# Some Remarks on Tabo Tibetan – A Variety of the Tibetic Language of Spiti

Veronika Hein
(Solothurn)

y research on the language of Spiti began with a contribution to the Comparative Dictionary of Tibetan Dialects (CDTD), which was compiled by Roland Bielmeier and his team of linguists at Berne University. The CDTD is now in print but this impressive work will come out only after the sad demise of our respected teacher, who died in December 2013. This paper is dedicated to Roland, who encouraged me to venture out into Himachal Pradesh and who made it possible for me to discover a new world in Spiti.

This article presents data collected for the CDTD on three levels: In the first part, some examples from Volume 2: Nouns illustrate the geographical situation of Spiti Tibetan on the level of phonology. The second part presents verbs, verbal expressions and sentences in order to show some salient morphological features of the language of Spiti. Some remarks on case marking, especially the Spiti use of the Ergative, conclude part two. In the third part, the beginning of a coherent text is presented and some aspects of a text transmitted orally are worked out.

Before proceeding to the three main parts of this paper, I wish to clarify a terminological issue: How to refer to the language spoken in the given area. It is the Tibetan language spoken mostly in the Tehsil of Spiti, and it should therefore be called Spiti Tibetan. The reason why in all my previous publications it is called Tabo Tibetan is simply because my linguistic research is mainly based on data collected in Tabo; as such it also appears under Tabo in the CDTD. The name Tabo Tibetan (TT) does not therefore imply a different language from Spiti Tibetan, and I will also use the former in this paper in connection with data collected in Tabo.

## *Part One: Phonology and Language Geography*

The area in which Spiti Tibetan is spoken is practically identical with the administrative unit of Tehsil Spiti in the district of Lahaul-Spiti. There is only a single village in Tehsil Lahaul in which Spiti Tibetan is spoken. It is

the uppermost Lahauli village of Khoksar, which is situated on the right bank of the River Chandra, on the way to the Kunzum Pass and Spiti. Following the Spiti River downstream into the district of Kinnaur, there are also a number of Tibetan speaking villages. At the district border with Kinnaur, however, some phonological differences occur. I will come back to them hereafter.

Before turning to the phonological differences between Spiti Tibetan and Kinnauri Tibetan (Khunnu)[1] let's see how the languages in question are grouped in Bielmeier's CDTD. I have selected the Written Tibetan[2] lemma of *sran ma* (*peas*) from Volume 2: Nouns,[3] as an illustration:

> **8917**005172      **sran ma ~ srad ma**
> **BTC**    sran ma ''bru'i bye brag cig'
> (2971a), srad ma 'ri skyes 'bru rigs śig'
> (2970a), srad ma 'ri skyes 'bru rigs śig ri
> la skye ba'i sṅo gaṅ bu can…' (2970a).
> **Jk**    '1. pease, beans, lentils…' (580a).
> **Ja**    '1. Erbsen, Bohnen, Linsen, als Korn,
> Pflanze u. Gericht' (605a).
> **Gs**    sran ma 'the general name for beans,
> lentils, peas' (1138b). srad ma 'wild beans,
> peas' (1138b).
> **WAT**   Bal *stranma* 'peas' (only Khaplu); Har,
> Kar, Tsha, Par, Thuw, Dar, Hanu *stranma* 'peas';
> KarMZ *stranma* ~ *ṣṭanma* 'peas' ; Chik *ṣṭanma*
> 'peas'; Sapi, Shar, Mul, Lam, Wan, Khal, Nur, Nim,
> Nub *ṣanma* 'peas'; Leh *ṣanma* 'peas' (gen.)'.

*Table 1 — sren ma in the CDTD, part 1.*

The entries that are listed first are taken from 4 important dictionaries of Written Tibetan and define as well as translate the headword: BTC by Zhang Yisun et al., (The Great Tibetan-Chinese Dictionary), Beijing 1985; Jäschke English and German editions,[4] Goldstein's New Tibetan-English Dictionary of Modern Tibetan, 2001.

