

# Loanwords in Manange, a Tibeto-Burman Language of Nepal

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## 1. The language and its speakers

Manange, also known by its endonym variants *ɲjeshan*, *ɲjeshante*, or *ɲjanmi* ‘our language/our people,’ is a Bodish language of the Bodic subgroup of Tibeto-Burman. Alternative spellings in Cooke (1985 a, b, c) and in van Spengen (1987) include *Nyisang* and *Nyishang*, *Nyishangba*, respectively. It is grouped with other Tamangic (or "Gurungic" or "TGTM") languages: Nar-Phu, Gurung, Thakali, Tamang, Seke (Tangbe), Kaike, Gyalsumdo, and Chantyal (van Driem 2001; Bradley 1997; Noonan 2003c). The sub-grouping of Bodish within Tibeto-Burman (Sino-Tibetan) is shown in Figure 1.

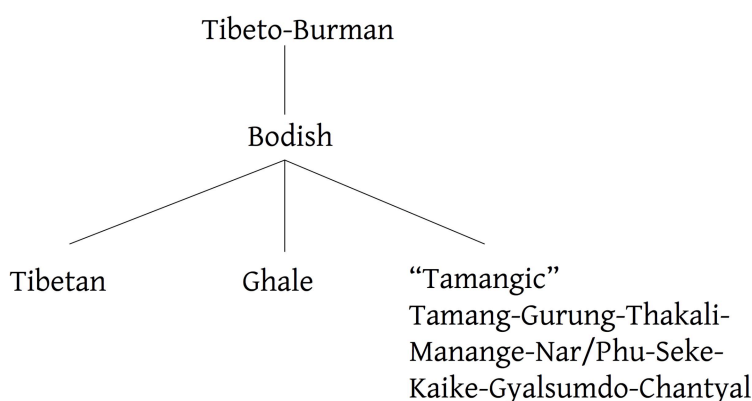
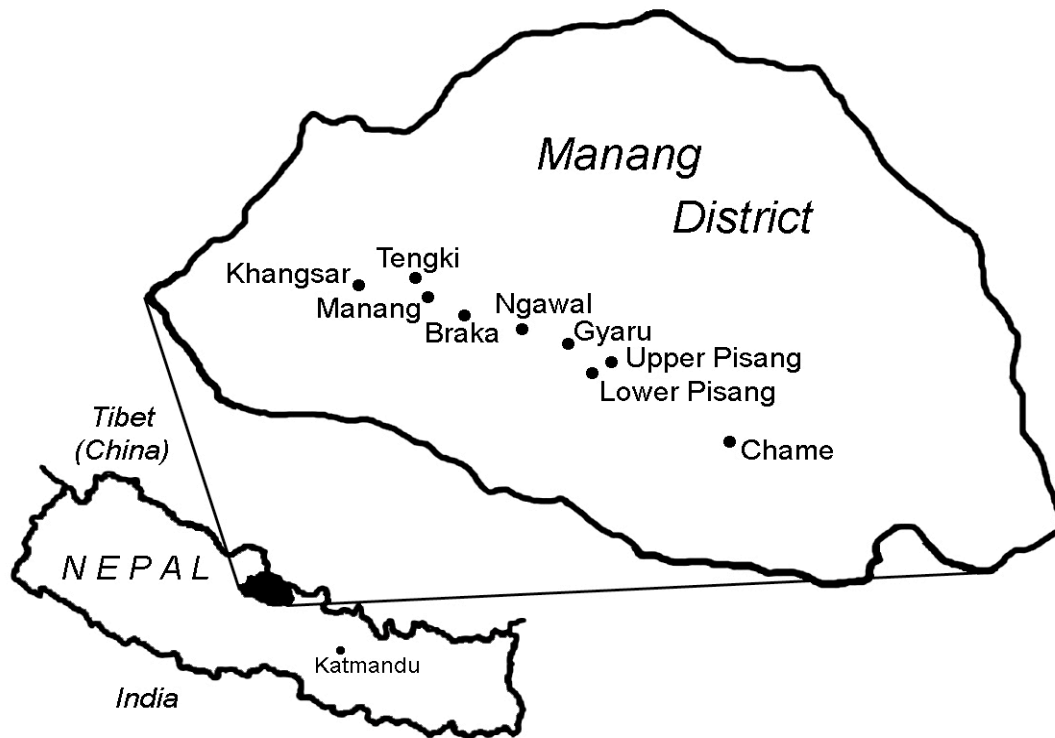


Figure 1. The Bodish Sub-Grouping

The Tamangic languages, of which Manange is a member, are most closely related to the Tibetan languages/dialects. Manange is spoken by members of a single ethnic group of between 3,000 and 5,000 people, located in the Manang district of northern Nepal. Geographically, Manang is known as the Inner Himalayan Valley, as it is surrounded to the south, east and west by the Annapurna mountain range. Map 1 illustrates the main villages where Manange is spoken.



