



Som Bahadur Dhimal

Exploring The Relationship Between Language and Culture in Dhimal

Dissertation

Edited by Muhammad Wolfgang G. A. Schmidt



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EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE IN DHIMAL

A DISSERTATION

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The University of America, USA in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirement for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN LINGUISTICS

By

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EDITOR'S NOTE:

Figure 4 on p. 222 of this dissertation was taken from the following source:

<http://what-when-how.com/social-sciences/kinship-social-science/>.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation entitled **EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LANGUAGE AND CULTURE IN DHIMAL** submitted to the office of the Dean, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of Linguistics and Foreign Language Studies at International Faith Theological Seminary in collaboration with Salt Lake Bible College, The University of America by me for the partial fulfillment for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Linguistics is my own original work prepared under the supervision of my supervisors and guides. I have made due acknowledgements to all ideas and information borrowed from different sources in course of writing my dissertation. The results of research and study prepared in this dissertation have not been presented or submitted anywhere else for the award of any degree or for any other purposes. No part of the contents of this dissertation has ever been published in any form before. I shall be solely responsible if any evidence is found against my dissertation.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
LIST OF TABLES	xiii
FIGURES	xiv
MAPS	xiv
ABBREVIATIONS	xv
Abstract	xix
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. The Dhimal	1
1.1.1. The Dhimal Settlement	3
1.1.2. The History	7
1.1.3. The meaning of the "Dhimal"	10
1.1.4. The Traditional Institution and Customary Laws	12
1.1.5. Social Organization.....	13
1.1.6. The Population and Public Awareness.....	14
1.1.7. Social, Cultural and Economic Situations.....	17
1.1.8. Socialization Process	20
1.2. Statement of the Problems	22
1.3. Objectives of the Study	24
1.4. Research Methodology	24
1.4.1. Field Study Area	25
1.4.2. Research Design and Sampling	26
1.4.3. Tools	31
1.4.4. Analysis of Data.....	31
1.5. Significance of the Study	32
1.6. Ethical Consideration	33
1.7. Limitation and Achievement of the Study	33
1.8. Organization of the Study	34

CHAPTER TWO	38
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	38
2.1. Introduction.....	38
2.2. Dhimal Related Literature Review.....	41
2.3. Summary of Literature Review	53
CHAPTER THREE.....	62
ON THE ORTHOGRAPHY, MORPHOLOGY AND SYNTAX OF DHIMAL	62
3.1. Dhimal Orthography	62
3.2. Word Classes	65
3.2.1. Major Word Class	66
3.2.1.1. Nouns	67
3.2.1.2. Verbs	79
3.2.2. Minor Word Class	96
3.2.2.1. Pronoun	96
3.2.2.2. Preposition	103
3.2.2.3. Conjunction.....	106
3.3. Word Order	108
3.4. Simple Clauses and Simple Sentences.....	119
3.5. Copular clauses	122
3.6. Complex Clauses and complex sentences.....	123
3.7. Discourse Analysis	124
CHAPTER FOUR.....	136
DHIMAL CULTURE.....	136
4.1. Tangible and Intangible Culture	136
4.2. Dhimal Rituals.....	138
4.2.1. Birth.....	140
4.2.2. Bhendra.....	144
4.2.3. Marriage.....	145
4.2.3.1. Types of Marriages	148
4.2.3.2. Tying Relationship in between Parents-in-law	157
4.2.3.3. Marriage Day	159
4.2.3.4. Marriage Payment System	160

4.2.3.5.	Punishment and Fines	163
4.2.3.6.	Marriage miscellaneous	164
4.2.4.	Death.....	166
4.3.	Socialization.....	169
4.3.1.	Dhimal Festivals	169
4.3.1.1.	Sirjat (sirdzat) or Jatiri (dzatiri).....	170
4.3.1.2.	Parva	172
4.4.	Bansag^haka	172
4.5.	The Majhi Warang System	173
4.6.	K^han Practice.....	174
4.7.	The Religious Beliefs.....	175
CHAPTER FIVE	181
DHIMAL LANGUAGE SITUATION	181
5.1.	Dhimal and Language Situation	181
5.1.1.	Dhimal MT Publication.....	183
5.2.	Language Use	187
5.3.	Toponyms and Loconyms.....	192
5.4.	Western vs Eastern Dialect Variations	196
5.5.	Dhimal Mother Tongue Teaching	218
5.6.	Kinship in Dhimal	221
5.7.	Riddles, Sayings, Proverbs and Idioms	229
5.7.1.	Riddles.....	229
5.7.2.	Sayings.....	231
5.7.3.	Proverbs and Idioms	232
5.7.4.	Literature.....	233
5.8.	Language Trend	236
CHAPTER SIX	246
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LANGUAGE AND CULTURE	246
6.1.	Nepalese Constitutional Act	246
6.2.	Naming Culture.....	247
6.3.	Marriage Culture	254
6.3.1.	Rheka (Proposing to the girl)	255

