A Tibetic Role in Trans-Himalayan Evidentials?

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Who Am I?

- PhD Student at the University of Sydney
  - Supervisors: Gwendolyn Hyslop and Lila San Roque
  - Started March 2021
- Who Knows What and How: Intersubjectivity in Tibeto-Burman Languages
  - Working title (in need of revision)
  - Overview of “epistemic” marking in Trans-Himalayan languages

Introduction

- Where did the widespread evidentials in Trans-Himalayan come from?
- Collected data on 66 Trans-Himalayan languages
  - Collected as a major part of my PhD
  - Intended to be a reasonably representative sample of the language family
  - Using van Driem's "fallen leaves" model to avoiding putting stake in any one phylogeny
    - Simply a method of ensuring no major subfamilies (as much as is possible) are omitted
- Data sorted by evidential system, and mapped in relation to Tibetic-speaking regions
  - Historical social, economic, and religious connections to Tibet mapped by region
  - Geographical Proximity to Tibetic-speaking people
  - Sociolinguistic influence from Tibetic-speaking people
  - By Tibetic, I mean the subfamily of languages 'descended' from Old Tibetan, not including the East Bodish languages of Bhutan

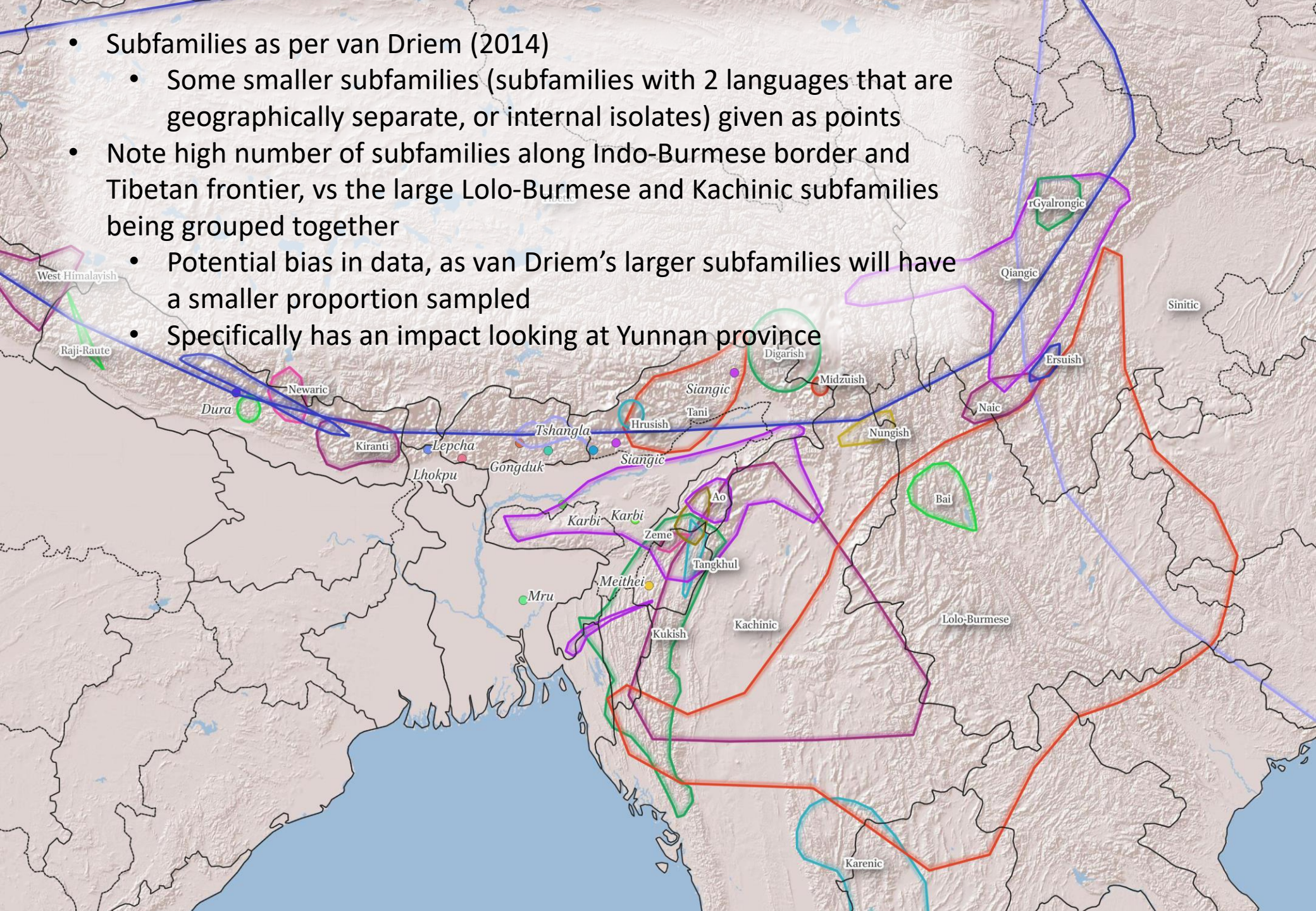
Introduction

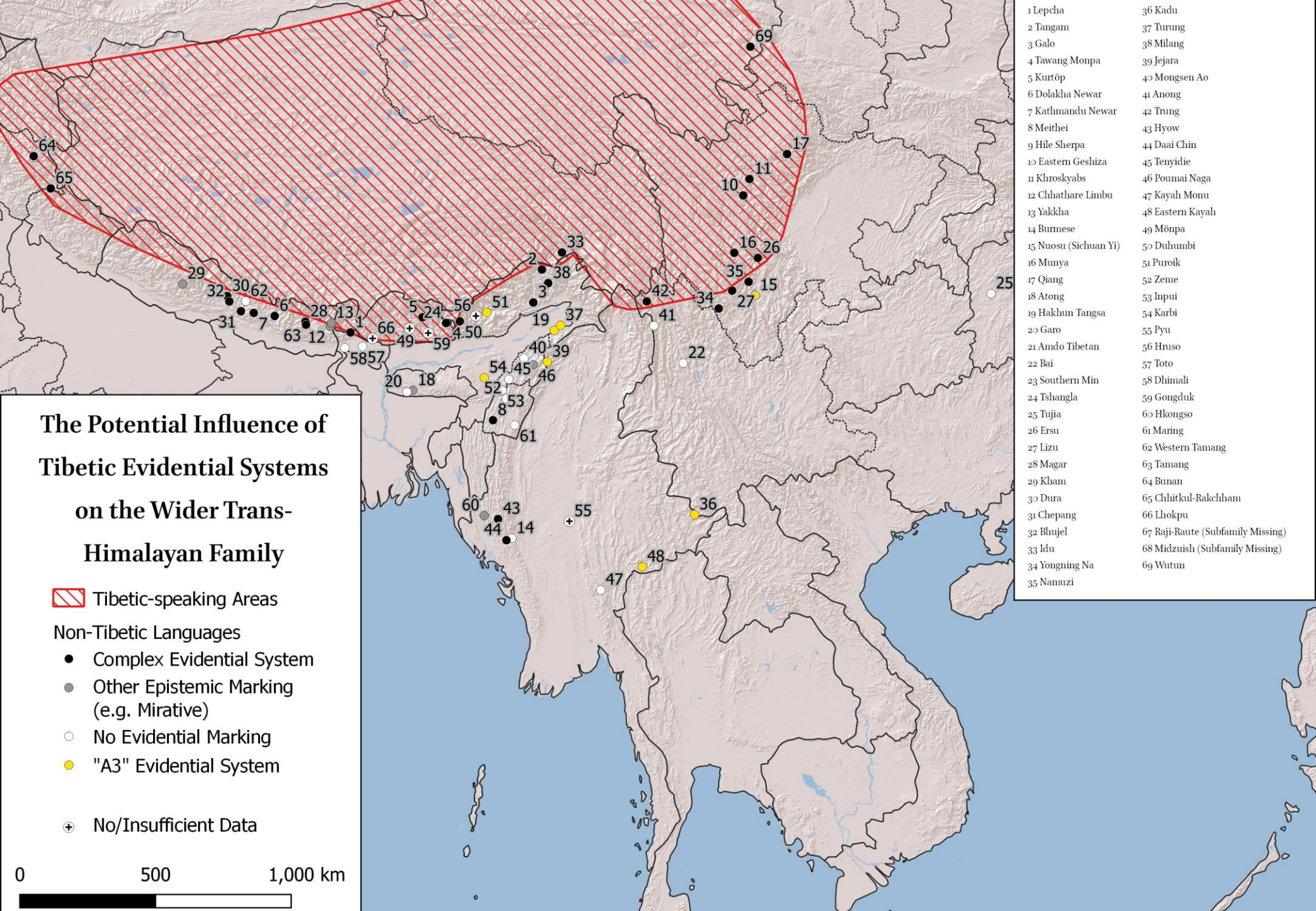
- 4 categories of evidential systems
  - Complex evidential system
    - Multiple evidential or egophoric bases encoded grammatically
    - Similar in general scope to evidentials seen in Tibetic languages
  - ‘A3’ evidential system
    - System marking only reportative, hearsay, or quotative evidence
    - A3 label as per Aikhenvald (2004)
  - Other epistemic marking
    - Languages with grammatical marking such as Mirativity, but no complex evidentiality
  - No clear evidential marking

