Picking up where Hodgson left off: Further notes on Dhimal

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1. INTRODUCTION

Dhimal[1] is a Tibeto-Burman (TB) language spoken natively by about 35,000 people of the same name in the lowlands of southeast Nepal (Jhapa & Morang districts). In the areas Dhimals inhabit, they make up about 10% of the population. There are also a few communities in the adjoining areas of West Bengal, India where they go by the name of Malik. The language can be divided into two major dialects separated geographically by the Kankai Mai river system: the eastern and western. The western dialect is primarily spoken in about 44 villages, while the eastern dialect is only spoken in about ten. These two dialects differ primarily in syntax and vocabulary, though variations in pronunciation can be heard even within the same village. Dhimal also has the distinction of being the only TB speech community, with the possible exception of Mech, indigenous to the lowlands of Nepal.

Although there has been much research on the Himalayan languages of Nepal, Dhimal has received scant attention. Languages spoken in the Nepali lowlands have not merited the same focus as those in the hill regions. This academic marginalization can be attributed in part to the allure of the Himalayas and the corresponding lack of interest in the peoples and languages of the lowlands. In addition, researchers, in an attempt at reconstructing Proto-Tibeto-Burman, have been more attracted to the conservative complex pronominalized languages of the hills. Studying the Dhimal language, however, will allow linguists to sort out the historical spread of TB languages in this region and contribute clues to the puzzle of pronominalization. An in-depth investigation will also establish Dhimal's genetic relation to other TB languages and determine paths of interaction and influence among the lowland peoples of Nepal and the adjoining areas of India. The following article, based on three years of living in a Dhimal community, will make a step in that direction.

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[1] The Nepali anthropologist Regmi (1985) postulates, quite fancifully, that the etymology of the ethnonym Dhimal stems from the Sanskrit-based word *himal* meaning 'place of snow'. Dhimal (1992), on firmer ground, cites a mythical ancestor named *Dhekokpa* who was stranded in the lowlands, thereby founding a new people and lending the first part of his name to his progeny. Dhimal (1992) also ties the Dhimal word *dhe* 'split' into the equation.

2. LINGUISTIC CLASSIFICATION

Brian Hodgson (1847) is the sole Westerner to investigate and publish an account of Dhimal (eastern dialect). Though he didn't concern himself with classifications, succeeding scholars have used his linguistic sketches to postulate the genetic relationship of Dhimal to other TB languages. Because of the paucity of research on Dhimal and the difficulty of easy classification, linguists have tried lumping it in with a variety of subgroups. Grierson and Konow (1903-28) classify it under the Eastern Subgroup of Complex Pronominalized Himalayan languages. Shafer (1955, 1966) and Egerod (1974) group it in with the unclassified Bodic languages. Benedict (1972) places it without justification in Abor-Miri-Dafla—though distant from the nucleus. Voegelin & Voegelin (1977), on the other hand, classify it eclectically under the Eastern subgroup of Gyarung-Mishmi. Considering the unsettled state of TB studies, Ruhlen's (1987) classification of Dhimal (along with Toto) as a subgroup under Tibetic appears to be one of the most organic and prudent.

Dhimals have been influenced culturally and linguistically by peoples speaking diverse languages. From having been near the front lines of Hindu expansion, Dhimals have experienced centuries of Indo-Aryan linguistic influence—mostly in the form of word borrowing. It is uncertain, however, to what extent they were historically influenced by the formerly Baric-speaking Koch or the Morangiya Tharus, whose original language is unknown. It is unlikely that the Austroasiatic-speaking Santals have had much effect on Dhimal since they have only lived in southeast Nepal since the 1920s. Linguistically, Dhimal is related, though mutually unintelligible, to the Rai, Limbu, Newar and other Bodic languages spoken in the hills of Nepal. It shows strong lexical links with these languages, while sharing few morphological patterns. Dhimals recognize these ties and consider themselves younger brothers of the Rai and Limbu, though this may be a result of their former subjugation by these groups in the 18th century. Culturally and linguistically, however, Dhimals have been more heavily influenced by and feel more akin to neighboring lowland indigenous groups such as the Bengali-speaking Rajbangshis to the east and the Maithili-speaking Tharus to the west.

3. LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL PRESERVATION

Historically, Dhimals occupied one of the most fertile, yet dangerous and unhealthy, regions in Nepal. Until malaria was eradicated in the early 1950s, they lived a largely autonomous existence as agriculturists. Since then, massive inmigration of people from the hills and felling of the Sal forests have turned Dhimals into a 'backward' minority group. In the process, they have lost

much of their original land. In many villages, about 60% of Dhimals are landless or near landless, forcing many to seek work in Kathmandu, India, or even in the Gulf States. These socioeconomic stresses have put great pressure on Dhimal cultural traditions. Since the advent of democracy in 1990, Dhimals have joined the struggle for linguistic and cultural survival along with many other indigenous groups of Nepal. Most Dhimals are bilingual to varying degrees in Nepali (women less than men), which has supplanted Maithili and Bengali as the major source of loan words. In 1993, the Dhimal Development Center in Damak, Jhapa was formed to champion the socioeconomic betterment of Dhimals. This organization, which is the sole representative of Dhimals above the village level, has made efforts to limit this linguistic borrowing and promote the use of 'traditional' Dhimal words where possible. In the last couple years the Dhimal Literature Sociey, based in Duhubi, Sunsari district, has published several short stories dealing with socioeconomic problems facing Dhimal society and works of poetry using the Devanagari script. Still, not all these publications have been wholeheartedly accepted by the Dhimal community due to the authors' often heavy-handed use of Sanskrit-based loan words, which even an uneducated native Nepali speaker would have difficulty understanding.

4. SYNTAX, PHONOLOGY, AND MORPHOLOGY OF DHIMAL (WESTERN DIALECT)

4.1 Syntax

Dhimal is an atonal, postpositional language with agglutinative morphology. In common with most TB languages, its syntactic structure consists of subject-object-verb. It employs a nominative-accusative topic marking scheme. Verb conjugation follows, with the exception of the honorific, simple subject agreement rather than a split ergative pattern. In addition, there is no trace of the pronominal prefixes such as are found in the neighboring East Himalayan languages. The subject or agent, because it is reflected in the verb, is often ellipted in a process known as 'zero pronominalization'. Likewise, the patient or object, which is often implied or understood from context, may be dropped: *capihi* '(he) ate (it) up'. In Dhimal, the verb and its modifiers come at the end of a clause. The verbal phrase consists of a verb or verbs, verb-like morphemes expressing tense or aspect, a pronominal morpheme, and particles. Demonstratives, genitive phrases, relative clauses, and noun phrases precede the modified. The agent and genitive phrases often come at the end of the sentence as a sort of afterthought, perhaps being related to the phenomenon of pronominalization. The most common order of elements before the verb is agent-beneficiary-patient. The beneficiary marker *heng* or *seheng* (used only with pronominals) is suffixed to nominals. The genitive suffix *ko* is sometimes

omitted when the relation is clear: *saqko liqta* > *saqliqta* 'inside (of) the house'; *nelaiko dera* > *nelai dera* 'your (pl.) village'.

Aside from using the question words (*hai* 'what', *hiso* 'whither', *hasu* 'who', *hesa* 'how', and so on) or rising intonation, there are several ways to ask a question in Dhimal. The first involves the use of the tag question word *ma*, which is tacked on to the end of a declarative sentence. The user of this type of construction expects an affirmative response: *kaseheng na dopha amrika cumpuana, ma?* 'you're going to take me to America with you, right?'. Another common method used to construct an interrogative sentence is to place contrasting affirmative and negative statements back to back: *cur amana ma-amana* 'do you want to smoke a cigarette or don't you?'.

