

## Evidence for the development of ‘evidentiality’ as a grammatical category in Tibetan.

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### 1. Background information

#### 1.1. Chronology

The Tibetic languages constitute a large family with several regional branches and many dialects.

Old Tibetan is documented since the mid 8<sup>th</sup> c. CE, with the Old Tibetan Annals being a copy of a text that started to be written in the mid 7<sup>th</sup> c. CE. The shift to Middle or Classical Tibetan takes place around the 11<sup>th</sup> c. Some of the modern varieties are documented since the late 19<sup>th</sup> c. A hybrid variety of Classical Tibetan continues to be used as literary language

#### 1.2. Evidentiality in Modern Tibetic

With the only exception of Balti, the western most Tibetic language, the modern Tibetic languages generally display a grammatical opposition, which is usually described in terms of different sources of knowledge. The exact function of the members of this opposition, however, is difficult to define. Formally, the basic opposition is between two sets of auxiliaries:

- ▶ Set I: authoritative, self-evident knowledge, not based on immediate perception (neutral category) & evaluative usages
  - used for the MSAP’s own controlled [+ctr] actions and all situations under the control or responsibility of the MSAP.
  - used neutrally in non-finite constructions.
  - combine with evaluative markers (inference, estimation, probability)
- ▶ Set II: knowledge based on immediate perception (marked category) & constative usages (neutral)
  - used for all situations not controlled by the MSAP, that is, [–ctr] events relating to the MSAP and all [±ctr] events relating to other persons.
  - functionally marked, and therefore not commonly used in non-finite constructions (some varieties allow certain exceptions).
  - cannot be followed by other evaluative markers.

These modes of knowledge relate to the main speech act participant (MSAP) or asserter, that is the speaker in positive statements, the addressee in questions. The opposition of forms used for the MSAP and OTHER is usually also found in the domain of future tense, although this should fall outside the category of evidence, and some scholars have therefore excluded the future forms from the discussion. But this fact could equally well be taken as evidence that the opposition is not one in terms of evidentiality or not of evidentiality alone.

Hearsay is encoded separately, adding a quote marker to the quoted speech. The quoted speech contains the evidential markers of the original utterance, although the pronouns are shifted as in indirect speech.

Table 1. Tibetic ‘evidentials’ (schematic overview)\*

domain	set I:	set II:	
	MSAP +ctr self-evident assertive	nMSAP ±ctr, MSAP –ctr (OTHER)	
future	<i>yin</i>	—	( <i>red</i> )
past	<i>yin</i>	stem II or light verbs	( <i>red</i> )
copula	<i>yin</i> ( <i>l yod</i> )	<i>ħdug</i> ( <i>ĉ drag</i> )	( <i>red</i> )
existential present	<i>yod</i>	<i>ħdug</i> ( <i>ĉ drag</i> )	—
perfect	( <i>yin l</i> ) <i>yod</i>	<i>ħdug</i> ( <i>ĉ drag</i> )	—
	MSAP & OTHER		
evaluative	<i>yin</i> / <i>yod</i> + EM		

\*Forms in brackets are language specific: *drag* for non-visual experience is restricted to Western Tibetan. In these languages, *red* is not used. Some eastern languages show completely different set II forms.

Recent research into Lhasa Tibetan (Speas, in press, Vokurková, to appear) as well as into West Tibetan (Bielmeier 2000, Zeisler 2012) has shown, however, that the choice of the markers in question is quite flexible and not (always) depending on the sources of knowledge (in relation to the MSAP). Often, if not always, it reflects the stance or commitment the MSAP is willing (or is expected) to take. I shall, nevertheless, keep the terminology of evidentiality, more or less as used in the Tibeto-linguistic literature.

In the cross-linguistic literature, knowledge based on (immediate) perception is usually termed *direct*, everything else being *indirect*. This does not really match the Tibetan system: knowledge about one’s own controlled actions and about situations under one’s control is certainly the most direct knowledge a speaker can have.

Knowledge based on mere perception, on the other hand, is perceived as not being fully reliable and it can well be indirect, namely inferential (the identity or character of the items of the outer world are inferred from what they look like, which may not correspond to their ‘true’ identity or character).

In the following, I shall use the values *experiential* (set II) and *non-experiential* (set I), but this should be understood as a mere approximation to a much more complicated playground.

The term MSAP will be used only for situations controlled by the MSAP (own [+ctr] actions plus situations that can be warranted due to involvement and control).