Map 1. Location of Manang Languages

The Manang District is culturally and linguistically heterogeneous, divided into three ethnic group areas: Gyalsumdo to the south (where Gurung and Gyalsumdo speakers live), the high elevation Nar valley to the north (where Nar-Phu peoples live), and the upper *njeshan* valley (i.e. the Manang valley) in the west (Snellgrove 1961). Although Manange people are nowadays found in all portions of the Manang District, the *njeshan* valley is considered the traditional area of Manange habitation. Both Gurungs and Mananges (variably termed Manangis, Manangpas, Manangbas and Manangbhots) are the dominant ethno-linguistic groups of Manang.

In terms of endangerment, the Manange language can currently be considered as small but relatively viable, with some prospect for endangerment (using Kincade's 1991 terminology). Although the speaker population is under 5,000, there appears to be continued transmission of Manange to younger generations, despite displacement via emigration of some speakers from traditional Manang to urban Kathmandu generations ago (cf. section 2). Factors contributing to an observed small-scale shift away from Manange include the rise of access to formal education in Nepali, as well as the general prestige of Nepali in terms of socio-economic advancement. Factors contributing to retention include positive within-ethnic group identity and various prestige factors, including the comparative wealth and social status that Mananges have accrued as entrepreneurs. In comparison to the viability status of other geographically proximate Tamangic languages, like Nar-Phu and Gurung, Manange is somewhere in the middle, with the Phu dialect of Nar-Phu dwindling to perhaps a couple of hundred speakers, and the Gurung dialects totaling over 200,000 speakers.

## 2. Sources of data

Currently, two grammatical descriptions of Manange exist (Hoshi 1986b; Hildebrandt 2004b). In addition, there are two dictionaries (Hoshi 1986a; Nagano 1984). Other published accounts of Manange phonology and morpho-syntax include Genetti and Hildebrandt (2004), and Hildebrandt (2005; 2007a; 2007/forthcoming). Other related materials include several synchronic and diachronic analyses of Tamangic (including Manange) tone (Mazaudon 1977; 1978; 1988; 1996). Other geographical, religious and socio-cultural accounts of Manange life and the Manang area include works by Cooke (1985a; 1985c; 1985b), Gurung (1976), Pohle (1986; 1988), Snellgrove (1961), van Spengen (1987), and Watkins (1993; 1996).

The data for this project come from the above-named sources, and additional data were collected (and double-checks performed on existing data) during fieldtrips to Manang in 2004 and 2006.

In order to ascertain the history/origins of most data, the forms in the database were checked against the Etymological Dictionary of Nepali (Turner 1931) and a number of wordlists, glossaries and dictionaries of Tibeto-Burman languages (synchronic as well as etymological). The Tibeto-Burman sources include the *Handbook of Proto-Tibeto-Burman* (Matisoff 2003), which is a fairly comprehensive reconstructive account of Proto-Tibeto-Burman lexicon and (syllable) phonology, with additional information on links to Proto-Chinese and ancient loans from outside of the family (e.g. Proto-Austro-Tai). While the Handbook can be considered as an excellent, authoritative resource in many senses, it does have a couple of drawbacks for this project. One is simply that not all forms in this database are listed in the lexicon of the *Handbook*, due to various reasons. Thus, for example, meaning entries like nouns such as ‘lion’ and ‘waterfall’, and other more function-word-like forms like quantifiers ‘some’, are not contained in the *Handbook*, and as such, it is not possible to easily compare the forms in Manange to a possible source in Proto-Tibeto-Burman. Another gap comes from a comparative lack of etymological data from Bodish languages (aside from Written Tibetan) in the Handbook. This stems, at least in part, from an unfortunate, but chronic paucity of “large” (comprehensive) dictionaries of Bodish languages in general. Dictionaries of several Bodish languages (including Tamangic) do exist, and some are fairly detailed, but there are not always one-to-one matches between the meanings of this database and those listed in the different sources.

