A cross-varietal description of modifiers of basic colour terms in Tangsa-Nocte[1]

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Abstract	*In many varieties of the Tangsa-Nocte language group, there are a handful of unique suffixes that modify simple adjectives. These terms include but are not limited to the majority of basic colour terms, with which they show up with a high frequency cross-varietally. Such terms have not yet been addressed in any depth, aside from brief mention in a single unpublished grammatical sketch. This paper remedies that by providing a description of the various forms the modifiers take, and by addressing cross-varietal similarities and differences in both the affixes and lexicon of basic colour terms. In the past these modifiers have been referred to as intensifiers (Morey, p.c.). However, it is now clear that this is only one function, and that these affixes provide a much greater range of nuance in the majority of Tangsa-Nocte varieties studied to date. With this in mind, this paper addresses a number of questions on the topic of affixes. First, to what extent do basic colour terms show consistency cross-varietally? Second, to what extent are the modifiers known across speech communities? And finally, to what degree may they be considered cognate?*

1. Introduction

Tangsa[2] is a Tibeto-Burman language, classified under Northern Naga. It is spoken primarily in the Patkai mountain range and the surrounding lowlands in Northeast India and Northwest Myanmar. In many varieties of the Tangsa-Nocte language group, there are a handful of suffixes which modify simple adjectives. They appear not to occur with compound or prefixed stems. However, they can occur on the majority of basic colour terms and common adjectives.

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[2] Tangsa is also referred to as Tangshang in Myanmar, a recent label which includes Wancho and Tutsa as well as Nocte, the most closely related language group of varieties. Within groups referred to as Tangsa in India, Burmese speakers may instead identify as Rangpang or Heimi, two of the larger subgroups. There is considerable overlap between Nocte and Tangsa varieties. For this reason, the joint term "Tangsa-Nocte" is used here, in order to be most inclusive and less restricted by divisions, which are more sociopolitical than linguistic.

This paper provides a description of the various forms and uses of these modifiers, as well as addressing similarities of these terms across the different varieties[3] of Tangsa and varieties of closely related language varieties which may fall outside of the usual "Tangsa" classification. In the past, these modifiers have been referred to as intensifiers (Morey, p.c.). However, it is now clear that intensification is only one function of these affixes.

A typical example of how these modifiers are used is given in the following examples. The basic term for RED is /ə.ʃaŋ/, as in example (1). A modifier /de/ exists which can be considered an intensifier. When attached to the term for RED, the nominal prefix /ə-/ is dropped, and the translation changes from 'red' to 'truly red', example (2). The modifiers may also be reduplicated as in (3), which does not necessarily increase the intensity of the modifier. In many cases, the resulting meaning is less strong than if the modifier were not reduplicated. Modifiers also exist, such as /ro/, which lessen the intensity of the colour which they modify, as in example (4).

	prefix	**root**	**modifier**	**gloss**
1)	ə-	ʃaŋ		'red'
2)		ʃaŋ	de	'truly red'
3)		ʃaŋ	de de	'more red than /ə.ʃaŋ/'
4)		ʃaŋ	ro ro	'less red than /ə.ʃaŋ/'

The following will be addressed in this paper through examples from a wide range of Tangsa-Nocte varieties:
1. To what extent do basic colour terms show lexical consistency cross-varietally?
2. To what extent are the modifiers shared across speech communities?
3. To what degree may the modifiers be considered cognate cross-varietally?

1.1. Field Sites & Fieldwork

Modifiers of basic colour terms were collected over the course of three months of fieldwork in the winter of 2015-2016. They were elicited from speakers of various varieties of the Tangsa language, including Chamchang (Kimsing), Hahcheng, Joglei, Moklum, Mueshaung (Mossang, Mueshaungx), Mungre (Mawrang), Ngaimong, Phong (Pontai), Rera (Ronrang) and Shangwal in Arunachal Pradesh and Upper Assam, India. Additional work was performed in March 2016 in Sagaing Region, Myanmar. Data from Wancho, a related Northern Naga language spoken in Myanmar, India and possibly Bhutan, have also been included in some of the following discussion for cases where they may be relevant for comparative purposes.

For the sake of brevity and in order to make the current study more manageable, the only modifiers which were elicited were ones which attach to colour terms that could potentially be considered basic. Such modifiers are also attested for a much larger number of adjectives. However, due to their greater inconsistency between dialects and the difficulty in consistent elicitation across varieties, as well as the overwhelming number of terms that would need to be addressed in the short time spent in the field, the focus here has been reduced to deal only with the modifiers on colour terms and not the larger class occurring across common

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[3] It remains to be seen how the various language varieties which fall under the classification "Tangsa" and "Nocte" are actually related to each other. Much more work needs to be done to be able to provide a good model of relationships.

adjectives. Terms were elicited through conversations with speakers, rather than with colour stimuli such as Munsell colour chips.

In citation form, colour terms will take a nominalising prefix (most typically /ə-/ or /ɐ-/). Cognates of this nominalising prefix are found in Tibeto-Burman languages of the region (Matisoff 2003: 106). In Tangsa, the prefix itself is toneless and unstressed, but it may trigger changes in the tone of the following stem.

In the examples given in this paper, only the root form is provided, without the use of the /ə-/ prefix. The nominalising prefix is typically lacking when a modifier is affixed, although there are exceptional varieties for which this pattern is absent. For the sake of space and clarity, it has been omitted here.

Subscript numerals refer to phonemic tone categories. All syllables are marked where I am confident about the toneme. For many lexemes, approximate reconstructions have been offered for Proto-Tangsa-Nocte (PTN). These are provided for the sake of having a way to refer to the lexemes as they occur in the following pages. It is not an attempt to present an overall reconstruction of the proto-forms. I have also made an effort to suggest possible connections to other Tibeto-Burman languages and have provided Proto-Tibeto-Burman (PTB) reconstructions where connections are likely.

