

Manuel Widmer  
**A Grammar of Bunan**

# **Mouton Grammar Library**

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Manuel Widmer

# **A Grammar of Bunan**

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For my family



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# List of abbreviations

1	first person
2	second person
3	third person
ABL	ablative
ABS	absolutive
ACT	active participle
ADD	additive
ADDINV	address inversion
ADESS	adessive
ALL	allative
ALLO	allophoric
ANTER	anterior
APP	approximative
APPR	apprehensive future tense
ASS	assertive
ASSER	assertive future tense
ATT	attributive copula
AUX	auxiliary
AVS	adversative
CAUS	causal
CIRCUM	circumstantial
CNS	consent
COM	comitative
CON	conjunction
COND	conditional
CONSEC	consecutive
CONSUL	consultative mood
DAT	dative
DEF	definite
DEM	demonstrative pronoun
DETR	detransitivizing
DIM	diminutive
DIR	direct evidence
DU	dual
EGO	egophoric
EMPH	emphatic
ENR	enumerative
EQ	equative copula
ERG	ergative
EVOC	evocative
EX	existential copula
EXCL	exclusive
F	feminine
FIN	finite
FOC	focus
FUT	future tense
GEN	genitive

GENER	generic evidence
HON	honorific
HS	hearsay
HUM	human
ICVB	imperfective converb
IMMED	immediate
IMP	imperative mood
INCL	inclusive
INDEF	indefinite
INF	infinitive
INFER	inferential evidence
INTESS	interesive
INTR	intransitive conjugation
intr.	intransitive
LOC	locative
M	masculine
MID	middle conjugation
MOD	modifier marker
NEG	negation
NFIN	nonfinite
NZR	nominalizer
ONOM	onomatopoetic expression
PCVB	perfective converb
PL	plural
POSS	possessive copula
POT	potential mood
PROHIB	prohibitive mood
PRS	present tense
PST	past tense
PTB	Proto-Tibeto-Burman
PUNCT	punctual
Q	question
QUE	querying
REL	relativizer
REPUD	repudiative mood
RESUL	resultative
SG	singular
SIMUL	simultaneous
SEMBL	semblative
STAT	stative
SUG	suggestive
SUP	supine
T	functionally opaque derivational suffix <i>-t</i>
TERM	terminative
TOP	topic
TR	transitive conjugation
tr.	transitive
UND	(egophoric) undergoer
VOL	volitive

VRB	verbalizing
WT	Written Tibetan
(f)	female
(h)	honorific
(m)	male
*	reconstructed form
**	ungrammatical form / ungrammatical construal
?	form with debatable grammatical status
/.../	phonological representation
[...]	phonetic representation
<...>	orthographic representation

# 1 Preliminaries

## 1.1 Introduction

Bunan is a Tibeto-Burman minority language of India. The language is spoken by between 3,500 and 4,000 speakers in Lahaul, the northernmost region of the state Himachal Pradesh. The traditional homeland of the Bunan speaking community is the Gahr Valley, which lies in the center of Lahaul at an average altitude of approximately 3,000 meters above sea level. Within the Tibeto-Burman language family, Bunan is commonly assigned to the West Himalayish branch, which consists of a group of fourteen languages that are spoken in the states of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

This book represents the most comprehensive description of the phonology and grammar of Bunan that is available to date. The material on which this description is based was gathered in Himachal Pradesh during four fieldtrips between 2010 and 2013. The data corpus primarily consists of recordings of elicitation sessions, everyday conversations, and traditional as well as autobiographical stories. To a lesser extent, it also comprises materials that were produced by members of the Bunan speaking community themselves.

The present chapter is intended to provide some background information about the language and its speakers. Section 1.2 gives an overview of the geography and history of Lahaul and also provides information about the history of the Bunan speaking community. Section 1.3 lists previous studies of the lexicon and grammar of Bunan. Section 1.4 discusses the genetic position of Bunan within the West Himalayish subgroup. Section 1.5 describes the data corpus on which this book is based and the circumstances under which the data were collected. Section 1.6 accounts for the theoretical orientation of this grammar.

## 1.2 Background information

### 1.2.1 The geographical setting

Bunan is a Tibeto-Burman minority language of the North Indian Himalayas. The traditional homeland of the Bunan speaking community lies in the region of Lahaul in the mountainous north of the Indian state Himachal Pradesh. There, the language is spoken in an area known as the Gahr Valley, which lies at an altitude of approximately 3,000 meters above sea level. The valley, located in the center of Lahaul, stretches for about five kilometers along the lower course of the Bhaga river from west to east and borders on the Tod Valley in the east and on the Pattan Valley and Tinan Valley in the west.

Lahaul is separated from the surrounding areas by high mountain ranges. In historical times, the area could only be accessed by crossing one of several mountain passes that connect Lahaul with the outside world. The most important of these passes are the Rohtang La (3,979 m), which connects Lahaul with the Kullu Valley in the south, the Kunzum La (4,590 m), which links Lahaul to the area of Spiti in the east, and the Baralacha La (4,890 m), which leads to the area of Ladakh in the north. In the West, Lahaul is not bounded by mountains, as the Chenab River flows off in this direction. The Chenab River has never connected Lahaul to the outside world, however, as the river flows through a steep and narrow mountain valley that remains inaccessible until it reaches the foothills of the North Indian Himalayas some 200 kilometers to the west of Lahaul.

The climate of Lahaul is relatively dry, as the mountain ranges to the south keep out the monsoon rains in the summer. However, unlike Spiti and Ladakh, the area experiences periodic rainfall throughout the year, which allows for the cultivation of various sorts of field crops. From late autumn to late spring, Lahaul is usually cut off from neighboring areas, as snowfall makes it impossible to cross the surrounding mountain ranges. During that time of the year, the government of Himachal Pradesh runs a helicopter service between Kullu and a number of major villages in Lahaul. A tunnel connecting Lahaul to the Kullu Valley is currently under construction. The building project is supposed to be completed by 2019 and will render Lahaul accessible to road traffic throughout the year.

In the following, I provide a number of maps that illustrate the geographical position of the Gahr Valley and its main town Keylong in the context of South Asia (Figure 1), Himachal Pradesh (Figure 2), and Lahaul (Figure 3). Figure 4 gives an overview of the major villages and important monasteries of the Gahr Valley.<sup>1</sup> Note that all of the following maps are north-oriented.

---

<sup>1</sup> All maps were created with the software QGIS using the OpenLayers plugin in combination with Google Satellite maps.

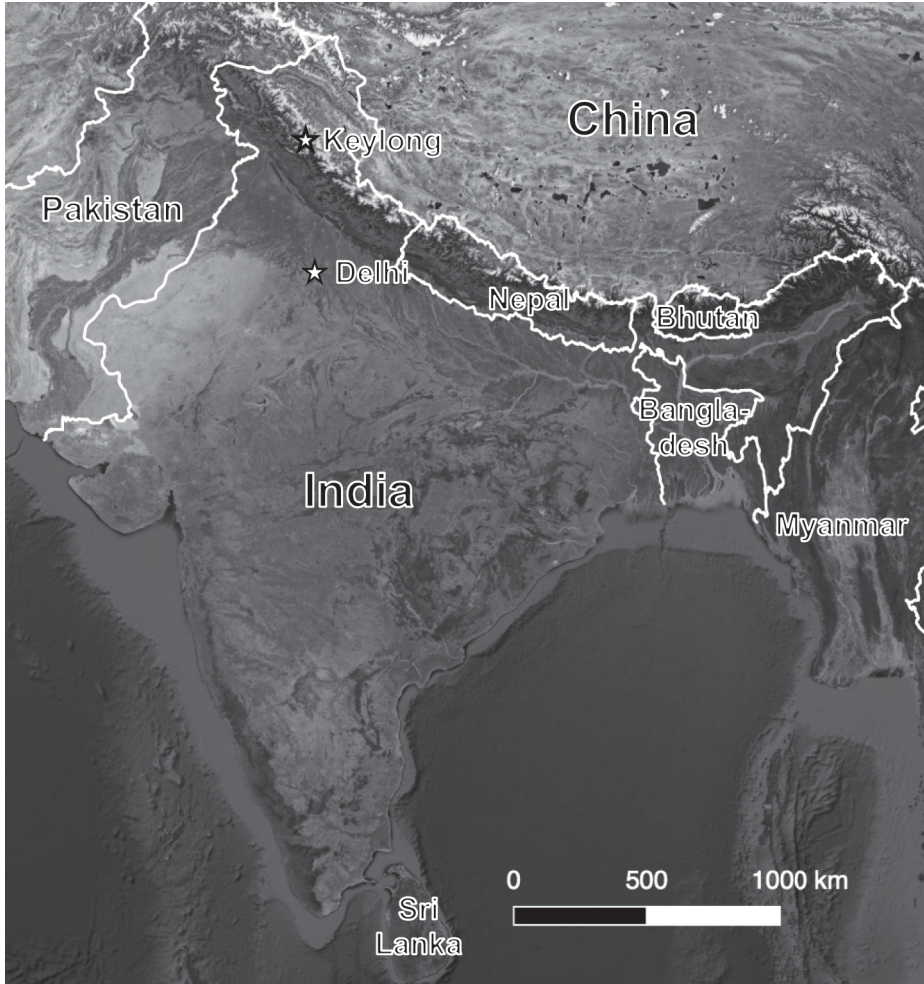


Figure 1: Map of India

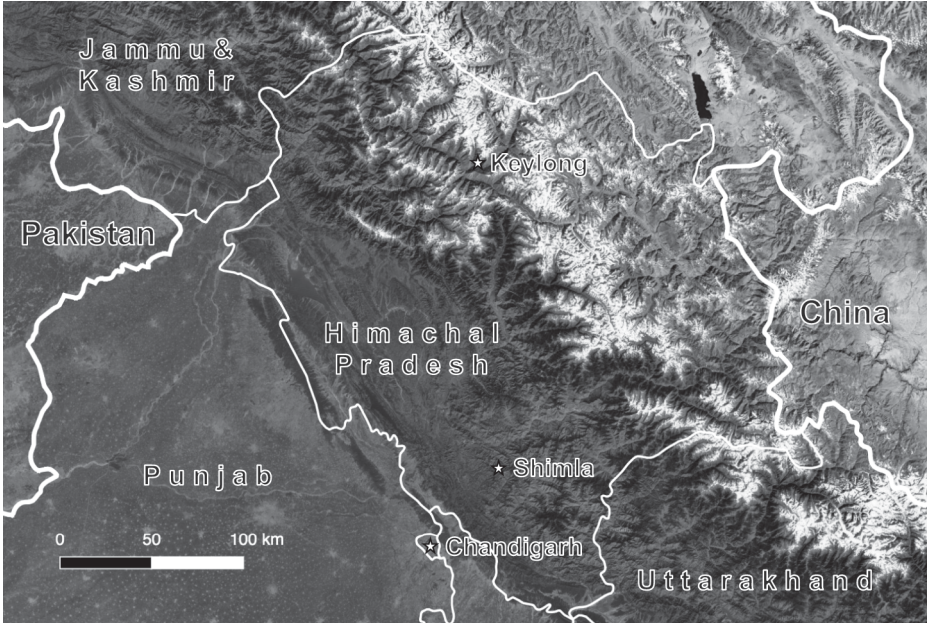


Figure 2: Map of Himachal Pradesh and surrounding areas.

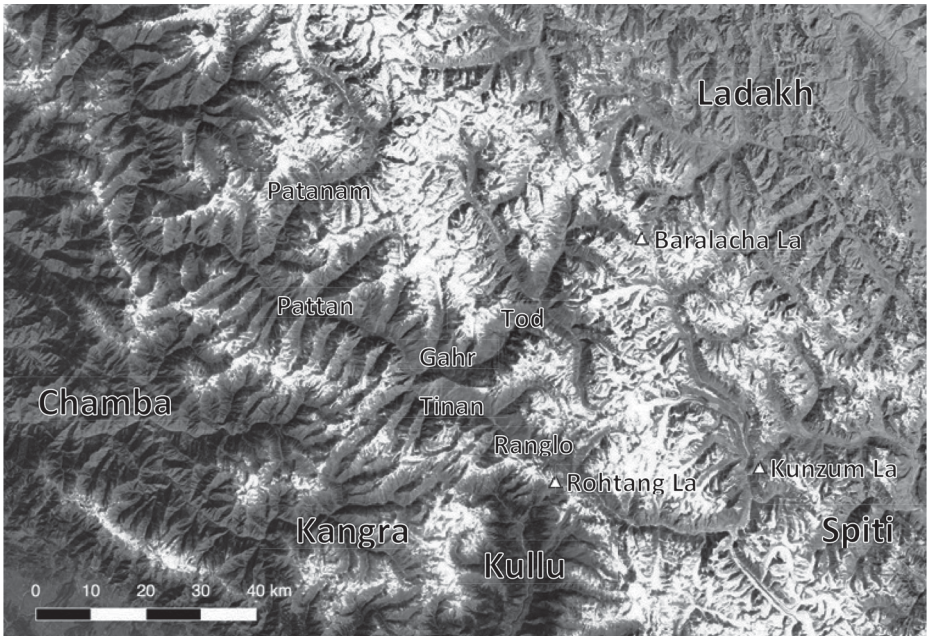


Figure 3: Map of Lahaul showing major valleys, passes, and surrounding areas.



**Figure 4:** Map of the Gahr Valley showing major villages and monasteries (*gompas*).

1 <i>gwadzan</i>	8 <i>raŋkelaŋ</i>	15 <i>katɕaraŋ</i>
2 <i>bilin</i>	9 <i>pasparak</i>	16 <i>mangun</i>
3 <i>kardaŋ</i>	10 <i>kuskjar</i>	17 <i>pjaso</i>
4 <i>kardaŋ gomp</i>	11 <i>jurnat</i>	18 <i>kjor</i>
5 <i>jokelaŋ</i>	12 <i>laptɕaŋ</i>	19 <i>tiŋrik</i>
6 <i>ɕaɕur gomp</i>	13 <i>gumlin</i>	20 <i>pjukar</i>
7 <i>barbok</i>	14 <i>tɕ<sup>h</sup>eliŋ</i>	

Figure 5 through Figure 9 were taken by the author while doing fieldwork in North India and give an impression of the homeland and the culture of the Bunan speaking community.



**Figure 5:** View of the Gahr Valley from Shashur Monastery in southwesterly direction.



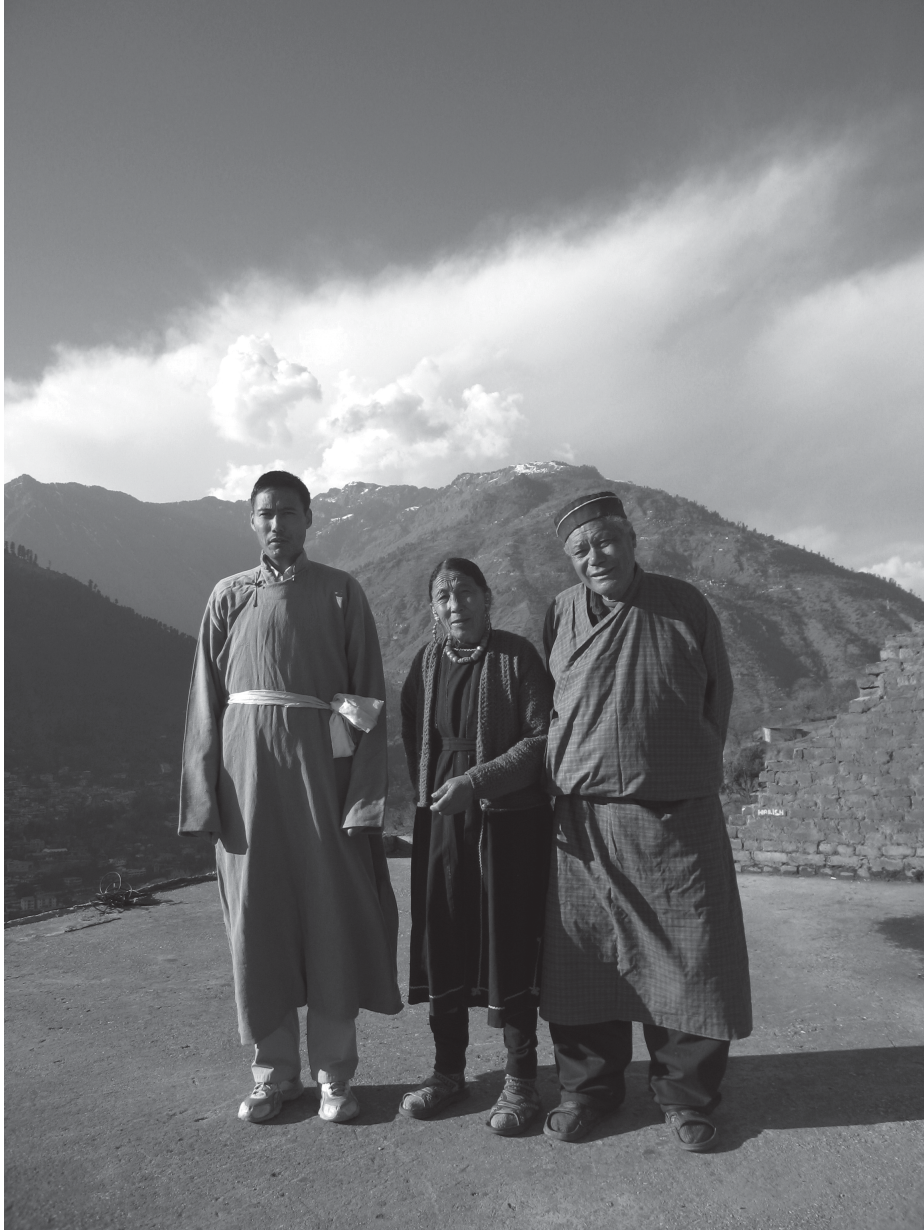
**Figure 6:** View of the Gahr Valley from Kardang Monastery in northeasterly direction.