6.3.2.	Bihai beheni dzorika (Joining the relationship between the boy's and girl's parents)	256
6.3.3.	Bihu b ^h atjar (the feast of the marriage).....	257
6.3.4.	Bihuko lok ^h an d ^h aba (marriage dress).....	257
6.3.5.	Kalja tsumpuka (the marriage procession)	257
6.3.6.	Kalja maisaka (the resting of the marriage procession).....	258
6.3.7.	Rit sosuka (cultural exchange)	258
6.3.8.	D ^h angai kija and Telhi kija Culture.....	260
6.3.9.	Bedangi (Farewell Program).....	266
6.4.	Death Ritual and Culture	268
6.4.1.	Dead requirement goods	268
6.4.2.	Burying the dead body.....	270
6.4.3.	Purification Process.....	271
6.5.	Cultural Festivals	273
6.5.1.	Chengcheng Bengbeng "t ^s en ₁ t ^s en ₁ beŋben ₁ le" or 'the t ^s en ₁ t ^s en ₁ beŋben ₁ song'	274
6.5.2.	Parva Festival	279
6.5.3.	Piya Bakhor (<i>pija bak^hor</i>).....	281
6.5.4.	Charbo Sayo Sayo (Song)	282
6.6.	Children Games and Songs	286
6.6.1.	Dzondzo lou lou.....	287
6.6.2.	kukuidza g ^h aka	288
6.6.3.	ləhəi ləhəi ləhəi.....	290
6.7.	Food Culture	292
6.7.1.	Collection of Foods.....	293
6.7.2.	Foods and Serving Culture	294
6.7.3.	Symbolic Meanings and Beliefs.....	296
6.8.	Songs, Dance and Musical instruments	297
6.8.1.	Poyāmari or Poyāpoka nhaka "pojā poka nhaka".....	298
6.8.2.	Satte Dha:teng Loka Dharma Raja "søtte d ^h aten ₁ loka d ^h ermə radza".....	299
6.9.	Worship Culture	303
6.9.1.	Internal Worship	303
6.9.2.	External Worship.....	305

CHAPTER SEVEN	317
FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION, IMPLICATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	317
7.1. FINDINGS.....	317
7.2. CONCLUSION	333
7.3. IMPLICATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	335
APPENDIX I : CULTURAL QUESTIONNAIRE.....	339
APPENDIX II: BASELINE INFORMATION	352
APPENDIX III: CROSS-CHECKING QUESTIONNAIRE.....	373
APPENDIX IV: BASIC VOCABULARY TEST	383
APPENDIX V: SWADESH 200 COMPARATIVE WORDLIST	390
APPENDIX VI: DHIMAL LANGUAGE ALPHABET CHART	399
APPENDIX VII: A PRACTICAL GRAMMAR OF THE DHIMAL.....	401
4.2 Case.....	420
6 Pronouns.....	430
6.1 Personal Pronouns.....	431
7.2.2 Ordinal Numbers.....	453
8.3 Possessors	471
8.4 Quantifier Phrases	474
8.5 Adjective Phrases.....	475
8.6 Prepositional and Postpositional Phrases	476
9 Verbs	480
9.1 Inflection Features	480
9.5 Auxiliaries.....	500
9.5.1 Auxiliar words	500
9.5.2 Nonfinite Auxiliary	502
10.2 Locative Adverbs	509
11.2 Complements other than Nominal Phrases	526
13.2 Intransitives and Motion Constructions	542
13.3 Transitives and Ditransitives.....	546
13.6 Subjunctives.....	552
13.9 Other Voice Changes	555
13.10 Causatives	557

