

Introduction to the Bangru language

**The 52nd International Conference on Sino-
Tibetan Languages and Linguistics
University of Sydney
June 25th 2019**

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**Cheria Meke
Mili**

**Elicitation was in a
mixture of Nyishi,
Hindi and English**



Bangru festival

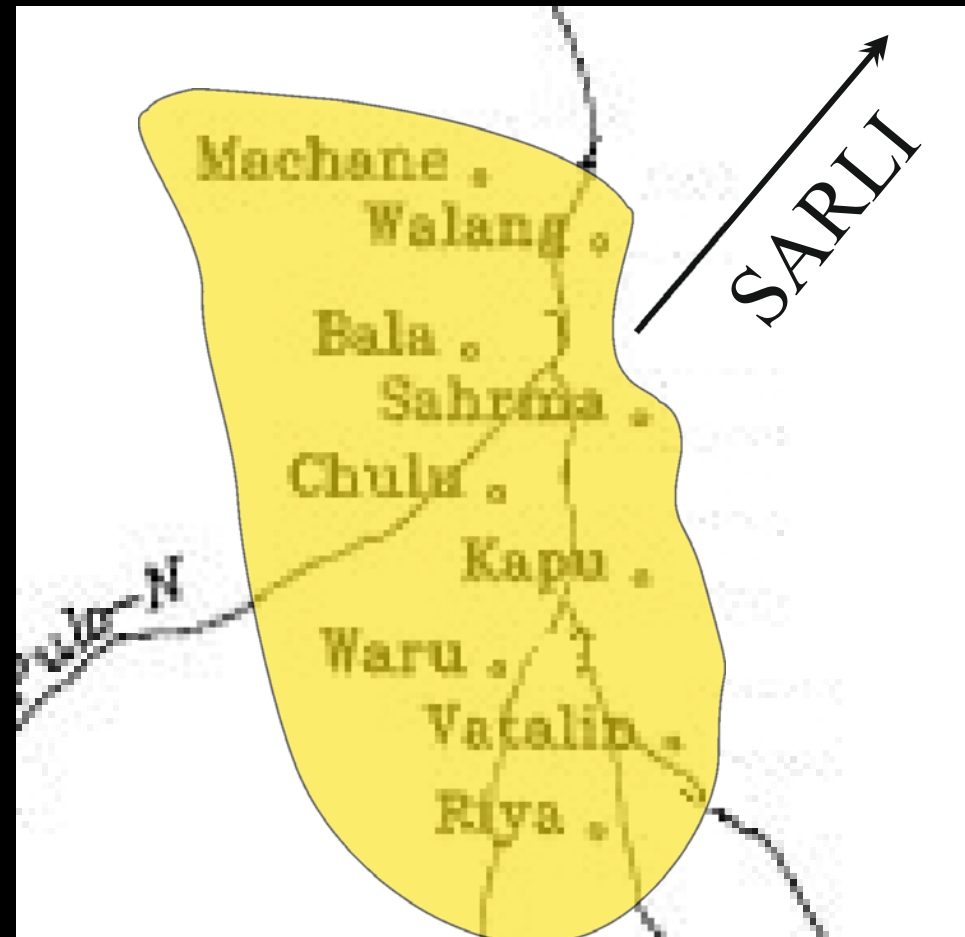


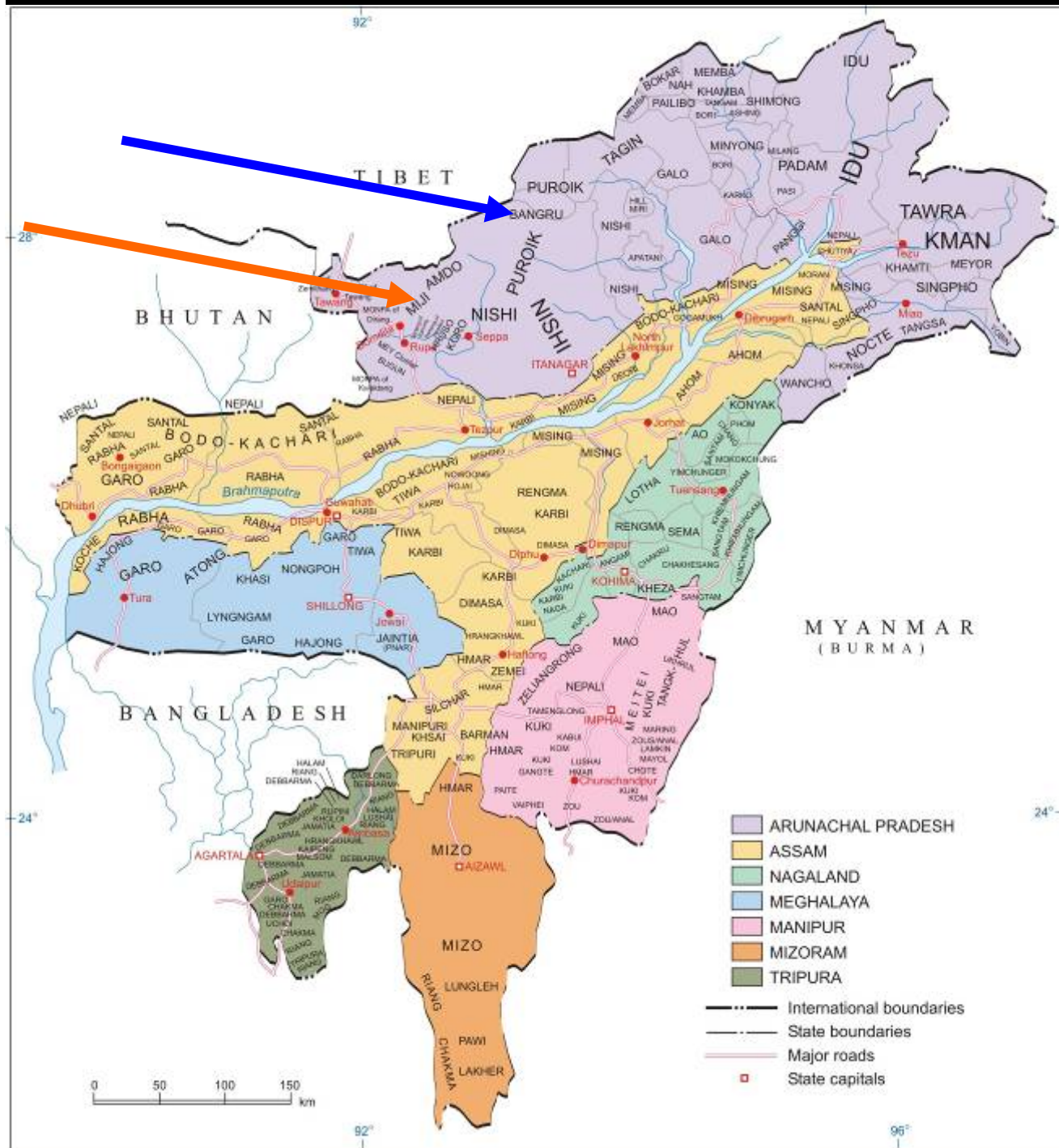
Bangru: from rumour to reality

- Until recently, the existence of a language known as Bangru was only rumoured, though mentioned as Levai in non-linguistic sources
- However an ethnographic thesis and subsequent report (Ramya 2011, 2012) confirmed that this was a genuine ethnic group, but also that it is a language related to Miji.
- Ramya's transcriptions are orthographic, but the underlying forms are easily seen when compared to Miji.
- Blench (2015) published some comparative data on Miji and Bangru in support of this assumption.
- Bodt & Lieberherr (2015) have published a wordlist of Bangru based on the CALMSEA list, with analysis and comparisons with Miji and Hruso.
- However, Li (2003) is a phonology and wordlist of the Bangru spoken in Tibet. Attention to this has been omitted by all previous researchers.
- Li includes phonemes that seem to have disappeared from the Bangru of India, and also envisages a more elaborate tonal system.