**Figure 7:** A traditional house in Lapchang.



**Figure 8:** A monk performing a mask dance at the annual Tshechu festival.



**Figure 9:** Tshering Dorje, Tshetan Drolma, and Sonam Angrup (from right to left) wearing traditional Lahauli garments.

## 1.2.2 Lahaul through the centuries

### 1.2.2.1 Political situation

Despite its remoteness, Lahaul has had strong political ties to its surrounding areas for centuries. Due to its intermediate geographical position between Kullu, Spiti, and Ladakh, the region was and still is an area of great strategic importance, as Lahaul represents the most direct connection between the western Himalayan foothills and the Upper Indus Valley. Unfortunately, our knowledge of the early history of Lahaul and the western Himalayas in general is scant. The earliest major political power in the western Himalayas was the kingdom of Zhangzhung, whose central regions lay in what is nowadays the southwestern part of the Tibet Autonomous Region.<sup>2</sup> Little is known about this kingdom, which was conquered in the mid-seventh century AD by the emerging Tibetan empire (van Driem 2001: 121–122). It is conceivable that Lahaul was a part of Zhangzhung. This seems especially plausible given the fact that Bunan belongs to the eastern branch of West Himalayish (see Section 1.4.2 below), which seems to be closely affiliated with the language of the kingdom of Zhangzhung (see Section 1.4.3 below). However, given the fact that written historical sources are scarce and of questionable reliability, any account of the early history of Lahaul must remain speculative (see Hutchinson & Vogel 1933: 476–477).

After the downfall of the Tibetan empire in the ninth century, Lahaul came to lie at the intersection of the spheres of influence of the kingdoms of Kullu and Ladakh. According to Hutchinson and Vogel (1933: 478–488), the few available historical sources indicate that the two kingdoms came into recurring conflicts with each other. As Lahaul represents the most direct geographical connection between Kullu and Ladakh, both kingdoms must have striven to bring the region under their direct control. However, as noted in the previous section, Lahaul is a remote area that is difficult to access from all directions. During the wintery half of the year, Lahaul is completely cut off from the outside world. We may thus assume that neither Ladakh nor Kullu ever succeeded in gaining complete control over the region for a longer period of time (see Moorcroft's note below). Ladakh seems to have been the dominant political power in Lahaul between the eleventh and sixteenth century, whereas Kullu gained supremacy over Lahaul from the seventeenth century onwards (Hutchinson & Vogel 1933: 480).

The watchtower at Gondhla in the lower Chandra Valley bears witness to this turbulent chapter of the history of Lahaul. The impressive building was built by Raja Man Singh of Kullu around 1700 AD to control access to the Chandra Valley and the Rohtang La (Hutchinson & Vogel 1933: 478). Although it is likely that Lahaul was under foreign hegemony for centuries, one may assume that the area nonetheless enjoyed a considerable degree of political autonomy under the rule of petty chiefs, so

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<sup>2</sup> See Denwood (2008) for a more elaborate account of the political situation in the western Himalayas in the mid-seventh century.

called *thākur*.<sup>3</sup> These local rulers usually were on good terms with the royal dynasties of the surrounding kingdoms. However, allegiance to the royal dynasties of Kullu and Ladakh represented a potential risk for these local rulers as well, as the example of the *thākur* dynasty of Barbog illustrates. The *thākur* of Barbog had been acting as the representatives of the kings of Ladakh in Lahaul for several centuries. When Lahaul eventually became part of Kullu in the seventeenth century, they were deprived of all their political power by the Raja of Kullu (Francke 1926: 221–222).

The first western account of the political situation in Lahaul was provided by the Jesuit missionary António de Andrade. In November 1631, de Andrade travelled through Lahaul on his way from Leh to Kullu. He called the area *Carja*, which is a transcription of WT *gar zha*, the Tibetan name for Lahaul, and stated that it was part of the kingdom of Kullu (Wessels [1924] 1997: 112–116). Almost two centuries later, the English explorer William Moorcroft (1841: 198–199) travelled through the area in the summer of 1820. He noted that the “peasantry of Lahoul hold their lands of the Raja of Kulu, except at four villages, Barkalanak and three others, which we passed on our way to Tandi, and which, whilst they acknowledge military fealty to the Raj of Kulu, pay rent to the state of Ladakh.” Moorcroft’s notes corroborate the assumption that the political power mainly lay in the hands of the king of Kullu at the beginning of the nineteenth century, although the kingdom of Ladakh still seems to have had some sort of influence in the area.

In 1840, the kingdom of Kullu was conquered by the expanding Sikh Empire, and Lahaul, which was a part of Kullu at that time, suffered the same fate (Hutchinson & Vogel 1933: 482). Little is known about the invasion of the Sikhs in Lahaul. An eyewitness report which was recorded by Francke (1926: 222–223) suggests that the new rulers imposed a harsh regime on the inhabitants. However, the control of the Sikh Empire over Lahaul only lasted for six years, as Kullu and its surrounding areas became part of the British Empire in 1846 (Hutchinson & Vogel 1933: 473). With India’s independence in 1947, Lahaul came under the control of the Indian central government, and since 1971 the regions of Lahaul and Spiti have formed the northernmost district of the then formed Indian state of Himachal Pradesh (Charak 1979: 287–298).

### 1.2.2.2 Economic situation

Until the mid-nineteenth century, the inhabitants of Lahaul mainly subsisted on agriculture and livestock breeding. A complex system of irrigation channels made it possible to grow a small number of crops on terraced fields. The most common foodstuffs

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<sup>3</sup> In historical times, there were three *thākur* dynasties in Lahaul: the chiefs of Kolong (Tod Valley), the chiefs of Barbog (Gahr Valley), and the chiefs of Gondhla (Tinan Valley) (Francke 1926: 195–220). These three families still exist to the present day and, although they no longer have any political power, they still hold a prominent social position in the indigenous societies of Lahaul.

were buckwheat and barley, which could be grown throughout Lahaul. Wheat, which could only be cultivated in the Pattan Valley, was much rarer (Harcourt 1871: 179). Uncultivated land and mountain pastures served as grazing grounds for cows, yak, sheep, and goats (Diack [1897] 1994, 3: 47). In addition, the male population of Lahaul also engaged in the trade between Kullu and Ladakh (Moorcroft 1841: 198–199; Harcourt 1871: 243–244; Francke 1926: 221–224). Diack's ([1897] 1994, 3: 51–52) description of this trading activity is given in the following.

The people are not entirely dependent on their land for subsistence. It is estimated that one-third of the proprietors are traders first and agriculturists afterwards. They own ponies of the sturdy Láhuli breed, and employ them either in trade ventures of their own or to carry for hire the wares of Punjabi merchants engaged in the Central Asian trade. [...] The remaining two-thirds of the proprietors all possess sheep and goats, which are used as beasts of burden, and are in that way a source of income to their owners. And each of the poorer families deposes one or two of its members to Simla or Kúlu for the winter to make money by working as coolies, or by keeping *lurgi* shops. [...] Large number of Láhulis engage in this traffic [i.e., the trade between Kullu and Ladakh] both as traders and carriers. They purchase indigo, rice, piecegoods, and brass and copper vessels in Kúlu, and carry them on their ponies and on their sheep and goats, which are also used as beasts of burden, to Ladak and Tibet, where they exchange them for borax, wool, *pashm* [i.e., pashmina wool], and salt, which they bring back and sell in Kúlu. Less enterprising traders content themselves with importing rice from Kúlu and exchanging it with Tibetans in Láhul for double its weight of salt, which they take back to Kúlu and barter for double its weight of rice, thereby making a profit of 300 per cent on each venture. Wool is also brought by Tibetans to Láhul and bought by the Láhulis, who sell it at a profit of 40 to 50 per cent (including cost of carriage) in Kúlu.

Diack's account suggests that the trans-Himalayan trade route was an important source of income for Lahaul in the nineteenth century and that the inhabitants of the area maintained particularly strong economic relations with the valley of Kullu, where a considerable number of them used to spend the winter months. The 1891 Census reported that 5,725 Lahaulis spent the winter in Lahaul, whereas 866 Lahaulis (i.e., 13 % of the total population) were in Kullu at the same time (Diack [1897] 1994, 3: 24).<sup>4</sup> Although the literature does not mention this, it is likely that some inhabitants of Lahaul already owned real estate in the Kullu Valley at that time. Nowadays most families<sup>5</sup> from Lahaul own a house or at least a piece of land in Kullu, and many generate the major part of their income in Kullu, where they work in the agricultural, public, or service sector.

The trading activities that Diack described had likely been going on for a long time. The Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang (603–664), who travelled through the

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<sup>4</sup> Diack ([1897] 1994, 3: 24) also mentions that an unknown number of Lahaulis spent the winter in Ladakh and western Tibet. This implies that the percentage of the total population that did not spend the wintery half of the year in Lahaul may have been somewhat higher, possibly around 20 %.

<sup>5</sup> In this context, the term “family” is used in an “Indian sense” and refers to an extended family comprising all male descendants of a common male ancestor including their wives and unmarried children.

western Himalayas in the mid-seventh century AD, visited a North Indian kingdom *Qūlūduō*, which according to him lay in a remote and mountainous region. He mentioned two further kingdoms North of *Qūlūduō* 屈露多, which he called *Luòhùluó* 洛護羅 and *Mòluósuō* 秣羅娑, and noted that they could only be reached by undertaking an arduous journey through the mountains (Beal 1884: 177–178). Cunningham (1854: 4) identified *Qūlūduō* and *Mòluósuō* as Kullu and Ladakh, respectively,<sup>6</sup> while Beal (1884: 177) considered the name *Luòhùluó* to be phonetic transcription of the name “Lahaul”. Cunningham and Beal’s interpretations subsequently gained wide acceptance among scholars (see Francke 1908; Hutchinson & Vogel 1933; Uray 1990). If they are correct, this indicates that a trade route from Kullu to Ladakh through Lahaul may have existed by the middle of the first millennium AD.

The economic situation in Lahaul began to change radically towards the middle of the eighteenth century. This process was initiated by the invasion of the Sikhs in Kullu and surrounding territories in 1840, which seems to have obstructed the trade between Kullu and Ladakh (Francke 1926: 222–223). In 1846, economic circumstances changed again with the incorporation of Kullu and Lahaul into the British Empire. The colonial government built bridges and roads in the region, which facilitated travelling from Lahaul to neighboring areas (Diack [1897] 1994, 3: 51). At the same time, British officials expelled tax collectors from Ladakh, who kept visiting Lahaul until 1862 (Diack [1897] 1994, 3: 9). Hereby, they weakened the political and economic ties with Ladakh, which had existed for centuries. However, the event that may have had the most far-reaching consequences for everyday life in Lahaul took place in 1853, when the Moravian Church opened a missionary station in the Gahr Valley (Hutchinson & Vogel 1933: 482). The members of the mission introduced a number of agricultural, technological and institutional innovations in Lahaul that considerably raised the living standard of the indigenous population.<sup>7</sup> They brought new trees and crop plants (i.e., the Lombardy poplar, the willow tree, and the potato) as well as hitherto unknown technologies (i.e., use of iron ovens for heating and the technique of knitting) to Lahaul. In addition, they opened a missionary school in Keylong and thus provided access to formal education for the male population (Dorje & Tobdan 2008: 35–41).

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<sup>6</sup> Cunningham interpreted *Mòluósuō* as a phonetic transcription of the toponym *Mar po yul*, a Tibetan epithet for Ladakh. However, as Uray (1990: 1) pointed out, it is very unlikely that Tibetan was already spoken in Ladakh by the middle of the seventh century. Nonetheless, Uray accepted Cunningham’s theory, but claimed that *Mòluósuō* represented a more ancient name for Ladakh, which he reconstructed as *\*Mars ~ \*Mras*.

<sup>7</sup> The inhabitants of Lahaul quickly came to appreciate the advantages of the innovations introduced by the Moravians. This appreciation continues to the present day. The members of the Bunan speaking community are well aware that the missionaries considerably improved the standard of living in Lahaul and have kept their memory fondly alive.

The slow but steady transformation of the economic environment continued after India's independence in 1947. The new constitution of 1950 recognized socioeconomically disadvantaged communities throughout the country as "Scheduled Tribes" or "Scheduled Castes", which benefit from public development programs. All indigenous ethnolinguistic communities of Lahaul were classified either as Scheduled Tribes or Scheduled Castes, granting them generous financial support and privileged access to higher education. At the same time, the First Indo-Pakistani War (1947–1949) revealed the strategic importance of the western Himalayan areas. As a result, the Indian Government made great efforts to promote the economic development of the region in order to ensure the political loyalty of the indigenous population. Ongoing border disputes with Pakistan and China led the Indian Government to construct a mountain road between Kullu and Lahaul between 1963 and 1965. Ten years later, this road was extended as far as Leh, thus establishing a direct traffic connection between the Upper Beas Valley and the Upper Indus Valley. This project had a great impact on the everyday life of the population of Lahaul in general and the Bunan speaking community in the Gahr Valley in particular. The mountain road considerably facilitated travelling from Lahaul to Kullu and Ladakh and thus increased the residential mobility of the indigenous population. Furthermore, Keylong in the Gahr Valley became one of the major intermediate stations on the Manali-Leh-Highway. When the road from Keylong to Leh was opened for tourism in 1982, this gave rise to the development of a flourishing hotel industry in Keylong, which has led many local families to prosperity. The tourist sector will likely continue to thrive in the coming decades, when the Rohtang Tunnel will make Lahaul easily accessible from the Kullu Valley throughout the year.

The development of Lahaul as a tourist destination is surely a profitable business. However, it also poses a challenge to the indigenous population, as it will likely bring with it environmental problems such as water shortages, pollution, and the disfigurement of the natural landscape. At the same time, a massive and unregulated immigration of outsiders might lead to the disintegration of the traditional ethnolinguistic groups of Lahaul in the long term. We may only hope that the political and economic elite of Lahaul are aware of these risks and will opt for a sustainable economic development of their traditional homeland.

### 1.2.2.3 Ethnolinguistic situation

Lahaul is an area of extraordinary linguistic diversity. In historical times, the area was home to six different language communities. Table 1 gives an overview of the indigenous ethnolinguistic groups of Lahaul.

**Table 1:** Indigenous ethnolinguistic groups of Lahaul.

Ethnicity	Area of settlement	Population*
Pattani	Pattan Valley	15,000–20,000
Gahri	Gahr Valley	3,500–4,000
Tibetan	Tod Valley, Ranglo Valley, Patanam Valley	3,500–4,000 (?)
Tinani	Tinan Valley	1,833
Chanal	Pattan Valley	1,286
Lohar	throughout Lahaul	872

\* The population numbers for the ethnicities of the Pattani, Gahri, and Tinani are taken from van Driem (2001: 935–938), who cites the 1981 Census of India. The population number for the Tibetan ethnicity is a personal guess based on a number provided by the *Ethnologue* (Lewis et al. 2014; see below). The population numbers for the Chanal and Lohar ethnicities are taken from the 2001 Census of India.

The inhabitants of the Pattan Valley constitute the largest ethnolinguistic community of Lahaul. In the literature, there are two concurrent designations for these people: “Pattani” and “Manchadpa”. Pattani seems to be an Indo-Aryan exonym with an unclear etymology, whereas Manchadpa is a Tibetan exonym that means ‘lowlander’ (WT *man chad* ‘lower area’). The Pattani speak a West Himalayish language that is known as “Pattani” or “Manchad”. As the latter designation is more established in the literature, I shall refer to the language as Manchad in the following. Manchad is closely affiliated with the language spoken in the Tinan Valley but only distantly related to Bunan (see Section 1.4.2 below). Francke (1917: 137) stated that the language contains a considerable number of Indo-Aryan and Tibetan loanwords, which suggests that its speakers have been in longstanding contact with both Indo-Aryan and Tibetan communities. This assumption is plausible given the fact that the population of the lower Pattan Valley adheres to Hinduism, whereas the Manchad speakers in the upper Pattan Valley follow Tibetan Buddhism.

The Gahri or Bunanpa represent the second largest ethnolinguistic community of Lahaul. I restrict myself to a brief discussion of the ethnonyms “Gahri” and “Bunan” at this point, as the Bunan speaking community is introduced in more detail in Section 1.2.3 below. The origin and etymology of the name “Gahri” are obscure. The term is used in the languages Manchad and Tinan as well as local Indo-Aryan idioms to refer to the members of the Bunan speaking community. The term is obviously related to the toponym “Gahr”, i.e., the designation of the Gahr Valley in the aforementioned languages. It also seems to occur in the toponym *garza*, the Tibetan name for Lahaul (WT *gar zha*). The designation “Bunanpa”, on the other hand, is derived from the exonym *punan*, which is the Tibetan name for the Gahr Valley. The original meaning of this toponym is unclear. Note that the Tibetan exonym *punan* exhibits a voiceless rather than a voiced initial in Tibetan. The established spelling with an initial <b> was introduced by Jäschke (1865: 94), who first mentioned the language as “Boo-nan”. Jäschke’s spelling most probably

arose from a mere misperception of the Tibetan name *punan*. This assumption is corroborated by the fact that Jäschke's Bunan vocabulary contains numerous misspellings of voiceless plosives as voiced plosives and vice versa.<sup>8</sup> The term "Bunan" was subsequently popularized by Francke, who adopted Jäschke's spelling in his publications. Note that the members of the Bunan community refer to themselves as *eraṅmi* 'our people', to Lahaul and the Gahr Valley as *eraṅmaṅ* '(in) our place', and to their language as *eraṅkat* 'our language'. When talking to foreigners, they normally use the term "Gahri" to specify their ethnicity. Interestingly, most members of the Bunan speaking community are not familiar with the term "Bunan" or "Punan". I have nonetheless chosen to adopt this designation in this book, as it is the more established term in the literature.

