

Typological Description of Existential Verbs and Expressions in the Tibetic Languages Spoken in the Eastern Tibetosphere

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1 Introduction

Existential verbs and expressions in Tibeto-Burman have been discussed in Huang (2013), in which the basic framework of description and typological analysis are provided. Unfortunately, Huang (2013) only describes Lhasa Tibetan and Baima within the Tibetic languages defined by Tournadre (2014). The typological diversity attested in the Tibetic languages has been overlooked so far, hence a description from wider typological, dialectological perspectives for them is indispensable. At present, more and more works on a single variety of Tibetic languages have been published, however, the most headachy problem found in them is that “each author has each terminology”, as Zeisler (2016) summarises the category of *evidentiality*. This unfortunate situation prevents us from obtaining a typological overview.

As for studies on the existential verbs of the Tibetic languages, Tournadre & Konchok Jiatso (2001) provide an overall view of ‘auxiliaries’ including existential verbs for several Tibetic languages. However, their basis of description is the system of Literary Tibetan, hence the description does not follow a methodology of descriptive linguistics. Rig-’dzin dBang-mo (2012) attempts to analyse the existential verb roots attested in Tibetic languages spoken in China, focusing on the use of *snang*.

This article, based on Suzuki (2016), deals with existential verbs and expressions in various Tibetic languages (principally Zalmogang Khams, Minyag Rabgang Khams, Rongbrag Khams, Southern Route Khams, Chaphreng Khams, Muli-nDappa Khams, sDerong-nJol Khams, Sems-kyi-nyila Khams; Amdo; Sharkhog, Khodpokhog, dPalskyid, mBrugchu, Thewo-smad, Thewo-stod, Cone) spoken in the eastern Tibetosphere (Yunnan, Sichuan, and southern Gansu), and displays a variation in expressions of existentiality. All the linguistic data described here are obtained by the present author’s fieldwork for more than a decade, in which language appellation, phonetic description frame, and grammatical terminology are identical to each variety (to be reflected in Tournadre & Suzuki forthcoming). However, this article less uses phonetic transcription because of a different purpose of discussion.

Huang (2013) provides generally types of existential verbs in Tibeto-Burman as follows:

- (1) Location - Existential - Possession
- (2) Animacy - Location - Access to information - Manner of existence

Taking the classification (1) into consideration, we can find that there are two principal frames attested in the Tibetic languages spoken in the eastern Tibetosphere. One is no differences among Location, Existential, and Possession, and the other is a difference between Location+Existential and Possession. Following the classification (2), almost all varieties have differences based on Access to information as a syntactico-semantic feature, and Animacy of arguments also functions in several varieties with the type attesting ‘a difference between Location+Existential and Possession’.

This article will discuss not only verbs belonging to the category ‘existential verbs’ in each Tibetic language but also lexical verbs denoting existence such as ‘stay’, ‘sit’, and ‘live’. In most Tibetic languages, the concept ‘existential verb’ is different from ‘lexical verbs denoting existence’ in terms of behaviour as auxiliaries and limitation of suffixes which can be taken. Note that the present article merely deals with affirmative cases of existentiality, and negation forms (inexistentiality) are unfortunately out of scope because of necessity of different discussions such as how to recognise what does not exist and the scope of negation.

2 Frames regarding existential expressions: classification and distribution

2.1 Classification

In order to present a comprehensive classification regarding the existential expressions, I primarily arrange them based on the features of verbs employed for an affirmative. Three principal classes are to be distinguished from each other concerning the existential verbs and expressions as follows:

- (A) no differences among Location, Existential, and Possession.
- (B) a difference between Location+Existential and Possession, without animacy distinction.
- (C) a difference between Location+Existential and Possession, with animacy distinction.

Each class has several subclassifications. I name them here: A1, A2, A3; B1, B2; C1, C2, C3, C4. Each type is introduced one by one below.

(A) no differences among Location, Existential, and Possession.

Many dialects presenting this class distinguish an egophoric access to information. Syntactic construction generally differs in Location, Existential, and Possession.

A1: one root of existential verb; the egophoric access depending on a suffix.

	Location - Existential - Possession
egophoric	EXV1
non-egophoric	EXV1/EXV1+SFX

Mainly attested in all kinds of Amdo, Minyag Rabgang Khams, and Rongbrag Khams. See examples (1) to (4) in Section 3.

A2: two roots of existential verb; the access to information (egophoricity-sensory) depending on the root. [This type is similar to the case of Lhasa Tibetan cited in Huang (2013). Cf. Hoshi (2003:8-10).]

	Location - Existential - Possession
egophoric	EXV1
sensory/non-egophoric	EXV2
factual	EXV1+CPV

Mainly attested in Zalmogang Khams and Southern Route Khams. See examples (5) to (9) in Section 3.

