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PRELIMINARY NOTES ON THE LANGUAGES OF THE BUMTHANG GROUP

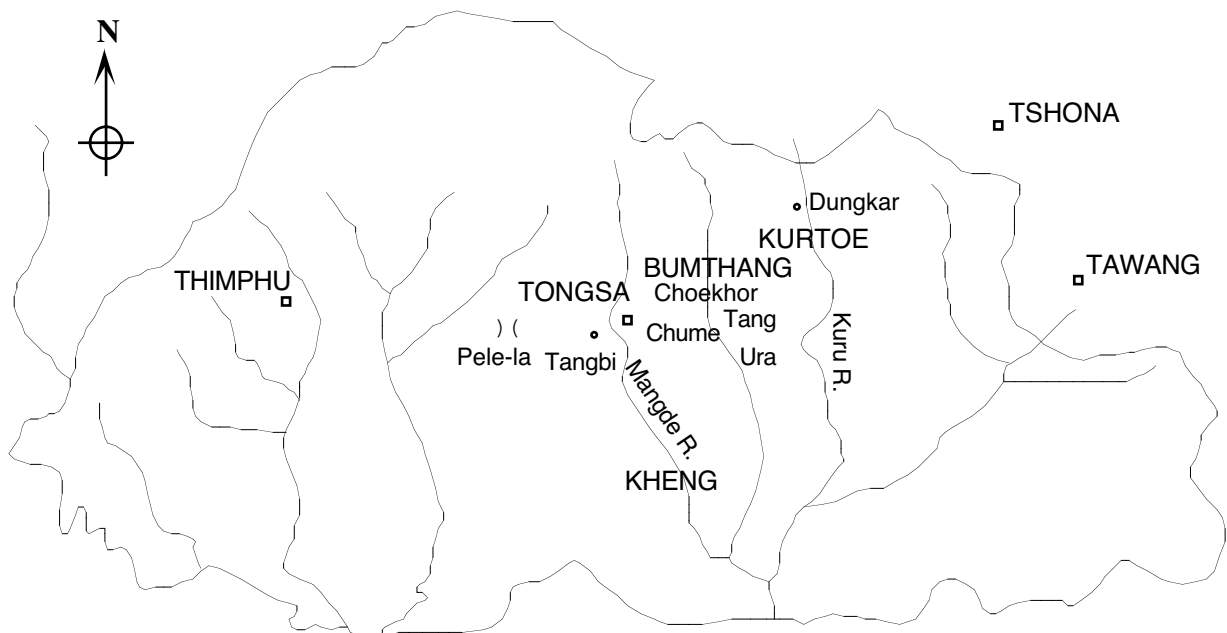
Boyd MICHAILOVSKY and Martine MAZAUDON (CNRS, Paris)

1. The Bumthang languages

Bhutan is home to perhaps a dozen Tibeto-Burman languages; the three major ones, from west to east, are Dzongkha, the official language, linguistically a Tibetan dialect, Bumthap, and Sharchop (or Tshangla).

The main language of Central Bhutan, Bumthap, and its varieties or relatives may be referred to as the Bumthang group. This group is somewhat diverse. We will base our description on Kurtoep (Kt), the language of Dungkar and the Kurtoe (“upper Kuru Valley”) region in Lhuntse district to the east of Bumthang, on which we collected data in Delhi in 1977-78. Bumthap proper (Bt) is the language of the four valleys of Bumthang district; we have a small amount of data, collected in Bhutan in 1986, on the dialects of Chume (Cm), Choekhor (Ck), and Ura (U) (the remaining valley is Tang). Kurtoep, Bumthap proper, and, by all reports, Khengke, to the south of Bumthang, are mutually intelligible. We have also included some preliminary material on a more divergent language, Mangdep¹, from Tangbi village in Tongsa district (see map), which may also belong to the Bumthang group.

The Bumthang languages are clearly closely related to Tibetan in addition to being heavily influenced by it, but we will show evidence that they are not Tibetan dialects, that is, unlike Dzongkha, they are not continuations of (roughly) the language reflected in the Tibetan writing system.



Map of Bhutan

1.1 Bumthang and Dakpa

The closest relative of the Bumthang group on which studies have been published is probably the Dakpa language spoken in the areas of Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh and Tshona in Southern Tibet, and in neighboring parts of Bhutan.² On the basis of Hodgson's (1853) vocabulary, Shafer (1954) published a short historical study and classification of this language, which he designated as "Dwags", following a Tibetan orthographic convention.³

Shafer noted traits in Dakpa which appeared to be archaic compared to Old Tibetan, and pointed out that several of these (e.g. nis '7') were shared by Jiarong and other Tibeto-Burman languages. These are traits retained from Tibeto-Burman, however, and not innovations, so their presence cannot be used as a basis for subgrouping within Tibeto-Burman. (Tibetan *bdun* '7', on the contrary, is an innovation, one of many that together define the Tibetan dialect group.) Thus, Shafer did not suggest that Dakpa and Jiarong were more closely related to each other than to Tibetan; indeed he put Tibetan and Dakpa together in one branch of his Bodish section, with Jiarong, Tamang/Gurung and Tshangla (less correctly Tsangla) as the other branches. The validity of this Bodish section itself (particularly concerning Jyarong) needs to be restudied using new data which has become available.

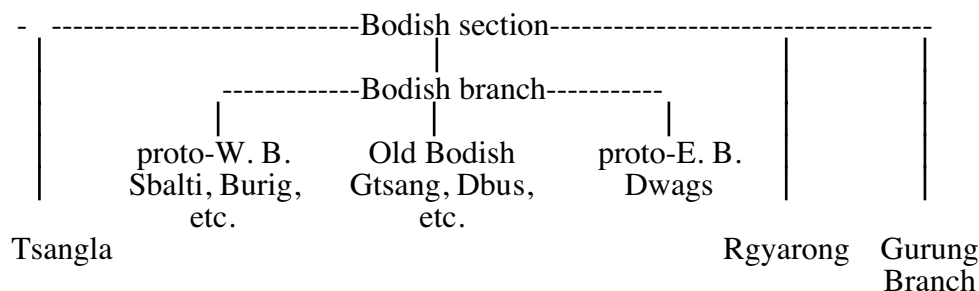


Fig. 1. Shafer's (1954/1966) classification of "Dwags" (Dakpa).

