

**LANGUAGE SHIFT, MAINTENANCE AND
OBSOLESCENCE: BANGANI, A CASE STUDY**

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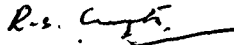
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled, "LANGUAGE SHIFT, MAINTENANCE AND OBSOLESCENCE: BANGANI, A CASE STUDY" submitted by P.Sunil Menon in part-fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any other university. To the best of our knowledge this is an original work.

We recommend that this dissertation should be placed before the examiners for their consideration for the award of the above-mentioned degree.


(Supervisor)


(Chairperson)

This is dedicated to the people of Bindri, Sandra, Bamsu, Saras, Dagoli, Chiwa-Jagta, Butanu, Anol and Arakot; and everyone else who put up with me; I thank my supervisor Prof. R.S. Gupta for his support and advice and the Centre for Linguistics and English for allowing me this opportunity; and above all, I thank Santwana, without whom...

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I. Introduction

PROSPECTUS

"In the end... (in the social sciences) one can at best hope to state one's biases".

—Joshua A. Fishman

It is the self-accorded privilege of every researcher to reiterate a set of given propositions, while at once insistently wreaking modifications upon them in the name of advancement of knowledge. Accordingly, one can pick a tiny quibble with the above quote—to wit, its first part. What is referred to can be profitably done right at the outset, as a kind of tone-setter, rather than let it emerge in the end. But what *is* referred to? Is it a condition or an activity; cause or effect; a transparency born of abundant caution; or a humanistic, value-centred approach? Or is it merely a carryover from the solemn 'scientism' of formulating a hypothesis so as to test it against reality, masquerading as a theory of cultural relativism? Any which way, it seems as honest an attempt as any to exorcise some fundamentals that usually go unstated and one shall adopt it without further ado.

The question of bias is one that frequently attends research, especially in disciplines that can be defined only within a socio-political matrix. **Minority language studies** bequeath to us precisely such a territory. Bracketed with 'minority', 'language' here clearly cedes its Chomskyan sense of a formal template and instead evokes instant, messy images of a sociological order—identity, preserved ethnicity markers, in-group communication etc. Then, 'minority' itself contains an implied, if not overt, politics—relations of hierarchy and domination, invasion and resistance, the main text and the margins. This bundle of seminal archetypes works both ways, generating both adherents and critics, but ensures that the *sociolinguistic* debate stays within its framework. Having named one 'minority' and the other 'dominating', it really fixes the subject to the universe demarcated by the nomenclature. There is, thus, a polyvalence within the terminology, a tension between its two seeming referents: one is *linguistic*, the other is purportedly *extra-linguistic*.

In stage two of the debate, this yields several interposing currents. Social psychologists retrieve the question of 'minority' from a primarily statistical reading and describe it as not an objective 'fact' but a variable self-ascription, traceable to an individual/collective

consciousness¹. Areal contact studies buttress the view that there is no direct correlation between the exact hierarchy of language dominance and the *direction* in which linguistic transfusion takes place. Contact and convergence phenomena in a sprachbund follow an independent path, and by no means a singular one. There is no one-way cline, borrowings occur on all sides, and not always motivated by power relations. Indeed, the dominant language often itself borrows, incorporates and expands.² All languages, by definition, possess an indigenous technology that enables *innovation*. Still, the results are frequently unpredictable, and only analyzable in retrospect—e.g. in intense contact situations, new entities develop, like Dakkhini, with morphed genetic codes that surpass the inputs.

There is another, crucial, problematic. This is the linguist's paradox, when confronted with a lesser known language. Cast in the framework of the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis and its approach to the 'grammar of thought', descriptive analysis begins to take on some functions of ethnography, with which it shares a conceptual turf. The potential loss of cultural material in cases of obsolescence presents the converse side of 'literacy' and 'development'. Seeing value in *difference* has its immediate corollary—it engenders a resistance to the idea of change and an impulse to preserve, at least partly for academic reasons, a subject-matter as it is. This not just discounts its autonomy, it subtly dehumanizes it, placing it in a *natural* class—like the environment—that can die and hence must be *preserved* for whatever higher-order utility it offers to the mainstream. Such an equation is realized in entities like Terra Lingua, a body of linguists and other specialists, who have taken upon themselves to tap the vast riches of folk knowledge in the sphere of botany and other areas, that demand the continuation of a certain pattern of living. In cases of near-obsolescence of native knowledge systems, documentation becomes a task invested with special urgency. Positive evaluations are surely possible, but simultaneously one can recognize a *proxy* Luddite philosophy at work, one that requires firstly that the subject be specimenized.

It is in full cognizance of these attendant problematics that this research project proposes to take up **Bangani**, a hill language spoken in the Bangan region of Uttarkashi district,

¹ The 'demographic' back-up is—a majority somewhere can be a minority elsewhere, in space or time. The sociolinguistic correlate is—what's a *dialect* at some time can turn into a *standard*, and vice-versa.

² Consider only the modern lexical stock of English. Or, in India, take Hindi's appropriation of 800 years of Braj and Awadhi literature, exclusion of Urdu; and Bangla seeking its literary origin in Maithili works.

Uttar Pradesh. Numerically small but arresting in its numerous specificities, it opens up an ideal terrain for a multi-pronged examination of the micro-level language situation in India. Bangani has gained currency as a fascinating, if controversial, area of study for historical linguists—its slender, yet significant substratum of archaisms at the lexical level and atypical (in the Indian context) structural features not only confirm a hoary antecedence, but ultimately also seem to suggest a part non-Indo-Aryan affiliation.

Over and above such typological debate, valuable as it is in the way it explicates how territorial disputes are conducted *within* linguistics, this research project is an attempt to study the Bangani situation in sociolinguistic³ terms. At the same time, it seeks a latitude that extends into areas proscribed by individual disciplines. Its chief aim being to characterize fully the complexities that obtain in language use at the micro-level in what is allegedly a vast isogloss, the tangle of historical theories shall not preoccupy us exclusively. Nor will it be ignored—the philological possibilities will be set out inasmuch as they assist a fuller description, unencumbered by the scope of the purely synchronic.

Beyond philology, history as a mode of analysis will be an interloping leitmotif here. For, there is also a *history* backing up philology—a history of migrations, of sequences of intermingling, of settlement and economic practices, of political forms. This history has spawned another history—two centuries old in its current, scholarly embodiment but seeking sustenance from various antiquities—the enterprise of reconstructing the past, its progress determined by sequences of archaeological evidence, coterminous with the findings of linguistic palaeontology, and the bald tools of anthropometry.

This paper will try to offer a brief conspectus of the lines of argument that persist in whatever historiography there is about the general region⁴ (next to none exist specifically on Bangan, that is, before the decade-old irruption of philological interest). This shall be done for its own sake, but in a way that it cross-fertilizes other ways of understanding. The precise counterpoint to this scholarly domain is a *living* autohistory—cherished, verbalized and inherited forms of knowledge of the self.

³ In the broadest sense of the term: seeking a brief that covers areas as diverse as dialectology, pragmatics, diachronic convergence and obsolescence studies and what is called 'the ethnography of communication'.

⁴ Denoting, roughly, the contiguous submontane areas of Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. Bangan, as we shall see, is in many ways a borderline phenomenon wedged between the two.

Here, one loosely adopts a kernel principle in ethnology—to characterize the subject not merely by means of evidentiary support, but by trying to approximate to the standpoint of the subject itself, to explicate things in its own terms. This is done with the belief that the surest road-map to the core of a community—its cultural symbols, specific terms of reference, and communicative practices—is that provided by itself, however haltingly.

This has other, obvious benefits. Given the patchy state of documentation, the indigenous framework presents the most elaborated, finely-grained taxonomy of the region, a multi-point access to a zone of life beyond the radar-screens of macro-level apparatus. One only has to acknowledge the existence of native geographies, native dialectologies and not pretend that all of these are non-sciences, marked by the excesses of imprecise myth-making. ‘Native wisdom’, that patronizing yet ‘mystifying’ phrase of colonial vintage, only lends a facetious aspect to a body of knowledge in which early science found the bulk of its raw material and upon which branches like ethnobotany are still parasitic.

And as much as this is about language phenomena, this is also about a site of a complex interplay, brimming with meaning and activity, the point at which an objective reality and a felt history interpenetrate and mediate new forms of coexistence. To the extent that it is composed of a bundle of general factors, the Bangani case-study is offered not for its departures from the Indian paradigm, but for its typicalities. If formal analyses will etch out the neural structure of grammar, the real objective is the flesh and blood of language.

This is not to effect a theoretical promotion of dialect to language⁵. It is preferable to disengage from the questions of status and identity altogether, and excavate deeper processes. For, in any case, a full awareness of the context-specific pragmatics of speech leads us away from the unitary conception—and towards the complex, fragmented nature of the subject matter. It leads us towards an essential plurality, the dialectal richness within Bangani and the kinds of multi/bidialectalism and proficiency variations revealed in a social patterning and the historical conditions that brought them about—*prior* to any brush with new, state-sponsored paradigms and its consequences⁶.

The unitary conception, as tacitly present in idealized representations of Bangani speech, is a carryover from the ‘purism’ of philology, and it is not entirely susceptible of the

⁵ The debate over the terminology has been conducted *ad infinitum*, yet ‘neutral’ terms have proved elusive. For our purpose, Bangani will normally be treated as ‘language’ and its variations as ‘dialects’.

⁶ This is the domain of bilingualism, convergence and obsolescence, understood in their canonical sense.

flexibility demanded by descriptive studies. To escape the theoretical cul-de-sacs of mummified data, one has to restore speech to its habitat, to the point of its origin, to its basic motivations. Here, a monocular vision—a framework that goads one to focus on what's 'relevant', weeding out the rest as so much static—is counter-intuitive. Bangani (or for that matter, any language) will be seen to be instantiated not in frozen paradigms, but in the wealth of its minutiae. Areal phenomena like the question of parallel structures and optionality will have to be first referred to their actual pragmatics in the given sociolinguistic matrix. The profusion of partly overlapping grammatical forms; the possible (as against canonical) utterances; the contextual specificities of deictic markers; the resonances and polysemies thrown up by grammatical mobility: all these, cumulatively, nudge the focus of inquiry towards the dialectal tangle that generates these variegated forms in the first place.

Thus, essentially, what is proposed to be investigated here is not a discrete, whole linguistic entity but the benefits gained in problematizing the very category, and a conflux of other such a priori notions, overt and covert, that together form the 'ground' of linguistic research. Such 'givens' are, one way or the other, theoretical abbreviations of reality—an obligatto while 'fixing' the subject (as in bunched, discrete binaries like 'language/dialect', 'lexical/grammatical', 'Kentum/Satem', 'maintenance/obsolescence', 'negative/positive prestige', 'optionality/redundancy' etc, all encouraging an either/or conclusion). Short of wishing away formal frameworks, one proposes to submit them to reanalysis in the light of the 'facts' they generate beyond their brief. To elaborate this dual mode of investigation, to the extent possible, field data will be deployed—as elicited under structured 'heads', yet reciprocally modifying this very framework of its recording. What occupies us directly here will be the content of current, real-time Bangani interactions, its historical placement vis-à-vis the 'proselytizing' function of the dominant language (in this case Hindi), increased social/physical mobility accruing from the spread of education, communication networks and the media. All set in the context of sweeping agro-economic changes, disruption and diffusion of original living patterns, but stabilized by older community practices and possibilities of interaction with 'outsiders'. But all this already dislodges analysis from a frozen, synchronic plane. Hence, this report shall not engage exclusively with producing processions of data in a mathematized tabula

rasa, marked only by the linguist's notations; visual symbols that represent mental diacritics—a cue for a shift in not just the accent of inquiry, but in the code itself. Rather, whatever offers descriptive or explanatory value shall be seized upon. But not necessarily in an integrative approach. Autonomous, partitioned-off domains of research, in an inelegant division of labour, set up overlaps and more than a few antinomies. This need not blind one to the logical merits of individual conclusions; formulations from one domain won't be held invalid *because* of the difficulty of its coexistence with a fact dug up elsewhere⁷. It is not even in the hope that a *modus vivendi* will finally emerge that one juxtaposes contrary inputs. Facts may exist, but only in the reflected light of other facts. Antinomies do exist, one need not artificially eliminate them; in fact, they are truly representative of the current state of our knowledge.

Lastly, among other theoretical biases, one offers the view that it is the business of linguistics to confront *living* language in its totality; not reduced to the visible residuum of a pre-imagined, unilinear history, but as a *product* of conflict itself, occasioned by competing presences; an integrated, definable entity, but set amid diverse linguistic continua and fragmented at its core by the genetic marks of multiple parentage, of perpetual flux; susceptible of isolated morpho-phonological and syntactic inquiries, but also cohering around other impulses (call it an aesthetic, or a cosmology) that defy such analysis—and lastly, language as structure, but also as praxis.

METHODOLOGY & FIELD NOTES

To start with, the fixing of roles—or rather, disengaging from them. A set of assumptions—a silent work ethic, only tacitly effective—comes into play in field linguistics. Since the days they were born at the turn of the century, in a spree of descriptive studies of American Indian languages so as to facilitate Bible translations, the figures of the 'researcher' and the 'informant' have been formalized in their relative placement—a problematic that is now less evident than before, but more differentiated. It demands a transference of 'information' on specified lines, a selective translation from 'other' knowledge systems into its own code—along a conceptual bridge that assembles

⁷ Consider, for instance, the conflicting claims over the Marwari and Dardic affiliations of Western Pahari.

and modifies. It retrieves certain forms of 'data' from a specimenized subject-matter-complex. This is, *inter alia*, demonstrably harmful for research itself if it seeks to apprehend fully the socio-psychological scaffolding in which language is embedded. That is, without resorting to a naïve progression of labels.

This dissertation—and the bulk of its data on dialectology—is based almost entirely on two exhaustive field trips conducted in Bangan; inasmuch as it deals primarily with the findings on the field and arrives at certain provisional conclusions, and the fact that whatever bibliographical elements are there have been juxtaposed with these—either in support or refutation—there is nothing that appears here that has not been influenced decisively by these first-hand encounters with the subject-matter-complex. It is contended here that this is validated by the nature of the inquiry: a wide-berthed, eclectic one, its elements organized under a general sociolinguistic rubric.

For the purpose of this study, an 18-day field trip was undertaken to Bangan in April 1998. The primary focus here was to uncover to the fullest extent possible the dialectal variation within the region. This, logically, necessitated the construction of a basic linguistic geography. For this, in the absence of any official word on the matter, one took full recourse to locally attested dialect divisions. The first of these broadly corresponds to natural demarcations in the lie of the land. This yielded three 'pattis' (for our purpose, dialect belts). To gain a representative range of information, all three dialect belts were covered in the trip, working through a sequence of villages—halting at times for a day, at others over two days in a given village. Two belts having been covered on an earlier field trip, the focus this time was on the third—eight villages were covered here, as against three and four in the others. Through this exercise, it became possible to recognize the village as a crucial locus of language use patterns, as the primary dialect field.

The selection of villages too answered to some basic representative demands. Some villages were identified, for different reasons, as special cases and will be accorded detailed treatment in later chapters.⁸ Apart from this, four semi-urban agglomerates—three of them on the boundaries of Bangan—were covered. This cross-section helped in bringing out the precise degree of similarities and differences—in speech, in living modes, in economic conditions—and the quantum of cultural interaction.

⁸ Especially Brahmin village Dagoli; others are Sandra, an enclave of ex-Monda villagers, and Saras.

The axis of inquiry pertained primarily to speech patterns, and the way the complex, interlocking social arrangements impinge on these patterns. The objective here was two-fold. Firstly, to apprehend linguistic characteristics of Bangani of a general sort (research has already uncovered certain crucial grammatical patterns that seem to set apart this language from neighbouring Pahari languages, but data collection in relation to morpho-syntax is still in many ways in its primary stages, i.e. if one considers the exact combinatorial possibilities at the speech-level, the coexistence of forms with similar functions, and their correlation to a cross-linguistic cartography).

The second objective was to problematize the subject matter in two other ways, to see what theoretical benefits may be gained by the exercise. One by trying to dissolve the notion of Bangani as an uniform linguistic terrain⁹—isoglotic, cohesive, with finite forms and strict boundaries. To establish this, cross-dialectal data from the three belts was elicited on the basis of a questionnaire—a fixed set of Hindi sentence-forms (interrogatives, imperatives, declaratives, negatives etc), which the respondents were asked to render in Bangani. Their responses were tape-recorded; and a criss-crossing itinerary enabled these recordings (and other forms of data collected) to be played to speakers in other dialect-belts—whereupon the latter were asked to identify the dialect-belt, attest the forms, or alternately, put on record variations, if any, at the lexical, grammatical or phonological level. The bulk of the data that appears here are transcribed versions of this recorded speech, collected from the three dialect-belts. The questionnaire was progressively modified and expanded with the cues provided by the respondents.

For purposes of structural analysis, especially inquiries into comparative word order (vis-à-vis Hindi) feeding a convergence study, this data will be deployed only with a slight qualification, placing its utility in suspension on one crucial count. This is in cognizance of the fact that linguistic ‘cues’ play a big part in shaping individual instances of speech: the structure of the initiating form is likely to modify the response.¹⁰ Hence, the recorded data on word order will not be furnished as *proof* of convergence, but only as provisional indications—at best indicating, not predicting, probable paths of structural shift.

⁹ The aim was to bring depth to dialectal description, not to pretend Bangani, as a language, does not exist or to drive the point some like to hold that it is just an insignificant part of a wider dialectal setting.

Two other locii, apart from the dialect belts, were considered for variation: viz. the village and the home. The first would delineate the contours of a new category that can be posited tentatively: the village dialect,¹¹ that is dialectal variation *within* a dialect belt and its possible sources. The second helps sharp-focus inquiry on a still more primary level of language use—the home as a basic unit of linguistic analysis proffered a turf where bidialectalism could be pinned to its most micro-level instantiations.

A purely synchronic analysis can at best hope to identify the fact of variation and characterize its precise quantum and quality; its provenance can be established only by recourse to Bangani's correlation to extraneous elements, understood in an ongoing, diachronic setting. Accordingly, so as to set Bangani in a wider dialectal setting and to account for possible infusion of forms from contiguous areas, a few samples were also collected of speech from some of these other neighbouring Western Pahari languages, on both the Uttar Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh side.

The inadequacies of formal, structured data collection techniques have been belaboured over ad infinitum and do not require to be dredged up in detail here. Suffice it to say that this methodology, necessary for the most part in its realm of utility, has to be complemented by more open-ended means. Encounters with novelty can perhaps be pre-arranged under controlled environments, but to put the entire onus of describing variation in what is already a lesser known language exclusively on a finite sample of ideal-type Hindi sentence-forms could only be counter-productive.

The accent, thus, was on eliciting and recording what is disparagingly called 'naturalistic'¹² data—forms of speech that correspond more closely to the specific socio-physical environment of Bangan, invested with indexicality, and grounded in a real-time deixis. This, one feels, is a self-validating exercise (which had concrete and positive spinoffs in the quality of information made available for analysis).¹³ Face-to-face interviews, conducted with scores of individuals, families or social groupings and under wide-ranging contexts and topics (language, history, ethnological detail) provided the

¹⁰ A related illustration is that which is called Question-Answer focus, one of the word order displacement kinds Masica discusses. For example, a question like 'roti *kisne* khai hæ' is liable to elicit a response of the form 'roti *usne* khai hæ'—the 'normal' paradigm being 'usne roti khai hæ'.

¹¹ In Gumperz's analysis of the Indian situation, the village forms the central site of language activity.

¹² The triple suffix on the root-form 'nature' implies it is a mental construct, thrice removed from reality.

¹³ See, especially, the chapter on Grammaticalization.

basic substance of this dissertation, partly oriented as it is to the task of describing Bangani from its own perspective. The heuristic, fragmented nature of progress this implies is, one hopes, counter-balanced by the reciprocal tradeoffs.

The Conscious Speaker:

The social scientist's motto of a 'fly on the wall' approach, it has to be recognized, is only a theoretical possibility—with little scope for being actionable in a transplanted, non-analogous social setting. The researcher is more apt to be an overweening presence, modifying the environment chosen for study by this very fact. This holds true in both interviews and the techniques of general observation that supplement it, and working transparently within this framework in preference to the guised approaches that, for instance, Fasold mentions¹⁴ is a choice made for pre-theoretical reasons. Firstly, guised approaches, by their very definition, are not concerned with the status of the informant as a sentient being. It also tends to devalue the intelligence of the informant, by isolating the ethnologically-motivated affective component in his/her reading of phenomena. On the other hand, simply recognizing a speaker as a thinking, conscious entity, essentially capable of engaging—constructively, creatively, and in unique modes—with situations precludes such artificial compartmentalization in a linguistic theory of the brain.

There are other, insistent reasons to peg such field interactions as 'interviews' rather than pure 'data collection'. This relates to the kind of reciprocal, equational basis that tended to form around these exercises. A certain resistance to scrutiny also made itself manifest in the field, especially noticeable in the way they tended to precipitate and congeal in some contexts. Rather than picture this as obstructions in the way of data collection, offering nothing more than nuisance value, it can be profitably taken—along with the afore-mentioned, automatic interview forming—as significant information to feed a theory of language attitudes.

