Workshop: Advances in Trans-Himalayan Studies
Pavel Ozerov

The study of Trans-Himalayan languages – one of the largest families in the world – remains a "niche"-discipline in European linguistics. As the number of documented Trans-Himalayan languages is constantly growing, so grows our understanding of the typologically diverse grammatical profiles of Trans-Himalayan languages, and of the peculiar grammatical phenomena that they exhibit in all domains of grammar: phonology (e.g. tone), morphology (e.g. highly complex verbal paradigms and person-indexing principles), and the interrelation of grammar and pragmatics (e.g. egophoricity, evidentiality, differential argument marking, or pragmatic particles). This workshop aims at bringing together scholars of Trans-Himalayan languages to discuss the current advances in these topics with an emphasis but not restricted to:

- Interrelation of grammar-pragmatics: how can we better account for "pragmatic" particles, argument flagging, and pragmatically-driven verbal categories
- Tone and tonogenesis
- Underdescribed Trans-Himalayan languages: documentation and description
- Understudied grammatical phenomena and categories
- Discourse structuring, spontaneous interaction, and multimodality

Hunter Brown (University of Bern)
Toward a Tonology of Ranglong

Work on Tibeto-Burman languages has contributed massively to the study of linguistic tone in general: the volume of work on the synchrony and diachrony of tone in Chinese varieties is such that they have arguably achieved prototype status among the world's "tone languages," and exemplary tonological studies have been carried out across many other subgroups as well (e.g. Tibetic, rGyalrongic, Lolo-Burmese & Naic). However, the family has also been a source of "atypical" cases and analytical cul-de-sacs which problematize traditional definitions of tone and assumptions about its possible functions within the context of a language's broader phonology. For example, the tone system of Kurtöp has properties usually associated with stress systems (Hyslop 2021), while Standard Burmese tone is also analyzable as a phonation distinction with pronounced pitch correlates (Jones 1986). This study presents another such case, in which phonetic pitch level and contour are tightly bound up with segmental and prosodic features, particularly vowel length and syllable structure.

Ranglong is a member of the Northwestern (erstwhile "Old Kuki") group of South-Central Trans-Himalayan languages spoken by 8,000-10,000 people around the Tripuri-Mizo-Assamese border in Northeast India. Like most languages of the Northwestern group, Ranglong is both endangered and underdescribed. This study presents a preliminary tonological analysis of Ranglong, including minimal tone pairs, phonetic correlates, the tone-bearing unit, sandhi phenomena and, most importantly, segmental interactions. It will be argued that while tone in Ranglong has a low functional load compared with segmental contrasts, it nonetheless exhibits regular patterning and interactions with other phonological domains: in closed syllables, level tones are associated with the long, tense vowels [aː, eː, iː, oː, uː], while falling tones are associated with their short, lax counterparts [ɐ, ɛ, ɪ, ɔ, ʊ]. In open syllables, however, length and tenseness distinctions are neutralized (i.e. all nuclei become long & tense), leaving pitch as the sole contrastive feature for a given vowel phoneme in the absence of a coda. Additionally, the diphthong [uə] with a falling tone often triggers labialization of the preceding consonant, while the same diphthong with a level tone does not. While it is clear that pitch is minimally contrastive in limited contexts, the extent to which tone, segmental vowel features and even consonantal features appear to function as part of a single system suggests that Ranglong may be only marginally tonal, a surprising result given its broader areal and familial contexts—robust tonal contrasts are provisionally reconstructed as far back as Proto-South-Central ("Proto-Kuki-Chin"; VanBik 2009).

The analysis put forward here represents the first description of Ranglong tonal phenomena. To date, few detailed tonological studies have been carried out for Northwestern languages (though Ozerov

2018 is a prominent counterexample), and the few published grammars of these languages tend to treat tone superficially or not at all. As such, it is hoped that these data will prove to be valuable for future research on languages of the Northwestern group, especially with respect to the areal/familial microtypology of tone as well as comparative reconstruction/subgrouping.

