



DFG Projekt

Evidentialität, epistemische Modalität
und Sprecherhaltung im Ladakischen

Evidentiality, epistemic modality,
and speaker attitude in Ladakhi

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FROM SPEAKING TO DOING –
the case of Tibetan *bya* and Kurtöp *ṅak*

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1. Introduction

The Classical Tibetan verbs $\sqrt{\text{bya}}$ and $\sqrt{\text{bgyi}}$, Old Tibetan $\sqrt{\text{brgyi}}$ both do not only mean ‘do, act’, but also ‘speak, say’. The second meaning is taken by many scholars as a mere extension of the first, as stated, e.g., by Schuessler (2007):

A few verbs with the meanings ‘to think, to say’ or other abstractions are apparently semantic extensions of verbs ‘to be, to do, to act, to go’. ... WT *byed-pa*, *byas* ‘to make, fabricate, do’ > *zes byas-pa* ‘thus said, so called’ (i.e., marks direct discourse); ... Lushei *ti^L / tiʔ^L* < *tiiʔ / tiʔ* ‘to do, perform, act, work; act towards; say; to think, consider, feel, wish’; Mandarin Chinese → *wéi³* 為 ‘do act’ in the phrase *yǐwéi* 以為 ‘to consider ..., to think’ (lit. ‘take something to be, take something for).



Similarly, Hyslop (2017: 79), suggests that the use of Kurtöp $\sqrt{\eta}ak$ as a *verbum dicendi* and as a quotative is a mere ‘extension’ from the basic meaning ‘do’, and further (p. 237), that the “main verb *ngak* ‘do’ still retains its original meaning in some contexts but is also used as a verb ‘say’”.

However, cross-linguistically, the opposite development or extension seems to be more likely, cf. Heine & Kuteva (2002).



2. From 'say' or 'speak' to 'do' and 'act'

Note: time constraints won't allow reading out the examples, they will be found in your handout.

Apologies, if it is going too fast!



2.1. Etymologically related verbs and nouns

In the case of the verb $\sqrt{\text{bya}}$ with the meaning ‘speak’, the relationship to potential cognates (inherited or loaned) is quite complex.

Elsewhere, I argue that quite a few speech-act-related verbs and nouns, including $\sqrt{\text{bya}}$ ‘speak, say’, are related through four types of sound alternations, three of which are also common in other Tibeto-Burman languages.

These concern the instability of vowels, the alternation between nasal and voiced or voiceless oral stop, the alternation of postconsonantal glides $-r \sim -y \sim -w$ (Tibetan only $\text{Cr} \sim \text{Cy}$), and the Tibetan metathesis $\text{Cr} > \text{sCr} > \text{rC}$ (Zeisler 2023).



‘speak’: *mrao >

1. smra > rma; smo-n (Tibetan metathesis) / > mV
2. *p/rao > *pya(o) > *by/wa > p/bV;

Hani (Caiyuan) /mi³¹/,

WrB: *mrwak* ~ *prwak* or *pro* ~ *prô* (/pro³/), Pattani /præi/ or /prài/,

Saker (Luish), now called Sak (Asakian) /pri/,

Rangoon /pjɔ⁵⁵/, Jinuo /pja⁴²/ or /pje³¹/, Lotha Naga /phyo/,

Tiddim /pa:u²/, Chokri (Naga) /po/ or /po³⁵/, Gurung /põq ba/,

Angami, Mikir /pu/, Athpare /pik-/, Sema (Sumi) /pi/,

Lisu, /bæ³³/ ‘speak, tell, discuss, scold’,

Lalo, Yi /bi³³/, Sani, Ahi, Yi /be³³/ or /be⁴⁴/,

Sunwar /bwa:k-/, Lushai /bia-k/ (bià-I, bîak-II) (from STEDT)*

Plus Kurtöp /bja/ ‘invite, call, summon’ (Hyslop 2017).

*Not all forms may be etymologically related, or if they are, their relationship is not necessarily one of inheritance, but could be due to (mutual) borrowing.



There are further a few Tibetan utterance-related compounds that may point to an underlying more original function as *verbum dicendi*:

bya.dgaḥ (~ *bya.sga*) ‘reward’: in the olden times, rewards were most likely proclaimed and accompanied with words of praise or ‘words’ *bya* of ‘pleasure’ *dgaḥ*.

bya.gtoñ ‘communication’ (*ḥphrin.gtoñ*) or ‘secret password’ (*gsaṅ.brda*), where *bya* can only mean ‘speak’ or ‘speech’. This expression also appears in the *Mi.la.ras.paḥi rnam.thar*, though not as a compound, but as a free combination of noun and verb, cf. *ces bya btañ* ‘thus [she] gave the information’ or ‘warning’ (Rus.paḥi Rgyan.can, ed. 1989: 41).

bya.de ‘sb. who tells secrets’ with *bya.de skyel* ‘to tell a secret (slang)’ and *bya.shor* ‘to have a secret leak out’ similarly point to the act of speaking, rather than doing.



In the case of Kurtöp $\sqrt{\eta}ak$, one can point to the etymological relationship with a set of Chinese *verba dicendi*:

語 mOC * $\eta a?$ ‘speak’, 言 mOC * ηan ‘speak, speech, talk’, and the possibly related 言, 諺 mOC * ηans ‘console’ (言); ‘saying, proverb’ (諺) (Schuessler 2007: 588).