Speech as a physically occurring phenomenon (rather than language as an abstraction) can be extricated neither from its immediate pragmatics, nor the ethnographical backdrop against which it occurs. To flesh out this plurality of input factors, this project attempts to

¹⁴ The methodology proffered in 'Sociolinguistics of Society', especially the attestation techniques meant to uncover 'coloured' errors in dialect identification, tends to rest on an unsatisfying, behaviouristic model.

'capture' language as occurring in its variegated sociolinguistic settings, examined along different axes—village gatherings; intimate, family contexts; cross-dialectal and cross-linguistic interactions; highly-coded ritual proceedings; caste differentiations and non-Bangani elements: all of which demanded non-participating observation. This yielded primary data on bilingualism, the frequency of the occurrence of code-switching (independent of the researcher's presence), the kind of forms it can assume, the combination of circumstances that seem capable of triggering it. These shall be elaborated upon in later chapters, without necessarily leading to easy theorizing.

For independent sociological information, the research was also led to observe a series of religious and ritualized activity, and a periodic festival at a high-altitude village.¹⁵ The search for an antique orthographic component proved futile, but to the extent possible cultural material has been documented—in the form of orally transmitted literature and song. This was deemed valuable for configuring Bangani in terms of its stability as a cultural unit—not atomized, but set in an interlocked network of shared cultural space. The results from an earlier field trip—conducted in December 1995, with the focus on obsolescence potential—have been conflated wherever deemed necessary.

¹⁵ References to the *Ō:kṭiri* festival at Bamsu village shall also feature in discussions on grammar.

BANGANI: A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

Denoted in general terms, Bangani is an Indo-Aryan language of the Western Pahari subgroup spoken by about 10,000-20,000 people¹⁶ in the westernmost part of Uttarkashi district, Uttar Pradesh. Banganis inhabit a submontane region in the Lower Himalayas, encircled by three rivers and ranging in elevation from 1,500-2,500 feet at the riverside to over 7,000 feet in its interiors, covered with now-thinning patches of pinewoods and interspersed with high-altitude pasturelands. Large parts of its interiors are still largely inaccessible to motorized transport; the road network basically runs along its periphery and the only road that goes into the region is barely over 20 years old. That in no way negates Bangan's setting in an old network of historical linkages, predating the 'modern'. Bangani, as it stands, lacks a script (though there are historical references to a Khasai lipi in neighbouring Jaunsar-Bawar etc). but shares some of the general characteristics that set apart a whole linguistic stock—rather, a conjunction of ancient strands, newly clubbed and christened Dardo-Pahari¹⁷—from the New Indo-Aryan (NIA) tongues that occupy much of the riverine plains of northern India. Locationally, it hovers in the zone that breaks off gradually from the Central Pahari tongues of Garhwal proper, that lie at some distance to its east (with a non-Bangani problem zone intervening), and starts bearing affinities to the core Western Pahari of Simla district, which it directly abuts.

But within this arrangement, Bangani exhibits certain lexical and structural departures (in different ways) that seem to suggest, ultimately, a remote Kentum group affiliation, now thickly overlaid in basic stock by a history of Indo-Aryanization. The phonological stock largely answers to the Pahari paradigm, with a crucial exception—the absence of a voiced, aspirated occlusive—that will be elaborated upon in the Language section.

The lexical items that are seemingly susceptible of a non-Indo-Aryan etymology are, barring a few, embedded in highly ritualized contexts and may be a surviving fragment

¹⁶ This is the range German Indologist Claus-Peter Zoller quotes; there are no census figures pertaining specifically to Bangan; indeed there seems to be, across fields, a near-conspiratorial silence about Bangan.

¹⁷ Indian linguists, especially hill language specialists like D.D. Sharma, prefer this compound appellation. The reasons will be elaborated upon in the section that takes up issues in historical linguistics.

from an inherited, shared (or less likely, borrowed) corpus. The grammatical-level breach with NIA—primarily the phenomenon of AUX-raising (which seems specific to Bangani) and a discontinuous, reflexive negation (which is partly shared with neighbouring Simla tongues)—are, on the other hand, visible in everyday speech though, to some degree, ‘marked’ because of the simultaneous presence of infiltrating, semantically related forms from the NIA paradigm. From all aspects, it is a scenario that insists upon more of both philological and areal studies. The cumulative work on Bangani, till now, is only about a decade old. The name made its first appearance in philological studies in the late 1980s with Claus-Peter Zoller, a German Indologist and linguist, who first put forward the theory of a possible Kentum group affiliation based on a stock of archaic words he uncovered while recording forms of traditional oral narrative.

Linguistic Geography

The unique problem with categorizing Bangan owes partly to its borderline status. In the Uttarkashi map itself, Bangan would be located on the furthest fringe of the western sector of Rawain pargana, which starts roughly 50 km away horizontally, from an eponymous region just north of Purola township.¹⁸ In ethnolinguistic terms, a tangible frontier comes right with the start of the pargana, the beginning of a culturally prohibited zone—the ‘other’—for the rest of Tehri Garhwal. Mirroring this is a concomitant breach in mutual intelligibility, a condition that normally obtains across contiguous areas.¹⁹ Westwards in the areas from this point of disjunction to Bangan proper, there is an intervening layer of as yet fuzzily classified tongues. Immediately abutting Bangan on its south-eastern fringe are the Siktur and Garugad pattis. Ostensibly of the same ethnic stock as Banganis, there is however consensus on both sides that they speak different tongues.²⁰ North of Siktur, and not directly accessible from Bangan, is the high-altitude Parbat region—which leads among other peaks to the five-peak range called Sargarohini

¹⁸ Purola—a low-lying, urbanized settlement, which forms the nearest market and revenue centre for much of the surrounding country—is connected by road to Dehra-Dun, about 100 km south, and Saharanpur.

¹⁹ Garhwalis, beyond identifying the obvious family resemblances, encounter a marked degree of opacity in Rawain tongues; and at least Banganis reciprocate by their lack of proficiency in Garhwali.

²⁰ The Dialectology section will take up cross-lingual communication; for the troubled history of Bangani-Siktur interaction, see the section on Village Histories.

(denoting, in popular legend, the ascent to heaven of the five Pandavas)²¹. Here emanates the Tons river and here in Badasu patti (after the demon who battled the Pandavas) falls Har-ki-Dun, which has in recent decades put Parbat on a well-trodden tourist map.²²

The economically relatively 'backward' people of Parbat, of a more markedly Mongoloid physiognomy, speak a related tongue with possible Tibeto-Burman elements. Parbat's field of interaction extends to Kinnaur in the north-west (across high-altitude peaks that ring Bangan on the right side) and Tibet, two days by foot, to the north. One interviewee from Osla village of Badasu patti reported that till the 1962 war with China, the old links with Tibet were functional; that his father and grandfather had been to Tibet on those old salt trade routes. A recurrent Tibetan element also crops up in the political history of Himachal Pradesh. These details, dilatory though they are, serve to explicate Bangan's proximity to a zone of interaction much removed from the plains.

To the south of Bangan and the length of Rawain pargana is the Bawar sub-section of the Jaunsar-Bawar tribal belt—again an ethnolinguistically distinct entity—which falls in Dehra Dun district. Grierson²³ categorized this group of languages as Western Pahari, but apparently also toyed with the idea of according them a Central Pahari denomination. To its west, a variety of Jaunsari is also spoken in Sirmour district of Himachal Pradesh, which abuts Bangan on the south-west, but affords no interaction on account of a popular gulf. To the immediate west and north of Bangan lie the old Simla hill states, with the nearest centres being Jubbal (an erstwhile seat of royalty) and Rohru. There is a high frequency of inter-marriages to this side, leading to a partial linguistic overlap; a link that is only reaffirmed in other significant socio-economic manners.

Here, one shifts to the next degree of enlargement, so as to bring out the differentiations within this broad picture. For this, native geographies offer the best signposts—there is good reason to discount official Indian records and accept the Bangani self-description; no readily available account of the broad region seems to so much as acknowledge the existence of Bangan; Banganis can surely attest to the contrary, and since that claim is easily verifiable, it would also be reasonable to adopt it *prima-facie*!

²¹ The Pandava myth, a striking leitmotif in these parts, will feature later.

²² The area has now been given over to a national reserve park; the local villagers stand in danger of being evicted and relocated in chosen plots near the plains.

²³ The turn-of-the-century British linguist, apocryphal accounts say, made a mule-back journey to Jaunsar.

Native geography guided one to three dialect belts within Bangan—Masmur, Pingal and Kothigarh. The three are roughly set in a squarish C-shape, joined at the edges along two river confluences and connected internally along criss-crossing mountain roads skirting or running through the high-altitude forest, Dev-van, that lies approximately in the centre and serves as a quasi-divine point of reference for all of Bangan. On the exterior, two of the pattis run along rivers—Masmur in the south has the Tons forming a natural barrier between it and Bawar, and the Pabar tributary separates Pingal patti from the Himachali areas to its west. Kothigarh has the privilege of representing a salient image of Bangan on one crucial topographical count²⁴—it is the only dialect belt which has a river running *through* it, marking out a whole valley for Bangan territory, with villages ranged upwards on both sides of the river. But even here, high-altitude villages on the far northern tip—like Kiranu and Duchanu—need only 15 minutes over the peak to reach Himachal territory. All this, as we shall see, has crucial implications on dialectology. The lie of the land encourages specific kinds of interaction—a combination of what’s permissible and what’s prohibited over and above a simple Bangani fidelity—*institutionalized* in at least two modes: **marriages** with neighbouring areas, and a **shared religion**.

Kothigarh	Monda, Khaikhwadi, Balavat, Jhotadi, Manjgain, Gokul, Makudi, Dhar, Dagoli ²⁵ (Brahmin village), Chiwa, Jagta, Barnali, Tikochi, Kiranu, Duchanu; a string of dogris include: Dzole, Moldi, Erala, Bhotadi.
Pingal patti	Arakot town and village, Khalij, Menjni, Begal, Paoli, Kiroli, Butanu, Lakhtwal, Jagdhar, Kukreda, Thunara; dogris: Saran, Gamri, Damthi, Ishali, Khimadi, Sekal. *
Masmur	Thapli, Saras, Odatha, Bamsu, Devti, Thalli, Gotwadi, Bindri, Buthothra, Thadiyar, Salla, Bankhwadi, Sandra; in Bawar, touching Masmur, are Khoonigarh and Anol.

Figure 1: List of some main villages and dogris, patti-wise.

* *Historical, abandoned villages*

All three dialect belts—Masmur, Pingal and Kothigarh—have roughly a dozen-odd villages (in all, about 40) ranged over an incrementally increasing elevation, up to 7,000 feet above sea level. The number of settlement-clusters is also progressively increasing, as old joint families splinter up and proliferate, rearranging themselves across settlements near the roadside. These new settlements are actually a concretion of old *dogris*—literally

²⁴ This is not to accord it a 'purer' Bangani identity; Bangan is named after Bankhwadi village, in Masmur.

²⁵ This is the only Brahmin village in Bangan, and shall feature prominently for its unique problematics.

'second house'—inhabitations coalescing around atomized agricultural plots near the river, highly prized earlier because of their level terrain before high-altitude apple plantations gradually displaced them from their prime utility. Beyond broad patti-level dialect variation, there are differences between individual villages, again of course fully within the scope of mutual intelligibility but tangible enough to provide identity-markers for locals, that accrue from their different sites of interaction.

The People

As things stand, there is a broad level of uniformity among the Banganis—setting aside for the moment the question of how the ethnic continuum is sustained or disrupted beyond Bangani territory. Yet, there are all the reasons to assume a mixed genepool, the presence of stocks of diverse provenance and denomination. Anthropologically, Bangan is set in the same **shatter zone**—a technical term that denotes a history of high-frequency migrations, occurring in a spread-out series—that the adjoining submontane, Lower Himalayan regions fall. This ethnic composition more or less mirrors the layered linguistic structure, and has left its traces in race-identity markers, in forms of collective memory, in toponyms, and in more covert linguistic manners, a matter for research. Employing current caste appellations, Banganis can be classified under five heads:

1. The numerically and politically dominant Khoshiya Rajputs, the central stock;
2. A small stock of Brahmins, servicing the entire community, concentrated mostly in the Dagoli village, the sole Brahmin island in Bangan;
3. The Devals and Bajgis, a semi-itinerant group of bards and story-tellers attached to the local, travelling deities; some, of late, preferring a settled life;
4. A cluster of artisan castes—the Badiya or the local architects and carpenters; and goldsmiths and blacksmiths; and
5. The Kolis, a relatively poor group of lower castes, now increasingly literate; mostly settled on the outer fringes of villages or nearby inhabitations.

This demographic profile of village composition, a synchronic fact, may perhaps possess significant implications for a historical dialectology. For, apart from the variation visible along a primarily geographical axis, that is at the dialect belt and village level, there is

variation along a caste axis. Individual, distinguishing elements here make it possible to construe at least three *sociolects*—Khoshiya speech, Brahmin speech and Deval speech. Again, the magnitude of difference is not the core issue. For, magnitude is clearly a matter of relative perception and standards of evaluation. A macro-level dialectology could easily be pardoned for glossing over the variation, judging by their broad identity, but in local terms the differences are effective enough as cues, as degrees of ‘markedness’²⁶, to trigger the processes of identification. Having accessed this level of differentiation, one can examine each component separately—collating locally gleaned ethnological perspectives with whatever material is available in historiography—so as to throw open the possibilities of a hoary diversity in their origins, after assuming a reasonable degree of intermingling over centuries.²⁷ First, the central stock:

Khoshiya Rajput: This compound designation takes us straightaway to the core of the problematic encountered in classification. The bulk of this group answers to ‘Rajput’ caste-suffixes like Chauhan, Panwar, Rawat, Rana etc, much like the pattern visible in a lot of neighbouring areas. One interviewee from Khalij village reported that, on perusal of 200-year-old land records pertaining to the area at a library in Srinagar, Garhwal, he found no mention of caste-suffixes like Chauhan, which tend to imply a high-prestige ‘Rajasthani’ provenance. (The migratory influx from the northern Indian plains into Garhwal, a spread-out phenomenon a few centuries old, is a well-recognized fact; its linguistic implications will be dealt with along with other questions of typology).

On the other hand, suffixes like Rana were found to be predominating. This is crucial, for one would imply—if taken at face value—a direct affiliation to a canonical NIA stock, and the other would place Banganis along with groups attested to be settled in the hills much longer. In the neighbouring Simla, for instance, Rana is a frequently occurring title in old records—from as far back as two millennia ago, right down to colonial records—designating local chieftains of petty principalities. This can mean two things. One, the Banganis actually represent a mixed stock of an older layer (which could itself contain multiple strands) and a more recent input from the plains, which would explain the thick, overlaying NIA features in language—broadly sharing this characteristic with the rest of

²⁶ These are not uniform or equidistant, Brahmin speech being more ‘marked’ than the others.

²⁷ Anthropologist D.N. Majumdar, after studies in Garhwal, Dehra Dun and Simla in the ‘50s, reported a high-degree Coefficient of Racial Likeness of Rajputs with Brahmins (0.525) and artisan castes (7.5).

Pahari. Two, the NIA component represents a purely linguistic superstructure, and reading an ethnic corollary to that is not warranted. That is, the migration from the plains did not affect Bangan directly, but modified the ethnolinguistic ecology of the whole region so profoundly that Bangan could not remain immune to the evolving changes.

Thus, to continue the hypothesis, the environment prompted Bangani clansmen to adopt newly-prestigious caste-suffixes like Chauhan in an effort to integrate themselves with a widely accepted social and ethnic hierarchy. In his account of the relation between 'tribal' identity and mainstream culture, Emeneau talks of an interlinked network of values wherein minor ethnic groups exhibit a tendency to "adopt items of token value" from the mainstream. A frequent mode of achieving this is "taking on jati characteristics" so as to integrate themselves across an ethnic gulf. One Bangani interviewee, a schoolmaster from Gokul village, explained the title 'Khoshiya Rajput' in startlingly similar terms: "It can mean that, historically, we are of the Khasa stock, but somewhere along the way proclaimed ourselves to be Rajputs."²⁸

Koli & Deval: In the linguistic history of the hills, D.D. Sharma hypothesizes the presence of Negrito-Austroloid and even Dravidian substrata apart from the expected Mongoloid stream. The first is scarcely evident now, the only trace left being the Koli suffix for the lower castes and certain other naming processes visible in the hills. As things stand, none of these historical hypotheses are directly germane to the sociolinguistic status of the Kolis of Bangan. On ethnolinguistic grounds, they stand practically analogous to the Khoshiya pattern, answering to the same village and patti divisions, and ordered around a similar pattern of extra-territorial marriages. Subtle forms of caste discrimination still operate but queries at the Arakot high school revealed that the proportion of Koli students has been increasing over the years. Devals present a small but unique problem in categorization, which shall be taken up later on linguistic grounds. For the present purpose, it shall suffice to recall that they are the traditional bards from whose vast inventory of oral narrative forms Zoller recorded most of his archaisms; that these archaisms, as they stand, are mostly not available to everyday Khoshiya speech and also exhibit a significant departure from current Bangani phonotactics; and that the Devals

²⁸ The exact sentence: "*Hum Khas jati ke hain, aur apne apko Rajput ghoshit kar diya*". The full implications of the term Khasa shall be taken up in the History section.

and Bajgis are by definition semi-itinerant, being an integral part of the retinue for the local, travelling deities. In short, as a logical corollary to the above facts, the possibility of a *non-Bangani provenance* need not be foreclosed.

Brahmins: The Brahmins of Dagoli ultimately claim a non-Bangani origin. They have been settled in Bangan for possibly 200 years, having migrated from the Tehri region. Most of them answer to caste-names like Nautiyal, a common surname in Garhwal for people supposed to have originated from the Nauti village, near Tehri. This Brahmin island in Bangan problematizes the assumed relation between ethnicity and language in several ways. For, Dagoli speech, despite being distinct, is clearly attestable as *Bangani*. Its departures from Bangani do not owe anything to a Tehri residuum; none exist, going by most accounts. They accrue more from the fact that the Dagoli people do not marry into Bangan, for the simple reason that there are no other Brahmins in Bangan. All their marriage alliances are struck in Himachal, making for a steady transfusion of linguistic material—in a more concentrated and regularized manner than is the case with Khoshiyas and Kolis, who also marry frequently into Himachal. A fuller description of this exogamous trait will come in the Language section.

Interestingly, across the breach with Garhwal at Rawain, the subtle process of cultural distancing that is manifest also takes into its sweep the Brahmins within Rawain. One interviewee from the core of Tehri Garhwal attested that even Brahmins from Rawain are *persona non grata* for Brahmins on the other side—that for them, with their tacitly-held, inter-generational memory of being part of a migratory stream from the plains, the people of Rawain represent an aboriginal inhabitation. *Khoshiya*, a term that marks out the ethnic difference for this other category of Garhwalis, is applied equally to Brahmins from Rawain and marriage alliances across this breach are normally frowned upon.

The Border Re-examined: If one takes this fact of congealment of ethnic attitudes on a fuzzy, gradual border, along with the attested gap in mutual intelligibility, then Rawain seems to signify the start of a *terra infirma*, the incremental onset of Grierson's Western Pahari. There are other factors that attend the border problem—the seeming 'nowhere' status of Rawain. Linguistic boundaries, wherever they are marked, tend to coalesce around topographical divisions. The question here seems to be of competing boundaries,

represented by the Yamuna and the Tons. Social historians of Himachal Pradesh talk of the region between the Satluj and the Yamuna (which would include Bangan and all of Rawain) as a natural continuum. Language typologists reinforce this, holding the Yamuna to be the point where Central Pahari breaks from the Western Pahari stock. On the other hand, the Skanda Purana offered the Tons (Tamasa) as the western boundary of Kedara-khanda (Garhwal). And in the political history of Jubbal also the Tons figures often as its eastern limit (this would again seem to include Bangan). But in recent colonial history, Bangan was the property of the Tehri maharaja, with only two villages—Dhudi Bhatad and Sansog—being disputed.

In the modern context, administratively it falls in Uttar Pradesh, but it is far from its consciousness. Linguistic and cultural ties link it in tangible ways to Himachal Pradesh, which now represents an unattainable zone of developed life. Reinforcing this, the ongoing Uttarakhand agitation places Bangan in an ambivalent relation to it. There is a considerable amount of party-level support for the idea of a hill state. (This researcher's December 1995 visit ran head-on into a road roko stir at Arakot township). Then again, there is resentment at the temporary halt in development funds it would mean as funds get diverted to building official infrastructure for the new state. Underlying it, as some admitted, is a wistful feeling vis-à-vis the developed Himachal, the estranged sibling.

If anything, this maze of plural allegiances exposes a deep-seated, formal flaw in the science of cartography—its requirement of a finite, definable border. The fraudulent aspect of this exigency today tends to be hidden under our absolutized, received geography, especially after the linguistic division of the Indian states. Its weak link emerges when one attempts a typology for an entity like Bangani. In the final analysis, assigning it to one side or the other of a border becomes meaningless in the face of what history itself paints as a shifting mass of lines. Indeed, in a larger scheme of things, Bangan constitutes part of a linguistic buffer zone, it is itself the border.

