'Bo skad, a newly recognised non-Tibetic variety spoken in mDzo sgang, TAR

a brief introduction to its sociolinguistic situation, sounds, and vocabulary

(Language material)

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'Bo skad

The language name should be written *mBo*, based on the pronunciation /⁻ᵐbo/.

A variety spoken in Tshawarong of mDzo sgang County, Chab mdo District, TAR.

Another closely related variety to 'Bo skad, called sMad skad, is also spoken in Tshawarong.

'Bo skad sound structure

- Maximum syllable structure:

  ᶜCGV (/minimum: CV)

  E.g., ⁻nɑ 'sky', ⁻ᴺɢa 'hillside', ⁻ɴwɘ̰ˤ 'five'

- Suprasegmentals:

  Two-way word tone system, High (¯) and Low (´)

  E.g., ⁻ʁɑ 'ten' - ´ʁɑ 'needle'

  Pitch generally descends at the end of a word.

  A tonal distinction is valid only for the first two syllables of a multisyllabic phonological word.

- Vowels:

  Plain (i, e, ɛ, a, ɑ, ɔ, o, u, ɯ, ʉ, ə, ɵ); +retroflexed (ɚˤ);

  +creaky (v̰); +nasalisation (ṽ); +creaky nasalisation (ṽ̰)

  No length contrast.

  No checked syllable.

- Consonants:

  Obstruents (pʰ, p, b, tʰ, t, d, ʈʰ, ʈ, ɖ, kʰ, k, g, qʰ, q, ɢ, ʔ, tsʰ, ts, dz, tɕʰ, tɕ, dʑ);

  Fricatives (s, z, ɕ, ʑ, x, ɣ, χ, ʁ, h, ɦ); Resonants (m, m̥, n, n̥, ɳ, ɳ̊, ŋ, ŋ̊, ɴ, l, l̥, r, w, j)

  Prenasalisation (voiced), preaspiration (any voicings)

'Bo skad is a non-Tibetic language

meaning	mBo	Written Tibetan	PTB (based on STEDT)
seven	⁻n̥i	*bdun*	*s-ni-s (#2505)
four	⁻lə̰	*bzhi*	*b-ləy (#2409)
one	⁻də	*gcig*	*tyak ≽ *g-t(y)ik (#2726)
ten	⁻ʁɑ	*bcu*	*ts(y)i(y) ≽ *tsyay (#2748)
you	⁻nə	*khyod*	*na-ŋ (#2489)
horse	´re	*rta*	*s/m-raŋ (#1431)
road	⁻tɕɯ	*lam*	*lam (#1017)

However, many Tibetic loans are attested. An outstanding feature is that the open syllable of WrT -a# corresponds to /-ɛ/ in 'Bo, e.g.:

/´n̥ɛ/ 'fish' (< *nya*), /´ɕe mɛ/ 'sand' (< *bye ma*), /⌐sɛ tɕʰɛ/ 'land' (< *sa cha*), /⌐ⁿdo̰ pɛ/ 'pastoralist' (< *'brog pa*), etc.

'Bo skad seems to be a Qiangic language

Some distinguished words of mBo are compared with Basum (non-Tibetic non-Qiangic; Kong-po rGya-mda), Nyagrong Minyag (rGyalrongic; Nyag-rong), Choyu (Qiangic; Nyag-chu-kha), Lhagang Choyu (Qiangic; Dar-rtse-mdo), Darmdo Minyag (Qiangic; Dar-rtse-mdo), and bTsanlha rGyalrong (rGyalrongic; bTsan-lha).

meaning	mBo	Basum	Nyagrong-Minyag (Shoring)	Choyu (Phubarong)	Lhagang-Choyu (Thamkhas)	Darmdo-Minyag (Lhartseshis)	bTsanlha-rGyalrong (Sengge)
seven	⁻n̥i	ni	´ʲn̥e	⁻nə	⁻ɦdɛ	´n̥ʉ	´kə ʃnə
four	⁻lə̰	bər	ˋˠʐɛ	´ᵛʒə	⁻ʐə'	´rə̰	ˆkə pli
one	⁻də	ti?	ˋre	⁻tə	⁻tə'	´tə	ˆtɐ rwo
five	⁻ɴwə̰ˇ	ŋo	ˋᴺʁvɛ	⁻ŋwɑ	⁻ŋʷa'	´ɴɑ	ˆkə ᵐŋo
you	⁻nə	do	⁻ne	´nə	⁻nə	ˋna	ˋno
blood	⁻sa	kø?	⁻sʰe	⁻sə	⁻sə̆ˠ	ˆsaˤ	´tə ʃe
meat	⁻tɕʰi	an̥i	ˋm̥tʰu	⁻n̥tʰo	⁻n̥tʰo	ˋⁿdo	ˋʃe / ˆtə ᵐtʰəm
iron	⁻ʰtɕɑ	lɐ?	ˋtɕu	⁻ɕo	⁻ʰtɕɑ	⁻ɕe	ˋʃom
pig	⁻pʰo ɦiu	pɐ?	´va	⁻ve	⁻ve	⁻ʑi	⁻pɐˤk
urine	´qo	***	⁻pə	⁻pə̆ʲ	´paˠ	´bi	ˆtə wle
snow	⁻jʉ	***	⁻n̥kʰo vo / ⁻ˡvu	´n̥kʰu wa	⁻kʰa	⁻βə	´tɐj pɔ?
road	⁻tɕɯ	***	ˋtɕe	⁻ɦdza	´ᵛri	´rɤ	´tə lje?
water	⁻tɕə	***	ˋɣrə	´ʒə	´ʒə	⁻tɕə	⁻tə tɕi

Source of data: Basum from Nicolas Tournadre (p.c.), phonetic description reconfirmed by the first author; the others from the first author's fieldwork.

