

KINSHIP TERMS IN BANTAWA, YAKKHA, KOYEE AND LOHORUNG: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

TARA MANI RAI

Central Department of Linguistics, T.U.

tara.raai@cdl.tu.edu.np

(Received: 08 Aug., 2025; revised: 09 Oct., 2025; accepted: 5 Nov., 2025; published: 26 Nov., 2025)

This paper examines the kinship terminologies of four Kirati languages: Bantawa, Yakkha, Koyee, and Lohorung. Through a comparative analysis of both consanguineal (blood) and affinal (marital) relations, the study identifies patterns of cognancy, innovation, and typological variation. The findings reveal a strong shared core fundamental terms (e.g. papa 'father', mama 'mother') distinguishing relatives by age, gender, and lineage. Besides, there are significant lexical divergence among the Kirati languages, Bantawam Yakkha, Koyee and Lohorung in peripheral and affinal terms. However, Lohorung exhibits more innovative kinship terms in relation to other Kirati languages discussed in this paper. This study contributes to the understanding of the linguistic relatedness along with the social organization and cultural historicity of the Kirati people.

Keywords: Affinal, conanguineal, comparative, language preservation, peripheral

1. Introduction

Kinship term reflects the social organization and role relationship within the groups (Bonvillain 2019). It is the system used by interlocutors of a specific language to distinguish, group and speak about their relatives (Rácz et al. 2020). Since kinship terms are quite common linguistic phenomena in human daily life across cultures, they are designed for naming relatives (Trask 2007 p.128).

The study of kinship systems began with Morgan (1871). He argued that the kinship terms as evidence of stages of social evolution. His ideas became standard in cultural studies. Later, Lévi-Strauss (1949/1969) argued that kinship is based on alliance, not descent. He showed that alliances form through the exchange of spouses between groups. Goodenough (1956) and others then used methods from structural linguistics. They made the study of kinship terminology more systematic.

The scholars like Stone (2014) and Bonvillain (2019) have categorized the kinship terms into two: (a) affinal and (b) consanguineal. Consanguineal relationship is a bond formed

through blood, connecting individuals who are descendants of a shared ancestry or common ancestors. On the other hand, affinal relations are those relations which are made by marriage.

Of the various themes and the areas of the research in the Kirati languages, the Kinship term is one of them in which very few researches have undergone in terms of the comparative perspectives. Hence, this study aims to present the kinship terms in the Kirati languages among Bantawa, Yakkha, Koyee and Lohorung, and compare and contrast them.

2. Methods and materials

This study employed both primary and secondary data to examine the kinship systems of four Kirati languages: Bantawa, Yakkha, Lohorung, and Koyee. Primary data were collected from native speakers through a questionnaire on kinship terms, with informants selected using the snowball sampling method. Data analysis followed a comparative approach, examining kinship terms across categories such as parents, siblings, grandparents, cousins, and in-laws. Phonological comparison was conducted using

COG software, while the study also drew on theoretical frameworks from Lado (1957), Greenberg (1963), Morgan (1871), and Read (2013), focusing on synchronic forms as well as comparison among four Kirati languages.

3. Results and findings

Kinship term reflects the social organization and role relationship within the groups (Bonvillain 2019). There are two types of kinship relations (a) affinal and (b) consanguineal.

3.1 Consanguineal relations

Consanguineal relationship can be categorized into two: core consanguineal and peripheral consanguineal relations.

Table 1: Core consanguineal kinship terms among the Kirati languages

Kinship relation	BANTAWA	YAKKHA	KOYEE	LOHORUNG	Gloss in English
Pa	<i>mam-pap</i>	<i>ma-pa</i>	<i>mamapa pa</i>	<i>mampapa</i>	'parents'
Fa	<i>papa</i>	<i>papa</i>	<i>papa</i>	<i>papa</i>	'father'
Mo	<i>mama</i>	<i>ma</i>	<i>mama</i>	<i>mama</i>	'mother'
Br	-	-	-	-	'brother'
Bre	<i>bubu</i>	<i>p^{hu}</i>	<i>bubu</i>	<i>bubu</i>	-
Bry	<i>nits^{ha}</i>	<i>nuts^{ha}</i>	<i>baktsi</i>	<i>nusa</i>	-
Si	-	-	-	-	'sister'
Sie	<i>nana</i>	<i>na</i>	<i>nana</i>	<i>nana</i>	-
Siy	<i>nits^{ha}</i>	<i>nuts^{ha}</i>	<i>baktsi</i>	<i>nusa</i>	-
o/c	<i>tsa</i>	<i>tsja</i>	<i>tsi</i>	<i>pasa</i>	'child'
So	<i>duwats^h</i>	<i>tsja</i>	<i>lantsuba</i>	<i>t^huka</i>	'son'
Da	<i>metsets^h</i>	<i>tsja</i>	<i>mintsum</i>	<i>samsam</i>	'daughter'

As can be seen in Table 1, core terms such as *papa* 'father', *mama* 'mother', and *nana* 'elder sister' are highly stable and clearly show a shared origin, whereas the compound forms for 'parents' (*mam-pap*, *ma-pa*, *mampapa*) also reflect a consistent pattern of combining 'mother' and 'father'. Elder brother terms come from a common root (*bu/bubu*), though Yakkha has a variant *p^{hu}*. Younger sibling terms are strikingly similar (*nits^{ha}*, *nuts^{ha}*, *nusa*) and appear to function as gender-neutral for both brother and sister, whereas Koyee differs with *baktsi*. In

contrast, the words for 'child', 'son', and 'daughter' vary across the languages.

