



## The Subba Surname Attributes to the Kirat Legacy

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**Abstract:** 'Subba' is a word that today defines a social ethnicity. In Nepal, the name is also often used in the administrative sector. People believe that when Prithvi Narayan Shah united Nepal, he established the title Subba. Limbu group claim that the Gorkha-Limbu pact signed during Nepal's unification did not grant Limbu rights. They have spread the misconception that the surname or post of Subba originated during the Shah's reign. As a result, a sect of the Limbu responded harshly to the remarks of Subba. However, a Subba surname bearer saw his last name as his traditional title as his identity. There is a split opinion within the Kirat Limbu community. Is Subba's surname or title from the Gorkha or Shah dynasty? What evidence is there in history and mundhum on the theme? I dedicate this essay to providing an answer to that question. The review indicates that this word is a sign of the Kirat legacy, not a product of the Shah's reign.

**Keywords:** Subba, Surname, Title, Kirat, Limbu, Prithvi Narayan Shah, Gorkha.

## INTRODUCTION

Kirat Limbu indicates his surname by writing surnames and titles. Most of them write Limbu, subclan, or family name, but a few also write Subba. Limbu is a word that means "bow warriors." Their particular roles and features have coined subclans. Chongbang, such, is a man who lives in a high-level house. Yakso is the fort's defender. Limbu evolved with different families' names after their efficiency, characteristics, and so on. There is a discrepancy in practice when it comes to writing one's last name or interpreting the surnames of others in the Limbu community.

People believe the term 'Subba' written by the Kirat Limbu people in ethnic is a title given by Prithvi Narayan Shah. Furthermore, tribals who oppose Nepal's unification see it as distorted by political lenses. The Limbu community's feelings about the word aren't entirely clear.

In the 1970s, I'm in a fort in Taplejung discussing public opinion. What are you going to do when you have read in school? Going to a foreign country's army was a viable alternative for Kirat children. A person seeking a job for Malaya or the Indian army who wanted an identity card or a recommendation to join the British army at the time may get a certificate from the local village panchayat. The applicant also requested that he write Limbu because only an army commander knows if he writes Limbu on the village panchayat's recommendation letter. As a result, it was common practice to write Limbu in official papers. Even at school, getting a certificate to join the army afterward would be easy. Many people used to write the surname Limbu, and a few people used to write the sub-tribe of Limbu. Because there has been a lot of writing in Limbu since then, the name 'Subba' has suffered a setback. This practice was the custom of the Kirat Limbu pupils in Taplejung, Panchthar, Tehrathum, from the 1960s to now.

The Limbuwan campaign is also responsible for not writing the Subba surname. Nepal's government did not safeguard Limbu's rights after the Gorkha Limbuwan Treaty of 1831 (Palungwa, 2013). As a result, when the Limbuwan campaign raised its voice against the Shah's authority, Limbuwan saw the word Subba as Gorkhali domination. Following the Shah's overthrow of Limbu's Subhangi feudal system, there was an unspoken agreement that Limbu would not write the Subba surname. As a result, Limbu did not write Subba's last name. Those who bear the Subba surname find them uncomfortable in their society.

According to historian Iman Singh Chemjong, Shan-Makwan, the ancestor of the Brahmaputra, the Kirat of Burma, southeast of China, established a kingdom in central Burma at the beginning of the sixth century. They referred to the president as 'Showbwa' (Chemjong, 2003). Chemjong claims that the current title or surname is Subba, derived from the same word 'Showbwa.' Chemjong, the historian, has drawn a significant conclusion. Chemjong's theory has shaped the history of Kirat Limbu. We need to keep putting his facts and proof to the test. San Makwan, the senior of the ancient Kirat Limbu, also used it. He claims it is usual to write Subba in Kirat on the same basis. Based on what he has presented, the coinage of Subba. This essay will discover another cause for this Subba practice.