II. Language

FLUX & MAINTENANCE

The idea of a 'pure' language—insulated from change in its very isolation, laden with archaisms and hoary secrets—may perhaps suffice as an organizing principle for an extended ethno/philological project, like the one that brought Bangani into prominence. For language to become subject-matter, it is obliged to be frozen at a specific focus, 'a degree of enlargement'. Temporarily setting aside the question of veridity of the competing philological claims on Bangani, one can try to extricate whatever is theoretically valid in the criticism against the Philological Project. The most serious critique perhaps is the presence of a silent programmatic bias. That is to say, a teleology is involved here, embedded in ordinary notions, a conception of things orientated towards the beginning—which, though not an anomaly, is but one mode of apprehending the situation, of 'freezing' a language like Bangani. Its fault-line comes in subtly effecting a closure in an open-ended system, emphasising a single pathway of linkages, desensitising one to many questions one may have posed—its setting in a complex dialectal field, for instance.

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These are constitutive factors one can ignore only at the cost of a fuller picture. What this research project entails is an attempt in this direction, to set out the linguistic ecology of Bangani, to flesh out its dialectology—both in its wider inter-relations and tradeoffs with contiguous linguistic areas (with whom it's linked more organically than one presupposes in an 'autonomous' reading) and in the way this is reflected in its internal composition as diachronically coalesced village/ caste dialects, and in shared areal features. But at the same time, in emphasizing the 'exteriority' encoded in the Bangani genepool, one should not lose sight of the salience Bangani possesses for its people, the strategies they deploy to mark out its turf, the cultural notions, mythbiographies and self-ascriptions that mentally carve out a territorial niche for themselves. Given the sheer volume of external linkages, institutionalized over centuries, how does a small speech community manage not to

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vanish into thin air, as it were? There is a self-stabilizing function that one can see at play here, integral to a people condemned to encounter flux in the most intimate domains. Yet, language shift and maintenance do not have the reassuring predictability of programmed software; there are factors in operation here that we must name, bereft as we are of a technically more sound terminology, 'human'.

When one characterises a dialect field like Bangan, it is tempting to argue for discrete entities, juxtaposed against each other, in stable and autonomous forms. But such a perception module grants no space for physical, real-time interactions; only allowing for theoretical, formal correlations to be made. The directly verifiable situation demands a conception altogether different—it nudges one to take cognizance of interlocking linguistic networks; where constant flux is a 'given', an obligatory, almost built-in feature. To employ a more biological phraseology, not entirely inapposite here, there is in Bangan a perpetual osmosis along the peripheries—not just the physical boundaries, an idea we can dispense with, but all the individual nodal junctions of communication.

Bangani as a sociolinguistic entity is deeply marked by this internal dynamics. If the Bangani structure reveals itself to be a complex matter—a stabilising core, and an accommodative, modified periphery—it is only a mirror of the patterns of relationships, the points of contact that shape the communal make-up of the language. If its lexical, grammatical and conceptual inventories call attention to a residual substratum, capable of being exhumed, excavated; there is also a horizontal and vertical differentiation in sociolinguistic terms, with implications on grammar, which has to be accounted for in any model. Gumperz's celebrated notion of India as a series of interlocked continua, a network of partly overlapping village dialects, bears itself out in any field study²⁹—if anything, it deserves to be deepened, broadened and further enriched by referring basic conclusions to source material outside linguistics proper.

To accomplish this twin objective, one must at the outset problematize, to the point of dissolving it, the notion of 'border' and 'territory'. To confront the Bangan situation in its fullness, one has to acknowledge the simultaneous presences, the interwoven processes, not just the porous peripheries, but dialectal borders *within* homes that are at once marked out and mobile. Hudson's hypothetical possibility (of a linguistic disjunction between

²⁹ What the sociolinguist needs to uncover is, alas, nearly always a matter of common 'rural' wisdom.

mother and child) realises itself in Bangan ad infinitum. Established exogamy patterns ensure a certain degree of dialectal heterogeneity *within* families.

This makes two demands on theory. One, *it calls into question the very notion of a 'mother tongue'*, but at the same time less affectively-loaded terminology like 'primary language' seems somehow lacking in expressive power to describe an ethnocultural unit, if we are not to reduce it entirely to a computational possibility, to dots on a visual chart. Two, a more satisfying diachronically-grounded model has to be evolved which can account for micro-level sociolinguistics, in all its bewildering minutiae. For, before a language can be presumed to be poised for a shift, it must necessarily be presumed to be stable—and before one seeks to comprehend one, *how* the other comes about in the face of a constant genetic transmutation has to be established with reasonable clarity. In two centuries of an identical teleological orientation, European Indology has tended to focus on matters of typology and text exegesis. Nor have Indian linguists managed to quite extricate themselves from the various dominant paradigms to engage with the precise mode of this *immate consolidative principle*. Recognising that languages open up a cognitive space, a way of conceptualizing, a *Weltanschauung*, is a step forward from dealing with sociological units like family/village—which remain null categories till filled out with details that in turn call into question their very conception as 'units'. In Bangan, even interaction across belts may be of a lesser volume than the institutionalized meeting-points with non-Bangani entities within homes. Where, then, does the balance occur? Is it a matter of some parts expanding their domain along separate axes, autonomously, absorbing new elements within a given orbit of creativity? Within their life-span, women married into Bangan seem to display a receding attachment with their home dialect—restricted as it is to in-group communication contexts, which are not equally available to all—and a progressive entanglement with the adopted village speech. So is there no linguistic transfer at all? On the other hand, villages related to non-Bangani counterparts in established patterns of exogamy visibly concretise certain kinds of variation over generations. That is, novelty is regularized in such a manner that there is neither extreme flux, nor absolute stasis. Before we return to this question, a brief description of the linguistic base-material that every Bangani inherits.

Lexicon:

Apart from the (hypothesized) Kentum, Vedic and NIA layers, Bangani possesses a culturally shared corpus with Bawari and neighbouring Himachali, and beyond that still more linkages open up.³⁰ Here we shall try to encounter native Bangani naming processes, not necessarily referring them to their origin. A minority language like Bangani does not arrogate to itself the privilege of expanding its inventory through deliberate and pseudo-native processes like calquing.³¹ Simultaneously, as their immediate universe undergoes rapid and profound alterations, as a quasi-urban lifestyle takes shape within the span of a generation from amid an older, mountain and forest-centred living arrangement stabilized over centuries, it is reasonable to assume a depletion in the stock of native mental items that correspond to the new reality. Such is the situation in all languages where a deluge of alien items gatecrash upon the speech community's mental archives. Such is also the situation Bangani, described as a "lost tribe" even just 10 years ago, faces today with sweeping changes in living patterns—a downhill mobility, to settlements near the roads, away from the old mother-villages; a ubiquitous turn to new agro-practices like apple cultivation³², a cash crop that has changed the face of Himachal in a century; an ever-expanding contact with modern forms of education; and related mobility patterns. A largish body of obsolescent lexemes in a ratio corresponding to new cultural items is the natural corollary. It was rare, therefore, to come across during field interviews an instance of an existing category being extended to denote a new cultural item. Asked to render in Bangani a sentence of the type of 'I don't have a lighter, do you?', an 18-year-old boy from Gokul village of Kothigarh responded with:

mukĕ ɔ:kɔ:ŋ nɔ:thina, tau kate nɔ:thi

I-acc lighter neg. aux. neg. you with neg. aux.(int.)

'I don't have a lighter, do you?'

That is the Bangani name for a lighter, he explained. A few more queries revealed that ɔ:kɔ:ŋ was a compound formation derived from ɔ:k (fire) + ɔ:ŋ (make, create). The

³⁰ For a comparative look at certain basic vocabulary items, see the Dardic entry under Genetic Typology.

³¹ All 'modern' Indian languages demonstrate their breach with both past and present through this mode.

³² Apple, requiring high-altitude plantations, has the benefit of extending the utility of old 'mother-villages'.

word denoted an indigenous metal implement for lighting a fire before the advent of matches rendered it obsolete. Leaves from the bacca tree (*Acorus calamus*), when rubbed for a sufficiently long time, would yield a cotton-like inflammable substance that was placed in the ɔ:kɑ:ŋ and a spark produced by rubbing ʃɑ:krɔ: , a white granite, on the metal. The resulting ember would then be passed on to a hukkah. It is, of course, incidental that the lexical item cropped up. A deliberate ‘cultural’ translation may have been involved here, it’s by no means a regularized adoption.³³ But it serves to symbolize the exact predicament of a culture at the crossroads. And it is reasonable to assume that a host of classes of words linked up inextricably with cultural factors can all soon be assigned the same fate as the living patterns that spawned them in the first place.

Under these circumstances, it will be a theoretical impossibility to draw up an exhaustive inventory of indigenous words—especially those that are crucially dependent on a way of living that is passing, along with the specific means and materials associated with it, with all of which the linguist toting a basic word list would be unfamiliar to begin with. From whatever corpus is available for study, it is perhaps also not tenable to speculate on which part is likely to be more basic than the other, and therefore possessing a higher retention possibility. Yet, the more strikingly vulnerable categories can be mentioned:

1. The vigesimal system (counting in twenties) that grew specifically from a pastoral necessity of counting sheep; a pattern was revealed of boys settled in uphill villages being able to count in twenties, ‘proficient’ adults those who’ve moved down have forgotten;
2. The vast botany born of the Bangani’s deep familiarity with the forests, its produce and the native therapeutic systems that developed from it (disrupted only after colonial-style forestry came in);
3. Practices associated with the old agricultural crops, now rendered obsolete by the apple revolution: viz. colai, a red wheat-like crop still common in Parbat area; marsa, a variety of rice; koda, a high iodine wheat variety; jalla, a red rice variety.

The old, finely-grained system of fractions rendered in Bangani and the numerals associated with the Candyani script that the Brahmins of Dagoli use in their daily practice would represent another such endangered stock—only practicing Brahmins can now read

³³ Like, for instance, Malayalam ‘tii-vaṇḍi’ (fire+wagon) ‘train’ or ‘tii-peṭṭi’ (fire+box) ‘matchbox’ are.

Candyani³⁴. Utensil words like badu 'utensil to cook dal'; bantkhula 'water utensil'; thek 'wooden box for salt' may survive as long as the items remain in use. A downward displacement from the hills also often means new building material (wood becoming more expensive), a new living arrangement, new furniture items (in a Saras kitchen, different names would attach to the goat's wooden enclosure on one side, the hollow wood panels in the wall for utensils, and many other specific kinds of wooden artefacts)—all of which effecting a similar breach. The old weighing measures used for foodgrain stored in the kothaar 'granary'—classified hierarchically as 2 ser > 1 patha / 16 patha > 1 dzuun/ 20 dzuun > 1 khar/ 10 khar > 1 kharso (one kothaar has four divisions called ganje, each with a capacity of 4 khars)—may fare no better than the vigesimal system. A typical Bangani kitchen would also possess *two* brooms:

kusunṭi (a small broom used only to clean the cooking area), used as in:

kusunṭi-ke gu: cu:l poru 'clean the culha with the kusunti'

suin (a big broom for cleaning the floor), used as in:

suin-ke edz por baur 'clean the floor with the suin'

Deep-rooted cultural notions regarding food and cleanliness may mean that these may survive even in a transplanted environment. Similarly, well-entrenched habits and other phenomena pertaining to the human body are likely to prove resilient. For example, bodily-related words recorded on the trip—ɔ:sai jamai 'to yawn', onci-ŋɔ: 'to rinse one's mouth', kukhi gɔ:die 'arms akimbo' (taken to be an unpleasant posture)—seem too much attached to an intimate domain to be prone to attrition, even across generations. The gɔ:reṭ 'water-run cakki' too may survive longer than counterparts due to its continuing utility. Religion, because of its continuing relevance for Banganis, represents a domain where nothing in terms of outright obsolescence is likely. The small sample recorded contained devuṭh 'temple', sundol 'drums at last light', parbat 'drums at morning'; dundi 'utensil for Kol devta at Salra'. Indeed, the nomenclature of the gods itself represents a colourful lexical hierarchy—the eldest of the four Mahasu gods, who is lame and therefore immobile, is Botha (sitting); the youngest and most mobile is Calda (moving).

Naming processes, in attaching to a whole environment, proceed along different requirements. New dogris in Bangan do not necessitate new names, for right down to the

³⁴ The History section will dwell on Bangan's tangential relation to writing systems.

last agricultural plot, every patch of land is already named. Thus, an interviewee in a house just off the Bindri dogri said that the specific plot he occupied bore the name Benda, as inherited from the forefathers. But at the presumed stage of naming, innovation is visible in the dogri names Dzɔ:le (lit. 'afire') and Ishali ('extinguished'). The precise history of toponyms would in itself provide a fascinating account. (A cursory check of the typical Bangani -li and -nu toponym suffixes with a Rajasthani speaker, for instance, elicited instant 'recognition'—strengthening the hypothesized Marwari link of Pahari.) On another level, there is a regularized manner in which village names attach to its inhabitants, marking a history of clan affinity.³⁵ The variety that can attend naming is also to be seen in the river that runs through Kothigarh. Khoniyado, called thus at Tikochi village, receives another name barely four kilometres upstream at Chiwa-Jagta, derived from the name for one of its feeder-streams.

To round off this selective look at synchronic Bangani lexicon—attached to everyday use, rather than an exotic antecedence—one can take up the polysemy of ugad-ŋɔ:, an action verb related to the Hindi 'nikalna', particularly difficult to gloss into English because of obvious reasons. This can attach to a variety of contexts:

juta poru-gad
shoe there open
'Open your shoes there'

kamera oru ane fotugadu-le
camera here bring, photo take
'bring the camera here and click snaps'

goti-goo dzɔ:d, cɔ:in ugadu-le
happen (pst) rain, cow let loose
'The rain has stopped, open the cows'

ek botal gadi-ne ame suri-ri oru
one bottle buy we liquor-gen here
'Let us get a bottle of liquor'

³⁵ See Appendix

STRUCTURE

Phonology:

Here, Grierson's general observations regarding the Western Pahari sound stock hold good. The rendition of NIA /a/ as /ɔ:/ which goads Zoller to note a "superficial similarity with Bengali", the diphthongization of /o/ as in *maunde* and affricate /dz/ coming in place of the NIA palatal /j/. In addition, of the other features, the crucial ones are the absence of word-initial aspiration and aspirated voiced occlusives, and the retention of a distinction between /r/ and /l/ and their retroflexed counterparts. Zoller notes that Bangani is the sole exception in Western Pahari in the absence of aspirated voiced occlusives—others exhibit the normal four-fold pattern of opposition whereas Bangani, in a shared structural feature with the Dardic tongues, shows a three-way 'p, ph, b' distinction. Also, akin to Dardic tongues like Khashali, it has six occlusive/affricate articulatory positions, instead of the normal seven obtaining across Western Pahari.

In the modern context of code-switching with Hindi, it is possible to observe the considerable pressure non-Bangani paradigms exert on native phonotactics. The frequent Bangani-Hindi code-switching means that there is ever a tension in the utterance of words like *Dagoli* (which is rendered as *Dhagoli* in Hindi) and *Anol* (*Hanol*). In Arakot high school, the instilling of the absent class of sounds, the voiced aspirated occlusives, is a long-drawn process which involves the schoolmaster introducing the children to a 'chota-kh lesson'. Despite fluency in Hindi, a context of reflection will sometimes reveal that this remains an imposed superstructure, never integrating itself fully into a natural class. One such effect could be seen in the over-correction by one interviewee in the spelling of the name *Kedar* (he insisted on *-dh-*). In Bangani, a rich, four-way tone differentiation stands in for the eclipsed aspiration. It's a matter for further research if the phonetic demands of Hindi diachronically devigorates the Bangani system of tonemic allocation of meaning. Crucially, Zoller observes that his stock of archaisms don't answer to the modern Bangani /p, ph, b/ paradigm, retaining voiced aspirated occlusives. He suggests they were fossilized in specialized oral genres like the *Ponduan* *before* the sound changes, but could an external provenance be the answer?

Morphosyntax

Bangani morphosyntax reveals a finely-grained, highly productive character, marked for some structural possibilities that depart entirely from the NIA paradigm—allowing for a creative employment at the grammatical level itself, a range of options that can't be explained away satisfactorily as stylistically-motivated rearrangements of word order. It is not proposed here to write a full grammar of Bangani, only to take up a small set of known morphosyntactic 'peculiarities', extending the riddle further with fresh data, and to dredge up a few previously unrecorded phenomena that pose new questions. First, a brief prelude to showcase the extent of complexity and the kind of thin ice the linguist treads in offering definite answers on the basis of available data. Van Driem notes two sets of genitive—the standard *-rɔ:* which is compatible in case, number and gender with the head noun (as in the recorded string *gɔ:re-ri biit* 'house-gen wall'); and *-kɔ:*, an adjectival genitive ending that comes in strings like *boŋja-kɔ: bɔ:i* 'brother's wife's brother' and *pɔ:r-kɔ:* 'last year's'. The second one, incidentally, also deflates Zoller's claim that the form *pɔ:rkɔ:* 'question' is a Kentum word (as against Satem 'pras-'). Which is more bonafide, whether such a genitive is a native category (as against a likelihood, however dim, of a grammatical borrowing from Hindi) are questions that shall not occupy us here. The debate comes in handy to demonstrate a *possibility* of confusion between lexeme and grammeme, a slippery terrain, and to note a few 'slips'.

The Case of the Locative: Despite the elaborate taxonomizing, Bangani morphosyntax still seems to possess variational possibilities that are yet to be grasped. But a still more curious transcription saw van Driem offering, in his list of Bangani villages, names like *Ducanu-ke*, *Kervanu-ke*, *Ciu-ke* (with *-ĕ* bracketed as the local 'pronunciation'). Here he seems to have, on the face of it, failed to recognize a crucial rule in Bangani phonotactics—in other words, an inflectional mark with its own distributional law has been transcribed along with the name. Recordings made on the field trip of utterances containing *Chiwa*, intended to throw up details on locative/deictic markers, yielded this suffix but not uniformly. First, a little elaboration is called for. Since the names *Chiwa*, *Duchanu* and *Kiranu* are properly Hindi renditions of the original, a certain amount of phonetic shift can be imagined (as in Bangani *məʊndĕ*, accompanied by a falling tone,

going to toneless ‘Monda’—Banganis themselves refer to the village in this fashion, dropping the diphthong, while speaking in Hindi, but revert to the original phonetic shape in native speech). A sample of sentences collected on the trip can be adduced here to throw some light on this conundrum.

To render a sentence like ‘above Chiwa is Monda’, Banganis would use:

ciu-kĕ ma:lĕ maʊndĕ

Chiwa above Monda

‘Monda is above Chiwa’

Here, it is possible to read -kĕ as an inflectional morpheme possessing deictic information and assigning locative case (as in the Hindi -ke that would appear in a similar context).

This is reinforced by the form of the locative interrogative kitkĕ ‘where’ and its corresponding deictic responses itkĕ ‘here’ and titkĕ ‘there’. Also, one has a string like:

aʊ tumkĕ ciu-kĕ milu

I you-acc. Chiwa-loc. will meet

to mean ‘I’ll meet you *at* Chiwa’. But there are problems in accepting this in toto in the phenomenon in question, for the same reasons that encouraged van Driem to err. To proceed, let us invert the equation, and look at it from Monda’s perspective. This yields, in the first of the possible utterances:

maʊnda:-kĕ tollĕ ciu-kĕ

Monda below Chiwa

‘Below Monda is Chiwa’

Here, notice two things: Monda receives the -kĕ suffix, as expected, but Chiwa doesn’t *relinquish* its suffix. And indeed, there is an optional construction to describe the same spatial relation, in which Monda can drop the locative -kĕ suffix but Chiwa *still* retains it:

maʊnda: tollĕ ciu-kĕ

Monda below Chiwa

‘Below Monda is Chiwa’

So now, we have a locative case-assigning -kĕ suffix that is not obligatory in the syntactic slot it should be expected in, but is indeed obligatory as a suffix in another context—that is, in the slot after Chiwa, when rendered in its native phonetic form /ciu/. It is not a syntactic requirement here, which can be established by pointing to just two facts. One,

the first string quoted above, where we have the uninflected form /məʊndɛ/ (the final vowel presumably taking its kernel form when the word forms the burden or GOAL of the prepositional element). For the second, one only needs to replace Chiwa with its twin village Jagta, which is also *below* Monda. We get:

məʊnda: tollɛ̃ jɑ:ɡɛ̃

Monda below Jagta

‘Below Monda is Jagta’

What is it, then, that makes the /ciu/ form obligatorily take the -kɛ̃ suffix? Is it an empty morpheme here? Or does it modify the form it affixes itself to in some manner? Since what is referred to is primarily a *topographical* entity, we can infer that -kɛ̃ accords a spatial sense at the level of schema, a locational function reduced in its grammaticality because it is at least partly autonomous of syntax. But since it is hardly optional or arbitrary in its appearance with Chiwa (it is so persistent that van Driem assumed it to be part of the name!), it has to be motivated at some level.

