Year: 2017

Review of Lauren Gawne Nathan W. Hill (eds.). 2016. Evidential systems of Tibetan languages. Linguistics of the Tibeto-Burman Area 40(2), 285–303

Widmer, Manuel

Review of *Evidential systems of Tibetan languages*

Gawne, Lauren & Nathan W. Hill (eds.). 2016. *Evidential systems of Tibetan languages*. de Gruyter: Berlin. vi + 472 pp. ISBN 978-3-11-047374-2

Reviewed by Manuel Widmer

1 Tibetan evidentiality systems and their relevance for the typology of evidentiality

The evidentiality[1] systems of Tibetan languages rank among the most complex in the world. According to Tournadre & Dorje (2003: 110), the evidentiality system of Lhasa Tibetan (LT) distinguishes no less than four "evidential moods": (i) egophoric, (ii) testimonial, (iii) inferential, and (iv) assertive. If one also takes into account the hearsay marker, which is commonly considered as an evidential category in typological survey studies (e.g. Aikhenvald 2004; Hengeveld & Dall'Aglio Hattnher 2015; *inter alia*), LT displays a five-fold evidential distinction. The LT system, however, is clearly not the most complex of its kind within the Tibetan linguistic area. More complex systems have been described for some western Tibetan languages, e.g. Tabo Tibetan (Hein 2001).

In spite of their astonishing complexity, evidentiality systems of Tibetan languages have so far received relatively little attention in typological studies. One of the reasons for this neglect is that until the recent past there were – and to some extent still are – relatively few comprehensive and typologically oriented descriptions of Tibetan evidentiality systems. The volume under review makes a substantial contribution to filling this gap. The editors Gawne & Hill have managed to bring together no less than fourteen specialists for Tibetan languages (including themselves) who have contributed fifteen papers that focus on various aspects of Tibetan evidentiality systems. The individual papers have been arranged in four thematic sections: (i) an introductory section that consists of a general introduction by Hill & Gawne, (ii) a section of five papers that deal with typological and historical aspects of Tibetan evidentiality systems, (iii) a section of two papers that describe the evidentiality systems of LT and Diasporic Tibetan, and (iv) a section of six papers that describe evidentiality systems of other Tibetan languages.

---

[1] For this review, it is important to distinguish between a narrow and a broad definition of the term "evidentiality". Aikhenvald's (2004) widely accepted definition of the term defines the category "evidentiality" in a narrow sense and explicitly excludes the category "egophoricity" a.k.a. "conjunct/disjunct" (see Section 6 for a discussion of these terms). In the volume under review, however, the term "evidentiality" is used in a broader sense, unifying the two phenomena as one grammatical category. Throughout this review article, the term "evidentiality" will mostly be used in the latter sense. Whenever the term is used in the sense of Aikhenvald (2004), this will be indicated.

In what follows, the content of these four thematic sections will be discussed one after the other. However, before turning to this task, a few remarks on the formal quality of the volume are in order. The editors have done a good job in editing the volume. The formal quality of the layout is generally high, and the comprehensive index at the end of volume makes it easy for readers to find sections on specific topics across the volume. A relatively small number typos and formatting inconsistencies are not detrimental to the overall positive impression. The only point that one might criticize is the lack of standardization in interlinear glosses. Different authors use different abbreviations to refer to the same category (e.g. the category "perfect", which is abbreviated as 'PERF', 'PRF', and 'PT' in different papers) and also follow different conventions with regard to marking one-to-many-correspondences between morphemes and grammatical categories (some authors follow the Leipzig Glossing Rules, while others use idiosyncratic strategies to describe such relations). By deciding on a list of standardized abbreviations for common grammatical concepts as well as a unified standard of marking one-to-many-correspondences between morphemes and categories, the reading of example sentences as well as their comparison across individual contributions could have been considerably facilitated for readers.

2 General introduction

As stated above, the volume begins with an introductory paper by the editors with the title *The contribution of Tibetan languages to the study of evidentiality*. The paper initially provides an exhaustive overview of previous descriptive studies on the LT evidentiality system, distinguishing three types of research traditions: (i) early pedagogical grammars, which describe the LT system in terms of person agreement, (ii) approaches that describe the LT system in terms of interacting binary features of two (or more) categories, and (iii) approaches that describe the LT system in terms of three features that belong to the same category. Hill & Gawne then go on to offer a detailed review of how the LT system has been analyzed in typological studies, here mainly focusing on the contrast between the "conjunct/disjunct" model, which corresponds to research tradition (ii), and the "egophoric evidentiality" model, which corresponds to research tradition (iii), and arguing that the latter is more adequate from a Tibetan perspective. The editors then give a synoptic overview of research on evidentiality in other Tibetan languages. The paper closes with a brief section on the diachronic evolution of evidentiality systems in Tibetan as well as a short note on nomenclature.

Hill & Gawne's paper offers an informative overview of previous research on evidentiality in Tibetan and thus represents an adequate introduction to the overall topic, providing an exhaustive if condensed survey of the relevant literature. A very specific aspect

that deserves comment is their critical assessment of DeLancey (1990) and Bartee's (2011) descriptive work with regard to the (un)grammaticality of the egophoric ending *-gi-yod* in combination with noncontrollable verbs. DeLancey (1990: 300) and Bartee (2011: 143) both report that the use of *-gi-yod* in combination with noncontrollable verbs is not possible in LT and Dongwang Tibetan, respectively. Hill & Gawne, adducing the (grammatical) example sentence *ṅa na-gi-yod* [1SG sick-PRS-PER] 'I'm (chronically) sick', conclude that DeLancey and Bartee's descriptions must be flawed and that the two scholars were "misled by the artificiality of elicitation" (p. 17). However, when working with a native speaker of the Central Tibetan variety of Shigatse, I came across the very same constraint. The data that I collected suggests that in the Shigatse variety spoken by my consultant, the egophoric imperfective form *-gi-yod* cannot occur on noncontrollable verbs in single clause constructions, as in (1)a below. In any case, my consultant consistently rejected such examples as ungrammatical and insisted on using the direct allophoric imperfective form *-gis*. In the course of our discussion, it turned out that the use of *-gi-yod* only becomes possible if two conditions are met. First, the main clause must be preceded by a subordinate clause describing an event that stands in a cause-effect relationship to the event described in the main clause. Second, the speaker must be well-acquainted with the relevant cause-effect relationship. This is the case in (1)b.

