

# Posture Verbs in Two Tibeto-Burman Languages of Nepal<sup>1</sup>

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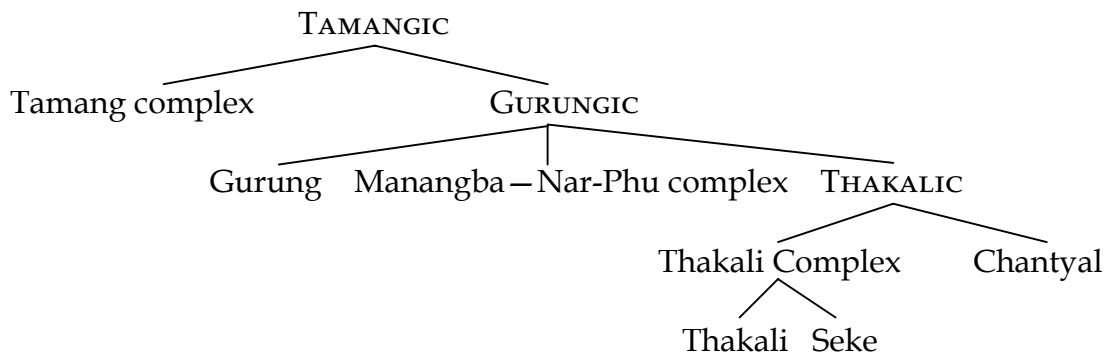
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0. **Introduction:** In this paper we will examine the syntax and semantics of expressions which, either currently or historically, contain verbal expressions denoting posture ['stand', 'sit', 'lie'] in two Tibeto-Burman languages of Nepal: Chantyal [Tibeto-Burman: Bodic: Bodish: Tibetic: Tamangic] and Magar [Tibeto-Burman: Bodic: Himalayish: Kham-Magar]. The genetic relationship of these languages to each other and to other members of the Bodic Division of Tibeto-Burman is outlined in Figure 1.

## 1. Posture verbs in Chantyal

1.0 **Introduction:** The Chantyal language is spoken by approximately 2000 of the 11,000 ethnic Chantyal.<sup>2</sup> The Chantyal live in the Baglung and Myagdi Districts of Nepal; the villages where the Chantyal language is spoken are all located in the eastern portion of the Myagdi District and include the villages of Mangale Khāni, Dwāri, Ghyās Kharkā, Caura Khāni, Kuine Khāni, Thārā Khāni, Pātle Kharkā, Mālāmpāhār, and Malkābāng. There is relatively little linguistic variation among these villages, though where differences exist, it is the speech of Mangale Khāni that is represented here.

The Chantyal language is a member of the Tamangic group and, within the group, it is lexically and grammatically closest to the Thakali Complex. Assessment of the internal relations within the group is complicated by a number of factors, among which is the fact that shared innovations may be the product of geographic contiguity as much as shared genetic background. At the moment, the most likely classification is as follows:



Chantyal, however, is in many respects the most deviant member of the group, lacking a tone system and having borrowed a large portion of its lexicon from Nepali. In addition, there appears to be a layer of Tibeto-Burman vocabulary that is not Tamangic.

The Chantyal were traditionally identified as Magars [most printed references refer to them as 'Chantel Magars'], but this identification was based on a deliberate misrepresentation fostered by the Chantyal for various practical reasons.<sup>3</sup> In fact, Chantyal and Magar are not especially close genetically, as shown in Figure 1, but they have been in contact for at least two centuries and their grammars have been converging, both

through influence of Magar on Chantyal and through influence of Nepali on both (Noonan 2001b).

**1.1 Posture expressions in Chantyal:** In this section we will discuss a set of basic expressions denoting posture in Chantyal. By ‘basic expression’, we mean expressions whose meanings contain the minimum reference to manner available in the language for the expression of a particular posture.

Basic expressions denoting posture in Chantyal consist of a few simplex verbs and set of complex expressions. The complex expressions contain an orientational word and one of a set of generic verbs translating English ‘do’, ‘become’, and ‘happen’.

Expressions denoting *standing* include the simplex verbs in (1) and the complex expressions in (2):

- |     |                    |  |
|-----|--------------------|--|
| (1) | <b>yep-</b>        | ‘maintain a standing position’                                     |
|     | <b>yes-</b>        | ‘assume a standing position’                                       |
| (2) | <b>tharo la-</b>   | ‘maintain a vertical position’ [literally: ‘vertical do’]          |
|     | <b>tharo ta-</b>   | ‘assume a vertical position’ [literally: ‘vertical become’]        |
|     | <b>tharo pəri-</b> | ‘come to be in a vertical position’ [literally: ‘vertical happen’] |

The verbs in (1) refer to muscular activity; they cannot be used with inanimate subjects. The expressions in (2), on the other hand, refer to vertical position and can be used with inanimate subjects also, though see below for more discussion of this.

There is only one basic expression denoting *sitting*, and it consists of a simplex verb:<sup>4</sup>

- |     |            |       |
|-----|------------|-------|
| (3) | <b>ci-</b> | ‘sit’ |
|-----|------------|-------|

On the other hand, there are no basic expressions denoting *lying* consisting only of a simplex verb. All basic expressions referring to lying are complex:

- |     |                      |  |
|-----|----------------------|--|
| (4) | <b>terso la-</b>     | ‘maintain a horizontal position’ [literally: ‘horizontal /flat do’]          |
|     | <b>terso ta-</b>     | ‘assume a horizontal position’ [literally: ‘horizontal/flat become’]         |
|     | <b>terso pəri-</b>   | ‘come to be in a horizontal position’ [literally: ‘horizontal /flat happen’] |
| (5) | <b>wattano la-</b>   | ‘maintain a supine position’ [literally: ‘supine do’]                        |
|     | <b>wattano ta-</b>   | ‘assume a supine position’ [literally: ‘supine become’]                      |
|     | <b>wattano pəri-</b> | ‘come to be in a supine position’ [literally: ‘supine happen’]               |
| (6) | <b>bhūy-ri than-</b> | ‘lie down’ [literally: ‘ground-LOC rest.on’]                                 |

The difference between the sets of complex expressions in (4) and (5) rests on the differences in meaning of **terso** ‘horizontal, flat’ and **wattano** ‘supine [face up]’. The latter, since **wattano** makes crucial reference to the face, can only be used with regard to humans and animals; the former, however, can be [and is] used with reference to people and can also be used with inanimates. The expression in (6) includes the verb **than-**, which means literally ‘hang on, rest on’, implying that the subject is being supported or held up by something.<sup>5</sup>

In sum, Chantyal makes extensive use of complex expressions in referring to posture. And, as we have seen, there is no simplex verb denoting the *lying* posture in the language. There is a simplex verb for *sitting*, however, and no corresponding complex expressions with only this basic meaning. Expressions for *standing* consist of both simplex verbs and complex expressions.

