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.

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 Mahārājakaniśka-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 Viṃśikā 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]

\[
\text{gal te de yi las kyis der} \\
\text{′byung ba dag ni ′byung ba dang} \\
\text{de bzhin ′gyur bar ′dod na go} \\
\text{rnam par shes par cis mi ′dod} \\
\]

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

\[
yadi tatkarmabhis tatra bhūtānam sambhavas tathā \\
isyate pariṇāmaś ca kim vijnānasya nesyate
\]

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]):

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

\[
\text{sūkṣmāṇāṃ codakajantūnam sthālaiḥ samāna\textcolor{red}{rū}nānān \textcolor{red}{a}nīkṣa\textcolor{red}{n}aṃ na \textcolor{red}{s}yāṭ \textcolor{red}{l}} \textcolor{red}{a} \textcolor{red}{d}ev \textcolor{red}{a} \textcolor{red}{d}eva dravyāntaratvam kalpyate \textcolor{red}{, nānyathā.}
\]

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. Most of the examples I know of the construction verb + na go are, in fact, in verse. Nevertheless, the appearance in the Viśnīkā 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 Mahārājakaniśkalekha (ed. and trans. Hahn 1999: 40–41, verse 69), for which we have no extant Sanskrit, reads as follows:

\[
\text{sngon chad bgyis pa'i sug las kyis} \textcolor{red}{l} \textcolor{red}{l} \textcolor{red}{l} \textcolor{red}{l} \\
\text{ʻdi ltar 'ben du gyur pa la} \textcolor{red}{l} \textcolor{red}{l} \textcolor{red}{l} \textcolor{red}{l} \\
\text{khyod nyid gnod pa mdzad na go} \textcolor{red}{l} \textcolor{red}{l} \textcolor{red}{l} \textcolor{red}{l} \\
\text{su la skyabs su mchi ba gsungs} \textcolor{red}{l} \textcolor{red}{l} \textcolor{red}{l} \textcolor{red}{l}
\]

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

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7 When the sub-commentary of Vinītadeva to the Viśnīkā 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 ʻdis ni yul tha dad pa la so gs 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 Śatapāñcaśatka of Mātṛceṭa 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 ŋid gyur smos ci ’tshal ||

gurutvam upakāritvān mātāprītor yadīṣyate ||
kedānīṁ astu gurutā tvayy aṭyantopakārīṇī ||

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 niṣkriyāḥ, 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 karanṭyaṁ 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 błatar mi snang ||
yi ge’i shes rab mthar phyin na ||

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8 X.8; Foucaux 1847: 114.9–11; Derge Kanjur 95, mdo sde, kha 67a3–4; Hokazono 1995: 528; my translation from Tibetan.
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 Mūlasarvastivāda 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 Nagarāvalambikāvadāna of the Divyāvadāna: aham … svapunyaphale vyavasthitah kasmā dānāṇi na dadāmi.\(^{11}\) Also from the Bhaisajyavastu of the same Vinaya, we find another verse:\(^{12}\)

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

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\(^9\) 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 … gebräucht, wobei nich selten auf ko bzw. go ein Fraggesatz folgt.” The same is cited in the Wörterbuch (Maurer et al. 2005–: 113: ko\(^2\)), with reference to its source in the Kanjur.
Having cut off the roots of thirst/desire,\textsuperscript{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, ‘

\textit{dul ba, kha}, 29a3–4):

\begin{verbatim}
[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 ||
\end{verbatim}

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

\begin{verbatim}
[9b] 'di ltar kun na chu yod pas ||
    su zhig tshol zhing rgyu byed de ||
    khron pa'i chu \textit{lta} ci zhig dgos ||
    sred pa rtsa nas gcad par gyis ||
\end{verbatim}

It might be that the use of \textit{lta} here corresponds to the hypothesis of Hahn (1994: 290) that \textit{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 \textit{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 \textit{khron pa'i chū 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),\textsuperscript{14} but in the \textit{Udānavarga} we read (Bernhard 1965):

\begin{verbatim}
kim kuryād udapānena yatrāpah sarvato bhavet ||
trṣṇāyā mūlam uddhṛtya kasya paryeṣaṇāṁ caret ||
\end{verbatim}

Another prose passage cited by Shackleton Bailey appears in the

\textsuperscript{13} There is an evident pun on \textit{trṣṇā}; I thank Berthe Jansen for pointing this out to me.