### 1.3. Methodological considerations

We have little knowledge about when and how the modern systems (evidential or not) evolved. All that we know for sure is that Old Tibetan lacks an evidential system completely, and that evidentiality must have evolved at some time in the classical period. Classical Tibetan, the language of the religious texts, lacks a fully grammaticalised evidential system, although certain texts show traces of evidential marking in direct quotations.

Marking of evidentiality (or stance) is certainly more important in a discursive situation, than in a narrative context, where it is typically evident that the narrator has not experienced the events in the case of historical events or tales, or that s/he has experienced the events personally in the case of a personal narrative. Evidentiality is thus, first of all, a category that appears in conversations, and in a written text in direct (or indirect) speech.

Since most Classical Tibetan texts are of a doctrinal nature and the much less frequent narrative texts do not contain enough direct speech to explore the possible contrastive usage of the auxiliaries, few attempts have been made to study evidentiality or its possible precursors in the classical language.

There exists, however, one long narrative, which is written for the greater part from a fictive first person perspective. This text, the famous biography of Milaraspa (*Milaraspa rnamthar*) from the 15<sup>th</sup> c. allows us to gain some insight into the development of evidentiality in Tibetan by the 15<sup>th</sup> c. The text shows that evidential marking has not yet fully developed and does not yet cover all temporal domains. And it contains a big surprise.

### 1.4. The narrative

Milaraspa (Modern Tibetan pronunciation: Milarepa) is one of the most important Tibetan saints or *yogis*, ascetics who practise meditation (and a bit of magic). Like almost every great saint in world history, Milaraspa has a past of great sin.

In his youth, his family was deprived of their wealth by greedy relatives, and Milaraspa, urged by his revengeful mother, studied and applied black magic, eventually killing a large number of people. Repenting, he took refuge in the Buddhist teachings, but his master, Marpa, refused to reveal him the powerful teachings for quite some time, letting him build and deconstruct and rebuild a tower instead. Only when he was completely desperate, was he accepted by the teacher (who argued that all the suffering was necessary to out-balance or clean off the great sin of the past).

After completing his studies, Milaraspa stayed in the wilderness, clad only in a thin cotton cloth, practising inner heat, relying on the food donations by nearby villagers. Among other visitors, his truthful fiancée and his sister Peta visited him from time to time, the latter trying to persuade him to live the life of an ordinary cleric – who would be able to gather much wealth through his religious performances. Milaraspa usually accompanied his answers and teachings with a song, containing a morale and the praise of the religion.

Milaraspa gathered a group of disciples and eventually died in high age.

The narrator of the outer story frame reports a dream: he is taken to heaven to a divine assembly. There he is witness how Milaraspa, upon the request of a disciple, starts to tell his life story (including the history of his ancestors). This narrative is very modest, natural, and lively, and may in fact be based on earlier oral accounts by Milaraspa himself, as transmitted by his disciples. Milaraspa’s death, however, is glorified and narrated from a third person perspective, but this part is interspersed with oral reports from some of the disciples.

## 2. Origins of evidential marking

### 2.1. Old Tibetan

As already stated, Old Tibetan does not have an evidential system. The existential linking verbs *yod* (negated *med*) and *ḥdug* (the latter also a lexical verb with the meaning ‘stay, dwell. sit’) are used side by side with all persons for the meaning ‘exist, be there’ and as auxiliaries for certain periphrastic tense constructions.

As a linking verb, *yod* seems to have both a more punctual meaning (somebody, something is there at a certain location at a certain reference time) and a more generic meaning (something exists in general).

*ḥdug* seems to have a connotation of limited and transitory duration (somebody, something stays at a certain place for some time).

Quite apparently, it is this meaning of limited and transitory duration that could be exploited to express, first of all, inferences and doubts.

### 2.2. Early Classical Tibetan

At some point in the history, possibly already in Old Tibetan, but conclusive data is missing, *ḥdug* is used in a complex construction:

X Y (+ NMZ) + LOC.PUR + *ḥdug* (-*par ḥdug*)

X = subject, Y = predicate

Literally: ‘X exists as Y / Y-doing for some time’

The *par ḥdug* construction is often used in place of the attributive and identificatory copula *yin* ‘be somelike, be something’.

*ḥdug* can be replaced by the near synonym *gdaḥ*. (This becomes an evidential auxiliary in Kham.)

