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Himalayan Linguistics

Title
Introduction to Aspects of Brokpa Grammar

Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/56c8w718

Journal
Himalayan Linguistics, 19(1)

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Publication Date
2020

DOI
10.5070/H919148915

Peer reviewed

Introduction to Aspects of Brokpa Grammar

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ABSTRACT

The Brokpa language, spoken in the two villages Merak and Sakteng in eastern Bhutan and adjacent parts of Arunachal Pradesh, is a hitherto undescribed Tibetic language (Trans-Himalayan). This special issue of Himalayan Linguistics presents the first account on several aspects of the phonology and grammar of the language. This introduction gives some general information about the Brokpa language, its phylogeny and linguistic profile and about the Brokpa Documentation and Description Project (BDDP). Additionally, the individual contributions of this special issue are shortly introduced and some formal conventions followed throughout this issue are laid out.

KEYWORDS

Brokpa, Tibetic, language documentation, Bhutan, Trans-Himalayan, areal typology, historical-comparative linguistics, East Bodish, Tshangla, Bodish

Introduction to Aspects of Brokpa Grammar[*]

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1 Introduction

This special issue of Himalayan Linguistics presents a number of contributions which together represent the first descriptive account on the Brokpa language (Tibetic, Trans-Himalayan) of eastern Bhutan. Together, these individual papers can be seen as a concise grammatical sketch of the language, covering many salient aspects of Brokpa phonology and morphosyntax. The data were collected in the last three years with a native speaker of Brokpa living in Bern, Switzerland, by a team of students at the Department of Linguistics of Bern University under the guidance of the authors of this introductory paper. The individual papers were written separately by the respective authors, but there was current exchange between all project members, and new findings were regularly shared and discussed. Additionally, the data of all papers are drawn from the same collectively compiled data corpus. This proceeding guaranteed that, while each paper can be seen as an individual, stand-alone descriptive study on a certain aspect of the Brokpa language, the sum of the papers has an internal analytic coherence and contains numerous cross-references. In this introductory piece, some general information about the language (section 2) and the Brokpa Documentation and Description Project (BDDP) (section 3) will be given and the individual contributions to this special issue will

shortly be presented (section 4). General linguistic conventions revelant for all contributions of this issue are provided in the last section too.

2 The Brokpa Language

2.1 General Information

Brokpa is a Tibetic[1] language spoken in the villages of སག་སྟེང་ Sakteng (*Sâteaŋ* in Brokpa) and མེ་རག་ Merak[2] of eastern Bhutan by approximately 5,000 speakers (van Driem 1998: 15, 2001: 867) and in adjacent parts of the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh (Bodt 2012: 303). The Written Tibetan term འབྲོག་པ་ *'brog pa* literally means 'inhabitant of the steppe' (Jäschke 1881: 402) and is used as an unspecified auto- or exonym for various pastoralist and (partially) nomadic groups of the wider Himalayan region,[3] such as the "Drokpa" in southwestern Tibet (cf. Kretschmar 1986), the speakers of the Lakha and Brokkat languages in central Bhutan (cf. van Driem 1998: 15-16), all speaking Tibetic languages, or the "Dokpa" of Central Ladakh, who speak a Dardic language, but are called "Dokpa" by their Tibetan neighbours (cf. Sharma 1998: 1). In the following, *Brokpa* refers exclusively to the language of Merak and Sakteng in eastern Bhutan. A more precise and perhaps more appropriate designation for the language is the (Dzongkha) loconym *mera-sakteng-kha* 'language of Merak-Sakteng' (cf. van Driem 1998: 15).[4] Besides a short sketch by Dondrup (1993), some

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[1] More widespread, but synonymous terms are *Tibetan* or *Bodish*. The terms *Bodish* (and *Bodic*) derive from the Tibetan designation for Tibet, བོད་ *bod*, and were coined as linguistic designations by Shafer. As a designation for all the daughter languages of Old Tibetan, these terms are preferred over *Tibetan* by certain scholars, for example van Driem (2001, 2019), who argues that not all the peoples that speak Tibetan languages view themselves as Tibetans, for example the speakers of Dzongkha in Bhutan. In a similar vein, Tournadre (2014: 106) rejects the designation *Tibetan* on the basis of considerable linguistic variation among the individual languages and the rejection of the ethnic label *Tibetan* by many speakers of Tibetan languages. However, the alternative term *Bodish* is vague and ambiguous, since in Shafer's original conception, the "Bodish branch" also includes Dwags (= Dakpa, "East Bodish"), and his "Bodish section," besides the "Bodish branch," includes Tshangla, Gurung (= Tamangic) and Rgyalrong, which, like East Bodish, are not daughter languages of Old Tibetan. Benedict (1972: 7) adopts this classification. Bradley's (1997: 3-15, 2002: 75-80) definition of "Bodish" differs from Shafer's and includes Tibetan, "West Bodish" (= Tamangic), East Bodish, Tshangla, the "East Bodic" languages Lhokpu and Gongduk as well as West Himalayish. Thurgood (2003: 9-10) employs the more inclusive term "Bodic" of Shafer and Bradley as the designation for a more specific group than Shafer's or Bradley's "Bodish," including Tibetan, East Bodish, "Tamang-Gurung-Thakali-Manang" and potentially Tshangla. For van Driem (2015b), "Bodish" consists merely of Tibetan and East Bodish, comparable to Shafer's Bodish "branch." Lamentably, none of these classifications offers any evidence in the form of shared linguistic innovations. They can therefore not be viewed as well-founded proposals. Recently, Hill (2011, 2014, 2015, 2019) has brought forth evidence in the form of shared innovations that Tibetan and East Bodish may in fact share a common ancestry and has used the term "Bodish" for this subgroup. Therefore, it may be appropriate to reserve *Bodish* for the tentative subgroup of Hill taking together Tibetan and East Bodish. Keeping in mind Tournadre's and van Driem's reservations against *Tibetan*, the languages deriving directly from Old Tibetan will be called *Tibetic* in this issue, as advocated by Tournadre (2014). Note, however, that "Tibetic" too was used as label for macro-groups (cf. Egerod 1974, cited in Hale 1982, Noonan 2011 or Blench & Post's (2014: 92) "Greater Tibetic") and is therefore inherently ambiguous as well.

