

Endangered Language Alliance presents

**Unheard of!**

**part 4**

**The Himalayas**

**Mustang, Sherpa & Tibetan**

# Endangered Language Alliance

- A non-profit organization dedicated to the documentation, conservation and continuation of endangered languages throughout the world.
- Based in NYC and working in collaboration with immigrant communities.

# The Unheard Of! series

- With the help of Bowery Arts + Science, we present a 10 part series highlighting the poetry and song of different endangered language communities.

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- Each community is represented by local NYC populations, fighting to keep their languages vital in their new home.

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- These communities are mostly composed of new immigrants to New York (last 10-15 years) but now have very significant populations within the city.
- Yet, they are still relatively unknown to outsiders.

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- As is generally the case, anthropologists, linguists and historians are primarily interested in *preservation*.
- However, the communities in question are also interested in *continuation*.

# Pt. 4: The Himalayas

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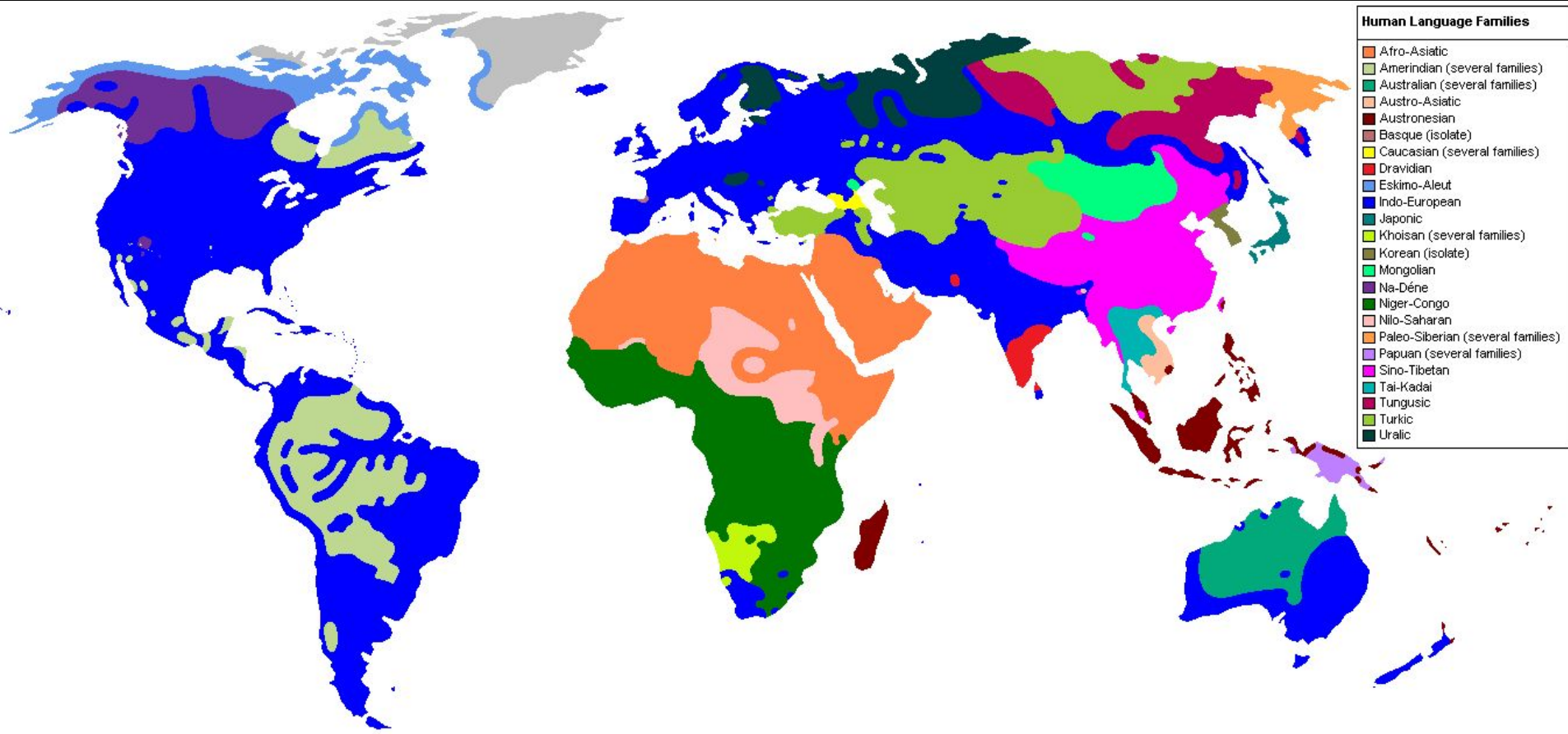
- Today we present another side of Tibetan and other Tibeto-Burman cultures.
- The transmission of traditional culture to new generations as demonstrated by the *Himalayan Language and Culture Program*, led by Nawang Tsering Gurung.

