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# Exploring the Linguistic Influence of Tibet in Ladakh (La-dwags)

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## 1. Introduction

Language is the essence of knowledge and the life force of humankind. It serves as the medium of communication in society and other social domains and determines one's culture in relation to the world. As the noted Tibetan scholar Zhangton Tenpa Gyatso (1825–1897) stated, “It is good to learn all languages, but forgetting and ignoring one's own language is a shame.” Regarding the Tibetan language, fortunately, the age-old indigenous Tibetan script, in which the entire Buddhist scriptures and other related literature are written, has been preserved. This language, introduced during the reign of Emperor Songtsen Gampo (617–649/50 A.D.), is based on the Indic script. In spite of a decline in its grammatical usage over the last six decades owing to political upheaval, the Tibetan language, also known as Bhoti (or Bodhi), remains one of the most important languages of Central Asia. In addition, the language has become well known for its significant contribution toward the development of human society.

Historically, Bhoti falls under the Sino-Tibetan language group. However, in general, Bhoti is the Western Archaic Tibetan language, which is not only spoken by the people of the Ladakh region but is also culturally connected to the entire Himalayan region of India, extending from Ladakh in Jammu and Kashmir through Himachal Pradesh, Uttaranchal, West Bengal, Sikkim to Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh. The language has also expanded beyond the borders of the Himalayan region of India and into Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan, China, and Mongolia. In addition, through the practice of Buddhism, particularly Tibetan Buddhism, the language has even spread into Europe.

Even the term “Bod” has been classified in various ways, from the name of the tribes in the Bod kingdom to the time of Buddha when the land was known as “Bod.”<sup>1</sup> This indigenous Himalayan language is an offshoot of Sanskrit, and its “devanagari” script was created by the Tibetan scholar and minister Thonmi Sambhota in the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D during the reign of Srong btsan sgam po.

Owing to its long history and widespread usage, Bhoti has become one of the most noted ancient spoken and written languages in not only the Himalayan regions but also the

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1. Tulku, T. (1986). *Ancient Tibet (Research materials from the Yeshe de Project)*. California: Dharma Publishing, p.123.

neighboring countries. For centuries, it has been used, even apart from mainland Tibet, as a classical language, i.e., in both spoken and written forms. For instance, in colloquial Indian languages, Bhoti is called “Bhota bhasha” or “Bhota’gam”; in Bhutan, it is known as “Dzong kha”; and in Nepal, it is referred to as “Bhote kura,” and at a certain period, it existed throughout Central Asia. Hence, this language, which boasts thousands of dialects and names as well as many Buddhist scriptures translated from Sanskrit, Pali, and Chinese texts, has been safely and scientifically preserved in the rich ancient Indian classical languages of Pali and Sanskrit.

Currently, more than 16 million people use Bhoti under various tongues and dialects; it differs among regions. Moreover, many scholars from around the world have recently proved that the primary form of this language originated from the dialects of the people in the Himalayan region of India.

The Hungarian scholar and founder of Tibetology, Alexander Csoma de Koros (1784–1842), the first foreign author of the *Tibetan–English Dictionary*, considered to be having studied the Tibetan Language in Zanskar (Zangs dkar) which the neighbor region of Ladakh. The language of Ladakh is known as Ladakhi (the dialect of Ladakh or *La-dwags kyi skad*), and it represents an idiom of Western Tibetan; this dialect is not an absolute colloquial form or classical Tibetan, which includes some type of perceptive mutual understanding. In addition, Ladakhi dialects lack tone, although some tonal qualities have been discovered in both spoken and written applications. Furthermore, the Tibetan written and spoken forms diverge and differ conspicuously in that case the written form consists of consonant clusters which are usually not to be pronounced. For instance, the classical Tibetan word “Bsgrubs” is pronounced “Drub,” but in Ladakhi, both the written and spoken (phonetic) versions are similar, with vowel and consonant clusters being pronounced, e.g., “Bsgrubs” as “Bsgrubs” and “Rnam Rgyal” as “Rnam Rgyal.”

## 2. Cultural History of Ladakh and Tibet

The etymological meaning for the term “Ladakh” (“La-dwags”) consists of two separate terms: “La” (meaning “pass”) and “dwags” (meaning “situated or exist”). However, this term has been inaccurately interpreted by many Western scholars as “many” in both literary and historical contexts. In its entirety, the term most appropriately and expressively means “the land of passes” or one who lives there. Another suitable meaning would be “the dwelling of deities in the passes,” which is appropriate as the people of this region have a long tradition of offering prayers whenever one crosses these passes on their journeys. In this regard, the reason for the elaborate meaning of the term “Ladakh” is probably influenced by the numerous exotic temples (Dgon-pa), shrines (Lha-khang or Lab-rang), stupas (Mchod-rten), and Lhatos (a type of consecrated stupa for Lha and Lha-mo deities). In addition, numerous rock carvings and petroglyphs have been discovered in Ladakh that depict these monuments as sacred locations for both living deities and other forms of gods and goddesses. We also found that the Ladakhi

“Ka wa chen” in the ancient Buddhist historical accounts means “the inhabitants of the land of snow that never melted.” However, “Ka wa chen” appears to be just a reproduction of “Kie-Chha,” the oldest name for Ladakh, which was thought to be unique and was used by Fa-Hian, the renowned Chinese pilgrim who visited this part of the world in 399 A.D.<sup>2</sup> These Tibetan nomenclatures can be attributed to Ladakh based on its similar physical appearance, both geographically and geo-strategically, as well as its closeness in terms of social ethos and traditional cultural values.

Geographically, Ladakh is known for its remote high-altitude desert landscape. In addition, its parallel snow-capped mountain range is considered to resemble a woman wearing ornaments around her neck. Thus, the term “Kie-chha,” divided into “Ki’e” (“neck”) and “Chha” (“ornaments”), appropriately represents these features. However, in spite of being largely barren and unproductive landscape as well as being among the highest inhabited places in the world, such remoteness never isolated the people nor created barriers between the numerous cultures and religious influences from India, Tibet, Central Asia, West Asia, and even Western European countries. Therefore, historically, the region has served as a major trading point as well as a cultural buffer among Central Asia, South Asia, and Tibet.

Today, Ladakh is called “Little Tibet” by the peoples all over the world after the taken over Tibet by China in 1959, because it has been strongly influenced by the Tibetan culture. This title also appropriately alludes to the growth of Tibetanization. Especially after Tibet was invaded and annexed by the Chinese in 1959, the title “Little Tibet” became more relevant for the Himalayan belt. In fact, the regions of Zaskar, Ladakh, and Rupchu collectively formed “Little Tibet” during the rule of the Maharaja of Kashmir. This province was known as “mNga’-ris-skor-gsum,” (Western Tibet), and it comprised two other provinces: Guge and Pu hrang. Eventually, the frontier between Kashmir and the Ladakh territory was formed as the province of Tibet.<sup>3</sup> However, historically Ladakh was known as ‘Greater Tibet’.

In addition, “Mar-yul La-dwags” (low country) was designated by the Tibetans on the basis of its physical location, and some Tibetans still call Ladakhis “Rong-pa” or “Rong-yul pa,” meaning “ravine dwellers” or “those who reside in the valley.” This was an appropriate designation since they usually referred to western Tibet as “stod-phyogs” (“upper regions”), particularly the Kailasa Manasa-saravar, as these regions included passes with altitudes greater than 19,000 feet.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Kapur, B.T.A., (1987). *Ladakh: The Wonderland*, Delhi-35, India: Mittal Publications, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Cambridge History of India* (Vol. 1), p. 33.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas, F.W., (1948). ‘*NAM*’ *an Ancient Language of the Sino-Tibetan Borderland*, Publications of the philological society, XIV, Texts with introduction, vocabulary and linguistic studies. London: Oxford University Press, p. 1.

Emperor Songtsen Gampo, to extend his kingdom, shifted the capital from Yarlung to Lhasa (near the border of Bhutan) in the first half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>5</sup> The region of Zhang Zhung, toward Kailasa Manasa-saravar, was the territory of another kingdom under its own dynastical name, Lig,<sup>6</sup> which was entirely non-Tibetan, even though it employed Tibeto-Burman speech.<sup>7</sup> However, the area was ultimately conquered by Emperor Songtsen Gampo during his westward territorial expansion beginning in the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

However, the “lower regions” of Ladakh and Baltistan<sup>8</sup> (Balti yul) are concerned the wave of Tibetanization entered probably during the reign of Emperor Songtsen Gampo. The Ladakh chronicles and Chinese historical documents reveal that the Tibetan occupation of Ladakh and Baltistan occurred during the conquest of Zhang Zhung in the mid-7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. In addition, these documents also showed that Ladakh, Baltistan, and Zhang Zhung were under Tibetan suzerainty, and the people of these regions practiced Buddhism. Tibetanization also advanced toward Gilgit, until the final partition of Baltistan and Ladakh in 1947–1948. At the time, Baltistan was a province of Ladakh, of which Skardu, or Skardo, was the winter capital and Leh was the summer capital. The Ladakhi language includes words referring to the Balti people,<sup>9</sup> who are descendents of the Tibetans since they speak in the Amdo Tibetan dialect and share the

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>6</sup> See *Tibetan Literary Texts and Documents* (ii), p. 54.

<sup>7</sup> See *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*. (1933), pp. 405–10.

<sup>8</sup> In fact, Baltistan was once a pure Buddhist country largely inhabited by Baltis of Tibetan descent, who adopted Tibetan Buddhism from the time of Emperor Songtsen Gampo. It later embraced Islam in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, during the Mughal era, and was annexed to India. In 1947, it became a part of Pakistan. The Baltis are an ethnic group of Tibetan descent with some Dardic characteristics since Tibetan Khampas and Dardic tribes settled in Baltistan prior to modern civilization. In addition, it was believed that the Balti people came under the sphere of influence from the kingdom of Zhang Zhung and the Balti language belongs to the Tibetan language group as a sub-dialect of Ladakhi. It is important to note that Balti and Burig, or Purik, are mutually identical in both language and culture.

