

ETHNOLINGUISTIC SURVEY OF WESTERNMOST ARUNACHAL PRADESH: A FIELDWORKER'S IMPRESSIONS¹

Linguistics of the Tibeto-Burman Area
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The area between Bhutan in the west, Tibet in the north, the Kameng river in the east and Assam in the south is home to at least six distinct phyla of the Trans-Himalayan (Tibeto-Burman, Sino-Tibetan) language family. These phyla encompass a minimum of 11, but probably 15 or even more mutually unintelligible languages, all showing considerable internal dialect variation. Previous literature provided largely incomplete or incorrect accounts of these phyla. Based on recent field research, this article discusses in detail the several languages of four phyla whose speakers are included in the Monpa Scheduled Tribe, providing the most accurate speaker data, geographical distribution, internal variation and degree of endangerment. The article also provides some insights into the historical background of the area and the impact this has had on the distribution of the ethnolinguistic groups.

Keywords: Arunachal Pradesh, Tibeto-Burman, Trans-Himalayan, Monpa

1. INTRODUCTION

Arunachal Pradesh is ethnically and linguistically the most diverse state of India. The total number of tribes² enumerated in the 2001 census amounted to 101, of which 26 tribes returned a population over 5,000. In the westernmost part of the state, Tawang and West Kameng districts are the homeland of a number of ethnically, culturally, religiously and linguistically diverse people. This area has been called Monyul or the “Monyul Corridor” (e.g. Aris 1980) and forms the proposed ‘Mon Autonomous Region’³. To the west, the area borders eastern

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² Despite the fact that in the ethnological and sociological literature the terms ‘tribe’ and ‘tribal’ are often contested from a normative as well as descriptive perspective, within the context of Arunachal Pradesh, and the Northeast of the Indian subcontinent in general, the terms are commonly used by the administration and by the people themselves without any pejorative connotations. For that reason, this paper uses the term ‘tribe’ in alternation with a perhaps more correct term such as ‘ethnolinguistic groups’.

³ Regarding the motives and history of this proposal, see for example Gohain (2012). The historical construct Monyul is certainly biased since the area includes many more ethnolinguistic groups than just Monpa. The name Monyul will be used when referring to the area pre-1959,

Bhutan, an area dominated by speakers of Central and East Bodish languages as well as the unclassified language Tshangla. To the north, the great Himalayan divide forms the border with the Tibetan plateau, the Tibetan Buddhist heartland inhabited by speakers of several related Central Bodish dialects. To the east, the area borders on East Kameng district and the Tani language area. To the south, the plains of Assam are the traditional homeland of people speaking various Bodo-Koch languages and the easternmost Indo-European language, Assamese.

Earlier ethnolinguistic surveys touching on the genetic relationships between the languages of the area were reported in Konow (1902, 1909), Kennedy (1914), Shafer (1955, 1966, 1967), Benedict (1972), Matisoff (1986 and 2003), Matisoff, Baron and Lowe (1996), Thurgood & LaPolla (eds., 2003), Bradley (1997, 2002), van Driem (2001, 2008), Lewis (2009) and Blench and Post (2011 and 2014). These surveys were based on the state-of-the-art knowledge at that time, but none of them were able to exhaustively and correctly report the linguistic affiliation and variation of the ethnic groups inhabiting the region. One of the prime causes for this has been the ambiguity caused by the historical Tibetan term *mon pa*⁴ ‘Monpa’, perpetuated in the ethnographic and linguistic literature as well as in the contemporary Monpa Scheduled Tribe affiliation that many of these groups share in India⁵. This term for long masked the linguistic variety of the people labelled as Monpa, as well as their linguistic affiliation with other groups. That this ambiguity could not be resolved earlier can be attributed to the limited access to the area that was the result of sensitivities over the border area between India, Tibet and Bhutan.

2. THE MONPA SCHEDULED TRIBE

Among the ethnolinguistic groups of Monyul, a traditional Tibetan division distinguishes between the predominantly Buddhist Monpa tribes and the *klo pa* ‘Lopa’ or *ghri du* ‘Gidu’, i.e. any non-Monpa, non-Buddhist tribe. Furthermore, as has been extensively discussed elsewhere (see for an overview Bodt 2012: 4-7), the term Monpa has referred to different ethnolinguistic groups in other parts of the Himalayas during various historical periods.

Part XVIII (Arunachal Pradesh) of the Indian Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order of 1950, insertion by Act 69, section 17 of the State of Arunachal Pradesh Act of 1986 and the Third Schedule mention a Scheduled Tribe called ‘Momba’ (Census of India 2013). The same act, however, states that “all the tribes [of Arunachal Pradesh]” are Scheduled Tribes. Because the nomenclature of the tribal people varies considerably according to location, time and personal preference of the respondent, his community and even the enumerator, a wide plethora of alternative names has developed in the official records and the literature. At

whereas the area will be referred to as westernmost Arunachal Pradesh when referring to the modern districts of Tawang and West Kameng combined.

⁴ In this article, transcriptions of written Tibetan are given in cursive Wylie transcription without capitalisations, followed by their most common romanisation in the study area.

⁵ This term also refers to two distinct ethnolinguistic communities in Tibet, where they form the Ménbā ethnic minority.

present, a general administrative distinction is made between the ‘Monpa’ Scheduled Tribe of western Arunachal Pradesh and the ‘Memba’ Scheduled Tribe of eastern Arunachal Pradesh⁶.

The significance of the Scheduled Tribe status lies mainly in the numerous benefits accorded to its holder, as the Indian Government aims to uplift the socio-economic condition of the Scheduled Tribes through protective arrangements (e.g. the Scheduled Castes and Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989), affirmative action (e.g. the reservation system, preferential treatment to allotment of jobs and access to higher education) and socio-economic development assistance (e.g. periodical access to subsidised kerosene, food grains and other alimentary items).

3. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE MONYUL AREA

Although local lore holds that the Tibetan variant of Buddhism was introduced in the area in the eighth century CE (see for an overview Bodt 2012: 53-54), there are no independent historical sources corroborating this assertion. Similarly, the establishment of local rule by an aristocracy of Tibetan descent in the ninth century reported in a single local written source attributed to the late seventeenth century (Gyelrik 1668; Bodt 2012: 63-96) has no corroborating written sources dating back to the actual period, nor any independent written sources of a later date. According to this source, however, the descendants of the exiled Tibetan prince *lha sras gtsang ma* ‘Lhase Tsangma’ were not the first inhabitants of the region, but rather assumed authority over existing populations whose clan names are even reported in the document.

The historic events that occurred in the middle of the turbulent seventeenth century are reported in various independent sources. Conflict arose between the *dge lugs pa* ‘Gelukpa’ religious order, which had quickly gained political and religious prominence on the Tibetan plateau and now spread southward, and the *'brug pa* ‘Drukpa’ school of the *bka' brgyud pa* ‘Kagyupa’ order, which had spread its dominion from western Bhutan eastward. This conflict led to the incorporation of the western part of Monyul into Bhutan, whilst the eastern part came under the suzerainty of the *dga' ldan pho brang* ‘Ganden Phodrang’ government in Tibet (Bodt 2012: 111-134). The Tibetan administration divided the area under its control into 32 administrative units called *tsho* ‘tsho’ and *lding* ‘ding’ and henceforth the area was referred to as the *mon yul gyi tsho lding sum cu so gnyis* ‘the 32 tsho and ding divisions of Monyul’. The contemporary relevance of this division lies in the fact that it meticulously represents the ethnolinguistic realities of the time, with the borders of the tsho and ding following ethnolinguistic boundaries that exist till date.

Since the time of Ahom King Pratap Singha (imp. 1603-1641) the ‘sāt rājā’ or ‘seven kings’ of the Tshangla speakers of Metsho and Tötsho, the ‘sāt rājā’ of the

⁶ The Memba Scheduled Tribe incorporates the Buddhist people of Menchukha circle in West Siang district, who are of mixed Tibetan, Tshangla and Tawang Monpa origin, as well as the Tshangla speakers of Tuting and Geling circles in Upper Siang district.

Sherdukpen and the *ba spu* 'Bapu' rulers of the Tshangla of Thembang enjoyed the benefits of the 'posa' system. This gave them the right to periodically control the *las sgo* 'Lägo' or 'Duar' areas of the plains of the Brahmaputra and their populations, conducting trade and extracting tax for up to eight months per year to obtain those items not available in the hills (Government of Arunachal Pradesh 1996: 43-44; Dutta and Jha 1999). The Assamese called them, and all Tibeto-Burman people living in the sub-Himalayan hills from Darjeeling till the Bhareli (Kameng) river, 'Bhutia' (Pandey and Nayak 2007: 48, 94-95, 97).

After the British colonial administrators took control of Assam in 1826, they adopted this name as 'Bhutia' or 'Bhutiya' and, when referring to those people outside Bhutan, as 'extra-Bhutan Bhutias' (Mackenzie 2012[1884]: 116; Government of Arunachal Pradesh 1996: 43-44). This name continued to be in use until the end of the nineteenth century. The British colonial administrators preferred to leave the people in the hills alone and take action against them only in case of attacks and plunders on the British Indian subjects in the plains (Mackenzie 2012[1884]: 7-8). The British disliked having to enforce authority among the hostile, scattered populations of the inaccessible hill and mountain regions, where little if any economic benefit could be obtained. Thus, until the early twentieth century, the only contact the British had with the tribes of the area was during their annual sojourn to attend the trade fairs in the Duars (Dutta and Jha 1999). Raids by the Bhutias took place in the 1830s and 1840s. From 1843, the in-kind tax extracted by the Monpa and Sherdukpen was replaced by an annual cash payment. Similarly, the Ganden administration in Tawang was given annual compensation from 1844 onwards (Government of Arunachal Pradesh 1996: 43). In the Aitchison treaties of 1844, the Bhutia recognised British authority in the Duar areas in return for the British recognising local authority in the hills and from then the relations remained largely cordial.

The visit of Captain F.M. Bailey in 1913 introduced the name 'Monpa' into British colonial administration. Incorrectly assuming Monpa to be an autonym, the British colonial administrators adopted it in favour of the Assamese word Bhutia. At the Indo-Tibetan conference in Shimla in 1914, the border with Tibet was established at the McMahon line, north of Tawang. Despite this, the British did not effectuate control by establishing their own administration in Monyul, and the people remained under Tibetan suzerainty (Government of Arunachal Pradesh 1996: 45).

In 1914, Captain Nevill observed the extreme poverty of the people of the river valleys as a direct result of excessive and unjust taxation by the monastic authorities of Tawang and raids by the Miji and Aka, who considered these raids their legitimate right (Government of Arunachal Pradesh 1996: 31, 44-47). Despite the construction of the Rupa and Dirang *rdzong* 'Dzong' fortresses and the annual tax payments, the people of the valleys were offered limited protection against these raids. Suggestions for improvement of the situation were thwarted by the First World War. In 1938, Captain Lightfoot similarly concluded that the only way to improve the living conditions of the Monpa and Sherdukpen people would be

by removing the Tibetan administration from Tawang and stopping the constant Miji and Aka raids (Government of Arunachal Pradesh 1996: 45-46). But Tibetan control of the area persisted (Reid 1942: 286-269 and 294-300; Richardson 1945: 62-64, 110-111). Although attempts to establish control were halted due to the Second World War, Assam Rifles outposts were established in Rupa in 1941, in Dirang in 1944, and in But in 1946. These outposts finally managed to control the raids.

After Indian independence, Indian administration was slowly extended into Monyul. Major Bob Khathing established Indian administration in Tawang in 1951, after which the Tibetans gradually withdrew north of the McMahon line (Government of Arunachal Pradesh 1996: 46), leaving only the upper part of the Nyamrang river valley under Tibetan control. In early 1954, the administration of the Kameng Division of the North East Frontier Agency in Bomdila classified all nominally Buddhist tribes that had previously been under Tibetan control as the Monpa Scheduled Tribe. After the Chinese takeover of Tibet in 1959, the border was sealed and all ties with Tibet were severed. In response to the 1962 Chinese aggression, militarisation and modernisation of the region became a top priority for the Indian government, though with mixed results.

