

Chapter 14

Endangered Languages of South Asia

George van Driem

1. Introduction

Not only can ideas and memes go extinct, entire conceptualisations of reality are wiped off the map when languages go extinct. South Asia is an area with the greatest linguistic diversity in the Old World, with the possible exception of Papua New Guinea. Many languages in the area have gone extinct in documented history. For example, Pyu is an extinct Tibeto-Burman language of the Irrawaddy basin in what today is Burma. The language had an epigraphic tradition which endured well into the twelfth century. Numerous languages have gone the way of Pyu. Rangkas was recorded in the Western Himalayas as recently as the beginning of the 20th century, but is now extinct. August Schleicher wrongly believed that the survival and extinction of languages was characterised by ‘die Erhaltung der höher entwickelten Organismen im Kampfe ums Dasein’ (1863: 28). However, the survival of individual languages is primarily determined by factors which have nothing to do with their intrinsic worth as a system for the articulation of human thought, but by economic, ecological and demographic factors affecting the individual language communities. The success of one language in outcompeting another has little or, in some cases, nothing to do with its grammatical propensities or lexical richness and refinement. Instead, the extinction of a language is a function of the histories of peoples, regions and language communities.

In addition to the socio-economic and demographic changes which cause language communities to assimilate to larger, often more exploitative groups, there are also trends and fashions within the linguistic establishment that impede the documentation of endangered languages. The most obvious has been the detrimental influence of Chomskyite formalism on the field of linguistics as a whole since the 1960s, leading to vast amounts of public and private fund-

ing and human resources being channeled away from research on languages. More recently, some funding bodies have undertaken to prescribe codes of conduct or research regimens. Linguists have been working on endangered languages for many decades, but now that 'endangered languages' has become a buzz phrase, there is also suddenly no shortage of people who would tell these linguists how precisely to go about conducting their work.

Where linguists have previously been working effectively, ethically and constructively with native language communities, now they will have to conduct their work with the meddlesome prompting of people sitting on the sideline. The codes of conduct currently being drafted have generally been inspired by the extreme situation which exists in North America and Australia, where colonial European populations have on a grand scale wiped out native peoples along with the languages they once spoke, and in their place set up modern Western societies with litigious Anglo-Saxon legal customs. The situation on the ground is already utterly different from one Asian country to the next. Therefore, codes of conduct inspired by the situation in North America and Australia are singularly inappropriate in other parts of the world. In practice, codes of conduct are more than superfluous, for they can actually hamper sound and ethical field research.

In a similar vein, in addition to conventional grammatical analysis and lexical documentation, it is helpful to document a language in the form of an audio recording. In fact, I have never met a field linguist who did not do this as a matter of course. Yet it serves no purpose to prescribe a format of audiovisual documentation to which the fieldworker must adhere in order to be eligible for funding. Recruiting a capable field linguist willing to document endangered languages is already a big challenge. Most people trained in linguistics are either not up to the task or unwilling to suffer the discomfort or brave the dangers involved. Putting extra hurdles in place, however well-intentioned, merely obstructs the documentation of what remains of mankind's endangered linguistic heritage.

2. Endangered Language Isolates of the Indian Subcontinent

Each of the languages endangered with extinction discussed in this section represent so-called language isolates, i.e. languages which have not been demonstrated to belong to any other major language family or linguistic phylum. There is a theory connecting the Nahali language to Austroasiatic, although even this theory recognises that

Nahali, if Austroasiatic, would constitute the only representative of its own distinct major branch of this large linguistic phylum. The Karasuk theory, advanced by myself on the basis of specific morphological evidence, holds that Burushaski forms a language family together with the Yenisseian languages.

Andamanese languages. All native languages spoken by the indigenous negrito peoples of the Andaman Islands are either extinct or threatened with imminent extinction. As a result of British colonial policies, just three of over a dozen native languages of the Andamans were driven extinct, along with the people who spoke them. The three surviving Andamanese languages are Önge, spoken on Little Andaman, Sentinelese, spoken on North Sentinel Island, and Jarawa, spoken in the interior of South Andaman. The 1981 census enumerated 31 speakers of Jarawa, 97 speakers of Önge, and a comparably small Sentinelese language community holding out on Sentinel Island. No reliable recent data are available. Historically the Andamanese used to give outsiders visiting the islands a hostile reception, but in view of their tragic history the prompt slaying of outsiders was in retrospect the best policy that the Andamanese could have had. Since the beginning of the 20th century, Urdu or Hindi had established itself as the dominant language because it was the *lingua franca* between the inmates of the penal colony established on the Andamans by the government of British India. Today Bengali, Tamil, Malayalam and Telugu are also significant minority languages spoken by the colonists who have settled the islands.

Vedda. The earliest Western account of the aboriginal Veddas of Ceylon and their language was written by Ryklof van Goens of the Dutch East India Company in 1675. Subsequently most Veddas were assimilated by the Tamil and Sinhalese speaking populations of the island, both linguistically and through acculturation and intermarriage. Policies implemented by the Ceylonese government in the 1950s and 1960s led to the displacement, fracturing and impoverishment of the last remaining Vedda language communities. The individuals who survived the devastation of their communities have been absorbed into modern Sinhalese society in terms of both lifestyle and language. It is not known whether there are still any surviving speakers of the original, albeit heavily Indo-Aryanised Vedda language, but the places to look would be at the Mahaweli Vedda Settlement Area at Hennanigala on the Kudu Oya, or in isolated households around either Dambana or Polonnaruwa. The Rodiya language, another language of Ceylon, is almost certainly extinct.

Nahali. The Nahali are mainly settled in and around the Gawilgarh Hills south of the Tapti river in Nimar and Ellichpur Districts of

Madhya Pradesh, especially around the village of Tembi 40 km east of Burhanpur. The Gawilgarh Hills form part of the Vindhya and Satpuḍā chain, which separates the Deccan Plateau from the Gangetic plain. There are less than 2,000 speakers of Nahali. The Nahali language — also written as Nihali or Nehali — has been heavily influenced by the Austroasiatic language Korku. It should be possible to do fieldwork using Hindi as the contact language.

Kusunda. Kusunda is the language of an ancient aboriginal relict group of Nepal. The four remaining Kusunda clans, which designated themselves by the Indo-Aryan names of Siṃha, Sen, Śāhī and Khān, split up in the middle of the 20th century. Kusunda speakers could still be found in the 1960s and 1970s, but the remaining Kusunda are generally individuals which have married into a sedentary agriculturalist community. Several individuals are known to remember the language of their parents, though none speak Kusunda as the language of daily communication. Individual Kusunda are known to be found around Damaulī and near Gorkhā in central Nepal as well as further west in Dāng and Surkhet. For those interested in finding the last speakers, more detailed clues and reports on their possible whereabouts are given in my handbook (van Driem 2001).

Burushaski. Burushaski is spoken in the high alpine valleys of Hunza-Nager and Yasin in northern Pakistan by about 80,000 people who call themselves *Burúšo* and their language *Burúšaski*. Some 50,000 Burúšo live in Hunza and Nager and some 30,000 live in Yasin. A considerable Burúšo population has also settled in Gilgit itself. The Burúšo area is surrounded on all sides by tracts of land where Iranian, Indo-Aryan, Turkic and Tibetan languages are spoken. The Burúšo for centuries enjoyed a high degree of local autonomy. In 1891, Hunza was conquered by the British after a bloody three-day struggle, and in 1947 the region became part of Pakistan. In 1972 President Bhutto abolished the autonomous Nager kingdom, and in 1974 the kingdom of Hunza was abolished. Between 1964 and 1968 the Karakoram highway was built, which has rendered the area easily accessible to outsiders. In addition to many older *Šiṇā* loans, Burushaski has become swamped with Urdu and English loan words. Bilingualism has led to the attrition of native morphosyntactic complexity in the speech of the younger generation. In 1992, Hermann Berger predicated that at the present rate of assimilation the language would be fully extinct within several decades.

3. Endangered Austroasiatic Languages of the Indian Subcontinent

The Austroasiatic language family is the most ancient linguistic phylum of mainland South and Southeast Asia. With the exception of the four languages Khmer, Vietnamese, Khasi and Santhali, each of the over two hundred Austroasiatic languages is threatened with extinction. Even the Mon language, which has an epigraphic and literary tradition dating back to the seventh century, is threatened with imminent extinction. The Austroasiatic languages of South Asia are the Nicobarese languages of the Nicobar Islands and the Munda languages of the Indian Subcontinent.

Nicobarese languages. Over 20,000 people presently inhabit the Nicobar Islands, but not all of these speak a native language of the Nicobar Islands. The precise linguistic situation on the Nicobars is currently kept hidden from the scrutiny of foreign scholars by the Indian government. The names and locations of the language communities are known, however. Pû is spoken on Car Nicobar Island, Tatet on Chowra Island, Taihlong on Teressa Island, Powahat on Bompoka Island, Nancowry on the islands of Nancowry and Camorta, Lâfûl on Trinkut Island, Têhñu on Katchall Island, Lo'ong along the coast of Great Nicobar Island, Ong on Little Nicobar Island, Lâmongshé at Condul, and Miloh at Milo. The language Shompen, the most aberrant and idiosyncratic of the Nicobarese languages, constitutes a group unto itself. Shompen is spoken in the hinterland of Great Nicobar Island by the Shompen tribe. The 1981 census enumerated 223 members of the Shompen tribe.

South Munda languages. The Munda languages are divided into a southern and a northern branch. Despite the large number of speakers of a few of the Munda languages, bilingualism is widespread. At the present break-neck speed of assimilation, most Munda languages will not survive to the end of this century. All Munda language communities are under heavy demographic and socio-economic pressure to assimilate linguistically to the local Indo-Aryan majority language. We shall turn to the South Munda languages first. Juang has approximately 17,000 speakers in the Kyonjhar and Dhekānāl districts of Orissa. The Kharīa dialects have over 190,000 speakers, concentrated mainly in the Choṭā Nāgpur, especially in Rāñcī district of Bihar, and in scattered communities in Orissa, West Bengal, Bihar, Assam and Madhya Pradesh. The language known variously as Sora, Saora or Savara has over 300,000 speakers in the Korāpuṭ and Gañjām districts of southern Orissa and in neighbouring parts of Andhra Pradesh. Pareng or Gorum is spoken by approximately 10,000 people

in Nandpur and Pottāngī tālukā in Korāpuṭ. Remo or Bonda has approximately 2,500 speakers in the Jayapur hills of Korāpuṭ. Gutob or Sodia (also known as Gadaba, but not to be confused with the Dravidian language also named Gadaba) has just over 40,000 speakers in Kalāhāṇḍī, Korāpuṭ, Viśākhāpaṭnam and Bastar districts. The language known as Getaṭ, Gtaṭ, Dideyi or Didam has about 3,000 speakers in the hills and plains on either side of the Sileru river in East Godāvarī district of Andhra Pradesh.