<sup>9</sup> The saying “Sbal ti la tsha thob pa tsogs” indicates the Balti people’s satisfaction with the things that they procured. It literally translates to “Baltis who received some salt from Tibet.” This represents how, as salt is rare in Baltistan, the Baltis accepted salt after convincing the Tibetans that it was sugar. Accordingly, the saying “Sbal ti syin chan nis blo bkol bkol la/Bod syin med di syin po brkus” refers to how the reserved Balti pretended to be honest and took advantage of the candid Tibetan. It highlights the aggressiveness of the Baltis and the honesty of the Tibetans. Another saying, “Sbal ti ngo log,” indicates that the Baltis are opportunistic and act according to their needs and wants. Therefore, they are called rebellious (Ngo log). On the other hand, a famous Kashmiri proverb, “Ladakhis eat Sattu (Tib. Phey, roasted barley flour), wear pattu (woollen cloth), and ride tattü (Tib.Rta, ponies),” depicts the adapted cultural aspects of Ladakhi life and society. However, the Ladakhis and Tibetans both use the term “Kha chhe” for Kashmiris, in which “Kha” means “mouth” and “chhe” means “big,” thus referring to one who talks too much.

same cultural ethos even though they are Shia Muslims. Furthermore, Baltistan was once known as “Apricot Tibet” or “Little Tibet.” Most likely, the Baltis are descendants of the Scythians (Shakas),<sup>10</sup> although they are classified as a sub-ethnic group under the Iranian ethnic group.<sup>11</sup> It was after the reign of Emperor Songtsen Gampo and during the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D. that the Tibetan empire established its control over several regions by spreading its cultural influence. Its dominance continued until Emperor Langdarma’s assassination, which led to the collapse of the Tibetan dynastical kingdom. Tibet was both politically and economically powerful and was a well-established nation in Central Asia. Hence, it played a significant role in the cultural history of inner Asia and asserted its own identity and sovereignty.

Currently, Ladakh is a province in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir, located at the extreme northwest of India between the Kunlun Mountains in the north and the Great Himalayas in the south. Ladakh is divided into two districts, Leh and Kargil. However, historically, the region was designated as western Tibet (Mnga’-ris-skor-gsum)<sup>12</sup> or the ancient Shang Shung (Zhang Zhung),<sup>13</sup> which comprised a vast territory of small states that were divided into three main regions: Ru thogs, Gu ge (in present-day Tibet), Pu hrans<sup>14</sup> (consisting of Spiti, Lahul, and Kinnaur), and Ladakh. The latter region extended to Gilgit and Baltistan as well as parts of Turkistan. The region, once geographically and culturally part of the Tibetan plateau, was under the tremendous influence of its cultural and intellectual ethos, which included Tibetan Buddhism.

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<sup>10</sup> Sakas (Scythians) were a group or a branch of the Scythians or Saka nomads from Central Asia. These early inhabitants of the Kashmir ethnic group spoke North Asian or Siberian languages.

<sup>11</sup> These are Iranians, Tajiks, Turks, Uigurs, and Dards.

<sup>12</sup> Vitali, R., (1996). *The Kingdoms of Guge, Pu hrang: According to mNga’ ris rgyal rabs*. Delhi: Indraprastha Press (CBT), p. 160. As geographically it includes the districts of Rut hogs, Gu ge and Pu hrans only but usually it includes Ladakh, Zaskar even Balti stan.

<sup>13</sup> Shang Shung (or Zhang Zhung) was the kingdom associated with the Dmu tribe and was considered important for Bon followers. Bon was the pre-Buddhist religion of Tibet. It was founded in the kingdom of Zhang Zhung by Shenrab Miwo. The region lies in what is now known as western Tibet, and its capital was Khyung lung near Ti-se, which was later conquered by Emperor Songtsen Gampo. The earliest Tibetan documents in Dunhuang mentioned both Bon and Shang Shung, which sheds light on Tibet’s early history. In addition, since this ancient province encountered its neighboring states, including Kashmir, Jalandhar, and the entire Trans-Himalayan belt, Zhang Zhung may have developed basic elements of written language before Thonmi Sambhota’s departure to India. Therefore, it is assumed that Zhang Zhung’s spoken as well as written forms of language may have been assimilated into Tibetan.

<sup>14</sup> It is now a part of Himachal Pradesh, which is situated on the slopes of the western Himalayas in northern India. This area was once a Tibetan province under British rule, which was an integral part of Ladakh before India’s independence in 1947.

The Mnga'ris king sKyid-lde-nyima-gon (900–930 A.D.) ultimately divided the western part of Tibet among his three sons<sup>15</sup>, with most of the priority and liability given to his eldest son Lha-chen-dpal-gyi-mgon, who reigned over (Mar yul La-dwags, Zangs dkar, Gar zha, and Brog chu chod) the largest and most extensive part of the Mnga'ris. The middle son, Lha-chen-bKra-shis-mgon, was assigned (Pu rang, Brad, Ya rtse, Glo bo, Dol po, 'Brog Gro shod, rGya Nyi ma, and Bar ka) which comprised the second largest region. The youngest son, Lha-chen-lde-gtsug-mgon, was given (Gu ge, piti/ Pi skyog, Brog Mur la mtsho skyes, phun rtse, and gyu gong, gSer kha, gSur ngur, rin chen 'byung gnas) which was the smallest of the three regions of Mnga'ris. Accordingly, Lha-chen-dpal-gyi-mgon was designated as the first king of the Mar yul La-dwags kingdom. Today, Ladakh borders Tibet to the east; Lahul and Spiti to the south; the valleys of Kashmir, Jammu, and Baltistan to the west; and the Trans-Kunlun territory of East Turkistan in Central Asia, which lies beyond the Kunlun Mountains and across the Karakoram Pass in the north.

Tibet's last dynastical king, Lang Darma (Glang dar ma) 838-42 A.D., being pro-Bon, destroyed all Buddhist establishments in his drive to uproot Buddhism from Tibet, and was eventually assassinated by a Buddhist monk named Lha lung dpal gyi rdo rje. sKyid-lde-nyi ma-mgon, both a member of the Tibetan royal family and a Lang Darma descendant. The monk annexed Ladakh and established an independent Ladakhi dynasty. During this period, the culture of Ladakh was greatly influenced by the Tibetans in every aspect of socio-cultural activities, including language, rituals, customs, art and architecture, as well as food and dress. The Tibetanization of Ladakh began and steadily intensified into the establishment of the first sKyid-lde-nyi ma-mgon dynasty, which had become a separate kingdom from the 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D. onward, with a political sovereign and identity separate from that of Tibet. The great scholar Lama Lo tsa Ba Rin chen bzang po (958–1055) pledged to support the “second stage of the Buddha Dharma revival” under the guidance of the first western Tibetan royal dynasty. This dynasty also spearheaded the “Later spread of Buddhism,<sup>16</sup>” (bstanpa phyi dar) which encompassed not only Tibet but the entire western Himalayan belt. It is usually said that ‘bstan pa snga dar’ was officially enforced in Zang zhung by Khri strong lde btsan.

When Gu ge invited Atisa Dipankara Sriyana, the noted Indian Bengali pandit, to revive Buddhism, the Ladakhis also began inviting scholars from northwestern India, particularly from Kashmir, to revive Buddhism in Ladakh. Through this process, Mahasiddha Naropa established the first monastery in Ladakh, at Lamayuru, in the 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D. and this was also considered the first Bon monastery in Ladakh. This was when Ladakh began experiencing Tibetanization in every domain of life, and as a result, the region became inhabited by different ethnic groups in addition to the predominant Tibetans. However, soon after the conquest, King La-chen-dpal-gyi-mgon, intent on establishing Buddhism, looked not to Tibet but to

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<sup>15</sup> Vitali R, (1996) pp 159-60

<sup>16</sup> Ibid 165

northwestern India, particularly Kashmir. Evidence of this is found in the iconography and archeological sculptures of famous Ladakhi monasteries, such as Alchi and Likir, as well as other monasteries all around Ladakh.

### 3. Socio-ethnic Structure of Ladakh

Today, Ladakh is an important position primarily due to its geostrategic location at the crossroads of an imperative trade route between Tibet and Central Asia. In fact, Leh (the present Ladakh capital) was the epicenter of the commercial intercourse among the traders of Tibet, India, China, Turkestan, Russia, Kashmir, and other sub-towns of India, thus creating a blend of people that included the Dards of Gilgit, Mons<sup>17</sup> of northern India, and Mongolian nomads from Tibet. Compositely, they are called Indo-Aryan and are considered the Tibetan ancestors of the present inhabitants of Ladakh. Among these ancestors, there is no comprehensive information on the Mons in the historical literature of Ladakh or in Tibetan sources apart from indications that they arrived at the regions of Karja (Gar zha) and Lahul–Spiti in present Himachal Pradesh to either sustain their livelihood or propagate Buddhism. Many hypothetical questions arise regarding particular ethnic groups and their origin and identities. However, when we explore the origin and development of the Mons, we find many probable sources that show how they were one of the earliest ethnic groups to arrive in Burma, and how they were minority kindred to the Mon–Khmer family in both language and appearance.