A3: two roots of existential verb; the egophoric access depending on the root plus a suffix.

	Location - Existential - Possession
egophoric	EXV1
non-egophoric	EXV2+SFX

Mainly attested in Sharkhog, Cone, Thewo-stod. Under some specific condition, egophoric expressions can also use EXV2 (Suzuki & dKon-mchog Tshe-ring 2009); thus the formulation of this category might be sensory access vs epistemic access as A2 displays.

See examples (10) to (13) in Section 3.

(B) a difference between Location+Existential and Possession only for egophoric.

Many dialects presenting this class distinguish an egophoric access to information.

B1: two roots (one existential verb and one lexical verb); the egophoric access distinguished only in the case of Location-Existential.

	Location - Existential	Possession
egophoric	LV	EXV1
non-egophoric	EXV1	EXV1

Mainly attested in mBrugchu. LV, *lexical verb*, is frequently occupied by 'dug 'stay'. See examples (14) to (17) in Section 3.

B2: two roots of existential verb; the egophoric access distinguished only in the case of Location-Existential.

	Location - Existential	Possession
egophoric	EXV1	EXV2
non-egophoric	EXV2	EXV2

Mainly attested in the Thewo-bar subgroup of Thewo-smad.
See examples (18) to (21) in Section 3.

(C) a difference between Location+Existential and Possession, with animacy distinction.

Many dialects presenting this class distinguish an egophoric access to information, in addition to this, sensory (especially visual) and factual are also concerned in Possession.

C1: three roots (two existential verbs and one lexical verb); the egophoric access depending on the root.

	Location - Existential	Possession
egophoric	LV	EXV1
non-egophoric	EXV2 / inanim.	EXV2
	LV / anim.	

Mainly attested in Thewo-smad (except for the Thewo-bar subgroup). LV is occupied by 'dug 'sit'.
See examples (22) to (26) in Section 3.

C2: four roots (three existential verbs and one lexical verb); the egophoric access depending on the root.

	Location - Existential	Possession
egophoric	EXV3	EXV1/ EXV3
non-egophoric	EXV2 / inanim	EXV2/ EXV3+SFX
	EXV3/LV (+SFX) / anim.	

Mainly attested in Sems-kyi-nyila (except for the Melung subgroup), sDerong-nJol, Chaphreng, and Muli-nDappa. Difference between EXV1/EXV3 and LV(+SFX) depending on Animacy (human - animal - inanimate or animate - inanimate).

See examples (27) to (34) in Section 3.

C3: three roots (two existential verbs and one lexical verb); the access to information (egophoricity and epistemisity) depending on the root or existence of a suffix.

	Location - Existential	Possession
egophoric	LV	EXV1
non-egophoric	EXV2 / inanim.	EXV1+SFX
	EXV1+SFX/LV / anim.	
factual	EXV2	

Only attested in the Melung subgroup of Sems-kyi-nyila. LV is frequently occupied by *bzhugs* 'stay', *sdad* 'stay', or *sdod* 'stay'.

See examples (35) to (39) in Section 3.

C4: two roots (one existential verb and one lexical verb); the egophoric access depending on the existence of a suffix.

	Location - Existential	Possession
egophoric	LV	EXV1
non-egophoric	EXV1+SFX / inanim.	EXV1+SFX
	LV / anim.	

