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A Tibetan Grammatical Construction: verb + *na go*

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While much in Classical Tibetan grammar remains insufficiently understood,¹ as more literature is carefully read, further facts emerge, however incrementally, to refine our knowledge. In my own very limited reading, restricted to translations of Buddhist literature, I have recently come across a phenomenon that has so far passed almost unnoticed, namely the construction of verb + *na go*. Although relatively rare, the grammatical morpheme *go* itself has been remarked. The *Wörterbuch der tibetischen Schriftsprache* tells us (Maurer et al. 2005–: 214, s.v. *go*³) that this *go* is a “Suffix mit emphatischer Funktion”, suggests comparing *ko*, and states that *go* is “a topic marker similar to *ni*”, citing a remark of Takeuchi (1985: 139).² The *Wörterbuch* (Maurer et al. 2005–: 113, s.v. *ko*²) speaks of the above-mentioned *ko* itself as a “Partikel nach Pronomina und Nomina, mit emphatischer Bedeutung: ‘eben’ ‘gerade’ ‘da’ ‘hier’”.³ Regarding *go*, Takeuchi’s original

¹ This leaves aside for the moment the fact that at some point we must more actively acknowledge the multiplicity of what usually falls, without discrimination, under the general umbrella of ‘Classical Tibetan’. I received valuable advice and references from (in alphabetical order) Nathan Hill, Harunaga Isaacson, Berthe Jansen, Seishi Karashima, Charles Ramble, Akira Saitō, Lambert Schmithausen, Johannes Schneider, and Peter Verhagen, all of whom I thank, and none of whom are responsible for errors. Proper translations of the examples cited below would require careful study of the source texts, which I have not undertaken. Therefore, it is virtually certain that refinements in the translations will be required.

² Explaining such elements is, to be sure, not the main function of the *Wörterbuch*. As Helga Uebach wrote in the first fascicule, p. xiv: “Partikeln im Sinne grammatischer Funktionswörter, Partikeln zur Wortbildung u. dgl. finden ohne Belegstellenkontext Erwähnung.”

³ In Btsan lha Ngag dbang tshul khrims 1997: 7, s.v. *ko*, we read: “*ko: ni sgra dang mtshungs pa’i phrad cig ste | brda yig blo gsal mgrin rgyan las | ko ni tshig phrad ni zhes pa’i brda rnying.*” The definition seems to be cited here from a work of the Alashan Mongol scholar Ngag dbang bstan dar (1759–ca. 1840), alias Bstan dar lha rams pa, his *Gangs can gyi brda’ gsar rnying las brtsams pa’i brda’ yig blo gsal*

statement, offered in discussing a short passage from the *Old Tibetan Chronicle* (PT 1287, l. 208) translated from the Chinese *Shiji* 史記, reads as follows (here and below I transcribe all Tibetan in the so-called Wylie system):

As for a clever man (Myi 'dzangs-pa go): This clause has not been correctly understood by previous scholars, who have understood *go* to be the stem of the verb *go-ba*, “to understand.” In the present context that is impossible both from the point of view of grammar and from that of content. Here *go* must be a variant of the grammatical particle *ko*, a topic marker similar to *ni*. The entire clause thus means “as for a clever man,” which corresponds well to the expression found in the Chinese version [夫賢士之處世也]. One problem which remains is the phonetic identification of *go* and *ko*. In old Tibetan texts the mixing up of the aspirated and unaspirated voiceless stops and affricates is very common. While the interchange of voiced and voiceless stops is much less common, some instances do exist. ... Therefore, it is possible that in the present instant *go* and *ko* have been interchanged.

While it is not my goal here to address the question whether *go* is indeed a variant of *ko*, or vice-versa (though the more one reads a variety of Tibetan texts the more one's tolerance for spelling variation grows), we will see that there are advantages to treating the two together, at least provisionally.⁴ Be that as it may, the function of *go* in which I am here most interested appears not to be—or at least not to be entirely—covered by Takeuchi's discussion or that in the *Wörterbuch*, since the specific usage upon which I will focus most of my attention is that of verb + *na go* (which also appears as *na ko*, suggesting that the two are indeed equivalent, at least to many scribes). Whether verb + *na go* is to be considered a sub-case of the syntax of *go* in general is a question best left to linguists.

mgrin rgyan. Leonard van der Kuijp, however, writes to me that he has not found the reference to Bstan dar Lha rams pa's text in *Bstan dar lha rams pa'i gsung 'bum*, ed. Ser gtsug nang bstan dpe rnying 'tshol bsdu phyogs sgrig khang (Lhasa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang, 2008), 622–679. But van der Kuijp further informs me of Rnam rgyal tshe ring's *Bod yig brda rnying tshig mdzod* (Beijing: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2001): 8, where, s.v. *ko*, we find *ni sgra'i 'jug tshal dang 'dra ba'i phrad cig*.

⁴ As Charles Ramble suggests to me, it is possible that there are phonological reasons for the difference after consonants, such that *k* follows *-d* and *-s*, and *g* follows *-g* and *-n*, but both forms appear after *na*.

To begin with the statements above, it is important to note at the outset that the central usage discussed below is connected not with pronouns or nouns, but with grammatical morphemes, and, as far as I see now, is limited to placement following the ‘case particle’ *na*. Another usage sees *ko/go* following directly after a verb, which however is not remarked upon in the *Wörterbuch*. I say that reference to the case of verb + *na go* is ‘not entirely’ covered since the *Wörterbuch* does cite one example of this usage, from the *Mahārājakanīṣka-*lekha**, discussed below.⁵

I begin by introducing the passages that initially drew my attention to the construction verb + *na go*, two examples found in a Buddhist treatise, the *Vimśikā* of Vasubandhu and its auto-commentary, which I have recently edited in both Sanskrit and Tibetan. In this text one example occurs in verse, another in prose. The first reads:

- [1] *gal te de yi las kyis der* ||
’byung ba dag ni ’byung ba dang ||
de bzhin ’gyur bar ’dod na go ||
rnam par shes par cis mi ’dod || [6]

This corresponds to the following (my translation is from the Sanskrit):

yadi tatkarmabhis tatra bhūtānāṃ sambhavas tathā |
iṣyate pariṇāmaś ca kiṃ vijñānasya neṣyate ||

If you accept that gross material elements arise there
in this fashion through the karmic deeds of those [beings],
and [you accept their] transformation,
why do you not accept [the transformation] of cognition?

