As we learn from Buddhist teachings, nothing is permanent in our world. This is true for the appearance of sentient beings and plants as well as for cultural artefacts, including languages.

Deliberately, I will not follow the classical orthography of Choskat, but use a simplified version of Phalskat, based on the Leh dialect. Since an ideal script should mirror the sounds of a language (Lobsang Tsewang at the 13th IALS seminar in Kargil 2005), letters will not be written when they are not sounded or have no phonetic impact on other letters (exceptions are made for names, religious and grammatical terms). This means that the grammatical b- prefix of verbs will not be written, and the prefixes m- and h- will only be written when they support a voiced pronunciation (voiced consonants would be pronounced unvoiced otherwise). When a simplified form is used for the first time, traditional spelling will be given in brackets. (As for the title: $À corresponds to $À, 1ë#<À to 2ë#<À, !À to 0",À). Following the grammar of the Leh dialect implies that the agent of transitive clauses is marked as a possessor (ë7ÜÀ instead of ë<À). The spelling of other grammatical particles follows the current conventions of Phalskat writing.

This spelling style follows as close as possible the linguistic principles that guided those who introduced the Tibetan script. It is thus far more radical than the moderate Phalskat spellings current in Ladakh. This style is meant to facilitate the understanding of the text (one simply has to read it aloud), as well as to provide an example of the manifold possibilities for adjusting the Tibetan script to the needs of the Ladakhi language. Hopefully, it demonstrates that even academic texts can be written in simple Phalskat. Whether it can be a model or not, is ultimately up to the Ladakhi people. Understanding the mental effects that unconventional spellings can have, the author apologises to all those scholars who feel utterly uncomfortable with this text.

In linguistics, /…/ is used for rendering the pronunciation. In the Budik part I will use ‘instead, whereby I will have to follow the conventions of the Roman script: consonants are to be read as consonants only, in the order they are written. Vowels are indicated by the ‘vowel sign’ for the vowel ‘a’ with the appropriate super- and subscripts.
The development of the species is documented through imprints of now-extinct beings in the sediments of former lakes or oceans. These imprints are called fossils. In the case of flower-like fossils, people in Ladakh talk of 'stone flowers'.

Likewise, the various stages in the development of a language leave their imprints in so-called 'frozen' or 'fossilised' forms, i.e. forms that cannot be formed according to the actual grammatical or phonetic rules, but have been inherited from an earlier stage of the language.

In the following I want to give an example for the reconstruction of the development of West Tibetan, the varieties spoken in Ladakh and Baltistan.

It is commonly accepted that among all modern Tibetan varieties the pronunciation of the Balti and western Ladakhi dialects comes closest to the spelling of the 'original' Tibetan language as documented from the mid 7th century.

The complex consonant clusters at the beginning of a syllable are to a great extent retained, thus WrT (Written Tibetan) skad 'language' and dpe-sgra 'speech' are /skat/ and /spera/ even in Leh. Western Sham has still /rhta/ for WrT rta

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1 क्षे (khanak) क्षेत्र (khanak) क्षे क्षेत्र (khanak)
2 प्रहुस्र (phrugu) प्रहुस्र (phrugu) प्रहुस्र (phrugu)
3 क्राक (khrak) क्राक (khrak) क्राक (khrak)
4 ग्री (gri) ग्री (gri) ग्री (gri)
‘horse’ (Leh /sta/), /zbyar/ for WrT sbyar ‘summer’ (Leh /yar/), /phrugu/ for WrT phrugu ‘child’ (Leh /thruG/), while Purik and Balti still have /khrag/ for WrT khrag ‘blood’ (Leh, Sham /thrak/) and /gri/ for WrT gri ‘knife’ (Leh, Sham /tri/).

However, this phonetic conservatism is only found with lexemes or the meaning parts of a word, but not with morphemes or the grammatical parts of a word. Thus the Old and Classical Tibetan grammatical prefixes of the verb indicating the temporal relation between an event and the utterance are missing in Balti and Ladakhi as well as in all other Tibetan varieties except the north-eastern ones. Thus, two western scholars (Shafer 1950/51 and Bielmeier 2004) have suggested that ‘Western Archaic Tibetan’, i.e. Balti, Purik, and western Sham, represents an early stage of Tibetan, where those grammatical prefixes had not yet developed.

