

THE AFFINAL KIN REGISTER IN DHIMAL

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1. INTRODUCTION

This study deals with the grammatical indexing of the marked relationship between affinal kin in Dhimal¹, a Tibeto-Burman language spoken by 20-40,000 people in the lowlands of southeastern Nepal and adjoining areas of West Bengal, India. There are two mutually intelligible dialects, an eastern and a western. This study focuses on the more widely spoken western dialect.

Dhimal has generally been characterized as a simple pronominalizing language. Beneath this facade of simplicity, however, lies a more complex agreement structure. In addition to the pattern of subject agreement, the participants of the verb may be marked in transitive scenarios with portmanteau suffixes indexing both subject and object (King forthcoming). Furthermore, there is also a distinct speech register in which the social relationship obtaining between affinal kin groups is marked. This multifaceted relationship is indexed both lexically, through distinct pronominals, and in the verb agreement morphology. Aside from linguistic coding, this relationship may also be marked by prescribed behaviors, such as avoidance and ritualized non-verbal greetings upon meeting. This paper, however, will only touch on these issues, which merit a thorough investigation of their own, as they relate to the grammatical aspects of this relationship.

The grammatical marking of kinship status in Australian aboriginal languages has been well documented (see Haviland 1979; Heath 1982). These complex and varied systems are characterized by distinct pronominal forms (often plural) and avoidance language involving extensive lexical replacement. Less well known are similar systems in other languages. While the Dhimal system of indexing the social relationship between affinal kin may be one of the most elaborate in Tibeto-Burman, it reflects both universal tendencies and areal patterns. This speech register shares much in common with honorific and other respect registers, including the employment of plural forms to mark singular

¹ A version of this paper was presented at the Himalayan Languages Workshop hosted by Carol Genetti at UC Santa Barbara, June 22-23, 1999. I would like to thank the participants for their helpful comments and suggestions.

actants and socially-constrained behavior between participants. The notion of markedness in the application of these context-dependent forms will be drawn upon in explicating their use. In the following sections, I will introduce the social context in which this register is used, describe its morphosyntactic characteristics, and explore the significance of these grammatical devices for the historical development of Dhimial.

2. CLANS, MARRIAGE, AND IN-LAWS

In his seminal work *The Gift* (1990), Marcel Mauss identified the gift exchange as a fundamental element in human society, one which permeates the legal, economic, moral, religious, and other cultural spheres of a given people. The very act of giving, which requires giving back, generates solidarity between the givers and the receivers. Mauss recognized that this exchange is not limited to material goods, but extends to humans in the form of labor or women. Lévi-Strauss (1969), however, explicitly explored the exchange of women between families, clans, and other groups, citing it as one of the most important forces in traditional societies. In many cultures, the relationship between key actors involved in or affected by this exchange is one that receives explicit coding in the grammar. In Dhimial society, a woman plays a pivotal role in this register, in that those who employ it are the individuals who stand to gain from or be deprived of her and her children's labor after marriage.

To understand the nature of the morphosyntactic marking used between affinal kin, one must examine the social context in which it is embedded. In the Dhimial world, kin and clan are important structures of social organization and ritual life. There are 13 exogamous, patrilineal clans and numerous sub-clans, which determine the deities one worships, whose death one has to mourn, and whom one may marry. In seeking a prospective wife a man is restricted from choosing a woman among his own clan, and from those related to him within several generations². He must not only woo the woman of his choice, but also pass muster with her parents. During marriage negotiations, a woman is at liberty to reject any suitor not to her liking, and if her parents reject a suitor of her choice, she has several options open to her³. In any case for the marriage to be socially sanctioned a bride-price must be paid and gifts exchanged. Some of the stakeholders who must be compensated materially or monetarily (even if in

² I have heard speakers of the western dialect claim that the Purbiya or eastern Dhimial speakers descend from those who broke these marriage taboos and were forced to settle to the east.

³ While parents attempt to restrict a young woman's options for partners, if the woman is determined and resourceful, she may have the ultimate say. A woman may elope with her beau or in extreme cases, even threaten suicide.

symbolic form) for their loss include the woman's parents, her girlfriends, village youths, and elders. This exchange begins a reciprocal relationship of obligations and rights.

The affinal register is reciprocally employed between two distinct groups: i) the parents of a husband and wife, and ii) a man and his wife's senior relatives. The first group encompasses participants belonging to the same age group and standing in the same relationship to each other, while the second group delineates the participants by relative age. Regmi (1985, 112), in his study of socioeconomic patterns in Dhimal society, notes the use of what he terms "suffixes of respect" between affinal kin, though he incorrectly limits their use to wife's brother. In this social domain, marked forms are employed in all persons, tenses and aspects, and it is considered disrespectful to use forms from the standard agreement paradigm. Table 1 lists the reciprocal relations in which this register is used (a more extensive list of affinal kin terms is included in the appendix)⁴.