4.2 Phonology

Dhimal is rich in consonant phonemes (33) and permits a variety of syllable-final consonants, including *m*, *n*, *ng*, *r*, *l*, and a glottal stop (written "q"). That the glottal stop may be an unreleased *t* is evidenced by future tense verb forms: *themli* 'to be enough' > *themang* 'will be enough' vs. *doqli* 'to say' > *doqtang* 'will say'. Some verbs, however, which don't end in a glottal stop, exhibit what may be an atrophied syllable final *k* when followed by a vowel: *loli* 'to come' > *lowang* 'will come', but *bholi* 'to look for' > *bhokang* 'will look for'.

All the consonants except for *q* and *ng* can appear word-initially. Some retroflex phonemes also exist in words borrowed from Indo-Aryan languages, but are used irregularly. Some older loans, after being adapted to the Dhimal phonological system, are difficult to detect. There is an areal tendency for *ch* to become *s*, also occurring in the variety of Nepali spoken in eastern Nepal and in the Bengali spoken in northern West Bengal. Traces of a former aspirated voiceless affricate *ch*, however, can be found in the pronunciation of some Dhimal speakers. The aspirated voiceless velar plosive *kh* has a velar fricative allophone [x]. Consonant clusters, although not common, do occur due to compounding, elision, and word borrowing. Except for the aforementioned cases, the only permitted medials are *y* and *w*. In the village where I conducted research, there was a good deal of variation in pronunciation among different families: *elong* 'one' vs. *enong*;[2] *dopha* 'with' vs. *dokha* and *dosa*; *lekhara* 'butt' vs. *lesara*; *jamal* 'child' vs. *jambal*; *camindi* 'daughter' vs. *camdi* . While some of these differences were accepted variations, others were considered idiosyncratic peculiarities prevalent among certain groups. The frequency of this occurrence may be due to the fact that founding families were from different dialect areas. Because neighborhoods in Dhimal villages tend to be made up of clusters of

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2   The variety of Bengali spoken by Rajbangshis also confuses *l* and *n*.

houses of related families (who also tend to take brides from areas of origin), these distinct pronunciations continue to be maintained.

Dhimal Consonant Phonemes

p	t		k	q
ph	th		kh	
b	d		g	
bh	dh		gh	
		c		
		j		
		jh		
	s		sy	h
v				
m	n		ng	
mh	nh			
	l			
	lh			
	r			
	rh			
w		y		
wh		yh		

Vowel Phonemes

i		u
	e	o
	a	
	au, ai, oi, ui, eu	

In comparison to the wealth of consonant phonemes, the number of vowel phonemes seems impoverished. There are five vowel phonemes in Dhimal (the schwa being rare) and five diphthongs. With the exception of the glottal stop, vowels become lower or more lax in closed syllables, especially those ending with a nasal. Diphthongs occur only in open syllables and there is a strong tendency for words to be stressed on the initial syllable. Nasalization of vowels, although common enough, is not a distinctive feature of Dhimal.

Assimilation and dissimilation in Dhimal is not widespread. The velar nasal *ng* and dental nasal *n* become labialized before labial plosives: *khangli* 'to watch' > *khampili* 'to watch for'. In rapid speech, infinitival verbs ending in *ngli* assimilate and simplify to *ni*: *khangli* > *khani*, *nangli* > *nani*. A velar nasal followed by a vowel also dissimilates to *n* before a suffix containing -*ng*: *khanang* 'will watch'.

The Devanagari script, adapted by Dhimals for writing their language, has enough built-in flexibility to represent all the phonemes of this TB sound system. The only Dhimal phoneme not covered by this script is the glottal stop. Devanagari, however, does have a separate set of letters for word initial vowels and it is these letters which are conscripted for duty as glottal stop markers.

Lastly, although Dhimal is an atonal language, it is nevertheless richly intonational. The use of intonation along with particles adds depth and subtlety to an utterance, bringing in undertones of irony, disbelief, sarcasm, wonder, and so on.