It is obvious here that *gal te ... ’dod na go* corresponds to the Sanskrit *yadi ... iṣyate*.⁶ The second passage reads (in my numbering XV [H]):

⁵ I should note quite clearly that as a specialist in Indian Buddhist literature I mine Tibetan translations of Indic texts, rather than grazing in the fields of pure Tibetan. I leave it to my proper Tibetanist colleagues to offer observations on the grammar of “real Tibetan.” In addition, I have avoided referring to tantric literature, even as translated from Sanskrit, because I do not understand it well enough to cite it with confidence. There do appear, however, to be a number of probably relevant examples in this corpus.

⁶ In the version of the verse embedded in the Tibetan translation of the commentary, we find instead of the verb *’dod* rather *’dug*; I do not understand this well.

- [2] *gal te mtshan nyid tha dad pa nyid kyis rdzas gzhan kho nar rtog gi
gzhan du ma yin na go | chu'i skye bo phra mo rnams kyang chen
po dag dang gzugs mtshungs pas mig gis mi sod par mi 'gyur ro | |*

This corresponds to the following (my translation of the Sanskrit):

*sūkṣmāṇāṅ codakajantūnāṃ sthūlaiḥ samānarūpāṇāṃ anīkṣaṇāṃ
na syāt | yadi la(kṣaṇabhe)dād eva dravyāntaratvaṃ kalpyate ,
nānyathā.*

And, if you were to imagine [the two] to have a difference in substance purely because of a distinction in characteristic feature, not otherwise, microscopic aquatic creatures, having forms like macroscopic [creatures], would not be invisible.

What drew my attention to these passages is the grammatical function of *go*, which was unclear to me.⁷ Most of the examples I know of the construction verb + *na go* are, in fact, in verse. Nevertheless, the appearance in the *Vimśikā* in prose does prove—as will further examples cited below—that *go* is not to be accounted for as a metrical filler or other artifact of the verse form, despite its seeming predominance in verse.

Continuing, then, with our review of previous scholarship, the above mentioned passage from the *Mahārajakanīṣkalekha* (ed. and trans. Hahn 1999: 40–41, verse 69), for which we have no extant Sanskrit, reads as follows:

- [3] *sngon chad bgyis pa'i sug las kyis | |
'di ltar 'ben du gyur pa la | |
khyod nyid gnod pa mdzad na go | |
su la skyabs su mchi ba gsungs | |*

When even someone in your position harms those
who have become a target
because of deeds committed in the past,
tell me, in whom will they take refuge?

Hahn comments (1999: 234) that *go* is an “emphatic particle, used after pronouns and case particles.” In his translation, however, it would appear that Hahn made no effort to express any emphasis added to the verbal expression (his “even” seems to represent the

⁷ When the sub-commentary of Vinītadeva to the *Vimśikā* quotes the expression from the prose (Derge 4065, *sems tsam, shi*, 189b1), it does not help in this regard: *gzhan du ni ma yin na go zhes bya ba la 'dis ni yul tha dad pa la sogs pa ston to.*

nyid of *khyod nyid*).

Although *ko* has been noted as an emphatic particle (better: grammatical morpheme) at least since the grammar of Bacot (1948: 13), for whom it is a “Particule emphatique du pronom démonstratif,” *go* has not fared so well. To my knowledge, however, at least one earlier scholar has noticed the peculiar usage of *go*, that being David Roy Shackleton Bailey. In his edition and study of the *Śatapañcāśatka* of Māṛṇceṭa we find (1951: verse 106):

[4] *phan 'dogs bgyid slad pha ma dag | |*
gal te bla mar 'tshal na go | |
khyod ni lhag par phan 'dogs pas | |
bla ma ñid gyur smos ci 'tshal | |

gurutvam upakāritvān mātāpitror yadīṣyate |
kedānīm astu gurutā tvayy atyantopakāriṇi | |

Shackleton Bailey translates (from the Sanskrit):

If father and mother are acknowledged to be venerable because they are benefactors, what dignity should then be yours whose beneficence has no limit?

Here again *gal te ... 'tshal na go* translates *yadīṣyate*. In his remarks on an earlier occurrence of *go*, after the word *kyis* in verse 6 of the same text, Shackleton Bailey noted (1951: 153, to 6c) that “*go* (or *ko*) seems to be a particle unknown to dictionaries. Usually, as here, it introduces a question: cp. vv. 106, 136, 139 of this poem.” Stanza 106 I have just cited above. In 136d we find [5] *de la lan go ci zhig lon*, corresponding to Sanskrit *tava kā tasya niṣkṛtiḥ*, translated by Shackleton Bailey “how should there be any requital thereof?” In 139d we find [6] *gzhan go ci zhig mchis lags kye*, corresponding, as Shackleton Bailey specifically notes (1951: 140n7), to *kim anyat karaṇīyam bhavet*, words which do not appear in this order in the verse. In his note to verse 6, Shackleton Bailey went on to refer briefly to a number of other examples, which I cite more fully than did he.

To begin, in the *Lalitavistara* we find a verse which reads:⁸

[7] *'di yi zhal ni mthong mod kyi | |*
spyi gtsug 'phags pa bltar mi snang | |
yi ge'i shes rab mthar phyin na | |

⁸ X.8; Foucaux 1847: 114.9–11; Derge Kanjur 95, *mdo sde, kha* 67a3–4; Hokazono 1995: 528; my translation from Tibetan.

bdag gis 'di go ji ltar bslab | |

vaktraṁ cāśya na paśyāmi mūrdhānaṁ tasya naiva ca |
śikṣayiṣye katham hy enaṁ lipiprajñāya pāraḡam | |

Although one may see his face,⁹
the crown of his head is so noble that it is invisible.
Given that he has attained ultimate knowledge of scripts,
how could I instruct [such a one as] this?