And then the different dialect entries follow, grouped according to

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[1]   The term Khunnu (*khu nu)* for the Tibetan language spoken in Kinnaur was first suggested by N. Tournadre. (Personal communication 2015).
[2]   The term Written Tibetan (WT) is used in the CDTD and related publications in the sense of a written standard language, as opposed to any regional variations, and therefore comes close to the term Classical Literary Tibetan used in Tournadre 2014.
[3]   PDF-Version exported on 07/07/2014.
[4]   Jäschke, H. (Gnadau 1871, London 1881).

geographical distribution:

WAT    Western Archaic Tibetan
WIT    Western Innovative Tibetan (cf. Table 2 below)
CT     Central Tibetan
ST     Southern Tibetan
AT     Amdo Tibetan

|**WIT**    Trang, Tabo *ṣānmā* 'peas'; Nako *ṭṣēnmā*
'peas'; Nam *ṭõnmā*, 'peas' < ?; Nes *ṭõnmā* 'peas'
(local) ; Thol *ṣēnmā* 'beans, peas' (717).
**CT**    Ru, Gar *ṣālmā* 'beans, peas' (717) < ?; Gerg
*ṣēnmā* 'beans, peas' (717, 718); Gerg *ṭṣēnmā*
'pod' (718) ; Pur *ṭṣēnmā* 'beans, peas' (717) ;
 SMu *ṣēma* 'Erbse; peas'; WDro *ṣēma* 'Bohne; beans';
Tsho *ṣēlmā* 'beans, peas' (717) < ?; Kyir *sēmmā* 'peas'; Yol
*sèma* 'peas'; Jir *ɕēmma* 'variety of lentil with reddish skin'
(JNE); Shi *ṣiēmā:* 'legume'; LhaQT *ṭṣē:mā* 'beans, peas'
(717).
**ST**    Dzo *sēm* 'lentils, pulse' (67, 114; D1991, 65) ;
Dzo *sèm* 'lentils, beans, dried beans, small beans'
(MM1988, 119, 134).
**AT**    The, Mkha, Rka, Chab, La, Mdzo *ṣanma*
'legume'; TheHua *ṣanma* 'pea, bean, broad bean'
(513, 515); ArTBL *ṣanma kardaŋ* 'broad beans' (432)
< ?; BayHua *ṣama* 'pea, bean, soya bean, soybean'
(513, 514, 516); BayHua *ṣama dzɛṣɛ* 'broad bean' (515);
Rnga *ṣanmæ* 'legume'; Ndzo *ṣenmæ* 'peas' (238); Rma
*ṣenma* 'legume'.

*Table 2 — sren ma in the CDTD, part 2.*

Tabo Tibetan, as identical to Spiti Tibetan, is listed under Western
Innovative Tibetan (WIT). It is followed by the languages spoken in Nako,
Namgya and Nesang; the three villages of Upper Kinnaur included in the
CDTD, yet, with a much smaller set of entries than the one from Tabo.

But what does *innovative* mean in the term WIT? There are several
phonological features that can be distinguished. In our example, one of them
is register tone. It suddenly appears as we proceed from west to east; that is
from the margins towards the centre of the Tibetan speaking area.
Historically, the development of register tone is connected with old initial
consonant clusters that have merged, or with a preradical that was dropped.

1)      WT: *gnam – sky*        >       Balti: χnam/hnam
                                >       Ladakhi: nam
                                >       Tabo: nām

2)      WT: *nam – when?*       >       WAT: nam
                                >       Tabo: na̱m

   Example 1 shows more data from the CDTD. Under the Written Tibetan lemma for *sky* the WAT entries of 2 Balti varieties/dialects, the Ladakhi, then finally the Spiti forms can be found. Example 2 WT *nam* English *when?* in contrast shows the unprefixed nasal initial, after which the syllable is realised in a low register tone in Spiti.
   Let's now turn to the south-eastern border of Spiti Tibetan, and look at the villages of Upper Kinnaur which appear in the CDTD. There is one prominent difference on the level of the phonetic realisation of the syllable initial consonant cluster sr-, as can be seen in 3) the example of WT *sren ma*. This is a completely regular realisation and just incidentally coincides with the border of the districts of Lahaul-Spiti and Kinnaur.

3)      WT: *sran ma – peas*
                                > Tabo:              ʂānmā
                                > Nako:              tʂēnmā
                                > Namgya, Nesang:    ʈø̄nmā

   Ex. 4 and 5 show more examples of the same phenomenon.

4)      WT: *srog – life*
                                > Tabo:              ʂōk
                                > Namgya:            ʈōq

5)      WT: *sruṅ ma – female protector*
                                > Tabo:              ʂūŋmā
                                > Kinnaur:           ʈūŋmā

   To conclude the first part let me just mention an ongoing discussion: The concept of Tibetan dialects used in the CDTD has recently been questioned, especially by Nicolas Tournadre (Tournadre 2014), who suggests using the term Tibetic languages instead. For Spiti, I think it makes good sense to call it a Tibetan or Tibetic language and not a mere dialect. As for Tabo, as no distinctive features have been identified, I cannot see any reason for keeping the term "dialect of Tabo". The Tibetan language spoken in the villages of

Upper Kinnaur between, Pooh and Sumra, on the other hand, shows only minor phonological differences, so the term "dialect" might still be useful there.

