Copulas in Brokpa

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ABSTRACT

Like many Tibetic languages, Brokpa boasts an intricate system of copulas. Six present tense copulas, one past tense copula, and two modal copulas are identified, including a distinction between sets of equative and existential copulas and a three-way epistemic contrast akin to Lhasa Tibetan, and more elaborated than that found in Brokpa's Bhutanese relatives Dzongkha or Chocha-ngachakha. In particular, Brokpa features an egophoric category next to a contrast between, in DeLancey (2018)'s terms, EVIDENTIAL and non-evidential FACTUAL which is reminiscent of the opposition between acquired and assimilated knowledge proposed for Dzongkha by van Driem (1998). The discussion of the sophisticated epistemic semantics of Brokpa copulas is complemented by some suggestions as to its diachronic origins.

KEYWORDS

Brokpa, Tibetic languages, copulas, epistemicity, egophoricity

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1 Introduction

Tibetic languages are known for their copula systems and Brokpa is no exception.[1] There are two sets of copulas, equative and existential, both manifesting a three-way epistemic contrast in the basic non-past forms. In addition, one finds a past tense copula as well as two modal copulas, adding up to nine distinct copulas, not including their negative counterparts.

Descriptions of copulas are available for three other Southern Tibetic languages: Dzongkha (van Driem 1998, 2007; Tshering and van Driem 2019; Hyslop and Tshering 2017), Denjongke (Yliniemi 2017, 2019), and Chocha-ngachakha (Tournadre and Rigzin 2015), which will be consulted where appropriate.

Section 2 introduces the copulas encountered and the syntax of copula clauses. Section 3 presents the basic non-past copulas, focusing on epistemic semantics. Section 4 and Section 5 present the past tense and modal copulas, respectively. Section 6 concludes with some comparative and diachronic notes.

2 Copulas and copula clauses

Elicitation brought to light six basic non-past copulas, which do not fundamentally mark tense and have a default present tense, or non-past reading: three equative and three existential, as well as their negative counterparts.[2] Regarding epistemicity, Brokpa makes a three-way contrast — like Standard Tibetan, but unlike its Bhutanese companions Dzongkha and Chocha-ngachakha, which basically show a binary contrast here (see Tshering and van Driem 2019; Tournadre and

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[1] For general information about the Brokpa language and the Brokpa Documentation and Description Project as well as for the list of abbreviations and the transliteration of Written Tibetan used in this issue, see Gerber & Grollmann (this issue).
[2] The following data come largely from elicitation with a single speaker, which in practice means that their semantic interpretation here strongly reflects that speaker's own intuition. Examples from oral narrative texts by the same speaker are used where available, and indicated by their source. Transcriptions of the texts in their entirety can be consulted in the appendix of this special issue (Leki et al., this issue).

Rigzin 2015; see Tournadre 2017 for a recent overview of epistemicity in Tibetic languages).[3] Specifically, Brokpa features an egophoric copula, understood here as the expression of epistemic authority; and two allophoric copulas distinguishing older, ingrained knowledge from more recently acquired knowledge. The latter are labelled ASSIMILATED and ACQUIRED respectively, following the description in van Driem (1998) of a similar contrast found in Dzongkha. The copula forms are shown below (Table 1).

	Egophoric	**Assimilated**	**Acquired**
Equative	*jin*	*na*	*jinda*
Existential	*jo*	*jena*	*tuk*

Table 1. Non-past affirmative copulas

In the negative forms, the distinction between assimilated and acquired is neutralized in equative copulas, resulting in a total of five negative copulas (Table 2).

	Egophoric	**Assimilated**	**Acquired**
Equative	*man*	*manda*	
Existential	*me*	*mena*	*min*

Table 2. Non-past negative copulas

Table 3 gives the glossing used for non-past copulas in the present study.

	Affirmative	**Negative**
Equative	*jin* COP.EQ.EGO	*man* COP.EQ.NEG.EGO
	na COP.EQ.ASM	*manda* COP.EQ.NEG.ALLO
	jinda COP.EQ.ACQ	
Existential	*jo* COP.EX.EGO	*me* COP.EX.NEG.EGO
	jena COP.EX.ASM	*mena* COP.EX.NEG.ASM
	tuk COP.EX.ACQ	*min* COP.EX.NEG.ACQ

Table 3. Glossing of non-past copulas

As for copula clauses, there are four formally distinct constructions corresponding to four semantic relations.[4] Semantically, equative copulas are used for expressing identity, while existential copulas express attribution, possession, and location. Formally, the only difference between identity and attribution lies with the copula verb itself, copula subject and copula complement remain both unmarked. By contrast, possessive and locative clauses differ from attributive clauses by marking subject and complement respectively with the dative enclitic =*la*. The constituent order is typically subject — complement — verb. Table 4 gives a schematic summary.

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[3] Epistemicity is used here as a cover term for epistemic semantic categories like evidentiality and egophoricity, as well as epistemic modality, in order to remain agnostic about their theoretical status vis-à-vis each other.
[4] The terminology follows Dixon (2010: 159).

	Semantic relation	Copula subject (CS)	Copula complement (CC)	Copula
Equative	Identity	CS	CC	COP.EQ
Existential	Attribution	CS	CC	COP.EX
	Possession	CS=DAT	CC	COP.EX
	Location	CS	CC=DAT	COP.EX

Table 4. Schema of the syntax and semantics of copula clauses

Table 5 illustrates this structure with some concrete examples.

Translation	Semantic relation	Copula subject	Copula complement	Copula
'I am a monk.'	Identity	*ŋa*	*ɟeloŋ*	*jin*
'I am strong.'	Attribution	*ŋa*	*ɕukɕen*	*jo*
'I have money.'	Possession	*ŋa=la*	*rup*	*jo*
'I am in Merak.'	Location	*ŋa*	*merak=la*	*jo*

Table 5. Schematic examples of copula clauses

This is the typical constituent order found in elicitation. In texts, the dative-marked complement of locative clauses often occurs before the subject, in clause-initial position. Additionally, there is a fourth type of clause featuring existential copulas, an existential clause lacking a copula complement. Semantically, existential clauses assert the existence of a referent (as opposed to its location), and they differ formally from locative clauses only by the elision of the complement.

