Optional Ergative Case Marking in Tibetan

Ralf Vollmann

01. Introduction

Spoken variants of Tibetan have the following structural case markers: an unmarked absolutive case (ABS), an ergative/instrumental case (ERG/INS) [ki] (phonological form) = kyis (orthographic form), an allative(locative)/dative case (ALL/DAT) [la] = la. The genitive (attributive) case (GEN) [ki] = kyi is (synchronously) formally identical with ERG/INS in many varieties of Tibetan. Furthermore, we find an ablative case (ABL) [nɛː] = nas, and a sociative (comitative) case marker (SOC) [tʰan] = dang. Various other semantic case meanings are expressed by suffixes, postpositions, or relational nouns (GEN-Adpos-ALL), e.g. illative [nāː] nang (or GEN-nang-la, respectively).

Nonetheless, all these forms can deviate phonologically, morphologically, or morphotactically from the above-quoted forms in single dialects (cf. Vollmann 2006: 01.04.07.). To give an example, (Leh) Ladakhi has two distinct markers for ERG/GEN [i] und INS [nāː] (cf. Kosshal 1979: 73), whereby one INS marker is diachronically related to the Tibetan SOC dang.2

1 The author wants to thank Bettina Zeisler for numerous valuable comments on an earlier version of this paper.

2 However, this description does not seem to fully account for the real distinctions; in Kenhat Ladakhi (to which Leh belongs), ERG/INS/GEN are described as being
One peculiar feature of Tibetan case grammar is the fact that ERG is 'optional' in most variants. This phenomenon, well-known since the first grammars, has been thoroughly described for Lhasa Tibetan (Chang & Chang 1980) and has influenced the discussion on the status of the Tibetan ERG ever since (Chang & Chang 1980, DeLancey 1990, Saxena 1991; Agha 1993; Tournadre 1996). In this contribution, an overview of ERG case marking patterns will be given, as far as it can be deduced from various descriptions.

02. FLUID S-MARKING

Tibetan ERG marking is morphological (i.e., ERG is expressed by suffixes or attached particles). Transitive verbs can occur with or without ERG subjects, and 'control(able)' intransitive verbs such as [tə] = sdod/bsad 'stay', [tʰʊ] = thon 'come out', [tʰo] = gro 'go', [tʰi] = phyn 'went' take ABS as well as ERG subjects (cf. Chang & Chang 1980: 16f., Saxena 1991: 112). Based on a distinction of various motivating factors for 'transitivity' (Hopper & Thompson 1980, Tsunoda 1985, McGregor 1992: 284ff.), Tibetan ERG qualifies for being an Agent (AG) and Actor (ACT) marking device; both agents and actors actually 'act', but actors do so without being embedded in an AG-PAT-relationship (cf. McGregor 1998: 500). According to Dixon (1979: 80ff.), this has been classified as 'fluid S-marking'.

Thus, ERG marking in Tibetan seems to imply volition, control, or intention, as can be seen from the following examples (Chang & Chang 1980: 17):

(01a) ŋɛ̠ɛɲ̥rʐve.cʐp lɲh.superiorɛ̄ɛ̄sʐ̄ʐ̄ chĩpʌ yĩ̠ĩ̠
Lhaəa:ALL 1:ERG gone-ɕS-COɕ̠
I went to Lhasa (myself).

(01b) ŋʐ̠ lɲh.superiorɛ̄ɛ̄sʐ̄ʐ̄ chĩpʌ re̠eɲ̥rʐve.cʐp
Lhaəa:ALL 1
I went (= was taken) to Lhasa.

With 'future tense' (intention), ERG is usually not used; this can also be described as an ERG marking sensitive to the transitivity parameter of control (cf. Hopper & Thompson 1980: 252; McGregor 1992: 285). Consequently, if ERG is used, it puts the focus on the marked participant identical, SOC [tang] being used for INS arguments, not 'real' instruments. In Shamskat Ladakhi, the situation is again different (cf. Zeisler, this vol.).
("It is me who will do this"). With the verb [qo] = dgos 'need', the use of ERG would imply a meaning of "I'll do it [for you]" (Chang & Chang 1980: 19f.). The following example is taken from DeLancey (1990: 307):

(02) ngas kho'i ming brjed kyi red/
   I:ERG he:GEN name forget-PR-DISJ
   *I will forget his name.

In Lhasa Tibetan, ERG interacts with CONJ/DISJ forms of the verb (see example above) with 1st person subjects; with CONJ forms, ERG implies volition, with DISJ forms, the focus is on the object, however (Chang & Chang 1980: 18):

(03) ɲɛɛ sɛŋ tɔ cɑã-pa-reɛ
   1:ERG sang two lowered:CAUS-NS-DISJ
   *It [= the price] has been decreased two sang by me.

Therefore, DeLancey (1990: 308) stated that ERG is used on the basis of 1. transitivity and 2. volition, whereby volition can be divided into 2.1. semantic use (based on perfectivity), and 2.2. discourse-pragmatic use (e.g., focus). The main function of ERG seems to be the implication of volition/control, cf. (Goldstein 1977: 41, Goldstein et al. 1991: 83f.):

(04) kho ɲal ba red/
   3:ERG sleep-NS-DISJ 3 sleep-NS-DISJ
   He slept.
   He fell asleep.

There are, however, quite a few counter-examples, such as the following example (Tournadre 1996: 87):³

(05) khos nyal ba red/
   3:ERG year twenty prison in-ALL stay-NS-DISJ
   He stayed in prison for twenty years.

03. Optional ERG MARKING

Word order in Tibetan is relatively free (obligatorily verb-final),⁴ cf. (Agha 1993: 13); additionally, all nominal constituents are syntactically facultative, cf. (Tournadre 1996: 69, 71):

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³ Such unexplicable exceptions can be found in many languages, however. Probably, such examples add some pragmatic meaning in their respective contexts (‘emphasis’, etc.), which, however, does not ‘explain’ the use of ERG in such contexts.
This characteristic is not uncommon (cf., e.g., Yacapultec Maya, Du Bois 1987); McGregor (1998: 501) describes ellipsis as a pragmatic connection of AG marking to 'givenness or predictability' for Gooniyandi (Australian). Schultzze-Berndt 2006 analyzes a Jaminjung corpus (Australian) and finds out that actually more than three quarters of all transitive clauses lack overt agentive NPs; overt agentive NPs occur almost exclusively (89%) when a new topic is introduced. Similar results have been obtained with other languages.