Where are the Bangru?

- The Bangru live in Sarli Circle, Lower Subansiri District,
- Ramya (2012) says ‘ They are seen spread in Sarli town and in a few villages viz. Bala, Lee, Lower Lichila, Upper Lichila, Machane, Milli, Molo, Nade, Namju, Palo, Rerung, Sape, Sate, Wabia, and Walu’.
- Many of these are not to be found on the Administrative Atlas of Arunachal Pradesh, but some of those shown are clearly the same as in Ramya’s list.





Bangru and Miji in NE India

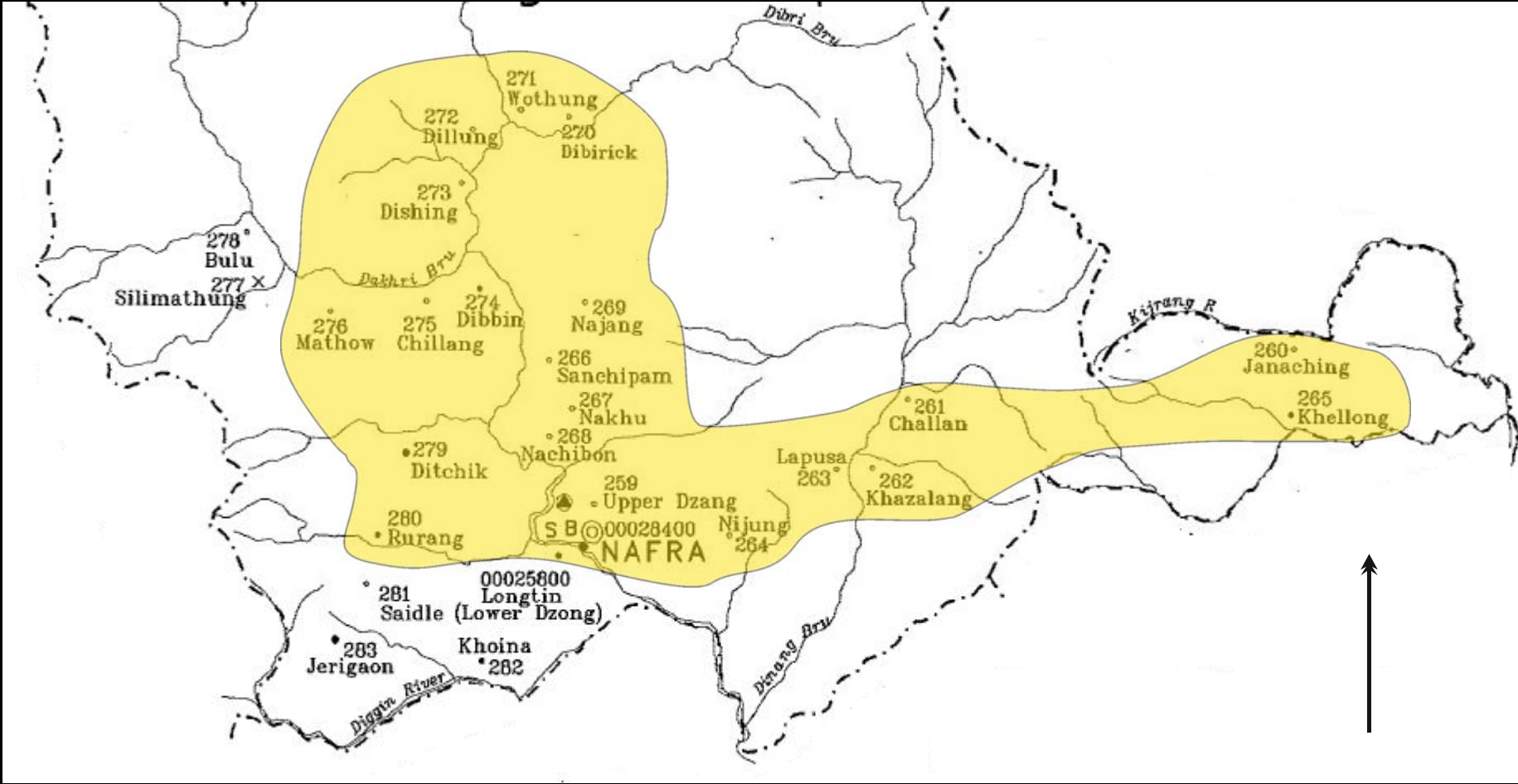
Bangru: research possibilities

- The location of the Bangru is in a politically sensitive area which is blocked for direct access by outsiders, even Indian citizens
- As a consequence, it is necessary to work with speakers outside the region
