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## Himalayan Linguistics

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*Adjectives and adjectivals in Magar*

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### ABSTRACT

This paper analyses the forms and distribution of terms which describe property concepts in Magar, a Himalayish language of Nepal. In many languages, such terms comprise a dedicated category referred to as adjectives, however in some languages, for example Magar, words that describe property concepts are derived from other categories. In this paper, these derived terms are referred to as adjectivals. In Magar, all native terms describing property concepts are derived from verbs (*i.e.* nominalizations which function adnominally and as copular complements), or are verbs (in intransitive verb constructions). Underived ‘true’ adjectives do exist in Magar, but these are entirely borrowings from the *lingua franca*, Nepali. The morphosyntactic behaviour of these two lexical classes, native adjectivals and borrowed adjectives, differs from each other and across the Magar dialects. The paper describes two dialects: Syangja and Tanahu. It is apparent that there is considerable and significant divergence with respect to the morphosyntax of both native adjectivals and borrowed adjectives. Moreover, data, especially from the more conservative dialect, Syangja, suggests that historically Magar may not have had an independent natural class of adjective. Rather property concepts were expressed by nouns or by verbs depending upon their time-stability – more constant properties are expressed with nominal(ization)s and non time-stable properties with verbs.

### KEYWORDS

Magar, Himalayish, Tibeto-Burman, adjective, adjectival, borrowing, nominalization, dialect, divergence

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# *Adjectives and adjectivals in Magar*

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## **1 Introduction**

The aim of this paper is to analyse the form, distribution and function of those lexical terms in Magar<sup>1</sup> which describe property concepts, and to discuss the implications of this analysis. In many languages such lexical terms comprise a dedicated category referred to as adjectives. The designation “adjectival” is used here because, in native Magar vocabulary, words that describe property concepts are either verbs or are consistently derived from verbs; they do not constitute a natural class of “true” adjectives. The term “adjective” is reserved for underived terms. Adjectives are also found in Magar, but these are exclusively borrowings from the *lingua franca*, Nepali. These two lexical classes – adjectival and adjective – differ morphologically and in their syntactic behaviour. There are also morphosyntactic differences within each class across the dialects of Magar.

Magar belongs to the Bodic sub-phylum of Tibeto-Burman and has been assigned to the Magaric group of the Himalayish languages to which also belong: Kham, Chepeng and Bhujel.<sup>2</sup> According to the 2001 Census of Nepal, there are 770,116 speakers of Magar. The actual number is, however, far fewer. Many ethnic groups claiming to be, and to speak, Magar belong in reality to other clans and language groups (Noonan 2006, Grunow-Härsta 2008).<sup>3</sup> The Ethnologue (Grimes 2000) records much lower numbers for Magars: a total of 498,383, with 288,383 in the eastern group and 210,000 in the western. The Magars live primarily in the Himalayan foothills of west-central Nepal in the Tanahu, Gorkha, Nawalparasi, Syangja, and Palpa districts. There are also enclaves of Magar speakers in Eastern Nepal, but about these groups little is known.<sup>4</sup> There are two major dialectal variants distinguished primarily by the presence or absence of subject-verb indexing<sup>5</sup> and of split ergativity<sup>6</sup> (Grunow-Härsta 2008). The western dialects evince the former

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2 This classification was proposed at the SIL ethnologue review, Kathmandu, Nepal, November, 2010 but is as yet unpublished.

3 Among those ethnic groups who have taken the Magar name are: the Kham, the Kaike, the Kusunda, the Raute, the Raji and the Chantyal. None of whom speak the same language as the Magar language analysed here (Grunow-Härsta 2008).

4 Magars, reportedly, are found in Eastern Nepal, in Sinduli, Ilam and Panchthar.

5 In the western dialects (spoken in Syangja and Palpa districts), person, number and status of the subject is encoded on the verb. This has been called “pronominalization” by early TB scholars; for example Hodgson (1857: 116) and Grierson (1909: 179, 276) employed this term. The eastern dialects (Tanahu, Nawalparasi and Gorkha) do not manifest agreement.

6 In the eastern dialects ergativity “splits” according to aspect; *i.e.* ergative case-marking occurs only in the perfective aspect, analogous to the Nepali pattern (Grunow-Härsta 2008). The western dialects are consistently ergative.

and include Palpa and Syangja. The eastern dialects evince the latter and include Tanahu, Gorkha and Nawalparasi. The dialects analyzed in this paper are representative of both variants and are spoken in the Tanahu and Syangja districts.<sup>7</sup>

This paper is organized as follows: Section 2 briefly presents generalizations about adjectivals and adjectives in Tibeto-Burman languages. Section 3 describes native adjectivals (§3.1) and borrowed adjectives (§3.3) in Magar, and discusses dialectal divergence. Section 4 summarizes and discusses the implications of the data for understanding word classes and historical development in Magar.

## 2 Adjectives and adjectivals in Tibeto-Burman

Within functionalist theory, grammatical categories, or word classes, are claimed to arise from prototypes according to either of two inter-related schema. The first is the time-stability schema according to which nouns represent the most time-stable concepts, and verbs the least (Givón 1984, 2001). The second is the predication schema, whereby the prime unit of communication is the predication, whose basic parts are predicates and arguments. Nouns represent those words which are prototypically used as arguments; verbs represent those which are prototypically used as predicates. According to either schema, adjectives are problematic: they represent concepts whose time stability falls between that of nouns and verbs (Givon 1984: 51–55; Croft 1991: 53) and their status as predicates or arguments is, as a group, indeterminate (Givon 1984: 74; Bhat 1994: 155–242). As a result of this indeterminacy and overlap with nouns and verbs, it has been observed that many languages lack an easily definable category of adjective (Dixon 1982: 2, 2004: 9, Thompson 1990: 167–181). In such languages, either nouns or verbs may express property concepts and any adjectives that they do have may exhibit behaviours that distinguish them from nouns or verbs only in small ways (Givon 1984: 53; Wetzer 1992, 1996). An adjective class may exhibit specific morphology, distinctive word-order, or may participate in constructions such as the comparative-superlative, which preclude other word-classes; however this is not necessarily the case in all languages.

Many languages have only a small and closed set of adjectives. However, as Dixon (2004: 2) has observed, such languages can extend this set “almost indefinitely by derivations based on nouns and verbs.” Tibeto-Burman languages comply with this generalization. Adnominal modifiers in Tibeto-Burman languages are almost invariably nominalized, *i.e.* they are derived with a morpheme which also derives, or has historically derived, nouns. This pattern was first observed by Matisoff (1972) for Lahu (Loloish), and the phenomenon was dubbed “nominalization-attribution syncretism” by Noonan (2008: 82). It is considered a prominent feature of Tibeto-Burman languages (Matisoff 1972; Delancey 1986, 2005; Noonan 1997, 2008; Bickel 1999; Watters 2002, 2006, Genetti *et al.* 2008; *inter alia*).