3.1.1 Peripheral consanguineal kinship terms from parents

The ego's connections extend beyond their father and mother. For instance, the ego's grandparents on both the paternal and maternal sides are considered peripheral consanguineal relatives. These peripheral consanguineal kinship terms are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Peripheral consanguineal kinship terms from parents

Kinship relations	BANTAWA	YAKKHA	KOYEE	LOHORUNG	Gloss in English
Papa	-	-	-	-	'grandparent'
FaFa	<i>kopa</i>	<i>pum</i>	<i>tsuktsu</i>	<i>pappa</i>	'grandfather'
FaMo	<i>koma</i>	<i>namma</i>	<i>pipi</i>	<i>ma?mma</i>	'grandmother'
MoFa	<i>kopa</i>	<i>pum</i>	<i>tsuktsu</i>	<i>pappa</i>	'grandfather'
MoMo	<i>koma</i>	<i>mum</i>	<i>pipi</i>	<i>ma?mma</i>	'grandmother'

As can be seen in Table 2, both paternal and maternal grandparents share the same forms in the Bantawa, Yakkha, Koyee and Lohorung. For 'grandfather' (FaFa, MoFa), Bantawa uses *kopa*, Yakkha *pum*, Koyee *tsuktsu*, and Lohorung *pappa*. Similarly, 'grandmother' (FaMo, MoMo) is *koma* in Bantawa, *namma/mum* in Yakkha, *pipi* in Koyee, and *ma?mma* in Lohorung, with the recurring *-mma* element pointing to a shared morphological marker for female lineage.

Table 3: Peripheral consanguineal kinship terms from father

Kinship relations	BANTAWA	YAKKHA	KOYEE	LOHORUNG	Gloss in English
FaBr	-	-	-	-	'uncle'
FaBre	<i>dewa</i>	<i>jep</i>	<i>dede</i>	<i>deppa</i>	-
FaBry	<i>baŋa</i>	<i>p^{ha}ŋ</i>	<i>p^hop^ho</i>	<i>dema</i>	'aunt'
FaSi	-	-	-	-	-
FaSie	<i>dema</i>	<i>ni</i>	<i>nono</i>	<i>dema</i>	-
FaSiy	<i>ts^huna</i>	<i>ni</i>	<i>nono</i>	<i>nini</i>	-

Table 3 shows that general terms for 'uncle' and 'aunt' are absent, indicating that these relations

are expressed mainly through distinctions of elder and younger siblings. For the elder father's brother, Bantawa *dewa*, Koyee *dede*, and Lohorung *deppa* appear related, while Yakkha differs with *jep*. Younger father's brother shows greater variation, with Bantawa *baja* and Lohorung *dema* possibly linked, while Yakkha *p^han* and Koyee *p^hop^ho* reflect distinct developments. Similarly, elder father's sister is expressed as *dema* in Bantawa and *dema* in Lohorung, with Koyee *nono* and Yakkha *ni*, while the younger father's sister forms (*ts^huna*, *ni*, *nono*, *nini*) point to reduplication and innovation.

3.1.2 Peripheral consanguineal kinship terms from mother

This kinship terms refer to a type of extended family relationship in which the ego's relations are through their mother. The ego's sisters and brothers are considered peripheral relatives on the mother's side.

Table 4: Peripheral consanguineal kinship terms from mother

Kinship relations	BANTAWA	YAKKHA	KOYEE	LOHORUNG	Gloss in English
MoBr	-	-	-	-	'uncle'
MoBre	<i>dewa</i>	<i>koŋba</i>	<i>kuku</i>	<i>deppa</i>	-
MoBry	<i>ts^huwa</i>	<i>koŋba</i>	<i>kuku</i>	<i>deppa</i>	-
MoSi	-	-	-	-	'aunt'
MoSie	<i>dema</i>	<i>jem</i>	<i>demdem</i>	<i>dema</i>	-
MoSiy	<i>ts^huna</i>	<i>koŋma</i>	<i>nono</i>	<i>seŋma</i>	-

Table 4 presents that the elder mother's brother (*MoBre*), Bantawa *dewa* and Lohorung *deppa* share root across paternal and maternal lines, while Yakkha *koŋba* and Koyee *kuku* reflect different innovations. The younger mother's brother (*MoBry*) shows the same pattern, with Bantawa *ts^huwa* distinct but Yakkha, Koyee, and Lohorung repeating their elder forms, indicating less differentiation by age. In the case of mother's elder sister (*MoSie*), Bantawa *dema* and Lohorung *dema* are directly cognate, while Yakkha *jem* and Koyee *demdem* depict alternative forms through shortening or reduplication. For the younger mother's sister (*MoSiy*), Bantawa *ts^huna* parallels

earlier sibling terms, while Yakkha *koŋma*, Koyee *nono*, and Lohorung *seŋma* show lexical variation.

3.1.3 Peripheral consanguineal kinship terms from father's siblings

Ego's relationships with the children of the father's siblings, including the father's brother and sister, are referred to as peripheral consanguineal relations through the father's relatives. The sons and daughters of the father's brother and sister are considered peripheral consanguine of the ego.

Table 5: Peripheral consanguineal kinship terms from the father's siblings

Kinship relations	BANTAWA	YAKKHA	KOYEE	LOHORUNG	Gloss in English
FaBrSo	-	-	-	-	'cousin'
FaBrSoe	<i>bubu</i>	<i>p^hu</i>	<i>bubu</i>	<i>bubu</i>	
FaBrSoy	<i>nits^ha</i>	<i>nuts^ha</i>	<i>baktsi</i>	<i>nusa</i>	
FaBrDa	-	-	-	-	'cousin'
FaBrDae	<i>nana</i>	<i>na</i>	<i>nana</i>	<i>nana</i>	
FaBrDay	<i>nits^ha</i>	<i>nuts^ha</i>	<i>baktsi</i>	<i>nusa</i>	
FaSiSo	-	-	-	-	'cousin'
FaSiSoe	<i>bubu</i>	<i>p^hu</i>	<i>bubu</i>	<i>bubu</i>	
FaSiSoy	<i>nits^ha</i>	<i>nuts^ha</i>	<i>baktsi</i>	<i>nusa</i>	
FaSiDa	-	-	-	-	'cousin'
FaSiDae	<i>nana</i>	<i>na</i>	<i>nana</i>	<i>nana</i>	
FaSiDay	<i>nits^ha</i>	<i>nuts^ha</i>	<i>baktsi</i>	<i>nusa</i>	

As can be seen in Table 5, elder sons (*Soe*) of both father's brother and father's sister are expressed as *bubu* in Bantawa and Koyee, *p^hu* in Yakkha, and *bubu* in Lohorung, showing partial cognacy. Younger sons (*Soy*) are *nits^ha*, *nuts^ha*, *baktsi*, *nusa*, reflecting a gender-neutral term also used for younger siblings. Elder daughters (*Dae*) appear as *nana* in Bantawa and Koyee, *na* in Yakkha, and *nana* in Lohorung, while younger daughters (*Day*) again use the same forms as younger sons.