Beside these non-past copulas, there is also a single — existential — past tense copula. An equivalent past equative copula is lacking (Table 6).

	Affirmative	Negative
Equative	—	—
Existential	*tuŋ* COP.EX.PST	*minuŋ* COP.EX.NEG.PST

Table 6. Past tense copulas

Finally, there are two modal copulas, one equative, one existential, which express epistemic modality, i.e. 'may/might be' (Table 7). They are formed through modification of the basic non-past copulas, see Section 6 for a brief discussion.

	Affirmative	Negative
Equative	*jinuŋ* COP.EQ.EPI	*manuŋ* COP.EQ.NEG.EPI
Existential	*jedoŋ* COP.EX.EPI	*medoŋ* COP.EX.NEG.EPI

Table 7. Modal copulas

3 Non-past copulas

The typical distribution of the three epistemically contrastive non-past copulas is such that one finds a characteristic egophoric pattern, also known as the rule of anticipation (Tournadre and LaPolla 2014: 245): the same copula in first person subject declaratives and second person subject interrogatives, and the two allophoric copulas elsewhere (Table 8). Both allophoric copulas with first person subjects and egophoric copulas with second or third person subjects are attested as well, in each case leading to a distinctive shift in meaning and usage.

Person	Declarative	Interrogative
1	EGO	ASM / ACQ
2	ASM / ACQ	EGO
3	ASM / ACQ	ASM / ACQ

Table 8. Typical distribution of epistemicity by person and mood

As already mentioned, EGOPHORIC is defined here as expressing so-called epistemic authority, i.e. the privileged, personal knowledge one has about oneself (cf. Widmer and Zemp 2017: 36, Widmer and Zúñiga 2017: 420).[5] The contrast between the two allophoric copulas was generally paraphrased by the speaker along the lines of 'I already knew' and 'I found out (recently)'. This is basically the same as the contrast between old, already assimilated and new, recently acquired knowledge that is described for Dzongkha in Tshering and van Driem (2019, chapter 4), and hence their terminology of ASSIMILATED versus ACQUIRED has been adopted. This analysis is also congruent with the interpretation of the Lhasa Tibetan categories by DeLancey (2018), who speaks of an opposition between assumed (non-evidential FACTUAL) and contingent (EVIDENTIAL) knowledge (see Section 6 for more discussion).

The following pages will now turn to a discussion first of the equative (Section 3.1), then the existential copulas (Section 3.2).

3.1 Equative **jin**, **na**, **jinda**

Equative copulas equate subject and complement with each other, expressing their identity. The affirmative equative copulas *jin*, *na*, and *jinda* are exemplified in their characteristic distribution in (1).

(1)   Affirmative equative copulas
      a.   *ŋa ɟeloŋ jin*
           ŋa   ɟeloŋ   **jin**
           1SG   monk   COP.EQ.EGO
           'I am a monk.'

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[5] Following Hargreaves (1991) on epistemic authority: 'Expanding Hargreaves' original conception, we define egophoricity as a grammatical category that indicates whether one has privileged or non-privileged access to the knowledge on which a proposition is based. [...] Egophoric markers thus express that one has a privileged epistemic perspective on an event and possesses epistemic authority to assert the relevant facts, whereas allophoric markers indicate that this is not the case.' (Widmer and Zemp 2017: 36). The term egophoric itself was first coined by Hagège (1974) before being taken up in a different sense in Tibetan linguistics by Tournadre (1991, 2008).

b.   *cʰo ɟeloŋ na / jinda*
cʰo   ɟeloŋ   **na** / **jinda**
2SG   monk   COP.EQ.ASM / COP.EQ.ACQ
'You are a monk.' (I already knew) / (I found out)

c.   *kʰo ɟeloŋ na / jinda*
kʰo   ɟeloŋ   **na** / **jinda**
3SG.M monk   COP.EQ.ASM / COP.EQ.ACQ
'He is a monk.' (I already knew) / (I found out)

Some examples from texts are given below. In (2a) the speaker explains what a photo introduced earlier depicts, using the assimilated equative copula *na*. In (2b), he states that he and his cousin are peers, also using *na*.

(2)   a.   *ɲe par tónedi meragi jâ tɕʰam ɟaginba na*
ɲe   par   tón-pe=di   merak=gi   jâ
1SG.AGT   photo take.out-NMLZ.PST=DEF   Merak=GEN yak
         tɕʰam   ɟap=gin=ba   **na**
         mask.dance   do=NMLZ.AGT=PL   COP.EQ.ASM
'On the photo I showed are the yak dancers of Merak.' [YD]

b.   *di ɲe ɕaŋsin dã ŋa nenda na*
di   ɲe   ɕaŋsin   daŋ   ŋa   nenda
TOP   1SG.GEN   male.cross.cousin   and   1SG   peer
         na
         COP.EQ.ASM
'My cousin and I are of the same age.' [SI]

The contrast between assimilated *na* and acquired *jinda* can be illustrated with the following examples. Focusing on *jinda*, (3b) might be uttered while looking at a person approaching from some distance, upon realizing that it is a child. In a similar vein, (3d) can be used when catching someone red-handed.