13.11 Applicatives	557
14 Topic and Focus Constructions	558
14.1 Topics and Topic Markers	559
15.1.2 Embedded Clause Yes/No Questions.....	561
15.2 Content Questions	562
15.2.2 Embedded Clause Content Questions	564
16 Negation Constructions	565
16.1 Auxiliary and Verbal Negation.....	565
17 Coordination Constructions.....	573
17.1.3 Nominal Phrase Coordination.....	577
17.1.4 Adpositional Phrase Coordination	577
17.3 Appositives	580
19 Adverbial Clauses	587
19.2 Complements of Reason Adverbs.....	588
20 Relative Clauses	589
21 Texts	591
APPENDIX VIII: DEAD RITUAL SACRED VERSES.....	603
APPENDIX IX: RAJARANI GRAMTHAN DEITIES AND OFFERINGS	606
APPENDIX X: THE PARVA OR DEEPAWALI WORSHIP	607
APPENDIX XI: RIDDLES, SAYINGS, PROVERBS AND IDIOMS	608
APPENDIX XII: FIEDL COLLECTION	620
APPENDIX XIII : Myth I (Limbu and Dhimal)	622
APPENDIX XIV : SATYA RAJA AND SATYA RANI.....	622
APPENDIX XV: Major Evaluative Factors of Language Vitality	623
APPENDIX XVI: Indigenous Nationalities of Nepal and Organizations.....	627
APPENDIX XVII: Naming Cultural Story in Dhimal.....	631
APPENDIX XVIII: Sohorai-ko kaθa (The Story of Sohorai)	632
APPENDIX XIX: The "d^hols" Tunes and Styles	633
APPENDIX XX : Some Photos related to the Dhimal Communities of Nepal.	636

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Ten clans and subclans	8
Table 2 Key Informants for Field Work General Questionnaire Survey.....	26
Table 3 Key Informants for Field Work Baseline Information	27
Table 4 Major Interviewers on Overall Issues on Language and Culture	29
Table 5 Key Personalities for sharing folktales and myths related to language and culture of the Dhimals	30
Table 6 Dhimal Language Consonant Phonemes Chart.....	63
Table 7 Dhimal Language Vowel Phonemes Chart.....	65
Table 8 Types of Noun	67
Table 9 Some examples of Compound Nouns.....	69
Table 10 Human or living beings.....	76
Table 11 Making Plural for non-living or goods	77
Table 12 <i>Making plural by adding -suffix /-lai or -ai/</i>	77
Table 13 Making plural for uncountable nouns.....	78
Table 14 Lexical Verb/Main Verb	80
Table 15 Auxiliary Verbs.....	82
Table 16 Adverbs.....	90
Table 17 Personal Pronouns.....	97
Table 18 Reflexive Pronouns.....	98
Table 19 Post-positions in Dhimal.....	103
Table 20 Syntactic Roles	120
Table 21 Copular Clauses	122
Table 22 The Differences on Swadesh 200 Comparative Word List	199
Table 23 Some differences in western and eastern.....	202
Table 24 Entirely Different Words	211
Table 25 Singular, Dual and Plural Use.....	215
Table 26 Honorific in Dhimal	216
Table 27 Consanguineal relatives (DHIMAL)	223
Table 28 Affinal relatives (DHIMAL).....	224
Table 29 Dhimal Gadh Worship Deities.....	312

FIGURES

Figure 1 Genetic classification of Dhimal. Khatiwada, (2016: 3).....	2
Figure 2 Human Communication. Adopted from Givon 2001a: 43	125
Figure 3 Human Communication. Adopted from (Krishnaswamy N. and et al. 2000:103	126
Figure 4 Kinship Relations/ Source: google	222

MAPS

Map 1 The Dhimal ancient settlement districts: Jhapa, Morang and Sunsari, eastern Terai, Province No. 1, south-east of Nepal.	4
Map 2 The Dhimal settlement areas. The map is taken from (Rai, Tank Bahadur, 2017 : 52).....	5
Map 3 Dhimal language speaking areas in Nepal mainly Jhapa, Morang and Sunsari districts of far-eastern, Tarai, Nepal.	25

