

Charles University
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Subject: Languages of Asia and Africa

Propositions to PhD Thesis

*The Description of Namuzi
Language
Popis jazyka Namuzi*

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1 Introduction

In this work I present a preliminary description of one variety of the endangered (or more properly dying) languages spoken in China called *Nàmùzī* 纳木兹. The description itself is based on my own material collected during two stays in the field, because little previous research has been available up-to-day. Although I had recorded several speakers, I have finally decided to concentrate to work with only one language consultant, therefore the work reflects actually an idiolect. Given the variability among idiolects I chose the option of giving a comprehensive and consistent description of an idiolect of a speaker with a profound knowledge of the language. That also solved the problem of the time limits of field research, which was caused by my teaching duties at the Department of East Asian studies (it allowed me to be in field only during the examination period) and rather limited financial resources to conduct the research.

2 Sociolinguistic profile

2.1 Geographic distribution

Nàmùzī 纳木兹 language (also called *Nàmùyī* 纳木依, *Nàmùyì* 纳木易 or *Nàmùzǐ* 纳木子) is spoken by an officially unrecognised ethnic group of China living in *Sichuān* province 四川省 in two autonomous prefectures - Tibetan Garze 甘孜藏族自治州 and *Yí Liángshān* 凉山彝族自治州. *Nàmùzī* people mainly live in counties of *Jiǔlóng* 九龍, *Miǎnnìng* 冕寧, *Xīchāng* 西昌 and *Mùlǐ* 木里 (NISHIDA 2005). Because the people in *Xīchāng* and *Mùlǐ* use the endonym /naʎ.muʎ.ziʎ/ to refer to themselves¹, I have decided to prefer the variant *Nàmùzī* 纳木兹². In the *Ethnologue* language inventory (SIMONS & FENNING 2017), the code for this language is “nmy”.

The language, while very little studied, is severely endangered³. At present, NMZ is used mostly by the older generations at homes. The main language of communication of the *Nàmùzī* people is one of the *Sichuān* dialects of Chinese, closely followed by languages of the neighbouring ethnic groups, namely Tibetan, *Yí* 彝 or *Pǔmǐ* 普米. The younger generations are just passive listeners of the language (NISHIDA 2005) and the number of active speakers is decreasing year by year.

1 Though Libu (2007) states that the ethnonym /naʎ.mziʎ/ denotes all Tibetans, according to my language consultant, there is an ethnonym for Tibetans **Pshih** /pʰʂuʎ/.

2 *Huáng* (1992) also provides the version /næʎ.muʎ.ziʎ/, or according to ISTL (MÄ 2003) more specifically /naʎ.muʎ.ziʎ/ for the varieties in *Jiǔlóng* and *Mùlǐ* and /naʎ.muʎ.zi/ for varieties in *Miǎnnìng*, *Xīchāng* and *Yányuán*. Libu (2007) provides the version of /naʎ.mziʎ/.

3 Simons & Fenning (2017) gives NMZ language grade 6b „threatened“ according to EGIDS scale. That should mean the language is spoken within all generations, but it is losing users.

2.2 Native speakers

Due to the fact that *Nàmùzī* is not an officially recognized ethnic group and members of this community are classified as Tibetans, no census on the *Nàmùzī* population exists. The available studies give the number of *Nàmùzī* speakers as 4000 or 5000 people (e.g. SŪN 2001, HUÁNG 2003, BRADLEY 2007). Even my language consultant, who estimated the number of *Nàmùzī* population to 50 000 people, stipulated that only a few of them are able to speak NMZ language, however he was not able to specify the number of active speakers. My own experience from fieldwork suggests that the number of speakers may be rather low. In the community of *Xīchāng* and *Luōbō* township 倮波鄉, I encountered only around thirty active speakers, most of them old people. Young people were only passive listeners of the language, but they preferred to use Chinese.