It will be clear from the data cited below that Bumthang and Dakpa are not the same language. Nevertheless they have much in common, and we can tentatively place them in the same subgroup.

In the present study we will present data from several forms of Bumthang⁴, and offer comparisons with Dakpa, Written Tibetan (WT), and, when it provides information which can help us look further back than WT, with the Tamang-Gurung-Thakali-Manangba⁵ group (TGTM), a somewhat conservative group of languages spoken in Nepal, which belongs in the Bodish Section but outside the Bodish Branch.

2. The Phonology of Kurtoep

The segmental phonology of the Bumthang languages, as exemplified by Kurtoep, is not untypical of languages of the Bodish Branch, with four series of consonants in the dento-palatal area (c,ts,t), as against five in Central Tibetan (CT), two tonal registers, high and low, correlated with voicing oppositions in the initial consonant, and remnants of initial clusters. It is richer than CT or Dzongkha (Dz) and poorer than the neighboring TGTM Branch. Its array of final consonants is rich as compared to other modern Bodish Branch languages. Its vocalic system is only starting to complexify with the introduction of diphthongs, but without the multiplication of vowel qualities found in CT.

Initials:

high-toned	k	c	ɕ	ts	s	t̥	t	p
high-toned	kh	ch		tsh		t̥h	th	ph
low-toned	g	ɟ	z	dz	z	d̥	d	b
high/low-toned	ŋ	ñ					n	m
high/low-toned	j	r	l					
low-toned				w				
mostly high-toned:	vocalic initials							

Initial clusters:

kw	pj	pr	pl
khw	phj	phr	
gw	bj	br	bl
(ŋw)	mj	mr	

Word-final consonants:

(k)	t	p
ŋ	n	m
	r	

Word-internally:

add	k	s
-----	---	---

Vowels:

i e a o u

Diphthongs:

au, iu
ui ~ ü, oi ~ ö, ai ~ e:

Length:

On open syllables only, Kurtoep has a distinction between short smooth and long glottalized syllable-types. (This distinction is absent in Bumthap proper — see below.) In addition, the presence of a grammatical morpheme may lead to a long smooth syllable, as in /wi:/ [ʋi:] ‘you’ in the ERGATIVE-INSTRUMENTAL case.

Tone register (high vs low):

A high vs low contrast is found on words with nasal or continuant initials. Initial stops and sibilants also have distinctive tonal register, high for unvoiced (p, t, k, c, s, ɕ) and low for voiced (b, d, g, ɟ, z, ʒ). Voicing is often absent in pronunciation, leaving only the low tone to insure the contrast. Thus, ʒ- is usually pronounced ^lɕ-.

Vocalic initials are generally high-register, but one word at least, Kt ^la:tom (Bt ^lauja WT *wa*) ‘jackal’ is clearly low-register (and breathy, so that it could be transcribed as ^lhauja). Words like wo ‘that’ could also be considered as having low-register vocalic rather than semivowel initials.

Typologically, the intersection of two tonal registers with a distinction between glottalized and smooth syllable types is typical of Tibetan dialects. We may note, however, that the opposition short/smooth vs long/glottalized only occurs on open syllables in Kurtoep, whereas in Central Tibetan it extends to nasal-ending syllables and in Dzongkha to all syllable types. Kurtoep and Bumthap also differ from Lhasa Tibetan and Dzongkha (as spoken by native speakers from west of the Pele-la) in the absence of a voicing opposition within the low register.

Some Kurtoep speakers have an initial high-register h- initial in at least some words where others have kh-; thus Kt, Bt khako ‘up’ is pronounced ^Hhako by some Kt speakers.

The palatal series is affricated in Kurtoep [tɕ...]. None of the group has an opposition between palatal stops (c, ch, ɟ) and palatalized affricates (tɕ, tɕh, dzɕ), as recorded in the Mama variety of Cuona Monpa (but not in Wenlang), and as we find in CT. The phonemes noted ɕ, ʒ are realized as retroflex [ʂ, ʐ] in Ck.

We will now discuss the origin of the present phonological system.

3. Topics in historical phonology

3.1 Finals

3.1.1 Word Finals

As noted above, the system of final consonants in Bumthang languages is relatively rich. These finals seem to reflect rather faithfully the Proto-Tibeto-Burman (PTB) finals as reconstructed by Benedict. Since WT (as opposed to modern CT) is also conservative in this respect, it can be a useful basis for comparison.

Old PTB finals *p, *t, *m, *n, *ŋ, and *r are kept in all Bumthang dialects. In Kurtoep, final *k, *s (for some speakers⁶), and *l are dropped, giving rise to a lengthening of the preceding vowel and a glottalized tone. In Bumthap proper *-k and *-s are retained (with *-s > -t in Choekhor), and there are no long glottalized finals:

	Kt	Bt (Ck)	(Cm)	Mang	Dakpa	WT	PTB ⁷
iron	^H la:ʔ	^H lak	^H lak	cak	lek ⁵³	<i>lcags</i>	
blood	ka:ʔ	kak	kak	ka:	ceʔ ⁵³	<i>khrag</i>	
seven	^H ni:ʔ	^H nit	^H nis	^H nis	nis ⁵⁵		s-nis
paddy	^L mra:ʔ	^L mrat	^L mras			<i>'bras</i>	
barley	^L na:ʔ	^L nat	^L nas	^L nes	naʔ ¹³	<i>nas</i>	
wool	be:ʔ	bai	bai	bɛ:		<i>bal</i>	
back	ke:ʔ	kai	kai	gɛ:tshe		<i>sgal</i>	s-ga:l
kidney	khe:doʔ	khai	khe:do	khæ:m	khɛ: ⁵⁵ ma ⁵³	<i>mkhal</i>	m-kal
silver	^L ŋoi	^L ŋoi	^L ŋoi	^H ŋü:		<i>dngul</i>	

3.1.2 Influence of finals on vowel quality

Palatalization of vowels before old dental finals is a typical CT feature. In languages of the Bumthang group, only *-l has such an effect, and this through the development of a diphthong (see Ck and Cm in ‘wool’, ‘back’ ‘kidney’, ‘silver’ above). Final *-t and *-n (which are retained) and *-s (whether retained or dropped) do not front the vowel. In the neighboring language of Mangdep, we can observe palatalization linked to an old *-s (‘honey’ and ‘barley’ below) or *-t (‘to blow’).