In contrast to the copula *yin*, the morphologically quite heavy (and thus functionally marked) *par ḥdug* construction has a very strong connotation of doubt, vagueness, and uncertainty, already observed by Jäschke (1881: 277). It also expresses inferences and probabilities.

The construction can be translated as ‘seems to be / looks like something’ or ‘seems to happen, do, etc.’. The notion of doubt or inference often implies a personal observation, but one that is limited to a single perception, which cannot yet be generalised to certain knowledge.

- (1) *da blama ḥdi-s-ni ḥbulba med-pa-r*  
 now lama this-ERG-TOP gift NG.have-NOM-LOC  
*gdamsngag mi-gnaṅ-ba-r-ḥdug* |  
 teaching NG1-grant-NOM-LOC-EVD.exist  
*gzhan-du phyin-runṅ ḥbulba mi-dgos-pa-ni mi-yoṅ* |  
 other-LOC go-possible gift NG1-want-NOM-TOP NG1-come.PRS  
*nor med-pa-s chos-ni mi-thob-pa-r-ḥdug* |  
 wealth NG.have-NOM-INSTR religion-TOP NG1-get-NOM-LOC-EVD.exist  
 ‘Now, this lama is not likely to bestow the teachings [on me] without a gift. [But] even if I go somewhere else, there won’t be anyone who would not want a gift. Having no wealth, it seems that I won’t get any religious teachings.’ *Milaraspa rnamthar*

Less frequently, one may also find *ḥdug* alone in the place of *yin*, with the same connotations. This shortened form is already attested in a late 12<sup>th</sup>-century text (and possibly even in Old Tibetan). One can assume that the complex form must have been in use at least some decades or a century earlier (which might bring us at least to the latest stages of Old Tibetan).

- (2) «*ḥdi-ni gnam-las byon-pa-ḥi*  
 this-TOP sky-ABL come-NOM-GEN  
*btsanpo ṅomtsharcan-žig ḥdug-pas* |  
 scion marvellous-LQ EVD.be-NOM-INSTR  
*ḥo-rnams-kyi jobo bya-ḥo» zer-te* |  
 we.excl-PL-GEN lord do.GER-SF» say-NF  
 ‘«As this one seems to be/ looks like a marvellous scion, who has come from the heavens, we should make him our lord», they said and ...’  
 (*Ñanṅral choshbyun*, late 1100s)

The speakers had been looking for a new overlord. They cannot immediately perceive that the person they just met *IS* a marvellous scion. They merely draw an inference, based upon the fact that person in question had pointed to the sky – or rather to a mountaintop, when asked where he had come from.

The *par ḥdug* construction is and remains a lexical means to express doubt and inference, like the counterparts used in the translation.

The rather strong notion of doubt and inference or deduction – as based on a singular perception – gets bleached in the course of time to the mere notion of a more or less singular perception, and *ḥdug* develops into an experiential marker.

Depending on the language or dialect and depending on the context, the connotation of inference is not fully lost in the modern Tibetic languages, as could be demonstrated for Ladakhi (Zeisler 2012).

### 3. Evidentiality in the 15<sup>th</sup> c. *Milaraspa rnamthar*

On a superficial reading, the text shows striking similarities with modern Central Tibetan, including the opposition between the linking verbs and auxiliaries *yin*, *yod*, on the one hand, and *ḥdug* on the other.

However, the Central Tibetan auxiliary *red* is not yet used. The light verbs *soṅ*, *byuṅ*, and *bśag*, which are typical for Central Tibetan are also not yet used in a systematic manner. The evidential system (as far as it exists) may thus better be compared to that of the Western Tibetan languages than to Central Tibetan.

In Ladakhi, e.g., the evidential opposition has spread to all temporal domains, including those constructions that do not take linking verbs as auxiliaries (the simple past) or do not allow existential linking verbs as auxiliaries (the future tense constructions).

The non-evaluative future (stem I & *yin*) can only be used for the MSAP. The simple past (stem II) & remoteness marker *pin* (< *payin*) is used for the MSAP. The simple past (stem II) without further morphology is used for OTHER. The distribution of the forms follows thus the basic evidential opposition. Forms that are used for the MSAP are not used for OTHER and forms that are used for OTHER are not used for the MSAP. Exceptions from this rule are limited and well defined.<sup>1</sup>

In the *Milaraspa rnamthar* and other classical texts, there is only one future tense form, used indiscriminately for both MSAP and OTHER. The two past tense forms are used for both MSAP and OTHER, although a tendency can be observed that the mere stem ( $\pm$  sentence final marker) is used primarily for OTHER and the *payin* form ( $\pm$  sentence final marker) primarily for the MSAP.