In accordance with these forms, there is also a set of related Classical Tibetan counterparts:

ñag ~ *dñags* ‘speech, talk, word’, a derived verb *sñag(s)*, *bsñags*, *bsñag*, *sñog* ‘praise, (re-)commend, extol’, and a further nominalisation *sñags* ‘incantation, magic formula’.

Given these correspondences, there cannot be any doubt that the speech-act-related meaning of $\sqrt{\eta}ak$ is primary, and that the use as a verb of action must be secondary.



2.2. *bya* ‘to be called, read’ and *byas* ‘said’ in Classical and Old Tibetan

As is well known, the gerundive participle of stem III *bya.ba*, lit. ‘to be called’, is used for naming. This function also underlies the use of *bya.ba* with letters and more permanent inscriptions, which are *to be read out*, i.e., *to be spoken* aloud.

In the 15th-c. *Mi.la.ras.paḥi nam.thar*, there are at least two instances where the nominalised form *bya.ba* refers to the content of a letter.



(1) *Mi.la.ras.paḥi rnam.thar*

a.ma+s *na+s* *bskur-ba-ltar* *byas-pa+ḥi* *yi.ge* «...»
 mother+ERG I-ERG send-NLS-like do.PST-NLS+GEN letter

bya-ba-žig *bris-nas* *rgya* *byas-te* |
 say-NLS-LQ write-ABL seal do-LB

‘[My] mother wrote a letter, made as if I had sent it, **saying / to be read as** «...», sealed [it], and ...’ (Rus.paḥi Rgyan.can (1452–1507), ed. 1989: 42.16–43.3)

(2) *Mi.la.ras.paḥi rnam.thar*

yi.ge *sprad-pa* *zur-žig-tu* *bklags-pa+s* «...»
 letter deliver.PST-NLS side-LQ-LOC read.PST-NLS+INSTR

bya-ba-žig *ḥdug-pa+s* | *yi.ge+ḥi* *don-ni* *ma-go*
 say-NLS-LQ exis-NLS+INSTR letter+GEN sense-TOP NG-understand

‘When [I] read the letter given [to me] aside, it was one **saying / to be read as** «...»; [but] I did not understand the sense of the letter.’ (Rus.paḥi Rgyan.can, ed., 1989: 43.11–44.3)



The 13th-c. *Biography of Dharmasvāmin*, shows the same use of *bya.ba* with an inscription:

(3) Biography of Dharmasvāmin, Aśoka legend

bltas-pa+s

look.PST-NLS+INSTR

sgrom.chuñ-žig-gi.steñ.na

box.small-LQ-PPOS:above

yi.ge

letter

ḥdug-pa-la

EVD.exist-NLS-ALL

«*ma-ḥoñs-pa+ḥi*

NG-come.PST-NLS+GEN

dus-su

time-LOC

rgyal.po dbul.po dbul.po-žig-gis

king

poor

poor-LQ-ERG

rñed-pa+r-ḥgyur-ro»

find-NLS+LOC-become.PRS-SF

bya-ba

say-NLS

ḥdug-pa+s

EVD.exist-NLS-INSTR

rgyal.po khro-ste

king

be.angry-LB

...

...

‘and when [they] had a look, there was an inscription on a small box, and when it became apparent that it **said/ was to be read as:** “In the future, a very destitute king will obtain it”, the king became furious.’ (see Champa Thupten Zongtse 1981: 98, 100)



In these cases, an interpretation as ‘to be said’ in the sense of ‘to be read as’ fits much better than an interpretation as ‘to be done’.

After all, a letter (or an inscription) is no longer *to be done*, it *is done*. A letter (or an inscription) itself is also not doing or saying anything. If it did so, then stem II *byas* should be used in a narrative.

What is still to be done, and to be done by a human being, is the reading; and in all likelihood this was done aloud.*

*Cf. the European tradition: *Scholars assume that reading aloud (Latin clare legere) was the more common practice in antiquity, and that reading silently (legere tacite or legere sibi) was unusual.*[8] *In his Confessions, Saint Augustine remarks on Saint Ambrose's unusual habit of reading silently in the 4th century AD.* (Wikipedia)



Stem II *byas* is commonly found in Old and Classical Tibetan texts as one of the various *verba dicendi* that may be used after a citation.

In the Old Tibetan texts, while there is a general preference for diversification, the use of different *verba dicendi* differentiates between different speakers in dialogues or settings with more than two speakers.

In at least some Classical texts, this strategy is used more systematically to describe differences of status or differences of focus and empathy between two dialogue partners.



In the following text fragment from the 13th century, the dialogue partners are a group of elders who are in search of a ruler, still the narrative focus and closer to the implied ‘we Tibetans’ than the second speaker, at that moment still a complete stranger (even though he eventually becomes the first ruler according to the legend). For the speech of the elders *byas* is used, for the stranger the speech introduction *na.re* and closing *zer* are used.