<i>behai</i> (CSpF)	←→	<i>behai</i> (CSpF)	
<i>beheni</i> (CSpM)		<i>beheni</i> (CSpM)	
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<i>mhawa</i> (DH)	←→	<i>juwa</i> (WF)	<i>mausi</i> (MZ-)
		<i>jube</i> (WM)	<i>mausa</i> (MZ-H)
		<i>go</i> (WB+)	<i>mamai</i> (MB-)
		<i>naju</i> (WZ+)	<i>mami</i> (MB-W)
		<i>kaka</i> (FB-)	<i>boi</i> (PSib+)
		<i>ate</i> (FB-W)	<i>aju</i> (PF)
		<i>pisai</i> (FZ-)	<i>ajai</i> (PM)
		<i>peusa</i> (FZ-H)	

Table 1. Kin relations requiring the honorific

The kin groups employing these forms are symmetrical only in the case of the parents of the bride and groom. The term for the parents-in-law (*behai-beheni*) refers to both the givers and the receivers in this exchange. The terms show some interesting connections to kinship terms in two other Tibeto-Burman

⁴ Standard abbreviations are used: C (child), P (parent), Sp (spouse), F (father), M (mother), B (brother), Z (sister), Sib (sibling), S (son), D (daughter), W (wife), H (husband). Plus (+) and minus (-) signs indicate elder and younger respectively, and ↔ indicates a reciprocal relationship.

languages. In Newari, the term *behaiti* signifies 'wife', while in Bodo, *bihau-bikhunju* has the same meaning as in Dhimal. The near correspondence of these terms suggest that they may be borrowings, but from where is not clear, though the feminine ending *-ni* in the Dhimal form points to a possible Indic origin.

Relations between the *mhawa* (DH) and his senior in-laws are characterized by respect, distance, and the maintenance of social harmony. One indication of this respect is the affix *ju*, used in terms for respected persons, which occurs as a prefix in the terms *juwa* (WF), *jube* (WM), and as a suffix in the term *naju* (WZ+) This root is also found in the terms for another honored group—one's grandparents (*aju-ajai*). The kinship term *go*, signifying wife's classificatory elder brother, and elder sister's husband, is also revealing in this respect. It likely stems from PTB **m-gaw* meaning 'head', a body-part which is often used in terms for elder male relatives in Tibeto-Burman (see Matisoff 1979, 26).

While marked forms are employed reciprocally, the status of the bridegroom in Dhimal culture suggests a certain asymmetry. Regmi (110) notes that the *mhawa* "son-in-law"⁵ is jokingly abused and is served substandard food by the bride's female kin on his first night. Many lowland indigenous groups in Nepal show striking similarities. In ceremonies preceding a wedding, a Rajbangshi bridegroom is verbally abused in song by the bride's girlfriends, while in Dhanuwar society, the bride's senior female relatives verbally abuse the bridegroom and generally treat him shabbily. In Saptariya Tharu dialect of Maithili, the terms of address for father and mother-in-law are *thakur* and *thaukrain*, which derive from words meaning 'lord' and 'lady' respectively, while honorific agreement forms are primarily used with affinal kin. These patterns suggest a relatively low status for the groom, at least in the early stages of this relationship⁶.

Although the system is reciprocal for those participating in it, it is still largely asymmetrical in regard to participants. Outside this marked relationship lie all the *mhawa*'s kin (except his parents), and the bride and her younger siblings. In contrast to the formal relationship with his senior in-laws, a man has a friendly, joking relationship with his wife's younger siblings. Because they are his wife's juniors, his *huigo* (WB-) and *hulme* (WZ-) do not participate in the formal deferential aspects of this relationship. Unsurprisingly, they also do not employ the marked forms.

⁵ The term *mhawa* clearly derives from PTB **s-mak-pa* 'son-in-law'.

⁶ Noting the relationship between a Kayapo man and his in-laws, Haviland tentatively comes to the same conclusion for Guugu Yimidhirr (p. 388).

Along with her younger siblings, the *nama* (SW, B-W) is not a party to the formal aspects of this relationship. Although the bridegroom employs honorific forms with his senior in-laws and vice versa, a woman addresses her mother and father-in-law as *amai* and *aba* ('mother' and 'father') rather than as *juwa* or *jube*. She does not use the marked forms with her in-laws, nor do they with her. Linguistically and socially, a woman has a more cordial relationship with her senior in-laws than does a man, due perhaps in part to her residence with and incorporation into her husband's family⁷.

