



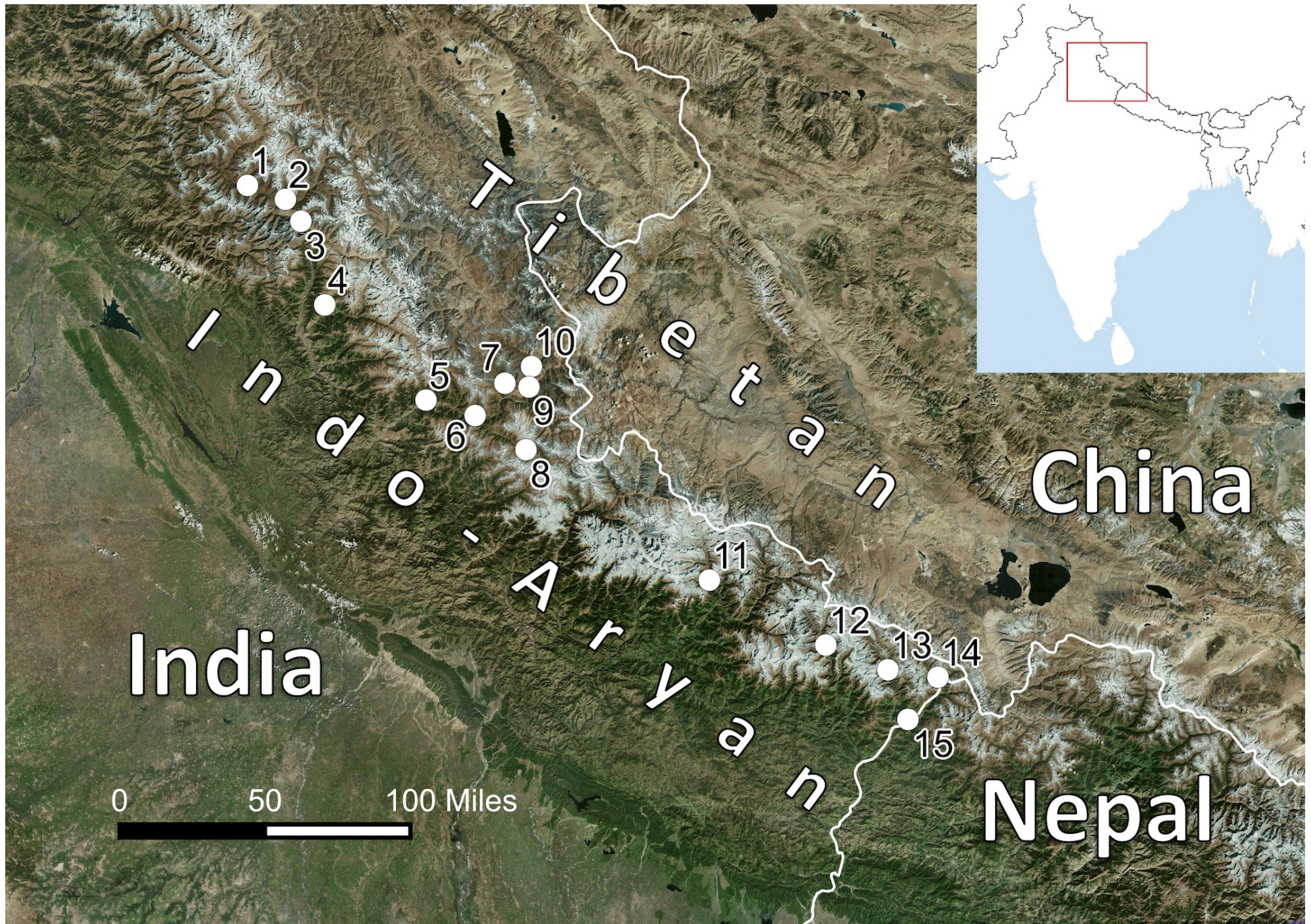
The linguistic prehistory of the western Himalayas

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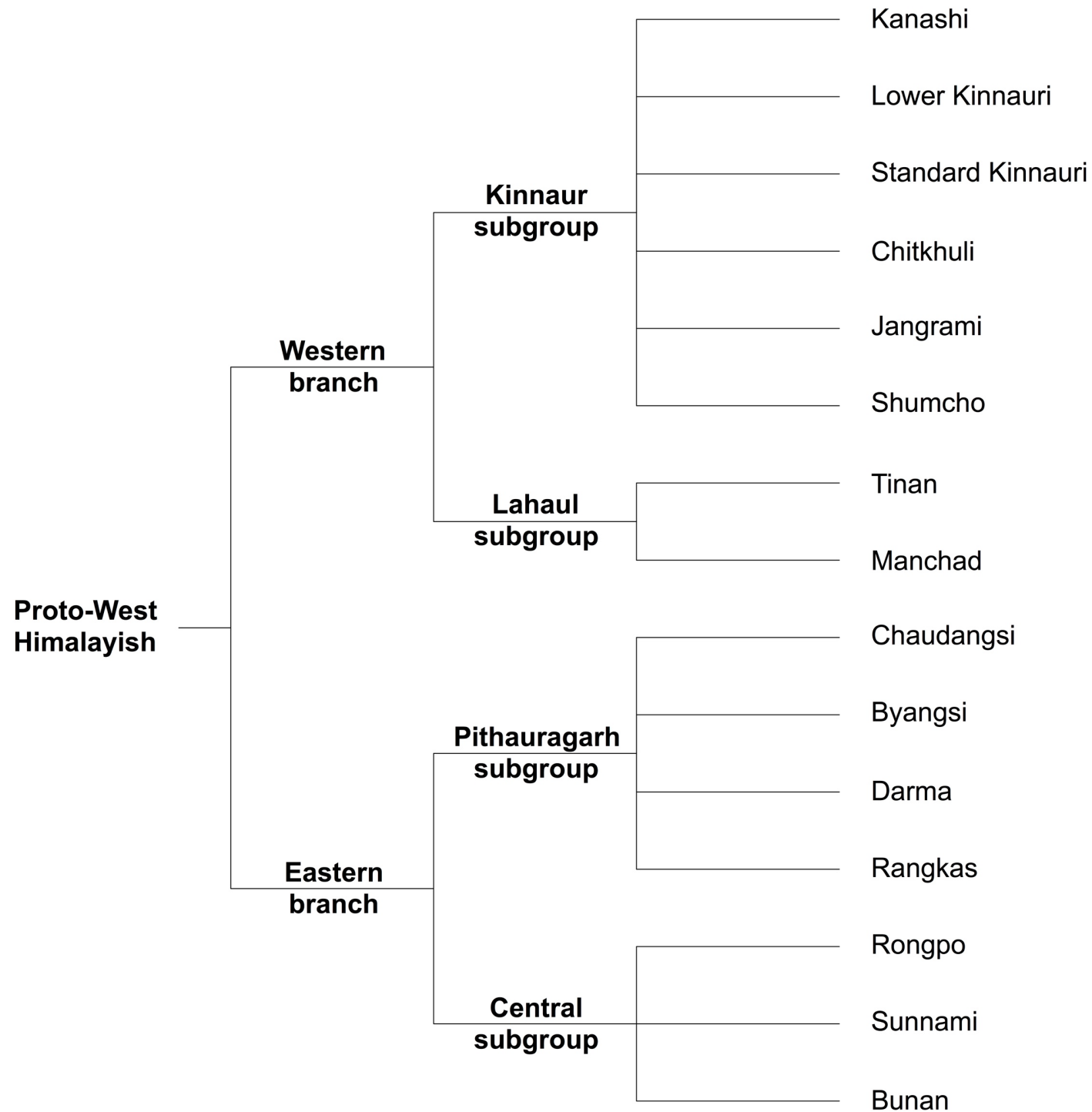