2. Berlin & Kay's Hierarchy of Basic Colour Terms

In order to address the role of modifiers, it is necessary to first address the colour system as it is found in the Tangsa languages surveyed here.

What constitutes a basic colour term is here defined following Berlin & Kay (1969). In this definition, the following criteria must be met. First, the term must be known and consistently used by members of the speech community. Second, it must not be considered a subset of some other colour term (e.g. English *pink* treated as a subset of RED). Third, the word's meaning must not be apparent from the component parts, for example *sky blue* in English.
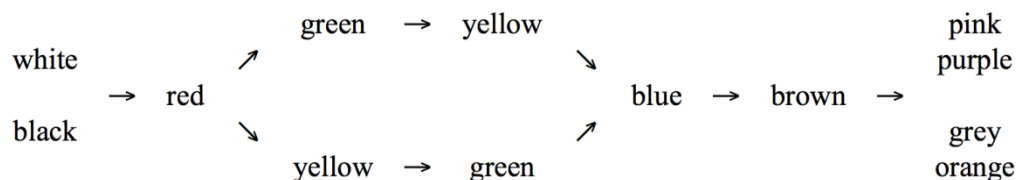
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                    green   →   yellow                           pink
    white                ↗                ↘                       purple
          →   red                               blue   →   brown   →
    black                ↘                ↗                       grey
                    yellow  →   green                            orange
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Figure 1 – Hierarchy of basic colour terms (Berlin & Kay 1969)

It should be stated that it would be inaccurate to describe a four-colour system as consisting of only those four colours as imagined by modern English speakers, namely black, white, red and green. In many cases a better way to label the categories may be DARK, LIGHT, WARM and COOL to better reflect which colours tend to fall into these categories.

This will differ for three-category systems, for which 'warm' no longer applies as accurately, or five-colour systems where what falls under YELLOW would otherwise be considered either WARM or COOL depending on context in a four-category system. Since the labels DARK, LIGHT, WARM and COOL are really only best suited for a four-category system, the English colour names are used here instead. While the basic colour terms of English are used in this paper to represent the categories as presented by Berlin & Kay, it is important to recognise their use not as reflecting an accurate one-to-one translation between the two.

2.1. A Note on Terms

In what follows, I employ the use of small capital letters when referring to colours as categories. As an example, GREEN refers not to the concept as an English speaker might translate it, but rather the category in the colour system as described in Berlin & Kay (see Figure 1). When in quotations, 'green' is a gloss in English. Thus, to say that 'yellow' is classified within RED in Tangsa, what I mean is that the colour hue that might be called *yellow* in English is contained within the same category in Tangsa as what in English we might call 'red' in English, RED being the more fundamental category in the hierarchy.

For systems which are here identified as falling under Stage IIIa, containing BLACK, WHITE, RED and GREEN, the labels are equivalent to the labels DARK, LIGHT, WARM and COOL respectively. I have used both labels where appropriate as an attempt to make it clear for the reader that RED does not strictly speaking mean 'red' translated into English.

3. The Basic Tangsa-Nocte Colour System

After discussion with members of a wide range of Tangsa dialects, it is clear that the basic colour system is currently undergoing a change where the term for YELLOW, *mjen*, has been added as a basic term widely accepted by younger speakers (30s and below) but rejected as basic by the oldest speakers (70s and above) who deny that there is a word for YELLOW, stating instead that it is referred to as "turmeric colour" if it needs a special label. In the current study, younger speakers have often claimed ignorance of any recent origin of *mjen* and treat it as a basic colour word. However, as will be shown further down, it still lacks an important morphosyntactic feature true of other basic colour terms in Tangsa – the ability to co-occur with modifiers.

In fact, much discussion was prompted by what were at the time thought by myself as straightforward, and eliciting colour terms to be applied to objects treated as GREY, PURPLE, BLUE among others showed no real consensus between varieties or sometimes between speakers. In other words, an object which we would consistently refer to as 'blue' in English may be given any number of labels in Tangsa. The same goes for what we would consistency label 'grey' or 'purple' in English.

More surprising is that, among the oldest speakers consulted, items which might be described with YELLOW terms were alternately described with those normally representing RED or WHITE. In other words, the colour of a specific item might be called one word one time, for example /men/, and another five minutes later, for example /ʃaŋ/, where the two words given refer to two different basic colour terms YELLOW and RED respectively.

What in English may be called 'blue' were most often described with terms covering the GREEN category, but sometimes also those for BLACK or GREY (when the situation is interfered with and GREY is given as an option). Hues named 'purple' in English may be considered BLACK or GREY, or given a new label which will be discussed further below.

The older speakers' system may be labelled a Stage IIIa system (Kay & McDaniel 1978). Younger speakers are now floating somewhere between Stages IV and V, depending on which community is being consulted. An additional change which is ongoing is the addition of other terms being treated as basic, but with far less consistency cross-varietally as is found with YELLOW *mjen*. One of the more common examples is *k^huai_2* for GREY. While GREY was originally proposed to occur quite late in Berlin & Kay's (1969) hierarchy, later revisions allowed for more flexibility with regard to its appearance (Kay 1975, Kay, Berlin & Merrifield 1991). This too is not so clear-cut, and *k^huai_2* may occur just as often referring to BLUE as GREY.

A number of Tangsa-Nocte varieties have disyllabic basic colour terms, for which the behaviour of the term when affixed by a modifier changes. The Rera variety found in the villages of Balinong and Phulbari is one such case. Many of the basic colour terms are made up of two morphemes. The category for BLACK is no exception.