Here line d of the Tibetan corresponds to c of the Sanskrit. One could argue—although Shackelton Bailey does not—that *go* is here meant to represent *hi*. If so, however, this is not a widespread phenomenon, despite the ubiquity of the Sanskrit particle; the absence of parallel examples may thus allow us to conclude with confidence that *go* is not to be equated with *hi*, or for that matter, with any specific Sanskrit term.¹⁰

Shackelton Bailey continued with an example from the Mūla-sarvastivāda Vinaya, in which we find the following sentence in prose: [8] *bdag ... rang gi bsod nams kyi 'bras bu la gnas pa go ci'i phyir sbyin pa dag mi gtang*, to which corresponds in the Nagarāvā-lambikāvādāna of the *Dīvyāvādāna: aham ... svapūṇyaphale vyavasthitah kasmād dānāni na dadāmi*.¹¹ Also from the *Bhaiṣajyavastu* of the same Vinaya, we find another verse:¹²

[9] *gal te kun na chu yod na | |*
khron pa'i chus ko ci zhig bya | |
'dir ni sred pa'i rtsa bcad nas | |
gang shig yongs su brtsal bar spyod | |

If there is water everywhere,
what need is there for water from a well?

⁹ Note that the Sanskrit text is negated: one does *not* see his face.

¹⁰ An additional consideration: in Sanskrit *hi* evidently links with *katham* (*ji ltar*), which we might understand as something like 'how on earth' (of course not!). However, it is not clear that in Tibetan *go* should be taken as most closely bound with *ji ltar*, rather than with 'di. If *go* should be attached to *ji ltar* we might understand something like "how could I possibly instruct".

¹¹ *Derge Kanjur* 1, 'dul ba, kha, 164b7; Cowell and Neil 1886: 83.17.

¹² *Derge Kanjur* 1, 'dul ba, kha, 133b7–134a1; Yao 2013: 101, 254; my translation. This example of Shackleton Bailey must have been known to Hahn 1996: 38, who quotes the half verse (without any reference), following the statement: "ko und go werden gelegentlich auch nach Nomina, nach Kasus- und Gerundialpartikeln in leicht verstärkender Funktion ... gebraucht, wobei nich selten auf ko bzw. go ein Fragesatz folgt." The same is cited in the *Wörterbuch* (Maurer et al. 2005–: 113: ko²), with reference to its source in the *Kanjur*.

Having cut off the roots of thirst/desire,¹³
for what should one proceed [further] to search?

It is interesting to note that ‘the same’ verse appears elsewhere, articulated, however, slightly differently. Indeed, about 100 pages earlier in the same Vinaya text we find (Derge Kanjur 1, ‘*dul ba, kha*, 29a3–4):

[9a] *gal te kun na chu yod na* ||
khron pa’i chus ni ci zhig bya ||
sred pa’i rtsa ba bcad nas ni ||
su zhig spyod pa tshol bar byed ||

Here in place of *ko* we find *ni*. This verse is, moreover, found in a number of other places, including in the *Udānavarga* (Zongtse and Dietz 1990: XVII.9), where it takes on yet another form:

[9b] *’di ltar kun na chu yod pas* ||
su zhig tshol zhing rgyu byed de ||
khron pa’i chu lta ci zhig dgos ||
sred pa rtsa nas gcad par gyis ||

It might be that the use of *lta* here corresponds to the hypothesis of Hahn (1994: 290) that *lta* occurs in interrogative sentences, adding “a shadow of indefiniteness” to the preceding noun, to which it belongs: “something like water from a well.” Much less likely is that we should take *lta ci* as a unit conveying something like: ‘there is no need to mention,’ argued against both on grounds of parallelism with other versions of the line and in terms of stress, since it is the first element of a combination which should take stress, and here we have *khron pa’i chú lta ci zhig dgos*.

We should note that there are variants in the Sanskrit versions of this verse as well (see Hiraoka 2007: 132–133),¹⁴ but in the *Udānavarga* we read (Bernhard 1965):

kiṃ kuryād udapānena yatrāpaḥ sarvato bhavet |
tr̥ṣṇāyā mūlam uddhṛtya kasya paryeṣaṇām caret ||

Another prose passage cited by Shackleton Bailey appears in the

¹³ There is an evident pun on **tr̥ṣṇā*; I thank Berthe Jansen for pointing this out to me.

¹⁴ The variations are no doubt also in part due to differences in sectarian transmissions of the verse (or verse complex); this makes comparison between different instances difficult.

Saddharmapuṇḍarīka, where [10] 'bar ba 'di lta go ci zhig ces renders *kim etad ādīptam nāmeti*.¹⁵ It is possible here too that *lta* has some indefinite meaning, and much less likely that *go* has been imposed within the otherwise bound expression *lta ci*.

Finally, Shackleton Bailey refers to a verse in the *Lalitavistara* which, he acknowledges, has—despite his suggestion that *go* “usually ... introduces a question”—no following question.¹⁶

[11] 'di ni mngon par byung bar gyur na go | |
 rgyal po'i pho brang 'di kun nyams mi dga' | |
 rgyal po'i rigs rgyud yun ring gnas pa yang | |
 rgyal po'i rigs dang rgyud ni chad par 'gyur | |

etasya nirgatasya rājakulaṃ sarvīmāṃ nirabhiramyam |
ucchinnaś ca bhaveyā pārthivavāṃśāś ciranubaddhaḥ

If [the prince, Siddhārtha] were to depart,
 all of this royal house would be distressed.
 The royal lineage, although it has lasted long,
 the family and line of the king would be cut off.

We encounter here again the combination in which we are interested, verb + *na go*. At least one way of reading it here is as a strongly undesired circumstance: if—heaven forbid!—[the prince] were actually to leave [the palace]

We began with a look at several attempts to categorize *ko/go*, which share the claim that these grammatical morphemes (or this grammatical morpheme, if we accept that the two forms are realizations of the same underlying form) follow pronouns or nouns, case particles, or introduce a question. Examples of such usages can certainly be found, for example in the translation of Āryadeva's *Catuhśataka*, even examples in which *ko* both follows a pronoun and introduces a question.¹⁷

[12] khyod la gus bzhin rtag par ni | |
 mo dang lhan cig phrad pa med | |
 'di nga'i gzhan gyi ma yin zhes | |

¹⁵ Derge Kanjur 113, *mdo sde, ja* 29b7; Kern and Nanjio 1908–1912: 73.10.