[2] The Romanisation of Dzongkha forms and Bhutanese place names, except for the two Brokpa villages Sakteng and Merak, follows van Driem (1998).

[3] See Tournadre (2005: 18-20, 2014: 123) for an account on the binary classification of Tibetic languages into "pastoralists" and "cultivators."

[4] In Dzongkha, the language is known as འབྲོག་ཁ་ *bjokha* 'language of the Brokpa' and the people speaking the language as འབྲོག་པ་ *bjop*, two terms which should not be confused with the (Dzongkha-derived) self-designation *Bjokapa* of the Tshangla speaking people of Bjoka in Zh'ämgang district in central Bhutan (cf. Grollmann 2020a).

phonological and lexical information in Bodt (2012: 309-311) and some texts recorded in Tibetan script by Dorji (2003: 38-52), Brokpa is undescribed to the present day. The papers in this issue therefore constitute the first substantial description of the Brokpa language. A grammar of Brokpa is currently written by Pema Wangdi as a Ph.D. thesis. Cultural and historical information on the Brokpa can be found in Wangmo (1990), Dorji (2003), Pelgen (2007) or Bodt (2012: 301-311 and sources therein).

The Brokpa live as semi-nomadic pastoralists in the high altitude region of easternmost Bhutan, on the border to the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh, mainly in the two settlements (རྒེད་འོག་ *geo* 'block') Merak and Sakteng in Trashigang district of Bhutan and across the border in some places in Tawang and West Kameng districts in the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh (cf. van Driem 1998: 15, Bodt 2012: 303). They are one of the few ethnolinguistic groups in Bhutan to have preserved their own native dress and a lifestyle diverging from mainstream Bhutanese culture. This is due to their longtime isolation within Bhutan, the comparatively late effective political-administrative integration of the Brokpa settlement area into the Kingdom of Bhutan[5] and the strong historical, cultural and religious ties with Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh (cf. Bodt 2012: 302-303).

Van Driem (2001: 871) estimates that there are about 5,000 speakers of Brokpa. This is a comparatively large number in the areal context (cf. the numbers of speakers of other Bhutanese languages in van Driem 1998: 2), but the challenges of modernity for (linguistic) diversity do not spare Brokpa, as the construction of new roads and the arrival of modern technologies, although highly comfortable and beneficial for the individual, are already starting to change the culture of the Brokpa and leading to the loss of certain unique cultural peculiarities. Therefore, the documentation and description of Brokpa, like of any other small language of the Himalayas, is a matter of high linguistic and anthropological urgency. Brokpa is an unwritten language. Many speakers of the language also have a good command of the languages of neighbouring Dakpa and Tshangla peoples with which the Brokpa have close sociocultural ties. The Dakpa (known as "Tawang Monpa" in Arunachal Pradesh), who speak an East Bodish language (cf. van Driem 2007b, Hyslop & Tshering 2010), share many cultural features with the Brokpa, including the characteristic dress and yak hair hat (cf. Bodt 2012: 302), and the two groups practice intermarriage, whereas the Tshangla in the lower areas of Trashigang constitute important trading partners for the Brokpa. Traditionally, the Brokpa would move to lower, Tshangla-speaking regions during the winter season where they would live with certain Tshangla host families and barter their livestock and handicraft products for the agriculture products of the sedentary Tshangla, a practice known as འབྲུ་སྐོར་ *drukor* 'grain round' (cf. Pelgen 2007: 121, Bodt 2012: 304).

2.2 *Phylogeny*

Phylogenetically, Brokpa belongs to the Tibetic branch of Trans-Himalayan, a fact that can easily be proven by the Brokpa reflexes of the changes identified as diagnostic shared innovations of the Tibetic branch of Trans-Himalayan (see Table 1), i.e. the sound change *η^j > *ny* [ɲ] ("Houghton's

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[5] Bodt (2012: 303) informs that the effective integration of Merak and Sakteng into Bhutan only took place during the 20th century, i.e. after the consolidation of the monarchy and during the modernisation process. Pelgen (2007: 132) reports that education was only made available for the Brokpa in the late 1980s and that in general, "receptiveness to the developmental initiatives of the government towards bringing them into the mainstream is still received with mixed feelings."

law," Hill 2011: 444), the sound change *lʲ > zh ("Benedict's Law," Hill 2011: 445), the sound change *ry > *rgy ("Li Fang-Kuei's Law," Hill 2011: 447), the innovative root for the numeral "7" (cf. Beyer 1992: 7, Nishi 1986: 849, Tournadre 2014: 110-111) or the innovative 2nd person singular pronoun (cf. Thurgood 1985: 378, Beyer 1992: 7). Lexically, too, Brokpa is a typical Tibetic language in showing reflexes of most of the 100 diagnostic lexemes listed by Tournadre (2005: 39-40).[6] Finally, the system of verb stem alternations of Brokpa (presented in Leki et al., this issue and discussed by Mittaz, this issue [b]) continues alternations attested in Classical Tibetan (CT).

