

Mouton Grammar Library 4

van Driem
A Grammar of Limbu

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George van Driem

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Abbreviations

1	first person	EXIG	auxiliary of exigency (9.9)
2	second person		
3	third person	exp	expletive
A	agent (4)	f	feminine
ABS	absolutive case marker (2.4.1)	fig	figuratively
		G	glide
ADH	adhortative (8.1)	GEN	genitive (2.4.4)
adj	adjective (2.1)	i	inclusive ¹
adv	adverb	imp	impersonal conjugation (4.2)
AP	active participle (8.4)	IMP	imperative (8.2)
ASS	assertive (9.10)	IND	individualizer (see <i>ca-ĩ</i> , <i>dik</i> and <i>dzik</i> in glossary)
Bur	modern Burmese		
C	consonant		
caus	causative (10)	INF	infinitive (8.6)
cl	clitic	INST	instrumental (2.4.3)
col	collective expectation	IPF	imperfective (5.1)
		irr	irregular
COL	colour affix	IRR	irrealis (6.3)
COM	comitative (2.4.7)	interj	interjection
		interr	interrogative
CON	conditional (6.2)	inv	invariable
conj	conjunction	lit	literally
CTR	contrary to (see <i>ni?</i> in glossary)	LOC	locative (2.4.6)
		m	masculine
d	dual ¹	n	noun
DEF	imperious (5.2)	NEG	negative (non-nexal negation, 4.5)
dem	demonstrative	Nep	Nepali
DEPR	deprehensative (9.10)	NOM	nominalizer
		NOT	nexal negation (3.1.1)
dim	diminutive		
di	dual inclusive ¹	NP	negative participle (8.4)
dir	directive (10)		
de	dual exclusive ¹	npG	negative perfect gerund (7.5.2)
e	exclusive ¹		
EMPH	emphatic particle, emphatic verbal suffix	NPT	non-preterit (4.4.7)
		ns	non-singular
Eng	English	num	numeral
ERG	ergative case marker (2.4.2)	∅	zero
		OPT	optative (6.1)
		p	plural ¹

P	patient (4)	SUS	aspectivizer of sustained action (5.3.7)
part	particle		
PAS	passive (8.8)		
pe	plural exclusive ¹	TB	Tibeto-Burman
pej	pejorative	Tib	written Tibetan
pf	prefix, prefixal slot (esp. 4)	v	verb
PF	perfective (5.1)	V	vowel
pfG	perfect gerund (7)	vi	intransitive verb
pi	plural inclusive ¹	VOC	vocative (2.4.5)
poet	poetic, characteristic of elevated diction	vr	reflexive verb (4.2)
postp	postposition, postpositive	VS	<i>Vikram Samvat</i> era
PP	passive participle (8.5)	vt	transitive verb (4.2)
prG	present gerund (7)	*	reconstructed or unattested form
PT	preterit (4.4.7)	[]	phonetic transcription/etymological note
Q	yes/no question marker (6.4)	//	phonemic transcription
REF	reflexive/reciprocal (4.4.5)	<>	morpheme/allomorph
REP	reported speech particle (9.8)	<	derives from
RES	resultative aspectivizer (5.3.5)	→	direction of a transitive relationship
S	subject (4)		
s	singular ¹		
sf	suffix, suffixal slot (esp. 4)		
ST	Sino-Tibetan		
STC	<i>Sino-Tibetan, a Conspectus</i> (see bibliography)		
sub	subordinator		
SUB	subordination through <i>-ille</i> (9.4)		
SUP	supine (8.7)		

¹ also as a superscript to disambiguate English glosses

Transliteration and Transcription

Nepali words are transliterated from the *devanāgarī* script using the following symbols:

	<i>a</i>		<i>ā</i>	
	<i>i</i>		<i>ī</i>	
	<i>u</i>		<i>ū</i>	
			ɽ	
	<i>e</i>		<i>ai</i>	
	<i>o</i>		<i>au</i>	
	<i>ṃ</i>		<i>ḥ</i>	
<i>k</i>	<i>kh</i>	<i>g</i>	<i>gh</i>	<i>ṅ</i>
<i>c</i>	<i>ch</i>	<i>j</i>	<i>jh</i>	<i>ñ</i>
<i>ṭ</i>	<i>ṭh</i>	<i>ḍ</i>	<i>ḍh</i>	<i>ṇ</i>
<i>t</i>	<i>th</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>dh</i>	<i>n</i>
<i>p</i>	<i>ph</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>bh</i>	<i>m</i>
	<i>y</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>l</i>	<i>v</i>
	<i>ś</i>	<i>ṣ</i>	<i>s</i>	
		<i>h</i>		

- (1) Silent *a* is not rendered in the transliteration, even though it is generally not deleted in the *devanāgarī* orthography.
- (2) The distinctions between *i* and *ī*, *u* and *ū*, *b* and *v*, *ś* and *ṣ* and *s*, preserved in conservative orthography, are also rendered in the transliteration, although they do not correspond to any phonemic distinctions in modern spoken Nepali.
- (3) The *candrabindu* used to indicate vowel nasality in *devanāgarī* is rendered by the symbol *~* above the vowel.

Pokhrel et al. (2040) and Rabinovič et al. (1968) are taken as standards for modern Nepalese orthography:

Written Limbu (see 0.2) is transliterated as *devanāgarī* using the transliteration on p.554, except that *eḥ* [ɛ] is transliterated as *è*.

Literary Tibetan and Burmese orthography are transliterated using the following symbols:

Tibetan				Burmese				
<i>k</i>	<i>kh</i>	<i>g</i>	<i>ñ</i>	<i>k</i>	<i>hk</i>	<i>g</i>	<i>g</i>	<i>ñ</i>
<i>c</i>	<i>ch</i>	<i>j</i>	<i>ñ̃</i> ²	<i>s</i>	<i>hs</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>ñ̃</i> ²
<i>t</i>	<i>th</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>ht</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>n</i>
<i>p</i>	<i>ph</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>ht</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>n</i>
<i>ts</i>	<i>tsh</i>	<i>dz</i>		<i>p</i>	<i>hp</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>bh</i>	<i>m</i>
<i>w</i>	<i>ʒ</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>ḥ</i>	<i>y</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>l</i>	<i>w</i>	<i>θ</i>
<i>y</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>l</i>			<i>h</i>	<i>l</i>	<i>a</i>	
<i>ś</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>h</i>	<i>a</i>		<i>i</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>ε</i>	
<i>i</i>	<i>u</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>o</i>		<i>ɔ</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>u</i>	

For Burmese: the creaky tone is indicated by *accent aigu*, the falling or heavy tone by *accent grave*, and the level tone is unmarked. Phonetic transcriptions of Modern Burmese are given between brackets using the following IPA symbols. Nasalization is treated as a syllable-final segment and indicated by placing ~ above the vowel.

syllable-initials						syllable-finals	
<i>p</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>k</i>	<i>c</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>θ</i>	ʔ	~
<i>p^h</i>	<i>t^h</i>	<i>k^h</i>	<i>c^h</i>	<i>s^h</i>			
<i>b</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>g</i>	<i>j</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>ḍ</i>	vowels	
<i>m</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>ŋ</i>	<i>ɲ</i>				
<i>ṃ</i>	<i>ṇ</i>	<i>ŋ̣</i>	<i>ɲ̣</i>			<i>i</i>	<i>u</i>
<i>l</i>	<i>w</i>	<i>y</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>h</i>		<i>e</i>	<i>o</i> ³
<i>ḷ</i>	<i>ẉ</i>	<i>f</i>				<i>ε</i>	<i>ə</i> ³ <i>ɔ</i>
						<i>a</i>	

and the diphthongs⁴
ai, au, ou

² When *ñ̃* is used to indicate a front vowel, it is transcribed as *i*.

³ not in closed syllables.

⁴ not in open syllables.

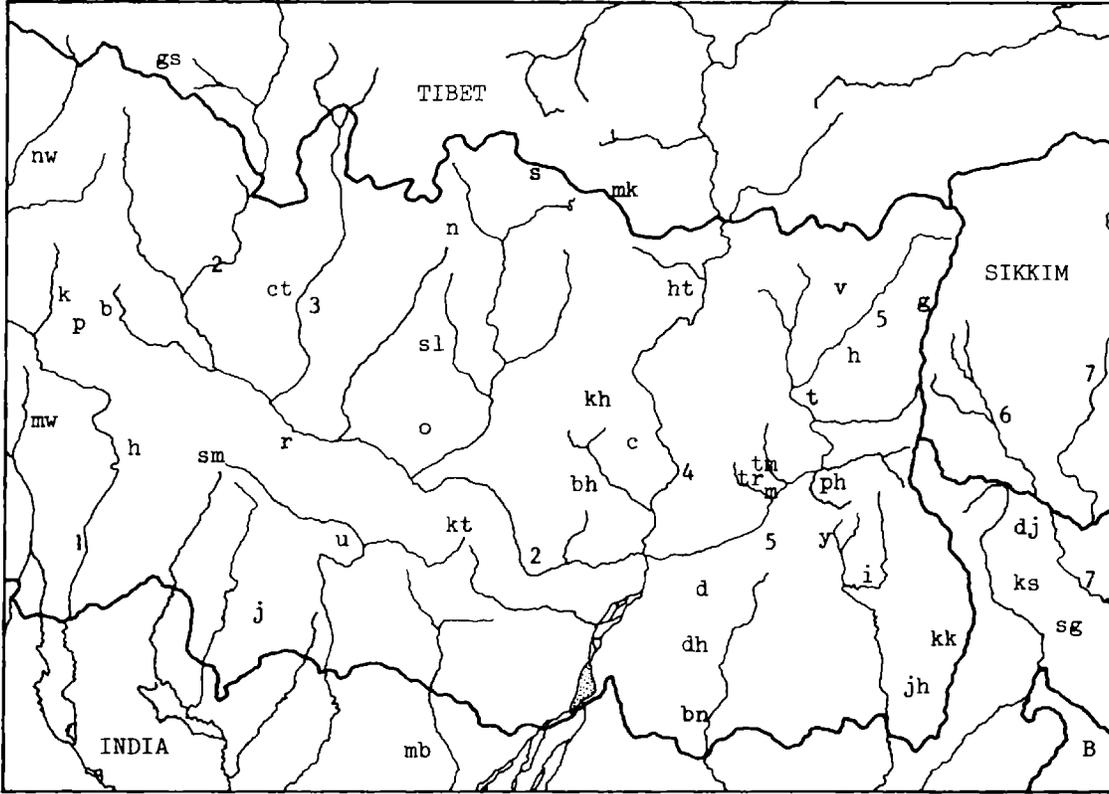
Key to Maps

MAP 1: Eastern Nepal
approximate scale 1 : 2 780 000

<p>b <i>Bhādgāũ</i> (<i>Bhaktapur</i>)</p> <p>bh <i>Bhojpur</i></p> <p>bn <i>Birāṭnagar</i></p> <p>c <i>Cainpur</i></p> <p>ct <i>Carikoṭ</i></p> <p>d <i>Dhankuṭā</i></p> <p>dh <i>Dharān</i></p> <p>dj <i>Dārjīliṅ</i> (<i>Darjeeling</i>)</p> <p>h <i>Hellok</i></p> <p>ht <i>Haṭiyā</i></p> <p>g <i>Gaṅs-chen-mdzod-lña</i> (<i>Kāñcanjanḡhā</i>, <i>Kum-</i> <i>bhakarṇa</i>) 8598m</p> <p>gs <i>Gosāĩthān</i> 8013m</p> <p>h <i>Harihar Gaḡhī</i></p> <p>i <i>Ilām</i></p> <p>j <i>Janakpur</i></p> <p>jh <i>Jhāpā</i></p> <p>k <i>Kāṭhmāṅḡū</i> (<i>Kāṭhmāḡau</i>)</p> <p>kh <i>Khādbārī</i> (<i>Saṅkhuvā</i> <i>Sabhā</i>)</p> <p>kk <i>Kākaḡbhittā</i></p> <p>ks <i>Karsiyāṅ</i> (<i>Kurseong</i>)</p> <p>1 <i>Bāgmatī</i></p> <p>2 <i>Sunkosī</i></p> <p>3 <i>Tāmākosī</i></p> <p>4 <i>Aruṅ</i></p>	<p>kt <i>Khoṭāṅ</i></p> <p>m <i>Myāṅluṅ</i></p> <p>mb <i>Madhubanī</i></p> <p>mk <i>Makālū</i> 8481m</p> <p>mw <i>Makvānpur</i></p> <p>n <i>Nāmce Bajār</i></p> <p>nw <i>Nuvākoṭ</i></p> <p>o <i>Okhalḡhuṅā</i></p> <p>p <i>Pāṭan</i> (<i>Lalitpur</i>)</p> <p>ph <i>Phidīm</i></p> <p>r <i>Rāmechāp</i></p> <p>s <i>Sagarmāthā</i> (<i>Mt.</i> <i>Everest</i>) 8848m</p> <p>sg <i>Silīgaḡī</i></p> <p>sl <i>Solusallerī</i></p> <p>sm <i>Sindhulīmāḡī</i></p> <p>t <i>Tāplejuṅ</i></p> <p>tm <i>Tamphulā</i></p> <p>tr <i>Tehrathum</i></p> <p>u <i>Uḡāypur Gaḡhī</i></p> <p>v <i>Vālaṅchuṅ Golā</i></p> <p>y <i>Yāśok</i></p> <p>5 <i>Tamor</i></p> <p>6 <i>Raṅgit</i></p> <p>7 <i>Ṭiṭṭā</i></p>
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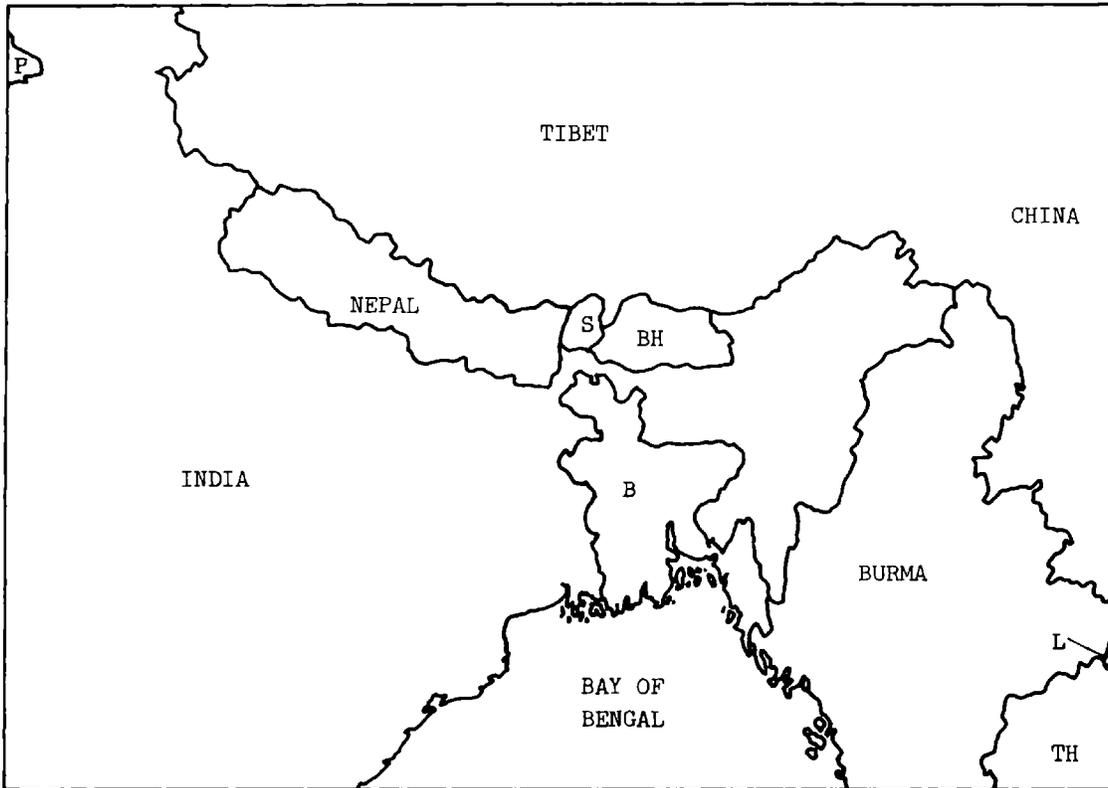
MAP 2: Nepal in South Asia
approximate scale 1 : 20 800 000

