PERFECTIVE AND IMPERFECTIVE IN SPOKEN TIBETAN[1]

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Is the grammar of spoken Tibetan verbs[2] as it relates to time one of tense or aspect? Or does it combine elements of both? Tense (following Comrie 1976. 1-2) "relates the time of the situation referred to to some other time", that is, the time to which the tense refers is situation-external. If the time to which the situation is related is the present, the tenses are absolute; otherwise, they are relative. The time with which aspect is concerned is that of the situation in itself, that is, it is situation-internal. If this time is viewed as an "unanalyzable whole, with beginning, middle, and end rolled into one", the aspect is perfective. If it is analyzed, if one sees a situation in progress, the aspect is imperfective.

The labels assigned to the verb roots of written Tibetan (Present, Perfect, Future, Imperative in Western grammar and the synonymous thatā, tɕèpa, ma͞ȭȭpʌ, qɯ̄ɯ̄tsìì in spoken Tibetan) imply a tense system of Past, Present, and Future. Though spoken Tibetan does not have three-way reflexes of the written Tibetan roots, neither do its verb bases derive solely from the Perfect root. (The view that they do has been rather widely held; see, for example, Bacot 1946. 72.) As in written Tibetan there are one-root verbs (e. g. ltogs-pa 'to be hungry',

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'phyid-pa' 'to wipe'), so in spoken Tibetan there are, to be sure, verbs with just one base. And these are greater in number than in written Tibetan; in some cases, one of the roots of written Tibetan—which may be either the Present or the Perfect root[3]—has been generalized to the exclusion of the other roots. For example:

Generalization of the Present root.

(1) WT Present 'jib(s)-pa, Perfect bźibs, Future bźib 'to suck' ST cip, e. g. cipqìì 'He is sucking it' cipʌ rèè 'He sucked it', cipqī rèè 'He will suck it', cip! 'Suck it!'

The affricate initial of cip shows that its source was the root represented by written Tibetan 'jib. Fricative initials yield fricative initials, as in 'a bow': WT gźu, ST šu̱.

Generalization of the Perfect root.

(2) WT Present 'gog-pa, Perfect bkog, Future dgog, Imperative khog 'to take away, take off, pull out'

ST qɔ́ɔ̀, e.q. qōōqìì 'He is pulling it out', qɔ́ɔ̀pʌ rèè 'He pulled it out', qōōqī rèè 'He will pull it out', qɔ́ɔ̀! 'Pull it out!' The high tone of qɔ́ɔ̀ shows that it derives from bkog; written Tibetan voiced-stop initials with prefixes yield the spoken Tibetan low tone, as in 'a saddle', WT sga, ST qa̱. The ȯȯ of qȫȫ- is a result of vowel harmony; with i in a contiguous syllable, ɔɔ is raised to ȯȯ. (On such vowel alternations, see Chang and Chang 1968.)

Spoken Tibetan, however, also has a goodly number of verbs with two bases. One of these bases derives from the Perfect root; in general, the second base derives from the Present root. (A verb of this sort which in written Tibetan has, for example, a Present root ending in a vowel and a Perfect root ending in this vowel followed by the -s suffix has in spoken Tibetan a base ending in this same vowel with a level tone and, corresponding to the Perfect root in -s, a base ending in a vowel with a falling tone [WT -is, -es, -as, -os, -us: ST -ìì, -eè, -ɛ̀ɛ̀, -ȯȯ̀, -üǜ].)

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3. See Chang and Chang, The Persistence of Present-tense Reflexes in Modern Spoken Tibetan.

Examples of derivation in three common verbs:

(3) 'to eat'. WT Present (b)za-ba, Perfect zos, bzas, Future bza, Imperative zo(s)

Spoken Tibetan has three bases for 'to eat': sa̱, sɛè, and so̱. sa̱ could derive from either the Present (b)za-ba or the Future bza, or it could represent a merging of the two; this base appears in verb forms whose time reference includes both present and future. (Under present we include both the continuous and the habitual.) sɛè derives by regular phonetic change from the Perfect bzas. The Imperative so̱ò̱! 'Eat!' derives from zo̱. (The falling tone and change in vowel are due to the intonation.) The negative Imperative, ma̱sāà! 'Don't eat!', derives from the base sa̱. Examples of the bases sa̱, sɛè: Present reference; base sa̱ ~ sʌ-:

a. ā̱tā qhō̄tsō qhālāà sʌqī yɔɔ̀ re̱è 2.256.15-16 'Right now they are eating'

Future reference; base sa̱ ~ sʌ-:

b. ···qhō̄ō̄ tho̱qō̄ō̄ pho̱mō ti̱ sʌqī re̱è 4.11.23—12.2 '···tonight he is going to eat this girl'

Past reference; base sɛè:

c. ā̱nī pho̱mō ti̱ì ko̱māà thi cīq sɛ̀èpʌ re̱è, hɔ̄p thi qhā lʌ 4.263.12-14 'And then, suddenly, in the wink of an eye, this girl had eaten the sausage'

(4) 'to do; to make'. WT Present byed-pa, Perfect byas, Future bya, Imperative byos.