The northern and eastern valleys of Lahaul are inhabited by Tibetan speaking communities. According to my consultants, the Tibetan varieties spoken in these valleys represent one dialect that is very similar to the dialect of Spiti. It is not clear how many Tibetans there are in Lahaul. The *Ethnologue* (Lewis et al. 2014) gives the number of 2,500 speakers for Tod Tibetan alone based on an unknown source from 1998. In my estimation, there may be 1,500–2,000 additional speakers of Tibetan in the valleys of Ranglo and Patanam. This conjecture suggests that the Tibetan speaking population of Lahaul has approximately the same size as the Bunan speaking community. The Tibetan population of Lahaul adheres to Tibetan Buddhism.

The inhabitants of the Tinan Valley represent the smallest of the four major ethnolinguistic communities of Lahaul. The etymology of the name "Tinan" is unclear. The second syllable of the word might be related to the second syllable of the toponym "Bunan". The designation "Tinan" is used in all languages of the area (i.e., Tibetan, Manchad, Bunan, Indo-Aryan idioms) to refer to the Tinan Valley as well as its inhabitants. The Tinan language is closely related to Manchad. The two languages are not mutually intelligible, but share a great amount of lexical and grammatical traits, which indicates that they form a subgroup within West Himalayish. As mentioned above, Manchad and Tinan are only distantly related to Bunan (see Section 1.4.2 below). Tinan seems to possess a large stock of Tibetan loanwords, which implies that the speakers of the language have been in longstanding contact with Tibetan speaking communities, from which they also adopted Tibetan Buddhism.

The two remaining ethnolinguistic groups of Lahaul are the Indo-Aryan communities of the Lohar and the Chanal. The members of these communities are not settled in a contiguous geographical area, but live in small groups that are scattered among

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<sup>8</sup> Sharma (2007b: 270–272) interprets these mismatches as evidence for recent sound changes. However, there are no systematic sound correspondences between Jäschke's spellings and the contemporary pronunciation of the respective lexemes. Some of Jäschke's voiceless plosives correspond to voiced plosives in contemporary Bunan, while some voiced plosives correspond to voiceless plosives. This suggests that Jäschke had difficulties in distinguishing voiceless and voiced plosives and consequently gave some wrong spellings in his vocabulary.

the four dominant ethnolinguistic groups discussed so far. The Lohar can be found throughout Lahaul. In historical times, they worked as blacksmiths and musicians at festivals and funerals. The Chanal, on the other hand, are only found in the Pattan Valley, where they traditionally worked as laborers, carpenters, and musicians. Both the Lohar and Chanal are considered to be socially inferior by the major ethnolinguistic communities of Lahaul, who do not intermarry with them. Note that the Lohar and Chanal are not only settled in Lahaul, but can be found throughout Himachal Pradesh (Singh 1993: 356–358, 802–805).

As mentioned in the previous section, all indigenous communities of Lahaul are acknowledged to be Scheduled Tribes or Scheduled Castes. The different communities that adhere to Tibetan Buddhism form a Scheduled Tribe with the name “Bodh” (from WT *bod* “Tibet”). This group comprises the Tibetan, Bunan, and Tinan speaking communities as well as the Manchad speaking population of the Upper Pattan Valley. The population of the Lower Pattan Valley, which adheres to Hinduism, is classified as a Scheduled Tribe called “Swangla”. This designation reflects the toponym *swanḷa*, which is the name of Lahaul in Manchad. The two tribes are sometimes subsumed under the superordinate term “Lahaula” (Singh 1994: 680). Unlike the Tibeto-Burman communities, the Indo-Aryan communities of the Lohar and Chanal are not classified as Scheduled Tribes but as the Scheduled Castes “Lohar” and “Chanal”.

At this point, it also seems indispensable to discuss the toponym “Lahaul” itself. The toponym “Lahaul” (from which the ethnonym “Lahauli” is derived) is clearly not an endonym. The indigenous ethnolinguistic minorities of Lahaul do not use the term, but refer to their homeland as *swanḷa* (Manchad), *garza* (Tibetan and Tinan), or *eranman* (Bunan). Many scholars have interpreted the term as a Tibetan exonym. The most common Tibetan etymologies found in the literature are WT *lho yul* ‘southern realm’ (Cunningham 1854: 24; Diack [1897] 1994, 3: 9; Hutchinson & Vogel 1933: 476; van Driem 2001: 935) or WT *lha’i yul* ‘country of gods’ (Hutchinson & Vogel 1933: 476; Charak 1979: 269). However, it is doubtful whether the term “Lahaul” originated in Tibetan. Francke (1926: 195) mentioned that the Tibetan name of Lahaul is *gar zha*, whereas “the name Lahul is entirely unknown among the Tibetans”. Moreover, the name is already mentioned by the Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang (603–664) as *Luòhùluó* 洛護羅 (Beal 1884: 177–178). As Uray (1990: 218) points out, it is highly unlikely that Tibetan was already spoken in the western Himalayas in those days. This suggests that the name “Lahaul” is not of Tibetan origin. It seems much more plausible that the term originated in the Kullu Valley, where at the time of Xuanzang it apparently was already used to refer to the area north of the Rohtang La. However, given the fact that our knowledge of the early history of Kullu is scant, it is not possible to say anything more about the origin of the toponym, let alone its original meaning.

#### 1.2.2.4 Some further historical speculations

Considering the ethnolinguistic diversity of Lahaul, the question arises as to how such a culturally and linguistically heterogeneous society could have developed in such a remote and inaccessible area. On further reflection, it becomes obvious that the geographical remoteness of Lahaul must be the main conditioning factor that brought about the present-day situation. It is highly improbable that the communities of the Manchadpa, Bunanpa and Tinanpa (and other West Himalayish communities in general) were always confined to the narrow and remote mountain valleys where they can be found today. It seems much more likely that the small West Himalayish communities of today represent the remnants of a West Himalayish dialect continuum that once extended over the area of the modern Indian states of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand as well as western Tibet. In the course of the centuries, the majority of these West Himalayish communities assimilated to the culture and language of Indo-Aryan and Tibetan communities, which advanced into the North Indian Himalayas from the plains in the south and the Tibetan plateau in the west, respectively. West Himalayish communities only persisted in some inaccessible mountainous areas of the Himalayan range, i.e., Lahaul, Kinnaur, and the north of Uttarakhand.

In the case of Lahaul, there are unfortunately almost no sources for the ethnolinguistic history of the region. The only available documents are materials collected by the Moravian missionary Francke ([1907a] 1998: 134–141, [1907b] 2008: 155–179, 1926: 195–220) in the early twentieth century. These collections contain two short stories that describe the arrival of Indo-Aryan communities in Lahaul (Francke [1907b] 2008: 157–158, 168–169). Since these events were still present in the collective memory one hundred years ago, we may suppose that the Indo-Aryan communities may have migrated to the area relatively late compared to the Tibeto-Burman communities of Lahaul. Given the fact that the Lohar and the Chanal are not settled in a contiguous area in Lahaul, this assumption seems plausible. However, Francke's materials do not allow us to draw further inferences about the historical processes that gave rise to the multiethnic society of Lahaul. Since the sources do not contain any evidence for major migration movements in the recent past, we have to assume that the ethnolinguistic situation of Lahaul has persisted for a comparatively long time, possibly for many centuries.

Linguistic evidence may be able to throw some light on the ethnolinguistic history of Lahaul, especially the history of the Bunan speaking community. As I argue in Section 1.4.2, there is robust evidence that West Himalayish consists of two major subgroups: a western branch and an eastern branch. Interestingly, the languages of Lahaul do not belong to the same subgroup. Manchad and Tinan pertain to the western branch, which additionally comprises the language Kanashi<sup>9</sup> spoken in the

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<sup>9</sup> Kanashi is spoken in the village of Malana, which is located in an inaccessible tributary valley east of Kullu (see van Driem 2001: 938). The geographical location of the language is remarkable, as it represents an isolated Tibeto-Burman idiom in an otherwise Indo-Aryan speaking environment. The

Kullu Valley and most West Himalayish idioms of Kinnaur. Bunan, on the other hand, belongs to the eastern branch together with the language Sunnami spoken in Upper Kinnaur and the West Himalayish languages of Uttarakhand. The language of the ancient kingdom of Zhangzhung most probably belongs to eastern West Himalayish as well. The fact that the closest linguistic relatives of Bunan are found in Upper Kinnaur and Northern Uttarakhand implies that the linguistic ancestors of the present-day Bunan speaking community came from the East, i.e., Spiti Valley<sup>10</sup> and western Tibet. The Manchad and Tinan speaking communities, on the other hand, probably came to Lahaul from the Himalayan foothills in the South, i.e., the present-day districts of Mandi, Chamba, Kangra, and Kullu, where the closely related language Kanashi is spoken to the present day (see above). It is not possible to say which of the West Himalayish communities settled in Lahaul first, but we may assume that Tibetan speaking communities migrated to Lahaul comparatively late. Klimburg-Salter (1997: 32) assumes that the Tibetanization of the North Indian Himalaya only began in the tenth century with the conquest of the area by descendants of the Central Tibetan Yarlung dynasty (see Petech 1997: 231–232).

In addition, it is worth including geography into our considerations, in particular the geographical location of the Gahr Valley. The Gahr Valley, which lies in the center of Lahaul, does not have any direct geographical connection to Kullu, Spiti or Ladakh (see Section 1.2.1). The valley can only be accessed from the Pattan Valley and the Tinan Valley in the west, or the Tod Valley in the east. All of these neighboring areas are home to other Tibeto-Burman communities that must have been settled in these regions for a considerable amount of time. It is difficult to imagine that the linguistic ancestors of today's Bunan speakers migrated to their present area of settlement in the recent past by moving through territories that were already inhabited by other ethnolinguistic communities. It is much more plausible that the Bunan speakers were gradually confined to their present-day homeland by a socioeconomically dominant group, most probably Tibetan speaking tribes. In this context, we have to consider the following note by Jäschke (1865: 94) on Bunan:

An instance of peculiar interest in this respect is found in the Boo-nan language, spoken in a small district of Lahaul, and in part of Kunawur, where it is called *Tibar-skad*, *Tibar-language*. [...] The fact of this language existing in two different provinces, like two islands separated from

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inhabitants of Malana appear to have resisted linguistic assimilation because they follow a rigorous code of conduct that strongly restricts social interaction with members of other ethnolinguistic communities.

**10** Early inscriptions from Tabo Monastery in Spiti (tenth century CE) contain several non-Tibetan clan names and personal names, which indicates that the local population did not speak Tibetan in those days (Klimburg-Salter 1997: 32–43; Luczanits 1999: 96). Today, the closely related eastern West Himalayish languages Bunan and Sunnami are spoken on the western and southern border of Spiti, respectively. Based on their geographical distribution, one may speculate whether the inhabitants of Spiti once spoke a language that represented the linguistic ancestors of the two languages.

each other by the pure Tibetan population of Spiti and the pure Hindu nationality of Kooloo, renders the theory of a wider diffusion, of the Tibarskad language in former times probable, and agrees with the assertion of the Lahoul people, that even within the remembrance of the present generation, its district was greater than it is now, and has been more and more encroached upon by the Tibetan.

Jäschke's statement suggests that Bunan was still spoken in a wider area a few centuries ago. However, there is reason to question the reliability of his statement. Francke, who conducted extensive research on the history of the North Indian Himalayas only forty years after Jäschke, does not adduce a single piece of evidence that would support Jäschke's claim that the Bunan speaking community had only been recently confined to the Gahr Valley. Nor have I myself been able to find any evidence in favor of Jäschke's hypothesis while conducting fieldwork on Bunan. The present-day Bunan speakers cannot remember that their language was ever spoken outside of the Gahr Valley. It thus appears that Jäschke overinterpreted the linguistic evidence, the more so as his claim that Bunan and Theborskad, i.e., Sunnami, represent a single language is an obvious exaggeration (see footnote 13). Nonetheless, we have reason to believe that Jäschke's historical scenario is essentially correct and that Bunan and Sunnami belonged to a contiguous West Himalayish dialect continuum that was gradually superseded by Tibetan varieties in the course of the past millennium.

### 1.2.3 The Bunan speaking community

#### 1.2.3.1 The speakers

The traditional homeland of the Bunan speaking community lies in the Gahr Valley, where the Bunan speakers are settled in thirty villages and hamlets that are scattered on both sides of the Bhaga River. The settlements on the northern bank of the Bhaga River from west to east are: *biliŋ*, *dangun*, *raŋkelan*, *jokelan*, *tiŋtse*, *kuskjar*, *gunraŋ*, *sakiliŋ*, *grimas*, *jurnat*, *gunliŋ*, *katčaraŋ*, *makon*, *kjor*, *bar*, and *(s)tiŋrik*. The settlements on the southern bank of the Bhaga River from west to east are: *gwadzaŋ*, *tsikaraŋ*, *kardaŋ*, *barbok*, *pasparak*, *namtsi*, *laptčaraŋ* ~ *lapjaŋ*, *č<sup>h</sup>eliŋ*, *pjaso*, *maŋmur*, *pjukar*, and *čardzi*. The two villages *raŋkelan* and *jokelan* are usually collectively referred to as *kelan*, as the two settlements have merged together in the course of the twentieth century. *kelan*, whose name is officially spelt as *Keylong*, is the headquarters of the district Lahaul and Spiti and thus not only serves as an economic and political center for the Gahr Valley but for all of Lahaul. However, until the nineteenth century, the village *kardaŋ* on the other side of the Bhaga River was the most important village in Lahaul (see Harcourt 1871: 154). This is also the reason why the Moravians opened their first missionary station in *kardaŋ* 1854 before moving to *raŋkelan* two years later (Dorje & Tobdan 2008: 18).

The Census of India counted 3,581 speakers of Bunan in 1981 (van Driem 2001: 938). The *Ethnologue* (Lewis et al. 2014) gives a number of 4,000 speakers based on an unknown source from 1997. Unfortunately, I have not been able to verify this information, but the number provided above coincides with estimates of my consultants. We may thus assume that Bunan is currently spoken by 3,500 to 4,000 people. I have not been able to obtain more precise numbers for two reasons. First, the recent editions of the Census of India have only classified the inhabitants of Lahaul according to caste or tribe membership but not according to their native languages. The Bunan speaking community is thus subsumed under the Scheduled Tribe “Bhot”, which comprises all Buddhist communities of Lahaul and Spiti. Second, many Bunan speakers do not live in Lahaul, but have settled down in the Kullu Valley. The size of this emigrant community is even more difficult to assess than the total number of speakers. In my estimation, there must be several hundred Bunan speakers who currently live outside of Lahaul.

As mentioned before, the Bunan speaking community adheres to Tibetan Buddhism. Within Tibetan Buddhism, they follow the Drukpa Lineage (WT ‘*brug pa bka’ brygud*), whose headquarters lie in Ladakh and Bhutan. The most important monastery of the Gahr Valley is *kardañ gompa*, which is located on a mountain slope above the village of *kardañ* and is home to the largest monastic community in the area, which in 2011 consisted of seven monks and five nuns. The second notable monastery is *caćur gompa* above Keylong. This monastery is older than *kardañ gompa*, but is nowadays only stewarded by a small number of monks from *kardañ gompa*. Its historical significance is, however, still reflected by the fact that it hosts the *ts’ecu* festival in summer. In addition to *kardañ gompa* and *caćur gompa*, there are eight minor monasteries scattered throughout the Gahr Valley.

Although the Bunan people are Buddhists, they are well acquainted with Hinduism, to which the Manchad speaking population of the western Pattan Valley adheres. Buddhism and Hinduism appear to have peacefully coexisted in Lahaul for possibly more than a millennium. This is reflected by the fact that there are several pilgrimage sites in Lahaul that are visited by Buddhists and Hindus alike. The most well-known example is the sanctuary of Triloknath in the Pattan Valley, which is maintained by both Buddhist monks and Brahmins who take care of the religious needs of the pilgrims. Inter-marriage between the two religious communities is socially accepted and occurs frequently. Remarkably, persons who marry into the other religious community are not expected to convert to the religion of their marriage partner.

The Bunan speaking community is organized by patrilineal descent. Married sons stay at their parents’ house together with their wives and children, whereas daughters become a part of their husband’s family on the day of their marriage. As a consequence, possessions can only be inherited along the male line of a family. If a parental couple only has female offspring, one daughter will remain at her parents’ home with her husband, who will become the heir of the family’s possessions. Until the recent past, the inhabitants of Lahaul practiced fraternal polyandry, i.e., marriage between

one daughter of one family and all brothers of another family. Although this custom has been abandoned in the course of the twentieth century, it has left its marks on the vocabulary of Bunan. The language does not make a lexical distinction between the concepts “father” and “paternal uncle”. Rather, the respective kinship terms are all derived from the root *awa* ‘father’ and describe the relative age of a brother in comparison to his brothers, as illustrated in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Kinship terms based on the noun *awa* ‘father’.

