Caste and Kin in Nepal, India and Ceylon

ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDIES IN HINDU-BUDDHIST CONTACT ZONES

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The photographs are by C. von Furer-Haimendorf and Elizabeth von Furer-Haimendorf. Maps 1 and 2 were drawn by the staff of the Royal Geographical Society, London.
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The essays contained in this volume are the results of anthropological field research in areas where Hindu and Buddhist civilizations dovetail and merge. Though each is written as an independent study of a particular social situation they illuminate from different angles the problems of the contact and interpenetration of two distinct ideologies and ways of life. Among some of the Himalayan populations studied, there is an overt dichotomy of Hindu and Buddhist social attitudes, and the authors have shown the process which their confrontation has set in motion. One of the main problems arising from this is the coexistence—not always leading to harmonization—of different systems of status evaluation. In the rigid stratification of an orthodox caste system of the type found in traditional Indian village society status evaluation as a rule poses no problem. There is a broad consistency between ritual, political, and economic status and very little mobility between the various groups. Wherever the social equilibrium is disturbed either by rapid economic change or by the contact of distinct ethnic groups, whose systems of status evaluation do not tally, the consistency between the different scales of values is destroyed or diminished, and tension arises between the groups involved. Often a malaise sets in among communities whose ritual and social status is not commensurate with newly gained economic or political power, and the desire to redress the balance and remove this inconsistency may give rise to various devices aimed at raising an individual’s or preferably a whole group’s social status.

The quest for the amelioration of individual and group status among the Newars of the Kathmandu valley is the principal subject of Dr. Rosser’s study. The detailed analysis of the litigation about the respective status of two groups serves as the starting point of a
comprehensive survey of status differences and mobility among Newar castes. While I am in full agreement with Dr. Rosser's assessment of the mechanism employed in 'status seeking' in Newar society, I have some reservations regarding his strong emphasis on the structural in contradistinction to the cultural aspects of the phenomenon of caste. Though many of the more rigid systems of social stratification have certain structural features in common, the specific interdependence of groups whose distinctiveness is expressed in ritual terms seems restricted to societies that have come under the influence of Hindu ideas. On the periphery of the Hindu culture sphere this is more clearly apparent than in its centre where the hierarchy of castes is taken for granted. Where Hindu concepts have impinged only superficially or recently on Buddhist or tribal societies, status groups as well as ethnic divisions assume caste-like features, not because of their structural nature, but because they have moved into the orbit of Hindu ideology. In my essay “Caste Concepts and Status Distinctions in Buddhist Communities of Western Nepal” I have shown that the Buddhist Thakalis, originally a segmentary tribal society, have begun to see themselves as a caste and are attempting to develop symbols of high caste status for no other reason than that they wish to attain a more favourable position among the higher castes of Nepalese Hindu society. It is unlikely that without the stimulus of Hindu ideas the various ethnic groups of the Thak Khola would have assumed caste-like features, and that the pattern of coordinated ethnic groups would have given way to the image of a stratified society consisting of unequal elements arranged in a hierarchic order. Similarly Dr. Srivastava demonstrates how in Kumaon Hindu influence has transformed the social attitudes of a group of Bhotias, who aspire to Rajput status and have modelled their behaviour on the example of high Hindu castes whereas the eastern Bhotias have persisted in an older tribal religion and have retained customs objectionable to Hindus. The widening gap between the two groups, which must inevitably result in their different ranking in a regional status-system, is due to their divergent responses to contact with Hindu society, and in this we can see a parallel to the differing attitudes to the values of Hindu society by the various ethnic groups within Thak Khola (cf. pp. 140-160).

Dr. Rosser rightly emphasizes that among the Newars Hindu
and Buddhist ideologies do not appear as two co-existing philosophies, and this is understandable enough as in cow ded towns of the Kathmandu valley the two religions have co-existed and merged for numerous centuries. It is legitimate therefore to doubt whether the comparative flexibility of the Newar caste system can be attributed to the greater tolerance of Buddhism towards unconventional social conduct. But in areas where the contact between Buddhist and Hindu societies is less intensive or of more recent date, a lack of rigidity in social relations is clearly traceable to the more tolerant and broad-minded outlook of Buddhists, who even when accepting a hierarchic order of castes do not invoke supernatural sanctions for its maintenance. This is apparent even in Ceylon where Hindu-Buddhist contacts extend over the greater part of the island's recorded history, but Sinhalese castes have none of the rigidity of the classical Hindu castes.

In the Himalayan regions, similar situations arise wherever populations of Tibetan speech and cultural background are subject to the impact of the social ideology of Hinduism. The Bhotia traders of Kumaon, described by Dr. Srivastava, have reacted to the contact with Brahmans and Rajputs in a manner closely paralleled by that of the Thakali traders of Nepal.

In both cases the non-Hindu communities surpass in wealth, material standard of living and economic power the majority of the caste Hindus into whose society they wish to be accepted on terms of equality, and in both cases is this quest frustrated by the reluctance of high caste Hindus to concede equality of status to communities of a basically different cultural background. Both Bhotias and Thakalis attempt to support their claim by the manufacture of historical evidence for a high caste-status in the distant past, but by these conjectural histories they only flatter themselves without impressing the Hindus whom they wish to emulate. Ib- betson's theory (quoted in Dr. Rosser's essay) that a community's rise in political importance is necessarily accompanied or closely followed by a rise in caste-status, does not receive support from these situations, mainly no doubt because it was developed with a view to well integrated Hindu caste-societies, and not to the inter-ethnic and inter-cultural contact situations prevailing in Kumaon and Western Nepal.

The greater flexibility of Tibetan Buddhist societies as compared
with the rigidity of a 'closed' Hindu society is illustrated by Miss Chie Nakane's analysis of the plural society of Sikkim. Discussing the relations between the indigenous, originally 'pagan' Lepchas and the Bhotia representatives of Tibetan Buddhist civilization Miss Nakane shows that the Bhotias did not form an exclusive group but enabled Lepchas to acquire religious learning and to join monastic communities on equal terms. Bhotias and Lepchas intermarry, though not on a large scale, and in so far as the upper strata of society are concerned there is no feeling of status distinction between Bhotias and Lepchas. The Hindu immigrants from Nepal, on the other hand, have remained outside the framework of the local Bhotia-Lepcha society. Not only is the cultural gap between the politically dominant Buddhist population and the economically forward and rapidly increasing Nepali settlers too great to allow of easy assimilation, but the Hindu immigrants are an element which resists absorption into a non-Hindu society. Although many of them stem from tribal communities which had originally no strong sense of caste-status, they have all been influenced by high caste ideas of purity and exclusiveness. Hence they are opposed to any intermarriage with Lepchas and Bhotias, and Miss Nakane mentions that in the one case of a marital union between a Nepali and a Lepcha girl the Nepali community had outcasted the man for lowering his status by concluding a union with the member of a community considered by Hindus as inferior. No such sentiments of caste-exclusiveness colour the relations between Bhotias and Lepchas even though the former are in some respects regarded as socially superior to Lepchas.

The intolerant attitude to inter-caste unions evinced by the Nepali-speaking Hindus in Sikkim is at variance with the practice of the higher Hindu castes in Nepal. There Chetri men can enter into marital unions with women of lower status without endangering their own position (cf. pp. 51, 52), and the internal stratification of the Chetri caste is the direct result of this relaxation of the rules of caste-endogamy. While the highest ritual status remains the monopoly of the issue from orthodox unions, such high status based on the purity of blood does not necessarily coincide with eminence in the economic and political sphere. In my essay "Unity and Diversity in the Chetri Caste of Nepal" I have shown that status-differences within the caste do not necessarily lead to
fission and the development of sub-castes, and that there is mobility within the framework of a caste which has remained a unit despite the influx of non-Chetri blood through marriages inconsistent with the rules of caste-endogamy.

The impracticability of an equation of caste and class becomes apparent when one tries to apply it to a caste such as the Chetris. This caste comprises aristocratic, middle-class and peasant-class elements, each of which forms part of a social class consisting not only of Chetris but also members of other castes equally stratified according to economic and political criteria. In this situation nothing can be gained by confusing the Chetri caste as a unit determined by descent and a number of cultural features with a social class, the definition of which is based on economic and political fortunes. The Chetri, and indeed the Newar, is acutely aware of the existence of social classes in Nepalese society, and for many families of 'middle-class status' the retention of that status involves a continuous struggle. Membership of the Chetri caste, and within it of a particular clan, on the other hand, is taken for granted, and no Chetri thinks of 'caste' and 'class' as categories of a comparable order.

This argument must not be pushed too far, however. The Chetri distinguishes clearly between caste- and class-status, because the same endogamous group comprises an immensely rich and—until recently—powerful aristocracy, a middle-class, the peasantry and even landless families of working class status. Ritual purity in caste-terms, often better preserved among the peasantry than among the urban middle-class, has hence no implications in the terms of class. In the case of the lower Parbatia castes, and particularly certain untouchable castes of craftsmen, low ritual status and a humble social status are linked. Members of these castes cannot easily rise to middle-class status on account of their caste. Similarly among the Newars untouchables are virtually barred from entry into the higher brackets of the class-order, while those of a caste-status lying in the middle of the hierarchy often attempt to move up within that hierarchy as soon as economic success has enabled them to maintain middle or upper class standards. In these circumstances there is an impulse towards the achievement of congruence between caste- and class-status, but the two categories are nevertheless seen as distinct. While for the Newar it is possible
to move openly from a lower to a higher economic status and in the process secure some of the privileges of the middle class, mobility within the caste-hierarchy can be achieved only by subterfuge and a measure of deception. Economic success provides the means to achieve such deception, but it does not by any means automatically bring about a change of caste-status or even a movement from one caste grade to the other.

In a recent analysis of caste principles, Dr. Leach has emphasized that “caste ideology presupposes that the separation between differently named castes is absolute and intrinsic”, and the caste-system of Nepal, though deviant in some ways from the classical Indian pattern provides support for this view. The social climbers referred to in Dr. Rosser’s essay, as well as in my preliminary survey of Newar society have to use subterfuge for the very reason that mobility between castes is possible only by a violation of the principles of the system. If, in Dr. Leach’s words, people of different castes are “of different species”, a person can be accepted in another caste only if he disguises his identity.

Dr. Leach distinguishes between the different castes, which ideally are complementary and not competitive, and the different grades of the same castes, whose members are in competition one against the other. This distinction is very relevant to the Nepalese situation, and Dr. Rosser demonstrates how the constant competition for status within the grade-system of the Shresta caste has undermined the cohesion and unity of that caste.

Another distinction between castes and caste-grades emerging from our analysis of Nepalese society lies in the contrasting attitudes to marital unions between persons of unequal status. Whereas the only tolerated inter-caste marriages are hypergamous unions, such as the alliance of a Chetri man with a Gurung or Tamang girl, or the marriage of a Brahman with a Chetri girl, marriages between persons of the same caste but different caste-grade or degree of purity are more usually of hypogamous nature, even though an alliance of this type seems to be opposed to the general principle that the wife-givers rank lower than the wife-takers.

Such hypogamous marriages are among the most common devices of social climbers striving for an improvement of their social status, but though they may help in the jockeying for position within caste-grades they do not, as a rule, enable a man to cross a major caste-boundary.

Status distinctions among some of the Bhotia populations of the Himalayan region form part of the theme of three of the essays of this volume. Protagonists of the view that 'caste' is a purely structural phenomenon not necessarily linked with Indian tradition might argue that the social stratification prevailing among many Bhotias is fundamentally similar to the hierarchic order of Nepalese Hindu castes. Such a view can be upheld, however, only by ignoring the fact that the 'various' sections of Bhotia society do not prescribe different patterns of conduct, whereas Hindu caste is characterized by a specific code of behaviour non-compliance with which jeopardizes an individual's status within the caste. Bhotia groups aspiring to a status within the Hindu caste system have to accept the limitations of a rigidly circumscribed conduct, and only in doing this that they can hope to qualify for inclusion within the caste they emulate.

The study of such contact situations reveals the large range of variations of the phenomenon of caste, variations due to the multiplicity of ways in which ideas of caste and the resultant social attitudes can be absorbed by populations outside the inner core of Hindu society. These ideas and attitudes are basically cultural facts, and by stressing only the structural aspect of the caste situation the flexibility and variety of the phenomenon is likely to be lost sight of; for the very reason that it is the cultural components which are responsible for this variety. Dr. T. N. Madan, who has made a notable study of Muslim castes in Kashmir, comments on this problem as follows: "A comparison of caste situations with a view to bringing out only the similarities will produce merely a structural skeleton, and consequently yield a caricature. Our interest should lie in showing the similarities as well as the variations, i.e. the structural as well as the cultural aspects of caste."  

The only essay in this volume not directly concerned with prob-

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9 Unpublished paper on "Caste in Rural Kashmir" presented to a seminar at the School of Oriental and African Studies.
lems of group status is Dr. Tambiah's study of polyandry in Ceylon. A link between this and the preceding essay by Miss Chie Nakane, however, lies in the fact that both deal with the phenomenon of polyandry. The polyandry practised by Lepchas and Bhotias is of a type occurring among Buddhist populations in Tibet and in the Himalayan regions. The principal motive for the arrangement of polyandrous marriages of this type is the desire of brothers to avoid the splitting up of their agricultural property. Among the Sinhalese peasantry polyandry also enables brothers to manage their property undivided, and Dr. Tambiah suggests that polyandry meets the needs of brothers compelled by economic forces to pool their dwindling land resources.

Another explanation for the occurrence of polyandry in Ceylon, and one which Dr. Tambiah credits with some plausibility, links the origin of this form of marriage with a feudal system compelling a man to attend for long periods his chief or the king. The need for a substitute to remain in the village and care for the fields and cattle could best be met by accepting a co-husband with joint responsibility for the farm-work. This situation has close parallels in many Himalayan regions, where men leave their homes for weeks and even months at a time to pursue long distance trade or to tend their yak-herds on high grazing grounds. There too polyandrous families have the advantage that one of the husbands remains in the village while the other is engaged in trade or pastoral pursuits.

A third element which Sinhalese and Bhotia society have in common is the tolerant attitude to sexual laxity. Polyandry does not seem compatible with a puritan outlook on sex, and in all polyandrous societies so far studied it has been found that sexual relations are not held to be of great moral relevance. Such an attitude seems more germane to Buddhist than to Hindu society, and the coincidence of polyandry with Buddhism in the Tibetan sphere and in Ceylon is perhaps not entirely fortuitous. We would certainly err if we considered Buddhist ideology as a causative factor in the development of polyandry, but there can be little

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5 The case of the Nayars might seem to disprove this statement, but the Nayars are clearly not a typical Hindu caste, their traditional family pattern being entirely at variance with the general image of the Hindu family.
doubt that Buddhist morality is permissive of a type of sexual arrangements unacceptable to the more puritan Hindu moralist.

With one exception the contributors to this volume have at one time or other been on the staff of the School of Oriental and African Studies, and though holding divergent views on some points of theory, they share the belief in the necessity of presenting detailed accounts of the basic data of anthropological field research. Their essays are to be viewed primarily as original contributions to the ethnographic knowledge of areas still inadequately known, even though they lie within the orbit of some of the world's most ancient historic civilizations.
I. Unity and Diversity in the Chetri Caste of Nepal

THE ETHNOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND

The Nepal Valley, whose inhabitants form the subject of the first two essays of this volume, occupies a unique place among the valleys set within the compass of the Himalayan ranges. Though barely two hundred and fifty square miles in area this valley was at various times the scene of a cultural efflorescence remarkable even in the perspective of the civilizations of Nepal's neighbours India and Tibet. Its cities, adorned with temples and palaces ranking among the finest architecture of Asia, served as a meeting ground of people from both these countries, and this rôle of link between two different worlds engendered an unusual capacity for weaving heterogeneous ethnic and cultural elements into a complex fabric of distinctive character.

Cradling the three ancient towns of Kathmandu, Patan and Bhatgaon, the Valley is not only the political and administrative centre of the Kingdom of Nepal, but it is Nepal in the sense that the inhabitants of the surrounding mountain country will refer to this one valley as 'Nepal', even though their own homelands lie just as much within the political frontiers of the present State of Nepal. For until the Gurkha conquest of 1768 and the subsequent

The data presented in this essay were collected during 1957 and 1958 in the course of fieldwork carried out under the auspices of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. My work was facilitated by a generous grant from the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, to whose Director and Trustees I am greatly indebted. My thanks are due also to my research assistant, Mr. Dor Bahadur Bista, whose knowledge of Chetri society was of invaluable help in my inquiries.
expansion of Gurkha rule over the territories now comprised within those frontiers only the Valley was known by the name of Nepal. The might of the Newar kings did not extend far beyond its confines, and the civilization which through centuries attracted scholars, pilgrims, artists and traders from India as well as Tibet, was contained within the narrow physical frame of an area small enough to be traversed on foot in a single day.

Some aspects of the history of Newar civilization are discussed in Dr. Rosser's essay. Besides the three royal towns of Kathmandu, Patan and Bhatgaon, each of which was at one time the centre of a small Newar kingdom, there are the towns of Sankhu, Thimi, Kirtipur and Thankot, as well as a number of smaller settlements distinctly urban in planning and architectural style even though ranking as villages and inhabited mainly by peasants farming the surrounding land. Indeed the outstanding feature of the civilization of the Nepal Valley, a civilization largely created by the Newar people, is its strictly urban character. While the rest of Nepal, just like the greater part of India, is a land of villages, the Valley is traditionally a region of towns. It was only after the Gurkha conquest that rustic populations from the hills of Western Nepal streamed into the Valley and introduced to the environs of the ancient Newar towns a pattern of scattered settlements developed in rugged mountain country.

In the towns and villages of the Newars the houses stand crowded together in narrow streets and lanes. Most of them are buildings several storeys high and not only merchants and artisans, but also peasants live in such city-houses. They as well as temples are built of red brick and many of the streets, which were never intended for wheeled traffic, are brick-paved. Viewed from the air or from the crest of one of the hills surrounding the Valley, the settlements of the Newars, compact clusters of tiled roofs broken only by a fine maze of narrow lanes, recall the fortified towns of mediaeval Europe, while the settlements of other ethnic groups, consisting of loose groupings of individual homesteads, appear casually scattered over the hillocks and low ridges, which rise here and there from the intensively cultivated level expanse of the Nepal Valley.

Even from a distance these two types of settlements can be recognized as representing diametrically opposed manners of living, and in the first two essays of this volume we meet with
the basic dichotomy of Nepalese civilization, a dichotomy of which the distinction between the two settlement patterns is one of the outward signs. In the Nepal Valley the urban pattern has remained dominant even during the period since 1768 when the Newars, the creators of its historic city civilization, had been subjected by rulers stemming from the martial but unpolished hill-chiefs of the Gorkha region.

A description of the political events which led to the conquest of an ancient and highly sophisticated city-civilization by rustic hillmen is beyond the scope of these essays, and such accounts can indeed be found in a number of works dealing with Nepal and the fortunes of its rulers from a historical point of view. But both the primary historical sources, such as inscriptions, chronicles or contemporary accounts of travellers, and the writings of western historians, fail to give us adequate information about the people ruled by the various dynasties which wielded power in the Nepal Valley. Though caste and tribal names occasionally appear in such documents, their occurrence tends to be incidental rather than purposeful, and the main emphasis is always on events and personalities relevant to dynastic policy and developments. Indeed historical documents alone convey only a blurred picture of the ethnic groups inhabiting the Nepal Valley even during a time as comparatively recent as that of the Gurkha conquest. First hand acquaintance with the contemporary population pattern, on the other hand, enables us to envisage the social background against which the main events of Nepalese history were enacted, and it is by the knowledge of this background that even well established historical facts can be invested with a fuller and more significant meaning.

The interaction of disparate ethnic groups played an essential part in the formation of a distinct civilization which is the product of a complicated mingling of heterogeneous cultural traditions. Nepal has always had a share in two different worlds. Throughout the great part of the country speakers of Indo-Aryan languages dovetail with populations speaking Tibeto-Burman tongues, and it is in the hills of Nepal that races of Mongoloid stock adjoin peoples belonging to the easternmost branch of the Caucasian section of humanity. In some parts of the country these distinctions

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1 Cf. Lévi, Sylvain—1905; Landon, Perceval—1928; Regmi, D. R.—1948; Tuker, Sir Francis—1957.
coincide with the dividing line between Hinduism and Buddhism in its Tibetan, lamaistic form. But the frontiers between the various religions are neither well defined nor rigid, and major changes might have been brought about by such historic events as the influx of Indian high-caste Hindus seeking refuge in Nepal at the time of the Muslim invasion of Northern India.

The first two essays in this volume deal specifically with two of the major ethnic groups of the Nepal Valley: the indigenous Newars and the Chetris or Khas, the most populous of the Nepali-speaking castes collectively known as Parbatias ("hillmen").

The Newars, an outline of whose social structure I have given elsewhere, constitute a stratified caste-society with the full range of status-groups typical of Hindu societies, but complicated by a vertical division into Hindu and Buddhist groups. Unlike those Buddhist populations which conform to the pattern of Tibetan lamaism, the Buddhist Newars observe many restrictions on social relations between members of different castes, and in this respect show themselves as no less bound by caste-rules and pollution-fears than their Hindu compatriots. Regardless of the bond of a common faith, they tend to keep aloof from such Buddhist groups as Sherpas or other Bhotias, considering these to be of low caste-status because of their indifference to what Newars regard as elementary requirements of ritual purity. K. C. Rosser’s essay "Social Mobility in the Newar Caste System" demonstrates the unwillingness of most sections of Newar society to admit even learned and respected Tibetan lamas to a position of social equality. From the caste dispute described by Dr. Rosser it becomes evident that during the period of Rana rule this attitude received official encouragement. This is hardly surprising. The entire political and social system prevailing after the Gurkha conquest depended on the universal acceptance of the idea of caste exclusiveness and caste privileges, and the adherence of even part of the Newar community to the social philosophy of Tibetan Buddhism would have constituted a departure from the accepted ideology.

The number of Tibetans or other Bhotias permanently resident in the Nepal Valley is so small that their aloofness from the caste ideology could never become politically embarrassing, and the Rana ruling class was stirred into action only by the impact of a

Tibetan lama's teaching on a section of the Newar community.

A numerically as well as economically more important element in the population pattern of the Nepal Valley are the Tamangs, another tribe of Tibeto-Burman language and Mongoloid stock. Like the Sherpas the Tamangs are often loosely referred to as 'Bhote', but in their case links with Tibet are confined to their Buddhist faith and the lamaist ritual practised side by side with that of an older tribal religion.\(^3\) The Tamangs are one of the major tribal groups of Nepal. Their distribution extends from the Pokhara region—or possibly even further west—throughout the greater part of Central and Eastern Nepal, and their main concentration lies in the area between the Sun Kosi and the Likhu Khola. According to the Census of 1952-54 there were 494,735 speakers of the Tamang language in the whole of Nepal, and 19,169 of these were resident in the Valley.

Few Tamangs live in towns, and most of their settlements lie on the flat crests of hills rising from the Valley to heights several hundred feet above the level of the flat, irrigated land. Tamang houses are basically of the same pattern as those of Chetri and Brahman villagers, and like these they tend to stand scattered or in small groups, each house surrounded by fields and kitchen-gardens. Being in general poorer than either Newar or Chetri peasants, the Tamangs on the outskirts of the Valley have to content themselves with land of lesser quality, and many of them have to eke out their agricultural income by occasional wage-labour. In areas two or three days' journey from the Valley, Tamangs are very much better situated, and east of the Sun Kosi there are large areas where Tamangs are still the undisputed owners of their ancestral land, and material prosperity is matched by flourishing religious institutions maintained by Tamang lamas trained in the tradition of Tibetan Buddhism and literate in Tibetan.

In the Nepal Valley, on the other hand, the cultural contribution of the Tamangs is insignificant. They are economically important as hewers of wood and carriers of loads, but their social position is low, and they normally enter Parbatia and Newar houses in no other capacity than as servants and farm hands, though there are isolated cases of Tamang girls living with Chetris or Newars as secondary wives.

\(^{a}\) Cf. Förer-Haimendorf, C. von—1956(b).
Similar to the Tamangs in physical make-up as well as in their overall economic and social position, are the Paharis, a small tribe of Mongoloid race and Tibeto-Burman language. In the hills surrounding the Nepal Valley and even in some areas within the borders of the Valley, Paharis live in small settlements of scattered houses. They are skilful and industrious cultivators, and normally do not engage in any occupation other than agriculture. Little is known about their linguistic affinities, and though resembling Tamangs in appearance and the general manner of living, the Paharis do not follow Buddhist practices and, perhaps partly for this reason, are not included within the category of Bhot, a term used by Parbatias indiscriminately for Tibetans, Sherpas and Tamangs.

Among the populations of the Nepal Valley other Tibeto-Burman speaking tribes are represented by individual families living in urban conditions rather than by communities permanently settled in any of the villages. Outstanding among these tribes are the Gurungs and the Magars. The homeland and area of densest concentration of both these tribes lies in Western Nepal, but recent generations have seen not only the influx of individuals into the society of the Valley, but also the migration of larger groups far into Eastern Nepal. The Gurungs, whose large town-like villages occupy the high crests and ridges of the hill-ranges north of Gorkha and Pokhara, are well known for their martial qualities. Gurungs fought already in the armies of Prithwi Narayan Saha, and as soldiers and minor government servants numerous Gurungs have at times been stationed in the Valley. But unlike other ethnic groups, they have never formed there compact communities, and the impact of individual Gurungs on the society and the cultural life of the Valley has remained insignificant. Inter-marriage remained confined to occasional, unsanctified unions between Gurung girls and men of other, and mostly higher, castes. Both Chetris and Newars regard the Gurungs as their social inferiors, but tend to accord them a somewhat higher status than to Tamangs and Sherpas. One of the reasons for this higher rating is the Gurungs' compliance with certain fundamental Hindu observances, such as the ban on the eating of beef. Service in the Nepal Army has no doubt also been instrumental in raising the Gurungs' status above that of most other tribal populations.
While in their homeland the Gurungs are divided into two endogamous divisions of unequal status, this stratification does not find expression in the ranking of individuals within the multi-ethnic society of the Valley. The higher ranking ethnic groups including Newars, adopt the attitude that one Gurung is as good as the other, and do not concern themselves with the Gurungs' own class distinctions.

Very similar to the position of the Gurungs is that of the Magars. This tribe too has a proud record of martial exploits, and Magar officers served in the armies of the early Gurkha kings as well as in those of the Newar states of the Valley. In even earlier times the Magar chieftains of Western Nepal seem to have faced Thakuri and Chetri chiefs on equal terms, and the same clan-names, such as for instance Thapa and Rana, occur among Magars and Chetris. While it is difficult to find a historical explanation for this identity of names, it might suggest that in the early periods of Rajput immigration into Nepal, the autochthonous Tibeto-Burman speaking tribes and the Indian immigrants interacted in a manner which allowed the absorption of the issue of mixed marriages within either of the communities involved. In this way lineages with Chetri names might have sprung up among Magars (or vice versa), just as at present we find Sherpa lineages tracing their descent in the male line to Chetris or Newars.4

In the Valley society of today there is no such possibility, for all offsprings of Chetri-Magar unions invariably belong to the father's caste, and such Magar blood as may flow in Chetri lineages stems from women living with Chetri men as wives of secondary status.

The Magars seem to be close to the point where a tribal group may enter Hindu society as a caste of recognized status. Unlike Gurungs they employ Brahman priests, and whereas Gurungs will eat from the hand of Magars, the latter normally do not eat food cooked by Gurungs. Their aspirations to inclusion within the Hindu caste system is rationalized by the myth that the first Magar was the youngest of four brothers; while the eldest, who became the ancestor of the Thakuris worshipped Kalika, the youngest sacrificed a pig to Bhairobi and hence became a Magar—the Magars

4 Another explanation has been suggested by Sir Francis Tuker (1957, p. 32).
being still keen on pig breeding, though this occupation and the eating of pork are looked down on by upper caste Hindus.

Whereas Gurungs and Magars, albeit not numerous in the Valley, have yet ancient historical connections with the ruling class of Thakuris and Chetris, it is only since the Gurkha conquest that the Kiranti tribes of Eastern Nepal have to some extent been drawn into the framework of the inter-ethnic society of Nepal. In the Valley there are Rais and Limbus serving in the police and army, or—more recently—holding political appointments. The attitude of the indigenous Valley population towards members of these tribes is one of aloofness, and problems of social precedence have hardly arisen. Rai and Limbu women resident in the Valley have been so few that there are hardly any cases of mixed marriages, but normally the position of a Kiranti wife in a Chetri or other Parbatia household would be comparable to that of a Tamang or Gurung wife.

Viewed from the standpoint of high caste Hindus all of the Tibeto-Burman speaking groups—Newars, Magars, Gurungs, Tamangs, Sherpas and Kirantis alike—fall within the category of matwali castes, a term applied to those who do not wear the sacred thread and are in the habit of drinking intoxicating beverages (mat). The opposite of matwali, however, is not a term referring to teetotalism, but it is taga dhari, meaning "those who wear a sacred thread".

The classification of a community as matwali had more serious implications than a reference to its drinking habits. Until the abolishment of slavery in 1926 members of matwali castes were liable to be made slaves, either by being sold as children or by being deprived of their freedom as punishment for a crime, whereas no Brahman, Thakuri or Chetri could become a slave unless he had been expelled from his caste on account of a grave offence resulting in permanent pollution.

Highest among the Nepali speaking populations rank the two castes of Upadhya and Kumai Brahmans. The former, known also as Purbe (or Eastern) Brahmans, are more numerous in the Valley, but there is no clear status-difference, each of the two

*Any connection of the present Kiranti tribes with a dynasty of Kiranti kings supposed to have ruled in the Valley during the first millennium B.C. is very doubtful.*
castes claiming superiority over the other, and neither accepting food from the other. But marriages between these two highest Brahman castes are permissible, and the only slight discrimination against an Upadhya bride in a Kumai household (or vice versa) is the rule forbidding her to cook in the kitchen of her mother-in-law or serve food she has cooked to her parents-in-law.

In their physical features Upadhya and Kumai Brahmans bear the unmistakable signs of close affinity with the dominant races of Northern India. They, as well as most Chetris, are Europoid in all but skin colour, and the same racial type predominates among the Jaisi Brahmans. This group is of identical stock, but of considerably lower status than Upadhya and Kumai Brahmans. For Jaisi Brahmans are the offspring of unions of Upadhya and Kumai men with Brahman widows or the descendants of such offspring. Their number is large and it appears that in the social climate of Nepal widow-remarriage was frequent even among Brahmans, and that—in contradistinction to Indian usage—the children of remarried Brahman widows were accorded a relatively respected place in society.

Brahmans of all three castes are found in the towns as well as in the villages of the Nepal Valley. The number of those who maintain themselves mainly by priestly work is small, and many of the Nepal Brahmans are cultivators living in villages and in a style hardly distinguishable from that of other cultivators. High status in the caste hierarchy is by no means always correlated with a high economic status, and many Brahman peasants are no wealthier than their Chetri, Newar or even Magar or Tamang neighbours. They labour in the fields, and abstain only from the work of ploughing, a task for which they employ men of lower caste. Unlike Indian Brahmans they are not supported by numerous members of menial castes. There are no barbers or washermen in Nepalese villages, and the higher castes have therefore no other choice than to undertake themselves many functions which in other Hindu societies would be clearly below the dignity of any twice-born.

The Brahmans of Nepal do not object to hypergamous inter-caste marriages as much as their Indian counterparts, and it is not unusual even for Upadhya Brahmans to conclude formal marriages with Chetri girls, while others live in unsanctified unions
with Newar, Gurung, Magar or Tamang women. The children from all such inter-caste unions are classified as Khatris or Khatri Chetris and their status is equal to that of pure Chetris. Similarly the children of Brahman fathers and Thakuri mothers are neither Brahmans nor Thakuris, but form the special caste of Hamal. Provision for the issue from inter-caste marriages is thus far more elaborate than in any contemporary Indian society, and miscegenation must be considered a permanent and accepted feature of the Nepalese caste system.

Below the Brahmans in the caste hierarchy, but far ahead of them in the political order, ranks the Thakuri caste. This caste has given Nepal the royal house of Saha, but barring a few aristocratic Thakuri families dwelling in the capital, it is not well represented inside the Nepal Valley. Even in the district of Gorkha, the ancestral home of the Saha clan, the number of Thakuris is not great, and it seems that the caste’s main concentration lies further west, roughly in an area extending between the rivers Beri and Karnali. There the Thakuris are hill-farmers without any pretensions to an aristocratic style of life.

The early history of Thakuris and Chetris (or Khas) is obscure. Both castes claim descent from Kshatriya warriors of Indian origin, but there is little documentary evidence to support this contention. The racial characteristics of the Chetris, on the other hand, leave no doubt about their close connection with North Indian populations. Their narrow faces, long prominent noses and deep set eyes mark them clearly as a racial group akin to the ‘Europoid’ inhabitants of most of North India. Most Thakuris, on the other hand, evince in their features a Mongoloid strain, and it is likely that they represent a race indigenous to the Nepal hills. Thakuris were the rulers of the twenty-four chiefly states, which extended west of Gorkha, and a Thakuri of Saha clan, Drabya Shah, supported by a number of Chetri clans besieged and conquered the last Chetri king of Gorkha, who is believed to have been of Khadka clan.

* This characterization applies to Chetris of Central and Eastern Nepal, but in such areas of Western Nepal as Jumla there are—according to a personal communication from Dr. T. Hagen—large numbers of Chetris of predominantly Mongoloid type, a phenomenon which may be due to frequent inter-marriages with local non-Chetri populations.
The Thakuris and Chetris found in the villages of the district of Gorkha refrain from intermarriage, the Thakuris being considered of superior and the Chetris of somewhat inferior status. But in the Nepal Valley inter-caste marriages involving Thakuris and Chetris have become frequent occurrences and many members of the Rana family, though clearly Chetris, have married Thakuri girls of the royal Saha clan. Such intermarriages have to some extent blurred the physical distinctions between the two ethnic groups and it is only in the more isolated hill-regions that Thakuris and Chetris can still be distinguished by their facial features. The difference between the two groups is incidentally not only in the eye of the anthropologist, but it is a commonly voiced belief that the Thakuris look “like Gurungs and Magars”, while Chetris resemble Brahmins in appearance. The relative status of Thakuris and Chetris runs counter to the general rule that ethnic groups of Indian descent rank higher in the caste hierarchy than the indigenous populations of Mongoloid race. I do not possess sufficient data on Thakuris to explain this apparent inconsistency, and I can only suggest that if the Thakuris furnished the chiefly houses of small hill-states even before the immigration of Chetris into Nepal, the elevated place they occupied in the Hindu caste hierarchy reflects the political power they were already wielding.

But Chetris too achieved prominence in the political field. We have mentioned already that chieftains of Chetri caste ruled in Gorkha before the founder of the present royal house established himself in this historic stronghold. The struggle which preceded this change-over must not be interpreted as a conflict between castes or ethnic groups. It was a dynastic war, and Chetris fought on the side of the rising Thakuri dynasty as well as on the side of the Chetri chieftains of the Khadka clan.

Whatever their history and racial origin may have been, Thakuris and Chetris today share numerous cultural features. Both castes speak Nepali as their mother tongue, both consider themselves as high caste Hindus, wear the sacred thread, and employ Brahman priests, both conform in their domestic and ritual life to the same pattern and subscribe to the same values.

There is no Nepali-speaking caste of true middle-status. Brahmins, Thakuris and Chetris, the twice-born among the Parbatias rank high above all other communities, while the artisan castes,
such as shoemakers (Sarki), blacksmiths (Kami) and tailors (Damai) are untouchables and stand at the bottom of the social scale. It is the Newar peasants (Jyapu), Magars, Gurungs and Tamangs, all touchable—even though matwali—castes, who form the middle stratum of Nepal society.

Untouchability is confined to the caste-society of Newars and Parbatias. There are no untouchables among any of the tribal groups, though Parbatia blacksmiths or shoemakers, living among Gurungs, Magars or Sherpas, are treated as untouchables even by their tribal neighbours. In the Nepal Valley there are large numbers of untouchable artisans, and some of them have achieved considerable prosperity despite their low social position. The houses of some shoemakers, for instance, are superior to those of many of their Chetri neighbours, but such wealth remains so far without influence on their position in inter-personal relations.

While the observance of untouchability has never assumed the extreme forms of discrimination current in some parts of India, members of the untouchable artisan castes are nevertheless excluded from most social contacts. They may not enter any part of a touchable’s house and no person of clean caste will accept any type of cooked food or even water from the hand of an untouchable.

On the other hand, there is no restriction on occupational cooperation in agriculture and commerce. At harvest and planting-time caste Hindus work side by side with untouchable labourers, and persons of any caste avail themselves of the services of untouchable blacksmiths, tailors and shoemakers.

Sexual intercourse and interdining with an untouchable are among the gravest offences which a member of a clean caste can commit and excommunication is the automatic consequence. There are nevertheless cases of Brahmans and Chetris living with untouchable women. They thereby lose their caste-status and completely cut themselves off from the society of their kin and caste-fellows. While such unions, however reprehensible in the eyes of high caste Hindus, are permissible under the laws of the State, the union of a Brahman or Chetri woman with an untouchable is a criminal offence, the punishment for which amounts to three years’ imprisonment for the woman and twelve years’ imprisonment for the man.

Equality of all citizens before the law has never been a feature of the social order of Nepal, and the very concept of such a rule
would run counter to the ideology of a caste-society, in which responsibilities and duties are unequally distributed. Yet, even the hierarchy of castes, which appears to determine every individual’s status and functions in the society of the Valley, is not an entirely immutable system.

The monarch is not only the source of all law, but at least in theory he is also the lord of castes. It is within his powers to raise—or in case of dispute to determine—the status of a caste and even of an individual, and in the days of Rana rule, this authority was exercised by the Maharaja, the hereditary prime minister. There is a tradition according to which one of the lower Newar artisan castes used to be untouchable but was raised to touchable status by one of the Malla kings in recognition of a special service rendered. Dr. Rosser records in his essay an appeal to the prime minister in a dispute over the respective caste-status of the two Newar castes of Gubhaju and Uray (p. 110) and another recent example of the secular ruler’s power to manipulate ritual status was the appointment to Khatri rank of the Gharti foster-father of the Kanchi Maliarani, the favourite wife of the Maharaja Judha Shamsher, prime minister from 1931-1945.

Ghartis were slaves or the descendants of slaves before slavery was officially abolished in 1926, when the owners of liberated slaves received compensation out of the State treasury. As long as slavery was legal anyone becoming a slave lost his status as a member of his natal caste or community, and was henceforth simply known as Gharti. Today there are many Gharti families in the Nepal Valley, and their social and economic status approximates with that of Tamangs and Paharis, tribes which would seem to have furnished a considerable proportion of the slaves kept by the aristocratic and wealthy families of the Valley.

Many of these slaves were persons sold as children by their own parents or already born from slave parents. Others were prisoners of war, while a few had been enslaved as punishment for such crimes as incest.

The sizable Gharti population of the Nepal Valley does not entirely or even predominantly consist of families freed only in 1926, for even in the past it had been not unusual for a master to give a favourite slave his freedom, and hence there are Gharti families which have been free for several generations.
The basic distinction between ritual and socio-economic status is brought out by the fact that Ghartis were touchable even while still the absolute property of masters, and were thus ritually superior to even the wealthiest member of an untouchable caste.

For an appreciation of the social history of the Nepal Valley an understanding of the hierarchy of castes is indispensable. To a Nepali every human situation is coloured by the caste-affiliations of the actors involved, and this applies to events affecting members of the family circle as well as those of political and national importance. Social as well as political developments are and were largely determined by the interactions of the major caste-groups.

The replacement of Newar rule by the Thakuri-Chetri régime of the past two centuries, for instance, involved not only a shift of political power from an urban ruling class indigenous to the Valley to a rustic aristocracy stemming from the hill-chiefs of the Gorkha region. It caused the decline of a pattern of life moulded by the Newars' emphasis on the importance of aesthetic values and the commerce and crafts which provided the basis for their realization, and favoured the growth of martial and nationalistic ideals. A liberal tradition under which Buddhism had thrived on equal terms with Hinduism, was set aside by the more puritanical outlook of the Thakuri and Chetri rulers, who lent the whole power of the governmental machinery to the enforcement of Brahmanical values and invested the Raj Guru, a Brahman heading an office of pandits, with the authority to regulate behaviour in many spheres of life and to adjudicate caste-disputes.

Yet the new rulers, however orthodox and confirmed in their high-caste Hindu outlook, had to make allowance for the ideology and traditions of the non-Hindu populations inhabiting the Valley and the extensive regions of their growing dominions. Buddhist institutions, such as the great centres of pilgrimage which annually drew a great flow of Tibetans to Nepal, were tolerated even if not specially encouraged, and there was no attempt to restrict by legislation the possibility of inter-caste and inter-ethnic marriages which seem to have of old been a feature of Nepal society. Women of Newar and tribal origin, moreover, gained admittance to the palaces of Thakuri and Chetri nobles, and their charms secured to not a few a favourite place among the wives of leading members of the ruling class. Thus occurred a blending of ethnic strains in the
Chettri settlement with widely dispersed homesteads in the Nepal Valley

Newar village consisting of a compact cluster of houses surrounded by rice-fields
highest circles of the Valley society, and sections of the population formally excluded from political power succeeded at times to exercise an indirect but by no means negligible influence on palace and state affairs.

THE SETTLEMENT PATTERN

Unlike the Newars, the founders and main inhabitants of the cities and large compact villages of the Nepal Valley, the Chetris have no urban tradition and most of their settlements are loose aggregations of houses. There is little difference between the dispersed Chetri settlements of the hill-regions of Gorkha, and the Chetri villages situated within the confines of the Nepal Valley. While the Newar villages and towns are closely packed clusters of houses, surrounded in most cases by stretches of irrigated rice- and wheat-fields, the settlements of the Chetris—as of Brahmans and other Parbatias—are strung out along low ridges and hill-slopes, the isolated houses often built on different levels and usually surrounded by kitchen gardens and fields. The houses may be built of mud and roofed with thatch, or they may be brick buildings with tiled roofs, but their character is always rustic, and even in the biggest Chetri settlements there is never an arrangement of houses suggesting anything like a village street.

Such dispersed settlements of Chetris are found all along the hill-slopes surrounding the Nepal Valley as well as in some areas of raised ground closer to the centre of the Valley. Interspersed with the houses of Chetris and Khatris, and hardly distinguishable from them, may be the houses of Brahmans as well as those of Magars and Tamangs, and usually also of such occupational castes of low status as cobblers (Sarki), tailors (Damai) and blacksmiths (Kami).

There is no modification of this basic settlement pattern even in villages with a large element of middle-class families connected with Kathmandu or one of the other cities. Many of the men of such families hold positions in the army or civil service, but although they may maintain residences or rent houses in towns they have continued to build houses of the traditional style and arrangements in their home-villages, and with very rare exceptions, no attempt has been made to introduce urban fashions of building into the villages on the outskirts of Kathmandu.
Newar and Parbatia manners of building and of living remain radically different, and the settlement pattern of the Chetris of the Valley reflects even today the requirements and preferences of a basically rural community.

The composition and character of the large, widely dispersed villages along the rim of the Nepal Valley can best be demonstrated by a concrete example. Bisanku, a cluster of settlements south of Patan, which extends over the edge of the Valley as well as the adjoining range of foothills, is a village only from the administrative point of view, and consists of a number of settlements, some merging one into the other and some separated by short stretches of open country. The following list contains the names of these settlements and the number of houses arranged according to castes and in the case of Chetris and Khatris also according to clan-names:

Bistachap: Bista Chetri 58, Karki Chetri 6, Basnet Chetri 5, Silwal Khatri 1, Newar 1, Gharti 5, Damai 2, Sarki 4.

Dhobi Khola: Brahman 6, Bista Chetri 13, Silwal Khatri 1, Sanyasi 14, Tamang 5.

Pathechap: Brahman 1, Bista Chetri 2, Silwal Khatri 36, Damai 3, Sarki 2, Kami 2.

Kabrechap: Bista Chetri 6, Silwal Khatri 34, Mahant 1, Damai 4, Sarki 11, Kami 2.

Kanikegaon: Bista Chetri 3, Silwal Khatri 7, Tamang 1, Gharti 4, Sarki 4.

Kitini: Brahman 2, Thapa Chetri 2, Karki Chetri 2, Silwal Khatri 90, Puri Mahant 3.

Godavari: Brahman 13, Silwal Khatri 4, Mahant 5, Magar 3, Tamang 3, Gharti 5, Damai 4, Kami 2.

Pandol: Brahman 5, Khadka Chetri 5, Thapa Chetri 5, Damai 2, Sarki 5, Kami 2.

Lelmitok: Karki Chetri 18, Mahat Chetri 5, Silwal Khatri 5, Gharti 8, Damai 2, Sarki 10, Kami 2.

Kodetar: Brahman 15, Karki Chetri 3, Gharti 1, Sarki 4.


Gulinda: Brahman 19, Jaisi 2, Thapa Chetri 3, Gharti 4.
**Taukhel:** Brahman 5, Silwal Khatri 3, Newar 5, Kamar Sanyasi 15, Pahari 5.

**Mulpani:** Brahman 6, Kharki Chetri 6, Khaḍka Chetri 11, Rahut Chetri 3, Basnet Chetri 3, Silwal Khatri 4, Bhandari Khatri 2, Gharti 5.

**Dungarkani:** Brahman 6, Khaḍka Chetri 4, Silwal Khatri 18, Sarki 2.

**Khaḍkachap:** Khaḍka Chetri 15, Karki Chetri 3, Satial Khatri 1, Sarki 6.

**Godam:** Khaḍka Chetri 1, Newar 15, Sarki 30, Kami 4.

**Jemirkoth:** Thapa Chetri 6, Silwal Khatri 3, Damai 2, Sarki 28.

The above list demonstrates clearly the heterogeneous composition of the sprawling villages situated all along the rim of the Nepal Valley. Among a total of 739 households comprised within the administrative unit known as Bisanku the higher Parbatia castes are represented by 507 households (212 Khatri, 189 Chetri, 101 Brahman, 5 Jaisi Brahman), the untouchable Parbatia castes account for 108 households (76 shoemaker, 19 tailor, 10 blacksmith), the Tibeto-Burman speaking communities by 71 households (Newar 6, Pahari 53, Magar 3, Tamang 20). There are moreover 20 Gharti, 29 Sanyasi and 4 Mahant households.

Large clusters of families belonging to one particular Chetri or Khatri lineage, such as the 58 Bista families in Bistachap or the 90 Silwal Khatri families in Kitini, are the exception rather than the rule, and the average Chetri lives in a settlement where the members of his own lineage are in a minority, and not only Chetris but also people of many other castes are his neighbours.

**INTERNAL STRUCTURE**

The Chetris of Nepal form ideally a homogeneous, endogamous caste free from the tendency to split into status-determined subdivisions characteristic of many Indian castes. In the absence of status differentials between the numerous named clans, they appear as an ethnic group conscious of its identity despite its dispersal over the greater part of Nepal. We shall see presently that there is a sliding scale of social status within individual clans and lineages, but the units moving up and down the scale are primary
and extended families rather than larger descent groups identifiable by a name or a regional association.

The principal named divisions of the Chetri caste are the *thar* or clans. Many of the Chetri clans now found in the Nepal Valley and its vicinity, occur also in historical records, and it would seem that in this area at least their number has remained fairly constant ever since the Gurkha conquest. I am not in a position to say whether different clans are found in the westernmost districts of Nepal, but the clans occurring in the districts of Gorkha and Pokhara, as well as those I encountered on journeys in Eastern Nepal are the same as the clans found in the Valley. There is no tradition regarding any definite number of Chetri clans, and I have never met a Chetri who professed to know the names of all the *thar* occurring in his caste.

Yet the number of clans found in the Valley and the areas I visited is limited to those in the following list:

- Kunwar, including the lineage now known as Rana.
- Pande
- Thapa
- Basnet
- Bista
- Adhikari
- Baniya
- Bhandari
- Bohra
- Budathoki
- Boguti
- Gharti
- Karki
- Khadka
- Mahat
- Rai Majhi

Each of these clans is subdivided into a number of lineages designated by terms many of which suggest territorial associations, although today these lineages are not confined to specific geographic areas. The *thar* bearing the name *Bista*, for instance, consists of three lineages, referred to as Kalikote Bista, Puar Bista and Gharti
Bista. Each of these lineages is a strictly exogamous unit, but although statistically there seems to be a disinclination against marriages between the various lineages of a clan, such unions are not prohibited and several cases occur in the genealogies and house-lists I recorded.

Exogamous units larger than an individual lineage, on the other hand, are formed by clusters of identically named lineages of different clans. Besides the Kalikote lineage of the Bista clan, for instance, there exists also a Kalikote lineage of the Mahat clan, and the members of these two units refer to each other as swange bhai and standing in this 'brother'-relationship they are barred from intermarriage. The term swange indicating in this context a cluster of identically named lineages does not seem to be used by itself as a term comparable to thar, and whereas a man may be asked for his thar he will not be asked for his swange.

Independent of the system of clans and lineage-clusters is the association of the individual lineages with specific gotra. Different lineages of one clan may have different gotra, or two or three lineages may have the same gotra while a fourth lineage has a different gotra.

Similarly lineages of two clans which are regarded as swange bhai may have different gotra. Thus the gotra of the Pura Bista lineage is Kapila whereas the gotra of the Puar Thapa is Atrya. Conversely the same gotra may be associated with groups unconnected by ties of clan or lineage cluster. Thus Mandgalya is the gotra of the Kalikote Thapa lineage as well as of the Karki Mudula lineage.

Summarizing this structure we find that every Chetri belongs by birth to the following four units:

1. The clan (thar), from which he derives his surname (e.g. Bista or Thapa) used in documents.
2. The named lineage of this clan (e.g. Kalikote Bista), which is the basic exogamous unit.

7 The exogamous character of the clusters of identically named lineages seems to be weakening in recent days, and I heard of a marriage between a Kalikote Mahat of Patan and a Kalikote Bista girl of Machegaon. My informants admitted the irregularity of such a union, but pointed out that nowadays even Brahmans had begun to marry within the same gotra.
3. A cluster of identically named lineages, whose members regard each other as *swange bhai* and normally do not intermarry.

4. The *gotra*.

Neither the *thar* nor the clusters of identically named lineages (i.e. Kalikote Bista and Kalikote Thapa), are unilineal descent groups in the narrow sense of the term. All members of the Bista clan no doubt consider each other as linked in an undefined way, but the fact that those who are of different lineage are not debarred from intermarriage excludes a fiction of patrilineal descent from a common ancestor. Similarly the members of a cluster of identically named lineages, such as Kalikote Bista and Kalikote Thapa, though included as *swange bhai* in the same exogamous unit, have no tradition of common descent. *Gotra* affiliation, on the other hand, exceeds not only clan-limits, but also caste-limits, and many Chetri lineages have the same *gotra* as certain Brahman clans.

In the system so far described there are no elements of stratification or ranking. No *thar* is inherently superior or inferior to any other Chetri clan, and no lineage within a clan has precedence over other lineages. The prominence attained at various times by individual Chetri families, and the reflected glory enjoyed by other members of their lineage, is the prize of success in the political field, and is not inherent in the system. The most obvious example is the widely ramified Rana family, which sprang from the Chetri clan of Kunwar, but on gaining supreme political power changed the name to Rana, and for nearly a century overshadowed all other Chetri clans. Yet, even at the time of Rana rule the Kunwar clan as a whole was not considered superior to such clans as Thapa or Bista, and it was only members of the dominant Rana family who claimed a status equal to that of Thakuris and achieved alliances with the royal house.

Though not germane to the system of Chetri clanship, distinctions of ranking and ritual status play nevertheless an important rôle in present-day Chetri life. Their introduction into Chetri society is closely connected with the conclusion of marriage alliances and unsanctioned unions of Chetris with members of other castes. It is through such unions that status differentiations found their way into traditionally egalitarian Chetri society.
Accretions to the main body of the homogeneous Chetri caste have occurred in two ways:

1. Many Brahmans have married Chetri girls, and the issue from such unions are known as Khatris or Khatri Chetris and bear the same clan-name as their Brahman father. They rank equally with Chetris and their children, whether from Chetri or Khatri mothers, have also the status of Khatris. There are, at present, many Khatri clans bearing Brahman clan-names. But most of them cannot trace their origin to any specific Brahman-Chetri marriage, the time which has passed since such an occurrence being too long for it to be remembered. Khatris and Chetris freely intermarry, and children succeed to the father's status. Nearly everything said in this essay about Chetris applies equally to Khatris.

2. While Chetri men were debarred from marrying Brahman girls—the laws of Nepal upholding Brahman superiority—many Chetris entered unions with women of ethnic groups of lower status in the caste-hierarchy, such as Newars, Gurungs, Magars and Tamangs. The issue from such intercaste unions, which could not be solemnized by Vedic rites, were still regarded as Chetris, but not as Chetris equal in status to the offspring from marital unions with Chetri girls. They bore the father's clan-name, but were denied the privilege of commensality by the pure-bred members of their father's kin-group. Over a number of generations some of the descendants from such intercaste unions were able to work their way back into the circle of fully privileged lineage-members, but as cases of mixed unions continue to occur, there is no end to the process of status-differentiation within individual Chetri lineages.

3. A third group incorporated in the Chetri caste consists of Khatris, who incongruously have no Chetri blood whatsoever, yet describe themselves nevertheless as Khatri Chetris. These are the offspring from unions between Brahmans and women of castes lower than Chetris. Like all other Khatris they bear their Brahman forefather's clan-name, and once two or three generations have passed, they are indistingui-
shable from the Khatris listed under 1. They intermarry with Chetris on the same terms as any other Chetris or Khatris.

Status differentiation within Chetri society is not only the outcome of miscegenation. Even the children of a Chetri man and a Chetri girl may be considered of inferior status if their parents were not formally married or the mother was a divorcée or widow. Their position is better, however, than that of the children of a Chetri and a Newar or Tamang wife, and their full acceptance by their father’s kin is more easily achieved.

Despite the frequency of status differentiation within the individual Chetri clans and lineages, there is practically no external stratification. The basic equality of all Chetri clans has so far not been modified and they remain co-ordinated groups, irrespective of the success of individual members in the political sphere.

Status Differentiation within the Lineage

The Chetris possess no terminology to describe detailed gradation in social and ritual status. Ideally all members of Chetri clans are equal, and the lower status of the offspring of irregular unions is considered as a deviation from the norm rather than as a definite grade in a ranking system. Chetris refer to the fully privileged members of a clan as jharra, meaning ‘proper, pure’, and to those not accorded this status as not being jharra, without using any positive attribute to indicate their inferior status.

The difference between jharra and non-jharra status cannot be defined in absolute terms. Whether an irregularity in the marriage of a person’s parents will debar him from commensality depends largely on the attitude of his closest kinsmen, who may ignore such irregularity and accept him as one of them. There are, of course, certain situations which will compel even the most accommodating of kinsmen to treat a member of their lineage as non-jharra. Thus the son or daughter of a Chetri and a Tamang or Gurung mother cannot by any device be granted commensal rights without endangering the jharra-status of the accepting group.

There is, on the other hand, no constant correlation between jharra-status, which is basically ritual in character, and the economic and social status enjoyed by an individual or a family.
In the villages in the Nepal Valley, for instance, there are many middle-class families of substance and political influence which are not considered jharra whereas the majority of the poorer peasant class families enjoy jhawa-status. On a few ritual occasions, such as the annual sacrificial rites in honour of the clan-deity, these jharra-families have precedence before their richer non-jharra neighbours, but in daily village life the distinction is hardly noticeable. In a village near Bisanku, for instance, I found that among 90 Chetri and Khatri households, 54 were considered jhawa and 36 non-jharra. The 10 wealthiest families, many of whose members were holding or had in the past held high positions in the Nepal army, were all of non-jhawa status, whereas most of the ordinary cultivators were jhawa.

Owing to their influential position many middle-class non-jharra landowners and officials were able to obtain for their sons jhawa-brides. Most of these girls came not from the neighbourhood but from Chetri villages in the hills, some of them situated at a distance of several days' journey from the Valley. The daughters of these middle-families, however, were married to men of the Valley or even of Kathmandu. The parents' urge to find jhariha-husbands for their daughters does not seem to be as great as their desire to obtain jhara wives for their sons. For in the case of a girl great stress is placed on the necessity of finding a husband capable of offering the kind of life to which she was accustomed at home, and rather than marrying their daughter to a poor man of jhara-status, a wealthy family will marry their daughter to a non-jhara man of means. Non-jhara middle-class men endeavour to find jhara-brides, because of the possibility of gradually raising a family's ritual status by alliances with jhara-families. There is no definite rule that the children of a non-jhara man and a jhara mother will be considered as jhara, but a man's chance of being admitted to jhara-status improves considerably if he can point out that both his grandfather and his father have married jhara-girls. With the passage of time the circumstances of a mesalliance which originally caused a drop in status may be forgotten, and marriages with families of unimpeachable status may be invoked as evidence of a family's claim to rank as jhara.

The argument underlying such a claim is obviously more or less circular. On the assumption that unions between jhara and
non-jharra persons are rare and undesirable, it is hypocritically argued that jharra-brides would not have been married into a family which did not qualify for jharra-status, but that as demonstrably such jharra-girls were married by men of the family, it must enjoy jharra-status.

There could be little mobility between the status of jharra and non-jharra if a person’s position within the system was a matter of general concern and thus widely known. But as occasions when status-differences of this kind become apparent arise mainly from social and ritual interaction of close kin, and the circle of those actively conscious of a man’s status may be small. There is a term, bhatiyar, for all those ‘who eat rice together’, and this is applied to both real and classificatory brothers (daju-bhai), wife’s kin (sasurali) and kinsmen on the mother’s side (mamali). This term is as a rule used only by jharra-people, who have no hesitation in describing their kinsmen by a term implying ritual interdining. Non-jharra Chetris, on the other hand, who are always on the look-out for opportunities to rise in the social scale, do not like to refer to their non-jharra relatives as bhatiyar, as this would emphasize their common ritual status with other non-jharra persons.

The discrimination of jharra Chetris against kinsmen of non-jharra status expresses itself principally in the following ways:

1. Refusal to accept ritually relevant food, i.e. rice, cooked by them or in their kitchen.
2. Reduction of the period of pollution observed after a kinsman’s death from 13 days in the case of a jharra kinsman to 5 days in the case of a non-jharra person.
3. Exclusion of the non-jharra members of the lineage from the inner enclosure of the shrine of the lineage-deity.

There is moreover, a distinction between those entitled to wear a sixfold sacred thread (janai) and those invested with a janai of only three threads. This distinction does not entirely coincide with the differentiation between jharra and non-jharra. Whereas all Chetri of jharra status wear a sixfold janai, there are some non-jharra families whose members are customarily entitled to six-fold sacred threads, while the men of other non-jharra families wear only a threefold janai. The decision whether to invest a boy
with the one or other type of Janai lies ultimately with the family's Brahman purohit. This family priest will normally refuse to invest a Chetri's son from a Gurung or Tamang wife with a sixfold sacred thread, but he may agree to do so in the case of the offspring of a Chetri's unsanctioned union with a Chetri widow or divorcée.

Whereas among peasant- and middle-class families, status distinctions have always been fluid, they tended to become highly systematized among the members of the politically dominant Rana family. In the case of Rana men jharra-status involved not only the right to interdine with other kinsmen of unimpeachable ancestry, but also a place in the line of succession to the prime ministership and other high offices. The familiar classification of Ranas as A class, B class and C class Ranas is nothing else but the systematization of status-distinctions within a lineage. It was first formulated by foreign observers, but soon gained wide currency. Initially all children from marriages of jharra Ranas with jharra girls of any Chetri clan were considered A class, those from unions with Chetri widows or divorcées B class, and the children of Rana men and lower caste women as C class. But to restrict the number of men in the line of succession to the prime ministership, the leading members of the Rana family introduced the rule that only the sons of A class Ranas from wives belonging to the royal clan of Saha should be reckoned as A class, whereas the offspring from perfectly legitimate unions with girls of Chetri clans should not be placed on the roll of succession and not be considered A class. Political considerations and specifically the desire to keep the circle of ruling families as small as possible, has here led to the introduction of a criterion not inherent in the idea of jharra status. By normal standards many Ranas now described as B class, have every claim to jharra status, and it is not unlikely that with the end of Rana rule, the artificial distinction between A and B class Ranas will become meaningless and there will remain only the distinction between those of pure Chetri ancestry on the one side and the issue of Rana men and wives of lower caste on the other.

The Spread and Recent History of a Chetri Lineage

Chetri clans are so widely dispersed that their members have little idea of their size, ramification, and spatial distribution. A Thapa Chetri of the Nepal Valley will be aware of the existence
of two or three prominent named Thapa lineages, such as Gagle, Godar and Bagale, but he is unlikely to know where outside the Valley members of the lineages other than his own may be found, nor will he be sure whether in more distant regions there are not perhaps yet other Thapa lineages of which he has never heard.

It is only within the lineage that we encounter a sense of a common history. This does not necessarily imply a knowledge of the exact genealogical links between its various branches, but all members may share the tradition of being descended from a prominent ancestor associated with a particular region or believed at least to have come from a certain direction. Many of the lineage members will know moreover where approximately other families of the lineage may be resident, and a few well-informed men may even be able to give a rough estimate of their numbers.

The degree of corporateness of such a lineage can best be demonstrated by way of a concrete example, and I propose to use as such an example the Kalikote lineage of the Bista clan.

All Kalikote Bistas resident in the Nepal Valley, have the tradition of being descended from Dasrath Bista, who is believed to have come from a region in the west, somewhere beyond the Kali River, and to have first settled in a place some ten miles south of Patan, which is now known as Bistachap. The story goes that his wife, a girl of the Valley, once returned from a visit to her parental home, and innocently brought with her some vegetables which she had bought on the journey. Her parents-in-law took umbrage at the thought that a Chetri girl of good family should have walked about in the bazaar of a way-side town buying vegetables, and in anger sent her back to her parents. But Dasrath Bista followed his wife and went to live in her parents' house as a ghar-juwain or resident son-in-law. He is believed to have had ten sons and the present members of the Kalikote lineage are the descendants of these ten sons. There is, however, no tradition as to the names of Dasrath Bista's sons, and consequently also no possibility of tracing individual branches of the lineage to the one or the other of the ten sons.

One of Dasrath Bista's descendants named Indrajit went to live in the village of Champi, and his son settled in Chunikhel. From there the family spread to the important village of Jharwarasi, and several other localities, while at about the same time
Bista men from Bistachap went to settle at Pulchok, a suburb of Patan.

Bistachap still contains the greatest concentration of Bista families, and these account for 70 out of the 92 households of the settlement. Other substantial groups of Bista families within the Nepal Valley are in Pulchok, a suburb of Patan, where we find some 40 Bista households, in Dhobi Khola (13 houses), Machegaon (16 houses), Champi (10 houses), Chunikhel (8 houses) and Jhaluntar (12 houses). Groups of three to six Bista houses are found in twelve other settlements, and there is moreover a large Bista settlement of some 40 houses at Palung, a village in the district known as West No. 1. The Bista families living there are believed to be also descended from Dasrath Bista. It thus seems that they do not represent an off-shoot of the Kalikote lineage before it settled in the Nepal Valley, but that their ancestors moved west after a period of residence in the Valley.

The total number of households of the Kalikote lineage of whose existence my informants were aware amounts to about 200, dispersed over 25 villages and settlements, all except two of which lie within the Nepal Valley.

To what extent do these two hundred families form a corporate group? Besides the sense of common descent and heritage, there is the prohibition of marriage within the Kalikote lineage and the equally strict rule that no member of the group may marry the widow or divorced wife of another Kalikote Bista. The latter rule which runs counter to the custom of levirate practised by many other Nepalese ethnic groups is of comparatively recent introduction, and is said to have become law only in the days of the prime ministership of Bir Sham Sher Rana' (1885-1901).

Other indications of the corporateness of the lineage, can be seen in certain historic events. Thus all Kalikote Bista settled in the Nepal Valley tell of the rebellion and tragic end of Sangram Sur Bista, whom they see in the rôle of a national hero. Sangram Sur Bista was the leader of a revolt against the prime minister Bir Sham Sher and the growing power of the Rana family, and stood for the traditional ideal that no Chetri clan or lineage should permanently dominate all others. When the rebellion failed Sangram Sur Bista was executed, and it is believed that some forty other Kalikote Bistas shared his fate. Many others, fearing the Rana
prime minister’s revenge, fled the Valley and hid for years in the hills and in villages of affinal kinsmen. Much of their land was confiscated and auctioned, and it seems that the Kalikote Bistas never fully recovered from the havoc wrought by Bir Sham Sher’s vengeance. While at one time equal in influence to prominent lineages of Thapa and Basnet clan, after the incident of Sangram Sur they were left with little pull at the centre of political power. Though the circumstances of Sangram Sur’s plot are not sufficiently known to allow of a full interpretation in sociological terms, the execution of a large number of Kalikote Bistas and the flight of many others are significant in themselves. They show that a lineage such as the Kalikote Bistas appeared to other Chetris and certainly to the Rana rulers very much as a corporate group with joint responsibility for its members’ actions.

In how far is the corporateness of a lineage expressed in ritual terms? All members of the lineage worship the same kul devata or lineage deity, and once a year those resident in the same area gather for the performance of a rite known as devali puja, which corresponds closely to the digu deo puja of the Newars. All Kalikote Bistas perform this rite on the same day, but there are several open shrines, situated in the forest or on hill-tops, and members of the lineage usually join in the performance at the shrine nearest to their place of residence. It seems, however, that every Kalikote Bista has the right to attend the ceremonies at any of the shrines maintained by members of the lineage, and this in itself is evidence of a sense of unity among all the members of a lineage.

Another index of cohesion is the observance of death pollution by members of the lineage. Strictly speaking only those who can trace a genealogical link within a depth of seven generations are under an obligation to observe death pollution, and such kinsmen are described as tera din ka daju bhai (‘thirteen days’ brothers’), because they keep for 13 days the rules prescribed for mourners. But in a settlement such as Bistachap, all Kalikote Bistas consider each other as agnatic kin without being able to trace the exact relationship. Unwilling to run the risk of an involuntary violation of the rules of death-pollution they play for safety and act within certain limits as if they were all “thirteen days’ brothers”, even though they realize that between some families there may have

been no genealogical link for the past seven generations. Spatial proximity becomes in such cases a substitute for traceable genealogical links.

Groups of families demonstrably descended from a common ancestor are sometimes referred to as *hanga*, which means literally "branch", and the inference is that such a group constitutes the branch of a lineage, the latter being likened to a tree. In the village of Bistachap, for instance, there are seven such *hangas* consisting of 9, 11, 8, 8, 7, 12 and 11 primary families respectively. The members of such a branch, irrespective of residence, observe a more severe type of death-pollution if one of their number dies than do the less closely linked members of a lineage resident in the same settlement. The former abstain for 13 days from salt and oil, shave their heads as a sign of mourning and wear neither shoes nor anything else made of leather. Lineage members without a traceable link with the deceased, on the other hand, abstain during the 13 days of mourning only from meat and refrain from any kind of worship, but do not observe the more irksome abstention from salt and oil. It is believed that neglect to observe these rules of death-pollution will result automatically in the extinction of the family (*santan khiinu*) or its impoverishment (*daridri lagnu*).

Ritual expression of the links between *hanga* members is given also by the custom that such kinsmen should visit each others' houses at the time of the Dassain festival. The obligation to do so is not as compelling as the duty to observe death-pollution, and even closely related kinsmen who are not on friendly terms omit these annual visits. There is, however, the general feeling that members of the same branch of a lineage should occasionally pay each other such ceremonial calls.

The only occasion when most Bista families resident in Bistachap and about twelve other settlements within the Nepal Valley are represented at a ritual event is the *devali puja* celebrated at Sagarikot, a low hill immediately above Bistachap. On the full moon day of the month of Jeth (May/June), men from thirteen settlements congregate there for the worship of their *kul devata*. The four oldest men among the regular attendants of the ritual act as *thakali* or headmen, and these four men share the offerings brought by the worshippers. As over eighty goats are sacrificed on this occasion, the organization of the ceremony involves considerable effort, and
the thakali are assisted by any odd number of lineage-members known as pujari. These pujari must be of jharra-status, but require otherwise no special qualifications. The seniormost thakali is described as mukhiya, a term applied in Nepal also to the village-headmen of certain ethnic groups. But among the Chetris neither the mukhiya nor the other thakali wield any authority except during the performance of the devali rite, when the mukhiya blesses the gathering and exhorts the lineage-members to remain unified. But he is in no sense a clan- or lineage-headman, and the Chetri system differs in that respect from that of the Newars whose thakali have not only ritual but also some jural functions.

The concept of the Kalikote Bista as a single ritual group is reflected in the influence any death- or birth-pollution arising within the Nepal Valley exerts on the celebration of the devali rite. This has to be postponed if a case of a death or a birth (the former causing 13 and the latter 10 days' pollution) occurs in any family of the lineage and is brought to the notice of the organizers. Even the celebrations of the same rite at different shrines are interdependent, and if a death prevents the holding of the rite at Sagarikot the parallel rite at a shrine near Godavari performed by other groups of Kalikote Bistas must also be cancelled because of the idea that all the members of the lineage are "brothers", and that their lineage-deity cannot be worshipped as long as any family of the lineage is in a state of pollution.

Rivalry of Lineage Members

In the absence of institutionalized leadership the solidarity of a Chetri lineage is not readily apparent, and in recent times there have been only a few instances of lineages evincing strong solidarity in the field of politics. The example of the Ranas, forming a branch of the Kunwar lineage, shows, of course, that concerted political action lies well within the range of the potential functions if not of a whole lineage, so certainly of one of its branches. But the Ranas' position in the Nepal of the 19th and 20th century is unique, and no other Chetri lineage has shown similar political cohesion over so prolonged a period.

A study of the Rana family history illuminates, however, one important feature of Chetri lineage organization: the potential rivalry and antagonism between collaterals. While the members of a
lineage or the branch of a lineage have certain identical interests, they are as individuals also rivals in the sense that they compete for the shares of the common heritage. Where, as in the case of the Rana family, this heritage includes supreme political power, competition is fiercest, and Nepal's history of the past century shows that rivalries between collateral members of the Rana family took extreme forms, including the banishment of the sons and brothers of so great a national hero as Jung Bahadur, the founder of the Ranas' power.

But the antagonism between collaterals is not confined to those competing for the prizes of political power. It is a common saying that a man's worst rivals are his agnatic collaterals, i.e. the members of his own patri kin-group whom he addresses as 'brothers' and for whom he observes birth- and death-pollution. Identification on the ritual level does not exclude competition, and there is rivalry between classificatory brothers while the relations between affines are as a rule more relaxed and devoid of an element of rivalry. It is particularly during the years after the separation of a joint-family that the resultant segments, consisting perhaps of the sons of two brothers, are likely to engage in a silent competition for wealth, social standing and prestige. I have heard of cases when such first cousins would pay extravagant prices for pieces of land which a third party was selling because each tried to outbid the other in the attempt to establish his greater affluence and thereby increase his standing in the village. Such rivalry runs concurrently with a latent community of interests. For collaterals are the natural heirs to each others' property, and should the line of one brother become extinct his or his descendants' property passes to the descendants of the other brothers.

It is for this reason that a man is not permitted to sell or even leave to a daughter any part of his immovable property unless he obtains the consent of his own or classificatory brothers, who are the potential heirs to his estate. The group of kinsmen known as hanga or branch of a lineage remains thus to some extent a property holding group, even if for purposes of immediate usufruct the land is divided up among individual families.

The Chetri Family System
A detailed discussion of the Chetri family system would exceed the framework of this essay, but a statement of its main features is
necessary for an understanding of the process of change which Chetri society is at present undergoing.

The Chetri family is traditionally virilocal and patriarchal. It consists of a man and his wife or wives, their unmarried children, and in many cases also their married sons and the latters' wives and children. All those living under the same roof as well as married sons inhabiting a separate building but remaining co-owners of the joint-estate, are subject to the father's authority and expected to place their earnings at his disposal. In return they are entitled to maintenance and their legitimate needs are met out of the family's common purse. Large joint families are nowadays rarer than they were even a generation ago. Among peasant class Chetris married sons often separate from their father's household once they have children of their own, but among middle-class people there is a strong tendency to keep the family undivided until after the father's death, when the sons usually divide the property, only one remaining with the mother in the parental house. Joint-families headed by an eldest brother are exceedingly rare once the younger brothers are married.

Even after separation there remain, however, certain ritual ties which unite the brothers and their children on such occasions as the Dassain festival. Part of this festival is a sacrificial rite known as kal rati, which consists of the offering of a goat and vegetarian gifts to the clan-god (kul devata). Sons separated from their father, join at this time in the celebration in their father's house, and after his death they and their children continue to perform the rite jointly as long as one of them is alive. Diagrammatically the development of the ritual unit for the performance of this rite can be represented as follows:

In stage I a father (A) and his three sons celebrate kal rati together. In Stage 2 A has died, and the three brothers (a, b, c) gather in the house of a for the joint celebration. In stage 3 a too has died and the celebration is held in the house of b. In the final stage all the brothers (a, b, c) are dead, and their sons (α, β, γ) hold three separate celebrations of kal rati.

We thus see that ritual solidarity among close collaterals persists longer than the physical unity of the joint family, but that even this solidarity at the celebration of kal rati never includes more than two generations of adults.
Whereas daughters leave the parental home after marriage, and count henceforth as members of their husband's family and lineage, ritual relations with their natal family are transformed but by no means broken. The ties which henceforth link them and their children with their parents and particularly their brothers are based on the concept of pujya, and it is this essential concept which provides the rationale for much of the relations between affines.

A girl is considered pujya or 'worshipable' to her own father, to her brothers, to her mother and to her elder sisters. This 'sacredness' of a girl is expressed in the custom that during the wedding her own parents, brothers and elder sisters wash her feet and that ever after they give her ritual gifts (dakshina) of the type given to Brahmans for the sake of acquiring merit. This relation is a unilateral one. The daughter or sister is always the recipient, the father or brother always the giver. Whereas sons inherit a share in their father's property, the daughters are not only entitled to a dowry but also to a never ending series of gifts from their parents and their brothers, a right which in the long run may amount to as much as a share in the parental estate. The quality of being pujya which a woman possesses in relation to her parental family, is transmitted to her children and to a lesser degree to the husband. The custom which compels a man always to offer hospitality to his sister's husband, but to refrain as far as possible from accepting food or anything of value in the latter's house, is the logical sequence of this attitude of reverence towards a sister and her husband. Both are to be 'worshipped', to be given food and offerings, in the same way as a Brahman is given gifts but never reciprocates. The only exception to this rule is the annual festival of Tihar, when the sisters bless their brothers by placing a tika-mark on their foreheads and give them presents of flowers and food. But even at that time the brothers must give them dakshina in excess of the value of the sisters' presents.

The obligations resulting from a man's pujya relationship to his sisters pass on to his son, who is expected to offer hospitality and gifts, not only to his own sisters, but after his father's death even to any of his father's sisters who come to his house and claim their dues.

The pujya-relationship, and the rejection of any marriage which
would involve a reversal of this unilateral relationship, set limitations to the permissible types of marriage which are otherwise not easily understandable. The relationship of *pujya*, for instance, is incompatible with a man's relationship to his wife, and this explains, for instance, why a man may not marry his paternal grandfather's sister's son's daughter, whereas it is quite in order for a girl to marry her paternal grandfather's sister's son's son. In the latter case B is already *pujya* to A because he is the grandson of a woman who was *pujya* to A's father. By becoming his son-in-law he becomes even more *pujya* to him and the two relationships reinforce each other, while a is not *pujya* to B, who can therefore marry her. (Fig. A)

In the opposite case, however, A's son A1 has inherited from his father the *pujya* relationship to b, and as a wife must not be *pujya* to her husband—wifely subservience being contradictory to 'worshipability'—he cannot marry b. (Fig. B)

Similarly a confusion of *pujya* relationships which would result from a brother-sister exchange marriage (*santi biha*) makes this form of marriage objectionable, even though it is not strictly illegal.

Cross-cousin marriage is, on the whole, not favoured by the Chetris. But only marriage with the father's sister's daughter, as running contrary to the *pujya*-relationship, is forbidden, whereas cases of a man marrying his mother's brother's daughter, who is not *pujya* to him, have occurred among Ranas. Other Chetris, however, do not approve of such marriages, though we have seen in the example above that they have no objection to a man's marriage with his father's mother's brother's son's daughter.

