A first investigation into the encoding of habitual aspect in Muklom with reference to other Sal languages*

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This paper constitutes a first investigation into the strategies for encoding habitual aspect in Muklom, a Sal language of Northeast India, and contains a short survey into the grammatical encoding of habitual aspect in a sample of Sal languages, a subbranch of the Tibeto-Burman family. While some languages in the sample show cognate markers, others show non-cognate forms. The habituals can be linked etymologically to other grammatical categories such as facultative or deontic modality, locative, progressive, continuative, but also to a verb meaning 'to eat soft foods'. Due to their potential diachronic instability, dedicated habitual markers are of limited use to the internal classification of Sal languages.

1 Introduction

This paper investigates the encoding of habitual aspect in a sample of Sal languages, a branch of the Tibeto-Burman (TB) family, with a focus on Muklom, a Sal language of Northeast India. Muklom is spoken by a few thousand people who reside in the Changlang District of the state Arunachal Pradesh, spread out over two clusters of villages: the older cluster is located in a hilly area and the more recent cluster of settlements in the plains.[1] Muklom is part of a group of languages called 'Tangsa', a subgroup that belongs to the Northern Naga languages, which in turn together with Boro-Garo and Jingpho-Asakian fall under the umbrella of the Sal group. Recently, Peterson (2009) has suggested Mru-Hkongso as a new addition to Sal, proposing these languages may be most closely related to the Boro-Garo branch. The linguistic

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[1] The 2011 Census of India contains the most recent population data and recorded 2,614 people who identified as Muklom.

classification of TB languages is discussed in detail by, for example, Post & Burling (2017), Van Driem (2001), and Bradley (1997), and the Sal group by Burling (1983). The state of Arunachal boasts the highest phylogenetic diversity in the already highly diverse Northeast of India (see Post & Burling 2017: 215). The majority of the languages of Arunachal are still un(der)documented.

The sources on which this short survey is based are discussed in section 2. Section 3 describes the different strategies that the speakers of Muklom have at their disposal to encode habitual aspect. Sections 4 and 5 zoom in on the grammatical encoding of habitual aspect in this language, after which section 5 broadens into a discussion of habitual markers across the Sal languages. Finally, section 6 discusses the implications of the findings for the internal classification of the Sal group.

2 Data sources

The Muklom data cited in this paper have been collected by the author during two fieldwork trips to the Kharsang Town in the winter of 2015/2016 and one year later in the winter of 2016/2017 in the context of a PhD project on the language which resulted in the compilation of a grammatical description of Muklom, a collection of annotated text, and a lexicon, and during previous fieldtrips by Stephen Morey, the main supervisor of this PhD project. The code after each quoted example indicates which audio recording it is taken from or in which notebook it was noted down. An overview of recordings is provided in Table 1, which indicated for each whether it concerns a recording of controlled elicitation or of free narrative or discussion. Muklom recordings by Morey are archived at DoBeS and recordings by Mulder are in the process of being archived.[2] Data from other Sal languages is taken from various published grammatical descriptions. There are two main limitations of the Muklom data for the purpose of the current investigation. First, the size of the corpus of fully annotated non-elicited texts is relatively small. The habitual prefix *ɟin*^{3}- does not occur frequently in Muklom texts.[3] A larger body of fully annotated texts, containing more tokens of the habitual marker, would be needed to allow for a more in-depth description of its use. Second, of the controlled elicitations, none was aimed specifically at eliciting utterances with habitual meaning. Though our

[2] The DoBeS recordings can be accessed via dobes.mpi.nl.

[3] Superscript numbers in the transcriptions throughout this paper indicate tone category (see Mulder 2018). In Muklom, tone 1 is typically realised as mid-low falling with creaky phonation, tone 2 typically has a delayed falling contour and modal phonation, and tone 3 typically has a mid level contour with breathy phonation. A superscript 0 in Muklom transcriptions indicates a lack of tone. For syllables that lack a superscript number, the tone category could not be determined yet.

preference may go to non-elicited narrative as a source of examples, an elicitation session around the theme of habituality could have helped to provide deeper insight into the distribution of the habitual marker.