¹⁶ XV.20; Foucaux 1847: 178.9–11; Derge Kanjur 95, *mdo sde, kha* 100b5–6, Lefmann 1902: 202.7–8; my translation from Tibetan. It is a bit artificial to quote this verse cut out of its narrative context, but since my focus here is on *na go* rather than the overall logic or poetics of the *Lalitavistara*, this seems permissible.

¹⁷ ed. and trans. Lang 1986: III.11, pp. 40 (my trans.); V.23, pp. 62–63.

yongs 'dzin 'di ko ci zhig yin | |¹⁸

You cannot have sex with a woman constantly, no matter how much she admires you. [Still you] say: 'She is mine; she is not someone else's'—what need is there of this possessiveness?

- [13] *gang la kun tshe sems dbang ni* | |
nyid las skye ba yod gyur pa | |
de ko rgyu cis 'jig rten ni | |
kun gyi mnga' bdag 'gyur ma yin | |

Why shouldn't a certain [bodhisattva], who always is born precisely because of his control over mind, become a ruler of the entire world?

Two further examples from the same text also connect *ko/go* with a question, although in the second case not directly:¹⁹

- [14] *skye ba dran pa yod pa'i phyir* | |
gal te khyod kyi bdag rtag na | |
sngon byas pa yi rma mthong nas | |
khyod kyi lus ko cis mi rtag | |²⁰

If you [claim that] the self is permanent because of the memory of [its past] births, why do you [claim that] the body is impermanent, having seen a wound previously incurred?

- [15] *mi rtag nyid gar stobs chung der* | |
gnas pa stobs chung ma yin na | |
phyi nas de dag nges par go | |
bzlog par ci yis mthong bar 'gyur | |

¹⁸ According to Lang 1986: 40n, CD read *ko* while NP read *go* here. The translation of Lang 1986: 41 reads: "You cannot have sexual intercourse constantly [day and night] in accordance with your fondness [for sensual pleasure]. To say 'She is mine; she is not someone else's'—what is the use of this possessiveness?" For a translation of the commentary see Ueda 1994: 45. I am not sure I have understood the verse correctly.

¹⁹ ed. and trans. Lang 1986: X.7, pp. 96 (my trans.); XI.21, pp. 108–109.

²⁰ According to Lang 1986: 96n, CD read *lus ko* while NP read *bdag go* here. Lang 1986: 97 translates: "If you [claim that] the self is permanent because of the memory of [its past] births, [we reply:] How can you [claim that] the body is impermanent when you see a scar previously incurred?"

In that case when impermanence is instable, if duration were stable, how would these two later be seen to reverse [their positions]?

The grammatical morpheme *ko/go* also appears in this text following a case particle:²¹

[16] *las ni 'bad pas byed 'gyur zhing | |*
byas zin 'bad pa med par 'jig | |
*de ltar gyur kyang khyod la go | |*²²
las la chags bral 'ga' yod min | |

yatnataḥ kriyate karma kṛtam naśyaty ayatnataḥ |
virāgo 'sti na te kaścid evaṁ saty api karmaṇi | |

Action is undertaken with effort; the result is destroyed effortlessly. Even though this is true, you haven't any aversion to action!

In this last case, at least according to the Tibetan it might be better to understand: 'For *you* there is not the slightest aversion to action.'

While all of this, then, seems relatively straight-ahead, even if it remains unclear just what *ko/go* contributes in each and every case, there is yet more to the story. Akira Saitō's careful edition and translation of Buddhapālita's *Mūlamadhyamakavṛtti* contains a number of examples of *ko* directly following a verb, *ko* in this case, according to Saitō (1984: xix), being an "ending particle for emphasis." However, there is something very interesting about the uses Saitō has collected (see Saitō 1989, 2013), namely, that they seem to be connected with a particular formulaic usage with metaphorical expressions. Saitō catalogued more than thirty of these, which almost without exception have the form *bshad pa | ci khyod ... 'am | khyod ... [verb] ko | |*. Thanks to the recent publication of fragments of a Sanskrit manuscript of Buddhapālita's text, it has been possible to identify the Sanskrit underlying this formula, namely: *ucyate | kim idaṁ ... [verb] | yas tvam ... [verb]*. For Saitō (2013: 1180):

The complex sentence is composed of both principal clause and subordinate one. Having a fixed form, i.e., *kim idaṁ bhavaṁ ...*, the principal clause is an ironic interrogation directed to the opponent in which the interrogative

²¹ Ed. and trans. (of Skt.) Lang 1986: VII.12, pp. 72–73.

²² According to Lang 1986: 72n, CD read *ko* while NP read *go*.

particle “*kim*” is used as making a negative answer to be expected. The subordinate clause beginning with *yas tvam* ... shows the reason for the ironic question as expressed by the preceding principal clause.

Be this as it may—and I do not challenge Saitō’s understanding of the Sanskrit here—I do not think that this analysis correctly describes what is happening in the Tibetan translation. The first example in the text for which we have a corresponding Sanskrit version comes in the commentary to *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* II.14, as cited by Saitō:²³

[17] *smras pa | re zhig ma song ba yod do || bshad pa | ci khyod
bu ma btsas par 'chi ba'i mya ngan byed dam | khyod song ba
med par ma song ba la rtog go ||*²⁴

*āha | kim idaṃ bhavān ajātaputramaraṇāt saṃtapyate | yas
tvam asati gate agatāṃ kalpayasi |*

Saitō’s translation from Sanskrit reads (2013: 1173):

[The opponent] objects: First, there exists that which has not yet been gone over (*agata*).
[Buddhapālita] answers: Are you now suffering from the death [of your son] though he has not yet been born because you imagine ‘that which has not yet been gone over, i.e., traversed’ when there does not exist ‘that which has already been gone over’ (*gata*)?

Saitō’s translation from Tibetan, however, understands the text as follows (1984: I.41):

Objection: There certainly exists that which has not yet been gone over.
Answer: Although you have not begotten a son, are you distressed about his death? You are imagining that which has not yet been gone over, though that which has already been gone over does not exist.