A final remark should be added here concerning the issue of how to refer to the local varieties of Tibetan of Himachal Pradesh. It has been agreed upon by some leaders of Spiti that the least controversial term in the Indian context is the term *Bhoti*, the Hindi word for Tibetan.[5]

*Part Two: Morphology*

*Some remarks on the Spiti verbal system*

The first volume of the CDTD ready to be published is Volume 1: Verbs. This part of the CDTD is organised in a similar way to Volume 2: Nouns, but as headwords the 1 to 4 Written Tibetan verb stems are given, followed by the relevant translations in the 4 WT dictionaries before the main part, which again consists of the dialect entries grouped into linguistic areas from west to east.

Quoted below are entries 347, 1002, and 1142 with their respective translations following Jaschke (English), Goldstein, and Tabo.

347 gcog, bcag, gcag, chog

Jk:      vt, 'to break, to break off'
Gs :     va, 'to break'

Tabo:   tɕā (k), imp. tɕōk,        cEA  'to break'

The dialect entry also consists of the verb stems as far as they can be distinguished, followed by the verb type and the translation into English. In entry 347 the verb type is cEA; c referring to the category of "controllable" as contrasted to "non-controllable".[6] The capital letters indicate obligatory arguments of the given verb.

Not included in Volume 1: Verbs of the CDTD are examples that illustrate the use of each dialect listed. For 347 in Tabo there are examples 6 and 7.[7]

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5    Lochen Tulku, personal communication 2016.
6    Huber 2005: 84 defines "controllable" as follows: "If the action expressed by a verb is usually carried out intentionally, that is, if the person doing it can control the action, then the verb is considered controllable."
7    The sentences given here to illustrate the usage of some verbs were recorded together with the verbs in field sessions in Tabo with my local assistants Pema Dorje and Sonam

6)      *kʰō*              *glas*            *tɕāk-soŋ*
        He(ABS)           glass(ABS)        break(PFV).AOR.VIS
        'He broke the glass.'


7)      *kʰō-su*           *goŋā*            *tɕāk-taŋ*
        He.ERG            egg(ABS)          break(PFV).INTENT.PF
        'Oh, he has broken the egg!' (intentionally)


In Ex. 6 there is a 3ʳᵈ person pronoun as an agent and an object, and both are in the absolutive case, which means there is no case marker.

The verb stem is formally the same for imperfective and perfective and the auxiliary morpheme designates the verb as in the past tense. VIS stands for visual perception. It means that the speaker has seen the action, i.e. the breaking of the glass. Ex. 7 on the other hand has an agent in the ergative case (always -su in Spiti Tibetan).[8] The object is again in the absolutive case and the verb stem is again the perfective stem followed this time by -taŋ that expresses clear intention of the agent. This is a good illustration of the fact that ergative case is only used for emphasis in Spiti.

Two more verbs from the CDTD may illustrate different verbal endings. Only this time they are non-controllable verbs and therefore take different auxiliary morphemes:

1002   tshag; Tabo:    tsʰā̄(k)   ncA    'to feel a stinging pain'
1141   bzod; Tabo:    zø̄t      ncAA   'to bear, to endure'


I will again present the usage of the verb with two examples, 8 and 9.


8)      *ŋūi*      *ŋgo*          *minm*         *tsʰā:rak*
        My         head(ABS)      a.lot          feel.pain(IPFV):IPFV.NVIS
        'My head is stinging with pain.'


9)      *ṭirīŋ*     *ṭū:-ɹa*        *ɹukpā*        *zø̄t-ɕuŋ*
        Today      boy.PL(ABS)     stick(ABS)     endure(PFV).AOR.NVIS
        'Today the boys endured the stick, I feel.'


Ex. 8 means that the speaker is feeling pain in his head. And in (9) the speaker feels that somebody else had to suffer.

Especially when I was collecting non-control verbs, it became clear that

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Tsering. The sentences were later transcribed, interlinearised and glossed and were originally meant to be published in a separate volume of the CDTD entirely dedicated to the syntax of the major dialects collected in the CDTD.