Table 1: Sources of Muklom examples cited in this paper.

code	**type**	**recorded by**[4]
20100124-112046	controlled	SDM
20151208_01	free	MM
20151208_04	free	MM
20151208_05	free	MM
20160106_02	free	MM
20160106_05	free	MM
20160107_04.ed	free	MM
B1[.n]	written notes	MM

This paper further contains data from a sample of other Sal languages, an overview of which is given in Table 2. This is a convenience sample and consists of languages for which I was able to obtain descriptive linguistic publications or manuscripts which included information on grammatically encoded habitual aspect. The Sal languages are underdescribed and the accessibility for typologists of linguistic descriptive work on these languages differs, as glossing conventions vary from precise and consistent morpheme by morpheme translations to no glossing at all, and anything that lies in between. I have been able to include at least one language from each subbranch of the Sal group. The double solid lines between Mru-Hkongso and the other branches in Table 2 indicate that this subgroup is a new addition to the Sal group which requires further research to validate its linguistic affiliation.[5]

[4] MM stands for Mijke Mulder and SDM stands for Stephen D. Morey.

[5] I am grateful to David Peterson (p.c.) for generously sharing unpublished work on the Mru and Hkongso languages so that these could be included in the sample.

Table 2: The sample of Sal languages.

sub-branch	**language variety**
Boro-Garo	Boro
	Dimasa
	Garo
	Kokborok
	Rabha
Jingpho-Asakian	Turung
Northern Naga	Chamchang
	Cholim
	Jugli
	Lochang
	Lungkhi
	Muklom
	Ngaimong
	Rera
Mru-Hkongso	Hkongso
	Mru

3 The encoding of habitual aspect in Muklom

This paper follows the definition of habituals as formulated by Comrie (1976: 27–28): '[habituals] describe a situation which is characteristic of an extended period in time, so extended in fact that the situation referred to is not viewed as an incidental property of the moment but, precisely, as a characteristic feature of a whole period.' A habitual event may involve iterativity but describes the habit and not the individual instantiations of that habit, so the described habit does not need to be manifested at the moment of speaking or at the relevant reference time (see Boneh & Jędrzejowski 2019: 4). Also, habitual events do not necessarily involve iterativity, as Comrie's (1976: 27) example of the temple of Diana illustrates: 'the Temple of Diana used to stand at Ephesus.' The discussion of expression of habitual events in Muklom in this paper will, however, be restricted to habitual events that do involve iterativity. As Boneh & Jędrzejowski (2019: 1) point out, habituality is often not encoded overtly and can be encoded by means of different strategies within one and the same language. In Muklom, we indeed observe this situation: habituality may be i) morphologically encoded, ii) adverbially encoded, or iii) not be overtly encoded. Below I will provide an example of each strategy for Muklom, but in the remainder of the paper, the focus will lie on the first strategy, i.e., morphological encoding of habitual aspect. Example (1) shows how habitual aspect can be morphologically encoded by means of the prefix *jɨn*^{3}- in Muklom.

(1) kʰɔ²-tuk⁰=tʰi³=a²=lɛ³ **ɟɨn³-**tɕu³ ka¹-t-a¹=ti³,
head -weight=DEF=ABS=FOC **HAB-**request go-PST-3=HS

ɹʌŋ²-te²=tʰi³=lɛ².
sky-PERS=DEF=FOC

'They used to come and ask for the compensation, the people from the sky.' (20151208_05)

A Muklom example of the second strategy, i.e., adverbial encoding of habitual aspect, is provided in (2). The speaker who uttered this clause wanted to point out that when the cat pooped in the garden, he always did so in the same spot next to a bunch of plants near the carport. The adverb that signals habitual aspect is *ɟuk⁰-βɛʔ⁰*, which literally means 'time again'.