Some Theoretical Background

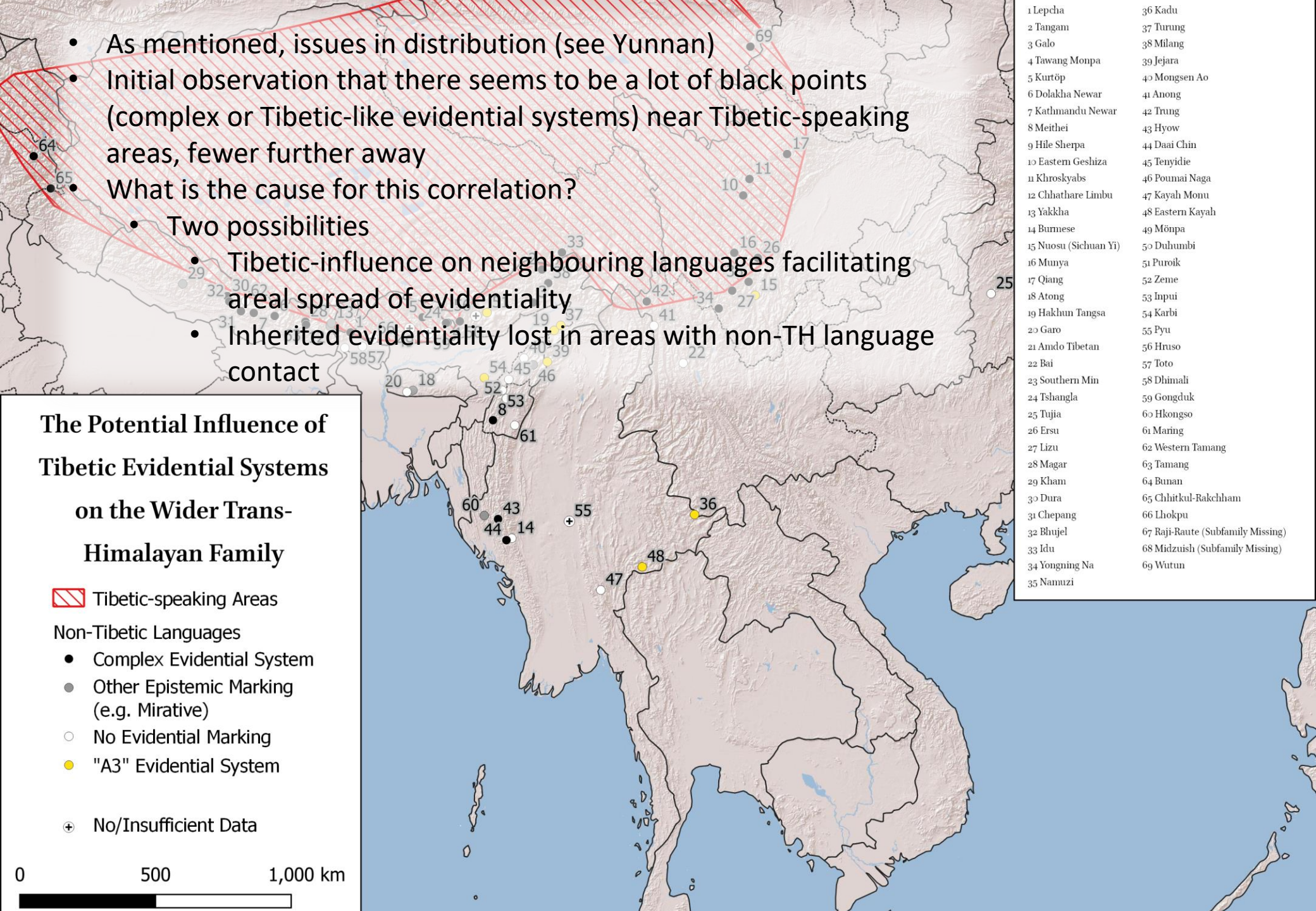
- Areal spread of evidentiality widely documented
  - Aikhenvald 2004: 288 discusses it broadly
  - Verhees 2018 in relation to languages in the Caucuses
  - Sandman & Simon 2016 specifically in reference to Tibetic influence on Wutun and Salar, languages on the Plateau's northern flank
  - Where areal spread of evidentiality is seen, direct borrowing is rare (Aikhenvald 2004)
    - Rather, evidential systems are innovated in a language under influence from neighbouring languages, and specific forms are not shared
- Widespread presence of evidentials in the Himalayas is also well documented
  - See Bickel 2000, Gawne 2021 for A3 systems
- Evidentials tend to be found in smaller, more tightknit communities (Aikhenvald 2004)
- To my knowledge, a full evidential system in Old Tibetan has not yet been uncovered
  - 'dug has been argued to carry evidential meaning in Classical Tibetan but not in Old Tibetan sources (Hill 2014)
  - As such, while I am treating Tibetic languages as a single unit here, the widespread evidentials of Tibetic languages are not an inherited feature of a shared ancestor, but probably also an areal development

- Subfamilies as per van Driem (2014)
  - Some smaller subfamilies (subfamilies with 2 languages that are geographically separate, or internal isolates) given as points
- Note high number of subfamilies along Indo-Burmese border and Tibetan frontier, vs the large Lolo-Burmese and Kachinic subfamilies being grouped together
  - Potential bias in data, as van Driem's larger subfamilies will have a smaller proportion sampled
  - Specifically has an impact looking at Yunnan province