(4) *Rgya-Bod.kyi chos.ḥbyuñ rgyas.pa*

«*ḥo.na phyag.sor-dañ*

now hon.hand.finger-COM

lce no.mtshar che-ba

tongue marvelous be.big.PRS-NLS

gcig ḥdug-pa |

one EVD.exist-NLS

khyod-la nus.mthu ḥdra.ba ci-yod» byas-pa+s |

you-ALL power be.like-NLS QM-have say.PST-NLS+INSTR

kho na.re «nus.mthu-dañ rdzu.ḥphrul che drags.po+s

he INTRO «power-COM magic be.big.PRS very+INSTR

bšugs.pa yin» zer |

?strength.possessing be say

«*ḥo ned-kyi rje bcol-lo» byas-nas |*

well we-GEN lord appoint.GRD-SF say.PST-ABL

‘«Now, [you], who (surprisingly/ apparently) has a very wonderful tongue and fingers, do you [also] have corresponding powers?»

When saying this, he **replied, saying**: «[Yes,] [I] am potent (?) with very great magic powers.» «Well then, [we] should appoint [him/you] as our lord», **having said** [this] ...’ (Mkhas.pa Lde.ḥu (fl. 13th c. ?), after 1261, ed. 1987: 226-227.)



In the *Biography of Dharmasvāmin* (Roerich 1959), likewise from the 13th century, one finds a similar strategy. In the legend of Kalidasa, who allegedly began as an idiot, who literally sawed off the branch upon which he sat, one can find the use of *byas* for persons of relatively higher status speaking to persons of relatively lower status, who then reply with *zer* ($\pm na.re$).

The status asymmetries (high vs. low) are as follows:

a king (*byas*) vs. his daughter (*na.re* + *zer*),

a pandit (*byas*) vs. the king (*zer*),

an idiot (Kalidasa to be) at the court only stammering (*zer*),

and the newly gifted Kalidasa (*byas*) vs. the king's daughter.



In the *Mi.la.ras.paḥi rnam.thar*, one can observe a further perfection of the person-related distribution with five *verba dicendi*:

gsuñ, *gsuñs* ‘hon. speak’ for speech acts of narrated speakers of high status,

žu, *žus* ‘request’ for narrated speakers addressing persons of higher status, and

gyis ‘tell!’ for commands,

zer ‘say’ is used for narrated speakers of equal or lower status than the main narrator,

byas ‘spoke, told, said’ is used mainly for the main narrator’s (i.e., *Mi.la.ras.pa*’s) utterances towards equals or persons of lower status, e.g., *Mi.la* talking to his sister, (5).



(5) *Mi.la.ras.paḥi rnam.thar*

«*khyed mi yin-nam ḥdre yin*» *zer* |
 you human be-QM ghost be say(3P)

«*na mi.la thos.pa.dgaḥ yin*» *byas-pa+s*
 I Mila 'Happy-to-hear' be say(1P).PST-NLS+INSTR

'[Pe.ta, Mi.la's sister] **asked**: «Are you a human or a ghost?» When [I] **said**, «I am Mi.la 'Happy-to-hear',» ...' (Rus.paḥi Rgyan.can, ed. 1989: 158)

byas is also used for a narrated speaker referring to his/her own speech (the teacher Mar.pa), and, in the case of two narrated speakers of equal status, for the person more closely associated with the main narrator, e.g., Mi.la's sister in a conversation with their aunt, (6).



(6) *Mi.la.ras.paḥi rnam.thar*

a.ne zam.sna+r sleb-byuñ-ste |
aunt bridge.end+LOC arrive-come-LB

«*tsha.mo zam.pa ma-sdog-cig a.ne yoñ-gi-yod-do*» *zer-ba-la |*
niece bridge NG-remove-DM aunt come-CNT-exist-FM» say(3P.low)-NLS-ALL

«*de.ka+s sdog-pa-yin*» *byas-pa+s |*
that.exactly+INSTR remove-NLS-be say(3P.high).PST-NLS+INSTR

«*tsha.mo bden-te | [...] zam.pa tshugs | mi-ḥjugs-na...*
niece be.true-LB bridge insert.IMP NG-insert-CD

a.jo-la <na sleb-ḥdug> gyis-dañ» zer-ba+s ...
elder.brother-ALL I arrive-ADM.exist say.IMP-DM say(3P.low)-NLS+INSTR

‘The aunt appeared at one end of the bridge, and when she **said (low empathy)**: «Niece, don’t remove the bridge, [your] aunt is coming», [Pe.ta] **answered (high empathy)**: «Exactly because of that I’ll remove the bridge», upon which [the aunt] **said (low empathy)**: «Niece, you are right but ... Put the bridge in place! If you don’t [want to] put [it] in place, then [at least] tell [your] elder brother <(that you have seen) that I have arrived!», and then ...’
(Rus.paḥi Rgyan.can, ed. 1989, p. 180)



This distribution shows that for the classical authors *byas* was still an ordinary *verbum dicendi*.

Whether it is the speaker or the person closest to the speaker or narrator, whether it is the main personage of the narrative, or whether it is the person of relatively higher status in the dialogue, the choice of *byas* in contrast to *zer* reflects the distinction, and/ or differences in empathy.

In my opinion, it would be rather odd not to use a verb of speaking to mark the distinction, but to use an every-day verb for unspecified 'doing' instead. The use of *byas* for the distinguished speaker may be due to a higher register in which an old-fashioned and, in ordinary speech, obsolete word could have been preserved.



In the legend about the first ruler of example (4) above, the elders suggest that because of the latter's marvellous features, they should *make* him king. This is not so much a doing but a proclamation or invitation.

