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THE AMDO DIALECT OF LABRANG

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INTRODUCTION

While the description of Tibetan dialects in Western languages has proceeded apace for the last century, for various reasons there are few accurate, useful descriptions of any particular dialect presently available. Due to political and geographic constraints, Tibetan dialectology in the West is still in its infancy (Beyer 1992:20). In particular, the study of Tibetan dialects in the ethnically diverse regions of what has been called the "frontier zone" of China[1] has seen little progress in recent decades.

Before the Communists won the civil war against the Republicans (KMT) in 1949, the rugged conditions of these regions and their susceptibility to frequent warfare limited foreign researchers' access to them. Since 1949 and until very recently, the upheavals of successive "revolutionary" campaigns and xenophobia in China had effectively closed to foreigners such sensitive border regions, where most of the country's "minorities" (*shǎoshù mínzú*) live.

However, since the advent of Deng Xiaoping's "open door" policies in the early eighties, there has been an increase in opportunities for foreign researchers to undertake long-term fieldwork among local communities in these regions. Moreover, Chinese and Tibetan linguists have been increasingly able to publish for wider audiences the results of decades of research on vernaculars spoken among ethnic groups of this "frontier zone." Unfortunately, much of the

[1] The "frontier zone" in China is the rugged stretch of mountainous and desert land from modern Yunnan province in the south to modern Gansu province and Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region in the north, which for centuries formed a shifting zone of frontier politics and trade. This "zone" marked the outer limits of Chinese state power and cultural nfluence over, among others, Tibetan, Tangut, and Mongolian steppe polities all the way up to 1949 (Alonso 1979; Aris 1992; Ekvall 1929; Rock 1956; Sperling 1990, 1993; Stoddard 1985; Sutton 1974).

corpus of material on Tibetan dialects recently published in China is unavailable in Western languages and therefore difficult for foreign linguists and language learners to access.

This article and other work to follow may be viewed as the outcome of the present historical moment. In collaboration with two distinguished Chinese linguists, both of whom have conducted linguistic research among speakers of Amdo dialects in Qinghai and Gansu provinces for over thirty years, and drawing on our own fieldwork conducted among Tibetans in Amdo regions in 1995-1996, we present a detailed description of the sound system of the Tibetan dialect of Labrang[2] as a representative of the Amdo Tibetan dialect group. This phonology of the Labrang Amdo dialect will form Part One of our planned three-part series on the dialect, Parts Two and Three of which will be a grammar and a lexicon. The present article provides a useful system for transcribing the language, which will be employed in the grammar and lexicon as well. While we are not producing teaching materials *per se*, we do hope that the series will be useful for the growing numbers of foreign researchers planning to work in the area.

Since we are presenting this description of the Labrang dialect as an introduction to Amdo Tibetan dialects in general, we provide a context for this particular regional variety in the following paragraphs. We first give a brief introduction to the complicated political geography of the region, as this has affected the ways in which linguists have construed "Amdo dialects" in relation to other groups of Tibetan speakers. We then describe certain materials previously published on Amdo dialects and disscuss some of their methodological problems and basic assumptions. We conclude by discussing Labrang and our treatment of its dialect. An appendix with references and further reading on Amdo Tibetan dialects is also provided.

AMDO AND AMDO DIALECTS

For centuries, the terms "Tibet" and "Tibetans" have evoked a sense of mysterious uniqueness for foreign travelers and scholars. To the wider public, they have designated a particular people and culture isolated on "the roof of the world" and linked by, it was assumed, a common devotion to Buddhism and a common language. In recent years, however, Tibetanists have begun to focus on the remarkable sociopolitical and linguistic variety of Tibetan-speaking populations over time (Samuel 1993), as well as the geopolitical complexities

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2 In Tibetan, "Labrang" refers both to a monastery and to the surrounding villages formerly subject to it, both of which are located in southwestern Gansu, near the Qinghai border. In Chinese, the monastery and the town attached to it are known as *Lābùléng*, and the town is the seat of the county known as *Xiàhé*.

that have generated much ambiguity around the identification and classification of such populations (Stoddard 1985). These complexities are nowhere better expressed than in the plethora of ethnonyms and sociopolitical classificatory schemes applied to Tibetan-speaking populations by Tibetan and Chinese historians. These taxonomies reflect a long history of contesting claims to control over regions far from centers of power, as well as the migrations of soldier and refugee populations from various military campaigns as early as the 7th century.

Modern China is no exception. The term usually translated as "Tibet" (Ch. *Xīzàng Zìzhìqū* 西藏自治区, the Tibetan Autonomous Region or TAR) refers only to the 2,100,000 Tibetans living in the Lhasa valley and the western half of the Qingzang plateau (Tib. *byang thang*), and does not include the 2,500,000 Tibetan-speaking people in regions now divided among the four separate provinces of Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan, and Yunnan.[3] Yet the majority of Tibetan speakers share a state-recognized label as "members of the Tibetan nationality" (*zàngzú*),[4] and are referred to in the state census as living in one of these five administrative areas.[5]

Such Chinese classifications have been matched and contested by Tibetan counterparts for centuries. It has been fashionable in recent years for Chinese and Tibetan scholars discussing linguistic and cultural variation among Tibetans to rely on a Tibetan convention of dividing Tibetan populations into three "districts", which do not exactly correspond to the geopolitical lines drawn by the modern Chinese state. The three districts are *dBus gTsang* (Ch. *Weìzàng* 卫藏 often glossed as "Central Tibet"), which roughly corresponds to modern TAR; *Khams* (Ch. *Kāngqū* 康区) the territory to the east and northeast of Central Tibet, roughly corresponding to Changduo in the eastern TAR, southwestern Qinghai, western Sichuan, and northern Yunnan; and *Amdo* (Ch. *Anduō* 安多), the area northeast of Khams, roughly including most of Qinghai province, a section of southwestern Gansu, and a section of northern Sichuan.

The vast range of territory where Tibetan-speaking populations are found in modern China is what some Tibetan historians refer to as *bod chen* or "Greater Tibet." The territory represents the extent to which Tibetan power expanded in the heyday of the Tibetan Yarlung kings beginning with Srong btsan sgampo in the 7th century AD and ending with the collapse of the dynasty in the 9th century. Many communities in these eastern "frontier" regions trace their

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3 Figures are taken from the 1990 census conducted in the PRC, reported in Zhang 1993:107.

4 There are also a number of Hui, Mongols, and Salar who speak Amdo Tibetan dialects.

5 Much to the chagrin of many Tibetans, in recent years generations of young Tibetans, particularly those growing up in cities or in regions in which there is much contact with non-Tibetans, are coming of age with local dialects of Chinese as their first language.

ancestry to garrisons set up during military campaigns on what was then the border between the Tibetan empire and the dominions of the Tang (618-907) rulers of China. Elliot Sperling and others argue that the range over which such ethnic Tibetan communities can be found has been shrinking ever since the collapse of the Yarlung dynasty, and this process, due to assimilation and pressure from migrating populations of Han and Muslims, continues to this day (Sperling 1990, 1993).