(2) mɛŋ² **ɟuk⁰=βɛʔ⁰** e²-ni³=ɔʔ⁰ xiʔ⁰-a³.
cat **time=again** NPROX-MED=at poop-3
'The cat always poops there.' (B1.61)

The third strategy, i.e., no overt encoding of habitual, is exemplified in (3). A long time ago in the Muklom community, there used to be communal houses, dormitories where the boys or the girls would stay together, away from their parents, to be taught skills that would prepare them to run their own household. The nominalised clause that stands at the beginning is not overtly marked as habitual but does carry habitual meaning.

(3) nɨm³-paŋ²-nɨŋ³=a³ ɟa²ɹɔ²-hʌn³=tʌŋ²=ɹi³ paŋ¹=na³ ɟɨp⁰-te²,
a.long.time.ago=at boy-girl=PL=PROX dormitory=in sleep-NMLZ

ɟɨp⁰-a³=tʰi³=ɔ³ tɕʌm¹-mʌl² ɛʔ⁰ tʌ⁰-tɨn¹ mʌt⁰ ɛʔ⁰ tʌ⁰-kam²
sleep-3=DEF=at what-like do RECIP-heart perish do RECIP-propose

nam²-t-a¹, nɨŋ²=ɹi³?
propose-PST-3 3PL=PROX

'A long time ago, the boys and girls used to sleep in dormitories, so when they slept (there), how did they fall in love with one another and arrange a marriage?' (20160107_04.ed)

4 The rise of the Muklom habitual marker

When a language possesses an overt marker of habituality, that marker is often also associated with other linguistic categories, such as imperfective aspect, iterative aspect, present tense, facultative modality, or irrealis modality (see for example Boneh & Jędrzejowski 2019: 2). This is indeed the case for the

Muklom habitual *ɟɨn*^{3}-, which is associated with facultative and deontic modality. I analyse the morphological status of the Muklom habitual marker as bound (a prefix) for the following two reasons. First, the marker cannot occur in isolation, at least not when it expresses habitual meaning. Second, the habitual morpheme itself does not carry verbal operators such as tense marking and person indices. The verb which is modified by the habitual marker and to which it prefixes, however, may carry verbal operators.

The Muklom habitual prefix *ɟɨn*^{3}- developed from a periphrastic construction, namely from a modal verb which occupied the first position in a serial verb construction (SVC). The element *ɟɨn*^{3} synchronically still functions as a modal verb which expresses a range of meanings that fall under facultative and deontic modality (see Hengeveld 2004: 1193–1194). The modal verbs, unlike the habitual prefix, are morphologically unbound. As the form *ɟɨn*^{3} grammaticalised into a habitual marker, it became more closely connected with the following verb stem.

As a facultative verb, *ɟɨn*^{3} may express extrinsic facultative modality, i.e., situations in which the conditions for the ability or possibility are not determined by any participant that engages in the event, as is illustrated by (4). Intrinsic innate facultative modality may be expressed by *ɟɨn*^{3} as well, as is shown in (5). Sight is an innate capacity, so not being able to see because of blindness is expressed with a modal verb that expresses innate ability in combination with a negated main verb. Muklom has a separate verb that expresses acquired ability, *mɛ*^{3} ‘can, know how to’. As noticed by Bybee et al. (1994: 154), ‘know’ is a common source for habituals. However, in Muklom it was the verb expressing innate ability which became the source for the habitual.

(4) **ɟɨn**^{3} ʌŋ^{2}-a^{3}=t^{h}i^{3}=a^{2} tʌ^{0}-t^{h}ɨn^{3}-a^{3}.
PSSB AUX-3=DEF=ABS VAL-think-3
‘He thinks it is possible.’ (B1.141)

(5) **ɟɨn**^{3} k^{h}i^{3}-m-ɔŋ^{1}.
ABIL see-NEG-1SG
‘I cannot see (because I am blind).’ (B1.71)

In (4) and (5), *ɟɨn*^{3} modifies the main verb which carries the person index or negator. However, the facultative modal verb may also occur as the main verb of a clause itself, carrying indices or other verbal operators. An example is provided in (6).