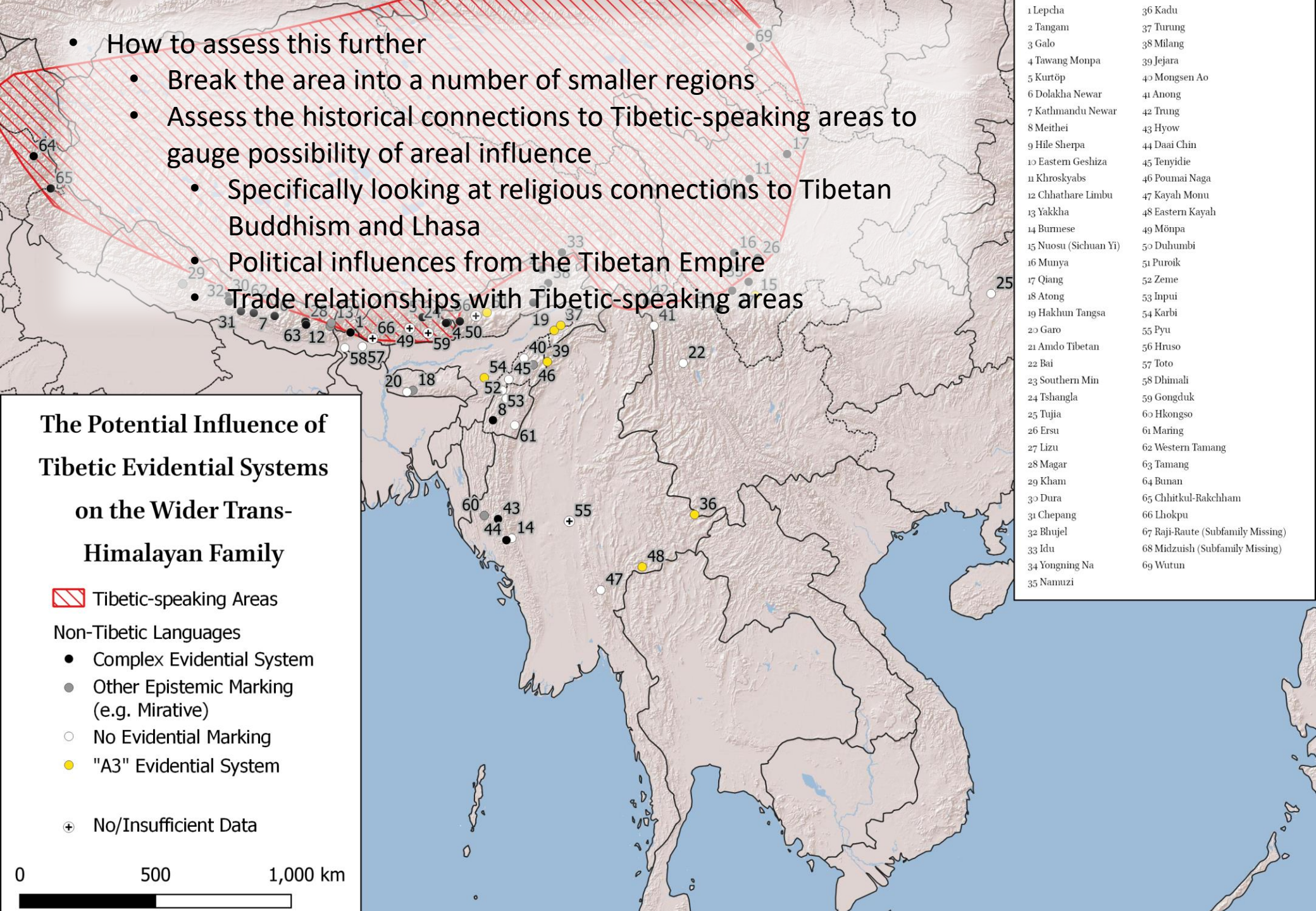


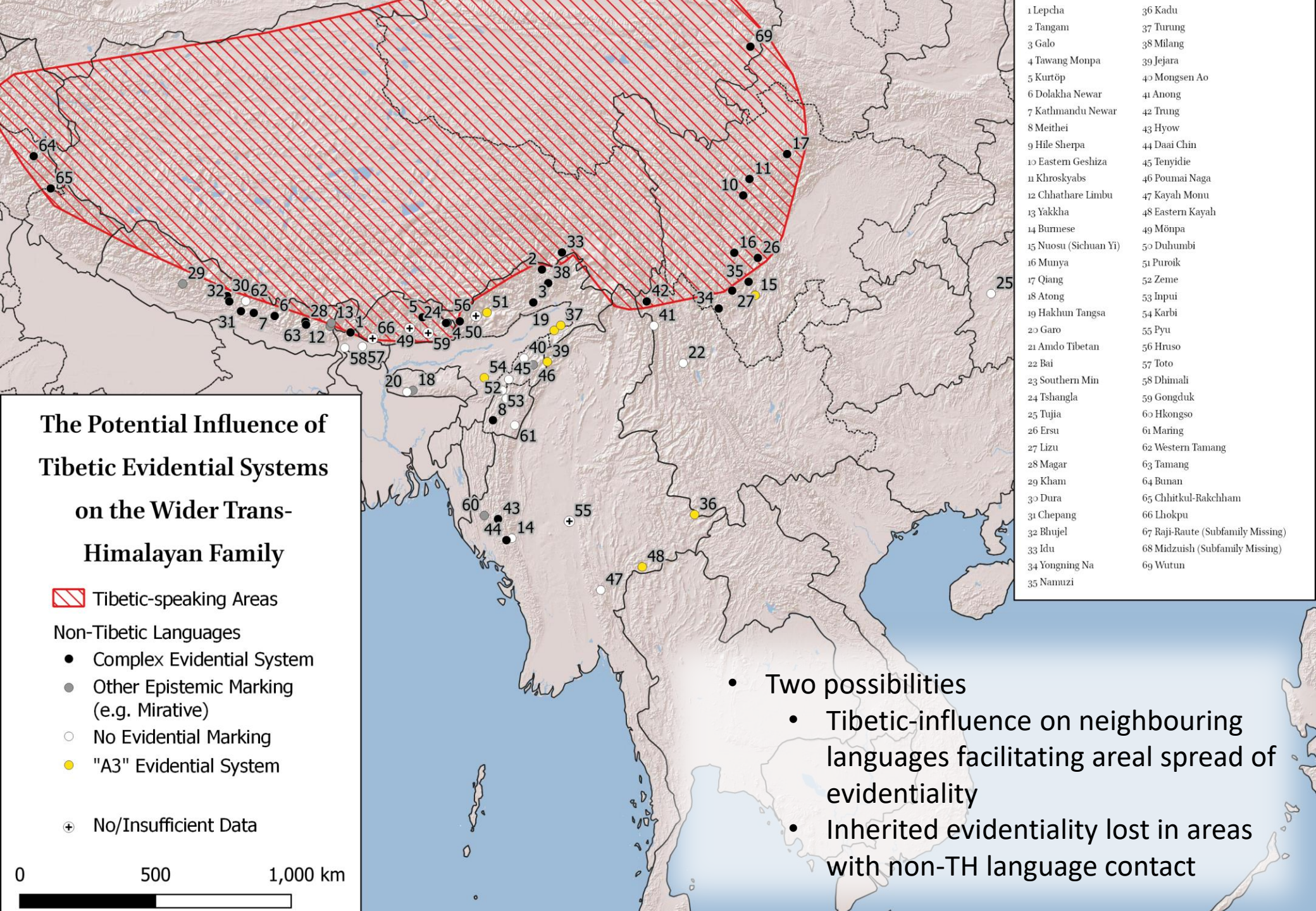

The Potential Influence of Tibetic Evidential Systems on the Wider Trans-Himalayan Family
Tibetic-speaking Areas
Non-Tibetic Languages
Complex Evidential System
Other Epistemic Marking (e.g. Mirative)
No Evidential Marking
"A3" Evidential System
No/Insufficient Data
0
500
1,000 km
1 Lepcha
2 Tangam
3 Galo
4 Tawang Monpa
5 Kurtöp
6 Dolakha Newar
7 Kathmandu Newar
8 Meithei
9 Hile Sherpa
10 Eastern Geshiza
11 Khroskyabs
12 Chhathare Limbu
13 Yakkha
14 Burmese
15 Nuosu (Sichuan Yi)
16 Munya
17 Qiang
18 Atong
19 Hakhun Tangsa
20 Garo
21 Amdo Tibetan
22 Bai
23 Southern Min
24 Tshangla
25 Tujia
26 Ersu
27 Lizu
28 Magar
29 Kham
30 Dura
31 Chepang
32 Bhujel
33 Idu
34 Yongning Na
35 Namuzi
36 Kadu
37 Turung
38 Milang
39 Jejara
40 Mongsen Ao
41 Anong
42 Trung
43 Hyow
44 Daai Chin
45 Tenyidie
46 Poumai Naga
47 Kayah Monu
48 Eastern Kayah
49 Mönpa
50 Duhumbi
51 Puroik
52 Zeme
53 Inpui
54 Karbi
55 Pyu
56 Hruso
57 Toto
58 Dhimali
59 Gongduk
60 Hkongso
61 Maring
62 Western Tamang
63 Tamang
64 Bunan
65 Chhitkul-Rakchham
66 Lhokpu
67 Raji-Raute (Subfamily Missing)
68 Midzuish (Subfamily Missing)
69 Wutun

- As mentioned, issues in distribution (see Yunnan)
- Initial observation that there seems to be a lot of black points (complex or Tibetic-like evidential systems) near Tibetic-speaking areas, fewer further away
- What is the cause for this correlation?
  - Two possibilities
    - Tibetic-influence on neighbouring languages facilitating areal spread of evidentiality
    - Inherited evidentiality lost in areas with non-TH language contact



- How to assess this further
  - Break the area into a number of smaller regions
  - Assess the historical connections to Tibetic-speaking areas to gauge possibility of areal influence
    - Specifically looking at religious connections to Tibetan Buddhism and Lhasa
    - Political influences from the Tibetan Empire
    - Trade relationships with Tibetic-speaking areas