B	Bangladesh
BH	Bhutan
L	Laos
P	Pakistan
S	Sikkim
TH	Thailand



MAP 1

MAP 2



Introduction

0.1. The Limbus

The Limbus are a sedentary agriculturalist people of the Mongoloid race dwelling in the hills of the *Kośī* and *Mecī* zones of eastern Nepal, parts of Sikkim to the west of the Tista and in Darjeeling district. By far the largest part of the Limbu nation lives within eastern Nepal, which is the home of approximately 180,000 speakers of Limbu (Subba 1976: 142). The Limbus designate themselves by the name *Yakthunba* and their language by the name *Yakthunpa·n* or *Yakthunba pa·n*. Dās (1896b: 31) claims that the autonym¹ 'Yāk-thumbā' means yak-herd, but I can find no evidence to support this etymology, and I have been unable to find any Limbu who could tell me the origin or meaning of the term *yakthunba*. The component *yak-* is probably identical to the first part of the autonym of the more northerly dwelling *Kirātī* people, the Yakkhas or *Yākhā*, amongst whom it has, however, recently become fashionable to call themselves *Jimī*, *Majhiyā* or *Devān* (Regmi 1983). The component *-thunba* may derive from the etymon **thun-* of which the adjective *kedhunba* 'brave, heroic, manly, bold' appears to be an active participle. The word *Limbū* is a Nepali ethnonym, and the Limbu homeland in eastern Nepal is known in Nepali as *Limbuvān*. Campbell (1840: 595) believes the term *Limbū* to be a Gorkha corruption of the autonym 'Ekthoomba', although I suspect that the origin of the term *Limbū* must be sought elsewhere. Of the Limbu homeland Campbell (595) writes:

The Limboos consider themselves to be the original inhabitants of the country they now occupy, at least they are satisfied that none of the neighbouring tribes have any claims of preoccupation, but they are not agreed among themselves, on the point of nativity.

Indeed, there are various local legends, most of which are rather fanciful, tracing the origins of the Limbus or the lineages of their kings back to the province of Tsang

¹ Terms differentiating various types of ethnonym are defined in Matisoff (1985a: 3-9).

in Tibet, to *Vārāṇasī* on the Gangetic plain, to ancient Babylon, to China and so forth (Campbell 595, *Cemjoṅ* 2018: 11, *Dās* 1896b: 31, *Limbū* 1978: 6, Regmi 1983: 74-75).

The Limbus are often identified by the term *Kirāta* or *Kirātī*. The term *Kirāta* first appears in the *Yajurveda* where it is used to designate an alpine, cave dwelling people of the Mongoloid race living in the northeast (Chatterji 1974: 26). Subsequent references to *Kirātas* in the *Mahābhārata*, *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Viṣṇu-Purāṇa* and *Kirātārjunīya* portray the *Kirāta* as fierce, warlike and handsome savage hunters living in the densely forested (now largely denuded) eastern Himalaya, with golden complexions which gave them an appearance very distinct from the Indo-Aryan inhabitants of the Gangetic plain (Chatterji 28-34, *Dās* 1896a: 29, Kaisher K.C. 1972/1974). Although Chatterji (37-38) suggests that the term *Kirāta* probably covered all Mongoloid peoples living along the northeastern fringe of the Subcontinent, it is the speakers of the *Kirātī* group of Tibeto-Burman languages in eastern Nepal to which the term strictly applies. In the writings of some contemporary Limbu authors writing in Nepali (viz. *Cemjoṅ*, *Māden*, *Limbū*, *B.B. Subba*), the terms *Kirāta* and *Kirātī* are used to refer specifically to the Limbus.

Campbell (597) writes that at the time of the Gorkha conquest, the Limbus reigned with considerable autonomy 'in feudal subordination to the rajas of Beejapoor and Mukwanpoor'. *Makvānpur* fell to *Pr̥thvī Nārāyaṇa Śāh*, the founder of Nepal's currently reigning dynasty, on the 23rd of October 1762, and *Vijaypur* fell to the Gorkhas on the 17th of July 1774 (Stiller 1973: 122-3, 137). Continuing expansion in eastern Nepal brought the Gorkhas into contact with Sikkimese forces, and in 1774 a treaty was signed with the raja of Sikkim giving *Pr̥thvī Nārāyaṇa Śāh* all of eastern Nepal 'west of the Singalila watershed' and, in the *Tarāī*, all land as far as the Tista (Stiller 138). Although eastern Nepal was nominally under the rule of *Pr̥thvī Nārāyaṇa Śāh* at the time of his death on the 11th of January 1775, *Cainpur* was only wrested from the grip of Sikkimese forces in 1776 (Stiller 150), and Sikkimese territory in fact extended to west of the *Aruṇ* and included *Limbuvān* until the Gorkhas overran Sikkim in 1788 (Sprigg, MS: 2). Most peoples in eastern Nepal accepted Gorkhali rule peacefully (Stiller 138), but the Limbus were not actually pacified until after *Prāṇabala Rāṇā* became *subbā* of *Dhankuṭā* in 1782. Limbus, led by two freedom fighters, *Muregan* and *Thāmuyā*, are said to have fought against the Gorkha troops with poisoned arrows (*Cemjoṅ* 1948: 77). Campbell (597)

recounts how the Limbus under siege 'held their stronghold Yangrong against a superior Goorkha force, for nearly a month, and did not yield until nearly the whole clan fell in a succession of assaults hand to hand with the Kookri'. Only after the Gorkhas had driven the Sikkimese forces from northern *Limbuvān* in 1785-86 did peace come to eastern Nepal (*Cemjoñ* 1948: 78). Limbus, however, became recruited into the Gorkhali army as early as the battle of *Cainpur* in 1776 and fought on the Gorkhali side against their own people (*Stiller* 150,281). In 1863 *Jaṅg Bahādur Rāṇā* began conscripting Limbus into the Royal Nepalese Army on a large scale. Because hundreds of Limbu soldiers died of an outbreak of cholera in Kathmandu, many Limbu families fearing conscription fled to Darjeeling (*Regmi* 1983: 80). Their prowess as warriors is reputed to be of great antiquity, and today the Limbus are one of the few Tibeto-Burman ethnic groups of Nepal from which the famous Gorkha regiments of the British Army are recruited.

Although now a minority in Nepal's multi-ethnic society, the Limbus' sense of identity as a separate people is strong. The Nepalese authorities have come to governmentally control all formal tribal lands except those of the Limbus, who have retained their ancestral land rights (*Caplan* 1964). These land rights are determined by the Limbu kinship system. The autochthonous Limbu *kipaṭ*-system of land tenure was still operative in *Limbuvān* in 1975 alongside the governmental *raikar*-system (*Jones & Jones* 1976, *Bista* 1980).

The codex of the *Nevārī* king *Jayasthiti Malla* dating from the end of the fourteenth century was an early attempt to codify the caste system in the Kathmandu Valley (*Höfer* 1979: 41). After the conquest of Nepal by *Pṛthvī Nārāyaṇa Śāh*, edicts were periodically issued which declared the non-Hindu peoples of Nepal to be Hindus and which were intended to assimilate these peoples into the caste system and to consolidate Nepal's many peoples into a nation. This process of assimilation is discussed in *Hansson* (1982). The place of the various Tibeto-Burman peoples of Nepal within the caste system was codified much later in the *Mulukī Ain* of *Jaṅg Bahādur Rāṇā* which classed the Limbus with other *Kirāṭī* speakers such as the *Sunuvār* and *Rāī* amongst the 'enslavable alcohol-drinkers' in an intermediate position below that of the *Guruñ* and *Magar*, 'non-enslavable alcohol-drinkers', but above the many *pānī nacalne* or 'water unacceptable' and untouchable castes (*Höfer* 135, 141). *Campbell* (599-602) identifies the Limbus as being neither Hindu nor Buddhist. Though strongly influenced by Hinduism, the

Limbus practice an animist religion and worship an indigenous pantheon populated by both gods and goddesses and household deities reminiscent of the Roman *penātēs* (Van Driem 1986).

0.2. The language

The Limbu language can be roughly divided into four dialects: *Phedāppe*, *Pācthare*, *Chathare* and *Tāplejuñe* (or *Tāmarkholā*).

Phedāppe is spoken throughout the Tehrathum district, and even Indo-Aryans living outside Tehrathum bazar, especially those of lower caste, speak some Limbu in addition to their native Nepali. The largest centre of population in the *Phedāppe* speaking area of *Limbuvān* is *Tehrathum*, although *Tehrathum bajār* itself is largely Nepali and Newari speaking. Nepalis living in the bazar seldom speak Limbu, and in fact many Limbus living in the bazar do not speak Limbu either. The term *Phedāppe* is a Nepali adjectival form of *Phedāp*, the region where the *Phedāppe* dialect is spoken and formerly the designation for all of presentday *Limbuvān* (*Cemjoñ* 31). The term *Phedāp* contains the Limbu morpheme **phe*· found in *phe·daṅma* 'witch doctor', *phedzikkum* 'sorcerer' and *phe·dahaṅ*² [< *haṅ* king] 'warrior hero'. Dās (1896b: 34) claims that 'Phedub' means 'land of verdure', but his source was probably giving a description which he mistook for an etymology.

Pācthare is literally the dialect of the *pāc thar* or 'five clans', *Chathare* of the *cha thar* or 'six clans'. *Pācthare* is spoken to the east of the *Tamor* river. Centres of population in *Pācthare* speaking *Limbuvān* are *Yāsok*, *Phidīm*, *Ilām*, beyond which *Pācthare* speaking *Limbuvān* extends to the east and eastnortheast. *Chathare* (including the *tḥhəttḥor pokhori* and *daṅappat hōmordzuṅ* sub-dialects³) is spoken in parts of *Dhankuṭā* district away from the bazar and in parts of *Tehrathum* district fringing *Dhankuṭā* district. I have observed that the Limbu of *Chathare* speakers is virtually wholly unintelligible to *Phedāppe* speakers of the village of *Tamphulā* (where the dialect described in this grammar is spoken) who must even resort to Nepali to

² Campbell's 'pheda hung' (1840: 597).

³ Sub-dialect names, given in IPA, are those of *Dillī Vikram Inṅvābā Subbā*, alias B. Subba (personal communication, 1984).

communicate with distant relatives living in *Chathar*. Though ideally *Pā̃cthare* and *Phedāppe* are mutually intelligible dialects, understanding *Pā̃cthare* presents considerable problems to native *Phedāppe* speakers of *Tamphulā* village. I have observed how *Nārāyaṇ Prasād*, a fluent native speaker of *Phedāppe*, was unable to make heads or tails of the animated conversation of *Pā̃cthare* lads in *Yāsok*, but was quite successful in a one-on-one conversation with a *Pā̃cthare* speaker, where both made an effort to be understood. The differences between *Pā̃cthare* and *Phedāppe* can be a source of amusement.

Tāplejuñe (including the *tamarkhole*, *janrupe* and *mōiwa-khole* sub-dialects³) is the dialect spoken to the north of *Phedāp* along and especially north of the *Tamor* River in *Tāplejuñ* district and beyond. Whereas the dialect boundary between *Phedāppe* and *Pā̃cthare* is an abrupt transition as one crosses the *Tamor* between *Tehrathum* and *Yāsok*, the differences between *Phedāppe* and *Tāplejuñe* as one moves north appear to be gradual, and the differences are on the whole less pronounced than between any of the other two dialects.