ABBREVIATIONS

AD	Anno Domini
BS	Bikram Sambat
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics
CDC	Curriculum Development Center
CDC	Curriculum Development Center
DEDCN	Dhimal Ethnic Development Center, Nepal
Dhi.	Dhimal
Eds.	Editions or Editors
Eng.	English
et.al	And others
EU	European Union
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FM	Frequency Modulation
HR	Human Rights
ICH	Intangible Cultural Heritage
ICH	Intangible Cultural Heritage
ILO	International Labor Organization
Ltd	Limited
MT	Mother Tongue
MTCN	Mother Tongue Center Nepal
MW	Majhi Warang
MWS	Majhi Warang System
Nep.	Nepali
NFDIN	National Foundation for Development of Indigenous Nationalities

OBC	Other Backward Castes
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
RMIT Uni.	Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University
SIL	Summer Institute of Linguistics
SOV	Subject Object Verb
TU	Tribhuvan University
TV	Television
UA	University of America
UN	United Nations
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
UNESCO	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USA	United States of America
UT	Utah
Vs.	Versus

Grammatical Abbreviations

The abbreviations used in the examples are:

1 First person

2 Second person

3 Third person

ABL ablative

ADJ adjective

ADVLZ adverbalizer

ALL allative

ASS	assertive
AUX	auxiliary
CAUS	causative
CIRC	circumlocative
CLF	classifier
COL	collective
COM	comitative
COND	conditional
CONR	contrastive
COP	copula
DAT	dative
DED	deductive
DIST	distal
DM	discourse marker
DU	dual
EMPH	emphatic
EXCL	exclamation
FOC	focus
FUT	future
GEN	genetive
HCLF	human classifier
IMP	imperative
INST	instrument

IPFV	imperfective
MIR	mirative
NEG	negative
NMLZ	nominalizer
ONOM	onomatopoea
OPT	optative
PART	particle
PFV	perfective
PL	plural
PROB	probability
PROH	prohibitive
PRS	present
PST	past
PURP	purposive
REDUP	reduplicative
REL	relinguitive/relative
SEQ	sequential
SG	singular
TOP	topic

Abstract

This research explores the relationship between language and culture of the Dhimal communities of Morang, Jhapa and Sunsari districts of Nepal by applying the mixed methodologies of qualitative and quantitative through ethnographic and linguistic analysis. The Dhimal cultural rituals; such as birth, marriage, dead, socialization, social festivals, the religious belief systems and the Majhi Warang System have been analyzed in culture and the orthography, word classes, language concerned to toponyms and loconyms, morphology and syntax, western and eastern dialect variations, kinship system, mother tongue situation and contribution, riddles, sayings, proverbs, discourse analysis, folk literature, language trend have been attempted to language.

The study has been categorized into seven chapters. Chapter one consists of introduction; two as the review of literature; three concerns on the orthography, morphology and syntax; four focuses on Dhimal culture; five covers the Dhimal language situations; six as the relationship between language and culture and seven consists of findings and conclusion, implementation and recommendation.

As the objectives of the study were to analyze the functional activities of the discourses in term of language and culture; to analyze the basic properties of syntactical structures; and to explore the present situation of Dhimal language and culture; and it would assist to understand the relationship in between the language and the culture of the Dhimals; transfer oral traditions and expressions of knowledge, cultural and social values and collective memory; bring awareness for safeguarding language and culture; demarcate the present situation of language and culture of the Dhimals; and would be useful not only for the Dhimals, but also for other who would like to extend their studies on language and culture as the achievements.

Key Words : Relationship, language and culture, mixed methodologies, ethnography, linguistics, discourse analysis, folk literature, Majhi Warang System.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Dhimal

With the establishment of National Foundation for the Development of Indigenous Nationalities (NFDIN) in 2002, indigenous peoples had a semi-autonomous foundation, with a governing council consisting of both government and indigenous people's representatives. There are 59 ethnic groups have been recognized by the state as indigenous in Nepal. As per the definition of the *NFDIN Act in 2002*, "Indigenous Nationalities" means a tribe or community as mentioned in the *Scheduled* having its own mother language and traditional rites and customs, distinct cultural identity, distinct social structure and written or unwritten history, distinct collective identity, own language, religion, culture and civilization, own traditional egalitarian social structure, traditional homeland and geographical area¹. The Dhimal is one of the indigenous group has the aforementioned features of its own.

Dhimal is one of the Tibeto-Burman languages spoken by the Dhimals residing originally in the far-eastern Tarai (i.e. Jhapa, Morang and Sunsari districts) of Nepal. According to the census report (2011), the total population of the Dhimal is 26, 298 which consists 0.09% of the total population of Nepal. This language is also spoken by a small number of people, known as Mallik, in Darjeeling district of West Bengal, India (King, 2009:2).