This tripartite division of Tibetan-speaking populations into Central Tibet, Khams, and Amdo has been very important to modern Tibetan and Chinese scholars as an organizing principle and as a way to make political points. Exiled Tibetan activists use it as a way to portray Tibet as a sovereign centralized state in which a government located in Central Tibet exercised control over its outlying "provinces", Khams and Amdo. The Chinese state found it convenient to argue that Khams and Amdo were not a part of Tibet proper, and consequently carved them up into separate provinces. Chinese and Tibetan linguists in the PRC rely on it as the main way to classify Tibetan-speaking populations. Most introductions to Tibetan dialects in China refer to the "three great dialects" (*sān dà fāngyán*), corresponding to the three regions of Central Tibet, Khams, and Amdo.

Scholars inside and outside of China have recently pointed out that none of these assertions accounts for the actual geopolitical and sociolinguistic complexity of the "frontier" zone. For one thing, the simple classification of Tibetan-speaking peoples into three fixed geographic locations glosses over a long history of disagreement among Tibetan and Chinese historians over ethnonyms and toponyms and their geographic locations in the regions east of the Yarlung valley (Ren Naiqiang and Zewang Duoji 1989, cf. also Matisoff 1986). Besides, such assertions neglect the actual cultural and linguistic diversity among Tibetan-speaking populations within these areas that are due to differing histories of migration and settlement and varying degrees of contact with non-Tibetan groups.

In the wake of the collapse of the Yarlung dynasty, the rugged topography separating the eastern frontier regions from Central Tibet meant that links between them became ever weaker (Sperling 1993). A number of independent Tibetan polities rose to power in the east, which saw themselves as sandwiched between centers of power in Tibet and China. Centuries of relative separation saw the divergence of local dialects, so that dialects spoken in, e.g., the

northern border areas of Amdo and those spoken in the Lhasa valley are all but mutually unintelligible.[6]

Yet, due in part to the influence of Tibetan forms of Buddhism[7] and to the "remarkable conservatism of the Tibetan writing system" (Beyer 1992:18)[8] shared by officials and intellectuals in all Tibetan-speaking regions up to the present, Tibetans have considered themselves to be members of a single ethnic group, an identification bolstered by the modern state-recognized label of *zàngzú*. This larger identity in turn has afforded modern speakers of Amdo dialects (and the linguists who have studied them) a way to construe their speech varieties in relation to those spoken in the Lhasa valley. It is a source of pride among self-identified Amdo speakers, as well as a key identifying characteristic of Amdo dialects for linguists, to say that conservative Amdo dialects are closer to classical written Tibetan because they preserve phonetic evidence for the prefixed and superscripted letters of Tibetan words now elided in the innovative modern Lhasa dialect (Dempsey 1991, Bstan pa rgya mtsho 1982). Most linguists assume that written Tibetan, codified as early as the 7th century, was at least an attempt to render the phonology of the spoken language of the time (Beyer 1992). Therefore, cosmopolitan Lhasa is seen to have provided an environment where the spoken language diverged radically from the written, while the far-flung frontier regions of Amdo preserved a closer relation to the old Tibetan language.

Such linguistic stereotypes, however, tend to create monoliths. Simplified chronologies neglect the actual sociolinguistic diversity in Amdo regions and erase the historical vicissitudes of the development of spoken languages. The reality is that there are many regional varieties of Amdo Tibetan speech. Native speakers and linguists alike often say that in fact there is "a dialect for every valley" (cf. Norbu 1983). Needless to say, due to the difficulty of access and paucity of data on them, what constitutes a "dialect" of Tibetan is uncertain in Tibetan dialectology (cf. Beyer 1992, Matisoff 1986). This is an especially difficult issue in ethnically diverse Amdo regions because of their complex histories of warfare, migration, and contact with non-Tibetan peoples. Yet the demands of communication among Tibetans of different regions, as well as those of foreigners attempting to learn local speech varieties, have resulted in

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6 It is said that when Chinese movies dubbed in Lhasa Tibetan were first shown in Amdo regions in the early fifties, some Amdo nomads thought they were listening to a foreign language (Dongrub Tshering, personal communication, February 1995).

7 Buddhism was influential even throughout what Tibetan historians have called "the dark period" when Buddhism was supposed to have been completely cut off by its enemies after the collapse of the Yarlung dynasty in 842.

8 The Tibetan writing system is traditionally said to have been adapted from Indian scripts at the behest of King Srong btsan sgampo in the 7th century.

the production of materials on "Amdo Tibetan dialect", which, until recently, largely approached the region as a monolithic speech community.

TYPES OF MATERIALS PRODUCED ON AMDO DIALECTS

The following paragraphs list some of the main types of materials written on Amdo dialects since the turn of the century. We briefly discuss some of the methodological problems they raise in order to provide a context for our present contribution on the Labrang Amdo dialect. Readers should refer to the references for more information on particular works.

Materials on Amdo dialects can be divided into the following four groups. First, there are phonological studies of different regions by Western and Western-trained linguists. These include the early works by the explorers Hermanns and Roerich, who traveled in Amdo regions prior to 1949, as well as studies by more recent linguists working with single informants outside of China since 1959 (Sun 1986, 1993; Nagano 1980; Róna-Tas 1983; cf. Dempsey 1991). The second group consists of workbooks, primarily written by Chinese and Tibetan linguists, published in China and geared toward helping Chinese cadres learn enough of the dialect to conduct government business in Amdo Tibetan–speaking regions. These books are used as teaching materials at Nationalities Institutes (*mínzú xuéyuàn*), where Chinese and non-Chinese cadres are trained to work in "minority" regions (*Bod rgya* 1990; Fang 1989, 1990; Li 1987). The third group consists of teaching materials produced by Tibetan linguists in Amdo regions, generally based on traditional Tibetan linguistics and including some discussion of Amdo phonology. However, these writers do not make use of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), and they tend to focus on lexicon as the main perceived difference between spoken and written language (Dbyi sa blo gros rgya mtsho 1981, Bstan pa rgya mtsho 1982).[9] The fourth group consists of lexicons, based on different Amdo

[9] Tibetans have their own long tradition of scholarship on the written Tibetan language. Studies of the language are based on two probably composite texts, the *sum cu pa* and the *rtags kyi 'jugs pa*, attributed to a famous 7th century scholar Thon mi Sambhoṭa, and their many commentaries (Beyer 1992). Among Tibetans, the written language, as a vehicle for the expression of the sacred Buddhist texts, as a marker of social prestige among the privileged literate few, and more recently as a medium unifying Tibetans of all regions felt to be endangered by assimilation to "Chineseness", is endowed with an almost sacred quality. Tibetan linguistic tradition thus favors written Tibetan over spoken forms, which are considered unworthy of transcription, indeed dangerous to the written language as corrupting forces if written down. Thus, until recently Tibetan scholars focused primarily on grammar at the expense of phonology (but see the works of modern Tibetan scholars like dMu dge bsam gtan and Ma Jinwu). This tradition is also the source of great pride among Tibetan intellectuals, who are reviving it now as a way to analyze the language in contradistinction to the linguistic methodologies of Chinese-trained linguists. Most recently, Chinese linguists working on local dialects in Amdo are often viewed by Tibetan intellectuals as representing

regions, and published both inside and outside of China by authors with varying degrees of linguistic training (Awang Qie Tai'er 1980, Hua Kan 1993, Go 1954, Yang 1995).