The basic term for BLACK in isolation is /ɐ.nak$_4$-k^{h}ɐm$_1$/. It was also given as /ɐ.nak-maŋ/; the distinction between the meanings of /k^{h}ɐm$_1$/ and /maŋ/ was unclear, other than that /maŋ/ was less frequently used than /k^{h}ɐm$_1$/. This lexeme /nak$_4$/ is derived from the same etymon as BLACK (section 5.1), while /k^{h}am$_1$/ is the lexeme for 'burn', likely of the sense of 'charred'. This same /k^{h}am$_1$/ lexeme also occurs with RED in Ronrang. A minority of varieties addressed in this paper have polysyllabic forms for some basic colour terms, but those varieties in which they appear do not have polysyllabic terms for all basic colour terms. Overall there seems to be a larger inventory of modifiers and greater likelihood of polysyllabic terms for basic colour terms near the start of Berlin & Kay's hierarchy. It remains to be seen how well this observation holds up with a much larger sample of Tangsa-Nocte varieties.

4. The Role of Modifiers

While not all those consulted for the present study agree, or were able to articulate the specific details of the colour terms, the overall consensus was that there are two main types of what were previously called "intensifiers" (Morey, p.c.), which I refer to as "modifiers". The first are used to strengthen the meaning of the term used, while the second set of common affixes tends to lessen the implied intensity. In nearly all cases, the modified colour term can have the structure AB, where A is the basic colour term and B is the suffix. Alternatively, it can have the structure ABB with the suffix being reduplicated. This too causes a shift in meaning. Alone, the colour term is given the nominal prefix, most typically /ə-/, thus əA. When suffixed with the modifier, this /ə-/ prefix is dropped. A construction of əABB would be ungrammatical in the varieties investigated here.

With this in mind, the basic system is as follows. əA is the basic elicitation form of the colour term. N əA means 'the N is A-coloured' and is a sentence on its own. Without the /ə-/ prefix — N A — the result is a noun phrase. Taking examples from Mueshaung, /man əʃɔ/ should be glossed 'the cow is red', while /man ʃɔ/ is 'the red cow', as seen in examples (1) and (2).

(1)   *man   ə-ʃɔ*
        cow   NOMZ-red
        'The cow is red.'

(2)   *man   ʃɔ*
        cow   red
        'The red cow…'

As mentioned, there are two common general categories of modifying suffixes, one which increases intensity and one which lessens it. These are not the only modifiers, but are the two most common categories cross-varietally. In the former category, where the modifiers are intensifiers, the AB form is often translated as the "true" colour by consultants. Meanwhile, ABB is often translated by consultants as 'A-ish'. In the other common category where the modifiers lessen the intensity of the colour, both AB and ABB signal a 'less A than A' meaning, and the ABB pattern seems to be more typical.

There is also the question as to whether the modifiers discussed here are suffixes or not. It is not yet clear to me if all of these really should be treated as suffixes. Many of these do exist

as words on their own, and many others do not. For the sake of simplicity, they have been treated as suffixes here. More work needs to be done to work to determine which modifiers are more like words that can stand on their own and which cannot.

5. Overview of Modifiers

The following sections present the inventories of all modifiers as collected from consultants up to the time of writing, organised by colour category.

In many – if not most – cases, the modifiers create a clear change in meaning which can be agreed upon by all surveyed members of the speech community. In some cases, the meaning has been clearly explained by consultants, and in a way which is consistent across varieties. The modifier /put/, for example, when applied to WHITE will always mean 'spotted' or 'speckled'. However, due to limitations in the ability to communicate such nuance between myself and the speakers, I have been unable to ascertain the exact meaning intended by the modifier for many of the modifiers given. Thus, no translation can be provided for many of the modifiers, at the time of publication. I have done my best to indicate meanings where they are known.

In each section below, a table is given showing the varieties being addressed, the basic colour terms for those varieties, and then the modifiers which have been attested.

5.1. Black, Dark

5.1.1. Basic colour names

There are two likely related etyma for BLACK in Tibeto-Burman following Matisoff's (2003) Proto-Tibeto-Burman (PTB) reconstruction. One is PTB *s-nak*[4] > Northern Naga **njak* BLACK and another PTB *s-ma(ŋ/k) > PTN **mak* DARK. The distinction is retained in certain varieties, such as Moklum and Phong, but in many other dialects **njak* would translate as both 'dark' and 'black'. Not all varieties are the same in their treatment of what in English would be called *dark*. In varieties where both **mak* and **njak* are used, there is disagreement between speakers of different varieties as to which means 'dark' and which means 'black' as a basic colour term. For example, in Moklum, /mak/ is treated as the basic colour term while /nak/ has been given as 'dark', as in describing the night. This is contrary to the etymologies given above.

In Central Naga, **njak* is attested in Ao as /anjak/ (Marrison 1967). In reconstructions for Proto-Tibeto-Burman, there is a reconstructed *s-* prefix for this etymon making it **s-nak*. It has been argued elsewhere that the glide is likely a result of metathesis from the *s-* prefix – see Matisoff (2003: 101) regarding this change. This is fairly uncontroversial as a basic colour term.

An additional form **kʰa* is found in varieties spoken in Myanmar, notably Rinkhu, Lungkhi and Shangthi. In the case of Rinkhu, no modifiers are attested.

5.1.2. Modifiers

Table 1 shows the most common modifiers of BLACK elicited for a number of varieties. Not all speakers of a single variety provided the same modifiers. However, for varieties in which **duk* and **rieC* were found, they were provided consistently from speaker to speaker. In both cases, the meaning given was something like "exceptionally black".