3.1.4 Peripheral consanguineal kinship terms from mother's siblings

Ego's relationships with the children of the mother's sister and brother are classified as peripheral consanguineal relations through the mother's siblings. The sons and daughters of the mother's sister and brother are considered the peripheral consanguine of the ego.

Table 6: Peripheral consanguineal kinship terms from Mother's siblings

Kinship relations	BANTAWA	YAKKHA	KOYEE	LOHORUNG	Gloss in English
MoBrSo	-	-	-	-	'cousin'
MoBrSoe	<i>bubu</i>	<i>p^{hu}</i>	<i>bubu</i>	<i>bubu</i>	
MoBrSoy	<i>nits^{ha}</i>	<i>nuts^{ha}</i>	<i>baktsi</i>	<i>nusa</i>	
MoBrDa	-	-	-	-	'cousin'
MoBrDae	<i>nana</i>	<i>p^{hu}</i>	<i>nana</i>	<i>nana</i>	-
MoBrDay	<i>nits^{ha}</i>	<i>nuts^{ha}</i>	<i>baktsi</i>	<i>nusa</i>	
MoSiSo	-	-	-	-	'cousin'
MoSiSoe	<i>bubu</i>	<i>p^{hu}</i>	<i>bubu</i>	<i>bubu</i>	
MoSiSoy	<i>nits^{ha}</i>	<i>nuts^{ha}</i>	<i>baktsi</i>	<i>nusa</i>	
MoSiDa	-	-	-	-	'cousin'
MoSiDae	<i>nana</i>	<i>na</i>	<i>nana</i>	<i>nana</i>	
MoSiDay	<i>nits^{ha}</i>	<i>nuts^{ha}</i>	<i>baktsi</i>	<i>nusa</i>	

Table 6 presents the elder sons (*Soe*) of both mother's brother (*MoBr*) and mother's sister (*MoSi*) are expressed as *bubu* in Bantawa and Koyee, *p^{hu}* in Yakkha, and *bubu* in Lohorung, showing clear cognacy. Younger sons (*Soy*) use the same forms as younger siblings: *nits^{ha}*, *nuts^{ha}*, *baktsi*, *nusa*. Elder daughters (*Dae*) are mostly *nana* across languages, with Yakkha occasionally showing *p^{hu}* or *na*, while younger daughters (*Day*) mirror the younger son forms. Overall, cousin terms from the mother's side largely replicate the patterns found in the father's side, reflecting age and gender distinctions, strong cognacy in core forms, and minor phonological variations across the Kirati languages.

3.1.5 Peripheral consanguineal kinship terms of male and female ego

Peripheral consanguineal relations that are expanded from either male or female ego are called peripheral consanguineal relations of male and female ego.

Table 7: Peripheral consanguineal kinship terms of male

Kinship relations	BANTAWA	YAKKHA	KOYEE	LOHORUNG	Gloss in English
BrSo	<i>ts^{ha}</i>	<i>jets^{ha}</i>	<i>tsi</i>	<i>hanlisa</i>	'nephew'

BrDa	<i>mets^{ha}ats^{ha}</i>	<i>mets^{ha}</i>	<i>mintsumats^{ha}</i>	<i>jessama</i>	'niece'
SiSo	<i>ts^{ha}</i>	<i>jets^{ha}</i>	<i>tsi</i>	<i>hanlisa</i>	'nephew'
SiDa	<i>mets^{ha}ats^{ha}</i>	<i>mets^{ha}</i>	<i>tsi</i>	<i>hanlisa</i>	'niece'

As can be seen in Table 7, Nephews of brothers (*BrSo*) are expressed as *ts^{ha}* in Bantawa, *jets^{ha}* in Yakkha, *tsi* in Koyee, and *hanlisa* in Lohorung, indicating some phonological variation. Nieces of brothers (*BrDa*) are *mets^{ha}ats^{ha}* in Bantawa, *mets^{ha}* in Yakkha, *mintsumats^{ha}* in Koyee, and *jessama* in Lohorung, showing more complex forms with reduplication or compounding. Nephews of sisters (*SiSo*) largely mirror the brother's nephew terms, with Bantawa *ts^{ha}*, Yakkha *jets^{ha}*, Koyee *tsi*, and Lohorung *hanlisa*. Similarly, nieces of sisters (*SiDa*) resemble the brother's niece terms: *mets^{ha}ats^{ha}*, *mets^{ha}*, *tsi*, and *hanlisa*.

3.1.6 Peripheral consanguineal kinship terms of female ego

The peripheral consanguineal relations that are derived from a female ego are referred to as the peripheral consanguineal relations of the female ego.