(1)   Shigatse Tibetan

   a.   *ṅa   rtag.par   na-**gis** / *na-gi-**yod**.*
        1SG   always   be.sick-IPFV.DIR.ALLO / be.sick-NMLZ-IPFV.EGO
        'I am always sick / keep getting sick all the time.'

   b.   *ṅa   'di   bzas-na   na-gi-**yod**.*
        1SG   this   eat.PFV-COND   be.sick-NMLZ-IPFV.EGO
        'If I eat this, I become sick.'

Hill & Gawne are right to point out that the use of the egophoric ending *-gi-yod* in combination with noncontrollable verbs has been described as grammatical by various scholars (e.g. Denwood 1999: 151; Tournadre 1996: 223; Garrett 2001: 174, 193). However, the fact that others have described the same constructions as ungrammatical suggests that these inconsistencies are not simply explicable as a consequence of scholars falling victim to the "artificiality of elicitation". It seems much more likely that we are confronted with variation in the use of egophoric markers across the Tibetan linguistic area. Given the scarcity of data, it is premature to say anything more about this topic at present. We need more data to gain a better understanding of the various factors that restrict the use of egophoric markers in

LT and other varieties. In addition, we need a better understanding of intradialectal variation. Until then, we would do well to be more careful with our assessment of data collected by others, especially if we ourselves have nothing more to offer than elicited data for which we have to draw on secondary sources for the most part.

Another aspect that merits some discussion is Hill & Gawne's discussion of the concept "conjunct/disjunct" and its (un)suitability for describing Tibetan evidential systems. However, as this point is also relevant with regard to other contributions, it will not be discussed here but in Section 6 below.

3 Papers on typology and history

Ebihara's paper *Evidentiality of the Tibetan verb snang* offers a dialectological study of the Written Tibetan (WT) verb *snang* 'to emit light, to be seen, to appear' and its function in modern Tibetan varieties. As Ebihara demonstrates, the WT verb *snang* has been grammaticalized as an evidential auxiliary and / or an evidential verbal ending in several modern Tibetan varieties. While Ebihara's geographical overview of the distribution of *snang* is highly informative, her overview of the different functions of *snang* in individual Tibetan varieties (p. 55) could have been more detailed. Ebihara characterizes each dialectal attestation of *snang* with one single grammatical label, e.g. as "visual", "sensory", "non-egophoric", "mirative", etc. However, the example sentences that she presents suggests that the functional variation between the different reflexes of *snang* is too great to be captured with such simple labels. For example, the Dongwang reflex *ŋõ* is described as a "visual" marker, while the Zhollam reflex *ɲɔŋ* is described as a "non-egophoric" marker, suggesting that the morphemes serve different functions in the two dialects. However, the data given for Dongwang (pp. 48–49) and Zhollam (pp. 51–52) suggest that *ŋõ* and *ɲɔŋ* are in fact very similar in terms of their function (both express visual perception), the main difference being that *ŋõ* can only occur as a verbal ending, while *ɲɔŋ* can both function as a verbal ending and a copula. Nonetheless, Ebihara's study is a valuable contribution to the dialectological study of auxiliaries / copulas in Tibetan.

Gawne's paper *Egophoric evidentiality in Bodish languages* discusses Tibetan egophoric markers both from a dialectological and a typological perspective. The first few sections of the paper are dedicated to the functional description of egophoric markers in Standard Tibetan and other Tibetan varieties as well as their diachronic evolution. Gawne then goes on to describe egophoric markers in two non-Tibetan languages of the Tibetosphere, i.e. Kurtöp (East Bodish) and Wadu Pumi (Qiangic), and then discusses the terms "egophoric", "egophoricity", and "conjunct/disjunct" in relation to each other. The

paper closes with an overview of functionally reminiscent markers in non-Tibeto-Burman languages and a summarizing section.

Gawne's paper offers an interesting dialectological overview of egophoric markers in Tibetan and highlights the functional variability of the relevant markers across the Tibetan linguistic area. The paper also offers important typological insights such as the observation that egophoric semantics and the "egophoricity pattern" (i.e. the ability of certain evidential markers to relate to the perspective of the speaker in assertive speech acts and to the perspective of the addressee in interrogative speech acts) are logically independent phenomena (p. 84). At the same time, the discussion of the term "conjunct/disjunct" and its relation to the term "egophoric" / "egophoricity" (p. 83) is rather brief and vague. As a consequence, it remains unclear how the phenomenon "conjunct/disjunct" ties in with the broader typology of evidentiality in Gawne's opinion. Given that there are strong functional parallels between "conjunct" and "egophoric" markers (see Section 6 below), a more thorough discussion of the relevant literature on Tibeto-Burman languages, especially the literature on Kathmandu Newar (e.g. Hale 1980; Hargreaves 2005), would have been desirable. Nonetheless, the paper offers a valuable overview and will serve as a starting point for more fine-grained and comprehensive studies in the future.