The *Nàmùzī* language has no writing system and the speakers use Chinese, Tibetan or *Yi* script respectively. The language, religion, history and other parts of the indigenous *Nàmùzī* culture rely solely on oral transmission and are threatened by extinction.

2.3 Genetic relationship

Nàmùzī language belongs to the Tibeto-Burman branch of Sino-Tibetan language family. The idea of the same origin of languages spoken in regions between China and India comes from the 19th century, however many of these languages are not very well documented and described until today, therefore the genetic affiliation, historical development and reconstruction of historical sources of these languages remain undeveloped in comparison with other language families⁴ (VAN DRIEM 2007, HANDEL 2008).

Tibeto-Burman languages are spoken in Burma, Thailand, Vietnam, India, Laos, Nepal, Bhutan and in China⁵. It is difficult to define the total number of TB languages (MATISOFF 2003:3), however there are more than 30 languages belonging to TB branch, which are spoken in China (Mǎ 1994:1-2). *Nàmùzī* language was discovered in 1979 along with other languages and were classified to belong to the *Qiāngic* subgroup (羌語支) with languages as *Zhābà* 扎坝, *Quèyù* 卻域, *Ērsū* 爾蘇, *Shíxìng* 史興, *Guìqióng* 貴瓊 and others. First field research in the area was conducted after the year 1984 by researchers from the Minzu University of China⁶ 中央民族大學 led by *Huáng Bùfán* 黃布凡 (SŪN 2001:161-162).

The whole concept of classification of TB languages is very problematic and the classification of *Qiāngic* languages itself was made on the basis of typological similarities and

4 For the overview of the history of the Sino-Tibetan linguistics see MATISOFF 1991, VAN DRIEM 2005, Mǎ 1994.

5 Specifically in the Tibetan autonomous region, in provinces *Qīnghǎi* 青海, *Gānsù* 甘肅, *Yúnnán* 雲南, *Sìchuān* 四川, *Guìzhōu* 貴州 and *Húnán* 湖南 and in autonomous region of *Guǎngxī* 廣西.

6 This university is formerly known as Central University for Nationalities.

shared lexical items, but the percentage of shared common vocabulary is very low (CHIRKOVA 2012:4). *Sūn* (2001:160) has divided *Qiāngic* languages into two subgroups – the Northern (languages: *Lāwùróng* 拉塢戎, rGyarong 嘉戎, *Ērgōng* 爾龔; Tangut 西夏; *Qiāng* 羌, *Pǔmǐ* 普米 and *Mùyǎ* 木雅) and the Southern (*Guìqióng* 貴瓊, *Quèyù* 卻隅; *Zhābā* 扎巴; *Ērsū* 爾蘇, *Shǐxìng* 史興 and *Nàmùzī* 納木茲). Chirkova (2012:4-5) gives four reasons, why the whole subgroup has been controversial from the very beginning: the restrictive nature of the supporting evidence, small percentage of shared common vocabulary, absence of common innovations and the historical, ethnic and linguistic complexity of the area.

Other researchers (LĀMĀ 1994) state that *Nàmùzī* language is genetically related to *Yí* 彝 and *Nà* 納 languages, which is based on much higher number of related words. Guillaume & Michaud (2011) have proposed Naic subgroup consisting of *Nàmùzī*, *Shǐxìng* and other Naish languages (*Nàxī* 納西, *Nà* 納 and Laze 拉热).

3 Previous research

Most of the languages classified as belonging to Southern *Qiāngic* group are not well described until today. *Nàmùzī* language was discovered in 1979 (*Sūn Hóngkāi* 孫宏開), however the first field research was carried on in 1984 led by Chinese linguists (*Huáng Bùfán* 黃布凡 and *Rénzēng Wàngmǔ* 仁增旺姆). The language received more attention after 1991, when several Chinese, Japanese and American linguists started to collect more data. Original data collected often lack high accuracy. Recently, *Huáng Chénglóng* 黃成龍 from the Academy of Social Sciences in Peking carried out fieldwork among the *Nàmùzī*, but the results have not been published yet.

