

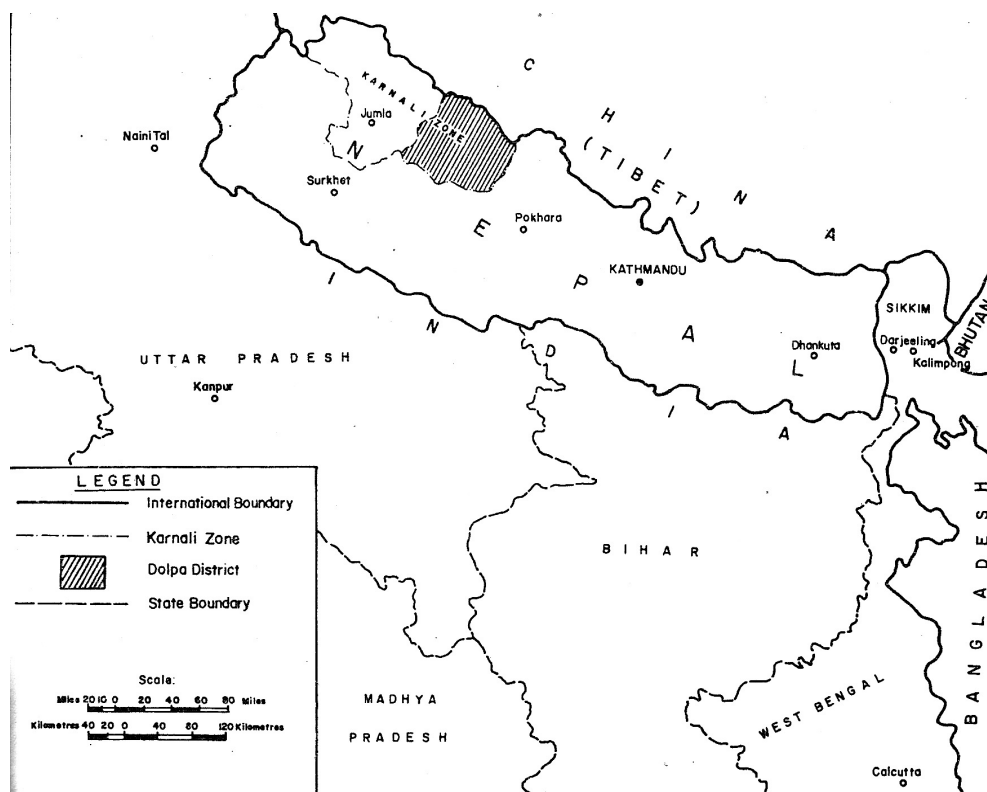
Preliminary report on Tichyurong Tibetan (Dolpa, Nepal)

Isao Honda (Nagoya College, Japan)

