

ERGATIVITY IN SPOKEN TIBETAN

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I. INTRODUCTION

It has frequently been said that literary Tibetan is an ergative language. That is, it has just one case form, the absolutive, for the object of a transitive verb and the subject of an intransitive verb; another case form, the ergative, is used for the subject of a transitive verb. This differentiates Tibetan from those languages which have one case form, the nominative, for the subject of either a transitive or an intransitive verb and another, the accusative, for the object of a transitive verb. We propose to consider here to what extent ergativity prevails in modern, colloquial Tibetan, which differs markedly from the literary language.¹

II. TRANSITIVE VERBS

The transitive verbs of spoken Tibetan are those which may be preceded by a sequence of substantives (nouns or pronouns), one of which is in the ergative case, designating the subject. (The ergative, the case of the agent, is formally, though not functionally, identical with the instrument of means. The ergative and the instrumental of means may be viewed either as variant functions of one case or as homonymous cases.) Positioned between this ergative form and the verb there may be other substantives, as for example, (1) a substantive in the

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Our spoken Tibetan material derives from our work with Mr. Nawang Nornang and Mrs. Lhadon Karsip (now Zongtse). While collaborating on the writing of *A manual of spoken Tibetan* (Chang and Chang 1964), we made a number of tape recordings of conversations between these two and of stories or monologues narrated by one or the other. Examples in this paper marked [volumes] I-IV are from the transcriptions of these recordings, which are being published as *Spoken Tibetan texts*. Of the four volumes, two have appeared at this time (Chang and Chang 1978).

absolutive, designating the direct object (qhōō̃ ṇa sōō̃pa rẽe 'he fed [or raised] me', qhōō̃ qhōō̃ cāāpa rẽe 'he reduced the price', qhōō̃ yĩqī sūpa rẽe 'he erased the letter [purposely]'), (2) a substantive in the dative, designating the indirect object (qhōō̃ ṇaa tēēpa rẽe 'he looked at me'), (3) a sequence of dative and absolutive, indicating indirect and direct objects (qhōō̃ ṇaa thep tēēpa rẽe 'he gave me a book' qhōō̃ ṇaa qēcā ṭhĩpa rẽe 'he asked me a question'). All transitive verbs may, when they have a first-person subject, occur in construction with an affixed base followed by yīi, which also functions as the first-person copula (ṇēē qhō sōō̃pa yīi 'I fed him', ṇēē qhōō̃ cāāpa yīi 'I reduced the price', ṇēē yĩqī sūpa yīi 'I erased the letter [purposely]', ṇēē qhōō̃ tēēpa yīi 'I looked at him', ṇēē qhōō̃ thep tēēpa yīi 'I gave him a book', ṇēē qhōō̃ qēcā ṭhĩpa yīi 'I asked him a question').

III. CONTROLLABLE INTRANSITIVE VERBS

All intransitive verbs lack objects, direct or indirect, and all intransitive verbs may occur preceded by a substantive in the absolutive, designating the subject. There are, however, several subclasses among the verbs which satisfy these conditions. There is, for example, a dichotomy determined by whether or not a verb with a first-person subject can occur in construction with an affixed base followed by yīi. Verbs which can belong to a subclass whose members we shall call controllable; these include tēē 'to stay', thōō̃ 'to come out', lēē 'to come, arrive', yōō̃ 'to come', and chīi, ṭo 'to go'. An important characteristic of these verbs is the ability of their subjects to appear in either the ergative or the absolutive. (To the extent that subjects of intransitive verbs appear in the ergative—and to the extent that subjects of transitive verbs appear in the absolutive—spoken Tibetan is, of course, not an ergative language.) We find, for example, both ṇa thōō̃pa yīi 'I came out', with an absolutive subject, and ṇēē thōō̃pa yīi, with an ergative subject.

The fluctuation between ergative and absolutive among subjects of intransitive verbs has been called "fluid S marking" (Dixon 1979, pp. 80 ff.). The degree of fluidity varies in Tibetan depending, we posit, on the meaning of the verb base.

Some controllable intransitive verbs occur more commonly with an ergative subject, others with an absolutive. (The case is also determined, in part, by verbal affixes.) Dixon sees the basis for "fluid" marking in the subject's control or lack of control over the activity expressed by the intransitive verb. He cites nineteenth-century usage in Bats, a northeast Caucasian language, where verbs such as 'fall', 'get drunk', 'fear', and 'lie down' were treated in this way, while 'go' appeared only in the ergative case. In Eastern Pomo, an American Indian language, fluidity is characteristic of 'slide/slip', as opposed to the always controlled 'sit/go' verbs and the never-controlled verbs such as 'fall'. In Crow, another American Indian language, 'run' is always controlled, 'fall over' is never controlled, and 'go' is fluid. (Whether a verb is viewed as controllable varies somewhat from language to language.) But *is* control the criterion which determines the usage of the ergative for the subject of a spoken Tibetan intransitive verb? If so, it is—at least for the first person—redundant: subject control is the semantic feature common to those verbs which enter into construction with yī (that is, transitive verbs and controllable intransitive verbs), and with the first-person subject yī itself signifies the exercise of control. Even a verb which is defined as controllable within Tibetan may occur with re rather than yī when the first-person subject is not in full control. So we find ṅe lhēsāā chīpa yī 'I went to Lhasa' but also ṅa lhēsāā chīpa re 'I went to Lhasa (for example, when I was small; i. e. I was taken there)'. (lhēsāā is the dative of lhēsā. The dative occurs frequently in construction with the controllable intransitive verbs, as do the dative and ablative particles la 'to' and nee 'from'.) Though chī 'to go' shows by its occurrence in construction with a first-person subject and -pa yī that it belongs to the class of controllable intransitive verbs, in the sentence ṅa lhēsāā chīpa re it functions like a member of the subclass of noncontrollable intransitive verbs, of which na 'to be sick' is typical. Such verbs have subjects in the absolutive, and the base with -pa is followed by re regardless of person: qhō napa re 'he was sick', ṅa napa re 'I was sick'. We define a class of verbs by what makes it unique. It may, however, have some feature in common with another class of verbs. We then have the choice of regarding the two classes as overlapping or of charac-

terizing a given verb as belonging to two classes.