There hasn't been any research done on this issue yet. Scholars seem uninterested in determining whether it is correct or incorrect to keep up this belief. Why and how did the two societal perspectives emerge? Is the present assumption correct or incorrect? It is now meaningful to set up this. This author has published a critical essay to discuss this topic. The focus of this paper will be on two concerns. First, is it true that Shah coined the term Subba? The article will address the query. The essay's second aim is to look into and check the Subba in light of Kirat history and other domains. Because it is a crucial piece, it has acquired, studied, and analyzed related material. The article presents a meaningful conclusion based on the evidence.

## DISCUSSION

### Practice Using the Surname Subba

The author would want to give some context to answer this question. We would not be able to answer this question unless we had any background information. Since this writer also bears the Subba surname, I like to relate a personal experience first. In my mind's eye, I will go back to Saraswati High School in my village's Taplejung Hangpang from 2024 to 2034 VS. In school, I did not write my last name as Subba on purpose in childhood. My parents and teachers must have written the surname Subba later. I found my ethnic Limbu mentioned on my early primary school certificates and Subba after Middle School. At school, my classmates were predominantly Khas-Arya. With them, I used to have private talks. They knew Limbu as a rough, aggressive, and forerunner, and they recognized that this was due to a lack of education. We made a bosom friend (*mitjyu*) strengthen the friendship. I have also made a lot of such new friends.

This picture is a brief snapshot into child psychology and a view of social reality. This practice is only a sample of one caste's social attitude toward another tribe. With this socialization, I could have found it easier to talk, write, and remember my 'Subba' surname. Limbu students used to write names like Angbuhang, Yakso, Chongbang, Samba, and their family names. They didn't think it was necessary to include Limbu. It was customary to use the surname Limbu in written receipts and government records. However, it was a tradition in the Limbu culture to discuss each other as Yakthung. Most people who could read and write at the time were Aryans. A Limbu surname as such was easier to write than Limbu's many sub-clans. Limbu's various surnames as family names are also challenging to pronounce and spell to non-Limbu. As a result, a well-educated person would prefer to use the term Limbu in their records.

I went to Kathmandu for higher studies in 2034 VS. I visited the Institute of Medicine's Maharajgunj campus to study. I approached the form sales desk and inquired about purchasing the form. The accountant asked my name, and I informed him of my given name

and surname. He asked if my surname was Subba. He inquired whether it was a family name or administrative title. It was Limbu, I said. He still takes a back. What exactly is Limbu? I felt a little self-conscious. I informed him that Limbu is a Rai-like ethnic group. He was aware of Rai's ancestry and inquired again, "Are you Kirat?" Yes, I said. Even the Tribhuvan University employees in Kathmandu, who appeared of the Newar ethnic, were not informed about the Limbu ethnic then. I thought that I had arrived at a new place. It has been four decades since then. Today, however, the situation is different.

### Perspectives on the Surname Subba

Let's have a look at the historical topic now. After the Limbu community's feudal privilege of Shubhangi Kipat land's right expired, there was a controversy about writing Subba. Many people remarked that calling Subba should stop after losing the rights. That is natural in and of itself, but how fitting! Is Subba exclusively related to Limbu's feudal Shubhangi or Kipat? Limbu's Hang, or kingship, was removed earlier. So, why do Limbu people write 'Hang' after their surname? "We were 'Hang' and didn't stop being proud of it," they responded. People blend their ancestor's accomplishments or titles into their personalities to show lineage. My only concern is that people called "Subba" and "Hang" around the same time. Why not be proud of it, or if we write Hang, why do we need to leave Subba as a surname? However, in Limbu, it is often assumed that Gorkhali bestowed Subba. Is 'Subba' the name given by Gorkhali to the Nepali language?

The term 'Subba' is common in Nepal government administration. As a result, many people believe it is a Nepali term coined by the Shah dynasty or the monarchy. The documents after Nepal's unification also included the title. Some anti-Prithvi Narayan Shah proponents of Nepal's unification are also hostile to the term 'Subba.' In their eyes, the man who gave his last name to this word became close to Gorkhali. As a result, it conceals a broken heart of Limbu-Gorkhali political psychology.