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[4] Etymon #2483 from the Sino-Tibetan Etymological Dictionary and Thesaurus (STEDT) (http://stedt.berkeley.edu)

I have attempted to arrange the following tables so that the first column contains the most typical modifier. The last column shows cognates of *ro*. This is the only modifier which appears cross varietally as well as applying to the majority of the colour terms in a given variety. The modifier *ro has the meaning that the colour is less intense than normal. This does not necessarily mean 'faded', as there is another modifier (*mɔt) which may be used in some varieties and also perhaps co-occurs with more than one basic colour term. Where used, *ro* can generally be considered an opposite to the term given in the first column.[5]

Table 1 – Modifiers for BLACK in Tangsa-Nocte varieties

	njak4	*duk4*	*rieC4*	*sim*	*rum3*	*ham5*	*htauŋ2*	*tʃaŋ*		*ro1*
Chamkok	nʲak₄	duk	rik	sim	rum					
Hahcheng	nʲɐk₄	duk₄	rʲɛt₄			ham₂				
Joglei	nʲʌk₄	duk₄		sim₂					kʰʌiʔ₄	ro₁
Chamchang	nʲaʔ₄	dok₄			rɯm₃					ro₁
Lungkhi	mak								ɣip	
Lungphi	nʲɔk₄	duk₄	riet	sim	rɪm₃	ham	htɔŋ₂			rɯu₂
Maitai	nʲaʔ									
Moklum	nak/mak	dɪk		sʌm₂	rɪm					
Mueshaung	nʲauk₄	duk₄			rum₃		htauŋ₂			rɯu₂
Mungre	nʲaʔ₄		riɣʔ₄		rɯm₃				deɣʔ	ro₁
Ngaimong	nʲɐk₄	duk₄	riɛk₄							
Phong	mak₄	dik	rik		rʌm₂				tʰum	
Pinkhu	mak								diŋ	
Rangsi	nak/mak									
Rera	nak₄.kʰʌm		riɪt₄	ʃip				tʃaŋ		
Shangthi	nak*			ʃik						
Shangwal	nʲak₄	duk₄	rit₄							
Tikhak	nʲak₄									
Yongkuk	nʲak₄	dok	riɛk	sim₂	rɯm₃	hum				

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[5] See section 5.6.2 for *ham* as a basic colour term.

	kʰa	*duk₄*	*rieC₄*	*sim*	*rum₃*	*ham*	*htauŋ₂*	*tʃaŋ*		*ro₁*
Lungkhi	kʰa					gam			mut, puʔ	
Rinkhu	kʰa									
Shangthi	ŋ.kʰe							tʃaŋ		

In Table 1, there are two modifiers to note that have other meanings cross-varietally. In the case of *ham*, in addition to being a modifier of BLACK, it is also the word for 'bruise'. Rera is one variety where /ham/ exists on its own with the meaning of 'bruise', but did not come up as a modifier. It may still exist as one, but did not come up in conversation and was not actively elicited.

Another is *sim*. As speech communities are developing words for what in English could be glossed as 'blue' or 'purple', *sim*-like words have been adopted in to cover these meanings in a number of varieties. The presence of a cognate of *sim* in Yongkuk was first proposed and then later rejected by the consultants with whom this was being discussed. It is uncertain if this is actually used in this variety or if the speaker was influenced by other varieties.

Likewise, it is yet to be determined if the presence of this modifier in both Moklum and Joglei is the result of contact. The majority of consulted speakers for these dialects live in Khasan and Kuttom, two villages an easy 5 minute walk from one another on the outskirts of Kharsang, Arunachal Pradesh. Speakers in both villages admit to borrowings elsewhere in the lexicon. This same situation arises in a great many villages in the Kharsang-Miao area where many different language communities have been in close contact for multiple generations.

It must also be noted that Rera /ʃip/ and Shangthi /ʃik/ may or may not be related to *sim* in other varieties. Its inclusion in this column is purely speculative. A similar form exists as a modifier on RED seen in section 5.3 below, and given the high incidence of crossover between RED and BLACK modifiers, it is possible these are a result of borrowings of modifiers between BLACK and RED.

5.2. White, Bright

5.2.1. Basic colour names

In most varieties WHITE is simply /loŋ₁/ as a single syllable. However, as with other colour terms, Rera has an additional way of handling WHITE. While WHITE alone is /ɐ.lo₁ba/, when modifiers are involved the base colour term changes from /lo/ to /mɯ/, an alternate term for WHITE which is not used on its own. Thus, instead of */lo tu tu/, we find /mɯ tu tu/ in Rera. This would translate as 'whiteish' in English. Given modifiers were /mɯ tu tu/, /mɯ tɯɯ tɯɯ/ and /mɯ tʃʊp tʃʊp/, though no explanation was discovered. One exception that came up was /lo₁ put₄ put₄/, likely cognate with the Joglei /loŋ₁ pet₄ pet₄/ for 'off white'. A cognate of /mɯ/ is not found elsewhere in the languages surveyed.

Hahcheng likewise has an additional variant: /poŋ₁/, not included in Table 2. There is a slight difference in meaning between /loŋ₁/ and /poŋ₁/, the latter having some additional sense of 'shining' or 'pearlescent'. Note that there is another word for 'shining' in other dialects, /peŋ/. Additionally, in Hahcheng there is the word /ə.ha₁/ meaning 'light/bright' and can also be used with the 'lightning' modifier (see next section).

The tone category of /loŋ₁/ is significant here since /loŋ₃/ means 'aflame' and may be related to Matisoff's PTB *ploŋ* 'burn' and thus cognate with Jingpho /prōŋ/. These may be cognate with PTN *loŋ*.

5.2.2. Modifiers

Table 4 gives the modifiers that are found on terms for WHITE.