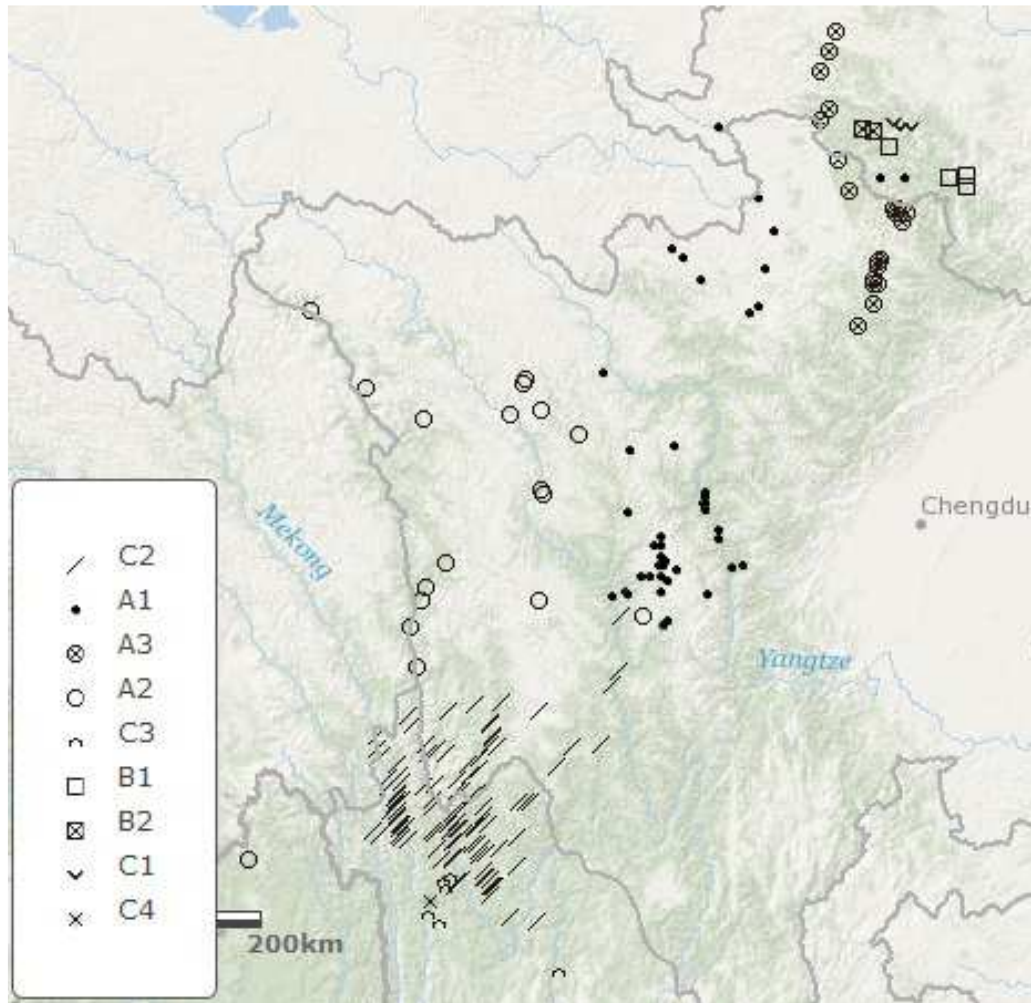
Only attested in the Gongnong dialect of the Melung subgroup of Sems-kyi-nyila. Difference between EXV1+SFX and LV depending on Animacy.

See examples (40) to (44) in Section 3.

2.2 Geographical distribution

In 2.1, the information of dialect group names is also provided; however, without detailed knowledge of Tibetic languages, we cannot understand how the distribution of each type is exhibited. Now I do not claim anything regarding a relationship between the variation of existential expressions and influence of non-Tibetic languages in this region; nevertheless, I will provide linguistic maps concerning the existential verbs for further discussions.

I provide two maps: Map 1 is regarding the geographical distribution of dialects classified by the nine principal types, and Map 2 is regarding the number and forms of existential verb roots. The maps, including 220 geographical points (regiolects), are designed with ArcGIS online. Unfortunately, there are some uncontrollable mistakes included in every map due to the problem of the ArcGIS system.



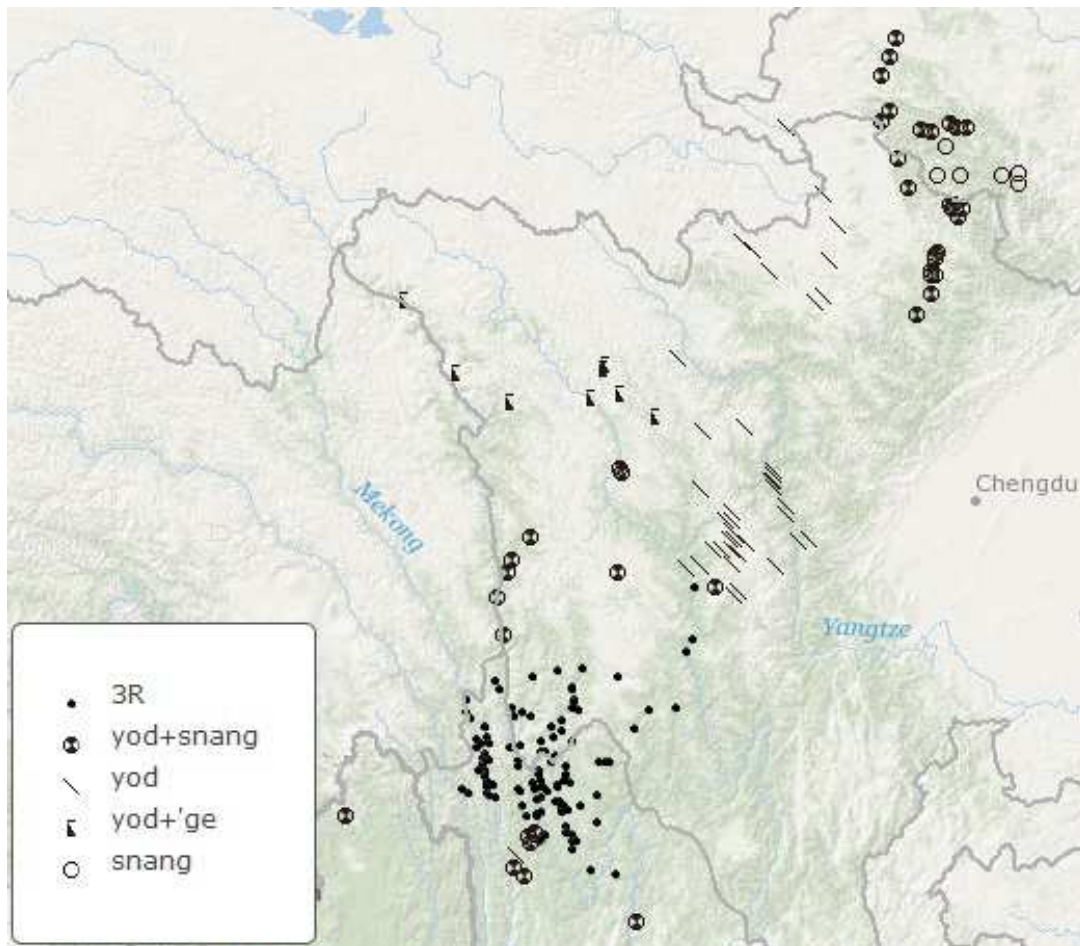
Map 1: Geographical distribution of dialects classified by the nine principal types.