On available evidence, the reason seems to be phonotactic. From Chiwa (with its approximant+vowel ending) the name goes in Bangani to /ciu/, a nasalised diphthong. Bangani syllabic rules, one may presume here, demand a -CV ending in these circumstances. Or, if one does not have enough evidence to generalize that, we can say it at least prohibits a -VV structure in this particular sentential environment. /ciu/ violates that rule, whereas /jagɬa/ does. We can posit that as an intrinsic component of Bangani phonotactics, not a rule but a tendency that has yielded this unique, portmanteau-like concretion. That still does not explain van Driem’s Ducanu-ke and Kervanu-ke. Did he unconsciously generalize a toponym-forming rule from *ciu-kɛ̃*? If that is the case, the only response is to end this with one more question: why did he not extend it to Butanu? *Where*, if one may put it that way, is the locative?

Reduplication: This phenomenon is ubiquitous, revealing almost infinite variation in the way it can be partial or complete. That is to say, all the functions that one expects iterated forms to perform—especially intensification, and extension of the temporal range of the denoted activity or state—are fulfilled, but not through ‘canonical’ expressions which are idiomatically frozen but possibilities that are variously realized by different people. It might be difficult to even write a full dictionary of the Bangani reduplicated forms,

judging by the degree of *ex tempore* creativity that seems to be involved, on the sole condition that morphological salience is retained. Consider the following forms:

eti baadlin, ɔ:r dzɔ:d na lagoi na

This much cloud, and rain neg. fall neg.

‘It’s so cloudy, and it still doesn’t rain’

Now, to render this line of thought more forcefully, reduplication is what one may expect. But emphasis markers can come in many forms. Some recorded ones are given below. First, one of total reduplication, done in such a way as to produce a fused form:

Ettetti baadlin, ɔ:r dzɔ:d na lagoi na

The paradigmatic alternative, a shift which can then procreate along its own range of possibilities, is to render this in a rhetorical format, the interrogative:

keti baadel the lagondi, ɔ:r dzɔ:d lagoi na

how much cloud pst.

This, in turn, yields a whole subset of its own reduplicated forms—the recorded ones being as varied as *kettetti*, *kit-kit*, *ket-keti*, *ket-it*:

kettetti dus aigoe, bai kadu-ɔ:r gɔ:re-n ashe-n

how many days come-pst. Brother since when house-neg. come-neg.

nɔ:e-di kit-kit pani

river-in how much water

‘There is so much water in the river’

The third category is the correlative form, *tettetti*, which then gives:

tettetti badel lago ɔ:r dzɔ:d lagoina

This much cloud and rain fall-neg.

‘There’s so much cloud, but it still doesn’t rain’

On the other hand, when a sentence like this directly uses a quantifying adjective instead of the question-answer formations, reduplication again follows naturally, almost obligatorily. For instance:

nɔ:e-di bɔ:ri bɔ:ri pani

river in full full water

‘The river is full of water’

Or again:

nɔːe-di dzad-dzad-ke pani

river in excess water

‘The river is overflowing with water’

The J-clause of relative constructions is another natural candidate for both partial and total reduplication, expressing the range of selection of entities upon whom the following proposition applies. Thus, one gets constructions like:

jeu-jeurɔː ristɔː imacal-ki, teuri boli milë

‘Those who marry into Himachal, their language is similar’

The observed option here is:

jeurɔː-jeurɔː ristɔː imacal-ki, teuri boli milë

In this and many of the other cases, the optionality mirrors the one occurring in Hindi and many other Indian languages, reduplication being properly an areal feature that extends across India. Reduplication can also give rise to nominal forms like *bude-kude sadruva* ‘the old saints’ (characters who figure in the myth of Una Bhat, who brought the four Mahasu brother-gods to Bangan to fight Kirmir Danav), where it does not seem to be modifying or extending the meaning, rather, only providing a kind of phonetic shadow that enhances the rhythmicity of the phrase, a value-adding feature common in literature. In fact, Zoller mentions a whole range of such operations in his article ‘The Grammar of Poetics’. The key component of what Zoller’s describes as ‘poeticity’ is a verbal technology frequently resorted to in Indian literary forms, the strictly spatio-temporal constraints of metrical composition forming the primary motivation. They also serve in creating a “prose-song dichotomy”. The Ponduan, which is the Bangani version of the Mahabharata, as Zoller says, is “phonologically, morphologically, syntactically different from the colloquial”. Along with rare words that create a “reduced semanticity”, he mentions “elliptic syntax, echo-forms and alliteration” that create an “incantation-like quality...a spell-boundedness”. As an example of the “symmetrical reduplication of oppositional pairs as functional units in an overall aesthetic design”, he mentions *sarath-barath* (Shatrughan-Bharat) where for “morphological symmetry” a semantic assymetry has been effected—the first name losing its individuality and becoming a “drawn-forth” shadow of the second. His conclusion is that the bard’s use of language is characterized

by a “creative violence”. That, some linguists may well concur, is a feature of ordinary language as well in Bangani, in the way it ‘plays’ with its material.

In the domain of expressive morphology, a string of manner adverbs come into play. For example: sandɔː-sandɔː (tired). Sometimes, rather than as a mere adverbial modifying the denoted activity, such a construction seems to function as a self-contained clause, the specific vowel-ending enabling the change of category:

zokh-zokhĕ, roi jai etre

‘You look fatigued, stay back today’

As diminutives and attenuators, in Dagoli the form recorded was ushi ushi ‘a little’. From a Rohru teenager from Himachal, the form dokh-dokh performed the same function. Even when Banganis employ a cognate construction in Hindi, they tend to nativize its phonetic arrangement, dropping the vowel in the first component and retaining it in the second. For example, thod-thodi ‘a little’.

Causatives: Initial data had seemed to suggest that causative constructions in their full scope were absent in Bangani. This has to be partially revised in the light of fresh data, which reveals a three-way distinction in verb-forms that flows from their structure of causation, as in Hindi. However, indirect causation seems a merged category. A boy from village Gokul supplied these facetious clauses to exemplify this three-way distinction. Observe the incremental phonetic change in the verb that yields this difference:

kukre-r muṭki khani thi mui

rooster-gen. head eat AUX-pst. I-erg.

‘I should have had the rooster’s head’

Kukre-ke khɔːinɔː-thɔː tu

‘You should have had a rooster’

A direct causation seems to be implied in this case. The third category is:

kukre-r mutki khɔːain-thi tumkĕ

rooster-gen head feed-AUX-pst. you-acc.

‘You should have been fed a rooster’s head’

This seems to merge the sense of indirect causation, for though the source of action is only obliquely present, it could be the speaker or another entity. For a sample sentence containing the sense of indirect causation, the interviewees invariably returned:

thekedar-ei kaam kɔ:raɔ:

contractor-erg.emph. work got done

'The contractor got the work done'

And a related grammatical type, correlating two interlinked actions through the means of a conjunctive participle (CP clause) indicating "temporal priority" (rather than canonical causation) vis-à-vis the matrix clause, occurs in Bangani as below:

Ek bidi mukē de dzɔ:lai

one bidi I-acc. give lit

'Light a bidi *and* give it to me'

Relative clauses: Colin P. Masica calls this the "characteristic Indo-Aryan (both old and new) construction, where the modifying clause, marked by a member of the 'J'-set of relative pronouns, adverbs and other words, is 'represented' by a correlative in its role slot in the main clause." Typically, the head noun of the main clause is deleted, leaving the correlative of the 'T'-set to mark its place, while the coreferent in the modifying clause is allowed to remain, though there are variations thereupon.

Here, as with reduplications, Bangani makes no departures from the Indian paradigm, if anything employing the technique to its maximum. It exhibits the entire stock of relative-correlative constructions. One needs to look at only two types. For the first, an example is repeated to exemplify a relation between relative and matrix clause to a set of entities, the other binding them to a temporal framework:

jiu-jiu-rɔ: ristɔ: imacal-ki, jesrɔ: boli thod-thodi milē

Those who-gen marriage HP-to, their speech little similar

'Those who marry to Himachal, their speech is also similar'

The second relates the two clauses through a sense of time:

jetra ɔ:mru undē deolo, tetra es bi nie-no

when Amar there go-fut., then he-3sgm(vis) too take

'When Amar goes there, take him along'

The notable point with the above sentence-type is the optionality that exists of overtly referring to the name of the person in the modifying clause, *even if* the utterance is directly addressed to him. The more 'regular' option would have been to not use the

name, but the second person singular absolutive form ‘tu’.³⁶ To express this temporal relation, Bangani has another form that was recorded in Masmur in another context (it seems to be absent in at least Dagoli)—kadu ‘when’. This first emerged as an option to express the sentence-type given below:

dada keti-ɔ:r na aasɔ:

brother since when neg. come

‘Since when has brother not come’

This too yields the affiliated relative-correlative in jētra-kētra, but /keti/ seems more akin to a quantifier (like the Hindi ‘kitna’), betraying a sense of ‘how *long*’, because of its use in strings like nɔ:ē-di keti pani. On the other hand, the option is:

dada kadu-ɔ:r na aasɔ:

brother since when neg. come

‘Since when has brother not come’

This form seems closer to a pure temporal sense of ‘since when’, and this too reveals its full family of relative-correlative possibilities, as in the following exchange:

tu kadu asɔ:

you when come-pst.

‘When did you come?’

au dzadu dzɔ:d thɔ: lagiu, tadu asɔ:

I when rain AUX-pst. falling, then come

‘I came *when* it was raining’

Morphology is the armoury every language carries to protect its flanks, so to speak. Native morphological mechanisms enable speakers to accept borrowed lexemes and integrate them fully with the familiar paradigm. Thus, we get a hierarchy of operations that characterize the familiar depths to which loanwords can be nativized. The first signs occur when loanwords begin to get inflected, as in *asia-ri ped* ‘asia’s tree’—a reference to the largest pine tree in Asia that comes just a few furlong away from Buthothra village in Masmur. At the second stage, phonological modifications are performed upon the loanwords to nativize them before it can receive regular postpositions, as in:

isʃuul-mai kitaab-ē

³⁶ A parallel construction is possible in Malayalam, but not in Hindi.

stool-on book is

'The book is on the stool'

The third stage is when more sophisticated morphemes affix themselves on to loanwords. Here, we get a succession of forms like *iskuul* 'school' which then yields *iskuulia* 'schoolkid' or, as in *Dagoli*, a more specialized diminutive '*iskuultia*'. No definite data can be proffered on what kind of forms may resist change and what may be more vulnerable to invasive forms. As a preliminary inquiry, one can consider the encroachment of Hindi formative suffixes in the grammatically much-reduced Bangani spoken by an expatriate child settled in *Vikasnagar*, *Dehra Dun*. Asked to provide the Bangani equivalent for a future construction of the type 'brother will come' (*H. ayenge*), instead of the shorter, canonical Bangani:

dada asē

the expatriate child offered a Hindi suffix marking future

dada asne-wale

For the negative counterpart, he stuck to the base-form:

dada na asne-wale

'Brother won't becoming'

Again, in the causative type 'the contractor got the work done', he offered a curious blend of a Bangani completive suffix (consciously?) affixed to a Hindi form:

ṭhekedar kaam karvaigo

The syntax here is clearly Hindi, incorporating 'pseudo-native' elements. However, this is an extreme case of estrangement from the Bangani atmosphere and no universal diagnostic value can be proposed—that is, it cannot be predicted that upon intense contact with Hindi, these are the forms convergence might take. There are no dramatic conflicts here between alien families here, as in *Gumperz's* celebrated case of a multilingual Marathi border village or in *Dakkhini*. In *Bangan* proper, the lexicon is predictably enhanced by loanwords, but the indigenous morphological system seems not to be exhibiting any patterns of redundancy or attrition. The precise predicament can be exemplified in the below construction, native morphemes affixing on loanwords:

lampu-ro aaso kei na aastō: foto

lamp-gen light in-emph neg come photo

'Won't the photo turn out alright in lamp's light?'

Pre-verbal Auxiliaries:

This is the area of Bangani syntax that has thrown up its most radical departure from the NIA paradigm. Consequently, it has also been proposed that the encroachment of Hindi forms tends to set up ‘parallel structures’ in a relation of optionality which, diachronically, may lead to a situation where the native form may gradually become more ‘marked’ and, partly because of reasons of economy, may fall into a class of ‘redundancies’ that ultimately stand the risk of becoming obsolete. First, the illustrative examples³⁷ of a set of two, one carrying the ‘canonical’ structure of pre-verbal negative auxiliaries, the second the parallel structure that drops the pre-verbal auxiliary, but carries “redundant but obligatory” durative markers.

1. au khanɔ: (na) nɔ:thi thɔ: khande lagi

I food neg. neg-aux aux (pst.msg.) eat prog/dur

2. au khanɔ: na rɔ: thɔ: khandi lagi

I food neg. dur. aux (pst. msg.) eat prog/dur

‘I was not eating food’

Writes Abbi: “Notice the redundant structures of two negatives and two auxiliaries with past tense and the absence of progressive aspectual markers” in the first and the redundant aspect (rɔ: and lagi) and one aux. in the second. She infers that the situation of obligatory selection that is set up, and the “redundancy” of double negatives, progressive markers and auxiliaries is symptomatic of an intense contact situation. Before one proceeds, two addenda at the level of data. One, in none of the recordings on the field did the first type appear—that is, two negatives *and* two auxiliaries in the progressive aspect of past. (A fact which should be qualified by another, that of the discourse-motivation set by questioning in Hindi forming a base-matrix upon which data is collected.) The closest that came retained two negatives, from a speaker from Jagta:

au khanɔ: nanɔ:thi khandɔ: laagɔ:ndi

This raises the question of whether the second negative should be bracketed as ‘optional’—indeed, double negatives *and* double aux appeared together in other syntactic contexts, i.e. past and future of the non-progressive aspect, suggesting a certain salience).

³⁷ Cited from ‘Competing languages, Structural Conflicts... Languages in Contact’, Anvita Abbi.

Here we may adduce three illustrations of the pidgin Bangani of Vikasnagar, elicited on the above format for comparison:

au khanɔ: khandɔ: lagɔ:n-thɔ:

'I was eating food'

au khanɔ: na khandɔ: lagɔ:n-thɔ:

'I was not eating food'

au bɔ:ngaan na deɔ:ndɔ: lagɔ:n-thɔ:

'I was not going to Bangan'

Again, no universality is proposed. The speaker is a child who has grown up outside Bangan in a Hindi-speaking area, with little contact with native home, and with his limited competence, had to muster up remembered fragments in an artificial speech context—that of recording. Hesitation and error come naturally in such contexts, even for proficient adults; the sentences are listed because they serve precisely to illustrate the *site* of grammatical confusion, as particles dislodged from their syntactic environment behave like flotsam; even so, here they share a regularity.

However finely-grained and convincing the evidentiary support, its prognostic nature requires that all loose ends are tied up at the level of both theory and practice before conclusions about "redundancy" (a loaded word that seems to insist upon future obsolescence) can validate themselves. For, 'redundancy' seeks to express a syntactic 'state', but it willy-nilly implies a *prognosis*. As can be seen, overt grammatical redundancy is a dubious guarantee for *actual* redundancy. One does not necessarily lead to the other in a uniform fashion along a 'cline'; different phenomena react differently. To allocate this alleged selective retention to the presence of 'basic-level' categories may be a hypothetical exercise. But at the least, it has to be acknowledged that a cluster of factors—undefined, yet loosely categorized as 'cultural'—act in nexus to regulate the logical move from grammatical to actual redundancy. The tricky part here is that an overarching sociolinguistic 'motivation' towards adoption of dominant language forms at various levels, conscious and unconscious, is certainly making itself visible in Bangan—an area for reasearch in coming years as more and more children in the once-remote mountain country attend schools that indoctrinate a feeling of pan-Indian affiliation to

Hindi—but in positing that at the level of language, as structural and hence ‘natural’ selection, one effects a subtle but profound theoretical shift. Before that, a few facts.

Optionality (and Dialect):

Before endorsing the first term wholesale as a valid analytical tool and applying it to a forward-looking theory, one has recognize that this is a formal, synchronic category that places two or more forms in a class of set-theoretical equivalences (without counting the social ‘value’ that influences selection)—which implies that, on the ground, both forms are equally available to all Bangani speakers at the same time, and they make a conscious or unconscious selection. This may not bear itself out in a dialectologically-enriched understanding of the variations within Bangani. To wit, the progressive/durative aspect is not “absent” in the first type above. It is present in the nasalized –u ending of /lagiu/, and it is uniformly employed in that fashion to express durativeness (without the need for another marker like -rɔ:) in speech typical of Masmur (Pingal also uses it, as recorded on the field). The evidence from Jagta above shows that, if not absent, it is not the first choice of a Kothigarh speaker, who is naturally closer to certain dialects characteristic of Simla. Indeed, in Dagoli, closest to certain Himachali forms, the /lagiu/ is entirely absent and they attest it to be characteristic of Masmur. Van Driem cursorily notes the “dialectal variation” within Bangan which his informants, well, informed him about but in the next breath brushes it away as of no consequence because of all forms being “mutually intelligible”. The context of this discussion makes it is easy to see how such an approach can blind one to the crucial grammatical-level differences that Bangani dialects pose. The invisible conceptual categorization between ‘language’ and ‘dialect’ exerts an influence that rightfully it should not in variational analysis. That is, once we categorize a speech as Bangani, as against Himachali or Bawari, we let at least some factors extraneous to language seep into analysis—even blunt factors like modern territorial divisions. On the other hand, an alternate view is possible. Whereby we temporarily dissolve the category of Bangani, recognizing it to be a composite ethnolinguistic unit rather than a pure linguistic unit. Not carved out as an island of oddities that can be profitably conquered by theory, but one emerging from the overlaps in a series of penumbra. Cumulatively, as three pattis, it shares a linguistic distinctiveness, but the individual elements are still cast

in their autonomous zones of interaction outside. Within this framework of multiple affiliations, Bangani maintains itself as an ethnic/linguistic entity, marking out the 'others'.

A diachronic basis for analysis should also exist. If there are parallel structures in Bangani, how long have they been there? What is the contact situation that spawned them? Do we take Hindi as the default contact language, or was the composition of Western Pahari already rich enough to exhibit such plurality? There are also some theoretical lines here that themselves set up a class of 'parallel structures'. On one count, there is Weinreich's dictum that *simplification* of form is always a motivation in contact and convergence phenomena. That can help endorse the view that in Bangani there is a potential shift towards less 'marked'³⁸ forms sans the burden of 'redundancies'.

But where does that integrate with the understanding that contact situations are more generally characterized by an enlargement, not a depletion of grammar? From that fact to a linear hierarchy of 'states'—viz. parallel structures > optionality > redundancy (> obsolescence?)—logically represents an incompatible theoretical movement. Does the selective non-applicability of one or the other of these mutually exclusive propositions make for a consistent theory? Or is one more *basic* than the other? And lastly, positing a syntax-level "redundancy" presets the scope of analysis, making it cohere around what can only be called a normative core. This follows a mathesized conception, a singular, digitized allocation of grammatical roles and functions, which we can see does not sit well with a language like Bangani on several counts.

Before we proceed, a brief review. There are two sentence types in Bangani of the progressive aspect. They are:

ag jol-di ro lagi

fire burn prog. dur.

'The fire is burning'

and:

au manḍ-de the lagiu

I rub aux (1msg) dur. prog.

'I started rubbing'

³⁸ Markedness is another slippery concept. Within many Bangani contexts, Hindi might be more 'marked'.

We also draw, provisionally, the conclusion that at least as much as an optional pair, these two structures also call to mind a dialectal differentiation within Bangani. One superimposed on another, this explains the constitutive duality between submerged elements and overlaid features—the structural tension between them, the mobility it causes, and a pattern of adaptivity it implies. It is with this enlarged structure, already incorporating NIA features, that Bangani confronts the new inputs of Hindi via nativized use ('*thoḍi-jaisi pilo*' derived from the diminutive adjective *choḍ-jai*), economic interactions outside Bangan, or the educated variety via education, official communication and the media.

Negation:

This is another domain where Bangani exhibits significant departures from the NIA paradigm, in that it allows (in fact, in some constructions seems to encourage) multiple negation, either staggered or in a cluster of *neg.aux. neg.aux* (for perfectives). Double negation was earlier thought to be the maximal realization of this phenomenon, in fact it was enough to mark out Bangani syntax, but data recorded on this trip yielded forms that go beyond 'simple' double, discontinuous negation—two instances were recorded from differing syntactic contexts of the negative particle being affixed *thrice* on a succession of stems. There is a degree of optionality involved, but to proceed from a view of grammar as implying 'economy' and minimal expenditure of form and energy would clearly put Bangani beyond the ambit of such theory. For, though certain slots seem to obligatorily require the negative particle, and can be thought to be the canonical slot, natural speech tended to a maximal realization. If nothing is added here in terms of propositional content (apart from perhaps emphasis), it only serves to underscore the degree of difference between natural language and formal logic. The field exercise also yielded evidence that multiple negation is not a singular feature of Bangani alone. Though it was not possible to make a full inventory, enough data could be gathered to prove that areas in Himachal north and north-west of Bangan (i.e. Simla dialects) have variants of the phenomenon. From the only recordings made of samples of Bawari and the speech of a woman from Devgarh patti (a 'backward' Himachal-UP belt that is now shared between Simla, Sirmour and Bawar) married into Sandra village, it seems that

south and south-west of Bangan the phenomenon ceases to apply—although Bawari (south of Bangan) still shows a pre-verbal negative auxiliary. First the Bawari form, in the imperfective (non-habitual) aspect:

au arakot-ke laago nathi nɔ:ɛ̃

I Arakot-for prog. neg.aux. go

'I wasn't going to Arakot'

mui kolar nathi lagi khai

I-erg. breakfast neg.aux. prog. eat

'I wasn't eating breakfast'

The data recorded from a Rohru town (N-NW of Bangan) local yielded a discontinuous, double negation on a pattern identical to that of Bangani in the same aspect:

undɔ: nai deɔ:nde-nai

there neg. go-pst.imp. neg.