# **A very brief linguistic introduction**

# Language Families

- The classification of languages by historical relationships
  - Inherited cognates
  - Shared Innovations
- Families are biggest groups linguists can identify with a degree of certainty
- Isolates have no known relatives

# Present day distribution of language groups



# Sino-Tibetan Family

Tibeto-Burman

Sinitic

Burmese, etc.

Tibeto-Kanauri

Chinese languages

Bodic

Tamangic

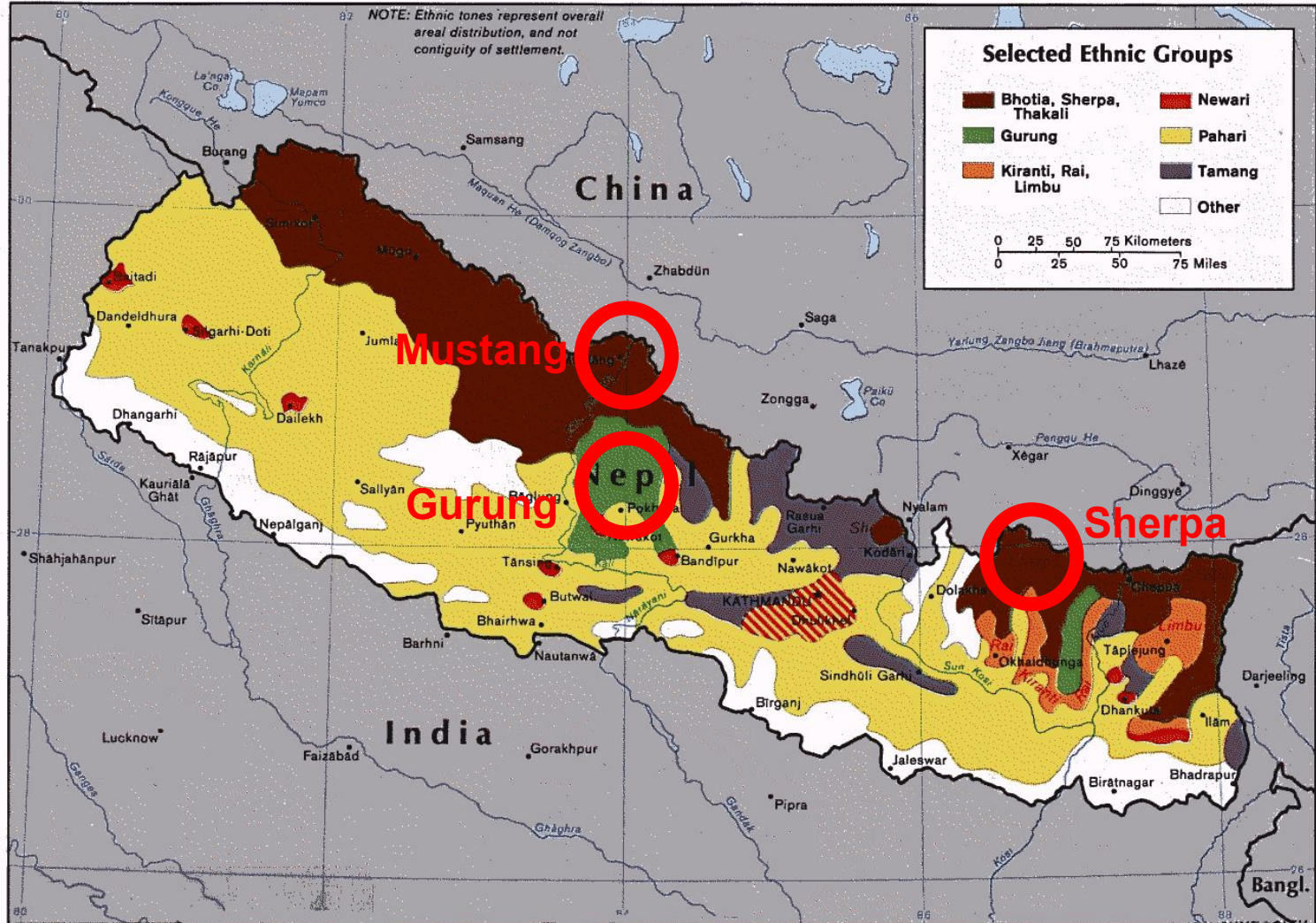
Tibetan  
Dialects

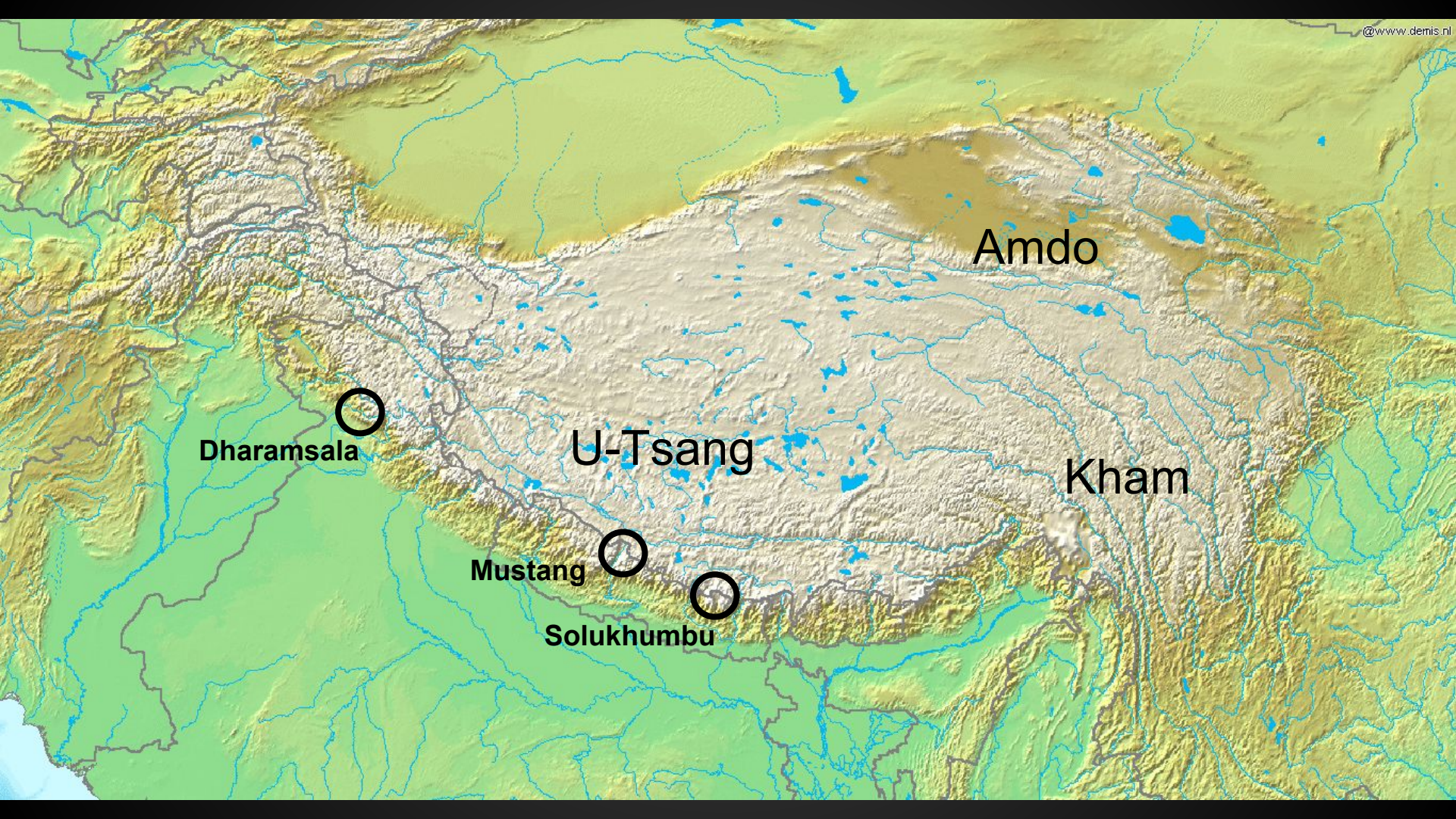
Mustangi

Sherpa

Gurung







Amdo

Dharamsala

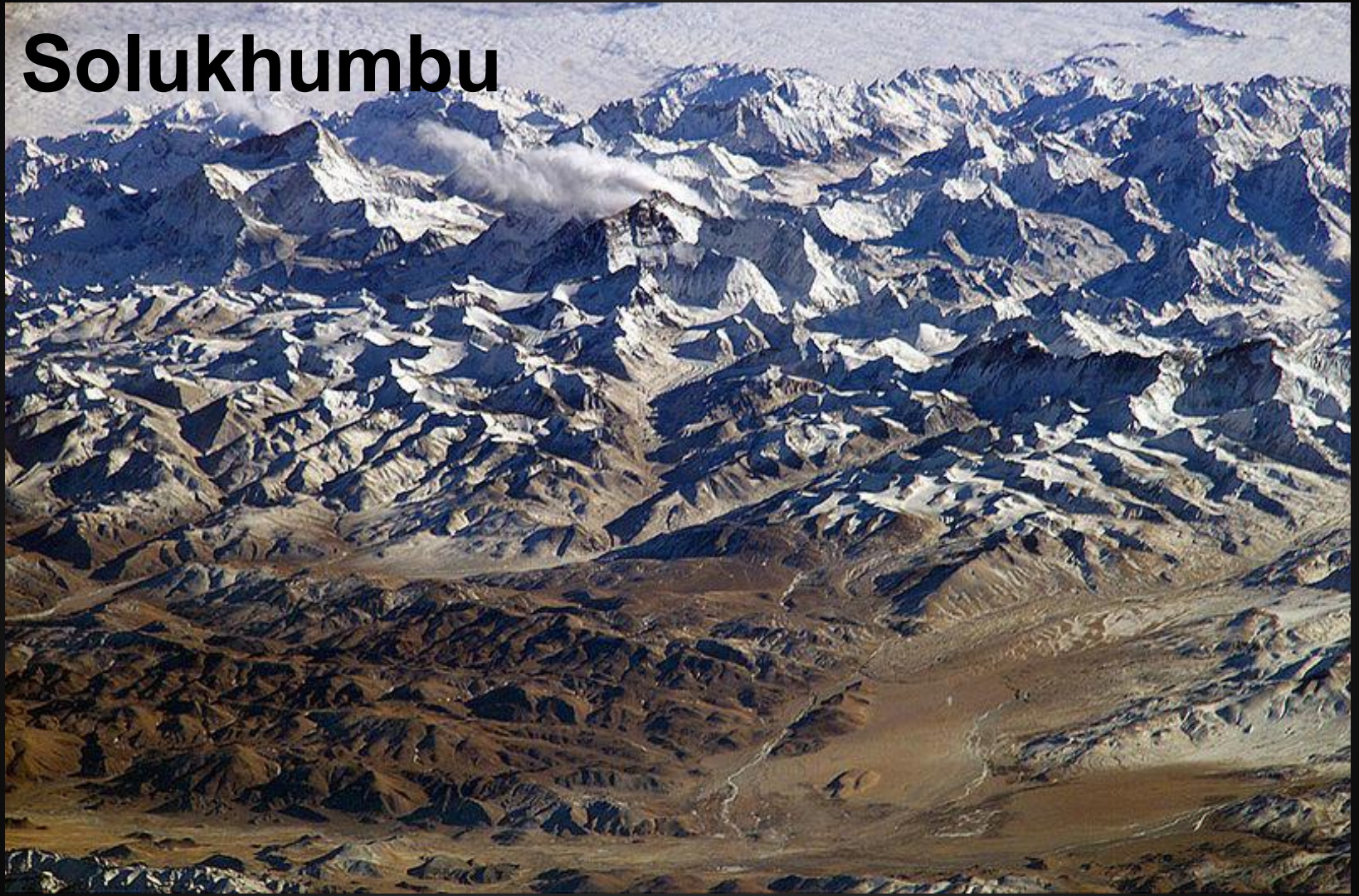
U-Tsang

Kham

