PEOPLE OF NEPAL

DOR BAHAADUR BISTA

Published by

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLICITY
MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING
HIS MAJESTY’S GOVT. OF NEPAL
1st Edition. 2000 Copies
June 11, 1967

© Department of Publicity, HMG., 1967

Price: Rs. 25/-

Printed at Sree Saraswaty Press Ltd.,
Calcutta-9
TO

KING AND COUNTRY
**CONTENTS**

| Foreword | ...... | ...... | ix |
| Preface | ...... | ...... | xi |
| Introduction | ...... | ...... | xiii |

**Part I**

**Middle Hill and Valley People**

| Brahman, Chhetri and Occupational Castes | ...... | 1 |
| Newar | ...... | 15 |
| Kiranti | ...... | 29 |
| Rai | ...... | 31 |
| Limbu | ...... | 40 |
| Tamang | ...... | 48 |
| Magar | ...... | 57 |
| Sunwar and Jirel | ...... | 64 |
| Gurung | ...... | 70 |
| Thakali | ...... | 80 |
| Panchgaunle | ...... | 89 |
| Chepang | ...... | 91 |

**Part II**

**Terai People**

| Brahman, Rajput and Occupational Castes | ...... | 99 |
| Tharu | ...... | 108 |
| Danuwar, Majhi and Darai | ...... | 117 |
| Rajbansi, Bodo, Dhimal and Satar | ...... | 123 |
| Musalman | ...... | 129 |

**Part III**

**Northern Border People**

| Introduction | ...... | 135 |
| Sherpa | ...... | 136 |
| Lhomi | ...... | 145 |
| Thudam and Topke Gola People | ...... | 149 |
| Tamur Valley People | ...... | 150 |
| Lopa of Mustang | ...... | 153 |
| Baragaunle | ...... | 156 |
| Dolpo People | ...... | 160 |
| Manangba | ...... | 164 |
| Larke People | ...... | 167 |
| Epilogue | ...... | 169 |
| Glossary | ...... | 172 |
| Bibliography | ...... | 173 |
| Index | ...... | 174 |
FOREWORD

It gives me real pleasure while presenting the "People of Nepal" to its readers. This book happens to be the first of its kind ever written by a Nepali and published by HMG. It is hoped that the present volume will be usefully utilized by the scholars, students, administrators, and development planners alike in addition to its being of considerable interests to the general readers.

A sovereign country having adopted Panchayat Democracy as its way of life and method of development could not afford to ignore any one segment of the country. The knowledge of the entire Nepali Society was, therefore, considered very necessary for everybody. The idea of the Department however, could not have been materialized without the admirable and very willing effort of a competent person in the subject. The Department of Publicity, HMG. would like to congratulate Mr. Dor Bahadur Bista for his successful adventure of field research which at times had been very tiring, demanding enough of courage, patience, and the skill in writing up the text.

Chitra Bahadur K. C.
Secretary,
Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, HMG.

Kathmandu, 11th June 1967
PREFACE

When, after 1950, Nepal changed her policy of isolation and began to take a modern and realistic attitude toward the world at large, she opened her doors wide for all sorts of people, aid missions, and expeditions from outside. There had been only a very few exceptions until then. Now, however, in this modern era Europeans, Americans, and others have poured into Nepal, the "Land of Mystery", hitherto almost unknown to the world. Some have come with offers of help to develop and modernize Nepal. Some have come with purely scholarly interests of revealing the mysteries of life among the Nepali people, some with mere curiosity or for climbing the snow peaks of the Himalaya.

Many people around the world wanted to know about Nepal and her people. But more important for Nepal—many Nepali people themselves became eager to know about the world, and above all, about their own country.

Nepal had been closed not only to the outside, but there was no incentive or encouragement even for the Nepalis themselves to travel inside the country. Because of the difficult terrain in the hills, the deadly malarious conditions in the plains, and the complete absence of any means of efficient transportation or communications, people in different parts of the country remained very much confined to their areas and relatively ignorant of the rest of the country. No one, except a very few government officials, had ever travelled over the country. It was, therefore, with great enthusiasm and pleasure that I took the opportunity to visit and study the Sherpa peoples of eastern Nepal in early 1957 in the company of Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf, Professor of Asian Anthropology at the University of London. I travelled and worked with him among the Sherpas and gained some knowledge of the Rais and Limbus as well, when we visited their areas on our way to Darjeeling, in neighbouring West Bengal.

When Professor von Fürer-Haimendorf studied the Gurungs in the west, and the Chhetris of Kathmandu Valley, I also accompanied him, and by 1962 I had visited the Thakalis and various border peoples in Mustang and Dolpo with him.

I am very much indebted to Professor von Fürer-Haimendorf for the training in the field as well as in his classroom at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, where I was a student of cultural anthropology. He has also
read the manuscript and gave invaluable suggestions.

Despite my growing field experience and knowledge of many groups of Nepali people, this book would never have come to fruition without the plan, inspiration, and financial assistance for extended field visits provided by the Department of Publicity and Mr. Kul Sekhar Sharma, Chief Secretary of His Majesty's Government, under whom the Department of Publicity was administered until 1964. I am extremely grateful to Mr. Sharma and to the Department of Publicity, His Majesty's Government of Nepal.

Many thanks are due to Mr. Donald A. Messerschmidt, former Peace Corps Volunteer now residing in Kathmandu, who took considerable interest and relentless trouble to correct technicalities and helped bring the book into a proper shape. Mr. Messerschmidt assisted in the typing of many sections, with the glossary, bibliography, and the photography.

Others who read the manuscript in various forms and who gave considerable assistance in criticism and suggestion include Leo E. Rose, Director, Himalayan Border Countries Project, School of International Studies, University of California, Berkeley; Mrs. Frances Wilde of England; Thomas B. Smith, former Peace Corps Volunteer; Lionel Caplan and Charles McDougal, both of the University of London; and Boyd Michilovsky, Peace Corps Volunteer. To all of them I am sincerely indebted.

I owe a deep sense of gratefulness to Mr. John C. Cool, Deputy Director of the United States AID mission to Nepal who provided many facilities, encouragement, and assisted in countless ways toward the ultimate completion of the book.

There are many others, foreign and Nepali, whose names are not mentioned but who offered advice, encouragement, suggestion, and willing help. My thanks to all of them but especially to those Nepalis in outlying villages and towns who were invaluable sources of information and hospitality during my wanderings. Those times were fruitful and their memories pleasant.

Kathmandu
June, 1967
INTRODUCTION

The Kingdom of Nepal lies in South Asia between the east meridians of 80° and 88° and the north parallels of 26° and 30°. Nepal is bordered by India on the west and south, by Sikkim and India to the east, and by Tibet region of China in the north. Its area is 54,362 square miles and the population is 94,12,996. * Nepal embraces a part of the main Himalaya range in the north including Mount Sagarmatha (29,028 feet), the highest mountain in the world, and also a part of the Gangetic plain in the south.

Geographically the country can be divided into four major regions:

(1) The Himalayan highlands with the snow mountains and the glacial valleys;

(2) the lower Himalayan ranges with its green forests and long slopes leading to fertile valleys, such as Kathmandu, Pokhara, and several smaller ones;

(3) the forest areas of the inner Terai, the low river valleys, and the foothills of the Siwalik (Churiya) range—all of them with a very hot and unhealthy malarial climate; and,

(4) the flat and fertile land of the Terai, the north edge of the Gangetic plain.

With a few exceptions the great majority of the Nepali people live in well defined, specific geographic regions. The Tibetan speaking Mongoloid people live in the high Himalaya regions of the north, with an alpine climate at altitudes of between 8,000 and 16,000 feet.

Immediately south of the Himalaya are attractive mountain valleys. This region is inhabited by various Tibeto-Burman and Indo-Aryan speaking hill and valley people. Its altitude is between 3,500 and 7,000 feet above sea level. The climate is cool, temperate to warm-temperate. This is the most densely populated region of the 500 mile east-west stretch of Nepal. Sixty percent of the people live here. To the south of this region the stretch of land which consists of the low river valleys and unhealthy forest belts is inhabited by various indigenous peoples whose

* 1961 Census, HMG.
INTRODUCTION

origins and affinity are quite obscure. Here, as is the case in the high Himalaya, there are fewer inhabitable areas than in the middle ranges. Also lacking is the charm of the mountain surroundings. The altitude is 1,000 to 2,500 feet above sea level.

The fourth and most important geographical region is inhabited by various Indo-Aryan language speaking Mediterranean type people and some indigenous people such as Tharu. This is the most agriculturally productive of all the regions and is therefore called the granary of Nepal. More than thirty-five percent of the people live in this region, which is thirty to fifty miles wide and five hundred miles long. The land is rich in production of rice, corn, wheat, sugarcane, tobacco, jute, pulses, mustard, and a variety of forest products. The climate is tropical savanna, with a summer monsoon.

The people living near the borders of the north and south have easy access to the neighbouring countries for trade and social intercourse. Both of these border areas are within the sphere of influence of the respective neighbouring countries in matters of race, religion, language, culture and economy; whereas, the people living in the middle regions are far removed, and isolated from such outside influence and foreign culture. For this and other reasons the stern nationalists have always come from among the middle hill people. The Nepali language, which is the national language, is mainly spoken and understood in this middle region. Likewise, the energetic middle hill people make some of the best soldiers in the world. They are sought by the British, Indian and Royal Nepal armies. More than ninety percent of the country's administrative officers come from this region. Any knowledge that the outside world—beyond India and Tibet—had about Nepal was about these people. This was partly because of the Gurkha soldiers and partly because the court of Nepal and other offices in Kathmandu have been by tradition staffed by these people.

Owing to the lack of communications among different groups, they remained in their traditional areas, isolated from other groups until quite recently. Every single group spoke a different language or dialect, developed its own marriage and social rules, and became ethnocentric in almost every respect. There was no feeling of being one nationality, one nation.

The only mobility that can be traced within the country is a very slow and restrained migration of the middle range people, and this almost always from the west to the east along the mountains and from the mountain ranges south to the Terai.

When, in 1768, Prithvi Narayan Shah defeated the smaller warring
principalities and brought them together to form one united Nepal, he felt impelled
to say that his hard earned country was a garden for all four Varnas (the classical
division of Hindu society) and thirty-six castes. Certainly, Nepal was united politi-
cally, but much yet remained to be done to unite it socially, culturally, and
economically. The historical situation at that time was not propitious for extend-
ing relations with the outside world. The giant empires were a matter of serious
concern for the freedom-loving people of Nepal. So the subsequent governments
of Nepal felt that they had no other choice than to shut themselves in completely
and close the borders. The isolation was complete with the result that the country
remained one of the most primitive and backward in the world. The art and
culture that flourished in medieval Nepal was confined and frozen for a century
and a half. For this long period the technology of Europe, America, and Japan was
absolutely forbidden. It was only after the close of World War II, when the world
situation had changed, that Nepal was able to uncoil herself, open her borders, and
establish relations with the outside world. The ice has been broken successfully
under the able leadership of His Majesty, King Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev.

A new legal code has been introduced guaranteeing equality to all the people
in the eyes of the law. Much effort is being put into the construction of an
east-west highway, a number of other internal roads, airline routes, tele-
communication links, and postal services throughout the country. Educational
institutions are being provided for all the people. All of this will help to encourage
the change of attitudes, intercommunity marriages, and cultural exchanges to fully
unite the nation.*

Some writers in the past have quite unjustly placed the people of Nepal on
their own theoretical social ladder. In this regard the past governments of Nepal
misled them by creating an unnatural vertical social ladder, framing the legal
code accordingly. The people with so many different origins and cultural back-
grounds cannot possibly be arranged into strict social frameworks. However, the
predominant Hindu caste system tends to pervade the entire Nepali situation.
As a result, the people outside the caste system—i.e. Gurung, Magar, Rai, Limbu,
Tharu, et ce era—are tempted to rank themselves within the traditional Hindu
caste hierarchy, seeking a relatively high position either equal to or just beneath

---

* Then the accounts I have given in the following chapters concerning the peculiarities
of the different groups will be only a record of the past; although, I have used the present tense
in describing life as it is today. In some cases changes are coming more rapidly than readily
imagined. I find certain communities have changed considerably during the period of two or
three years during which I have been writing.
that of the Chhetris.**

The present monograph is an attempt to record some of the existing interesting differences, and similarities, among various groups of people. But I do not claim, by any means, to have done this job completely. To visit so many different groups of people personally and to study them within a very short time was not an easy job for me, nor would it be for any other individual. Although there are a few books that are useful, I have found it necessary to visit all these peoples personally to be able to understand them better. But since I could not spend enough time among each group, there are some peoples whom I know less well than others. I studied some ethnic groups several years ago, while with others I have been working until quite recently. Some societies are changing very quickly, and complete accuracy is difficult.

I thought it would be advisable to balance the size and standardize the nature of the individual chapters even at the expense of more well known and more developed societies such as the Brahmans, Chhetris, and Newars. There are some others about whom I have been able to give only brief descriptions because of my limited knowledge. I feel, therefore, that even after the appearance of this book the remarks of Professor Tucci, the famous Tibetologist and one of the authorities in Nepali history and religion, that "the ethnographical study of Nepal, despite the many researches undertaken, is still one of the most complex in the world,"* will remain as true as ever. It will take many years of continued research in this field before anyone can claim to have complete information about all the peoples of Nepal.

** Chhetris (Kshatriya), the warrior caste, are ranked second to Brahman, the priest caste, in traditional Hindu caste hierarchy.

