



Evidentiality and inferentiality: Overlapping and contradictory functions of the so-called evidential markers in Ladakhi (West Tibetan)

The Nature of Evidentiality

Leiden 2012

The Tibetan speaking area

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L'AIRE LINGUISTIQUE TIBÉTAINE
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- Aire linguistique tibétaine
- Frontière internationale
- Limite provinciale
- Limite des circonscriptions

Tsang (བཅའ་བོ) Dialecte tibétain (province historique)

SIKKIM Autre province ou État

Chengdu Capitale d'État ou de province

Sakya Ville principale tibétaine

1 : 12 500 000

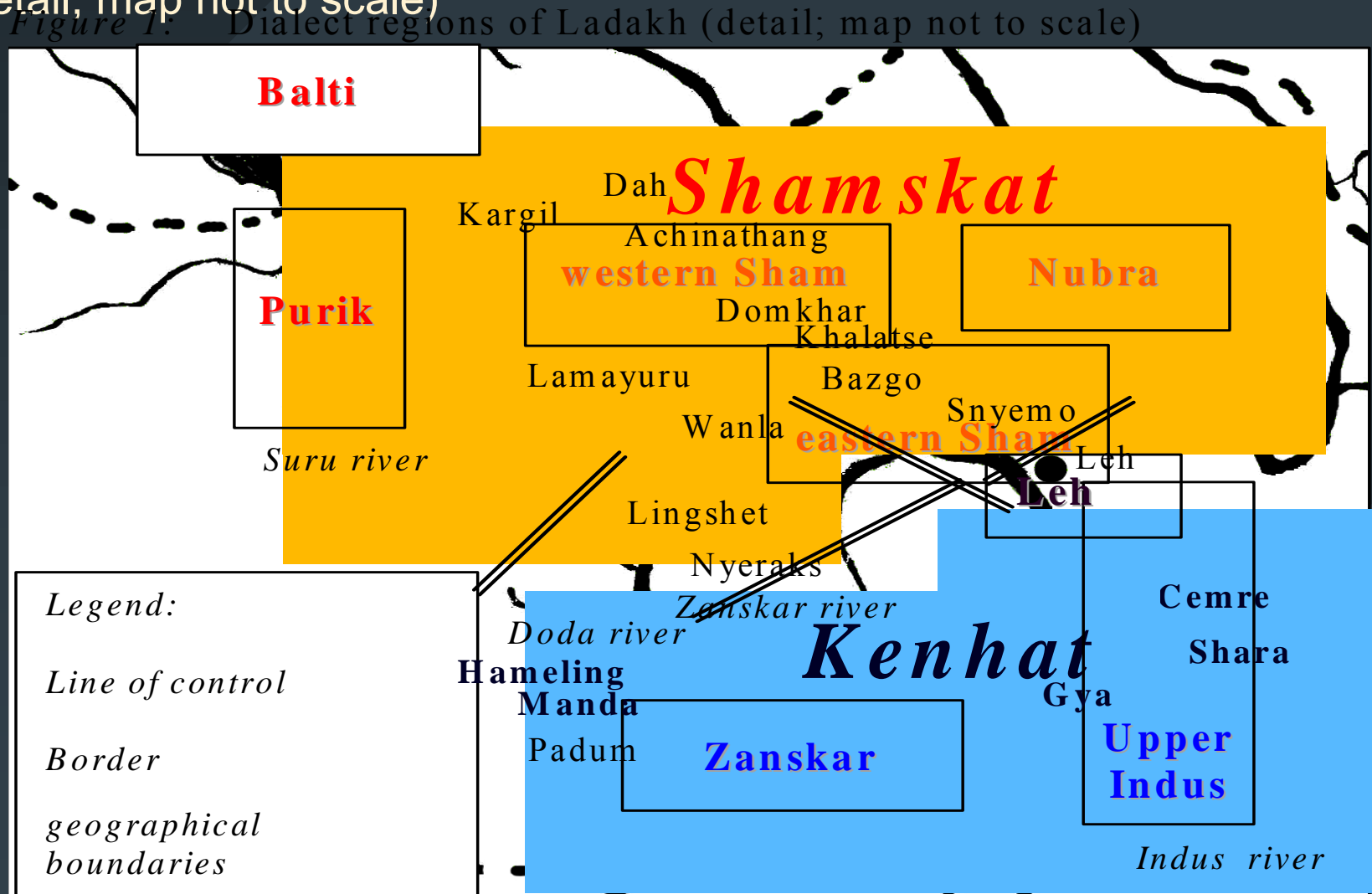
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Map by Chr. Gigaudaut for Tournadre and Sangda Dorje (1998: 6)



Dialect regions of Ladakh

(detail; map not to scale)





1. Evidentiality in Tibetan



- The marking of sources of knowledge is a grammatical feature in the modern Tibetan languages – except Balti – to the extent that a speaker obligatorily has to make a choice between two sets of markers. These markers typically consist of attributive and existential linking verbs, which are also used as auxiliaries in many or all TM(A) constructions.