As seen on Map 1, Class A is widely attested in such languages as Amdo, Sharkhog, Thewo-stod, Rongbrag, and Minyag Rabgang. The principal difference in this class is found in the form of the suffix, e.g., /kə/ or /gə/ for Amdo, /rɔʔ/ for Rongbrag, and /to/ or /tu/ for Minyag Rabgang. Paying attention to the difference between A2 and A3, we can note that A3 has a morphologically redundant suffix. This suffix is also used for any lexical stative verbs, hence if the EXV2 (*snang*) is regarded as a stative verb, this category will no more follow the present classification. A more detailed analysis is required. From a geolinguistic viewpoint, A3 is distributed in the place close to the A1-speaking area, thus the formation of A3 might have some interaction between them. The condition of the usage of suffix both in A1 and A3 is the same; it appears only in affirmative sentences, neither in interrogative nor negative ones.

Class B shows that only egophoric utterances have a distinction between Location-Existential and Possession. This class is attested in a small area, north-eastern edge of the Tibetosphere. The difference between B1 and B2 is the nature of verb for egophoric Location-Existential, and in the case of B1, the verb root for egophoric Location-Existential (*'dug*) can take any TAM markers for lexical stative verbs, which implies that it is not a existential verb ty but a lexical verb meaning an existentiality. Existential verbs are generally tense-aspectless and merely take limited suffixes expressing various modalities.

Class C is the type that Location-Existential and Possession are always distinguished, in addition to this, the animacy is concerned for a selection of verb roots. The subclassification of this class is mainly concerned with animacy and the nature of verb roots. The verb root for Location-Existential of animates is various, either an existential verb or a lexical verb which can take TAM suffixes. This class is dominant in the southern Khams region and also found in a part of Thewo.

If one existential verb is used for Location-Existential-Possession (Class A and partial case of Class B), a syntactic pattern of a sentence appears differently, especially on case marking. A possessor is marked by a dative (or locative, if applicable); an existent element occupies the beginning of a given sentence for Existential; a location element occupies the beginning of a given sentence for Location.



Map 2: Number and forms of existential verb roots (3R=*yod*, *snang*, *'dug*)

Map 2 reflects the geographical distribution of existential verb roots. The majority of dialects have *yod*; however, its phonetic variation is rich, such as /jot/, /joʔ/, /jəʔ/, /juʔ/, /zoʔ/, /zəʔ/, and /ɕəʔ/, all of which display an ordinary sound correspondence in a given variety. It also indicates that mBrugchu and some dialects spoken in the north of Jiuzhaigou County (Babzo dialect group of dPalskyid) do not use *yod*, which can, however, appear in an epistemically doubtful utterance; for example, mBrugchu employs *yod ra* to say ‘it is likely to exist’. Apart from this, some dialects of Thewo-stod always use *yod* with a suffix specialised for this verb: /je: ^hpa/; it is already fixed.

Another root *snang* (pronounced as /^hnəŋ/, /^hnɔː/, /^hnu/, /ŋɔ̃/, /ŋɔ̃/, etc.) is also used quite widely. Dialects which do not have *snang* are all the varieties from Amdo (limited within the dialects on Map 2; marginally existent outside Map 2, see Ebihara 2012), Rongbrag Khams, Minyag Rabgang Khams, and the majority of dialects of Zalmogang Khams, in other words, such dialects are spoken in north-central area of the eastern Tibetosphere.