The Dhimal dialects can be divided into two dialects; they are separated by the *Kankai* river of Jhapa district as the center, the dialects spoken west to the river is western dialects and east to the river as eastern dialects. King (1994: 121) notes these two dialects differ primarily in

¹ (See: <http://www.nfdin.gov.np/securi/>)

syntax and vocabulary. Khatiwada (2016) has extended his study on morphosyntax that King had already made his study on the Dhimals.

Genetically, Dhimal belongs to the Tibeto-Burman family. The earliest genetic classification was made in Hodgson (1847). Toba (1999; 2002) and Dhimal Ethnic Development Center, Nepal (DEDCN) and its sisterhood organization *Saisik Jagaran Kendriya Samiti* (2062 BS or 2005) lay the foundation for making Dhimal dictionary in three languages: Dhimal-English-Nepali. The Dhimal language is unique in that it is one of the only Tibeto-Burman languages spoken in the Terai (Larsen & Williams, 2001:3). Eppele et al, (2012: 44) identifies Dhimal as Dhimalish of SAL group of the Tibeto-Burman languages of the Sino-Tibetan language family which is presented as below:

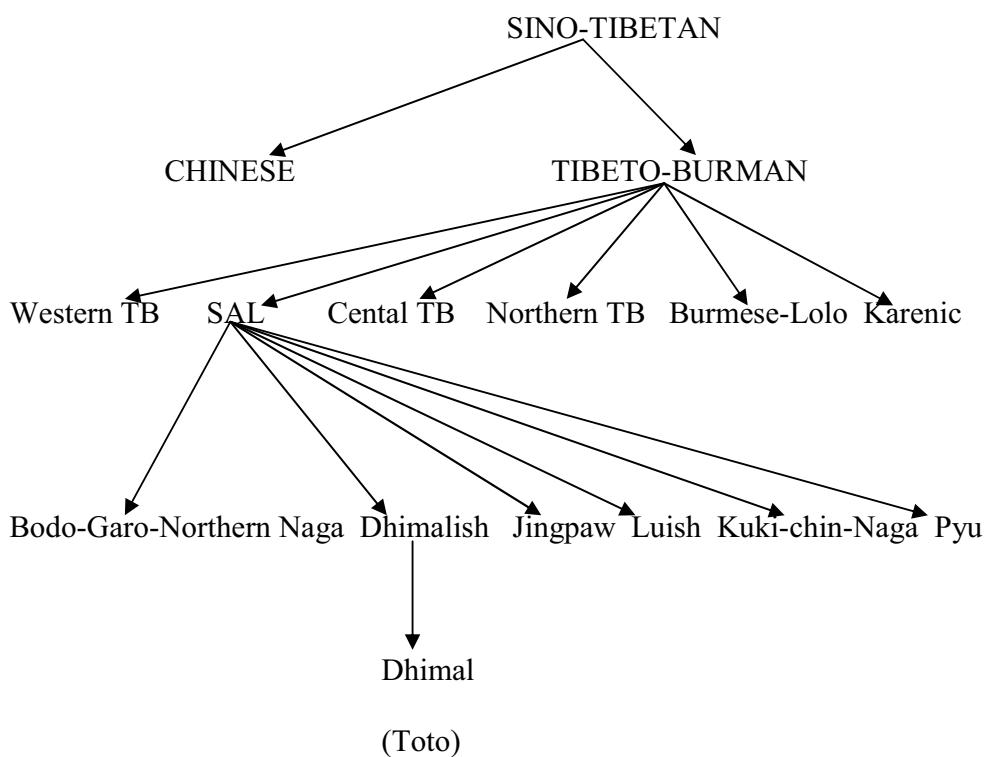


Figure 1 Genetic classification of Dhimal. Khatiwada, (2016: 3)

1.1.1. The Dhimal Settlement

The Dhimals' ancient settlement territories are present Jhapa, Morang and Sunsari districts of Nepal. But due to in search of opportunities, govt. job employment, business pursuit, migration; the Dhimals are now found in Ilam, Banke and Kathmandu districts as well.

