Creating a Digital Archive for Dimasa Cultural Heritages and Identity Preservation

Monali Longmailai[1]

Abstract

Documenting cultural heritage in the digital platform is one of the major challenges in the emerging research studies today. The paper will discuss how a digital archive has been created to document and preserve culture and traditions of Dimasa, one of the vibrant and thriving communities from northeast India. It will discuss the role and importance of a community based digital archive as model for digital preservation of cultural heritage and community access. The study will highlight the cultural heritage information of Dimasa digitized with metadata in the archiving portal Bodo and Dimasa Heritage Digital Archive, from several categories, such as oral traditions, food, dress and ornaments, flora and fauna, to name a few. It will highlight community engagement, research collaboration and their curator roles for creating such an archive. Overall, the paper will discuss archiving in the digital space for creating a language and cultural resource for the Dimasa community.

Keywords: Digital Archive, Dimasa Tribe, Community-Based Language Documentation, Oral Narratives, Cultural Heritage

1.0   Introduction

The research paper has been broadly analysed into three main sections: overview of the archive and Dimasa, the digital archive of Dimasa and cultural heritage items featured, and its challenges. This section provides a background of the role and importance of archiving in the digital platform in northeast India, a profile of the Dimasa community and aims and objectives of the present study.

1.1.1   Archive Overview (in the Northeast Context)

Archive in general parlance is a place for preserving documents and records. Archiving in the digital platform is one of the effective means of using technology for preservation of those records for the future users. In India, there have been a number of digital archives such as, NAI (National Archives of India) (GoI 2023) covering historical and cultural documents and Indian Culture Archives (GoInd.) on cultural diversity of the country. Both the portals are run by the

[1]Assistant Professor, Department of Linguistics, Assam University, Silchar -788011, Dist: Cachar, Assam; Email: monalilong@gmail.com; Ph. 8638189306

Ministry of the Government of India. SiDHELA (Sikkim-Darjeeling Endangered Languages Archive) (Narayanan 2020 and Narayanan &Takhellambam 2021) is a linguistic archive for documenting oral narratives and grammatical descriptions of the languages from Darjeeling and Sikkim. There is little or no known lingua-cultural archive in India. However, most of these and other similar archives are database for documenting information and records. The portals are of either restricted or semi-open access in most cases (Longmailai et al. in print).

The digital archive called Bodo and Dimasa Heritage Digital Archive (BDA)is a newly created open access platform for the digital preservation of Bodo and Dimasa indigenous heritages in India since 2021. This archive differs from the aforementioned archives in the sense that BDA is completely community based and is run by the community members as curators and co-administrators for the community and with entirely community heritage information. The purpose of this archive is to promote the cultural heritages and the languages of Bodo and Dimasa communities in the digital platform by directly engaging the community persons, and developing a language and cultural resources for revitalising their age old traditions towards language development and culture sustainability[1].The archive is created in Mukurtu, a content management system for digital archive using Drupal platform to create the system for archiving. The archiving portal BDA needs to be reclaimed hosting every year for 100 USD by the team collaborators to enable the use and uploading, and the Mukurtu team support assists in related technical logistics[2].

The BDA archive has enabling features such as "community" for the respective community to upload and own the information, "categories" for the heritage information uploading, and "cultural protocol" for the copyright information and acknowledgement that "a certain item belongs to a particular "x community". It has "cultural heritage" for descriptive upload with media files such as image, audio and video, and "pdf" files (scanned materials, if any). Annotations for these files can be uploaded as "summary" (short description), "description" (detailed description), and "cultural narrative" (cultural use and significance and/or narrative and translation). Another feature is "heritage dictionary" or cultural dictionary for uploading culturally existing words from the community with the same media file features. It contains term as the head word, alternate spellings, translation, audio recording, source, phonological transcription, definition, sentence example, additional media and related content. The advantage of both "cultural heritage" and "heritage dictionary" is that the contents from both the section can be shared and linked with one another. Additional feature is "blogs" which is optionally used for longer descriptions. The metadata in "cultural heritage" consists of the details of the source, contributor, creator, location, original date (date recorded), date uploaded and modified and "heritage dictionary" consists of community, cultural protocol, wordlist, keywords, date uploaded and date modified. The images and videos (videos are uploaded through Vimeo platform) are watermarked and customised community wise mainly to prevent plagiarism and misuse by other sources. Thus, the BDA archive is primarily designed for community access and promotes community based indigenous heritage information.