'I wasn't going there'

au roti na khandɔ:e-nai

I roti neg. eat-pst.imp. neg.

'I wasn't eating roti'

In addition, even in future tense the structure stays intact:

au na deɔ:ndɔ: nai

I neg. go-fut. neg.

'I won't be going'

The question of optionality could not be settled; but in the face of the profusion of multiple negative forms in the natural speech of Bangan and its neighbouring areas, it seemed at least a little gratuitous. For instance, the sample recorded from a woman from Bhatad (HP) married into Dagoli had the form *nanaithi*, as in:

byale nanaithi baaguur

yesterday neg.neg.aux wind

Now, the typical Bangani construction containing a *neg.aux.neg.aux* structure and variations thereupon, for perfective and future, respectively. This was attested across speakers from the different pattis. A speaker from Buthothra village supplied forms that exercised almost the whole spectrum of optionality. First the base form:

byale baaguur nɔ:thi nathi
 yesterday wind neg.aux.neg.aux.

‘There was no wind yesterday’

This immediately yields two variants, notice that it is a specific auxiliary that gets elided (the second one, suggesting it carried no tensual/aspectual information in the above), upon which the negative particle it was affixed to is free to precede the other cluster:

byale baaguur nɔ:thina
 yesterday wind neg.aux.neg.

‘There was no wind yesterday’

byale baaguur nanɔ:thi
 yesterday wind neg.neg.aux.

‘There was no wind yesterday’

Two more sentences can make the pattern clear:

muke ɔ:kcan nɔ:thina, tau kate nɔ:thi?

I-dat. Lighter neg.aux.neg, you with neg.aux

‘I don’t have a lighter, do you’

mere pen-di siai nɔ:thina

I-gen. pen-in ink neg.aux.neg.

‘My pen has no ink’

In the future construction, the first of the above two provides the pattern, and there seems to be no optionality element present here, nor any overt tense marking (except that the word tomorrow confers the appropriate temporal context). The form is:

doti dzɔ:dɛ nɔ:thina
 tomorrow rain neg.aux.neg.

‘It won’t rain tomorrow’

The next level of negational behaviour is a *spreading* effect. First the previously attested double, discontinuous negation, with its optional variation, where one particle is elided:

etre baadlino dzɔ:d na lagoi-na
 etre baadlino dzɔ:d lagoi-na
 today clouds rain (neg.) prog.emph.-neg.

‘There are clouds today, but it still doesn’t rain’

For another example, to regularize the pattern:

etrau kolar-n khandi-na

etrau kolar khandi-na

‘today I breakfast(-neg.) eat-prog.neg.’

The next stage is **previously unrecorded** and quite atypical for India. This is where the *spreading* takes place over most of the clause, depositing the negative particle at three different sites—the question element, verb, and noun in that order. First, the sentence:

dada keti-ɔ:r-n aase-n gɔ:re-na

dada kadu-ɔ:r-n aase-n gore-na³⁹

brother since when-neg. come-neg. home-neg

‘How long brother has not been home’

Semantically, this seems to achieve an accentuation of the negational sense in this rhetorical utterance (emphasis being one of its chief goals). To search out a logic, a syntactic motivation for such an arrangement of lexical material, where the base form stays the same, but the negative element spreads and infixes itself at each word-ending in the clause, is difficult. But having *heard* the forms, one can hazard a suggestion—any explanation might prosper from having a prosodic component to it. For, a rhythmicity borne by the alliteration is undeniably the first ‘effect’. Next stage, the optional utterance:

dada keti-ɔ:r na aasɔ:

dada kadu-ɔ:r na aasɔ:

brother since when-neg come

Triple negation was observed in another construction, this time future tense⁴⁰:

doti-n laagdi-n baagure-i-na

tomorrow-neg. blow-neg. wind-emph. neg.

‘It won’t rain tomorrow’

In the two other renderings by the same person, either of the first two negative particles were dropped in *allegro* speech, an extended nasalised vowel standing in for it, and the last was retained as *baagurei-na*. Seeing what overlaps with the distributional pattern of the earlier sentences, one can pinpoint a slot abutting the verb as obligatorily requiring

³⁹ *Keti* is properly a quantifier, as in *nɔ:e-di keti pani* ‘river-in how much water’. *Kadu*, seemingly more characteristic of Masmur (borrowing from different neighbours?), has the more temporal sense ‘since’.

⁴⁰ This was recorded in Sandra village, the enclave of ex-Monda villagers.

the negative and the last negative particle is likely to be an echo-like construction, iterating the –na- syllable.

Deixis:

Language as it is used, to be grasped in its essence, has to be understood as speech, restored to its indexicality, accompanied by gesture—its imagistically coded variant, set in a specific spatio-temporal axis, adapting and integrating itself to that context. The word *deixis* has come to signify this integral matrix of speech. Lyons writes: “By (*deixis*) is meant the location and identification of persons, objects, events, processes, and activities being talked about, or referred to, in relation to the spatiotemporal context created and sustained by the act of utterance and the participation in it, typically of a single speaker and one addressee”. From that root sense, this component can be generalized and related to a larger process of how individual languages can be shaped by the environment in which they find themselves placed. A cultural component silently affixes itself to speech that derives directly from this collective situation. The Whorfian hypothesis that language brings about a cultural difference in conceptualizing the immediate universe offers an approach that can be extended to other domains, other activities set anterior to his area of description. Before language shapes, it is itself shaped. If this seems biased towards an implied evolutionary process, one can *generalize* the analysis by pointing to the network of inter-relations. This distinction is necessary—because a lot of ethnosemantics and cultural anthropology is entrenched in an evolutionary principle—at one end, offering a too *biological* analysis, at the other quantifying cultural complexity with western democracy as the neutral standard, the all-too-frequent case of a personal cultural paradigm feeding theory. Be that as it may, beyond what can be described formally, it’s a fact that language encodes a way of seeing—and it is a reciprocal activity, speech drawing from a visually accessible reality. Since speech is set along a spatiotemporal activity “centred on the speaker”, can we assume a larger system of relations between the two, which get generalized across a set of speakers with a similar vantage-point? Is it valid to posit a cultural component composed of these relations, a collective *deixis*? Let us examine the facts from the language on

hand, Bangani. Recall, at the outset, that spatially it is enriched like any other hill language by an extra axis, a vertical axis relating to altitude, that can input to language.

The space-time markers provide an easy entry point to the rich scope for variation that set Bangani apart in the way it organizes its conceptual material. The first implication of the vertical axis becomes immediately visible in extra differentiations along this axis—i.e. a two-way distinction between *uubē* ‘up’ and *mɑ:lē* ‘above’. English, as we can see it, has the distinction. In Hindi, born in one of the world’s largest alluvial plains, there is but one word for ‘up’—*uupar*, which then refers to every relationship along that axis, whether it be the table-top or a mountain-top. The burden of describing those ultimately deictic distinctions will be allocated to surrounding qualifiers. Finer gradations along this axis become necessary for a hill people, and it reveals itself in language. Reduplication can further qualify these terms. Consider:

uubē uubē iu pɔ:ɸ-di laagɔ:ndi

up up snow fall-prog. happen-prog.

ciu-kē mɑ:lē mɑ:ŋɸē expresses the more proximal relation on a vertical axis. *mɑ:lē* yields its own diminutive in *mɑ:i*, as in the sense of ‘directly above’, ‘on’:

mu-mɑ:i choɸa chatɔ:

I-acc. above hold.pst. umbrella

isʃuul-mɑ:i kitaab-ē

‘the book is on the table’

ɸɔ:kɔ:n-de lai bɑ:ɸu- mɑ:I

‘put the lid *on* the utensil’

Downwards also, fine distinctions arise beyond the basic-level *tolle deo* ‘go down’.

dɔ:ni bosh aagi-kai tapiule bitre

down sit fire-from warm-vb. Inside

‘let’s sit down and warm ourselves at the fireplace inside’

augi ‘below’ also gives a two-way distinction: *ɸɔ:kkē augi kaasē* ‘what’s below the mountain’; and *ʃeble-augi* ‘beneath the table’. When the *mɑ:li* of a deity⁴¹ invokes his lord, he is liable to say *otru deva* (literally ‘descend into me’). A sense of the horizontal may even be permanently embedded in the initial vowel of *uunde* ‘there’ (*uunde nosh* ‘go

⁴¹ An oracular role, played by appointed people, always a Khoshiya

there'). The combination of this all-pervading axis along with the near/far proximal markers cumulatively yield a rich stock of space-markers. The binaries of ɔ:lle/pɔ:lle 'this side/that side', ɔ:gle/palle 'in front/ at the back (cingḍi palle koḥdɔ:r 'the granary behind your back'; one interviewee from Dodra Kuar, HP, returned cingḍi paare), oru/poru 'here/there' (oru ɑ:sh mɑ:sta bosh 'come here, friend, sit'/dɑ:r poru ɬɔ:kɔ: 'close the door'). The 'p' class of words in this list, all of them denoting the distant, are often interchangeably applicable, especially in the frequent situation of having to describe 'across the river'. Linear distinctions—ɔ:gɔ:/pɔ:ncɔ: 'forward/backward'—pose a few unique problems. In Chiwa, at one end of the valley, the perspective not just changes, it *inverts*. Hence, Chiwa villagers often exhibit an ambivalence in their use pɔ:ncɔ:-ɬe (using it for 'down into the valley' or 'back to the village').

Temporal deixis: This domain, again, serves to highlight the different grasp of the universe, the different arrangement of cognitive material implicit in the different organization of time. Hindi, as has been noted, organizes its temporal universe around basically a two-way distinction ɑ:j ('today', present) and kal ('not today', non-present). Bangani possesses a more varied mechanism by which the words for successive days of 'not today' are not identical on both sides but often advance by echoing each other. A linear, six-way distinction yields, beginning with phorez 'day before yesterday', to byale 'yesterday', etre 'today', doti 'tomorrow', porsi 'day after tomorrow', and on to two more succinct words orsi and nitorsi, for which English doesn't have equally succinct cognates. Here too, dialectal differences are there—Dagoli villagers says nitorsi is spoken only in places influenced by Bawari, and is absent from Dagoli.

Grammaticalization:

It has been suggested that the second -thi auxiliary in some of the above examples of negation given above (which appears affixed as -nathi and is more liable to be dropped) is a grammaticalized entity, no longer marked for number, gender or even tense. This field trip yielded *a new class of morphologized lexemes in Bangani*. These involve two lexical items, both of whom in their kernel sense convey basic-level spatial information but, in their grammaticalized form, a metaphoric transfer effects a shift to temporal indexicality. Metaphor studies have unearthed the highly productive and *constitutive*

activity upon certain lexical items in which a semantic transfer from a spatial to a temporal (or vice versa) domain is done, often to gain an aspectual sense. We need only think of the /-ja/ suffix as the perfectivizer in Hindi and many other Indian languages. 'Immediate', broken down to its units, reveals building-blocks borrowed from space. Time itself is often a horizontal space, it 'comes' or 'goes', it sometimes 'flies' or even 'stands still'. too fast' to gain a special across languages. In its essence, grammaticalization refers not to "static entities", say Hopper and Traugott, but to "entities undergoing processes". This leads to shades of meaning, polysemies and other extensions of root semantics which only "pragmatic inferencing" by another acculturated into the same visual code can profitably decipher. Often, some sort of completion, of an activity or of a temporal range is implied. In Bangani, a broad temporal relation comes to be expressed by the word for 'on' mɑ:I, and a more subtle temporal range comes to be connoted by the word for 'up' uube. Consider this sentence, gathered during inquiries into practices surrounding the deities:

devu kholiu, ɔ:ktiri-mɑ:i uube-dzodinu

This has first to be explained. The local deities, being itinerant entities, have a large retinue that go along with them and also other crucial appertunances that must accompany them on their travel—ceremonial objects, decorations, jewellery etc. When a deity leaves a temple for a tour along with his appertunances, the Banganis refer to that as an 'opening up' of the god—i.e. devu kholiu means 'the god is at large'. ɔ:ktiri is a seasonal festival, which this researcher had occasion to participate in at Bamsu village, Masmur. The deity, whose return to Bamsu was expected for the festival, has to be 'rejoined'. The above sentence then means, 'the god is at large, he will be rejoined *during* the festival'. Here, mɑ:i comes to express a temporal relation—ɔ:ktiri-mɑ:i is 'during the festival of ɔ:ktiri'. That is one level of grammaticalization. The same can be said about other 'events' like dzatru festival or any other—to express another event's coinciding temporal range, almost mapping the spatial relation of 'on' or 'spanning the length of'. The last compound in the sentence was prima facie simple to decode—uube-dzodinu 'up will join', since Bamsu is a high-altitude village, it should have been referring to this fact of height. But inquiries revealed uube here no sense of space, but the villagers found it hard to explain the compound-form. Working at it from a tangent, other possibilities of its

occurrence, it turned out also to have *a temporal sense, in fact a finer, aspectual sense*. That is, uube-dzodinu is almost a parallel of ‘join it up’⁴², according a sense of completion and finality, akin to a perfective aspect—a construction that is almost certainly not found in Indian languages of the plains.

Cross-contextual inquiries gradually revealed a highly generative character, as a grammaticalized verbal-compound formative that lends a perfective aspect to temporally-sequenced activities across the spectrum, but with fine polysemies that could be interpreted variously. One such hair-splitting difference was pointed out by a woman at Butanu village. dɑ:r poru-dɔ:kɔ: ‘shut the door’ is the usual utterance when said from inside the room; but it is possible to say dɑ:r uube dɔ:k ‘door close up’ to someone to whom you want to convey the sense of ‘lock it up when you go’. The usage is across a wide field: roʈi uube-cɑ:n ‘roti up-make’ (to denote completive aspect). One last sentence will serve to provide a real-time context:

selai-go nɑ:dz, uube-khao.

cold-pst. meal, up-eat

‘The meal has gone cold, eat it up’

Bilingualism: The ‘Naturalized’ Hindi

Language change is a living reality, with a primarily socio-economic impetus. Despite the radical changes Bangan has undergone in 20 years, the exact effect of what is till now “thoughtful bilingualism” cannot yet be described as corrosive upon an earlier reality. But such a situation may come to pass, if the nature of bilingualism changes. Education is not new to Bangan, the Arakot high school having started as a pathshala in 1901. But it is what education professes *itself* to be, what it means to locals in their first brush with it, the inculcation of a negative prestige, that lends it a subversive potential vis-à-vis the original language. There is a premium on the use of Hindi at these schools—the teachers are from the plains of Uttar Pradesh and often hold their own set of quasi-pejorative notions about hill cultures, and there are punitive measures in store for children who speak Bangani in school. Other factors that influence the linguistic situation is the

⁴² As with discontinuous negation, whose partial French analogies have been noted, it is to another European language that we have to turn for cognate constructions with a grammaticalized ‘up’.

presence of children from a variety of backgrounds taken along different axes—those from the higher villages still participating in the pastoral/agricultural setting as against those from the downhill dogris who are partly divorced from these settings; children from at least two dialect-belts, including many from neighbouring Himachali villages. Hindi, made available as the ‘neutral’ code (though there is no need for a ‘link’ language) insinuates itself into child repertoires at this stage. A new network of Saraswati Sisu Mandirs (there are at least four in Pingal and Kothigarh) is only instilling the climate for a more wholesale shift to Hindi. “Schoolchildren now don’t use Bangani” is a frequent statement. There *is* a reduction not just in competence, attested by locals, among children tutored to in Hindi, but in their *desire* to connect to this past, a crucial shift is effected in their very visualization of themselves. But education alone does not prove the clincher. It is the coincidence of a variety of factors—part social, part cultural, part economic—that lays the ground for sweeping changes in a region like Bangan. What happens in the managed spread of Hindi is not a considered, controlled *bilingualism* but the progressive *replacement* of one code by the other that poses to be a ticket to all that is lacking in a rural, mountain country—urbanization and its cultural-economic desirability⁴³; a dislocation from the regionally-embedded modes of identity-formation and ‘integration’ into a larger ‘national’ whole. A key to language attitudes became visible when, talking about other languages of India, an interviewee set himself against them as *a Hindi speaker*, the native speech (theoretically devalued as ‘dialect’) receding in significance for this purpose of larger identification. The shift is clear—once official linguistic maps put down entire stretches of the country as ‘Hindi-speaking’, the official machinery has to retrospectively realize this on the ground. The issues are clear. Active bilingualism has long been a fact in Bangan, as has been institutionalized bidialectalism. As long as the living arrangements stay the same, it may not affect the internal principles of coherence, the fragile ‘networks’ of identity, the grammatical and tonal force-field, only modifies it from outside. But the social predicament is poised on the edge of that balance.

Code-switching: This is a ubiquitous phenomenon in Bangan. Apart from the obvious domain divisions (intra/inter-group) and other broad categories like topic, situation and participant-influenced switches—which one can make in situations like the school, where

⁴³ The dogris represent this shift—on the road, bigger markets, concrete building materials, satellite TV.

non-Bangani elements influence the circumstances, or in townships like Arakot, Teuni or (outside Bangan), one should like to propose that in each of its instantiations, what prompts code-switching remains a matter for extreme speculation, verifiable only with reference or access to sundry individual psychologies. For, the phenomenon plays itself out in the most unexpected contexts also. Intimate domains like a mother playing with the infant-child in Moldi dogri—a half-playful, stern Hindi. Even such characterizations are at times impossible. The ‘proof’ comes from a purely ritualistic context—an oracular communication with the deity is a frequent, organized event in Bangan, of which three context types were witnessed by this researcher: one, in small villages where family members gather and put intimate problems to god; two, in wider gatherings of Bangani elders where the organization of the religious calendar, a matter of some heated debate (who has a claim on the deity next month?), had to be settled; three, the many, simultaneous sessions that go on in the Anol temple, where pilgrims from surrounding areas (including Bawar and Himachal) set out in dozens of batches in the courtyard with an oracle in the middle⁴⁴. The latter works himself up into a frenzy and assumes the god’s voice, *speaks* as god and the petitioners speak to him one by one in a structured, coded fashion, in at times an emotionally charged atmosphere as intimate, family problems are dredged up in public. In the first, at the tightly-knit, economically backward Sandra village the least incidence of code-switching was found (it was mostly restricted to when the villagers addressed this researcher). In the second, the gathering of elders, the composition was more eclectic—villagers from all three dialect-belts, with even some Himachalis representing *their* claims. Here, the protracted discussions tended to flit in and out of linguistic codes, the petitioner lapsing into Hindi at times, the deity (that is, the possessed ‘maali’) responding to the cue, the petitioner returning to native speech to make a culturally potent point that finds audible echoes from the large gathering, the deity at times following suit. In the third category, at the Anol temple courtyard proceedings, there was a wider strata represented, and the deity’s voice itself was heard in many of the small independent batches to be freely using Hindi. This ritual exchange, a highly specialized and structured form of collective speech, lies at the heart of what is a *personal* domain for the Banganis. The extent to which Hindi has managed to seep in as

⁴⁴ The oracle or ‘maali’ is always an appointed Khoshiya; a Brahmin accompanies him for other duties.

a *natural* component of their repertoire is nowhere more strikingly represented than in the central figure of these proceedings—the *figure of a bilingual god*.

If it can't be predicted when Hindi will be used, it's more profitable to point to retention features, or those carried over to L2. Apart from suprasegmental carryovers, native deictic-markers prove to be basic-level categories considering their preponderance in L2. Hindi, as uttered in Bangan, has to still take recourse to the native divisions of space to make itself intelligible. What other native elements are retained and carried over to L2 should prove an interesting area for future research.

Social Dialectology:

Before one takes up broad bilingual studies, the native speech itself has to be understood in terms of its *internal mobility* patterns. The distribution of dialectal elements in physical space has to be first accounted for—that is what takes analysis to the actual composite nature of interactions at the ground level, the compromises it necessitates, the twin impulses of shift and sustenance that impinge on it. On the first count, there are the *dogris*—transplanted villages (literally, second house) near the roadside, which have direct access to mobility and communication facilitators. Divorced from their *mother-villages* uphill, they are firmly set on a course of all-round shift—from living patterns, the profound, inherited knowledge of the forests, pastoral-agricultural practices, recreational possibilities and innumerable other socio-cultural indices that marked the 'old' life. This breach is mirrored in the proficiency continuum that is manifest in the uphill/downhill speech varieties, affording a striking visual metaphor for 'joining the mainstream'. The classic case here is of Saras, the village placed at the highest altitude in Masmur patti. The home of Jitu Jodiyan, the hero of a legendary battle with Siktur patti over a prime plot of arable land near the riverside, this village is set amid thick deodar forests at approximately 6,500 to 7,000 feet above sea level. The most exquisite and elaborate village architecture—100-year-old constructions that primarily used the durable deodar—is to be seen in Saras, bespeaking a former prosperity and self-sufficiency and even a link to a shadowy mythical/historical ancestry (further uphill on the way to alpine pastures, there are old, abandoned villages built on the same pattern of houses and *ukhlis*⁴⁵). Of the

⁴⁵ A stone with a depression in the courtyard where the women engage in threshing activities.

