

## **On the Languages of the Himalayas and their Links (nearly) around the World.**

Review Article by Roland Bielmeier

***Languages of the Himalayas. An Ethnolinguistic Handbook of the Greater Himalayas, containing an Introduction to the Symbiotic Theory of Language.*** By **George van Driem**. Handbook of Oriental Studies. Section 2. India, edited by J. Bronkhorst. **Leiden Boston Köln: Brill, 2001. ISBN 0169-9377, ISBN 90 04 12062 9, ISBN 90 04 10390 2 (set). Vol. 10/1, p. I - XXVI, 1 - 462. Vol. 10/2, p. I - VIII, 463 - 1375.**

On about 1400 pages the author presents an impressive range of ethnolinguistic topics connected with the speakers and their languages spoken at present and in the past in the greater Himalayan region. He describes a long period of time by introducing us to a „symbiotic theory of language... which assumes that increasing encephalisation and neural interconnectivity in the prehistory of the hominid line were the developments which yielded a brain ripe and ready to be colonised by language before language arose“ (p. 21) and covers an area from present-day western Iran to China, the Malay peninsula and Vietnam in the east and even beyond into the Pacific Ocean by touching the Austronesian languages. The reason for this very broad spatial concept lies in the fact that „many languages spoken in the Himalayas have ties to language stocks far beyond the region“ (p. IX). The „book tells a tale of the languages spoken in the Himalayas and of the people who speak them“ and „was written to give a student of Himalayan languages a panoramic view of the region and to provide a broader context of useful and relevant facts.“ I hope that this book will indeed excite the students‘ curiosity and encourage them to take part in the labour of contributing to our growing knowledge in this area. I hope that it will not give the students a feeling of being unable to master this huge amount of topics, leading to discouragement. „The book does not contain detailed grammatical descriptions of the languages discussed, but discusses these languages in their proper temporal and spatial context“ (p. X). It goes without saying that it is impossible to give more or less detailed grammatical descriptions of all the hundreds of languages discussed or mentioned, provided grammatical descriptions actually exist. Usually the descriptions are confined to giving a list of the languages in question, to classifying them

if possible, to mentioning important recent publications and to sketching the research history. These sketches are often also very interesting to „insiders“, as they contain information not so easily accessible in other handbooks. A special feature is the continuous attempt to correlate not only cultural features to the languages but also archaeological findings and concepts. This approach to research has been familiar for some time in Indo-European studies as well. I consider it a completely legitimate and often fascinating approach. I just want the reader to recall the many methodological difficulties involved in this approach, especially in Indo-European studies, where they have been familiar for long time. The basic problem is to correlate systematically linguistic and prehistorical archaeological data. I think, the author is aware of this when he writes „...in addition to information on language communities, I present speculations about prehistory and the ethnolinguistic identity of cultural assemblages identifiable in the archaeological record“ (p. IX). And it is only natural that „This overview does not therefore pretend to be the last word on the subject. Much of the rich ethnolinguistic heritage of the Himalayas still awaits discovery, and what is written here will require enhancement and revision“ (p. X).

The book is divided into eight chapters. The first contains primarily an introduction to the symbiotic theory of language, and the second a sketch of the Austroasiatic language family and the Daic language communities. Chapters three to six, dealing with the Tibeto-Burman languages and their language communities, are the heart of the book. Many topics raised in chapters seven and eight are very interesting, but highly controversial. The author does not always succeed in presenting the controversial opinions with the required minuteness of detail and balance, and sometimes the presentation is not on the actual level of discussion. This is the case, for example, with the question of the homeland of Indo-European, controversial since the 19th century (cf. pp. 1051f.). The Indo-Hittite hypothesis is attractive, but not at all the *opino communis* it is presented to be (p. 1956f.). The question of a genetic relationship between Hattic and Caucasian languages is highly controversial.<sup>1</sup> The few „lexical Hattic-Kartvelian look-alikes“ are qualified correctly as unconvincing by the author himself (p. 1057, n. 5). The main problem in comparing Hattic with other languages, including with West Caucasian, is our ignorance of the Hattic lexicon, all transmitted through Hittite inscriptions.<sup>2</sup> Hattic is neither Indo-European nor Semitic, it is still genetically isolated. But Carian, once spoken in

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<sup>1</sup>On the problem of the genetic relationship of the Caucasian languages with each other and with other languages see the still fundamental review of Karl Bouda's *Baskisch-kaukasische Etymologien* (1949) by Gerhard Deeters 1952.

<sup>2</sup>This is the reason why Jörg Klinger in his important *Untersuchungen zur Rekonstruktion der hattischen Kultschicht* (1996) often refrains from giving translations. For a review of Klinger's book and a fair evaluation of the state of the art, including the question of genetic relations to Caucasian languages, see Soysal 1999.

southwestern Anatolia, which the author qualifies as having „no demonstrable relationship with any other known linguistic stock“ (p. 365, n. 3) has been deciphered recently and belongs to the Luvian group of the Anatolian language family within Indo-European.<sup>3</sup> Chapter seven also contains a discussion of a possible genetic relationship between Elamite and the Dravidian languages. The genetic relationship of Elamite to other languages has not so far been established. The book takes up „Zagrosian“ as cover term for Elamite and the Dravidian languages and relates the Indus script and Indus civilisation as well as the coming of the Indo-Europeans with it, including the question of the Indo-Aryan migration. Finally chapter eight attempts to present Burushaski and the Yenisseian languages as genetically related, forming the Greater Yenisseian or Karasuk language family. The linguistic arguments presented on p. 1199 ff., however, are very few and weak, exhibiting at best some structural correspondences. If, for example, the Burushaski second person singular patient-subject prefix *gu-/gó-* is considered to be etymologically cognate with the Ket second person agent or subject prefix *ku-/k-/gu-/ghu-*, why should we not add the Kartvelian second person singular object prefix *\*g-*? Or, the Georgian first person singular agent-subject prefix *w-* seems even closer to the Ket first person singular prefix *ba-/bo-/va-/vo-* than the Burushaski first person singular patient-subject prefix *a-/á-*. On the other hand, Old Georgian aorist subject-object plural infix *-(e)n-* seems closer to the Burushaski plural agent-subject suffix *-en* than the „corresponding“ Ket suffix or infix *-(V)n/-(V)ng*, etc. The idea of genetically connecting genetically isolated languages or subsuming as many languages as possible under the wing of a single macrofamily seems to fascinate people till today, as we can see from nostratic or omnicomparative approaches, to use a convenient term introduced by G. Doerfer. On the term „nostratic“, described by the author briefly on page 1051 and defined by Pedersen „as a comprehensive designation for the families of languages which are related to Indo-European“, cf. K. H. Schmidt's review of Aharon Dogopolsky, *The Nostratic Macrofamily and Linguistic Palaeontology* (1998).<sup>4</sup> There, the reviewer points to the principal difficulties of such an approach: 1. The present state of the art excludes the spatial and chronological limitations of the sound laws as the possibility of reconstructing subgroups still is very limited; 2. to rely on phonetic similarity presupposes that no or only little sound, semantic and lexical change has taken place on either sides. The comparison of more distant genetically related languages usually leads to word pairs which are similar but not cognate and word pairs which are not similar but cognate. And last but not least, we must eliminate all loans before beginning the comparison, a very difficult task, as we have to elaborate criteria to differentiate between loans and inherited cognates.