Problems with this body of materials have made it difficult to analyze or learn any particular Amdo dialect. The difficulties include: (1) methodological problems resulting from difficulty of access to native Amdo speakers; (2) confusion due to the lack of standardized transcription or transliteration systems; and (3) uncertainty over what constitutes a "dialect" of Amdo Tibetan due to the paucity of data on a wide range of Amdo speakers. In our three-part series on the Labrang Amdo dialect, we hope to remedy these problems, by providing a clear, accessible account of one regional variety placed in context.

Among Western and Western-trained scholars of Amdo dialects of Tibetan, Hermanns and Roerich alone spent some time among Amdo-speaking groups before 1949. However, the usefulness of their published descriptions suffers because they both treat the region as one speech community. Neither of them had the data or the experience to describe the geographic range of the varieties they were working with.[10] Most importantly, neither is systematic in transcribing the language—errors in their phonological analyses as well as inconsistent transcription practices greatly reduce the clarity of their work.[11]

By contrast, more recent Western-trained linguists working with single speakers of Amdo dialects outside of China have produced much more systematic and detailed phonological descriptions (Sun 1986, Nagano 1980). However, their limited access to informants in natural speaking environments leads to some confusion in their work. This is evident not only in transcription practices (both make little effort to relate their systems to those used in other works), but also in the phonetic versus phonemic status, as well as the social and geographic scope, of certain elicited pronunciations.[12]

Throughout this corpus of material on Amdo dialects, including studies produced in China from the early eighties to the present, problems of transcription and transliteration are caused by the ever-present specter of written

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colonizing interests; their focus on local dialects is seen as contributing to dividing Tibetans among themselves. Many young Tibetan intellectuals now call for the development of a Tibetan "standard spoken language", comparable to Standard Chinese (*pǔtōnghuà*), which would be intelligible to all Tibetans.

10 Roerich worked in Rebgong, which is in the Tongren Tibetan Autonomous County, Qinghai; Hermanns' research was conducted in an unspecified northern Amdo nomadic region.

11 For example, Hermanns confuses two different initials, the voiceless velar fricative [xh] and the voiceless glottal fricative [h], and transcribed them both with "h"; and Roerich's transcription of vowels is inconsistent (cf. Dempsey 1991).

12 Dempsey calls these studies "hyperanalytical," and notes that in their meticulous attention to detail, these writers sometimes lend phonemic status to allophones, particularly in their analyses of the vowel systems, and of velar and uvular initials and finals.

Tibetan. As noted above, the great prestige and the unifying nature of written Tibetan have led most linguists working on Amdo dialects to assume the ancestral nature of written Tibetan *vis-à-vis* spoken dialects. Their theories of the evolution and relationships of Amdo dialects are based on this assumption (e.g., Dempsey 1991, Yang 1995).

Theoretical problems with these arguments are beyond the scope of this article, but suffice it to say that in most studies of Amdo dialects, the spoken language is described in relation to the written.[13] This is useful in phonological studies and lexicons for cross-dialect comparison, but it can also lead to methodological difficulties and confusion. First of all, transliteration systems for written Tibetan are notoriously numerous, and Chinese scholars have recently weighed in with their own system based on the *pīnyīn* transliteration adopted by the Chinese government (Li 1987). In addition, Chinese linguists often use the same phonetic symbols (based on IPA) both to transcribe sounds and to transliterate written words, sometimes confusing one for the other (e.g., in the workbooks mentioned above). Finally, in studies based on elicited pronunciations from single informants reading words in written Tibetan, the prestige Tibetans attach to the written language, as well as to forms of oratory which privilege certain pronunciations, can lead to reading pronunciations of words that are not widely used in the vernacular.[14]

Perhaps the most important difficulty throughout the earlier works on Amdo Tibetan, however, is the confusion over what constitutes a distinct dialect. This confusion is due in part to the ethnic and historical complexity of the region, and partly, as Sun complains in his 1986 monograph on the Amdo dialect of nDzorge, to the lack of access to accurate data on a wide range of Amdo speakers. As Ren and Zewang Duoji (1989) and Matisoff (1986) have abundantly described, ethnonyms and toponyms referring to the populations of the "frontier" regions in Chinese, Tibetan, and Western languages have proliferated. Regional speech varieties, and therefore ethnic groups, have generally been named after broad geographic regions, and then more specifically after smaller districts, valleys, or even villages in which a particular variety is found.

As discussed above, scholars inside and outside of China tend to agree on the three-way division of Tibetan dialects into the regions of Central Tibet,

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13 E.g., when phonemes identified for a dialect are described as "reflections", "innovations", or "conservations" of the written language (Dempsey 1991; Hua Kan 1985, 1993; Hua Kan and Ma Anqiang 1992; Renzeng Wangmu 1986; Yang 1995).

14 This problem is most often encountered with Amdo speakers in the pronunciation of initial consonant clusters. For example, the usual vernacular pronunciation of the consonant cluster **skr-** as a palatal [htɕ] would be changed by a reader to a retroflex [htʂ] to reflect the subscript letter *r-* in the written language.

Khams, and Amdo.[15] However, there is little agreement on how to describe linguistic variation within these regions. Sun and Dempsey merely list regions in which Amdo dialects are said to be spoken, and conclude that there are six Amdo dialects: *Arig* (NE Qinghai), *Labrang* (SW Gansu), *mGolog* (W Qinghai),[16] *rNgaba* (NW Sichuan), *Amchog* (S Gansu), and *mDzodge* (N Sichuan). Norbu, referring to a traditional Tibetan geographic distinction which uses the Yellow River to divide Amdo into a "northern region" (*byang rgyud*, north of the Yellow River) and a "southern region" (*lho rgyud*, south of the Yellow River), classifies Amdo dialects under "Northern" and "Southern" varieties (1983:1). While such geographic schemata are generally appropriate for talking about linguistic variation in a rugged region where transportation and communication were difficult, and therefore local speech varieties could evolve (relatively) separately, they are not based on enough data to delineate relationships among them or distinguish their true geographic ranges.

Now, however, more data on Tibetan dialects in general and on Amdo dialects in particular are available than ever before. While still by no means exhaustive, large amounts of data are now being published in China. Collected in a massive effort by Chinese linguists beginning in the early fifties, this material is finally seeing widespread publication in various monographs and articles (e.g., Hua Kan 1980, etc.; Huang Bufan 1988; Qu Aitang 1991; Wang Qingshan 1984, etc.; Yang Shihong 1995; et al.).[17] It has now been possible for Chinese and Tibetan linguists to construct a broader view of the range and geography of Amdo dialects. Indeed, a map of Tibetan dialects based on this large corpus of linguistic data was put together in the early nineties through a collaborative effort by a team of Western linguists and linguists from the Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing.[18]

This map, of course, is not completely exhaustive or accurate, and the dialect "boundaries," drawn according to rough phonological isoglosses, are more like zones of sociolinguistic interaction in which speech varieties fade into each other (cf. Beyer 1992, Yang 1995). Nonetheless, it does reflect more knowledge about Tibetan dialects than has been available in the West. and it

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15 J. T. Sun (1986:1), however, identifies a vaguely defined fourth Tibetan dialect, "Western Tibetan", and asserts that it is closer to Amdo than to Khams and Central Tibetan dialects (1986:1). Dempsey questions this theory.

