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

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SUMMARY

The dialects of Nar (local name Tshiprungtan, also known as Nar-mä ‘lower Nar’) and Phu (or Nar-tō ‘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 ²⁵njī, Nar ²⁴njī < TGTM *bhnis (vs WT bdun).

From the phonological correspondences 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 *bdap ‘needle’ > Nar ¹¹²dou, Phu ¹¹toː⁶, Man ³³the). Like the dialects of Tamang proper, Nar and Phu preserve the old velar + l clusters (TGTM *bgliŋ ‘snow’ > Nar ¹²gliŋ, Phu ²¹gli⁶ŋ, cf. Risiangku Tamang ²¹kliŋ), 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 *bkat ‘voice’ > Nar ¹⁴k⁵e, Phu ⁴⁷ke).

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 *bme ‘cow’ > Nar ¹¹³me⁶, Phu ²²mjë, Praka ³³mje.

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 54thakp³ |
| ‘bile’          | Phu 53¢hîkp(a) |

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 *bmar > Nar 11bmarε (~ 212mar), Phu 22mar |
| ‘star’        | TGTM *bsar > Nar 43sar³, Phu 32sar |
| ‘gum’         | TGTM *a-nil/nil > Nar 23-nilε, Phu 10-nil |
| ‘shoulder’    | TGTM *abam > Nar 22pɔ6:ma |
"bear" Nar 221'toma (cf. Tukche 2tom, Sahu 1tawam)

and occasionally after stops:

"lung" TGTM 1glop1gwap > Nar 111lōbe (cf. Phu 2lōf)

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

"cubit, elbow" TGTM 1kru > Phu 5kuru with an undimiated variant: 3kru 42naŋ / 22kuru 42naŋ

"snow" TGTM 1glin > Phu 2glin with a dimiated variant 2glin
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 l < *Hl, as in ‘god’, tends to confirm the reconstruction of two different high series laterals *hl and *Hl in Proto-Tamang.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TGTM</th>
<th>Ris.</th>
<th>Sahu</th>
<th>Tag.</th>
<th>Tukche</th>
<th>Marpha</th>
<th>Syang</th>
<th>Gha.</th>
<th>Praka</th>
<th>Nar</th>
<th>Phu</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*Hl</td>
<td>hl</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>hl</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>hl</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>hl,l</td>
<td>hl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*b l</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>hl</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>l</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*bl/ i,e</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>hl</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>hl,l</td>
<td>hl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*l</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>l</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘god’

TGTM *^Ahlα (TTM except Ris *^Ahla) > Nar 43læ, Phu 43hle

‘water-god’

TGTM *^Ahlu (Tam) > Nar 54lu, Phu 43lu

‘ladder’

TGTM *^Ahli (GT) > Nar 54hl, Phu 43hli

‘tongue’

TGTM *^bl/e > Nar 54lɛ, Phu 43hle

‘mortar’

TGTM *^laŋ (TTM) > Nar 21lɑŋ, Phu 10lɑŋ
2.3 PLACE OF ARTICULATION

- The place of articulation of simple initial consonants has remained unchanged in Nar-Phu as across all of TGT.
- Labial initial clusters have been preserved, as everywhere in TGT.
- Differences are noted in the evolution of velar initial clusters.

*Velar plus r clusters*

Velar plus r clusters are apparently fully preserved in Nar-Phu and in Gurung; almost fully preserved in Risiangku Tamang; partly preserved in the other Tamang dialects, and in Manang-Praka; and completely lost in the three Thakali dialects (Tukche, Marpha and Syang).

- 'head/hair' TGTM *^A+kra > Nar 43kra/54kra, Phu 44kre (cf. Tangbe 43kra)
- 'filth' TGTM *^A+gri > Nar 21gri, Phu 11gri
- 'one' TGTM *^B+grik > Nar 11gri / 12gri, Phu 22gri / 22kri (cf. Tangbe 11giri)
- 'enemy' TGTM *^B+gra > Nar 13grä, Phu 11kre: (cf. Tangbe 20që)
- 'wheat' TGTM *^B+grwa > Nar 231grä, Phu 21grä (cf. Tangbe 11goñ)

*Velar plus l clusters*

Velar plus l clusters are preserved in Nar-Phu, as in all Tamang dialects, while they are lost in all other TGT dialects.

- 'ox' TGTM *^B+glap > Nar 11glou, Phu 11glo:
- 'place' TGTM *^A+gla: > Nar 11klañ, Phu 11gla:
- 'to swallow' TGTM *^A+gloñ > Nar 3922kloñba

2.4 SOME IRREGULAR CORRESPONDENCES

In Phu (but not in Nar) we notice two groups of recurrent irregular correspondences which will require further study. Both of these groups are reconstructed in other TGT languages with initials in the dental area, simplex or affricated. They may indicate the presence of doublets in TGT.