North Munda languages. Santhali or Santali is the only Munda language community with millions of speakers that may be large and resilient enough to resist the forces of linguistic assimilation in the course of the present century. Korku, the westernmost Munda language, has approximately 200,000 speakers in southwestern Madhya Pradesh and neighbouring parts of Maharashtra, especially in the Satpuḍā range and Mahādev hills. The diverse Muṇḍārī or Hoṛo dialects, including Hasadaṭ, Naguri, Latar and Keraṭ, together have approximately 750,000 speakers in the districts Rāñcī, Siṃhabhūm, Manbhūm, Hazārībāg and Palāmū of Bihar and in northern Madhya Pradesh and Orissa. Ho or Kol has just over 400,000 speakers in Siṃhabhūm district in Bihar. Bhumij may have as many as 150,000 speakers in scattered communities in Bihar, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh. The language of the semi-nomadic Birhoṛ is moribund, with less than two thousand speakers in Siṃhabhūm, southern Palāmū, southern Hazārībāg, and northern and northeastern Rāñcī. The Koḍa dialects, which have been utterly neglected by scholars and evangelists alike, are spoken by about 25,000 people in scattered enclaves throughout the Choṭā Nāgpur. Turi is spoken by several thousand people living as small artisanal groups in West Bengal, Palāmū, Rāñcī, Siṃhabhūm, Rāygaḍh and Chattīsgaḍh. The Asur dialects count some 7,000 speakers on the Netarhaṭ plateau in southern Palāmū and northern Rāñcī as well as further south around Gumlā. The dialects collectively referred to as Korwa, Koroa or Ernga together have over 35,000 speakers in the Jaśpurnagar tahsil of Rāygaḍh district and in Sargujā district of Madhya Pradesh and in Palāmū and Hazārībāg districts of Bihar.

4. Endangered Dravidian Languages of the Indian Subcontinent

Other than the four major Dravidian languages Kanarese, Tamil, Malayalam and Telugu, most minor Dravidian languages are spoken by small tribes and have not been systematically committed to writing.

Kanarese, Tamil and Malayalam are South Dravidian languages. Telugu is the only Central Dravidian language not threatened with extinction.

South Dravidian languages. Iruḷa, Toda, Kota and Badaga are minor South Dravidian languages spoken in the Nilgiri Hills in the west of Tamil Nadu. Of these Iruḷa, Toda and Kota are most closely related to Tamil and Malayalam, whereas Badaga can be said to be a major variant of Kannada. Iruḷa has only about 5,000 speakers. Kota and Toda are each spoken by about one thousand people, Kota in the Kōttagiri portion of the Nilgiris, and Toda in the vicinity of Udagamaṇḍalam or 'Ootacamund', affectionately known as 'Ooty'. Although a close relative of Kota, Toda is aberrant and is said to have non-Dravidian features. Badaga has over 100,000 speakers. Another relative of Tamil and Malayalam is the Koḍagu language, spoken by about 100,000 speakers in the 'Coorg' or Koḍagu district of Karnataka in the vicinity of 'Mercara' city or Maḍkeri. Tuḷu is a totally distinct South Dravidian language with over a million speakers around the coastal city of Mangalore or Maṅgalūru and along the coast from Kāsargoḍu in Kerala up as far as North Kanarā district in Karnataka. Tuḷu is written in an adapted form of the Grantha script, like Malayalam, and schoolbooks and Bible translations have been printed in Tuḷu since 1842. The Kuruba language is spoken by the thousand or so members of the Betta-Kuruba tribe in the hilly parts of Coorg. The Betta-Kuruba tribe constitute merely one tenth of all ethnic Kuruba, for other Kuruba tribes have adopted Kannada. The Koraga and Bellari languages each have roughly 1,000 speakers in the area around Kundāpura or 'Coondapoor' and Uḍupi or 'Udipi' in South Kanarā district of Karnataka. The recently discovered Koraga language is spoken by untouchables who are bilingual in Kannada. Kurru (including Korava, Yerukula, Yerukala and Kaikudi) is spoken by an estimated 100,000 nomadic tribesmen in Andhra Pradesh and neighbouring portions of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

Central Dravidian languages. Central Dravidian comprises the minor languages of the Telugu-Kūi group (Gōṇḍi, Koṇḍa, Maṇḍa, Pengo, Kūvi and Kūi) and the Kolami-Parji group (Kolami, Naikri, Naiki, Gadaba and Parji). Over two million speakers of Gōṇḍi, who call themselves either Kōi or Kōya, live in scattered communities in Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa and the north of Andhra Pradesh. Koṇḍa or Kūbi is spoken by the more than 15,000 members of the Konda Dora tribe in the districts of Viśākhāpaṭṇam and Śrī-kākulam in Andhra Pradesh and the neighbouring district of Korāpuṭ in Orissa. Maṇḍa and Pengo are spoken in Korāpuṭ and Kalāhāṇḍi districts in Orissa by an estimated 1,500 speakers. The languages Kūi

or Kūṛi and Kūvi are spoken by more than half a million members of the Kondho (also Kondh, Kandh or Khond) tribes in Gañjām, Kalāhāṇḍī, Baudh-Kondhamāḷ and Korāpuṭ districts in Orissa and in Viśākhāpaṭṇam district in Andhra Pradesh. Christian missionaries have printed religious tracts in Kūi and Kūvi using the Roman and Oriya scripts. Kolami is spoken by about 70,000 people in the hills of Yavatmāḷ and Vardhā districts in Maharashtra and in Adilābād district in Andhra Pradesh. An estimated 1,500 Yerku tribesmen in the hills of Canda district in Maharashtra speak the related language Nai-ki. There are roughly 50,000 speakers of Parji in Bastar district in Madhya Pradesh in the vicinity of Jagdalpur. In neighbouring Korāpuṭ district in Orissa, there are roughly 40,000 speakers of the various dialects of Gadaba, not to be confused with the Muṇḍā language of the same name, currently more usually called Gutob.

Northern Dravidian languages. The Northern Dravidian languages are all minor languages, i.e. Brahui, Malto and Kurukh. Brahui [brāṛūi] is spoken in Pakistan, mainly in Kalat and the adjacent districts of Hyderabad, Karachi and Khairpur, and in small communities in adjacent portions of Afghanistan and Iran. The language is spoken by about half a million members of the so-called indigenous Brahui tribes of the Kalat, the Sarawan tribes north of the Kalat and the Jhalawan tribes south of the Kalat. Brahui has been a written language for over three centuries, but a truly flourishing literary tradition has never developed. Brahui, like the Indo-Aryan language Urdu, is written in an adapted form of the Persian script. Traditionally, Brahui is considered to be either a separate branch of Dravidian or a member of North Dravidian alongside Malto and Kurukh. More than 100,000 people speak the Dravidian language of Malto, mainly in the Rājmaḥal Hills of central Bihar.

Kurukh, also written Kuṛux, and also known as Oraon or Uraon is spoken by roughly 1.5 million speakers, mainly in the hill tracts of the Choṭā Nāgpur in the states of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and West Bengal but also in scattered communities elsewhere in these states and even as far east as Assam and as far north as the foot of the Himalayas in the eastern Nepalese Terai, where about 15,000 people speak the Dhangar and Jhangar dialect. There are also a few scattered Uraon settlements on the Indian side of the Indo-Bhutanese border at intervals from the area south of Samtsi in the west to the area south of Samdrup Jongkhar in the east. Moreover, scattered Uraon communities are found throughout Assam, where they are referred to as 'Adibasis', and so lumped together with the various linguistically unrelated Austroasiatic Muṇḍā groups with whom they share their geographical provenance and their dark, at times nearly negroid ap-

pearance. The term *Ādivāsī* used in northeastern India literally means 'aboriginal', but, ironically and confusingly, the groups thus designated are, in fact, not aboriginal to northeastern India, but aboriginal to the Choṭā Nāgpur.

5. Endangered Languages of Bhutan and Sikkim

The contrast between Bhutan and Sikkim in terms of the language endangerment situation could not be greater. With the possible exception of Singapore, Bhutan is the most anglophone country in all of Asia. The position of English in education, government and daily life is such that even Dzongkha itself, the national language which is actively propagated by the Royal Government of Bhutan, occupies a precarious position alongside English. On the other hand, the Royal Government of Bhutan fosters a policy of studying, documenting and preserving the native languages of the country as part of the national cultural heritage. Sikkim, on the other hand, has been swamped by colonists from Nepal and lost sovereignty in 1975 when it was annexed by India. The indigenous population groups of Sikkim, the Lepcha and the Dränjop, have been reduced to a minority of less than 10% in their own native homeland. Nepali, an allochthonous language, has expanded in Sikkim to the detriment of all native languages, and Nepali has also made inroads into Bhutan. In comparison with Sikkim and Nepal, the sociolinguistic situation in Bhutan is characterised by far greater stability. In Bhutan, languages under threat are faced with encroaching endangerment and gradual extinction, but not with the cataclysmic upheaval and immediate endangerment which threatens almost all of the native language communities of Nepal. The only exception is Lhokpu, the most endangered language in Bhutan, which is threatened by linguistic assimilation to the surrounding communities of Nepali colonists in southwestern Bhutan. Here too Nepali is spreading at the expense of a native language. The least endangered language in Bhutan is the Tshangla or Shâchop language. Tshangla is a Tibeto-Burman tongue which constitutes a subgroup in its own right, spoken by a highly robust language community native to the eastern part of the kingdom. A Tshangla dialect is also spoken in an enclave around Pemakö, further east on the Indo-Tibetan border.

South Bodish languages. The four South Bodish languages are Dzongkha, Dränjoke, J'umowa and Cho-ca-nga-ca-kha. Dzongkha is the national language of the kingdom of Bhutan, but is actually native to just eight out of twenty districts, all located in western Bhu-

tan. Propagation of a standard form of the language highly influenced by the Classical Tibetan liturgical language or 'Chöke'. The preeminent role of English in Bhutan threatens Dzongkha even though there are an estimated 160,000 native speakers of the language. The normative influence of Chöke threatens authentic grass roots forms of Dzongkha.

The sister language of Dzongkha, Dränjoke, used to be the national language of the Kingdom of Sikkim. However, since Sikkim was annexed by India in 1975, the land has been overwhelmed by a Nepali-speaking immigrant population which now constitutes over 90% of the populace. As a result, young Dränjop are almost all raised in Nepali, and Dränjoke is now moribund.

J'umowa is spoken in the southernmost portion of the Chumbi valley, a sliver of former Sikkimese territory which was ceded to Tibet and is now wedged in between Sikkim and Bhutan. The Chumbi valley is known in Tibetan as Gro-mo or 'Dr'omo' and in Dzongkha as Gyu-mo or 'J'umo'. The English name for the Chumbi Valley is derived from the genitive adjectival form J'umbi 'of or pertaining to the Chumbi valley'. Based on the Tibetan pronunciation of the valley, the language is also known as 'Tromowa' or 'Dr'omowa'. This language, only spoken in the lower portion of the valley, is now moribund. Cho-ca-nga-ca-kha is spoken by approximately 20,000 speakers in Monggar and Lhüntsi districts on both banks of the Kurichu. This language is under threat from Tshangla and Dzongkha. The closeness of Cho-ca-nga-ca-kha to Dzongkha means that assimilation to the Bhutanese national language is an easy process which involves the language being shorn of all its most interesting features, some of which are Kurichu linguistic substrate traits.

East Bodish languages. The East Bodish languages are the most archaic branch of Bodish, more conservative in some respects than Old Tibetan. East Bodish comprises Dakpa, Black Mountain, Bumthang, Kurtöp, Kheng, Nupbikha, 'Nyenkha, Dzala and Chali. Of these languages, four can be seen as dialects of a single Greater Bumthang language, i.e. Bumthang, Nupbikha, Kheng and Kurtöp. Yet all the other East Bodish languages are quite distinct, and their diversity reflects a great time depth. The particular language endangerment situation of Bhutan has already been discussed above in light of the country's relative sociolinguistic stability.

Bumthang is the native language of Bumthang district in central Bhutan, where four dialects of the language are spoken by an estimated 30,000 people. The dialect spoken in Trongsa is called Nupbikha 'language of the west', i.e. west of Bumthang. Kheng is the language of an estimated 40,000 people in Kheng district, now also

known as Zh'ängang, south of Bumthang in central Bhutan. Kurtöp is spoken by approximately 10,000 people in Lhüntsi district, to the west of the Kurichu all the way north to the Tibetan border. The Kurtöp area is therefore east of the Bumthang area, whilst the Kurichu separates the Kurtöp area from the Dzala language area of northeastern Bhutan.