16 Beyer (1992:23) does not include the variety of Tibetan spoken in mGolog as a dialect of Amdo Tibetan.

17 These data reflect an almost exclusive emphasis on phonological studies by Chinese-trained linguists. Until recently, very few such scholars focused on grammatical, syntactic, or sociolinguistic aspects of language (exceptions being Wang Qingshan 1996 and Ma Jinqu 1993). By contrast, Tibetan-trained linguists have focused all along on grammar at the expense of phonology.

18 The result of the collaboration is the *Zàngyǔ Fāngyán Tú* cited in the bibliography.

demonstrates some broad distinctions and relationships among Amdo dialects in particular that are not referred to in Western linguists' classifications.

Perhaps the most important distinction among Amdo dialects, reflected in native speakers' views as well as those of Chinese linguists, is made along the lines of the most significant socioeconomic and geographic differentiation in the region: that between the speech varieties of the nomadic pastoralists of higher grassland plateaux (Ch. *mùqū yǔ*, Tib. *'brog skad*) and those of the farmers of lower river valleys (Ch. *nóngqū yǔ*, Tib. *rong skad*). This distinction can be clearly drawn on a dialect map (e.g., Zhōngguó Shèhuì Kēxuéyuàn 1990). The zone of "farmer's speech" corresponds to the foothills and lower Huang and Yellow River valleys on the eastern edge of the Amdo Tibetan region (eastern Qinghai and southwestern Gansu). These Tibetan farming communities form the outer edge of Tibetan culture and they have for centuries been in more intimate contact with Han Chinese, Chinese-speaking Muslims, and other non-Tibetan-speaking populations. Thus, compared to nomadic regions, they are the site of more rapid linguistic and cultural change and assimilation (Yang 1995, Sperling 1993).[19]

Tibetan farming communities in eastern Amdo are surrounded by the bulk of Amdo territory to the north, west, and south in Qinghai and northern Sichuan. These rugged grassland plateaux at high altitudes are more sparsely populated by pastoralist Tibetans. These groups, buffered from Chinese cultural and political influence until very recently, are known to be fiercely independent. In recent years, Tibetans have often regarded these nomads as epitomizing "true" and "pure" Tibetanness, untainted by outside influence. It is thus not surprising that nomadic forms of speech carry a certain degree of prestige in Amdo regions, and most modern broadcasting and public oratory in Amdo Tibetan are based on them.

Linguistic variation among Amdo dialects, especially in native eyes, can thus be striking. Natives and linguists alike identify regional varieties within nomadic and farming communities (Hua Kan 1984; Qu Aitang 1991; Wang Qingshan 1996, 1998; Xun and Wang 1987; Yang Shihong 1995). Besides lexical differences, which are often significant even from one valley to the next, the most striking differences among Amdo dialects are phonological. For example, Yang describes three "phonetic levels" (*yǔyīn céng*) of Amdo dialects which map the gradual development eastward, from nomadic territory to farming communities, of the simplification of initial consonants (including clusters), ranging from 134 in the Arig nomadic region (surrounding Qinghai

19 Farming varieties of Amdo Tibetan speech, following river valleys and surrounding larger cities and towns, can be found scattered through the eastern parts of nomadic regions of Amdo (in eastern Qinghai). These are not shown on the dialect map.

Lake), to 48 in Labrang (on the eastern Qinghai-SW Gansu border), to around 35 in the farming communities of the Bailongjiang and Tao Rivers in SW Gansu) at the farthest perimeter of Amdo.[20]

As Professor Hua Kan points out, despite this variation among Amdo Tibetan dialects, the vast majority of the over one million Amdo speakers can understand each other. This is either because the regional varieties they speak are mutually intelligible (even across nomad-farmer lines), or because they are exposed, through the monastic system or more recently through radio and television, to prestige dialects (based on nomad speech) that serve as a sort of lingua franca in Amdo regions. Indeed, Hua Kan emphasizes that linguistic variation in Amdo regions is actually relatively slight compared to Khams areas.

Thus, linguists can talk about a cluster of linguistic features and a range of intelligibility that mark the boundary zones of Amdo Tibetan-speaking regions. As Yang points out, they are usually referring to the majority of the Amdo territory, encompassing the nomadic and semi-nomadic regions surrounding Qinghai Lake and the northern and southern reaches of the Yellow River, and not to the farming communities on its perimeters. Qu Aitang, cited in Yang, lists twelve main phonological features, such as the occurrence of complex initials and the absence of diphthongs and phonemic tones, which characterize the Amdo dialects of these regions and differentiate them from other dialects of Tibetan (Yang 1995:4). The Tibetan spoken in the Labrang region is an example of one such Amdo dialect.

LABRANG AND LABRANG AMDO DIALECT

Labrang is located in what is today called Xiahe County on the border of Qinghai and SW Gansu. For centuries the region was the site of migrations and settlements of various steppe peoples, but it was not until the large and powerful Tibetan Buddhist monastery of *Bla brang bkra shis 'khyil* was founded on the banks of the bSang River in 1710 that the region was settled by significant populations of Tibetans.[21] The modern town, which is now home

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[20] Note, however, that Yang's classification is schematic at best, and does not correspond to that shown on the dialect map (Zhōngguó Shèhuì Kēxuéyuàn 1990). He includes the speech variety spoken in the Zhuoni (Cone) region as a dialect of Amdo, while the map classifies it as a member of the Khams family of dialects. He also classifies Labrang (Xiahe) and Rebgong (Tongren) as varieties of nomad speech, while the map classifies them as examples of "semi-nomadic" speech. In addition, Yang's analysis of farming communities' speech does not deal with those found in the north (in eastern Qinghai). However, his schema does give a nice general overview of some linguistic relationships among Amdo dialects. He also notes such other general linguistic trends in farming communities of Amdo Tibetans as the loss of consonant clusters, an increase of diphthongs, and the addition of phonemic tones (1995:15).

[21] Labrang monastery housed over 3000 monks and was considered a great center of Bubbhist scholarship in its heyday during the 18th and 19th centuries. It exercised much political and economic power over surrounding groups of pastoralist and farming Tibetans, as

to almost 14,000 people, around 6000 of whom are Tibetans living in a number of interethnic and Tibetan villages, developed as a trading hamlet on the outskirts of the monastery.[22] The region known as Labrang lies on the edge of the grassland steppes as they rise from the loess valleys of northwest China to the *Amnyes rma chen* (Ch. *Ānǐ Mǎqīng*) mountain range. It is therefore located at the juncture of farming and nomadic pastoralist regions. The powerful monastery, as landlord and important pilgrimage site, was the center of a network of socioeconomic relationships linking nomadic and farming communities of Tibetans.

Among Amdo Tibetans, the great power and prestige of Labrang monastery and its influential incarnate lamas was a unifying force. Its monastic textbooks (*yig cha*) and the treatises of its famous scholars were used by many "branch" monasteries throughout the Amdo regions and into Mongolia. The large numbers of monks and traders who came to study and do business there were exposed to the local dialect, which not surprisingly came to be seen as prestigious. To this day, their dialect is a source of pride to local Tibetans, who insist it is more elegant than "farmer's speech" especially, and that it is intelligible "wherever you go" in Amdo.