Who, why, where, and when did such a bitter seed sow against this word at the moment? Curiosity is a natural emotion. The Land Act 2021 VS effectively ended the practice of land feudalism in Nepal. As a result, Limbu, who had backed the feudal system by becoming Subba of Eastern Nepal, lost their rights. Limbu leaders believed that the state violated the saltwater treaty by depriving Limbu of his land rights. Thus, they considered Subba's title as sarcastic and unjustified. This chronology is also related to the concept of viewing crookedly.

### The Political Strategy Behind the Subba Surname

In 1998, Gangtok, the capital of the Indian state of Sikkim, hosted a Chumlung Limbu gathering. The

meeting decided against writing the surname 'Subba.' The Limbu people decided to band together against the state to secure their reservation rights. Therefore, the meeting determined that the Limbu of Sikkim should now write 'Limboo' surname instead of 'Limbu' and no mention of the family name/sub-clan like Lawati, Nembang, Samba, Yakso, Angbuhang, etc. (Gustavsson, 2013).

Following that, the number of people watching 'Subba' in Sikkim increased dramatically. Limbu from Nepal learned from this as well. Limbu, the author of Subba, became the adversary of his community during the Limbuwan movement in Nepal. There were discriminatory views on social media against writing 'Subba' with a name from within the community.

Limbu from Sikkim became Limboo, while Limbu from Nepal remained Limbu. This event marked the beginning of the distinction between writing Subba, Limbu, and Limboo. The Yuma religious campaign, and political campaign in Sikkim, created unnecessary division in Nepal's Limbu community. Yuma followers who have learned from Sikkim have also attacked the term Subba in the spirit of the Limbuwan movement. In any case, the Sikkim movement has contributed to the undesired and discriminatory notion of writing in English spelling (Limboo and Limbu) and the Nepalese 'Subba' boycott movement in its community.

Now, if the term "Subba" originated after Nepal's unification, my question is: Is Prithvi Narayan Shah the inventor of this term? How did he come up with this title? Did he create the word with a linguist? Or are they simply using words from the community's vocabulary? We should investigate.

### **Mundhum or Indigenous Knowledge**

Mundhum has made many references to Saba-Yet-hang as a Kirat Limbu ancestor. Chongbang Samba mundhum also stated that all Kirat were of the Saba-Yet-hang faith believer before separating into Kashi Khambongba and Lhasagotre Limbu (Chomgbang, 2009). However, the word 'Limbu' does not appear in Mundhum because outsiders speak or understand the term. Limbu was a political word. It was first used in the sixth century, during Limbuwan's reign. For the long haul, the phrase later did not seem used. The word Rai appears to have taken its place during the Shah period. Limbu had red seals known as Rai Limbu (Shrestha, 1985).

Take the 'Saba Sammang' on the way back to Mundhum. People regard Saba (monkey) as God (Sammang) in this Mundhum. He is a Kirat Limbu's patriarch form. According to the Mundhum people, the same 'Saba' later blended into distinct levels of Limbu clans from the Sammang (Subba, 2005).

Given the above, it is reasonable to wrap up Saba from Sammang to Samba/Subba. Another thing to note is that the journeys of their fathers are the same in the Saba Sammang Mundhum's Baraha Kokaha Mang, Tamber Khola, and Samba's Tungdunge Mundhum. The original term 'Saba/Shiv,' an abstract of both Mundhums to create Saba, Samba, Showbwa, Subba. As a result, it seems that the path to becoming Subba from the original word traditional belief Shiva, Saba is open. These words have respect to ancestors and power deserving titles to them. These words are the ancestral god and influence, the 'Subba' associated with them.