Julien Baley and Nathan Hill (Trinity College, Dublin)

The timing and conditioning of the loss of -s in Chinese

The traditional account of the development of the Middle Chinese *qùshēng* 去聲 tone is that it came from an earlier *-s. In syllables in which this *-s followed a *-p, *-t, or *-k, Baxter (1992, 311-314) proposed that the consonant cluster was later simplified by loss of the stop, with *-ks → *-s already affecting the Shījīng, while *-ts > *-js probably occurred later. We present a refined analysis of the phenomenon, based on a corpus of Late Han Chinese transcriptions of Buddhist terms: following a demonstration that the translators chose Chinese characters which closely matched the pronunciation of the source language terms, we examine the characters used to transcribe /s/ in the source language and conclude that they all have *-ts in their Old Chinese reconstruction. The data confirms that *-ts > *-js must have been later than *-ks > *-s, but it also shows that the change *-s > *qùshēng* must have occurred twice, once after *-ks > *-s and before *-ts > *-js, and once after *-ts > *-js and before the translations of our Buddhist corpus. In the process, we also propose revised OC reconstructions for a handful of characters.

Joël Schregenberger (University of Bern)

A first look at Tamar historical phonology

The Tamar (formerly Greater Yakkha-Limbu) languages, spoken by ca. 400.000 people in eastern Nepal and Sikkim, have almost all been described thoroughly, starting in the 1970s. They belong to the Eastern Kiranti group of languages (see Gerber & Grollmann 2018), but few attempts have been made to systematically establish their genetic relationship to one another. Based on regular sound correspondences observed in a large corpus of verb stems modeled on Jacques (2017), a tentative reconstruction of Proto-Tamar phonology is presented, followed by remarks on subgrouping. This diachronic study of Tamar equally contributes to furthering the traditional, bottom-up methodology of reconstruction in Trans-Himalayan linguistics.

Pascal Gerber (University of Bern)

Anomalous modal forms in Kiranti person marking

The Kiranti languages of Eastern Nepal are well-known in Trans-Himalayan linguistics for their biactantial person marking on the verb. Several scholars have assessed this morphology from a diachronic perspective and proposed Proto-Kiranti and Proto-Trans-Himalayan reconstructions of individual morphemes and paradigms as well as pathways and scenarios of change (cf. Bauman 1975, DeLancey 1989, 2010, 2011, van Driem 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1997, Jacques 2012).

However, this previous research has given little attention to the non-"default" modal paradigms, i.e. non-indicative mood. Instead, it has focused on the indicative paradigm and implicitly assumed that no (relevant) differences exist between different modal categories. Although the non-indicative modal paradigms in wide parts do employ the same morphology for the marking of person and number as the indicative, cf. e.g. Mewahang *-num* {IND.2PL→3/ IMP.PL→3}, they also show morphological material not attested in the indicative, e.g. Yakkha *-iga* {IND.2PL.VI} vs. *-ni* {IMP.PL.VI}. Additionally, non-indicative paradigms show marking that, although morphologically transparent, is not identical to the one in the corresponding indicative cell, e.g. Yamphu *-aniŋ* [2PL] {IND.2PL→1SG} vs. *-ŋ-anŋ-e* [1SG-2PL-IMP] {IMP.PL→1SG}.

This talk aims to draw more attention to the non-indicative modal paradigms and their significance for the historical comparison and reconstruction of Kiranti person marking. It presents and describes several case studies of divergences between indicative and non-indicative paradigms, and argues that the forms in the non-indicative paradigms present archaisms that were lost in the indicative paradigm. The evidence for this is both external, i.e. cognates from other Kiranti languages which are still

morphologically transparent, and internal, i.e. distribution, alignment and morphological structure of the forms in question and paradigmatically adjacent forms. As irregular morphology is of paramount importance for historical comparison and reconstruction (cf. Meillet 1925, Hetzron 1976, Hock 2021: 815f), more attention on anomalous modal forms in Kiranti person marking has the potential to provide new insights and forward our understanding of the historical morphology of this branch as well as Trans-Himalayan in general.

Jessica K. Ivani, University of Zurich (Eberhards-Karls-Universität Tübingen); Taras Zakharko (University of Zurich)

Typological Variation in the Expression of Modal Necessity in Trans-Himalayan Languages

This study investigates the formal and semantic variation in expressions of modal necessity, with a particular focus on strong necessity, across a sample of 42 genealogically diverse Trans- Himalayan (T-H) languages. While the existing literature provides descriptive accounts of deontic modality at the level of individual languages, a typologically oriented assessment of these structures is still lacking. This research seeks to address this gap by exploring patterns of formal, functional, and micro-areal convergence and divergence, with the goal of advancing our understanding of necessity expressions within Trans-Himalayan and beyond.

