Hearsay is encoded separately, adding a quote marker to the quoted speech. The quoted speech contains the evidential markers of the original utterance, although the pronouns are shifted as in indirect speech.

### Table 1. Tibetic ‘evidentials’ (schematic overview)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>domain</th>
<th>set I: MSAP +ctr</th>
<th>nMSAP ±ctr, MSAP –ctr (OTHER)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>self-evident assertive</td>
<td>directly observed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>future</td>
<td>( \text{yin} )</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>past</td>
<td>( \text{yin} )</td>
<td>stem II or light verbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>copula</td>
<td>( \text{yin} / \text{yod} )</td>
<td>( \text{ḥdug} ) &amp; ( \text{drag} )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>existential</td>
<td>( \text{yod} )</td>
<td>( \text{ḥdug} ) &amp; ( \text{drag} )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>present</td>
<td>(( \text{yin} / \text{yod} ))</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perfect</td>
<td>MSAP &amp; OTHER</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>evaluative</td>
<td>( \text{yin} / \text{yod} + \text{EM} )</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Forms in brackets are language specific: \( \text{drag} \) for non-visual experience is restricted to Western Tibetan. In these languages, (red) is not used. Some eastern languages show completely different set II forms.

Recent research into Lhasa Tibetan (Speas, in press, Vokurková, to appear) as well as into West Tibetan (Bielmeier 2000, Zeisler 2012) has shown, however, that the choice of the markers in question is quite flexible and not always depending on the sources of knowledge (in relation to the MSAP). Often, if not always, it reflects the stance or commitment the MSAP is willing (or is expected) to take. I shall, nevertheless, keep the terminology of evidentiality, more or less as used in the Tibeto-linguistic literature.

In the cross-linguistic literature, knowledge based on (immediate) perception is usually termed direct, everything else being indirect. This does not really match the Tibetan system: knowledge about one’s own controlled actions and about situations under one’s control is certainly the most direct knowledge a speaker can have.

Knowledge based on mere perception, on the other hand, is perceived as not being fully reliable and it can well be indirect, namely inferential (the identity or character of the items of the outer world are inferred from what they look like, which may not correspond to their ‘true’ identity or character).

In the following, I shall use the value experiential for the set II marker \( \text{ḥdug} \), but this should be understood as a mere approximation to a much more complicated playground. The term MSAP will be used only for situations controlled by the MSAP (own [+ctr] actions plus situations that can be warranted due to involvement and control).
1.3. Methodological considerations

We have little knowledge about when and how the modern systems (evidential or not) evolved. All that we know for sure is that Old Tibetan lacks an evidential system completely, and that evidentiality must have evolved at some time in the classical period. Classical Tibetan, the language of the religious texts, lacks a fully grammaticalised evidential system, although certain texts show traces of evidential marking in direct quotations.

Marking of evidentiality (or stance) is certainly more important in a discursive situation, than in a narrative context, where it is typically evident that the narrator has not experienced the events in the case of historical events or tales, or that s/he has experienced the events personally in the case of a personal narrative. Evidentiality is thus, first of all, a category that appears in conversations, and in a written text in direct (or indirect) speech.

Since most Classical Tibetan texts are of a doctrinal nature and the much less frequent narrative texts do not contain enough direct speech to explore the possible contrastive usage of the auxiliaries, few attempts have been made to study evidentiality or its possible precursors in the classical language.

There exists, however, one long narrative, which is written for the greater part from a fictive first person perspective. This text, the famous biography of Milaraspa (Milaraspa rnamthar) from the 15th c. allows us to gain some insight into the development of evidentiality in Tibetan by the 15th c. The text shows that evidential marking has not yet fully developed and does not yet cover all temporal domains. And it contains a big surprise.

1.4. The narrative

Milaraspa (1040–1123; Modern Tibetan pronunciation: Milarepa) is one of the most important Tibetan saints or yogis, ascetics who practise meditation (and a bit of magic). Like almost every great saint in world history, Milaraspa has a past of great sin.