Additionally, there is “variation between the use and non-use of the ERG marker within its normal domain of application” (McGregor & Verstraete 2005: 1, quoted in Meakins & O’Shannessy 2006: 3) in a number of ERG languages (including Tibetan), usually with some pragmatic distinction. Meakins & O’Shannessy (2006: 3) remark that in a number of cases, the "variable use of the ERG marker is attributed to language contact" (and language obsolescence, cf. McGregor 2002: 170).5

In Tibetan, ERG marking on an overt agentive NP is frequently omitted (cf. Agha 1993: 14). Saxena 1991 reports a rare use of ERG in Lhasa. Similarly, the textbook of Chonjore (2003: 226f.) gives quite a few sample sentences with omitted ERG, cf.

(07) nga kha lag bzo bgyi’ yod/ nga kha laa so-gi-jee
1 food eat-PR-CONJ
I am making food.

For Chonjore, ERG use is basically founded on the 'emphatic function' (= focus), as can be shown in question/answer sequences (Chonjore 2003: 277f.; cf. also p. 230): 6

(08a) padma ga re byed kyi padma rin chen la bhta bgyi’ dug/ 'dug/

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4 Even the verb-final rule is not without exceptions (cf., e.g., Haller 2004: 164), in Ladakhis, extractions are obligatory in certain contexts (B. Zeisler, pers. comm.).

5 A similar hypothesis was made by Saxena 1991 for (modern) Lhasa Tibetan, but optional ERG is more widespread in Tibetan synchronically and diachronically.

6 The orthographic rendering of the connector particle as (bgyi) is interesting here; this implies the connector to be a stem form of (bgyid).
What is Pema doing?  Pema is looking at Rinchen.

What is looking at Rinchen?  Pema is looking ...

Probe questions are of course a good example for the marking of identificational focus (Kiss 1998). Similarly, new referents are typically focal elements (Comrie 1981: 62), and two agents may be contrastively marked. Focus, however, is not the only possible candidate for optional ERG marking (see below).

04. SUBSTITUTION OF ERG BY ABL

ABL can replace ERG in some contexts (cf. "[...] mais l'instrumental et l'ablatif sont souvent confondus en tibétain." (Foucaux 1858: 99, FN 1)), which is shortly mentioned for the written language in Tournadre (1996: 105f., 133ff., 153ff.) and thoroughly discussed in Zeisler this vol., e.g.:

(09)  gong sa  chen po  mchog nas  bka' slob  gnang song/  highness big supreme-ABL teaching give-H-PFV-GEN
   His Supreme Highness has given a teaching.

The shift from ERG to ABL has been observed in other languages (e.g., in Jaminjung, cf. Schultze-Berndt 2006) and usually involves pragmatic consequences, such as in Samoan, where, in official speeches, ABL instead of ERG has the function to diminish the degree of ascribed volitionality, intent, or control for what has been done. For Tibetan, Tournadre (1996: 134) remarks that this use of ABL is mainly restricted to written language or high registers for the agentivity of important persons – or institutions (cf. Tournadre 1996: 139, cf. also Zeisler this vol.). Thus, we have to do here with a 'social function' (McGregor 1998: 496).

Incidentally, ABL=ERG morphotactics (ABL/ERG syncretism) is found in Amdo Tibetan and in Newari, as well as in some other Tibetan languages (cf. Tournadre 1996: 134, Genetti 1990, and others); e.g., the Lepcha ABL nun has also AG function (Plaisier, pers. comm.).

ERG being rare in general, it is regularly used for authors of books. In Kenhat Ladakhi, ABL can be used for corporate bodies (Zeisler this vol.).

The Tibetan ABL cannot replace ERG with mover verbs which is probably due to locative source meaning of the ABL; with respect to INS marking, ABL but marks the source, while INS marks the means (ex. from Tournadre 1996: 154):

(10a) blo bzang gis lag pas zin-song/
Lobzang ERG hand:INS hold-GEN:PFV
Lobzang held [him/her] with [his] hand.

(10b) blo bzang gis lag pa nas zin song/
Lobzang-ERG hand-ABL hold-GEN:PFV
Lobzang held [him/her] at [his/her] hand.

05. Optional DAT (EXP) MARKING

The traditional Tibetan ALL/DAT case [-la, (-ya, -a)] = la case has posed problems for Western authors with regard to transitivity statements ever since (cf. Schmidt 1839: 62; Foucaux 1858: 27; Jäschke 1865: 40f.; etc.); this case has not only been identified as a dative marker, but has instead variously been named a (facultative) accusative case. Interestingly, Tibetan grammaticography has identified la with the accusative (second case) of Sanskrit (for an extensive discussion cf. Zeisler 2006) as well. The frequent omission of ERG marking (or of ERG NPs) in clauses with DAT-marked NPs led to the view that the DAT marker can play a similarly distinctive role7 with regard to the ABS, as does the ERG case, cf. (Chonjore 2003: 230):

(11) A ma lags phru gu tshor kha lag bzos gnang gi ’dug/
mother-HON child-PL:ALL food made-HON-PR-DISP
Mother is making food for the children.

This definition includes an underlying locative meaning (or, more generally, the GOAL) which occurs also in few settings considered transitive in European languages. Additionally, with few specific verbs,

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7 A "discriminatory function" of optional ERG marking has been proposed by some researchers working on other languages as well (cf. McGregor 1992: 276, 1998: 495); f.ex., Meakins & O’Shannessy (2006: 9) find a frequent omission of ERG in 'semi-transitive' clauses (with DAT objects) for two Australian mixed languages (Light Warlpiri and Gurindji Kriol).
there are EXP subjects, e.g. with 'byor 'receive' or byung 'get' (cf. ex. in Losang Thonden 1984: 230). Bickel 2001, however, remarks that there are only 9 verbs with EXP subjects in Read’s (1934: 64) description of Balti, and mostly (or only) dative possessors in Central Tibetan (as in the example above); most 'real' EXP roles are ERG-marked (e.g., 'he/she:ERG saw/is ashamed/etc.').

Nonetheless, the discriminatory role of the DAT is somewhat specific in that it can optionally occur with objects of certain verbs, thereby shifting focus (Tournadre 1996: 161); see the following examples:

(12) g.yag gzhon pa red/
Yak ride-NS-DISJ
He rode a yak.

This is similar to the above-mentioned difference between ERG and ABS use with motion verbs, whereby in certain contexts focus is expressed by the use of ERG (Tournadre 1996: 161):

(13) kho phyn pa red/
3 gone-NS-DISJ
He went.

Thus, focus can be marked by word order, or by the application of case markers which would not occur in normal settings, cf. (ex. from Tournadre 1996: 162):

(14a) blo bzang g.yag gis brdung song/
Lobzang Yak-ERG hit-GEN:PFV
Lobzang [received] a hit from the yak.