R.K. Sprigg (1966) has written a treatise on phonological formulae for the *Pā̃cthare* Limbu verb. Boyd Michailovsky (1985) has written on dental suffixes in Tibeto-Burman as evinced by their reflexes in Limbu directives and causatives (see p.245) and has been preparing a grammar of Limbu based on his work in the *Maivā-Mevā* Valleys of *Tāplejuñ* district. A description of *Pā̃cthare* by Weidert & Subba (1985) has recently become available.

The dialects of Limbu are traditionally classified as belonging to the Khambu subtype⁴ of languages within the Kiranti (*Kirātī*) group or Bahing-Vayu nucleus, one of the eight main nuclear groups in Benedict's classification of

⁴ The Khambu subtype also includes: 'Sangpang, Nechereng, Rodong, Waling, Rungchenbung, Lambichong, Chingtang and Yakkha'. The other subtype within Kiranti is the Bahing subtype and includes 'Sunwari, Dumi, Khaling and Rai'. Close to these two subtypes which together constitute the Kiranti nucleus is *Vayū* or *Hayū* (described by Michailovsky 1981). More remotely linked to the Kiranti group is *Nevārī*, the language of the indigenous, or at least pre-Gorkha, population of the Kathmandu Valley (Benedict 1972: 4-5). The subdivisions adopted in Benedict (1972) are confusing, however, for Sangpang (*Sāñ-pāñ*), Nechereng (*Nāceriñ*, *Nāccheriñ*), Chingtang (*Chiñ-*

Tibeto-Burman⁵. Benedict's Bahing-Vayu nucleus, the Kiranti group, corresponds to the Complex Pronominalized languages of Eastern Himalayan in Konow's older classification (1909), so called because the transitive verb's agreement system codes for both agent and patient actants and because, with a singular, dual and plural and with an inclusive/exclusive distinction in the first person, there are eleven pronominal categories. Major historical work on pronominal morphology in Tibeto-Burman has been done by Bauman (1975).

Limbu was once a written language. Limbu, Lepcha and *Nevārī* are the only Sino-Tibetan languages of the central Himalayas to possess their own scripts (Sprigg 1959: 590). Sprigg (1959: 591-592 & MS: 1-4) tells us that the Limbu or Kiranti script was devised during the period of Buddhist expansion in Sikkim in the early 18th century when *Limbuwān* still constituted part of Sikkimese territory. The Kiranti script was probably composed at roughly the same time as the Lepcha script which was devised by the third *Mahārājā* of Sikkim, *Phyag-rdor rNam-rgyal*, ca. 1700-1717. The Kiranti script is ascribed to the Limbu hero, *Śirijaṅgā* who was killed by the Tasong monks in conspiracy with the *Mahārājā* of Sikkim at the time that *Siṃha Pratāp Śāh* was king in Nepal (i.e. 11 January 1775 to 17 November 1777; Stiller 141,153). Both Lepcha and Kiranti scripts were ostensibly devised with the intent of furthering the spread

tāñ), Dumi (*Dumī*), Khaling (*Khāliñ*) are all Rai (*Rāī*), which is a collective ethnonym for several groups of people speaking heterogenous but related Kiranti languages. 'Rodong' is merely an indigenous ethnonym, probably *Cāmlīñ*, meaning 'Rai'.

Recent data collected by the Linguistic Survey of Nepal under the direction of Werner Winter (Universität Kiel) shed new light on intra-Kiranti relationships. The results of extensive survey work conducted throughout eastern Nepal under Winter's direction will soon be made available in published form. New contours have emerged, and new nuclei or related language clusters have been defined within Kiranti on the basis of the gathered data.

⁵ The eight nuclei within Tibeto-Burman are: Tibeto-Kanauri, Bahing-Vayu, Abor-Miri-Dafla, Kachin, Burmese-Lolo, Bodo-Garo, Kuki-Naga and Karen (see Benedict 1972: 4-11, 1976).

of Buddhism, and *Śirijaṅgā* was apparently a Limbu Buddhist, also known by the Tibetan title of 'the Dorze Lama of Yangrup'.

In 1855, Campbell published a copy of the indigenous Kiranti script which he had received from Lieut. George Mainwaring of the 16th Regiment N.I. Grenadiers (Campbell 1855: 202). It is noteworthy that this, ultimately *Devanāgarī*-based, Kiranti script, though it distinguishes aspirate and non-aspirate stops, makes no distinction between voiced and voiceless plosives (see also 1.1). A facsimile of this list can be found in Appendix IV. Brian Hodgson managed to procure fourteen Limbu books in the *Kirāntī* script which he donated to the India Office Library, and Sprigg acquired an additional five books in the Limbu script in 1958 for the School of Oriental and African Studies (Sprigg 1959: 591).

In recent times *Imānsiñ Cemjoñ* has made attempts to resurrect the Kiranti script. Both his bilingual *Kirāta Mundhum* or *Kirāta-Veda*, with a column of Limbu flanked by its Nepali translation, and his *Yākthuñ-pene-mikphu?lā Pochekwā* or 'Limbu-Nepali-English Dictionary' appeared in 1961, but in both works the Limbu was rendered in the *Devanāgarī* script. In the dictionary, however, he included a table giving the Kiranti script (21-23), reproduced here in Appendix IV. Scrutiny of *Cemjoñ*'s Kiranti alphabet and the original Kiranti script attributed to *Śirijaṅgā*, in which the old books which Hodgson and Sprigg procured were written, reveals that *Cemjoñ* had drastically altered and expanded upon the original script so that his new version of the Kiranti script not only made provision for the voiced counterparts of the plosives but also provided counterparts for Nepali characters for *ṣ*, *ñ*, *tr* and *jñ*. In 1965 *Cemjoñ* wrote another book in Limbu verse with Nepali translations, but here too he makes use of the *Devanāgarī* script.

Subsequent attempts were made to revive the Limbu script by B.B. Subba in Sikkim in the late '70s. Subba (1976) adopted *Cemjoñ*'s new and expanded Kiranti script but made a few minor but enlightened modifications of his own (1978) which rigorously improved the script by making provision for both the glottal stop phoneme and for phonemic vowel length. More significant is that Subba produced illustrated textbooks for Primary 1 through 5 on behalf of the Directorate of Education of the Government of Sikkim (1976, 1977, 1982) as well as a Limbu textbook intended for adults (1978) and a Limbu-Nepali-English dictionary (1979) with the Limbu in new Kiranti script, the Nepali in *Devanāgarī*

and the English in Roman alphabet.

More recent, modest attempts have been made by *J. Māden* in Darjeeling, who produced two booklets, one to instruct the reader in the use of the Kiranti script (1983) and the other containing Limbu verse in the *Devanāgarī* script (1984).

Modern written Limbu is without exception based on the easternmost variety of *Pācthare* speech.

0.3. This grammar

This grammar is a description of the *Phedāppe* dialect of *Yakthunba* or Limbu as it is spoken in *Tamphulā* village in *Tehrathum* district in eastern Nepal's *Kośī* zone. The author spent three months in early 1984 and the first six months of 1985 as a live-in guest in the household of farmer *Netra Bahādur Pāyāṅgū* (*Panyangu*) with his wife, five sons and three daughters. The family's house was named *Ya·kpɔ·ppo·ŋ* after the *ya·kpɔ·ppo·ŋ*-tree or large *Engelhardtia spicata* which had once stood at the site of the house.⁶

During these periods, the author enjoyed the warm hospitality, generous friendship and well developed sense of humour of his Limbu family. Initially, in 1984, communication took place in Nepali with and through the elder sons, but eventually the medium of conversation between author and hosts became Limbu. A basis was laid which enabled the author, upon his return in 1985, largely to obviate the use of Nepali except for translating recorded texts and obtaining glosses. Both members of the family and their many relatives offered the author valuable guidance in the form of good-natured ridicule of the deficiencies in the

⁶ It is common practice in the *Phedāp* to name houses and individuals or groups of individuals after large trees which serve as arborescent landmarks. Whereas houses and places take Limbu names, people are generally given Indo-Aryan first names but retain their Limbu clan or family names. For example, one of the local *phe·danma* is called *Okhre Māhilā*, lit. 'walnut (adj.) second-born', after the *okhar* or walnut (*Juglans regia*) tree which stands at the site of his parental home. In slope farming, the various cultivated terraces or *pyaṅsi* are given proper names, although these are often not named after trees. For example, one of the *pyaṅsi* on the *Panyangu* property was called *ɔ·ŋge·*.

author's Limbu as well as practical instruction on the correct way to say things, which sometimes led to reflective and insightful conversations amongst the *de facto* instructors themselves on the differences in meaning, nuance and applicability of various words and expressions in their own language.

The many kind people of *Tamphulā* village were eager to relate to the author their ideas on creation, the supernatural, their neighbours, themselves and the world at large as well as to offer the hospitality of their hearth and home. It is through their acceptance of the author into their community and thanks to the generous hospitality and care of the *Panyangu* family that this grammar was made possible.

The present grammar consists of ten chapters of analysis and four appendices containing a corpus of texts, verbal paradigms, a glossary and an anthology of Limbu scripts.

The first chapter of the analysis is devoted to the phonology of the *Phedāppe* dialect and describes the phonemes of the full and native phonemic system and their allophones. Chapter 2 deals with nominal morphology, and Chapters 3 to 8 and Chapter 10 with verbal morphology. The seven verbs 'to be', the topic of Chapter 3, include one aberrant conjugation and six intransitive verbs. Four of these six occur as auxiliaries in periphrastic construction, treated in Chapter 7. Chapter 4 provides a morphological analysis of simplex verb forms. Simplex verb forms are tensed forms of intransitive, transitive or reflexive verbs which show agreement with actant or actants. Complex verb forms are those derived from these simplicia through augmentative suffixation and form the topic of Chapters 5 to 7. Of great interest are the periphrastic tenses discussed in Chapter 7.

Other verbal constructions, such as the adhortative and imperative, are not derived from simplicia through augmentative suffixation but also entail subtraction of affixes (eg. adhortative forms) or are derived from the verb stem (eg. active participles) or from both verb stem and/or simplicia (eg. nominalized construction in *-pa*). Such verbal constructions form the topic of Chapter 8. Many Limbu verbs have causative and directive counterparts derived through now defunct processes of affixation. Productive causative formation is periphrastic. Both unproductive and productive causatives are treated in Chapter 10, where there is also a general discussion on transitivity and actant coding in the Limbu verb.

Limbu, like other Tibeto-Burman languages⁷, is characterized by the syntactic element order SOV. Coordination in Limbu is straightforward and is discussed in Chapter 7 because it is intimately tied to the meaning and probably the genesis of perfect gerunds. Subordination in Limbu is treated in 8.3 and Chapter 9.

⁷ except Karen.

Chapter One

Phonology and Phonetics

1.1. Limbu phonemes and the native phonemic system

The full inventory of Limbu phonemes is given in the following table. Phonemes occurring exclusively in loans appear between parentheses.

Consonant phonemes

<i>k</i>	<i>kh</i>	<i>(g)</i>	<i>(gh)</i>	<i>ŋ</i>
<i>c</i>		<i>(dz)</i>	<i>(dzh)</i>	
<i>(t̥)</i>	<i>(t̥h)</i>	<i>(d̥)</i>	<i>(d̥h)</i>	<i>(ŋ)</i>
<i>t</i>	<i>th</i>	<i>(d)</i>		<i>n</i>
<i>p</i>	<i>ph</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>(bh)</i>	<i>m</i>

<i>y</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>l</i>	<i>w</i>
	<i>s</i>	<i>h</i>	<i>ʔ</i>

Vowel phonemes

<i>i/ī</i>	<i>u/ū</i>
<i>ē</i>	<i>ō</i>
<i>ɛ/ɛ̄</i>	<i>ə</i>
	<i>ɔ/ɔ̄</i>
	<i>a/ā</i>

The occurrence of loan phonemes is restricted to a rather limited set of Nepali loans specified in 1.2. The Limbu consonant system devoid of non-native phonemes may be schematized in the following way:

<i>b</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>ph</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>w</i>		
	<i>t</i>	<i>th</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>l</i>
	<i>c</i>				<i>y</i>	
	<i>k</i>	<i>kh</i>		<i>ŋ</i>		
	<i>ʔ</i>		<i>h</i>			

2 1. Phonology and phonetics

Nepali loans show the tendency to assimilate to this native phoneme system. For example, the word *khyu* 'ghee, clarified butter' is a loan from Nepali *ghiu*. A bilingual Limbu may say *ṭika* 'ṭīkā-powder' from Nepali *ṭīkā*, whereas speakers who have either no or a very limited command of Nepali tend to say *tika*, substituting a native dental for the alien retroflex. Similarly, a bilingual speaker may say *la·lṭi·n* 'kerosene lamp' [< Nep. *lālṭīn*] where the monolingual Limbu says *la·lti·n*.

The adaptation of loans to the native phoneme system is not limited to the voice assimilation of plosives and dentalization of retroflexes. Limbu *ka·ndruk* (type of vegetable condiment) comes from Nepali *gundruk*, where it seems that modifying *gundruk* to **kundruk* would have sufficed. There seems to be no reason for the change of vowel other than that the resultant form perhaps 'sounds more Limbu' as a consequence. The same probably holds for *karāhi* 'wok' from Nepali *karāhī*. It is apparently in deference to native syllable structure (1.3) that Nepali *iskus* 'vegetable marrow' occurs in Limbu as *sikus*, with the unacceptable pre-consonantal /s/ comfortably metathesized to word-initial position.

Loans which are not at variance with native phonology in their original form are adopted unscathed, eg. *sirak* 'quilt' [< Nep. *sirak*], *phitta* 'kerosene lamp wick' [< Nep. *phittā*]. Other unadapted loans appear to be of more recent origin, eg. *ḍhiki* 'rice thrasher' [< Nep. *ḍhikī*], *bhiḍiyo* 'video' [< Nep. *bhīḍiyo*].