The *pujya* relationship is different from the relationship of respect, which is described as *mannu parne*. A daughter, for instance, owes respect to her father and a sister to her elder brother even though she is *pujya* to him. Where there is a conflict between the two relationships the behaviour proper to the *pujya* relationship
overrules that prescribed by the respect-relationship. Thus when at Dassain persons owing respect to a kinsman or kinswoman go to him or her to pay respect and receive a ti̱ka-mark, a man does not go to the house of his father’s sister, to whom he owes respect, but she, who is pujya to him, comes to his house to receive dakshina-gifts and ‘worship’ in the form of ti̱ka.

Any person pujya to a man is also pujya to his wife, but this rule does not apply the other way round. A wife’s younger sister, though pujya to her is not pujya to the husband, who is free to marry her, either as a second wife or after his wife’s death.

A problem for which I can offer no explanation is the reversal in the evaluation of seniority in the case of pujya- and respect-relationship. Whereas respect is paid to those senior in birth-order, the younger brother paying respect to the older, it is the elder sister who treats the younger sister as pujya, and bows to her if she has accidentally touched her with her foot.

The different ceremonial relationships are expressed in the manner of salutation. The most deferential way of greeting is the touching of a person’s feet with one’s forehead. This salutation is due to a person’s father and mother, to his father’s parents, his father’s brothers and sisters, his mother’s sister, his elder brother and elder sister, and his father’s brother’s sons and daughters if senior in birth order. A woman salutes only her husband and her husband’s mother, but not her husband’s father, in this way.

A less deferential though still respectful way of greeting is the bowing of the head which the saluted person touches. This is used when greeting one’s mother’s father and mother, the mother’s brother’s and father’s sister’s sons and daughters senior in birth order, the father’s sister’s husband, and the elder sister’s husband.

All other relatives are greeted with a simple gesture of one hand known as salaam garrtu, and it is significant that this comparatively casual greeting is applied also to the mother’s brother, whereas the mother’s sister is saluted in the most deferential way, no doubt because she is identified with the mother.

Independent of the relationship of respect and pujya is the relationship of interdining which is the formal recognition of equal ritual status. One might expect that anyone would eat food cooked by his sister whom he treats as pujya, or that any drop in her
social status would also affect her 'sacredness'. This, however, is not so. A jharra-girl married to a man of non-jharra status remains pujya to her brothers, and continues to receive from them dakshina-gifts and tika, but her brothers may not accept rice cooked in her house, and when she visits the parental home she will not be allowed to help in the cooking. The relationship inherent in a sister's pujya position appears thus as independent of her status as member of the commensal group. The Chetris refer to the latter as bansha or kitchen-status, because only those of equal ritual purity may participate in the cooking or have their meals in the inner part of the bansha, the space set aside for cooking and eating, which in Chetri eyes is of great sacredness and ritual importance.

The separation of the concepts of pujya and commensality permits the maintenance of ritual relations between a man and his sister and her children in the face of status differences created by marriage. The present-day Chetri society of the Nepal Valley is a spectrum of status groups, one merging into the other, with kinship ties running across the dividing lines. This situation has been created mainly by marriages between partners of unequal status, and we must briefly consider the marriage-system to understand how such unions come about.

The arrangement of a man's first marriage is usually the sole responsibility of his parents, and it is rare even for Chetri youths of modern education to interfere with their parents' decision. The rule of caste endogamy restricts the choice in such arranged marriages to Chetri and Khatri girls, and the exogamy of the lineage often excludes the majority of the girls living in the same village. There is otherwise no injunction to seek one's bride in a different locality, but we shall see that many Chetri families of the Valley show a preference for brides from distant hill-regions. The parents of a marriageable boy or girl consider various factors when looking for a spouse for their son and daughter, and these can be summarized under the following points:

1. The ritual status of the prospective partner's father and mother. Jharra and non-jharra status are important con-

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8 The marriages of Ranas to Thakuri girls of the royal house of Saha were exceptions made possible by the dominating political position of the Rana family. Normally such hypogamous unions are not permissible.
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ciderations, and any deficiency in that sphere must be bal-
anced by great advantages of other aspects.

2. The economic status of the girl’s or boy’s family. In the
case of a bride her father’s wealth or position in Government
service is taken into consideration; in the case of a son-in-
law also his education and career prospects.

3. The absence or existence of undesirable alliances in the
prospective partner’s family.

(a) a girl’s marriage prospects may be seriously damaged
by the divorce of a sister or even the re-marriage of a
widowed sister. An intercaste alliance of her brother
also affects her prospects adversely.

(b) The marriage-prospects of a young man are influenced
by the marriages of his elder brothers.

(c) Any irregular second marital union of their father can
prejudice the prospects both of young men and girls.

The general desire on the part of parents is to find for their sons
and daughters partners in whose families everything is normal and
respectable and nothing has to be explained away.

Whereas considerable attention is paid to the general economic
status of a prospective bride’s family, the dowry is usually not
discussed, a feature which distinguishes the Chetri marriage nego-
tiations from those of comparable Indian castes. There is also no
obligatory comparison of horoscopes, and parties are on the whole
unwilling to give their children’s horoscopes to any outsider. Only
the ritual names and the date of birth are communicated to the
other party.

A first marriage, in the conclusion of which all economic and
status factors are taken into consideration, is usually negotiated
with the help of intermediaries (lomi). These are not professionals
and may or may not be kinsmen or kinswomen of either party.
When final arrangements for the wedding have been agreed upon,
the bridegroom pays a ritual visit to the bride’s house and at a
ceremony known as swayambar, he may see his bride for the first
time. After the celebration of the swayambar a betrothal can still
be broken off, and a girl whose betrothed withdrew or died
after the performance of the swayambar is known as baikalya.
Though such a girl may marry subsequently, she is considered
unlucky and is unlikely to be chosen by parents looking for a first wife for their son. I have heard it said that it is "not right" to marry such a girl, and that even those ancestors of the husband who have already entered swarga (heaven) may have to leave paradise and go to narka (hell) as a result of their descendant's unorthodox marriage. For this reason the swayambar is often postponed until immediately before the wedding, when it loses its function of giving the young couple a chance of seeing each other before definitely binding themselves.

The elaborate wedding ritual which extends over at least four days cannot be described here in detail. The rites and the feasting are divided between the groom's and the bride's house, but the essential rite of kanya dan, when the bride's father gives the girl as a dan, or gift, to the bridegroom is held in the courtyard of the bride's house.

The implication of this ritual giving away of the bride explains why a woman can be formally married only once in life, whereas a man may go through any number of wedding-rites. The idea is that what has been given as a dan, a sacred gift comparable only to the gifts given to Brahmans, cannot be taken back or given to anyone else. In the eyes of the Chetri the handing over of the bride to the groom is a unilateral and irrevocable act, and not a mutual acceptance of a contract relationship.

There is also an exchange of presents, the bridegroom receiving, as part of the kanya dan, material gifts together with the bride, and giving on his part ceremonial presents of jewels and clothes (sau bhagya) to his new wife. From her parents the bride receives a dowry of clothes, utensils and ornaments, but only among the very rich and particularly among Ranas does a Chetri bride receive a substantial dowry in the shape of immovable property.

The full wedding rites culminating in the kanya dan can be replaced by a much simpler and less expensive rite known as diyo kalas pujne ("worship of lamp and water-jar"). This too can be performed only if the bride has not previously been married, but its prestige value is low and though poor parents may agree to their daughter being married in this way, they try to save their faces by pretending that it was done without their knowledge and consent. As a matter of fact the diyo kalas pujne ceremony is often used to legalize an elopement, but it nevertheless estab-
lishes a valid marital union, the issue of which has the full status of legitimate children. The procedure is simple. The groom fetches the bride unceremoniously from her house, and the rite is held either in his house or at a third place. A Brahman performs a simple rite of worship and the bridegroom offers *sau bhagya* gifts to the bride.

In the event of a girl being known to be pregnant, the *diyo kalas puje* may not be performed, but there are cases when a couple undergo this ceremony before a pregnancy has become apparent.

Whether married by the full ritual of a traditional wedding or the simple ceremony of *diyo kalas puje*, a Chetri bride enters her husband’s house and, if his parents are alive, assumes the rôle of a daughter-in-law. This rôle is one of subservience to the mother-in-law and the great difference between the happy, carefree life of an unmarried daughter in the parents’ house, and the oppression and drudgery which falls to the lot of a daughter-in-law is a frequent theme in Chetri conversation. Young married women have little opportunity to spend much time in their husband’s presence, and the parents resent it if a married son pays too much attention to his wife and neglects to seek his father’s company. The irritation and sense of frustration caused by the conflicting demands of parents and wife have driven many a young Chetri to seek partition from the joint-family. Traditional Chetri opinion views such an attitude with disapproval. A man is expected to put his loyalties to his parents before those to his wife, and there are many young husbands who live up to this ideal and neglect their wives for the sake of their parents and brothers.

Visits, sometimes for prolonged periods, to her parents’ house may alleviate to some extent the position of a young wife, who finds her marital home uncongenial, but if serious misunderstandings arise between husband and wife separation or divorce is sometimes the only way out.

The Chetris, like other high-caste Hindus, do not approve of divorce, but in practice a good many marriages concluded with full rites break up after a number of years. A wife unable to adjust herself to her husband or his parents, may either return to her natal home and refuse to rejoin her husband, or she may go and live with another man in an unsanctioned union. If she takes the
former course, her parents may ultimately be embarrassed by having to give shelter to a young woman separated from her husband, and if there is also a daughter-in-law in the house relations between daughter and daughter-in-law are likely to become difficult. If, on the other hand, she enters an informal union with another man, her husband may follow one of three courses: he may report the case to the police and this may result in both the wife and her lover being sentenced to a term of imprisonment for adultery, or he may divorce his wife formally, disclaim any further obligation to maintain her and demand compensation for his marriage expenses; or alternatively he may ignore her association with another man and leave the possibility of a report to the police as a threat over the couple's head. Many husbands take the latter course, mainly in order to avoid the scandal attached to a court case, and in such an event the wife and the man she lives with usually keep well out of the husband's way and if possible settle in some distant place.

The number of women who have left their husbands and live to all intents and purposes as the wives of other men is considerable, and among peasant-class Chetris young widows usually also enter a second union. A minor ceremony, known as the "changing of clothes" (luga pheraune) legalizes their position. The new husband presents to the woman a set of clothes as well as sau bhagya gifts, and she takes off the clothes of her widowhood and dresses in the new clothes. No Brahman is required for this rite.

A divorcée or widow can never attain the full status of a byaite wife, as those married with full rites are called, but will always be regarded as a lyaita wife. If she was jharra by birth and her second husband is also jharra she may retain her high ritual status, but if the circumstances of her divorce were discreditable the husband's kinsmen may refuse to grant her commensal status, and in that case she will automatically be regarded as non-jharra.

A problem different from that of the marriages of Chetri divorcées and widows, is that of the unions between Chetri or Khatri men and women of other castes. Though contrary to the generally accepted ideal of caste endogamy, such unions are not infrequent, and there are few Chetri villages in which there are no instances of inter-caste alliances. Only Upadhya and Kumai Brahman and untouchable women are excluded from the range of potential
spouses; Brahman women because the laws of Nepal forbid men of lower status to have sexual relations with women of the higher Brahman castes, and untouchables because any man living with an untouchable wife would automatically be treated as untouchable.

Newar, Gurung, Magar, Tamang and Sherpa women, on the other hand, are eligible to share the bed even if not the kitchen of a Chetri. Numerous are the cases of Chetris of the most exalted status, not excluding Rana prime ministers, living with women of these ethnic groups, and in many a non-jharra Chetri and in most C-class Ranas there flows the blood of Newar or Tamang mothers, grandmothers or great-grandmothers. It would seem that such mixed unions are more frequent among the wealthier families where non-Chetri servants are employed and men can afford to maintain more than one wife, than among the less affluent peasant-class families. In a Chetri village south of Patan with a large proportion of middle-class families I counted among 92 Chetri households six inter-caste unions, involving two Newar, one Magar, one Gharti and two Gurung women, whereas among an equal number of peasant families in a nearby but less prosperous settlement lying beyond the first range of foothills, there were only two Chetri men who lived with women of other castes, one being a Magar and one a Sanyasi girl.

What is the position of a non-Chetri ‘wife’ in a Chetri household? By posing the question in this form we are at once faced with the problem whether a Newar or Gurung woman living with a Chetri and bearing him children should be described as a wife or as a concubine. As such a union is not sanctified by any religious rite one might argue that it is a case of simple concubinage. But against this view stands the fact that the children of a lyaithe wife take the father’s lineage-name and are entitled to inherit a share in his estate, though in the absence of a will this share is admittedly only \( \frac{1}{3} \) of the share to which the son of a fully privileged Chetri wife is entitled. On ritual occasions, moreover, such as at the time of tika-giving during Dassain, a non-Chetri ‘wife’ takes part in the ceremony, and whereas unlike a Chetri co-wife she would not be

10 Although the Newar community is subdivided into numerous castes of differential status, Chetris consider all Newars as inferior to themselves, and do not show any marked preference for women of the higher Newar castes. They avoid, however, all contact with untouchable Newars.
expected to give *tika* to her husband's sons from Chetri wives, she receives *tika* from her father-in-law and her husband, and gives *tika* to her own children.

Judha Sham Sher, one of the last Rana prime ministers, tried to alter this rule for the benefit of his favourite wife, a Tamang girl known as Kanchi Maharani. He issued an order that everyone in his palace, including his legitimate sons and their wives of royal descent, should receive *tika* from the Kanchi Maharani and bow to her. This was greatly resented by members of the royal house married to Rana men, and a serious dispute ensued.

The incident shows that non-Chetri women living with Chetri men are capable of attaining a status approximating in many respects to that of a wife married with full rites. But they always remain outside the commensal family group. Even the husband is not expected to eat rice and other ritually relevant food from the hands of a non-Chetri wife, and such a woman's own sons should not accept cooked rice from her once they have assumed the sacred thread. Provided these simple precautions are observed such sons count as Chetris and as members of their father's lineage. It is the children from such marriages who form the amorphous mass of non-*jharra* Chetris, a class which, unlike an Indian sub-caste, has no sense of corporateness and identity of interests. For the individual offspring of a Chetri and a Newar wife usually has the ambition to gain as favourable a position as possible among his father's kinsmen, and neither identifies himself nor wishes to be identified by others with people of similar mixed parentage. If it were customary for such Chetris with Newar mothers to marry girls with Newar blood a Chetri-Newar sub-caste, comparable perhaps to the Khatris, might have emerged. But there are no signs of such a development, and the son of a Chetri father and a Newar, Gurung or Magar mother will make every effort to marry a Chetri girl of pure Chetri parentage. Rich men usually succeed in this effort, and many C-class Ranas have married Thakuri or Chetri girls of unimpeachable parentage. Such an alliance does not immediately blot out the opprobrium of a mixed ancestry, but after a few generations the original mixed marriage may be forgotten, and the descendants of a Newar or Tamang ancestress may even be admitted to commensality with *jharra*-Chetris and thus gain recognition as Chetris of pure ritual status.
We thus see that Chetri society no less than the Chetri family has a considerable absorptive power and is continuously assimilating foreign elements. In case of the individual family this absorption is facilitated by the prevalence of polygyny. As a man may have as many wives as he likes, there is room for non-Chetri lyaita wives and their children, as well as for more than one byaita wife married with full rites.

In a village south of Patan there were in 1958 among 92 Chetri households 23 men who either had more than one wife or had been married more than once and had lost one or several wives through death or divorce. The number of households where two or more wives were resident at the time of inquiry was 13, but at least some of the wives then dead had for some time lived as co-wives of a still surviving wife. The number of divorced wives appearing in the house list was only three, but it is likely that some wives who had left their husbands after a short spell of married life were ignored by my informants. The greatest number of wives of one husband was six, five of whom were alive though not all living in the same house.

Of the six non-Chetri wives occurring in the same sample, four were second or third wives, while two were the first and only spouses of their husbands. In general it is much more usual for a non-Chetri wife to be an additional wife, taken into the house by a man past his first youth, than to be the partner with whom a young Chetri starts his conjugal life.

Unions between Chetris and non-Chetris of lower castes are almost exclusively hypergamous, i.e. Chetri men take Newar, Gurung or Tamang wives. No social recognition on the part of the Chetris, on the other hand, is given to the union between a Chetri girl and a man of any of these communities. Such a union is incapable of being regularized in the eyes of Chetris and its occurrence leaves a serious stain on the family’s reputation.

In unions of persons of different status within the Chetri community, on the other hand, the opposite principle prevails. For it is more usual for jharra-girls to marry non-jharra men than for jharra-men to seek alliances with non-jharra brides. The tendency is thus one of hypogamy rather than of hypergamy, and the Chetris explain this by pointing out that the introduction of a daughter-in-law of lower status would create difficulties with the household
arrangements; for being debarred from cooking for the family she could not take her traditional place as a help to her mother-in-law. There is, moreover, the danger that her status as a non-
jharna may affect the status of her sons and hence that of the whole family in the next generation. The jharna-girl married to a non-
jharna man, on the other hand, is easily absorbed into his household, and her natal family is not materially affected by the lowering of her status. For according to the rules of the pujya relationship it is she and her children who are entitled to hospitality in her parental home, while neither her parents nor her brothers are expected to visit her house on any formal occasion, and seldom accept even ordinary hospitality. As persons of lower status can eat in the houses of those higher than they, but not vice-versa, a daughter who has married below her status (but within the Chetri caste) can maintain normal relations with her natal family, while a daughter-in-law of lower status can never play a normal rôle in her conjugal home.

It could be argued that the same considerations might apply also to inter-caste unions, but there the position is reversed. Chetri girls are freely given in marriage to Brahmans, but never to men of castes or ethnic groups lower than Chetris. The explanation lies probably in the fact that the conclusion of a sexual union unsanctioned by religious rites is more damaging to the reputation of a woman than to that of a man. The lower caste spouses of Chetri men are mainly subsidiary wives taken in addition to a principal wife of equal status. But a woman cannot marry subsidiary husbands, and by entering into a union with a non-Chetri of inferior caste, she cuts herself off from the Chetri community and foregoes the possibility of any future marriage within her own caste.

One might think that the preference for jharna-brides evinced by many of the wealthy non-jharna men of the Valley coupled with the frequency of marriages between Chetri-girls (mainly also of

11 A similar attitude to hypogamous marriages has been found among certain Hindu castes of Garhwal. In an unpublished Ph.D. thesis Ram Prakash Srivastava writes: “The Garhwalis Hindus felt that if girls went out to lower castes, it would not affect the purity of the family, but if one took in a woman of a lower caste as wife, his purity would be destroyed and his children would suffer social degradation.” (The Bhotia. A Study of the Cultural Pattern of a Community on the U.P.-Tibetan Border. University of Saugar 1958).
jharra status) and Brahman men would create a shortage of jharra-girls. In practice no such difficulties seem to have arisen, for many of the girls whom non-jharra men of the Valley villages seek as brides are drawn from a large area in the hills, where the outflow of marriageable women is balanced by the absence of many of the younger men on military service and perhaps also by the incidence of inter-caste unions involving Gurung, Magar or Tamang women.

Peasant Class, Middle Class and Aristocracy

The Chetri followers of Prithwi Narayan Saha, instrumental in the overthrow of the Newar kings, were undoubtedly largely villagers from the hills west of the Nepal Valley. Some of them were probably professional soldiers, but the majority will have been cultivators just like the men in the Nepalese army of the Rana period, who were mainly of peasant stock and returned to their villages and fields as soon as they had completed their service.

There is evidence that small numbers of Chetris lived in the Nepal Valley even before the Gurkha conquest, and that some of them even served in the armies of the Newar kings. But the great influx of Chetris into the Valley occurred only after the establishment of Thakuri rule. Many settled along the rim of the Valley, cleared the forests which had until then surrounded the irrigated area cultivated by Newars, and put the newly gained land under the plough. As far as one can see there was little encroachment on the fertile irrigated land which since time immemorial the Newars had been tilling by a highly developed form of hoe-cultivation, and even today, two centuries after the Gurkha conquest, there is marked difference between the Newar and the Chetri type of cultivation.

Besides Chetris of peasant stock who settled in outlying villages, there were those close to the court of the new rulers. As army officers and government dignitaries they had to live in Kathmandu, and in the period immediately after the Gurkha conquest Thakuris and Chetris occupied houses inside the old Newar town and particularly in a locality known as Indrachok. A prominent Basnet lineage, for instance, is known as Indrachok Basnet, and there is a local tradition that this family was already resident in Indrachok at the time of the Malla kings. But in the time of Jang Bahadur, the first Rana prime minister, there was a determined move to dis-
sociate the Parbatias from the urban Newars, and the Chetris were encouraged to build houses and palaces on the outskirts of Kathmandu and Patan. Living in the shadow of the court, prominent Chetri families had by that time developed an aristocratic pattern of life, which was a complete departure from the rusticity of the style in which the Chetri chieftains and warrior-cultivators of the Western hill regions must have lived. The nucleus of the Parbatia aristocracy was formed by a number of families known as the bharadari. They belonged to such Chetri clans as Thapa, Basnet, Pande and Bista, and constituted a council (bhradari) which advised the king on important matters of policy. The historical evidence regarding the origin and function of the bharadari families is still inadequate, and it is even doubtful whether these Chetri families gained prominence only in the days of Prithwi Narayan Saha, or whether some noble Chetri families had attained prominence already under the Malla kings.

However this may have been—and the problem is one to be solved by the study of historical documents—there were as early as the first half of the 19th century several Chetri families of great power and wealth that lived in a style so far removed from the pattern of life characteristic of the majority of the Chetri people that it falls outside the purview of this essay. But the existence of the great palaces and the prizes of royal and Rana favour attainable only in Kathmandu as the centre of political power, acted as a strong stimulant for the development of a middle class, economically still partly based on agricultural holdings in villages, but with aspirations to imitate as far as possible the aristocratic families close to the throne.

A study of the genealogies of Chetri families settled in the Nepal Valley demonstrates conclusively the fluidity of the dividing line between this middle class and the bulk of the Chetri peasantry. Mobility between the two classes is not only possible, but every village provides examples of families, some members of which have at one time or other risen to middle class status while others continue to live the life of simple peasants.

The main criterion of middle-class status is not so much wealth, but a reasonably elevated position in the service of government or a comparable occupation practised in one of the major towns.

Military service was always one of the principal occupations of the Chetris, and promotion to commissioned rank brought a man almost automatically within reach of middle class status. But the status thus attained was not necessarily permanent, and it is not unusual for colonels and captains of the Nepal army to feature in the genealogical tables of families unable to boast at present of any members in an even moderately elevated position.

The rapid ups and downs in the fortunes of Chetri families was inherent in the system by which promotion in government service was the result of the personal favour of the Rana prime minister or one of his kinsmen rather than of ability and merit. Thus a simple soldier in a Rana’s bodyguard, who knew how to please his master or was fortunate enough to render him some service in an emergency, could suddenly be promoted to officer’s rank, and if he retained his superior’s goodwill the door to the higher ranks of government service was open to his brothers and sons. Equally rapid, however, could be the downfall of a family, and the displeasure of a Rana prime minister or commander-in-chief could deprive a whole family of all prospects in army and civil service.

The solid economic background which sustained Chetri families through good and bad days was their ownership of land, and an officer dismissed from service or temporarily out of favour, would retire to his village and maintain himself and his family by cultivating his land. But even while in government service a Chetri would depend for his subsistence largely on the yield of his land, and the whole system of low taxation and correspondingly low emoluments for the officers of government was possible only because the latter invariably owned land and did not rely on their salaries for their basic maintenance.

Middle-class and peasant class Chetris share, therefore, their dependence on the land, from which both classes draw the bulk of their food supply. The need to maintain this source of income, moreover, has compelled many middle class Chetris to choose wives capable of managing a farm. For husbands serving in the army or working in a government office, have neither the time nor the inclination to take an active part in agricultural work. They spend most of their time in the towns, and leave the management of their farms almost entirely to the wives, who seldom leave the village
and are in effective control of the household affairs and the agricultural work.

Middle-class Chetris with landed property in the Nepal Valley, therefore prefer as brides for their sons girls with a village background, who are used to agricultural work and have no ambitions to join in their husband's urban life. Girls of this type are found most easily in the hill-villages outside the Valley, and the pronounced preference of middle-class parents for such "hill-girls" has led to a steady influx of women from the hills into the Nepal Valley without any corresponding movement in the opposite direction. For middle-class Chetris do not normally give their daughters to men living in remote hill-villages, and there is even a tendency to marry them to men permanently resident in one of the major towns. As girls brought up in a town are not suitable as brides for either the Chetri villagers of the Valley or those of the remoter hills, one might think that consequently there would be a surplus of marriageable women of an urban background. The fact that such a surplus did not assume serious proportions may be due to the prevalence of polygamy among urban Chetris, the large number of women employed in one or the other way in the great palaces of the royal family and the Ranas, and possibly also by the high incidence of maternal mortality. All these three factors are likely to have redressed the balance in the sex-ratio which the influx of hill-girls into Chetri families of the khant,\(^{13}\) and that of khant-girls into the towns might otherwise have caused.

The most interesting aspect of the system by which middle-class men of the khant marry peasant girls from the hills in order to provide for the management of their farms, is the dependence of a superior class on brides of socially—though not ritually—inferior status for maintaining its own economic position. It is a kind of economic hypergamy, for the marriage relations established with hill-families are never reciprocal. They are sometimes repetitive, however, and over a period of years several girls from a hill-family may marry men of the same khant family.

Such hill-girls, though usually of peasant background, are partly assimilated to middle-class standards, but complete assimilation to the tastes and pattern of living of their husbands would defeat

\(^{13}\) Khant is the generic term for the settlements outside the major towns but inside the Nepal Valley.
the purpose of seeking brides outside the Valley. The result is a society which consists of partly urbanized middle-class men and women of peasant origin, sharing few of their husbands' interests, but occupying a dominant rôle in their own sphere. As in most Chetri villages of the Valley, middle-class and peasant class families usually live side by side, one might assume that middle-class men might easily find suitable peasant girls, used to hard work in the fields, without having to bring brides from distant hill-villages. The reason for preferring such hill-girls is the belief that those who come from a distant place will be more adaptable and make greater efforts to fit into a middle-class household than local peasant girls who "think that they are as good and as knowledgeable as their middle-class neighbours".

The difference between middle-class and peasant class standards is not rigid, but the following points made by an educated middle-class man from a village consisting of members of both classes show very well that the distinction between the two patterns of living is not only in the eye of the beholder, and is recognized by the Chetris themselves.

1. Fundamental to the definition of peasant and middle-class is the fact that wealth is not a decisive criterion. Some peasant-class families, retaining peasant-class values and showing no signs of aspiring to middle-class status, are wealthier than middle-class families of the same village. But a modicum of wealth is necessary for the retention of middle-class standards, and reduction to poverty involves their loss.

2. Peasant-class people consider their village and the few kinsmen and affines who come on visits as their whole world, while middle-class people are more conscious of the outside world and urban society, and consequently pay less attention to village opinion. Wishing to appear grand within the village society peasant-class people incline to spend heavily on elaborate weddings, while middle-class people have now the tendency to economize on such occasions.

3. In peasant-class families the relations between the different generations are relaxed and informal, while in middle-class families there is a great deal of formality, even between father and son. A son treats his father with great respect, and will not talk freely with him in the presence of others.
4. A similar difference applies to relations between masters and servants. In peasant-class families servants are treated like members of the family, dress like their masters, and use such familiar terms of address as 'father', 'mother' and 'brother'. In middle-class families servants maintain some distance and treat their masters with great respect, using such honorific terms as sahib, kazi and huzur.

5. Peasant-class Chetris sell not only their cash crops, but may sell even small quantities of such produce as milk, eggs and fruit. Middle-class people sell only in bulk and consider it degrading to sell small quantities.

6. Peasant-class people work not only on their own fields, but may work also for wages. Middle-class people may, if necessary, work on their own land, but never accept paid agricultural employment. Many middle-class men do not normally even work on their land, but employ hired labour.

7. Peasant-class people freely carry loads, but middle-class people are ashamed to carry anything; even children feel awkward at carrying anything in public.

8. The guests of peasant-class families help in the household, and if they stay for some days, they will even help with the agricultural work. This is not done among middle-class families.

9. In the houses of peasant-class families there are few partitions, and a whole floor may be a single large room. The whole family often sleeps in one room, while in middle-class houses there are separate rooms for the parents and the children.

10. In peasant-class houses there is little furniture, while middle-class houses have shelves for clothes and utensils, and there are white sheets and carpets to sit on.

11. Peasant-class people store their grain anywhere, even in the rooms in which they sleep, while middle-class people have separate grain stores.

12. Peasant-class people often keep calves and sometimes even buffaloes in the ground floor room, which is also used as kitchen. Middle-class people usually have separate cattle sheds.

These distinctions between the two classes which relate largely to the pattern of living within the village, do not represent a recent phenomenon, but must have developed ever since service in the employ of government enabled Chetris to maintain standards
superior to those of the average agriculturist. What is a comparatively new element in the situation, however, is the tie between education of a modern type and middle-class standards. While until a generation ago, family connections and a modest measure of ability were sufficient to set up a young man in a military career, nowadays formal educational qualifications including a knowledge of English are required for appointments in all the higher grades of government service. Those middle-class families which lack the foresight to give their sons an education of this type are in danger of losing their privileged position, whereas others see in education their best chance of securing for the children the kind of advantages which previously depended almost exclusively on the favour of the Ranas. Many middle-class families make therefore great efforts to provide their sons with a good education, while Chetris of peasant-class have largely no such ambitions for their sons and see in the ownership of land and cattle their only way to prosperity and prestige.

Owing to the increased importance of education the distinction between the two classes is likely to grow rather than to diminish. For with the reduction of the importance of military service as an avenue to influence and status, the peasant-class is deprived of the one means by which in the days of personal rule and Rana favouritism a few of its members could rise to high office. Today education is required even for an officer’s career in the army, and its commissioned ranks have thus become a preserve of the educated irrespective of caste. This development, which dates only since 1951, has not yet been grasped by the majority of Chetris. While middle-class men with urban connections realize the value of investing in education, even wealthy peasant-class men show little inclination to spend substantial sums on their sons’ schooling. In the villages, for which I have data, none of the boys and young men of peasant-class status were receiving any education other than that provided by free village schools, whereas a good many of the middle-class boys were attending fee-paying schools in Kathmandu or Patan.

The distinction between peasant-class and middle-class cuts across clan-, lineage- and family associations and most middle-class Chetris have kinsmen who fall distinctly within the category of peasant-class. It seems that individuals of the two classes mix
on fairly easy terms. On ceremonial occasions they invite each other, and while middle-class men may have interests beyond the comprehension of their peasant-class neighbours, the women of the two classes share many basic attitudes and aspirations.

In the observance of caste-rules peasant-class Chetris are, on the whole, more rigid and more orthodox than at least some of the middle-class men. For pride in their high caste-status, with all the self restraint its maintenance involves, provides compensation for a comparatively humble status in the sphere of public life. The need for such a prop to self confidence may even increase as the shift of political power deprives the Chetris of the privileges of what was once the politically dominant caste. As cultivators they compete today on equal terms with Newars, Tamangs and Paharis, and the disproportionately strong representation of Chetris in certain types of Government services is no longer assured.

This is not the place to sketch even in outline the pattern of life of the Chetri aristocracy, which consists above all of the Ranas and a few families of such clans as Thapa, Pande and Basnet. Enjoying the fruits of supreme political power, the Ranas and those they allowed to share in high offices lived at an economic level streets above that of both middle-class and peasant-class. But despite the luxury of their palaces and the extravagance of their retinue they did not completely lose touch with their humble caste-fellows. It is not unusual to encounter in the genealogies of ordinary Chetri villagers links with Ranas or, through Rana kinsmen, even with the royal house of Saha. There is no doubt that the large number of wives of many members of the aristocracy, and the recognition of women not formally married as 'secondary wives', provided a great many ties with Chetri families of no great eminence. The Chetri nobility never formed a completely closed circle, and despite immense differences in wealth there seems to have continued the sense of a basic equality of all the members of the great Chetri community. Hill-girls of peasant-class were acceptable as the brides not only of middle-class men but, provided they were of outstanding looks, even of members of the nobility. And such marriage relations across class boundaries may have played a part in preventing a horizontal division of Chetri society into hierarchically arranged sub-castes on the Indian model. Though Hindu in religious sentiment to the core the Chetris, even when
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elevated by political events into the position of dominant caste, preserved an almost tribal feeling of homogeneity and solidarity, and this indivisibility of large comprehensive caste-groups appears as a variant of the Hindu system of society typical of the Parbatia castes of Nepal.

CONCLUSIONS

Nepal provides one of the most recent examples of the subjection of the creators of a great urban civilization by a less sophisticated but more virile and dynamic population of hill peasants. While in the fields of architecture no less than in the refinements of crafts and the pursuit of a far-flung trade the Newars of the Nepal Valley remained unsurpassed even during the two centuries following upon the Gurkha conquest, the Chetris and Thakuris excelled in the organization of government and succeeded in bringing the whole of Nepal under the control of a central authority. This achievement, largely completed within the span of two generations, is all the more remarkable as the rulers of the Newar kingdoms had never been able to extend their administration very far beyond the confines of the Nepal Valley. The glory of those Newar kings lay not in the conquest of large territories, but in the patronage of religion and art. The fame of their great cities reached as far as China and attracted scholars from many parts of India, but neither the Kiranti tribes of Eastern Nepal nor the Thakuri, Chetri and Magar chieftains of the Western hills ever bowed to Newar power.

It was only after the Gurkha conquest that the principle of a centralized authority gained general and unquestioning recognition. Though Thakuri and Chetri rule lay but lightly on the hillfolk of other castes and races and the administrative system was not of an elaborate type, the political control of the established government was effectively maintained throughout the country. No less remarkable than the extension of Gurkha rule was the rapid spread of Nepali as the lingua franca. With the infiltration of Brahmans and Chetris into most areas of Nepal, barring the regions of high altitude along the Tibetan border, Nepali acquired an importance such as Newari had never possessed. Indeed in no other sphere is the difference between Chetris and Newars more striking than in the linguistic field. Wherever Chetris settled, be it
among Gurungs, Tamangs or Rais, they not only retained their language but usually even achieved its adoption as a lingua franca by the locally dominant population. Newars, on the other hand, tended to lose their language within two or three generations of residence outside Newar towns, and in no case has Newari been adopted as the second language of any other ethnic group.

The problem, then, arises whether the dynamic power which carried the Chetris to political and linguistic supremacy, can be correlated with specific features of their social structure—features which one might presume the dominant castes of the Newar kingdoms must have been lacking. One of the features which favoured the Chetris' spatial expansion and rapid colonization of wide areas, would seem to be their independence of local ties. The place of a primary or extended family, no less than that of a lineage, in Chetri society is never determined by residence in a specific locality. Village-community and lineage do not compete for the loyalty of a Chetri, for the local community acts as a corporate unit only in so far as ties of neighbourhood reinforce existing agnatic links. The rights and responsibilities of lineage members are not affected by spatial distance, and there is no legal or sentimental bond which fetters an individual to a specific locality. Whereas Gubhaju and Bare families resident outside the Valley retain their high status in the caste hierarchy only as long as the young boys of every generation undergo an initiation rite in their ancestral town-quarters (baha), Chetris remain what they are wherever they may have settled.

The solidarity of a lineage, moreover, is not dependent on the ritual equality of all its members. The sons born of unorthodox alliances have the right to participate in the communal worship of the lineages deity, and such persons are Chetris in sentiment even if only partly of Chetri blood. When the Chetris expanded into areas of Mongoloid populations it was due to this principle that intermarriage with local women did not result in a sapping of Chetri strength. Even the Chetris dwelling in the high regions of Western Nepal, among whom Mongoloid types are said to predominate, bear the same clan-names as the Chetris of the Gorkha area and the Kathmandu Valley, and identify themselves with the Chetri class which dominated Nepal throughout the Rana period.

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The fact that the members of lineage might include high officials close to the royal house, civil servants of middle-class status and a large mass of peasants, would seem to have been a further source of strength of the Chetri caste. For enjoying, or at least hoping for, the patronage of the mighty, the humbler members of a lineage supported a system from which they benefited in varying degree. Moreover, the prestige of a Thapa or Basnet in high office was a matter of pride not only for the members of his own lineage, but to a lesser degree for all those bearing the clan-name Thapa or Basnet, and to some extent even for all members of the Chetri caste. However poor and insignificant, every Chetri was conscious that men of his caste wielded supreme power over the whole of Nepal, and this consciousness gave him confidence in his dealings with people of other ethnic groups. The Newars, no doubt, had also had a ruling class, which in the days before the Gurkha conquest, exercised political power, not, it is true, over the whole of Nepal, but over the three Newar kingdoms of the Valley. The segmentation of Newar society into a large number of castes, however, and the inward orientation of Newar castes, would seem to have prevented any comparable identification of ordinary cultivators with the men who wielded power at the courts.

The loyalty of Chetris, springing largely no doubt from self-interest, was the firm basis of the Rana régime, and without the impact of events outside the borders of Nepal, it would probably have kept that régime in power for many years to come. With Ranas no longer at the helm of affairs, the whole Chetri community and particularly the Chetris of the Valley, who were accustomed to depend on government employment and patronage, have now to reassess their position in the multi-ethnic society of Nepal, and much points to the conclusion that this reassessment is by no means painless. Whether in the Nepal of the future Thakuris and Chetris will be able to retain the position of dominant castes or not, history will record their achievements as the architects of a centrally governed, united Nepal. A knowledge of the social system which enabled a people of hill-peasants to undertake this task, and in doing so to break the hegemony of so highly civilized a population as the Newars even in the area of their densest concentration, is therefore indispensable for an understanding of Nepalese history from the time of the Gurkha conquest until the revolution of 1951.
NOTES

1. An important discussion of the marriage-systems of the Chetris and Newars is contained in Professor Louis Dumont's article "Marriage in India: The Present State of the Question" (Contributions to Indian Sociology, No. VII, 1964, pp. 77-98). At the time of its publication the present essay had already gone to press and it was therefore not possible to include a consideration of the points raised by Professor Dumont.

2. There is no consistent and universally accepted system of transcribing Nepali names and terms. The correct spelling of the ancestral seat of the royal house of Saha, a town in Western Nepal, is 'Gorkha', but it has become customary to use the spelling 'Gurkha' when referring to the martial hillmen from the region of Gorkha who under the leadership of Prithwi Narayan Saha conquered the Newar kings and established the Kingdom of Nepal in its present form. In conformance to this practice I have used the spelling 'Gurkha' in such phrases as 'the Gurkha conquest.'

REFERENCES

2. Social Mobility in the Newar Caste System

INTRODUCTION

One of the most observant and entertaining accounts of the process of social mobility in a system of rigid stratification is that given by Molière in "Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme". A Newar audience in Kathmandu would have no difficulty whatsoever in following the pretensions and comic tribulations of Monsieur Jourdain as he learns to dress in silks and satins, to speak poetry, to fence, to dance the minuet, to acquire the airs and style of a "gentilhomme". The Newars are well acquainted with their own Newar counterparts of this classic figure of status seeking. Though the particular Newar status symbols are of course different, the theme of Molière's comedy is thoroughly familiar to them. It is this theme of individual and group social mobility in the Newar caste system that forms the main subject of this essay.

I do not propose to discuss the definition of the term "caste": readers can judge for themselves from the evidence I give, according

The fieldwork on which this essay is based took place in the Kathmandu Valley between April, 1956 and May, 1957, when I was on overseas research leave from the School of Oriental and African Studies in the University of London. I wish to express my thanks to the Governors and Director for providing me with this valuable opportunity for research, and also to those of my colleagues at the School who were engaged at the same time on studies in Nepal in various fields of scholarship and who helped me on numerous occasions in the Kathmandu Valley. I am also indebted to the Directors of the Wenner-Gren Foundation for a most generous supplementary grant which enabled me to undertake an extensive collection of information on Newar caste demography.
to their own favoured definitions, whether the Newar form of social stratification meets the requirements of "a caste system" as they understand the implications of this concept. For my own part, I take "caste" simply to be a form of social stratification in which the necessary statements and judgments about relative status are couched predominantly in a traditional ritual language. In a particular caste system the differing status positions of the component groups are in my view derived ultimately and basically, as in all systems of hierarchical stratification, from the distribution of political and economic power within that system. The language of ritual behaviour is used conventionally to express and validate status achieved through and based upon the operation of political and economic factors. This essentially is the position taken by Ibbetson in his remarkable report on the Punjab census eighty years ago which still remains the most accurate and satisfactory sociological account of the caste system in general, teaching us more about the principles according to which it is actually constructed and about the processes that actually operate within it than we would get from a lifelong study of the works of Brahmanical obscurantists who have for centuries been sedulously promulgating the theories of ritual purity and impurity as an *explanation* of caste precedence. The superior position of the Brahman, depending mainly on the power and patronage of the ruler where it has not depended directly on his own political and economic power, has been made secure to the extent to which he has been able to disseminate these mystical theories. There is ample evidence, some very recent, that Indian sociologists have not been immune from this persistent indoctrination. Ibbetson at least, together with a number of his colleagues such as Gait and Rose and Nesfield and Risley, had to face the caste systems he encountered as a practical administrator and to deal with the empirical realities of the differential distribution of power. He shrewdly noted that the change in the political and economic importance of a caste was accompanied by a change in its ritual status, and that the latter change was invariably preceded by the former. In Ibbetson's terms, "social standing, which is all that caste means, depends very largely on political importance, whether present or belonging to the recent past... The rise in the social scale which accompanies increased political importance will presently be followed by a rise in
Ibbetson goes on to describe how, given increased political and economic importance, a caste may increase its "social standing" through the observance of what he calls "the artificial standards" (i.e. the rules of ritual avoidance) of Brahmanical Hinduism. "Caste", says Ibbetson, "has no necessary connection with the Hindu religion" (in the same sense, I take it, that clan organisations have no necessary connection with totemism, or family structures with ancestor worship, or feudalism with Christianity).

This process of upward mobility consequent upon political and economic change has recently been termed "Sanskritisation" by Srinivas in a series of valuable and stimulating contributions well familiar to all students of caste. The introduction of this term has of course been useful in awakening the interest of observers in this process, but unfortunate in that it has tended to concentrate attention solely on the ritual and "acculturation" aspects of a complex social phenomenon, misleading and ethnocentric in that it applies only to Hindu society and suggests that the process of upward mobility is in some way sociologically unique in that society, and unnecessary in that the existing term "social mobility" describes the process sufficiently and accurately. If we accept "Sanskritisation" we must surely expect a spate of parallel terms to describe the identical social process in Muslim, Sikh, Parsi, and Buddhist caste systems. It is particularly inappropriate and confusing in a discussion of the Newar caste system in which there occurs the co-existence of both the Hindu and Buddhist cultural traditions, both equally "Sanskritic" in content and derivation.

Social mobility can of course be divided into two categories—group mobility and individual mobility: the former, generally discussed in terms of caste fission and sub-caste formation, being a ubiquitous feature of caste systems; the latter, where it implies and involves the quitting of one caste for another higher in the scale, held to be absent and impossible in caste systems where (apart from rare instances of successful cheating and "trickery") the rules of endogamy plus the inheritance of permanent caste status at birth combine to block any possibility of individual social advancement across caste boundaries. Both these forms

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1 Ibbetson, Sir Denzil—1881, p. 174.
of social mobility occur however among the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley. Before I discuss them in some detail two general observations are necessary about the relationship between power and status.

Firstly, it can be observed that the more rigid and inflexible is a system of social stratification, judged by the relative difficulty and absence of movement upwards or downwards in the scale of social ranks, the more rigorous must be the mechanisms of social control that sustain this system. The rules of order, precedence, and status differentiation must be precise and those who disobey the rules—and thus challenge the accepted form of the system—must be effectively punished. The privileges of the superior orders must be protected and asserted, and individuals of the lower orders must be denied access to positions of authority and to the means and opportunities of economic advancement. Certainly a vital factor in the maintenance of such a system is the fact that, through the inevitable hereditary specialisation of occupation, the system involves a functional and organic unity of the component status groups necessitating a high degree of social and economic co-operation. Individuals born into such a system can readily and understandably come to accept the inequalities of status and the attendant social discriminations as part of the natural order of existence, to explain these inequalities and discriminations in an ideology which upholds the interests and prerogatives of the dominant groups, and to believe that it is a system in which changes are socially impossible (this itself being a tribute to the effectiveness of the supporting sanctions). Such a situation classically, traditionally, and ubiquitously occurred in India in the form of the small feudal state in which the caste system depended ultimately for its stability on the final coercive sanction of physical force at the disposal of the ruler (and in the village community in which it depended on the sanctions available to the dominant castes). The more effective the sanctions, the more rigid the system, the more unlikely it is that we shall find instances within it of successful

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3 This acceptance of the order by the lower castes has been described in studies of the White/Negro caste systems of the Deep South in America as “the principle of accommodation”. See G. Myrdal, 1944, Ch. 31 passim for a discussion of this, and p. 1377 for references to the American literature on the subject.
social mobility across the demarcation lines of status grades. Such a "closed" system of stratification is characteristically found in small scale societies, precisely because it is in such societies that the necessary extreme forms of social control operate most effectively. But it must further be said that, for this very reason, small-scale stratified societies everywhere tend to exhibit similar characteristics. Indeed—one can wonder what the theory of social class would look like if all fieldwork on this subject had been undertaken in small rural communities in Western society in which, characteristically rank is mainly ascribed by birth, vertical social mobility within the community is virtually impossible, hereditary specialisation of occupational class predominates, and in which a functional organic unity based on this division of labour occurs. If an individual wants to get ahead in such a community, he has to get out. Inevitably almost all our studies of caste in India have been in small rural communities: we seem at times to be in danger of arguing features inherent in caste organisations which are in fact inherent in the conditions of small scale stratified societies everywhere. As yet, we know little or nothing about caste in Lucknow or Calcutta or Ahmedabad, and we have as yet no theoretical discussions of the tolerance or modification or adjustments of caste structures (according to the prescriptions of our rural model) to conditions of greatly increased scale and occupational diversification—and essentially to conditions in which it is difficult for a rigorous system of social control to operate smoothly and efficiently. As I shall be indicating presently this factor of scale and of urban concentration is of particular importance in a consideration of the Newar caste system.

Secondly, the continuity of the current form of a particular caste system depends not only on the maintenance of the inequalities

4 And we have not begun to consider vigorously the effect on caste membership—in terms of ascription at birth—of the extensive rural-urban migration that has long been a characteristic of many parts of India, the volume of this migration increasing sharply in the last decades. See the excellent recent study of Poona for example where the "data shows that during the last 15 years about 45 per cent of the total sample families (a random sample of the whole city) had migrated to Poona". N. V. Sovani, D. P. Apté, R. G. Pendse, 1956, p. 2. See also S. N. Sen, 1960, p. 10, which shows that "less than one-third" of the total population (approx. 2.5 million in 1951) of Calcutta were born in the city.
(or status differentials) that exist between the component caste groups but also on the maintenance of a status equivalence of the individuals belonging to the same caste. It is a basic convention of the system that the members of a particular caste are all ritually equal—i.e. that they interact with one another socially as members of a single group of peers. This ideological equality is extremely difficult to maintain in practice, even though of course it is constantly expressed verbally and in ritual behaviour (notably in the rules of endogamy and commensality). It is this convention which appears to be the origin of what I call the Fallacy of the Caste Stereotype which has persistently bedevilled sociological discussions of Indian caste systems. The literature is liberally scattered with statements in the form of simple generalisations about the behaviour of caste stereotypes—about “Brahmans”, or “Chamars” or “Jats” or “Julahas” or whatever, on the assumption that even in a single system the individuals comprising these respective groups all occupy a single social rank. There is ample evidence that this assumption is sufficiently inaccurate to be a major impediment to progressive discussion. Ideally all members of a single caste are social equals (and it is this ideal which the ritual expresses): in practice factors of wealth, political power, education, occupational status and so forth operate within, as well as between, castes to produce important internal inequalities of status. We know from our studies of Indian caste systems that it is these internal inequalities of economic condition and social prestige which lead to caste fission and sub-caste formation, a group of economic peers hiving off and claiming a higher status than their former caste fellows, and validating this claim by a modification of their ritual behaviour in the direction of accepted Brahmanical standards (the main status symbols of a Hindu caste society)—and so achieving a “correction” of the system in terms of the ideological model of peer groups. But so far as I am aware there are as yet no discussions in the literature or evidence or hypotheses about the range and limits of the internal inequalities that can be tolerated within particular castes before fission occurs, and whether this range of tolerated inequalities varies for castes standing at different points in the overall scale of precedence. Such a discussion would be a useful contribution to our knowledge of caste systems.

Certainly the problem of status inconsistency is endemic in all
systems of rigid stratification, particularly where the social conditions (scale, economic change, diversification of occupations and the opportunity of recruitment to new occupations, possibility of spatial mobility, educational provision and so forth) are such as to reduce the effectiveness of traditional sanctions and thus permit the opening out of significant gaps between ascribed and achieved statuses. Equally the tenenncy to adjust behaviour so far as is socially permitted so as to limit role conflict and tension and to secure a return to consistency in roles and statuses is characteristic of such systems. Since in a caste system ascribed status is calibrated mainly in ritual symbols, where a "lack of fit" occurs between say the achieved economic and political status of an individual or group on the one hand and his or its ascribed status as expressed in ritual behaviour on the other, one would expect to find some modification of behaviour (or "status seeking") in the latter field of ritual so as to reduce this gap. By and large, though it can be agreed that the process is exceedingly complex, this is what is happening in the process described by Srinivas as "Sanskritisation". But, except perhaps in extreme and isolated instances, it must be observed that a perfect consistency is rare and unlikely. Economic change however arising (taking only one fertile source of status inconsistency) is more or less universal in some degree, and its effects on status are relatively immediate. Concomitant change in the excessively conservative and "traditional" field of ritual behaviour is much more difficult to achieve and slow to take effect. Equally high ritual status is likely to persist, if energetically bolstered by an accepted ideology, long after the basic supports of political and economic power have crumbled or weakened (a situation which is not uncommon in the cases of obsolete European aristocracies, for example). Hence it is not surprising in caste systems to find economic power and ritual status "out of phase" as it were—the result of "cultural lag". But the clear tendency in such situations is towards a correction of the inconsistency—and a variety of mechanisms exist for this purpose.

The status inconsistency of an individual can obviously have a number of distinct patterns (high economic status, high educational status, low ritual status, for example taking only three variables, or these could be reversed or differently weighted). If we follow Lloyd Warner and speak of an individual's location on
several ranks or scales as his "status profile", we could then usefully ask which particular status profiles in a particular caste system lead to role conflict and eventually to upward mobility and which do not. It is difficult, in spite of all the work that has been done, to think of a single study of a caste system in which this crucial question has been explicitly examined and discussed. Clearly the evidence indicates, much as one would expect, that a status profile combining high economic status and low ritual status is productive of particular tension and, given certain conditions, is particularly likely to result in an adjustment of the system of precedence expressed in ritual. We need to know a good deal more about this and other status profiles in actual caste societies if we are to advance the theory of caste systems in general.

Given a particular individual finding himself in a situation in which certain of the status positions that he currently holds manifest a sufficient degree of inconsistency to cause him to be aware of acute role conflict, there would appear to be three choices open to him if the conflict is to be avoided or minimised:

1. To take action as an individual to abandon his lower status positions in favour of a higher position on that scale—that is, if this be possible, to emulate Molière's M. Jourdain and embark on a programme of individual social mobility.

2. To combine with other individuals in a similar perceived situation to achieve a collective amelioration of their position—that is, the process of group mobility, requiring it should be noted a certain degree of co-operation, leadership, organisation and control.

3. He could so behave as to avoid the social situations in which his role conflict becomes apparent. Marriott in his recent exposition of "the four logical conditions" for the elaboration of caste ranking gives as the third "separation from inconsistent interaction elsewhere" and makes it clear that by this he means the separation of a particular system (in one community for example) from another which is different from it. My view is that this separation can and does occur within a single system, and indeed within the behaviour of a single

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5 Marriott, McKim—1960.
individual, and that this avoidance is an important method of accommodating inconsistencies in status positions.

Each of these three mechanisms for dealing with the persistent problem of status inconsistency is extremely complex, and all three occur within the Newar caste system with considerable effects on the general structure of the system. It is to a discussion of the Newar system of social stratification with particular attention to this question of status inconsistency that I now turn.

THE SOCIAL SITUATION OF THE NEWARS

Before we plunge into the complexities of Newar caste behaviour, two general comments are necessary about the general social situation of the Newars in the Kathmandu Valley. Each of these points could be discussed at considerable length—I present them as briefly as possible here merely to establish the general background and context against which the details of the system must be understood, and to indicate the extent to which this particular caste system must be treated as a particular variant of Indian caste systems in general.

Firstly, population density and the settlement pattern. The Kathmandu Valley is small, roughly circular in shape with a diameter of about 15 miles (that is, it can easily be crossed on foot from rim to rim within the day) and intensely fertile with rich black alluvial soil giving extremely high yields of rice from the irrigated and intensively cultivated paddy fields. It has an area of 208 square miles and a total population of 413,869 giving a gross population density of approximately 2,000 to the square mile. This remarkable valley is the political heart of the Kingdom of Nepal, the seat of government, the main centre of communications and commerce and education, the site of renowned and ancient Hindu and Buddhist shrines and places of pilgrimage—and essentially the home and cultural centre of the Newar people.

Numerically, and in terms of their ancient and flourishing culture and civilisation, the Newars form the dominant community in this metropolitan valley. They number 225,798, which is 56 per cent of the total population, and speak a separate and exclusive language, Newari, which differs radically from Nepali or Parbatia, the national
language of Nepal (spoken bilingually by most Newars) and the mother tongue of the other main community in the valley—the Parbatia or Gurkha castes who number 164,160 (or 39 per cent of the total population). Each of these two main communities—the Newars and Parbatias—is sub-divided internally into a full range of castes from Brahmans to untouchables in each case: two separate caste systems existing side by side within a common territory and inter-acting and interlocking to an important extent in the manner of a plural society. The remaining 5 per cent of the population of the valley is made up of diverse elements drawn from the mountain regions of the Kingdom, from the low-lying Terai along the southern frontier with India, with of course small groups of foreigners from India to the South and Tibet to the North (and also since Kathmandu is the capital of Nepal, members of diplomatic and aid missions from a whole variety of countries including the Western world). Numerically the most important group amongst this “remainder” are the 23,000 Tamangs, a large peasant tribe who inhabit the mountains immediately surrounding the Kathmandu Valley but who have spilled over into the valley in one or two areas and established small villages just inside the rim.

The valley contains 33 main settlements (including the three main towns of Kathmandu with 108,000 inhabitants, Patan two miles away with 41,000 and Bhatgaon eight miles away with 35,000) all populated mainly or exclusively by Newars, and a whole host of small, scattered hamlets populated almost exclusively by Parbatia castes or Tamangs. I shall be discussing the distribution of Newar castes over these 33 settlements presently—for the moment I simply wish to emphasize the factors of scale and concentration of population which are importantly related to the operation of the Newar caste system.

Secondly, some comments on the co-existence within the compass of this single small valley of the two great cultural traditions of Hinduism and Buddhism, together with a brief account of the effects on caste behaviour of recent historical events in their relationship to these cultural traditions. From remote antiquity Hinduism and Buddhism have existed side by side in the Kathmandu Valley producing the magnificent array of superb temples and stupas and ornate shrines which adorns all three major towns and most of the other thirty Newar communities. Buddhist monasteries
formerly flourished in Kathmandu, Patan and Bhatgaon. But for centuries up to 1768 when the Gurkha invader arrived from the western mountains of Nepal, the valley was divided into three small feudal principalities ruled by Newar kings, the Mallas, who were themselves Hindu. Thus though Buddhism was tolerated without apparent discrimination and Buddhist temples were revered and protected, Hinduism enjoyed a secure domination and ascendancy through royal patronage. And throughout these centuries the strength and vitality of the Buddhist faith in the Kathmandu Valley appears to have undergone a steady decline. The Newar monks in the monasteries surrendered to the dominant philosophy and practices of Hinduism, ceased to be celibate and became fully incorporated into the Newar caste system as a distinct and hereditary priestly caste, vaguely approximating in status to that of the Newar Brahman and with similar exclusive functions in the performance of domestic rituals in the houses of their Buddhist jajmans or client families tied by a hereditary relationship to a particular family of priests. The monastic compounds or viharas (baha in Newari) survived and still survive as ritual centres and as the residences of groups of priestly households. (These erstwhile monastic compounds are referred to in detail later when I examine the internal structure of these Newar Buddhist priestly castes).

Thus there are in the present-day Newar caste system two separate castes at the highest level of ritual status with the traditional and hereditary occupation of being family priests. One of these Newar castes is Brahman and of course Hindu, serving all Hindu Newar families apart from the untouchables. The other is Buddhist and called Gubhaju, serving all Buddhist Newar families apart again from untouchables. The competitive relationship between these two castes forms one of the main themes of this essay because it is inextricably related to the whole question of status and social mobility.

Some further remarks are necessary on the social implications of this division of Newars as a whole into Hindus and Buddhists. It is very easy, if one is to judge by previous accounts of Newar society, to exaggerate the social importance of this division and indeed to suggest that a complete vertical barrier exists with Hindu castes ranged on one side and Buddhist castes on the other. This view, common in the literature, is quite wrong. On grounds of
religious belief and practice (certainly apart from the Brahmans on the one hand and the three leading Buddhist castes—Gubhajus, Bares and Uray, which I describe later, on the other) it is incredibly difficult if not impossible to identify the vast bulk of the Newar population as being either Hindu or Buddhist. The degree of religious syncretism is so complete that such a distinction on grounds of belief and ritual practice is out of the question—and it is important to note that this distinction is not generally made by the Newars themselves.

From the point of view of social behaviour, the most useful criterion to employ, as Haimendorf was the first to point out, in discerning Hindu from Buddhist is that of noting which family priest a particular family employs for its domestic rituals, a family which calls a Brahman being described as Hindu and a family which calls a Gubhaju being described as Buddhist. This is the criterion which Haimendorf uses in his brief survey of Newar society, but in employing it he makes two assumptions which later research has proved inaccurate—firstly, that all families of a particular caste will use the same kind of priest, either the Brahman or the Gubhaju, and secondly that a single family will use exclusively either the Brahman or the Gubhaju for all its domestic rituals. In fact some families of a particular caste may use a Brahman and some families of the same caste may use a Gubhaju, indicating that so far as these castes are concerned it is incorrect to describe them as being exclusively either Hindu or Buddhist. In the town of Sankhu, for example, in which I spent the greater part of my period of fieldwork, of 413 families of the Shrestha caste, some 30 families used a Gubhaju whilst the remainder used a Brahman. Similarly many Jyapu families in the same town used a Brahman whilst the vast majority of other families of this same caste used a Gubhaju family priest. Further, I noted many cases throughout the Kathmandu Valley of individual Newar families employing a Brahman for some of its domestic rituals and a Gubhaju for others within the same household (sometimes indeed both priests would be present at the same time). In certain conditions of status seek-

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* C. von Fürer-Haimendorf, 1956, p. 15-38. I am indebted to Professor Haimendorf for permitting me to see the manuscript of this preliminary account of Newar society before its publication and before my own fieldwork in Kathmandu. It was of great help to me in planning my initial inquiries.
ing—and this when elaborated later will be one of the main points of this essay—a family will deliberately change from its traditional practice of using a Gubhaju to that of using a Brahman (in theory the change could be the other way about but I observed no actual instances of this happening), and such a change is a matter for individual families to decide, never of a caste or caste segment as a whole. The fact that two families of the same caste may employ different priests, the one a Brahman and the other a Gubhaju (the former family being therefore Hindu and the latter Buddhist) does not for this reason mean that there exists any barrier whatsoever against intermarriage between them or any restrictions on general social intercourse. The same domestic rituals (initiation rites for boys and girls, marriage, funeral rites, etc.) would be performed by either priest though the form and symbolism of the rituals would of course vary slightly and both families would participate fully and equally in the common annual round of public and family ceremonies according to the Newar annual ritual cycle. These observations hold true whatever the actual caste of the families concerned.

While I hold it to be inaccurate and misleading to discuss Newar society in terms of a vertical social division into Hindu and Buddhist castes (this bifurcation occurring only at the highest level of ritual status), I do not therefore wish to imply that this religious distinction has no social importance whatsoever. In terms of family prestige and social standing it matters a great deal, as will emerge later. And this is largely because of the association of Hinduism with political power and dominance within the political system which obtained in the Kathmandu Valley and Nepal generally, up to the Revolution of 1950.

For almost two hundred years from 1768, when the invading Prithvin Narayan Shah overthrew the Malla kings and succeeded in establishing a Gurkha dynasty in Kathmandu, up to 1950, supreme political authority in the valley resided not with the numerically dominant Newars but with the alien Gurkha castes who were exclusively Hindu. Initially this new regime appears to have continued the policy of toleration of and avoidance of discrimination against the Newar Buddhist priests and families. But in 1846, as a result of a palace massacre, the Rana family and clan, a subdivision of the Parbatia Chetri or warrior caste, rose to supreme
political power. The Ranas, one of a number of ritually equal Chetri clans, appear to have sought to confirm their dominant and superior political status vis-à-vis their former Chetri peers by a policy of vigorous "Sanskritisation" and determined and fanatical Hinduism—a process which began under Jang Bahadur, the first Rana Maharaja and Prime Minister of Nepal, and increased in strictness and rigidity as successive Rana Maharajas took over supreme despotic power. The Newars found themselves in the position of a politically subject community, denied access to political power, compelled to pursue the favours of the Hindu Ranas for appointment to positions within the complex bureaucracy of the State, and with their rules of inter-caste behaviour legally regulated at the behest of the Rana (and on the advice of his Brahman high priest, the Raj Guru) and enforced by his courts with a strict insistence on the precepts of Brahmanical Hinduism. The Ranas utilized the ideology of caste to validate and reinforce their own political authority and to ensure the political stability of an absolute and autocratic despotism. Pudma Jung Bahadur Rana's biography of his father Jang Bahadur, the first Rana Maharaja and the exalted family hero of the Ranas, is liberally scattered with accounts of his generosity to Brahmans both Parbatia and Newar. The following extracts are typical:

"On the 12th of July, the Maharaja celebrated his birthday . . . . Learned Pandits were invited to take part in the ceremony, which was accompanied by the usual modes of rejoicing and acts of charity . . . . The Brahmans were feasted on a sumptuous scale and dismissed with rich presents . . . ."

"A few days later, the Maharaja made another gift of one thousand cows to Brahmans, at the junction of the Baghmati and Manohra—a confluence of waters specially recommended for gifts of this kind. Some months previously he had presented to the Brahmans a gold chariot and elephant weighing 500 tolas, or about 13 lbs., that must have cost him not less than Rs. 10,000. Such munificent, and almost heedless charity was very frequent with Jang Bahadur, who sometimes gave away to the priests sums that might well be called a monarch's ransom."7

I am not here concerned to discuss the most interesting and significant question of what Jang Bahadur and the Ranas got in return for this "monarch's ransom": my concern is with the effect of this conspicuous, and as we shall see later, often violent, support of Brahmanical prestige and ritual authority on the Newar caste system. This determined Hinduism had the effect of notably raising the prestige (and of course the tangible rewards) of the Hindu Newars in particular the Shrestha merchants and of depressing the status of Newar Buddhism particularly the Gubhaju priests. These Gubhaju family priests found themselves increasingly deserted by their jajmans for their more favoured and influential Brahman competitors. Since the loss or gain of jajmans has an important effect on the economic condition of a particular priest, and consequently on the economic condition of these two priestly castes as a whole, this competition had a sharp economic effect on this Buddhist community—a competition greatly affected by the fact that there are more than ten times as many Gubhaju families in the valley as there are Newar Brahmans, and hence losses of jajmans from Gubhajus are divided between few Brahman priests with a consequent substantial increase in the income of the latter. While the position of the Brahman, fundamentally through self-interested royal patronage, has been secured at the highest level, the Buddhist Gubhajus in terms of their general social prestige have long been standing on a slowly descending escalator—the speed of which sharply accelerated within the last three generations since the rise of the fanatically orthodox Ranas as the supreme political authority. This is the context and background against which we must read the facts on status and mobility within the Newar caste system: the specific and complex reactions of the Gubhaju priests to this situation will be discussed later in this essay.

It should be added here to complete this picture that, though it is certainly true that the two great cultural traditions of Hinduism and Buddhism co-exist in the Kathmandu Valley, it should not be thought that these traditions, so far as caste ideology is concerned, stand in sharp contrast to one another. The Buddhism of the Newars has long been dormant and decadent: only in the last decade since the arrival on the scene of parliamentary democracy in Nepal and the new wave of intellectual enthusiasm for the rejection of caste distinctions and untouchability, has Newar
Buddhism shown slight signs of a new energy and vitality—the political dominance of Hindu rulers having been overthrown with the rise of political parties and the introduction of the ballot box. Certainly one hears educated Newar Buddhists expressing vague notions of a casteless society on the Tibetan model but basically, and certainly during the Malla and more recent Rana regimes, Newar Buddhism in practice appears to have become so suffused with Hindu concepts of pollution and of caste order and precedence as to be practically indistinguishable from Brahmanical Hinduism. We are not in fact dealing with two distinct and contrasting social philosophies, the one expressing an ideology of caste inequality and discrimination, the other a rejection of this in favour of an "open", casteless society based on individual merit and group equality. So far as it has had any effect at all on caste behaviour, the most that one can say is that Buddhism makes for a loosening of the rigidity of the caste ideology and for a tolerance, so far as permitted by the dominant Hindu authority, of transgressions of the rules of commensality and of caste endogamy. This question of the extent to which Newar caste behaviour can be related to what I will vaguely call "the general cultural atmosphere" arising from the co-existence of these two major traditions is most perplexing. In my view it is easy to exaggerate this factor but incredibly difficult to produce any objective evidence one way or the other. I am well aware that the mere mention of the term "Buddhism" will induce some scholars to accept at once that herein lies the full explanation of the flexibility of the Newar caste system and of the unusual incidence of social mobility. I can only record my view that such "explanations" are not warranted by the evidence, and are misleading.

THE NEWAR CASTES

Ignoring this distinction between Hindus and Buddhists for the moment (and recalling that this in any case apart from a special exception at the highest status level, is not a distinguishing characteristic of castes as wholes), the total Newar community is internally sub-divided into 26 castes (jat) each with a distinct name, an hereditary and traditional occupation or group of occupations (though such an occupation may not be exclusive to a particular
caste), preferentially but not exclusively endogamous, and each with a definite if not necessarily precise position in an overall hierarchy of dominance and subordination expressed in the symbolic language of ritual purity. These castes vary strikingly in their numerical size and complexity of internal organisation, and importantly in their degree of localisation or dispersal over the 33 Newar settlements in the Kathmandu Valley. I give this figure of 26 castes with very considerable hesitation: herein lies one of the major difficulties of exposition in most caste systems, certainly with the Newars. Most of the larger castes are further sub-divided internally into segments usually reproducing the diacritical exclusiveness of what I have called “castes” (namely, a distinctive name, a traditional occupation, preferential endogamy, and so forth). It is sometimes incredibly difficult to make a precise decision whether to classify such a named segment as a sub-caste and a sub-division of a larger entity, or as a separate caste on its own—and the Newars themselves will readily supply a welter of contradictory statements on this point. Too great a degree of precision on this point can easily distort the actual realities of the situation, when this precision must necessarily be arbitrary and a matter of fluctuating opinion among Newars themselves.

Take the case of the farming Jyapus (the largest of all Newar castes) and their relationship with the following groups: Kuma (potters), Khusa (palanquin bearers), and Tepe (also farmers and cultivators). Many of my informants from the latter groups claim that their particular group is simply a sub-division of Jyapus, with no explicit bars to intermarriage (the children simply following the sub-division of the father) and no barriers on commensality. Others admit a status differentiation and say such inter-marriages are rare. Equally many Jyapus deny equality in social intercourse to these three groups arguing that they are distinct castes of lower status, whilst other Jyapus (particularly those families who have been involved in cases of inter-marriage with these groups) argue a contrary opinion. And this opinion appears to vary importantly from community to community, Kathmandu Jyapus generally denying equality and identity of caste membership to Kuma and Tepe but tending to accept Khusa, whilst in Bhatgaon and the large neighbouring town of Thimi (the main centre of the potters) all three groups appear to be accepted vaguely as Jyapu sub-
divisions. No centralised authority exists for promulgating a
definite decision on such a point, universal for all Newar com-
communities, and any list of Newar castes could be challenged and
questioned on this score. Similar observations could be made
about the internal structure of the vast Shrestha caste or about
the relationship between Gubhaju priests as a group on the one
hand and the Bares—gold and silver smiths—on the other (both
of which I examine later) or about the relationship between Duhim
(and its sub-divisions of Putwar and Dali) and Balami.
Recognizing then that this list I give involves an arbitrary
decision on my part in certain respects and that it may well give a
false impression of social distance and distinctions, I offer below a
table of Newar castes with an estimate in each case of its total
number of households in the Kathmandu Valley—the figure given
being compiled from an actual household census of caste member-
ship which I conducted in 31 of the 33 Newar settlements together
with estimates based on various sources of the caste composition
of the remaining two—Kathmandu and Patan—which were too
large for a household census in the time and with the resources
available to me:

**TABLE I—NEWAR CASTES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>Traditional Occupation</th>
<th>Personal Surname</th>
<th>Total No. of Households</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Deo Brahman</td>
<td>Family Priests</td>
<td>Raj Uphadhaya</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Bhatta Brahman</td>
<td>Temple Priests</td>
<td>Bhatta</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Jha Brahman</td>
<td>Temple Priests</td>
<td>Jha</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Gubhaju Bare</td>
<td>Family Priests</td>
<td>Vajracarya</td>
<td>3,700</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gold and Silver Smiths</td>
<td>Sakyabhikshu</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Shrestha (Sheshya)</td>
<td>Merchants</td>
<td>Shrestha, or Malla, Josi, Pradhan, Raj Bhandari, Maske, Raj Lawat, Amaty, Raj Vamshi and others.</td>
<td>8,100</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caste</td>
<td>Traditional Occupation</td>
<td>Personal Surname</td>
<td>Total No. of Households</td>
<td>% of Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Uray (Udhas)</td>
<td>Merchants and Craftsmen</td>
<td>Tuladhar (merchants), Lohamka :mi (masons), Awa : (tilers), Sika :mi (carpenters), Madika :mi (confectioners), Tamrakar (coppersmiths), Kamsakar (workers in alloys)</td>
<td>1,700</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Jyapu</td>
<td>Farmers</td>
<td>Maharjan, Dangul, Suwal, Duwal, Sapu (cowherd), Kabhuja, Musa, Lawat, etc.</td>
<td>15,800</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Kuma</td>
<td>Potters</td>
<td>Kumale, Prajapati</td>
<td>1,150</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Saymi</td>
<td>Oilpressers</td>
<td>Manandhar</td>
<td>1,370</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Khusa</td>
<td>Palanquin Bearers</td>
<td>Khusa, Tandukar</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Nau</td>
<td>Barbers</td>
<td>Napit</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Kau</td>
<td>Blacksmiths</td>
<td>Naka :mi</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Bha</td>
<td>Funeral Duties</td>
<td>Karamjit, Bha</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Gathu</td>
<td>Gardeners</td>
<td>Bammala, Mali</td>
<td>470</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Tepe</td>
<td>Cultivators</td>
<td>Tepe</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Pum</td>
<td>Painters</td>
<td>Citrakar</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Duhim</td>
<td>Carriers</td>
<td>Putwar, Dali</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Balami</td>
<td>Fieldworkers</td>
<td>Balami</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Pulu</td>
<td>Funeral Torch Bearers</td>
<td>Pulu</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Cipa</td>
<td>Dyers</td>
<td>Ramjitchar</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Nay</td>
<td>Butchers and Musicians</td>
<td>Kasain, Khadgi</td>
<td>1,050</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Kulu</td>
<td>Drum-makers</td>
<td>Kulu</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Pore</td>
<td>Fishermen and Sweepers</td>
<td>Pore, Deola</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Chami</td>
<td>Sweepers</td>
<td>Chami, Camkhala</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Halahulu</td>
<td>Sweepers</td>
<td>Halahulu</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total Number of Newar households</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>37,315</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total Newar population</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>225,798</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From this table it can be seen that the single caste of Jyapus (certainly if the Kuma be included with them) constitutes just under half of the total Newar population, and that the four large castes of Jyapu, Shrestha, Gubhaju and Uray, which stand in varying positions just below the highest level of social status, together form just over 89 per cent of all Newar households. Practically all the remainder are by comparison small in size, eighteen of the remaining castes having under five hundred households each. I cannot now undertake a detailed discussion of the distribution of these castes over the thirty-three Newar settlements, but it is essential to emphasize that these factors of scale and demographic distribution of castes are fundamentally related to the caste morphology of the system as a whole and to the morphologies of individual settlements. Some castes like Jyapus and the lower artisan castes like Nau, Kau, and Cipa and untouchables such as Jogi and Nay tend to be widely dispersed over all or most of the Newar communities. Others like the merchant Shrestha and the priestly castes tend to be concentrated in the major towns—the Uray for example being almost exclusively concentrated in Kathmandu itself. This dispersal or concentration obviously has an important effect on caste interaction and on judgements of relative status. Individuals not unnaturally tend to have only the vaguest ideas about the precise position in the overall hierarchy of castes which do not appear in their own communities and neighbourhoods and with whom they may have little or no actual contact—and it is this fact among others, which leads to conflicting statements about the status positions of particular groups. But though they know little further about a particular caste, Newars as a whole can readily identify it through common knowledge as belonging to one or other of the two basic status divisions of Newar society—the “pure” castes on the one hand and the “impure” on the other.

In terms of the hierarchy of dominance and subordination, this division is fundamental—the first order of segmentation in fact. On the one hand stand the la cale ju pim (literally, “the ones from whom water can be taken”): on the other, the la cale ma ju pim (“the ones from whom water cannot be taken”). In everyday speech, these terms are abbreviated to ju pim and ma ju pim. In the list given in Table 1 the ju pim are the first 20 castes in the table (93 per cent of the total Newar population), and the remainder,
castes 21 to 26, are the *ma ju pim*, the impure (7 per cent of the total).

It is usual to discuss such a caste system in terms of a single continuous hierarchy running from the Bralman at the top to the lowest caste of untouchables at the bottom. In my view, this is erroneous. Correctly we should speak of two orders of hierarchical segmentation—the first into two blocks of castes, *ju pim* and *ma ju pim*, the one collectively dominant, the other collectively subordinate. Each of these blocks is further sub-divided into a separate and internal hierarchy. The demarcation line—symbolized by the "water line" with the Newars—between the two blocks is clear, precise, immutable; internal change and jostling for status within the hierarchies on either side of this line does not affect this precision and immutability. For the castes in the subordinate block, those below the water line, this line represents the limit of possible upward mobility. What goes on above it in terms of internal change is irrelevant to them, as the change which may take place below the line is irrelevant to the castes in the dominant block so long as this change does not affect the basic pattern of collective dominance and subordination that exists between the two blocks. That is, the Newar caste system is essentially bisegmental in hierarchy even though each of these two segments has multiple divisions within it. (I believe this to be true of most Indian caste systems, certainly those in North India with which I am familiar). It is important to be accurate on this point if we are to produce an intelligible and realistic theory of caste interaction.

In Table 2 I give a rough and approximate picture of the relative social status in terms of caste stereotypes as expressed both verbally and in ritual behaviour by my Newar informants (accepting that a lack of precision in the internal hierarchies of either block, but not in the line dividing the blocks, is part of the essential nature of any caste system). The table in relation to the segmentation of the second order would of course be hotly disputed by individuals in all castes in either hierarchy with the sole exception of the Deo Brahman, accorded here the highest status position. Students of caste are well familiar with such disputes: they are an inherent characteristic of the dynamics of caste systems. The table is given merely as a rough guide so that the reader can follow the discussion which follows of social mobility within this system.
TABLE 2—APPROXIMATE RITUAL HIERARCHY IN TERMS OF CASTE STEREOTYPES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Order Segmentation</th>
<th>Second Order Segmentation Respectively</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dominant Block (ju pim)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deo Brahman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhatta Brahman</td>
<td>Gubbaju</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jha Brahman</td>
<td>Bare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shrestha</td>
<td>Uray</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jyapu</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuma</td>
<td>Khusa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saymi, Nau, Kau, Cipa, Gathu, Bha, Pum</td>
<td>Tepe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duhim</td>
<td>Balami</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subordinate Block (ma ju pim)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jogi</td>
<td>Nay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nay</td>
<td>Kulu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pore</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chami</td>
<td>Halahulu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

First a further essential observation on the social identification of individuals in terms of caste membership. In a small community where everyone is personally known to everyone else, every individual's caste membership is a matter of common knowledge. But in the crowded streets of a large urban centre such as Kathmandu, or in the other large Newar towns (with a good deal of movement of population in and out of rented houses), in the courts, schools, hospitals, government offices, university, and so forth individuals meet not as life-long neighbours and acquaintances but often as strangers, fellow Newars indeed as is at once apparent by the distinctive Newar dress and language—but of what caste? From every Newar's personal name it is possible to identify his caste at once. Once his name is known he is no longer anonymous, simply a Newar: he becomes immediately identified as a member of a particular caste to whom one behaves with a certain deference and respect or alternatively with authority and superiority. Names
then have a particular importance in triggering off appropriate caste behaviour under certain circumstances common in an urban environment. We shall see later that this fact is of relevance to an examination of the process of upward mobility. In Table 1, I have given in each case the appropriate personal surname (or in some cases examples of surnames) that is customarily and exclusively used by individuals of the castes listed.