The grammatical prefixes, however, must have been in use even in West Tibetan and must have disappeared from the language gradually, not without leaving some traces of their former presence. In many Tibetan varieties the Written Tibetan prefixes that are no longer pronounced word initially can be
heard at syllable boundaries and thus in bound word forms, provided the preceding syllable ends in a vowel. This 'revitalisation' of mute lexical prefixes was first observed in Central Tibetan compound forms of numbers, e.g. WrT bcu ‘10’ and WrT bzi ‘4’ pronounced as /cū/ and /ši/ become /cūši/ ‘14’ and /šicu/ ‘40’. This feature can also be observed in the Ladakhi dialects (cf. Koshal 1979: 31).

Besides in compound numbers, the Written Tibetan nasal prefixes mG and ḥG, which have become mute in word initial position, can frequently be heard at syllable boundaries of compounds in Ladakhi (Shawe 1894; Koshal 1979: 32). Similarly the mute bG prefix can be heard at syllable boundaries of compounds (Shawe 1894; he gives only one example).

In the course of time, the prefix ḥG (originally a voiced velar fricative) was pronounced as an unspecified, often homorganic nasal (/ŋb/, /nb/, or /m/). In most cases, the nasal prefixes m- and h- originally had a purely lexical function, while the b- prefix can be found in half of all instances as an originally lexical prefix and in the other half as an originally grammatical prefix. All prefixes shifted their position and became attached to the preceding syllable as if they were suffixes. In the following I will present a
selection of examples (for all abbreviations see end of article):

Lexicalised nasal prefix (kha-ма chu 'beak, bill':
- RAM, HAM, HML, CEM, LEH, LEH2 /kham-chu/, SAS, DOM, ACH, GARK, ARA, BAL (SPR) /kham-cu/.

- rgya-mtsho 'sea, ocean' or 'river':

- chu-mgo, lit. 'head of water':
  GYA, SAS /chu-go/, HML, KHAL, LEH /chum-go/ 'beginning of water (first wave)', LEH also 'land at the beginning of a river, near the mountain'; DOM /chup-go/ 'beginning of water (first wave)' in contrast to /chum-go (khor)/ 'place around the beginning of a river'; SHA /chugo/ ~ /chup-go/, GARK /chum-go/ 'land at the beginning of a river' (also used as a loan in Brokskat) in contrast to /chugo/ 'beginning of the water'; ACH /chum-go/ 'beginning of the water, beginning of a canal, upper part of river'; but ARA /chugo/ 'beginning of the water'; BAL (SPR) /chugo/ 'first fields to receive water supply'.

- chu-mjig 'end of the water':
  HML, SHA, KHAL, DOM, ACH, ARA /chumjuk/ 'remaining part of the water', ACH also 'end of a canal'; LEH /chun-juk/, GARK /chumzuk/ 'land at the lower part of the river' (also as a loan in Brokskat), DOM /chum-juk khor/ 'place around the end of a river'.

- chu-hdzom 'confluence':
  GYA, DOM, ARA /chun-dzom/, but SHA, LEH /chudzom/, GARK /chudzoms/.
- rdzu-kphrul 'magic, supernatural':

- sa-hbu 'maggot':
  HML, GYA, GARK /sam-bu/, SHA /cam-bu/; but HAM /Sabu/, LEH, SAS, KHAL, DOM /Sabutsik/.

- sa-gulgul 'earthquake':

- sa-tshams 'border, frontier':
  RAM, GYA, CEM, HML, SHA, ARA /san-tsam/, LEH, SAS, DOM /san-tshams/, HAM, LEH2 /sam-tshams/.

Morphologically relevant nasal ( 돌아오는 회로에서 나는 이 기의 암체가 아닙니다)
- kha-hdon 'by heart':
  HAM, GYA, SHA, CEM, LEH, LEH2 /khan-don/, ACH, GARK (heard), ARA /kham-don/; cf. DOM /kham-don/ 'morning prayer (performed without looking into the text)'.

- mg-ukhor 'head-turning, dizziness':
  HAM /gokhor/ ~ /gom-khor/ 'dizziness, confusion'; RAM /gom-khor/ 'accident'; GYA /gokhor/ ~ /gom-khor/, CEM /gokhor/ ~ /gom-khor/, IGU, LEH, LEH2, SAS, DOM, ACH, GARK /gom-khor/, TUR /goy-khor/ 'dizziness, confusion'; ARA /gom-khor/ 'puzzling, unclear'; SHA /gom-khor/ 'dizzy' in contrast to /gokhor/ 'confusing'.

- hdra-hdra 'equal':
  RAM, HAM, GYA, SHA, CEM, LEH, LEH2, SAS, KHAL (Kesar), DOM, PUR (Bailey 1920: 37), CIK-He, GARK, ARA /dram-dra/, but BAL (SPR) /dradra/.