Tournadre's paper *A typological sketch of evidential/epistemic categories in the Tibetic languages* provides a survey of evidential markers across the Tibetan linguistic area. Tournadre begins by introducing the concept of "Evidentiality/Epistemicity" (E/E), arguing that any descriptive analysis of Tibetan epistemic systems has to take into account the categories "evidentiality" and "epistemic modality" (pp. 95–96). The ensuing chapters give an informative overview of E/E systems in Tibetan, illustrating the morphological realization of E/E markers, discussing the core categories expressed by the relevant morphemes, and highlighting a number of more fine-grained semantic distinctions that are attested in certain varieties. Tournadre then goes on to discuss two topics that have been discussed controversially in the literature, viz. the (ir)relevance of the concepts "conjunct/disjunct" and "mirativity" for the description of Tibetan E/E systems. The paper closes with a description of marginal E/E categories that are rarely discussed in descriptions of Tibetan E/E systems, yet form an integral part of them.

Tournadre's paper offers the most comprehensive and informative overview of epistemic categories in Tibetan languages that is available to date. By taking into account varieties different from LT and Diasporic Tibetan, he draws attention to phenomena that have so far only received relatively attention in the literature on evidentiality in Tibetan languages. An interesting aspect of Tournadre's account is his treatment of egophoric markers as a subtype of the evidential core category "assumed" (p. 104). In a recent typological survey

study, San Roque & Loughnane (2012) treat "egophoric" as an independent core category "participatory evidence" that is on a par with "assumed evidence".[2] Given the fact that Tournadre's account is typologically informed and takes into account the relevant literature, it would have been desirable to have a more detailed discussion of the evidence that underlies this analysis and its potential implications for typological studies, the more so as the status of egophoric markers is a controversial aspect of the typology of evidentiality. Another aspect of Tournadre's paper that deserves comment is his discussion of the term "conjunct/disjunct". However, as this issue is of relevance for other papers in the volume, it is not discussed at this point but in Section 6 below.

Hill's paper *Perfect experiential constructions: the inferential semantics of direct evidence* focuses on the functional relation between markers of direct evidence and markers of inferential evidence, challenging the widely held view that the contrast between direct and inferential evidence constitutes a fundamental distinction in the domain of evidential marking. Emanating from a Haspelmathian approach to linguistic typology (Haspelmath 2010), Hill observes that some languages display constructions that combine the semantics of a perfect with the semantics of an inferential evidential and proposes to describe such constructions with the comparative concept "perfect experiential" (p. 136). He then goes on to discuss the internal semantic complexity of such constructions, showing that they express a twofold causal relationship: (i) one between a present state that arose in consequence of a prior event and (ii) one between a currently observable state based on which one infers that a prior event must have taken place. As Hill points out, perfect experiential constructions are thus characterized by the "intimate contacts both between perfects and inferentials and between sensory evidentials and inferentials" (p. 138). Subsequently, Hill discusses instances of perfect experientals in Sherpa, Duna, Oksapmin, and Bogaia, highlighting the fact that in all four languages, direct and inferential evidential constructions share a common morphological element that is associated with the expression of direct evidence. Hill then goes on to discuss the case of LT *bźag*, an evidential marker that has both been analyzed as an inferential perfective and an inferential perfect in previous studies (e.g. DeLancey 1985; Tournadre & Dorje 2003). Based on both structural and functional considerations, Hill argues that the relevant construction should also be analyzed as a perfect experiential. Eventually, Hill discusses two more putative instances of the perfect experiential in Kham and Kashaya before summarizing the results of his study.

Hill's paper makes an interesting and thought-provoking contribution to the study of evidentiality in that he calls attention to a phenomenon that has so far only received

---

[2] Note that San Roque & Loughnane (2012) use the term "conjunct" instead of "egophoric" and the term "reasoning" instead of "assumed".

comparatively little attention in the literature, viz. the functional relationship between inference and direct evidence. In addition, he points out that some constructions that have previously been described as "inferentials" may actually be "perfect experientials". However, it still seems debatable whether these insights justify the conclusion that the distinction between direct and inferential evidence is not a fundamental contrast in the domain of evidential marking. After all, it appears that the relevant constructions do not primarily express inferential evidentiality, but merely imply the process of inference. Hill implicitly acknowledges this, stating that "inference is the direct summation of the semantics of direct evidence and the semantics of the perfect" (p. 136). Caplow (2016: 239–240, 250–253) makes the contextual status of inferential evidentiality in such constructions more explicit. According to her, the relevant constructions express "deferred evidence", that is to say, they primarily profile one's current perception of the state resulting from a prior event, with the process of inference being contextually implied in appropriate contexts. If inferential semantics merely arises in the consequence of a (cancelable) conversational implicature, however, it becomes questionable whether inferential evidentiality can be considered as an integral semantic component of the relevant constructions. In any case, direct and inferential evidence appear to be located on rather different levels in such constructions, the first being an inherent semantic feature and the latter a contextually dependent pragmatic feature. Eventually, further research on the pragmatics of perfect experiential constructions is needed (especially from the perspective of conversational implicature) to gain a better understanding of the intricate relation between direct and inferential evidence. With his contribution, Hill offers a good starting point for such research.

Oisel's paper *On the origin of the Lhasa Tibetan evidentials "song" and "byung"* investigates the diachronic evolution of the LT direct evidential past tense marker *song* and the receptive egophoric past tense marker *byung*. Based on a careful philological analysis of Middle Tibetan texts, Oisel demonstrates that *song* and *byung* originally functioned as "personal deictic verbs" (expressing movement towards / away from the speaker) and contrasted with the "relative deictic verbs" *phyin* and *'ongs* (expressing movement towards / away from a contextually specified origo). All four verbs could also occur as auxiliary verbs in serial verb constructions, in which case they retained their respective deictic value. Oisel's subsequently discusses the reflexes of Middle Tibetan *song* and *byung* in Modern Literary Tibetan and Colloquial LT, showing that the "personal deictic" semantic component of the two verbs was eventually reanalyzed as a direct evidential and receptive egophoric function, respectively. Oisel's paper thus makes a valuable contribution to the diachronic study of Tibetan evidentials and demonstrates that philological analyses of Old / Middle Tibetan texts may provide interesting insights into the history of evidential markers.