(6) βa^{1}-ʃɛ^{1} ŋa^{1} **ɟɨn^{3}**-ʌŋ^{3}=ta^{3}.
person-one 1SG **ABIL**-1SG=QUOT
'One said, 'I can'.' (20151208_04)

As a deontic verb, *ɟɨn^{3}* expresses the notion that the participant is permitted to engage in the event. An affirmative example is provided in (7), and a negative example in (8).

(7) nʌŋ^{1}=a^{3} ŋaʔ^{0}-bɨŋ^{2}=βaŋ^{3} **ɟɨn^{3}** lɔt^{0} ɛʔ^{0}-u^{3}.
2SG=ERG fish-pit=from **PERMIS** grab do-2SG
'You are allowed to take fish from the pond.' (lit. 'You are allowed to grab from the fishpond.') (B1.162)

(8) nʌŋ^{1}=a^{3} kʰʌm^{2} **ɟɨn^{3}** lɨŋ^{2}-m-u^{1}.
2SG=ERG alcohol **PERMIS** drink-NEG-2SG
'You are not allowed to drink alcohol.' (B1.162)

It should be mentioned that there is a near-identical marker that encodes completive aspect ('finish, already') and occupies the same pre-verbal slot. According to consultants, this marker is different in function from the habitual marker and carries a different tone, namely tone 2: *ɟɨn^{2}-*. It remains to be determined whether this form can be etymologically linked to the habitual, facultative, and deontic elements *ɟɨn^{3}-* and *ɟɨn^{3}*.

In Muklom, the majority of verbal operators follow the verb root. A small number of operators precedes the verb root (see Mulder 2020: 325; Mulder 2019). The habitual marker *ɟɨn^{3}-* is among the operators which precede the verb root. It is observed that the facultative verb *ɟɨn^{3}* 'be able to, be possible' and deontic verb *ɟɨn^{3}* 'be allowed to', which are phonologically identical to the habitual marker, occur before the main verb in SVCs. The proposed grammaticalization of the habitual operator from a modal verb which occurs before the main verb in an SVC, would explain the atypical pre-root position of the Muklom habitual.

5 The Muklom habitual marker and tense

Before discussing the occurrence of the habitual marker *ɟɨn^{3}-* with different tenses, I will briefly introduce the tense system of the language. Muklom exhibits a three-way absolute tense system in which past and future tense are overtly marked and present tense is unmarked (see Mulder 2020: 286-289). The past tense marker is a suffix *-t ~ -taʔ^{0}*. The second allomorph (*-taʔ^{0}*) must be used when a cislocative or inverse suffix follows, and the first allomorph (*-t*) is

the default past tense marker which is employed in all other contexts. The future tense suffix (*-n*) does not show allomorphy. An example of a past tense clause is provided in (9), a future tense clause in (10), and an unmarked present tense clause in (11).

(9) nap^{0}-k^{h}i^{2}-bʌŋ^{1}=t^{h}i^{3}=a^{2} duk^{0}-tɕʌk^{0}**-t**-a^{1}.
wild.banana-tree=DEF=ABS cut-PFV**-PST**-3
'He cut down the wild banana trees.' (20160106_02)

(10) hiʔ^{0}-tʌŋ^{2}=ma^{3} kuʔ^{0}-ʌ^{0}-məl^{2}=tʌŋ^{2}=ni^{3}=ɔʔ^{0} bat^{0}
1INCL-PL=DAT festival-and-Mol=whole=MED=at say
tʌ^{0}-p^{h}ʌn^{3}-tɕe^{2}**-n**-i^{3}.
RECIP-tell-PROG**-FUT**-1PL
'We will be telling one another stories during the whole Mol festival.' (20151208_01)