The native Tibeto-Burman pattern is, generally, to express property concepts as nouns (*i.e.* nominalizations) when modifying, and as stative verbs when predicating. According to Noonan (1998b), where other patterns are found in Tibeto-Burman, the language has likely innovated. One common sort of innovation involves the establishment of a class of adjectives through large-scale borrowing. In Tibeto-Burman languages, borrowed adjectives do not generally undergo the deri-

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<sup>7</sup> Data drawn from and found in only a particular dialect is indicated parenthetically following the example; *e.g.* data from the Tanahu dialect is indicated with “(T)” and from the Syangja dialect with “(S)”. If no attribution is made, then the data is felicitous in both dialects.

vational processes that native forms do; and they therefore form a separate (sub-)class of adjectives.<sup>8</sup>

Distinct classes or sub-classes of adjectives need not depend on the presence of borrowings. The presence of distinct lexical classes of adjectives as opposed to derived adjectivals is a phenomenon which has been observed across Tibeto-Burman and is prevalent in the languages of the Himalayan area. According to Genetti (2007: 207–12, 2008, in press) two distinct classes are observed for Newar: lexical adjectives that are not related to verbs and adjectivals which are derived from verbs. Manange likewise is described as having “true” and “verb-like adjectives” (Genetti and Hildebrandt, 2004). Mongsen Ao (Coupe 2007: 208ff; Genetti *et al.* 2008; Genetti in press) exhibits adjective and de-verbal-adjectival classes; this occurs also in Dongwang Tibetan and Zhuokeji rGyalrong (Genetti *et al.* 2008; Genetti in press). Distinct underived and derived adjective classes are also observed for Kham (Magaric), though as Watters observes: “‘Adjective’ as a natural word class is almost non-existent in Kham. The entire class is comprised of three native words – ‘big’, ‘small’ and ‘short’.” (Watters 2002: 111).<sup>9</sup> Aside from these three lexemes, other words denoting property concepts in Kham are transparently nominalizations. Another Magaric language, Chepang, also has only three non-verbal adjectives: *ʔay* ‘old’, *raw* ‘new’ and *soh* ‘empty’ (Caughley p.c., 2011); otherwise attributive terms are nominalized verbs, for example *jok-ʔo manta* [quick-NMZ person] ‘quick person’.<sup>10</sup> Native Magar (*i.e.* borrowings excluded) is more extreme than both Kham and Chepang. It entirely lacks a set of true, underived adjectives.

### 3 Adjectivals and adjectives in Magar

As stated, Magar has two distinct lexical classes that encode property concepts. The first comprises native Magar lexical verbs which are nominalised to function as adnominal modifiers or as copular complements; these are referred to here as adjectivals. The second class comprises underived adjectives, all of which are borrowed from Nepali, the Indo-Aryan *lingua franca*.

In Magar, core semantic concepts (as identified by Dixon 1997, 2004), which cross-linguistically are generally expressed as a distinct and independent category of adjectives, are either derived de-verbal nominals or borrowings. For example, ‘dimension’ in (1), ‘age’ in (2), ‘value’ in (3) and ‘colour’ in (4), are either de-verbal nominalizations, as in (1a, 2a, 3a and 4a), or borrowed from Nepali, as in (1b, 2b, 3b and 4b). Virtually all nominalizations are formed with *-cyo* or *-ca*, which are allomorphic dialectal variants. The nominalizing prefix *mi-* also occurs in a single term *mi-nam* ‘new’. The nominalizers, as well as their supporting copulas *le* and *ale*, which also differ across the dialects, are discussed in §3.1.1 and §3.1.2. Both native adjectivals and borrowed adjectives are open-classes and readily admit new members.

8 There are exceptions to this; for example the Tibeto-Burman language Mishing spoken in Assam, Northeast India. In this language both native and borrowed terms are nominalized by *-nə*; for example *lvv-nə* ‘red-NMZ’, a native term, and *pisol-nə* ‘slippery’ borrowed from Assamese.

9 Watters (2006: 3) notes that even these words *gehppa* ‘big’, *zimza* ‘small’ and *twi:za* ‘short’ occur with vestigial nominalizers: *ʔa* likely derived from PTB *\*pa* meaning ‘father, male’ and PTB *\*za* meaning ‘child, offspring’ (Benedict 1972). Thus, they are also in a sense nominalized, which suggests that even these “true” adjectives are, at least historically, derived.

10 In Chepang, nouns express properties. According to Caughley (p.c., 2011) “For the English sentence ‘The path is very steep,’ the most common equivalent would be *ʔanə kraŋh munaʔ*, literally ‘There is much upward slope.’”

- (1) (a) *ho-se im-aŋ kat mfiar-cyo ~ca*<sup>11</sup> *ja-ja le-a*  
 D.DEM-DEF house-LOC one small-ATT.NMZ child-child COP-PST  
 ‘In that house there was a small boy.’
- (b) *māndir dferai badako (N)*<sup>12</sup> *ale*  
 temple very large COP  
 ‘(The) temple is very large.’ (S)
- (2) (a) *i-sa-i im mi-nam ale*  
 P.DEM-DEF-FOC house POSS.NMZ-smooth COP  
 ‘This house is new.’ (S)
- (b) *ho-sa-i mandir purano (N) le*  
 D.DEM-DEF-FOC temple old COP  
 ‘That temple is old.’ (T)
- (3) (a) *srijana sefi-cyo le*  
 Srijana beautiful-ATT.NMZ COP  
 ‘Srijana is beautiful.’ (T)
- (b) *manas swasthya (N) ale*  
 Manas healthy COP  
 ‘Manas is healthy.’ (S)
- (4) (a) *gya-cyo~ca gwa-e bir myertuŋ-aŋ*  
 red-ATT.NMZ bird-ERG pommelo tree-LOC  
  
*mim khas-a*  
 nest build-PST  
 ‘The red bird has built a nest in the pommelo tree.’
- (b) *nam nilo (N) mah-ale*  
 sky blue NEG-COP  
 ‘The sky is not blue.’ (S)

### 3.1 *Native adjectivals*

Native terms describing properties in Magar are inherently (*i.e.* in their underived state) verbal.<sup>13</sup> Verbs are nominalized to form adnominal adjectivals. These are described in §3.1.1. Native terms can also express property concepts as predications. They will function syntactically either as copu-

11 In examples (1), (3) and (4) both variants *-cyo* - *~ca* are explicitly transcribed. In further examples, only one dialect variant (that which the speaker produced) is transcribed, and unless indicated otherwise the example will be felicitous to both dialects.

12 In examples (1)-(4), Nepali borrowings are indicated by (N) following the word.

13 In Dixon’s (1977) terms, they are “deep verbs”.

lar complements or as intransitive verbs. Copular complements are also nominalized. Both predication constructions are described in §3.1.2.

### 3.1.1 Adnominal adjectivals

Native adnominal adjectivals are de-verbal and almost exclusively occur with the nominalising suffix *-cyo* ~ *-ca*,<sup>14</sup> as seen in (1a), (3a) and (4a) above. The allomorph *-cyo* is used in the Tanahu (and Nawalparasi and Gorkha) dialects; *-ca* occurs in the Syangia (and Palpa) dialects. As noted, there is also a single example of an adjectival nominalized with the prefixal nominalizer *mi-*,<sup>15</sup> this occurs in the term *mi-nam* [POSS.NMZ-smooth] meaning ‘new’ as seen in (2a) above.

Examples (5) and (7), below, demonstrate that *mi-* and *-cyo* ~ *-ca* are, in fact, nominalizers. The nominalizer *mi-* and its allomorphs *me-* and *my-*<sup>16</sup> generally derive abstract concepts from active verbs, as in (5a-b), but not exclusively. Contrast (5c), where a stative, descriptive verb *arkhis* ‘putrid’ is nominalized.

- (5) (a) *ho-se*    *motar-o*            *me-kher*            *kat* *gfianta*  
 D.DEM-DEF                            motor-GEN            POSS.NMZ-run    one    hour  
  
*parchas*    *kilam iter*    *le*  
 fifty            kilometre    COP  
 ‘The motor has a speed of fifty kilometers per hour.’
- (b) *i-se-ko-urj*                            *mi-wfiarfi*            *le*  
 P.DEM-DEF-HON-GEN            POSS.NMZ-know    COP  
 ‘These venerable ones have knowledge ~ are knowledgeable.’
- (c) *ho-sa-i*                            *my-arkhis*            *lofi-nis*  
 P.DEM-DEF-FOC            POSS.NMZ-putrid            throw.away-HON.IMP  
 ‘Throw away those putrid things!’