Where *reè* replaces *yīī* with transitive verbs (that is, with first-person subjects), we see the emergence of a passive construction.

For example:

1. a. *ŋɛ̀ pūqū tī sṑp̄a yīī* 'I raised this child'
- b. *ŋɛ̀ lō cīq tsa chi sṑp̄a reè* (II. 115) 'It [this mule] was fed by me [i. e. under my care and at my expense] for about a year'. Here a horse trader is attempting to justify a higher price for his horse; he has, however, not himself been in immediate charge of the care and feeding of the animal.
2. a. *ŋɛ̀ qhṑ cā̀p̄a yīī* 'I lowered the price'
- b. *ŋɛ̀ cā̀p̄a reè: ŋɛ̀ sā̄ŋtō cā̀p̄a reè* (II. 117) 'It [the price] has been decreased by me: it's been decreased two sā̄ŋ by me'. Here a vegetable vender is protesting against making a further decrease in the price he is asking; he implies that he has not been in complete control of his actions, but has been acting under pressure from the buyer.

With the replacement of *yīī* by *reè* in examples such as these there is a severing of the connection between the agent and the action. The instrumental case of examples 1. a. and 2. a. is the ergative; that of 1. b. and 2. b., though formally the same case, has rather the function of an animate instrument or means. When there is agreement in person between subject and verb, as there is in *ŋɛ̀ sṑp̄a yīī* 'I raised him', *qhṑ sṑp̄a reè* 'he raised him' and *ŋɛ̀ cā̀p̄a yīī* 'I lowered it', *qhṑ cā̀p̄a reè* 'he lowered it', the appearance of *ŋɛ̀* with *reè*, as in 1. b. and 2. b., means that *ŋɛ̀* is *not* the subject.

Historically, many transitive bases have been formed in Tibetan through the affixation of a causative prefix to an intransitive base. This prefix has left its mark in spoken Tibetan in, for example, unaspirated initials where the intransitive has aspiration. *cā̀* 'to lower, bring down (a price)' is this sort of transitive, based on an intransitive *chā̀* 'to come down (by itself)', as in *tīnēē lāqā̀, qhā̀ nīpū tī, sṑ tshā̀ ni, tḕtsa chā̀p̄a reè* (III) 'when they finished making these two different roads, it [the price of barley] came down a little'. In *ŋɛ̀ sā̄ŋtō*

cā̀pa rèe 'it has been decreased two sāṅ by me' and ṅẽ sṑpa rèe 'it was fed by me', the direct object of an active transitive verb has, through a passive transformation, become the subject of a passive, intransitive verb. (The subject may be implied, if it has just been mentioned.)

The long-standing debate on whether or not the ergative itself is a passive construction has apparently not yet been resolved to everyone's satisfaction (cf. Dixon 1979, p. 99). Regamey (1954, p. 367) makes the point that Tibetan and European grammarians alike labored under the handicap of grammatical frameworks which had both active and passive voices; forced to choose between the two the Tibetan grammarians selected the active, Europeans the passive. But, as Regamey says, active and passive are two terms of an opposition which have meaning only in relation to one another; without an active there can be no passive. Transformational grammarians are still attempting to interpret the ergative as passive; at another extreme, McLendon (1978, p. 1) holds that one part of the "classic definition of an ergative language" is its lack of passives. And yet Eskimo, an ergative language, is said to have both passives (Perlmutter and Postal 1977, pp. 397-8) and antipassives (Dixon 1979, p. 119). (In the antipassive, the deep-structure subject of a transitive verb becomes the surface-structure subject of an intransitive verb [Dixon 1979, p. 119].) We suggest that, though restricted to the first person and relatively rare in occurrence, examples such as ṅẽ cā̀pa rèe and ṅẽ sṑpa rèe are genuine passives. If they are, the spoken Tibetan ergative construction can then be identified as active.

Two constructions in which ergative subjects of controllable verbs, both transitive and intransitive, regularly appear suggest that the function of the ergative is, at least in part, goal-directed activity. In one, the verb base is followed by the particle qo (which has the variants qho, qu, qhu); the meaning of this construction is 'I will perform the action defined by the verb for you'. If a verb has both perfect and nonperfect bases, it is the perfect base which is used here.

Examples with transitive verbs:

1. ṅẽ chẽ qo (II. 23) 'I'll do it for you' (Perfect base: chẽ; nonperfect base: che)

2. $\eta\epsilon\grave{\epsilon}$ $t\grave{\epsilon}\grave{\epsilon}ts\grave{\epsilon}$ $\eta\grave{o}\grave{o}$ qhu (II. 11) 'I'll buy a little from you [that is, as a favor to you]' (Perfect base: $\eta\grave{o}\grave{o}$; nonperfect base: $\eta\grave{o}$)

3. $\eta\epsilon\grave{\epsilon}$ $t\ddot{o}\ddot{o}$ qo (II. 86) 'I'll take it out for you'

Examples with intransitive verbs:

1. $th\grave{a}r\grave{i}$ $\eta\epsilon\grave{\epsilon}$ $r\grave{a}\grave{a}$ qhi $tsh\ddot{o}\ddot{o}$ $t\acute{\epsilon}\acute{\epsilon}$ $t\acute{\epsilon}t\acute{\epsilon}\acute{\epsilon}$, $\eta\epsilon\grave{\epsilon}$ $ma\grave{a}$ $y\ddot{o}\ddot{o}$ qo (IV) 'Today, for your sake, I'll certainly come down'

2. $\eta\epsilon\grave{\epsilon}$ $taq\grave{a}\grave{a}$ $t\acute{\epsilon}\acute{\epsilon}$ qo (IV) 'I'll sit right here [as you suggest, for you]'

Ergative subjects also occur in a construction where the verb is preceded by a subordinate clause of purpose containing a verb base with the affix -qāā. The meaning of this clause is 'in order to perform the action defined by the verb'. Generally, ergative subjects occur in this construction with intransitive verbs when the base is followed by -pa, not -qī.