4. LINGUISTIC DIVISION

In order to remove the ambiguity caused by the diverse nomenclature, the following table presents an overview based on the information available at present, with the proposed names of the phyla, the languages, hitherto reported dialect variability and previously reported names of all the people considering themselves as part of the Monpa tribe of western Arunachal Pradesh⁷.

<i>Phylum</i>	<i>Language, autonyms</i>	<i>Varieties</i>	<i>Previous name(s) and sources</i>
East Bodish	Dakpaket	?	Takpa (Shafer 1954); Dakpa (van Driem 2001 and 2007); Dāba (Zhāng 1997); Bramilo (by Tshangla speakers)
	(Tawang) Monket	?	Northern Cuònà Ménbā (Zhāng 1997; Lu 2002; Lu 1986); Tawang Monpa (Wangchu 2002); Dakpa (Hyslop and Tshering 2010); Northern Monpa (Abraham et al. 2005: Sharnup and Changprong (=Tsangprong) varieties); Bramilo (by Tshangla speakers); Yarpa ngak (by Khispi and Duhumbi)

⁷ Languages and varieties between brackets are not spoken in the westernmost Arunachal Pradesh area but genetically related to the languages spoken there.

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<i>Phylum</i>	<i>Language, autonyms</i>	<i>Varieties</i>	<i>Previous name(s) and sources</i>
	Pangchenpa Mat	Pangchenpa Mat	Northern Cuònà Ménbā (the Xuézèng dialect of Bāngxīn in Zhāng 1997; Lu 2002); Northern Monpa (Abraham et al. 2005: Zemithang variety)
		Lepo	Southern Cuònà Ménbā (Lu 1986; the Mámǎ dialect in Lu 2002; the Lèbù dialect in Zhāng 1997)
	(Dzalakha/Dzalamat)	(Dzalamat) (Khomakha)	Dzalakha (Genetti 2009; Balodis 2009; van Driem 2007; Norbu 2004; Bodt 2012)
Central Bodish	Brokpa, Brokpe, Brokke	Magopa ke Sengyukpa ke (Merak-Saktengpa ke)	n.a. Brokeh (Dondrup 1993) Brokpalo (by Tshangla speakers); Bj'obikha (in Dzongkha)
Tshangla	Bhutan Tshanglalo	(Bhutan Tshangla varieties)	Tsangia (Robinson 1849a/b); Tsangla (Stack 1897; Hofrenning 1959; Egli-Roduner 1987); Sharchok (Hoshi 1987); Tshangla (Andvik 1999 and 2009; Bodt 2014); Brukpalo, Nupchokpalo (by Dirang Tshangla speakers); Shâchop (in Dzongkha); Kyabu (by Brokpa); Tshyem (by Tawang Monpa)
		Metsho Tshangla	Southern Monpa/Khalaktang Monpa (Abraham et al. 2005: Balemü and Khalaktang varieties)
		Tötsho Tshangla (Pemakö Tshangla)	Southern Monpa (Abraham et al. 2005: Domkho variety) Cángluo Ménbā (Sün et al. 1980; Zhāng 1986)
	Dirang Tshanglalo	Dirang Tshangla Sangthi Tshangla Namshu and Thempang Tshangla	Dirang Monpa (Chakravarty 1953); Central Monpa (Das Gupta 1968; Abraham et al. 2005: the Namshu, Dirang and Sangthi varieties); Sharpalo (by Bhutan Tshangla speakers)
Kho-Bwa	Duhumbi and Khispi	Khispi ngak Duhumbi ngak	Lishpa (Abraham et al. 2005) Chugpa (Abraham et al. 2005)

Table 1. Overview of Trans-Himalayan⁸ ethno-linguistic groups belonging to the Monpa Scheduled Tribe of western Arunachal Pradesh.

⁸ Following van Driem (2011, 2014), the neutral, geographical term Trans-Himalayan is used here in favour of the terms Sino-Tibetan (i.e. pinioned Tibeto-Burman and Sinitic) and Tibeto-Burman (in von Klaproth's 1823 original sense, i.e. Tibetan, Burmese, Chinese and all languages that can be demonstrated to be genetically related to these) in recognition of the wide linguistic variety found among populations straddling the Himalayan divide.

5. TIBETAN ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION AND ETHNOLINGUISTIC CORRESPONDENCES

The administrative division of Monyul by the Tibetan Ganden administration closely follows the ethnolinguistic division of the area, as a comparison of Map 1 and Map 2 shows. The eighteenth to twentieth century Tibetan administrators of the area, obviously depending on local informants, were much better aware of the ethnolinguistic makeup of the people under their control than the twentieth century British and Indian administrators that supplanted them. Apparently, for the Tibetan administrators ethnolinguistic identity was the prime factor for the administrative set-up of the region, and the divisions not only corresponded with the languages, but even with the various dialects among them. The modern administrative units, however, are largely based on geographical proximity and population figures, politically dividing ethnolinguistic communities. Based on Biswal (2006), Norbu (2008), Gyelse Tulku (2009) and extensive personal communication with local people, this section provides a detailed overview of the ethnolinguistic groups and their respective geographical territories.

5.1. THE TAWANG MONPA

The Tawang Monpa variety is often considered the ‘real’ *mon skad* ‘Monket’ [mɒŋkɛt]⁹ and widely considered the standard/prestige variety (Bodt 2012: 284). These ‘real’ Monpa, for whom no alternative name appears to have existed, were traditionally distinguished from the *dag pa* ‘Dakpa’ and the *sbe mi spang chen pa* ‘Bemi Pangchenpa’. Together these three groups formed the *mon rigs khag gsum* ‘Monrik Khaksum’ or ‘three groups of Monpa clans’ or *mon rigs rnam gsum* ‘Monpa Namsum’ or ‘three (kinds of) common Monpa’ (Dorji 2003: 204, Bodt 2012: 273-274). These three groups speak three interrelated languages belonging to the East Bodish phylum and occupy geographically distinct areas.

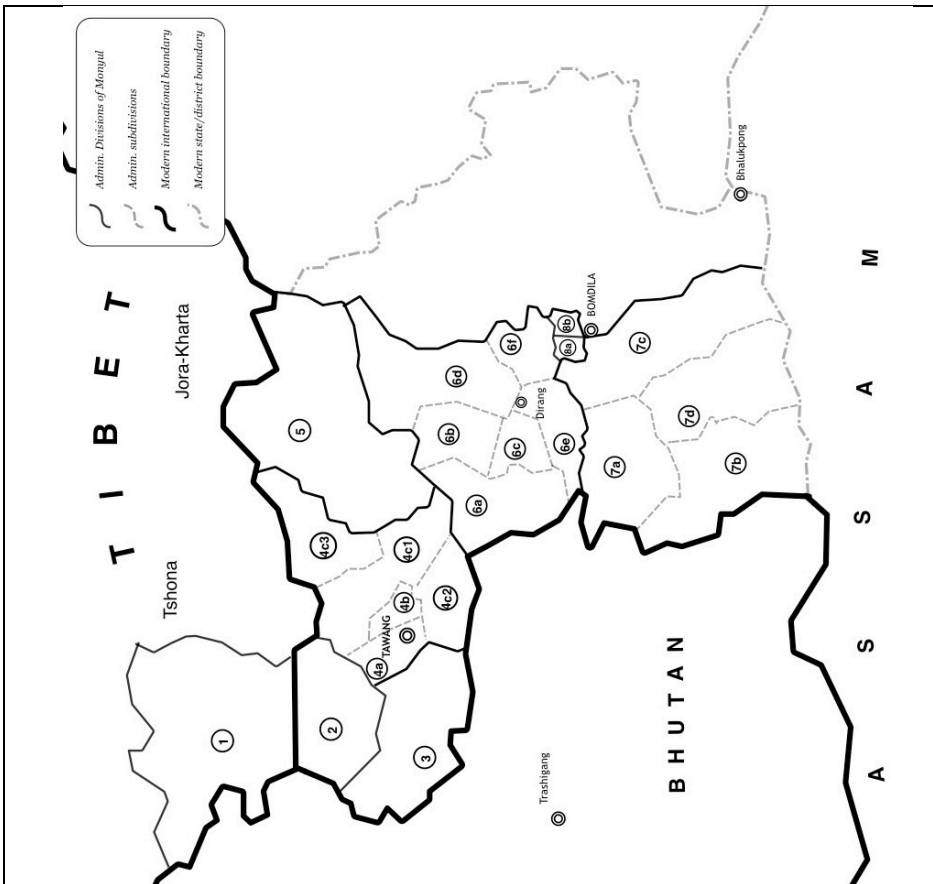
The traditional Tawang Monpa homeland is traditionally known as *la ’og yul gsum* ‘Lawok Yülsum’, ‘the three lands below the mountains’, or *shar nyi ma tsho gsum* ‘Shar Nyima Tshosum’, ‘the three divisions of the eastern sun’ (Gyelse Tulku 2009: 119-120; Norbu 2008: 14-15, 18-19). These divisions were *shar* ‘Shar’, *lha’u* ‘Lhau’ and *gse ru/bse ru* ‘Seru’. This area has been the heartland of Monyul at least since the late ninth century (Bodt 2012: 71, 275) and has dominated Monyul politically, religiously and linguistically since the second half of the seventeenth century.

The total number of Tawang Monpa speakers is estimated between 10,000 and 12,000 speakers. Despite the pre-eminence of the variety, linguistic data are scant and were published in Das Gupta (1968), Dondrup (1993), Lu (1986), Wangchu (2002), Hyslop and Tshering (2010), Abraham et al. (2005) and perhaps Zhāng (the De’rang dialect, 1997: 3-4).

⁹ The most common phonetic realisations of some local names are given in International Phonetic Alphabet between square brackets.



Map 2. Linguistic groups of westernmost Arunachal Pradesh. Tawang Monpa: 1a. Dzalakha, 1b. Lepo Pangchen Monpa, 1c. Pangchen Monpa, 1d. Dakpa, 1e. Tawang Monpa; Brokpa: 2a. Magopa, 2b. Sengnyukpa, 2c. Merak-Saktengpa; Tshangla: 3a. Sangthi, 3b. Dirang, 3c. Namshu-Thembang, 3d. Tö, 3e. Me; Sherdukpen: 4a. Rupa, 4b. Shergaon; Sartangpa: 5a. Rahungpa, 5b. Khuitampa, 5c. Buipa, 5d. Khoinapa.



Map 1: Administrative Divisions of Monyul. 1 Lepo Tshozhi; 2. Pangchen Dingdruk; 3. Dakpa Tshoget; Shar Nyima Tshosum: 4a. Seru, 4b. Shar, 4c1. Lhau, 4c2. Hraula Gangsum, 4c3. Shar Rho Zhangdak; (5. Maktheng Lungsum); Drangnang Tshodruk: 6a. Sengnyuk, 6b. Chuk, 6c. Lis, 6d. Sangthi, 6e. Dirang, 6f. Namshu-Thembang; Rongnang Tshozhi: 7a. Tö, 7b. Me, 7c. Tukpan, 7d. Sher, (8a. Rahung, 8b. Khuldam).

5.2. THE DAKPA

In 1680, the ‘Dakpaneng’ area inhabited by the people traditionally called ‘Dakpa’ [dakpa:] consisted of five divisions and was called *dag pa tsho lnga* ‘Dakpa Tshonga’ or the ‘five divisions of the Dakpa’ (Gyelse Tulku 2009: 119-120). The three Dakpa divisions under present-day Tawang circle¹⁰ were *spa ma mkhar* ‘Pamakhar’ (or *dpa’ mo mkhar*, see Department of Karmik and Adhyatmik Affairs 2011: 25), *bras sa* ‘Bresa’ (‘rice land’, now called *sag pred* ‘Sakpret’ or *sag phred*, see Department of Karmik and Adhyatmik Affairs 2011: 25) and *mthong legs* ‘Thonglek’ (‘nice appearance’, now called ‘Thongleng’). Under present-day Lumla circle the divisions were known as *khri lam* ‘Khrilam’ (now called ‘Thrillam’) and *’ung la* ‘Ungla’. After the final settlement of the border with the Drukpa of Bhutan, the divisions of *zangs lung* ‘Zanglung’ (or *bzang lung*, see Department of Karmik and Adhyatmik Affairs 2011: 25, now written ‘Sanglum’), *mu khob shag gsum* ‘Mukhop-Shaksum’ and *kha rung sbang lan* ‘Kharung-Banglan’ (or *kha bong*, see Department of Karmik and Adhyatmik Affairs 2011: 25, now called ‘Kharung-Bongleng’) were added. Since then the area was referred to as *dag pa tsho brgyad* ‘Dakpa Tshoget’ or the ‘eight divisions of the Dakpa’ (Norbu 2008: 14-15, 18-19). These eight divisions encompass the area of the present-day *bong mkhar* ‘Bongkhar’ (now written ‘Bonghar’), *lum la* ‘Lumla’ and *sde stong mkhar* ‘Detongkhar’ (now written ‘Dudunghar’) circles, the western portion of Tawang circle and the southern portion of *bje ma’i thang* ‘Jemithang’ (‘plain of sand’, now written ‘Zemithang’) circle.