From the available previous works, the main are two lexicons of Tibeto-Burman languages (HUÁNG 1992 and SŪN 1991) with a chapter introducing the phonetic system of the language and containing basic vocabulary. Both lexicons contain language data from the *Luōbō* township 倮波鄉, therefore are relevant as a source of comparison⁷. The first lexicon contains 1822 lexeme entries and was conducted by *Huáng Bùfán* 黃布凡 and *Nìng Yù* 寧玉; the latter contains 1004 lexeme entries and was conducted after 1956 by *Sūn Hóngkāi* 孫宏開.

Among other primary sources, there are several articles with examples of original texts (NISHIDA 2005 and GUÓ 2011) from the same township as mentioned above, which are much more accurate.

Last month before submitting this thesis, I found a book published in December 2016 written by *Yīn Wèibīn* 尹蔚彬 from Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (中國社會科學院) on NMZ

⁷ Even the comparison between these two lexicons shows that the collected data are not always accurate. Some of the entries are clearly in local dialect of Chinese rather than in *Nàmùzī* language; some meanings do not match, or the borders of the words are not correctly determined. The critical evaluation of the above mentioned works was already made in my M.A. thesis “The Namuyi Language – Its Characteristics and Research”. However, these two lexicons significantly facilitated the preparatory stages of my research, helping to determine the main problems of phonetics and grammar.

grammar with annotated texts. This work represents the largest description of NMZ grammar (excluding my thesis) up-to-date, therefore I tried to make a comparison of my and dr. *Yin's* analysis. The chapter on grammar has only cca 25 pages including example sentences and the focus is on the annotated texts. There are 13 stories collected during three field trips (2010 for cca 1 month, 2012 for 2 months and 2013 for two months).

Beside these works, there was published an article on the variety of *Luóguōdǐ* 鑼鍋底 village in *Miǎnnìng* 冕寧 county (LIÚ 1996) and a MA thesis on *Jiǔlóng* 九龍 county variety describing phonetics and grammar (SHĒN 2013), however, these works describe another variety, so they are considered only as a reference. A very brief grammar sketch on NMZ language can be found in the work *Fifteen Tibeto-Burman Languages* (HUÁNG & RÉNZĒNG 1991) and some notes on grammar of NMZ can be found also in the book *An Introduction to Sino-Tibetan Languages* (Mǎ 2003).

Several works were written by Libu Lakhi (2007, 2009), however my language consultant, having heard recordings, which are available, claimed that it is a variety of *Nàxī* language, which is intelligible to him to some extent. During my fieldwork and visit of *Luǒbō* township, several people were talking about “*Nàxī Nàmùzī*” - people who should belong to the same ethnic group, but are speaking different language. When I compared my own data with the work of Libu Lakhi, I have found out it reflects at least another dialect, if not another language. However, this situation supports the existence of the so-called Naic group languages as proposed by Guillaume & Michaud (2011). Chirkova (2014:6) also points out that the conclusion of the existence of closer relation between Naic languages “*has been reached on the basis of historical, cultural, and anthropological evidence*” by *Yáng* (2006).

Other sources contain very little data about *Nàmùzī* language and can be mainly used as a reference to the Tibeto-Burman language group as a whole.

My goal is to provide a description of from the synchronic perspective. Given that there is a very limited previous research on NMZ, I also consulted other works on either neighboring languages or languages, which might be genetically affiliated to NMZ. However descriptions of (for my work relevant) TB languages written in English either work with methods of historical phonetics and grammar, which I did not find very helpful for the basic description of the NMZ grammar when almost no other research on this language is available, or it was problematic to find a work with similar gramatical features. Research written in Chinese conducted mainly on the universities in PRC (excl. Hongkong) usually follow a uniform muster, however these works are often not detailed enough to provide sufficient data for comparison⁸.