The other East Bodish languages are all quite distinct languages. 'Nyenkha is also known as Henkha, but the most popular name is probably Mangdebi-kha because this highly divergent East Bodish language is spoken by an estimated 10,000 people in the Mangde river valley. Chali is spoken by about a thousand people in a small enclave north of Monggar on the east bank of the Kurichu, consisting mainly of Chali itself and neighbouring Wangmakhar. Dzala is the spoken by about 15,000 people in northeastern Bhutan in Trashi-'yangtse district and in Lhüntsi district east of the Kurichu. Chinese sources have reported over 40,000 speakers of the same language in the portion of Tibet just north of northeastern Bhutan and the adjacent part of Arunachal Pradesh. Dakpa is spoken by a few thousand people in Tawang, which now makes up the northwestern corner of Arunachal Pradesh, and in a few villages in eastern Bhutan abutting Tawang. The Black Mountain language is spoken by about five hundred people in six different villages scattered throughout the southern jungle heartland of the Black Mountains in central Bhutan. This language is decidedly the most divergent and aberrant of all East Bodish languages. The language may, in fact, not be East Bodish at all, but represent another Tibeto-Burman language on its own which has been extensively relexified by East Bodish.

Lhokpu. Lhokpu constitutes a group unto itself within the Tibeto-Burman language family. The Lhokpu language is spoken in the hills of Samtsi District in southwestern Bhutan in two distinct language communities. The robust western community in the hills one day's march to the northwest of Samtsi bazaar comprises approximately 1,340 speakers in the villages of Sanglung, Sataka and Loto Kucu and Lotok. The eastern community comprises approximately 1,270 speakers in Tâba, Dramte and several associated hamlets near Jenchu, upstream from the town of Phüntsho'ling on the Indo-Bhutan border. Language retention is better in the western community because there are fewer Nepali settlements nearby. The entire Lhokpu population is effectively bilingual in Nepali, and most of the hill tracts of southwestern Bhutan as well as a portion of the western Bhutanese duars used to be Lhokpu territory. The Royal Government of Bhutan has recognised the urgent language endangerment situation of the Lhokpu due to the influx of Nepali settlers into their tradi-

tional homeland, and Lhokpu is currently being grammatically and lexicographically documented under the auspices of the Royal Government of Bhutan.

Lepcha. The Lepcha have their own indigenous script and a literary tradition which dates back to the early eighteenth century. Lepcha is the language of the original populace of Sikkim. The kingdom of Sikkim, once comprised present-day Sikkim as well as most of present-day Darjeeling district. Outside of this area, Lepcha is also still spoken decreasingly within roughly 100 Lepcha households in Ilām district in eastern Nepal. The language is also spoken in Kalimpong or 'British Bhutan', i.e. the territory wrested from Bhutan which now forms the easternmost part of Darjeeling district. Lepcha is furthermore spoken in a few Lepcha villages in Samtse District of southwestern Bhutan. Zongu district in Sikkim is the only remaining area where the Lepcha have not been outnumbered by Nepali colonists. The entire Lepcha area is bilingual. Despite spirited attempts to preserve the language, Lepcha has already effectively been lost everywhere in favour of Nepali. There are very few remaining households where the younger generation actively speaks the language, and these households are few and far between. The total number of fluent Lepcha speakers does not exceed a few thousand.

Gongduk. Gongduk is a previously unknown Tibeto-Burman language which was first discovered for scholarship in May 1991. The language, which has turned out to constitute a distinct and unique branch unto itself within the great Tibeto-Burman language family, is spoken by a dwindling population of just over a thousand people in a remote enclave along the Kurichu in Monggar district in east-central Bhutan. Gongduk is one of the two languages in Bhutan which has retained complex conjugations which reflect the ancient Tibeto-Burman verbal agreement system. The language community has survived intact for so long because of its remoteness and the relative general stability of language communities in Bhutan over time. Whereas some language communities are remote in the sense that they are many days on foot from a motorable road, the Gongduk speaking enclave has until recent historical times also been several days on foot from the nearest neighbouring language communities. This means that travellers had to carry their own provisions and sleep outdoors to reach the Gongduk area. This still holds true for two of the three approaches to the language community. Yet Bhutan has been transformed in recent decades by a network of narrow but motorable roads and a growing infrastructure of educational and health care facilities set up by a caring central government. The Gongduk language community is opening up to the outside world, and a grow-

ing staff of civil servants who do not speak the language are now stationed there on a semi-permanent basis. Although there is still a fair number of genuine monolinguals, the situation is rapidly changing, and the future prospects for the survival of Gongduk are not good. The Royal Government of Bhutan has recognised the urgent language endangerment situation of the Gongduk, and the language is currently being grammatically and lexicographically documented under the auspices of the Royal Government of Bhutan.

6. Endangered Languages of Arunachal Pradesh

The Kho-Bwa languages. The four languages of the enigmatic Kho-Bwa cluster in western Arunachal Pradesh, just east of Bhutan, are all endangered with imminent extinction. These are Khowa or Bugun, Sulung or Puroit, Lishpa and Sherdukpen. Khowa is spoken by an estimated 800 people, more than half of whom reside in the two villages of Wanghoo and Singchung near the district headquarters at Bomdila in West Kameng district. Sulung is spoken by about 4,000 people, half of whom inhabit a small area which straddles the northeastern hills of East Kameng and the northwestern hills of Lower Subansiri district. In this area, they occupy the northern and more inaccessible parts of the upper reaches of the Par river. The Sulung have been compelled to lead a semi-nomadic existence because they were lowest in the pecking order established by the perennial internecine tribal warfare traditionally waged in the region. The Sulung were often enslaved by rival groups. Therefore, their actual area of dispersal extends from the Bhareli river to the Subansiri, and small settlements of Sulung are interspersed with the villages of more numerous groups such as the Tani and Hruso. Lishpa is spoken by about 1,000 people in Kameng district who pass themselves off as 'Monpa'. Sherdukpen is spoken by less than 2,000 people who live mainly in the villages of Rupa, Shergaon and Jigaon in the southwestern corner of Kameng district, but are also settled in the area in and around the Tenga valley south of Bomdila. Culturally the Sherdukpen are distinct from the other Kho-Bwa language communities because they have adopted a Tibetan Mahāyāna Buddhist *Hochkultur*.

Hrusish languages. All three Hrusish languages are endangered with imminent extinction. The Hruso or 'Aka' population is estimated at less than 3,000 speakers. The Hruso live in the southeast of Kameng, where they are concentrated in the Bichom river valley. Like the Bhutanese to the west and the neighbouring Nishi tribes to the east,

the Hruso or Aka have historically observed the practice of raiding the plains to take back slaves to the hills. Dhímmai or 'Miji' is still spoken by about 4,000 people. The Dhímmai inhabit about twenty-five villages and hamlets in the northeastern and north-central region of Kameng, i.e. in the Bichom river valley to the north of Hruso territory and also in the Pakesa river valley. There are only about 1,000 speakers of Levai or 'Bongro', who live in Kameng and also part of Subansiri.

Tani languages. Tani languages, formerly known as 'Abor-Miri-Dafla' languages, are spoken by the many Adi and Nishi tribes and a few other groups such as the Milang which are not thus classified. An estimated 5,000 speakers of Milang live on the eastern fringe of the Tani area, abutting the territory of the Idu Mishmis. The Milang inhabit the three villages of Milang, Dalbing and Pekimodi in the upper Yamne valley in Mariyang subdivision of East Siang district.

Bangni, Nishi, Tagin and Apatani form a cluster. Bangni, traditionally known as Western Dafla, is spoken by roughly 23,000 people. In the north, the Bangni area straddles the Indo-Tibetan border. Nishi, formerly known as Eastern Dafla, is spoken by roughly 30,000 people. Nah is spoken in just seven villages of Taksing administrative circle in Upper Subansiri district. Sarak or 'Hill Miri' is spoken just east of the Apatani area by an estimated 9,000 people. An estimated 25,000 Tagin inhabit the northeastern quadrant of Subansiri district and Subansiri and adjoining parts of West Siang, including the towns of Denekoli and Taliha. The Tagin were driven to their present abode by the bellicose Pailibo and Ramo tribes. Apatani is the most divergent member of the Nishi group and has been exposed to the most Tibetan influence. An estimated 14,000 Apatani inhabit an enclave in the fertile valley of the Apatani Plateau in lower central Subansiri district, between the Nishi and Hill Miri, midway between the Panior and Kamla rivers.

Gallong, Bokar, Pailibo and Ramo form a cluster. Gallong, one of the two Tani languages which is endangered but not threatened with immediate extinction, is spoken by approximately 40,000 people in the southern half of West Siang district as far down as where the plains of Lakhimpur District begin in Assam. The largest Gallong village is Bagra with a population exceeding 3,000 near the West Siang district headquarters at Along. Approximately 3,500 speakers of Bokar live in forty villages in the Monigong Circle of Machukha subdivision in West Siang district just below the peaks of the Indo-Tibetan border, as well as in several villages on the Tibetan side of the ridge. Just over a thousand speakers of Pailibo live along the banks of the Siyom or Yomgong river, in nine villages in the Tato Cir-

cle and two villages in the Payum circle of West Siang district. Less than 800 speak Ramo in the upper Siyom valley in Mechukha subdivision of West Siang district to the northwest of the Pailibo area. Exclusively Ramo villages are located between Machukha and Tato, whereas elsewhere Ramo are mixed with Bokar and Memba settlers.

The remaining languages belong to the Minyong-Padam cluster, although nothing is in fact known about the Ashing language except its name. Its inclusion, therefore, is just a matter of geographical convenience. Whereas Padam is one of the two Tani languages which is endangered but not threatened with immediate extinction, Tangam is nearly extinct because most of the people who spoke the language became the victims of genocide. The endangerment situation therefore varies widely from language community to language community. Approximately 20,000 speakers of Minyong occupy the swathe of territory along the west bank of the lower Siang river, downstream of the Bori and Karko language communities and to the east of the Gallongs. Not much more than 2,000 speakers of Bori are settled along the Siyom and Sike rivers in an area enclosed by the Luyor hills on the east, the Piri hills on the west and on the north by the closing together of these two ranges. The totally undocumented Ashing language is spoken by less than 1,000 people who inhabit the northernmost headwaters of the Siang river near the Tibetan border, beginning from the village of Ramsing in the south and extending up as far as Tuting village in the north. Pango and Bomdo are the most numerous Ashing settlements. An estimated 2,000 speakers of Shimonong remain on the left bank of the Siang in the northernmost portion of what used to be known administratively as the Siang Frontier Division. Yingkiong is the administrative centre in the Shimonong area. Less than 200 speakers of Tangam remain in the northernmost portion of Siang district inhabiting the three villages of Kucing, Ngering, Mayum and a few neighbouring hamlets in the northeastern corner of the Adi tribal region of Arunachal Pradesh, along the upper reaches of the rivers Siang and Nigong. The Tangam were once numerous but were killed *en masse* by neighbouring tribes. Karko is spoken by a small tribe of just over 2,000 people found mainly in Karko village and surrounding hamlets, such as Ramsing and Gosang. About 600 speakers of Panggi live in the lower Yamne valley above the confluence of the Yamne and the Siang, in the villages of Geku, Sumsing, Sibum, Jeru and Pongging. Padam, formerly known as the 'Bor Abor' or 'Great Abor', is spoken by probably over 40,000 people in the tract of land between the Dibang, Siang and Yamne valleys in East Siang, from the Assam border in the south to the Sidip river in the north. Mishing or 'Plains Miri' is spoken by

less than 4,000 Hinduised people living in scattered settlements on the plains closely skirting the hills of Arunachal Pradesh. All the language communities of Arunachal Pradesh are threatened by Hindi which has been propagated in the area by the Government of India since the 1970s.