- **Set I** typically contains the modern forms of the classical linking verbs *yod* ‘exist (in some location)’ and *yin* ‘be (a certain item, of a certain property)’, **set II** the verb *hdug* ‘sit, stay, live’ and in most varieties also *red* (of unknown origin).

MSAP: main speech act participant (“ego”), i.e., the speaker in assertions, the addressee in questions.

function	set I controlled by MSAP/ not directly observed	set II all others/ directly observed
<u>copula</u> , future, past	<i>yin</i>	<i>red</i>
<u>existential</u> , present, perfect	<i>yod</i>	<i>hdug</i>



- The individual Tibetan varieties show a certain variation on this general theme, such as
 - a different choice of auxiliaries,
 - use of additional light verbs (e.g. *byun* 'come' > observed, directed towards MSAP, *son* 'go' > observed, directed away from MSAP, *šag* 'put down' > resultative),
 - or a different functional distribution in or across the various semantic or functional domains.





- Roughly speaking, set I auxiliaries indicate situations that are
 - a) **familiar** to, or **controlled** by, the MSAP; not based on immediate perception; typically the MSAP's [+control] actions;
=> **warranted knowledge**, certain, **authoritative**, best possible grounds

Or, in combination with further morphemes:

- b) habitual and generic facts
- c) **inferred** or generally known
- d) **mirative** (unexpected or questionable) narrative (irrelevant for the present)



- **Set II auxiliaries indicate**
that the knowledge is based on some kind of **immediate perception** and/ or
that the situation was **not controlled by the MSAP**,
that is,
[−control] events relating to the MSAP
(perceptions, accomplishments, accidents, etc.),
[±control] events of non-MSAPs.



- There is a certain flexibility in the use of the markers, allowing the MSAP to indicate with **set I** markers that s/he is in some sense **involved** in, or **responsible** for, a situation concerning other persons, that s/he may have **intimate knowledge** of a person and his/her habits or intentions, or that s/he **remembers** the situation **well**. The MSAP may further present [–control] events *as if* under his or her **control**.
- Conversely, the MSAP may use **set II** auxiliaries with [+control] verbs to defocus from his or her intentions and to focus on some outer conditions or to indicate his or her **lack of genuine intentionality**.
- See examples (1)-(9).



2. Evidential markers in Ladakhi

- Some varieties, such as most Ladakhi dialects, show a further distinction between visual perception and non-visual perception, including inner feelings or thoughts. The latter is encoded with a form of the verb *grag* ‘is heard of’.
- Visual perception is encoded again with the verb *ḥdug* ‘sit, stay (at a place)’, in **Nubra**, however, with a form of the verb *snan* ‘appear, manifest itself, shine’.



- **Set I** is represented again by the copula *yin* and the existential linking verb *yod*.
- Unlike in many other Tibetan dialects, *yin* does not have an evidential counterpart. As a result, some of the functions of the copula have been taken over by the existential linking verbs *yod*, *ḥdug*, and, if available, *grag*.
- There is thus a certain asymmetry in the usage of the auxiliaries. On the one hand, *yin* is opposed to the experiential markers, on the other hand it also contrasts with the existential verb *yod*.





- The distribution of the auxiliaries differs somewhat in the different semantic and temporal domains.
- Unfortunately, there is no time to discuss examples for all domains. But they are given on your handout.

2.1. Copular constructions

	MSAP	non-MSAP
	attributive	
non-experiential	<i>yin / yod</i>	<i>yod</i>
exp.visual	(<i>ḥdug</i>)	<i>ḥdug</i>
exp. non-visual	<i>grag</i>	<i>grag</i>
	identification	
non-experiential	<i>yin / yod</i>	<i>yin</i>
exp.visual	—	<i>ḥdug</i>
exp. non-visual	—	? <i>grag</i>



Attributive: non-experiential (well-known),
non-distant, actual (10=MSAP), (11=non-MSAP)

10 *ŋa* *diriŋ* *dalmo* *in.*
I-ABS today at.leisure-ABS be=set I
'I am free/ at leisure today.'

11 *kho* *ma(:)_* *_rgjalba* *jot.*
s/he-ABS very good-ABS be=set I
'S/he is very good (knowledge by personal
acquaintance, usually over a long time).'