Examples with -pa:

1. $qh\ddot{o}\ddot{o}$ $tuq\grave{a}\grave{a}$ $n\grave{a}\grave{a}$ $t\acute{\epsilon}\acute{\epsilon}$, $h\grave{a}p\grave{q}\grave{a}\grave{a}$ $ch\grave{i}p\grave{a}$ $re\grave{\epsilon}$ (IV) 'He went inside the assembly hall to hide'

2. $\bar{a}n\bar{i}$ $\bar{n}\acute{\epsilon}c\ddot{o}\ddot{o}$ $sa\bar{n}p\ddot{o}\ddot{o}$, $k\acute{\epsilon}\epsilon p\ddot{o}\ddot{o}$ $q\ddot{u}t\ddot{u}\ddot{u}$ la $s\ddot{o}\ddot{o}c\grave{a}$ $k\grave{a}\grave{a}q\grave{a}\grave{a}$ $ch\grave{i}p\grave{a}$ $re\grave{\epsilon}$ (IV) 'And then $\bar{n}\acute{\epsilon}c\ddot{o}\ddot{o}$ $sa\bar{n}p\ddot{o}$ went into the King's presence to pour tea'

Examples with -qī:

1. $\eta\grave{a}$ $y\grave{i}c\grave{i}$ $m\grave{i}c\grave{i}$ $t\grave{h}\ddot{o}m$ la , $m\ddot{i}$ $t\grave{a}q\grave{a}\grave{a}$ $t\grave{u}q\grave{i}$ $y\ddot{i}$ (IV) 'I certainly want to go to the marketplace to take a look'

2. $\eta\grave{a}$ $q\ddot{o}p\grave{a}\grave{a}$ yaa , $m\grave{a}\grave{a}c\grave{a}$ $ph\ddot{u}\ddot{u}q\grave{a}\grave{a}$ $t\grave{u}q\grave{i}$ $y\ddot{i}$ (IV) 'I'm going to offer butter and tea to the nunnery'

Though it is the nonperfect base to which -qī is affixed, the nonperfect base in itself does not have this inhibiting effect on the occurrence of ergative subjects. With a subordinate clause of purpose and -tūū 'at the time of', the subject does appear in the ergative if the meaning of the construction as a whole is perfect. Examples: $\bar{a}n\bar{i}$ $ph\ddot{o}m\ddot{o}$ $t\grave{i}$ $ph\grave{a}\grave{a}$ $t\grave{a}q\grave{a}\grave{a}$ $t\grave{u}t\ddot{u}\ddot{u}$ (IV)... 'And then, when this girl went over there to look...'; $t\grave{i}n\acute{\epsilon}\acute{\epsilon}$ $m\ddot{o}\ddot{o}$ $q\acute{\epsilon}\acute{\epsilon}$ $p\ddot{u}q\ddot{u}$ $l\acute{\epsilon}q\grave{a}\grave{a}$ $t\grave{u}t\ddot{u}\ddot{u}$ (IV)... 'Then, when the old woman went to get the child...'.
 When the base is followed by -qī, however, the use of the ergative with intransitive verbs is rare in any construction. Most often we find examples such

as $\bar{\text{ānī}} \text{ ɳa } \text{ʈuqī} \text{ yīī}$ (IV) 'And then, I'll go' and $\text{simñēē} \text{ sū } \text{ʈuqī} \text{ rɛ̄ɛ?}$ (III) 'Who are the ones who go and catch them?'. This suggests that the ergative with intransitive verbs is correlated with accomplished fact. Though we translate the construction of verb base with ɳɛ̄ɛ and qo as 'I will do this for you', the use of the perfect base there may be interpreted as a guarantee that the action will be performed.

With transitive verbs, on the other hand, we frequently find an ergative subject in conjunction with a verb to which $-\text{qī}$ is affixed.

Examples:

1. $\text{tī } \text{ɳātsōō} \text{ ʈēēqī} \text{ yīī}$ (IV) 'We'll give you this'
2. $\text{tūūmūū} \text{ sḂqī} \text{ rɛ̄ɛ}$ (IV) 'The witch will eat me'
3. $\text{sūū} \text{ tḂmqī} \text{ rɛ̄ɛ?}$ (III) 'Who selects them?'
4. $\text{rō } \text{sūū} \text{ kēēqī} \text{ rɛ̄ɛ?}$ (III) 'Who takes away the corpse?'

Absolutive subjects, however, also occur in this environment:

1. $\text{phomō } \text{ɳa } \text{tīqī} \text{ yīī}$ (IV) 'I'll give the girl'
2. $\text{thā } \text{ɳa } \text{khōrā} \text{ sēēqī} \text{ yīī}$ (IV) 'Now, I'm going to kill you'
3. $\text{yaasōō} \dots \text{qhūñī} \text{ thā } \text{kēepō} \text{ rḂḂ } \text{chīqī} \text{ rɛ̄ɛ}$ (III) 'The $\text{yaasōō} \dots$ those two, now, do elaborate sorts of things'
4. $\text{tīī} \text{ chōtōō} \text{ mḂkḂp } \text{pḂtōō} \text{ qōō} \text{ qhāāqā} \text{ mīl } \text{tēē} \text{ tūūqī} \text{ rɛ̄ɛ}, \text{ phḂtsa } \text{tīnēē}$ (III)
'Until it pecks, all the vultures keep on watching, a little distance away'

The occurrence of an ergative subject with any instance of $-\text{qī}$ means, of course, that the ergative is not restricted to the perfect in spoken Tibetan.²

Let us tentatively assume that with intransitive verbs the ergative is used to signify either the achievement or the guarantee of an act directed toward a goal.