The data were also checked against several glossaries and etymological dictionaries for other Bodish and Tamangic languages, including Written Tibetan (Matisoff 2003; Goldstein 1984; Jäschke 1881), Thakali (Georg 1996), Chantyal (Noonan 2003a), Gurung (Glover 1977), Nar-Phu (Noonan 2001/2002), and Tamang (Mazaudon 1993-1994). In some cases, such checks identified fairly old loans. In other cases, matching forms were found in only one or two languages, resulting in a less certain decision on the borrowed status of a form. More is said on these observations in sections 3 through 7.

### 3. Contact situations

#### 3.1 *Contact with Nepali (Indo-European, Indo-Aryan)*

The history of language contact in Nepal is complex, and the results of this long-term inter-mingling of languages have had varying consequences on typological and genealogical features of different Tibeto-Burman languages located there. Noonan (2003b) charts the different types of grammatical borrowing in a number of Tibeto-Burman languages from different sub-phyla. Of the three main types of contact scenarios, the oldest situation is between Himalayish languages (including Kiranti, Kham, Magar, Chepang, Newar, and others), whose speakers have been long-time residents of Nepal. A more recent type of contact is between speakers of the Tibetan-type languages of the Bodish sub-group, including Manange (i.e. within-family contact). These peoples are more recent immigrants to Nepal, having migrated within the last two millennia, and occupying territories that are in close proximity. A still more recent, and different, type of contact situation in Nepal has been between speakers of Tibeto-Burman languages and Indo-Aryan languages, especially Nepali. Although Nepali was already well-established in western Nepal, there has been more recent contact of this third type in eastern and central Nepal. Now, as the influence of Nepali (and perhaps English) spreads throughout Nepal, cross-family contact is as (or more) likely as within-family contact.

In 1956, David Snellgrove, of the School of Oriental and African Studies, undertook a six month journey through Nepal to update map information originating from the Survey of India and to study Buddhist art and scriptures. He spent some time in the Manang District, and his observations provide an interesting take on the Manange language and society at that time. Snellgrove was initially intrigued by the lack of surprise displayed by Mananges when they first encountered him. He also noted that Manange youths “spoke Nepali willingly and fluently” (1961: 205). Added to this, Snellgrove noticed silks from mainland China and Singapore adorning the walls of local gompa buildings, suggesting some trade-oriented contact with other Asian peoples. Snellgrove soon learned that Mananges had significantly more contact with the world beyond the Nepalese borders than did many other indigenous groups, holding posts in the Indian Army and having unique travel rights to Malaysia and Singapore. Snellgrove’s observations are anecdotal evidence that the (intermittent) contact between Manange and other non-Bodish languages has been occurring for a long time.

In recent generations, it has become commonplace for many Mananges to migrate temporarily or permanently to the Kathmandu valley, or to lower elevations within Manang or Lamjung Districts during winter, to benefit from longer growing seasons and less harsh climates. In winters, women and children especially, stay in low elevation villages where Nepali is spoken, and men may travel to other regions in Nepal or to India (or beyond) for work (Rogers 2004). Although some people do remain in Manang year-round, this number seems to be declining as the years go by. As a result, for part of the year, many Mananges are surrounded by, and use, Nepali either in urban Kathmandu or in other lower elevation villages in Manang where Nepali-speaking communities (mainly Nepali-speaking Chhetris and Brahmans) are also located.

Another relevant factor for contemporary Manange language contact with Nepali is education (Hildebrandt 2003; 2004b). There is one school in each larger Manang village nowadays, and instruction is in Nepali (in fact, most schoolmasters

in these schools do not speak the local languages). In addition, a number of adults who live in Manang (traditionally men, but increasingly women too) have had some education either in Kathmandu or abroad. These opportunities for formal education have led to frequent and long-term contact with other languages, especially Nepali, Hindi and increasingly, English.

In the past twenty-five years or so, Manang has become something of a “tourist hot-spot” because the popular trekking route known as the “Annapurna Long Circuit” bisects the district. A tourist-driven economy has consequently emerged in Manang where wealthy Mananges build elaborate trekking lodges to host (mostly foreign) trekkers. Other related tourist-oriented businesses have grown in the area, including guided tour operations, porter services, trekking-gear shops, and even a solar-powered cyber-cafe, open in the main village of Manang during the high season. Some aspects of this new economy are grounded in Nepali language use (e.g. interaction with tour guides and porters), and so the economic benefit of speaking Nepali has grown there.