### **The Persian and Sanskrit History**

The literal meaning of Limbu is bowing perfection. Kirat appears to have had Kirat-Limbu's ancestors during the Mahabharata period. As a result, the historical depth of the word Limbu seems relatively shallow. On the other hand, delving deeper into the word 'Subba,' the original word mentioned in Persia's history, leads to 'Shiva-Saba-Sabha-Subha.' Referring to Persian history historian Naradmuni, Thulung has clarified that the Kirat family developed into the Limbu clan. Their ancestors were Saumer, Sumer, Marut, the Sumer region, or the modern Arabian region. In ancient times, people in Arabia worshiped Shiva or Linga (Thulung, 1985).

This account does not necessarily imply that Sabians in Persia were Hindus. The details of the pre-Vedic period before Arya arrives in the Indus Valley. The Aryans borrowed the term Sanatana from ancient Shiv/Sabians. Sabeanism was the name given to Arabia's ancient religion. Harament Province was the Saba or Sawa religion's epicenter (Thulung, 1985). In that religion, planets worshiped. This religion and state were known as Saba, and followers were known as Sabians. In ancient times, the Arabs were known by the names Bhumi, Nabhi, Sumeru, and Srinar. According to historian Thulung, most of the Battle of Devasur was fought on this land (Percy, 1951; Yarshater, 1989; Bryce, 2009).

According to Persian history, the term "Shiv" meant religion and race in Arab and ancient Persia (Thulung, 1985). Therefore, it is possible to investigate how Sanskrit recognized the word 'Shiv.' We can deduce that Sanskrit distorted 'Shav' and 'Shuv' with the opposite meaning. Because 'Shuv' is auspicious and 'Shav' is a corpse, this depicts Aryas' relationship with Kashi/Saumur, sometimes good and sometimes unpleasant. The historical fact indicates that Shiv (God) derived the words 'Shav' (corpse) and 'Shuv' (good), which were formerly Shiv (God). That is the result of interaction between Aryans and non-Aryans. Their relationship was sometimes good, sometimes poor, or good or bad with the original and derivative words 'Shav' (corpse) and 'Shuv' (good).

### **Shiv and Bon in Kailash, Mansarovar**

Bon is not only the Tibetan religion but also the traditional religion of Central Asia. Before the Tibetan Empire, it belonged to the Sungsung kingdom (Rinpoche, 2002).

Some scholars believe the Shaivites entered Tibet from Kashmir via Mesopotamia and the Arabian Peninsula. As a result, Shaivism felt that Bon's religion was in the Kailash Mansarovar region of Tibet. Bon followers treat Mount Ti-se (Mt. Kailash) and Lake Manasarovar (Mansarovar) as sacred places. Shiv followers also considered Kailash and Mansarovar as holy places. Scholars believe that Shiv faith influences or intermingled with Bon because they are the same places of pilgrimage for both Shaivites and Bon (Chogyal, 2013). Based on the evidence presented above, the interaction and mutual influence of Shaivism and Bonism seem to have occurred in the Kailash-Mansarovar region. Bon and Shiv pilgrimage met in a place after Shaivism (Sanatana) converted to Hinduism.

When Buddhism arrived in Tibet in the seventh century, it persuaded the traditional Bon religion. Because the rulers were Buddhists, they were adamant about preaching Buddhism. There is little knowledge about the ancient Bon religion. The Kirat Limbu are nature worshippers. Bon believes in Shamanism and Animism, where natural objects such as mountains, hills, rivers, stones, trees, and so on, the father, the soul, and so on. Shaman sacrifices and even offers alcohol to the gods in Bon. Kirat Limbu shaman (Samba, Phedangba) performs the same as in the Bon religion. Mundhum claims that they used to do magic as well, like Bon.

### **Ancient Kirat-Ashur**

According to ancient documents, Samba-Shambar fled the plains and hid in the hills after being defeated by Indra. Then, to reclaim power, he waged a 40-year-long guerrilla war against Indra. According to historian Thulung, the last phase of the Devasur battle after Persia and Arabia took place in the Saptasindhu region (Thulung, 1985). Meanwhile, history reveals that the Saptasindhu, a lineage composed of Marut, Asura, Das, and Dasyu, transformed into an organized Kirat race and migrated to Nepal during the Devasur wars. As a result, the ancient words Sab, Saba, and Samba, and Kirat entered from the West, South, North, and East of Nepal at the same time.

