhasa and Ü-Tsang (Central Tibet). Hence, the Khampas never call themselves *phöpa*. When asked what nationality they are, they may reply by using a neologism ཤོ་རྩམས་པོ་ *phöri*, a Tibetan translation of the Chinese term *zàngzú* 'Tibetan nationality'.

⁵On the interplay among language, identity and ethnohistory, see Hongladarom (2002). Similar issues are also addressed in Hartley (1996: 38-46).

⁶It is generally agreed that Central Tibetan and Amdo Tibetan are mutually unintelligible and Kham Tibetan situates half-way between these two dialectal groups (Hartley 1996: 39-40).

⁷Thanks to Yeshe Gyatsá for this piece of information.

⁸For more information on Kham phonetics and phonology, see Gesang Jumian (1964)/Skal-bzang 'Gyur-med & Skal-bzang Dbyangs-can (2002).

⁹A variation of this utterance is མ་དྲུག་མཁྱེན་ *?aka the*. The expected answer is མ་དྲུག་མཁྱེན་ *maka the* '(I'm) not tired'. According to Gesang Jumian (personal communication), this greeting expression is common in Dartsedo Tibetan but not in southern Kham.

¹⁰Most verbs in Old Tibetan (8th-10th C.E.) and Classical Tibetan (13th-18th C.E.) have four forms according to tense and mood: present, past, future, and imperative. The vestige of this distinction can be found in Amdo nomadic dialects. The distinction is neutralized in most Kham dialects. Instead, tense and mood are conveyed through verbal suffixes, secondary verbs and final auxiliaries.

¹¹Although most spoken Kham dialects do not have a lot of honorific words, this deference marking vocabulary prevails in Written Kham. For example, the honorific third person singular pronoun *khon* 'he/she' is preferred to the non-honorific counterpart *kho*. The latter is more common in the colloquial language.

¹²Only the examples from Rgyalthing and Bathang are tone-marked in this paper. Examples from other dialects such as Derge are tone-marked when they are done so in the original sources. The Bathang tonal system is derived from Gesang Jumian, as published in Huang et al (1992) and from my fieldnotes. Both Bathang and Rgyalthing dialects contain four tones (one level [ā or 55] and three contour tones [à or 51/53, â or 231 and ǎ or 13]. For the Rgyalthing data, the final glottal stop, which is a remnant of Written Tibetan final stops, is not represented in the transcription. It presence can be predicted from the types of tones involved [51 and 13]. Although most Bathang examples are transcribed according to the system established by Gesang Jumian, there are some discrepancies between that system and my system, especially regarding the transcriptions of final nasals and allophonic vowels. The symbol /n/ and /ŋ/ are used to replace all nasalized vowels. Allophones are not represented except for /a/ and /a/.

¹³Abbreviations used in this paper: 1s first person singular pronoun; 1s first person singular pronoun; 2s second person singular pronoun; 3s third person singular pronoun; 3p third person plural pronoun; ABS absolutive case; AUX auxiliary verb; CON conjunctive suffix; COP copular verb; EVID direct evidential; ERG ergative case; EXIST existential verb; DAT dative case; FUT future tense; GEN genitive case; HON honorific word; HS hearsay; IMPF imperfective aspect; INS instrumental case; LOC locative case; MOD modality marker; NEG negative particle; PF perfective aspect; PN proper name; PUR purposive marker; Q question; SFP sentence final particle; TOP topic marker.

¹⁴Although the genitive case particle in Lhasa Tibetan can be distinguished from the ergative case marker (the vowel in the ergative construction is often longer, bears falling pitch and is likely to be followed by pause—Agha 1993; Denwood 1999), the cognates in Rgyalthing and Bathang are hard to distinguish.

¹⁵At a discourse level, transitive agents, when present, are presented with the topic marker, rather than the ergative marker. This conforms to the Given-A constraint postulated by Du Bois (1987). For more detail on the treatment of transitive subjects in Rgyalthing, see Hongladarom (1996).

¹⁶Some Bathang speakers alternate between /n/ and /l/ when pronouncing the dative case. *ŋā-la* 'to me' in Standard Spoken Tibetan is pronounced either as *ŋĩ-nə* or *ŋĩ-lou*. From my observation, the /n/ allophone is more common among young Bathang speakers. Its uses also extend to the lexical domain. For example, the word *?ālūŋ* 'ring' is pronounced *?ānūŋ* by some speakers.

¹⁷According to van Driem (1998:194), the verb 'like, love' in Dzongkha requires the subject to be in ergative case, hence exhibiting the pattern X(ERG) Y (DAT) V. This pattern is common especially when both subject and object are animate.