\textsuperscript{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.
Saddharmapundarika, where 'bar ba 'di lta go ci zhig ces renders kim etad âdîptam nāmeti. 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:

\[11\]

\[\text{'di ni mngon par byung bar gyur na go ||} \\
rgyal po'i pho brang 'di kun nyams mi dga' || \\
rgyal po'i rigs rgyud yun ring gnas pa yang || \\
rgyal po'i rigs dang rgyud ni chad par 'gyur || \\
etasya nirgatasya rājakulaṁ sarvimāṁ nirabhīramyam || \\
ucchinnas ca bhaveyā pārthivavamāṁśa cirunbaddhaḥ\]

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 Catuḥśataka, even examples in which ko both follows a pronoun and introduces a question:

\[12\]

\[\text{khyod la gus bzhin rtag par ni ||} \\
mo dang lhan cig phrad pa med || \\
'\text{di nga’i g}zh\text{an gy}i\text{ ma yin zhes ||} \]

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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.
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?

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:

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?

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.


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?”

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\[18\]  
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:

\[14\]  
skye ba dran pa yod pa’i phyir  
gal te khyod kyi bdag rtag na  
sgon byas pa yi rma mthong nas  
khyod kyi lus ko cis mi rtag

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

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\[18\] 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.


\[20\] 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.\(^{21}\)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{[16]} & \quad \text{las ni 'bad pas byed 'gyur zhing} \\
& \quad \text{byas zin 'bad pa med par 'jig} \\
& \quad \text{de ltar gyur kyang khyod la go} \quad 22 \\
& \quad \text{las la chags bral 'ga' yod min} \\
& \quad \text{yatnataḥ kriyate karma kṛtāḥ naśyaty ayatnataḥ} \\
& \quad \text{virāgo 'sti na te kaścid evaṁ saty api karmāṇि}
\end{align*}
\]

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 tvaṁ ... [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 bhavān ..., the principal clause is an ironic interrogation directed to the opponent in which the interrogative

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\(^{22}\) 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 Sankrit 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 ||

āha | kim idam bhavān ajātaputramaraṇāt saṃtapyate | yas tvam asati gate agatāṁ 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

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

\begin{verbatim}
[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 ||
\end{verbatim}

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.

Saito’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 *saṁyoga. 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/\textit{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 \textit{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 \textit{ko/go} alone, focusing on the formula verb + \textit{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
are in verse, but some appear in prose as well.

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

\[
\begin{align*}
&[19] \quad \text{sbyin dang spyod pas stong pa yi } || \\
&\quad \text{nor des nor bdag yin na go } || \\
&\quad \text{nor de nyid kyis bdag kyang ni } || \\
&\quad \text{nor gyi bdag po cis ma yin } || \\
\end{align*}
\]

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:

\[
\begin{align*}
&[20] \quad \text{mkhas pas brtags shing gsungs pa'i tshig } || \\
&\quad \text{spyod yul ston par byed pa yi } || \\
&\quad \text{chos 'di rnam par shes na go } || \\
&\quad \text{khyed cag ci phyir byed mi 'gyur } || \\
&\quad \text{paṇḍitābha parāmrśṭā vāg yā gocarabhāṣinī } \\
&\quad \text{yuśmākaṃ nu kathāṃ na syād imāṃ dharmāṃ vijānatāṃ } || \\
\end{align*}
\]

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):


²⁷ Hahn points to the Sanskrit original as: *dānopabhogaśūnyena dhanena dhanino yadi / bhavaṃmah kim na tenaiva dhanena dhanino vayam* ||. The relation between this and the Tibetan, however, is not completely clear to me.
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 *Suvarṇavarnāvadāna* we find:

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§89.2; Rajapatirana 1974: 87; Derge Tanjur 4144, *‘dul ba, su* 209b4–5; my translation from Tibetan.
na go from the Mulasarvastivada Vinaya. In the Kauśambīkavastu of that same collection, we read: 

[23] tshig mi mthun la phyogs nyamsyangs ||
'di gtso min zhes sams byed pa ||
dge 'dun dbye bar 'gyur na go ||
mthu chung cung zad cis mi bsam ||

prthakchabdās samajavā nedāṁ śreṣṭham iti manyatāṁ* < | >
saṅghhe hi bhīdyaṁāne hi nābālam kiṅci manyatāṁ* < | >