1 The West Himalayish languages





2 Classifying West Himalayish



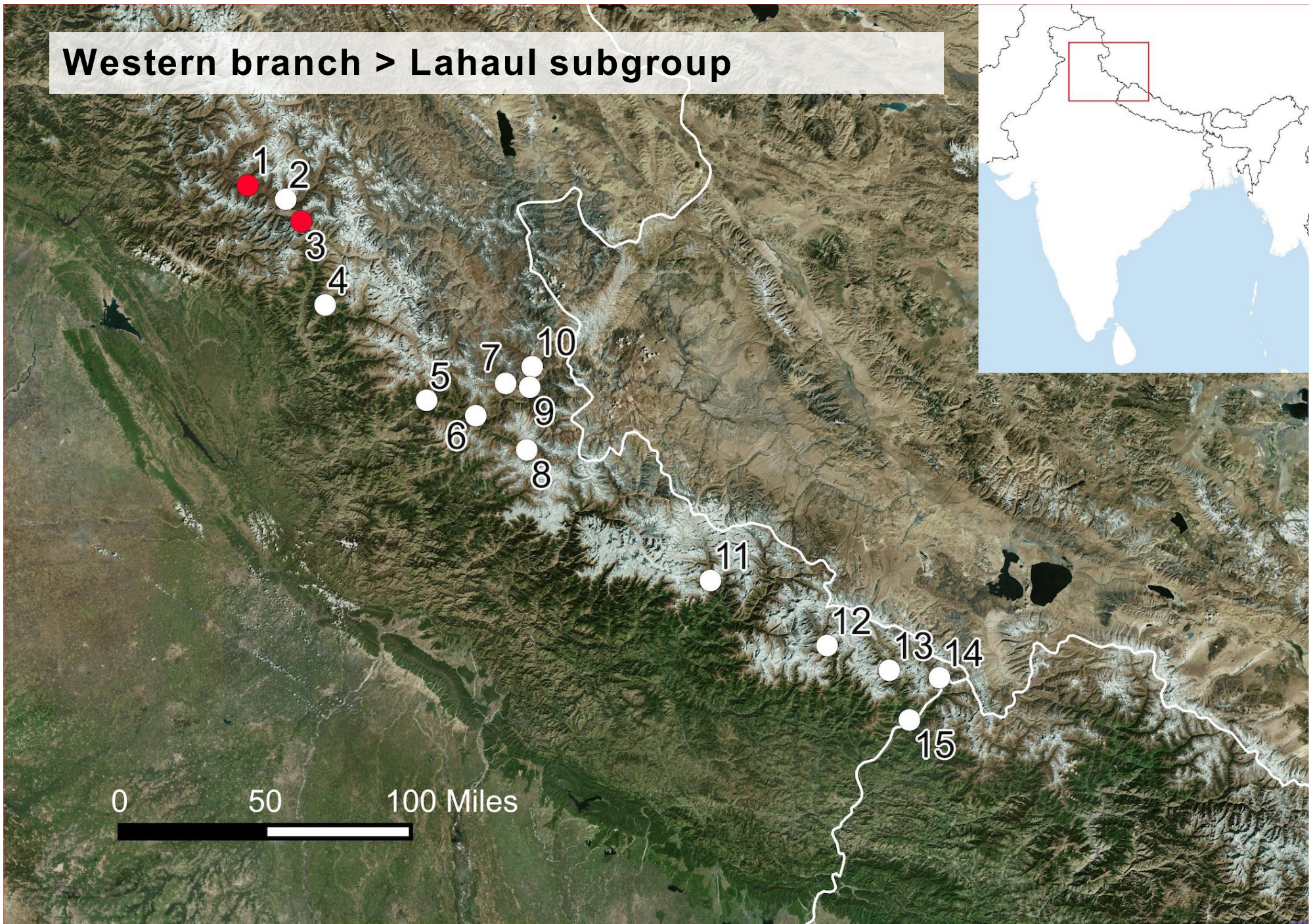
Widmer, 2017

Language	'one'	'hand'	'cry'	'black'
	<i>*it</i>	<i>*gut</i>	<i>*krap-</i>	<i>*rok-</i>
1 Manchad	<i>itsa</i>	<i>gùṛa</i>	<i>krap-</i>	<i>roki</i>
2 Tinan	<i>itsa</i>	<i>gud</i>	<i>krap-</i>	<i>roki</i>
4 Kanashi	<i>idh</i>	<i>guḍ</i>	<i>kərop-</i>	<i>roko</i>
5 L. Kinnauri	<i>īdd</i>	<i>guḍ</i>	—	—
6 S. Kinnauri	<i>id</i>	<i>gūd'</i>	<i>krap-</i>	<i>rōkh</i>
7 Jangrami	<i>it</i>	<i>la:</i>	<i>tue-</i>	<i>k^hai</i>
8 Chitkhuli	<i>it</i>	<i>lau</i>	<i>te-</i>	<i>khai</i>
9 Shumcho	<i>it</i>	<i>gut</i>	<i>krap-</i>	<i>k^hai</i>