Change	Brokpa	Classical Tibetan	Comparanda
*ŋʲ > ny [ɲ]	ɲa 'fish'	ཉ *nya*	Old Burmese *ṅāḥ* (Hill 2011), Old Chinese 魚 *[r.ŋ]a* (Baxter & Sagart 2014), Tshangla *ŋa*
*lʲ > zh	ɕi '4'	བཞི་ *bzhi*	Old Burmese *liy* (Hill 2011), Old Chinese 四 *s.li[j]-s* (Baxter & Sagart 2014), Proto-East Bodish *ble* (Hyslop 2014a), (Dungsam) Tshangla *phi* (Hoshi 1987)
*ry > *rgy	ɟe '8'	བརྒྱད་ *brgyad*	Old Burmese *rhyat* (Hill 2012b), Old Chinese 八 *pˤret* (Baxter & Sagart 2014)
Innovative root *bdun* for the numeral '7'	dyn	བདུན་ *bdun*	Proto-East Bodish *nís* (Hyslop 2014a), Tamang *nis* (Yonjan Tāmāṅ 1997/8), Japhug Rgyalrong *kuɕnuz* (Jacques 2015), Dhimal *nhiʔ-* (King 2009), Mongsen Ao *thəni* (Coupe 2007)
Innovative pronoun *khyod* 'thou'	cʰo	ཁྱོད་ *khyod*	Tshangla *nan*, Dhimal *na* (King 2009), Mewahang (Kiranti) *ana*, Proto-Kuki-Chin *naŋ* (VanBik 2009), Japhug Rgyalrong *nɤzo ~ nɤj* (Jacques 2015)

Table 1. Innovations of the Tibetic branch of Trans-Himalayan

The internal classification of the Tibetic branch is largely unknown, since previous classifications (e.g. Shafer 1955, 1974, Róna-Tas 1966, Nishi 1986, Denwood 1999, Tournadre 2005, 2014) are based on geographic distribution, a basic differentiation between 'archaic' and 'non-archaic' dialects and basic linguistic similarities rather than shared non-trivial linguistic innovations which are the only acceptable evidence for closer linguistic relationship and, hence, subgrouping (cf. Leskien 1876, Brugmann 1884). For Tibetic, the concurrence of geographic groupings with genetic relationship still lacks empirical substantiation (cf. Hill 2019: 5).

As long as the genetic classification of Tibetic can not be based on a solid fundament consisting of diagnostic shared innovations, we consciously refrain from proposing a classification of Brokpa within Tibetic. All that can be said at the present point is that Brokpa does not share innovations of Dzongkha, the National language of Bhutan, e.g. the development *r > y in initial clusters with bilabial and velar stops (first described for "South Bodish" by Shafer 1955: 101, 1974:

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[6] For a glossary of Brokpa with etymological notes, see Leki et al. (this issue).

87), e.g. CT བྲག *brag* 'cliff' > Dzongkha བྲག *bj'â* vs. Brokpa *pra*, CT སྐྲ *skra* 'hair' > Dzongkha སྐྲ *ca* vs. Brokpa *ṣa* (< *sra*), CTའབྲོག་པ *'brog pa* 'inhabitant of the steppe' > Dzongkha འབྲོག་པ *bjop* vs. Brokpa *brokpa*. Therefore, Brokpa can not be grouped together with Dzongkha genetically (as suggested by Tournadre 2005: 21, 2014: 122).

2.3   Linguistic Profile

This section provides a short overview of the structural profile of Brokpa with some notes on areal features, especially within the linguistic context of Bhutan, focusing on structures that are not described in detail in the individual contributions of this issue.

2.3.1   Phonology

Phonologically, Brokpa can be viewed as a somewhat more conservative or archaic Tibetic language (as noted already by Rerix 1961), since it retains the initial cluster of a bilabial stop plus <r> (cf. Rüfenacht & Waldis, this issue). Other Tibetic languages to have preserved this cluster are Ladakhi, Balti, Purik, Kyirong, Choca-ngacakha or Lamjung Yolmo (cf. Tournadre 2005, Tournadre & Rigzin 2015: 61, Gawne 2016: 38). However, Brokpa is more innovative than the archaic western Tibetic languages such as Purik, Balti or Ladakhi in showing palatal affricates as reflexes of Classical Tibetan bilabial stop plus <y> clusters. Moreover, Brokpa has developed tonal contrasts from former voice contrasts and initial clusters, a development characteristic for most Tibetic languages except the geographically peripheral groups, i.e. the western languages Purik, Balti, Ladakhi and Zangskari as well as the eastern Amdo dialects (cf. Tournadre 2005: 30, 36-37).

A feature with far-reaching implications is the lack of a voiced dental affricate in Brokpa (cf. Rüfenacht & Waldis, this issue). Hill (2012b, 2014, 2019) assumes that the sound change **dz > z* is an innovation of Bodish, i.e. Tibetic and East Bodish ("Schiefner's Law"), e.g. Brokpa *sa* 'to eat' < Classical Tibetan *za,* and Kurtöp *zu* (Hyslop 2017) < Pre-Bodish **dza*. However, Schiefner's Law does not fully explain the lack of /dz/ in Brokpa, since secondary instances of /dz/ introduced into Tibetic after Schiefner's Law (cf. Hill 2014 for discussion), which are still attested in Dzongkha and other Tibetic languages, have also been lenited to /z/ in Brokpa, e.g. *so* 'male yak hybrid' < Classical Tibetan མཛོ *mdzo*, or *sima* 'eyelash' < Classical Tibetan རྫི་མ *rdzi ma*, cf. Dzongkha *dzim*. This suggests that there were two waves of lenition of /dz/ to /z/. The second, more recent wave constitutes an areal feature of eastern Bhutan, since a similar lack of the phoneme /dz/ is also attested in distinctly non-Bodish languages of eastern Bhutan, i.e. Tshangla (Andvik 2010, Bodt 2014, Grollmann 2020a), Gongduk (Gerber 2020) and Black Mountain Mönpa (Hyslop 2016, Gerber 2020).[7] The first wave constitutes a diagnostic innovation of Tibetic, but contra Hill (2014, 2019), we argue that East Bodish did not participate in this change ("Schiefner's Law"), but that the lack of /dz/ in East Bodish is the result of the second, areally spread sound change with the same effect. Since East Bodish languages are almost exclusively spoken in eastern Bhutan, this would seem to be the more

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[7] In contrast, other, mostly western Bhutanese languages such as Dzongkha (Tshering & van Driem 2019), Chocangacakha (Tournadre & Rigzin 2015) or Lhokpu (Grollmann & Gerber 2018) exhibit a phoneme /dz/.

elegant assumption. As a consequence, Schiefner's Law can not be regarded as a shared innovation of Tibetic and East Bodish.