- Which may sometimes result in normalisation of phonology and the substitution of loanwords for even common items
- Plus key cultural vocabulary is hard to elicit as well as names for plants and animals
- We have tried to guard against this as far as possible, but anything said here must be regarded as provisional

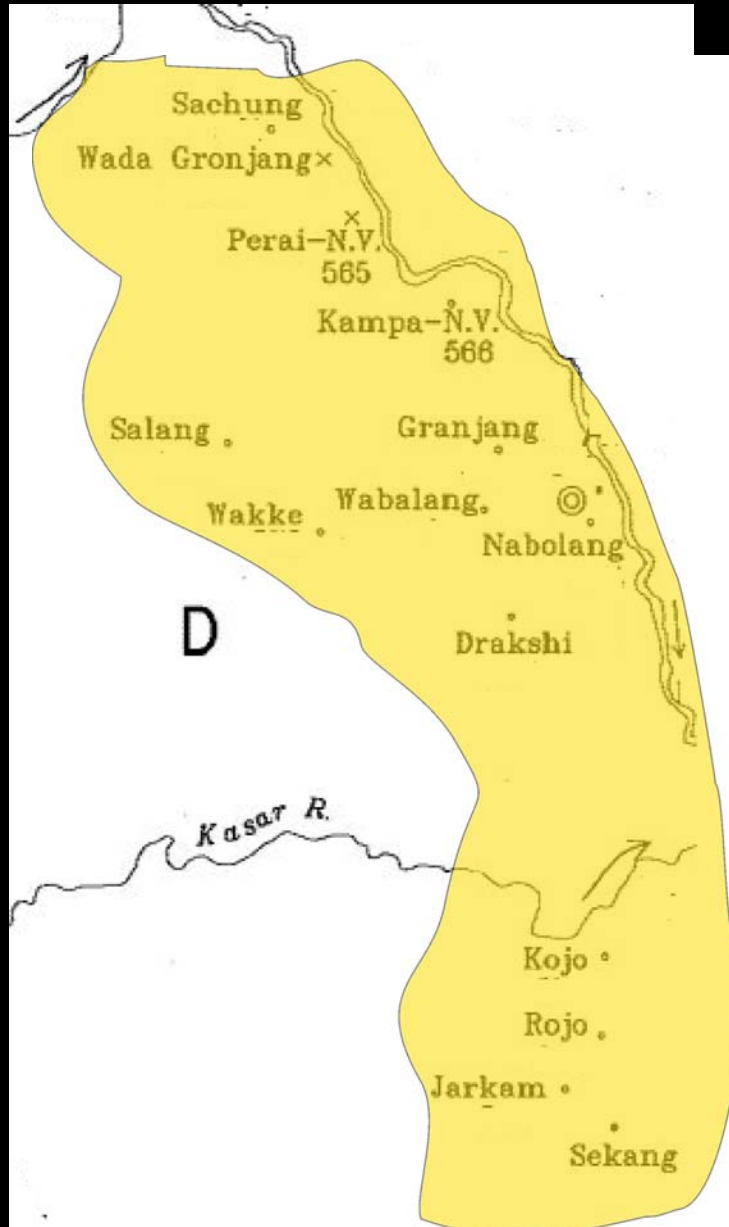
Bangru: the link with Miji

- Bangru is clearly related to Miji (Dmay, Sajolang), which is some distance away to the southwest: there is now no clear knowledge of this relationship
- Miji itself is divided into two markedly different dialects, East and West
- West Miji is becoming standard due to some literacy development and even bible translation