Not all Mananges benefit equally from this new tourist-oriented economy. Many Mananges still live traditional, subsistence-farming and husbandry-oriented lives, sometimes simply because they live in areas that are too far off the main trekking route to benefit from the tourist industry in the way that more strategically located residents can. These Mananges claim to use Nepali only sometimes, (e.g. with outside visitors), and speak Manange in all other situations.

The end result is that Nepali loans make up the majority of borrowings in this database, with over 90% of identified loanwords of Indic origin. These include words spanning multiple semantic fields, including words for the physical world, animals, food items, parts of the body, clothing and personal items, religion, and the modern world.

### 3.2 Contact with English

Because of similar tourist-economy factors, English has begun to spread rather sporadically as a minor lingua franca in Manang, due to the linguistic diversity represented by the trekkers (with language origins like Spanish, German, Dutch, French, Korean, Japanese, etc.). In most cases, basic business transactions between the tourists and Manange lodge or shopkeepers occur in English, with occasional bits of Nepali added. In general, the presence of English is limited enough that it has not had a significant influence on the structure of Manange (at least those Mananges living in the Manang District), but there does seem to have been the introduction of a handful of English words into the Manange lexicon (without obviously traveling via Nepali), including *plate*, *candy*, *pipe*, *petrol*, *government*, and *silk*. At least one of these, *ṣilik* ‘silk’, co-occurs with another (Nepali) loan, *resham*. In most cases, unless there is evidence otherwise, it is observed the influence of English is currently limited enough such that even loanwords that share a stronger-than-chance phonological similarity with English are assumed to be borrowed via Nepali, and not directly from English (e.g. Manange *sapi* ‘soap’ is assumed to be a loan from Nepali *sop*, even though it is probably a loanword in Nepali from English).

### 3.3 Contact with Tibetan or Other Bodish

Another observation is the recent immigration of certain Tibetan-speaking groups (e.g. Lhomi speakers) and other Manang peoples (e.g. Nar-Phu speakers) to the

Manang villages. They have come to Manang in search of better economic opportunity; they rent vacated (Manange-owned) houses and farm the land in a kind of share-cropping situation. Mananges report that these new residents adopt Manange for local use, or else use Nepali. My own (limited) interaction with these people has been in the Manange language, and not in their traditional languages, nor in Nepali. The phonological similarity and shared history of most meanings in Tibeto-Burman makes pinpointing loanwords a difficult task, and as a result, there are only a couple of words in this database suspected as possible Tibetan borrowings (coded under ‘perhaps borrowed’ in the database), including a directional word and a couple of suspected words relating to human states/conditions.

One speculation about the source of these suspected Tibetan borrowings could be the ongoing use of Tibetan in liturgical environments, as Buddhist activities in Manang communities are performed by lamas who speak Tibetan (or chant/read the language) in these contexts. However, the nine suspected Tibetan loanwords in this database are not of religious meanings, but rather express family relations, temporal notions, aspects of the modern world, or serve more interactional/discourse functions. This suggests that despite the continued exposure to Tibetan through religious activities, there has been little impact on the Manange lexicon in this way.

#### 4. Numbers and kinds of loanwords in Manange

The database for Manange contains a total of 1127 completed entries, and a total of 370 gaps, which are due to unknown forms, the irrelevance of the meaning to Manange speakers (i.e. with certain maritime meanings) and therefore a lack of a known lexical item, or else the lack of one dedicated form mapping to a specific meaning (e.g. kin terms in Manange have a high degree of age and matrilineal/patrilineal specificity, and as such, there are not dedicated words for ‘sister’, or ‘brother’, for example, in a general sense). Of the remaining 1127 filled meanings which have at least one form associated to them, 224 are ‘super-counterparts’, i.e. the same word applies to several meanings. As an example, the Manange form <sup>1</sup>sa applies to four meanings: ‘land’, ‘soil’, ‘ground’, and ‘water’.<sup>1</sup>

Of the coded forms in the database, 133 show varying degrees of evidence for loanword status. Of those forms with little or no evidence for being loanwords, many can be reconstructed back to Proto-Tamangic, the time of the establishment of Written Tibetan or to Proto-Tibeto-Burman (i.e. minimally back several hundred years, and maximally to around 4,000 B.C. Therefore, around 11.8% of the forms in this database are potentially or almost certainly loanwords. These suspected loanwords may be further subdivided in the database into ‘clearly borrowed’ (56%), ‘probably borrowed’ (9%), ‘perhaps borrowed’ (23%) and ‘little evidence for borrowing’ (12%). The decision to include a suspected loan in one of these sub-categories is based on a combination of factors, including phonological similarity to the suspected donor language, and/or the presence of the same (or similar) form as a loan in another Tibeto-Burman language. Another 334 entries are not noted as

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<sup>1</sup> Manange has four phonemic word-tones. The superscript numerals before words indicate the following tone (pitch) properties: /1/ low, level; /2/ high, level; /3/ very high falling; /4/ mid-falling. Additional details of the tone system are included in section 6. For some forms, the lack of a tone symbol means that the tone properties of this word are currently unknown.

known or suspected borrowings, but there exists so little comparative data that they are classed as ‘unknown’ in origin and age. More is said on some of these words of unknown origin in section 7.