1.2. Allophones and phonetic description of Limbu phonemes

Consonants - native phonemes

/k/	syllable-initially: unaspirated voiceless dorso-velar plosive	[k]
	syllable-finally: the same, unreleased with simultaneous glottal stop	[k̚]
	after a nasal, glottal stop or intervocalically: unaspirated voiced dorso-velar plosive	[g],
	rarely	[k],
	eg. in the loan <i>ma·ki</i> 'maize'.	
/kh/	aspirated voiceless dorso-velar plosive after a nasal or glottal stop and	[k ^h]

	intervocally: aspirated voiced dorso-velar plosive	[g ^h],
	rarely	[k ^h],
	eg. <i>mi-kho-ʔ</i> 'smoke', <i>ma-khi</i> 'blood'.	
/ŋ/	voiced dorso-velar nasal	[ŋ]
/t/	syllable-initially: unaspirated voiceless apico-dental plosive	[t]
	word-internally syllable-finally: unreleased with simultaneous glottal stop	[t̚]
	word-finally or before /ʔ/ or /h/: lateralized preceded by a glottal stop	[ʔl]
	after a nasal, glottal stop or intervocally: unaspirated voiced apico-dental plosive	[d]
/th/	aspirated voiceless apico-dental plosive	[t ^h]
	after a nasal, glottal stop or intervocally: aspirated voiced apico-dental plosive	[d ^h]
/n/	voiced apico-dental nasal	[n]
/p/	syllable-initially: unaspirated voiceless bilabial plosive	[p]
	syllable-finally: unreleased with simultaneous glottal stop	[p̚]
	after a nasal, glottal stop or intervocally: unaspirated voiced bilabial plosive	[b]
/b/	unaspirated voiced bilabial plosive	[b];
	in a considerable number of loans ¹ , the hybrid <i>biha-ndik</i> 'morning' and the native words <i>ke·b</i> 'tiger', <i>ke·b</i> (also <i>ke·ʔe·ba</i>) 'mute', <i>la·b</i> 'moon' (and its derivatives <i>la·bbutthun</i> 'lunar foam', <i>la·bbherik</i> 'counter-clockwise', <i>la·b-ne·tti</i> 'lunar cord'), <i>la·bbhək</i> 'tuber'	

¹ viz. *badam* 'peanuts', *baḍkyo·la* 'shit pellet', *badza* 'musical instrument', *bakulla* 'crane', *balla* 'at last', *barne·* 'ought', *ba·ha·n* 'one time (in distillation)',

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and *la·bdzo·kma?* 'cost'.

/b/ has an optional intervocalic/post-nasal allophone in the form of voiced median labial-velar approximant

[w],

eg. */nuba/* as either [nuba] or [nuwa],
/co·gunba/ as either [tʃo·gunba] or [tʃo·gunwa], */ande·ben/* [ande·wen].

/ph/

aspirated voiceless bilabial plosive after a nasal, glottal stop or intervocalically: aspirated voiced bilabial plosive

[p^h]

rarely

[b^h],

eg. *pa·nphe·* 'village'.

[p^h],

/m/

voiced bilabial nasal

[m]

/c/

unaspirated voiceless lamino-postalveolar affricate

[tʃ]

after a nasal, glottal stop or intervocalically: unaspirated voiced lamino-postalveolar affricate

[dʒ]

/l/

1. initially in full words: voiced apico-alveolar lateral approximant
 eg. */luŋ/* [luŋ]

[l],

2. syllable-initially in word-internal position and word-initially in clitics:

In these positions the phoneme */l/* has two allophones, the laminoalveolar trill and the voiced apico-alveolar lateral approximant

[r]

[l].

These two allophones occur in complementary distribution in all affixes and parts of speech, with the exception of nouns taking possessive prefixes and the second members of a few

ba·kas 'box', *ba·ni* 'habit', *ba·ri* 'garden', *ba·ula* 'sleeve', *be·l* 'bel-tree', *be·la* 'period', *bəm* 'bomb', *bətti* 'lamp', *biha* 'marriage', *bihiba·r* 'Thursday', *budhəba·r* 'Wednesday', *hisa·b* 'arithmetic', *talab* 'salary' and *subba* (ethnonym).

composita. The distribution is such that [r] occurs after vowels and glottal stop, [l] elsewhere:

/l/ → [r] / { $\begin{matrix} V \\ ? \end{matrix} \} \text{ — , except in some composita}^2$

/l/ → [l] / { $\begin{matrix} C \\ \text{(except ?)} \end{matrix} \} \text{ —}$

In older composita such as *mikwara·p* 'bat' (< *mikwa* 'tear' + *la·p* 'wing'), intervocalic /l/ is realized as [r], whereas in composita of probably more recent date, /l/ retains its word-initial realization, eg. *ha?luŋ* 'fireplace-stone' (< *ha* 'tooth' + *luŋ* 'stone'), with a linking glottal stop not uncommon in composita.³ Similarly, this rule does not apply when a productive prefix is attached to a noun beginning with /l/, eg. *ku-la·p* 'its wing'.

eg.

genitive suffix:	
<i>menda?-re ku-sa?</i>	(goat-GEN its-offspring) 'the goat's offspring'
<i>phak-le ku-mi</i>	(pig-GEN its-tail) 'the pig's tail'
<i>pha-re siŋ</i>	(bamboo-GEN wood) 'the wood of bamboo'
<i>mik-le raŋ</i>	(eye-GEN colour) 'the colour of the eyes'
<i>ku-la·p-le ku-raŋ</i>	(its-wing-GEN its-colour) 'the colour of its wings'

² I have often heard bilingual Limbus confuse Nepalese /r/ and /l/ in their Nepali, eg. *āmā re* for *āmā le* 'mother (ERG)'.

³ eg. *wətchya?dɔk* 'cooked rice' < *wətchya* 'uncooked rice' + *tɔk* 'cooked grain, *bhāt*'

clitic *lɔk/rɔk* 'only':

angaʔin-lɔk-ʔi (mine-only-Q) 'Mine only?'
anchi-rɔk-le-i (we^{di}-only-GEN-Q)
 'Only ours^{di}?'

in verbs:

wameranʔe 'They'll make me wet.'
wamenlanʔen 'They won't make me wet.'

assertive particle *lo·/ro·*:

keniŋwa məye ro·! 'You've lost your mind!'
anga pe-gan lo·! 'I'm off!'

deprehensative particle *ləcə/rəcə*:

ma-ŋgha kennisun ləcə 'You seem to be myopic'
kəŋ lɛ·su rəcə 'He appears to know'

As a result of this distribution, intervocalic /l/ is realized as [r] or, when geminate, as [ll]. Occasionally we find idiolectal doublets like *yərik* alongside *yəllik*, both 'much, many'.

3. syllable-finally: in loans

[l],

eg. *be·l*. Some loans with syllable-final [l] are re-analyzed as ending in final /t/, eg. Nep. *syāl* 'jackal' > *syaʔl* (= /syat/), Nep. *rumāl* 'handkerchief' > *rumaʔl* (= /rumat/). In native words /l/ does not occur syllable-finally except as part of an intervocalic geminate.

4. as the second member of an initial cluster:

[r],

eg. *cɔkkrɔkma* 'uvula', *phuphudre* 'elder sister's husband (female speaking)', *sangatra* 'citrus fruit', *lɔtthrake* 'tree squirrel'. Initial clusters containing /l/ as a post-consonantal glide are never word-initial.

/r/	lamino-alveolar trill word-initially: only in the loans <i>ru-maʔl</i> 'handkerchief', <i>rupi</i> 'rupī-bird', <i>raŋ</i> 'colour'. syllable-initially in word-internal position: eg. <i>khɔ·mre·ʔ</i> 'peach tree', <i>samrippa</i> 'silhouette'. syllable-finally: in loans, eg. <i>pi·r</i> 'suffering', <i>pardzo·kmaʔ</i> 'be situated', and in the onomatopoea <i>phirli·</i> 'whirling'.	[r]
/w/	voiced median labial-velar approximant	[w]
/y/	voiced median palatal approximant	[j]
/s/	voiceless lamino-alveolar fricative after /t/ or /n/: voiceless aspirated lamino-postalveolar affricate	[s] [tʃ ^h] ⁴
/h/	voiced glottal fricative [ɦ]	
/ʔ/	syllable-finally: non-released glottal stop syllable-initially in word-internal position: released glottal stop	[ʔ'] [ʔ]

Consonants - loan phonemes

/g/	unaspirated voiced dorso-velar plosive occurs in the loans <i>ga·ro·</i> 'wall', <i>go·li</i> 'bullet' and <i>gundri</i> (often [<i>kundri</i>]) 'straw mat'. ⁶	[g]; ⁵
/gh/	aspirated voiced dorso-velar plosive in one loan [<i>g^ha·s</i>] 'fodder'.	[g ^h],

⁴ Confusion of the Nepali phonemes /ch/ and /s/ is characteristic of the Nepali of some bilingual Limbus, eg. *chirāunu* for *sirāunu* (= Limbu *li·mmaʔ*) 'pass through a hole, thread, insert'.

⁵ The particle *gɔ·*, /kɔ·/, does not occur clause-initially, and clause-internally it most often appears in a voiced environment. Its glossary form is therefore given

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/d/	unaspirated voiced apico-dental plosive in the loans <i>ḡa·ri</i> 'beard', <i>ḡarta</i> 'registration' and <i>ḡoi</i> 'yoghurt'. ⁷	[ḡ];
/bh/	aspirated voiced bilabial plosive in the loans <i>bhiḡiyo·</i> 'video', <i>bhitra</i> 'inside', <i>bhitta</i> 'the walls', <i>bheḡṭa</i> 'eggplant' and in the word <i>bha·tra</i> 'forest fire' which I believe to be of Indo-Aryan etymology.	[b ^h];
/dz/	unaspirated voiced lamino-postalveolar affricate in the loans <i>dzanti</i> 'participants in a procession', <i>dze·</i> 'that which', <i>dzilla</i> 'district', <i>dzoro·</i> 'fever', ⁸ <i>dzun</i> 'that which', <i>dzutta</i> 'shoe'. ⁹	[dz],
/dzh/	aspirated voiced lamino-postalveolar affricate in the lone loan <i>dzhan</i> 'even more so, yet more'.	[dz ^h]
/ṭ/	unaspirated voiceless retroflex in <i>ṭika</i> 'ṭīkā-powder' (also <i>tika</i> and <i>bheḡṭa</i> 'eggplant').	[ṭ],
/ṭh/	aspirated voiceless retroflex in <i>ṭhikai</i> 'right' ¹⁰ and <i>ko·ṭha</i> 'room', <i>muṭhi</i> 'fist'.	[ṭ ^h],
/ḡ/	unaspirated voiced retroflex in the loans <i>ḡasana</i> 'mattress', <i>ḡo·li</i> 'palanquin', <i>baḡkyo·la</i> 'shit pellet', <i>cuḡe·l</i> (type of apparition).	[ḡ],

as *gɔ·*. Following a word ending in a voiceless plosive,
gɔ·, /kɔ·/, is realized as [kɔ·]. See also 1.5.

⁶ alongside native *lo·tna* 'straw mat'.

⁷ alongside native *nudak* 'yoghurt'.

⁸ alongside native *tun* 'fever'.

⁹ alongside native *lanṣup* 'shoe'.

¹⁰ alongside native *nu* 'right', *po·ṇ* 'alright', *lo* 'O.K.'

/dʰ/	aspirated voiced retroflex in the loan <i>dʰiki</i> 'rice thrasher'.	[dʰ̠̚],
/ŋ/	voiced retroflex nasal in <i>bheŋʈa</i> 'eggplant' and in the affected pronunciation by some bilingual speakers of Nepali proper names containing Nepali <i>ŋ</i> .	[ŋ̠̚].

Whereas /p/ and /k/ each have a single syllable-final allophone, [p̚] and [k̚] respectively, /t/ has two syllable-final allophones: [ʔ̚] and [ʔl̚]. The lateral variety is the prepausal allophone, occurring before a word boundary or before the glottal phonemes /h/ and /ʔ/. In word-internal position, syllable-final /t/ deletes a following glottal stop but is realized as its lateral allophone [ʔl̚] notwithstanding. In this way, the distinctiveness of syllable-initial /ʔ/ is not lost: /VtʔV/ → [VʔlV], eg. [mɛbheʔlɛn] /mɛ-phɛt-ʔɛ-n/ 'I shall not fetch it', [mɛŋgaʔle·wa:] /mɛn-kat-ʔe·wa/ 'he did not have it transported'. Compare with this the voiced allophone of /t/ in intervocalic position: /VtV/ → [Vq̠V], eg. [kubo·q̠ɛn] /kupo·tɛn/ 'his position in society', [kɛq̠a] /kɛta/ 'you'll come'.

Similarly, a syllable-final glottal stop cancels a following syllable-initial glottal stop: /VʔʔV/ → [VʔV], eg. [naʔmɛnuʔɛn] /naʔ-mɛ-nuʔ-ʔɛ-n/ 'he doesn't love me', [ho·ʔo·lam] /ho·ʔ-ʔo·-lam/ 'from inside the furuncle'.

Internasal glottal stop is sometimes not realized in allegro speech, eg. /huʔmʔna/: [huʔmʔna] or [huʔmna].

The following minimal pairs and near minimal pairs illustrate the distinctiveness of glottal stop vis-à-vis the glottalized syllable-final allophones of /p/, /t/ and /k/:

/ʔ/ - ø: *yumaʔ* 'come down', *yuma* 'grandma'; *he·ʔmaʔ* 'be able to', *he·maʔ* 'dry in the sun (something inedible), dry by the fire'; *taʔmaʔ* 'bring, fetch', *tamaʔ* 'come'; *pe·ʔ/pe·gɛʔ* 'go!', *pe·/pe·gɛ* 'he went'; *pi·nɛ* 'I'll give it to you^s', *pinʔɛ* 'I jump'; *kuhiʔ* 'its chaff', *kuhi* 'its shit'; *saʔ* 'child', *sa* 'meat'; *puʔ* 'it'll get severed', *pu* 'bird'; *saʔmaʔ* 'visit', *samaʔ* 'deliver'; *waʔ* 'hen', *wa·* 'there is'.