At present, the Dimasa team has archived 255 items and the Bodo team has 488 items as "cultural categories" for preserving the cultural heritages. For producing the heritage dictionary in the digital archive, Dimasa has uploaded 310 head words and Bodo 661 till date. Only the Dimasa team is using the blogs section and there are three blogs from Dimasa in the archive.

The "contact+contribute" allows public users, primarily the community, to contribute any heritage information through the details provided for communication[3].

1.2   Profile of Dimasa

Dimasa is Indo-Mongoloid by race and linguistically, it belongs to the Bodo-Garo group of languages from the Tibeto-Burman language family (Post and Burling 2017: 213-242). It has a population of 137,184 peoples according to 2011 Census of India (GoI 2011). The Dimasa people are found in large numbers in Dima Hasao, Karbi Anglong and Cachar districts of Assam. They are sparsely populated in Hojai, Karimganj and Hailakandi districts of Assam and Dimapur district of Nagaland. The Dimasa community identify themselves with the following native names based on the regions they inhabit at present: Hasao (Dima Hasao), Hawar (Cachar, Karimganj, Hailakandi), Dembra (Hojai and parts of KarbiAnglong), Dijuwa (major part of KarbiAnglong and Dimapur) (Longmailai 2017:7). The Dimasa language has dialectal (regional) variation based on these regions (Hasao, Hawar, Dembra and Dijuwa) although these dialects have several sub-varieties further. Hasao is adopted as the standard dialect with Roman orthography in 2004 by the Dimasa Sahitya Sabha[4].

Earliest records of the Dimasa and Dimasa history have been found in the *Ahom Buranji* as "Timisa" during the reign of the Dimapur kingdom which Barman (2007) traces to 056-1536 CE.As Barman mentions, the kingdom later shifted to Maibang in 1536-1745 CE after they lost the 3rd battle with the Ahom invasion in Dimapur, and further shifted to Khaspur in 1745-1832 CE. The downfall of the kingdom happened with the Doctrine of Lapse and annexation of Cachar after the assassination of the last king Govinda Chandra in 1832 CE. Colonial writers such as E.A. Gait (reprint 2017), has written accounts of the historical past of Dimasas, and W.C.M. Dundas (1908) on the Dimasa grammar. Few of the older writers to name a few are, N.K. Barman (2007) who wrote on the history of the Dimasa history with reference to Khaspur kingdom, S.K. Barpujari (1997) on the history of the Dimasa, and S. Thaosen (1994) on the Dimasa language with reference to word structure and word formation rules.

Presently, Dimasa is a non-scheduled language and the community is recognised as a Scheduled Tribe (under 6th Schedule) in the Constitution of India[5]. Their language has been introduced as an optional subject till Class 8 in selected schools in Dima Hasao district (interpersonal communication with Dimasa Sahitya Sabha members). In February, 2024 the Government of Assam has announced to introduce Dimasa as a medium of instructions along with five other languages namely, Rabha, Tiwa, Deori, Karbi and Mising (Nandy 2024).

1.3   Aims and Objectives

Dimasa is a "vulnerably endangered" language based on the scales of UNESCO's vitality report (UNESCO 2003). In spite of the positive attitude towards their language, high generational transmission and the language spoken in the home domain, the language is still considered vulnerably endangered because of the limited documentation and little availability of published works on the language besides limited use in the media platform. The Dimasa Sahitya Sabha has been engaged in the preparation of textbook materials as a result of government's decision to introduce the Dimasa language for mother tongue education. However, there is huge dearth of

sufficient literature and materials to build for the Dimasa language education. In addition, the National Education Policy 2020 (GoI2020) further has strongly mentioned the importance of mother tongue education, use of machine translation for language learning, and promotion of arts, language and culture as a web based portal.

Thus, the present study aims to create a digital archive where one can document, protect and preserve the indigenous heritages of a community as of utmost concern, especially for Dimasa. The language has already been under the consideration of language education from the state government but with limited human resources and limited language resources. The present study thus discusses how the author and team have created a digital archive for the Dimasa community with a preservation commitment.