Visual perception (15=non-MSAP), (16=MSAP)

15 *kho ta ma(:) gjalba duk,*
 she-ABS now very good-ABS be=set II

tfiba zerna,
 why say-cc

khos de zakfik ŋa(:) phantoks tfos.
 s/he-ERG that day-LQ I-ALL benefit-ABS do-PA

‘S/he is, indeed, very good. Because that time, s/he did me a great favor.’

16 *ŋa rdemo duk.* (?)
 I-ABS beautiful-ABS be=set II

‘I am beautiful (seeing myself in the mirror).’



Non-visual perception (18=non-MSAP), (17=MSAP)

18 *i* *bakstoni* *trhims ...*
 this wedding-GEN custom-ABS

ma(:) *jamtshan* *rak.*
 very strange-ABS be=**set II**

‘This wedding custom is quite strange ... (as I feel/
 think).’

17 *khoa* *kītpo* *rak* *lo.*
 s/he-AES happy-ABS be=**set II** QOM

‘[S/he] says, that she (=MSAP) is happy.’



Identification: (19=MSAP), (20, 21, 23=non-MSAP)

19 *ŋa* *ladakspa* *in.*
I-ABS Ladakhi-ABS be=**set I**
'I am a Ladakhi.'

20 *kho* *ladakspa* *in.*
s/he-ABS Ladakhi-ABS be=**set I**
'S/he is a Ladakhi.'

21 *i* *bate* *jama* *hin.*
this bus-DF-ABS Sham-ALL be=**set I**
'This bus is [bound] for Sham.' (Information by the driver, who has the control, or by anybody else)

23 *bas nambar sumpa* *domkharla* *duk.*
bus number three-ABS Domkhar-ALL be=**set II**
'Bus number three is for Domkhar [according to the list].' (**The speaker looks at a list.**)



2.2. Existence and possession

	MSAP	non-MSAP
	existence	
non-experiential	<i>yod</i>	<i>yod</i>
exp., visual	—	<i>ḥdug</i>
exp., non-visual	—	<i>grag</i>
	possession	
non-experiential	<i>yod</i>	<i>yod</i>
exp., visual	<i>(ḥdug)</i>	<i>ḥdug</i>
exp., non-visual	<i>(grag)</i>	<i>(grag)</i>



2.3. TM auxiliaries: present, imperfect, and perfect

	MSAP	non-MSAP
	PRESENT, IMPERFECT	
non-experiential	[+ctr] <i>yod</i>	<i>yod</i>
exp.visual	[-ctr] <i>ḥdug</i>	<i>ḥdug</i>
exp. non-visual	[-ctr] <i>grag</i>	<i>grag</i>
	PERFECT	
non-experiential	<i>yin / yod</i>	<i>yin / yod</i>
exp.visual	—	<i>ḥdug</i>
exp. non-visual	<i>grag</i>	<i>grag</i>



Present tense/imperfect, [+ctr] actions of MSAP: (34)

34 *kheraŋ tʃhana, ɲatʃa duget!*

YOU-ABS go-CC WE.excl-ABS stay-PRS=**set I**

‘Are you going? Well, we shall stay!’ (Said jokingly, when one happens to have the door shut with a big bang.)

Present tense/imperfect, visually observed [\pm ctr] situations of non-MSAP: (35)

35 *çaŋku hoŋduk!*

WOLF-ABS COME-PRS=**set II**

‘A wolf is coming!/ is about to come!’



Present tense/imperfect, non-visually observed situations, [-ctr] body or mental states of MSAP: (37)

37 *tshikpa* *kholtʃugarak.*
 anger-ABS boil.cause-PRS=set II
 ‘[This] makes (me) angry.’

While body and mental states of the MSAP need the marker for non-visual perception of set II, the marker for visual perceptions is used for non-MSAP: (36)

36 *kho* *khjagzan.* *ŋa* *khjagzak.*
 s/he-ABS freeze-PRS=set II I-ABS freeze-PRS=set II
 ‘S/he is freezing (visually observed or inferred). I
 am freezing (non-visual self-perception).’



- When the final point of an event relating to a non-MSAP is not or no longer immediately perceivable in the situation talked about, the set I auxiliary *yod* might be used.
- This rule, which is not a strict rule, applies particularly to events that go on while the MSAP moves away from the location where the event takes place.
- By contrast the auxiliary for visual perception of set I is used, when the MSPA moves into the location where the event takes place.