Table 8: Peripheral consanguineal kinship terms of female ego

Kinship relation	BANTAWA	YAKKHA	KOYEE	LOHORUNG	Gloss in English
BrSo	<i>ts^{ha}</i>	<i>jets^{ha}</i>	<i>janatsi</i>	<i>hanlisa</i>	'nephew'
BrDa	<i>mets^{ha}ats^{ha}</i>	<i>mets^{ha}</i>	<i>janama</i>	<i>jessama</i>	'niece'
SiSo	<i>ts^{ha}</i>	<i>jets^{ha}</i>	<i>janatsi</i>	<i>hanlisa</i>	'nephew'
SiDa	<i>mets^{ha}ats^{ha}</i>	<i>mets^{ha}</i>	<i>janama</i>	<i>hanlisa</i>	'niece'

As can be seen in Table 8, Nephews of brothers (*BrSo*) are *ts^{ha}* in Bantawa, *jets^{ha}* in Yakkha, *janatsi* in Koyee, and *hanlisa* in Lohorung, while nieces of brothers (*BrDa*) are *mets^{ha}ats^{ha}*, *mets^{ha}*, *janama*, and *jessama*, showing variation across languages and the use of reduplication or compounding. Nephews of sisters (*SiSo*) follow similar forms: *ts^{ha}*, *jets^{ha}*, *janatsi*, and *hanlisa*, and nieces of sisters (*SiDa*) are *mets^{ha}ats^{ha}*, *mets^{ha}*, *janama*, and *hanlisa*. These patterns indicate that, from the female perspective, cousin and sibling-offspring terms largely preserve cognate roots in

Bantawa, Yakkha, and Koyee, while Lohorung shows greater lexical innovation, particularly for nephews.

3.1.7 Peripheral consanguineal relations from ego's off-spring

The peripheral consanguineal relations of ego's offspring expand from the grandsons and granddaughters.

Table 9: Peripheral consanguineal kinship terms from ego's offspring

Kinship relations	BANTAWA	YAKKHA	KOYEE	LOHORUNG	Gloss in English
CC	-	-	-	-	'grandchild'
Soso	<i>ts^ha</i>	<i>jets^ha</i>	<i>tsatsa</i>	<i>jaŋmin</i>	'grandson'
SiSo	<i>met^sat</i>	<i>met^sa</i>	<i>juts^ha</i>	<i>haŋlisa</i>	'granddaughter'
SoDa	<i>ts^ha</i>	<i>jets^ha</i>	<i>tstatsama</i>	<i>jaŋmin</i>	'grandson'
DaDa	<i>met^sa</i>	<i>met^sa</i>	<i>ttsatma</i>	<i>jaŋmin</i>	'granddaughter'

As can be seen in Table 9, grandsons of sons (Soso) are *ts^ha* in Bantawa, *jets^ha* in Yakkha, *tsatsa* in Koyee, and *jaŋmin* in Lohorung, while granddaughters of sons (SiSo) are *met^sat*, *met^sa*, *juts^ha*, and *haŋlisa*, showing both cognacy in Bantawa, Yakkha, and Koyee and lexical divergence in Lohorung. Grandsons of daughters (SoDa) mirror the Soso forms, and granddaughters of daughters (DaDa) correspond to SiSo forms, reflecting a parallel system based on the gender of ego's child.

3.2 Affinal relations

Affinal relations are categorized into two: core and peripheral which are discussed below.

3.2.1 Core affinal kinship terms from father

Core affinal kinship terms from father are the terms which expand from father. Father's brother's wife and sister's husband is core affine of the ego from father.

Table 10: Core affinal kinship terms from father

Kinship relation	BANTAWA	YAKKHA	KOYEE	LOHORUNG	Gloss in English
FaBrW	-	-	-	-	'aunt'
FaBreW	<i>dema</i>	<i>jem</i>	<i>demdem</i>	<i>dema</i>	-
FaBryW	<i>ts^huna</i>	<i>ts^him</i>	<i>ts^himts^him</i>	<i>dema</i>	-

FaSiH	-	-	-	-	'uncle'
FaSieH	<i>dewa</i>	<i>ku</i>	<i>pus^hai</i>	<i>kibbu</i>	-
FaSiYH	<i>pus^hai</i>	<i>ku</i>	<i>pus^hai</i>	<i>kibbu</i>	-

Table 10 presents the core affinal kinship terms from the father's side in Bantawa, Yakkha, Koyee, and Lohorung. Generic terms for 'aunt' (FaBrW) and 'uncle' (FaSiH) are absent across all four languages. Elder father's brother's wife (FaBreW) is expressed as *dema* in Bantawa, *jem* in Yakkha, *demdem* in Koyee, and *dema* in Lohorung, showing cognacy in Bantawa, Koyee, and Lohorung, with Yakkha exhibiting a phonologically reduced form. Younger father's brother's wife (FaBryW) is *ts^huna* in Bantawa, *ts^him* in Yakkha, *ts^himts^him* in Koyee, and *dema* in Lohorung, reflecting both reduplication and lexical variation. Elder father's sister's husband (FaSieH) and younger father's sister's husband (FaSiYH) show more divergence: Bantawa *dewa/pus^hai*, Yakkha *ku*, Koyee *pus^hai*, and Lohorung *kibbu*, indicating independent lexical innovations for male affines.

3.2.2 Core affinal kinship terms from mother

Core affinal kinship terms from mother are the terms which expand from mother. Mother's brother's wife and sister's husband is core affine of the ego from mother.

Table 11: Core affinal kinship terms from mother

Kinship relations	BANTAWA	YAKKHA	KOYEE	LOHORUNG	Gloss in English
MoBrW	-	-	-	-	'aunt'
MoBreW	<i>dema</i>	<i>ni</i>	<i>nono</i>	<i>dema</i>	-
MoBryW	<i>kujayma</i>	<i>ni</i>	<i>nono</i>	<i>anij</i>	-
MoSiH	-	-	-	-	'uncle'
MoSieH	<i>dewa</i>	<i>p^han</i>	<i>dede</i>	<i>dappa</i>	-
MoSiYH	<i>baja</i>	<i>p^han</i>	<i>p^hop^ho</i>	<i>babban</i>	-

As can be seen in Table 11, elder mother's brother's wife (MoBreW) is *dema* in Bantawa, *ni* in Yakkha, *nono* in Koyee, and *dema* in Lohorung, showing cognacy between Bantawa and Lohorung. Younger mother's brother's wife (MoBryW) is *kujayma* in Bantawa, *ni* in Yakkha, *nono* in Koyee, and *anij* in Lohorung, illustrating more lexical variation. Elder mother's sister's husband (MoSieH) appears as *dewa*, *p^han*, *dede*, and *dappa*, and younger mother's sister's husband (MoSiYH) as *baja*, *p^han*, *p^hop^ho*, and *babban*,

reflecting partial cognacy with phonological differences and reduplication.