(14b) g.yag gis blo bzang la brdung song/
Yak-ERG Lobzang-ALL hit-GEN:PFV
[It was] Lobzang [who received] a hit from the yak.

06. OUTLOOK

Thus, we find all or most characteristics of optional ERG marking as it has been described for some other languages: The facts of the possible and widespread omission of agentive NPs, AG marking with intransitives, and non-overt AG marking might correlate with the following list of functions (cf. also McGregor 1992: 276ff.; 1998: 495ff.; Meakins & O’Shannessy 2006):

• agent and actor marking
• discriminatory function
• contrastive marking
• social factors
• newness, focus\(^9\) and intention
  • question/answer pairs (< newness/focus)
• other functions
  • intensification\(^11\)
  • ERG and word order

Additionally, the model of Tibetan transitivity has to be extended in order to distinguish various aspects as proposed in Hopper & Thompson 1980, Tsunoda 1985, McGregor 1992:

• degree of affectedness of the PAT
• degree of intentionality and control of the AG
• degree of stativity of the process

Additionally, the use of ABL for ERG has to be considered.

07. DIALECT OVERVIEW

The above-mentioned patterns, exemplified with samples from Modern (Lhasa) Tibetan (MT), are not equal in all dialects (or varieties) of Tibetan. Unfortunately, with the exception of MT (DeLancey 1980 etc., Saxena 1991, Tournadre 1996, and others) and Ladakhi (Zeisler to appear), the question of optional ergativity has not been thoroughly discussed for most dialects. Thus, a preliminary and tentative overview of various variants of Tibetan as given below does only give few hints on what should be elaborated in later studies.

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\(^8\) Contrasting the agentivity of two agentive participants (cf. Meakins & O’Shannessy 2006: 16); word order may also play a role here.


\(^10\) McGregor (1998: 496), referring to Saxena, originally enumerates "topicality or givenness", but remarks that in Gooniyandi "topical subjects are actually less likely to be ergatively marked than non-topical ones". This has been described in the same way by Agha 1993, Che 1992, Zeisler (2004: 514ff.) for (Lhasa) Tibetan.

\(^11\) E.g., in intentional aspect (ERG with 'future tense'), or in 'emphatic subject chaining', i.e., "subject chains where the subject is not reduced to an anaphoric pronoun" (Meakins & O’Shannessy 2006: 18f.).
07.01. Written Tibetan

Although most speakers of Tibetan varieties are ignorant about its exact rules, Written Tibetan is widely perceived as the ‘standard’ language of Tibet. Among the different written styles, the biography of Milarepa has sometimes been chosen for textual analysis (cf. Saxena 1989; Dempsey 1993, Haller 2005) or as literary examples (cf. Kelzang Gyurme 1992). The text itself appeared in 1488 (cf. gtsang smyon he ru ka rus pa'i rgyal mtshan 1981). Haller 2005 (ms.) gives a detailed analysis of the verbs and case frames in this text which can be interpreted for our purposes.

Haller (2005: 47ff.) distinguishes controllable and noncontrollable verbs as a lexical feature. The difference is based on AUX usage. However, ERG marking does not exactly correlate with these categories: The classification of case patterns is as follows (E=ERG, A=ABS, D=DAT):

Since all nominal constituents are facultative, the counting has to be evaluated for omissions. Haller 2005 finds that the A in cEA frames seems to be usually present, which holds true also for the E and A in cEDA, and the D in cED frames. The A in ncA seems to be usually omittable, but it is more or less ‘obligatory’ in the majority of ncAD frames. ncDA usually requires A, not D. ncEA seems to need mainly the A role. The few verbs governing SOC obligatorily require the SOC role. In other words, the unmarked ABS NPs are less omittable than the case marked NPs; among these, ERG and also DAT are omittable, while more specific cases (e.g., SOC) are not. The list of verbs from this text gives this result:

Table 1: Verb classes and case patterns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>controllable verbs</th>
<th>noncontrollable verbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cA (46 verbs)</td>
<td>ncA (114 verbs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cEA (95 verbs)</td>
<td>ncEA (34 verbs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cEDA (72 verbs)</td>
<td>ncAD (41 verbs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cED (13 verbs)</td>
<td>ncDA (18 verbs)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Omission of NPs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>cA</th>
<th>cEA</th>
<th>cEDA</th>
<th>cED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

12 (mi la ras pa'i rnam mthar)

13 Zeiler (to appear) gives another (similar) description of Written Tibetan case marking patterns which will be described in section 7.3., however.
Additionally, Haller (2005: 45ff.) reports an aspectual split in the use of ERG marking with c verbs: cA verbs in perfective aspect can take ERG roles with focus function. cEA verbs have cEA in PFV and sometimes cAA in IPV; here, volition seems to play a role; with topical A, E is obligatory. cED can become cAE with topicalized GOAL. Similarly, topicalized DAT in ncAD and ncDA results in ncAD.

### Table 3: Aspectual split patterns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PFV</th>
<th>IPV</th>
<th>PFV</th>
<th>IPV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>ncA</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cEA</td>
<td>EA</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>cEA</td>
<td>EA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cED</td>
<td>EDA</td>
<td>ADA</td>
<td>cED</td>
<td>AD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ED</td>
<td>AE</td>
<td>ncDA</td>
<td>AD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Semantically, c verbs are verbs which allow control over the situation. But monovalent controllable verbs predominantly take ABS. The category cED contains verbs such as *dgongs* [gon] 'think', *lta* [tä] 'see', *gnod* [nø] 'harm', *phug* [pʰʊk] 'bite'; some of these verbs are perception verbs which actually relate an EXP to an 'attained' (not affected) PAT. As in many other ERG languages, this EXP is perceived as an actor and therefore ERG marked (e.g., 'I:ERG see you'). The PAT, or GOAL of this event, is DAT marked in some cases (e.g., 'I:ERG look at you:DAT'; 'directed activity' (Zeisler)).

Among the nc verbs, ncAD shows a grammaticalized DAT: *skrag* [täk] 'be afraid of', *ha las* [hälɛ̱] 'be surprised about', *dad* [dɛ̱] 'be-
lieve in’, etc. all take DAT. The class ncDA contains verbs which mark experiencers with DAT; only few cases can probably be understood as experiencer subjects (‘byor [fjo] ‘receive’ vs. phan [pʰe] ‘benefit’; skyes [k’e] ‘be:born’) is similar in taking a syntactically focussed LOC/EXP object.


To sum up, ERG marking in this text is fluid and often facultative, being sensitive to focus, aspect, and volition.

07.02. BALTI

Balti (cf. Read 1934, Bielmeier 1985), the language of Baltistan, is the westernmost dialect of Tibetan. The ERG marker in Balti is [-i] and [-si] (Hassan Lobzang 1995: 26), the dative is [la].

