

The History of the Tibetan Verbal System

Outline

- The Classical Tibetan verb
- Verb serialization and auxiliaries
- Verb forms derived through nominalization

The Classical Tibetan verb

The Classical Tibetan verb

བྱ་ལ་ཚོན་ནས་

bya-la zhon-nas

bird-LOC mount-ABLATIVE

འཕུར་དེ་

'phur-te

fly-NONFINAL

སོང་བ་ལས་

song-ba-las

went-NOMZ-ABL

did-FINAL

བྱ་དེས་སློག་ཐར་པར་བྱས་སོ་

bya de-s

bird that-ERG

srog thar-pa-r

life save-NOMZ-LOC

byas-so

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ཚོན་ནས་	<i>zhon-nas</i>	mount-ABLATIVE
འཕུར་ཏེ་	<i>'phur-te</i>	fly-NONFINAL
མོང་བ་ལས་S	<i>ong-ba-las</i>	went-NOMINALIZER-ABLATIVE
ཐར་པར་	<i>thar-pa-r</i>	save-NOMINALIZER-PURPOSE
བྱས་སོ་	<i>byas-so</i>	did-FINAL

The Classical Tibetan verb

གསོད་

sö?

བསད་

se?

གསད་

se?

སོད་

sö?

The Classical Tibetan verb

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བསད་

se?

གསད་

se?

སོད་

sö?

The modern Tibetan verb

བསད་སོང་

བསད་ཞག་

བསད་པ་རེད་

གསོད་ཀྱི་རེད་

The modern Tibetan verb: **Serialization**

བསད་སོང་

བསད་ཞག་

བསད་པ་རེད་

གསོད་ཀྱི་རེད་

The modern Tibetan verb: Nominalization

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The modern Tibetan verb

Type 1: Verb + Auxiliary

བསད་སོང་

བསད་ཞག་

Type 2: Verb + Nominalizer + Copula

བསད་པ་རེད་

གསོད་ཀྱི་རེད་

The modern Tibetan verb: Serialization

སོང་	perfective
བྱུང་	egophoric undergoer
བཞག་	perfect inferential
ཚར་	completive
ལྱུང་	experiential
ཡོངས་	future

The modern Tibetan verb: Serialization

ཁོ་ཕྱིན་ནས་བཞག་པ་རེད་

kho phyin-nas bzhag-pa red

he went-NF put-PERFECTIVE

‘He went and put [it] [there].’

The modern Tibetan verb: Serialization

ཁོ་ཕྱིན་ནས་བཞག་པ་རེད་

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ཁོ་ཕྱིན་བཞག་པ་རེད་

kho phyin bzhag-pa red

he went PERFECT-PERFECTIVE

‘He has gone (unfortunately).’

The modern Tibetan verb: Serialization

ཁོ་ཕྱིན་ཟླ་

kho phyin-zhag

he went-PERFECT/INDIRECT

'He has gone (it seems).'

Serialization in other Sino-Tibetan languages

Serialization in other Sino-Tibetan languages

Mandarin

ta xiao-qi-lai=le

s/he laugh-INCEPT=PERF

‘S/he broke out
laughing’

Serialization in other Sino-Tibetan languages

hw-khár-hór-phin-gar-dwng

drive-M OT-DIST-REPT-REGRET-RLS

‘drove them away again unfortunately’

as lexical verb

as adverbial suffix

khár

‘run’

MOTION

hór

‘send to somebody’

DISTAL

phin

‘reply’

AGAIN

gar

‘discard’

REGRETTABLY

dwng

‘exist, reside’

REALIZED

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as adverbial suffix

<i>khár</i>	‘run’	MOTION
<i>hór</i>	‘send to somebody’	DISTAL
<i>phin</i>	‘reply’	AGAIN
<i>gar</i>	‘discard’	REGRETTABLY
<i>dwng</i>	‘exist, reside’	REALIZED

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REALIZED

The modern Tibetan verb: Nominalization

Nominalized forms:

The modern Tibetan verb: Nominalization

བ་མེད་	བ་ཡིན་
གི་འདུག་	གི་ཡོད་
གི་མེད་	གི་ཡིན་

The modern Tibetan verb: Nominalization

བོད་པ་

‘a Tibetan’

ཁོ་བོད་པ་རེད་

‘He is a Tibetan.’

བྲས་པ་

‘one who ate’

ཁོས་བྲས་པ་

‘he eating’

ཁོས་བྲས་པ་རེད་

‘[It] is his eating.’



‘He ate.’

The modern Tibetan verb: Nominalization

གསོད་མཁན་

killer

ལྷུག་གསོད་མཁན་

sheep-killer

ང་ལྷུག་གསོད་མཁན་

‘I am a sheep-killer’ 我是宰羊的



‘I will kill a sheep.’ 我会宰羊

Nominalization in other Sino-Tibetan languages

Sunwar 松瓦尔语 (Kiranti, Nepal)

pi-'ti
come-3S.PST
'S/he came.'

他来了。

'pi-šo baâ-ta
come -NOMZ exist(有)-3sg
'S/he is one who comes' → 'S/he came.'

他是来的 → 他来了

'pi-šo tsha
come -NOMZ be.at(在)-3sg
'S/he has come [i.e. is here]; is coming [i.e. on the way]'
'他来了 [现在在这里] ; 在过来 [在路上]'

Nominalization in other Sino-Tibetan languages

Mandarin

你 是 爱 我的
you COP love I-NOMZ
'You're in love with me!'

你 是 出不去的
you COP exit-NEG-leave-NOMZ
'You're not getting out of here!' (大上海)