[8]   Cf. Section 2 on Ergative below.

in Spiti Tibetan there are auxiliary morphemes that are not distinguished in central Tibet and I could establish the following verbal endings for Spiti:

| Categories of evidentiality | I Focus on speaker's involvement | II Focus on speaker's unspecified knowledge | III Focus on speaker's perception a) visual b) auditory | IV Focus on speaker's inferred knowledge |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Tense/aspect | | | | |
| Present/ imperfective | -et | -kak/-ak | a) tuk/-uk -arak b) -arak | -ken jinkak -ken jinuk -ken jindarak |
| Future/ imperfective | -in -kajin > -ken | -kak/-ak | | -tɕe jinkak -na jinkak |
| Present/ perfective | -deret -peret | -dekak -pekak | a) -deruk -peruk b) -derak -perak | |
| Past/ perfective | -wajin > -wen | -wa ak > -wak | a) -soŋ b) (?)-tɕuŋ | -wa jinkak > -anak .wa jinuk > -anuk |

*Table 3 — Categories of Evidentiality in Spiti Tibetan (Hein 2007).*

The system is organised according to how the speaker has come to know about the action or state expressed through the verb in question. In the first category, the focus is on the speaker's direct involvement, it is also called egophoric. The second category are the default forms, which do not specify in any way how the speaker has come to know of the verbal action or state. Category III is the most interesting one, as it contains a subdivision that is only found in Western Tibetic languages. The morpheme -tuk/-uk, -deruk, -peruk and -soŋ always express visual perception, e.g. the speaker sees or has seen the action or state. There is a different set of auxiliary morphemes expressing all the other sensory perceptions, i.e. auditory and others like feeling or touching: -arak, -derak/-perak and -tɕuŋ.

The basic verbal system that I have presented here fits in well with other linguistic descriptions of Tibetic languages. But with its great variety of forms, especially in the verbal category of evidentiality, it makes an important contribution to the linguistic research on Tibetan.

*Some remarks on Ergative constructions in Spiti Tibetan*

The ergative case and ergative constructions in Tibetan have been widely discussed in modern linguistics.[9] As shown above, in the CDTD the verbs are subsumed under different verb types according to the categories of "control" on the one hand, and "arguments" or "case" on the other hand.

For a majority of the dialects included in the CDTD, the presence or absence of an ergative case as a core argument can be used as a defining criterion for the verb type.

But in some WAT and WIT dialects, as well as in Tabo (Spiti) Tibetan, the use of the ergative case is not quite as straightforward as it seems from the way it is applied in the definition of the verb types and therefore a more precise description of the Tabo/Spiti ergative is given here.

In Ex. 6 and 7 above, we have seen that the Tabo verb tɕāk can be used with the agent either in the absolutive case (no case marker) or in the ergative case (with the case marker -sū).

A unique feature is the form of the ergative marker. So far I have not come across -su in this function anywhere else but in Spiti. Regarding its etymology, the only likely origin I can think of is the WT interrogative pronoun sū (English *who*), which exists as a free morpheme in TT, too.

The second point about the TT ergative that is worth mentioning is its usage. As illustrated above in ex. 7, it is only used to put emphasis on the fact that the agent in an utterance executed a certain action, in other words, the ergative stresses the fact that a certain person did something and not somebody else. This use is purely pragmatic, i.e. depending on the situation and what the speaker wants to emphasise. That means to say that there is no verbal construction that triggers off a compulsory ergative as is the case with other Tibetic languages.

A third point about the morpheme -su in TT is the fact that in its emphatic function it also occurs in combination with other case morphemes, e.g. as part of the ablative case. An example of this can be found in the text presented in Part Three below (cf. sentence 11 of the story of Lingsing Gyalwo).

| 10) | *tᶒnē:* | *wo̥ wo̥* | *ŋa* | *līŋpā* | *īzūk* | *mi̥* | *maŋpō-i* |
|-----|---------|----------|------|---------|--------|-------|-----------|
|     | Then    | EXCL     | I    | Ling man | like that | people | many.GEN |

| | *kʰā-naisukun* | | *dynmā* | *tɕø̄:-je* | *īzūk* | *ŋa* | *ɖa-la̲* |
|---|---------------|---|---------|-----------|--------|------|---------|
| | mouth.ABL.EMPH | | meeting | call-NOM | like this | I | enemy.DIR |

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[9]   Cf. Tournadre 1996.

| *manḍo-na* | *ŋo* | *tsʰā-je* | *jị̄nuk* |
|---|---|---|---|
| NEG.go.   if | shame | take-NOM | COP |

'Then, lo! I, like that, from so many Ling people speaking at a meeting, like this, if I don't go to the enemy, it will be shameful.'