Recent historical studies and research have provided significant support for this historical fact. Archeology, genetics, history, and linguistics have all been used to in-depth analyze the Chinese-Tibetan and Tibetan-Burman language families. According to this research, a group of Tibeto-Burman-speaking people from Xinhua, China, entered the Himalayan region (Nepal) via Saptasindhu and the plains from the west of Nepal since the Neolithic period. In addition, another Tibeto-

Burman-speaking group appears to have entered the Himalayas (Nepal) from the north and east of Nepal via the Brahmaputra Sikkim and Assam (VanDriem, 2005). Furthermore, Jammu Kashmir's Samba and Kathuwa are linked to Kirat Limbu culture and history (Subba, 2019).

### **Historical Evidence**

In 1831 VS, Prithvi Narayan Shah merged the Limbuwan state with the Gurkha kingdom. From 1779 to 1831, he ruled (18th-19th centuries) Nepal. However, before this, in the 17th century, when the Kirat king Lohang Sen (reigned 1666-1698) established the country's borders, divided the expanded Kirat kingdom into five large provinces, and appointed one 'Subba' to govern each territory (Chemjong, 1974).

Hang Vidyachandra Rai, son of King Bajhang of Phedap, was appointed as Subba in the fortified area east of the Koshi river, west of Tista Mahanadi, north of Jalalgarh, and south of Vijaypur, according to historian Iman Singh Chemjong (Chemjong, 2003, Chemjong, 1974). Namdung Hang was also named Subba after naming Khambuwan as these four forts east of Tambakoshi, west of the Arun River, north of Saptari Province, and south of Tibet. Khambuwan's capital was Khotangadhi. King Lohang Sen established Saptari Province with the territory east of the Kamala River, west of the Koshi River, and south of the Khambuwan Hills upon Chongbang Hang. The capital of Saptari province was Bhimgadhi (Bhimnagar).

Lohang Sen established Makwanpur province, including the western part of the Makwanpur fort and the eastern part of the Trishuli Gandaki river, and appointed Shreng Hang Rai as Subba. Based on the preceding, the title 'Subba' was used by the Kirat ethnic in Lohang Sen's tent before Nepal's unification. Prithvi Narayan Shah had just quoted this Subba from the Kirat Limbu community. The title was already established as a respected and popular word in the Kirat community. As a result, the assertion or argument that the title of Subba originated during the reign of Prithvi Narayan is incorrect. Therefore, it's pointless to associate Subba with Gorkhali hostility.

### **Linguistics**

According to Nepali linguistics, the word 'Subba' is neither a *Tatsam* (original) nor a *Tadbhav* (corrupted) comment. It's also not a harsh Nepali word. The Mahakirat language family later shared this new word to the Nepali vocabulary. As a result, the Nepali dictionary defined it as an administrative status and an appreciative term for the Limbu people. In truth, this name is not just by the Kirat Limbu but also by other Kirat ethnic groups like the Gurung, Thakali, and others to find themselves.

The word Subba is situated in the Kirat Limbu language's literature and grammar. Although there is no lowercase letter (*Chuksak*) in the Limbu language

representing -Ba, it is customary to use the lowercase letter (*Chuksam*) instead of -Ba. In Limbu vernacular, such as when Subba is pronounced, it is called Supba, Suppa, Suba, Subha, and so on (Ingnam, 2012). The Limbu dictionary has a plethora of such words. Yuppa, Sufa, Sepma, Hepma, Lumba, Supna, Fasuppa, Keba, Yeba, Theba, Yungba, Thungba, Yamba, Chamba, Teneba, and other words. As a result, the term 'Subba' as it is now spoken or written is a distorted form of the original word. Historian Thulung mentioned the word sab/saba/sabha/shiva, from which many ethnic groups and terms in the Kirat civilization arose (Thulung, 1985). In any case, 'Subba' is Kirat Limbu's original name. Not only that, but it is a Kirat/Mahakirat word, heritage, and identity.