Through considerations of space I am omitting any attempt to provide a glossary of the full range of Newar castes and sub-castes. A description of each caste in turn would prove unnecessarily tedious. The relevant facts about the castes with which I am particularly concerned in this essay will emerge as the discussion proceeds.

INDIVIDUAL SOCIAL MOBILITY AMONG NEWARS

Though in the symbolic calibrations of ritual a caste group is essentially a group of peers, it may nevertheless, as I have noted earlier, contain individuals covering a wide range of status positions in terms of wealth, prestige, political power, education, occupations and so forth. And thus social mobility inside a particular caste both of individuals and family groups in terms of these factors is of course possible and widespread in caste systems. It would be easy to cite numerous case histories from the Kathmandu Valley (as from any caste society) to illustrate this type of individual upward or downward mobility. But this is already sufficiently familiar for this to be unnecessary in this essay. The real obstacles to upward progress arise when the limits of mobility within the range of a particular caste have been achieved and further advancement necessitates crossing the boundary into a higher caste. I put it this way, but it is actually more accurate to say that the problems arise when high economic and political status coupled with an individual's present "caste" or ritual position create a situation of marked status inconsistency and acute role conflict. A well-to-do individual conscious of his superior power in relation to his caste peers will if circumstances permit seek to translate his achieved status into the familiar and traditionally-accepted idiom of the appropriate and correlated ritual position. To do this he has to quit his former peer group, normally of course in a caste system by forming with other well-to-do individuals a new peer group recruited
out of the old through fission. If he decides to "go it alone" he is faced with the normally insurmountable obstacle of endogamy: no matter what his aspirations to a higher ritual status he will find that a caste higher in the scale will not provide him or his sons with wives, even though it may with impunity accept his daughters into hypergamous unions. Equally the rules of commensality will operate to frustrate his ambitions. The ideology of caste is heavily weighted against the ambitious parvenu. So indeed the argument normally goes, caste scholars—heavily supported by the evidence from small scale rural societies in India—having satisfied themselves that such upward mobility across caste lines is impossible, marriage being treated as the crucial test, except of course for the occasional trickster who "passes" by successful cheating (such rare exceptions merely "proving the rule").

But this is by no means the whole story, and it is certainly not an accurate statement of the situation as regards the Newars. In a recent notable account of inter-caste and inter-ethnic unions among Chetris and Newars in Nepal, Haimendorf points to numerous examples of socially-advantageous alliances leading to the confirmation of a higher caste status for individuals and concludes that "In Nepal the individual can follow a solitary path of social advancement by means of favourable unions". While accepting that this statement, under certain conditions only, is true of Newars, I want to show that this process of individual advancement is a good deal more complicated than would appear if we consider the evidence of marriage alone. The context of these "favourable unions" is in fact more significant than are the unions themselves, considered on their own.

Let me put it this way. In any system of stratification, the process of individual mobility would seem to involve four distinct steps (ignoring for the moment the question of motivation and the material support and backing which makes entry into this process at least feasible and reasonable):

1. A public claim to equality with persons of higher status.
2. Modification or adjustment of behaviour to conform with that current among the higher status group aspired to.

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3. Rejection of former peers of lower status and severance or minimisation of interaction with them.
4. Acceptance by the higher status group demonstrated and confirmed by social interaction with them on terms of equality.

When all four steps have been completed, we can speak of successful social advancement in a particular case, but a lapse of time is essentially involved and we must recognize that the completion of the process may take years, even more than a single generation. It depends on the circumstances in individual cases. Further we will no doubt find examples in any stratified system, where such mobility occurs, of individuals who stand at different stages in the process, perhaps having managed the first two or three but who have not yet achieved the fourth. And it is this final stage acceptance, which is obviously critical and the most difficult for the social climber to accomplish. This is his summit. He can reach it in one of two ways—by persuading and inducing the higher status group into ignoring his lower social origins, "the base degrees by which he did ascend", in the words of Cassius, or by successfully deceiving them on this score.

Among Newars this process of individual mobility across the barriers of caste occurs predominantly and commonly at a particular point in the scale (at the point separating the large merchant caste of Shresthas from the even larger farming caste of Jyapus who come immediately below them in the scale of ritual precedence) though it is not confined to this point.

It is at this point in the scale that a sudden and sharp contrast in caste stereotype occurs. The stereotype of the Shrestha is that of the well-to-do merchant, clean, well-dressed, highly literate, well-mannered and well-educated, fastidious, cultured, essentially urban in outlook and orientation: the stereotype of the Jyapu is that of a mud-bespattered fieldworker, poor, rough in manner and speech, illiterate, essentially a peasant and a "worker". Fundamentally, the line between Shrestha and Jyapu is the line between white-collar occupations (the non-manual "middle class") on the one hand and the manual "working class" occupations on the other, between commerce and agriculture, between town and village, between U and Non-U (in the recent jargon of English social class).
But in practice, many Shresthas particularly in the smaller communities fall well below this stereotype—they are poor, barely literate, working as tenants on the rice fields of either more wealthy absentee Shrestha landlords or of landlords of other castes including wealthy Jyapus, indistinguishable in dress, and manner, in relative poverty of housing and culture from individuals from castes standing ritually below them in the hierarchy of the *ju pim* block. And there is constant evidence in behaviour, notably in their often desperate insistence on the meticulous observance of rules of pollution, that they are by no means unaware of and insensitive to this contrast between their own social and economic condition and that of the Shrestha stereotype in general. Equally many Jyapus—in contradistinction to the Jyapu stereotype—are prosperous landowners and shopkeepers employing tenants to do all their fieldwork, with their wives expensively dressed in fashionable saris, well-educated, with their sons at college, or employed as clerks or school-teachers or important officials in the elaborate State bureaucracy, or nowadays as Ministers or leading members of political parties. And it is these urbanite Jyapus, exhibiting this high degree of inconsistency in their "status profiles", who are candidates for upward mobility in caste terms, who press their claim for a ritual position commensurate with their economic power and social prestige.

The continual process of social and economic change in this metropolitan region of Kathmandu (the provision of easily available educational facilities, Trichandra College being opened by the Ranas in 1918, the rapid elaboration of the government bureaucracy under the Ranas, the increasing prosperity of Kathmandu as a trading and commercial centre) continued throughout the period of the Rana regime, accelerating rapidly in the final decades and sharply and suddenly since the Revolution of 1950 with the advent of the new era of political parties, planning commissions, foreign aid, and the like. This cumulative change affected all Newar castes in varying degrees—the Shrestha merchants of Kathmandu, Patan and Bhatgaon particularly, both in terms of commerce and in the fact that they were extensively recruited by the Rana rulers as clerks and officials within the Singha Durbar, the Government secretariat, and other Government offices. The Rana, briefly, used the warrior Chetri and Parbatia castes to man his police
and army and the highest positions of State authority, and the Newars to man his bureaucracy. But not only Shresthas benefited educated Jyapus and Saymis and Urays and others of the ju pim block succeeded, in comparatively small numbers, in getting employment in “Government service” (apart from independent advancement in commercial enterprises) and sometimes found themselves in positions of authority over Shresthas, or at least in positions of equality. And throughout this period, there is evidence of individual Jyapus and others transforming themselves into Shresthas and securing a ritual confirmation of their social status achieved through these channels of educational and economic and occupational mobility.

The steps in this process of caste transformation, taking the case of the individual Jyapu, are as follows: Firstly they drop their former Jyapu surname and take to calling themselves “Shrestha”. Prayag Raj Dangul, for example, a Jyapu will take to giving his name as Prayag Raj Shrestha on his appointment as a clerk in the Singha Durbar, and have this name entered into the departmental records and so forth. I noted many instances of this in conversation and in the recording of genealogies of Jyapus and lower castes in Kathmandu, where the informant giving the name of a particular relative would suddenly say with a chuckle (but not also without a noticeable respect and pride): “O, he calls himself So-and-So Shrestha: he’s a deputy secretary in the Finance Department (or whatever)”. Young men who had changed their names in this way said they did so to avoid being snubbed and ridiculed by their multitude of Shrestha colleagues in Government Offices. “If you give your name as Dangul or Maharjan, they mock you for being a Jyapu fieldworker. ‘Have you brought your hoe with you this morning?’ and that kind of thing. If you call yourself ‘Shrestha’, nobody knows whether this is correct or not, and in any case there are many others doing the same as you are”. This change of name occurs also with traders and schoolmasters and lawyers and politicians and so forth. Of course in many cases it is simply a form of temporary avoidance behaviour, appropriate to the specific situations in which status or role conflict is likely to occur, and without any permanent significance for the individuals concerned. The “Shrestha” in the Singha Durbar may well go home at night to his kin and his family ceremonies and so forth and revert to
being a Jyapu again. But it can be and often is the first essential stage in a complex process of upward mobility in terms of the ritual idioms of caste.

The second stage is the copying of the customary cultural behaviour diacritically distinctive of the Shresthas as a caste group. Fundamental here is the distinction between Hinduism and Buddhism to which I have earlier referred. By the criterion of which of the two available classes of family priest that they use, the Shresthas are predominantly Hindu in using Brahmans whilst the Jyapus are predominantly Buddhist in using Gubhajus. The social climbing Jyapu will simply cease to call his traditional hereditary Gubhaju and call instead the status-giving Brahman. There is no practical difficulty here—the Gubhaju cannot come if he is not called (and thus the relationship is easily severed since the essential alternative priest is available), and the Brahman, anticipating his priestly fees, will come at once when called. But the Brahman is well aware of his status-giving function, confident and secure in the power and patronage with which the Rana rulers indulged him, and he makes his new client pay heavily for the privilege of his priestly services. To get the Brahman is easy, to keep him costs money. The fees and gifts (particularly on the occasions of the sraddhas following deaths, which are notable occasions of public and conspicuous and competitive consumption between families) extorted by prosperous Deo Brahmans from these Newar status-seekers far outweigh what the poor Gubhaju would be content with. And herein lies a fundamental economic check on this form of status mobility. Turning Hindu brings the social climber tangible rewards in status and prestige (and in ease of promotion in the fanatical Hinduism of the Rana regime) but it is beyond the economic means of all except the wealthier Jyapus wishing to translate their wealth and positions of authority into the idiom of caste status.

Turning Hindu in this way is associated with a general tightening up of observances of rules of ritual avoidance—a stricter application of the concepts of pollution, greater care and punctiliousness in following the prescriptions of commensality and the restrictions associated with food, and equally with the requirements of caste endogamy. "Caste consciousness", that is, concern with the practical applications of the ritual concepts of the ideology of caste, is by no means evenly distributed over the Newar caste system as a
whole (this of course is true of all caste systems though it is a fact which is commonly and significantly ignored in most existing discussions). It becomes most extreme at those points in the scale where there is most to be gained from care in this respect. In the Newar system, it is the Shresthas who exhibit the keenest concern with caste rules, understandably because it is with them that the keenest competition for status occurs. New "Shresthas" (Jyapus or others seeking acceptance of this new ritual position) must be above suspicion in this respect. It is in their interests to assert the rules publicly and energetically, and to be overtly scornful of laxity in this connection among their former peers and amongst lower castes generally. Hence becoming "Shrestha" involves a rigorous programme of "Sanskritisation" in personal behaviour, imitating the Brahmanical model—as for example, in observing a thirteen day period of ritual impurity after death instead of the normal ten days of the Jyapu, or in refusing cooked rice from any hand except that of the Brahman himself, or in observing expensive Hindu ceremonies which lower castes ignore.

The third essential stage in this process is rejection of former peers of lower status. A Jyapu en route to becoming a Shrestha must quit Jyapu associations and seek membership of Shrestha associations. And here we come to another economic check on this process. Among Newars there is an ubiquitous form of voluntary association known as a guthi. These are common interest groups with restricted recruitment, and there are a whole range of different types of guthi (those concerned with the maintenance of particular shrines or temples for example, those for the worship of the ancestral deities of particular families, those for a special form of charity, and so forth). I propose to deal in detail with these Newar associations on another occasion: for the moment I am particularly concerned with one particular association, known as a sanam guthi. All Newar males must belong to a sanam guthi and all members of a single guthi of this type must belong to the same caste. A sanam guthi is a kind of funeral society basically. On the death of one of its members, or of any adult within his household, the members of the guthi as a whole are expected to turn out to walk in the funeral procession to the burning ground. It is a fairly common sight in Kathmandu to see such funeral processions of males winding through the street, the size of the procession depending on how
large was the guthi to which the deceased belonged. And all the men in the procession would belong to one caste. But any one caste would contain many such funeral associations with memberships ranging from fifteen or twenty in the smallest cases to several hundred in the largest. A man may quit one guthi at any time (should he change his residence, for example) and join another, if the members of the latter will accept him into fellowship. Brothers on partition from the parental household may well cease membership of one guthi for that in another where they prefer the company or expect greater benefits. Each guthi has a senior member and an organising committee. Each guthi requires an annual cash subscription from its members, and an entrance fee from new members, the amounts varying according to the general economic condition of members of a particular guthi. In addition to the obligation of turning out for the funerals of fellow members, each individual member has the privilege of attending the annual feast paid for out of the funds. And he may in some cases borrow money at favourable rates of interest, or no interest at all, from the guthi funds. Wealthy guthis may own land and considerable property, the income of which is used for these feasts and loans.

These funeral associations are found throughout all Newar castes with the proviso that a Nau must belong to a Nau guthi, a Pum to a Pum guthi, a Jyapu to a Jyapu guthi, a Shrestha to a Shrestha guthi, and so on. At first sight this rule of guthi membership would seem an insuperable obstacle to the social climber seeking acceptance as a member of a caste higher than that into which he was born. But it can be circumvented, provided he has the financial means and has completed the two stages in upward mobility which I have described earlier.

A man of Jyapu origin claiming to be a Shrestha will apply for membership of a Shrestha sanam guthi, offering a substantial entrance fee far in excess of that normally required by the rules of the guthi. As we shall see in a moment the Shrestha caste as a whole is sub-divided into a number of internal status grades. Each of these grades has its collection of sanam guthi. Such an aspirant would stand no chance of being accepted by the highest grade of Shresthas but a very good chance, if he is wealthy and conforms to the Shrestha stereotype described earlier, of being accepted by one of the funeral associations of the lower grades.
If of sufficient prestige and economic status, he can persuade the members of one of these guthis to accept him to their company. And he will not be the first to apply in this way, with cash in hand. The members of such an association of the lowest Shrestha grade will of course be careful to avoid any publicity which would reflect on their own status, nor would they easily accept anyone from a caste lower than Jyapu. And the new recruit must of course call himself a Shrestha, conform to Shrestha dress and culture, use a Brahman priest, and have rejected his lower social origins. Having thus got a foot on the Shrestha ladder, the individual status seeker could conceivably secure later on membership of higher grade Shrestha funeral associations, and, providing "good" marriages have been arranged, his sons are certainly likely to do so if they have the requisite wealth, prestige and a high occupational position.

Finally we come to the ultimate obstacle—marriage. But by this stage of the process the scene is set for the arrangement of the "favourable alliances" which will set the seal of success on this programme of individual social advancement. To achieve his goal, the new "Shrestha" must obtain Shrestha daughters for his sons, or of course a bride for himself, and give his daughters equally to Shresthas in return. The latter does not provide any great difficulty since hypergamous unions are a common feature of caste systems. But he wants, not a hypergamous union for his daughters, but unions of which the children will be accorded Shrestha, not Jyapu, status.

Early on in my fieldwork among Newars, I recall discussing with a lami, a marriage broker employed in all castes to carry out the arrangement on behalf of the parents for the marriage of a son and daughter respectively, the kinds of enquiries she made for the parents about caste status, other alliances in the families concerned, economic condition and so forth. She said "There's only one important question to be answered. What guthis does the family belong to?" This is the test of status by association. It is not what the family claims to be that counts: it is who will accept them as equals, as ritual peers. All my subsequent inquiries tended to confirm the importance of this question of the Newar lami. No matter how wealthy a Jyapu the chances of his getting a Shrestha bride for his son are nil so long as he continues to call himself a Jyapu, to belong to Jyapu funeral associations, and to behave
culturally as a Jyapu. And if such a Jyapu succeeds in marrying off his daughter to a Shrestha, the marriage will be a simple hyper-gamous alliance with the children of the union being classed as Jyapus (though it is true that these children through their paternal Shrestha associations will stand a fair chance of success themselves if they claim as adults to be Shresthas and embark on the process of mobility described above). But the Jyapu who calls himself Shrestha and has bought his way into a Shrestha association can indeed secure Shrestha marriages for his children, and have his grandchildren accorded Shrestha status. Men in this position commonly exploit the wide status difference that exists between the major towns and the smaller villages. He will hunt out a poorer Shrestha family in one of the smaller communities and use his wealth to persuade this family to give him a bride for his son: the Shrestha family will gain rather than lose prestige by such a marriage because it will be presented in their own community as a good and highly desirable match—a wealthy “Shrestha” from the town, of assured prestige and position, undisputed member of a Shrestha sanam guthi, for their daughter. This status differential between town and village is an important factor in the arrangement of such marriages. And of course, failing a Shrestha bride of assured status, the new “Shrestha” can always secure a marriage with other new “Shresthas” in a similar position to himself, and hope for better luck with later marriages within the family. What he must not do is to give his daughter to a Jyapu or accept a Jyapu daughter for his son—such marriages with his former caste peers would immediately affect his claim to be a Shrestha and cause his expulsion from the Shrestha sanam guthi to which he has been admitted.

The process of individual mobility between the Jyapu and Shrestha castes which I have outlined above is sufficiently common among Newars for it to be a constant theme of discussion, and for numerous examples to be cited in conversation. It is of course extremely difficult to obtain evidence on the incidence of this mobility, precisely because its success depends on secrecy and on a denial that such mobility has ever taken place. The process is possible because, firstly, the Shresthas have no sanctions available to prevent individual Jyapus of wealth and substance from undertaking such actions if they so desire; secondly, because the process develops a sort of “snowballing” character as more and more Jyapus
embark on it (and the more cases that occur, the more impossible is it for Shresthas to apply the rule of endogamy as a protective barrier—the new "Shresthas" simply marry and form funeral associations amongst themselves); and thirdly, because the scale and urban concentration of the society and complexity of internal structure of both the Shrestha and Jyapu castes give sufficient individual anonymity to make the accurate social identification of any individual extremely difficult. Fundamentally it is possible because enough wealthy individuals from lower castes have embarked upon it to provide a blurring of the boundary line that demarcates the Shrestha caste by the complicating of the tests of marriage and social acceptance.

It is one matter to recognise the existence of this process in Newar society and quite another to demonstrate the scale on which it occurs. This is an exceptionally difficult fieldwork problem which I found impossible to solve satisfactorily. It is a phenomenon which occurs mainly in the major towns particularly Kathmandu and Bhatgaon rather than in the smaller communities, precisely because these latter do not afford the necessary anonymity that is essential to success. But the scale of these towns represents a formidable fieldwork problem, apart from the problem of obtaining frank and accurate information on such an essentially secretive process of social deception.

However I made some attempt at this problem in the large Newar town of Bhatgaon, and I offer below a brief picture of the situation there which gives some indication of the scale of upward mobility across the line separating the Shrestha from the Jyapu. The method I used was as follows: I completed a household census of all the 24 tols or neighbourhoods into which the town is divided, recording the full name and address of the head of the household and the familiar nickname (benam) by which each Newar family commonly is described. With these details of identification, I consulted the Brahman and Gubhaju family priests living in Bhatgaon and providing priestly services for these families. Going through my lists tol by tol, I asked the priests familiar with the tol concerned to allocate the families involved to their respective castes and to the named status grades within castes. I am concerned here only with the Shrestha and Jyapu castes out of the total of seventeen Newar castes in Bhatgaon, and with the total households of these
two castes, numbering 4,762 out of a total of 6,293 households in
the town as a whole. The priests frequently disagreed amongst
themselves in their judgements of status: in such cases, I have
taken the majority opinion in the table below.

### TABLE 3—STRUCTURE OF SHRESTHA AND JYAPU CASTES
IN BHATGAON

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>Status Grade</th>
<th>No. of Households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SHRESTHA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Chathare</td>
<td>437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A/B</td>
<td>doubtful A status</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Panchthare</td>
<td>340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Charthare</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sarhetinthare</td>
<td>266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>&quot;Shrestha&quot;</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Shresthas</td>
<td>1,372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JYAPU</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Jyapu claiming &quot;Shrestha&quot; status</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Jyapu</td>
<td>2,645</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Sikami (carpenters)</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Kuma (potters)</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Jyapus</td>
<td>3,390</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I cannot pretend that, particularly with grades of the Shrestha
caste and with the top grade of Jyapus, the allocation of household
to grades is anything more than approximate. Doubtless this
allocation would be sharply and heatedly questioned by most of
the individual families concerned. But it does give a useful picture
of status differentiation seen from the relatively unbiased view-
point of the priestly castes. Whatever the position of an individual
family within this structure of precedence, certainly these status
grades do exist and are constantly and commonly used in conversa-
tion. The terms, Chathare, Panchthare, Charthare and Sarhetin-
Colin Rosser

that are used to denote the grades of Shrestha are Nepali terms not Newari: they mean literally “Six Clans”, “Five Clans”, “Four Clans”, and “Three and a Half Clans” respectively, and it is not at all clear to Newars themselves why these particular terms are used. I have heard it offered as one possible explanation that when the Gurkha invaders arrived the Newar Shresthas claimed equivalent status with the incoming warrior Chetri caste, and that “Chathare” is in fact a kind of popular Newar corruption of “Chetri”. Be this as it may, certainly the Chathare Shresthas (those who use the surnames of Malla, Raj Vamsi, Maske, Raj Bhandari, Josi and so forth) claim and enjoy the highest status among Shresthas, and use the term “Chathare” commonly and openly to describe themselves. They carefully restrict their marriages to families of their own status, and also their funeral associations. The terms for the other grades merely mean a lower than Chathare status, the smaller the numeral the lower the grade. I have heard Shrestha families referring to themselves occasionally as Panchthare (this, I hasten to say, usually means that they actually belong to the grades lower than Panchthare but are claiming this higher position) but the other terms are used only perjoratively in reference and then privately when members of the families being referred to are not within earshot.

The group that I have described in the table as “Shrestha” is formed of those whose origin is extremely doubtful. They are only barely distinguishable if at all from the topmost grade of Jyapus in the table. These are all families at different stages of the process of upward mobility in caste terms. Collectively the lower grades of Shrestha (C and D in my table) are derogatively referred to as chipi, bagha: Sheshya (“half-Shrestha”) or lawat (literally, “half-caste”)—and sometimes equally derogatively with the prefix of a village name—e.g. “Thimi Shresthas” or “Thoka Shrestha”—with reference to the fact that many villagers migrating into the towns and bettering themselves economically take to calling themselves Shresthas.

I have said that Chathare Shresthas use special surnames such as Malla and Josi and so forth. But there are many examples of individuals calling themselves Malla, or Pradhan or by one or other of these well-known Chathare surnames who would certainly not be accepted as Chathares by others in this grade. The same
process of name changing, status claiming, seeking membership of funeral associations, searching for favourable marriage alliances, occurs at this point within the Shrestha caste as at its lower limits.

What is the effect of all this doubt and uncertainty about status and about the bona fides and credentials of caste fellows on the behaviour of members of this Shrestha caste? If two Newars meet as strangers, a common question is “Chiguthar su?” (literally, “what is your lineage?” This is the polite way of asking a person’s caste: only to an untouchable is the word jat used in this question). On being told that it is Jyapu, or Gubhaju, or Pum, or any one of the Newar castes other than Shrestha, the question is followed up with the normal conversational exchanges about what town or village the person comes from, who he married, what his relatives do, and so forth—the usual conversation providing the information of social identification. But not if the reply is “Shrestha”. “If a man says he is Shrestha (or Malla, Josi, and so forth), we never ask any further questions. It might prove very embarrassing” said Newar informants to me on many occasions, and my observations supported it.

This doubt and uncertainty and embarrassment has led to an almost complete collapse of caste solidarity amongst Shresthas—certainly the prevalent suspicion and lack of co-operation inside this caste is in marked contrast with the situation inside all other Newar castes. And with Shresthas a significant modification in the rules of commensality has occurred which well illustrates the mutability of ritual behaviour to conform with social realities. In all other Newar castes, at feasts and ceremonies cooked rice is served and eaten together by the caste fellows present. But at Shrestha feasts, when only Shresthas are present, only dry, pressed rice is served and eaten. Pressed rice may be eaten from the hands of any caste, even untouchables. No Shrestha will eat cooked rice in the house of another Shrestha, “even that of his own brother” I was told on countless occasions. The recruitment of new Shresthas by upward mobility from the Jyapu and lower castes of the ju pim hierarchy has been sufficiently common—not just the rare and exceptional trickster—to cause a disintegration of Shrestha caste cohesion at all levels and a zealous, meticulous, defensive concern with personal observance of the rules of pollution lest the finger of
suspicion be pointed and the voice of gossip and rumour uncover real or imaginary skeletons in the family cupboard.

Not directly involved except as a status symbol, but happily benefiting in the background from the increased wealth and prestige that this social climbing lower in the scale has brought him, stands the Brahman. Few in number in the Kathmandu Valley, the substantial increase in jajmans as status seeking Newars turn to them from the Gubhajus has made the Brahmans prosperous and, confident in their prestige, increasingly authoritative with their clients and contemptuous of their Buddhist counterparts. The relatively impoverished Gubhajus have steadily declined in prestige and morale as the Brahmans have prospered. The tendency to use Brahmans instead of Gubhajus has been for the last three generations since the rise of the Ranas steadily increasing downwards through the scale of Newar castes. Formerly, except for the Chathare Shresthas, the priests of the Newars were the Gubhajus. In the small town of Sankhu at the turn of the century, as I saw from Gubhaju records, only 10 out of 400 Shrestha families used a Brahman priest. All the remaining Shresthas and all the other castes except untouchables used Gubhajus as family purohits. Today less than 30 of the 400 odd Shrestha families in Sankhu still use Gubhajus, and already Jyapu families are turning to Brahmans. Fifty years ago Brahmans had only 10 client families in Sankhu, now they have more than 400—all of course gains from the Gubhaju. And this in a small, outlying, community relatively remote from the fierce status competition of the major towns.

The reactions of the Gubhajus to this situation of a declining income and prestige have been exceptionally interesting and I discuss them at length, as my example of group social mobility among Newars, in the section which follows. I deal here with a series of disputes inside the Newar Buddhist castes, clearly related directly to the effects of the incidence of individual social mobility within and into the Shrestha caste on the status of the Gubhaju. I present it as a case study of an attempt by group action, to halt and reverse a process of downward social mobility. It is given in detail because it is both relevant to the main theme of this essay and revealing as regards the internal structure of an important segment of Newar society.
THE COLLAPSE OF A NEWAR TRADE UNION: A CASE STUDY IN DOWNWARD GROUP MOBILITY

In 1923 a Tibetan lama called Yangtse came to Kathmandu and settled in Kindol Baha near the great Buddhist stupa of Swayambhu on the western edge of the city. This in itself was not a particularly unusual event but it proved to have far-reaching consequences. During the two years or so that he remained there, his fame as a holy man and expounder of the Doctrine spread throughout the Kathmandu Valley and people of all castes came to Kindol Baha in increasing numbers to see him and to hear him preach. By all accounts he seems to have aroused a new enthusiasm among large numbers of those Newars who professed to be Buddhist by religion, and he began to gather around him in Kindol Baha a small group of active and celibate Newar monks, from various castes, inspired by his example and teaching.

Not unnaturally as time passed the activities of this Tibetan lama and the enthusiastic response of a growing Newar audience attracted the attention and anger of the current Rana maharaja, Chandra Shamsher. His hostility is fully understandable. Firstly, he was a staunch Hindu totally committed to the Brahmanical concepts of a caste society and therefore strongly opposed to active Buddhism of the Tibetan type with its implied rejection of the caste order. (The dormant and decadent Buddhism of the Newars appears to have caused him or earlier rulers no great concern.) And secondly, Chandra Shamsher like his predecessors from Jang Bahadur onwards was a despot with absolute power supported by tyrannical force and as such fundamentally opposed to change of any kind and to new ideas and practices from any source likely to disturb the apathy of the populace. Whatever his motives in this particular instance, Chandra Shamsher took decisive action to remove the source of irritation. Prompted no doubt by his Raj Guru—a Parbatia Brahman and the chief spiritual authority in Nepal—he ordered the Tibetan lama to leave the Valley, and sent his police to expel the eight or ten Newar monks—by caste these included four Saymis, one Shrestha, one Uray, one Bare, and one Chipa—from Nepal. He further pronounced all those Newars who had bowed their heads to the lama and who had eaten food distributed by him and his assistants following gatherings at Kindol
Baha as impure and ordered them to undergo the standard Hindu purificatory ritual known as *patia* at the direction of the Raj Guru.

This purification ritual is of interest as it indicates the general orientation of ideas under the Rana regime. Though it is of course an ancient Hindu rite, it was only made compulsory and legally enforceable from the time of Jang Bahadur onwards. According to the legal code drawn up by Jang Bahadur, any Nepalese citizen returning to his home after a journey abroad (other than to India) had to go to the Raj Guru to obtain permission and directions for performing *patia*. The actual ritual was carried out by the family *purohit*—whether a Brahman or a Gubhaju—the Raj Guru first deciding the degree of elaboration of the rite and the number of days it should last. The law laid down that a man returning from Tibet had to perform a *patia* lasting five days and pay a fee of six and a half rupees to the Raj Guru: this was the maximum—at the other end of the scale was a fee of a half rupee and the performance of *patia* lasting one day for a man returning from a journey to a trading post on the Tibeto-Nepal frontier. This law primarily affected two categories of persons—Gurkha soldiers returning from service overseas with the Indian Army, and Newar traders returning from Tibet. The majority of the latter were men of the Uray caste—a composite caste of merchants and craftsmen of generally high economic status through their predominance in the trade with Tibet, and of all Newar castes the one which is by far the strongest in devotion to Buddhist beliefs and practices according to the Tibetan model, largely of course through their close and continuing association with Tibetans in the course of trade.

There is no doubt that these prominent Newar Buddhists strongly resented the introduction of a law making it necessary for them to go to the Hindu and non-Newar Raj Guru for purification on return from Tibet. And indeed, recognising the fact that Nepal under the Ranas had a multiplicity of laws but a somewhat chaotic machinery of law enforcement, these Uray traders appear to have returned quietly to their homes and ignored this regulation about purification. Other Newars, less ready to make an issue of religious principles and perhaps fearing more the threat of the Maharaja rather than the efficiency of his police, appear to have obeyed the law and to have taken *patia* at the Raj Guru’s direction. This
certainly is what happened on this occasion when Chandra Shamsher ordered those Newars who had been to Kindol Baha to undergo the purificatory ritual. Large numbers of Newars went immediately to the Raj Guru: those of the Uray caste, and there were many of this caste among the devotees of the Tibetan Lama at Kindol Baha, quietly but firmly refused to undergo a Hindu rite which they held to be a complete contradiction of their religious principles.

The Tibetan lama appears not only to have upset the Maharaja but, perhaps more importantly in relation to subsequent events, he aroused the resentment of the Gubhajus—particularly the Gubhajus of Kathmandu itself, most of the lama’s audiences being drawn from the city—who undoubtedly saw the lama’s popularity and prestige as a teacher and man of sanctity as undermining their own position and authority as the traditional religious leaders and family priests of Newar Buddhists. But there was very much more to it than this as we shall see later. These Gubhajus clearly approved of Chandra Shamsher’s actions (and may indeed have brought the whole matter to his attention through the Raj Guru) and went about persuading their jajmans (the families for whom they held the hereditary right of performing priestly services) to obey the Rana’s order and go to the Raj Guru for purification if they had been to Kindol Baha. Prominent among their jajmans in Kathmandu were the wealthy Uray merchants (the Uray as a community are almost entirely concentrated in Kathmandu itself) and though the Gubhajus pressed them to undergo the purification, the Uray took not the slightest notice. And thus began a series of bitter disputes which were to have profound consequences with regard to inter-caste behaviour among the leading Newar Buddhist castes.

In 1926 shortly after the departure of the Tibetan lama and the banishment of the Newar monks, the Gubhajus of Kathmandu held a special meeting with some three hundred persons present (the total number of Gubhaju families in Kathmandu being just under four hundred). By an overwhelming majority of those present a resolution—written down and signed by those who agreed—was passed which began as follows: “We have been taking food from Uray but conditions have now changed. To maintain the Gubhaju’s prestige and authority over society, we should not take food from Urays. Those who violate this rule will be expelled
from the caste". (By 'food' the Gubhajus were here referring specifically to cooked rice: among Newars it is cooked rice alone which is involved in the symbolism of caste status so far as commensality is concerned—other foods, including parched rice, may be eaten freely by persons of different castes together without any implications of equality of status). Some of the Gubhaju's present opposed this resolution vehemently on the grounds that it would inevitably involve them in a severe dispute with their Uray jajmans and would create caste prejudices where none existed. The leading opponents were Subha Ratna ("a very learned man") and Indrachudramani both of Asan Baha, one of the main viharas of Kathmandu.

A week or two later the annual Bare guthi meeting occurred in Jya Baha. (The Gubhajus and Bares of Kathmandu—the complex relationship between Gubhajus and Bares is to be considered later—number in all just over eleven hundred families and are divided into four associations, each called a Bare guthi and each meeting annually in a different vihara for a feast). At this meeting a violent quarrel occurred ending in the expulsion from the guthi of Subha Ratna and eight other Gubhajus who supported him. Subha Ratna is said to have felt angry and humiliated at being thus outcasted, and a few days later he filed a case in the court against ten prominent Gubhajus—from various viharas all over Kathmandu—who had taken the leading part in framing the resolution which he opposed. In his petition Subha Ratna wrote: "From time immemorial we Gubhajus have been taking cooked rice from our Uray jajmans. In the Samek11 ceremony,

10 I was fortunate in seeing either the originals or copies of submissions made to the courts during this series of legal actions. Where I give direct quotations, as in this instance, they are in each case from translations—from Nepali—of the documents now in the possession of persons, or their heirs, involved in these cases.

11 The Samek is a religious ceremony held regularly every twelve years, and whenever a wealthy man offers, as an act of merit, to pay the expenses of the feasts involved (expenses which may well run to well over half a lakh of rupees). It is held on the open meadow just below the hill of Swayambhu and is attended by all Gubhajus, Bare and Uray and by many invited dignitaries and officials. All the Dipankara Buddhas of the viharas are paraded and worshipped, and a great feast is held. If an individual gives the Samek ceremony, he thereby acquires tremendous public prestige—as well as untold religious merit—and usually adds the word "Samek" to his name.
it is the Uray who cook the rice and distribute it among the Gubhajus and Bares present. The very resolution passed admits that we have always taken food from Uray. Among Buddhists the question of high and low caste does not arise because caste does not exist. So the Court is requested to restore to me the right to be included in my society and to punish those who expelled me.”

The Gubhajus filed a reply to this as follows: “The caste of the Urays is quite different from that of the Gubhajus. It is quite true that we are the priests of the Urays. But we have never taken food from the Urays nor was this mentioned in our original resolution. What we did say in our resolution was that no Gubhaju should perform religious worship in the house of Urays who had not taken patia. It is true that we take food from Urays in the Samek ceremony, but this major religious ceremony is like the Jagannath Bhojan (the famous rite at Puri in Orissa) of the Hindus in which caste restrictions are relaxed for the period of the ceremony. Subha Ratna was outcasted because he confessed to having taken cooked rice from Uray. The Court is requested to uphold his exclusion from our caste”. The Gubhajus (say my informants) then tore off the upper part of their first resolution, the part containing reference to the fact that Gubhajus had previously taken food from their Uray jajmans but that conditions had now changed, and then submitted the remainder to the Court as part of the evidence.

The Magistrate decided the case with the following enigmatic sentence: “The taking of food from Urays is customary to those who take, and the outcasting is therefore reasonable”. So he decided in favour of the ten Gubhaju defendants, but at the same time—and by a process of reasoning which I find quite inscrutable—he added a fine of ten rupees to be paid by these Gubhajus for saying that the Urays were inferior in caste to the Gubhajus.

In 1927 both parties appealed to the Bharadari or main appellate court. In this court a long involved argument ensued on the meaning of the sentence “The taking of food from Uray is customary to those who take”. This court upheld the decision of the lower court, and both parties took the dispute to the Niksari, the final court of appeal apart from the Maharaja himself. The chief judge in this court was Major General Prachandra Shamsher Jang Bahadur Rana and he sat with three other leading Ranas and the Subha from the lower court to hear the case. But after hearing the argu-
ments these Niksari judges dismissed the case altogether saying that so long as the Uray themselves did not complain the court saw no reason to give any judgement on the status of the Urays vis-à-vis the Gubhajus.

Following this defeat, Subha Ratna and his co-belligerent Indrachudramani filed another case against the same ten Gubhajus alleging forgery in that they had torn off the part of the original resolution admitting that Gubhajus had previously taken food from the Urays. Here again they lost the case, the Magistrate arguing that it was unreasonable to believe that two hundred and eighty-three persons (the number of persons who had signed the resolution) would conspire in a fraud against two persons. Besides the plaintiffs could not submit to the court any evidence to prove that the Gubhajus had committed the forgery they alleged. So both Subha Ratna and Indrachudramani, the plaintiffs, were sentenced on a number of charges to be imprisoned for a total of ninety years and four months.

Not unnaturally both these men appealed to the next court against this somewhat harsh sentence of imprisonment. But this court upheld the sentence and added an additional two years imprisonment each. This was in 1929. In the following year the final court of appeal supported the decisions of the two lower courts and the two prisoners were given leave to submit a petition direct to Bhim Shamsher, the new Maharaja who had taken over supreme control of Nepal following the death of Chandra Shamsher. The Maharaja reviewed the case and in 1932 publicly announced his final decision as follows: “The Uray are inferior to the Gubhajus in caste, and those Gubhajus who have taken food with them are legally outcasted and are henceforth to be considered as Uray themselves”. He confirmed the sentence of imprisonment (I understand that the two prisoners were in fact released a year or two later following an amnesty declared, as was the general practice, on the occasion of the birthday of the Maharaja then in power). This decision of the ruler is known in Nepal as the Khadganishana and is held to be final and irrevocable—so long as the Maharaja survives in office.

Up to this point the Urays themselves had taken no active part in the legal actions in the courts of the Rana political authorities. But following this decision of the Maharaja they were
roused to action. The Maharaja conveniently died soon after the Khadganishana thus making it possible for this decision to be openly challenged. A group of prominent and wealthy Uray immediately applied for and obtained permission from Juddha Shamsher, the new Maharaja, to start an action in the courts against the Gubhajus on the question of caste status. So in 1934 began another series of legal disputes. The representatives of the Uray filed a petition claiming equality of status with the Gubhajus on the following grounds:

1. The priests of the Uray are the Gubhajus. For all domestic rites the priests come to Uray houses and take cooked rice after the rite has been completed. This has been the custom for centuries.

2. The Samek ceremony in which the cooking is done by the Uray is not the same as the Hindu Jagannath Bhojan which all castes can attend. For the Samek, only Gubhajus, Bares and Uray have the right and obligation to be present.

3. If the Samek ceremony is performed by a man of another caste (as for example when it was performed some seventy years ago in the time of Maharaja Jang Bahadur by Subha Dharma Narayan Manandhar—a Saymi) only parched rice and not cooked rice is customarily offered at the feasts. This shows the Uray to be equal to the Gubhajus and Bares.

4. The Gubhajus are trying to imitate the Brahmans. They want to be Buddhist Brahmans. So it is probable that they passed a resolution in the form stated by Subha Ratna.

5. When any Uray returns from Lhasa he has to undergo a Newar ritual called *nibvemke* so as to be permitted to re-enter his community (*sangh*). It is an essential part of this ritual that the Gubhaju priest who performs in the house of his Uray *jajman* should, when the rite is completed, sit together with the man who has returned and take cooked rice with him and the other members of the family.

6. In 1918 before all these disputes started, in a case before the courts on another matter altogether, a Gubhaju named Harucha stated as part of the evidence that he had taken food from his Uray *jajman*—the court records are available to prove that he said this. And yet Harucha has never been
outcasted for this by the Gubhaju association to which he belongs. This shows that Harucha was merely stating the normal Gubhaju custom.

7. And finally we Urays are Buddhist gristhi (laymen). The idea of high and low caste is totally opposite to the fundamental principles of Buddhism.

The ten Gubhaju defendants in their reply denied all the above arguments of the Urays. They insisted that the Samek ceremony was fully comparable with the Jagannath Bhojan of the Hindus. As for Harucha Gubhaju, they said that up to this moment they had been completely ignorant of his confession that he had taken food with his Uray jajmans. “As soon as the Uray revealed this fact” they added “we immediately excommunicated him from our caste in accordance with the Khadganishana of Maharaja Bhim Shamsher”.

The court settled the case in favour of the Urays, declaring the Uray and Gubhaju to be of equal status on the grounds that the Gubhajus admitted taking cooked rice from the Urays during the Samek ceremony.

The Gubhajus appealed to the next court who reversed the decision of the lower court, stating firstly that the Uray could not produce any written evidence in support of their claim to equal status; and secondly with regard to the Samek ceremony, the court pointed out that though the Uray claimed to have provided food for the Gubhajus, the Samek is a religious festival to which not only Gubhajus are invited but also His Majesty the King, His Highness the Maharaja, and many high officials of the Durbar. The Urays could not use the Samek ceremony to claim equality of status with these. Hence they must lose the case.

The Urays, smarting under this defeat and frustrated in their failure to obtain a favourable decision on what they considered incontrovertible evidence, now resorted to a time-honoured sub-

12 It must be observed that the court has clearly missed the point here. At the Samek ceremony a special pavilion is erected for the entertainment of the King, Maharaja, and the attendant nobles. Special foods (mainly confectionery and so forth) and drinks are provided. These special guests would not of course dream of accepting cooked rice nor would it be offered. The Gubhajus, Bares and Uray on the other hand sit together for a feast which includes cooked rice prepared by the Uray
terfuge. They bribed a whole series of government officials to introduce a forged and officially stamped document into some old records in the Government Records Office (the Goswara Tahabahil) stating that the Gubhajus and Uray were equal in caste and could take cooked rice from each other. Then representatives of the Urays went openly to the Records Office, as is the practice, obtained on payment of one rupee a certified true copy of this document. Having thus prepared the way, they took the case to the final court of appeal in 1935. When the forged document was produced in evidence, the Gubhaju defendants immediately protested that it was a forgery. They were arrested and imprisoned for alleging that a Government document was a forgery. From prison they submitted a personal appeal to Juddha Shamsher begging him to intervene and order an investigation. The inquiries which Juddha Shamsher ordered led to the release from prison of the Gubhajus, the arrest of the eight Uray presenting the case, and the dismissal of a number of government officials. With somewhat unusual leniency considering the general administration of law under the Ranas, Juddha Shamsher released the prisoners after a month or so, and pronounced as his personal and final decision that the Uray were inferior in caste status to the Gubhaju.

This decision at the end of 1935 ended this particular legal action—but not of course the dispute at large. A whole series of further cases came to the courts, individual actions concerned mainly with internal disputes within the Gubhaju guthis and sanghs. They all appear to have been decided with reference to this pronouncement of Khadganishana of Maharaja Juddha Shamsher on the inferiority of the Uray. In 1937 for example the wife of one of the renegade Gubhajus siding with the Uray brought an action against the head of a Gubhaju association alleging that she had been insulted by being refused admission to a feast. In 1943 the sons of an expelled Gubhaju fought a case against their family priest because he would not perform their initiation rites. And there were many similar cases of this type and particularity over the priest/jajman relationship. The details of these cases are often of very considerable interest in the understanding of the internal structure of the main Newar Buddhist castes and of attitudes towards caste discrimination in general. The important point for the moment is that for a period of just under thirty years from
1926 onwards such cases were continually occurring in the Nepalese courts, all clearly related to the main problem of relative caste status which I have so far been describing. I wish now to turn from the courts to a consideration of effects of these disputes on the traditional patterns of relationships between the social groups involved.

From the beginning in 1926 Uray families had begun to boycott the main faction of Gubhajus: though jajmans of specific Gubhaju priests, they refused to call these priests for the performance of domestic rites (primarily initiation rites of boys and girls, marriages and the sraddhas—pyam thaygu in Newari—following deaths) if they knew that these priests would refuse to accept the customary—in Uray opinion—meal of cooked rice after the ceremonies were completed. It is important to understand that this boycott was never deliberately organised by the Urays: it was largely a matter of the gradual hardening of public opinion within the Uray community against what they considered to be the unwarranted pretensions of the majority of Gubhajus in the matter of caste status. At first it was the wealthiest families of Uray—particularly those with Tibetan trading connections—who, conscious of their own high social standing, bitterly resented being treated as inferior by their Gubhaju priests whose own economic status was, and still is, very low and in sharp contrast to that of many well-to-do Uray families whom they serve. As time went on, and particularly from about 1934 onwards when the antagonisms were sharply exacerbated by the head-on clash between the leading Gubhajus and a group of prominent Uray in the courts, more and more Uray families joined in the boycott until practically the whole Uray community was united in refusing to use their hereditary Gubhaju priests where these followed the majority Gubhaju opinion about not taking food from their Uray jajmans. Discussing this dispute with me a man of one of the wealthy Uray families among the first to join in this boycott told me (and this perhaps indicates the intensity of feelings involved) with much vehemence "When the kaita puja (the initiation rite for boys) for my son and nephew was to be performed, I called as usual the Guruju from the Gubhaju family of whom we have been the jajmans for as long as anyone remembers—probably centuries. After the ceremony was completed, I invited him to come and sit down to the feast with the family as has always
happened in the past. He refused. I was so angry that I kicked him down the stairs, and swore never to call him or any of his family again. Most Gubhajus are ignorant of anything to do with religion anyway. They know only how to read the right mantras and that's all. We have a Newari proverb which applies to them exactly—'the man who belches after eating a dal made of dried radish and turnip leaves but who pretends he is belching from a stomach full of ghi'.”

Instead of calling their hereditary family priest these Uray families took to using the small group of Gubhajus who sided with the Uray on this question of equality of status and who had thus been expelled from the traditional Gubhaju associations. This small group of dissident Gubhajus came to be known generally as “Uray Gubhajus” and as more and more Uray families took to calling them for priestly services the economic conditions of these Uray Gubhajus improved considerably. Though comparatively small in size (there are about twelve hundred Uray families in Kathmandu itself—by far the main centre of this community) the Uray caste is, as I have already observed, generally of high economic status—some Uray families being conspicuously rich, and certainly ranking among the wealthiest of all families in the Kathmandu Valley (while I was in Kathmandu in 1957, Gyan Sahu, a wealthy Uray of Nhaykan Tol gave a feast to which some seven thousand guests were invited and which he told me cost him over twenty thousand rupees). And since family priests thrive on wealthy jajmans, this increasingly effective boycott by the Urays was felt severely by the main faction of Gubhajus. Indeed from time to time through this economic pressure, the group of Uray Gubhajus was reinforced by defections from the main faction. To appreciate the full importance and consequences of this change from strict obligation to something approaching freedom of choice on the part at least of Uray jajmans in the calling of a priest for the performance of essential domestic rites it is necessary to consider in some detail the nature and organisation of the priest/jajman relationship as it prevailed before these internal struggles for status began.

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13 In Newari, Bhyata: kem naya ghya; dhaha: tay mamha. "Bhyata - Kem", actually an extremely poor quality dal has great derogatory force—amounting to something like the English 'pig-swill'—in this saying, as in certain other contexts of abuse.
At the time the dispute began, all male Gubhajus in Kathmandu who had completed the initiation rite known in Newari as *acha-luigu* and in Sanskrit as *acharyabhises*—usually done at the age of eight or soon after—belonged automatically and as of right by virtue of their having completed this initiation rite to a single grand Gubhaju association known as the *acharya guthi*. This association met, and still meets, once annually on the day known in the Newar calendar as *du du cyam cyam* (this is the eighth day of the dark half of the Newar lunar month of Cilla—corresponding approximately to the month of Caitra in the solar calendar) in the buildings and courtyards behind the main stupa on the hill of Swayambhū. All Kathmandu Gubhajus are expected to attend (I use the present tense because the form of this organisation has not changed) and, including female relatives, the number present at the feasts and worship usually number several thousands. The proceedings last two days: the first at Swayambhū and the second in any *vihara* or private Gubhaju residence in the city to which the whole association is invited for a feast.

This main Gubhaju association is controlled by a council of eighteen leaders, each the *thakali* or oldest member of the eighteen subordinate associations (*sangh*) of which the *acharya guthi* is composed. These eighteen *sangha* are closely related to the performance of the ritual of initiation which makes a son of Gubhaju parents into a *vajracharya* and empowers him to perform religious rites on behalf of *jajmans*. Though there are altogether seventy-one former monastic compounds or *viharas* (or *baha* in Newari) in Kathmandu—some inhabited solely by Gubhaju families, some solely by Bare or gold and silversmith families, and some with mixed Gubhaju and Bare inhabitants—the initiation rites for Gubhaju can only be carried out in eighteen of these which are considered the main (and probably the oldest) *viharas* for this reason. Though any individual family can construct a *vihara* and perform the great ceremony known as *bahapuja* to have this new compound recognised by the Buddhist community as a whole as an authentic *vihara*, no initiation rites may be performed there. That is, though the total number of *viharas* in Kathmandu can, and of course on very rare occasions does, go on increasing the number of main *viharas* remains constant at eighteen. Thus wherever he may actually live, either in a *vihara*, a private residence somewhere
in the city, or even elsewhere in the Valley or out in East or West Nepal (and here I am referring only to those Gubhajus of Kathmandu origin), a Gubhaju father must always bring his son for initiation to that particular vihara within this group of eighteen in which he was initiated when a boy. This rite can be performed nowhere else. The performance of the rite qualifies the boy for admission automatically to the sangh of that vihara: there is no other method of recruitment to one of these eighteen sangha to which every Kathmandu Gubhaju must inevitably belong. The rite which makes him a Gubhaju at the same time makes him a member of a sangh and, through the sangh, a member of the acharya guthi.14

Until this series of disputes occurred, the acharya guthi ruled by the council of eighteen thakalis was the main organ of social control among Kathmandu Gubhajus. Its real strength lay in two facts: firstly all Gubhaju males above initiation belonged to this association and accepted the exercise of supreme authority by the council, with regard to the regulation of their behaviour as Gubhajus, as being in their best interests—that is, the power of the council

14 The acharya guthi of Kathmandu in 1957, at the time when I collected these figures, had a total membership of 1,164, the full male Gubhaju population above initiation. Its composition was as follows (the common Newari name of the vihara being given in brackets):

| 1. | Mulsri Maha Bihar Sangh (Mu baha) | 66 members |
| 2. | Maitripur Maha Bihar Sangh (Kwa baha) | 110 |
| 3. | Ratnapur Kantu Maha Bihar Sangh (Nhu baha) | 76 |
| 4. | Hemakarna Maha Bihar Sangh (Gan baha) | 11 |
| 5. | Henakar Maha Bihar Sangh (Dhoka baha) | 50 |
| 6. | Ratna Kirti Maha Bihar Sangh (Makhan baha) | 130 |
| 7. | Surat Sri Maha Bihar Sangh (Tachya baha) | 63 |
| 8. | Kanak Chaitya Maha Bihar Sangh (Jana baha) | 47 |
| 9. | Mantra Sidhi Maha Bihar Sangh (Sabula baha) | 78 |
| 10. | Raj Kirti Maha Bihar Sangh (Tej baha) | 18 |
| 11. | Brahma Chakra Maha Bihar Sangh (Om baha) | 60 |
| 12. | Bajra Sri Maha Bihar Sangh (Eku baha) | 10 |
| 13. | Kirtipunjabajra Dhatu Maha Bihar Sangh (Lagan baha) | 200 |
| 14. | Mani Sangh Maha Bihar Sangh (Mikha baha) | 25 |
| 15. | Srikhand Mula Maha Bihar Sangh (Shikam muga: baha) | 200 |
| 16. | Mani Sangh Maha Bihar Sangh (Musham baha) | 25 |
| 17. | Bhaskarmalla Parbatayebarta Maha Bihar Sangh (Itum baha) | 25 |
| 18. | Mani Sri Maha Bihar Sangh (Manshu baha) | 80 |
rested on the solidarity of the Gubhajus as a corporate group; and secondly, through its ability to control the performance of the initiation rite in the eighteen viharas, it could decide the essential question of recruitment to this community of priests. While it could not exercise any direct sanctions on the jajmans, the clients of the Gubhaju priests drawn from many different castes, compelling them to use particular priests it could through its command over the priests directly control the priest/jajman relationship.

Gubhaju priests are linked to particular families of jajmans through the inheritance by the Gubhajus of the rights to perform the domestic rituals for these particular client families (these rights are legally transferable to other Gubhajus in a manner to be explained presently). The acharya guthi was vitally concerned with the protection and enforcement of these rights. If a particular jajman family quarrelled with the particular Gubhaju priest possessing the hereditary right to perform their domestic rituals, they might wish to ask another Gubhaju to come. But if this Gubhaju thus infringed the rights of one of his colleagues, he would be expelled by the acharya guthi and by the subordinate sangh to which he belonged. (He would almost certainly be involved also in a case in courts brought by the Gubhaju family whose rights he had usurped). In addition, and this was the essential sanction, the acharya guthi through the particular sangh would prevent the sons of this Gubhaju performing their initiation rite and therefore being empowered to act as priests in the next generation. The sons would not then be Gubhajus at all, but would be counted as Bares (this is explained below). Expulsion from the acharya guthi therefore meant not only social humiliation for the man expelled and a sharp decline in the social standing of his family (the rights to act as priests, though of course exercised by individuals, resided collectively with the males of an undivided joint family) in relation to other Gubhaju families, but also in the extinction of a particular descent line of priests.

Under this traditional system of control, the acharya guthi did not itself actually decide cases of disputes among its members over these rights with regard to jajmans. When such disputes arose, the parties concerned were required to go for arbitration to a particular Gubhaju family in Raj Kirti Maha Bihar in Maru Tol in Kathmandu. The oldest male (that is, the thakali) of this family, held, and still
holds, the inherited office of Raj Gubhaju which, though not recognised under the Rana political authority, is without doubt a survival from the Malla regimes before 1768 when the Raj Gubhaju carried the authority of the Malla ruler to examine and pass judgement (which would then have the official support of the ruler) on cases concerned with rival claims between individual Gubhaju families to particular jajmans. Through the powers of the acharya guthi such cases were rarely if ever of the type described in the last paragraph—cases of one priest deliberately and without any justification infringing the rights of another, in other words cases of deliberate revolt against the whole system of control. The much more typical cases, and these appear to have been reasonably common, brought before the Raj Gubhaju were those arising out of complications of the rules of inheritance where both parties felt they had a true claim to the particular jajmani duties, and of course rewards, in question. If under the Mallas there was political support for the Raj Gubhaju's decisions, certainly since the Gurkha invasion the essential support for this method of arbitration has lain in the powers of the acharya guthi. Annually the Raj Gubhaju reported his decisions to the acharya guthi—where these decisions were not accepted amicably by both sides and the council endorsed them, with the implication of the exercise of sanctions if they were not obeyed.15

The acharya guthi functioned then as a powerful caste panchayat controlling on the one hand the specialised occupation and on the

15 The system works somewhat differently in Patan. The Gubhajus of Patan do not have one single guthi as in Kathmandu, though this is said to have been the case in the past. There are now, and have been for as long as anyone can remember, seven separate acharya guthi in Patan each with its own council of thakalis—varying in number between six and fifteen—concerned with the regulation of jajmani and with control of the performance of the initiation rite. A man is not permitted to leave one acharya guthi and join another. Disputes over jajmans between members of different guthis should be taken to the Raj Gubhaju (more commonly in Newari, Lay Guruju) family, which has no connection whatsoever with the Raj Gubhaju family in Kathmandu, for settlement. But, I was told, such cases in Patan almost invariably go to the courts for settlement—and the Raj Gubhaju is an office which exists in name only. The system in Bhatgaon, the other main Newar centre, is similar to Kathmandu in having one acharya guthi but here the office of Raj Gubhaju though known to have existed once is said to be no longer in existence.
other the recruitment of its members. And paradoxically it was the very effectiveness of its powers which in the outcome appeared at least partially responsible for its undoing. Indeed an examination of the strengths and weaknesses of this Gubhaju acharya guthi provides one with an instructive case study in the politics of trade union organisations. Because this of course is precisely what it was—a trade union of priests which had succeeded in establishing and maintaining a 'closed shop'. The rank and file accepted the system because it protected their rights, and therefore their economic interests. If their employers, here their jajmans could hire and fire with absolute freedom, no individual Gubhaju would know where he stood from one week to the next. And so individually they supported and obeyed the union which by safeguarding their rights gave them economic security. And any individual who challenged the system knew that he would be expelled by the union, would be dependent entirely on the goodwill and whims of his jajmans who might well be influenced against him by the hostility of the Gubhaju community at large, and would certainly sacrifice the livelihood of his sons in the next generation.

Because such challenges had never occurred, the leaders of the Gubhaju union clearly came to think that they had more power over the rank and file than they actually possessed. The closed shop had existed for so long that they seem to have believed that the obvious unity obtained firstly because the council had at its disposal effective sanctions to deal with recalcitrance, and secondly because of a strong affective content in the loyalties of individual Gubhajus to their sangh and to the acharya guthi. While these two factors were undoubtedly involved, there was a third major reason for the effectiveness of the acharya guthi as a trade union organisation. This was the fact that the solidarity of the rank and file

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16 It must be observed here that the 'leaders' who took the initiative in framing the resolution about not taking food from Uray which began this struggle, and 'the ten prominent Gubhajas' who were sued in court, were not actually thakalis or members of the council of the acharya guthi. This is actually less of a problem than it might appear at first sight. The thakalis from the eighteen sangh hold their offices by virtue of being the eldest males; actual power is exercised through them by de facto leaders, usually vigorous, reasonably well-off men of late middle age. They lead and influence opinion and initiate action with the approval and endorsement of the council of aged, and in some cases senile, thakalis.
behind the leadership rested on a fundamental community of economic interest. In their actions at the beginning of 1926, the Gubhaju leaders appear to have ignored this fact. These leaders seem to have felt (I see no other way of understanding the framing of the original resolution) that the combination of powers of control on the one hand and the solidarity of Kathmandu Gubhajus as a whole on the other was sufficient to enable them to command unanimous support in a course of action designed to raise the status of the caste as a single group. And if this unanimity had in fact been achieved they might well have succeeded. But because they ignored the essential fact that their actions directly conflicted with the economic interests of part of their membership (notably those who could not afford to upset their wealthy Uray jajmans) and undermined the solidarity on which unity rested, they made a major mistake of judgement. A dissident faction was formed, small in size at first but one which grew to greater significance as the economic pressure from the Urays made itself felt. And no matter how the leaders called into play the ultimate sanctions of excommunication—and these in practice proved less powerful than had been imagined—they could not subdue the Uray Gubhajus who, though they framed their dissent in terms of lofty Buddhist principles, had their backs to the wall of harsh economic reality.

Even so the closed shop principle could not have been challenged successfully were it not that these Uray Gubhajus received the support of their Uray jajmans. Part of the reasons for this support is of course obvious. The wealthy Uray families refused to admit themselves inferior in social standing to poor Gubhaju priests. But in part the support—and this is one of the reasons the Bares were drawn into the struggle on the side of the Urays and the Uray Gubhajus—was due to the sharp dislike on the part of the jajmans for the manner in which the Gubhaju had come to treat the priest/jajman relationship. And this again arose out of the apparent strength of the acharya guthi.

While the acharya guthi was functioning properly, the jajman families using Gubhaju priests to perform their essential domestic rituals had no say whatsoever in the choice of priests. This was entirely a matter of inheritance—the descendants of a jajman family were required to call the descendants of the Gubhaju family which had performed the rites for their forefathers in the earlier
generations. No matter how much they might dislike their particular priest or how low their opinion of his abilities in the discharge of his priestly functions, no other Gubhaju could come on pain of excommunication by the *acharya guthi*. For the *jajmans* the relationship had become compulsory. This fact seems to have set in motion a train of tensions and stresses in this important social relationship, due largely but not entirely to some high-handed behaviour on the side of the priests who, secure in their closed shop, appear to have treated their *jajmans* with scant concern for their feelings. It became a common practice for example for the priests to buy and sell these *jajmani* rights. Gubhajus would buy clients from other Gubhajus in possession of the rights to priestly services for these clients, a poor family of clients fetching, or so I am told, somewhere between five and twenty-five rupees, and a wealthy *jajman* family between two hundred and three hundred rupees. This buying and selling was recognised by the *acharya guthi*, but from the many comments I heard from client families about this practice, the *jajmans* themselves resented it deeply and considered it a gross abuse of this relationship. But while the Gubhajus were so tightly organised, they could do nothing about it. Further the priests used their complete control of this relationship, to extort higher fees and better gifts from these client families, particularly the wealthier families. This was more a subtle extortion than outright blackmail (as one Uray family described it to me). It rested on the knowledge on the part of the *jajman* that should he quarrel with his priest, this priest could sell him off (it is of course the rights that were sold, but this is how my informants would put it) to a Gubhaju ten miles away in Sankhu or to a Gubhaju away in Bhatgaon. The priest could do this, and in some publicised instances did do this, deliberately to cause the client family the trouble and inconvenience of having to send a long way each time it wished to call a priest. *Jajmani* rights could also be left as bequests in Gubhaju wills without the client family concerned having any say in the matter.

This abuse of this relationship clearly arose out of the very strength of the Gubhaju trade union giving the priests unilateral control of what was essentially a bilateral social relation. It did not endear the Gubhajus to their *jajmans*, and when the rift appeared was an added reason for the Urays to support the dissident
section of Gubhajus with enthusiasm. For the first time they were being offered a freedom of choice and an escape from what they considered a subtle system of extortion. And it was its inability to exert effective sanctions on the families of jajmans which proved the real weakness of the acharya guthi.

For an important reason, this high-handedness on the part of the priests affected the Uray and Bares to a much greater extent than families from the other castes in the Valley who used Gubhaju priests. For these latter families, the Gubhajus had to remember a vital fact in the ordering of their relationship with their jajmans—and that was that although the Gubhajus might have tied up the priest side of this relationship completely, they were not the only priests in the Valley capable of performing domestic rites. There were always the Brahmans. If a particular family of these other castes became thoroughly exasperated at the behaviour of its Gubhaju, it could always give up using Gubhajus altogether and turn over to using Brahmans. And the wealthier the jajman the more likely he would be to do this, as I have described earlier in this essay. In dealing with jajmans from castes other than Uray or Bare, the Gubhaju had to reckon with his Brahman competitor, and this itself was a very effective restraint on high-handedness. But no such restraint was present in the case of the Uray and Bare. Of all the castes in the Valley, apart from the Gubhajus themselves, these two are the most exclusively ‘orthodox’ Buddhists, and for a family from one of these castes to use a Brahman would be unthinkable. I certainly found not a single case of such a family using a Brahman priest for the performance of any domestic rituals. And this seems one of the main reasons the Gubhajus initially felt themselves in a strong enough position to challenge the Uray directly in the resolution about the taking of food, and a reason further why the dispute was limited to this particular group of main Buddhist castes in Kathmandu, other castes not being directly involved.

But as the dispute progressed between the Gubhaju main faction and the Urays, the third section of this particular group of castes—the Bares—were most certainly involved and came to have an important effect on the course of events. The Bares by traditional occupation are gold and silversmiths. At first aloof, they were gradually drawn in on the side of the Urays for three reasons:
(1) as wealthy merchants—many Uray families are among the most important customers of these workers in precious metals—and these Uray families appear to have successfully exerted economic pressure on the Bares to throw in their lot with the Uray against the Gubhajus; (2) the Bares as well as the Urays deeply resented what they considered Gubhaju malpractices with regard to the priest/jajman described above, and were on this score already aligned against the Gubhajus; and (3) the Bares, particularly in Kathmandu, were already involved in a private dispute with the Gubhajus over the question of relative status.

The relationship between the Gubhajus and the Bares is most complex, and I have no doubt that it would be technically correct to describe the Gubhajus and Bares as two sections of the same caste rather than as two separate castes. Certainly this is a true appreciation of the relationship for all other communities in the Valley other than Kathmandu itself. In Sankhu, Patan or Bhatgaon for example, Gubhajus and Bares intermarry freely, the sons following the occupation of the father—if a Gubhaju father, then the sons would take the acha luigu initiation rite and become priests: if a Bare father, the sons would follow the traditional occupation and become workers in gold and silver. In these cases, there is absolutely no distinction, other than this occupational specialisation, between the two sections and they both refer to one another as belonging to one caste (chagujat). Alone of all the Newar castes, Gubhajus and Bares together are the inhabitants of the viharas or erstwhile monastic compounds which exist in considerable numbers in every Newar community wherever these two sections occur, and which form an essential element in the religious life of Newar Buddhists. Some of these viharas are inhabited by Gubhajus alone, some by Bares alone, and many by both sections together. The Sanskrit term bandya—or more commonly its Newari derivative, Bare (or Bamra in the Bhatgaon dialect)—is applied in common speech to describe the two sections collectively. Both Gubhaju and Bare boys, at about the age of eight or nine, undergo the same basic initiation rite known as cuda karma in Sanskrit and as bare cuigu in Newari. On the fourth day of this rite (though it may be, and in Kathmandu more often is, done separately some time later), Gubhaju boys alone go on to take the special rite qualifying them to be vajracharya that is, the rite known as
acharya abhises or acha luigu to which I have frequently referred. Bare boys, not being permitted to undergo this latter induction into the role of vajracharya, cannot therefore become Gubhajus and serve as priests: Gubhajus—above initiation that is; this term only has meaning with this essential reference—cannot by common consent follow the reserved occupation of the Bares and become gold and silversmiths. But both these statements need qualifications. To deal with the latter statement first, and this is only a minor qualification, in Bhatgaon many Gubhajus in fact do the work of gold and silversmiths though, taking the Valley as whole, this appears an exception rather than a common practice.

The qualifications to the first statement are much more complex and lie at the root of the long continuing dispute over status between the Gubhajus and Bares of Kathmandu. The key to the problem lies in the fact that though Bare and Gubhaju boys take the same basic initiation ceremony (bare cuigu) only the son of a Gubhaju father may take the final part of this ceremony, the acha luigu. If this is not actually done on the fourth day, it must be done before marriage. If it is not done before marriage, the son of a Gubhaju father remains a Bare and cannot be counted as a Gubhaju at all. Clearly in order to restrict the intake of priests, and it is factors of demography which underlie most of the present Gubhaju troubles, the acha luigu rite was formerly much more elaborate and costly to perform than it is today. Many poor Gubhajus, or so I was told, could not afford to perform it for their sons, who consequently remained Bares. But once a Bare, it was next to impossible to become a Gubhaju in the next generation. Certainly quite impossible after marriage. Thus, say my Bare informants, all Bares

17 As an illustration of the notions surrounding these initiation rites, I should add here that I was frequently told that a Bare or Gubhaju boy failing to perform the basic bare cuigu would for this reason become an Uray. I actually found not a single instance of this happening. I do not propose here to describe the form of these initiation rites. I intend on some later occasion presenting a detailed study of Newar initiation rites, both for males and females, including a comparison of those performed by a Gubhaju priest with those performed by a Brahman.

18 However there is one recorded instance of this actually happening. In Brian Hodgson’s time (that is, about 1840) the Newar pandit he worked with, Amritananda Sakyabhiksu (a Bare, and certainly married) was elevated to the rank of Bajracarya (Gubhaju) on account of his scholarship by order of the King of Nepal.
were once Gubhajus. And whether this statement be in fact true or false, it is in my experience certainly not denied by Gubhajus themselves: indeed agreement on this point is one of the main reasons for the complete absence of any restrictions on social intercourse between the two sections in every other Newar community except Kathmandu itself.

In Kathmandu, the basic initiation rite for Bare as well as Gubhaju boys must be carried out in one of the main eighteen viharas to which I have earlier referred, the priests performing the rite being of course in either case Gubhajus.¹⁹

Formerly in Kathmandu intermarriage between Hares and Gubhajus was as free and unrestricted as it is today in other parts of the Kathmandu Valley. But from about forty or fifty years ago (and there is incontestable evidence from genealogies to confirm this) Gubhaju families began to avoid the arrangement of marriage with Bare families, and today in Kathmandu, though they still occur, such marriages are rare. The gradual widening of this breach between the two sections in Kathmandu was of course directly related to the growing Gubhaju concern with questions of status and their determination to assert their superiority—a process which had clearly been going on for some time in the relations between Gubhajus and Bares and which, in 1926, suddenly bubbled to the surface and erupted in a course of events which got out of anyone's control. The Bares were clearly offended by this withdrawal of marriage relations on the part of the Gubhajus with its direct

¹⁹ There is an exception to this statement that must be noted. In addition to the 71 balza in Kathmandu with in many cases mixed Gubhaju and Bare occupants, there are 16 bahi (linguistically a diminutive form) inhabited by Bare alone. The Bare boys who are permitted to perform their bare cuigu in one of the 16 bahi are referred to as “Bhikubare”. Apparently a very long time ago some dispute occurred among Bares leading to a small faction breaking away and founding these bahi in which they were permitted to hold their initiation rites separately.

A further distinct class among Bares are known as “Budhacarje” and consists of only 18 families. These families live up at Swayambhu, and take it in turns to act as wardens of the shrines there and worshippers. They perform their initiation rites in the baha at Swayambhu. They are not priests in any way.

These two classes of Bares intermarry quite freely with one another and with all other Bares and Gubhajus. No other distinctions exist apart from those outlined above.
implication that the Bares were of lower status, and those Bares with a fairly recent tradition of being descended from Gubhaju fathers whose poverty had prevented them from performing the \textit{vajracharya} initiation rite for their sons, fought back by demanding that their sons be allowed to undergo the \textit{acha luigu} rite and so become Gubhajus. This demand was of course not accepted by the \textit{acharya guthi} who announced that any Gubhaju priest who performed this rite for Bare boys would be immediately outcasted. And prior to 1926 while the \textit{acharya guthi} was accepted by all Gubhajus as the supreme authority, none did. (But as we shall see this problem was by no means finally disposed of). A number of court cases were fought by Gubhajus and Bares over this question, all of which the Gubhajus won, the courts upholding the right of the \textit{acharya guthi} to restrict the performance of the initiation to the sons of Gubhaju fathers in accordance with ancient custom.

Armed with this knowledge of the background, we can now turn back to the closing stages of the main series of disputes with which I am primarily concerned. Though they were themselves clearly exasperated by the behaviour of the Gubhajus, the Bares at first either kept out of the business altogether or tended to support the main Gubhaju faction whom they probably thought to be the strongest of the groups involved and therefore most likely to win. The Bares may well have thought that by siding with, or at least not opposing openly, the main body of Gubhajus in this dispute they might thus succeed in inducing the Gubhajus to settle in their favour their own dispute with the Gubhajus over relative status which had been continuing for some time. The Bares, that is, were not anxious to commit themselves irrevocably to one side or another until they could have some idea how things were going to turn out. And the Gubhaju successes in the major court cases no doubt curbed any enthusiasm Bares may have felt for joining in the struggle against the Gubhajus for whom, after their own experiences over the abuses of the priest/\textit{jajman} relationship and over the question of their personal social standing, the Bares can have had little sympathy. And clearly, as events showed, the Bares as a whole were by no means unanimous in deciding what in the circumstances would be the course of action most likely to coincide with their own best interests. Most Bare families, feeling on the one hand the economic pressure being exerted by wealthy
Uray families and seeing on the other the growing defections of Gubhajus from the main faction to the group of Uray Gubhajus and the associated collapse of the powers of the acharya guthi as an effective organ of control, came to support the Uray and the group of dissident Gubhajus.

But apart from verbal support, these Bare families did very little until in 1950 an event of major significance occurred. 1950 is a most important date in recent Nepalese political history: it is the year which saw the collapse of Rana rule and the end of a century of despotism under the Rana dynasties. More immediately relevant to the subject here being discussed, 1950 was also the year in which a private individual, an extremely wealthy Uray named Samek Ratna of Nhaykan Tol in Kathmandu, decided to pay the expenses—amounting in this case I am told to some eighty thousand rupees—for the performance of a Samek ceremony. All the Urays in Kathmandu immediately impressed upon him the necessity of using only Uray Gubhajus for the religious worship which is an essential part of this ceremony. He agreed, though it involved a departure from ancient custom since this worship should be done by priests holding official positions in the acharya guthi. The main faction of Gubhajus were infuriated by this decision. They called a special meeting of all Gubhajus (apart from those expelled to date by the acharya guthi) and a resolution was passed forbidding all Gubhajus and Bares to attend this Samek ceremony on pain of excommunication.

However in 1951 when the ceremony was actually held, the majority of Kathmandu Bares ignored the Gubhaju threats and attended the ceremony along with Gubhajus and Bares from all over the Valley (who have the right to attend the Samek). The only people absent of those who should attend were the main body of Kathmandu Gubhajus. These latter were now even more furious. They were also in a quandary. The Bares of Kathmandu number about seven hundred families all using Gubhajus as their priests. It was clearly difficult to take any strong action against this whole group which would not boomerang on those Gubhaju priests of the main faction still being used by these Bare families, and thus lead to a further split in the solidarity of the Gubhajus still remaining loyal to the acharya guthi. After bitter experience the Gubhaju leaders were now becoming wiser. But equally they could not ignore
this direct challenge to their authority. And thus they compromised by excommunicating, after a heated discussion, just eighteen Bare families said to have been prominent in the Bare opposition to the Gubhajus (but one informant discussing this action with me said that, on the contrary, these families were chosen deliberately because they were relatively unimportant). They further forbade in the agreed resolution any Gubhaju priest to perform any religious worship of any kind in the house of a Bare so long as the latter did not provide a statement in writing to the priest that he had either not attended the Samek or was prepared to perform a ceremony of atonement if he had done. Up to this point Bare families were continuing to use their hereditary Gubhaju priests according to traditional custom. By this relatively mild decision the Gubhajus sought to assert their authority without entirely alienating this important section of their jajmans. And they well understood of course that the Bares as a whole were not united among themselves in their attitudes, some Bare families being convinced that they had more to gain by throwing in their lot with the Gubhaju acharya guthi. But here again the Gubhaju leaders appear to have misjudged the intensity of feeling on the part of the majority of Bares.

Shortly afterwards a death occurred in a Bare family at Itum Baha, and as is the custom the son of the deceased called his Gubhaju priest to come for the immediate funerary rites. The priest said he would not come unless the man concerned gave him a written statement in accordance with the terms of the Gubhaju resolution. The man refused, and the Gubhaju stayed away. But something had to be done at once about the corpse. A Bare man at Itum Baha said that he knew how to perform the necessary rituals, and he did so to the satisfaction of the relatives of the deceased man. After this, all the other Bares at Itum Baha resolved to use only this particular Bare man as a priest for the performance of their domestic rites, and not to call Gubhajus at all. And a little later, these Bares took the lead in calling a mass meeting of Kathmandu Bares at which a new association was formed called the Sakya Samaj with the purpose of organising a Bare boycott of the Gubhajus (apart from the Uray Gubhajus). All Bares who did not join this new association were to be outcasted. The vast majority of Bares joined and accepted the rules, but a small but still sizeable group of Bares centred on Om Baha refused and organised a rival associa-
tion called the Dharma Niyem Pal Sangh ("the society for the defence of the rules of religion") siding with the Gubhajus. And thus the Bares were split in two.