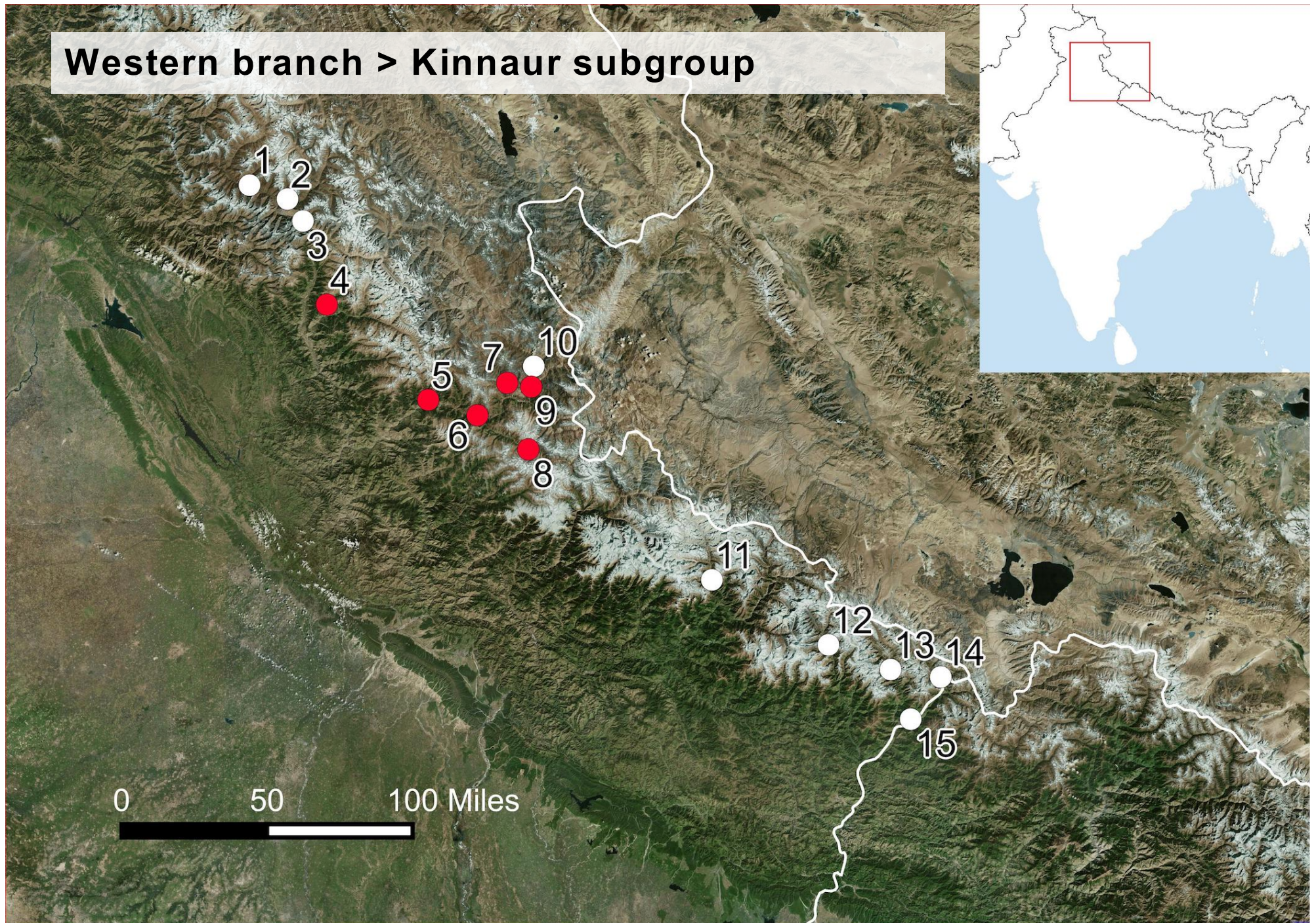
	<i>*tik</i>	<i>*lak</i>	<i>*tjo-</i>	<i>*k^ha- / *wom-</i>
3 Bunan	<i>tiki</i>	<i>lak</i>	<i>tjo-</i>	<i>k^haj</i>
10 Sunnami	<i>tik</i>	<i>lak</i>	<i>tjo-</i>	<i>k^hani</i>
11 Rongpo	<i>tig</i>	<i>lag</i>	<i>tyō-</i>	<i>k^hasyū</i>
12 Rangkas (†)	<i>tākā</i>	<i>lā</i>	—	—
13 Darma	<i>taku</i>	<i>la</i>	<i>tee-</i>	<i>womnu</i>
14 Byangsi	<i>tigε</i>	<i>là</i>	<i>tye-</i>	<i>wamde</i>
15 Chaudangsi	<i>tigə</i>	<i>la</i>	<i>te-</i>	<i>wom-də</i>

Language	‘one’	‘hand’	‘cry’	‘black’
Eastern WH	<i>*it</i>	<i>*gut</i>	<i>*krap-</i>	<i>*rok-</i>
1 Manchad	<i>itsa</i>	<i>gùṛa</i>	<i>krap-</i>	<i>roki</i>
4 Kanashi	<i>idh</i>	<i>guḍ</i>	<i>kərop-</i>	<i>roko</i>
6 S. Kinnauri	<i>id</i>	<i>gǔd'</i>	<i>krap-</i>	<i>rǒkh</i>
	...	...	...	...
Western WH	<i>*tik</i>	<i>*lak</i>	<i>*tjo-</i>	<i>*k^haj</i> / <i>*wom</i>
3 Bunan	<i>tiki</i>	<i>lak</i>	<i>tjo-</i>	<i>k^haj</i>
11 Rongpo	<i>tig</i>	<i>lag</i>	<i>tyõ-</i>	<i>k^hasyũ</i>
14 Byangsi	<i>tigε</i>	<i>là</i>	<i>tye-</i>	<i>wamδε</i>
	...	...	...	...