2. Dixon (1979, p. 95) to the contrary, the ergative does not appear to be limited to the past tense in literary Tibetan, either. Dixon cites Regamey (1954) here, but though Regamey happens to give an example of a Tibetan ergative in the past tense, Matthews (1953), whose paper Regamey discusses, and without argument on this point, says (p. 401) that the Tibetan ergative "is not confined to a restricted area of the verb". In its use of the ergative, he points out, it offers a parallel to Nepali and Gurkhali, which are "in variance with common Indo-Aryan practice" (p. 399). (Matthews does not say whether or not he believes that in this Nepali and Gurkhali show Tibetan influence).

(This, of course, presupposes an act which an agent can control.) In support of this assumption we find examples such as the following:

tɛ̀ɛ̀ 'to stay'

After the death of his father, an older son prospers but in his prosperity ignores his father's second wife and his young half-brother. The young boy has to go off to sell clay pots. Losing his way, he comes to a monastery the monks are abandoning in fear of thieves. His need to rest is stronger than his fear of thieves and so he stays; in telling his mother about this he says ānī ɲɛ̀ɛ̀ tɛ̀ɛ̀ tɛ̀ɛ̀pa yīi (IV) 'And then I stayed there'. That is, he stayed purposely, not out of inertia, and so he uses the ergative ɲɛ̀ɛ̀ with the intransitive verb tɛ̀ɛ̀. Through a series of propitious and supernatural events, the boy acquires a magic stick which enables him to give a magnificent party. The older brother comes, and 'when the other people went back in the evening, he acted as if he were an intimate, and he stayed on for a little while': qōōtāā mī šāpā lōō tɔ̀ɔ̀ qhutūū, nāātsāā rapa chɛ̀ɛ̀ cɛɛ, qhōō šuūtsa la tɛ̀ɛ̀pa rɛ̀ɛ̀. The purpose in his staying was to show that he was one of the family, to ingratiate himself with his brother.

When the verb tɛ̀ɛ̀ is used to describe a state not initiated with a purpose in mind—but perhaps also not conceived of as controlled—the absolutive is used: qhūūnī kīpšāā chɛ̀ɛ̀ tɛ̀ɛ̀pa rɛ̀ɛ̀ (IV) 'Those two lived most happily'. A pair of examples in our material which does, however, seem to illustrate the purpose versus inertia contrast is qhō nāā la tɛ̀ɛ̀pa rɛ̀ɛ̀ 'he stayed at home', qhōō ɲɛ̀ɛ̀ nāā la tɛ̀ɛ̀pa rɛ̀ɛ̀ 'he stayed in my home'. To stay in another person's home indicates purpose; staying in one's own home may require less purpose but still be a controlled action.

thōō 'to come out'

At one extreme, thōō 'to come out, emerge, escape' is used with inanimate subjects (such as steam coming from water) where there is no question of the subject's having a purpose or exercising control. Such subjects are in the absolutive. At the other extreme, the subject has a purpose in coming out and is in

control of the action; this sort of subject is in the ergative: (1) Asked when nomads come out to non-nomadic areas in order to engage in trade, the reply is qhōtsōò phānēē tshūū qūqā thōō yūqī reē (I. 32) 'They come out here from over there in the winter'. (2) A rabbit, in order to make his escape, comes out of the basket in which an old man has put him: pōō qālēē qhā ni, ηēsō kḗpēē qhāā laa, reqōō tī thōō; ... (IV) 'The old man grew tired and, while he was resting, this rabbit got out (made his escape)...'.

Between these two extremes, there is the situation in which the subject exercises control over the action but the impetus to the action is external. Here the subject is in the absolutive. The context may be marked by a preceding tsāā 'since', as in (1) qam qo chē tsāā, tī nāā nē ānī, phū thi thōō yōōpa reē (IV) 'Since she had opened the door of the box, this boy came out, then, from inside this', (2) lēeqōō thi ηōō tsāā, lēeqōō tī nāā nē, ānī, cīq thōōpa reē (IV) 'Since he was rummaging around in the basket, a nun emerged from the basket', and (3) ηēsō kḗp ni, pōō nīl qhūū tsāā, reqōō qho thōō; ... (IV) 'Since the old man had fallen asleep resting, that rabbit got out...'. Again, a girl knocks at a door; in *response*, a woman comes out: tīnēē maa kīmēē chi thōō yōōpa reē (IV).

lēē 'to come, arrive'

A merchant, searching for special flowers his daughter has requested, is carried away by a great wind. In the wasteland where the wind deposits him he finds the flowers but is threatened by a disembodied spirit. Explaining his predicament he says: tīnēē lhāqpēē khī cē, ānī, ηa tēē lēēpa reē (IV) 'Then a wind carried me off and, then, I arrived here'. That is, he did not intend to go to that place—he did not even know of its existence—(ηa, not ηēē), and his arrival there was beyond his control (reē, not yīi).

When purpose is expressed, we find the ergative. In one story, for example, a boy discovers that a Minister has killed his father. The Minister learns of this and orders his gardener to kill the boy. Pleading for his life, the boy tells the gardener how he can be of use to him if his life is spared and assures him that

he will come when he is needed: $\eta\epsilon\grave{\epsilon}$ $\text{l}\ddot{\epsilon}\ddot{\epsilon}$ $\text{y}\ddot{o}\ddot{o}$ (IV). Certainly purpose, not just control, is conveyed here. In another story, a princess wishes to build a new palace where she can live in undisturbed privacy with her new husband. Her parents grant permission with the promise $\eta\grave{\text{a}}\text{n}\ddot{\text{i}}\text{l}$ qhi $\text{k}\ddot{\text{u}}\text{n}\ddot{\epsilon}\ddot{\epsilon}$ $\text{l}\ddot{\epsilon}\ddot{\epsilon}$ $\text{m}\ddot{\epsilon}\text{y}\ddot{o}\ddot{o}$ (IV) 'We two will never come'.

