

## AN OUTLINE OF THE HISTORICAL PHONOLOGY OF THE DIALECTS OF NAR-PHU (NEPAL)

**Martine Mazaudon**

Lacito, CNRS, Paris

### SUMMARY

The dialects of Nar (local name Tshiprungtan, also known as Nar-mä 'lower Nar') and Phu (or Nar-tö 'upper Nar') are spoken in two villages in a small valley north of Manang in Nepal. They undoubtedly belong to the TGTm group of languages (Tamang-Gurung-Thakali-Manang). Notwithstanding the existence of a significant number of Tibetan roots, the basic vocabulary remains TGTm, including the test-root 'seven' Phu <sup>55</sup>pɿ, Nar <sup>54</sup>ni < TGTm \*<sup>B</sup>h<sub>nis</sub> (vs WT *bdun*).

From the phonological correspondances we can define two distinct dialects, different from each other and distinct from Manangba. For instance, the development of the Proto-Tamang \*voiced series under Proto-tone \**B* into an aspirated series, which is a striking feature of Manangba, is not found in Nar-Phu (e.g. TGTm \*<sup>B</sup>dap 'needle' > Nar <sup>112</sup>dou, Phu <sup>11</sup>to;ɦ, Man <sup>31</sup>the). Like the dialects of Tamang proper, Nar and Phu preserve the old velar + *l* clusters (TGTm \*<sup>B</sup>gliŋ 'snow' > Nar <sup>12</sup>gliŋ, Phu <sup>21</sup>gliɦŋ; cf. Risiangku Tamang <sup>21</sup>kliŋ), against all the rest of the TGTm languages which have lost them, either through coalescence (as in Gurung), or by the loss of the velar (Marpha and Syang), or by loss of the liquid (Tukche and Manang, including the Praka dialect, which is only marginally distinct from Manang proper).

A rather large number of lexical items are not direct cognates between Nar and Phu; many of these may be loanwords from Tibetan. Among cognates, divergent outputs can be observed for some diachronic rules; for example, certain old stopped rimes which are reflected as diphthongs in Nar complete their evolution to a monophthong in Phu (e.g. 'needle' quoted above, or TGTm \*<sup>B</sup>kat 'voice' > Nar <sup>54</sup>k<sup>2</sup>e, Phu <sup>43</sup>ke).

On the other hand, some developments are shared by the three languages of the area (Manang, Nar and Phu), e.g. the shift of short \**e* to the opening diphthong *je*, TGTm \*<sup>B</sup>me 'cow' > Nar <sup>112</sup>mjeɦ, Phu <sup>22</sup>mjě, Praka <sup>31</sup>mie.

From the diachronic point of view, the most interesting developments are found in the system of vowels (and rimes). The disappearance of old final stops has led to a proliferation in the number of vowels and diphthongs, which give the dialects a distinctive typological appearance. Changes in the vowels

in open syllables have also contributed to the enrichment of the vocalic system.

The system of initials and initial clusters is characterized by a high degree of conservatism, similar to that of Eastern Tamang (Risiangku). The Nar-Phu dialects are useful, along with Gurung, in reconstructing velar clusters, which are weak in Tamang, and in confirming some other initial clusters and an occasional final, which would otherwise be attested only in the eastern part of the family. They are also useful for lateral initials and the old vocalic length contrast. Tones correspond regularly to those of other TGTm languages. Among finals, the nasals and *l*, *r*, *s* are preserved. Overall, the Nar-Phu dialects are a little less conservative than the dialects of Tamang proper.

## 1. THE DEVELOPMENT OF MORPHEME AND SYLLABLE STRUCTURE

Two opposite types of evolution in morpheme and syllable structure can be observed in Nar-Phu.

### 1.1 LOSS OF THE FINAL SYLLABLE OF DISYLLABIC MORPHEMES IN PHU

This development, which has been described for Dzongkha (Mazaudon and Michailovsky, 1989) has been observed in Phu but not in Nar. The roots involved are shared with Tibetan, rather than strictly TGTm roots. Further study is needed to decide whether these words could have been borrowed from Tibetan directly in their present sesquisyllabic form.

‘rope’	Phu <sup>54</sup> <sup>4</sup> <i>thakp</i> <sup>ə</sup>
‘bile’	Phu <sup>55</sup> <sup>33</sup> <i>tʃhɪkp(a)</i>

### 1.2 EXPANSION BY EPENTHESIS OR DIMIDIATION

In both Nar and Phu, sonants can lead to an expansion of what is a *monosyllable in neighbouring dialects (and seems reconstructible as a monosyllable)* into a disyllabic or sesquisyllabic form.

In Nar (but not in Phu) a final vowel is added, in some words, after the final sonants *m*, *r* and *l*:

‘gold’	TGTm * <sup>B</sup> <i>mar</i> > Nar <sup>11</sup> <sup>22</sup> <i>mare</i> (~ <sup>21</sup> <i>mar</i> ), Phu <sup>22</sup> <i>mar</i>
‘star’	TGTm * <sup>B</sup> <i>sar</i> > Nar <sup>43</sup> <sup>54</sup> <i>sar</i> <sup>ə</sup> , Phu <sup>32</sup> <i>sar</i>
‘gum’	TGTm * <sup>A</sup> <i>ɲil/nil</i> > Nar <sup>23</sup> <sup>32</sup> <i>ɲil</i> <sup>lɛ</sup> , Phu <sup>10</sup> <i>ɲil</i>
‘shoulder’	TGTm * <sup>A</sup> <i>bam</i> > Nar <sup>22</sup> <sup>1</sup> <i>pɔ̃<sup>h</sup>:mə</i>