(3)   Assimilated versus acquired equative copulas
a.   *kʰo/mo pʰrugu na*
kʰo/mo   pʰrugu   **na**
3SG.M/F   child   COP.EQ.ASM
'S/he is a child.' (I already knew)

b.   *kʰo/mo pʰrugu jinda*
kʰo/mo   pʰrugu   **jinda**
3SG.M/F   child   COP.EQ.ACQ
'S/he is a child.' (I found out)

  c. *cʰo kunma na*
    cʰo kunma   **na**
    2SG thief   COP.EQ.ASM
    'You are a thief.' (I already knew)

  d. *cʰo kunma jinda*
    cʰo kunma   **jinda**
    2sg thief   COP.EQ.ACQ
    'You are a thief.' (I found out)

Additionally, it is also possible to use *jinda* to emphasize a proposition. This might be done after an earlier statement is questioned, so in (4c) the initial assertion is confirmed by restating it with *jinda*, stressing that it really is the case.

(4) a. *kʰo ɟeloŋ na*
    kʰo ɟeloŋ **na**
    3SG.M monk COP.EQ.ASM
    'He is a monk.'

  b. *kʰo ɟeloŋ na e*
    kʰo ɟeloŋ **na**   e
    3SG.M monk COP.EQ.ASM Q
    'He is a monk?'

  c. *kʰo ɟeloŋ jinda*
    kʰo ɟeloŋ **jinda**
    3SG.M monk COP.EQ.ACQ
    'Yes, he really is a monk.'

The allophoric copula *jinda* may also occur with a first person subject.[6] Its meaning is essentially the same as with second or third person subjects. Here it expresses recently gained insight into one's own state, such as if one suddenly finds oneself a patient (5b). It should be noted though, that this is something one would rather think for oneself than say out aloud, or perhaps say in conversation after some pressing to confirm or emphasize the point made ('I really am a patient').

(5) Egophoric versus allophoric with first person
  a. *ŋa natpa jin*
    ŋa natpa   **jin**
    1SG patient COP.EQ.EGO
    'I am a patient.'

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[6] It is not clear if assimilated *na* might also be used here, and if its function would be the same or different.

    b.   *ŋa natpa jinda*
          ŋa   natpa   **jinda**
          1SG   patient   COP.EQ.ACQ
          'I am a patient.' (I found out)

The converse is also attested: an egophoric copula can be used with a non-first person subject. Example (6) is an illustration of such a case, featuring an instance of an embedded copula clause. An older boy has made two younger boys throw strawberries at him, catching them with his mouth. At one point, the boys throw sheep's droppings instead. The narrator uses egophoric copulas to express the epistemic authority lying with the duped boy when he tastes the difference. This shows that egophoric forms can be used to talk about the internal states of third persons as well, though the wider topic of marking endopathic sensation and internal states in Brokpa is at this point still one for future research.

    (6)   *di kʰo luki tuxɸin man ɕen*
          di   kʰo   luk=gi   tukpa   **jin**   **man**
          TOP   3SG.M sheep=GEN excrement COP.EQ.EGO COP.EQ.NEG.EGO
                          ɕe-ne
                          know-CVB2
          'He knows whether it is or is not sheep's droppings…' [SI]

The example also illustrates the strategy of simply following an affirmative copula with its negative counterpart, and no further overt marking, to render a disjunctive copula clause ('whether it is or is not').

Negative equative copulas show no opposition between assimilated and acquired forms. The single contrast is between egophoric *man* and allophoric *manda*.

    (7)   Negative equative copulas
        a.   *ŋa ɟeloŋ man*
             ŋa   ɟeloŋ   **man**
             1SG   monk   COP.EQ.NEG.EGO
             'I am not a monk.'

        b.   *cʰo ɟeloŋ manda*
             cʰo   ɟeloŋ   **manda**
             2SG   monk   COP.EQ.NEG.ALLO
             'You are not a monk.'

        c.   *kʰo ɟeloŋ manda*
             kʰo   ɟeloŋ   **manda**
             3SG.M monk COP.EQ.NEG.ALLO
             'He is not a monk.'

In interrogative mood, the egophoric patterning comes to the fore. Second person subjects require egophoric *jin*, as it is addressees who holds epistemic authority in questions about themselves,

while first and third person subjects occur with allophoric *na* or *jinda*. This is also known as the rule of anticipation, since the speaker in using an egophoric form anticipates the forthcoming answer of the addressee, which is expected to use the same egophoric form (Tournadre and LaPolla 2014: 245). To form a question, one simply adds the question particle *e* at the end of the clause after the copula verb; rising intonation is not necessarily found. With a second person subject, the copula is usually elided, i.e. one simply asks *cʰo ɟeloŋ e* — presumably because questions are most common and thus expected to be with second person.

(8)   Interrogative clauses with affirmative equative copulas
   a.   *ŋa ɟeloŋ na / jinda e*
      ŋa   ɟeloŋ   **na** / **jinda**   e
      1SG   monk   COP.EQ.ASM / COP.EQ.ACQ   Q
      'Am I a monk?'

   b.   *cʰo ɟeloŋ jin e*
      cʰo   ɟeloŋ   **jin**   e
      2SG   monk   COP.EQ.EGO   Q
      'Are you a monk?'

   c.   *kʰo ɟeloŋ na / jinda e*
      kʰo   ɟeloŋ   **na** / **jinda**   e
      3SG.M monk   COP.EQ.ASM / COP.EQ.ACQ   Q
      'Is he a monk?'

Questions about oneself are generally understood to be directed to a second person addressee, and not rhetorically to oneself, just as with second and third person subjects (i.e. '(Do you think) I am a monk?'), essentially targeting the opinion of the addressee about oneself. In the example above, this could for example refer to enquiring about one's official status as a monk ('Am I (officially) a monk?'). There seems to be no difference between using *na* or *jinda* in questions, compared to existential copulas (see the examples below in (23)).

Example (9) illustrates the strategy of simply repeating the egophoric copula to answer a question in the affirmative, or using the negative counterpart instead to negate it, which shows the rule of anticipation in action (i.e. the characteristic egophoric pattern).

(9)   Question and answer with equative copulas
   a.   *cʰo ɟeloŋ jin e*
      cʰo   ɟeloŋ   **jin**   e
      2SG   monk   COP.EQ.EGO   Q
      'Are you a monk?'

   b.   *jin*
      jin
      COP.EQ.EGO
      'Yes. / I am.'

    c.   *man*
           man
           COP.EQ.NEG.EGO
           'No. / I am not.'