Table 2 – Modifiers for WHITE in Tangsa-Nocte varieties

	loŋ₁	*raŋ*	*ljep*	*tak*	*tɕiaŋ*	*put*		*ro*
Chamchang	lɯ₁	rɯu₂						ro₁
Chamkok	loŋ	reŋ	lep	tak		put		
Hahcheng	lɔŋ₁	reŋ₂	ljep₄					
Joglei	loŋ₁		lep₄	tak₄		pet₄		ro₁
Mueshaung	lɯ₁	ra₂						rɯu₂
Muŋre	loŋ₁	re₂		teʔ₄				ro₁
Ngaimong	lɔŋ₁	reŋ₂						
Rera	lo₁.ba					put₄		
	mɯ						tu, tɯu, tʃʊp	
Shangwal	loŋ₁	ran₂						
Tikhak	loŋ₁		lep					
Yongkuk	loŋ₁	ran₂	ljep	teʔ₄		pʌt₄	raʔ	

| Rangsi | voan | | | | | | ʃoŋ | |

| Rera | mɯ | | | | | | tʃʊp, tʰy | |

	poŋ₁	*raŋ*	*ljep*	*tak*	*tɕiaŋ*	*put*		*ro*
Moklum	puŋ₁				tɕiaŋ₂	pɔŋ	tsaʔ	
Phong	pɔŋ		lep	tuk₄	tɕiaŋ₂		tɤ	

Column III *ljep* means 'flash, shine'. Lightning is literally 'sky flash', but /loŋ/ alone is generally sufficient for clean metal which is not otherwise catching the light. Matisoff (2003: 338) has reconstructed this as *lyap* in PTB. There are cases where WHITE has the form /loŋ ljep ljep/, defined as describing the glistening of water when fish move near the surface on a sunny day. The use of /ljep/ is perhaps less a modifier – in the sense of others discussed here – as more a case of poetic description. For many modifiers, an original meaning, if it existed at all, is unknown. The form /loŋ ljep ljep/ is attested for this context in a number of Pangwa varieties.

Column V, *pət*, has a clearer meaning of 'speckled'. Something which is /loŋ.pət.pət/ is mostly another colour, but with flecks of white. This same *pət* modifier has been described as possible occurring with other colour terms. For example, in Yongkuk, /seŋ.pət.pət/ can be used to describe an animal which is mostly one colour but has areas of red, and at least one Yongkuk consultant said it can be used with the other colour roots as well. Button (2011) gives /pɐʔ/ for Thado, a nearby Kuki-Chin language, with the meaning 'white' or 'spotted', which may be cognate.

The bottom rows, showing Moklum and Phong, will be discussed further in section 5.6.3.

5.3. Red, Warm

5.3.1. Basic colour names

The Tangsa term for RED has been tentatively reconstructed as *ʃaŋ₂* for Proto-Tangsa. The full standalone word for RED in Rera is /ɐʃe₂khɐm₁/. Both RED and BLACK include /khɐm₁/ in isolation. Marrison (1967) gives *kaishan* as the Mueshaung word for RED, *akal* for 'hot', and *ashang* for Joglei RED. The Mueshaung form given in Marrison was not repeated in 2015 among Mueshaung speakers in Arunachal Pradesh, however it is possible that this shows a connection to some RED terms in other varieties

5.3.2. Modifiers

The first consultant for Yongkuk provided a number of modifiers that were unlike those seen elsewhere. Presented without hesitation were /ti/, /hu/ and /ro₁/. However, it was made clear that /ro₁/ here functioned the same as *ro₁* in other varieties; but unlike in other varieties, it was only possible to apply it to RED and not other colours. However, Yongkuk speakers who were consulted in another location at a later date accepted it as universal. /seŋ₂ tɛək/ was additionally given for 'too red', and /rɯm₃/ was rejected for 'red' but acceptable for 'black'.

The /koŋ/ form given for Ngaimong was stated to be rare. It may occur in other varieties as well but was not offered up. Chamkok /put/ and Yongkuk /pʌk₄/ is the same as 'spotted' and can work for any basic colour.

In at least some varieties, such as Mueshaung, the forms under *tʰaN* have the clear meaning of 'less red than red', while consistently across dialects the forms in Column I can be translated as 'truly red' when the suffix is not reduplicated, and 'reddish' when it is.

Table 3 – Modifiers for RED in Tangsa-Nocte varieties

	*ʃaŋ$_2$	*diŋ	*rjeC	*tʰaN	*pən	*rəm	*rɤk	*ʃip	*vət	*put		*ro
Chamchang	ʃɤ$_2$	dəŋ$_1$		tʰam$_2$	pən	rəm$_2$	rɤk					ro$_1$
Chamkok	ʒaŋ	diŋ				rum				put	ki	
Hahcheng	seŋ$_2$	diŋ$_1$	rʲɛt	tʰəŋ$_2$				ʃip$_4$				
Joglei	ʃaŋ$_2$	deŋ$_1$										ro$_1$
Lungki	ʃa.rek		rek					ʃip		pʰa		
Lungphi	ʃɔ			tʰauŋ	pən	rum	rɯk		vʌt		te	ruɯ$_2$
Maitai	ʃa											
Moklum	ʃaŋ$_2$			tʰɐŋ$_2$					vat		pok	
Mueshaung	ʃɔ$_2$	de$_1$		tʰauŋ$_2$		rum$_2$	rɯk					ruɯ$_2$
Mungre	ʃɤ$_2$	dəŋ$_1$			pən	rəm$_2$						ro$_1$
Ngaimong	seŋ$_2$		riɛt$_4$	tʰəm$_2$	pən		rɤk				koŋ$_1$	
Phong	saŋ$_2$	dik	ret				rɤk	tʃip	wʌt		tʰu	
Pinkhu	nen	diŋ										
Rangsi	sa		rjep									ru
Rera	ʃe$_2$.kʰʌm		rit					ʃip$_4$		ʃu		
Shangthi	ʃa		rjet									
Shangwal	ʃaŋ$_2$											
Yongkuk	seŋ$_2$						rɤk	sip		pʌt$_4$		ro$_1$

5.4. **Green, Cool**

5.4.1. **Basic colour names**

Note that throughout Tangsa varieties, the realisation of /β/ can be [β], [v], [ʋ] or [w], and the realisation of /ʒ/ can be [j], [ʒ] or, less frequently, [dʒ]. Thus Mueshaung /βɯl$_1$ ʒɯt$_4$/ is likely cognate with Ngaimong /βil$_1$ tɕit$_4$/, especially given a clear correspondence between nuclear /ɯ/ in Mueshaung with nuclear /i/ in Ngaimong (compare βɯl$_1$ and βil$_1$ for GREEN). There are instances where a given lexeme will occur with only a single and consistent realisation of onset, but these seem to be a minority.