Set II: MSAP entering ongoing situation (38)

38 *daŋ* *ŋa* *khaŋpa(:)* *lebzane,*
yesterday I-ABS home-ALL arrive.when

ŋe *abale(:)* *lu* *taŋdukpin.*
I-GEN father.hon-ERG song-ABS give-IMPF=**set II**

‘Yesterday, when I arrived at home, my father was singing.’ (**Speaker witnessed end of activity.**)

Set II: MSAP leaving ongoing situation (39)

39 *daŋ* *ŋa* *khaŋpa(:)* *lebzane,*
yesterday I-ABS home-ALL arrive.when

ŋe *abale(:)* *lu* *taŋinjotpin.*
I-GEN father.hon-ERG song-ABS give-IMPF.**CONT**=**set I**

‘Yesterday, when I arrived at home my father was already singing.’ (**Speaker did not witness end of activity.** S/he refers to a moment when s/he was again spatially dislocated.)

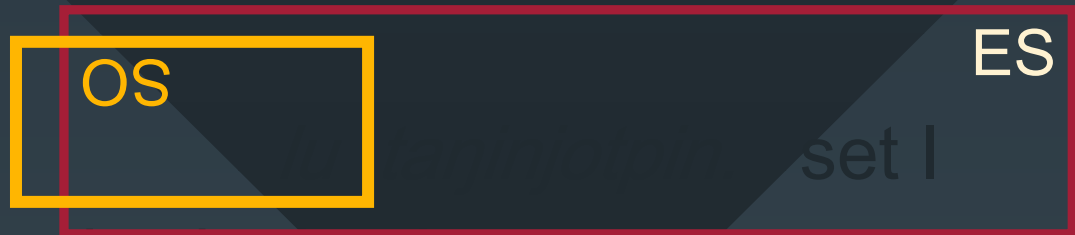


- The identical context shows, that it is not a question of ‘old’ or ‘assimilated’ (set I) vs. ‘non-assimilated’ or ‘new’ knowledge (set II), but rather, as Peggy Speas has put it, whether the observed situation (OS) comprises (a relevant part of, that is the end of) the event situation (ES) (> set II) or not (> set I):

38 *ne abale(:)*
 ‘my father was singing.’
 (Speaker witnessed end of activity.)



39 *ne abale(:)*
 ‘my father was already singing.’
 (Speaker did not witness end of activity.)



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38 *ŋe abale(:) lu tanjukpin. set II*
 ‘my father was singing.’
 (Speaker witnessed end of activity.)

39 *ŋe abale(:) OS lu tanjinjotpin. set I ES*
 ‘my father was already singing.’
 (Speaker did not witness end of activity.)



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38 *ne abale(:)*

‘my father was singing.’

(Speaker witnessed end of activity.)

ES

lu tandukpin. set II

OS

39 *ne abale(:)*

‘my father was already singing.’

(Speaker did not witness end of activity.)

OS

lu taninjotpin. set I

ES



- In the perfect constructions, the choice between the two sets, depends on whether the **result** is visible (set II: *hdug*) or otherwise perceptible (set II: *grag*) or not (set I: *yin*, *yod*).
- The **set I** auxiliaries *yin* and *yod*, however, alternate in a non-predictable way. They are both used for events produced by, or affecting, the MSAP and for results where the MSAP has not been involved.



Set I, copula *yin* (41=MSAP involved), (43=MSAP not involved)

41 *migra* *ciphia* *t^eaŋsein?* –
glasses-ABS what-PPOS give-PERF=**set I**

tsapik *zarein.*
a.bit get.blind-PERF=**set I**

‘Why do [you] wear (lit. have you given) glasses? – [I] am (lit. have become) a bit blind.’

43 *du* *ta* *kheraŋis* *noseinba!*
this-DF-ABS now you-ERG buy-PERF=**set I**-EM

‘This is only what you deserve! / This will teach you! (Lit. This one, you have bought it (yourself).)’



Set I, existential verb *yod*, distant situation: (48=MSAP involved), (49=MSAP not involved)

48 *bom* *jestsana*,
bomb-ABS explode.when

ŋa *tʃhatsharemetpin*.
I-ABS go.end.up.not.exist-PERF=**set** I-RM

‘When the bomb exploded, I had already left.’

49 *bom* *jestsana*,
bomb-ABS explode.when

kho *tʃhatsharemetpin*.
s/he-ABS go.end.up.not.exist-PERF=**set** I-RM

‘When the bomb exploded, s/he had already left.’



Set II: visual observation of result produced by non-MSAP (52), MSAP may be affected (51)

52 *amas* *ʃiŋ* *maŋbo* *rukseduk*.
mother-ERG wood much-ABS collect-PERF=**set II**

‘Mother has collected a lot of wood (upon seeing the collected wood; otherwise, one would use the **set I** auxiliary: *ruksejot*).’

51 *gelonles* *ŋa(:)* *ʃuŋa* *skureduk*.
monk-HM-ERG I-ALL talisman-ABS send-PERF=**set II**

‘The monk has sent me a protective talisman.’