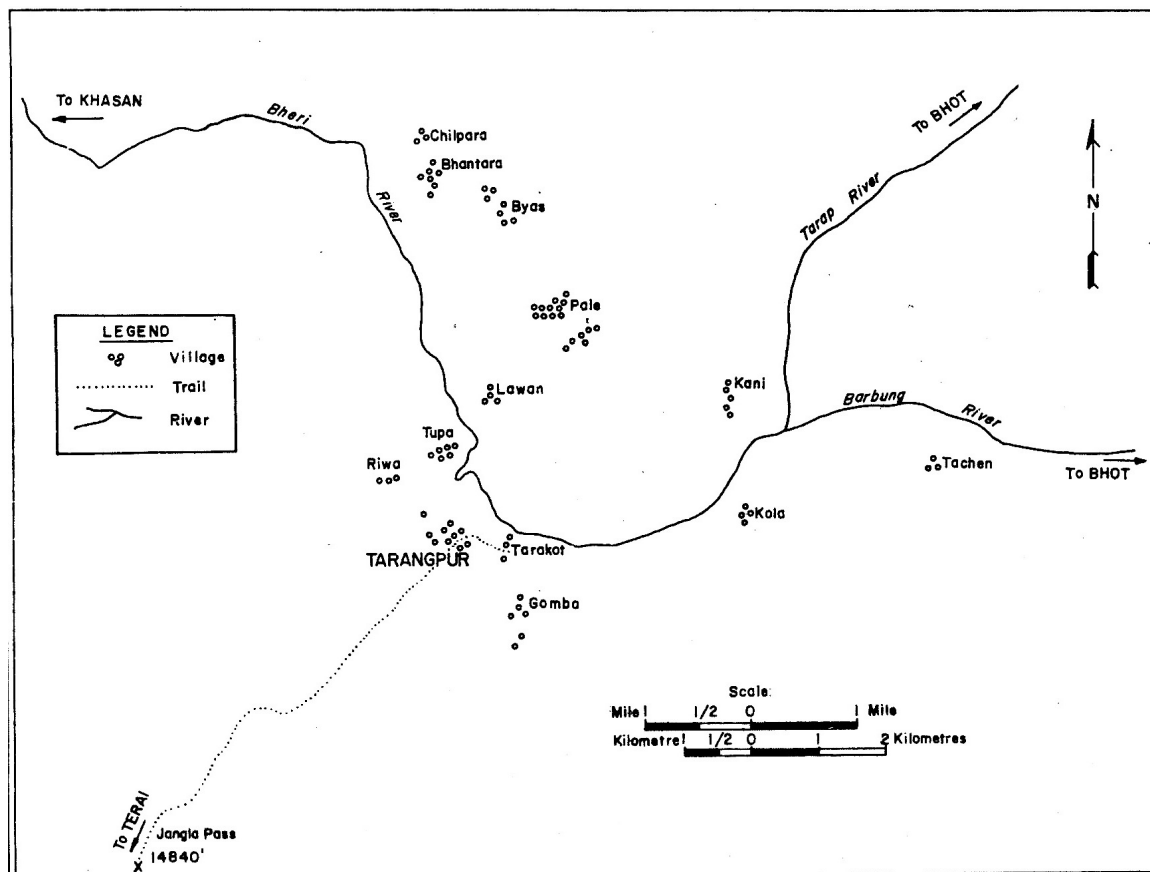
This presentation is a report of an on-going linguistic survey on a Tibetan variety spoken in an area known as Tichyurong (Dolpa, Nepal; see Map 1). In this area, the language of Kaike, which is not a Tibetan dialect (or Tibetic language), is also spoken but only in five settlements, which are all located on the left side of the Bheri river (see Map 2). Since 2003 I have investigated the Kaike language, and a couple of years ago I started studying Tichyurong Tibetan primarily for exploring the historical relation between Kaike and Tichyurong. Kaike has quite a large number of Tibetan loans, and it is apparent that the vast majority of them are relatively recent ones. I have examined how the loans from Tibetan have been incorporated into Kaike, especially with respect to tone, and which loans are old ones and which are relatively new ones, probably from Tichyurong.

This research is also motivated by the fact that Tichyurong has never been investigated. In the northern areas of Nepal and near the border between Nepal and Tibet, a number of Tibetan varieties are spoken, and many of them have been well studied (e.g., Kyirong, Baragaonle (or Southern Mustang), Yohlmo, Kagate, Jirel, Lhomi, Sherpa); yet many others, particularly those spoken in the northwestern areas of Nepal, such as Limi, Mugu (or Mugum), Karmarong, Dolpo, and Tichyurong, has been little documented (cf. Bielmeier 2003, Driem 2001; see Map 3).