<sup>3</sup>Cf., e.g., Michael Meier-Brügger 2000: 25 and for the history of its decipherment see especially Hajnal 1996.

<sup>4</sup>Schmidt 2002. See also, e.g., Doerfer 1993.

As I cannot claim competence or even familiarity with the topics treated in the first two chapters, I will concentrate my remarks on Tibeto-Burman in chapters three to six. As an introduction to the Tibeto-Burman language family the author gives a detailed and learned sketch of the history of the classification of Tibeto-Burman in the first part of chapter three „From Turanian to Tibeto-Burman“. The author shows convincingly Tibeto-Burman as one of the oldest theories about genetic relationship dating back to the 18th century and being well-defined by Klaproth in 1823, who pointed out the correspondences in the core vocabulary of Tibetan, Burmese and Chinese. „Yet in the same period, Tibeto-Burman became subsumed in grander designs by scholars who thought that virtually all languages spoken by what was impressionistically the ‚Mongoloid race‘ or the ‚Mongolian races‘ belonged to a single language family. Two of these ill-fated theories were Turanian and Indo-Chinese“ (p. 335). The even older Indo-Chinese theory outlived the Turanian hypothesis, but the term was used in different ways, often to denote Tibeto-Burman plus Daic. August Conrady divided it into a western branch Tibeto-Burman (Tibeto-Barmanisch) and an eastern branch Sino-Daic (Siamesisch-Chinesisch) for which Jean Przyluski (1924) coined the term *sino-tibétain* which was adopted into English as *Sino-Tibetan* a few years later. This term was then used with different denotations by Robert Shafer and Paul Benedict and gradually came into general use. The author strongly advocates dropping the notion of Sino-Tibetan and returning to Tibeto-Burman at the top of the language family tree. An important reason for the weakness of the Sino-Tibetan hypothesis is that it implies the assumption that all Tibeto-Burman languages besides Chinese „have constituted a unity after Chinese split off, and that this must be demonstrable in the forms of shared isoglosses, sound laws or morphological developments which define Tibeto-Burman as a unity as opposed to Sinitic. The innovations purportedly shared by all Tibeto-Burman subgroups except Chinese have never been demonstrated“ (p. 350). But now the basis of the evaluation is going to change as our knowledge of Old Chinese has grown dramatically in the last years. „Today, the various reconstructed models of Old Chinese resemble each other ever more closely, and the reconstructed language begun to look like a natural human language rather than an inventory of phonetic formulae as it still seemed in Karlgren's pioneering work. In fact, the ‚new‘ Old Chinese has turned out to look rather like just another Tibeto-Burman language“ (van Driem 1997: 461). On the basis of these advances in the study of Old Chinese and also of the fact that we know much more about many contemporary Tibeto-Burman languages, especially about the Kiranti languages, the author presents the Sino-Bodic and the Sino-Kiranti hypotheses, which are compatible with the „new“ Tibeto-Burman theory. The Sino-Bodic hypothesis, advanced by the author, „states that Sinitic is a branch within the Tibeto-Burman language family with its most intimate genetic affinity being with the languages of the Bodic group“ (p. 352). The Sino-Kiranti hypothesis, advanced by Sergej A.

Starostin, basically states that Sinitic and Kiranti either formed a genetic unity after the break-up of common Tibeto-Burman or they were distinct branches which split off at an early stage from what Starostin calls „core Tibeto-Burman“. „Though it is unclear whether either of the two hypotheses will stand the test of time, both Sino-Bodic and Sino-Kiranti propose that the closest relatives of Chinese may well be found in the Himalayas“ (p. 388). If we follow the Sino-Bodic hypothesis with Tibeto-Burman on the top as shown in diagram 16 (p. 399), Tibeto-Burman is first divided into Western (Brahmaputran, etc.) and Eastern Tibeto-Burman, the Eastern branch being further divided into Northern (Sino-Bodic) and Southern Tibeto-Burman. This Southern Branch divides further into a Deep Southern branch (Burmic, Karenic), consisting of Lolo-Burmese and Karenic, and in a Central branch (Qiangic, Xifan).<sup>5</sup> The Northern (Sino-Bodic) branch divides into Northwestern (Bodic) and Northeastern (Sinitic), and the Northwestern branch divides further into Bodish and Himalayan. It seems important to note that the author does not consider the tree in diagram 16 „a *Stammbaum* in the proper sense. Instead it represents a model of prehistoric dispersals reflected by the geographical labels ‚Western‘, ‚Northern‘, ‚Northwestern‘ and so forth“ (p. 398) and they „refer explicitly to the relative geographical positions of the groups at the time of branching“ (p. 401, cf. also p. 408).

To prove the close genetic relationship of the Sino-Bodic languages within Tibeto-Burman we have to find exclusively shared innovations, at least exclusively shared cognates between Sinitic and Bodic. This is to a large extent in accordance with the author, who says „the Sino-Bodic hypothesis is based on shared lexical isoglosses and vestiges of a shared morphology and morphosyntax“ (van Driem 1997: 461). Now defunct morphosyntactic processes, once operative in Old Chinese, can be found in Himalayan languages. As a typical Tibeto-Burman flexional feature of Old Chinese lost in the modern Chinese languages he adduces the original pronominal declension distinguishing full and clitic forms, which may point to a common Sino-Bodic verbal agreement system. Without calling the possibility of such a system for Sinitic or even Sino-Bodic into question, I do miss a discussion of Tibetan and other Bodish languages in this respect, where no vestiges of such a system can be found. Giving further examples, van Driem compares Middle Chinese polyphonic readings with the various classes of verb stem in Kiranti languages, especially in Limbu, and examples of reconstructed Old Chinese forms alongside with their Modern Mandarin pronunciations and mainly Limbu correspondences (pp. 367 - 384). Many

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<sup>5</sup> In van Driem 1997: 463 the two Southern branches are called South-western and South-eastern, the latter consisting of Qiangic and Rung. The author might have changed from Rung to Xifan „Western Barbarian“ (p. 443) in the present book because „The original proposer (1984) of the ‚Rungic‘ group, Graham Thurgood, has recently repudiated it altogether“ (Matisoff 2000: 357 and footnote 7). A different concept of a „Rung branch“ has now been introduced by Thurgood in Thurgood/LaPolla 2003: 14ff.