Table 12: Core affinal kinship terms from ego's siblings

Kinship relation	BANTAWA	YAKKHA	KOYEE	LOHORUNG	Gloss in English
SBreW	<i>busunima</i>	<i>teyme</i>	<i>d'unana</i>	<i>kitna</i>	'sister-in-law'
SBryW	<i>bammi</i>	<i>teyme</i>	<i>name</i>	<i>nammi</i>	'sister-in-law'
SSieH	<i>p'ejwabuŋ</i>	<i>p'u</i>	<i>nanatapa</i>	<i>kibuu</i>	'brother-in-law'
FaSiYH	<i>makts'a</i>	<i>tabaŋ</i>	<i>maktsi</i>	<i>maksa</i>	'brother-in-law'

Table 12 presents that the elder sister-in-law (*SBreW*) is *busunima* in Bantawa, *teyme* in Yakkha, *d'unana* in Koyee, and *kitna* in Lohorung, while younger sister-in-law (*SBryW*) appears as *bammi*, *teyme*, *name*, and *nammi*, showing some cognacy in Yakkha and Lohorung. Elder brother-in-law (*SSieH*) is expressed as *p'ejwabuŋ* in Bantawa, *p'u* in Yakkha, *nanatapa* in Koyee, and *kibu* in Lohorung, whereas younger brother-in-law (*FaSiYH*) is *makts'a*, *tabaŋ*, *maktsi*, and *maksa*, reflecting partial phonological similarity between Bantawa and Lohorung.

Table 13: Core consanguineal kinship terms from ego's offspring

Kinship relation	BANTAWA	YAKKHA	KOYEE	LOHORUNG	Gloss in English
SoW	<i>nammi</i>	<i>tayme</i>	<i>name</i>	<i>nammi</i>	'daughter-in-law'
SoSoW	<i>nammi</i>	<i>tayme</i>	<i>tsatsaname</i>	<i>nammi</i>	-
DaSoW	<i>nammi</i>	<i>tayme</i>	<i>tsatsaname</i>	<i>nammi</i>	-
DaH	<i>makts'a</i>	<i>tabaŋ</i>	<i>maktsi</i>	<i>maksa</i>	'sister-in-law'
SoDaH	<i>makts'a</i>	<i>tabaŋ</i>	<i>maktsi</i>	<i>maksa</i>	-
DaDaH	<i>makts'a</i>	<i>tabaŋ</i>	<i>maktsi</i>	<i>maksa</i>	-

As can be seen in Table 13, daughters-in-law (*SoW*, *SoSoW*, *DaSoW*) are *nammi* in Bantawa and Lohorung, *tayme* in Yakkha, and *name*/*tsatsaname* in Koyee, showing partial cognacy with some reduplication or compounding in Koyee. Sisters-in-law (*DaH*, *SoDaH*, *DaDaH*) are *makts'a* in Bantawa, *tabaŋ* in Yakkha, *maktsi* in Koyee, and *maksa* in Lohorung, reflecting close similarity between Bantawa and Lohorung, while Yakkha and Koyee show divergent forms.

3.2.3 Peripheral affinal kinship terms from parent's siblings

Table 14: Peripheral affinal kinship terms from parent's siblings

Kinship relations	BANTAWA	YAKKHA	KOYEE	LOHORUNG	Gloss in English
PaSiDaeH	<i>p'ejwaduŋ</i>	<i>b'ena</i>	<i>nanatapa</i>	<i>kibbu</i>	'brother-in-law'
PaSiDayH	<i>makts'a</i>	<i>tabaŋ</i>	<i>maktsi</i>	<i>maksa</i>	'brother-in-law'
PaSiSoeW	<i>busunima</i>	<i>tayme</i>	<i>name</i>	<i>nammi</i>	'sister-in-law'
PaSiSoyW	<i>nammi</i>	<i>teyme</i>	<i>name</i>	<i>nammi</i>	'sister-in-law'
PaBrDaeH	<i>p'ejwaduŋ</i>	<i>tabaŋ</i>	<i>nanatapa</i>	<i>maksa</i>	'brother-in-law'
PaBrDayH	<i>makts'a</i>	<i>tabaŋ</i>	<i>maktsi</i>	<i>maksa</i>	'brother-in-law'
PaBrSoeW	<i>busunima</i>	<i>teyme</i>	<i>d'unana</i>	<i>kitna</i>	'sister-in-law'
PaBrSoyW	<i>nammi</i>	<i>teyme</i>	<i>name</i>	<i>nammi</i>	'sister-in-law'

Table 14 shows that brothers-in-law (*PaSiDaeH*, *PaSiDayH*, *PaBrDaeH*, *PaBrDayH*) are expressed as *p'ejwaduŋ*, *makts'a*, *p'ejwaduŋ*, and *nakts'a* in Bantawa; *b'ena* and *tabaŋ* in Yakkha; *nanatapa* and *maktsi* in Koyee; and *kibbu* and *maksa* in Lohorung, reflecting both cognacy in some forms and independent lexical innovations. Sisters-in-law (*PaSiSoeW*, *PaSiSoyW*, *PaBrSoeW*, *PaBrSoyW*) are *busunima* and *nammi* in Bantawa; *tayme* and *teyme* in Yakkha; *name*, *d'unana* in Koyee; and *nammi*, *kitna* in Lohorung, showing partial cognacy, reduplication, and phonological variation.