Spoken Tibetan has a base chɛè which derives from Perfect byas. A second base, che̱, we derive from the Present root byed. A parallel to the loss of the –d which we posit here is the loss of the root-final –s of written Tibetan dgos in spoken Tibetan qo̱ 'to need to' (example 32). When these consonants, or their reflexes, were preserved, spoken Tibetan shows the falling tone and fronting of nonfront vowels: -ed yields -eè, as in spoken Tibetan re̱è, one of the verbs for 'to be', from the red of written Tibetan red-pa; -os yields -ö̱ö̀, as in spoken Tibetan sö̱ö̀ 'to make', the reflex of the written Tibetan Perfect root bzos. The range of time reference for che̱ is the same as that of sa̱ (example 3). The

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spoken Tibetan negative Imperative, maceē! 'Don't eat!' derives from the base chẹ. The positive Imperative, chịị! 'Do it!', can only be said to be irregular.

Examples of the bases chẹ, chẹè:

Present reference; base chẹ ～ chị-:

a. phārcīī ātā qāp sūpēē qhātūù tịnēè maa, tị chịqī yɔɔ̀ rẹè, tāqī yɔɔ̀ rẹè 2. 143. 6-8 'As for the phārcīī, he's just now doing, that is, studying, from the third section on down'

Future reference; base chẹ ～ chị-:

b. chịcēè ŋātsōō khērāā ñīī qhi sẹyāà tèè nēèpʌ chịqī yīī 4. 328. 20—329. 2 'In the future we'll keep to what you two have said'

Past reference; base chẹè:

c. Ānī thoqōō tị ē qhōō qhaà qhèè macēèpʌ rẹè; sāqōō tị è macēèpʌ rẹè 4. 194. 13-15 'And then, that night he didn't do anything at all; nor did he do anything the next night'

(5) 'to go'. WT 'gro-ba and phyin-pa.

The written Tibetan Present 'gro is the source of the spoken Tibetan base tọ. The spoken Tibetan base to which tọ stands in suppletive relationship does not, however, derive from the soṅ given in dictionaries of written Tibetan as Perfective and Imperative to 'gro[4]. As, in the case of 'to do', chẹ is to chẹè, so, in the case of 'to go', is tọ to chīī. chīī derives from phyin, but its falling tone when it occurs in isolation (e. g. before auxiliaries) implies an *-s suffix, that is, the suffix which marks the Perfective: *phyin-s. Examples of the bases tọ and chīī:

Present reference; base tọ ～ tụ-:

a. tha qhōtsōō chāpō chẹè cɛɛ thịì tụqìì 4. 181. 9-10 'Now, they are taking him in a kind manner' (That is, they are taking him [thịì] while they are going [tụqìì].)

Future reference; base tọ ～ tụ- :

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4. A reflex soṅ 'to go' is found in the fixed phrase qḭātsam sōŋʌ [*soṅ-ba] taa···4. 176. 3 'After some time had passed···'. Another reflex of soṅ means 'to be': kɛɛpō sōō [*soṅ] tsāā 4. 50. 11-12 'since he's a king'.

b. ··· nāā̀ ñīqāā ṭuqī yīī 3. 212. 11 '···I'll go day after tomorrow'

Past reference; base chīī̀ ～ chī- :

c. tha thị̄rī qhēēsā̄, tshōōsɔ̄ɔ̀ qhāāqā yaa yaa phār chīī̀ tsāā··· 2. 64. 14–16 'Now, since all merchandise has been going up and up these days···'

d. ānī tị̄nēè̀ sāā̄ tị̄, ñẹcōȯ̀ sạŋpō taa kɛ̣ɛpō ñĀpȱȯ chīpʌ rẹ̀è 4. 174. 10–12 'And then, the next day, ñẹcōȯ̀ sạŋpō and the King went together'

These examples suggest a spoken Tibetan tense system of Past and Nonpast; 'to eat' and 'to do' (examples 3 and 4) suggest, further, that the Nonpast base was a result of the merging of written Tibetan Present and Future roots. Other examples, however, show that this is not the case. Consider the following passage:

(6) ŋāmō ŋāmō cīì lʌ yaa phọmō pīkāà sūm yɔ̀ɔ̀ rẹ̀è. qhō̄tsō sū̄pū tị̄qēè̀ ñēētāā phʌcūù̀ tshōqāà ṭuqī yɔ̀ɔ̀ rẹ̀è. ñị̄mā̄ cīq qhō̄tsō phʌcūù̀ tshōqāà ṭutūù̀ tsā nɛɛ··· qhō̄tsō phʌcūù̀ yạqō chi yɔ̀ɔ̀ rẹ̀è··· tị̄ lāāpʌ rẹ̀è 4. 257. 1–8 'Once, a long, long time ago, there were three sisters. Every day those three went to tend the cows. One day, when they went to tend the cows···there was a good cow of theirs··· this one got lost'

ŋāmō ŋāmō cīì lʌ yaa 'a long, long time ago' in the first sentence establishes the time as past. In the third sentence, the –pʌ rẹ̀è construction of lāāpʌ rẹ̀è is one commonly associated with past-time references, e. g.