From the large number of Indic loans for kinship terms referring to ego's parent's younger siblings and their spouses, it is clear that Dhimals have been influenced by the kinship patterns of the neighboring Maithili-speaking Tharu. Only two Dhimal terms remain for ego's parent's siblings: *boi* (PSib+) and *ate* (FB-W). Unfortunately, this large-scale borrowing obscures what we might deduce about the historical relationship between the kinship system and marriage patterns. Regardless of its historical nature, the relationship between a man and his senior in-laws, and between the parent's of a bride and groom, point to an important social institution which is indexed through distinct pronominal and verbal morphology.

3. PRONOMINALS

Aside from kinship terms, the only other lexical items that are marked for this relationship are the pronouns. The Dhimal unmarked pronominal system distinguishes first, second, and third person, and singular, dual, and plural number. Table 2 lists the abbreviations used and Table 3 lists the standard Dhimal pronominals.

1	first	A	addressee	FUT	future	NEG	Negative
2	second	ADH	adhortative	GEN	genitive	NOM	Nominalize
						r	
3	third	CAUS	causative	IMP	imperative	P	Past
s	singular	CONC	concessive	IMPF	imperfective	PERF	Perfective
d	dual	COP	copula	INC	inceptive	POL	Polite
p	plural	DAT	dative	INF	infinitive		
c	collective	EMP	emphatic	M	marked		

Table 2. Abbreviations

⁷ See King 1995 on the evolving roles and status of women in Dhimal society.

	Nominative	Genitive	Dative
1s	<i>ka</i>	<i>ka_-ko</i>	<i>ka-se_</i> ⁸
1d	<i>kidhimi</i>	<i>kidhi_-ko</i>	<i>kidhimi-he_</i>
1p	<i>kelai</i>	<i>kelai-ko</i>	<i>kelai-he_</i>
2s	<i>na</i>	<i>na_-ko</i>	<i>na-se_</i>
2d	<i>nidhimi</i>	<i>nidhi_-ko</i>	<i>nidhimi-he_</i>
2p	<i>nelai</i>	<i>nelai-ko</i>	<i>nelai-he_</i>
3s	<i>wa</i>	<i>wa-ko</i>	<i>wa-se_</i>
3d	<i>odhimi</i>	<i>odhi_-ko</i>	<i>odhimi-he_</i>
3p	<i>obalai</i>	<i>obalai-ko</i>	<i>obalai-he_</i>

Table 3. *Dhimal pronominals*

Only first and second person singular—the core dyad of a speech situation—have distinct pronominal forms that index this relationship, *kya* and *nya* respectively. No distinction is made in non-singular or third person pronouns. Note that the corresponding genitive and dative forms are slightly irregular.

1sM	<i>kya</i>	<i>ki_-ko</i>	<i>ki-se_</i>
2sM	<i>nya</i>	<i>ni_-ko</i>	<i>ni-se_</i>

Table 4. *Marked Dhimal pronominals*

Historically, the marked first and second person singular pronouns derive from plural pronouns, a common pattern found in the world's languages (Brown and Levinson 1987, 198). Internal evidence in Dhimal supports these findings. Compare the corresponding synchronic dual and plural forms: *kidhimi* (1d) and *kelai* (1p), and *nidhimi* (2d) and *nelai* (2p). The morphemes marking first non-singular *ke* ~ *ki* and second non-singular *ne* ~ *ni* are cognate to the first and second honorific pronouns *kya* and *nya* respectively. Palatalized onsets are rare in Dhimal and their retention in these affinal forms is undoubtedly due to their marked nature. In the eastern dialect of Dhimal presented by Hodgson (1880) the plural pronouns *kyel* (1p) and *nyel* (2p) still have palatalized onsets. Besides,

⁸ The morpheme <-se_>, which is restricted to monosyllabic pronouns, is an allomorph of the dative marker <-he_>, which may occur with monosyllabic or polysyllabic pronouns and nouns.

the marked genitive and dative pronominal forms *ki_-ko* and *ni_-ko*, and *ki-se_* and *ni-se_* are used as first plural and second plural in the eastern dialect, though it is not known whether they are also employed to mark affinal relations. Examples (1) and (2) illustrate genitive and dative use of the marked pronouns.

- (1)⁹ *ki_-ko* *p'riwar* *bigir-hi-nyo*.
 1s^M.GEN family break-P-A
 'My^M family is broken down.' (p. 45)

- (2) *ni-se_* *pi-hoi-ga-nyo*.
 2sH-DAT give-PERF-P.1s-A
 'I^M already gave it to you^M [sg.].'

According to Brown and Levinson (p. 198), the function of employing plural morphemes to mark singular actants in honorific and respect registers is i) to link the person to a group and thereby associate him/her with the backing that comes with group membership, or ii) to avoid any threat to the addressee's face by not singling him/her out. Although many languages have marked second person pronouns, less common are marked first person forms. In the highly stratified society where Kathmandu Newar is spoken, for example, a first person honorific distinction is not made. And Maithili, which has an extensive honorific system with four distinct second person pronouns, does not have a separate first person honorific pronoun. Also, the fact that *kya* originates as a first plural pronoun stands in stark contrast to languages that do have marked first person forms, where they are more commonly derived from words that have a self-deprecating connotation.