This distribution of simplex and complex expressions is consistent with predictions from Givón's (1984) time-stability continuum and Hopper & Thompson's (1980) transitivity continuum: *lying*, the least agentive and therefore least transitive of the basic posture expressions is the least prototypically verb-like and therefore the one most likely to receive complex expression involving a stative positional word.

**1.2 The syntax of posture expressions:** Chantyal is a consistently ergative language, which is to say that transitive subjects are in the ergative case, marked by the case clitic *-sə*, but intransitive subjects are in the absolutive case, which is unmarked. Direct objects are either absolutive or dative, the latter if their animacy is relevant to the meaning of the clause.<sup>6</sup>

The basic posture expressions described in the last section are all intransitive, and thus have absolutive subjects. Examples follow:<sup>7</sup>

- (7) *Pirəm thim-muwari yep-ji*  
 Piram house-ADES stand-PERF  
 'Piram stood near the house.'
- (8) *mhiun-chə nə yewta kalce bənnu tharo la-sirə*  
 night-LOC FOCUS one black gun vertical do-SEQ  
 'at night a black gun stood erect, and.' [R78]
- (9) *Ram kurci-phyaraŋ ci-i*  
 Ram chair-SUPER sit-PERF  
 'Ram sat on the chair.'
- (10) *Om bhūy-ri terso ta-i*  
 Om ground-LOC horizontal become-PERF  
 'Om lay on the ground.'
- (11) *Om bhūy-ri thian-ji*  
 Om ground-LOC hang-PERF  
 'Om lay on the ground.'

There are no simplex verbs denoting transitive or causative counterparts of the basic expressions; that is, there are no simplex verbs with meanings analogous to English 'stand smth up', 'set' ['place in a sitting position'], or 'lay' ['place in a lying position']. Causative counterparts can be formed, however, by either of two methods for making causative constructions in Chantyal. For native verbs, causative constructions are formed by placing the resultative suffix *-nə* on the semantic main verb and adding the auxiliary verb *la-* 'do':

- (12) *Ram-sə nāni-ra yep-nə la-i*  
 Ram-ERG baby-DAT stand-RSLT do-PERF

‘Ram stood the baby up.’ [*i.e.* caused the baby to stand]

Note that this sentence has the expected ergative subject and dative-marked direct object.

Chantyal has borrowed a very large portion of its lexicon from Nepali, and verbs borrowed from Nepali often are found in intransitive/transitive pairs, unlike verbs in the native portion of the lexicon. The morphological marking for transitivity is based on the Nepali originals, but is manifested somewhat differently and in a rather simpler system than one finds in Nepali. As it happens, only one of the verbs in the set of basic posture expressions is borrowed from Nepali: **pəri-** ‘happen’, which has a transitive counterpart **pari-** ‘cause to happen’.

- (13) *Om-sə nāni-ra terso pari-i*  
Om-ERG baby-DAT horizontal make.happen-PERF  
‘Om lay the baby down.’ [*i.e.* caused the baby to become horizontal]

### 1.3 The semantics of posture expressions:

1.3.1 **Auxiliaries:** In Section 1.1, a set of basic expressions for referring to posture was presented. While there was only one [simplex] expression for *sitting*, for *standing* and *lying* there were a number of periphrastic expressions formed with a set of three auxiliary verbs, **la-** ‘do’, **ta-** ‘become’, and **pəri-** ‘happen’.

**la-** ‘do’ is an active proverb which can substitute for any active verb, transitive or intransitive. It implies activity, so in (14)

- (14) *Ram tharo la-i*  
Ram vertical do-PERF  
‘Ram stood.’

we assume that Ram actively maintained a standing position. When it is used with inanimate subjects, as in (8), repeated below,

- (8) *mħun-chə nə yewta kalce bənnu tharo la-sirə*  
night-LOC FOCUS one black gun vertical do-SEQ  
‘at night a black gun stood erect, and.’ [R78]

the subject is presented as a volitional actor: in the story from which (8) is taken, the gun is standing before the narrator in a dream.

**ta-** ‘become’ is an active copular verb, implying a transition from one state to another. Its subjects may be animate or inanimate.

- (15) *dəliŋ terso ta-si-m*  
house.beam horizontal become-ANT-NPST  
‘The housebeam lay horizontally.’

**pəri-** has a complex set of meanings in Chantyal and also in Nepali, from which the word was borrowed. The original sense in Nepali is ‘fall’; in Chantyal, the basic sense is ‘happen’. In posture expressions, it contributes the sense that the state of affairs thus described is the result of an event or events mentioned or alluded to earlier. Like **ta-** ‘become’, its subjects may be animate or inanimate.

- (16) *dəliŋ ajəy terso pəri-m*  
house.beam still horizontal happen-NPST

'The housebeam is still horizontal.' [i.e. still hasn't been raised]

The contributions of these auxiliary verbs to posture expressions are summed up in (17):

(17) <b>la-</b>	implies activity on the part of the subject; animate subjects only
<b>ta-</b>	active copular verb; implies transition between states; animate or inanimate subjects
<b>pəri-</b>	resultant state; animate of inanimate subjects

These verbs are found in many other expressions; the orientational words associated with the verbs in (17) supply the meanings for the sense of posture expressions: **tharo** 'vertical', **terso** 'horizontal, flat', and **wattano** 'supine'.