**Phu s vs other TGTM ts/tsh/dz**

- s/tsh
  - 'hair' Phu 443kra:sem TGTM *^B+tsam
s/dz
'daughter' Phu ³³⁴²sæ⁵me  TGTM ²⁸dzam(e,i)
'tip'  Phu ³¹sɔ⁵z/³⁴so  TGTM ²⁸dzø
'nest'  Phu ²¹sæʰi  TGTM ²⁸dzæŋ

Phu k/kh/g vs other TGTM or Tibetan t/th/d

'fathom'  Phu ¹¹gjä⁶m  Dz dom, WT 'dom(s)(-pa)
'heart'  Phu ⁴kĩ:  TGTM ⁴ᵗʰｉⁿ (Nar ⁴³ᵗʰｉⁿ)
'house'  Phu ³⁴ɡim  TGTM ²⁸dim (Nar ¹⁰¹dim)
'palm'  Phu ³³ja: ⁴²khil  Manang ⁵⁵ja: ³²³³thili, Nar ⁴⁴ja: ⁴⁴thil, or ³³ja ³²thïⁿ, TT ⁴ᵗʰｉⁿ
'siblings’  Phu ⁴⁴khe:  Tuk. ¹ʰthon  'sons and daughters' Ris. ¹ʰþetmai  'family'

3. THE EVOLUTION OF VOWELS AND RIMES

3.1 PROTO-TGTM RIMES

For Proto-TGTM we can reconstruct the following vocalic system:

**Simple vowels**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Short</th>
<th>Long</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>u:i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>o:e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>e:a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

No nasality contrast
No length contrast in closed syllables

**Complex nuclei**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>iu</th>
<th>ui</th>
<th>iui</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(ie)</td>
<td>io</td>
<td>oi</td>
<td>ioi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ia</td>
<td>ai</td>
<td>iai</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(i = j and u = w)

**Final consonants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stop</th>
<th>Fricative</th>
<th>Liquid</th>
<th>(Semi-vowel)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>p</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>u</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k</td>
<td>²</td>
<td>³</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2 OPEN RIMES

The most salient feature in the evolution of open rimes for both dialects is the centralisation of proto *short vowels, and the diphthongisation of short *e
to *je. The old long vowels have not changed in quality, and their length is becoming progressively reduced and redundant as compared to the newly formed quality contrasts.

**Proto short vowels**

The centralisation of peripheral vowels (*i* *a* *u*) is more advanced in Phu than in Nar.

*\(i > i\)  
‘man’  
TGTM \(*^a\text{mi} > \text{Nar } 2^2mɨ\), Phu \(2^1mɨ\)

*\(e > je\)  
‘wife’  
TGTM \(*^a\text{be} > \text{Nar }2^1bje\), Phu \(3^2pje\)

‘cow’  
TGTM \(*^b\text{me} > \text{Nar }2^1\text{mj}e\{\text{f}\};\text{ Phu }2^2\text{mj}e\{\text{f}\}/2^1\text{mj}e/1^1\text{mj}e\) (cf. Tangbe \(2^1\text{me}\))

*\(a > \text{Nar }æ\), Phu \(e\)  
‘goat’  
TGTM \(*^a\text{hra} > \text{Nar }5^4ræ\), Phu \(5^4rə\)

‘small bamboo’  
TGTM \(*^b\text{hma} > \text{Nar }5^4\text{mæ}\), Phu \(3^2\text{me}\)

‘earth’  
TGTM \(*^a\text{sa} > \text{Nar }5^4sə\), Phu \(4^3sə\)

*\(o > o\)  
‘deer’  
TGTM \(*^a\text{pho} > \text{Nar }5^3\text{pho};\text{ Phu }4^3\text{ph}o\)

‘lake’  
TGTM \(*^a\text{tsho} > \text{Nar }4^3\text{tsh}o\), Phu \(5^4\text{tsh}o\) (cf. Tangbe \(4^4\text{tsho}\))

*\(u > \text{Nar }u/\text{u}\), Phu \(u\)  
‘seed’  
TGTM \(*^b\text{blu} > \text{Nar }2^1\text{blu}\), Phu \(2^1\text{blu}\)

**Proto long vowels**

The *long vowels have retained their original quality and tend to shorten:

‘bark (of tree)’  
TGTM \(*^a\text{phi} : > \text{Nar }4^4\text{phi};\text{ Phu }4^4\text{phi}\)

‘tail’  
TGTM \(*^a\text{me} : > \text{Nar }5^4\text{mje}();\text{ Phu }4^4\text{mje}(;)\) (cf. Tangbe \(5^4\text{mər}\))