Midzuish languages. The Midzuish languages are referred to in older writings by the antique term 'Northern Mishmi'. The two Midzuish languages, Kaman and Zaiwa, are both endangered. Approximately 9,000 people speak Kaman or 'Miju Mishmi' along the upper reaches of the Lohit on both banks of the river around Par-suram Kund in Lohit district, and across the border in Tibet. Less than 200 people of the Zakhring and Meyor clans speak the Zaiwa language in the vicinity of Walong. This 'Zaiwa Mishmi' is not to be confused with the utterly different Burmic language also named Zaiwa, which is spoken in parts of Yúnnán and Burma.

Digarish languages. The two Digarish languages, Idu and Taraon, are both endangered with imminent extinction. There are only an estimated 9,000 speakers of Idu, once known as Chulikata 'cropped hair' Mishmi. An estimated 6,000 speakers of Taraon are concentrated in the area between the Delei and Lati rivers in the east, the Kharem in the south and the Digaru in the west.

7. Endangered Languages of the Brahmaputran Plain and associated hill tracts

Brahmaputran is a major trunk of the Tibeto-Burman language family, comprising the three branches Konyak, Bodo-Koch and Dhimalish and may include a fourth branch Kachinic or Jinghpaw. The Kachinic languages are all endangered, not only by Mandarin, Burmese and Assamese, but also by the Jinghpaw creole which is used as a *lingua franca* between diverse Kachinic language communities. This form of Jinghpaw has been grammatically simplified and is shorn of the native morphosyntactic complexity which characterises the various local grass roots Jinghpaw languages. More information on the Jinghpaw languages can be found in the section on Southeast Asia. The Bodo-Koch branch of the Tibeto-Burman family consists of Chutiya, Bodo-Garo and the Koch languages. A number of Bodo-Koch languages mentioned and even scantily documented in British sources in the 19th and 20th century have since then gone extinct, e.g. Hâjong.

Deori Chutiya. There was once a large number of ethnic Chutiya, but the only group that had retained the original language at the dawn of the 20th century was the priestly Deori clan, who formerly officiated at sacrificial ceremonies for the Ahom kings. The 1971 census only counted 2,683 ethnic Deori in Arunachal Pradesh and 9,103 Chutiya in Assam. Today there are reportedly only few households in Lakhimpur and Sibsagar districts of upper Assam who still speak the language and one would have to make an effort to localise them.

Bodo-Garo languages. The Bodo-Garo cluster consists of Kokborok, Tiwa, Dimasa or 'Hills Kachari', Hojai, 'Plains Kachari', Bodo, Mech and Garo. The most divergent languages within this cluster are believed to be Dimasa, Tiwa and Kokborok. Dimasa is hardly documented and today very much under threat of extinction. The Dimasa live in the northern Cachar hills and portions of the adjacent plains, where they have largely been linguistically assimilated to their Bengali and Assamese neighbours. Dimasa is only spoken in isolated households, and local sleuthing would be required to find them. There is no description of Hojai, but old sources suggest some affiliation with the Dimasa. Dimasa and Hojai are distinct from Plains Kachari, but the speakers of all three dialects refer to themselves as 'Bodo'. Plains Kachari or simply Kachari is the dialect spoken in Darrang district, upriver from Bodo proper and downriver from the Chutiya territory. The surviving Kachari language communities are rapidly being assimilated. The dialect spoken further downriver in areas such as Goalpara is generally referred to simply as Bodo. There is still a considerable number of Bodo speakers, but their communities are presently assimilating linguistically to Bengali and Assamese under heavy demographic and socio-economic pressure. Meche is a Bodo-Koch language often mentioned in British sources, but now perhaps extinct. If there are still households speaking Meche, they must be sought by a locally savvy linguist in Jalpaiguri district and neighbouring parts of Goalpara. The original Meche territory stretched from what today is Jhāpā district in the eastern Nepalese Terai all the way across the Bhutanese duars as far as modern Goalpara district.

Kokborok, formerly known as 'Hill Tippera' is spoken in the low rolling hills of Tripurā. At the time that India gained its independence from Great Britain, at least 70% of the people in Tripurā were Kokborok and merely 30% were Bengali colonists. Today the Kokborok constitute just a 30% minority in their own tribal homeland, having been swamped by Bengali immigrants, especially from the area which now constitutes the country of Bangladesh. Bengali colonists now make up over 85% of the population. There are an esti-

mated 800,000 ethnic Kokborok, but the vast majority have abandoned their ancestral language or are in the process of doing so. Tiwa, also known as ‘Lalung’, is spoken by about 35,000 people settled in Kamrup and Marigaon districts and in the Karbi Anglong, formerly known as the Mikir Hills. Garo is the only Bodo-Koch language not threatened with imminent extinction. About 200,000 of the 250,000 people living in the western half of the Meghālaya, known as the Garo Hills, speak Garo. An additional 50,000 Garo speakers live in the Assamese districts of Goalpara and Kamrup and in Mymensing District of Bangladesh, which all skirt the Garo Hills. Some Garo even live further south in the Bangladeshi hinterland, e.g. about 15,000 in Modhupur.

The Koch languages. The Koch languages are Pānī Koch, A’tong, Ruga and Rabha. Koch proper is still spoken by only approximately 300 people along the western fringe of the Garo Hills near Dalu in the vicinity Garobadha. The speakers are known as Wanang or Pānī Koch ‘Water Koch’. Several thousand speakers of A’tong live in the southeast of the Garo Hills reside in and around Somasvarī and Bāghmārā. The A’tong speak a Koch language, but identify themselves as ‘Garo’ and are already bilingual in their native A’tong and in Garo. The Ruga or Rugha are a small group in the south of the Garo Hills. No data are available on the number of Rugha speakers. The Rabhas inhabit the territory where the Brahmaputra meanders around the highlands of the Meghālaya and bends south towards the Bay of Bengal after flowing westward across the plains of Assam. The prehistoric Rabha ethnic area may originally have extended as far east as Guwahati. There are at least 150,000 ethnic Rabha in Assam, and in 1993 the Rabha Hasong Demand Committee even put the number of ethnic Rabha as high as 375,000. Yet there are no more than several thousand speakers of the Rabha language. Most Rabhas speak Bengali or Assamese. Rabha is only still actually spoken in a number of villages in Goalpara District between Goālpārā proper and Phulbārī, inc. Bardāmāl, Mātiā, Majerburi and Mākuri. However, even here the younger generation is already fully bilingual in Assamese, and most young Rabhas have a better command of Assamese than they have of Rabha.

Dhimalish languages. Dhimalish includes the Toto and Dhimal languages. Toto is spoken by a small tribal group at the town of Ṭoṭopārā in Baksā or Mādārīhāt subdivision of Jalpānguḍī district in the Indian state of West Bengal nearby the Bhutanese border town of Phüntsho’ling. In November 1994, there were 176 Toto families with a total number of 992 Toto speakers. Although this language of the Bhutanese duars is officially spoken on the Indian side of the border

today, the Royal Government of Bhutan has recognised the precarious situation of this community and commissioned grammatical investigation of the language, which is currently being prepared for publication. On the basis of British sources, it is known that the range of Toto speaking settlements was once far larger than it is today.

The Dhimal live in Jhāpā and Morañ districts in the eastern Nepalese Terai. There are two distinct Dhimal language communities, an eastern conglomeration of 16 villages in Jhāpā district to the east of the Kañkāimāi or Māi river, with an estimated 3,000 speakers, and a western tribe of over 25,000 speakers to the west of the river inhabiting about 24 villages in western Jhāpā and 51 villages in Morañ district. The current Dhimal population has recently been estimated as high as 35,000 people, though the 1991 census somehow only counted 16,781 Dhimal. The language is rapidly being lost in favour of Nepali, however, because the Dhimal are a 10% minority in their own native areas. The groups in the same region which are sometimes identified as *Jhāngāḍ Dhimāl* are speakers of the Dravidian language Jhangar.

Konyak languages. The ‘Northern Naga’ or Konyak languages are spoken in Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and adjacent areas of Burma. Two clusters can be distinguished, the first comprising the languages Konyak, Wancho, Phom, Khiamngan and Chang, and the second comprising Tangsa and Nocte. Tangsa, Nocte and Wancho are spoken in Arunachal Pradesh, whereas Konyak, Phom and Chang are spoken to the southwest in Nagaland. There are approximately 30,000 Wanchos in approximately 41 villages grouped into eleven confederacies, known as *jan*, in the southwestern tip of Tirap district between the foothills and the Patkoi range. To the south of the Wancho, in Nagaland, live approximately 70,000 speakers of Konyak. South of the Konyak live about 19,000 speakers of Phom. To the southeast of the Phom, approximately 16,000 Chang occupy the hinterland of Nagaland, stretching back into the high range which divides India from Burma. An unknown number of speakers speak Khiamngan, and the precise whereabouts of this language community is unknown. There were about 20,000 Tangsa in Changlang and Miao subdivisions of Tirap district. The Jogli, Moklum and Lunchang languages are dialects of Tangsa, divergent enough to warrant separate documentation and each spoken by well over a thousand people. The Noctes live in central Tirap to the northeast of the Wanchos and to the west of the Tangsas. There are approximately 28,000 Nocte.

Karbí. Karbí or Mikir is spoken in the Karbi Anglong or ‘Mikir Hills’ of Assam as well as in the neighbouring districts of Kamrup, Nowgong and Sibsagar. The language is not a Brahmaputran language, but a taxon unto itself within the Tibeto-Burman language family. There are over 150,000 Mikir, the vast majority of which reside in the Karbi Anglong. Half of the Karbí are bilingual in Assamese, and amongst the younger generation the ancestral language is being abandoned at an alarming rate in favour of Assamese.

8. Endangered Tibeto-Burman and Daic Languages of the Indo-Burmese borderlands

Ao languages. The Ao languages are spoken in central Nagaland. These are Chungli Ao, Mongsen Ao, Sangtam, Yimchungrü, Lotha, Yacham and Tengsa. Lotha is the most robust with about 35,000 speakers. All the other Ao languages together have about 65,275 speakers. Over one third of the population of Nagaland are not indigenous Tibeto-Burmans, but Indo-Aryan settlers. Due to the many languages spoken in Nagaland, the increased mobility of all population groups and the use of Assamese and Nagamese, a low-status Assamese-based creole, as *lingue franche*, all the Ao languages are threatened with extinction.

Angami-Pochuri languages. There are two language clusters, one of consisting of Angami, Chokri, Kheza and Mao, and the other of Pochuri, Ntenyi, Maluri, Sema and Rengma. There are roughly 30,000 speakers of Angami and an estimated 65,000 speakers of Sema. The other languages are all spoken by far smaller populations. For example, there are about 9,000 speakers of Rengma.

Zeme languages. The linguistic territory of the Zeme languages lies in the southwestern corner of Nagaland and the northwestern portion of Manipur, where the languages Zeme, Liangmai, Nruanghmei, Mzieme, Puiron, Khoirao and Maram are spoken. There are no good population counts for these language communities. There were 26 Zeme speaking villages in 1901, whereas the 1971 census returned 406 Khoirao, 19,968 Maram and 17,360 Rongmai. All Zeme languages are threatened with extinction. The direction of linguistic assimilation is generally towards Meithei, a robust Tibeto-Burman language which is the official language of Manipur, spoken by over one million people.