1.3.2 **Agency & movement:** Expressions denoting posture in Chantyal are divided between those which attribute agency to the subject and those which do not. For *standing*, the simplex verbs **yep-** 'maintain a standing position' and **yes-** 'assume a standing position' require an agent subject, as does the complex expression **tharo la-** 'maintain a vertical position'. **tharo ta-** 'assume a vertical position' and **tharo pəri-** 'come to be in a vertical position', as noted earlier, do not require an agent subject. The basic expression for *sitting*, **ci-** 'sit', requires an agent subject. Of the expressions for *lying*, all of which are complex, those formed with **la-** 'do' require an agent subject and the rest do not.

In this way, Chantyal distinguishes between expressions which denote an active involvement on the part of the subject in the assumption or maintenance of a particular posture and those which simply express a specific vertical-horizontal orientation, the latter being available for animate or inanimate entities. For animate subjects, therefore, the speaker has a choice between framing the utterance so as to emphasize the subject's active involvement or framing it so as to background or even deny active involvement.

Another distinction which the Chantyal speaker must make in referring to posture is the distinction between the subject's assuming and maintaining a given posture. Expressions denoting *standing* and *lying* are so divided between those implying motion and those that do not, but **ci-** 'sit' is neutral in this regard, and in this way is like the English verb *sit*, which can also be used to refer to assuming or maintaining a sitting position.

Expressions for *standing* and *lying* can be displayed relative to the agency and motion as in (18):



(18):

EXPRESSION	STANDING/ LYING	AGENT SUBJECT	ASSUMING/ MAINTAINING POSITION
yep-	standing	yes	maintaining [non-notional]
yes-	standing	yes	assuming [motional]
tharo la-	standing	yes	maintaining [non-motional]
tharo ta-	standing	no	assuming [motional]
tharo pəri-	standing	no	assuming [motional]
terso la-	lying	yes	maintaining [non-motional]
terso ta-	lying	no	assuming [motional]
terso pəri-	lying	no	assuming [motional]
wattano la-	lying	yes	maintaining [non-motional]
wattano ta-	lying	no	assuming [motional]
wattano pəri-	lying	no	assuming [motional]
bñūy-ri tñan-	lying	no	maintaining [non-motional]

It should be noted in passing that Chantyal has a set of motion verbs whose sense includes an invited inference that a lying or standing posture is achieved as a consequence of the motion, but which do not encode the posture directly or include the achieve of the posture as an entailment. For example, the verb **khur-** means ‘fall’ or ‘trip’ and invites an inference that the subject is horizontally positioned, *i.e.* **terso**, as a result. The meaning does not entail this posture, however.

1.3.3 **Expression of location:** Posture expressions in Chantyal are not used idiomatically to express location. One does not find in Chantyal, therefore, idiomatic expressions analogous to the following English sentences:

(19) The house stood on the edge of a cliff.

The book sat on the table.

The pieces lay on the floor.

In translating all of the above, a Chantyal speaker would use a simple locative expression involving a copular verb:

(20) *pñara-ye tawko-ri thim mu-ō*  
mountain-GEN edge-LOC house be-IMPF

‘The house was/stood on the edge of a cliff.’

Indeed, posture expressions are used with inanimates mostly when a vertical or horizontal orientation is somehow basic to their definitions, the sorts of mental scenes they invoke. So, a posture expression might appropriately have as a subject a housebeam or a tree, but not a watch or a book. And even then, it is only expressions denoting vertical or horizontal position, *standing* and *lying*, which are potentially available for inanimates: the only dedicated basic expression for *sitting*, **ci-**, can be used only with animates and only those for which reference to a sitting posture would make sense.

1.3.4 **Expression of manner:** Chantyal lacks simplex expressions which lexicalize *posture + manner* in verbs analogous to English ‘squat’, ‘crouch’, ‘lean’, and so on. Such expressions are always complex in Chantyal involving either an orientational word

- (21) *ghowto pəri-wa*  
 prone happen-NOM  
 ‘lean over, bend over, lie face down.’

or an item in the ‘expressive vocabulary’ (Noonan 2001a):

- (22) *kyata dhutummə ci-i*  
 boy sitting.upright sit-PERF  
 ‘The boy sat upright.’
- (23) *kyata cakre-makre la-si ci-i*  
 boy sit.cross.legged do-ANT sit-PERF  
 ‘The boy sat cross legged.’

The lack of simplex verbs encoding *posture + manner* is consistent with the way the expression of manner is handled generally in the language: manner is most frequently encoded by expressive vocabulary, often with **la-** ‘do’ functioning as an anterior con-verb, as illustrated by (22)-(23) above.

1.3.5 **Polysemy of basic posture expressions:** At various points in the preceding paragraphs we have noted ways in which the meanings of the basic posture expressions either overlap with other posture expressions or have sense that extend beyond the expression of posture. For example, the posture expressions containing **tharo** ‘vertical’, repeated below, are used to expressing *standing*: they can also be used to express *sitting*, especially in reference to the assumption of a sitting posture from a *lying* position:

- (24) **tharo la-** ‘maintain a vertical position’ [literally: ‘vertical do’]  
**tharo ta-** ‘assume a vertical position’ [literally: ‘vertical become’]  
**tharo pəri-** ‘come to be in a vertical position’ [literally: ‘vertical happen’]

When the reference is to *sitting*, **tharo** refers not to the entire body but only to the spine. All of the complex expressions can be used to encode a set of meanings based on a literal interpretation of their components.

Of the simplex verbs, **ci-** ‘sit’ is the only one to have extended its meaning much beyond the expression of a basic posture sense. **ci-** has acquired a range of meanings, including: sit, live [somewhere], be in a place, stay, remain, wait; continue; be [a member of a profession]; seem. A few examples of these additional senses follow:

- (25) *yəwta gāw-ri yəwta bura ci-ma*  
 one village-LOC one old.man sit-IMPF  
 ‘There was an old man who lived in a village.’ [P1]
- (26) *nhi Ram-ye yəwta them-əŋ ci-i*  
 we Ram-GEN one house-LOC sit-PERF  
 ‘We stayed in one of Ram’s houses.’
- (27) *shya-i ci-m*  
 look-ANT sit-NPST  
 ‘He’s staring.’