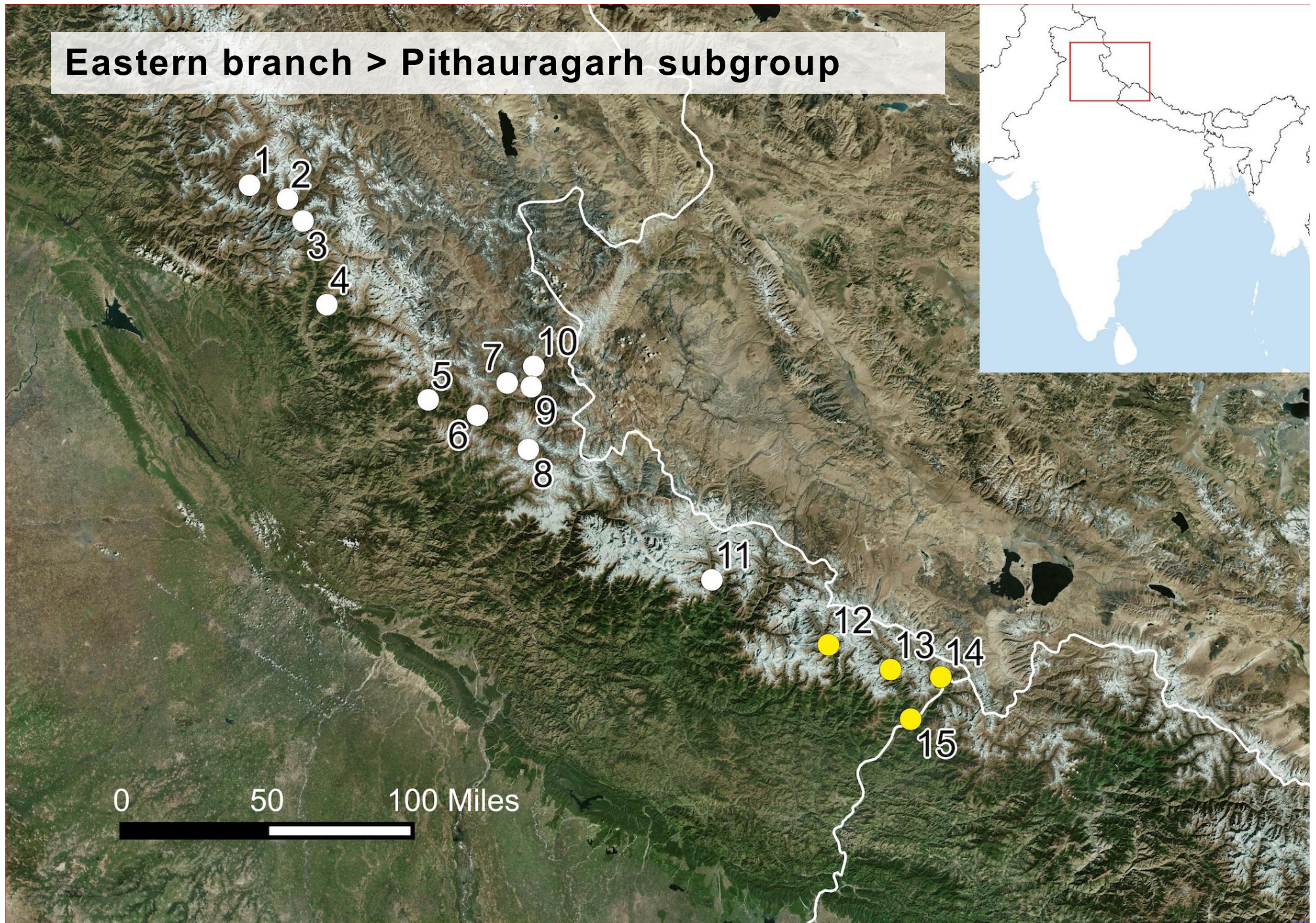
Western branch > Lahaul subgroup



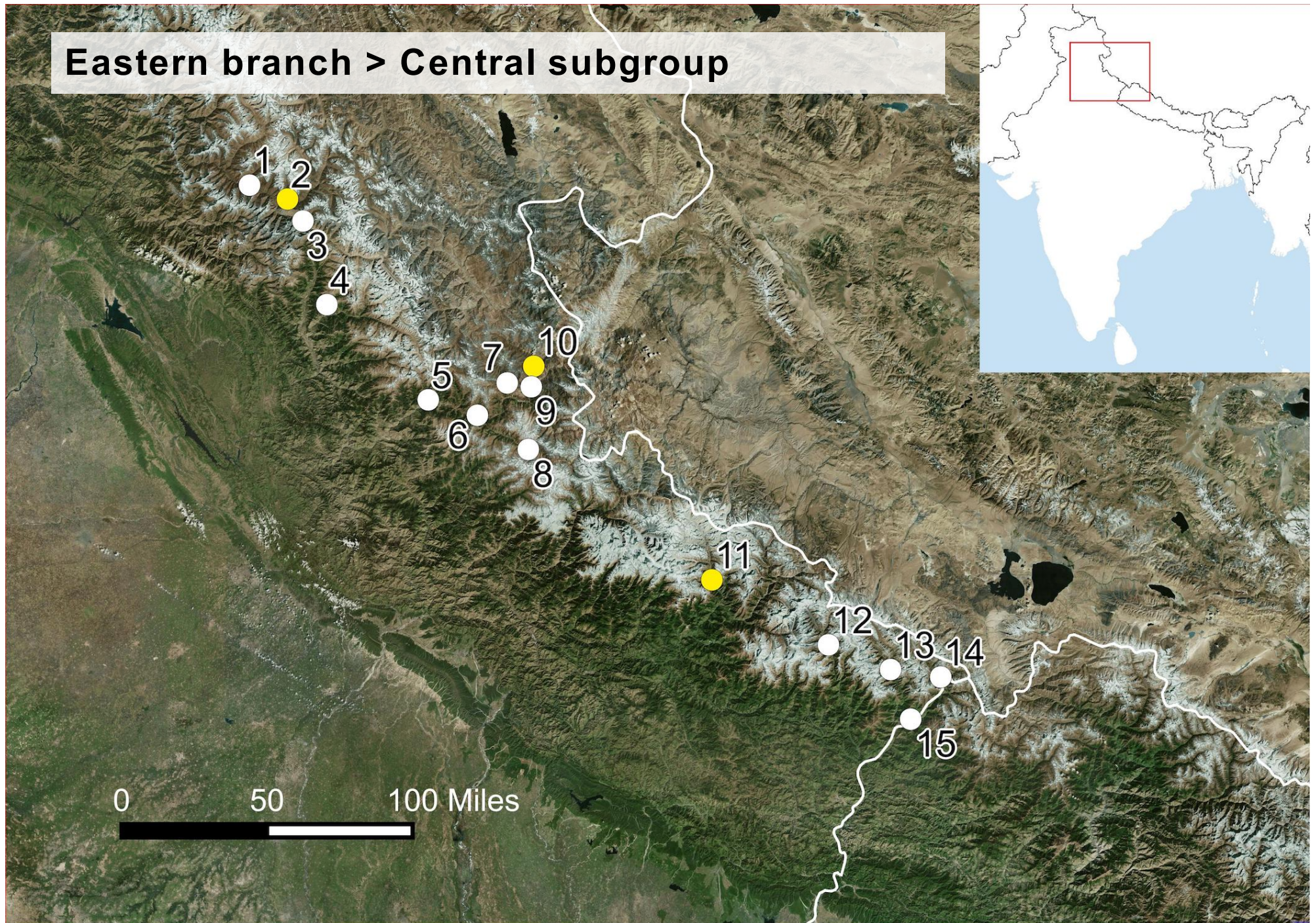
Western branch > Kinnaur subgroup



Eastern branch > Pithauragarh subgroup



Eastern branch > Central subgroup



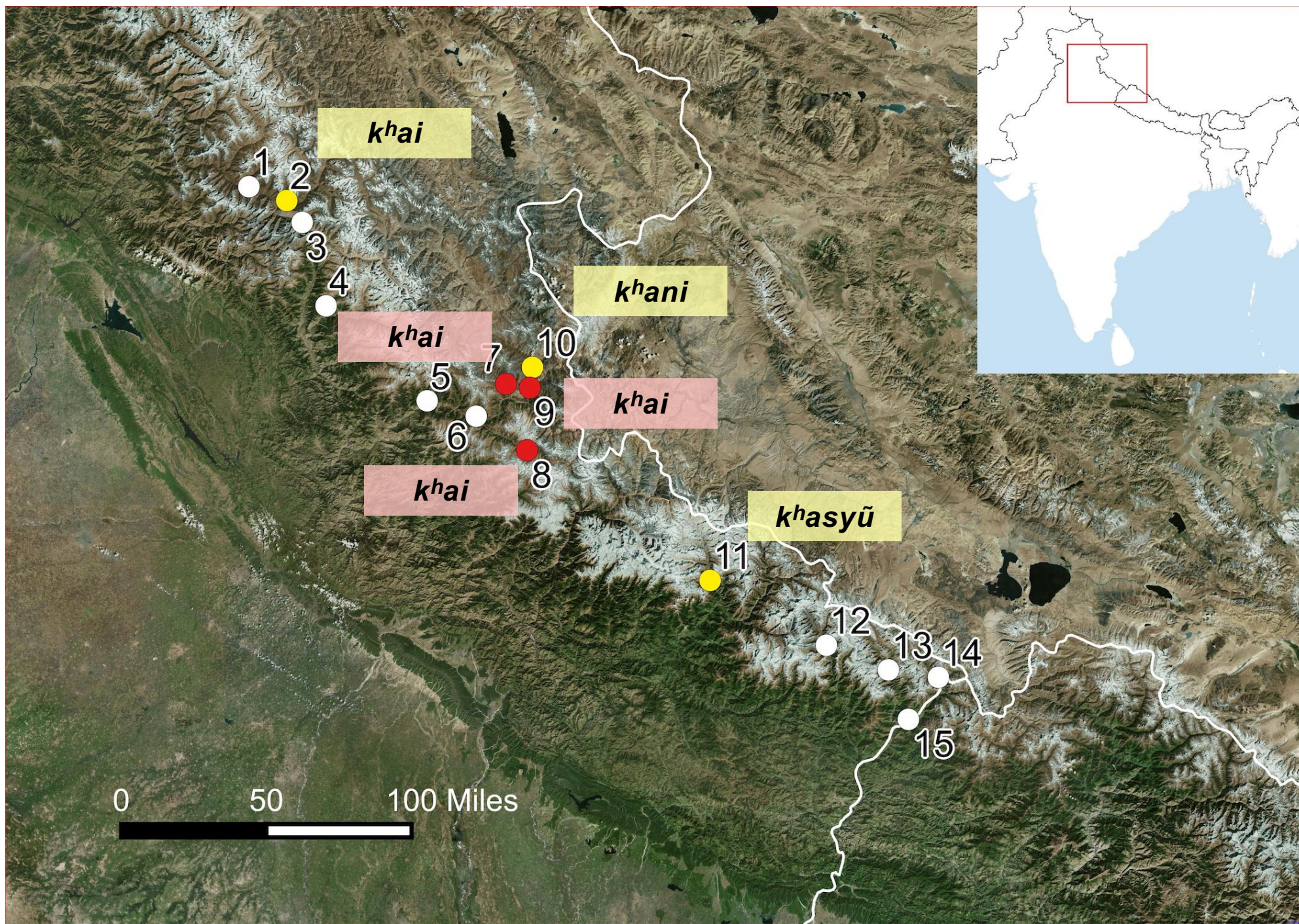


3 Some unexpected findings



Two observations

- 1) The Lahaul, Kinnaur, and Pithauragarh subgroups are spoken in geographically continuous areas, while the Central subgroup (i.e. Bunan, Sunnami, and Rongpo) is scattered over the western Himalayan mountain range.
- 2) The eastern-most languages of the Kinnaur subgroup (i.e. Jangrami, Chitkhuli, and Shumcho) display a considerable amount of lexical traits that are otherwise characteristic of EWH languages, in particular the languages of the Central subgroup (see Fig. 2).