4 Lhasa and Diasporic Tibetan

The following paper *Lhasa Tibetan predicates* differs from the other contributions in the sense that it is a translation by Hill of a paper published in 1975 by the Japanese linguist Yasutoshi Yukawa (*1941, † 2014). Yukawa published a number of papers on LT evidentiality in the 1960s and 1970s, more than a decade before DeLancey published his first papers on LT evidentiality in the 1980s. As Hill & Gawne point out (p. 6), Yukawa's work has gone unnoticed by Western scholars, which is why Hill decided to translate one of Yukawa's papers for this volume. Hill was right to do so. Yukawa's offers a detailed and sophisticated analysis of LT evidential auxiliaries / markers. Given the fact that a substantial amount of research on LT evidentials has been carried out since the 1980s, Yukawa's paper does no longer provide any revolutionary insights into the workings of the LT evidentiality system. However, by translating this paper into English and making it accessible to a wider public, Hill does justice to Yukawa's pioneering work on LT evidentials.

Caplow's paper *Inference and deferred inference in Tibetan* focuses on markers of inference in Diasporic Common Tibetan (DCT). Caplow emanates from the assumption that the DCT evidential system is characterized by a basic distinction between markers of certainty, which indicate that the content of the relevant proposition has been verified, and markers of non-certainty, which express that the content of the relevant proposition has not been verified. Embedded within this basic fundamental contrast, there is an additional distinction between direct evidentials, which mark a proposition as being based on personal knowledge or direct perception, and indirect evidentials, which mark a proposition as being based on generic knowledge or hearsay (pp. 231–233). Having introduced these functional contrasts, Caplow goes on to discuss perceptual markers of certainty in DCT with a special focus on the current perception auxiliary *du̱k* in present perfect constructions. Similar constructions in LT have repeatedly been analyzed as inferentials in previous studies (e.g. DeLancey 1990; Tournadre & Dorje 2009). Caplow, however, argues that *du̱k* does not encode inferential evidence in such contexts, but rather serves as a marker of "deferred evidence", which expresses that the speaker observes a state resulting from an event that was completed in the past (p. 239). Caplow acknowledges that "deferred evidence" necessarily entails the mental process of inference, but argues that inference is not the primary meaning of *du̱k* in present perfect constructions. Rather, the morpheme profiles the speaker's current perception of a state and the certainty of this knowledge, with inference merely being a contextual semantic feature of the construction (p. 240). Caplow then goes on to discuss markers of inference in DCT, which are markers of non-certainty and thus express that the content of a proposition has not been verified. Caplow demonstrates that three inferential

constructions can be distinguished in DCT based on their evidential auxiliary: perceptual inferentials based on the auxiliary *duk*, personal inferentials based on the auxiliary *yö?*, and unspecified / non-evidential inferentials based on the auxiliary *re?*. Caplow eventually turns to the LT evidential system and argues that the LT perfect marker *bzhag* is functionally equivalent to DCT *duk* in perfect constructions and should thus be analyzed as a marker of deferred evidence as well.

Caplow's study is a valuable contribution to the study of Central Tibetan evidential systems, offering an intriguing functional analysis of the morphemes *duk* / *bzhag* and drawing attention to a set of inferential constructions that have so far only received little attention in typological studies of Tibetan evidential systems. At the same time, the paper gives rise to a number of interesting follow-up questions. For one thing, it remains to be seen how Caplow's account of the DCT ties in with typological models of evidentiality, which generally assume that evidential markers, including markers of inferential evidence, are associated with epistemic certainty. For another thing, it is unclear whether Caplow's concept of "deferred evidence" can be applied to other Tibetan varieties. Further research is needed to answer these questions.

5 Papers on other Tibetan languages

Zemp's paper *Evidentiality in Purik Tibetan* describes the evidential system of Purik Tibetan, a western Tibetan variety spoken in Ladakh, India. Zemp offers a detailed account of different evidential constructions, ranging from copulas and verbal endings to periphrastic verb forms and clause-final demonstratives. Some notes on the diachronic evolution of evidentiality in Tibetan supplement the paper, making it an interesting and worthwhile reading for linguists interested in the synchronic and diachronic study of evidentiality.

Yliniemi's paper *Copulas in Denjongke or Sikkimese Bhutia* focuses on the evidential function of existential and equative copulas in Denjongke, a southern Tibetan variety of Sikkim, India. Yliniemi offers a detailed account of simple copulas as well as their combinatorial possibilities. Particularly interesting is Yliniemi's description of egophoric copulas, whose range of applicability diverges considerably from their cognates in Central Tibetan varieties. The paper thus makes a valuable contribution to the dialectological study of Tibetan copula systems.

Hyslop and Tshering's paper *An overview of some epistemic categories in Dzongkha* offers an account of selected evidential constructions in Dzongkha, a southern Tibetan variety that serves as one of the national languages of Bhutan. The evidential constructions described by the authors include the existential and equative copulas, the progressive aspect suffixes, as well as the hearsay marker. Hyslop and Tshering thus only take into account a subset of the

evidential markers described by van Driem (1998), which to date represents the most extensive description of evidentiality in Dzongkha. Nonetheless, their account is informative, supplementing and revising van Driem's (1998) analysis in several respects and providing a basis for further investigation of the Dzongkha evidential system. One of the follow-up questions arising from Hyslop and Tshering's study is whether the mirative / non-mirative distinction in copulas and the egophoric / allophoric distinction in verbal endings might not be analyzable as manifestations of one grammatical category.