(11) ŋa^{1}=a^{3} tɨl^{2} saʔ^{0}-tɕe^{2}-ʌŋ^{3}.
1SG=ERG rice eat.soft-PROG-1SG
'I am eating rice.' (20100124-112046)

Dependent clauses may be left unmarked for tense, even when they describe non-present tense events. The occurrence in time of events described in dependent clauses can be inferred from the tense marker on the verb in the main clause, or from the lack of one. In example (12), the two cosubordinate clauses (see Van Valin 1984; Mulder 2020: 364–366) are unmarked for tense but describe events in the past like the last verb of the SVC in the matrix clause, *ka^{1}ta^{1}* 'he went', which is marked for past tense.

(12) [ɟan^{2}-hi^{2} bʌt^{0} ɛʔ^{0}]$_{Dep}$ ni^{3}a^{3} [ɟan^{2}tɔŋ hɔl^{3} ɛʔ^{0}]$_{Dep}$pɨk^{0} βɔt^{0} ka^{1}**-t**-a^{1}.
knife-sheath hang do and dao carry do field weed go**-PST**-3
'Wearing a sheath and carrying a dao[6], he went to weed the field.' (20160106_05)

In the current annotated corpus of Muklom data, the habitual marker *ɟɨn^{3}-* occurs in clauses with main verbs marked for past tense or unmarked for tense, in the latter case either denoting a present tense event or a past tense event within a dependent clause. No examples were found of the habitual marker in a future tense context. First, an example of habitual *ɟɨn^{3}-* with a past tense verb, or rather a past tense SVC, is provided in (13). This utterance was taken from a

[6] Short, multi-purpose sword, somewhat similar to a machete.

mythological narrative about a man who killed his wife, a woman from the sky. The relatives of the deceased woman used to come to the house of the husband and ask for a compensation for her death. He never paid them the compensation but sent them off with excuses every time until one day he decided to trick the relatives of his late wife and murder them.

(13) kʰɔ²-tuk⁰=tʰi³=a²=lɛ³ **ɟɨn³-**tɕu³ ka¹**-t-**a¹=ti³,
head -weight=DEF=ABS=FOC **HAB-**request go**-PST-**3=HS
ɹʌŋ²-te²=tʰi³=lɛ².
sky-PERS=DEF=FOC
'They used to come and ask for the compensation, the people from the sky.' (20151208_05)

Second, an example of *ɟɨn³-* with an unmarked verb expressing a present tense event is provided in (14). The event of seeing the white person from Kharsang is a recurring event but does not manifest itself at the moment of speaking, showing that *ɟɨn³* truly encodes a habitual and not frequentative sense.

(14) ŋa¹ ʌ⁰-luːk⁰ ʌ⁰-ɟɔŋ² ʌ⁰-puŋ² miʔ⁰ **ɟɨn³-**kʰi³-ʌŋ³
1SG NMLZ-tall NMLZ-big NMLZ-white person **HAB-**see-1SG
kʰʌ⁰sʌŋ³=na³ tɔŋ-te².
Kharsang=in live-PERS
'I usually see the tall, big, white person who lives in Kharsang.' (B1.148)

Third, an example of habitual *ɟɨn³-* with a verb unmarked for tense but expressing a past tense event is provided in (15).

(15) [e²tʰɔ³=ba³ **ɟɨn³-**pʰʌk⁰ ɛʔ⁰=ba³]$_{Dep}$ [miʔ⁰-βa¹=tʰi³=a² bɔ³ ɟɨp⁰
and=TOP **HAB-**eat.hard do=TOP person-M=DEF=ABS indeed sleep
ʌŋ²]$_{Dep}$ u³-hɨm²-te²-βa¹ mɨk⁰=tʰi³=a² tat⁰ lʌt⁰**-t-**a¹.
AUX 3SG.POSS-house-PERS-M eye=DEF=ABS try take.out**-PST-**3
'And she used to eat (eyes) and while he was asleep, she tried to take out the eyes of her husband.' (20151208_05)

The verbs in the two dependent clauses are not marked for tense, but the verb in the matrix clause carries a past tense marker. All verbs express events set in the past. This utterance is again taken from the narrative about the woman from the sky and explains why her husband wanted to kill her in the first place: she was an eye-eater and attempted to take out his eyes. The act of eating eyes was a

habit of the woman. Her relatives from the sky had provided her with a jar full of eyes and when she had depleted them, she resorted to eating the eyes of her own children and husband.