In negative interrogative clauses, the distribution of egophoric *man* and allophoric *manda* is the same as in the affirmative.

(10)   Interrogative clauses with negative equative copulas
        a.   *ŋa ɟeloŋ manda e*

ŋa	ɟeloŋ	**manda**		e
1SG	monk	COP.EQ.NEG.ALLO		Q

           'Am I not a monk?'

        b.   *cʰo ɟeloŋ man e*

cʰo	ɟeloŋ	**man**		e
2SG	monk	COP.EQ.NEG.EGO		Q

           'Are you not a monk?'

        c.   *kʰo ɟeloŋ manda e*

kʰo	ɟeloŋ	**manda**		e
3SG.M	monk	COP.EQ.NEG.ALLO		Q

           'Is he not a monk?'

3.2   *Existential* jo, jena, tuk

The difference between equative and existential copulas is best appreciated when comparing equative identity with existential attribution. In semantic terms, the difference is whether the complement is attributed to the subject or identified with it. For example, with an attribute like *ɟakpa* 'fat', it is possible to use an equative copula as well. The reading would then be that 'fat' is that person's nickname.

(11)   Existential versus equative copulas
        a.   *kʰo ɟakpa tuk*

kʰo	ɟakpa	**tuk**
3SG.M	fat	COP.EX.ACQ

           'He is fat.'

        b.   *kʰo ɟakpa jinda*

kʰo	ɟakpa	**jinda**
3SG.M	fat	COP.EQ.ACQ

           'He is *Fat*.' (i.e. 'Fat' is his nickname)

There are other cases where one might use an equative copula instead of the expected existential copula. The locative clause in (12) allows equative *na* instead of existential *jena* because it expresses the inherent, fixed location of a place.

(12) *merak ɖukla na*
     merak   ɖuk=la   **na**
     Merak   Bhutan=DAT   COP.EQ.ASM
     'Merak is in Bhutan.'

Existential copula clauses can be divided into attributive, possessive, and locative clauses. Without any further marking on the subject, existential copulas express attribution. Possession is expressed by marking the copula subject with the dative enclitic *=la*, while location is marked by attaching *=la* to the copula complement (or alternatively, using a locative particle like *ola* 'here' as complement). The affirmative existential copulas *jo*, *jena*, and *tuk* are exemplified in their characteristic distribution via attributive (13a), possessive (13b), and locative clauses (13c).

(13)   Affirmative existential copulas
     a.   *ŋa ɕukɕen jo*
          ŋa   ɕukɕen   **jo**
          1SG   strong   COP.EX.EGO
          'I am strong.'

     b.   *cʰola rup jena / tuk*
          cʰo=la   rup   **jena / tuk**
          2SG=DAT   money   COP.EX.ASM / COP.EX.ACQ
          'You have money.' (I already knew) / (I found out)

     c.   *kʰo/mo merakla jena / tuk*
          kʰo/mo   merak=la   **jena / tuk**
          3SG.M/F   Merak=DAT   COP.EX.ASM / COP.EX.ACQ
          'S/he is in Merak.' (I already knew) / (I found out)

Additionally, existential clauses lacking a copula complement assert the existence of a referent (14a), which is the only aspect that differentiates them formally from a locative clause (14c). Semantically, marking the subject with an indefinite article may also induce an existential reading to what is formally a locative clause featuring a copula complement (14b).

(14)   a.   *kí tuk*
          kí   **tuk**
          dog   COP.EX.ACQ
          'There is a dog.'

     b.   *kíɕik cʰim naŋla tuk*
          kí=ɕik   cʰim   naŋ=la   **tuk**
          dog=INDF   house inside=DAT   COP.EX.ACQ
          'A dog is in the house. / There is a dog in the house.'

    c.   *kí cʰim naŋla tuk*
        kí   cʰim   naŋ=la   **tuk**
        dog   house inside=DAT   COP.EX.ACQ
        'The dog is in the house.'

The opposition between assimilated *jena* and acquired *tuk* is the same as between the equative copulas *na* and *jinda*.[7] In (15) the speaker uses acquired *tuk* in describing figures he just recognized in a photograph.

(15)   *tɕʰampa ɲî tuk*
        tɕʰampa   ɲî   **tuk**
        mask.dancer two   COP.EX.ACQ
        'There are two mask dancers.' [YD]

Allophoric *tuk* may occur with first person subjects, expressing a newfound insight into one's own state.[8] For example, one might find oneself able to lift a heavy package (16b), or discover some money in one's pockets (16d); though this is again something one might say only in talking to oneself, not in conversation.

(16)   Egophoric versus allophoric with first person
    a.   *ŋa ɕukɕen jo*
        ŋa   ɕukɕen   **jo**
        1SG   strong   COP.EX.EGO
        'I am strong.'

    b.   *ŋa ɕukɕen tuk*
        ŋa   ɕukɕen   **tuk**
        1SG   strong   COP.EX.ACQ
        'I am strong.' (I found out)

    c.   *ŋala rup jo*
        ŋa=la   rup   **jo**
        1SG=DAT   money   COP.EX.EGO
        'I have money.'

    d.   *ŋala rup tuk*
        ŋa=la   rup   **tuk**
        1SG=DAT   money   COP.EX.ACQ
        'I have money.' (I found out)

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[7] Though unlike the equivalent equative copula *jinda*, acquired *tuk* does not have an additional function of confirming a proposition as seen in example (4). Instead, assimilated *jena* seems to have a kind of past reading in some contexts, though this connection is not clear yet.

[8] As with the equivalent equative copula *na*, it is not clear if assimilated *jena* could be used here as well, or what its function might be in this context.