The 3R type (=yod, *snang*, 'dug) is principally distributed in the southern area: Chaphreng Khams, Muli-nDappa Khams, Sem-kyi-nyila Khams, and sDerong-nJol Khams (some exceptions are included). This type also corresponds to the C2 class.

From a geolinguistic view based on these two maps, I claim that the distribution of the dialects with the 'A1-yod' frame is geographically continuous over some languages and thus can make a hypothesis that Rongbrag Khams and Minyag Rabgang Khams have had some relationship with neighbouring varieties of Amdo Tibetan, because Amdo Tibetan maintains only one type of the frame to express the existentiality regardless of its neighbouring languages. Looking at the distribution of A3, we can also consider a possibility that dialects with A3 originally had the 'A2-yod+snang' frame, however strong influence of Amdo made it A3, an intermediate position between A1 and A2.

3 Description

This section provides a detailed description of existential verbs. I will arrange common words to all the varieties, such as *nga* 'I', *kho* 's/he', *mi/myi* 'person', *phag* 'pig', and *yi ge* 'book', as many as possible. For the sake of simplicity, I use Written Tibetan spellings (Wylie transliteration; [◊] indicates an absence of the given form in Literary Tibetan) in order to denote word forms instead of phonetic symbols.

The dialects described here are: Lhagang (Minyag Rabgang Khams; Kangding Municipality; see Suzuki & Sonam Wangmo 2016 in detail), Lithang (Southern Route Khams; Litang County), sKyangtshang (Sharkhog; Songpan County; see Suzuki & dKon-mchog Tshe-ring 2009 in detail), dGonpa (mBrugchu; Zhouqu County), Khaba (Thewo-smad; Diebu County), sDedgudgon (Thewo-smad; Diebu County), Choswateng (Sems-kyi-nyila Khams; Shangri-La Municipality; see Suzuki 2014 in detail), Zhollam (Sems-kyi-nyila Khams; Weixi County; see Suzuki 2013, forthcoming in detail), and Gongnong (Sems-kyi-nyila Khams; Weixi County).

Absolutive case (*zero* morpheme) is uniformly not marked in glosses. Any existential expressions cannot take Ergative case marking for any argument components. Each example presented below always conveys an acceptable meaning; discussions regarding acceptability are excluded.

3.1 Class A

There are three subcategories in Class A.

A1: Lhagang (Minyag Rabgang Khams)

(1) Location-Existential egophoric:

<i>nga</i>	<i>khang pa</i>	{ ^A nang/ ^B nang-la/ ^C go/ ^D go-la}	<i>yod</i>
1sg	house	{ ^A inside/ ^B inside-LOC/ ^C top/ ^D top-LOC}	EXV

'I am {^Ain/^Bin/^Con/^Don} the house.' [Some position nouns are on the way to grammaticalisation.]

(2) Location-Existential non-egophoric:

<i>kho</i>	<i>khang pa</i>	<i>nang</i>	<i>yod</i>
3sg	house	inside	EXV

'S/He is in the house.' [As I have just seen. 'awareness just obtained']

<i>kho</i>	<i>khang pa</i>	<i>nang</i>	<i>yod-[◊]du</i>
3sg	house	inside	EXV-SFX

'S/He is in the house.' [as I have seen before. 'awareness obtained before']

<i>kho</i>	<i>khang pa</i>	<i>nang</i>	<i>yod-red</i>
3sg	house	inside	EXV-CPV

'S/He is generally in the house.' [as everyone knows. 'non-direct sensory experience']

(3) Possession egophoric:

nga-la phag yod
1sg-DAT pig EXV

‘I have pigs.’ [I raise pigs. The morpheme of locative and dative is synchronically the same, however, the condition of omission differs from each other. Additionally, from a diachronic viewpoint, Location and Possessor are marked with different cases in Literary Tibetan (Hoshi 2016:124-125).]

(4) Possession non-egophoric:

kho-la phag yod
3sg-DAT pig EXV

‘S/He has pigs.’ [S/He raises pigs, as I have just seen.]

kho-la phag yod-^odu
3sg-DAT pig EXV

‘S/He has pigs.’ [S/He raises pigs, as I have seen before.]

kho-la phag yod-red
3sg-DAT pig EXV-CPV

‘S/He has pigs.’ [That person is responsible for caring the village’s pigs.]

A2: Lithang (Southern Route Khams)

(5) Location-Existential egophoric:

nga khang pa {^A*nang-la*/^B*thog-la*} *yod*
1sg house {^Ainside-LOC/^Btop-LOC} EXV1

‘I am {^Ain/^Bon} the house.’ [Position nouns generally require a locative case marking.]