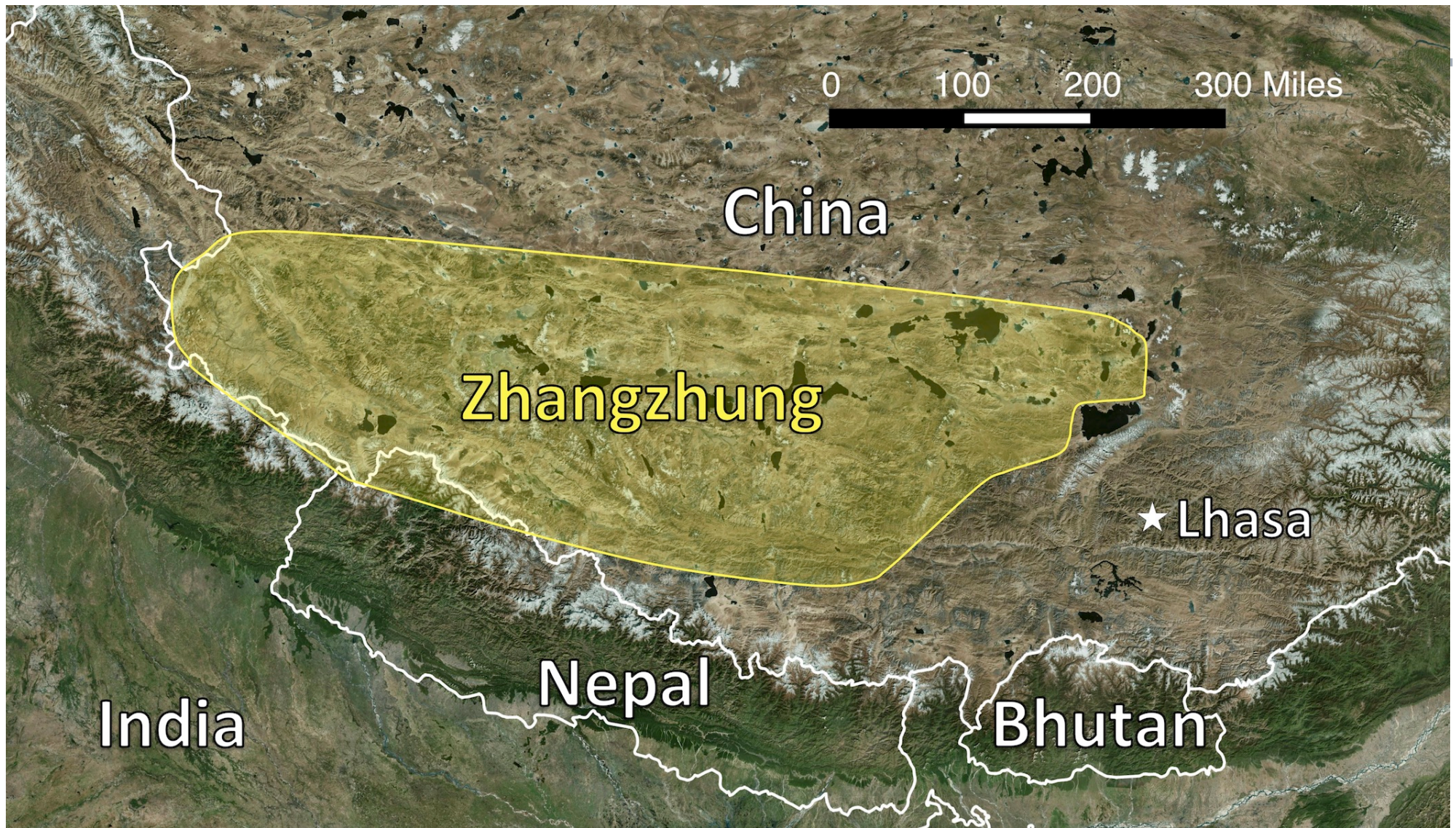


4 The connection to the Plateau



Matching linguistic and historical evidence

- In the 6th century CE, the western half of the Himalayan Plateau was controlled by the Zhangzhung polity (Denwood 2008).
- Zhangzhung ceased to exist as an independent polity in the 7th century CE when it was conquered by the expanding Tibetan empire (van Driem 2001).



Reconstructed extension of Zhangzhung according to Denwood (2008)



Matching linguistic and historical evidence

- Zhangzhung language fragmentarily attested in Bon texts
- clear affiliation with Central subgroup of WH (Widmer 2017)