Hassan Lobzang 1995 distinguishes transitive and intransitive verb forms. In various cases, these verb forms are morphotactically related, showing [s+C] (e.g. sk-, zb-) onsets for transitive verbs and [C, Cʰ] (e.g. g-, b-) onsets for intransitive forms, respectively (f.ex. skol/khol, but also other forms, cf. Zeisler 2001: 188). This regularity reflects the common Tibetan distinction of CAUS/RES verb pairs, or the parameter of ‘control’ in other terminologies; cf. (Hassan Lobzang 1995: 30f.):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4: Verb morphology for causative vs. resultative orientation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>skang-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spar-</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Transitivity, or bivalence, however, does not seem to play a role for case marking; instead, we find examples of causative or controllable verbs with ERG marked NPs; the following examples can be drawn from the grammar (ex. extracted from Hassan Lobzang 1995: 32ff., 38): 14

(15a) examples with ERG:
Nadir hltef
Nadir looks.
khosi hltek
He will look.

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14 These data were given for another reason and therefore, unfortunately, do not always contain complete sentences so that not all case marking patterns can be derived from these examples.

15 Other data could give a more detailed view, f.ex.: kho de kamerā gaymā-la lta ‘he looked into all rooms’ (Bielmeier 1985: 36, ex. 13.18).
Ahmzd as ros Aslam las byaset
Ahmad ate meat Aslam has done work
(15b) examples with ABS:
chhu kholet nga chheset
Water boils I believe
bomo ongen dugetpa Aslam goet
The girl used to come Aslam goes
bomoi ongetpa bomoi khoren yotpa
A girl had come A girl was wandering
(15c) examples with DAT:
gala thongset I have seen

From what can be seen in the data, ERG marking is restricted to transitive control verbs. Mover verbs trigger only ABS subjects.\(^\text{16}\) As for EXP (or dative) subjects which is widespread in Western Tibetan, Read (1934: 64) gives a list of 'impersonal verbs', and so does Bielmeier (1985: 139f.), e.g., thonya 'see', rgospa 'need, be necessary', šespa 'to know', etc. (cf. also Zeisler 2004: 626).

The Tibetan causative verb 'jug, here described as a verb suffix -chuk, transmits the agenthood to the causer and makes the causee an experiencer of the event (Hassan Lobsang 1995: 35):\(^\text{17}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(16)</th>
<th>khola gochuk</th>
<th>mola ongchuk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Let him go</td>
<td>Let her come</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahmatla zachuk</td>
<td>atala zerchuk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let Ahmad eat</td>
<td>Let the father tell</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hassan Lobsang also mentions a category of 'genus verbi' ('active and passive voice'). As in the other dialects of Tibetan, we do not find a morphological passive in Balti, but a syntactic retopicalization with no changes in case marking: the only morphological change lies in the increased referentiality -po of a topicalized PAT/ABS; specifically, the verb form does not change, e.g., between CAUS and RES forms (Hassan Lobsang 1995: 49):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(17a)</th>
<th>Aslam zan zet zanpo Aslam zet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aslam-ERG meal eats meal-DEF Aslam-ERG eats</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aslam takes a meal. The meal is taken by Aslam.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(17b)</td>
<td>Akbari zgo chaqs zgo Akbari chaqs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akbar-ERG door broke door:DEF Akbar-ERG broke</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akbar broke the door. The door was broken by Akbar.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^\text{16}\) The above-quoted forms bomo-i are not ERG forms, but translate as bomo-INDEF; the ERG case would be bomo-i-si.

\(^\text{17}\) This is not the case in Purik and Ladakhi (Zeisler, pers. comm.).
In these examples, the Tibetan morphological CAUS/RES distinction is not exploited, and there is no case marking 'split' as described for Central Tibetan varieties. Except for one EXP subject, the grammar distinguishes only control verbs which take ERG subjects and no-control verbs which take ABS subjects, regardless of valence. There is no mention of facultative case marking.

07.03. LADAKHI

A closely related dialect (group) is Ladakhi (cf. Koshal 1979, Zeisler this vol.). Descriptions of Ladakhi are more extensive and offer interesting data with respect to case marking patterns. Similar to Indic languages, non-agentive actors are DAT-marked, i.e., there are EXP subjects in Ladakhi, cf. (Zeisler 2004: 257):

(1a) ṅa: thakpa drol
    i:DAT rope get:lose:RES
    I got the rope untied.
(1b) škunma: kulunpo chakste
    thief:DAT window:DEF break:RES
    The thief got the window broken.

All case markers are used 'semantically', not only 'distinctively', so that the number of different patterns is very high; Zeisler (to appear) lists 11 main and various marginal case marking patterns for Ladakhi and Tibetan in general:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5: Case marking patterns for Ladakhi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(main patterns)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01. ABS</td>
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<tr>
<td>02. ABS ABS</td>
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<tr>
<td>03. ABS LOC, LOC ABS</td>
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<tr>
<td>04. ABS ABL</td>
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<tr>
<td>05. ABS COM</td>
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<tr>
<td>06. DAT ABS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07. ERG LOC</td>
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<tr>
<td>08. ERG ABS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09. ERG LOC ABS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contrary to Central Tibetan where EXP subjects are restricted to possessive expressions (*nga la dngul yod/ 'I have money'), there are many examples of EXP subjects, e.g. with 'like' or 'see' (Zeisler (to appear), ms.):

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18 Actor is, in short, a cover term for both agents and movers.
It is noteworthy, however, that there are thus various different patterns with LOC: facultative actors as in (20) (cf. Zeisler to appear: 3.3.5.), object marking as in (21a), and EXP-subjects with perception verbs as in (21b).

AG marking is described as partly optional, with a preference for temporal or spatial distance (Zeisler (to appear), ms., p. 13); in some cases, a semantic difference can be defined between the possible case marking patterns, e.g. (Zeisler (to appear), ms., p. 13ff.):

(20a) kho zdulkŋal-na drol

3 suffering-ABL free

She succeeded to get free from suffering.

(20b) kho-a zdulkŋal drol

3-DAT suffering free

She happened to get free from suffering.

(20c) garwa-s ser-na kagu-zos

smith-AG gold-ABL amulet made

The smith produced an amulet out of gold.

(20d) garwa-s ser kagu-a zos

smith-AG gold amulet-DAT made

The smith shaped the gold into an amulet.

In other words, case marking highly depends on semantic roles and not so much on 'syntactic patterns'; therefore, one finds a high number of case marking patterns which are able to distinguish aspecual values of the event construal.