The total ‘Dakpaket’ [dakpaket]-speaking population is estimated between 11,000 and 12,000 people. The Dakpa linguistic variety is markedly different from standard Tawang Monpa and might, at least linguistically, constitute a language by itself. As a result of intense linguistic contact and the pervading influence of Tawang Monpa as a *lingua franca* in the area, most Dakpa speakers, in communication with speakers of standard Tawang Monpa, consciously adjust their speech to the prestige variety, masking the phonological, lexical and syntactic peculiarities of their own variety. A dialect continuum can be observed where lexical isoglosses between Tawang Monpa, Dakpa and Dzalakha¹¹ overlap. Earlier, linguistic data of Dakpa have been presented in van Driem (2007), who correctly observed the linguistic affinities between Dakpa and Dzala. Zhāng (1997) refers to this variety as Dāba.

An additional 1,500 Dakpa speakers can be found in *stod mtsho* ‘Tötsho’ and *ya lang* ‘Yalang’ blocks of *bkra’ shis g.yang rtse* ‘Trashī Yangtse’ district in eastern Bhutan adjacent to the Dakpaneng area.

¹⁰ A circle is the administrative sub-division under a district in Arunachal Pradesh.

¹¹ See also section 5.4.

5.3. THE PANGCHENPA

The area previously known as *spang chen lding drug* ‘Pangchen Dingdruk’ (‘six divisions of the great meadows’ sometimes translated as ‘six divisions of great renunciation’, Gyelse Tulku 2009: 129) was, and is, linguistically, culturally, religiously and administratively distinct from the Shar Nyima Tshosum and Dakpaneng areas. The six ding divisions of the area were *gshog tshan stod bar smad* ‘Shoktshan Tö, Bar, Me’ or ‘upper, middle and lower Shoktshan’, corresponding to the present-day ‘Shoktshan’ (now written as ‘Shocktsen’) area, *lhun po* ‘Lhunpo’ (now written as ‘Lumpo’), *rmu chod* ‘Muchot’ and *mkhar sman* ‘Kharman’. The language, ‘Pangchenpa mat’ [paŋtʰɛnpa ’mat] is markedly different from standard Tawang Monpa and Dakpa, to the extent that it might be considered a distinct language. The traditional dress, headgear, religious affiliation and local administrative system are distinct as well (Biswal 2006: 37; Norbu 2008: 158-167). There are perhaps 2,000 Pangchenpa speakers in Arunachal Pradesh. Scant data of the Pangchen Monpa language have earlier been presented by Abraham et al. (2005), Zhāng (the Xuézèng dialect of Bāngxīn, 1997: 3) and Lu (2002).

To the north of the Pangchen area, the Nyamnyang river crosses the international border into Tibet. The valleys just north of the border are traditionally known as *le po tsho bzhi* ‘Lepo Tshozhi’ (Gyelse Tulku 2009: 129, *le’u po tsho bzhi*, see Gyelse Tulku 2009: 148 or *legs po tsho bzhi*, see Department of Karmik and Adhyatmik Affairs 2011: 25) or ‘four divisions of Lepo’ (Norbu 2008: 18-19; Bodt 2012: 278). This area includes *srin mo tsho* ‘Sinmo Tsho’ (present-day Mámǎ Ménbā autonomous township), *gom ni tsho* ‘Gomni Tsho’ (present-day Gongri Ménbā autonomous township), *skyid po tsho* ‘Kyitpa Tsho’ (present-day Jība Ménbā autonomous township) and *zhan slad tsho* ‘Zhanle Tsho’ (present-day Le Ménbā autonomous township). Culturally and linguistically, the people of Lepo Tshozhi are akin to the Pangchen Monpa (Bodt 2012: 284-285). Linguistic data of this variety were presented in Zhāng (1997: 3, the Lèbù dialect) and Lu (2002, the Mámǎ dialect). Chinese sources call these speakers the ‘Southern Cuònà Ménbā’. The Census of China returned 612 Ménbā, and Lu (2002) mentions a number of 527 Ménbā speakers in *mtsho-sna* ‘Tshona’ (present-day Cuònà county).

5.4. RELATED LANGUAGES OF EASTERN BHUTAN

In addition to the aforementioned East Bodish languages of westernmost Arunachal Pradesh, two varieties of a language commonly called *dza la kha* ‘Dzalakha’ or ‘Dzala ’mat’ [dʒala ’mat] are spoken in *kho ma* ‘Khoma’ block of *lhun rtse* ‘Lhüntsi’ district and *bum sde gling* ‘Bumdeling’ and *g.yang rtse* ‘Yangtse’ blocks of Trashi ’Yangtse district in eastern Bhutan (Genetti 2009; Balodis 2009; van Driem 2007; Norbu 2004: 13, 14; Bodt, 2012: 285). The total number of speakers of these two varieties is 3,835 (Bodt 2012: 277). The status of Dzalakha as a language, especially in consideration of the wide phonological and

lexical variation between the various Monpa varieties, was discussed in Bodt (2012: 288-290).

5.5. THE DIRANG TSHANGLA

As one travels from Tawang towards the southeast and crosses the Zela pass, one enters the Gongri river valley. In Tibetan and in Dzongkha, this river is known as the *grang med chu* ‘Drangmechu’ or ‘the not-cold (i.e. warm) river’. The homonymy with the main river in the Tshangla-speaking area of eastern Bhutan indicates the close ethnolinguistic and historic ties between these two areas. The six divisions of this area were known as *grang nang tsho drug* ‘Drangnang Tshodruk’ or the ‘six divisions in the warm river valley’ (also *sbrang nang tsho drug*, see Department of Karmik and Adhyatmik Affairs 2011: 25). The divisions included *seng smyug* ‘Sengnyuk’ (from the two main villages, *seng ge rdzong* ‘Senge Dzong’ or ‘fortress of the snow lion’ and *smyug-ma-dung* ‘Nyukmadung’ or ‘bamboo village’, also *smyug ma gdong* ‘bamboo face’, see Department of Karmik and Adhyatmik Affairs 2011: 25), *phyug* or *phyugs* ‘Chuk’ (‘rich’), *slis* ‘Lis’ (also *rli*, see Department of Karmik and Adhyatmik Affairs 2011: 25), *sang thi* ‘Sangthi’ (also *sang rti*, see Department of Karmik and Adhyatmik Affairs 2011: 25), *sde rang* or *’di rang* ‘Dirang’ (also *rdi rang*, see Department of Karmik and Adhyatmik Affairs 2011: 25) and *nam shu them spang* ‘Namshu-Thembang’ (also *nam zhi them spang*, see Department of Karmik and Adhyatmik Affairs 2011: 25). The latter three divisions are inhabited by around 6,500-7,000 Tshangla speakers traditionally referred to as the ‘Drangnangpa Monpa’.

Although these three internally slightly divergent Tshangla varieties are undoubtedly closer related to the Tshangla varieties spoken to the immediate south as well as in eastern Bhutan than to any other language, there are lexical and syntactic differences that compromise mutual intelligibility to the extent that, without prior exposure and conscious adjustment, speakers of these varieties cannot comprehend each other. In the case of Dirang Tshangla, rather than phonological or lexical distinctiveness, it is the morphological and syntactic structures that make the language largely incomprehensible to other Tshangla speakers. The Dirang Tshangla varieties might, therefore, warrant listing as a separate language rather than as a dialect. The distinctiveness of these Tshangla varieties is probably attributable to a substrate language. Similarly, the physical appearance of the people is significantly different from their southern and eastern brethren and the people of Tawang (Duarah 1992: 55¹²). Although Duarah (1992: 156-158) attributes this to environment and livelihoods, the current understanding is that the Tshangla speakers of Dirang are an admixture of mainly male settlers from eastern Bhutan and Tibet with a strong local substrate of a people related to the Sartang to the east and the people of Lish and Chug to the west. Additional evidence for this might be the reference to the lineage of a certain *b+hi su ra pa*

¹² Here a remark needs to be made that Duarah’s ‘Dirang Monpa’ sample included people from Dirang, Yewang, Sangthi and Lish villages, and not just Tshangla speakers.

‘Bhisurapa’ in the Sangthi valley (Gyelrik 1668: ff27b-28a) and the story of the ‘Bishum Shapa’ (hunter) who came from the confluence of the Bishum (now written Bichom) and Kameng rivers, where at present Bugun is spoken (Bodt, to appear). Their descendants lived in present-day Bishum village and were called *mundapa* [mundapa]¹³ by the Tshangla speakers. The Tshangla speakers of Thembang and Sangthi still refer to the Bugun people as Mundapa and their language as *mundalo* [mundalo]. The Mundapa lived in wooden houses on stilts with bamboo mats as walls and dried sago palm (*Metroxylon sagu*¹⁴) leaves as roofing. Their primary livelihood was hunting, gathering and the cultivation of sago palms in a manner similar to the Puroik people living further to the east. This sago palm plantation still exists today and is exploited by seven households of Bishum and Phudung villages, who claim descent from the Mundapa (pers. comm. Phudung Tsorgan Thinlay and Bishum Leki, 7 October 2013). In Tshangla the sago palm is called *nungshing* [nuŋʃeiŋ]. Until perhaps four decades ago, Mundalo was actively spoken in Bishum. The language is said to have been mutually intelligible with the Puroik variety spoken in Bulu village in Nafra circle (pers. comm. with Phembu of Bulu, 16-17 October 2013).

According to the Gyelrik, in the ninth century the *jo bo* ‘Jowo’ clan took over control from the existing lineages of *a mi gsar pa* ‘Ami Sarpa’ in Lis, *sngon btsun chen thi* ‘Ngontsun Chenthi’ in Nyukmadung, Bhisurapa in Sangthi and *jo jo rgan pa* ‘Jojo Ganpa’ in Dirang who all originated from the east (Gyelrik 1668: ff27b-28a). Another descendant of the exiled Tibetan prince Lhase Tsangma from the *wang ma* ‘Wangma’ clan became the Bapu ruler of Thembang in order to suppress the various Lopa tribes in the region on invitation of the *gtso rgan* ‘tsorgan’ or ‘village chief’ *a rgyal* ‘Agye’ (Gyelrik 1668: ff. 26a). This story is told by the Sartang people too, who maintain that it was them who invited a Tibetan of royal descent to rule them. He settled in the Dikhri dzong fortress and later in the fortified village of Thempang (‘doorstep’), located on a high hillock overlooking the Sartang-inhabited area. In return for providing protection against the Lopa, they would render their voluntary services to him. The Sherdukpen have a similar history (Jatso n.d.). Kennedy (1914) reported that in historical times, the Monpa of Dirang lived together with “Lopa”, probably speakers of a Kho-Bwa language, until a dispute led to their expulsion and the establishment of the Dirang dzong fortress. Perhaps of significance is the existence of a low-ranking social class in all Tshangla-speaking villages of the Gongri valley, including Dirang, Sangthi, Namshu and Thembang called the *yenlak* [jenlak]. A cognate class called *yanlo* [janlɔ] also exists among the Sherdukpen and they are believed to be descendants of immigrants from Bhutan. The people of the *yenlak* and *yanlo* classes do not have

¹³ The homophony with the name of the Austroasiatic Munda speakers of the east-central Indian subcontinent will strike the attentive reader, particularly those who have been suspecting an Austroasiatic affiliation of Puroik and Bugun. Till date there is, however, no linguistic or other evidence that would support such an affiliation. A possible etymology could incorporate the Dirang Tshangla and Khispi/Duhumbi word for ‘jungle’, [mun].