West Miji



East Miji



Bangru: phonology

■ Bangru consonants

	Bilabi al	Labio - denta l	Dent al	Alveol ar	Palato - alveol ar	Palat al	Vela r	Labia l- velar	Glott al
Plosive	p b			t d			k g		ʔ
Nasal	m			n		ɲ	ŋ		
Trill				r					
Fricative				s	[ʃ]				h
				z	[ʒ]				
Affricate					tʃ				
					dʒ				
Approxim ant		[v]				y		w	
Lateral				l					

Bangru: vowels I

- Bangru vowels are similar to those of Miji, although clear length contrast is not as clear as Miji

Vowels	Front	Central	Back
Close	i		ɯ u
Close-Mid	e [ẽ]	ə	o õ
Open-Mid	ɛ		ɔ ã
Open		a [ã]	

- The contrast between mid back vowels is not well established. /ɯ/ is represented as ü, in keeping with Arunachal Pradesh orthographic convention.
- Two words, *lelyɛ* ‘creeper’ and *preɛ* ‘crack’ clearly support e/ɛ contrast
- Some vowels are underspecified. For example, *vi* ‘water’ becomes *vo* in compounds, e.g. *vogo* ‘river’. Mithun *su?* but male mithun *sebi*

Bangru: vowels II

- Length contrast in Bangru vowels looks as if it is connected with final checked syllables. For example;
 - su ʔ ‘meat’ versus suu ‘cane’
- One case of a retracted vowel tɤ̠ ‘to surprise’
- Nasalised vowels are quite rare, and only a few cases of nasalised vowels have been recorded, e.g. ‘otter’ sɛ̃ // ‘grasshopper’ takĩ
- /ə/ plus nasal realised VN sequence, e.g. pitsən ‘mat’
- The word ‘to open’ is realised as hⁿwa, i.e. the nasalised vowel has moved leftwards to become a consonant with nasalised release
- Final nasalised vowels with glides occur. E.g.
 - ‘ginger’ duwasãĩ // ‘onion’ yəkɛĩ
- But these may be in allophonic relation with coda velar nasal /ŋ/
- Thus ãĩ alternately realised as ayŋ, e.g. sayŋ ‘to weave’

Bangru: vowels III

- Miji has breathy vowels which correspond to non-breathy in Bangru
- ‘give’ Miji bay Bangru bay
- Though two possible cases of breathy vowels in Bangru recorded. A case of ‘brightening’?

Gloss	Miji	Bangru
that (level)	paytʃu	pɛtʃi̯.
that (below speaker)	potʃu	putʃi̯.

Bangru: phonology III

- No evidence for contrastive lexical tone, though this is marked in Li (2003) ? Tibetan influence or Chinese transcription conventions
- Bangru phonology is markedly simplified compared with Miji, especially in the consonant inventory
- However, it is also markedly different from the inventory proposed in Li (2003)
- Miji resembles Hruso, and probably [!] the Bangru reduced their system under the influence of Nyishi
- While the Bangru in Tibet may well have come under the influence of Tibetan
- Much still to be worked out here

Bangru: morphology I

- Bangru nominals have no number marking just a generalised suffix *ade*, or *adedoa* for adult persons

man *ɲivi* men *ɲivi adzedoa*

woman *ɲivie* woman *ɲivi adzedoa*

child *məɖzu* children *məɖzu ade*

friend *məɖzua* friends *məɖzua ade*

- Similar there is no gender marking, though male and female persons have distinct lexemes and domestic animals are unpredictably marked

cow, generic *se* female *se məɲe* bull *se məɖzi*

mithun, generic *soʔ* female *seɲe* bull *sedzi*

chicken *doo* female *done* cock *dotorõ*

Bangru: morphology II

- Bangru pronouns are as follows;
- There is a dual but not reliably elicited; but appears ot match Miji