	Kt	Bt (Ck)	(Cm)	Mang	Dakpa	WT	Dz	Tam
barley	^L na:ʔ	^L nat	^L nas	^L nes	naʔ ¹³	<i>nas</i>	³ na:	
bee, honey	^L wa:ʔ	^L wat	^L was	^L jös				Gur ⁴ kwe
stairs	ka:ʔ	kat	kas			<i>skas</i>		
language	kat	kat	kat		ku ⁵³	<i>skad</i>	¹ ke:	² kat
vulture	got		gotpa			<i>rgod</i>	³ goe:	⁴ kwat < ^{*B} grwat
to blow	but-	but-	but-	büʔ	phuʔ ⁵³	<i>'bud</i>		¹ phut
medicine	^H man	^H man	^H man		ma ⁿ ⁵³	<i>sman</i>	¹ men	¹ man

An exception is Kurtoep ^Hje:ʔ ‘right (side)’, Bt ^Hjeba WT *g.yas*. The fronted pronunciation may be borrowed: note that *-s has a fronting effect in Central Tibetan but not in Dzongkha (¹ya:ʔ).

3.1.3 Word-internal finals; chronology of composition

As is the case in CT or Dzongkha, composition often predates the phonological changes which affected the finals. Thus inside a word, syllable-final *-s and *-k are kept, even in Kurtoep (but *-s > -t in Choekhor):

	Kt	Bt (Ck)	(Cm)	Mang	Dakpa	WT	Tam
barley flour	^L nasphi					<i>nas, phye</i>	
body	^L luspu		^L luspu		lu ¹³ po ⁵³	<i>lus-po</i>	³ lwi
bone	^L rospa	^L rotpa	^L rosa	^L rotho		<i>rus-pa</i>	² nakhru
skin	pakpa	pakpa	pakpa	pogo	phe ⁵⁵ khu ⁵³	<i>pags-pa</i>	

3.1.4 Verb root finals

Kurtoep verb roots are cited here in a morphophonemic transcription, e.g. *blek-* ‘leave, put down’, ^H*mul-* ‘sell’. In actually occurring verb forms, however, -k and -l do not appear word-finally, and non-front vowels in -l roots are fronted or diphthongized, whether the -l is dropped or not, thus: ^H*muile* ‘sell!’, ^L*ŋat* ^H*memui* ‘I will not sell’ (voir §5).

3.2 Vowel correspondences

3.2.1 Kurtoep o ~ WT u

Kurtoep and Bumthang vowels often correspond to identical vowels in WT. Shafer noted, however, that WT non-final high vowels often corresponded to mid vowels in Dakpa: WT *iC, uC* ~ Dakpa *eC, oC*. In Kurtoep and Bumthap, *o* is most often found to correspond with WT *u*, in final as well as non-final position. When we have evidence outside the group—here from Tamang—it points to proto-Bodish **u*.

	Kt	Bt (Ck, Cm)	Mang	Dakpa	WT	Tam
grain, seed	bro	bro	bru	pru ⁵³	<i>'bru</i>	PTB * <i>mruw</i>
fur	po	po	po	pu ⁵³	<i>spu</i>	³ <i>pu-²tsham</i>
son	bo	bodza	bɔs	pu ¹³	<i>bu</i>	
horn	^L ro	^L ro	^L rəu	ru: ¹³	<i>ru, rwa</i>	¹ ru
wash	ʈho-	khro-, hro-	ʈho-	khru? ⁵³	<i>'khrud-pa</i>	² khru
manure	^L jot	^L jot		lon ⁵⁵	<i>lud</i>	
six	d̥o:ʔ	grok, ^L rok	d̥u:	kro? ⁵³	<i>drug</i>	⁴ t̥u:
sheep	^L jo:ʔ	^L jok	^L lo:ʔ	jeŋ ¹³	<i>lug</i>	⁴ kju
poison	do:ʔ	dok		tu ¹³	<i>dug</i>	
drink	thoŋ-	thoŋ-	thoŋ-	toŋ ⁵⁵	<i>'thung-ba</i>	² thuŋ
load	khor	khor	khor		<i>khur</i>	

See also ‘silver’ (§3.1.1), ‘bone’ (§3.1.3), ‘come off’ (§3.3.1), ‘sprout’, ‘thread’, ‘warm’, ‘sew’ (§3.3.4), ‘nine’ (§3.4.3), ‘extract’ (§3.5 WT *'byung-ba*). This shift, however, is not without exception (e.g. ‘blow’ §3.1.2, ‘cheese’ §3.3.3, ‘elbow’, ‘abrade’ §3.3.4 ‘handle’ §3.4 1), and can even be reversed:

	Kt	Bt (Ck, Cm)	WT	Tam
straw	su:ʔ	suk	<i>sog-ma</i>	
to hear	thu-	thu-	<i>thos-pa</i>	¹ thai

3.2.2 Kurtoep e ~ WT i (after palatals)

Unlike the correspondence WT *u* ~ Kt *o*, for which no conditioning factor is known, the correspondence WT *i* ~ Kt *e* is less frequent and apparently related to the initial. In our material, the set of words showing this correspondence coincides almost exactly with the set in which a WT palatal initial (*c, ch, j, ny, sh, zh*) corresponds to a Kurtoep non-palatal (but note Kt ^L*meŋ* ‘name’ ~ WT *ming* below).