PART I

MIDDLE HILL AND VALLEY PEOPLE

BRAHMAN, CHHETRI, AND THE OCCUPATIONAL CASTES OF THE HILLS

The Brahman and Chhetri population of Nepal has had more than any other people the dominant role in the formation of the modern Kingdom of Nepal, in the political realm, and in the all-pervading social and religious realms. The Shah Royal Family and their right-hand men have traditionally been drawn from the Thakuri and Chhetri castes beginning with the Gorkha Conquests of 1768. However, effective power became limited in fact to one particular family, the Ranas, who gained absolute control over the administration of the country. The Ranas provided the hereditary prime ministers of the country for just over a century, from A.D. 1847 to 1951. The office of prime minister, as well as all other first-class positions, both in the military and the civil services, was occupied by Rana family members. The majority of the remaining important positions were filled by other Chhetris and Brahmans and a few select Newars. Since the power of administration was restored to the Shah Thakuri throne in 1951, this situation has gradually been changing, although in the Royal Nepal Army the majority of the higher posts are still held by Chhetris.

Brahmans rank highest in the caste hierarchy, but the majority of the powerful and wealthy people of Nepal are Chhetris. Of all the people of Nepal, Brahmans and Chhetris are among the wealthiest and most widely distributed. Nepali, a Sanskritic language, is their mother tongue and has been adopted as the national language. Nepali is also the mother tongue of the small number of occupational castes, the Damai (tailor), Sarki (cobbler), Kami (blacksmith), Sunar (goldsmith), and such others as Sanyeshi and Gharti. The number of occupational-caste people is estimated to be less than ten percent of the total Nepali-speaking population, spread unequally throughout the country. The total number of people speaking Nepali as their mother tongue, then, is close to five million, or about half of Nepal’s entire population.

More than half of all Brahmans and Chhetris live in the western hills, where they form about eighty percent of that area’s total population. In the remainder of the hilly areas they are more or less evenly distributed, being, however, a definite minority in the lowland Terai.
Historical accounts state that the Brahman community came to Nepal from India for the first time during the twelfth century, when they were dislodged during the Moslem invasions. The Brahmans first met the Khas, the predominant race in the hilly regions of Kumaon, Garhwal, and the western districts of Nepal. These Khas were then a very powerful people with a number of Khas principalities still intact until the sixteenth century. The historian of Nepal, Baburam Acharya, says,

At the time when the Lichhvis had established their rule in Nepal, some "Khasas", shepherds of Aryan stock, had settled in Western Nepal and established the independent state of "Kartripur" which consisted of the present western region of Nepal, Kumaon, and Garhwal... Later, the boundary of their state extended to Mustang in the hills as well as to the Terai... Their state survived till the end of the medieval period.*

Although the Khas spoke a language closely allied to Sanskrit and were a people racially akin to the Brahmans, being of the so-called Mediterranean type, they were not considered of the same stock by the orthodox Hindus of the plains. The Manusmriti code of Hindu caste behavior states that they were to be treated as Shudra, low caste, because of their neglect of caste rules. But when they came into contact with the immigrant Brahmans of the plains, the Khas were given the very high Kshatriya (Chhetri) status. Brian Hodgson wrote in the last century,

To the earliest and most distinguished of their converts (Khas) they (the Brahmans) communicated, in defiance of the creed they taught, the lofty rank and the honors of the Kshatriya order.**

The progeny of a Brahman man and a local Khas hill woman became referred to as Khatri. They were also given the status of Chhetri and became popularly called Khatri Chhetri, the term Khatri being a corruption of the Hindu form Kshatriya-Kshatri. "To this progeny also, then," continues Hodgson, the Brahmans, in still greater defiance of their creed, communicated the rank of the second order of Hinduism; and from these two roots (Khas and Khatri), mainly, sprung the now numerous, predominant, and exten-

---


sively ramified, tribe of Khas...now the proud title of Kshatriya, or military order of the Kingdom of Nepal.*

Some Khatri do not call themselves by such, but instead identify themselves only as Chhetri or use only the clan name of their Brahman progenitor, such as Pandey, Adhikari, and others. Some of them were given a name altogether different from that of their Brahman father.**

Brian Hodgson mentions that some people refused to be converted to Hinduism; for example, the Magar clans of Thapa, Rana, and Gharti. Those who refused remained Magars, he implies, while those converted became Thapa Chhetri, Rana Chhetri, et cetera.*** But here, I feel, Hodgson has clearly been misled. There is no evidence to support his implication that Magars were given the status of Chhetris. It is common for similar clan names to occur among various groups of people. Although the Khas are considered to have been converted wholesale to Hinduism, there are some Khas in Sallyan and other adjoining districts of the West who were apparently not given the sacred thread and the status of Chhetri. They are locally known as matwali, "those who drink liquor".

There have been cases in the recent past of some non-Chhetris acquiring Chhetri status through political influence and wearing the sacred thread. In each case they have adopted new Chhetri titles. In the Middle Ages, the Rajput refugees from India were given the name and status of Thakuris, among the highest Chhetris in social and ritual order. Many powerful Rana Chhetris, during their regime prior to 1951, gave the status and title of Chhetri to the relatives of their favoured non-Chhetri wives.

Brahmans and Chhetris were traditionally concentrated in the mid-western parts of Nepal, but at present they are more widely spread throughout the country. Their living conditions and house types vary greatly according to the area. They have always tried to impose their allegedly superior cultural and religious practices on whichever ethnic group they came to live in proximity with, but in fact it is obvious that these Brahmans and Chhetris have been influenced in turn by their neighbours.

In the hills, the average Brahmans and Chhetris live in small, sturdy, two storey stone or mud-brick houses roofed with thatch. Village houses are usually loosely scattered along hill slopes, hilltops, in flat valleys, or along ledges, as the

* Ibid., p. 142.

** "Thapa Vamshavali" (Genealogy of Thapa), Itihas Prakash (History Publication,) No. 1. Ed. Yogi Narahari Nath, (Kathmandu, 1955), pp. 119-120.

case may be. In most parts of the country the Brahman and Chhetri houses are washed with red ochre or whitewashed. The inside walls are usually whitewashed and the floors are always cleaned with a fresh, wet mixture of cowdung and mud.

The main occupations of Brahmans and Chhetris are farming and government service. Brahmans also act as family priests. All are Hindu by birth and forever. Besides farming, Chhetri and Thakuri men traditionally join the military services and are renowned for being among the best soldiers in the world. Like all other people involved in agriculture, Chhetris living in rural areas are idle for at least three months of the year. The fortunate ones among them are rich landlords, moneylenders, senior officers in the army, political leaders, and the like, but the great majority are just average farmers.

Brahmans are of two different types: Purbiya (eastern) and Kumain. The name Kumain is derived from one of the districts of northern India’s Uttar Pradesh State, to the west of Nepal. These two types of Brahman must have migrated from India at different periods to different points in Nepal. It is interesting to note that each of these groups considers itself purer and higher than the other.

The Jaishi issues of irregular unions of Brahman men and women are not allowed to act as priests. They are mainly peasant farmers. The number of Jaishi seems to be quite considerable although there is no way of determining it exactly. The progeny of a mixed marriage between a Brahman man and a Thakuri woman is known as Hamal Thakuri and is accepted within the Thakuri caste circle.

As some social stigma is attached to an unorthodox union and to marriages between unequal castes, the designations Jaishi or Khatri, being the results of such irregularities, are not owned with pride. These people would rather identify themselves with the clan name of their father.

Some of the Brahman and Chhetri clan names are as follow in alphabetical order:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kumain Brahman</th>
<th>Purbiya Brahman</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bhatta</td>
<td>Bhatta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bista</td>
<td>Bista</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dotel</td>
<td>Dotel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joshi</td>
<td>Joshi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kadariya</td>
<td>Kadariya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khatriwada</td>
<td>Khatriwada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lohini</td>
<td>Lohini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paitola</td>
<td>Paitola</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pandey</td>
<td>Pandey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paneru</td>
<td>Paneru</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pant</td>
<td>Pant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soti</td>
<td>Soti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acharya</td>
<td>Acharya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adhikari</td>
<td>Adhikari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aryal</td>
<td>Aryal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baral</td>
<td>Baral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baskota</td>
<td>Baskota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bastola</td>
<td>Bastola</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basyal</td>
<td>Basyal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhandari</td>
<td>Bhandari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhatta</td>
<td>Bhatta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhattacharai</td>
<td>Bhattacharai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamlangain</td>
<td>Chamlangain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapagain</td>
<td>Chapagain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dahal</td>
<td>Dahal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devkota</td>
<td>Devkota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhakal</td>
<td>Dhakal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhitai</td>
<td>Dhitai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhungel</td>
<td>Dhungel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gartola</td>
<td>Gartola</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghimire</td>
<td>Ghimire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gotame</td>
<td>Gotame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guragain</td>
<td>Guragain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeagain</td>
<td>Homeagain</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Continued)
Some Brahman and Chhetri individuals, when they are frustrated and tired of their domestic lives, renounce the worldly life and become sadhu mendicants, wearing only safron robes, living upon alms and charity, and spending their days primarily in meditation and recitation. But in this process some take a wife, or female sadhus a husband, and produce children. These children, since their progenitors have renounced their caste status, cannot claim caste or go back to caste society. Such people are called Sanyeshi. There are many Sanyeshis. They can take up any profession they want to follow, but many become temple priests and manager-treasurers of Mahadev (Shiva) temple endowments. Sanyeshi have various family names: Giri, Puri, Bharati, Saraswoti, Aranyak, Ban, and Parvat.

The occupational castes of the hills also have subdivisions. For example, the Kami (blacksmiths) include: Sinchokre, Langmote, Lama, Banth, Gharti, Ghimire, Paret, and Gadel. The exact origin of these occupational castes is obscure, as is that of their counterparts among Newars.

Marriage among Brahmans and Chhetris is, as a rule, monogamous, yet polygyny is very frequently found. In fact, men take pride in having more than one wife. Some of the middle class landowners have as many as five or six wives at a time, while many of the rich and powerful Ranas have had several dozen wives and concubines. In such cases they do not always stick to the rules of caste endogamy. Polygynous Brahman or Chhetri men have taken wives from almost every ethnic community, that is, from the Gurung, Magar, Tamang, Sherpa, Newar, and other groups.

Brahmans and Chhetris, with the exception of Thakuris, do not practise...
cross-cousin marriage. Thakuris have a system of marrying maternal cross-cousins, that is, a boy can marry his mother’s brother’s daughter, but they do not condone paternal cross-cousin marriage to one’s father’s sister’s daughter. Rana Chhetris have adopted the Thakuri custom of marrying maternal cross-cousins, but no other Chhetris or Brahmans have followed the practice. The restriction on marrying one’s own father’s sister’s daughter is consistent with the system of worshipping and entertaining one’s daughter, sister, and sister’s daughter. If a girl is married back into her mother’s parental family the whole code of behavior, rituals, and relationship terms will have to be altered, a process which is not possible in a society where relationship and kinship play such an important part in the everyday life of the individual. A daughter-in-law has a completely different status in her husband’s house than in her parents’ house. A total change in her way of life occurs from the day she gets married.

Most Brahman girls are married at the early age of ten or eleven, while most Chhetri girls are married only when they are fully grown. Tradition maintains that the sixth year is the most holy age for a Brahman girl’s marriage and her parents achieve the greatest amount of punya, “merit”, if they give her in marriage then. Punya is so important that sometimes a rich Chhetri couple will “adopt” a Brahman girl of the age of eight or ten, never older than eleven years, to give her away to a Brahman boy in marriage simply with the intention of accumulating punya. This acquisition of punya is believed to help the couple have a son, to win prosperity, and eventually to reach swarga, “heaven”, when they die.

Marriage is the concern of the father both for a girl and for a boy. But in fact it weighs more heavily upon the girl’s father, the reason being that any lapse on the part of the girl in sexual morality is never tolerated; it brings great disrepute to her father. Similar misconduct in a boy is more or less ignored and there is no loss of face for his father. It is more difficult to seek a match for an older girl than for a girl of twelve or thirteen. This rule however, no longer applies to educated urban dwellers. In the rural districts the position of a boy becomes questionable if he has remained unmarried until his middle twenties. But today Brahman and Chhetri families of good standing and education do not follow the traditional rules of early marriage. It is common among the peasant class only.

Generally, for marriage negotiations, a relative acts as the middleman. Since village exogamy is observed, it usually involves a good deal of running back and forth for the middleman, who is known as lami, until the transaction is completed. The practice of comparing names by an astrologer, to see whether the proposed couple will make a good match, still remains but it is done only in a perfunctory
Chhetris keep wayside shops in far West Nepal

Dor Bahé
Damais play long horn pipes at a wedding
Chhetris of the far West

Royal throne at Hanuman Dhoka
manner. Once it is found by the astrologer that the two people are a good match it is the job of the priest of the boy's family to discover an auspicious date, based on the lunar calendar best suited for the boy. There is usually a set of specific dates for weddings given in the calendar, and it remains for one to be chosen.

There are two important considerations taken into account in deciding wedding days. First of all, it can take place only in the months of baisakh-jest (mid-May to mid-July), mangsir (mid-November to mid-December), magh, and phagun (mid-January to mid-March). Secondly, the planet Venus must be visible in the sky. For a modern and unorthodox marriage neither of these things is taken seriously into account.

Once the date is fixed by the groom’s party, the bride’s parents are informed. On the prescribed date, the groom goes out in a procession formed by his relations and friends. The number of people invited to take part in the procession varies according to the economic and social status of the groom’s father. There are fifty to sixty people in the case of an ordinary peasant, four to five hundred in the case of rich farmers or other middle class people, and in the case of the affluent Ranas they used to be several thousands, including a detachment of the Royal Nepal Army. The wedding party, the janti, consists only of men except for one or two maid servants who are there as personal attendants to the bride and the groom. The whole janti party is preceded by a musical band, and is received with great respect and enthusiasm by the bride’s people at her home. They are entertained with a feast before the actual wedding ceremony takes place.

There is one ceremonial rite to be completed preceding the final wedding rite. This is called svayamvar, literally meaning “choosing one’s own husband”; and the bride and groom exchange garlands of flowers and gold engagement rings. Svayamvar may be conducted either on the wedding day soon after the boy’s party arrives at the house of the bride, or a few days prior to the actual wedding day.