¹⁴ Although the cultivated palms from which sago is extracted are presumed to be of this species (e.g. Blench and Post 2014), there are several other species of palm and tree-fern from which pith is extracted as well (e.g. Stonor 1948; Bodt 2012: 382-383).

specific clan names and perhaps represent the indigenous population stratum. These people subsequently came under the authority of the highest *bapu* [bapu] class in the Tshangla area or *thong* [tʰõŋ] class in the Sherdukpen area, consisting of clans claiming aristocratic origin in Tibet and Bhutan. The yenlak were also considered inferior to the clans belonging to the Tshangla *gila* [gila] class who originated from Tshangla, Brokpa, Tawang Monpa or Sartang speaking communities in Bhutan or Monyul. Similarly, the yanlo were considered inferior to the Sherdukpen *chau* [tʰhau] class, some of whom constitute an indigenous element and others originate from Tawang.

5.6. THE TÖTSHO AND METSHO TSHANGLA

South of the Dirang Tshangla area were four divisions called the *rong nang tsho bzhi* ‘Rongnang Tshozhi’ or ‘four divisions in the lower gorges’, namely *stod* ‘Tö’ or the ‘upper division’ including the villages of *mur shing* ‘Murshing’ (now written ‘Morshing’), *dom kha* ‘Domkha’ (also *dam khog*, see Department of Karmik and Adhyatmik Affairs 2011: 25) and *phu dung* ‘Phudung’ (also *phu thung*, see Department of Karmik and Adhyatmik Affairs 2011: 25); *smad* ‘Me’ or the ‘lower division’ including the villages of *sbo mkhar* ‘Bokhar’ (now written ‘Boha’), *sham spang* ‘Shampang’ (now written ‘Samphung’) and *tsing ki* ‘Tsingki’ (now written ‘Chingi’); *sher* ‘Sher’; and *stug span* ‘Tukpan’ (also *ltug span*, see Department of Karmik and Adhyatmik Affairs 2011: 25). Of these four divisions, Tötsho and Metsho are inhabited by around 6,000 speakers of Tshangla, who were known as ‘Rongnangpa Monpa’, referring to the traditional name of the area they inhabit, whereas Sher and Tukpan Tsho are inhabited by the Sherdukpen. Since 1831, Rongnang Tshozhi was administered by the *rdzong dpon* ‘dzongpon’ or ‘fort magistrate’ of the sixteenth century *stag lung rdzong* ‘Taklung fortress’ and the tax collected in the Rongnang area was used for sponsoring the Torgya festival in Tawang. Five Tshangla Bapu nobles from the area and the two Taklung dzongpon constituted the *sāt rājā* who collected the land tax and *posa* imposed on the Kachari people of the Duar plains (Dutta and Jha 1999; Directorate of Research, n.d.).

The Tshangla speakers of Metsho originate in eastern Bhutan in historical times. Before their arrival and settlement in the area, the forested hills were the winter grazing grounds and camp area for the people of Tötsho and Lis and the Brokpa. Till date there is no evidence, linguistic, archaeological or other, for a permanent habitation of this area before the arrival of the Tshangla speakers. Metsho Tshangla is very close to eastern Dungsam Tshangla spoken just across the border in Bhutan. These Tshangla speakers of eastern Samdrup Jongkhar district probably represent a relatively recent migration themselves (Bodt 2012: 217-230). Internal dialect differences of Metsho Tshangla are mainly of a lexical nature and appear to be the result of twentieth century Tawang Monpa and Dirang Tshangla migration to several of the 22 Metsho Tshangla villages.

The Tshangla variety spoken in Domkha, Murshing and Sanglem of Tötsho is lexically intermediate between Dirang and Metsho Tshangla but grammatically closer to, and therefore mutually intelligible with, the latter and Bhutan Tshangla.

In the densely populated Phudung, Bamrok and Khelong villages and associated hamlets, the people speak a Tshangla variety called by other Tshangla speakers as *nangtam-sangtam* ‘inner talk-secret talk’, incomprehensible to any other Tshangla speaker. Even when they adapt their speech to outsiders, it is still hard to comprehend. The last large-scale Tshangla migration from Bhutan to Phudung, naming the largest village after their deserted home village in eastern Bhutan, is a post-seventeenth century migration from eastern Bhutan five to six generations ago. Before that, Tshangla speakers might have arrived cotemporary to the settlement of Tshangla speakers in Dirang, and there might well have been an unknown substrate population before that.

The total number of Tshangla speakers in West Kameng is estimated at 12,500-13,000, making Tshangla the second-most populous Monpa language. The exact classification of Tshangla and the origins of its speakers remains unknown. All Tshangla speakers strongly identify themselves as Monpa and call their language *monpalo* ‘Monpa language’ although the elder generation still remembers the autonym *tshanglalo* ‘language of humans’. In the Drangnang and Rongnang areas, Tshangla was the *lingua franca* until it became slowly replaced by Arunachali Hindi after the 1950s. Tshangla is also the majority language in the adjacent areas of eastern Bhutan, where it serves as a *lingua franca*, as well as in the Pemakö region of south-eastern Tibet (Bodt 2012). The total number of Tshangla speakers is estimated to be close to 200,000.

The first mention of Tshangla is made in the short grammar by W. Robinson in 1849 (1849a, b), followed by Stack (1897). From the late 1950s onwards, descriptions of Bhutan Tshangla were made by Hofrenning (1959), Egli-Roduner (1987), Hoshi (1987) and Bodt (2014). The first complete Tshangla grammar was written by Andvik (1999 and 2009). Descriptions of Dirang Tshangla include Chakravarty (1953) and Das Gupta (1968) and word lists of Dirang, Metsho and Tötsho Tshangla can be found in Abraham et al. (2005). Linguistic descriptions of Tshangla as spoken in Tibet include the description by Sün et al. (1980) and Zhāng (1986).

5.7. THE BROKPA

In between the Tawang Monpa area in the northwest, Tibet in the north, the Tshangla area in the south and southwest, and the Lish and Chug area in the east we can find an extended area of highlands inhabited by the semi-nomadic *’brog pa* ‘Brokpa’ people who speak the Central Tibetan ‘Brokpake’, ‘Bropke’ or ‘Brokke’ [brɔ̃ʔpake: ~ brɔ̃ʔpke: ~ brɔ̃ʔke:] language. The northern area historically known as *dmag theng lung sum* ‘Maktheng Lungsum’ (Gyelse Tulku 2009: 119-120, Norbu 2008: 14-15) included the present-day villages of *dmag ’go* ‘Mago’ (Gyelse Tulku 2009: 174), *theng phu* ‘Thengphu’ (Gyelse Tulku 2009: 174, now written ‘Thingbu’) and *lung thang* ‘Lungthang’ (now written ‘Luguthang’) of Thingbu circle. The area was not included in the 32 divisions of Monyul because it was the pastureland of the nobility of the house of *bsam sgrub pho brang* ‘Samdrup

Phodrang' in the *byo ra mkhar ta* 'Jora Kharta' region of Tibet, a fact which was recognised in the McMahon agreement of 1914 (Richardson 1945:112; Norbu 2008:18-19). These 'Magopa Brokpa' of Maktheng Lungsum have retained a linguistic and cultural distinction from the other Brokpa groups (Biswal 2006: 37). The Magopa variety of Brokpa is also spoken by Magopa migrants in the villages of Chander, Thungri and Lagam under Dirang circle, although many of these speakers are also proficient in Tshangla which has served as the *lingua franca* among people of mixed Brokpa, Tawang Monpa and Tshangla origin. The variety of Brokpa spoken in Nyukmadung, Senge Dzong and surrounding hamlets in erstwhile Sengnyuk Tsho is slightly different, incorporating many lexical borrowings from Tawang Monpa and Tshangla. Dondrup (1993) produced a short description of the language spoken in Senge and Nyukmadung villages.

Because of their shared historical origin on the Tibetan plateau (ref. the Brokpa origin story in Pelgen 2007 and Bodt 2012: 305-308 and Annex VIII), the approximately 2,200 Brokpa speakers of Maktheng Lungsum and Sengnyuk in the Drangnang area are linguistically and ethnically related to the approximately 3,600 Brokpa speakers of Merak and Sakteng in eastern Bhutan (Bodt 2012: 303, 307). The Brokpa variety spoken in Lubrang village of Dirang circle is virtually the same as Brokpa spoken in Bhutan, as most of the inhabitants of Lubrang descent from migrants who came from Sakteng two to three generations ago.

5.8. THE KHISPI AND DUHUMBI

As Blench and Post (2011: 3) earlier observed, the people of Lis (now written Lish) village, erstwhile Lis Tsho, speak a language mutually intelligible with the people of the Chuk (now written Chug) valley or Chuk Tsho. The language is part of the Kho-Bwa cluster and related to the Sartang, Sherdukpen and most probably, on a higher level, the Bugun and Puroik languages. The autonyms of the languages are *khispi ngak* [k^hispi ŋak] 'the language of the people of Khis' and *duhumbi ngak* [duhumbi ŋak] 'the language of the people of Duhum', in which Khis and Duhum are the autonyms of the villages of Lis and Chuk respectively and 'bi ~ pi' is the third person indefinite pronoun. Because of the pejorative connotations of the names Lisha and Chukpa, the autonyms are preferable. The total number of speakers is estimated at 2,000-2,500 people. Until two generations ago, Duhumbi was also spoken by the Thukshipa or Tukshipa *tshan* 'clan' in Sangthi village, considered one of the oldest clans of the Sangthi valley. A few households belonging to the Thukshipa clan can also be found in Duhum village. This is the only tangible evidence of the origin myth claiming a shared descent of the Sangthi and Chuk people from two hunter-brothers (Bodt, to appear). The Thukshipa clan members of Sangthi have linguistically assimilated to the Tshangla majority, whereas, as in Lis, the clan system is not used in Chuk.

Popular accounts hold that the people of Lis are of Kachari origin and that they were brought to the village as porters and stonemasons for the dzongpon of Dirang. According to some, this is the reason that Dirang is called the *tsho a pa* 'Tsho Apa' or 'division father' and Lis the *tsho a ma* 'Tsho Ama' or 'division mother'. There

is, however, little historical or linguistic evidence for a direct Kachari origin. Instead, the Khispi combine an indigenous element with later admixture from people who migrated from eastern Bhutan, the Tibetan plateau and Tawang. The people of Chuk are similarly of a very diverse ethnolinguistic origin, including Tshangla, Brokpa, Chocangaca and Tibetan influences. Blench (2011) named the subgroup of Khispi and Duhumbi and the Sartang and Sherdukpen varieties within the Kho-Bwa cluster as the Mey-cluster. Abraham et al. (2005) presented a word list from Lis and Chuk.

6. SPEAKER DATA AND CENSUS RESULTS

Since no detailed linguistic census of Arunachal Pradesh was ever conducted, the languages and dialects of the state, their classification and their speaker numbers remains largely unknown. Although Scheduled Tribe data have been collected during the decadal Census of India, the data are inconsistent and unreliable. As an illustration, the following Table presents the various Monpa Scheduled Tribe results in the years 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991 and 2001:

<i>ST</i> ¹⁵	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001
Monpa	21,985	23,319	34,469	38,862	41,983
Momba	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	4,712
Tawang Monpa	n.a.	826	6,503	n.a.	7,500
Dirang Monpa	n.a.	1,716	3,599	5,025	1,108
Lish Monpa	n.a.	1,046	1,567	12	682
Chug Monpa	n.a.	483	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
But Monpa	n.a.	n.a.	348	665	3
Panchen Monpa	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	11

Table 2: Monpa Scheduled Tribe decadal census results (Census of India 1961-2001).