This syntactic variability of event construals may appear relatively unusual in comparison to English, but has been described also for many other languages, such as Latin or Gothic. Ladakhi is an example for a relatively extended semantic use of the GOAL case. AG (i.e., ERG) case marking is mainly dependent on 'distance' (temporal, spatial, emotional). This also closely relates to Zeisler's earlier analysis of Lhasa data (Zeisler 2004: 514ff.).

07.04. DROKPA

The nomads of Western Tibet who call themselves simply Drokpa (’brog pa, 'pasturer', 'nomad') live in the area between Nepal (Dolpo,
Mustang) in the south and the Changthang (byang thang) in the north. With respect to ERG marking, Kretschmar (1986: 87) states that ABS subjects are used if the person is not ‘active’. With transitive verbs and more rarely with intransitive verbs, the AG (ERG) marker is used only if the event construal puts focus on the acting participant – ERG is facultative, cf. (Kretschmar 1986: 87):

(21a) tæ čöːeː nyː sèː fok-ci-jin ...
Now 2 1:AG eat-must-PR-AUX
Now I will have to eat you ...

(21b) čöːeː nga sèː fok-ci-jin ...
2 1 eat-must-PR-AUX
I will have to eat you ...

Weakly transitive verbs\(^{10}\) trigger ERG marking, cf. (Kretschmar 1986: 87):

(22a) ti ʈæŋpø pʰuki kʰoa-jinci
DEF beggar son-AG understand-AUX-PR
The beggar’s son had understood them.

(22b) mu tʃiː-kì tʰoŋ mài-tʃuk
man one-AG see NEG-allow
[He] did not allow that anybody saw [her].

DAT subjects in Dropha are possible only in possessive relations, cf. (Kretschmar 1986: 87):

(23) nga-la sèr tʰöp-ci-re‘
1-DAT gold get-PR AUX
I will get gold.

07.05. SHERPA

Sherpa, one of the Tibetan languages of Nepal, may serve as an example for South Himalayan variants. Its case marking system is described as a split ergative pattern with typically DAT-marked objects (Kelly 2004: 248); the use of the ERG marker is described as follows (cf. Kelly 2004: 248):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ERG is ...</th>
<th>verb</th>
<th>aspect</th>
<th>perfective</th>
<th>person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>obligatory:</td>
<td>transitive</td>
<td>imperfective</td>
<td>2nd, 3rd persons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>optional:</td>
<td>transitive</td>
<td>imperfective</td>
<td>2nd, 3rd persons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{10}\) According to Hopper & Thompson 1984 and Tsunoda (1985: 388), transitivity is seen as a gradual semantic feature, in which perception verbs and the more so knowledge verbs may be considered ‘weakly transitive’.
Additionally, ERG marking fluctuates with ABS in "rare instances" (cf. Kelly 2004: 249). It does not occur with inanimate agents (which are marked as unvolitional actors on the verb) (Kelly 2004: 258):

(24) ɲima kʰa fi-ci-suŋ
     sun  snow  melt-CAUS-NVOL

The sun made the snow melt.

As in all (other) Tibetan dialects, there is a morphological opposition of CAUS and RES verb forms with a number of verbs (mainly aspirated/unaspirated and voiced/unvoiced opposition). These verb forms both take ERG-marked participants, whereby volition is expressed by the verb form and the auxiliary (Kelly 2004: 255):

(25a) ɲé-ki kap ca-ki
     1-ERG cup  break:CAUS-PR
     I am breaking the cup (intentionally).

(25b) ɲé-ki kap ɛʰ-ki
     1-ERG cup  break:RES-PR
     I am breaking the cup (accidentally).\(^{20}\)

Nonvolitionality is expressed by the AUX song, but only with RES verb forms (Kelly 2004: 255):

(26) ɲé-ki kap ɛʰ-ak-suŋ
     1-ERG cup  break:RES-NVOL
     I broke the cup (accidentally). (My cup broke accidentally.)

Volition is inherent in some verbs, such as a class of perception verbs; this is expressed by the AUX as well; but this verb class does not take ERG (Kelly 2004: 255):

(27) ɲà tʰoŋ-suŋ ɲà lʰa-i
     1 see-NVOL  1 watch-PST:CONJ
     I saw.  I looked.

\(^{20}\) Due to the homophony of ERG/INS and GEN, example 27b might also be understood as 'My cup is breaking' in Tibetan.

07.06. KYIRONG

Kyirong (skyid grong) is a valley at the Tibetan-Nepalese border, north of Kathmandu (cf. Harrer 1952: 62ff.; Huber 2002: 2, 2005). The dialect of Kyirong is a Tibetan idiom of Western Central Tibet. Huber
2002 remarks the following about ERG case marking in Kyirong Tibetan:

The conditions for the distribution of ergative case marking in KT are quite complicated. In short, verb type (control, valence) and aspect determine whether the use of the ergative is allowed at all. When it is allowed, its use seems to have a purely pragmatic function (cf. the "emphatic function" below), the speaker having mostly the aim of emphasizing the A or S argument. (Huber 2002: 73f.)

Huber states that Kyirong Tibetan has a kind of split-S system (cf. Dixon 1994: 71); all controllable verbs trigger ERG use in perfective aspect, while imperfective aspect does not combine with ERG. Additionally, ERG marking "is very often omitted in spontaneous speech" (Huber 2002: 74), cf. (p. 74, 75):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>verb type</th>
<th>IPV</th>
<th>PFV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>V1 c</td>
<td>ABS</td>
<td>ERG or ABS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V1 nc</td>
<td>ABS</td>
<td>ABS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V2 c</td>
<td>ABS or ERG</td>
<td>ERG or ABS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V2 nc</td>
<td>ABS or ERG</td>
<td>ERG or ABS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V3 c</td>
<td>ABS or ERG</td>
<td>ERG or ABS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

That is, bivalence, controlability, and perfectivity seem to influence the application of ERG. Additionally, ERG is used in these contexts only with pragmatic function (Huber 2002: 75, 117), as e.g. in:

(28) kʰo ma: jɑr so mɑ: jɑr-so
3:M NEG-leaped-AOR.SENS 3:F:ERG leaped-AOR.SENS
He didn’t hurry, but she hurried.

07.07. SHIGATSE

Shigatse is the capital of Tsang (gtsang), one of the Central provinces of Tibet (U-Tsang dbus gtsang). Haller (1995: 4.11.2. [p. 51]; cf. Haller 2000: 88) states that in Shigatse Tibetan, ERG is applied in the PFV aspect, but omittable in the IPV aspect, which describes an aspectual split, complicated by the fact that there are also exceptions.