The entire wedding ceremony lasts for about twenty-four hours from the time the janti arrives late in the afternoon until roughly the same time the next afternoon, when the bride’s people send her off with the groom’s party. The most important part of the entire wedding ceremony is kanyadan, when the parents of the bride make a gift of her to the groom. This must take place at the exact auspicious moment determined by the priest, the moment when the hands of the bride are put into the cupped hands of the groom. She has then been given to him. After this the parents are relieved of the most important of their obligations. They can break the fast which they have been observing for the last twenty-four
hours in order to keep them pure and clean for performing the pious act of kanyadan.

The young daughter is considered a sacred object, more so even than the sacred cow, and she therefore brings much punya to her parents. Just prior to the kanyadan moment the bride and groom are seated on a bed which is provided by the girl’s parents as a gift to the new couple. While sitting there the bride and groom hang their legs into a copper vessel, or in the case of the Ranas and the Royal Family, a silver vessel. The parents of the girl wash the feet of both the bride and groom. The girl’s nearest relatives are also expected to wash her feet. For this purpose they need a small bowl, cup, or silver spoon which they bring with them as a present to the bride. Although not many people do the actual washing of the feet nowadays, the present they bring for the bride is nonetheless called gor dhuwa, “foot-washer”. The footwashing ritual is accompanied by the recitation of Vedic lore by the Brahman priest of the bride’s parents’ family.

Kanyadan follows immediately; the groom receives his bride as a gift, and whatever dowry the parents are giving for the purpose of prestige is given at this time. The groom also hands over his presents, mainly of clothing and ornaments, to the bride. When the foot-washing and kanyadan are completed, the bride is taken into her room and changed into the clothes brought as presents from the groom, and she is beautifully made up with cosmetics and decorated with ornaments and tika also brought by the groom. When she is thus dressed, she is carried outside the house into the courtyard where a sacrificial fire is burning. All sorts of offerings of food for the sacrifices and other articles of various ritual performances are in readiness. There is also a place prepared for the bride and the groom to sit on one side of the quadrangle that encloses the ritual articles, the altar, and the central sacrificial fire. The bride and groom spend several hours in the courtyard performing rituals of various descriptions, sometimes going around the quadrangle, and sometimes worshipping and making offerings to various deities—Ganesh and the gods of fire, sky, wind, earth, and water.

Another ritual performed at this time is the putting of vermillion powder on the forehead of the bride by the groom. Vermilion in a woman’s hair is a sign of marriage; she is theoretically required to re-apply it daily with powder mixed in with the original powder presented at the wedding as long as her husband is alive.

In the meanwhile, the guests from both sides surround the place and watch the ceremony, exchanging jokes and pleasantries amidst big bursts of laughter. The jokes sometimes lead to misunderstandings, and in a few instances in the rural areas they may even cause an open fight.
A Kami (blacksmith caste) smiles for an extra rupee bonus for his work in a Chhetri village.
Brahmans and Chhetris look upon marriage from a totally different angle than that of any other ethnic community in Nepal. It is not a mere biological, social, or economic need, but more of a spiritual obligation. The learned Brahman or other knowledgeable person tells his young folk that a husband and wife do not come together by mere chance, accident, or even arrangement, but that they have been destined to live together as husband and wife from their previous lives. This is the idea which discourages divorce among them. Then, of course, prestige is involved also in the question of divorce, and as a result there are very few divorce cases, although there is provision for it in the legal code. People either put up with whatever luck they may have been favoured in spite of their unpleasant or dull lives, or if they are rich and can afford to live separately they will live apart so far as their daily lives are concerned, remaining husband and wife only in name.

A man fulfils the most important of his duties by bringing home a wife and by begetting at least one son. By having a son he ensures a safe passage over various obstacles which he will have to cross before he reaches swarga, "heaven" or the "land of the souls", after death.

A woman acquires her proper caste status only after her marriage. An unmarried girl cannot offer certain kinds of food cooked by herself to her parents. The girl's parents not only accumulate punya by making gift of their daughter to a boy of suitable background, but also clear their passage to the next life by discharging the burdensome obligation of giving her away. Because a daughter is often described as one held in custody for another, the parents feel relieved only when she is collected by the rightful person. Giving away their daughter by no means terminates the social obligations of the girl's parents toward her. A daughter is not entitled to a share in the property of her parents as are all her brothers, but she must be invited with her husband and children to all family festivals and ceremonies. It is not enough merely to invite them; one must also provide the best food one can afford and give presents of money and other things when they go back home. The obligation of entertaining the daughter with her husband and children is passed on to the son when a man dies.

Among the occupational castes, marriage customs are a simplified version of the Brahman and Chhetri type. These lower castes drink large quantities of liquor and create a much more informal wedding atmosphere.

Once a new bride is taken home she is more under the command of her mother-in-law than of her husband. This usually continues for several years until she has a child or succeeds in winning her husband to her side away from his parents. This happens easily among the peasant class Brahmans and Chhetris, whereas
middle-class families consider it highly improper for a newly married couple to separate from their parents. After a girl has children she gradually feels more and more secure and at home.

The new bride has a very hard time in her husband’s house. Only for the first few days after marriage is she indulged because of other people’s curiosity. Soon after that she has to work very hard to win the confidence not only of her husband but of all other members of her husband’s family—the father, mother, and the wives of her husband’s brothers, if there are any, before she can establish herself in the household.

Some Chhetris in the far western districts of Doti, Dadeldhura, and in the surrounding areas never eat the rice cooked by their wives. The women are given only menial work to do. In parts of Dadeldhura, Doti, and Baitadi the Chhetris and Brahmans also take a bride price for a daughter from her would-be husband. The payment varies from one hundred to six or seven hundred rupees.

Among certain of these people, who indeed wear the sacred thread and claim the status of Chhetris, there is a practice of selling their daughters to rich Thakuris or Brahmans, who dedicate the girls they buy in the name of certain deities. According to local tradition these girls, when they become mature, can cohabit with any man they want and become prostitutes, but it is irreligious for them to marry a man. As a result they produce children who do not have an officially recognized father. Such men are called devko and women, devki or dev dashi, which means “attendant of a deity”. These women, of course, perpetuate the trade and custom by remaining “single” all their lives.

All Brahmans and Chhetris and the occupational castes are Hindus and as such they follow all the religious practices and observe the religious festivals of Hinduism. They worship Shiva, Vishnu, Rama, Krishna, and thousands of other deities of the Hindu pantheon.

They worship gods and goddesses on a number of religious festivals. Most important of them is dashain or durga puja, observed for a whole fortnight in October. During this period they worship the goddess Durga (Kali) and indulge in feasting and merrymaking. On the tenth day of the fortnight they have a tika festival. For this occasion each individual male or female has to pay respect to his or her senior relative, who reciprocates by putting a coloured tika mark on the forehead of the junior person. This is done inside the immediate family and outside of it within the extended kin group and other relatives.

Tihar is another big festival, which falls a fortnight after the last day of dashain. Tihar is also known as dipavali, “festival of lights”, since every family puts dozens
of lamps on the outside of the house for the last three of the five days of the festival. They worship various deities on different days and offer food and decorate and worship one per day a crow, a dog, a cow, a bull, and Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth. On the last day all the women worship and offer gifts of food to their brothers. This is bhai tika, and such worshipping and blessing of brothers by sisters is believed to protect them against evils.

In addition to the above mentioned festivals there are a number of other occasions when Hindus worship one or another god and have feasts. On most of these occasions except tihar, they need a Brahman priest to conduct the puja ceremonies. The Brahman priests have occasions to read excerpts from the holy Vedic text for the general welfare of their jajman, “clients”. The Brahmans also recite the puranas, “epics”, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata in Sanskrit and translate them orally into Nepali for the benefit of their jajman.

Brahman families appoint some other Brahman as their priest. Most of the Brahmans living in rural areas appoint their sister’s son, father’s sister’s son, or daughter’s son as priest.

Besides the regular festivals at home or in the village, the individual families also visit local temples and shrines of which there are many, and also make pilgrimage to rather distant temples. The farther away the temples or shrines, the more important and significant are they. Many Nepalis place a very high priority on pilgrimages to the temples of Vishwonath (Shiva, in Benaras), and to char dham, the “four places” of pilgrimage. The char dham are located at the four corners of India, namely, Jagannath at Puri, Ramesworam in Madras State, Dwarkanath in Gujarat, and Badrinath in Himachal. An equally important and holy quest of Hindu pilgrims is Pashupatinath in Kathmandu.

Brahmans and Chhetris always cremate their dead by the side of a river. A small piece of bone is preserved at the last while the rest is burnt down into ashes and thrown into the river. The preserved piece of bone, asthi, is taken into the middle of the river and buried there, or, if the family can afford to do so, it is taken to Benaras in India and cast into the Holy Ganges.

Mourning for a death is observed for thirteen days by all the surviving family members and other near relations; distant relations observe it only for a day by bathing and fasting. Those who mourn for thirteen days abstain from eating salt, oil, meat, pulses, and a number of other things. The men shave their heads, abstain from wearing the red tika mark on their foreheads, and attend no ceremony of songs or dancing. They also observe ritual pollution during the period; they may
not offer food or even water to a person who is not in mourning, nor can they go to a temple or make offerings to a god.

The son of a dead person has to restrict himself to a number of austerities during the period of the thirteen days' mourning. He must shave all the hair from his body, wear only a white loincloth called lagauti, and a small scarf tied about his head. He must wear nothing more than these two small pieces of white cloth. He eats only one meal a day consisting of boiled rice, ghee, and sugar. Besides this, he has to conduct a ritual under the guidance of a Brahman priest that takes several hours daily for thirteen days and requires bathing several times in cold water during the ritual performance. This whole funeral activity is called kriya, and at the end a big feast is given to the relatives, neighbors, and particularly to all those who participated in the funeral procession and went to the cremation ghat. Food, clothing, furniture, pots, pans, and such other things considered necessary for the decedent in the next life are all given as gifts to the officiating Brahman priest.

At the conclusion of the funeral ceremony the survivors have the obligation of performing an annual shraddha ceremony in the name of the dead. Shraddha is also a ritual conducted by the decedent's son or husband and officiated at by a hired Brahman priest. It is followed by a small feast. A close male relative or a Brahman performs the ceremony in the absence of a son.

The occupational and artisan caste people cannot employ a Brahman priest for their funeral ceremonies but use instead the sister's son or daughter's husband to act the part. This person does not read from a text, but merely guides the funeral process.

There are several important ceremonies and observances of life to note. A woman has to observe pollution for the first four days during her monthly course. She is treated as untouchable during this period, at the end of which time she must wash herself and all the clothes she has used during the period before she may touch anybody. A mother and her newborn child are considered untouchable until the eleventh day at which time a purifying ceremony and the name giving ceremony are conducted. An appropriate name for the new born baby is determined by an astrologer following the positions of the stars at the exact moment of birth. It is very important that the moment of birth should be recorded carefully, although in fact most people living in the countryside can only give an approximate hour of the day.

It is important that the father of the baby be present at nwaran, the name giving ceremony. This is much more important in case of an unmarried girl giving birth to a baby, since the occasion is for the official declaration of the biolo-
gical as well as the social fatherhood of the man. However, babies born in proper wedlock have no problems even if the father cannot be present for the occasion since the case is obvious; any near collateral cousin or a real brother of the baby’s father can act in his stead for the ceremony. But failure to bring a father for a baby born outside of wedlock, or in a doubtful case of a married woman, leads her and the baby automatically into the status of untouchability.

The next ceremony for the child follows about five or six months after nwaran. It is the weaning ceremony, called pasni. Various kinds of food and other things are prepared for the occasion. All the relatives of both the father and the mother of the baby are invited and they give food and other presents to the child. Normally a girl is weaned when she is five months old, whereas a baby boy is weaned only in the seventh month.

When a boy is five or seven years old he takes part in a ceremony called chudakarma or kshyaur. His head is shaved, leaving only a small tuft of hair at the back of the head called a tupi, “top-knot”. This top-knot indicates that he is Hindu. Only the brother of the boy’s mother can officiate at this ceremony. If there is no real brother, a cousin can be brought in.

One more important formal ceremony before marriage in the case of a boy is the bratabandha, also called upanayana sanskar, performed when he receives the sacred thread. Brahman boys are given the sacred thread when they are seven or nine years old, while Chhetri boys usually receive their thread at the age of thirteen or fifteen or even later. With the wearing of the sacred thread the child takes on several new caste responsibilities. For instance, he is now eligible to eat in company with his seniors, whereas as a child he had to eat separately.

Girls have no ceremony to undergo after pasni and before marriage. However, at the age of nine, ten, or eleven some people give their daughters a full set of adult clothes, that is, a sari, and a blouse. The girl is then free to wear the sari and blouse if she chooses. In rural areas, girls of eleven or twelve do wear women’s dress, but few urban girls wear it until they are at least sixteen or seventeen years old.

When a girl attains puberty and has her first menstruation, she is taken to another house where she is confined for a fortnight, during which period she cannot see or be seen by any of her brothers, father, father’s brothers, or male cousins. She must not touch water or food not meant for her, and for a whole fortnight she is treated as untouchable even by other women. She has to repeat this for seven days during her second mense and only for four days each subsequent period except that she need not hide from her brothers and cousins after the second time. She must at all costs avoid touching even her own son during her period if he has
received his sacred thread. This custom is disappearing among the modern, educated urban girls.