Now things got steadily worse. The acharya guthi was increasingly ignored by its rank and file members, and the system of arbitration in cases of jajmani disputes by the Raj Gubhaju collapsed altogether. The acharya guthi finding its powers of expulsion quite ineffective in dealing with recalcitrance on a large scale at least still had control of the eighteen main viharas and therefore the powers to prevent the sons of expelled Gubhajus from performing their initiation rites. And this was becoming a serious problem for the Uray Gubhajus. The rite should be done at about nine and certainly before marriage. But in some cases their sons were reaching their twenties and still had not been initiated. Marriages were being delayed but this situation could obviously not go on indefinitely.

In 1952, a Bare father asked one of the Gubhajus who supported the acharya guthi and who was not his family priest if he would perform the bare cuigu for his sons without first imposing any conditions about written statements and so forth. The Bare belonged to the Sakya Samaj. The Gubhaju agreed and twenty-five of his fellow Gubhajus all members still of the acharya guthi, and all obviously fed up with the whole business, agreed to help him. These were all men of good social position and hitherto staunch supporters of the acharya guthi, but for this act they were all expelled, a move which further eroded the popularity of the Gubhaju leaders.

Later the same year, one of the Uray Gubhajus applied to the current Prime Minister, M. P. Koirala, for permission for his son to undergo initiation in one of the eighteen viharas. And presumably because Democracy had arrived in Nepal and a new climate of ideas was abroad in the land, the Prime Minister declared the viharas to belong to all men in general and gave the necessary permission. The rival factions turned out in force when this initiation rite was being performed and armed police had to intervene to quell disorders and allow the ceremony to be completed.

Events had taken such a serious turn that prominent men of all the factions involved realised that the continuation of the quarrel would do more harm than good to any side. Meetings were arranged
and compromises sought, but all without success. The only point at issue now was the priest/jajman relationship—the Gubhajus wanting to return to the traditional system in its entirety: the Uray Gubhajus, the Urays, and the main Bare group wishing to abolish the practices of buying and selling jajmani rights and to give the jajman freedom of choice in calling the priest he wanted. Neither side would yield to the other. And all the efforts to reach agreement ended in deadlock on this point.

In 1954 a fresh eruption occurred. According to the twelve year cycle, this was the year for the regular Samek ceremony to be held. The vast majority of the members of the guthi which by subscriptions pays the expenses of this regular Samek were Bares and Urays. And of these the majority agreed that the priests that should be used at the Samek should be Uray Gubhajus only. The Gubhajus and the Bares who sided with them opposed this vehemently. So on the appointed day for the Samek, all the Gubhajus, Bares and Urays of Kathmandu—a crowd of thousands—assembled at Hanuman Dhoka when the gods from the vihara shrines arrived on the shoulders of their respective devotees to be carried in procession to the meadows at the foot of the hill of Swayambhu on the west of the city, the traditional site for the Samek. The Bares and Urays tried to carry off the gods to Swayambhu: the Gubhajus tried to prevent them. Fighting and scuffling broke out on a large scale and the police had to intervene. Large numbers were arrested from all factions involved. High officials from the Government arrived on the scene to try to persuade the leaders of the various parties to settle their differences and permit the peaceful performance of the Samek but without success.

These scenes of disorder brought the quarrel to a climax. Lok Darshan, the young Private Secretary to the Crown Prince and himself a Gubhaju, was ordered by the Crown Prince (now the present King of Nepal, and at this time the ruler in his father’s absence) to call a meeting at once of all the leaders of the factions to reach a settlement without fail. The meeting assembled and though there was a long and heated argument, the leaders realised only too clearly that matters had got out of control and that a settlement had to be achieved at this meeting. They eventually agreed on a form of words, and a document was drawn up and signed by the sixty-three leaders present representing all the parties
involved. The document stated that all sides agreed on the following three conditions to end the dispute:

1. The Uray Gubhajus who had been expelled from the *acharya guthi* and from various *guthis* and *sanghs* should be taken back at once and without conditions.
2. The Samek ceremony should be celebrated according to ancient rites and customs.
3. All Gubhajus should take back their respective *jajmans* according to the rules of the *acharya guthi*.

It will be noted that there is no mention whatsoever in this document of the status of the Urays vis-à-vis the Gubhajus or of whether it was permissible for Gubhaju priests to take food from their Uray *jajmans* without fear of expulsion by their caste fellows. It will be remembered that for the first ten years or so of the dispute this was the main issue, the issue which led to a series of major court cases. But the fact is that as time went on the real problem became that of the priest/*jajman* relationship and though the ‘compromise’ above contained a reference to this subject, everyone in fact knew that this was merely a form of words to put a formal and public end to a long and tiresome internecine quarrel which was wrecking havoc within this group of the main Buddhist castes of the Newars.

The effects of this struggle could be clearly seen during the period of my studies in the Valley in 1956 and early 1957. Persons of all the factions taking part told me repeatedly that the whole business had been completely finished and settled at this meeting in 1954, and, resorting unconsciously to a device with which every anthropologist must be well familiar, were by this time arguing vehemently that the real cause of the whole trouble lay in a carefully hatched plot by Chandra Shamsher and the Ranas generally to destroy the Newar Buddhist castes finally and completely. “It was all the fault of the Ranas, particularly Chandra Shamsher. Didn’t he banish the Newar monks? Didn’t he order the Newars to take *patia*? He knew of course that of all the Newars the strongest were the Gubhajus and Bares and Urays, and so he plotted with his Brahman Raj Guru to set us against one another. And we were fools not to realise this”.

But in spite of these signs of a return to harmony within this
group of castes, the whole situation was clearly in a state of flux. The leaders of the acharya guthi had managed to save face by securing a wording of the document of compromise that fully satisfied them, and certainly did not appear at all anxious to re-open a dispute in which they had so obviously been on the losing side. But though the wording of the document was quite precise, nobody quite knew what exactly the current situation was. Certainly the Uray Gubhajus had been taken back into the acharya guthi and were present as I observed at the acharya guthi annual meeting at Swayambhu in March 1957. But from the side of the jajmans, the client families clearly appeared to think that as a result of the settlement they now had full freedom to call any Gubhaju they wished as their family priest without this priest suffering from the acharya guthi. And also that the former practice of buying and selling jajmani rights among Gubhajus had been completely abolished: and this appears to be correct for the simple reason that since a Gubhaju could no longer be sure whether his client families were going to respect his hereditary rights or not he would be unlikely to find another Gubhaju willing to buy rights of such doubtful value.

On the other hand many client families I spoke to, told me that they were still not permitted to call any other Gubhaju but their hereditary family priest. Equal doubts were apparent among Gubhajus themselves, some thinking that, except for the annual feasts, the acharya guthi no longer had any powers of control over the priest/jajman relationship and that a priest could not go to any jajman family if called, others insisting that the traditional system still operated as strongly as ever. And while I was in the Valley, a Gubhaju priest performed the acha luigu rite for the sons of Bares of Jan Baha—Bares who had many times before demanded this rite for their sons but who had been stoutly refused this by the acharya guthi. Formerly such an act would have been unheard of, and would most certainly have led to the immediate outcasting of the Gubhaju concerned by the acharya guthi. The acharya guthi had certainly not accepted these sons of Bares as members of the Gubhaju association, but it had equally not expelled the Gubhaju concerned. Having completed the acha luigu, are these sons of Bares now Gubhajus? Nobody quite knows, though there are strong opinions for and against among both Bares and Gubhajus.
And on this point which fully indicates the present measure of confusion and uncertainty which is one of the consequences of this long struggle which to a marked extent wrecked the traditional system of control exerted through a once-powerful trade union of priests, I now leave this story of turmoil in the main Buddhist castes to consider the wider issues it raises in relation to an understanding of social processes operating within the Newar caste system as a whole.

CONCLUSION

The questions raised by this series of disputes may be phrased as follows: why did this internal struggle occur at all? why did it occur at this particular period? what prompted the Gubhajus on a course of action which was clearly a determined and somewhat desperate attempt to establish their superiority in caste status? why indeed should the Gubhajus be so obviously concerned about their prestige and authority—and what were the "changing conditions" to which they referred in their original resolution of 1926? why in brief (and recalling the accusation of the Urays) should the Gubhajus wish to imitate the Brahmans?

Readers who have followed my earlier brief account of the general social situation of the Newars, the comparatively recent rise of the Ranas to supreme political dominance and their validation of this dominance in the cultural ideology of Brahmanical Hinduism through patronage of the Brahman and the Hindu "Establishment" and increasing discrimination against the Buddhist Newar, and also my description of the extensive process of individual upward mobility in "caste" terms with its rejection of the Gubhaju in favour of the status-giving Brahman, should have no great difficulty in providing the answers to these questions. It is not surprising in the circumstances that the Gubhajus should wish to imitate the Brahmans. Equally their errors of judgement should be understandable and familiar to students of caste since the whole anthropological literature on caste is pervaded by similar errors of interpretation of the function of ritual in Indian caste systems. The wording of the original Gubhaju resolution is significant: "We have been taking food from Urays but conditions have now changed. To maintain the Gubhajus' prestige and authority over
society, we should not take food from Urays.” But ritual purity by itself does not give political power. It merely expresses in a traditional idiom, “prestige and authority” based essentially on the harsh realities of the differential distribution of political and economic power within the system. As this distribution of power changes, so eventually—allowing for “cultural lag”—will modifications occur in the associated symbolic representations of precedence expressed in ritual behaviour. But modifications of ritual behaviour, unsupported by appropriate political and economic power, will prove either impossible or without effect on existing status differentials. Were this not essentially so in caste systems, it is difficult to understand why the process of cultural imitation known as “Sanskritisation” has not been universal throughout all Indian castes even untouchables—and indeed why it has not been fully completed, if one can speak of complete “Sanskritisation”, centuries ago.

If we are to follow Leach in his recent discussion of caste, it seems we are required to interpret the Gubhajus’ behaviour described at length above as a negation of, rather than an attempt to assert, caste principles. In Leach’s view, “If a whole caste group plays the role of a political faction by competing with other such factions for some common political and economic goal it thereby acts in defiance of caste tradition . . . . My own view is that wherever castes are seen to be acting as corporations against like groups of different caste, then they are acting in defiance of caste principles . . . . Caste ideology presupposes that the separation between different named castes is absolute and intrinsic. People of different caste are, as it were, of different species—as cat and dog. There can therefore be no possibility that they should compete for merit of the same sort. But with members of different grades of the same caste, the exact opposite is the case; the grades would not exist unless their members were constantly in competition one against the other. In this respect, grades within a single caste have the nature of social classes rather than castes”.

20 This, in my view, is a thoroughly unrealistic and inaccurate picture of caste systems as they are actually encountered in practice—an excellent example of the confusion that arises from the failure to distinguish between the essentially static paradigm of caste stereotypes, expressed in verbal statements (about “traditional” occupations and concerning

the ideal interaction of ritual peers), and the dynamics of power
distribution within actual systems. What indeed is "merit of the
same sort"? Status, wealth, political power and office ("Honour,
Riches and Authority" in Hobbes' celebrated dictum about the
"natural predicament of mankind") are universal goals common to
all castes and the competition for them between and within castes is
fierce and continuous—"like cats and dogs" to continue Leach's
simile—if the conditions, so far as sanctions and control are concerned,
permit. No caste is an island unto itself. In caste systems, success
or failure in this competition tends to be translated into a particular
and accepted status language, that of ritual, before it is publicly
accepted and confirmed.

All systems of extreme social stratification in which there is
an institutionalised and explicit ascription of rank by birth tend to
exhibit the same structural form and to incorporate the same
processes of social interaction. They tend equally to involve a
distinctive ideology which rationalises the inequalities of the system
and upholds the interests of the politically superior ranks or classes.
This ideology is an idiosyncratic cultural phenomenon: it may
well be the doctrines of ritual purity and impurity (and so we by
convention use the term "caste") or equally the theories of racial
supremacy or the divine right of kings, or whatever. Obviously we
need in examining such systems to describe this ideology carefully
and fully and to observe its use as a mechanism of reinforcement.
But we must not be misled into arguing, in the face of ample evidence
to the contrary, that this ideology is the vital characteristic of the
system of stratification under examination, the only or even the
main reason for its existence. In Indian studies such a position
leads all too easily to vague, intuitive, mystical interpretations of
Indian caste behaviour in terms of assumptions about a cultural
and essentially psychological unity in Indian attitudes and charac-
ter. Such interpretations are the negation of the rules of the socio-
logical method. The so-called unity of India, so far as this is a
sociological fact, resides as much in the common history of political
and economic conditions as it does in the "ubiquity of the Brahmans
and their common possession of a sacred literature and a body of
religious laws". Basham, distinguished historian and Sanskrit
scholar, has recently expressed a view which is relevant to this

21 Gough, E. Kathleen—1960, p. 11.
point: "There is a widespread view that Hindu culture has always had a uniquely spiritual and other-worldly character. This generalisation is still sedulously propagated by some Indians, and is often to be found in European writings on India, especially those written before the transfer of power. To my mind it is no more true of India than of medieval Europe and many other earlier cultures."  

In this essay at least I have presented Newar "caste" as essentially a function of the political and economic conditions in the Kathmandu Valley "whether present or belonging to the recent past", in the phrase of Ibbetson. I have found it necessary, in order to describe the processes at work in the Newar caste system accurately and intelligibly, to refer constantly to these basic political and economic factors—the rise of the Rana despotism, the incidence of economic change and increased occupational diversification, the status inconsistencies of wealthy and influential Jyapus or of increasingly impoverished Gubhaju priests, the need for material support for the process of upward "caste" mobility because of the economic checks of a more expensive style of living (use of costly Brahmans, the purchase of entry into Shrestha associations and of Shrestha brides), the economics of the priest/jajman relationship and the sanctions on this relationship for the Newar Buddhists, the use of physical force by the Ranas and their courts and the regulation of caste disputes by these courts, the absence of sanctions available to the Shresthas to prevent recruitment through upward mobility, the explicit Gubhaju goal of prestige and authority, and so forth. Without a full recognition of the basic significance of these factors, Newar caste behaviour is unintelligible.

There is one final point that needs to be made—apart from observing that I have necessarily confined my attention in this essay to certain sections only of the Newar caste system: an examination of the social situation of other Newar castes, notably the position of wealthy but low ritual status Saymis or that of the castes within the separate hierarchy of the subordinate ma ju pim block, must await another occasion when I shall seek to show that precisely the same mechanisms are at work to deal with the problem of status inconsistency as those I have outlined in this paper for Jyapus and Shresthas and the topmost Newar Buddhists.

It must be emphasized that these mechanisms which exist for accommodating or minimising status inconsistency have the overall effect of strengthening rather than undermining the caste system as a whole. Upward social mobility (the siphoning off of status seeking Jyapus, for example, into a ritual position commensurate with their economic power) is a change in the distribution of power within the system rather than necessarily a challenge to the system as such. The point has been admirably made by Frankenberg who wrote in a recent paper: “Some social mobility between classes serves not to weaken but to strengthen the class system as a whole. In a way structurally analogous to the revolt against the king which strengthens the kingship, so the social mobility of individuals emphasizes the rigidity of the class system through which they move. Individual rebellion against class, especially if successful, may serve merely to reassert class values.” This seems a correct observation both for individual and group mobility within the Newar caste system, and serves to strengthen my view of the identity of much of the phenomena which we now somewhat arbitrarily assign to “class” on the one hand and “caste” on the other.

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3. Caste Concepts and Status Distinctions in Buddhist Communities of Western Nepal

Unlike the Hindu view of the world and society Buddhist ideology is not concerned with caste. In ancient India Buddhists tolerated caste distinctions without providing the hierarchical structure of society with religious justification, and in modern Ceylon Buddhists observe caste-restrictions but do not invoke for them the authority of scriptures or religious tradition. Tibetan Buddhism developed in a basically casteless society, and the Buddhist societies of Nepal's northern borderlands conform on the whole to the Tibetan pattern. It is of interest, therefore, to observe the process whereby caste concepts have affected the social attitudes of the various ethnic communities in a region which, until recently dominated by Tibetan Buddhism, used to be unfamiliar with the Hindu ideas of status distinctions prevalent in other parts of Nepal.

The region in question is the Thak Khola, the high valley enclosing the upper course of the Kali Gandaki north of the gorge which separates the Annapurna Himal from the Dhaulagiri range. Through this valley runs one of the most ancient and important trade routes that link India, Nepal and Tibet, and its population has for a long time been engaged in trans-Himalayan trade.

The population of the Thak Khola is sharply divided into two

The data presented in this essay were gathered in 1962, the greater part of which year I spent in Thak Khola and the adjoining regions on the Tibeto-Nepalese border. For financial support of the project, in which I was aided by my wife and Mr. Dor Bahadur Bista, I am indebted to the National Science Foundation. The School of Oriental and African Studies generously gave me study leave and the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research once again facilitated our research by a grant-in-aid.
MAP 1. The location of Thak Khola in Western Nepal
main groups. To the south live the Thakalis, who in their own language call themselves ‘Tamang’ although they have no close connection with the Tamang tribe of central and eastern Nepal, and to the north dwell various groups of Bhotes (Bhotias), occupying the upper part of the Kali Gandaki valley, as well as several side valleys. Both groups speak Tibetan-Burman languages, but while the Thakali dialect is akin to such tribal tongues as Gurung, Magar and Tamang, most of the Bhole communities speak standard Tibetan.

Within the Thakali area two separate regions can be distinguished: to the south lies Thaksatsae (‘Thak of the seven Hundred’ [households]), and to the north Panchgaon (‘The Five Villages’). The inhabitants of the former regard themselves as the true Thakalis and superior to the people of Panchgaon, but the differences in the dialects and cultural patterns of the two regions are so slight that their respective populations appear clearly as two sub-sections of the same tribe. Whereas Thaksatsae and Panchgaon are well defined geographical units, the area lying to the north of Panchgaon and commonly known as Baragaon (‘The Twelve Villages’) contains several less easily separable groups of villages.

To the east, north and west Baragaon borders on regions inhabited by people of Bhotia stock and predominantly Tibetan culture. The only influences stemming from a different cultural environment have so far reached Baragaon by way of the Thakalis, who in more than one sense act as intermediaries between the purely Buddhist way of life of the northern borderlands and cultural trends resulting from the inter-mixture of Hindu and tribal populations in the middle ranges of Nepal.

While Buddhist ideology and practice run counter to the development of rigid caste distinctions, the complex society of Nepal’s middle regions is deeply steeped in the belief in a hierarchic order based on hereditary and immutable status-differences. With the improvement of communications and the broadening of the social horizon of many of the inhabitants of the Thak Khola, but in particular of the Thakalis, a clash between the Buddhist view of society and the basic premises of the Hindu social order was inevitable. Here I propose to show how this conflict affected a population dwelling on the border of the two cultural spheres.

Until about two generations ago the Thakalis were firmly rooted
in Buddhist tradition and practice. Apart from the performance of certain rites stemming from an older tribal religion, and involving such un-Buddhist traits as animal sacrifices, they conformed to the general pattern of Tibetan Buddhist society. From the 17th century onwards and possibly earlier Buddhist temples staffed by monks and nuns were established in most Thakali villages. It was customary that out of every three sons or daughters one should receive the training of a monk or nun, and those members of religious orders who could afford the cost of travel went for study and pilgrimage to Tibetan monasteries.

Many communal ceremonies and festivals were of purely Buddhist character, and an initiation rite prescribed for all Thakali boys served primarily the purpose of teaching the candidates the performance of basic Buddhist ritual. This rite known as Shyoben was centred in two temples whose lamas acted as preceptors for the initiates. The candidates wore ceremonial clothes, and conformed in many respects to the pattern of Tibetan behaviour.

Similarly private rites, and in particular the complicated sequence of the mortuary rites, followed orthodox Buddhist practice, the lamas using the texts and ritual paraphernalia current among Tibetan Buddhists of the same sects, i.e. Nyingmapa, Sakya and Karagyupa.

There can be no doubt that at that time religious merit as well as social prestige were gained by such acts as the building of mani-walls, the construction or endowment of temples, and the commissioning of rites to be performed by lamas or nuns. Numerous are the mani-walls constructed in the vicinity of Thakali villages, and several temples (gompa) as well as private chapels (cho-khang) contain sets of sacred scriptures, including Kangyur and Tangyur, which pious Thakalis had obtained from Tibet.

At that time there can have been little difference in the cultural atmosphere of the villages of Thaksatsae and those of Panchgaon. Both contained lamas and nuns adhering to the same sects and the lay folk of both areas showed zeal in adorning their villages with ritual structures.

Contacts with the non-Buddhist people of the middle-ranges and plains of Nepal were restricted to occasional trading trips, and whereas many Thakalis, and particularly monks and nuns, were familiar with Tibet, there were no occasions to visit Kath-
mandu or other centres of civilization in Nepal. The Magars, Gurungs and occasional Chetris and Brahmans whom the Thakalis encountered when bartering Tibetan salt and wool for rice and other grain from the lower regions were not representative of a civilization or society superior to that of the Thak Khola and Tibet, and there was hence no incentive to imitate or adopt any of their customs or attitudes.

A different situation arose, however, when in the last decades of the 19th century, and the beginning of the 20th century, Thakali traders obtained contracts for the collection of customs duties and with them not only a monopoly on the important salt-trade, but also certain administrative powers. In their capacity as government contractors they visited Kathmandu and their business brought them in contact with officials and other members of the higher Hindu castes. At the height of the power of the Ranas as hereditary prime ministers of Nepal, orthodox Hindu ideas about the ranking and interrelations of castes received the full backing of an autocratic government, and one can well imagine that the Thakali traders and contractors must have experienced difficulties in moving in a society differing in basic structure so greatly from their own. Their Buddhist faith as well as their style of dress and manner of living stamped them at once as 'Bhote' and so pronounced was the contempt of the high-caste Hindus of the Nepalese ruling class for the beef-eating and 'unclean' Tibetans and other Bhotes (e.g. Sherpas and Tamangs) that the Thakalis, however wealthy, could not establish satisfactory social relations with the dominant classes of Nepalese society.

More ambitious and, on the whole, richer than most other Bhotes, the Thakali traders did not accept this position with the nonchalant self-assurance of Sherpas and various other Buddhist border-populations. They resented their low ranking in the multi-ethnic caste-society of Nepal, and those who had the closest contact with Kathmandu began to scheme how to raise their social status. They realized that before adopting any positive steps towards assimilation to the higher castes, they had to shed those habits which inevitably depressed their status in the estimation of those in whose society they wanted to be accepted. One of these was the eating of yak-meat, which in Hindu eyes counts as beef, and is hence polluting to all except the lowest and most despised of castes.
Temple in the Durbar Square of the Newar town of Patan

Newars bringing offerings to a Hindu shrine in Kathmandu
The Thakali village of Tukche on the banks of the Kali Gandaki river

The Bhotia village of Lubra in a side valley of Baragaon
Harvest of barley outside the Thakali village of Tukche

*Mani*-walls with prayer-wheels and Tibetan Buddhist inscriptions in Tukche
A Buddhist rite in the *gonpa* of the Thakali village of Kobang.

Stone altar with the heads of a goat and a sheep sacrificed to a locality god at Tukche.
It is said that the customs contractor Harkaman Subba Sherchan (1860-1905) initiated the banning of yak-meat from the kitchens of Thakalis, but today many young Thakalis are genuinely convinced that the peoples of Thaksatsae never partook of the flesh of any cow-like animal.

As more and more Thakalis began to travel widely and extended their trade to such places as Pokhara, Baglung, Bhairava and Butwal, the urge to become acceptable to the higher Hindu castes grew in intensity. More and more Thakalis realized that their classification as a 'Bhote' community placed them automatically outside Hindu society. This experience must have led to the gradual abandonment of many of the customs and habits which they had shared with Bhothe populations. First the outward and least essential features of Tibetan culture were dropped. Thakalis gave up dressing in Tibetan fashion, except for wearing in the winter a Tibetan warm gown (baku), for which the Nepali type of male dress had no equivalent. But when European-style overcoats became fashionable in Nepal, the Thakalis were quick to adopt these ungainly garments and in Tukche they have become a prestige symbol which some of the more pretentious men wear even on warm summer days. While distilled liquor is a favourite drink among the Thakalis of all classes, the drinking of beer (chang), so beloved of Tibetans and the Bhothe border-tribes of Nepal, is looked down upon and in respectable Thakali houses beer today is served only on ritual occasions. Even then it is often only touched and not drunk except by a few old men indifferent to modern fashion. A change of dress and the compliance with the attitudes of higher Hindu castes to food and drink, however, was not sufficient to free the Thakalis from the suspicion of being Bhothes. As long as they practised Tibetan Buddhist ritual they appeared to the ruling classes of Nepal as some kind of Bhothes, and the next step of the reformers intent on raising the tribe's social status was an attack on Buddhist religion and ritual. The first harbingers of the changed attitude adopted by the Thakali élite towards Buddhism occurred a generation ago when the son of one of the customs contractors was recognized as the reincarnation of a lama. His father then took the unprecedented step of not permitting the boy to be given the training of a lama. While such disregard of what orthodox Buddhists consider the highest honour a family
can be blessed with was then the reaction of one individual, a comprehensive campaign against Buddhist practice developed when in the forties and fifties of the present century the first Thakalis educated in Kathmandu and India returned to the Thak Khola.

In their anxiety to do away with the religion which seemed to stand in the way of their community’s recognition as a Hindu caste of respectable standing, they agitated for a ban on the recruitment of boys and girls to religious orders, the prohibition of many of the rites performed by lamas, and in particular a drastic curtailment of the elaborate Buddhist funeral ceremonies. This agitation was supported by members of the leading family of Tukche, a family of Sherchan clan which for many years had held the customs contract and wielded great power throughout the Thak Khola. Members of this family, known as the subba-family because many of its members held the title subba, had been the first Thakalis to establish themselves in Kathmandu and Pokhara, and they were therefore most directly concerned with the status of their community in the caste-society of the centres of administration and commerce. Since the termination of the system of customs contract they had exerted their influence through a council of village headmen, on which they were strongly represented, and it was due to their initiative that this council adopted many of the anti-Buddhist reforms.

Significantly the advocates of reform, while severely limiting the influence of lamas, did not interfere with the activities of jhankri, the shamanistic priests, of a pre-Buddhist religion which among the Thakalis had survived side by side with Buddhism. The jhankri's rites and exorcism of spirits could not by any stretch of imagination be classified as part of Hindu religion, but the sacrifice of rams and goats, always abhorred by the more serious of Thakali lamas, seemed conveniently similar to the animal sacrifices of such highly respectable Hindu castes as Thakuris and Chetris. The jhankri thus escaped the censure of reformers, and so great was the antipathy to Buddhism that some of the Thakali leaders even envisaged the establishment of this brand of shamanism as the ‘national’ religion of the Thakalis. No-one seemed to realize that a complete reversion to a folk-religion lacking sacred scriptures and a sophisticated philosophy, was hardly consistent with the claim to high status in the Hindu caste hierarchy. But though some of the short-
term aims of the reform movement seemed inconsistent and even confused, there was no doubt about the long-term aim of the reformers. They strove to alter the image of the Thakalis in the eyes of the high Hindu castes, and to achieve this they considered it necessary to bring about changes not only in the attitudes and way of living of the families settled in Pokhara and Kathmandu, but also in those of the people remaining in Thaksatsae. For as the Thakalis represent a homogeneous and indivisible society, the habits of those living in Thaksatsae affect the status of Thakalis wherever they may be. Unlike the *nouveau riche* in other societies the successful Thakali business man in Kathmandu cannot dissociate himself from his kinsmen in Thaksatsae, for whatever he may do to adapt himself to the Hindu pattern of life, the image of his community is determined by conditions in Thaksatsae, the recognized homeland of the Thakalis.

In their striving for an improved status vis-à-vis Brahmans, Chetris and Newars some of the young Thakalis with a smattering of education acquired in Kathmandu, Pokhara or Bhairava, used the most tortuous arguments to prove that the Thakalis had originally been Thakuris, i.e. members of the high Hindu caste which includes the royal house of Nepal. These arguments were based on the sacred myths of the four Thakali clans. According to these the ancestors of the four clans came from Sinja, a place in the Jumla District, far to the west of Thak Khola. As Sinja was at one time the capital of a dynasty of Malla kings who ruled over Jumla, the Thakalis concluded that their own ancestors must have been scions of that dynasty, and they linked this interpretation with the legend of Hangsha Raja, a prince believed to have stemmed from Jumla, who married the daughter of the local ruler of Thini village in Panchgaon. The absence of evidence to prove that the mythical ancestors presumed to have come from Sinja were Thakuris and the impossibility of tracing any of the present four Thakali clans to Hangsha raja were ignored in the arguments for the Thakalis' Thakuri origin. The more enthusiastic and uncritical protagonists of this theory went so far as to assert that their ancestors' original language had been Nepali, and that they adopted their present tongue only by contact with the indigenous inhabitants of Thini and other Panchgaon villages. This most unlikely theory is still being put forward notwithstanding the fact that the
Thakalis' myths of origin are recorded in a mixture of Thakali and Tibetan, and that these myths contain no reference to the alleged Thakuri status of the tribal ancestors.

Evidence for an ancient connection with Thakuris of Jumla is seen, moreover, in the custom of turning west when praying, while the sacredness of the hearth and the exclusion of non-Thakalis from the part of the house where the ancestors are worshipped, is interpreted as a parallel to the rules of high caste Hindus. While Thakali practice stands indeed in contrast to the Tibetan custom of allowing visitors unhindered access to all parts of the house including the cooking hearth, it is not unlikely that the restriction on the movements of outsiders within a Thakali house is a fairly recent adaptation to Hindu custom. In favour of this possibility speaks the fact that in Tukche, the most advanced of Thakali villages, the feeling against non-Thakalis entering the interior room is far stronger than in the more traditional villages.

In the attempt to find parallels to Hindu customs the adherents of the theory of a Thakuri origin interpret even the initiation rite known as Shyoben lawa, despite its numerous Buddhist features, as a variation of the important Hindu rite of *brata bandha (upanayana)*, the investment of boys with the sacred thread. But the very fact that no Thakali, however rich, has ever been able to persuade a Brahman to invest him with a sacred thread, militates against such an interpretation.

The intensity of the desire for this symbol of high caste status among Thakalis can be gauged from the often repeated, though hardly credible, story that the famous prime minister Jang Bahadur had suggested to the Thakali customs contractors that they should wear a sacred thread. The latter are supposed to have declined this suggestion on the ground that in the cold climate of the Thak Khola the observance of high caste rules would be impracticable. Yet, in more recent years there has been a steady trend towards the adoption of Hindu customs, and the gradual abandonment of habits and observances deemed incompatible with the claim to high caste status.

Just as at the end of the 19th century yak-eating was proscribed, so in more recent years the custom of marriage by capture was formally banned by the headmen of Thaksatsae. In fact, however, only the socially ambitious and somewhat pretentious people of
MAP 2. The divisions and main villages of Thak Khola
Tukche observe this ban and have totally abandoned the custom of capturing brides. In the more conservative, agricultural villages this type of marriage continues to be practised in disregard of the decision of the council of headmen, but with the connivance and active participation of individual headmen. Marriage by negotiation is known by the Sanskrit term kanyadan, and the lack of a Thakali term to describe it suggests its comparatively recent introduction.

Similarly Thakalis have adopted the Hindu rite of ceremoniously shaving a young boy’s head. This is followed by a feast when kinsmen and friends are invited to a meal, and the boy is blessed and given presents. This rite is known as chokor garnu, a Nepalese equivalent of the Sanskrit term chuda karana, and the fact that neither a lama nor a jhankri has to minister at the ceremony seems to indicate that this initiation has no place in either of the two traditional religious systems. As no Brahmans live in Thaksatsae, the services of a Brahman priest can normally not be obtained.

It is only on rare occasions that Brahmans are invited to minister at certain rites, and the cost of bringing them to Thak Khola is prohibitive for all except the richest families of Tukche. In November 1962 a wealthy widow of the subba-family arranged for the performance of a saptaha rite in memory of her late husband, and for this purpose five Brahmans were called to Tukche. The widow in question had lived for some years in India, and the saptaha rite she commissioned was only the third of its kind to be performed in Tukche. No other Thakali village had ever been the scene of such a performance.

The Thakalis claim to follow Hindu rites in the matter of death pollution, but in reality there is a wide gap between orthodox Hindu practice and the half-hearted observance of pollution rules by the Thakalis. Whereas the former prescribe that all traceable agnate kinsmen are subject to death pollution for 13 days, among Thakalis even brothers observe but one day’s mourning, and it is only the members of the deceased’s own household who are considered in a state of mourning for ten to eleven days after death.

Examples of such a half-hearted imitation of Hindu customs could easily be multiplied, but the relevant point is not that the Thakalis are extremely slack in the observance of high caste rules, but that they endeavour at all to conform to a pattern foreign to
their traditional way of life. Within a generation or two their imitation of Thakuri and Chetri customs may well become more perfect, and by that time it will probably be much more difficult to distinguish between comparatively recent adaptations and what appears today as traditional Thakali conduct.

The belief in a Thakuri ancestry, which some of the young Thakali hold quite genuinely, has resulted in a feeling of superiority vis-à-vis the other inhabitants of the Thak Khola, which is similar to the attitude of a high Hindu caste towards the lower ranks of the caste hierarchy. Where such sentiments are still in a stage of development we cannot expect consistency, and the attitude of the Thakalis towards their immediate neighbours as well as the people of the upper part of the Thak Khola is indeed neither consistent nor logical.

The people inhabiting Panchgaon, the area immediately north of Tukche, resemble the inhabitants of Thaksatsae both in language and general pattern of living, but Thakalis in the narrow sense look down upon them, and refute their claim to the name Thakali. Yet, their own traditions tell of the marriage of Hangsha Raja, a legendary Thakuri prince, to the daughter of a raja of Thini, one of the villages of Panchgaon, and there is the widespread, though unsubstantiated belief, that among the present-day Thakalis there are the descendants of Hangsha Raja and his Thini wife, whose dowry is said to have included the whole of Thaksatsae.

Notwithstanding this often quoted union, the Thakalis of today disapprove of any intermarriage with people of Thini, Marpha and other villages of Panchgaon. Even men originally stemming from that area, but now resident in Thaksatsae, are not admitted to intermarriage with Thakalis, but must find their brides among the girls of their own ancestral village.

The people of Marpha and Thini are not greatly concerned about the Thakalis' claim to a higher status. Their villages are self-contained units, practising village endogamy, and the question of intermarriage with other groups is therefore not an object of social aspirations. The trade they engage in is on a smaller scale than that of the Thakalis, and has so far not been a means of bringing them in close contact with caste-Hindus of Kathmandu or other urban centres. Unlike their neighbours in Tukche they see no advantage in claiming Thakuri status. This attitude may change,
however, when the boys and young men now receiving education outside Panchgaon will return with an appreciation of the importance attached to caste-status by the trading communities of such towns as Pokhara and Kathmandu. Not that the people of Panchgaon have so far been ignorant of the outside world. Many families move every winter to the lower regions where they engage in petty trade, the keeping of wayside inns and liquor stalls, and the transport of goods on pack-animals. But in the resulting relations with Hindus questions of caste-status are of no great relevance. Their social aspirations being still focussed on their own village, they are far less interested in status problems than are the more outward looking Thakalis. There is yet another reason why the latter's claim to social superiority has on the whole been accepted by the people of Panchgaon. As the more substantial traders and, in the days of government contracts, the wielders of administrative authority, the leading Thakalis of Tukche were so blatantly in a dominant position, that the people of Panchgaon felt no hesitation in conceding their higher social status. Two members of the most prominent family of Tukche even now discharge some of the functions of village headmen (mukhya) in Panchgaon, and in this capacity act as brokers between the villagers and government.

The status differences between the people of Panchgaon and Thaksatsae do not manifest themselves in ordinary social intercourse. There is no ban on interdining, and Thakalis of Thaksatsae do not hesitate to eat in the houses of Marpha or Thini villagers. But the distinction between the two groups becomes evident in their economic relations. Numerous men and women of Panchgaon have at one time or other served in the houses of the Thakalis of Tukche, whereas no Thakali ever accepts service in the house of a man of Panchgaon. To do so would lower his status in the eyes of his own community, whereas conversely a person of Marpha does not necessarily lose status by accepting employment in Tukche.

The relationship between the people of Thaksatsae and those of Panchgaon is thus of peculiar nature. The inequality which is strongly emphasized by the former and not seriously contested by the latter, is unlike the status difference of two castes. It is neither institutionalized nor expressed in ritual behaviour. There is no traditional interdependence of the two groups, and such political influence as the Thakalis of Tukche are exerting over the villages
The thirteen Thakali headmen of Thaksatsae

Bhotia men and women of Purang, a village of Baragaon
Scene at a Thakali initiation rite known as shyoben lawa or kumar jatra

Ritual meal during the Thakali initiation ceremony of chokor garnu
of Panchgaon is gradually dwindling, and may well have developed only during the time when Thakalis were customs contractors and as such had certain administrative and judicial powers. With the rising prosperity of the Panchgaon villages the drift of young women into domestic service in Tukche has already virtually ceased, and the time may be near when the young generation of Panchgaon may no longer admit the social superiority of the people of Thaksatsae.

Nevertheless the endogamy of the latter as well as that of the inhabitants of Panchgaon is changing from a local and 'tribal' endogamy, to one with status implications resembling the endogamy of a Hindu caste. People from Thaksatsae and Panchgaon do not intermarry even if they live in the same locality, and on roughly similar economic levels. There are families from both regions settled in Pokhara, but so far no intermarriage has taken place, and the Thakalis of Thaksatsae, anxious to prove their claim to 'twice-born' status, are unlikely to jeopardize their aspirations by alliances with a community which so far does not even claim the status of a Hindu caste.

As one moves from Panchgaon northwards one enters a region of fundamentally different character. The landscape becomes more arid and the villages lying to both sides of the Kali Gandaki and in the valleys of tributary streams are inhabited by a population appearing at first sight homogeneous and totally Tibetan in race and way of life. This region is known as Baragaon, and borders to the north on Lo (Mustangbhot), to the east on Dolpo (Charkabhot) and to the west on Nye-shang (Manangbhot). The name Baragaon ("Twelve Villages") is inappropriate in so far as there are not twelve but eighteen major villages. The region derives a sense of political unity from the fact that there is customary provision for gatherings of the representatives of all villages for the discussion of matters of common interest.

For at least three generations Thakalis of Tukche have been dominating Baragaon both economically and politically, and members of the leading Tukche family have been acting as headmen (chikyap) for all the villages of Baragaon. They gained this position by their familiarity with the functioning of the Nepalese administration, and by their wide powers as customs contractors. There can be no doubt that in the days before the Thakalis of Tukche acquired
these powers, local chieftains ruled over several of the villages of Baragaon. The ruins of their fortress-like houses still stand on elevated sites, from which either the trade-route along the Kali Gandaki or some of the surrounding settlements could be dominated.

In the eyes of the Thakalis all the people of Baragaon are ‘Bhotes’ and hence of low social status. It is inherent in the Thakalis’ claim to high-caste Hindu status, that they must look down on the beef-eating, ‘impure’ inhabitants of Baragaon, and the economic dominance they had established lent support to their claim. Until a few decades ago all Baragaon villages were heavily indebted to Thakali merchants, and the latter used their economic power to obtain cheap labour. Numerous people from Baragaon, and particularly young people and children, worked for Thakalis of Tukche as bond-servants, often in discharge of debts incurred by their parents. Their position was not very different from that of slaves, and as long as Thakalis held the salt monopoly such Bhotes of Baragaon had very little chance of paying off their debts and regaining their freedom.

The economic and social inferiority of the Baragaon people vis-à-vis the Thakalis seems to be, however, a comparatively recent phenomenon. The ruins of some of the fortified places must date from a time when the Thak Khola still lay outside the sphere where the Gurkha kings exerted effective political influence and long before Tukche was founded by the great grandfathers of the present generation of Thakali merchants. At that period the Thakalis, who later rose to prominence with the backing of the central administration, cannot have exercised any significant influence on their Bhote neighbours of the upper Kali Gandaki valley. These Bhotes, conscious of their Tibetan roots and proud of their contacts with Buddhist monasteries in Tibet, could not have looked upon the Thakalis with admiration, for in Panchgaon and Thaksatsae Buddhism had not even succeeded in completely displacing the older tribal religion with its animal sacrifices objectionable to true Buddhists. Indeed I was told in Baragaon that originally the people of Baragaon were of higher status than the Thakalis of Thaksatsae and the villagers of Marpha, but that the inhabitants of Thini, the seat of the legendary Thini raja, were equal in status to the higher ranking villages of Baragaon.
The population of Baragaon, though conforming to the same cultural pattern, is not homogeneous, and there are status distinctions between the different villages. There is a group of five villages which rank lowest among the village communities of Baragaon, and it is significant that these five villages speak a language closely akin to Thakali, whereas the higher ranking villages speak dialects closely resembling standard Tibetan. The highest status is enjoyed by those villages which are known to have been founded by Tibetan lamas, irrespective of whether they were Buddhist or Bonpo. The status distinctions affect intermarriage. While the inhabitants of the thirteen higher ranking villages freely intermarry, the five lower ranking villages do not form part of this connubial group, though hypergamous unions occasionally occur as an exception to the general rule. Apart from a ban on intermarriage between the two groups there are also restrictions on other aspects of social contact. While according to general Bhoțe custom equals may drink from the same cup, which on certain occasions is passed from mouth to mouth, the people from the higher ranking villages do not share their drinking cups with any of the inhabitants of the 'low' villages. Internally these low ranking villages are homogeneous and unstratified, but the other villages contain a complex population consisting of lineages of higher and lower status.

The highest class in these villages, as well as in Lo, is known as Kutak or Shalonga. The number of families of Kutak status is small, and in some villages this class is not represented at all. The most prominent Kutak family is that of the ruling chief of Mustang, linked by ties of marriage and affinity with many aristocratic families of Tibet. But while the Mustang raja received recognition from the rulers of the Gurkha kingdom, and enjoyed a high rank in the order of precedence of the Kathmandu court, the Kutak families of Thak Khola have retained neither political power nor outstanding wealth, and their eminent social status receives recognition only in matters of etiquette. Kutak still have the tendency to marry within their own class, but Kutak men can enter hypergamous unions with women of lower rank while Kutak women usually do not marry below their own class. The people of Baragaon equate the term Kutak with the term Thakuri, and when speaking Nepali they often substitute 'Thakuri' for 'Kutak'. The one time position of Kutak as local chieftains justifies
this equation, but the term 'Thakuri' is here used as indicative of a political role, and not as a caste-designation. I have never heard of any Kutak claiming membership of the Hindu caste of Thakuris, and some Kutak are lamas of high status in the Buddhist hierarchy.

Next to the Kutak ranks a class known as Padungu, which forms the majority of the population of Baragaon. It is not homogeneous, however, for there is a distinction between the Padungu lineages of the thirteen 'high' villages, and those of the five 'low' villages. The Padungu of the second category are considered inferior to those of the villages which as total communities are of higher rank. Marriage between these two divisions of Padungu is unusual but not unknown. A man marrying a wife of the lower division retains his status and the ritual disabilities to which his wife is subjected are few and not very onerous.

Lower than all the Padungu stands a class known as Ma-Gara or Ma-Rigsin. Some of its members engage in occupations of low status, such as iron-work, but they are not considered 'untouchable' in the Hindu sense, and members of all three castes may interdine, provided those of different status do not drink from the same cup.

Until one or two generations ago the people of Baragaon were content to be regarded as Bhotes and saw no advantage in emphasizing their distinction from the Tibetan populations of Lo or Dolpo. Increasing contacts with other communities of Nepal, however, has instilled into them the idea that is advantageous to identify themselves with one of the major tribes of Nepal and they have begun to call themselves 'Gurung'. When asked to name their clan they are invariably unable to do so, and most of them are not even aware of the Gurung clan-system. Yet, most younger and middle-aged men of all classes insist that they are Gurungs whereas I have heard old men describe themselves quite frankly as Bhotes and mildly ridicule their juniors' claim to being Gurungs.

In contrast to the inequality between the people of Thaksatsae and Panchgaon and to the present sense of superiority of the Thakalis vis-à-vis the people of Baragaon, the status distinctions between certain villages of Baragaon as well as between such classes as Kutak, Padungu and Ma-Gara do not reflect clearly defined economic differences. The people of two villages within the lowest ranking group, i.e. Tetang and Tangbe, are among the
richest and most successful traders, and they claim that no member of these two villages has ever been in the employment of Thakalis. Group status is here not directly derived from recent economic success or present day political power, but may be regarded as an extension of a wider hierarchic system, the roots of which would seem to lie in Tibet rather than in Thak Khola. Such an interpretation would explain the low position of the villages speaking dialects akin to Thakali, for these village-communities presumably represent an indigenous population, which one might describe as 'Ur-Thakali' and which was already settled in the Kali Gandaki valley when populations speaking standard Tibetan moved into the area on the crest of a wave of great Buddhist expansion. It is probable that this wave brought certain families of Kutak status as well as the majority of the Padungu to the Thak Khola, and some of the former must have established themselves as local chieftains. Later most people of Baragaon became economically dependent on the Thakalis of Tukche, who then monopolized the salt trade with Tibet.

The Thakalis' economic hold over Baragaon has been weakening ever since the abolishment of the salt-monopoly in 1928. Many of the people of Baragaon now engage in trade on their own account, and this has enabled them to wipe out most of their debts to Thakalis. The lessening of economic dependence has resulted in a reassertion of self esteem, and most Baragaonlis maintain that they and the Thakalis are of roughly equal status. There is on neither side a general bar to interdining, but while people of Baragaon often eat in Thakali houses of Tukche and other villages, Thakalis have less frequently occasion to accept the hospitality of the villagers of Baragaon, and some of the more status conscious may hesitate to partake of ritually relevant food, such as rice, cooked by Baragaonlis. There is no formal intermarriage between the two communities, and the only irregular and usually temporary unions are between Thakali men and Baragaonli women living in Thakali villages. This situation seems indicative of the persistence of inequality at least under certain circumstances, and it is indeed a fact that those people of Baragaon who have gone to live in Thakali villages occupy an inferior position within Thakali society. They are simply referred to as 'Baragaonli' and no Thakali cares to know from which village or section of Bhote society they stem.
Baragaonlis settled among Thakalis are acutely aware of their lower status, and do not like to be reminded of their origin. Towards outsiders they try to pose as Thakalis, though no pretence is of any avail in bettering their status vis-à-vis the Thakalis themselves. Even wealthy Baragaonlis who emulate Thakalis in dress and style of living have not been able to penetrate the inner circle of Thakali society.

Apart from the populations so far described there are in most villages of Thak Khola members of the untouchable castes of Kami (blacksmith) and Damai (tailors and drummers). These castes, which occur throughout the Hindu regions of Nepal are without exception Nepali speaking and in Thak Khola undoubtedly represent an infiltration from the south. Their untouchability is not the result of local developments, but is clearly due to the fact that they were already tinged with the reputation of untouchability when they first came in contact with the Buddhist populations of Thak Khola, and were accepted by the latter at the valuation of the Hindu society in which they had their roots. They have no institutional relations with either Thakalis or Bhotes but are accepted by both as useful craftsmen and cheap occasional labourers, and allowed to exist on the outer fringe of society without any chance of improving their depressed position.

The social pattern of Thak Khola appears in different lights according to the angles from which it is viewed. Seen through the eyes of the present-day Thakalis of Thaksatsae the populations inhabiting the valley form a stratified structure consisting of caste-like elements the most highly placed of which is the Thakali community. This structure is viewed as an extension of the general Nepalese caste-society, and the Thakalis’ ambition is to merge their own community with the Thakuri caste. To achieve this aim they have begun to mould their behaviour on the model of high Hindu castes, and in doing so they have accepted the principle that status depends on behaviour in certain ritually relevant spheres. Aware of the Hindu practice of evaluating communities by what they eat, they have themselves abandoned the consumption of certain types of food and drink, and look down upon anyone who eats yak. They apply criteria based on Hindu ideas of purity and pollution to their neighbours, but ignore, on the other hand the division of the people of Baragaon into groups of different status. To them all
Bhotes appear of equal status, because they behave in similar fashion. According to the Hindu view social status cannot be divorced from ritual status, and as all the people of Baragaon eat polluting food, i.e. beef, they are in Thakali eyes of low status, not even excluding the Kutak whose equation with Thakuris they disregard. This evaluation is supported by the Thakalis' economic domination of all the other ethnic groups, but it would be an oversimplification to attribute their sense of superiority solely to economic factors. In the days of customs contracts Thakali contractors employed Brahmans, Chetris and Newars as clerks and other staff in the customs houses, and nowadays Thakali merchants have in their establishments outside Thak Khola numerous employees belonging to the upper Hindu castes. In all these cases the employees are economically inferior to the employers, but ritually superior, and these two contradictory status assessments cancel each other out.

When viewed through the eyes of the Bhotes of Baragaon the ethnic groups of Thak Khola do not appear as elements of a stratified structure, but as coordinated entities, arranged in a spatial pattern without value loaded distinctions. They are seen as tribal groups of basically equal status, among whom temporary economic domination of one by the other does not necessarily involve a corresponding distinction in status.

A curiously inconsistent aspect of these two views of Thak Khola society is the discrepancy between the internal structure and the outward attitude of Thakali and Bhote society. Thakalis of Thaksatsae represent a basically egalitarian society, organized on segmentary lines and devoid of institutionalized internal status distinctions, but they look at the outside social world as a hierarchic structure stratified on caste-lines. The Bhotes, on the other hand, recognize internal status distinctions, but do not evaluate the outside world in terms of social superiority and inferiority.

It is probable that the Thakalis had a similar outward outlook before they came in close contact with high caste Hindus of the Nepal valley. Since then they have become the prime movers in the introduction of caste attitudes in Thak Khola and exponents of the Hindu view of society. Although the protagonists of Hindu in contradistinction to Buddhist social attitudes were at first a minority recruited mainly from the wealthy merchant families of Tukche, the majority has followed their lead in the conviction that an
assertion of high caste-status, even if bought at the expense of some sacrifices and inconveniences, will ultimately benefit the entire Thakali community. What has so far changed most are not the relations between the Thakalis and the other ethnic groups of Thak Khola, but the image which the Thakalis have of themselves. They have moved away from the idea of being a tribe comparable to other tribes and have begun to regard themselves as a caste. This development probably became inevitable as soon as large numbers of Thakalis moved away from Thak Khola and settled in scattered groups in the valleys of the middle ranges as well as in certain urban centres. There, among numbers of various Hindu castes, a community cannot retain its identity except as a caste, and as all the recent changes involving the Thakalis of Thaksatsae were initiated by men with a foothold in Pokhara, Bhairava or Kathmandu the new image of the community was modelled on the pattern of a caste. Thus the Thakalis, though originally undoubtedly a tribal group, have become a caste because they think of themselves as a caste. The implications of such a development have been recognized by Louis Dumont when in a discussion of the concept of the tribe-caste continuum he stated “a tribe may or may not retain a close link with a territory in becoming a caste; it becomes a caste when it acknowledges the values of the caste system”.¹ This is exactly what is happening to the Thakalis. They are becoming a caste because they think of themselves as a caste, while the Bhotes of Baragaon though not unfamiliar with status distinctions are not on the way to becoming a caste, because they do not acknowledge the values of the Hindu caste system. The motivation of the Thakalis in their gradual movement towards a caste-position does not exist in their case. For unlike the Thakalis the Bhotes have no stake in the multi-ethnic society of the middle ranges and Nepalese towns and their caste-order. Concepts of caste, we may thus conclude, arose in the Thak Khola not on account of fundamental changes in the local social and political structure, but because of the aspirations of Thakalis settled in Kathmandu and other places outside their traditional habitat, who cannot secure a favourable place in the established caste-hierarchy without bringing about a transformation of their entire endogamous group including all those still dwelling in Thaksatsae.

¹ Contributions to Indian Sociology, No. VI, 1962, p. 122.
4. Tribe-caste Mobility in India and the Case of Kumaon Bhotias

PART I. TRIBE-CASTE MOBILITY IN INDIA

Introduction
India’s tribal population which stood at approximately 22.5 million in 1951 can now be roughly estimated to have exceeded the thirty-two million mark. Of this, the number of tribal people pursuing the traditional way of life and not considerably affected by the surrounding Hindu or some other cultural tradition is very small indeed. Again, the number of such tribal people as retain a tribal name—and are hence included in the figures for the tribal population—but who have otherwise become a part of the Hindu society, e.g. the Gond aristocracy and Korku noblemen, will also form a very small percentage of the above figures. These are the people who have secured for themselves a fairly high status in the caste hierarchy, and although they have adopted “the full Hindu faith . . . . they retain old tribal names, observe clan and totem rules,

The field-work on which this essay is based was carried out from September 1952 to August 1953 on a research scholarship in the Department of Anthropology, Government of India, for which I am indebted to the late Professor D. N. Majumdar and the late Dr. B. S. Guha. The Bhotia material presented here forms part of my dissertation, Cultural Pattern of the Bhotias (approved for Ph.D. in 1958 at the University of Saugar, India) in the writing of which I had the benefit of Dr. S. C. Dube’s critical suggestions and valuable help. This essay was written during 1961-62 when I spent a year as a visiting lecturer in Anthropology at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. I am grateful to Professor C. von Führer-Haimendorf and Dr. A. C. Mayer for going through the manuscript and making several helpful suggestions. I am also thankful to Dr. N. P. Ayyar for drawing the accompanying map of the Bhotia valleys.
and retain elements of tribal religion". However, there are also numerous tribal groups who have acquired a Hindu caste or a sub-caste name and are now returned as Hindus in the census data. The number of such tribal people as have now been absorbed almost completely either as individuals or as groups into the Hindu cultural matrix of the region and have lost their socio-cultural distinctiveness will be hard to determine, though it will perhaps vary in direct proportion to the depth of the time-span we take into consideration. Ghurye suggests tribal origins for a number of present-day Hindu castes and sub-castes on the basis of their names and other evidence. But most of this transition has taken place so gradually and over so long a period of time that it would now be difficult to assign any definite origins to a caste or a sub-caste in the absence of proper historical records. It is still more difficult to describe fully this transition and the conditions under which it took place in a given direction. These are problems which can be better understood with reference to the contemporary scene and the recent past for which historical evidence may be available. As this essay is concerned with certain aspects of the transition from a tribal status to a caste status within the fold of Hinduism, we can turn our attention to the contemporary scene for an inquiry into the nature and process of this transition and the conditions that determine its course.

The largest number of tribal people—perhaps over seventy percent of the total—have been variously described by the anthropologists: "Hinduised without being Hindus", "imperfectly integrated classes of Hindu society", "indistinguishable from the inferior ranks of the caste order" and the like. These are the people who are marginally situated in relation to the regional Hindu, Moslem or Buddhist tradition (though largely Hindu in most parts

2 I have used the term 'region' in this essay to mean the immediate cultural zone in which a given group is involved and with which it shares a number of "ritual and cultural forms" in terms of 'spread', as has been done by Srinivas (1952, Ch. VII). The usefulness of the concept of 'spread' in the analysis of caste and Hinduism has been amply demonstrated.
3 Ghurye, G. S.—1932, p. 29.
6 Majumdar, D. N.—1947, p. 131.
of India) towards which they have been gradually drawn in varying degrees. The range of this variation is certainly considerable but polar categories of tribe and caste or tribe and Hindu seem untenable in the contemporary scene. Bailey, for example, observes that “Politically at least the distinction between ‘tribe’ and ‘caste’ is ceasing to be a useful one. In the modern caste—the group which is politically active to the width of the linguistic region—both the tribe and the traditional caste are being merged”.

The interaction between tribal and Hindu societies in most parts of India has produced an “accommodative” social adjustment which has shown a tendency to become relatively stable and mutually acceptable. The two groups have participated in an exchange of cultural forms and rituals for a long time. This exchange—a form of simple adaptation to the ‘sheer presence’ of the other group—became more ramifying in the course of time and its effects were felt in other areas of the two cultures. The old and the new mingled together, indistinguishably, and became parts of a single complex. To the Hindu peasant, in contact with a tribal group, the tribal magician or the medicine-man became as real and as much a part of his adaptation to the supernatural world as his own Hindu priest, or for that matter, where a tribal godling found a place in the local pantheon of Hinduism, it became similarly as real as any other. The tribal ritual idiom also represented a fusion of the old and the new—the ‘externality’ of the new, which became so often invisible to the tribal people themselves, could only be discerned by one specially looking for it in terms of what had gone to whom and from which source. Führer-Haimendorf noticed

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6a Bailey, F. G.—1960, p. 266.
7 Instances of the tribal priests and magicians being employed by the Hindu peasants have been reported by several ethnographers from different areas. G. S. Ghurye (1943, Ch. I & II) cites a number of cases like that of the Baiga in Mandla district who “was a part and parcel of the village establishment” and writes that at one time most villages, “whether Hindu or aboriginal” (p. 17) had a Baiga priest.
8 The phenomena of re-interpretation and syncretization are not ruled out; actually there is considerable evidence for their presence. Cf. (Srinivas 1952) “All India Hinduism possesses certain features which make easy the absorption of local elements” (p. 214), and “Sanskritic Hinduism has a plasticity which enables it to absorb local religious phenomena” (p. 222).
9 Führer-Haimendorf, C; von—1945, p. 179.
among the Reddis that "Old and new are closely interwoven, and similar emotional reactions accompany the worship of the various deities, whatever the origin of their cult."

The 'tribalisation' of the local Hindus and the 'Hinduisation' of the tribes, in most regions, produced a situation in which the two groups tended to become culturally less and less dissimilar to each other, thus becoming interdependent dimensions of a diffuse but spatially much more pervasive cultural tradition. Using the Great-Little Tradition frame of reference, as formulated by Redfield, Sinha has made a comprehensive analysis of cultural forms to demonstrate how the tribal life in a particular region is articulated with the local, Hindu peasant life on the one hand, and the classical Great Tradition on the other. We also get a fairly clear picture of a situation in which the tribal people, Hindu castes and the Muslims live together in the same village, in Dube's study of a Deccan village. Here tribal people, divided into three groups, share in village life with 578 Hindus and 107 Muslims. "The Hindus join some of the Raj Gond and tribal ceremonials, as good social form, for a while, but withdraw in good time before the cow-sacrifice"... "Tribal Kolam seers and magicians are summoned by the tribes, the Hindus and the Muslims alike".

The point that becomes clear from the above discussion may be stated here, since the lack of appreciation of its full import has sometimes led to arguments among anthropologists in relation to tribal problems in India. The point is that the 'cultural approximation' that we see today between the tribal groups and the Hindu castes in any region has been brought about not only by the so-called Hinduisation (implying an assimilationist aggression in some of the studies) of the tribes alone, but also by a considerable 'tribalisation' of the local (followed by the regional and the All India) Hinduism. This may sound commonplace but that in itself would account for the lack of awareness shown for its significance two decades ago. Further, it may be added as a corollary that this form of acculturation is not just a simple exchange of godlings and rituals, or

10 Redfield, R.—1955, pp. 18-22.
12 This is an example of what I have later called incompatible dissimilarity in the process of 'cultural approximation'.
the sharing of a common priest or a medicine-man between two groups. It is much more involved when one of the groups happens to be the Hindu society or a segment of it. "The structural basis of Hinduism is the caste system..."¹⁴ and the idea of a hierarchy is inherent in it. The pervasiveness of the 'theme',¹⁵ of a hierarchy in Hinduism has been made clearer by the numerous village studies made in recent years. Gods, men, and animals, food and occupations, ceremonials and day-to-day behaviour, diseases and modes of death, all are arranged in a hierarchy. While Hinduism is liberal in absorbing local phenomena, it is also liberal in 'doling' out its hierarchical orientation. To put it differently, any prolonged interaction with Hinduism by a group in village India is not possible without a constant reference to this 'theme' by the two parties. The tribal groups, even though comparatively more egalitarian in terms of flexibility of social stratification, have often paid a price, as it were, for their interaction with Hinduism in the acceptance of the 'dole'. The hierarchy 'theme' in turn sets the stage for the type of tribe-caste 'cultural approximation' with which we are concerned here.

The tribal group tends to behave as a caste in the event of its being constantly so treated by others—the Hindu castes. In Dewara, Dube¹⁶ points out that "Technically, the three tribes (Raj Gond, Kolam and Pardhan) ... are not castes, ... but in intra-village life they function practically as independent castes". They are independent castes probably because they enjoy the autonomy characteristic of such groups, despite their interdependence. As individual caste-like groups, they may also be more autonomous than others because their lack of a well-defined hierarchical status allows them a greater degree of freedom in the performance of caste-relevant and caste-discrepant roles.¹⁷

**Tribe, Caste, and 'Cultural Approximation'**

It might be useful to pose a few questions at this stage even

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¹⁵ The term 'theme' in this essay has been used to mean a "postulate or position, declared or implied, and usually controlling behaviour or stimulating activity, which is tacitly approved or openly promoted in a society", as defined by Opler (1945 and 1946).
¹⁷ Cf Silverberg, J.—1959.
though it may not be possible to answer them all satisfactorily. What makes a group a tribe and when does it cease to be one? What is it that makes a caste out of it? What are the pressures and motivations behind this transformation? What happens to the tribe after this transformation in terms of structural relations? What is its relative position in the caste hierarchy? What are the significant variables in the determination of this position? What are the actual processes through which this transformation takes place? Is this change really a transformation or just another step towards ‘cultural approximation’ in a series of similar steps? What is ‘cultural approximation’? How do these various questions relate to the Bhotia social situation?

The problem of identifying the genus and differentia of tribe has been a tricky one and an attempt in this direction is better left out at this stage despite its relevance to the question: What are the tribal dimensions that are modified and what is it in the caste system that the tribes assume? Looking back into the anthropological literature is not very helpful. Intellectual romanticists still have the vision of an uncontaminated aboriginal when they speak of the tribal people. Still others are feeling crushed under the ‘brown-man’s burden’ and are inclined to view the tribes as ‘imperfectly integrated backward Hindus’! Majumdar\textsuperscript{18} mentions several characteristics of a tribe in terms of an ideal construct: name, territory and language, clan, kinship and tribal authority etc. A number of these characteristics are as much applicable to castes and sub-castes as they are to tribal groups, and, taken together they do not cover a large number of tribal groups either. In this long list, Majumdar does not say anything about the distinctiveness of tribal religions.

However, with reference to tribe-caste mobility, Majumdar\textsuperscript{19} in his classification of the tribes says that a large number of tribal groups are ‘Hinduised’ and ‘some of them are indistinguishable from the inferior ranks of the caste order . . .’ or again that ‘. . . the primitive and aboriginal tribes have supplied and are supplying a reservoir as it were of ‘surplus material’ which has been swelling the ranks of exterior castes.’ Ghurye\textsuperscript{20} rejects the view that the

\textsuperscript{18} Majumdar, D. N.—1958, p. 355.

\textsuperscript{19} Majumdar, D. N.—1947, pp. 129-131.

\textsuperscript{20} Ghurye, G. S.—1943, pp. 25-27.
tribe-caste mobility assumes the suggested direction and the view that "social degradation" follows 'Hinduisation'. According to him, "Status in Hindu society would also appear to depend upon the calibre and temper of the (tribal) society concerned" (p. 25). He goes on to point out that there is no basis for the fear that, if 'Hinduised', the tribes "will fall into the quagmire of social degrada-
tion of untouchability" (p. 27).

Another point made in the writings of these and several other anthropologists is that ownership of land, possession of wealth, and past or present rank in the tribal structure, have played im-
portant roles in determining the position claimed or achieved by a tribal group in the caste hierarchy. It may also be assumed that where these conditions or 'status resources' were lacking, a tribe gravitated towards that caste group in the hierarchy that was compatible with its own political, economic and occupational level, including the "inferior ranks of the caste order".

The phenomenon of caste has been widely discussed in recent years and need not be considered here. For the purposes of this essay it may be pointed out that the local and regional peculiarities of the system are extremely significant in the tribe-caste situation. Studies of caste from different parts of India, Ceylon and Pakistan show clearly that there is a considerable range of variation in caste behaviour. In a recent study we find that Hutton's seven criteria—endogamy, rules for commensality, hierarchical grading of castes, pollution, association with traditional occupations, determination of status by birth, and the prestige accorded to the Brahmans are not equally or universally valued. We see that some features which seem basic in one place are conspicuous by their absence in another. These regional peculiarities in the caste system may also be viewed as evidence of the "accommodative" adjustment that resulted from contacts between caste and non-caste groups. Most of the questions raised here can, therefore, be understood only in the context of the regional peculiarities of the caste system. The following discussion of Bhotia society will show whether it can be considered a tribal group or not in its regional context.

The phrase 'cultural approximation' has been used in this essay

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21 Singh, I.—1944.
to designate the type of acculturation that takes place in the tribe-caste situation, and the end-product of this process that we come across at a particular time. It has been adopted here in place of such terms as *Hinduisation*, assimilation or integration. One of the reasons for doing so is that it explains precisely the state of affairs that exists in the tribe-caste situation today as I will now briefly show.

The flow of cultural forms between two interacting groups tends to produce some kind of a cultural 'proximity' when viewed in terms of *lessening dissimilarity*. Interactional situations demand some degree of cultural 'compatibility' while permitting a wide range of cultural dissimilarity. 'Cultural approximation' thus represents both a process and the resultant end-product at a given time. As a process it tends to make two interacting groups less and less dissimilar to each other. Dissimilarities, as such, are not barriers to interaction. It is the *incompatible* ones that delimit it. In 'cultural approximation' we can anticipate a persistence of compatible dissimilarities, and a gradual modification of the incompatible ones. 'Cultural approximation' between two groups does not necessarily imply their organic articulation, though it may certainly favour such a relationship. In the tribe-caste situation, the tribes in a Deccan village "do not give a place to the Brahmin in their socio-religious life, but the barber, the washerman, the carpenter, the blacksmith, the goldsmith, and the Madiga feature prominently in their socio-religious rites and ceremonies".24 This would not be possible without a certain amount of compatibility having been achieved within the range of dissimilarity. Where incompatibility comes to the forefront as in the case of the 'cow-sacrifice' by the Raj Gonds, Dube points out that the Hindu castes leave in good time before such a ceremony.25

'Cultural approximation' can be viewed as a form of adaptation in which an interactive and mutually-beneficial cultural co-existence is rendered possible. Adaptive mechanisms emerge from within the cultures, often without organized efforts. The role of alien 'law' imposed by a 'dominant' group, with or without any political authority, is an important factor in the modification of incompatibilities. The forces that can accelerate the process of 'cultural

approximation' are well-known today and some of these will be mentioned later in relation to the Bhotias.

In the tribe-caste situation, the process of 'cultural approximation', once begun, continues as long as an interactive contact between the groups is maintained and the 'feed-back' (conflict-creating and conflict-minimising) mechanisms are not disturbed by a change in the interacting relationships. It may be added here that this process, by itself, does not transform the tribal groups into Hindu castes. The articulation of tribal groups with the Hindu castes in the economic and socio-religious spheres may be rendered possible, sometimes in proportion to the degree of 'cultural approximation' reached. Achieved 'cultural approximation' at a given time, coupled with the fact that a caste can retain a considerable amount of its cultural autonomy (i.e. dissimilarity) may favour a tribal group's entry into the caste system at a level in the hierarchy, generally, towards which it had been gravitating for some time. Where tangible or intangible benefits consequent upon such an entry are perceived, the group may seek to acquire a caste status. Often, the desire to become a caste, and the deliberate efforts made to achieve it, can be better understood in the light of role and status conflicts.

When a tribal group aims at achieving a particular position in the hierarchy, 'cultural approximation' becomes more precise in the sense that a specific caste may serve for a model, as against a possible earlier position in which compatibility and proximity achieved were either generalised or in relation to the dominant group. Where a relatively higher position in the hierarchy is sought by a group, considerable 'cultural approximation' may be necessary before even a claim for it is publicly made. This process does not come to an end with the entry of a tribal group into the hierarchy. For it may later assume the forms of what have been called 'sanskritization' and 'modernization', if the group acquires new models. Finally, it may be re-stated here that the process of 'cultural approximation' is not a 'caste-making' mechanism in itself. In the tribe-caste situation in India, it provides a channel in which the germs of caste, e.g. a hierarchical orientation, can flow.

It is in the sense briefly explained here that I have found the use of 'cultural approximation' useful in understanding the Bhotia tribe-caste mobility.
Status Resources in Tribe-Caste Mobility

It may be useful to identify two broad categories of tribes in relation to their achieved ‘cultural approximation’ in a region.

Category ‘A’ comprises tribes whose contact with the local Hindu cultural tradition has been a limited one as also their interaction with the local Hindu peasant community. The extent of ‘cultural approximation’ reached is comparatively small. The tribes do not have a desire to become castes yet. But if they should choose to do so, the process may be accelerated with the help of local and outside leaders.

Category ‘B’ comprises tribes whose contact with the local Hindu peasantry has involved a greater degree of interaction. As compared to those in category ‘A’ (hereafter referred to as ‘A’), they have achieved a considerable degree of ‘cultural approximation’ and are articulated into the socio-religious life of the local groups. Even though they retain their tribal names and a certain amount of cultural dissimilarity, they are treated by the Hindu society as caste-groups. Certain caste-like roles are ascribed to them, which they perform. They are, to some extent, ready to become castes, if a specific caste status could become agreeable to all concerned.

It is also possible that ‘A’ and ‘B’ above may represent two sub-groups or sections of the same tribal group. This is the case for several tribes including the Bhotias. If the sub-divisions of a tribe achieve differential ‘cultural approximation’ with the local and regional Hindu tradition, they also vary in their desire for a particular position in the hierarchy. Under these circumstances, the existing differentiation may be expressed in the caste language. The desire on the part of a B-type section of a tribe to become a caste may lead to its assigning the A-type section to a lower status. It may reject some of the old values and modes of behaviour which it still shares with the A-type section. Those adhering to these rejected values may be criticised and ridiculed for their different (dissimilar and incompatible) ways. This is the point where those in category ‘B’ are ready to look upon themselves as a caste and strive for a desired position in the hierarchy. In their dealings with the A-type group, they are already using a new frame of reference and new peers.

The caste status of a tribal group in the local hierarchy is determined by a number of factors, derived from the general status-
determinants in the caste system. The three most important of these factors are: possession of landed property and wealth, tribal rank where the tribe was stratified into, what may be called, rulers, aristocracy and the commoners\(^\text{26}\) and the traditional occupation its members followed.

The quest for prestige has been recognized as a primary factor affecting group mobility. Ghurye\(^\text{27}\) points out that the tribal people “seek to improve their social position by asserting themselves to be Hindus and then establishing a claim for a status higher than that of the lowest or even lower castes”. He also quotes Roughton, speaking of Gond farm labourers, that “In fact, recognition as a Hindu indicates a step upward on the ladder of social precedence, and a Gond will often impress his importance on a stranger by declaring himself to be a Hindu.”\(^\text{28}\) Prestige, an important element in motivating human behaviour, is more often sought in the group of one’s affiliation. It is difficult to agree with the observation in the above example (and similar examples given by other writers) that if a Gond “impresses” a “stranger” by claiming to be Hindu, he can improve his social position, unless this claim is accompanied by tangible advantages to him as an individual. In that case it may be taken to be an example of individual social mobility. Prestige is an important motivation in an entire group’s desire to raise its status vis-à-vis the caste hierarchy, particularly when a certain degree of cultural approximation has been reached, as in the case of a section of the Bhotias.

Where the achievement of ‘cultural approximation’ is accompanied by such other achievements by the members of a group, as economic success, authority over other groups, and educational and occupational advantages, a reinforcement of achievements may be sought in terms of the Hindu caste language—the ritual position. This may be viewed as one possible way of dealing with the conflict that arises from the performance of ‘achievement-discrepant’ roles after certain advantages have been achieved.

A tribe’s status in the hierarchy is determined by the kind of advantages its members possess. I list below some of these advantages, a number of which would be seen to have been operative in

\(^{26}\) Singh, I.—1944.
\(^{27}\) Ghurye, G. S.—1943, p. 20.
\(^{28}\) Ibid, p. 18.
the case of the Bhotias. The order in which they are discussed here is not indicative of their relative significance. It is also not possible to emphasize one at the expense of the other and ignore their inter-relatedness.

There are what may be called antecedent advantages which a group may possess. These emanate largely from their mythological, pseudo-historical or historical status on which the claims to a particular caste-status may be rested. The role of myths as an historical truth for the people in non-literate and peasant societies need not be stressed here. Successful claims to a high caste-status can often be seen to have had a ‘firm’ basis of this nature.

Mention has already been made of economic and political advantages. A claim for higher status, supported by economic and political advantages gets considerable weight. Economic advantages may express themselves in the possession of expendable wealth, sometimes for conspicuous consumption according to local standards. Ownership of resources (mainly land) and property may give the possessors an ability to support a tenantry or the members of an ‘inferior’ class and thus add to their authority and dominance in the area. In the context of general poverty, it is quite understandable that wealth can be successfully used to buy such items as would contribute to the acceptance of claims for a higher status—e.g. priestly services from the Brahmans or contracting a marriage in the group with which status-equivalence is sought. This may of course require a certain amount of modification in the area of incompatible dissimilarities before, for example, priestly services from the Brahmans can be obtained. Education of children as a form of conspicuous consumption by parents is not unknown in tribal societies.

Socio-religious advantages accrue in the process of ‘cultural approximation’ achieved in relation to a prestige-group or a caste-group with which status equivalence is being claimed. Considerable modification of traditional institutions and modes of behaviour may be necessary before a more involved articulation can be expected.

Numerical, educational, and occupational advantages, e.g. employment in prestige-giving occupations such as government service, though of secondary significance, play an important role in the acceptance of claims to a higher position. The role of effective
leadership in this process cannot be over-emphasized. Where the leaders wield considerable influence inside the community and enjoy some influence and prestige outside, even in the secular areas, they can be instrumental both in the modification of incompatible dissimilarities and in the effective registering of claims.

The role of the presence of other groups at the same or a lower social, economic and ritual position has often been ignored. The presence of such groups provides the human material against which a higher status can be asserted with relative ease by maintaining or starting a form of ritual distance. As it is, a group, itself at the virtual end of a ‘pecking order’, may find it hard to assert its claims against the higher ones. Often a stratification within the group may develop and yield such material. In the case of the Bhotias, it will be seen that the presence of territorially stratified groups, the untouchable Doms and the Tibetan Khampas, has played a certain part in caste-status claims.

Lastly, the conflict involved in the performance of ‘achievement-discrepant’ roles in the face of some of the above advantages may lead to the struggle for a higher caste status, and where such attempts are repeatedly frustrated, or where enough weight of suitable advantages cannot be thrown about, a ‘nativistic’ movement in the tribe-caste situation may also emerge, despite the amount of ‘cultural approximation’ achieved.

**Caste Ranking**

In order to understand social mobility in any region, it becomes necessary to view the local caste and non-caste groups as elements in a single hierarchy. In his analysis of caste-ranking in terms of a ‘consensual’ picture, Marriott, with respect to the situation in Kishan Garhi, points out that “present discrepancies between the ritual ranks and political or economic standings of certain castes can be shown to stimulate mobility and therefore to promote dissensus”.

Claims for a higher status are made by certain castes and “some villagers grant these newer claims while others deny them, thus dispersing both practice and opinion as to caste ranks over a widened range.”

In such situations the ranking of caste groups in a single hierarchy becomes a fairly involved process.

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29 Marriott, McKim—1960, p. 15.
30 Ibid.
We often see a hierarchy-construct which gives the impression of being a consensual picture, and in which the allowance made for social mobility or conflicting claims is not always apparent.

For the purpose of portraying the Bhotias' struggle for a higher position I have chosen here to present a part of the 'dissensus' in ranking by means of different hierarchies as viewed by different groups. The usefulness of this procedure in understanding social mobility will become clearer in the succeeding pages.

PART II. THE BHOTIA CASE

The term 'Bhotia' is employed to designate several different groups of people in the Himalayan and trans-Himalayan regions. In the districts of Almora and Garhwal, in the central Himalayas, the non-Tibetan borderland folk are called Bhotias, while outside these districts the Tibetans are often referred to by this generic name. In the eastern Himalayas, certain groups of people inhabiting the Nepalese-Tibetan border regions, the Tibetans living in the vicinity of Darjeeling, and the inhabitants of Bhutan State, are all referred to as 'Bhotia' in their respective regions. To confuse the situation still further, some of the eastern Tibetans also style themselves 'Bhotia'. While all these are distinctly unrelated groups they seem to have one thing in common. They are all connected with some kind of a trade between Tibet and the region in which they live. They usually carry the goods available in their area to Tibetan markets and exchange these with Tibetan traders for salt and wool. The latter goods, chiefly salt, are used again to buy stocks for their next trade trip in the following year. Thus the cycle goes on. The nature of their occupation requires a seasonal migration between their region and Tibet. Their life, therefore, is geared to a semi-nomadic living.