	Kt	Bt (Ck)	(Cm)	Mang	Dakpa	WT
sun	^L ne	^L ni	^L ni	^L nece?	(p ^l aŋ ⁵³)	<i>nyi-ma</i>
heart	^H neŋ	^H neŋ	^H neŋ		niŋ ⁵³	<i>snying</i>
day	^L nen	^L nen	^L nen	^L ne:c	ŋiŋ ¹³	<i>nyin-ma</i>
to die	se-	se-	se-	se	ci ⁵³	<i>shi-ba</i>
louse	se:ʔ	sek	sek	se:ʔ	ce? ⁵³	<i>shig</i>
tree	seŋ	seŋ	seŋ	sē:	ceŋ ⁵⁵ m ^Λ ⁵³	<i>shing</i>
one	the:ʔ	thek	thek	the:	the:? ⁵³	<i>gcig</i>
urine	zeŋma	zeŋma	zeŋma		tchin ⁵³	<i>gcin</i>
name	^L meŋ	^L meŋ	^L meŋ	^L miŋ	meŋ ³⁵	<i>ming</i>

The same vowel correspondence obtains in three examples ('tasty', 'four', 'field') where Kurtoep *l-* corresponds to WT *zh-* (§3.4.2).

3.2.3 Kurtoep *i* ~ WT *u* (after palatal affricates)

Shafer noted the correspondence WT *-u* ~ Dakpa *-i* after palatal affricates, citing 'ten' and 'water'. These two items have *-e* in Bumthang, but the general correspondence of back to front vowels holds:

	Kt	Bt (Ck)	(Cm)	Mang	Dakpa	WT	Tam
ten	che	che	che	khepceʔ	tei ⁵³	<i>bcu</i>	² tsjui
water	khwe	khwe	khwe	khē:	tshi ⁵³	<i>chu</i>	² kjui
small	ciŋ-	ciŋ-	ciŋ-	chiŋ		<i>cung</i>	
lip	chi	chi	chi	chi	tchu ⁵⁵ tɔ ⁵⁵	<i>mchu</i>	

See also 'bow' (§3.4.2). Exceptions: Kurtoep cut- 'braid' (WT *gcud-pa*), and chupa 'Tibetan robe' (probably a loan—WT *chu-pa*). After a non-palatal initial, Kurtoep (and Cm) thiŋku 'short', (Mang thiŋ-, Dakpa thuŋ⁵⁵-po⁵³, WT *thung-*) is possibly influenced by ciŋku 'small'.

3.2.4 Kurtoep *u* ~ WT *a* (in verbs)

In verbs, Kurtoep *u* often corresponds to WT *a*:

	Kt	Bt (Ck)	(Cm)	Mang	Dakpa	WT
eat	zu-	zu-	zu-	zu-	zA ¹³	<i>za-ba</i>
gnaw	chu-				chA ⁵³	<i>cha'a-ba</i>
cut	chut-					<i>gcod-pa</i> (CAD) ⁸
kill	sut-	sut-	sut-	süʔ-	sot ⁵³	<i>gsod-pa</i> (SAD)
weave	thuk-	thuk-	thuk-		kAn ⁵⁵ the ⁵³	<i>'thag-pa</i>
study	^H lup-	^H lup-	^H lup-		lop ⁵³	<i>slob-pa</i> (SLAB)
sharpen	dur-	dur-	dur-		tor ¹³	<i>bdar-ba</i>
spin (thread)	khul-	khul-	khul-		che: ⁵⁵	<i>'khal-ba</i>
hang	pjuŋ-	cuŋ-	cuŋ-			<i>dpyang-ba</i>
winnow		khruŋ-	hrup-	tʃup-		<i>'khrab-pa</i>

3.2.5 Kurtoep *i* ~ WT *yV*

Kurtoep *i* often corresponds to WT medial *y* regardless of the following WT vowel, as in 'flour' (§3.1.3), 'hearthstone' (§3.5.2), and the following:

	Kt	Bt (Ck)	(Cm)	Dakpa	WT
wear	gin-	gin-	gin-	cen ³⁵ na ³⁵	<i>gyon-pa</i>
turn	gir-				<i>sgyur-pa</i>
cold	khik-	khik-	khik-	chek ⁵³ pa ⁵³	<i>khyags-pa</i>
broom	phiksaŋ	phiksaŋ	phiksaŋ	tchAp ⁵⁵ thAm ⁵⁵	<i>phyag-ma</i>

3.3 Initial clusters

Old PTB word-initial consonant clusters were reduced in all Bumthang dialects to a C or CC structure, but less drastically than in CT. In particular Labial + *j*, *r*, and *l* clusters exist in all dialects, to varying degrees. It is not always clear whether they are old or innovative.

3.3.1 Labial + *l*

Shafer noted that the word 'four' in Dakpa, as opposed to WT, retains PTB **l* in the initial cluster *bl-*. The cluster, in this and other roots, may be a retention of **bl-*, to judge by the realisation in other languages like those of the TGTM group, although examples are not numerous:

	Kt	Bt (Ck, Cm)	Mang	Dakpa	WT	Tam	PTB
four	ble	ble	brɛ:	pli ⁵³	<i>bzhi</i>	⁴ pli	b-liy
leaf	bla ² ma	^H lamba	^H la		<i>'dap-ma</i>	³ lapte	la/lap/pak
-ful, one-	-bleŋ	-bleŋ				¹ pliŋ	bliŋ~pliŋ
come off	plot-	plot-			<i>'bud-pa</i>		
leave	blek-	blek-,lek-				¹ leŋ	

3.3.2 Labial + j

Only a few medial j are found in Kurtoep, and only after initial labials. Other dialects lack Labial + j clusters.