In the domain of vowels, Brokpa resembles non-Tibetic Bhutanese languages like Tshangla, Gongduk, Kurtöp (cf. Andvik 2010, Hyslop 2017, Gerber 2020, Grollmann 2020a) and the Tibetic language Choca-ngachakha (Tournadre & Rigzin 2015) in that it lacks front rounded vowels except for a few instances of [y], unlike Dzongkha (Tshering & van Driem 2019) and other Tibetic languages (DeLancey 2003b, Tournadre 2005, Yliniemi 2019), where rounded front vowels are common and resulted from the loss of final coronal consonants.

Like most Tibetic languages (cf. Tournadre 2005), Brokpa has developed tone (cf. Funk, this issue [a] for a synchronic overview). With obstruent initials, a former voice contrast was replaced by a tonal contrast with a high register tone in syllables with a historical voiceless onset, a low register tone in syllables with a historical voiced onset and a falling tone which probably reflects the loss of a coda consonant (see Rüfenacht & Waldis, this issue). As for sonorant onsets, i.e. nasals, liquids and glides, historical complex onsets with prefixed and superscript letters in Written Tibetan usually correspond to high tone in Brokpa, whereas historical simple onsets correspond to low tone, viz. Brokpa *ŋá* 'drum' < Classical Tibetan ᠵ *rnga* vs. Brokpa *ŋa* 'I' < Classical Tibetan ᠵ *nga*. The same historical pathways can be observed for other Tibetic languages with tonal contrasts (cf. Tshering & van Driem 2019, DeLancey 2003b, Tournadre & Rigzin 2015), but also for East Bodish languages (cf. Hyslop 2009, 2017). Contour tones are also attested widely in Bhutan, e.g. in Dzongkha (Tshering & van Driem 2019: 91-93), Chocha-ngacakha (Tournadre 2015: 59), Kurtöp (Hyslop 2009: 829) or Lhokpu, where the emergence of tone in general seems to result from contact with Dzongkha.

Brokpa exhibits voiceless vowels in open syllables of some polysyllabic lexemes, although the conditions of the devoicing are not yet fully understood (see Rüfenacht & Waldis, this issue). This constitutes an areal feature, since voiceless vowels are also found in Dakpa (cf. Hyslop & Tshering 2010 and the discussion in Rüfenacht & Waldis, this issue).

2.3.2 Morphosyntax

Brokpa is a primarily suffixing language, although prefixes, e.g. the negation prefixes, do occur as well. The inflectional categories include case and number for the nominal morphology and tense, aspect, mood and evidentiality for the verbal morphology. Natural gender is expressed limitedly with the nominal formatives *-pa* and *pho* (male) and *-ma* and *mo* (female). There is no person or number agreement on the verb. The morphemes of the nominal morphology operate on a phrasal level by attaching only to the last member of the noun phrase. This clitic behaviour is a common feature throughout the Himalayas and has been described for many of these languages (e.g. Genetti 2007, Noonan 2008, Andvik 2010, Hyslop 2017).

In the domain of nominal morphology, Brokpa shows pragmatic ergativity, a feature common to several branches of Trans-Himalayan (cf. LaPolla 1995, DeLancey 2011b, inter alia). The plural marker *=ba* of Brokpa is a borrowing from Tshangla *=bak* (cf. Rüfenacht, this issue). The personal pronouns for first person plural show a clusivity distinction not attested in the other (so far described) Tibetic languages of Bhutan, i.e. Dzongkha (cf. Tshering & van Driem 2019: 98) and Choca-ngacakha (cf. Tournadre & Rigzin 2015: 75), but in a number of other Tibetic languages as well as Old Tibetan (cf. Hill 2010). Interestingly, however, the source for the inclusive form in

Brokpa varies from the one in Old Tibetan and other Tibetic languages. Whereas the distinction is lexical in Old Tibetan (Hill 2010) and certain Tibetic languages like Kyirong (Huber 2005: 67-68), Themchen Amdo (Haller 2004: 50) and Lamjung Yolmo (Gawne 2016: 57), in Brokpa, it is built on the addition of the reflexive formative *=raŋ*, viz. *ɲí* 'we (EXCL)' vs. *ɲeraŋ* 'we (INCL)'. Although the form itself is inherited from Old Tibetan, the reinterpretation as inclusive form is an innovation of Brokpa and may constitute an areal influence, since Kurtöp also shows a distinction between exclusive and inclusive first plural forms, the latter being identical with the reflexive pronoun and derived from the pronominal root plus *-raŋ* "self" (Hyslop 2017: 155). Similarly, Bjokapakha Tshangla shows an opposition between unmarked-exclusive and reflexive-inclusive in the domain of possessive pronouns (cf. Grollmann 2020a).[8]

Brokpa exhibits verb stem alternations inherited from Classical Tibetan. As in all other modern Tibetic languages (cf. Tournadre 2005: 45), there is no distinct future stem in Brokpa, but as in Amdo, Ü and Tsang dialects (Tournadre 2005: 45), a verb in Brokpa may differentiate a present-future, past and imperative stem (cf. Mittaz, this issue [b]). Brokpa verbs are able to occur as bare stems without any inflectional marking. The conditioning and the functional difference to inflected verbs is not yet fully understood. Most of Brokpa verbal morphology operates with analytic constructions, using verb concatenation or nominalised verbs plus copulas.