Tangkhul languages. Tangkhul territory covers the northeastern quadrant of Manipur. The two languages are Tangkhul in the north and Maring in the south. The 1971 census returned 58,167 ethnic

Tangkhul in Manipur, and no separate data were available on Maring. Tangkhul is being lost in favour of Meithei and is nearly extinct. It is not known whether Maring is already extinct or still survives in certain households.

Mizo-Kuki-Chin languages. Some languages of this branch are not yet endangered, e.g. Mizo, also known as Lushai, spoken by 300,000 people. Precise numbers for other language communities are unavailable, but it is certain that all these languages are vanishing fast. Thadou, Kom, Chiru, Gangte, Lamgang, Anal and Paite are spoken by dwindling numbers of speakers in Manipur, where these communities are being linguistically assimilated to the Meithei speaking majority. The small Lakher language community in southern Mizoram is assimilating to the Mizo speaking minority. The Simte, Zo, Vaiphei, Tiddim Chin, Falam Chin, Haka Chin and various Southern Chin language communities in Burma are being linguistically assimilated by the Burmese speaking majority. The small Hrangkol, Chorei, Bawm, Kom and Hmar language communities in Tripura, southern Assam and the northern tip of Mizoram are all assimilating to the Assamese or Bengali speaking majority.

Mru. Mru is a Tibeto-Burman language in a class by itself. The estimated 40,000 speakers of Mru in the central hills of the Chittagong in southeastern Bangladesh are losing their language in favour of Bengali.

Sak languages. The Kachinic branch consists of the Sak languages and the Jinghpaw dialects. The Sak languages, formerly also known as 'Luish' languages, are Sak, Kadu, Andro and Sengmai. Andro and Sengmai went extinct in the course of the 20th century. The descendants in Manipur now speak Meithei. In 1911, Kadu was still spoken by at least 11,000 people in the portion of the Burmese district of Katha adjacent to Manipur. It is unknown whether there are any hamlets or households in which the language is still spoken. The Chakmas of the northern Chittagong Hill tracts have adopted Bengali, but the Chak, Cak or Sak in the southern Chittagong hill tracts still speak their ancestral Tibeto-Burman tongue. The Sak are separated from the Chakma by bands of territory inhabited by speakers of the Mru language and of the Arakanese dialect of Burmese. A mere 1,500 speakers of Sak were counted in 1981 in the area of Alaykhyong, Baichiri, Nakhali et Nakhyongchari near the Burmese border east of Cox's Bazar.

Daic languages. Ahom is an ancient Daic language introduced into the lower Brahmaputra valley in what today is northeastern India with the incursion of a Daic tribe in 1228. A Daic élite led by prince Sukāphā imposed its language and culture upon a Bodo-Koch popu-

lace, but their language ultimately went extinct and all that survives are chronicles known as *Buranjis*. Subsequently other Daic groups migrated into northeastern India, such as the Khampti and Tai Phake or 'Phākial', who arrived in the mid eighteenth century. Today the Khampti predominantly inhabit the southeastern corner of Lakhimpur district in Assam and neighbouring portions of Lohit district in Arunachal Pradesh, and an unknown but dwindling number of ethnic Khampti still speak their ancestral Daic language. The roughly 2,000 Buddhist speakers of Tai Phake inhabit the six villages of Nam Phakial, Tipam Phakial, Bar Phakial, Namman, Namchai and Lang in Tinsukia and Dibrugarh districts. The Tai Phake are already all bilingual and speak Assamese in addition to their native language.

The Tai Nora are a Northern Shan group who fled to the Patkoi Hills to escape persecution by the Jinghpaw at the beginning of the nineteenth century, later moving to Jorhat subdivision of Sibsagar district. Most of the Tai Nora have lost their native Daic tongue, whereas the few Tai Nora who continue to speak the language usually identify themselves and their language as Khamyang. The Tai Rong or Tai Long 'Great Tai' are a Shan group who settled in northeastern India in 1825, likewise settling in Jorhat. The approximately 2,000 speakers of Aiton or 'Shām Doāniyās' are also a Northern Shan group who fled to avoid persecution in the nineteenth century and settled in small numbers in Lakhimpur and Sibsagar districts and the Naga Hills.

9. Endangered Languages of Nepal

The 1971 census returned 220,000 speakers of all the Rai languages taken together. After the Nepalese Revolution did away with repressive language policies in 1990, it became popular to identify oneself as a speaker of one's ancestral language even when one no longer spoke it. In the 1991 census, 80% of the 525,551 Rai people reportedly still spoke their native language, but this outcome is the product of collective wishful thinking. All Rai languages are moribund and will go extinct within one or two generations at the present rate, being lost in favour of Nepali. A comparable situation exists amongst the Limbu. The Kiranti languages consist of the Limbu group, Eastern Kiranti, Central Kiranti and Western Kiranti. Sometimes the Limbu and Eastern Kiranti languages are grouped together under the heading of Greater Eastern Kiranti languages.

The Limbu group. There are an estimated 300,000 ethnic Limbu in eastern Nepal and a portion of western Sikkim. It is sometimes

claimed that language retention is as high as 80%, but these figures belie the dire situation of these languages. The most conservative Limbu language, Phedāppe, will probably go extinct when today's generation of young adults takes the language to the grave with them because virtually nobody in the Phedāppe language community is currently raising their children in Limbu. The linguistic situation is comparable in the even smaller Chathare language community. The situation is slightly better in the larger Pāñthare language community to the west of the Tamor. Yet even the prospects for Pāñthare as well as Tamarkhole, the Limbu dialect spoken in northeastern Limbuvān, look bleak. Under the currently prevailing sociolinguistic conditions Limbu is likely to be completely extinct by the end of this century unless measures are taken to revitalise the language through the primary school system.

Eastern Kiranti languages. Eastern Kiranti consists of the Upper Aruṅ and Greater Yakkha languages. The languages of the Greater Yakkha cluster are Yakkha, Chiling and the Athpahariya dialects. Yakkha is on the verge of extinction. There are reportedly only a few isolated households where the language is still spoken on a daily basis, though there is a slightly larger number of elderly Yakkha throughout the former Yakkha territory who can remember the language, but have no fellow speakers with whom to speak it. Chiling is a Rai language spoken by about 3,000 people in the hamlets and villages of Āṅkhisallā in Dhankuṭā district. The language has managed to survive surprisingly well amongst the approximately 600 households where it is spoken. Language retention amongst the Chiling younger generation is still relatively good, but under the present sociolinguistic conditions it is highly unlikely that the next generation of speakers will be raised in the language. The Athpahariya dialects are spoken by the indigenous people of Dhankuṭā district, who are now vastly outnumbered by settlers from outside. There is significant dialectal diversity within the Athpahariya dialects area. For example, the Belhare variety is somewhat distinct. Comprehensive grammatical and lexical documentation of the Athpahariya dialects is a matter of great urgency. There are probably only several hundred elderly speakers, and these languages are all now on the verge of extinction.

The Upper Aruṅ or Yakkhaba languages are Yamphu, Lohorung and Mewahang. The Yamphu is spoken by less than 3,000 people in the upper Aruṅ valley in the north of Saṅkhuvā Sabhā district. Lohorung is spoken by an estimated 4,000 people in a language community in the central portion of Saṅkhuvā Sabhā district on the left bank of the Aruṅ. Mewahang is spoken by a comparable number of speakers north of the Saṅkhuvā river and to the east of the Aruṅ. The

southern portion of the Mewahang area is flooded with Indo-Aryan colonists as well as Newar, Ghale and other Tibeto-Burman migrants from more westerly parts of Nepal. These language communities are all bilingual in Nepali. In terms of language they have fared surprisingly well until today. Yet these communities are now being subjected to unprecedented upheaval due to the economically motivated emigration of their members to urban centres elsewhere and the likewise economically motivated influx of monied outsiders into these areas. Not only are indigenous languages of the Himalayas endangered by the construction of roads into their areas, the socio-economic detrimental effects of roads on indigenous populations are often observed, studied and reported. In Nepal roads have generally benefitted outsiders moving in and had deleterious economic effects on local people, but this is a message which development banks, aid organisations and governments do not want to hear.

Central Kiranti. The Central Kiranti languages comprise the Khambu group and the Southern Kiranti languages. The Khambu group encompasses Kulung, Sampang, Nachiring and probably Sām. Kulung is spoken by an estimated 15,000 people, mainly in Solukhumbu district but also in neighbouring portions of Saṅkhuvā Sabhā district. Nachiring is spoken downstream from the Kulung area, just above the confluence of the Hoṅgu and the Dūdhkosī and in the swathe of territory which lies between Hulu and the Rāva river in Khoṭāṅg district. There are only an estimated several hundred speakers of the language, all quite elderly and often isolated from other speakers. Sampang is spoken in the Khārtamchā, Phedī and Pāthekā areas of Khoṭāṅ district and in adjacent parts of Bhojpur district to the east. Although there may be over a thousand speakers, increasingly fewer members of the younger generation are learning the language. The Sām inhabit the territory which straddles both Saṅkhuvā Sabhā and Bhojpur districts along the Irkhuvā River, a western tributary of the Aruṅ. It is uncertain whether there are any remaining speakers of the language, but patient sleuthing in the area could uncover a remaining Sām speaking household.

The Southern Kiranti languages are Bantawa, Chintang, Dungmali, Chamling and Puma. They are spoken in the lower hills region between the Dūdhkosī and the Aruṅ. The Sunkosī which runs through this area cuts through Chamling territory, but in the east, where the river has already descended onto the plains, it more or less coincides with the southern border of Bantawa territory. Two of the Southern Kiranti languages, Bantawa and Chamling, are respectively the largest and second largest Rai language in terms of numbers of speakers. Yet hardly any young people speak these languages. Ban-

tawa is the language native to Bhojpur district. Dungmali is spoken in the northeastern quarter of Bhojpur district, north of the Pikhuvā river, covering the territory on the right bank of the Aruṅ across the river from Yakkha territory. Chintang is spoken in just the two villages of Chintān and Ḍāṅḍāgāũ in Dhankuṭā district, just west of the Chiling language area further along the same ridge. Chamling is spoken in Khoṭān and Udaypur districts, south of the Rāva Kholā and east of the Dūdhkosī, and on both banks of the Sunkosī, especially to the northeast of the river. The number of ethnic Chamling have been estimated to be as high as 30,000, but language retention is poor in most areas. Language retention amongst the younger generation is reported to be highest in communities on the southwest bank of the Sunkosī, such as Balamtā. Puma is spoken in Dipluñ and Cisopānī in the southeastern corner of Khoṭān district, about 10 km north of the Sunkosī to the west of the Buivā river.

Western Kiranti. Western Kiranti consists of the Thulung, Tilung, the Chaurasiya group, the Upper Dūdhkosī languages and the Northwestern Kiranti languages. Thulung is spoken mainly in the southern part of Solukhumbu district and in the territory surrounding the confluence of the Solu river and the Dūdhkosī. Thulung is so distinct within Kiranti that it is viewed as a group on its own, termed Mid-western Kiranti. The number of Thulung has been estimated at 8,000, but the language is being lost. Tilung is a Kiranti language about which very little is known except the name and the approximate location. The language is spoken only by an indigenous minority in the triangle of land between the lower course of the Dūdhkosī and the part of the Sunkosī below the confluence in the southwestern portion of Khoṭān district. There are few remaining speakers.