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<sup>17</sup> Mon is a region in south east Tibet on the border with Bhutan (Cf Norbu Namkhai 1995 p224). However, there are different views about the origin of this ethnic group. As Mons (Indo-Mongolians) are an ancient ethnic group of Ladakh who settled along the Indus Valley before the arrival of the Tibetans and after that of the Dardic ethnic group. The rock carvings and ruins indicate that Mon castles were situated in Ladakh, particularly in Zaskar. Known as “Mon Castles,” these structures are representatives of the Aryan stock who gradually intermingled with the Mongoloid people. The Mon, who do not possess much agricultural land, assumed professions as musicians to sustain their livelihood during their immigration into Ladakh. Accordingly, they offered their services to peasant families on different occasions such as marriages, birth ceremonies, New Year’s Eve celebrations, and other festive or religious occasions. Previously, properties such as agricultural land and livestock were considered the greatest asset and status symbol in Ladakhi society. Therefore, the consideration of Mon as “rigs ngan,” lower caste or low peoples, is not as per the general understanding of the division of people on the basis of caste and clan that existed in primitive Indian society, but purely on the grounds of them possessing no property. Thus, the Mons are excluded from the social and cultural alliances of other communities. This exclusion also extended to two other common groups: the Gara and Beda, who also do not possess property such as land and therefore assumed professions as blacksmiths and musicians to sustain their livelihoods. Thus, the Ladakhi considered these ethnic groups as lower caste on the basis of socio-economic aspects. Thereafter, hostilities emerged between the Dards and Mons, for which A. H. Francke gives likely reasons, and the Mons were subdued during the struggle, causing their status to become much lower than that of the Dards. Thus, it can be concluded that the different groups of people eventually returned to their positions in the social hierarchy and inequalities emerged over time due to their different occupations and diverse ethnicities.



The most powerful ethnic Burmese are the Tibetan Burmans, who defeated and subjugated the Mons under the leadership of King Anawratha, who established the first Burmese empire in 1057 A.D. Eventually, the Mons were forced to leave their homeland and migrate to different locations in search of a proper existence. Therefore, it may be assumed that the Mons of Ladakh might be the same Mons who migrated from Burma. According to Tibetan sources, a Mon–Khmer race known as the Mon pa inhabited western Tibet until the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century. By the time native Tibetans spread to the western part, most of the Monpas had been absorbed.<sup>18</sup> However, A. H. Francke provides a different version of the Mons, stating that they were the earliest settlers in Ladakh, even before the Dards and Tibetans. However, we can still find many historical ruins, monasteries, and castles in Zaskar, whose inhabitants were once entirely Mons before they were eventually conquered by the Tibetans.

While H.E. Richardson annotates differently in his “Ancient Historical Edicts at Lhasa,” 1952, RASGBI, Mons inhabited the southern Himalayan valleys. In fact, in the sub-Himalayan region of Mon-yul, extending from Kashmir to Assam, inhabitants of a region in western Assam’s tribal areas are still called Mon-pa. There also existed a tradition in ancient Central Asia of using the term “Mon” to classify foreigners. However, the strongest evidence of the colonization of Ladakh and western Tibet by ancient Indians and later by British India is the inscriptions in the Brahmi script on rocks and pillars on the banks of the Indus, which date back to approximately 200 B.C. According to the legendary Third Buddhist council convened by King Asoka (272–131 B.C.) at Patliputra, Buddhist missionaries were sent to Kashmir, Yarkand, and other parts of Central Asia. Therefore, Buddhism flourished in Kashmir, and thus, the Fourth Buddhist council was held under Kushan King Kanishka (125–152 A.D.) at Jalandhar or in Kashmir. Presumably, during these periods, Buddhism must have spread to Ladakh and western Tibet before it penetrated to central Tibet. Thus, it is presumed that the Mons settled with a religious mission while colonizing the barren land. Therefore, the fundamental reason in view of the Mons considering as low caste, (Rig ‘sgn) in Ladakhi society is their designation as descendants of the ancient Buddhist missionaries who remained dedicated to their mission and vision rather than developing their cultural legacies and communities. As a result, this ancient ethnic group is on the verge of extinction because of their status as “Rig sgn.”

During the ‘Mons’ expansion and dominion, they exercised enormous cultural influence upon the different ethnic groups including the Dards,<sup>19</sup> who were known as the “Brok-pa” by the Ladakhis. In addition, the indigenous people of Ladakh may have been Dards who colonized

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<sup>18</sup> Sankrityayan, R., (1984). *Selected Essays of Rahul Sankrityayan*. People’s Publishing House (P) Ltd, p. 2.

<sup>19</sup> Dards or Brok-pa (Iranian Turkistan or Indo-Iranic) are of Iranian stock from the Indo-Iranic border. They came from Bru-zha and occupied the land in the northwestern Himalayas from Gilgit to Baltistan, Nubra to Zaskar, and the upper region of Ladakh. However, the term “Dardic” is ambiguous as it is used to define both geographic and linguistic terms. Moreover, it is currently known under various names such as Yaghistan and Kafirstan, which were once dominated by Ladakhis before the emergence of Tibetans in the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

the western Himalayas through the Indus Valley.<sup>20</sup> Ladakhi historical material that describes the Dards exists;<sup>21</sup> however, the Dards were overwhelmed by the immigration of shepherds and nomads from Tibet approximately 1,000 years ago.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, the present-day Buddhists are primarily descendants of Mongolians and bear a close physiognomic affinity with Tibetans. In fact, the disintegration of Dardic culture in Ladakh may be linked to the Tibetan conquest in which the highly organized Dardic kingdom was destroyed by the Tibetan army, and several castle ruins remain as a historic symbol of Dardic culture as well as an indication of the Tibetans' forceful cultural and territorial expansion. The evidence of Tibetanization during the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D. is emphasized by Langdarma's execution and the emergence of the western Tibetan empire as well as the later revival of Buddhism by the great Tibetan Lo tsa ba Rin chen bzang po, who established a number of monasteries in the western Himalayas, including Ladakh, Zaskar, Lahul, Spiti, Mus-tang, and even Nepal.

#### 4. Buddhism in Ladakh

The pre-Buddhist religion of Ladakh and Tibet, particularly western Tibet, was Bon, an animistic and shamanistic belief system with more formalized ritual practices of gods and goddesses. Buddhism might have been introduced in Ladakh during the period of the Third and Fourth Buddhist councils. In fact, Buddhism in Ladakh dates back to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D., when it was a part of King Kanishka's empire. Buddhism also flourished in Kashmir and its neighboring areas including Ladakh. A century later, Buddhism spread to western Ladakh<sup>23</sup> via Kashmir toward China, Korea, and Japan.

Furthermore, the spread of Buddhism was facilitated through the Silk Route, which was frequently used by Buddhist missionaries to propagate the religion when much of eastern Ladakh and western Tibet was practicing the indigenous Bon religion. Ladakh was situated on this route and was an important trading center for traders from various countries, such as Tibetans, Yarkandis, Chinese, Turkish, Persian, and Mongolians. Evidence of the Kushans' influence over Ladakh and the period of introduction of Buddhism can be substantiated through

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<sup>20</sup> Jina, P. S., (2001). *Religious History of Ladakh*. (Ed.). Delhi: Sri Satguru Delhi, pp. 20–23.

<sup>21</sup> The saying “Broga pa brgya shi stong lang” states that “if a hundred Dards die, then a thousand sons will rise up.” It represents the strength and long lineage of the people. The saying “Broga pa gral la ma bor/Sta ri phyar la ma bor” states that “if we respect and honor Dards, then more harm will beget respect.” It literally translates to “do not put a Dard in the row and do not hang up your ax. Be derisive when speaking to Dards.”

<sup>22</sup> Kaul, S., & Kaul, H. N. (1992) *Ladakh Through the Ages, Towards a New Identity*. Springfield, VA: Nataraj Books, pp. 118–141. 35.

<sup>23</sup> Mulbik, a village in the western part of the Sham block in Ladakh, was where a nine-meter rock-carved statue of “Rgyal va Cham ba” (Maitriya Buddha) was discovered. Some Buddhist scholars consider this statue the second of the Bamiyan Buddhas.

valid sources such as the Kharosthi script near the present Khaltse<sup>24</sup> (Kha-la-tse) village and other locations near southwestern Ladakh.

The early history of Ladakh's kings may be traced to the last Tibetan king Langdarma, although the Tibetan domination is inherited from Emperor Songtsen Gampo. There are also references to King Ling Gyalam Kesar, who may be mythical because his life is generally depicted through stage dramas such as "Rnam thar of Ling rgy lam ke sar" and "Lang dar mai rnam thar." Moreover, the history of Ladakh before the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. is exceedingly complicated due to numerous invasions, immigrations, deportations of dynasties, and foreign domination. In the process, Ladakh's historical literature has become fragmented, resulting in a lack of substantive accounts and evidence.

Over the course of Tibet's political struggle in Central Asia, especially against the Chinese and Arab world, it ultimately weakened through internal and external conflicts. However, Tibet was able to overcome the Ladakhi resistance without significant struggle. Tibetan and Tibeto-Mongolian forces invaded Ladakh several times. The Tibeto-Mongolian forces compelled the king of Ladakh to sign a treaty that included sending an annual tribute to Lhasa. This Ladakh-Tibet Peace Treaty of 1684 was signed after the conclusion of the war between Ladakh and Tibet. The Drug pa Lama Mi pham bzang po had always been the patron Lama of Ladakhi kings from the very beginning of its historical relation with Tibet. From the late 7<sup>th</sup> century until approximately 842 A.D., Ladakh was a part of the Tibetan empire.

According to scholars such as L. Petech, Ladakh was under Tibetan suzerainty by 727 A.D. After his expedition into the Himalayas in 1935, G. Tucci stated that there are several Tibetan rock inscriptions along the Indus River on the route from Leh toward Alchi and Khalatse. In 1975, P. Denwood's expedition found that ancient Ladakhi history and culture was concurrent with the Tibetanization in the region. This is also reflected in the Chinese chronicles of that period, which refers to both Tibet and Ladakh as the area "east of Baltistan."<sup>25</sup> However, as stated earlier, Buddhism was firmly established in Ladakh during the 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D., during the lifetime of Lo tsa ba Rin chen bzang po,<sup>26</sup> who was the pioneer of Buddhism during the second Buddhist revival in Ladakh and western Tibet.