The Dhimals inhabit the rich alluvial lowlands known as the Tarai between the Kosi and Tista rivers, adjacent to the Siwalik foothills of the Himalayas, the start of which for the northern border of the Dhimal settlements (King, 2009:5).

By nature, the Dhimals are nature lover and animistic; believe in nature, dead ancestral, and divinely powers. They believe in *tantramantra* and *shamanism*, where the *ojha* and *dhami* play the vital roles to perform such activities. The *ojha* is such a person who forecasts the diseases and heals with powers and local medicine, whereas the *dhami* is the person to conduct the worship in *Dhimal Gramthan* or deity temple. The *dhami* not only worships the deity temple but also binds the village with *tantramantras*² for welfare, peace and prosperity of the village. One small deity temple or "*Dhimal Gramthan*"³ is available north-east of the village, where they worship the divinely powers, dead ancestral, nature and so on once in every year. In past, they used to build houses in the village around the house of the village head, who is called "*the Majhi Warang*", either in square or in rectangular shape. They used to have a common courtyard in the center, where they used to perform different activities, ceremonies, such as marriage, sharing the experiences and the stories, etc. After having dinner and completion of their domestic chores, the village old men and women, and the village ladies and gentle men, children, youth used to sit around the bonfire and share the experiences of past gone days, life stories, different ups and

² A religious belief or charm of magic, treatise containing mystical formulas attaining supernatural powers.

³ A common deity temple of the Dhimal community, which lies north-east of the village and the common worship is performed by the *dhami* once every year in autumn season for village prosperity, peace and harmony, welfare, rain to get good production of crops, worship of the powers, be safe from plagues, drought, famine, natural disasters, etc.

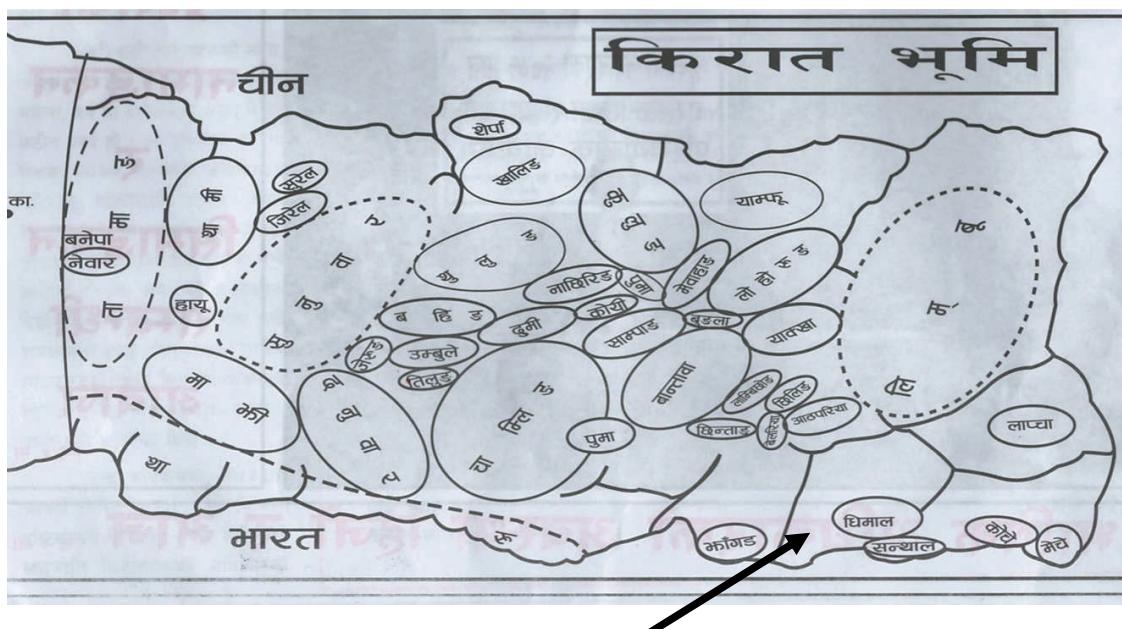
downs, and different walks of life one and another which used to be very educational, full of moral, a system of educating the children in the community, a free open system to train one and another, full of educational in the society (Dhimal, 2012: 65-66).