The semantics of verbal morphemes and copulas in Brokpa is permeated with epistemic functions, very similar to the systems described for Tibetic (cf. the contributions in Gawne & Hill 2017, van Driem 2007a, DeLancey 2018), Kurtöp (Hyslop 2014b), Newar (Hale 1980, Hargreaves 2005), Kaike (Watters 2006), inter alia. These structures have been controversially discussed with a plethora of terms such as "evidentiality," "conjunct/disjunct," "mirativity," "egophoricity" or "epistemicity" (e.g. DeLancey 1997, 2012, Tournadre 2008, Hill 2012a, Tournadre & LaPolla 2014). While certain verbal suffixes of Brokpa inherently code certain epistemic functions, the main locus of these functions are the copulas and the periphrastic constructions including them (cf. Funk, this issue [b] for an overview of the copula system). In contrast, aspectual distinctions are mostly coded by auxiliary verbs, while temporal categories are expressed by suffixes and by stem alternation. Finally, mood is expressed by stem alternation and by suffixes (cf. Mittaz, this issue [b]).

Most finite verbal suffixes can be traced back diachronically to nominalisers or to the combination of nominalisers with copulas and are synchronically still transparent as such (cf. Mittaz, this issue [b] and Waldis, this issue). These constructions tend to be phonologically bound, so that the NMLZ + COP construct could be analysed as one verbal suffix. It is possible that these combinations may become fully grammaticalised suffixes in the future. The prevalence of the construction NMLZ + COP as source for verbal morphology is found in many Trans-Himalayan languages, notably in various Tibetic languages or in neighbouring Tshangla, where similar structures of grammaticalised NMLZ + COP combinations can be observed (cf. Grollmann 2020b). The combination of NMLZ + COP is in general a frequent source for new finite verbal morphology in Trans-Himalayan languages (DeLancey 2011a). Likewise, the occurrence of non-embedded nominalisation as finite verbal morphology in Brokpa is a feature widely attested in Trans-Himalayan (for accounts on individual languages or subgroups, see e.g. Matisoff 1972, van Driem

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[8] Note, however, that both Kurtöp and Bjokapakha are not spoken in the immediate vicinity of Brokpa and that no clusivity distinction is described for the more adjacent Tshangla varieties and East Bodish languages (cf. Wangdi 2004, van Driem 2007b). The assumption of areal influence therefore needs to be tested in future research.

1993, Noonan 1997, Bickel 1999 or Watters 2008). For these reasons, a clear-cut boundary between finite and non-finite (nominalising) verbal morphemes can not be upheld for Brokpa.

Syntactically, nominalisers are the core of relativisation and complementation in Brokpa (cf. Waldis, this issue). There are various nominalisers with different semantic functions: action vs. actor nominalisers, past vs. future temporal connotations, subject nominalisers vs. non-subject nominalisers. Generally, the relative clauses formed with the nominalisers precede the head, but in some instances they may also follow the head or can be internally headed in a functional distribution similar to the one described for Lhasa Tibetan by DeLancey (1999).

In addition to the combination NMLZ + COP, another type of complex predicates in Brokpa involves the concatenation of two verbs, one being the lexical core of the predicate and the other a kind of auxiliary which mostly denotes aspectual, modal or Aktionsart specifications of the verbal action (some of these auxiliaries are discussed in Mittaz, this issue [b]). These verbs are often just juxtaposed without any morphological marker between them, the second verb taking the finite verbal suffixes. However, the negative prefix *ma-* can be attached to the second verb, which shows that the morphological and semantic cohesion is not yet fully advanced. Some verbs have developed a distinctly different meaning when used as an auxiliary in comparison with their lexical usage, e.g. *ga-* "leave" / <auxiliary for uncontrollable motion>. Certain verbs are not attested in lexical usage, but only as auxiliaries (cf. Funk 2020), e.g. *ɕor-* <valence-decreasing auxiliary> or *taŋ-* <auxiliary for intentional actions>. Similar auxiliary verb constructions and verb concatenations are found throughout the Himalayan region, both in various Trans-Himalayan languages, e.g. Tibetic (DeLancey 1991, Häsler 1999 or Yliniemi 2019, inter alia), Tshangla (Andvik 2010, Grollmann 2020a), Kurtöp (Hyslop 2013), Dolakha Newar (Genetti 2007), Rgyalrongic (Jacques 2018), Kiranti (Doornenbal 2009: 473-482, Jacques 2018), Lahu (Matisoff 1969), as well as in Indo-Aryan languages, e.g. Nepali or Assamese (Post 2006).

This kind of verb concatenation is different both morphosyntactically and semantically from the converbal subordination in Brokpa. So far, three adverbial subordinators have been attested, the most frequent and versatile being *-sin* and *-ne*, usually expressing manner or temporal subordination. These two adverbialisers occur very frequently in narration and play an integral role in Brokpa discourse structure. The difference between these two converbs is not easy to pin down, although there is a tendency that a verb marked with *-ne* has closer semantic ties with the main predicate in that the two verbs designate two aspects of the same verbal action and usually share the same subject (and object, if present). By contrast, the converb *-sin* is used to subordinate whole clauses which often have different subjects (and objects) than the main clause predicate. Thus, if a subject change is involved, *-sin* is expected on the subordinate predicate. There are, however, exceptions to this general rule.