We analyze 65 distinct constructions across 42 languages using a construction-based multicategorization approach (Ivani & Bickel 2024), ensuring high resolution and granularity in the data. We identify patterns of formal and functional convergence.

Our findings reveal significant heterogeneity in the formal realization of strong necessity across T-H, including monoclausal structures, such as nominalizations (e.g., Hakhun Tangsa, Boro 2017) and simple future clauses (cf. Dhimal, King 2009), as well as complex clauses involving multiple predicative units, at times in complementation relations (e.g., Sunwar, Borchers 2008). Modal verbs are frequently derived from verbs with meanings such as 'want' or 'need' (Prinmi, Ding 2014), and, less commonly, from motion verbs (e.g., Ersu, Zhang 2013).

Furthermore, we observe considerable variation in the semantics of these constructions, with some languages conflating multiple modal flavors into a single expression, while others employ a wider array of constructions, each associated with a distinct modal flavor, including variations in polarity (e.g., positive vs. negative strong necessity and obligation, cf. Thulung Rai, Lahaussois 2002).

We will present these findings, and further discuss the typological patterns and their implications.

Selin Grollmann (Universität Bern)

Non-singular number in local scenarios in Kiranti

Kiranti languages show biactantial argument indexation in the finite verbal morphology of transitive or ditransitive verbs and index either one or both arguments with person (1, 2, 3), number (SG, DU, PL) and clusivity (INCL, EXCL) marking. While the patterns of person indexation can be quite consistent for certain scenarios across various Kiranti languages, we can observe a great diversity of marking patterns when it comes to non-singular (DU and PL) number in the local scenarios, i.e. 1→2 and 2→1. Especially the scenarios involving a 1NSG argument show a puzzling variability in their argument indexation pattern, quite in contrast to the local scenarios involving a 1SG argument which show more or less consistent patterning: i.e. the exclusive indexation of the patient argument in 1SG→2 and indexation of both arguments in 2→1SG with a maximal differentiation of the numbers of 2nd person.

The patterns found in the local non-singular cells are so varied that even for shallow small-scale subgroups of Kiranti, such as Upper Arun, no reconstruction of the pattern is possible (cf. Gerber 2023: 654). Synchronically, the scenarios 1NSG→2 and 2→1NSG have been reported to be a frequent locus of restructuring and/or simplification of the paradigm and an area where speakers often seem to have difficulties in producing the "correct" forms (Allen 1975: 49, Michailovsky 2017: 657, Grollmann 2022, Grollmann 2023: 92-103). Many Kiranti languages also have replaced 1NSG object forms with non-finite or impersonal constructions (Ebert 1991, Bickel et al. 2007, Bickel/Gaenszle 2015). Syntactically, the alignment cannot be satisfyingly formulated in purely hierarchical terms, as it is assumed for other Trans-Himalayan languages (DeLancey 1981, 2017, Ebert 1987), but instead in terms of syntactic roles.

This is, however, again a complex issue and different types of alignment are typically associated with different person/number arguments, i.e. 1st/2nd with splits between ergative/neutral alignment and 3rd with splits between accusative/tripartite alignment (cf. Bickel 2008 for Puma, Gerber 2023 for Mewahang, Grollmann 2023 for Nachiring). However, in local scenarios involving a 1NSG argument, generalisations about alignment are often disrupted and exceptions have to be postulated (cf. Grollmann 2023: 418-421).
The role of number in Trans-Himalayan alignment types and hierarchies in general and in local scenarios specifically is often ignored for the sake of simplicity, so that the patterning of non-singular numbers has yet to be explored in more detail. This contribution thus aims to provide a first step in typologizing non-singular arguments in local scenarios in Kiranti.
The talk shall provide a survey of the different argument indexation patterns found in non-singular local scenarios in Kiranti in order to show the great diversity of patterns attested. By doing so, we will pursue the question why we find such a diversity in 1NSG→2 and 2→1NSG as opposed to other scenarios. Possible answers shall be explored, e.g. the potential role of socio-pragmatic effects (Heath 1991, Heath 1998, DeLancey 2018), possible hierarchies related to number and the role of co-argument sensitivity (Grollmann 2023: 381-397, 413-421), and potential areal influence.