Kinship term	Relative age	Literal meaning
<i>teawa</i>	eldest brother	‘big father’ <i>tedzi</i> ‘big’ + <i>awa</i> ‘father’
<i>barawa</i>	second eldest brother	‘intermediate father’ <i>bar</i> ‘between’ + <i>awa</i> ‘father’
<i>p<sup>h</sup>etse awa</i> ~ <i>p<sup>h</sup>etsawa</i>	second youngest brother	‘young father’ <i>p<sup>h</sup>etsetsi</i> ‘young’ + <i>awa</i> ‘father’
<i>awa kjuktsi</i> ~ <i>awatsi</i>	youngest brother	‘small father’ <i>awa</i> ‘father’ + <i>kjuktsi</i> ‘small’

As mentioned in the previous sections, the Bunanpas subsisted on agriculture and livestock breeding in historical times. Both economic domains still represent important means of livelihood for the contemporary Bunan speaking community. Originally, the most common field crops were barely and buckwheat, but nowadays the inhabitants of the Gahr Valley mainly grow potatoes and peas. Many Bunan families also own land in the Kullu Valley, where they mostly grow apples and rice. The most common livestock are goats and sheep. Most families also keep one or two cows as a source of milk but not as a source of meat, as the consumption of beef is not common among the inhabitants of Lahaul.

In the recent past, the Bunan people did not exclusively rely on their field crops and their cattle for subsistence, as they also participated in trade across the western Himalayan range between Ladakh and Kullu. This trans-Himalayan trade route gradually lost its importance after the Sikh invasion in 1840 and the subsequent establishment of British rule, and ceased to exist with the construction of the Manali-Leh Highway. However, many Bunan people adapted to these new economic circumstances and entered the tourist business, which is an important source of income throughout Himachal Pradesh but especially in the Kullu Valley, as the area represents one of the most well-known tourist destinations of the Indian Himalayas. Many Bunan families own shops, restaurants, hotels, or trekking agencies in Lahaul and Kullu, which generate the greater part of their income in summertime. Winter tourism is in the early stages of development, but will without doubt become more important in the future, which will allow members of the Bunan community to profitably run their businesses throughout the year.

### 1.2.3.2 The sociolinguistic situation – past and present

The Bunan speaking community and the inhabitants of Lahaul in general have lived in a multilingual society for several centuries. The earliest accounts of multilingualism in Lahaul date from the second half of the nineteenth century. Jäschke (1865: 94) stated that “Tibetan is understood and spoken fluently enough in intercourse with genuine Tibetans by the adult men, but more or less imperfectly by women and children [...]” In an article published two years later, Jäschke (1868: 175) noted that many inhabitants of Lahaul, most of them male, were also fluent in Hindi. Similar observations were made by Harcourt (1871: 136) and Diack ([1897] 1994, 3: 23). Tibetan and Hindi were not the only contact languages for the Bunan speaking community over the past centuries, however. Its members have also been in close contact with the neighboring West Himalayish communities and their languages, i.e., Manchad and Tinan. Especially Manchad, which served as a regional *lingua franca* throughout Lahaul, has been an important contact language for the inhabitants of the Gahr Valley.

Multilingualism at a regional level must have existed in Lahaul for as long as the local population has been ethnically heterogeneous. As argued in Section 1.2.2.3 the ethnolinguistic diversity of Lahaul cannot be a recent phenomenon and has most likely persisted for several centuries. Multilingualism at a supraregional level must have been common for a long time as well, probably for as long as people have been travelling on the trade route between Kullu and Ladakh. As argued in Section 1.2.2.2, there is evidence that this trade route is of considerable antiquity and may already have existed in the seventh century AD. We cannot know, of course, whether the present inhabitants of Lahaul were already settled in the area at that time, but the fact that it was possible to travel from the Upper Beas Valley to the Upper Indus Valley in those days implies that the people who did so were able to communicate in different local languages.

The sociolinguistic situation in Lahaul has changed radically since the mid-twentieth century. The creation of new national boundaries between India, Pakistan, and China and the ensuing border conflicts between these nations broke up the close economic and cultural ties between the North Indian Himalayas and western Tibet, which had existed for centuries. These developments permanently altered the economic structure of the regions that became part of the Republic of India. Trans-Himalayan trade between the Upper Indus Valley and the Upper Beas Valley gradually became less important. As a consequence, the Tibetan varieties of Ladakh, Spiti, and western Tibet, which had been important contact languages for the Bunan speaking community for centuries, subsequently lost their status as supraregional *lingue franche*. They were gradually replaced in this function by the emerging national language Hindi. Since Hindi was taught in elementary schools throughout Himachal Pradesh, it became the standard language for supraregional communication within less than a generation, which accelerated the decline of Tibetan as a *lingua franca* in Lahaul and neighboring areas. As time went by, Hindi also began to replace Manchad as the traditional regional language of communication in Lahaul.

The fundamental changes in the sociolinguistic environment are reflected by the fact that Bunan speakers belonging to different speaker generations tend to be competent in different languages. Nowadays, virtually all members of the Bunan speaking community are fluent in Hindi. Speakers who were born before 1960 usually also have good competence in both Tibetan and Manchad. Speakers who were born in the 1960s or later, on the other hand, tend to have much less proficiency in these two traditional contact languages compared to the oldest generation of speakers. Many members of the younger speaker generations do not even have passive knowledge of Tibetan and Manchad. Conversely, many young speakers have a good command of English, whereas only few old speakers are fluent in this language. However, competence in English not only correlates with a person's age, but also depends on the social factors of sex and education. Usually, only male persons with a higher education have solid communication skills in English. Many other members of the Bunan speaking community can understand the language, but are not able to speak it fluently.

Since the opening of the road over the Rohtang La in 1965, an increasing number of Bunan families have permanently migrated to Kullu Valley. Their descendants often speak Hindi as a primary language and only have an imperfect command of the language of their parents. Fortunately, such cases are rather exceptional. Bunan as a spoken language is thus not immediately threatened at present. The Bunan speaking community in Lahaul is still cohesive and most parents still raise their children in the Gahr Valley, where they grow up speaking Bunan. Still, the rapid social and economic changes that are currently taking place in India are a challenge for both the traditional culture and the language of the Bunan speaking community (and for the cultural and linguistic diversity of South Asia in general). In the future, the steady emigration of Bunan speakers to other areas inside and outside of Himachal Pradesh combined with the increasing immigration of outsiders may well lead to the destabilization and disintegration of the Bunan speaking community in the foreseeable future. Great efforts will have to be made in order to preserve the cultural and linguistic diversity of Lahaul for future generations. However, the indigenous inhabitants of Lahaul are increasingly becoming aware of the uniqueness of their cultural heritage. Manifestations of this growing awareness are publications such as the book *Moravian missionaries in western Trans-Himalaya* (Dorje & Tobdan 2008), which was authored by indigenous scholars. An ever-growing number of Lahauli music videos on YouTube likewise illustrate this development. I am thus confident that Bunan and the other indigenous languages of Lahaul at least stand a good chance of surviving as spoken languages in the near future. The transformation of modern India may indeed be a challenge for the countless linguistic minorities of India. However, at least in the case of Lahaul, the process is also being accompanied by increased social awareness of the value of cultural and linguistic diversity, which may prove to be a powerful resource for the indigenous ethnolinguistic societies of Lahaul.

### 1.3 Previous descriptions

The earliest descriptions of Bunan date back to the mid-nineteenth century. We owe these accounts to the renowned Tibetologist August Hermann Jäschke, who lived in Keylong from 1857 to 1868 as a member of the local Moravian missionary station (Dorje & Tobdan 2008: 35). Although the main focus of Jäschke's research lay on the study of Tibetan, he also conducted fieldwork on Bunan. In his 1865 study of the diachronic phonology of Tibetan, Jäschke included a Bunan glossary and some notes on Tibetan loanwords in Bunan. Two years later, a slightly different version of the same article was published in German (Jäschke 1868). Although Jäschke did not provide any information about the grammar of the language, his vocabulary lists represent a valuable source for the historical phonology of Bunan. In addition, his articles contain some interesting notes on the sociolinguistic situation of the Bunan speaking community.

Almost three decades after Jäschke's early work on Bunan, the British official Alexander Henderson Diack (1896) published a short vocabulary of Bunan in the appendix to his grammar of the Indo-Aryan dialect of Kullu. Around the same time, August Hermann Francke began to conduct research on the languages spoken in Ladakh and Lahaul. Like Jäschke, Francke was a member of the Moravian Church. Between 1896 and 1916, he spent fifteen years as a missionary in the North Indian Himalayas (Walravens & Taube 1992: 17). Francke published a considerable number of articles and books on the history, culture, and languages of Lahaul and Ladakh. Many of these publications contain Bunan materials, for example traditional songs and stories (Francke 1899: 105–107, [1907b] 2008: 5–11, 1926: 219–224) as well as short grammatical descriptions of the language (Francke [1907a] 1998: 134–141, Francke 1909: 65–77). In addition, Francke prepared the Bunan data that were compiled for the *Linguistic Survey of India* by Konow and published by Grierson (1909: 469–478, 532–565).

Konow acknowledged that the Bunan material in the *Linguistic Survey of India* had originally been compiled by August Wilhelm Heyde, a member of the Moravian mission in Keylong who spent almost four decades in Lahaul (see Dorje & Tobdan 2008: 35). He also mentioned that Francke had translated the Gospel of Mark into Bunan. However, this translation was never published. Konow's comments suggest that the members of the missionary station at Keylong did not publish all their Bunan data. It is likely that these unpublished materials can be found at the Moravian Archive at Herrnhut, Germany.

Francke's materials represent an invaluable source for the history of Bunan as well as the Bunan speaking community. To be sure, his grammatical descriptions merely consist of nominal and verbal paradigms that do not tell us much about the function of the respective forms. However, in combination with his collections of texts, these data still give us a good idea of what the grammatical structure of Bunan looked like one hundred years ago. Thus, Francke's materials allow us to make inferences about the grammatical changes that the language has undergone since then.

For much of the twentieth century, the material compiled by the members of the Moravian mission in Lahaul remained the only Bunan data available. In the late 1980s, more than sixty years after Francke's last publication, the Indian linguist Devi Datta Sharma published several studies of tribal languages of the North Indian Himalayas. Amongst these, there are a grammatical sketch of Bunan (Sharma 1989b: 189–260) as well as a comparative grammar of North Indian Tibeto-Burman languages (Sharma 1994), which contains some Bunan material as well. Although Sharma's sketch grammar is more comprehensive than earlier descriptions, his study is problematic in several ways. Sharma describes most parts of the grammar in a shallow and oversimplifying manner and omits several crucial grammatical features such as epistemic marking. In addition, his transcription of the data is highly unsystematic, making it virtually impossible to distinguish between phonetic and phonological features. The usefulness of Sharma's material is thus limited (see Saxena 1992: 8–9).

Since Sharma's (1989b) grammatical sketch of Bunan, there has not been another attempt to provide a comprehensive descriptive account of the language. Since the early 1990s, Anju Saxena (1992: 91–102, 1997), Suhnu Ram Sharma (1996, 2007b), and Yoshiharu Takahashi (2009) have published a number of comparative studies on West Himalayish languages, all of which contain some Bunan data. However, only Suhnu Ram Sharma's studies contain data that are based on personal fieldwork, while Saxena and Takahashi draw on other published sources. Finally, Yoshio Nishi and Yasuhiko Nagano provide a 17 page comparative word list of West Himalayish languages in the appendix to Nishi (2001). This word list also contains some Bunan data. The authors do not indicate whether this lexical material was adopted from another source or whether it was collected in the field.

## 1.4 Genetic affiliation<sup>11</sup>

Bunan is commonly assigned to the subgroup of West Himalayish languages that form a separate branch within the Tibeto-Burman language family. West Himalayish comprises sixteen languages, fourteen of which are spoken in the North Indian states of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand to the present day. Table 3 shows the geographical distribution of West Himalayish languages based on information drawn from van Driem (2001: 934–957).

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<sup>11</sup> I would like to express my sincere thanks to Christian Huber (Austrian Academy of Sciences), who gave me valuable feedback on an earlier draft of this section and was willing to share his data on Shumcho, Sunnami, and Jangrami with me. On his behalf, I would like to emphasize that the Shumcho and Sunnami data that will be discussed in the following are only preliminary and may need to be revised in the future.

**Table 3:** The West Himalayish languages and their geographical distribution.

State	District	Languages
Himachal Pradesh	Lahaul and Spiti	Bunan, Manchad, Tinan
	Kullu	Kanashi
	Kinnaur	Lower Kinnauri, Standard Kinnauri, Chitkhuli, Jangrami, Shumcho, Sunnami
Uttarakhand	Camoli	Rongpo
	Pithauragarh	(†) Rangkas*, Darma, Byangsi, Chaudangsi
–	–	† Zhangzhung

\* Rangkas was still spoken by about 600 speakers at the beginning of the twentieth century (Grierson 1909: 479–486), but according to Sharma (1994: 5) and van Driem (2001: 934) it is now extinct. However, Willis (2007a: 23) adduces evidence that the language may still be spoken to the present day. Her claim can, however, only be verified by future research in the Milam Valley, where the traditional homeland of the Rangkas community lies.

Note that van Driem (2001: 939) does not list Jangrami, Shumcho, and Sunnami as separate languages. Based on Bailey (1910: 559), he subsumes the West Himalayish idioms of Upper Kinnaur under the label “Thëbörskad”. However, Christian Huber (personal communication), who has been conducting fieldwork in Upper Kinnaur since 2002, has confirmed their status as distinct languages as well as their genetic affiliation with the West Himalayish subgroup.

The origin and meaning of the name “Thëbörskad” (and several variant forms thereof) are unclear. The term was first used by Gerard (1841: 88, 1842: 551) to refer to the language spoken in the village of Sunnam, i.e., Sunnami. Joseph Cunningham (1844: 223–225) applied the designation to the language spoken in Sunnam and idioms of neighboring villages. Jäschke (1865: 94) noted that the language was spoken in “part of Kunawur [= Kinnaur]” without giving a more precise location. However, the fact that Jäschke postulated a close genetic affiliation with Bunan (see below) implies that he used the term to refer to Sunnami. Alexander Cunningham (1854: 391) and Bailey (1909: 661–662) used the designation to refer to all West Himalayish languages of Upper Kinnaur. It is thus difficult to reconstruct which language(s) the term originally referred to. It is possible that the term once designated all languages of Upper Kinnaur and was later used in more narrow sense by certain Western scholars to refer to the language spoken in the village of Sunnam. According to Christian Huber (personal communication), the indigenous communities of Kinnaur are no longer familiar with the term “Thëbörskad”.

Further languages have occasionally been assigned to the West Himalayish subgroup. Konow grouped the language Janggali (Raji-Raute) spoken in eastern Uttarakhand / western Nepal together with West Himalayish in the *Linguistic Survey of*

*India* (Grierson 1909: 530), while Shafer (1967: 3) also included Thami (Thangmi) and Brahmū (Bramā) spoken in central and eastern Nepal, respectively. However, most scholars no longer consider these languages to be part of West Himalayish (see van Driem 2001: 934).

#### 1.4.1 Previous classifications<sup>12</sup>

Heinrich August Jäschke was the first scholar who conducted research on Bunan. In his 1865 article, he noted that the language – despite the great number of Tibetan loanwords – was not part of the Tibetan dialect continuum and instead suggested that it was closely related to the language “Theborskad” (i.e., Sunnami) spoken in Kinnaur.<sup>13</sup> Some forty years later, August Hermann Francke ([1907a] 1998: 134–136) pointed out that Bunan not only was related to tribal languages spoken in Kinnaur, but also to the neighboring languages Manchad and Tinan. He further claimed that those languages exhibited traces of an ancient Munda substratum, a theory that was propagated by several scholars at that time (see Bailey 1909: 662; Grierson 1909: 427). However, as Genetti (2007: 7) points out, the alleged shared properties of Tibeto-Burman and Munda are only typological features that cannot be considered as evidence for genetic relatedness.

Sten Konow was the first to treat Bunan in a broader genetic context in the *Linguistic Survey of India* (Grierson 1909: 427–586). He assigned the language to the “western subgroup” of “Complex Pronominalizing Languages”, into which he also incorporated Manchad, Tinan, Kanashi, Kinnauri, Rangkas, Darma, Chaudangsi, Byangsi, and Janggali. Konow’s classification is shown in Figure 10.

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<sup>12</sup> All language names have been adopted from the respective sources without standardizing them. In a number of sources, some languages are listed several times under different names. In this case, the divergent designations are linked with equal signs (=). If a language is referred to with a name that is not commonly used in the literature, a more common name is added in square brackets.

<sup>13</sup> Jäschke (1865: 94) stated that Bunan and Sunnami were so closely related that they could be regarded as dialects of the same language. However, he did not present any empirical evidence for his hypothesis. Nonetheless, his idea has been taken up by several researchers who worked on the classification of Tibeto-Burman (see below). Jäschke’s claim that Bunan and Sunnami are merely dialects of one language is without doubt too extreme. However, there is substantial evidence that the two languages are indeed closely related (see Section 1.4.2), and Jäschke must have become aware of that fact by the time he published his first article on Bunan in 1865. In 1862, the Moravian Church opened a missionary station in the village of Poo in Upper Kinnaur (Seeliger 2005: 16), where Sunnami and other West Himalayish languages are spoken. It is beyond doubt that the Moravian missionaries conducted small-scale fieldwork on the local languages in that area and compared their findings with the data they had collected in Lahaul. Thus, Jäschke must have had access to some Sunnami data. If these materials consisted of written records, they can probably still be found in the central archive of the Moravian Church in Herrnhut, Germany.