- rdo-chan 'stone':
‘carriable stone’ (cf. JÄ K /dom-chan/ rdo-hchay ‘a stone of such a size as may be grasped by the hand’ and the OT/CT verb hchay / bcaŋ / bcaŋ / chay(s) ‘to keep in one’s hand’). ... ... ...  

Lexicalised labial prefix (्दर्क्त लब्ध श्री गौर ग्राम तिन जगत्त नाम)  

- भक्तिं भयं ‘undesirable order, scolding (hon):’  

- हेकै ‘profit’:  

- गुरु ‘square’:  

- नगो ‘havest’ (cf. JÄ K btsah ‘bring forth’):  
  GYS, SHA, CEM, LEH /ŋa-pbsa/, SAS, DOM, ACH, TUR, GARK /rhŋa-pbsa/, ARA, Kargil (according to GARK) /rhŋa-pbsa/.  

- होगयल ‘difficulty, trouble (hon):’  

- रेब ‘frame of a door or window’:  
  HAM, HRD /reb-ži/, GYA, IGU, CEM, SAS, DOM, ACH, GARK, ARA /rib-ži/ ‘frame of a door or window’ (ARA only rarely used).  

- हाबगड ‘(loud or wild) laughter’:  

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6 The realisation as /pž/ is most probably due to the elicitation context, in normal speech there should be voicedness assimilation either as /bž/ or as /pš/.  
7 The ‘correct’ spelling would be हाबगड or हाबगड (JÄ K), but the spelling वाबगड seems to be attested for the simple word ‘laughter’, cf. TETT. The asterisk * is used here for a hypothetical or reconstructed form, but according to linguistic conventions it will also be used in the following for forms that are not used.
‘laughter’; DOM /hab-rgot/ ‘loud, aggressive laughter (not coming from the heart)’, ACH /hav-rgot/ ‘senseless laughter’; TUR /havgot/ ‘laughter that does not come from the heart’, LLV /habrgad/ ‘wild laughter’; but GARK heard /har-got-cas/ ‘lough’.

Morphologically relevant labial

− mgo-bskor ‘turning so the head’:

− chu-btso ‘barley or wheat flour of boiled grain’:
  HAM /chup-tsos/, HML, GYA, IGU, SHA, CEM /chup-tse/, DOM /chup-tsos/ ‘mixture of roasted barley and the left-over from chaang (/bajna/)’, LEH /chip-tsos/ ‘fried grain that has been washed and left for sprouting’; GARK /chip-tsos/ ‘fried food’; DRS /chup-tsos(i kholak)/ ‘barley soaked in water, roasted when half dry, and ground into flour’, ‘pap made out of this flour’, SAS, KHAL, ACH, ARA /chup-tsos/ ‘anything boiled in water’, HRD /chup-tsos/ ‘dried vegetable put into boiling water (in order to get rid of insects etc.)’.

− no-btsho ‘shopping, trade, commerce’:

− dop-cak ‘(artificially) broken stone’:

− dop-chot, ‘able to cut stones’ (name of Kesar’s sword):
  GYA (Kesar songs) /dop-chot/ ~ /dop-p-chot/ or /dop-chos-ral dri/, SAS /rai rdo-p-cat/, /rai rdo-p-chot/, KHAL (Kesar) /rdop-cot/, DOMb /rdop-chot/, GARK (Kesar) /rdop-cot-me ragi/ ‘able to cut

8 Such spellings are known from Old Tibetan.
stones'; but SHA (in Kesar story) /dochot/, STOK (Kesar) /docotme raldrí/, cf. LLV दोट /dóchód.

- दोबात्सिंग rdoba-brtsigs ‘stacking, staple of stones, built of stones’:
  GYS /dop-sik/ ~ /do’p-sik/, DOM /rdoar-tsiks/ ~ /rdoap-rhtsiks/, GARK /rdoap-rhtsiks/, ARA /rdortsik/ ~ /rdop-rhtsik/; but HML /dóasics/, SHA /dorsik/, LEH /doartsik/, HRD /rdorartsik/, SAS, ACH, DRS /rdorartsiks/ (but, according to DRS, possibly with /-p-/ in the Batalik area or Ciktan).

- नोएडा snaq-rna-bcad ‘nose/ear cutting’:
  GYS /nap-cat/ ‘cutting of the nose (a punishment)’ in contrast to /nacat/ ‘cutting of the ear (a punishment)’; SHA /nap-cat/ ‘someone, whose nose is cut’ in contrast to /nam-cat/ ‘someone whose ear is cut’; DOM /snacat/ ~ /snap-cat/ ‘someone with too short a nose’ used as a nick name; SAS, ACH /nap-cat/ ‘broken or cut nose, someone having such nose’; DRS /rhnap-cat/ ‘someone with a short or cut nose’ in contrast to /rhncat/ ‘someone whose ear is cut’; but LEH /nacat/ ‘nose cutting’ or ‘ear cutting’.