The Chaurasiya group comprises the languages Ombule or 'Wambule' and Jero. Ombule is spoken around the confluence of the Dūdhkosī and Sunkosī. The Jero speaking area is contiguous with Ombule territory and lies to the northwest of the Ombule area on both sides of the Sunkosī. There are approximately 15,000 Chaurasiya people, speaking either Jero or Wambule, and language retention is rapidly waning in the younger generation.

The Upper Dūdhkosī languages are Dumi, Kohi and Khaling. There are less than eight speakers of Dumi east of the Lidim river, all of whom are very elderly. There are unsubstantiated reports of middle-aged speakers around Aiselukharka on the west bank of the Lidim. The Dumi homeland is the area between the Rāva and the Tāp rivers. Kohi is an undescribed Rai language related to Dumi. The language is still spoken in and around the village of Suñdel along the upper headwaters of the Rāva in Khoṭān district. Language retention

amongst the young is still good, but the language community is very small. Khaling is spoken by about 15,000 people in Solukhumbu district in the mountains on either side of the Dūdhkosī from Bupsā above Jumbhiñ as far downstream as Kilimpī, just above the confluence of the Hoṅgu river and the Dūdhkosī.

The Northwestern Kiranti languages are Hayu, Bahing, Sunwar and perhaps Surel. If there are any elderly speakers of Hayu remaining, they would most likely be found in the villages of Mudhājor, Bardāṇḍā, Māneḍihī, Adhamarā or in some neighbouring hamlet. Hayu was once spoken in a corridor of land, along the Mahābhārat Lek range alongside the Sunkosī above its confluence with the Likhu river, primarily in Rāmechāp and in neighbouring portions of Sindhulī and Kābhrepālāñcok districts. Bahing is also on the verge of extinction. The language has been lost or language retention is poor in most Bahing villages. There are a few exceptional villages with exceptional households, however, within the Bahing homeland area in Okhalḍhuṅgā district and neighbouring parts of Solukhumbū. Sunwar is the most northwesterly of the Kiranti languages, and it is now spoken only by a small and dwindling minority out of the approximately 30,000 ethnic Sunwar. The Sunwar homeland is the river valleys of the Likhu and Khimtī, tributaries of the Sunkosī and Tāmākosī respectively. The Surel live in the village of Surī near Hāleśvara in Dolakhā district. Their language is spoken by at least several hundred people, and some claim that it represents a more archaic stage of the Sunwar language.

Newaric. The Newaric languages are Newar, Barām and Thangmi. Newar is the Tibeto-Burman language of the urbanised civilisation of the Kathmandu Valley. The language has an epigraphic tradition dating back to 1171 AD. Land deeds survive in Newar from as early as 1114 AD, and the Newar literary tradition dates back to 1374. There are over a million Newar. None the less Newar is a language endangered with imminent extinction. All Newars are bilingual in Newar and Nepali. Nepali is a language originally not native to the Nepali capital. Today the native Newar are vastly outnumbered in their native homeland of the Kathmandu Valley.

At a Tibeto-Burman workshop held at the University of California at Santa Barbara on 28 July 2001, the Newar scholar Dayā Ratna Śākya went as far as to proclaim that ‘the more educated the Newar, the less likely he is able to speak Newar’. This is a damning observation to have to make about the language that has been the daily means of communication for a society that yielded one of the most advanced pre-modern societies and has produced sublime art and a refined culture and acted as the midwife for the birth of numerous

schools of philosophy. The drastic sociolinguistic changes which have overwhelmed the culturally and technologically advanced Newar language community since the conquest of the Kathmandu Valley by Pṛthvī Nārāyaṇ Śāh in 1768 may serve as a metaphor for the convulsive changes which are now overwhelming language communities all over the world as they increasingly come under siege by expansive languages such as English.

There is a large Newar language community, but few families are raising their children in Newar. It has even been claimed that none do so. Though the language community is still large in absolute terms, the language may already have reached the point of no return. The prospects may be slightly better for other Newar dialects, which are at any rate not mutually intelligible with the Newar language of Kathmandu and Pāṭan. The situation is in fact not much better for the Newar dialect spoken in Bhaktapur, but the highly divergent Paharī and Citlāṅg dialects and the Dolakhā Newar language could conceivably hold out for another generation. The Paharī and Citlāṅg dialects are spoken by rural groups at localities within the Kathmandu Valley and surrounding hill tracts, whereas the Dolakhā Newar language is spoken far away in Dolakhā district.

Barām is still spoken in just one village in Gorkhā district in central Nepal, i.e. Dāṇḍāgāũ near Pīpal Dāṇḍā in the Tākukoṭ area. Ethnic Barām can be found throughout Gorkhā district as well as in Dhādiñ and Nuvākoṭ districts. However, in these areas only a few very elderly and isolated individuals can be found with some fragmentary recollection of the language. There are only a few hundred speakers of Barām, but the fluent speakers are all middle-aged to elderly and together number far less than a hundred. Thangmi is spoken by approximately 30,000 people, mainly in the northern portion of Dolakhā district, but also in eastern Sindhupālcok. Language retention is poor amongst the younger generation.

Shingsaba. Shingsaba or Lhomi are a cis-Himalayan Bodish group with a distinct language. Not much is known about the language, but Shingsaba is likely a Bodish language heavily influenced by Tibetan. The language may exhibit some substrate influence from the Kiranti or Tamangic languages. Just over 4,000 speakers were reported in the 1970s. The Shingsaba live in villages on the steep slopes of the upper Aruṅ upstream from the Hedāññā area in Sañkhuvā Sabhā district as far as the Tibetan border, e.g. in the villages of Cyāmṭāñ and Kimāthāñkā. The Shingsaba area is surrounded by the towering Lumbā-Sumbā Himāl, Umbhak Himāl and Kumbhakarṇa Himāl.

Magaric. Magaric includes the Magar dialects spoken by the southern Magar septs and Kham or Northern Magar. According to the

1991 census data on language retention, only 430,264 out of 1,339,308 ethnic Magar or one third of the Magar population in Nepal still speak the Magar language, but this return is higher than the real number. Actual language retention is sadly just a fraction of this number. The Magar have been a highly mobile group since the dawn of the Gorkha conquest in the eighteenth century, and most Magar communities have abandoned their language in favour of Nepali. The language is primarily still spoken in small communities found between the Bherī and Marsyāndī, especially in the districts Pālpā, Syāñjā, Tanahū and Gorkhā. The original home of the Magar was known as Bāhra Magarānt ‘the twelve Magar regions’, which comprised all the mid hill regions of Lumbinī, Rāptī and Bherī zones. The Magar still live in these areas as well as in adjacent parts of Gandakī and Dhavalāgiri zones. There is great dialectal variation within Magar, and because of major differences in grammar and lexicon the various dialects merit separate studies. Northern Magar or Kham is also a distinct language spoken by at least 30,000 people in the upper valleys of Rukum and Rolpā districts in west-central Nepal and in adjacent portions of Bāgluñ district, separated from the Magar area proper by several days’ walk. Most Magar dialects are on the verge of extinction, with few children being raised in Magar anywhere. The prospects for Kham are slightly better in the short term.

Chepangic. Chepangic consists of Chepang and Bhujeli. Chepang is spoken by only 25,097 out of 36,656 ethnic Chepang or two thirds of the Chepang, who live in Makvānpur, Citvan and Dhādiñ districts, south of the Triśulī river, north of the Rāptī river and west of the highway connecting Heṭaūḍā to Kathmandu. Chepang proper is spoken to the east of the Nārāyaṇī river, whilst Bhujelī is spoken by at least 2,000 people in Tanahū district to the west of the Nārāyaṇī. The Chepang have until recently lived as semi-nomadic hunter-foragers, but their habitat has been largely deforested and rendered accessible by roads and settlers from elsewhere in Nepal. The work of Christian missionaries has pitted the converted against the traditionalist Chepang. Therefore, the Chepang are now entering modern Nepalese society as a fragmented and socio-economically depressed group, compelled to assimilate both linguistically and culturally in order to survive at all.

Raji and Raute. The Raji and Raute are two groups who have until recently lived as semi-nomadic hunter-gatherers in the western Nepalese Terai and the adjoining portion of Pithaurāgaḍh district in Uttarkhaṇḍa. The Raji and Raute groups have been compelled to abandon their traditional lifestyle and adopt a sedentary existence by

Nepalese and Indian government resettlement programmes. This has left most Raji and Raute destitute and prey to alcoholism and other social ills. Just 472 Raji were counted in 1988 in the Indian district of Pithaurāgaḍh, where they had been resettled in four villages in Dhārcūlā tehsil, four villages in Ḍiḍihāt tehsil and one village in Campāvāt tehsil. The 1991 census of Nepal returned 3,274 Raji and 2,878 Raute by ethnicity, and 2,959 Raji by mother tongue. The Raji are primarily settled in Dān-Deukhurī district. Since 1979 the Raute have been settled at two places in Ḍāḍeldhurā district. In addition, several hundred Raute still lead a nomadic lifestyle, led by the septuagenarian headman Man Bahādur Raskoṭī. This traditional group has resorted to modest forms of trading in jungle commodities and crafts, since much of their original forest habitat has been destroyed. Unverified reports would indicate that the resettled groups have largely lost the ancestral language, whereas the itinerant band of Raute is still known to speak Raute. Traditionally the Raute used to migrate from Pyūṭhān in the east to Ḍoṭī district in the west. Most recently, the itinerant group has been operating in Surkhet.

Dura. The Dura language is a Tibeto-Burman language which was spoken until the 1970s in the heartland of Lamjuñ between the Pāūdī and Midim rivers. The last speakers passed away in the 1980s. The surviving Dura data have been collated in Leiden. The precise position which Dura occupied within the Tibeto-Burman language family has yet to be determined.

Gurung. Gurung is a Tamangic language. The Tamangic group includes Gurung, Tamang, Thakali, 'Narpa, 'Nyishangba, Gyasumdo, Chantyal, Kaike and perhaps Ghale. According to the 1991 census data on language retention, 227,918 out of 449,189 ethnic Gurung or about one half of the Gurung population still speaks the Gurung language. Gurungs live in the districts Gorkhā, Kāskī, Lamjuñ, Parbat, Syāñjā, Tanahū and Dhāḍiñ. Gurung comprises three dialects with a low degree of mutual intelligibility between them: (1) a relatively homogeneous western Gurung dialect in Kāskī and Parbat, (2) a heterogeneous eastern dialect group in Lamjuñ, Gorkhā and Tanahū, and (3) a southern dialect in Syāñjā. All Gurung language communities are abandoning the language in favour of Nepali. Probably no young children are being raised in the language, so that all dialects of the language are likely to go extinct after the present generation of speakers expires.

Tamang. According to the 1991 census data on language retention, 904,456 or nearly 90% of the 1,018,252 ethnic Tamang reported Tamang as their first language. Though already in a precarious position, Tamang is not yet as endangered as the other Tamangic lan-

guages. Tamang language communities are found dispersed throughout central and eastern hill regions of Nepal, especially in the districts Kābhrepālāncok, Makvānpur, Sindhupālcok, Nuvākot, Dhādīn, Sindhulī, Rāmechāp, Bāgmatī, Dolakhā and Rasuvā. A majority of 83% of the population in the sparsely populated district of Rasuvā in Bāgmatī zone is Tamang speaking. There is a clear distinction between the western and eastern dialects of Tamang, whereby the Trīsulī river demarcates the linguistic boundary between the two varieties, with transitional dialects found in western Makvānpur. 'Murmi' is an obsolete term for Tamang. The *Humlī Tāmān* 'Tamangs of Humlā' and *Mugulī Tāmān* 'the Tamangs of Mugu' are not linguistically Tamangs, but Limirong Tibetans and Mugu Tibetans respectively.