Bawari (Anol)	Masmuri (Bindri-Saras)	Sandra¹	
dada lago ai	dada aasɔ: laagiu	dada aandɔ:-rɔ: laagi	'brother is coming'
dada aigo	dada aasigɔ:	dada aaigɔ:	'brother has come'
Dokhre-di kaam lago chali	dokhre-di kaam kɔ:rdɔ: laagiu	dokhre-di kaam-rɔ: kɔ:rdɔ: laagi	'work is on in the field'
koi-ki nɔ:ndɔ:	kitke baagre laagi	Ketki-re baagde laagi	'where are you going?'
kɔ:tra aɔ:ndɔ:	ketra aasē	ketra aasē	'where are you coming from?'
byale kolu-na ao	tu kele-na aso byale	Kela byale na aa	'why didn't you come yesterday?'

Dagoli mother (Bhatad, HP)	Dagoli girl	
dada laago ai	dada ahe	'brother is coming'
dada na laago ai	dada nai ahnda	'brother won't come'
dada rɔ: ai	aagua dada	'brother has come'
au laagi ai	au laagi ahu	'I am coming' (fem.)
ai gai au	augi ahu	'I have come' (fem.)
ketra ae	kehri ahe	'when will you come?'
dada rɔ: de gumɔ:	daɖa rɔ:e yatre-ki de	'brother is travelling'
baaguur nanaihi byale	Byale baaguur nɔ:thi-nathi ²	'there was no wind yesterday'
nɔ:i palle ɔ:sti dogri	nɔ:i-kaase dogri-tingri	'dogri is across the river'

¹ Sandra falls just off Masmur, but the village is a splinter from Monda, Kothigarh, settled 50 years ago.

² The general structure in Kothiga:rh.

40-odd houses that exist in Saras, only three or four are inhabited. A wholesale migration to roadside dogris like Bindri etc, prompted primarily by economic factors, has left Saras a near-ghost village and the linguistic corollaries on the migrants can be easily attested in a comparative study of migrant children's speech (who even returned the Hindi 'billi' for cat rather than the Bangani 'birɑ:lʰo') and that of those growing up in Saras, who carry an active, rich stock of native songs etc, leave along simple proficiency. The case of other villages like Kiranu and Ducanu in Kothigarh mirrors this only partially because of a distinct economic difference between Kothigarh and Masmur. Though these two villages have spawned their own dogris (like Moldi, Tikochi etc), and the 100-house uphill villages are for large parts of the year partially empty, yet they remain economically viable units because of the success of apple cultivation. For them to reach the road with their crop is a simpler matter—there is a road running into Kothigarh territory that connects them. The high-altitude Butanu of Pingal patti represents the prosperous end; it has recently started a ropeway to carry apple downhill to the road. Saras, on the other hand, is crippled in this economic game by being furthest from a road. But generally, the dogri/mother-village linguistic disjunction is a valid one to make for all villages. These dogris are yet new, and it is on coming generations that the effects will be most visible.

On the second count, there is the *demographic intermingling* that marriages cause and the curious demands it makes on the sustenance impulse. Exogamic patterns take brides at the very least to a different dialect belt. Consequently, every village home has a woman married in, from a different Bangani dialect zone, if not from (as is the case frequently) outside Bangan. The 'different' speech of the new bride was a matter of much mirth on all sides (including the bride) in most of the recording sessions in villages. But the light-hearted ribbing conceals deeper processes—of identification and 'markedness', of alienation, of how a woman's speech is obliged to be gradually dislodged from its native village-marked variety. A married woman travels a long, tortuous linguistic path in her life—her native speech thrown into flux and desecutude, but presumably forming a critical input for her new speech. This researcher met women ranged along the whole gamut—from young brides whose very talk evokes attention towards its striking differences, to old women married for long years who said they had 'forgotten' their old tongue, to whole variety of intervening caegories of negotiated compromises. This

mobility continuum throws up a crucial component that is not accounted for in the simplistic definition of women as 'monolingual', as static entities who are likely to 'retain' pure, home speech—as representing an undiluted link with older structures. As can be seen, women's speech is primarily marked by *dialectal shift*. The theoretically pertinent questions are: how and how much is the initial 'difference' in this speech regularized; and conversely, how in the long term is the residual 'difference' integrated and accommodated, if at all? In the immediate context, there seems to be little transference, as child and mother gravitate to the 'normative' village speech. But in a diachronic perspective, where marriages with specific dialectal regions are institutionalized, as in Dagoli (100 per cent from Himachal), and villages bordering Himachal like Kiranu and Ducanu, a long-term effect is manifest in the way the linguistic inputs via *marriages in turn lend an overall dialectal 'difference' to the village speech*. This two-way exchange affords a fascinating profile of an area for future study, which necessarily must grasp of wider dialectological factors and their diachronic interplay.

The third component of a social dialectology concerns the question of complexities in *linguistic geography*. Once having taken into account the existence of village dialects, one has to characterize their *placement* in a physical space. Individual village histories speak of older, inland migrations. Thus, the villagers of Butanu have migrated up from near the riverside (the modern Teuni) near-about a century ago. On the other hand, the village of Kiroli adjacent to them is peopled mostly by a descendants of a group that abandoned the high-altitude Khimadi village a similar span of time ago (There are individual, lexical-level differences: for Butanu's nisen 'stair', Kiroli has the optional 'songad'. Dagoli represents even older migrations, having come from Tehri, their original linguistic stock now totally submerged. A curious case is that of Sandra, now placed just outside Bangan territory near Mori and just across the Tons from Masmur villages like Salla. The people of Sandra are from the innermost village of Kothigarh, Monda, and settled down in this other extreme of Bangan after dispersing Gujjar settlements during the Hindu-Muslim riots of 1947. (Monda's adjacent village Balavat is also said to have participated in new forcible settlements near Mori but retreated because of climatic factors) Now the economically backward Sandra represents an enclave of pure Kothigarh speech where one would expect Masmuri to be prevalent. In 50 years, they have not yet

relinquished the structural typicalities of Kothigarh (e.g. they say $\alpha:st\alpha: r\alpha: l\alpha:gi$ 'is coming' in the progressive aspect instead of the Masmuri $\alpha:st\alpha: l\alpha:giu$). But a 15-year-old girl from Sandra, going to school at Mori, displayed all the effects of initial attrition. How 'integration' may happen in the future will be interesting to see.

The Inter-Dialects: What presents another fascinating profile for analysis is the *accommodations* made among Bangani speakers of different dialect or with those just across the border. Mutual intelligibility is not the issue here, communicative demands are not impeded overmuch. So such cross-dialectal communications respond to other factors, those belonging more in the realm of social psychology. Witnessing such an interaction between a person from Khalij village near Arakot with another from the non-Bangani village of Nanain near Mori, one posed the question: what speech-form were they using? Both smiled and said each was talking in his own native speech, but modifying it somewhat for the other's benefit. Writes Howard Giles of precisely such a situation: "If the sender in a dyadic situation wishes to gain the receiver's approval, he may adopt his accent patterns towards that of this person". Indeed, in accent, lexicon and even grammar, there are no discrete boundaries in between, only subtler shades of difference, fading into each other. There is an *approximation*, a "behavioural convergence" that lies at the heart of a lot of speech situations in Bangan, a profusion of 'inter-dialects'.

Yet there are silent antipathies. A curious phenomenon was observed during field recordings. Many speakers wrought an unconscious, automatic modification upon a basic relative construction they were asked to render in their native speech. The sentence was of the type 'those who frequently marry from Himachal, their language too is similar'. Most of them willy-nilly inverted the proposition to say the languages are *not* alike.

Dialectology demands that one takes linguistic geography to a different micro-level. To the village as a unit of dialect, which plays a primary stabilizing function in a situation where linguistic disjunctions at home are almost the rule. Institutionalized exogamy implies a steady input from outside. To put it in cold (yet rough and imprecise) statistics, possibly not half but still a significant number of the women in Bangan are of non-Bangani origin—allowing for a slight rhetorical exaggeration to drive home the point, *one-quarter of the population of Bangan is non-Bangani*. Where is their speech to be placed? As Himachali or Bangan village-specific? They are not a mute component, but

fullscope *speaking subjects*. In Dagoli, They approximate their talk to village-level, i.e. to family level stabilized by that village level. At the village level, they reopen the *other* family level—talking to other women caught in a similar predicament of dialectal dualism Dagoli. Thus mother tongue is reinforced, not just on trips back home, but in village. For instance, in Dagoli one woman—a representative for all—has been married in from Bhatad, Jubbal, for 22 years. She still talks to Himachali women in her home dialect, and switches to what Bangani she can manage at home. The children initially wouldn't be able to decipher her home dialect, but grow up to natural bidialectals. Cross-dialectal matches are indeed not rare through India. What is striking here is it represents not a departure from the norm, but it is in itself the norm. It is not an aberration, but the variational axis that provides the very armature, diglottic scaffolding that renders it stability—not staticity, but a dynamic regularity.

Not that this is peculiar to Dagoli. One interviewee from Giltad of Himachal, one of the closest to Kiranu-Ducanu, reported that now the Kiranu and Giltad speech coincide by at least 75%—at least 15 women from Giltad are married to Kiranu itself, 10-12 to other Bangani villages. The fading-out of dialect zones also throws up some curious phenomena. On all sides of Bangan, **mixed-code border villages** exist, that are characterized by being different from both sides. For instance, Dhansar village's dialect is said to be an equidistant mix between Kiranu and Giltad; and Nuranu village with Parbat, Siktur and Bangan—but they fall nowhere, and are affiliated to none.

The varied nature of the population which comprises the Bangani speech community has already been noted. This inner differentiation itself provides the ground for a complex set of attitudes about each other to develop, partly guided by ethnic notions (Dagoli Brahmins, for instance, refer to their Tehri origin and near-complete orientation towards Himachal by virtue of their marriage relations to set them apart from the Masmuri who form the other end of the geographical and cultural spectrum for them. Masmur, unlike Kothigarh, has the crucial difference of not having an inch of tarred road on their territory. (The government, ostensibly to protect the forests in which villages like Saras are set, keeps it that way). The belt also abuts the 'tribal' region of Bawar. The mental distancing along cultural notions is a constant, though tacit, factor. Bawar, despite 'physically' sharing the Mahasu pantheon with Bangan, is the readily available 'other'

though in Masmur marriages to Bawar are not entirely absent. This 'distance' also plays along caste lines, the Devals are sometimes ascribed a Bawar origin because of some linguistic marks in their speech (they use ɔ:ike/kɔ:ike , instead of itke/kitke , as one Khoshiya attested). One villager in Butanu claimed a distant, Rampur-Bushahr origin for his family some generations ago. (Bushahr, an erstwhile seat of royalty in Himachal, would accord a desirable mark of prestige). The Devgarh patti abutting Sirmour, according to a woman from Bhatad in Dagoli, forms a backward, uncultured region, aspects she also ascribed to their speech—though recordings of the two regional speech-forms revealed a crucial, identical difference from Bangani: both retain a prominent word-initial aspiration. Sirmour, though abutting Bangan above Teuni, elicits consensus as a 'rough, backward' area lacking the social grace of Bangan. Pingal patti abuts Sirmour but locals attest to little or no interaction. The linguistic sieve, hence, is not open on all sides. There are social factors, deeply-held notions of each other, that regulate and qualify the Bangani' interaction with the immediate neighbourhood. There are areas that are desirable, like prosperous Simla, and others that are prohibited.

On the Peripheries: To characterize the compositional complexity of the ground linguistic situation, apart from differentiation built into Bangani society, one has to account for the presence of other figures. The first of these are the Gujjar herdspeople, some settled en famille for generations (there is an apocryphal tale about a Gujjar having pleased a British official last century by climbing the tallest pine tree in Asia off Masmur, then climbing all the way back, head down; he was dead by the time he got down, but the official was so awed that he allotted the land to his clansmen) and nearly fully bilingual in Bangani and Gujri; there are also the seasonal, semi-nomadic Gujjars who still come from Saharanpur during summer to go up to the high-altitude pasturelands. Then, there are the Nepali-speaking Gorkhas—again both settlers and periodic arrivals (Bangan's bitter-sweet links to Nepalis go back to the Gorkha invasion of 1790). They are mostly here as seasonal plantation labour, forest contract labour, and semi-settled caretakers in uphill apple plantations for absentee landlords. At Saras, deserted by 90 per cent of its original population, a caretaker Gorkha's children speak excellent Bangani, but also occasion the use of more Hindi than would have normally happened. On the other hand, a 59-yr-old Nepali speaker at Arakot, after 36 years in Bangan, can speak only a little

Bangani, and still can't comprehend all local talk. The ethnic composition gets more complex and urban-like towards Mori-Valti, where van Driem collected his primary data. It is outside Bangan proper—falling on the junction of Garugad and Sittur pattis and Bawar. Siktur is the traditional enemies of old Masmur villages, especially Saras, their fight going back over 150 years to the Jitu Jodiyān story. At Saras, a descendant from Jitu Jodiyān's lineage, says he still refuses to go to Siktur, though traditional rivalry was sought to be ended through a rapprochement only last year. Evident at Mori is a linguistic melting-pot: Tibetan refugees, Gujjar settlers in the milk trade, Himachali, Bihari, Kumaoni shopkeepers, Bengali chemists (common also in Bangan), Bawaris, Parbatis, Gorkhas, itinerant traders and forest officials. It is also relatively prosperous on account of being a transit point on a well-trodden tourist route (Har-ki-Dun) unlike Bangan, where tourist arrivals dried up ostensibly after a rape case at Balca. Hindi, hence, seemed the prime mode of communication at Mori, except among the (outnumbered?) locals.

Obsolescence: In descriptions of language contact, there often comes into play an organic conception. Here, 'obsolescence' is the equivalent of *pathology* in the biological triad it forms with shift (*evolutionary*) and maintenance (*survival*). The question often counterposed against it that it's a matter ultimately of historical contingencies. That wilful action, as much as symbolic value, lies behind speech—the tendency that accrues from natural laws is an *adaptive* capacity, for *survival* is paramount. That flux is the nature of things, and the linguist exaggerates a cause where none exists.⁴⁶ This reasoning flows down a shared ground of logic. There is a cognate concept in the sociological subfield of disaster management and relief studies. This seeks to legitimize seeing floods, drought etc (and their consequences) as *phenomena*, rather than *events*. The is not to promote the view of language as casualty, but to point to the analogous theorizing, a *naturalizing* tendency. Ultimately, obsolescence is too wide and absolute a frame of reference to apply to a linguistic entity like Bangani, which exists not in a decontextualised setting, but in its own proper linguistic habitat. What one can posit is partial obsolescence, attrition in certain genres, of linguistic behaviour in specialized forms of knowledge born of and linked to a pre-modern, pastoral/agricultural setting.

⁴⁶ Language as ethnic marker, recent studies show, doesn't always result in assertion. Dorian essay reports how ethnic Nubians (?) have in batches married outside, relinquishing 'separateness', for survival.

Good raconteurs are now in short supply, the majority plead ignorance about old myth rendition skills, fudge details of the wealth of the story old telling techniques, referring the question to an area of specialty that has passed. There is a large stock of oral literature, apart from the myths that stand in danger of fading away—the tshoda, poetry of some intensity that is sung as both dirge and as epigrammatic utterances; the laman, sung while returning from fields, the malku and many other forms of song. Reproduced here is just one tshoda recorded on the field, with a rough translation, to showcase the aesthetic component that may fall victim to obsolescence patterns:

mɔ:rdɔ mɑ:nchuɔ e bɔ:ndo pɑ:ni

aguɔe aguɔe seu ja:ndɔ:

pɑ:pi pɑ:mesrɑ: e jɔ:rɔ: merɔ:

biɔai biɔai seu khɑ:ndɔ:

(A dead man is flowing water/Onward, onward he goes/

Yama, my evil god of death/eats you morsel by morsel)

Literary analysis is beyond the scope of this project, although the specific aesthetic that informs such poesy will be visible to anyone who has the temperament to enter that terrain. For our purpose, it will suffice to draw the gratuitous and somewhat banal conclusion that what is represented by an area like Bangan is not some isolated pastoral community that has to be ‘modernized’—as officialdom will persist in viewing it—but a highly evolved cultural specificity, whose aesthetic productions are being dislodged from their old systems of onward transference and inheritance. The cultural matrix that spawned such forms, the occasions that facilitate their continued utterance (after all, not being written down, it depends crucially on being *spoken*), the area of specialization where it is sustained are all undergoing a shrinkage.

III. HISTORY

SEARCH AND DISCOVERY

In two centuries of immense and diligent scholarship in the field of Indo-European philology, the concentrated focus among Indologists was on “the more copious than Greek, more wondrous than Latin” form of Sanskrit, its classical works in theory and, more significant as philological material, the Vedas. The main body of this inquiry led conspicuously out of the map of India, feeding one of the most zealous and elaborate (and often fanciful) exercises in comparative historical linguistics. This is the reconstruction of a proto-Indo-European language, based on sound law changes, from the shared lexicon of its vast number of genealogical affiliates⁴⁷. And, secondly, affixing it to a geographical specificity on the basis of the universe described in this hypothesized mother-lexicon—notably, horse-drawn carriages, an incipient metallurgy, agricultural implements, names for topographic and ecological entities etc. After the early competing claims of the Baltics and Scandinavia as a European homeland, consensus now veers around to “the crescent that runs south from the Black Sea, into ancient Anatolia (and contiguous Central Asia territories) and back up across the south Russian steppes to the Caucasus”. The long-sequenced, southward migration of these Armenoid peoples to Old Persia and India—compared to the westward migration into Europe—presents a crucial component of the story: viz. the split of the proto-IE into the **Kentum** and **Satem** groups (derived from the words for ‘hundred’, standing for a regularized change from the hypothesized

⁴⁷ The post-Greenberg interest in universals has sparked a homologous exercise—the search for a proto-language itself, the linguist’s Tower of Babel, a sort of L1 raised to infinity; among other conclusions, it declares a Malayalam-Finnish cognate for sister-in-law, over and above any intervening static!

palatal *k* of PIE to a velar *k* in European languages and a palatal fricative *s* in the south.⁴⁸ Yet the sample of languages submitted to this comparative exercise was finite, defined by what was known to linguists (i.e. the then-obscure Bangani was nowhere included).

Fifty years into Indology, in the mid-19th century, there was an increasing interest in the typological affinities the tribal and non-Aryan languages of India exhibited—but both the scope and the form and content of this new site of analysis was such that hill languages took time being included. Neither does the blame attach exclusively to Euro-centric philology. The Linguistic Survey of India, Grierson's magnum opus, had antennae sensitive enough to distinguish between standard Kului and its variant in Sainj valley and accord the latter the status of a separate Western Pahari tongue but in the eastern sector of that subgroup, he skips straight from Jaunsari to Simla dialects like Kiunthali. Modern dialect geographies of Western Pahari, at least up to the Eighties, similarly glossed over Bangani. Nor does *Languages and Scripts of the People of India* project (published 1993), which pegs itself as the most exhaustive survey after Grierson, have an entry on any such tongue. 'The Bangani enigma' was yet again postponed.

But not for long. The conditions for its 'discovery' matured in an upsurge of fresh interest in the hill languages. This was because of two contradictory factors—one, the ostensible link of this genepool to Vedic Sanskrit (or some other form of OIA); two, their special status within NIA on account of their seeming breach with the Vedic stream, analogous to Dardic—the latter's status had occupied linguists as far back as Grierson. Kohistani, Pasai, Kafiri, Nuristani, other Dardic tongues of the Hindu Kush *and* Kashmiri became a parallel focus of interest, absorbing generations of linguists.

And yet, Himalayan linguistics was in part popularly interpreted and rendered as a search for 'pure Aryans' tucked away in the remote hills, speaking 'pure Sanskrit'—a cherished myth that validates a whole, state-level socio-cultural orientation in Indians (and also 'connects' to Indo-Europeanists). Just a few years before Bangani exploded on Indo-European linguistics, Sharma contributed to this 'turn' in scholastic mood with his 'discovery' of archaic items in Shinali and other Dardic tongues of Kashmir, Ladakh and Lahaul.⁴⁹ The language hunt was closing in.

⁴⁸ Accounted for theoretically by what is known as the Ruki (r-u-k-i) Law.

⁴⁹ The periodic discovery of pure 'Aryans' in the hills had some ludicrous repercussions. In the late '80s, a group of German women infamously got themselves impregnated at the villages of Dah-Hanu in Ladakh.