(7) qhēēsā̄ yaa phēèpʌ rẹ̀è 1. 247. 16–17 'He came up yesterday'. –qī yɔ̀ɔ̀ rẹ̀è in the second sentence (i. e. ṭuqī yɔ̀ɔ̀ rẹ̀è) is the construction we have seen in examples 3a and 4a referring to the present. This sentence, however, also refers to past time. It is not a matter of shifting tense; compare the following example, where ŋāmō 'a long time ago' appears in the same sentence with –qī yɔ̀ɔ̀ rẹ̀è:

(8) ŋāmō mị̄tsāā̄ nāā̄ lʌ āmɛ̄ɛ̀ tāqpāā qhū̄qī yɔ̀ɔ̀ rẹ̀è sẹsōȱ rʌ chi tụ̄ù 1. 160. 4–6 'A long time ago, they say, the mother always wore them in the household'

Textual occurrences of –qī yɔ̀ɔ̀ rẹ̀è referring to past time appear in context with expressions indicating habitual actions, such as ñēētāā 'every day' (example 6), taqpāā 'always' (example 8), yạŋsē 'often', and nʌmkū̄ū̀ nɛɛ 'usually,

ordinarily, regularly'. This is typically imperfective[5]. For example:

(9) qhō k̲a̲qā͞a lʌ tshōō kaaqā̲a̲ yaŋsē ṭu̲qī yɔɔ̀ re̲è 4. 293. 3-5 'He often went to India to engage in trade'

(10) tī̲t̲e̲è chɛ̲è ni, mɛ̄ɛ ŋɔ͞ɔ lé̲e̲ ŋa̲tsōō mʌʌmī tɛ͞ɛtsʌ, nʌmkū͞u nɛɛ s̆a̲a̲ nʌ̄qī yɔɔ̀ re̲è 3. 64. 5-7 'Since it was like this, they [the Tibetan government] regularly stationed a few of our soldiers in the area of lower Tibet, too'

The -pʌ re̲è construction referring to the past occurs in context with expressions that pinpoint the time of an event, such as hōp thi qhā lʌ 'in the wink of an eye' (example 3c), qhɛ͞ɛsʌ̄ 'yesterday' (example 7), or specific time indications, as in

(11)···thāmā···chɛ̄qtō͞o qupkʌ̄ ŋʌ̄pcū ŋʌʌqū͞u lo̲ ti, phö̲ö̲ phɛ͞ɛcɛ͞ɛ s̆ɔ͞ɔpʌ re̲è, qhu̲ŋte̲è lʌ phāa 3. 60. 4-7 '···in the end···in the year 1959, Tibet was, for the most part, lost, that is, to the Communists'. This is typically perfective. Where -qī yɔɔ̀ re̲è occurs in such contexts we see the sort of imperfective extension over time of the action or event that may be termed continuous[6]. Contrast, for example, 12a and 12b, 13a and 13b:

(12) a. tshɛ͞ɛpɛɛ qhu̲tū͞u, n̄i̲mʌ̄ cìi phaa̲qɔ̀ɔ nā̲a̲ te̲è···ʌ̄qū tō̲pā thūu̲pʌ re̲è 4. 101. 9-11 'When he was searching, one day, there in the phaa̲qɔ̀ɔ···he met ʌ̄qū tō̲pā'

b. tha̲ ti̲nɛ̀è qhō yā̲a̲ lhɛ͞ɛsɛ̄ɛ nā̲a̲ lʌ, tshɛ͞ɛ tshɛ̄ɛ tshɛ͞ɛ chɛpɛ͞ɛ qhu̲tū͞u, n̄i̲mʌ̄ cìi sūūcū͞u ra̲a̲ qhi su̲u te̲è···ʌ̄qū···la̲qpā te̲è co̲o̲ chi khī̲ī cɛɛ ṭu̲qī yɔɔ̀ re̲è 4. 106. 2-7 'Now, after that, when he was again searching all over in Lhasa, one day, there at a corner of sūūcū͞u ra̲a̲···ʌ̄qū···was going along, carrying a hoe in his hand'

(13) a. ···qhö̲ö̲ sʌ̄n̄ī̲ī ti, tshōō kaaqā̲a̲ chi̲pʌ re̲è 4. 284. 13-14 '···the next day

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5. See Comrie, ibid., pp. 27-8, on the definition of habitual as one of the two major subdivisions of the imperfective: "The feature that is common to all habituals, whether or not they are also iterative, is that they describe a situation which is characteristic of an extended period of time, so extended in fact that the situation referred to is viewed not as an incidental property of the moment but, precisely, as a characteristic feature of a whole period".

6. If we accept Comrie's definition of continuous, his second major subdivision of the imperfective, as "imperfectivity that is not habituality" (ibid., p. 26), continuous differs from noniterative habitual in referring to a briefer period of time.

he went off to engage in trade'

b. thḛnēὲ sā́ā̀šɔ̀ɔ̀ tḭ, kɛɛpō, qᴀ̄pìi cìi qhi ɔ̀ɔ̀ tėὲ, ñḭmᴀ̄ ṱō̄ō̄ cɛɛ šuuqī yɔ̀ɔ̀ reὲ 4. 168. 12–14 'Then, the next morning, the King was sitting there under a qᴀ̄pìi, warming himself in the sun'.

-qī yɔ̀ɔ̀ reὲ does not, however, need time or aspect expressions, such as 'yesterday', 'today', 'tomorrow', 'always', 'frequently', 'suddenly', to express the continuous. This can be seen in examples such as the following passage, where two sisters, attempting to deceive a third sister about the time, have closed the windows.

(14) ᴀ̄nī phɔmō tḭ sēm̀ tshᴀ̄p ni, kuqū qiiqūū thi yaa cīq chēpᴀ reὲ. qiiqūū chēpɛɛ qhutū̀ū̀, ñḭmᴀ maa sų̀ų̀ tuqī yɔ̀ɔ̀ reὲ 4. 233. 11–15 'But then this girl grew anxious and quickly opened the windows. When she opened the windows, the sun was setting'.