Naomi Peck (University of Freiburg)
Towards an interaction-based understanding of SVCs in Tibeto-Burman languages

Serial verb constructions have long been a puzzle for linguistic theory. These constructions – consisting of two or more verbal elements functioning as a single unit without overt linkage which typically encode a single event – have been recognised in a range of Tibeto-Burman languages (e.g. Dzongkha (Watters 2018); Lamkang (Thounaojam & Chelliah 2007); Manange (Hildebrandt 2004)), but are not well recognised as a recurring typological feature of the language family (however, see Muheim 2022). In this talk, I argue that data from serial verb constructions (SVCs) in Tibeto-Burman languages can help us redefine how we should approach SVCs – as an interaction-based phenomenon, rather than a reflection of a cognitive unit.
Serial verb constructions form part of a range of multiverbal constructions in Tibeto-Burman languages. Together with non-finite verb forms, these two structures are often used in regulating narrative flow. While the function of non-finite verb forms in forming discourse paragraphs is well-recognised (see e.g. Genetti 2005), less is known about the role that SVCs play in structuring discourse. Through narrative analysis of texts from three different languages (Kera'a, Duhumbi, and Galo), I show that SVCs can be used to summarise event sequences in a text, as well as to highlight events within a narrative. These uses are distinct from other multiverbal constructions in these languages and cannot be completely explained by reference to single eventhood. I then link these attested discourse functions of SVCs to how the use of SVCs is perceived in Tibeto-Burman-speaking communities. Comments made in descriptive grammars suggest that the "correct" use of SVCs is seen as a mark of a good orator and symbolises a high level of linguistic competency. This suggests that accounting for SVCs is not simply a question of grammar, it is a question of *usage*.

Pavel Ozerov (University of Innsbruck)
Subject form and interpretation in Burmese: multimodality and underspecification

Burmese is a typical East Asian Tibeto-Burman language, with an optional argument expression, no verbal person-indexation, and differential argument marking driven by elusive factors. The argument alignment is nominative-accusative. This study reports preliminary findings on the factors underlying the expression of subject and its differential case marking in a 20-minute sample of a corpus of spontaneous Burmese conversation.
Zero-subjects are the most common strategy (44%) found in the sample. It is commonly associated with 1SG in sequence-starting assertions and 2SG in sequence-starting questions. It could be expected that otherwise a zero would refer to the most accessible continuing referent, yet this is not the case. Around 25% of zero-expressed subjects are cases of referent shifts, mostly shifting between the speaker and another active referent, or between two different 3rd person referents. Studies of written

language suggested that the reference resolution is derived purely from semantic-pragmatic considerations: who is the likeliest referent to perform this action (Ozerov 2015). However, spoken language relies on additional strategies for this purpose, the most notable of which is material recycling, illustrated in (1): the first two clauses with zero-subjects ('said'; 'has heart disease') recycle previous material. For example, the second clause with the precise wording of "have heart disease" unmistakably echoes a previous utterance and thus links it to the relevant accessible referent. The last clause 'startled' shows no explicit cues for self-reference, although the speaker is not the most salient referent at this point. However, contextually he is the most likely referent of the expressed event. Such zero-arguments also demonstrate that precise reference can be unnecessary as interlocutors orient themselves at a "good enough" (Ferreira and Patson 2007) interpretation, with a primary split between "ingroup vs. outgroup" readings. For instance, it remains vague in (1) whether it is only the speaker who startled or also his colleagues. In (2), it remains vague whether the discussion with the "others" involved a single neighbour or the whole family, whether the measuring procedure by the "ingroup" was carried out by the speaker (professional builder) alone, or how much the contractor was involved in it. Such underspecification is found in around a half of the cases, and occasionally creates an intentionally ambiguous reading (cf. "you", de Hoop and Tarenskeen 2015).

Introduction of new or inferable referents is expectedly carried out by full NPs and is found in around a quarter of the examined cases. However, spontaneous speech demonstrates that the NP has numerous additional prosodic and multimodal characteristics making referent activation into a separate, negotiated discourse move. Such NPs are commonly marked by a range of "pragmatic" particles: differential case marking and a few other utterance-structuring markers. The usage of differential case markers and other particles strongly coincides with prosodic partition, as 90% of the cases form a separate Intonation Unit. Moreover, there are multimodal cues accompanying the referent introduction process, such as pointing, head shake, gaze-shift, co-gesture or shifting body posture. The combination of these markers is shown in (3). This has the differential subject marker and an additional discourse marker in both lengthy NPs; the speaker pauses after each NP; and throughout the production of the two NPs he shifts gaze and uses head pointing, returning to the base posture and aligning gaze with the recipient again immediately afterwards. However, new referents can also be introduced with no such markers or cues, if they are transient, as 'time' in (4). This suggests that case-marking and multimodal cues coincide with discourse moves since they are associated with an interactional process of joint attention alignment (O'Madagain and Tomasello 2021), rather than the referent's pragmatic status or a syntactic form.