Generally, there used to be some trees, jackfruit trees, mango trees, tamarind trees, bitter bottle gourd trees, banana trees, berry trees, flower trees around the houses in the village. The tall "simal tree", footpath, dense bush, swamp land, canal, hill, forests, river used to be the border of one village and another to separate this from that. There used to be 3 to 4 houses to 20 to 30 houses as a small village, 20 to 30 houses to 40 to 50 houses as the middle village and 50 houses and above as the big villages(ibid.), such as now Nalbari 170 houses, Aathiyabari 160 houses, Karikosi 170 houses, etc as the big villages.



Map 1 The Dhimal ancient settlement districts: Jhapa, Morang and Sunsari, eastern Terai, Province No. 1, south-east of Nepal.

Regarding the Dhimal villages, there are *Salbari*, *Bhusi*, *Sunjhoda*, *Tinghare*(east), *Katahare*, *Thapadangi*, *Dumre*, *Tarabari*(A), *Tarabari*(B), *Sunapakuwa*(A) and *Sunapakuwa*(B) in Urlabari municipality; *Aambari*, *Durgapuri*, *Khaibatole*, *Bhingamari*, *Aathiyabari* and *Indrajhoda* Dhimal villages in Rajghat VDC; *Pathari*, *Ringuwa*, *Aayabari*(A), *Aayabari*(B) and *Kushe Sanishchare*, *Pangrejhalas*, *Jonghata*, *Titrijhank*, *Bhategauda*, *Dandagaun*, *Tilaijhar* in Pathari-Sanishchare municipality. *Itahara* village in Itahara VDC; *Madhumalla*(*Jharshanti*) and *Laxmijhar* in Madhumalla VDC; *Khorsane* and *Belaipur* in Koshi-Haraicha municipality; *Borabana* in Bayarban VDC; *Kalabajar* in Bahuni VDC; *Mattigaun*, *Jura*, *Bhaunne*, *Nalbari*, *Kakum*, *Small Baluwahi*, *Large Baluwahi* are in Dangihat VDC; *Doghare*, *Telkundi*, *Mainabari*, *Partaghari*, *Bhinda*, *Belbari*, *Tinghare*(west), *Dharara* in Belbari municipality; *Dumreghat*, *Keraun*, *Jahada* and *Dhapaun* in Keraun VDC; *Babiyabirta* and *Jamubirta* are in Babiyabirta VDC of Morang district.



Map 2 The Dhimal settlement areas. The map is taken from (Rai, Tank Bahadur, 2017 : 52)

Similarly, north *Nakalbanda*, south *Nakalbanda*, *Dhulabari*, *Aayabari*, *Ghodajin* are in Mechi municipality; *Dhaijan*, *Budhabare*, *Bodogaun*, *Lamasikari* villages in Handiya Budhabare VDC; *Anarmani*, *Arjundhara*, *Bhausabari* in Birtamod municipality; *Goldhap*, *Buttabari*, *Badakhal Gaun*, *Tridev*, *Bansbari*, *Baisabari* and *Tuthbari* in Shani-Arjun municipality; north *Kharkhare*, south *Kharkhare*, *Chadakpada*, *Adhiyamal*, *Jamujhar*, *Dapagachhi*, *Tarabari*, *Doghare*, *Buttabari*, large *Arnakhadi*, small *Arnakhadi*, *Barhaghare*, *Nalbari*, *Setumari* and *Pashuhat* are in Damak municipality. *Kartoli*, *Balubathan*, *Jharka*, *Laldhondra*, *Sonapur*, *Basanta Chowk*, *Bishnukatta* are in Lekhanpur VDC; *Jogichaun*, *Dahi Chowk* and *Bansabari* in Topagachhi VDC are in Jhapa district. *Hattileda* village is in Chulachuli VDC of Ilam district; *Itahari* and *Baukajhoda* are in Sunsari district. A few families are in Banke district and some families are in Kathmandu valley as well (*Birtamod Report, 2017*).

The Dhimals eastern part of the Mechi River, presently in Darjeeling district and West Bengal state, India started to write them as the "*Mallik*" when the then Bhutanese king and Government had handed them this post during that time to collect taxes in the areas because the Dhimals were physically strong and courageous to do this job that the areas were under Bhutanese Government. As they started to write "*Mallik*", they have not been categorized as tribal and scheduled caste but as OBC (Other Backward Castes) in India. As the Dhimals started to write them as the "*Mallik*" and continued it generation to generation, but they have been deprived of getting the opportunities of tribal facilities and now have been fighting for tribal enlistment since 29 years, Mr. Garjan Mallik says (Personal Talk, 2017).