The converse is attested as well, namely egophoric copulas with non-first person subjects. This may be the case when talking about people who one is personally close with, such as one's relatives. Essentially, one is claiming epistemic authority over information such as their whereabouts (17a) or attributes (17b) due to their close association with oneself. Which subjects or other contexts allow the use of egophoric forms with non-first persons is a question of egophoric scope (see Garrett 2001: 178, Tournadre 2008: 296), and further research is needed to determine the scope of egophoric forms in Brokpa in more depth, including for equative copulas as well.

(17) Egophoric versus allophoric with third person
    a.   *ɲegi puntsen ɖukla jo*

ɲe=gi	puntsen	ɖuk=la	**jo**
1SG.GEN=GEN	relative	Bhutan=DAT	COP.EX.EGO

        'My family is in Bhutan.'

    b.   *ɲegi oː bombo jo*

ɲe=gi		oː	bombo	**jo**
1SG.GEN=GEN		son	big	COP.EX.EGO

        'My son is big.'

While the dative-marked complement of locative clauses always occurs between the clause-initial subject and the clause-final verb in elicitation, it tends to switch position with the subject in texts. Example (18a) is a possessive clause, with the dative-marked subject in clause-initial position, as expected. In the locative clauses (18b-d) however, the dative-marked complement ('in front of the king's palace', 'between Merak and Sakteng', 'at the base of that mountain') comes first as well, followed by the subject ('mountain', 'mountain pass', 'grassy plain'). Perhaps this is due to the complement being significantly longer than the subject.[9]

(18)   a.   *kʰɔŋla ɹeboɕ jenase*

kʰoŋ=la	ɹebo=ɕik	**jena**=se
3PL=DAT	king=INDF	COP.EX.ASM=REP

        'They had a king.' [BO]

    b.   *ɹebodigi pʰoʈaŋgi ŋotɕol ta riɕik jenas*

ɹebo=di=gi	pʰoʈaŋ=gi	ŋontɕo=la	ta
king=DEF=GEN	palace=GEN	front=DAT	now

ri=ɕik	**jena**=se
mountain=INDF	COP.EX.ASM=REP

        'In front of the king's palace was a mountain.' [BO]

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[9] Alternatively, these examples may be interpreted as existential clauses with a preposed complement.

c. *tɕisin ta sâteaŋ da meragi pal laɕik jenas*

tɕi-sin	ta	sâteaŋ	daŋ	merak=gi	par=la
go.PST-CVB1	now	Sakteng	and	Merak=GEN	middle=DAT

la=ɕik   **jena**=se
mountain.pass=INDF   COP.EX.ASM=REP
'Going so, there was a mountain pass between Sakteng and Merak.' [BO]

d. *one o rigi tsalraŋ páŋɕ jena*

one	oti	ri=gi	tsa=la=raŋ
and.then	DEM.PROX	mountain=GEN	under=DAT=REFL

páŋ=ɕik   **jena**
grassy.plain=INDF   COP.EX.ASM
'Right at the base of that mountain is a grassy plain.' [BO]

The three negative copulas, showing the same distribution as their affirmative counterparts, are illustrated with examples of attributive (19a), possessive (19b), and locative clauses (19c).

(19) Negative existential copulas

a. *ŋa ɕukɕen me*

ŋa	ɕukɕen	**me**
1SG	strong	COP.EX.NEG.EGO

'I am not strong.'

b. *cʰola rup mena / min*

cʰo=la	rup	**mena** / **min**
2SG=DAT	money	COP.EX.NEG.ASM / COP.EX.NEG.ACQ

'You do not have money.' (I already knew) / (I found out)

c. *kʰo/mo merakla mena / min*

kʰo/mo	merak=la	**mena** / **min**
3SG.M/F	Merak=DAT	COP.EX.NEG.ASM / COP.EX.NEG.ACQ

'S/he is not in Merak.' (I already knew) / (I found out)

Some examples from texts illustrate egophoric (20a) and assimilated (20b) negative equative copulas.

(20) a. *ŋala ap me*

ŋa=la	apa	**me**
1SG=DAT	father	COP.EX.NEG.EGO

'I don't have a father.' [MF]

b. *netok eɕen mena*

netok	eɕen	**mena**
network	good	COP.EX.NEG.ASM

'The network is not good.' [NC]

Interrogative mood reveals the egophoric patterning, with second person subjects requiring egophoric *jo*, and first and third person requiring allophoric *jena* or *tuk*. The same remarks apply as for the equative copulas shown above in (8).

(21)   Interrogative clauses with affirmative existential copulas
    a.   *ŋa ɕukɕen jena / tuk e*

ŋa	ɕukɕen	**jena** / **tuk**		e
1SG	strong	COP.EX.ASM / COP.EX.ACQ		Q

           'Am I strong?'

    b.   *cʰola rup jo e*

cʰo=la	rup	**jo**	e
2SG=DAT	money	COP.EX.EGO	Q

           'Do you have money?'

    c.   *kʰo/mo merakla jena / tuk e*

kʰo/mo	merak=la	**jena** / **tuk**		e
3SG.M/F	Merak=DAT	COP.EX.ASM / COP.EX.ACQ		Q

           'Is s/he in Merak?'

Example (22) once more illustrates the strategy of repeating the egophoric copula to answer a question in the affirmative, or using the negative counterpart instead to negate it, showing the rule of anticipation in action again.

(22)   Question and answer with existential copulas
    a.   *cʰo ɕukɕen jo e*

cʰo	ɕukɕen	**jo**	e
2SG	strong	COP.EX.EGO	Q

           'Are you strong?'

    b.   *jo*

jo
COP.EX.EGO
'Yes. / I am.'

    c.   *me*

me
COP.EX.NEG.EGO
'No. / I am not.'