14 With respect to the origins of nominalizer *-cyo* ~ *-ca*, Noonan (2007: 7) suggests that certain “Bodic nominalizers may be traced to combinations of older nominalizers with other morphological material. One possibility is the widely attested Bodic sequential converbial suffix \*si”. In Chantyal, the converbial suffix has merged phonologically with a nominalizer *-wa* (from PTB \*pa), resulting in the nominalizer *šo*. Noonan observes that the nominalizers in Sunwar (DeLancey 1992) and Magar, *-šo* and *-cyo* respectively, have likely undergone the same derivation as Chantyal. Kham (Watters 2002) also has a combination of two morphemes an “intransitive verbalizer” *-s* plus the nominalizer *-o*, resulting in *-so* which functions as an attributive nominalizer to which the Magar form may be related. Another possibility is that the morpheme *-cyo* may also be a reinforced nominalizer, i.e. an older nominalizer to which the nominalizer *-o*, which also marks the genitive, has been added. Thus a genitive-marked nominalizer has become an attributive marker. The primary synchronic function of the nominalizer *-cyo* ~ *-ca* is to express property concepts, i.e. attributes; hence it is glossed ‘attributive’ [ATT].

15 Shafer (1966) traces Bodic prefixal *mi-* back to proto-Tibeto-Burman \*mi ‘person,’ Benedict (1972: 117–120) regards it as an old pronominal element \**m-* with forms like Tibetan \**m-nam* ‘smell’ < ‘its smelling’; \**m-kri-t* ‘bile’ < ‘its sourness’ (\**kri*), which closely resemble *me-* ~ *mi-* ~ *my-* nominalizations in Magar.

16 The prefix *mi-* harmonizes with vowel of the stem; before mid-vowels *mi-* becomes [me-]. Before vowel-initial stems *mi-* becomes an on-glide [my-].

17 The morpheme *le* functions as the locative copula, as such it can have extended the meaning ‘have’, i.e. something which is ‘at’ an entity is possessed by that entity. It also serves as a marker of the imperfective aspect within the verb par-adigm; see also note 25.

The morpheme *mi-* ~ *me-* ~ *my-*, in addition to functioning as a nominalizer, is also an inalienable possession marker. As such it expresses that a noun is part of, or integral to, another entity.<sup>18</sup> It is exemplified in (6).

- (6) (a) ***mi-hyu***      ***jfa-aj***      ***le***  
 POSS-blood    ground-LOC    COP  
 ‘There is blood on the ground.’
- (b) ***me-khe***      ***dherai***    ***hurfi-ni***  
 POSS-intestine    very      wash-IMP.HON  
 ‘Wash the intestines very well!’
- (c) ***ŋa-o***      ***my-armin***    ***ram***    ***ale***  
 1S-GEN    POSS-name    Ram    COP  
 ‘My name is Ram.’

The prefix is fully productive in both functions. This productivity, as well the fact that it derives a single adjectival, suggests that its function to derive adjectivals is a relatively new one (Grunow-Härsta 2009, in press).

The nominalizer *-cyo* ~ *-ca* derives patient (7a), agent (7b), and event nominals (7c). Both descriptive as in (7a) and active verbs, as in (7b) and (7c), may be nominalized.

- (7) (a) ***ho-sa-i***      ***gya-cyo-ko***      ***ma-jya-nis***  
 DEM-DEF-FOC    red-ATT.NMZ-PL    NEG-eat-IMP.HON  
 ‘Don’t eat those red ones!’
- (b) ***sita***    ***ra***      ***ram***    ***rup-cyo-ko***      ***ale***  
 Sita    and    Ram    sew-ATT.NMZ-PL    COP  
 ‘Sita and Ram are tailors.’
- (c) ***hi***      ***te-mo***      ***ma-sat-ca***  
 why    say-SEQ    NEG-kill-ATT.NMZ  
 ‘Why, do you say “no killing”?’

Nominalizations with *-cyo* ~ *-ca*, when functioning referentially (as nouns) take all the same noun-phrase markers as nouns do, e.g. the plural/honorific morpheme and case-clitics, as seen in (8).

- (8) (a) ***cha-cyo-ko-ke***      ***usha***      ***yafi-o***  
 sick-ATT.NMZ-PL-DAT    medicine    give-IMP  
 ‘Give the medicine to the sick ones!’

18 The inalienable possession marker has a broad range and is used with both animates and non-animates; it appears with: body-parts including emissions and essential fluids, personal characteristics and emotions, offspring including eggs, domiciles, integral parts of life and community, and highly valued items or necessities.



- (b) **phi-ca-ko**                      *ma-gofi-nis*  
green-ATT.NMZ-PL      NEG-harvest-HON.IMP  
‘Don’t harvest the green ones!’
- (c) **syafi-ca-ko-i**                      *arnam-ko-i*  
dance-ATT.NMZ-PL-ERG      young.women-PL-ERG
- yah-cyo*                      *sikret*                      *ga-a*  
give ATT.NMZ      cigarette      smoke-PST  
‘The dancers smoked the cigarettes given them by the young women.’
- (d) *hospital*      *daktor*      *de-cyo*                      *kura*  
hospital      doctor      say-ATT.NMZ      matter
- hyok-cyo-ko-i**                      *abo*      *hospital-aj*                      *alfi = le*  
be.able-ATT.NMZ-PL-ERG      now      hospital-LOC      carry=IMPF  
‘As for hospital, doctors and such things, those who are able now take (their ill) to hospital.’

Agent and patient nominalizations are largely limited to plural forms. This limited productivity suggests that *-cyo ~ -ca* is losing its general nominalising ability as it simultaneously develops a more specialized function,<sup>19</sup> which is to mark property concepts (Grunow-Hårsta 2009, in press).

The nominalizer *-cyo ~ -ca* is very productive in its derivation of adjectivals. A short list of semantically core adjectivals appears in (9). These examples are all derived from descriptive (intransitive and stative) verbs; however adjectivals can be derived from virtually all verbs (including active and transitive). Both descriptive and active nominalized verbs are exemplified in (10).

- (9)
- |                         |           |                         |              |
|-------------------------|-----------|-------------------------|--------------|
| <i>lhot-ca ~ cyo</i>    | ‘long’    | <i>lup-ca ~ cyo</i>     | ‘deep’       |
| <i>rut-ca ~ cyo</i>     | ‘slender’ | <i>des-ca ~ cyo</i>     | ‘fat’        |
| <i>ret-ca ~ cyo</i>     | ‘sharp’   | <i>arhin-ca ~ cyo</i>   | ‘numb’       |
| <i>khan-ca ~ cyo</i>    | ‘hot’     | <i>jumfi-ca ~ cyo</i>   | ‘cold’       |
| <i>mfiordi-ca ~ cyo</i> | ‘foolish’ | <i>mfiinfi-ca ~ cyo</i> | ‘ripe’       |
| <i>ris-ca ~ cyo</i>     | ‘dirty’   | <i>jes-ca ~ cyo</i>     | ‘attractive’ |
| <i>nfiam-ca ~ cyo</i>   | ‘smooth’  | <i>kum-ca ~ cyo</i>     | ‘damp’       |
| <i>bo-ca ~ cyo</i>      | ‘white’   | <i>cik-ca ~ cyo</i>     | ‘black’      |
- (10) (a) **kher-cyo**                      *mi-ja-ja*                      *rap-ma = le*  
run-ATT.NMZ      POSS-child-child      cry-CONT.NMZ=IMPF  
‘The running child is crying.’
- (b) **lfiij-ca**      *lenja-ko*      *langhia-lak*  
sing-ATT.NMZ      young.man-PL      village-CIR
- wfia-ma = le-a*  
walk-CONT.NMZ=IMPF-PST  
‘The singing young men were walking toward the village.’