In (4), *ḥchol* 'appoint' is used. Other variants of the same legend may have again *ḥchol* 'appoint' (7), *žu* 'request' (8), or *bya* (9) and (10).



(7) *Rgyal.rabs gsal.baḥi meloṅ*

«*ḥdi-ni nam.khaḥ-nas ḥoṅs-pa+ḥi*
 this-TOP heaven-ABL go.PST-NLS+GEN

lha.sras yin-pa+r-ḥdug-pa+s |
 god.son be-NLS+LOC-EVD.exist-NLS+INSTR

ḥo.cag-rnams-kyi rje ḥchol-lo» zer-te |
 we-excl-PL-GEN lord appoint.PRS-SF say-LB

‘«As this one appears/ seems to be/ looks like/ is probably a son of the gods who has come from the heavens, let [us] appoint him as our lord!», [they] said and ...’ (Sa.skya Bsod.nams rgyal.mtshan (1312-1375)

(8) *Mkhas.paḥi dgah.ston*

«*lha.yul gnam-nas ḥoṅs-pa+ḥi btsan.po+r ḥdug |*
 god.land heaven-ABL come.PST-NLS+GEN scion+LOC EVD.be

ḥdi-la bdag.cag rje.bo ḥu-dgos» zer ||
 this-ALL we.excl lord hum.request-need say

‘«[He] appears/ seems to be/ is probably a scion who has come from the country of gods, the heaven. We should request him [to become our] lord», [they] said’. (Dpaḥ.bo Gtsug.lag Hphreṅ.ba (ca.1504–1566)



(9) *Bšad.mdzod yid.bžin nor.bu*

«*ḥdi lha+ḥi yul-nas ḥoñ[s]-pa-ḥdug* |
 this god+GEN place-ABL come.PST-NLS-EVD.exist

ñe.rañ-gi rje bya+ḥo» žes |
 we.self-GEN lord do/say.GRD-SF QOM

‘«This one] appears/ seems to have come/ most probably came from the land of the gods. We should **make/ proclaim** [him] our own lord!» So [they said.]’ (Anonymous, 1400s, see Haarh 1969)

(10) *Chos.ḥbyuñ me.tog sñiñ.po*

«*ḥdi-ni gnam-las byon-pa+ḥi btsan.po ño.mtshar.can-žig*
 this-TOP sky-ABL hon.arrive.PST-NLS+GEN scion marvellous-LQ

ḥdug-pa+s | *ḥo-rnams-kyi jo.bo bya+ḥo» zer-te* |
 evd.be-NLS+INSTR we.excl-PL-GEN lord do/say.GRD+SF» say-LB

‘«As this one appears to be a marvellous scion, who has arrived from the heavens, [we] should **make/ proclaim** him our lord», [they] said and ..’. (Ñañ.ral Ñi.ma Ḥod.zer (1124–1192), ca. 1175–90, ed. 1988: 159)



This parallelism indicates that the latter verb also refers to an act of communication. After all, one does not *make* a ruler like one makes or produces, say, a pot or a statue of clay.

One has to introduce him(/her), explain about him(/her), get his(/her) consent, then, together with some magical formulae and other ritual performances, (s/)he is publicly proclaimed as ruler.



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If one accepts the verb $\sqrt{\text{bya}}$ as a genuine *verbum dicendi*, then one can find suitable full verb usages, apart from citations, also in the Old Tibetan documents. At the very least, it becomes difficult to decide whether we deal with an utterance or with an activity.

In (11), two tribal leaders have become discontent with their lord. They decide to join the upcoming ruler of Spu on the other side of the river. This is the beginning of the historical lineage of the Tibetan emperors. When the two men approach their new overlord, they must *declare* their loyalty to him, before they can show it through their acts.



(11) Old Tibetan Chronicle, ll. 153–154

<i>ḥuñ.nas</i>		<i>myañ dbaḥs</i>	<i>gñis</i>	<i>ziñ.po.rje-las</i>	<i>ḥkhus-te</i>
then		Myañ Dbahs	both	Ziñ.po.rje-ABL	contend.PST-LB
<i>btsan.po</i>	<i>spu.rgyal-la</i>	<i>glo.ba</i>	<i>ñe.ba+r</i>	<i>byas-nas</i>	
scion	Spu.ruler-ALL	mind	near+LOC	do/say-ABL	

‘Then Myañ [and] Dbahs, the two, defected from Ziñ.po.rje and made (?) themselves loyal to the ruler of the Spu, the [true] scion.’ Or perhaps better: ‘and **pronounced/ declared** their loyalty to the ruler of the Spu’.



Given the political importance of formalised speech acts in general, and more particularly in the archaic aristocratic society of Tibet, it is rather unlikely that in this context an every-day verb of doing is used with an extended meaning, rather than a genuine *verbum dicendi* of high reputation.