*mi mạ̄ŋpōi kʰānaisukun* literally means "from so many people's mouth", as the source of the words "mouth" is marked with the ablative morpheme -naisukun or, probably more accurately, -nai as ablative marker followed by -sukun for emphasis.

For ablative marking the following morphemes have been identified in TT:

-nai /-naki, naisu/-nakisu, -naisulo/-nakisulo, -naisukun/-nakisukun, -nailo/-nakilo

As -nai can also have a clearly instrumental function in TT, let me add some more examples from my own collection of sentences to illustrate the point.

11)   *kʰō*          *kāŋpā-nai*      *ŋō-la*   *ɕyː-joŋ*
       He(ABS)       foot.INST        I.DAT    hĩt.PAST
       'He kicked me with his foot.'

12)    *ŋō*      *tʰōā-naisu*       *zị̄rū-la*       *ɕyː-wen*
       I(ABS)    hammer.INST       nail.DAT        hĩt.PAST
       'I hit the nail with a hammer.'

13)    *ŋō*      *tʰōā-nai*        *zị̄rū-la*       *ɕyː-wen*
       I(ABS)    hammer.INST       nail.DAT        hĩt.PAST
       'I hit the nail with a hammer.'

The complete set of instrumental morphemes in TT is identical with the set marking for ablative.

That is why I consider -su to express ergative only, as in:

14)    *sōnām-su*           *ī*      *pētɕā*        *tēt-ɕuŋ*
       Sonam.ERG            this     book(ABS)      give.PAST.NVIS
       'It was Sonam who gave me this book.'

As a rather surprising conclusion from examples 7 and 10 to 14, it can be stated that in Spiti Tibetan the ergative morpheme -su is only used as an emphasising marker, whereas the instrumental and the ablative case take the same set of complex morphemes, which are clearly distinct from the ergative.

This is another difference with other Tibetic languages, where we find the same morphemes for ergative and instrumental,[10] and different ones for ablative. The split in the set of case morphemes is drawn differently in Spiti Tibetan.

*Part Three*

As I have also done some work on oral tradition,[11] in order to show more features of the spoken language of Spiti, I would like to present a text that has been passed down to the present day purely orally.[12] It is the beginning of the story of Ling Singsing Gyalwo, the Spiti version of the Gesar epic. Although written versions of the Gesar epic exist, the women storytellers of Spiti do not normally read Tibetan but retell from memory the stories they once heard.

The text transcribed here below is rendered without a morpheme analysis, using only simplified glosses. They are meant to facilitate reading a coherent text without providing the basis for a detailed linguistic analysis.

*The story of Lingsing Gyalwo*

1)    *ta̱    līŋ sīŋsīŋ ɹalwō        ji̱nuk    ŋgo̱        ho̱sē*
      Now    King Ling Singsing        COP      beginning    EXCL
      Now this is King Ling Singsing, the beginning, ok?

2)    *te̱nē:    līŋ sīŋsīŋ ɹalwō    te̱nē:    līŋ kārsāŋ        na̱ksāŋ*
      Then    King Ling Singsing    then    Ling Karsang        Naksang
      *sūmpō                    dy̱nmā            tɕø̄:wak*
      the three                meeting            called.PAST
      Then King Ling Singsing, Ling Karsang and Naksang, the three, convened a meeting.

3)    *te̱nē:    līŋ kārsāŋ        na̱ksāŋ        sūmpō        dy̱nmā*
      Then    Ling Karsang        Naksang        the three        meeting.DIR
      *tɕø̄:je            di̱mʈūk    pu̱tsā    tɕɛīkpō    dy̱nmāla*
      call.NOM            Dimtuk    boy    only    meeting
      *majo̱ŋwak*
      NEG.come.PAST
      Then, when Ling, Karsang and Naksang, the three of them had

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[10]  Haller 2000, Huber 2005.
[11]  Cf. Hein 2007, 2011.
[12]  The text presented here was audio-recorded during fieldwork in July 2003 as part of a project on oral tradition run by the Austrian Academy of Sciences in Vienna. Sonam Tsering from Tabo introduced me to Tsering Palzom from Lari who narrated two episodes of the story. Later I worked on the audio recording with Sonam Tsering and together we transcribed the text and then translated it into English.

called a meeting, only the boy Dimtruk did not come to the meeting.