That is, the evidential distinction is neutralised in certain temporal domains: forms that are used for the MSAP may also be used for OTHER and forms that are used for OTHER may also be used for the MSAP

Table 2. The evidential opposition in Ladakhi and the *Milaraspa rnamthar*

temporal domain	modern Ladakhi		<i>Milaraspa rnamthar</i>	
	set I (MSAP)	set II (OTHER)	set I (MSAP)	set II (OTHER)
present/simult.	<i>yod</i>	<i>ḥdug, drag</i>	<i>yod</i>	<i>ḥdug</i>
perfect	<i>yin, yod</i>	<i>ḥdug, drag</i>	<i>yin, yod</i>	<i>ḥdug</i>
past/anterior	stem II + <i>pin</i>	stem II + $\emptyset$	← stem II + <i>payin</i> stem II + $\emptyset$ →	
future/necess.	stem I + <i>yin</i>	—	stem I + <i>payin</i>	
infer. future	gerundive + <i>yin</i>			

<sup>1</sup> The remoteness marker *-pin* has the strong connotation that the event was personally witnessed some time ago, and may thus be used for OTHER when the MSAP wants to emphasise that s/he remembers the fact well. Conversely, the speakers of some western dialects use the mere stem for their own [+ctr] actions, if they happened in the recent past.

The evidential contrast of the auxiliaries in the *Milaraspa rnamthar* is shown in the following examples: Example (3), line 1 contains a MSAP present/ simultaneity form plus the neutral future tense in line 3. Example (5) contains the corresponding OTHER present/ simultaneity form. Example (4) contains a MSAP perfect form. Example (6), the corresponding OTHER perfect form. Example (7) shows the neutral future tense used for OTHER.

- (3) «*ŋa Khyuŋpo Josras hoŋ-gin-yod-do* ||  
 I Khyuŋpo Josras come.PRS-CNT-exist-3F  
*gdon-bgegs-rnams-kyi ša za kbrag hthuy-ba-yin-pa-s*  
 spirit-demon-PL-GEN meat eat- blood drink.PRS-NOM-be-NOM-INSTR  
*sdod-aŋ*»  
 stay.IMP-DM  
 ‘I, Khyuŋpo Josras am coming! As I (shall) eat the meat and drink the blood of [all you] demons and bad spirits, stay on [if you dare]!’»
- (4) «*mi khyed yodsa-r ŋas yoŋs-pa-med [m-yod]-pas*  
 man you exist.place-LOC I-ERG come.PA-NOM-NG.exist-NOM-INSTR  
*bdag-la srog stsol-cig*»  
 I-LOC life give.IMP-DM  
 «Man, as I have never come to your place, spare (lit. grant) my life!»  
 [The evil spirit pleads.]
- (5) *gdon de ... zer-žiy-ħdug-pa-la* |  
 sprit that say-CNT-EVD.exist-NOM-LOC  
 ‘The evil spirit was saying (again and again) ...’
- (6) *khoy-tsho blama-la gtayrag-dan phyag phul-nas*  
 they-PL teacher-LOC thanksgiving-COM prostration offer.PA-ABL  
*chas-ħdug-pa-las* |  
 set.forth.PA-EVD.exist-NOM-ABL  
*ŋa-s kyaŋ blama-s gnaŋ-ba-ħi gos de gyon-nas*  
 I-ERG also teacher-ERG hon.give-NOM-GEN coat that dress-ABL  
*khoy-rnams grolam gcig-gibar bskyal* |  
 they-PL walk.way one-PPOS:LOC accompany.PA  
 ‘Having offered a thanksgiving ritual and prostrations to the teacher, they had all set off, and I, donned with the coat that the teacher had bestowed upon me, accompanied them until [we reached] a smaller road.’
- (7) *thugssras buchen-rnams-kyis bkaħ bgros-te* |  
 heart.child son.great-PL-ERG hon.word discuss-NF  
 «*rjebtsun Raschuŋpa mi-ħbyon-pa-yin* | »  
 venerable Raschuŋpa NG1-come.PRS-NOM-be=3FUT  
 ‘The spiritual sons, the great followers deliberated: «The venerable Raschuŋpa will not come [in time]. ...»