3. The path: from saying via thinking and conjunctions to acting

Saxena (1988) has shown for several Tibeto-Burman languages that verbs with the meaning ‘say’ may develop various functions, some of which are seemingly unrelated to the notion of speaking. Among the related functions she mentions:

- a) naming or labelling,
- b) ‘quotative’ and ‘evidentiality’, that is, marking of personalized and impersonal or unspecific hearsay information,
- c) onomatopoetic expressions,
- d) the causal conjunction ‘if you say why’ for reasons or causation, and



These are attested in Ladakhi and more generally in the Tibetic languages and in Kurtöp.

a) CT: with frozen quote verb *ces* ‘such’: *ces bya.bahi* X ‘the one to be called X’, Balti: *zer-b.i* X, Ladakhi: *zer-k(h)an-e* X ‘called X (say-NLS-GEN)’; Kurtöp: *sako tsho ṅak-khan-gi* ‘(the lake) called Sako Lake’ (say-NLS-GEN) (Hyslop 2017: 116, ex. 101)

b) CT: with frozen quote verb *ces* ‘such’: *ces byas* ‘such said’, LT: *-s* (< *zer*), Balti, Ladakhi: *lo, zer(s)* ‘said’; Kurtöp *ṅaksi wenta* ‘is said’ (say-NF be) (Hyslop 2017, e.g., p. 76, ex. 23)

c) Ladakhi: e.g., *thu zer!* ‘say thou!’, i.e., ‘spit!’, Kurtöp: *taṅkalin tonkalin ṅaksi* ‘saying dingeling dongeling’ (say-NF) (Hyslop 2017: 85, ex. 54)

d) CT only with frozen quote verb: *ce-na* ‘if [someone] says’ Balti *tfa zerbana*, Ladakhi *tfa zerna* ‘why say’; Kurtöp: *zhâ ṅaksi* ‘why’ (what say-NF) (Hyslop 2017: 168, ex. 229)



Among the seemingly less related functions, Saxena (1988) mentions:

- e) question word complementizer and embedded questions,
- f) purpose conjunction,
- g) conditional conjunction,
- h) marking of deliberate acting, and
- i) “expletive” (possibly the same as d) above).

Functions e) to g), might be described more generally as a strategy for extracting embedded propositions.



3.1. The first part: *zer(d)e* in West Tibetan

As for embedded propositions e), Ladakhi speakers clearly prefer a “direct” quote closed with an adverbial form *zere* or *zerde* (say-LB) to embedded nominal constructions, cf. examples (12) with embedding and (13) with the *zer(d)e*-construction.

(12) Shamskat, dialect of Teya (Lower Ladakh)

gergan-is thugu-un-la ma-sil-khan-ifia jat şoks.
 teacher-ERG child-PL-ALL NG-study-NLS-PPOS memory frighten.PST

‘The teacher scolded the children harshly for not having studied’.
 (Possible, but not common.)

(13) Shamskat, dialect of Teya (Lower Ladakh)

gergan-is thugu-un-la, «sil-ma-sil-ba!» zer-e, jat şoks.
 teacher-ERG child-PL-ALL study-NG-study-emph say-LB memory frighten.PST

‘The teacher scolded the children harshly, saying: «[You] did not study at all!» (Preferred construction.)



In the West Tibetan languages, the non-finite form *zer(d)e* may also be used to extract mere thoughts (14) and (15).

(14) Ladakhi, dialect of Domkhar (Shamskat)

<i>danʃfik</i>	<i>ŋ+i</i>	<i>gaʃi</i>	<i>ʀku-se-kher-tsoʃk.</i>
some.days.ago	I+GEN	car	steal-LB-take.away-PST.INF
« <i>su-s</i>	<i>khers</i> »	<i>zer-e</i>	<i>samba tʰaŋ-tšana,</i> ...
who-ERG	take.away.PST	say-LB	thought give.PRS-when

‘Some days ago, my car was stolen. When I thought about who [could] have stolen [it], ...’ Lit.: When I thought about [it], **saying [to myself]**: ‘Who [could] have stolen [it]’, ...’

(15) Purikpa, dialect of Kargilo

<i>spin-a</i>	<i>doʃs-et,</i>	<i>samba</i>	<i>maŋmo</i>	<i>joŋ-et,</i>
heart-ALL	be.irritated-ASS	thought	a.lot	come-ASS
<i>tʃi</i>	<i>bo-ok</i>	<i>zer-e.</i>		
what	do-POT	say-LB		

‘(I) have sorrows, (I) have a lot of thoughts, **saying [to myself]** ‘what should I do?’ (Zemp 2018: 529, ex. 628, adapted, my translation)



Saxena (1988: 383) points to the use of *zere* for the complementiser function e) and the purposive function f) in what she calls “Ladakhi,” but which is a Baltipa dialect of Khaplu in Pakistan (cf. Read 1934: 67). The purposive function f), as in (16), is not commonly used in the Ladakhi dialects,* but I have observed it in a Baltipa dialect spoken in Ladakh, cf. (17) and (18). Bashir (1996) gives further examples for the dialect of Skardo. Read (1934: 67), accordingly treats *zere* as a fullfledged conjunction.