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<sup>24</sup> There is a saying in Ladakh about this village "Mkhar las sng ma kha la tse/Yul las sng ma mi ru." This means that Khaltse possesses the first palace (Mkhar) and the first village (Meru).

<sup>25</sup> Sadiq, W.(1981). *Ladakh between Earth and Sky*. New Delhi: I.B. Publications.

<sup>26</sup> Lotsawa Rin chen bzang po from Guge was the most renowned translator in Tibetan history, particularly during the second revival of Tibetan Buddhism. In addition, he is revered as the founder of Ladakhi literature and introduced sculpture, painting, and wood carving to Ladakh.

## 5. Influence and Efficacy of Tibetan-related Languages/dialects and Literary History of Ladakh

The Ladakhi language includes components of Mongolian and Indo-Iranian. In addition, there is some assimilation of Dardic influences on the development of the Ladakhi language through their historical relations.<sup>27</sup> A language of Tibetan origin, Ladakhi includes its own dialects spoken in Ladakh, Zaskar, and Baltistan as well as in the Tibetan regions Lahul, Spiti, Kar ja, and Khun nu. However, Urdu, Hindi, and English terms have been developed and adopted by the modern education system.

In general, the primary step when identifying one's language is to realize the ethnicity of the particular inhabitant's indigenous group through the assimilation of its culture, religion, and politics. However, there are Ladakhi sayings that contrast this approach. For example, "Gzung dang shes rig ji ltr zig yin kyan rung, skad (dialect) dang kyad par du yi gai (language) la brten dgos pa yin" means "to know one's identity, art and culture is barely important, the most indispensable job is to study and know the language and dialects that they are associated with." This language possesses the largest repository of written art and literature in the world. There are numerous names for this repository in oratory and written activities: "Bod skad" (Tibetan); "La-dwags skyi skad" (Ladakhi); "Sbal skad," "Drug," or "Druk pas" (Baltis); "Brug skad" (Bhutanese); "Bras ljons" (Sikkim); "Mon Ta wang" (Arunachal Pradesh); "shark hum bu" and "lhao mon thang" (Garja, Spiti, Khunnu, and Ba-yul). Although variations exist among the dialects, the tone and written components of the language remain identical in application and exhibition.

The traditional form of the Ladakhi language and system of writing is called the "Tib.Bod yig Skt. Bhota-bhasa." Its script evolved in the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D., when Thonmi Sambhota developed two forms of written Tibetan: Dbu chan (a script with head letters designed on the basis of Lan tsha) and the cursive Dbu med (a script with headless letters designed on the basis of wa rtu). These represent the only writing systems extensively used for editing and drafting not only in Ladakh but also in central Tibet, Kham, Amdo, Spiti, Lahul, Sikkim, Bhutan, Arunachal Pradesh, Nepal, and even in Gilgit Baltistan, where the dialect varies even though the written language is the same. However, in Tibet, the writing and speaking methods have significantly transformed due to expansion and the steady development of language and literature over the centuries. Ladakh and Baltistan have retained the originality of the language and its literary works dating back to the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore, according to the renowned

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<sup>27</sup> Snellgrove, D., (1980). *The Cultural Heritage of Ladakh* (Vol.2), p.119 & 163.

Tibetan scholar Dge' dun chos phel (1902–1951) as well as his contemporaries, if one aims to study actual Tibetan, then he should go to Ladakh. Alexander Csoma de Koros was the first Western scholar to write Tibetan grammar while studying in Ladakh. However, both Ladakhi and Tibetan follow the same grammar with disparity only in vocabulary and certain literary styles, and the Ladakhi variant has been deemed literarily more suitable and clear.

When we exclusively and explicitly examine the Ladakhi dialect, it primarily consists of variations of the three ethnic groups: Mon, Dard, and Tibetan, although they write in the classical Tibetan language. However, there are thousands of dialects in Tibet, which makes it difficult to completely understand them all even though their meaning is easily understandable through certain terms and expressions. On the other hand, when a Ladakhi speaks to a Tibetan, they do not immediately understand one another. Therefore, they impulsively attempt to communicate by using either Hindi or English. In this situation, the Tibetan seems to possess the corrupt speech, while the Ladakhi appears to be struggling to effectively communicate using his pure Tibetan tone. Occasionally, they even use terms of gestures such as “Julay,” “Phyebs Yag po,” “Skyod,” “Skyid po,” “Sdugs po,” “Ama le,” “Aba le,” “Cho cho le,” and “Tashi delek.”

Based on these circumstances, there may be reservations about classifying Ladakhi as one of the dialects of Tibetan. Nevertheless, it is quite difficult to project even through some convincing available resources with ramification and implication of the Ladakhi language reforms and its revival among Ladakhi and Baltis through the ages of its long history and cultural assimilation. Ladakhis generally divide their literary spoken language into two categories: Chos-skad<sup>28</sup> (the language of dharma or classical Tibetan) and Phal-skad,<sup>29</sup> a deviation from classical Tibetan that lacks any proposition of grammatical themes. In general, when people write, they only use Tibetan consonants and vowels that Ladakhis understand. However, Tibetan script as a written form is used in school curriculums, public and religious affairs, and in the monasteries and other religious establishments and institutions.

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<sup>28</sup> Chos-skad is the language of Tibetan Buddhism. Furthermore, it is the literary style in which the Buddhist scriptures and other classical works are written and preserved. In this case, “Chos” means “religion.” However, texts that are not religious are also called “Chos” by the Ladakhis. “Skad” represents the dialect in which one expresses his/her own language.

<sup>29</sup> Phal-skad or Yul-skad is demotic language or vernacular speech that is used by different localities on the basis of their common fundamental language. “Yul-skad” signifies that every village or region includes its own separate dialect.

Only two authentic books written in Bhoti (Tibetan script) are available on the history of Ladakh: “Bla-drags-rgyal rabs chi med gter” by Gergan Sonam Josef (later published by his son as “Bsod nam skyabs ldan dge rgan” in 1976) and “Mar yul la dvags kyi sngon rabs kun gsal me long” by Tashi Rabgyes. In addition, this script was extensively used by Western European and Indian non-Buddhist scholars such as Alexander Csoma de Koros, Alexander Cunningham, A. K. Francke, Giuseppe Tucci, F. W. Thomas, Sarat Chandra Das, Vidhushekhar Bhattacharya, and Rahul Sankrityayan. These Western scholars and missionaries began their writing around 1905, by translating and publishing their research along with other literary works into Ladakhi language, while classical Tibetan was first used by Westerners before 1860, when they entered Tibet for political colonialism rather than for academic pursuits. However, actual Western contact with Ladakhis first occurred in 1631 with Azevedo’s expedition.<sup>30</sup>

Upon examining the assimilation and dissemination of the various Mongoloid tribes in India, three distinct varieties are found:

1. The primitive long-headed Mongoloids: These are found in the sub-Himalayan tracts of Nepal and Assam.
2. The less primitive and more advanced short-headed Mongoloids: These are found in Burma and are present through Arakan, into Chittagong and the mountainous area of Bangladesh.
3. Tibeto-Mongoloids: These are taller and have lighter skins compared to other Mongoloids. In addition, they appear to be highly developed (linguistically characterized) and their various offshoots arrived in India later through the Himalayas from Bhutan and Sikkim to Ladakh and Baltistan. In fact, except the Khasis people in Assam, the rest of the Mongoloids in India use languages and dialects that belong to the Sino-Tibetan or Tibeto-Chinese speech group.

However, the geopolitics of Ladakh has remained unstable and chaotic through its political developments. The dynastical period ended with forceful occupation and annexation during the era of Muslim and Hindu fanaticism. Ladakh was ultimately incorporated into the state of Jammu and Kashmir by the Dogra dynasty in 1834. During these periods, Ladakh included a large territory that extended northeast to Changthang, Nubra, Lahul, and Spiti; southwest to Kargil Dras and Zaskar; and toward Baltistan, in which Skardo, once Ladakh’s winter capital, was located. It is important to note that Baltistan remained an integral part of Ladakh until 1947 when India gained its independence. After the partition of the Indian subcontinent, it became a

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<sup>30</sup> Tobdan & Dorje, C. (2008). *Moravian Missionaries in Western Trans-Himalaya*. Lahul, Ladakh and Kinnaur: Kaveri Books, Delhi-02, p. 51.

territory of Pakistan. Similarly, in 1846, the British India government separated Lahul and Spiti from Ladakh and annexed them to the Kulu and Kangra district of Punjab. Now, they lie in the state of Himachal Pradesh.

Along with Chinese and Burmese, Tibetan has been considered as one of the three main components of Sino-Tibetan languages; it includes a unique and compact traditional form of written scripts and literary works. Thus, the Ladakhi language belongs to the Bhotia category of the Tibeto-Burman branch of the Sino-Tibetan family of languages,<sup>31</sup> while the writing system used is Bhoti or Bota Bhasha, the classical Tibetan language. The Tibeto-Burman language group comprises several dialects, which originate from Tibet in the north to Burma in the south and from Baltistan in the west to Sichuan and Yunnan in the east. Phal-skad, the spoken Ladakhi dialect is simply a deviation from the Tibeto-Burman language. The dialect is mostly used as a means of oral communication and is one of the most popular Tibetan dialects among those of the Tibeto-Burman language group.