THE PHILOLOGICAL DEBATE

Here, both Bangani and its chief protagonist—German Indologist Claus-Peter Zoller—make their first appearance, dramatically upending received theories about the migration pattern of the early Indo-Europeans. Zoller's claim rested chiefly on specific linguistic evidence. In over five years of exhaustive field work in Bangan, Zoller compiled an inventory of Bangani lexicon, drawn from both ritual texts and everyday speech. The items fell into three categories—an overlaid NIA stock (which corroborated the Western Pahari paradigm in being closer to Marwari than Hindi), with its usual mix of *tadbhava* and Perso-Arabic elements; a native stock that showed up some striking *tatsama* features of Vedic provenance and also typical Dardic characteristics (i.e. what's believed to a non-Vedic branch of OIA) in lexicon and phonology; and specifically, a small surviving non-Vedic substratum that seemed to exhibit *Kentum* group properties in their phonological content⁵⁰. This last one was startling—it would necessitate an overhaul of the current state of theory in the historiography of the Aryan migration and dispersal of the hypothetical proto-Indo-European mother-language.

The Zoller Hypothesis

This relates primarily to what seems (though not equally to all linguists) to be a vestigial *Kentum* layer in Bangani, specifically a slender stock of 60-odd words, most of them preserved in ritualized oral narratives and some visible in everyday Bangani. The crucial part of the evidence is those words in which an initial or medial *k* takes the place of a palatal *s*, which would be the rule in canonical NIA. Zoller hypothesizes that these words, because of the non-application of the Ruki law that normally effects a phonetic shift towards palatalization in all languages of eastern branch of Indo-European, represent a residuum of the old language the progenitors of the modern-day Banganis brought in as

⁵⁰ Zoller, in his first report 'On the vestiges of an old *Kentum* language in Garhwal', calls these layers *Prakritic*, *Sanskritic* and *Kentum*. This, however, plays down the Dardic aspect.

they migrated to India circa 2000 BC. More astonishingly, the form of these lexical items answered not to the nearest attested Kentum group language—Tocharian—but to western European paradigms, notably Greek. For example, $d\text{:}kr\text{:}$ (tear) departs not only from the IA pattern (Skt. asru)—the medial -k- having been palatalized to -s- as in Avestan asru and Lithuanian azara—but also from Tocharian because of its initial d-. Tocharian preserves the medial -k- but drops the initial d- in akar (Toch A) and akruna (Toch B). On the other hand, the western stream offers more directly similar forms in Greek dakru, Latin dakruma > lacrima and cognates zaehre (German) and tear (English).

This paradigm, according to Zoller, repeats itself with Bangani words $l\text{:}kt\text{:}$ (milk), which answers to Greek galakt- and Latin lact-, and $g\text{:}sti$ (guest of honour) which corresponds to Latin hostis, Old Slavic gosti and ultimately even the English form. Bangani forms $g\text{:}mb\text{:}$ (tooth), $gim\text{:}$ (winter) and $kur\text{:}$ (powerful) too show startling similarity to the Greek forms. Then Zoller found forms with Kentum features that are derivable from the hypothesized inventory of proto-Indo-European. For example, $\text{ḡ}gn\text{:}$ (unborn) and $g\text{:}nn\text{:}$ (to give birth) that correspond to PIE *GenH- from which the root form gen- denoting life and procreation has travelled to both the western and eastern stream; $k\text{:}tr\text{:}$ (fight) as against Sanskrit satru; $akn\text{:}$ (to eat) which corresponds to PIE *ako-; and $k\text{:}p\text{:}$ (hoof) which too has a PIE cognate *kapho.

From this base logic, Zoller deduces that the Sanskritic layer (i.e. the OIA component, with many tatsama items) formed the first borrowings and the Prakritic layer (the Western Pahari stock) represents an addendum that was borrowed en bloc in more recent centuries. We may modify this hierarchy of lexical structure, strengthening the Dardo-Pahari element by positing it at an earlier stage (for reasons of basic lexicon, and other indicators explained later). This element, hypothetically, possessed an innate stock of what can be loosely called OIA (suspending the tatsama terminology and the question of this stock's relation to the Vedic stream). This shift in accent can be done without altering the basic composition of the earlier proposition, which now can be reformulated as: a non-Vedic, and ultimately Kentum, people migrated south via Kashmir (perhaps already mingling with other, related batches of migrants and/or local elements) and settled in Bangan—taking on many, new linguistic features but retaining a core of the old lexicon.

This core was further weakened and fossilized over the centuries, as more NIA inputs encroached on core vocabulary, leaving only small traces of the old one today.

Refutation, Confirmation: The precise chronology or geography surrounding the proto-Indo-European dispersal and the consequent history of migrations and intermingling is not in the best of times an academic terrain marked by much consensus. The theorizing in this domain has its own dialectics, a cacophony of conflicting analyses and, indeed, more than its share of notions cherished for the wrong reasons. Yet it proceeds *within* a wide, consensual range—those propositions that receive ‘evidentiary’ support from related academic fields like anthropology, archaeology and various kinds of specialized ancient history settle down to form a quasi-veridical core, a state of the art. This *modus operandi* selects its own forms of ‘truth’ over and above the clearly untenable and often culturally motivated propositions that proliferate, especially in matters of race history and such like. Zoller’s proposition was one that profoundly disturbed this consensual arrangement, a claim that *prima facie* found nothing to prop it in 200 years of ‘fact’ collection.⁵¹

It was not entirely unpredictable, then, that Zoller’s Bangani story invited a chorus of criticism after the initial novelty wore off. The most voluble critique came from a Dutch linguist, George van Driem. This Himalayan language specialist, who conducted a ‘fact-finding’ trip along with Himachali linguist Suhnu Ram Sharma to Mori-Valti, just off the outer fringes of Bangan proper where a small filial enclave of people from Jagta village of Kothigarh are settled, returned with a wholesale denunciation of Zoller’s proposals. Among other things, they suggested that Zoller was passing off in part contrived data, the result of misidentification, ‘wilful interpretation’ and something worse.

Although ostensibly buttressing their case with a point-by-point rebuttal of what they hold to be Zoller’s bundle of ‘imagined’ archaisms, the tenor of their report often went beyond the purely academic, and was seemingly attended by more than a bit of pique. It would do for us to skirt the polemic at this juncture, extracting just one of the less acerbic statements: “Bangani is either the linguistic equivalent of the Piltdown Man or a highly instructive example of how wishful thinking can colour linguistic perceptions.” Basing their views now on this refutation, linguists veered around back to conventional wisdom

⁵¹ Only facetious theories like the one that, influenced by Zoller’s list of Greek-like forms, floated a Macedonian ancestry for the Banganis—a sort of lost cavalry from Alexander’s army.

in Indo-European studies. Kevin Tuite ascribed Zoller's data to a tendency on the part of the informants "to provide evidence that feel may please the investigator". Soon, S.P. Beekes provided a one-paragraph conspectus of the debate and emphatically pronounced "the end of the Bangani story". The last bit, at any rate, soon proved premature. Indian linguists followed up on the Bangani enigma and reported confirmation of at least part of Zoller's data (to accept Zoller's view, a full confirmation would in any case require more than mere field inquiries; these were lexical items buried in a especially contextualized setting which he managed to uncover with techniques that were more ethnographical than linguistic, one of the sore points with van Driem). But more significantly, they uncovered structural features in Bangani that did not answer to the canonical NIA paradigm—viz. AUX-raising and a discontinuous negation—taking the debate to another level.

Field notes: Notwithstanding the fact that the prime thrust of this research project was sociolinguistic, the manifold ways in which 'historicity' can impinge on a language's synchronic make-up made the philological debate a lead worth following up. A unique provenance of even a small fragment of a vocabulary, or even higher-order linguistic material, if proved to be existing in such specific modes, would also lend valuable inputs to a theory of diachronic obsolescence and level-by-level attrition in speech genres—prima facie, one need not discount this value purely because of its dramatic potential.

Apropos such a reading, this field trip provided some opportunities to cross-check part of the data with a few elderly villagers (no women) at Bamsu and Saras, in the upper reaches of Masmur belt. An available sample of Zoller's data was employed for the purpose.⁵² The inquiries elicited a mixed response, with villagers attesting to some forms, albeit in a modified phonetic shape, emphatically marking the rest out as "unfamiliar", even "foreign to Bangani"—although they evidently exhibited enough family resemblance on phonological grounds. To wit, a constant theme was, "it must be a *Bawari* word, not Bangani". That the index of felt 'foreignness' was not of a great degree, and that a first-shot geographical allocation rested on Bawar, not any further, may not be a coincidence. The forms that they did attest, on the other hand, were not phonetically identical with the available sample, but were related reasonably closely enough for one to be able to equate them, ascribing the variation to dialectal factors. The

⁵² 'Debate on Archaism of Some Select Bangani Words'—Anvita Abbi, JNU.

results are provisional—to the extent that the unattested forms can't be held to be non-existent—and at any rate not intended to be a final adjudication on the debate. Given the fact that the available corpus is posited as an archaic stratum, with possible corresponding forms borrowed from NIA also freely available in modern Bangani, and therefore properly demand a deeper scrutiny based on a more exhaustive compilation of an ethnographic inventory, the above exercise can even be held to be more or less cursory. But the surprise was that even this one-off inquiry in some of the genuine interiors of Bangan (Bamsu and Saras are located at 5,000-6,500 feet, forming the innermost core of Masmur, and there are no motorable roads leading anywhere *into* Masmur, a stark contrast to the tourist roadhead of Mori-Valti) suggested that there's more to Zoller's hypothesis than mere wishful interpretation. The results are given below (in italics), with the items that formed part of the sample⁵³:

ɔ:nkɔ: 'dead, inanimate; a corpse'. <PIE ank- 'necessity, force'

Attested by Abbi as common in strings like:

eu manuj bi-jaigo ɔ:ngkɔ:

this man also appears dead-like

Inquiries at Saras and Bamsu elicited no affirmation of such a word.

E~rkQ 'louse, flea'. <PIE erek- 'louse'. OIA liksa- 'nit, young louse

Attested as a genetic term for any kind of lice in:

meri bɔ:kri-di erkE porɪ gui

my goat-gen lice fall GO

"my goat has contracted lice"

Inquiries at Bamsu-Saras failed to confirm the word, only returning pisu for flying lice.

Erkɔ: 'shining'

A rare word, attested only twice in Chiwa-Jagta by Abbi as in:

accho Erkɔ: 'good lighting'

Inquiries at Bamsu-Saras only elicited the form biij for 'well-lit', as in:

biij porɪ gui 'light fall GO'

A related sentence was recorded in Buthothra village of Masmur:

⁵³ The first entry corresponds to Zoller's own finding, the second to the form attested by Abbi.

Biiɔ:i-re porɪ ‘clear sky-emph fall’

‘The sky has cleared’

kɔ:trɔ: ‘a fight’ <PIE k`at(e)ro; OIA sa tru

Attested in a variety of contexts by Abbi

Villagers at Bamsu-Saras were emphatic in their denial of the word.

kɔ:pɔ: ‘hoof’ <PIE kapho-, kopho- ‘hoof’; OIA sa`pha ‘hoof’

Abbi attests the word to be common (with options like nɑ:l), as in:

goru-rɔ: kɔ:pɔ: barE chuTi-go ek

cow-gen hoof out left GO one

‘the cow’s hoof got detached’

Only forms like khuri ‘hoof’ and nɑ:l ‘iron shoe’ could be attested at Bamsu-Saras.

kapɔ:- kɔ:pɔ: ‘several adjacent fields that belong to one person’ <PIE ka`p-kɔ:p ‘plot’

Attested as a common word, also allowing for diminutives like kapuN ‘small field’:

mere kape-di paNi bɔ:ri

I-gen field in water much

‘My field is filled with water’

Both the lexical item and the sentence-form in which it figures were confirmed at Bamsu and Saras. Locals also offered another diminutive form—kapudi ‘small field’

kɔ:rsNɔ: ‘to rub oneself, to scratch’ <PIE kars- ‘to scratch’

Abbi found many variants—kɔ:rsENɔ: and kAnaNo ‘to scratch back’ were common,

khɔ:rgeS/ konau-/ khɔ:rbar all meaning ‘scratch’.

mu kɔ:rson lagɔ:ndi

I-dat scratch feel prog.

‘I feel like scratching myself’

Bamsu-Saras villagers confirmed the above item, and also khɔ:rgeS, but by themselves supplied only one form—konauNɔ: as in ‘mu konauN lagɔ:ndi’

kɔ:lpɪNɔ: ‘to disappear, hide’ (used with spirits)

This item could not be attested in Bamsu-Saras. The listed variant ‘orchino’ was stated to be of Kinnauri origin.

kɔ:sNo ‘to reprimand’ <PIE k as- ‘to reprimand’

The item was confirmed in the form of kɔːsɔː

kɔːsta ‘a story’ Cognate to OIA sastra

The item was confirmed in the form of kasta.

kurɔː ‘strong, with authority’ <PIE kuro-. Attested earlier as in tesro baba bɔːrɔː kuro-kurɔː ‘his father very strong’

Inquiries at Bamsu-Saras elicited a related form ‘kaR-kaRa’

dɔːkɔː ‘ten’ <PIE dek m ‘ten’. OIA dasa ‘ten’

No confirmation was received.

dɔːkru ‘tear’. <PIE d(r)akru, OIA asru

Bamsu-Saras locals indeed confirmed the word, albeit with an altered phonetic shape ‘dukru’ and a slight but interesting shift in semantic field—‘to sob audibly’, as in:

dukre-nde lagi ‘he began to sob’

dukti ‘daughter’. <PIE dhughter. Used also for ‘heartbeat, soul’, which Abbi attested.

Inquiries at Bamsu-Saras confirmed the second sense, and supplied the sentence:

thodi dukti rɔːI ‘little life left’

gɔː~:ter ‘creator’ <PIE g’ enhl ‘to create’. OIA janitr

The word is listed as a rare one by Abbi, but it was confirmed in the form of gatiir.

Other items from the list—notably pɔːrkɔː ‘question’; muskɔː ‘biceps’; gɔːsti ‘guest’—

could not be confirmed. laktɔː ‘milk’ was only confirmed in the compound

likɔː-kislɔː ‘milk-butter’. ɔːgnɔː ‘unborn’ was rejected for other forms like:

garkedī cani-mari asui

foetus make-dead (past) premature

GENETIC TYPOLOGY RECONSIDERED

The above findings offer a unique insight into the kind of semantic shift that can accompany phonetic shift in historical dialectology, especially in the way dɔːkru ‘tear’ has changed dukru ‘to sob audibly’. But more than that, in the light of these findings, a reformulation of Bangani’s genetic typology is warranted. The idea is to try and diminish the quantum of unpredictability, even incredulity, that has greeted the Bangani ‘story’. The consensus among critics seems to be that it is too much of a historical aberration,

violating received accounts in too many ways, to be accepted as true. The situation can only be amended by a fuller grasp of the wider sprachbund, wherein Bangani is placed, fully congruent with known historical contingencies.

Grierson did not mention Bangani but his linguistic cartography of the hills makes it clear that he would have placed in the region where Western Pahari begins. His notable remark here was that Western Pahari's NIA element was closer to Marwari than to neighbouring NIA tongues of the plains, so much so that he said Western Pahari could be considered "just another form of Rajasthani". That, provisionally, one can take to be an apt statement about the superficial aspect—or the dominant layer—of the subgroup, historically a more recently imposed superstructure. The point to emphasize is that the north-western arc of Western Pahari, including the Simla and Kullu dialects and reaching up to Bhaderwahi in Jammu, places it in a line just south of the arc occupied by Dardic tongues, including Kashmiri; indeed the regions are not really distinct and overlap in many ways.⁵⁴ That is, centuries of intense contact can be presumed, so much so that linguists now prefer the appellation Dardo-Pahari to emphasize the common linkages and a shared stock—denoting not quite two entities now, but a hyphenated continuum.

Is Bangani a law unto itself or does it possess a generality that attends hill languages? On a cursory check with Sainji, a small valley dialect (Western Pahari) in south Kullu, a considerable distance north-west of Bangan, this researcher encountered a few facts. Total or partial correspondences with Bangani were established in the lexical entries for 'mother' (ije), 'snow' (iu), and 'up' (B. ube > S. uje); a degree of syntactic identity and correspondence in the NIA component were also noticeable despite the intrusion of some Punjabi forms on Sainji. Can such cognacies be established to the south (Jaunsar-Bawar) or east (Garhwal and Kumaon), leave alone Rawain, that problematic entity within which Bangan is traditionally subsumed? If so, on what grounds? A tacit assumption is also that Bangani's pre-verbal auxiliary justifies an equation with the Kashmiri V2, not on grounds of identity but *atypicality* in the Indian context vis-à-vis a similar syntactic operation (indeed, the only ready analogy researchers have noted regarding word order is the West European SVO). Thus, there does seem to be a Dardic component (which Zoller has noted but not fully developed as a line of inquiry, preferring instead to accord an

⁵⁴ Zoller too notes that Shina et al are, significantly, spread over the northern fringes of NIA territory.

exclusionary air to Bangani) that has gone understated in the whole controversy. This doesn't necessarily negate the Marwari link—buoyed by recent migratory history and ethnicity markers like 'Chauhan'—rather, it insinuates itself *underneath* it, prising open the diachronic scale further back, necessitating a history of convergences. Hypothetically, this can be thought of as a three-way process involving something like the submerged original elements (Tibeto-Burman and/or Austric), the Dardic-speaking Khasas who came in from the north-west (presumably carrying some PIE forms), and lastly the NIA influx from the plains—much like the rest of the hills.

A Khasa Sub-history: The allocation of Khasa speech to Dardic, rather than canonical OIA, is justifiable. The term Khasa itself denotes an antique non-Aryan (at any rate, non-Vedic Aryan) people of Caucasian stock, opening up a wholly different vista of migratory history, problematizing the notion of a singular Aryan invasion. Generations of anthropological linguists have recognized the series of toponymic pug-marks the Khasa race has left over a vast continent, spanning from the Caspian Sea in a south-easterly arc right up to Nepal. Pliny has talked of the “mountain race of Cesi”. References to a Khasadesa (denoting the mountain country of Garhwal and Kumaon) can be found in classical Indian literature; in much of the representation of hill people in this stream of writing they are imbued with a vile, demonic quality—buttressing the view of an ancient racial gulf between them and mainland Aryans. Manu clubbed the Khasas with the 'Pisaca' group of “degraded Kshatriyas”. A Buddhist history of the hills too is signified: in the Ceylon archives, the Khasas are mentioned in a list of the tribes that submitted to Asoka circa 300 BC.

To go back another two millennia, anthropologists have retrieved “evidence of a wide diffusion through an immense breadth of Asia of names with the root 'Khasa'.” Thus, Herziffeld decodes the word 'Caspian' as the conjoining of plural suffix -pa on the root. He also quotes the old Arab name for the Caspian, Behr-e-Khaza, literally 'sea of the Khasas'. The second part of the name Hindu Kush, the mountain range across which old migrations from Central Asia would have to pass, is similarly attributed. Strengthening the Dardo-Pahari link, there is a Dardic tongue of the Hindu Kush called Khasali. E.T. Atkinson prefers to read the same into the Kashmiris' self-appellation of 'Khasira' or 'Kasira' over the claim that 'Kashmir' is an abbreviation of the Sanskrit 'Kashyapamira'.

Further, Sharma cites toponyms across the Himalayas—Kashgar (Khasagiri or Khasagarh) and Kashdhar and a host of other names marked by the suffix ‘-garh’ or ‘-kota’, which he deems typically Khasa. He also extends the race-marker ‘Khoshiya’ to a string of names—e.g. Khassar, and the Khasu caste in the Jhelum-Chenab area. To bring up the rear, the principal dialect of Kumaoni is still called Khasparjiya (literally, speech of the Khasa subjects) and the old name for Nepali is Khaskura. Even the modern ruling caste of Nepal bears affiliation to the Khasa stock.

The wealth of detail suffices to puncture the notion of Banganis as a “lost tribe with a Vedic past”—they are neither lost, nor an aberration in this historical arrangement, and Kentum or no Kentum, they hark back at least to a non-Vedic branch of cross-mountain migration beginning circa 2000 BC, much antedating the NIA influx into Garhwal of this millennium, possibly even the birth of Classical Sanskrit. This can also goad us to suspend the applicability of traditional categories like tatsama and tadbhava beyond their immediate purview: to taxonomize the New Indo-Aryan lexicon, i.e. of those recent languages born in a direct lineage from MIA. If Proto-Bangani (to use Beekes’ pardonable coinage) is related to them, it can only be as a rather distant uncle. Consider the following facts that take up the Dardic thread again.

Pahari and Dardic: Consider the following facts. Morgenstierne lists the archaic words he found in Hindu Kush dialects which correspond also with the forms in many Pahari tongues. For example, in the Dardic dialect called Pasai the word ‘byaal’ means ‘night’. Then again, ‘biyaali’ in Chillis, ‘byaala’ in Kohistani, and ‘byaale’ in Shina all mean ‘yesterday’. The word ‘byaale’ is shared by Garhwali and Kumaoni in the latter sense. In Bangani too, though Morgenstierne does not quite betray any knowledge of it, ‘byaale’ denotes ‘yesterday’ and ‘byaali’ is ‘night meal’. The Pasai form ‘katug’ and Shina ‘katak’ (how much) is rendered in Bangani as ‘kɔ:to’ with the same meaning. The Kohistani dialect of Torwali has ‘pihil’ for ‘green’. In Kumaoni this becomes ‘pihal’ and in Garhwali ‘pinglɔ:’, both meaning ‘yellow’. Bangan, as we have seen, has a whole dialect belt named after that—Pingal, locally rendered as ‘pinglɔ:’ meaning ‘yellow’. Another word from basic lexicon that can settle the matter is the word for ‘mother’—variously rendered as ‘aaje’/ ‘ijaa’ / ‘ije’, all related to OIA ‘aarya’—that is shared by a large number of Dardic and Pahari tongues.