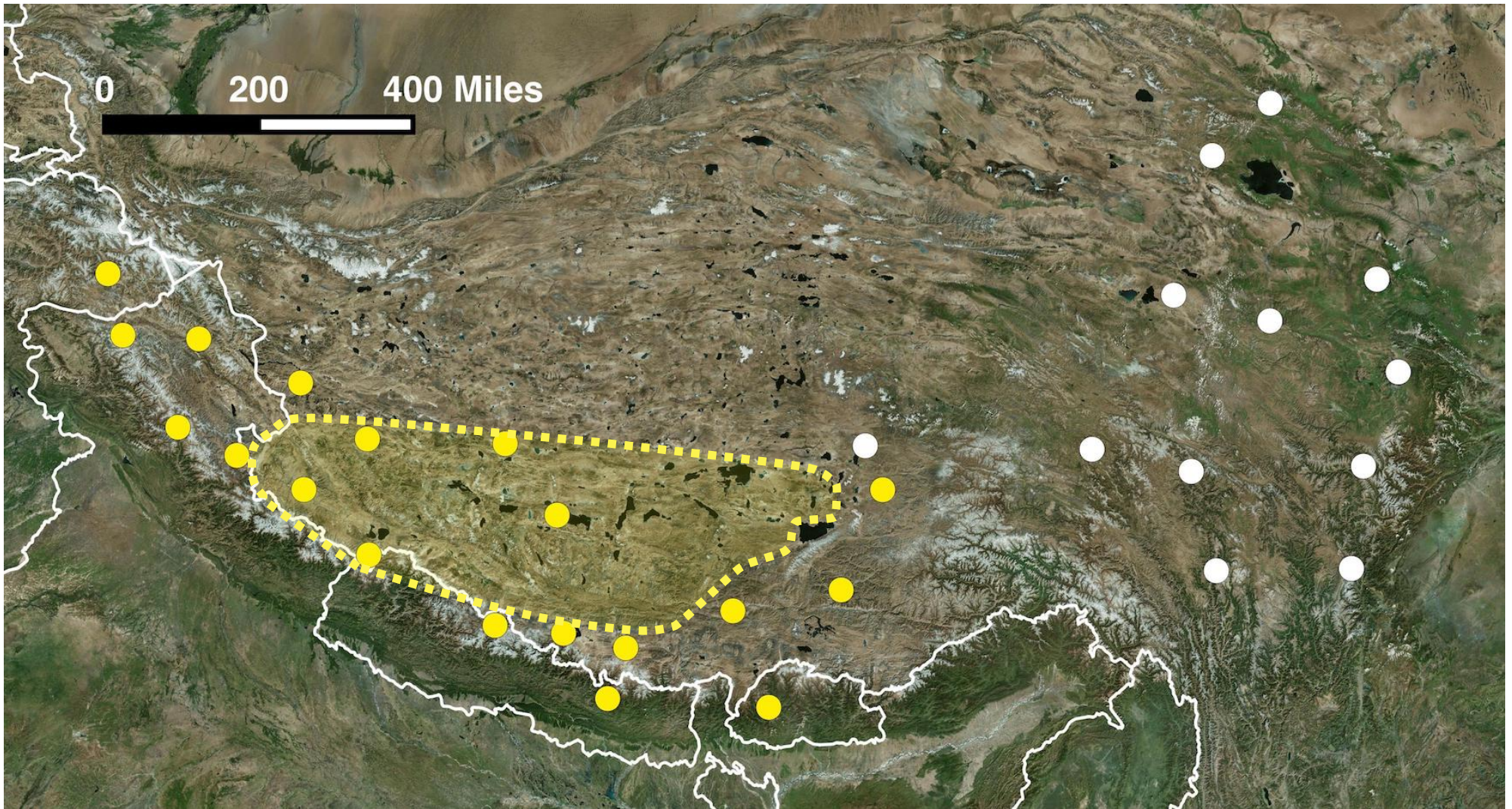
Language	‘nose’	‘one’	‘black’	‘white’
1 Manchad	<i>ñà</i>	<i>itsa</i>	<i>roki</i>	<i>tshàṅsi</i>
6 S. Kinnauri	<i>staküts</i>	<i>idd</i>	<i>rökh</i>	<i>ṭhōg'</i>
13 Darma	<i>nim</i>	<i>taku</i>	<i>womnu</i>	<i>xinu</i>
3 Bunan	<i>gjump^huk</i>	<i>tiki</i>	<i>k^haj</i>	<i>ḡi:</i>
Zhangzhung	<i>lgyum zhi</i>	<i>tik</i>	<i>kha nig</i>	<i>shi nom</i>



Further evidence

Further evidence for a former WH presence on the Himalayan plateau comes from ...

- WH borrowings in Tibetan varieties
(e.g. the noun formation suffix *-tse* < WH diminutive suffix)
- WH toponyms in Tibetan-speaking territory
(e.g. *-ti* 'water', *-liŋ* 'place')
- WH names and titles in ancient Tibetan inscriptions
(e.g. the title *wer* 'king' in inscriptions from Tabo monastery)



The distribution of *tse*-formations in the Tibetan dialect continuum (data mainly taken from Bielmeier et al. forthcoming; Chinese LWs have been excluded)