/p/ - ø: *sapmaʔ* 'write', *samaʔ* 'deliver'; (piʔlin) *mɛghe·pʔɛn* 'I won't yoke (the cow)', *mɛghe·ʔɛn* 'I won't quarrel'; *lup* 'leech', *lu* 'well'; *ho·pmaʔ* 'burst open', *ho·maʔ* 'bark'.

/t/ - ø: *syaʔl* 'jackal, sting', *sya* 'uncooked rice'; *sɛtchu* 'they^d killed him', *sɛsu* 'they^d scattered it'; *puʔl*

'it'll get mixed', *pu* 'bird'; *an̄ghət̄n̄en* 'we're^{pi} not hoarse', *an̄ghə·n̄en* 'we're^{pi} not going to utter incantations'; *m̄ema·t̄n̄en* 'it won't get used up', *m̄ema·n̄en* 'it won't get lost'.

/k/ - ø: *s̄endik* 'night', *s̄endi* 'good-bye (1pi/ADH)'; *phak* 'swine'; *pha* 'bamboo'; *ko·kma?* 'prop up', *ko·ma?* 'stand guard'; *ɔ·kma?* 'cry', *ɔ·ma?* 'drool'; *ya·k* 'gift', (*k̄emik*) *ya·* '(you'll) be horrified'.

/ʔ/ - /p/: *saʔma?* 'visit someone', *sapma?* 'write'; *m̄chaʔn̄en* 'it won't catch on fire', *mahap̄n̄en* 'it won't get stuck (up there)'; *ho·ʔ* 'furuncle', *ho·p* 'there is not'; *liʔ* 'slingshot', *lip* 'it's heavy'.

/ʔ/ - /t/: *puʔ* 'it'll get severed', *puʔl* 'it'll get mixed'; *m̄esəʔʔ̄en* 'I shall not knead it', *m̄esəʔl̄en* 'I shall not be glad'; *k̄embh̄eʔn̄en* 'he won't give you anything to sit on', *k̄embh̄et̄n̄en* 'he won't squeeze you'.

/ʔ/ - /k/: *h̄eʔma?* 'get or become shattered', *h̄ekma?* 'cut with a sickle'; *t̄aʔma?* 'bring, fetch', *t̄akma?* 'fetch (water), tap'; *saʔ* 'child', *sak* 'it is difficult'.

Despite the great phonetic similarity between glottal stop and the non-aspirate plosives in syllable-final position, even a non-native speaker of Limbu who has difficulty hearing the difference in any given case can distinguish them easily through observing the allophonic variation of /s/ and /l/ which they condition. The lateral is rhotacized following a glottal stop or vowel, but not following /p/, /t/ or /k/, eg. *thik m̄endaʔ r̄ək* 'only one goat', *thik phak l̄ək* 'only one pig'. Dual morphemes, which invariably contain initial /s/, have a different allophone following /t/ than after /ʔ/, eg. *l̄ət-ch-u* 'they^d swallowed it', *l̄əʔ-si* 'they^d seem'.

The mutual distinctiveness of the syllable-final allophones of /p/, /t/ and /k/ (viz. [ʔ], [ʔ̄]/[ʔl] and [ʔ̄]) is illustrated by the following minimal pairs and near minimal pairs:

/t/ - /k/: *khamda·ʔl*, *khamda·tma* 'spider', *khamda·k* 'hard palate'; *pyaʔl* 'cricket', *pyak* 'slap'; *m̄esa·ttu* 'they derided him', *m̄esa·ktu* 'they castrated him'.

/p/ - /k/: *sapma?* 'write', *sakma?* 'be difficult'; *la·p* 'wing', (*ase·ʔl*) *la·k* '(I'm) hungry'; *tupma?* 'sweep', *tukma?* 'ache'; *luk* 'it'll be completed', *lup* 'leech'.

/p/ - /t/: *k̄emenlep̄n̄en* 'they won't hit you (with a projectile)', *k̄emenl̄et̄n̄en* 'they won't release you'; *ha·ptu* 'he mourned for him', *ha·ttu* 'he portioned it out'; (*piʔlin*) *m̄eghe·ptu* 'they yoked (the bull)', *m̄eghe·ttu* 'they fought about it'.

The following minimal pairs illustrate the distinctiveness of the aspirated and non-aspirated plosives:

/k/ - /kh/: *ko·reʔl* 'clay slingshot pellet', *kho·reʔl* 'type of bowl'; *keŋ* 'he'll stumble and fall', *khəŋ* 'that, he, she'; *kəŋ* 'this, he, she', *khəŋ* 'he'll get hit with a stick'; (*saʔhaʔ*) *məgəktu* 'they'll bear (young)', (*siŋ*) *məgəktu* 'they'll chop (wood)'.

/t/ - /th/: *təkpeʔl* 'straight up', *tho·kpeʔl* 'rhododendron'; *təʔl* 'leaf', *thəʔl* 'spit'; *tək* 'cooked rice', *thək* 'body'; *kədaktwi·* 'are you going to show it to him?', *kədhaktwi·* 'did you bring it up?'; *mədəŋ* 'they shall meet', *mədhəŋ* 'they'll engage in combat'.

/p/ - /ph/: *pe·ʔmaʔl* 'vomit (n.)', *phe·ʔmaʔl* 'fart (n.)'; *pu* 'bird', *phu* 'elder brother'; *pe·ʔrum* 'let's vomit on it (1pi/ADH)', *phe·ʔrum* 'meal, flour'; *pakma* 'second wife', *phakma* 'sow'; *kəbənchusi* 'you lined them up', *kəbənchusi* 'you handed them across'.

The rarity of the phoneme /b/ accounts for the scantness of the following set of minimal pairs:

/p/ - /b/: *khənəʔ* *kə·pnei·ʔ* 'shall I pinch you?', *khənəʔ* *kə·bnei·ʔ* 'are you mute?'; *la·p* 'wing', *la·b* 'moon'.

The phonemes /y/ and /w/ occur both as syllable initials and as post-consonantal glides. Their distinctiveness as glides is illustrated by the following sets of minimal pairs and near minimal pairs:

/y/ - ø: *mənchya* 'maiden', *mənchaʔ* 'grandchild'; *sya* 'uncooked rice', *sa* 'meat'; *kəbyəŋsi* 'your rice terraces', *kəbəŋsi* 'he sent youP'.

/w/ - ø: *cwaʔl* 'water', *ca·ʔl* 'game'; *twaba* 'forehead', *taba* 'he's on his way'.

/y/ - /w/: *syaʔl* 'jackal, sting', *swaʔl* 'silent'.

Distinctivity of the three nasal phonemes, /m/, /n/ and /ŋ/, is illustrated by the following minimal pairs:

/m/ - /ŋ/: *yum* 'salt', *yun* 'sits'; *lim* 'tastes sweet', *liŋ* 'thatching; grows; begins to shine'; *nim* 'ant, termite', *niŋ* 'poison'; *tim* 'fills up', *ti·ŋ* 'thorn'; *sim* 'woman's dress', *siŋ* 'wood'; *him* 'house', *hiŋ* 'survives'.

/m/ - /n/: *miŋ* 'name', *niŋ* 'poison'; *kəsa·m* 'he's preparing to strike you', *kəsa·n* 'your child (ABS)'; *kuna·m* 'its scent', *kuna·n* 'his face (ABS)'; *ləmsi* 'kidneys', *lənchi* 'they'll^d slide out of place'.

/n/ - /ŋ/: *thi·n* 'egg', *thi·ŋmaʔ* 'retract one's foreskin'; *məbhunʔən* 'I won't dislodge it', *məbhunʔən* 'I won't scrape it together'; *lən* 'it'll slide out of place', *ləŋ* 'he wanders about lost'; *po·n* 'abounds', *po·ŋ* 'alright'.

Doubling of consonants is distinctive. The phonetic difference between doubled and non-doubled consonants is often considerable. Intervocalic /l/ is rhotacized [r] except when it is geminate [ll]. Intervocalically plosives tend to be voiced, whereas doubled plosives are unvoiced, eg. *ye·ba* /ye·pa/ 'he has come', *ye·ppa* /ye·ppa/ 'he is laughing'. Even when there is no great phonetic dissimilarity between doubled and non-doubled realization of a phoneme, as with the nasals, doubling is the distinctive presence of an additional phoneme, eg. *kennunenni·?* 'aren't you feeling alright?', *kennu·nnenni·?* 'aren't you ashamed?'.

Notwithstanding all afore-mentioned distinctions, homophony abounds in Limbu. For example, some forms of the verbs *setma?* 'kill a sacrificial animal in honour of a new guest' and *se?ma?* 'kill' are embarrassingly homophonous: *setm?nasi* (1pi→3ns) 'we killed some people/we killed some sacrificial animals (*phudo·ŋ*) in honour of a new guest', *settetchuge* (1de→3s/PT) 'we killed him/we slaughtered a *phudo·ŋ* for a new guest'.

Vowel phonemes

/i/	short unrounded front high vowel before a nasal: often lowered to eg. /liŋ/ [liŋ] 'thatching'	[i] [ɪ],
/i·/	long unrounded front high vowel	[i:]
/u/	short rounded back high vowel	[u]
/u·/	long rounded back high vowel	[u:]
/e·/	unrounded half-long mid-high front vowel	[e·]
/ə/	short unrounded mid vowel	[ə]
/o·/	rounded half-long mid-high back vowel before a nasal: often raised to eg. /siŋbo·ŋ/ [siŋbɔ·ŋ]	[o·] [ɔ·],
/ɛ/	unrounded short mid-low front vowel	[ɛ]
/ɛ·/	unrounded long mid-low front vowel	[ɛ:]

/ɔ/	unrounded short mid-low back vowel regular allophone in after bilabials	[ʌ] [ɔ]
/ɔː/	unrounded long mid-low back vowel	[ʌ:]
/a/	short unrounded mid central	[a]
/aː/	long unrounded mid central	[a:]

Long vowels are often realized with pharyngealized voice or 'creak'. The creak is particularly pronounced in long /uː/, eg. *su·ma?* 'be late'. In the verb stems of *yu?ma?*, *-yu·r-/yu?*- 'bring down', a long creaky vowel alternates with glottal stop.

Vowel length is distinctive, both in closed and open syllables. Only the half-long vowels /eː/ and /oː/ and the rare mid-vowel /ə/ do not partake in the length opposition. Some minimal pairs are given below:

/i/ - /iː/: *i* 'hair (on one's scalp)', *i·* 'he wanders'; *pipma?*, *pittuŋ* 'jump, I jump over it (vertically)', *pi·pma?*, *pi·ttuŋ* 'suck, I suck it'; *si* 'he will die', *si·* 'wheat'; *ki?ɛ* 'I'm afraid', *ki·?ɛ* 'I'm rotting'.

/ɛ/ - /ɛː/: *abhe* 'he'll lay down matting for us', *abhe·* 'he'll release us [birds]'; *medheŋ?enchiŋ* 'I won't pen them in', *medhe·ŋ?enchiŋ* 'I won't tear them'; *keghɛksu* 'you dried it (meat)', *keghɛ·ksu* 'you chipped it'; *tɛpma?* 'consent to give', *tɛ·pma?* 'become overcooked'.

/a/ - /aː/: *kamma?* 'tuck in', *kha·mma?* 'yawn'; *keyaŋ lo·* 'hey, you'll get hit (by a projectile)', *keya·ŋ lo·* 'hey, you'll get dizzy (up there)'; *maŋ* 'deity', *ma·ŋ* 'it is far'; *yaŋ* 'money', *ya·ŋ* 'he is dizzy'; *haŋ* 'king', *ha·ŋ* 'it will taste spicy'; *anaŋ* 'we^{P1} shall go crazy', *ana·ŋ* 'my younger siblings (of the same sex as I am)'; *laŋ* 'leg, foot', *la·ŋ* 'dances'; *laktu* 'it's boiling', *la·ktu* 'he tramples underfoot'; *kɛdaŋba* (*cum*) 'intimate (friend)', *kɛda·ŋba* 'tree-feller'; *mɛsaktu* 'they locked him up', *mɛsa·ktu* 'they castrated him'.

/ɔ/ - /ɔː/: *mɛlɔtchun* 'they^d won't swallow it', *mɛlɔ·tchun* 'they^d won't pay'; *mɛmɔ?ɛn* 'I shall not dig', *mɛmɔ·?ɛn* 'it won't get me drunk'; *pɔndammɛ?* 'mould it!', *pɔ·ndammɛ?* 'disperse!'; *khɔma?* 'jot down', *khɔ·ma?* 'utter incantations'; *mɛdɔŋnɛn* 'it doesn't make any sense', *mɛdɔ·ŋnɛn* 'it's not short'.

/u/ - /uː/: *yu* 'comes down', *yu·* 'is in effect'; *tun* 'fever', *tu·ŋ* 'it will bend'; *mɛsuptu* 'they took draughts through their *pi·tchiŋs*', *mɛsu·ptu* 'they capped it'; *tukma?*

'hurt', *tu·kma?* 'sweep'; *pu?* 'it will get severed', *pu·?* 'it will boil over'.

The distinctive quality of vowel height is demonstrated by the following minimal pairs:

/i/ - /e·/, /i/ - /ε/: *khi* 'thread', *khe·* 'yam'; *lim* 'is sweet', *le·m* 'is slippery'; *tim* 'gets full', *tεm* 'grabs a hold of'; *pɔʔiʔl* 'cucumber', *pɔʔe·ʔl* 'winnowing basket'; *sendi* 'good-bye (1pi/ADH)', *sεnde* 'split up'; *phik* 'talks loudly', *phεk* 'unfolds, blooms, unfurls'.

/e·/ - /ε, ε·/: *pe·ma?* 'vomit', *pε·ma?* 'fly'; *ye·ppa* 'he is laughing', *yεppa* 'standing'; *phe·suŋ* 'I farted', *phe·suŋ* 'I let fly'; *ke·b* 'tiger', *kε·b* 'mute'; *khe·ŋ* 'fishing rod', *kheŋ* 'that'; *ke·mba* 'tall', *kεmba* 'your father'; *le·m* 'is slippery', *lεm* 'kidney'.