The neutral use of the past tense forms can be demonstrated with examples (8)–(11): example (8) shows the contrastive use of the *payin* form for the MSAP and the simple stem for OTHER, example (9) shows the use of the simple stem for the MSAP, Examples (10) and (11) show the use of the *payin* form for OTHER.

- (8) *ŋa-s deltabu-hisgonas dgrathabs byas-pa-s*  
 I-ERG that.like-PPOS:INSTR enemy.means do.PA-NOM-INSTR  
*las nagpo bsags-pa-yin gsuŋ* |  
 deed black accumulate.PA-NOM-be=PA/PERF hon.say.PA  
 ‘[The venerable Milaraspa] said: «... Having performed hostile actions through this [black magic], I accumulated bad (lit. black) deeds.»’
- (9) *ŋas ci loŋs-šig byas-te | berka-la lus brten-nas*  
 I-ERG what able.to.hold.PA-LQ do-NF stick-LOC body lean.PA-ABL  
*ane-la glu ħdi blaŋs-so* ||  
 aunt-LOC song this take.PA-SF  
 ‘I took (lit. did) whatever I could get hold of and leaning myself (lit. body) on a stick, I sang this song to the aunt.’
- (10) «...*bu-s bstan-pa-ħi ltadmo ħdiħdra*  
 son-ERG show.PA-GEN spectacle this.like  
*mthoy-ba-ħi dus byuŋ-ba-yin* | ...»  
 see-NOM-GEN time appear.PA-NOM-be  
 ‘[The mother shouted:] «... The time has come to see the spectacle presented by [my] son. ...»
- (11) *ŋyon Bcomldanħdas-kyis kyaŋ ħtsho-byed*  
 early Victorious.one-ERG also care-do.PRS  
*gžonnu-la phyag bstan-pa-dan*  
 youth-LOC hon.hand show.PA-NOM-COM  
*sman gsol-ba-lasogspa-ħi rnampa mdzad-pa-yin* |  
 medicine consume-NOM-ect.-GEN manner hon.do-NOM-be  
 In earlier times, the Victorious One also, caring [for the non-enlightened beings], reached his hand to [the physician] Kumāra, and swallowed medicine and the like (lit. acted in the manner of reaching his hand to Kumāra and eating medicine etc.).

A similar distribution of forms can also be observed in other Classical Tibetan texts, that is, the linking verb and auxiliary *yod* is used only for the MSAP, while *ħdug* (or an equivalent) is used for OTHER. But the past tense forms: simple stem or stem & *payin* are used neutrally for both. The evidential distinction is thus restricted to certain tense (or as other scholars would have it: aspect) forms.

Unlike the modern Tibetic languages, we also find constructions with the set I auxiliary for [–ctr] events relating to the MSAP, examples (12) and (13):

- (12) *ŋa-ni mchima-s brnajs-brnajs-pa-r-yod* |  
I-TOP tear-INSTR choke.PA-choke.PA-NOM-LOC-exist  
'As for me, I was completely choked with tears.'
- (13) *des da ŋed lunpa-ŋi mi kun*  
that-INSTR now we valley-GEN people all  
*kho-ŋi choskyoŋ-la hjijs drags-nas* |  
he-GEN protector-LOC fear much-ABL  
*žinjkaŋ-gi phyogs-la ... mig kyaŋ blta-mi-phod-pa-tsam-yod* |  
field.house-GEN direction-LOC eye even look-NG1-dare-NOM-as.much-exist  
'Therefore, out of great fear of his protector deity, now we people of the valley, ... don't even dare as much as to turn [our] eyes into the direction of house and fields.'

Furthermore, unlike many modern Tibetic languages, we can find *hdug* in non-finite constructions.

Finally, the *Milaraspa rnamthar* also shows a quite unexpected usage of *hdug*, which cannot be accounted for in terms of evidentiality (or stance). Compare the following two examples, (14) and (15):