- (28) *cater nə kfi nə mastər ci-wa pəri-m bfi-i*  
 then FOCUS you FOCUS teacher sit-NOM happen-NPST say-PERF  
 ‘‘You have to be the teacher,’’ they said from that time on.’ [U103-4]
- (29) *m̄ya kfi-ye h̄ənuwar lū-i ci-si-m*  
 love you-GEN appearance shine-ANT sit-ANT-NPST  
 ‘[My] love, your appearance seems to shine.’ [AA82]

1.4 **Grammaticalization of posture expressions:** In the last section it was noted that **ci-** ‘sit’ had evolved a range of meanings, a few of which were illustrated in (25-9). We assume that the ‘sit’ meaning is an old one, and that the others derive from that sense by means of meaning extensions familiar from the histories of many languages. The ‘seem’ and ‘be [in a profession]’ senses are copular, extensions arising ultimately from the stative, durative senses of ‘sit’:

- (30) SIT → STAY → REMAIN → BE/SEEM  
 The ‘continue’ sense has a similar semantic origin, but with a somewhat different grammatical result, since here **ci-** assumes the status of an auxiliary:
- (31) *kha la-i ca-wa ci-m-ě cu raches-sə*  
 how do-ANT eat-NOM sit-NPST-Q this ogre-ERG  
 ‘How does he continue to eat them, this ogre?’ [AA90]

There is evidence that the copular verb **mu** derives historically from a verb meaning ‘sit, stay’. In Chantyal, **mu** is used for the expression of location and attribution; another stative copula, **fin**, is used for identification.<sup>8</sup> The locational sense in particular is expected in a copula deriving from a verb with a ‘sit, stay’ sense. Forms clearly cognate with **mu** are widespread in copular function in the Bodic Division of Tibeto-Burman. Where they have a meaning that is not simply copular, they mean ‘sit, stay’, as in Magar [see below].

The **mu** copula has developed into an auxiliary verb and a non-past suffix on verbs. In the latter function, it is suffixed directly to the verbal stem. It has two allomorphs, **-m** and **-mu**, the latter appearing in certain phonologically conditioned environments and optionally [but rarely] elsewhere.

- (32) *na-sə sar-mu*  
 I-ERG kill-NPST  
 ‘I’ll kill it.’ [P37]
- (33) *əmr̄ika-ne-ma-thōy la-si-rə ci-m*  
 America-PERSON-PL-ESS do-ANT-SEQ sit-NPST  
 ‘He sits down like an American.’
- (34) *kfi nə bipəttə ta-si-m*  
 you FOCUS terrible.state become-ANT-NPST  
 ‘You’re in a terrible state.’ [L24]

As an auxiliary, **mu** is found in a number of constructions involving predictive, progressive, and resultative senses. A few examples follow:

- (35) *na kam-ri th̄o-wa-bh̄ənda pəyle, Ram kam la-wa mu*

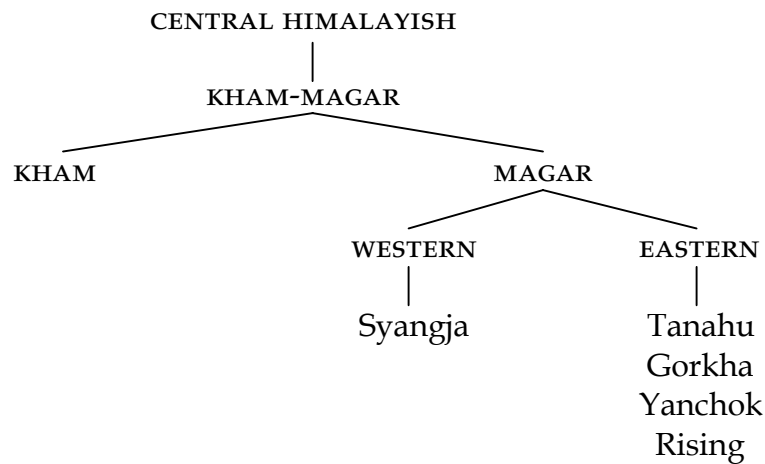
- I work-LOC arrive-NOM-COMP before Ram work do-NOM be.NPST  
 'Even before I get to work, Ram will be working.'
- (36) *tor them-əŋ kɦa-gəy mu-ō ro*  
 upward house-LOC bring-PROG be-IMPFP REPORT  
 '[It was said that] he was bringing them up to the village.' [M5]
- (37) *yi-sər-wa s̃ara-si-wa mu-ō nu*  
 this-manner-NOM swell-ANT-NOM be-IMPFP REMINDER  
 'It had swollen like this.' [I85]
- (38) *cə din nə bənnu nə bhərə-ysi-wa mu-wa fiin-si-m*  
 that day FOCUS gun FOCUS fill-ANT-NOM be-NOM be-ANT-NPST  
 'That day, it turned out that the gun was loaded.' [R20]

The sense contributed by **mu** in such constructions, historically, was stativity and location within the time of an event.

## 2. Posture verbs in Magar

**2.0 Introduction:** According to the 1991 census of Nepal, there were 1,339,308 ethnic Magars, of whom only 430,264 (32.1%) spoke their ancestral tongue.<sup>9</sup> Magar speakers can be found throughout central and west-central Nepal, but they are the dominant ethnic group in several districts: Rolpa, Pyutan, Baglung, Myagdi, Palpa, and Tanahu. Significant populations exist also in the Syangja and Kaski districts. The identification of Magars is complicated by the fact that a number of other ethnic groups, some speaking languages completely unrelated to Magar, have claimed to be Magars to outsiders. These groups include the Chantyal [as noted above], the Kham, the Kaike, the Kusunda, the Raute, and the Raji.<sup>10</sup>

While the Magar dialects listed in Figure 1 form a linguistic group and are clearly more closely related to each other than to any language outside their group, there is considerable linguistic diversity among them, even to the point where the dialects differ in the presence or absence of a few major features defining different typological classes of languages in Nepal (Noonan 2000b).<sup>11</sup> The dialects considered in this paper fall into two groups:



All of the Magar dialects have been influenced to one degree or another by Indo-European Nepali, the national language. The eastern dialects, Tanahu and Gorkha in particular, have innovated considerably in the direction of Nepali, whereas, Syangja has preserved more conservative features. The source dialect is indicated in the examples below.<sup>12</sup>

**2.1 Posture expressions in Magar:** The Chantyal and Magar languages, though they are related and may have been spoken in close proximity at various times in their histories,<sup>13</sup> are very different in their treatment of posture expressions. In section 1.1, we saw that Chantyal makes extensive use of complex expressions in referring to posture, having only a small set of simplex verbs with posture senses. In Magar, on the other hand, there are verbal roots with meanings referring either directly to posture or to motion up or down [rising or falling] which, in combination with a set of voice/transitivity [VT] suffixes, produce verbal stems which can be used to denote posture.