/ε/ - /a/: *tεm* 'grabs a hold of', *ta·m* 'refuse (n.)'; *phεk* 'unfolds, blooms, unfurls', *phak* 'swine'; *lεm* 'kidney', *lam* 'way'; *sεma?* 'spill, scatter', *sama?* 'deliver'.

/a/ - /ɔ/: *saŋma?* 'splutter', *soŋma?* 'sell'; *phak* 'swine', *phɔk* 'explodes'; *pa·ʔl* 'talks', *pɔ·ʔl* 'fungus'; *kεdɔŋba* (*cum*) 'intimate (friend)', *kεdɔŋba* 'your *tuŋbā*'.

/ɔ, ɔ·/ - /o·/: *pɔŋ* 'kicks up (of wind)', *po·ŋ* 'all right'; *pɔ·ʔl* 'fungus', *po·ʔl* 'he'll lose his way'.

/o·/ - /u/: *po·ʔl* 'he'll lose his way', *puʔl* 'misses'.

/i/ - /u/: *piʔl* 'bull, cow', *puʔl* 'it will become blended'.

/ε/ - /ə/ - /a/: *εn* 'today', *ən* 'horse', *ando·* 'later', *ande·* 'before'.

Whispered vowels occur regularly in Limbu. Their devoiced quality is subphonemic. The vowels /i/ and /u/ may become voiceless in unstressed position in lengthy words, eg. /*niseʔtɕhɔge·*/ [*niseʔtɕhɔge·*] 'we^{de} saw it', /*hipsusi·ge·*/ [*hipsusi·ge·*] 'we^{de} hit them', /*miksɔrumba*/ [*miʔksɔrumba*] 'blind', /*siradɔŋba*/ [*sɪradɔŋba*] 'pleasing'.

The phenomenon of harmonic neutralization affects these same two vowels, /i/ and /u/, and also their long counterparts /i·/ and /u·/. In an environment containing back vowels, /i, i·/ may become [u, u·], and in an environment containing front vowels, /u, u·/ may become [i, i·] in allegro speech, eg. *mεbhukusu mεbu·ru* 'they mixed it all up' for *mεbhukusu mεbi·ru*.

Nasalization of vowels is not distinctive except in the Limbu word for 'yes', *ã*, and in a small number of Nepali loans, eg. *culēsi* (cutting implement). Vowels may be phonetically nasalized before a nasal consonant.¹¹

¹¹ At this subphonemic level of description, however, it

Stress in Limbu is not very pronounced and is non-distinctive. Stress is marked in glossary entries by a stress mark ['] before the stressed vowel, and is indicated only when it is not predictable. Unless otherwise indicated: affixes, whether inflectional or derivational, are never stressed. Verbs and deverbatives are always stressed on the root. Nouns and other parts of speech are stressed on the first syllable.

1.3. The Limbu word

The phonological word consists of one or more syllables. Two features which define the word as a phonological unit are hiatus and syllable structure and type.

1.3.1. Hiatus

Hiatus is the phenomenon whereby a glottal stop occurs (1) preceding a vowel in word-initial position,¹² or (2) intervocalically in word-internal position. Hiatus prevents diphthongisation. Aside from loan words, eg. *ba·ula* 'sleeve' [< Nep. *bāhulā*>], diphthongs in Limbu occur only in forms with affixed interrogative particle <-i·> (6.4) or vocative suffix <-e·> (2.4.5) which do not exhibit glottal hiatus.¹³

/a·i·r·ε/	[ʔaʔi:rε]	We ^P wandered.
/hi-a-e·s-ε-tch-u/	[hiʔaʔe·sεtʃ ^h u]	We ^{di} shat.
/khunεʔ ku-inghəŋ hən wa·/	[khunεʔ kuʔinghəŋ hən wa:]	What's his news?

becomes arbitrary what portion of the myriad of phonetic data one wishes to describe and what details one wishes to leave undescribed. For example, *khamakmaʔ* 'get dark', rapidly uttered, comes out [*khamaʔŋ*]. It is not the author's intention in this grammar to provide an exhaustive description of all but the most conspicuous phonetic regularities.

¹² Glottal hiatus occurs before vowel-initial verb roots, even when word-internal.

¹³ For the sake of convenience, the second nasal of nasals doubled before the vocative or interrogative endings are treated as a feature of the ending.

Glottal hiatus does not occur word-internally following a consonant. Except in intervocalic position, word-internal glottal stop is phonemic and distinctive.

<i>yʉɛ</i>	He sat down.	<i>pɛ·gɛ</i>	He went.
<i>yʉŋʔɛ</i>	I'm sitting.	<i>pɛ·kʔɛ</i>	I'm going.
<i>yʉŋɛʔ</i>	Sit down!	<i>pɛ·gɛʔ</i>	Go!

1.3.2. Syllable structure

The canonical syllable structure¹⁴ observed in native Limbu may be schematized as follows:

$$(C_i (G)) V (C_f)$$

A syllable may consist of only a vowel or of a syllabic nasal (V). Except in the case of the interrogative suffix *-i·* or the vocative ending *-e·*, consecutive vocalic syllables are separated through glottal hiatus (1.3.1). Diphthongized syllables containing either of these two suffixes have no syllable-final consonant or coda (*C_f*). In syllables with an initial consonant or onset (*C_i*), the nucleus is not a nasal.

The set of phonemes which occur as onset is: /*k, kh, c, t, th, n, p, ph, m, y, l, w, s, h*/¹⁵ and, in word-internal position, also /*ʔ*/ and /*ŋ*/. Additionally, in a limited number of loan words, the following loan phonemes may occur as onsets: /*g, gh, dz, dzh, ʈ, ʈh, ɖ, ɖh, d, b, bh, r*/.

The set of codas consists of: /*k, ŋ, t, th*/,¹⁶ *n, p,*

¹⁴ Aside from loans, eg. *haphta*, the only exceptions are the word *hɔ·ndge·k* 'lizard', *wiʔsma* [ʔ< *wiʔsɯma*] 'another kind of', *hɔʔmaʔŋ* 'sleep (n.)' and some onomatopoeic expressions, eg. *pətslək-pətslək* 'slosh-slosh'. *Cemjoñ* (2018 V.S.) lists *hondigek* for 'lizard', but the pronunciations *hɔ·ndəge·k, hɔ·ndige·k* etc. are rejected.

¹⁵ Although *Păcthare* dialect speakers in the vicinity of *Yaśok* on the far side of the *Tamor* have retained /*ŋ*/ in word-initial position, it has disappeared in this position in *Phedāppe* and been replaced by /*n*/, eg. *Păcthare* Limbu /*ŋa*/ 'fish', *Phedāppe* Limbu /*na*/ (cf. Bur. *ŋà*, Tib. *ñā*); *Păcthare* Limbu /*ŋasi*/ 'five', *Phedāppe* Limbu /*nasi*/ (cf. Bur. *ŋà*, Tib. *lña*).

¹⁶ eg. *adhge·k* 'my head'.

ph,¹⁷ b, m, ʔ/ and, as the onset of an intervocalic geminate, /l/.

The phonemes /y, w/ and /l/ may occur as a post-consonantal glide (G), the latter in the form of its allophone [r], eg. *swaʔl* 'quiet', *syaʔl* 'sting', *cwaʔl* 'water', *pyak* 'slap', *sammyaŋ* 'gold', *twaba* 'forehead', *pe·kkɾəkna* (type of bird), *kikkɾəkna* (type of bird), *hɔ·mbrikwa* 'sweat', *kumbhrɛ·ŋ* 'one half', *nadha·kkriŋ* 'deaf'. The post-consonantal glide /l/ never occurs in the initial syllable of a word.

Intervocalic voiced plosives and intervocalic /ŋ/ are ambisyllabic. The allophone of /t/ preceding a glottal stop initial syllable, [ʔl], straddles both syllables, eg. *piʔl* + *-ʔin* → *piʔlin* [*piʔ-lin*] 'cow (ABS)'.¹

1.4. Assimilation and dissimilation:

Various types of assimilation are common in Limbu: (a) regressive assimilation of dentals to labials, (b) homorganicity of consecutive nasal phonemes, (c) velarization of dental /n/, (d) optional regressive lateralization of nasal, (e) morphologically restricted glottal stop assimilation to nasals, and (f) voice assimilation of initial plosives across word boundaries.

Dissimilation is rare. The only attested case involves the demonstrative *kheŋ* and is discussed on p.19.

(a) Virtually without exception is the rule that dental phonemes regressively assimilate for place of articulation to bilabial phonemes:

$$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} /t/ \rightarrow [p] \\ /n/ \rightarrow [m] \end{array} \right\} / \text{ — } \left\{ \begin{array}{l} /m/ \\ /p/ \end{array} \right\}$$

eg. */mɛ-n-kɔt-mʔna-haʔ* *ke-kɔt-pa-haʔ* [*mɛŋgɔpmʔnahaʔ* *kegɔp-pahaʔ*] 'the haves and the have-nots', */mɛ-n-mɛt-paŋ/* [*mɛm-mɛppaŋ*] 'I did not tell him', */ɔ·mɔt-maʔ/* [*ɔ:mɔpmaʔ*] 'to look at', */ke·t-mʔna-bɛ-n/* [*ke·pmʔnabɛn*] 'the inserted', */ke·t-maʔ/* [*ke·pmaʔ*] 'add'.

An exception is the infinitive of *penmaʔ* (*-pench-/-pen-*) 'arrange in rows', which contrasts with *penmaʔ* (*-pend-/-pen-*) 'be removed (of clothes)'. It appears implausible to argue that this exception can be explained as serving to maintain a lexical contrast in view of the rampant homophony elsewhere in the lexicon where this possibility is

¹⁷ In the loan *haphta* 'week'.

not exploited, eg. *phemma?* (-*phɛʔr*-/-*phɛn*-) 'spoil', *phem-ma?* (-*phɛnd*-/-*phɛn*-) 'take off (clothes)', *phemma?* (-*phɛr*-/-*phɛn*-) 'come', *phemma?* (-*phɛnch*-/-*phɛn*-) 'bring'. In very few words non-assimilated /t/ does occur before a bilabial, eg. *pitma* 'cow', *sɛtma?* 'build a wall'. Generally, however, dentals assimilate to following bilabials even in well enunciated lento speech.

(b) Homorganicity of consecutive nasal phonemes is limited to regressive assimilation of dental /n/ to bilabial /m/ and progressive assimilation of bilabial /m/ to velar /ŋ/. The former has already been dealt with under the preceding assimilation rule. The latter is limited to the PP, 1PS/PT and NP suffixes.

/m/ → [ŋ] / /ŋ/ __ , eg. /haŋ-mʔna/ [haŋ-ŋʔna]

(c) Dental /n/ optionally assimilates to following /k/ or /kh/: /kɛ-n-kho·s-u-n/, [kɛŋ^ho·sun] or [kɛŋ^ho·sun] 'you^s didn't find it'.

(d) Nasals may become lateralized preceding /l/ in allegro speech, although this is rare:

$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} /m/ \\ /n/ \\ /ŋ/ \end{array} \right\} \rightarrow [l] \quad / \quad _ /l/$

(e) The two forms of the plural infinitive affix, -*aʔmɛʔ*/-*ammɛʔ*, suggest that glottal stop may regressively assimilate to a following nasal, diachronically giving rise to geminates.

The initial glottal stop of the locative and absolutive endings optionally assimilate progressively to a preceding nasal, eg. *him-ʔo* /*him-mo*· 'in the house', *nam-ʔin* /*nam-min* 'the sun (ABS)', *luŋʔin* /*luŋŋin* 'rock (ABS)', *thaŋbenʔin* /*thaŋbennin* 'youth, lad (ABS)'.

(f) Plosives optionally assimilate for voice across word boundaries. This is explicable in light of the non-distinctiveness of voice in native plosive phonemes.

- *hɛn co·kma?* *allɔ?*

- *thi· dhunma?*

/*thunma?*/

- What to do now?

- Drink millet beer.

- *anige hɛn dzo·kmaʔʔ* /co·kmaʔ/
 - *pe·kmʔ bo·ŋ.* /po·ŋ/
 - What shall we^{pe} do?
 - It's time [for you^P] to go.
- *kheŋ-aŋ o·ʔmyaŋ bheŋɕa bhitra akmʔ po·ŋ.*
anga co·guŋ bi·ne thebae·, kheŋeʔ go·! /pi·ne/
 - Having roasted that too, [I'll] have to
 put it inside the eggplant. I'll make
 it and give it to you, grandpa, for you!

The nasal of the word *kheŋ* 'that' often dissimilates when combined with the postpositive particle *-aŋ* 'also' to yield *kheŋaŋ*, as in the preceding example. In the absolutive, both the form *kheŋŋin* and *kheŋnin* occur.

1.5. The orthography

In addition to the phonemes and loan phonemes indicated in the table on p.1, the orthography chosen in this grammar distinguishes the voiced plosive allophones, the glottalized lateral allophone of /t/ and the post-dental allophone of /s/: *g, gh, d, dh, b, bh, dz* and *ʔl* and *ch*. The length mark is dropped after the final /e·/ in the supine, exclusive, instrumental, ergative, genitive and subordinator suffixes.

Hyphenation is used: (1) to separate two phoneme symbols which might otherwise be read as the digraph for another phoneme, eg. *ma·khi* 'blood', *mik-hi* 'eye detritus', (2) to separate two parts of a compound or onomatopoeia, or (3) to separate morphemes within a word.

Intervocalic glottal hiatus is indicated by ʔ, unless the syllables have been separated by hyphens.

Chapter Two

Nominal Morphology

This chapter is devoted to nominals which comprise the parts of speech: adjectives, pronouns and nouns. Adjectives, including verbal adjectives, may be adnominal, predicative or occur independently as nominal heads. When adjectives are used independently, they take all the case and number suffixes nouns take. Adjectives form the topic of 2.1.

Pronouns include personal, demonstrative and interrogative pronouns, and are dealt with in 2.2.