Among Chinese linguists, partly due to its key frontier location as a site of official Han-Tibetan encounters for centuries, and partly due to the extensive work on the dialect carried out since the 1950s by linguists like Hua Kan, Labrang Amdo dialect has had emblematic status as "representative" or "typical of" Amdo dialects (cf., e.g., Hua Kan 1993, Renzeng Wangmu 1987). It is included as an example of Amdo dialects in most Chinese anthologies of "minority" and Tibeto-Burman dialects.

There are several good reasons why Labrang Amdo dialect is appropriate for a close examination. Geography dictates that Labrang serve as a broker between nomadic and farming speech communities,[23] and its phonological system, grammar, and core lexicon are squarely within the perimeters of intelligibility of Amdo Tibetan-speaking populations. However, we must emphasize that our focus on Labrang Amdo dialect has more to do with the availability of data than with whether it can represent all Amdo dialects. We do not suggest that it is a lingua franca in Amdo regions, or that it is prestigious

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well as over its many "branch" monasteries. Interventions of the Chinese state in the area were largely ineffective against its power until 1949.

22 Significant populations of Han Chinese and Chinese-speaking Muslims also live there. The boom in the non-Tibetan population in town is a fairly recent phenomenon and is part of a larger process, noted by Sperling (1990), of the gradual reduction of the range of ethnic Tibetan regions. Population figures are extrapolated from 1982 census data, with a 2.35% increase for the Gansu Tibetan population in 1990 as reported in Zhang 1993 (see footnote 3).

23 Indeed, it is classified on the Tibetan dialect map as "semi-nomadic semi-farming" (*bàn nóng bàn mù*).

throughout the Amdo-speaking world. Historically in Amdo there have been other centers of cultural and linguistic production, most notably the Qinghai Lake region northwest of Labrang. The largely nomadic forms of speech spoken there have significantly different phonologies and lexicons.

PART 1: THE PHONOLOGY OF THE LABRANG DIALECT

Our description of the Labrang Amdo dialect is a broad phonetic transcription.[24] It is not a phonemic analysis, but rather a system which preserves the important phonetic distinctions in the dialect in order to make it more accessible for language learners. Our phonetic symbols are all commonly used IPA symbols. In addition, for comparative purposes we provide charts which map relationships between the initials and finals of written Tibetan and those of this dialect. The Wylie system of transliterating written Tibetan is used throughout; we also note common reading pronunciations when relevant.

1.0. The Syllable

There are the following syllable types in the Labrang dialect:

V VC CV CVC CCV CCVC

The majority of words in the dialect are monosyllabic or disyllabic, but there are a large number of trisyllabic and quadrisyllabic words as well.

1.1. Initials

Besides a zero initial, the initial consonant phones in the Labrang dialect are as shown in Table 1. Most of these may occur individually in syllable initial position. However, the voiced series of stops and affricates [b dz dʑ d dʐ g]

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[24] There are several analyses of the phonology of the dialect published in Chinese, including Hua Kan et al. 1993, Dai Qingxia 1992, and Renzeng Wangmu 1987. The system of finals is widely agreed upon: all three of these analyses recognize 6 vowels, 7 final consonants, and 25 combinations of vowel and final consonant. However, there is disagreement in the analysis of initial consonants and consonant clusters. Most sources give a total of 58 or 59 initials, but confusion centers around the phonemic versus phonetic status of certain initials, especially aspirated versions of velar and palatal fricatives. Dai and Hua Kan list both a palatal fricative [ɕ] and its aspirated counterpart [ɕh] as initials, while Renzeng Wangmu lists only the unaspirated one. Dai includes as initials both voiced uvular [ʁ] and unvoiced uvular [χ], as well as the voiced velar [ɣ]. Hua Kan includes the unvoiced uvular fricative [χ] but analyzes [ʁ] as an allophone of the voiced velar fricative [ɣ]. Renzeng Wangmu's analysis accords with Hua Kan's, but uses the voiced uvular fricative [ʁ] as the symbol representing this phoneme. As for consonant clusters, most descriptions of the dialect agree in dividing possible pre-initials into two phonemes [n] and [h], for a total of 17 initial consonant clusters plus 3 that occur only as the initials of second syllables in collocations. How our broad phonetic transcription differs from this will be made apparent below.

has a restricted distribution, occurring only in combination with the pre-initial [ɣ] or as the initial of the second syllable in a disyllabic word. Voiced consonants do not occur individually in word-initial position. Note also that in initial position /r/ is a voiced retroflex affricate [ʐ], and that /ɣ/ in word-initial position is phonetically [ʁ], but as the initial of a second syllable in a polysyllabic word it is phonetically [ɣ].

	Labial	*Apical*	*Dental*	*Retroflex*	*Palatal*	*Velar*	*Laryngeal*
Unaspirated stops	p		t			k	
Aspirated stops	ph		th			kh	
Voiced stops	b		d			g	
Unasp. affricates		ts		tʂ	tɕ		
Asp. affricates		tsh		tʂh	tɕh		
Voiced affricates		dz		dʐ	dʑ		
Fricatives		s		ʂ	ɕ	x	h
Asp. fricatives		sh			ɕh	xh	
Voiced fricatives		z			ʑ	ɣ	
Nasals	m		n		ɳ	ŋ	
Laterals			l ɬ				
Rhotics			r				
Semivowels	w				j		

Table 1. The initials of Labrang

Table 2 presents the initial consonant clusters in the Labrang dialect. The pre-initials [ɣ-] and [h-] are pronounced very lightly. Note that the pre-initial [h-] occurs only with voiceless consonants; the pre-initial [ɣ-] occurs only with

hk	htɕ	htʂ	ht		hɕ	hts	hw	kw
ɣg	ɣdʑ	ɣdʐ	ɣd		ɣz	ɣdz		
ɣŋ	ɣɳ		ɣn	ɣm	ɣj	ɣl	ɣw	
ŋg	ndʑ	ndʐ[25]	nd	mb	ndz			

Table 2. Initial consonant clusters in Labrang

25 The consonant clusters [ndʑ] and [ndʐ] are phonetically [ɳdʑ] and [ɳdʐ], respectively. For typographical simplicity, they are written here with the [n-].

voiced or sonorant consonants; and the pre-initial nasals only occur with voiced consonants at the same point of articulation. In a strictly phonemic transcription, pre-initials could be reduced to two: /h-/ and /n-/. We transcribe the allophonic variants here in order to make clear the marked phonetic differences they have in different environments.

1.2. Finals

In contrast to the complex initials, the finals of the Labrang dialect are rather simple, consisting of 6 vowels and 7 final consonants, as shown in Table 3:

i		u	-p	-l / -t	-k
e	ə	o	-m	-n	-ŋ
	a			-r	

Table 3. Vowels and final consonants in Labrang

The variant final consonant [-t] occurs only in reading pronunciation. The final consonant [-k] has two allophones, [-k] and [-x], as explained below.

