Endangered Language Alliance presents

Unheard of!
part 4
The Himalayas
Mustang, Sherpa & Tibetan
Endangered Language Alliance

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

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

- With the help of Bowery Arts + Science, we present a 10 part series highlighting the poetry and song of different endangered language communities.
- Each community is represented by local NYC populations, fighting to keep their languages vital in their new home.
Pt. 4: The Himalayas

- Today we present several Tibeto-Burman languages of Nepal and Tibet.
Pt. 4: The Himalayas

- Today we present several Tibeto-Burman languages of Nepal and Tibet.
- These communities are mostly composed of new immigrants to New York (last 10-15 years) but now have very significant populations within the city.
Pt. 4: The Himalayas

- Today we present several Tibeto-Burman languages of Nepal and Tibet.
- These communities are mostly composed of new immigrants to New York (last 10-15 years) but now have very significant populations within the city.
- Yet, they are still relatively unknown to outsiders.
Pt. 4: The Himalayas

- Uniquely, NYC is home to several major Tibetan organizations and museums.
Pt. 4: The Himalayas

- Uniquely, NYC is home to several major Tibetan organizations and museums.
- As is generally the case, anthropologists, linguists and historians are primarily interested in preservation.
Pt. 4: The Himalayanas

- Uniquely, NYC is home to several major Tibetan organizations and museums.
- As is generally the case, anthropologists, linguists and historians are primarily interested in preservation.
- However, the communities in question are also interested in continuation.
Pt. 4: The Himalayas

- Today we present another side of Tibetan and other Tibeto-Burman cultures.
Pt. 4: The Himalayas

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

● The classification of languages by historical relationships
  ○ Inherited cognates
  ○ Shared Innovations
● Families are biggest groups linguists can identify with a degree of certainty
● Isolates have no known relatives
Present day distribution of language groups
Sino-Tibetan Family

- Tibeto-Burman
  - Burmese, etc.
  - Tibeto-Kanauri
    - Bodic
      - Tibetan Dialects
        - Mustangi
        - Sherpa
    - Tamangic
      - Gurung
  - Sinitic
    - Chinese languages
Mustang
A few features of linguistic interest
# Tonogenesis

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

- Mandarin:

<p>| | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(mā)</td>
<td>(má)</td>
<td>(mǎ)</td>
<td>(mà)</td>
<td>(ma)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘mother’</td>
<td>‘bother’</td>
<td>‘horse’</td>
<td>‘scold’</td>
<td>QM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written Tibetan</td>
<td>Lhasa Tibetan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>རོ = sa</td>
<td>sá  ‘earth’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>དོ = za</td>
<td>sà  ‘eat’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Tones - Tibetan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Written Tibetan</th>
<th>Lhasa Tibetan</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>རྟ</td>
<td>tá</td>
<td>‘horse’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>མཐོ་མཇུ</td>
<td>tʰá</td>
<td>‘end’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ཀ་ལྟ</td>
<td>tʰà</td>
<td>‘now’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>མད</td>
<td>tà [ⁿdà]</td>
<td>‘arrow’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tones – Gurung

1) /le (high, falling) ‘moon’

2) /le (mid, level) ‘tongue’

3) /le (low, breathy) ‘many’
Tones – Gurung

1) $mbi$ high falling ‘tail’
2) $mbi$ mid/high level (long?) ‘fire’
3) $mbi$ mid/high level (short?) ‘eye’
4) $mbi$ low rising; breathy ‘person’
Case marking – Sherpa

daw-i  daŋ  tɬakpa la  tʰonŋ suŋ
Dawa-ERG yesterday Lakpa OBL see SFP
'Dawa saw Lakpa yesterday.'
(Zhang 11/11/13, NYU fieldmethods)

dawa tʃaŋbu we
Dawa clever SFP
'Dawa is clever.'
(Zhang 11/11/13, NYU fieldmethods)
Evidentiality

Roman Jakobson:
“Languages differ essentially in what they must convey and not in what they may convey.”
Evidentiality

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

Van Driem (2002:35)

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

‘Aphi ’mi d’i dr’ungnyi ’ing
That man the clerk be
‘That man is a clerk.’
Assimilated knowledge

(Van Driem 2002)

‘Aphi ’mi d’i dr’ungnyi ’immä
That man the clerk be
‘That man is a clerk.’
Acquired knowledge
Evidentiality – Dzongkha

Nga khêko yö
I strong be
‘I am strong.’
Assimilated knowledge

Chö j’ârim dû
You beautiful be
‘You are beautiful.’
Acquired knowledge

(Van Driem 2002)
Program

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

The kindness of my gracious horse
I wanted to repay it
But I lost him at the hands
of a deceitful ruler
Even if I want I can’t repay him
Oh...Lama and the Three Jewels
Because of this bestow your compassion

Om Mani Padme Hum
The kindness of my gracious dri (female yak)
I wanted to repay it
But I lost her at the hands of a slaughterous ruler
Even if I want I can’t repay her
Oh…Lama and the Three Jewels
Because of this bestow your compassion

Om Mani Padme Hum
The kindness of my gracious parents
I wanted to repay it
But they left to the land of a foreign ruler
Even if I want I can’t repay them
Oh…Lama and the Three Jewels
Because of this bestow your compassion
_Om Mani Padme Hum_
Mustangi Song

by Tenzin Wangmo

Dagu yeta yonta
Lhayi shuk ta dajung
Dagu goru shuken misang
ser ki dongpo
Jamo riksha domo
Thorang shangne gang je?

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

Noble men sit on their thrones.

Why have the birds woken up so early?
Mustangi Song by Tenzin Wangmo

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

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

Tangpo meyok gyuken milang kamed thung jung
Nyen dang phama debdu
Nang sa demed jung sung
Nyen kyi buchung gyang ne
Sem la kyon nang bar
Dhomed Tibetan dance

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

a modern Tibetan song by Jamphel and Sonam

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

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

At Lhasa Norbu Ling
Don’t say there is no jewel
Yeshi Norbu (‘Wisdom Jewel,’
Buddha, His Holiness)
If this is not a jewel, what is?
Mrs. Sonam Lhamo was a professional performer for the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts in Dharamsala, India. She is dedicated and passionate about Tibetan cultural preservation, with the youth in particular and teaches Tibetan language, dance, and music classes. We the Himalayan Language and Cultural Program are happy to have Mrs. Sonam la as a key leading guru for the children.