In general, the system works as follows:<sup>14</sup> each verbal root forms at least two stems, one of which is causative. The other stem contains one of the other VT suffixes [transitive, intransitive, or middle] or is unmarked. The causative is formed:

- (39)
- |              |                             |
|--------------|-----------------------------|
| CAUSATIVE    | <b>-(V)k-</b>               |
| TRANSITIVE   | <b>-(V)t-</b>               |
| INTRANSITIVE | <b>-(V)s-</b>               |
| MIDDLE       | <b>-(V)fi<sup>-15</sup></b> |
| UNMARKED     | <b>-∅-</b>                  |

The unmarked form can be transitive or intransitive in sense. No verbal root has all five theoretically possible stems. A few roots have four; many have three.

Verbal stems denoting *sitting* include the following:

- (40)
- | MIDDLE                   | UNMARKED    | INTRANS.     | TRANSITIVE   | CAUSATIVE              |
|--------------------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|------------------------|
|                          | <b>mu-</b>  |              |              | <b>mu-ak</b>           |
|                          | 'sit, stay' |              |              | 'cause to sit/stay'    |
| <b>ba-fi-</b>            |             | <b>ba-s-</b> | <b>ba-t-</b> | <b>ba-fi-ak</b>        |
| 'settle down,<br>alight' |             | 'sit'        | 'set down'   | 'cause to settle down' |
|                          |             |              |              | <b>ba-s-ak</b>         |
|                          |             |              |              | 'cause to sit'         |
|                          |             |              |              | <b>ba-t-ak</b>         |
|                          |             |              |              | 'cause to set down'    |

Verbal stems denoting *standing* include the following set:

- (41)
- | MIDDLE         | UNMARKED               | INTRANS. | TRANSITIVE                        | CAUSATIVE               |
|----------------|------------------------|----------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>so-fi-</b>  | <b>so-</b>             |          | <b>so-t-</b>                      | <b>so-fi-ak</b>         |
| 'swell up'     | 'stand, rise,<br>wake' |          | 'stand smth,<br>raise,<br>awaken' | 'cause to swell'        |
|                |                        |          |                                   | <b>so-k</b>             |
|                |                        |          |                                   | 'cause to rise/wake'    |
|                |                        |          |                                   | <b>so-t-ak</b>          |
|                |                        |          |                                   | 'cause to raise/awaken' |
| <b>toŋ-fi-</b> |                        |          |                                   | <b>toŋ-fi-ok</b>        |

'be in a standing position; stop, wait'

'cause to stand/stop/wait'

**thor-os**

'stand, rise'

**thor-os-ak**

'cause to stand/rise'

Magar, like Chantyal, has no basic expression for *lying*, nor any complex expression whose only or basic sense is 'lie'. What we find instead, as indicated in (42), are verbs whose basic sense is 'flop down, collapse' or 'fall'. None of these denotes simply the basic posture of *lying*; rather, these verbs describe an event which could result in the subject assuming a lying posture. The assumption of a lying posture is not stated directly, but left to inference.

(42)	MIDDLE	UNMARKED	INTRANS.	TRANSITIVE	CAUSATIVE
	<b>pol-oh-</b>			<b>pol-ot-</b>	<b>pol-h-ok</b>
	'flop down, collapse, lie down'			'put or lay down'	'cause to fall down/ collapse/lie; roll over'
	<b>khoh-h-</b>				<b>pol-ot-ak-</b>
	'fall down, lie down'				'cause to put/lay down'
					<b>khoh-h-ok</b>
					'cause to fall/lie'

The state of being in a *lying* posture is expressed with a construction containing a nominalization of one of these verbs together with a resultative or stative auxiliary itself derive from the posture verb **mu-** 'sit' which in this construction functioning as a resultative auxiliary [section 2.3.5].

(43)	<i>khoh-h-mə</i>	<i>mu-</i>
	fall-MID-NOM	sit
	'be in a lying posture.'	

In sum, we see that Magar, like Chantyal, maintains a distinction between expressions denoting *standing* and *sitting*, on the one hand, and *lying* on the other. In both languages, there are expressions for *standing* and *sitting* involving simplex verbs with primary senses denoting their respective postures. Expressions denoting *lying*, on the other hand, involve either complex expressions or simplex verbs referring to the lying posture only indirectly by inference.

**2.2 The syntax of posture expressions:** Magar is a morphologically ergative language. The dialects differ in that some are consistently ergative, like Chantyal, and some display split ergativity on the Nepali model. The western dialects, represented here by Syangja, are consistently ergative. The eastern dialects [Tanahu, Gorkha, Rising, and Yanchok] have an aspect-based split ergativity wherein perfective aspect correlates with ergative syntax and imperfective clauses with accusative syntax. The absolute case is unmarked; the ergative is marked with the suffix - i/e.

In the western dialects, and in the eastern dialects in the perfective aspect, the absolutive is found with subjects of intransitive and middle stems, and the ergative is found with subjects of causative and transitive verbal stems:

MIDDLE

- (44) *Gandaki-aj mudhia pol-ofi-a*  
 river-LOC log fell-MID-PST  
 'the log lay/fell in the river.'  
 INTRANSITIVE
- (45) *Sita tebəl-aj ba-s-a*  
 Sita table-LOC stood-INTR-PST  
 'Sita stood on the table.'  
 TRANSITIVE
- (46) *Manas-e biruwa jhia-ŋ so-t-a*  
 Manas-ERG sapling ground-LOC stood-TR-PAST  
 'Manas stood sapling on the ground.'  
 CAUSATIVE
- (47) *Bhim-e mi-ja-ke ba-s-ak-a*  
 Bhim-ERG POSS-child-DAT sit-INTR-CAUS-PST  
 'Bhim made the child sit down.'