These Scheduled Tribe population data cannot be considered even close approximations of the actual number of speakers, and the improbable decadal fluctuations are an obvious sign of this. There are several reasons for this. First of all, the Scheduled Tribe population data do not follow rigid distinctions along ethnolinguistic lines. As a result, any group of people in Arunachal Pradesh can be considered a Scheduled Tribe, and the Scheduled Tribe category is an open category in the census forms. Thus, the particular Scheduled Tribe affiliation of an individual is a subjective interpretation of both the individual and the enumerating officer. Secondly, post-independence decades have seen a considerable influx of

¹⁵ The abbreviation ST in tables will refer to Scheduled Tribe.

political and economic migrants from various parts of the Himalayan region. These include Tshangla speakers from eastern Bhutan, Tibetans fleeing the Chinese take-over in 1959 and economic migrants of Nepalese origin. In due course of time, a considerable number of them have, through marriage or illegal means, obtained the Scheduled Tribe status, even though the tongues they speak may not reflect their tribe affiliation. Finally, and perhaps most worryingly from a language endangerment point of view, the Scheduled Tribe status of an individual does not automatically mean that the person is conversant in the language spoken by that Scheduled Tribe. Urban populations as well as rural populations that are in constant contact with other linguistic communities increasingly use the Arunachali variety of Hindi, not only as a *lingua franca*, but even within the household. For a considerable number of speech communities, inter-generational transmission of the mother tongue stops at the current parent generation, even when the Scheduled Tribe status is passed on to the next.

As the 2011 Census of India data for Arunachal Pradesh have not been released by the Regional Census Office in Shillong due to gross irregularities in the enumerated data, the results of the 2001 census are the most recent (Census of India 2001 and Office of the DC 2012). To come up with more reliable estimates, this research combined the figures for the village-wise Scheduled Tribe populations with the geographic location of the various speech communities. Adjustments had to be made for non-Scheduled Tribe populations inhabiting urban areas and army camps, and assumptions had to be made regarding the linguistic affiliation of multilingual populations. Although the tabularised results presented below are estimates, they are the most detailed figures available at the moment.

<i>Language/Division/Circle</i>	<i>Total Population</i>	<i>%ST</i>	<i>ST Population</i>
Tawang Monpa	9,935 (12,000)		
<i>Shar Tsho</i>			
Kitpi circle	2,665		2,665 ¹⁶
<i>Lhau Tsho</i>			
Thingbu circle ¹⁷	1,231		1,231
Mukto circle ¹⁸	2,515		2,515 ¹⁹

¹⁶ The non-Scheduled Tribe population of Tawang and Kitpi circles combined was 38.5%, presumably inhabiting Tawang town and army areas and not the largely rural Kitpi circle, so no adjustment has been made.

¹⁷ The area of present-day Thingbu circle traditionally belonging to Lhau Tsho was called *shar hro byang dag tsho* ‘Shar Hro Zhangdak Tsho’ (see Norbu 2008:18-19; Gyelse Tulku 2009:174, or *sha ’ug hro byang dwags tsho*, see Department of Karmik and Adhyatmik Affairs 2011: 25).

¹⁸ The villages in Mukto circle were also known as *hra’u la gang gsum* ‘Hraula Gangsum’.

¹⁹ Mukto and Bonghar circle combined had a Scheduled Tribe population of 99%, hence, no adjustment for Mukto circle was made.

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<i>Language/Division/Circle</i>	<i>Total Population</i>	<i>%ST</i>	<i>ST Population</i>
Jang circle	5,423	65.0 ²⁰	3,524
<i>Seru Tsho</i>			
Tawang circle	13,605	61.5 ²¹	8,367 ²²
(Eastern Bhutan) ²³			(1,500)
(West Kameng) ²⁴			(567)
Dakpa Monpa	10,596 (12,000)		
<i>Kharung Bongleng Tsho</i>			
Bonghar circle	931		931
<i>Pamakhar Tsho</i>			
Tawang circle	789		789
<i>Sakpret Tsho</i>			
Tawang circle	202		202
<i>Thongleng Tsho</i>			
Tawang circle	481		481
<i>Khrila Tsho</i>			
Lumla circle	2,541	91.0 ²⁵	2,310
<i>Ungla Tsho</i>			
Lumla circle	2,839		2,839
<i>Zanglung Tsho</i>			
Dudunghar circle	1,854		1,854
<i>Mukhop Shaksum Tsho</i>			
Dudunghar circle	429		429
Zemithang circle	761		761
(Eastern Bhutan) ²⁶			(1,500)
Pangchen Monpa	1,737 (2,200)		
<i>Pangchen Dingdruk</i>			

²⁰ *byang* 'Zhang' (now written as Jang) circle had a non-Scheduled Tribe population of 35%, mainly concentrated in Yuthenpo, Dungji and Kharsa villages and the Nuraneng army area.

²¹ Tawang circle had a total population of 15,077 including a rural population of 6,701 people and an urban population of 8,376 people. The western portion of Tawang circle with 1,472 people traditionally belonged to the Dakpa-speaking area.

²² A considerable number of people whose mother tongue is Tibetan, especially those staying in Zhöl and Gonpa, have obtained Scheduled Tribe status. The majority of them are also near-proficient in Monket. These people are descendants of pre-1950 Tibetan administrators and clergy as well as post-1950 refugees and speak a dialect of Central Tibetan. They have sometimes been called Zhöpa, Shöpa or Shöpa Monpa.

²³ From Shongphu and Phongme blocks, viz. Bodt (2012: 277).

²⁴ Several villages of West Kameng district have a population whose mother tongue is Tawang Monpa, in addition to the local language. This includes people who fled the 1962 border conflict and economically well-off people who have bought land and settled in the climatically more favourable conditions of West Kameng district.

²⁵ The Scheduled Tribe population of Lumla circle was around 91%, with the majority of the non-Scheduled Tribe population residing in Lumla circle headquarters of the erstwhile Khrila Tsho.

²⁶ In Yalang and Tötsho blocks (Bodt 2012: 277).

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<i>Language/Division/Circle</i>	<i>Total Population</i>	<i>%ST</i>	<i>ST Population</i>
Zemithang circle	2,044	85.0 ²⁷	1,737
<i>Lepo Tshozhi</i>			
(Tibet)			(500)
<hr/>			
Dirang Tshangla	6,336 (8,000)		
<i>Drangnang Tshodruk</i>			
<i>Dirang Tsho</i>			
Dirang circle	3,690	84.1	3,104 ²⁸
<i>Sangthi Tsho</i>			
Dirang circle	1,534	94.1	1,444
<i>Namshu-Thembang Tsho</i>			
Dirang circle	1,893	94.5	1,788
(Dirang Town)	(2,320)	58.2	(1,350) ²⁹
(Sera village/Bomdila)	(566)	70.7	(400)
(Pedung village/New Bomdila)	(567)	68.2	(387)
<hr/>			
Metsho and Tötsho Tshangla	5,882 (6,000)		
<i>Rongnang Tshozhi</i>			
<i>Tötsho</i>			
Dirang circle	1,473	63.7	938
Khalaktang circle	727	68.9	501
<i>Metsho</i>			
Khalaktang circle	5,960	74.6	4,443
(Balemu Town and Village) ³⁰	(520)		(0)
(1300 and 1700 chain PWD)	(122)		(0)
<hr/>			
Brokpa	2,190		
<i>Maktheng Lungsum Tsho</i>			
Thingbu circle	616		616
<i>Drangnang Tshodruk</i>			
<i>Sengnyuk Tsho</i>			
Dirang circle	2,913	54.0 ³¹	1,574
<hr/>			
Khispi/Duhumbi	2,495		
<i>Drangnang Tshodruk</i>			
<i>Lis Tsho</i>			

²⁷ The majority of the 15% non-Scheduled Tribe population of Zemithang circle is presumed to inhabit Zemithang town.

²⁸ As mentioned, the people of some villages are Tawang Monpa speakers, although they also speak Tshangla.

²⁹ A large proportion of the Scheduled Tribe population of Dirang town and Sera and Pedung villages near Bomdila are native Tshangla speakers, although Tawang Monpa and Brokpa speakers and to a lesser extent Sherdukpen, Bugun, Aka and Miji can also be found.

³⁰ No Scheduled Tribe figures were given for Balemu town and village and the 1300 and 1700 PWD labour camps but there might be another 500 Metsho Tshangla speakers.

³¹ The Scheduled Tribe population of these villages is only 54% due to the high army presence in the Senge Dzong area.

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<i>Language/Division/Circle</i>	<i>Total Population</i>	<i>%ST</i>	<i>ST Population</i>
Dirang circle	2,208	87.2	1,925
<i>Chuk Tsho</i>			
Dirang circle	572	99.7	570

Table 3. Scheduled Tribe population and linguistic groups in historical and modern administrative units³².

The Monpa Scheduled Tribe is a political and administrative label, made up in the early twentieth century. Despite the fact that it groups together linguistically non-related ethnic groups, there are some factors that contribute to a shared Monpa identity. Notwithstanding their awareness that their languages are distinct, any speaker of Tshangla, the varieties of Monpa, Brokpa, Khispi and Duhumbi in Tawang and West Kameng will strongly and uniquely identify him or herself in the first place as Monpa.

Historical and contemporary binding factors for this Monpa identity are in the first place a common history of post-seventeenth century political dominance by the Tibetan Ganden administration through Tawang monastery, characterised by heavy in-kind taxation. Furthermore, all of these groups adhere to one of the Tibetan Buddhist schools, at least nominally. Despite the political predominance of the Gelukpa order, many village communities continue to follow the Nyingma order by virtue of its tolerance of non-celibate practitioners and of the pre-Buddhist rituals that continue to be practiced. Pre-Buddhist animal sacrifice is, however, strictly not condoned. Finally, there are shared cultural features.

As in the past, the Monpa primarily use their identity to juxtapose themselves against other groups- the *Ging* or *bod pa* ‘Botpa’, ‘Tibetans’, the *brug pa* ‘Brukpa’ or *nub phyogs pa* ‘Nupchokpa’, ‘Bhutanese’, the *Nyera* or *Kya* or ‘Indians from the plains and Nepalese’ and first and foremost the Gidu or Lopa. Within the modern democratic set-up of India, however, there is another factor playing a role; namely the fact that population size matters.

7. NON-MONPA ETHNOLINGUISTIC GROUPS OF THE AREA

Beside the ethnolinguistic groups that till present form part of the Monpa Scheduled Tribe mentioned above, several other ethnolinguistic groups inhabit the area. The possible relation between what were considered the isolate languages Bugun, Lishpa (Khispi), Sherdukpen and tentatively Sulung (Puroik) was first suggested by Sun (1993: 13), who called these languages ‘Bugunish’. In 1999, Rutgers reportedly showed that Bugun, Sulung, Sherdukpen and perhaps Lishpa indeed belong together on basis of a 45-lexeme wordlist (van Driem 2001: 473 and pers. comm.). Consequently, van Driem grouped Bugun, Sulung, Sherdukpen and Lishpa together in the ‘Kho-Bwa cluster’. In unpublished reports by Anderson et

³² Traditional administrative divisions are in italics, the modern administrative divisions in normal font below it. Upper range estimates of speaker populations, including those in towns and cities and those outside India, are given between brackets. A detailed village-wise breakup of these figures is available from the author on request.

al. (2005) and Blench (2011), Chugpa and Sartang were added to this group as well. According to Blench (2011), within the Kho-Bwa cluster Khispi, Duhumbi and the Sartang and Sherdukpen varieties form a sub-group which he named the ‘Mey-cluster’. Blench and Post (2011) consequently grouped Sartang, Sherdukpen, Duhumbi and Khispi together with Bugun in an isolated small phylum they tentatively named ‘Kamengic’, excluding Puroik, which they later mention to be either an isolate or related to Kamengic at a higher level.

This superfluous grouping and regrouping, naming and renaming is unfortunate, especially in the absence of any solid linguistic evidence to support it. Ongoing research seems to hint that Puroik and Bugun are more closely interrelated than either is to Sherdukpen, Sartang, Khispi or Duhumbi, but that the Kho-Bwa cluster appears to hold, with Bugun and Puroik higher-level branches. There appear to be diverse contact languages and possible unknown substrates for each of the languages of the cluster. The almost extinct Puroik variety spoken in Bulu village in Nafra, West Kameng, might be an important link between the various languages in the Kho-Bwa cluster.