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25 Tujia
26 Ersu
27 Lizu
28 Magar
29 Kham
30 Dura
31 Chepang
32 Bhujel
33 Idu
34 Yongning Na
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42 Trung
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44 Daai Chin
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• Two possibilities
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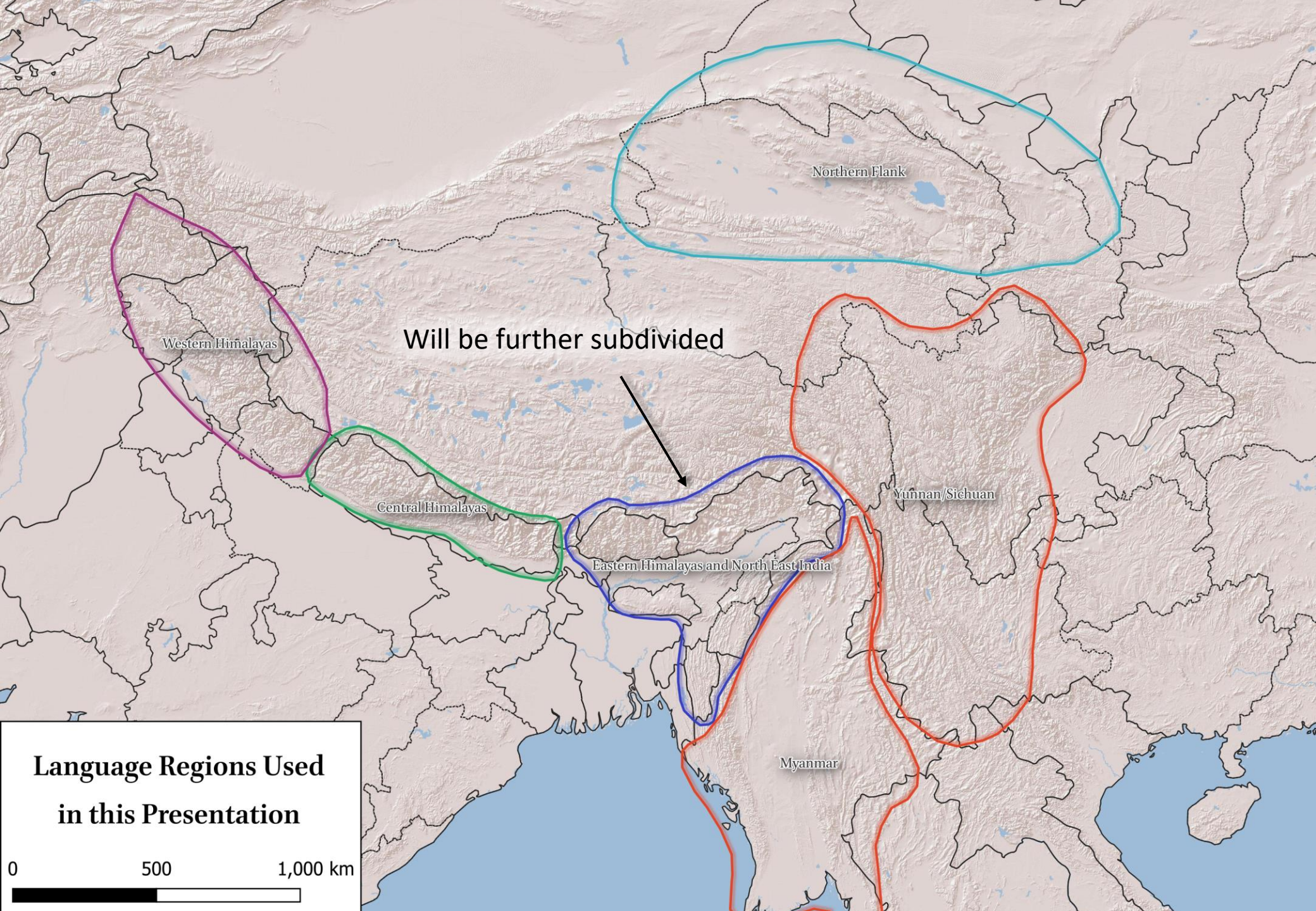