	Kt	Bt (Ck)	(Cm)	Mang	Dakpa	WT	Tam
hang	pjuŋ-	cuj-	cuj-			<i>dpyang-ba</i>	
ashes	bja		thapja		plA ¹³		¹ mephra
to call	bja-		ja-				
to get	^L mjan-	^L ñoŋ-				<i>myong (MYANG)</i>	
swallow	^L mjot-		^L not-		^ŋ ut ⁵³ tho ² 53	<i>mid-pa</i>	
arrow ⁹	^L mja	^L mewa	^L ña	^L mra	blA ⁵³	<i>mda'</i>	¹ mja

We may also cite Kt pjo 'a lie' and bjo 'taro'.

3.3.3 Labial + r

Clusters of labial + r seem to have been the most stable across the family. See Kt bro 'grain, seed' and the following:

	Kt	Bt (Ck)	(Cm)	Mang	Dakpa	WT, (TGTM)
monkey	pra	pra	pra	pra	prA ⁵³	<i>spra</i>
finger	primaŋ	primaŋ	primaŋ		lA ² 53priu ⁵³	(Tam ^H primci)
cheese	phrum	phrum	phrum	phrum		<i>phyur-ba</i>
to tear	phret-	phret-	phret-		phrɛ ² 53	
tray	bra	bra	bra	brɛxɛp		
buckwheat	bra:ma	branma	branma	brɛ:m	pre: ¹³ tɕi ⁵³ cA: ⁵⁵ pre ⁵³	<i>bra</i> (Thak ³ pre)
chest	braŋto	braŋdo	braŋdo	braŋko	prAŋ ¹³	<i>brang-khog</i>
odor	bri	bri	bri		ʃi ⁵³	<i>dri</i>
hunger	bru		bru			<i>bro-wa</i> 'taste'
ant	bruktula	bruktula	bruktula	butil	ʃuk ⁵⁵ pu ⁵³	(Gur ² nabbru)
scratch	^L mrat-	brat-	brat-		(po ² 53)	<i>'brad-pa</i>
paddy	^L mra:ʔ	^L mrat	^L mras		(tem ¹³)	<i>'bras</i>

3.3.4 Velar clusters

Only velar + w, of somewhat unclear origin, is found in a few Kurtoep examples:

	Kt	Bt (Ck)	(Cm)	Mang	Dakpa	WT	Tam	PTB
sprain	kwir-		gwir-			<i>sgyur-ba</i> ¹⁰		
tooth	kwa	kwa	kwa	^H wa	wA ⁵³	<i>so</i>	¹ swa	s-wa
dog	khwi	khwi	khwi	chö	chi ⁵³	<i>khyi</i>	¹ nakhi	kwiy
water	khwe	khwe	khwe	khě	tshi ⁵³	<i>chu</i>	² kjwi	ti(y)/twiy
buy	^L ŋwi-	^L ŋwi-	^L ŋwi-		^ŋ er ¹³	<i>nyo-ba</i>		
two-	-gwa		-gwa		tɕA ⁵³	<i>cha</i>		<i>Qiang guə</i>
tether	gwi-		gwe-					

Velar + r clusters usually followed an evolution similar to CT in Kurtoep, developing into an affricated retroflex series, while they were retained in Bumthang (Ck) and are realized as r in Cm. Thus Cm has high register ^Hr- and hr- corresponding to Ck kr-, khr-, while Cm ^Lr- corresponds to both Ck gr- and ^Lr-. Note that Kt sometimes has ^Hr- rather than ʃ- corresponding to Ck kr-.

	Kt	Bt (Ck)	(Cm)	Mang	Dakpa	WT	Tam
hair	^H ra	kra	^H ra	^H ra	khra ⁵³	<i>skra</i>	¹ kra
thread	^H rotman	kronman	^H rotman	^H rɔp		<i>rgyud</i>	
village	toŋ	kroŋ	^H roŋ		tʂoŋ ¹³ sep ⁵³	<i>grong</i>	
dirt	tekpa	krekpa	^H rekpa	dɛkpeʔ		<i>dreg-pa</i>	¹ khiti
nit	^H rikar	kriwit	^H riwis	^H riula			
roll	tʂhil-	khрил-	hril-			<i>'khril-pa</i>	
winnow		khруп-	hrup-	tʂhup-		<i>'khrab-pa</i>	
go up	tʂhaŋ-	khraŋ-	hraŋ-				
wash	tʂho-	khro-	hro-	tʂho-	khru ^{ʔ53}	<i>'khrud-pa</i>	² khru
sprout	tʂhoŋ-	khroŋ-	hroŋ-		khroŋ ⁵³	<i>'khrung-ba</i>	
count	dʌŋkha	graŋ-	^L raŋkha			<i>grangs</i>	
cry out	dʌk-		^L rak-		grek ³⁵ (W)	<i>'grags-pa</i>	
shadow	dɛm	gɾep	^L rep			<i>grib(-ma)</i>	² krip
elbow	dʌmaliŋ	grumaŋti	^L rumaŋti		krum ¹³ teuŋ ⁵³	<i>gru-mo</i>	¹ kru 'cubit'
six	dʌo:ʔ	gɾok	^L rok	dʌu:	kro ^{ʔ53}	<i>drug</i>	⁴ tʂu
warm		grut-	^L rut-		kro ³⁵ po ⁵³	<i>drod</i>	⁴ dʌot
mule	dʌe:ʔ	dɛ	griu (u)		kre ^{ʔ35}	<i>drel</i>	

Some PTB dental + r clusters seem to have shifted to velar + r in Common Bumthang as noted by Shafer in Dwags 'six' (PTB *d-ruk). But in 'dirt' we believe it is the WT which is innovative (PTB *kriy). The following are further examples of WT *dr-* initials (see also 'odor' §3.3.3):

	Kt	Bt (Ck)	(Cm)	Mang	Dakpa	WT	Tam
ask	dʌi-		^L ri-		bri ³⁵	<i>'dri</i>	
sew	dʌop-					<i>'drub-pa</i>	⁴ tʂup
abrade	^L rut		^L rut			<i>'drud-pa</i>	

For some WT *gr-*, we might suggest an older *rg- parallel to 'hawk, vulture' (§3.1.2) as in the following:

	Kt	Bt (Ck)	(Cm)	Mang	Dakpa	WT	PTam	PTB
wheat	go	go	go		ko ⁵³	<i>gro</i>	*grwa ⁴	?*r-gwa
walk	go-	go-	go-		ko ⁵³	<i>'gros</i>		

Finally we may note a possible correspondence in the following: Kurtoep zowa 'lung' (WT glo-ba), zɛŋ 'flute' (WT gling-bu).