Set II: non-visual observation of result (54, 56)

54 *oho, ɲe* *rpe* *faksenak,*
 oho I-GEN example-ABS put.down-PERF=**set II**

miŋ *borsenak.*
 name-ABS keep-PERF=**set II**

‘Oho, [I] really must have set up an example, [I] feel am getting famous!’ (After realising that one has done something wrong.)

56 *di* *sperean* *su* *galedrak?*
 this matter-PPOS who-ABS do.wrong-PERF=**set II**

‘Who, do you think, is wrong /has done wrong in this matter?’



2.5. TM forms that do not fit the system

TM-construction function	auxiliary	MSAP				non-MSAP	
		+ctr	-ctr	observed		not-obs.	generic
SIMPLE PAST	∅	+(Sham)	+	+	+	-	-
MARKED PAST	<i>pin (payin)</i>	+	+	+	+	-	-
remotnes marker other usages	<i>pin (payin)</i>	+	+	+	+	-	-
SIMPLE PRESENT FUTURE	∅	+	-			-	+
DEFINITE FUTURE I	<i>yin</i>	+	-			-	-
DEFINITE FUTURE II	<i>yin</i>	+	+			+	+
gerundive non-exp.	<i>yin & RM</i>	+	-	-	-	+	-
	<i>yod</i>	-	+	-	-	+(Ken)	-
	<i>yod & RM</i>	+	-	-	-	+	-
gerundive exp. visual	<i>hdug</i>	-	+	+	+	-	-
gerundive exp. n.-visual	<i>grag</i>	-	+	+	+	-	-



- Not all verbal forms, however, fit fully into the system. Some forms lack a direct evidential counterpart (SIMPLE PRESENT and DEFINITE FUTURE I).
- That is, even if there are formal counterparts, they do have different TM functions (e.g., the DEFINITE FUTURE II or gerundive & *yin* and the other gerundive constructions).
- In some cases, the forms are equally applicable to the MSAP and a non-MSAP (the SIMPLE PAST in Sham, DEFINITE FUTURE II, and the non-experiential gerundive constructions & remoteness marker).



3. Evaluative markers

TENSE	markers	Sham	Ken, Leh
PAST	probability	—	—
	estimation	stem & <i>thig</i> & aux	stem & <i>thig</i> & aux
	inference	stem & <i>tsug</i>	stem & <i>tog</i>
PERFECT, PRESENT	distance	stem & <i>kha(i)ntsug</i>	stem & <i>ka(na)g, kyag</i>
	probability	aux & <i>ḡgro</i>	aux & <i>ḡgro</i>
	estimation	stem & <i>thig</i> & aux	stem & <i>thig</i> & aux
	estimation	gerundive & <i>ḡdug</i>	gerundive & <i>ḡdug</i>
FUTURE, modal, generic	inference	aux & <i>tsug</i>	—
	distance	aux & <i>kha(i)ntsug</i>	aux & <i>ka(na)g, tsug, kyag</i>
	probability	aux & <i>ḡgro</i>	aux & <i>ḡgro</i>
	estimation	gerundive & <i>ḡdug</i>	gerundive & <i>ḡdug</i>
	inference	stem & <i>bog</i>	stem & <i>ka(na)g, ḡanog</i>
	distance	—	—



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PERFECT, PRESENT	distance	stem & <i>kha(i)ntsug</i>	stem & <i>ka(na)g, kyag</i>
	probability	aux & <i>hgro</i>	aux & <i>hgro</i>
	estimation	stem & <i>thig</i> & aux	stem & <i>thig</i> & aux
	estimation	gerundive & <i>hdug</i>	gerundive & <i>hdug</i>
	inference	aux & <i>tsug</i>	—
FUTURE, modal, generic	distance	aux & <i>kha(i)ntsug</i>	aux & <i>ka(na)g, tsug, kyag</i>
	probability	aux & <i>hgro</i>	aux & <i>hgro</i>
	estimation	gerundive & <i>hdug</i>	gerundive & <i>hdug</i>
	inference	stem & <i>bog</i>	stem & <i>ka(na)g, hanog</i>
	distance	—	—





- There are various evaluative markers, which combine with different tense constructions. Their semantic range spans from ‘maybe X’ (**probability**) over ‘it seems that X’ (**estimation**) to ‘X is quite certain’ (**inference**) and ‘X is (believe it or not)’ (**mirative** and **narrative** mode).
- The origin of many of these markers is unknown and open to speculation. The Kenhat inferential marker *tog*, however, seems to be related to the auxiliary for visual experience: *ḥdug*.