The -qī yɔ̀ɔ̀ reὲ construction is, then, imperfective; the -pᴀ reὲ construction is not past but perfective. This does not mean that the Tibetan verbal system has no element of tense. Tense reference is, however, not systematic. In the first person, for example, tuqī yīi can only refer to the future: 'I will go'; the corresponding third-person construction, tuqī reὲ, is ambiguous, since it may refer to habitual actions. chīi su 'he went', on the other hand, is unambiguously past.

The base with the suffix -qī can be followed by various forms of auxiliary verbs meaning 'to be; to have' (yīi, yöö̀, yɔ̀ɔ̀ reὲ, tų̀ų̀); the semantic range of these constructions varies, as the following chart shows[7]. Numbers 3 through 14 in the chart refer to examples given above; examples 15 through 23 follow the chart. (Abbreviations: Hab., Habitual; Con., Continuous.)

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7. The imperfective can also be expressed by a construction made up of the verb base with the suffix -qī followed by the auxiliary tɛὲ 'to stay, (honorific: šuù). We will discuss this auxiliary on another occasion; we also exclude for now (1) occurrences in clauses of result preceded by conditional clauses and (2) expressions of judgment with yöö̀.

	Future	Present		Past	
		Hab.	Con.	Hab.	Con.
-qī yīī	4b, 5b				
-qī yö̀ö̀		15	16	17	18
-qī reè	3b	19			
-qīì*		20, 21	5a, 22		
-qī yɔɔ̀ reè		23	3a, 4a	6, 8,	12b, 13b
				9, 10	14

*-qīì takes the place of the nonoccurring sequence *-qī tu̠ù. -qī does, however, occur with other forms of tu̠ù, such as the negative (mī̠tūù) and the interrogatives (e. g. tu̠qā̄ā?, to̠ò?).

-qī yö̀ö̀; Present Habitual.

(15) ōō, sūūtsīì tsom tsom 1ʌ ŋɛ̀ɛ̀ su̠qī yö̀ö̀ 2. 163. 13–14 'Oh, I sometimes make the food'

-qī yö̀ö̀; Present Continuous.

(16) ā̠tā ŋa phā̄rcīī tā̄qī yö̀ö̀ 2. 164. 14 'Yes, just now I'm studying the phā̄rcīī'

-qī yö̀ö̀; Past Habitual.

(17) tiqē̄è tị qhā̠āqā, lọ reè tȫ̠tē̄è taa tị̄tsū phā̄ā tshuū, tshuū tụkū; thaqā nʌŋšīī, tị̄nē̄è lọqɔɔ phāā tọsō̄ō tūūkū; tị̄tsū qhā̠āqālɔ̀ɔ̀, lɛɛqā cheqāà tu̠qī yö̀ö̀ 3. 233. 12—234. 3 'As for all these, among other things, I collected each year's autumn crops and these things here and there; similarly, among other things, I then disbursed the year-round operating supplies (for the estate; e. g. seed, food): I used to go to do the work concerned with all these matters'. There is no time expression in this sentence. Only the larger context shows that it refers to the past; this is the conclusion of a discourse that began thatsā̄ā qhi cīsū taa, ā̄ā, ñētsā̄ā, lhē̄kē̄è, tị̄tē̄è qhi, yịqī thị̄ì cheè cɛɛ tɛèpʌ yīī 3. 229. 1–3 'I was writing letters for the monastic college's bursary and, ah, supply office and reception office, this sort of thing'.

-qī yö̀ö̀; Past Continuous.

(18) ñ̠imā̄ cīì sūūcū̄ù raà qhi su̠u tēè···tu̠qī yö̀ö̀ 'One day, there at a corner of sūūcū̄ù raà···I was going along'. (Example elicited from Mr. Nornang, 1981.)

-qī reè; Present Habitual

(19) qhōtsōō phānēè tshuū qũqʌ thōō yuqī reè 1. 32. 11–12 'They come out here from over there in the winter'

*-qī tuù; Present Habitual.

(20) tawā merē ŋorēē nāā tsʌ lʌ yaa, thā cepō kʌp tuqī tuqāā nʌ̄? 2. 46. 13–15 'Just about each and every month the stripes change, don't they?'

(21) ···ātā yaqō yöönēè, yāā lamsāā mɛ̀èpʌ chāānɛ̄ɛ rʌ chi chiqìì, tsom tsom lʌ 3. 193. 13–15 '···even though they're good just now, they do get spoiled right away, sometimes'

*-qī tuù; Present Continuous.

(22) ātā qhʌtsēè sũqī tòò? 2. 83. 7–8 'How much are you asking right now?'

-qī yɔ̀ reè; Present Habitual.

(23) mm, qhōtāā, yāāqā thʌ qũqʌ̄ cētāà sō sōsō māṭāà lɔɔqāā māṭāà rʌ chi qhũqī yɔ̀ rɛɛ, qhʌ̄ṭēès chiqī yɔ̀ rɛ̀? 1. 150. 7–10 'Mm, as for the way of dressing, in summer and winter, and so forth, do they dress differently in each (of the seasons), or how do they do it?'

The base which is the reflex of the written Tibetan Perfect root is, then, used in a Perfective construction; the base which is the reflex of the written Tibetan Present or Future root is used in an Imperfective one. We cannot, however, attribute imperfective meaning to the latter base; examples such as 3b, 4b, and 5b, which refer to the future, do not fit the definition of the imperfective as showing a situation in progress.

Is aspect expressed in both the morphology and the syntax? We have so far been examining bases with spoken Tibetan suffixes. Let us now see what bases without modern suffixes reveal about aspect[8].