The paper discusses its features, contents and accessibility to the community, and how the archive serves as digital language and cultural resource for material production as well as for promotion of traditional knowledge systems to the users. That is, the current paper additionally describes the traditional knowledge preserved through the lexical items and their use from categories such as dress and ornaments, tools and instruments, flora and fauna to name a few. Overall, it further attempts to explore the challenges and possibilities of such a digital archive.

1.4   Research Design and Dimasa Archive

The design of the Dimasa digital archiving in the Bodo and Dimasa Heritage Digital Archiving (BDA) using Mukurtu, is "community-based". The community based research model (CBR) also known as community based participatory research (CBPR) focuses on research based on narrative enquiry and storytelling. (Clandinin & Connelly 2004). Narrative enquiry involves the cultural narratives on experiences collected such as oral history, traditional practices, beliefs, for instance, through observation and interviews with the community participants, while story telling includes oral narratives such as stories, songs, riddles, proverbs and idioms. Story telling can thereby include enactment or demonstration of the information collected in this method.

The fieldwork for Dimasa data was collected using narrative enquiry and storytelling for the documentation of cultural heritage for digital archiving. The Dimasa team volunteers began engaging in uploading of heritage information in online mode in 2021 with food, dress and ornaments, flora and fauna, song and dance, and selected historical information[6]. In the later year, 2022, the community members with the Dimasa team directly engaged in the recording of this heritage information from several community participants across 14-15 villages in Cachar district, Assam in 2022 by organising community outreach programmes. With such attempts, the team created awareness workshops in these villages and collected bulk data from several community resource persons. As the archive took shape into a research project under the financial aid of Indian Council of Social Sciences Research (ICSSR) since 2023, the project assistants have recently documented Bushu (Dimasa harvest festival) experiences and cultural narratives, enactments from Haflong, Dima Hasao district in Assam in 2024.

Another research model "community-based language documentation" (CBLD) was used, wherein the team volunteers from the Dimasa community since 2021 have been trained for the linguistic annotation of the cultural heritage as in text to text translation as well as for creating a

digital corpora in the Heritage Dictionary section in the portal. The project assistants have additionally collected 750 words from several semantic domains such as kinship, body parts, celestial bodies, numerals, food, plants and animals to illustrate, for uploading in the Dimasa Heritage Dictionary.

Thus, the BDA archive is community centric and involves community participants in digital preservation of their linguistic and cultural knowledge.

1.4.1   Archiving Cultural Heritage

The BDA archive has a key feature of Cultural Heritage in the Menu section for both Bodo and Dimas communities, besides the direct access in the main screen of the portal into 12 categories: Dance, Flora and Fauna, People, Dress and Ornaments, Songs, Food, Tools and Instruments, History, Traditional Practices, Literature, Oral Traditions, and Scholarly Works.
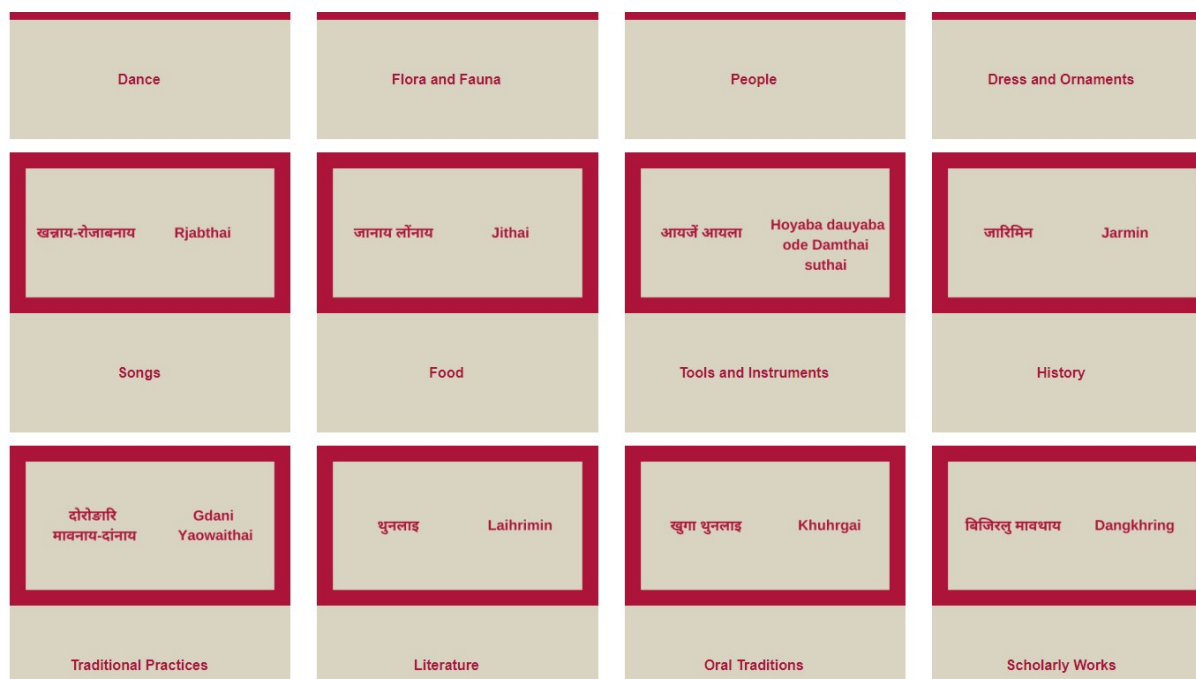