4.3 Morphology

Nominals in Dhimal include adjectives, adverbs, pronouns, and nouns. Many nouns, adjectives, and adverbs derive from verbs by way of suffixation. The nominalizing suffix *ka* is affixed to a verb stem to create a nominal, which can also be used as an adjective. Nominal plurals are created by using the suffix *gelai*,[3] though this is sometimes shortened to *lai*: *khiya* 'dog' > *khiyagelai* 'dogs'; *dhimal* > *dhimalai* 'Dhimals'. Adverbs are constructed simply by suffixing *pa* (sometimes *pha*) to a verb or nominal stem: *belompa* 'late' (*belom* 'to be late' + *pa*); *makiqpa* 'unwillingly' (*ma* 'negative prefix' + *kiq* 'to want' + *pa*); but *rempha* 'well'. Dhimal distinguishes eleven pronominal categories: 1, 2, and 3 persons singular *ka*, *na*, and *wa*; dual *kidhimi*, *nidhimi*, and *odhimi*; plural *kelai*, *nelai*, and *obalai*; and a 1 p. and 2 p. honorific *kya* and *nya*. The 3 p. contains proximal and distal forms for both singular and plural: *ya*, *wa* and *ebalai*, *obalai* respectively. The 2 p. pl. *nelai* is often used singularly to indicate politeness. Pronominals make no sex distinctions.

Grammatically speaking it is difficult to distinguish between adjectives and verbs. First, most adjectives are derived from verbs and have a corresponding conjugated form: *remka wajan* 'good boy' vs. *wajan remkhe* 'the boy is good'. Second, both are negated by the same particle *ma*: *maremka dyang* 'bad person' vs. *ingko dyang maremkhe* 'that person is bad'. Third, the same nominalizing particle *ka* used to create adjectives also subordinates a clause: *maika dyang* 'a tired person' vs. *anji syika dyang* 'the person who died yesterday'. Subordination of clauses through the use of this nominalizing suffix is common. Moreover, as nominal heads they can be pluralized and take case endings: *kharka* 'cryer or crying'; *kharkalai* 'cryers'; *babarkalaiheng* 'to the big shots'.

Dhimal has a productive compounding process to create bi- and polymorphemic words. Affixing, compounding, and reduplication represent the major derivational processes. Compounding may be coordinate or attributive. Coordinate nouns include *aba-amai* 'parents' (*aba* 'father' + *amai* 'mother'); *bai-one* 'sisters' (*bai* 'older sister' + *one* 'younger sibling'); *leka-beqka* 'music' (*leka* 'singing' + *beqka* 'drumming'). Examples of attributive compounds include *bhemti* 'sweat' (*bhem* 'heat' + *ti* 'liquid'); *bejan* 'girl' (*be* 'female' + *jan* 'youth'); and *misyā* 'eyeball' (*mi* 'eye' + *syā* 'seed'). Compounding can occur through

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3   *Gelai* appears to be a loan from Bengali which has *gulo* as a plural suffix.

verbal strings: *cali pali te mathemkhe* 'it's not even enough to survive' (*cali* 'to eat' *pali* 'to do' te 'emphatic particle' *mathemkhe* 'doesn't suffice'). Noun-verb compounds also form a rich source of expressions: *nhapu taqli* 'to save face' (*nhapu* 'nose' + *taqli* 'to put'); *ni calhali* 'to be quiet and desolate' (*ni* 'day' + *ca* 'take' + *lhali* 'to go'). Nominal compounds often require the genitive suffix *ko* : *mhaigelaiko kiyam* 'scorpion' (*mhaigelaiko* 'witches' + *kiyam* 'crab').

Three kinds of reduplication occur in Dhimal: reduplication of the base form without change; rhyming; and ablauting reduplication. Reduplication of the base intensifies the meaning: *alopa* 'slowly' > *alolopa* 'very slowly'; *phirli* 'to shiver' > *phirphiraili* 'to quiver, shimmy'. Many adjectives and verbs consist solely of a reduplicated form: *malamalaka* 'fragrant'; *gupugupukhe* 'it's warm out'. Some adjectives (possibly borrowed from Maithili or Bengali) change the first letter of the reduplicated form to *m*: *khijirimijirika* 'rough'; *tetemeteka* 'tight'. The diminutive affix *co* is almost always reduplicated, *khapa* 'bitterly' > *khacocopa* 'bitterishly'; *ika* 'red' > *icocoka* 'reddish'. Ablauting reduplication, primarily used in the totalizing construction verb + *teng*, intensifies the meaning: *khanteng* 'having seen ' > *khanteng khunteng* 'after having seen'; *piteng* 'having given' > *piteng pateng* 'after having given'; but also *mi dhuteng* 'having washed the face' (*mi* 'eye') > *mi dhuteng ma dhuteng*.