examples are clearly cognates which can be verified on the basis of the Old Chinese reconstructions, not on the basis of the Modern Mandarin pronunciations. Most of these examples were already presented in van Driem 1997 and critically scrutinized by Matisoff 2000, who pointed out that many of van Driem's examples are unsatisfactory due to different reasons. In my opinion the most important is that many shared phenomena seem to be not exclusive „Sino-Bodic“ phenomena, thus weakening this hypothesis considerably. To summarize, we can say that we have the Sino-Tibetan hypothesis, weakened by the necessary but unproved assumption on the innovations shared by all Tibeto-Burman subgroups except Chinese,<sup>6</sup> and the Sino-Bodic hypothesis, weakened by the empirically not sufficiently demonstrated shared exclusive innovations. I think, in this situation, we have to draw the conclusion to intensify the building up of subgrouping from below. This means intensifying the descriptive work as well the as historical comparison on a low level in order to work out as many regular correspondences as possible for a few supposedly genetically closely related Tibeto-Burman languages before going on to a higher level, where the number of regular correspondences naturally will be reduced. As mentioned above, the tree in diagram 16 and its branches do not represent a *Stammbaum* in the proper sense, but a model of prehistoric dispersals reflected by the geographical labels. Consequently, the author concludes chapter three with the corresponding archaeological record entitled „Neolithic and Bronze Age *Völkerwanderungen*“, having stressed earlier that it is essential to keep the archaeological model distinct from the linguistic theory of genetic relationship and subgroup hypotheses (cf. p. 398). But within this part the author also touches upon many Tibeto-Burman languages from west to east and from north to south, providing an abundance of valuable information not on the particular grammars but on the cultural and language history of all the many different peoples speaking a Tibeto-Burman language.

A further genetic hypothesis involved in the „new look“ of Tibeto-Burman is the author's Brahmaputran hypothesis, which claims a closer genetic relationship of Konyak, Bodo-Koch, Dhimalish and Kachinic (p. 501). „The Brahmaputran branch is one taxon within the geographic constellation of primary taxa collectively called Western Tibeto-Burman“ (p. 398). But „opposed to the Sino-Bodic and Brahmaputran hypotheses, Western Tibeto-Burman is not a hypothesis about genetic subgroups“ (p. 399).<sup>7</sup> The Brahmaputran hypothesis is discussed among other Tibeto-

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<sup>6</sup> The individual opinions may vary to a considerable extent. In a recent contribution on the subgrouping of the Sino-Tibetan languages, Graham Thurgood simply states: „The Sino-Tibetan family consists of two major subgroups, Chinese and Tibeto-Burman. By and large the distinction between the two is unambiguous and widely accepted, despite a dwindling number of older scholars who still see the connection as not yet proven“ (Thurgood/LaPolla 2003: 6).

<sup>7</sup> In van Driem 1997: 462f. this hypothesis was called Western Tibeto-Burman hypothesis, comprising Baric, Sal and Kamarupan, and was first suggested to van Driem by Benedict, „who wrote that Kachin, Konyak and Bodo-Garo make up a group“ (ibid.). This statement has been

Burman subgrouping proposals (pp. 388ff., 396ff.) and compared with two „rival subgrouping hypotheses,... Jim Matisoff's ‚Jiburish‘ and Graham Thurgood's ‚Rung‘“ (p. 390). An important difference lies in the fact that van Driem has added Dhimalish (including Toto and Dhimal) to the Bodo-Konyak-Jinghpaw group. The evidence, the languages involved as well as their speakers and communities are presented at some length in chapter four ‚The Brahmaputra and Beyond“. Other new concepts are the Mahakiranti and the Newaric hypotheses in chapter five. According to the author's concept, the speakers of the ancient North-western Tibeto-Burman dialects reached the Himalayan region by at least two distinct routes. One wave „reached both the western and eastern Himalayas and spread across their northern flank and the Tibetan plateau“ (p. 826), yielding the Bodish, West Himalayish and Tamangic language communities of today, with which the author deals in chapter six. Another wave crossed the Himalayas somewhere in the east and spread in a westerly direction across the southern flank, yielding Bodic language communities which today speak languages of the Mahakiranti group. In this concept the author has „related Newar both to Thangmi and Baram... These three languages together form a subgroup which I call Newaric or para-Kiranti and which, together with the Kiranti languages proper, make up a hypothetical subgroup which I have christened Mahakiranti, ‚Greater Kiranti‘“ (p. 397). Therefore, the Mahakiranti concept comprises the numerous Kiranti or Rai languages and the Newaric languages Newar, Baram and Thangmi, constituting the „Himalayan“ subgroup, in which the author also included Lepcha, whose genetic position is unclear, Lhokpu and the Magaric languages Magar, Kham, Chepang including the Bhujeli dialect, possibly Raute or Raji, and the now extinct Dura. But in two papers with nearly the same text (van Driem 2003, 2004) the author has now withdrawn the Mahakiranti hypothesis, originally based on two specific morphological traits that Newar shares with the Kiranti languages, since it had turned out in his further research that these traits also occur in Gongduk and therefore are not exclusively shared by Newar and Kiranti, „but would appear to be the shared retention of a far older trait of the Proto-Tibeto-Burman verbal agreement system“ (van Driem 2003: 24). However, „whilst the evidence for Mahakiranti has waned, the evidence for Newaric or Mahanevari has grown“ (van Driem 2003: 25). This is not reflected in Bradley's classification (Bradley 1997: 15ff.) who subsumes under his label „Himalayan“ the „Kiranti or Rai languages“ and the „Central Himalayan languages“ Magar, Kham, Chepang, Raute/Raji and Newari. But Bhramu (Baram) and Thami (Thangmi) are listed under „West Himalayish“ together with Kinnauri, etc., and Lepcha under „Central Tibeto-

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commented on by Matisoff (2000: 357 including note 7) who states that this grouping goes back to the Linguistic Survey of India, that the term „Sal languages“ originated in Burling and that the term Kamarupan was coined by himself.