19 In these instances the plural morpheme *-ko* may reinforce the nominalization, or it may “mark” or signal the phrase as nominal. Plural morphemes are attested to “act as a nominalizer” in, for example, Rawang (LaPolla 2008: 49).

- (c) **khan-cyo**    *sahak-an*    *garmi*    *sahak-an*    *karufia*  
hot-ATT    month-LOC    hot    month-LOC    Karuha

*syafi-ak = le*

dance-CAUS=IMPF

‘In the hot months, in the hot months the Karuha is danced.’

- (d) **dun-cyo**                    *di*    *ma-gap-o*  
muddy-ATT.NMZ    water    NEG-scoop-IMP

‘Don’t scoop muddy water!’

The nominalizer *-cyo* ~ *-ca* marks both adjectivals and adjectival (~relative) clauses.<sup>20</sup> In Magar, there is essentially no difference between the morphosyntax of phrasal and clausal restrictive adnominal modifiers. Both are nominalized with *-cyo* ~ *-ca*, and both precede the noun they modify.<sup>21</sup> Examples (11a) and (11b) can be felicitously translated as being either an adjectival or an adjective clause.

- (11) (a) **mis-ca**                    **ja-ja**    *ma-cyak-ma = le-a*  
sleeping-ATT.NMZ    child-    NEG-noise-CONT.NMZ=IMPF-PST  
‘The sleeping child is not noisy.’ ~ ‘The child who is sleeping is not noisy.’

- (b) *ho-sa-i*                    **sefi-cyo**                    *mi-ja-ke*  
DEM-DEF-ERG    beautiful-ATT.NMZ    POSS-child-DAT

*gfi-o-a*

grab-PST

‘He grabbed the beautiful child.’ ~ ‘He grabbed the child who is beautiful.’

- (c) **na-o**    **nani-ke**                    **dus-cyo**                    *bfiormi-e*  
1-GEN    little.sister-DAT    help-ATT.NMZ    man-ERG

*tafi-rafi-a*

reach-come-PST

‘The man who helped my little sister arrived.’

- (d) **gya-ca**                    *gunya*    **bil-ca**                    **nani-ja**  
red-ATT.NMZ    skirt    wear-ATT.NMZ    little.sister-child

**na-o**    **nani**                    *ale*

1s-GEN    little.sister    COP

‘The young girl wearing the red skirt is my little sister.’

20 The term “adjectival clause” is used interchangeably with “relative clause”. The former is used to emphasize the parallelism and identity of these clauses with the other adjectivals.

21 Different terminology is used to capture differences of scale and complexity. A nominalized NP with an object is called an adjectival clause, a simple modifier is called an adjectival.

- (e) *ho-se-i*                      *im-ij*                      *bflog-di-s-cyo*  
 D.DEM-DEF-FOC    house-ABL    escape-LN-INTR-ATT.NMZ  
*rokotyak*    *le-a*  
 frog                      COP-PST

Non-restrictive adjectivals and adjectival clauses are uncommon in Magar. However, they are attested, particularly when opening a discourse. In these contexts, the principal referent will have been introduced and additional qualification or explanation is provided in an adjectival clause, as in (12). Non-restrictive adjectival clauses parallel appositional nominals, in (13); both are nominal(ized), both follow the noun to which they refer, and both provide ancillary information.

- (12) *hosa-i*                      *lukurdhiam-o*                      *lukurdhiam-o*                      *mim*  
 D.DEM-DEF-FOC    owl- SG.GEN                      owl-SG.GEN                      nest  
*le-o-sa*                      *hosa-i*                      *lukurdhiam*                      *bahire*  
 COP-MIR.NMZ-INF    D.DEM-DEF-FOC    owl                      outside

*khyofi-cyo-cyo*<sup>22</sup>                      *babu-ja*                      *ganfi-mo*  
 emerge-ATT.NMZ-AT.NMZ    boy-child                      startle-SEQ  
 ‘And there was apparently an owl’s, an owl’s nest. The owl, who popped out, startled the boy!’

- (13) (a) *a-se-i*                      *ho-s*                      *bahun-e*                      *sarki-ni*  
 R.DEM-DEF-ERG    D.DEM-DEF    brahmin-ERG    cobbler-F  
*mi-tuk*                      *bus-ak = le-sa*                      *man*  
 POSS-stomach    carry-CAUS=IMPF-INFR    truly  
 ‘That one, the Brahmin, apparently impregnated the cobbler woman, truly.’ (S)

- (b) *ho-s-kuṅ*                      *mahja*                      *na-kuṅ*                      *baje-e*  
 D.DEM-DEF-GEN    wife                      1-GEN.PL    grandmother-ERG  
*sya*    *jya*    *jya*    *se = me*                      *na*                      *te-a*                      *ta*  
 meat    eat    eat    sense=IMPF    EMPH    say-PST    HSY  
 ‘It is said that his wife, our grandmother, said to him “I feel like eating meat.”’

In the preceding section, it has been demonstrated that the morphemes *cyo-* and *mi-* derive nominals; hence they are nominalizers. The result of a nominalization process is, by definition, a noun (Comrie and Thompson 1985: 349); nevertheless these nominalizations are discussed independently of nouns because they share the cross-linguistically prototypical characteristics of the class of adjectives, *i.e.* they describe the properties of nouns. They are also semantically distinct from nouns insofar as they specify rather than instantiate, and are non-referential as opposed to referential (Dixon 1982, 2004; Croft 1991; Bhat 2007).

Furthermore, in Magar, as in many Bodic languages, constructions headed by nominalizers have innovated beyond their primary and expected function of deriving nominals. Noonan

22 The nominalizer *-cyo* has also developed a mirative sense (see Grunow-Härsta 2007). Its reduplication here conveys that sense.

(1997, 2008: 231) attributes such innovation to the versatility and extensive use of nominalization in these languages. Watters (2008: 2) also observes that in these languages, “nominalization is a multi-functional instrument.” Nominalizers have been documented as marking relative, adverbial and converbal clauses, as well as complement structures (Genetti 2008, in press; Genetti *et al.* 2008). In Magar, the nominalizer *-cyo ~ ca*, has developed into an attributive marker. In other words, the nominalizer derives terms which are semantically adjectives.

On morphosyntactic grounds, however, it is less clear that native Magar has a distinct class of adjectives. As observed, the same morpheme derives both adjectivals and nominals. As seen above, non-restrictive adjective clauses fill the same slot as nouns in apposition. Moreover, restrictive adjectivals pattern syntactically with nouns in other respects: both adjectivals and nouns can modify nouns, and in both cases the modifier precedes the modified. In (14a) ‘tiger’s teeth’ is an NP modifying ‘necklace’ and in (15a) ‘frog’ modifies ‘child’<sup>23</sup> and in the same syntactic slot we find adjectivals ‘beautiful’ (14b) and ‘small’(15b).

- (14) (a) *ho-se ra«ghu-o mi-sya-ko kanthmala le*  
 D.DEM-DEF tiger-GEN POSS-teeth-PL necklace COP  
 ‘He has a tiger’s teeth necklace.’
- (b) *ho-se seh-cyo kanthmala le*  
 D.DEM-DEF beautiful-ATT.NMZ necklace COP  
 ‘He has a beautiful necklace.’
- (15) (a) *rokotyak mi-ja-ko dhari thuprai rah-a*  
 frog POSS-child-PL also many come-PST  
 ‘Many frog children also came.’
- (b) *marh-ca mi-ja-ko dhari thuprai rah-a*  
 small-ATT.NMZ POSS-child-PL also many come-PST  
 ‘Many small children also came.’

Both adjectivals and nouns are gradable and can be preceded by intensifiers and quantifiers, as seen in (16) and (17).