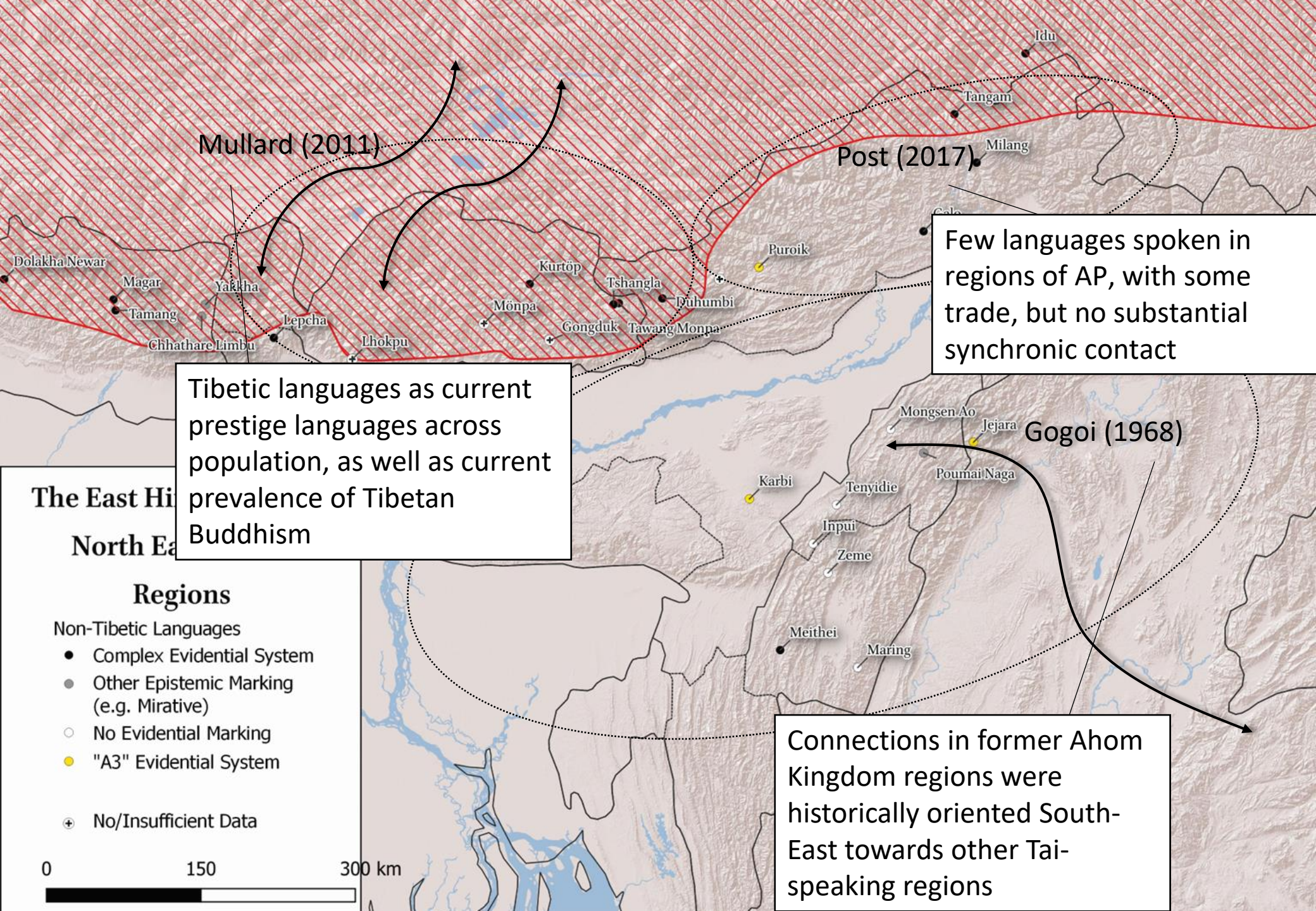
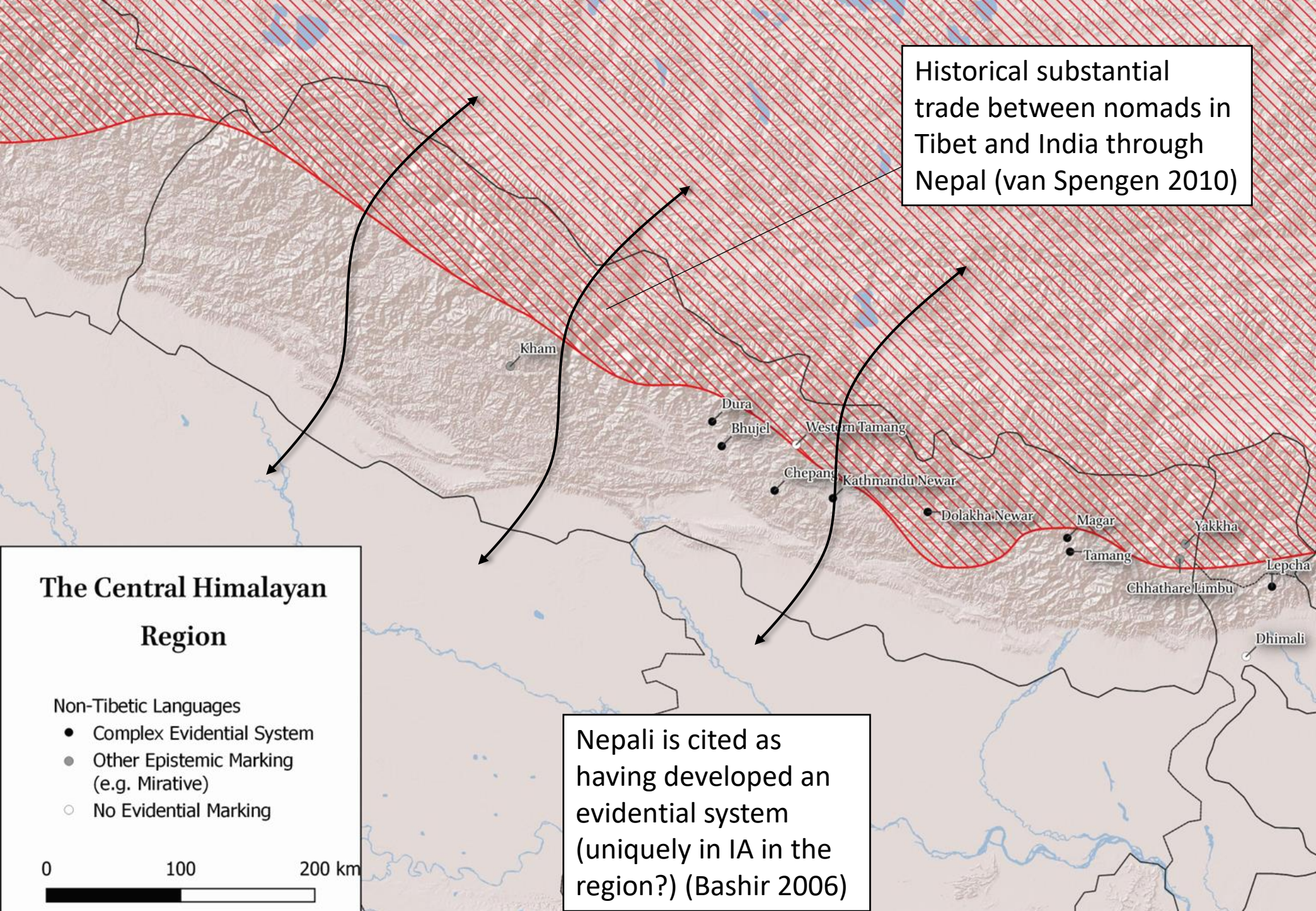
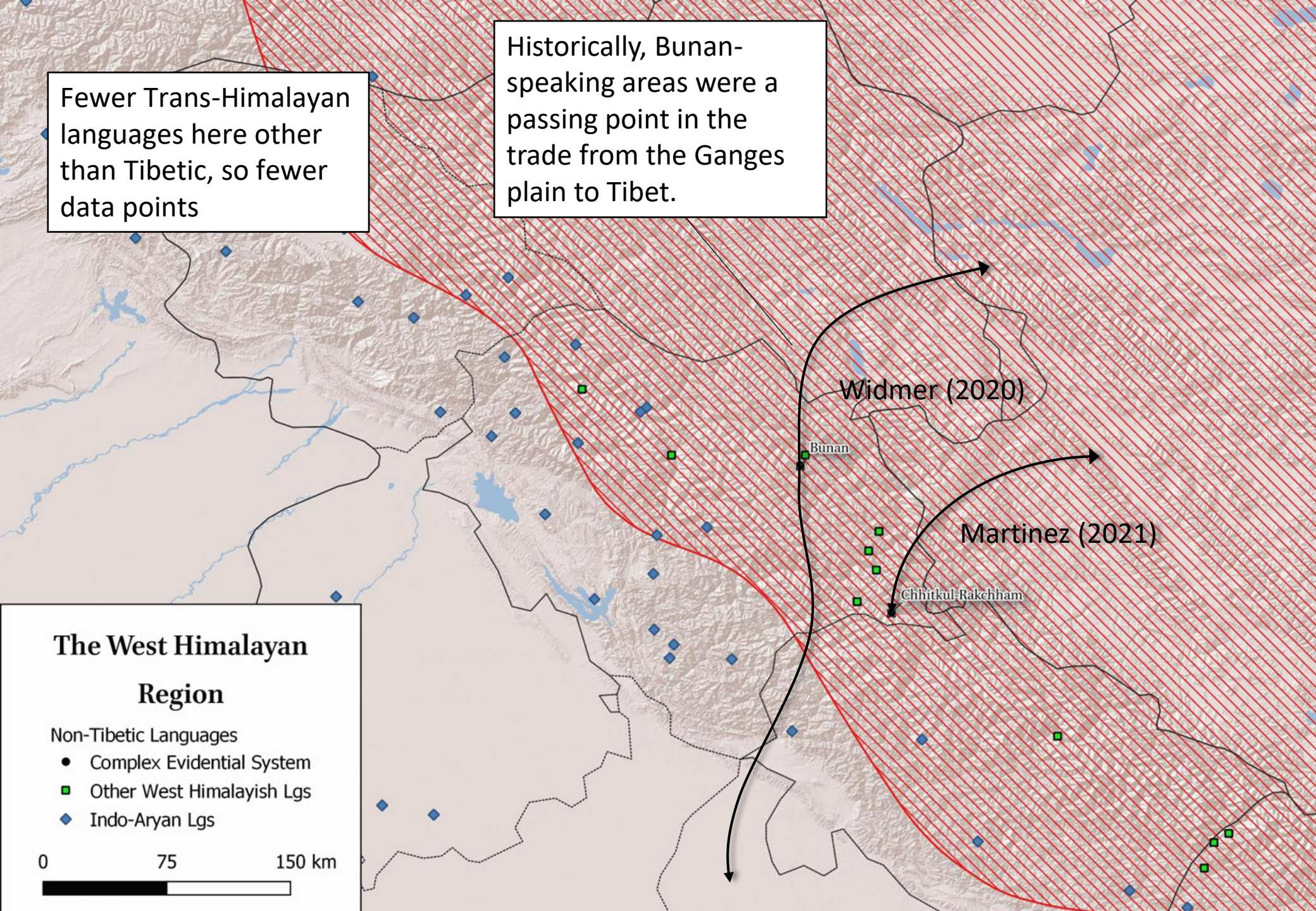
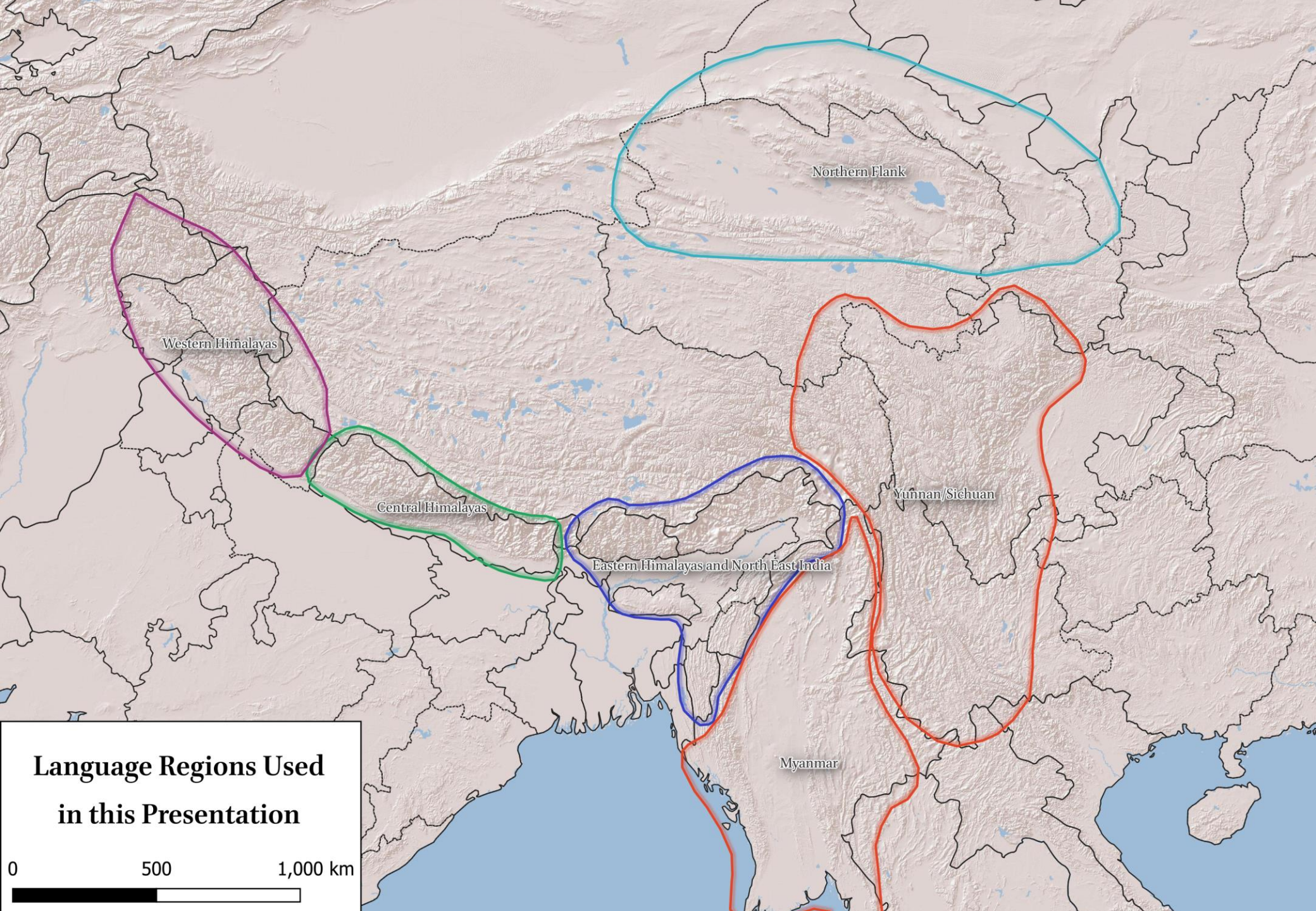
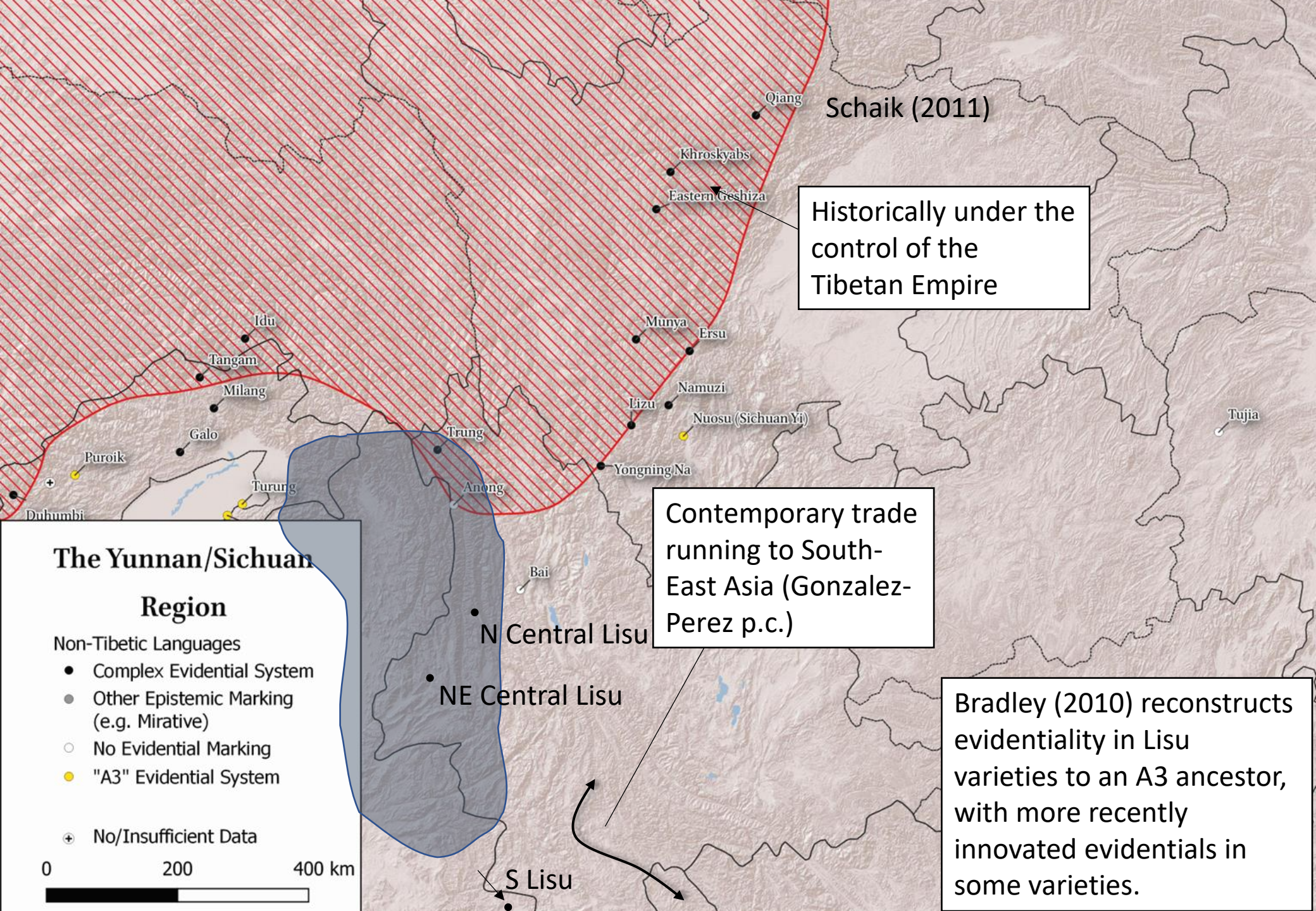