Etymologically, the converb *-ne* is related to the ablative *=ne*. Already in Classical Tibetan, the ablative case marker ནས་ *nas* was used as a subordinator of temporal succession (DeLancey 2003a). The converb *-sin* may either be a borrowing from East Bodish, cf. the *-si* converb marker found in Kurtöp (Hyslop 2013, 2017) and Bumthang (van Driem 2015a),[9] or it may derive from the homophonous lexical verb *sin-* 'to finish', which also occurs as auxiliary for completive aspect (cf.

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[9] Cognates of the East Bodish morpheme are found in other non-finite verbal markers in the wider region, e.g. *-si ~ -se ~ -s* in various Kiranti languages (e.g. van Driem 1987, Ebert 1997b, Opgenort 2005, Tolsma 2006, Doornenbal 2009, Schackow 2015) or *-si* in Karbí (Konnerth 2014).

Mittaz, this issue [b]), constituting a potential source construction for the grammaticalisation of this adverbialiser, i.e. *X–sin* 'finish X-ing' > 'after X-ing'.

Both in Brokpa and in neighbouring Tshangla, the etymologically unrelated verbs "to do" have become semantically bleached with the respective converbs, probably constituting an areal feature. In Tshangla, the verb *a-* combined with the adverbialiser *-nɪ ~ -ɲi* (the phonological difference is dialectal) is used as a versatile adverbialisation device, both with adjectives and noun phrases, but also with whole clauses. In the latter use, *anɪ ~ aɲi* can be used to subordinate direct speech (cf. Andvik 2004, Grollmann 2020a). In Brokpa, the verb *ɟap-* seems to have very similar functions when combined with the converb *-ne*, i.e. it does not occur with its literal meaning but as grammaticalised adverbialiser translatable as 'being X' (cf. Mittaz, this issue [a] for deadjectival adverbs derived with *ɟapne*).

Likewise, the verb *ɟap-* marked with the converb *-sin* acquired a pragmatic function which frequently occurs in the texts as clausal connector in the beginning of a new sentence. The narrative is resumed by *ɟapsin* to indicate "having said that…" or "this being the case…" and to move to another topic.

The marker *=soŋ* is a converb used for causal subordination. Whether or not the homophony with the sensory past marker *-soŋ* is indicative of a common origin remains to be examined.

Another marker which occurs in converbal subordination is the comitative case marker *=daŋ*. Attached to the past nominaliser *-pe*, it expresses temporal succession. The temporal anteriority of the verbal action marked with *=daŋ* derives from the perfective connotation of the past marker, the whole construction being translatable as 'with having done X' > 'after having done X'. The cognate morpheme དང་ *-da* in Dzongkha is used in a similar function (cf. Tshering & van Driem 2019: 270-272), and the use of a comitative case marker in adverbial subordination is also attested in other languages of the Himalayas, e.g. several Kiranti languages, for example Kulung *-lo* (Tolsma 2006), Athpare *-lok* (Ebert 1997a), Nachiring *-lo* or Mewahang *-loŋ*.

Marginally, a conditional subordinator *-na* is attested in the Brokpa text corpus. This morpheme is also attested in other Tibetic languages such as Lhasa (DeLancey 2003b) or Dege (Häsler 1999) as well as in Tshangla (Andvik 2010, Grollmann 2020a). For Tibetic, the source construction, as for the converb *-ne*, lies in a case marker used for adverbial subordination, in this case the elative ན་ *-na* (cf. DeLancey 2003a).

2.3.3 *Syntax and Pragmatics*

Brokpa has SOV constituent order in basic clauses, but frequently uses word order changes for emphatic purposes. In the noun phrase, dependents, such as possessive prefixes and nouns marked with the genitive usually precede the head noun, but syntactic modifiers such as the dependent of a genitive construction and relative clauses may also follow their head, rendering a more appositive, pragmatically marked meaning. Adjectives, numerals and quantifiers follow the head noun. Additionally, there are relator noun constructions in Brokpa, whereby the relator noun follows the lexical noun which is optionally marked with the genitive (cf. Mittaz, this issue [a]). Relator noun constructions are common in surrounding languages such as Tibetic, Tshangla, East Bodish, inter alia.

Brokpa exhibits pragmatic particles, e.g. the focus marker *=khe* or the frequent topic marker *di*. The latter developed from the definite article *=di* which is cliticised to the preceding constituent.

Unlike its source construction, the definite article, the topic particle *di* is a free-standing element and often marks the beginning of a new clause in narratives to lead over into a new proposition.

2.3.4 Lexicon

The vocabulary of Brokpa shows a robust Tibetic core with some areal influences from East Bodish languages, mostly neighbouring Dakpa, and Tshangla. Although Dzongkha is closer related to Brokpa than Tshangla or Dakpa and, as National language, constitutes a prestigious and influential language throughout Bhutan, Brokpa does not exhibit many Dzongkha borrowings, except some political and administrative terminology, e.g. *ɖuk* 'Bhutan' or *ɖi* 'to write'.[10] The glossary in the appendix to this issue also lists the etymological sources of the Brokpa lexemes.