3.4 Liquids and glides

3.4.1 Straightforward initial correspondences: Kt j, l, r ~ WT y, l, r

	Kt	Bt (Ck, Cm)	Dakpa	WT	Tam
odd one	^L ja	^L ja (Cm)		<i>ya</i>	
above	^L ja	^L jawo		<i>ya</i>	
handle	^L ju	^L ju (Cm)		<i>yu-ba</i>	¹ ju:
right	^H je:ʔ	^H je:ba	je:ʔ ⁵⁵ pa ⁵³	<i>g.yas</i>	¹ ket

Some Bumthang w ~ WT y are also found:

to weed	^L wɛr-	^L wɛrsa		<i>yur</i>	
to be	^L wɛn-	^L wɛn	jin ¹³	<i>yin</i>	³ hin

as may happen also after velars (see 'dog' and (possibly) 'sprain' §3.3.4).

For initial r see 'bone', 'horn' (§3.1.3, §3.2.1).

For initial l see 'body' (§3.1.3), and:

	Kt	Bt (Ck, Cm)	Dakpa	WT
blind	^L loŋba	^L loŋma	loŋ ¹³ pa ⁵³	<i>long-ba</i>
soar	^L liŋ-	^L liŋ-		<i>lding</i>
blade	^L lep	^L lep		<i>ldang</i>

(In WT *ld-*, *l* functions as the initial.)

3.4.2 Bumthang l ~ WT zh

The following words show the correspondence PTB *l ~ Kt l ~ WT zh already observed in ‘four’ above.

	Kt	Bt (Ck, Cm)	Mang	Dakpa	WT	Dz	TGTM
four	ble	ble	bre:	pli ⁵³	<i>bzhi</i>	zhi	Tam ⁴ pli
bow	^L limi?	^L li, ^L limae	^L li	li ¹³	<i>gzhu</i>	^L zhu	Thak ³ tolen
field	^L leŋ	^L leŋ	-le?	leŋ ¹³	<i>zhing</i>	⁴ zh’i:	
tasty	^L lembu			lim ¹³ po ⁵³	<i>zhim-ba</i>		

(See §3.2.3 for the vowel correspondence in ‘bow’, PTB *d-liy.) This correspondence, which seems not to have been noticed, is a subtype of the Tibetan “palatalization of l- before y, i, or e” (Benedict 1972:33) (and in the word ‘iron’!), as in the following:

	Kt	BT (Ck, Cm)	Mang	Dakpa	WT	Tam
tongue	^H li	^H li	ce	le ⁵³	<i>lce</i>	² le:
flea	lija	^H liwa	^H liu	liu ⁵⁵	<i>lji-ba</i>	¹ tanliŋ
iron	la:?	^H lak	cak	lek ⁵³	<i>lcags</i>	
heavy	jit-	jüt- (Cm)		li ⁵⁵ po ⁵³	<i>ljid-po</i>	³ li:-pa

If we can draw conclusions from the very small set of examples above, it would seem that the conditioning of the differential treatment *l > lj vs *l > zh in WT might have been the presence/absence of a voiceless prefix, as reflected by the high/low tone of the Kurtoep reflexes. A Bodish branch prefixed *s- could have led to high register on Kurtoep ^Hl- as on nasal initials (§3.5.1). If this is correct, the WT evolution might reflect metathesis of the prefix rather than straight palatalization (cf. Beyer 1992:78).

3.4.3 Bumthang j ~ WT l < *Velar + l (?)

One word, ‘brain’, has been noted with a kl initial in Bt (Ck, U) and Kt:

	Kt	BT (Ck, U)	Cm	Mang	Dakpa	WT	Dz
brain	klatpa	klatpa	^H latpa	^L lep	la ⁵⁵ pa ⁵³	<i>klad-pa</i>	² lep

Except for this word, we have found no velar + l clusters in Kurtoep (and we have no others in Ck or U either). It might be suspected, however, that some of the not infrequent correspondences Bumthang ^Lj- ~ WT l- reflect an old *gl-:

	Kt	BT (Ck)	Mang	Dakpa	WT	Tam	PTB	PBod (ours)
road	^L jam	^L jam	^L lam	lem ¹³	<i>lam</i>	⁴ kjam	lam	*g-lam
sheep	^L jo:?	^L jo:?	^L lo:?	jeŋ ¹³	<i>lug</i>	⁴ kju		*g-luk
work	^L ja:?	^L jat		ple? ¹³ ja ¹³	<i>las</i>	⁴ kjat		*g-las/t

and perhaps:

	Kt	Bt (Ck, Cm)	Mang	Dakpa	WT	Tam	PTB
hand	^L ja:?	^L jak	^L la:	la? ⁵³	<i>lags</i>	¹ ja:	lak=g-lak
ankle	^L jonkor	tegolŋ (Cm)			<i>long-bu</i>		
manure	^L jot	^L jot		løŋ ⁵⁵	<i>lud</i>		
to get	^L juŋ-				<i>len-/long-ba</i>	¹ jaŋ	
stand	^L jaŋ-	^L jaŋ	^L lõ:	laŋ ¹³	<i>ldang</i>		

The high-register tone in Tamang suggests the presence of an old prefix. The incorporation of the prefix in the preceding set (leading to Tam. kj- initials) blocked the tone-raising effect.