- (14) *Raspa Žibaḥod nare* | «... *dehi tše*  
Raspa Žibaḥod saying that-GEN time  
*Raschungpa Lorodol-gyi dgonpa-na bžugs-pa-ŋi ...*  
Raschungpa Lorodol-GEN hermitage-LOC hon.stay-NOM-GEN  
*mnal-day ḥodgsal ḥdres-pa-ŋi ṅams-la* | ...  
sleep-COM light.clear mix.PA-NOM-GEN mind-LOC  
*mkhahḥgro-rnams-kyis bteg-nas*  
Dākinī-PL-ERG raise.PA-ABL  
*žinjkhams gžan-du gdan-drangs*  
field.blessed other-LOC seat-invite.PA  
*ḥgro-grabs-su hdug-pa de-la* |  
go.PRS-preparation-LOC EVD.exist that-LOC  
... *lha-day mkhahḥgro nammkhaḥ gaŋbas dbyaŋs len-ciŋ*  
deity-COM Dākinī heaven all-INSTR melody take-CNT  
*mchodpa bsam-gyis mi-khyab-pa ḥbul-žij-ḥdug-pa-la* | ...»  
offering mind-INSTR NG1-encompass-NOM offer.PRS-CNT-EVD.exist-NOM-LOC  
'Raspa Žibaḥod said: «... At this time, while Raschungpa was staying in the hermitage Lorodol, [he had] a dream-like vision (lit. in a mind where sleep and clear light were mixed) where it appeared (to him) that the Dākinīs had taken up [the teacher] and were about to convey [him] to the blessed fields, and ... that the deities and Dākinīs were chanting throughout the heaven and were offering offerings [so splendid] that the mind could not encompass it ...»

- (15) *Peta-s balspu byuŋtshad bsdus-nas*  
Peta-ERG wool.hair appear.PA.measure gather.PA-ABL  
*bzos-paḥi snambu-žig khyer-te* |  
process.PA-NOM-GEN woolen.cloth-LQ carry.PA-NF  
*Bragdkar Rtaso-r phyin-pa-s* | *ŋa mi-ḥdug-pa-day* |  
Bragdkar Rtaso-LOC go.PA-NOM-INSTR I NG1-exist-NOM-COM  
*kun-la ḥdri-žij ḥtshol-du phyin-tshe ...*  
all-LOC ask-NF search.PRS-LOC go.PA-time  
'Peta had come to Bragdkar Rtaso ('White Rock Horse Tooth') carrying along a woollen cloth, which she had made after collecting wool hairs wherever she could find some (lit; wherever they appeared), but since I was no (longer) there, / as soon as she realised that I was not there, she went searching [for me] asking everybody [about me], and ...'

In both cases, we deal with a singular immediate perception, but in both cases this is not the perception of the MSAP, the narrator, but the perception of somebody OTHER. This could be called an instance of *indirect* evidentiality, certainly not attested in the modern Tibetic languages, and certainly nothing that could easily grammaticalise.

If, on the other hand, the event should have been quoted from the Raschungpa's or Peta's report, one could have expected a quote marker, such as *skad* 'saying' (as attested infrequently in the text) or at least an ordinary *verbum dicendi* (as in many other cases).

I have checked the last example with a Ladakhi speaker. The whole passage could be presented either as a neutral narrative without quotation or as a quoted report. In the first case, Peta's actions would receive inferential markers, as Milaraspa could not have witnessed them, and the fact of Milaraspa's absence would be presented with the marker for the MSAP.

In the second case, Peta's actions would receive the marker for the MSAP plus a quote marker, and the observation of Milaraspa's absence could accordingly be presented with the marker for OTHER plus a quote marker. However, this is not the preferred construction. The narrator would rather switch between the quoted report and an assertion of his/her own absence, marked with the form of the MSAP.

- (16) *ŋi šiŋmo ŋa tsal-ba(:) joŋ-sok.*  
I.GEN sister I search-NOM.LOC come-INF.PA  
*inaŋ ŋa met-pin. defia kho lok-se-soŋ-sok.*  
but I NG.exist-RM hence s/he return-NF-go.PA-INF.PA  
'My sister had come to search for me [inferential].

But I had not been there [assertive=MSAP]. Therefore she went back [inferential].'

(17)	<i>ŋi</i>	<i>ʃiŋmo</i>	<i>ŋa</i>	<i>tsalba(:)</i>	<i>yoŋs-pin</i>	<i>lo.</i>
	I.GEN	sister	I	search-NOM.LOC	come.PA-RM	QT
a)	<i>inaŋ</i>	<i>ŋa</i>	<i>met-pin-ba.</i>	<i>kho</i>	<i>lok-se-soŋ-bin</i>	<i>lo.</i>
	but	I	NG.exist-RM-EMPH	she	return-NF-go.PA-RM	QT
b)	<i>inaŋ</i>	<i>ŋa</i>	<i>%minuk</i>	<i>%lo.</i>	<i>lok-se-soŋ-bin</i>	<i>lo.</i>
	but	I	NG1.EVD.exist	QT	return-NF-go.PA-RM	QT

‘My sister said [she] had come searching for me [quoted assertive].

a) But, in fact, I had not been there [assertive=MSAP]. [So] she went back, [she] said [quoted assertive].

b) But [she %saw that] I was not there [she] %said [quoted evidential]. [So she] returned, [she] said [quoted assertive].’