The employment of first person non-singular forms (historical or synchronic) as polite, deferential, or otherwise marked forms of address, though not as well-documented as second person forms, is an apparently widespread phenomenon. One of the most significant finds noted by Muehlhaeusler and Harre for first person plural forms in English and other languages is their "general flexibility and multifunctionality" (p. 177). According to McConvell (1982, 97), one of the strategies available to speakers of the Australian aboriginal language Gurindji to achieve social distance in an avoidance relationship is the use of first person dual inclusive forms in place of second person forms. Closer to home we find the same mechanisms at work. A similar, yet distinct, pattern is found in Santali, an Austroasiatic language indigenous to Bihar and West

⁹ All examples with a page number following the gloss are taken from Dhimal (1992). The remaining Dhimal examples are from elicitation, and none are taken from actual discourse.

Bengal, India. In Santali, first (exclusive) and second person dual forms are used by a mother and father-in-law to their son or daughter-in-law, while first (exclusive) and second person plural forms are used between the parents of a husband and wife (MacPhail 1953, 23). Limbu also employs first person dual and plural inclusive forms to those “with whom one must retain a demeanour of respect” (van Driem 1987, 221).

The grammaticalization of a historically first plural pronoun to encode a marked first person singular, alongside the (historically plural) second singular *nya*, is a direct reflection of the system’s reciprocal nature. In honorific registers in languages like French, marked pronominal forms exist for only one half of the speech dyad—the addressee. The marked first person singular form in Dhimial serves to round out and balance the equation. And just as plural second person forms serve as a distancing device, plural first person forms utilize the same mechanism to defocus the speaker. Thus, a reciprocal system like Dhimial’s affords the speaker as well as the addressee a face-saving device (Brown & Levinson 1987) by not singling him/her out in first person utterances.

When there is more than one speaker or addressee who require the affinal register, then the standard dual and plural pronouns are used. While a distinction is not made in the non-singular pronouns, the relationship is nevertheless formally marked by the suffix <-nyo>, which will be discussed in the following section on verb agreement.

- (3) *nidhinhimi-he_ do_ pi-hoi-ga-nyo.*
 2d-DAT EMP give-PERF-P.1s-A
 ‘I^M already gave them to you^M two.’

- (4) *kelai-ko samaj sudha_ bigir-li thale-hoi-nyo.*
 1p-GEN society totally break-INF begin-PERF-A
 ‘Our^M [pl.] society has completely begun to break down.’ (p. 45)

4. VERB AGREEMENT

In the standard or unmarked agreement paradigm, the Dhimial verb inflects for person and number of the subject. That is, the verb encodes only one argument, which may be either the single argument of an intransitive verb or the agent of a transitive verb. Person and number markers vary with the tense and aspect, and are in many cases portmanteau suffixes indicating person, number, and tense or aspect. Non-plural agreement indices follow the tense-aspect suffixes, while plural indices precede the tense-aspect marker. First and second dual agreement morphemes are homophonous. Third person is unmarked, except for third person collective, which is only used when the speaker wishes to emphasize the group or collective action of a third person non-singular subject.

All forms are negated with the prefix <ma->. Table 5 lists the standard agreement paradigm¹⁰.

	Perfective	Past	Imperfective	Future	Inceptive
1s	- <i>hoi-ga</i>	- <i>gha</i>	- <i>kha</i>	- <i>ā/a_-ka</i>	- <i>khoi-ka</i>
1d	- <i>hoi-ni_</i>	- <i>nhi_</i>	- <i>khe-ni_</i>	- <i>a-ni_</i>	- <i>khoi-ni_</i>
1p	- <i>nha-hoi</i>	- <i>nha-hi</i>	- <i>nha-khe</i>	- <i>a_</i>	- <i>nha-khoi</i>
2s	- <i>hoi-na</i>	- <i>nha</i>	- <i>khe-na</i>	- <i>a-na</i>	- <i>khoi-na</i>
2d	- <i>hoi-ni_</i>	- <i>nhi_</i>	- <i>khe-ni_</i>	- <i>a-ni_</i>	- <i>khoi-ni_</i>
2p	- <i>su-hoi-na</i>	- <i>su-nha</i>	- <i>su-khe-na</i>	- <i>su-a-na</i>	- <i>su-khoi-na</i>
3	- <i>hoi</i>	- <i>hi</i>	- <i>khe</i>	- <i>a_</i>	- <i>khoi</i>
3c	- <i>su-hoi</i>	- <i>su-hi</i>	- <i>su-khe</i>	- <i>su-a_</i>	- <i>su-khoi</i>

Table 5. Standard Dhimal agreement paradigm

When the speech dyad is made up of individuals standing in a marked affinal relationship, the verb distinguishes person and number of the subject, and the social relation between the speaker and the addressee. Note, however, that these forms are used only between speaker and addressee in the above mentioned relationships, and are not employed with bystanders. Table 6 lists the affinal agreement paradigm.