¹⁸See Biellmeier (2001) for a detailed account of verbs of being in six western Tibetan dialects.

¹⁹Aspectivizers have been called by various terms such as linking particles (Denwood 1999).

²⁰Tournadre (2001: 89) makes this interesting remark: “(G)rammatical aspect appears three times within the Tibetan verb: in the verbal flexion, in the suffix (or the auxiliary) and in the secondary verb.” As verbal conjugations are neutralized in most Kham dialects, aspect is conveyed mainly by the suffix, the auxiliary and the secondary verb.

²¹See Denwood (1999: 176-178) which lists the various lexical and grammatical meanings of the verb *dgos* ‘want’ in Lhasa Tibetan.

²²There is another interesting aspectual morpheme in Rgyalhang, *-tci*, which functions as a marker of perfective aspect. Though it stands in a paradigmatic relation with the verb *thūin* and *tshā*, its status is more like a clitic, rather than a verb. The difference between *thūin* and *-tci* is discussed in Hongladarom (2000), as follows:

“Telicity distinguishes *thūin* from *-tci*. The former is used with verbs which have no natural terminal points and may take a long time to complete (i.e. atelic verbs), e.g. eat, work, wash, write, sweep (floor), whereas the latter is used with verbs that have natural terminal points (i.e. telic verbs), e.g. hit, kick, or kill. We can also look at this distinction from Vendler’s (1967) verb classification: *-tci* is used with activity terms depicting a dynamic and durative situation that has an arbitrary endpoint. *thūin*, on the other hand, is used with accomplishment terms describing a situation that is dynamic and durative, but has a natural endpoint. In this way, it is not surprising to find that *thūin* also connotes perfect aspect.”

²³Due to the limit in scope of this paper, I cannot elaborate on the interesting uses and grammaticalization of existential verbs in Rgyalhang (as well as in Bathang). Interested readers may consult Hongladarom (forthcoming) for the account of these as well as other common verbs in Rgyalhang.

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TIBETAN

Affiliation and Geography

Tibetan belongs to the Bodish branch of the Tibeto-Burman division in the Sino-Tibetan language family. It is closely related to Newar and Tamang, indigenous languages of Nepal, but is distantly related to other Tibeto-Burman languages such as Akha, Lahu, Karen and Burmese and is remotely related to Chinese. It is spoken by approximately five million people in six different nation-states: China, Burma, India, Nepal, Bhutan and Pakistan. Only in Bhutan is it the national language. Significant groups of Tibetan speakers are also found in exile communities in India, Nepal, Bhutan, and several western countries. At least, 100,000 Tibetans fled Tibet in 1959, when China took over it. Out of the five million Tibetans, 2,100,000 speakers are concentrated in the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) with Lhasa as the main municipality, and 2,500,000 speakers are found in several Tibetan autonomous prefectures and counties in four western provinces of China, i.e., Qinghai, southwest Gansu, western Sichuan and northwest Yunnan. The remainder are in the Himalayan regions covering the northern tip of Burma, northern Nepal, Bhutan, the Indian states of Arunachal, Sikkim, Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, the states of Jammu and Kashmir (divided between India and Pakistan) and a Pakistani district of Baltistan.

Tibetan-speaking people in the Himalayas are known as *Bhotia* (from the word *bod*, the name for Tibet). A minority group in eastern Nepal with the population of approximately 14,000 speaks the southern variety of Central Tibetan and is more commonly known as the Sharpa (Sherpa). The Bhutanese name their national language Dzhongkha and do not classify themselves as Tibetans. Ethnic Tibetans in China are officially designated as the Tibetan nationality (*zàngzú* in Chinese or *bod-rig*, a newly coined term in Tibetan). The Jiarong (Rgyarong), Baima and other ethnic groups of western Sichuan consider themselves Tibetans and are officially included within the Tibetan nationality, though they speak non-Tibetan languages as their mother tongues. The variety of Tibetan spoken in Baltistan is called Balti but it acquires another name (Purik) when spoken on the Indian side.