In his youth, his family was deprived of their wealth by greedy relatives, and Milaraspa, urged by his revengeful mother, studied and applied black magic, eventually killing a large number of people. Repenting, he took refuge in the Buddhist teachings.

After completing his studies, Milaraspa stayed in the wilderness, clad only in a thin cotton cloth, practising inner heat, relying on the food donations by nearby villagers. Among other visitors, his truthful fiancée and his sister Peta visited him from time to time, the latter trying to persuade him to life the life of an ordinary cleric – who would be able to gather much wealth through his religious performances. Milaraspa usually accompanied his answers and teachings with a song, containing a morale and the praise of the religion.

The narrator of the outer story frame reports a dream: he is taken to heaven to a divine assembly. There he is witness how Milaraspa, upon the request of a disciple, starts to tell his life story (including the history of his ancestors). This narrative is very modest, natural, and lively, and may in fact be based on earlier oral accounts by Milaraspa himself, as transmitted by his disciples. Milaraspa’s death, however, is glorified and narrated from a third person perspective, but even this part is interspersed with oral reports from some of the disciples.

2. Origins of evidential marking

2.1. Old Tibetan

As already stated, Old Tibetan does not have an evidential system.

The existential linking verbs yod (negated med) and ḡdug (the latter also a lexical verb with the meaning ‘stay, dwell, sit’) are used side by side with all personal pronouns for the meaning ‘exist, be there’ and as auxiliaries for certain periphrastic tense constructions.

As a linking verb, yod seems to have both a more punctual meaning (somebody, something is there at a certain location at a certain reference time) and a more generic meaning (something exists in general).

ḡdug seems to have a connotation of limited and transitory duration (somebody, something stays at a certain place for some time). Quite apparently, it is this meaning of limited and transitory duration that could be exploited to express, first of all, inferences and doubts.

2.2. Early Classical Tibetan

At some point in the history, possibly already in Old Tibetan, but conclusive data is missing, ḡdug is used in a complex construction:

\[
X \ Y (+ \ NMZ) + \ LOC.PUR + \ ḡdug \quad (= \ par \ ḡdug \ construction)
\]

\[
X = \text{subject, } \ Y = \text{predicate}
\]

Literally: ‘X exists as Y / as Y-doing for some time’

The par ḡdug construction is often used in place of the attributive and identificatory copula yin ‘be somelike, be something’.

ḡdug can be replaced by the near synonym gdah. (This becomes an evidential auxiliary in Kham.)

In contrast to the copula yin, the morphologically quite heavy (and thus functionally marked) par ḡdug construction has a very strong connotation of doubt, vagueness, and uncertainty, already observed by Jäschke (1881: 277). It also expresses inferences and probabilities.

The construction can be translated as ‘seems to be / looks like something’ or ‘seems to happen, do, etc.’. The notion of doubt or inference often implies a personal observation, but one that is limited to a single perception, which cannot yet be generalised to certain knowledge.

(1) \( da \ blama \ ḡdi-s-ni \ bbulba \ med-pa-r \)

now lama this-ERG-TOP gift NG1-grant-NOM-LOC-EVD.exist

gdamgsngag \( mi-gnay-ba-r-ḡdug \ |

teaching NG1-grant-NOM-LOC-EVD.exist
gzhan-du phyin-ruŋ ḥbulba mi-dgos-pa-ni mi-yonŋ | other-LOC go-possible gift NG1-want-NOM-TOP NG1-come.PRS
nor med-pa-s chos-ni mi-thob-pa-r-hdag | wealth NG-have-NOM-INST religion-TOP NG1-get-NOM-LOC-EVD.exist

Evidence for the development of ‘evidentiality’ in Tibetan

However, the Central Tibetan auxiliary red is not yet used. The light verbs soŋ, byunŋ, and bšag, which are typical for Central Tibetan are also not yet used in a systematic manner. The evidential system (as far as it exists) may thus better be compared to that of the Western Tibetan languages than to Central Tibetan.