A son is very important for any Brahman or Chhetri not only economically and socially but he is desired even from the point of view of his parents' next lives after death. In marriage a man and wife fulfil not only their economic, social, and biological needs, and the obligations of the previous life, but they create something in store for the next. In like manner, a son is not only important as an insurance for the parents in their old age, but he is also necessary for conducting their funeral rites, important for taking the deceased across the land of *preta*, the "spirit of the dead", to *swarga*, "heaven"—or to *narka* "hell", as the case may be. Without the funeral rites the decedent is condemned to hover around in mid-air in the form of an evil spirit which causes trouble for the surviving folk. A son, therefore, is highly gratifying merely because he is a son.
NEWAR

The Newar people are the indigenous inhabitants of the valley of Kathmandu. They are the people seen in the greatest numbers in the capital city, and they are found in great numbers in every market town and village in the outlying districts, the hills and the Terai. They are the small shop keepers, the big businessmen, importers, exporters, taxi drivers, farmers, craftsmen, and so on. Among them you will find artisans and caste groups ranging from the lowest to the highest, sweeper to priest, both Buddhist and Hindu. They are a unique and interesting people, and one of the oldest known groups in Nepal.

Many scholars, foreign and Nepali, have studied the Newars, and much has been published concerning them. It is natural, therefore, for most people who have any knowledge of Nepal to have heard or read of the Newars. The term Newar itself was derived from the name of the country, or vice versa. *Nava* means lowered, or valley. When we refer to Nepal in association with just the Newar people we usually mean only the Nepal Valley, Kathmandu Valley.

At present the term, "Newar", describes a fairly complex group of people. It is not really fair to discuss them under just one title, as has been done with every other group in these pages, but for brevity and uniformity Newars must be treated as one subject here. After all, their's is a cultural entity, although it is not one single ethnic group in the sense that Gurungs, Magars, or Tamangs are for example. In fact, the Newars were a "nation" apart, subjugated and over-shadowed during the eighteenth century by a large and powerful group that came from outside Kathmandu Valley. These intruders, the Shahs of Gorkha and other Chhetris and Brahmans, dominated the valley in short order and set about to unify the country politically, while the Newars underwent a significant process of change.

Today the term Newar embraces people of both Mongoloid and Mediterranean physical types who speak both Nepal; an Indo-Aryan language, and Newari, a Tibeto-Burman language which includes some half a dozen dialects.

Because of the complexities in the composition of Newar society, scholars in the past have developed various and interesting theories about their origins. The Newari language, although greatly influenced by Sanskrit, is still distinctly a Tibeto-Burman tongue. Although it uses Dev Nagri script today it does have its own script as well. Sylvain Levi has forwarded the theory that Newars migrated
to Nepal from "regions north of the Himalayas".\textsuperscript{*} Some other scholars\textsuperscript{**} suggest that the Newars may have originated in South India, with ties or distinct similarities to a Hindu community on the Malabar coast called the Nair, or Nayar. This theory was probably based on mere phonetic similarity of the terms that describe them and on one or two other coincidences of customs. Not believing either of these theories complete, Christoph von Führer-Haimendorf believes that "the bulk of the Newar people had been settled in the Nepal Valley since prehistoric times."\textsuperscript{***} Dilli Raman Regmi, however, speculates that the early Newars may have an ancestry connected both with the Kiranti and the Lichhavis, one-time rulers of the Nepal Valley.\textsuperscript{****}

During the course of history, a considerable amount of cultural influence has been exerted on the Newar culture by various immigrant groups, both of Tibetan and Indian origin. These immigrants were ultimately absorbed into the Newar community. Of all the peoples who migrated to the Nepal Valley, the Malla Kshatriyas of India were the most distinctive. They ruled from the thirteenth to the eighteenth century, when they were finally replaced by the Shah Kings. The Mallas brought with them the influence of a Hindu socio-religious base. They introduced the caste system after the fashion of the Indian Hindu caste hierarchy followed by the vast majority of Indian immigrants to Nepal (the Brahmans), to an otherwise non-caste country.

Today, the bulk of the Newar population is concentrated inside the Valley in the large cities of Kathmandu, Patan, Bhadgaun, Kirtipur, and half a dozen smaller towns. In addition, a fair number of Newars have settled in villages and markets outside Kathmandu Valley during the course of the last two centuries.

The Newars total nearly 400,000 people, of which fifty-five percent are living in Kathmandu Valley. The rest are spread almost equally through the eastern and western hills and related Terai plains. In their movement away from the Valley some Newars, unlike other peoples of Nepal, have made an exception to an otherwise general rule of migrating eastward; they have settled in the western towns of Pokhara, Tansen, and Butwal, and even in the far western Silgarhi Doti. The differences in migration trends is found in specialization of professions. Newars

---


\textsuperscript{**}Dr. Gopal Singh Nepali, \textit{The Neawrs} (Bombay, 1965), pp. 28-29.

\textsuperscript{***}Führer-Haimendorf, \textit{op. cit.}

\textsuperscript{****}Regmi, D. R., \textit{Ancient and Medieval Nepal} (Kathmandu, 1952).
A hill Newar
Masked dancer (Lakhé)  

Ganeshman Chitrakar

Kathmandu street  

Ganeshman Ch

Machhendranath festival  

Ganeshman Ch

←Bhairav in Kathmandu  

Ganeshman Chitrakar
Durbar square, Patan
Bronze statue of Kumari, the Living Goddess

Kumari, the Living Goddess

Bronze statue of Vasundhara

Ganeshman Chitrakar
have always travelled for trade and business, while all other groups, Thakalis excepted, migrate in search of land for farming or for other employment. There have been very few Newars living in these outlying districts who have taken to agriculture as their sole occupation, whereas, in Kathmandu Valley great numbers of Newars are strictly farmers.

Newar housetypes in the outlying districts are basically the same as in Kathmandu Valley. Houses are built closely together and line the cobbled streets and alleys. The standard house has several storeys, many and large framed doors and windows, and often a verandah overlooking the street below. Roofs are almost always of tile or slate, with only the few very poorest Newars in the villages using thatch roofing.

Subdivisions within Newar society are at the same time unique and involving. One's religion is either Hindu or Buddhist, and furthermore, one belongs to a particular subgroup which is ranked in order by the rules of the Hindu caste hierarchy. For reference in the ensuing discussion the following diagram outlines the Newar caste system.*

---

**BUDDHIST**

1. Guvaju
2. Bare
3. Sheshyo (Shrestha)***
   Urhae
   Haluwai
   Jyapu
   Chhipa (Ranjitkar), Saemi (Manandhar), Kau (Nakarmi), Pu (Chitrakar), Gathu (Malakar), Nau (Napit), Dui, Bauh.
   Nae
   Pore, Chamyo, Kulu

**HINDU**

1. Deo Brahman (Deo Bhaju)
2. Jha
3. Sheshyo (Shrestha)
   Jogi****

---

*After the pattern of Christoph von Führer-Haimendorf, *op. cit.*

**Number 1, 2 and 3, under both Buddhist and Hindu, fall hierarchically in that order. All others listed have a rather nebulous hierarchy except in the case of those names in a single line which are relatively equal to one another in ritual status.

***All names indicated in parentheses represent common usage.

****The Hindu Jogi caste is on a par in status with the Buddhist Nae caste.
Scholars believe that the Newars were predominantly Buddhist in the early period. Later, the Brahman and Rajput immigrants from India brought Hinduism. From the thirteenth century onwards political power came into the hands of the Malla Kings, high caste Hindus, concurrently with the gradual degeneration of Buddhism, which in time incorporated the rigid caste formula. However, the two religious groups have never antagonized each other to any obvious extent; only mutual integration has taken place.

The Guvaju are traditionally Buddhist priests, but a majority of them work as masons, carpenters, wood carvers, ivory workers, painters, goldsmiths, silversmiths, brass-smiths, and bronzesmiths. The Bare caste, second in ritual status among Buddhist Newars, are also the artisans, as listed here. These Guvaju, Bare, and other Newar artisans developed the unique architectural monuments, various domestic arts and an urban civilisation, a heritage which contemporary Nepalis are proud to claim.

The Urhae, and Sheshyo—or commonly, hereafter, Shrestha—of either religious group are traditionally businessmen and shop-keepers. In the rural areas of Kathmandu Valley and throughout the hill districts, many Shresthas have settled as farmers. In the markets and cities they, and the Urhaes, work as civil servants or other un-skilled professional workers.

Within the Shrestha community there are three hierarchically ranked groups, which describe themselves as chha-thari, panch-thari and char-thari, literally "six-", "five-" and "four-grade" Shresthas. The chha-thari are the highest class among them and in fact consider themselves above almost all Newars. They may not call themselves as Shrestha, but use their family names, for example Pradhan, Malla, Pradhananga, Munshi, Joshi, Rajbhandari, and so on. Some people believe that chha-thari is not the correct word to describe them. The term appears to be a corruption of the Nepali word Chhetri which immediately brings to mind another element of status classification. The chha-thari Shresthas do follow many a tradition very similar to that of the Chhetris.

Haluwais keep confectionery shops and make sweetmeats and delicacies to sell daily and on the occasion of feasts and festivals.

Jyapus are the farmers of the community whose grain and vegetable produce is seen in the market places. They use an improved hoe for field work and never use bullocks as is most generally done in the hill and Terai regions. For carrying loads, they use a yoke balanced across the shoulders, slung with two baskets. Jyapus also run domestic errands for wages for other caste people, but culturally and religiously they are heavily interdependent with the Guvaju, Bare, and Urhae.
Some among them are called Kumhales and are almost exclusively potters by trade.

Here, in short, are the skilled labourer castes who work to make the Newar community run smoothly: the Chhipa are colour dyers; Saemi run the oil presses; Kau are blacksmiths; Pu are painters and printers; Mali work as gardeners and florists, and also play an important role in the ritual life of the temples by performing as the masked and costumed dancers in the ritual performances; Nau are barbers and nail cutters, but they leave the toe nails of a person beneath the Jyapu in caste to the Nae caste of butchers. Dui are poor agricultural labourers, often called upon to porter loads as well, and are also masked performers in religious dances. Bauh have the specific role of pipers during funeral processions. Nae are butchers; Pore are sweepers and the keepers of the temples of Tantric deities; Chame are scavengers; and Kulu make drums. These latter three—Pore, Chame and Kulu, are considered the lowest of the Newar caste hierarchy.

First among Hindus are the priestly Deo Brahmans. The Jha, sometimes called Jha Brahman, recite religious texts and take roles as lawyers, pleaders and advocates. These Jha Brahmans were of a sort adopted into the Newar community several centuries ago after migrating up from India, but they still maintain contact with their original community in Tirhut, Darbhanga in Bihar State. Other Newars do not consider them Newar.

The Shrestha Hindus have virtually the same standing socially, ritually and economically as their Buddhist counterparts. One notable difference is that traditionally only Hindu Shresthas left Kathmandu Valley to establish business and trade in the farther removed localities.

The low caste Jogis are tailors and play musical instruments on special occasions, notably at weddings of those caste people listed above them. They are the only skilled labourers among the Hindu hierarchy, all other artisans being Buddhist.

Marriage customs among Newars are as interesting and often as involving as the social-religious organization. During certain months of the year the wedding bands of a Newar marriage can be heard and seen parading through the streets and alleyways during the night, and the festivities at Newar homes always draw inquisitive crowds.

Marriage is as a rule patrilocal and monogamous. The parents arrange marriages for their sons and daughters; although, with the process of modernization of Nepali society, the number of young people who chose their own partners is increasing. The marriage partners must belong to different descent
groups but within the same caste group. Among the Shresthas, since they are divided into the three grades discussed earlier, one's marriage partner must be from the same grade as well. Buddhist Newars living in a baha, a residential quadrangle around a central court with Buddhist shrines and temples, believe in common descent, and intermarriage therein is a taboo. In some areas the rule of "seven generations" of descent is also observed; members who fall within the common descent group of seven generations are restricted from intermarriage.

Unlike Brahmans and Chhetris, Newars—and especially Buddhist Newars—do not consider marriage as a particularly sacred or an unbreakable union or relationship. It is looked upon from a matter-of-fact point of view. Divorce is not subject to much criticism; but some Hindu Newars tend to follow the attitudes of Brahmans and Chhetris and avoid divorce.

A majority of Newars observe the symbolical arranged marriage of their daughters with a bel fruit before she ever marries a man. The bel fruit marriage is done when the girl is seven to nine years old, or before she attains puberty, and since it is the general belief of Hindu and Buddhist Newar communities that a proper marriage with full rites can be held only once in a lifetime, her subsequent marriages, if any, are considered of only secondary importance. Although the Newar girl later marries a boy with almost the full ritual, the girl retains her marital status with the bel fruit. So a woman, if she wishes, can at least theoretically break her marriage with her husband by giving the gift of areca nuts she received during the wedding back to him or by putting those areca nuts beside the dead body of her husband in the event of his death. The wife, by this act, becomes free to enter into another marriage union and also escapes the obligation of mourning for the death of her husband.

The Newar marriage is completed by several stages of formalities. At first the father of the boy locates the girl whom he considers to be a suitable bride for his son. Then he appoints one of his relatives as a mediator to carry on the negotiations back and forth. Meanwhile, the horoscopes of both the boy and the girl are analysed by an astrologer who determines whether the two will make a good match. Once agreed that the horoscopes are compatible, several presentations of small gifts of food, sweets, areca nuts, and fruits are sent to the girl's parents by the boy's parents. The wedding ceremonies follow.

The noted Newari scholar Purna Harsha Bajracharya says that on the day before the marriage ceremony a pathi, or about one gallon, of milk with some molasses and cardamon is sent to the girl's home. This ceremony, called duradai, is a symbolical act of repayment to the girl's mother for suckling her. The follow-
ing evening, her parents give a feast to their relatives and friends. The invitees bring their gifts for the girl, usually brass and copper bowls and silver plates and spoons. The maternal uncle of the girl usually brings a goat. Her mother gives a box for keeping vermillion powder, and her father gives a bronze mirror.