History and Development of Written Tibetan

With historical evidence dated back to the seventh century, Tibet was an important empire of Central Asia extending its influence to the Tang dynasty of Imperial China and ruling over small kingdoms such as the Nan Chao Kingdom (present-day Dali) in southwest China. It was in contact with several nation-states of Asia, one of which was India, from where it borrowed a writing system. The Tibetan script - with 30 consonant and 4 vowel signs and a few punctuation marks - was modeled after the Brahmi script during the reign of King Srongtsan Gampo (617-650 CE). The language during this period until the ninth century, known as Old Tibetan, was used mainly to record royal documents and historical chronicles. A good number of Old Tibetan manuscripts found in the Dunhuang caves became one of the most important materials for the study of proto-

history and proto-language of Tibet. The majority of these materials have been catalogued and preserved in national libraries in France and England.

Classical Tibetan (sometimes called *Chöke* by western scholars) was developed since the 11th century. It has been used until today as the medium for religious texts and other kinds of learned discourse. This literary variety was adopted as the liturgical language by Mongols and other non-Tibetan speaking groups in Nepal who are influenced by Tibetan Buddhism such as Tamang, Gurung, Thakali and Manang. It has served as the standard written language for all learned documents in Bhutan. The written variety from the 19th century, which was developed from Classical Tibetan with an influence from Lhasa colloquialism, is called Modern Literary Tibetan or New Tibetan. It is used widely in Tibetan communities in China and elsewhere as the standard medium for newspapers, magazines and other kinds of modern writings, including radio broadcasts. Other varieties developed from Classical Tibetan but based on regional idioms also emerged but their uses are limited only in particular regions. Written Tibetan, specifically Classical Tibetan still represents the pronunciation of the language as it was in the ninth century, when it underwent a major reform. Hence, there are considerable differences between Written Tibetan and modern spoken dialects. For example, the greeting expression *bkra-shis bde-legs* "Good luck" is pronounced *trashī tele* in the Lhasa speech.

Dialect Classification

Spoken Tibetan is divided into several dialects and sub-dialects, which are quite different from one another. The number of dialects varies depending on geographical areas under

investigation. Most authorities agree that there are, at least, four major dialects: Central Tibetan (Ü-tsang), Northeastern Tibetan (more commonly known as Amdo), Eastern Tibetan (Kham), and Western Tibetan (Töö). Central Tibetan, which includes Lhasa, the standard dialect, Shigatse and other sub-dialects is spoken in TAR and along the Tibet-Nepal border. Amdo is spoken in Gansu and Qinghai Provinces. Kham is found in Sichuan and Yunnan Provinces. Western Tibetan includes Ngari in TAR, Ladakhi in India and Balti in Pakistan. Chinese linguists pay attention only to the first three groups, as they are the major dialects spoken in China.

Kham Tibetan is distinguished into two groups: valley or sedentary dialects (*Rongke*) and nomadic dialects (*Droke*). Each category is further divided into several sub-dialects. Likewise, Amdo is divided into valley dialects and nomadic dialects, though the difference between these two categories is not as great as the ones in Kham. There is a continuum of mutual intelligibility among the speakers of these dialects. Amdo speakers are reported to have problem understanding Lhasa and vice versa, and thus it is common that both groups resort to Chinese as a *lingua franca*. For each region, a sub-dialect associated with cultural heritage, education or political power is generally considered to be more prestigious than others and serves as a regional *lingua franca*. Lhasa Tibetan is a sub-dialect of Central Tibetan but because it is spoken in the metropolitan, pilgrimage center and former seat of government, it is generally regarded by Tibetans as the most prestigious form. Lhasa Koiné with loanwords from Nepali, Hindi or English is spoken in exile communities by refugees who came from various linguistic backgrounds. Other

regional koiné in Tibetan territories in China include the Labrang dialect of Amdo and the Dege dialect of Kham.

Phonological Characteristics

The majority of words in Tibetan are disyllabic. A basic, monosyllabic word consists of an initial, a vowel and may or may not have a final consonant, e.g., *bod* "Tibet" (*phöö* in the Lhasa dialect; *wot* in the Amdo dialect). Consonant clusters are common in Written Tibetan and archaic dialects – those containing archaic features and therefore being closer to Written Tibetan – namely Amdo and western dialects. The number of initial consonants varies from one dialect to another. There are 28 consonants in Lhasa Tibetan. Some Amdo nomadic dialects have as many as 134 consonants, whereas most Kham valley dialects have about 40 consonants. Tibetan presents an interesting case for the study of the origin of tones, as this innovative feature is found only in some modern dialects. Central Tibetan and Kham Tibetan exhibit a well-developed system of lexical tones, whereas Amdo and Western Tibetan do not have tones. The number of tones ranges from two to four. Tibetan dialects in Nepal display a two-tone system (high tone versus low tone). Most Kham dialects contain four tones (high tone, low tone, rising tone and falling tone). Initial and final consonants are relatively simple in these tonal dialects. In addition to tones, some of these dialects also developed a rich inventory of diphthongs.