I believe that the latter translation—which might benefit from an exclamation point at the very end—captures the required sense, at least of the Tibetan text. In fact, most of Buddhapālita’s examples are

²³ Saitō refers to D *tsa* 171b5; P *tsa* 193b2–3.

²⁴ Saitō 1984: II.41; 2013: 1173–1174. Saitō (1984: xx) has observed that it is likely that this *go* should be *ko*, but that it is influenced by the preceding *rtog*.

quite colorful and memorable; they are clearly intended as powerful rhetorical flourishes, and the final emphasis is an added ironic push showing the unreasonableness of the opponent's position. Although many nice examples could be cited, I limit myself to one further instance:²⁵

[18] *smras pa | phrad pa med kyang sla ste re zhig gcig pa nyid kyi
snga rol na gzhan du 'gyur ba'i dngos po gang yin pa de ni
phrad pa po ste re zhig yod do || bshad pa | ci khyod ma ning
la phrag dog za 'am | khyod phrad pa med par phrad pa po yod
pa nyid du 'dod ko ||*

Objection: Even if those which have already combined do not exist, it does not matter. Those things which have been different before they become identical are “combiners”, and they certainly exist.

Answer: Do you envy an eunuch? Although there is no combination, you regard a combiner as existent.

Saitō's translation chooses one aspect of the vocabulary here, the philosophical, although he obviously also understood that the text is being more than a bit sarcastic. The reference to 'combination' is to be understood in the example (also) as sexual combination, playing on the wide semantic range of **samyoga*. Buddhapālita is saying to the opponent: A eunuch can't have sex, but you maintain that there is someone having sex without having sex! The point grammatically stressed here, and in all of Buddhapālita's examples, as far as I can see, is that the opponent is confronted with a statement: you (*khyod/ tvam*) maintain / assert / hold a completely ridiculous and untenable view! The mark of exclamation is the final *ko*. It is important to note, however, that—again, as far as I have seen—this construction seems to appear *only* in this particular text, something which, if correct, certainly requires explanation.

The formula noted by Saitō is of interest to us from a grammatical point of view among other things for the fact that *ko/go* directly follows a verb, rather than a pronoun or case particle, for instance, thus broadening the range of application of this 'emphatic' grammatical morpheme. In addition to the examples collected above by previous scholars, however, who were almost exclusively interested in *ko/go* alone, focusing on the formula verb + *na go* I have been able to locate a number of examples of what seems to me to be a previously unnoticed pattern. Numerically speaking most examples

²⁵ Saitō 1984: 196; 2013: 1178; D 223b5–6; P 253a4, ad MMK XIV.8.

are in verse, but some appear in prose as well.

Our first example is found in the *Prajñādaṇḍa* (Hahn 2011: verse 201):

- [19] *sbyin dang spyod pas stong pa yi* | |
nor des nor bdag yin na go | |
nor de nyid kyis bdag kyang ni | |
nor gyi bdag po cis ma yin | |

Hahn translates:²⁶

If it is true that one can be rich through wealth
that is neither donated nor enjoyed,
why do we not become extremely rich
by not donating wealth we do not have?

The Tibetan text may be difficult to fully understand on its own terms,²⁷ but we do notice that *na go* appears to emphasize the condition: “If one is a rich person” In fact, this seems to be a more wide-spread pattern. In the *Udānavarga* (XIV.7 = Skt. XIV.7ab, XIV.6ef; my translation from Tibetan), again, we find:

- [20] *mkhas pas brtags shing gsungs pa'i tshig* | |
spyod yul ston par byed pa yi | |
chos 'di rnam par shes na go | |
khyed cag ci phyir byed mi 'gyur | |

paṇḍitabhā parāmrṣṭā vāg yā gocarabhāṣiṇī |
yuṣmākaṃ nu kathāṃ na syād imaṃ dharmāṃ vijānatām | |

While words investigated and spoken by a wise person
are taught as the domain of practice,
if you [really] know this teaching,
why don't you actualize [lit. do] it?

In the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* VIII.54, we have (Bhattacharya 1960; my translation from Tibetan):

²⁶ Hahn 2007: 206: “Falls es möglich wäre, reich zu werden durch Besitz, / den man weder durch Genießen / noch durch Geben nutzt, / warum werden wir dann nicht durch diesen Reichtum / ebenso Besitzer großen Reichtums?”

²⁷ Hahn points to the Sanskrit original as: *dānopabhogaśūnyena dhanena dhanino yadi* | *bhavāmaḥ kiṃ na tenaiva dhanena dhanino vāyam* | |. The relation between this and the Tibetan, however, is not completely clear to me.

- [21] *bdag ni sha 'di la dga' zhes* | |
reg dang blta bar 'dod na ko | |
sems med pa yi rang bzhin gyi | |
sha ni khyod ko ji ltar 'dod | |

māmsapriyo 'ham asyeti draṣṭuṃ spraṣṭuṃ ca vāñchasi |
acetanaṃ svabhāvena māmsaṃ tvaṃ katham icchasi | |

If, thinking 'I enjoy this flesh',
 you [really] desire to touch it and gaze upon it,
 how is it that you can possibly desire flesh,
 which by its nature is free of consciousness?

We notice in this verse the use of *ko* in *d* as well, which I have understood with the following question word. Here, as in other instances, I think that it is likely that the *na go* after the verb suggests something akin to 'really', emphasizing the pregnancy of the verbal notion. In the present case, this implies that one does not merely desire, but deeply and ardently desires. However, this cannot be everywhere the case. In the *Suvarṇavarṇāvadāna* we find:²⁸

- [22] *bde ba kun dang rnam bral ba* | |
shin tu mi sdug gyur pa 'di | |
dman pa ci tsam mthong na go | |
sems ldan snying rje cis mi skye | |

imam atyantaviraṣaṃ sarvasaukhyavivarjitam |
dīnaṃ yācantam ālokya kṛpotpannā na cetasi | |

If you merely see this poor one,
 deprived of all happiness,
 in extreme suffering,
 being mindful, how can compassion not arise?

Here it is possible that the notion the translator attempted to convey is that mere seeing should be enough to motivate compassion. But that idea is conveyed already by *ci tsam*, I think. The exact force of *na go*, then, remains unclear to me.