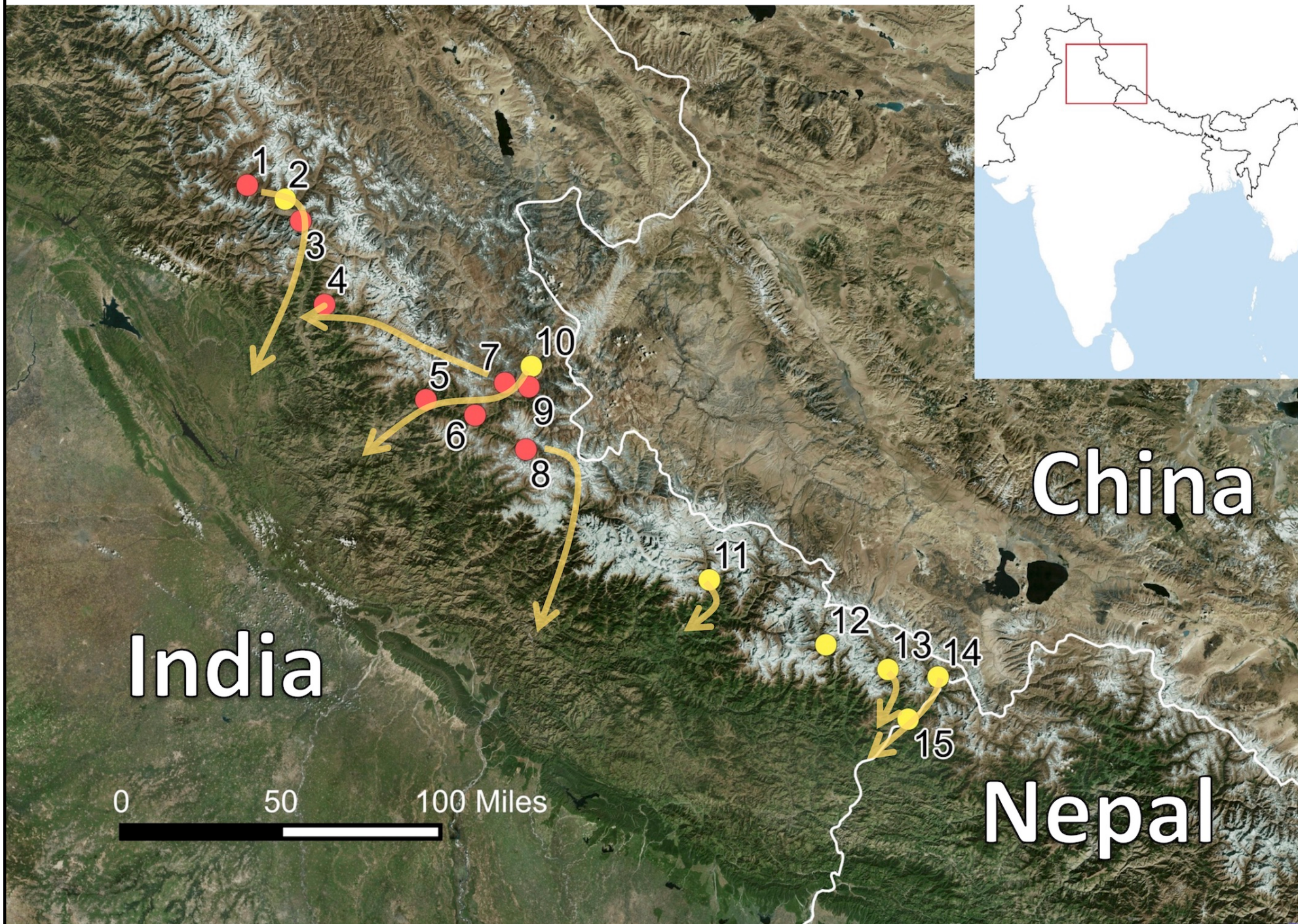


5 The connection to the foothills



Transhumance in the western Himalayas

- Until the recent past, several WH communities were highly mobile societies and practiced transhumance, i.e. an annual migration cycle between high-altitude summer pastures in the Himalayan range and low-altitude winter pastures in the Himalayan foothills (see Zoller 1983, Willis 2007, *inter alia*).





Transhumance in the western Himalayas

- Speakers of the WH language Jangrami (7) used to spend the winter months in the valley of Kullu, where the closely related WH language Kanashi (4) is spoken to the present day. These strong socio-economic ties to lower-altitude areas suggests that WH communities may once have permanently settled the Himalayan foothills, but were then gradually pushed into the Himalayan range by Indo-Aryan communities, who may have arrived in the area as early as 1,500 BCE.⁶



6 Conclusion



Summary

Former WH presence on the Tibetan Plateau

- There is evidence that the western regions of the Himalayan Plateau were once settled by ethno-linguistic communities that spoke eastern WH languages. Those communities were gradually superseded by Tibetan-speaking communities, a process that may have started as early as 750 CE.



Summary

Former WH presence in the Himalayan foothills

- There is evidence that the western Himalayan foothills were once settled by ethno-linguistic communities that spoke western / eastern WH languages. Those communities were gradually superseded by Indo-Aryan communities, a process that may have started as early as 1,500 BC (Mascia 1991).



Directions for further research

- If these conclusions are correct, the former presence of WH languages on the Himalayan Plateau and in the foothills may still be detectable in the form of ...
 - lexical / grammatical influence
 - toponymy
 - cultural heritage



Directions for further research

- **Investigate ancient contact situations:** In ancient times, WH languages could potentially have been in contact with ...
 - western Tibetan varieties
 - Tamangish languages
 - Indo-Aryan languages (western Pahari, Dardic)
 - Burushaski



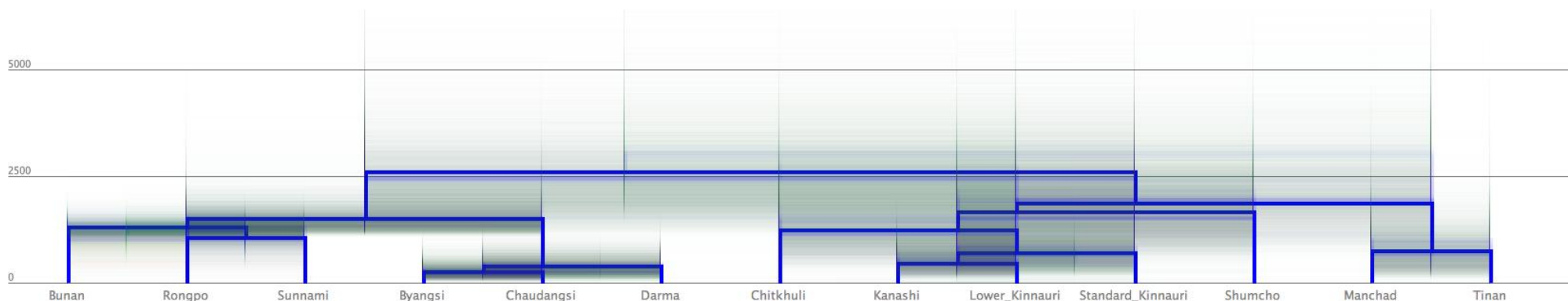
Directions for further research

- **Investigate toponymy and cultural heritage of areas that may once have been settled by WH communities:**
 - the western Himalayan Plateau
 - the western Himalayan foothills
 - the Upper Indus Valley
 - the Karakoram



Directions for further research

- **Dating the settlement of / population movements in the western Himalayas:** Bayesian inference allows us to date splits in the phylogeny of WH. This might allow us to correlate insights from historical linguistics with insights from archeology (e.g. Aldenderfer & Zhang 2004; Aldenderfer 2007; d'Alpoim Guedes 2015).





5 References

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