The Dhimal autonomous area remains the north of second Hulaki marga⁴, Amardaha(Morang), Dhimaldhura(Jhapa), west from the Mechi River, east from the Saptakosi River and south from Sanguri bhanjyang, Ramite, Chure mountain (Dhimal, RP, 2017:69). The

⁴ The Hulaki road built by the government of Nepal.

Dhimal historical territorial settlements areas are *Letang, Bhogateni, Warangi, Dhimaldhura, Budhijhar, Laxmijhar, Tilaijhar, Nagardubba, Ra-sombri, Ra-dhampal, Bhundisimal, Damak, Urlabari, Madhumalla, Budhabare, Nakalbanda, Bindaha Portaghari, Belbari, Naisabari, Balai, Doholu* and so on (Dhimal, 2012: 8-9).

1.1.2. *The History*

The Dhimals were once nomadic hunters and practiced shifting cultivation (Larsen HJ & Williams, RG, 2001:1). The Dhimals, who seem fast passing away as a separate race, and whose numbers do not now exceed 15, 000 souls, are at present confined to that portion of the Soul forests lying between the Konki and the Dhorla or Torsha, mixed with the Bodo, but in separate villages and without intermarriage(Hodgson, BH, 1880:115). This shows that the Dhimals had close relationships with the Bodo and Kocch during that time, but they had system of marrying within their race and intermarriage was not accepted.

Ethnically, the Dhimals prefer to identify themselves as closely related to Limbus and Rais of eastern hilly region of Nepal. The Dhimals themselves would like to say them as *Kirati People*⁵ who have arrived in Nepal before 1000, might be before the arrival of *Aryan Group*⁶ (Diwas, 2039 BS:8). According to genealogical study, Kiratingwa had ten sons. The youngest son was Thandawa. The first son of Thandawa, Dhikompa's descendent is the Dhimals (Diwas, 2039 BS). The Dhimals claim their origin place as "Rajarani Bhogateni" of Letang, where they had a big Dhimal village and one "gramthan", common worshipping deity temple, but there is no Dhimal village at all at this present moment; where the Dhimals go to worship and conduct the

⁵ By nature, they are Indo-mongoloid and people of cis-Himalayan region of Indian sub-continent, short and fat, flat nose, thick lips, round face, dark-brown complexion, dense and coarse hairs, small eyes, thin eyebrows and eyelashes, very sparsely grown moustache, beard and hair on the body, long and thin ears, round chins and full cheeks, average in height, etc.

⁶ The noble group, noble class within the Indo-Aryan culture, long pointed noses, slim and tall, quite different from kirati group in physical bodies and more.

fair on *Baishakh 2*, every year as per the Nepali calendar. There is magar ethnic community now. After completion of this fair which is called, the "*Jatiri*", each and every Dhimal village conducts their "*Sirjat*" or "*Jatiri*" in their villages one after another before Asar 2 (Field Survey, 2017).

It is believed that it has been one thousand years of separation from Kirati brothers of the Dhimals, settled down in dense dark forests of the Terai land in Nepal. As per the song goes: "*djalon̄ aba-ko te-mi tsan-gelai lo-nhahi*" means "four fathers' ten sons we arrived", which is sung during the marriage day ceremony. As per the saying of the olds, the Dhimals came from the ravine of the Arun and the Tamor Rivers called "*dasbhāntza*", so they had been separated into ten clans. The Dhimals had been separated into ten clans and sub-clans as per the following table.

Table 1 Ten clans and subclans

<i>Clans</i>	<i>Sub-clans</i>
Ding /din̄/	<i>Rajding, Dingjal, Ding Dhimal, Muling ding</i>
Donge /don̄ge/	<i>Lasingdunge, Simaldonge, Sajhadonge, Suddhadonge, Suryadonge, Sridonge, Sajdonge, Rajsridonge, Ra donge, Kusyardonge, Rajdonge, Rajkaser donge, Ding donge.</i>
Dongya /don̄gja/	<i>Hardiya dongya, Nuniya dongya, Matteri dongya, Raj nuniya dongya, Ding dongya, Yongyang dongya, Raj dongya, Ra dongya, Laxmi dongya, Kusyar dongya, Muling dongya, Hardiya nuniya dongya.</i>