- (16) (a) *ho-se-i dferai cho jya = le*  
 D.DEM-DEF-ERG much corn rice eat=IMPF  
 ‘They eat a lot of rice.’
- (b) *ho-se-i dferai jyap-cyo cho jya = le*  
 D.DEM-DEF-ERG much tasty-ATT.NMZ rice eat=IMPF  
 ‘They eat very tasty rice.’

23 These combinations are not considered compounds. In Magar, compounds are single intonation units without intervening morphology (i.e. no intervening case clitics, inherent possession markers, number) as occurs here.

- (17) (a) *ho-se-i*                      *ces-ces*                      **cho** *jya = le*  
           D.DEM-DEF-ERG    little.bit-little.bit    rice    eat=IMPF  
           ‘They eat a little bit of rice.’
- (b) *ho-se-i*                      *ces-ces*                      **thuk-cyo**  
           D.DEM-DEF-ERG    little.bit-little.bit    spicy-ATT.NMZ
- cho jya = le*  
   rice    eat=IMPF

The parallel morphological and syntactic behaviours of adjectivals and nouns suggests that Magar may not have a separate category of adjective, but simply has nominal(ization)s modifying nouns. Or at the very least, it seems that Magar could be classified as having strongly “noun-like adjectives” (Dixon 2004: 11). However, as shall be seen, in non-copular predications, terms that describe property concepts pattern precisely with verbs (§3.1.2.2), pointing to a very different classification.

### 3.1.2 Predicational adjectivals

Across languages, property concepts may be expressed in predications. These may take the form of copular constructions in which the property is expressed as an argument supported by a copular predicate<sup>24</sup> (Dixon 2004: 6), or they may take the form of intransitive clauses in which the property is expressed verbally. Languages will generally utilize one of these constructions. In some languages, such as Magar, speakers employ both.<sup>25</sup> The two constructions are described in §3.2.1.1 and §3.2.1.2.

#### 3.1.2.1 Adjectival copula complements

In native Magar, property concepts expressed as copular complements are nominalizations. Like adnominal adjectivals, they are derived with *-cyo* ~ *-ca* (18); *mi-nam* also occurs as a copular complement (19). The dialects diverge in respect to the copulas that support this construction. In the Syangja dialect, the nominalization is the complement of the equative copula *ale*, as in (18a), (19a) and (20a), which is also the copula used with noun complements; compare (20a) and (20b). In the Tanahu dialect, adjectival complements occur with the locative copula *le*, as in (18b), (19b) and (21a). This divergence is likely a consequence of leveling and loss. In the Tanahu dialect, *ale* is losing ground to *le*, as evidenced by the fact that nominal copular complements are not supported by the equative *ale* in past tenses, where it has been supplanted by *le*; compare (21b) and (21c).<sup>26</sup> In both dialects, adjectival copular complements may also be supported with the inchoative copula *chanfi* ‘become’, as in (22).

24 Dixon (2004: 6) defines “predicate” narrowly as a “transitive or intransitive verb, plus modifiers, but not including any NP” This definition excludes complements from the predicate in copular clauses; thus distinguishing them from predicate adjectives, which will be verbs in intransitive clauses – a distinction which serves to separate verb-like from non-verb-like adjectives, and a distinction relevant to Magar.

25 Tariana (Aikenvald 2004; Dixon 2004: 6–8), is another example of a language which employs both.

26 In both dialects, *le* is a clitic within the verb paradigm where it signifies imperfective aspect (see §3.1.2.2, n.23). This generalized and auxiliary function may have facilitated its spread to adjectival complements in Tanahu.

- (18) (a) *rña mi-ja bo-ca ale*  
 goat POSS-child white.ATT.NMZ COP  
 ‘(The) kid is white.’ (S)
- (b) *rña mi-ja bo-cyo le*  
 goat POSS-child white.ATT.NMZ COP  
 ‘(The) kid is white.’ (T)
- (19) (a) *ho-se-i mñan mi-nam ale*  
 D.DEM-DEF-FOC woven.bag POSS.NMZ-smooth COP  
 ‘That bag is new.’ (S)
- (b) *ho-se-i mñan mi-nam le*  
 D.DEM-DEF-FOC woven.bag POSS.NMZ-smooth COP  
 ‘This bag is new.’ (T)
- (20) (a) *maha-ja-ja sefi-ca ale*  
 female-child-child beautiful-ATT.NMZ COP  
 ‘The young girl is beautiful.’ (S)
- (b) *maha-ja-ja ŋa-o nani ale*  
 female-child-child 1S-GEN little.sister COP  
 ‘The young girl is my sister.’
- (21) (a) *maha-ja-ja sefi-cyo le*  
 female-child-child beautiful-ATT.NMZ COP  
 ‘The young girl is beautiful.’ (T)
- (b) *i-se bñormi lama le-a*  
 P.DEM-DEF person priest COP-PST  
 ‘This man was a Buddhist priest.’ (T)
- (c) *i-se bñormi lama ale*  
 P.DEM-DEF person priest COP  
 ‘This man is a Buddhist priest.’ (T)
- (22) *moi des-cyo chanfi-a*  
 mother fat-ATT.MNZ become-PST  
 ‘Mother became fat.’

Adjectival copular constructions express time-stable properties. This contrasts with intransitive verb constructions. Examples (23a, b), where the adjectival is realized in a copula complement, imputes a general and presumably long-term characteristic to the subject. By contrast, example (23c), with the property concept expressed by an intransitive verb, implies that the same characteristic was temporary; it expresses how the person acted on a particular occasion. In this regard, copula complements align with nouns in their time-stability. In the Syangja dialect, where the same copula is used with both nominal and adjectival complements, they could felicitously be given a nominal

translation as in (23a), an interpretation not possible in the Tanahu dialect. Likewise, examples (18a), (19a) and (20a) above, from Syangja dialect, can have the following nominal interpretations: ‘The kid is a white one.’, ‘The bag is a new one.’, and ‘The young girl is a beautiful one.’ respectively.

- (23) (a) *lenja mfiorki-ca ale*  
 young.man foolish-ATT.NMZ COP  
 ‘The young man is (a) foolish (one) ~ ‘a fool.’ (S)
- (b) *lenja mfiorki-ca le*  
 young.man foolish-ATT.NMZ COP  
 ‘The young man is foolish.’ (T)
- (c) *lenja mfiorki-ma = le*  
 young.man foolish-ATT.NMZ=IMPF  
 ‘The young man is acting foolish.’

### 3.1.2.2 Adjectival intransitive verbs

As seen in (23c), property concepts are also expressed with intransitive verbs. These intransitive verbs express transient and less time-stable properties, as would be expected of a verbal construction. This is exemplified in (24).

- (24) *a-se-i bela-aj gwa gya-ma = le*  
 R.DEM-DEF-FOC time-LOC bird red-CONT.NMZ= IMPF  
 ‘In that season, the bird is red.’

Adjectival verbs inflect with the full range of verbal morphology. This includes: derivational morphology, such as the negative (25a) and the causative (25b); subject-verb agreement (26b-g), which has been preserved in the Syangja dialect;<sup>27</sup> TAM markers, including the copula *le*, which has come to signify imperfective aspect (26a-c); and the vestigial nominalizers *-ma* (26d-e) and *-o* (26f), which have become fully integrated into the finite verbal paradigm and express continuous and habitual aspects respectively (Grunow-Hårsta 2009: in press; see DeLancey in press for a discussion of the integration of nominalizers into finite verb paradigms as a general process). Other TAM markers include the irrealis (26g), the optative (26h), the imperative (26i), and the hortative (26j).

- (25) (a) *babu-ja ma-marfiarj-ma = le*  
 boy-child NEG-happy-CONT.NMZ=IMPF  
 ‘The little boy is not happy (just now).’
- (b) *moi-e babu-ja-ke marfiarj-ak-a*  
 Mother-ERG boy-child happy-CAUS-PST  
 ‘Mother made the little boy happy.’

