

# **Dilemmas of Traditional Natural Resource Management Systems in the Nepal Himalaya: A Case Study of the Limi Valley, Humla**

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# Outline

- Introduction
- Objectives
- Methodology
- Discussion
- Concluding remarks



# Introduction

- Nepal – known for rich in biological and cultural diversity
- Communities practiced traditional system of community governance and natural resource management (TNRMS).
- Expansion of state institutions, decentralization practices have led to TNRMS have being threatened, facing gradual decline.
- Few of them have survived.
- Limi Valley is one such area where TNRMS is still practiced.
- Limi community currently experiencing rapid changes, new challenges (internal and external)



# Objectives

- Exploring about traditional natural resource management systems (TNRMS) surviving in Limi
- Examining internal and external challenges, and dilemmas for Limi community





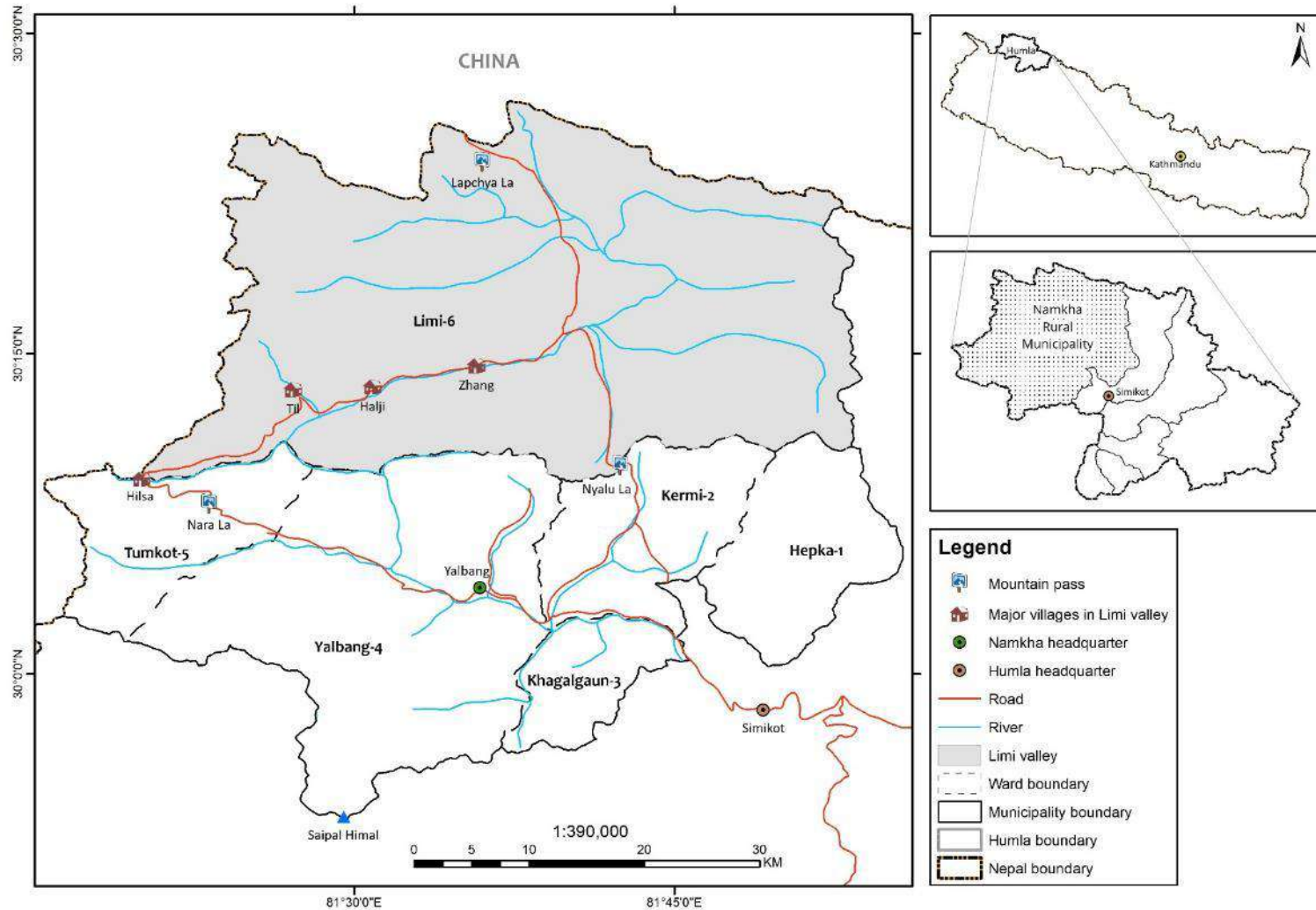
# Methodology

- In-depth Interviews with elected representatives of Limi and Namkha Rural Municipality, members of Limi Youth Society, journalists from Humla, academicians and researchers (20 persons)
- Focus group discussions (2 discussions)
- Secondary literature review