- मिसाड (क्हिसाड) mi-bsad (khi-bsad):
  GYA /mip-sat (khip-sat)/ ~ /misat (khisat)/ ‘habitual murderer’ in contrast to /misat (khisat)/ ‘murderer’; SKY, ACH /mip-sat/ ‘one who has killed, murder’, GARK /mip-sat(pa)/ ~ /mip-sot(pa)/ mi-bsad(pa), DRS /mip-sat/ ‘murderer, killer’; but LAD (RAM) /misat/ ‘murderer, killer’; SHA, LEH, SAS, DOM, HRD, ARA /misat/ ‘murderer, killer’; TUR /misat khisat/ ‘killing, trouble making’.

- ब्डोइ’ za-bthuj ~ za-btuj ‘food’:
  RAM, BĀL (SPR) /zap-thunj/, ‘food management, catering’; GYA, SAS, DOM /zap-thunj/ ‘eating and drinking’, LEH2 heard /zap-tunj/; but HAM (bzjbthuj), HML, SHA, LEH, GARK, HRD, TUR /zathuj/.

- घोटोल्ड bzo-bltka ‘appearance’:
  HAM (bzolta), GYA, SHA, CEM /zop-ta/, LEH, DOM /zos-ta/ ~ /zop-

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9 Originally, the first meaning was given only in the form with -b-.
sta/; but LEH2, SAS, CIK-He, GARK, HRD, DRS, TUR /zos-ta/, ARA /zo-sta/ ~ /zos-ta/ ‘appearance’.

− ḥo-btsags ‘milk-sieve’:

− ša-btsos ‘boiled meat (inner organs)’:
  GYS /ša-btse/; SAS, DOM, ACH (not sure), ARA (not very common) /šap-tsos/ ‘boiled meat’; but SHA /catse/, LEH, HRD /šatsos/ ‘boiled meat, meat ready to be eaten’.


Many people would state that the feature described is found in their home dialect, but that it should not be there in the ‘real’ language. The reason given is that monks do not pronounce prefixes when reading religious texts. I would think, however, that if prefixes are written in Classical Tibetan, their pronunciation would, in fact, constitute the only ‘true’ language.

The nasal prefix ḥ- also occurs frequently in negated verb forms when the initial is voiced, e.g. /mi/ + /dra/ (WrT ḥdra) ‘similar’ > /min-dra/ ‘not similar, special’, /ma/ + /but/ (WrT hbud) ‘fall’ > /mam-but/ ‘did not fall’. With respect to the negation particle mi, this feature can be found in the central Tibetan, as well as in all Ladakhi dialects.
With respect to the negation particle *ma*, it seems to be restricted to the western Sham dialects. In some of these dialects the nasal prefix was generalised and appears before all voiced initials, whether the verb had an original nasal prefix or not (cf. Zeisler 2004: 612, isogloss 10). Cf. the following examples from the Kesar epic, as recorded in Khalsi 1996.

Negation marker *mi* (मिन-नामा)

- /mi-gor/ निगर नहोगर ‘(I) will not be late’
- /mi-duk/ ~ /minuk/ निडुक निमडुक ‘is not (there, visual experience)’
- /mi-ba/ निबा निमबा ‘(I) will not do’
- /mi-dzemskancik/ निडाम्स्कंचिक मिंदेस्मकंचिक ‘one that is not avoiding’

Negation marker *ma* (मा)

- /ma-gat/ माग निगट ‘didn’t like’
- /ma-gansok/ मागंसोक मिंगांसोक ‘was not filled’
- /ma-jiks/ माजिग्स ‘was not afraid’
- /ma-drik/ माजिग्रिग ‘was not right’
- /ma-drupa/ माजिग्रुप ‘not having accomplished’
- /ma-drülba/ माजिग्रुल्बा ‘not walking’
- /ma-but/ माजिबुट ‘did not fall’
- /ma-bana/ माजिबना मिंगाना ‘if (you) will not do’
- /ma-borskhantsokle/ माजिबार्स्कंचिकले मिंगार्स्कंचिकले ‘was not put down’

By contrast the grammatical prefix *b*- is never found in negation – or is it?

