



ERC Advanced Grant

Theory of Tone

Version 8b

Lhasa Tibetan

10.5281/zenodo.15062722

0. Generalities

tibe1272-tibetan-perekhvalskaya

Questionnaire version 8b.

1. General information about the language

1.1. Lhasa Tibetan or Standard Tibetan. Ethnolinguonym བོད་སྐད་ (*bodskad*) or ལྷ་སའི་སྐད་ (*Lha-sa'i skad*) 'Lhasa language', a dialect of Central Tibetan (Ü-Tsang Tibetan), Glottolog code utsa1239. Central Tibetan was once considered a dialect of Tibetan (tibe1272). Lhasa Tibetan is one of the numerous Tibetic varieties which derived from Old Tibetan (Tournadre, Hiroyuki 2023).

1.2. Geographic area: Central Asia, Tibet (Tibetan Autonomous Region).

Genetic affiliation: Lhasa Tibetan < Ü Tibetan < Tibetan < Central Tibetan < Bodish < Bodic < Sino-Tibetan

Number of speakers: 1,2 million (1990) of native speakers. The number of L2 speakers is at least 1 million people.

1.3. Information on dialects. Lhasa Tibetan is a variety of Central Tibetan spoken in Lhasa, the capital of the Tibet Autonomous Region; it is widely used as lingua franca in Tibet (especially, in the regions Amdo and Kham) and also in the Tibetan diaspora outside of Tibet.

Lhasa Tibetan distinguishes between formal and colloquial styles of speech. The formal style is closer to the orthography and is used in official situations; the colloquial style is used in everyday life (Zhang 2024: 5).

2. Segmental phonology

2.1. Phonemic inventory

2.1.1. Vowels

	Short			Long			Nasal		
Closed	i	y	u	i:	y:	u:	ĩ	ỹ	ũ
Mid-closed	e	ø	o	e:	ø:	o:	ẽ	õ	õ
Mid-open	ɛ			ɛ:			ẽ		
Open		a			a:			ã	

Table 1. Vowels.

Nasal vowels occur before etymological /ŋ/ and /n/ in the final position in a syllable.

Long vowels:

1) result from a compensatory lengthening when syllable-final consonants *r*, *l*, *n*, *ŋ*, *ʔ* are optionally omitted in the informal style, cf. variants of pronunciation:

(1) མར་ *mar* [mà:] ~ [màr] 'red'¹

2) result from fusion of morphemes:

(2) ལྷ་སའི་ *su'i* [sý:] (< *su* 'who' + *-i* GEN) 'whose'

(3) ཁོང་ཚོ་ *khong-tsho'i* [H k'hóŋ][L tsò:] 'their'

¹ « The coda /ɹ/ is frequently dropped in colloquial speech, resulting in compensatory lengthening of the vowel [V:], e.g., TN: /k'hàɹ/ [k'hà:] 'dancing'. In colloquial speech, /ɹ/ is not pronounced and the vowel is lengthened, e.g., (/k'hél/), /k'hé:/ 's

There is no correlation between vowels and tone.

2.1.2. *Consonants*

The consonant inventory differs for three positions in a prosodic word: initial, middle and final.

	Bilabial	Alveolar	Retroflex	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Stop	p p ^h	t t ^h	ʈ	c c ^h	k k ^h	
Affricate		ʈs ʈs ^h		tʃ tʃ ^h		
Fricative		s	ʃ	ç		h
Approximant	w	ɹ		j		
Lateral		l l ^h		ʎ		
Nasal	m	n		ɲ	ŋ	

Table 2. Onset consonants in a prosodic word.

	Bilabial	Alveolar	Retroflex	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Stop	p	t	ʈ	c	k	
Fricative		s	ʃ	ç		h
Approximant	w			j		
Affricate		ʈs		tʃ		
Lateral		l				
Nasal	m	n		ɲ	ŋ	

Table 3. Consonants in the word-internal position

If the onset consonant inventory is characterized by the opposition aspirated/non-aspirated stops, affricates and the sonorant /l/, in the word-internal position these consonants lose aspiration, see the following examples:

- composites:

(4) དངུལ་ *dn̥gul* [ŋý:] ‘money’ + ཁང་ *khang* [k^há:] ‘house’ = དངུལ་ཁང་ *dn̥gul-khang* [H ŋý:..kã:] ‘bank’;

- reduplicated adjectives:

(5) ལྷོད་ལྷོད་ *lhod-lhod* [H l^hé.ləʔ] ‘relaxed’.