Figure 1: Cultural Categories in Bodo and Dimasa Heritage Digital Archive[7]

One of the advantages of these categories is that, they can be linked as shared contents for reference purpose. For example, an item inside the category such as Song can be shared with People and Oral Traditions; similarly, an item which is a story can be shared with History, Oral Traditions, and Literature. This makes the readers access related information in multiple categories and gather more traditional knowledge of the community. This section shall discuss some of these categories from Dimasa digital archiving which currently includes 255 items in the portal.

1.5   People, Oral Traditions, and Traditional Practices

This section merges cultural categories such as people, oral traditions and traditional practices from the archive, as they have a large number of shared information as 'shared content" in these categories. It also includes songs and dance categories in the section, as they have shared contents and are linked with oral traditions.

Figure 2: Ritual narratives catalogued under Oral Traditions[8]

The archive has several oral narratives in the "oral traditions" category which includes rituals, history, village narratives, folk stories and folk songs, children's games, proverbs, riddles, taboos and village activities. Birth, marriage and death rituals have been extensively documented from the Hawar Dimasa culture. The birth ritual *daosa rataiba* "bird sacrifice" is still performed traditionally in Dimasa village for purification of the baby after childbirth by elderly women. One of the significances of marriage rituals in Hawar is the use of betel leaf and betel nut (*gwai-mithi*) besides the rice beer *ju* in the *laothai* ceremony (before marriage ritual in the bride's house). One of the dying marriage rituals followed in Hawar is that of the union of frogs as *khaoroma jukhuyaba* "frog marriage" which is enacted to unite heaven and earth through frogs to spell rain for the paddy harvest. In death ritual, as narrated by language consultants especially from Kumacherra village, the Dimasa people, both men and women, make a paste of mustard seeds, turmeric seeds and cleanse themselves with it and water after returning from the crematorium.

Narratives on the Dimasa villages Kumacherra, Lodi, and Lodi Kachari have also been collected and archived as "people" interlinked with the categories "history", "oral traditions" in the portal. Besides these, there are oral narratives of historical ruins and temples that the community persons shared, which can be categorised here as oral history. Accounts of ruins of