Mustang

Solukhumbu

# Solukhumbu



# Mustang



# **A few features of linguistic interest**

# Tonogenesis

- Among Sino-Tibetan languages, some have complex tone systems, some have simple ones, some have none.
- Mandarin:

<i>mā</i>	<i>má</i>	<i>mǎ</i>	<i>mà</i>	<i>ma</i>
'mother'	'bother'	'horse'	'scold'	QM

# Tones – Tibetan

## Written Tibetan

ས = *sa*

ཟ = *za*

## Lhasa Tibetan

*sá* 'earth'

*sà* 'eat'

# Tones – Tibetan

## Written Tibetan

རྟ	rta
མཐའ་མཇུག	<u>mtha'</u> (mjug)
ད་ལྟ	da(lta)
མདའ	mda'

## Lhasa Tibetan

tá	'horse'
t <sup>h</sup> á	'end'
t <sup>h</sup> à	'now'
tà [ˈdà]	'arrow'



# Tones – Gurung

1) *le* (high, falling) 'moon'

2) *le* (mid, level) 'tongue'

3) *le* (low, breathy) 'many'

# Tones – Gurung

- 1) *mbi* high falling 'tail'
- 2) *mbi* mid/high level (long?) 'fire'
- 3) *mbi* mid/high level (short?) 'eye'
- 4) *mbi* low rising; breathy 'person'

# Case marking – Sherpa

daw-i            dan            ʔakpa la    tʰonʃ sunʃ

Dawa-ERG      yesterday Lakpa OBL see    SFP

'Dawa saw Lakpa yesterday.'

(Zhang 11/11/13, NYU fieldmethods)

dawa tʃanbu we

Dawa clever SFP

'Dawa is clever.'

(Zhang 11/11/13, NYU fieldmethods)

# Evidentiality

Roman Jakobson:

“Languages differ essentially in what they *must* convey and not in what they *may* convey.”

# Evidentiality

Many Tibeto-Burman languages require the use of affixes and auxiliary verbs that convey how knowledge was arrived at in every statement.

Van Driem (2002:35)

“The form - **'ing** expresses old, ingrained background knowledge which is or has become a firmly integrated part of one's conception of reality, whereas the form - **'immä** expresses knowledge which has been newly acquired.”

# Evidentiality – Dzongkha

ཨ་ཕི་མི་དེ་དྲུང་ཡིག་ཨིན།

'Aphi 'mi d'i dr'ungnyi 'ing  
That man the clerk be  
'That man is a clerk.'

**Assimilated knowledge**

(Van Driem 2002)

ཨ་ཕི་མི་དེ་དྲུང་ཡིག་ཨིན་པས།

'Aphi 'mi d'i dr'ungnyi 'immä  
That man the clerk be  
'That man is a clerk.'