Phonetic symbol-based transcription; no orthographical description applied except for suprasegmentals.

Pitch patterns written as ⁻ : high-level; ´ : rising; ˋ : falling; ˆ : rising-falling; ' in Lhagang Choyu: 'atonalising marker' or 'tone bearing unit terminating marker'

As seen in the word forms of 'you', 'blood', and 'meat', Basum does not seem to be a member of Qiangic.

The word 'urine' in mBo, unfortunately, suggests that this language has a different feature from Qiangic languages because this word can display a similarity among them.

'Bo skad numerals

Let's count one to hundred.

		+10	+20			
0		⁻ʁɑ	´ɲe qa		100	⁻ɦd͡ʑi
1	⁻də	⁻ʁɑ tə˞	´ɲe qa pʰe ⁻də			
2	⁻na	⁻ʁɑ na	´ɲe qa pʰe ⁻na			
3	´sɔ̃	⁻ʁwə˞ sɔ�̣	´ɲe qa pʰe ´sɔ̃		30	⁻sɔ̃ qa
4	⁻lə̣	⁻ʁwə˞ lə̣	´ɲe qa pʰe ⁻lə̣		40	⁻lɑ̣ qa
5	⁻Nwə̣˞	⁻ʁwo Nwə̣˞	´ɲe qa pʰe ⁻Nwə̣˞		50	⁻Nwə̣˞ qa
6	´t͡ɕi	⁻ʁɑ t͡ɕi	´ɲe qa pʰe ´t͡ɕi		60	´t͡ɕe qa
7	⁻ni̥	⁻ʁɑ ni̥	´ɲe qa pʰe ⁻ni̥		70	⁻n̥e qa
8	⁻ɦd͡ʐə	´ʁɑ ɦd͡ʐə	´ɲe qa pʰe ⁻ɦd͡ʐə		80	´ɦd͡ʐa qa
9	⁻ŋgo	´ɉe ŋgo	´ɲe qa pʰe ⁻ŋgo		90	⁻ŋgọ qa

Some grammatical expressions

Copulative verbs, existential verbs, and directional marking for action verbs

Copulative verbs

Egophoric copulative verb: /´ŋo/;

Non-egophoric copulative verb: /´t͡ɕʰɨ/

(1) a ´ŋa   ´po ri   ´ŋo
       1sg   Tibetan   CPV
       I am Tibetan.
    b ⁻kə   ´po ri   ´t͡ɕʰɨ
       3sg   Tibetan   CPV
       He is Tibetan.

Anticipation usage attested:

(2) a ⁻nə   ´po ri   ´t͡ɕʰɨ
       2sg   Tibetan   CPV
       You are Tibetan.
    b ⁻nə   ´po ri   ⁻ʔa-ŋo
       1sg   Tibetan   Q-CPV
       Are you Tibetan?

The sentence construction and evidentiality distinction are quite common to many Tibetic languages, including Southern Route Khams to which the mDzogong dialect belongs.

Existential verbs

Existential verbs are employed as possession, existence, and location.

There are three two verb stems and three categories:

Egophoric existential verb: /´kʰo/;

Sensory existential verb: /⁻n̥e/;

Factual existential verb: /´kʰo t͡ɕʰɨ/ (morphologically EXV+CPV)

(3)　　´ŋa-lə　　⁻pʰo fiu　⁻də　´kʰo
　　　　1sg-DAT　pig　　　one　EXV
　　　　I have a pig.

(4)　　⁻kə rɛ　　⁻pʰo fiu　⁻də　⁻n̥e
　　　　there　　pig　　　one　EXV
　　　　There is a pig. (I see it)

(5)　　⁻ᶠigã-kə　　´nɔ-lə　　　　´ɖi tʰu　´kʰo tɕʰʉ
　　　　box-GEN　　inside-LOC　pen　　　EXV
　　　　There are pens in the box. (I know that)

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Directional marking

Imperative and completed forms of general verbs should take a directional prefix. E.g., /⁻xɯ/ 'go':

(6)　a　⁻tʰo-xɯ
　　　　　DIR-go
　　　　　Go upwards!

　　　b　´no-xɯ
　　　　　DIR-go
　　　　　Go downwards!

　　　c　´ŋa　　　⁻tʰo-xɯ-zo
　　　　　1sg　　　DIR-go-EXP
　　　　　I have already been over there.

　　　d　⁻kʰə　　　´no-xɯ-tɕʰʉ
　　　　　3sg　　　DIR-go-CPV
　　　　　He has already been downwards.

Almost all the verbs must have a directional prefix when it is used in an imperative as follows:

- /´wə-/: /´wə-n̥tʰi/ 'drink!', /´wə-ⁿdzi/ 'eat!'

- /´nə-/: /´nə-gɯ/ 'sleep!', /´nə-sə/ 'kill!'

This phenomenon is also attested in several dialects of Dzayul Khams and Sems-kyi-nyila Khams.

[Abbreviations]

1sg: 1st person singular	CPV: copulative verb	GEN: genitive
2sg: 2nd person singular	DIR: directional	LOC: locative
3sg: 3rd person singular	EXP: experience	Q: question marker
	EXV: existential verb	