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Non-contextually-triggered verb-verb sequences in Tibetan and Ladakhi

Tibetic languages are, from the very beginning, very rich in verb-verb combinations that are not simply due to the omission of contextually given arguments. These non-contextually-triggered combinations can be divided into three different groups:

The first group contains fully grammaticalised verb plus auxiliary constructions (VAC). Most of them contain additional morphological material that link the main verb with the auxiliary. This material may disappear in the development of modern constructions. These constructions will not be further discussed.

The second group contains verb plus modal verb combinations (VMC). While the lexical verb was originally a complement of the modal verb, the modern Ladakhi constructions are in a process of fusion and intertwining, resulting in a somewhat unexpected case marking behaviour.

The third group is formed by converb plus verb combinations (CVC), where the semantics of the second element may be retained to a greater or lesser degree. There are two types of CVCs, one where the first verb does not show any additional morphemes, and one where a clause chaining marker is added to the first verb, typically a form of the Classical Tibetan *lhagbcas* morpheme {*ste*}. The first type is rather typical for modern Central Tibetan and some East Tibetan (Kham) varieties, the second type is found in Old Tibetan, particularly in texts that are translated or adapted from Indian or Western sources, in Classical Tibetan, in West Tibetan (Balti and Ladakhi) and, with a different morpheme in North-East Tibetan (Amdo). The Western Tibetan varieties (Balti and Ladakhi) are particularly rich in CVCs, which may be indicative of some influence from New-Indoaryan languages, particularly from Shina.

I shall first give an overview over the last group of CVCs, as attested diachronically and synchronically. I shall then discuss their status as mono-clausal compounds or bi-clausal constructions of embedded modification. Initially, I had taken all of them on semantic grounds as compound constructions. However, recent syntactic analysis of the Ladakhi CVCs shows that the most frequent constructions, the combinations with directional or vector verbs, cannot be treated as compound constructions. Within 1200 years of language development, there has been apparently little progress in the grammaticalisation of these combinations. The reason might be that both components of the pair are usually semantically well-motivated. Some of the less frequent constructions, however, are quite advanced on the grammaticalisation path. Frequency, therefore, cannot be taken as the sole or main indicator for semantical bleaching or grammaticalisation.

Finally I should like to discuss briefly the syntactically intertwining VMCs, where the case marking depends both on the [\pm control] semantics of the modal verb, and on the original argument structure of the lexical verb. That is, with intransitive verbs taking an absolutive marker for the first (or sole) argument, the combined modal construction re-

sults in absolutive marking. However with transitive verbs taking an ergative marker, the combination with a [-control] modal verb triggers aesthetic marking (dative experiencer subject), whereas the combination with a [+control] modal verb triggers ergative marking. One of the Ladakhi dialects offers some alternative constructions, which can demonstrate the development from ordinary complement constructions.