**Acquired knowledge**

# Evidentiality – Dzongkha

ང་ཁི་ཚོང་ཡོད།

Nga khêko **yö**

I strong be

**'I am strong.'**

**Assimilated knowledge**

ཁྱོད་འཇའ་རིས་མོ་འདུག།

Chö j'ârim **dû**

You beautiful be

**'You are beautiful.'**

**Acquired knowledge**

(Van Driem 2002)

# Program

- Sherpa song introduced by Phuri Lama
- *Om Mani Padme Hum* mantra and song
- Mustangi song by Tenzin Wangmo
- Dhomed Tibetan dance
- Modern Tibetan song by Jamphel and Sonam
- Tibetan group song (*song dang lemo so*)
- Sonam Lhamo song



# Sherpa

# *Om Mani Padme Hum*

ཨོཾ་མ་ཎི་པ་དྲེ་ཧཱུྃ།

The kindness of my gracious horse

I wanted to repay it

But I lost him at the hands

of a deceitful ruler

Even if I want I can't repay him

Oh...Lama and the Three Jewels

Because of this bestow your compassion

*Om Mani Padme Hum*

# *Om Mani Padme Hum*

ཨོཾ་མ་ཎི་པ་དྲེ་ཧཱུྃ།

The kindness of my gracious *dri* (female yak)

I wanted to repay it

But I lost her at the hands

of a slaughterous ruler

Even if I want I can't repay her

Oh...Lama and the Three Jewels

Because of this bestow your compassion

*Om Mani Padme Hum*

# *Om Mani Padme Hum*

ཨོཾ་མ་ཎི་པ་དྲེ་ཧཱུྃ།

The kindness of my gracious parents

I wanted to repay it

But they left to the land of a foreign ruler

Even if I want I can't repay them

Oh...Lama and the Three Jewels

Because of this bestow your compassion

*Om Mani Padme Hum*

# *Mustangi Song*

by Tenzin Wangmo

Dagu yeta yonta

Lhayi shuk ta dajung

Dagu goru shuken misang  
ser ki dongpo

Jamo riksha domo

Thorang shangne gang je?

In the surroundings, here and  
there, is where the gods live.

Noble men sit on their thrones.

Why have the birds woken up so  
early?

# *Mustangi Song* by Tenzin Wangmo

Tangpo meyok gyuken milang  
kamed thung jung

Nyen dang phama debdu

Nang sa demed jung sung

Nyen kyi buchung gyang ne

Sem la kyon nang bar

Common people head to  
work in the dark and the  
cold.

As they wonder why they  
have woken up so early,  
the birds are already  
awake and ready to sing.

# *Dhomed Tibetan dance*

This dance celebrates the youthful aspirations of the dancers, as they amuse themselves by admiring each other's virtues and merits. This type of dance is popular in Tso Ngon and Labrang of the Amdo region. Dhomed (Domey), the original home of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, is known for its lush green meadows. The people are known for their love of horses and academic brilliance.

# ***Beautiful Kongpo***

**a modern Tibetan song by Jamphel and Sonam**

This song describes the beauty of the Kongpo region of Tibet. It talks about how peaceful the flowers are when you glance at them, how fresh the relieving air is, how pure the water is through which one can see fish, how the animals are full of joy running here and there with no fear, and how people are extremely generous to one another. It is the one and only, the beautiful Kongpo country.



# Tibetan group song (song dang lemo so)

Iha sa norbu ling la  
norbu mi duk ma song  
chho sha yi shin norbu  
nor bu min na nga re?

At Lhasa Norbu Ling  
Don't say there is no jewel  
Yeshi Norbu ('Wisdom Jewel,'  
Buddha, His Holiness)  
If this is not a jewel, what is?

ལྷ་ས་ནོར་བུ་སྒྲིང་ལ།  
ནོར་བུ་མི་འདུག་མ་གསུང་ས།  
ཇོ་འཕགས་ཡིད་བཞིན་ནོར་བུ།  
ནོར་བུ་མིན་ན་གང་རེད།

# *Concluding Song*      by Sonam Lhamo

Mrs. Sonam Lhamo was a professional performer for the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts in Dharamsala, India. She is dedicated and passionate about Tibetan cultural preservation, with the youth in particular and teaches Tibetan language, dance, and music classes. We the Himalayan Language and Cultural Program are happy to have Mrs. Sonam la as a key leading guru for the children.