5.4.2. Modifiers

Table 4 – Modifiers for GREEN in Tangsa-Nocte varieties

	BəL₁	*tʃit₄*	*diŋ₃*	*suk₄*	*soŋ*	*tɕaŋ*	*ʃu*	*lik₄*		*ro₁*
Chamkok	vəŋ					tʰaŋ			re, jaŋ	
Hahcheng	pin₁									
Joglei	pil₁	tɕit₄	diŋ₃							ro₁
Chamchang	βai	tɕət₄								ro₁
Lungphi	vɯl₁	ʃit	diŋ					lik		rɯu
Lunkhi	ʋʷʌiʔ						ʃu		kiʔ	
Maitai	paiʔ									
Moklum	pil / pɯl₁	tʃit₄	diŋ₃							
Mueshaung	βɯl₁	ʒut₄								rɯu₂
Mungre	βar	tɕət₄								ro₁
Ngaimong	βil₁	tɕit₄								
Phong	vi₁		diŋ₃	suk₄		tɕaŋ		lik/liŋ		
Pinkhu	vin								sam	
Rangsi	vin			suk	soŋ				nam	
Rera	βin₁	tʃit₄		ʃok₄		tʃaŋ				
Shangthi	vin						ʃɔ			
Shangwal	pil₁		diŋ							
Tikhak	pəiʔ	tʃit₄								
Yongkuk	pəiʔ₁	tʃit₄								

	diŋ	*tʃit₄*	*diŋ₃*	*suk₄*	*soŋ*	*tɕaŋ*	*ʃu*	*lik₄*		*ro₁*
Hahcheng	diŋ									
Wancho	diŋ									

Chamkok modifier /tʰaŋ/ was described as having some meaning of 'glossy' in the sense of vegetation. It was unclear if *tɕaŋ takes this meaning more generally. Rera /tʃaŋ/ also

occurs with GREEN, and /βin.tʃaŋ.tʃaŋ/ was described by one consultant as 'pure deep green like plants'. A possible cognate exists in Phong as well: /tɕaŋ/, which occurs on a number of other colours including WHITE but not BLACK.

Column II /diŋ/ is of particular note for its potential to provide a possible origin for these terms. In Wancho, a related Northern Naga language group, the basic term for GREEN is /diŋ/. This was also the basic colour term given by a Hahcheng speaker in Myanmar, rather than /pin$_1$/ given by Hahcheng speakers in India. Wancho does not otherwise have such modifiers as found in the other languages addressed here. French (1983) reconstructs *criŋ* for 'grass', 'alive', which is one possible origin.

5.5. Yellow

5.5.1. Basic colour names

There was no word given for YELLOW in Rera by one consultant who was 99 years old. This was also claimed by an elderly (88 years old) speaker of Haidley and Hahcheng, who said no such word exists to his knowledge. In Rera, the term for YELLOW was instead described as 'turmeric colour', though the word for 'turmeric' was later identified as a loan, likely from Singpho. Joglei and Muklom speakers also pointed to a kind of orchid of which the bark is used as colouring. The term for turmeric is /kʰo.men/, and for the orchid it is /min/. The term /kʰo.men/ in Tangsa-Nocte is a loan, but the second syllable /men/ is also identified as meaning YELLOW in some varieties.

PTB *min* 'ripe' may be a candidate for the origin of the term. Reflexes of *min* are found in Jingpho as /myîn/, Mizo as /hmin/, Karbi (formerly Mikir) as /men/, Lahu as /mɛ/ and Tangsa as /min$_2$/. An alternative, and I believe a more likely one, is that the colour term is borrowed from Singpho/Jingpho.

Yongkuk and Tikhak have a different word for YELLOW, /ʒuŋ$_1$/. It is more widely used even among older people as compared to *men* in other varieties. However, /ʒuŋ$_1$/ does not take modifier suffixes. There is no cognate of *men* in Yongkuk and Tikhak. One was briefly provided by a consultant, but then quickly rejected by others. The distinction was stated by the first consultant that /ʒuŋ$_1$/ was a little bit yellow, but truly yellow was /men/, however other consultants believed the first was simply mistaken, influenced by other varieties in which /men/ is found. No modifiers were given by this consultant for /men/, and for /ʒuŋ$_1$/ there was only one, /hut/, not found in other varieties.

5.5.2. Modifiers

YELLOW has fewer modifiers than other basic terms. This is most likely due to its relative newness among speakers. I had been told by numerous informants that in Rera there are no modifiers for YELLOW. Some varieties lack modifiers for YELLOW, or they may exist but were not known to those consulted. They are however found in other varieties.

Yongkuk, despite having a long-used term for YELLOW, also lacks many modifiers. In numerous conversations with a range of consultants only one modifying suffix was attested. However, *put* which exists as a modifier for WHITE was later shown to be applicable to RED in an un-elicited utterance, after which point consultants said it could apply to "most colours". There was disagreement as to whether this was extended to YELLOW.