6 Habitual markers across the Sal languages

Across the Sal group we find languages that have developed grammatical encoding of habitual aspect. Table 3-6 list the habitual markers found in our sample, one table for each branch. While some languages share the same form, like Garo and Rabha *-a* in Table 3, Chamchang and Lochang *tə⁰-*, and Cholim, Jugli, and Ngaimong *l-*, some exhibit a marker that is not identical to other languages in the sample. The non-identical habituals might still be cognate, for example the habituals with an /r/-onset, like Dimasa *-re*, Garo *-rong*, and Mru *reng*, or the habituals with an /h/-onset, like Turung *haʔˡ*, Lungkhi *h-*, and Hkongso *hai*. Historical reconstruction is required to determine whether these derive from a common source or not.

Table 3: Habituals in Boro-Garo.

language	**form**	**source**
Boro	Σ-jɯ /-ɯ	Brahma (2013)
Dimasa	Σ-re	Brahma (2013)
Garo	Σ-rong Σ-a	Burling (1961; 2003)
Kokborok	Σ-o / -wo	Jacquesson (2008); Ghagra & Evans (2008)
Rabha	Σ-a	Joseph (2007)

Table 4: Habituals in Jingpho-Asakian.

language	**form**	**source**
Turung	Σ haʔ¹	Morey (2010)

Table 5: Habituals in Northern Naga.

language	**form**	**source**
Chamchang	Σ tə⁰-	Morey (2019)
Lochang	Σ tə⁰-	Morey (2019)
Cholim	Σ l-	Morey (2019)
Jugli	Σ l-	Morey (2019)
Ngaimong	Σ l-	Morey (2019)
Lungkhi	Σ h-	Morey (2019)
Muklom	jin³-Σ	Mulder (2020)
Rera	Σ saʔ / sat	Morey (2019)

Table 6: Habituals in Mru-Hkongso.

language	**form**	**source**
Hkongso	Σ hai	Wright (2009)
Mru	Σ reng	Schutzman (2016); Williams (2008)

The morphological status of the habitual markers in Tables 3–6 is either bound or unbound. I have given the bound or unbound status of the markers as presented in the respective sources. It should be kept in mind that they may be applying different criteria, which they may or may not make explicit, in the determination of morphological status than the ones I use for Muklom. Similarly, in all examples provided below, the placement of spaces and dashes, indicating word and morpheme boundaries, is maintained as it appears in the sources.

When we look at the position of the habitual marker relative to the verb stem across the sample, the order in Muklom stands out: *ɟɨn*^{3}- is the only habitual marker which precedes the verb stem. All other languages exhibit a particle or affix which follows the verb stem. As discussed in section 4, the order of elements can be explained based on the diachronic development of the marker and we may keep in mind that in Muklom too most verbal operators follow the verb.

For some of the markers in the sample, authors have reconstructed the path of grammaticalisation or suggested etymological relationships with other elements in the language. Four will be briefly discussed and exemplified here. First, the Kokborok habitual suffix *-o* ~ *-wo* can be linked to phonologically identical elements with different functions (see Jacquesson 2008): i) a marker of generic statements, ii) a progressive marker, iii) a locative marker. The most likely path of grammaticalisation is locative > progressive > habitual/generic. According to Comrie (1976: 103) languages never develop a habitual directly from a locative, but only indirectly, after an intermediate step of grammaticalisation into progressive aspect. The grammaticalisation from locative to progressive involves only a small semantic step, from location in space to location in time. An example of Kokborok *-o* as a habitual marker is presented in (16). The author glosses the element with the cover term ‘Aorist’, a term which is used with varying definitions cross-linguistically, but clearly expresses habitual meaning in this sentence, as Jacquesson (2008: 47) clarifies: “the sentence does not mean you are presently writing a poem, but that you are fond of writing poems, or that maybe it is your occupation.” An example of Kokborok *-o* functioning as a generic statement marker is provided in (17). An example of progressive *-o* is shown in (18), and (19) contains *-o* as a locative suffix.