Hence, the study situates subject expression and differential case marking in the interactional multimodal perspective, demonstrating how the syntactic form and marking are interrelated with multimodal and prosodic cues linked in turn to attention distribution.

Examples

(1) One minute earlier the speaker – a leader of a construction team – said that the neighbours of their current construction site had talked to them and requested to keep the construction process quiet because of the heart disease of the neighbour's grandmother. This evolved into a discussion initiated by another interlocutor about how this request is impossible. The original speaker resumes the abandoned topic with the following utterance.

ʔèda-Ko	pjɔ̀-Ta=Pɰ̃ .	n̥əlǒu-jɔ̀ga	ɕi̱-Tɛ=sʰo	houʔ-kɛ̰	lɑ̃-θwà-Tɛ=Pɔ
this-OBJ	say-R.NMLZ=OBV	heart-disease	be-R=say	right	startled-COS-R=OBV

'[**They**] said that, sure. Since [**this grandma**] has a heart disease, right, [**I/we**] obviously got startled.

(2) The speaker (same as in (1)) tells how a neighbour from a different house came to complain that their house gets lower because of the construction work. He and the contractor of the constructed house went over to check the issue and discuss it.

ʔɛ̰lo-mjò	pjɔ̀=Tɰ̃	ʔəkʰu̱=Tɰ̃	pe-tɕò-nɛ̰	ba-nɛ̰	θetɕʰa-tɑ̃̌i-Kʰɛ̰-pì=Tɰ̃
like.that-kind	say=SEQ	now=SEQ	foot-rope-with	what-with	sure-measure-DIST-after=SEQ

'After [**he/they**] said so, now, [**I/we**] measured [**the house/the house height/etc**.] with a rope.'

(3) The speaker describes the kind of odd jobs he works in. Usually, he says, his friend finds a job and invites him over to work together. He continues:

lɛʔ.ɕi̯ ʔəpjĩ.ʔəlouʔ-te-Kɐ̯-tɕɐ̯.Tɔ̯,… tɕənɔ ko.Tãi louʔ-ta=tɕɐ̯.Tɔ̯, … palata=Pɔ̯
current job-PL-SBJ-DM 1SG self work-R.NMLZ=DM paratha=OBV
'The current job, a job I work myself in, is [preparing] parathas.'
(4) ʔèda-nɛ̯=Pè **ʔətɕʰẽi** kõu-ne-Ta=Pɔ̯
this-with=ATTN **time** be.over-CONT-R.NMLZ=OBV
'That way, **the time** has been passing by.'

Wifek Bouaziz (University of Freiburg)

Silences and turn-taking in Kera'a (Trans Himalayan, Northeast India)

In this talk, I consider the length and positioning of gaps in Kera'a conversation and reflect on the turn-taking rules, coined by Sacks et al. (1974). A gap is an inter-turn silence, occurring after a transition relevance place (Sacks et al. 1974), but before a new turn-at-talk has started (cf. Hoey 2017 for an extensive definition of the different types of silence in conversation). Gail Jefferson's famous 1989 paper as well as others like Stivers et al. 2009 confirm the maximum standard silence to be of one second in length. These studies show that silences longer than one second are usually accounted for by activities that the interlocutors are undertaking, which distract them from the talking activity. If no distracting activity is the reason, such silences are usually a sign of interactional trouble. They proceed, for example, upcoming disagreement, disalignment, and/or disaffiliation (Heritage 1984, Pomerantz 1984, Jefferson 1989, Clayman 2002). While this may hold true for British and American interactions, Scollon and Scollon (1981) as well as Gardner and Mushin (2015) show that the standard maximum silence in Athabskan (North America) and Garrwa (Australia) is of 1,5 seconds, without parallel activities to explain the length of these silent periods. Although some studies argue that transition times may simply differ between languages and cultures (Stivers et al. 2009, Hoymann 2010), other studies, for example Walsh (1991), argue that speakers (Aboriginal Australians in his case) follow a different set of turn-taking rules than those described by Sacks et al. (1974), that the talk is "non-dyadic", and that speakers have a greater tolerance for silence.