On this same wedding evening a procession is organized at the house of the boy. The party consists mostly of male relatives and friends of the family numbering a hundred or more depending upon the status of the family. After having been entertained with sweets, dried fruits, betel nuts and cigarettes, they leave for the girl’s house preceded by a musical band. Except in a very few cases among the chha-thari Shresthas, the groom stays behind at his own house. The procession usually arrives at the girl’s house between nine and ten o’clock at night. They are entertained again with sweets and nuts, after which all but the groom’s father and a few close relatives return to their own house. After midnight the girl is carried in a hammock slung on a long pole to another house of a friend of the boy’s father who accompanies her or the bride may be taken directly to the groom’s parents’ house.

Early the next morning the bride is taken to the groom’s house and welcomed at the gate by her mother-in-law. The bridegroom’s mother bathes the bride’s feet with holy water, gives her a key, and takes her into the house. Inside, a priest completes the ritual invoking and offering foods to various deities. At the end, the bride distributes areca nuts to all members of the family including the groom. This day’s ceremony is completed as the bride and groom eat ritual food from the same plate.

In the evening a big feast is provided to friends and relatives, at which a son-in-law of the bridegroom’s family serves curds, the bride-groom’s mother serves wine, and the groom serves sweets.

The following day the bride is formally received into the family kitchen where they all eat boiled rice and other food. The day after that the bride is taken to the family deity where the family priest conducts a ceremony wherein the groom combs the hair of his bride, puts medicated oils in her hair, and applies the vermillion to her forehead. This evening the bride’s father, accompanied by a few near relatives, comes to fetch her back to his house where he is offered fruits, nuts, and liquor. The groom is invited to accompany her and on arriving there is offered sweets, nuts, and the like. Following these simple observances of respect for the new marriage relationship between families, the groom returns home with his bride to make a home within his larger extended family.

The Newar woman in her husband’s house has much more authority and
freedom than her Brahman or Chhetri counterpart. She is readily accepted into the extended family group and adapts quickly to her new role in relation to the family and in particular to her husband.

Returning now to the more general social-religious organization of Newar society, it might appear at first glance that the vast majority of people living in Kathmandu are Buddhists. Until the 1952-1954 official census report this was generally believed. That report, however, points out that far less than half of the Newar population of the Valley are Buddhist, and when the number of Buddhist from other ethnic communities, Sherpas, Tamangs, and the like is considered, the point is obvious: Despite appearances Buddhist Newars are a definite minority.

As far as religious practices and the worship of the Hindu and Buddhist deities are concerned, neither religious group is strictly restricted to one category. Both parties visit and worship in Hindu and Buddhist temples to the same deities. In fact, many of the temples and shrines in Kathmandu Valley have both Hindu and Buddhist deities, often close together. For example, the famous Swayambhu Chaitya on the hilltop west of Kathmandu city is purely a Buddhist shrine, but on the same grounds is the shrine to Saraswoti, a Hindu goddess of learning, and in fact, there is even a Hindu goddess situated within the entrance of the big Buddhist chaitya itself. Hindus and Buddhists visit both sites and pay their respects. There are many other examples of this phenomenon in Kathmandu and in other parts of Nepal.

Almost all of the large religious festivals are observed and participated in by both groups with equal enthusiasm. Only domestic ceremonies and rites can be said to be peculiar to one or the other religious group. The Guvaju, who are also called Bajracharya and addressed as gurju, are the family priests of Buddhist Newars. Deo Brahmans, who are addressed as jiju, are the Hindu priests. Bares, known as Sakyas or Sakyavikshu, and the Jha Brahmans act as temple priests and recite religious texts among their respective groups.

The religious practices of lower castes are much less involved, since they have little in the way of domestic ritual ceremony and therefore do not have to hire priests.

Guvaju and Bare boys have to undergo an initiation ceremony before they are actually accepted as Bajracharya or Sakyavikshu. The initiation ceremony is believed to date back to earlier days when boys were initiated into a celibate life of discipline before being admitted into a baha, the monastic residence. The initiation ceremony was called bare chhuigu.

For a Guvaju boy, however, there is one more ritual to observe called
acharyabhishek, after which he is considered eligible to act as a priest. Usually, the ceremony of bare chhuigu is organized for all the Guvaju and Bare boys of one residential baha once in seven years. The Hindu Newars have a similar initiation ceremony for their boys called kaita puja or brata bandha.

The Buddhist monasteries of the early days, indicated by the great number of bahas in Kathmandu and Patan, are believed to have degenerated under Hindu influence and the introduction of the caste system. The caste system, writes Regmi, got regularized and hardened in due course, and monasteries dying out produced the priest class of the Buddhist community, its monks easily turned into priests under the influence of Vajrayana ritualism. What Vajrayana started, Shaiva (a form of Hinduism) influence later on consolidated and hardened.*

On the same subject David Snellgrove writes:

It is certainly an interesting problem, how monks, who were once self-professed and presumably came from all classes of Newar society, and spiritual masters, who once owed their position to their personal knowledge and reputation, should have become an hereditary caste, closed to the rest of society. This is something which has occurred in no other Buddhist country.**

Of all the Nepali people, Newars observe the greatest number of festivals and feasts. They spend a great amount of money and food on such occasions, the food consisting of buffalo meat, beaten rice, vegetables, pickles, curd, and large quantities of beer and spirit. They take great pride and pleasure in spending great amounts for good food for the large feasts, more so than for domestic or family needs. Even the Jyapus, who are mainly the peasants of small to average means, spend heavily for feasts and festivities.

The largest festival in Kathmandu is indra jatra, which lasts for eight days in mid-bhadra, the lunar month usually coinciding with the end of September or first week in October. At this time the people worship Indra, the God of the rain, and a number of religious dances are performed by artists wearing most colourful dresses and headdresses representing various deities. They parade carts carrying Kumari, the “living goddess”, and Ganesh and Bhairav, represented by a Bare girl and two Bare boys respectively, through the streets of Kathmandu city. Although the great part of this festival is quite old, the rath jatra, or “cart festival”,

*Regmi, ibid.

is said to have begun in the year 1756 A.D., during the reign of King Jaya Prakash Mall. Then a girl of Bare caste was said to have been possessed by the goddess Kumari, who claimed that she was the protector of Nepal Valley. Ever since, she has been worshipped. A beautiful house with golden windows was built for her, and every year she was taken round the city at the time of indra jatra by her attendants Ganesh and Bhairav. Even today a virgin girl of Bare caste is chosen for the position and can keep her role until she sheds blood from a cut or by menstruation. Two boys of seven or eight years are chosen to be her escorts. These three children are put into their temple-like carts for the parade and the townspeople worship them with offerings of flowers and vermilion powder.

Another equally important festival is gai jatra. All families of which one or more members died during the preceding year send decorated cows to round the city. Those who cannot afford the actual cow may employ a small boy to wear colourful dresses and a basket covered with painted papers on his head to represent the cow. This is done to help the dead members of the family to enter the gates of heaven. Gai jatra occurs one month ahead of indra jatra. Morning sees the "cows" through the city streets, and later in the afternoon some people come out in varying costumes to act as clowns, criticising or mimicking the social, political or individual peculiarities of the society of certain people, and amuse the thousands of spectators gathered for the occasion along the streets.

Rath jatra of Matshendranath in Patan and Kathmandu are the occasions for thousands of people to enjoy the sight of the forty-eight foot high carts being dragged through the narrow streets of the town. The observance in Patan city lasts for more than a month, beginning in May, while the cart is being dragged slowly on its way. At several points the procession stops for several days. When all is done at month's end the brocade vest of the god Matshendranath is displayed from the balcony of the high cart to the thousands of people collected to see it at Jawalakhel where the festival terminates.

Newars observe a number of other religious festivals, including dashain and tihar, celebrated by the majority of Nepali people throughout the country. Family occasions play an equally important role on a small scale and involve feasting and rituals often just a few days apart.

Most of the Newar traders and merchants found settled in outlying districts, away from Kathmandu Valley, observe these same large and small religious occasions, though usually on a smaller and less elaborate scale. To be sure, they follow the pattern of ritual in all aspects of the religious life, from the pollution of birth to the cremation, mourning, and pollution of death.
On all of these occasions the men and women dress smartly. Women of the Buddhist community are fond of gold ornaments in their ears, over the head, and around the neck. Modern young girls, however, do not wear the gold and ornaments of the older generations. The women's sari and blouse is either covered by a padded, quilted, material or thin coloured muslin in the form of a gown. The Indian style sari and blouse is becoming more and more popular among Newar women. Schoolgirls wear white trousers and a shirt, with a fine scarf around the neck, reminiscent of the Punjabi Indian costume. Young men and boys wear European-style trousers and shirts, while the older generations still prefer the Nepali traditional dress.

Jyapu men and women are the exception to general Newar costume. They wear their own homemade garments from homespun cotton materials. The women have black saris with red bordering, their blouses are of finely woven cotton material, and a huge waist-band of plain cotton complete the costume. The style of wearing the sari varies from the standard of other Newar communities. Furthermore, Jyapu women have tattoos on their calves and ankles which are exposed in the wearing of the sari, and they ornament themselves with gold earrings and silver necklaces.

Jyapu men wear the Nepali suit without the western suit jacket which is seen so often on other Nepali men. Instead, they wear a waist-band of plain white cotton material and a waistcoat of their own style, which is slightly different from the western one.

The Jyapu woman is kept busy throughout the year because of her obligation to weave all the cotton materials for family clothing requirements, in addition to her responsibilities in the family fields.

Over the centuries, the Newars have developed a purely urban mode of living. Even those who are strictly farmers or skilled artisans in support of the remaining population are town dwellers.

The Newar settlements in the cities of Kathmandu and Patan have a peculiarity of enclosing quadrangles with lines of brick houses on all four sides supporting exquisitely carved wooden doors and windows. The quadrangles of the Buddhist baha communities invariably have a Buddhist shrine in the center and often a temple built into the line of houses along one side. Later on, the Hindu residential areas were also to be designed in the same manner. These quadrangle arrangements are simply known as chok, or “courtyard”. The Hindu chok is comparatively recent and often does not include a temple. A baha or chok community is usually inhabited by one patrilineal descent group of all castes and
26 PEOPLE OF NEPAL

at all levels of society. But in the present push for expansion of the towns, main roads and shopping centers, the Newar residential areas are not following the traditions of a common patrilineal locality.

It is quite usual under all circumstances for the Newar family to stay as closely associated as possible. Fürer Haimendorf, in this regard, illustrates the Newar characteristic rather clearly. A Newar, he says,

sees in the precincts of his town the historic limits to the spread of patrilineal exogamous descent groups and considers the citizens of other towns as members of an out-group, even if they should bear a clan name identical with his own.*

Newars were purely sedentary until some time back, and to a large extent they are so even today. Adventure was apparently the least attractive to them. However, after the valley kingdoms fell into the hands of the Shah Kings, some Newars started to leave the valley and settle down in distant districts to the west and east. They must have felt relatively secure to consider such moves after the consolidation of Nepal by the Shah Kings, and the intrusion of a large number of powerful people from outside the valley must have frustrated them to the extent that they risked moving business and family life away from Kathmandu Valley.

But the style of living, the cultural traditions, and the occupations of trade and business have all been preserved intact even in those localities which are removed by weeks' journeys from their place of origin. It is quite common while travelling in rural Nepal to come across small pockets of Newar culture in an area totally foreign to their traditional Kathmandu Valley environment.

The unique feature of Newar social-economic organization is indicated by the presence of a great number of guthis, a kind of “common trust” consisting mainly of cultivated lands as assets. The lands in the beginning were endowments of one or several families, but in the course of time they have become the property of the entire guthi membership. Most members are of a common descent group, but there are a few larger guthis which include several descent groups.

Among Jyapu Newars, most of the guthi lands are cultivated by the members themselves, but in the rest of the Newar communities the lands are leased out to tenants, who are obliged to pay their rent to a specially appointed guthi member. The man in charge of these rents is expected to conduct worship of the deity to whom the lands are dedicated and also to arrange one or several feasts for the

*Fürer-Haimendorf, op. cit.
entire membership group. These obligations are given to each member in rotation yearly or in some cases every second, third or fifth year. Most guthi lands' net incomes are in excess of their requirements and are therefore profitable for the incumbent, but there are a few which can bring the person in charge of rents a considerable loss.

Guthis are of three types: religious, functional, and social. Almost every Newar family is a member of a digu puja guthi, a religious guthi for worshipping of the deity of an extended family. These guthis involve the membership of a common descent group, which gather to partake of the worship and feasts. There are a number of temples which also have guthi organizations responsible for their worship observances, and in these cases include membership from more than one caste or common descent group.

Functional guthis are organised specifically for cremating the dead, conducting funerals, and maintaining temples, rest houses, bridges, roads, and the like. Their membership is drawn from several extended family units of common residence, and not necessarily of common descent. Thus a functional guthi might include members of several caste levels and different religious groups, as in the case of those charged with temple, rest house, bridge maintenance, et cetera.

For pure entertainment, fellowship and activities of common interest, the social guthi is organized. It includes members of one common locality, although not necessarily of common descent or relationship by marriage. The membership of the religious and functional guthis is compulsory and inherited, while the social guthi is a voluntary organisation.

Each guthi is a well-organised unit with strict rules and conditions of membership and activities. The seniormost member is called thakali, the “eldest”; he acts as chairman and maintains the discipline of the rest of the members who are called guthiars. The guthi decides disputes arising between members and takes action against the offender or against those who act in defiance of the rules and regulations of the organisation. A majority vote can levy fines or even expel a member, depending upon the gravity of the crime. Common offences include bad manners, irregularity in attendance, failure to fulfil one’s assigned role in the guthi, breach of ritual observance, breach of caste rules, and inappropriate sexual behaviour.

All Newars except Jogi, tailor caste, cremate their dead by the riverside; the Jogis bury their dead. Whenever a death occurs in any Newar family, all the members of that person’s cremation guthi and all his relatives are immediately informed. Those few persons who do not have such guthis are joined only by their relatives. The dead is not removed from the house until all are present, then a green bamboo
bier is prepared and the corpse is transported on it to the burning ghat. The dead body is covered by a yellow or red satin shroud which is removed at the time of burning and kept for further cremations in the house of a guthi member.