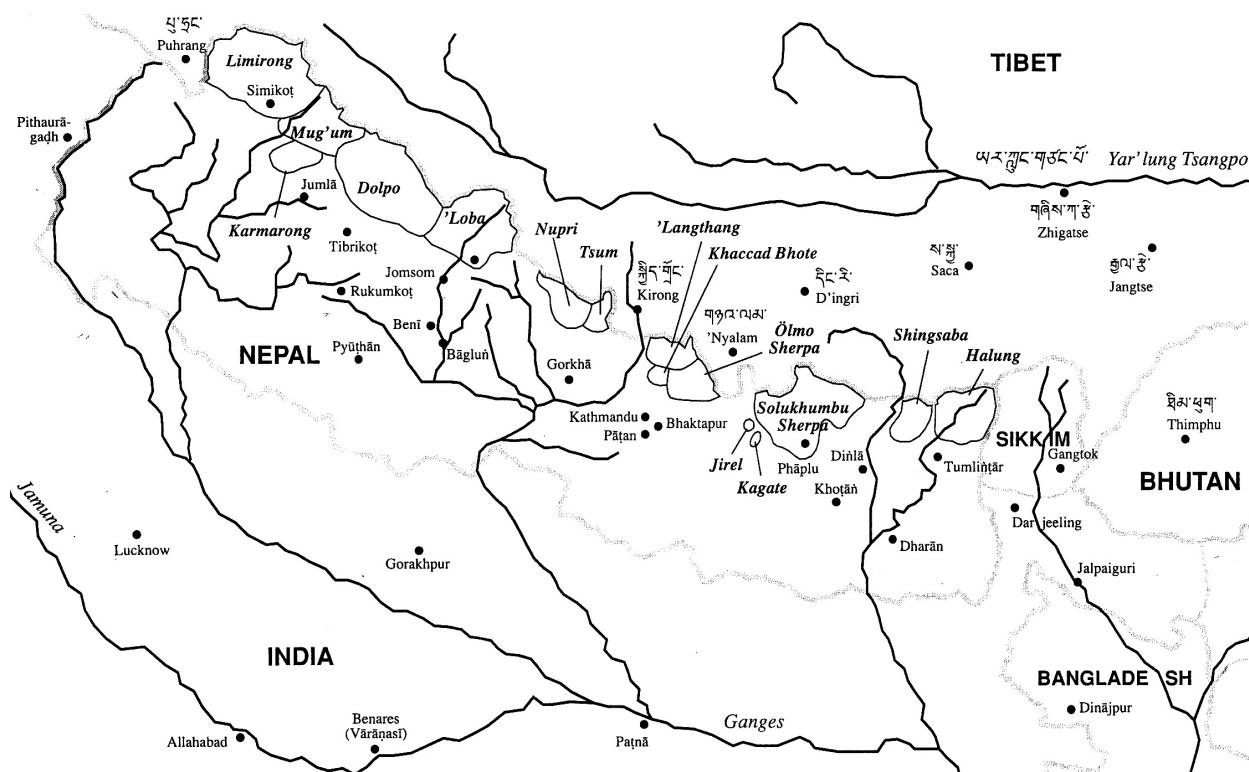
This presentation aims at providing preliminary findings of the research, including the contact situation between Kaike and Tichyurong, similarities and difference between Tichyurong and the Lhasa variety (or “Standard Tibetan”) and also between Tichyurong and its neighboring Tibetan dialects.



Map 1 The Dolpa district (Fisher 1987 [1975]:16)



Map 2 Tichyurong (Fisher 1987 [1975]:21)



Map 3 Tibetan varieties spoken in Nepal (Driem 2001: 858)

Classification on Tibetan varieties spoken in the northern areas of Nepal and near the border between Nepal and Tibet

Classification of Tibetan varieties spoken in the northern areas of Nepal and near the border between Nepal and Tibet is found in Nishi (1987), Bradley (1997), Tournadre (2014) and many others.

The following classification is found in *Glottolog* 3.2. (<http://glottolog.org>)

Glottolog 3.2

Bodish

- Old-Modern Tibetan
 - Classical Tibetan
 - Tibetic
 - Amdo Tibetan
 - Eastern Tibetic
 - Kham-Hor
 - Lahauli-Spiti
 - North-Western Tibetic
 - Southern Tibetic
 - South-Western Tibetic
 - Dolpo-Tichurong
 - Dolpo
 - Tichurong
 - Humla
 - Kyirong-Kagate
 - Gyalsumdo-Nubri-Kyirong
 - Kyerung
 - Nubri
 - Tsum
 - Yolmo-Kagate
 - Kagate
 - Lamjung-Melamchi Yolmo
 - Eastern Helambu Sherpa
 - Ilam Yolmo
 - Lamjung Yolmo
 - Western Helambu Sherpa
 - Lhomi
 - Lowa
 - Baragaunle
 - Upper Mustang
 - Mugom
 - Karani
 - Mugali
 - Sherpa-Jirel
 - Jirel
 - Sherpaic
 - Naaba
 - Solu-Khumbu Sherpa
 - Khumbu
 - Ramechap
 - Solu
 - Walungge
- Tibetan
 - Aba
 - Dartsemdo
 - Dbus
 - Dru
 - Gtsang
 - Hanniu
 - Jad Tibetan
 - Kongbo
 - Marchha

- Mngahris
- Nganshuenkuan
- Panakha-Panags
- Paurong
- Utsang
- Tshangla-East Bodish
- Unclassified Bodish
- Basum

Previous studies on Tibetan varieties spoken in the northern areas of Nepal and near the border between Nepal and Tibet

As far as I know, Tichyurong has never been investigated linguistically. Ethnologue gives the following description on it.