Following preleminary fieldwork observations of the Kera'a language in the region of Arunachal Pradesh of India (cf. Peck (2020) and Reinöhl (2022) for preliminary descriptions of the language), this study explores silent inter-turn gaps which substanially exceed the duration reported for Western European languages and are nonetheless not treated as trouble-signalling by the speakers. Taking a closer look to recorded audio-video data of every day casual Kera'a conversation and relying on sequential multimodal analysis (Sacks 1995; Schegloff 2007; Clift 2016), I examine several extracts for the length of gaps, whether these are pre self-selection or post next-speaker-selection, and whether their presence has an effect on the organisation of turn-taking, whether the Kera'a follow a different set of rules, like Walsh (1991) argued for.

In the data, the presence of gaps as well as the general lack of backchannel behaviour (nodding, humming, saying yes, etc.) is noticeable. Turns, however, seem to be organized in the same manner that Sacks et al. (1974) described, adding more proof to the universality of the rules of turn-taking. At the same time, while some gaps are accounted for by other activities parallel to talk, most of them are not. These gaps are, however, not oriented to as problematic or troublesome by the interlocutors. As such, even if they are longer than the standard maximum silence described in the literature for British and American interaction, they do not signal trouble because they are not oriented to as such.

Susie Kanshouwa (University of Bern)

Person Markings in Kashung

Kashung is a southern Tangkhul village located in Kamjong district of Manipur, in northeast India. The village shares a common origin and migration story and kin numeratives (Wanglar 2014) with the larger Mote group (Kanshouwa 2018) of eastern Manipur. Kashung language has never been described before. But it is mutually intelligible to some extend with the Ramyang (Mongmi) varieties of Saibol and Narum (Kanshouwa 2023) due geographical contact and cultural exchange. The language also has lexical similarities with Sorbung (Mortensen & Keogh 2011) and other Northwest South-Central languages (Konnerth 2022). Many of these languages have preverbal and postverbal person markings that can

either be traced to the archaic proto-Tibeto-Burman forms, or ascribe to the newly innovated forms found in Kuki-chin languages (see Delancey 1989, 2010, 2011, 2013, 2014; Driem 1993, Peterson 2003). For instance, Saibol and Narum, two neighboring languages of Kashung have both preverbal and post-verbal person agreement (Kanshouwa 2024).
So based on shared ancestry and existing research, this paper will bring in new perspective of person markings from Kashung. It will be crucial for advancing the current knowledge in Trans-Himalayan linguistics in general, but also more specifically for understanding the research gap between Tangkhul and Maring languages.

Uta Reinöhl (University of Freiburg)
Shamanic languages as windows into pre-history - An overview of Igu

This talk offers a linguistic survey of Igu, the shamanic language of the Kera'a (also "Idu" or "Idu Mishmi") people, taking off from the sketch grammar Reinöhl, Pulu & Wallner (2024). Shamanic languages often retain ancestral linguistic terms and structures, and thus have a unique potential to illuminate Tibeto-Burman linguistic and cultural pre-history. However, many such ritual languages in the Eastern Himalayas await detailed or any investigation, even while (sometimes severely) endangered, if they are still in use at all (but see e.g. Gaenszle (ed.) 2018, Morey 2022). This talk takes steps towards filling this gap for Igu, offering a survey of its phonology, lexicon and syntax, and relating it to Kera'a - the language of everyday communication in Kera'a society - as well as to additional neighboring varieties.
The corpus collected for this study consists of about 8 hours of audio-video recordings of two different rituals, the Ayi ritual and the Kaliwu ritual. Both of these are performed in order to heal illness or ask for the well-being of a person, with the former being much more elaborate extending over several hours, and the latter being shorter, lasting under an hour. The Ayi ritual was recorded once and the Kaliwu ritual three times, all of them in high audio quality. Two of the Kaliwu rituals were performed by the same shaman, whereas the third Kaliwu and the Ayi ritual were performed by two different shamans. This corpus thus allows to conduct comparative work along several dimensions, namely of the same ritual performed by the same shaman, of the same ritual as performed by different shamans, and of performances across two different types of rituals. Extensive audio and video recordings of transcription and translation sessions add valuable information on content, language, symbolic meanings and mythological background.
This talk will, firstly, provide a general overview of the content and structure of Igu rituals (see Blackburn 2005, Dele [Delley] 2018, Delley 2021, 2023). Secondly, I will discuss how Igu relates to modern Kera'a with respect to phonology, lexicon and syntax, drawing comparisons to recent work by Morey (2022) on Wihu, a ritual 'song' language in the geographically close Tangsa-Nocte varieties. Thirdly, I will highlight the role of dyadic speech (or 'speaking in pairs') including rhyming as well as non-rhyming pairs, and its potential to support the historical-comparative method. This stylistic device has been described as having significant organizational importance in the structure of ritual speech and oral art around the world (Fox 1988, Ong 1982), and it also pervades Igu chanting.