$\text{y}\ddot{o}\ddot{o}$ 'to come'

When purpose is shown, as for example by q(h)o or $-\text{q}\ddot{\text{a}}\ddot{\text{a}}$ (the latter *not* in the same sentence with $\text{ts}\ddot{\text{a}}\ddot{\text{a}}$ 'since'), the subject of $\text{y}\ddot{o}\ddot{o}$ appears in the ergative case. For example:

With qho :

$\eta\epsilon\grave{\epsilon}$ $\text{ma}\ddot{\text{a}}$ $\text{y}\ddot{o}\ddot{o}$ qho (II. 151) 'I'll come down to you (for your sake)'

With $-\text{q}\ddot{\text{a}}\ddot{\text{a}}$; without $\text{ts}\ddot{\text{a}}\ddot{\text{a}}$:

1. $\eta\epsilon\grave{\epsilon}$ $\text{t}\ddot{\text{a}}$ $\text{tsh}\ddot{\epsilon}\ddot{\epsilon}\text{q}\ddot{\text{a}}\ddot{\text{a}}$ $\text{y}\ddot{o}\ddot{o}\text{p}\ddot{\epsilon}\ddot{\epsilon}$ $\text{qhu}\text{t}\ddot{\text{u}}\ddot{\text{u}}$ $\text{k}\ddot{\text{a}}\text{l}\ddot{\text{i}}\ddot{\text{i}}$ $\text{t}\ddot{\text{a}}\ddot{\text{a}}\text{t}\ddot{\text{u}}\ddot{\text{u}}$ $\text{r}\ddot{\epsilon}\ddot{\epsilon}$ (IV) 'When I came to look for the horse, it was the time when they were playing the Chinese flutes'
2. $\text{n}\ddot{\text{a}}\ddot{\text{a}}$ $\text{n}\ddot{\text{i}}\text{q}\ddot{\text{a}}\ddot{\text{a}}$ thi $\text{š}\ddot{o}\text{q}\ddot{\text{q}}\ddot{\epsilon}\ddot{\epsilon}$ $\text{qh}\ddot{o}\ddot{o}$ $\text{qh}\ddot{\text{a}}\text{l}\ddot{\text{i}}$ $\text{l}\ddot{\text{a}}$ $\text{t}\ddot{\text{a}}\text{q}\ddot{\text{a}}\ddot{\text{a}}$ $\text{y}\ddot{o}\ddot{o}\text{p}\ddot{\text{a}}$ $\text{r}\ddot{\epsilon}\ddot{\epsilon}$ (IV) 'On the morning of the following day he slowly went to look'

With $-\text{q}\ddot{\text{a}}\ddot{\text{a}}$ and with $\text{ts}\ddot{\text{a}}\ddot{\text{a}}$:

1. $\text{ch}\ddot{\epsilon}\ddot{\epsilon}$ $\text{ts}\ddot{\text{a}}\ddot{\text{a}}$, $\eta\grave{\text{a}}$ $\text{tsh}\ddot{\text{u}}\ddot{\text{u}}$ $\text{th}\ddot{\text{u}}\text{q}\ddot{\text{a}}\ddot{\text{a}}$ $\text{y}\ddot{o}\ddot{o}\text{p}\ddot{\text{a}}$ $\text{y}\ddot{\text{i}}\ddot{\text{i}}$ (IV) 'Therefore I came to meet you'
2. $\text{ch}\ddot{\epsilon}\ddot{\epsilon}$ $\text{ts}\ddot{\text{a}}\ddot{\text{a}}$, $\eta\grave{\text{a}}$, $\text{kh}\ddot{\epsilon}\text{r}\ddot{\text{a}}\ddot{\text{a}}$ qhi $\text{ts}\ddot{\text{a}}\ddot{\text{a}}$ $\text{l}\ddot{\text{a}}$ $\text{š}\ddot{o}\text{s}\ddot{\text{a}}$ chi $\text{l}\ddot{o}\text{q}\ddot{\text{a}}\ddot{\text{a}}$ $\text{y}\ddot{o}\ddot{o}\text{p}\ddot{\text{a}}$ $\text{y}\ddot{\text{i}}\ddot{\text{i}}$ (IV) 'Therefore I came to your place to beg for some $\text{š}\ddot{o}\text{s}\ddot{\text{a}}$ '
3. $\text{m}\ddot{\text{a}}\text{m}\ddot{o}$ $\eta\grave{\text{a}}$ $\text{n}\ddot{\text{i}}\text{i}\text{t}\ddot{\text{a}}\ddot{\text{a}}$ $\text{t}\ddot{\text{a}}\text{q}\ddot{\text{a}}\ddot{\text{a}}$ $\text{y}\ddot{o}\ddot{o}$ $\text{ts}\ddot{\text{a}}\ddot{\text{a}}$... (II. 291) 'Actually, since I've come every day to look at it ...'

A simple narrative statement normally has the subject in the absolutive case:

1. $\eta\grave{\text{a}}$ $\text{qh}\ddot{\epsilon}\ddot{\epsilon}$ $\text{n}\ddot{\text{i}}\text{q}\ddot{\text{a}}\ddot{\text{a}}$ $\text{qh}\ddot{\text{a}}\text{m}$ $\text{n}\ddot{\epsilon}\ddot{\epsilon}$ $\text{y}\ddot{o}\ddot{o}\text{p}\ddot{\text{a}}$ $\text{y}\ddot{\text{i}}\ddot{\text{i}}$ (I. 237) 'I came from Kham the day before yesterday'
2. $\eta\grave{\text{a}}$ $\text{q}\ddot{o}\text{p}\ddot{\text{a}}$ $\text{n}\ddot{\epsilon}\ddot{\epsilon}$ $\text{tsh}\ddot{\text{u}}\ddot{\text{u}}$ $\text{y}\ddot{o}\ddot{o}\text{p}\ddot{\text{a}}$ $\text{y}\ddot{\text{i}}\ddot{\text{i}}$ (I. 199) 'I came here from the monastery'
3. $\text{a}\text{n}\ddot{\text{i}}$ $\text{t}\ddot{\text{i}}\text{n}\ddot{\epsilon}\ddot{\epsilon}$ $\text{qh}\ddot{o}\text{t}\ddot{s}\ddot{o}$ $\text{m}\ddot{\text{i}}$ $\text{t}\ddot{\text{i}}\text{q}\ddot{\epsilon}\ddot{\epsilon}$ $\text{qh}\ddot{\text{a}}\ddot{\text{a}}\text{q}\ddot{\text{a}}$ $\text{y}\ddot{o}\ddot{o}\text{p}\ddot{\text{a}}$ $\text{r}\ddot{\epsilon}\ddot{\epsilon}$ (IV) 'And then all those people came'
4. $\text{q}\ddot{\epsilon}\ddot{\epsilon}$ $\text{t}\ddot{\text{a}}\text{q}\ddot{\text{a}}\ddot{\text{a}}$ $\text{t}\ddot{\text{a}}\ddot{\text{a}}$ $\text{n}\ddot{\text{i}}$, $\text{qh}\ddot{o}\text{t}\ddot{s}\ddot{o}$ $\text{tsh}\ddot{\text{u}}\ddot{\text{u}}$ $\text{y}\ddot{o}\ddot{o}\text{p}\ddot{\text{a}}$ $\text{r}\ddot{\epsilon}\ddot{\epsilon}$ (IV) 'He sent someone to summon them, and they came'

When we do find a subject in the ergative case, then, it seems reasonable to infer an added element of volition or purpose. After ñečōō saṅpō maneuvered the King of ñētōō to his death, he went down to ñētōō to become the new king. In $\text{qhōō maa yōō cee ni...}$ (IV) 'He came down...', the subject is ergative; this was, after all, no aimless wandering.

chīī 'to go'

The case treatment of subjects with chīī 'to go' is the reverse of that with yōō 'to come'. It is not only where purpose is explicitly marked that we find the ergative with chīī ; in ordinary narrative, the subject is most commonly in this case. It is, then, the appearance of the absolutive which requires explanation. Sometimes the absolutive is used for semantic reasons. The base chīī is closely associated with accomplished fact. It never occurs, for example, before the affix -qī , which is used in nonperfect formations. When the act of going is not an accomplished fact, however, we find the absolutive:

1. $\text{khōrā chīīnā nī...chīpa reē. mhācīīnā nī, khōrā ñīmā, sūm nee šiqī reē}$
(IV) 'If you go...you go. If you don't go, you'll die after three days'
2. $\text{ānī ṇa cīqōō mhācīpa cheē, nāmā ṭhīīnā nī yāā ē sēē nāqī reē}$ (IV) 'And then, if don't go alone, if I take my bride, she [the goddess] will kill me, too'

The absolutive may also be used for stylistic reasons, as when the subject has already been given in the ergative in the immediately preceding sentence:

1. $\text{qhōō sālī tī, tshōō kaaqāā chīpa reē. qhō tshōō kaaqāā chīī...tshāāpā taa...}$ (IV) 'The next day he went off to engage in trade. As soon as...he had gone off to engage in trade...'
2. $\text{sālī tī pāpā tī, tshōō kaaqāā chīpa reē. pāpā tī tshōō kaaqāā chīī nī...}$
(IV) 'The next day this father went off to engage in trade. This father went off to engage in trade, and...'

Such avoidance of redundancy is, of course, not limited to chīī ; compare $\text{qhōō maa lōō yōōpa reē. qhō maa lōō yōōpēe qhūtūū...}$ (IV) 'He returned back down from there. When he was returning back down from there...'. On the other

2. Q: *chāā* *la* *tshā* *lēqāā* *tāqpāā* *ṭuqī* *repēē*? 'Do they always go north to get salt?'

A: *lotāā* *re* *ši* *ṭoqo* *reē* 'Yes, they have to go every year'

Q: *yüüpēē* *ṭuqī* *marepēē*? 'Don't non-nomads go [to get salt]?'

A: *yüüpēē* *ṭuqī* *marēē* 'No, non-nomads don't go [to get salt]' (I. 18)

IV. NONCONTROLLABLE INTRANSITIVE VERBS

The structural definition of a noncontrollable intransitive verb is its inability to appear in the construction of a first-person subject with an affixed base followed by *yīi*. In *ṇa ṇapa reē* 'I was sick' and *qhō ṇapa reē* 'he was sick', for example, only the subjects differ. *ṇa* 'to be sick' belongs to the stative subclass of intransitive verbs. These verbs, which include, for example, *ṣar* in *mīl ṣar* 'to go blind' and *ṭhaā* in *natsā ṭhaā* 'to recover from an illness', and whose common semantic denominator may be stated as 'to come into, be in, or go out of a state or condition', always have absolutive subjects. Positioned between the absolutive subject and the verb there may be another absolutive which refines the scope of the verb base. These two absolutives may be regarded as a sequence of subjects. In *qhō qo ṇapa reē* 'he had a headache', *qhō* 'he' would then be the outer subject, *qo* 'head' the inner subject. Between the outer and inner subjects there may be a substantive in the dative: *ṇa lō tshīpa reē* 'I was satisfied', *ṇa qhō lō tshīpa reē* 'I was satisfied with him'. Controllable intransitive verbs, when they are not controlled, also enter into the construction of the never-controllable verbs (e.g. *ṇa tēē lēēpa reē* [IV] 'I arrived here', *ṇa lhezāsā chīpa reē* 'I went to Lhasa [if, for example, I was taken there as a child]').