Therefore, the presence of an aspirated consonant signals the beginning of a prosodic word.

In the word-internal position so-called “fossilized consonants” (DeLancey, 2003) also may be pronounced (cf. *liaison* in French), see (6).

(6a) བཅུ་ *bcu* ‘ten’ is pronounced [tɕú] in isolation², and as [ptɕú] in the middle position after a vowel (with resyllabification):

(6b) བཞི་བཅུ་ *bzhi-bcu* [ɕip. tɕú] ‘forty’ [L ɕip.tɕu].

	Bilabial	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Stop					ʔ
Approximant		ɹ			
Lateral		l			
Nasal	m	n		ŋ	

Table 4. Consonants in the word-final position

In the contemporary language, in the full style of pronunciation, only the sonorants and the glottal stop can appear in the **final** position. In the informal style, final consonants (with the exception of /m/) have a tendency to be substituted by a vowel length. The final /n/ and /ŋ/, when omitted, combine lengthening of the vowel with its nasalization.

Tone-depressor consonants played a crucial role in the tonogenesis: the loss of the opposition between voiced/voiceless consonants led to the formation of tonal oppositions.

² The letter བ “b” represents an Old Tibetan prefix which is not pronounced in the modern language.

2.2. Prosodic units

2.2.1. Syllable and mora

TBU in Lhasa Tibetan is a syllable.

The following syllable structures are available:

V	<i>a-gsar</i> [á.ksar] ‘infatuation’; དབུ <i>dbu</i> [ú] ‘head’;
VL ~ VV	དོར་ <i>dbor</i> [ó:] ~ [ór] ‘to transport’;
VC	དབུགས <i>dbugs</i> [ù] ‘breath’;
CV	ས་ <i>sa</i> [sá] ‘earth’, ར་ <i>ra</i> [rà] ‘goat’;
CVC	ལག་པ་ <i>lag-pa</i> [lák.pá] ‘hand’; ལྷག་ <i>lug</i> [lù] ‘sheep’;
CVV ~ CVL	མིང་ <i>ming</i> [mìŋ] ~ [mì:] ‘name’; ལན་ <i>lan</i> [lèn] ~ [lɛ:] ‘reply’; བཤུལ་ <i>pha-yul</i> [pʰá.jý:] ‘native’;
CVL ²	ཁམས་ <i>kham</i> [kʰâm ²] Kham; བསྟན་ <i>bstand</i> [tên ²] ‘to teach’.

The realisation VC / V²; CVC / CV² depends on the position in the prosodic word. For example, in the syllable ལག་ *lak* ‘hand’, /k/ is realized as an occlusive consonant in the word-internal position (7a), and the word-final position it is realized as the glottal stop (7b).

(7a) ལག་པ་ *lag-pa* [lák.pá] ‘hand’ (hand + thematic syllable) [L lák.pa].

(7b) ཁ་ལག་ *kha-lag* [kʰá.lâ²] ‘food’ (mouth + hand) [H kʰá.lâ²].

In the same way, the syllable སྟོབ་ *slob* has two realizations conditioned by the position in a prosodic word:

(8) སྟོབ་ *slob* [ló²] ‘to teach, to learn’ + ཏ་ *tra* [tá] (no meaning in the modern language) > སྟོབ་ཏ་ *slob-tra* [lóp.tá] ‘school’ [H lóp.ta].

Two types of syllables are distinguished, light and heavy.

Light Syllables: (C)V, (C)VC;

Heavy Syllables: (C)VV, (C)VL, (C)VLC.

(V is a vowel, L is a sonant, C is a stop.)

Light and heavy syllables differ with respect to their tonemic realizations.

2.2.2. Foot

Prosodic foot is not relevant for Lhasa Tibetan.

2.2.3. Word

Noun roots have a strong tendency to be bisyllabic; verbal roots commonly consist of only one syllable.

The number of syllables in a prosodic word is theoretically unlimited.