(16) aŋ koktaŋ sŵi**-o**.
s1 poem write**-HAB**
'I write poems.' (Kokborok, Jacquesson 2008: 47)

(17) musŵi hoŋ**-o**.
deers cry**-GNR**
'Deers cry.' (Kokborok, Jacquessson 2008: 47)

(18) aŋ thaŋ²-nani nai-o.
s1 go-VN look**-PROG**
'I am looking forward to go.' (Kokborok, Jacquessson 2008: 47)

(19) aŋ nok-siŋ**-o**.
s1 house-inside**-LOC**
'I am in the house.' (Kokborok, Jacquesson 2008: 69)

The second habitual marker which can be linked to other elements in the same language is the habitual suffix *-h* in Lungkhi. This habitual marker is phonologically identical with the facultative suffix *-h*. An example of the former is provided in (20) and an example of the latter in (21). It seems Lungkhi has independently developed a habitual marker via the same route as Muklom, i.e., from an element expressing facultative meaning.

(20) ka¹ **h-**əŋ³.
go **HAB-**1SG
'I usually go.' (Lungki, Morey 2019: 151)

(21) ka¹ **h-**əŋ³.
go **ABIL-**1SG
'I can go.' (Lungkhi, Morey 2019: 151)

A third habitual marker of interest here, is the Rera habitual particle *saʔ ~ sat* (Morey 2019: 167). For its habitual use, unfortunately no example sentences could be located in the literature. This form alternatively functions as a progressive marker, exemplified in (22), and as a lexical verb meaning 'eat soft foods', as shown in (23), where the lexical and derived grammatical element stand side by side. The lexical verb is the source from which the grammatical functions must have developed. Evidence for an etymological connection between the grammatical markers and the lexical verbs 'eat soft foods' is found in the fact that both show root allomorphy, in TB linguistics often referred to as verb-stem alternation: *saʔ* is stem I and *sat* is stem II. In Tangsa languages such as Rera and Muklom, there is a correlation between stem II and nominalisation

(see Mulder 2020: 256–260, 398–402). The first two examples, (22) and (23), contain stem I forms, i.e. *saʔ* (transcribed *sa*^{1} and *sa*^{2} in the example from Goswami 2017). Example (24) shows the nominalised verb 'eat soft foods' with a stem II form, *sat*, and example (25) shows how a progressive marker may appear in stem II form as well.

(22) ŋa^{1} i-jup rə^{0}-**saʔ** l-aŋ^{1}.
1SG NMLZ-sleep AUX-**PROG** PRT-1SG
'I am sleeping.' (Rera, Morey 2019:167)

(23) mi^{2}-wa^{1}-sa^{2} i^{1}na^{2} ji^{1}tʃi^{1}ku^{2}nu^{2}-sa^{2} kəra^{2} du^{1}
person-man-child and woman-child this rice
sa^{1}-sa^{2}-l-o^{3} si^{1}ni^{2} kon^{2}ti^{2}-daŋ^{3}-niŋ^{2}.
eat.soft-PROG-PRT-3 PRT friend-group-with
'This boy and girl are eating rice with a group of friends.'
(Rera, Goswami 2017: 30)[7]

(24) a^{2}han^{2} maʔ^{3} ha^{2}-ra^{2} i^{1}-pak-i^{1}-**sat^{3}** kəlo^{2}-wan^{2}-t-o^{3}.
good from stay-SEQ NMLZ-eat.hard-NMLZ-**eat.soft** prepare-COS-PST-3
'Staying well, foods were prepared.' (Rera, Goswami 2017: 53)