*We find *zer(d)e* with prayers, where it can be still be interpreted literally. In the context of consulting a doctor, some speakers use *zer(d)e* for the implied wish that the visit may yield an improvement of his/her or his/her child’s condition, e.g., dialect of Sumur (Shamskat): «*phan-tjik!*» *zer-tse, thuu doktar-la stan-pin*. ‘[In the hope/ wishing] **that** [he] will recover’, I showed [my] child to a doctor. One speaker from Fadum also mentioned a conventionalised use with *putting a padlock in order that no thief will come in or rather: thinking/ hoping that ...*



(16) Baltipa, dialect of Khaplu (Pakistan)

kho-la lam-la tʃa+ŋ kif-kif mi-go zer-e,
he-AES road-ALL what+FM problem NG-need say-LB

ŋa-si ŋ+i bizb+o jambo taŋs.
I-ERG I+GEN servant+DF together give.PST

‘**In order that** he might have no trouble on the road, I sent my servant with him’. (Adapted from Read 1934: 67, cf. Saxena 1988: 383). Alternative translations could be ‘**Saying:** «there is no need for you to have trouble on the way»,/ **Thinking** [i.e., saying to myself]: ‘he does not need to have trouble’, I sent a servant with him’.



(17) Baltipa, dialect of Tyaksi (India)

rdos-po mi ljax-la doafari intsuk : rdos tan-se-met-na,
 lock-DF person good-ALL therefore be-INF/DST lock apply-LB-NG.EXIST=PERF-CD

de nan-p+eanu ljaxmo laxse thon-na,
 that room-DF+PPOS good thing see-CD

kho-e-san spin khjor-et. ...
 he-GEN-fm heart go.astray-ASS=PRS

rkunma-la rdos-i tʃan rtsiruk-tʃi met.
 thief-AES lock-GEN what.at.all esteem-LQ NG.have.ASS

amma mi ljax-la spin khjor-et **zer-e,**
 but person good-AES heart go.astray-ASS=PRS **say-LB**

rdos tan-ma-in-tsuk.
 lock apply-NLS-CP-INF/DST

‘The lock is [only] for the reputable persons because of that: if a lock is not applied, [one who] sees a precious thing, will yield to temptation (lit. his heart will go astray). ... The thief has no respect at all for a lock, but **lest** a reputable person’s heart may go astray, [one] applies a lock’. Lit. ‘saying/ thinking that ‹a reputable person’s heart may go astray›, one applies a lock’.



(18) Baltipa, dialect of Tyaksi (India)

safar-i *stranb-i* *bale* *ataapo+n-ena*
 safar-GEN street-GEN soup father.grandfather+PL-PPOS:ABL

drul-en-jot-p+i *las'tsir-tfik* *in-tsuk.*
 go-CNT-EX-DF+GEN work.row-LQ be-INF/DST

d+o *defila* *in-tsuk :*
 that+DF that.for be-INF/DST(=GEM)

bala-bantfat-na *strun-se-duk-tfik!* *zer-e.*
 accident-calamity-ABL protect-LB-stay-DM say-LB

‘The ‘street soup’ of the second Islamic month (*şafar*)’ is a tradition that comes from our forefathers. That one is for that [reason]: **that** it may protect against all calamities [associated with this month].’

Note “=” is used for “equals”; it does not mark clitics; the latter will be marked as “..” further below.



3.2. Use of $\sqrt{\text{bya}}$ as conjunction and for thinking

In Standard Spoken Tibetan, the verb form *byas* /tɕhɛ̃i/ can be used to chain items in enumerations of the type X *byas*, Y *byas*, then Z ..., here example (19), and as a clause-chaining conjunction, indicating sequentiality, and as connector for a durative construction with *bsdad* ‘stay’, here example (20).

In the first case, the meaning ‘do’ is less appropriate than a notion of thinking or saying, and in the second case, which may have developed from the enumerative function ‘that said’, the lexical meaning is completely bleached out, and this seems to be the stage that may lead from one meaning (‘say’) to the other (‘do’).



(19) Standard Spoken Tibetan (Tournadre, Sangda Dorje 2003)

spags byas, lug.ša bcos.pa byas,
 kneaded.tsampa done/said mutton.meat boiled done/said

de.nas žo byuñ-na, ḥgrig-gi.min-gro.
 then curd appear-CD be.ok-NG.FUT-PROB

‘Kneaded tsampa, that done/ said, boiled mutton, that done/ said;
 then with some yogurt, that should be enough’.

(20) Standard Spoken Tibetan (Tournadre, Sangda Dorje 2003)

kha.lag rgyas.po že.drags bzas -byas,
 food extensive very eat.PST -CONJ

gžas.rnam.thar btañ -byas- bstad-kyi.red.
 opera.song give -CONJ- stay-FACT.FUT

‘When they’ve eaten well, they sit and sing songs from the Tibetan opera’. Or rather: “they sing songs from the Tibetan opera for quite a while.” – Perhaps originally: ‘They have eaten well, that said, they sit and sing...’



(21) Standard Spoken Tibetan (Delancey 1991: 3, ex. 1, adapted)

kho *bro*s *-byas*
 he flee.PST -NF

kho+s *mar* *bro*s-*tshar*-*dus* *gañ.la.yañ*
 he+ERG down flee.PST-finish-while wherever

rgyal.sgo+*hi* *phyi.logs-la* *don-tshar-nas*
 gate+GEN outside.LOC emerge-finish-NF

ʔani *kho*+s *skad* *brgyab* *-byas*
 well, he+ERG voice do.PST -NF

«*btsun.mo*+*hi* *gos.thuñ* *r[k]un.ma* *rkus-yod-ḥgro-ba*»-*ze*
 queen+GEN pants theft steal.PST-EX=PERF-PROB-NLS-QUOT

ʔani *kho* *bro*s-*yoñs-pa.red*
 well, he flee.PST-come.PST-FACT.PST

‘He fled, and that done/ said, when he had come (lit. completely fled) down [the stairs], having gotten outside of the gate, well, he called out: «the queen’s pants have been stolen!», and that done/ said, well, he ran away [back home]’.