4)    *tẹnē:   dynmāla        majo̱ŋwa              līŋpi*
      Then    meeting.DIR    NEG.come.NOM          Ling.GEN
      *mi̱ɟa    du̱m   kʰō   tɕīkpō  tɕī   gø̱tpō    ji̱nani*
      People  EXCL  he    only    what  powerful  be.QUEST.EMPH
      Then (as) he did not come to the meeting, the people of Ling all
      (said) how powerful he is!

5)    *wo̱ā    ta̱kpō   dynmāla        lēpteken         tɕākla*
      We     all     meeting.DIR    came.PER.NOM     as

      *di̱mʈūk  pu̱tsā   tɕīkpō   tɕīla   majo̱ŋwani*
      Dimtruk  boy     only     why     NEG.come.QUEST.EMPH
      We have all come to the meeting, why has only boy Dimtruk not
      arrived?

6)    *wa̱ɟa   tẹnē:   dẹmōla         mide̱t         naŋmō*
      We.PL   then    properly       NEG.stay       tomorrow
      *ŋātōk        tɕʰātpāla       ḍala        nḍo    gu̱ɕyin*
      morning      punishment.DAT   enemy.DIR    go     need.FUT
      *sa̱:k            tɕi̱      se̱*
      say.PAST         tell!.IMP   like this
      We are all not going to stay like this, it was said, tomorrow morning,
      as a punishment he needs to go to the enemy, tell him!

7)    *tẹnē:   ḍa̱    tūldu          sōŋ           tɕi̱*
      Then    enemy  destroy.TERM   go !.IMP       tell !.IMP
      *tɕe̱:wak*
      said.PAST
      Then go to destroy the enemy, tell him! It was said.

8)    *tẹnē:   ḍa̱    tūldu          sōŋ      tɕe̱:je       tẹnē:*
      Then    enemy  destroy.TERM   go !.IMP  said.NOM     then
      *mi̱ɟa    dzu̱:raŋ      se̱ken           majo̱ŋwak*
      people  many.EMPH    say.NOM          NEG.come.PAST
      *kʰōla     dzi̱:je        kʰō    gø̱tpō     jo̱kae*
      he.DAT    be afraid.NOM  he     powerful   COP
      Then having said, go to destroy the enemy! Then there were not
      many people who said (like this) as they were frightened of him, he
      was powerful (you know).

9)    *tẹnē:   naŋmō         ŋātōk         se̱rsena        di̱mʈūk*
      Then    tomorrow      morning       say.when        Dimtruk

*pu̱tsā   ɲo̱tla           de̱tna           me̱t*
boy      you.EMPH       stay.NOM         NEG.COP
Then, when speaking about tomorrow morning, boy Dimtruk, you
can't stay!

10)   *nda̱ŋ            dynmāla        majo̱ŋwa                 ɲo̱tla*
      Yesterday       meeting.DIR    NEG.come.NOM            you

      *ḍala            nḍo     gu̱ɛyin       se̱tuk*
      enemy.DIR        go      need.FUT     say.IMPF
      Not having come to the meeting yesterday, you have to go to the
      enemy, it was said.

11)   *te̱nē:   wo̱ wo̱ na līŋpā    īzūk     mi̱    ma̱ŋpōi*
      Then     EXCL   I   Ling man  like that  people  many.EMPH
      *kʰānaisukun    dynmā    tɕō̱:je     īzūk    ŋa̱   ḍala*
      mouth.ABL       meeting  call.NOM   like this  I    enemy.DIR
      *manḍo         na      ŋo̱   tsʰā-je        ji̱nuk*
      NEG.go         if      shame  take.NOM       COP
      Then, lo! I, like that, from so many Ling people speaking at a
      meeting, like this, if I don't go to the enemy, it will be shameful.

12)   *te̱nē:    tsūk    ji̱na    kʰāŋpi      zi̱mēt   ta̱kpō   ṭi̱mdze*
      Then     how     be.NOM   house.GEN    family   all     leave.NOM
      *ŋa̱    ḍala            nḍo       gu̱ɛuk        sāmdze*
      I      enemy.DIR        go        need.IMPERF   think.NOM
      *kʰōmpā    te̱nē:    kʰōmpī     tɕʰōkʰāŋdu       mōnlām*
      he         then      this       prayer room.LOC   prayer

      *tāptu           pu̱tak*
      do.TERM         went.PAST
      Then, anyway, leaving all the family members, thinking I have to go
      to the enemy, he then went to his prayer room to pray.