8 Cf. the following works I have studied: Chirkova (2009) on *Shìxìng*, Denwood (1999) on Tibetan, Hé & Jiāng (1985) and Michaud et al. (2013) on *Nàxī*, Huáng & Zhōu (1996) and LaPolla (2003) on *Qiāng* and Zhang (2013) on *Ērsū*.

4 Methodology

4.1 Theoretical background

Concerning methodology of field research and further analysis of the obtained material, I have chosen, besides relying on sources of traditional Western linguistic provenience (e.g. COMRIE & SMITH 1977), to take into consideration also several works by Chinese linguists (e.g. CHÉN 1998, WÉN 2006).

In the process of collecting language data and preparing questionnaires, it was very important to maintain not only the western view on language, but also to be aware of a different (Chinese) linguistic tradition.

4.2 Field work

In order to obtain basic data for my thesis, I have conducted two times field research to *Sìchuān*: winter 2011 (1 month) and summer 2012 (2 months). My teaching duties at Charles University did not allow me to spend more time in the field. Due to the difficult accessibility of the rural *Nàmùzī* areas, I worked predominantly among the *Nàmùzī* residents of *Xīchāng* 西昌, the capital of *Liángshān Yí* Autonomous Prefecture. My main informant was *Wáng Wénfā* (王文發, a 65 years old, former teacher at an elementary school in his native township *Luǒbō* in *Mùlǐ* county (木里县倮波乡). With his help, I was able to visit the village *Gānhǎizi* 干海子 in *Luǒbō* township collecting language data and also used the rare chance to witness and document a funeral and a wedding ceremony⁹.

For gathering the data of the language corpus, I used the method of recording the spoken word and simultaneously making notes by hand, with subsequent verification and immediate correction or recording of longer speech with translation and annotation after the recording, with the help of main language consultant. During the process, every word was carefully written down, while paying attention to the way of pronunciation and most of the words were cross-checked to ensure the most accurate transcription to IPA as well as translation to Chinese language.

4.3 Collected material

I started with the adapted Swadesh list of basic vocabulary to get the impression of the language, continued with a grammar questionnaire I prepared and then I decided to let the consultant dictate me several stories. The method of dictation has its pros and cons, namely it does not allow to capture natural flow of speech, so I had to leave the phonotactics undescribed and did not answer prosodical questions, however it turned out to be extremely useful for having the comparison of several words pronounced alone and in context as a part of a clause. Dictation also allowed me to collect more material during the limited time and solved the problem of artificial

⁹ The above mentioned field research was funded by the internal grant of the Faculty of Arts of the Charles University (VG078 – The Phonological System of Namuyi Language).

sentences or sometimes the desire of the consultant to satisfy to answer the question on grammar despite the answer would sound rather strange in the language. The working language was Chinese. During the work on the grammar questionnaire, I have found out that despite all efforts to avoid the contamination caused by the working language, Chinese constructions can very easily affect the answer. Therefore I did not incorporate some features concerning grammar to the work if they were not proven in the constructions of the narrated stories.

4.4 Annotation and glosses

I have decided to use my own transcription system together with IPA. All terms in Chinese are written in *pīnyīn* alphabet and in italic, the meaning of the words or morphemes is printed in small capitals. The annotation consists of the first line in my own transcription system, where I also indicate the structure of the sentence using standard interpunction; the second line is the representation in IPA; the third line provides the meaning (abbreviation instead of a meaningful word means that the relevant morpheme or word is functional) and the fourth line provides information on the word class or the type of the morpheme. Translation is provided always in italic. Therefore I do not follow the *Leipzig glossing rules* in the sense of graphic representation in my own examples (all meanings and grammatical morphemes are printed in small capitals), however when citing example sentences of other authors, I provide the example as it has been analysed by the author (only adding one line of English translation if the original was in Chinese) and with a change of graphic representation of tones instead of numeral indexes.