- While this might look contradictory, there is a conceptual relation between the experiential function of the **set II** auxiliary and the inferential function.
- In Classical Tibetan, *snan* ‘appear, become manifest, shine’ is often used to express some kind of reservation with respect of the truth of the event. Something only appears to be, inferred from sense perception, which ultimately cannot be relied upon.
- In the Nubra dialects *snan* is used in the same contexts where the other Ladakhi dialects have *hdug*. One may thus assume that *hdug* has the same inferential connotation, in opposition to intrinsic knowledge expressed by set I auxiliaries.





- The combination of the copula with the markers *tsug* or *hog* has developed into a marker of its own right: *hintsug* or *hinog*. The marker is used for all kinds of information, whether generally known, personally known, observed, heard (or read), or inferred.
- Its main function seems to be to indicate some reservation with respect to the validity of the statement – for reasons of **politeness**.
- It commonly combines with a perfect construction to describe present (resulting) states. The polite perfect construction is very frequent in the news or other radio programs.

- This politeness construction has likewise been overgeneralised so that one may find double perfect constructions for facts that are well known (109):

109 *tjanaŋ tinmozgaŋ*
Tya-COM Tinmozgaŋ-ABS

thudejodeinok.

border-PERF=**set** | (*yod*)-PERF=**set** | (*yin*)-IM

(*thude-jot* & *jode-in* & *in-ok*)

‘Tya and Tinmozgaŋ [two neighbouring villages] border upon each other (since long).’

(Lit. ‘**must have had** bordered’)





4. Second hand knowledge / Hearsay / Indirect quotation



- Hearsay information is encoded quite straightforwardly by adding the defective verb *lo* ‘say’ to the statement with all evidential or inferential markers in place. Pronouns, however, are shifted from the quoted person’s perspective to the quoting speaker’s perspective:

ŋa(:) kītpo rak.
 I-AES happy-ABS be=set II nonvisual
 ‘I (=MSAP) am happy.’

becomes:

17 *khoa kītpo rak lo.*
 s/he-AES happy-ABS be=set II nonvisual QOM
 ‘[S/he] says, that she (=MSAP) is happy.’

khoa kītpo duk.
 s/he-AES happy-ABS be=set II visual
 ‘S/he is happy.’

becomes:

ŋa(:) / khoa kītpo duk lo.
 I-AES / s/he-AES happy-ABS be=set II visual QOM
 ‘[S/he] says, that I am / s/he is happy.’



- While the evidential markers are semantically opaque and their evidential notion cannot be challenged or negated, the quotation marker is still semantically transparent as a *verbum dicendi* and it's basic notion can be challenged:

X dug__lo '[S/he, they] said there was X (as [s/he, they] saw).'

loa? 'Did [s/he, they] say so?'

malo! 'No, [s/he, they] did not say so.'

sus lo? 'Who-ERG said so?'

and there are further free usages, such as

ci lo le? 'What did [you] say (hon)?'

ci lo? 'How do/ should [I] say?'





- The quotation marker can be replaced at any time by a functional *verbum dicendi* plus the evidential marker for non-visual perception (cf. exx. 104 and 105). This will happen particularly when one wants to be more specific about who said something or when the auditory transmission is indirect (exx. 12, 103) or even merely narrated (ex 22).

X-ERG «Y duk» molarak.

‘X says/ said (hon.) that there is Y (as visually perceived by X) and [I] heard this.’

X-ERG «Y jodeinok» zeretsok.

‘X apparently said that there must be/ must have been Y.’

- Both, the quotation marker and the full verb are used neutrally for hearsay information that passed through several transmission stages. If somebody really wants to specify that his or her hearsay informant got his or her information through hearsay as well, a full verb and a quotation marker could possibly be combined, possibly either way:

X-ERG «Y dug_ _lo» molarak.