(25) ŋa^{1} i-jup **sat**.
1SG NMLZ-sleep **PROG**.NMLZ
'I am sleeping.' (Rera, Morey 2019:167)

The fourth marker that will be discussed here is *reng* in Mru. Its use as a habitual marker is exemplified in (26). The utterance relates to the preparation of opium. Those who use (literally 'drink') opium as a habit, know how to make it. When reduplicated, as *rengreng* or *rereng*, this element expresses continuative aspect (see Schutzman 2016).[8] An example of continuative *rereng* is provided in (27).

[7] The glosses have been adapted to align better with the conventions adopted in this paper. The original tone marking by Goswami (2017) has been maintained. It should be noted, however, that Goswami's (2017) tone marking differs considerably from Rera tone marking in Morey (2019) and also from tones carried by cognates in a related language variety, Muklom (Mulder 2020). It is unclear to me what could explain this difference.

[8] Schutzman (2016) alternatively refers to this element as an iterative aspect marker but based on the translation of the example sentences he provides, a continuative reading seems more likely.

(26) *kham-**reng**=mi=wüö* *tuk.*
drink-**HAB**=NMLZ=COLL know
'Those who use it all the time know (how).' (Mru, Schutzman 2016: 26)

(27) *n'cöpö* *toj-cong* *cong-**rereng**-nö ka-kup.*
but go-wait wait-**CNT**-and get-enter
'But if you went and waited for a long time, you got to go in.'
(Mru, Schutzman 2016: 26)

Finally, it should be mentioned that in the linguistic literature on Boro-Garo languages, various authors use the label 'Present Habitual' in reference to the habitual marker, for example Boro *-jɯ* ~ *-u* (Brahma 2013: 227), Dimasa *-re* (Brahma (2013: 227), Garo *-a* (Ingty 2008: 75-76), and Rabha *-a* (Joseph 2007), but it is not always clear from the examples provided whether these markers indeed encode tense. At least some of these markers may co-occur with past tense markers, which seems odd for a present tense marker. Perhaps present tense is in fact an unmarked category in these languages. This is a topic worthy of further investigation.

7 Discussion

This preliminary survey on habitual aspect in Muklom and across the Sal languages reveals the diversity in the encoding of this aspectual category in this subbranch of the TB family. This does not necessarily stem from a high degree of linguistic differentiation within this branch, though the Northern Naga group in particular is known for its high linguistic diversity. Cross-linguistic research on habitual markers has shown that their diachronic stability may vary (see Boneh & Jędrzejowski 2019: 1). While in some language groups around the world we see habitual markers that survive over a long time span, in others, habitual markers grammaticalise or fall out of use relatively fast. The internal classification of Sal languages is far from set, in particular for Northern-Naga and Mru-Hkongso. Since habitual markers are potentially diachronically unstable, the presence of cognate habituals can signal close affiliation or contact, but the absence of cognate habituals should not be taken as an indicator of the reverse.

Abbreviations

1	first person	NMLZ	nominaliser
2	second person	NPROX	non-proximal
3	third person	PERMIS	permissive
ABIL	ability	PERS	person
ABS	absolutive	PFV	perfective
AUX	auxiliary	PL	plural
COLL	collective	POSS	possessive
COPS	copula	PROG	progressive
COS	change of state	PROX	proximal
DAT	dative	PRT	particle
DEF	definite	PSSB	possible
Dep	dependent clause	PST	past
ERG	ergative	RECIP	reciprocal
FOC	focus	S	subject
FUT	future	SEQ	sequential
GNR	generic	SG	singular
HAB	habitual	SVC	serial verb construction
HS	hearsay	TB	Tibeto-Burman
INCL	inclusive	TOP	topic
LOC	locative	VAL	valency-changing prefix
M	male	VN	verbal noun
MED	medial		

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