Thakali. The Thakali are a Tamangic language community in the Kālī Gaṇḍakī river valley, an affluent area because of the trade in salt and other commodities between Tibet and India in olden days and today because of tourism. The majority of the ethnic Thakali are economically successful, no longer speak Thakali and have moved out of their native homeland to Kathmandu and abroad. Many of the remaining Thakali speakers are originally outsiders of other ethnic groups who have settled in the Thakali portion of the Kālī Gaṇḍakī river valley in order to make a livelihood and have assimilated as best they can to the Thakali both linguistically and culturally. Particularly, the Towa, who were originally speakers of the 'Loke dialect of Tibetan, have moved from the neighbouring Bāhra Gāū area and mastered the Thakali language, though they are looked down upon by the Thakali, who refer to them by the derogatory name *arangsī karangsī*. Thakali was spoken by 7,113 people according to the 1991 census. A comparable number of people speak Seke, a related and mutually intelligible dialect spoken in an enclave further upstream, surrounded on all sides by Tibetan speaking settlements. The speakers of Seke are known as *Shopa*.

Manangba. The Manangba dialects include 'Nyishangba, Gyasumdo and 'Narpa, spoken respectively in the upper Manang valley, the lower Manang valley, and in the 'Nar and Phu valleys, east of the Annapūrṇā Himāl massif. The 1971 population estimate for the 'Nar-Phu dialect area was approximately 500, whilst the 1971 census put the number of Mananba in Manang proper at approximately 2,600. The latter figure revealed that at the time the Manangbas already effectively constituted merely one third of the population of their native homeland in the Manang valley. A sociolinguistic detail relevant to any field linguist is that the speakers of Manangba dialects generally resent the qualifications Manangba or *Manāne*, both of

which have acquired a derogatory connotation. Instead, these people prefer to be known as ‘Gurungs’.

Kaika and Chantyal. Kaika is another Tamangic language spoken by approximately two thousand people in several villages in Dolpo district. The language is also known as ‘Tārālī Khām’ or ‘Tārālī Ma-gar’. This name is taken from the toponym Tārakoṭ ‘star fort’, the main town in Tichurong, where these people live. Chantyal is spoken in the hills south of the Thakali area between the Myāgdī and Bherī rivers on the steep western and southern slopes of the Dhaulāgiri massif. The Chantyal until recently worked the copper mines of the area. Approximately only 2,000 of the 10,000 ethnic Chantyal still speak the language. The ethnic Chantyal are divided into two groups, one in the northeast, in Myāgdī district, and the other in the southwest, in Bāgluñ district, the two areas being separated by a ridge. The Bāgluñ Chantyal had ceased to speak Chantyal by the nineteenth century. The Myāgdī Chantyal still speak the language in certain villages, e.g. Maṅgale Khānī, Dvārī, Ghyāms Kharka, Caurā Khānī, Gurjā Khānī, Kuhine Khānī, Thārā Khānī, Pātīle Kharka, Mālāmpār and Malkābāñ, as far as the Rāhughāṭ Kholā.

Ghale. Ghale is a Tibeto-Burman language which may, in fact, not be Tamangic, but may phylogenetically constitute a group on its own within the Tibeto-Burman language family. The number of Ghale speakers was estimated at 12,000 in 1975. The language is spoken in the northern portion of Gorkhā district, where there are 33 Ghale villages and hamlets, and in an adjacent portion of Dhādiñ district. The main Ghale speech community lies in the area surrounding and north of the town of Bārpāk, which has about 650 houses. Traditionally, the Ghale have been ethnically classed with the Gurung, with whom they may intermarry. The designation ‘Ghale Gurung’ is even heard, though others repudiate that they are Gurung. The inaccessibility of the area has protected the language thus far. Yet even in this remote northern part of Gorkhā district, language death is inevitable, given the present pace of linguistic assimilation to Nepali in Nepal.

10. Endangered Tibeto-Burman Languages of the Western Indian and Pakistan Himalayas

West Himalayish. The ten West Himalayish languages are spoken in scattered enclaves in the western Indian Himalayas, between Jammu and Kashmir in the west-northwest and the modern state of Nepal in the east-southeast. Rangkas was recorded at the beginning of the 20th century, but is now extinct. Zhangzhung went extinct even earlier,

and used to be spoken to the north of the Himalayas across a large portion of western Tibet until it was wiped out by Tibetan towards the end of the first millennium AD. All surviving West Himalayish languages are severely endangered.

The three languages Manchad, Tinan and Bunan are spoken in Lahul district in what today is the Indian state or Himachal Pradesh. Manchad is spoken along the Candra or Upper Chenab river by approximately 15,000 people who have adopted the Hindu religion, and whose language has adopted many Indic loanwords. The term 'Manchad' means 'lower valley' in the local Tibetan dialect. The language has also been called 'Paṭanī' or 'Paṭṭanī' after the Paṭan or Paṭṭan valley, where it is spoken from Tandi as far upstream as Thirrot. Tinan is spoken on the Chenab immediately downstream from the Manchad area, from Tandi as far downstream as Sissu Nullah, particularly in the area known as Gondhla. The 1981 census counted 1,833 speakers of Tinan. Bunan is spoken in the Gahar or Gahr valley which covers both banks of the Bhāgā river from Tandi northeast to Kyelong. The Bhāgā is a tributary emptying into the Chenab from the north. The 1981 census enumerated 3,581 speakers of Bunan.

Kanashi is a special language within this branch of the family, spoken in just the one village of Malāṇa near Kulu in Kulu district of Himachal Pradesh. Kinnauri is spoken in Kinnaur district of Himachal Pradesh. It is unknown what percentage of the 59,154 people enumerated in the 1981 census for Kinnaur district actually still spoke the language. Rangpo or Rongpo is spoken along the northeastern fringe of Garhwal, confined to the area of the Nīṭī and Māṇā valleys in Jośīmath subdivision of Cāmoli district, north of Badrināth along the upper course of the Alaknandā river and around the lower course of the Dhaulī-Gaṅgā river above its confluence with the Alaknandā at Jośīmath. There are an estimated 12,000 remaining speakers of Rangpo. Darma and Byangsi are spoken further west in the Indian-Nepalese borderlands, straddling the Indian districts of Almodā and Pithaurāgadh in the area that used to be known as Kumaon as well as in the Nepali district of Dārculā. Darma is spoken in the uppermost portion of the Darmā valley, drained by the river Dhaulī and bounded on the north by Tibet. At the beginning of the 20th century, 1,761 speakers of the language were counted. No more recent figure is available. Immediately to the east of the Darmā valley lies the Mahākālī river valley, which is the home to the Byangsi. The 1991 census counted 1,314 Byangsi in Nepal. A form of Byangsi was recorded by Sten Konow under the name 'Chaudāngsī'.

Central Bodish languages. Europeans call German and English 'languages', rather than treating them respectively as a hinterland

dialect and an insular dialect of Dutch. However, Westerners tend to treat languages in other parts of the world as 'dialects' which are just as distinct from each other phonetically, phonologically, morphologically and lexically as German and English are from Dutch. The same applies to what are generally referred to in the West as 'Tibetan dialects'. The Standard or Central dialect of Tibetan, spoken in Lhasa, is not an endangered language, even though the language is undergoing heavy lexical and even grammatical influence from Mandarin, the language of the occupying forces. Kham and 'Amdo Tibetan also still represent lively language communities. However, many other 'Tibetan dialects' are endangered. Linguistically, it is more correct to refer to these languages as Central Bodish languages, and not as 'Tibetan dialects'. These include the many diverse languages spoken in the western extremity of Tibet, parts of which now lie in the modern states of Pakistan and India, as well as the languages spoke in the sBas-yul 'hidden lands', as the high alpine valleys on the southern flank of the Himalayas have been referred to from the Tibetan perspective.

The Central Bodish languages of western Tibet are in many respects the most conservative of the Tibetan languages and also amongst the most endangered. They are spoken in the parts of Tibet which are now located in the modern states of Pakistan and India, in the areas of sBal-ti 'Balti', Bu-rig 'B'urik' or 'Purik', La-dwags 'Lada' of 'Ladakh', sBi-ti 'Biti' or 'Spiti', and Zangs-dkar 'Z'angkar'. In the western Indian Himalayas, the languages of the 'hidden lands' include Jād, spoken mainly in Bagorā village, just 17 km south of Uttarkāśī on the banks of the Bhāgīrathī, where the Jād were resettled after the Indo-Chinese conflict of 1962. Some settlements are also found in Puroḷā, Rājgaḍhī, and Bhaṭvārī sub-divisions. Their original homes lay on the Indo-Tibetan border.

In Nepal, several Central Bodish languages are spoken in enclaves on the southern slopes of the Himalayas which show characteristics divergent from Central Tibetan proper. These include the dialects spoken by the Limirong Tibetans in the extreme northwest of Karnālī zone in the district of Humlā, the Tibetans of Mugu and the Karmarong Tibetans in northwestern Nepal, the dialect of Dol-po 'D'ölpo', the dialect of Mustang known as 'Loke, the dialect of the Nupri or *Lārkyā Bhoṭe* below Manāslu Himāl in Gorkhā district, the dialect of the Tsum in a few villages along a tributary of the Buḍhī Gaṇḍakī known as the Shar, the community of *Khaccaḍ Bhoṭe* 'mule Tibetans' north of Dhāibuñ and northeast of Nuvākoṭ, the 'Langthang Tibetans south of the 'Langthang Himāl and north of Jugal Himāl and Gosāimkuṇḍ, the well-known Sherpa in the mountains

surrounding Mt. Everest and in Solu Khumbu, and a small population living at Ha-lung, known in Nepali as Olāncuī Golā, and at Tāpke Golā and Thudam in the northeastern extremity of Nepal around the headwaters of the Tamor.

In Bhutan, three endangered Central Bodish language communities account for nearly 15,000 people. The Brokpas of Sāphu Geo in 'Wangdi Phodr'a district in the north of the Black Mountains speak a dialect called Lakha 'language of the mountain passes' or Tshangkha. There are an estimated 8,000 speakers. Brokkat is a Central Bodish language spoken by the Brokpa community of 300 speakers at Dur in Bumthang district in central Bhutan. A Central Bodish language is spoken by approximately 5,000 people at Mera and Sakteng in eastern Bhutan. A number of Tibetan enclaves are also spoken in Arunachal Pradesh, south of the McMahon line on the Indian side of the Indo-Tibetan border.

Other Bodish languages. Jirel is a poorly documented Bodish language spoken by about 3,000 people in the Jirī and Sikrī valleys of Dolakhā district in northern central Nepal. The name *Jirel* is the Nepali adjectival form of the place name Jirī. Kāgate is spoken in the mountains between the Likhu and Khimtī rivers in the northeastern part of Rāmechāp district by the *Kāgate Bhoṭe* 'paper Bhutiya' because their ancestors used to manufacture paper. The Kāgate call themselves 'Šyu:ba', which likewise signifies 'paper maker', and pass themselves off as 'Tamang' to outsiders. The number of speakers was estimated at about one thousand in 1974. There is another group of 'Sherpas', who are not recognised as Sherpas by the Sherpa proper, mentioned above. Whilst the Sherpas around Mt. Everest and in Solu Khumbu speak a Central Bodish language, the Sherpa of Yol-mo or 'Ölmo', an area known in Nepali as Helambū north of Sindhupālcok, speak a distinct Bodish language.

11. Endangered Indo-European Languages of South Asia

Indo-European languages are spoken throughout the north of the Indian subcontinent and on Ceylon. All of these are Indo-Iranian languages belonging to Iranian, Nuristani and Indo-Aryan branches. Nuristani sometimes still goes by the name 'Kafiri', and Indo-Aryan is sometimes still called 'Indic'.