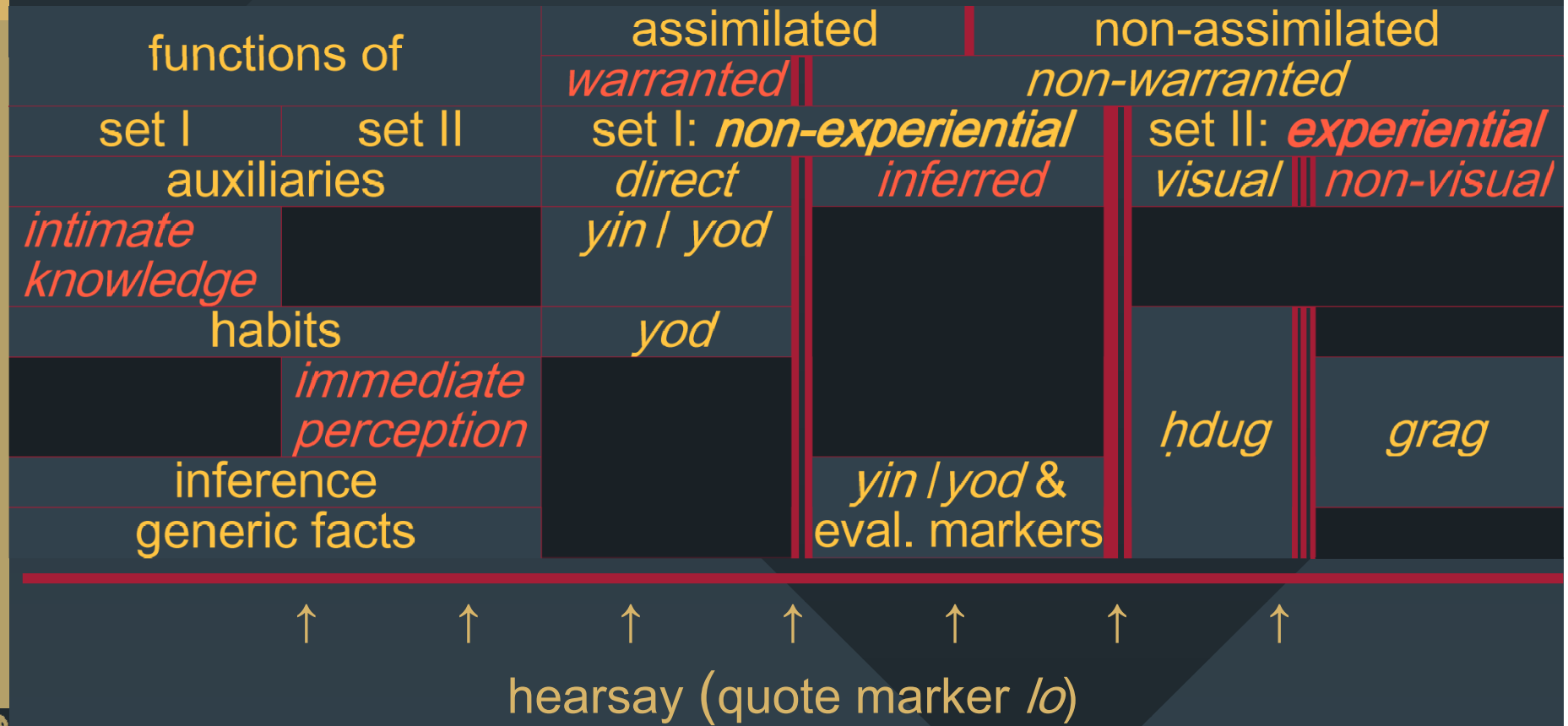
‘X says/ said (hon.) that there is Y (as visually perceived by some persons) and [s/he] heard this.’

X-ERG «Y duk» zerarak lo.

‘X said that there is Y (as visually perceived by X) and [I] heard this.’



5. Conclusion





- Although the evidential and inferential marking is grammaticalised to the extent that any speaker obligatorily has to make a choice, the actual choice appears to be adjustable and situational in much the same way as the choice of the corresponding modal particles or constructions in English or German.
- Many choices depend on the specific context, some pragmatic factors, such as politeness – and sometimes simply on the speaker's mood.



- I have made the strange experience that whenever I ask a shopkeeper with a set I auxiliary whether s/he has a certain item: *joda le?*, s/he answers with a set II auxiliary: *dug_le. / minug_le.*, but the next day, when I try the set II auxiliary with the same or another person: *duga le?*, I get an answer with a set I auxiliary: *jod_le. / med_le..*
- This is particularly irritating, as people tend to use the same markers in the answer as used in the question, and one is actually obliged to using the same evidential markers in one's question as the addressee could be expected to use in his or her answer. So why am I wrong with my expectations almost all the time?



- My impression is that in the first case, the question with a set I auxiliary, although formally correct, is perhaps a bit too straightforward, and the addressee thus tries to boil down my expectations towards his or her control or responsibility. On the other hand, if I am more modest in my speech act by using a set II auxiliary, the addressee might be more ready to assert his or her control over the stock.

- The choices are somewhat reduced, when the speaker leaves his or her cultural sphere: in that case, the speaker can only use evaluative constructions, including the experiential constructions with their inferential connotation.
- The researcher, e.g., who lacks the basic intimacy with Ladakh, her culture, and her language, can only make inferences or observations, not really *know* anything.



- Overlapping and contradictory functions
- Inferences
 - ☞ can be made with specific inferential auxiliaries (*tog*), following directly the past stem,
 - ☞ can be made on the base of set I auxiliaries (*yin* or *yod* + *tsug*, *kyag*, *kanag*; *yin* + *hog*),
 - ☞ can be made with set II auxiliaries (*hdug/snaŋ*, *rag*).
- Set II auxiliaries (*hdug* and *rag*) encode **immediate perception** and **inference**.
- Set I auxiliaries (*yin* and *yod*) encode **intrinsic knowledge** and the opposite: **mere inference**.