Grammatical Characteristics

Like the majority of Tibeto-Burman languages, Tibetan has the SOV (subject-object-verb) word order. Grammatical relations are expressed by means of case postpositional particles. Five morphological cases are distinguished for most spoken and written varieties: ergative-instrumental, ablative, absolutive, genitive and dative-locative. The genitive case particle also functions as a relative clause marker. The ergative and the instrumental case markers are homophonous but they are attached to nouns with different semantic roles. The ergative particle marks an actor, which is chiefly animate, whereas the instrumental particle marks an instrument. Likewise, the dative and the locative case particles are identical in form, but they have different functions: the former marks a recipient or a patient (an entity, generally an animate being, affected by the action); the latter is attached to a place or time. Written Tibetan is a prototypical example of an ergative language: subjects of transitive verbs require ergative case marking, whereas objects of transitive verbs and subjects of intransitive verbs behave differently: they are marked by absolutive case, which has zero form. Lhasa Tibetan is often cited by linguists as a language with a split ergative-marking pattern. Ergative subjects are required only when reported actions have already taken place. Therefore, the subject in *khōṅ-ki tà tēi sē sōṅ* "He killed a tiger" requires an ergative case particle because the verb indicates a past event, whereas the subject of *khōṅ tà tēi sē-ki rè* "He will kill a tiger" does not.

Tibetan nouns express neither gender nor number. Plurality is indicated by the plural marker *tsho* as well as *dag* and *rnams* (the latter two are more common in written texts). In modern dialects, except in the pronominal paradigms, these plural particles are not generally employed. Adjectives follow nouns. Determiners (words that modify noun

phrases) include the number one *gcig*, which functions as an indefinite article and spatial demonstratives *di* "this" and *de* "that" functioning as definite articles. Negation is indicated by *mi-* or *ma-*, which is prefixed to the main verb. In Lhasa Tibetan, it is more common to use sentence-final negative verbs, i.e., *min* and *me* when the subject is first person and the negative prefixes when the subject is second or third person. A sentence may consist of a single clause or a series of clauses chained together by various conjunctive suffixes with the main clause being the last element. Because of this characteristic, Tibetan is typologically classified as a clause-chaining language.

Verbs in Old Tibetan and Classical Tibetan, most of which are monosyllabic, have variant forms corresponding to tenses (future, present, past) and mood (imperative). In Central Tibetan and Kham Tibetan, this distinction is neutralized: there is only one form for each verb. Instead, sentence-final auxiliary verbs are employed to convey tense/aspect and modality. These auxiliary verbs and verbs of being (copula verbs and existential verbs) are used according to person (whether or not the subject is first person) and evidentiality (whether or not the person has witnessed the event described in the utterance). Person marking in Tibetan, also known as participant role perspective, deictic class marking or conjunct/disjunct distinction, is different from person agreement, a common feature of languages of the Himalayan branch of the Tibeto-Burman group. The emergence of person and evidential markings in modern spoken dialects of Tibetan has attracted a great deal of attention from linguists. The phenomena are also found in other Bodish languages.

Honorifics

Tibetan has a well-defined and productive system of honorifics (*zhesa*). These are special words (mainly nouns and verbs) used when referring to Buddhas and deities and in everyday conversations when one talks with people of higher social standing, elderly and respectable people including monks, officials, teachers, one's own parents and elder siblings. Honorific vocabulary, which stands in parallel with ordinary vocabulary (*phal-skad*), is common in Old Tibetan texts and has developed into a complicated system in Lhasa Tibetan. It is found in most of the dialects but in a relatively less sophisticated manner. Contrary to stereotypes among native speakers, honorifics are used among Kham speakers, but mainly when they engage in conversations with monks, high officials or the elderly. The following expressions represent two ways of saying "his hat," with the structure [he-genitive hat]: *khō-ki zhāmo* (ordinary speech) and *khōṅ-ki ūzhā* (honorific speech). The honorific compound *ūzhā*, which consists of *ū*, the honorific root for "head" and *zhā*, the ordinary root for "hat," is a typical example of how most honorific nouns are formed in Tibetan.

Given that most Tibetan-speaking areas are inaccessible for fieldwork, both a basic description and an investigation of contemporary aspects of Tibetan languages and dialects still await linguists today. With continuing socio-cultural and political changes, Tibetan remains one of the most challenging areas of study for the 21st century.

KRISADAWAN HONGLADAROM

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