One environment in which both bases occur without suffixes is before auxiliaries. Before some auxiliaries, either base may occur. Generally, however, it is

8. Historically, the source of the distinction between, for example, sɔ and söö, the two bases for 'to make', was the suffix -s of the Perfect (WT bzos). Before the -s was lost, it caused fronting of o to ö. The -s also led to the fall in pitch, with its accompanying glottal stricture. (See Chang and Chang 1978, Volume 1, xix ff. on glottalization and the falling tone.)

just one of the bases which is used before a given auxiliary. An auxiliary like nüü (WT nus) 'to dare to' may, offhand, seem to have little to do with either tense or aspect. And yet, when a verb has two bases, a choice in the base to precede an auxiliary must be made. The criteria for distinguishing perfective from imperfective offer clues to the basis for this choice.

Comrie (ibid., pp. 16-21) claims to have found one feature that defines the perfective aspect: the perfective describes a complete, not a completed action. It is, for example, not punctual, though "by not giving direct expression to the internal structure of a situation, irrespective of its objective complexity, [it] has the effect of reducing it to a single point ··· [or] to a blob, rather than to a point" (ibid., pp. 17-18). Its defining feature is not that it indicates the end of a situation ("Indicating the end of a situation is at best only one of the possible meanings of a perfective form" [ibid., p. 19]), though when contrasted explicitly with an imperfective it may do so. Though the perfective forms of certain verbs indicate the completion of a situation, the perfective is not a resultative.

And yet, when we attempt to understand why a given auxiliary follows what we have inferred to be a perfective base, some of the above features of perfectivity, peripheral though they may be, are quite helpful. The auxiliary tshāā 'to finish; to have already taken place' and šaà 'to exist as the result of an action', for example, follow what we posit to be perfective bases:

Auxiliary tshāā (WT 'tshar-ba, tshar) 'to finish; to have already done; to have already taken place'

(24) söö̀ tshāāpʌ tʌqāā lamsāā tshöȫ naaqō kʌp···1. 189. 14-15 'Just as soon as they've finished making it, they dye it black···' ('to make': WT bzo-ba, bzos; ST so, söö̀)

Auxiliary šaà (WT, 'jog-pa, bźag [ST šaà], gźag, źog) points to a result. (As a main verb, šaà means 'to put, place, leave'.)

(25) chiŋpēè̀ söö̀ saàpʌ reè 1. 158. 3 'Yes, they're made of felt'

There are, however, also auxiliaries which engage directly the central feature of perfectivity, the completeness of an action. Among these are yöȫ and yɔɔ̀ reè

(negatives: mɛ̀ɛ̀ and yɔ̀ɔ̀ mạrēè), which, in one of their usages as main verbs, occur in construction with the dative to indicate possession:

(26) ŋaa rɛ̀ɛcā nāmēɛ nātsɔ̀ɔ yǒ̀ò̀ 2. 197. 7 'I have a variety of cotton fabrics' (ŋaa is dative to ŋa 'I')

(27) qhɔ̄ɔ qhạà qhɛ̀ɛ̀ yɔ̀ɔ̀ mạrēè 4. 83. 9-10 'He didn't have anything at all' (qhɔ̄ɔ is dative to qhō 'he')

As auxiliaries, yǒ̀ò̀ and yɔ̀ɔ̀ rɛ̀è follow suffixless bases to form the Perfect. In examples 28 through 31, the actions referred to are complete, but their effects continue into the present. (Cf. Comrie, ibid., pp. 52 ff., on the criteria for defining perfect.)

(28) thɛ̀sāā lɔ̀ɔ̀ ṭhìì yɔ̀ɔ̀ retāā, yāā 1. 115. 2-3 'These days they've brought electricity, is that right?' ('to bring': WT 'khrid-pa, khrid, ST ṭhìì)

(29) qhūñìì ạtā ē yạqāā šạà yǒ̀ò̀···chɛ̀ɛ tsāā, qhōrāā ñīqāālɔ̀ɔ̀, yʌqēē rȯò lʌ yɔ̀ɔ̀ rɛ̀è 3. 203. 13-20 'And just now, I've put those two up there···So, both of them are up there at the encampments' ('to put' WT 'jog-pa, bźag [ST šạà], gźag, źog)

The main verbs of examples 28 and 29 have just one base in spoken Tibetan. Examples 30 and 31 show that it is the Perfective base which is used in forming the Perfect:

(30) ṭọtā tɛ̀è chɛ̄qō̄ō̄ šụ̀ụ̀ yǒ̀ò̀ 2. 217. 6-7 'I've marked the invitation' ('to mark': ST chɛ̄qō̄ō̄ with šụ, šụ̀ụ̀ [WT źu, źus])

(31) tụŋtēē qhi···kạtōō qạ̄ạ̀ nɛɛ šāārɛɛ so rʌ chi kēè yɔ̀ɔ̀ rɛ̀è, thạ···ṭi ạtā thɛ̀sāā qām̀ yɔ̀ɔ̀ mạrēè 1. 117. 8-12 'From the surface of the tomb's stone slab··· something like deer horns have grown, now···Even these days, now, they have not yet become dry' ('to grow': WT skye-ba, skyes; ST kē, kēè. 'to cause to become dry; to become dry': WT skem-pa, bskams [ST qām̀], bskam, skom[s])

The Perfect, then, we interpret as conclusive evidence that the bases we posit as Perfective are, indeed, just that.