<div align="center">

Table 5 – Modifiers for YELLOW *mjen₂* in Tangsa-Nocte varieties

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	mjen	*tʰo*	*tʰəŋ*	*tʰi*	*tVk*	*lik*	*tɕaŋ*	*naʔ*	*ʒu*	*ʒeŋ₁*	*kuʌi₁*	*ro*
Chamkok	men							naʔ				
Joglei	men₂		tʰəŋ₁	tʰi								ro₁
Kimsing	min	tɤu										ro₁
Lungphi	mjen	tʰo		tʰi	tɔk	lik						rɯɯ₂
Lunkhi	men								ʒu			
Moklum	min₂		tʰɐŋ	tʰi	tak₄		tɕaŋ					
Mueshaung	men₂	tʰɔ₁				lɯk₄						rɯɯ₂
Mungre	men			tʰe								ro₁
Ngaimong	mʲɛn									ʒeŋ₁		
Phong	men₂				dik		tɕaŋ				kuʌi₁	

The Rera term [nò.dî] was provided by a Rera informant in Phulbari, India as the term for YELLOW, however with uncertain origins. It was later explained by a Shangthi informant in Hkamti Town, Myanmar, that this in fact means 'baby's faeces'. This has yet to be verified. Regardless of the origin, the term does permit modification in Rera through reduplication of the second syllable.

Chamkok has /men/ but not with modifiers, at least according to my Chamkok consultant from Pangsau.

5.6. BLUE, GREY, PURPLE and everything else

For BLUE and GREY there is much more variability in terms used. The following are exceptions which should not be considered basic colour terms at this point in time but which may be headed in that direction.

There were a number of cases where a single word was given for BLUE, but no modifiers existed in that variety. One example is in Pinkhu, for which the term was given as /mɔ/. This was provided by a speaker in Hkamti, Myanmar, but one who was not comfortable giving much more. This is a common occurrence with younger speakers who may feel their speech is "inauthentic". It is possible this /mɔ/ relates back to an alternate form of WHITE given by a Rera speaker, /mɯ/. Most Rera migrated to India some time in the past century, and those that remained in Myanmar are said to have joined the communities that are now called Pinkhu.

5.6.1. *kʰuai₂

In a number of dialects, *kʰuai₂* has been given for both BLUE and GREY, as well as in some varieties as a non-basic term for a mixture of black, white, tan. In those cases, such as in the Tikhak/Yongkuk dialects where the term is more properly translated as 'tan', it does not take

modifiers. In Wancho, a related language in the Northern Naga family, the term is also present with this sense of 'grey/tan'.

Modifiers are few in number and appear in only a fraction of the varieties which have this colour term.

Table 6 – Modifiers on *$k^h uai_2$* in Tangsa-Nocte

	$k^h uai_2$						
Joglei	$k^{hw}oi_2$		mok_4	dun_2			ro_1
Moklum	$k^h i$				boŋ	tsɔk/tsɔŋ	
Mueshaung	$k^h oai_2$	$t^h ok_4$					$ruuu_2$
Wancho	$k^h uai$						
Yongkuk	$k^h uai_2$						

5.6.2. *ham

There is a reconstructed *$ha{:}ŋ$ BLACK for PTB[6], but any connection to modern Tangsa-Nocte is unclear. In many varieties, *ham* does come up in the word for 'bruise', and at least among the Joglei speakers I had discussed this research with, they were in general agreement that *ham* is the colour of a bruise.

Table 7 – Modifiers on *ham* in Tangsa-Nocte

	ham	*tat*	*diŋ*	*lik*	*baK*	tɕaŋ		*ro_1*
Joglei	ham_3	$tʌt_4$	$diŋ_1$					ro_1
Moklum	hʌm	tat	diŋ	lik			tɔŋ	
Mueshaung	$ɣəm_2$				$baʔ_4$			$ruuu_2$
Phong	ham			lik/liŋ	$bɔŋ_2$	tɕaŋ		
Yongkuk	ham			lik/liŋ	$bɔŋ_2$	tɕaŋ		

However, *ham* has proven to be somewhat controversial; *ham* exists in Yongkuk as a deep blue, being accepted by speakers in one community but rejected by those in another in which it exists only as a modifier for *njak*. In the community where *ham* is acceptable, lighter blues will be *pil*, while *ham* appears to be limited to only a narrow range of darker blue hues, but not those dark enough to be identified as *njak*

It is unclear if /tɔŋ/ here should be the same as /thɐŋ/ for other colours. There was some difficulty in eliciting clear responses.

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[6] STEDT #315 (http://stedt.berkeley.edu)

Table 8 – Modifiers on *sim₁*

	sim₁	*lik*
Ngaimong	ʃim₁	
Moklum	sɪm₁	lik₄

An additional colour term *sim* was provided for Moklum and Ngaimong. Only one modifier was found for reflexes of *sim* in Moklum. It is worth noting that the Ngaimong consultant was originally from a village which is mostly inhabited by Moklum speakers. According to this informant, Ngaimong has a similar word to Moklum /sɪm/, but no modifiers have yet been elicited. However, *sim* does have good representation in other sub-groups, and links back to PTB, reconstructed as *syim₄* for PTB (Matisoff 2003) and present in Bodo-Garo as /sim/ and Jingpho as /sin/, both with the meanings of 'blue' 'dark' or 'black'. This is the most likely origin of the term in Tangsa.

The /lik/ modifier for *sim* appears in Phong for *ham*, and for Mueshaung YELLOW as well as being used for Phong 'green'.