The following paragraphs will only concisely describe the Sherdukpen, about whom more has been published elsewhere (e.g. Sarkar 1980; Deuri 1976; Dollfus and Jacquesson 2013; Jatso n.d.). More detailed information will be provided regarding the Sartang, a group hitherto socially and economically marginalised and largely neglected by research. The relevance of these two groups for this article lies mainly in their linguistic affinity with the Khispi and Duhumbi and the possible substrate to Dirang Tshangla as well as their historically close association with the Monpa people of the region. Finally, section 7.3 will provide some information on the other people of westernmost Arunachal: the Bugun, Puroik, Miji, Hruso and Koro. Of these, the Bugun and Puroik affinities to the other Kho-Bwa languages are of particular interest.

7.1. THE SHERDUKPEN

The separate Scheduled Tribe status of the Sherdukpen is primarily based on a distinctive collective identity that sets them apart from the Monpa groups. The name Sherdukpen derives from the Tibetan names for the Sher division inhabited by the *Sēnji* [s̄ēnd̄zi ~ s̄ēnd̄zi] people and the Tukpan division inhabited by the *Thōngji* [t̄hōṅd̄zi] people. In the Gyelrik, the Sherdukpen were called *srin mi* ‘Sinmi’ and *rgyun mi* ‘Gyunmi’ (Aris 1986: footnote 123 to page 69). The name Sherdukpen is pronounced by the people themselves as [sertukpen], and they prefer to call themselves *Möö* [mø:] in Shergaon or *Mee* [me:] in Rupa. The Sherdukpen Scheduled Tribe has been enumerated since the 1961 census, and in 2001 they numbered around 3,300. There are several factors that contributed to the formation of a separate Sherdukpen identity, rather than inclusion in the Monpa Scheduled Tribe: a divergent origin and settlement history; a distinctive language; a persistence of pre-Buddhist religious beliefs, customs and festivals; a slightly different material culture; and limited control by the Tibetan Gaden

administration and instead a greater focus on relations with Assam. Despite this, a publication such as Jatso (n.d.) continues to refer to them as “Shertukpen Monpas”.

The origin and settlement history of the Sherdukpen is distinct from the East Bodish and Tshangla speaking groups. Although origin histories relate them to both the Tibetan plateau as well as the plains of the Brahmaputra (Government of Arunachal Pradesh 1996: 31-33), there is also a strong indigenous element related to the speakers of the other Kho-Bwa languages, particularly the Sartang. The highest three *Thongdok* [tʰɔŋʔadək ~ tʰɔŋdək], *Thongchi* [tʰɔŋtʃʰi] and *Thongon* [tʰɔŋɔ̃] clans and the fifth-ranking *Thongdokchung* [tʰɔŋdɔktʃʰuŋ] clan of the upper Thong class claim descent from *Asuu* (grandfather) *Japtang* [ʔasu: d̪ɔptaŋ] (Bodt 2012: 74-75; Dollfus and Jacquesson 2013: 15-16), by some believed to be a local corruption of *gab lde btsan* ‘Gapdetsen’, the founder of the Wangma clan and grandson of Lhase Tsangma (Jatso n.d. 11-12)³³. The sixth or lowest ranking *Khrime* [kʰrime:] clan of the Thong class claims descent from *khri mi lha’i dbang phyug* ‘Thrimi Lha’i Wangchuk’, son of Lhase Tsangma and the founder of the Jowo clan that mainly spread in Tawang, and their arrival might account for the Tawang Monpa influence on the Sherdukpen language. The origin of the fifth and smallest thong clan, the *Musobi* [musɔ:bi], is unknown, but the name suggests a connection with the Khispi and Duhumbi speakers. The names of four of the five clans belonging to the subordinate Chau class, *Məgēji* [mægē:d̪zi], *Məjiji* [məd̪zid̪zi], *Mənōji* [mənō:d̪zi] and *Sinchāji* [sintʃʰād̪zi] reflect the <-ji> suffix common to Sartang autonyms (see next section). Similar to their allied Thong clan the Khrime, the fifth Chau clan, the *Dingla* [diŋla], originates from Tawang.

The Sherdukpen people speak two closely related dialects called *mee nyó* [me: n̪ó] in Rupa or *möö nyúk* [mø: n̪úk] in Shergaon ‘the Mee/Möö language’. They call the Tshangla and Tawang Monpa speakers *Jəmō* [d̪zəmō], the Tibetans *Khampo* [kʰampɔ̃], the Bugun and Puroik *Bugun* [bugun] or *Səlung* [səlun], the Hruso *Khunūū* [kʰunū:] and the Miji *Woroo* or *Waaro* [wɔrɔ: ~ wa:rɔ], the latter two being a Bugun loan. All other tribes, including the Bengni and Nishi, are called *Gidi* [gidi]. The Sartang are called by their autonyms, i.e. *Rəphüngji* [rəpʰyŋd̪zi] for the people of Rahung, *Gətamji* [gətamd̪zi] for the people of Khoitam, and *Khənūūji* [kʰənū:d̪zi] for the people of Khoina and Jerigaon. The correspondences between all these names and similar names given by the Sartang are also evidence of a close relationship between the Sartang and Sherdukpen people. The Sherdukpen call the Bodo *Gəchəri* or *Kəchəri* [gətʃʰəri ~ kətʃʰəri], the Adivasi tribes *Banggar* [baŋgar], the Assamese *Hundi* [hundi] or *Ohōōmiya* [ɔhō:mija], the Bhutanese *Brukpu* [brukpu], the Indians from the plains *Dəchuu* [dətʃʰu:] and any foreigner *Azōmah*

³³ Other sources, e.g. Sarkar (1980) and Chowdhury (1975: 49) hold him to have been *brgya bstan* ‘Gyapten’ the lay associate of the early seventeenth century propagator of the Gelukpa order in Monyul, *me rag bla ma blo bzang bstan pa’i sgron me* ‘Merak Lama Lopzang Tenpe Dronme’, whereas according to Sharma (1988[1960]: 5-6) he was the son of the Tibetan King *srong btsan sgam po* ‘Songtsan Gampo’.

[ʔazɔ̃ma^h] ‘white one’ (pers. comm. with Prem Khandu Thungon of Shergaon, 3 June 2014 and Rincin Khandru Karma of Rupa, 2 June 2014).

Despite extracting a three-yearly tribute from the Sherdukpen villages (Government of Arunachal Pradesh 1996: 31, 54), the Ganden administration did little if anything at all to protect their subjects from the constant raids and plunder by the Aka and Miji (Government of Arunachal Pradesh 1996: 54). On the other hand, the Sherdukpen were given customary control of some of the Duar areas by the Ahom kings in recognition of a supposed shared origin (Government of Arunachal Pradesh 1996: 31; Dutta and Jha 1999). During the second half of the nineteenth century, the British, who came into contact with the Sherdukpen during their annual winter sojourn in the Duars, considered them distinct from the Monpa. Tibetan Buddhism was introduced among the Sherdukpen only in the second half of eighteenth century and pre-Buddhist elements persist till date. Finally, the Sherdukpen material culture is similar but slightly divergent from the mainstream Monpa. As a consequence of these differences, the Sherdukpen were already accorded separate Scheduled Tribe status in the early years of Indian administration of the area.

7.2. THE SARTANG

Until recently, the people now preferably referred to as Sartang were part of the Monpa Scheduled Tribe and were sometimes referred to as “Maichhopo” (Sharma 1988[1960]: 9) or “Matchopa” (Abraham et al. 2005: 3) and Butpa or “But Monpa” (e.g. Dondrup 2004), although this specifically referred to the people of But (now renamed Jerigaon) village. The Sartang are a small ethnolinguistic community living in the eastern part of the Gongri river valley. Two Tibetan administrative divisions called *ra hung* ‘Rahung’ and *khul dam* ‘Khuidam’ were not part of the 32 divisions of Monyul, and a further two villages, But and Khoina, were even less allied to the Monyul area.

The Sartang area starts north of the Bomdila pass. The land immediately south of the pass is the traditional homeland of the Bugun, although Bomdila town has a mixed population reflecting the various ethnic and linguistic groups of Tawang, East Kameng and West Kameng districts.

Following the Bomdila to Dirang stretch of the main road, speakers of Sartang can be found in the hamlets of *Bəkhü* [bək^hy:] or Pāñch Mile (5 Mile), *Muncham* [muntʃ^ham] or Chē Mile (6 Mile), *Darbu* [darbu] or Chaudah Mile (14 Mile) and *Dangkosing* [daŋkosiŋ] or Chabbīs Nala (26 Nala). The Sartang area ends here, and the village called *Chönma* [tʃ^hønma] in Sartang or *Balung* [baluŋ] in Tshangla (Munnā Camp) is the first settlement inhabited by Tshangla speakers. The road connecting the Sartang area to the main Bhalukpong-Bomdila-Tawang road starts near two hamlets called *Tinghe Pam* [tiŋhe: pa:m] or Nau Mile (9 Mile) and *Warjong* [wardʒoŋ] and runs all the way to the Nafra circle headquarters. The first village along the road is called *Candan Pam* [tʃ^handan pa:m] or Tīn Mile (3 Mile).

The area developed into a village only after the construction of the road, and the majority of its population originates from Rahung village. *Rahung thük* [ra:huŋ tʰyk] or Rahung village is located on a hill spur above the Gongri (Kameng) river. The next hamlet is *Khodəru* [kʰodəru] or Labour Camp. The people of the aforementioned hamlets speak the Rahung variety of Sartang (pers. comm. with Karma Tsering Ngoimu of Rahung, 29 May 2014). After crossing Khodəru, a road runs down towards the village of *Khuitam* [khuitam] and on to the Rahung Micro Hydrel Scheme located just below Rahung village. The plateau on which now the village of Salari is located was originally called *Mōsihī* [mōsihī] ‘garlic plain’ or *Namkuthang* [namkutʰaŋ] in Sartang (pers. comm. Kezang Rokpu of Salari, 25 May 2014). The first inhabitants of the village are believed to have been mid twentieth century migrants from eastern Bhutan, who named their settlement ‘Zalari’ or ‘macaque river’. In more recent times, these Tshangla speakers have been largely replaced by settlers from Khuitam village. The village now houses a horticulture centre. After Salari, the road crosses to the north bank of the Gongri river and climbs up to the village of Jerigaon. After Jerigaon there is the small settlement called Kirafarm. The last Sartang villages along the road are *Deshuk Lecah* [dəʃuk lətʰaʰ] or Saidel and *Batseribo thük* [batsəribō tʰyk]. From Saidel, there is a road towards the east ending in the Sartang village of *Khoina* [kʰoina]. On the opposite bank of the *Delikhō* [delikhō] or *Digenkhō* [digenkhō] or Gongri river lies the village of *Dünglō* [dyŋlō], where the people of Khoina used to flee during the Miji raids. The latter four villages all speak the Khoina variety of Sartang (pers. comm. Geshi Tamu Yamchodu of Khoina, 22 May 2014). After Saidel, the main road continues to the Miji area, whereas Dünglō borders on the Bugun area.

The Sartang believe their most ancient ancestors to be four male offspring of a male deity called *Tang* [taŋ] and the female sun deity called *Jiü* [jy:]. These brothers inhabited shifting cultivation hamlets in a place called *Sərihangli* [səritʰaŋli] just below the Himalayan ranges far to the northeast. Their descendants slowly descended along the Buchung (Bichom) river. There they settled in a place called *Duwuu Dəsa* [duwu: dəsa] among the descendants of *Rongradu* [rɔŋradu] who had earlier come from *Lici Labō* [liʈʰi labō] in the east. They were later joined by *Asuu Japtang* and his entourage (see previous section), until they were expelled by the Miji who came from a place called *Janacing* [dʒanaʈʰiŋ] (pers. comm. Geshi Tamu Yamchodu, Karma Tsering Ngoimu, Chaphok Nathungji of Jerigaon, 23 May 2014 and late Dargye of Salari, 4 June 2012). They then spread all along the Gongri and Tenga river valleys, and their ancestral territory extended from the *Zela* [zela] pass in the west to *Picang* [pitʰaŋ] pass in the east and from *Cinglupiri* [tʰiŋlupiri] mountain in the north to *Khawacong* [kʰawatʰoŋ] mountain in the south, giving rise to the Sherdukpen, Sartang and Khispi and Duhumbi people³⁴. As

³⁴ The Sartang maintain that the area till Picang pass, located beyond Lada and Bameng in East Kameng, once included their ancestors’ territory, and that the Puroik speakers of Bulu, Lada and Bameng are descendants of these same four brothers. Similarly, the name of the last mountain might indicate that the Bugun (=Khowa/Khawa) people also descent from this same group.

mentioned before, the people of the westernmost Sartang villages Rahung and Khoitam later requested a Tibetan aristocrat to protect them from the Lopa and become their king. This aristocrat and his entourage came from *Mlamjung Kharsokhar* [mlamdz̄uŋ kʰarsokʰar] and his descendants also settled in Sangthi, Nyukmadung and Thembang villages. Later, they were joined by people from Bhutan, whereas the religious practitioners came from Saidel and Khoina. These different migrations streams gave rise to the various Sartang clans that can be found till date.