27 Agreement on verbs is a salient feature in other Himalayish languages and attributed to the proto-language (DeLancey 1988, 1989, 1992; van Driem 1990, 1991, 1995 and 1999; and Watters 2002). It is absent from the Tanahu dialect.

- (26) (a) ***ŋa marfiŋ = le***<sup>28</sup>  
 1S happy=IMPF  
 ‘I am (often) happy.’ (T)
- (b) ***ŋa ŋa-marfiŋ = le-aŋ***  
 1S 1PRO-happy=IMPF-PST-1PRO  
 ‘I am (often) happy.’ (S)
- (c) ***naŋ na-marfiŋ = le-as***  
 2S 2 PRO-happy=IMPF-PST-1PRO  
 ‘You are (often) happy.’ (S)
- (d) ***ja-ja-ko marfiŋ-mʌ = le-kaŋ***  
 child-child-PL happy-CONT.NMZ=IMPF-3PL.PRO  
 ‘The children are happy (now).’
- (e) ***ja-ja-ko marfiŋ-mʌ = le-a-kaŋ***  
 child-child-PL happy-CONT.NMZ=IMPF-PST-3PL.PRO  
 ‘The children were happy (then).’ (S)
- (f) ***(ŋa-kuŋ) ka-marfiŋ-o = le-a-as***  
 (1-PL) 1PL.PRO-happy-HAB.NMZ=IMPF-PST-1PL.PRO  
 ‘(We) used to be happy.’ (S)
- (g) ***(ŋa) a-marfiŋ-na***  
 (I) IRR-happy-1PRO  
 ‘(I) might be happy.’ (S)
- (h) ***a-tʌ-marfiŋ-nis***  
 IRR-OPT- happy- 2PRO.HON  
 ‘May you be happy.’ (S)
- (i) ***marfiŋ-nis***  
 happy-IMP.HON  
 ‘Be happy!’
- (j) ***marfiŋ-iŋ***  
 happy-HORT  
 ‘Let us be happy!’

The only restriction on adjectival verb constructions is that the verb be intransitive. To this end, speakers of the Syangja dialect employ a de-transitivizing morpheme *-cis*,<sup>29</sup> which derives

28 The morpheme *le* has become integrated into the verbal paradigm as a clitic, where it signals imperfective aspect. In these contexts, it has no separate verbal status. The fact that the agreement markers and the negative morpheme *ma-* prefixes to the lexical verb, not *-le*, as in *ma-marfiŋ = le* (example (24)) indicates that the construction *V-mʌ = le* forms a single constituent.

29 According to Watters (2008: 12), a parallel morpheme can be found in Kham *-si*, as in *hip-si-u syakəri* [burn-



(usually resultant) states from transitive verbs. Thus, in this dialect, all verbs can be used adjectivally, their sense permitting (27).

- (27) (a) *han ga-cis-a*  
 millet.beer drink-DTR-PST  
 'The millet beer was drunk.' (S)
- (b) *cho phin-cis = le*  
 rice.meal cook- DTR=IMPF  
 'The meal is cooked.' (S)
- (c) *badhin a-hurfi-cis-e*  
 clothing IRR-wash-DTR-IRR  
 'The clothes might be washed (by me).' (S)
- (d) *wak-sya jya-cis-o = le-a*  
 pig-meat eat-DTR-HAB.NMZ=IMPF-PST  
 'Pork used to be eaten.' (S)
- (e) *gwa-ko-ke kas-cis-ma = le*  
 chicken-PL-DAT feed DTR-CONT.NMZ=IMPF  
 'The chickens are being fed.' (S)

The morpheme *-cis* is absent from the Tanahu dialect; thus the range of verbs possible in adjectival intransitive verb constructions is limited. In place of the *cis*-construction, in the Tanahu dialect, a copular clause with the inchoative *chanfi* 'become' in the past tense is used to convey a resultant state, as in (28), or with a causative, as in (29). The morpheme *-cis* is found in other dialects of Magar, both eastern and western variants; for example Nawal-parasi and Palpa. Its absence in the Tanahu dialect suggests morphological loss.

- (28) *cho phin-cyo chanfi-a*  
 rice.meal cook-ATT.NOM become-PST  
 'The meal is cooked.'  
 Lit. 'The meal became cooked.' (T)
- (29) *caita-lak-inj asar samma asar majjha samma*  
 Caita-CIR-ABL Asar until Asar middle until  
*karuha syafi-ak = le*  
 Karuha dance-CAUS=IMPF  
 'From about Caita (May) until Asar (September), the middle of Asar (September), the Karuha is danced.' (T)

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DETRANS-NML meat] 'roasted meat.' A reflex *\*-nsi* is found also in Kiranti. These forms and what is found in Magar are likely a retention of the early Tibeto-Burman reflexive *\*si*.

### 3.1.2.3 Adjectivals in comparative constructions

Native adjectivals in comparatives differ across the dialects. In the Tanahu dialect, the comparative verb is inflected with verb morphology, specifically *ma*, a vestigial nominalizer which encodes continuous aspect, plus the imperfective auxiliary *le*,<sup>30</sup> as in (30a). In the Syangja dialect, the preferred construction<sup>31</sup> is a nominalization supported by the copula *ale* (30b).

- (30) (a) *karfiŋ-cyo bhai marfi-ca bhai de-naŋ*  
big-ATT brother small-ATT brother say-SIM

***gfian-ma = le***

tall-CONT.NMZ=IMPF

‘Big brother is taller than little brother.’ (T)

- (b) *da hos-kuŋ jutta me-ko te-naŋ*  
also D.DEM-GEN shoe 3-PL say-SIM

***karfiŋ-ca ale-a***

big-ATT.NMZ COP-PST

‘And their shoes were bigger than they were.’ (S)

Magar lacks a dedicated superlative; rather a comparative with *patta* ‘all’ as the comparatum express the highest degree, as in (31).

- (31) (a) *mayl-i phupu patta te-naŋ*  
second.oldest-F aunt all say-SIM

***des-ma = le***

fat-CONT.NMZ=IMPF

‘Second oldest aunt is fatter than all ~ fattest of all.’

- (b) *mayl-i phupu patta te-naŋ des-ca ale*  
second.oldest-F aunt all say-SIM fat-ATT.NMZ COP

‘Second oldest aunt is fatter than all ~ ‘fattest of all.’ (S)

## 3.2 Interim summary of native Magar adjectives

Native terms expressing property concepts have adnominal and predicational functions. Adnominals are nominalized with *-cyo* ~ *-ca*, and, although rare, also with *mi-*. These forms, not surprisingly, pattern with nouns both in terms of their morphology and their distribution. Adjectival predications manifest in two ways: (i) in copular constructions, in which adjectival complements are nominalized with *-cyo* ~ *-ca* (excepting *mi-nam*); and (ii) in intransitive constructions with adject-

30 The use of *le*, which is a verbal auxiliary, in the Tanahu dialect, with adjectivals (and adjective borrowings), may have lead to a re-interpretation of these forms as verb-like, thus facilitating the development of verbal comparative constructions.

31 The verbal form, used by Tanahu speakers, has also been attested in the Syangja dialect. This may be a result of dialectal diffusion.

tival verbs. The adnominals and complements express time-stable properties. In this respect also, they pattern with nouns. On the other hand, intransitive constructions express less time-stable properties and pattern with verbs, taking the full range of verbal morphology. In sum, terms expressing property concepts are de-verbal nominalizations (*i.e.* adjectivals), or are verbs.