Noncontrollable intransitive verbs are not devoid of personal reference. There is an auxiliary of first-person focus, *chu*, which when it follows the perfect base of these verbs is in agreement with the subject. For example: *ṇa ṇa chu* 'I was sick' (*ṇa tawā qāārī chi ṇa chu* 'I have been sick for a whole month'), *qhō ṇa su* 'he was sick'.

chu also occurs with verbs which do occur in construction with *-pa yīi*. With such verbs, however, the first person on which *chu* focusses is anything but

the subject: *chu* is a patient, not an agent auxiliary. The origin of *chu*, as an unstressed variant of the verb *chũũ* (negative: *m̥acũũ*), sheds light on the use of *chu* as opposed to *yīi* 'I am'. *chũũ* is 'to get, receive', as in *ṇaa ṇũũ t̤ɛ̀tsa chũũ* 'I got a little money', *ṇaa pūqũ chũũ* (or *chũũpa rèe*) 'I had a child'. *yīi*, unlike *chu*, identifies the subject as a controlling, volitional agent.

chu has a broad focus, which excludes only the subject of a transitive verb or a controlled intransitive verb. The first-person reference may be in any case. For example:

1. Transitive verbs.

- a. Absolutive (direct object): *qhṑ ña sṑ ñ chũ* 'he fed me'
- b. Dative (indirect object): *mṑ ñaa t̤ɛ̀ chũ* 'she looked at me'
- c. Genitive (within a noun phrase): *qhṑ ñɛ̃ t̤a šaa chũ* 'he shaved my hair'

2. Intransitive verbs.

- a. Absolutive (subject): *ña saa chũ* 'I fell'
- b. Dative (indirect object): *ña phũ cīq k̤ɛ̀ chũ* 'a boy was born to me'
- c. Genitive (within a noun phrase): *ñɛ̃ qāṇpā t̤ā̃ chũ* 'my legs got swollen'

In fact, there need be no explicit first-person reference in the sentence in which *chu* occurs; an understanding derived from the context is enough. For example, in one of the stories we recorded, a boy is recounting to his mother the things which happened to him when he was staying in an abandoned monastery. *ña, tùs chĩ̀ ñi, qō̃pā l̤ɛ̀ chũ* (IV) he says: 'Going like this, I came to (arrived at) a monastery'. He continues his narrative: when he arrived at the monastery, the monks were leaving. Since he was tired, he prevailed on them to allow him to stay, even though they had warned him that thieves were coming. And then, he says, *qūmā l̤ɛ̀ chũ* 'the thieves arrived [where I was]'.¹

In another subclass of intransitive verbs, the subject—which is in the absolutive—is preceded by a substantive in the instrumental case. This use of the instrumental is *not* that of the ergative, which denotes a volitional agent. Among the relatively few verbs which belong to this subclass are *thṑ* 'to see' and *qhṑ* 'to hear'. (With *hā*, *qhṑ* has the meaning 'to know, to understand'.) Though the actions of looking and listening may be controlled, when seeing and hearing one

is the passive recipient of sense impressions. These intransitive verb bases may be followed by the auxiliary *chu*, focussing on the first-person non-agent instrumental; with affixes, they may be followed by *reè* (or its negative, *marèè*), but not by *yīi*. For example:

1. *ŋɛ̀ qhō thōō chu* 'I saw him', *qhōō ŋa thōō su* 'he saw me' (cf. *ŋɛ̀ qhōō tḕpa yīi* 'I looked at him', *qhōō ŋa tḕpa reè* 'he looked at me')
2. *ŋɛ̀ mō qhō chu* 'I heard her' (cf. *ŋɛ̀ mōō nḕpa yīi* 'I listened to her')
3. *ŋɛ̀ tī qhōpa reè* 'I heard this'
4. *tsīi thi lānā, ānī, hā qhūqī marèè* (II. 5) 'if you lose this receipt, then, I don't know'

It is Dixon's contention (1979, p. 103) that, despite the semantic differences that divide 'see' and 'hear' from such transitive verbs as 'cut' and 'give', almost all languages treat the subjects of both types of verbs in the same way; that is, they treat the subjects of 'see' and 'hear' like subjects of transitive verbs. From this he concludes that "the syntactic-semantic functions A [subject of a transitive verb] and O [object of a transitive verb] are universal linguistic primitives". He cites two exceptions to this generalization on how languages treat 'see' and 'hear': Avar, a northeast Caucasian language, in which the one who sees is in the locative case, and the related Lesghian, where the one who sees is in the dative case. We hold that spoken Tibetan treats 'see' and 'hear' as intransitive verbs and in thus another exception. Our reasoning is as follows:

1. 'See' and 'hear' occur in spoken Tibetan in characteristically intransitive constructions. It is the first-person subject of a non-controllable intransitive verb which occurs in construction with *chu*, but not with *yīi*; we find *ŋa na chu* 'I was sick', not **ŋa napā yīi*, *ŋɛ̀ qhō chu*, 'I heard it', not **ŋɛ̀ qhōpa yīi*. If a verb occurs only in intransitive constructions, it is ipso facto intransitive. And if it is not transitive it cannot have a direct object. The substantive in the absolutive case which precedes such a verb is then the subject, not the direct object. In, for example, *ŋɛ̀ mō qhō chu* 'she was heard by me, i.e. I heard her', the patient *mō* is the subject. And if *mō* is the subject, *ŋɛ̀* cannot be.