**Tibeto-Burman**

- 1 Tibetan
- 2 **Himalayan languages**
  - 2.1 Non-pronominalized languages
  - 2.2 **Complex pronominalized languages**
    - 2.2.1 **Western subgroup**

Kanāw<sup>a</sup>rī, Kanāshī, Manchāṭī = Chamba Lāhuḷī, Tinan,  
**Bunān**, Rangkas, Dārmiyā, Chaudāngsī, Byāngsī, Janggali
    - 2.2.2 Eastern subgroup
- 3 North Assam group
- 4 Burma group
- 5 Kachin group
- 6 Kuki-Chin group
- 7 Nāgā group
- 8 Bara or Bodo group

**Figure 10:** Classification of Bunan according to Konow (Grierson 1909).

Shafer (1967: 3) mainly adopted Konow’s western subgroup, but changed its name to West Himalayish and assigned it to the Bodic Division together with Bodish (= Tibetan), West Central Himalayish, and East Himalayish (= Kiranti). He also revised the internal structure of West Himalayish by adding the two languages Thami (Thangmi) and Bhramu (Bramā) and by subdividing the subgroup into five branches. Bunan was classified under the label “North-Northwestern” together with “Thebor”, which here appears to subsume all West Himalayish languages of Upper Kinnaur, i.e., Jangrami, Shumcho, and Sunnami.<sup>14</sup> Figure 11 gives an overview of Shafer’s classification.

Benedict (1972: 7) referred to West Himalayish as “Himalayish” and subsumed it together with Bodish (= Tibetan) under a Tibeto-Kanauri branch. His internal classification of West Himalayish was simpler than the model proposed by Shafer (1967). First, Benedict excluded the three languages Janggali, Thangmi, and Brahmu. Second, he only postulated two subtypes within the subgroup: a “Kanauri subtype” (which Bunan was assigned to) and an “Almora subtype”. Benedict’s classification is illustrated in Figure 12.

<sup>14</sup> The terms “Sumtsū” and “Žangram” refer to Shumcho Valley and Jangram Valley, where the languages Shumcho and Jangrami are spoken. The term “Sungnam” evidently refers to the village Sunnam, in which Sunnami is spoken. The terms “Kanam” and “Lippa” are the names of major villages in Shumcho and Jangram Valley, respectively.

**Sino-Tibetan**

- 1 Sinitic division
- 2 Daic division
- 3 **Bodic division**
  - 3.1 Bodish section
  - 3.2 **West Himalayish section**
    - 3.2.1 *North-Northwestern*  
**Bunan**, Thebor (Sumtśu, Žangram, Sungnam, Kanam, Lippa)
    - 3.2.2 *North-Northwestern*  
Kanauri (Upper, Lower, Tśitkhuli, Tukpa, Kanaśi)  
Mantśati (Standard, Tśamba Lahuli, Rangloi)
    - 3.2.3 *Almora*  
Rangkas, Darmiya, Tśaudangsi, Byangsi
    - 3.2.4 *Džangali*  
Džangali
    - 3.2.5 *Eastern*  
Thami, Bhramu
  - 3.3 West Central Himalayish section
  - 3.4 East Himalayish section
- 4 Burmic division
- 5 Baric division

**Figure 11:** Classification of Bunan according to Shafer (1967).**Tibeto-Burman**

- 1 **Tibeto-Kanauri**
  - 1.1 Bodish
  - 1.2 **Himalayish**
    - 1.2.1 *Kanauri subtype*  
Kanauri, Chithkuli, Thebor, Kanashi, Rangloi = Tinan,  
**Bunan**, Manchati = Chamba Lahuli, †Zhangzhung
    - 1.2.2 *Almora subtype*  
Rangkas, Darmiya, Chaudangsi, Byangsi
- 2 Bahing-Vayu
- 3 Abor-Miri-Dafla
- 4 Burmese-Lolo
- 5 Kachin
- 6 Kuki-Naga
- 7 Bodo-Garo

**Figure 12:** Classification of Bunan according to Benedict (1972).

Bradley's (1997: 7) classification is largely identical with the model proposed by Shafer. He placed the West Himalayish languages in the western branch of Tibeto-Burman together with Bodish (= Tibetan), Tshangla, and Himalayan (= Kiranti and other languages of Nepal) and subdivided them into five subgroups. However, unlike Shafer (1967), Bradley did not postulate a close genetic affiliation between Bunan and Theborskad (i.e., Sunnami), but instead grouped Bunan together with Manchad and Tinan. Figure 13 summarizes Bradley's classification.

### Tibeto-Burman

- 1 North-Eastern India / Sal
- 2 **Western Tibeto-Burman / Bodic**
  - 2.1 **Bodish**
    - 2.1.1 Central Bodish (Tibetan)
    - 2.1.2 West Bodish
    - 2.1.3 East Bodish
    - 2.1.4 **West Himalayan**
      - 2.1.4.1 *North-Northwestern (Lahul)*  
Pattani = Manchati, Tinan = Gondhla = Ranglo,  
**Bunan = Gahar**
      - 2.1.4.2 *Northwestern (Kinnaur)*  
Lower Kinnauri, Upper Kinnauri, Chitkhuli, Thebar
      - 2.1.4.3 *Kanashi / Malana*  
Kanashi
      - 2.1.4.4 *Almora*  
Rangkas / Rangpa, Rangkhas, Darmiya, Chaudangsi / Byangsi
      - 2.1.4.5 *Eastern (Nepal)*  
Bhramu, Thami
  - 2.2 Himalayan
- 3 South-Eastern
- 4 North-Eastern

**Figure 13:** Classification of Bunan according to Bradley (1997).

The model used by Saxena (1992: 2) is based on a more comprehensive family tree of Tibeto-Burman developed by Nishi (1990). The classification scheme is similar to Benedict's (1972) approach. The West Himalayish languages are placed in a superordinate grouping together with Bodish (= Tibetan) and are internally divided into two branches with Bunan being grouped with Theborskad (i.e., Sunnami) and the West Himalayish languages spoken in Uttarakhand. Saxena's classification is illustrated by Figure 14.

**Tibeto-Burman**1 **Bodic**1.2 **Bodish**1.2.1 **Tibeto-Kinnauri**

## 1.2.1.1 Tibetan

1.2.1.2 **West Himalayish**

a) Kinauri-Patani, Tinan

b) Thebor-**Gahri**, Rangpa, Chaudangsi, Darmyia**Figure 14:** Classification of Bunan according to Saxena (1992).**Tibeto-Burman**

1 Lolo-Burmese

2 Bodic

3 Sal

4 Kuki-Chin-Naga

5 **Rung**

5.1 rGyalrong

5.2 Nungish

5.3 Kiranti

5.4 **West Himalayish**5.4.1 *Kinauri*

Kanauri, Kanashi, Rangloi = Gondla = Tinan,  
**Bunan = Gahri**, Manchatu = Chamba Lahuli =  
 Pattani, Marchcha [= Rongpo], Jahri<sup>15</sup>

5.4.2 *Almora*

Rangkas, Darmiya, Chaudangsi, Byangsi

5.5 Kham-Magar-Chepeng

5.6 Qiangic

6 Karenic

**Figure 15:** Classification of Bunan according to Thurgood (2003).

Thurgood's (2003) family tree places the West Himalayish languages in the Rung branch of Tibeto-Burman, which comprises a number of diverse language groupings found in Nepal and China. According to him, the Rung languages share "a complex, innovated person marking system, [...], as well as a \*-si reflexive / middle marking

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**15** I have not been able to determine what language / dialect the name "Jahri" refers to.

verb suffix” (Thurgood 2003: 14). With regard to internal classification, West Himalayish is divided into two subgroups: a Kinnauri branch (including Bunan) and an Almora branch. Figure 15 gives an overview of Thurgood’s classification.

The models discussed above can be grouped into three types with regard to how they classify West Himalayish within the broader context of the Tibeto-Burman language family: First, there are classifications that assume a close genetic link between West Himalayish and Tibetan (Benedict 1972, Saxena 1992). Second, there are approaches that group West Himalayish together with Kiranti and other languages exhibiting verb agreement systems (Grierson 1909, Thurgood 2003). Third, there are models that classify West Himalayish in a more comprehensive grouping that includes Tibetan, Kiranti, and a number of further Tibeto-Burman languages spoken in Nepal (Shafer 1967, Bradley 1997). At present, it is not possible to decide which of these models truthfully reflects the mutual genetic affiliation of these major groupings. Only future research will enable us to clarify the genetic relationship between West Himalayish and its nearest relatives.

As for the internal classification of West Himalayish, the situation is equally unclear. Benedict (1972), Saxena (1992), and Thurgood (2003) subdivide West Himalayish into a western and an eastern branch. Their classification schemes agree on the fact that Manchad, Tinan, and most Kinnauri varieties are assigned to the western (Kinnauri) branch, whereas Rangkas, Darma, Chaudangsi, and Byangsi are subsumed under the eastern (Almora) branch. However, they are not in agreement about the position of Bunan, Theborskad (i.e., Sunnami), and Rongpo. Saxena (1992) classifies them as part of the eastern subgroup, while Benedict (1972) and Thurgood (2003) place them in the western branch. Shafer (1967) and Bradley (1997) put forward more complex classifications. Shafer divided West Himalayish into a North-Northwestern (Bunan, Theborskad), a Northwestern (Manchad, Tinan, Kinnauri varieties), and an Almora subgroup (Rangkas, Darma, Chaudangsi, Byangsi). Bradley, in turn, postulates four subgroups: North-Northwestern (Manchad, Tinan, Bunan), Northwestern (Kinnauri varieties), Kanashi (Kanashi), and Almora (Rongpo, Rangkas, Darma, Chaudangsi, Byangsi). Unfortunately, none of the aforementioned scholars explicitly stated the criteria by which she or he classifies West Himalayish, which makes it difficult to critically assess their models. In the following section, I shall thus discuss a number of lexical and grammatical traits that allow for a tentative classification of West Himalayish and might prove helpful for future research.

#### 1.4.2 A tentative classification of West Himalayish

Most West Himalayish languages have not been adequately described to the present day. Comprehensive grammars have only been written for Rongpo (Zoller 1983) and Darma (Willis 2007a). For the remaining languages, only partial descriptions are available, most of which are dated and / or of doubtful reliability. Needless to say,

these materials only allow for a small-scale comparative study. The results that will be presented in the following thus have to be considered as tentative. The data used for the present study are based on the following authors:<sup>16</sup>

- Manchad: Francke (1909); Francke (1917); Grierson (1909); Sharma (1989b)
- Tinan: Francke (1909); Sharma (1989b); Grierson (1909)
- Kanashi: Harcourt (1871); Grierson (1909)
- Lower Kinnauri: Bailey (1920)
- Kinnauri: Bailey (1910)
- Shumcho: Huber (personal communication)
- Jangrami: Huber (personal communication)
- Sunnami: Gerard (1842); Huber (personal communication)
- Rongpo: Zoller (1983); Sharma (2001a)
- Darma: Willis (2007a); Krishan (2001a)
- Byangsi: Sharma (2001b)
- Chaudangsi: Krishan (2001b)

The data presented in Table 4 highlight that some languages share a sufficient degree of lexical and grammatical traits to postulate the existence of two major groupings within West Himalayish, viz. a western branch and an eastern branch. The western branch comprises the languages Manchad, Tinan, Kanashi, Lower Kinnauri, Standard Kinnauri, Chitkhuli, and Shumcho, which share the characteristics shown in Table 5.

There is evidence that this western branch can be further subdivided into a “Lahaul subgroup” comprising Manchad and Tinan and a “Kinnaur subgroup”, comprising Kanashi, Lower Kinnauri, Standard Kinnauri, Chitkhuli, Jangrami, and Shumcho. First, such a classification is suggested by the geographical distribution of the languages. Second, there is lexical and grammatical evidence for this hypothesis. Consider Tables 6 and 7 below.

The eastern branch comprises the languages that have been subsumed under the label “Almora” by Shafer (1967), Benedict (1972), Bradley (1997), and Thurgood (2003), e.g., Darma, Byangsi, Chaudangsi, and most probably also the extinct language Rangkas, which has not been included in the comparative word list above. In the following, I refer to these languages as the “Pithauragarh subgroup”. Characteristic traits of the Pithauragarh subgroup are listed in Table 8 below.

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**16** The lexical material for Manchad, Tinan, Kanashi, Shumcho, Rongpo, and Darma has been drawn from several sources. The following abbreviations will be used in Table 4 to indicate the exact origin of the lexical data: A = Francke (1909), B = Francke (1917), C = Grierson (1909), D = Sharma (1989b), E = Harcourt (1871), f = Huber (personal communication), G = Gerard (1842), H = Zoller (1983), I = Sharma (2001a), J = Willis (2007a), K = Krishan (2001a). A bar symbol ‘–’ is used to indicate that a specific grammatical form reportedly does not exist in a language. The abbreviation “n/a” indicates that a particular word form is not available in the sources. Note that the data have been adapted from the respective sources without standardizing the orthography. The only exception is the data from Willis (2007a), which has been transliterated into IPA.

Table 4: Comparative word list of West Himalayish languages.

	Bun	Man	Tin	Kan	L. Kin	St. Kin	Chit	Shum	Sun	Rong	Dar	Byang	Chaud
(1) one	<i>tiki</i> 'one'	<i>idi</i> 'one'	<i>ica</i> 'one'	<i>idh</i> 'one'	<i>īdd</i> 'one'	<i>id</i> 'one'	<i>id'</i> 'one'	<i>it</i> 'one'	<i>ti</i> 'one'	<i>tig</i> 'one'	<i>ṭaku</i> 'one'	<i>tigε</i> 'one'	<i>tigə</i> 'one'
	C	C	D	C				F	F	H	J		J
(2) two	<i>niskinj</i> 'two'	<i>jut</i> 'two'	<i>nyizhi</i> 'two'	<i>nish</i> 'two'	<i>nish</i> 'two'	<i>nish</i> 'two'	<i>nish</i> 'two'	<i>nisε</i> 'two'	<i>niεi</i> 'two'	<i>nhis</i> 'two'	<i>nisu</i> 'two'	<i>nafε</i> 'two'	<i>nis</i> 'two'
	C	C	C	C				F	F	H	J		J
(3) three	<i>sumi</i> 'three'	<i>shumu</i> 'three'	<i>shrummu</i> 'three'	<i>shum</i> 'three'	<i>shūmm</i> 'three'	<i>shum</i> 'three'	<i>homō</i> 'three'	<i>hum</i> 'three'	<i>sum</i> 'three'	<i>sum</i> 'three'	<i>sum</i> 'three'	<i>sum</i> 'three'	<i>sum</i> 'three'
	C	C	C	C				F	F	H	J		J
(4) four	<i>pi:</i> 'four'	<i>pi</i> 'four'	<i>pi</i> 'four'	<i>pu</i> 'four'	<i>pū</i> 'four'	<i>pū</i> 'four'	<i>pō</i> 'four'	<i>pi:</i> 'four'	<i>pi</i> 'four'	<i>pi</i> 'four'	<i>pi</i> 'four'	<i>pi</i> 'four'	<i>pi</i> 'four'
	C	C	D	C				F	F	H	J		J
(5) five	<i>ηaj</i> 'five'	<i>ngā</i> 'five'	<i>ngar</i> 'five'	<i>nga</i> 'five'	<i>nā</i> 'five'	<i>nā</i> 'five'	<i>nā</i> 'five'	<i>ηa:</i> 'five'	<i>ηai</i> 'five'	<i>nε</i> 'five'	<i>ηaj</i> 'five'	<i>ηai</i> 'five'	<i>ηai</i> 'five'
	C	C	C	C				F	F	H	J		J
(6) six	<i>truj</i> 'six'	<i>t<sup>h</sup>rui, trui</i> 'six'	<i>trui</i> 'six'	<i>tso, cho</i> 'six'	<i>tugg</i> 'six'	<i>tug</i> 'six'	<i>tūk'</i> 'six'	<i>tʉ:</i> 'six'	<i>tuki, tuki</i> 'six'	<i>che</i> 'six'	<i>tuku</i> 'six'	<i>tugu</i> 'six'	<i>Tuggo</i> 'six'
	C	C	D	C				F	F	H	J		J
(7) seven	<i>nidzi</i> 'seven'	<i>nyizhi</i> 'seven'	<i>nicce</i> 'seven'	<i>saot</i> 'seven'	<i>st'issḥ</i> 'seven'	<i>stish, tish</i> 'seven'	<i>tissḥ</i> 'seven'	<i>εinε</i> 'seven'	<i>naεi, nαεi</i> 'seven'	<i>sat</i> 'seven'	<i>nesu</i> 'seven'	<i>nifε</i> 'seven'	<i>hnis</i> 'seven'
	C	C	D	C				F	F	H	J		J
(8) eight	<i>gei</i> 'eight'	<i>re</i> 'eight'	<i>gyeidi</i> 'eight'	<i>ath</i> 'eight'	<i>rāi</i> 'eight'	<i>rai</i> 'eight'	<i>rai</i> 'eight'	<i>gjet</i> 'eight'	<i>gjai</i> 'eight'	<i>a:t, a:th</i> 'eight'	<i>ṭedu</i> 'eight'	<i>ṭεdε</i> 'eight'	<i>iyəd</i> 'eight'
	C	C	D	C				F	F	H	J		J

Table 4: (continued).