The Sartang are divided in four communities speaking mutually intelligible dialects. The Rahung dialect is spoken by around 600 people called *Rəph̄ingji* [rəpʰi:ḍzi]. The Khuitam dialect is spoken by around 500 people called *Khətamji* or *Gətamji* [kʰətamḍzi ~ gətamḍzi]. The Jerigaon dialect is spoken by perhaps 350 people called *Kəsh̄ingji* [kəʃi:ḍzi], *Dic̄ingji* [ditʃi:ḍzi] or *Butpa* [butpa]. The highly divergent Khoina variety is spoken by around 450 people called *Khun̄ngji* [kʰun̄ḍzi]. This variety is heavily influenced by the nearby Miji and Hruso Aka languages.

The Sartang call the Tshangla speakers *Dzəməḍḍ* [dzəmḍ:] in Khoina or *Monpa* [mɔnpa] in Rahung, but refer to the Tshangla speakers of Thembang as *Thəmbangji* [tʰambanḍzi] and those of Namshu as *Phchouji* [pʰtʃʰoud̄zi] in Rahung or *Natsōḍji* [natsō:ḍzi] in Khoina. They call the Tibetans *Khampa* [kʰampa], the Monpa of Tawang *Brami* [brami], the Puroik *Shtang* or *Stang* [ʃtaŋ ~ staŋ], the Bugun *Səlung* [səlun̄] and the Miji *Khun̄* [kʰun̄], with the Hruso being referred to as *Khunusō* [kʰunusō]. They call the Bengni, Nishi and other more distant tribes as *Gədi* [gədi] and any non-tribal Indian from the plains as *Chūchuu* [tʃʰytʃʰu:] in Rahung or *Duchuu* [duʃʰu:] in Khoina. The Sherdukpen of Rupa, finally, are called *Thəməḍḍji* [tʰəmḍ:ḍzi] in Rahung or *Thōwāḍji* [tʰōwā:ḍzi] in Khoina and those of Shergaon as *Sēnji* [sēnd̄zi] in Khoina or *Sānji* [sānd̄zi] in Rahung (pers. comm. Karma Tsering Ngoimu and Geshi Tamu Yamchodu). Sartang speakers report a high degree of mutual intelligibility with the Sherdukpen and their close relation is also evident from the Sherdukpen origin stories (Government of Arunachal Pradesh 1996: 31), although the Sartang vehemently deny their supposed descent from the porters, as reported in Sharma (1988[1960]: 7).

Although nominally converted to Buddhism, most sections of the Sartang people continue pre-Buddhist practices involving the sacrifice of yaks, cows, sheep and fowl, the propitiation of a wide range of local deities, and spirit possession. The Sartang religious practitioners clearly distinguish their own religious practice from that of the Miji, Hruso and Tani tribes to the east. They not only abstain from sacrificing mithuns, goats and pigs, they also refrain from eating the meat of any animal except yaks and sheep.

Like the Sherdukpen, Puroik, Bugun, Khispi and Duhumbi, the Sartang appear to be descendants of the indigenous population of the area. In common with other indigenous populations, they were marginalised by later migrants. The location of the Sartang homeland, sandwiched in between the area under Tibetan suzerainty

and the Miji area has had a profound impact on the Sartang community. First, they ‘voluntarily’ subjugated to the Bapu rulers of Thempang, who extracted in-kind taxes from them and could anytime summon them for free labour services, including pre-Buddhist religious services. At the same time, the Miji would yearly raid their villages, claiming the land had originally belonged to them, and robbing them of livestock, food grains and other local produce. Despite paying in-kind taxes to the post-seventeenth century Gaden administration in the form of earthen cooking pots, bamboo fences and other handicraft products, this administration was unwilling or unable to provide them the required protection. In 1914, Captain Nevill described the Sartang people of But and Konia (*sic.* Khoina) as “a miserable lot...entirely under the thumb of the Mijis who make them cultivate for them...very poor”, a situation not unlike the conditions of the Bugun under the Sherdukpen, Hruso and Miji, the Khispi under the Dirang Tshangla and the Puroik under the Miji and Nishi. Nevill also reported how the Miji “look upon the Monpas as their lawful prey and talk of their visits as collecting taxes” (Reid 1942: 285, 288). In 1946, But and Khoina villages were reported to be in the process of gradual disintegration under the Miji raids, with people shifting their houses to other villages (Government of Arunachal Pradesh 1996: 48). The establishment of an Assam Rifles outpost in But in 1946 finally put a halt to the raids.

After Indian independence, the Sartang became politically divided between the Monpa-dominated Dirang circle and the Miji-dominated Nafra circle. Combined with a small population and limited access to education and other resources, their marginalised position has been perpetuated till the present. Perhaps that is the reason why the Sartang did not proliferate themselves as distinct from the Monpa until 1997. Since then, part of the Sartang society, particularly educated people and religious practitioners from Khoina and Jerigaon, have been advocating the inclusion of the Sartang Scheduled Tribe under the Third Schedule of the Indian Constitution. They have standardised a ‘traditional’ dress, despite great internal variation made haphazard efforts to commit their language to writing, and announced *Chiksabo* [tʃʰiksa:bɔ] as the festival celebrating their *Tang* [tan] religion. They believe that this request has been granted by the State government and has now been forwarded to the Central government, but there are no official documents confirming this.

<i>Language/Division/Circle</i>	<i>Total Population</i>	<i>%ST</i>	<i>ST Population</i>
Sherdukpen	3,313		
<i>Rongnang Tshozhi</i>			
<i>Sher Tsho</i>			
Khalaktang circle	1,114	59.3	661
Balemu circle	(281)		(0 ³⁵)
<i>Tukpan Tsho</i>			

³⁵ The 2001 census reports a Scheduled Tribe population of zero in the villages of Betali, New Betali, Demachang and Rowta. This is the resettlement area for people from Shergaon, but their census might have been retained in Shergaon itself.

<i>Language/Division/Circle</i>	<i>Total Population</i>	<i>%ST</i>	<i>ST Population</i>
Rupa circle	7,812	34.0	2,652
Bhalukpong circle	(826)		(0 ³⁶)
Sartang	1,898		
<i>Khuldam Tsho</i>			
Dirang circle	719	70.0	503
<i>Rahung Tsho</i>			
Dirang circle	1,082	54.2	586
<i>Jerigaon</i>			
Nafra circle	555	64.5	358
<i>Khoina</i>			
Nafra circle	462	97.6	451

Table 4: Sherdukpen and Sartang population data

7.3. OTHER TRIBES OF THE AREA: BUGUN, HRUSO, MIJI, KORO AND PUROIK

Unlike the ethnolinguistically near-homogenous Tawang district, West Kameng district is home to a much wider range of languages belonging to Trans-Himalayan phyla. Of these, Tshangla, Duhumbi and Khispi, Brokpa, Sherdukpen and Sartang were discussed in the previous sections. Bugun and Puroik are two additional languages presumably related to the Kho-Bwa cluster.

Bugun, earlier known as Khowa or Khova [k^hāwa ~ k^hāva], is a minority language spoken in a geographically confined area south of the Sartang area, west of the Miji area, north of the Hruso area and east of the Sherdukpen area. The Bugun call the Monpa *Bumua* [bumua], the Sartang and Sherdukpen *Pətsong* [pətsəŋ], the Miji *Waroo* [waro:], the Hruso *Əban* [əban], the Puroik *Psəəm* [psə:m], all other tribes including the Bengni and Nishi *Kətəi* [kətəi] and the non-tribal Indians from the plains *Pəkhjok* [pək^hjək] (pers. comm. Tashi Khanam and Khiluwa Marphiuw of Dikhyang, 30 May 2014). The total number of Bugun speakers is unknown and difficult to assess, but according to local sources might not exceed 600 (pers. comm. Tashi Khanam). Although Blench and Post (2011) mention a figure of 1,700 speakers, their source is unknown. There are 12 Bugun villages in Singchung, Jamiri and Rupa circles. Like with other ethnolinguistic groups of this cluster, the Bugun were subject to the more powerful Miji and Hruso tribes as well as the Sherdukpen. Bugun linguistic data were earlier reported in Dondrup (1990) and in Abraham et al. (2005).

The closest genetic relative of Bugun appears to be the enigmatic language called Puroik, earlier known as Sulung. Puroik is spoken in a wide geographical area to the east of the Monpa area. Within West Kameng district, Puroik is only

³⁶ Similarly, the 2001 census reports a Scheduled Tribe population of zero in the villages of Khellong, Doimara, Kamengbari, Foot Hills, Chopai and Dukumpani, although this is a resettlement area for people from Rupa.

spoken by the people of the village of Bulu [bulu], now settled in Silimathung [silimat^huŋ] in Nafra circle. Out of the 30-40 people in the village, only five elderly man speak a variety of Puroik that is unintelligible to most other Puroik speakers (pers. comm. Ismael Lieberherr). These few speakers might be a remnant population of a once much more widely spread Kho-Bwa *Sprachbund* that also included the Mundapa and Thukshipa of Sangthi. Across the area they inhabit, the Puroik were subjected to their more powerful neighbours, particularly the Bengni, Nyasang and Nyishi.

The different varieties of Hruso (Aka) and Miji, spoken in West and East Kameng and Bangru (Lövai, Sun 1993), spoken by perhaps 1,500 people in Sarli circle of Kurung Kumey district make up the Hrusish phylum (Shafer 1947). Blench and Post (2011) noted that the affiliation between Hruso and Miji is of an ethnographic rather than linguistic nature, and discarded the Hrusish phylum. Bangru and Miji do, however, appear to be closely related, and new descriptions in progress will hopefully shed more light on this and their relation with Hruso.

Miji is spoken in at least three distinct varieties known to the speakers by their autonyms, *Sajolang* [sadʒolaŋ ~ sadʒalaŋ] in Nafra circle, *Dhammai* [ðammai] or *Dhimmai* [ðimmai] in Jamiri circle, and *Nəmrai* [nəmrai]³⁷ in adjoining areas of East Kameng. The Miji of Nafra call the Hruso *Guau* [guau], the Monpa *Nitsang* [niŋsaŋ] probably derived from Tshangla [netsaŋ] ‘host’, the Sherdukpen *Thungji Thungtso* [t^huŋdʒi t^huŋtso] and non-tribal Indians from the plains *Nikhyung* [nik^hjuŋ]. In the 2001 census, the 21 Miji-inhabited villages of Nafra circle returned a total of 3,244 people with Scheduled Tribe status, of whom the majority speaks Miji. The number of Miji-speakers in several Aka-dominated villages in Jamiri circle and in Lada circle of East Kameng is unknown, but the total number of Miji speakers does not exceed 10,000.

The 3,000-odd people commonly known as Aka call themselves Hruso [ɾuso] or Hruso Aka [ɾuso aka] and inhabit Jamiri and Thrizino circles of West Kameng district. Because of their close proximity to and regular contact with the Assamese plains, several studies of the Hruso language were published, for example Schubert (1964) and Shafer (1947), although there is no complete descriptive grammar.

Finally, around 800-1,200 people submerged in the Hruso identity speak a divergent isolate language called Koro [koro] or Koro Aka [koro aka] (Anderson & Murmu, 2012). Post and Blench (2011) have tentatively placed this language in a separate phylum *Siangic* together with Milang spoken in Upper Siang district.

A summary of the non-Monpa tribes of the area is given in Table 5.