Sometimes it seems that indeed it is, however, the conditionality (that is, the force of *na*, rather than the force of the verbal root) that is being emphasized. We have already seen several examples of verb +

²⁸ §89.2; Rajapatirana 1974: 87; Derge Tanjur 4144, 'dul ba, su 209b4–5; my translation from Tibetan.

na go from the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya. In the *Kauśāmbakavastu* of that same collection, we read:²⁹

- [23] *tshig mi mthun la phyogs nyams*³⁰ *yangs* | |
'di gtso min zhes sems byed pa | |
dge 'dun dbye bar 'gyur na go | |
mthu chung cung zad cis mi bsam | |

*prthakchabdās samajavā nedarī śreṣṭham iti manyatām** <| >
*saṅghe hi bhidyamāne hi nābalaṁ kiṁci manyatām** <| | >

If, being lenient in the face of disagreement,
 thinking 'this is not the most import point,'
 there would be [the danger of] a split in the monastic
 community
 how could one not consider the matter a mere trifle?

As illustrated above, sometimes a verse appears in several forms, only one of which might exhibit the pattern in which we are interested. In Kamalāsīla's *Bhāvanākrama* I, we find a citation of the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* II.175:³¹

- [24] *blo yis rnam par gzhigs na go* | |
ngo bo nyid ni gzung du med | |
de phyir de dag brjod med cing | |
ngo bo nyid kyang med par bshad | |

buddhyā vivecyamānānāṁ svabhāvo nāvadhāryate |
tasmād anabhilāpyās te niḥsvabhāvāś ca deśitāḥ | |

If/when [= whenever?] the mind examines [things],

²⁹ Derge Kanjur 1, 'dul ba ga 128b6, Clarke 2014: 282v5 = Dutt 1939–1959: III/2, 182.13–14; my translation is from Tibetan; I thank Berthe Jansen for her remarks. There are a number of versions of this verse, for instance in the *Udānavarga* XIV.5; see Dietz 1998: 10. The Sanskrit is quite hard to understand in the form found in the Vinaya manuscript. At the very least, in the Sanskrit the repetition of *hi* is not good, but a glance at the parallels (cited by Dietz 1998: 10) demonstrates that what must have been a locative in °*amhi* or something similar became °*e hi*; this same observation is offered mutatis mutandis by Bernhard 1965: 208n3. My interpretation of this Tibetan text differs from that of Dietz (1998: 10n8): "Having distinct words but similar intentions—one should not consider this to be good! But when a community is being split, one should not consider anything minor."

³⁰ Both Derge and Peking (1030, 'dul ba, nge 124a4) read *nyams*, but I wonder whether the Sanskrit *sama*° could not suggest *mnyam*.

³¹ Derge Tanjur 3915, *dbu ma, ki* 30b2; Skt. in Nanjio 1923: 116.9–11; my translation from Tibetan.

their intrinsic nature is beyond its grasp;
therefore, we teach that those [things] too,
being inexpressible, lack intrinsic nature.

In the *sūtra* itself, however, we find this verse as follows (Derge Kanjur 106, *mdo sde*, ca 101b3):

[24a] *blo yis rnam par gzhiḡs na yang* | |
gang phyir rang bzhin mi rig ste | |
de phyir de dag brjod du med | |
ngo bo nyid kyang med par bstan | |

When the same verse is quoted elsewhere (*Vṛtti ad Madhyamakā-lanīkāra* 61; Ichigō 1985: 174), moreover, we find further variation:

[24b] *blo yis rnam par gzhiḡs na ni* | |
ngo bo nyid ni gzung du med | |
de phyir de dag brjod med dang | |
ngo bo nyid kyang med par bshad | |

The flexibility we see here exemplifies something of the indeterminacy of the application of the formula *na go*, since obviously not all translators or redactors felt the need to deploy it. We do not know enough about the fine-grained history of the translation and revision of Buddhist works in Tibet to know whether a given translator or revisor may have had before him a version with the *na go* formula which he then, perhaps, emended, or whether on the contrary the opposite process might have taken place, that is, the deployment of *na go* was felt preferable in a verse in which it was originally not found, or why such a change might have been motivated in either direction. However, to be sure, the almost literal parallelism between verses such as those cited in [24] suggest—if they do not indeed prove—that one or the other of these processes must have taken place.

Returning to the question of *ko/go*, another verse is found in the *Catuhśataka*.³²

[25] *gang gi phyogs 'ga' rgyu yin zhiḡ* | |
phyogs 'ga' rgyu ma yin des na | |
de ni sna tshogs 'gyur na go | |³³
sna tshogs rtag par mi rigs so | |

³² verse IX.12; D 3865 *dbu ma, ya* 152a7; ed. and trans. Lang 1986: 90–91.

³³ According to Lang (1986: 90n), CD read *ko* and NP *go*.

An [atom] that has some part which is a cause and some part which is not a cause would be, consequently, a manifold (*citra*) [atom]. It is not possible for a manifold thing to be permanent.

The editor Lang apparently understood *na go* to have no special force here. However, it may be that we should understand it as emphasizing conditionality, and translate something closer to: “If [you would maintain that an atom] that has some part (side) which is a cause and some part (side) which is not a cause would be, consequently, manifold, [we would reply that] it is not reasonable to hold that a manifold thing is permanent.”³⁴

What may be a similar example is found in the *Madhyamakā-lanīkāra*, in which verse 31 (ed. and trans. Ichigo 1989: 200–201) reads:

[26] *ri mo'i gzhi rnams mthong ba'i tshē* | |
de la de bzhin sems mang po | |
ci ste cig ca'i tshul gyis su | |
'byung bar 'gyur bar 'dod na go | |

If (the author) agreed (with the opponent, i.e. the Sautrāntika who holds) that (many of the same kinds of perceptions) occur at the same time, then when you look at a multicolored carpet, (there would) occur at the same time as many perceptions (as there are colors in the colored carpet).

Here according to Ichigō's edition (1989: 200n6), in all editions the Tanjur version of the verse-only text reads *na ko*, while the version in which the verses are embedded in the commentary spells *na go*, demonstrating once again (as do, for instance, the variants cited by Lang for the *Catuhśataka*) the apparent near interchangeability of *ko* and *go*, at least in this sort of environment.