	Perfective	Past	Imperfective	Future	Inceptive
1sMM	- <i>hoi-gya</i>	- <i>ghya</i>	- <i>khya</i>	- <i>a_-kya</i>	- <i>khoi-kya</i>
2sM	- <i>hoi-nya</i>	- <i>nhya</i>	- <i>khe-nya</i>	- <i>a-nya</i>	- <i>khoi-nya</i>
1sM	- <i>hoi-ga-nyo</i>	- <i>gha-nyo</i>	- <i>kha-nyo</i>	- <i>ā-nyo</i>	- <i>khoi-ka-nyo</i>
1dM	- <i>hoi-ni_-nyo</i>	- <i>nhi_-nyo</i>	- <i>khe-ni_-nyo</i>	- <i>a-ni_-nyo</i>	- <i>khoi-ni_-nyo</i>
1pM	- <i>nha-hoi-nyo</i>	- <i>nha-nyo</i>	- <i>nha-khe-nyo</i>	- <i>a(_)-nyo</i>	- <i>nha-khoi-nyo</i>
2dM	- <i>hoi-ni_-nyo</i>	- <i>nhi_-nyo</i>	- <i>khe-ni_-nyo</i>	- <i>a-ni_-nyo</i>	- <i>khoi-ni_-nyo</i>
2pM	- <i>su-hoi-na-nyo</i>	- <i>su-nha-nyo</i>	- <i>su-khe-na-nyo</i>	- <i>su-a-na-nyo</i>	- <i>su-khoi-na-nyo</i>
3M	- <i>hoi-nyo</i>	- <i>hi-nyo</i>	- <i>khe-nyo</i>	- <i>a(_)-nyo</i>	- <i>khoi-nyo</i>
3cM	- <i>su-hoi-nyo</i>	- <i>su-hi-nyo</i>	- <i>su-khe-nyo</i>	- <i>su-a-nyo</i>	- <i>su-khoi-nyo</i>

Table 6. Marked agreement paradigm

¹⁰ These tense-aspects capture the allomorphy in the agreement paradigm. Briefly, the perfective aspectivizer marks a complete event generally in the past; the past tense morpheme simply marks a past event and may co-occur with the imperfective; the imperfective aspectivizer marks a habitual or progressive event, and when occurring without an overt past tense morpheme has present tense meaning; the future tense morpheme marks an event subsequent to the present; and the inceptive aspectivizer indicates the onset or beginning phase of an event.

Morphologically, the marked agreement forms can be divided into two groups. The first consists of forms in which portmanteau suffixes encode person, number, the marked relationship between affinal kin, and (in some cases) tense-aspect. The second consists of forms where there is a discrete suffix that encodes this relationship, in addition to the unmarked person and number suffixes. Comrie (1976) divides respect registers along three axes: speaker-referent, speaker-addressee, and speaker-bystander. Brown and Levinson (p. 181) add a fourth axis of speaker-setting. We need only concern ourselves here with two, to which these groupings roughly correspond: the speaker-referent and speaker-addressee axes. The agreement morphology also allows the expression of degrees of formality. The marked second person singular past tense suffix has an alternate unfused form that is more formal: *-hi-nya*. In addition, the first and second person dual affixes have alternate unfused past tense forms that are more formal: *-hi-ni_-nyo*. Hence, careful and enunciated speech may be employed to mark a greater degree of formality or social distance. Haviland also notes the use of slow and soft speech with affines in Guugu Yimidhirr (p. 369).

A distinction in the degree of formality is also made in first person singular. As Regmi notes (p. 101), while at first formal and restrained, relations between in-laws become more relaxed over time. Early on in the affinal relationship and if the relation is only seen occasionally, e.g. because he/she lives in a distant village, the more formal first singular (1sM) form is used. When persons standing in a marked relationship are seen on a regular or even daily basis, then the marked informal first singular form (1sMM) is employed. The informal form is the marked member of the pair. In the course of this relationship, use of the formal form precedes that of the informal form, though the precise mechanisms and the time frames involved in this shift are not known. The simpler informal first singular form is likely the older of the two constructions, while the morphologically heavier formal form was developed by analogy to the others in the paradigm to mark increased formality.