Tribur's paper *Observations on factors affecting the distributional properties of evidential markers in Amdo Tibetan* describes the evidential systems of Amdo Tibetan varieties, which are spoken in the Chinese provinces of Qinghai, Gansu, and Sichuan. Tribur identifies three classes of markers in Amdo Tibetan: (i) epistemic modal markers, which indicate the speaker's degree of certainty about a proposition, (ii) evidential markers, which indicate the speaker's evidence for a proposition, and (iii) factual markers, which assert that a proposition is a fact. Taken together, these markers constitute a system of "epistemic-factual-evidentiality" (EFE) marking, which Tribur describes in great detail both in relation to verbal and copular clauses. An aspect that does not become fully clear from Tribur's account is the status of the category "egophoric" in the overall system of EFE marking. The egophoric category is repeatedly characterized as "evidential" by Tribur (pp. 373–374, 378, 384). However, a contrast of egophoric vs. non-egophoric forms can also be found in factual markers, which Tribur characterizes as "non-evidential" on one occasion (p. 411) and which she functionally contrasts with "evidentials" on another (p. 414). The egophoric category can thus both occur (i) in a paradigmatic contrast with evidential categories like "direct" and "indirect" and (ii) in a paradigmatic contrast to a "non-egophoric" category in factual markers. This suggests that the egophoric / non-egophoric categories have distributional properties that set them apart from other EFE categories. Whether these differences are great enough to warrant their postulation as a fourth functional dimension in addition to "epistemic modality", "factuality", and "evidentiality" is a question that can only be answered based on further research, for which Tribur's survey offers an excellent starting point.

Suzuki's paper *The evidential system of Zhollam Tibetan* gives an overview of evidentials in the Kham Tibetan variety of Zhollam, a village of northwestern Yunnan. Suzuki describes evidential distinctions in both copulas and verbal endings and highlights a number of unusual features that are not commonly encountered in Tibetan varieties, e.g. the conventionalized use of egophoric forms in declarative statements about the addressee (p. 426) or the presence of an animacy distinction in existential copulas (p. 430). The paper thus makes a valuable contribution to the dialectological study of Tibetan evidential systems.

Chirkova's paper *Evidentials in Pingwu Baima* discusses evidential markers in Baima, an unclassified Tibetan variety that is spoken in the borderland between Sichuan and Gansu. It offers a brief but informative survey of evidential verbal endings and subsequently discusses them from a dialectological perspective, substantiating the claim that Baima cannot easily be fitted into existing classifications of Tibetan languages. Chirkova paper thus offers a valuable overview of the evidential system of this little-studied Tibetan language.

6 Remarks on the terms "conjunct/disjunct" and "egophoricity"

While Tibetan languages have the most complex evidentiality systems in the Tibeto-Burman language family, they are by no means the only Tibeto-Burman languages to display such systems. Numerous non-Tibetan languages belonging to various branches of Tibeto-Burman exhibit evidential systems as well. A substantial number of these languages display systems that have been described under the name "conjunct/disjunct" or – more recently – "egophoricity". The question of how the relevant phenomenon relates to the evidentiality systems of Tibetan languages has been controversially discussed in the recent past (see Tournadre 2008; *inter alia*) and is also touched upon in the present volume on several occasions. It thus seems warranted to discuss this issue in more detail.

In the volume under review, the term "conjunct/disjunct" is critically discussed by Hill & Gawne (pp. 5–6, 8–14) and Tournadre (pp. 115–118), who express the view that the concept is not suitable for describing the evidentiality systems of Tibetan languages. They offer several pieces of evidence for their position, but their reasoning basically rests on two major arguments, a functional one and a structural one:

(a) Functional argument

The term "conjunct/disjunct" cannot be applied to Tibetan evidentiality systems because it implies a rigid syntactic analysis that does not do justice to the pragmatic nature of Tibetan evidentiality marking.

(b) Structural argument

The term "conjunct/disjunct" cannot be applied to Tibetan evidentiality systems because they are ternary, while conjunct/disjunct systems are binary.

As for the functional argument, Hill & Gawne and Tournadre are right to point out that Hale's (1980) original syntactic analysis of conjunct/disjunct marking in Kathmandu Newar (KN) is problematic for Tibetan. In this context it should be noted, however, that Hale's original approach has turned out to be equally inadequate for KN, the language it was originally

developed for. As a consequence, Hale's original terminology was given a new functional interpretation by scholars such as DeLancey (2003: 278) and Hargreaves (2005: 3), who use the term "conjunct/disjunct" to refer to a "particular evidential pattern" or a "intentionality/evidentiality system", respectively. This view by now seems to have gained general acceptance among Tibeto-Burmanists. In any case, I am not aware of any recent publication in the field of Tibeto-Burman linguistics that still endorses Hale's original analysis. Admittedly, the interpretation of conjunct/disjunct as person marking is still found in some typological studies (e.g. Aikhenvald 2004), but this issue will be left aside for the time being. It thus seems legitimate to say that a syntactic analysis of conjunct/disjunct systems is no longer favored by Tibeto-Burmanists, who now generally believe that the phenomenon is much closer to "classic" evidentiality (in the sense of Aikhenvald 2004) in terms of its functional motivation. Also, Tibeto-Burmanists now prefer the term "egophoricity" over the term "conjunct/disjunct" (see below).

As for the structural argument, Hill & Gawne and Tournadre are again right in pointing out that a binary conjunct/disjunct model in itself – regardless of what one considers to be its functional motivation – is not suitable to describe Tibetan evidential systems, as a binary approach cannot fully model the ternary functional contrast that we find in many Tibetan varieties. However, looking back at the history of research on evidentiality in Tibeto-Burman, this gives rise to the question of why DeLancey (1990) applied the term "conjunct/disjunct" to Tibetan in the first place.

This question takes us away from structural issues and brings us back to functional considerations. Discussions of the term "conjunct/disjunct" in relation to Tibetan evidential systems have so far concentrated on its shortcomings, and they had reason to do so. However, in focusing on these inadequacies, such discussions never reflected on what led DeLancey (1990) to applying Hale's (1980) terminology to the evidential system of LT.[3] Obviously, DeLancey was prompted to adopt Hale's terminology because he had identified functional parallels between the verbal systems of KN and LT.