Das Subjekt von einfachen Sätzen mit einem kontrollierbaren, transitiven Verb als Prädikat ist in Konstruktionen, die mit dem Imperfektiv-Stamm gebildet werden, sowohl im Absolutiv als auch im Ergativ, aber in Konstruktionen, die mit dem Perfektiv-Stamm gebildet werden, gewöhnlich nur im Ergativ belegt. Das Subjekt von einfachen Sätzen mit einem kon-

Specifically, Haller gives examples of the use of ERG as an emphatic marker (Haller 2000: 111):

(29a) k'oty rã tɔ soë-ki
DEM-time 2 food make-IPV
At that time, you were cooking.
(29b) k'oty tɔ rã-ki soë-ki
DEM-time food 2-ERG make-IPV
At that time, you were cooking.

The use of ERG is said to be related to an action which is performed with intention (Haller 1995: 4.11.2. (p. 51)). In some cases, ERG seems to have distinctive function, e.g., when the word order is changed to OSV due to a topicalisation of the object, in Haller’s example, a tonal change marks the ERG application:

(30a) ci cumpu sa-ki
don cat eat-IPV
The dog is eating the cat.
(30b) cumpu ci sa-ki
cat dog:ERG eat-IPV
It is the cat which the dog is eating.

There are other examples which depend on non-default word order as well (cf. Haller 1995: 5.1.2., p. 93). Finally, Haller gives examples for merely ‘pragmatic’ usage of ERG:

(31) nič mā ʔo-ki
1:ERG down go-PR
I go downwards (accidentally)!

In Haller’s definition, ERG occurs with controllable verbs; but ERG can occur also with noncontrollable verbs; as in other descriptions, this is called INS case marking (instead of ERG), and Haller refers to the German translation "Mir ging die Tasse zu Bruch" (lit. ‘the cup got me broken’) in order to describe the involuntariness of the action (Haller 1995: 52, 94):

(32) kajoe ko nič tea-so
cup DEM 1:ERG break:RES-PFV:GEN
I broke the cup (accidentally).

On the other hand, ‘find’ is construed with an EXP subject in the DAT case: nga la dngul brnyed byung/ ‘I found money’ (cf. Haller 1995: 5.1.3., p. 94). From these data, it seems as if ERG is an optional marker
of volitional agentivity which can also have an emphatic meaning. ERG does not cooccur solely with controllable verbs, as might have been expected. Instead, it seems to occur more regularly in marginal settings, such as in pragmatic use and with non-default word orders.

07.08. LHASA

In Tibetan, beside ABS vs. ERG-ABS, a third case is involved among grammatical case patterns, as follows (Tournadre 1996: 75):

Table 8: case patterns in Lhasa Tibetan
1. ERG ABS 'construction ergative'
2. ERG OBL 'construction ergative mixte ou contrastive'
3. OBL ABS 'construction possessive-bénéfactive'
4. ABS OBL 'construction affective-accusative'
5. ERG OBL ABS

The following examples are (also) taken from Tournadre (1996: 75ff.):

(33a) tshe ring kyi par khyer bzhag/
[T1] Tsering-ERG photo bring-REF
Tsering brought photos.
(33b) grwa pas bu mo la bfas song/
[T2] monk:ERG girl-ALL look:PFV-PFV:GEN
The monk looked at the girl.
(33c) ngar ide mig brnyed byung/
[3.] 1-ALL key find-EXP:ORIENTED
I found the key.
(33d) khong la deb mang po yod red/
[3.] 3:HON ALL book many GEN EQU:DISJ
He has many books.
(33e) phyi rgyal mi de bod jar dga' po 'dug ga'/
[4.] foreigner DEF tib.tea-ALL enjoy EX:DISJ:QU
This foreigner likes Tibetan tea!
(33f) kho stag la zhed song/
[4.] 3 tiger-ALL afraid:PFV:GEN
He is afraid of tigers.
(33g) nga rang gis rgan lags la kha btags phul ba yin/
[5.] 1-self-ERG teacher:HON-ALL Katag offer:PFV-CONJ
We have offered a Kata to the teacher.

As a conclusion, one could state – with respect to Tsunoda’s (1985: 388) transitivity hierarchy (see table below) – that ERG in Tibetan has a far-reaching function of subject-marking in that ERG occurs with strongly transitive verbs as well as with perception, pursuit and knowledge verbs the event construal of which do not contain semantic agents and sometimes no patients. Additionally, mover verbs trigger ERG mar-
Thus, case marking is strongly semantic and depends on semantic verb classes. In a traditional analysis, this is of course unusual, cf. [Tournadre 1996: 78]

There are even further patterns (e.g., ERG-LOC, ERG-INS) favoring such a semantic analysis, cf. (Tournadre 1996: 80f., DeLancey 1982c: 24):

1. The AG of transitive controlled action verbs is usually marked with ERG, but in Lhasa Tibetan only in PST tense; the AG role can also remain unmarked if
in TOP position or if it is the only animate participant in an AG-PAT construal; the AG must be ERG marked, if a recipient or an instrument are named.

2. The AG of the intransitive controlled action verb is usually unmarked, but can bear ERG marking for emphatic, contrastive meaning.

3. EXP subjects of transitive accidental experiential verbs (e.g. mthong 'see') are always marked with ERG (INS)\textsuperscript{21}; a small set of such verbs has ALL, i.e., true EXP subjects.\textsuperscript{22}

4. "Affected" subjects of affective verbs (e.g. (dga) 'like') are always unmarked.

5. The "undergoer" subject of intransitive accidental event verbs is always unmarked.

6. The PAT of transitive controlled action and accidental event verbs is always unmarked, GOAL roles are marked with ALL, except for Lhasa Tibetan where ALL is usually omitted.

This enumeration shows that the motivation for ERG case marking is not restricted to a single parameter of one specific semantic (or, metaphorically, pragmatic) agentivity (in combination with volition), but has to be seen as 'distinctive' in the sense that ERG (and DAT) are actually used more in 'untypical', 'marginal' cases of agentivity rather than in transitive, controlled, bivalent constructions.

In a model of agent marking, optional ERG would be expected with a high degree of agentivity (McGregor 1998: 518); but indeed, a more complicated pragmatic use is described by various authors on Australian languages (e.g., McGregor, 2006, Schultze-Berndt, 2006).

As for the DAT, it also plays a decisive, although lesser, role among the three structural case markers of Tibetan. It can be the subject case only in possessive relations and with few other verbs, but it can increase the affectedness of a patient (e.g., ‘ride a yak’ vs. ‘ride on a yak’). Therefore, we find predominantly an ERG-ABS-based syntactic system, but with quite a few alternative patterns (cf. Zeisler 2004: 255).