The suffix *<-kya>* and its allomorphs index a marked informal first singular subject. Like the unmarked first singular agreement suffix *<-ka>*, the marked form has tensed allomorphs, which undergo the same morphophonological changes including fusing with the imperfective morpheme. The suffix *<-nya>* and its allomorph *<-nhya>* index a marked second singular subject. While *<-kya>* and *<-nya>* are alike in that both carry the bulk of the semantic weight of this relationship in the agreement suffix, they fall on opposite sides of the speaker-referent and speaker-addressee cleavage. The following examples illustrate simple subject agreement with first and second person singular.

- (5) *nya hiso hane-khe-nya?*
 you.s^M whither go-IMPf-2s^M
 'Where are you^M [sg.] going?'
- (6) *kya jumni lo-wa_-kya.*
 I^{MM} tomorrow come-FUT-1s^{MM}
 'I^{MM} will come tomorrow.'
- (7) *kya hate hane-khya.*
 I^{MM} bazaar go-IMPf.1s^{MM}
 'I^{MM} am going to the bazaar.'
- (8) *ma-am-laubu_ rhu~li goi-ya-nya.*
 NEG-drink-CONC take-INF must-FUT-2s^M
 'Even though you^M [sg.] don't drink, you^M [sg.] will have to accept it.' (p. 44)

When the subject is not a marked informal first or second person singular, however, the relationship is still indexed. Person and number of the subject is shown through unmarked affixes, while the affinal relationship is encoded by the addressee suffix <-nyo>. In the Dhimial affinal register, the verb indexes the deictic referent (the addressee), in addition to the subject. While this suffix predominantly indexes the speaker-addressee axis, the notional categories of axes are of limited utility in accounting for the distribution of these morphological forms. As was previously noted, the marked informal first singular form (1s^{MM}) does not take the suffix <-nyo> even though it falls along the speaker-addressee axis. The marked second person dual and plural, however, are marked by the addressee suffix even though they fall along the speaker-referent axis. These anomalies probably have diachronic implications, which may shed light on their distribution. The following examples illustrate the use of the addressee suffix.

- (9) *ma-ko ma-ko kya gora am-li kera ca-gha-nyo.*
 NEG-COP NEG-COP I^M alcohol drink-INF oath take-PT.1s-A
 'No, no, I^M swore off drinking alcohol.' (p. 45)
- (10) *kya ma-am-kha-nyo.*
 I^M NEG-drink-IMPf.1s-A
 'I^M don't drink.' (p. 44)

- (11) *kya damak han-ā-nyo.*
 I^M Damak go-FUT.1s-A
 'I^M will go to Damak.'

- (12) *ki-se_ khan-te_ ni-se_ bigir-ka samaj-ko bare-ta*
 IM-DAT look-TA you.sM-DAT break-NOM society-GEabout-LOC
cinta hi-li goi-hi-nyo.
 worry be-INF must-PT-A
 'You^M [sg.] need to worry about a broken-down society more than I^M do.'
 (p. 45)

The addressee morpheme is derived from the marked second singular agreement suffix <-*nya*>. Brown and Levinson predict just such a development: an addressee honorific from a referent honorific (p. 277). The employment of what is historically a second plural morpheme to refer to the addressee in these scenarios is significant. It is based on a strategy of overt acknowledgment of in-laws as important participants impacted somehow by the event, even though they are not arguments.

The derivation of the high back vowel in this morpheme is uncertain. A possible origin may be from a spatial demonstrative. In Dhimal there is a distal demonstrative *u* that encliticizes to nominals and verbs to i) indicate location away from the speaker and addressee or ii) refer to an event known to both. A striking parallel of marking social deictics on the verb can also be seen in Maithili. Bickel et al (1999) cite the case of spatial demonstratives encliticizing to the verb in Maithili scenarios involving a third person honorific. It may also be an outright borrowing from the Morang Pradesh or Dehati dialect of Maithili. In his Maithili grammar, Yadav (1996, 265) lists an emphatic morpheme <-*o*> that can encliticize to nominals or verbs. And Verma (1991, 135) identifies two Magahi morphemes, <-*au*> and <-*o*>, as marking respectively a non-honorific and an honorific addressee¹¹. Considering the influence of the Maithili-speaking Morangiya Tharu on Dhimal, such a borrowing into Dhimal may not be so far-fetched. Regarding this form, Verma notes that agreement is with the subject and addressee in preference to object (13):

- (13) *h'm okra dekh'-l-i-o.*
 I 3.DAT see-P-1-A
 'I saw him.'

¹¹ Thanks to Balthasar Bickel for steering me towards this article.

The Dhimial addressee suffix has different distributional properties that further distinguish it from the other indices. The morpheme <-nyo> exhibits behavior indicative of a clitic, in that it is not limited to finite verb morphology. In examples (14) and (15), it adheres to non-verbal elements: an adverbial and a nominalized verb. Both examples, however, could be explained by the type of clause in which they occur, which has a zero copula.