With posture verbs, unmarked verbal stems are always intransitive and thus have absolutive subjects:

- UNMARKED
- (48) *Shrigana im-aj mu-a*  
 Shrigana house-LOC sit-PST  
 'Shrigana sat in the house.'
- (49) *babu-ja galam-aj so-a*  
 boy-child door-LOC stand-PST  
 'the boy stood at the door.'

The intransitivity of these verbs reflects the Aktionsart of these verbal roots: some unmarked verb stems are grammatically transitive.

Magar, like Chantyal, exhibits the anti-dative phenomenon, whereby direct objects high in animacy are marked in the dative case; other direct objects are absolutive, which is to say morphologically unmarked. (47) illustrates the marking of animate direct objects. In (50), we have an example of a causative of a transitive, which shows that the subordinated agent is rendered in the dative case:

- (50) *Sita-e Bhim-ke mi-ja-ke ba-t-ak-a*  
 Sita-ERG Bhim-DAT POSS-child-DAT sit-TR-CAUS-PST  
 'Sita made Bhim set down the child.'

## 2.3 The semantics of posture expressions:

2.3.1 **Transitivity and voice:** We had earlier discussed how, in referring to posture, Chantyal speakers must, on the one hand, distinguish between expressions which attribute agency to the subject and those which do not; and, on the other hand, distinguish between those which denote the assumption of a given posture and those which denote the maintenance of one. Neither of these distinctions, so fundamental to the Chantyal mode of referring to posture, is encoded syntactically or morphologically in Magar.

However, as noted, Magar employs an elaborated system of voice and transitivity marking that has no analog in Chantyal. At one stage in the history of Magar, this system must have been fully productive. Benedict (1972) reconstructs\* **t** and \***s** stem-finals for Proto-Tibeto-Burman with meanings – directive/causative and reflexive/middle, respectively – that show that the Magar system is a direct continuation of a Proto-TB transitivity marking system. At this stage in the history of the language, however, only the causative is fully productive: every verbal stem [transitive, intransitive, middle, or unmarked] has a causative counterpart, as (40)-(42) attest. However, the distribution of the other verbal stem-types indicates that these forms are fully lexicalized and are not derived by morphological processes. From a purely synchronic perspective, it is not possible to predict for these posture expressions why certain theoretically possible VT stems are not found. So, for example, for verb roots referring to *sitting*, we have only an unmarked form for **mu-**, along with the inevitable causative, while for **ba-**, we have a middle, an intransitive, and a transitive [and corresponding causatives], but no unmarked form. Unmarked **mu-** and morphologically intransitive **ba-s-** are more-or-less synonymous. For *standing*, we have morphologically unmarked **so-** paired with transitive **so-t-**, alongside an unpaired, morphologically intransitive **thor-os-** and a middle [and unpaired] **ton-f-**. While we could not predict from the meanings of the verbal roots how the stem forms would be distributed among them, it is nonetheless remarkable that, with the predictable exception of the causatives, we have for both *sitting* and *standing* full paradigms of verbal stems distributed among the various roots. So, for *sitting*, we have

(51)	MIDDLE	UNMARKED	INTRANS.	TRANSITIVE
	<b>ba-f-</b>	<b>mu-</b>	<b>ba-s-</b>	<b>ba-t-</b>

and for *standing*, we have:

(52)	MIDDLE	UNMARKED	INTRANS.	TRANSITIVE
	<b>ton-f-</b>	<b>so-</b>	<b>thor-os</b>	<b>so-t-</b>

[Recall that **so-f-** ‘swell up’ has a deviant meaning.] This is likely just a coincidence since similar patterns are not regularly found among other groups of nearly synonymous verbs, but it is a curious fact nonetheless.

Despite the fact that the VT stems are fully lexicalized, there is a high degree of predictability in their meanings given the sense of the root and meanings of the VT suffixes: stems marked with the transitive suffix **-(V)t-** are unfailingly transitive and preserve the basic meaning of the stem very well. Similarly, those marked with the intransitive suffix **-(V)s-** are unfailingly intransitive and likewise preserve the basic meaning. The exceptions, not surprisingly, are the middles, which show the greatest degree of semantic drift: **ba-f-** ‘settle down, alight’ [from **ba-** ‘sit’] and **so-f-** ‘swell up’ [from **so-** ‘stand, rise’] have extended meanings, with the result that the latter has ceased to be a posture verb, though its relation to the other members of the **so-** stem set is still discernable. **ton-f-** ‘be in a standing position’ has the additional meaning ‘stop’.<sup>16</sup>

2.3.2. **Expression of location:** Unlike Chantyal, some posture verbs in Magar can be used to indicate location. In (53), we see intransitive **ba-s-** ‘sit’ used with an inanimate subject to indicate location:

- (53) *khwa bhiṭr-aṅ handa ba-s-le*  
 small.clay.pot inside-LOC large.clay.pot sit-INTR-IMPF  
 ‘the khwa (small clay pot) sits inside the handa (large clay pot).’ [T]

In (54), we find the causative of **ba-s-** used in a similar way:

- (54) *ho-t-iṅ karaṅ ra-k-le, kara-ṅ*  
 D.DEM-PROX-ABL bamboo.basket bring-CAUS-IMPF bamboo.basket-LOC  
*moca lḥa tan-le, ra ho-lak-aṅ ba-s-ak ka-le*  
 banana leaf stretch-IMPF and D.DEM-CIR-LOC sit-INTR-CAUS put-IMPF  
 ‘afterwards we bring a bamboo basket, stretch a banana leaf over it and make it sit there.’ [T]

Similarly, unmarked **mu-** ‘sit’ has evolved a sense meaning ‘stay’, which can be used to indicate location:

- (55) *kus-kat kitab a-l-aṅ mu-a*  
 which-one book R.DEM-CIR-LOC sit-PST  
 ‘which of the books over there stays?’ [S]

Verbs expressing the *standing* posture don’t seem to be used to indicate location, however, locative expressions formed with the copular verb are used instead.

The expression of the *lying* posture is rendered by verbs whose basic sense means ‘fall down’. These verbs can take animate or inanimate subjects, but are not used in the expression of location in ways analogous to English ‘lie’.