Verbs, the meat of a Dhimal utterance, are inflected for agent, tense, mode, and aspect. Many pronominal morphemes used to indicate agent have fused with the tense morpheme: *hanekheka* (*hane* 'go' *khe* 'simple indefinite' *ka* '1 p.') > *hanekha* 'I go'. In the past, *hanehika* > *hanegha* 'I went', and *hanehina* > *hanenha* 'you went' vs. *hanehi* 'he/she/they went'. The 3 p. always takes a zero agentive morpheme and therefore, the verb always agrees with person but not necessarily number: *hanekhe* 'he/she/they go(es)'. The 1 p. pl. is unusual in that the pronoun *kelai* is not reflected in the verb as is the case in 1 p. and 2 p. singular: *kelai haya mangli hanenhakhe* 'we're going fishing' (*kelai* 'we pl.' *haya* 'fish' *mangli* 'to catch' *hanenhakhe* 'go 1 p. pl.'). The 2 p. pl. is distinguished from the singular by the addition of the morpheme *su* (the *u* is often elided): *bona thirka paisa hai paskhena?* 'what do you do with the money you earn weaving?' *bona* 'female wrap' *thirka* 'weaving' *paisa* 'money' *hai* 'what' *pasukhena* 'do 2 p. pl.').

At least in its verbal morphology, the western dialect of Dhimal is more conservative (and hence of more interest to the diachronically inclined) than the eastern dialect presented by Hodgson, which shows extremely simple subject agreement. The western dialect, on the other hand, has two forms that deviate from the others in the verbal conjugation paradigm. The 1 p. pl. morpheme *nha* bears no resemblance to the independent pronoun *kelai*, while the 2 p. pl. morpheme *na* is related to its corresponding pronoun *nelai* only in

so far as *nelai* is probably derived from *na*. *Nha* doesn't belong to the same morphological series as the others because it occupies the slot anterior to the *khe* affix, while the other forms in the paradigm follow it. The 2 p. plural is marked by a distinct and separate morpheme *su*. This morpheme is undoubtedly cognate to the Proto-Kiranti dual marker *ci, now reanalyzed as a morpheme which doesn't distinguish between duality and plurality. These two forms are in marked contrast to the others in the paradigm and represent archaic features of the Dhimal conjugation system.

A synchronic analysis of the Dhimal verbal paradigm turns up another vestige of a more elaborate system. The honorific form reflects an older, more complex conjugation pattern. The honorific is used by a man when speaking to his in-laws, and the reflex of the honorific 2 p. pronominal *nya* is suffixed to the end of the verb phrase: *gora amli kera caghanyo* 'I swore off drinking alcohol' (*gora* 'alcohol' *amli* 'to drink' *kera* 'oath' *ca* 'take' *gha* '1 p.-past' *nyo* '2 p. honorific reflex'); *kya damak hananyo* 'I will go to Damak' (*kya* '1 p. honorific' *damak* 'Damak' *hana* 'will go' *nyo* '2 p. honorific'). The morpheme *nya* is cognate to the Proto-Kiranti 1 p.→2 p. patient *nya. The ritual importance of the relationship between in-laws has resulted in the preservation of a conjugation pattern that was discarded in all other social situations. The form as it is now used in Dhimal, however, is merely a fossilized shadow of a time when the patient was reflected in the verb.