With existential copulas, there is a slight difference between the two allophoric copulas in questions. Assimilated *jena* expresses a stronger assumption that the addressee knows the answer than acquired *tuk*. Of course, questions imply such an assumption by design, but the use of *jena* means speakers expect addressees to know specifically because the speaker already knows that the addressee

is familiar with the topic in question (e.g. because the addressee is close to the person the speaker is asking about), while the use of *tuk* implies no such assumption.[10]

(23)   Assimilated versus acquired in interrogative clauses

a.   *kʰo/mo bombo jena e*
       kʰo/mo   bombo   **jena**   e
       3SG.M/F   big   COP.EX.ASM   Q
       'Is s/he big?' (I assume you know this)

b.   *kʰo/mo bombo tuk e*
       kʰo/mo   bombo   **tuk**   e
       3SG.M/F   big   COP.EX.ACQ   Q
       'Is s/he big?' (you might know this)

c.   *kʰo/mo merakla jena e*
       kʰo/mo   merak=la   **jena**   e
       3SG.M/F   Merak=DAT   COP.EX.ASM   Q
       'Is s/he in Merak?' (I assume you know this)

d.   *kʰo/mo merakla tuk e*
       kʰo/mo   merak=la   **tuk**   e
       3SG.M/F   Merak=DAT   COP.EX.ACQ   Q
       'Is s/he in Merak?' (you might know this)

Negative existential copulas likewise pattern like their affirmative counterparts in questions.

(24)   Interrogative clauses with negative existential copulas

a.   *ŋa ɕukɕen mena / min e*
       ŋa   ɕukɕen   **mena** / **min**   e
       1SG   strong   COP.EX.NEG.ASM / COP.EX.NEG.ACQ   Q
       'Am I not strong?'

b.   *cʰola rup me e*
       cʰo=la   rup   **me**   e
       2SG=DAT   money   COP.EX.NEG.EGO   Q
       'Do you not have money?'

c.   *kʰo/mo merakla mena / min e*
       kʰo/mo   merak=la   **mena** / **min**   e
       3SG.M/F   Merak=DAT   COP.EX.NEG.ASM / COP.EX.NEG.ACQ   Q
       'Is s/he not in Merak?'

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[10] In questions with a first person subject, assimilated *jena* seems to be more natural than *tuk*, presumably because they target the opinion of the addressee about the speaker ('Am I big (in your opinion)?'), which can be considered assimilated knowledge, and not something they just found out.

4 Past tense copulas

There is a single dedicated past tense copula, the existential allophoric *tuŋ*. In egophoric contexts, attributive, possessive, and locative clauses do not contain a copula but are formed with the existential verbs *je* 'exist' and *me* 'not exist'. There are no past equative copulas, though it is possible to get a past tense reading by using the fundamentally tenseless non-past copulas with temporal particles like *unla* 'previously'.

4.1 Existential **tuŋ**

The distribution of the past existential copula *tuŋ* and its negative counterpart *minuŋ* is shown below through attributive (25a), possessive (25b), and locative clauses (25c). There is no egophoric past copula; instead, the inflecting main verbs *je* 'exist' and *me* 'not exist' are used.

(25) Past existential copula clauses
  a. *ŋa ɕukɕen jeti / meti*
      ŋa   ɕukɕen   je-pe / me-pe
      1SG   strong   exist-NMLZ.PST / not.exist-NMLZ.PST
      'I was (not) strong.'

  b. *cʰola rup tuŋ / minuŋ*
      cʰo=la   rup   **tuŋ** / **minuŋ**
      2SG=DAT   money   COP.EX.PST / COP.EX.NEG.PST
      'You did (not) have money.'

  c. *kʰo/mo ola tuŋ / minuŋ*
      kʰo/mo   ola   **tuŋ** / **minuŋ**
      3SG.M/F   here   COP.EX.PST / COP.EX.NEG.PST
      'S/he was (not) here.'

As with non-past copulas, it is possible to use an allophoric form — in this case, *tuŋ* — with a first person copula subject, with an equivalent difference in meaning.

(26) Past egophoric versus allophoric with first person
  a. *ŋala rup jeti*
      ŋa=la   rup   je-pe
      1SG=DAT   money   exist-NMLZ.PST
      'I had money.'

  b. *ŋala rup tuŋ*
      ŋa=la   rup   **tuŋ**
      1SG=DAT   money   COP.EX.PST
      'I had money.' (I found out)

Interrogative clauses also display the characteristic egophoric distribution.

(27) Interrogative clauses with past existential copulas
   a. *ŋa ɕukɕen tuŋ / minuŋ e*
       ŋa   ɕukɕen   **tuŋ / minuŋ**   e
       1SG   strong   COP.EX.PST / COP.EX.NEG.PST   Q
       'Was I (not) strong?'

   b. *cʰola rup jeti / meti* e
       cʰo=la   rup   je-pe / me-pe   e
       2SG=DAT   money exist-NMLZ.PST / not.exist-NMLZ.PST   Q
       'Did you (not) have money?'

   c. *kʰo/mo ola tuŋ / minuŋ e*
       kʰo/mo   ola   **tuŋ / minuŋ**   e
       3SG.M/F   here   COP.EX.PST / COP.EX.NEG.PST   Q
       'Was s/he (not) here?'

There is no corresponding past equative copula. It is possible to induce a past tense reading of the non-past equative copulas by adding temporal particles with past tense reference like *unla* 'previously'.

(28) Past equative copula clauses
   a. *ŋa unla lopon jin / man*
       ŋa   unla   lopon   **jin / man**
       1SG   previously   teacher   COP.EQ.EGO / COP.EQ.NEG.EGO
       'I was (not) a teacher.'

   b. *cʰo unla lopon na / jinda / manda*
       cʰo   unla   lopon
       2SG   previously   teacher
                 na / jinda / manda
                 COP.EQ.ASM / COP.EQ.ACQ / COP.EQ.NEG.ALLO
       'You were (not) a teacher.'

   c. *kʰo/mo unla lopon na / jinda / manda*
       kʰo/mo   unla   lopon
       3SG.M/F   previously   teacher
                     na / jinda / manda
                     COP.EQ.ASM / COP.EQ.ACQ / COP.EQ.NEG.ALLO
       'S/he was (not) a teacher.'