Burman“.<sup>8</sup> He classifies Dura under „Western Bodish“, together with Gurung, etc. For Tshangla, Lhokpu and Gongduk he has an extra branch within „Western Tibeto-Burman or Bodic“. As for this last language, spoken by a dwindling population of about 1000 speakers in a remote enclave along the Kurichu in east-central Bhutan, van Driem, who discovered it in 1991, has tentatively classified it as an independent subgroup within Tibeto-Burman. „When the Tshangla and Dzongkha loans are eliminated from consideration, the underlying substrate of Gongduk may in fact not even be Tibeto-Burman at all“ (p. 465). Even if so, to speculate about a genetic relationship with Proto-North-Caucasian remains not only „premature until the grammar and lexicon of the Gongduk language have been documented in greater detail“ (p. 467), but also until a Proto-North-Caucasian genetic unity has been established. The only languages established in the North Caucasus as genetic unities are the North West Caucasian languages, the Nakh languages and certain groups within the Daghestan languages. And despite N. S. Trubetzkoy's *Nordkaukasische Wortgleichungen* (Trubetzkoy 1930), the genetic relationship among these groups is not at all clear or even probable. For example, no one so far has convincingly shown on a broad empirical basis that the North West Caucasian languages and the Nakh languages, widely accepted genetic unities in themselves, are mutually genetically related. But these are the sort of proofs we need prior to higher level comparisons.<sup>9</sup>

The author has dedicated chapter six to the Bodish, West Himalayish and Tamangic language communities, whose ancestors, according to the author, reached both the western and eastern Himalayas, as mentioned above, and spread across their northern flank and the Tibetan plateau. In diagram 16, the languages they speak are collectively called „Bodish“.<sup>10</sup> The terminology is a bit confusing. On the one hand the West Himalayish languages do not belong to the Himalayan languages group, but to the Bodish languages group. On the other hand the label „Bodish“ is used in three different ways. First, as a cover term for all Bodic languages except the

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<sup>8</sup> A subgroup of his „North-eastern“ group (cf. Bradley 1997: 2); the label „North-eastern India“ on p. 2, line 9 from below is a misprint, see line 26 from below (correct in Bradley 1994: 60f.). Bradley's presentation of his classification in the introduction of his paper is a bit confusing. It is not clear whether he differentiates four or six immediate subgroups of Tibeto-Burman. The diagram on p. 2 gives only four, as does the text of the introduction that follows, where a fifth „Central subgroup“ is mentioned under the „North-eastern“ (not „North-eastern India“!) subgroup, and a sixth subgroup, „Kuki-Chin“, is named under the „South-eastern“ subgroup. In Bradley 1994: 60ff. we find the same four subgroups, and the languages of the Central subgroup are listed under the North-eastern subgroup and Kuki-Chin under the North-eastern India subgroup. The problem involved in calling two immediate subgroups „North-eastern India“ and „North-eastern“ respectively, is evidenced by the misprint mentioned above.

<sup>9</sup>On Nikolajev/Starostin 1994 see Schulze 1997.

<sup>10</sup>Unfortunately Tshangla is not included in diagram 16, but according „to our present state of knowledge Tshangla appears to constitute an independent linguistic subgroup within Bodic. Here the provisional term ‚para-Bodish‘ has been introduced for Tshangla merely to indicate that the relationship between Tshangla and Bodish is more obvious at the present time than the relationship with Tshangla to other Tibeto-Burman groups“ (p. 991).



Himalayan languages group and Tshangla. Second, on a lower subgrouping level for Tibetan alone as opposed to the West Himalayish and Tamangic languages (cf. p. 826). The presentation of the position occupied by the East Bodish languages remains somewhat unclear, which is the third example of the use of the term. Despite of what the label may suggest, the East Bodish languages are genetically not a subgroup of the Bodish languages in the sense of the second usage (= Tibetan), but a subgroup of the Bodish languages in the sense of the first usage (= Tibetan, West Himalayish, Tamangic, East Bodish). Thus the label is unsatisfactory and confusing from the terminological point of view. This third point is due to Shafer's confusing the Tibetan dialect Dwags-po with the Tibeto-Burman, but non-Tibetan language Dag-pa. The author is aware of this,<sup>11</sup> but says that it poses no problem to him and that he has therefore adopted the term for the whole subgroup (cf. p. 916). As we have seen, however, it has posed a problem for the classification of the Bodish languages group as well as for the internal classification of Tibetan, because the label „Bodish“ is used on different levels, precisely what Shafer was trying to avoid by introducing his terminology. And due to his error, he had no choice but to abandon his own terminology, as I have shown elsewhere,<sup>12</sup> and clearly we should not perpetuate his mistake. We could restrict the notion „Bodish“ to the higher level, which would permit us to keep „East Bodish“ on the level below. This possibility is discussed by Bradley 1997: 3ff., and perhaps also alluded to by van Driem 1994: 609f. Thus we could retain „East Bodish“ for the Bumthang group, „Central Bodish“ for Tibetan, and „West Bodish“ for the Tamangic group. The disadvantage of these labels, however, is that they are in competition with Shafer's notions „West Bodish unit, Central Bodish unit, South Bodish unit, East Bodish unit“ to characterize the different groups of Tibetan dialects. Therefore I found it easier and clearer to drop the abstract labels on this level, where specific single languages are beginning to be recognised, and to use „sounding“ labels like „Tibetan“, „Bumthang languages group“, „Tamang or Gurung languages group“, „Kinnaur languages group“, etc. A distinction still remains between „Tibetan“ and the other groups, for example, the „Bumthang languages group“, because the label „Tibetan“ usually refers to „varieties“ or „dialects“, whereas van Driem applies the label „Bumthang languages group“ to differentiate between „dialects“ and „languages“ (cf. p. 908, 910). As we know from Dutch, however, a former dialect can rise to the status of a language, mainly due to extralinguistic reasons. Therefore I have no objection to speak of Dzongkha as a South Bodish language (p. 891) or better as a South Tibetan language.<sup>13</sup> From a linguistic point of view it has been regarded since the Linguistic Survey of India as a South Tibetan dialect or better as a South Tibetan

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<sup>11</sup>See also van Driem 1994: 609f.

<sup>12</sup>Cf. Bielmeier 2004: 398ff.

<sup>13</sup>In the case of the variety of Tromowa in Tsang, i.e. in Tibet/China, van Driem speaks correctly of „Tibetan sister language“ (p. 903) probably due to extralinguistic reasons.

variety with its closest relatives on the same linguistic level, namely the three sister varieties: Drenjongke in Sikkim, Tromowa in Tsang, and Chocangacakha in Bhutan (cf. p. 891).

On Tibetan, the author first gives a short but to our present state of knowledge accurate classification of the dialects followed by a brief sketch of Tibetan history including the contacts with the West since the 17th century, that is, since the Christian mission and the documentation of the Tibetan language beginning with a Tibetan word list provided by the mayor of Amsterdam Nicolaes Witsen in 1692. Nicolaes Witsen had been a close confidant of czar Peter I and had been travelling several times in Russia in the years between 1666 and 1677.<sup>14</sup> But van Driem's notes on the early documentation of Tibetan by westerners after Witsen are short and not very balanced. He underestimates Csoma's role and achievements and overestimates that of I. J. Schmidt. Csoma's understanding of the Tibetan verbal system following native conceptions is remarkable till today. And it is Csoma, to whom we owe the first classification of Tibetan tribes and dialects.<sup>15</sup> On I. J. Schmidt, who simply adapted Csoma's dictionary for a German public, and on Csoma, whose work „is that of an original investigator and the fruit of an almost unparalleled determination and patience“ it is best to read Jäschke's preface to his famous *Tibetan-English Dictionary* of 1881 and the „Vorrede“ in the first German version of his *Handwörterbuch der Tibetischen Sprache* of 1871.<sup>16</sup>