‘bear’ Nar <sup>22/11</sup>*toma* (cf. Tukche <sup>H</sup>*tom*, Sahu <sup>1</sup>*tawam*)

and occasionally after stops:

‘lung’ TGTM \*<sup>B</sup>*glop*/\*<sup>B</sup>*glwap* > Nar <sup>11/11</sup>*glǝbɛ* (cf. Phu <sup>21</sup>*lǝh*)

In Phu (but not in Nar), optional insertion of an echo vowel occurs inside some velar + sonant clusters:

‘cubit, elbow’ TGTM \*<sup>A</sup>*kru* > Phu <sup>55/55</sup>*kuru* with an undimidiated variant: <sup>33</sup>*kru* <sup>42</sup>*naŋ* / <sup>22/22</sup>*kuru* <sup>42</sup>*naŋ*

‘snow’ TGTM \*<sup>B</sup>*gliŋ* > Phu <sup>21</sup>*glihŋ* with a dimidiated variant <sup>21</sup>*g<sup>h</sup>liŋ*

## 2. THE EVOLUTION OF INITIAL CONSONANTS

### 2.1 PROTO-TGTM INITIALS

Proto-TGTM initials have tentatively been reconstructed as shown in the two tables below. Parentheses indicate problematic reconstructions.

aspirated	p <sup>h</sup>	t <sup>h</sup>	ʈ <sup>h</sup>	tʂ <sup>h</sup>	(tɕ <sup>h</sup> )	k <sup>h</sup>	
voiceless unasp.	p	t	ʈ	ts	(tɕ)	k	(?)
voiced	b	d	ɖ	dz	(dʒ)	g	
voiceless nasal	ḥm	ḥn			ḥɲ	ḥŋ	
voiced nasal	m	n			ɲ	ŋ	
voiceless fricative				s	ɕ		h
voiced fricative				z	ʒ		
voiceless glide		ɸl	ɸr		ɸj	ɸw	
voiced glide		l	r		j	w	

Table 1. TGTM plain initials

	p <sup>h</sup>	p	b	ḥm	m	t <sup>h</sup>	t	d	ʈ <sup>h</sup>	ʈ	ɖ	tʂ <sup>h</sup>	ts	dz	s	k <sup>h</sup>	k	g	ŋ
l,r	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	+	+	-
j	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
w	*	*	*	*	*	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+

\* only with V = /i/

Table 2. TGTM initial clusters

### 2.2 TONE AND MANNER

Proto-TGTM is reconstructed with a three-way manner contrast between \*aspirated, \*voiceless unaspirated, and \*voiced initial consonants (Mazaudon 1978). Across all TGTM dialects, the loss of the old voicing contrast has led

to a two-way split of the proto 2-tone system into 4-tone systems, with complete loss of the voicing contrast in nasals, liquids and sibilants, while the stops retain some trace of it in the guise of weak voicing or a breathy voiced pronunciation of the old voiced stops (and the following vowel). Variability in the realization of these initials is common in all TGTm dialects, with pronunciations of low-toned initials varying from weak voice to complete voicelessness, with more or less breathiness on the following vowel. The same variation is found in Nar and in Phu, with voiceless realizations being somewhat more common in Phu than in Nar.

A remarkable development is found in Manang, where the old \*voiced series under tone \*B has become aspirated. This development is not found in Nar-Phu, confirming, if need be, the difference between the two valleys.

Phonetically, as in the majority of TGTm dialects, the 4 tones in Nar and Phu are realized as two high tones with clear voice quality and two low tones with breathy voice quality.

### *Lateral series*

As a rough approximation, we have said that the proto-Tamang voicing contrast in liquids was completely lost in modern TGTm dialects. I have argued elsewhere that the Syang dialect preserves a trace of the Proto-Tamang voiceless lateral initial in the form of a *fricative* initial *hl* < \**hl*, in opposition to the Syang voiceless *hl* < \**HL*, which possibly reflects an older cluster (Mazaudon, 1978). The contrast in Nar and Phu between a plain voiced lateral *l* (with high tone) < \**hl*, as in ‘water-god’, and a fricative lateral *ɬ* < \**HL*, as in ‘god’, tends to confirm the reconstruction of two different high series laterals \**hl* and \**HL* in Proto-Tamang.

TGTm	Ris.	Sahu	Tag.	Tukche	Marpha	Syang	Gha.	Praka	Nar	Phu
* <i>HL</i>	hl	l	l	hl	l,hl	hl	l	hl	hɬ,l	hɬ
* <i>hl</i>	l	l	l	l	l	hɬ	l	l	l	l
* <i>h</i> /_i,e	l	l	l	l	l	hɬ	l	l	hɬ,l	hɬ
* <i>l</i>	l	l	l	l	l	l	l	l	l	l

‘god’                      TGTm \**<sup>A</sup>HLa* (TTM except Ris \**<sup>A</sup>hl*a) > Nar *<sup>43</sup>læ*, Phu *<sup>43</sup>hɬɛ*

‘water-god’            TGTm \**<sup>A</sup>hlu* (Tam) > Nar *<sup>54</sup>lu*, Phu *<sup>43</sup>lu*

‘ladder’                TGTm \**<sup>A</sup>hli* (GT) > Nar *<sup>54</sup>hli*, Phu *<sup>43</sup>hli*

‘tongue’                TGTm \**<sup>B</sup>hle* > Nar *<sup>54</sup>ɛ*, Phu *<sup>43</sup>hɬɛ*

‘mortar’                TGTm \**<sup>A</sup>laŋ* (TTM) > Nar *<sup>21</sup>la<sup>6</sup>ŋ*, Phu *<sup>10</sup>la<sup>6</sup>ŋ*