Khaspur such *Snan Mandir, Barodwar,* stone inscription of King *Rama Chandra Narayan Hasnu*, and temples of Khaspur, Hawarma, Joypur and several other places from Cachar have been archived.
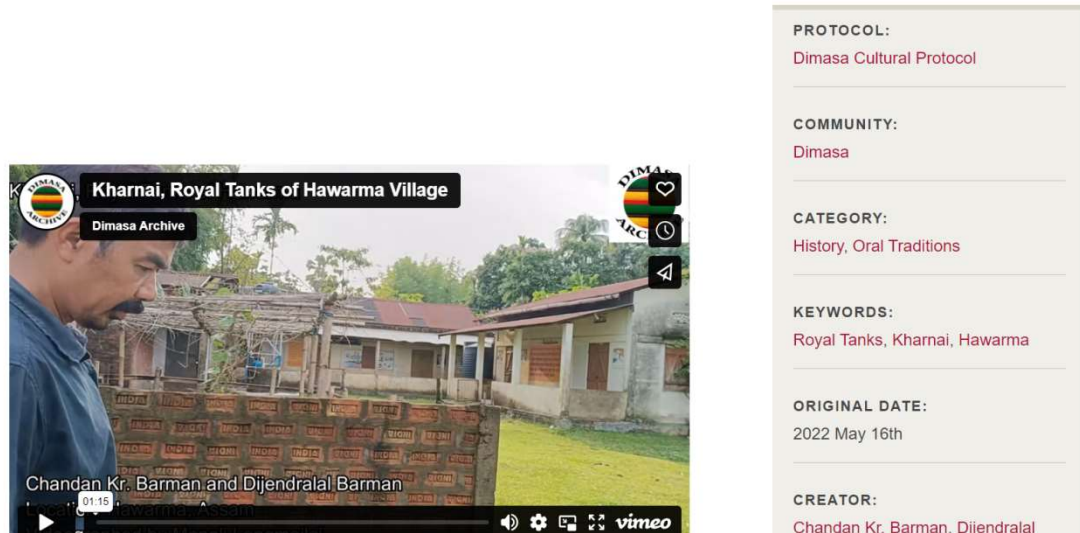

Figure 3: Oral narrative of the royal tanks in Hawarma village[9]

Folk stories on characters such as *Ashampha* (an idiot person), *Sogo Raja* (huge beast), *honohjang shisha* (the pig and the dog), to cite a few and folk songs on princess *Dishru,* Kirtan, ballad songs, lament songs, modern Dimasa songs broadcast in All India Radio in the 1970s-80s, folk epic on the Dimasa cosmos *Dilaobra-Sangibra* all provide pictures of the Dimasa society and values that have been carried from generations to generations.

Another milestone in the Dimasa digital archiving is the collection of children's games such as, a) question-answer game "satraitrai-gonthaitrai", wherein the next answer becomes the topic of next question, and the next answer as next question, b) finger game *yaoshijang mlaoyaba* where ten fingers are laid wide open on the surface and one finger is used to poke on all remaining fingers, until the narrative ends in which case, that particular finger has to be folded and locked inside; then it resumes with next finger and the narrative resumes until only one finger remains. Also, several of the Dimasa traditional knowledge of proverbs and riddles, for instance have elements from nature, body parts and the king cited in these narratives: for example,

Proverbs
1) *Nikhudada   khudi thukadeh   jar   na   glaireh*
   push if   spit   thrown   self   to   fall
   "What goes around comes around (Lit: If you spit up in the air it will fall down on you)".
2) *Shain   ha   thathi kadeh   hor ha gibrimba   maire*
   day   on   store if   night at useful   get
   "A stitch in time saves nine (Lit: If you keep things carefully during the day, then it will be useful in the night time)".

Riddles

3) *Hadam guphu, maimugishim*
    field   white rice seed   black
    "Empty field is white; rice seed is black". **Answer: a book/writing a book**
    (*laishirebba*)[10].

4) *Ddamaguphubirkhlaikha de birkhuphinya*
    butterfly   white jump down if jump up cannot again
    "If a white butterfly jumps, it cannot jump back". **Answer: spit (n) (*khudi   thuba*)**

Other narratives from paddy field activities and songs sung in traditional dance *Baidima* "harvest dance"*, Baimaija i*"plate dance"*, Baigrah* "war dance" have also been documented in the archive. The *Baidima* dance is performed mainly during the harvest season in January, and the date 27 January is declared as the official harvest festival for the Dimasa community in Assam and Dimapur in Nagaland. Rice wine is prepared and feasted with meat and sticky rice in the day time traditionally in the headman's compound, while the *Baidima* dance follows throughout the night until dawn. The dance is accompanied by the music *khram* "drum" and *muri* "long musical pipe". *Baimaijai* is a ceremonial war dance using plates, performed by women. It used to be historically performed to seek blessings and protection for the men from the goddess *Kali* before going to war. Presently, it is revived as one of the traditional dance forms and popularly performed among the Dijuwa speaking Dimasas of Dimapur in Nagaland. Lastly, *Baigrah*is also a war dance performed by men using swords.

In the recent decades, these folk dances have been relearned among the younger Dimasa community and almost all of these dance forms are well preserved and performed during community occasions.