All the vowels may occur by themselves as finals. Only the vowels [i] and [u] never occur together with a final consonant. The possible combinations of -VC rhymes are spelled out in Table 4:

V / C	*-p*	*-m*	*-l*	*-n*	*-k*	*-ŋ*	*-r*
e	ep	em	el	en	—	—	er
a	ap	am	al	an	ak	aŋ	ar
o	op	om	ol	on	ok	oŋ	or
ə	əp	əm	əl	ən	ək	—	ər

Table 4. The finals of Labrang

Except for the following, the above symbols accord with the actual phonetic realization:

/aŋ/ and /ak/ are more like [ɐŋ] and [ɐx];
/an/ and /al/ are more like [ɛn] and [ɛl];
/ap/, /am/, and /ar/ are more like [æp], [æm], and [ær];
/ək/ is more like [ɯx].

There are no diphthongs or triphthongs in the Labrang dialect, nor are there tonal distinctions.

2.0. Correspondence between written Tibetan and colloquial Amdo pronunciation

In this section we will show how Labrang pronunciation is related to the written language. We do not presuppose that the Labrang dialect, or any Tibetan dialect, is the direct lineal descendant of written Tibetan. Nevertheless, the large number of systematic correspondences between written Tibetan and the Labrang dialect will aid the researcher who wants to learn the Labrang dialect.

2.1. Written Tibetan initials in the Labrang dialect

Table 5 shows how written Tibetan initials, as transliterated in the Wylie system, are pronounced in the Labrang dialect. For the sake of comparison, the pronunciation of the same written initials in a nomadic dialect, that of Zeku in SE Qinghai, are provided in the third column. Sounds before a slash represent reading pronunciations, while those following a slash represent colloquial variants. Symbols separated by a comma indicate that either pronunciation is possible.

2.2. Written Tibetan finals in the Labrang dialect

Table 6 shows written Tibetan finals transliterated in the Wylie system and their pronunciation in Labrang and Zeku dialects.

Together, Tables 5 and 6 provide all the information needed for the pronunciation of individual written Tibetan syllables.

3.0. Regular sound changes

When two syllables come together, there are a few regular changes that occur. Generally, these changes are immediately apparent from the written language.

3.1. WT pre-initials in the second syllable after an open first syllable

If the first syllable of a disyllabic word ends in a vowel and there is a superscribed *r-* in the second syllable, then a final [-r] will occur after the end of

the first syllable: e.g., *go rgyu* [kor dʑə] 'significance, implication', *chu rdza* [tɕhər dza] 'water jar'.

Similarly, if the first syllable of a disyllabic word ends in a vowel and there is a pre-initial *b-* in the second syllable, then a final [-p] will occur after the end of the first syllable, as in *kha brda* [khap da] 'words; to chat', or *lnga bcu* [ɣŋap tɕə] 'fifty'. The written Tibetan initials *phy-*, *by-*, and *br-*, when occurring in the second syllable, will cause a [-p] to occur at the end of the first syllable, e.g., *nas phye* [nep ɕe] 'barley flour', *rma bya* [ɣmap ɕa] 'peacock', *bla brang* [ɣlap raŋ] 'Labrang'. The pre-initial *m-* in a second syllable has an analogous effect on the final of the preceding syllable: *ja mchod* [tɕam tɕhol] 'tea offering'.

In the same written Tibetan environment, '- (*a-chung*) will become a final [n] on the first syllable: *nye 'khor* [ɳen khor] 'nearby'. If *a-chung* occurs as the pre-initial of a second syllable whose radical is a written Tibetan labial (*p-*, *ph-*, *b-*) and the first syllable ends in a vowel, then a final [-m] will occur at the end of the first syllable: e.g., *chos 'byung* [tɕhem dʑoŋ] 'religious history', *rna 'byog* [ɣnam dʑok] 'ear'. An *a-chung* in the second syllable of a disyllabic word whose first syllable ends in a final consonant is realized as a pre-nasal in the second syllable with the same point of articulation as its initial consonant: e.g., *thig 'then* [thək nthen] 'draw a string'.

3.2. Voiced and voiceless consonants in the second syllable

Written Tibetan voiced initial [g-, j-, d-, dz-, etc.] in the second syllable of a polysyllabic word will be voiceless if there is a final stop consonant at the end of the first syllable: e.g., *gtub gri* [htəp tɕə] 'vegetable knife'. The same series of written Tibetan initials will be voiced in the second syllable if the first syllable ends in a vowel or a final nasal: e.g., *'o ja* [o dʑa] 'milk tea', *sa zhing* [sha ʑaŋ] 'field', *mang phyogs* [maŋ ʑok] 'majority; mostly', *chu dong* [tɕhə doŋ] 'water hole'.

If there is a final consonant [-k] in the first syllable, then the pre-initials [h-] and [ɣ-] are elided in the second syllable: e.g., *lcags skud* [htɕak kəl] 'metal wire', *lcags gshol* [htɕak ɕu] 'metal plough'.