13)   *te̱nē:    tɕʰūkpō   mi̱nāŋ   jo̱kak   te̱nē:   kʰōmpā*
      Then     rich       very      COP      then     he
      *tɕʰōkʰāŋdu      mōnlām    tāptū        pu̱tak*
      prayer room.DIR  prayer    do.TERM      went.PAST
      He was very rich. He then went to his prayer room to pray.

14)   *te̱nē:    kʰōmpā         jø̱tsenani        kʰōmpī      tɕʰōkʰāŋ*
       Then      he             be.when.EMPH      his         prayer room
      *ko̱ŋmāna     sēr     sērwōik        ḍola        jē:kōr*
      upper.LOC    gold    golden.INDEF   stone.DIR    right.round

ɹepkak          sēna     tɛnē:    naŋmō     kʰōmpā
go.IMPERF        but      then     tomorrow   he

puɳḍōje          sena             jōnkōr          ɹepkak
went.PROG.NOM.   when             left.round       go.IMPERF

Then, when he was there, in his upper prayer room, a yellow golden
bell (?) went round the stone to the right side, but then, when he was
going the next day, it went round to the left side.

15)     tɛnē:    kʰōmpī    tɕʰōkʰāŋ        baŋmāna       mūl
        Then     his       prayer room     middle.LOC     silver

        kʰāmpāik       ḍola     jē:wōr          ɹepkak
        light.INDEF     stone    right.round      go.IMPERF

        Then, in his middle prayer room, a light silver (bell?) went round the
        stone to the right side.

16)     tɛnē:    kʰōmpā    ḍala            nḍosena  hotēkā     kʰōmpā
        Then     he        enemy.DIR       go.when   that.also   he

        naŋdu        dɛtsena   jē:kōr          ɹepkak        ḍala
        home.LOC     stay.when  right.round      go.IMPERF     enemy.DIR

        putnḍoet      sɛtsena    jōnkōr       ɹepkak
        went.PROG.SP  say.when   left.round    go.IMPERF

        Then, when he was going to the enemy, the same (happened), when
        staying at home, it went round to the right, when he said he was
        going to the enemy, it went round to the left.

17)     hotē     sɛna     manē    kōrna     jokak     kʰōmpī
        That     say.if    mane    turn.NOM   COP       his

        tɕʰōkʰāŋ        rɛrēru     manē    kōrna     jokae
        prayer room     each.LOC   mane    turn.NOM   COP

        That means there are mane (prayer wheels) to turn, in each of his
        prayer rooms he has mane to turn, as you know.

18)     kʰōmpā    tāndu      dɛtcaɹala      jē:wōr          ɹepkak
        he        always     stay.if         right.turn        go.IMPERF

        If he always stays on and on, it turns to the right.

19)     miɹala         ɹɣ:          mɛkak     kʰōmpī      naŋki
        People.DAT     knowledge    NEG.COP    his          inside.GEN

        tsʰāmōla       ɹɣ:          mɛkak
        wife.DAT       knowledge    NEG.COP

        The people have no knowledge, his 'house-' wife (also) does not
        know.

20)     kō        tɕūktɕē:
        Melody    put.QUEST(?)

I shall put a melody:

21)    *ɕōlala  lāmōi  lūre*
       (Beginning of) Goddess' song !

       *tsʰūr*              *ŋōla*   *nøndaŋ*        *tsʰāmō*        *ɲø̄t*
       To.this.side         I.DIR    listen.REQUE    wife           you
       To this side, to me, please listen, wife, you!

       *jaŋ*    *ŋala*   *nøndaŋ*        *tsʰāmō*        *ɲøt*
       Again    I.DIR    listen.REQUE    wife            you
       Again, listen to me, you, wife!

22)    *puʈūkwi*           *tɕʰōkʰāŋ*      *bukɕōna*
       Boy.GEN             prayer room     upper.SUP.LOC
       In the uppermost of the boy's prayer rooms

       *sēr*    *sērwōi*    *dola*       *jēːwōr*      *jøt*
       gold     golden.INDEF  stone.DIR    right.turn    COP
       A yellow golden (bell) has a right turn around the stone.