In Ladakhi, e.g., the evidential opposition has spread to all temporal domains, including those constructions that do not take linking verbs as auxiliaries (the simple past) or do not allow existential linking verbs as auxiliaries (the future tense constructions).

The non-evaluative future (stem I & yin) can only be used for the MSAP. The simple past (stem II) & remoteness marker pin (< payin) is used for the MSAP. The simple past (stem II) without further morphology is used for OTHER. The distribution of the forms follows thus the basic evidential opposition. Forms that are used for the MSAP are not used for OTHER and forms that are used for OTHER are not used for the MSAP. Exceptions from this rule are limited and well defined.¹

In the Milaraspa rnamthar and other classical texts, there is only one future tense form, used indiscriminately for both MSAP and OTHER. The two past tense forms are used for both MSAP and OTHER, although a strong tendency can be observed that the mere stem (± sentence final marker) is used primarily for OTHER and the payin form (± sentence final marker) primarily for the MSAP.

That is, the evidential distinction is neutralised in certain temporal domains: forms that are used for the MSAP may also be used for OTHER and forms that are used for OTHER may also be used for the MSAP

Table 2. The evidential opposition in Ladakhi and the Milaraspa rnamthar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>temporal domain</th>
<th>modern Ladakhi</th>
<th>Milaraspa rnamthar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>present/simult.</td>
<td>yod</td>
<td>hdag, drag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perfect</td>
<td>yin, yod</td>
<td>hdag, drag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>past/anterior</td>
<td>stem II + pin</td>
<td>stem II + ø</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>future/necess.</td>
<td>stem I + yin</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>infer. future</td>
<td>gerundive + yin</td>
<td>stem I + payin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The evidential contrast of the auxiliaries in the Milaraspa rnamthar is shown in the following examples: Example (3), line 1 contains a MSAP present/simultaneity form plus the neutral future tense in line 3. Example (5) contains the corresponding OTHER present/simultaneity form. Example (4) contains a MSAP

¹ The remoteness marker -pin has the strong connotation that the event was personally witnessed some time ago, and may thus be used for OTHER when the MSAP wants to emphasise that s/he remembers the fact well. Conversely, the speakers of some western dialects use the mere stem for their own [+ctr] actions, if they happened in the recent past.  

3. Evidentiality in the 15th c. Milaraspa rnamthar

On a superficial reading, the text shows striking similarities with modern Central Tibetan, including the opposition between the linking verbs and auxiliaries yin, yod, on the one hand, and hdag on the other.
Having performed hostile actions to see the spectacle in the manner of reaching his hand to...

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A similar distribution of forms can also be observed in other Classical Tibetan texts, that is, the linking verb and auxiliary yod is used only for the MSAP, while bdug (or an equivalent) is used for OTHER. But the past tense forms: simple stem or stem & payin are used neutrally for both. The evidential distinction is thus restricted to certain tense (or as other scholars would have it: aspect) forms.

Unlike the modern Tibetic languages, we also find constructions with the set I auxiliary for [–ctr] events relating to the MSAP, examples (12) and (13):
Evidence for the development of 'evidentiality' in Tibetan


As for me, I was completely choked with tears.

(13) *des da yed lumpa-hi mi kun*

that-INSTR now we valley-GEN people all

kbo-hi chosskyob-la hjigs drags-nas | he-GEN protector-LOC fear much-ABL

ţinhtan-gi phyogs-la ... mig kyaŋ blta-mi-phod-pa-tsam-yod | field,house-GEN direction-LOC eye even look-NG1-dare-NOM-as.much-exist

Therefore, out of great fear of his protector deity, now we people of the valley, ... don't even as much as to turn [our] eyes into the direction of house and fields.'

Furthermore, unlike many modern Tibetic languages, we can find *ḥdug* in non-finite constructions.

Finally, the Milaraspa *rnamthar* also shows a quite unexpected usage of *ḥdug*, which cannot be accounted for in terms of evidentiality (or stance). Compare the following two examples, (14) and (15):

(14) *Raspa Žibaḥod nare* | «... dehi tse*

Raspa Žibaḥod saying that-GEN time

Raschungpa Lorodol-gyi dgonpa-na bţugs-pa-hi ...