3 The Brokpa Documentation and Description Project

The Brokpa data on which the contributions of this special issue are based were collected by a team of graduate students participating in the Brokpa Documentation and Description Project (BDDP) based at the Department of Linguistics of the University of Bern, Switzerland. This project started as a two-semester field methods class with a native speaker of Brokpa, taught by the authors of this introduction during the spring and fall semesters 2017. The project was initiated after finding out that Tshering Leki, a speaker of Brokpa, was living in Bern and willing to work with linguists on his language, which presented a compelling opportunity to work on the hitherto undocumented, undescribed and unfortunately rather inaccessible Brokpa language. Thus, from the beginning the course had two objectives, to teach field methods on the one hand and to provide preliminary descriptions of Brokpa on the other hand. It soon became clear that Tshering Leki, although living in Switzerland for some years, still had an excellent and nuanced command of his mother tongue and was a very cooperative and attentive consultant. During the field methods class, certain students proved themselves highly enthusiastic and diligent so that the potential of this project rose beyond a mere field methods class. As a consequence, the BDDP was pursued with a smaller group until 2019. Over the course of time, the project members collected a considerable body of natural text data, presented preliminary results of their analyses at the 61st StuTS (Funk et al. 2017) and at a university-internal symposium (Funk 2019), and wrote several *Seminararbeiten* and two B.A. theses (Mittaz 2018, Waldis 2019) on selected aspects of Brokpa. Since Brokpa is an undescribed language, we finally decided that the findings and material collected by the BDDP should be made accessible to a larger audience. At this point we reached out to Kristine Hildebrandt, Editor of Himalayan Linguistics, who kindly agreed to dedicate a special issue of the journal to Brokpa.

Although all data were collected from a single speaker, we are confident that his proficiency as a speaker and consultant enabled a solid empirical basis for the analyses presented in the papers of this issue. It goes without saying that the results presented here are only an initial scratch on the surface of the grammar of Brokpa, but we hope that they may be a valueable first descriptive point of departure for future research on Brokpa.

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[10] As is shown by Rüfenacht & Waldis (this issue), the expected, regular reflexes of Classical Tibetan འབྲུག *'brug* and འབྲི *'bri* in Brokpa would be *bruk* and **bri*. The former is in fact attested in this form in Brokpa, but in the original lexical meaning 'thunder/dragon' (cf. Leki et al., this issue).

4 Overview of the Issue and Conventions

This section provides an overview of the contributions to this special issue and presents some conventions used throughout the issue regarding transcription and transliteration, glossing and abbreviations.

4.1 Contributions

The contents of this special issue are more or less structured like a grammatical sketch, starting with phonology, then moving on to the lexicon, nominal and verbal morphology and finally reaching syntactic issues such as deverbal nominalisations, followed by an appendix where the text corpus, a glossary and a verb stem list can be found. Short descriptions of the individual papers are given in the following.

Funk [a]: A preliminary phonology of Brokpa
Funk [a] presents the phoneme inventory of Brokpa and discusses the syllable structure and the issue of tone in Brokpa from a synchronic perspective. The accoustic correlates of the phonemes are measured based on a sample of 134 lexemes having a CV syllable structure. Among the features measured are formant values and vowel length for vowels and voice onset time for stops.

Rüfenacht & Waldis: Diachronic and areal aspects of Brokpa phonology
Rüfenacht & Waldis discuss various phonological phenomena of Brokpa from an areal and diachronic perspective. They show that many features can be identified as being due to contact influences in eastern Bhutan. They specifically discuss the ongoing nature of tonogenesis, voiceless vowels and the missing voiced dental affricate and present sound changes and retentions of Brokpa.

Mittaz [a]: A short overview of the word classes in Brokpa
Mittaz [a] presents the lexical categories or parts of speech of Brokpa and the semantic and morphosyntactic features differentiating them. Besides the major categories noun, adjective and verb, many minor subcategories are discussed as well. The paper also contains some notes on the syntax of the noun phrase.

Funk, Mittaz, Rüfenacht & Waldis: The Brokpa lexicon: Notes on selected semantic fields
In this contribution, some salient lexical fields are discussed in more depth, i.e. kinship terminology, terms for yaks and cattle crossbreeding, animal sounds and commands used for summoning them, body part terms, honorifics and numerals. The individual parts can be regarded as stand-alone micro-studies.

Rüfenacht: Brokpa nominal morphology
Rüfenacht presents a sketch of the nominal morphology of Brokpa both from a synchronic descriptive perspective and with historical-comparative notes. Number and case morphology is treated in an areal context.

Mittaz [b]: Verbal categories in Brokpa
This contribution contains an overview of verbal inflectional categories of Brokpa. Mittaz [b] presents verb stem alternations of Brokpa from a comparative Tibetic perspective and shows that the allomorphy of the past marker can only be understood from a diachronic point of view taking into account stem coda consonants of Classical Tibetan. Temporal, aspectual, modal and evidential verbal markers are discussed as well as analytic constructions involving auxiliary verbs grammaticalised for a certain aspect.

Funk [b]: Copulas in Brokpa
Funk [b] presents Brokpa copulas in some depth and differentiates the temporal, modal and epistemic distinctions in the copula system. For morphologically complex copulas, the individual elements are isolated. A comparative section relates the Brokpa copulas functionally and historically to the systems found in other Tibetic languages.

Waldis: Deverbal Nominalization in Brokpa
The paper by Waldis discusses deverbal nominalization in Brokpa from a semantic and syntactic perspective. The productive deverbal nominalisers are presented and their syntactic functions, i.e. relativisation and complementation, exemplified. Waldis also illustrates how Brokpa employs pre-headed, post-headed and internally headed relative clauses. Additionally, etymologies for the nominalisers are proposed.

Leki, Funk, Gerber, Grollmann, Mittaz, Rüfenacht & Waldis: Brokpa texts, glossary and verb stems: Appendices to *Aspects of Brokpa Grammar*
The appendix to this special issue contains three parts, the text database including 23 texts in interlinear glossing, a glossary with approximately 1230 entries and a list of Brokpa verb stems. These appendices, especially the text collection, contain a considerable amount of raw material for further analyses.

4.2 Conventions

For the sake of consistency, conventions used throughout this special issue are subsumed in this introduction. This concerns the phoneme inventory and the transcription of Brokpa, the transliteration of Written Tibetan and the conventions and abbreviations used in the glosses.