Examples (14) and (15) with evidential marking in relation to the observation of a non-MSAP would thus be extremely odd, if not fully impossible in a full-fledged evidential system.

All in all, the examples show that evidentiality (or stance) is not yet a grammatical category for the author and/ or compiler of the biography in the 15<sup>th</sup> c. This does not preclude that one or some of the spoken varieties might already have further developed evidential marking, but without any document this must remain pure speculation.

#### 4. Sketch of a possible developmental path

##### 4.1. Evidence from the written language

The evidence from the written languages allows us to reconstruct the following steps:

1. Old Tibetan (mid 7<sup>th</sup> to early 11<sup>th</sup> c. CE):  
The existential linking verbs *yod* and *ḥdug* differ with respect to the temporal structure of the expressed state, *yod* seems to express a more general existence, while *ḥdug* has the connotation of a more transitory state.
2. Transition state from Old to early Middle (Classical) Tibetan (11<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> c.):  
The transitory notion is exploited for the expression of doubt, probability, and inference, which may be based on singular (and transitory) perceptions. In this function the *par ḥdug* construction and the shortened form can be used contrastively for the attributive copula *yin*.
3. Early Middle Tibetan (12<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> c.):  
The notion of a singular (and immediate) perception becomes dominant. Such perceptions can be ascribed to all persons (the *Milaraspa rnamthar* may represent the transition from the last stage of this phase to the next).

#### 4. Middle phase of Middle Tibetan (14<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> c.):

The notion of a singular (and immediate) perception is restricted to the MSAP’s perceptions and it is contrasted with the MSAP’s non-perceptive knowledge. The opposition is restricted to those constructions that involve auxiliaries.

#### 5. Late Middle Tibetan (16<sup>th</sup> c. –):

In the spoken languages, the contrastive usage spills over into other TMA constructions which do not involve auxiliaries or which involve only the attributive copula.

#### 6. Early Modern Tibetan (16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> c. ?):

The system is enlarged by further sub-divisions (set II: experiential vs. constative function as in Lhasa Tibetan, visual perception vs. non-visual perception as in Ladakhi; set I: non-experiential knowledge vs. inference, estimation, and probability).

The inferential connotation of *ḥdug* did not fully bleach out. When the experiential markers got differentiated the inferential connotation was transferred to the non-visual experiential marker *drag* in Ladakhi.

#### 4.2. Locating the development in space and time

To my understanding, the exploitation of the different temporal values of the two existential linking verbs *yod* and *ḥdug* is linked to, or dependent upon, the systematicisation of the periphrastic constructions in the spoken languages.

This seems to have started in the early 11<sup>th</sup> c., after the breakdown of the Tibetan empire and after the subsequent phases of instability. The development of the new verbal system in the modern languages seems to be linked to the novel attempts of ‘nation’ building by local rulers as well as the clerical elite, which gains more and more worldly power. Regions were the Old Tibetan *lingua franca* was only spoken as L2 (e.g. Ladakh) shift to a local form of Tibetan as L1.

The evidential system apparently spread from the east to the west, but it is not fully clear whether it started in East Tibetan, in Central Tibetan, or perhaps in both regions more or less independently.

Balti, which does not have evidential marking, got probably disconnected from the Tibetan mainstream by the late 15<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> c. when the area was fully converted to Islam. For this reason, evidentiality as a grammatical category could not have been adopted in Ladakh much earlier, but it could well be a much more recent development.

If we assume that the spread of evidentiality across the spoken languages did not take much more time than one or two centuries, we can date the beginnings of evidential systems in the spoken languages around the 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, at the earliest, and the first full-fledged systems may have existed not before the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

It is possible that the written language lagged behind for a century or so, but all the evidence that we can gather from texts, such as the *Milaraspa rnam-*

*thar*, indicates that by the 15<sup>th</sup> c., full-fledged evidential systems did not yet exist in the underlying spoken languages.