Raschungpa Lorodol-GEN hermitage-LOC honstay-NG1-ABL

mnal-dan ḥodgsal ḥdres-pa-hi ḥams-la | ... sleep-COM light.clear mix,PA-NOM-GEN mind-LOC

mkbahgro-rnas-kysis bteg-nas

Ḍākinī-PL-ERG raise,PA-ABL

ţinkams ĝzan-du ĝdan-drangs

field.blessed other-LOC seat-invite,PA

ḥgro-grabs-su ḥdug-pa de-la | go,PRS-preparation-LOC EVD.exist that-LOC

... ḥa-dan ḥmkbahgro nammkha ġaybas dbyangs len-cin

deity-COM Dākinī heaven all-ISTR melody take-CNT

mchodpa bsam-gyis mi-khyab-pa ḥbul-ţinj-ḥdug-pa-la | ...

offering mind-ISTR NG1-encompass-NOM offer,PRS-CNT-EVD.exist-NG1-NOM-LOC

*Raspa Žibaḥod said: «... At this time, while Raschunpa was staying in the hermitage Lorodol, he had] a dream-like vision (lit. in a mind where sleep and clear light were mixed) where it appeared [to him] that the Dākinīs had taken up [the teacher] and were about to convey [him] to the blessed fields, and ... that the deities and Dākinīs were chanting throughout the heaven and were offering offerings [so splendid] that the mind could not encompass it ...»

In both cases, we deal with a singular immediate perception, but in both cases this is not the perception of the MSAP, the narrator, but the perception of somebody OTHER. This could be called an instance of indirect evidentiality, certainly not attested in the modern Tibetic languages, and certainly nothing that could easily grammaticalise.

If, on the other hand, the event should have been quoted from the Raschunpa’s or Peta’s report, one could have expected a quote marker, such as *skad* ‘saying’ (as attested infrequently in the text) or at least an ordinary *verbum dicendi* (as in many other cases).

I have checked the last example with a Ladakhi speaker. The whole passage could be presented either as a neutral narrative without quotation or as a quoted report. In the first case, Peta’s actions would receive inferential markers, as Milaraspa could not have witnessed them, and the fact of Milaraspa’s absence would be presented with the marker for the MSAP.

In the second case, Peta’s actions would receive the marker for the MSAP plus a quote marker, and the observation of Milaraspa’s absence could accordingly be presented with the marker for OTHER plus a quote marker. However, this is not the preferred construction. The narrator would rather switch between the quoted report and an assertion of his/her own absence, marked with the form of the MSAP.

(15) *Peta-s balspu byunzshad bsdns-nas*

Peta-ERG wool.hair appear,PA.measure gather,PA-ABL

bzos-paĩ snambu-ţig khyer-te | process,PA-NOM-GEN woolen.cloth-LOC carry,PA-NF

Bragdkar Rtaso-r phyin-pa-s | *ya ni ḥdug-pa-dan*

Bragdkar Rtaso-LOC go,PA-NOM-INSTR I NG1-exist-NOM-LOC

kun-la ḥdi-ţinj ḥtsbol-du phyin-tshe ...

all-LOC ask-NF search,PRS-LOC go,PA-time

‘Peta had come to Bragdkar Rtaso ([‘White Rock Horse Tooth’] carrying along a woollen cloth, which she had made after collecting wool hairs wherever she could find some (lit; wherever they appeared), but since I was no (longer) there, / as soon as [she realised that] I was not there, she went searching [for me] asking everybody [about me], and ...’
Evidence for the development of ‘evidentiality’ in Tibetan

2. Transition state from Old to early Middle (Classical) Tibetan (11th – 12th c.):
The transitory notion is exploited for the expression of doubt, probability, and inference, which may be based on singular (and transitory) perceptions. In this function the par ḡdug construction and the shortened form can be used contrastively for the attributive copula yin.