Other auxiliaries refer to situations that precede action, that are potential as opposed to actual. In this they are like those finite-verb constructions which

refer to the future, constructions in which non-Perfective bases are used. (See examples 3b, 4b, and 5b.) And it is non-Perfective bases which precede these auxiliaries:

Auxiliary q̠o (WT dgos-pa[9]) 'to need to; to be compelled to'

(32) chɛ̱ɛ̀ ni, tsiŋmēē thi t̠hu quqı̀ı 2.280.7-8 'So, we have to dig this foundation' ('to dig': WT [']bru-ba, brus; ST t̠hu, t̠hu̱ù)

Auxiliary šē̄ē (WT śes-pa[10]) 'to be able to'

(33) …t̠uqšǖü qhi šȫȫnēē, totsē̄ɛ̀ cūpt̠āā̀ mānēɛ̀pɛɛ tha šʌmtö̀ö̀ tsāā ni so šı̄qı̄ m̠arēè 1.208.6-9 '…even if they make it of the worse (grade), now, they can't ever make lower robes that don't cost from ten to twenty totsē̄ɛ̀' ('to make': WT bzo-ba, bzos; ST s̠o, sö̀ö̀)

Auxiliary thū̱ù (WT thub-pa) 'to be able to'[11]

(34) …phom̠ō qɛ̃pɛɛ qɔ̀ɔ̀ s̠eyāà qhi šamō ti, ño thū̱ùpʌ rɛ̱è 4.210.8-9 '…he was able to buy the hat his older daughter had said she wanted' ('to buy': WT ño-ba, ños; ST ño̱, ñö̀ö̀)

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9. In discussing example 4, we have pointed out the parallel absence of colloquial reflexes for the root finals of written Tibetan byed and dgos. It is tempting to speculate that this may derive from the formal similarity of the expected reflexes, qö̀ö̀ and chɛ̱è, to Perfective bases. (qö̀ö̀ and chɛ̱è do occur in the fixed usage of proverbs.) q̠o and che would, then, be modelled after non-Perfective bases. ñö̀ö̀ (WT ños) 'to buy', for example, is Perfective to a non-Perfective ño (WT ño); kē̱è 'to be born' (WT skyes) is Perfective to a non-Perfective kē (WT skye). And yet, rare though it is, the loss of root-final consonants or their expected reflexes is not confined to verbs of this type. The -r of written Tibetan zer 'to say' is, for example, retained only in medial position: qhʌtsē̄ē se yȫō 4.325.9-10 'I wonder what they'd say'; totsɛ̱̀ɛ̀ cū s̠erɛɛ qhutüünı̄ 2.184.18 'when I say ten totsɛ̱̀ɛ̀'. Moreover, there are single-base verbs of the form -ö̀ö̀ and -ɛ̀ɛ̀, e.g. tö̀ö̀ 'to want to do something' (WT 'dod-pa) and cɛ̱è 'to be forgotten' (WT rjed-pa, brjed). It is perhaps not possible to determine the cause for the development of dgos to q̠o and byed to che.

10. -es should have yielded -ɛ̀ɛ̀; the nasalization of šē̄ē 'to know; to know how to; to be able to' may derive from that of khē̄ē (WT mkhyen-pa), the honorific for 'to know'. The falling tone of khē̄ē could, conversely, derive from that of šē̄ē.

11. We have a Perfective base before thū̱ù in 4.35.8-9 khȫrɛ̀ɛ̀ pūqö̀ö̀ phutsē̄ɛ̀ chɛ̱è thū̱ùpʌ tuqḕē? 'Would you be able to serve as a babysitter to a child?' We were also offered the example mö̀ö̀ qɛcā šē̄ɛtsö̀ö̀ chɛ̱è thū̱ùqı̄ mı̄tū̱ù 'She can't control her talking'. Mr. Nornang (1981) finds acceptable either f̱o or f̱ö̀ö̀ 'to buy' in construction with the Perfective thū̱ùpʌ rɛ̱è, but he would use only the non-Perfective base ño̱ with the Imperfective thū̱ūqı̄ rɛ̱è.

Auxiliary nṵ̈̌ù (WT nus-pa) 'to dare to'

(35) ǟnī o̰nā tḕètsʌ, ŋa̰, pǖǖqā šṵ nṵ̈̌ùpʌ mḭ̄tùù 2.78.11-13 'Well now, then, I can't quite bring myself to (don't quite dare to) buy them' ('to buy': ST šṵ, šṵ̈̌ù [WT źu-ba, źus] with pǖǖqā. The use of šṵ, sṵ̈̌ù shows respect to the seller.)

Auxiliary rę̄̀ę̄ (WT ran-pa) 'to be time to' (more generally, 'to be right, appropriate')

(36) ǟnī ñḭmā cǐì qhō tshōō̄ kaaqā̀à tọ rę̀pʌ rę̀è 4.283.1-2 'And then, one day it was time for him to go engage in trade' ('to go': WT 'gro, ST tọ. On this verb, see example 5.)

What is expressed by these auxiliaries is not part of a situation in progress, though it may be viewed as a preamble to action[12]. This lends no support to the attribution of imperfectivity to the preceding bases; it only allows us to say that those bases which are members of two-way oppositions with bases we have shown to be Perfective are Nonperfective. Nonperfectivity is a broad concept which embraces imperfectivity; so it is the Nonperfective base which is used both in Imperfective constructions and in the -qī yḭ̄ī, -qī rę̀è Future.