Nouns and parts of speech used as nominal heads may be dualized and pluralized and take case endings. The ergative, absolutive, genitive, instrumental, vocative and locative cases are indicated by endings affixed directly to the noun and assimilating to its final in a regular way. In addition, a number of postpositions can be affixed directly to the noun and are treated as case endings, viz. the comitative, mediative, etc. Two or more case endings may co-occur attached to a single noun, eg. *a-ndzum-le-n-ille* (my-friend-GEN-ABS-INST) '[using] my friend's'. Number and case are the topics of 2.3 and 2.4 respectively. Other spatial and abstract relations indicated by prepositions in English are indicated in Limbu by postpositions which are not attached to the noun as endings but are the complements of nouns in the genitive, eg. *cumlun-le ku-sikto-?o-* (bazar-GEN its-beneath-LOC) 'below the bazar'. Such postpositions are listed in the glossary.

2.1. Adjectives

2.1.1. Agreement in adjectives

Adjectives agree in gender but not in case or number with the nouns they modify. Adjectives, including verbal adjectives, ending in */-pa/* have corresponding feminine forms in */-ma/*, eg. *yamba yembitcha* 'big man', *yamma menchuma* 'big lady', *cukpa pi?l* 'small bull/cow', *cukma pitma* 'small

cow'. Nouns lack grammatical gender independent of semantic sex distinction.¹

Feminine adjectival forms ending in *-ma* collocate exclusively with nouns denoting animate entities of the female sex. Nouns denoting inanimate objects and phenomena take the non-feminine forms of the adjective in *-pa/-ba*, eg. *cukpa luŋ* 'small stone', *yamba him* 'large house', *kerek-nulle ke·mba siŋbo·ŋ* 'the tallest tree'

A small number of adjectives, including the negative participle, do not end in */-pa/* or */-ma/* and are invariable in form. Some of these end in the derivational diminutive suffix *-sa*, eg. *cuksa menchya* 'tiny lass', *cuksa thanben* 'tiny lad'.

Adjectives may be adnominal, predicative (with attributive 'to be' *co·kma?* (3.5) or with a similar verb such as *lo?ma?*, *po·ŋma?* etc.) or may be used as nouns themselves. Adnominally adjectives generally precede the noun they modify, although they also occur after the noun when the specified attribute establishes the identity of the nominal referent, rather than merely ascribe a generic trait to it. This is especially the case with kinship terms in which the adjective identifies the individual concerned, eg. *to·re·sarumba* 'the third-born male guest', *nakpa yamba* 'the elder nephew'. The collocation *ke·mba kyaŋ* means 'the/a long pestle' and may refer to any pestle to which the generic trait 'long' may be ascribed. However, contrast with this the use of *kyaŋ ke·mba* in the following exchange, which takes place in a household with two pestles, a larger one and a smaller one:

- (1) - *kyaŋ pi·re?!*
 - *atiŋŋin?*
 - *kyaŋ ke·mba.*
 - Give me the pestle!
 - Which one?
 - The long one.

A group of invariable adjectives marked 'adv.adj.' in the glossary may be used adverbally or as predicate adjectives but not adnominally or as nouns; eg. *kerek ma·ki pe·na? ya? na·tchri-po·tchri po·kse rəcə* 'All the maize, millet and rice has gotten mixed up'.

¹ The essential distinction and interplay between gender (*genus*) and sex (*geschlecht*) in language is discussed by C.B. van Haeringen (1954).

2.1.2. The nominalizing suffix *-taŋba*

The suffix *-taŋba* may be added to a noun or adjective and is also found in the adjectives *a·kdaŋba* 'what kind of', *hekdəŋba* 'that kind of', *ɔkdaŋba* 'this kind of, such a'. Added to a noun or adjective, the suffix *-taŋba* has the effect of creating a noun with an associative or like meaning, strongly reminiscent of the suffix *-vālā* in Hindi. In the following sentence,

- (2) *him-daŋba a·tto· mɛ-be·g-ɛ?*
 house-*vālā* where nsAS-go-PT
 Where have the people associated with the house
 gone?

the term *himdaŋba* denotes those people whom the speaker expected to be at home tending the house when he arrived and found it unguarded. Affixed to a noun, it may convey the sense of 'something like x', as in the following example:

- (3) *cigip-taŋba co·k.*
 glue-*vālā* be
 It's just like glue.

The suffix nominalizes adjectives which, without it, can occur only as predicate adjectives. The suffixed forms may be used either independently or adnominally.

- (4) *yɔŋyɔŋ-daŋba co·g-ɛ.*
 light-*vālā* be-PT
 It was a light one.
- (5) *kɔŋ a·kkhya·k se·se·-daŋba mənə ni gɔ·!*
 this how_much clear-minded-*vālā* man CTR then
 What a clear-minded man this is!

It is commonly suffixed to colour morphemes (2.1.3) and to the postpositive adverb *kusiŋ* 'like, in the fashion of', giving *kusiŋdaŋba* 'one like x'.

- (6) *kɔŋ-in tha·ŋle·kwa kusinɔaŋba məna rəcə.*
 this-ABS cuckoo one_like man DEPR.
yeʔlɪŋ pa·nɪŋ. khɛnɛʔ
 repeatedly change_one's_tune. you^s
tha·ŋle·kwa kusin
 cuckoo like
pa·n-kɛ-lɛŋ-ŋi·ʔ
 change_one's_tune-2-change_one's_tune-Q
hɛkke·lɔʔrik
 in_that_fashion
pa·n-mɛl-lɛŋ-ʔɛʔ!
 change_one's_tune-NEG-change_one's_tune-IMP
 This guy is like a cuckoo bird. He's always
 changing his tune. (turning to the person in
 question) Are you changing your story like a
 cuckoo? Don't keep changing your story in
 that fashion!
- (7) *kɔŋ kuʂinɔaŋbɛ-lɪe a-niŋ lɛʔr-u.*
 this one_like-ERG my-ire release-3P
 I get fed up with people like him.
- (8) - *khɛnɛʔ kɛ-mba-i·ʔ*
 you^s your^s-father-Q
 - *mɛ·n... ǎ, kusinɔaŋba.*
 no... yes, one_like
 - Is that your father?
 - No... yes, it's someone who looks like
 him.

2.1.3. The colour affixes

The bound colour morphs *mak* 'black', *phɔ* 'white', *hɛʔl* 'red' and *hik* 'green' occur as predicative adjectives with the verbs *lɔʔmaʔ* 'appear' and *co·kmaʔ* attributive 'to be'. Free forms of the bound colour roots are formed by affixation of the discontinuous colour affix <ku-root-la> to these colour morphs. The resultant free forms can occur both as nouns and as adjectives.

<i>ku-mak-la</i>	black
<i>ku-bhɔ-ra</i>	white
<i>ku-hɛt-la</i>	red
<i>ku-hik-la</i>	green

- (9) *a-him-min kubhɔra co·k. kɛ-him-min*
 my-house-ABS white be. your^s-house-ABS
kuhɛtla-kuhɛtla co·k.
 red-red be
 My house is white. Your house is all red.

- (10) *kuhikla a·phis*
 military base (lit. 'green office')

The colour morphs can also occur in forms with the suffix *-tanba* 'like, of the kind' (2.1.2), resulting in adjectives which may be used adnominally or as independent nominals themselves.

<i>mak-tanba</i>	black, black-kind; a black one.
<i>phɔ-danba</i>	white, white-kind; a white one.
<i>hɛt-tanba</i>	red, red-kind; a red one.
<i>hik-tanba</i>	green, green-kind; a green one.

- (11) *anga mak-tanba co·k-ʔɛ.*
 I black-one_like be-1sPS/NPT
 I'm a black one.

- (12) *mikphuʔla me·n laʔba, ku-mik phɔ-danma.*
 European NOT perhaps, her-eye white-*vālā*/f.
 Maybe she's not a European (a white-eye), but she
 sure is white-eyed! (i.e she sure does look
 like one)

The four bound colour morphs may also be incorporated into an active participial expression (6.5) with the verb *lɔʔmaʔ* 'to seem, to appear':

<i>mak-kɛ-lɔʔ-ba</i>	black-AP-appear-AP
<i>phɔ-gɛ-lɔʔ-ba</i>	white-AP-appear-AP
<i>hɛt-kɛ-lɔʔ-ba</i>	red-AP-appear-AP
<i>hik-kɛ-lɔʔ-ba</i>	green-AP-appear-AP

Although an AP form of *lɔʔmaʔ* is appropriate in the sentence *waʔ makkɛlɔʔba* 'the hen is black', it would be inappropriate and particularly insulting at best to use the form *makkɛlɔʔba* in reference to a person. The reason that *maktanba* is suitable in (11) above, whereas *makkɛlɔʔba* is not, is because *makkɛlɔʔba* suggests jet black. The associative nature of the *-tanba* suffix in *maktanba* results in a colour term which is less committal about the quality and degree of blackness than the active participial form of *mak*

lɔʔmaʔ 'appear black'. Similarly, *phɔdanba* is appropriate in the expression uttered by a Limbu at seeing the untanned abdomen of a European in *phɔdanba kɛdzo·k!* 'You sure are white!', whereas *phɔgɛlɔʔba* is suitable, for example, in referring to a white goat or a *so·gha*.

Additionally, the colour *ɔmdanba* 'yellow' exists only in its *-tanba* suffixed form. The colour morpheme 'yellow' does not occur separately. The colour *ɔmdanba* has a very narrow range of applicability in the spectrum, limited to bright daffodil yellow. Gold, for example, is not *ɔmdanba*; it is *kuhikla*. The colour *ɔmdanba* does not as such belong to the set of four cardinal colours listed above. The spectral range of the respective colours is defined under their glossary entries.

2.2. Pronouns

The personal pronouns differentiate three persons, three numbers and, in the non-singular first person, inclusive and exclusive. The personal pronouns are:

<i>anga</i>	I	1s
<i>anchi</i>	we	1di
<i>anchige</i>	we	1de
<i>ani</i>	we	1pi
<i>anige</i>	we	1pe
<i>khɛnɛʔ</i>	you	2s
<i>khɛnchi</i>	you	2d
<i>khɛni</i>	you	2p
<i>khunɛʔ</i>	he, she	3s
<i>khɛŋ</i>	he, she, it	3s
<i>khunchi</i>	they	3d/3ns
<i>khɛŋhaʔ</i>	they	3p/3ns

The pronoun *anga* has a contracted form *ŋga* in allegro speech.

The third person pronoun *khunɛʔ* denotes only animate referents. Although now an integral part of the pronominal system, the pronoun *khɛŋ* 'that, the' is actually a demonstrative, and *khɛŋhaʔ* is its synthetic plural. The demonstratives *kɔŋ* 'this' and its synthetic plural *kɔŋhaʔ* 'these' are likewise used as third person pronouns, though less frequently because they constitute the more marked member of the proximal/distal distinction in the demonstratives. I suspect that the demonstratives *khɛŋ* and *kɔŋ* have only in recent times come to be used as third person pro-

nouns because they behave differently than the personal pronouns in some respects, whereas they also exhibit behaviour unique to personal pronouns.

The difference is that, with the exception of the demonstratives *khɛŋ*, *kɔŋ* and their plurals, the pronouns take neither ergative nor absolutive suffixes and occur unchanged as subject, agent or patient in a syntagm, eg. *ŋga kɛniʔɛ* 'you can see me', *ŋga khɛni ɔ·mɛpmaʔ asiradhaŋ* 'I enjoy watching you'. The demonstratives have both absolutive (*kɔŋ/kɔŋŋin*, *khɛŋ/khɛŋŋin*, *kɔŋhaʔ*, *khɛŋhaʔ*) and ergative forms (*kɔŋle/kɔlle*, *khɛŋle/khɛlle*, *kɔŋhaʔre*, *khɛŋhaʔre*). Note that, although personal pronouns take no ergative or absolutive suffix, adnominal quantifiers do, eg. *khunchi nɛpmaŋ* → *khunchi nɛpmaŋle* 'they both (ERG)'. Furthermore, the singular demonstratives can be used adnominally, whereas the personal pronouns cannot. The personal pronouns can occur as possessive prefixes, whereas the demonstratives cannot (2.2.1).

The similarities are that (1) the independently used demonstratives behave syntactically like personal pronouns and are even more frequent than *khunɛʔ* and *khunchi*, (2) the singular demonstratives form their independent genitive as do the personal pronouns (2.4.4.2), and (3) that, in the singular, they replace *khunɛʔ* in referring to inanimate referents.

Khunchi is a dual pronoun, whereas *khɛŋhaʔ* is plural. However, both *khunchi* and *khɛŋhaʔ* are often loosely used to refer to non-singular third person referents. Ambiguity between duality and plurality of referent does not exist in the first and second person, whereas a coalesced non-singular is characteristic of the third person in general, esp. in the verbal paradigm (see 2.3.1, 4.4.4, 4.4.13).

Demonstrative pronouns, *khɛŋ* 'that', *kɔŋ* 'this' etc., and indefinite pronouns, *wiʔsma* 'another kind of', *eʔyanba* 'other' etc., invariably precede the noun when used adnominally.

2.2.1. Personal possessive prefixes

The singular personal pronouns *ŋga*, *khɛnɛʔ* and *khunɛʔ* have possessive prefixes in *a-*, *kɛ-* and *ku-*, eg. *kɛ-sapla* 'your book', *a-go·co·* 'my dog', *kɛ-him-mo·* 'at your house', *kɛ-ndzum-nu* 'with your friend', *a-ndzum-haʔ* 'my friends', *kɛ-mba-re* 'your father-ERG', *a-ba·ŋphe·-ʔo·* 'in my village', *a-waʔ* 'my chicken', *ku-ho·rik* 'his/her/its hide', *kɛ-gyaŋ* 'your pestle', *a-yuma* 'my grandmother', *kɛ-ndhɛba*

'your grandfather', *keməra huʔreʔ!* 'Shut your mouth!', *kuməra huʔreʔ!* 'Shut him up!, Have him shut up!', *ku-ba·ni hekke· habha* 'His habit is just like that', *kemiŋ hen? - amiŋ Gra·m Baha·dur* 'What is your name? - My name is *Grām Bahādur*'.