3.2.4 Peripheral affinal kinship terms from ego's siblings

Table 15: Peripheral affinal kinship terms from ego's siblings

Kinship relations	BANTAWA	YAKKHA	KOYEE	LOHORUNG	Gloss in English
BrSoW	<i>nammi</i>	<i>teyme</i>	<i>name</i>	<i>nammi</i>	'daughter-in-law'
BrDaH	<i>makts'a</i>	<i>tabaŋ</i>	<i>maktsi</i>	<i>maksa</i>	'son-in-law'
SiSoW	<i>nammi</i>	<i>teyme</i>	<i>name</i>	<i>nammi</i>	'daughter-in-law'
SiDaH	<i>makts'a</i>	<i>tabaŋ</i>	<i>maktsi</i>	<i>maksa</i>	'son-in-law'

As can be seen in Table 16, daughters-in-law (*BrSoW*, *SiSoW*) are *nammi* in Bantawa and Lohorung, *teyme* in Yakkha, and *name* in Koyee, indicating partial cognacy and minor phonological

variation. Sons-in-law (*BrDaH*, *SiDaH*) are *makts^ha* in Bantawa, *tabaŋ* in Yakkha, *maktsi* in Koyee, and *maksa* in Lohorung, again showing partial similarity across languages.

3.2.5 Peripheral affinal kinship terms from ego's wife

Table 16: Peripheral affinal kinship terms from ego's wife

Kinship relation _s	BANTA WA	YAKKH A	KOYEE	LOHOR UNG	Gloss in English
W	<i>tajama</i>	<i>ma</i>	<i>tama</i>	<i>k'imtaŋma</i>	'wife'
WBre	<i>bubu</i>	<i>p^hu</i>	<i>d'ububu</i>	<i>bunampa</i>	'brother-in-law'
WBreW	<i>nana</i>	<i>na</i>	<i>d'unana</i>	<i>nana</i>	-
WBry	<i>nits^ha</i>	<i>nunts^ha</i>	<i>baktsi</i>	<i>nusa</i>	'brother-in-law'
WBryW	<i>nits^ha</i>	<i>mamu</i>	<i>simma</i>	<i>nusa</i>	-
WSie	<i>nana</i>	<i>na</i>	<i>d'unana</i>	<i>nana</i>	'sister-in-law'
WSieH	<i>bubu</i>	<i>p^hu</i>	<i>bubu</i>	<i>bubu</i>	-
WSiy	<i>nits^ha</i>	<i>teŋma</i>	<i>simma</i>	<i>nusa</i>	'sister-in-law'
WSiyH	<i>nits^ha</i>	<i>nunts^ha</i>	<i>baktsi</i>	<i>nusa</i>	-

As can be seen in Table 16, the term for 'wife' (*W*) is *tajama* in Bantawa, *ma* in Yakkha, *tama* in Koyee, and *k'imtaŋma* in Lohorung. Brothers-in-law (*WBre*, *WBry*) are expressed with forms such as *bubu/nits^ha* in Bantawa, *p^hu/nunts^ha* in Yakkha, *d'ububu/baktsi* in Koyee, and *bunampa/nusa* in Lohorung, while their wives (*WBreW*, *WBryW*) appear as *nana/nits^ha* in Bantawa, *na/mamu* in Yakkha, *d'unana/simma* in Koyee, and *nana/nusa* in Lohorung. Sisters-in-law (*WSie*, *WSiy*) show similar patterns: *nana/nits^ha* in Bantawa, *na/teŋma* in Yakkha, *d'unana/simma* in Koyee, and *nana/nusa* in Lohorung, with their husbands (*WSieH*, *WSiyH*) expressed as *bubu/nits^ha*, *p^hu/nunts^ha*, *bubu/baktsi*, and *bubu/nusa*, respectively.

Table 17: Peripheral affinal kinship terms from ego's husband

Kinship relation _s	BANTA WA	YAKKH A	KOYEE	LOHOR UNG	Gloss in English
H	<i>tajama</i>	<i>nik^huba</i>	<i>tspa</i>	<i>k'imtanpa</i>	'husband'
HBre	<i>bubu</i>	<i>p'unamba</i>	<i>bubu</i>	<i>bubu</i>	'brother-in-law'
HBreW	<i>nana</i>	<i>na</i>	<i>nana</i>	<i>nana</i>	-
HBry	<i>nits^ha</i>	<i>teŋba</i>	<i>dewar</i>	<i>ŋeteŋma</i>	'brother-in-law'
HBryW	<i>nits^ha</i>	<i>joŋnima</i>	<i>simma</i>	<i>nusa</i>	-
HSie	<i>nana</i>	<i>nanamma</i>	<i>nana</i>	<i>nanamma</i>	'sister-in-law'
HSieH	<i>bubu</i>	<i>p^hu</i>	<i>bubu</i>	<i>kibbunampa</i>	-
HSiy	<i>nits^ha</i>	<i>teŋma</i>	<i>simma</i>	<i>ŋeteŋma</i>	'sister-in-law'
HSiyH	<i>nits^ha</i>	<i>tabaŋ</i>	<i>bubu</i>	<i>ŋeteŋma</i>	-

Table 17 presents that the term for 'husband' (*H*) is *tajama* in Bantawa, *nik^huba* in Yakkha, *tspa* in Koyee, and *k'imtanpa* in Lohorung. Brothers-in-law (*HBre*, *HBry*) are *bubu/nits^ha* in Bantawa, *p'unamba/teŋba* in Yakkha, *bubu/dewar* in Koyee, and *bubu/ŋeteŋma* in Lohorung, while their wives (*HBreW*, *HBryW*) appear as *nana/nits^ha* in Bantawa, *na/joŋnima* in Yakkha, *nana/simma* in Koyee, and *nana/nusa* in Lohorung. Sisters-in-law (*HSie*, *HSiy*) are expressed as *nana/nits^ha* in Bantawa, *nanamma/teŋma* in Yakkha, *nana/simma* in Koyee, and *nanamma/ŋeteŋma* in Lohorung, with their husbands (*HSieH*, *HSiyH*) expressed as *bubu/nits^ha*, *p^hu/teŋba*, *bubu/bubu*, and *kibbunampa/ŋeteŋma*, respectively.