The chosen graphic annotation system based on the work of prof. Harbsmeier (*n.d.*), strictly separates the glosses on the meaning (and grammatical morphemes) from word classes and allows us to provide graphic representation of the syntactic structure when needed. The annotations in the texts in Appendix follow the graphic representation according to Leipzig glossing rules.

5 Overview of the thesis

5.1 Phonology

I have proposed a system of initial phonemes, which includes 38 simple initials and 17 compound (prenasalized) initials including bilabial, labiodental, alveolar, retroflex, palatal, velar, uvular and glottal consonants. According to my analysis, there are 13 finals with 6 monophthongs, 5 diphthongs with medial /i/ or /u/, two reduced finals and rhotacization. All syllables in NMZ are open. the system of tonal patterns needs to be further studied, I have described 6 different tonal contours, however I presume that there are at most four distinctive tonemes.

Remarkable is the existence of nasalized glottal fricative /hⁿ/ and bilabial trills. Unlike other researchers, I have analysed the existence of voiceless lateral approximant /l̥/ instead of lateral fricative /ɬ/.

5.2 Parts of speech

I have defined the main word classes on the basis of morphology and functional approach in cases where the morphological criteria were not sufficient. The main word classes include the content words (verbs, nouns, adnomina and numerals), where the first three are also open classes; and function words with little lexical meaning (pronouns, adverbs, classifiers, particles, postpositions, conjunctions, interjections and onomatopoeia).

I have provided an IC analysis for several example sentences with marking of syntactic relations between two adjacent constituents (paratactic relations e.g. of coordination, conjoined relation, disjunctive relation, reduplication and apposition; and hypotactic relations e.g. subject-predicate, predicate-complement, topic-comment, attributive and adverbial relation).

There is no corresponding relation between word classes and syntactic constituents – therefore e.g. verbs, which primarily function as predicate, can also (without any morphological marking) function as topic, object or attribute.

NMZ is an SOV language, where the basic word order is topic – agent – recipient – patient -verb.

5.3 Verbal word classes

Verbs in NMZ are the most complex word class, which was not easy to describe. They can appear at the end of the sentence as a predicate. There are distinct categories of aspect and mood. Verbs which are modified by after-verb modifier also distinguish the category of tense (past and non-past). In other cases, the tense is expressed by lexical means or by the overall context. The aspect can be expressed by aspectual markers and/or by directional prefixes or the verb can be modified by resultative modifier. However all modified verbs are perfective.

Apart the tense-aspect-mood, I have distinguished three verbal voices – active, passive and causative (the causative voice is common in TB languages).

There are two inherent properties of verbs which affect the inflection and the ability to govern certain arguments – the former is influenced by punctuality, the latter by transitivity. Durative verbs can combine with five different aspect markers, while punctual verbs can combine with only three different aspect markers.

There are two deverbal forms of transgressive and participle, which are used to form more complex structures.

Verbs are the only word class that can be negated. The negative marker can be placed either before the verbal stem or after the verbal stem. This feature is also one of the criterion defining the difference between non-specific verbs and specific verbs (linking verbs, verbs of localization and existence, verbs of possession and finally adjectival verbs).

Although there is this rather complex system of verbal inflection (including features of aspect marking, directional and resultative modification, potential construction etc), verbs very often occur in its basic form, i.e. the whole inflectional system is optional, used only to avoid ambiguity or misinterpretation.

Adjectival verbs often function as predicates and complements and can be modified by directional prefixes. They also often form adverbial phrases by reduplication and by adverbial marker **-mu** /muɫ/. There is a system of expressing degree of the adjectival verbs by adverbs of degree, however this feature can also be omitted when the degree is possible to deduce from the overall context.

Adjectival verbs are often used as attributes of nouns or nominal phrases. They are placed either before the head without any other marker, or after the head followed by classifier, which also functions as nominalizer.