1.6   Flora and Fauna

From the items archived for flora and fauna, it has been found that fruits in Dimasa are traditionally categorised highly with the prefixation of "thai" in words such as *thaiju* "mango", *thaigundi* "jujube", *thaiphlung* "jackfruit", while those without "thai"- are mostly derived or nativised from other language sources such as *nadigol* "coconut (from Indic *narikal*)", *hondra* "orange (from Indic santra)", *dalim* "pomegranate (from Indic<Bengali *dalim*)"[11].

Dimasa is rich in naming of plants based on their structure, taste and plant types by employing these strategies: suffixation with "-thai" (*thathai* "potato", *hangathai* 'sweet gourd"), "-phang" (*shlikdiphang* "turmeric plant", *morshaiphang* "chilli plant", "-blai" (*bakhorblai* "edible leaf", *laiblai* 'spinach leaf') and other kinds of naming (*mithi* "betel leaf", *thagong* "taro").

Similarly, animals both wild and reared have "m(V)-" prefixation in native words such as *miyung* "elephant", *misi* "tiger", *magusa* "monkey", *mojoh* "rat", *meseb* "buffalo", while derived words occur without any prefixation such as *gorai* "horse", *Gondar* "rhinoceros", *ahlu* "cat". Fish have categorisation with "na" either prefixed or suffixed as in *rou nah* "rahu fish", *namna* "eel", *nathu* "prawn"[12].

1.7   Food

Dimasa food consists of a wide range of herbal plants and meat, mostly chicken, mutton and pork besides fish. Few of those herbal plants archived till date are *phanthao mikhri* (bitter tomato), *mojoh khmao* (fish mint leaf), *bakhor blai* (coriander leaf), *shlikdiphang* (turmeric plant). Spices such as *morsaidi* (black pepper) are very commonly used in food culinaries. *Maiju* (sticky rice (mostly red)) is a favourite food staple besides the daily *makham* (plain rice). *Humao* is a yeast cake specially prepared for making rice wine (*judi),* rice beer (*jugap)*and a kind of rice drink (*juharo*, which appears like white rum). The traditional food items are mostly cooked with *hon* (rice flour), *khari* (alkali), fried (*yaoyaba*) and roasted *(brengyaba*), while salad or side dish is mostly smashed (*saphinyaba*).

In the archive, there's a collection of 10-11 food items mostly cooked as *brengyaba* (roasted using bamboo wherein food is stuffed for cooking in fire) as in, *mgong brengyaba* (roasted chicken), *nah brengyaba* (roasted fish), *naphlam brengyaba* (roasted fermented fish); cooked as *yaoyaba* as in *daodijang moshay aoyaba* (egg fried with dried fish); cooked with *hon* as in *miya hondap* (bamboo shoot cooked in rice flour), *daono hon shamlai* (chicken gravy cooked in rice flour); cooked with *khari* as in *much ikhari* (arrowroot cooked in alkali), and *saphinyaba* as in, *naphlam saphinyaba* (smashed fermented fish (*chutney*)), *honohain saphinyaba* (smashed pork (chutney)). Besides this, *lodama* (silkworm eggs) are a delicacy in Dimasa culinaries as either fried or smashed as salad.

1.8 Dress and Ornaments

Most of the Dimasa ornaments consist of silver such as *chondrowal* (silver moon shaped necklace), *khadu* (silver bangles with an opening cut), *yashimsho* (anklet), *yaoshtem* (finger ring), *rangbarsa* (necklace of silver coins), *khamothai* (earring) and beads such as *jongsama* (small beaded necklace), *phowal* (red beaded necklace). These ornaments are only worn by women except for *phowal* (red beaded necklace) which can also be worn by men. A hair accessory to tie a bun (*sukhep)* is popularly used among the Dijuwa Dimasas of Dimapur and Karbi Anglong. An image of the adornment *yashimsho* (anklet) which is a nearly extinct adornment is illustrated in the Figure 4:

The dress materials are highly colourful especially, the *rigu* (skirt), *rijamphain* (chest wrapper), and *rikhaosa* (shoulder wrapper). The colours are mostly red, green and yellow, with shades of black and white, teal blue, teal green, parrot green, navy blue and deep purple popularly common. *Risha* is a traditional *dhoti* or a wrapper worn by men from waist till knees. *Rithap* (shawl for men made of Eri silk) is mainly white, and it also specially used to cover a deceased body for the funeral ceremony. Most of the traditional dress names are categorically prefixed with *ri-*, as illustrated in this section.