At first, these functional parallels may not be apparent – especially given the clear structural differences between the KN system and the LT system – but on closer examination it cannot be denied that they exist. They are obvious in the domain of conjunct / egophoric marking, in particular between the KN past conjunct marker -a: (Hargreaves 2005) and the LT intentional egophoric perfective marker -payin (Tournadre & Dorje 2003). The two

---

[3] It is important to bear in mind that DeLancey only adopted Hale's terminology, but did not endorse the syntactic analysis presented in Hale's 1980 paper on KN. In his 1990 article, DeLancey explicitly characterizes LT as a language with an "evidential system" (p. 289). He further notes that "the conjunct/disjunct pattern does not represent person agreement in any ordinary sense" (p. 296) and that "the relevant semantic distinction […] is epistemological" (p. 297).

morphemes basically serve the same function in the two languages and express that the speaker (or the addressee in questions) volitionally instigated an event. Admittedly, the two markers are embedded into paradigms that display very different structures. Also, the functional parallels between the KN system and the LT system may be less obvious in the case of other markers. However, the fact that the KN past conjunct marker and the LT intentional egophoric perfective marker express almost identical semantics warrants the assumption that they are manifestations of one and the same grammatical phenomenon. This is why some scholars (including DeLancey) have chosen to refer to the relevant markers with the same terms. When DeLancey published his seminal papers on the LT evidentiality system three decades ago, the only existing term for this category was Hale's (1980) "conjunct", so DeLancey quite naturally extended the term (and the binary structural analysis that comes with it) from KN to LT.

In the course of the 1990s, the conjunct/disjunct terminology gradually came out of use, most probably because it was still strongly associated with Hale's (1980) rigid syntactic analysis, which scholars did no longer believe in. At the same time, the term "egophoric", which had been introduced by Tournadre (1991) to describe "conjunct" markers in LT, gained more and more acceptance among scholars working on Tibetan languages. Eventually, the term was also adopted by Tibeto-Burmanists working on non-Tibetan languages that display binary systems of the KN type. The functional parallels between LT type systems and KN type systems, which had prompted DeLancey (1990) to apply the term "conjunct/disjunct" to LT two decades earlier, now led the relevant scholars to replace Hale's outdated terminology with the term "egophoric" favored by Tibetanists. However, as the term "egophoric" merely substitutes Hale's "conjunct" category, it was necessary to introduce other terms for the superordinate phenomenon "conjunct/disjunct" and the contrasting category "disjunct". Scholars now generally use the term "egophoricity" (Post 2013) instead of "conjunct/disjunct" as a superordinate term, and have come up with several alternatives for the term "disjunct", e.g. "alterphoric" (Post 2013), "non-egophoric" (San Roque et al. 2017), and "allophoric" (Widmer forthcoming).

Hill & Gawne (pp. 18–19) as well as Tournadre (p. 116) disapprove of this development. They argue that the term "egophoric" was coined to refer a specific evidential category in Tibetan and that there is no point in expanding it into an autonomous grammatical category "egophoricity". Their argumentation is coherent and reasonable from a Tibetan perspective. In Tibetan evidential systems, egophoric markers are usually tightly integrated into a ternary paradigm in which they contrast with a direct and an assumptive evidential marker. Accordingly, the structure of Tibetan evidential systems gives no cause for the

assumption that the egophoric marker is anything else but one piece within a larger evidential system.

However, the situation looks different when considered from the perspective of a binary KN type system. In KN, the conjunct / egophoric form only contrasts with one other marker, which I will refer to as the "disjunct / allophoric" form in the following. The conjunct / egophoric form expresses that the speaker (or the addressee in questions) has a privileged epistemic perspective on an event by virtue of being its volitional instigator, while the disjunct / allophoric form indicates that this is not case (Hargreaves 2005). Since the disjunct / allophoric form indicates the lack of a privileged epistemic perspective, but does not indicate information source in the strict sense, the marker does not easily lend itself to an interpretation as an evidential marker in the sense of Aikhenvald (2004). In any case, it is difficult to relate the KN disjunct / allophoric form to existing typologies of evidentiality. The same case can be made for the conjunct / egophoric form. It certainly makes sense to analyze a conjunct / egophoric marker as a "personal" evidential marker if it contrasts with other well-established evidential categories like direct or assumptive evidentiality, as is the case in Tibetan. However, in a binary system of the KT type such an interpretation is not compulsory. Here, the conjunct / egophoric form can simply be analyzed as a marker that expresses a privileged epistemic perspective.

This ambiguous status of egophoricity is also addressed by San Roque et al. (2017) in a recent typological study. They note that the interpretation of egophoric markers is "compelling for languages where EGO markers contrast paradigmatically with 'classic' evidential morphemes such as visual and other sensory markers", but at the same time concede that languages with KT type systems offer "less motivation for an evidential interpretation, as information source is not (otherwise) grammaticalised. In such cases, it may be more appropriate to consider egophoric markers as expressions of 'primary knowerhood' that make a claim of intimate involvement with an event, but are not primarily concerned with indicating contrastive values of information source" (p. 138).

Hill & Gawne do not agree with San Roque et al.'s (2017) approach:

"In claiming that egophoric marking which fails to contrast with 'classic' evidential morphemes provides less motivation for an evidential interpretation, they [i.e. San Roque et al. (forthcoming)] cling too firmly to existing typologies that fail to mention personal (egophoric) evidentiality. If it is sensible to analyze some languages as exhibiting personal evidentiality, then the personal merits to stand among other evidential categories with cross-linguistic evidence of reoccurring semantics (p. 19)."