Ethnologue, Language of the World, a language statistics organization, has also shown maps of the various language families spoken in the Indian subcontinent, highlighting the Tibeto-Burman language family's presence in the Himalayas (David, Simons, & Fenning, 2019). Thus, the linguistic picture also supports the carry of the Tibeto-Burman language family, its origin, and distribution.

### Toponyms

There are many sites in Kirat Limbuwan territory that attest to their ancestry. For example, the name of several rivers in the area distorted by the word 'Showbwa' is 'Sobuwa Khola.' In the Kirat Limbu area, there is a river called Sobuwa Khola. That is close to the word Showbwa used by San Makwan for his chief in Burma, as recounted by Chemjong above (Chemjong, 2003). However, Sabha (Saba) Pokhari (pond) is linked to Saba/Shiv of mundhum, according to Saba mundhum and Pong Mundhum (Chongbang, 2009). The Sabhapokhari in the Arun-Barun region is also a distorted version of the Saba-Shiv-Pokhari in consonance with Chongbang Samba's Pong Mundhum and Tungdunge Mundhum. As a result, we should look beyond Chemjong's reported San Makwan (Burma) to the histories of Persia, Shiva, Pong Mundhum, and Saba Mundhum to associate the surname Subba with them.

### Subba is a Kirat Title

It is now clear that the Shah dynasty did not only give 'Subba' title to Limbu. The Shah dynasty bestowed this title on the Aryan-Khas caste at various times. For example, the famous linguist Bal Krishna Pokhrel's father, such as, was a Subba titleholder (Pokhrel, 2011). But why do not any Aryan-Khas caste today use the surname Subba in their name and surname? Why do the Kirat family of Limbu, Gurung, and Thakali continue to write Subba? Because the Subba title had already been established as a sociocultural legacy in the Kirat long before the Shah dynasty conferred it on Limbu following unification.

The title 'Subba' was instilled in the Kirat or MahaKirat family and is still used today. Subba is not an Aryan, nor is it a word or title in Nepali. Non-Kirats do not recognize this by their social customs and cultural traditions. The State system provides them with a reward for some time; they do not attach their names to their identity in any way. So why didn't they think to use this word? It is critical to understand that the word 'Subba' represents Kirat's lineage.

### CONCLUSION

By Persian history and linguistics, the word Subba consonants on the history of Mesopotamia, the Mediterranean region, West Asia, the Middle East region, the ancient Saba, the Shiva faith, and the Sabians group. Subba's corresponding Samba toponym Samba is in Jammu-Kashmir. Kashmiri Limbu as a remnant in Kashmir contributes to this. Kirat Mundhum claims that Kirat's ancestor Saba Yet-hang split into two branches. Kashi Khambongba centered in the Indian subcontinent, while the other branch traveled around *Singyuk* or China and became Lhasagotre. Sen Makwan named *Showbwa* to a leader who traveled to China and then to Burma, and the name *Showbwa* corrupted Subba. According to genealogy and linguistics, the words Saba, Shiva, Sen, Sena, and Subba were born in the Khambongba Kashi or *Singyuk* Lhasagotre Saumer group in Kirat. In any case, the term Subba has come to symbolize Kirat's faith and culture. Only Prithvi Narayan Shah borrowed the title Subba in the administration. This title is not a post from his period.

'Subba' is an ancient and unique Kirat Limbu sign based on Mundhum and historical evidence. This title predates Prithvi Narayan Shah. The name refers to a traditional social leader who has existed since Mahakirat's time. This terminology is not only well-known in Nepali languages, but it is also well-liked and respected in native Nepal. However, Subba is Mahakirat's identity and heritage, not the Shah's reign progeny. The misunderstanding arose among the Kirats due to a lack of awareness of the meaning of this word. It is now vital to comprehend the colonial attempt to divide Kirat Limbu using the divide and rule strategy. Rather than battling with one another through a lack of knowledge, we should strive compassionately and stop fighting.

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