Note that it seems possible to use this strategy with non-past existential copulas as well (see e.g. the examples in (18) above, which clearly refer to the past, but still use *jena*). It is not at this point clear how exactly the use of past existential *tuŋ* differs from the use of the fundamentally tenseless non-past copulas, which otherwise have a default present tense interpretation.

On a related note, there are also no future tense copulas. Instead, one can form the equivalent of future tense copula clauses with the inflecting main verbs *re* 'become' in equative clauses (29a) and *joŋ* 'come' in existential clauses (29b), marked with regular future tense verbal morphology including the non-past copula *na* in allophoric contexts (see Mittaz, this issue [b] for a description of the verbal morphology and the role of copulas in it).[11]

(29)   Future tense copula clauses with *re* and *joŋ*

    a.   *kʰo/mo lopon reco na*

kʰo/mo	lopon	re-co	na
3SG.M/F	teacher	become-FUT	COP.EQ.ASM

    'S/he will be a teacher.'

    b.   *kʰo/mo ɕukɕen joŋco na*

kʰo/mo	ɕukɕen	joŋ-co	na
3SG.M/F	strong	come-FUT	COP.EQ.ASM

    'S/he will be strong.'

Additionally, instead of *joŋ* one can also use *tʰop* 'achieve' in possessive clauses (30a) and *dok* 'arrive' in locative clauses (30b).

(30)   Future tense copula clauses with *tʰop* and *dok*

    a.   *kʰo/mola rup tʰopco na*

kʰo/mo=la	rup	tʰop-co	na
3SG.M/F=DAT	money	achieve-FUT	COP.EQ.ASM

    'S/he will have money.'

    b.   *kʰo/mo ola dokco na*

kʰo/mo	ola	dok-co	na
3SG.M/F	here	arrive-FUT	COP.EQ.ASM

    'S/he will be here.'

5 Modal copulas

Lastly, one finds two copulas expressing epistemic modality: equative *jinuŋ* and existential *jedoŋ*. Specifically, they express uncertainty and can be translated with 'may' or 'might'. Unlike the non-past or past copula clauses, there is no opposition between egophoric and allophoric: a single form is used in all contexts.

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[11] However, this distribution is not so clear-cut, as attributive and possessive clauses (but not locative clauses) also seem to permit the use of *re* 'become'.

5.1 *Equative* **jinuŋ**

The affirmative modal equative copula *jinuŋ* and its negative counterpart *manuŋ* are illustrated in (31). The same form is used irrespective of the copula subject's person category.

(31)   Modal equative copulas
      a.   *ŋa/cʰo/kʰo/mo lopon jinuŋ / manuŋ*

ŋa/cʰo/kʰo/mo	lopon	**jinuŋ** / **manuŋ**
1SG/2SG/3SG.M/F	teacher	COP.EQ.EPI / COP.EQ.NEG.EPI

            'I / You / S/he may (not) be a teacher.'

In the following example, the speaker expresses his uncertainty concerning which year the incident he is about to relate took place, using modal equative *jinuŋ*.

(32)   *unla nam lo ɲîtɔŋ daŋ ɲîtɔŋtɕiks ɸal tsul jinuŋ*

unla	nam	lo	ɲî-toŋ		daŋ
previously	sky	year	two-thousand		and
			ɲî-toŋ-tɕik-s	pʰa=la	tsu=la	**jinuŋ**

ɲî-toŋ-tɕik-s	pʰa=la	tsu=la	**jinuŋ**
two-thousand-one-APPROX	there=DAT	here=DAT	COP.EQ.EPI

'It was maybe around the year 2000 or 2001.' [LS]

5.2 *Existential* **jedoŋ**

The affirmative modal existential copula *jedoŋ* and its negative counterpart *medoŋ* are illustrated with attributive (33a), possessive (33b), and locative clauses (33c). Again, there is no contrast between multiple epistemic categories.

(33)   Modal existential copulas
      a.   *ŋa/cʰo/kʰo/mo bombo jedoŋ / medoŋ*

ŋa/cʰo/kʰo/mo	bombo	**jedoŋ** / **medoŋ**
1SG/2SG/3SG.M/F	big	COP.EX.EPI / COP.EX.NEG.EPI

            'I / You / S/he may (not) be big.'

      b.   *ŋa/cʰo/kʰo/mola rup jedoŋ / medoŋ*

ŋa/cʰo/kʰo/mo=la	rup	**jedoŋ** / **medoŋ**
1SG/2SG/3SG.M/F=DAT	money	COP.EX.EPI / COP.EX.NEG.EPI

            'I / You / S/he may (not) have money.'

      c.   *ŋa/cʰo/kʰo/mo ola jedoŋ / medoŋ*

ŋa/cʰo/kʰo/mo	ola	**jedoŋ** / **medoŋ**
1SG/2SG/3SG.M/F	here	COP.EX.EPI / COP.EX.NEG.EPI

            'I / You / S/he may (not) be here.'

As indicated, modal copulas are used with first person subjects as well. Example (34a) shows an interrogative clause which is understood to the effect of 'Do I look fat?'. Example (34b) may be uttered while searching for oneself on a photograph.