However, San Roque et al.'s reservations about the evidential status of egophoric markers appear to be well-founded. If based on a crosslinguistic survey of an underdescribed and poorly understood grammatical phenomenon X, one finds that phenomenon X (i) sometimes manifests itself as a functionally self-contained system and (ii) sometimes occurs integrated into a larger system that is dominated by the well-known grammatical phenomenon Y, it seems conclusive to be cautious about claims that X and Y are exponents of the same grammatical phenomenon. After all, it is common knowledge that well-known grammatical categories like tense, aspect, and mood, whose status as independent grammatical categories is firmly established, can sometimes be functionally fused to an extent that it is very difficult to tease them apart. In such cases, linguists usually resort to the strategy of setting up a supercategory (e.g. "tense/aspect/mood") so as to avoid difficult decisions about the status of the relevant categories as distinct grammatical concepts in a specific language (Haspelmath & Sims 2010: 84–85). This is a reasonable and practical solution. However, even though some languages may not make a clear-cut distinction between categories like tense, aspect, and mood, still few linguists would argue that we need to abandon the distinction between these well-established categories altogether.

Viewed in this light, San Roque et al.'s position appears sensible. Crosslinguistic evidence demonstrates that egophoricity systems and "classic" evidentiality systems (in the sense of Aikhenvald 2004) can exist independently of each other. There is thus both structural and functional evidence for the assumption that egophoricity and evidentiality are relatively independent grammatical phenomena. Whether this means that they should be postulated as distinct grammatical categories analogous to the distinction between the categories "tense" and "aspect" or simply be considered as two functional layers of one superordinate category analogous to the distinction between "perfective" vs. "imperfective" and "habitual" vs. "continuous" within the category "aspect" (see Comrie 1976: 25) is a question that future research will have to answer.

Hill & Gawne and Tournadre are right when observing that the evidentiality systems of Tibetan offer little motivation for postulating "egophoricity" as an independent grammatical phenomenon. However, their position leaves out of consideration the many non-Tibetan languages with KT type systems, for which the term "egophoricity" is a helpful and adequate grammatical concept. Their conclusion that "[t]he application of the term 'egophoricity' and reference to 'egophoric systems' is a hindrance to the understanding of the specific evidential forms in Tibetan varieties and analogous phenomena in other languages" (p. 19) is thus too Tibetocentric. It is true that one does not need a term like "egophoricity" as long as one wants to compare the system of LT with structurally similar systems of languages

like Foe (Rule 1977) or Guambiano (Gonzales & Bruil 2015), in which an egophoric / personal evidential directly contrasts with other evidential markers. However, the concept is necessary if we want to be able to typologically compare complex systems of the LT type with binary systems of the KN type. In any case, I see no other way to model the functional parallels between LT and KN in a (multivariate) typological perspective than by going back to an approach similar to DeLancey's (1990) analysis and assuming that LT essentially combines a binary egophoricity system with a binary evidential system, the latter being nested inside the allophoric domain. This analysis is illustrated in Tables 1 and 2 below.

Table 1: Modelling the KN system in typological perspective

	EGO	ALLO
NPST	*-e*	*-i*
PST	*-a:*	*-a*

Table 2: Modelling the Lhasa Tibetan in typological perspective

	EGO	ALLO	
		DIR	INDIR
IPFV	*-gi-yod*	*-gis*	*-gi-yod-pa-red*
PFV	*-pa-yin* (ACT) *-byung* (UND)	*-song*	*-pa-red*

Proponents of a holistic approach to linguistic typology may reject such an analysis, arguing that the two systems are too different to be compared in the first place. I do acknowledge that the functional parallels between, for example, the KN non-past egophoric marker *-e* and the LT imperfective egophoric marker *-gi-yod* may not be obvious at first sight. However, the same is true for the functional parallels between the LT imperfective egophoric marker *-gi-yod,* the LT perfective actor-egophoric marker *-pa-yin* and the LT perfective undergoer-egophoric marker *-byung*, which have rather different distributions. In the case of these LT markers, descriptive linguists working on Tibetan have come up with sophisticated descriptive concepts to account for these differences, e.g. Tournadre's (2008: 296) differentiation between "narrow scope" and "wide scope" egophoric markers. Why should these concepts not be applied in crosslinguistic comparisons to account for the (dis)similarities between egophoric marking in LT and KN? After all, the differences between the rather rigid KN system and the more flexible LT system largely seem to be explicable in those terms (see Widmer & Zúñiga forthcoming for a proposal of how to model the similarities between LT and KN type systems in a typological perspective).

On a final note, I would like to point out that binary systems of the KN type and ternary systems of the LT type can coexist side by side in one language. This is for example

the case in the Tibeto-Burman language Bunan (West Himalayish), whose present tense system is based on a binary distinction of the KN type, while the past tense system is based on a ternary system of the LT type (Widmer forthcoming). If we do not allow egophoricity to exist as a grammatical concept next to evidentiality, such systems become very difficult to describe in terms of their internal structure.

To sum up, Hill & Gawne as well as Tournadre's skepticism about the concept "egophoricity" is understandable from a Tibetan perspective, as the term is not helpful when describing evidential systems of the LT type. However, the term is useful both for (i) describing binary systems of the KN type and (ii) modelling functional parallels between ternary systems of the LT type and binary systems of the KN type in a typological perspective. Typologically oriented research on Tibetan evidential systems should no longer focus on the differences between ternary LT systems and binary KN systems but on their similarities and strive to develop typological models that allow us to compare both types of systems to each other as well as to other types of evidential systems. This will pave the way for a more comprehensive typology of evidentiality that will incorporate evidence from Tibetan evidentiality systems and that will at the same time provide new insights into Tibetan evidential systems in the light of crosslinguistic comparisons.