3. Early Middle Tibetan (12th –14th c.):
The notion of a singular (and immediate) perception becomes dominant. Such perceptions can be ascribed to all persons (the Milaraspa rnamthar may represent the transition from the last stage of this phase to the next).

4. Middle phase of Middle Tibetan (14th – 16th c.):
The notion of a singular (and immediate) perception is restricted to the MSAP’s perceptions and it is contrasted with the MSAP’s non-perceptive knowledge. The opposition is restricted to those constructions that involve auxiliaries.

5. Late Middle Tibetan (16th c.): In the spoken languages, the contrastive usage spills over into other TMA constructions which do not involve auxiliaries or which involve only the attributive copula.

6. Early Modern Tibetan (16th or 17th c.):
The system is enlarged by further sub-divisions (set II: experiential vs. non-experiential knowledge vs. inference, estimation, and probability). The inferential connotation of ḡdug did not fully bleach out. When the experiential markers got differentiated the inferential connotation was transferred to the non-visual experiential marker ḡdrag in Ladakhi.

4.2. Locating the development in space and time
To my understanding, the exploitation of the different temporal values of the two existential linking verbs yod and ḡdug is linked to, or dependent upon, the systematicatisation of the periphrastic constructions in the spoken languages. This seems to have started in the early 11th c., after the breakdown of the Tibetan empire and after the subsequent phases of instability. The development of the new verbal system in the modern languages seems to be linked to the novel attempts of ‘nation’ building by local rulers as well as the clerical elite, which gains more and more worldly power. Regions were the Old Tibetan lingua franca was only spoken as L2 (e.g. Ladakh) shift to a local form of Tibetan as L1.

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4. Sketch of a possible developmental path

4.1. Evidence from the written language
The evidence from the written languages allows us to reconstruct the following steps:

1. Old Tibetan (mid 7th to early 11th c. CE):
The existential linking verbs yod and ḡdug differ with respect to the temporal structure of the expressed state, yod seems to express a more general existence, while ḡdug has the connotation of a more transitory state.

2 Roy Pascal cites Goethe [1749–1832] and Jane Austen [1775–1817] as the first novelists to use this style consistently. He says the nineteenth century French novelist Flaubert [1821–1880] was the first to be consciously aware of it as a style. (from wiki.en) wiki.fr quotes the following as an earlier example, but the indirect thought is actually introduced: ‘Il met bas son fagot, il songe à son malheur. / Quel plaisir a-t-il eu de puis qu’il est au monde ? ’ (Jean de La Fontaine [1621–1695] "La Mort et le Bûcheron")
The evidential system apparently spread from the east to the west, but it is not fully clear whether it started in East Tibetan, in Central Tibetan, or perhaps in both regions more or less independently.

Balti, which does not have evidential marking, got probably disconnected from the Tibetan mainstream by the late 15th to 16th c. when the area was fully converted to Islam. For this reason, evidentiality as a grammatical category could not have been adopted in Ladakh much earlier, but it could well be a much more recent development.

If we assume that the spread of evidentiality across the spoken languages did not take much more time than two or three centuries, we can date the beginnings of evidential systems in the spoken languages around the 13th or 14th centuries, at the earliest, and the first full-fledged systems may have existed not before the 15th century.

It is possible that the written language lagged behind for a century or so, but all the evidence that we can gather from texts, such as the Milaraspa rnamthar, indicates that by the 15th c., full-fledged evidential systems did not yet exist in the underlying spoken languages.

### 4.3. Evidence from the spoken languages

This scenario is, by large and large, corroborated by the West Tibetan synchronic data. The Nubra dialects of Ladakh (like some varieties in Central Tibetan and Amdo) use a form of the verb snay ‘appear’ in place of the evidential ḡdug. snay is used in Classical Tibetan to express a doubt situation similar to the par ḡdug construction. This corroborates the assumption that the experiential marker ḡdug (and equivalents) developed out of a lexical marker for inference and doubt.