Northern Flank
Western Himalayas
Will be further subdivided
Central Himalayas
Eastern Himalayas and North East India
Yunnan/Sichuan
Myanmar
Language Regions Used
in this Presentation
0
500
1,000 km

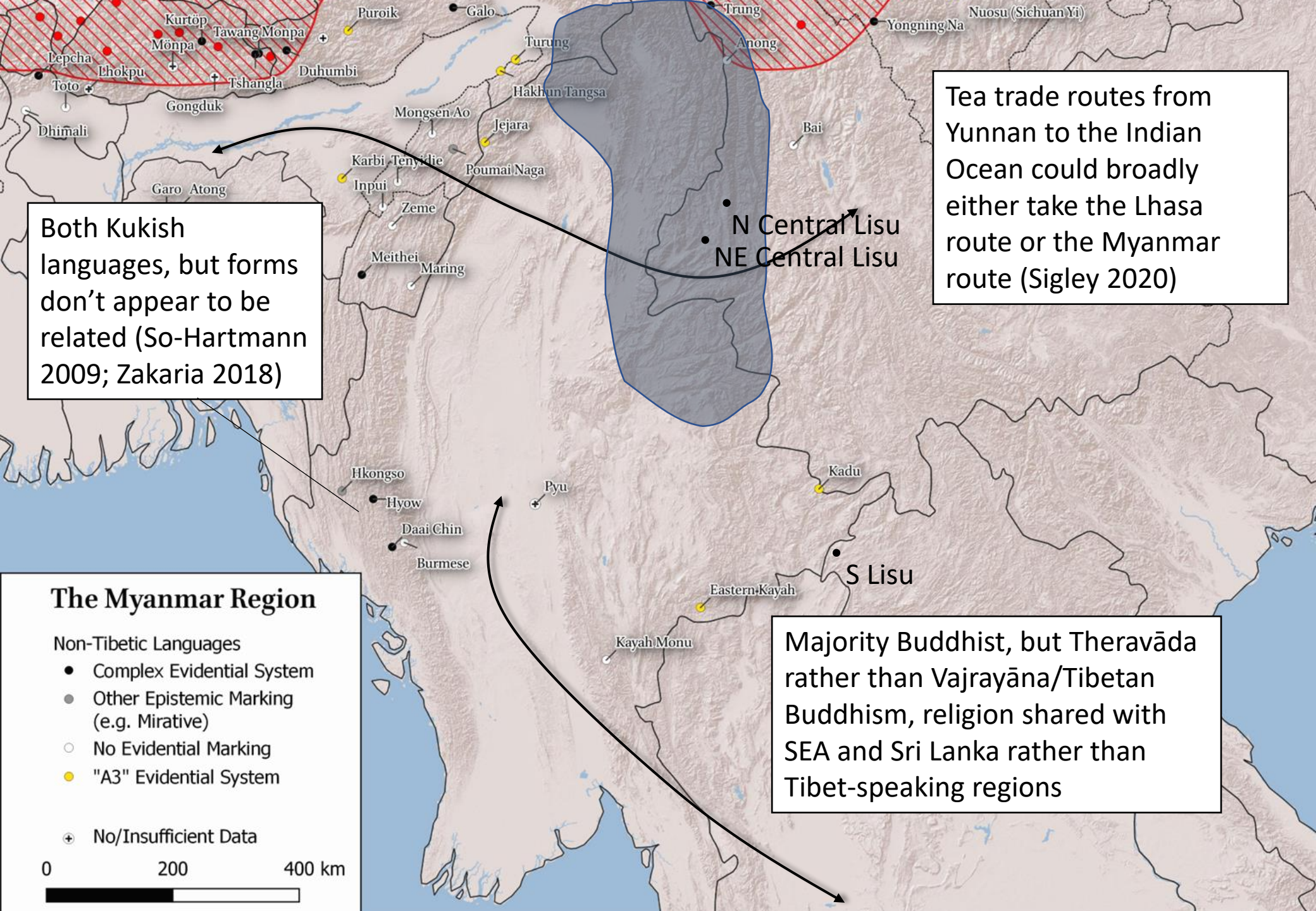

Mullard (2011)
Post (2017)
Gogoi (1968)
Few languages spoken in regions of AP, with some trade, but no substantial synchronic contact
Tibetic languages as current prestige languages across population, as well as current prevalence of Tibetan Buddhism
Connections in former Ahom Kingdom regions were historically oriented South-East towards other Tai-speaking regions
Idu
Tangam
Milang
Puroik
Dolakha Newar
Magar
Tamang
Yakkha
Chhathare Limbu
Lepcha
Lhokpu
Kurtöp
Mönpa
Gongduk
Tshangla
Tawang Monpa
Dudhumbi
Mongsen Ao
Jejara
Poumai Naga
Karbi
Tenyidie
Inpui
Zeme
Meithei
Maring
The East Hi
North Ea
Regions
Non-Tibetic Languages
Complex Evidential System
Other Epistemic Marking (e.g. Mirative)
No Evidential Marking
"A3" Evidential System
No/Insufficient Data
0
150
300 km


Historical substantial trade between nomads in Tibet and India through Nepal (van Spengen 2010)
Kham
Dura
Bhujel
Western Tamang
Chepang
Kathmandu Newar
Dolakha Newar
Magar
Tamang
Yakkha
Chhathare Limbu
Lepcha
Dhimali
The Central Himalayan Region
Non-Tibetic Languages
Complex Evidential System
Other Epistemic Marking (e.g. Mirative)
No Evidential Marking
0
100
200 km
Nepali is cited as having developed an evidential system (uniquely in IA in the region?) (Bashir 2006)


Fewer Trans-Himalayan languages here other than Tibetic, so fewer data points
Historically, Bunan-speaking areas were a passing point in the trade from the Ganges plain to Tibet.
Widmer (2020)
Martinez (2021)
Bunan
Chhitkul-Rakchham
The West Himalayan Region
Non-Tibetic Languages
Complex Evidential System
Other West Himalayish Lgs
Indo-Aryan Lgs
0
75
150 km


Northern Flank
Western Himalayas
Central Himalayas
Eastern Himalayas and North East India
Yunnan/Sichuan
Myanmar
Language Regions Used
in this Presentation
0
500
1,000 km


Schaik (2011)
Qiang
Khroskyabs
Eastern Geshiza
Historically under the control of the Tibetan Empire
Idu
Tangam
Milang
Galo
Puroik
Duhumbi
Turung
Trung
Anong
Munya
Ersu
Namuzi
Lizu
Nuosu (Sichuan Yi)
Yongning Na
Tujia
Bai
Contemporary trade running to South-East Asia (Gonzalez-Perez p.c.)
N Central Lisu
NE Central Lisu
S Lisu
Bradley (2010) reconstructs evidentiality in Lisu varieties to an A3 ancestor, with more recently innovated evidentials in some varieties.
The Yunnan/Sichuan Region
Non-Tibetic Languages
Complex Evidential System
Other Epistemic Marking (e.g. Mirative)
No Evidential Marking
"A3" Evidential System
No/Insufficient Data
0
200
400 km


Tea trade routes from Yunnan to the Indian Ocean could broadly either take the Lhasa route or the Myanmar route (Sigley 2020)
Both Kukish languages, but forms don't appear to be related (So-Hartmann 2009; Zakaria 2018)
Majority Buddhist, but Theravāda rather than Vajrayāna/Tibetan Buddhism, religion shared with SEA and Sri Lanka rather than Tibet-speaking regions
N Central Lisu
NE Central Lisu
S Lisu
The Myanmar Region
Non-Tibetic Languages
Complex Evidential System
Other Epistemic Marking (e.g. Mirative)
No Evidential Marking
"A3" Evidential System
No/Insufficient Data
0
200
400 km
Kurtöp
Tawang Monpa
Mönpa
Lepcha
Lhokpu
Toto
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Duhumbi
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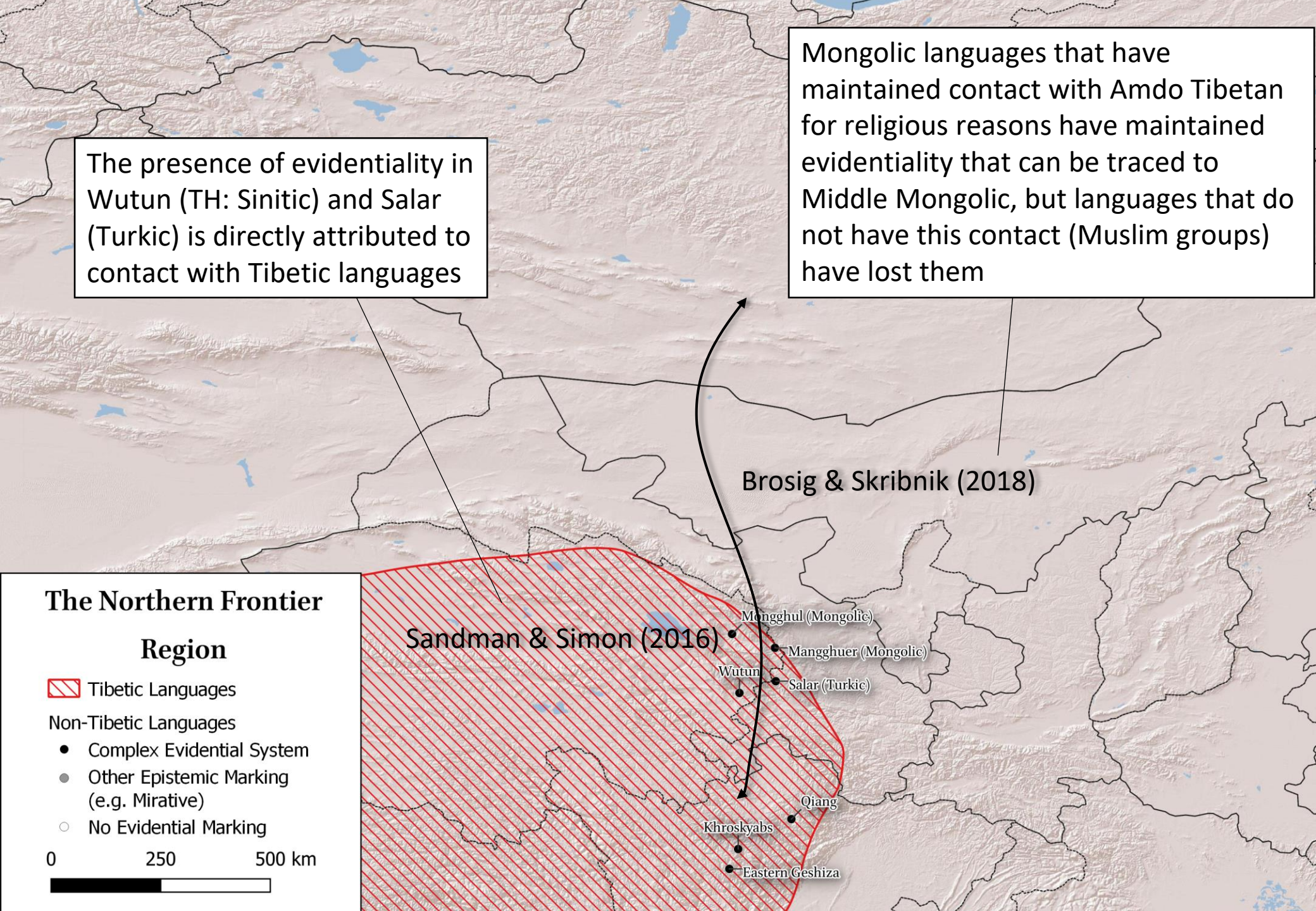
Hkongso
Hyow
Daai Chin
Burmese
Pyu
Kadu
Eastern Kayah
Kayah Monu