Syllables in a prosodic word differ by prominence. The first syllable is always prominent. It is characterized by the following features:

1) in the onset position all consonant phonemes are possible (see Table 2);

2) it bears the toneme, this toneme can spread to the next syllable (see 4.1.2.).

In multisyllabic prosodic words all syllables, except for the first one, are non-prominent.

Non-prominent syllables have the following characteristics:

1) some consonants are not licensed in the onset position not (see Table 3), in particular, aspirated consonant are disallowed (9).

(9) ལྷ་ *chu* [cʰú] ‘water’ + མོད་ *tshod* [tʰô²] ‘measure’ > ལྷ་མོད་ *chu tshod* [cʰú.tʰô²] ‘time, hour’ [H cʰú.tʰô²];

2) the lexical tone of a syllable is neutralized if the syllable is not prominent (i.e., in the non-initial position in a prosodic word), see (10).

(10) ཏ་ *ha* [há] ‘breath’ + ཡང་ *yang* [jàŋ] ‘light’ > ཏ་ཡང་ *ha yang* [há.jàŋ] ‘aluminum’ [H há.jàŋ].

In the word-final position, occlusive consonants are substituted by the glottal stop (11), and sonorants, with the exception of /m/, tend to disappear, resulting in a compensatory vowel length (see Table 4).

(11) ཁ་ལག་ *kha-lag* [kʰá.lâ²] ‘food’ (mouth + hand) [H kʰá.lâ²]

A prosodic word necessarily begins with a prominent syllable which carries a toneme; the tonal span may spread on the second syllable. The remaining syllables are extra-tonal and are realized with a default low tone.

A prosodic word which contains more than two syllables may be:

- 1) a noun that cannot be broken down into meaningful components (12):
(12) བསེ་ལེ་པད་གོག་ *bse-le-pad-gog* [sé.lé.pè.kòʔ] ‘beetle’ [H sé.le].pɛ.koʔ
- 2) Personal names and toponyms:
(13) གཤེན་ཀ་ཙེ་ *Gzhis-ka-tse* [L tɕʰi.ka].tɕɛ ‘Shigatse’ (a town);
- 3) loans:
(14) ཏི་ཀ་སི་ *ti-ka-si* ‘post stamp’ [H tí.ka].ɕi (< Eng. *ticket*);
- 4) words with functional morphemes:
(15) རྩ་ཐང་སྒང་ལ་ *rtsa-thang-sgang-la* [tsá.tɕŋ.gà.là] ‘in the grassland’ [H tsá.tɕŋ].gə.la;
rtsa-thang-sgang-la
tsá.tɕŋ gə là
steppe TOP in
- (16) ཉི་མ་རྩི་ *nyi-ma-cig* [ɲi.má.teiʔ] ‘one day’ [L ɲi.ma].teiʔ;
nyi-ma-cig
ɲi.má teiʔ
day one

3. Tonal inventory

3.1. Character of tonal system

The tonal system can be characterized as a mixed level-contour tone system.

3.1.1. It counts two levels: High and Low.

3.1.2. Contour tones.

Raising and falling tones are, in fact, allotones which appear with certain types of syllables, see 3.2.

3.2. Inventory of tonemes.

The character of Lhasa Tibetan tonal system is the subject of a dispute. Researchers postulate from 2 to 8 meaningful tones in; for an analysis of different points of view see [Lim (2018)]. I will follow the interpretation of the Lhasa Tibetan tones by Nicolas Tournadre [Tournadre & Dorje 2003] and earlier by Jäschke [Jäschke 1888]³ and R. K. Sprigg [1955] who distinguish in Lhasa Tibetan two meaningful tones, high and low⁴.

Therefore, there are two tonemes, High/Falling and Low/Rising. Each toneme has several surface representations (allotones) depending 1) on the type of the syllable; 2) the presence or absence of the glottal stop in the Auslaut; 3) the length of the tonal span (one or two syllables).

HIGH toneme (Toneme 1)

Main allotones: H, F, HF (sharp falling)

Type of a syllable	outset	
	without ʔ	ʔ
Light syllable	F	HF
Heavy syllable	H	HF
Two syllables	HH	HF

Table 4. Allotones of the High/Falling toneme

An example of a light syllable bearing the F allotone if ended with a vowel (21):

- (21) འཁྲུ་བ་ *khru-wa* [tʰ.wà] [H tʰú].wa ‘to wash’.