Turning to the modern Tibetan dialects and to the work which has been done on them in the recent years the author is very brief if we consider the numerous present varieties of linguistic Tibet as a whole, varieties spoken from the K2 in Pakistan to the Blue Lake in Amdo. He is concentrating on the Tibetan varieties spoken by the „cis-Himalayan Tibetans“, as he calls them (p. 855 and elsewhere), who live mainly in Himachal Pradesh, Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan. On this part I would like to add a few minor corrections and comments. Despite the perhaps misleading title of K. Rangan's *Balti phonetic reader* (1975), Rangan is not describing Balti in this booklet but Purik (cf. p. 850). The error is probably due to the meaning of the term „Balti“ which refers to the Shia Muslims on both sides of the cease fire line, while the Sunni Muslims are usually called Khache, a term which originally referred to the inhabitants of Kashmir. And since most of the people in the Purik area of Ladakh are Shia Muslims, they are also referred to as Balti. If they are asked after their area and language, however, they clearly refer to

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<sup>14</sup>Witsen published material on many then unknown or very little known Asiatic languages in a revised form in two volumes „Noord en Oost-Tartarye, ofte bondig...“ in 1672 and 1705. Among this material, e.g., are the first samples of Circassian and Ossetic. At least the Ossetic material was collected by the German physician Dresscher, who accompanied the Imeretian king Archil II. (1647-1713) on his trip from Moscow to Georgia through Cabardia and Ossetia (cf. Biemeier 1979).

<sup>15</sup>Cf. Róna-Tas 1985, especially pp. 78-91, 185-242; p. 223 on the first classification of the Tibetan dialects.

<sup>16</sup>Cf. Jäschke 1881: v and Jäschke 1871: 4.

themselves as „Purikpa“ (person of the Purik area) and to their language as „Purikpe skat.“ Rangan corrected this mistake in his *Purki grammar* (1979).<sup>17</sup> On p. 851 the author mentions the western (?) Brokpa dialect spoken in the villages Da, Garkhon, etc. and D. D. Sharma's book (Sharma 1998) dealing with it. Despite the Tibetan names „Brokpa“ and „Brokskat“, bestowed by the Ladakhis on the people and their language, these people are immigrants and speak a variety of Indo-Aryan Shina, close to the language of Gilgit. Brokskat is traditionally placed among the so-called „Dardic languages“. Its lexicon is indeed heavily influenced by lower Ladakhi and Purik, but not by Balti. Among other recent linguistic works one should at least mention N. Ramaswami's *Brokskat Phonetic Reader* (1975), *Brokskat Grammar* (1982) and *Brokskat-Urdu-Hindi-English Dictionary* (1989) and André Carrée's *Phonologie du dialecte Shina de Da-Hanu* (1989).<sup>18</sup>

Describing the varieties of Tibetan spoken in the northern areas of Nepal, the author lists them from west to east. He states, correctly, that „Most of these cis-Himalayan Tibetan dialects have not been studied or have been investigated only cursorily“ (p. 856). Therefore, the linguistic information that he can give must be regarded as preliminary. I will try to add a few more preliminary information on some of the varieties we have been able to discover in the meantime and which has not yet been published elsewhere. All these varieties spoken in Nepal can be subsumed under the overall label „Central Tibetan“. Nevertheless there are considerable differences among them. Nothing has been published on the Central Tibetan variety spoken in Limi or Limirong. In 1999 Brigitte Huber recorded a short word list with the help of three informants from that area, one from Sangra, one from Nyinba north and northwest of Simikot, and one from Limi further northwest of Simikot close to the Nepali-Tibetan border. According to the judgement of native speakers, the Sangra and Nyinba varieties are more or less the same, whereas the Limirong variety is described as being a bit different. In their opinion, the Tibetan variety spoken in the neighbouring areas of Mugu and Karmarong, however, differs from their own and is more similar to the Tibetan language spoken in Dolpo. Some information on the Nyinba is given in Levine 1976. Their language is spoken in four villages

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<sup>17</sup>Purki is an Urdu-like adjective for Purik, the name for the area, formed according to the Urdu grammar with the final *-i*.

<sup>18</sup>Through all three booklets (Ramaswami 1975, Ramaswami 1982, Ramaswami 1989) the author translates Brok as ‚rock‘ instead of ‚high pasture‘. This mistake is apparently due to the confusion of the Written Tibetan *brag* ‚rock‘ and *'brog* ‚high pasture‘. Unfortunately, Carrée's *Phonologie* seems not to have been published. It was finished in November 1989 for his Diplôme d'études approfondies. The anthropologist Rohit Vohra also has published works on the Buddhist Dards of Ladakh. Among these publications are the two books: *The Religion of the Dards in Ladakh* (Vohra 1989a) and *An Ethnography. The Buddhist Dards of Ladakh* (Vohra 1989b), in which he presents transcriptions and translations of songs or hymns mostly performed during important festivals. These songs contain a mixture of Ladakhi, Purik, Brokskat and unidentified linguistic elements. Vohra's transcriptions and translations of the songs are not reliable. I tried to interpret a few of the songs in Bielmeier 1994. The conventional name „Dards of Da-Hanu“ is no longer correct, since today the people in Hanu speak a variety of Purik.

north of the confluence of the Dozam and the Humla Khola. In Nepali the area is known as Barthapale and its inhabitants as Barthapalya. Levine has the following to say concerning the language of Nyinba: „The inhabitants of these villages claim to have migrated from Tibet in the distant past, they speak a dialect of western Tibetan and are adherents of Tibetan Buddhism“ (Levine 1976: 57). According to a text on their origin, their ancestors came from *sKu mkhar stod* in Purang, and it is said that there is still a village with this name existing in the Purang valley. As regards phonology, these varieties of Limirong are indeed quite close to the variety of Purang as described in Qu/Tan 1982. An important difference lies in the fact that voicedness still seems to play a phonemic role, just as in most Tibetan varieties of Nepal. As in the variety of Purang and other Tibetan varieties, the original labial nasal *m* between vowels has disappeared and led to nasalisation of the second vowel. It seems to be a Tö-dialect inasmuch as an original initial bilabial stop followed by *r* has led to a retroflex stop. An original bilabial stop followed by *y* and a back vowel (*a, u, o*) led to an affricate, but was retained as bilabial stop if the original bilabial stop was followed by *y* and a front vowel (*i, e*). Original *-n, -r, -l* in final position are retained, only original final *-s* is dropped, palatalising the preceding vowel, primarily in Limi and Sangra, but usually not in Nyinba.