However, the Bhotias of the central and the eastern Himalayas differ in one major respect. While most of the people called Bhotia in the eastern Himalayas are Buddhists and follow the lamaistic form of Buddhism, the Bhotias in the central Himalayas are not Buddhists in any sense of the term, although the possibility of their having been so once, with the rest of the region, is not remote. This study relates to the latter population. The term 'Bhotia', therefore, in
Map of Bhotia Valleys
this essay, refers specifically to the groups of people who currently pass under this name in the district of Almora in the State of Uttar Pradesh, India, and not to such other groups as may be called so elsewhere.

The district of Almora lies in the north-east of the area formed by latitudes 28.49' and 30.49' north and longitudes 79.2' and 81.31' east. The north-eastern part of the district inhabited by the Bhotias is popularly known as Bhot, and consists of several valleys bordering on Tibet. These valleys from east to west are: 1. Byans, 2. Chaudans, 3. Darma, and 4. Johar. Further west of Johar lie two more Bhotia valleys—Niti and Vishnuganga valleys inhabited by Niti and Mana Bhotias—in the adjoining district of Garhwal. They have been omitted to confine the discussion to one administrative unit with a long history. Traditionally, large parts of the present Almora and Naini-Tal districts, once ruled by the Hindu kings with Almora city as their capital, formed the unit called Kumaon. The people in these parts use 'Almora' and 'Kumaon' as synonyms, and call themselves "Kumaoni" as distinguished from the neighbouring "Garhwali" and "Dotial".

The territorial limits of Bhot cannot be clearly defined, as the term is used in an ethnographic sense to denote the region whose inhabitants are the Bhotias. Pant32 in a map of the region shows the southern boundary of Bhot at a line roughly joining Askot and Kapkot. If we accept this demarcation, the Bhotias will constitute less than one-third of the total population of Bhot—the rest being the Khasiya Brahmans and Rajputs, pseudo-Rajputs and others. This demarcation would be correct if we understood the term Bhot in the same loose sense in which it is used by an average Hindu hillman of Almora. To him it denotes an area which is higher in altitude, closer to the great snowy peaks and where the Bhotias alone can go about.

In the north, the boundary of Bhot can be easily defined. The watershed which is the boundary between India and Tibet in the district of Almora, is also the northern boundary of Bhot. The average elevation of the watershed is approximately 17,000 ft. above sea level. At the head of each Bhotia valley lie the passes, ranging from 16,750 feet to 19,000 feet above sea level, which

are used for crossing the watershed on the way to Tibetan markets.

The Bhotias have been described as a Mongoloid people by several writers.\textsuperscript{33} Whilst exhibiting a preponderance of Mongoloid characters, there is, however, a considerable range of variation among them. The inhabitants of villages farther north and closer to the border, particularly in Byans and Darma valleys, appear more Mongoloid in features and appearance than those in Chaudans, Talla (lower, implying the southern part) Darma, and Johar. The traditions current in these areas about the ancestors of the present inhabitants having come from Doti (in Nepal, south-east of Bhot) and Garhwal, if correct, may have a bearing on their racial history.

The Bhotia dialects belong to the Tibeto-Burman family of languages. The four dialects spoken by the Bhotias of Almora are Byansi, Chaudansii, Darmiya, and Rankas or Shankiya Khun. The first three are spoken respectively in the valleys after which they are named. The last named, Rankas or Shankiya Khun was at one time spoken in Johar, Goriphat (south of Johar) and Malla Danpur (south-west of Johar). Walton, in the \textit{District Gazetteer} of Almora, wrote in 1911, "Some [Bhotias] have so far become Hinduised that they have forgotten their original dialect and now speak the ordinary hill dialect common to their Khasiya neighbours."\textsuperscript{34} At the turn of the present century, Sherring had recorded 614 people who spoke Rankas or Shankiya Khun.\textsuperscript{35} In 1953, during the course of my field-work, I made some inquiries about this language. Most of the people did not believe that such a language was ever spoken in Johar. An old man admitted that he had heard his father speak such a language when passing through Goriphat in their migrations. However, in the absence of more extensive inquiries, it is not possible to write an epitaph for this dialect here, though it seems significant that the loss of this language in Johar is associated with a period characterized also by zealous efforts of the local leaders to bring about greater 'cultural approximation' to support their claims for the Rajput status. The Jethoras (inhabitants of Goriphat) who spoke this language are settled agriculturists and their claims for a Rajput status go farther back than


\textsuperscript{34} Walton, H. G.—1911, p. 97.

\textsuperscript{35} \textit{Ibid}, p. 98.
those of the Johari Bhotias. Actually, they claim superiority over the latter but have been at a disadvantage, comparatively, in matters of wealth and influential leadership.

About the remaining three dialects two points are worth noticing: Firstly, these dialects are in constant use in every-day life in the various valleys. Most of the ritual in various ceremonies makes use of these languages. As unwritten languages they also possess a capacity to absorb words and phrases from various sources. Grierson\textsuperscript{36} had pointed out that Darmiya has been much influenced by the Aryan forms of speech in grammar and Hindustani in vocabulary, though not to the same extent as Chaudansi. Since Grierson analysed the numerous dialects, a good deal of change has taken place in the vocabulary of these three valleys. The District Board primary schools in Bhot employing non-Bhotia teachers have been teaching the Bhotia children through the medium of Pahari, the ordinary Hindi hill dialect. The second point worth noticing is their intimate interrelationship. Grierson\textsuperscript{37} observed that Byansi in most characteristics agrees with Chaudansi and it seems probable that both represent the same dialect, and that Darmiya is also closely related to both of them. It will be seen in the succeeding pages that Byans and Chaudans have shared a common destiny in political upheavals from the 15th century onwards, and the geographical location of these valleys has made their more intimate interaction possible.

The Bhotia Valleys

Three of the four Bhotia valleys are flanked by ridges covered with perpetual snow. These are Byans, Darma and Johar. They run mainly in a southerly direction from the watershed, and are separated from each other by vast masses of snow and a ‘tangled mass of peaks and gorges’. The Chaudans valley has a more favourable situation and the Bhotias in this valley have for long been settled agriculturists, and so also the Bhotias in Talla Darma.

The area of Bhot is estimated by Pant\textsuperscript{38} to be nearly one-third of Almora District, “but only one-sixteenth is inhabited. The area under cultivation is even smaller. . . . It is not quite 8000 acres.”

\textsuperscript{36} Grierson, G. A.—1916.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid, p. 12.
\textsuperscript{38} Pant, S. C.—1935, p. 41.
He also estimates the population of this region at approximately one-twentieth of the total for the District. The provisional figures for the 1961 census released by the Government of India show a total population of 6,011 for the valleys of Darma and Byans.\(^{39}\)

Computing on the basis of figures for the preceding census, Johar can now be estimated to have population of about 10,000 and Chaudans and Talla Darma, about 4,000. The Bhotia population is thus close to 20,000 in Bhot with another 2,000 living outside Bhot. The Bhotia population stood at 9,099 in 1901 and in sixty years it has more than doubled.

The rivers in Bhot have determined not only the routes of communication but also the sites of habitation. Rivers in these parts have mostly narrow beds flanked by steep cliffs. Wherever a valley broadens or the slopes are of a gentler gradient, a Bhotia settlement or a camping site is found. Such places, however, are not numerous. The valleys have an elevation of more than 10,000 feet above the sea level and the altitude of the Bhotia villages ranges from 10,000 feet to 19,000 feet above sea level. Most of the villages, however, lie at elevations of 11,000 to 13,000 feet above sea level.

The Bhotia valleys are wholly covered with snow for half the year. Snowfalls begin about the end of September and continue intermittently until the beginning of April. The seasons of spring, summer and autumn are compressed within the five months of May to September. The Bhotias come to these villages in June with their merchandise and families. The Bhotia village here is a nucleated settlement with different areas marked out for different clans. While the men are engaged in trade preparations or are trading in Tibet, the women raise crops on the fields surrounding the village. If the crops do not ripen, they are abandoned. By the end of September a southward migration begins—the destination being the winter homes in warmer places. These homes are situated at a distance of eight to ten days’ march, but when a Bhotia travels with his trade goods laden on sheep and goats this journey may take longer.

The winter homes of the Bhotias are located both in the district of Almora and in the western-most parts of Nepal. Here the Bhotias trade with Hindu Rajputs, Brahmans and other castes, mostly exchanging salt and wool for cereals, unrefined sugar, etc. The

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Johari Bhotia have three sets of homes, and use them both as dwellings and as trade-depots.

The Bhotias also own some land near their winter habitations and this is usually let out to Dhami and Khasiya tenants on a crop-sharing basis. I have elsewhere discussed the range of profits and risks involved in trade, and here it will suffice to say that the Bhotias in Byans, Darma and Johar mainly concentrate on trade and handicrafts, the latter being connected with the weaving of woollen blankets, carpets, shawls and cloth. The making of these handicraft goods contributes substantially to the income of the Chaudansi Bhotias.

The prosperity of the Bhotias has been the envy of Hindu hillmen and throughout their history, they have been subjected to heavy taxation. The profits of the Bhotias from their trade must have been considerable, but this is also related to their generally industrious character. The Bhotias have, therefore, enjoyed the highest standard of living in these parts. The Khasiya Brahman and Rajput cultivators in the vicinity of Bhot are poor compared to an average Bhotia trader. A Bhotia's wealth is reflected in his possessions, in his food and his dress. The Bhotias have substantial houses, a plentiful supply of woollen carpets and blankets, spun and woven by the members of the family, cattle, goats and sheep, and even though they have only a secondary interest in agriculture, they own their land. Their food consists mainly of mutton, rice, and several varieties of cereals. They are also able to afford the luxury of consuming unrefined and refined sugar, brew their own beer and distil their spirits. Where dress is concerned, the Bhotia men and women are much better dressed in their colourful, home-made clothes than any of their neighbours. Most of the Khasiya Brahmins and Rajputs around Bhot who look down upon the Bhotias as a caste, have only a narrow strip of usually dirty cloth around their waist, or a blanket pinned on their shoulders.

The Bhotias have been able to maintain their monopoly of the Tibetan trade through various political and social sanctions and have kept away possible competitors from among the Hindu hillmen. Besides the difficulties of travel and the fear of Tibetan robbers, the Bhotias openly declared and popularised the half-truth that the Tibetans would not trade with any one with whom they did

not have commensal relations. This last condition was enough for
the Hindu hillmen to shy away from any thought of trying to trade
directly in Tibet. As Hindus, they would not dream of eating with
the "filthy, beef-eating", Tibetan Dogpa traders or drink from the
same cup with them a beverage which invariably has a piece or
two of meat thrown in. The meat could be from a sheep or a yak-
cow! This fact kept competitors away and the Bhotias remained
the middlemen not merely for salt and wool, but even for such items
as gold-dust and precious stones. Their confession of having com-
mensal relations with the beef-eating Dogpa traders gave them
a substantial standard of living, but this fact has constantly stood
in the way of their acceptance as Rajputs by other Hindus. This
represents one of those sensitive cultural facets where even the com-
paratively more flexible caste system of the hills is not quite ready
to yield, despite the considerable cultural approximation and other
advantages achieved by the Johari Bhotias.

Bhotia attitudes generally, and those of the Johari Bhotias in
particular, towards the cultivators in their area can also be under-
stood in relation to their trade. The Tibetan trade requires con-
siderable capital investment in animals, saddle-bags and merchan-
dise. The successful traders stay in trade, while the unsuccessful
ones leave the valley to become agriculturists or get hired as servants.
Secondly, the Bhotias, until quite recent years used to buy their
slaves from the Khasiya Rajput cultivators. In 1837, the Com-
missioner of the region reported to the Government:

"Slavery in Kumaon appears to be hereditary. The classes
are distinguishable into household slaves and slaves kept for
the cultivation of the land, the former, Khasiya Rajputs, and
the latter, Doms. . . . . The purchase or temporary engagement
of such persons for carrying on cultivation as well as the purchase
of females for prostitution are still common and have never
been prohibited. Such transactions are accompanied by a deed
of sale. The recognition of slavery by the courts is confined to the
sale of individuals (children and grown-up) by their parents.
Claims for freedom or servitude are heard like other suits."

It was also indicated in the above report that the Bhotias on

the north and the Pathans on the south were the principal customers. Such slaves, freed later on, stayed in Bhot and became the Kunkiya, occupying a low place in the Bhotia hierarchy. It is needless to add that the Bhotias do not look upon the surrounding Rajputs with any great respect.

A Bhotia’s trade needs also make him pay deference to local gods and goddesses wherever he goes for his trade requirements. He does not want to take unnecessary risks with the ghosts and spirits that may be lurking in a particular area. His trade needs have taught him to placate any one—a Tibetan tax collector, a Hindu client or a goddess of any denomination.

Political History of the Bhotia Valleys

Considerable cultural diversity exists between the various Bhotia valleys. Isolation and lack of contact have been pointed out as the main causes. Berreman has examined at great length the role of isolation in producing “cultural variability” in the Himalayas generally. “Localism” in the Himalayas has been mentioned by several writers. Eighty per cent of the marriages contracted in the village studied by Berreman were within a radius of sixteen miles. Walton quotes a Mr. Stevenson to the effect that when the latter came to Almora in 1867, he noticed that “not one man in a hundred had ever been 12 miles from his village. . . . Every village used to have stocks of grain buried, for no one came to them, and the villagers went nowhere. . .”

However, in the case of the Bhotias, who were never shy of moving about, and actually were always ready to move, isolation could not account for the diversity between the Johari and the rest of the Bhotias. The variability here can be better understood in the light of what has happened in the last five hundred years in this area, even though the records are sketchy. Cultural differences that arose because the different valleys were ruled by different powers until A.D. 1815, may have contributed to the social isolation in these valleys. At the same time, proximity in terms of physical accessibility could help maintain contact even when two valleys were being ruled by two different powers. This is the situation in Bhot.

Walton, H. G.—1911, p. 108
The Bhotias of Almora (and Garhwal) are not Buddhists in any sense. It is, however, quite likely that the inhabitants of these valleys were Buddhists at the time when the rest of Kumaon professed Buddhism, an amalgam of Tantric ritual and aboriginal cults. Shankaracharya, the great reformer, came to Kumaon and Nepal around the 9th century A.D. to re-establish Hinduism and drive the followers of Buddhism out. Around the 11th century, when the rest of Kumaon had virtually banished Buddhism, it may have lingered on in some isolated pockets.

It has been suggested that the Bhotia valleys were once ruled by 'Tibet'. This suggestion often comes from the inhabitants of Kumaon, and does not seem likely. Rev. Francke's studies in the history of western Tibet leave no doubt that these valleys were not a part of the Ladakh empire at any time. Central Tibet was not strong enough to control its domains until almost the middle of the seventeenth century. The records available give a fairly continuous account of the Bhotia valleys after A.D. 1420. In that year, the valleys of Johar and Darma were ruled by the Raja of Doti—Doti being the western-most province of Nepal. The valleys of Byans and Chaudans were in the possession of the Raja of Jumla, a kingdom bordering Tibet in the north-western region of Nepal. This state of affairs continued for almost one hundred and fifty years, until in A.D. 1581 the Raja of Kumaon seized the control of Johar and Darma from the Raja of Doti. The valleys of Byans and Chaudans, in those days were probably not as accessible as they are now. The Darma Bhotias, however, could go to Byans easily, either by going through Tibet or by using a short cut across the glacier-covered mountains, as they do even now. So that, although Darma and Byans belonged to two different kingdoms, their contact remained despite the change of hands; and although Johar and Darma valleys remained part of the same political unit, there was little contact, if any. The Darma Bhotias were turned towards the Byansi Bhotias in their economic and social relationships.

Johar and Darma remained a part of Kumaon under the rule of Kumaon Rajas until the Gurkhas invaded Kumaon in 1790. The latter, who had earlier seized the control of Byans and Chaudans valleys from the Jumlis, brought the four valleys under the same administrative unit. Twenty-five years later, they were succeeded by the

Francke, A. H.—1907.
British and the four valleys became a part of British Indian territory.

To what extent the Bhotias submitted to their rulers is quite another question. In the interest of their trade they have often acknowledged the authority of more than one state over their valleys. After their incorporation into Indian territory, and despite all agreements between Lhasa and the British Indian Government, they continued to pay various taxes to the Tibetan officials. This state of affairs led Atkinson to remark that the Bhotia, in continuing to pay taxes to both Tibetan officials and the Government of India create "an anomalous state of subjection which their paramount interest in continuing to be the medium of commercial intercourse between India and Tibet tends to perpetuate."

Any conclusions, therefore, relating to the cultural tradition towards which they were drawn by virtue of their being a part of a particular kingdom, are likely to be little more than conjecture. There are, however, a few points which may be noted.

The level of interaction between the three valleys of Darma, Chaudans and Byans has been fairly high for several centuries. The Byansi Bhotias have to pass through Chaudans in their winter and summer migrations. Marriages between the Chaudansi and Byansi Bhotias are frequent, though only by choice and facilitated by the existence of rangbang, a modified form of bachelor’s dormitory. Similarly, marriages between Darma and Kuti (a village in Byans) were often contracted. The Darma Bhotias would sometimes go to Tibet via Kuti and the latter, in their southward migrations, would pass through Darma. Considerable ‘cultural approximation’ between these three valleys has existed. Their winter-homes in Indian territory are situated within a five to six hours’ march. To what extent their culture is related to that of the Jumlis, whose kings ruled over Chaudans and Byans for several hundred years, it is difficult to say in the present tenuous state of knowledge about the Jumlis. It may, however, be mentioned here that some of the Bhotias’ institutions (to be described later as incompatible dissimilarities in the present region of their involvement) have been reported to exist in that part of Nepal. The traditions current among the Bhotias in these valleys also point to their having migrated from western Nepal and Tibet.

The Johar valley is situated closer to the administrative and religious centres of Kumaon, and has not been as inaccessible in early days as the other valleys. The Johar route to Tibet and particularly to Mt. Kailash and Manasarovar lake was much more in use by the pilgrims than it is today. Bhotia traditions here point to two periods in Johar. The first, when the Shoka (or Soka) Rajputs (?) ruled the valley. They had settled here with the help of a Sakya Lama and prospered on Tibetan trade. Their population however, declined after some time when some undisclosed event occurred. It was either a disease or an invasion; the latter from either north or south usually meant ruin and destruction. The second period began with the coming of the ancestors of the present-day Milamwals (the inhabitants of Milam, the largest and the northern-most village in Johar valley). They were two brothers who are said to have come from Garhwal and were of Rajput origin, the surname being Rawat.47 One of the brothers went to Niti valley and the other came to Milam. As tradition has it, Dhamoo Rawat, by a singular act of heroism, routed an army led by a chief of

47 While it is difficult to evaluate the authenticity of this tradition, some of its details may be seen here in the light of available chronology. Cf. Walton (1911, p. 178): "Baz Bahadur Chand returned to Almora (in 1671 A.D... after defeating the Raja of Garhwal...) taking with him several Bisht families from Sabli and Rawats from Bangarsyun, to whom he gave the post of headmen of certain villages." Walton's accounts are based mainly on Atkinson's work (1882). Baz Bahadur Chand was the powerful Raja of Kumaon (1638-1678 A.D.) and a devoted Hindu. His religious feelings were constantly offended by the reports of cruel conduct of the Huniyas (Tibetans), brought to his court by the Hindu pilgrims returning from Kailash and Manasarovar. The Raja went to Tibet via Johar in 1670 A.D., defeated the Huniyas and wrested the control of the passes. He virtually destroyed the fort of Tak-lakot and made the Huniyas promise that pilgrims and traders will be allowed free communication. On his return, he set apart the revenue of five villages for the free distribution of food and provision of shelter for the pilgrims. On his return he invaded Garhwal in 1671 A.D. It is not unlikely, that the Hindu Raja may have thought of posting Hindu village headmen near the passes, and one such Rawat was sent to Milam. This seems to tally with the Bhotia tradition. The Rawats of Milam in Johar are divided into several clans. All the clans trace direct descent from Dhamoo Rawat. They now inter-marry because "the distance is of more than 15 generations." Towards the end of his reign, Baz Bahadur also annexed the Byans valley, but effective control of this valley was perhaps not possible in those days. The kingship was little more than a tax-gathering agency in such cases.
Ladakh and saved the ruler-cum-lama of Thojung monastery from certain ruin. This earned for Dhamoo Rawat and his descendants the right to trade anywhere in Tibet, a right which they retained until the Chinese occupation of Tibet. The other Bhotia traders are restricted to a specific Tibetan mart.

The coming of the Rawats in Milam started several trends. Dhamoo Rawat is alleged to have gone back to Garhwal and brought several families of Rajputs, Kunkiyas and slaves with him and settled them in several villages in Johar. Displacement of Buddhism by Hinduism is also associated with the coming of the Rawats, who in turn were to become Bhotias and find it hard to come back to Hinduism, themselves!

Whether the ancestors of the Milam Rawats were Hindus or not may be difficult to answer definitely. What is certain is that the Hindu Rajas of Kumaon in the sixteenth century were least willing to put up with serious incompatibilities within their kingdom. An example of this can be seen among the Bhotias of Darma, Chaudans and Byans. The Bhotias in all these three valleys have a ceremony called Dhurung connected with the last rites of a person. Dhurung is celebrated in exactly the same manner in these three valleys, except in one detail. While in Chaudans and Byans, a yak is sacrificed (the sex of the animal following the sex of the deceased person) in Darma, it is always a sheep. The Darma Bhotias had probably modified this incompatibility with Hinduism while they were ruled by the Hindu Rajas of Kumaon. On the other hand the Byansi and Chaudansi Bhotias became a part of Kumaon when, under the British legal system, native customs and practices were respected.

It was during the British rule that the Bhotias were positively drawn towards Kumaon and India with undivided loyalties. In the preceding regime they were subjected to very heavy taxation and the irregular demands of officers. The British reduced their taxes to one-fifth of what the Bhotias were paying to the Gurkhas. The British also patronised the Bhotias as a border-people and the Bhotias were in turn convinced that, as British subjects, they could get protection for themselves. However, their coming closer to the British also meant their coming closer to the regional cultural tradition. The British policy created new leaders in the Bhotia community. Later, these leaders played an important role in the
struggle of the Bhotias for a higher status. It may be added here that notwithstanding the claims of the Johari Bhotias to be called Rawats, the use of the term Bhotia as a category applicable to the borderland traders became official. Atkinson’s observations that language, physical features, customs and practices, all assign to the Bhotias a common origin with the people of Hundesh (Tibet), became the official policy which later had some important repercussions.

The Regional Cultural Tradition

The wider cultural region in which the Bhotias are involved and in relation to which their social mobility has to be understood may be roughly defined to constitute the Himalayan districts of the state of Uttar Pradesh, including the former state of Tehri Garhwal in the west and some of the western-most parts of Nepal in the east. In terms of “spread”, this is an area in which certain cultural forms—dialects, gods and rituals, food and dress, and forms of social organisation in relation to caste-structure and caste rules—are shared within a range of local variations. The cultural traditions of the area are distinguishable from those of the areas lying outside it. Berreman has discussed the cultural characteristics of this region (which he calls Central Pahari) as distinguished from those of the plains in the south. The administrative district of Almora in which the Bhotias are involved forms a large part (nearly one-third in area and population) of the “central Pahari region” described by him. However, in certain respects, Berreman’s picture of the larger region does not very well fit the Almora scene, as may be seen in some of the examples that follow. Perhaps, more intensive and extensive work is necessary to be able to say whether these differences are mere “local” variations or of such significance that it may be misleading to underestimate them in a culture-area scheme. Here it may be useful to have a synoptic view of the Almora caste structure and caste rules to be able to understand several aspects of Bhotia social mobility, since it is this smaller cultural region in which the Bhotias are directly and intimately involved.

It is a commonplace of Himalayan ethnology to regard the Doms as the earliest inhabitants of the Pahari region. They are

supposed to have been conquered, subjugated and reduced to virtual slavery by the Khasas (or the Khasiyas). The latter are believed to have been of 'Aryan' stock but had preceded the 'Vedic Aryans' in coming to India. In their customs and practices, the Khasiyas were considerably different from the Hindus of the plains, until perhaps the tenth century A.D. when religious reforms and new political influences brought them closer to Hinduism.

For over a thousand years or so, before the coming of the British to Kumaon, large parts of Garhwal, Kumaon and western Nepal were ruled by the Hindu (chandravanshi) Rajput kings who had come from the plains and conquered the Khasiyas in their turn. While the bulk of the population was Khasiya, the 'immigrant' rulers were numerically a small minority. It is, therefore, understandable that these 'immigrant' Rajput kings of Kumaon encouraged other Brahmans and Rajputs from the plains to settle in their kingdom. From time to time Hindu Rajputs from the plains were also invited to join the forces against the Khasiyas. During this period, however, there were also small pockets where Khasiya chiefs ruled over certain territories almost up to the sixteenth century. They sometimes paid a tribute to the Hindu Rajput kings of Kumaon and on other occasions, they revolted and wreaked vengeance on the immigrant Hindu 'tyrants'.

Under these conditions, the immigrant Brahmans and Rajputs who supported the kings were favoured with royal services, award of lands, and administrative appointments to keep a control over the Khasiya peasantry. By virtue of their political and economic dominance they became the aristocracy of Kumaon. The immigrant Brahmans and Rajputs also shared the comparatively more rigid caste rules of the plains. They remained closely tied to each other in ritual relationships—the immigrant Brahmans alone performed priestly services to the immigrant Rajputs. The Khasiyas, after their subjugation probably decided to 'join' the immigrants since they could not 'beat' them. At some point in their history, the Khasiyas themselves split into Brahman and Rajput divisions. However, the immigrants considered themselves to be the 'real' Brahmans and Rajputs, whereas the Khasiyas pitted their own Brahman and Rajput divisions against the former for status equivalence.

The immigrant Brahmans and Rajputs showed considerable superciliousness in their dealings with the Khasiyas and tried to maintain
a social distance characteristic of the rulers and the ruled. The story of Khasiya social mobility during this period is interesting but outside the scope of this essay. It may suffice here to say that the Khasiya-Brahmans and the Khasiya-Rajputs at this point began to rank their segmentary divisions in a hierarchy and in this process, they even adopted caste and sub-caste names for their clan and lineage divisions. The Khasiya clans that had once ruled over other clans were placed higher up in the scale and even though the stratification did not become rigid in terms of commensality and pollution, preferences for marital alliances into clans occupying an equal or higher status in the hierarchy were present. Atkinson in 1886 recorded about 250 ‘septs of Khasiya Brahmans’ and about 280 ‘septs’ of Khasiya Rajputs. A large number of them had adopted surnames of their Hindu immigrant counterparts while others derived them from their occupations. The situation with regard to the surnames is quite confusing today, as can be seen in the case of the surname Rawat. This surname is shared by (i) a sub-caste of the immigrant Hindu Rajputs, (ii) the descendants of a Khasiya-Rajput clan that once ruled over parts of eastern Kumaon, and (iii) Bhotias of a particular clan in Johar.

Although some of the Khasiya Rajputs tried to raise their status by marrying into immigrant Rajput families, they seldom made any effort as a group to achieve substantial cultural approximation to the aristocracy which continued to look down upon them. In the observance of upper Hindu caste rules, considerable dissimilarity persisted. During the period of British rule, Khasiya marriages and inheritance were governed by their own customary law, in contrast to the immigrant Hindus from the plains who were governed by the Mitakshara law. Joshi summarises the differences between the Khasiyas and immigrant Brahmans and Rajputs from the plains in the following chart:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Khasas</th>
<th>Brahmanized Hindus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. ‘The existence of levirate. The brother’s widow is received as wife.</td>
<td>1. No custom of levirate or widow marriage.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Marriage is a secular transaction. Wife is mostly purchased and bride-price is taken.

3. No religious ceremony is essential for marriage.

4. Marriage undoubtedly dissolvable by mutual consent.

5. Dhanti marriages recognized.

6. Thread ceremony (janeo) is not essential. No fiction of rebirth. Many Khasas have taken to the mystic thread now.

7. Cultivate and use the plough themselves.

Khasas

Brahmanized Hindus

2. Marriage is a sacrament. Bride-price is never taken.

3. Kanyadan and Anchal ceremonies are essential.

4. Marriage indissoluble; no divorce is recognized.

5. No Dhanti marriages recognized.

6. Thread ceremony indispensable.

7. Even when engaged in agricultural pursuits do not plough the land themselves.”

It may be mentioned here in passing that the Bhotias of Johar have sought status equivalence with the Hindu immigrant Rajputs. These Bhotias, therefore, also affect superiority over the neighbouring Khasiya-Rajputs on the basis of the cultural approximation which the former have gradually achieved with the immigrant Rajputs. Joshi is concerned mainly with the “Khasa Family Law”, and he mentions only those distinctions which have a legal significance. For our purposes, other caste rules and cultural forms

52 “The word ‘Dhanti’ only denotes that the woman was either a widow or had been divorced when she remarried, and a Dhanti marriage in no way affects the legal status of the wife or her children.” (Joshi, ibid., p. 129).

53 Joshi, L. D. —1929.
among Rajputs which have influenced Bhotia behaviour may also be noted here briefly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Khasiya Rajputs</th>
<th>Immigrant Rajputs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. A Khasiya can take a wife from any caste, except the Doms. Both hypergamous and hypogamous marriages are recognized. The families involved in the inter-caste or inter-sub-caste marriages do not suffer any social degradation.</td>
<td>1. Endogamy is more often the rule. Inter-caste marriages, or marital relations with the Khasiya Rajputs usually lead to a lowering of the family's social status.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Rules relating to pollution or acceptance of food and water from other castes (except Doms) are considerably relaxed.</td>
<td>2. Rules governing commensal relationship and pollution are observed carefully.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. They are mainly an agricultural people living in rural areas.</td>
<td>3. Are largely an urban people engaged in services, and professions. In rural areas they are the landowners who hire Khasiyas and Doms to work in their fields. Older families retain an aristocratic ritual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. There is no segregation between the sexes. The women work in the fields and are valued as a labour force. Their contact with the opposite sex, before and after marriage, is tolerated. Sexual lapse on the part of a woman does not affect her family's social status.</td>
<td>4. There is a certain amount of segregation of the sexes. 'Purdah' was observed until quite recently by the women in most families as a mark of respectability. Women work mainly in homes. Loss of face for the family often accompanied a sexual lapse on the part of a woman.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Among the All-India Hindu gods and goddesses, Shiva (Siva) and Parvati are worshipped under several names. Other Hindu gods like Vishnu and his re-incarnations (Ram and Krishna) are known but only occasionally receive a secondary attention. *Nanda Ashtami*, when the goddess Nanda (Parvati) is worshipped, is the most important event in the annual ritual cycle.

6. There is considerable belief in local deities, ghosts and spirits (like Kshetrapal, Bhumiya, Chaimu, Runiya, etc.) which are usually connected with mountains, rivers and forests.

7. Most of the worship is done in crudely constructed temples on mountain ridges. The ritual consists mainly in the sacrifice of animals, usually goats and sheep, but sometimes water-buffaloes.

5. The regional emphasis on the worship of Shiva and Nanda (Parvati) is shared with the Khasiyas. But the All-India gods also receive their usual attention at the time of festivals. *Gita* and *Ramayana* are regularly read, usually by the older people.

6. The belief in the local deities, ghosts and spirits is by and large shared with the Khasiyas.

7. Worship is done both in well-known temples, and in a specified part of the homes where idols and pictures of the gods and goddesses are kept. The ritual is predominantly non-sacrificial except on the occasion of *Nanda Ashtami* when animals are also sacrificed.

The list could become almost endless if various minute details were to be included, but the above is probably sufficient to illustrate
the case of social divisions in this region. In the existing literature, the caste system of Kumaon is characterized by a broad two-fold division—the Biths (i.e. the upper castes, Brahmans and Rajputs) and the Doms. The Biths as a category include all Brahmans and Rajputs irrespective of their being Khasiyas or later immigrants. The Doms as a category also include a number of artisan and other lower castes. Although it is undoubtedly true that this two-fold division provides a broad frame of reference for inter-caste interaction, it is, nevertheless, also true that the complexity of the caste system in Kumaon is somewhat shrouded in this simplification. In the context of social mobility, it is necessary to see beyond the Bith and the non-Bith division. The hierarchy of divisions among the Biths is better represented in the following table.

STATUS HIERARCHY OF KUMAON BRAHMANS AND RAJPUTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brahmans</th>
<th>Rajputs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Immigrant Brahmans</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Immigrant Rajputs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khasiya Brahmans</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Khasiya Rajputs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It may be added here that the efforts of the Khasiya Brahmans to achieve status equivalence with the immigrant Brahmans have been persistently frustrated by both the immigrant Brahmans and Rajputs.

The use of the term ‘immigrant’ as an adjective to distinguish the later arrivals from the Khasiyas is not a happy one but because of its currency in Himalayan ethnology, it has been retained here. It should, however, be understood that the so-called ‘immigrants’ have lived in Kumaon for anything between twenty to fifty generations, and today, they are as much an immigrant and as much a pahari (hillmen) as the Khasiyas themselves. The immigrant Brahmans and Rajputs are an integral part of the pahari society and their interactional relationship with the Khasiyas has been historically defined. They share a large number of cultural forms in common, but to say that the Paharis meet other Paharis “on
terms of equality" is over-stating the case for pahari culturalism.

To complete the picture of Kumaon caste structure we may now have a look at the Doms and such other castes that lie somewhere between the Doms and the upper castes.

The Doms are not a caste. The term 'Dom' as a category includes a large number of artisan castes, untouchables, and a few nomadic groups like musicians, tailors, jugglers and acrobats. They are like serfs, being tied to their masters. They are usually heavily in debt and spend their lives working to repay it. Prior to the British rule, they could be bought and sold like slaves. Although they have been lumped together into one status category by the higher castes, the numerous castes and sub-castes among the Doms do not always intermarry or interdine with each other. In Kumaon they constituted about 20 per cent of the total population at the turn of the century. The presence of the Doms in practically every village in Kumaon in a state of servitude, and bound to perform most of the jobs for which an artisan may be needed, has not allowed the emergence of a jajmani type of interdependence of castes. Their lack of independence is largely responsible for the absence of intra-caste inter-village solidarity among them. The absence of the jajmani pattern of relationship in these parts makes it difficult for the marginal groups to become integrated into the economic and ritual life of the peasants, as has happened elsewhere in India in tribe-caste situations.

The two-fold division of castes into Bith and 'non-Bith' (upper and lower) largely determines the pattern of a rural Khasiya's interaction with others. A person may be allowed to enter a Khasiya home and offered certain foods (like milk and milk products) if he is not a Dom. For then he is either a Brahman or a Rajput of a kind known to the Khasiya. The Banias are not to be found in the rural parts of Kumaon and in the cities they do not have any difficulty in being treated as a twice-born caste. A large number of marginal groups like Dhamsis, Bhotias, and Tibetans with whom a rural Khasiya comes into contact, are dealt with them in terms of his orientation to a two-fold division of Hindus. The Bhotias, the pseudo-Rajputs and the Tibetans do not fit into the upper caste bracket of his caste scale. To a rural Khasiya, therefore, these groups are either non-Hindus, or, if they are Hindus but are

neither Brahmans nor Rajputs, they have to be non-Biths, which in common parlance is the same as the Doms. The various groups that are found in the area immediately south of Bhot can be arranged in a hierarchy (in terms of a two-fold division) as a rural Khasiya Rajput would view them.

### STATUS HIERARCHY AS VIEWED BY A RURAL KHASIYA RAJPUT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups accepted as Hindus in the caste structure</th>
<th>Non-Hindu groups in terms of a status hierarchy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Immigrant Brahmans Khasiya Brahmans</td>
<td>..............................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrant Rajputs Khasiya Rajputs</td>
<td>..............................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhami, Bora, and other pseudo-Rajputs.</td>
<td>..................................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doms</td>
<td>..................................................................</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the above table, Hindu groups claiming to be Rajputs, have acquired considerable cultural approximation with the Khasiya Rajputs. Some of them employ Khasiya Brahman priests. Their rituals and institutions do not show any incompatible dissimilarities. They are therefore admissible as Hindus. Since they are, also, land-owning cultivators, they have to be ranked above the Doms. In matters of pollution, commensality, marriage, etc. they are not treated as Rajputs at all. The main reason for their non-acceptance is: "No body knows who their ancestors were—may be slaves." Besides the absence of antecedental advantages, they have until quite recently lacked some of those advantages which could make their claims weightier.

In case of the Johari Bhotias, the situation is often confusing. They possess all the advantages which are required for conceding them their Rajput status. Their wealth and prosperity, their possessions of land, houses and animals, their social status in Johar valley, their antecedental advantages, and the influential
leaders in Bhot who occupied important positions in the British government have given the Johari Bhotias considerable prestige in the area. But the one irreconcilable incompatibility in their case is their being suspected of being beef-eaters or inter-dining with beef-eaters. They have to be placed at an equal if not higher status but they are not Hindus to a Khasiya. Other Bhotias are confirmed "beef-eaters" and "just like the Tibetans".

The Bhotia Society and Levels of Stratification

In spite of the fact that the Bhotias of Darma, Byans and Chaudans (hereafter, for the sake of brevity, referred to as eastern Bhotias) and the Bhotias of Johar shared the same appellation and occupation, such a thing as a Bhotia community has probably not existed for more than two decades. The Bhotias of Johar and the eastern Bhotias stood apart from each other with the Johari Bhotias regarding the eastern group as 'primitive and backward' and having nothing to do with it. Any possible relationship because of a common name was vehemently disclaimed. The eastern Bhotias in turn were jealous of the prosperity and prestige of the Johari Bhotias. They disliked them for their superciliousness. Besides encountering each other in a Tibetan mart, they also met each year in a fair at Jauljibi (in Bhot). There was very little social intercourse between them on these occasions. The Bhotias of Almora have never had a centralized tribal authority or a Bhotia organization in the past. However, the rest of the population regarded them all as "Bhotias" and several things have happened during the last twenty years which have compelled them to put up a united front. The new leaders in Bhot, particularly in Johar, have been more cosmopolitan in outlook, and ready to forego their superiority for other benefits. The coming of the Chinese into Tibet and their interference in the Bhotia's traditional trade arrangement was a matter of grave concern to all sections and this brought them together. Before this happened, India had gained independence and the constitution of the new Republic-to-be was in the making. Special provisions were being made for scheduled tribes and backward classes. The Bhotias from all the valleys joined together under a new leadership to demand numerous safeguards as a "backward people" and special protection of their trade interests. This movement was led by the Johari Bhotias in the main. This new leadership
later decided to claim a ‘scheduled tribe’ status for the Bhotias of Kumaon, as against the earlier organized efforts to become Rajputs. This will be discussed later.

Structurally, the Bhotias are divided into the following units:

The Bhotia Community

The several valleys inhabited by different groups of Bhotias named after the valley

The local group (village)
Surname often derived from the name of the village

Clan (garkha)
Sometimes it may be same as the local group when an entire village is inhabited by the members of one clan

Lineage (Ranih)

The Family

The most important structural unit for our purposes is the Valley. For the outer world and the community, a person is identified with the name of the valley he inhabits. The valleys, besides being culturally identifiable, are the main socio-political units in Bhotia social organization. The order in which the Bhotias place themselves, much to the annoyance of the Darma Bhotias, is:

Johar
Byans

Mayer has suggested the possibility of some villages in central India having derived their name from the clan-name of the first settlers. Such a possibility cannot be ruled out for other parts of India, including Kumaon (1960, p. 162).
In wealth and possessions, the Darma Bhotias have been known to be better off than the Byansi or the Chaudansi Bhotias. This relative scaling, however, does not affect interaction among the eastern Bhotias to any recognizable extent.

The Bhotia society in each valley is divided into a number of hierarchically arranged divisions. In Johar, there are five such divisions:

1. The Bhotias are at the apex and may be said to constitute the aristocracy of Bhot. There are tendencies on the part of certain villages and clans to place themselves higher than the rest, but such tendencies have not yet become ramifying in their effects.

2. Next in order come the Nitwals who are also Bhotias and inhabit the valleys of Niti and Mana in Garhwal. Some of them have come and settled in Johar. Unlike the rest of the Bhotias who claim to be Rajputs, the Nitwals claim to be Brahmans. The Bhotias accept their claim to be Brahmans but have assigned them to a lower rank. The Nitwals act as Pujaris (priests), cooks, and occasionally as servants of the Bhotias. They have accepted their inferior position, although they claim that they would not eat rice, cooked by a Bhotia.

3. The Kunkiyas (also called Paikasi) have sprung from two sources. Firstly, the slaves, whom the Bhotias freed, settled down in Bhot as Kunkiyas. The other source of their recruitment is from among the Bhotias themselves. 'Whoever goes lower for a mate, becomes lower, and begets a Kunkiya'. They generally act as servants of the Bhotias though theoretically they are permitted to own land and cultivate. There are a few instances of a Kunkiya engaging himself in the trade independently. They are ranked above the Doms as they come from partly Rajput or Bhotia ancestral background.

4. The Doms in Bhot occupy the same position as they do in the rest of Kumaon. In Johar they are the untouchables and the Johari Bhotias do not eat anything cooked by them.

5. In Bhot, particularly in Johar a distinction is made between the Doms generally and the Musician-Doms, called Hurkiya or
TRIBE-CASTE MOBILITY IN INDIA

Mirasi. The latter usually prostitute their women and are ranked lower than the Doms.

The Johari Bhotias have a status ranking order in which they place most of the groups they come into contact with. Because of the greater cultural approximation in their caste-behavior with that of the higher castes, they are more strongly hierarchical in their interaction with other castes.

The Johari Bhotias rank the people they come into contact with in terms of a broad two-fold division of the caste hierarchy, and maintain a Rajput-type social distance. From the point of view of a Johari Bhotia, the various groups could be arranged in a hierarchy as under:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATUS HIERARCHY AS VIEWED BY A JOHARI BHOTIA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Groups within the valley of Johar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khasiya Brahmans, the priests of the Johari Bhotias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johari Bhotias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nitwals &amp; Khasiya Rajputs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kunkiya servants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hurkiyas &amp; Mirasis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The fact that the Johari Bhotias assign the Khasiya Brahman a higher and the Nitwal priest, a lower position does not really indicate a contradictory attitude towards religion or these priests. A Nitwal is essentially a servant, and only when there is a celebration for one of the local gods or goddesses, the servant plays the role of a priest-cum-cook. In the more important ceremonies, particularly those related to crises of life, a Khasiya Brahman priest is invited to officiate. The Johari Bhotias also seem to have accepted the claims of the Khasiya Brahmans for equality of status.
with the immigrant Brahmins but have rejected the claims of the Khasiya Rajputs for a higher status for several reasons some of which were indicated earlier. It should suffice here to say that this course of accepting the Khasiya Brahmins' claims and rejecting the Khasiya Rajputs' claims has been followed by several other groups in Kumaon.

The Khasiya Brahmins have officiated as priests in Johar for a long time now. This fact in itself cannot be taken to mean a general acceptance of the Bhotias' claims for Rajput status. For in catering to the spiritual needs of the Bhotias, these Khasiya Brahmins have themselves suffered a downward slide in their ritual status among Brahmins. Another thing noticeable in the above chart is the position of the eastern Bhotias. They have been regarded by the Johari Bhotias as having the same status as pseudo-Rajputs. However, a much higher status is likely to be assigned to them today when all Bhotias have to put up a united front for a 'tribal' status.

In the eastern Bhotia valleys, the social divisions are the same as in Johar except that there are no Nitwal servants. The eastern Bhotias have not imbibed the hierarchical orientation in terms of caste precedence to an extent where it influences their interaction with every other group. Accordingly, their ranking of the various groups they come into contact with is very different from that of the Johari Bhotias. Their ranking is not made within the frame of a two-fold division. They recognize three broad divisions—high, middle and low. Their view of the status hierarchy could be represented as under:

**STATUS HIERARCHY AS VIEWED BY AN EASTERN BHOTIA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups within their valleys</th>
<th>Groups outside their valleys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Hindus</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brahman priests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darma, Byansi and Chaudansi Bhotias</td>
<td>Johari Bhotias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kunkiyas Khampa servants</td>
<td>Khasiyas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doms</td>
<td>Doms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It will be noticed from the above chart that the Brahman and the Lama priests are equally important to the eastern Bhotias. Neither of them exists within their valleys, the only exception being a Khasiya Brahman from Nepal who stays with one of the richest Bhotia traders as a family priest. Most of the ceremonies related to the life-cycle and the worship of gods and spirits are presided over by a man’s sister’s son or a seyaktza who is usually a trader and a householder like other Bhotias. He is only additionally versed in the tribal lore and ritual. When these Bhotias are in their winter homes, they approach the Khasiya Brahmans to choose a name for a child, or to draw a horoscope. The Seyaktza is a specialist mainly in Dhurung, the performance of last rites of a person. The lamas are venerated for their wisdom and power to do good. The eastern Bhotias visit the monasteries in Tibet in the course of their trading operations. Here, with the help of the lamas they try to make sure that the local ghosts and spirits are taken care of before they embark on their return journey. The level of their interaction with the Dogpa traders is much more intimate than that of the Johari Bhotias, being usually on ‘terms of equality’, but the eastern Bhotias, nevertheless, always speak of the Dogpas as ‘dirty, filthy and crawling with lice’.

It may be added here that the above hierarchical ranking of the groups in Bhot is based on observations and inquiries made nearly ten years ago and it is reasonable to suspect that a good many changes have taken place in recent years.

Cultural Approximation: Compatible and Incompatible Dissimilarities

We have given an account of the caste structure and caste interaction in a small part of the central Himalayan region in which the Bhotias are involved. Now, it may be useful to examine briefly certain institutions and relationship patterns among the Bhotias to show the extent of cultural approximation reached by the two Bhotia groups in relation to the regional cultural tradition.

An indication of the considerable cultural approximation attained by the Bhotias has been given earlier. Most of the regional gods and goddesses are worshipped in Johar. Nanda Devi is worshipped with special fervour, and Nanda Ashtami, the festival when this goddess is worshipped, is the most important annual event in Johar.
Gita and Ramayana are recited on ceremonial occasions. Most of the ritual includes the sacrificing of sheep or goats to the various deities. These Bhotias, like the immigrant Rajputs, also have pictures of Ram and Krishna in their homes. The temples in Johar are extremely crude and built on ridges. There is usually a trident (Shiva’s symbol), a round stone representing the ling and a statue whose frame is made of twigs and later covered with clothes and jewellery to represent Nanda. Other regional deities worshipped in Johar are Thatiyal-Bhumiyal, the god of fields and rain, and Runiya, the shepherd god. There are also a number of purely local deities which are individually worshipped in different villages.

Bhotia caste behaviour in Johar has tended to become stricter than among the Khasiya Rajputs in certain respects. Rules governing their interaction with the lower castes are rigidly observed. Persons violating the rules are punished by the clan and village councils. The Johari Bhotias emphatically deny taking food or drinks with the Dogpas and they also refute the charge of eating beef when in Tibet.

Rules relating to celebration of life-cycle events are carefully observed in the manner of upper caste Hindus. A priest usually attends and performs all marriages in Johar. Marriages by kanyadan are common and considered respectable. They have been trying hard to eradicate the practice of charging a ‘bride price’ at the time of marriage. The Johari Bhotias have tried to model their caste behaviour not on the Khasiyas but the urban immigrant-Rajputs. The Bhotia women in Johar observe complete ‘purdah’, a practice which is unique in the rural parts of this area. There is a rigid segregation of the sexes, and like the other Hindu upper castes, all marriages in Johar are arranged by the parents without consulting the girls. The Johari Bhotias are proud of the higher moral tone of their life as compared to other Bhotias or the Khasiyas. The Johari Bhotias are mainly monogamous. In cases of barrenness, if a second wife is taken, this is done on the condition that the first wife will be allowed the freedom to remarry if she so desires. These Bhotias employ a Brahman priest to perform Shraddh for their dead ancestors like the Hindus.

There is virtually nothing in a Johari Bhotia’s way of life that may be incompatible with the fundamental values of upper caste
Hinduism. In several ways, they come fairly close to the immigrant Rajputs of distinguished families.

In the case of the eastern Bhotias there are a number of striking dissimilarities, some of these being incompatible with the basic values of regional Hinduism. During the last one hundred years or so, when the Johari Bhotias were busy modifying their customs and practices under influential leadership, the eastern Bhotias were content with their traditional way of life. In the matter of religion, the eastern Bhotias are far removed from the regional Hinduism. They pay respect to the ling, which is often represented by any irregular stone in their saithan (seat of god), a crudely constructed stone enclosure. The ritual usually centres around the sacrificing of animals, chiefly sheep. The animals are sacrificed in a specific way. The stomach of the animal is ripped open with a knife to pull its heart or the liver out and offer it to the deities at the saithan. The gods and deities are worshipped as and when the need arises. The eastern Bhotias have their distinctive religious lore, rituals and philosophy. They are also not Buddhists. There are no lamas and no images of the Buddha.

Ideas relating to ritual pollution of persons, food and water are alien to them. Upper caste Hindus, generally, disapprove of laxity in sexual morals, particularly on the part of women. The eastern Bhotias have the institution of rangbang which involves a nightly gathering of unmarried men and women who dance, drink and sleep together. The accepted form of marriage is 'marriage by capture'. Most of their festivities are characterised by considerable intermingling of the sexes. By and large, these customs are revolting to their Hindu neighbours. On top of these customs, stands the eastern Bhotias' ritual of 'killing' a male or a female yak (considered by the Hindus as a bull or a cow) in the Dhurung rites. To most Hindus in this region—Brahmans, Rajputs, or pseudo-Rajputs—the eastern Bhotias are “worse than the Doms”. These Bhotias are apparently far removed from the regional cultural tradition.

Desire for Rajput Status, Reform Wave and Leaders

There are two questions about the Johari Bhotias which can hardly be answered. If, as they claim, the Johari Bhotias are descended from Rajput immigrants from Garhwal and Nepal, at what stage and how did they lose, or felt they were losing, their
Rajput status? Secondly, if the Johari Bhotias at some point in their history were as far removed from Hinduism and the regional tradition as the eastern Bhotias, how and when did the process of their cultural approximation begin? There are hardly any records that could throw some light on the social history of these valleys. The earliest accounts of this nature are to be found in the reports of the British administrators in this area and these are just a little over one hundred years old. We know from these records that the Johari Bhotias had, by that time, "become considerably Hinduised". The process continued after the establishment of the British administration. British patronage of the Bhotias created a new type of leadership in Johar. Several Johari Bhotias were recruited into the government service for the specific purpose of Tibetan survey and cartography. Some of them did splendid work. Rai Bahadur Kishan Singh of Milam village, who later became a well-known surveyor of the 19th century, had worked for the Survey of India. He is reported to have mapped a very large area in Asia Minor, Tibet and other regions up to the Gobi desert. He received several medals from the Geographical societies of London and Rome. His brother, Narayan Singh, was awarded the decoration of C.I.E. by the British government in recognition of his work on Tibetan exploration. Another Johari Bhotia held the post of a sub-divisional officer with magisterial powers at the turn of the present century. The first two were Johari Bhotias, yet Pandit as an honorific was attached to their names in all official papers. Today the number of Johari Bhotias in government services in Almora, Naini Tal, and other cities is much larger.

The Johari Bhotias, at the turn of the century, were prosperous by any standards. Members of their community had received honours and recognition from the government. Education received considerable impetus in Johar through the influence of new leaders. Yet, despite all these advantages, they were not satisfied with their 'Bhotia' status and wanted to be accepted as Rajputs. Officially they were the members of a 'Mongoloid border tribe' and to those around them in the urban, administrative centres, they were 'dirty, beef-eating Bhotias'. The Bhotias of Johar, in particular, did not like this appellation at all. There are stories current in Almora that the Bhotia boys in Almora schools would fight any one who called them a Bhotia.
At the turn of the century, pressure was also put on the government to re-classify the inhabitants of Milam and some other villages as Rajput Rawats and the rest as Soka Rajputs. These efforts, however, did not meet with success. At this time, a *Jauhariya Upkarak Sabha* (Joharis’ welfare society) was formed. It had the support of all villages in Johar and considering the amount of money received by the secretary as mentioned in his reports, it could be said that the society had wide support. The secretary, Ram Singh, was a man of ideas. He published two issues of the society’s journal, *Jauhariya Upkarak* in 1913 and 1914, in which several socio-economic reforms are discussed. There is a mention of the ‘evil’ practice of bride-price current in Johar and that an all-out effort was necessary to eradicate it completely. Another theme met with is the desirability of ‘unity’ in Johar to build up prestige outside Johar.

Ram Singh was also interested in the Johari Bhotias’ case for Rajput status generally. It was reported by several people in Johar that Ram Singh had compiled the genealogies of several clans in Johar, tracing their descent from the various Rajput families who had originally come and settled in Johar. Ram Singh died in the thirties and in 1953 no one in his family seemed to know what became of his compilation.

It is, however, clear that the leaders in Johar were actively busy in not only seeking cultural approximation with the immigrant Hindus, but also in tracing their lost Rajput ancestors. The significant question here is: what did the Johari Bhotias stand to gain if their claims for Rajput status were to be accepted? There could possibly be several related answers. They had achieved practically everything by way of status resources. It is not unlikely that the desire for Rajput status was an attempt to seek a ritual recognition of their achieved status and thus add to their power and prestige. Their achievements also did not seem consistent with the ‘Bhotia’ status, particularly in relation to the Almora urban society into which their elite were being increasingly drawn. Such an achievement-discrepant status gave rise to numerous conflicts and the desire for caste status represented one possible way of resolving these conflicts.

Let us now look at the eastern Bhotias. Rai Pandit Gobaria was an influential and titled leader in Byans. After the coming
of the British, the roads to this valley were improved and the flow of the Hindu pilgrim's traffic to Mt. Kailash was directed through Byans. District Board schools were opened throughout Bhot in the late twenties and were staffed with Brahman teachers. Shri Narain Swami, a Hindu ascetic, full of zeal for humanitarian work and financially backed by his numerous devotees in the plains, came to Chaudans and eventually built a temple there in the forties. A Darma Bhotia had returned home as a teacher from Almora. These two leaders combined together and formed a *Darma Sevak Sangh* in the forties. Besides lending his support to this organisation Narain Swami preached against drinking and immorality and gave the Bhotias a high school and a middle school from his own resources. His influence, coupled with that of the local leaders led the Darma Society to launch a policy of reform. To begin with, a war was waged against drinking, smoking, rangbang and intermixing of the sexes. The question of yak sacrifice was left out at this stage.

The initial response was not discouraging. The Bhotias, who are traditionally allowed to distil their own spirits, were asked to burn their distilling apparatuses. On a particular day several villages in Darma and Chaudans witnessed a 'bonfire' of the apparatus. With the co-operation of the village elders, the rangbang gatherings became less frequent. All went well for a while in the few villages close to the Swami's ashram. Then suddenly "one day everything came back". Climate was blamed for making it "necessary for a man to drink if he wanted to survive the cold". New distilling apparatus were set up. The young men complained that these "old people had all the 'fun' when they were young. Now they would not let us have our share of it". Thus everything was revived within the short span of a couple of months.

The question, why these reforms failed is of secondary importance here. But the general reluctance on the part of the eastern Bhotias to seek the same kind of status as the Johari Bhotias, or to achieve a certain amount of cultural approximation with the regional cultural tradition may be considered. The Johari Bhotias, through organised efforts, have reached a stage in their cultural approximation where, in certain respects, they cannot help wanting to become a caste. The eastern Bhotias are not yet equipped for a similar desire. During the last five centuries of their history the eastern Bhotias have had to face diverse political pressures and
cultural influences from Kumaon, Nepal and Tibet. Too much diversity in external influence may have created a situation in which they stuck to their own cultural forms and learnt to resist external influences. Their interaction with the Kumaon and Nepal peasantry has been generally confined to the exchange of salt and cereals. The lack of situations requiring greater involvement and more intense interaction with the peasants has added to the social and physical isolation of the eastern Bhotias. They are aware of the Hindu attitudes towards them and have shown the same generalised indifference to the Hindu cultural tradition which they had earlier shown to most external influences.

Their cosmology and ideology seem as much suited to their 'joy-oriented' life as the Hindu ideology is to the Hindu peasants. Nearly a hundred years ago when the Bhotia valleys became accessible parts of Kumaon, it was noticed by the British administrators in the region that the Johari Bhotias were considerably "Hinduised". To the eastern Bhotias, however, the Hindu peasant philosophy of karma, rigid stratification, renunciation and making a virtue out of poverty have remained alien through the years. Under these conditions, while the Johari Bhotias, at the commencement of British rule in Kumaon, found themselves advantageously situated to strive for greater cultural approximation with the regional culture, it was not so with the eastern Bhotias. In their case, the diversity in values and world-view stood in the way of the two cultures—eastern Bhotia culture and the regional Hindu culture—establishing any rapport, as it were. During the later years when the Johar valley witnessed organised efforts for cultural approximation, the eastern Bhotia efforts could neither be serious, nor far-reaching. What they did acquire during this period are Hindu names with 'Singh' as a suffix, and their readiness to call themselves 'Soka' Rajputs.

Persistence of incompatible dissimilarities as a part of the core in eastern Bhotia culture have already been noted. The Kumaon Hindu society has been unwilling to make any concession to accommodate these incompatibilities. The process of cultural approximation has been too slow to produce any noticeable effect.

Individual efforts to attain a higher status in terms of caste are present but mainly confined to the richest traders or a handful of individuals, educated in Almora. The young people, mainly
from Byans valley, who went to Almora for higher education find themselves a misfit on their return to eastern Bhot. Their newly acquired values and norms stand in the way of their participation in eastern Bhotia culture. An interesting aspect of education in Byans is that while men were busy in trade and the boys in learning the tricks of trade, the girls went in for education, often in Almora schools. Now, it is often hard for these girls to find a tolerably literate Bhotia husband in their valleys. Marriages in eastern Bhot are arranged not by the parents but by the boys and girls directly in rangbang gatherings, and are finalised by a token ‘capture’ in which the bride is willingly captured and carried away from her village by the groom’s friends. The girls educated in the Almora Hindu tradition usually acquire a distaste for the entire procedure of getting a mate.

Individuals who find it hard to fit themselves into the eastern Bhotia society often find their way into the towns and cities of Almora for good. Except for such individual emigrants, the eastern Bhotias in general are not drawn to the Almora urban milieu, as the Johari Bhotias are. Because of their limited participation in the regional society, the eastern Bhotias have also not yet seriously felt the disadvantages of being a ‘Bhotia’ in terms of a hierarchical status.

Back to Tribal Status

It was mentioned earlier that after India’s independence, a Kumaon Bhotia People’s Federation was formed in Almora. The leadership was mainly from the Johar valley with a lady-member from Byans. The leaders were educated and employed in the urban areas. The Federation sent a memorandum to the Minority sub-committee of the Indian Constituent Assembly in 1947, demanding special “social, economic and political safeguards” for the Bhotias.

Several things happened during the next six years which the Bhotias watched with interest. Special provisions were made in the Indian constitution for the scheduled tribes and castes. A number of groups were listed as backward castes and these were also entitled to receive certain benefits from the state. The Bhotia leaders probably watched with envy, the political, economic, educational and social advantages which such groups were receiving.

Thev felt that they had a right to be included in this category entitled to special benefits.

In the meantime another thing which upset the Bhotias was, the coming of the Chinese into Tibet. As soon as they had established themselves, the Chinese started interfering in the traditional trade arrangements between the Bhotias and the Dogpa traders. The support of their trade monopoly which the Bhotias had received from the Tibetan officials was not forthcoming any more. They were not in a position to collect even their debts from the Dogpa traders without the traditional support of the local Tibetan officials. The Chinese, on the other hand were interested in promoting Sino-Tibetan trade and the construction of new roads linking China and Tibet virtually displaced the Bhotia traders. Their main source of livelihood was rapidly slipping away from them by 1953. The Bhotias felt that the Government of India was both helpless and unwilling to defend their trade arrangements. The treaties between India and Tibet were mainly of a political nature and had little reference to the interests of such groups as the Bhotias.

In 1953, therefore, a second memorandum was drafted by the Federation. This time they asked for their inclusion in the list of scheduled tribes. The leaders were still mainly the educated Johari Bhotias. A deputation of the leaders waited on the Governor of the State to present their case. It was, however, generally known that the U.P. Government had decided not to allow any group living in their state to be included in the list of scheduled tribes. The Bhotia leaders therefore indicated in the memorandum that they may be included at least in the list of ‘backward’ castes, although they had stressed in their demand their socio-economic distinctiveness in the region.

Their demand for recognition as a ‘tribe’ has not so far met with any success, but this is a different matter altogether in that it is linked with the policy of the state government. What is significant here is the demand itself by the Johari Bhotias for a ‘tribal’ status, in contrast to the earlier position when they had always wanted to be recognised as Rajputs.

How is this back-to-tribal status demand by the Johari Bhotias to be understood? In the first instance, such a status carries with it certain advantages which they feel they need badly at present after the loss of their Tibetan trade. In terms of tribe-caste mobility
this could perhaps be taken as a form of nativistic movement after their attempts at achieving a desired status were constantly frustrated. However, before it could be called a 'nativistic' movement the content and direction of change now will have to be studied. It would be interesting to watch the nature of cultural approximation this community now seeks within itself and with the regional cultural tradition.

Summary

A large number of India's tribal groups today, though not organically articulated with the regional society, have acquired considerable cultural approximation with the local and regional cultural traditions. The tribe-caste dichotomy, in terms of polar categories, is neither justified by ethnographic facts nor does it seem useful as a hypothetical proposition. Both the Khasiyas and the Bhotias would seem to be a caste and a tribe simultaneously. The Johari Bhotias chose the Rajput aristocracy of Kumaon as a model for their caste behaviour. This was in keeping with their notions of superiority over the neighbouring Khasiya-Rajput cultivators. They did not quite succeed in their efforts because of alleged 'incompatibilities' in their cultural inventory. The eastern Bhotias almost stood apart as spectators for various reasons. In claiming a higher position for themselves, the Johari Bhotias were not competing against the immigrant Rajputs or the Khasiya Rajputs for common goals. Their struggle seems to have been intimately related to the conflict inherent in their achievement-discrepant status.

In situations of social mobility and status conflict, different groups tend to view others in a hierarchy commensurate with their claims. Such differing hierarchy-constructs can sometimes enable us to see the stresses and strains of social mobility. Where the interaction between different groups is not intense, a consensual hierarchy as a basis for day-to-day relationships cannot be easily arrived at. It is seen in the Bhotia situation that three of the four

\[\text{After the preparation of this essay I have come across a recent paper by Bailey (1961) in which he has examined the terms "Tribe" and "Caste" at some length from a 'structural' point of view. He suggests that tribe and caste may be viewed "as a continuum rather than as disjunct opposites" (pp. 13-14).}\]
general dimensions of community structure mentioned by Marriott for the elaboration of caste ranking are absent in Bhct.

Post Script (April 1965)

Since the writing of this essay in February 1962, two important developments in the Bhotia scene have taken place:

1. The Bhotias, as a result of their negotiations with the Government of India have been classified as a "Backward Caste". This status entitles them to special economic, political, educational and employment privileges.

2. The Bhotia trade with Tibet came to a complete end in 1962-63, in which year an agreement (signed in 1952) between India and China to maintain status quo, for ten years to begin with, in border trade came to an end and its renewal was presumably refused by China. The Bhotias are now being resettled on agriculture, handicrafts and sheep-farming. They are leaving their valleys in large numbers and are drifting towards the towns and cities in Kumaon. This is going to involve them increasingly in the Kumaon society and in the next few decades we may witness new trends in the Bhotia caste-mobility situation.

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5. A Plural Society in Sikkim

A Study of the Interrelations of Lepchas, Bhotias and Nepalis

INTRODUCTION: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

This essay is in the nature of a preliminary report on my field-work carried out in Sikkim during February and March 1955. Though the time I could spend in Sikkim was too short for an intensive study, I have decided to publish my data, because field-work in this area is becoming increasingly difficult, and so far little work has been done in Sikkim by anthropologists.

This essay was written in 1961 during my stay in London as Visiting Lecturer in the Department of Anthropology, School of Oriental and African Studies. I am greatly indebted to Professor C. von Fürer-Haimendorf for his suggestions and comments, as well as for his help in preparing the essay for publication. At the time I did my field-work it was difficult for a foreigner to obtain permission to enter Sikkim, particularly for field-work in villages. Two months was the maximum period for which I was allowed to work, and even this was an unusual permission to be given to a foreigner. I am grateful for the extremely kind consideration given to me by their Highnesses, then Maharaja of Sikkim, Tashi Namgyal, and Maharaja Kumar, Thendup Namgyal, (the present Maharaja) and Mr. Pant, all of whom had the most generous appreciation of the needs of an anthropologist. In particular, I owe my profound thanks to Her Highness the Maharaji Kumari, Pheunkhang Lha Chum: her unforgettable warm friendship and her encouragement were of the greatest help in my work. My acknowledgments for kind help are also due to the Dewan, Mr. Rustomjee, to the Minister of Religion, Kazi Densapa, to the Private Secretary to the Maharaja, Kazi Tseten Tashi, and to the Assistant Secretary, Mr. Punkumar Pradhan. My field-work was carried out when I was attached to the Department of Anthropology, Government of India, under a Government of India Scholarship. I also received
My field-work was carried out in three hamlets in the eastern part of Sikkim. Each hamlet is centred on a monastery (gonpa): namely, Pabyuk, 5 miles south-east of Gangtok (the capital of the Sikkim kingdom); and Phodang and Phensang, neighbouring hamlets 15 miles north of Gangtok. In this essay I present material from Pabyuk as the major field, and from Phodang and Phensang for comparative purposes.

The population of Sikkim is composed mainly of Lepchas, Bhotias, and Nepalis, who represent different ethnic groups, settled in the country at different times. The Lepchas represent the autochthonous inhabitants of Sikkim, while the Bhotias and Nepalis are immigrants.

The majority of the present Bhotia inhabitants are descendants
generous financial assistance from the Japanese Ethnological Society; and
my research was made possible by the Institute for Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo, to all of whom I give grateful thanks.

1 In Sikkim, peasant households are always clustered on the slope of a hill, which distinguishes each residential area, and bears each local name. I use the term 'hamlet' for such a unit. Administratively, there is a local unit called 'Block': one large hamlet, or two or more small hamlets together form one unit, with one headman (Mandal). Wider than this Block, there is a unit called 'Area' (which is also used as a polling area for the election of the State Council). 'Block' and 'Area' often coincides with the traditional unit 'Elakha' (estate, a unit of landownership before the land reform of 1951).

2 The Tibetan spelling of gonpa is dGon-pa; in English literature, it often appears as gompa, gonpa, etc.

3 The total population of Sikkim in 1891 was 30,458, of which 5,762 were Lepchas; 4,894 were Bhotias; and the rest were Nepalis, including minor groups of Limbu, Gurung, Murmi, etc. (Gazetteer of Sikkim, Ed. in the Bengal Government Secretariat, Calcutta, 1894, p.27). The total population increased to 109,808, according to the Census of India, 1931, of which 13,060 were Lepchas, and 11,955 Bhotias. The Census of India, 1951, showed an increase to the total of 137,725: 39,397 were Buddhists, against 97,863 Hindus (no statistics by ethnic groups are given, but it can be assumed that the Buddhist population represent Lepchas and Bhotias, and the Hindus the Nepalis).

The terms, Bhotia (Brutia), Lepcha and Nepali are those used by non-Tibetan-speaking peoples. In Sikkim they are called Monri, Lhori and Pahari respectively, names derived from the Tibetan terms: Mon-pa, Lho-pa and Bal-pa. The southern parts of Tibet, including the annexed areas, are called Mon-yul in Tibet; Lho indicates south, and particularly signifies Bhutan and Sikkim; and Nepal is called Bal-yul in Tibetan. Lepchas called themselves also Rong in their own language.
of immigrants from Tibet and Bhutan in the 17th century, who played an important role in establishing the kingdom of Sikkim. According to historical evidence, a considerable number of Tibetans, including the Bhutanese, migrated to Sikkim during the early part of the 17th century. They included both peasants and Buddhist monks as well as aristocrats who had played a major role in the formation of the Sikkim kingdom and the Tibetanization of the land of the Kanchinjunga. The migration of these Tibetans naturally resulted in considerable cultural and political changes.

The kingdom, with its system of bureaucracy, was formed by the immigrant Bhotias in cooperation with the local Lepcha chiefs. Before the Bhotia migration there was no central political power in

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4 The chronological account of Sikkim history starts in 1604, the birth year of the first Sikkim Maharaja, Phuntso Namgyal.

One of the best accounts of the history of Sikkim is the History of Sikkim, by their Highnesses the Maharaja Sir Thutob Namgyal and the Maharani Jeshay Dolma of Sikkim, 1908. (Sir Thutob Namgyal was the ninth Maharaja of Sikkim, and the father of the late Maharaja, Tashi Namgyal who was enthroned in 1915 as the eleventh Maharaja, succeeding the tenth Maharaja, his late elder brother.) The book is written in Tibetan, and translated into English by Dawa Kazi Samdup; both are in manuscript. I was given access to both through the kindness of Mr. Densapa, the Minister of Religion. I found the translation very good, following every detail of the original Tibetan manuscript: the following quotations in this essay indicate pages of the English translation. Some excerpts of the English copy were published by Joseph F. Rock, "Excerpts from a History of Sikkim", Anthropos, Vol. 48, 1953, pp. 925-948.

The Gazetteer of Sikkim also gives short accounts of Sikkim history (pp. 5-38, 248-250), and is apparently based on similar sources to those of the History of Sikkim, though I had no time to enquire into the historical sources used by them. The History of Sikkim gives us much more detailed and rich descriptions.

5 The Bhotia migration seems to have started during the 16th century, because, according to the History of Sikkim, Gyabumsag (Gyad-hBum-gSags) the ancestor of the first Maharaja, Phuntso Namgyal, six generations back, had already migrated to Sikkim from Tibet (detailed evidence is given in the History of Sikkim). The migrations took place continuously in many waves, and through different routes: from the northern, and western passes of the Sikkim border to Tibet.

The term Bhotia or Lhori only applies to the descendants of these early immigrants: Tibetans who migrated recently—only two or three generations back—are called Pu-pa (Tibetans) or Kham-pa (Tibetans from Kham district), and are distinguished from the Lhori.
Sikkim, but only local chiefs. The people practised shifting cultivation, and their general economic condition seems to have been similar to that of many tribes in Assam, who even now practise this type of cultivation. The local Lepcha chiefs, who contributed to the formation of the kingdom, were appointed as governors or ministers; the lands, which were nominally taken over by the king, were regranted to them as a reward for their contribution to the state. Thus local chiefs were transformed into an aristocracy: quasi feudal lords, who ranked in the same way as the Bhotia aristocracy. Thus, neither the natives nor the immigrants were rulers or ruled, though the kingship itself has been held by a patrilineal descent line of Tibetan aristocrats who migrated to Sikkim and attained royal status since the year of the installation of the first king (Maharaja), Phuntso Namgyal in 1641.

The History of Sikkim describes how the Bhotia immigrants had contact with the native Lepchas, and finally established the kingdom as follows. Gyabumsag (Gyad-hBum-gSags), the ancestor of the Maharaja of Sikkim who first migrated into Sikkim established a great friendship with Thekongtek (The-kong-Tek),

Even after the establishment of the kingdom the majority of the people still seem to have continued shifting cultivation until the late 19th century. The History of Sikkim describes the method of cultivation, in the middle of the 18th century, as follows:

"a new patch of jungle would be cleared every year, and when dried set fire to. On the cleared space, paddy, kodo and bhutta, as well as various other white and black grains would be sown. Next year another patch of jungle would be cleared. The virgin soil of course yielded a very rich crop, and people used to gain their living very easily, and also enjoyed a good many sorts of fruits and herbs, which they cannot get now. As they had not much call on them for free labour contribution nor much of tax to pay, they were very happy". (IV p. 36,).

Today in most parts of Sikkim, wet terraced rice cultivation is practised: according to various records, the change from shifting cultivation to wet cultivation occurred mainly during the latter part of the 19th century, when Sikkim began to suffer from land shortage, owing to the increasing Nepali colonies. This change was also encouraged by British policy at that time.

The ancestor of the Maharaja of Sikkim is said to be a member of the royal family of the Minyak kingdom, the north-eastern part of Tibet, descended from a famous Tibetan king, Tisondetsen (Khri-srong-Iden-tsan).
the powerful Lepcha chief, who was also famed as a wizard.

"An eternal friendship was made between Gyad-hBum-gSags and The-kong-Tek. They agreed by this that all the males should be considered to be related to the sons and all the females to the daughters. This friendship was cemented by a ceremony at which several animals, both domestic and wild, were sacrificed and all the local deities invoked to bear witness to this solemn contract of friendship, binding the Lepchas and Bhotias in an inseparable bond. They sat together on the raw hides of the animals, entwined the entrails around their persons, and put their feet together in a vessel filled with blood, thus swearing the blood troth to each other. The-kong invoking all the Sikkim local spirits, asked them to stand witness to this solemn contract, on those who broke this eternal hereditary and national contract between the two races. . . . Henceforth the Lepchas gradually came under the influence of the strangers." (Thutob Namgyal, Maharaja of Sikkim, and Jeshay Doma, Maharani of Sikkim, History of Sikkim I, p. 21.)

The account just before the enthronement of Phuntso Namgyal runs thus:

"The Guru Tashi (the father of Phuntso Namgyal) family became very influential and prosperous. The Lepchas came under their influence and power in a very short time. One Lepcha retainer (Nang-gZan) called Sambar became the favourite of the chief, from among the Lepchas. From that time the Lepchas flocked to the service of the new chief, and those who proved themselves the most trustworthy were appointed in the household establishment of the Raja, while others were entrusted with posts of responsibility and honour in the State. Gradually as the Lepchas of Tashi-teng-kha and Seng-deng also came under the direct influence and control of the chief, they were called the ministerial Lepchas (Monpas). Those not so much in the chiefs' confidence or favour were employed as traders to carry goods and were called Tshon-sKyel Monpa:, and employed in outdoor services. They were also expected to strike or kill anyone if necessary, in building or other handicrafts. Besides they were to contribute the summer Nazar in the shape of newly gathered
crops, grains and fruits, and they were also to carry grains, etc., to any markets for trade or barter. These rules were established."

(Thutob Namgyal, Maharaja of Sikkim, and Jeshay Doma, *History of Sikkim*, I, p. 22). The next year after the installation, 1643 (water sheep), "the Maharaja built a Palace at Tashi Tengkha. Having brought all the Lepchas and Bhutias under his direct power, he selected twelve Kaziz from amongst the twelve Lepcha Jongpons from amongst the superior families of Lepchas of Sikkim. Proclamations were made promising due recognition and services, saying that the posts of ministers and Prime ministers (Chag-mzod) would be conferred on them. On the other hand those who did not serve well would be classed amongst the common people, and required to contribute such services as were required by the Maharaja, and that thenceforth they would not be allowed to remain masterless as before." (Ibid., p. 30).

By this time, the Bhotias were also forming an aristocracy through the development of the power of the royal family: there were fourteen major Bhotia families of high rank, grouped into two different descent groups (Gazetteer of Sikkim, 1894, p. 27), to one of which belonged the group of the royal family.

This political system of Sikkim, the basic pattern of which was laid down in the period of the first Maharaja, followed the system of Tibet: a kind of centralized feudal bureaucracy. The ministers and other important officials of the central government consisted of members of aristocratic families who resided in the capital, and who, at the same time, were feudal lords of the estates by virtue of grants from the Maharaja; they are locally called Kazi. The king also had his own estate. Some of the estates belonged to monasteries which also formed part of the centralized system under the king.

The migration of the Bhotias into Sikkim was important not only because it led to the organization of the entire population in

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8 After the land reform of 1951, the estates of these Kazi were taken by the state, and distributed to the cultivators, so that these bureaucrats were transformed from feudal lords into salaried officials, thus losing much of their economic basis.