4.2.1 Phoneme Inventory, Transcription and Transliteration

The consonants of Brokpa are given in Table 2 and the vowels in Table 3, the transcription being indicated by <...> if deviating from the sound symbol of the International Phonetic Alphabet. Note that a strict application of the conventions of the IPA is practised in this issue, so that <j> is a palatal glide, <c> a voiceless unaspirated palatal plosive, <cʰ> a voiceless aspirated palatal plosive and <ɟ> a voiced palatal plosive. Alveo-palatal affricates are represented as <tɕ> or <tɕʰ> and dental affricates as <ts> or <tsʰ> respectively. A high rounded front vowel is transcribed as <y>. These transcription conventions thus differ from the indological tradition often employed for the

description of Himalayan languages, where <j>, for example, stands for a voiced alveo-palatal affricate and <y> for a palatal glide.

Vowel length is represented with the IPA symbol <ː>, high register tone with an *accent aigu* on the vowel <á>, low tone with an *accent grave* <à> and falling tone with an *accent circonflexe* <â>. The low tone is, however, only marked explicitly in the glossary (cf. the introduction to the glossary in Leki et al., this issue, for more information) and in Rüfenacht & Waldis (this issue). Elsewhere, it is left unmarked. Similarly, in syllables where the tone is predictable from the onset, i.e. voiced and aspirated obstruents, tone is not marked.

	Bilabial	**Dental**	**Retroflex**	**Palatal**	**Velar**	**Glottal**
Stops	p, pʰ, b	t, tʰ, d	ʈ, ʈʰ, ɖ	c, cʰ, ɟ	k, kʰ, g	ʔ
Affricates		ts, tsʰ		tɕ, tɕʰ		
Fricatives		s	ʂ	ɕ	x	h, ɦ
Nasals	m	n		ɲ	ŋ	
Tap		ɾ <r>				
Laterals		ḷ, l				
Approximants	w			j		

Table 2. Consonant inventory of Brokpa

	Front	**Central**	**Back**
Close	i, iː, y		u, uː
Mid	e, eː		o, oː
Low		[ə, ɐː] <a, aː>	

Table 3. Vowel inventory of Brokpa

Written Tibetan is generally given in Tibetan script alongside the Roman transliteration in italics following Wylie (1959). If individual letters or short sequences of letters are given, they are transliterated in angle brackets <…>. The Tibetan script and the Roman transliteration according to Wylie (1959) are shown in Table 4.

ཀ་ *ka*	ཁ་ *kha*	ག་ *ga*	ང་ *nga*
ཅ་ *ca*	ཆ་ *cha*	ཇ་ *ja*	ཉ་ *nya*
ཏ་ *ta*	ཐ་ *tha*	ད་ *da*	ན་ *na*
པ་ *pa*	ཕ་ *pha*	བ་ *ba*	མ་ *ma*
ཙ་ *tsa*	ཚ་ *tsha*	ཛ་ *dza*	
ཝ་ *wa*	ཞ་ *zha*	ཟ་ *za*	འ་ *'a*
ཡ་ *ya*	ར་ *ra*	ལ་ *la*	
ཤ་ *sha*	ས་ *sa*	ཧ་ *ha*	ཨ་ *a*

Table 4. Tibetan script and Transliteration by Wylie (1959)

4.2.2 Conventions in the Interlinear Glosses

The examples in this issue come from both elicitation and natural text data. The example data in the individual papers and in the appendix are represented in four-line interlinear glossing, i.e. with an additional first line compared to the usual three-line glossing. This first line shows all phonetic details of the Brokpa utterance, i.e. phonological processes, situative and idiolectal peculiarities and concrete allomorphs. The second line is reserved for the underlying or diachronic phonological representation. Here, the internally reconstructed forms of allomorphs are shown. The third line contains the glossing of all lexical and grammatical morphemes and the fourth line is an approximate translation into English. For text data, an acronym indicating the source of the data is given after the translation in the fourth line (see Leki et al, this issue for a list of acronyms and text metadata).

The abbreviations used in the third line of the examples and texts as well as in the glossary in the appendix are listed in the following table.

ABBREVIATIONS

1	first person	FUT	future
2	second person	GEN	genitive
3	third person	GER	German
ABL	ablative	HON	honorific
ACQ	acquired	IMP	imperative
ACT	action	INCL	inclusive
ADH	adhortative	INDF	indefinite
ADJ	adjective	INJ	interjection
adj.	adjective (word class)	LOC	location
adv.	adverb (word class)	M	masculine
AGT	agentive	n.	noun (word class)
ALLO	allophoric	NEG	negation
APPROX	approximative	NFIN	non-finite
ASM	assimilated	NMLZ	nominalizer
aux.	auxiliary	NP	noun phrase
CAUS	causal	num.	numeral
clt.	clitic	part.	particle
COM	comitative	PAUC1	paucal 1 [*-lal*]
COMPR	comparative	PAUC2	paucal 2 [*-baxɕik*]
COND	conditional	pfx.	prefix
conj.	conjuction	PL	plural
CONS	consent	pro.	pronoun
COP	copula	PREST	presentative
cop.	copula (word class)	PROX	proximal
CT	Classical Tibetan	PRS	present
CVB	converb	PST	past
CVB1	converb 1 [*-sin*]	Q	interrogative

CVB2	converb 2 [*-ne*]		quan.	quantifier
DAT	dative		RC	relative clause
DEF	definite		REFL	reflexive
DEM	demonstrative		REP	reportative
DIST	distal		rn.	relator noun
EB	East Bodish		SBJ	subjunctive
EGO	egophoric		SEN	sensory
ENG	English		sfx.	suffix
EPI	epistemic modality		SG	singular
EQ	equative		SUP	superlative
EX	existential		syn.	synonym
EXCL	exclusive		TIB	Tibetan
EXPR	expressive		TOP	topic
F	feminine		v.	verb (word class)
FIN	finite		WT	Written Tibetan
FOC	focus			

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