Adverbs are rather limited word class of functional words with little lexical meaning. There are adverbs of degree, adverbs of manner, adverb **hrâ** /ɣaɫ/, which is used in specific constructions to express e.g. universal pronouns and adverb **lolo** /loɫloɫ/, which is used to express gradual degree. Most of the words, which in other languages are classified as adverbs (answering questions as how, where, when and why) behave as nouns (and are classified accordingly as spatial or temporal nouns) or are formed by reduplication of adjectival verbs followed by an adverbial suffix **-mu** /muɫ/ and regarded as adverbial phrases.

5.4 Nominal word classes

Nouns usually occurs in apposition with numeral phrases or with a classifier. We can distinguish categories of class and case, which are expressed on morphological level, while the categories of number and definiteness are expressed by lexical means.

The class of nouns is based on external characteristics of the noun and determined by a classifier. There are eight distinct classes (humans/animate things, big animals, small objects/animals, round-shaped objects/animals, flat objects or things growing from the soil, long and thin objects, objects without distinct external characteristics and abstract nouns). Nouns cannot be directly modified by a numeral and their quantity is specified by numeral phrase with the help of classifiers.

Nouns can be inflected by five inflectional suffixes. I have divided them into five cases. The first is unmarked form (the noun can be followed by postposition), which is without case marker

and used when the relation is clear from the overall context. The second is genitive, specifically genitivus qualitatis marked by the suffix **-gvîh** /gɤl/ or genitive/instrumental marked by the suffix **nyĩ~ĩ** /ŋiɫ/~iɫ/. The third is dative/committative (**-dâ** /daɫ/), the fourth is accusative (**-dzhà** /dzaɫ/) and the fifth is agentive/topic (**-nyĩ** /ŋiɫ/). Except the dative/committative case and agentive in passive constructions, other case markers are usually omitted, when the relation is clear from the context.

Colours and several words describing the quality of nouns cannot be used as a predicate alone, therefore I have classified them as adnomina. However, this word class should be further studied in detail.

Another important word class are the classifiers, which together with numerals are used to measure or count quantity and alone function as nominalizers for other word classes (esp. verbs and adjectival verbs), mark the end of a phrase with dependent members and denote grammatical number or definiteness of substantives.

I have divided the classifiers into seven types according to their grammatical functions: generic classifiers (denoting the class of nouns), general classifier (denoting plural or huge quantity of mass nouns), specific classifiers (modifying the meaning of the noun), measure units (used with mass nouns), measure words (which can be regarded as specific noun with the ability to be directly modified by a numeral), verbal classifiers (used to quantize duration of an action denoted by verb or count how many times certain action occurred) and quazi-classifiers (nouns or verbs used as a measure unit).

During our research, I did not focus on numeral expressions, thus in the word class of numerals, I have differentiated only cardinal numbers and ordinal numbers.

There are personal, reflexive, possessive, demonstrative and interrogative types of pronouns. Relative clauses are not marked by pronouns and indefinite pronouns are expressed by specific constructions by numeral phrases and the adverb **hrâ** /kaɫ/.

Personal pronouns have the categories of person, number and case. The first person plural has the distinction of clusivity, there are three numbers – singular, dual and plural. The case system slightly differs from the noun declension system. There is no specific genitivus qualitatis and pronouns do not drop the inflectional suffixes that easily. Also in certain constructions (e.g. the argument of the coverb **bũmu** /buɫmuɫ/ TO HELP) substantives and pronouns require different suffix.

There is a set of three deictic words in NMZ referring to object close to the speaker (proximal), far from the speaker (medial) and very far from the speaker or indefinite (distal).

Interrogative pronouns can form a question or express the function of indefinite, relative, universal and negative pronouns. In case of relative function, it is used in pair, where the first pronoun has no antecedent, while the second pronoun refers to the first.

Pronouns can be omitted, when they can be inferred from the context.

5.5 Other word classes

There are two spatial postpositions denoting either enclosed or open space and one temporal postposition denoting temporal nominal phrase. Other temporal and spatial relations are expressed by the means of spatial and temporal nouns.