2.3.3 **Expression of manner:** It is almost certainly an areal feature of the Tibeto-Burman languages of Nepal that they do not lexicalize *posture + manner* in ways analogous to English ‘squat’, ‘crouch’, ‘lean’, etc. As noted in section 1.3.4, Chantyal does not have verbs of this sort, and neither does Magar. In Magar, adverbial expressions of various sorts are used to supply information about manner.

- (56) *tokorok mu-*  
 straight sit  
 ‘sit straight.’ [S]

- (57) *bḥa-t-alas mu-*  
 separate-TR-ADV sit  
 ‘sit cross-legged.’ [T]

Most likely, the fact that *posture + manner* is not lexicalized in Chantyal and Magar is related to the limited use of posture verbs in the expression of location – recall that posture expressions are not used idiomatically to express location in Chantyal, and only the verb **ba-** ‘sit’ has this use in Magar. In using a posture verb-based metaphor for the expression of location, a speaker is invoking an image suggesting the manner in which the subject is situated in space. By saying *Milwaukee lies west of Lake Michigan*, we create an image of the town arranged in space in a certain manner. Since these Tibeto-Burman languages rarely conflate verbal and manner senses into a single lexical item,

they are less likely than languages that do this regularly, such as English, to use posture verbs for the expression of location.

**2.3.3 Polysemy of basic posture expressions:** In introducing the posture verbs in (40)-(42), we noted the range of meanings that these verbs possessed. For the most part, these meaning extensions are familiar ones. Focusing here on expressions for *sitting* and *standing*, since it is only with these verbs that we have dedicated postural meanings, the following instances of polysemy were noted in (40) and (41):

- (58) **mu-:** SIT → STAY  
**ba-:** SIT → SETTLE DOWN, ALIGHT  
**so-:** STAND/RISE → SWELL UP  
**so-:** STAND/RISE → WAKE  
**toŋ-:** STAND → STOP/WAIT

Note also that with **so-** and **thor-**, we have verbs which mean both ‘stand’ and ‘rise’.

Additional instances of meaning shift have been noted. For example, transitive **ba-t-** ‘set down’ can also mean, given the appropriate context, ‘stop’ or ‘desist’ in an activity:

- (59) *Bhim -e kajus-cə-ko-ke kajus-ke ba-t-ak-ke Manas-ke birhin-a*  
 Bhim-ERG work-ATT-PL-DAT work-NOM sit-TR-CAUS-NOM Manas-DAT send-  
 PST  
 ‘Bhim sent Manas to make the workers stop their work.’ [S]

The same verb compounded with **mhuŋ** ‘tiredness’ has the meaning ‘rest’:

- (60) *hose-ko pahar-aŋ kalh-a curcur-aŋ tak-dək-iŋ mhuŋ-ba-t-a*  
 D.DEM-PL rock.face-LOC climb-PST peak-LOC reach-COTEMP-ABL tire-sit-  
 TR-PST  
 ‘they climbed the rock face, and having reached the peak, they rested.’ [S]

**mu-** has extended its meaning beyond ‘sit, stay’ to ‘live at/in’:

- (61) *hose mahja i-l-aŋ som lhes-iŋ ho-ra mu-mə-le*  
 D.DEM woman P.DEM-CIR-LOC three year-ABL D.DEM-QUANT sit-NOM-IMPF  
 ‘that woman has lived here for three years.’ [T]

- (62) *hos-ko jum-cyo sah-aŋ sahər-aŋ ŋu-le<sup>17</sup>*  
 D.DEM-PL cold-ATT season-LOC city-LOC sit-IMPF  
 ‘they live in the city in the cold season.’ [T]

**mu-** is also found in verb concatenation constructions, some of which have lexicalized meanings, as in the following example:

- (63) *Ram-e kagat la-ŋ-ak-ke kagat-aŋ me-cop mu la-a*  
 Ram-ERG paper take-MID-CAUS-NOM paper-LOC POSS-pitch sit take-PST  
 ‘Ram put pitch on the paper to cause the paper to stick together.’ [S]

The verb concatenation **mu la-** means ‘put on’.

**2.4 Grammaticalization of posture expressions:** It was noted in section 1.4, that the Chantyal copular verb **mu** derives from a verb meaning ‘sit, stay’. Traces of its origins in a posture verb can be found in the fact that, in opposition to the other copular verb



**fin**, **mu** is used in locational expressions as opposed to identificational ones, to which **fin** is now restricted.

As it turns out, Magar **mu-** ‘sit, stay’ is cognate with Chantyal **mu**. And just as with its Chantyal counterpart, Magar **mu-** has followed an evolutionary path toward purely grammatical meanings. The main grammatical use to which Magar **mu-** is put is in the expression of durative aspect. This use can be seen in the following three examples:

- (64) *hose mis-mə mu-me*  
 D.DEM sleep-NOM sit-PRPF  
 ‘she is still sleeping. ~ has been sleeping.’ [T]
- (65) *mi-ja-ja kur-fu-mə mu-le*  
 POSS-child-child fall-MID-NOM sit-IMPF  
 ‘the child is lying down.’ [T]
- (66) *ka-yak babu-ja ra cyu mis-mə ŋu-naŋ rokotyak sisi-iŋ*  
 one-day boy-child and dog sleep-NOM sit-SIM frog bottle-ABL  
*bahire khyo-f-mo nu-a-aŋ*  
 outside emerge-MID-SEQ go-PST-LOC  
 ‘one day while the boy and the dog were sleeping, the frog came out from inside the bottle.’ [T]

The semantic main verb is found in the form of a nominalization in the durative construction with **mu-** appearing as an auxiliary. The sense contributed by **mu-** in this construction is location within the time of the event, which derives from the ‘stay, remain’ senses that **mu-** has developed.

### 3. Summary

Despite the fact that Chantyal and Magar are related languages, have almost certainly been spoken in close proximity during the last few centuries, and are subject to the same areal influences [see Noonan 2001b], they show numerous differences in the ways in which posture verb expressions are formed and organized within the grammar. In sum:

- Chantyal makes extensive use of complex expressions in referring to posture, having only a small set of simplex verbs with posture senses. In contrast, Magar has a relatively large number of verbs referring to the *sitting* and *standing* postures: these verbs are formed by combining the verbal root with any of a number of voice/transitivity affixes.
- However, for the *lying* posture, both languages employ complex expressions or simplex verbs which refer to the lying posture only indirectly by inference: neither has dedicated verbs denoting this posture.
- Chantyal speakers must, on the one hand, distinguish between expressions which attribute agency to the subject and those which do not; and, on the other hand, distinguish between those which denote the assumption of a given posture and those which denote the maintenance of one. Neither distinction is made in Magar.