Dialectal divergence is apparent in the syntax of adjectivals and includes different copulas, different comparative/superlative forms, and different detransitivization processes. In the Syangja dialect, which is the more conservative of the two,<sup>32</sup> adjectival complements and comparative/superlative constructions involve nominalization and the noun-specific copula *ale*. By contrast, in the Tanahu dialect, comparative/superlative constructions do not involve nominalization, and it is the copula *le* (which occurs as part of the verb paradigm) that supports the copular construction. Thus *le* is encroaching on the distribution of *ale* in this dialect. The innovation of *le* in these constructions results in a distinguishing feature between the class of adjective and noun in that dialect. Another significant dialectal different is the absence of the detransitivizing morpheme *-cis* in Tanahu; thus in this dialect, the range of verbs in adjectival intransitive constructions is limited.

### 3.3 Borrowed adjectives

Adjectives have been borrowed massively from Nepali. All core semantic adjectival categories can be expressed with borrowings. Some examples were given in (1) – (4) above; (32) illustrates some of the semantic range of these loanwords.

(32)	<i>sānguro</i>	‘narrow’	<i>phānt</i>	‘wide’
	<i>budha</i>	‘old’	<i>sānnu</i>	‘young’
	<i>sāncō</i>	‘real’	<i>jfūtho</i>	‘false’
	<i>sojo</i>	‘straight’	<i>dolo</i>	‘round’
	<i>dayula</i>	‘kind’	<i>nirdai</i>	‘cruel’
	<i>hosiyar</i>	‘careful’	<i>bahadur</i>	‘brave’
	<i>batho</i>	‘clever’	<i>chalakh</i>	‘cunning’
	<i>chito</i>	‘fast’	<i>dillo</i>	‘slow’
	<i>nilo</i>	‘blue’	<i>khairo</i>	‘brown’

Like native adjectivals, borrowings express property concepts adnominally (§3.3.1) and in predications as copular complements and as comparatives (§3.3.2). Unlike native adjectivals, in these contexts, borrowings are not nominalized, rather they occur as monomorphemic stems. Thus, unlike native adjectivals, which are inherently verbs, these appear to be “true” adjectives.

#### 3.3.1 Adnominal adjectives

Like native terms, borrowed adjectives precede the head noun when they are restrictive, as seen in (33). The infrequent exception to this is the case of non-restrictive adjectives, which can follow the noun, as in (34). This is reminiscent of the non-restrictive adjectival clauses discussed in §3.1.1.

32 See notes 5 and 6. For a fuller description, see Grunow-Härsta 2008.

- (33) (a) *ra ho-se-i cahin kan-uj*  
 and D.DEM-DEF-FOC well 2P-GEN  
*prampara-ij purano calan le-a*  
 beginning-ABL old tradition COP-PST  
 ‘And those were, well, from the beginning, our old traditions.’ (T)
- (b) *ho-se-i dfiodra mudhia a-lak patti*  
 D.DEM-DEF-FOC hollow log R.DEM-CIR side  
*jos-a*  
 look-PST  
 ‘They looked on the other side of the hollow log.’
- (c) *ho-nfiay kan-uj dallo im*  
 D.DEM-hour 1P-GEN.PL round house  
*sarbaswa bfiafi-ma = le-a*  
 everything separate-CONT.NMZ=IMPF-PST  
 ‘At that time, our round house was splitting apart.’

- (34) *os-nis ja-ja-ko hi*  
 look-IMP-PL child-child-PL what  
*te-o = le-a te-hay pahila ja*  
 say-HAB.NMZ=IMPF.PST say-COND first EMPH  
*kauwa batho ben jya = le*  
 crow clever feces eat-IMPF  
*pada lato dut ga = le*  
 buffalo stupid milk drink=IMPF  
 ‘Look children, why, indeed, has it been said from the beginning, that the crow, who is clever, eats and the buffalo, who is stupid, drinks milk?’

In Nepali, adjectives that modify humans are marked for gender. This feature is retained in the loan vocabulary in Magar, as exemplified in (35).

- (35) (a) *budhi-a bfiormi*  
 old-M person  
 ‘old man’
- (b) *budhi-i bfiormi*  
 old-F person  
 ‘old woman’

Unlike nominalized native terms, borrowed adjectives cannot function as the referential head of an NP. In order for this to occur, the morpheme *-ya* is first suffixed to the stem. The suffix is a simulative nominalizer.<sup>33</sup> The same morpheme with parallel meaning also occurs in Kham (Watters 2000: 122–123). According to Watters it is likely derived from the Nepali *-e*. These borrowed constructions co-occur with Magar noun phrase morphology, as shown in (36). However they cannot function adnominally; see (37a). In order to do so, they must be first verbalized with the intransitive verbalizing morpheme *-s*,<sup>34</sup> which occurs also in Kham, and then (re-)nominalized with *-cyo* ~ *-ca*, as in (37b).

- (36) *ku-se*            *pari-o-ko*            *ale*  
 INTRG-DEF    this.side-GEN-PL    COP  
  
*kurc-ya-ko*            *te-ca*  
 stingy-S.NMZ-PL    say-ATT.NMZ  
 ‘Who are the ones from this side, the so-called stingy ones?’

- (37) (a) *\*kurc-ya*            *bfiormi*  
 stingy- S.NMZ    person  
 ‘stingy person’  
  
 (b) *kurc-ya-s-ca*            *bfiormi*  
 stingy- S.NMZ-V-ATT.NMZ    person  
 ‘stingy person’ ~ ‘persons who are stingy’

It is interesting that, though the borrowed term, with the addition of *-ya*, is a nominal and should therefore be acceptable as a modifier (nouns modify nouns in Magar), the language requires the addition of the native nominalizer *-cyo* ~ *-ca*. This underscores the fact that *-cyo* ~ *-ca* has developed a specialized function as an ‘adjectival/attributive’ marker which is replacing its waning nominalizing function (see Grunow-Härsta 2009; in press). Furthermore, the necessity of the verbalizer, underscores that adjectivals in Magar are understood to be derived from verbs.

### 3.3.2 Adjective predications

Borrowed adjectives occur in predications only in copular constructions and in comparative constructions. They do not occur as intransitive verbs. With the exception of some comparative constructions that are found primarily in the Tanahu dialect, borrowed adjectives take no verb morphology.

#### 3.3.2.1 Adjective copula complements

Borrowed adjectives, like native adjectivals, can occur in copula complements. The two dialects

33 This term is from Watters (2000: 122–123) description of Kham. Watters describes *-ya* as a “kind of formative for descriptive names”. It creates descriptive nouns.

34 This verbalizing morpheme occurs for example in *bohrla* ‘tuft of grass, fur’ > *bohrla-s-nya* ‘to become furry, fluffy’(Watters 2002: 76).

differ with respect to the copula which supports the copular construction. In the Tanahu dialect, borrowed adjectives co-occur with *le* (38a) and in Syangia dialect with *ale* (38b). Borrowed adjectives may also be complements of the inchoative copula *chanh* in both dialects (39).

- (38) (a) *maha-ja-ja*            ***batho le***  
 female-child-child    clever    COP  
 ‘The young girl is clever.’ (T)
- (b) *maha-ja-ja*            ***batho ale***  
 female-child-child    clever    COP  
 ‘The young girl is clever.’ (S)
- (39) *i-se-i*                    ***mahungo a-chanfi-e***  
 P.DEM-DEF-FOC    expensive    IRR-become-IRR  
 ‘This might be(come) expensive.’

As noted, borrowed adjectives do not occur as intransitive verbs. The examples in (40), which tested the possibility of inflecting borrowed adjectives with verb morphology, are ungrammatical. In the grammatical counterparts of these constructions, the adjective is not verbal and TMA distinctions and agreement are encoded on the copula, as in (41), or on a native ‘light’ verb<sup>35</sup> *jat* ‘do’, as in (42).