3.2.6 Peripheral affinal kinship terms from spouse

Table 18: Peripheral affinal kinship terms from spouse

Kinship relation _s	BANTA WA	YAKKH A	KOYEE	LOHOR UNG	Gloss in English
SpFaFa	<i>kopa</i>	<i>pum</i>	<i>tsuktsu</i>	<i>panampa</i>	-
SpFaMo	<i>koma</i>	<i>mum</i>	<i>pipi</i>	<i>manamma</i>	-
SpMoFa	<i>kopa</i>	<i>pum</i>	<i>tsuktsu</i>	<i>panampa</i>	-
SpMoMo	<i>koma</i>	<i>mum</i>	<i>pipi</i>	<i>manamma</i>	'brother-in-law'
SpFa	<i>papa</i>	<i>pa</i>	<i>papa</i>	<i>papa</i>	'father-in-law'
SpMo	<i>mama</i>	<i>ma</i>	<i>mama</i>	<i>mama</i>	'mother-in-law'
SpFaBre	<i>dewa</i>	<i>jep</i>	<i>dede</i>	<i>deppa</i>	-
SpFaBreW	<i>dema</i>	<i>jem</i>	<i>dendem</i>	<i>demma</i>	-
SpFaBry	<i>baŋa</i>	<i>p'aŋ</i>	<i>p'op'o</i>	<i>babaŋ</i>	-
SpFaBryW	<i>ts'una</i>	<i>ts'im</i>	<i>mama</i>	<i>sima</i>	-
SpMoSie	<i>dema</i>	<i>jem</i>	<i>dendem</i>	<i>demma</i>	-
SpMoSieH	<i>dewa</i>	<i>jep</i>	<i>dede</i>	<i>deppa</i>	-
SpMoSiy	<i>ts'una</i>	<i>nunts^ha</i>	<i>nono</i>	<i>nini</i>	-
SpMoSiyH	<i>baŋa</i>	<i>p'aŋ</i>	<i>p'op'o</i>	<i>babaŋ</i>	-
SpMoBre	<i>dewa</i>	<i>jep</i>	<i>kuku</i>	<i>deppa</i>	-
SpMoBreW	<i>dema</i>	<i>jem</i>	<i>kiki</i>	<i>demma</i>	-
SpMoBry	<i>ts'uwa</i>	<i>koŋba</i>	<i>kuku</i>	<i>kajeŋ</i>	-
SpMoBryW	<i>kujuma</i>	<i>ni</i>	<i>kiki</i>	<i>ani</i>	-
SpFaSie	<i>dema</i>	<i>jem</i>	<i>nono</i>	<i>demma</i>	-
SpFaSieH	<i>dewa</i>	<i>jep</i>	<i>pusai</i>	<i>depa</i>	-
SpFaSiy	<i>ts'una</i>	<i>ni</i>	<i>nono</i>	<i>nini</i>	-
SpFaSiyH	<i>pusai</i>	<i>ku</i>	<i>pusai</i>	<i>pusai</i>	-

As can be seen in Table 18, grandparent-in-laws (*SpFaFa*, *SpFaMo*, *SpMoFa*, *SpMoMo*) are expressed as *kopa/koma* in Bantawa, *pum/mum* in Yakkha, *tsuktsu/pipi* in Koyee, and *panampa/manamma* in Lohorung, reflecting cognacy in Bantawa, Yakkha, and Koyee, with more innovation in Lohorung. Parent-in-laws (*SpFa*, *SpMo*) are *papa/mama* in Bantawa and Koyee, *pa/ma* in Yakkha, and *papa/mama* in Lohorung. Siblings-in-law of the spouse show

greater variation: elder and younger brothers-in-law (*SpFaBre*, *SpFaBry*, *SpMoSiy*, *SpMoBry*) are expressed as *dewa/baŋa/ts^huwa* in Bantawa, with corresponding variations in Yakkha, Koyee, and Lohorung (*jep/p^haŋ/konba*, etc.). Their wives (*SpFaBreW*, *SpFaBryW*, *SpMoSiyH*, *SpMoBryW*) are *dema/ts^huna/kujunma* in Bantawa, with varied forms across the other languages. Similarly, sisters-in-law of the spouse (*SpMoSie*, *SpMoSiy*, *SpFaSie*, *SpFaSiy*) show parallel distinctions, with cognate forms in Bantawa and Lohorung and more divergent forms in Yakkha and Koyee.

4. Discussion

The analysis depicts a shared phylogenetic heritage of the kinships among the Bantawa, Yakkha, Koyee and Lohorung. This section will discuss the findings through the lenses of lexical, semantic in general and morphological in particular.

The most striking evidence of a common origin is reflected in the core consanguineal terms. The languages like Bantawa, Yakkha, Koyee and Lohorung exhibit the massive stable forms like *papa* ('father'), *mama* ('mother'), *bubu* ('elder brother'), and *nana* ('elder sister') across the languages. These forms are persevered in the Proto-Kirati languages¹.