Figure 4: Yashrungshrung/Yashimsho[13]

1.9   Tools and Instruments

The archive has collected a range of traditional baskets made of bamboo and cane, which are used for different purposes in Dimasa daily life, especially *khangkhra* (open basket)*, khaojeb* (storage baskets) and *khailim* (bigger storage baskets).

Among the musical instruments, mention can be made of *turulit,* which is made of mud and shaped like a bird (pigeon), and played pouring some water and blowing air through one of the holes. Unfortunately, there is hardly any known musician in Dimasa playing this instrument, nor promoting this instrument. Only hearers of the instrument remain for the future generations.

Figure 5: The musical instrument "turulit" extinct in use[14]

Plenty of bronze utensils *khasa* and alloy materials have been archived as these utensils are slowly disappearing from the daily households with plastic and clay dining sets available

widely in the local markets. Tools such as *khudirang* "spade", *rimin-shamtho* "mortar and pestle", *dauphang* "weaving set", *ha ni Chula* "mud stove", *khamplai* "wooden stool", to illustrate have been uploaded with information collected on their use and significance in Dimasa social activities.

1.10   History, Literature and Scholarly Works

Most of the historical information uploaded in the archive is oral narratives previously discussed in the section 2.1, besides essayed account of the Dimasa warriors such as *Sengya Sambhudhan Phonglo* and *Veer Demalik Kemprai.* The Literature category has covered oral literature specifically as riddles, proverbs, stories as discussed in 2.1[15]. Few of the scholarly works have been archived as in Singha's Dimasa Word Book (2010) and Danda's ethnography of Dimasa (1978) for the community access on Dimasa language and culture.

1.11   Future of the Dimasa Digital Archive: challenges and possibilities

Protecting the copyrights of the traditional knowledge and preserving them in the digital platform requires huge team work with community resource persons from various disciplines from social sciences, literature, engineering, and linguistics, who can design and build such an archive for the proper dissemination of information to the community. It consumes huge amount of time, effort and fund to run such a project for revitalization of the community resources in the long run. The BDA archive at present uses cultural protocol of both Bodo and Dimasa community members as owners of the heritage information from the respective communities. The team members include field experts, researchers and students from inter-disciplines, both from the community and others, and they have designed images and videos with watermarking and labels in such a way that the metadata of the particular item are provided to avoid misuse and protect the items in the digital platform. The team collaborators are currently working on the permission and digital copyright of literature (written), manuscripts and any narratives which are culturally vulnerable.

With the amount of cultural heritage and heritage dictionary uploads, print publication of materials for language education can be produced for the learners, students, and the community, at large. Such a community based digital archive can serve as a model for other communities to create similar platforms for preserving and promoting their heritage traditions and culture into learning resources. In addition, engaging the community persons in Mukurtu training to use this platform from one community team to the other not only promotes the use of the platform, it also creates a social awareness to protect and promote their indigenous heritage in the digital world, from the community to reaching others.

Thus, digital archiving is the future of corpus building for language and cultural resources for indigenous communities. It is one of the most useful means of creating a digital storage of information for future generations to learn and reuse their language and cultural practices as it is an open access platform. One of the main limitations is constant building of human resource for managing and preserving the resources. It is, therefore, most convenient to create collaborative research with a team of experts, community and other communities, connect with institutions and the community, and thereby grow the resources and sustain the information effectively. As such

a platform is for the "community use" purpose, it is the utmost responsibility that a group of community members can take to generate a chain of community curators to monitor and run the archive time to time, for the long term success of the digital storage and access.

1.12   Conclusion

Dimasa as a language of education requires a good number of text corpus especially in digital mode to create higher production of language materials for textbooks and curriculum design. Also, due to the regional variation and wide demographic distribution of Dimasa people, it becomes a necessity to bridge the micro-cultural gap across the Dimasa society by providing a digital archiving portal to share and learn each other's dialects and regional cultures. This helps in creating a positive attitude among the younger generation of the greater Dimasa community and popularizing the folklores and traditions of the Dimasas to other viewers and users.