9 Gazetteer of Sikkim, 1894, p. 11.
one political unit, but also because of the spread of Tibetan Buddhism. The activities of Tibetan monks in the establishment of the kingdom were very significant. These monks were profoundly learned in Tibetan Buddhism and great personalities; some of them belonged to noble families of Tibet, according to the History of Sikkim.\textsuperscript{10} They paved the way for the enthronement of the first king, and since then the monks of important monasteries have played a significant role as advisers in the political affairs of the kingdom. For two hundred years since the Bhotia migration, Buddhist monasteries had been established all over the country. Today there are 35 gonpa altogether, which are officially registered in the Ministry of Religion, and which receive government patronage. The oldest is Sanga Chelling, established in 1697, the biggest is Pamiongchi, established in 1705,\textsuperscript{11} and the second biggest is Phodang, established in 1740. There are also numerous small temples and shrines in and near every inhabited area. The establishment of gonpa has been part of the political scheme of the central government from the beginning of Sikkim history. Reflecting this historical process, all monasteries in Sikkim have been centralized under the secular power of the king, and are not religious organizations independent of the political system.\textsuperscript{12}

\textsuperscript{10} Among them the most influential figure was Lha-tsun Nam-kha Jig-med (1597-1654).

\textsuperscript{11} Pamiongchi has the privilege of sending a representative to the Maharaaja's Durbar, as a member of the Sikkim Council (History of Sikkim, I, p. 34).

\textsuperscript{12} At the installation, the first king Phuntso Namgyal was given the title of Chos-rGyal (Dharmaraja, Religious king) by the lamas, so that in theory he had twofold powers, spiritual and temporal. This is somewhat different from the case of the Dalai Lama in Tibet, who was originally a religious figure and who was given secular power as the head of the state in 1642 from Gshrikhan, the then Mongol chief who conquered Tibet. The kingship of Sikkim is much more secular, and the power of the monasteries is subject to, and amalgamated with, the secular system of the state. However, within the Tibetan ideology, the Sikkim king was regarded as something similar to the Dalai Lama, and the former kept very close contact with the latter—in fact, Sikkim became one of the satellite states of Tibet, historically and culturally.

"The Maharaja Chogyal Phuntso Namgyal of Sikkim was also one of the canonised saints of the doctrine, the Dalai Lama condescended to regard the brotherhood thus established and sent the Raja a most friendly and complimentary letter recognising him as the ruler of the sacred land of the southern slopes, and accompanying the letter with the silk scarf of congratu-
However, within the framework of Tibetan Buddhism, the *gonpa* of Sikkim form branches of major monasteries in Tibet to which belonged the monks who first migrated into Sikkim and who contributed a great deal to the establishment of Sikkim Buddhism. These monks belonged to non-reformed sects, such as Nyingma-pa, and Kagyu-pa, which flourished before the rise of the Geluk-pa, the reformed sect which was established by Tsonkapa and became dominant sect in Tibet after the 17th century. The Sakya-pa, to which the Sikkim Royal family was historically closely linked, was also one of the major sects which played an important role in the history of Tibet before the 17th century. Consequently most of the *gonpa* in Sikkim belong to these older sects; and particularly to the following: Lhatsun-pa, to which Pamiongchi *gonpa* belongs, Katok-pa and Ngodak-pa (these three are sub-sects of the Nyingma-pa); Karma-pa, to which Phodang *gonpa* belongs, Drug-pa, to which Pabyuk *gonpa* belongs,—these two sects are sub-sects of Kagyu-pa. These *gonpa* of Sikkim have kept in fairly close touch with those of Tibet ever since their establishment; many learned monks used to receive further training in Tibet.

The activities of the monks who established monasteries here and there in what were then pagan Lepcha communities, accompanied by Bhotia peasant settlers, had great significance in the development of the native community. The *gonpa* became the important centre of the local community. The function of the *gonpa* was both to convert pagan Lepchas to Buddhism, and to weld them into a wider system. *Gonpa* were centralized as an integral part of the political system of Sikkim, but at the same time, had close links with the religious system of Tibet. Closed local communities were thus opened to the outside world, and a primitive society changed into a peasant society under a centralized political system, connected with the greater world of Tibetan civilization.

The spread of Buddhism among the pagan Lepchas was surprisingly successful. Today, there are many Lepcha monks as well as lation, bearing the Dalai Lama's seal, the mitre of Guru Rinpoche extracted from a hidden store, as well as the Phurpa (devil dagger) and the most precious sand image of the Guru as present. These kind and friendly greetings bound the new ruler to the head of the Tibetan Government with feelings of gratefulness. And since then whenever this State suffered from any aggression, from the neighbouring states, it always looked to the Tibetan Government for protection and aid." (History of Sikkim, I, p. 34.)
Bhotia monks. The local Lepcha population now speaks the Bhotia language, one of the Tibetan dialects, and this is quite different from their own, which is believed to have Austroasiatic affinities.\textsuperscript{13} They wear Bhotia dress and hold annual festivals according to the Buddhist calendar. Gradually the pagan Lepchas were entirely converted to Buddhism, and today, they and the Bhotias constitute one religious and cultural entity. Native belief and Tibetan Buddhism were closely interwoven in their culture, thus producing one of the distinctive frontier cultures within the Tibetan cultural area.

The Nepali migration into Sikkim started much later than that of the Bhotias. In the latter part of the 19th century, when the bulk of the Nepali population began to migrate into Sikkim, the acculturation between the Lepchas and the Bhotias had already reached such a high degree that the latter two ethnic groups confronted the Hindu newcomers as one well-integrated Buddhist population.

This historical process in the formation of the present population of Sikkim is clearly reflected in the actual scene of a local community. Contacts between Lepchas and Bhotias, and those between the Lepchas-Bhotias and the Nepalis are of an entirely different nature. The religious differences which cover various aspects of social life are very great: both Buddhists and Hindus maintain their own values and ideas, and have little in common, although they reside side by side in the same locality and follow similar techniques of rice cultivation.

The following discussion is divided into two parts: the first deals with the problems of the contacts of Lepchas and Bhotias in terms of a community centred on the gonpa, while the second discusses the various problems arising from the intrusion of Nepalis into a community of Lepchas and Bhotias.

\textsuperscript{13} The Lepcha Language used to be classified as Tibeto-Himalayan, of the Tibeto-Burman branches in most of the literature concerned. I found it was quite different from the Tibeto-Burman (Tibetan including various Tibeto-Burman dialects of tribes in Himalaya and Assam). Bhotias hardly understand the Lepcha language, though they have lived side by side with Lepchas for more than two hundred years. I gained the impression, though I have no training in linguistics, that it is somewhat similar to the Khasi language in Assam, which is considered Austroasiatic, unlike many tribal languages of Tibeto-Burman affinities in Assam. The late Dr. Roerich, one of the most distinguished Tibetologists, also held the same view, in a conversation I had with him at Kalimpong. I hope very much that a trained linguist will work thoroughly on this matter in the near future.
LEPCHA AND BHOTIA COMMUNITY

Gonpa and Local Community

Since the time of the Bhotia migration, the gonpa has been the pivot of community life. It is also the centre which unites both ethnic groups, the Lepchas and the Bhotias.

The structure of a Sikkim local community is characterized by the gonpa at the highest point of the village. The gonpa is normally situated about 5,000 to 6,000 feet high, overlooking the valley, and backed by the forests. Around the gonpa, outside its precincts, are clustered households which normally supply professional priests (lama) to the gonpa, and farther below the households which engage mainly in cultivation form another hamlet. Around and below this residential area extend rice fields, irrigated terrace fields, and pastures. The land in the bottom of the valley, which is sheltered and moist, being close to the river, is used for cardamom cultivation.

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14 Priests in Sikkim are organized into a monastic organization of each local gonpa, and many of them have training as monks, as I presently describe. Hence they are also monks. In Sikkim they are generally called 'lama', though the term is only applied in Tibet to those who have achieved the highest religious status and learning.
This type of settlement, which distinguishes between the households of lamas and those of peasants, is most pronounced in communities with larger monasteries, such as Phodang and Phensang. In such a community we normally find a substantial population of Bhotias, who form a hamlet by themselves, and in particular the hamlet immediately round the gonpa tends to monopolise the professional lamas of the local gonpa. In the case of Phensang, however, there is a Bhotia community immediately around the gonpa, surrounded by hamlets of Lepcha peasants, thus distinguishing between the Bhotias and Lepchas geographically and occupationally within a local unit; whereas in Phodang, one of the areas of the dominant Bhotia population, the peasant hamlets which surround the lamas' hamlet near the gonpa are mainly occupied by Bhotias and the headmen of these hamlets are all Bhotias.

On the other hand, in an area such as Pabyuk situated on the frontier of the Bhotia population, there is a somewhat different type of hamlet composition, in which both monks and peasants, the Bhotias and the Lepchas, are mixed. In Pabyuk, out of 73 households clustering around the Pabyuk gonpa, 30 are Lepcha, 20 Bhotia, and 23 Nepali. Such a balanced proportion of the three ethnic groups in one hamlet is rare in Sikkim, most hamlets being dominated by one or other of the three groups. The households of the Lepchas, the oldest inhabitants of this area, occupy the best parts—the southern slope to the east of the gonpa—called Naitam—and the Bhotias occupy the northern slope—Namonten. On the outskirts of these clusters, the Nepali households are scattered here and there, as shown in the map 'Distribution of Houses in Pabyuk', reflecting the historical formation of the Pabyuk community.

Phodang gonpa is the second largest gonpa in Sikkim, after Pamiongchi, and regards the Crown Prince (Maharaji Kumar) of Sikkim as the spiritual head as well as its patron. Phensang gonpa which ranks next to Phodang, likewise regards the Queen (Maharani) as its spiritual head and receives her patronage.

This Bhotia hamlet, called Gensho, consisting of 16 households (headman: Pemachewang Bhotia), is surrounded by Lepcha hamlets: Pani (30 households; headman: Ake Lepcha) in the south; Rangon (29 households; headman: Karbari Lepcha) in the north-west; Pamtan (15 households; headman: Nuksuk Lepcha) in the east; Tsaon (35 households; headman: Adon Lepcha) in the west; Labi (39 households; headman: Chuzon Lepcha) in the north-east. They together form a local community clustered on one hill topped by the Phensang gonpa.
The Nepalis are the most recent immigrants here—they came within the last 30 years. The Bhotias must have settled in this community about 1875, when Pabyuk gonpa was built. Though the Bhotias and the Lepchas tended to concentrate in distinct residential areas, the distance between the gonpa and each residential area is the same—the gonpa is situated at the point where both residential areas meet. Both groups produce lamas in proportion to their number: of the total registered lamas of Pabyuk gonpa, 20 are Lepchas and 13 Bhotias.

In every hamlet, whatever its composition, unless it is a hamlet newly created by, and exclusively occupied by, Nepalis, there are always one or more Buddhist institutions; if not a gonpa, then a small shrine of some kind. To each of the larger gonpa is attached a distinctive area, including several local hamlets, which one might call a parish. Households within a parish are called zindha and they support the major economy of the gonpa. Originally "the monasteries did not possess any land as monastery land", as the History of Sikkim states, but they were authorized "to receive the gifts and donations of certain villages or blocks, over which they were given religious authority".17 "Certain villagers are named the laymen of a certain monastery: and these people support the monastery with their contributions for pujahs in all cases". However, in the course of time a gonpa would be able to accumulate its own land "by the gifts and donations of their own laymen who were named in the deeds granted them by the Maharaja". On the whole, except the five big gonpa,18 the gonpa

17 These quotations are from History of Sikkim, I, p. 154.
18 The following data give some idea of the distribution of estates before the land reform: according to the Administration Report of the Sikkim State for the Year 1929-30, published by Sikkim Government, 1931: Chapter IV. Main Heads of Revenue. "There are 104 Elakhas in Sikkim of which 11 were during the year managed by Managers appointed on commission by the State. 15 Elakhas's land revenue tax goes to the upkeep of five big monasteries of Sikkim. 21 are 'Kazis', 6 are Bhutias, 8 are Lepchas and 13 are Nepalese and one a domiciled plainsman.

Elakha leases were issued by the Durbar in 1925 for a period of 15 years. In the event of the death of a lessee during the term of his lease, the State has undertaken to renew the lease in favour of his heirs only in the male line of lineal descent and failing that to the duly recognised adoptee of the lessee if any." (Above number of Elakhas altogether make 74: the rest of 104 seems to be the private estates of the H.H. Maharaja.)
DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSES IN PABYUK
did not possess much land even before the land reform.

From this system of landholding, there arose two major kinds of zindha: landowners and cultivators. Those called 'Kazi' were big patrons of the gonpa. Peasants contributed to the gonpa economy through their landlords, but they themselves were socially so closely attached to the gonpa, that they also made minor contributions on such occasions as festivals. This kind of relationship between the peasants and the gonpa seems to have been semi-permanent. The ownership of land might change in the course of time, through changes in the political and economic relations of the landlords, or from donations to gonpa by landlords, but cultivators remained on the same land. The local population might therefore change their affiliation to the landlords, but their affiliation to the gonpa has remained for the most part unchanged.

The unity of the local community is preserved by the gonpa. The people's life is regulated by its activities: the ritual at birth and death, illness, and various agricultural rites are performed by the lamas of the gonpa. All peasants' festivals are festivals of the gonpa. Priests are the intellectual élite, whom peasants consult for guidance in their life. Hardly a day passes without some contact with the gonpa and lamas. In return, zindha are obliged to give service and gifts to the gonpa, when needed. After the land reform most of the gonpa in Sikkim, except the five biggest, lost their lands, if they had any, and they cannot expect handsome donations from their former patrons who are now no longer landlords. Hence their economic dependence on the local peasants, who are now smallholders, is greater today.

However, the gonpa and zindha are inseparably interwoven, since lamas are also the zindha of the gonpa, as are other peasants. Unlike the monks of the Geluk sect who must observe celibacy and reside in the gonpa, the monks of the Kagyu sect, to which belong Phodang, Phensang and Pabyuk Gonpa, as well as many other gonpa in Sikkim, normally have wives and children with whom they reside. And when they are not engaged in prayer or meditation, they engage in cultivation. Hence a gonpa is not inhabited. In this respect, the gonpa is a temple rather than a monastery. But there are many periods of minor or major festivities in the Tibetan Buddhist calendar, when all lamas stay in the dormitory of the gonpa, engaged in prayer all day and even during
the night. During these periods, the lamas' activities are strictly regulated by the monastic order, and the gonpa is then like a monastery.

Lamas are recruited from both Lepchas and Bhotias. People are eager for their sons to become lamas. They say that if a son is intelligent and healthy, he should be sent for monastic training. No restrictions or customs, in terms of descent, status, wealth, and occupation of one's father, prevent an individual from becoming a lama, though on the whole there are more lamas among the Bhotia population, and among those whose fathers are also lamas. To become a lama is considered a most desirable achievement. The gonpa is the place where Buddhists receive their ideal education and practise their ideal profession, and the lamas form the intellectual élite of society with an exceedingly high prestige. In fact, lamas who have reached a comparatively high stage in their training, have an intellectual outlook, which is clearly distinguishable from that of the peasants. The monastic training which I shall describe presently seems to contribute greatly to the development of an individual's personality and cultural standard. Furthermore, the professional lamas normally earn more than the peasants.

The training begins between the age of five and ten. At the start of the monastic training, the boy's head is ceremonially shaved, he is given a monk's robe and religious name, and takes the vow. One tutor is selected from the monks of the gonpa, and he becomes responsible for the boy's training. If the boy has relatives among the monks, one of them is likely to become his tutor. The parent or guardian of the boy prepares a feast for the lamas of the gonpa. The ideal training is expected to continue

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19 There are nunneries for girls, but in their case entry into the nunnery depends on their own desire, rather than on that of their parents. Their training is not as strict as that of young men, and there is no specified discipline. The number of nuns is very small and a nunnery is usually found in small quarters attached to the gonpa.

20 Pamiongchi Gonpa, the largest in Sikkim, is an exception, where admission is open only to sons of Bhotia aristocrats. It is said to have been built for the Bhotia exclusively: the Gazetteer of Sikkim states that 14 major noble families of Tibetan origin have the right to be admitted to the monastery without payment of entrance fees; and eight other minor families of Bhotia nobles are also admitted into the monastery, but only on payment of heavy entrance fees (p. 27).
through all stages and ranks of the priesthood, ending with the rank of Dorje-Lopen (the head of the *gonpa*). These series of ranks represent the various roles of priests in the monastic organization, and play an essential part in the prayer services and festivities in the *gonpa*. Each rank requires certain qualifications acquired in the process of training, according to which all lamas are ranked from the top to the bottom. For example, the following is the system in Phodang, Phensang, and Pabyuk *gonpa*. There are minor differences in each *gonpa*, but the basic scheme is common to all the *gonpa* in Sikkim.\(^{21}\)

**LIST OF RANKS AMONG MONKS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Period of Appointment</th>
<th>Number of lamas</th>
<th>Annual Payment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Dorje-Lopen (Patriarch, the head of the <em>gonpa</em>)</td>
<td>till death</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Rs. 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Omze-Tipa (Chief celebrant: the manager of the <em>gonpa</em>)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>(1(2))</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Ochunpa (Assistant of Omze-Tipa) (^{22})</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Chutempa (provost-marshal: in charge of monks)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Chenjipa (officiating monk)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Nyepo (commissariat manager)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Chinyel (in charge of kitchen)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Konsopa (a monk on duty at a special prayer every evening) (^{23})</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Kunyel (lamp caretaker; sacristan)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Tongpa (conch-shell blower)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{21}\) Cf. the monkhood of Pamiongchi (*Gazetteer of Sikkim*, pp. 294-304).

\(^{22}\) The number of Omze-Tipa, whether one or two, depends on the individual *gonpa*: in one case, he receives Rs. 20, otherwise it is divided equally.

\(^{23}\) (3) and (8) are not essential stages in the ranking order. (3) Ochunpa is a status between Chinyel and Nyepo: it is occupied by those who have passed the rank of Chinyel—it is not necessary to become Ochunpa to attain the higher ranks above Chinyel. Some *gonpa*, like Pabyuk, do not have Ochunpa. (8) Konsopa is not actually a rank, it is taken in turn by those who have the qualification above Chinyel. He performs a service every evening in the secret prayer room of the *gonpa*. The prayer of the Konsopa is intended to protect the *gonpa* and the people from evil spirits: they say that if this duty is not performed, they would be attacked by evil spirits and
The system of training through these ranks is as follows: a boy who enters the *gonpa* will spend a couple of years in studying the chanting of prayers and the various rules governing the *gonpa* activities of his teachers and predecessors. After this period, if he is considered fit for the priesthood, he will be given the rank of Tongpa. During this period, he does the cleaning and sweeping of the *gonpa*, and runs errands for the priests. At this stage, the boy will be about ten years old. When he passes this rank, he will be given the next rank, Kunyel, though not always immediately after he has completed the training which he receives as Tongpa. Most lamas, however, achieve the rank of Kunyel when they are in their teens.

The ranks of Tongpa and Kunyel are in the nature of a novitiate. The real priesthood starts from the stages of Chinyel, Nyepo, Chenjipa and Chutempa. Once passed the rank of Chinyel, he is regarded as a professional lama, who may be asked by villagers to perform ceremonies. The payment increases as his qualifications become higher. After the stage of Kunyel, in order to achieve the next rank a considerable time must be spent in prayers and meditation; he has to master various prayer books, and the technique of performance of ceremonies, including the detailed preparation of ceremonial articles.

At this stage not only intellectual ability is required, but also a certain degree of economic stability. This is also a stage at which a man may enter married life. Hence, unless he has a brother to attend to his cultivation and his family, and to support his needs for study, he has to face economic difficulties. Polyandry is one of the means best suited to deal with such a situation, as I shall describe later. Those who are able to overcome the difficulties of such a situation and attain the intellectual requirements of a lama may enter the professional priesthood. Some of them become non-professional lamas, although they once began monastic training, and remain peasants for the rest of their lives, without proceeding haunted by ghosts. The term of the Konsopa differs according to the *gonpa*, for example, in Phodang, it is one year, in Pabyuk 15 days.

24 The highest fee is received by the Dorje-Lopen Rs. 30 for a service, which normally takes one day, together with drinks and midday meals and high tea at the house. The Tongpa and Kunyel who accompany him at such a ceremony receive Rs. 3.
to the next stage. When a man becomes an established lama, for example by attaining the status of Chenjipa or Chutempa, his income becomes higher than that of an ordinary peasant and his activities become more and more those of a priest than of a cultivator. This is particularly so when he is holding office: his lands will then be cultivated by his brothers, or he engages labourers.

It takes about twenty years to reach the status of Chutempa, because the number of posts are limited and there are normally many candidates. One usually has to wait a couple of years before obtaining the next rank. So that when a man becomes Chutempa, he would be over forty. There are many lamas included in this category among the local population, and they represent the majority of lamas in this country. When the gonpa holds a festival, all these priests come to pray and stay in the gonpa's dormitory.

The next step is to become the Omze-Tipa and, finally, the Dorje-Lopen, which is the most difficult—the opportunities becoming correspondingly rarer, particularly in the case of the Dorje-Lopen who is appointed for life. As he is the religious head, the office requires a distinguished personality and profound knowledge. Further, the appointment is a government one, and hence a Dorje-Lopen is often a non-local lama. At present, posts as Dorje-Lopen are mostly held by Bhotias. For the local lamas the ideal goal is to become the Omze-Tipa. Many of those who have achieved or intend to achieve the rank of Omze-Tipa, have had a period of further study in monasteries in Tibet, and remain for very long periods in meditation. They are indeed the most devoted lamas of all. The majority remain in, and satisfied with, the second category.

In Sikkim, throughout monkhood, meditation is considered a very important part of self-training. When a lama decides to spend his life as a monk, he establishes his own meditation hut—locally called tsamkang—in a forest far from the hamlet (he may build or buy it from his predecessor). He sits in one of the rooms of this hermitage, closed to others, without seeing anyone. A small window, through which meals are served, opens on to the next room. The meals are cooked by his disciples who stay with him in another room during his period of meditation; or where a lama has no disciple, his family bring his meals (or ingredients which he can cook for himself).

The time for the meditation is normally in the monsoon season when there are no other activities in the gonpa—most festivals are
concentrated in the dry season, particularly after the harvest—and owing to the heavy rain it is easier for lamas to remain secluded from ordinary people. The period varies considerably, according to each meditator: ten days, one month, three months, or six months. In some cases it extends over more than a year, and even continues until death. The longer and more frequent the period of meditation, the greater is the spiritual status attained.

**LIST OF BABYUK LEPCHAS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of household-head</th>
<th>Clan</th>
<th>Wife's clan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  Khikhi</td>
<td>Rigmo</td>
<td>Gormo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  Temsing</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sigmo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3  Omze</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dorjepa B.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4  Zomle</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5  Gyamtso</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dorjepa L.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6  Tseling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7  Entsun</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yoktsabo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8  Namge</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sigmo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9  Hendup</td>
<td></td>
<td>Gormo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Mikchun</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sigmo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Gentsen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Tenzantseling</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tariputso</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Ledeng</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Dapsan</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sigmo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Ashe</td>
<td></td>
<td>Brimo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Yeshe</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Redo</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yoktsabo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Sentok</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tsurgepa?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Zopatenzin</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sigmo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Dugleii</td>
<td>Sigmo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Dewatendu</td>
<td></td>
<td>Samrabo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 Tashi</td>
<td></td>
<td>Porba B.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 Rincheng</td>
<td></td>
<td>Rimgo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 Gage</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sambrabo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 Churup</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 Tendup</td>
<td>Yoktsabo</td>
<td>Brimo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 Gyatso</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sambraba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 Pelden</td>
<td>Sambraba</td>
<td>Geupa B.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 Purba</td>
<td></td>
<td>Rimgo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 Penchen</td>
<td>Phokramptso</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Meditation seems to carry more weight than the philosophical study of doctrine. Though Buddhism in Sikkim has contributed much to the mass of local people by raising their cultural standard, it has had to pay the price. In comparison with the intellectual standard of Tibetan lamas that of the Sikkimese lamas is low. Many of those of the second category, though they read and write Tibetan, frequently make mistakes in the spelling of Tibetan, and lack the ability to interpret the meaning of the prayer books. Their knowledge of the Tibetan language in which the prayer books are written is rather poor, unless they have studied in Tibet.

**Composition of a Local Community in terms of Kinship**

In Pabyuk, where Lepchas and Bhotias form a harmonious cooperative community, both participate in important roles in the activities of the gonpa and equally produce professional priests, the Lepchas and Bhotias present quite different features as far as the composition of the local population in terms of kinship is concerned; yet the basic arrangements concerning marriage and inheritance are very similar.

*Lepcha.* All 30 Lepcha households in Pabyuk are grouped into four clans (*ptso*) according to household heads: 19 belong to Rigmo; 6 to Sigmo; 2 to Yoktsabo; 2 to Sambraba. One household which belongs to Phokramptso is rather an exceptional resident in this community: the household head, Penchen, originally from Pamiongchi, had been a servant in the Gangtok palace fifteen years before, and he had been given land there on his retirement, thus becoming a resident in the community, bringing his wife and children from Pamiongchi. He and his family had no relatives in the community.

Among the four clans, the Rigmo who constitute the majority, are the original inhabitants of this area, and occupy the best residential area in the hamlet, while other clans are relatively new to Pabyuk and have settled their account of marriage with Rigmo members. The household heads belonging to the same clan are related through relatively closer kinship ties with each other, as shown in Genealogies of Pabyuk Lepchas. Through this genealogical network, we can see a predominant tendency according to which male members remain in their natal community. Particularly among the Rigmo, 98 per cent of the male members have remained in the community after their marriage.
This tendency seems to be typical of the Lepcha population in Sikkim. Gorer also found that "in the very small village there is a tendency for all, or at any rate the majority, of the men to be members of the same ptso", and assumes that in former times the ptso represented a geographical unit. According to the Sikkim Gazetteer of 1893, there are 39 clans of Lepchas in Sikkim, each of which is associated with a locality. If each clan or lineage was localized, marriage should have taken place with neighbouring exogamous clans (or lineages) according to the exogamous rule. However, it is likely that they never had any marriage arrangements between any particular two, or more than two lineages, which would entail cross-cousin marriages. The Lepchas whom I met had no prescribed or preferential marriage arrangement in terms of kinship network. Instead, there was a strong tendency to avoid marriage, including any sexual connection, among members who have been related for several generations not only on the father’s side but also the mother’s. And the members within these generations are all called ‘brother’ and ‘sister’ with a distinction between ‘older’ and ‘younger’, in the Lepcha kinship terminology. Kinship on the mother’s side seems much less important in determining avoidance of marriage than that on the father’s side; empirically there is, according to my data, no marriage whatsoever between members of the same patri-clan. Gorer mentions that any sexual connection with blood relations for nine generations on the father’s side and four on the mother’s is considered incestuous.

Among the Lepchas in Gitdabling, ten miles from Kalimpong, which is Indian territory near Sikkim where no Bhotia is found at all, I found that sons belong to the father’s clan, and daughters to the mother’s. They say they cannot marry members of either father’s or mother’s clans, unless they are not related within seven

26 Gorer, 1938, p. 151.
27 Among Zongu Lepchas, according to Gorer, the ptso supernaturals descend, as it were, from father to son; women have other different supernatural guardians although all children are counted as members of their father’s ptso (p. 150). They seem to have a tendency more to patrilineality than have the Gitdabling Lepchas; but Pabyuk Lepchas hardly consider the descent of supernatural guardians through women, which indicates that they have a greater patrilineal tendency than the Zongu Lepchas.
generations. All these factors, which prohibit marriage with near relatives on both sides, theoretically make it impossible to have inter-marriage between particular clans or lineages. This I think is closely related to the outstanding development of go-betweens (bek-bu). Any old and experienced man in the local community can be the go-between and his kinship relation to the bride and bridegroom is not considered. Further, there is also no lineage or clan solidarity, and no political organization in terms of kinship network.

As male members have a strong coherence in terms of a patri-lineal kin group, most marriages are virilocl. Actual data on marriages among Pabyuk Lepcha during the last fifty years—a total of 46 cases—show that 16 cases (35 per cent) are marriages within the community. The remaining 30 cases (65 per cent) are of marriages with members of neighbouring Lepcha hamlets with various different clan members, such as Brimo, Garmo, Tariputso, etc. Out of 16 cases of local endogamous marriages, ten are of Rigmo men and women from Sigmo, Yoktsabo and Sambraba. Five are those of Rigmo women and men of three other clans. Only one case is that of a Yoktsabo man and a Sambraba woman. There are no marriages between the members of local Yoktsabo and local Sigmo, or between members of Sigmo and of Sambraba. Thus these three minor clans in Pabyuk stand as affines of the

Gorer, who worked in the Zongu area, which is inhabited only by Lepchas, states also that except as an exogamic classification the ptso is now functionless (p. 150). "But there are the triennial local gatherings of all the male members of the ptso, making a sacrifice of an ox and certain jewels and valuables to the supernatural guardian of the ptso, followed by a feast; these feasts are held in rotation in the houses of the members of the ptso who live in the neighbourhood. This sacrifice is entirely under the direction of the Mun, with no admixture of lamaism at all, and a few of the more pious lamas refuse to participate in them." (p. 149). This custom seems to be lost among the Lepchas where I worked, due to strong Bhotia and Buddhist influence. However, Gorer adds that the triennial unions only gather those members who live near one another; there has never been, nor has there ever been a reason for, a general gathering of all the members of the ptso (Gorer, 1938, pp. 150-151). Siiger who also worked in the Zongu area, states that "Every ptsho has its own priest called bong thing or padem, whose office is hereditary in his own pu tso, but depends on a particular vocation" (Halfdam Siiger, Ethnological Field-Research in Chitral, Sikkim and Assam, Copenhagen 1956, p. 83).
Rigmo clan. There are many cases where two descent groups exchange spouses in the same generation. Thus two families may be doubly united through brother-sister exchange marriages.

In this connection Gorer writes of the Zongu Lepchas: "There is a distinct tendency for several members of two families or neighbourhoods to marry each other; once one woman from a strange community is brought into a village, she is liable to establish further contacts between members of her old community and those of her new one; and, provided the rules of descent are not infringed, there is a tendency for a woman's daughters to marry back into their mother's old village. It is quite common for two siblings of one family to marry two siblings of another, whether it be two brothers marrying two sisters, or an exchange of sisters, each brother marrying the sister of the other. The marriage of two people does not affect the subsequent marriages of their families in the same generation in any way, but it is considered preferable for, say, the elder brother of the groom to marry the elder sister of the bride, and the younger, the younger; . . . ."

Bhotia

In contrast with the composition of the Lepcha local population, grouped into a patrilineal genealogical scheme, the data of the Bhotias show that they are simply a cluster of small fragments of various clans. The whole of the 20 household heads of Pabyuk Bhotias belong to 10 different clans; and some of them, though they belong to the same clan, cannot trace any genealogical link with each other, so that actually 20 households are divided into 15 patrilineal kin groups, the genealogical relationship of which is traceable.

This composition indeed reflects the Bhotias' historical settlement in Sikkim as immigrants. There are no localized clans, or lineages, among the Bhotias. Though all marriages among the Pabyuk Bhotias are exogamous, the clan has little sociological importance. For the Lepcha it is a matter of great concern as an individual to which clan he belongs; for example, a Lepcha introduces himself always by his clan name, while the Bhotia hardly mentions his clan name at all, unless he is asked for it. Many Bhotia clan names are associated with a locality, but there is no

29 Gorer, G., 1938, p. 155.
sense of a genealogical ideology involved. They do not regard the clan members as descendants from a common ancestor, as in the case of Lepchas. In fact many Bhotia clan names are derived from the name of a place where their recent ancestor used to live.

It seems that the clan organization among Tibetan commoners, who were the ancestors of the Sikkim Bhotia, lost its function a long time ago, if it ever had any. The term *rus* often appears in Tibetan literature, and is usually translated into English as 'clan'. Linguistically, 'rus' derives from *rus-pa* (bone): according to Tibetan concepts, one inherits one's bone from the father, and one's flesh (*sha*) from the mother. The *rus* therefore indicates a genealogical relationship through the father; it is a lineage or patrimonial family group. However, this term is used in terms of family genealogy rather than in the division of the descent group, which is more pronounced among nobles and well established local families, than among landless peasants. Among the peasants, the social groupings are associated with the locality rather than the kinship network. I am not sure whether or not present Tibetan peasants still maintain the term *rus* as in the case of Sikkim Bhotias. I think that among the commoners, sophisticated economic and residential criteria (such as relationship between peasants and landlords) make it difficult to maintain their kinship network.

If we consider the high degree of mobility and sophistication of Tibetan society, as we can see throughout its history since the 7th century, such a state of social organization among the commoners is not difficult to assume.

Further, I suspect that it is unlikely that they ever had a distinct patrilineal lineage organization covering the entire population. Their kinship terminology is of the 'Eskimo' type, and there are many bilateral elements in the operation of the rules of succession and inheritance. The general principle follows the patrilineal scheme, but beyond the range of an elementary family the patrilineal principle is often modified by bilateral arrangement: for example, the general order of succession of Sikkim Bhotias, according to the *Gazetteer of Sikkim*, is as follows:

1. son
2. grandson, etc. through the males

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30 *Gazetteer of Sikkim*, 1893-4, p. 56.
3. brother by same mother
4. father’s brother’s son
   father’s sister’s son
   mother’s brother’s son
   mother’s sister’s son
   \{ by choice
5. If only distant relatives, they receive only a portion, a portion
   going to the lamas and the remainder to Government.
6. If no relatives, funeral expenses, etc. to the lamas and the
   remainder to Government.

Thus, father’s brother’s son, father’s sister’s son, mother’s brother’s son,
and mother’s sister’s son stand equal. In fact, I found many cases where in the absence of a son, a
daughter (presumably daughter’s husband who may, or may not, be of the same rus) takes the son’s place. If they have a strong patrilineal ideology
and membership of a patrilineal descent group, such workings will not come into force.

In my field work, I found that Bhotias are not greatly interested
in their genealogy, and that their genealogical memory is very poor. In addition, there is a strong tendency towards geographical mobility. It is quite rare for married members of three generations
to stay in the same community. The traceable genealogical relations among the Bhotias in Pabyuk were extremely shallow. Such was also the case among the Bhotias in Phodang and Phensang.

In contrast with this very shallow genealogy, a considerable number of marriages have taken place among members of the same community. Affinal relationship links almost all household members who are not related through consanguinal ties, as shown in the list. Thus minor fragments of different clans are all linked through affinal ties one way or another, except for one household.

In this kind of sociological network, the role of siblings seems very important. Many of them answered my question “why did you come to settle here?” with “because my sister (or brother) who had married in this community said I should come here”. Instead of parents or other kinds of kin, siblings appear to be a kind of provider of spouses for their siblings. In fact, many have their own brother’s or sister’s household in the same local community; but households of cousins or grandparents are rarely in the same settlement.
Sons and daughters often leave their parents in their natal hamlet, marrying into another hamlet. When their mother becomes a widow, one of them asks her to reside with his (or her) family. As a result, the only consanguinial kin normally found in the same community are siblings or parents and children. This fantastic mobility enhances the narrowing of the range of kin, and makes it difficult to function as a kin group such as a lineage or clan.

On the other hand, information from hamlet to hamlet is surprisingly well maintained, when members who once formed a local community scatter in various hamlets by marriage. These
members seem to supply information, particularly about the availability of spouses, together with consideration of the economic advantages, and activities of the gonpa, to their kin or friends of their natal village. All professional priests seem to have a considerable role as suppliers of information, because they have more opportunity to exchange information than have peasants. During a festival of the gonpa, all professional priests from many hamlets—a gonpa includes several hamlets in the parish from which priests come together for prayers—stay in the gonpa dormitory where they can exchange news. Priests also render various services asked for by private houses, and naturally they are well informed of the situation in houses in the parish. Further, priests themselves move from one gonpa to another. It is easier for priests than for peasants to change their residence from one hamlet to another, because they depend more for their income on their service than on their land. Besides, many gonpa belong to the same sect, so that the change of affiliation is not difficult, and in a hamlet near a gonpa there is always a Bhotia community, which they can easily join.

Actually, a Bhotia community is rather like an island, in an area occupied by the Lepchas (see p. 223). Marriage takes place between such islands. Hence the marriage circle tends to include a fairly large area from hill to hill, while marriage among the Lepchas takes place within fairly limited neighbouring areas.

This wide geographical and fairly free choice of spouses is coupled with the permissibility of cross-cousin marriage. Unlike among Lepchas there is no bar to marriage with a near relative, except the members of one's own immediate family, though there is a tendency to avoid the members of the same rus. Many find their marriage partners for themselves, or through their siblings and friends. However, they may also employ a go-between, who normally approaches the maternal uncle of the girl.

These factors result in significant differences between Lepchas and Bhotias in the composition of a local community in terms of kinship network.

Common Features

In spite of the marked differences between the Lepchas and the Bhotias in the composition of the local population in terms of kinship and the selection of spouses, there are many similarities
between the two: firstly, a household consists as a rule of an elementary family. Secondly, the property is divided equally among sons; thirdly, both follow the custom of bride-price; and, fourthly, both practise polyandry and polygyny, though these relate only to a small percentage of marriages.

Among the Lepchas and Bhotias, a household rarely includes two married couples either of parent-children, or of sibling categories. When one of the old parents dies one of the sons (or sometimes one of the daughters) takes care of the widowed parent, who joins his household. It seems that such a widowed parent may change her (or his) residence among the households of her (or his) sons: there is no rule as to which son should take care of the widowed parent. If there is an unmarried son in the house the widowed parent will remain there and when the son marries his wife will join the household. A widowed sister who has no child or has only small children, may become a dependent of her brother, or of her late husband’s elder brother. Among Bhotias both levirate and sororate are practised, but they are not compulsory. Further, a widow or divorcée, if she is not too old, often remarries. Without any prescribed rule of institutionalization of either a descent group or primogeniture succession or inheritance, which may produce a certain residential rule, various alternative adjustments are made among near relatives in the case of the loss of a spouse. This is also the case when there are no children; adoption of a brother’s son or other member of the patri-clan may then be resorted to.

The rule of inheritance is equal division among all sons. When married sons live in the same community, they tend to take possession of the land undivided, though normally each couple has an independent residence. A daughter, who is normally excluded from a share in the property, inherits in the absence of a son; though the chances of her doing so are rather rare because parents who have no son often wish to adopt a son from among their near relatives, or sometimes from non-relatives, instead of handing over the property to the daughter, whose husband would evidently

During my fieldwork, I found only one case where two married brothers with their wives resided in the same house. This is an exceptionally wealthy household in this area, possessing vast land, and engaging twenty farm servants. The house itself is well built with more than a dozen rooms and servants’ quarters.
become the successor. This tendency is more pronounced among the Lepchas whose patrilineal male members tend to remain in the same locality. Where a daughter inherits the property, the marriage becomes uxorilocal, and the bride-price and the expense of the wedding feast are much less than in a virilocal marriage. In some instances two or three sisters, who have no brother, marry one husband, so that the property is kept intact, and all the sisters enjoy equal rights. I found one case in Phodang, in which three sisters took one husband. Other cases of polygyny—I found three cases in my field—are those which are normally found in other societies, i.e. when a wealthy man takes a secondary wife (or wives) into his household.

This sororal and uxorilocal kind of polygyny is, I think, the parallel arrangement to the polyandry practised by both the Lepchas and the Bhotias in this area. In 1955 there were no cases of polyandry in Pabyuk hamlet, but I found three in Phodang, and one in Phensang. The people explained to me that it was a very good custom because if every brother has his own wife, it is usually very difficult to reside together and keep property undivided in the long run. Quarrels normally occur among brothers because of their wives. If there is one wife, they can both keep the property undivided, and can live together happily all their lives. Thus there is among the brothers a strong desire to keep the property undivided, which suits the practice of polyandry.

My further observation of these four actual cases of polyandry reveals that these polyandrous brothers do not share the wife in the same way in terms of the relationship between husband and wife. For example, in the case of one of the sets of polyandrous brothers (three brothers) in Phodang, one is a monk who is studying in Tibet; another is a trader mostly absent from home; and the eldest brother is a lama in Phodang gonpa, who actually lives with their wife. In another polyandrous case in Phodang (two brothers), the elder brother is a devout lama of Phodang gonpa who studied in Tibet and mostly spends his life in meditation as a hermit; his younger brother is a farmer, and actually lives with their wife. The elder brother is supported by the younger. There is a similar situation in the case of a polyandrous family in Phensang. In these three cases, the actual matrimonial life is that of monogamy, though formally the marriages are polyandrous.
In the third case in Phodang, both brothers live in the same household all the time: both are lamas as well as farmers. They told me that they were poor, so that they could not afford to pay the bride-price for the younger brother; the latter therefore decided to share his elder brother's wife. In fact, the younger brother became a husband to the wife only very recently. In this case, the younger brother is like a dependent of the elder brother, by whose generosity he is permitted to share the wife.

According to the information I collected in Sikkim, the eldest brother is formally the husband of the polyandrous wife: it is for this marriage that the bride-price is paid, and the wedding ceremony performed. But in no circumstances can the formal wife of a younger brother be shared by his elder brother. I think in this respect polyandry is closely related to the custom of levirate, particularly among the Lepchas. According to Gorer:

"Among the Lepchas a man can inherit the wives of all his elder brothers, real or classificatory, the wives of all his paternal and maternal uncles real or classificatory, provided these 'uncles' are younger than his parents but not younger than himself, and all the younger sisters of his wife, real or classificatory. Conversely a woman can be inherited by all her husband's younger brothers, all the sons of her husband's uncles, and all the husbands of her elder sisters, real or classificatory. With all these potentially hereditable spouses the Lepcha has the right to copulate during the life time of their husbands (or wives) and in nearly all cases these rights are taken full advantage of, as opportunity offers; opportunity is naturally greater with people who live in the same district, and distance often prevents men taking advantage of the right to sleep with the younger sisters of their wife, and women with the husbands of their older sisters, since they most often live in different parts of the country.

With the wives of their real older brothers Lepchas have in theory a right to use force, if they will not copulate willingly; the younger brothers are considered to have contributed to the marriage price of the bride and therefore to have, as it were, a legal right. In point of fact such a use of force never arises;
Lepcha women know that their husband's younger brothers have the right of access; . . . . . "32

Further Gorer states that the restriction of sexual partners to near relatives on both sides, coupled with the fact that a local community is mostly occupied by people of the same clan, enhances such a sexual relation between younger brothers-in-law and elder sisters-in-law.33 This seems a reasonable assumption. My impression is that at least the Bhotias whom I know were not so strongly orientated to this sexual pattern, as Gorer suggests. This must be related to the fact that they have a fairly free sexual life and their choice of marriage partners is not so restricted as in the case of the Lepcha. Frankly speaking, I am not sure how far this levirate ideology is actually practised among the Lepchas and Bhotias among whom I worked—my stay among them was too short to enable me to observe informal sexual relationships. However, I think the widespread levirate ideology among both Lepchas and Bhotias paves the way for polyandrous marriage. Yet this does not mean that an actual polyandrous marriage always works smoothly or that a wife is shared equally by her husbands.

When polyandrous husbands reside in the same household, they do not stand in an equal relationship to their wife; the elder one certainly takes more advantage as the husband, and the younger brother becomes a secondary husband. However, where there are occupational differences among the husbands, the actual matrimonial life is naturally carried on by the husband who always stays in the house, regardless of seniority in the marriage. The idea behind the practice of polyandry is clear: it is, as they say, to keep the property undivided, or to save incurring the heavy expense of another bride-price. But how far this polyandry works, whether the occupational difference among polyandrous brothers led to polyandry, or whether it is the result of polyandry, it is difficult to know. As I mentioned elsewhere, polyandry serves a very useful purpose when one of the brothers wishes to devote himself to his training as a lama: his family is well taken care of by his brother. However, a devout lama in Phodang, who is polyandrous, told me one day, "You know, actually I gave my wife to

33 Ibid., pp. 161-162.
my brother, though I love her very much. I used to love her more than my brother did. In spite of my love for her I firmly decided to devote my life to meditation". His way of talking gave me the impression that what he did was worth of moral appreciation. I suspect that there must be some psychological tension between the polyandrous brothers at one time or another, particularly when they are close in age. And occupational difference may be one of the solutions of the situation. My stay was too short for further enquiries on this subject. But the fact is that one of the brothers is always the dominant husband: the relationship is not the same for all polyandrous brothers.

**Interruption**

In view of various factors which weld the Lepchas and the Bhotias into one uniform population in one cultural and political field, Sikkim state; the basic social similarity in terms of descent, and inheritance, including polyandrous arrangements and the custom of paying bride-price; the high degree of cultural and religious assimilation of the Lepchas to that of the Bhotias; the fact that they have lived side by side for more than two hundred years, and have the same kind of economy; and that there is no ethnic discrimination in the political and religious fields;—it would seem that there should be no difficulty in intermarriage between the two. But, so far as intermarriage is concerned, there are delicate problems between the two groups, which reveal some aspects of the historical, religious, political and social complex of Sikkim plural society.

Interruptions are rare in rural areas. First of all I present all the cases of intermarriage found in my genealogical tables from the three hamlets: Pabyuk, Phodang and Phensang.

**Pabyuk**

Three cases of intermarriage between Lepcha men and Bhotia women: household head, 3, 22 and 27 married Bhotia women respectively (I previously presented these households as being Lepcha). Two other cases of intermarriage are those between a Bhotia man and a Lepcha woman: the late father of 13 and 14 married a Lepcha woman. This woman after the death of the Bhotia husband, again married a Bhotia man. The
genealogical relationship of these five intermarriages is as follows:

\[ 3 \triangle = O \]

\[ 22 \triangle = O \]

An interesting fact here is that those households involving intermarriage are situated where the residential areas of the Lepchas and the Bhotias meet, i.e. near the gonpa (see p. 225).

**Phodang**

Three cases of intermarriage, each of which is between a Lepcha man and a Bhotia woman (one case of which is polyanandrous), and found in one descent line as shown:

**Phensang**

Two cases in which a Lepcha father and son married Bhotia women. Another case is the illegal relation between a Bhotia man who had a Bhotia wife, and a Lepcha woman, from which one son (Z) was born, who took a Lepcha wife. (Z insisted that he was a Bhotia because his father was Bhotia, but others regarded him as a Lepcha, because his father was not his legal father.)
Though my data are very limited and derived from only three hamlets, two factors tend to appear in all these cases of intermarriage: one is that intermarriages tend to occur among the descendants of those who have once intermarried; another tendency is that intermarriages occur between Lepcha men and Bhotia women rather than the other way round. The first tendency indicates that intermarriage is likely to occur rather among the marginal population of the community: those, either Lepcha or Bhotia who once practised intermarriage, make it easier for their descendants to intermarry. These descendants seem to reduce the social distance between the two ethnic groups.

The second tendency seems to affect the somewhat delicate social situation between the two ethnic groups. In this connection the custom of paying bride-price is important. Lepcha peasants say that a rich Lepcha man may have a Bhotia wife, because he can afford to pay a higher bride-price to enable him to have a Bhotia wife instead of a Lepcha wife. They say, further, that Lepcha girls often want to marry Bhotia men, but usually they are unsuccessful because Bhotia men look down on the Lepcha. These statements imply a desire on the part of the Lepchas to approach the Bhotias socially through marriage. In other words, the Bhotias are considered socially somewhat higher than the Lepchas. In Phensang, priests told me that the Bhotias used to be considered somewhat higher than the Lepchas until ten years ago, though today they are considered equal. This tendency may be a natural outcome of the formation of Sikkim plural society. Though the Bhotias did not form an exclusive ruling class nor a priestly class, they were the carriers of the civilization—the complex of higher Tibetan culture—to the native pagan Lepchas. I think this fact causes the peasant Lepcha to look up to the Bhotias as a culturally higher group, evidence of which is that it is the Lepchas who want to marry the Bhotias. And this is made possible to a certain degree by paying the higher bride-price, which results in the pattern of intermarriage between Lepcha men and the Bhotia women, not the other way round. The Bhotia women who have married Lepcha men tend to be found among the marginal members of the Bhotia community; such as the daughter of a poor Bhotia, or a woman who had no relative in the community.

However, intermarriage of this kind does not result in the descen-
dants becoming Bhotias, since both follow the patrilineal system, even though such an intermarriage gives the individual concerned an opportunity to approach the Bhotia community through an affinal relation. $X^1$, $X^2$, $Y$ and $Z$ are all Lepchas by patrilineal descent, but interestingly enough all claimed to be Bhotias, indicating how much they have Bhotia blood or Bhotia connection through their mother, or grandmother, or through their wife, while the Bhotias of the communities whispered to me that they were in fact Lepchas. Yet the fact remains that they were accepted in the Bhotia community, though they are Lepchas by their patrilineal descent. They are only Lepcha members who have established their households in a Bhotia community. I did not find that any Lepcha who did not have an intermarriage relationship with a Bhotia lived in Phodang and Phensang hamlet, which were inhabited exclusively by the Bhotias.

Further, those Lepchas who had Bhotia wives were all professional priests. It is a significant fact, I found, that discrimination between the two ethnic groups tends to be minimized among the professional priests. It is immaterial whether one is a Lepcha or a Bhotia within a community of priests who form the intellectual elite, where the status as a priest is most important, and birth, descent and ethnic criteria are almost neglected. This fact makes it more likely for a Lepcha priest to have a Bhotia wife: a Bhotia colleague may give him one of his relatives such as a sister; a poor Bhotia woman, or a Bhotia woman who has no relatives in the community, may be glad to marry a Lepcha priest of relatively high status.

The fact that discrimination between the Bhotias and the Lepchas appears to be more pronounced in Phodang and Phensang, than in Pabyuk, seems closely related to the way in which the recruitment of professional priests is carried out. In the former two hamlets, as already described, the professional priests of the local gonpa tend to be monopolised by the Bhotia community. Hence these members of Bhotia communities are somewhat more highly regarded than the members of the neighbouring Lepcha peasant communities. This reinforces the psychological tendency for the Bhotias to be considered somewhat superior to the Lepchas. In contrast to such an attitude, in Pabyuk the professional priests consist of both the Lepchas and Bhotias. Moreover, there are more Lepcha professional priests than Bhotias, and discrimination between the two ethnic
groups is almost non-existent. I found here that the Lepchas regarded the Bhotias almost as equals; there is no strong desire to marry a Bhotia, or to claim to be Bhotia because one's mother or wife is Bhotia. The Lepchas are quite proud of being Lepcha. It may be noted in this connection that in Pabyuk, two Bhotia men are married to a Lepcha woman, whereas there were no such cases in Phodang and Phensang.

The degree of social distance or discrimination between the two ethnic groups appears more strongly among the peasants, and tends to decrease in professional circles. Thus in the upper strata—aristocrats who live in Gangtok—intermarriage has taken place to a surprising degree. Throughout their history, much intermarriage, including illegal liaisons, have been found among the upper strata of the two ethnic groups. So far as these upper strata of the society are concerned, there is no feeling of superiority or inferiority. Both are very proud of being Lepcha or Bhotia. Both ethnic groups have produced prime ministers. Though in the early period of their history there were undercurrents of political intrigue and fights in which tensions in terms of ethnic groups appeared, in the course of time this kind of problem has disappeared. Practically speaking, even when they themselves claim to be Bhotia or Lepcha through patrilineal descent, it is hard to find biologically pure Lepchas or Bhotias among them owing to the many intermarriages.

Professional priests and aristocrats form one community based on their common intellectual social and political activities, the value of which is far stronger than the ethnic differences. Thus élite-consciousness, and the common ground of intellectual social and political activities, diminish ethnic consciousness. In fact, among this élite, it is difficult to judge whether a man is a Lepcha or a Bhotia: their outlook and personality become very similar. On the other hand, among the peasants, it is quite noticeable: Lepchas are more reserved, and slow in reaction, while Bhotias are gay and more sophisticated. In general, each hamlet is occupied by either the one or the other predominantly. More especially the Lepchas still live in a social world where their mother-tongue, the Lepcha language, is spoken and which the Bhotias do not understand. Though both Lepchas and Bhotias live very close together, with friendly and frequent economic and social contacts (all Lepchas
speak the Bhotia language fluently), and perform together festivities centred in the gonpa, the real avenue to unity in both local groups is the gonpa where professional priests from both ethnic groups form a common world, rather than direct house to house contact between the two peoples. In such a situation, intermarriage may occur, but it is not surprising that intermarriage is quite rare among the peasants.

Nepalis settled in Pabyuk only within the last 20 years, and most of the present household heads are first generation immigrants. Reflecting, as it were, the historical formation of the present Pabyuk hamlet, their households are found on the outskirts of the residential area of Lepcha and Bhotia households (see p. 225), and only a few households possess land of their own. This is situated on the upper part of the hill close to the forests, and on steep slopes here and there. This land had been left uncultivated by the Lepchas and Bhotias, because the soil is poor and, as there is no way of getting a water supply, it is unsuitable for rice cultivation. Some parts were converted from forest into cultivated land by the Nepali immigrants themselves. In these poor lands, which they acquired as newcomers, they plant chiefly maize, which is their main food crop. The majority of the Nepalis in Pabyuk have little or no land, and work as casual farm labourers or herdsmen for Lepcha and Bhotia households; they also work as coolies on bazaar days in Gangtok.

Many of these Nepali immigrants moved to such new areas as the result of the over-exploitation of cultivable lands in their original home in eastern Nepal: others come from villages in Sikkim, colonized earlier, owing to the pressure of an increasing population.

Historically the colonization of Nepalis in Sikkim territory was stimulated by the weakness of the political power of Sikkim against Nepal during the later part of the 18th century, and the British political power in Sikkim since the 19th century, which favoured the opening up of the waste land of Sikkim to Nepali settlers. The History of Sikkim describes the earlier Nepali colonies as follows:
"Since the year 1871 . . . there was an influx of Gorkhalis from the neighbouring state of Nepal. . . . They settled down for good, and began digging, hoeing, smashing and overturning rocks, felling down trees, and turning the courses of streams at such a rate that all jungles were turned into fields, in a very short time. The present Gorkhali population of Sikkim, would treble the large influx of people, they brought in large herds of buffaloes, cows, and sheep which filled every hill top and jungle, high and low."\[84\]

The increasing numbers of Nepali immigrants during the last hundred years have covered the western and southern parts of Sikkim. This colonial population is steadily increasing and further expanding into the frontier area, which has resulted in a picture of Nepali immigrants as shown in Pabyuk.

**Nepali Settlers in Pabyuk**

Pabyuk, being one of the frontier areas of Nepali immigration into Sikkim, the Nepalis in this hamlet are comparatively newcomers, so that the process of their settling down in this hamlet is traceable, and enables one to see the interesting ways in which these Hindu immigrants penetrated into the Buddhist community.

The method of the establishment of Nepali colonists in Pabyuk is representative of the way in which Nepalis have expanded into Lepcha and Bhotia communities in various parts of Sikkim. The colonists, once they have succeeded in establishing a local community of their own, again gradually expand to another new neighbouring area: that is an area where the Bhotias and Lepchas have long before formed a community. From the Nepali point of view these areas, already inhabited by the Lepcha-Bhotias, are considered to have much unused land. In fact, the Lepcha-Bhotias do cultivate the most favourable parts of the hills, leaving less fertile lands uncultivated. These waste lands are enough to attract the Nepali colonies. For example, in Pabyuk, the land which the Nepalis cultivate is bad land with little water, covered with shrubs which are hard to uproot. It calls for great efforts to make such land arable. While converting such land into cultivation, the Nepalis

\[84\] Part IV, p. 37.
usually work as casual farm labourers for Lepcha or Bhotia households, many of which lack labourers because some of their members are devoting their lives to Buddhist activities. There is, therefore, normally no strong opposition to the entry of the Nepali colonies into these established hamlets.

The data which I collected in Pabyuk reveals two major ways of colonizing new areas: one is by new settlers who are off-shoots of the neighbouring Nepali colonial communities. The Nepalis who come from neighbouring hamlets can normally enter a Lepcha-Bhotia community without much difficulty, because they do not appear to the latter entirely as strangers. At the same time they can keep in constant social and economic contact with their parent community, which is a great help to those who face hardship at the beginning of their establishment in a new area. 11–17, and 20 on the list are such cases. Most of them are young couples from Assam, a neighbouring hamlet of Pabyuk, across the Takchom Chu, where Nepali colonies constitute the majority of the inhabitants. Most of them have come to Pabyuk within the last 15 years. 11 and 12 settled down there on their marriage only a few years ago.

Thus Nepali expansion into new areas is normally undertaken by the younger generation who seek a new life, away from their over-populated parent community. As they are newcomers, at present their life in Pabyuk is still hard, their economy being the lowest among the households of the hamlet.

1 and 2 are also similar to the above cases, though their parent hamlets are different. Kharka Bahadur (2), who came to Pabyuk about 30 years ago with his wife, told me that he found himself much happier here than in his former home, Mangan, because the land here is more fertile and less densely populated. Some years after his settlement, his wife died, and he took his second wife from the neighbouring hamlet, Lachun. He had 12 children altogether, including those by his late wife, the eldest being a 19-year old boy. It would appear that the more children there are in a household, the more prosperous is a Nepali peasant. Children are important as a labour force in the household and contribute to its economic expansion: as their standard of life is very plain and simple, if a child is over 10 years old it is easy to earn more than he himself consumes. Among these Nepali households in Pabyuk, those who have more children have a better life: thus Kharka Bahadur, and Sak Bahadur
who have ten children, and Past Ram with eight children, and Ripdo, who had nine, of whom two sons became independent (6 and 7) are the most well-off households.

**NEPALIS IN PABYUK**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of household head</th>
<th>Number of members of household</th>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>Origin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Pirti Narayan</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Newar</td>
<td>Lachun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Kharka Bahadur</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Chetri</td>
<td>Mangan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Mandra</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Newar</td>
<td>Gangtok</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Bak Bir</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Rai</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Sak Bahadur</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Rai</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Rai Bahadur</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Rai</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Bakhre Kantsa</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Rai</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Ripdo</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Rai</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Kharka Bahadur</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Rai</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Jai Bahadur</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Rai</td>
<td>Assam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Palsti</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Rai</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Chandra Man</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Gurung</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Sano Harka Bahadur</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Rai</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Zas Bir</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Rai</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Harka Bahadur</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Rai</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Ram Man</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Rai</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Birka Bahadur</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Rai</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Past Ram</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Chetri</td>
<td>Pamjongchi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Kharka Bahadur</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Chetri</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Dan Bahadur</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Rai</td>
<td>Assam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Kharka Bahadur</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Gurung</td>
<td>Simsomsa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Kulvir Man</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Limbu</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Sano Krubirman</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Limbu</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Most wives belong to the same caste as their husbands: those of different castes are:

the second wife of 2—Newar; the wife of 12—Limbu; and the wife of 22—Rai.

Soon after Kharka Bahadur’s second marriage, his brother-in-law (his second wife’s elder sister’s husband), Pirti Narayan, came to settle here. Both households are near each other, at the north-eastern edge of Pabyuk, and they form one distinguishable corporate group among the Nepali households in the hamlet.

Contrasted with these immigrants from neighbouring Nepali
communities, are secondly those who came from a great distance and who have no kin or friends in neighbouring hamlets. They originated in various places: in east Nepal, Darjeeling district, outside Sikkim; or in Nepali colonial villages in south-western Sikkim, where all neighbouring areas have already been exploited. Many young people have to seek their living far from home. Those who are pushed out of their natal villages by over-population normally become coolies in bazaar towns such as Gangtok. While engaged in various wage-earning occupations, they save money, and hope to settle down in a hamlet as peasants. The process of their establishment of a new life is therefore much harder than those described above, with no help from their kin or neighbours. One of the good examples is Sak Bahadur (5) who finally achieved great success.

Sak Bahadur (5) was born in a Nepali immigrant house in a village near Darjeeling. He left his poor house for Sikkim, seeking a new life. He spent some time near Tashiding, and later, about 1930, came to this area looking for a place to settle down. Being a stranger, with no possessions other than his own abilities, he was not accepted by the local people. He had no relatives or friends to depend on. He was not allowed to reside in the hamlet, so he used to live in the forest, and made a small hut for himself. He lived by collecting roots for medical purposes in the jungle, and sold them at Gangtok bazaar; he also worked as a porter in the bazaar. After several years' hardship, he was able to save money, and built a small hut near Pabyuk hamlet, where he took his new Nepali wife, whom he had met in Gangtok bazaar. When he settled down in this hut with his wife, he soon had a child, and the people gradually began to have contact with him. In a busy season, Lepcha and Bhotia peasants began to engage him at minimum wages. He still depended for the greater part of his income on selling jungle products or working as a porter, but he could count on a fairly stable income since he could also take some work in the local community. Through these contacts with local people, he was gradually admitted as a member of the local community, and socially accepted as a peasant of Pabyuk.

At present he has ten children, headed by a 21-year old son, most of whom work as day labourers; they also engage in the cultivation of maize on the land which they have converted into cultivation. His valiant effort has brought successful results: today he lives in a
very nice Nepali-style house and owns three cows. His economic standard compares well with that of the other inhabitants of this hamlet.

Those who took a similar course are Mandra (3) who came from east Nepal, Bak Bir (4) and Ripdo (8). Those who had a similar experience and settled down finally here have very friendly relationships; these households (3-9) form a kind of co-operative group by themselves, as do 1 and 2, and 10-17, 20, who came from Assam and form other groups.

This kind of development among Nepali colonies indeed requires great individual effort: it normally takes many, many years from the time one leaves home until the final place for settling down as a peasant is found. These instances in Pabyuk are of very successful Nepalis, I should say. Some fail to become peasants and remain as coolies all their life. Others may find good fortune while they work in Gangtok bazaar, as in the case of Past Ram (18) and Kharka Bahadur (19). Both originally came from Pamiongchi to Gangtok bazaar, where they succeeded in becoming tenants of Gelong Kazi who was an absentee landlord in this area, including Pabyuk. Thus they settled down as tenants in this hamlet. Some Nepalis also became tenants of successful Nepali immigrants elsewhere. Such tenantship is one of the most desirable solutions for immigrants, and is often the result of their service to their landowner as farm or domestic servants.

Chief Features of Contacts between Nepalis and Lepcha-Bhotias

The outstanding fact in the process of Nepali penetration into the Lepcha-Bhotia community is the high degree of successful establishment and the rapidity of its expansion, in spite of the fact that Nepali colonies are initially economically greatly handicapped as compared with the Lepcha-Bhotia peasants—particularly in the availability of land. An interesting fact is that a Nepali who came with empty hands would, in two decades, succeed to such a degree that his economic standard would easily compare with that of even rather wealthy Lepcha-Bhotia peasants in the community. Cases such as Kharka Bahadur and Sak Bahadur in Pabyuk are examples of this. Such an individual success is normally accompanied by increasing members of his own folk. There are many hamlets in Sikkim, where the Nepali population has exceeded more than 50
per cent of the total, within a couple of decades after the time when the first Nepali immigrant settled down in the Lepcha-Bhotia community, and many of them have become wealthier than the former inhabitants, Lepchas and Bhotias.

There are many explanations for such phenomena. The basic reason, I observed, is the difference in the pattern of life, which is closely related to the religious difference between the Buddhists and Hindus. This results in a sharp contrast between the two in terms of productivity and consumption pattern. Though both peoples, being peasants, have the same technology, the Nepali are able to accumulate more capital, even from relatively poor resources, than the Lepcha-Bhotias. Given the same population with the same resources, the productivity of the Nepali is much higher, and their consumption is much lower, than that of the Lepcha-Bhotias.

Among the Lepcha-Bhotias the potential labour force is reduced by the fact that some of them engage in priestly activities, whereas all the Nepali available labour force engages in production. Furthermore, the productivity of Nepali children and women is much higher than that of the Lepcha-Bhotias. Nepali children over the age of five are normally put to work, and those over ten may earn more than they themselves consume. Wives are also an important labour force. Marriage for a man means the acquisition of more labour force, so as to raise his production, rather than another dependent to be fed. This is why even poor Nepali peasants often practise polygyny. All Nepalis can engage in all kinds of labour other than cultivation: such as coolies in the bazaar; collecting various kinds of products from the jungle for their own consumption as well as for sale in the bazaar; construction of roads or buildings, etc. On the other hand, Lepcha-Bhotia peasants engage in hardly any work other than cultivation, even when they face poverty. Here we see a sharp contrast in the productive effort between the two different peoples: one which enjoys plenty of fertile land, the other which has had to seek new land and life owing to the exhaustion of the homeland by over-population.

Another economic drawback of the Lepcha-Bhotias in terms of productivity as compared with the Nepalis, is that they are greatly handicapped by a higher consumption pattern than that of the Nepalis. First of all, they have to feed those who engage in Buddhist
activities. Almost every household has one or more monks to support. Though a monk who has achieved high status as a professional may earn more than an ordinary peasant, and his brother or kin need not support him, the net product from the available resources of the community is limited by the available labour force, which, on the whole, yields a low return to the cultivator. Secondly, Buddhist peasant households have certain essential expenses, such as: occasional donation either in kind or in money to the *gonpa* (particularly heavy at festivals); free labour service for repair or construction of the *gonpa* (in Phensang, 15 days in a year); comparatively high fees by their standards for various services rendered by lamas.\(^{35}\)

Further, the high consumption of rice beer is important: drinking rice beer is a daily essential, and is also essential for the lama's service—a bottle of rice beer is always placed next to the *sutra* table, so that lamas may drink now and then while they chant *sutras*. The manufacture of rice beer consumes great amounts of rice, their staple food. Though it is only my impression, it seems to me that if they cut down these drinks, they would have enough supply of rice for the year. The fact is that most of these peasants have to become farm labourers from time to time, for wealthier people both in and outside their community, or they have to borrow money, in order to cover the hard months before the harvest.

On the other hand, the amount spent by Hindu Nepali peasants on their religious activities is negligible in comparison with that of the Buddhists, since they have no obligation to the *gonpa*. Nepali peasants may present a handful of rice or eggs to the *gonpa* at festivals, but it is not obligatory, and depends on individual voluntary gifts as an expression of thanks for the generosity of the community, since they would not participate in Buddhist festivals, nor ask the lamas for any service. They have a few Hindu festivals according to the Hindu calendar, but the expense of these is very low in comparison with that of the Buddhists. In these Hindu colonies, festivals are not at all elaborate—they dine together having paid homage at a small local temple where a stone Hindu image has been dedicated. Such a temple is often situated at the roadside.

\(^{35}\) Another heavy expense besides lamaistic rituals is the bride-price and feast on the occasion of a marriage. This often absorbs a family's accumulated wealth, and may even create a debt for life.
its maintenance costs nothing at all, in contrast with the elaborate building of a Buddhist temple, where monks constantly pray, and various ceremonial equipment and repairs are needed—the monks particularly desire constantly to make it more and more elaborate. Moreover in contrast with the great and expensive ceremonial involved in a Buddhist festival, a Hindu festival is rather a social gathering of peasants than an elaborate ritual conducted by the priests, particularly in a frontier area where there are no Brahmans. Even if a Brahman from a neighbouring Nepali village is invited, the cost is very low in comparison with the fees paid to Buddhist monks. Moreover on these religious occasions, as well as in their daily life, Hindu Nepalis do not take drink, and they eat little meat. Also they do not indulge in the luxury of eating rice as a main meal; they are satisfied with maize, which is much cheaper than rice, and grown even on their poor land. The side dishes consist of vegetables from their garden or material collected from the jungle, while Buddhists take meat which is expensive.

The simplicity and plainness of Nepali peasants covers not only their diet, but every aspect of their life. The materials and tailoring of the Nepali costumes are simple and cheap, and are obtainable in any bazaar in the Himalayas: on the other hand, the Tibetan style Bhotia costume, which has now become the Lepcha costume also, requires a great deal of special tailoring and is much more expensive than that of the Nepalis. In the case of houses, too, a Nepali house is easily built by a man himself out of local mud, while a Bhotia-Lepcha house is built of timber, which is expensive to buy, and requires the expert handling of carpenters.

The expense incurred by a marriage too makes a great difference: in comparison with Bhotias and Lepchas, who have to pay high bride-prices and to give costly wedding-feasts, the expense of a Nepali marriage is negligible.

These major distinctions in the pattern of life of Hindu Nepalis and Buddhist Bhotia-Lepchas have resulted in the course of time.

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86 One good example which I observed in Pabyuk was that of a festival of the Avalokiteśvara. For this occasion, the monastery wanted to erect a golden spire on the roof of the gonpa. About ten days before the festival, the representatives of the sīndha visited every house asking for donations. They succeeded in collecting Rs. 1,000 and this enabled them to erect the spire. Lamas and peasants, rich and poor alike, were pleased to contribute for this purpose.
in considerable differences in the accumulation of capital among the peasants. A Nepali may start by cultivating an unwanted piece of poor land working for Lepcha and Bhotia peasants. In due course he may gradually improve his position by acquiring better land from the indigenous population. Nowadays Buddhist Lepchas and Bhotias are often in financial difficulties arising from their duty to the gonpa or from paying high bride-prices. On such an occasion they may look for a Nepali neighbour to lend them money, mortgaging their land, and in the end such land often falls into Nepali hands. Thus, Nepalis gradually acquire more land at the expense of the Lepchas and Bhotias. Such a tendency seems unavoidable in a plural society, in which the various groups have entirely different values and ways of life.

The ruling class of Sikkim is much concerned, not only about the Nepali economic exploitation of the Lepcha and Bhotia community, but also about the increase of the Nepali population as opposed to the decrease of the Lepcha-Bhotia population. This development is closely related to economic as well as social factors: the impoverishment of the Lepcha-Bhotia peasants tends to lower their birth rate and to increase their death rate, and the high bride-price usual among Lepchas and Bhotias delays marriage in the poorer section of the community, or gives rise to the practice of polyandry. This lowers the birth rate as opposed to that of the Nepalis, who normally marry early and sometimes practise polygyny. On the whole, the average number of children is much higher among the Nepalis than among Lepchas and Bhotias. Though there are no demographic statistics, in many parts of Sikkim where the Nepali population is found, this phenomenon is noticeable. Particularly the Lepcha population seems to be decreasing even more rapidly than that of the Bhotias. Gorer remarked in this connection that "compared with any of the neighbouring tribes the fertility of those Lepchas who have children is extremely low. Infantile mortality is excessively high".87

Economic exploitation by the Nepali colonists, coupled with their increasing population as against the native population, became noticeable as early as the beginning of this century. According to the *History of Sikkim*, His Highness the Maharaja, in an interview with the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal which

87 Gorer, G., 1938, p. 176.
took place at Darjeeling in 1900, "mentioned about the difficulties and gradual dwindling down of the real Bhotia and Lepcha population of Sikkim and begged that the Government should adopt such measures as to give effect to the words of the late Sir Ashley Eden who had said that although the waste land of Sikkim might be opened to Paharia settlers, yet they should never be created headmen". 38

In spite of the efforts of the Maharaja and his ministers to check Nepali colonial expansion, the Sikkim territory was increasingly exploited by Nepali settlers. In the course of time laws were promulgated in order to check the Nepali expansion: such as laying down a territorial limit for the Nepali settlers, and prohibiting the alienation of land by the natives to the Nepalis. Thus the *Administration Report of the Sikkim State for the Year 1931-32* states:

"In recent years cultivation has been steadily extending and more and more demands for throwing open areas reserved for forests continue coming in mostly from Nepali settlers, and it appears that the country has been fully colonized as far as it could be. Further settlement of ryots could only be possible at the sacrifice of forest reserved areas.

"A portion of the country lying in the Tista Valley north of Dikchu has not been thrown open to Nepali settlers and is specially reserved for the hereditary inhabitants of Sikkim such as Lepchas, and Bhotias; recently Tamangs, and Sherpas, who are Nepali Buddhists were allowed to settle there, and own land. . . .

"A law prohibiting land alienation by hereditary state subjects (i.e., Bhotias, Lepchas) in favour of non-hereditary subjects such as Paharias or domiciled plainsmen is in force and acts as a very useful check on the former class, which is poor and improvident, getting speedily replaced by the latter, who are more subtle and shrewd."

The expansion of the Nepali settlers into Sikkim presents an increasingly more serious problem as the modernization of Sikkim advances. For the modernization and the development of the Sikkim State, the Government needs employees who have had a modern

education. Such persons are found among young Nepalis, rather than among Bhotias or Lepchas. This fact reflects the significant differences in the pattern of life and cultural values between the two different religious communities. For the Buddhists, their ideal education is still found in the traditional way: to become monks. Today a promising young boy has the choice between two alternatives: he may either enter a monastery or go to a modern school. Since most Bhotias and Lepchas are peasants, whose life is regulated by the traditional Buddhist activities, it is natural for them to be inclined to take the former course, in spite of the Government's efforts to spread modern education.

On the other hand, among the Nepalis, entry into the priesthood is strictly regulated by birth; there is no chance of becoming a member of the élite of society unless one is born into the Brahman caste. For non-Brahman people it is a wonderful chance to climb up the ladder to a new intellectual élite by means of modern education, and thereby to raise their status and increase their income. I think this incentive is also developed by the circumstances of their life as colonists. On the whole, the desire for modern education is much greater among the Nepalis than among Bhotias and Lepchas, and as a result many Government employees are now Nepalis, particularly of the middle and lower ranks who have direct contacts with the common people; the higher ranks, such as those of ministers, are still all occupied by members of Bhotia-Lepcha families.

All announcements of the present Government are issued in Sikkimese (the Bhotia language written in Tibetan script) as well as in Nepali, written in Nagri script. The common language in the offices, however, tends to be Nepali. In a rural area where both ethnic groups are represented the Nepali language is used for communication between the two: even those Nepalis who have lived in a Lepcha-Bhotia community for many years do not, as a rule, speak the Bhotia language. This tongue, which belongs to the Tibeto-Burman family, is a complicated tonal language not easily learnt by the average Nepali peasant. Lepchas and Bhotias seem much more successful in learning Nepali, and those who are accustomed to go to the Gangtok bazaar, or who have contact with Government officials, are fluent in Nepali; most Bhotia peasants who have contacts with Nepalis in their own village
speak at least broken Nepali. Moreover, Nepali is a kind of a lingua franca used widely through the Himalayan area.

While Sikkim is traditionally strongly coloured by Tibetan culture, Nepali influence has recently become very strong. This fact causes considerable tension between the two different communities, and this tension is entirely different in character from that prevailing between Lepchas and Bhotias. The cultural and social gap between these two groups and the Nepalis is too great to allow them to become assimilated.

As can be imagined in such a situation, intermarriages are exceedingly rare. I did not find any in the areas in Sikkim where I worked, though there may be some cases among the inhabitants of trading-centres such as Gangtok where individuals are not entirely tied by the conventions of their own community. I came across only one case of a marital union between a Nepali and a Lepcha woman, and this was in a village outside Sikkim, inhabited by Lepcha and Nepali peasants. The villagers' attitude towards the couple was very cold. The Nepalis had outcasted the man, and the woman's parents maintained that their daughter and her children were theirs, because the husband had not paid the full bride-price; in fact he had paid only one third of the current price. In general there is no reason why a Nepali man should want to take a Lepcha or Bhotia wife and pay a high bride-price, when he could easily marry a Nepali girl for whom he need not pay at all. Conversely a Lepcha and Bhotia man, who is completely involved in the rhythm of Buddhist activities, would experience difficulties if married to a Nepali wife. While Lepchas, Bhotias and Nepalis can live in common village communities, the differences between the two former ethnic groups and the Nepalis are too great to allow a harmonious adjustment within one domestic unit.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


6. Polyandry in Ceylon

With Special Reference to the Laggala Region

PART I

DEFINITION

The Notes and Queries\(^1\) definition of marriage has recently been subject to criticism.\(^2\) The definition states: 'Marriage is a union between a man and a woman such that children born to the woman are recognized legitimate offspring of both parents.' Implied in this definition are two criteria: that marriage is a union between one man and one woman and that it establishes the legitimacy of children.

It is not my intention here to involve myself in a discussion whether polyandry is a form of marriage, and whether the Notes and Queries definition is adequate.

Leach\(^3\) has with characteristic clarity tackled these questions. Fischer, he reports, has argued that the concept of polygamy should be reserved for situations in which the polygamous spouse goes through a succession of marriage rites with different partners, and that in adelphic polyandry 'the woman does not contract different successive marriages. There is no reason for this, since the social position of her children is guaranteed completely by the fact that she is married.' In terms of Fischer's criteria adelphic polyandry is plural mating or 'polykoity'. But, as Leach points

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\(^1\) Royal Anthropological Institute 1951.
\(^3\) Leach, E. R., 1955.
out, Fischer's criteria are not so easily applied to situations where the role of social father is allocated to different husbands as among the Todas, and where possibly some type of 'corporate polyandry' exists in which the role of social father is vested simultaneously in several different individuals as among the Irawas.

Leach⁴ then proceeds to question the *Notes and Queries* definition of marriage in terms of 'legitimacy' of offspring. He argues that this definition is limited and that in the institutions commonly classed as marriage several distinguishable classes of rights can be discerned, and that in no single society does marriage serve to establish all these types of rights simultaneously. His arguments against using the legitimizing of children as a universal criterion of marriage do not bear directly on the question of defining polyandry as marriage. He leaves the question of definition open with regard to polyandry in Ceylon.