Table 5. Labrang reflections of written Tibetan initials

Wylie	*Labrang*	*Zeku*	*Wylie*	*Labrang*	*Zeku*	*Wylie*	*Labrang*	*Zeku*
k-	k	k	*dg-*	ɣg	rg	*mch-*	tɕh	ɳ̊ch
ky-	tɕ	c	*dgy-*	ɣdʑ	rɟ	*'ch-*	tɕh	ɳ̊ch
kr-	tʂ / tɕ	tʂ	*dgr-*	ɣdʑ/ɣdz̧	rɟ/ʁdz̧	*j-*	tɕ	c
kl-	ɣl	ʁl	*bg-*	ɣg	βg	*mj-*	ndʑ	mɟ
dk-	hk, k	ʂk	*bgy-*	ɣdʑ	βɟ	*'j-*	ndʑ	nɟ
dky-	htɕ	hc	*bgr-*	ɣdz̧	βdz̧	*rj-*	ɣdʑ	rɟ
dkr-	htʂ, htɕ	htʂ/hc	*mg-*	ng	mgw	*lj-*	ɣdʑ	rɟ
bk-	k	pkw	*mgy-*	ndʑ	mɟ	*brj-*	ɣdʑ	βɟ
bky-	tɕ	pc	*mgr-*	ndz̧	ndz̧	*ny-*	ɳ̊	ɳ̊
bkr-	tʂ, tɕ	ptʂ	*'g-*	ŋg	ŋg	*nyw-*	ɳ̊	ɳ̊
bkl-	ɣl	βl	*'gy-*	ndʑ	nɟ	*gny-*	ɣɳ̊	ʁɳ̊
rk-	hk	ʂk	*'gr-*	ndz̧/ndʑ	ndz̧	*mny-*	ɳ̊	mɳ̊
rky-	htɕ	ʂc	*rg-*	ɣg	ŋg	*rny-*	ɣɳ̊	ʁɳ̊
lk	hk	ʂk	*rgy-*	ɣdʑ	nɟ	*sny-*	ɣɳ̊	ʁɳ̊
sk-	hk	ʂk	*lg-*	ɣg	rg	*brny-*	ɣɳ̊	βɳ̊
sky-	htɕ	ʂc	*sg-*	ɣg	rg	*bsny-*	ɣɳ̊	βɳ̊
skr-	htʂ/htɕ	ʂc/ʂtʂ	*sgy-*	ɣdʑ	rɟ	*t-*	t	t
brk-	hk	ɸk	*sgr-*	ɣdz̧	ʁdz̧	*tr-*	tʂ	tʂ
brky-	htɕ	ɸc	*brg-*	ɣg	rg/βg	*gt-*	ht	ht
bsk-	hk	ɸk	*brgy-*	ɣdʑ	βɟ	*bt-*	t	pt
bsky-	htɕ	ɸc	*bsg-*	ɣg	rg/βg	*rt-*	ht	rt/ʂt
bskr-	htʂ	ɸtʂ	*bsgy-*	ɣdʑ	βɟ	*lt-*	ht	rt/ʂt
kh-	kh	kh	*bsgr-*	ɣdʑ/ɣdz̧	βdz̧	*st-*	ht	ʂt
khy-	tɕh	ch	*ng-*	ŋ	ŋ	*brt-*	ht	ɸt
khr-	tʂh/tɕh	tʂh	*dng-*	ɣŋ	rŋ	*blt-*	ht	ɸt
mkh-	kh	ɳ̊kh	*mng-*	ŋ	mŋ	*bst-*	ht	ɸt
mkhy-	tɕh	ɳ̊ch	*rng-*	ɣŋ	rŋ	*th-*	th	th
mkhr-	tʂh	ɳ̊tʂh	*lng-*	ɣŋ	rŋ	*mth-*	th	ɳ̊th
'kh-	kh	ŋ̊kh	*sng-*	ɣŋ	ʂŋ	*'th-*	th	ŋ̊th
'khy-	tɕh	ŋ̊ch	*brng-*	ɣŋ	βŋ	*d-*	t	t
'khr-	tʂh/tɕh	ŋ̊tʂh	*bsng-*	ɣŋ	βŋ	*dw-*	t	t
g-	k	k	*c-*	tɕ	c	*dr-*	tʂ	tʂ
gy-	tɕ	c	*gc-*	htɕ	hc	*gd-*	ɣd	ʁd
gr-	tʂ, tɕ	tʂ/c	*bc-*	tɕ	pc	*bd-*	ɣd	βd
grw-	tʂ	tʂ	*lc-*	htɕ	ʂc	*md-*	nd	md
gl-	ɣl	ʁl	*ch-*	tɕh	ch	*'d-*	nd	nd

Wylie	*Labrang*	*Zeku*	*Wylie*	*Labrang*	*Zeku*	*Wylie*	*Labrang*	*Zeku*
'dr-	ndz˞	ndz˞	*dby-*	ɣj	ʁj	*w-*	ɣ	ʁ
rd-	ɣd	rd	*dbr-*	ɣdz˞	r/tʂ	*zh-*	ɕ	ɕ
ld-	ɣd	rd	*'b-*	mb	mb	*zhw-*	ɕ	ɕ
sd-	ɣd	rd	*'by-*	ndʑ	mɲ	*gzh-*	ɣʑ	ʁʑ
brd-	ɣd	βd	*'br-*	ndz˞	mdz˞	*bzh-*	ɣʑ	βʑ
bld-	ɣd	βd	*rb-*	ɣb/w,ɣ	w	*z-*	s	s
bsd-	ɣd	βd	*lb-*	w, ɣw	ʁ/w	*zl-*	ɣd/ɣdz	rdz
n-	n	n	*sb-*	w, ɣb	—	*gz-*	ɣz	ʁz
gn-	ɣn	ʁn	*sby-*	ɣdʑ	βʑ	*bz-*	ɣz	βz
mn-	n	mn	*sbr-*	ɣdz˞[30]	βr/mb	*bzl-*	ɣd	βdz
rn-	ɣn	rn	*m-*	m	m	*'*	—	—
sn-	ɣn	ʂn	*my-*	ɳ	mɳ	*y-*	j	j
brn-	ɣn	βn	*dm-*	ɣm	ʁm	*gy-*	ɣj	ʁj
bsn-	ɣn	βn	*dmy-*	ɣɳ	ʁɳ	*r-*	r	r
p-	p, w	p	*rm-*	ɣm	rm	*rw-*	r	r
pr-	tʂ	ptʂ	*rmy-*	ɣɳ	ʁɳ	*rl-*	ɣl	ʁl
dp-	hw	hw	*sm-*	ɣm	ʂm	*brl-*	ɣl	βl
dpy-	hɕ	hɕ	*smy-*	ɣɳ	ʂɳ	*l-*	l	l
dpr-	htʂ	htʂ	*smr-*	ɣm	ʂm	*lw-*	l	l
lp-	w	w	*ts-*	ts	ts	*sh-*	xh, ɕ	xh
sp-	hw[28]	ɸs	*rts-*	hts	ʂts	*shw-*	xh	xh
spy-	htɕ	ɸɕ	*gts-*	hts	hts	*gsh-*	hɕ	hɕ
spr-	htʂ[29]	ʂtʂ	*bts-*	ts	pts	*bsh-*	ɕ	ɸɕ
ph-	ph, h	ph/h	*brts-*	hts	ɸts	*s-*	sh	sh
phy-	ɕ/tɕh	ɸɕ	*sts-*	hts	ʂts	*sr-*	ʂ, s	ʂ
phyw-	ɕ/tɕh	ɸɕ	*bsts-*	hts	ʂts	*sl-*	ɬ/hts, l	ɬ
phr-	tʂh	tʂh	*tsh-*	tsh	tsh	*gs-*	hs	hs
'ph-	ph, h	ɱph	*tshw-*	tsh	tsh	*bs-*	s	ɸs
'phy-	tɕh	ɸɕ	*mtsh-*	tsh	ɱtsh	*bsr-*	ʂ	ɸʂ
'phr-	tʂh	ɱtʂh	*'tsh*	tsh	ɳtsh	*bsl-*	ɬ/hts, l	ɬ
b-	w	w	*dz-*	ts, ndz	ts	*h-*	h	h
by-	ɕ, j	ɸɕ	*mdz-*	ndz	mdz	*hw-*	h	h
br-	tʂ	ptʂ	*'dz-*	ndz	ndz	*hr-*	ʂ	ʂ
bl-	ɣl	βl	*rz-*	ɣdz	rdz	*lh-*	ɬ, h	ɬ
db-	ɣ, w	ʁ	*brdz-*	ɻdz	βdz	*a-*	—	—

28 This initial tends toward [ɸ].
29 Colloquial pronunciations include [hw], [ʂ], and [tʂ].
30 Colloquial pronunciations include [w], [r], and [mb].