Gloss	W Miji Bangru		W Miji Bangru		W Miji Bangru	
	sg.		dual		pl.	
I, me	ɲaŋ	ɲo	gəni	?	we (inc.)	aɲi kapi
you sg.	ɲi	ɲi	ɖzini	ɖzini	you pl.	ɖze ɖze
he, she, I, it	ayi	se	ini	ini	they	ina ʃo

Bangru: numerals

■ Bangru decimal numerals

Gloss	Bangru
one	akə
two	kəray
three	kətayŋ
four	purway
five	puŋu
six	rɛʔ
seven	moy
eight	səgay (k)
nine	sətəŋ
ten	rəŋ
eleven	əkə ne
twenty	kəray rən

Bangru: syntax I

- Bangru has a basic SOV word order

no teti setero

I eat food

I ate the food

- Negation is sentence final

no teti setero ηwa

I food eat NEG

I didn't eat the food

Bangru: syntax II

- Adjectives and numerals follow the head;

sopye wapay

dog black

a black dog

sopye wapay k.ray

dog black two

two black dogs

Bangru: Nyishi cultural dominance

- The Nyishi people (Tani speakers) live to immediate south of the Bangru and have established significant cultural dominance
- They have moved into the Bangru area and have married in to the community
- As a consequence, Bangru is being lost, since speakers are switching to Nyishi and almost everyone appears to be a fluent speaker of Nyishi as a second language
- Needless to say, there are numerous borrowings from Nyishi into Bangru, even replacing quite common words...
- Bangru borrows names for modern items, machines, crops such as maize and sweet potato from Nyishi

Bangru: examples of Nyishi borrowings

- Bangru seems to have particularly borrowed numerous animal names

Gloss	W Miji	Bangru	Nyishi
descendants		səŋte-səŋte	Nyishi <i>sangtam-sangtam</i>
steam	vo n.ryu	myak ^h	Nyishi mak ^h
world		tʃaŋgo doggo	Nyishi
cow	dʒfiʔ nəʔ	se	Nyishi
cat	gáfù	ali	Nyishi
elephant	aʃ ^{hi}	sətə	< Nyishi
fox, wolf		pəsu	< Nyishi
tiger	tndrãw	gani	< Nyishi
owl		papu	< Nyishi
kite	glyã si	pəkuʃin	< Nyishi
crow	akramə	puwa	< Nyishi
spider	riame	aparanga	< Nyishi
termite		tatsən	< Nyishi
crab	pási láde`	taʃʒigiri	< Nyishi

Bangru: the link with Miji

- Bangru is clearly related to Miji, which is some distance away to the southwest: surprisingly there is now no clear knowledge of this relationship
- The very different consonant inventories makes seeking regular correspondences difficult and...
- Miji itself is divided into two markedly different dialects, East and West
- West Miji is centred in Nafra which is the nearest to an administrative centre and is becoming standard due to some literacy development and even bible translation (though *not* on the basis of a fully worked out phonology)