Nearly nothing is known, let alone published, on the Tibetan varieties of Mugu and Karmarong. I have no additional information on the variety spoken by the Karmarong Tibetans. The only scholar to have published linguistic material on the Mugu variety, collected in Mugu village, is Stephen A. Watters (Watters 2002). He kindly put his unpublished word list on six Tibetan varieties, four of them spoken in Nepal (Dzongkha, Drenjongke, Sherpa, Lhomi, Dolpo, Mugu), at my disposal. Thus I was able to use a limited amount of Mugu language material for my own evaluations. This material does not confirm van Driem's impression: „The fact that the degree of mutual intelligibility between Mugu and Central Tibetan is negligibly small warrants considering Mugu to be a distinct language...“ (p. 857). On the contrary, the variety fits quite well into the Tibetan speech environment and is definitely a „conservative“ Central Tibetan dialect. The same seems to be true of the dialect of Dolpo as well. Despite the fact that Dolpo is quite well known and has often been the object of various studies, practically nothing has been published on the Tibetan variety spoken in Dolpo. The only language material so far published comes once more from Watters 2002. In addition to that I have the Dolpo material from his unpublished word list, and in 1998 Michael Kollmair, at my request, recorded a Dolpo word list with the help of an informant from Saldang in the Nepal Research Centre in Kathmandu. The Dolpo variety does not seem to be specifically close to the neighbouring Mugu variety. With a few exceptions, they all share many of the sound-change phenomena to be met with in Ngari. In the Dolpo variety as well as in that of Mugu we find the retention of final *-n, -r, -l*, but not of final *-s*. An original initial bilabial stop is retained, provided it is

followed by *y* and a front vowel. Original initial *s-* followed by *r* led to initial *s-* in Dolpo as well as in Mugu. This is a development typical of Kham, but also encountered in Kyirong for example, and in other languages. A peculiarity of Dolpo and Mugu, however, is the change of the original initial clusters *skr-* and *spr-* resulting in an initial palatal fricative *sh-* in Dolpo and in an initial *s-* in Mugu.<sup>19</sup>

There is little to be added concerning the Tibetan varieties of Mustang. The author refers to the comprehensive description of the Southern Mustang or Lower Mustang variety, published by Monika Kretschmar 1995.<sup>20</sup> It clearly supersedes the word list collected and published by Nagano 1982a. One should add, however, that Nagano in the same year also published a word list of the variety of Upper Mustang or Lo, accompanied by a historical discussion (Nagano 1982b).<sup>21</sup> Nothing at all has been published on the dialect of Nubri or Nupri in a phonemic rendering.<sup>22</sup> But in 1987 M. Kretschmar collected a long word list from two areas in Nubri, namely Rō and Trök, and has placed it at my disposal. We have integrated this material into the *Comparative Dictionary of Tibetan Dialects*.<sup>23</sup> The Nubri variety seems to be closer to the varieties spoken in the north beyond the border in Tibet than to its western neighbouring varieties in Nepal. There are clear differences to its eastern neighbouring variety in Tsum, as regards the sound level. In Nubri voicedness is not phonemic, similar to the varieties of Ngari, Tsang and western Ü in Tibet.

Speaking of Tsum, I shall first point out that we find a very distinctive common historical phonological feature in the varieties of Tsum, Kyirong, Langtang, Yolmo, Kagate, and also in the Tibetan varieties spoken in a few villages in the Bhote Kosi and Langtang Khola valleys in Nepal near the Tibet-Nepal border, where the main population and language is Tamang. Despite the fact that the Kagate speakers live today in a mountain area between the Likhu and Khimti Khola in the northeastern part of Ramechhap District, their variety is considered especially close to that of the people of

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<sup>19</sup>Because of this general picture we can hardly consider the Mugu variety to be „a distinct language just as Dzongkha is manifestly a distinct language from Tibetan despite the shared liturgical tradition“ (p. 857). The Mugu variety is a Central Tibetan dialect with only a few peculiarities, at least on the sound level. For Dzongkha, due to extralinguistic reasons, we may claim the status of a language, but Dzongkha is not a distinct language from Tibetan, but a South Bodish language (p. 891) or a South Bodish dialect or variety, if we understand „Bodish“ as a synonym of „Tibetan“, cf. note 13.

<sup>20</sup>One of the twelve villages of Southern Mustang is called Pura in the local variety, translated by M. Kretschmar as Purang. This might well be misleading, because it is not at all clear that we have here the same place name as „Purang“ in Ngari.

<sup>21</sup>Unfortunately no further help was to be found in the booklet of Kitamura 1977, containing a word list of 456 items and dialogues in Modern Written Tibetan and in the Upper Mustang variety, because the material of the Upper Mustang variety is written in Tibetan script giving thus very little information on the actual pronunciation.

<sup>22</sup>The Literary Tibetan form is *nub ris* and not *nub ri*, as given by van Driem.

<sup>23</sup>For more details on the *Comparative Dictionary of Tibetan Dialects* see my short report in Bielmeier 2002. On the area and history of Nubri and other Tibetan speaking areas in Nepal and beyond the border in Tibet see Clarke 1980 and now Everding 2000: 29off. and Childs 2001.

Yolmo, also called Helambu Sherpas (cf. Hoehlig/Hari 1976: 1). This is linguistically correct and confirmed by the fact that, according to their own tradition, they originally came from the Helambu or Yolmo area (Hoehlig/Hari 1976: 1). All these varieties share the retention of the original cluster consisting of an initial bilabial stop, with or without prefix, followed by *r*. Only the prefix of the original cluster is omitted. This is definitely a shared archaism and not a shared innovation. But it is nevertheless very remarkable, for this retention can also be found only in a part of Western Archaic Tibetan, i.e., in Balti, Purik and Lower Ladakhi as far as Khalatse. This is one important feature among many others that distinguishes the variety of the Helambu Sherpas clearly from the varieties of the Solu-Khumbu Sherpas. Despite the common name, the varieties are not really very close to each other. Both diverge from the „typical“ Central Tibetan type quite a bit, but in different directions. Nothing has been published on the variety of Tsum. But during my work on Kyirong Tibetan in a refugee camp in Syabru Besi in the eighties, I was informed by locals that the language of Tsum seems to be quite close to Kyirong Tibetan. The same seems to be valid for the Tibetan varieties spoken in Langtang and in the above-mentioned few villages in the Bhote Kosi valley between Syabru Besi and Rasua near the Tibetan border on the way to Kyirong and in the few villages in the Langtang Khola valley on the way to Langtang.<sup>24</sup> In 1998 Brigitte Huber, who has written a comprehensive grammar on Kyirong Tibetan (Huber 2002), recorded a short word list compiled with an informant from Tsum in Kathmandu. This is the only linguistic material that we have so far. During my above-mentioned stay in Syabru Besi I also visited Langtang and collected some linguistic material. A few years ago Christoph Cüppers, at my request, recorded some few words with the help of a Helambu Sherpa speaker in Kathmandu. And in 2000 Brigitte Huber again recorded a word list with an informant from that area in Kathmandu. My evaluations on Helambu Sherpa or Yolmo Tibetan based on these two wordlists are now confirmed by a comprehensive *Yohlmo-Nepali-English Dictionary* recently compiled by the Swiss scholar Anna Maria Hari which hopefully will go to press very soon and was put at our disposal by the author. Kagate was briefly described as early as 1909 in the Linguistic Survey of India, where it is also mentioned that its speakers live in East Nepal and Darjeeling (no further authorities are quoted). As mentioned above, Monika Hoehlig and Maria Hari published a *Kagate Phonemic Summary* (1976) and have compiled a comprehensive *Kagate-English-Nepali Dictionary* that includes an English-Kagate index in the seventies; unfortunately, this has not been published as yet, but was put at our disposal by the authors. A further paper is Höhlig 1978.