If, being lenient in the face of disagreement, thinking ‘this is not the most important 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 Kamalaśīla’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 anabhilāpīyās te niśvabhāvās ca desitāḥ ||

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 Udānāvarga 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 āmhi or something similar became ēhi; 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 gzhigs na yang ||
gang phyir rang bzhin mi rig ste ||
de phyir de dag brjod du med ||
go bo nyid kyang med par bstan ||

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

[24b]  
blo yis rnam par gzhigs na ni ||
go bo nyid ni gzung du med ||
de phyir de dag brjod med dang ||
go 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 known 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 Catuḥśataka:

[25]  
gang gi phyogs 'ga' rgyu yin zhing ||
phyogs 'ga' rgyu ma yin des na ||
de ni sna tshogs 'gyur na go ||
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 \textit{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.”\textsuperscript{34}

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

\begin{verbatim}
[26] ri mo’i gzhi rnams mthong ba’i tshe ||
de la de bzhin sens mang po ||
ci ste cig ca’i tshul gyis su ||
’byung bar ’gyur bar ’dod na go ||
\end{verbatim}

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 \textit{na ko}, while the version in which the verses are embedded in the commentary spells \textit{na go}, demonstrating once again (as do, for instance, the variants cited by Lang for the \textit{Catuḥśataka}) the apparent near interchangeability of \textit{ko} and \textit{go}, at least in this sort of environment.

As a final verse example, in Prajñāvarman’s commentary to Udbhātasiddhavāmin’s \textit{Viśeṣastava} (verse 64A; ed. Schneider 1993: 250), we find him quoting the following:\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{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?”

\textsuperscript{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
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 Viṃśikārtti. Other instances, while not common, may be found for example in the Abhidharmakośabhāṣya.\(^{36}\) I refer to the following selective examples:\(^{37}\)

\(^{36}\) It of course also appears elsewhere, and my quotations here too are selective (although random!). Just to give a hint, one might notice the Tattvāvatāravṛttī of Śrīgupta (D 3892, dbu ma, ha 40b5) where we find [28]: ʿon 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 ʿod 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 Mahāyānapathasādhanaavaraṇasāṅgraha attributed to Aśīśa (Sherburne 2000: 458–459, verse 57; Derge Tanjur 3954, dbu ma, khi 302b3; my translation) contains the following:

\[^{31}\]

\[^{37}\] This is repeated also in the Abhidharmakośavākyākhyā (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 prthagjanasabhāgata nāma dravyam asti kim punah 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 ...

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

atha dvityādidhyānasamnihṣrayena niyāmāvakrāntau katham (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 dvittyādidhyānasamnihṣrayena 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 \[37]
yadi khalu dvādaśāṅga eva pratītyasamutpāda evam saty avidyāya anupadīṭhahetukatvād ādīnāṃ saṁsārah prāptoti jarāmaraṇasya cānupadīṭhaphalatvād 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 mtsan 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 11, translating yadi paricchedātmikā saṁjñā tataspravaye nimittam udgrhmantītī panicāpi viśeṣānakaśyā vikalpakāḥ syuḥ \ na syuḥ \ na hi paincaviśeṣā-
saṁpravayeś ca saṁjñā patvī 11.

38 Prof. Schmithausen wonders whether here go should not be connected with ji ltar.
Here we have a $yadi$ construction, which is rendered however with plain $gal$ ... $na$, followed by a locative construction in which $evam sati$ is rendered with $de lta na go$.

$[37]$ $gal$ $te$ $de$ $lta$ $na$ $go$ ‘di$ $la$ $yang$ $de$ $bzhin$ $du$ $lam$ $la$ $snyoms$ $par$ $zhugs$ $pas$ $ram$ $par$ $rig$ $byed$ $ma$ $yin$ $pa$ $med$ $bzhin$ $du$ $gang$ $zhig$ $thob$ $pa$ ‘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$ $te$


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 constrast, it is worth noting that, to my knowledge, the $prasāṅgas$ 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 they 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 Buddhāpālita’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 Jñātakamālā of Āryaśūra and one from Harsadēva’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] khō 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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