There is a strong tradition among most Newars, except chha-thari Shresthas, that the funeral procession should consist of as many individuals wailing and crying as possible.

Mourning and pollution is observed by the next of kin for twelve days and for an entire year by the son. These rules and abstentions are similar to those of Brahmans and Chhetris.
KIRANTI

Introduction

The Kiranti people of east Nepal, more commonly known as Rai and Limbu, form together one of the largest single ethnic groups in Nepal, second only to the Tamangs. As numerous as they are they are divided into a number of smaller thar tribal units, the major two being Rai and Limbu. Rai is technically a term meaning “headman,” but has over the years become the popular generic term of reference for an entire ethnic group. The Rai in some districts are called “Jimidar” or “Jimi,” and in other areas “Khambu” or by a particular thar clan designation. In the course of time Rai came to include the Yakha people, a third subdivision of the Kiranti.

Limbu people are addressed as subba, a term which, like rai, means “chief” or “headman”. In general, however, when speaking of the Kiranti peoples we refer to Rai and Limbu, not Rai and Subba.

Northey and Morris have written concerning the origin of these terms that when the Shah Gurkhas conquered the Kiranti tribes, the Gurkha Kings established some of the Jimidars as local rulers and gave them the title of rai, and Limbu headmen were similarly called subba. In time the use of these names came to include whole groups, and now we find Jimidars called Rai, Limbus called Subba, and the Yakha people called Dewan.*

The Kiranti people speak a number of Tibeto-Burman dialects collectively known as the Kiranti language. Their Mongoloid features with pale yellowish pigmentation and flat faces with almost shaped eyes make them easily distinguishable from other peoples living near them in the hills, the Chhetri, Brahman, Tamang and Sherpa.

There are several theories concerning the Kiranti ethnic origins. Some speak of coming from Tibet, while others insist that Kiranti have always lived in these hills. One of the old Kiranti religious texts, the Kirant ko Veda,** indicates that at least some of their ancestors and ancient rajas came from Tibet. Whatever may have been their place of origin, Kirantis have been associated with the history of Nepal for thousands of years. Their feats of bravery have been recorded in the great Hindu epics Ramayana and Mahabharata, and in the ancient annals of Nepal. Kiranti kings ruled Kathmandu Valley until the 2nd century A. D., and some

**Iman Singh Chemjong, Kirant ko Veda (Veda of the Kiranti), (Bihar: 1961).
historians believe that there may be a strain of Kiranti in the present day Newar Community. Not much was recorded about Kirantis for a long period after their ruling era until the early nineteenth century when the Shah kings of Nepal began their expansion eastward. Thereafter, the last Kiranti raja recorded was the Raja of Bijaypur, whose domain consisted of parts of Kosi, Mechi, and Sagarmatha Zones. His capital was at Bijayapur, situated on a small hill about two miles east of Dharan in the district of Sunsari, Kosi Zone. The ruins of the old fort are still in evidence. Bijayapur’s Kiranti raja was defeated during the close of the 18th century and his territory was annexed thereafter to the Kingdom of Nepal.
Of the two main subdivisions of Kiranti, the Rai are the most numerous. In the last official census, 1952-1954*, the Rai totalled over 236,000 as compared to 145,511 Limbus. Of the Rai population at that time, all but 15,000 were found in the traditional hill regions—in the Kirant Pradesh and its neighbourhood, while the remainder accounted for Rais living in the eastern Terai plains near the Indian border.

These numbers are of course presently out of date, especially since the Terai has only recently been opened up by the near total eradication of malaria; hitherto uninhabitable lands are being put to the plough by the poorer hill farmers who have flocked southward. We must also take into account the numbers of both Rai and Limbu who for generations have lived in and around Darjeeling in India’s West Bengal, Nepal’s eastern neighbour.

That part of Kirant Pradesh which is traditionally inhabited by Rais is called manjh-Kirant, “middle Kirant”. Therein the Rai settlements are spread along the valley slopes of the Dudh Kosi and Arun rivers and their tributaries. Pallo-Kirant, or “far Kirant”, is Limbu territory. Manjh-Kirant includes Rai settlements in the districts of Solu-Khumbu, Okhaldhunga, Khotang, Bhojpur, and Udaipur in Sagarmatha zone. Some old records indicate that Rais formerly occupied a much larger area than that in which they are found today. On lalmohar certificates affixed with the red seal during the reign of King Rajendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev (1813-1881) are indications that parts of Solu-Khumbu district and its pasture land, presently occupied in the main by Sherpa people, belonged previously to the Rai community.

Most Rai settlements lie between the average altitudes of three to six thousand feet above sea level. Their small one storey houses are built of stone and are usually thatched or in some cases roofed with slate. These houses normally stand out in the cultivated dry fields quite apart from each other, in the same manner as Sherpa villages. Larger villages may spread along a slope for several miles. An example is the village of Bung, comprising ninety-six houses scattered along the Hongu river valley, a tributary of the Dudh Kosi: It is an hour’s walk from the lower end to the topmost house. In July, the low houses are almost hidden in the tall maize, but the same village in November is quite different and most attractive with yellow fields of flowering mustard and bright red poinsettias bordering the trails.

The houses of Bung, and of most other Rai villages in this particular area, invariably have two doors, one to the east and a second facing south. The Rai houses found along the upper Arun khola are built on wooden piles, raised about five feet from the ground with access by a notched wooden ladder to a frontside verandah. The walls are of bamboo and the roofs of bamboo matting. Beneath the piling, on the ground level, pigs, chickens, and sheep are kept. A larger version of this same house pattern is used by the Tibetan-speaking Kath BHONE people living to the north.

Typical Rai household articles consist of a few brass pots, iron pans, earthen jars, and basket containers for storing grain. Some Rais do not possess brass pots; their women fetch water from the river or spring in large bamboo pipes.

The Rais cultivate both dry and wet fields, the dry terraces in maize, millet, wheat, and some mustard, and the wet fields in rice. They grow enough grain to meet their daily needs with the excess made into spirits and beer which they enjoy in great quantities. In addition they grow various types of vegetables, beans, potatoes, and the like, and fruits such as oranges, bananas, jack fruit, and guavas. Their staple diet is a thick porridge of hand-ground flour of maize, wheat, and millet, and on significant occasions they eat rice. Vegetables, beans, and pulses are taken with their two daily meals. Both the Rai men and their womenfolk smoke cigarettes prepared from locally grown tobacco. The tobacco leaf is wrapped in the fine inner silk of maize.

The Rais of some villages have put in incredible amounts of work to raise stone walls and footings for their beautifully terraced fields along the steep mountainsides, which they irrigate to raise paddy. And in addition to the cereals and vegetables they raise cotton which is made into a coarse material for clothing. Some villagers collect the wild fibres of sisal hemp which is processed at home and woven into a very coarse but extremely durable material. These cotton and sisal materials suffice the domestic needs of some Rais living in the interior areas. Weaving is done by the women during their leisure between agricultural tasks. Those Rais in closer proximity to outside market places and larger towns rely on factory made cotton goods. Some women also make rugs of sheep's wool.

Rai women wear necklaces of red glass or plastic beads and of silver quarter, half and one-rupee-Indian coins, and silver bangles, and silver rings. Young girls carry a small jew's harp on a tassel that hangs from their blouse near the left shoulder. These instruments are three inches long, made of bamboo. The girls play them while walking or during short breaks while working in the fields, and in the evenings.
A Rai headman presiding over a gaun panchayat meeting.
Rais terrace their fields

Rai houses

A Rai-
A Rai crossing the rope bridge over the Arun river

Dor Bahadur Bista
Men in more isolated areas wear a vest and loincloth made out of coarse locally woven material. All men including boys nine or ten years old wear a khukuri, the Nepali knife, in their waist-band. Women wrap a very small skirt around their waists, with a blouse above. The people near market towns, however, wear clothes of cotton material a little more lavishly.

The requirements of living and farming in manjh-Kirant, as in all of interior Nepal, make the Rais a hard working people. The planting and harvesting season, from spring to autumn, gives them plenty of work to do, and during the slack winter months the villagers make trips south to the important towns of Dharan, Janakpur and Jayanagar in the Terai to buy and pack home the necessary supplies of salt, oil, and materials for clothing, or to find work for wages. They carry goods for trade rather than money on these trips.

Fallowing of fields is practised by the Rai farmers. Some of their dry fields, usually small clearings in the forest, are left fallow for two or three years before they are ploughed and planted again. One farmer may have several such fields and shift from one to another in successive seasons. Before the land is ploughed, the grass and dry undergrowth are burned away, supplying the soil with ash residue.

Bullocks are used for ploughing. Two bullocks are hitched to a double yoke to which is attached on a long shaft the wooden plough with an iron tip. Other farm tools are a small mattock or hoe, and a sickle for harvesting. Except for small variations in style or design, these are the standard methods and tools used throughout the hill regions.

Almost all Kiranti land used to be under the kipat system whereby the people exercised inalienable communal rights over the land. The kipat system is common to several other Nepali ethnic communities. The Kiranti kipat was tax-free and included dominion over all cultivated lands, forests, streams, and rivers within its bounds. Taxes were raised not from the land but traditionally from each household. Each rai would collect six or seven rupees from each of his subjects. Since this tax was uniform and equal for each household, notwithstanding the size of a man's landholdings, a great number of the poorer Rai farmers have demanded that the age old kipat establishment be abolished and replaced by a fairer land revenue system. This has come about in part.

The land of a Rai farmer is his own. Seldom are fields rented or cultivated by anyone other than the owner. A Rai farmer on manjh-Kirant kipat was called a kipatiya, but any farmer of another ethnic group, even a Limbu, on the same kipat
was called *raiti*, and subject to taxes on his land which he paid to the *rai*, of the village.

A major contribution to the Rai cash income is from their employment in the Indian and British Gurkha regiments. A few Rais have recently found employment in the civil service and with the Nepali police and army. Almost every single Rai village has a few soldiers, police, or civil servants, and older pensioners. Most Rais working with the government services have previously either served or lived for some time in India. Many who do not go out to work are found selling home grown produce and grain in the market towns. With the proceeds they can buy necessary domestic requirements.

A farmer will usually keep some cattle, goats, pigs, and chickens both for his own immediate needs and for the little extra cash they bring in sale.

Transactions of borrowing and lending money in some parts of *manjh*-Kirant are carried on Shri Panchami day, the fifth day of the bright fortnight of *phagun* (mid-February to mid-March), and in other parts at any time of the year. A majority of the people are in debt. The usual practice is for money transactions to be made against security in land. The common rate of interest is twenty-five percent, but occasionally it may be found as high as seventy-five percent per annum.

Rais are renowned for their bravery, fearlessness, and straightforwardness. They are also said to be proud and easily offended, and therefore have the makings of good friends or serious enemies.

The social structure of the Rai tribe includes a number of *thar* subdivisions, which in turn may be further segmented. Each *thar* is representative of a particular locale, part of a river valley or a group of settlements in close proximity, although nowadays they are very much mixed in almost all the areas. Some Rai *thars* and their related locales are listed here:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THAR</th>
<th>LOCALE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kulunge</td>
<td>Maha Kulung: The valleys of Hongu and Rawa rivers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamlinge</td>
<td>Rawa river valley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khalinge</td>
<td>Rawa river valley and in Solu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pelmange</td>
<td>Rawa river valley and in Solu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falinge</td>
<td>Rawa river valley and in Solu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thulunge</td>
<td>Aiselukharka</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(Continued)*
With these, we might include the Yakha people of Tehrathum district. But Yakhas are considered by many to be a distinct group of Kiranti, not absolutely fitting either into the Rai or the Limbu groups. In this matter, however, not even all Rais consider themselves as being of one identity. Rais also maintain that those people called Mech-Koch, who live in Morang and in Jhapa, are of the same origin as Rais.

Each of the above listed thars are found exclusively in its locale and speaking a distinct dialect, usually unintelligible to members of another thar. In such cases effective communication is carried out in the Nepali language which is understood by all.

The Rai thars are more often endogamous units than not. Restrictions of geography have made it so, resulting in marriages within the thar. There is little communication between one locale and another, as is found among the Brahman and Chhetri communities under similar circumstances. However, with the Rai thars are found exogamous units of a common kinship descent along a direct line of seven generations.

Descent is traced beyond seven generations, but after seven generations—i.e. in the eighth and subsequent generations—intermarriage can occur (it is institutionally sanctioned) between differently named segments of the same clan. When such a marriage takes place, the result is clan fission; that is, the two segments in question become separate, distinct clans with all the attributes thereof. There is a rite to formalize the division. In fact, clan fission and the coming into being of
new clans is dependent on this process—i.e. on hadphora* marriage within the clan, after the requisite depth of seven generations has been reached. Marriage can occur between relatives tracing their relationship through a female lineage after three generations, that is, in the fourth generation.**

Young boys and girls are free to indulge in romance and to make advances to almost any partner except as prohibited by both common descent and by degrees of relationship. Ideally, all marriages are monogamous, that is, of one husband and one wife. The marriage can be one of three varieties: by arrangement, by capture, or by elopement or mutual agreement between the boy and the girl.

An arranged marriage is the form observed by the few rich families. The boy and girl are usually between thirteen and fifteen years old. The boy’s parents take the initiative, sending two or three male relatives to the house of the prospective girl in mind. These representatives take a bottle of rakshi to the girl’s parents. The girl’s parents are not obliged to consent, but if they should agree to the match there is a round of drinks and the representatives return to the boy’s father.

An auspicious wedding date is chosen either by a Brahman astrologer, or with the aid of an almanac. On the day prescribed, the bridegroom, in a party of friends and relatives preceded by a musical band of Damais (tailor caste), goes to the house of the girl where they are entertained and fed rice, pork, and drinks. During the evening, at a prescribed hour, the boy presents the bride with gifts of clothes, necklaces, and silver ornaments, and applies vermillion powder to her hair.