- (14) *mane insa_-nyo. kya bigir-gha-nyo.*
 meaning like.this-AI^M break-PT.1s-A
 'It's like this — I^M am broken down.' (p. 45)

- (15) *kunu haipali kera ca-ka-nyo?*
 if.so why oath take-NOM-A
 'But why take^M an oath?' (p. 45)

Similarly, the Tamil honorific referent marker *-nka*, derived from a bound morpheme marking plural actants on the verb, encliticizes to any constituent of a sentence (Brown and Levinson, 180). The Dhimial addressee marker, however, appears to be limited to clause-final position. Thus, when a zero copula is used, the affinal relationship is still marked.

The affinal register serves a functional purpose and speakers may choose to encode other meanings. Just how or why this system of encoding respect might break down is illustrated in a short story by Buddhi Dhimial (1992) entitled *Dhimial bhaa, tai bhaa* [Dhimial, our own language]. In one episode, the protagonist encounters his father-in-law who has been drinking. The young man declines the alcohol proffered by his wife's father, thereby insulting him. When the *juwa* interprets the *mhawa*'s action as outside the behavioral norms, he adopts corresponding grammatical forms from the unmarked pronouns (16). A vituperous tirade ensues in which the father-in-law throws alcohol in his son-in-law's face and switches over to the unmarked second person singular. Brown & Gilman (1970) refer to this type of mid-conversational change as an expressive shift.

- (16) *na hita-ko dya_?!*
 you.s whither-GEN person
 'What kind of person are you [sg]?!' (p. 45)

This switch to an unmarked form provides some important clues to the actual use of these forms. The unmarked second person form here becomes in effect a marked form with derogatory connotations. After the old man cools down, he

reverts to the respectful affinal forms. Whether *na* or *nya* is the marked member in actual discourse is context-dependent. The forms stand in opposition to one another and thus may be exploited by users for expressive purposes. As Sutton notes (p. 198), “an etiquette system has a function only if it is adhered to and varied from.” Presumably, a speaker could also switch to other unmarked forms to signal an emotionally agitated state. Hence, it becomes quite apparent that this register is not merely a formal encoding of affinal kinship, but rather is a well-grammaticalized social lubricant employed to index the respectful relations between in-laws.

5. DIRECTIVES

The deictic marking of kinship relations extends into other non-finite verb forms such as directives: the adhortative and the imperative.

5.1 Adhortative

Dhimal has a dual and a plural adhortative and both are marked for this register. The dual adhortative affixes the morpheme <-si_>, likely deriving from an old first person dual morpheme, to the verb stem. The marked form simply affixes the addressee suffix <-nyo> to the dual adhortative. Example (17) illustrates the unmarked dual adhortative form, while (18) and (19) show the dual marked adhortative.

- (17) *gora* *am-si_*.
 Alcohol drink-ADH.d
 ‘Let’s [dual] drink some alcohol.’

- (18) *pa-si_-nyo*.
 do-ADH.d-A
 ‘Let’s^M[dual] do it.’

- (19) *am-si_-nyo*.
 drink-ADH.d-A
 ‘Let’s^M [dual] drink.’

The plural adhortative, indexing three or more actants, consists of a synchronically unsegmentable disyllabic morpheme likely deriving (at least in part) from an old first person plural marker. In the marked form, the affixation of the addressee suffix <-nyo> causes the plural adhortative to undergo

phonological erosion. Example (20) illustrates the unmarked plural adhortative form, while (21) and (22) show the marked plural adhortative.

- (20) *jim-aine.*
 sleep-ADH.p
 'Let's [pl] go to sleep.'

- (21) *pa-i-nyo.*
 do-ADH.p-A
 'Let's^M [pl] do it.'

- (22) *am-i-nyo.*
 drink-ADH.p-A
 'Let's^M [pl] drink.'

5.2 Imperative

In Dhimal, standard imperatives consist of the bare verb stem. A singular imperative takes a zero morph, while dual and plural are indexed by the morphemes <-se> and <-su> respectively. Imperatives may also be marked for deference. Of interest to the present discussion is the polite imperative marker <-ni>. The polite imperative is used when one does not have the authority to force one's will on another, or when to do so would be unseemly. It essentially softens a command and is popular when cajoling children or towards others seeking favors. A polite imperative is indexed with a morpheme that appears to derive from the second person non-singular marker <-ne~-ni>, showing that historically other non-singular morphemes have been used to mark deference on the part of the speaker—the same pattern we find in the affinal register. This morpheme, however, has lost any number distinction and may co-occur with morphemes that mark number in imperatives.