The perfect and pluperfect tenses are formed with the nominalizing aspectivizer *ka* and an auxiliary verb *hili* 'to be' (or *manthu* in the negative). The perfect uses the past of the auxiliary, whereas the pluperfect uses the imperfect: *hiso hiso higilka hinha?* 'where all have you travelled?' (*hiso hiso* 'where all' *higil* 'travel' *ka* 'nominalizing aspectivizer' *hinha* 'be 2 p. past'); *ancang inta haneka manthughakha* 'I hadn't gone there before' (*anca* 'before' *ng* 'emphatic particle' *inta* 'there' *hane* 'go' *ka* 'nominalizing aspectivizer' *manthu* 'negative copula' *ghakha* 'imperfective aspectivizer 1 p.').

The reciprocal/reflexive morpheme, which has as cognates the Limbu *sing* and the Bahing *si*, is *su: cerli* 'to be mad' > *cersuli* 'to quarrel or argue'. This morpheme occupies the slot directly posterior to the verb stem and anterior to any tense morphemes or aspectivizers: *pheqli* 'to beat' > *pheqsugilnhahoi* 'we already went around fighting' (*pheq* 'beat' *su* 'r/r morpheme' *gil* 'chase' *nha* '1 p. pl. reflex' *hoi* 'finish').

The future and conditional markers are *a(ng)* and *dha(ng)* for 1 p. and 3 p. singular/plural, and *ana* and *dhana* for 2nd person. Only the 2 p. is distinctly marked in these verb tenses: *loang* 'I'll come, we'll come, he/she/they'll come', but *loana* 'you'll come'; *na dopha bihu padhang* 'I, we,

he/she/they would marry you' (*na* 'you' *dopha* 'with' *bihu* 'wedding' *padhang* 'would do'). First person singular, however, does have optional morphemes of *angka* and *dhangka*: *loangka* 'I'll come'; *padhangka* 'I'd do (it)'. The conditional phrase is often preceded by a subordinate clause expressing contingency : *kaseng cumpunute, um gapidhang* 'if you were to take me, I'd cook for you' (*ka 1 seng* 'to' *cumpu* 'take' *nu* 'if' *te* 'having' *um* 'rice' *ga* 'cook' *pi* 'give' *dhang* 'would').

Some other common particles affixed to the verbal phrase that subordinate a clause are *lau, laubung*, and *na*. The particle *lau* sets off a temporal clause: *udini athiyabari hanelau khining ninggha* 'only while going to Athiyabari the other day did I get it' (*udini* 'day before yesterday' *hanelau* 'while going' *khining* 'just' *ninggha* 'got 1 p.'). The particle *laubung*, which can be translated as 'even though' or 'although', signals a concessive clause: *kaseng na insika one doqlaubung, cer matampang* 'although you say that I'm that kind of brother, I won't get mad' (*kaseng* 'to me' *na* 'you' *insika* 'like that' *one* 'younger sibling' *doqlaubung* 'even though say' *cer* 'anger' *matampang* 'will not raise'). The third particle *na* begins a causal clause: *sita hili mon majenang kodala phateng deraso bahar olhegha* 'because I didn't feel like staying home, I shouldered the hoe and left the village (*sita* 'home' *hili* 'to be' *mon* 'heart' *ma* 'not' *jeng* 'be' *na* 'because' *ng* 'emphatic particle' *kodala* 'hoe' *phateng* 'having shouldered' *dera* 'village' *so* 'from' *bahar* 'outside' *olhegha* 'came out-1 p.').