Marius Zemp (University of Bern)
The evidential contrasts of Kaike and Kutang and the tones of Northern Ghale — Tibetic influence on peripheral members of the Tamangic language family

Having reconstructed the main paths on which evidential contrasts grammaticalized in the Tibetic language family (Zemp 2017), the project 'Evidentiality in Time and Space' (funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation) gave me the opportunity to study evidential contrasts described for languages that have had contact with Tibetic, such as Wutun, Southern Mongolic, Tshangla, and Kaike. While the Tibetic influence may be pinned down in all of these cases, the number of verbal morphemes which reflect Tibetic matter or patterns is particularly high in the last case. This is not surprising, given that all Kaike speakers are also fluent in the Tibetic variety spoken in the same valley, Tichurong Poike (Regmi 2012).

Kaike appears to have borrowed from Poike prospective *-ce* and 'perspectivizing' *-ta* without changing form or function, while the Poike verb form *pǫ* (< **bo*) 'went' became employed in Kaike as a suffix indicating past events over which the speaker had no control. This *-bo* became contrasted with a *-pa* implying control, which is used in corresponding ways in Western Tamang (see Mazaudon 2017: 474, 482, 486, etc.) and thus appears to reconstruct to a common ancestor of Kaike and Tamang, which likely borrowed it from Tibetic (Zemp & Schindler to appear). Kaike *-ɲi*, finally, derives from the inherited verb *n(y)i* meaning 'go' found in Western Tamang (Taylor 1973: 162) and Nar-Phu (Noonan & Hildebrandt 2017: 537), but its 'potential' function was calqued on the Poike verb *ɖo* 'go' (which is used as a 'potential' suffix in Poike as well as Ladakhi, see Koshal 1979: 192).

In the last year of our project, I got to do fieldwork also on Kutang (Ghale, KG), another peripheral Tamangic language for which evidential contrasts have been documented. Kutang is particularly interesting, because the binary contrasts described by Donohue & Gautam (2019) for its existential and equative copulas appear to be missing not only in Southern Ghale (SG, Paudel 2008), but also in the even more closely related Northern Ghale (NG) variety (as my own data shows), see Table 1.

copulas		existential		equative	
Ghale	Kutang	*jaŋ* (egophoric)	*goŋ* (allophoric)	*na* (egophoric)	*noŋ* (allophoric)
	Northern	*(kʰ)jaŋ*	–	–	–
	Southern	*kʰjəŋ*	–	–	–

Table 1: existential and equative copulas in three Ghale varieties

As can be seen in Table 1, NG and SG have a highly plausible source of one of the existential copulas, namely what became the 'egophoric' existential copula in Kutang, but apparently no cognates of the 'allophoric' existential copula or the two equative copulas (equations are expressed by means of juxtaposition in SG, see Paudel 2008: 180, as well as in NG). While the existential copula *goŋ* likely derives from the verb *koŋ* 'sit, sat down' documented by Webster (1992: 64) for Kutang as well as two Tamang varieties of the lower Budhi Gandaki valley (note that the Tibetic allophoric existential copula *duk* similarly derives from a verb meaning 'stayed, was there', see Zemp 2017), the equative copulas more likely reflect Tibetic matter (I will present hypotheses as to their sources).

What makes the study of KG and NG even more promising is that we find the opposite situation for word tone. A tentative investigation of the almost sixty stories I collected with the help of Tharpa Lama from KG and NG speakers of nine different villages suggests that NG like SG (see Khadgi 2021) has distinctive word tone (Zemp 2024), but KG doesn't.