<i>Phylum</i>	<i>Language, autonyms</i>	<i>Varieties</i>	<i>Previous name(s) and sources</i>
Kho-Bwa	Sartang	Kəshingji Khətamji	n.a. Sartang (Abraham et al. 2005 from Khoitam)

³⁷ Interestingly, Nəmrai is the Sajolang word for ‘woman’.

<i>Phylum</i>	<i>Language, autonyms</i>	<i>Varieties</i>	<i>Previous name(s) and sources</i>
		Rəphinji	Sartang (Abraham et al. 2005 from Rahung and Darbu); Boot Monpa (Dondrup 2004)
		Khuunuji	Sartang (Abraham et al. 2005 from Khoina)
	Sherdukpen, Möö/Mee	Rupa variety	Mey (Blench 2011); Sherdukpen (Abraham et al. 2005)
		Shergaon variety	Sherdukpen (Abraham et al. 2005; Dondrup 1988)
	Bugun	?	Bugun (Dondrup 1990; Abraham et al. 2005); Khowa/Khova
	Puroik	Prin (Bulu)	(I. Lieberherr pers. comm. October 2013)
		(Puroit- Kojo-Rojo)	-do-
		(Puroik- East Kameng and beyond)	-do-
Hrusish	Miji	Sajolang	Miji (Simon 1979); Dammai (Abraham et al. 2005)
		Dhammai/Dhimmai (Nəmrai/Namrai)	Dammai (Abraham et al. 2005) (Namrei (Abraham et al. 2005))
		Hruso	Aka (Anderson 1896; Simon 1993[1970]; Abraham et al. 2005); Hruso, Hruso Aka (Schubert 1964; Shafer 1947; Anderson & Murmu, 2012)
	(Bangru)	Bangru, Levai (Sun 1993)	
Siangic	Koro		Koro, Koro Aka (Anderson & Murmu 2012; Abraham et al. 2005; Post and Blench 2011); Miri Aka, Angka Miri (Grewal 1997),
	(Milang)		Milang (Holon)

Table 5: Other tribes in westernmost Arunachal Pradesh

8. LANGUAGE ENDANGERMENT

UNESCO (2003) identified six factors of language vitality: intergenerational language transmission, absolute number of speakers, proportion of speakers within the total population, trends in existing language domains, response to new domains and media and materials for language education and training. No in-depth study of language vitality has been conducted in the study area. However, this research found some languages to be more vital, whereas other languages are showing clear signs of endangerment.

The two majority languages, Tawang Monpa and Tshangla, are still vigorous in intergenerational transmission in the rural setting. Tshangla has an existing descriptive grammar (Andvik 2009), but this grammar is not representative of

Dirang Tshangla. Despite the large number of absolute speakers and widespread use in existing and new domains, Dirang Tshangla and Tawang Monpa have not yet received the attention they deserve and descriptive grammars are yet to be written. Haphazard attempts to introduce 'Ucen script for writing Tawang Monpa appear futile in absence of a standardised orthography. Tshangla and Tawang Monpa, and all the other Monpa languages of the area, are further threatened by the adoption of Bhoti, basically modern Tibetan language written in the 'Ucen script, as a subject in schools. This has diverted attention from the development of orthographies, grammars and mother tongue education in the Monpa languages. Often-heard arguments for the choice of Bhoti are that there is no such thing as a single Monpa language (which is true), that the Monpa languages have no script (which is also true, but this can be developed) and that choosing one Monpa language as the standard will be at the expense and against the wishes of speakers of other Monpa languages (which might be true if the other languages are not simultaneously developed and used in mother tongue education). Although Chöke (classical Tibetan) has traditionally been used in the Monyul region as the liturgical language used in Buddhist ritual and as script of administration, Tawang Monpa and Tshangla have been used as *lingua franca* of inter-Monpa communication. Thus, the choice to teach children written and spoken modern Tibetan³⁸ instead of one of the Monpa vernaculars written in 'Ucen script (which would enable them to read the religious scriptures anyway) appears to be relevant only in light of the Pan-Himalayan demands to get Bhoti included as national language under the Eight Schedule of the Indian Constitution (Gohain 2012). A related observation is that in many urban households, including those of the educated elite who most staunchly advocate the autonomy demands in order to preserve the own Monpa culture and tradition, Hindi, and not any of the Monpa languages is the preferred and often the only medium of communication between parents and children, and the intergenerational transmission of the mother tongue often ends with the present generation.

Dakpa, Duhumbi and Khispi are still vigorous in the rural setting, and migration, which often threatens intergenerational transmission, is relatively limited. However, Hindi is used as unofficial medium of instruction in schools and has replaced the local *lingua franca* Tawang Monpa and Tshangla as medium of inter-tribe communication outside the village environment.

Pangchen Monpa has a small number of speakers and is under pressure of the majority language Tawang Monpa. Sources of livelihood are limited, so there is considerable out-migration from the community. Although intergenerational transmission of the language does take place, the younger generation learns the language incompletely because of the pervasive influence of Tawang Monpa. Once

³⁸ Political sensitivities are the main reason for calling the language 'Bhoti', ostensibly derived from the name of the presumed inventor of the Tibetan script and author of several grammatical treatises, *thon-mi sam+b+ho-Ta* 'Thönmi Sambhoṭa', rather than 'Tibetan' (pers. comm. Ngawang Tashi Bapu, Central Institute for Himalayan Culture Studies, April 2012 and late Tsona Gontse Rinpoche, Bomdila, April 2012).

speakers move out of the rural setting, Hindi and Tawang Monpa are used, completely replacing the mother tongue.

From the non-Monpa languages, Sartang, Sherdukpen, Miji and Hruso appear to be relatively viable at the moment, with positive language attitudes and intergenerational transmission in the rural setting. Sherdukpen has a fledgling upcoming entertainment industry, whereas Bible translations and modern songs contribute to the popularity of Miji and Hruso. All these communities have expressed great interest in the description of their language.

Bugun is one of the most threatened languages of the area. The Bugun people appear to have had to face the brunt of the militarisation and modernisation of the region, with much of their original homeland now occupied by military installations, hydropower projects, town areas and government institutions. This has resulted in an influx of temporary and permanent migrant workers including Nepalese, Kachari and Assamese. The speech community, never large to begin with, has seen a rapid decline in intergenerational transmission as Hindi has rapidly replaced the Bugun language in all domains.

The most threatened language appears to be the Puroik variety spoken in Bulu. This variety is spoken by only five remaining middle-aged men and their speech will become extinct in the coming decade. The variety appears to be of great scientific value to understand the relation between the three otherwise distinct branches of the Kho-Bwa cluster, Bugun and Puroik, Sartang and Sherdukpen and Khispi and Duhumbi.

9. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The great linguistic variance observed in the eastern Himalayas might attest to theories placing the centre of gravity and the possible homeland of the Trans-Himalayan language family in this area (van Driem 2011, 2014). Though perhaps insignificant from the perspective of geographical area and population, westernmost Arunachal Pradesh displays considerable linguistic variation, and this can at least partially be attributed to the particular topography of the area. The adjoining areas of Bhutan to the west and Central and Eastern Arunachal Pradesh to the east are characterised by southward flowing rivers connecting the Tibetan plateau to the plains of the Brahmaputra. In contrast, the easternmost watershed of Bhutan, the Manas-Drangmechu, and the westernmost watershed of Arunachal Pradesh, the Bhareli-Kameng, flow southward only in their downstream reaches. Further upstream, where they are called the Drangmechu or Gongri (in Bhutan) or Tawangchu (in Tawang) and the Gongri or Kameng (in West Kameng) respectively, they flow toward the southwest and the east. Two main feeding rivers, the Gamri and the Tenga, similarly have a predominantly east-west orientation. The only river actually crossing the Himalayan divide from north to south is the Nyamyang river in north-eastern Tawang district. The main rivers are fed by several southward flowing rivers, including the Chug, Sangthi and Bichom rivers. All these river valleys probably witnessed the earliest habitation, perhaps by

speakers of the Kho-Bwa languages, as well as subsequent migration by Tshangla speakers. The Tawang Monpa entered from the Tibetan plateau through the Nyamyang or the Kholong river valley, whereas the nomadic Brokpa mainly settled on and at the fringes of the high-altitude Sakteng-Zela-Phudung massif in the centre of this area.

Until modern times, the steep, lower and heavily forested areas were mainly used as hunting and gathering grounds and transhumance winter grazing grounds by the people inhabiting the dry, warm, subtropical river valleys and the cooler, wetter temperate river valleys. It is these river valleys, with a favourable climate not too hot in summer and not too cold in winter, rich and varied forest resources and often fertile floodplains that at various moments in history provided a gateway, a through pass and a temporary or permanent settlement site for consecutive waves of people, both from the plains of the Brahmaputra and from the Tibetan plateau. The reasons might have included climatic variations, large-scale influx of other peoples such as the Bodic, Bodo-Garo, Tai-Ahom or Indo-European expansions, and ethnic, religious and political persecution. Almost all these immigrant groups, however, appear to have been relatively small in number, increasing the existing linguistic variation by locally merging into the numerous linguistic varieties we find today. We do not need much imagination to see a situation wherein a certain community speaking a certain language adopts a migrant population with a related or unrelated language, resulting in mutual borrowing and finally in a mixture of the two languages, whereas a community just a stone's throw away, speaking the same language, adopts a different migrant population at another point in time. In due course of time this would result in two different linguistic varieties that are either still mutually intelligible or completely distinct. In fact, this might be a common pattern rather than an exception, as can now be attested from the linguistic marks left by known twentieth century migrations of Tawang Monpa, Brokpa, Chocangaca and Tshangla speakers on the Kho-Bwa languages of Rahung, Shergaon, Rupa and Lish and Chug.

Within this context, it appears highly likely that there were people living in the resource-rich, fertile and relatively secluded east-west oriented river valleys and their tributaries even before the advent of the speakers of languages of the Trans-Himalayan phylum (Post and Blench 2011; Blench and Post 2011, 2014; van Driem 2014: 30). Tellingly, perhaps, many of the languages of which Blench and Post (2014: 78) question the Trans-Himalayan affiliation are spoken in this area. Whether these languages should be considered as belonging to the Trans-Himalayan language family or not is a matter of defining the initial hypothesis and the interpretation of the available proof. Perhaps it would be prudent to assume a Tibeto-Burman affiliation of these phyla and languages, as in a higher level branch within the family as proposed by Blench and Post (2014), until and unless it can be proven that they belong to another family or, perhaps, constitute an independent family or isolate in their own right. Determining this affiliation, however, is a Herculean task even when better (or any) data become available.

An initial complicating factor that Blench and Post (2014) discuss is that the hitherto reconstructed Proto-Tibeto-Burman roots, most notably those contained in the STEDT database, by default exclude many forms of hitherto undescribed or insufficiently described languages, including many languages of Arunachal Pradesh, and in particular of the area under discussion. Divergence of lexemes of (individual) modern languages from these roots has resulted in a proliferation of new ‘roots’, many of which may in fact be related to substrata or lexical innovations.

Additionally, the long history of language contact and borrowing in this area makes some languages on first sight appear as ‘Bodish’, for example. This complicates the filtering out of probable and possible loans from a wide variety of themselves often insufficiently described source languages. Many of these lexemes might also be a shared inheritance from common roots.

The final issue concerns benchmarking. How many lexical cognates and shared phonological and lexical innovations and retentions between the reconstructed Proto-Tibeto-Burman forms and a modern language suffice to prove an affiliation? Obviously, the comparison should not end with a phonological and lexical comparison, as many morphological and syntactic constructions should be included as well. And rather than comparing individual languages, proto-languages of language clusters or phyla should be reconstructed and used as the basis for comparison. In the end, there will always be a residue, either innovations unique to the language or phylum, or perhaps the strongest proof of a non-Trans-Himalayan substrate.

The languages of the far western corner of Arunachal Pradesh form an enigmatic lot, with at least six phyla represented by at least 15 languages with a minimum of 27 varieties. Since their exact classification remains pending, and in view of the level of language endangerment, there is an urgent need for thorough descriptive grammars of all the languages and varieties discussed in this paper. This will undoubtedly alter any existing proto-forms and change our understanding of the linguistic history of Asia.

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