Since, this dialect is primarily used for oral communication; it has developed into many regional dialects (skads) that differ in tone. Similar to what can be observed in Tibet; the different regions of Ladakh contain dialects that differ slightly from one another in tone, although they are understandable by most Ladakhi speakers. For examples these Ladakhi dialects include Nubra's dialect (Nubrai skad), Sham's dialect (Shamai skad), Zaskar's dialect (Zanskari skad), Changthang's dialect (Chang skad), and Leh's dialect (Leh skad). Therefore, there are not only regional variations at the phonological and grammatical levels among the Ladakhi dialects but also differences among people's speaking different dialects in the same area. The Tibetan impact on different linguistic levels of Ladakhi is evident throughout Ladakh. Therefore, the requirement and application of different dialects in Ladakh is multifarious.

There are at least 200 Tibetan dialects in the Tibetan world with one written language. However, traditional Tibetans offer different numbers of Tibetan dialects, some attesting to 1,000 in Tibet alone. Linguistically, the current Sino-Tibetan languages can be classified into two groups:

1. Tibeto-Burman
2. Siamese-Chinese

The Tibeto-Burman speaking groups have lived in the northwestern Himalayas for centuries, and the established Tibeto-Burman languages or related dialects spoken in these areas are as follows:

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<sup>31</sup> It can be divided into three divisions: Tibetan dialects, Himalayan dialects, and the north Assam group of dialects.

- a) The language of Tibet and its various dialects, which prevail over a wide range, from Baltistan in the west to Kham in eastern Tibet. These include Ladakhi, Lhasa, and the central Tibetan dialects of Kham, Denjong gi skad, Sikkime, and Lho-ke skad Bhutan.
- b) The group of dialects spoken on the Indian side of the Himalayas, i.e., in Nepal and Sikkim: Newari, Magar, Gurang, Murmi, Sunwari, Kiranti, Lepcha, and Rong and Toto, which are pure Tibeto-Burman.
- c) Western and eastern Himalayan dialects of Tibeto-Burman, i.e., Kanawari, Lahuli, and other dialects spoken in eastern Punjab Himalayas and eastern Nepal: Dhimal, Thami, Limbu, Yakha, Bhambu Rai, and Vayu.
- d) The north Assam group of Tibeto-Burman dialects, i.e., Aka or Hrusso, Miri, Abor Dafla, and Mishmi.
- e) The Assam-Burmese group of Tibeto-Burman dialects of northern and eastern Bengal; Assam and Burman dialects of Bodo, Mech, Rabha, Garo, Kachari, and Tipra; the dialects of Naga-Ao, Angam, Sema, Tangkhul, and Songtem; the Kukis chin dialects of Manipur and Tripura in northeast India.

In this era of globalization, the Ladakhi language has stagnated among speakers of different languages and has been influenced by the development of modern education in English, Hindi, and other foreign languages. This phenomenon has jeopardized this language as well as Ladakhi culture. With the interaction of cultures, histories, and languages, blending Tibetan with English, Hindi, and other foreign languages is a concern, and an effort needs to be made to preserve and strengthen this written and spoken ancient indigenous language in which the Buddhist texts, manuscripts, and literary works are written and preserved. Conventionally, Ladakhi includes no written script distinct from classical Tibetan. However, several Ladakhi scholars have begun writing in Tibetan script while simultaneously applying the Ladakhi colloquial tongue. For example, Gergan Sonam Joseph and his son S. S. Gergan, both converted Christian Ladakhi scholars, wrote the Ladakhi history titled “La dwags rgyal rabs chhi med gter” in classical Tibetan. Another prominent work is the Ladakhi chronological history “La dwags rGyal rabs,” written by Shri Tsetan Phuntsog (Sabu) and Shri Tashi Rabges. In addition, Professor Jamyang Gyaltzen, Tsewan Rigzin, and Geshe Konchok Paldan have contributed to the Ladakhi language and literature. Moreover, in 1904, A. H. Francke published the first Ladakhi newspaper in Tibetan titled “La dwags kyi akh bar.” However, one year after the first issue was released, the newspaper ceased publication.

Throughout Ladakhi history, many noted scholars and lotsawas have contributed toward the Ladakhi language and literature, especially from the 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D. onward, after the onset of the Ladakhi dynastical period. This includes Rin chen bzang po, the renowned western Tibetan Lo tsa ba who translated Buddhist Sanskrit texts into Tibetan, which are preserved in the Tibetan canons Bstan ‘gyur and Bka ‘gyur. Moreover, other Tibetan scholars contributed,



such as Jang sem Sherab, Pon Namkha Palgon, King Nono Rinpoche Tsetan Namgyal, Tshultrim Nyima, and Lobsang Tshultrim Chophel.

## 6. Variety of Ladakhi Dialects

Ladakhi is the main dialect spoken in the region of Ladakh, which originally belonged to Tibet. Ladakh was an integral part of western Tibet in the 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D., or even until 1834, when it was incorporated into Jammu and Kashmir. Ladakh's inhabitants are largely Buddhists by faith and belong to the Tibetan ethnic group. The rest of the population comprises Balti Muslims, Puriks, and Arghons who speak their own Tibetan dialects called Bal skad, Purik skad, and Argon skad, respectively. Ladakhi is used only for oral communication among its people, and it traditionally uses classical Tibetan orthography for writing literary works and chanting Buddhist scriptures. Thus, Ladakhi is mainly a dialectical language used for oral communication, which has developed into different regional varieties. For example, in different parts of Ladakh, there are up to five major groups with different dialects, while each village includes its own dialect that is slightly different in speaking terms. For example, there is a Ladakhi saying, “Mi re re la skad re re, BLama re la chos re re,” which literally means “every man has his own dialect and every monk has his own religion.” Similarly, we can divide the numerous Tibetan dialects into three groups from the three different regions of Tibet: U-tsang, Amdo, and Khams. As we discuss the characteristics of these three Tibetan dialects, we find disparity in terms of both phonetic and orthographical expressions. On the other hand, the dialect-speaking groups do not have a sense of mutual understanding despite having the same written script. The central Lhasa dialect is generally considered one of the most audibly appealing Tibetan dialects due to its clarity, simplicity, and honorific expressions.

For example: “Sku zhabs lags ga ba phebs gi yin” means “where are you going?”

Meanwhile, the Khams dialect in eastern Tibet includes neither a tonal system nor a simplification of the various compound consonants as seen in other Tibetan dialects. However, there are more similarities in their contrastive tones and simplified syllable structures. It is believed that the first Tibetan settlers to arrive in Ladakh were the Khampas from eastern Tibet. This assumption is based on the Ladakhi and Balti dialects containing linguistic characteristics of the Tibetan language and closely resembling the Amdo/Khams dialects rather than the Lhasa dialect of central Tibet.

For example: “Hau ru ga ru gdrol li yin” means “where are you going?”

Conversely, the Amdo, northeastern archaic Tibetan, and western archaic Tibetan dialects are conservative to a certain extent because they maintain classical Tibetan features such as initial consonant clusters and the absence of phonemic tones.

For example: “Khyed ka ba ‘gdro gi yin” means “ where are you going?”

To summarize the sublime features and sources of the diverse dialects spoken by the different people in Ladakh, their respective differences and linguistic and dialectical identities, even while their roots remain Tibetan, are shown in the following:

1. Changs-skad (eastern dialect): The dialect of Ladakh’s Changthang region, inhabited by Tibetan nomadic herders. The Changthang plain is a desert area of the Tibetan plateau near the border. This ancient dialect is spoken by the inhabitants of this high-altitude region in the eastern upper part of Ladakh and the Changthang people, who may have experienced Tibetan influence in the mid-7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. This variety of speech has an accent similar to that of Tibetan and reflects a significant degree of Tibetan influence on its phonology. Moreover, even their dress and customs are similar to those of Tibetans.

For example: “Khong gun tho re sleb chi yod” means “They are coming tomorrow.”

2. Gzhung skad: The dialect of central Ladakh, which includes less accents and more localized variations in their expressions. This dialect is also called “Leh-skad” as Leh is the capital of Ladakh and was a hub in the trading route between Central and Western Asia. It lies close to the Silk Route that once linked Far-East Asia and Central Asia, which included Persia and East Turkistan.

For example: “Khong tho res sleb bChas yod” means “They are coming tomorrow.”

3. Shams skad: This dialect is spoken by inhabitants of northwestern lower Ladakh): It is similar to central Ladakhi but there are variations in its longer accents compared to the Gzhung skad. In addition, similar to the Tibetans, these people wear their hair in long braids. Thus, there is a popular saying, “Sham mai chuti (braid) sroma (locust) tab na chi song/Ajang nge kho mags (wallet) se nang paine (money) yod.” This means, “there is absolutely no predicament if there is a locust in our braid (chuti) but we have sufficient money in our wallet.”

For example: “Khong tho ras la leb cha yod” means “They are coming tomorrow.”

4. Zangs skad: This dialect, spoken in southwestern Ladakh, is more Tibetan in accent and mostly employs appropriate Tibetan terms. In terms of expression and communication methods, this dialect is different from those mentioned above. But it is comparable to Ladakhi in the Changthang region, which includes similar Tibetan accents and tones.

Geographically, these two regions remained cut off from the rest of Ladakh due to the difficult terrain, severe cold climate, and lack of infrastructure. Therefore, their inhabitants speak in pure indigenous Ladakhi dialects, remain in traditional attire, eat traditional food, and maintain their traditional culture. In particular, the elderly people fluently read and write Tibetan religious texts and scriptures, which is rarely witnessed in other regions of Ladakh.

For example: “Kho pha tho ro yong che yod” means “They are coming tomorrow.”

5. Nubrai skad: This dialect is spoken in the Nubra region of Ladakh. Nubra is bordered to the northwest by the Karakoram mountain range, which can be accessed via the world’s highest motorable road (18,380 feet) through the Khardongla mountain pass. This dialect is considered to be similar to Shams skad.

For example: “Khong tho ras leb chi dug” means “They are coming tomorrow.”