³ This view coincides with the Tibetan tradition which distinguishes two tones, *mo skad* ‘female voice’ and *pha skad* ‘male voice’ respectively. R.K. Sprigg refers to these tonemes as Tone 1 and Tone 2.

⁴ Keh Chen Lim postulates for Lhasa Tibetan High and Low-High tones which corresponds to our H and L tonemes.

The sharp falling allotone appears on a light syllable ending with a glottal stop. In this case, the tonal curve descends more abruptly, and the amplitude of the fall is greater (22).

(22) སྐད་བརྒྱལ་པ་ *skad-brgyab-pa* [kê˥˥.gè.bà] [H ké˥˥].ge.ba ‘to cry’.

Heavy syllables bear the all-H allotone if ended with a vowel or a sonorant (23) and the HF allotone if ended with a glottal stop (24); ex. (25) shows the realization of the High toneme if it is spread on the second syllable ending with the glottal stop:

(23) ཚལ་ *tshal* [H tsʰél] ‘vegetables’.

(24) ཁམས་ *kham* [kʰám˥˥] Kham (region) [H kʰám˥˥].

(25) གཞིན་ཁུག་པ་ *gnyid-khug-pa* [ní.kû˥˥.pà] ‘to sleep’ [H ní.ku˥˥].pa.

LOW toneme (Toneme 2)

Main allotones: level low, LLH, LHL.

Type of a syllable	outset	
	without ʔ	ʔ
Light syllable	L	L
Heavy syllable	LH	LHL
Two syllables	LLH	LHL

Table 5. Allotones of the low toneme

A light syllable bears a level low allotone (26) of the Low toneme:

(26) ཟ་བ་ *za-ba* [sà.wà] [L sà].wa ‘to eat’

A heavy syllable bears the LH allotone if ended with a long vowel or a sonorant (27):

(27) ཉལ་བ་ *nyal-ba* [něl.wa] [L nə̃l].wa ‘to lie down’;

On a heavy syllable or a disyllabic span (28), the L toneme is realized with its LHL allotone if ended with a glottal stop (29).

(28) ལས་རིགས་ *las-rigs* [lè.rí˥˥] ‘profession’ [L lè.rí˥˥];

(29) ཁམས་ *kham* [kʰám˥˥] Kham [L kʰám˥˥] (a region).

If the Low toneme is spread on the second syllable, it is realized as L.LH if the second syllable ends with a vowel or a sonorant (30) or as L.HL if it is ended with the glottal stop (31).

(30) ཉམས་ལྗོངས་ *nyams-myong* [nàm.nǔŋ] ‘experience’ [L nàm.nuŋ].

(31) རྣམ་ལངས་ *nam-langs* [nàm.lâ˥˥] ‘sunrise’ [L nàm.la˥˥].

Here are some tonal minimal pairs:

(32) འ་ *nga* [ŋà] ‘I’ [L ŋà] vs. ལྔ་ *lnga* [ŋâ] ‘five’ [H ŋâ];

(33) ཇམ་མོ་ *zha-mo* [ʃà.mó] ‘hat’ [L ʃà.mo] vs. ཤམ་མོ་ *sha-mo* [ʃâ.mó] ‘mushroom’ [H ʃâ.mo].

The tonemic status of both H and L tonemes is endorsed by the Activity criterion: both tonemes can spread to the right on the second syllable of the prosodic word.

(34) ཆུ་ *chu* [cʰú] ‘water’ + ཚོད་ *tshod* [tsʰê˥˥] ‘measure’ > ཆུ་ཚོད་ *chu tshod* [cʰú.tsê˥˥] ‘time, hour’ [H cʰú.tsê˥˥];

(35) བོད་ལ་ *bod-la* [pʰê˥˥.lá] [L pʰê˥˥.la] ‘in Tibet’, where *la* is an originally toneless morpheme, here incorporated into the tonal span of the preceding L toneme.

3.3. Floating tones

There are no floating tones in Lhasa Tibetan.

3.4. Downdrift and downstep

Lhasa Tibetan is characterized by an automatic declination, especially at the end of the phrase,

usually occupied by the sequence of auxiliary particles which bear default low tone.

Non-automatic downstep happens in a tonal phrase which consists of several (normally two) feet and constitute a lexical unit (see 4.4.).