(6) Location-Existential sensory/non-egophoric:

kho khang pa {^A*nang-la*/^B*thog-la*} *snang*
3sg house {^Ainside-LOC/^Btop-LOC} EXV2

‘S/He is in the house.’ (I saw him/her.)

{^A*mi*/^B*phag*} *gnyis snang*
{^Aperson/^Bpig} two EXV2

‘There are two {^Apersons/^Bpigs}.’ [I saw them. It is rare to see pigs in a pastoral area in Lithang, so I just add ‘person’ for an enunciation without mirative sense.]

(7) Location-Existential factual:

phag phag ra nang-la yod-red
pig pigsty inside-LOC EXV1-CPV

‘Pigs are (generally) in the pigsty.’ [Pigs are generally not on the pasture/in the house.]

(8) Possession egophoric:

nga-la sgor mo yod
1sg-DAT money EXV1

‘I have some money.’ [N.B. This does not mean ‘I am rich’. Again, the morpheme of locative and dative is synchronically the same. Maybe a redundancy in this variety.]

(9) Possession sensory/non-egophoric:

nga-la sgor mo snang
1sg-DAT money EXV2

‘I have just been aware of the fact that I have some money with me (in the pocket or somewhere, occasionally).’ [exclusively sensory]

kho-la *sgor mo* *snang*
 3sg-DAT money EXV2
 ‘S/He has some money.’ [exclusively non-egophoric]

A3: sKyangtshang (Sharkhog)

(10) Location-Existential egophoric:

nga *phyi-ni* *yod*
 1sg house-LOC EXV1

‘I am in the house.’ [The locative marker is derived from *nang* ‘inside’ (a strict appellation should be ‘inessive-locative’), not an inheritance of the locative marker in Literary Tibetan *na*.]

(11) Location-Existential non-egophoric:

kho *phyi-ni* *snang-gi*
 3sg house-LOC EXV2-SFX
 ‘S/He is in the house.’

(12) Possession egophoric:

nga-zhi *phag* *yod*
 1sg-DAT pig EXV1

‘I have pigs.’ [I own/raise pigs. Note that a possessor is marked by a dative, of which the form is completely different from the locative.]

nga-zhi *phag* *snang-gi*
 1sg-DAT pig EXV2-SFX

‘I have pigs.’ [As you see, I occasionally keep pigs instead of someone. At present, villagers do not raise pigs in the public area, so the use of this utterance is getting rare.]

(13) Possession non-egophoric:

kho-zhi *phag* *snang-gi*
 3sg-DAT pig EXV2-SFX
 ‘S/He has pigs.’ [S/He owns/raises pigs.]

3.2 Class B

There are two subcategories in Class B.

B1: dGonpa (mBrugchu)

(14) Location-Existential egophoric:

a *sbra-la* *’dug*
 1sg house-LOC stay

‘I am in the house.’ [LV (stay) can take any suffixes and auxiliaries (e.g., TAM) which are generally used for any lexical stative verbs. N.B. *sbra* (literally meaning ‘black tent’) is a house made of wood and stone. Black tents are not used in this language area.]

(15) Location-Existential non-egophoric:

nu *sbra-la* *yod*
 3sg house-LOC EXV
 ‘S/He is in the house.’

(16) Possession egophoric:

a-la *phag* *yod*
 1sg-DAT pig EXV
 ‘I have pigs.’ [I own/raise pigs.]

(17) Possession non-egophoric:

◊nu-la phag yod
3sg-DAT pig EXV
'S/He has pigs.' [S/He owns/raises pigs.]

B2: Khaba (Thewo-smad)

(18) Location-Existential egophoric:

nga khang-la yod
1sg house-LOC EXV1
'I am in the house.'

(19) Location-Existential non-egophoric:

kho ◊dag khang-la snang
3sg house-LOC EXV2
'S/He is in the house.'

(20) Possession egophoric:

nga-la phag snang
1sg-DAT pig EXV2
'I have pigs.' [I own/raise pigs.]

(21) Possession non-egophoric:

kho ◊dag-la phag snang
3sg-DAT pig EXV2
'S/He has pigs.' [S/He owns/raises pigs.]

3.3 Class C

There are four subcategories in Class C.

C1: sDedgudgon (Thewo-smad)

(22) Location-Existential egophoric:

nga ◊phyi-◊ni 'dug
1sg house-LOC stay
'I am in the house.' [LV (stay) can take any suffixes and auxiliaries (e.g., TAM) which are generally used for any lexical stative verbs.]

(23) Location-Existential non-egophoric animate:

de ◊phyi-◊ni 'dug-bgyid
3sg house-LOC stay-CPV
'S/He is in the house.'