# Field Settings



## Limi Valley

- Ward 6 in Namkha Rural Municipality of Humla district, Karnali Province,
- Area: 1201 sq. km.
- 3 villages: Til, Halzi/Waltse, Zang
- Households: 150 approx.
- Population: 1000 approx.
- Subsistence farming, animal husbandry, cross border trade and wage labour (Taklakot/Pulan County, TAR, China).



Rinchenling monastery – one of the oldest monastery in Nepal



# Traditional institution of Limi

- Religious and social institutions
- Established to meet societal needs (social, economic, ecological)
- Survived with strong religious leadership (Monastery)
- Structured governance
- Strong sentiments of nature conservation





# Governance structure of the institution

## Drong-chen

First settlers,  
Wealthiest families

## Drong-chung

Off-shoot of *drong-chen*  
Moderately wealthy

## Bomthang

Landless, Poor  
Single-women families

*Tax collection*

*Labor provision*

*Monastery contribution,  
including lama  
recruitment*

Photo: Astrid Hovden



## 1 Chi-kyab (Chief)

Til

## 3 Go-wa

Waltse

## 1 Go-wa

Zang

2 village-level meetings [**yulzin dunma**]

- Every HH head participates
- Lasts 4-5 days

1 community meeting [**tang dunma**]

- Representatives from 3 villages
- Often lasts for 3-7 days

Conflict resolution

Division of labour

Tax collection

Boundary issues

Issues unresolved at  
village level



# Natural resource governance

Forest watchmen  
**Ta-tok-pa**

**shing-nak** [forest]

Only dry & dead allowed

**drong** [kharka]

Use according to seasons

**shing** [agricultural field]

Prevent livestock from grazing on agricultural land  
Use only organic fertilizers

**chu** [water]

Keep water source clean  
Manage irrigation channel

Forest watchmen and Animal watchmen report to Go-wa/village council

Households breaking the rules are strictly fined

Ta-tok-pas are themselves monitored – those not doing their tasks effectively are fined

Religious institution, Monastery



# How has the institution survived till date?

Adapted to changing social conditions (coped with periodic crisis)

Met societal goals (religious, economic, environmental protection)

Integrate and regulate members

Create and sustain, equip individuals and motivate them for sustainability



# Voices from the field

## Interdependence of nature, culture and economy

“We are aware of symbiotic relationship between nature and culture. For generations we have created strict rules to protect water & wildlife, to use medicinal herbs, and we are conscious of overgrazing too” A young man in his 30s from Limi (June 2021)



Photo: Jitendra Bajracharya



# Challenges

## Internal

- Changing family system
- Changing aspirations
- Shifts from agro-pastoralism
- High rate of outmigration

## External

- Decentralization policies
- Infrastructure development
- Growing pressure on nature
- Globalization

# Voices from the field

## Changing gender relations, family system, and youth aspirations

“We [women] have limited freedom in the village. Household heads are male and only they participate and take decision in village. Our generation women want to have some level of independence and freedom as well.”

A young woman from Limi (July 2021)

In the past, this [fraternal polyandry] practice perhaps existed because then lifestyle required more working family members, and to avoid division of property. Now, our generation do not prefer to live in a traditional joint family system” - A young man from Limi, June 2021)



# Voices from the field

## Youth aspirations

“The eldest son in a family will have to give up his career aspirations, return to the village to replace the household head and take up social duties. This is problematic for us [youths], we want to pursue our personal career goals”- A college student from Limi (in Kathmandu) (July 2021)

“We [youth] do not aspire to live in the village; however, we are concerned for our people. We have formed Limi Youth Society to discuss and share problems of our people. We would like to contribute something to our village” – A college student from Limi (ingroup discussion in Kathmandu) (July 2021)

# Voices from the field

## Changing context and policies

“Since our ancestors’ times, we have lived closely with nature and very much attached with it. External influence would be disastrous for our life, livelihood and identity” – A Limi Respondent from Halzi (June 2021)



# Conclusion

## *Community governance*

- Ecologically sensitive
- Adaptive and resilient to crisis
- Participatory, equitable

## *Growing dilemmas*

- Policy dilemma,
- Socio-cultural dilemma

## Need of the hour

- Shift from centralized bureaucratic system







Thank you