Mongolic languages that have maintained contact with Amdo Tibetan for religious reasons have maintained evidentiality that can be traced to Middle Mongolic, but languages that do not have this contact (Muslim groups) have lost them
The presence of evidentiality in Wutun (TH: Sinitic) and Salar (Turkic) is directly attributed to contact with Tibetic languages
Brosig & Skribnik (2018)
Sandman & Simon (2016)
The Northern Frontier Region
Tibetic Languages
Non-Tibetic Languages
Complex Evidential System
Other Epistemic Marking (e.g. Mirative)
No Evidential Marking
0
250
500 km
Mongghul (Mongolic)
Mangghuer (Mongolic)
Wutun
Salar (Turkic)
Qiang
Khroskyabs
Eastern Geshiza

Conclusions

- Broadly speaking, evidentiality is seen in areas with a history of contact with Tibetic languages
  - Forms are (to my knowledge) not shared between less related languages in my data, as would be expected with areal diffusion of evidentiality
  - Some key exceptions to this contact, namely Arunachal Pradesh, where contact has been minimal to non-existent (Mark Post, Yankee Modi p.c.)
    - Likely more exceptions at a smaller scale (i.e. singular groups that have had minimal Tibetic contact in contrast with regional trends)
    - Also see Daai Chin and Hyow, Meithei
  - Not to say that Tibetic first innovated evidentiality, but that it may have helped spread it
- Potentially more likely conclusion
  - Widespread evidentiality is inherited from Proto-TH and is regularly renovated
  - Areas with sustained contact with non-TH languages (e.g. Tai languages in the Indo-Burmese border region) have lost evidentiality.

Other considerations

- Time scale
  - The spread of the Tibetan empire began in the 7th century CE (van Schaik 2013)
  - If evidentials can be reliably reconstructed to earlier than this, they cannot have developed under Tibetic influence and must have either independently developed or been inherited (or some mix thereof)
- Multilingualism
  - Spread of evidentiality (and, likely, its loss) would require high levels of multilingualism in speakers
  - Is it possible to find evidence confirming or disconfirming this?
    - I don't know.
- Community size
  - Evidentiality is typically found in smaller communities (Aikhenvald 2004: 359)
  - Is the Tibetan Empire therefore precluded as a facilitator of the spread of evidentials?
- Shared forms
  - Direct borrowing of forms is rare
  - Many TH evidential can be reconstructed to a shallow time depth, suggesting that, if evidentiality is inherited, it is regularly and widely renovated
    - I don't know of any evidence for or against this
- A3 systems
  - How do the also widespread A3 systems fit into either of these models?

Questions for the Audience

- Time scale and shared forms
  - Can any evidential systems be reconstructed into protolanguages older than ~1500y b.p.?
  - Is there any clear direct borrowing, or clearly cognate evidentials between languages that aren't closely related?
- Multilingualism
  - What levels of historical multilingualism between Tibetic/non-Tibetic and TH/non-TH languages can be determined?

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Complex Evidential Examples

An ‘exemplary’ Tibetic system

ང་ཟ་ཁང་ལ་ཕྱིན་པ་ཡིན།

nga	*za.khang-la*	*phyin-pa-yin*
1.SG	restaurant-LOC	go-[EGO PAST]

‘I went to the restaurant.’

བཀྲ་ཤིས་ཟ་ཁང་ལ་ཕྱིན་སོང་།

bkra.shis	*za.khang-la*	*phyin-song*
Tashi	restaurant-LOC	go-[DIR PAST]

‘Tashi went to the restaurant.’ (Direct evidence)

བཀྲ་ཤིས་ཟ་ཁང་ལ་ཕྱིན་པ་རེད།

bkra.shis	*za.khang-la*	*phyin-pa-red*
Tashi	restaurant-LOC	go-[IND PAST]

‘Tashi went to the restaurant.’ (Inferential or hearsay evidence)

Complex Evidential Examples

A non-Tibetic ‘complex’ system that has likely had Tibetic influence (Western Munya, Qiangic)

rɔ́	*tɛ́-zɛ*	*tʰó-sə*	*ra*
snake	one-CLF:LONG	AS-die	EVID:DIRECT

‘The snake died.’ (direct evidence, watching the snake die)

rɔ́	*tɛ́-zɛ*	*tʰó-sə*	*sə*
snake	one-CLF:LONG	AS-die	PFV

‘The snake died.’ (indirect evidence, seeing a dead snake)

ŋʉ́	*ndɔ̋*	*ŋo*
1SG	go/1SG	EGO:SAP

‘I’m leaving.’ (example of egophoric form)

(Bai 2019: 241, 247)

Some notes on A3 systems

- Generally grammaticalised forms of a speech verb (e.g. ‘to say’)
- Used as quotatives or reportatives
  - Quotatives marking direct quotations (‘He said “I’m hungry”’)
  - Reportatives marking indirect quotations (‘He said he was hungry’)
- Quite common across the family too, often appearing in languages with evidential systems, as well as without
  - Pervasive enough, in my opinion, to warrant setting it aside as a potentially separate phenomenon
  - Difficult to claim it as inherited from a very early common ancestor as grammaticalisations are often recent enough to be easily identified as forms of contemporary verbs

A3 System Example

Karbi (Internal Isolate)

[...] la Bey Ke'et Bey Ronghang lapen Bey Ki'ik

[là	[[Bēy	ke-èt]	[Bēy	Ronghāng]	lapèn	[Bēy	ke-ìk]]
this	CLAN	NMLZ-be.yellow	CLAN	CLAN	and	CLAN	NMLZ-be.black

*atum angjirta do **pu***

a-tūm]	a-ingjìr=tā	dō	**pu**
POSS-PL	POSS-SISTER=ADD	exist	**quot**

'[...] That Bey the Fair, Bey Ronghang, and Bey the Black, they also had a sister, **it is said**.'

(Konnerth 2020: 560-561)

Kukish Evidential Systems

Daai Chin

- Direct evidential marked by word *vanikba* that appears to be combination of three separate particles (So-Hartmann 2019: 295)
  - Sometimes just =*kba*

Kah	*kho-dok*	*hin*	*nghlai=kti*	***vanikba****.*
POSS:1S	slipper	DEM	be.changed=NON.FUT	EVID

'My slippers have been changed!' (p.295)

- Inferential marked by *lek*

Kah	*ih*	*k'um*	*kho-aak*	*lo=kti*	***lek****.*
S.AGR:1S	sleep	SUBO:while	sky-rain	ASP:inc=NON.FUT	EVID

'It must have rained while I slept.' (p.296)

- Hearsay marked by *mjoh*, which does not fill the same syntactic slot as the other two

Tuh-ngooi:	*kah*	*pu*	*lo*	*hlü*	***mjoh****=kti.*
now-today	POSS:1S	father.in.law	come	PROSP	EVID=NON.FUT

Kukish Evidential Systems cont.

Hyow (Zakaria 2018)

- Sensory evidential clitic *=nú*

bɔ́hí=tsæ̂	*èy*	*khóytsíp-tsɔ̂*	*í-ní-pék-khɔ̂=də̂=nú*
SO=TOP	ANAPH.DEM	ring-DIM	3A-INV-give.II-PM=EMPH=SS.EVID

'So, she gave you that ring.' (p.486) (having seen the ring in person)

- Reported evidential clitic *=tî*
  - Clear grammaticalised form of verb *tî* 'be told', though this verb is rare on its own

èy	*shɔ́t-ə̂ng-bá-lá=tsæ̂*	*phúl-hlɔ̂=**tî***
ANAPH.DEM	cut.I-DUR-3SG-SEQ=TOP	bury.II-PM=R.EVID

'Having cut her [the woman], he [the king's son] buried her.' (p.488)

Reportative here as part of a narrative.

Challenges in Data Collection

- There are many other descriptions of Kukish languages that I don't have listed here
  - Shorter descriptions
  - PhD theses without the scope necessarily to describe a full evidential system
  - Harder to distinguish between 'no evidentiality' and 'undescribed evidentiality'
- Evidentiality is, however, rarely described in Kukish language grammars, from the theses I have access to
- This challenge broadly applies to NEI, though in other areas the greater problem is a general lack of description