3.5. Upstep.

The upstep is not characteristic of Lhasa Tibetan.

3.6. Other suprasegmental features of tonemes, apart from pitch. Registers

There are no phonations or other suprasegmental features.

4. Tonotactics: tonal span, tonal phrase

4.1. Tonal span limits

4.1.1. *Tonal span size*

The size of a tonal span may be one or two syllables. The tonal span cannot be longer than two syllables.

4.1.2. *Change of tonal span boundaries*

With nouns, adjectives or adverbs, auxiliary morphemes integrate into the tonal span if they appear as the second syllable of the prosodic word. But the same morphemes remain extra-tonal if they appear as the third, fourth, etc. syllable of a prosodic word.

These auxiliary morphemes are:

- case markers, integrated into the tonal span (34) or extra-tonal (35):

(34) བོད་ལ་ *bod-la* [p^hè².lá] [L p^hè².la] ‘in Tibet’;

(35) མཚམ་མཚམ་ལ་ *mtsams-mtsams-la* [tsám.tsám.là] [H tsám.tsam].la ‘sometimes’;

- derivational nominal suffixes པ་ *pa*, མ་ *ma*, རྩ་ *po*, མོ་ *mo*⁵; adjectival suffixes པ་ *pa*, རྩ་ *po*, integrated into the tonal span (36) or extra-tonal (37):

(36) ཆེན་པོ་ *chen-po* [H ts^hén.po] ‘large, big’;

(37) རྩུང་ཆུང་པོ་ *chung-chung-po* [H tɕ^húŋ.tɕuŋ].po ‘small’.

By contrast, verbal suffixes cannot be integrated into the tonal span, e.g. the suffix of nominalization འ་ *wa*:

(38) འགྲོ་བ་ [tɔ́.wà] ‘to go’ [H tɔ́].wa.

4.1.3. *Tonal spans and prosodic units*

There is no correlation between tonal spans and prosodic units.

4.2. Combinations of tonemes. Tonal melodies.

In a prosodic word, only one toneme is possible.

4.3. Toneless syllables and morphemes

4.3.1. *Toneless syllables*

A segmental chain is not subdivided entirely in tonal spans. A tonal span can be followed by extra-tonal segments. These extra-tonal segments bear a default low tone. A word-initial syllable or two constitute a tonal span, the remaining syllables of a prosodic word are toneless. The toneless syllables bear a default low tone which has no tonemic status, see ex. 15-16, 35, 37, 38.

4.3.2. *Toneless morphemes*

All auxiliary morphemes (case markers, derivational nominal and adjectival suffixes, postpositions, verbal suffixes, copulas) are underlyingly toneless.

4.4. Tonal phrases

In Lhasa Tibetan, a tonal phrase consists of one or two (rarely more than two) prosodic words connected by downstep. The combination of prosodic words into tonal phrases is idiomatic.

(39) སྐད་གསུང་ཐུགས་ *sku-gsung-thugs* {[H kú.súŋ].[!H t^húʔ]} ‘body speech and mind’:

sku gsung thugs

body speech mind

(40) ལྷུག་པ་ཆེས་བཞི་ *drug-pa-tshes-bzhi* {[L tük.pa].[!H t^hé.ɕi]} ‘the fourth day of the sixth month’ (holiday

⁵ These affixes have rather vague semantics. In many cases these thematic suffixes are used just to make a word disyllabic.

to commemorate the first teaching of Buddha)

drug pa tshes bzhi

six ADJ day four

(41) བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔལ་ *byan-chub-sems-dpa'* {[L pyà.cu].[!L sèm.pa:]} 'Bodhisattva'.

byan chub sems dpa'

clearness exist think hero

(42) དཔེ་མཛོད་ཁང་ལ་ *dpe-mdzod-khang-la* [p^hé.tsò.kán.là] 'in the library' {[H p^hé].[!L tsò.kan]} la:

dpe mdzod khang la

book treasure house LOC

5. Stress and tone; culminativity; prominence;

5.1. Culminativity

Tone in Lhasa Tibetan is culminative: a prosodic word has strictly one toneme.

5.2. Stress

In Lhasa Tibetan there is no stress.