Iranian languages. Older stages of Iranian, such as Avestan, Old and Middle Persian, Pehlevi, Parthian, Sogdian, Chorasmian, Bactrian, Sarmatian and Khotanese, have gone extinct or have effectively been superseded by later stages of Iranian. The modern languages

Persian or Fārsī, Darī, Tājikī, Kurdish, Baluchi or Balōčī, and Pashto or Pakhto are flourishing. Yet a number of Iranian languages are spoken only by small and dwindling language communities. Ossetian is spoken in the north-central Caucasus. Tātī is spoken in parts of Azerbaijan, and Āzarī, Tāleshī, Semnānī, Gīlakī and Māzanderānī are spoken in the southwestern Caspian littoral. Gurānī is spoken in several areas in the Zagros east of the Tigris, Zāzā or Dimli is spoken in eastern Turkey and western Iran. There is considerable dialectal heterogeneity in southwestern, southeastern and central Iran. Other endangered Iranian languages of eastern Afghanistan and neighbouring parts of Pakistan include Parācī, spoken in three valleys along the southern flank of the Hindu Kush, and Ōrmuḡī, spoken in the area around Barakī-Barak in Afghanistan and at Kāñīgrām in Pakistan. The archaic and highly endangered Pāmīr languages spoken by communities along the Āb-i Panja river in southern Tajikistan, in Badakhshan province of northeastern Afghanistan and neighbouring portions of Chinese Turkestan, include Śughnī, Rośanī, Bartangī, Rośorvī, Sariqōlī, Yāzghulāmī, Wakhī, Zēbākī, Sanglīcī and Ískāsmī. Closely related to Paśtō are Yidgha, spoken in the Lutkuh valley of Pakistan, and Munjī, spoken in the Munjān valley of northeastern Afghanistan. Yaghnōbī is still spoken by a small community in an alpine valley around the headwaters of the Yaghnōb in Tajikistan. There are no reliable up-to-date statistics for the precise numbers of speakers of these endangered language communities.

Nuristani languages. All Nuristani languages were already faced with imminent extinction before Afghanistan was turned into a war zone by the Soviet Union under Brezhnev and later by the Taliban and warring Islamists from countries like Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. The Nuristani languages are spoken by tribesmen whose ancient Indo-Aryan ancestors took refuge in the inaccessible mountain valleys of the Hindu Kush in Nuristan. These tribes have no literary tradition of their own and were collectively called *Kāfirī* ‘infidels’ until they were converted to Islam after Nuristan was conquered by the Afghans in 1896. The Nuristani languages from north to south are Kati, Prasun, Waigali, Ashkun, Gambiri and Zemiaki. Kati, formerly also known as Bashgali, is perhaps still spoken by about 20,000 speakers. All the other Nuristani language communities are much smaller than Kati. Prasun, the most aberrant of the Nuristani languages, is spoken in six villages in the high alpine valley along the headwaters of the Peč, wedged in between the Kati speaking areas in the Ktiwī valley and the upper Bashgal valley. Waigali is spoken in the Waigal valley, a northern tributary of the Peč. Gambiri or Tregāmī ‘three villages dialect’ is spoken not only at Gambīr, Kaḡār

and in the Tregām valley southeast of lower Waigal in the direction of the Kunar river. The Ashkun speaking area lies between the Peč and the Alingar and in valleys along the upper drainage of these two rivers and their minor tributaries. Zemiaki, first identified as a sixth quite distinct Nuristani language by Edelman and Grünberg-Cvetinovič in 1999, is spoken in a small enclave south of the Peč river, south of the Waigali area but immediately surrounded on all sides by Dardic language communities. The Nuristani languages are not only highly important from the point of view of understanding the population prehistory of South and Central Asia, they exhibit numerous peculiar typological features of great interest to cognitive linguistics.

Dardic languages. The most endangered Indo-Aryan languages are the heterogeneous and archaic Dardic languages, spoken in small alpine communities. The five clusters of Dardic languages are the *Šiṇā* cluster, the *Kōhistānī* cluster, the Kunar group, the *Citrāl* group and *Paśāī*. *Šiṇā* and Kashmiri are not themselves endangered, but other languages of the *Šiṇā* group are threatened with extinction. These are the archaic *Phalūṛa* and *Sāwī* dialects, related to *Šiṇā*, and the endangered *Ḍumākī* language is of great historical importance because it is believed to be related to the language of the gypsies. *Ḍumākī* is spoken by a less than 600 elderly *Ḍoma* in Hunza, who traditionally belong to the lowly minstrel and blacksmith castes in what is now northern Pakistan. The *Kōhistānī* languages are *Baśkarīk*, *Torwālī*, *Maiyām*, *Tirāhī*, and the language of *Woṭapūr* and *Kaṭārqaḷā*. *Baśkarīk* or *Gāwrī* is spoken around the headwaters of the *Swāt* and in the *Panjkora* valley. *Torwālī* is spoken in the upper *Swāt* valley. *Maiyām* is spoken between *Šiṇā* and Pashto speaking territory. *Tirāhī* is spoken in a few villages southeast of *Jalalabad* in eastern Afghanistan. The language of *Woṭapūr* and *Kaṭārqaḷā* is spoken in a few villages on the *Peč* in eastern Afghanistan. The *Citrāl* languages are *Khowār* and *Kalaṣa*. *Khowār*, the language of the *Khō* tribe, is the main language of the great *Citrāl* valley. *Kalaṣa* is spoken by members of the *Kalaṣ* tribe in the western side valleys of southern *Citrāl*. The nearly extinct languages of the Kunar group are spoken by small communities found around the confluence of *Citrāl* and the *Bashgal*, i.e. *Damēlī*, *Gawar-Bātī*, *Ningalāmī* and *Šumāstī*. *Gawar-Bātī* or *Narisātī* is spoken in a few villages on the Kunar river. A divergent language is or used to be spoken by a dwindling number of speakers at *Ningalām* on the *Peč*. Another divergent but related language is or used to be spoken at *Šumāst*. *Damēlī* is likewise spoken in just one village. The *Paśāī* language is spoken in lower Kunar and in *Laghmān* and was once spoken over a larger area than it is today.

Western Pahāḍī and Central Pahāḍī. The three branches of Indo-Aryan known as Western Pahāḍī, literally ‘montane’, Central Pahāḍī and Eastern Pahāḍī do not together form a linguistic taxon, as the nomenclature misleadingly suggests, but merely share the feature of designating groups of alpine language communities. Western Pahāḍī languages are spoken from the western portion of Dehrā Dūn district in Uttar Pradesh, through Himachal Pradesh all the way west into Jammu and Kashmir. The 1961 census of India distinguished over sixty highly divergent and poorly documented Western Pahāḍī languages known by a welter of local dialect names, including Baṅgāṇī, Jaunsarī, Sirmauḍī, Baghāṭī, Mahāsuī (formerly known as Kiūṅṭhalī), Haṅḍūrī, Kuluī, Maṅḍeālī in the area formerly known as *Maṅḍe Rājya*, Cameālī in the area once known as in *Cambā-Rājya*, Kāṅḍī, Bharmaurī (or Gāḍī), Curāhī, Paṅgvālī, Bhadravāhī, Bhalesī, Khaśālī and Pāḍrī. The Central Pahāḍī languages are the Garhwali and Kumaoni dialects (*Gadhvālī* and *Kumāunī*), spoken in Garhwal and Kumaon, together forming an area known today as Uttarākhaṅḍ. All the Western and Central Pahāḍī languages are endangered because these areas are increasingly being linguistically being assimilated by larger language communities, e.g. Urdu, Panjabi, Hindi. Eastern Pahāḍī is represented by the successful and growing Nepali language. The success and spread of Nepali not only has conferred upon the language the dubious honour of being a ‘killer language’ throughout the Nepal, Sikkim and parts of Bhutan, but ironically also of threatening the archaic and divergent western dialects of Nepali itself.

Indo-Aryan languages with possible allophylian substrate. The Tharu in the Terai speak Indo-Aryan dialects collectively known as *Thāruvānī*, which is not a language as such but a cover term for various Terai dialects of Bhojpuri, Maithili and especially Awadhi as spoken by ethnic Tharu. The original pre-Indo-Aryan languages spoken by the Tharu are extinct, but survive in the form of substrate words used within households, so that doublets exist for certain words. For example, in Citvan Thāru alongside Indo-Aryan *yāṅkhī* ‘eye’ there exists a form *tēḍ* ‘eye’, reminiscent of the Manchad form *tira* ‘eye’. These original Tharu substrate words are being lost because not every household preserves them. The differences between the Tharuwani dialects and the local Indo-Aryan languages spoken by the high castes have never been properly or systematically studied and documented. Varieties of Tharuwani have been investigated by Christian missionaries, but they have kept their linguistic findings to themselves and used their knowledge mainly for the production of hymnals and Christian literature. As the Tharu are being continu-

ously assimilated into mainstream culture, the vestiges of their ancestral language and the peculiar features of Tharuwani are being lost through increasing linguistic assimilation to the mainstream Awadhi, Maithili, Bhojpuri and Nepali language communities.

Three other Indo-Aryan languages of Nepal are in the throes of death. Most speakers of the Danuwar, Darai and Majhi or Bote language communities have already assimilated linguistically and culturally to modern Nepali mainstream culture. The main Darai settlements are in Citvan, Tanahū, Gorkhā, Navalparāsī and Pālpā districts. According to the 1991 census data on language retention, only 6,520 out of 10,759 ethnic Darai or less than two thirds of the Darai still speak the Darai language, which exhibits biactantial verbal morphology. The Danuwar or *Danuvār* are native to Sindhulī and Udaypur districts in the Inner Terai, but Danuwar are also settled in the hills of Kābhrepālañcok and Sindhupālcok districts and in the Terai districts of Sarlāhī, Mahottarī, Dhanuṣā and Sirāhā. According to the 1991 census data on language retention, only 23,721 out of 50,574 ethnic Danuwar or roughly just half of the Danuwar still speak the Danuwar language. The group known as Majhi or Bote live along the Nārāyaṇī or Saptagaṇḍakī river and its tributaries in the districts of Bāgluṅ, Parvat, Syānjā, Gulmī, Pālpā, Kāskī, Gorkhā, Tanahū, Parsā, Citvan and Navalparāsī as well as in the Terai and hills of the districts of Rāmechāp, Sindhulī, Sindhupālcok, Kābhrepālañcok and Dhanuṣā. The 1991 census data on language retention show that only 11,322 out of 55,050 ethnic Majhi or just one fifth of the Majhi still speak the Majhi language.

A number of other inadequately documented Indo-Aryan languages spoken in the hills of Nepal, the Nepalese Terai and Manipur have now nearly vanished. The *Kumāle* or *Kumhāle* language is spoken by a potter's caste in the central Terai and adjacent central hills. The total number of speakers was estimated at 3,500 in the early 1950s, but only 1,413 speakers of the language were counted in the 1991 census. The original language of the Bāntar in the eastern Terai, esp. Morañ district, may have already vanished. A dwindling number of *Ganagāṭm* in eastern Bihar, the eastern Nepalese Terai and West Bengal still speak Aṅgikā. In Manipur, the Indo-Aryan language known as Bishnupriya Manipuri or *Viṣṇuprīya Maṇipurī*, served as an Indo-Aryan contact language and *lingua franca* between the thirteenth and nineteenth centuries, which had undergone influence of the Meithei language native to the region. In 1964, there were still reportedly 114 speakers of Bishnupriya Manipuri.

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