5.6.3. *poŋ

Ngaimong has an additional word, /əpoŋ₂/. More generally /la₃poŋ₂/ means 'ashes', which is likely the source of the colour term and not the other way around. There is a modifier suffix for /əpoŋ₂/, /reŋ₂/, which functions the same as the other modifiers. In Phong, the same word 'ashes' /bɔŋ/ is used as a modifier on 'black' as well as having a set of modifiers, seen in Table 4.6, and as a modifier for *kʰuai₂* in Moklum. While this might possibly be related to Tani *puŋ* 'white' (Sun 1993), such a connection has yet to be shown.

Table 9 – Modifiers on *poŋ₂*

	poŋ₂	*reŋ₂*	*lep*	*tɕaŋ*	*tuk₄*	*tɤ*	*tʰɐŋ₁*
Ngaimong	poŋ₂	reŋ₂					
Moklum	pɔŋ₂			tɕaŋ	tuk₄	tɤ	tʰɐŋ₁
Phong	pɔŋ₂		lep	tɕaŋ	tuk₄	tɤ	

Another issue to be resolved is that in Moklum, /puŋ₁/ has been given for 'white' with a modifier of /pɔŋ/, and different Phong speaking consultants have given different meanings and modifiers for /pɔŋ/. The Phong term /pɔŋ₂/ in the table above has been more generally treated as WHITE.

6. Conclusion

There is one more colour term which is worth bringing up. In Joglei, /dʒom.tʃʰa/ is a term which has only come up in discussion with Joglei speakers. It is a term used for PURPLE, specifically the colour appearing on the ubiquitous *longyi*, a plaid-patterned garment worn by older Tangsa men. It is not a basic colour term in any real sense, as /tʃʰa/ is understood to

mean 'to paint' and /dʒom/ refers to an insect which produces a waxy substance used as a purple pigment.

Of course /dʒom.tʃʰa/ fails to meet the criteria of what constitutes a basic colour term, as it is not typically used outside of the context of the colour of the longyi, it's primarily only used by older women and many men do not provide it in elicitation, and the component parts are easily identified by speakers. However, it is generally accepted as being a "real" term in the language by Joglei speakers, when it is presented. This helps to illustrate a point: things are changing rapidly for speakers of Tangsa-Nocte. The high degree of proficiency in either Hindi, Assamese or Burmese by many speakers and the rapid modernisation of the regions where the languages are spoken, due in part both to development in the more remote regions as well as large scale migration to places like Kharsang and Hkamti, resulting in continued contact between various speech communities, means that we may see an increase in both basic colour terms and standardisation of these terms cross-varietally. This is already happening with *min, which now is nearly universal among the younger speakers of Tangsa-Nocte consulted for this research.

From the discussions had with speakers and the data shown above, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. It has been previously suggested that this AB/ABB pattern of modifiers originated from the traditional poetic Wihu song structure of the Rangpang group of Tangsa varieties. This is unlikely since it is found in a wide range of Tangsa and Nocte varieties, and not just those few which have the Wihu tradition. While certain affixes may have originated in a single song, many others clearly exist outside the tradition.

2. Additionally, the forms are claimed by some speakers to occur in much smaller number among the varieties lacking Wihu song, such as the Yongkuk-Tikhak group, though this has so far been unconfirmed. It may be the case then that the song traditions have helped maintain these patterns of modifiers.

3. There is enough consistency in terms between varieties to suggest that these are not simply loans into other varieties — as some consultants have suggested — but are rather an older system of which individual parts have fallen out of use. A larger set of data is required to work out the correspondences.

4. Gaps in the tables above, where a given suffix is otherwise well attested, are thus likely the result of loss. This was made clear by a number of speakers who stated that a given suffix existed, but now is not used by that community (though others are). One such example was /ʃaŋ₂ thaŋ₂/ as a modified form of RED in Moklum, which in at least one village is no longer used.

5. In some clear cases, such as *lje₄ 'glistening' or *poŋ₂ 'ashen', modifiers are derived from other lexemes with meanings that are transparent to the speech community. It is also likely that other modifiers once had independent meanings, such as /pət/ for 'speckled'; or that they still have these meanings but speakers were unable to convey them to the author due to the barriers inherent when relying on the contact language.

6. The colour system of a century ago, as presented by the centenarian consultants, consisted of at most four categories which may be labelled as DARK/BLACK, LIGHT/WHITE, WARM/RED, and COOL/GREEN. It should be no surprise that green and blue typically fall into the same category.

7. Future Research

The current study has been limited to the subject of colour. This is not to say that that is the end of the discussion. The type of modifiers discussed above are also widespread beyond just the basic colour terms.

It is the author's hope that this brief study has laid the groundwork for a much more detailed investigation into both basic colour terms and modifiers in Tangsa-Nocte varieties. In doing so, it is my hope that some of the limiting factors of this first round of investigation can be better navigated at a future date.

One major difficulty in this research was the elicitation context. It was not uncommon that a speaker would say with confidence that they had only a single modifier for a given colour, but when prompted with the form from another dialect, the consultant would immediately recall their own cognate form. When possible, investigation for a given variety was done over the course of days involving many consultants working together to brainstorm in the hopes that it would provide a fuller and more consistent inventory. This of course did not always work, and there were many instances where only a single modifier was given and claimed to exist. See for example Table 4.3 for which it was stated repeatedly that Hahcheng does not have these words. However, over the course of multiple visits quite a few were provided which show clear cognacy to other varieties.

It is thus my hope to return to the topic in during a future trip to the area in order to refine and improve upon the data and analysis above.

Gaps need to be filled in the above tables where possible. The likelihood that a given consultant recalled all of the possible forms actually in use in the language is small, and consultants were generally not helped along with a list of choices. Transcriptions are also approximate and will need refinement in order to better determine the likelihood of cognacy between terms, as not enough time was available with any of the above communities to accurately determine phonemic inventories, something I hope to see resolved in the coming years.

Abbreviations

NOMZ   nominaliser

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