The past tense form *byas* has also been observed as representing thoughts. Justifiably, Vokurková (2008) treats it as an instantiation of the verb ‘do’, and analyses the phrase *byas-na* as “if I did”. However, the phrase might be equally reinterpreted as ‘if I said’ or more loosely as ‘I’d say’.

(22) Standard Spoken Tibetan (Vokurková 2008: 148, ex. 186, adapted)

<i>ña-s</i>	<i>byas-na</i>	<i>khoñ</i>	<i>nañ-la</i>	<i>yod.ma.red.</i>
I-ERG	do.PST-CD	s/he.hon	home-ALL	NG.FACT.exist

‘I don’t think he is at home./ In my opinion, he is not at home’. Lit.: ‘As I said (to myself)/ thought he is not at home.’ Or: ‘I’d say he is not at home’.



3.3. The Kurtöp data

A closer look at the Kurtöp data reveals a complex picture. First of all, */ŋak/* as a lexical verb unrelated to speaking does not simply mean ‘do’. Several of Hyslop’s examples point to a broader meaning ‘happen, be the case’, see (23)–(25), even ‘be, exist (at a certain place)’, see (26)–(28):



(23) Kurtöp

<i>dasum</i>	<i>ɕa:</i>	<i>ɲak</i>	<i>wɔ</i>	<i>ɲak-si</i>
today	what	<i>ɲak</i>	QM	<i>ɲak</i> -NF

‘What **happened** today [she] said’. (Excerpt, adapted from Hyslop 2017: 309, ex. 561.)

(24) Kurtöp

<i>ɕa:-jaŋ</i>	<i>ma-ɲak-na</i>
what-also	NG- <i>ɲak</i> -PST/ANT.LPO*

‘Nothing **happened** at all’. (Adapted from Hyslop 2017: 79 ex. 35.)

(25) Kurtöp

<i>woksoso</i>	<i>ɲak-pala</i>
this.much	<i>ɲak</i> -NLS

‘It **will be** this much’. (Adapted from Hyslop 2017: 289, ex. 516.)

*Note “LPO” stands for limited personal observation, Hyslop’s ‘mirative’; “..” is used for clitics.



(26) Kurtöp

khako *ɲak-nani* *tsama* *gor-ta*
 uphill *ɲak-COND* some take.time-PRS/SIM.LPO

‘If it is [located] uphill, it takes a while’. (Adapted from Hyslop 2017: 144, ex. 169.)

(27) Kurtöp

mau chötshok *ɲak-si* *dethoni* *ɲaŋ-na*
 down religious.office *ɲak-NF* immediately receive-PST.LPO

‘As their religious office is/ was [located] down there, [we] got [it] immediately’. (Adapted from Hyslop 2017: 351, ex. 652.)

(28) Kurtöp

khwe thamca rō·na *ɲak*
 water all valley·LOC *ɲak*

‘All water being [located] in the valley...’ (Adapted from Hyslop 2017: 141, ex. 160.)



Like *zer(d)e* in West Tibetan, it is very common in Kurtöp to use *ḡaksi* as an unspecific (and bleached) *verbum dicendi* before more specific *verba dicendi* or other speech-related verbs, such as insist, persuade, etc.

(29) Kurtöp

<i>ḡai</i>	<i>kwa</i>	<i>ḡak-si</i>	<i>lap-male</i>
I.ERG	tooth	<i>ḡak-NF</i>	tell-NLS

‘I will utter, (by) saying: «tooth»’. ≈ ‘I will utter the word [for] «tooth»’. (Adapted from Hyslop 2017: 237, ex. 391.)

(30) Kurtöp

<i>ciḡku·gi</i>	<i>ga·na</i>	<i>nāmlo</i>	<i>ḡak-si</i>	<i>çu-male</i>
small·GEN	time·LOC	year	<i>ḡak-NF</i>	hum.say-NLS

‘To tell, (by) saying: «at the time, the year, when [we] were small»’ (Adapted from Hyslop 2017: 236, ex. 390.)



(31) Kurtöp

khit pra ɟur-lu ηak-si mōlam tap-si
s/he monkey become-IMP *ηak*-NF prayer do-NF

‘uttered a prayer, (by) saying: «turn into a monkey!», and...’ ≈
‘prayed **that** she should become a monkey, and ...’ (Adapted from
Hyslop 2017: 372, ex. 705.)



(32) Kurtöp

tshe daruŋ boi phi-je-ni ŋak ūr-si
 DM again they.ERG open-IMP-ABL/COM *ŋak* pressurise-NF

tshe naŋ·gi ko·jaŋ phi-si ŋak-mo
 DM inside·GEN door·also open-NF do-CT

tshe tshe çākhwi mu: ŋak lap-si
 DM DM hunting.dog NG.exist *ŋak* say-NF

tshe wo·niŋ naŋ·i norbu me-go ŋak
 DM DEM·ABL inside·GEN jewel NG-want *ŋak*

boi ŋiku thuŋ-si
 they.ERG deception do-NF

‘And again they [the king’s assistants] **insisted**, **saying**: «open the door», and then, when the inside door was opened, and then —, then [the couple] **told** [them], **saying**: «there is no hunting dog» and then they [the king’s assistants] **deceived** [the couple], **saying**: «[we] don’t want your jewel inside» and ...’ (Excerpt, adapted from Hyslop 2017: 347f., ex. 646.)