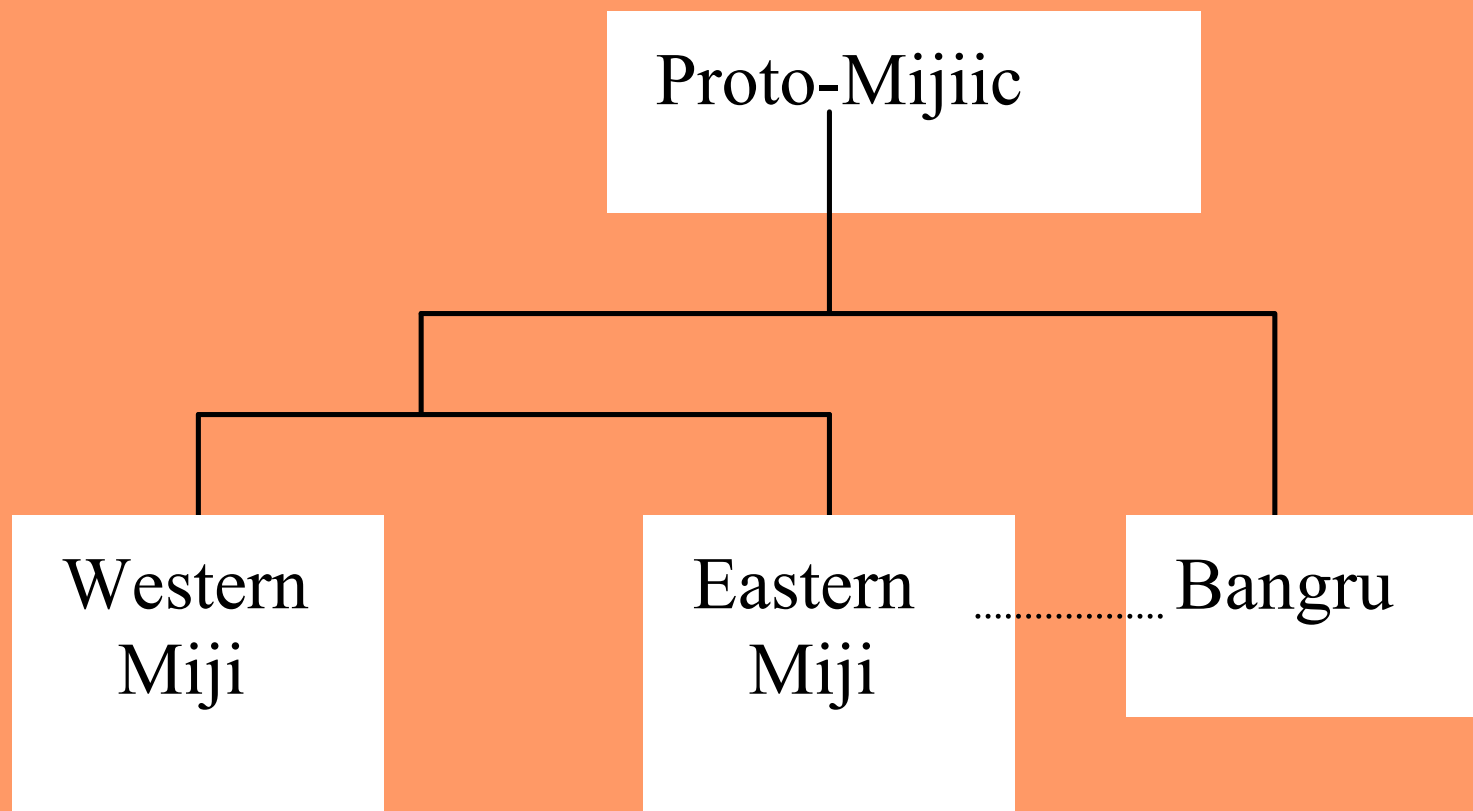
Bangru and Miji basic numerals

■ B

Gloss	W Miji	E Miji	Bangru
one	ùŋ	uŋ	akə
two	gnì	kɾn	kəray
three	g`t ^h ə́n	kt ^h m	kətayŋ
four	b`lí	play	purway
five	bunə	pŋu	puŋu
six	rɛʔ	raʔm	rɛʔ
seven	miaʔ	miaʔ	moy
eight	sigeʔ	ʃəgəʔ	səgay (k)
nine	st ^h ə́n	ʃət ^h ə́n	sətəŋ
ten	lìn	lɪn	rəŋ

Internal structure of Mijiic

- We can presume the following structure for Mijiic. There definitely seems to have been some contact between Bangru and East Miji in the past
- Whether Mijiic can be demonstrated to be genetically connected to Trans-Himalayan remains an open question



THANKS

- Thanks to Chera Devi for introducing me to her family and making this paper possible
- Thanks to Dorje Sanchuju for facilitating work on Miji
- To Kay Williamson Educational Foundation for funding my presence here