5.3. Positional prominence

The first syllable of a prosodic word is prominent, see 2.2.3.

5.4. Obligatoriness

Every prosodic word carries a toneme.

6. Tonal rules. Segmental rules which have impact on tones

6.1. Tonal rules (tonal processes)

Tonal spread

In non-verbal disyllabic prosodic words, the toneme of the first (prominent) syllable spreads onto the second syllable:

(43) རྩ་ *ha* [há] 'breath' + ཡང་ *yang* [jàŋ] 'light' > རྩ་ཡང་ *ha yang* [há.jáŋ] 'aluminum' [H há.jaŋ].

7. Grammatical tones

7.1. List of grammatical tonal morphemes

There are no grammatical tonal morphemes.

7.2. Tonal paradigms

Tonal paradigms exist for a few verbs. Normally, a Lhasa Tibetan verb has three forms: Present, Past and Imperative:

(44) ཟ་ *za* [sà] (Present) - བཟས་ *bzas* [sèʔ] (Past) - ཟོ་ *zo* [sò] (Imperative) 'to eat'.

These forms are coded by the change in the segmental representation⁶, as in (44). A change of toneme occurs in rare cases with verbs beginning with a sonorant, which reflects historical changes or in irregular verbs, e.g. 'to make':

(45) Present རྒྱལ་ *rgyag* [kyàʔ], Past བསྐྱེད་ *bskyon* [kyôʔ].

8. Tonal classes of words

8.1. Differentiation of parts of speech by tone

Verbs differ from words of other classes (nouns, adjectives, adverbs) in that the tonal span can occupy only one syllable and does not extend to the second syllable (see 4.1.2).

8.2. Tonal classes of words (not necessarily related to the part-of-speech attribution)

There are no tonal classes of words.

9. Diachrony of tone

In the tonogenesis of Lhasa Tibetan, the decisive role was played by the loss of the sonority contrast in occlusives. The original contrast by the voiced/voiceless nature of the consonant was converted into the tonal contrast: syllables with a previously unvoiced consonant acquired high tone, and syllables with a previously voiced consonant or sonorants received low tone. This process is reflected in the Tibetan writing system (see 10).

10. Tonal notation in the writing

Tibetan writing belongs to the "abugida" type, an alpha-syllabic script, where vowels are

⁶Historically, these forms were coded by the addition of suffixes and prefixes and by the alteration of the vowel.

indicated by additional signs. There are no spaces between words in the writing.

Traditionally tone distinctions are not coded but can be inferred in most cases, see (45):

(45) ས་ *sa* /sá/ ‘land’ – ཟ་ *za* /sà/ ‘to eat’

The following letters, which previously designated unvoiced consonants, stand for the HIGH tone of the subsequent vowel:

ཀ *ka*; ཁ *kha*; ཅ *ca*; ཆ *cha*; ཏ *ta*; ཐ *tha*; པ *pa*; བ *pha*; ཚ *tsha*; ར *tsha*; ས *sa*; ཤ *sha*; ཏ *ha*; ཨ *a*.

The following letters, which previously designated voiced and sonorant consonants, stand for the LOW tone of the subsequent vowel:

ག *ga*; ང *nga*; ཇ *ja*; ཉ *nya*; ཌ *da*; ན *na*; བ *ba*; མ *ma*; ལ *wa*; ཡ *ya*; ར *ra*; ལ *la*; འ *dza*; ར *zha*; འ *a*.

The orthography includes letters that are not pronounced, but are indicative of the tone. These are:

1) So-called superscripted 3 letters which are written above the syllable (ར *ra*, ལ *la*, ས *sa*) and are not pronounced, but when they precede a nasal consonant, they indicate the HIGH tone:

(46) སྐ *sna* [ná]; ཏྐ *nya* [ná]; རྐ *rma* [má].

(47) ང *nga* /ŋà/ ‘I, me’ - འ *nga* /ŋá/

2) So called 5 “prefixes” are written before the syllable (ག *ga*, ཌ *da*, བ *ba*, མ *ma*, འ *a*), they are not pronounced, but indicate the high tone if they are written before a nasal consonant, the consonant ཡ *y* or the sequence ཌ + བ (d+b):

(48) ཌམ *dma* /má/; ཏྐྱ *gnya* /ŋá/;

གཡག *gyag* /já/;

དའོ *dbo* /ó/; དའ *bra* /rá/.