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<sup>24</sup>In Bielmeier 1982: 411f. I have already pointed out that the Tibetan dialects of Kyirong, Kagate, the Helambu Sherpas and Langtang are closely related. I have never heard of a cis-Himalayan Tibetan community „locally known by the derogatory name Khaccaḍ Bhoṭe, ‘mule Tibetan’, whereby mule more or less carries the sense of ‚mongrel“ (p. 862).

As regards the Jirel the author invites his readers to examine the Sunwar influence, stating that „the Jirel language, though apparently similar to the Sherpa dialects, might show vestiges of Sunwar provenance. Until the language is adequately documented, there will be no way of testing this hypothesis“ (p. 863). Jirel is indeed similar in several respects to Solu-Khumbu Sherpa, but not to Helambu Sherpa. And the documentation of the Jirel dialect is relatively poor. But the four publications quoted by the author are not the only more recent studies on Jirel. Further publications are Hale 1973, Maibaum 1978, Strahm and Maibaum 1971 and Strahm 1978. The main point, though, is that Esther Strahm has completed a comprehensive *Jirel-Nepali-English Dictionary* which will go into press very soon. We have integrated the Jirel material from the published sources into our *Comparative Dictionary of Tibetan Dialects* and we are grateful to Esther Strahm, who put a revised draft of the dictionary at our disposal. Under these circumstances, the proposed comparison with Sunwar should become more promising.

Although the Sherpas are well known in the west and there is quite a lot of literature on them, even on linguistic topics since the brief description in the *Linguistic Survey of India* of 1909, we do not have a comprehensive grammatical description of their language. According to Sang Yong Lee's recently published sociolinguistic survey of Sherpa (Lee 2003), the Sherpa as an ethnic group live primarily in the district of Solu-Khumbu, which can be divided into the three regions of Khumbu, Pharak and Solu. Correctly, Lee does not include the Helambu Sherpas. The variety the latter speak, as noted above, is quite different from the variety spoken by the Sherpas in Solu-Khumbu. Therefore it is quite in order when these Sherpas „stress that they are genuine Sherpas and maintain that the Sherpas of Helambu are not true Sherpas“ (p. 865). „While it is generally agreed that the Sherpa people migrated from the Kham area of Tibet, according to Oppitz in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, it remains unclear whether they translocated to the present location at one time and in one direction only, or rather moved gradually and entered Nepal through different portals“ (Lee 2003: 81). Judging from a linguistic point of view, the Sherpa varieties seem to fit quite well into the surrounding Central-Tibetan-like varieties with the exception that Jirel and Sherpa and probably Khumbo verbs as well, have different stem forms, a linguistic phenomenon observed chiefly in Classical Tibetan and in modern Amdo varieties. An exclusive sound change discovered only recently for Sherpa and Khumbo (but not for Jirel) is the development of the original initial cluster *lt-* into initial voiceless *lh-*. The Khumbos are not mentioned by van Driem. According to Hildegard Diemberger the Khumbo people, also known as Nawa, are a small Tibetan speaking community in the Upper Arun valley, in close vicinity to the Lhomi people. They are divided into the Khumbo Tema or Upper Khumbo, in Khemathanka right at the Tibet-Nepal border, south

of the Tibetans of Kharta, and the Khumbo Ongma or Lower Khumbo living in some dozen villages around Sepa (Nep. Shedua). The Tibetan variety they speak is not close to that of the Lhomis, but to that of the Sherpas. This becomes understandable when we look at their history. „Historically the Khumbo stem from a migration from Tibet via Khumbu (probably some 300 years ago) which combining with other Tibetan clans originated a number of communities in the upper Arun valley“ (Diemberger 1996: 220). Nothing has been published on their language so far. But I can base my linguistic evaluations on language material which Diemberger has collected in the eighties during her fieldwork for her PhD dissertation and has placed at my disposal.

Concerning the Lhomi people and their language, the impression of the author that „the language seems rather unlike a Tibetan dialect“ (p. 865) is definitely wrong. He also says that Lhomi „is, I believe, not a dialect of Tibetan, but this conjecture can only be tested by detailed grammatical and lexical documentation“ (p. 866). There is no comprehensive grammatical description of Lhomi yet,<sup>25</sup> but we have enough lexical material and detailed information on its phonetics and phonology. Thus we can evaluate the number of basic lexical items that are shared and we can sketch a diachronic phonology for Classical Tibetan as well as for the neighbouring Tibetan dialects. We have not only the two accounts by Vesalainen and Vesalainen 1976 and Vesalainen and Vesalainen 1980, both quoted by van Driem, but also Nishi 1979, Nishi 1983, Watters 2002, Watters 2003 and Watters's above-mentioned unpublished word list. Definitely wrong again is the statement by Vesalainen and Vesalainen to the effect that Helambu Sherpa is the closest language to Lhomi (Vesalainen and Vesalainen 1976: 1). They compared Lhomi with only three varieties, namely Helambu Sherpa, Solu-Khumbu Sherpa and Tichurong Tibetan (southern Dolpo). We have no information on the Tichurong variety, but both, Helambu Sherpa and Solu-Khumbu Sherpa, are relatively distant from Lhomi. In other words this comparison is of no help in determining the position of Lhomi. The idea that Lhomi is quite different from Tibetan may go back to a statement by Ch. von Furer-Haimendorf in his book *Himalayan Traders* (1975), which has been very correctly criticised by Nishi, who states „von Furer-Haimendorf (1975), referring to this dialect, observes that it is a ‚language very different from Standard Tibetan‘, suspecting that it contains elements which cannot be derived from the languages of the adjoining regions of Tibet (p. 117). By ‚standard‘ Tibetan he probably means Lhasa or Central Tibetan... However, so far as its phonological features are concerned, we may well conclude that it is more likely a Central Tibetan dialect than Sherpa and Kagate. Thus it is tonal, has only simplex initials, and did not undergo the change \*-r- to -y-. Besides, the patterns of changes of \*initial voiced stops and affricates are exactly like Lhasa Tibetan“ (Nishi 1983: 59). To establish the genetic