(24) Location-Existential non-egophoric inanimate:

yi ge ◊phyi-◊ni snang
book house-LOC EXV2
'The book is in the house.'

(25) Possession egophoric:

nga phag yod
1sg pig EXV1
'I have pigs.' [I own/raise pigs. A possessor is generally in absolutive. Note that different roots of the existential verb are used between Location-Existential and Possession.]

(26) Possession non-egophoric:

de phag snang
3sg pig EXV2
'S/He has pigs.' [S/He owns/raises pigs.]

C2: Choswateng (Sems-kyi-nyila)

(27) Location-Existential egophoric:

nga khyim 'dug
1sg house EXV3
'I am in the house.' [All the arguments are in absolutive.]

(28) Location-Existential non-egophoric animate/human:

kho khyim 'dug-red
3sg house EXV3-CPV
'S/He is in the house.' [EXV3 can take CPV-suffix to express 'non-egophoricity'.]

(29) Location-Existential non-egophoric animate/non-human:

phag phag khang 'dug-red
3sg pigsty EXV3-CPV
'The pig is in the pigsty.'

phag 'dug-red
3sg EXV3-CPV
'There is a pig.' [on the pasture]

phag snang
3sg EXV2
'There is a pig.' [This 'pig' is an 'inanimate pig' in a photo or a pig doll or a piggybank]

(30) Location-Existential non-egophoric inanimate:

yi ge khyim snang
book pigsty EXV2
'The book is in the house.'

(31) Possession egophoric, animate possessee:

nga phag 'dug
1sg pig EXV3
'I have pigs.' [=I own/raise pigs. Again, all the arguments are in absolutive.]

nga phag yod
1sg pig EXV1
'I have pigs.' [=I have dead pigs, pigs' photos, or piggybanks.]

(32) Possession egophoric, inanimate possessee:

nga yi ge yod
1sg book EXV1
'I have books.'

(33) Possession non-egophoric, animate possessee:

kho phag 'dug-red
3sg pig EXV3-CPV
'S/He has pigs.' [S/He owns/raises pigs.]

kho phag snang
3sg pig EXV2
'S/He has pigs.' [S/He has dead pigs (*zhubiao* in Chinese), pigs' photos, or piggybanks.]

(34) Possession non-egophoric, inanimate possessee:

kho yi ge yod
3sg book EXV1
'S/He has books.'

C3: Zhollam (Sems-kyi-nyila)

(35) Location-Existential egophoric:

nga khyim bzhugs-da-yin
1sg house stay-PRG-CPV
'I am in the house.' [All the arguments are in absolutive.]

(36) Location-Existential non-egophoric animate/human:

kho khyim 'dug-da-s nang
3sg house stay-PRG-CPV
'S/He is in the house.' [describing an existence of a definite person]

na ga mi[◇]do gcig yod-s nang
over there person one EXV1-SFX
'There is a person over there.' [describing an existence of an indefinite person]

(37) Location-Existential non-egophoric animate/animal and inanimate:

phag phag khang snang
3sg pigsty EXV2
'The pig is in the pigsty.'

yi ge khyim snang
book house EXV2
'The book is in the house.'

(38) Possession egophoric:

nga phag yod
1sg pig EXV1
'I have pigs.' [I own/raise pigs. Again, all the arguments are in absolutive.]

(39) Possession non-egophoric:

kho phag yod-s nang
3sg pig EXV1-SFX
'S/He has pigs.' [S/He owns/raises pigs.]

C4: Gongnong (Sems-kyi-nyila)

(40) Location-Existential egophoric:

nga khyim 'dug
1sg house stay
'I am in the house.' [All the arguments are in absolutive.]

(41) Location-Existential non-egophoric animate/human:

kho khyim 'dug
3sg house stay
'S/He is in the house.'

(42) Location-Existential non-egophoric inanimate:

yi ge khyim yod-snang
book house EXV-SFX
'The book is in the house.'

(43) Possession egophoric:

nga phag yod
1sg pig EXV
'I have pigs.' [I own/raise pigs. Again, all the arguments are in absolutive.]

(44) Possession non-egophoric:

kho phag yod-snang
3sg pig EXV-SFX
'S/He has pigs.' [S/He owns/raises pigs.]

4 Concluding remarks

This article described the variation of existential expressions in Tibetic languages of the eastern Tibetosphere (220 valid varieties on the maps). Principal findings are following:

- (1) there are three existential verb roots (*yod*, *snang*, *'dug*) found in the varieties from all over the region of the eastern Tibetosphere;
- (2) a variety uses either one, two, or three roots within the options *yod*, *snang*, and *'dug*, under certain conditions in following (3)-(5);
- (3) varieties with Classes B and C distinguish 'Possession' from 'Existential-Location' in morphology, while those with Class A and some with B do in syntactic (case-marking) pattern;
- (4) every variety reflects a difference in access to information, i.e., distinction between 'egophoric' and 'non-egophoric', among 'sensory experience just confirmed', 'sensory experience obtained before', and 'non-direct experience', and/or among 'sensory experience', 'non-sensory experience', and 'factual'; and,
- (5) varieties with Class C (principally Southern Khams) have a system distinguishing 'animate' from 'inanimate'.