6. Sbal skad or Balti skad: This dialect is spoken in the region of Baltistan, which is now a part of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (POK). The inhabitants are Muslims of Tibetan descent with significant elements of both Dard and Mon racial attributes. The Tibetan dialects of Purig<sup>32</sup> and Arghon<sup>33</sup> are closely related to Balti, which appears to be an ancient platform of phonetic development that is more organized than the other dialects (skads) spoken in Ladakh. In fact, according to local Ladakhis, the Balti and Ladakhi languages represent the original form of Tibetan as they facilitate the use of gestures while speaking and effectively employ prefix and suffix consonants as well as Tibetan vowels, which is not the case in other Tibetan dialects. In addition, the Balti dialect is almost devoid of tonal features and is therefore more a Tibeto-Burman than a Tibetan language. This indicates significant similarity between the Zang skad and Balti dialects. Compared with other Ladakhi dialects, the vowel harmony in the Balti dialect plays an inconsequential role.

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<sup>32</sup> Purig or Purik is the dialect spoken in the region of Mulbik, Bodh Kharbu, Shaghar Chiktan, and the Dras villages in the Kargil district. It is closely related to Balti and Ladakhi. The name “Purig” is probably in contrast to the Tibetan phrase “Pod-rigs” or “Pot reeks” to denote Tibetan stock. Additional views have related “Purig” to “Pu rang” in western Tibet.

<sup>33</sup> “Arghon” is a Mongol word that literally translates to “mixed.” These people were originally Muslim traders from regions such as Kashmir, Central Asia, and Afghanistan who settled in Ladakh after marrying Ladakhi Buddhist women, and their offspring were called “Arghon.” Their dialect is similar to Balti and Purig and is mostly spoken in the Tur tuk and Bog dang regions of the Nubra Valley.

Speaking and writing patterns do not always match in most languages, but in the case of Tibetan, there are thousands of dialects with one form of written script. Many Western scholars have found similarities between the Balti and Ladakhi dialects and the Amdo dialect of eastern Tibet. The most apparent reason for such commonalities is that these regions were not culturally influenced by Tibet for a long period because of Islamic insurgency. Hence, these people use more honorific terms with longer accents in their expressions while pronouncing prefixes and suffixes clearly and expressively. Overall, Ladakhis and Baltis are proud that their dialects truly represent the original form of the Tibetan language. Thus, due to their phonological features and systematic presentation, the Ladakhi and Balti dialects as well as the northeastern Amdo dialect have been classified as archaic by Western scholars.

For example: “Khong thang as skye slyeb cha yod” means “They are coming tomorrow.”

Ladakhi regularly employs terms with phonetics that are used in everyday interaction. There are instances of such words being used by different Tibetan dialect-speaking groups in various regions of Tibet, Ladakh, and Baltistan, which are known to be “Middle Tibet” and “Little Tibet” respectively. This indicates that speech can vary in its consonants and vowels when colloquially used. This is particularly significant in Balti, and to some extent in Ladakhi, which pronounce each word as it is written.

<u>English</u>	(Lhasa)	Classical	(Ladakhi)	(Baltistan)	(Kham)	(Amdo)
Cow	pu	Ba phyugs	Ba lang	Ba	Wa	Ba lang
Bird	ja	Bya	Ci pa	Bya	P'ya	Bya
Eight	Gye	Brhyad	Rgyat	Rgyat	Vrgyad	Gyat
Horse	Ta	Rta	Sta	Rsta	Rta	Ta
Foot	Kang pa	Rkang pa	Rkang pa	Rkang pa	Rkang pa	kang
Two	Nyi	Gnyis	Nyis	Gnyis	Nyi	Nyi
Sister	Sing mo	Sring mo	Ashcho	Sring mo	String mo	Sring mo

Balti is an archaic form of the Tibetan language and a sub-dialect of Ladakhi, which is similar to Purik and Shams skad. In Romanized Balti, “X” is used for a strong guttural “Kh.” “X” also replaces the “gs” suffix in classical Tibetan. For example, “legs” (good) becomes “lex.” In addition, many words starting with “g” “Sngon zhug” is pronounced with a guttural “Xa,” as in “Xlang” for “Glang” (ox). Furthermore, Balti words are pronounced phonetically while subjoined or superscribed and headed letters are fully pronounced from the beginning to end. Examples include “Bya” (bird), “Brgya” (hundred), “Sgur” (hunch), “Skyur mo” (sour), “Brang” (chest), “Brag” (rock), “Skarma” (star), and “Skad” (language).

However, in some cases, there are prefixed consonants with “Sngon zhug,” which is fully pronounced with a guttural sound. For instance, “Glang” becomes “Xlang” (ox) and “Gser”

becomes “Xser” (gold). However, in certain cases, the “g” is dropped, as seen in “Tam” (speech/conversation), “Chik” (one), “Gchig”; “Ngyis” (two), and “Gngyis.”

In other instances, the head letter is dropped. Examples include when “Rkang pa” (foot) becomes “Kang ma” and “Ggro-ba” (infinitive: to go) becomes “Go-ba” after the subjoined “Ra-tags” is dropped and is pronounced “Gowa.” For example; Nga gwed ‘nga agro-ba yod’: I go Chhogho as Literally. Chhe-bo (Big). With regard to the sub-dialectic differences, there are cases in which “Ra-tag” is subjoined, as in “Brag” (rock), which is pronounced as “Blak” in Shigar/Skardo; “Zhog” (Lit. infinitive “Ajog-pa”: to place or put); “Yok” in Shigar; “Kro” (wheat in Khar mang); “Tro” in Shigar; “Lungba” (Khar mang) as “Lung ma” (Shigar/Skardo); “Spyan ku” as “Shang ku” (Gang che); “Amo” (mother) as “A-ngo”; and “Loma” (page/leaf) as “Lo-nga.”

There are also interchangeable suffixes: “pa/ba” with “ma” and “ba” with “wa.” For example, “Ka-ba” (pillar) becomes “kaa” (an extended form of “ka-wa”). “rKang pa” (foot) becomes “kang ma”; “Lung ba” (valley) becomes “Lung ma”; “Mang po” (many) becomes “Mang mo”; and “Rin po chhe” (precious) becomes “Rin mo chhe.” Infinitive forms with “pa,” “ba,” or “ma” also change in spoken Balti. For instance, “Ong-ba” (to come) becomes “ong-ma,” “rKyang-ba” (to stretch) becomes “rKyangma,” and “rDung-ba” (to beat) becomes “rDung-ma.”

A few shortened forms of Balti words are as follows: “Chaxpha” (Chi rtagspa), “gik” (agro ba duk), “bek” (bya ba duk), “phong” (pha-bong), “zomong” (zomo gun), “brow” (bra-bo), “zen” (za ba yin), “zed” (za ba yod), “gwen” (agro-ba yin), and “gwen” (mgo nang). In addition, examples of the dropped final consonant in Balti are as follows: “yo” (yod), as in “Zaa la chi yo” (what is to eat?), “Kho gar yo” (where is he?), and “Kho di yod” (he is here). Spoken Balti has one genitive marker, “i.” For example, “Shok bui loma” (page of book); “Lungmi chhu” (water of the valley) “rai ma” (Ear of goat).

The aforementioned Tibetan dialects are intimately connected and interrelated, and their vocabularies include meaningful connotations in modern colloquial grammatical languages as well as consider the current requirement of the spoken Tibetan Language. The phonetic expressions in the following dialects are analogous to other Tibeto-Burman languages. Moreover, when we examine the geopolitics of the regions, we find that from Baltistan to Tibet, an identical cultural and linguistic influence was exercised during the early history of these regions, when Tibet extended its control over a considerable area and over a long period. The regions interacted, particularly for trade, and before 1962, exchanged not only goods but also ideas, faiths, and cultural practices.

Additional examples of different dialect groups in conversational form were recorded from interviews and discussions among particular sections of Tibetan people from Tibetan refugee camps in India and scholars from the Central University for Tibetan Studies, Sarnath, Uttar Pradesh. They are as follows:

“Sgn dro bde legs” (Good morning)

“Sku bde gzugs po yin nam” (How are you?)

Stod skad ... “Shegs pa bde legs”

“Sku gzugs bde po yin pas”

Khams skad... “Khams bzong”

“Bde mo ae yin”

Amdo skad ... “Snga dro bzang”

“Lus khams bde mo yin na”

Ladakh skad... “Ju lay”

“Kham bzang yin na”

“De gar gnam gshis gang ‘adra ‘adug” (How’s the weather there?)