One auxiliary which follows Nonperfective bases may be interpreted as imperfective. This is ñūū (WT myoṅ-ba) 'to (ever) experience':

(37) lāptạ̄ā tḕètsʌ tọ ñūū 1.47.3 'I went to school for a little while' (That is, over a period of time, I had the experience of going to school.)

In the negative, the use of ñūū closely parallels the Habitual, i.e. Imperfective, construction found with kǚnèè 'ever':

(38) tha̰, chę̄pō šẹtā̀ā mę̀è tɔɔ. tḭ ŋaa kṵ̈̌ù mę̀è: tọ mʌ̄ñūū 1.114.5-6 'Now, it must be very big. I don't know this: I've never gone there'

(39) ···nʌmkǖ̄ü cōcɔ̀ɔ̀ qɛɛ ŋa̰rā̀ā ñī̄ī kōpō yḭ̄ītǖ̄üni, kṵ̈̌nèè tʌ̄qī yɔ̀ɔ̀ ma̰rę̄̀ę̄

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12. The same criteria govern the choice of bases to which suffixes are added. With the Perfective base chę̀è 'to do', for example, we have chɛɛnā 'if one does; when one does'; with the Nonperfective base chẹ we have chẹqo 'being compelled to do', chiku 'yet to do', chḭtọ̄ō̄ 'about to do', chẹkɔ̀ɔ̀, ready to do', chę̄tọ̄ō̄ 'having the desire to do', chẹsę̄m 'thinking of doing'.

4. 90. 16–19 '···ordinarily, when we two were poor, your older brother never paid any attention to us' ('to look at, pay attention to': WT lta-ba, bltas, blta; ST tā [~tā-], tḕè. tā may derive from either the Present lta or the Future blta; again, lta and blta may have merged through the loss of the Future prefix b-.)

In some cases, the base chosen to precede a given auxiliary may appear inconsistent with that used before another auxiliary. If qo 'to be compelled to' (example 32) follows Nonperfective bases, why are Perfective bases used before chɔ̀ɔ̀ (WT chog-pa) 'to be allowed to', as in the following example?

(40) phʌqḕē ŋarā̄ā tshu, ti mḛḕpaa, laqkḕē mḛḕpaa, chīi chṓōqī marḕē 1. 226. 13–15 'Over there, if we don't have this thing, that is, if we don't have a pass, we aren't allowed to go in'

Of the twenty-nine textual occurrences of two-base verbs before chɔ̀ɔ̀ in Chang and Chang 1978-81, only one follows a Nonperfective base:

(41) tshēpā ŋā nɛɛ, ʌ̄nī, qharē qharē chḛ chṓōqī marḕē? 3. 132. 9–10 'From the fifth, then, which things isn't one allowed to do?'

Perhaps the answer is that chɔ̀ɔ̀ implies that the action which is allowed is, indeed, carried out to its completion without objection or interference. Support for this interpretation is found in the examples of sentence-final chɔ̀ɔ̀ meaning 'I/we will do'. For example:

(42) "ŋā̄tsȭȭ qhā̄ā chamcā̄ā chḛ̀ chɔ̀ɔ̀" s, chḛ̀ cɛɛ ṭhīìpʌ rḕ̀è 4. 180. 24–25 '"We'll treat him as kindly as possible"; saying this, they took him'

Also, though qo 'to be compelled to' (example 32) follows Nonperfective bases, it has an alternant qo/qu, qho/qhu which follows Perfective bases. The use of this unstressed sentence-final particle carries with it a guarantee or promise that one will carry out an action. For example:

(43) ŋḛ̀ ŋōptsḕē qhā̄āqā tinḕ̀è ñ̥ö̀ö̀ qhu 2. 14. 15–16 'I'm going to buy all my vegetables here from you'

Another environment in which verb bases appear without suffixes is in nonfinal position in a sentence. The use of nonfinal forms in sequence lends

cohesiveness to narration and avoids a monotonous repetition of the same endings
and auxiliaries.

In the following passage, the verb construction in final position is a Perfective
(šü̃ü̃pʌ reè 'they said'); preceding it are two Perfective bases (chȩè with qēcā
'to talk' and thiì with qēcā 'to ask'):[13]

(44) Ānī, poō taa moō ñīī qēcā chȩè; phǫmɔ̄ɔ̄ lėè qēcā thiì; Ānī, "tharēē,
kɛɛpȫȫ, thēē cīq sǖü̃pʌ reè. tėè 'mēē' šüünā̀, tiqī marēè. taqā rāā, yūqī reè"
s šü̃ü̃pʌ reè 4. 49. 4-10 'And then the two, the old man and the old woman,
talked to each other; they asked the girl, too; and then they said, "This is the
only time the king said (i. e. asked for) anything. If we said 'No' to this, it
wouldn't be right. It will be just as you say" '.