- Neither language has simplex verbs which combine posture + manner.
- In Chantyal, expressions denoting posture are not used idiomatically to express location. In Magar, only one verb can be used idiomatically for the expression of location.
- In Chantyal, the few verbs with dedicated postural senses have not, with one exception, extended their meanings beyond postural senses. In contrast, postural verbs in Magar commonly exhibit extended meanings.
- In both languages, the verb **mu-** has acquired purely grammatical functions.

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<sup>2</sup> The figures given here are estimates, arrived at in consultation with ethnic Chantyls. In the last official census in 1991, the Chantyal were not an officially recognized ethnic group/caste and were not separately counted.

<sup>3</sup> See Noonan (1996) for a discussion of this question and for general ethnographic information, and Noonan (2001a) and Noonan *et al* (1999) and references given there for additional information about the Chantyal and their language.

<sup>4</sup> The expressions in (2) can be used in reference to *sitting*, the ‘vertical’ sense contributed by **tharo** referring here to the spine and not the entire body. However, without supporting context, these expressions refer to *standing*.

<sup>5</sup> It should be noted that there is an additional set of expressions with **ghowto** ‘prone’ which can also translate English ‘lie’.

- |     |                     |  |
|-----|---------------------|--|
| (a) | <b>ghowto la-</b>   | ‘maintain a prone position’ [literally: ‘prone do’]          |
|     | <b>ghowto ta-</b>   | ‘assume a prone position’ [literally: ‘prone become’]        |
|     | <b>ghowto pəri-</b> | ‘come to be in a prone position’ [literally: ‘prone happen’] |

The expressions in (5) involving **wattano** ‘supine’ differ from those with **ghowto** ‘prone’ with reference to the orientation of the face; they also differ in that those with **wattano** strongly imply [but do not entail] that the subject is in a lying position, whereas those with **ghowto** do not and have a range of meanings which includes ‘stoop’, ‘bend down’, ‘crouch down’ as well as ‘lie face down’. This difference between **wattano** and **ghowto** rests on the practical possibilities of human postures: to have one’s face pointing upward and one’s backside downward [‘supine’] implies a lying posture, whereas having one’s face pointing downward and one’s backside up is a posture that can be easily achieved without lying down. It is for this reason that the expressions with **wattano** are included among the basic expressions for posture in Chantyal [and are the forms usually given by Chantyls as translations of English ‘lie’], whereas those with **ghowto** are not included in the basic set.

<sup>6</sup> Chantyal exhibits the ‘antidative’ phenomenon: see Dryer (1986), Noonan (1991), and Noonan (2001a) for discussion.

<sup>7</sup> References in brackets, e.g. [R78] refer to numbered clauses in discourses published in Noonan *et al* (1999), Noonan & Bhulanja (2001), and Noonan & Bhulanja (in preparation).

<sup>8</sup> **mu** is the unmarked copula and is occasionally found in identificational sentences, especially if a locative noun is present, as in *He was a student in Kathmandu*.

<sup>9</sup> The figures are reported in Gurung (1998).

<sup>10</sup> Among the reasons for this were the fact that Magars were officially unenslavable and the fact that they were one of the groups recruited by the British for enrollment in the Gurkha units of the British army.

<sup>11</sup> Most notable among these features is a more complex verb agreement system which resembles that of the Kiranti languages and consistent ergativity.

<sup>12</sup> Tanahu [T], Syangja [S], Gorkha [G], Rising [R], Yanchok [Y]. Data from the Yanchok Dialect are from Shepherd and Shepherd (1971, 1972, 1973). Data from the Rising Dialect are from Subba (1972). Transcriptions have been systematized. Data from the other Magar dialects and from Chantyal were collected by the authors.

<sup>13</sup> In parts of the Chantyal-speaking area, Chantyls and Magars share the same slopes, with the Chantyls living at the higher elevations and the Magars on the lower. However, in these Magars speak the national language, Nepali, and we know that they have spoken Nepali for a number of generations, perhaps as long as the Chantyal have inhabited the area they now share. See Noonan (1996) for a discussion of some of these issues. There appears to be, however, an early layer of Magar borrowings in Chantyal, which suggests that the two languages were once spoken in close proximity. Population movements have been frequent in Nepal and it is known that the Chantyls migrated to their current homeland within the last two centuries.

<sup>14</sup> See Grunow-Hårsta (2002) for discussion.

<sup>15</sup> **-fi-** may represent phonetic murmur which extends over adjacent segments; it may also represent [h]. We choose to represent this morpheme by /f/ so as not to confuse the morpheme with phonetic aspiration represented by <h>.

<sup>16</sup> See Heine *et al* 1991 for discussion of the susceptibility of middles to meaning changes of this sort.

<sup>17</sup> **ɲu-** is a variant of **mu-** found in the Tanahu dialect.

### Abbreviations used in glosses

ABL	ablative	MID	middle
ADES	adessive case	NOM	nominalizer
ADV	adverbial	NPST	non-past
ANT	anterior	P.DEM	proximal demonstrative
ATT	attributive	PERF	perfective
CAUS	causative	PL	plural
CIR	circumulative	POSS	inherent possession
COMP	comparative case	PPRF	past perfective
DAT	dative case	PRPF	present perfect
D.DEM	distal demonstrative	PROG	progressive converb
GEN	genitive	QUANT	quantifier particle
ERG	ergative case	R	Rising
ESS	essive case	R.DEM	remote demonstrative
FOCUS	focus/topic particle	S	Syangja
G	Gorkha	SEQ	sequential converb
GEN	genitive	SIM	simultaneous converb
IMPF	imperfective	SUPER	superessive case
INTR	intransitive	T	Tanahu
LOC	locative case	TR	transitive
		Y	Yanchok

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**Figure 1: Proposed Genetic Relationships Within the Bodic Section of Tibeto-Burman**  
 [names of languages included within the present paper are in italics]