Gough⁴⁴ disagrees with the first criterion in the *Notes and Queries* definition of marriage as union between one man and one woman, but supports the 'legitimacy of children' criterion. Her essay is chiefly devoted to including Nayar unions as a form of marriage which concept she suggests be defined thus: 'Marriage is a relationship established between a woman and one or more other persons, which provides that a child born to the woman under circumstances not prohibited by the rules of the relationship, is accorded full birth-status rights common to normal members of his society or social stratum.' This definition which will include the Nayar 'group marriage' and the Nuer institution of woman-marriage-to-a woman, will present no difficulty in incorporating polyandry as 'marriage'.

There are certain facts relating to Ceylon which complicate the use of the concept 'marriage'. Today legally a woman can be married to only one man at a time, and this marriage must be registered. By the Kandyan Marriage Ordinance (No. 13 of 1859) polyandry cannot be legalized. But as Leach⁵ has pointed out there has been and still exists in rural areas a customary marriage, with or without a ritual of marriage, unregistered, publicly accepted, the acknowledged children of which union have legitimate rights of inheritance. In the village of Rambukkoluwa and its

hamlet Gangahenwela in the Laggala district, only three out of fifty odd marriages have been registered. It was told to me that in the birth certificates of children of non-registered marriages, the father's name is included as 'guardian' and that in a Court of Law this is sufficient to ensure the full inheritance rights of the children. In the same way, polyandry, though incapable of legal status, exists as a customary union, and even men who have formally registered their marriages may be informally a party to this arrangement. By custom the property of the incorporated husband usually goes to the children, but whether in a Court of Law today the rights of children to the property of their 'unmarried father' will be sustained I am uncertain.

Leach presents the problem thus: "On the one hand we have a formal and legal arrangement, by which, so far as Ceylon is concerned, a woman can only be married to one man at a time . . . . On the other hand we have another institution of 'marriage', which is entered into quite informally but which nevertheless, by virtue of its public recognition, serves to provide the children with claims upon the patrimonial property of the men with whom the woman cohabits and publicly resides . . . . If we accept this second institution as a form of 'marriage' then polyandry in Ceylon is a form of polygamy. If we confine the term 'marriage' to the first institution, polyandry in Ceylon is a form of polykoity".

In this essay, I shall regard polyandrous unions in the past and present in Ceylon as 'marriage' and the males in partnership as 'husbands' and the woman shared as 'wife'. Polyandry in Ceylon as a customary form of marriage establishes the inheritance rights of children, and 'their full birth-status rights common to normal members' of their society or social stratum. Furthermore many polyandrous unions portray many of the features associated with marriage in anthropological literature: the parties to it are in long standing cohabitation, they comprise a domestic residential and economic group, there is a definition of sexual rights, and finally, in terms of rural public opinion such unions are accorded the same status as any other form of acknowledged marriage. The following quotation from Denham highlights the aspects of polyandry as a domestic arrangement: 'The expressions generally

7 Denham, E. B., 1912
used in reference to this custom by the Kandyans are well known. The joint husbands will not say that they have a wife in common; the phrase employed is * Api ekageyi raksavenava*, "we earn our living in the same house". Nor does the woman say "I am their wife", but "I cook rice for all of them", "*Mama e detundenatama bat uya denava*". Today in Laggala (where I did my field work), this institution is referred to as *Eka ge kama*, meaning 'eating in one house'.

Polyandrous unions in Ceylon did not and do not satisfy Fischer's criterion for polygamy according to which the woman should contract different successive marriage with her husbands. Nor in the Kandyan Provinces was or is there any allocation of social fatherhood to different husbands as among the Todas, or a type of corporate social fatherhood as may possibly be found among the Iravas. But the concept of fatherhood was and is recognized, and it is because of the recognition of *paternity* that children can claim to be legitimate heirs of polyandrous husbands.

**SOME HISTORICAL REFERENCES TO POLYANDRY AMONG THE SINHALESE**

The degree of antiquity of the institution of polyandry in Ceylon is not known for lack of historical data. For the period after the beginning of the 16th century when the Europeans first came to Ceylon we have on record various references, some of which I shall attempt to set down in some systematic form.

Tennent writing in the middle of the last century said that the custom 'was at one time universal throughout the island, but the influence of the Portuguese and Dutch sufficed to discountenance and extinguish it in the maritime provinces.' It would appear that Portuguese and Dutch occupation of parts of the maritime provinces helped to dissolve the custom, but how swiftly one does not know. The custom appears to have persisted in the maritime provinces after several decades of European contact: Ribeiro makes explicit mention of this marriage custom which 'excites laughter'. Baldaeus wrote 'Incest is so common a vice among

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9 Tennent, Sir James Emerson, 1959.
10 Ribeiro, Joao., 1685
11 Baldaeus, Philip, 1672.
them that when husbands have occasion to leave their wives for some time, they recommend the conjugal duty to be performed by their own brothers' and cites an instance of a woman of Galle who 'complained of the want of duty in her husband's brother upon that account'. Even as late as the early 20th century Denham quoted the Muhandiram of Kalutara District as reporting that the custom of polyandry still existed to a very limited extent in the Kalutara District though fast disappearing, and J. P. Lewis cited a case of fraternal polyandry in the Siyane Korale of the Western Province. It is, however, evident that polyandry in the maritime provinces had virtually disappeared under the attacks of intolerant Colonial powers which viewed the practice as savage and ridiculous and contrary to Christian ethics.

In the nineteenth century it was the Central Provinces—the area comprising the native Kandyan Kingdom which for the first time was subjugated by the British in 1815—that are referred to as the locale of polyandry. Tennent wrote... 'But the revolt- ing practice of polyandry prevails throughout the interior of Ceylon . . . .' Parker and Denham make the same observation. Ievers writing of his experience in the district of Kandy as an administrator and Registrar of Kandyan Marriages wrote 'I found that the custom of polyandry was almost universal; and that in the case of a marriage registered under the Ordinance the name of the elder brother was given as that of the bridegroom, but everyone was aware that the girl would regard the brothers as being equally her husbands'. But curiously enough he also noted that contrary to expectation he did not at the turn of this century find polyandry in Nuwarakalaviya (a remote Kandyan district in the north Central Province), although the custom was known to have existed there in the past.

It is difficult to establish the rate of incidence of polyandry in Ceylon in the past or even in the Kandyan Provinces in the nineteenth century. As is evident from references already made,

18 Denham, E. B. 1912.
19 Lewis, J. P. 1920-1921.
14 Tennent, Sir James Emerson, 1859, p. 428.
15 Parker, Henry, 1909, pp. 15-16.
16 Denham, E. B., 1912, p. 327.
17 Ievers, R. W., 1899-1900.
Tennent 'carelessly' wrote that the institution was at one time "universal throughout the island", and that in the nineteenth century the institution prevailed "throughout" the interior. Ievers found the custom "almost universal" in the Kandy district. Lawrie flatly contradicted these estimates: "Polyandry in Ceylon was rare. It was the exception, not the rule". Lawrie appears to err on the other side. Perhaps Modder's verdict is the most realistic: "Polyandry, as practised by the Kandyans, was not a general system of marriage. It was a creature of circumstance, and was resorted to according as the needs and requirements of each individual family demanded it." A scrutiny of some concrete family histories and court records attest to the fact that in the 19th century before and after abolition of rajakāriya (feudal service to the king and later, after the British conquest, to the state) polyandry was a variant to the more usual customary monogamous union.

The commonest form of polyandry in Ceylon appears to have been adelphic or fraternal. Knox in 1881 wrote concerning the Kingdom of Kandy where he had been held captive: "In this country, even the greatest, hath but one wife; but a woman often has two Husbands. For it is lawful and common with them for two Brothers to keep house together with one wife, and the children do acknowledge and call both Fathers". While subsequent writers are all agreed that the custom was 'rarely other than fraternal' they are not agreed whether the association was restricted to own blood brothers only or was extended to classificatory brothers (parallel cousins) as well. Lawrie stated: "where it [polyandry] existed, the "associated" husbands were almost invariably full brothers. It was not common for first cousins to join in an associated marriage to one wife, and I do not remember any case in which two men, strangers in blood to each other, joined in such a marriage.' Panabokke, an aristocratic Kandyan who may be credited with intimate knowledge of Kandyan life, gives a more extensive version: "In most cases the husbands that are brought in are the brothers

18 Lawrie, A. G., 1899-1900.
19 Modder, F. H., 1898.
20 Knox, Robert, 1911, p. 150.
21 Lawrie, A. G., 1899-1900.
22 Panabokke, T. B., 1898.
and paternal cousins of the original husband. But it is not uncommon sometimes to have others not related to the husband, but of the same position or caste. The maternal cousins of the woman are also eligible in this sort of association.' Lawrie's statement about first cousins in polyandry being uncommon is not substantiated if one were to judge by explicit references in customary law and by scrutiny of the parties involved in legal disputes in the last century. Perhaps a true appreciation of the situation on the part of some foreign writers was made difficult by a lack of proper understanding of Sinhalese kinship terminology. Modder's statement on linguistic ambiguities met with in the law courts: 'A Kandyan leaves it uncertain whether by "brother" he means "cousin" or by "cousin" he means "brother-in-law". When a witness says "He is my brother," sometimes it happens that the interpreter himself is unable to say at first what relationship is meant by a witness, who has to be asked invariably, "which kind of brother? do you mean your own brother, "ek kuse upan sahodaraya" (brother born in the same womb), or your father's brother's son?" And so with the term used for "cousin", etc. similar questions have to be asked to ascertain what is really meant.' Perhaps we shall not be far wrong in inferring that the commonest form of polyandry involved 'brothers'. The term 'brothers' did not necessarily mean siblings; the kinship terminology of the Sinhalese, as Ribeiro himself appreciated, put parallel cousins (and even more distant relatives of a particular kind) into the 'brother' category. On the (conjectural) grounds of the most likely conditions that might lead to polyandry, it appears plausible that more instances of polyandry might have involved full brothers rather than classificatory brothers.

Writers are not entirely clear regarding the number of husbands who associated in polyandry. Knox refers to two brothers. Cordiner while referring to the custom of several brothers sharing a wife says "With two brothers the practice is extremely common". Davy wrote "One woman has frequently two husbands; and I have heard of one having as many as seven". Sawers and D'Oyly

23 Modder, F. H., 1898.
24 Cordiner, J., 1807, pp. 163-164
26 D'Oyly, Sir John, 1835.
to whom we owe much regarding our knowledge of Kandyan customary law make no definite statement. Tennent\textsuperscript{27} describes women of wealthier classes as having frequently 'three or four husbands and sometimes as many as seven'. Lawrie\textsuperscript{28} asserted that a woman ‘rarely, became the wife of more than two; never (I think) of more than three’. The biggest contradiction comes from Ribeiro\textsuperscript{29}—but of the peculiarities of this statement more later. To hazard a guess based on concrete cases recorded for the last century, and present day patterns in the Laggala villages: the commonest form of polyandry involved two husbands.

We may also infer from several historical accounts that polyandry was prevalent among both the wealthy and poor, aristocrat and commoner. The Rājāvali, a local historical chronicle\textsuperscript{30}, mentions that two brothers of the king of Kotte, Dharma Parakrama Bahu, had at one stage in their lives, 'lived in one place and cohabited with one woman.' Tennent cites Valentyn as having reported that the King of Kotte Wijaya Bahu VII shared a wife with his brother and that the Kandyan King Rajasinha I was born in polyandry.\textsuperscript{31} Ievers\textsuperscript{32} referred to the custom as having existed in the past among the ‘chief families’ of Nuwarakalaviya; Tennent\textsuperscript{33} to its prevalence in the interior ‘chiefly amongst the wealthier classes.’ Cordiner\textsuperscript{34} writes of the prevalence of the custom among ‘the poorer sort of people who are not Christians’. Davy\textsuperscript{35} makes explicit reference to the distribution of the institution among all social strata: ‘This singular piece of polygamy (polyandry) is not confined to any caste or rank; it is more or less general amongst the high and low, the rich and poor . . . .’ Ralph Pieris\textsuperscript{36} presents court cases for the early 19th century regarding disposition of property in the Kandyan area among polyandrous partners both titled and untitled.

The classic formulation of the procedure for establishing a poly-

\textsuperscript{27}Tennent, Sir James Emerson, 1859, vol. I, p. 428.
\textsuperscript{28}Lawrie, A. C., 1899.
\textsuperscript{29}Ribeiro, Joao, 1685.
\textsuperscript{30}Upham, Edward, 1833, vol. II, p. 274.
\textsuperscript{32}Ievers, R. W., 1899-1900.
\textsuperscript{33}Tennent, Sir James Emerson, 1859, vol. I, p. 428
\textsuperscript{34}Cordiner, Rev. James, 1807.
\textsuperscript{35}Davy, John, 1821, p. 107.
\textsuperscript{36}Pieris, Ralph, 1956, pp. 205-211.
androus association was stated by Sawers as follows: 'Polygamy as well as Polyandry is allowed without limitation, as to the number of wives or husbands—but the wife cannot take a second associated husband, without the consent of the first—though the husband can take a second wife into the same house with his first wife, without her consent—The wife however has the power of refusing to admit a second associated husband, at the request of the first husband, even should he be the brother of the first—And should the proposed second husband not be a brother of the first the consent of the wife’s family to the double connexion is required.'

These norms presumably relate to the *diga* (patrilocal) form of marriage because Sawers explicitly states that a man married in *binna* (matrilocal) has few privileges in his wife’s house and can be expelled at will, etc.

Leach gives a clear exposition of the principles involved:

'It is clear that two separate rights are here distinguished. First, there is the right of the wife’s sexuality which marriage serves to vest partly, but not completely in the person of the first husband. The sexual rights of the other husbands are exercised, not by virtue of the marriage, but through the individual consent of the first husband and the joint wife. On the other hand, the ritual of patrilocal marriage—the essence of which is that a man conducts his bride from her father’s house to his own—serves to establish a relation of affinity between the wife’s family as a whole and the husband’s family as a whole. The wife’s family have no interest in what sexual arrangements pertain unless it is proposed to extend the rights of sexual access beyond the limits of the husband’s sibling group.'

Underlying the latter part of Leach’s exposition is the notion that the usual *diga* marriage is a contract between the families of husband and wife and rights over the wife’s sexuality are transferred to the family of her husband, but limited to that family. This understanding presumably allowed for the husband’s brothers access to the woman so transferred, and did not necessitate any form of marriage ritual or ceremony when a co-husband was incorporated.

As already stated, Sawers’ statement is usually taken as the

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37 D’Oyly, Sir John, 1929, p. 129.
classic formulation of the rules regarding the formation of a polyandrous arrangement. But it is noteworthy that a previous writer, Ribeiro\(^{39}\) makes a statement which contradicts Sawers on certain fundamental points:

'Their marriages excite laughter. A girl makes a contract to marry a man of her own caste (for they cannot marry outside it), and if the relatives are agreeable they give a banquet and unite the betrothed couple. The next day a brother of the husband takes his place, and if there are seven brothers she is the wife of all of them, distributing the nights by turns, without the first husband having a greater right than any of the others. And if during the day any of them find the chamber unoccupied, he can have access to the woman if he thinks fit, and while he is within no one else can enter. She can refuse herself to none of them; whichever brother it may be that contracts the marriage, the woman is the wife of all; only if the youngest marry none of the other brothers has any rights over her, but he can claim access to the wives of all of them whenever he likes. If it chances that there are more brothers than seven those who exceed that number have no right over her, but if there are two, up to five, they are satisfied with one woman and the woman who is married to a husband with a large number of brothers is considered very fortunate, for all toil and cultivate for her and bring whatever they earn to the house, and she lives much honoured and well supported, and for this reason the children call all of them their fathers.'

Ribeiro seems to imply that marriage of a girl automatically enables the brothers of the husband to have access to her and that this right extends in theory to seven brothers. This situation very nearly resembles the polyandry pattern prevailing among the Iravas amongst whom although it is the eldest brother who fetches the wife, he acts as the representative of the brothers who corporately can exercise marital rights over her. It would be pure conjecture making an attempt to co-ordinate Sawers and Ribeiro. The latter wrote of the Low Country, the former of the Kandyan territory. And there is an appreciable time gap between the dates of their writings. It is possible that Ribeiro’s account may have been true of a certain set of people from South India settled in the Low Country. We may however accept Sawers’ formulation as

\(^{39}\) Ribeiro, João, 1685.
valid for the Kandyans during the nineteenth century. The Niti-Nighanduva\textsuperscript{40} which purports to be a statement of law as it existed in the last days of the Kandyan Kingdom restates the principles enunciated by Sawers.

About the respective statuses and rights of the co-husbands, whether they considered themselves equal or unequal in authority and security of position, we gather very little from historical sources. Panabokke alone (1898) briefly considers this significant question: 'But one thing is certain that when a man marries a woman that man is looked upon as the principal husband, those who come in afterwards being considered as secondary. For it is well recognized principle that the man who first conducted the woman had control over her and the household. It was also understood that if she remained under his roof, and all the other newcomers deserted her, she will be entitled to claim maintenance from him'. From Sawers we have already gathered that the other husbands are admitted by consent of the original marital partners (and if necessary, their parental families) which seems to indicate the primacy of the original husband. Another indication is that the polyandrous association was not necessarily stable, the younger husbands breaking away to form separate unions if they wished. As Lawrie put it: 'This arrangement was not necessarily permanent. Each of the younger brothers might afterwards contract a separate marriage elsewhere, or might bring a wife of his own to the family house.'

A criterion which might be useful in deciding on the respective statuses of the associating husbands is the nature of property rights of the husbands. Some of the principles as contained in customary law will be developed in a subsequent section. Husbands co-operated in economic activity and contributed to a common pool. But whether in actuality they held property jointly or in divided shares, in law their separate individual rights to their inherited and acquired properties were recognized. (Similarly the wife’s inherited property constituted a separate category.) These individual property rights came into play when succession by children was to be decided.

Expositions of Kandyan customary law also clearly state that children born of a polyandrous union were recognized and had legitimate rights of inheritance in the parental property. Some of these principles will be developed in a subsequent section.

\textsuperscript{40} Le Mesurier, C. J. R. and Panabokke, T. B., 1880, p. 22.
During the 19th century a spate of ordinances was passed in an effort to reform Kandyan marriage customs. We shall here mention only two major pieces of legislation, namely Ordinance No. 13 of 1859 and Ordinance No. 3 of 1870, both being ordinances "to amend the Laws of Marriage in the Kandyan Provinces".

Before 1859 there was no written code on the subject of Kandyan marriages. Marriages were contracted and discontinued without any formal registration, and the simple living together of man and woman was accepted as evidence of marriage. In addition to frequent marriage and divorce, there was polygamy, especially polyandry, to complicate the situation. As Richard Morgan put it, "The great difficulty was not simply ascertaining how many wives a man had, but how many husbands a woman had". This state of affairs did cause great difficulty to the deliberations of the courts of law, in the main manned by British civil servants. Questions of legitimacy of children and claims of inheritance confounded them and therefore control of Kandyan marriage customs was deemed necessary. Also matrimonial inconstancy, frequent divorce, polyandry and other 'inelegant' customs were deprecated from a Christian 'moral' point of view.

In 1858, on the plea that representations were made to him by many of the influential Kandyans and by the principal officials, Sir Henry Ward, the Governor, sought to make an alteration and sent a despatch on this matter to the Colonial Office. Sir E. B. Lytton remarked to Ward's successor, Sir Hercules Robinson, that he was surprised 'that the Kandyans should themselves have become weary of their existing license' and hoped that 'you have not over-estimated the force of public opinion among them . . . .'. It was later found that the influential Kandyans were 'very aged Kandyan chiefs, to whom in the course of nature marriage must be of very little concern', and that in general there was no widespread desire among the Kandyans for any change in their customs.

The Ordinance of 1859 was, however, passed. Its chief provisions were that polygamy was illegal, that in future all marriages must be registered, that all monogamous marriages contracted before 1859 must also be registered, that it was registration of marriage that invested children with legitimacy (even in the case of marriages
registered retrospectively), and that marriages could be dissolved only by divorce granted by the district courts, upon grounds somewhat similar to those prescribed by the English law.

The implementation of this Ordinance raised a hornet's nest of problems. The majority of Kandyans systematically ignored the law. In those districts where officials brought pressure on the people, instances of bigamy resulted, because some men registered their marriages with a new second wife. The Queen's Advocate in his speech regarding the operation of the ordinance stated: "Mr. O'Grady stated in his report that he had called upon married candidates for native offices to produce proofs of the registration of their marriages. The consequence was . . . that where there had been the greatest official pressure the greatest harm had been done. The men wanted to register their marriages, not with the women whom they had been living with, but with others, and the result was that the issue of a great many marriages so made were illegitimate."\(^{41}\)

The most disastrous consequences were related to the problem of legitimacy and inheritance. Persons who had married before 1859 according to Kandyan custom rarely bothered to register their marriages and their children were faced with being considered illegitimate. Registration of marriages with new wives left the children of previous customary marriages disinherited. Furthermore, unwilling to conform to the new rigorous divorce procedure, many a person who had registered his marriage, had subsequently separated and taken a new wife, who had borne him children. The Governor in a minute stated: "It is probably within the mark to assume that two-thirds of the existing unions are illegal, and that four-fifths of the rising generation born within the last eight or nine years are illegitimate."\(^{42}\)

It is probably certain, if customary marriages and bigamous unions continued, that polyandry itself could not have become extinct very quickly. But official reports laid before the Council claimed that polyandry was disappearing. "The present Government agent of the central province said that polyandry still lingers as a moribund practice, about which the people are indifferent."\(^{43}\)

In any case, polyandry faced the stern disapproval of all officials,

\(^{41}\) Digby, William, 1879, p. 71.

\(^{42}\) Ibid., p. 71.

\(^{43}\) Ibid., p. 70.
and there was general consent that although the marriage laws needed to be amended, polyandry must never be permitted.

The ordinance of 1870 was in many ways a realistic modification of the 1859 ordinance though not successful in solving inheritance problems. It liberalized the grounds on which marriage could be dissolved by including mutual consent and enabled the district and provincial administrators to grant divorce after inquiry, thus doing away with the hearings of law courts. All marriages contracted before 1859 were deemed valid, if they were contracted according to Kandyan custom. In the case of persons whose unions had been declared as valid marriage by section 28 of the 1859 ordinance, and who had subsequently registered a second marriage without getting a formal divorce from the district courts, such registration was held to operate as dissolution of the previous marriage and the issue of the registered marriage were considered legitimate. Marriages which were contracted since 1859 and which were technically invalid for want of proper registration were now deemed valid marriages and indicative of the dissolution of any former marriage, provided that no person who had already lawfully come into possession of property on the basis of the interpretation of previous law shall be dispossessed.

As regards polyandry the law took a serious view. Any marriage contracted during the life of a former husband or wife without a legal dissolution of the previous union was declared void, and the punishment for violating this law was imprisonment, with or without hard labour, for a period not exceeding three years.

PART II

POLYANDRY IN SOME CONTEMPORARY VILLAGES IN LAGGALA, CENTRAL CEYLON*

INTRODUCTION

Laggala, which to many a layman in Ceylon connotes a 'remote' area, is in fact a somewhat inaccessible region that lies in the north-

* The fieldwork on which this account is based was done in 1958-59 and was sponsored by the University of Ceylon. It was made possible by a grant
east of the Matale district. Coming from Kandy and Matale and Ratota one has to climb over a mountain range on a road as steep as any in Ceylon and then make a descent into a bowl from the rim of which one can see far into the dry zone plains. At Illukumbura village the motorable road stops, and thereafter one has to go on foot into the jungle. A second approach is far more circuitous; one has to drive into the dry zone to Elahera and motor by jeep to Pallegama, a trade-centre lying in the heart of Laggala.

Lying between the Kandyan highlands and the Dry Zone plains, Laggala is a transition area; one half of it is called Udasiya Pattu (Upper Sub-district) and is hilly; the other half called Pallesiya Pattu (Lower Sub-district) borders the plains and is flatter. Pallegama lies right on the border line between the sub-districts.

The relative inaccessibility of the area, its geographic separateness, its location in a transition zone have, among other factors, helped to stamp it with distinctive features discernible even in the cultural life of the people. It is a sparsely populated region, with small nucleated jungle villages, separated from one another by jungle and located near valleys fed by rivers and streams. Agriculture, unlike that of the Dry Zone, is not aided by village tanks.

If nothing else, the incidence of polyandry as a socially permitted custom and its virtual absence as an active variant marriage form to monogamy in neighbouring areas gives Laggala a claim to some distinctness. It is my impression that it is one of the few areas in contemporary Ceylon where polyandry can still be studied as an institutionalized pattern of behaviour. It has been possible to establish that in the following villages of Laggala cases of polyandry exist: Dammantenne, Etanwela, Rambukkoluwa, Ratninda, Pallegama, Walpolamulla, Mahalakotuwa, Pallepola, Hanwela, Imaduwa, Bogaweva; a systematic search will no doubt establish that in every village in the area contemporary cases exist or cases in the recent past existed.

It has to be recognized at the outset that the great majority of marriages in Laggala today are monogamous, and that instances from The Asia Foundation, and I thank Mr. Louis Lazaroff for the interest he took in the project. I gratefully acknowledge the invaluable assistance given in the field by students in the Department of Sociology, especially P. A. S. Saram, S. Amunugama, D. Dissanayake and K. A. D. Perera.
of polyandry are relatively rare. Perhaps in no Laggala village can one find today more than a maximum of five cases. Polyandry was probably more frequent in the recent past, but even during this period monogamy would appear to have been the most frequent form of marriage. It is my impression that the progressive dying out of the custom is to be interpreted partly as a submission to the force of 'urban' values and governmental enactment with regard to marriage.

THE INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Obviously polyandry can be understood only in terms of the institutional setting in which it operates. I shall briefly outline some salient features of the institutional background. This account relates primarily to the village of Rambukkoluwa and its satellite hamlet of Gangahenwela.

The economy of the village rests on paddy and chena (shifting slash and burn) cultivation. The latter is undertaken in the 'dry' season when lack of rainfall restricts paddy cultivation. Jungle land for chena is available in plenty; the limiting factor is human labour. Technologically both types of cultivation are primitive; human labour is necessarily the most important factor in this labour-intensive economy. Occupational specialization is minimal; virtually everyone is a cultivator first and foremost. It is to be expected therefore that systems of co-operation and mutual aid in all activities will have been developed. The nature of the economic base, especially the extent of irrigable land, has a decisive relevance for population density. The village of Rambukkoluwa-Gangahenwela has about 40 households with not more than 300 persons in all. Adjacent villages like Etanwela are bigger mainly because paddy stretches are larger.

The structure of kinship is difficult to characterize in clear outlines because of the problem of describing a 'non-unilinear' or cognatic system. The system as found in Rambukkoluwa-Gangahenwela is in certain ways markedly different in detail and emphasis from that prevailing in another region of the Central Province.

Inheritance is bilateral. Although there are variations in what

44 Davenport, W., 1959.
happens in particular families, the probability is that a daughter will inherit land along with the sons. She may inherit equally or there may be a weightage in favour of the sons. The latter is perhaps more usual when distribution is made during the life time of the parents. Certainly there is no pattern regarding this. What is of particular interest is that a woman is not usually given land at marriage; a father or mother may transfer land to her after the birth of a child, sometimes later, or as it often happens may die intestate. Most transfers are made informally and accepted as valid when the parent dies. When the parent dies intestate, irrespective of whether a woman has been given out in diga or binna marriage, she often gets a portion equal to those of her brothers if she has not already received property at the time of marriage or afterwards. (This customary practice is certainly at variance from what the expositions of Kandyan law have to say about the rights of a woman given in diga marriage.)

Among the two forms of marriage diga (virilocal) and binna (uxorilocal) the former is more common, but the latter comprises a significant structural variant. The consequence of a binna marriage is that the man affiliates himself to the wife's kin group and the children naturally do the same.

A man's full name, as listed in official documents, normally consists of the name of his natal village, followed by vasagama, gedera and personal names in this order.

The vasagama name is normally derived patrilineally. The children of a binna marriage may inherit the vasagama name of the mother's father, but this is not always the case. (A man married in binna will normally use his own vasagama name and may transfer to his children the same affiliation.) In the villages of Rambukkoluwa and Gangahenwela (and some of the neighbouring villages which I have visited) the vasagama name is supposed to be the property of the high caste Goyigama only—those referred to as rate minissu. (The Duraya caste for instance is identified by a caste prefix to the gedera name). The vasagama name is explained by the villager as deriving from an original ancestor (mutha); in all the villages of Laggala there are about four to five standard names stemming from the founding fathers, e.g. Herath Mudiyanse, Konara Mudiyanse, etc. There are plenty of myths in circulation about the

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46 D'Oyly, Sir John; Hayley, F. A.; Sawers.
doings of these ancestors. The vasagama name serves to buttress the high status of the 'good' Goyigama. There are 'lower' subcastes of Goyigama who are denied these connections with illustrious ancestors by the 'good' Goyigama. The vasagama has no kinship behavioural significance. Hundreds of persons distributed in several villages bear the same vasagama name. A person does not know the majority of persons who bear the same name, does not consider them as kinsmen, except to say vaguely that if they bear the same name they are perhaps common descendants of the ancestor.

For kinship it is the gedera that is the more important concept. In Rambukkoluwa and Gangahenwela there are clusters of households which are geographically divided into gedera (houses), e.g. banagewatte gedera (house in the garden near the preaching hall), galvate (house by the stone wall). The gedera is more than a territorial concept. The backbone of the gedera consists of certain agnatically related kinsmen; there are others who trace affiliation through a mother (who has made a binna marriage). A man who makes a binna marriage, while retaining his vasagama name, assumes the gedera name of his wife. In fact he has to because it indicates his present residence. His children will belong to the gedera where he is residing. At the margin stand those outsiders or remote kin who have come to reside in the village and being of the right status and caste, allowed to reside in the gedera territory. Hence the gedera is by no means a localized patrilineage in the strict sense.

Clearly the gedera group as a body of kinsmen presents difficulties of structural description. If one were to apply the concept of 'descent' how would one describe it? 'Descent' and 'descent system' connote lineal reckoning of kinship seen from the point of view of shared descent from a common ancestor. But the concept of lineal reckoning (descent) and its implications are not entirely clear in anthropological writings. For instance an anthropologist has written recently: "By descent group I mean a segment whose membership is determined unilineally, and whose members regard themselves as of common descent. Descent as I use the term is unilineal by definition and 'applies only to the mode of determining the membership of a social group' 47". Compare this with Davenport's definition of non-unilinear descent as "ascription or exclusion through specified kin relationships, but where societal norms

provide more than one possibility or where no single alternative rule approaches a frequency of 100 per cent".48

The gedera group is a non-unilinear descent group with a distinct agnatic emphasis. Normally a person traces his membership agnatically, which follows naturally from the usual diga marriage. But binna marriage in so far as it is a recognized variant allows for a person to trace membership through a female. Thus the system may be said to be ambi-lineal (descent traced through either males or females) with the agnatic line being the more usual. The gedera besides being a collection of persons claiming common descent is also a residential group. Normally it is not the case that ego's father and mother both belong to the same gedera, but common membership is theoretically possible, and sometimes found as a result of cross-cousin marriage.

It is clear from this account that the gedera is not a distinct descent group as far as membership goes; nor is it or any segment of it characterized (besides names) by identifying emblems, organization, collective control of land and ritual, nor is marriage regulated by the group. Land passes from parents to children. Marriage is an affair of close kinsmen, cross-cousins being ideally the preferred partners.

Besides gedera members, a large number of affinal kinsmen play a significant role in day to day affairs. A man's significant kinship circle is his 'personal kindred'. Siblings of the father and their children, the mother's brother and his children, one's own siblings and one's affinal relatives through marriage constitute the core, and of these those physically available (those living in the village or in adjacent villages) are the most effective. Of the affinal kinsmen, the mother's brother and his children are significant kinsmen and the preferred cross-cousin marriage pattern reinforces this relationship.

There is one other aspect of behaviour which may have some bearing on polyandry. Marriage (here I mean 'customary marriage' as opposed to registered marriage) is very brittle especially in the early stages of married life. Divorce at this stage is very common; it is not unusual for persons to go through the process of living with two or three women until they settle down eventually. The birth of children is usually a stabilizing factor; but divorce even after the birth of a child is not uncommon. (Usually, if a couple registers

the marriage, it is sometime after children are born and the union considered stable.) One may perhaps call these 'trial' marriages and it is easy to see why usually no property is given a woman by her parents at the time of marriage. Along with brittle marriage in the early stages and frequent divorce is also to be found a certain laxity in sex behaviour. Pre-marital and extra-marital relations take place and although not normatively condoned, they operate at the level of concrete behaviour. Normative condemnation of pre-marital sex relations and adultery is not formulated in 'moralistic' terms such as 'sin' but in terms of practical consequences such as illegitimate children, physical violence if the husband finds out, break up of marriage, etc.

The household is invariably composed of the elementary family. At marriage a son sets up his own household (separate holding of income, store house, cooking, etc.) although he may, if the parental house is big enough, live in the same structure or compound. Because of common land interests, location of fields, and availability of house site, the likelihood is that male siblings (and women married in binna) will live in proximity. However, migration of males for various reasons, e.g. to contract a binna marriage, residence on maternal property in another village, etc. takes place amongst any large set of brothers.

THE STRUCTURE OF POLYANDRY IN LAGGALA

Types of Polyandry and their Implications

The following discussion is based on intensive documentation of 27 cases of polyandry in a number of villages in Laggala. Some of these cases are in existence today; the rest occurred in the recent past and are remembered at first hand by contemporary adult informants. The number of cases documented do not represent by any means the total number that can be documented in the area; they represent the number which in the course of fieldwork I have been able to investigate directly or document from accounts given by informants whom I found to be reliable. A major problem may not concern the number of cases studied, but the representativeness of the cases as a cross-section of the incidence of polyandry. As far as I know the procedure for location and study of cases exerted no bias on selection; I have therefore proceeded as if
### Table I. Characteristics of Polyandrous Associations (N = 27)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kinship of co-husbands</th>
<th>Economic status of co-husbands</th>
<th>Primary consideration for incorporating second husband</th>
<th>Property rights of co-husbands</th>
<th>Stability of association</th>
<th>Instances when polyandry repeated by succeeding generation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Economic status of co-husbands</td>
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<td>Stability of association</td>
<td>Instances when polyandry repeated by succeeding generation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Landed</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own brothers</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step-brothers</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrilateral cousins</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matrilateral cousins</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distant kin or unrelated</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table II. Relationship Between Kinship of Co-Husbands and Features of Polyandry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Kinship</th>
<th>Total Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Own brothers</td>
<td>15 3 10 2 13 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step-brothers</td>
<td>2 1 1 1 1 2 2 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrilateral</td>
<td>2 2 1 1 1 3 2 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matrilateral</td>
<td>3 1 1 1 2 1 3 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distant kin</td>
<td>5 1 4 2 3 5 1 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 One case represents sons of common father and two different mothers; the other sons of a common mother and two different fathers.

### Table III. Three Types of Polyandry and Their Associated Features

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Polyandry</th>
<th>Total Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Own brothers</td>
<td>15 3 10 2 13 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step-brothers</td>
<td>7 2 1 4 1 4 2 7 5 1 1 1 1 3 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distantly related</td>
<td>5 1 4 2 3 5 1 4 3 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Distantly related or unrelated co-husbands
the range of cases studied would enable me to make a structural analysis of the institution.

In Table I, I have classified the cases according to some criteria which might be pertinent for understanding the institution. The majority of the associations (15 out of 27) were adelphic in character. The rest were partnerships between step-brothers (half-siblings) (2), patrilateral cross-cousins (2), matrilateral cross-cousins (3), and distantly related or unrelated men (5).

The economic status of the co-husbands also shows a range. Judged by the arbitrary criterion that ownership of 1½ acres of paddy is the minimum possession for calling a peasant 'landed', the majority of associations have been among men who are not landed. An interesting fact is that 6 cases represent an association between one man with land and another who was poor or landless. An equal number were alliances between men with land.

A major consideration in the formation of polyandry has been the consolidation of land belonging to the co-husbands. But in nearly half the cases the second husband has been incorporated because of his labour power or for extra-economic considerations such as liaison between the man and the common wife.

In terms of the property rights and agreements of co-husbands, there appear to be two different systems, both of which are nearly equal in incidence. One system is where the co-husbands hold and transfer the land jointly (corporation) and the other where the husbands hold their lands as individual properties and transfer to their children individually. (The management and working of the land is a different matter: in all instances there is economic cooperation in cultivation and a common pool.)

The majority (19) of the cases studied were found to be stable. The unstable type (7) however constitute a problem for explanation.

The evidence seems to point to the fact that in most cases polyandry is not a persisting form repeated by the succeeding generations within the same family. (The 8 cases categorized as inappropriate refer to children who have not contracted marriages yet.)

This list of traits indicates that polyandry as an institution appears to have a range of characteristics. The question is whether polyandry as a form can be reduced to sub-types each characterized by a distinct pattern of features.

Analysis indicates that there are distinct types of polyandry
and that the major variable is the kinship of the co-husbands. Table III which is obtained from Table II marks out the predominant characteristics of each type.

**Type I. Adelphic polyandry (own brothers):** This is the most frequent type of polyandry. Among brothers it appears to be most frequent among those who have inherited less than $\frac{1}{4}$ acres, an extent which does not enable an adequate living. Land consolidation is the primary consideration in the formation of the partnership. Among blood brothers land is held and transferred jointly; these unions are generally stable. Although the marked trend is that the sons (or any two sons) of polyandrous partners do not themselves enter a polyandrous alliance, such repetition is more likely to occur, if it occurs, in contexts of adelphic polyandry. There appears to be no pattern regarding which of the brothers with regard to birth order may associate in polyandry. The coming together of two brothers seems to be dictated by certain peculiar developments within each family.

**Type II. Polyandry between step-brothers and parallel cousins:** These in kinship terminology are *aiya malli* (elder brother and younger brother) and denote a category which is an extension of the sibling relationship. In such instances the likelihood is that the incorporated junior husband is ‘poor’ and attaches himself to the household of an ‘elder brother’ who is more affluent. The primary consideration for the incorporation of the second husband is, besides kinship obligation, his labour power. Such alliances, however, do not manifest corporate property ownership: the co-husbands own their properties individually and transfer them in the same manner. The associations are generally stable; it is not likely that the children will follow the example of their fathers.

**Type III. Polyandry between distant kinsmen or unrelated males:** This is essentially non-adelphic polyandry, and comprises the smallest type from the point of view of incidence. It tends to occur among men who are not landed, but at the same time each has some land to contribute to the bargain. Land consolidation is not a consideration in the formation of polyandry; sexual intimacy between the second man and the common wife and even consideration of labour power are more likely to be the effective con-
tributing factors. The individual properties are in these instances invariably held and transferred individually. Most of these associations tend to be unstable and dissolution is a common occurrence. The possibility that polyandry will be repeated by the sons of these unions is very small.

Each of these types appear to be associated with distinct clusters of characteristics. The thesis that these clusters of characteristics tend to be associated with the nature of the kinship of co-husbands is not to attribute the distinct characteristics of each type to kinship, but that in the classification of types the kinship variable appears to be a discriminating one and possibly a major criterion. Thus two blood brothers are more likely to hold their property jointly than non-siblings; adelphic polyandry is more likely to be more stable than non-adelphic polyandry.

The validity of this representation may be put to the test in relation to the problem of stability of polyandry. It may be said that it is not kinship of co-husbands, but their marital histories which determines whether a polyandrous association is stable or unstable. A polyandrous partnership between males both of whom had previously contracted individual marriages and had children by these marriages may be said to be inevitably faced with doom, because tension and friction is built into the context. Stated thus it is true; whatever the kin relationship of the co-husbands, previous marriages complicate and make unstable a subsequent polyandrous alliance. But in the entire collection of 27 case histories there were only two instances of the incorporated husband entering a polyandrous union while he had children by a previous marriage; one was between parallel cousins, the other between non-kinsmen. Both broke up. But in the vast majority of polyandrous alliances in Laggala the second husband had been a bachelor or childless though previously married. Among these 'uncomplicated' alliances, the chief factor explaining differences in stability appears to be whether the alliance is adelphic (real and extended) or non-adelphic.

A fact that appears to be general to all types of polyandry is that there is no trend towards the persistence and perpetuation of polyandry within the same family over the generations. The parents of persons living in polyandry have not in general been living in polyandry themselves. There is also a marked absence of polyandry amongst the siblings of those living in polyandry. Nor is there any
distinct tendency in turn for the children of polyandrous parents to contract polyandry. Thus polyandry appears to operate in the context—vertically and laterally—of individual marriages. This lack of perpetuation constitutes a problem for explanation.

In the different types of polyandry formulated I have for purposes of clarity emphasized different considerations as being primarily operative in the incorporation of the second husband. These considerations do not operate exclusively but may operate in varying conjunction in particular instances.

In many instances a primary fact to be considered in the history of the polyandrous marriage is the liaison between the woman and the husband's 'brother' or stranger who is incorporated partly for this reason and is changed from lover to co-husband with open access to the woman. It would appear that the wife often played a part in persuading her husband to formalize the relationship.

But sexual intimacy is not a sufficient reason for initiating polyandry. There are many liaisons outside marriage in Laggala which are never transformed into polyandry. Very often there are certain economic considerations that actively play a part.

Property considerations, especially the advantage of land consolidation, plays a significant role in the formation of polyandry especially among full brothers.

Besides land consolidation *per se* the value of an additional man for his *labour power* is also a significant consideration. This may be the chief consideration in cases where the incorporated man may have little or no land to contribute to the union.

In an economy where dispersion of fields is common a partnership makes it possible for two men to cultivate different fields at the same time. Also where land belonging to others is available for cultivation on a share-cropping basis, an additional cultivator in the family is obviously worthwhile. Perhaps one of the chief advantages concerns *chena* cultivation, which in the jungle villages of Laggala is a major agricultural activity supplementing paddy cultivation. Jungle land is freely available; the task involved is to fell the jungle, burn it, etc. and in the latter stages watch over the crops night and day. While *chena* cultivation is in progress, the permanent fields close to the village must also be cultivated and the family at home protected. Polyandry makes possible this division of labour, and in general ensures a much bigger yield and
income than is possible in the case of a single full time male worker per household.

It is noteworthy that the reasons advanced by present-day Lag-gala villagers as an explanation of polyandry accord with some of those recorded by Panabokke (Panabokke 1898) sixty years ago. In addition to the land tenure system and the feudal services it entailed, and the extreme sub-division of property through inheritance among brothers leading them to combine, he states two other reasons which a Laggala villager of today will appreciate:

"In the wilder parts of the country paddy fields and 'hena' lands have to be watched at nights to prevent wild elephants and other animals destroying them. This has to be done for six or eight months of the year. In the absence of one man the other or others take care of the family, house, and household goods . . . .

When a brother gets an illness which confines him to bed or to his house, a brother is called in, whether married or unmarried, to live in association for the purpose of cultivating the lands and looking after the other affairs." In not a few cases studied in Laggala sickness necessitated the aid of another man in order to manage and cultivate the fields.

It is noteworthy that most of the cases studied relate to cultivating peasants who are essentially small holders. The incidence of polyandry among feudal aristocrats and rich landed elements has not been described because there are scarcely any such resident elements in these villages with 'primitive economies'. However it is relevant to note that the polyandrous arrangement has occurred among individuals who by village standards own 'substantial' property as well as those who are poorly endowed.

Mode of Incorporation of Second Husband

There is no general pattern regarding the time at which the graft or incorporation of the second husband has taken place. In no instance was a polyandrous association simultaneously formed at the time a woman was taken in marriage. Monogamy has prevailed at first, and the second partner incorporated at different times, before the birth of children or after some have been born. In all cases studied in no instance have there been more than two co-husbands simultaneously. There appears to be a large amount of informality and lack of procedure regarding the incorporation of the second
husband. There is no ceremony which formalizes the partnership nor any ritual which publicly informs the village. It is said that the husbands themselves will be too ‘embarrassed’ to publicize their relationship and that the wife would suffer from the same restraint though she might more readily confide to her friends. In any case the village gets to know about a polyandrous arrangement more by inference from studying the movements of the parties rather than from direct information gained from them. As one informant puts it “if an elder brother who is married and an adult younger brother continue to live under the same roof for a long time, people by watching their movements will guess the truth.” When the arrangement becomes a ‘public fact’ the polyandrous partners need no more be reticent about the relationship.

Such a lack of formality in incorporation raises the problem of differentiating polyandry from a sexual liaison between a married woman and another man living under the same roof. It is not uncommon in this region for an unmarried brother to sleep with his brother’s wife; nor for that matter is it uncommon for a woman to sleep with an outsider. A polyandrous arrangement means more than this in that there should be an agreement between the husbands regarding the sharing of the wife and regarding certain economic arrangements concerning the household. In most cases perhaps polyandry is preceded by sexual intimacy between the second man and the shared wife; but at some point this intimacy is given a firm footing by means of intervention of the parents or close relatives of the men (if they are siblings), or through the mediation of the wife, or consultation between the husband and wife regarding the advantages to be gained by the partnership. Once polyandry has been initiated both men have an understanding regarding the sharing of the wife. Similarly there is an understanding regarding economic co-operation, common pool, common residence, land consolidation (if desired), and the further implications of parenthood such as legitimacy of children, their rights of inheritance, etc. These implications do not apply to sexual liaisons of a short lived nature. When in the text I refer to ‘formalization’ of the partnership I have in mind these agreements, and not to any ceremony or ritual act like a second marriage.

In the formation of a polyandrous association it appears that neither the parents nor the other relatives of the wife need be consult-
ed, irrespective of whether the co-husbands are brothers or not. This is a departure from the traditional procedure enumerated by Sawers and commented on by Leach by which the consent of her parents was necessary if the wife married in diga was to be shared by a non-sibling. It would also appear that today and in the recent past the co-husbands whether siblings or not do not and did not necessarily have to obtain the consent of their parents and relatives. In actual fact, especially in adelphic polyandry, parents of two brothers may play a considerable part in initiating a polyandry; so may the wife’s father if he is a mother’s brother or the wife’s mother if she is a father’s sister. But the co-husbands can act independently in establishing the union.

Relationship between Husbands: The Status of ‘Senior’ and ‘Junior’ Partners

There is definitely a differentiation of status between the husbands, one being considered the ‘senior’ and locally referred to as he who is vadimal (older) or pradana (chief).

Usually the man who first brought a woman is the senior and he who was subsequently incorporated the junior. In the typical case of two siblings who combine in polyandry, it is usually the elder brother who has married first and a younger brother later taken in partnership. Here the seniority is buttressed by age difference and the fact that the younger brother has always shown respect and recognized the authority of the elder sibling. As some of the case studies will show it happens often that it is not two brothers adjacent in birth order who join in polyandry. Therefore the greater the age gap the greater the asymmetry in relationship. The extreme case is where the youngest brother who after the death of parents has been brought up by a much older brother is later a party to polyandry.

But it is not always true that it is the younger brother who is incorporated. There are instances when an older brother has joined the younger brother’s household. This will be problematic from the point of view of establishing seniority. Informants say that even in such cases the rule of ‘who first brought the wife’ applies.

Nowadays, the question of establishing who is the ‘senior’ is sometimes resolved in terms of the legal criterion “In whose name is the marriage registered (if the marriage has been registered)”? Since legal recognition as husband goes only to the registered hus-
band, the second husband has legally fewer rights and also fewer responsibilities should he leave the union.

In the case of non-siblings the position of 'seniority' carries with it various implications. Unless registration of marriage after the partnership upsets the pattern, it is the first husband who is the senior. This is underlined by the fact that the second man settles in the first man's house. The second husband while retaining his vasagama name assumes the gedera name of the house to which he goes. More importantly, all children born to the co-husbands take the vasagama name and gedera name of the senior husband. Thus the legitimacy of the children is traced through the senior husband. (The 'inferiority' of the junior husband has implications for inheritance which will be discussed later.) It is only when the senior husband dies that any children born of the junior partner assume his vasagama name; the same gedera name will apply if he continues to live in the same house.

The differential statuses of the two husbands are manifest in the nature of authority concerning various economic activities. Direction regarding management of land and cultivation is likely to come from the senior to the junior husband. Similarly the control of the paddy store and money is likely to be vested in the senior husband. But in these matters it is not realistic to state generalizations. Amongst brothers who have consolidated their land holdings there is a less obvious authority structure unless the junior husband is much younger. Their relationship however is 'formal'; companionship is excluded; and exchanges limited to matters of economic concern. Among non-siblings, if both husbands have land of their own which they hold independently, the chief figure in maintaining solidarity and co-operation is likely to be the wife who may act as intermediary and may even be in charge of the common pool. However, if among non-siblings, the junior is landless and has attached himself to the senior and contributes only his labour to the household, the authority wielded by the senior husband is likely to be great. In such cases the junior partner receives 'orders' and his quota of 'pocket money' from the senior, and their relationship may be characterized as formal and asymmetrical. As has already been mentioned, a complicating factor is legal status by virtue of marriage registration. The legal husband may or may not use his legal status to advantage.
Whatever the kin relationship between the co-husbands, it is clear that both are regarded as 'fathers' by the children, and are addressed as such. However there is no uniformity in the prefixes used. In some instances Loku and Heen (big and small) are used, in other instances, only the 'junior' father may be distinguished by a prefix. There is no culturally patterned difference in the emotional relationships between fathers and children; however the relationship between the husbands will be reflected in their relationship to the children—the senior partner is likely to be the more powerful authority figure and disciplinarian.

It has been difficult to probe fully into the sexual arrangements between the partners. Both husbands have equal access to their common wife, but how this is achieved is problematic. Informants characterize the polyandrous house as being larger than the normal one, and that typically it has separate adjoining rooms for the husbands and a third room for the wife placed on the opposite side of the courtyard. This architectural plan is not always found in actuality. But it is true that the polyandrous house is larger, often having an extra room or enclosed part of the verandah where an additional person can sleep. The man sleeping 'outside' is the man excluded for the night. It is said that when both men are at home, neither expresses his desires to the other and it is the wife who manages the allocation of sexual rights. It was thought that it would be a woman with super-normal sexual appetite who would sleep with both husbands in the course of the same night. Informants also stated that over a period of time the junior partner supersedes the senior in the enjoyment of the wife. The senior partner is described as the older one; the junior as younger and sexually more potent. The senior partner while young may keep the woman and in fact share her room while the junior lives separately in his room, but as he grows older the junior takes his place sexually, and sometimes ends up by sharing the room with the wife while the senior is pushed out. It was the general opinion among villagers that the wife invariably preferred the younger partner sexually; this preference is evident especially in those instances where the wife's intimacy with a man was one of the circumstances leading to his incorporation. But sexual jealousy was not considered the ground for keen friction or disruption. Even if the woman preferred one of the husbands, she was said
to be shrewd enough to make herself available to both; and if the younger man at some point of time becomes the sexually more effective partner this transition is supposed to coincide with the waning of the appetite of the older man. However, it was said that an older man, if the age gap between him and his junior partner and wife was large, was in danger of being ignored and not looked after when he became decrepit.

Property and Inheritance

In the case of blood brothers in stable polyandry they have invariably consolidated their property and held it in joint ownership. In such instances when one of them died, irrespective of whether he was senior or junior, customarily the surviving co-husband succeeded to the property to the exclusion of other surviving siblings outside the polyandry. If the surviving parent too died intestate then the property was eventually divided equally among all the children irrespective of whether they were born before or after the initiation of polyandry. If the children were too young then the widow managed the lands over which she was considered as having a life interest. During their life time both husbands may, acting together, transfer property to their children; if one died the other may dispose it according to his wishes. While this has been the case in all stable partnerships, complications arise when blood brothers break up.

I have come across only one instance when two blood brothers in polyandry separated, and in this instance the separated brother did not re-marry. He held his land separately after the break up and made individual allocations of his property to his children. Thus it may be said that in stable sibling polyandry the co-husbands act as a corporation in which they merge their properties; but that separate ownership is claimed when they break up. Even if the brother who breaks away remarries he is considered as being in some way responsible for the children left behind and is expected to endow them with land.

In the case of co-husbands who are not blood brothers, whether they be step-brothers, parallel cousins, distant kin or unrelated, they have invariably, even when the partnership has been stable, held their properties individually, although they may work them as a common unit and possess a common store. If the union has
been stable, then each father will separately transfer property to his children if he so wishes. If the second husband has joined the union after some children have been already born to the first husband, he is likely not to give these children any of his property but give only those born after he joined.

We have seen that when co-husbands are distantly related or unrelated the association tends to be unstable. In such instances it is the junior husband who usually breaks away; in doing so he takes his property with him and leaves the children behind and they are considered the responsibility of the senior husband. If the junior husband marries again he can leave his property to the wife and children of his new alliance without any consideration for his children by the previous association. I have insufficient cases to state what actually happened when associated step-brothers and parallel cousins with children broke up the association. (These unions are generally stable.) If dissolution took place, then presumably the same course of action as in the case of unrelated husbands would be allowed.

In the case of polyandrous associations not involving blood brothers, the customary practice appears to have been that in the event of the senior partner dying first the property was managed by the surviving partner in the interests of the children. If the deceased had no children, then the wife enjoyed a life interest, the property going at her death to the deceased's siblings. If the junior partner died first, his property is regarded as passing on to the senior partner to be held in trust for children born during the period of his association; if however he had no children the siblings of the deceased can claim it to the exclusion of the surviving polyandrous partners. This appears to have been the customary position, but informants say that this position cannot be legally upheld today, especially if the junior partner has no legal status by virtue of being excluded from the marriage registration. Claims to the property are likely to be made by siblings of the deceased, even if the deceased had children, in instances when non-siblings have been associated in polyandry. This controversial legal position was pointed out as one of the 'disadvantages' of polyandry in the modern context. Presumably, even in the case of two blood brothers in polyandry, other siblings could contest the legality of being excluded from their share of the property of the deceased
brother, if he happened to be the non-registered husband.

In Laggala society we have already stated that a woman herself often owns property in her own right through the operation of bilateral inheritance. The property of a woman in polyandry remains technically a distinct entity although it is managed by her co-husbands (or the senior husband if the marriage is registered). If during her lifetime, in collusion with her husbands, she decides to gift her property, then her parcel of property is merged in the common stock and given as a share or shares to children. If she dies intestate, the surviving husbands may follow the same procedure. If all die intestate then the wife's property is shared equally by all her children.

**Village Opinion regarding Polyandry**

Village opinion regarding the institution of polyandry has to be appreciated in the context of two developments: firstly, polyandry has no legal status by virtue of the Kandyan Marriages Ordinance (1859), for only one man can register himself as being legally married to a woman; secondly, even a remote village like Rambukkoluwa is aware of the monogamous value system of the low country, the urban élite and the "prestige" groups in the country and hence is "embarrassed" by a custom that goes counter to a "dominant" value system compared with which polyandry may appear as "backward" and "primitive". Especially to a field worker from a different social stratum and culture stream the villagers will not openly volunteer information regarding polyandrous associations at the early stage of work. In the course of inquiries a slight difference in reaction to the custom between the older and younger people was detected. An oldish person when asked about a particular association would answer seriously but with wariness; a young man's first reaction would be one of amusement and embarrassment, followed by a greater willingness to talk about the more intimate details.

Many a villager in Laggala today would not contemplate or conceive of himself as being a party to a polyandrous association. As one informant in his early thirties put it: "I wouldn't like to eat off the same plate as another man". Another, slightly older, referred to it as 'shameful' and showed disgust at the prospect of two brothers sharing a wife, though after expressing personal
disapproval, he went on to elaborate the advantages. An oldish man of an inferior caste (Duraya) from Rambukkoluwa village, who himself in his youth had lived for a while in polyandry, and whose father too had been associated for a brief period in polyandry, expressed his disapproval thus: "Even a Rodiya (untouchable) will not accept food from an eka ge kama because he doesn't want to accept food from a bada loku (big stomach) banda and a bada loku amma." Asked to explain this, he said that the Rodiya beggar will scorn to take food from persons so stingy that they don't take separate wives. This informant, who has a flair for invective, presents an extreme opinion, but still it indicates an aspect of contemporary opinion. But in analyzing village opinion an important distinction has to be made. What is stated as their own individual preference (applicable to themselves) is quite different from their attitude of acceptance or rejection of the practice in others. It is in their acceptance of the custom as a legitimate permissive pattern of conduct that we see the normative support for the custom.

The opinion of informants may be classified into two aspects:

r. Village tolerance of polyandry is expressed in such words as "Dhenna kamathi nam bohoma hondai", i.e. "if they agree to it then it is good." The emphasis is on the wishes of the parties concerned. The villagers conceive of this association as being necessarily "fraternal" whether brothers or parallel cousins. The "oughtness" about the kinship category of the males is a significant pointer to the structure of kinship. Brothers have a common blood bond and solidarity. The wife of one brother is the nena of the other, and therefore technically in a marriageable relation. The preference and insistence on the appropriateness of the custom for brothers only is based also partly on the belief that two brothers can get on and co-operate by virtue of their blood tie. Furthermore, the moral responsibility of an elder brother for a younger brother is best illustrated by the words of an informant, who while developing the sequence of events leading up to polyandry said: "The malli (younger brother) comes visiting his elder brother; he visits the house when the elder brother is away. Then intimacy starts between the malli and the woman. The elder brother can't chase the younger brother away, because the latter might stray, get involved with other women and even fall into trouble. The elder
brother therefore must ‘protect’ his younger brother. So he accepts him and validates the polyandrous arrangement”. The significance of this statement is not that it is a realistic story of how polyandrous arrangement develops, but that it embodies the moral conception of the kinship obligation of an older brother for a younger brother. It also indicates the moral basis on which fraternal polyandry is considered legitimate and appropriate.

2. The virtue of polyandry was expressed primarily in terms of the economic advantages that accrue from the association. Besides the advantage of pooling land resources, it was pointed out that two men could work more and earn more for the household. If one man went on a trip the other could remain at home to look after the family. If there were two men available one could during the proper season devote himself to chena cultivation while the other could devote his energies to paddy cultivation. Two men could in any case cultivate more paddy land; sometimes a man had more land than he could cultivate by himself, and therefore an associated partner would be a boon.

In addition to the better standards of living made possible by polyandry, another distinct advantage was stated. It was pointed out that if one husband died then the other could keep the household going. This insures against the wife and children being left to suffer privations.

It is no exaggeration to say that in a villager’s scheme of considerations the practical economic motive looms large. In marriage the possibilities of increment to land are kept in view; even in a binna marriage the economic motive is a strong attraction, for the man contracting it is usually landless. In the same way a polyandrous association is considered as being economically advantageous; in an agricultural economy which is labour intensive an additional adult male is considered a worthwhile investment.

Legality and Legitimacy in the Modern Context

We have seen how in the modern context the recognition of monogamy only as legally valid marriage and the introduction of registration of marriage put the incorporated or junior husband in an unenviable position. His lack of legal status as husband and also as father of the children can raise, if put to the test in a court of law, problems regarding inheritance rights. The children he helped
to produce can presumably be partially or fully excluded from inheritance by others with claims on his property. Villagers with some acquaintance with legal matters present this problem as one of the 'disadvantages' connected with polyandry today.

But the fact is that the majority of marriages in Laggala are not registered, and polyandry exists, with other forms, as customary marriage. But even in these instances, the registration of the birth of each child is legally required and in actuality done. And in the birth certificate issued the name of the 'father' of the child or his 'trustee' is entered, and as may be expected, it is the senior partner who takes on this responsibility. Thus indirectly he is invested with the status of 'legal' father and the legitimacy of the children is traced through him (and the mother). Once again the junior partner is reduced to an inferior position. The legal implication when it comes to inheritance is that children of the polyandrous union cannot claim the property of the junior father.

This is legal speculation; the inheritance issues stemming from polyandry have in Laggala been rarely if ever taken as far as the courts. (Indeed, I did not come across a single court case concerning these problems.) But villagers are becoming increasingly aware of the disparity between the legal injunctions and customary practice.

PART III

INTERPRETATION

Polyandry as an arrangement to meet Feudal Obligations

There is a species of explanation to my knowledge first advanced by Tennent and reiterated later by Ievers, Panabokke, Perera and Gunaratne which links the development of the institution of polyandry with the nature of feudal obligations. To quote Tennent:

49 Ievers, R. W., 1899.
50 Panabokke, T. B., 1898.
51 Perera, J. M., 1898.
52 Gunaratne, 1898.
According to the notion of the Sinhalese, the practice originated in the feudal times, when, as is alleged, their rice lands would have gone to extinction, during the long absences enforced on the people by the duty of personal attendance on the king and the higher chiefs, had not some interested party been left to conduct their tillage. Hence the community of property led eventually to the community of wives. An aged chief of the Four Corles, Aranpulle Ratemahatmaya, who lived under three native kings, prior to the conquest of Kandy by the British, informed me, in 1848, in reply to an inquiry addressed to him as to the origin of polyandry, that its prevalence was attributable to the services above alluded to, "when the people gave their attendance at the royal palace, and at the residences of the great headmen, besides contributing labour on the fields of their lords, and accompanying them in their distant journeys; during such intervals of prolonged absence their own fields would have remained uncultivated and their crops uncut, had they not resorted to the expedient of identifying their representatives with their interests, by adopting their brothers and nearest relatives as the partners of their wives and fortunes".

I believe that this interpretation advanced by Tennent and which seems to have been recognized by some of the local Kandyans themselves carries some measure of plausibility for the period of feudalism. There is no doubt that the feudal system in the Kandyan Kingdom did enforce long periods of absence from the village in the service of lord and King. A brief note on the nature of feudal service is helpful for appreciating the exact nature of those services.

Military service increasingly became an important national duty in the Kandyan Kingdom ever since the Europeans came to Ceylon. The history of the relationship with the Portuguese, Dutch, and British from 1505-1815 could very well be characterized as a series of wars and skirmishes and shows of strength with the foreigner. A study of the Kandyan system of administration shows that as the danger of the foreigner increased the kingdom was progressively put on a war footing. The mainstay of the fighting strength consisted of the regular standing army composed of the king’s personal bodyguard (chiefly Malayan mercenaries) and the native militia; these were reinforced by various military departments, e.g. kodituwakku karayo (artillery men) and maduve (consisting of goyigama caste soldiers) which were organized on a land tenure
basis in the various districts. In addition to this large militia which was often called out for prolonged service, it is to be noted that in times of national emergency conscription was practised. 'The gabadagam, as the king’s estates, were required to send able-bodied young men for military service, and on occasion “thousands of men” were made available from these royal villages for drilling in Kandy. When war was imminent, disavas would be dispatched to their disavanes to enlist a representative or two from each vasama or service holding for the army. We read of several celebrated disavas touring their provinces rounding up men to wage war against the Portuguese, the Dutch, and the British'.\(^64\) Besides this type of war service to which theoretically every-one was subject, we gather that the concept of rajakariya (duty to the king) also applied to males in the construction of public works. This necessitated periods of stay out of the village, the type of work, graded from supervisory to manual, imposed on a man depending on his position in the administrative hierarchy, caste and other relevant statuses.

This overall general duty was quite different from those types of feudal service owed to the overlord by virtue of land tenure. If for reasons of simplicity we leave out of account the services required of palace retinue and villages in the proximity of the capital of Kandy and those organized under departments of State, we can conveniently enumerate the nature of duties falling to tenants in gabadagam (Crown villages), nindagam (villages of feudal lords) and temple villages. (Even in relation to these a general consideration is complicated by the fact that there were differences in security of tenure and nature of service, often graded by caste.\(^65\)) Besides the duties falling on tenants with regard to cultivating the overlord’s muttetu land (demesne) and delivery of various proportions from the yields of their pangus (holdings) and other gifts, the following duties necessarily carried tenants in Crown and ninda villages away from their villages for notable periods of time. Many a crown village in the outlying provinces was administered by chiefs so that roughly the same duties fell on the tenants of the same statuses in both types of villages.

\(^{64}\) Pieris, Ralph, 1956, p. 106.

\(^{65}\) D'Oyly, Sir John, 1835; Davy, John, 1821; Hayley, F A., 1928; Pieris, Ralph, 1956.
1. Attendance, as part of the retinue, on the disava or chief of the district when he appeared before the sovereign.

2. Attendance and work at the lord's valauwa (house) on such occasions as marriage, death, etc. and also catering to many a daily need at the manor house. If the occasion took place at the lord's residence situated in the capital or at the mulgedera (ancestral house) situated elsewhere, the presence of tenants from far away villages was necessary.

In the case of the temple tenants—whether vihare or devale—they were expected to help in the maintenance and repair of the building and contribute caste-linked ritual services at the various ceremonials. The larger devale and establishments had far flung holdings and hence attendance at ceremonials which were often protracted, and other obligations, necessarily demanded fairly long periods of absence. (For instance, Hocart (1931) describes the organization of personnel and services at the Temple of the Tooth and its ancillary devale.)

Without going into more details it is clear that certain national duties such as war service and labour on public works, and services to feudal lords, monastic landlords and priestly incumbents took a man out of his village for considerable periods of time. Secondly the burden imposed on certain kinds of tenants for cultivating the lord's demesne, necessarily caused neglect of his own personal cultivation. Such circumstances naturally called for arrangements to look after home and fields, and as Tennent suggests one such arrangement that could plausibly have met the demands was resorting "to the expedient of identifying their representatives with their interests, by adopting their brothers and nearest relatives as the partners of their wives and fortunes".

If national emergencies and duties called for certain arrangements by which a person could ensure that his own cultivation and domestic interest were looked after, the urgency for such arrangements was even greater among the militia and the personnel of military departments already described. It is to be noted that the indigenous military service was recompensed with land and the maintenance of the soldier's family was by cultivation of this land. The problem was to find someone to help in the cultivation and maintenance of the land, and here too one sees that polyandry could have been a solution.
It is to be noted that many feudal services to King or overlord were apportioned on the basis of holdings or vasama irrespective of the number of persons enjoying the holding. Hence in a sense the logic of associating more than one man with a holding is apparent because while one fulfilled the duties the other could cultivate uninterrupted. This leads to another consideration which to my knowledge no writer has fully explored, namely, whether in the past one of the buttressing or reinforcing factors of thatamaru and karamaru was precisely the necessity to devise a method of fulfilling one's feudal obligations and at the same time ensure one's economic needs. Thatamaru as is known today is joint ownership, each owner cultivating the field and enjoying the proceeds in rotation. Karamaru—which concept expresses my point better—refers to "relief or change of shoulders" meaning rotation in performance of duty. (In the village of Rambukkoluwa which was (and is) a nindagam, the word karamaru is used for the system of joint ownership as expressed by thatamaru.) Until recently feudal services were performed by representatives of families holding portions of strips demarcated in the latter half of the last century. This point in no way rules out of account other factors, mainly the economic one of paucity of land for passing on to the next generation, which have had and still have a significant bearing on the phenomenon of thatamaru.

Let us be clear on the argument here. I have suggested that the feudal society, as for instance we have known it in the Kandyan Kingdom, by virtue of the duties it imposed on the citizen might plausibly have helped in the development of polyandry as a solution to certain economic and domestic problems, and that possibly those subject to military duties were most urgently pressed with the need for making some domestic arrangement of this nature.

An interesting example provided us by Kathleen Gough with regard to the Nayars of Malabar, may have some relevance here. It has to be recognized that the parallel is inappropriate on several points. Nevertheless, there is a point to be made. The Nayars were in the traditional political system in both Calicut and Cochin the soldiers and armed retainers of the ruling lineage and of the district chiefs and the Raja himself. Kathleen Gough suggests that

\[\text{Gough, Kathleen, 1952.}\]
features of the Nayar kinship system and marriage were consistent with this military organization.

"The extent to which the marriage institution was influenced by the military system is unclear, since we lack adequate information on the residence of the Nayar soldiers . . . .

. . . . It seems obvious, however, that the majority of Nayar men must have spent long periods away from their natal villages when they were fighting in the Rajas' wars, which (at least in the Zamorin's area) were continuous from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries. Large numbers of Nayar soldiers were also employed permanently at the palaces, when they practised swordsmanship and held duels for the entertainment of the royal family. Though it is not possible to establish a causal connection between the military organization and polyandry and polygynous marriage, it seems evident that this institution, in which a man had no permanent responsibilities to one wife and children, but could take a new wife wherever he happened to be, fitted the way of life of a militia".57

Gough goes on to suggest that one of the factors responsible for change in kinship and marriage among the Nayars after the British conquest was the loss of the military duties of the soldiers and their returning home for permanent residence.

As is obvious from Gough's accounts the system of marriage she describes is quite different from that found in the Kandyan Provinces.58 But the question raised here is whether a political system that enforced long periods of absences among the Nayars with possible consequences for marriage, may not bear a similarity with the Kandyan feudal system which enforced periods of absence from home on the feudal tenants.

If the feudal system of obligations has had some connection with polyandry in the Kandyan kingdom then it seems logical to postulate that the decline of the feudal system might have contributed to the decrease in the incidence of polyandry. The magnitude of this effect is difficult to establish because one has also to take into account the impact of governmental opposition and of new "monogamous" values in the decline, though not extinction, of the institution.

57 Ibid.
As stated already any possible connection between polyandry and feudalism cannot have been the only buttress of polyandry. The very fact that polyandry persisted after the abolition of feudal service to the state in the early nineteenth century (1832) and persists today cannot be explained merely as a hangover or survival. Such an institution must have always been interrelated with the system of kinship, property relations and the structure of economy. Several writers have alluded to these factors as operative in the 19th century. Even if it can be satisfactorily demonstrated that feudal obligations had some bearing on the development of polyandry, to account for its commonest form as adelphic or fraternal, we have to examine its interrelationship with kinship structure, mode of succession to property rights, etc.

We now turn to some contemporary interpretations of this institution.

II

Prince Peter of Greece in a recent essay ‘Polyandry and the Kinship Group’ postulates an explanation of polyandry which he attempts to apply to polyandry in several societies: Tibetans, Tiyars and Kammalans of Malabar, Todas and Kandyan Sinhalese. He claims to give ‘depth’ to Radcliffe-Brown’s formulation that it is in the light of the structural principles of the internal solidarity of the sibling group and its unity in relation to other persons connected with it that we must interpret customs of the sororate, adelphic polyandry and the levirate. He argues that the explanation for polyandry is to be sought in “the direction of the degree of intensity of this unity and solidarity of the sibling group. For, presumably, only an intensification of the unity and solidarity of the sibling group can bring about difference of form such as adelphic polyandry”. He sees the economic function of polyandry as a factor in this intensification, but this formulation being inadequate, goes on to elaborate a ‘deeper going motive’ thus:

“It thus appears to me that we should seek an intermediary individual psychological motive for polyandry. A tightened economy

Davy, John, 1821; Panabokke, T. B., 1898; Modder, F. H., 1898; Lawrie, A. C., 1899.

Peter, Prince of Greece and Denmark, 1955.
leads to an intensification of the unity and solidarity of the sibling group, which in turn brings about an excessive repression to sibling (brother) aggression; there thus comes a return of repressed incestuous desires which are partly satisfied by polyandry.

Adelphic polyandry should be ‘interpreted in the light of the unity and solidarity of the sibling group’. But it is an intensified form. Owing to special circumstances (economy, wish to retain power, Toda nationalism), the jural relations within the sibling group are reinforced and lead, through a process of individual psychological elaboration, to adelphic polyandry. . .”

I must confess I find this formulation confusing and unclear. I shall take up two points for comment with regard to the Kandyan Sinhalese only because I have no familiarity with the other societies he discusses:

1. He posits that among polyandrous peoples there exists a greater unity and solidarity of their sibling groups than among non-polyandrous peoples, of whom he cites the Indians with the Joint Family System, Nepalese, and Aboriginal Tribes in India and Ceylon as examples. This seems to be an unwarranted generalization. There are non-polyandrous societies among whom solidarity and unity of siblings (and lineage) are far stronger, e.g. the Nuer and who do not practise polyandry. It is my impression that the Kandyan peasantry I have studied shows no great intensity in this tie; the preference for separate households of nuclear families and individual ownership of land certainly reflects less solidarity than is to be found in the traditional Indian Joint Family.

2. The psycho-analytic formulation that an intensification of relations between brothers brings about a excessive repression of sibling aggression, which leads to a return of repressed incestuous desires, is an interesting one which however, I do not altogether understand.

If Prince Peter means to say that among the Kandyan Sinhalese a brother tends to have an incestuous desire for his brother’s wife, then my contention is that this is not the only direction of a man’s sexual desire, and that even if true, the desire is not incestuous.

61 Ibid.

As mentioned in the note on the institutional setting in a Laggala village, there is a certain laxity in sex behaviour. Men and women outside the prohibited degrees of kinship may desire each other and, if circumstances allow, have intercourse. A man's desire for a brother's wife fits into this general framework. Secondly, the desire for a brother's wife is not incestuous. According to Sinhalese terminology a brother's wife is a nena, the kinship category from which a man chooses his marriage partner. The woman therefore is a potential partner. It is because of this and the fact that there is equivalence of brothers that we can understand the logic of polyandry from the point of view of kinship terminology. The nena is not forbidden, but once she becomes a brother's wife it would be improper to have an intimacy with her because it might affect the solidarity relationships between the brothers, unless such a relationship is sanctioned in the form of polyandry.

The case studies distinctly point to the fact that in a number of cases the wife and a brother of her husband developed an intimacy which was later formally recognized. Rather than analyze this attraction in psycho-analytic terms the phenomenon can be explained in terms of the direction dictated by kinship and the situational factors conducing to it. The fact that in most such cases the brothers were living in the same house or by virtue of brotherhood had easy access to the house produced conditions which can lead to intimacy with the wife.

The sociological question we have to probe may then be formulated as follows: Why does a liaison between a man and his brother's wife stand the chance of being stabilized and formalized in the form of polyandry, whereas a liaison between the same woman and an unrelated man must remain underground, dangerous and unsanctioned (unless the parties are willing to divorce their spouses and marry). That is to say the considerations that go into the stabilization of a polyandrous partnership—both from the standpoint of moral appropriateness and the distinct advantages to be gained—have to be examined. The further problem confronting the analyst is the possible relationship between polyandry and other structural patterns, and the consequences of the institution for the social system: this kind of analysis may bear no relationship to the motives of the actors nor the intended consequences of their action.
E. R. Leach in a recent essay 'Polyandry, Inheritance and the Definition of Marriage—with particular reference to Sinhalese Customary Law' has advanced a most challenging interpretation of polyandry in Ceylon.

Reviewing polyandry among the Kandyan Sinhalese, Iravas of Madras and the Tibetans he writes:

"The position in each case is that while the people concerned profess a preference for patrilocal marriage and the inheritance of landed property through males only, matrilocal marriage and inheritance through females is not at all uncommon. Moreover although women who marry patrilocally surrender their claims on their own ancestral land, they receive a dowry of movable goods in lieu. . . .

Now it is obvious that an inheritance principle whereby women as well as men can be endowed with property conflicts with the ideal that landed property should be maintained intact in the hands of the male heirs. Yet it is a fact that there are many societies which manage to maintain both principles simultaneously. There are a variety of customary behaviours which can best be understood if they are regarded as partial solutions to the dilemma that arises from maintaining these contradictory ideals.

Let us be clear what the dilemma is. On the one hand is the ideal that the patrimonial inheritance ought to be maintained intact. Full brothers and the sons of full brothers ought to remain in the ancestral home and work the ancestral land. On the other hand, since the wives of these men, when they join the household bring with them property which will be inherited by their own children but not by their husbands' nephews and nieces, each new marriage creates a separate block of property interests which is in conflict with the ideal of maintaining the economic solidarity of male siblings."

Leach suggests that the Jaffna Tamil code of Thesawalamai, the Yako double unilineal descent system and the Moslem preference for patrilineage endogamy are ways out of the difficulty.

"Adelphic polyandry, I would suggest, is to be understood as yet another variation on the same theme. If two brothers share one

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64 Ibid.
wife so that the only heirs of the brothers are the children born of that wife, then, from an economic point of view, the marriage will tend to cement the solidarity of the sibling pair rather than tear it apart, whereas, if the two brothers have separate wives, their children will have separate economic interests, and maintenance of the patrimonial inheritance in one piece is likely to prove impossible."

"Adelphic polyandry is consistently associated with systems in which women as well as men are the bearers of property rights. Polyandry exists in Ceylon because, in a society where both men and women inherit property, polyandrous arrangements serve, both in theory and practice, to reduce the potential hostility between sibling brothers."  