	Bun	Man	Tin	Kan	L. Kin	St. Kin	Chit	Shum	Sun	Rong	Dar	Byang	Chaud
(9) nine	<i>gu</i> 'nine'	<i>kū</i> 'nine'	<i>ku</i> 'nine'	<i>nou</i> 'nine'	<i>zgüi</i> 'nine'	<i>zgui, gui</i> 'nine'	<i>zgüi</i> 'nine'	<i>gu:</i> 'nine'	<i>gui</i> 'nine'	<i>no</i> 'nine'	<i>gwi</i> 'nine'	<i>gui</i> 'nine'	<i>gui</i> 'nine'
	C	C	D	C				F	F	H	J		
(10) ten	<i>təuj</i> 'ten'	<i>sā</i> 'ten'	<i>sa</i> 'ten'	<i>sa</i> 'ten'	<i>das</i> 'ten'	<i>sāi</i> 'ten'	<i>sai</i> 'ten'	<i>sai</i> 'ten'	<i>tsui</i> 'ten'	<i>dəs</i> 'ten'	<i>ci</i> 'ten'	<i>ci</i> 'ten'	<i>ci</i> 'ten'
	C	C	C	C				F	F	H	J		
(11) 1sg	<i>gi</i> '1sg'	<i>gye</i> '1sg'	<i>gye</i> '1sg'	<i>gu</i> '1sg'	<i>gü</i> '1sg'	<i>gö</i> '1sg'	<i>gā</i> '1sg'	<i>gi:</i> '1sg'	<i>gi</i> '1sg'	<i>gye</i> '1sg'	<i>fi</i> '1sg'	<i>je</i> '1sg'	<i>ji / je</i> '1sg'
	A	A	A	C				F	F	H	J		
(12) 1SG.GEN gi:	<i>gyiu</i> '1SG.GEN'	<i>gyeu</i> '1SG.GEN'	<i>ka</i> '2SG'	<i>aka</i> '1SG.GEN'	<i>añ</i> '1SG.GEN'	<i>añ(u)</i> '1SG.GEN'	<i>äge</i> '1SG.GEN'	<i>añ</i> '1SG.GEN'	<i>gie</i> '1SG.GEN'	<i>gyit</i> '1SG.GEN'	<i>fu</i> '1SG.GEN'	<i>jige</i> '1SG.GEN'	<i>jigə</i> '1SG.GEN'
	A	A	A	C				F	F	H	J		
(13) 2SG	<i>han</i> '2[sg]'	<i>ka</i> '2sg'	<i>ka</i> '2sg'	<i>ko</i> '2sg'	<i>ka'</i> '2sg'	<i>ka</i> '2sg'	<i>kan</i> '2sg'	<i>ka:</i> '2sg'	<i>nan, nən</i> '2sg'	<i>gən</i> '2sg'	<i>gε</i> '2sg'	<i>gan</i> '2sg'	<i>gε</i> '2sg'
	A	A	A	C				F	F	H	J		
(14) 3sg	<i>tal</i> '3[sg]'	<i>di, du</i> 'DEM'	<i>di, do</i> 'DEM'	<i>du, nu</i> 'DEM'	<i>zhu, nau, jü, do, nü</i> 'DEM'	<i>nö</i> 'DEM'	<i>yö</i> 'DEM'	<i>dzi, do, no hai, haru</i> 'DEM'	<i>u</i> '3sg'	<i>dhi, dhε</i> 'DEM'	<i>u</i> '3sg'	<i>uo</i> '3sg'	<i>o</i> '3sg'
	A	A	A	C				F	F	H	J		
(15) 1DU.INCL-	<i>ngyenggu</i> '1DU.INCL'	<i>(ny)ishag</i> '1DU.INCL'	<i>ngyenggu</i> '1DU.INCL'	-	<i>kashü</i> '1DU.INCL'	<i>kashöhñ</i> '1DU.INCL'	<i>niniñ</i> '1DU.INCL'	<i>uniε</i> '1DU.INCL'	<i>onçi</i> '1DU.INCL'	-	-	-	-
	A	A	A					F	F				
(16) 1DU.EXCL-	<i>ngyeku</i> '1DU.EXCL'	<i>nyish</i> '1DU.EXCL'	<i>ngyeku</i> '1DU.EXCL'	-	<i>nist</i> '1DU.EXCL'	<i>nishi</i> '1DU.EXCL'	<i>nishi</i> '1DU.EXCL'	<i>ninçie</i> '1DU.EXCL'	<i>ençi</i> '1DU.EXCL'	-	-	-	-
	A	A	A					F	F				

Table 4: (continued).

	Bun	Man	Tin	Kan	L. Kin	St. Kin	Chit	Shum	Sun	Rong	Dar	Byang	Chaud
(17)	2DU	kyeku '2DU'	kyentsag '2DU'	—	kisi '2DU'	kishī '2DU'	n/a	kanié '2DU'	nanci '2DU'	—	—	—	—
(18)	3DU	doku 'DEM.DU'	doku 'DEM.DU'	—	n/a	dösöh, nūsöh 'DEM.DU'	n/a	dzinié, nonié, donié 'DEM.DU'	—	—	—	—	—
(19)	1PL.INCL	eran	ngyenare, ngenag, '1PL. INCL'	ngyenaŋ enag '1PL.INCL'	kishū '1PL.INCL'	kishōhād' '1PL.INCL'	gā (?) '1PL.INCL'	uppan '1PL.INCL'	okpan '1PL.INCL'	in	niŋ '1PL'	in	in jamma '1PL'
(20)	1PL.EXCL	hiŋ	ngyere '1PL.EXCL'	ni '1PL'	n/a	niñād' '1PL.EXCL'	nī (?) '1PL.EXCL'	niŋpan '1PL.EXCL'	enpan '1PL.EXCL'	H	H	H	H
(21)	2PL	hanéi '2PL'	kyere '2PL'	ki '2PL'	kī '2PL'	kinā' '2PL'	kan '2PL'	kanpan '2PL'	nānpan '2PL'	gē '2PL'	geni '2PL'	gani '2PL'	gani '2PL'
(22)	3PL	talci '3PL'	dore 'DEM.PL'	duga 'DEM.PL'	nōgau, zhugau 'DEM.PL'	jāgo, dogo, nūgo 'DEM.PL'	yō 'DEM'	dziapan, nopan, doparŋ 'DEM.PL'	haiapan, harapan 'DEM.PL'	dhite, dhate 'DEM.PL'	wi '3PL'	uji '3PL'	uci '3PL'
(23)	to fear	gyarmen bei, 'to fear'	bei 'to fear'	n/a	n/a	byanimig' 'to fear'	n/a	berma 'to fear'	gearbun 'to fear'	gyarpan 'to fear'	jermu 'to be afraid'	dzermo 'to fear'	byomo 'to be afraid of'

Table 4: (continued).

	Bun	Man	Tin	Kan	L. Kin	St. Kin	Chit	Shum	Sun	Rong	Dar	Byang	Chaud
(24)	to come <i>ramen</i> 'to come'	<i>api</i> 'to come'	<i>ampim</i> 'to come'	<i>zhar</i> 'to come'	<i>tünmu</i> 'to come'	<i>bönig;</i> 'to come' <i>bünig;</i> 'to come'	<i>b<sup>n</sup>, bün</i> 'to come'	<i>tuma</i> 'to come'	<i>rawang</i> 'to come'	<i>rhapəñ</i> 'to come'	<i>ramu</i> 'to come'	<i>ra:mo</i> 'to come'	<i>ramo</i> 'to come'
			BA	C				F	H	H	J		
(25)	to cry <i>tjomen</i> 'to cry'	<i>krabtsi</i> 'to cry'	<i>krapi</i> 'to cry'	n/a	n/a	<i>krammig;</i> 'to cry'	n/a	<i>krapma</i> 'to cry'	<i>toebung</i> 'to cry'	<i>työpəñ</i> 'to cry'	<i>temu</i> 'to cry'	<i>tyemo</i> 'to cry'	<i>temo</i> 'to cry'
		B	D					G	H	H	J		
(26)	to eat <i>dzamen</i> 'to eat'	<i>zai</i> 'to eat'	<i>zaim</i> 'to eat'	<i>zau</i> 'to eat'	<i>zāmū</i> 'to eat'	<i>zāmig;</i> 'to eat'	<i>zā</i> 'to eat'	<i>dzai:ma</i> 'to eat'	<i>dzawan</i> 'to eat'	<i>jəpəñ</i> 'to eat'	<i>jamu</i> 'to eat'	<i>dzai:mo</i> 'to eat'	<i>jamo</i> 'to eat'
		B	A	C				F	H	H	J		
(27)	to give <i>datcum</i> 'to give'	<i>randri,</i> 'to give' <i>rami</i> 'to give'	<i>rantri</i> 'to give'	<i>rañ, ke</i> 'to give'	<i>kēmū,</i> 'to give' <i>rānmū</i> 'to give'	<i>kēmig;</i> 'to give' <i>ranmig;</i> 'to give'	<i>dā</i> 'to give'	<i>k<sup>h</sup>ema</i> 'to give'	<i>dawan,</i> 'to give' <i>k<sup>h</sup>ewan</i> 'to give'	<i>dha:pəñ</i> 'to give'	<i>damu</i> 'to give'	<i>damo</i> 'to give'	<i>damo</i> 'to give'
		B	D	C				F	H	H	J		
(28)	to go <i>elmen</i> 'to go'	<i>ibi</i> 'to go'	<i>ibim</i> 'to go'	<i>bungt</i> 'to go'	<i>dēmū,</i> 'to go' <i>baumū</i> 'to go'	<i>bīmig;</i> 'to go'	<i>bī, pā, yün</i> 'to go'	<i>dzema</i> 'to go'	<i>dewan</i> 'to go'	<i>dipəñ</i> 'to go'	<i>demu</i> 'to go'	<i>dyemo</i> 'to go'	<i>demo</i> 'to go'
		B	A	C				F	H	H	J		
(29)	to kill <i>purtsam</i> 'to kill'	<i>satsi</i> 'to kill'	<i>šeči</i> 'to kill'	n/a	<i>shumū</i> 'to kill'	<i>sannig;</i> 'to kill'	n/a	<i>satma</i> 'to kill'	<i>satpañ</i> 'to kill'	<i>sadpəñ</i> 'to kill'	<i>semu,</i> 'to kill' <i>semu</i> 'to kill'	n/a	<i>semo</i> 'to kill'
		B	D					F	H	H	J		
(30)	barley <i>dzat</i> 'barley'	<i>thañzad</i> 'barley'	<i>zad</i> 'barley'	n/a	<i>küfl</i> 'barley' <i>zöd</i> 'wheat'	<i>řag</i> 'barley' <i>zöd;</i> 'corn'	n/a	<i>tā</i> 'barley'	<i>zut</i> 'barley'	<i>swa</i> 'barley'	<i>jε</i> 'barley'	<i>dze</i> 'barley'	<i>jε</i> 'barley'
		D	D								K		G

Table 4: (continued).

	Bun	Man	Tin	Kan	L. Kin	St. Kin	Chit	Shum	Sun	Rong	Dar	Byang	Chaud
(31) calendar day	<i>gak</i> 'calen- dar day'	<i>dhyara</i> 'day' D	<i>gya</i> 'day' D	<i>dhyaree</i> 'day' E	n/a	<i>dīār</i> 'calendar day'	n/a	<i>dīar</i> 'calendar day' F	<i>dīar</i> 'calendar day' F	<i>gya</i> 'day' H	<i>fīa</i> 'day' J	<i>pye</i> 'day' <i>thinja:</i> 'today'	<i>jya</i> 'day'
(32) eye	<i>mik</i> 'eye'	<i>tīra</i> 'eye' B	<i>mig</i> 'eye' D	<i>meega</i> 'eye' E	<i>mīn</i> 'eye'	<i>mīg</i> 'eye'	n/a	<i>mī</i> 'eye' F	<i>mī</i> 'eye' F	<i>mig</i> 'eye' H	<i>me</i> 'eye' J	<i>mye</i> 'eye'	<i>mē</i> 'eye'
(33) fat	<i>ts<sup>h</sup>os</i> 'fat'	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	<i>ts<sup>h</sup>ös</i> 'fat'	n/a	<i>ts<sup>h</sup>os</i> 'fat' F	<i>sos</i> 'fat' F	<i>chyəs</i> 'fat' H	<i>t<sup>h</sup>ε</i> 'fat' J	<i>tshê</i> 'fat'	<i>chε</i> 'fat'
(34) field	<i>rik</i> 'field' D	<i>rhi</i> 'field' D	<i>ri</i> 'field' D	n/a	<i>riñ, rim</i> 'field'	<i>rim</i> 'field'	n/a	<i>ri</i> 'field' G	<i>ree, reem</i> 'field' G	<i>rhigar</i> 'field' H	<i>re</i> 'field' J	<i>re</i> 'field'	<i>re</i> 'field'
(35) god	<i>sat</i> 'god' B	<i>sad</i> 'god' B	<i>sad</i> 'god' D	n/a	n/a	<i>shu</i> 'god'	n/a	<i>sat</i> 'god'	n/a	<i>dyc</i> 'god' H	<i>sε</i> 'god' J	n/a	<i>sε</i> 'god'
(36) grand-child	<i>k'ot</i> 'grand- child'	n/a	<i>koc</i> 'grandson' D	n/a	n/a	<i>spāts</i> 'grand- child'	n/a	<i>kot<sup>h</sup></i> 'grand- child' J	n/a	n/a	<i>k<sup>h</sup>ε</i> 'grand- son' J	<i>khuê</i> 'grand- son'	n/a
(37) hand	<i>lak</i> 'hand' B	<i>gur</i> 'hand' B	<i>gud</i> 'hand' D	<i>guđ</i> 'hand' C	<i>guđ</i> 'hand'	<i>gūd(h)</i> 'hand'	n/a	<i>gut</i> 'hand' F	<i>la</i> 'hand' F	<i>lag</i> 'hand' H	<i>la</i> 'hand' J	<i>lā</i> 'hand'	<i>la</i> 'hand'



The classification of the remaining three languages Bunan, Sunnami, and Rongpo on the basis of the 48 cognate sets above is difficult. One may hypothesize that there is a close genetic link between Sunnami and Rongpo. First, this is implied by their geographical position between the languages belonging to the western and eastern branches of West Himalayish. Second, this is suggested by the presence of a cognate infinitive marker *-pung* / *-pəñ* and a shared word for snow derived from the root *\*aŋ*. One may be tempted to add the presence of the cognate copula *hin* / *hwən*, but I assume that this auxiliary is a Tibetan loanword derived from the common Tibetan copula *yin*. The question remains to be answered whether the two languages should be assigned to one of the two major branches postulated above or established as a third main branch of West Himalayish. I am tempted to classify them as a distinct subgroup within the eastern branch based on the fact that they share a number of core vocabulary items with the languages spoken in Uttarakhand.

**Table 5:** Characteristic traits of western West Himalayish.

Etymon	Description
(1)	reflexes of numeral ‘one’ derived from root <i>*it-</i> rather than <i>*tik-</i>
(3)	reflexes of numeral ‘three’ with initial fricative <sh> rather than <s>
(8)	reflexes of numeral ‘eight’ derived from root <i>*rai</i> rather than <i>*g(j)ed</i>
(13)	reflexes of second person pronoun derived from root <i>*ka-</i> rather than <i>*ga-</i>
(14)	reflexes of demonstrative pronouns derived from roots <i>*do</i> and <i>*nu</i>
(15)–(18)	special dual forms for pronouns
(25)	verb ‘to cry’ derived from root <i>*krap-</i> rather than <i>*tjo-</i>
(27)	verb ‘to give’ derived from roots <i>*ke-</i> and / or <i>*ran-</i> rather than <i>*da-</i>
(37)	noun ‘hand’ derived from root <i>*guɖ</i> rather than <i>*lak</i>
(44)	reflexes of a copula <i>*to-*</i>

\* This copula is likely derived from a verb with the meaning ‘to sit’, cf. Standard Kinnauri *tōshimig* ‘to sit’.

**Table 6:** Characteristic traits of the Lahaul subgroup.

Etymon	Description
(45)	reflexes of an equative copula <i>*ɕu-</i>

**Table 7:** Characteristic traits of the Kinnaur subgroup.

Etymon	Description
(12)	reflexes of a first person singular stem <i>*aŋ-</i> / <i>*ak-</i> in oblique cases

**Table 8:** Characteristic traits of Pithauragarh subgroup.

Etymon	Description
(8), (11), (12), (23), (31), (38)	palatalization of velar plosives before front vowels
(29), (30), (35), (36), (41)	loss of syllable-final *-t (with additional vowel raising / fronting)
(32), (34), (37)	loss of syllable-final *-k*
(33)	loss of syllable-final *-s (with additional vowel raising / fronting)
(39)	noun 'milk' derived from root <i>*nu</i> rather than <i>*pel</i>
(40)	noun 'nose' derived from root <i>*nim</i> ~ <i>*njum</i> rather than <i>*sta</i>
(42)	noun 'snow' derived from root <i>*hro</i> rather than <i>*aŋ</i> or <i>*mu(k)</i>
(43)	reflexes of a copula <i>*hle-</i>

\* This trait is shared by the languages Shumcho and Sunnami. However, as these languages are spoken at a considerable distance from Uttarakhand, the loss of syllable-final consonants in Kinnaur seems to have developed independently from the sound change in the eastern branch.

**Table 9:** Cognates between Sunnami / Rongpo and the Pithauragarh subgroup.

Etymon	Description
(23)	verb 'to fear' going back to <i>*gjar-</i> rather than <i>*bja(ŋ)-</i> (Kinnauri / Shumcho)
(24)	verb 'to come' going back to <i>*ra-</i> rather than <i>*am-</i> / <i>*bun-</i> (eastern branch)
(25)	verb 'to cry' going back to <i>*tjo-</i> rather than <i>*krap-</i> (eastern branch)
(27)	verb 'to give' going back to <i>*da-</i> rather than <i>*ke-</i> (eastern branch)
(28)	verb 'to go' going back to <i>*de-</i> rather than <i>*bi-</i> (eastern branch)
(40)	noun 'nose' derived from root <i>*nim</i> ~ <i>*jum</i> rather than <i>*sta</i>

Finally, the position of Bunan within West Himalayish needs to be addressed. It is not a coincidence that this issue has been left aside until now, as it is difficult to relate the language to other West Himalayish idioms based on the material presented above. Remarkably, Bunan does not share many lexical cognates with the languages of the western branch, in particular not with the directly neighboring languages Man Chad and Tinan. Rather, the language exhibits an astonishing number of lexical parallels to the languages of the eastern branch. These lexical parallels are basically the same as those discussed with regard to a possible genetic affiliation of Sunnami and Rongpo with the Pithauragarh subgroup (see Table 9 above). Based on this evidence, Bunan should also be classified as a member of the eastern branch, despite its "isolated" geographical position in the far west of the West Himalayish speaking area. This brings us to the question of how the language should be positioned within eastern West Himalayish. For the internal classification of this branch, it is helpful to consider additional lexical cognates that have not been included in the comparative word list in Table 10.