When, however, the verb construction in final position is an Imperfective,
the bases preceding it in nonfinal position are still Perfective. For example:

(45) tȩè ni, Ānī yaqšȫȫ tiì sōsȫȫ ɔɔmàà ti ñīīpʌ̄ nɛɛ maa sü̃ü̃ ni, ñūqšàà
šü̃ü̃; ñīīpʌ̄ ti yāā yaa làã̀; sōsȫȫ ɔɔmàà tinēè maa sü̃ü̃ ñūqšàà šü̃ü̃: tuqs chiqī
reè 1. 56. 11-16 'After they sit down, then, the best one hits the ones below
him, counting from the second on down, with a strip of bamboo; again, the
second one gets up and hits the ones below him, counting from there down,
with a strip of bamboo: this is the way they do it'

One might suspect a semantic basis for the use of Perfective bases in enumer-
ations: first one action is completed, then another. So, here, the first one hits
the others (Perfective šü̃ü̃); the second then gets up (làã̀; this verb has just one
base, and thus no Nonperfective-Perfective distinction). But these actions are as
habitual as the summing up in the final chiqī reè(WT byed-pa, byas; ST chȩ
[~chi-], chȩè). We infer that the indications of one action preceding another
are implicit in the order in which the actions are stated, as in the English trans-
lation, not in the nature of the base. Another example:

(46) "thāqō ti reè; ñīīpʌ̄ ti reè; sǖpʌ̄ ti reè" s chȩè: chʌŋšīī yīīnā̀,
chʌŋšīīqāã̀ 1ʌ šü̃ü̃; šūqūū lɔ̀ɔ̀ 1ʌ thiì yȫȫnā̀, šūqūū lɔ̀ɔ̀ 1ʌ chȩè cɛɛ, qeqēē qhi

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13. The corresponding Nonperfective bases are šu, chȩ, thi.

Āqī kʌp šòòqī reè 1.56.2–8 ' "This is the first; this is the second; this is the third" he puts down: on a writing board if there is a writing board; on paper, if he is writing on paper, the teacher puts down the grades'

Here, again, the Perfective bases (chẹè and šụ̈ụ̀) do not point to actions completed before what is described next. Rather, what follows the Perfective base chẹè is an elaboration of the preceding statement: it tells how the teacher puts down the grades. What follows the Perfective base šụ̈ụ is an alternative to what precedes: if the teacher isn't writing on a board, he writes on paper.

The opposition of Nonperfective and Perfective bases is, then, neutralised in nonfinal position. Neutralisation is, of course, one of the criteria for identifying markedness; the member of the opposition which appears under neutralisation—here, the Perfective base—is unmarked.

There is also evidence for the unmarked quality of a Perfective construction, the Perfective base with the suffix -pʌ followed by an auxiliary verb for 'to be' (yīī, reè). This can be used, with habitual meaning, in place of an Imperfective construction. For example:

(47) "phɔɔ" señēē thi qharēē chẹè thu kū̃qī yɔɔ̀ reè?

ōō tị ceemāà kēēnēè thɔ̀ɔ̀ taa cētāà, kēwā ceemāà kụqū lēēyāà taa, Ānī, yạqa chi lēēyāà qhi, chēè chẹè···phɔɔ šụ̈ụ̀pʌ reè 3.159.7—160.6 'For what purpose do they perform this thing called the "transfer"?' 'Well, as to this, for a higher manner of rebirth in the future and so forth, so that one will get the next rebirth quickly and, then, so that one will get a better one (i.e. a better rebirth)···they perform the transfer' If the construction in the answer were the same as in the question, we should have šụqī yɔɔ̀ reè rather than šụ̈ụ̀pʌ reè. Here -pʌ reè is an unmarked alternative to -qī yɔɔ̀ reè. This ability to encompass the meaning of the unmarked member of the opposition Comrie (ibid., p. 112) has called "one of the most decisive criteria in identifying markedness···the marked category signals the presence of some feature, while the unmarked category simply says nothing about its presence or absence".

The unmarked quality of the modern spoken Tibetan Perfective may be the

result of diachronic change. For many verbs, the written Tibetan Perfect root, from which the modern spoken Perfective base derives, had a suffix (-s) which the sources of the Nonperfective bases—the Present and Future roots—lacked. If it is true that "unmarked categories tend to have less morphological material than marked categories" (Comrie, ibid., p. 114) and, conversely, that marked categories have more, then it was the Perfect root that was historically marked. In the case of, say, the verb for 'to look' the Present root lta lacked the prefix of the Future blta. If extra morphemes alone decided markedness, the Future root of this verb would have been marked in relation to the Present. The Perfect bltas, however, with its -s suffix, would have been morphologically marked in relation to both.

We may speculate that, with the loss of prefixes and suffixes through phonological change, the Perfect roots and their reflexes were no longer perceived as formally marked. This, of course, does not resolve all questions. With the development of a two-base system (Perfective, Nonperfective), the relationship of Perfective to Nonperfective could have been equipollent. That is, neither had to become marked or unmarked. What propelled the Perfective to its position of preeminence? That it does occupy this position seems beyond question; there has been an atrophying of Present and Future roots.

Will the spread of the Perfective eventually lead to the extinction of the Nonperfective? Has it already done so in any spoken Tibetan dialect? What is the basis for the claims made by, for example, Jäschke (1954. 42) and Bacot (1946. 72) that the Perfect is the root underlying the spoken Tibetan verb system? An intuitive perception that the reflexes of the Perfect are more common, or something more substantial? To answer these last questions will require solidly documented field work, with extensive records of natural speech, not just elicited forms in isolation.

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西藏口語中的動詞（二）

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中 文 摘 要

　　這是我們講西藏口語中的動詞的第二篇文章。第一篇講 ergativity（集刊 51: 15-32, 1980）這一篇講 tense 跟 aspect。西藏口語中的動詞有些有兩個形式：sɛ̀è, chɛ̀è, chîì 是 perfective base, sa̱, che̱, to̱ 是 nonperfective base. 這兩個不同的 base 加上詞尾和助動詞形成種種不同的 tense 和 aspect.