One should know that in the Purik and Balti dialects the expression for prohibition has
been assimilated to the expression of command, while in all other Tibetan varieties, the command form cannot be used for prohibitions. Instead, the present stem has to be used, thus the regular Ladakhi prohibition is /macha/ (WrT macha) ‘don’t go’ or /matag/ (WrT ma-taŋ < OT ma-taŋ) ‘don’t give’, whereas in Purik and Balti it is /mason/ (WrT mason) or /ma-tot/ (WrT ma-taŋ < OT matoŋ).

But when the bilingual Aryans of Dah speak the Ciktan Purik dialect, they not only say /masot/ ‘don’t kill’, they even say /map-sot/ or /map-sodaŋ/ (WrT ma-bpso < OT masod). Surprising as this pronunciation may be, the verb /sat/ ‘kill’ is apparently the only verb where the prefix remains. It does not appear with the verbs /cak/ ‘break’: /macok/; /cat/ ‘cut’: /macot/, /tap/ ‘throw’: /mabtop/, /co/ ‘construct’: /macos/, and /sat/ ‘tell’: /mašot/.

One may argue that a single expression is not enough for the reconstruction of language development. But as in evolutionary biology, we must be content with what we find in the sediments of language history. When reconstructing the evolution of animals, we cannot always hope to find plenty of skeletons, we are quite lucky if we find a single bone. As fragmentary as the
present evidence might be, by comparing it cautiously with the \( b \)-prefix in nominal compounds and the nasal prefix in negation and compounds, we can safely assume, that the \( b \)-prefix once was a reality in the dialects of Ladakh and Baltistan.

The particular example of the Aryan-Purik prohibition also allows us to draw the following conclusion: in most verbs with a \( b \)-prefix in the past stem in Old Tibetan, this prefix must have been over-generalised and used for the present stem as well as for the imperative stem. Since the \( b \)-prefix is incompatible with aspiration, the initial of the imperative stem lost its aspiration. The same happened to a few aspirated present tense forms, while voiced present tense forms became unvoiced, due to the prefix.

After some time, the prefix gradually became silent, but was kept in fixed expressions (such as compounds), commands and the corresponding prohibitions. Then the prefix disappeared from the plain command, but remained for a while in the prohibition before being dropped there as well. As the Aryans of Dah use the Ciktan Purik dialect only as a second language, they might not always have been following the development of the Ciktan dialect proper. For this reason the fossilised \( b \)-prefix survived up to our days.
I would be very happy if any one who has heard the use of the b- prefix after negation in his or her home dialect or is even still using it himself or herself would contact me by e-mail:

zeis@uni-tuebingen.de

Pronunciation guide (IPA = International Phonetic Alphabet)

γ (IPA) gh (voiced velar fricative)
η (IPA) ng (velar nasal)
c Indian style ’ch’, IPA ʧ (non-aspirated alveo-palatal fricative)
ch Indian style ’chh’, IPA ʧʰ (aspirated alveo-palatal fricative)
ṅ ny, IPA ɲ (alveo-palatal nasal)
d (IPA) dh (voiced dental fricative)
ʒ zh, IPA ʒ (voiced postalveolar fricative)
ʃ sh, IPA ʃ (unvoiced postalveolar fricative)
ç (IPA) hy (unvoiced palatal fricative)

Abbreviations

1. Dialects and Informants

ACH Achinathang: Skarma Namthak
ARA Aranu: Tsering Youdon
BAL Balti, unspecific
CEM Cemre: Padma Dohar
CIK-He Ciktan, (Hermann n.d.)
CT Classical Tibetan (choskat)
DOM Domkhar: Tsegwang Tharchin (a) and Thrinlas Chosphel (b)
DRS Dras: Dr. Saleem Mir
GARK Garkoon: Stanzin Angmo
GYA Gya Sasoma: Tshomo Mingyur
HML Hameling: Tsering Angmo
HRD Hardas: Archo Saida
IGU Igo: Padma Dorje (through Rincen Dolkar)
LAD (Central) Ladakhi, unspecific
LEH Leh town, adjacent villages: Thrinlas Wangmo and various interlocutors
LEH2 Leh, migrant’s second generation: Rincen Dolkar
LLV Francke (1905–41), Khalsi
KHAL Khalsi, narrator and main interlocutor: meme Tondup Tsering
KPL Khapulu (Read 1934)
I would like to thank all of the above-mentioned informants and narrators. Special thanks go to: meme Stanzin Chosphel from Dah, narrator of the Kesar story (1996), where I found the prohibition form /map-sat/; to Roland Bielmeier whose remarks at the 12th Colloquium of the IALS, Leh, 21-26th July 2003 set me on the track; to Gelong Konchok Pande who improved the spoken version; and to Rebecca Norman for all her comments and help.

2. Dictionaries:

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<th>Year</th>
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References