**Table 10:** Additional lexical data for eastern West Himalayish languages.

Etymon	Bun	Sun	Rong	Dar	Byang	Chaud
‘where’	<i>guj</i>	<i>goa ~ go</i>	<i>gu</i> H	<i>wude</i> J	<i>ulo</i>	<i>ulo</i>
‘today’	<i>t<sup>h</sup>an</i>	<i>diring*</i>	<i>than</i> H	<i>thyā</i> J	<i>thinja:</i>	<i>thīyā</i>
‘day after tomorrow’	<i>mingjaks</i>	<i>meengeea</i>	<i>mingya</i>	<i>ninjja</i> J	<i>nimja:**</i>	<i>nin-jya</i>
‘snow’	<i>aŋ-***</i>	<i>ung</i>	<i>añ</i>	<i>χo</i> J	<i>hrɔ</i>	<i>hro</i>
‘to die’	<i>ciɕum</i>	<i>sheechpung</i>	<i>sicpəñ</i>	<i>simu ~ sijimu</i>	<i>hicimo</i>	<i>si-ci-mo</i>

\* Sunnami *diring* is a loanword from Tibetan (WT *de ring*).

\*\* Sharma (2001b: 295) gives the meaning ‘tomorrow’ instead of ‘day after tomorrow’.

\*\*\* In Bunan, the root *aŋ-* ‘snow’ only occurs as a bound morpheme in the compound *aŋmik* ‘snow blindness’ (lit. ‘snow-eye’). The Bunan word for ‘snow’ is *mu*, which is likely related to Sunnami *mookpa* ‘rain’ and Darma *mo* ‘rain’.

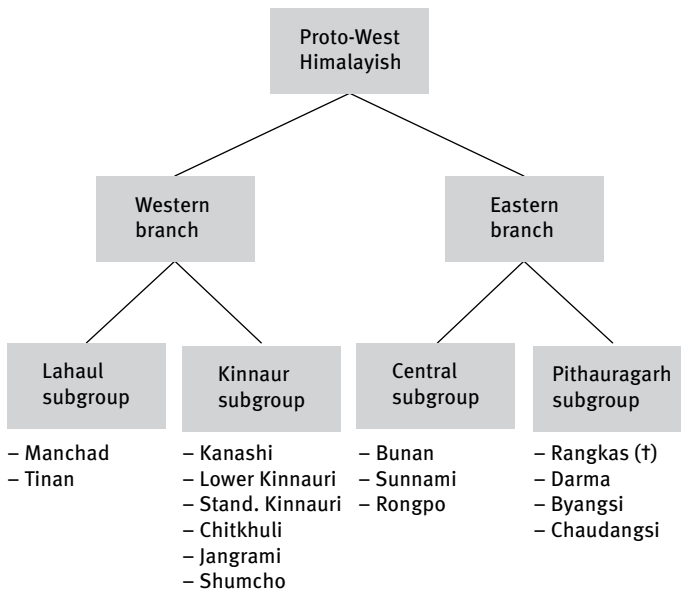
The lexical data in Table 10 suggest that Bunan, Sunnami, and Rongpo form a separate subgroup within the eastern branch of West Himalayish. The three languages share common roots for the interrogative pronoun ‘where’ (*\*gu ~ \*go*), the adverbials ‘today’ (*\*t<sup>h</sup>an*) and ‘day after tomorrow’ (*\*mingja(k)*), and the noun ‘snow’ (*\*aŋ*). Reflexes of the adverbs *\*t<sup>h</sup>an* and *\*mingja(k)* are also attested in the Pithauragarh subgroup. However, the reflexes of the adverb ‘today’ go back to a compound expression *\*t<sup>h</sup>an-gja(k)* (lit. ‘today-day’) rather than a simple form, while the reflexes of the adverb ‘day after tomorrow’ exhibit an initial nasal /n/ rather than /m/.

The last cognate set in the list corroborates the assumption that the six languages indeed form a close genetic unit within West Himalayish. The verb stem ‘to die’ exhibits the same morphological structure in all six languages. The verb consists of the lexical root *ci-* / *si-*, which is augmented by a palatal affricate. In Bunan, this affricate consists of two distinct morphemes: a functionally opaque derivational suffix *-t* and the middle conjugation marker *-ɕ*. It is highly probable that the affricate is composed of the same morphemes in the other languages as well, at least from a diachronic perspective. This presence of identical derivational morphemes on a cognate verb is highly indicative of a close genetic relationship and suggests that future comparative research on West Himalayish languages should also take into account morphosyntactic correspondences.

Based on the data presented in Table 10, I classify Bunan, Sunnami and Rongpo together in a “Central subgroup” within the eastern branch of West Himalayish. The term “central” may seem misleading given the fact that only one of the three languages (Sunnami) is located in the geographical center of the West Himalayish speaking area.

However, the outlying position of Bunan in the West and Rongpo in the East suggests that the three languages may once have been part of a West Himalayish dialect continuum that extended over the areas of present-day Spiti and western Ngari, and thus lay in the (supposed) center of the then West Himalayish speaking area.

Based on the material discussed in this section, we may draw the tentative family tree given in Figure 16 below.<sup>17</sup> Again, I would like to emphasize that this tree is the result of a small-scale comparative study that is based on a limited amount of data. Accordingly, the conclusions drawn should be considered as preliminary. Future research may call for a revision and refinement of the model proposed here.



**Figure 16:** A tentative family tree of West Himalayish.

### 1.4.3 The relationship between West Himalayish and Zhangzhung

This section discusses the relationship between the West Himalayish languages and the extinct language Zhangzhung. Zhangzhung was spoken in the ancient kingdom of Zhangzhung (WT *zhan zhuñ*), which once covered the southwestern parts of today's

<sup>17</sup> The West Himalayish language Jangrami, which is spoken in Upper Kinnaur, has not been included in the discussion above. However, Christian Huber (personal communication) kindly shared his Jangrami data with me. His material suggests that Jangrami should be assigned to the Kinnaur subgroup of western West Himalayish.

Tibetan Autonomous Region. The realm was conquered by the expanding Tibetan empire in the seventh century and its population subsequently assimilated to the language and culture of Tibet (van Driem 2001: 946–947). However, even though Zhangzhung became extinct as a spoken language, it survived in written form in the sacred texts of the Bon religion. These Bon manuscripts are a valuable source for comparative Tibeto-Burman linguistics, as they allow us to draw inferences about the linguistic situation in the western Himalayas prior to the expansion of the Tibetan empire. The translation and interpretation of the lexical material is, however, a difficult task, as Martin (2010: 8, 11–12) points out. This is primarily due to the special circumstances under which the language was transmitted. Over the centuries, the Bon scriptures must have been copied by generations of scribes who did not know Zhangzhung particularly well and consequently tended to change the form or the meaning of words that they did not understand. In this way, a considerable number of minor and major modifications accumulated over time, and nowadays the original spelling or meaning of certain words can often only be reconstructed by a careful philological analysis of the manuscripts.

The sacred texts of the Bon religion, however, might not be the only remaining source for Zhangzhung. Thomas (1933) suggested that the language is also documented in a small number of manuscripts from the Library Cave of Dunhuang. This hypothesis was originally disputed but has now gained wide acceptance (see van Driem 2001: 952–953 for an overview). The manuscripts have been analyzed by a team of Japanese scholars (Takeuchi, Nagano & Ueda 2001; Takeuchi & Nishida 2009), who accepted Thomas' view that the language is Zhangzhung, albeit a more archaic variety than the one found in sacred Bon texts. It has not, however, proved possible to translate the manuscripts so far. This has led Martin (2013) to raise the question of whether the identification of the language as Zhangzhung was not premature. His objection seems reasonable, given the fact that the growing amount of lexical data available for both Zhangzhung and modern West Himalayish languages has not yet made it possible to translate at least some longer passages of the text. Future research on Zhangzhung as well as the Tibeto-Burman languages of the western Himalayas will hopefully clarify this issue.

While the identification of the language of the Dunhuang manuscripts as Zhangzhung needs to be further substantiated, there is plausible evidence for a close genetic link between Zhangzhung and the West Himalayish languages. First, this is implied by the geographical distribution of the modern West Himalayish languages, all of which are spoken to the south and the west of the area that was known as Zhangzhung in ancient times. The West Himalayish speaking communities of today might be the descendants of Zhangzhung tribes that lived in inaccessible border areas of the former kingdom, where the cultural and political influence of the Tibetan empire remained weak. Second, there is comparative evidence for this hypothesis. Matisoff (2001: 22) has identified nine etyma that are exclusively attested in Zhangzhung and West Himalayish. Although the significance of these isoglosses has been called into question by

van Driem (2001: 956–957), the identification of Zhangzhung as a West Himalayish language remains the most plausible hypothesis for the time being, as will be shown in the following. Based on lexical comparisons between Zhangzhung and West Himalayish, some scholars have postulated close genetic affinities between Zhangzhung and particular West Himalayish languages. Martin (2010: 17–22), for example, speculates on a close genetic link between Zhangzhung and Darma. Sharma (1989b: 10–12) assumes that Zhangzhung and the West Himalayish languages of Lahaul (i.e., Bunan, Manchad, and Tinan) might be closely related. Van Driem (2001: 955) thinks along similar lines when he states that an etymological study by Hoffmann (1972) suggested “a close affinity between Zhangzhung and the Bunan language of Gahri.” In the following, these claims will be checked against linguistic evidence. Table 11 contains the nine etyma assembled by Matisoff (2001) as well as nine additional lexemes that were not considered in his study, but which I believe to be helpful in assessing the genetic relationship between Zhangzhung and West Himalayish.<sup>18</sup> Needless to say, we cannot make any definitive statements based on the limited and fragmentary material available at present. Thus, the results of the following discussion have to be considered as preliminary.

The data presented in Table 11 suggest that there is indeed a close genetic link between Zhangzhung and West Himalayish. In particular, such a close relationship is implied by a number of roots that occur in Zhangzhung and are also robustly attested across West Himalayish. The most common of these lexemes, all of which are attested in at least eight modern West Himalayish languages, are listed in Table 12.

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**18** The material is taken from the same sources as the data discussed in Section 1.4.2., except words marked with the abbreviation STEDT, which have been extracted from the STEDT database ([stedt.berkeley.edu/search](http://stedt.berkeley.edu/search)).

Table 11: Lexical cognates between Zhangzhung and West Himalayish.

Etymon	ZZ	Bun	Man	Tin	Kan	L. Kin	St. Kin	Chit	Shum	Sun	Rong	Dar	Byang	Chaud
(1) <b>arrow</b>	<i>hrim</i> 'arrow'	<i>šim</i> 'arrow'	<i>čuñ</i> 'arrow'	<i>čuñ</i> 'arrow'	n/a	n/a	<i>mōh</i> 'arrow'	n/a	<i>šim</i> 'arrow'	<i>sheem</i> 'arrow'	<i>tir</i> 'arrow'	<i>tir</i> 'arrow'	<i>rim</i> 'arrow'	<i>rim</i> 'arrow'
(2) <b>barley</b> (Matisoff 2001)	<i>zad</i> 'barley'	<i>dzat</i> 'barley'	<i>thainzad</i> 'barley'	<i>zad</i> 'barley'	n/a	<i>zōd</i> 'barley'	<i>zōd</i> 'barley'	n/a	<i>łá</i> 'barley'	<i>zut</i> 'barley'	<i>jəd</i> 'wheat'	<i>je</i> 'barley'	<i>dze</i> 'barley'	<i>je</i> 'barley'
(3) <b>black</b>	<i>kha nig</i> 'black'	<i>k'aj</i> 'black'	<i>roki</i> 'black'	<i>roki</i> 'black'	n/a	n/a	<i>rōkh</i> 'black'	n/a	<i>k'ai</i> 'black'	<i>k'ani</i> 'black'	<i>khasyū</i> 'black'	<i>womnu</i> 'black'	<i>wamde</i> 'black'	<i>womda</i> 'black'
(4) <b>blue</b>	<i>ting</i> 'blue'	<i>tinji</i> 'blue, green'	<i>tingi</i> 'blue, green'	<i>tingi</i> 'blue, green'	n/a	n/a	<i>rāg</i> 'blue, green'	n/a	<i>tinji</i> 'green'	<i>teengee</i> 'blue'	<i>tiñd</i> 'blue'	<i>tunnu</i> 'blue, green'	<i>timbu</i> 'blue'	<i>timburəñ</i> 'blue'
(5) <b>cloud</b>	<i>du</i> 'cloud'	<i>du</i> 'cloud'	<i>du</i> 'cloud'	<i>du</i> 'cloud'	n/a	n/a	<i>duböñ</i> 'mist'	n/a	<i>dzu:</i> 'cloud'	<i>zhoo</i> 'cloud'	<i>ba:daw</i> 'cloud'	<i>mo</i> 'cloud, rain'	<i>kasa:</i> 'cloud'	<i>saka</i> 'cloud'
(6) <b>DIM suffix</b>	<i>-tse</i> 'DIM'	<i>-tsi</i> 'DIM'	<i>-tsa</i> 'DIM'	<i>-tsa</i> 'DIM?'	n/a	<i>-ts</i> 'DIM'	<i>-ts</i> 'DIM'	n/a	<i>-ts</i> 'DIM?'	<i>-ch</i> 'DIM?'	<i>-ci</i> 'DIM'	<i>-tse / -tsi</i> 'DIM?'	<i>-tse</i> 'DIM'	<i>-tse</i> 'DIM'
(7) <b>ear</b> (Matisoff 2001)	<i>ratse</i> 'ear'	<i>retsi</i> 'ear'	<i>rhefra</i> 'ear'	<i>refra</i> 'ear'	<i>rhod</i> 'ear'	<i>kāññ</i> 'ear'	<i>kāññ</i> 'ear'	n/a	<i>repañ</i> 'ear'	<i>repañ</i> 'ear'	<i>kanuñ</i> 'ear'	<i>reju</i> 'ear'	<i>hrace</i> 'ear'	<i>ratse</i> 'ear'

Table 11: (continued).

Etymon	ZZ	Bun	Man	Tin	Kan	L. Kin	St. Kin	Chit	Shum	Sun	Rong	Dar	Byang	Chaud
(8) fat (Matisoff 2001)	<i>tshas</i> 'fat'	<i>ts'òs</i> 'fat'	<i>ts'òj</i> 'fat'	n/a	n/a	n/a	<i>tshòs</i> 'fat'	n/a	<i>ts'òs</i> 'fat'	<i>sos</i> 'fat'	<i>chyəs</i> 'fat'	<i>ts'ə</i> 'fat'	<i>chə</i> 'fat'	<i>chə</i> 'fat'
(9) girl/ daughter/ woman	<i>tsa med</i> 'woman, girl'	<i>tsemet</i> 'daughter, girl'	<i>mečmi</i> 'woman'	<i>meča</i> 'woman'	<i>chime</i> 'daughter, ter'	<i>cimě</i> 'daughter, ter'	<i>ciměd'</i> 'daughter, ter'	n/a	<i>tsamets</i> 'daughter, girl'	<i>tsamet</i> 'daughter, girl'	<i>carma</i> 'daughter, ter'	<i>timme</i> 'daughter, girl'	<i>tsame</i> 'daughter, girl'	<i>tsəmə</i> 'daughter, girl'
(10) god	<i>sad</i> 'god'	<i>sat</i> 'god'	<i>sad</i> 'god'	<i>səd</i> 'god'	n/a	n/a	<i>shu,</i> <i>darga</i> 'god'	n/a	<i>sat</i> 'god'	<i>la</i> 'god'	<i>dyc</i> 'god'	<i>sə</i> 'god'	n/a	<i>sə</i> 'god'
(11) gold (Matisoff 2001)	<i>zangs</i> 'iron (?)'	<i>ser</i> 'gold'	<i>zang</i> 'gold'	<i>žəñ</i> 'gold'	<i>zāngg</i> 'gold'	n/a	<i>za<sup>n</sup></i> 'gold'	n/a	<i>dzan</i> 'gold'	<i>zan</i> 'gold'	<i>jās</i> 'gold'	<i>jās</i> 'gold'	<i>dzan</i> 'gold'	<i>jəñ</i> 'gold'
(12) heart (Matisoff 2001)	<i>she</i> 'heart'	<i>əca</i> 'heart'	<i>shuja</i> 'heart'	n/a	n/a	n/a	<i>zūā</i> 'heart'	n/a	<i>əca</i> 'heart'	<i>əca</i> 'heart'	<i>swasya</i> 'heart'	<i>çigjo</i> 'heart'	<i>fiśo</i> 'heart'	<i>əicə</i> 'heart'
(13) intestines (Matisoff 2001)	<i>hritsum</i> 'intestines'	<i>guma</i> 'intestines'	<i>ritsi</i> 'small intestines'	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	<i>guma</i> 'intestines'	n/a	<i>nancya</i> 'intestines'	<i>ɰama</i> 'small intestines'	<i>tsəri</i> 'intestines'	<i>tsəri</i> 'intestines'
(14) neck (Matisoff 2001)	<i>khang</i> 'neck'	<i>k'angul</i> 'neck'	<i>muthu</i> 'neck'	n/a	n/a	<i>rāñ</i> 'neck'	<i>kak'ts</i> 'neck'	n/a	<i>k'akli:</i> 'neck'	<i>kaklee</i> 'neck'	<i>mərgəni</i> 'neck'	<i>bana</i> 'neck'	<i>koŋkr</i> 'neck'	<i>bana</i> 'neck'

Table 11: (continued).