       *tɛkun*            *jø̄nkōr*      *ɹɛpsena*
       That.EMPH          left.turn       go.when
       That, when it goes to the left

       *puʈūk*           *ɖala*          *ndona ɹin*
       boy               enemy.DIR       go.FUT
       I, the boy, will go to the enemy

       *dimʈūk*          *ɖala*          *ndona ɹin*
       Dimtruk           enemy.DIR       go.FUT
       I, Dimtruk, will go to the enemy.

23)    *puʈūkwi*           *tɕʰōkʰāŋ*      *baŋmāna*
       Boy.GEN             prayer room     middle.LOC
       In the boy's middle prayer room

       *mūl*    *kʰāmpī*      *dola*       *jēːwōr*       *jøt*
       silver   light.INDEF   stone.DIR    right.turn     COP
       The light silver (bell) turns to the right side around the stone.

       *tɛkun*            *jø̄nkōr*      *ɹɛpsena*
       That.EMPH          left.round      go.when

That, when it goes round to the left

| *puʈūk* | *ḍala* | *ɕōrcū jin* |
|---------|--------|-------------|
| boy | enemy.DIR | run away.FUT |

I, the boy, will run to the enemy

| *dimʈūk* | *ḍala* | *ɕōrcū jin* |
|----------|--------|-------------|
| Dimtruk | enemy.DIR | run away.FUT |

I, Dimtruk, will run to the enemy.

24)  | *puʈūkwi* | *tɕʰōkʰāŋ* | *jokɕōna* |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Boy.GEN | prayer room | low.SUP.LOC |

In the boy's lowest prayer room

| *tuŋ* | *kʰāmpī* | *dola* | *jē:wōr* | *jøt* |
|-------|---------|--------|----------|-------|
| Conch | light.INDEF | stone.DIR | right.turn | COP |

A light conch (bell) turns right round the stone.

| *tekun* | *jønkōr* | *ɹepsena* |
|---------|----------|-----------|
| That.EMPH | left.turn | go.when |

That, when it goes round to the left

| *puʈūk* | *ḍala* | *ɕōrcū jin* |
|---------|--------|-------------|
| boy | enemy.DIR | run away.FUT |

I, the boy, will run to the enemy

| *dimʈūk* | *ḍala* | *ɕōrcū jin* |
|----------|--------|-------------|
| Dimtruk | enemy.DIR | run away.FUT |

I, Dimtruk, will run to the enemy.

*Some comments on the transcribed text*

The given text consists of the beginning of a story and includes the first of a series of songs. The songs render important direct speech in the course of the story. In this way the storyteller switches between her speaking voice and her singing voice without any pause. The text shows some specific characteristics of oral tradition such as repetitions of lines with small variations, e.g. the last two lines of each stanza of the song. Other instances are the precious substances that occur in three forms: gold, silver, and conch shell/mother-of-pearl; each of these substances is often used in religious songs and stories for their symbolic meaning.

Linguistically the text illustrates the use of a number of saying verbs and provides a lot of examples of direct speech (cf. sentences 11, 12 and 22 to

24) and reported speech (sentences 6 to 10). The storyteller also makes frequent use of subordinate clauses in order to link the main clauses. The story thus provides a lot of material for an analysis of the syntactic level, which I have not yet touched upon in this article.

### *Conclusion*

The stories I have collected and worked on are an invaluable source of information for linguists. The collection of texts has provided me with a corpus of spoken language that forms the basis of my linguistic description of Spiti Tibetan. In the process of my research I have been allowed to get a glimpse of the rich oral tradition still alive in Spiti. But old songs and stories are getting lost quickly under the pressure of the dominating influence from the plains of India.

That is why I also see my involvement in Spiti as a contribution to create awareness among the local population about the particular aspects of Spiti Tibetan and its expressions in the oral tradition of stories and songs.

### *Abbreviations*

| | |
|---|---|
| A, ABS | absolutive case |
| AOR | aorist |
| c | controllable |
| COP | copula |
| DAT | dative |
| DIR | direction |
| E, ERG | ergative case |
| EMPH | emphasis |
| EXCL | exclamation |
| FUT | future |
| GEN | genitive |
| IMP | imperative |
| IMPF | imperfective |
| INDEF | indefinite article |
| INTENT | intentional modality |
| LOC | locative |
| nc | non-controllable |
| NEG | negative |
| NOM | nominaliser |
| NVIS | non-visual perception |
| PAST | past tense |
| PF | present perfect tense |

| | |
|---|---|
| PFV | perfective stem |
| PROG | progressive |
| QUEST | question |
| SUP | superlative |
| TERM | terminative |
| VIS | visual perception |

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