- The switch of meaning is achieved through the combination with further morphemes. There is a close parallel with the rare Shamskat marker *mkhan & la*, used for emphatic assertions of well-known facts:

khoa rta drakpo yotkan la.
s/he-AES horse strong-ABS have=set I-assertion

(rdzun ciba tanjet?)
lie-ABS why give-PRS=set I

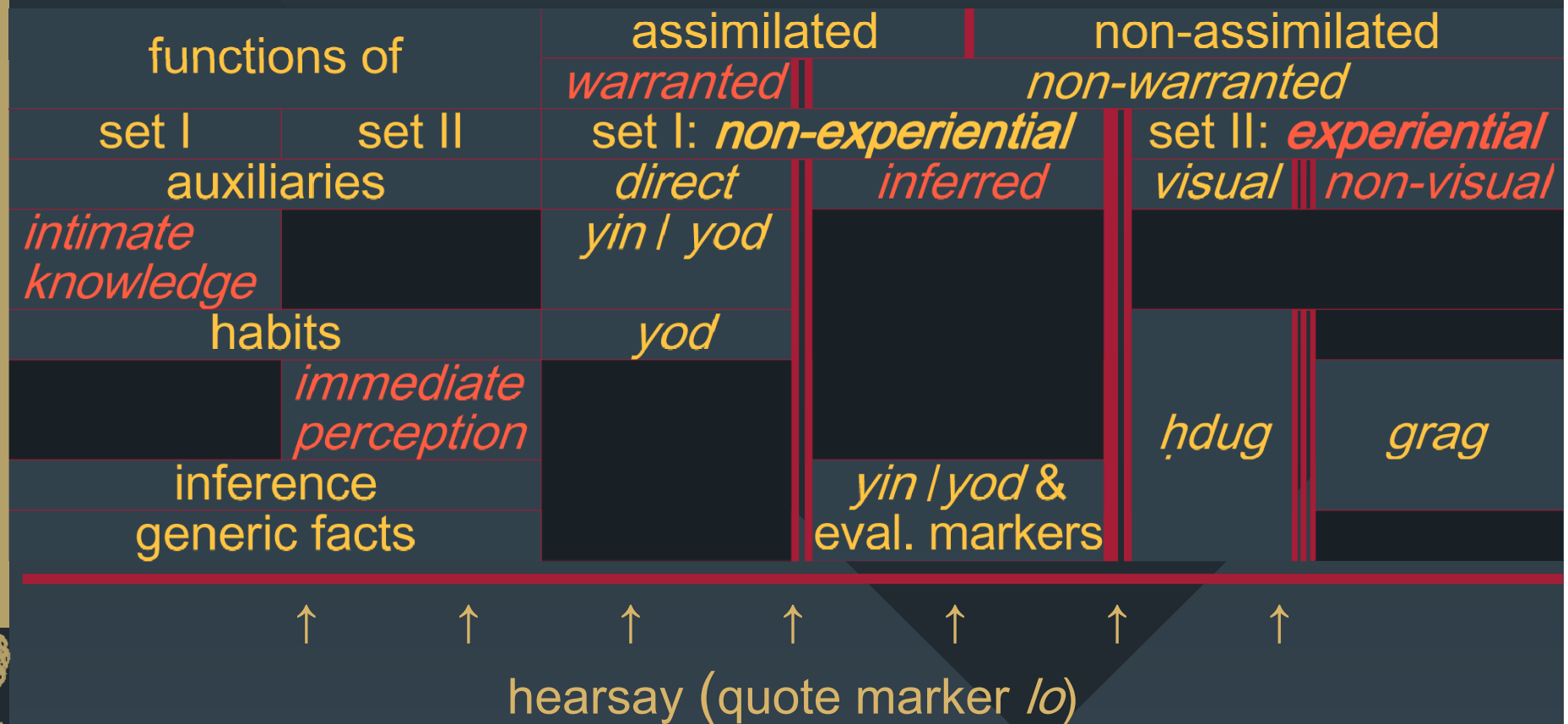
‘It is well-known that s/he has a strong horse. (Why should [I/we] lie?)’

- In combination with the morphemes *tsug* or *hog*, *mkhan* develops quite the opposite meaning as it turns into a distance marker.



- Given these overlapping and in part contradictory functions and given the additional non-evidential, pragmatic functions, such as politeness, it does not seem to be possible *to accurately map the relationships between evidential (and inferential) categories* in Ladakhi.

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Thank you



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