Ethnologue <https://www.ethnologue.com/>

Tichurong

[tcn] Karnali zone: Dolpa district, Thuli Bheri river basin. 2,420 (2000). Status: 6a (Vigorous). Alternate Names: Ticherong. Dialects: None known. Reportedly similar to Dolpo [dre]. Classification: Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman, Western Tibeto-Burman, Bodish, Central Bodish, Central, gTsang. Comments: Culturally distinct from Dolpo. Buddhist.

A good summary of the previous studies on Tibetan varieties spoken in the northern areas of Nepal and near the border between Nepal and Tibet is found in Driem (2001), and Bielmeier (2003). After Bielmeier (2003), many important studies have been published or became known in public on a Tibetan variety spoken in the north-western or the north-central areas of Nepal. The following are some of them: Limi (Wilde 2001), Gyalsumdo (Hildebrandt & Perry 2011), Yohlmo (Hari 2010, Hedlin 2011), Lamjung Yolmo (Gawne 2013a, 2013b, 2016).

Previous studies on Tibetan varieties spoken in the north-western or the north-central areas of Nepal (Bielmeier 2003)

Bielmeier (2003) gives the following descriptions on each Tibetan variety.

Limirong

In 1999 Brigitte Huber recorded a short word list with the help of three informants from that area, one from Sangra, one from Nyinba north and northwest of Simikot, and one from Limi further northwest of Simikot close to the Nepali-Tibetan border. According to the judgement of native speakers, the Sangra and Nyinba varieties are more or less the same, whereas the Limirong variety is described as being a bit different. In their opinion, the Tibetan variety spoken in the neighbouring areas of Mugu and Karmarong, however, differs from their own and is more similar to the Tibetan language spoken in Dolpo” (Bielmeier 2003: 104).

(Nyinba)

According to a text on their origin, their ancestors came from *sKu mkhar stod* in Purang, and it is said that there is still a village with this name existing in the Purang valley. As regards phonology, these varieties of Limirong are indeed quite close to the variety of Purang as described in Qu/Tan 1982. An important difference lies in the fact that voicedness still seems to play a phonemic role, just as in most Tibetan varieties of Nepal. As in the variety of Purang and other Tibetan varieties, the original labial nasal m between vowels has disappeared and led to nasalisation of the second vowel. It seems to be a Tö-dialect inasmuch as an original

initial bilabial stop followed by *r* has led to a retroflex stop. An original bilabial stop followed by *y* and a back vowel (*a, u, o*) led to an affricate, but was retained as bilabial stop if the original bilabial stop was followed by *y* and a front vowel (*i, e*). Original *-n, -r, -l* in final position are retained, only original final *-s* is dropped, palatalising the preceding vowel, primarily in Limi and Sangra, but usually not in Nyinba” (Bielmeier 2003: 105).

Mugu & Dolpo

“... is definitely a „conservative“ Central Tibetan dialect. The same seems to be true of the dialect of Dolpo as well.” (Bielmeier 2003: 105).

Dolpo

The Dolpo variety does not seem to be specifically close to the neighbouring Mugu variety. With a few exceptions, they all share many of the sound-change phenomena to be met with in Ngari. In the Dolpo variety as well as in that of Mugu we find the retention of final *-n, -r, -l*, but not of final *-s*. An original initial bilabial stop is retained, provided it is followed by *y* and a front vowel. Original initial *s-* followed by *r* led to initial *s-* in Dolpo as well as in Mugu. This is a development typical of Kham, but also encountered in Kyirong for example, and in other languages. A peculiarity of Dolpo and Mugu, however, is the change of the original initial clusters *skr-* and *spr-* resulting in an initial palatal fricative *sh-* in Dolpo and in an initial *s-* in Mugu.