Stod skad... “Di ai (there) gnam gshis gang ‘adra ‘dug gas”

Khams skad... “Da ha de na gnam gshis ci ‘dra gda”

Amdo skad... “De ru gnam gshis chhai mo gzigs red”

Ladakh skad... “De ngo nam la ka zug shig ‘dug”

“Di gar deng sang grang mo zhe drag ‘dug” (There is enough cold here)

Stod skad... “Dir den sang gra mo she po ‘dug”

Khams skad... “Da ha ae na drang zhen thu mo gda”

Amdo skad... “Di ru da skabs she gi drang mo red”

Ladakh skad... “Ai ru ma drang mo ‘dug”

“Da loi gung gseng skabs di gar yong thubna shog” (You can come here during the holiday)

Stod skad... “Da loi gung gseng skabs ‘dir yong thub na shog”

Khams skad... “Da loi gung seng tshes dus ai na yong thub na rtseb shog”

Amdo skad... “Da lo gung gseng skabs ‘di la yong thub na shog”

Ladakh skad... “Da lo gung gseng rang rang ai ‘ong yong/skyod”

“Thabs shes byed kyi yin/grtso pop ha mai bka ‘pharol rag min red” (I will try my best but it depends on my parent’s blessing)

Stod skad... “Thab shes byas chhog/gtso bo de pha mai bka ‘khrol rag min red”

Khams skad... “Thabs ai gda lta aon/gtso bo a pha a mai dgongs pa gnong min red”

Amdo skad... “Go pa ‘then gi yin/gtso bo ha ma gnis ‘thad mi nal thug yod ni red”

Ladakh skad... “na tan tan yong n’n dkal tes pha mai bka gsal na”

“Pha ma gnis la nges zhu chog” (I can talk to your parent)

Stod skad...“Pha ma gnis la nas lab chog”

Khams skad...“Pha ma gnis la nas lab rgyu ai dga lta”

Amdo skad...“Ha ma gnis la nas bshed chog”

Ladakh skad...“Nai rang nai pha ma tang snyam po jal ta ta nen”

“Thugs rje che” (Thank you)

Stod skad...“Ao yag byung”

Khams skad...“Kha dro tshe ring”

Amdo skad...“Bka drin che”

Ladakh skad...“Thug rje che”

“Dei par slob sbyong yag po gyis” (In the meantime, one should study very hard)

Stod skad...“Dei bar du slob sbyong yag po byos”

Khams skad...“Dei bar la slob sbyong yag ma gyis”

Amdo skad...“Dei bar du slob sbyong yag go byos”

Ladakh skad...“Dei de tshug pa slob sbyong rgyal la bcos”

“Lags so” (All right/ok)

Stod skad...“Lags so”

Khams skad...“ya ya”

Amdo skad...“ya la ges”

Ladakh skad...“ao lay/kasa lay/ma rgyal la rag”

“Gzhan gang lab yag yod pas” (Do you want to say anything else?)

Stod skad...“Gzhan dag lab yag yod pas”

Khams skad...“Da ltos rdzo rgyu a’i yod”

Amdo skad...“Gzhan pa chei gzigs bshad rgyu yod”

Ladakh skad...“Khed rang yang chi tong zer ches yod da”

“Gang med lags” (No...nothing please)

Stod skad...“Gas med”

Khams skad...“Ltos rdzo rgyu med”

Amdo skad...“Da cang med”  
Ladakh skad...“Chyang med le”

“Ma ler zhugs gdan ajags” (Bye-bye! See you later)

Stod skad...“Ya ga ler bzhugs aa”  
Khams skad...“Da bde mo stod”  
Amdo skad...“Ao’ dab de mo bycos”  
Ladakh skad...“Julay...Yang sting ne thu gyen”

“Lags so bzhugs gdan ajags” (Bye! See you then)

Stod skad...“Lags so...bzhugs gdan ajags dgos”  
Khams skad...“Ya ya...bde mo sdod”  
Amdo skad...“Ya lags bde mo bycos”  
Ladakh skad...“Julay...yang thug gyen”

“Rjes su mjal yong” (See you later)

Stod skad...“Rjes su mjal yong”  
Khams skad...“Rjes su mjal yong”  
Amdo skad...“Gzhug nas mthug yong”  
Ladakh skad...“sting ne thug gyen”

## 7. Examples of Ladakhi Sayings, Proverbs, and Expressions (Gtam pai)<sup>34</sup>

There are several beautiful, informative Ladakhi sayings for every situation, which are based on Ladakhi society, culture, and other traditional activities that are a part of daily life. The following is a collection of sayings obtained from Ladakhi scholars and elderly people who continue to use them in their daily interactions:

(Regarding theft- “Brkun ma”)

- “Rkun ma gshags mgo la bing ste gshags<sup>35</sup> btang ches.” The thief pretended to be innocent and very firmly gave his judgement just like the Chief Justice.
- “Rkun ma kha ma kha skyang la mi bsad.” A perplexed and bewildered thief killed a man.

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<sup>34</sup> In “Gtam pai,” “Gtam” means “cognition of the correct views” while “pai” means “example” or “instance.” Hence, it literally means a thought composed by a learned/aged person on the basis of his/her experiences. It is also called “Snyon mai slab bya,” which translates to “early sayings.”

<sup>35</sup> Persian loan word which mean deliver a judgement.



“Rku shes te sba ma shes.” One knew how to steal but was ignorant about how to conceal his theft.

(Regarding death and decay- “Sdug bsnl or Shi wa”)

- “Skied sdug mi la/azer pa shing la.” This consoles a man at the time of someone’s demise. It literally means “happiness and sorrow for a man and knots for trees.”
- “Skye lugs gchig la shi lugs brgya.” There is only one way of being born and a hundred ways of dying. This is regarding dying by many means and ways, such as through diseases and accidents. We never know how and when death comes.
- “Khor bai las la zin tus/Tsar gu med/Gti mug gnyid la tshim tus/Gu med.” There is no end to the endless circle of work, and at the same time, there is no satisfaction in the sleep of ignorance.
- “Dug po la gnyen mang po.” Old cloths get stuck everywhere, such as in thorns and other obstacles. Its literal meaning is “rags have many relations.”

(Regarding a bad person- “Mi ngn”)

- “Kha kha ra/Snying a ra.” This is about a man who is superficial. It indicates a man whose mouth is like sugar and heart is like an ax or saw.

(Regarding a shy or introverted person- “Mi nym chung”)

- “Kha kho mags ma cho.” One should speak up when the situation requires. Therefore, do not shut your mouth like a purse.
- “Kha rod pa la bde ba thob.” Too much talk creates conflicts. Therefore, one who is quiet obtains peace.

(Regarding a hard worker- “mi Brtsun dus chan”)

- “Kharag dang lag pa khrus te bzan za mkhan.” This is about a man who works very hard to sustain himself and his family. Its literal meaning is, “he who eats his food after washing his hands in blood.”

(Regarding babies and mothers- “Ma tang phr-gu”)

- “Ngu ma ngun a mas phrgu gung pi bi mi gtang.” One gets nothing unless he or she says what they want. The saying suggests that a mother does not suckle her child until it cries.

- “Bdun chog/brgyad tser/Dgur lang.” When a baby is seven months old, he/she can sit up. At eight months old, he/she can lift up. At nine months old, he/she can stand up.
- “Rgan mo khun te tshar/Phrugu ngus te tshar.” An old woman dies while groaning, and the child grows up crying.

(Regarding the male–female ratio- “Pho tang mo yi skor”)

- “Chog lam sa ka gai tsag tsag/Phey cho cho tsag tsag.” Choglamsar is a village near Leh, which includes an extremely high proportion of males, while the opposite is true for the village of Phey.

(Regarding the basis of learning methods- “Slab chai tshul”)

- “Lcha gu tang phrugu chung ngu nas srog.” It is better to learn from the very beginning. The saying means “Like straightening saplings, you must train a child when he/she is young.

(Regarding mischievous deeds- “Las ngn” and confidence and candidness- “Ham pa chan gyi mi”)

- “Chos bcho sa la bdud.” One who partakes in mischief at the time of a religious discourse or indulges in a scuffle on occasion of any celebration. It literally means, “The devil is on hallowed ground.”
- “Chu ngus zas te/Che kh rugs.” In every society, when children fight for small things, their parents tend to fight as well. The literal meaning is “Seniors contend for the causes of juniors.”
- “Pha tsan dan la bu chhu shing.” When a father is gentle, honest, and famous, his son is rough, dishonest, and mischievous. The literal meaning is, “The father of sandalwood got a child made of reed.”
- “Phi zig zig nang rul.” This saying is applicable to those who do not have anything of their own but pretend to possess things. It literally means, “He is outwardly smart and inwardly rotten.”
- “Phey bk al te gtang na/Chu mi thob.” This saying is used for stupid and careless people who have no goals in life. The literal meaning is, “If you send him with some roasted flour (tsam pa or phey), he cannot even get water.”
- “Nang la sin ge/Phyi la wa mo.” When a person who is very confident and open with his family members, but very low in confidence with others. The literal meaning is “Inside his house he is like lion, but outside he is like a fox” or “terror inside and sycophant outside.”

(Regarding recognition and affiliation- “Ming chan dang rtsi va”)

- “Rta med di yul la bon buai sang rag.” In a village where there is no sphere of domain or influence, the most uneducated person becomes influential. It literally means, “Donkey races are held where there is no horse.”
- “Thig pa bsags pa rgya mtsho.” Many drops make an ocean.
- “Mthon po nas chu la ma lta/Dma mo nas ri la ma lta.” When you are far from the water and the mountain, then it seems very easy to cross over, but when you are near, it does not seem possible. The literal meaning is “Look not at a river from an elevation and a mountain from a plain.”

(Regarding a truthful and faithful person- “Mi bzang po”)

- “Drang poi bstan pa chus kyang mi khyer/Mes kyang mi khyer.” This is applicable to an honest person. The literal meaning is, “Truth cannot be destroyed by water and fire.”

(Regarding smoke and fire- “du va tang mi”)

- “Dud pa chan gyi mei dron mo/Rus pa chan gyi sha zim po.” Used while smoking and eating meat, this literally means, “A smoky fire is warm and meat with much bone is delicious.”

(Regarding longer and shorter lives- “Mi tshai skor”)

- “Di ring shin a tshe thung yin/Tho re shin a tshe ring yin.” This is applicable when one is involved in a serious fight and does not care about his/her life. The literal meaning is, “If I die today then life will be short, if I die tomorrow, then it will be long.”

(Regarding the division of labor- “Mi so sai byaba”)

- “Pho zig adrul na rgyal/Mo zig adug na rgyal.” This saying concerns the division of work between the two genders. It literally means, “It is better for a man to do outside work and women to do homework.”

(Regarding marriage- “Chang sa”)

- “Mag pa mgyogs sa bag ma mgyogs.” This saying pertains to a Ladakhi marriage in which two people are spiritually combined. It highlights their love and happiness. The marriage party, called “nyo pa,” offer a spoonful of food to the bride and groom, asking “who is quicker, the bridegroom or the bride?” The inevitable smile that crosses the bride’s and groom’s faces shows that the couple are happy with one another.