4.1 Lexical and semantic patterns

The most striking evidence is of a common origin is reflected in the core consanguineal terms. There exist stable forms like *papa* ('father'), *mama* ('mother'), *bubu* ('elder brother'), and *nana* ('elder sister') across all four languages Bantawa, Yakkha, Koyee and Lohorung. These forms are persevered in the Proto-Kirati languages. The pattern of combining **ma-* and **pa-* to form 'parents' (*mam-pap*, *ma-pa*, etc.) points to a shared morphological process of compounding across the languages. Semantically, the terms like *nits^ha* in Bantawa, *nits^ha* in Yakkha, and *nusa* in Lohorung and *baktsi* in Koyee suggests the gender neutral (both

male and female). In peripheral relations, there is lack of distinction between paternal and maternal lineages for grandparent terms (e.g., Bantawa *kopa* for both grandfathers; Yakkha *pum*, Koyee *tsuktsu* and Lohorung *pappa*.)

4.2 Morphological analysis

The data reveal productive morphological processes of compounding, reduplication, affixation and suppletion and lexicalization.

a. Compounding

The core kinship terms show the use of compounding, especially in the formation of 'parents' by combining the terms for 'mother' and 'father', i.e. Bantawa *mam + pap = mam-pap*; Yakkha: *ma + pa = ma-pa*, and Koyee and Lohorung: *mama + papa = mamapapa/mampapa*.

b. Reduplication

Reduplication is a highly productive process that functions both as an honorific and as mean of denoting central familial roles. In Koyee, examples include *dewa-dede* (elder uncle), *nana* (elder sister), *demdem* (elder aunt). In Bantawa, Koyee and Lohorung, *bu-bubu* (elder brother) represents a case of full reduplication.

Partial reduplication is also realized as in Yakkha *namma* and Lohorung *ma?mma* for 'grandmother', where the geminated **-mm-* serves as morphological feature associated with female elders or grandmothers across these languages.

c. Suffixation and morphological marking

A pervasive feminine marker *-ma* exists across these languages, as in *ko-ma* ('grandmother'); Yakkha *mum* ('grandmother'), *kon-ma* ('aunt'); and Lohorung *manamma* ('grandmother'). This *-ma* suffix is clearly cognate with the widespread Tibeto-Burman feminine marker. A masculine marker *-pa* is also found in core terms, as in *papa* ('father'). In Lohorung, examples include *deppa* ('elder uncle') and *k^himtanpa* ('husband'). Variation in masculine marking, such as Yakkha *-ba* in *konba* that has phonological change.

The pattern of combining **ma-* and **pa-* to form 'parents' (*mam-pap*, *ma-pa*, etc.) points to a shared morphological process of compounding across the

¹ Rai and Budahthoki (2008); Rai (2022) and Rai and Angbung (2025) have also indicated the *papa* and *mama* as the proto-form of the Kirati languages.

languages. Semantically, the terms like *nits^ha* in Bantawa, *nits^ha* in Yakkha, and *nusa* in Lohorung and *baktsi* in Koyee suggests the gender neutral (both male and female). In peripheral relations, there is lack of distinction between paternal and maternal lineages for grandparent terms (e.g., Bantawa *kopa* for both grandfathers; Yakkha *pum*, Koyee *tsuktsu* and Lohorung *pappa*.)

5. Conclusions

This study has presented an overview of the kinship systems in Bantawa, Yakkha, Koyee, and Lohorung. The findings reveal the genetic relatedness within the Kirati group, as shown by cognacy in core kinship terminology. At the same time, there are variations realized in affinal and peripheral terms that indicate both the linguistic innovation and social transformation. The linguistic significance of this research is the contribution to the comparative study of Tibeto-Burman languages. By providing evidence from kinship terminology, it not only helps reconstruct aspects of Proto-Kirati but also illuminates the processes of divergence and contact that have shaped the languages of this region. Kinship terms are deeply embedded in social organization, and features such as age-based hierarchy, the merging of lineages at the grandparental level, and the treatment of cousins as siblings reveal important aspects of traditional Kirati family structures and social values. Equally important thing is implication of how to preserve the linguistic heritage from dominant national and global languages. Future research needs to expand to the Kirati languages and typologically compare them within the Tibeto-Burman language family.

Acknowledgments

I would like to extend my gratitude to the University Grants Commission, Sanathimi, Bhaktapur for providing the Mini Research Grant (UGC Award No.SRDIG-79/80-H&S-07) that supported me to conduct this research. I am equally thankful to the respondents from the speech communities that generously provided the linguistic data for this study. Their contributions from the languages Bantawa, Yakkha, Koyee and Lohorung were invaluable.

References

- Bonvillain, N. (2019). *Cultural anthropology* (4th ed.). Pearson Education.
- Goodenough, W. H. (1956). Componential analysis and the study of meaning. *Language*, 32(1), 195–216. <https://doi.org/10.2307/410665>
- Greenberg, J.H. (ed). (1963). *Universals of language*. MIT
- Lado, R. (1957). *Linguistics across cultures: Applied linguistics for language teachers*. University of Michigan Press.
- Lévi-Strauss, C. (1969). *The elementary structures of kinship* (J. H. Bell, J. R. von Sturmer, & R. Needham, Trans.). Beacon Press. (Original work published 1949).
- Morgan, L. H. (1871). *Systems of consanguinity and affinity in the human family*. The Smithsonian Institute.
- Rácz, P., Passmore, S. , & Jordan, F.M. (2020). Social practice and shared history, not social scale, structure cross-cultural complexity in kinship systems. *Topics in Cognitive Science* 12 (2). 744–765. DOI: 10.1111/tops.12430
- Rai, T.M. (2022). *A grammar of Koyee*. LINCOM EUROPA.
- Rai, T.M., & Angbung, D.B. (2025). The Kirati kinship terms in comparative typological perspectives. [Report]. University Grants Commission.
- Rai, T.M. & Budhathoki, M.B.(2008). A Documentation of Koyee Language. [Report]. NFDIN.
- Read, W. (2013). A new approach to forming a typology of kinship terminology systems: From Morgan and Murdock to the present. *Structure and Dynamics*, 6(1),1-26.
- Stone, L. (2014) *Kinship and gender* (4th ed.). Westview Press.
- Trask, R.L. (2007). *Language and linguistics: The key concepts*. Taylor & Francis.