The precise link between Dardic and Indo-Aryan is itself a matter of speculation. Grierson subscribed to the view that the Dardic-Kafiri line “seems to have left the parent stem (Indo-European) after Indo-Aryan, but after typical Iranian characteristics had developed”. Morgenstierne upends that view, holding Dardic to be of IA stock but saying Kafiri may be older—“exhibiting remarkable archaisms”, it probably contains a residuum that goes back to the language of the tribes “which split off from the main body of the Aryans so as to penetrate the Indian borderland before the Indo-Aryan invasion”.

Much of the received accounts of that period in Indian history are circumscribed by the available information. The trouble is also compounded by an unavoidable tendency to telescope sequenced, but sporadic events that temporally occupied a range of over a millennium, if not more. This time span must have been marked by sequences of intermingling and linguistic diffusion that took many complex forms long before classical Sanskrit even took shape as a response to change. J. Gonda even concludes from their linguistic structure that Vedic and Classical Sanskrit do not stand in a direct genetic relationship, that they represent different dialectal streams. He writes that the language of Rgveda is itself problematic, as it shows all the marks of not being a chronologically or dialectally uniform text, *nor was it rendered in the dialect used by the Indo-Aryans who composed it*. One, the “sociolinguistic mobility” the Aryans must have undergone had its inevitable effect—as the text, as it stands now, has “a degree of artificiality, an archaizing... formula” that he calls “pseudo-Vedic”—already an attempt to link to a lost history. Two, the oral poetic traditions that the Aryans developed (borrowed?) after the original was composed also effected changes for purposes of metre etc. In this hazy outline of a great linguistic melting-pot, the question of designating any current language by its relation to a discrete construct called ‘Vedic’ itself becomes a futile exercise.

Now, for the other strands that may have gone into the current make-up of the Pahari group. The history of the Himalayas does not begin with the IE influx, though the centuries predating that are shrouded in even more obscurity. But, however obscure, there are other genetic marks left on the Pahari group. Atkinson quotes classical references to the “Kirata, Naga and Khasa people who held the country between Tons and Sharada”. The Nagas and the Kiratas (or Kinnaras) are other races that migrated over the Himalayas to finally settle down in the submontane region that concerns us. There is also the

presumed migration across the hills from the east of the Kolarians. There are classical references to an ancient Kola race in the hills (which Sharma provisionally equates with the Munda or Kol group). The only trace left is Koli/Kolta suffix for the lower castes (though we may not infer a direct lineage for the Kolis of Bangan, at best an inherited position in the hierarchy) and the hypothesized Kola inflection of -da, widely visible on river names in the Himalayan hills (derived from *gada* or 'great water' of Kolarian origin, according to Sharma). There is also the problem of assigning the vigesimal numeral system (counting in 'twenties') to the Austro-Asiatic and Tibeto-Burman families, both of whom share the feature. In *Languages and Scripts* (People of India Project) this is seen as a hazy area of diffusion history, but Grierson and Chatterjee seemed to find the history of millennia of intense contact enough to explain it. This counting system is also shared by the Banganis, the pastoral requirement of counting livestock presumably encouraging its infusion.

The Tocharian Link: The way new archaeological findings can upturn conventional understanding was never better illustrated than in the case of Tocharian, the only known Kentum element in Asia before Bangani. An extinct language, it was discovered by archaeologist Aurel Stein at the turn of the century in old Buddhist monasteries in the Oxus Valley of Taklamakan desert in current Chinese Turkestan. Searching for old Buddhist documents in the monasteries along the old Silk Route, he discovered a documents in the Brahmi syllabary that pointed to a previously unknown language. Since the documents were of known Buddhist texts, they were easy to translate. A linguistic analysis soon revealed it to be of Kentum origin—the first known Kentum group tongue in Asia. Collating material from old Greek, Arab and other texts, the consensus fell on them being the Tocharoi, an ancient race mentioned in various literatures as having inhabited the Taklamakan desert till about 8th century AD, when they either disappeared or merged completely with the local Turkic stock. Could there be a Tocharian link to India? The only reference that could be found in historical literature is the recovery of an old inscription in Kashmir which mentions that in 1478 the king had attacked Tokharistan (it lies just north of Kashmir, across a wall of mountains) and even brought back a minister from there. This was six centuries after the presumed Kentum group people

vanished, but the possibility of older links of some sort cannot be discounted. All of which points to a more bewildering linguistic history for this part of the country than previously assumed—even though Zoller himself does not consider Tocharian as a possible source for Bangani.

PRESENCE OF HISTORY

The value of historicism encased in which Klaus Peter Zoller made Bangani available to Indo-European studies and general linguistics is of a specific sort. It takes an accessible, though not exhaustive (the latter a theoretical impossibility) corpus of myths, 'liturgy' and other invocations to god from Bangan as base material—a sort of reservoir of lexical archaisms—to be referred continually back to a systematized body of potential cognacies that is set well outside the universe this corpus itself refers to. The fact of the controversy it has generated or the question of its validity is not the core issue here (though they will be dealt with); its 'separateness' from Bangani is.

The symbols that Bangani population deploy to make sense of their historical occasioning, and are available to them for this purpose, may derive partly from the same inventory, but the strategies via which they perform this operation, consciously or otherwise, clearly belong to a different genre of myth-making (suspending the question of 'facticity' altogether for our purpose). To present an adequate characterization of the ways in which history is understood by Banganis themselves, and the multitude of ways in which it is present in their life, is a task that strays partly into anthropological territory. But the feedback it can provide to minority language studies—about an inner sociolinguistic character, and placement vis-à-vis an exterior reality—makes it worthwhile.

First, a look at some theoretical primitives in sociolinguistics—where at least some can bear further elaboration of their domain. Language attitudes, for instance, is an axis of inquiry that has thrown up some regularities across minority speech communities in their response to the dominance of a 'standard' language. The latter, typically, comes with a script that is at once the irrefutable symbol of superiority for an unlettered community and the means of its subjugation. And the process inevitably encourages a negative

prestige among the minority, and it succumbs. Alternately, strong cultural symbols like language lead to identity formation and assertion. This set of propositions has solidified into a *sine qua non* in dialect studies, and though far from being untrue, have no more or less utility than truisms. (There is also the attendant risk of characterising the speech community as a *tabula rasa*, and positing problematic concepts like 'identity formation' in the order the linguist has discovered them—surely an untenable way of going about things!)

One escape route is to go one step back—to flesh out the subject-matter-complex in such a manner as to keep alive the possibility of a pre-theory. In many ways, language is the domain that sets up the socio-psychological being of the speech community. Speaking cannot be divorced from a consciousness of speech, or its circumstances. Especially when it's a question of an almost totally bilingual community (like the Banganis)—with the overt presence of a newly dominant language (in this case, Hindi). Awareness is built into the situation of language contact, where two codes are placed in a relation of competing for social and cognitive space; the demands of education, with its emphasis on a 'corrective' function, guarantees that. Language shift is a temporally sequenced phenomenon that exaggerates this consciousness; change always calls attention to itself.

Given such real-time problematics, the binary of inverted/asserted prestige is an inadequate framework to bring alive to the fullest extent the native speaker's complex response to a situation of language shift. To make explicit this form of consciousness, obsolescence and other such lines of inquiry have to be partly extricated from a strictly linguistic methodology and restored to the socio-psychological strategies of the community itself. Technically, Bangani may be set prior to the 'tip' proposed in Nancy Dorian's theory—where infiltrating forms lead to structural attrition, at the level of syntax and morphology—and poised at the initial stages of attrition where, say, only certain specialized parts of its repertoire are in danger of vanishing. The more marked features in syntax are already throwing up patterns of redundancy where competing forms from Hindi insinuate themselves as 'options'.

But at one remove from such theorizing, a minority language, set against an all-pervading presence of a dominant language and steeped fully in self-notions of inferiority, *reveals* itself to be on the verge of a partial eclipse to its own speakers. Here we set up a

category, only partly hypothetical, to gain and formalize a different point of access to language flux: that of the indigenous observer, conscious of and willing to investigate his/her own historical circumstances. He is endowed with memory, and via this mnemonic entanglement with community, he is alive to questions of identity, self-esteem and an invasive 'otherness'. There is a strong affective component in this observer's visualizations that is absent in the linguist's supposedly value-free investigation. That may render opaque certain structural operations (which the field linguist is privy to by virtue of an impersonal erudition), but by no means invalidates his reading.

How do Banganis construe their language situation? To the indigenous observer, it is not a matter of apperceiving language within the definitional scope provided for in modern dialect and bilingualism studies, which commence by scrupulously marking out territory; rather, it is the inverse of that. The process is one that begins with the personal speech as a given; goes on to a progressive awareness of forms of variety, both diglossic and multi/bilingual in which the personal suffers a diminution in scope and prestige and recedes into a subordinate position in a received hierarchy; and culminates in a reverse process, one that involves a negotiating for space, a multi-pronged engagement with the fact of variety where the personal is sought to be retrieved to its original significance.

To explicate this further, one shall take up another predilection of descriptive studies—the theoretical act of fixing a 'standard' from within the dialectal field. Of adopting, say, one kind of Bangani as a default code, even arbitrarily, a sort of hypothetical centre from which to measure variation. Native dialectologies (and such things *do* exist, despite the fraudulent devaluation 'scientific' study imposes on 'popular' versions: the wealth of ready responses elicited on the field attests to that) too proceed from a single point along multiple axes to accommodate the existence of difference. But it's not a static, value-neutral 'standard'—a set of forms fixed onto a chart from which to mark distance. What, then, is its true nature?

Here, it may be useful to employ the sociological notion of the Ego, borrowed from the domain of kinship terminology and extended in its functions. The native speaker starts, broadly speaking, with the village dialect as a given. Higher order phenomena like the 'patti' dialect or more specific ones like the caste dialect or, narrowed down further, even home speech (recall Gumperz's notion of the "ethnic separateness of home life") can be

posited in its place. But despite all having their unique circumstances, there are large areas of overlap and the village dialect serves as the point of intersection of all three.

This requires further elaboration and validation (why should, say, home speech not be taken as the primary given?). For that, one has to problematize and flesh out these categories. Take, for instance, the fact that home speech is characterised in many Bangani cases by a certain mother/child disjunction (discussed in detail elsewhere). Here, the village-specific speech acts as a stabilizing force within homes, the primary 'normative'. For our purpose, it would suffice to describe home as the arena where the fact of variety first reveals itself, triggers an early awareness of diglossia/bilingualism, and necessitates a theory that can accommodate this complexity. On the other hand, on the caste axis, sheer demography dictates that 'khosiya boli' (Rajput speech) is placed as the default code, from which other caste dialects exhibit varying degrees of difference, but this is an umbrella term and subject to the very dialectal richness one is seeking to apprehend.

Thus, with the village dialect as the starting point, the Ego does not merely mark out 'distance' in an empty, tabulated space. It construes the meaning of its speech by setting it against other visible forms—but this happens in a value-laden space; it takes recourse to cultural notions of the 'other' and an inherent normalness, if not superiority, is accorded to what is personal and intimate. The community, hence, takes shape as a vast conglomerate of mutually exchanged images of the self and the other, where each negotiates its own space by marking out what is not personal.

The 'other' tongue is negotiated in many ways, as the situation dictates. One, it is kept at a distance wherever the option exists: for instance, women in the Brahmin village of Dagoli reinforce their native Himachali speech not just on visits to the pre-matrimonial home but also in mutual village-level interactions. Two, it is progressively accommodated and adopted: say, women married into a village where their speech becomes a minority, sometimes of one. The difference here may be one of degree: the woman from Gokul village, Kothigarh patti, married into Butanu, in Pingal patti will have to make minimal effort to bridge the gap; conversely, an elderly lady from Bawar, married into Sandra village near Mori for over three decades, confessed to having forgotten her native speech.

The case of a Brahmin's children interviewed in Dagoli furnished evidence that awareness of variety is instantiated along this self/other distinction, though with finer qualifying categories. Thus, they were uniquely sensitised to their mother's Himachali speech, but more fuzzy definitions—carried forward by cultural 'images'—came in response to Bangani speech varieties. (To certain recorded forms offered for attestation, they offered an accurate identification of dialect variety, but to more remote ones they returned two blanket terms. One was along a caste variable—"that's khosiya speech"—that signalled the preponderant 'other' for this Brahmin island. The next was attributing a non-Bangani source ("that's Bawari speech") to recordings made in Masmur patti, a higher-order distancing along the axis of linguistic geography. This may have been only partly erroneous—Masmur patti is contiguous to the northern portions of Bawar, and is a likely recipient of borrowed forms, which may be readily identifiable even across in Kothigarh.

That cultural notions can't be disentangled from such linguistic 'games' (real language games are discussed elsewhere) too made itself evident repeatedly, but equally significantly proximity always triggered a finer classification of variety. For instance, a young bride in Sandra had recorded in a variety that others in this southern-most hamlet of Bangan identified simply as Himachali; but across a whole patti to the north, in Dagoli, the recording elicited a more detailed classification. Aware of their mother's prestige dialect from near Rohru, Simla district, the children marked out the bride's recording as that from Devgarh patti of Himachal—and reported that this was a 'rough' dialect and a 'less developed', culturally 'backward' area. (And if they are confusing economic development with cultural superiority, the culpability is shared by numerous others amongst us.

To get back to the original point, there is the rare instance of speakers who apprehend variety along a diachronic space—again with the Ego as the cognitive vantage-point, and a field of inquiry that sets remembered speech, that of the older generation, as the standard against which the new forms, already visibly affected by Hindi, are measured. This is the kind of native speaker (from the total sample size of interviewees, they formed a smaller component) who returned the first attestations of obsolescence, overtly and without prompting—the mention of language itself sufficing to elicit talk about language

shift. Some even supplied a classificatory phrase—‘purani boli’ (the old speech)—that not every interviewee was willing to countenance, but one we take to be provisionally corroborated by independent investigation.

To this kind of observer, change is revealed not just in the limited sense of relative proficiency clines (though an intuitive apperception of this, in a fuller and non-schematic manner, is readily possible for him—unmediated by theoretical notations). Signs of obsolescence make themselves visible on all sides—in community practices, living systems, socio-economic indices like agriculture, dress. It is a cumulative apprehension of difference—borne along assorted routes. It makes itself audible in intonation pattern changes and other suprasegmentals that form the ‘music’ of the language. An invasive lexicon too is a powerful symbol of change—like when a three-year-old in a ‘dogri’ near the main road in Masmur returns ‘billi’ for cat, instead of the native ‘biralto’ (despite a common Sanskrit parentage). The intimate domain, where the kinship address terms used by children have widely been affected, is a particularly impactful one in this respect.

Apart from other things, this encourages the conclusion that, along with culture, language attitudes are tied to an apprehension borne along by an active engagement with history. A finer characterisation of this history—present, and elusive at the same time—is called for. For this, one has to exit the domain of linguistics proper and allow for ‘data’ to flow in from other sources—chiefly the social/anthropological. What are the elements in Bangani life, mythological and otherwise, that occasion this sense of history? In what ways does this impinge on language attitudes?

Orthography: Bangani is tangentially placed vis-a-vis the written word. It has no script of its own (although there are references in historical literature to a Khasai-lipi). Its scarce orthographic elements extend up to three entities—and all three are shrouded in various layers of mystification that reveal an unconscious deification of the written word. The three are the Candyani lipi that Dagoli Brahmins use in their practice; the widely attested but unconfirmed presence of an old manuscript record at the Anol temple for Botha Mahasu; and li-odara (literally ‘writing rock’), an ancient rock inscription—half-pictographic, half-script—five kilometres from Bankhwadi village in Masmur, which the Banganis refer to as the Pandava lipi, secret communications between the brothers while on their exile in the woods. The Candyani, apparently still prepared in Chopal district of

Himachal, is locally referred to as the ‘Kashmiri lipi’. It presumably bears affinities to the Sarada script, the now-obsolete Kashmiri script—and remotely, though attestably, linked to modern Devanagari (remote enough for non-professional brahmins from Dagoli to find it opaque on occasion, and *prima facie* family resemblance to the western Brahmi branch simultaneously). It’s at once set in and set back at one remove from the new generation, many of whom can’t read it. The pandit’s *sancha*—the sacred book from which he reads out the mystic ‘Candyani’ text—is the point at which divinity and economics intersect, the manual of the trade that occupies a pure, sanctified space. Set in linearly aligned charts of cryptographs, the Candyani amplifies its effect as mystic figures of knowledge. These cryptographs are monosyllabic, index-like cues, which the pandit uses to reach the appropriate utterance. This is ‘given’ in a Sanskrit form, as in:

puj khat kare to bhala hoe

This, in a unique case of bilingual transference, the Brahmin renders in Bangani, lexically and phonologically, as in:

edzɔ: karidzɔ: kɔ:relɔ: tēbē bɔ:lɔ: ɔ:lɔ:

these tasks do-fut. then-emph. good happen-fut.

‘If you perform these tasks, good will come’

It also serves to heighten the myth-sustained links with Kashmiri. From this presumed provenance to the actual places of usage, the geographical spread over which the script travels as sacred form—in specialised, exclusive domains such as that of the pandit—offers a unique cartography of horizontal linkages among knowledge groups typical to India. It also offers a unique axis to examine language attitudes. One that marks out a personal territory by default is the widely exhibited resentment at being *probed* on language. At one level, this is resistance to being made out to be anthropological specimens. At another, it hints at a recognition of a personal domain slipping out of hands in the face of ineffable historical necessities. A Dagoli boy in his teens exhibited this resentment on the subject of the Candyani script. His father is a renowned devpujia, then on a month-long date with the god, who is said to be proficient in even writing Candyani, now a lost art. The boy was brusque on the question of the Candyani. “Why do you ask? It’s Urdu. Even we can’t decipher it, how do *you* propose to do it?”. The Candyani, as a remote form of knowledge, offers other fascinating asides. One elderly gent in Dagoli,

prone to occasional lapses of reason, is said to have once dropped his sanca into the Pabar river from atop Arakot bridge, once in boiling water.

RELIGION: From an objective point of view, Bangan apportions to itself a personal mythology and relation to divinity which, in fact, it shares with a much wider geographical spread and cluster of communities. For instance, this researcher found the forest god of Bansher—who figures in a Sisyphus-like myth as a pestering monkey out to wreak revenge on an evil presence) appearing as far afield as Sainj valley in south Kullu—much (?? km) to the north-west of Bangan. This overlap was, incidentally, also mirrored in language. If myth is taken to possess a collective, inherited mnemonic value, the primary myth of Bangan reinforces this north-west orientation of remembered history. This concerns the ‘import’ from Kashmir of Bangan’s basic pantheon—the four Mahasu brothers. Mobility is a trait that commonly attaches to divinity in the hills, at least all the way north-west to the Kullu district of Himachal Pradesh, and the local pantheon is a *shared* one, with Jaunsar and Himachal areas possessing a proprietorial claim over them that is at least equal to Bangan. There are periodic claims over them, in the case of some, yearly (baramasi), and one of them, **Vasik**, stays for a period of 12 years in each of these territories, inevitably with an attached group of bards, some implications on Deval status can be inferred. Even now, religion provides the central ‘peg’ of social life, whose endorsement is needed for most community decision-making, a harmonizing influence that stands between identity and anomie.

ENDNOTES

The first suggestion that one is here confronted with a sociolinguistic entity characterized by a higher than normal degree of isolation comes from fact that there is a deafening silence about it in mainstream documentation. However, in the case of Bangan, it is easy exaggerate this aspect because of the way it endorses a manifest stock of archaisms. One need not construe this lack of representation as proof of *actual* isolation. The absence of Bangan from the map of India was a literal fact till recently,⁵⁵ but that has more to do with the state of modern socio-economic and communication network indices.

⁵⁵ A 1978 road map of Uttar Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh leaves the Bangan area as unmarked mountain country, the network of roads petering out just short of the region on all sides.

Mainstream consciousness need not blind us to some basic facts. Bangan is set in its own specific context of a sociolinguistic, cultural and political history that attaches it in many ways to contiguous regions. Its language and culture are carriers of some unique marks, yet they exhibit all the traces of a shared stock—of the composite kinds of intermingling characteristic of the Western Pahari region⁵⁶, ethnic and linguistic; of a continuum of partly overlapping grammatical and lexical inventories; of a form of living pattern and religious practice that is a matter of collective inheritance in the wider region. In short, Bangan is definable as an entity, but not as a peculiarity or aberration, rather, an individual element in a wider arrangement.

⁵⁶ The linguistic category is used here in lieu of conventional geography to overcome the 'border' problem.

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