Table 6. Labrang reflections of written Tibetan finals

Wylie	*Labrang*	*Zeku*	*Wylie*	*Labrang*	*Zeku*	*Wylie*	*Labrang*	*Zeku*
-a	-a	-a	*-ims*	-əm	-əm	*-en*	-en	-en
-ag	-ak	-ak	*-i'i*	-i	-i	*-eb*	-ep	-ep
-ags	-ak	-ak	*-ir*	-ər	-ər	*-ebs*	-ep	-ep
-ang	-aŋ	-aŋ	*-il*	-i	-i	*-em*	-em	-em
-angs	-aŋ	-aŋ	*-is*	-i	-i	*-ems*	-em	-em
-ad	-al	-al	*-u*	-ə	-ə	*-e'i*	-i	-i
-an	-an	-an	*-ug*	-ək	-ək	*-e'u*	-i	-i
-ab	-ap	-ap	*-ugs*	-ək	-ək	*-er*	-er	-er
-abs	-ap	-ap	*-ung*	-oŋ	-oŋ	*-el*	-i/-el	-el
-am	-am	-am	*-ungs*	-oŋ	-oŋ	*-es*	-e	-i
-ams	-am	-am	*-ud*	-əl	-ət	*-o*	-o	-o
-a'i	-i, -ə	-i	*-un*	-ən	-ən	*-og*	-ok	-ok
-a'u	-ə	-uə	*-ub*	-əp	-əp	*-ogs*	-ok	-ok
-ar	-ar	-ar	*-ubs*	-əp	-əp	*-ong*	-oŋ	-oŋ
-al	-a	-a	*-um*	-əm	-əm	*-ongs*	-oŋ	-oŋ
-as	-e	-i	*-ums*	-əm	-əm	*-od*	-ol	-ol
-i	-ə	-ə	*-u'i*	-i	-i	*-on*	-on	-on
-ig	-ək	-ək	*-ur*	-ər	-ər	*-ob*	-op	-op
-igs	-ək	-ək	*-ul*	-u/-əl	-u	*-obs*	-op	-op
-ing	-aŋ	-aŋ	*-us*	-i	-i	*-om*	-om	-om
-ings	-aŋ	-aŋ	*-e*	-e	-e	*-oms*	-om	-om
-id	-əl	-ət	*-eg*	-ak	-ak	*-o'i*	-u	-u
-in	-ən	-ən	*-eng*	-aŋ	-aŋ	*-or*	-or	-or
-ib	-əp	-əp	*-engs*	-aŋ	-aŋ	*-ol*	-u	-u
-ibs	-əp	-əp	*-ed*	-el	-el	*-os*	-e	-i
-im	-əm	-əm						

3.3. A few miscellaneous sound changes

The written Tibetan morphemes *mi* [ɳə] 'person', *ming* [ɳaŋ] 'name', *me* [ɳe] 'fire', *mig* [ɳək] 'eye', etc., when occurring in a second syllable, cause a final [-m] to appear at the end of the first syllable: e.g., *chos ming* [tɕhem ɳaŋ] 'religious name', *gces ming* [htɕem ɳaŋ] 'pet name'. These morphemes were written in Old Tibetan (i.e., in Dunhuang manuscripts, etc.) with the initial *my-*, rather than the simple *m-* used in modern written Tibetan.

If the first syllable of a disyllabic word ends with a final velar consonant [-k, -ŋ] and the second syllable is the particle *pa*, the second syllable becomes [kwa]: e.g., *rogs pa* [rok kwa] 'companion', *yag pa* [jak kwa] 'beautiful'. In most cases, the resultant suffix [kwa] causes regressive assimilation on the vowel of a first syllable: e.g., *mag pa* [mok kwa] 'son-in-law', *khang pa* [khoŋ ŋwa] 'house'.

Another common phenomenon is the merger or fusion of vowels in polysyllabic words where the written Tibetan initial *b-* is elided: e.g., *du ba* [to] 'smoke', *khu ba* [kho] 'soup], *gzhug ma bo* [ɣʑək mo] 'the latter'.

There is a general tendency for unaspirated velar stop initials of a second syllable to be weakened to a fricative, e.g., [k-, g-] —> [ɣ]. However, we only indicate this change in a few cases, such as the particle *ki* [ɣə] and certain words like *yi ge* [jə ɣe] 'letter', *lu gu* [lə ɣə] 'lamb', *smyu gu* [ɣɳə ɣə] 'pen'.

There is also a general tendency for words with a final *-d* in written Tibetan to be pronounced with no final consonant in the colloquial language: e.g., *med* [me] 'there is none', *yod* [jo] 'there is', *red* [re] 'is; to be' *byed* [je] 'to make; to do'. Many of these phenomena are lexically governed, so we refer the reader to our forthcoming dictionary.

In addition to the above, there are a number of simple assimilatory phenomena. For example, if the initial of a second syllable is a written Tibetan labial and the final consonant in the first syllable is a [k] or [ŋ], the initial of the second syllable will assimilate to the final of the first syllable: e.g., *gtsang po* [htsaŋ ŋo] 'river', *nak po* [nak ko] 'black', *gong ba* [koŋ ŋa] 'collar'. We will not indicate such changes in our transcription.

4.0. EXAMPLES

Below are some examples of Amdo colloquial sayings, written in the Wylie system, transcribed in our broad phonetic system, and translated. We hope they will give the reader an idea of how our system works.

(1) *a mdo gi dgon pa nang nas bla brang gi che gzig med gi*
am do gə ɣgon pa naŋ ne ɣlab raŋ gə tɕhe zək me gə
Amdo-prt.-monastery-among-Labrang-prt.-bigger-there is none

me tog gi nang nas pad ma gi yag gzig med gi
me tok kə naŋ ne wal ma gə jak zək me gə
flower-prt.-among-lotus-prt.-more.beautiful-there is none

Among monasteries in Amdo, there is none bigger than Labrang;
among flowers, there is none more beautiful than the lotus.

(2) *zas za no ma sdug skol no sdug*
se sa no ma ɣdək hku no ɣdək
food-eat-prt.-not-suffer-cook-prt.-suffer

gtam bshad no ma sdug nyan no sdug
htam cal no ma ɣdək ɳan no ɣdək
word-say-prt.-not-suffer-hear-prt.-suffer

The eater does not suffer, the cook does;
the speaker does not suffer, the listener does.

(3) *kha rog ga 'dug na kha mchu med*
kha rok ɣa ndək na kham tɕhə me
quietly-prt.-be-if-argument-there is none

mgo lag ga skyor na gcar ni med
ŋgo lak ɣa htɕor na htɕar nə me
head-hand-prt.-support-if-beat-prt.-there is none

If one holds one's tongue, there will be no arguments;
if one holds his head in his hand, no one will fight with him.

(4) *ban de 'gro sa sgar red*
wan de ndʑo sha ɣgar re
young.monk-go-place-monastery-is

byi mo 'gro sa gnas red
ɕə mo ndʑo sha ɣne re
unmarried.women-go-place-husband's-is

The place where the young monks go is a monastery;
the place where unmarried women go is their husband's home.

(5) *brgyags na chos dran na*
ɣdʑak na tɕhe tʂan na
full-when-dharma-think

ltogs na rkus dran na
htok na hke tʂan na
empty-when-stealing-think

When (the stomach) is full, one thinks of religion;
when it is empty, one thinks of stealing.

(6) *ma bu mo nangs zho ma 'thung*
ma wə mo naŋ ɕo ma nthoŋ
women-mornings-yoghurt-not-drink

'thung na gnyid rgyu 'bab ba
thoŋ na ɣɳə dʑə mbap wa
drink-if-sleep-fall

Women shouldn't drink yoghurt in the morning;
if they drink it, they will become sleepy.

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