As a final verse example, in Prajñāvarman's commentary to Udbhaṭasiddhasvāmin's *Viśeṣastava* (verse 64A; ed. Schneider 1993: 250), we find him quoting the following:³⁵

³⁴ Vaidya (1923: 136) translated: “Si une partie (d'une chose) devient cause alors que l'autre ne le devient pas, alors les deux parties étant différentes elles resteront à deux places différentes ; comment la permanence pourrait-elle être raisonnable?”

³⁵ Trans. Schneider 1993: 251: “Wenn man (schon) dadurch im Himmel (wiedergeboren) wird, / daß man einen Blutsumpf geschaffen hat, / nachdem man Opferpfosten errichtet und Vieh getötet hat, / wodurch wird (man dann wohl) in der Höller (wiedergeboren)? (So) sprach (er).”

What is evidently the Sanskrit original behind this Tibetan is transmitted in

- [27] *mchod sdong btsugs te phyugs bsad nas* ||
khrag gi 'dam ni byas gyur pa ||
des kyang mtho ris 'gyur na go ||
dmyal bar gang gis 'gyur ba gsungs ||

If even one who cut a sacrificial post, killed cattle,
 and built [a shrine] with the bloody clay
 would go to heaven,
 tell me, then, by what [action] would one go to hell?

To round off our brief survey, it is important to note that the construction does appear also in prose, of which we saw one example at the outset in the *Vimśikāvṛtti*. Other instances, while not common, may be found for example in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*.³⁶ I refer to the following selective examples:³⁷

various forms, of which the closest may be that found in the *Syādvādamañjari* 65 of Malliṣena (cited by Bhattacharya 2011: 216): *yūpaṃ chitvā paśuṃ hatvā kṛtvā rudhirakardamam | yady evaṃ gamyate svarge narake kena gamyate* ||. In some versions of the *Pañcatantra* (III.107, cited by Speyer [1896: §223]) we find: *vṛkṣāṃś chittvā paśuṃ hatvā kṛtvā rudhirakardamam | yady evaṃ gamyate svargaṃ narakam kena gamyate* ||. The verse may be familiar to students since it appears also in Gonda's popular *Grammar* (§XVIII).

³⁶ It of course also appears elsewhere, and my quotations here too are selective (although random!). Just to give a hint, one might notice the *Tattoāvātārvṛtti* of Śṛigupta (D 3892, *dbu ma, ha* 40b5) where we find [28]: *'on te bden na go* || (I believe this corresponds to a portion of verse 5 as numbered by Ejima [1980: 219]). In the *Śokavinodana* (D 4177, *spring yig, nge* 33a4) of unknown authorship we find [29]: *gzhan ni su yang min na go* ||. And in the *Pramāṇasamuccaya* (D 4203, *tshad ma, ce* 113a5–6) we have [30]: *chos yin par yang 'dod na go* ||.

It is worth mentioning here that some instances which may at first glance seem like they involve the construction verb + *na go* probably do not. A single example may suffice. The *Mahāyānapathasādhanaṅgraha* attributed to Atiśa (Sherburne 2000: 458–459, verse 57; Derge Tanjur 3954, *dbu ma, khi* 302b3; my translation) contains the following:

- [31] *shin tu bsdus na go mi 'gyur* || *shin tu spros na gzhung mangs 'gyur* ||
blo dang ldan pas legs dpyad na || *go ba'i ched du bdag gis gdams* ||

If [my presentation] were extremely condensed, there would be no understanding;

if I were prolix, the work would become [too] extensive.

If an intelligent person were to examine it well,

I expound it for the sake of his understanding.

Here the expression is evidently not verb + *na go* but verb + *na + go mi 'gyur*, the latter a compound verbal expression.

³⁷ This is repeated also in the *Abhidharmakośavyākhyā* (Derge Tanjur 4092, *mgon po, gu* 145a7 = Wogihara 1936: 158.8), as are many of the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* examples; I do not note these citations further. As one example from the

- [33] *gal te so so'i skye bo'i skal ba mnyam pa nyid ces bya ba'i rdzas zhig yod na go so so'i skye bo nyid kyis ci zhig bya ste |*

yadi prthagjanasabhāgatā nāma dravyam asti kiṃ punaḥ prthagjanatvena (Derge Tanjur 4090, *mgon po, ku* 74a6–7 = Pradhan 1975: 67.25).

Here it seems to be a matter of a straight rendering of *yadi* with *gal te ... na go*.

- [34] *yang bdag po'i 'bras bu yang med na go ji ltar na 'dus ma byas byed rgyu'i rgyu yin zhe na |*

athāsaty adhipatiphale katham asaṃskṛtaṃ kāraṇahetuḥ (Derge Tanjur 4090, *mgon po, ku* 93b3 = Pradhan 1975: 91.12–13).

In this case, we have a Sanskrit locative absolute *asaty adhipatiphale* rendered with *na go*.

- [35] *gal te bsam gtan gnyis pa la sogs pa la brten nas nges pa la 'jug na go ji ltar te |*

atha dvitīyādīdhyānasamniḥśrayeṇa niyāmāvakrāntau katham (Derge Tanjur 4090, *mgon po, ku* 107a7 = Pradhan 1975: 108.21).

Here again we have a locative construction *niyāmāvakrāntau*.³⁸

- [36] *gal te yang rten cing 'brel par 'byung ba yan lag bcu gnyis kho na yin na de lta na go | ma rig pa'i rgyu ma bstan pa'i phyir 'khor ba thog ma can du yang 'gyur la | rga shi'i 'bras bu ma bstan pa'i phyir mtha' dang ldan par yang 'gyur ba'am |*

yadi khalu dvādaśāṅga eva pratīyasamutpāda evaṃ saty avidyāyā anupadiṣṭahetukatvād ādimān saṃsārah prāpnoti jarāmaraṇasya cānupadiṣṭaphalatvād antavān (Derge Tanjur

Abhidharmakośavyākhyā which does not repeat material from the root text, we might cite (Derge Tanjur 4092, *mgon po, gu* 32b5–6 = Wogihara 1936: 37.7–10) [32]: *gal te 'du shes yongs su gcod pa'i bdag nyid yin na go de dang mtsungs par ldan na mtshan ma la 'dzin pas rnam par shes pa'i tshogs lnga rnam par rtog pa can du 'gyur ro zhe na mi 'gyur te | rnam par shes pa lnga dang mtsungs par ldan pa'i 'du shes ni gsal ba ma yin no ||*, translating *yadi paricchedātmikā saṃjñā tatsaṃprayoge nimittam udgrhṇantī pañcāpi vijñānakāyā vikalpakāḥ syuḥ | na syuḥ | na hi pañcavijñāna-saṃprayoginī saṃjñā paṭvī |*

³⁸ Prof. Schmithausen wonders whether here *go* should not be connected with *ji ltar*.