A final example of Bumthang ^Lj- ~ WT *l*-:

	Kt	Bt (Ck, Cm)	Mang	Dakpa	WT	Tam	PTB
five	^L jaŋa	^L jaŋa	^L ləŋ	le ³¹ ŋe ⁵³	<i>lŋa</i>	⁴ ŋa:	

Note that the WT prefix corresponds to a Bumthang syllable in this example, as in another number, ‘nine’ (Kt, Bt dogo, Mang dok, Dak tu³¹ku⁵³, WT *dgu*).

3.5 Initial Series and Tones

3.5.1 Nasals

Bumthang high-tone nasal initials, like those in tonal Tibetan dialects such as Lhasa or Dzongkha, correspond to nasals with prefixes (or superscribed letters) in WT. But only WT superscribed *s*- regularly corresponds to high register in Bumthang; other prefixes (including superscript letters), which regularly give high register in Tibetan dialects (e.g. tones ^H, ¹, ² in Dzongkha), do so only sporadically in Bumthang:

	Kt	Bt (Ck, Cm)	Mang	Dakpa	WT	Dz	Tam
heart	^H neŋ	^H neŋ		niŋ ⁵³	<i>snying</i>		¹ tiŋ
nose	^H na	^H naphaŋ	^H naba	nA ⁵³	<i>sna</i>	^H ha-pu	¹ na
barley	^L na:?	^L nat	^L neŋ	nA [?] 13	<i>nas</i>	³ na:?	
ear	^L na	^L na	^L nül	nem ³⁵ ne ⁵³	<i>rna</i>	^H namco	³ naphi
pus	^L na:?	^L nak	^L no:	(jaN ¹³)	<i>rnag</i>	¹ na:?	³ na:
dtr-in-law		^L naba, ^L nama	^L nam		<i>rnna-ma</i>	² nam	
sky	^L nam	^L nam	^L nam	nAM ⁵³	<i>gnam</i>	² nam	² nam
pillow	^H ŋa:?	^H ŋas (Cm)	^H ñös	ŋA [?] 53	<i>sngas</i>	¹ hã:	
blue	^H ŋokar	^H ŋokar	^H ŋœm	ŋAU ⁵⁵ po ⁵³	<i>sngon-po</i>	² hoem	
drum	^L ŋa	^L ŋa	^L ŋa	ŋA ⁵³	<i>rnga</i>	^H ŋa	³ ŋa:
to cut	^L ŋa-	^L ŋa-	^L ŋa-		<i>rnga-ba</i>	^H ŋa	
fry, parch	^L ŋu-	^L ŋut-			<i>rngud-pa</i>		Gur ³ ŋo
medicine	^H man	^H man		mAN ⁵³	<i>sman</i>	^H men	¹ man
insane	^H mju			ŋœn ⁵⁵ pa ⁵³	<i>smyo-ba</i>		¹ mjo
wound	^H ma	^L maga	^H ma	mA ¹³	<i>rma</i>	^H ma	
hoof	^L mukpa	^L mikpat		ne ¹³ WA ⁵³	<i>rmig-pa</i>	^H mip	
dream	^L mimaŋ	^L mimaŋ		mi ³¹ pren ⁵⁵	<i>rmi-lam</i>		

See also ‘silver’ (§3.1), ‘sun’, ‘day’ ‘name’ (§3.2.2), ‘get’, ‘swallow’ (§3.3.2) ‘buy’ (§5).

3.5.2 Oral stops

As opposed to (native) Dzongkha and most Central Tibetan dialects, Bumthap dialects do not distinguish the reflexes of old prefixed vs unprefixed voiced stops. The reflexes of both are voiced with redundant low tone. (Or, as we explained earlier, if they are phonetically devoiced the compensatory low pitch is always present.)

There is a single exception to this rule: the old prefix *s- has devoiced and raised an initial *g to k with high tone in a few words:

	Kt	Bt (Ck)	Mang	Dakpa	WT	Dz	PTB
door	ko	ko	gɔs	kɔ ⁵³	<i>sgo</i>	^L go	
back	ke:?	kai	ge:tshe		<i>sgal</i>	⁴ ge:p	s-ga:l
hearthstone	kitpa	kitpa			<i>sgyed-po</i>		

Many reflexes of WT *sg*- have initial *g*-, however, as Bt *gam*- ‘box’ (WT *sgam*).

The *s- prefix does not seem to have had a devoicing or tone-raising effect on a *b initial:

	Kt	Bt (Ck)	Mang	Dakpa	WT	Dz	Tam
frog	beptaktakpa	baibai	bɛ:p	bɛ: ¹³ pA ⁵³	<i>sbal-pa</i>	⁴ bɛ:p	⁴ palpa
give	bi-	bi-	bji	tɕi ¹³	<i>sbyin-pa</i>		¹ pin
a fly	braŋ	braŋ	brɔm	pɾA: ⁵³	<i>sbrang-bu</i>	⁴ bjam	¹ naphran

3.5.3 Clusters

In §3.3.4 we have seen three examples (‘thread’, ‘village’, ‘body dirt’) in which Common Bumthang *kr- corresponds to WT low-register initials, but the correspondence is not systematic.

4. Some (apparently) non-Tibetan roots in Bumthang

Finally, we list in a separate table some Bumthang words for which we know no Tibetan cognate (or only a partial one); many have cognates elsewhere in TB.¹¹

5. Morphology

As in Tibetan, there is some morphology at the interface between finals and suffixes or postpositions. This is most striking in verb roots, which fall into ten categories depending on the final consonant (zero, p, t, k, m, n, ŋ, r, l) of the root. The root forms given can not necessarily stand alone: for example ^Lŋak- ‘say, do’ cannot because word-final -k does not occur in Kurtoep (although it does in Bumthang). But this somewhat artificial form allows one to derive the occurring forms, in which some finals (-t, -k, -l in particular) are dropped before some suffixes. Roots ending in -al, -ol, -ul are invariably realized -ai(l), -oi(l), -ui(l), the -l appearing only in the imperative. Examples of Kurtoep roots and imperatives (the form which best preserves the finals):

<i>final</i>	<i>root</i>	<i>imperative</i>	<i>gloss</i>
zero	ku-	kuje	dig
-p	^L rup-	^L rube	help
-t	^L mjot-	^L mjotle	swallow
-k	blek-	blege	leave sth.
-m	dom-	dome	meet
-n	zon-	zonle	send
-ŋ	phjoŋ-	phjoŋe	extract
-r	sar-	sarle, sale	cook
-l	^H mul-	^H muile	sell

Not all apparent fronting diphthongs reflect final -l: ^Lŋwi- ‘buy’ (WT nyo-ba), with a velar cluster, has the imperative ^Lŋwije.