Verbal inventory is expanded through the use of aspectivizers, in addition to the lexicalization of complement + verb constructions, compounding, and borrowing. The imperfective aspectivizer *gha* indicates habitual action or action occurring in the past without regard to its completion. *Gha* generally co-occurs with the simple indefinite aspectivizer *khe*: *jamalai dhaqta ghaghakhe* 'the kids were playing on the porch' (*jamalai* 'kids' *dhaq* 'porch' *ta* 'on' *gha* 'play' *ghakhe* 'imperfect 3 p.'); *odoi kam palau, kathmandu highakha* 'while doing that work I lived in Kathmandu' (*odoi* 'that' *kam* 'work' *pa* 'do' *lau* 'while' *hi* 'live' *ghakha* 'imperfect 1 p.'). The terminative aspectivizer *hoi*, from the verb *hoili* 'to finish', denotes action already completed: *ci amli kiqhoigha* 'I'm thirsty' (*ci* 'water' *amli* 'to drink' *kiq* 'want' *hoi* 'finish' *gha* '1 p. - past'); *darhi bhasaqli dohoi, beq mabhokhena?* 'your beard has already grown, aren't you looking for a wife?' (*darhi bhasaqli* 'to have a beard' *do* 'to be finished' *hoi* 'already' *beq* 'wife' *ma* 'negative prefix' *bhokhena* 'look for 2 p. - simple indefinite'). The aspectivizer *dong* indicates sustained action, action that is ongoing within a certain time frame: *dhoko phudongkhe* 'she's carrying a basket on her head' (*dhoko* 'basket' *phu* 'carry on head' *dong* 'sustained action aspectivizer' *khe* '3 p.-simple indefinite'); *warang liqpang kam padongghakhe* 'the old man was working all day' (*warang* 'old man' *liqpang* 'all day' *kam* 'work' *pa* 'do' *dong* 'aspectivizer' *ghakhe* 'imperfective-3 p.'). The totalizing aspectivizer

te(ng) signals a gerundive construction: *makhalai duhubiso colteng cumanhahi* 'we bought mussels and brought them from Duhubi' (*makhalai* 'mussels' *so* 'from' *colteng* 'having bought' *cuma* 'bring' *nhahi* '1 p. pl.-past'); *narata jimteng hihi* 'they are asleep in the hay' (*nara* 'hay' *ta* 'in' *jimteng* 'having fallen asleep' *hihi* 'be 3 p. past').

Two productive aspectivizers are the benefactive/dimittive aspectivizer *pi* and the causative aspectivizer *pa*. *Pi*, derived from the verb *pili* 'to give', denotes doing something for someone or less commonly the dispatching of action: *dinggilpiyangka* 'I'll send someone for you'; *ingko khiya waseng ciqpihi* 'that dog went and bit him'. *Pa*, from the verb *pali* 'to make or do', can be affixed to most any verb to create a causative: *awaili* 'to hesitate or be puzzled' > *awaipali* 'to lead astray or mislead'; *cali* 'to eat' > *capali* 'to feed'. An older unproductive form from the Proto-TB directive suffix **t* can be seen in a few pairs: *syili* 'to die' vs. *syeqli* 'to kill'; *pili* 'to give' vs. *piqli* 'to sell'. For verbs borrowed from Indo-Aryan languages, the stem of the causative ends in *ai*: *bāceli* 'to survive' > *bacaili* 'to save'. Occasionally, two forms exist side by side though sometimes with slightly different meanings: *bujhaili* and *bujhepali* 'to explain'; but *syipali* 'to finish up, "kill"' and *syeqli* 'to kill'.

Dhimal also has several directional aspectivizers that impart a sense of motion to the verb. The directional aspect marker *gil*, derived from the verb *gilli* 'to chase', denotes indeterminate motion: *cagildongkhena* 'you are going around eating' (*ca* 'eat' *gil* 'chase' *dong* 'continuous marker' *khe* 'simple indefinite' *na* 2 p.'). The aspectivizer *pu* signifies movement away: *nangko amai hetathekapa sirpunha?* 'where did you escort your mother to?' (*nangko* 'your' *amai* 'mother' *heta* 'where' *thekapa* 'until' *sirpu* 'accompany away' *nha* '2 p.-past'). The aspectivizer *lha* (derived from the verb *lhali* 'go'), denotes going to do something: *pujata dhirpateng, dhabaq guqlhahi* 'having taught at the ceremony, he went to put on a shawl' (*puja* 'ceremony' *ta* 'at' *dhirpa* 'cause to learn' *te* 'totalizing aspectivizer' *ng* 'emphatic suffix' *dhabaq* 'shawl' *guq* 'put over shoulder' *lhahi* 'go 3 p.-past'). Lastly, the relinquitive aspectivizer *dhi* emphasizes leaving something behind: *ingko obalaiko syiqdhika photogelai pigilka higha* 'I have sent those photos that they left behind' (*ingko* 'that' *obalaiko* 'their' *syiq* 'go' *dhi* 'leave' *ka* 'nominalizing suffix' *photogelai* 'photos' *pigilka* 'sending' *higha* 'be 1 p.-past').