The dual and plural pronouns *anchi-*, *anchige-*, *ani-*, *anige-*, *khenchi-*, *kheni-* and *khunchi-* are prefixed integrally to the noun they modify, eg. *anige-pa·ŋphe·-ʔo·* 'in our^{pe} village', *khunchi-mendaʔ* 'their goat'. Infrequently, the singular prefixes are used together with a non-singular pronoun of the same person, eg. *anige a-mba-nulle kheni ke-mba kappo·ba co·k* (we^{pe} my-father-than you^p your^s-father older be) 'Your^p father is older than our^{pe} father'.

When possessive prefixes are added, some nouns, predominantly kinship terms and terms similar in meaning (eg. *cum*, *-ndzum* 'friend'), have a prothetic nasal which manifests itself after the singular possessive prefixes *a-*, *ke-* and *ku-*, eg. *cum* 'friend', *andzum* 'my friend', *pa* 'father', *amba* 'my father', *phoŋaʔ* 'uncle', *kembhoŋaʔ* 'your uncle', *sumaʔ* 'aunt', *kunchumaʔ* 'his aunt'. Some nouns (inc. two kinship terms) drop the vowel of their first syllable when a possessive prefix is attached, eg. *thege·k* 'head', *kedh-ge·k* 'your head', *neʔneʔ* 'older sister', *kunneʔ* 'his elder sister', *mudhuk* 'moustache', *amdruk* 'my moustache', *nusaʔ* 'sibling', *kunsaʔ* 'his sibling'.

Some noun compounds are separable when possessive prefixes are attached. These take prefixes on both parts, eg. *cumde·ŋ* 'buddy', *andzum-ande·ŋhaʔ* 'my buddies', *te·ʔl-phuŋ* 'garments, clothing', *kude·ʔl-kubhuŋ* 'his clothing'. These nouns are marked as such in the glossary.

As in English, but even more so because Limbu makes no sex distinction here, the third person singular possessive is ambiguous. The sentence *khunεʔ kude·ʔl phendu* means 'He took his clothes off', where 'his' may or may not be co-referential with 'he' in the same sentence. Similarly, *menchuma ku-him-mo· wa·* (woman his/her-house-LOC be) may mean that the lady in question is present in her own house or that she is present in someone else's house. The burden of disambiguating such utterances rests on the context.

2.2.2. Personal pronouns: an analysis

The following is a morphemic analysis of the first person personal pronouns:

<i>anga</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>ga</i>	
	l		e	
<i>anchi</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>si</i>	
	l		d	
<i>ani</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>i</i>	
	l		p	
<i>anchige</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>si</i>	<i>ge</i>
	l		d	e
<i>anige</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>i</i>	<i>ge</i>
	l		p	e

The exclusive morpheme <-ge>, also found in exclusive verb forms (4.4.15) as <-ge> and, after bilabials, <-be>, is the non-singular allomorph of the exclusive morpheme <-ga> found in the pronoun *anga* 'I'. It is virtually certain that -ge and -be are contracted reflexes of -gya and -bya because the latter forms are still characteristic of the speech of *Pācthare* speakers and even common amongst some elderly women native to the *Phedāppe* area, eg. *anchigyā nisigyā* for *anchige nisige* 'we^{de} see', which would suggest that the -gya > -ge transition occurred very recently. It is interesting to speculate that the /y/ of the non-singular exclusive <-gya> might be somehow diachronically related to the morpheme <-i> signaling plurality of first and second person in the verb.

The first person morpheme *a-* denotes 'inclusive of speaker'. This same morpheme is also reflected by the first person verbal affixes -*a*, -*ʔε* (with lowering, cf. /*a*/ for /*ε*/ in surrounding dialects) and -*aŋ*.

The second person possessive prefix and verbal affixes of the form /*kε-*/ and the second person pronouns, all beginning in /*khe-*/, reflect a second person morpheme with initial velar and front vowel. The third person possessive prefix /*ku-*/ and the third pronouns, all beginning in /*khu-*/ (remember that *kheŋ* and *kheŋhaʔ* are demonstratives, 2.2), reflect a third person morpheme with initial velar and back vowel. This same back vowel is reflected in the morpheme of third person patient /-*u*/ (see 4.4.3.2).

		s p e a k e r	
		inclusive	exclusive
a d d r e s s e e	inclusive	<i>anchi</i>	<i>khɛnɛ?</i>
		<i>ani</i>	<i>khɛnchi</i>
	exclusive	<i>anga</i>	<i>khunɛ?</i>
		<i>anchige</i>	<i>khunchi</i>
		<i>anige</i>	<i>khɛŋha?</i>

2.3. Dualization and pluralization

In nouns, the plural suffix is *-ha?*, the dual suffix *-si*. The plural suffix is superfluous when the plurality of the noun is indicated by the verb or the general context, eg.

- (13) *hilo·-?o· ku-lanyo·p mɛ-dha·p.*
 mud-LOC his-footprint nsAS-be_visible
 His footprints are to be seen in the mud.

The plural suffix is used (1) to indicate plurality in a context in which the plurality of the nominal referent would not otherwise be evident, (2) to stress the plurality of the nominal referents, or (3) to indicate multiplicity or manifoldness.

<i>məna te·</i>	A man came.
<i>məna mɛde·</i>	The men came./Some men came.
<i>mənaha? mɛde·</i>	The men came./A number of men came.
<i>sapla wa·</i>	There is a book.
<i>sapla mɛwa·</i>	There are books./The books are there.
<i>saplaha? mɛwa·</i>	There are all sorts of books./There are many books./There are various pieces of writing.

The use of the plural suffix to indicate manifoldness is well illustrated by the pluralization of proper names or kinship terms which do not have plural referents in the strict sense.

- (14) *Prabhu Ra·m-ha? khettho· ya·mbok me-dzo·g-u.*
Prabhu Rām-p up_{there} work nsAS-do-3P
 (lit. The *Prabhu Rāms* work up there.) 'Prabhu Rām
 and those like him (viz. his colleagues) work
 up there'
- (15) *sarumba-ha? me-be·k. e·?yanba me-ya·k.*
second-born-p nsAS-go. other nsAS-be
 The second-born [son] and crew will go. Everybody
 else will stick around.

Collective nouns which already have plural referents in the singular may take the plural suffix, as in the following example. Pluralization of collective nouns has the effect of individualizing the referents which in the singular of the noun are viewed as a collective whole.

thεge·k?i hair on scalp
thεge·k?iha? hairs on scalp

A plural noun takes a singular verb when the nominal referents are viewed collectively (17). The plural of *mεn* 'price' in both (16) and (17) is logical in view of the fact that the various commodities available at the bazar all differ in price.

- (16) *kεrεk-le ku-mεn-ha? me-ghik.*
all-GEN its-price-p nsAS-be_{expensive}
 The prices of everything are too high.
- (17) *kεrεk-le ku-mεn-ha? khik.*
all-GEN its-price-p be_{expensive}
 The prices of everything is too high.

The absolute forms of interrogative and indefinite pronouns such as *e·n* 'who', *hεn* 'what' and *e·?yanba* 'other' may take the plural suffix. Adjectives may also be pluralized when used as nouns themselves.

- (18) - *e·n-ha? me-ba·?l?*
who-p nsAS-talk
 - *na·pmi-ha? pa·kkha me-ba·?l.*
other-p outside nsAS-talk
 - Who are talking?
 - Others are talking outside.

In the non-singular, the dual of third-person arguments is marked vis-à-vis the plural. A dual referent may be indicated by a plural noun with a verb in the dual (19) and, less commonly, a plural verb may be used with a dual subject (20). Conversely, the dual suffix is not attached to nouns with non-dual referents.

(19) *kheŋha?* ɔ·kt-ε-tchi.
 they^P scream-PT-dPS
 They (two) screamed.

(20) - *habha hεkke· ni kε-dza-m-mi·?*
 just_{so} that_{way} 2-eat/3P-pA-Q
 - *o·ʔ-s-u-waŋ mu ca-s-u-ba.*
 roast-dA-3P-pfG REP eat-dA-3P-IPF
 - Do you^P eat it just like that (viz. raw)?
 - (butting in:) They said they^d eat it after
 having roasted it first.

2.3.1. The dual and generalized dual morphemes

The underlying form of all dual and generalized dual morphemes is <-si>. Dual morphemes denote duality of actant, whereas generalized dual morphemes denote non-singularity of actant. Generalized dual morphemes historically derive their meaning through over-generalization of the original dual sense to include the notion of plurality.

The dual morpheme of nominal flexion is <-si>, eg. *mānasi* '[two] men'.

The dual morphemes of verb morphology are the dual agent morpheme <-s> (4.4.8) and the dual patient/subject morpheme <-si> (4.4.9). The underlying form of the dual agent morpheme is also <-si>, but because the dual agent morpheme is always immediately followed by the third person patient morpheme <-u>, the /i/ elides before <-u> in keeping with the morphophonological regularity of *vocalis ante vocalem corripitur* (4.3).

The generalized dual morphemes of verbal morphology are the non-singular patient morpheme <-si> (4.4.13), the non-singular agent morpheme <-si> (4.4.12) and the first inclusive and third person non-singular forms of suffixal 'to be' (3.1). In →3 forms, duality and plurality of a non-singular third person patient are not distinguished; the non-singularity of a third person patient is indicated by a generalized dual morpheme. The duality and plurality

of a first person agent is not distinguished in *ns1*→2 forms; the non-singular agent number is indicated by a generalized dual morpheme.² The generalized dual affixes of suffixal 'to be' results in homophonous pairs with the dual nominal suffix (see 3.1, esp. footnote 2).

2.3.2. Numerals and the dual suffix

In numerals from two to nine, the derivational suffix *-si* is a generalized dual morpheme as defined in 2.3.1.

2	<i>netchi</i>	6	<i>tuksi/thuksi</i>
3	<i>sumsi</i>	7	<i>nusi</i>
4	<i>lisi</i>	8	<i>yətchi/yenchi</i>
5	<i>nasi</i>	9	<i>phaŋsi</i>

The numeral 'one' *lɔkthik* is a synthetic form consisting of *lɔk* 'only' and *thik* 'one'. *Lɔk* is a postpositive adverb, and *thik* is both a prepositive quantifier meaning 'one' and a postpositive article meaning 'a, a certain'.

(21) *yaŋ-dhik pi·r-aŋ-ε?*
 money-a give-1sP-IMP
 Give me a rupee.

(22) *thik yaŋ la·bdzo·k.*
 one money costs
 It costs one rupee.

The form *lɔkthik* is both the counting form of the numeral and the emphatic form of prepositive *thik*.

The numerals from ten to a hundred are formed by a straightforward process of number morpheme compounding. The interesting morphemes are the decimal morpheme *-bo·ŋ*, in

² The LSI (Konow 1909) attests separate forms for the *1de*→2 and *1pe*→2. The former are identical to the *ns1*→2 forms in the dialect studied in this grammar, whereas the latter have the form VERB-*a-si-ge* (VERB-1-p-e). Here too, the number affix is a generalized dual morpheme with non-singular meaning, *-si*, though such an affixal order is not characteristic of the dialect described in the present grammar.

the numerals 10, 20 and 30, and *-kip*³ in the decades 40, 50, 60, 70, 80 and 90 as a suffix and in 100 as the root. In the numeral 10, *thik* 'one' occurs as *thi*. In the numeral 20, 'two' occurs as its allomorph *-ni-*, whereas elsewhere it occurs in its more usual form *-net-*. The morpheme 'eight' *-yet-/-yen-* occurs as *-ye-* in the eighties.

10 <i>thibo·ŋ</i>	20 <i>nibo·ŋ</i>	40 <i>likip</i>	70 <i>nukip</i>
11 <i>thikthik</i>	21 <i>netthik</i>	41 <i>lithik</i>	71 <i>nuthik</i>
12 <i>thikneʔl</i>	22 <i>netneʔl</i>	42 <i>lineʔl</i>	
13 <i>thiksum</i>	23 <i>netchum</i>		80 <i>ye·kip</i>
14 <i>thikli</i>	etc.	50 <i>nakip</i>	81 <i>ye·thik</i>
15 <i>thikna</i>		51 <i>nathik</i>	
16 <i>thikthuk</i>	30 <i>sumbo·ŋ</i>	52 <i>naneʔl</i>	90 <i>phanḡip</i>
17 <i>thiknu</i>	31 <i>sumdhik</i>		91 <i>phanḡdhik</i>
18 <i>thikyεʔl</i>	32 <i>sumneʔl</i>	60 <i>thukkip</i>	
19 <i>thikphanḡ</i>	etc.	61 <i>thukthik</i>	100 <i>kipthik</i>

Collective numerals are used to enumerate entities in a group seen as a whole, often used for groups of people, but not used in counting. Collective numerals are formed with the suffix *-phu*:

1	<i>thikphu</i>
2	<i>nepphu</i>
3	<i>sumbhu</i>
4	<i>libhu</i>
5	<i>nabhu</i>
6	<i>thukphu</i>
7	<i>nubhu</i>
8	<i>yepphu</i>
9	<i>phanḡbhu</i>

Ordinal numbers are not attested. The only fraction is *kumbhre·ŋ* 'one half', eg. *yaḡ-dhik-ʔaḡ kumbhre·ŋ pi·r-aḡ-εʔ* (money-a-and one_half give-1sP-IMP, lit. Give me a rupee and a half) 'Give me one rupee and eight annas'.

³ The use of *-kip* in the decades from 40 is reminiscent of Old English use of *hund* prefixed to the decades from 70, cf. *twentig*, *prītig*, *fēowertig*, *fīftig*, *siextig* vs. *hundseofontig*, *hundeatig*, *hundnigontig*, *hundtēontig*, *hundendleofantig*, *hundtwelftig*. Benedict (1972) identifies Limbu 'gip' with a poorly attested Tibeto-Burman decimal root *gip (pp. 19, 94).