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<sup>25</sup>But see Vesalainen and Vesalainen 1980.



position of Lhomi we must compare it with the neighbouring varieties and with Classical Tibetan and establish the regular sound correspondences. This is easy and it renders a very clear picture, one which largely coincides with Nishi's evaluation. Even just the phonetic forms in Watters's word list, for example, of the numerals *nyi* with high tone for 'two' and *dün* with low tone for 'seven' demonstrate the Tibetan character of Lhomi. Today we can even determine the position of Lhomi in a bit more detail, and state that the closest relatives of this Tibetan dialect are the varieties spoken north of it in Tsang west of Lhartse, of which at present the dialects of the western Drokpas, of Dingri and of Shigatse are known best due to the works of Monika Kretschmar (Kretschmar 1986), Silke Herrmann (Herrmann 1989) and Felix Haller (Haller 2000). Comparing the clause patterns of Lhomi described by Vesalainen and Vesalainen 1980 with the corresponding phenomena in Shigatse Tibetan, we even find grammatical correspondences. There is a small settlement of Lhomis in Darjeeling and the name used for them there is Shingsapa. But this name is apparently used by the Lhomis in Nepal as well. Because the exact pronunciation is not known, it remains unclear to me whether *shing-sa* refers to 'field' or to 'wood'. The Nepali designation *Kāth-Bhoṭe*, lit. 'wood-Tibetan', points to the latter<sup>26</sup>. On the other hand, according to Bista 1980: 169, „the Lhomis subsist almost entirely on field agriculture“. Their self-designation Lhomi, just like the name of „the speakers of Lhokpu, known in Dzongkha as Lhop“, is often interpreted as meaning 'southerners' (cf. p. 802). In my opinion, however, we should be a bit careful with this interpretation. We should not forget the self-designation *lo* (with high tone) for Mustang, referred to in the Tibetan literature as *glo*, or *glo stod* for Upper Mustang and *glo smad* for Lower Mustang respectively.<sup>27</sup>

Finally, there are the Tibetan speaking communities of Halung or Walung at the far north-east border of Nepal in Thudam, Tokpe Gola, and Walungchung Gola. In Bista 1980: 173ff. we find some information on the Thudam and Tokpe Gola<sup>28</sup> people as well as on the people of Olangchung (better Walungchung). Nothing has been published so far on the Tibetan varieties spoken by these peoples. But at present Nancy Caplow (St. Barbara, California) is preparing a comprehensive grammatical description of the language of the Tokpe Gola people as her PhD dissertation. All the quoted information in this and the following paragraphs come from her. Her „TG [Tokpe Gola] consultants do believe they are culturally, historically, and linguistically close to the Walungchung Gola community (and there has been

<sup>26</sup>Note also Sanskrit *śimśapā*-, the tree 'Dalbergia sissoo', cf. Turner 1966, No.12424 and Mayrhofer 1996: 633.

<sup>27</sup>Cf., e.g., Everding 2000: 417f. The question remains whether *glo* can be connected with Old Tibetan *glo ba nye* 'loyal', and *glo ba rings* 'disloyal', preserved on the south face of the Zhol inscription of the 8th c. (cf., e.g., Li/Coblin 1987: 161).

<sup>28</sup>According to Caplow the name is pronounced with an initial aspirated retroflex stop. The spelling Topke Gola in Bista 1980: 173 is a misprint which crept into literature and maps, also in the present book, p. 866.

intermarriage between them, which does not occur with Limbus or Lhomis). However, they say that the TG people originally came from Tibet, and the WG [Walungchung Gola] people also originally came from Tibet. They do not say that the TG people moved from WG. This makes sense geographically, given the location of steep ridges separating the TG and WG settlements, and separate remote passes connection TG and Tibet, and WG and Tibet.“ Her TG language consultants also told her that Lhomi is quite different from Tokpe Gola and Walungchung Gola. „The village of Thudam is in the same valley as the Lhomi villages, but the Thudam people are considered by the locals to speak Tokpe Gola, and to be distinct culturally and linguistically from the Lhomi.“

In his description of the Bodish languages, van Driem proceeds eastward, leaving Nepal and going on into Bhutan. His discussion includes the Tibetan varieties of Sikkim and of the Chumbi valley, as these two languages are closely related to Dzongkha constituting together with Chocangacakha, a further variety in Bhutan, the Southern Tibetan group, as mentioned above. The author is certainly a leading expert on the languages of Bhutan, and the information he gives on Bhutan and its languages is most valuable.

The book, consisting as it does of so many heterogeneous topics and approaches, certainly cannot be evaluated as a whole. The main section of the book, as is also shown by its title, is concerned with the Tibeto-Burman languages. In this part of his book the author presents an excellent introduction on the research history and classification of Tibeto-Burman and Sino-Tibetan and tries to promote his Sino-Bodic hypothesis at the expense of the Sino-Tibetan hypothesis. But both hypotheses seem to have weak points. He puts forward the Brahmaputran hypothesis as applicable to Western Tibeto-Burman, and the Mahakiranti-Newaric to the Himalayan languages. In two recent papers, however, he has withdrawn the Mahakiranti hypothesis. At any rate he often gives a fascinating picture of the languages concerned, their speakers and cultures, their history and archaeology, particularly for the Kiranti language communities. This also holds true for some of the Bodish languages, especially of the non-Tibetan East Bodish languages in Bhutan and east of it. Within Tibetan, Dzongkha occupies a strong position in his analysis, whereas the presentations of the many other Tibetan varieties are somewhat short, concentrating mainly on the cis-Himalayan varieties. But in view of the author's research preference for the Kiranti languages (particularly Limbu) in Nepal and the many languages in Bhutan, especially Dzongkha, it is only natural that he should emphasize these languages and culture areas. Due to the high standard of his research work, readers cannot but benefit highly. Unfortunately, I cannot extend this evaluation to the last two chapters, in which very fragile (re)constructions are erected with the help of too many speculations, unproved assumptions and hypotheses. To give them a firm basis, we must

improve the (re)constructions from below. I can only underline the author's own words, namely that „priority must be given to descriptive work over historical comparison“ (van Driem 1997: 484 and cited by Matisoff 2000: 368) in Tibeto-Burman historical linguistics and even more with the topics touched upon in chapters seven and eight. In some respects the book seems to me like a kind of general store, with wonderful titbits and non-sellers consisting of speculative approaches. I am not certain whether it was really a good idea to put this huge amount of facts, ideas and hypotheses under one cover.

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***Trans-Himalayan Caravans: Merchant princes and peasant traders in Ladakh* by Janet Rizvi. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999. ISBN 019 564855 2, bibliography, 20 black-and-white and 13 colour plates, 4 maps, 359 pp.**

Reviewed by Nicky Grist

I am reviewing my second copy of this book. The first was not lost in some fast-flowing glacial stream or over the edge of an unimaginably high