It should also be noted that a very small set of loanwords in Manange (less than 5%) are probably of very recent entry into the language (probably within the past fifty years or so). In my work with both older and younger Manange speakers, who come from both urban and from rural environments, there is evidence in both the structure of the lexicon, and in the phonology and morpho-syntax, of recent and rapid contact-induced language change in one of two Manange communities (cf. 2003; Hildebrandt 2004b; 2007a). In some cases, older or more rurally based speakers recognize and use one form for a particular meaning, and this form shows little or no evidence of being borrowed. Younger/urban-based Mananges, on the other hand, sometimes recognize and use only a Nepali form for the same meaning. In such cases, this information is coded in the database as “Borrowed for all Mananges under 50 years of age”. When it so happens that younger/urban Mananges recognize only a borrowed form (to the exclusion of a non-borrowed form that older/rural Mananges recognize and use), then I have noted this in the database. These include forms listed in (1)

(1)

| <i>Form</i>  | <i>Source</i>   | <i>Meaning</i> | <i>Form, older/rural Mananges</i> |
|--------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------------------------|
| samundra     | Nepali          | sea            | kjʌmtso                           |
| koʈʰa        | Nepali          | room           | <sup>3</sup> tsʌpe                |
| boʈʌl        | English         | bottle         | various forms                     |
| pʌriwʌr      | Nepali          | family         | pʰope                             |
| ʃilik, reʃʌm | English, Nepali | silk           | kotʃẽ                             |

For forms coded in the database as “perhaps borrowed” or “little evidence for borrowing” there is some cross-over in terms of further source or certainty information. Some of these forms show some phonological resemblance to Nepali words (and no similarity to other forms attested within Tibeto-Burman), but the similarities are too tenuous to make a strong claim. Forms like this include *tʃipli* *tʃipli* ‘to blink’ (Nepali *cimlanu* ‘blink’), *tenʃi* ‘loom’ (Nepali *tan*), and (*ŋontse*) *ʰkrẽ* *ʰnokrẽ* ‘rib’ (Nepali *karan* ‘rib’). Other forms show some resemblance to other Tibeto-Burman (Bodish) languages, and so are either reconstructed back to a certain point, or else are within-family (or sub-grouping) loans. Examples include *ʰaku* ‘father-in-law, old man’ and *ʃiŋto* ‘fruit’. The number of cases like this is small enough that this does not affect the overall percentages and generalizations about loanwords in Manange.

In sum then, a total of 495 Manange forms (43.9%) have some historical-comparative basis on which to claim their non-loan status, and 162 forms (14.3%) in the database are shared with at least one other Tamangic language, with no obvious similarity to Nepali, and are therefore likely candidates for non-borrowed status if and when more information becomes available. Another 334 (29.6%) forms show no evidence of being borrowed with no other available information, while the other 133 forms (11.8%) are most likely loanwords (under the certainty groupings of ‘clearly’, ‘probably’, ‘perhaps’, and ‘little evidence’). The next two sections detail the loanwords by semantic word class and by semantic field.

#### 4.1 Loanwords by semantic word class

Table 1 shows the breakdown of loanwords into Manange by semantic word class.

|                        |         | <i>Nouns</i> | <i>Verbs</i> | <i>Adjectives</i> | <i>Adverbs</i> | <i>Function words</i> | <i>Total</i> |
|------------------------|---------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|----------------|-----------------------|--------------|
| <i>Source language</i> | Nepali  | 65           | 9            | 3                 | 0              | 2                     | 79           |
|                        | English | 6            | 0            | 0                 | 0              | 0                     | 6            |
| <i>Total Loanwords</i> |         | 71           | 9            | 3                 | 0              | 2                     | 85           |
| <i>Nonloanwords</i>    |         | 507          | 230          | 97                | 7              | 86                    | 927          |
| <i>Total</i>           |         | 578          | 239          | 100               | 7              | 88                    | 1012         |

Table 1: Loanwords in Manange by semantic word class (raw numbers)

Clearly, nouns are the most borrowed type of word class in Manange, with most borrowed nouns coming from Nepali. A few loaned nouns come from English, including *plet* ‘plate’, *kʰʌŋʈi* ‘sugar, sweets, candy’, and *paip* ‘smoking pipe’.