4090, *mgon po*, ku 126b2–3 = Pradhan 1975: 134.20–22).

Here we have a *yadi* construction, which is rendered however with plain *gal te ... na*, followed by a locative construction in which *evam sati* is rendered with *de lta na go*.

[37] *gal te de lta na go 'di la yang de bzhin du lam la snyoms par
zhugs pas rnam par rig byed ma yin pa med bzhin du gang zhig
thob pa'i phyir langs na yang log pa'i ngag la sogs pa dag la ni
mi 'jug la | yang dag pa'i ngag la sogs pa dag la ni 'jug par
'gyur ba de lta bu'i bsam pa dang lus thob par 'gyur te |*

*yady evam ihāpy evaṃ kiṃ na grhyate mārgasamāpanno vināpy
aviññāptyā tadrūpam āśayaṃ ca āśrayaṃ ca pratilabhate yasyāḥ
pratilambhād vyutthito 'pi na punar mithyāvāgādiṣu pravartate
samyagvāgādiṣu ca pravartate* (Derge Tanjur 4090, *mgon po*,
ku 171b3–4 = Pradhan 1975: 198.22–23).

In this example we have an apparent combination of these constructions, *yadi evam* being rendered with *gal te de lta na go*.

In some of the examples cited in this short survey, *na go* indicates an objection, but the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*, for instance, as is typical for such polemical works, is full of objections, and only a very few examples are marked with the verb + *na go* construction. In contrast, it is worth noting that, to my knowledge, the *prasaṅgas* which pepper Madhyamaka texts—in which an opponent is challenged “if you believe ~, then [some unacceptable conclusion must follow]”—are never articulated with the verb + *na go* construction. This absence suggests that verb + *na go* was not—at least for most Tibetan translators or translation teams—the construction of choice for a strong conditional in which the speaker does not accept the condition, despite the way in which we might choose to understand a few of our examples. The same might be said, *mutatis mutandis*, of the usage of verb + *ko* found in Buddhapālita's work. In other words, a broader survey of the overall use of—and failure to make use of—verb + *na go*, and more generally speaking the use of *ko/go* broadly, does not allow us to draw general conclusions about the nuance intended to be conveyed, despite what isolated examples might—taken on their own—seem to suggest. Additionally, in this context it may not be otiose to note that I have searched for, but failed to find, any pattern of usage among Tibetan translators to whom particular translations are attributed (and which might then point to regional or dialectal usages). Especially when we recall the examples of closely parallel verses which, alongside the verb + *na go* construction, do not

deploy it, the question of why such constructions may appear remains without a clear answer.

A final rapid note may be added referring to the pair of grammatical morphemes remarked upon by Hahn (1994: 292–293) as ‘something really new,’ namely *ke/ge*. He was able to cite just two examples from the *Jātakamālā* of Āryaśūra and one from Harṣadeva’s *Nāgānanda*, in all three cases directly following a verb. According to Hahn (1994: 293), “the three examples clearly show that *ke/ge* is used to put emphasis on a question,” but he does not offer any comparative speculations with *ko/go*. Further investigation of possible relations between these pairs of morphemes—which at least *prima facie* appear rather similar—remains a task for the future.³⁹

To sum up, in the central usage we have examined here, *go* (or *ko*) is significantly found together with *na* used, with or without *gal te*, in the sense of ‘if’, the force of the *go* on the whole remaining, however, not easy—and indeed, often impossible—to determine. Context sometimes suggests that the translators might have wished to emphasize the strong provisional nature of a given situation, but this is very difficult to tease out, and there are many examples where this can hardly be the case. As is so very often the case, we must expect only that further research may yield further clues to help unravel the remaining obscurities.

‘Additional Note’ by Charles Ramble.

As far as I know, *ko/go* does not exist in Central Tibetan, but it does feature in the South Mustang Tibetan (SMT) dialect. In some constructions it is more like a definite article than anything else:

[38] *yak-go shi-a-nak* | *ta-go ma-shi-ak*; the yak died, [but] the horse didn’t die.

With possessive pronouns, however, the *go* would be closer to literary or Central Tibetan *ni*, or perhaps *de ni*:

[39] *khö yak-go shi-a-nak* | *ngi yak-go ma-shi-ak*: **his** yak died, [but]

³⁹ In a perhaps related fashion, Peter Verhagen shares with me the following speculation: “in some form or manner this *na go* particle cluster is related to *kho na*. I am not saying it is a simple inversion without change of semantics and function. It seems likely (to me anyway; Hahn has argued the same) that the *-ko/-go* particle historically can be traced to the pronoun *kho* (‘he/she/it’), and this pronoun is obviously also the basis for the composite particle / adverb (?) *kho na*, ‘only, merely’.”

my yak didn't die.

As for verb + *na go*, is it possible that there is a difference in affect between this and verb + *na ni*? In Tibetan, the protasis of conditional clauses usually ends with *na*. SMT, however, frequently adds another particle after the *na*: *ka* or *tak*, which indicate respectively whether the apodosis – the outcome if the condition is fulfilled – would be a good or a bad thing.

[40] verb + *na ka* = the thing that would happen is good

[41] verb + *na tak* = the thing that would happen is bad

It seems to me that in all the examples of verb + *na go* cited above, the apodosis *either* contains a negative of some sort, *or*, if it does not, something bad would have happened (e.g., one would have gone to hell). In several examples the *na go* is followed by a rhetorical question, but in these cases I get the impression that expected answer to the question is pessimistic or disapproving.

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