(34)   Modal existential copulas with first person
    a.   *ŋa bombo jedoŋ e*
        ŋa   bombo   **jedoŋ**   e
        1SG   big   COP.EX.EPI   Q
        'Maybe I am big?'

    b.   *ŋa ola jedoŋ*
        ŋa   ola   **jedoŋ**
        1SG   here   COP.EX.EPI
        'I may be here.' (i.e. on this photo)

6 Comparative notes

DeLancey (2018) conceptualizes epistemicity in Tibetic, Lhasa Tibetan specifically, as a contrast between EVIDENTIAL, expressing contingent knowledge; non-evidential FACTUAL, expressing assumed knowledge; and EGOPHORIC, expressing personal knowledge. This is well in line with the analysis of Brokpa suggested here, and one can readily align DeLancey's proposal with the available descriptions of Southern Tibetic languages, resulting in the following presentation (Table 9 and Table 10).[12]

Language and source	Personal knowledge	Assumed knowledge	Contingent knowledge
Lhasa Tibetan DeLancey (2018)	EGOPHORIC	FACTUAL	EVIDENTIAL
Dzongkha Tshering and van Driem (2019)	—	ASSIMILATED	ACQUIRED
Chocha-ngachakha Tournadre and Rigzin (2015)	—	ASSUMPTIVE	SENSORY-INFERENTIAL
Denjongke Yliniemi (2017)	PERSONAL	NEUTRAL	SENSORIAL
Brokpa	EGOPHORIC	ASSIMILATED	ACQUIRED

Table 9. Terminology for epistemicity in some Tibetic languages

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[12] Notational conventions are as in the original sources. The portrayal of Denjongke is somewhat simplified, see Yliniemi (2017: 302-303) and Yliniemi (2019: 99-100) for details.

Language and source	Copula type	Personal knowledge	Assumed knowledge	Contingent knowledge
Standard Tibetan	EX	*yod*	*yod-red*	*'dug*
Tournadre and LaPolla (2014)	EQ	*yin*	*red*	*red-bzhag*
Dzongkha	EX	—	*yö*	*dû*
Tshering and van Driem (2019)	EQ	—	*'ing*	*'ime*
Chocha-ngachakha	EX	—	*yö̱t-pi*	*yö̱t*
Tournadre and Rigzin (2015)	EQ	—	*yi̱n(-pi)*	*yi̱n-cet*
Denjongke	EX	*jø̀ʔ*	—	*duʔ*
Yliniemi (2017)	EQ	*í:*	*bɛʔ*	—
Brokpa	EX	*jo*	*jena*	*tuk*
	EQ	*jin*	*na*	*jinda*

Table 10. Copula forms across some Tibetic languages

There is one clear pattern emerging here: if there is a three-way contrast, reflexes of the older Written Tibetan copulas ཡོད་ *yod* and ཡིན་ *yin* are shifted to EGOPHORIC. Conversely, FACTUAL is filled by different and presumably unrelated forms like Lhasa *red*, Denjongke *bɛʔ*, or Brokpa *na*. This broadly suggests a general scenario whereby, upon differentiating EGOPHORIC and FACTUAL in the individual languages, the latter category innovates new forms independently while the former carries on the reflexes of the older Written Tibetan copulas.[13]

As for the forms themselves, *jin*, *jo*, and *tuk* are straightforward continuations from Written Tibetan (WT) ཡིན་ *yin*, ཡོད་ *yod*, and འདུག་ *'dug*; with *jinda* presumably also based on ཡིན་ *yin* and some unknown element *da*. The innovative copula form *na* is generally not found in Tibetic languages, but common in other Trans-Himalayan languages (Nathan Hill p.c., 2018), and in this case might be a loan from East Bodish (EB)[14] or Tshangla (c.f. Grollmann 2020: 118); while *jena* may be a compound of ཡོད་ *yod* and *na*, parallel to the equivalent Standard Tibetan formation of *yod-red*. The negative copulas have straightforward sources in WT མན་ *man* and མེད་ *med* (cf. Denwood 1999: 128), as well as མིན་ *min* (from མ་ཡིན་ *ma yin*, cf. Jäschke 1881: 415).

As for the modal copulas, in Dzongkha the equivalent speculative copulas are based on the present tense copulas plus the WT verb འོང་ *'ong* 'come' (Hyslop and Tshering 2017). This is probably also the case for Brokpa *jinuŋ* and *jedoŋ*, which are presumably based on ཡིན་ *yin* and ཡོད་ *yod*, respectively (ditto for the negative counterparts). The past copula *tuŋ* seems to be based on འདུག་ *'dug*, though it is uncertain whether its coda is also due to a construction with འོང་ *'ong*, or perhaps some other verb.

Table 11 summarizes all etymologies proposed here, indicating the remaining uncertainties.

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[13] In this context, it is also worth noting the affinity between factual and egophoric semantics, even when an overt contrast is lacking. In Dzongkha, the assimilated copula is associated with first person ('In talking about oneself, it is most natural to use the form *yö* […]' (Tshering and van Driem 2019: 120)), and it is probably suggestive that Tournadre and Rigzin (2015) alternatively label the Chocha-ngachakha assumptive copulas WEAK EGOPHORIC.

[14] For example, Dakpa shows a copula form *nau* (Hyslop and Tshering 2010: 15).

	Brokpa	Source	Brokpa	Source
EQ	*jin*	WT ཡིན་ *yin*	*man*	WT མན་ *man*
	na	EB / Tshangla *na*	*manda*	WT མན་ *man* + *da* ?
	jinda	WT ཡིན་ *yin* + *da* ?		
EX	*jo*	WT ཡོད་ *yod*	*me*	WT མེད་ *med*
	jena	WT ཡོད་ *yod* + EB / Tshangla *na*	*mena*	WT མེད་ *med* + EB / Tshangla *na*
	tuk	WT འདུག་ *'dug*	*min*	WT མིན་ *min*
EX.PST	*tuŋ*	WT འདུག་ *'dug* + WT འོང་ *'ong* ?	*minuŋ*	WT མིན་ *min* + WT འོང་ *'ong* ?
EQ.EPI	*jinuŋ*	WT ཡིན་ *yin* + WT འོང་ *'ong*	*manuŋ*	WT མན་ *man* + WT འོང་ *'ong*
EX.EPI	*jedoŋ*	WT ཡོད་ *yod* + WT འོང་ *'ong*	*medoŋ*	WT མེད་ *med* + WT འོང་ *'ong*

Table 11. Proposed sources of Brokpa copulas

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