‘waist’  
TGTM \(*^a\text{kre} : > \text{Nar }4^3\text{kre}/5^4\text{kre}\), Phu \(5^5\text{kre}\)

‘blood’  
TGTM \(*^b\text{ka} : > \text{Nar }5^5\text{ka};\text{ Phu }3^3\text{ka}\)

‘son-in-law’  
TGTM \(*^a\text{ma} : > \text{Nar }3^3\text{ma}();\text{ Phu }2^1\text{ma}();\)

‘smallpox’  
TGTM \(*^b\text{bro} : > \text{Nar }1^1\text{bro}();\text{ Phu }1^1\text{bro}\)

‘nine’  
TGTM \(*^b\text{ku} : > \text{Nar }5^4\text{ku}/5^4\text{k}u\), Phu \(5^5\text{ku}\)

‘six’  
TGTM \(*^b\text{du} : > \text{Nar }2^1\text{du};\text{ Phu }2^1\text{du}/1^1\text{du}\)
The length contrast has thus become associated with a quality contrast:

\[ \begin{align*}
1 \neq i: & \quad u \neq u: \\
je \neq (j)e(:) & \quad o \neq o: \\
\text{Nar } æ/\text{Phu } ê \neq a:
\end{align*} \]

(e.g. Phu \(^{22}dǝ\) ‘span’ vs \(^{11}tǝ\) ‘needle’)
(e.g. Phu \(^{21}d驴\) ‘grain’ vs \(^{11}d驴\) ‘six’)

3.3 PROTO-CLOSED RIMES

Final nasals have almost all been preserved, while final stops have all disappeared, producing a multiplication of vowels and diphthongs.

**Nasal finals are preserved:**

- in Nar, fully, and without any change in vowel quality
- in Phu, almost completely except that:
  - the velar nasal can be reduced, by an optional rule, to nasality of the vowel.
  - the dental nasal palatalises \(^a\) preceding \(^a\) to \(ê\).

\(*ñ > \text{Nar } ñ, \text{Phu } ñ / ē\)

- 'sour'  \(\text{TGT}\) *^kjʊn > Nar \(^5^4kjʊn\), Phu \(^{22}kjʊn\)
- 'hole'  \(\text{TGT}\) *^khʊŋ > Nar \(^5^4khʊŋ\), Phu \(^{43}khû\)
- 'valley' \(\text{TGT}\) *^sjoŋ > Nar \(^4^3fjoŋ\), Phu \(^{43^4}fjo\)
- 'long bone' \(\text{TGT}\) *^kaŋ > Nar \(^5^4kaŋ\), Phu \(^{43}kaŋ\)
- 'daughter-in-law' \(\text{TGT}\) *^tsaŋ > Nar \(^5^4tsaŋ\), Phu \(^{43^3}tsʰ\)
- 'wood' \(\text{TGT}\) *^siŋ > Nar \(^5^4 fjŋ\)

\(*an > \text{Nar } an, \text{Phu } en\)

- 'rice' \(\text{TGT}\) *^kaŋ > Nar \(^2^2kan/\(^43kan\), Phu \(^5^4kʰn\) (cf. Manang \(^3^2kjë\))
- 'medicine' \(\text{TGT}\) *^hman > Nar \(^5^4man\), Phu \(^5^3men/mən\)
- 'panther' \(\text{TGT}\) *^tsján > Nar \(^4^4paŋ/\(^4^4tsjɛn\), Phu \(^3^t^fjɛn\)

\(*m > m\)

- 'language' \(\text{TGT}\) *^tam > Nar \(^5^3tam\)
- 'ear of grain' \(\text{TGT}\) *^hnam > Phu \(^5^5nam\)

**Oclusive finals**

Oclusive finals are lost in both dialects. Their reflexes are:

- simple vowels in both dialects:
*at > e in Phu and in Nar (more open after /r/)
full
TGTM *Bnat > Nar 53ne
eight
TGTM *Brat > Nar 112pre:6, Phu 11pre (cf. Tangbe 11pre?)
louse
TGTM *Bjat > Nar 554jje
work
TGTM *Bgjat > Nar 112gje, Phu 111gje: (cf. Tangbe 111kje?)
• diphthongs in both dialects:
*et > je
‘right’
TGTM *Aket (TT) > Nar 54kje/54kje, Phu 43kje/kje:
‘shame’
TGTM *Apet > Nar 55pje
*ut > yi
‘ball of wool’
TGTM *Bthut ‘to join at the end of a rope’ > Nar 554thi:, Phu 55thy/44thy (cf. Manang 44thi)
*ot > oe, we
‘load’
TGTM *Bdot > Nar 212 doe / 212doe
(?) colour’
TGTM *Atshon/Btshot > Nar 44tshøe, Phu 443tshø:
• a diphthong in Nar and a plain vowel in Phu:
*ap > Nar au, Phu o:
‘beer mash’
TGTM *Aabap > Nar 12pou/32pou, Phu 11po6:54khe:
(‘beer mash’); 11po6:/31po: ‘beer’ (cf. Tangbe 10bø6p)
‘needle’
TGTM *Bdap > Nar 112dou, Phu 11to:6 (cf. Tangbe 21tap 44gaj ‘needle-holder’)
‘fire tongs’
TGTM *Bgap > Nar 112gou, Phu 11112gou
‘cover’
TGTM *Gap > Nar 21gou, Phu 11ga:
‘ox’
TGTM *Bglap > Nar 232glou, Phu 111glo:
‘door’
TGTM *Bmrap > Nar 54mrou, Phu 32mro: (cf. Tangbe 43nap)
‘leafy vegetable’
TGTM *Adap > Nar 111tou/21tou
‘snot ‘
TGTM *Bnap (except Sahu *A) > Nar 54nou (cf. Phu 44na, Tangbe 43nap)
*at / k__ > Nar øe, Phu e
‘voice’
TGTM *Bkat (except Gha *Akat) > Nar 54ke/54køe,
Phu 43ke
The resulting phonological systems are typologically very different from those of other TGTM dialects, with the partial exception of Manang. For instance, the following minimal contrast can be cited in the Phu dialect:

'Arundinaria sp.' TGTM *Ahma > Phu 32me
'fire' TGTM *Ahmje > Phu 54mje
'tail' TGTM *Ahme > Phu 44mje
'level measure' TGTM *Bhnat > Phu 65ne

These four rimes would sound alike to an inhabitant of Risiangku.

3.4 OLD DIPHTHONGS

Some of the old diphthongs have survived and add to the complexity of the modern systems.

*ai > e'i

'iron' TGTM *Bphai > Nar 53phei
'ceiling-lath' Nar 12grei (cf. Ris 4krai-3siuj)

Rising diphthongs have become simple vowels:

*wa > o, ñ (The reflex in Phu seems to be a more closed ñ in closed syllables and a more open ñ in open syllables)

'clothes' TGTM *Akwane > Nar 54kon, Phu 54kon
'song' TGTM *Bgwai > Nar 12gwei, Phu 11gøi
'saliva' TGTM *Bthwa > Nar 54tho, Phu 44thø
'tooth' TGTM *Aswa > Nar 54so, Phu 32so (cf. Tangbe 43so)
'wheat' TGTM *Bgrwa > Nar 231grø, Phu 21grø
'fontanel' TGTM *Bhjwa > Nar 53ø, Phu 54ø
'trap' TGTM *Bhjwa > Nar 54ø

*ja > Nar jë, Phu je, as would be expected of *j + *a

'meat' TGTM *Asja > Nar 54cæ, Phu 43fje
'hundred' TGTM *Bgja > Nar 21gje, Phu 21gje / 21gje (cf. WT bryga, Ris 21kjarca)

*ja results in a stronger palatalisation of the vowel in some words in Nar:

'arrow' TGTM *Amja > Nar 54mjé, Phu 32mjé (This is the only example of ja in Phu.)
'panther' TGTM *Atsjan > Nar 44pan44tsjen, Phu 31tfjen
SOURCES

Nar-Phu data were collected by the author in collaboration with Boyd Michailovsky during two short sessions lasting a few days each in 1977 and 1978. Data quoted here from Manang, Tangbe and Risiangku are also the author’s. Gurung and Thakali are cited from SIL publications, especially by W. Glover et M. Hari. Praka is the form of Manangba collected by Hoshi in Braga.

TRANSCRIPTION

The transcription follows the IPA. Tones are according to Chao Yuenren’s five point scale, occasionally extended to 0 for a very low pitch. The tones of disyllabic units are transcribed by a formula preceding the whole tonal unit. Redundancy has been retained between length and vocalic quality, and between tone and breathiness (transcribed \( ʰ \)), or tone and voicing, wherever it was perceived. This is because the range and conditioning of the (rather important) phonetic variation of the phonemes and of the tones is not yet fully understood.

ABBREVIATIONS

TGMT: Tamang-Gurung-Thakali-Manang (see Mazaudon 1978)
TT: reconstructible for Tamang and Thakali only
TTM: reconstructible for Tamang, Thakali, and Manang branches
Tam: reconstructible for the Tamang branch only
Dz: Dzongkha
WT: Written Tibetan
Tuk: Tukche dialect of Thakali
Ris: Risiangku dialect of Tamang

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related fields, 40.) Norman, Oklahoma: Summer Institute of Linguistics.