7 Summary

The volume under review makes a highly valuable contribution to the study of evidentiality in Tibetan languages. It brings together high-quality papers that focus on different aspects of evidentiality in Tibetan languages, covering a wide range of different topics. It thus represents a valuable source for descriptive and historical linguists as well as typologists interested in the phenomenon of evidentiality and egophoricity, and will serve as a reference point for future research for years to come.

8 Abbreviations

1 first person, ALLO allophoric, COND conditional, DIR direct, EGO egophoric, IPFV imperfective, INDIR indirect, NMLZ nominalizer, NPST nonpast, PFV perfective, PST past, SG singular

9 References

Aikhenvald, Alexandra. 2004. *Evidentiality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bartee, Ellen. 2011. The role of animacy in the verbal morphology of Dongwang Tibetan. In Mark Turin & Bettina Zeisler (eds.), *Himalayan languages and linguistics: studies in phonology, semantics, morphology and syntax*, 133–182. Leiden: Brill.

Caplow, Nancy J. 2016. Inference and deferred evidence in Tibetan. In Lauren Gawne & Nathan W. Hill (eds.), *Evidential systems of Tibetan languages*, 225–257. de Gruyter: Berlin.

Comrie, Bernard. 1976. *Aspect: an introduction to the study of verbal aspect and related problems*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

DeLancey, Scott. 1985. Lhasa Tibetan evidentials and the semantics of causation. *Proceedings of the Eleventh Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society*. 65–72.

DeLancey, Scott. 1990. Ergativity and the cognitive model of event structure in Lhasa Tibetan. *Cognitive Linguistics* 1(3). 289–321.

DeLancey, Scott. 2003. Lhasa Tibetan. In Graham Thurgood & Randy J. LaPolla (eds.), *The Sino-Tibetan languages* (Routledge Language Family Series), 270–288. London & New York: Routledge.

Denwood, Philip. 1999. *Tibetan* (London Oriental and African Language Library 3). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Garrett, Edward J. 2001. *Evidentiality and assertion in Tibetan*. Los Angeles: University of California at Los Angeles dissertation.

Gonzales, Geny & Martine Bruil. 2016. On the existence of egophoricity in Nam Trik. Paper presented at the *Symposium on evidentiality, egophoricity, and engagement: descriptive and typological perspectives*, Stockholm, 17–18 March.

Hale, Austin. 1980. Person markers: Finite egophoric and allophoric verb forms in Newari. In Stephen A. Wurm (ed.), *Papers in South East Asian Linguistics 7* (Pacific Linguistics A 53), 95–106. Canberra: Australian National University.

Hargreaves, David J. 2005. Agency and intentional action in Kathmandu Newari. *Himalayan Linguistics Journal* 5. 1–48.

Haspelmath, Martin & Andrea D. Sims. 2010. Morphology (Understanding Language Series). 2nd ed. London: Hodder Education.

Haspelmath, Martin. 2010. Comparative concepts and descriptive categories in cross-linguistic studies. *Language* 86(3). 663–687.

Hein, Veronika. 2001. The role of the speaker in the verbal system of the Tibetan dialect of Tabo / Spiti. *Linguistics of the Tibeto-Burman Area* 24(1). 35–48.

Hengeveld, Kees & Marize Mattos Dall'Aglio Hattnher. 2015. Four types of evidentiality in the native languages of Brazil. *Linguistics* 53(3). 479–524.

Post, Mark W. 2013. Person-sensitive TAME marking in Galo: historical origins and functional motivation. In Tim Thornes, Erik Andvik, Gwendolyn Hyslop & Joana Jansen (eds.), *Functional-historical approaches to explanation: in honor of Scott*

DeLancey (Typological Studies in Language 103), 107–130. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Rule, William. M. 1977. *A comparative study of the Foe, Huli and Pole languages of Papua New Guinea*. Sydney: University of Sydney.

San Roque, Lila & Robyn Loughnane. 2012. The New Guinea Highlands evidentiality area. *Linguistic Typology* 16. 111–167.

San Roque, Lila, Simeon Floyd & Elisabeth Norcliffe. 2017. Evidentiality and interrogativity. *Lingua*. 120–143.

Tournadre, Nicholas & Sange Dorje. 2003. *Manual of Standard Tibetan: language and civilization*. Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications.

Tournadre, Nicolas & Randy J. LaPolla. 2014. Towards a new approach to evidentiality. *Linguistics of the Tibeto-Burman Area* 37(2). 240–263.

Tournadre, Nicolas. 1991. The rhetorical use of the Tibetan ergative. *Linguistics of the Tibeto-Burman Area* 14(1). 93–107.

Tournadre, Nicolas. 1996. *L'ergativité en Tibétain. Approche morphosyntaxique de la langue parlée* (Bibliothèque de l'Information Grammaticale 33). Leuven: Peeters.

Tournadre, Nicolas. 2008. Arguments against the concept of "egophoric" / "allophoric" in Tibetan. In Brigitte Huber, Marianne Volkart & Paul Widmer (eds.), *Chomolongma, Demawend und Kasbek: Festschrift für Roland Bielmeier zu seinem 65. Geburtstag*, 281–308. Halle: International Insitute for Tibetan and Buddhist Studies.

van Driem, George. 1998. *Dzongkha*. Leiden: Research School of Asian, African and Amerindian Studies.

Widmer, Manuel & Fernando Zúñiga. forthcoming. Egophoricity, involvement, and semantic roles in Tibeto-Burman languages. *Person and knowledge: from participant-role to epistemic marking*, special section of *Open Linguistics*.

Widmer, Manuel. forthcoming. *A grammar of Bunan* (Mouton Grammar Library 71). Berlin: de Gruyter.

Yukawa, Yasutoshi (湯川恭敏). 1975. チベット語の述部 Chibettogo no jutsugo [The predicates of Tibetan]. アジア・アフリカ文法研究 *Ajia Afurika bunpō kenkyū / Asian & African Linguistics* 4, 1–14. Tokyo: ILCAA.