The Dimasa digital archiving using BDA serves the purpose of promotion and preservation of the community's linguistic and cultural heritage. The paper has discussed the different categories from the archive's cultural heritage section, such as people, oral traditions and traditional practices, flora and fauna, food, dress and ornaments, tools and instruments, history, literature and scholarly works. The heritage information uploaded in these categories is mostly oral narratives collected using narrative and storytelling research methods.

The Dimasa archive in the BDA, which uses Mukurtu system, is designed for community engagement and participation as collaborative research, from fieldwork to annotation and uploading in the portal. Such a digital resource will eventually lead to print publication for community use, as well as preserving for the future generations to relearn and revitalise the dying traditions and culture and protect their indigenous heritages.

Thus, it can be concluded that digital archiving is the future of preservation of cultural heritage for indigenous communities, including Dimasa. It therefore requires extensive collaborative effort especially from the community and a need for constant interdisciplinary research field to keep the portal active and accessible for the dissemination of traditional knowledge and culture to the community and the other users.

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Notes

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Institute of Technology, Kokrajhar as Bodo collaborator, with financial aid received from Nativer's Institute of Bodology, Kokrajhar from 2022 to 2023. Christina Wasson administers and funds the web portal from the University of North Texas, USA.

2. [Support - Mukurtu CMS](). Last accessed 01.05.2024.

3. [Contact + Contribute | Bodo and Dimasa Heritage Digital Archive (bododimasaarchive.org)](). Last accessed 01.05.20224

4. The Spelling and Glossary Sub-Committee of the Dimasa Sahitya Sabha (DSS) (Dimasa Lairidim Mel in Dimasa) finalized the orthographic conventions using Roman for the Dimasa language on April 4, 2004. Late Shri J.K. Thaosen, one of the proponents of the committee shared the 2 paged manuscript of the orthographic conventions drafted on the given date with the author of the paper. This convention is printed as a supplementary reading in the DSS magazine *Khurang* periodically.

5. Article 244 deals with the Scheduled and Tribal Areas and Article 244(2) and 275(1) state provisions to the administration of tribal areas in the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram. Retrieved from [https://www.mea.gov.in/Images/pdf1/S6.pdf on May 1](), 2024.

6. The Dimasa team volunteers consisted of Krithika Barman, Moumita Barman, Animesh Barman and Dipjoy Barman led by Dr. Monali Longmailaiin 2021. Due to Corona pandemic, the team members communicated through Zoom meetings to proceed with data collection in their villages in Cachar district, Assam, and available sources in the internet, besides labeling and uploading in the archiving portal.

7. Downloaded from[https://bododimasaarchive.org/](). Accessed on May 7, 2024.

8. Downloaded from [https://bododimasaarchive.org/digital-heritage/community/167/category/oral-traditions](). Accessed on May 7, 2024.

9. Downloaded from [https://bododimasaarchive.org/digital-heritage/kharnai-royal-tanks-hawarma-village](). Accessed on May 7, 2024.

10. *Laishi* literally translates as wet leaf (*lai* means leaf and *shi* means wet). The usage as *laishi* has emerged from older manuscripts to modern form of books.

11. Prefixation is a word formation process in which, the word is fully productive/meaningful after something is added before the word as a prefix (Eg: equi-valent in "equivalent"), while suffixation is that which occurs at the end of the word (Eg: real-*ity*in "reality").

12. V indicates any vowel sound that occurs with "m" sound in m(V)- as *ma-, mi-, me-, mo-* or *mu-*.

13. Downloaded from [https://bododimasaarchive.org/digital-heritage?search_api_views_fulltext=Yashimsho]() on May 8, 2024.

14. Downloaded from[https://bododimasaarchive.org/digital-heritage/category/tools-and-instruments/community/167?search_api_views_fulltext=Turulit](). Accessed on May 7, 2024.

15. Finnegan (2012 repr.) defines oral literature as "a verbal art of traditional cultures which is transmitted by word of mouth". That is, it is a spoken literary tradition without literacy consisting of genres such as epic poems, ritual texts, legends, proverbs, idioms, historical narratives, which is transmitted from spoken to writing. Literature on the other hand is purely written form and it can include novels, pastorals, tragedy; it can share several other forms of writing with oral literature genres such as songs, epic, spells, to name a few.

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