07.09 DEGE

Dege is an important town and monastery in Kham, East Tibet, considered a cultural centre for the Kham region (Häsl er 1999: 1). Concerning ergativity, Häsl er (1999: 97; cf. also p. 136) states:

\textsuperscript{21} Zeisler (2004: 254) says "INS", with some good reason: In West Tibetan, these roles are marked with ALL/DAT; in Central Tibetan, the use of CONJ and DISJ verb suffixes helps distinguish these cases. Since Chang \& Chang 1980, various authors have stated that in some cases, the ERG has to be seen as an INS, in order to account for the involuntary meaning.

\textsuperscript{22} West Tibetan has ALL/DAT in most cases (Zeisler 2004: 254).
The ergative case is used to mark the agent or the experiencer of a transitive sentence. It marks both an agent of a controllable verb [...] or an experiencer/patient of a non-controllable verb [...]. (Häsler 1999: 97)

In other words, Kham Tibetan is described as having grammatical ERG marking (including experiencers or patients), cf. (Häsler 1999: 97):

(35a) lāmə: tāʦə: nǭ-ɕūi:  
lama:ERG holy:things give:GOAL:oriented  
*The lama gave me these devotional objects.*

(35b) kʰə: rā poː-le nūʔ-둡ʔ-ɕi-ŋgə  
3:ERG goat lose-CJ search-V2:DUR:PROGR:be  
*He searched for the goat he had lost.*

The verb ‘give’ is controllable, but the verb ‘search’ is not. Nonetheless, both verbs trigger ERG use. This looks like a system of syntactic ergativity, i.e., a system where ERG marks the subjects of transitive verbs, with a desemanticized concept of transitivity (which is close to mere bivalence). Therefore, Häsler (1999: 97, fn. 119) refutes the concept of active/inactive for this case marking scheme, and uses control and (syntactic) ‘transitivity’ to describe the system (+c/+TR, -c/+TR, +c/-TR, -c/-TR) (cf. Häsler 1999: 136, referring to Francke 1929: 137), whereby both control and transitivity trigger ERG use:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>class:</th>
<th>+c/+TR</th>
<th>-c/+TR</th>
<th>+c/-TR</th>
<th>-c/-TR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>verb:</td>
<td>shyar</td>
<td>shor</td>
<td>skor²³</td>
<td>skyug</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transl.</td>
<td>stick</td>
<td>lose</td>
<td>turn</td>
<td>vomit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>case:</td>
<td>ERG</td>
<td>ERG</td>
<td>ERG</td>
<td>ABS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the other hand, with controllable verbs, ERG is also ‘optional’ in this dialect (Häsler 1999: 98; 136, fn. 145); the usual triggers for ‘split ergativity’ do not apply:

In transitive sentences with a controllable verb the ergative marking is optional. An agent does not need to be marked ergative, it often occurs in the absolutive instead. So far I have not found rules which regulate the occurrence of the ergative with controllable transitive verbs. Unlike in other dialects, there does not seem to be any influence of aspect on the occurrence of the ergative marker, that is, both in the perfective and in the imperfective aspect the marker is not obligatory. Maybe ergative marking in the Dege dialect is used, like in some other dialects, to emphasize the agent. (Häsler 1999: 98)

²³ In ‘I turned (walked) around the jokhang’, i.e., a secondary meaning.
Indeed, the sample sentences of Häslar’s study sometimes show divergent data; e.g., the verb ‘drink’ (‘thung’) triggers ERG and also ABS subjects (Häslar 1999: 174, ex. 109, 111; 173, ex. 106):

(36a) ɲəː ēː pīma tāpā tə tʰuː-le-jiː ı:ERG day every-ILL tea drink-IPV-be

I drink tea every day.

(36b) ᵇa təxː jì-tyː ēː pīma tāpā dəma tʰuː-le-jiː

When I was a child, I drank milk every day.

(36c) ᵇa te tʰaː-na ᵇa na-le-jiː

If I drink this, I will get sick

In the third example, the speaker distances himself from the action which can also be viewed as a potential or future action. Most probably this is the reason why the ERG does not apply in this case. The second example shows that the ERG-marked NP is not deleted, although the participant is introduced already in the first clause (no ‘conjunction reduction’).

To sum up, the Dege dialect seems to show a facultative, but more ‘syntactic’ ERG marking semantic AG and EXP in controllable actions.

07.10. Themchen

Themchen is the name of a region north-east of the Blue Lake (mtsho sngon po), north of the Tsaidam basin (tshwa ‘dam gzhong sā) in Amdo. Both ERG/INS and GEN is marked by [ŋa], ABS is unmarked, and DAT is marked by [-a] (but cf. Haller 2004: 62). Contrary to Central Tibetan, Themchen verb morphology is more elaborated in accordance with the WT system: 28 1-3 TAM stem forms (IPV, PFV, IMP) and a CAUS/RES (c/nc) distinction can be found (cf. Haller 2004: 73ff.).

Haller distinguishes the following possible patterns: cA (control verbs with ABS), cEA (control verbs with ERG and ABS), ncA (non-control verbs with ABS), ncEA (non-control verbs with ERG and ABS). Practically all these patterns are found, such as ERG/ABS, ABS/ABS, ABS/DAT, ERG/DAT, etc..

When reducing the data to the ERG question, we get quantitatively the same distribution as described for WT (Haller 2005):

28 I.e., the formation is similar; the morphological markers are partly different, however.
There is thus some correlation between the categories c/nc and ERG/ABS marking, but the categories are not entirely identical. c verbs without ERG (cA) usually imply involuntary actions (for the complete list, cf. Haller 2004: 75ff.).

Themchen Tibetan also applies ERG with weakly transitive verbs, with the exception of the small class of verbs which is RECIPIENT-oriented (get, need, ...). Some verbs in the material occur under different headings, such as ‘ride’ which is mentioned both as cA[D] and cED (rta zhon, H: chibs pa bcibs [= ‘chib’] (PFV) ‘ride a horse’), cf. (Haller 2004: 81, ex. 132 and 110, ex. 425):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MILA</th>
<th>THEM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>c with ERG</td>
<td>42.55%</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c with ABS</td>
<td>10.87%</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nc with ERG</td>
<td>9.69%</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nc with ABS</td>
<td>36.88%</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The cED class contains the following verbs (Haller 2004: 111f.): avoid, bash, beat, listen, make, read, respect, revile, singe, smell, wait, watch/listen/smell/learn. Many of these verbs construe a relation AG-GOAL. There are interdialectal differences in single cases, however; e.g., klog ‘read’ has ERG-ABS in Central Tibetan (cf. Goldstein et al. 1991: 84).