This is further corroborated by the form of the inferential markers themselves. In the Kenhat varieties, the inferential marker for past tense constructions is tok. The Shamskat varieties have a more general applicable marker suk ~ sok, which can be used also as a mirative marker in the Kenhat varieties. A further marker for inferences or non-authoritative statements about the present or the future is Kenhat nok ~ nak, Shamskat (b)uk ~ (b)ok (possibly < ba & (...)uk ~ (...)ok).

So far, we do not have good evidence for the origin of these markers. In the case of the form tok, however, it is rather likely, that it is derived from a cliticised ḡdug. The voicing could have been lost after the final -s of the past stem (at that period still preserved). Cf. also the use of duk or tuk as inferential marker in several varieties spoken along the Nepalese border (Volkart 2000: 128). The vowel change could be the result of de-accentuation. (This might be corroborated by the variation in the Shamskat form suk ~ sok.)

The Shamskat form suk ~ sok (morphologically conditioned also tsuk ~ tsok), could perhaps be similarly explained, if we assume that the marker originally only combined with the past stem, assimilating to the final -s. In a second step, the marker could have been overgeneralised and applied to the present tense constructions, as well. (As these involve a reduced form of yod, one could alternatively think of a dissimilation feature here: at + duk > atsuk.)

The forms with an initial n- are less easy to explain. However, in some modern Tibetan varieties the experiential counterpart to ḡdug is, in fact, a nasal form suk, e.g. in Kyirong (Huber 2000: 155 and passim) and Shigatse (Tournadre & Konchok Jiatso 2001: 84). It might be possible that the nasal results from an assimilation feature after open syllables (cf. the negated forms miruk, minduk, and minuk in Ladakhi).

While Balti does not have the evidential opposition of yod and ḡdug, it has acquired the inferential marker suk. The possible conclusion is that ḡdug reached the west in a first wave in a somewhat reduced form basically as an inferential marker.

In a second step, ḡdug (as a lexical verb) was reanalysed as an experiential linking verb in the eastern, Upper Ladakhi, varieties, leading to a replacement of the lexical verb by its synonym dat (< sdoḥ ‘stay, dwell, sit’) as in the Central Tibetan languages.

Loh and the western, Lower Ladakhi, varieties seem to have borrowed the experiential function of ḡdug at a somewhat later stage, as they did not replace the lexical verb ḡdug, which in contrast to all other modern languages had acquired all morphological markers.

Nevertheless, the newly acquired experiential marker ḡdug must have still had a connotation of inference.

With the introduction of ḡdug, the earlier inferential markers would have lost all experiential connotations they might have had, and it seems that at least some of them are now in the process of losing their inferential value, giving way to a meaning of (polite) non-commitment.

### Conclusion

While we do lack diachronic data for the spoken varieties, the written data and the synchronic data allow to reconstruct not only the timeline of the development, but also the semantic path along which the development took place.

It seems that throughout the linguistic history of Tibetan, the auxiliary ḡdug carried a semantic load that distinguished it from its existential linking verb counterpart yod. This semantic load seems to have been temporal initially: expression of a limited and transitory duration. This meaning was then exploited for the expression of limited, transitory truth: doubt and inferences. This, in turn gave way for the notion of immediate (visual) evidence.

The history of the experiential marker indicates that the notion of ‘direct’ knowledge is not really appropriate for the Tibetic languages.
Map 1 The Tibetan speaking area by Christophe Gignaudaut in Tournadre & Sangda Dorje (1998: 6)

Abbreviations:

±ctr ±controllable
ABL ablative
ABS absolutive
CNT continuative
COM comitative
DM directive marker
ERG ergative
EVD evidential
FUT future
GEN genitive
GER gerundive
hon honorific
IMP imperative
INF inferential
INSTR instrumental
LOC locational
LQ limiting quantifier
MSAP main speech act participant
NF non-final
NG negation
NOM nominaliser
PA past (anterior)
PERF perfect
PL plural
PPOS postposition
PRS present (simultaneous)
QT quote marker
RM remoteness marker
SF sentence final marker
TOP topicaliser

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