There is a comparatively smaller amount of loaned verbs (all from Nepali), which is typologically not very surprising, given that many languages borrow comparatively fewer verbs than other lexical classes. Those verbs that are borrowed have undergone a compounding adjustment to make them compatible with the verbal inflectional system in Manange. More is said about this in section 5.

Why are there so few loaned adjectives in these counts? There are in fact a number of loaned adjectives in Manange, but not all of these are contained in the database meaning list. Manange actually has two distinct classes of adjectives: a small (closed) class of ‘true adjectives’ and a larger (open) class of verb-like adjectives (Genetti and Hildebrandt 2004). The true adjectives are comprised mainly of color terms and a few other semantic types like physical dimension and quantification. The verb-like adjectives comprise multiple semantic types. They are similar to true verbs in Manange in that they inflect with a partial range of verbal inflectional and derivational morphology (e.g. they both participate in morphological causation, and verb-like adjectives take a limited range of verbal TAM morphology). However, unlike true verbs, verb-like adjectives (and also ‘true adjectives’), when in a noun-attributive function, show different word-order properties, as (2) shows:

(2)

True verb in nominal attributive (relative clause) construction (Hildebrandt 2004b: 60)

<sup>3</sup>ŋ<sup>w</sup>o-pʌ      ʃʌ      ʰtsʌ-tsi  
 fry-NOM      meat      eat-PERF  
 ‘I ate the fried meat.’



Verb-like adjective in nominal attributive construction (Genetti and Hildebrandt 2004: 90)

|                  |                         |                  |                      |
|------------------|-------------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| <sup>2</sup> kju | <sup>1</sup> thjΛ-pΛ=ri | <sup>1</sup> thě | <sup>1</sup> tΛ-tsi, |
| water            | big-NR=LOC              | throw            | become-PERF          |

‘(The ashes) were thrown in big water (like a river).’

Of the two types of adjectives in Manange, it is the ‘true adjective’ class that shows more loanwords from Nepal, keeping in line with the fact that verb-like lexical elements (i.e. both ‘true verbs’ and ‘verb-like adjectives’) in Manange in general show fewer loans than do other word classes as a whole.

There are only five adverbs included in the database, and none show evidence of being borrowed. In fact, there is no real evidence for a distinct class of adverbs in Manange, as most forms that express adverbial modification are either verbs with affixal morphology (e.g. <sup>1</sup>thjΛ-pΛ <sup>1</sup>lΛ-tse big-NOM do-CC ‘loudly’; <sup>3</sup>sΛ-ni <sup>1</sup>lΛ-pΛ good-ADV do-NOM ‘to love, or do nicely [by someone]’). Otherwise, co-called ‘adverbs’ are forms that also can function as nominal attributives (i.e. adjectives) without extra structural modification (e.g. <sup>3</sup>kini ‘quick, quickly’; <sup>4</sup>kole ‘slow, slowly’) (Hildebrandt 2004b: 117-120).

As for function words, two Nepali words have made their way into Manange: *ra* ‘and’, and *ho* ‘yes.’ The form *ho* is the third person identificational copula ‘be’ in Nepali (Acharya 1991: 162) and occurs in Manange to mark agreement in conversational contexts or, less frequently, as an affirmative response to a yes/no interrogative. Of the non-borrowed function words, many are reconstructed at least to Written Tibetan or else further back to Proto-Tibet-Burman. Around twenty function words in this database are of unknown origin, neither being obviously reconstructed to earlier points within Tibeto-Burman, nor clearly being borrowings. These include location words like <sup>2</sup>nepΛ ‘beside’, <sup>1</sup>thaj ‘outside’, quantifier words like <sup>2</sup>pe? ‘many’, <sup>2</sup>tore ‘some’, temporal words like <sup>3</sup>tosojre ‘immediately’, *tika* ‘sometimes’, and mind-thought words like <sup>1</sup>a-tΛ ‘no’. Further comparative research within Tibeto-Burman may identify these as cognate with similar forms in other related languages.

#### 4.2 Loanwords by semantic field

Table 2 shows the distribution of loanwords in Manange by semantic field.