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Abbreviations

μ - mora

σ - syllable

C – consonant

V - vowel

L - sonorant

ADJ – adjectival suffix

HAB - habitual
 LOC - locative
 COP - copula
 PRS - presens
 NEG - negation
 REPR - reportative speech marker

<i>mig dmar</i>	<i>tshe ring</i>	<i>lo</i>	<i>chen po</i>	<i>o'o tsam red</i>
{[L mi ² .ma:]	[H ts ^h é.rin]}	[L lò]	[H c ^h én.po]	[H ó'.o].tsam-re
Migmar	Tsering	year	big	quite,rather-COP

Migmar Tsering is quite old.

<i>yin n'ang</i>	<i>nyin ltar</i>	<i>re bzhin</i>	<i>las ka</i>	<i>sna min sna</i>	<i>tshogs</i>	<i>byed kyi red</i>
[L jin.nɛ:]	[L nin.ta:]	[L rè. ɛin]	[L lè.ka]	[L nà.min]-na	[H ts ^h ó ²]	[L tèè]-ki-re
but	every.day	during	work	different-from	kinds	do.PRS-HAB-COP

But every day he does a lot of things.

<i>mtsams mtsams la</i>	<i>bod zas</i>	<i>bzo gi red</i>
[H tsám.tsam]-la	[L pè ² .sɛ]	[L sò]-ki-re
sometimes-in	Tibetan.food	prepare-HAB-COP

Sometimes he prepares Tibetan dishes.

<i>mtsams mtsams la</i>	<i>yang</i>	<i>deb</i>	<i>lta gi red</i>
[H tsám.tsam]-la	[H jáŋ]	[H té ²]	H [tá]-ki-re
sometimes-in	also	book	read-HAB-COP

Sometimes he reads books.

<i>de min</i>	<i>nang la</i>	<i>ca lag</i>	<i>bstu gsog</i>	<i>brgyab kyu red</i>
[L tè.min]	[H náŋ-la]	[H cá.la ²]	[H tú.so ²]	[L teà ²]-ki-re
as.well	inside-in	things.gather	collect	do-HAB-COP

He also put things in order at home.

<i>yan</i>	<i>min na</i>	<i>par</i>	<i>rnying pa la</i>	<i>lta gi red</i>
{[H jáŋ]	[H mín.na]}	[H pá:]	[H nin.pa]-la	[H tá]-ki-re
and	otherwise	photo	old-in	look-HAB-COP

Or he looks through old photos.

<i>yin n'ang</i>	<i>ngal gso</i>	<i>brgyab kyi ma red</i>
[H jin.nɛ:]	[L ɲál.so]	[H teá ²]-ki-ma-re
but	rest	do-HAB-NEG-COP

But he never has a rest.

<i>gang yin</i>	<i>zer na</i>	<i>khong gis</i>	<i>lab</i>	<i>yag la</i>	<i>mi tshe</i>	<i>thung thung red</i>
{[L kán-jin]	[L sè:-na]}	[H k ^h ón-ki]	{[L là ²]	[H já ² .la]}	[L mi.tsé]	[H t ^h ún.tun]-re
what-is	say-if	he-ERG	say	as.in	human.life	short-COP

Because, he says: "Human life is short.

<i>song tsang</i>	<i>las ka</i>	<i>byed thub na</i>	<i>las ka</i>	<i>gang</i>	<i>mang mang</i>	<i>byed dgos red zer</i>
[L sòn.tsan]	[L lè.ka]	[L tèè ² .tu ²]-na	[L lè.ka]	{[H k ^h án]	[H máŋ.maŋ]}	[L tèè ² .kə:] -re-se:
that.is.why	work	do.can-as	work	possible	as.much.as.	do.need-COP-REPR

That is why it is necessary to do as much as possible".

byas cang	khong	mu mthud nas	las ka	byed kyui ‘dug
[L tɛ̀ɛ̃.caŋ]	[H kɔ̃ŋ]	[L mù.tuʔ]-nɛ	[L lɛ̃.ka]	[L tɛ̃ɛ̃ʔ]-ki-tuʔ
so	he	continuously-at	work	do-HAB-COP.ADM

So, he seems to be continuously working.