Dhimal has a stockpile of mood and other particles which generally come at the end of the verb phrase and signal the speaker's attitude or emotion about what is being said. The optative particle *ko* expresses a wish or desire: *syako* 'I swear' (*syia* 'I will die' *ko* 'may it be'); *majenako* 'may it not happen' (*ma* 'negative prefix' *jena* 'will happen' *ko*). The particle *be* signals wonder or curiosity: *hai be ingko?* 'what could that be?'. The assertive particle *ru* calls

attention to what is being said: *dhaqpa syiqkheru!* 'it (the bus) is going really fast!' (*dhaqpa* 'runningly' *syiq* 'go' *khe* 'simple indefinite' *ru* 'certainty particle'). The particle *wala* denotes probability: *nani ci nani hanekhewala* 'she's probably going to fetch water today' (*nani* 'today' *ci* 'water' *nangli* 'to fetch' *hanekhe* 'go 3 p.-simple indefinite' *wala*). A last example is the particle *la*, which imparts a sense of change in the situation: *dohoila* 'it's all gone now'; *manthula* 'there isn't any more'.

Passivizing or topicalizing the patient is achieved in two ways and in both cases the patient is reflected in the verb. The first is through the construction *ningcali* 'to receive or undergo': *thokar ningcali* 'to bump into' (*thokar* 'bump' + *ning* 'find' + *cali* 'to take'); *danhai ningcali* 'to receive a beating'. The second method is through the use of the intransitive aspectivizer *nha* which immediately follows the simplex: *ka ghokrainhagha* 'I was choked' (ka 'I' *ghokrai* 'choke' *nha* 'intransitive aspectivizer' *gha* '1 p.-past'); *nuita khisa dumnhaka highakhe* 'mud had poured into my mouth' (*nui* 'mouth' *ta* 'in' *khisa* 'mud' *dumnhaka* 'pouring' *highakhe* 'had').

Verbs are negated by using either the negative prefixal morpheme *ma* or the negative copula *manthu*: *cudur cali maskaqkhena?* 'Doesn't eating snails make you feel queasy?' (*cudur* 'snails' *cali* 'to eat' *ma* 'negative morpheme' *sikaqkhena* 'feel queasy -2 p.'); *bihu paka manthu* 'she is (has) not married' (*bihu* 'wedding' *paka* 'doing' *manthu* 'negative copula'). *Manthu*, a cognate of the Limbu *menduk*, Newar *moru*, and Tibetan *mindu*, can also be declined like any verb and is used in the construction of negative perfect and pluperfect tenses: *um cali manthuteng coqhi* 'not having had rice to eat he grew thin' (*um* 'rice' *cali* 'to eat' *manthuteng* 'not having had' *coqhi* 'grew thin'); *caka manthugha* 'I haven't eaten' (*caka* 'eating' *manthu* 'have not' *gha* '1 p.-past'). *Ma* can also be reduplicated resulting in an intensified meaning: *waseng mamadusugha* 'I didn't run into her at all'.

5. CONCLUSION

Since its first description in the mid 1800s, Dhimal has remained virtually unknown. Of course, worse things have been known to happen to a language and its speakers. This overview of the prominent features of Dhimal returns it to the attention of scholars and points out areas of possible future research. A thorough comparison of the western and eastern dialects should provide information on the diachronic changes that have occurred in Dhimal. The verbal morphology of the western dialect reveals vestiges of a more elaborate paradigm that may help in reconstructing Proto-Tibeto-Burman. Lastly, if Toto does indeed form a subgroup with Dhimal, a systematic

comparison of these two divergent languages should be invaluable in determining how they have diverged from the other languages in their group, and should also assist in placing them within the Tibetic family.

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