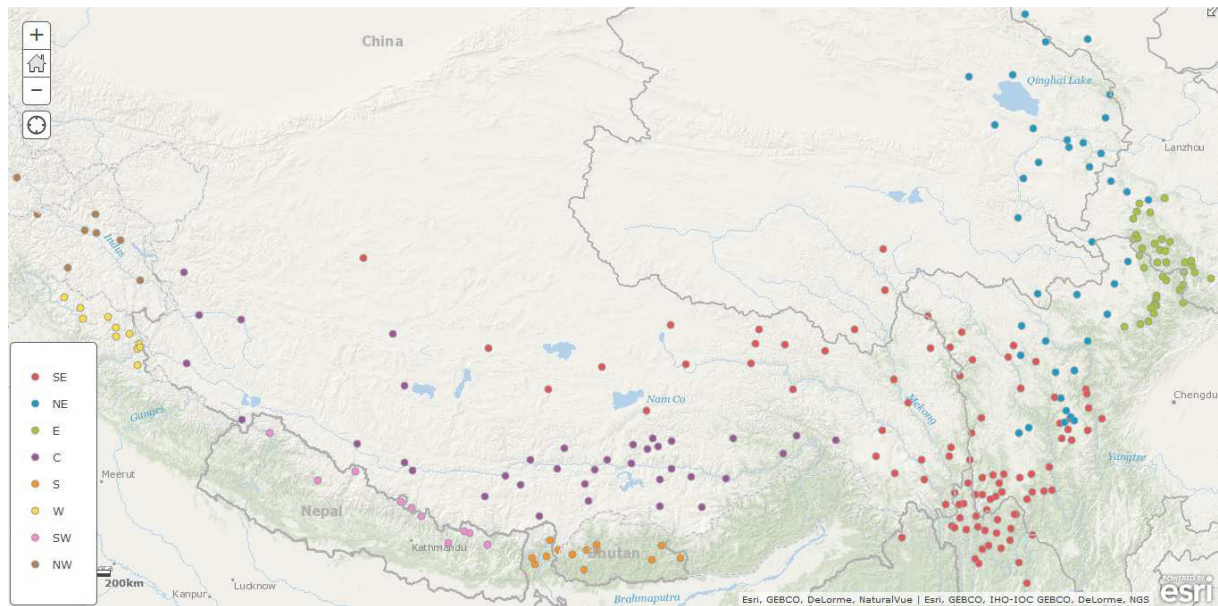
The description and classification are to some extent simplified in order to focus on characterising each variety. In addition, the discussion limited the range of the discussion for the affirmative expressions. Negations of existential expressions are more complicated than affirmatives regarding scope of negation, statement of 'non-existence', and implication of negation.

It is just a first step to give an overview of the complexity of existential expressions in the Tibetic languages. Tibetan is not a single language from the typological viewpoint, and a description of each variety can enrich typological perspectives not only for Tibetic languages but also for Tibeto-Burman languages. Tibetic languages should receive much more attention than the previous investigations. Meanwhile, the grammatical terminology for a description of Tibetic languages must be well elaborated.

Fortunately, the framework for existential verbs and constructions provided in Huang (2013) is valid for all the members of Tibeto-Burman, the data discussed in the present paper can be united from a typological perspective, and hence is ready for a geolinguistic analysis in further research from a broader perspective such as an ongoing research project *Studies in Asian Geolinguistics* (see Endo 2015 and Suzuki et al. 2016). On the other hand, the framework of Huang (2013) is not sufficient to describe the cases of Tibetic languages. Firstly, the existential verbs in some Tibetic languages also function as an attributive so that they are called ELPA (Caplow 2000). Secondly, epistemic variation also reflects in a syntactico-semantic structure as described in Vokurková (2008). For a perspective of the linguistics contribution of the Tibetic languages, an adjustment of the description framework to them is also needed.

Appendix

Distribution map of the Tibetic languages to be exclusively designed for Tournadre and Suzuki (forthcoming).



Beta version. Temporary reference use only. Not to be circulated.

Abbreviations

1sg: First person singular

3sg: Third person singular

CPV: Copulative verb

DAT: Dative

EXV: Existential verb (1/2/3 depending on a given dialect)

LV: Lexical verb

LOC: Locative

PRG: Progressive

SFX: Various suffixes [functions non specified]

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