- (23) *i_ko dada-he_ nha-pa-su-ni.*
 That e.brother-DAT dance-CAUS-IMP.p-POL
 'Please, get [pl.] that elder brother to dance.'

One might expect an imperative in this register to be indexed by such a morpheme, but the polite imperative suffix <-ni> apparently lacks the requisite degree of deference or formality for commands in this register. The delicate nature of affinal kin relations requires a special form when one presumes the authority to command an in-law. The marked imperative is indexed by the

morpheme <-du>, which is suffixed to the verb stem¹². It is employed always and only between affinal kin¹³. Interestingly, this suffix does not appear to originate as a morpheme indicating number, but rather as a copula. The employment of a copula softens and diffuses the force of the imperative. Examples (24) - (26) illustrate marked imperative usage.

- (24) *lo-du* *um* *ca-li*.
 come-IMP.M rice eat-INF
 ‘Please, come^M eat.’
- (25) *acar* *de_-du*.
 Achar lick-IMP.M
 ‘Please, taste^M the achar.’
- (26) *ko-du* *mhawa*.
 take-IMP.M son-in-law
 ‘Here, please take^M it, son-in-law.’ (p. 44)

6. CONCLUSION

The Dhimial affinal kin-based speech register presented here is a linguistic manifestation of a socially-constrained relationship between the parents of a bride and groom, and the groom and his wife’s senior-in-laws. The mechanisms employed to index this relationship have much in common with honorific and respect registers in many languages: the strategic use of plural pronouns and agreement indices to achieve social goals, and the deferential behavior shown in the relationship between affinal kin. The forms used in this register make a formal-informal distinction and a speaker’s emotional state may also influence his or her choice. The marking of the subject and the addressee is unique to the Dhimial verbal agreement marking system. This type of marking has few parallels in other Tibeto-Burman languages and is undoubtedly a Dhimial innovation, though the specific mechanisms and the social context in which they are exploited is much more widespread.

¹² Data unavailable for dual and plural forms.

¹³ On two occasions, forms from the affinal register were used in addressing the author (once by an eight year old girl who employed the honorific imperative, and once by a 20-something year old man who used the honorific genitive), suggesting that this register could yet develop into an asymmetrical, hierarchical honorific, likely due to the influence of Nepali.

The distribution of morphological forms within this register points to a likely path of development. Stage 1: the register is confined to first and second person forms with <-*kya*> and <-*nya*> being neutral for number. Stage 2: the register is extended to third person forms with the addressee suffix <-*nyo*>. Stage 3: number distinctions emerge with the <-*nyo*> suffixed to the unmarked forms. Stage 4: the addressee suffix is employed with first person singular as a marked formal form. At some point along this route the newer plural forms in <-*lai*> arose. This sort of development would explain the use of the addressee suffix in forms belonging to the speaker-referent axis (2dM/2pM) and its absence in a speaker-addressee form (1sMM). Brown and Levinson (p. 178), on the other hand, propose that reciprocal respect registers develop from the asymmetrical use. While it is possible that the use of <-*nya*> preceded <-*kya*>, there is no evidence for such a development in Dhimál. Rather, I propose that it was precisely in small-scale, kin-based societies such as Dhimál that respect registers first arose, probably employed reciprocally between affinal kin.

The Dhimál affinal register is an illuminating example of how the social structure of a culture can shape the grammar of a language. Brown and Levinson (p. 257) argue that social functions are important diachronic sources for much “superficial” morphology. Indeed, in Dhimál the importance of the relationship between affinal kin has resulted in the reinterpretation of plural pronouns and agreement indices, and the innovation of distinct pronominal and verb agreement forms. The devices employed—plurality, addressee acknowledgment, and a copula—serve to avoid any direct reference to a participant which might impinge upon his or her “face”. Sutton (1982, p. 189) sums up the variation in the strategic use of these devices, noting that “generality may be a culturally universal means of displaying formality and circumspectness, but the sets of forms to which the principle may apply, and the circumstances of its application, may differ from culture to culture.” The grammaticalization of the reciprocal relationship between affinal kin in Dhimál is a particular manifestation of a universal pattern that is elaborated to varying degrees in different languages.

APPENDIX

Classificatory affinal kinship terms:

<i>ke</i>	H
<i>be</i>	W
<i>nama</i>	SW, B-W
<i>mhawa</i>	DH, Z-H
<i>juwa</i>	WF
<i>jube</i>	WM
<i>behai</i>	CSpF
<i>beheni</i>	CSpM
<i>naju</i>	WZ+, HZ+
<i>go</i>	WB+, Z+H (Male ego)
<i>huigo</i>	WB-
<i>huluga</i>	HB-
<i>hulme</i>	WZ-, HZ-
<i>nuwa</i>	Z+H (Female ego)
<i>babai</i>	HB+
<i>bhauji</i>	B+W

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