- (40) (a) \**maha-ja-ja*            ***batho-a***  
 female-child-child    clever-PST  
 ‘The young girl was clever.’
- (b) \**maha-ja-ja*            ***batho-ma = le***  
 female-child-child    clever-CONT.NMZ=IMPF  
 ‘The young girl is being clever.’
- (c) \**maha-ja-ja*            ***a-batho-e***  
 female-child-child    IRR-clever-IRR  
 ‘The young girl might be clever.’
- (41) (a) *maha-ja-ja*            ***batho le-a***  
 female-child-child    clever    IMPF.COP-PST  
 ‘The young girl was clever.’ (T)
- (b) *maha-ja-ja*            ***batho ale-a***  
 female-child-child    clever    COP-PST  
 ‘The young girl was clever.’ (S)

35 Verbs such as *rafi* ‘come’, *da* ‘put’, *se* ‘sense’ and *jat* ‘do’ combine with, and follow, verbs, adjectives or nouns. They are called “light” because the preced-ing term carries the semantic weight.

(c) *maha-ja-ja batho a-le-e*  
 female-child-child clever IRR-IMP.F.COP-IRR  
 ‘The young girl might be clever.’ (T)

(d) *maha-ja-ja batho a-ale-e*  
 female-child-child clever IRR- COP-IRR  
 ‘The young girl might be clever.’ (S)

(e) *dfiani a-ta-chanfi-nis*  
 rich IRR-OPT- become-2PRO.HON  
 ‘May you be(come) rich.’ (S)

(42) *hosiyar jat-nis*  
 careful do-IMP.HON  
 ‘Be careful!’

Since borrowed adjectives do not occur in intransitive constructions, they cannot make the distinction between time-stable and transient properties as can adjectivals. Borrowed adjectives convey this distinction lexically with adverbs, as in (43), or with the addition of a “light” verb that can inflect with verbal morphology, as in (44).

(43) (a) *ho-se-i pihin dfile le*  
 D.DEM-DEF-FOC today late COP  
 ‘He is late today.’ (T)

(b) *ho-se-i sadfiā dfile ale*  
 D.DEM-DEF-FOC always late COP  
 ‘He is always late.’ (S)

(44) *maha-ja-ja batho jat-ma = le-a*  
 female-child-child clever do-ATT.NMZ=IMP.F-PST  
 ‘The young girl was being clever.’

### 3.3.2.2 Adjectives in comparative constructions

Comparatives formed with loanwords have different properties in the two dialects (as they do in native vocabulary). In the Syangja dialect, comparative constructions with borrowed adjectives generally involve the quantifier *dfaliŋ* ‘more’, which is placed before the borrowed adjective and modifies it (45a). This is consistent with the fact that borrowed adjectives cannot inflect with verb morphology in the Syangja dialect. However, in the Tanahu dialect, comparatives pattern with native intransitives and are inflected with verbal morphology,<sup>36</sup> as in (45b).

<sup>36</sup> See note 27.

- (45) (a) *karfiŋ-cʌ bfiʌ marfi-cʌ bfiʌ*  
 big-ATT.NMZ brother small-ATT.NMZ brother  
*te-naŋ dʃaliŋ bʌlio ale*  
 say-SIM more strong COP  
 ‘Elder brother is stronger than younger brother.’ (S)
- (b) *karfiŋ-cʌ bfiʌ marfi-cʌ bfiʌ*  
 big-ATT.NMZ brother small-ATT.NMZ brother  
*te-naŋ bʌlio-mʌ = le*  
 say-SIM strong-CONT.NMZ=IMPF  
 ‘Elder brother is stronger than younger brother.’ (T)

Superlatives are formed, as we have seen for native terms, with *pʌtʌ* as the *comparatum*, as in (46).

- (46) (a) *karfiŋ-cʌ bfiʌ pʌtʌ*  
 big-ATT.NMZ brother all  
*te-naŋ dʃaliŋ jʌ bʌlio ale*  
 say-SIM more emph strong COP  
 ‘Elder brother is stronger than all ~ the strongest.’ (S)
- (b) *karfiŋ-cʌ bfiʌ pʌtʌ*  
 big-ATT.NMZ brother all  
*te-naŋ bʌlio-mʌ = le*  
 say-SIM strong-CONT.NMZ=IMPF  
 ‘Elder brother is stronger than all ~ the strongest.’ (T)

#### 4 Summary and conclusions

Dialectal divergence has been observed in Magar with respect to adjectives and adjectivals, making it difficult to frame generalizations for the language as a whole. However it does hold that Magar has two separate classes which describe property concepts adnominally: 1. nominalized native lexemes, *i.e.* adjectivals, and 2. borrowed lexemes, *i.e.* adjectives. In addition, Magar expresses property concepts verbally.

Native adjectivals, in both dialects, function as adnominal modifiers and as copular complements. In these constructions they are deverbal forms, nominalized with the suffix *-cyo* ~ *-cʌ*, or in the case of *mi-nam*, with *mi-*. There is overlap in the distribution and behaviours of nominalized adjectivals and nouns. They fill same syntactic slot and, in Syangja dialect, they occur with copula associated with nouns. There are also semantic parallels: nominalized adjectivals express long-term or inherent characteristics, as do nouns. This is in accord with Givón’s *time stability* schema (2001). By contrast, property concepts expressed through intransitive constructions pattern morphosyntactically with verbs and express temporary and non-time-stable properties.



Borrowings, like native adjectivals, can function as adnominal modifiers and as copular complements; however, unlike native terms, they are not nominalised and do not occur in intransitive constructions. Thus, they make no distinction with respect to time-stable or transient properties. Interestingly, borrowings are verbalized in Tanahu Magar comparatives (as are native terms), providing evidence that the dialects are nativizing borrowings differently, and that their integration has been to be a catalyst for divergence.

Dialectal divergence can elucidate historical development and has implications for reconstruction. There is no question that synchronically Magar has a separate and distinct class of adjectives if for no other reason than that the language has borrowed massively from Nepali. Moreover, the Tanahu dialect, in particular, evidences development of a distinct adjective class through alignment of native terms and borrowings and loss of copular distinctions. However, the situation is different for the Syangja Magar, where, borrowings aside, clear and categorical distinctions have not yet been discerned for native terms. Data from both dialects, but most particularly the Syangja dialect, the more conservative of the two, suggests that historically there were not three distinct categories: noun – adjective – verb, rather there were time-stable and non-time-stable properties, the first being encoded with nouns and nominalizations (adjectivals), and the second with verbs (intransitives). In the Syangja dialect, where nouns and adjectivals retain more features in common, native terms denoting property concepts are still largely distributed across nominal and verbal categories as the sense requires.

Data such as that found in Syangja, led Noonan (1997b: 1) to observe that “TB languages frequently do not support an independent category of adjectives and it would seem that the ancestral language also did not.” It is plausible that when Magar adopted adjectives from Nepali, it adopted a new linguistic category. In Magar, adjective as a discrete lexical category is likely a later development and one, if not due solely to contact and diffusion, certainly hastened by it.

#### ABBREVIATIONS

ATT	attributive	IMPF	imperfective
CAUS	causative	INTR	intransitive
CONT	continuous	INTRG	interrogative
COP	copula	IRR	irrealis
DAT	dative	LN	loan nativizer
DEF	definite	LOC	locative
D.DEM	distal demonstrative	M	masculine
DTR	detransitivizer	NEG	negative
ERG	ergative	N.NMZ	Nepali nominalizer
F	feminine	NMZ	nominalizer
FOC	focus	OPT	optative
GEN	genitive	P.DEM	proximal demonstrative
HAB	habitual	PL	plural
HON	honorific	POSS	inherent possession
HORT	hortative	PRO	pronominal agreement
IMP	imperative	PST	past

S	singular	2	second person
S.NMZ	simulative nominalizer	3	third person
SIM	simultaneous converb	(N)	Nepali example
V	verbalizer	(S)	Syangja example
TR	transitive	(T)	Tanahu example
1	first person		

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