The ncEA group contains knowledge verbs (know, understand, remember, forget), perception verbs (see, think) and even some feeling and ability verbs; such as achieve, afford, be able, err/mistake, experience, find, forget, guess, hear, know, etc. (cf. Haller 2004: 129ff.).

As for the ncDA verbs, i.e., verbs with possible experiencer subjects, cf. (Haller 2004: 133f.): be born, be called, be durable, be enough, be equal, catch (a cold), find, get (a book), get, have enough, need, receive, receive/get, remain. This class contains a number of possessive verbs with DAT marked possessors and a few reception verbs.

(37a) stamdzan yjas-a con-taŋ-t’a.
Tamdrin Yak-DAT ride-NVOL-EVID
Tamdrin rode on a yak.

(37b) blama-ya tçopa tçap-koko.
Lama-ERG horseH ride:H-NVOL-EVID
The lama rode a horse.

The cED class contains the following verbs (Haller 2004: 111f.): avoid, bash, beat, listen, make, read, respect, revile, singe, smell, wait, watch/listen/smell/learn. Many of these verbs construe a relation AG-GOAL. There are interdialectal differences in single cases, however; e.g., klog ‘read’ has ERG-ABS in Central Tibetan (cf. Goldstein et al. 1991: 84).

The ncEA group contains knowledge verbs (know, understand, remember, forget), perception verbs (see, think) and even some feeling and ability verbs; such as achieve, afford, be able, err/mistake, experience, find, forget, guess, hear, know, etc. (cf. Haller 2004: 129ff.).

As for the ncDA verbs, i.e., verbs with possible experiencer subjects, cf. (Haller 2004: 133f.): be born, be called, be durable, be enough, be equal, catch (a cold), find, get (a book), get, have enough, need, receive, receive/get, remain. This class contains a number of possessive verbs with DAT marked possessors and a few reception verbs.

(38a) stamdzan-a ts’o wat-taŋ-zac.
Tamdrin DAT fat become-LV-NVOL-EVID
Tamdrin fattened. (Haller 2004: 132, ex. 633)
(38b) štamdgon-a ্χwete’a ्nt’ot-t’a.
Tamdrin DAT book got-NVOL:EVID
Tamdrin got a book. (Haller 2004: 133, ex. 637b)

‘Besick’ (lit. ‘boil’), however, is construed with ABS (Haller 2004: 147, ex. 732). Verbs such as 'need' take DAT subjects as full verbs, but do not trigger DAT case marking as AUX verbs:

(39a) štamdgon-a ্χwete’a-nda ́rgo-ya.
Tamdrin DAT book-DEF need-NVOL:EVID
Tamdrin needs this book. (Haller 2004: 133, ex. 640a)
(39b) štamdgon-ya ্χwete’a-nde ́sta-rgo-ye.
Tamdrin-ERG book-DEF:DAT read-need-NVOL:EVID
Tamdrin needs to read this book. (Haller 2004: 133, ex. 640b)
(39c) štamdgon-a ́rgormu-ye t’eöx-t’a.
Tamdrin-DAT money-PART have:enough:PFV NVOL:EVID
Tamdrin had enough money. (Haller 2004: 134, ex. 646)

Since most verbs belong to the cEA and nCA classes, the system seems to be a more grammaticalized ERG system. The detailed list of verbs from this dialect does not clarify which semantic class of verbs takes which semantically motivated case pattern. The few exceptions to this rule, before all, show a class of possessive verbs taking DAT-ABS patterns. Some semantically similar verbs seem to imply different event construals, such as the following examples (ERG-ABS, DAT-ABS):

(40a) štamdgon-ya ́bdestka-k’a ́χwete’a ́pet-taj-t’a.
Tamdrin-ERG Dekyi-GEN book find-LV- NVOL:EVID
Tamdrin found Dekyi’s book. (Haller 2004: 131, ex. 617b)
(40b) štamdgon-a ́čser tokā-zač t’em-t’a.
Tamdrin DAT gold piece INDEF find-NVOL:EVID
Tamdrin found a piece of gold. (Haller 2004: 134, ex. 643)

08. DISCUSSION

In spite of strong variation between dialects, case marking in Tibetan also shows commonalities. All dialects do have an ERG marker marking volitional agents. To a certain degree, ERG marking seems to be always optional, as far as this can be deduced from existing grammatical descriptions. In order to investigate optional ERG, however, a sample of similar clauses spontaneously produced under different cir-
cumstances is needed, and except for Lhasa Tibetan and Ladakhi, the
descriptions are not accurate enough in this respect.

The specific usage of ERG marking can deviate considerably among
the dialects. While in the center of Tibet, ERG marking seems to be
more 'rare' marking 'special cases' rather than typical agents, in the
western varieties, there seems to be more 'functional equality' between
the three main case roles (ERG-ABS-DAT) for the syntactic description
of semantic roles. In the east, however, ERG seems to be used more
'regularly' for subjects of transitive constructions. The pragmatic use of
ERG is described for the western and central dialects, but to a small
degree for the eastern varieties. In this respect, the westernmost dialect
of Tibetan, Balti, is similar to the westernmost (Amdo) dialects.

09. Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>italics</th>
<th>orthographic transliteration</th>
<th>HON</th>
<th>honorific</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[...]</td>
<td>phonological transcription</td>
<td>INDEF</td>
<td>indefiniteness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
<td>1st, 2nd, 3rd person</td>
<td>INFER</td>
<td>inferential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABL</td>
<td>ablative</td>
<td>INS</td>
<td>instrumental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABS, A</td>
<td>absolute (participant)</td>
<td>INT</td>
<td>intention aspect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACC</td>
<td>accusative</td>
<td>IPV</td>
<td>imperfective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AG</td>
<td>agent</td>
<td>MT</td>
<td>Modern Tibetan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALL</td>
<td>allative, experiencer, dative</td>
<td>nc</td>
<td>nocontrol verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>control verb</td>
<td>NS</td>
<td>nominizing particle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAUS</td>
<td>causative verb form</td>
<td>OBL</td>
<td>oblique case (= DAT/EXP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONJ</td>
<td>conjunct</td>
<td>PAT</td>
<td>patient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PR</td>
<td>connector, progressive aspect</td>
<td>PFV</td>
<td>perfective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAT, D</td>
<td>dative</td>
<td>PRS</td>
<td>present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISJ</td>
<td>disjunct</td>
<td>PST</td>
<td>past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXP</td>
<td>experiencer</td>
<td>RES</td>
<td>resultative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GEN</td>
<td>genitive</td>
<td>SOC</td>
<td>sociative, comitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOAL</td>
<td>goal concept</td>
<td>WT</td>
<td>Written Tibetan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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