(Regarding man- “Mi”)

- “Mi thabs skyi rgyal po/Bung bu phyen gyi rgyal po.” Man is wise and intelligent. Therefore, man is the king of resourcefulness while a donkey is referred to as unwise.

(Regarding an evil person- “Mi ngn”)

- “Mi ngn la dbang thob na/Chu la bri btab.” This saying is for greedy or bad individuals. If an evil doer is given the freedom to do anything, then he even bails out water with a measure.

(Regarding refugees- “Mi khyam”)

- “Mi khyam yongs pa yul la gnod/Khyi khyam youngs pa srang la gnod.” This saying is about refugees, infiltrators, and migration. A vagrant ruins a country like a pariah dog pollutes or infects a street.

(Regarding truth or reality- “Bden pa/dnos po”)

- “Mig gi ngn rdul mi shong/Chos si ngn la rzun mi shong.” There is no room for dust in the eyes and no room for fallacy in religion.

(Regarding sleepless nights- “Snid mi yong chas”)

- “Mtshan gcig la mtshan brgya mtong ches.” This refers to difficulty in sleeping. “One night seems like a hundred.”

(Regarding hospitality- “Zabs tog”)

- “Zim po mi la/lag mo rang la.” This concerns hospitality and a careful attitude toward others. “Delicious flavors for others but fine clothes for oneself.”
- “Lam nor na log nyan/dpira/Slab nor na log mi nyan.” If you lose your way you can return, but once the words are out of your mouth, you cannot revoke them. Therefore, think twice before saying anything.

(Regarding a miserly person- “Ser na chan”)

- “Shig la rgyu ma rgyan mkhan.” This refers to an extremely deceitful or resourceful person. “He who fills the guts of a louse (shig).”

## 8. Examples of Balti (Gtam pai) Proverbs, Sayings, and Expressions

- “Lo mgo byiwa (byaa’) khers”  
Year first (head) rat took.  
The first year of the Zodiac was taken by the rat.  
This proverb is usually used when someone achieves something extraordinary or performs an unexpected heroic act.
- “Rkoa shes; Zbaa’ ma shes”  
Steal (to) know; Hide (to) not know.  
One who knows how to steal but fails to hide (and gets caught).  
It is easy to achieve success but difficult to maintain it.
- “Lakpai snum la; Gnam (Xnam) Gyi (yi) bya.”  
Hand (of) grease to Sky (of) bird.  
Birds hover in the air for a greasy hand (food).  
If you have wealth, everyone wants to be your friend or relative.  
If you want to be popular, you have to spend money.
- “Sar snod; Kyi (yi) chhu zimbo”  
New pot of water tasty.  
Water in a new pot tastes sweeter.  
New things have initial charm, which quickly disappears.  
It may also suggest “Old is Gold.”
- “Mi rgos pai snod; Rgos pai zhak”  
Not need of pot; need of day.  
Nothing is worthless.  
Even a useless pot may be useful someday.
- “Mi bar gtam (tam); Brak bar sa”  
Man between words; cliff gap/between dirt.  
Arguments between people are like dirt in a cliff’s crack;  
small fissures lead to large chasms. “Bar” means “gap” as well as “between.”  
Friends are lost when arguments are not resolved,  
as crevices in mountains grow and dirt accumulates.
- “Rmak lok na; Hyak rdob”  
Army turns if yaks are slaughtered.  
If a group of people unite, they can slaughter a yak.  
United, people can overcome any difficulty or challenge.
- “Mi bzang la gtam (tam) chik; Rta bzang la thur chik”  
Man good to speech (word) one. Horse good to whip one.  
A wise person gets the first hint, while a trained horse understands the first whip.

- “Lam rings na”; “Tshe rings”  
Path (journey) lengthens if life lengthens.  
You live longer by taking longer but safer routes.  
Usually said to encourage people to travel by safer and longer routes rather than shorter, more dangerous ones.
- “Ngyid ong pai (phi) bong bu la rtsoa med”  
Sleep comes (to) of donkey, to grass not.  
A sleeping donkey gets no grass; it is generally applicable to lazy people.  
There is no reward for those who do not toil.
- “Dudpa (Tutpa) chan me zhimbo; Ruspa chan sha zhimbo”  
Smoke (with) fire tasty, bone (with) meat tasty.  
A fire with smoke is delightful (longer lasting), and meat with bones is tasty.  
If wood starts burning with smoke, the wood will take longer to burn and the fire will last longer.  
A piece of meat with a bone will take longer to eat; hence, it is more enjoyable.  
Joy comes with hard work.
- “Bumo aThsarba (thsarba) nang shamo aThsarba”  
Daughter growth (maturity) to and mushroom growth (to).  
Both girls and mushrooms mature/grow fast,  
Girls mature fast like mushrooms,  
worrying parents about their marriage.
- “Sngying (Sning) la od med na; mig la od med”  
Heart to light not if eye to light not.  
If heart has no light then eyes have no light.  
The light of the heart is knowledge and awareness.  
If the heart is blind, the eyes cannot see the future or make the right decision.
- “Rgyalu dug sa rgyal-sa”  
King resides/sits place capital (place of king/winner)  
A place where the king resides becomes the capital of the kingdom.  
A place becomes respectable and holy  
when holy people and nobles reside there or visit it.
- “Spyanku mi ltogs pa Lu-rzi mi thserba”  
Wolf not hungry (to), Shepherds not miss (to)  
Wolf not remain hungry (should feel content with lesser gain),  
Shepherds not miss (should feel content with minor loss).  
A settlement should make both parties happy.  
Enough to kill the wolf’s hunger with minimum loss to the shepherd’s flock.
- “Hor Gyi (yi) rta shi na; mGo Horyul”  
Turk (of) horse die if, head (toward) Xinjiang

When a Turk's horse dies, its head faces Xinjiang.

A patriotic person in exile always thinks about his/her country.

When s/he is dying, s/he dreams of the country.

- “Ata la bu phes med; Jowo (Cho’) la bran phes med”

Father to son differentiates not; king to subject differentiate not.

For the father, all sons are alike; for the king, all subjects are alike.

“Bran” also means slave.

The saying is used when making a choice is extremely difficult.

- “Rta chig gi phyra rta bgya chhu thung; Mi chig gi phyra mi bgya zan zo”

Horse one of sake horse hundred water drink; man one of sake man hundred food eat.

Because of one horse, a hundred drink water; because of one man, a hundred eat.

This is said when someone benefits many.

One person may become the source for others to obtain what they desire.

Goodwill is spread among people when a person takes the initiative.

- “Zharba la chi dGos yod (rgosed)? Mig ngyis.”

Blind to what need (is)? Eye two.

What does a blind person need? Two eyes.

A man wants what he does not have.

- “Anchan gyi (i) chik ching; mKhaspa bgya ching”

Powerful (by) one tie, learned hundred tie.

One can control many with wisdom and skill,

while the powerful control one or two with fear.

Real respect is won by winning hearts.

Respect gained through fear is short lived and false.

- “Sa mang na, mi zo; Mi mang na, sa zo”

Land abundance if, man eat; man abundance if, land eat.

If land is abundant, people eat. With overpopulation, land eats people.

In times of fewer resources, land becomes the adversary.

Overpopulation and limited resources lead to famine and death.

Muslims bury their dead; hence, “land eats people” reflects that tradition.

- “Chi zhimbo? Ltogs zhimbo”

What tasty? Hunger tasty.

It is hunger that makes things tasty.

- “Nad ngan la sman ngan”

Illness bad to medicine bad.

Severe or chronic illness needs strong medicine.

- “Drulbai glang (xLang) gi kha berka”

Walk (of) ox at stick.

The walking ox gets more beatings.

An industrious person keeps getting more work and extra responsibilities.

- “Dbyaru nguse yod na; Rgunu thod”  
Summer (to) cry (after) is if; winter (to) happy (be)  
Be happy during winters if you cried during summers.  
If you toil hard during the summers, then there is enough food,  
fodder, and wood accumulated to make the snowy winters fun and relaxing.
- “Sngying (sning) la thsik med na; Mig la thig med”  
Heart to burn (pain) not if; eye to drip not.  
No pain in heart, no drop in the eye.  
Care and pain for someone comes naturally if real love exists,  
not by pretending.  
If you are pretending to shed tears, it will soon be exposed.
- “Lakpa chad na; Khrag ma thigs”  
Hand cut if, blood not drip. If hand is cut, blood does not drip.  
This saying refers to a miser who refuses to share his wealth with others.
- “Chhu nang oma bar phyra”  
Water and milk gap open.  
To separate milk and water.  
To distinguish between a lie and the truth.  
Also, each step takes you closer to the destination.
- “Sbrul (Ghbul) thongse; thakpa la zhigs”  
Snake see (after); rope to fear.  
One who has seen a snake, fears a rope.

## 9. Conclusion

After examining the previous examples, we see that the phonetic systems of the Tibeto-Burman dialects of the Himalayan regions, including Tibet, represents one structural theme or phenomenon and exhibit significant ethnological value, especially with regard to language. In addition, it highlights the common racial affinities of the Trans-Himalayan people, from the Khams province of Tibet in the east to Baltistan in Pakistan in the west. Nevertheless, in this age of information technology, the traditional values of the indigenous cultures are being distorted into a feeble and shabby mix of culture and modernism. Thus, pure indigenous dialects have become increasingly influenced by modern languages such as English, Hindi, and other foreign languages. However, Ladakh has experienced various influences from its adjacent regions. The interaction of the cultural influences, in the form of different ethnic groups, religions, trade, languages, and literature, collectively ensured a distinct micro-cultural system that is distinct in nature.



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