Related to this is the likewise very common use of *ŋak* or *ŋak* alone to close up propositions that are embedded under mental verbs as if they were direct thoughts spoken aloud. The proposition is indicated here with angled brackets.

(33) Kurtöp

tshewan·gi <*karma·gi khit·na ga*> *ŋak* *bran-ta*
 Tshewang·ERG <Karma·ERG s/he·LOC like> *ŋak* know-PRS/SIM.LPO

‘Tshewang knows **that** <Karma loves him>’. (Adapted from Hyslop 2017: 95, ex. 61.)

(34) Kurtöp

<*ŋara·ko·ja[ŋ] nēn go-ikina*> *ŋak* *sam-si*
 <I.self·LOC·also marriage need-FUT/POST> *ŋak* think-NF

‘Thinking **that** <I also need a marriage>...’ (Adapted from Hyslop 2017: 187, ex. 274.)



(35) Kurtöp

da ro ṅak-mo tshe
now corpse ṅak-CT DM

da <nor·gi aaa mahe·gi the wen-ta>
now <cow·GEN umm water.buffalo·GEN INDEF be-LPO

ṅak nōksam thun
ṅak thought do

‘Now when (we) say «corpse», now (we) **should think** of it **as** <a cow’s ... umm ... a water buffalo’s corpse>’. (Adapted from Hyslop 2017: 220, ex. 343.)



Finally, *ṅak* may also follow other verbs. Depending on what affix follows, *ṅak* may function as a temporal coordinating conjunction, (32), line 2, and (36) to (38), but it may also indicate a more abstract causal relationship or reason (39). The coordinating conjunction corresponds to the use of Standard Spoken Tibetan /tɕɛ̃/ (< *byas*) for clause chaining, exx. (20) and (21) above.

(36) Kurtöp

bas·gi su·ko ge ṅak-si dot ni-pala
bus·GEN below·LOC go *ṅak-NF* sleep stay-NLS

‘[I] went under the bus **and** [then] slept there’. (Adapted from Hyslop 2017: 112, ex. 88.)



(37) Kurtöp

tshe tshoŋ·na ge ɲak-si tshe lok ra-taki wen-ta
 DM business·LOC go do-NF DM return come-PRS/SIM be-LPO

‘[He] had gone for business **and** [thereafter] was coming back’.
 (Adapted from Hyslop 2017: 350, ex. 651.)

(38) Kurtöp

chorten-the kora thun ɲak-mo
 chorten-INDEF circling do ɲak-CT

mi-the ra-ta·ri
 man-INDEF come-PRS/SIM-LPO·REP

‘Reportedly, a man came, **while** [she] was circumambulating the chorten’. (Adapted from Hyslop 2017: 290, ex. 522.)



(39) Kurtöp

da net daru natpa ta-ro ge-taki ηa-kini
now we now sick.person see-GRD go-PRS/SIM ηak-SEQ

da chomawo gapo nāmisami khor-male mû
now gift this PL.FOC very take-NLS NG.exist

‘Now, **because** we were going to see a sick person, we didn’t take many gifts’. (Adapted from Hyslop 2017: 339, ex. 634.)



4. Conclusion

The examples of Kurtöp *lŋakl* and West Tibetan *zer* corroborate the development from speaking to doing via thinking and intermediate bleaching as conjunction.

While the intermediate step, the use of a conjunction, particularly for embedded propositions, is completely unattested in the case of $\sqrt{b(r)gyi}$, and only marginally reconstructable for \sqrt{bya} , the Kurtöp verb $\sqrt{lŋak}$ not only shows a use as a conjunction, but it also has a clear etymological base as *verbum dicendi*.

In the case of *zer*, which seems to be in the initial stage of becoming a mere conjunction, there is likewise no doubt that we deal with a verb of saying and not of doing.



The Tibetan verb $\sqrt{\text{bya}}$ as a *verbum dicendi* has an immediate counterpart in Kurtöp /bja/ ‘invite, call, summon’, has other cognates, and its basic utterance-related meaning also shows up in some nominal compounds. Traces of the development into a conjunction are still found in Standard Spoken Tibetan.

It is uncontested that the Old and Classical Tibetan verb forms *bya* and *byas* are commonly used as *verba dicendi*, but there are also ambiguous cases, where our preconceptions about whether such usage is just a secondary meaning extension or the original meaning of $\sqrt{\text{bya}}$ lead to different results.

It may thus be expedient not to take the meaning ‘do’ always as the self-evident default meaning.



Following Saxena (1988), one can sketch a general path-way for the development from speaking to doing, that may apply also to other such doublets, as in Lushei or elsewhere in the Tibeto-Burman languages:*

(specific type of utterance) > unspecific saying > extraction of embedded propositions <> thinking > conjunction > unspecific state of affairs > unspecific doing and acting (> making).

*Similarly, Campell (2008) describes the first part, namely the development from SAY into a conjunction for various Sinitic languages.