2. The instrumental of the one who sees and the one who hears is not that

of the ergative subject. A case may have more than one function. The function may vary depending on whether the verb of the sentence in which it occurs is transitive or intransitive. With a transitive verb, the substantive in the absolutive may be either a subject or a direct object; with an intransitive verb, it can be a subject, but not a direct object. The substantive in the instrumental may be a subject with the meaning of a volitional agent, that is, with ergative function; it may, alternatively, indicate means or an instrument. In $\eta\dot{\epsilon}\dot{\epsilon}$ $\text{ph}\dot{\Lambda}\text{c}\dot{\Lambda}\dot{\Lambda}\dot{\Lambda}$ $\text{t}\dot{\Lambda}\dot{\Lambda}\dot{\Lambda}$ $\text{th}\dot{\Lambda}\text{q}\dot{\text{p}}\dot{\epsilon}\dot{\epsilon}$ $\text{t}\dot{\epsilon}\text{e}\dot{\text{p}}\dot{\Lambda}$ $\text{y}\dot{\Lambda}\dot{\Lambda}$ 'I connected these two cows with a rope', $\eta\dot{\epsilon}\dot{\epsilon}$ is the former kind of instrumental, $\text{th}\dot{\Lambda}\text{q}\dot{\text{p}}\dot{\epsilon}\dot{\epsilon}$ (instrumental to $\text{th}\dot{\Lambda}\text{q}\dot{\text{p}}\dot{\Lambda}$ 'rope') the latter. Between these two types of instrumental, there is another type which shares with the ergative the feature of being animate, with the instrumental of means the absence of volition. It is this intermediate type we find in the second of the following pair of examples:

- a. $\eta\dot{\epsilon}\dot{\epsilon}$ $\text{y}\dot{\Lambda}\dot{\text{q}}\dot{\Lambda}$ $\text{s}\dot{\text{u}}\dot{\text{p}}\dot{\Lambda}$ $\text{y}\dot{\Lambda}\dot{\Lambda}$ 'I erased the letter (on purpose)' ($\text{s}\dot{\text{u}}\dot{\text{p}}$ 'to cause to cover, erase')
- b. $\eta\dot{\epsilon}\dot{\epsilon}$ $\text{y}\dot{\Lambda}\dot{\text{q}}\dot{\Lambda}$ $\text{s}\dot{\text{u}}\dot{\text{p}}\dot{\Lambda}$ $\text{r}\dot{\epsilon}\dot{\epsilon}$ 'The letter was erased by me, i. e. I erased the letter by accident' ($\text{s}\dot{\text{u}}\dot{\text{p}}$ 'to get covered, erased [involuntarily, by accident]')

In a, the verb $\text{s}\dot{\text{u}}\dot{\text{p}}$ is the causative (hence transitive) counterpart to the noncausative (intransitive) $\text{s}\dot{\text{u}}\dot{\text{p}}$ of b. In a, $\eta\dot{\epsilon}\dot{\epsilon}$ is the ergative, the instrumental which denotes a volitional agent, and $\text{y}\dot{\Lambda}\dot{\text{q}}\dot{\Lambda}$ is the direct object. In b, however, the absolutive $\text{y}\dot{\Lambda}\dot{\text{q}}\dot{\Lambda}$, occurring with an intransitive verb, is the subject. $\eta\dot{\epsilon}\dot{\epsilon}$ is here what we shall tentatively call the instrumental of animate means. It is our contention that the function of the instrumental with verbs of the 'see' and 'hear' class is that of example b. Perhaps 'to see' and 'to hear' are misleading translations for the bases $\text{th}\dot{\text{o}}\dot{\text{o}}$ and $\text{q}\dot{\text{h}}\dot{\text{o}}$ and should be replaced in dictionary entries by 'to be seen' and 'to be heard'. Note that we have the same use of the instrumental of animate means with the passive as with $\text{s}\dot{\text{u}}\dot{\text{p}}$ and $\text{q}\dot{\text{h}}\dot{\text{o}}$:

1. $\eta\dot{\epsilon}\dot{\epsilon}$ $\text{s}\dot{\Lambda}\dot{\text{g}}\dot{\text{t}}\dot{\text{o}}$ $\text{c}\dot{\Lambda}\dot{\Lambda}\dot{\text{p}}\dot{\Lambda}$ $\text{r}\dot{\epsilon}\dot{\epsilon}$ 'It's been decreased two $\text{s}\dot{\Lambda}\dot{\text{g}}$ by me'
2. $\eta\dot{\epsilon}\dot{\epsilon}$ $\text{y}\dot{\Lambda}\dot{\text{q}}\dot{\Lambda}$ $\text{s}\dot{\text{u}}\dot{\text{p}}\dot{\Lambda}$ $\text{r}\dot{\epsilon}\dot{\epsilon}$ 'The letter was erased by me'
3. $\eta\dot{\epsilon}\dot{\epsilon}$ $\text{m}\dot{\text{o}}$ $\text{q}\dot{\text{h}}\dot{\text{o}}\dot{\text{p}}\dot{\Lambda}$ $\text{r}\dot{\epsilon}\dot{\epsilon}$ 'She was heard by me, i. e. I heard her'

If, in 3, $\eta\dot{\epsilon}\dot{\epsilon}$ is not even the subject, the one who hears is obviously not treated

in the same way as the subject of a transitive verb.

In another case, that of smell, the recipient of sense impressions appears in the dative, and 'smell' is explicit in the absolutive subject. In *ṇaa nūm qhi ṭhimā qhā chu* 'I smelled oil', *ṭhimā* 'smell' appears in a noun phrase; in *ṇaa qōqtī qhā chu* 'I smelled garlic', *-ṭī* 'smell' is part of a compound, *qōqtī* 'the smell of garlic'. Translated into English, some sentences with verbs of this intransitive subclass may sound transitive, but a moment's reflection reveals that it is a recipient which is defined by the dative case, not an agent. For example:

1. *ṇaa tshōō qōō chu* 'Some paint got on me'
2. *ṇaa chāpā qōō chu* 'I caught a cold'
3. *ṇaa tshīqōō rēē chu* 'The ring fit me'
4. *ṇaa thep nūi chu* 'I found a book'

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西 藏 口 語 中 的 動 詞

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中 文 摘 要

我們所採集的西藏口語中大部分的動詞，要是主語是第一人稱，可以用 -pa yīi 表示完成式，這些動詞都是我們所稱的 controllable 動詞。有些動詞，主語是第一人稱時，不能用 -pa yīi，只能用 -pv reè 表示完成式，這些動詞，像“病了”，“醉了”，“病好了”，“摔倒了”，都是我們所稱的 non-controllable 動詞。此外，關於主語 ŋa 和 ŋeè 的分別：用 ŋa 時不牽涉到 volition，用 ŋeè 時牽涉到 volition。