Notes

¹ BM’s personal notes 1986. The Kurtoep and Chume material was rechecked by BM with informants in Kathmandu in 1993.

² Hodgson (1853) published a “Takpa” vocabulary of some 180 words based on a speaker from Tawang (WT rTa-wang). Sun et al. 1980 and Lu 1986 describe a very similar language under the name of Cuona Menba (WT mtsho-sna mon-pa); they mention two dialects, one in Mama commune, Lepu district, Cuona county, and the other further east in Wenlang commune, Deqing district, Motuo county. Both Chinese descriptions are based on the Mama dialect, but Lu also gives forms in the Wenlang (W) dialect, which is somewhat closer to Hodgson’s data. The forms which we will cite as Dakpa are Mama dialect forms from Lu and from anon. 1991. The low register tone noted as ³⁵ in the former is transcribed as ¹³ in the latter.

³ See also Nishida 1988. Aris (1979) has pointed out that the Dakpa language has no connection (at least at present) with the Dwags-po (pronounced ^Ldakpo or ^Ltakpo) region of Tibet, as first suggested by Hodgson, or with its Tibetan dialect.

⁴ Transcription of Kurtoep is as indicated in the next section. Transcription of Dzongkha is more orthographic and follows Mazaudon and Michailovsky 1988; in particular, y- is used instead of j- for initial *yod* (IPA [j]), and ue, oe represent IPA [y], [ø].

⁵ Abbreviations for languages of the TGTG group are as follows: Tam = Tamang, Gur = Gurung, Thak = Thakali, Man = Manangba. In these languages, and in Dzongkha, the tones noted ¹, ², and ^H are high register; ³, ⁴, and ^L are low register.

⁶ Some speakers interviewed in Kathmandu pronounced final -s but never -k. They also said ge:pa for 'back' (see table). Like our first speaker, they were originally from the Dungkar area. Never having visited Kurtoe, we cannot say whether such variation is geographical or the result of contact. All of our Kurtoe informants had spent time in monasteries and urban centers.

⁷ Unless otherwise noted, all PTB reconstructions are from Benedict (1972).

⁸ The underlying root vowel of this verb is *a*, as evidenced in the past and future stems; the present (citation form) undergoes a rounding rule (see e.g. Beyer 1992:164).

⁹ All of our Kt speakers agreed on ^Lmj- in this word, but our Kathmandu speakers had ^Hnūt- 'insane' (§3.2.1), ^Lnōŋ- 'get' (§3.4.3), and ^Lnōt- 'swallow' where we had previously recorded mj- initials. In Cm, 'arrow' is homophonous with 'fish'.

¹⁰(?) Cf. 'turn' (§3.2.5).

¹¹Tshangla is cited from anon. 1991 and Zhang 1986; Bahing and Limbu (East Himalayish) from our field notes.

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	Kt	Bt (Ck)	Mang	Dakpa	Tshangla	WT	other TB
house	^L me:ʔ	^L mai	^L mɛ:	(chem ⁵³)	phai	(<i>khyim</i>)	
black	^L ñunti	^L ñe:nde	(nəkeʔ)	(plɛ: ¹³ kAn ⁵⁵)	(tɕhaŋlu)		?Tam ² mɿaŋkai
finger	primaŋ	primaŋ	(dzumu)	-priu ⁵³	-bruma	(<i>mdzub-mo</i>)	Tam ^H primci
rain	^L jöʔ	^L joi	^L jö	(naM ¹³)	(ŋam su)		Thak ² ju-wa
mouse	^H ñija	^H ñiwa	^H ñü	(tɕi ¹³ pu ⁵³)	(phijakpa)		
tear	^L mikpaliŋ	^L mikpele	phre	(mik ⁵³ tshi ⁵³)	miŋri	(<i>mig-chu</i>)	Thulung plə
what?	za	za	ɕe	(tsi ¹³)	(haŋ)		
who?	e	ai	ɛ	(su ⁵³)	(?ibi)	(<i>su</i>)	
you	wit	wet	^L ji	?i ⁵³	(nan)		Tam ² ai
foot	tawa	tawa	(kã:lep)	(le ¹³ mɛʔ ⁵³)	(bi)		
ant	bruktila	bruktula	butil	ʂuk ⁵⁵ pu ⁵³		(<i>grog-ma</i>)	Gur ² nabbru
old	^L manba	^L manba		(kɔk ¹³ po ⁵³)	manma		Sunwar maýt (<*man)
ash	bja	thapja (cm)		plA ¹³	(thulu)		Tam ¹ mephra, STC *pla
tooth	kwa	kwa	^H wa	wA ⁵³	ɕa	<i>so</i>	
two	zon	zon	zön	(naI ¹³)	(ŋiktsiŋ)	(<i>gnyis</i>)	
smoke	^L mikun			me ³⁵ kun ⁵³	mu gu		Tam ² mjuku, STC *kuw
come	^L ra-	^L ra-	^L ra-	rA ³⁵			Bahing ra- ‘arrive’
water leech	^L lekpa						Limbu la:kphet
walnut	khuci	khacuʔ, khaʂik (Cm)					Limbu khe:sik
tail	^L mipaŋ	^L mipaŋ, ^H ñipaŋ (Cm)					Tam ¹ me:, STC *r-may
fire	gami	gami	gəm	me ¹³	mi	<i>me</i>	Tam ¹ me

Table: Some Bumthang vocabulary