The following morning, after the actual wedding ceremony is concluded, the bride is taken to the house of the groom where she is received with a special ritual. One observer writes: “A chicken is killed and some of its blood placed on three plantain leaves which are set down just inside the door. The girl must step over the blood-smeared leaves when she crosses the threshold. This is known as sagun.”***

Among Kulungs, marriage is a gradual process. The first rite is sagun. The second and most important rite, janti, may follow by several years. The third rite is darju, giving away of the bride wealth.

Quite a number of marriages are secured by capture. Capturing a girl is usually

* Hadphora means, literally, “the breaking of the bones.” In this context the bones, had, represent the patrilineal clan unit broken through marriage after the seventh generation.
**Charles MacDougal, Personal Letter, December, 1965.
done in a large gathering of a marketplace, at festivals and fairs amidst confusion and quarrelling, or sometimes quietly in the village when the girl comes out of her house to fetch water or on some other errand. The boy then takes the girl to the house of a relative for hiding for a few days while the parents are informed. His parents try to negotiate with the parents of the girl through representatives. It usually takes a few days before they can appease the offended parents of the girl. Finally, however, they come to terms and give their consent to the new relationship. The boy is then free to take his bride home where she is welcome with the same kind of ritual ceremony as in the arranged marriage described above.

Marriage by elopement is done usually by very poor couples who may have already lost their parents, in which case there is little formality. In such cases the boy and the girl are sufficiently mature, usually in their late twenties, and they may have taken a considerable period for courtship. The girl is usually taken to the house of a relative of the boy and kept there until negotiations with the parents or between representatives of both partners are completed. The girl is received with the same kind of ceremony as in the previous cases at the boy's house, and the actual wedding ceremony is done at the boy's house.

In either of these three cases a nokchhoe, the religious leader among Rais, may be hired to invoke deities and bless the couple, and the young couple have to pay their respects to the girl's parents or their representatives. The boy must pay one and one half rupees each to the brothers of the girl's mother and half a rupee each to the brothers and cousins of the girl's father. A feast of boiled rice, meat, and home made beer has to be provided by the boy's family in all types of marriages.

After marriage, especially in the case of an arranged marriage, the girl spends the first year or two at her parents' house. But, meanwhile, both the boy and the girl are free to spend a few days together whenever they choose, at either's house.

Rais practise both junior levirate and junior sororate; that is, a man can marry his elder brother's widow, his deceased wife's younger sister or his wife's brother's daughter.

In the case of wife abduction, the second husband is made to pay compensation of one hundred or two hundred rupees—depending upon the social and economic status of the persons involved—to the first husband of the woman.

Should an unmarried girl become pregnant, her lover is expected either to marry her or to pay delivery expenses of fifty to sixty rupees, after which he leaves the girl alone. She is free to find another husband; having a child before marriage is not considered a serious disqualification.
When a married couple separate, any daughters go to live with the mother, and sons, with their father.

Rais practise a religion which is, strictly speaking, neither Hindu nor Buddhist although they have been influenced both by the Lamaistic form of Buddhism of the border people living immediately north of them, and by the Hinduism of the middle hills. The worship of many local deities, however, is their traditional religious practice. Jalpa Devi is one of the main goddesses living up in the snow mountains, and saat kanya, the “seven virgins,” are also worshipped by most Rais. There are also mythical common ancestors who rank as their chief deities: Sikatakhu-Budho, Balmo-Budhi, Kulung-Budhi, Mangtewa-Budhi, Molu-Sikari, and a number of others. These deities are offered food on every ritual occasion and festival. According to local legends, all of these ancestor gods vanished alive in ancient days. Nwagi is a rite performed to offer a few grains of rice to these ancestor deities before the people themselves begin to eat.

Most Rai households have a spirit called Khamang maintained in an earthen pot hung in a corner of the house. Khamang is considered the god of individual skills. The first piece of meat is always offered to it when a game is killed during the hunt.

The year has a number of religious ceremonies to be performed. One, the harvest ceremony called bhumi-puja, is observed in September and in April. It is a ceremony to worship the earth. Many people perform hom, a sacrificial rite for acquiring merit.

Likwamang is another ritual performed in order to ensure that no measles, smallpox, boils, or other such diseases should afflict the village. A ritual of similar intent, nagi, is observed for the general welfare of children and as a protection against the possible birth of a deformed child. Chickens, sometimes even pigs or a buffalo, are slaughtered and feasted upon with boiled rice and pulses by the villagers on some of these occasions.

The religious leader who presides over all of these ceremonies is called a ngopa. He sometimes becomes possessed by spirits and speaks out the verdicts of the gods. The ngopa also acts as a physician and treats the people by propitiating gods and spirits during an illness. Some Rais believe that the Milky Way as seen in the sky is a reflection of saptakosi, the “seven Kosi rivers,” and they worship it as such.

Rais bury their dead. Kulunge and Khalinge Rais bury in a cultivated field near their houses and offer food and drink for a month or so. Others perform burial just outside the village. A religious leader is required for the burial. He addresses
the spirit of the dead and requests it to go to its final resting place to join the ancestors. And finally he puts a white piece of flag over the grave. Mourning is observed by the nearest kinsman of the deceased who abstain from eating salt, oil, meat, and liquor for six days.

It is a common practice among Rais to construct a stone chautara rest-platform, erect a wooden bench, and plant a pipal tree to provide shelter and shade for wayfarers by the main trail as a memorial to the dead. The sons or any other relatives who inherit the property of the deceased person are supposed to finance these constructions and also to provide a feast in the name of the dead person. To the feast they invite all the villagers and relatives, even if they happen to live in another village. The guests and the people who helped to construct the memorial are served boiled rice, buffalo meat, and drinks. These acts and constructions are believed to help the dead people in the next world and those remaining gain merit. A stone tablet with an inscription of the date, the name of the deceased, and carvings of the sun and the moon at the top is erected on chautara.

There can be one or more rai in a village. The rai is an undisputed leader to whom the villagers pay their taxes. He hosts any visiting government officials and handles may problems including the settling of common disputes that may arise in the village. The office of a rai is hereditary, passing to the eldest son. Until some time ago the office of a rai used to be divided equally among all his sons after his death; that is to say, the total number of householders was divided up into as many groups as there were sons. This accounts for the present small size of a rai's area of jurisdiction. In some instances there is one rai for only half a dozen households. In some areas there are different rais for each clan. Traditionally all the lands in manjh-Kirant and pallo-Kirant were collectively registered in the name of the Kiranti kipated Taxes were collected from each household, so that the areas of jurisdiction of the rais were not the people's lands but only the individual households. This pattern is changing now.

Village unity is displayed in the participation by everybody whenever there is a ritual or social ceremony in any of the households, in attending funerals and in abstaining from work whenever there is a death or an important religious ceremony in the community.

Ordinarily, Rais do not have a large joint family system, as do the Tharus of the Terai for instance, although a Rai man lives with his parents for the first couple of years after marriage. But the Athapre Rais of Dhankuta did have a common house for the entire extended family group at one time. It was told that there was a large house just outside of Dhankuta bazaar with fifty-two hearths in it.
The Limbu tribe is second in size to the Rai among Kirantis. Like their Rai cousins the Limbu have an area traditionally their own called pallo-Kirant, “far Kirant”, or even more commonly called just Limbuwan, the “land of the Limbus”. They are the predominant people in Limbuwan; although, of course, there are also members of almost every other ethnic group in Nepal including Brahmans, Chhetris, and many Newar businessmen and shopkeepers from Kathmandu Valley, and representatives of neighboring ethnic groups like the Rai, Sherpa, Tamang and even Lepcha of Sikkim. Like the Rai, many Limbu farmers have in the past few years moved south into the promising Terai plains to take up lands recently opened to settlement and agriculture.

Limbuwan includes the area east of the Arun river extending to Nepal’s eastern border with India’s West Bengal. In contrast to the larger manjh-Kirant of the Rai, the Limbu areas are relatively confined. The districts represented in whole or in part in Limbuwan include Tehrathum, Sankhuwa Sabha, and Dhankuta in Kosi Zone, and Taplejung, Panchthar, and Ilam in Mechi Zone. Locally we find the designation Limbuwan prefixed by das, as das-Limbuwan, meaning the “ten Limbu lands”, referring to the common belief that at one time in the early days there were ten Limbu rajas.

The proper term of address for Limbus is subba. To be addressed as subba is not only acceptable, it is in fact flattering. As mentioned in the section on the Rai people the title subba was given to Limbu “headmen” at the time when the territory of the Kiranti was annexed to the Kingdom of Nepal by the Shah King, some one hundred and ninety years ago. At that time the Limbu were presented with a set of commemorative drums, of which they are very proud.

Limbu language is a dialect apart from Rai and includes a written form. What few books were written in the Limbu script are scattered and difficult to find.

Limbus have been in eastern Nepal for thousands of years. “The mountain is, in fact, his domain,” writes Sylvain Levi.* “It is there that he continues to live and to dominate during the epic period.”

Most Limbu villages are located along the high slopes of the Tamur river valley and of a number of tributaries. The houses, like their Rai neighbours’, usually stand in the middle of dry cultivated fields. Sometimes there are wet rice fields close by, but more often the irrigated wet fields are down the mountain slopes.

A Limbu

C. Fürer-Haimendorf
bu bride and groom

C. Färer-Haimendorf

A Limbu Girl

C. Färer-Haimendorf
A Fedangma conducts Tongshim rite
Limbu settlements are set between the altitudes of 2,500 feet and 4,000 feet above sea level. The houses are of one storey, built of stone with thatch roofs. They are washed with a red and white earth colouring; windows and doors are black. The houses of the few rich people are generally larger than the average, often roofed with slate and with a wooden balcony around the house at the first floor level. House construction in the important district towns and their vicinities has been influenced by Darjeeling house types and sizes. Village size might run from thirty houses to the older sites which often support over one hundred structures.

Typical household articles are brass, copper, aluminium pots and pans, water jars, earthenware, baskets, and wooden containers for storing grain.

Limbus raise enough rice, wheat, maize, and millet for their own self-sufficiency. The paddy fields are most laboriously terraced and irrigated, whereas the fields of wheat, maize, millet, and mustard are dry and unirrigated. Paddy is planted in June-July and harvested in October and November. These fields are then left fallow until the next planting season. In the dry fields maize is sown in February-March, and millet in June; they are harvested in August and November respectively. Wheat and barley are sown as a winter crop in October. These grains are not used entirely for eating but great quantities are made into rakshi and beer.

*Tongba* is a favourite social drink. Every man has a large wooden mug which is filled on occasion with thick millet beer and drunk through a bamboo tube. Limbus also have various fruits and vegetables: beans, pulse, potatoes, and the like, and fruits such as oranges, bananas, guavas, and papayas.

Everything harvested is consumed. The farmers also keep buffalo and cows for milk and manure, and goats, sheep and chicken for meat. Both men and women smoke cigarettes. Some farmers grow their own tobacco.

There are fewer areas of fallowing compared with the Rai. All the land is under the jurisdiction of the Limbu *kipat* and is consequently tax-free. Each registered householder pays six and one half rupees to his village *subba*, a representative of the government revenue office. This is strictly a house tax and has no bearings on the extent of a man's land holdings. But in fact, no single family has ever paid more than a rupee or two per year because each registered household has been split up into at least half a dozen different family entities, all descendants of one single ancestor household.

The *subba* is the natural leader of his fellow villagers. There are usually eight or ten *kipatiya* families under one *subba*. A few Rais live and farm on Limbu *kipat* lands, but they are not considered *kipatiya*. Instead, they hold the title of *raiti*.
and must pay land taxes to the subba. Sometimes a subba may have assistants to help him in carrying out his work. The office of a subba is inherited by his eldest son; in addition, an equal part of the parental property is shared among all the sons.

Because the Limbu are a little proud and sensitive, they have been alleged by outsiders to be rather curt and surly. Their basic profession is farming, but a good many men go out to join the British or Indian Gurkha regiments, or to Kathmandu to join the armed police, or to work in other government departments. They were encouraged to seek work in Kathmandu only after the Rana regime was deposed in 1951. A great many Limbu men go in search of seasonal work in Dharan, Biratnagar, Jhapa, Darjeeling, Sikkim, and Assam. Thus, every winter there is a regular outflow of people, most of whom return before the monsoon to work their fields. No doubt a few people stay behind, never to return home.

Other members of Limbu communities make trips to the important market towns with grain, fruits, and animals to sell for a little profit. They return home with market goods to resell among the villagers, and with a few domestic necessities of their own.

The men typically wear a Nepali shirt and a loincloth on ordinary days, and during festivals they wear the full Nepali suit and cap complete with a European style suit jacket. The women wear a sari and a blouse of colourful cotton material and wear silver necklaces, bangles, gold earrings, noserings, and rings on their fingers. In general they dress in a little more sophisticated manner than the Rais, as Limbuwan is closer to and more under the influence of the market and industrial towns of Biratnagar, Dharan, and especially Darjeeling—one of the most “westernized” places in India.

A majority of the Limbus are in debt, either to a rich ex-Gurkha officer, or to a rich Brahman, Chhetri, or Newar who has lent them money against the security of land. The official interest rate is ten percent, but rates are paid as high as twenty-five and thirty percent. As among Rais, almost all Limbu money transactions are made on Shri Pailchami day in phagun.

The Limbu tribe is divided into a number of clans, thars, some of which are listed here in alphabetical order with their respective subdivisions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Angbahang</th>
<th>Chemjong</th>
<th>Fenduwa</th>
<th>Lingden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angdambe</td>
<td>Ektinhang</td>
<td>Furumbo</td>
<td>Mabuhang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angthupuhang</td>
<td>Fanghang</td>
<td>Kanga</td>
<td>Kambang</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Continued.)
Some of the above listed thars are further subdivided, each subdivision having a separate name of its own. Most of the thar members live together in more or less well defined locales. Some names are identical with the place name or residence of the group. Each of these subdivisions again is divided into family groups which are strictly exogamous and intolerant of incest. Outside of this latter family category the Limbu is free to choose his marriage partner from within the Limbu tribe.