Etymon	ZZ	Bun	Man	Tin	Kan	L. Kin	St. Kin	Chit	Shum	Sun	Rong	Dar	Byang	Chaud
(15) nose (Matisoff 2001)	<i>lgyum zhi gjump<sup>h</sup>uknyā</i>	<i>hyanzi</i> 'nose' C	<i>hyanzi</i> 'nose' C	<i>hyanzi</i> 'nose' D	<i>ta</i> 'nose' C	<i>stakūts</i> 'nose' C	<i>tākūs</i> 'nose' C	n/a	<i>mur</i> 'nose' G	<i>neom</i> 'nose' G	<i>nhimci</i> 'nose' H	<i>nim</i> 'nose' J	<i>hnim</i> 'nose'	<i>hnim</i> 'nose'
(16) old (person)	<i>shang ze ʕandzi</i> 'old person'	<i>ʕandzi</i> 'old woman' D	<i>hyanzi</i> 'old woman' D	<i>hyanzi</i> 'old woman' D	n/a	n/a	<i>yanzē</i> 'old (f.)' H	<i>būḡḡauci</i> 'old' H	<i>mur</i> 'nose' G	<i>ninpa</i> 'old' F	<i>syahni</i> 'older' H	<i>ʕjanu</i> 'being old' J	<i>janthe</i> 'old (person)' J	<i>santa</i> 'old (person)' J
(17) red	<i>mang</i> 'red'	<i>manj</i> 'red' D	<i>šei</i> 'red' D	<i>mañi</i> 'red' D	n/a	n/a	<i>shwikh</i> 'red' H	n/a	<i>manj</i> 'red' F	<i>manñi</i> 'red' F	<i>meñd</i> 'red' H	<i>mannu</i> 'red' J	<i>mande</i> 'red' J	<i>manḡa</i> 'red' J
(18) skin (Matisoff 2001)	<i>pad</i> 'skin'	<i>bat</i> 'bark' D	<i>cam</i> 'skin' D	<i>cam</i> 'skin' D	n/a	n/a	<i>bōd</i> 'skin' H	n/a	<i>bot</i> 'skin' F	<i>pakp<sup>h</sup>a</i> 'skin' F	<i>lotɔ</i> 'skin' I	<i>bɛ</i> 'skin' J	<i>bɛ</i> 'skin' J	<i>bɛ</i> 'skin' J
(19) white	<i>shi nom ɛi</i> 'white' B	<i>ɛi</i> 'white' B	<i>thsañsi</i> 'white' B	<i>sii</i> 'white' D	n/a	<i>chōg</i> 'white' H	<i>thōg</i> 'white' H	n/a	<i>ɛi</i> 'white paint' F	<i>ts<sup>h</sup>ani</i> 'white' F	<i>sid</i> 'white' H	<i>ɕinu</i> 'white' J	<i>ʃi:de</i> 'white' J	<i>ɛida</i> 'white' J

**Table 12:** Robustly attested cognates between ZZ and WH.

Etymon	Zhangzhung	Proto-West Himalayish	Meaning
(1)	<i>zad</i>	* <i>zat</i>	‘barley’
(4)	<i>ting</i>	* <i>tiŋ-</i>	‘blue’
(6)	<i>-tse</i>	* <i>-tse</i> ~ * <i>-tsi</i>	‘diminutive suffix’
(7)	<i>ra tse</i>	* <i>re</i>	‘ear’
(8)	<i>ts<sup>h</sup>as</i>	* <i>ts<sup>h</sup>os</i>	‘fat’
(9)	<i>tsa med</i>	* <i>tsamet</i>	‘girl’
(10)	<i>sad</i>	* <i>sat</i>	‘god’
(11)	<i>zangs</i>	* <i>zaŋ</i>	‘gold’ ?
(12)	<i>she</i>	* <i>ʃe</i>	‘heart’
(16)	<i>shang ze</i>	* <i>ʃ(j)aŋ</i>	‘old (person)’
(17)	<i>mang</i>	* <i>maŋ</i>	‘red’
(19)	<i>shi nom</i>	* <i>ʃi</i>	‘white’

The case of the Zhangzhung word *zang* ‘iron’ requires more explanation. Matisoff (2001: 9–10) has identified the root as one of the lexemes that are exclusively shared by Zhangzhung and West Himalayish.<sup>19</sup> He compares this root with words for ‘iron’ that occur in the West Himalayish languages spoken in Uttarakhand, where the following forms are found (all forms adopted from Matisoff<sup>20</sup>):

Rangkas	<i>chyang</i>
Darma	<i>nijang</i>
Chaudangsi	<i>najang</i>
Byangsi	<i>najag</i>

The forms in Darma, Chaudangsi, and Byangsi are morphologically complex, as they are composed of a first syllable *na-* / *ni-* and the root *jang*. The root *jang* also occurs as a simple noun in all three languages. However, when occurring as a simple noun, *jang* does not mean ‘iron’ but ‘gold’. The meaning ‘gold’ for the simple noun is not confined to the West Himalayish languages spoken in Pithauragarh district. Rather, this meaning is attested in all other languages except for Bunan, where the original word has been replaced by the Tibetan loanword *ser* (WT *gser*), and Chitkhuli and Lower Kinnauri, for which no data are available. Based on the comparative evidence, we are

<sup>19</sup> Matisoff (2001: 10) acknowledges that WT *lcags* ‘looks rather similar’, but it is much more plausible that the word has a cognate in WT *zangs* ‘copper’. However, given the fact that the etymon has a different meaning in Tibetan, it may nonetheless be helpful in defining West Himalayish as a distinct subgroup.

<sup>20</sup> Matisoff (2001: 9) adduces a fifth lexeme *najang* from a language called “Almora”. While the lexeme is clearly cognate to the forms found in Darma, Chaudangsi, and Byangsi, it is not clear which language the term “Almora” refers to. Most likely, “Almora” is merely a dialect of one of the four languages listed above, which is why I have excluded it here.

thus able to reconstruct a noun *\*zan* for proto-West Himalayish, which most likely had the meaning ‘gold’. However, we are then confronted with the problem that the cognate form *zang* in Zhangzhung does not mean ‘gold’ but ‘iron’, the Zhangzhung word for ‘gold’ being *mar*.

There are basically two possibilities to account for this semantic mismatch between Zhangzhung and West Himalayish. If we assume that the semantic interpretation of *zang* as ‘gold’ in Zhangzhung is correct, this entails that the word must have undergone a semantic change in either Zhangzhung or the West Himalayish languages. In my opinion, it seems more likely that the semantic change occurred in Zhangzhung. The opposite assumption would imply that the remaining West Himalayish languages all underwent the change independently, which seems very unlikely, even if we acknowledge the possibility that the change might have spread areally.<sup>21</sup> However, given the fact that Zhangzhung was transmitted as a written language for more than a millennium (see above), it is imaginable that the meaning ‘iron’ for *zang* is due to a misinterpretation on behalf of the scribes who copied the Bon texts. This assumption is even more plausible in view of the fact that the Zhangzhung word for ‘gold’, *mar*, is not attested in any other West Himalayish language, but has a potential cognate in Written Tibetan *dmar* ‘red’, from which it might have been derived. However, at present, it is not possible to decide which of the two scenarios discussed here is preferable.

In addition to the etyma discussed above are two additional lexemes, for ‘god’ and ‘skin’, that are less well attested but nonetheless have a considerably wide distribution across West Himalayish. These words are given in Table 13.

**Table 13:** Moderately well attested cognates between ZZ and WH.

Etymon	Zhangzhung	Proto-West Himalayish	Meaning
(10)	<i>sad</i>	<i>*sat</i>	‘god’
(18)	<i>pad</i> *	<i>*bad</i>	‘skin’

\* The voiceless consonant in Zhangzhung again might be the result of a scribal error, given the fact that the Tibetan letters <p> and <b> look similar.

The fourteen lexemes that have been discussed so far imply that there is a close genetic link between Zhangzhung and West Himalayish in general. However, this finding immediately brings us to the question of whether there are further cognate forms with a more limited distribution, which would allow us to establish a genetic

<sup>21</sup> Theoretically, it is possible that the semantic shift occurred in Proto-West Himalayish after Zhangzhung had split off from the family. This assumption is, however, implausible, as there are no other linguistic traits that would distinguish Zhangzhung from all other West Himalayish languages.

link between particular modern West Himalayish languages and Zhangzhung. So far, I have only been able to identify six lexemes that might prove helpful in classifying Zhangzhung within West Himalayish. These are listed in Table 14.

**Table 14:** Rarely attested cognates between ZZ and WH.

Etymon	Zhangzhung	Proto-West Himalayish	Meaning
(1)	<i>hrim</i>	* <i>hrim</i>	‘arrow’
(3)	<i>kha nig</i>	* <i>k<sup>h</sup>a</i>	‘black’
(5)	<i>du</i>	* <i>du</i>	‘cloud’
(13)	<i>hri tsum</i>	* <i>hri</i>	‘intestines’
(14)	<i>khang</i>	* <i>k<sup>h</sup>aŋ</i>	‘neck’
(15)	<i>lgyum zhi</i>	* <i>lgjum</i>	‘nose’

We have to be careful when interpreting the distribution of these lexemes across West Himalayish, as native roots have been replaced by loanwords from Tibetan and Indo-Aryan in many cases. Nevertheless, it seems that a clear pattern emerges from the data. The roots for ‘arrow’, ‘black’, ‘neck’, and ‘nose’ are robustly attested in the languages that have been assigned to the eastern branch of West Himalayish in the preceding section, whereas they do not occur in the languages of the western branch. The root for ‘cloud’, on the other hand, is robustly attested in the western branch, but only occurs once in the eastern branch in Bunan, where it may represent a borrowing from Manchad or Tinan. The root for ‘intestines’, finally, is only attested once in the western branch and twice in the eastern branch. However, the distribution of the lexeme is particularly difficult to interpret, given the fact that there are no data obtainable for seven languages.

All in all, the data suggest that Zhangzhung should be assigned to the eastern branch of West Himalayish. This is not only implied by linguistic evidence but also by the geographical distribution of the languages, as the core region of the kingdom of Zhangzhung lay to the north of present-day Uttarakhand. Northern Uttarakhand is the traditional homeland of the ethnolinguistic communities that speak the West Himalayish languages Rongpo, Darma, Byangsi, and Chaudangsi. The evidence thus lends credence to Martin and van Driem, who speculated that Zhangzhung might be a close relative of Darma and Bunan, respectively. Within the eastern branch, Bunan exhibits the highest number of cognates with Zhangzhung, sharing seventeen out of nineteen possible forms. The lexemes that are not shared do not represent distinct West Himalayish roots, but are Tibetan loanwords (*gju ma* ‘intestines’ from WT *rgyu ma* and *ser* ‘gold’ from WT *gser*). However astonishing the lexical parallels between Bunan and Zhangzhung may be, they should not tempt us to draw any premature conclusions about a particularly close genetic link between the two languages, let alone to identify Bunan as a direct descendant of Zhangzhung. The available material is still too sparse and fragmentary for this purpose. For the time being, we can only

note that Zhangzhung seems to be genetically affiliated with eastern West Himalayish and that it may be a close relative to the languages of the central subgroup, i.e., Bunan, Sunnami and Rongpo.

## 1.5 The data and their presentation

### 1.5.1 Fieldwork and language consultants

The data on which this grammar is based were collected during four fieldtrips to India in 2010 (12 weeks), 2011 (12 weeks), 2012 (7 weeks) and 2013 (12 weeks). When I first arrived in Himachal Pradesh in June 2010, I was overwhelmed by the hospitality and openness of the indigenous population. Although I was a complete foreigner in the area, the members of the indigenous communities treated me with great kindness and were happy to introduce me to other community members. In this way, I was able to establish numerous contacts to Bunan speakers in a short time and eventually found a Bunan speaking family in Keylong that was willing to host me for the summer.

Despite the hospitality and kindness that I met with, I quickly realized that summer was not a particularly good time of the year to do fieldwork in Lahaul. Since the region is a high alpine area that is cut off from the outside world from late autumn to late spring, the inhabitants of Lahaul are forced to secure their livelihood between April and September. During that time of the year, they are busy herding cattle, irrigating fields, harvesting crops, running shops, hotels, and restaurants, guiding trekking groups, and so forth. Moreover, they may want to travel to nearby areas to visit relatives, attend religious festivals, or settle administrative matters. Accordingly, I experienced great difficulties in finding Bunan speakers who could spare time to meet with me on a regular basis. Eventually, I was able to find a number of male speakers who had time to work with me. These consultants were born in 1936, 1953, 1967, 1973 and 1981 and had all received a higher school education. All of them were fluent in Bunan, Hindi, English and had some basic competence in Manchad. The consultants born in 1936 and 1973 were additionally fluent in both the western Tibetan variety spoken in Lahaul and the Central Tibetan variety spoken among members of the Tibetan exile community.

When I returned to Lahaul in the following summer, I was confident that I would be able to work with the same language consultants whom I had been working with the year before. However, it quickly became clear that those people had other obligations and would not be able to spare the time to meet up with me on a regular basis. I was thus forced to look for new consultants and was eventually fortunate enough to meet Tshering Dorje, who became my main consultant. Tshering Dorje was born in 1936, spent his school time in Keylong, and as a young adult studied at the monastery of Tholing, which lies in the area that nowadays forms the western part of the Tibetan Autonomous Region. Because of his education, he was later hired

as an advisor and interpreter by the Deputy Commissioner of the district of Lahaul and Spiti. Eventually, he was promoted to the rank of a Public Relations Officer and subsequently served in several different districts of Himachal Pradesh. Accordingly, Tshering Dorje is well acquainted with the indigenous communities of Himachal Pradesh and western Tibet. Thus, he did not only teach me his native language, but also shared his profound knowledge about the history and culture of the indigenous communities of Himachal Pradesh with me.

In August 2011, Tshering Dorje only had time to work with me for one week. However, he showed great interest in my work and invited me to visit him during the winter months in his house in the Kullu Valley.<sup>22</sup> Although the Swiss academic calendar only allowed me to spend a maximum of seven weeks in the field during winter, I accepted his offer and visited him and his wife in the village of Barituni nearby Kullu in January and February 2012. During that time, I not only had the opportunity to work with him and his wife, but also got to know his nephew, Sonam Angrup, who became a valuable consultant and close friend. In addition, I also worked with Bunan speakers who spent the winter months in Manali to enlarge and round out my corpus of language data.

With the help of Tshering Dorje and his family, I was able to collect and analyze a considerable amount of data during the seven weeks that I spent in the Kullu Valley in winter 2012. As the winter months turned out to be a much more suitable time for fieldwork than the summer months, I decided to do my fourth and final fieldtrip in winter 2013. During that stay, which had a length of twelve weeks, I again worked with my main consultant and his nephew as well as with my consultants in Manali.

Although I recorded and analyzed the majority of my language data in India, I also conducted small-scale research in Switzerland, where one member of the Bunan community has settled down. This consultant had spent the greater part of his adolescence in the Kullu Valley, where he grew up speaking Hindi and the local Indo-Aryan dialect as his first languages. Accordingly, he never gained full proficiency in the language of his parents. However, my Swiss consultant still had an excellent passive command of Bunan and thus became an invaluable help for the transcription and preliminary analysis of the recordings that I had made in the field.

In Table 15, I list the consultants from which I recorded the majority of my elicited data. The table contains their names, their year of birth as well as the years in which I worked together with them.

Table 15 above suggests that there is a strong bias towards male speakers in my language corpus. However, this is only true for elicited data. My corpus of natural language data (see below) comprises various recordings of conversations that involved

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<sup>22</sup> Note that the Kullu Valley, unlike Lahaul, is easily accessible from Delhi throughout the year.

female speakers. Furthermore, I had access to female speakers during all my fieldtrips and double-checked crucial grammatical phenomena with them.

**Table 15:** Consultants that participated in elicitation sessions.

Consultant	Year of birth	Sex	Years of collaboration
Tshering Dorje	1936	male	2011–2013
Nawang Norbu	1939	male	2010–2011, 2013
Shamsher Singh	1953	male	2010–2011
Tuthob Gyalchen	1967	male	2010
Prem Singh Barbogpa	1968	male	2012–2013
Tashi Larje	1973	male	2010–2013
Sonam Angrup	1981	male	2012–2013
Sonam Zangpo	1984	male	2010–2011

When I began to conduct fieldwork on Bunan, I primarily used English as a contact language. This was possible because male Bunan speakers generally have a good command of the language, in particular young speakers. I only used Hindi when I had reason to believe that speakers had difficulties in expressing themselves in English. As time went by, I began to use Bunan as a contact language, especially when talking to female speakers, who often only have passive knowledge of English.

### 1.5.2 Corpus of language data

The material on which this grammar is based was recorded with an Olympus LS-11 recorder in Waveform Audio Format (WAV) and analyzed with the software Praat. The corpus of recordings consists of five different types of data: (i) data recorded from elicitation sessions, (ii) data recorded from natural discourse, (iii) data recorded from traditional and autobiographical stories, (iv) data from my field notes (unrecorded), and (v) data adapted from other sources.

The corpus of elicited materials consists of 69 hours of recordings. I recorded these materials from the consultants listed in Table 15. About half of the elicited data were recorded from my main consultant Tshering Dorje, while the other half was recorded from my other consultants in equal proportions. Throughout this grammar, elicited sentences are referenced with an abbreviation that consists of the initials of the respective consultant, the number of the respective recording and the number of the respective sentence. In addition, the label “elicited” is added in square bracket, e.g., TD 83.14 [elicited].

The database further comprises approximately seven hours of recordings of natural discourse that have been transcribed, annotated, and translated. These files mainly represent recordings of everyday conversations between members of my