I have described six conjunctions in NMZ. Conjunctions are not used very often, because most of the relations between clauses or constituents are inferred from the context.

Particles are placed mostly after verbs or at the end of a clause. Most of the sentence particles have emphatic or structural functions.

Though I did not focus on complex sentences, I have described the basic structure of declarative sentences, the direct and quoted speech, the way of forming interrogative sentences (either using question particles to form polar questions or interrogative pronouns to form nonpolar questions) and the optative, exclamatory and imperative sentences.

Thus I present a coherent system of word classes with description of the main grammar features and I believe I met the goal to provide a basic description of the grammar system from the synchronic perspective.

6 Contribution to science

The PhD thesis provides a description of one variety of NMZ language from the synchronic perspective based on data obtained by field research. The description and documentation of endangered languages is very important work not only for preserving a piece of knowledge for future generations, but also for the purpose of further research in fields of comparative linguistics, historical linguistics, anthropology, history and archaeology and last but not least, for the preserving of piece of culture. China is a large country with a lot of ethnic minorities, which speak their own languages, however these minorities are challenging with the politics and interests of the *Hàn* majority. Unfortunately for small ethnic groups of people like NMZ, the official approach towards minorities is restrictive, based on principles formulated by J.V.Stalin, which favors certain (usually bigger) minorities by its official recognition.

Previous works on NMZ language did not provide very useful information, therefore I had to start from the very beginning. The descriptions made by Chinese researchers are preliminary and very brief and the information is not supported by annotated text, therefore it is not possible to verify the reliability of the description. It proved that previous research was preliminary and mostly based on insufficient data. The other rather crucial problem of Chinese works is that these works are not reliable phonetically. The latest work of *Yin Weibin* (2016) shows problems to

distinguish voiced and voiceless initials, prenasalized initials and sounds which are not in the Chinese language (voiceless lateral approximant etc). On the other hand, for me, being the speaker of Czech language, there can be problem in the perception of several vowels and of course tones.

All inflected parts of speech, namely verbs, adjectival verbs, nouns and pronouns, were more or less described and the basic characteristics has been presented in relevant chapters. Further research can thus focus on each feature more specifically, e.g. the relations between specific kinds of verbs and its arguments, spatial relations, temporal relations etc.

I have found that NMZ is a language with a very interesting phenomena of conflicting basic morphological characteristic. The language has many agglutinative features (e.g. case markers, aspect markers etc.), however it also shows a strong tendency to avoid using them, expressing grammar categories by word order or by context, which is typical for isolating languages. This situation may be a result of bilinguality of the native speakers, who use the isolating Chinese language in common communication.

Some of the grammatical features resemble even Altaic languages (e.g. the case marking /ŋiʎ/), therefore it would be interesting to conduct further research to compare the grammar system of NMZ with languages along the way to „Nimalhasa“ (the legendary place of NMZ origin), which includes places, where Altaic languages are spoken.

Although the language has no written form, it has two distinct stylistic registers. The more prestige is called **yêlishâ** /jeʎliʎsaʎ/ and it is used in narratives, songs and ritual chants for idiomatic or poetic expressions.

Though I did not focus on complex sentences, I have described the basic structure of declarative sentences, the direct and quoted speech, the way of forming interrogative sentences (either using question particles to form polar questions or interrogative pronouns to form nonpolar questions) and the optative, exclamatory and imperative sentences.

Thus I present a coherent system of word classes with description of the main grammar features and I believe I met the goal to provide a basic description of the grammar system from the synchronic perspective.

The genetic affiliation of this language and more profound comparison to other neighboring languages (e.g. *Qiāng*, Naic languages, Altaic languages, Chinese, *Yi* and Tibetan) was beyond the scope of this thesis. However this field should also be studied in more detail to either support or disprove my analysis.

I hope this thesis can serve as a basic starting point for further more detailed research on this language.

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