Leach's contention is that the economic solidarity of siblings is threatened by individual marriages whereby wives create separate blocks of property interests. The meanings given to economic solidarity are not consistent. On the one hand it is postulated that the ideal is that 'the patrimonial inheritance ought to be maintained intact.' Later, the ideal is defined thus: 'Full brothers and the sons of full brothers ought to remain together in the ancestral home and work the ancestral land'. The question arises if the ideal is satisfied if full brothers and their sons live together or in proximity and work together but own their property in separate individual blocks. Economic solidarity is compatible with individual ownership as long as brothers by virtue of the location of their land in a village live in proximity (in the same compound or neighbourhood) and render one another economic aid in agriculture. This pattern of solidarity will be in jeopardy only if the maternal property by virtue of its location causes dispersion of siblings and their sons. If the wives of brothers come from the same village, as it often happens, then the property of brothers and their sons is in the same village, and solidarity is maintained. If wives come from another village and their property is located there, then the consequence for the next generation is not automatic dispersion of 'brothers': If the mother's property is small in relation to the father's, the sons remain in the natal village and give out the mother's land on ande (frequently to the mother's relatives); if what the father has left them is inadequate, then it is possible that a few of the brothers might migrate to the mother's village and till the land there.

What is not questioned here is Leach’s assertion that adelphic polyandry helps to cement the economic solidarity of siblings and gives them a stake in a common block of property. What is being asserted is that ‘economic solidarity’ between brothers is often compatible with individual ownership and the introduction of a new block of property through the wife does not automatically cause dispersion of agnatic kinsmen and that the above is the pattern actually observed in the field in Laggala.

Leach’s thesis would have greater validity if in polyandrous unions patrimonial inheritance was indeed maintained in one piece. Maintenance in one piece is ideally achieved if brothers living in polyandry are considered a corporation, their property rights are merged in a corporation, and likewise in the case of their sons. Since Leach argues with particular reference to Sinhalese customary law, let us now analyze the notions regarding property in polyandry as contained in the formulations of Kandyan Laws by Sawers and D’Oyly. Because of the technical and complex wording I have thought it best to summarise some of the relevant points as I see them.

I. The law provides for brothers living in polyandry holding their properties individually; and where land was owned jointly it recognized the separate shares of the partners. It is on this basis that the inheritance rights of different types of children of a man were and could be judged, e.g. those born to him by a previous union, those born to him by a subsequent polyandrous union, and those likely to be born to him by another union after he has broken away from a polyandrous association. Thus you have rules of the following nature: “If a woman bear a son to two Brothers, and one of the Brothers afterwards marry another woman and have a son and die, his property is equally divided between the son of the common marriage, and his own . . . .” Nor has the Brother who capriciously detaches himself from a joint issue born under the same, the power of depriving his first family of the whole of the share of the Family Estate . . . .”

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67 D’Oyly, Sir John, 1929.
68 Modder, F.
should one of the brothers quit the joint connection and take a wife for himself alone, and have issue also by her, he dying intestate, his share of the family property should be divided between the issue of his first wife which he had in joint connection with his brother or brothers, and the issue of his sole wife, each a moiety".  

These rules are also an indication of the fact that at least in the case of some men polyandrous union could have been one phase in their marital history, with monogamous marriage preceding or succeeding the dissolution. It is not to be understood that all polyandrous unions followed this pattern; the law provides for such contingencies; and there are concrete cases of such histories in the early 19th century.

But there is a more important reason why even if two brothers held their land jointly and had been in stable association without the complications of another union or divorce, their separate property rights were in law recognized. If two brothers in association had common issue, and if afterwards one died and to the surviving husband were born more children, the latter were not eligible for the deceased husband's property which devolved solely on the children born when the deceased was alive.

2. The law states that even if brothers living in polyandry held their land jointly, the children of this union had superior rights to a deceased father's land in preference to the deceased's associated brothers. Sawers writes thus: "Where an estate is enjoyed undividedly by two or three brothers having but one wife in common; on the death of one of the husbands and the Wife, or in the event of the Wife being divorced after the death of one of the husbands, the children being the issue of the joint connexion can claim the share of the deceased Father to hold it independently of their surviving Father or Fathers . . . ." The Niti-Nighanduva states the principle even more clearly—that a son or a binna married daughter inherits solely from a deceased father to the exclusion of the co-father.

3. There are very special circumstances under which one brother living in a polyandrous union can become the heir to the property of a deceased associated brother. Among a set of three brothers enjoying an Estate individually or otherwise, two of them having a joint wife and the third a separate wife, if one of the associated

69 Ibid.
70 Pieris, R., 1956, p. 208
brothers dies without issue, the surviving associated brother is the sole heir to the deceased’s share to the exclusion of the brother with a separate wife. The acquired property of one associated brother goes to the other associated brother in the same manner. Similarly ‘Two half-brothers associated with one wife are heirs reciprocally to each other, in preference to brothers of the whole blood’. But even the above limited right of one associated brother to the property of another was further limited. According to the Niti-Nighanduva, in the case of two associated brothers without issue, one inherits the other’s property, but this right is not upheld if the common wife is divorced by the surviving husband for no fault of her own, in which case all the other brothers of the deceased are entitled to equal shares in the deceased’s property. Sawers writing of a similar instance, states that while normally the acquired property of one brother goes to the other when there is no issue, the property which was acquired by the deceased from either of his parents would revert to that parent. 

Apparently (Sawers, op. cit. para 21) if the two associated husbands are not brothers but “cousins or strangers” then the paraventi inherited property of the man dying without issue reverts to his own kind (parents, siblings, etc.) and only the property acquired during the association goes to the surviving husband.

The above examples are sufficient to show that in customary law, as codified in the documents already referred to, there was enough precedent for us to infer that brothers in polyandrous association had legally separate property rights. Such a customary definition appears to be at variance with Leach’s postulate of the ideal that patrimonial inheritance be maintained in one block. The law, however, cannot tell us how in fact most brothers in polyandry held their land. It could be argued that the law provided for persons with “exceptional” marital histories, and for uncommon instances of friction. It is not possible, for lack of information, to form any idea of the situation that prevailed in the nineteenth century in the

71 Sawers.
72 Ibid.
Kandyan Provinces. However, the present situation in Laggala, though pertaining to contemporary times and the recent past, gives us a picture of the pattern as it exists in village society. We have found, in a previous section on the structure of polyandry in Laggala, that adelphic polyandry was usually stable and represented the only marriage made by the partners, that blood brothers in stable polyandry invariably held their property jointly, that usually one associated brother succeeded to the property of his partner to the exclusion of non-associated siblings, that children of a deceased polyandrous father rarely claimed his property to the exclusion of the surviving father, and that usually the property of two associated brothers was shared by all children, irrespective of whether some were born before the association started, some born during the period of partnership, and the rest born after one partner had died. But if two blood brothers broke up their partnership, each took separate possession or his share, and distributed it independently. Court records contain instances of property conflicts stemming from dissolution of polyandry and multiple marriages which were resolved on the judicial principle that polyandrous partners had separate property rights and that legitimate heirs were those born while the deceased was in partnership.

The situation in Laggala concerning polyandrous associations between step-brothers, classificatory brothers and unrelated males is, we have found, quite different from the true adelphic type, and are basically in conformity with the principles contained in the Kandyan Laws I have already enunciated.

The assertion that adelphic polyandry is a solution to the dilemma posed by a preference for patrilocal marriage and inheritance of land through males on the one hand, and the fact that wives bring in separate blocks of property thereby threatening the economic solidarity of male siblings on the other, is not comprehensive enough to account for certain features of adelphic polyandry as witnessed in Laggala.

To achieve the objective of preservation of patrimonial inheritance intact, polyandry must be ideally repeated by succeeding generations of siblings. The facts of the case are that if polyandry is contracted at all, only some (usually two) amongst a set of brothers do so, and furthermore the sons of a polyandrous union do not frequently imitate their fathers. The intactness of land achieved by
one generation of siblings is often dissipated and fragmented by their sons contracting individual marriages. Pieris\(^73\) cites two cases relating to the nineteenth century which also illustrate this point.

If the objective of maintenance of patrimonial inheritance is the rationale, then theoretically adelphic polyandry is to be expected among the landed elements and should be decreasingly present in elements of the population who have no land and who therefore cannot be in a position to preserve land intact. This is not necessarily the case in Laggala.

In cases of polyandry between classificatory brothers (which may fit into the class of adelphic polyandry?) it is possible that patrimonial inheritance may not be derived from the same ancestral source, e.g. if the joint-husbands are the sons of two sisters, and therefore the rationale for maintaining the inheritance in one block is absent. (This consideration applies even less to polyandrous partners who are more distantly related or are unrelated.)

As Leach himself has stated, his interpretation is one of the solutions to a dilemma he sees in the Sinhalese kinship system. His interpretation is perhaps particularly valid among landed elements, including aristocrats, among whom the consideration of keeping inheritance intact and passing it on to a limited number of heirs, the value of economic solidarity of siblings, membership in a common *mulgedera*, etc. are significant orientations. A joint wife in such cases reduces the prospect of fission in property interests. Davy\(^74\) made a significant point when he suggested that polyandry, distributed among all strata, may have a different relevance for the poor and the rich: "... The apology of the poor is, that they cannot afford each to have a particular wife; and of the wealthy and men of rank, that such a union is politic, as it unites families, concentrates property and influence and conduces to the interest of the children, who, having two fathers, will be better taken care of and will still have a father though they may lose one." Thus it seems to me that other dilemmas can be also stated and polyandry seen as attempts at solving them. Certain social conditions conducive to polyandry not considered by Leach appear to be present.

\(^73\) Pieris, Ralph, 1956, pp. 208-211.
\(^74\) Davy, John, 1821, pp. 286-287.
A bilateral system of inheritance in which females inherit substantial portions of the parental property (although not necessarily in the same proportion as their male siblings) inevitably produces certain consequences over generations. A fragmentation of parental property reduces some males in every generation to virtual landlessness or to a position where the land they inherit or expect to inherit is too small to enable them to maintain a separate household. A man faced with this predicament may attempt to solve it along several lines, two of which are: (a) Rent land and cultivate as a tenant. This presumes that there is land available. In Rambukkoluwa a limited amount of land (usually owned by persons outside the village) is available. But perpetual tenancy is naturally not a desired state and is not looked upon as a permanent solution. (b) Through marriage add to his land possession by finding a wife with land. This we may call 'recombination through marriage'.

The dilemma stated by Leach may be formulated a little differently now. A system of kinship which prefers patrilocal marriage, values economic solidarity of siblings, and works towards an ideal residential cluster of agnatic kinsmen (gedera), is faced with the possibility of inadequate land among some males and consequently the undermining of its orientations by virtue of fair division among male children and transference of property to females. It is in this context that we must view certain flexible arrangements by which the fundamental problem of the ratio of land resources to human beings is tackled.

The binna (uxorilocal) marriage is an arrangement by which a man goes to live with the wife's family and to work their land, resulting in his incorporation with her group. As far as the village of Rambukkoluwa is concerned my finding is that virtually landless men from other villages have come in to marry in binna women who have some land. Similarly some men from the village have gone out. The uxorilocal marriage, especially the type that requires migration to another village, represents one solution to the economic problem, and in terms of kinship highlights one of the essential features of this kinship system of the bilateral type, namely, alternatives in choice of affiliation with another kinship group. (In the same way, when a man migrates to occupy his mother's land in
another village, he affiliates himself to the mother's gedera there.) Affiliation with the father's kin, mother's kin or wife's kin are therefore three open alternatives, choice being dictated by the magnitude of land he is likely to receive from any of these sources.

The flexibility with regard to the choice of a wife from within the village or outside it may also be viewed in relation to the problem set out above. Besides other factors such as kinship dictating choice of marriage partner, the availability of marriageable cross-cousins in the village, etc. choice of a woman from the same village may be an arrangement by which a man could add to his holding another block of property situated in the same village. Whether he contracts a diga or a binna marriage within the village he will in any case be able to continue to reside in his natal village.

Polyandry, I suggest, may also be viewed as an arrangement by which two brothers, who singly cannot support individual families, may combine their land and maintain a common family, thereby bettering their living standards, and also ensuring that their land will go to a limited number of heirs. While Leach emphasized polyandry as a way of eliminating the divisive interests introduced by separate wives, I would include the somewhat different orientation of brothers with dwindling land resources (brought about by subdivision through inheritance) being impelled to fuse their land resources into one block. Some of the cases studied illustrate the sequence of events: among a set of brothers, some migrate or contract individual marriages, and the remaining brothers hold the remaining property undivided and carry their economic co-operation to the logical conclusion of sharing a wife. Incidentally, the institution of thatamaru (co-ownership and cultivation in rotation by individual joint-owners) which occurs especially in cases where it is economically inefficient to divide a block of land among several heirs is an illustration of the economic logic behind fusion of land. Polyandry in a sense is an extension of this logic.

Furthermore, just as the institution of binna marriage is patterned migration and a way of eliminating persons in a group too large for the land resources at hand, polyandry may very well have acted as a mechanism for preserving this same balance, and also in a general sense restricting population growth.

It is perhaps in the light of these several alternatives of affiliation and solving economic and domestic problems that one could inter-
pret a problematic fact about polyandry—a lack of persistence and continuity in its incidence over the generations in the same family, and the individualistic actions of some siblings amongst a set of brothers all of whom presumably are affected by the same economic pressures. In my opinion this feature cannot adequately be accounted for in terms of Leach’s formulation.

Leaving aside the considerations of ‘property’ and their possible relation to polyandry, the theme has often been stated in the previous sections that in a technologically primitive labour intensive economic system, as we have in Laggala, human labour in itself constitutes a highly valued asset. Not only in paddy cultivation but also in *chena* cultivation (the extent of which is only limited by the human labour power at hand) an additional adult worker in the family is an asset and an investment. The villagers themselves constantly phrased the economic benefits of polyandry as a device allowing for division of labour between rice fields and *chena*, enabling care of the dispersed cultivated plots and the family in the village at the same time, etc. An additional husband, irrespective of the land he brings into the family, increases the economic returns of the family into which he is incorporated. Some of the cases studied forcibly demonstrate the labour contribution of the second husband. From the point of view of the man with little or no land attaching himself as junior husband to the family, he has everything to gain—sex rights in a woman, food and shelter and children—for the exchange of his labour. (It is this type of man who occupies an ‘inferior position’ in relation to the ‘senior’ husband.) These considerations perhaps help us to understand why polyandry ‘may also occur among those elements of the population who have little or no land. Leach’s thesis on the other hand assumed patrimonial inheritance.

For extending the understanding of polyandry in the villages of Laggala perhaps certain other considerations, which I can only mention here in passing, should also be examined. The relationship between brothers is formal and lacks intimacy (which is not to say that economic solidarity and strong mutual obligations do not exist between them), and it is possible that this kind of social distance helps to insulate friction among the co-husbands. Similarly the fact that ‘jealousy’ between them regarding the wife does not seem to be present, or at least, does not appear to cause friction may be related to the content of the relationship between husband
and wife. To frame a question: does the appreciation of a wife in ‘utilitarian’ terms—as a sex object, housewife, helper in the fields—with a minimum of the ‘emotional’ element associated with ‘love’, help in the sharing of a wife without ‘jealousy’? These questions naturally lead us to the nature of various kinship and family ‘roles’.

A final question may also be posed: does a setting where a certain laxity in sex behaviour is prevalent, and where divorce and experimentation with wives are permitted, help toward an acceptance of ‘wife sharing’? Two incidents encountered in the village of Rambukkoluwa may obliquely illustrate the context in which polyandry operates: (a) Loku Punchi Appuhamy, a junior polyandrous partner, was left alone in the village for some days, while the senior partner and the common wife had gone to another settlement to attend to some agricultural problems there. Loku Punchi Appuhamy slept frequently with the wife of a lower caste man during this period, and subsequently left to join his brother and common wife. His exploit was common knowledge to many of his fellow villagers. (b) Piyadasa, a young man in his thirties married a girl who had ‘two fathers’ (blood brothers living in polyandry). Piyadasa’s mother was the sister of his wife’s fathers. Piyadasa’s younger brother, Somadasa, was unmarried, and lived with him, helping him in the fields. Somadasa was sexually intimate with his brother’s wife, a fact known to Piyadasa and their mother. The mother herself wanted Somadasa to join Piyadasa’s marriage, an arrangement to which Piyadasa himself would have agreed. But Somadasa had other ideas and left the village to study in a religious school run by monks.

In conclusion: no systematic attempt has been made in this essay to deal with the possible decreasing incidence over time in polyandry in Ceylon in general and in the Laggala villages in particular, and the changing conceptions among villagers in Laggala towards polyandry as a form of marriage and family life. The impact of new values regarding marriage form and of governmental laws needs to be examined thoroughly. The reader will have noticed that some of the husbands in the cases described have registered their marriages, and have taken another man in association, which act places the second husband in a unenviable position because he has no legal rights in the family. These and other complications may lead some to question the validity of treating these
instances as polyandrous marriage. I have done so, because despite the 'legal form' these instances conform to the 'customary' type of polyandry.

APPENDIX—CASE STUDIES

1. POLYANDRY REPEATED IN TWO GENERATIONS

This case study is somewhat unique in my collection because it is one of the rare instances when polyandrous unions have been repeated over two generations. The first generation is dead; the second generation today are middle aged; their children, the third generation, are young and a number of them are unmarried. It is unlikely, in the light of modern trends, for the last generation to contract any polyandrous unions.

(a) Ukkurala and Appuhamy—Etanwela Village

Present day informants know very little about the details of the polyandrous union contracted by the first generation, i.e. by Ukkurala and Appuhamy.

Ukkurala, Appuhamy and Kirala were three blood brothers. Their parents were apparently poor. Their father owned two fields in Etanwela village amounting to 1 pela 8 lahas in extent (less than one acre). Only one of these fields, 8 lahas in extent, was cultivable during both seasons of the year. The mother brought 1 pela located in her natal village of Aswedduma (3 miles away). The property was apparently inherited by the first two brothers. Kirala the third migrated to the village of Hanwella (about 9 miles away) and contracted a binna (matrilocal) marriage. It is not known for certain whether he did not inherit any land or whether he renounced his rights—anyway, binna marriage was a solution to his economic problem. The two brothers by combining their land and living in the parental house and sharing a common wife arrived at an equally satisfactory solution. It is useful to keep in mind these two solutions to economic stress.

(b) Kalu Banda (52 years), Pulingu Rala (48 years) and Kalu Menike (45 years)—Etanwela Village and Diyabedumya Colony.

The first child of the polyandrous union, Kalu Banda, married a
woman of the village and settled with his parents in the parental house. Punchi Banda, the second son, was, as a young boy, entrusted to the temple to be educated and ordained a priest. Heen Banda the youngest son showed an aptitude for education and after schooling went to Rambukkoluwa village to become the understudy and scribe to the headman there. Pulingu Rala the third son remained in the parental house and helped in the cultivation.

Kalu Banda after a couple of years of married life legally registered his union. He lived in monogamy for about 5 years and during this period two children, Ram Menike and Somadasa were born. It is said that it was at the instigation of the parents, who were motivated by economic considerations, that Kalu Banda and Pulingu Rala were persuaded to join in polyandry. Three children were born after the brothers became joint husbands.

In theory all the brothers had rights in the parental property. Punchi Banda by virtue of entering the priesthood renounced his rights. But some years after ordination he left the priesthood, and, returning to the village (Etanwela), took a wife. But the other brothers rather than give him land compensated him with some money, and he subsequently migrated to Maha Illupulama colony. Heen Banda the youngest brother who went to reside in Rambukkoluwa village took for himself by common agreement the mother’s field (1 pela in extent) situated in Aswedduwa (a hamlet, now extinct, of Rambukkoluwa). Thus the polyandrous brothers came to possess exclusively the land in the natal village (1 pela 8 lahas).

An imminent earthslip near their house in Etanwela qualified the polyandrous family for a grant of Crown land in Diyabeduma colony in the North Central Province. The family migrated in 1953 and are making good there.

Apparently, the 'senior' husband is Kalu Banda who is the elder brother and in whose name the marriage is registered. He is also a successful native physician which has brought him some prestige. He controls the family finances because Pulingu Rala has a weakness for gambling. But the relationship between the brothers is supposed to be one of 'equality', and the domestic relationships are said to be satisfactory.

Two of the children of this polyandrous union are married. Ram Menike the eldest daughter was, after the migration to the
colony, married off to a man in the natal village. This marriage, virtually amounting to *binna*, was done intentionally. She has been settled in the ancestral house and land which the parents still own in Etanwela village. Muthu Menike, another daughter, has married a man of the colony. Somadasa the son is also married and is living with his parents and helping in the cultivation of their land.

Certain points may be noted in regard to this polyandrous union:

It started some years after the elder brother Kalu Banda had lived in monogamy and had two children. Furthermore the partnership was begun after Kalu Banda had registered his marriage. The union however is of a permanent nature and has lasted several years.

The brothers held and worked their land in their natal village in common before migration. (They have the same arrangement in the colony.) They have both by consent now transferred their house and land in the natal village to the eldest daughter who was born before Pulingu Rala joined the union.

While Kalu Banda and Pulingu Rala followed the example of their parents in forming a polyandrous union, their three married children have not done so. While the first two generations were faced with common circumstances, the third is not.

(c) G. G. Heen Banda (43 years), B. G. (Loku) Punchi Appuhamy (30 years), and Pinchi Amma (35 years)—Rambukkoluwa Village.

Heen Banda, the youngest brother of the polyandrous brothers described above, was to repeat the example set by his brothers but for entirely different reasons and in a different form. He, as we have seen, became the scribe of the headman of the nearby village of Rambukkoluwa. After his patron died, he succeeded to the office and also inherited his patron’s land and house.

Since this polyandrous union is currently to be found in the village I have worked in, I am in a position to give a detailed account of various facets of the arrangement.

Heen Banda and Punchi Appuhamy are the sons of two sisters. In terms of kinship they are *aiya* (elder brother) and *malli* (younger brother). Loku Punchi Appuhamy’s mother was married to a man at Aswedduma (a hamlet or satellite village now extinct), and both his parents died while he was young. Heen Banda undertook to
bring up his younger brother. At this time, Appuhamy was in his teens, while Heen Banda was already married.

Heen Banda's official duties necessitated trips outside the village and absences from his home. The young boy taken into his house was therefore an asset—he was put to look after the buffaloes and cattle and also tend the fields. Heen Banda's children at that time were very young, and a helper was very welcome.

Heen Banda had a fair amount of land by village standards; he also reared some buffaloes and cattle. Therefore, it would appear that the economic motive for the polyandrous union was there. But naturally, this does not explain the arrangement altogether. There were periods of time when the young man and Pinchi Amma were left together at Rambukkoluwa; intimacy was furthered during the chena harvesting season, when they both looked after the chena in the pela (hut) built on the chena plot. A liaison developed between them, and it was well known in the village for some years. Heen Banda, it is said, knew about it, but since he was the Village Headman, he did not wish to acknowledge it because it was derogatory to his official status. About 12 years ago Heen Banda lost his post because of a shooting accident in which he was involved. When he lost his job he had no reason for postponing the public recognition of the union.

Punchi Appuhamy maintains a separate hut in Banagewatte Gedera (a residential cluster of close kin). Some years ago, Heen Banda scolded Punchi Appuhamy for being slack in his work and the latter in anger walked out and rented a one roomed hut in Banagewatte and lived there. It seems that the wife was very upset over this and pleaded with him to come back, which he did. Heen Banda accepted him. But from this time dates Punchi Appuhamy's separate establishment. It is worth noting that Heen Banda's residential affiliation is with 'Galvate' gedera. Punchi Appuhamy often sleeps in his own hut when Heen Banda is at home in Rambukkoluwa. That is to say, whenever both husbands are at the village at the same time some kind of distance is observed by them towards each other. Villagers attribute the separate sleeping to "shyness". However, there are many occasions when both sleep in Heen Banda's house; in such instances they sleep in separate rooms. Whenever Heen Banda is away from the village, which is a frequent occurrence, the junior husband sleeps at the
main house. Punchi Appuhamy has all his meals at Heen Banda's house, irrespective of whether his elder brother is in the village or not. They both eat together and are served by the wife at the same time.

Punchi Appuhamy himself owns 1 *pela* of paddy field which he cultivates. It is said that the Maha yield of 20 bushels (the field can be cultivated for only one season in the year) is retained by him in his hut for several months and when the next cultivation season comes round he carries the bag of rice intact to Heen Banda's house and delivers it there. Whenever he goes to the Wilgomuwa village expansion scheme, whatever money he earns by doing coolie work he retains for his personal use. But otherwise the earnings of both men go into a common pool stored in Heen Banda's house. They cultivate together Heen Banda's fields and other fields they may rent on *ande* (sharecropping). *Chena* cultivation of kurakkan, other grain, and vegetables is again a joint enterprise. Similarly, cultivation of paddy in *chena* style in the Wilgomuwa forest is a joint effort especially at sowing and harvesting. The purse strings are controlled by the elder brother, and the junior partner may get money for his own use out of the common pool. The paddy from the joint cultivation is retained in the main house.

The reason for Punchi Appuhamy storing the 20 bushels in his hut is explained by an informant, a close friend of his, thus: "If Punchi Appuhamy has a quarrel with either Heen Banda or his wife he may be asked to leave the house. Therefore he retains the paddy for such an emergency because he will need it for his daily food."

The relationship between the husbands is formal and distinctly one of avoidance. (It is an exaggerated form of the formal relationship between two adult male siblings.) Neither of them moves in the same company; they are never seen together except when engaged in a common economic or social activity. They are distinctly not "friends", and there is no show of intimacy or familiarity. Verbal exchanges are also at a minimum usually limited to those necessary for getting something done.

Heen Banda is the boss of the household and wields authority over his junior partner. All directions regarding work in the fields, *chena* and care of animals proceed from him. Punchi Appuhamy, it is said, does not give Heen Banda any directions or orders.
This does not mean that Punchi Appuhamy, is entirely subordinate or that he has no freedom of movement. For instance, every year Punchi Appuhamy goes for a few weeks to help his brother Dingi Rala at Kekeleterenne colony. But Heen Banda’s requests and directions are definitely heeded by him.

With regard to actual work, both share the burden, although Punchi Appuhamy being the younger and stronger male, does more physical work. In late June, both partners were seen harvesting a paddy field side by side in the hamlet of Gangatenwela 1½ miles from the main village. The field was cultivated on an ande basis. The wife brought the lunch for both of them and they ate as a group. In early July, two days running, both partners and the wife jointly threshed the paddy from Heen Banda’s fields in Rambukkoluwa. During the paddy growing season, each may work separately, one spending most of his time in the colony, the other in the village.

Village opinion is that although Heen Banda ‘likes’ the arrangement, nowadays he makes many trips out of the village because it is “embarrassing” for both brothers to be in the village at the same time. Although there are periods when both partners reside in the village for days on end, it is our field observation that Heen Banda spends a lot of his time in Wilgomuwa “colony” tending his cultivation there, and leaving his junior partner to look after the village affairs. If however, Heen Banda during the cultivation season in the colony has to come to Rambukkoluwa, Punchi Appuhamy takes his place there. During the harvesting in the colony in 1959 and 1960, both males moved there with the wife, and when harvesting was concluded the wife and the junior partner returned together leaving Heen Banda behind to see to the sale of the paddy. During the chena harvest early this year (1960) a definite sharing of wife and economic responsibilities was witnessed. Each husband in turn, spent alternate nights with the wife and children in the jungle hut. The off night was spent by the surplus male in the main village.

Punchi Appuhamy’s sexual access to the woman becomes a problem when Heen Banda returns home, and Punchi Appuhamy sleeps in his hut. Village opinion has it that she, at such times, sleeps with her senior partner in the nights, and that early in the morning—about 4.30 a.m.—she goes to Punchi Appuhamy’s hut.
on the pretext of waking him, but in truth to have intercourse with him. She is credited with a lusty sexual appetite, to which one informant attributed the reason she needs two men! It is also the village opinion that the woman "prefers" the junior partner and that she is fonder of him. An incident related by an informant is revealing. He said that while he was in the boutique the wife came and bought some cigars and requested the boutiquekeeper not to tell her senior husband that she had made the purchase. She was, it was explained, making a secret gift to her favourite. While explaining this incident to me the informant added another motive. She is "fonder" of him and takes good care to placate him for fear that he might leave her and go away, which prospect she does not relish at all.

There were altogether 8 children born to this family; the first three were born before Punchi Appuhamy joined the union. The eldest daughter married a man of the village and died at childbirth. The others are still young. The children appear to show no embarrassment regarding their second father and address him as heen appa (little father).

Regarding this polyandrous relationship the following features may be noted:

1. The associated partners are not brothers but parallel cousins who in local kinship stand in the relationship of 'brothers'.

2. The union between Heen Banda and his wife started out as a monogamous union. Three children had been born before Punchi Appuhamy appeared on the scene.

3. The polyandrous arrangement in some respects departs from the "typical" pattern as evidenced by Punchi Appuhamy's separate establishment, emergency paddy stock, and gedera name. While the arrangement has now persisted for some ten years and appears to be stable, Punchi Appuhamy considers it necessary to take measures for an emergency when he may be asked to leave or he may leave on his own account.

4. From a reconstruction of past events it appears that the association was preceded by an "emotional" involvement between Punchi Appuhamy and Pinchi Amma, and it was she who took the initiative and persuaded her husband to give his consent.
The relationship between the two men is formal as well as asymmetrical.

The partnership is definitely economically advantageous to all parties concerned. Punchi Appuhamy has little land of his own, whereas Heen Banda has more. Both men’s labour not only makes possible cultivation of more paddy land in the village, than either of them can do single handed, but also makes possible kurakkan and vegetable chena cultivation in the village as well as cultivation of paddy at Wilgomuwa Colony. The household and every member in it is better off economically by it. The association of the husbands had not as its aim the consolidation of property. One partner had little land. The advantage accrues from the pooling of labour power.

2. ADELPHIC POLYANDRY IN A ’WEALTHY FAMILY’

(a) Attapattu—Tikirala—Kalu Menike—Etanwela Village.

Attapattu and Tikirala were the only surviving children of rich parents. Attapattu was the eldest and Tikirala was several years junior, the intermediate children having died at an early age.

Attapattu married Kalu Menike while his parents were living. The parents died soon afterwards, leaving Tikirala in his charge. The property left for the sons was considerable by village standards, amounting to about 12 pelas (6 acres) of paddy land; since the parents died intestate both sons were heirs to equal portions.

A problem immediately arose regarding the cultivation of the lands. Attapattu was already employed as an estate kanganı (labour overseer) in the nearby tea estate. This was a remunerative job, and he could not forego it. Tikirala was a cultivator and he was obviously suited to take charge of the lands. It appears that both husband and wife decided that it was best to incorporate Tikirala in the polyandrous association. One of the steps taken was the registration of marriage with Tikirala as the legal husband. This may be viewed as insurance against possible future defection on his part. This arrangement took place after the original couple had lived together in monogamy for two years, and
the association continued until the deaths of the partners.

The polyandrous association turned out to be a singularly profitable one. In addition to the 12 pelas they jointly inherited and owned, they asweddumised another 3 pelas of land which belonged to them. The wife herself brought 1½ pelas situated in the adjoining village of Pittawela. Tikirala managed this entire estate with hired labour.

Attapattu himself acquired with his earnings extents of paddy land amounting to 11 pelas in several nearby villages.

Tikirala the junior partner was the first to die. At the time of his death, no portion of the land had been given to any of the 10 children. His land went to Attapattu, who, before his death 4 years ago at the ripe age of 90, divided the land by will amongst his children. The charts below give a picture of the marriages contracted by the children and the division of property.

![Diagram of property division and marriages](image)

The pattern of marriages is noteworthy. Two brothers, Kirivastu and Ariyaratne are living in polyandry. All the others have contracted individual marriages, which are of the diga type except in the case of Dingiri Banda. All of them are living in the natal village. The women married men of the village. Thus there is no dispersal of siblings. Finally, the polyandrous parties and two other brothers live in the large parental house, but each family functions separately as an economic unit.

This kind of unique residential clustering is of course partly related to the land which each one of these children owns in the village. I present below a detailed chart of the pattern of subdivision of parental property.
### PROPERTY DETAILS

*Parental Property (Paddy Land)*

1. **Joint Inheritance of Attapattu and Tikirala:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Name of field</th>
<th>Extent (pelas)</th>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Name of Field</th>
<th>Extent (pelas)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Etanwela</td>
<td>Hurigasmulla</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ranamure</td>
<td>Pahalawela</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Udahawela</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Amunuhenawela</td>
<td></td>
<td>Guruwela</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Ihala)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Rambuk-</td>
<td>Udagammanahe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Pahala)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>koluwa</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Illuke Kumbura</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Etanwela</td>
<td>Udahawela</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gedaraliyadde</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Gangahen-</td>
<td>Gedaragawela</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(aswedumised)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. **Property Acquired by Attapattu**

3. **Inheritance of wife, Kalu Menike** = $1\frac{1}{2} \text{ pelas}$ at Pitawela.

   Total = $27\frac{1}{2} \text{ pelas}$ (about $13\frac{1}{2} \text{ acres}$).

#### Division Among Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Extent (pelas)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Dingiri Banda</td>
<td>Guruwela</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Etanwela</td>
<td>Gederaliyadde</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Udahawela</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Mudalihamy</td>
<td>Ranamure</td>
<td>Pahalawela</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Etanwela</td>
<td>Hurigasmulla</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Udahawela</td>
<td>$-\frac{1}{2}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Amunuhenawela</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3$\frac{1}{2}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Kirivastu</td>
<td>Etanwela</td>
<td>Pathankotuwe</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Amunuhenawela (Pahala)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ranamure</td>
<td>Pahalawela</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>Field</td>
<td>Extent (pela)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Ariyaratne</td>
<td>Ranamure</td>
<td>Pahalawela</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Etanwela</td>
<td>Pathankotuwe</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hurigasmulla</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Illuke Kumbura</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gederaliyadde</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(P<del>0</del>S)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Punchi Banda</td>
<td>Ranamure</td>
<td>Pahalawela</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Etanwela</td>
<td>Hurigasmulla</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pathankotuwe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Ukku Amma</td>
<td>Etanwela</td>
<td>Amunuhenawela (Pahala)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Udahawela</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Dingiri Amma</td>
<td>Rambukkoluwa</td>
<td>Udagammahe Kumbura</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gangahenwela</td>
<td>Gedaragawela</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Ram Menike</td>
<td>Died soon after</td>
<td>No land given.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>marriage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Tikiri Menike</td>
<td>Etanwela</td>
<td>Amunuhenawela (Ihala)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Biso Menike</td>
<td>Pitawela</td>
<td>? (mother's property)</td>
<td>1½</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: I have not been able to account for 1 pela in Ranamure village.

This pattern of division shows the extreme sub-division of what was previously a considerable block of property. The property consisted of numerous dispersed bits of land; these were further broken up in the transference to children. The inheritance was heavily weighted in favour of males who however did not inherit equally. The eldest son, Dingiri Banda, for example, got more than
some of the others because he was a teacher; his achievement was rewarded. Ariyaratne the youngest received the same amount. A noteworthy feature is that only two of the brothers repeated the example of their fathers by joining in polyandry. To these two we now turn.

(b) Kirivastu—Ariyaratne

It so happened that both the polyandrous fathers predeceased the mother, who along with her youngest unmarried son, Ariyaratne, occupied a portion of the mulgedera, in which also lived three other married sons and their families. It appears that it was the mother who instigated the polyandrous association. Kirivastu had lived with his wife for less than a year when this started. Today Kirivastu is 32 and Ariyaratne 25; they have 3 children, all of whom were born after the association started. Their respective lands are cultivated in common. Kirivastu is considered the senior partner.

3. ADELPHIC POLYANDRY IN A POOR DURAYA CASTE HOUSEHOLD

Tikira — Muthua — Komali — Dammantenne Village.
Tikira, Kiriya, Kalua and Muthua were the four sons of Boda. He and his wife were economically depressed in that they owned only 1 *pela* (½ acre) of paddy land and the highland homestead.

Tikira the eldest married Komali—a cross cousin—and brought her to the parental house. Kiriya and Kalua followed suit but set up separate households in the village. Muthua the youngest had remained unmarried. It appears that Komali and Muthua had been intimate for some time and that Komali had managed to get her husband’s consent to formalize the relationship. By the time Muthua joined two children had already been born, and the marriage had lasted about 10 years.

There was scarcely any consideration of land that helped in the formation of the partnership. The parents’ meagre land devolved equally on all four brothers, who in theory received only 2 *lahas* each. Komali herself brought no land. It was however after the union commenced that an improvement in their economic circumstances occurred. They received a government grant of about 1 ½ acres which the two male partners jointly aswedumised.

Tikira appears to have been the ‘Senior’ partner (*pradaniya*), by virtue of having brought the wife initially, of having legally registered his marriage, of being the elder. The land was held and worked in common, and the husbands are supposed to have behaved as ‘equals’. It is reported that the brothers had fights but that they never separated.

Muthua the junior partner was the first to die. It is noteworthy that his property was taken charge of by his co-husband, i.e. the property was held and enjoyed by the brother who was co-husband and his wife, to the exclusion of the other two brothers Kiriya and Kalua. When Tikira himself died 5 years ago, Komali gained the right of life interest in the property. She has already given a third of the property to her eldest son; the rest was being cultivated by the youngest son who lived with her. Komali herself married again three years ago and has left the village.

It is noteworthy that all her children have contracted monogamous marriages. While the daughters have become dispersed through marriage, all four sons still live in the natal village. There has been no attempt on the part of any of them to unite in polyandry.
This is a brief description of a polyandrous partnership in Etanwela Village which is a neighbouring village of Rambukkoluwa.

Dingiri Banda was the eldest son in his family. The parents died when he was growing into adulthood and the responsibility for taking care of his siblings devolved on him. The parental property consisted of about 8 *pelas* of paddyland (4 acres), 1 acre highland, and the *mulgedera* (house). The land was worked by Dingiri Banda with the assistance of his younger brothers.

Dingiri Banda married Muthumenike; this marriage was registered. The sisters were at various periods given in marriage (most of them migrating out of the village) and each of them was given 7 *lahas* (1/3 acre) each. The rest of the property was held in common by the brothers.

The first child, Navamenike, was born in monogamy to Dingiri Banda and Muthumenike; however, soon afterwards, Menik Rala was incorporated as a polyandrous partner. As far as I could gather, the agreement was made by the brothers, the reason being economic advantage. The fact that the brothers lived in the same parental house and worked as an economic unit laid the groundwork for the partnership.

Manthrihamy the third brother was not incorporated thus. He in fact has made a *binna* marriage in Rambukkoluwa, consenting to a small share of 7 *lahas* from the parental land.

The economic partnership between the brothers seems to have been effective. No attempt at separating the property was made, both holding it jointly. It was pointed out by informants that non-availability of *chena* land close to the village necessitated absence of
the cultivators from the village for a long period of time each year. The co-operation and division of labour between the brothers enabled efficient cultivation of fields and *chena* at the same time.

It appears that although the marriage was registered in Dingiri Banda’s name, Menik Rala enjoyed equal rights. Both considered the children as their own and were addressed as *Loku Appachi* and *Heen Appachi* (the prefix denoting age distinction) by them. A revealing incident was related to me which expresses the solidarity of the parties to this union. Ukku Amma, a daughter, was given in marriage a couple of years ago. On the day of the wedding, Menik Rala had to go on an urgent trip to the town of Matale 25 miles away. As is the custom, the bridegroom’s party arrived from Rambukkoluwa and were given dinner and were to stay overnight before taking the bride away next morning. But Menik Rala had not arrived by dinner time, and the bride’s mother and father (Dingiri Banda) announced that since the other father, Menik Rala, had not arrived the bride could not leave the house without his permission. Fortunately, the crisis was stayed, by Menik Rala’s arrival in the early morning. He had walked the entire distance right through the night.

Dingiri Banda died last year (1958). Two daughters are married, but none of the sons, who help in the cultivation. The land so far has not been divided up among the children and is being managed by the surviving husband.

Comment: This is an example of perfect collaboration between two brothers. Economic interests, especially joint possession of land and parental house and equal contribution of labour, appear to have been the buttresses to this arrangement.

5. ADELPHIC POLYANDRY FACING DISSOLUTION

*Pusumbahamy (32 years)—Kiri Banda (45 years)—Loku Menike—Etanwela Village*

In this case study Pusumbahamy and Kiri Banda are the polyandrous partners. It is revealing in this instance to relate certain events preceding the arrangement.

Appuhamy, the eldest in the family, now about 50 years old, was the first to get married; he and his wife Menik Ethana from the village of Imaduwa came to live in the paternal house. The only
sister, Asoka, married next and moved to Imaduwa village; she died soon afterwards. Kiri Banda was said to have been not keen on marriage; the younger brother Kirivastu married next and brought his wife to the same paternal house. The last to get married was Pusumbahamy, the youngest brother; the marriage took place seven years ago and he too brought his wife to the paternal house. The father Tiki Rala had died some years previously.

Soon afterwards, Appuhamy and Kirivastu moved to Government sponsored Village Expansion Schemes (popularly known as "colonies") in Namini Oya and Diyabedduma. The mother accompanied Appuhamy with the net result that Pusumbahamy and Kiri Banda were the only two brothers remaining behind in the parental home to cultivate the family fields in Etanwela Village.

It appears that it is at this stage that Pusumbahamy's wife's father (who is Pusumbahamy's mother's younger brother) took the initiative in suggesting that Kiri Banda the bachelor enter a polyandrous association with his son-in-law and daughter. He obtained his sister's consent. Pusumbahamy agreed because his aiya was to be his partner; it appears, however, that Loku Menike did not readily consent, but was persuaded by the elders. Some years later the mother Muthumenike returned to live in the village.

The father-in-law and mother looked upon this incorporation of Pusumbahamy's elder brother as advantageous from the point of view of joint holding and cultivation of land. This brings us to the land transactions involved.
Tiki Rala, the father, owned 6 pelas of paddy land in the village (3 plots of 2/2.5/1.5 pelas respectively). The mother, who originally came from Ratninda, brought 1 pela situated there. (Hence the land immediately available for cultivation by the family was the father's six pelas.)

After the father’s death and their marriage, Appuhamy and Kirivastu received 1 pela each from the mother. Appuhamy’s wife brought some land but Kirivastu’s, none. The remaining land was cultivated by the other brothers and the yield given to the mother. It is because Appuhamy and Kirivastu did not possess enough land that they were lured by the colonies. (Appuhamy has eight children to support.) Their departure left the other two brothers enough land to cultivate. Joint effort on the part of both was required to cultivate all the land. Pusumbahamy’s wife herself brought 3 pelas which enlarged the family holding. In fact, after the departure of the brothers Pusumbahamy and Kiri Banda jointly held the paternal land that had not been divided and were engaged in economic co-operation. The polyandrous arrangement therefore carried economic co-operation to its logical end. The two brothers now jointly own 4 pelas (paternal property), plus 3 pelas (wife’s) and cultivate on unde (half-share) basis the 2 pelas belonging to the brothers.

The association has been by all accounts a successful one. It is interesting to note that the marriage is registered in Pusumbahamy’s name, but this legal technicality has not affected the equal status of the brothers. All 3 children were born after the association started. The location of fields and the exigencies of chena cultivation often necessitate the absence of one man. In the slack periods both men live together in the house. No frictions have arisen so far. But this successful association is now faced with dissolution. The possibility of exploiting Crown Land under the village expansion schemes has been within the last six years a disrupting factor in many a Laggala village. Just as the brothers Kiri Banda and Kirivastu have migrated, so has Pusumbahamy now become eligible for an allotment of virgin land in Kalu Ganga. He and his wife Loku Menike and the children are about to move there, leaving behind the associated brother and mother to look after the fields in the village. Pusumbahamy explained to the writer that the fields in the village were infertile and therefore he has decided to
migrate. Since he is the registered husband he naturally takes the wife and children with him.

Comments: This case clearly indicates that the advantages of joint ownership and cultivation provided the basis for the polyandrous union. The migration of other brothers and the mother, resulting in two brothers being virtual heirs of parental house and land, invited a partnership. It is particularly interesting that the wife’s father who was also mother’s brother took the initiative in the formation of this arrangement. In a sense the link between brother and sister was reinforced in the polyandrous marriage of their children. But the insufficiency of income in the village and the opportunity to better life through migration has resulted in a dissolution of the polyandrous union.

6. SIBLING POLYANDROUS ALLIANCE IN A LANDED FAMILY

Ukku Banda — Ratnaikela — Menik Ethana — Gangahenwela Hamlet

This is an account of a polyandrous association that existed in the past. The male partners Ukku Banda and Ratnaikela are dead and the woman, now 60 years old, is the only surviving partner.

In this case some information regarding the genealogy of the males concerned is relevant. Ukku Banda and Ratnaikela were brothers, whose father Mudalihamy is an important personage in the genealogy of the entire hamlet, for he and his two brothers (Ukkurala and Kiri Banda) form the three ancestors through whom all the residents in the satellite village of Gangahenwela today become related by blood or marriage.75

Mudalihamy possessed a good deal of land (about 35 pelas—17½ acres in the village), which was at his death divided up between his 4 sons Ukku Banda, Ratnaikela, Puchi Banda and Kalu Banda. (A step-son received the mother’s property.) The residences of

75 The data on the structure of kinship in Gangahenwela cannot be provided here, but the 18 families living there constitute a group, who through males or females or both can trace back to the three ancestors mentioned. These three ancestors were the sons of Punchi Rala who according to village tradition is the only son of one of the founders of the village. Whether this is true or not, in fact this thread of affiliation gives kinship structure to the hamlet of Gangahenwela.
these brothers formed the nucleus of the growing settlement of Gangahenwela. Kalu Banda, the eldest, married a woman from Ratninda (a nearby village) and set up a house. Ukku Banda followed him with Menik Ethana from Imaduwa (another neighbouring village). The huts of these two brothers were set up adjacently. The other brothers were at this time not married, and they lived in separate structures in a common compound.

Ukku Banda soon after marriage developed an ailment which virtually incapacitated him. The ailment was described to me by his surviving wife as a "swelling of the belly, complexion turning yellow and limbs becoming sticks". Since the invalid could not engage in active cultivation, Ratnaikela the next brother looked after Ukku Banda's fields and was invited by the latter to share his household. Ratnaikela moved in and thereby developed a polyandrous partnership.

Ukku Banda died some time afterwards; he had already registered his marriage with Menik Ethana. After his death, Ratnaikela registered the marriage in his name. Ukku Banda's property was retained by his surviving partners and no share went to the other "non-associated" brothers, all of whom were by now married.

During the lifetime of Ukku Banda, when Ratnaikela was also sharing his wife, several children were born, only one of whom, a girl, survived. There are no other surviving children from the time when Ratnaikela alone lived with the woman.

Ratnaikela himself died some two decades ago. The property of both men is held now by the surviving wife, who, it is expected, will pass on the property to her only daughter. It is interesting to note that after the death of her associated husbands, the "heiress" contracted eight marriages with men who were attracted by her property. One of them was the step brother of the associated husbands, another a parallel cousin. The rest were landless men from outside who married in binna. These marriages were of short duration. It is noteworthy that throughout this procession of marriages Menik Ethana managed to keep the land intact and also produced no children.

When all three members of the polyandrous association were living, they lived in a one-roomed hut, there being no elaborate differentiation in the physical structure of the house. Ukku Banda the senior partner did start building a bigger house, a venture
finished by his brother Ratnaikela, but both husbands died before the shift to the new house was made. The house is now used by their daughter.

With regard to this association the following features may be noted:

1. The associated "husbands" were brothers who by village standards had a great deal of land. The fact that the other brothers contracted separate marriages seems to imply that there was no overpowering motivation for the brothers to hold the land undivided and to work out some arrangement like a common wife whereby the land will go to a common set of children.

2. On the other hand, the immediate circumstance leading to the *eku ge kama* of two brothers was the fact that one was ill and needed the other's physical aid to cultivate and maintain his lands. The younger brother's motive for agreeing to the partnership is difficult to ascertain; he was a bachelor at the time and the advantage of having a woman to cook for him, etc. may have been an incentive.

3. The wife, according to her tale, complied with her husband's decision to share her with his brother. The husband apparently took the initiative.

4. The fate of the property of the two brothers is instructive. Since at the time of the death of the elder brother there was an issue, and the same circumstance prevailed when the second husband died, the property was held intact by the members of the polyandrous union from claims by the other brothers. The wife has enjoyed the property and has even been able to contract marriages subsequently; the daughter will on her death inherit the property of the fathers. (The two registrations of marriage make her the legal heir.)

7. **HALF-SIBLINGS IN NON-CORPORATE POLYANDRY**

*Menik Rala — Appuhamy — Pinchi Amma — Pallegama Village*

This case refers to persons who formerly resided in Gangahenwela and now live in Pallegama, a village situated 4 miles away and fast becoming a trade centre.

Menik Rala (47 years) and Appuhamy (50 years) are half siblings
(common father, different mothers). The father Ukku Banda, native of a Laggala village, Kahagala, of which he became headman, had first contracted a marriage with Palingu Menike of the same village. By this union six children (all sons) were born, Appuhamy being the fifth. After his wife died Ukku Banda, the father, married an ‘heirress’ of Gangahenwela in binna (matrilocal). He brought along with him his last two sons (Appuhamy and an infant who died subsequently); his other sons he left behind in the village in the care of relatives, leaving for their use the proceeds from his lands there. Appuhamy was brought along mainly on account of the fact that he was lame in one foot.

Ukku Banda had seven children by his second wife, Menik Rala being the eldest. Appuhamy and Menik Rala, with no appreciable age gap between each other, grew up together in Gangahenwela. The father when he died provided for both sons thus: Menik Rala inherited about 5 pelas of paddy land (approximately 2½ acres) in Gangahenwela, and Appuhamy 4 pelas, 7 lahas (two pelas of which were situated in his father’s native village and the rest in Gangahenwela). Both therefore inherited adequate land by village standards.

The events leading up to the polyandrous association and the subsequent arrangements are somewhat curious. It was Menik Rala, the younger man, who first “brought” a woman, Pinchi Amma, from Pallegama to Gangahenwela in customary marriage. The couple lived with Menik Rala’s widowed mother and siblings in the parental home. It is during this period that Appuhamy’s illicit relationship with Pinchi Amma first started. The story as far as I could gather was as follows: the step brothers were
working their land separately but lived in the same house. Some time after Jayasena the first child was born Menik Rala fell ill and Appuhamy actively helped out in supervising the cultivation of his brother’s fields. It is said that the liaison between Appuhamy and Pinchi Amma had started before the illness, but that it was after the illness and Appuhamy’s economic contribution that the association was formalized as an accepted polyandrous partnership. Appuhamy called by the villagers nondiya (lame-foot) had not married, perhaps because of his handicap. However, his brother’s wife and he had, aided by common living, developed intimacy, which fact it is claimed by informants, preceded the economic motives that helped the formalization of the association. While living thus in Gangahenwela two more children—Ram Banda and Tikiri Menike—were born.

Soon afterwards a shift was made to the wife’s village of Palle-gama. Pinchi Amma’s parents were by village standards an affluent landed family. Her father Dingri Banda had married a woman of means and he had subsequently amassed land—in all he is said to have about 10 pelas (5 acres) of paddy land and a coconut garden. Pinchi Amma was the only child of Dingri Banda, who was himself getting too old to work his lands, and he therefore invited his daughter and her husbands to come to Pallegama and take charge of his property. He informally gave them about 6 pelas to work and use the entire proceeds, and requested them to work the rest of the land and give him a share. He turned over his own house to his daughter and built himself a new one nearby. The brothers co-operated and worked the land together and contributed to a common pool.

In Pallegama certain developments took place which have somewhat upset the equal participation of the brothers. It is claimed that Pinchi Amma preferred the lame man. More important perhaps (and this is confirmed by the writer’s impressions formed after interviewing both men) Appuhamy is a far more forceful and active personality. His physical handicap does not interfere with cultivation at which he is proficient. Menik Rala is both passive and inactive. Appuhamy was able to manoeuvre and register the marriage in his name, thereby relegating Menik Rala legally to an inferior status.

Four children were born after the shift to Pallegama and the registration of marriage. Thus the first three children were born
in Gangahenwela while Menik Rala was the 'senior partner' and the rest born when Appuhamy became the legal husband. Jayasena is the only child born when Menik Rala's marriage was monogamous. It is therefore interesting to note that Jayasena addresses and refers to Menik Rala as Appachi, and Appuhamy as Loku Appachi, whereas all the other children, born after the partnership, refer to both men as Appachi (Loku Appachi means Big Father, used for father's elder brother). It is said that both fathers treat all the children equally.

It has not been possible to gather information regarding the sexual arrangements during this period. The house was large one with 4 rooms and two maduwas (which can also be used as sleeping quarters). The men had their separate rooms, and the wife hers. The arrangement, as described by a younger brother of Menik Rala, was as follows. Each night the wife laid out an extra mat in her own room, and whichever brother wanted to sleep with her, went and lay on the mat. Both appear to have had equal access to her and there were no sexual frictions.

However, as hinted before, certain other developments have upset the equilibrium. Appuhamy is the legal husband; and although the land in Pallegama is in the name of the wife, he has become the real manager of the lands. It is perhaps Appuhamy's supremacy that led Menik Rala, some six years ago, to move to Wilgomuwa Colony (Village Expansion Scheme), where he has obtained a government grant of three acres. When asked why he moved although he had enough land in Pallegama he said that he 'wanted some land of his own' which perhaps indicates that he felt he had no rights over his wife's land anymore. In Wilgomuwa (about 12-15 miles away) he cultivates the land by himself, and makes monthly visits to Pallegama and stays there for a couple of days. He still enjoys access to Pinchi Amma, but definitely he is more an outsider than otherwise. During harvest time Pinchi Amma goes to the colony for a couple of weeks to help him (without Appuhamy) but otherwise she is permanently settled in Pallegama. The two able bodied sons rarely go to Wilgomuwa to help him; their economic interests are in Pallegama. Menik Rala, although he gives part of the yield from his Wilgomuwa fields to the common household, still retains as personal income a good proportion of it. In Pallegama real authority has passed out of his hands.
Certain interesting features emerge in regard to the property rights of the parties to this polyandrous union and their issue. It has already been mentioned that both Appuhamy and Menik Rala inherited property from their father. When they shifted to Pallegama they rented their land on a half share basis to relatives in Gangahenwela. It was the wife's land in Pallegama that provided the economic basis for the household. It would seem that all these parties have held their land separately each conscious of his or her exclusive rights (although in the case of the wife her legal husband Appuhamy has taken over the management). This is clearly seen in the nature of the property settled on those children who have married.

Jayasena the eldest, now 25 years old, married a few years ago. He continues to live in the parental house, occupying two of the 4 rooms, but derives his income, and maintains a kitchen, separately from his parents. When he married, Menik Rala (who can claim him as his son), legally transferred to him $1 \frac{1}{2}$ pellas of paddy land (in two blocks) situated in Gangahenwela; Appuhamy chose to give him none; the mother has informally given him about $2 \frac{1}{2}$
pelas in Pallegama to work and enjoy the yield. Working of this land is Jayasena's responsibility.

The second in the family, Ram Banda, is unmarried; he lives in the house and now helps Appuhamy with the cultivation.

Tikiri Menike has been given in marriage to a man from Imaduwa village. The mother has given her 1½ pelas as dowry. The fathers have not given her any land yet.

Biso Menike married a man from Mahalakotuwe village last year. In her case both fathers have given her some land: Appuhamy 1 pelas in Kahagala village, Menik Rala 1 pelas in Gangahenwela. The mother has contributed nothing.

Thus it is clear from this account that the husbands have maintained separate property rights, and that the wife's property is also considered as a separate block of ownership.

In conclusion certain features may be noted regarding this polyandrous arrangement:

(1) Both husbands enjoyed some land derived from a common father. But it is the wife's succession to land that has been the central economic basis on which the household has been built. The marriage changed from a patrilocal to a matrilocal one, which is not uncommon in this area; but this matrilocal basis certainly has rendered the inheritance of the husbands and their land interests insignificant in the maintenance of the polyandrous union.

(2) The association between the males—preceded by illicit intimacy with a brother's wife—was probably stabilized because of the economic advantages stemming from it. Appuhamy originally came into the picture when Menik Rala was ill; subsequently having both men in co-operation was a distinct advantage in cultivating the father-in-law's extensive fields.

(3) The later history of the union, especially the elbowing out of Menik Rala is the result of a developmental sequence in which registration of marriage, difference in agricultural ability, personal preference of the wife, all probably played a part. Menik Rala's superfluousness as a worker was evident when the two sons had grown up.

(4) The parties concerned appear to have maintained separate property rights; the economic solidarity was primarily expressed in jointly working on the wife's land for several years.
8. HALF-SIBLINGS IN STABLE NON-CORPORATE ASSOCIATION

Kalu Banda (60 yrs.)—Appuhamy (50 yrs.)—Sitahamy (50 yrs.)—Etanwela Village.

Ram Menike, the mother, was first married to Kalu Banda to whom she bore Kalu Banda and Dingiri Menike; after Kalu Banda died she married his brother Dilindu Rala, and by this marriage had 3 children, Hamy, Navarath Ethana and Appuhamy.

While his mother and stepfather were living, Kalu Banda the eldest in the family, married Sitahamy (from Imadu village) and brought her to live in the parental house. Dingiri Menike married next a man from Mahalakotuwe village and went away to live in diga (patrilocal). Hamy followed suit; he set up house independently. Hamy is described as being not "steady", presumably because he sent his wife away, and has now migrated to Wilgomuwa Colony having received a government grant of land. Navarath Ethana married a man from Mahalakotuwe village and moved out there, to die a few years after marriage.

Appuhamy was the only unmarried member of the family left behind. By now his father too had died; so he and his mother and Kalu Banda and his family shared the parental home. The story goes that Appuhamy became 'secretly' intimate with his stepbrother's wife, Sitahamy, and that the relationship continued
for many years, but that it was only after the birth of the third child that Kalu Banda formalized it. The arrangement was sanctioned by the mother. With regard to the considerations that went into the formalization, two seem to have been uppermost: the wife's wish to incorporate Appuhamy, and her successful persuasion of her husband; and the economic advantages accruing from the partnership. Kalu Banda and Appuhamy had for some years preceding the partnership cultivated their lands jointly; in a sense therefore economic co-operation was extended to sharing the wife also.

Particulars of the property must be set out in detail in this case because the persons we are considering are the children of two separate marriages made by the mother Ram Manike. Inheritance of the children derives partly from two paternal sources although Ram Manike's husbands were full brothers.

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<th>Parental Property</th>
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<td><strong>Kalu Banda's property</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Ram Menike's property</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Dilindu Rala's property</strong></td>
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<td>Etanwela</td>
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From the above details we see that the polyandrous stepbrothers were differently endowed and each had property deriving from separate sources. The brothers throughout the association held
their properties as separate entities, though the cultivation was joint and the paddy stored in the same *atua* (storehouse). There were certain developments which underline the notion of separate property rights. The house in which the polyandrous partners lived was Kalu Banda’s by virtue of the fact that it belonged to his father Keerala. Appuhamy lived in the same house, but he has also acquired a house nearby in his name, and it was in this house that one of the daughters—Gunarat Ethana—lived before she and her family migrated. Kalu Banda by his own efforts has aswed dumised and reclaimed in Gongala field $\frac{1}{2}$ *pelas*, and this by virtue of reclamation is solely his, although it was ancestral property. Appuhamy on the other hand has bought in his own name $1$ *pela* in Kalavellamulla field.

Sitahamy herself inherited 8 *lahas* of paddy land in her natal village of Imaduwa. This is being cultivated now by her grandson (Heen Banda’s son) living there. The notion, as far as I could gather, was that the blocks of property of the three persons were distinct entities; none of it has been transferred to any of the children yet, most of whom as we have seen have migrated.

With regard to the treatment of children by the co-fathers and vice-versa there is said to be no distinction. However in the terms of address used by the children to the fathers there is one: Kalu Banda the legal father and senior partner is called *Appachi* and Appuhamy *Heen Appachi*. The prefix *heen* denotes younger which is a statement of fact, but not only that.

It is interesting to note that the children born of this polyandrous union have upon marriage dispersed from the parental home. Heen Banda the eldest son contracted a *binna* marriage in Imaduwa and resided there until his death a few years ago. Tikiri Banda the second son has married a woman from the same village and had gone to live with her (*binna*) but has now migrated to Katukeliyawa colony. Two daughters Pinchi Amma and Seelawathie have both married in *diga* and now reside in the villages of Pitawela and Puhakpitiya. The other daughter Gunarat Ethana married a man of the village, but this family too has now migrated to Kalu Ganga colony. None of the land has been transferred to the children yet but it is expected that all will inherit land. It is possible, however, that the surviving son will on the death of his parents inherit the paternal house.
From reports it appears that while the polyandrous partners are generally united, frictions and fights are not unusual. It is rumoured that there is some jealousy between the males, and that the wife is fonder of Appuhamy because Kalu Banda is 'old'. However, as one informant put it "the woman distributes her favours equally when both are healthy and working"—a statement which conveys that illness in one man is a setting for conflict and the united effort in harvesting a time for unity and diplomacy on the part of the woman!

9. UNSTABLE POLYANDROUS UNIONS OF CONVENIENCE AMONG PARALLEL COUSINS IN TWO GENERATIONS

This case study examines two unstable polyandrous unions in two generations. They were contracted by men who were parallel cousins of both matrilateral and patrilateral types. Both were unstable for different reasons. The parties involved belong to the Duraya caste (servant status to Goyigama (cultivator) caste). It will be useful to view the polyandrous unions in the larger context of marriages charted in the diagram.

(a) Kira, Tikira, and Dingiri—Rambukkoluwa: Gangahenwela Village
This example recounts events that took place roughly 45 years ago. Although the documentation is probably partial, it is a worthwhile illustration, because it concerns the polyandrous association between one man who had been previously married and had children by that marriage, and another man who had children by his wife prior to the sharing of her with the former.

Kira and Tikira were parallel cousins being the sons of two sisters. Kira lived in Rambukkoluwa, and Tikira in Gangahenwela, the satellite village.

Kira at the turn of this century had married Dhotu (also from Rambukkoluwa) and had two sons by her, Nandua and Havadia. (The latter now about 58 years old is the informant from whose statement this story is compiled.) While Havadia was in his early teens, his mother Dhotu died. This calamity was followed by a more serious catastrophe. A landslide, which probably happened about 1912 or 1913, swamped the village of Rambukkoluwa and many villagers were forced to evacuate the village. Kira, the father, took his two children and went to the satellite village of Gangahenwela to put up with his parallel cousin (“brother”) Tikira. Tikira was married to Dingiri and this union had produced 3 children, two boys and a girl.

It is difficult to find out how exactly the agreement came about, but it appears that both men agreed to share a common wife (Dingiri), live in the same house, and contribute to a common pool. The agreement was made further possible by the fact that Dingiri was a classificatory cross cousin to both. But the arrangement lasted for only three years, because several difficulties and tensions cropped up leading to a dissolution of the arrangement.

(a) According to our informant, his new stepmother had enough work on her hands looking after and bringing up her own children. Therefore, inevitably, she neglected the new husband’s children. This neglect led to friction between Kira on one side and Tikira and Dingiri on the other.

(b) Perhaps the more critical conflict was that which centred round land. Kira had nearly 3 acres paddy land in Rambukkoluwa. Tikira and Dingiri together possessed about the same amount at Gangahenwela. The first problem was how the men were going to work both sets of property; it is our informant’s claim that Kira did not get his share of labour from Tikira and Dingiri, both on
his paddy fields and his separate *chena*. (The woman in this society is a valued worker during paddy harvest and in tending of *chena*.)

The final crisis centred round the future disposal of Kira’s land. Our informant claims that his stepmother wanted Kira to hand over the titles to his land to her if she was to look after his children any more. Kira, fearing that his own children by his previous marriage may be dispossessed, left the union and returned to Rambuk-koluwa. (No children were born after the polyandrous association was started.) Kira’s son, our informant, married soon after the dissolution, and he prevented his father’s return to Gangahenwela by promising to care for his father and brother.

This case illustrates some of the conditions under which a polyandrous association cannot possibly maintain itself and also brings into focus some of the problems treated in Sawer’s statement of Kandyan Law with regard to polyandry:

1. The association started after both men had already, by virtue of past marriages, two different sets of children. The bringing together of two sets of children may be expected to lead to problems especially between the stepmother and her new husband’s children.

2. The fact that there were issue by previous unions and no issue after the common association of the men naturally created problems regarding the disposal of property. Kira was according to law “right” in maintaining that, since there were no issue after he entered the second union, his property should go to his children by his former marriage. But the legal rights did not straighten out the domestic tangle. Dingiri and Tikira did not want Kira to treat the association merely as one of convenience but claimed some share of his property. There could have been no permanence in the arrangement when the parties to it disagreed on fundamental issues.

(b) **Havadia, Wathua and Ukku.**

Our informant Havadia himself became party to a short-lived polyandrous partnership. Wathua his parallel cousin married Ukku. After three or four years of married life, Wathua fell grievously ill, and was unable to cultivate. His wife faced with starvation was
about to leave him, and Wathua hit upon the plan of inviting Havadia, then a youth of 15, to live with him in polyandry in order to get his fields cultivated and also keep his wife. His brother Kalua was already married and Havadia living in the same village was the obvious choice.

Havadia claims that he had before this been sexually intimate with Ukku and therefore was willing to enter the partnership. Apparently it was Wathua’s sister Punchi who acted as the intermediary in the negotiation. Wathua who was already in poor health died after a couple of years and Havadia remained as sole husband.

Wathua’s property went to his brother and sister and not to his marriage associates. No children had been born while he was alive, and therefore the claims of his siblings were accepted.

Havadia and Ukku subsequently had two children. Ukku then died, and Havadia now lives with another wife.

What is of interest in this case is that the union was deliberately made for very practical reasons. Wathua needed another man to cultivate for him and to keep his wife; Havadia a youth who already knew the woman and who had no land of his own at that time, consented to become a member of a ready made family. It is also noteworthy that Wathua’s property went to his siblings in the absence of children.

Both cases described, placed in the context of the marriages of other kinsmen, appear as exceptions amongst a majority of monogamous unions.

10. ASYMMETRICAL POLYANDRY AMONG MATRILATERAL PARALLEL COUSINS

Muthu Banda (35 yrs.) — Ukku Banda (30 yrs.) — Palingu Menike (28 yrs.) — Etanwela Village.

This case of polyandry located in Etanwela village has certain peculiar features at the inter-personal level.

The background facts before the polyandrous association started are as follows. Ukku Banda and Palingu Menike were supposed to have had an intimate relationship from their early years. This childhood romantic bond was described by an informant in the words velikeliye yalu kama (friends from sand-playing age). They
were not close relatives, but were neighbours. It appears possible that they had at some stage before Palingu Menike’s marriage been physically intimate. Ukku Banda was rejected by Palingu Menike’s parents as a prospective son-in-law in preference to Muthu Banda who was Palingu Menike’s mother’s brother’s son and therefore considered preferable. At the time Muthu Banda married Palingu Menike, it is reported, he was aware of her liaison with Ukku Banda.

After marriage, Ukku Banda and Palingu Menike continued their intimacy; the liaison was publicly known and Muthu Banda consented to a polyandrous association. In considering the factors that went into this formalization it is relevant to note that Muthu Banda and Ukku Banda were the sons of two sisters and therefore ‘brothers’ in local kinship. Their kinship relationship was an ‘appropriate’ one for polyandrous partnership. The fact that Muthu Banda had registered his marriage did not stand in the way of this informal arrangement. The parents of both husband and wife also gave their consent to it.

It does not appear that considerations of property as such played any significant role in the transaction. Muthu Banda owns 2 *pelas* (1 acre) of paddyland, Ukku Banda 1 *pela*; Palingu Menike brought an additional *pela*. It may be noted that since the ‘husbands’ were sons of two unrelated men, though of two sisters, there was no consideration of keeping parental property intact involved.

However, there seems to be another factor involved which has made Muthu Banda amenable to the relationship. It is Ukku Banda who has assumed the role of provider, and in fact he cultivates all the family fields. As for Ukku Banda’s willingness to continue this unequal relationship it is claimed that his affection for the woman is the motive force. In any case, the association has continued for several years; six children have been born.

In the house there appears to be a definite asymmetry in rights and privileges. Muthu Banda ‘lords’ it over his junior partner, by virtue of the status of legal husband and because of his dominating aggressive qualities. For instance, Muthu Banda occupies a room while Ukku Banda sleeps in the *salava* (inner verandah). The former is served his food separately in his room, while the latter eats in the kitchen. As may be expected, the woman appears to prefer the latter; hence there is no sexual inequality.
II. NON-ADELPHIC ASYMMETRICAL POLYANDRY


The polyandrous partnership between Mudiyanse and Tikiri Banda commenced long after a pattern of settled monogamous marriages on the part of all the individuals in his family.

Mudiyanse of Banagewatte Gedera had been married to Ukku Amma for some years and two children had been born when Tikiri Banda came on the scene. Tikiri Banda was no kinsman to Mudiyanse but was a classificatory cross cousin to Ukku Amma whose natal village was Etanwela. Tikiri Banda himself hailed from Rambukkoluwa; his parents were poor cultivators living in Udaha Gedera. After the death of his mother, Tikiri Banda, a young bachelor, lacking support from his father, and having only 5 laahas of land (¼ acre) of his own, took to earning his keep by helping other cultivators in their fields and being kept in food in exchange for his labour. Mudiyanse was one of those whom he used to help; the former possessed about 1 acre of his own and his wife had brought him another ½ acre located in the adjoining village of Etanwela. Hospitality was extended to Tikiri Banda in Mudiyanse’s house partly because the latter was a cousin of his wife. Intimacy developed between the cousins, and it was said that Mudiyanse was a ‘quiet man’ and since his wife had already borne him two children, he consented to a polyandrous partnership. Tikiri Banda shifted to Mudiyanse’s house, and discarding his own gedera
'affiliation' became one of the Banagewatte Gedera group.

The relationship between the two husbands appears to have been decidedly asymmetrical. Mudiyanse's senior position stemmed from the fact that he owned the land and was also the older person. Tikiri Banda contributed physical labour, and took his orders from Mudiyanse. The money and paddy store was in the latter's charge and Tikiri Banda was given his 'pocket money'.

Two more children were born after the partnership started. Then the whole family migrated to the village of Guruwela. Apparently, one year, the wife Ukku Amma's sister, Ram Menike, living in Guruwela, invited her sister and her family to do chena cultivation there. After the chena season, the family decided to settle permanently in that village, in Ram Menike's house. Mudiyanse was able to exchange his land in Rambukkoluwa with a fellow villager living there for an equal extent in his new village.

This change of residence was the prelude to a tragedy. Mudiyanse and his wife's sister's husband (who was also Mudiyanse's parallel cousin) combined as a work team and cultivated together, while Tikiri Banda became slack, partly because his labour power was needed no more. Friction developed between him and Ram Menike who upbraided him for being inactive. One day the exchange got hot and Ram Menike ordered Tikiri Banda to leave her house, upon which Tikiri Banda assaulted her and stabbed her seven times with a knife. Ram Menike died on the spot. In the course of the struggle Ukku Amma, the polyandrous wife, intervened and Tikiri Banda stabbed her too but not fatally. Tikiri Banda fled from the scene and entering an unoccupied neighbouring hut hanged himself.

Today Mudiyanse and Ukku Amma still live in Guruwela. After Tikiri Banda's death a son was born to them and was christened with the same name. Tikiri Banda's 5 lasas of land went to his co-husband and wife. The three children who have married have contracted monogamous marriages.

The significant facts in this case are: that the co-husbands were not kinsmen, that the union developed because of the previous intimacy between the wife and her cousin (which was an appropriate kinship bond for marriage), that Tikiri Banda had virtually no land to contribute but was appreciated for his labour power, that the tragedy occurred partly because his labour power became unnecessary, that Tikiri Banda’s meagre land went to his poly-
androus partners, and that the children of the union who have married have contracted monogamous unions. (It is possible of course that what are monogamous unions at one point of time may develop later into polyandry.)

12. UNRELATED MALES MEET IN POLYANDRY

Hamy—Mulhamy—Ram Menike—Rambukkoluwa

Hamy, a villager from Rambukkoluwa, now dead several years, had a colourful marital history, which is not unique by Laggala standards. He was the fourth child, the elder three being sisters, each of whom married in diga and migrated from the village. Hamy first married Kalu Menike from Polwattakande; this woman died childless after several years of married life. Then Hamy took to wife Kalu Menike of Welangahawatte; he sent her back after one year 'because she was not good in her work'. He then brought Tikiri Menike from the same village; she and her two young children also died. Next came Ram Menike of Madadurawela; he lived with her for 5-6 years, when a polyandrous partnership was contracted with Mulhamy.

Mulhamy was a resident of Welangahawatte; he had already contracted a marriage there, but his wife had died leaving him a son Kaurala. Mulhamy used to come to Rambukkoluwa village on hunting trips, sometimes to cultivate chena, and also to bring cattle to the patana (grass plateau) near Rambukkoluwa for grazing. During these trips he began to have a liaison with Ram Menike, Hamy's wife. This relationship was put on a permanent footing by his joining the union; it is said by present day informants that one of the factors which was taken into consideration was the fact that Hamy was aged and that Mulhamy, being younger, would be an asset as a worker. (It is noteworthy that Mulhamy's three brothers and two sisters had contracted individual marriages, so that he alone amongst his siblings lived in polyandry.)

After Mulhamy came to settle down in Rambukkoluwa two children, Ukku Banda and Kiri Banda, were born, and they assumed Hamy's vasagama and geder name. The partners co-operated in economic activities, but soon Hamy's illness precipitated a tragedy. It is said that during his illness, the other two partners did not nurse him at all, and in sheer despair, he hanged himself.
After Hamy had committed suicide, Mulhamy and Ram Menike lived together, and three more children were born, namely Tikiri Menike, Kirala, and another son who died young. These boys took Mulhamy’s vasagama name. Hamy’s land apparently was managed by the surviving partners.

It appears that Mulhamy himself quarrelled with his wife and returned to his native village to live with his son by his previous marriage. He lived there until he died.

The manner in which the property of the partners was distributed clearly establishes the rights of children belonging to different fathers. Hamy’s lands in the village were inherited solely by the two sons born while he was alive—Ukka Banda and Kiri Banda. Mulhamy after settling down in Rambukkoluwa bought some land which went to his two living sons born after the death of Hamy. Mulhamy’s ancestral property in the village of Welangahawatte, he gave his son Kaurala, born by his first marriage. All the children of the polyandrous partnership have contracted individual marriages.

In conclusion, then, this polyandrous partnership was contracted by two unrelated males. The union was not stable. The properties of the ‘fathers’ were treated as separate entities. Hamy when alive was the senior partner; the children born in his lifetime assumed him name. The children born after his death had no claims on Hamy’s land. Mulhamy evidently felt no obligation to endow Hamy’s children; but to those he recognized exclusively as his own he gave land. The result was a balancing of property rights among all the children involved.

13. SHIFTING ASSOCIATED PARTNERS


This case is perhaps extraordinary because one man and one woman were involved in two separate polyandrous partnerships, in that one associated partner was replaced by another. The males involved were distant relatives, terminologically classificatory brothers. All the parties are dead.

Kalu Banda of Rambukkoluwa village married Menik Etana, who left him after two years and went to live with Ratnayake of Etanwela. Two years later she left him too, and returned to Rambukkoluwa to live with Mudalihamy. Kalu Banda, whom she had
previously deserted, was after sometime admitted as a polyandrous partner. The interesting fact is that all three settled down at Kalu Banda's house and accepted him as the senior partner, perhaps because he had a previous claim on her, and, more importantly, because he was the headman of the village.

Kalu Banda owned about 2 pelas of paddy land and Mudalihamy the same extent. Both worked the lands together, stored the paddy in the same atua. This association persisted for about 15 years when Mudalihamy broke away and married another woman, Ukku Menike.

The next person who appeared on the scene was Hamy, who had lost his wife. He joined the union, and contributed the proceeds of 3 pelas of paddy land he owned to the running of the household. This association lasted for several years (the villagers estimate the period as 20 years), but once again the junior partner, Hamy, deserted, and went to live with Kalu Menike of the neighbouring hamlet of Gangahenwela.

The lands of the male partners were divided as follows: Mudalihamy who married Ukku Menike left his lands to her and his son by her. Hamy's land went to Kalu Menike, his wife after the polyandry broke up. Kalu Banda's children (born during both phases of the association) died before they became majors, and he left half his lands to Menik Etana and the other half to his 'scribe'. The chances are that, even if Kalu Banda's children had lived, the property of the associated partners would still have gone to their subsequent wives and children.

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