### 4.3. Evidence from the spoken languages

This scenario is, by and large, corroborated by the West Tibetan synchronic data. The Nubra dialects of Ladakh (like some varieties in Central Tibet and Amdo) use a form of the verb *snay* ‘appear’ in place of the evidential *hdug*. *snay* is used in Classical Tibetan to express a doubtful situation similar to the *par hdug* construction. This corroborates the assumption that the experiential marker *hdug* (and equivalents) developed out of a lexical marker for inference and doubt.

This is further corroborated by the form of the inferential markers themselves. In the Kenhat varieties, the inferential marker for past tense constructions is *tok*. The Shamskat varieties have a more general applicable marker *suk* ~ *sok*, which can be used also as a mirative marker in the Kenhat varieties. A further marker for inferences or non-authoritative statements about the present or the future is Kenhat *nok* ~ *nak*, Shamskat *(b)uk* ~ *(b)ok* (possibly < *ba* & *(..)uk* ~ *(..)ok*).

So far, we do not have good evidence for the origin of these markers. In the case of the form *tok*, however, it is rather likely, that it is derived from a cliticised *hdug*. The voicing could have been lost after the final *-s* of the past stem (at that period still preserved). The vowel could change be the result of de-accentuation. (This might be corroborated by the variation in the Shamskat form *suk* ~ *sok*.)

The Shamskat form *suk* ~ *sok* (morphologically conditioned also *tsuk* ~ *tsok*), could perhaps be similarly explained, if we assume that the marker originally only combined with the past stem, assimilating to the final *-s*. In a second step, the marker could have been overgeneralised and applied to the present tense constructions, as well. (As these involve a reduced form of *yod*, one could alternatively think of a dissimilation feature here: *at + duk* > *atsuk*.)

The forms with an initial *n-* are less easy to explain. However, in some modern Tibetic varieties the experiential counter part to *hdug* is, in fact, a nasal form *nuk*, e.g. in Kyirong (Huber 2000: 155 and passim) and Shigatse (Tournadre & Konchok Jiatso 2001: 84). It might be possible that the nasal results from an assimilation feature after open syllables (cf. the negated forms *miruk*, *minduk*, and *minuk* in Ladakhi).

While Balti does not have the evidential opposition of *yod* and *hdug*, it has acquired the inferential marker *suk*.

The possible conclusion is that *hdug* reached the west in a first wave in a somewhat reduced form basically as an inferential marker.

In a second step, *hdug* (as a lexical verb) was reanalysed as an experiential linking verb in the eastern, Upper Ladakhi, varieties, leading to a replacement of the lexical verb by its synonym *dat* (< *sdod* ‘stay, dwell, sit’) as in the Central Tibetan languages.

Leh and the western, Lower Ladakhi, varieties seem to have borrowed the experiential function of *hdug* at a somewhat later stage, as they did not replace the lexical verb *hdug*, which in contrast to all other modern languages had acquired all morphological markers.

Nevertheless, the newly acquired experiential marker *hdug* must have still had a connotation of inference.

With the introduction of *hdug*, the earlier inferential markers would have lost all experiential connotations they might have had, and it seems that at least some of them are now in the process of losing their inferential value, giving way to a meaning of (polite) non-commitment.

### Conclusion

While we do lack diachronic data for the spoken varieties, the written data and the synchronic data allow to reconstruct not only the timeline of the development, but also the semantic path along which the development took place.

It seems that throughout the linguistic history of Tibetan, the auxiliary *hdug* carried a semantic load that distinguished it from its existential linking verb counterpart *yod*. This semantic load seems to have been temporal initially: expression of a limited and transitory duration. This meaning was then exploited for the expression of limited, transitory truth: doubt and inferences. This, in turn gave way for the notion of immediate (visual) evidence.

The history of the experiential marker indicates that the notion of ‘direct’ knowledge is not really appropriate for the Tibetic languages.

### Abbreviations:

±ctr	±controllable	LOC	locational
ABL	ablative	LQ	limiting quantifier
ABS	absolutive	MSAP	main speech act participant
CNT	continuative	NF	non-final
COM	comitative	NG	negation
DM	directive marker	NOM	nominaliser
ERG	ergative	PA	past (anterior)
EVD	evidential	PERF	perfect
FUT	future	PL	plural
GEN	genitive	PPOS	postposition
GER	gerundive	PRS	present (simultaneous)
hon	honorific	QT	quote marker
IMP	imperative	RM	remoteness marker
INF	inferential	SF	sentence final marker
INSTR	instrumental	TOP	topicaliser

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