Nubri

“The Nubri variety seems to be closer to the varieties spoken in the north beyond the border in Tibet than to its western neighbouring varieties in Nepal. There are clear differences to its eastern neighbouring varieties in Tsum, as regards the sound level. In Nubri voicedness is not phonemic, similar to the varieties of Ngari, Tsang and western U in Tibet.” (Bielmeier 2003: 106).

Tsum

Speaking of Tsum, I shall first point out that we find a very distinctive common historical phonological feature in the varieties of Tsum, Kyirong, Langtang, Yolmo, Kagate, and also in the Tibetan varieties spoken in a few villages in the Bhote Kosi and Langtang Khola valleys in Nepal near the Tibet-Nepal border, where the main population and language is Tamang. All these varieties share the retention of the original cluster consisting of an initial bilabial stop, with or without prefix, followed by *r*. Only the prefix of the original cluster is omitted. This is definitely a shared archaism and not a shared innovation. But it is nevertheless very remarkable, for this retention can also be found only in a part of Western Archaic Tibetan, i.e., in Balti, Purik and Lower Ladakhi as far as Khalatse. This is one important feature among many others that distinguishes the variety of the Helambu Sherpas clearly from the varieties of the Solu-Khumbu Sherpas” (Bielmeier 2003: 106-107).

References

Bielmeier, Roland. 2003. On the languages of the Himalayas and their links (nearly) around the world (*Review article of “Languages of the Himalayas: An ethnolinguistic handbook of the Greater Himalayas, containing an introduction to the symbiotic theory of language, by George van Driem. Brill: Leiden/Boston/Köln. 2001). European Bulletin of Himalayan Research* 24: 94-117.

- Bradley, David. 1997. Tibeto-Burman languages and classification. In David Bradley (ed.), *Papers in Southeast Asian linguistics No.14: Tibeto-Burman languages of the Himalayas (Pacific Linguistics A-86)*, 1-72. Canberra: The Australian National University.
- Driem, George van. 2001. *Languages of the Himalayas: An Ethnolinguistic Handbook of the Greater Himalayas, containing an Introduction to the Symbiotic Theory of Language*. Brill: Leiden/Boston/Köln.
- Fisher, James F. 1987. *Trans-Himalayan Traders, Economy, Society, and Culture in Northwest Nepal*. Delhi/Varanasi/Patna/Madras: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Gawne, Lauren. 2013a. *Lamjung Yolmo copulas in use: evidentiality, reported speech and questions*. PhD dissertation. Melbourne: The University of Melbourne.
- Gawne, Lauren. 2013b. Report on the relationship between Yolmo and Kagate. *Himalayan Linguistics* 12(2): 1-27.
- Gawne, Lauren. 2016. *A sketch grammar of Lamjung Yolmo*. Asia-Pacific Linguistics. College of Asia and the Pacific, The Australian National University.
- Hari, Anne Marie, and Chhegu Lama. 2004. *Yohlmo - Nepali - English Dictionary*. Kathmandu: Central Department of Linguistics, Tribhuvan University.
- Hari, Anne Marie. 2010. *Yohlmo Sketch Grammar*. Kathmandu: Ekta books.
- Hedlin, Matthew. 2011. *An investigation of the relationship between the Kyirong, Yòlmo, and Standard Spoken Tibetan speech varieties*. Master's dissertation. Chiang Mai: Payap University.
- Hildebrandt, Kristine A., and John Joe Perry. 2011. Preliminary notes on Gyalsumdo, an undocumented Tibetan variety in Manang district, Nepal. *Himalayan Linguistics* 10(1): 167-185.
- Honda, Isao. 2004. Preliminary report on Kaike (Dolpa, Nepal). Paper presented at the 10th Himalayan Languages Symposium held in Thimphu, Bhutan.
- Honda Isao. 2008. Some observations on the relationship between Kaike and Tamangic. *Nepalese Linguistics* 23: 83-115.
- Jäschke, H. 1881 [1995]. *A Tibetan-English Dictionary*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Tournadre, Nicolas. 2014. The Tibetic languages and their classification. In Nathan Hill and Thomas Owen-Smith (eds.), *Trans-Himalayan linguistics*, 155–179. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Wilde, Christopher Pekka. 2001. *Preliminary phonological analysis of the Limi dialect of Humla Bhotia*. MA thesis. University of Helsinki.