Marriage rules in general are similar to those of the Rai community. There can be marriage by arrangement, capture, or elopement, the procedures of each of which have been described in the preceding discourse on the Rai, and as are found among so many other Nepalese groups. As might be expected, however, the Limbu have a few minor wedding formalities and rituals which are completed in addition to, or with a little variance from, the standard.

Marriages are strictly monogamous and patrilocal. Limbu young men and women have freedom of movement and can meet while working in the fields, during wedding parties, at fairs and festivals, and in the marketplaces. During festivals and marriage ceremonies the young people get together for a dancing-singing performance called yalangma. They join hands together and form a continuous line of eight, ten, or twenty people and dance with a uniform rhythm by stepping backwards and forwards and going round and round in a circle together, all the while singing songs in unison.

Whether for a marriage arranged by the parents, or for one of their own choice, a Limbu boy first sets out in search of a bride by himself on a day fixed by his fedangma priest. Another person is employed by the boy’s parents to act as a middleman in the marriage negotiations after a prospective partner is found. This middleman is called ingmiva, and he is usually a relative of the boy. The middleman approaches the parents of the girl and after consent for the match is

*Satihangma are those who are said to know how to read Limbu script and are also in possession of early Limbu books.
obtained he returns to the boy who in turn goes to bring the bride from her parents' house to a resting place near his home. There, short of the house, he leaves her while he goes ahead to inform his parents. The boy dresses in white Nepali shirt and trousers, wears a Nepali cap, and puts a khukuri knife in his waist band before he sets out to fetch the girl the rest of the way home. In the case of a properly arranged marriage, the girl will be accompanied from her home by a group of fifty to sixty people, mostly young women like herself, dressed in colourful dresses and ornaments. These young women and a few young men wait with the bride while the groom goes to inform his parents and change his clothes. This party is called miksama, and its members stay overnight and are entertained at the groom's house. **Yalangma** is danced and sung in the evening at the courtyard of the boy's house and the festivities may last until morning. Occasionally there is a competition of singing between the young men and women, or between a friend of the groom's and a woman of the miksama party. It is during these festive wedding occasions that many other young men prepare for future love adventures.

**Yalangma** is said to have originated as a dance song for harvest and has been called the *dhan nach*, the rice dance. This harvest song is tuneful and fascinating.

Earlier in the afternoon of the wedding, a small group of men comes to the groom's house to dance with drums slung from the neck. The groom's house is overwhelmingly crowded by the time of the entrance of the bride. Young boys become quite hilarious with a lot of practical joking and occasional outbursts of laughter. Then the bride is conducted into the house amidst the noise and music. Inside, she and the groom receive a *tika* on their foreheads from the parents and other relatives of the groom. The bride and groom are seated in a corner where they remain throughout the night while the *fedangma* priest recites *Mundhum*, the Kiranti religious text. The *fedangma* also puts *tika* on the forehead of the bride and the groom. The theory to this all night affair is that it is a bad omen for the young couple to fall off to sleep while the *fedangma* is reciting the *Mundhum*, so the young people present keep making noise and the miksama party keeps singing and dancing all the time to keep them awake. The *fedangma* kills a chicken at the beginning of the ceremony and lets the blood flow onto a banana leaf, whereupon he reads the omen. Friends, relatives, and neighbours are invited to the wedding and are entertained with food and drink. But every invitee must bring a little rice and up to a rupee in cash as his or her contribution.

After a few days, the new couple goes back to the girl's parents' house with
gifts of spirit and a whole pig. The father, mother, and their brothers and sisters also have to be presented with gifts and money. The father receives five rupees, the mother two rupees and half, and each of the other prescribed aunts and uncles of the bride receives a rupee. When all the wedding ceremonies are completed, the girl usually stays on with her parents for a few months or a year before coming to live permanently with her husband.

A man can marry the widow of his elder brother, or the younger sister of his dead wife, but, if subsequently she is abducted from him he receives no compensation. Any man abducting somebody else’s wife is made to pay one hundred to two hundred rupees compensation depending upon the financial status of the parties involved. Abduction is common among most Nepali groups. Sometimes a man wanting to marry another man’s wife must elope with the woman in order to escape the wrath of her former husband.

As among so many other peoples of Nepal, the Limbus and Rais do not have a formal system of divorce. A couple may choose to live apart, but divorce is actually only obtained when the wife takes a second husband.

Limbu religion is very closely allied to the Rai religion in that it has a number of local deities of mountains and rivers to worship. They have also adopted some religious practices of the Hindus, in observing the great festival of dashain and employing Brahman priests occasionally to recite religious texts. Sylvan Levi writes about these attitudes:

The religious indifferences…. among the Kirantis has hardly altered at all. In a Buddhist country they mumble the om mane padme hum and make presents to Lamas; in a Hindu country they give themselves out to be followers of Shiva and worship Mahadev and Gauri.*

Every Limbu household has a mangena, the ancestor-god, and hyumahimdangma, the spirit of the original grandmother who is believed to be the common ancestor of the entire Limbu tribe. Singbungba, Lungbungba, and Khangbungba, the gods of wood, of stone, and of earth, are also worshipped by all twice a year, in November and in March, beside a river, and are offered food daily in the home. These worshipping ceremonies are called udhaulibihauli. Pathibhara, Kalika, and Thulodevi, gods living on the snow mountains, are also worshipped.

The Limbus have two different kinds of religious leaders or “priests”, known as shamba and fedangba. Either of these two can conduct rituals on behalf of their

* Northey and Morris, Ibid., p. 216.
clients; they officiate at weddings, birth rites, and funerals, propitiate ancestor-gods, ward off evil spirits, and treat their clients when they fall ill.

All Limbus have a ceremony called tongshim, observed in the courtyard of the house for three days each year in the name of all the dead members of the family. Sometimes four or five extended families join together to conduct a common tongshim for economic expediency. Tongshim is technically the name of a small bamboo basket filled with earth with a small bamboo stick stuck up in the middle. This is believed to represent the spirit of the deceased. A white scarf is put on top of the stick to represent a male, a necklace on top for a female. There are six, seven, or even ten tongshim structures depending upon how many dead people they represent, arranged around a twelve foot bamboo pole stuck in the centre of the courtyard. A shamba or fedangna dressed in a long white skirt, white blouse, and a hat with feathers on his head and beaded garlands jumps around beating his drum. A couple of teenage boys, hoping to learn the acts of the priest, follow him around beating brass plates. Those who begin to shake hysterically after a while are considered to have been selected by their god and are therefore fit to be taught. Others fail to reach ecstasy and are dismissed.

The tongshim ceremony is performed for the welfare of the dead and the merit of the survivors, and is observed either in the months of October-November or March-April.

Limbu bury their dead on a hill, in a common burial ground of the entire village or of several neighbouring settlements. They erect a stone monument for the body, about five feet long and three feet wide at the bottom with four tiers for a male or three tiers for a female. A one foot high pole is placed on top in the centre. The whole structure is covered with a plaster of cement and left to dry with the date and name of the deceased inscribed on it in the case of a few rich people. Mourning is observed for seven days by the nearest relatives, except after the death of small children. If a young boy dies, mourning is observed for four days, and in the case of a young girl, for three days. A rest platform, chautara, is built and trees are planted with it in the name of the dead along main roads to the village, a practice like that of the Rai. Many Limbus have themangba, a death anniversary ceremony, performed for their dead relatives. For this observance, some people employ Brahman priests and conduct the whole affair as a Hindu shradha.

Sometimes people dying of an accident do not go easily to the land of the dead, but instead they roam around their villages as spirits in the form of an eagle or a monkey. They are called chil-deva, “eagle-god”, or bader-deva, “monkey-god”. Inefficiently conducted funeral rites on the part of the fedangma or shamba
can lead a spirit to become one of these *devas*. The spirits are maintained in a tree where they are offered food regularly by the surviving members of the family.

Limbus abstain from work for a day whenever there is an earthquake. No one ploughs on days of the New Moon or Full Moon, or on days of important festivals.
The Tamangs live in the high hills around Kathmandu Valley to the east, north, south, and west. They are commonly seen on the streets of the capital city carrying large basketloads of goods by the common headstrap, the men and boys dressed in their typical loincloths and long, usually black, tunics and in winter wearing short-sleeved sheep’s wool jackets, always with a khukuri knife stuck in the waistband. Women, seen in lesser numbers, wear a simple cotton sari and blouse adorned with a few ornaments.

Tamangs form one of the major Tibeto-Burman speaking communities in Nepal, and maintain a belief that they originally came from Tibet. No one seems to have any idea how long they have resided on the south slopes of the Himalaya. It is said that originally they were collectively called “Bhote”, meaning Tibetan, and that later on the term “Tamang” was attached to them because they were horse traders. Ta in Tibetan means “horse”; mang means “trader”. “Tamang” has remained, and it is all the better because the term Bhote has come to be a highly objectionable and derogatory term to most Nepalis.

We do not know the exact number of Tamangs today, but the figures found in the official census statistics of 1952-1954 can give us some idea of both population and geographic distribution. Of nearly 500,000 Tamangs registered, almost exactly half were registered in the eastern hills; that is, east of Kathmandu Valley; about 44,000 in the eastern Terai areas; and a little more than 19,000 in Kathmandu Valley. The western hills accounted for over 112,000 with a few scattered families in the central and western Terai areas.

The eastern majority of Tamangs is found in settlements in Bagmati Zone just outside of the hills surrounding Kathmandu Valley, and in the hilly region of both Janakpur and Narayani Zones. Some scattered settlements are found as far east as West Bengal, in the Darjeeling area. In these distant and traditionally non-Tamang areas they have been living close by various other peoples such as Magars, Gurungs, Rais, Limbus, Brahmans, Chhetris, and Newars.

Two groups of people, known as Thami and Pahari, live in traditional Tamang areas of the eastern hills. They number only a few thousand and practise similar social, religious, and economic customs to the Tamangs'.

In Tamang territory a strict kipat land system has been carried down through their various clan divisions over many generations. It has only recently been abolished. In the kipat a clan had exclusive and inalienable communal rights over a large defined settlement and cultivation area. Only members of the
A Tamang woman goes to work
Tamang headman

Dor Bahadur Bista

Tamang boy paints a drum

C. Fürer-Haimendorf
particular clan could hold land or reclaim the uncultivated land within the *kipat* jurisdiction, which included the streams and forests. At the time that *kipats* were abolished, however, there were in fact several clans represented in many single *kipats* due to the great dispersion of clan members in the past. Today, the only *kipat* system legally intact in Nepal is found among the Limbu people. Tamang ex-*kipat* land today is actually owned and farmed by the same people as held *kipats*, only under slightly changed land tenure and taxing arrangements.

Tamangs seem to prefer to live along the slopes of hills at an average altitude of from 5,000 and 7,000 feet above sea level. In some cases they live even higher, and are also found out of their traditional high habitat in the low Terai plains or in the Rapti Valley.

The old Tamang villages have compact, closely built houses, and the streets are usually paved with stones. The houses are well built with cut stone walls and wooden shingle roofs. In a few cases there are even slate roofs. Most of the houses have one storey; the upper level is generally used for storage of grain and other household possessions, while the ground floor is used as a kitchen, dining place and bedroom. There is usually a balcony on the first floor and a verandah beneath it in front of the main entrance. The verandah is used as a living room.

Most Tamangs living in the compact traditional settlements are self-sufficient in food production, although many of them need to borrow money at times. Almost all are the owner-cultivators of their land. In one village of Sindhu-Palchok district of Bagmati zone, we learned that approximately 50 percent of the people borrowed money occasionally. But none of these people were perpetually in debt. This was a village of about 200 houses. Perhaps 20 of the Tamang families in the village loaned money on a short term basis with an interest rate of about twenty percent. They did not collect the interest in cash but always in grain.

Tamangs living outside the traditional Tamang territory are generally very poor. They are not able to grow enough on the marginal land they cultivate, and usually are found going out to earn wages as porters, coolies, domestic servants, muleteers, grooms, and such, in Kathmandu and other towns and villages. As farmers in the area of another ethnic group, they are usually tenant farmers, and being poor, they are found living in low thatched huts.

Tamangs prefer the higher, dryer elevations for living and farming. Their staple crops are maize, millet, wheat, barley, and potatoes. Those who have settled in the lower, warmer, and wetter regions also raise rice. All of them keep a few cows, buffalo, and chickens.

The headman of a Tamang village is called *talugdar*, and acts as an agent of
the government for collecting land revenues. Formerly, under the kipat system, each kipatiya paid five rupees yearly irrespective of the size of his land holdings. But now that the kipat system is abolished, each farmer pays according to the size of his holdings. The current rate of payments is not high.

Tamangs eat what they grow in their own lands, wheat and barley during the months May through July, potatoes in August through October, millet, maize, and some rice from November to April or May. They will not allow buffalo meat, garlic, nettles or paha—the treetoad of the forest—in their houses, although there is no prohibition against eating these things if they are cooked outside in the open or in some other house.

Tamangs are generally very skilled at a number of crafts which they have preserved for ages in their traditional ways. Widespread is the making of woollen jackets of sheep’s wool, worn during the winter months. This type of half-sleeved or sleeveless, open-fronted, thick woollen jacket is made by the Tamang women and found even in the markets of Kathmandu. Also woven are various types of bamboo baskets, receptacles for storing grain, and leaf umbrellas for protection against rain. There are carpenters, masons, builders, and wooden plough makers among Tamang men. Some Tamang Lamas, the Buddhist priests, are well trained in painting Tibetan-type thankas, religious scroll paintings, and some others are expert in carving designs in wood.

Tamangs have not preserved Tibetan art, culture, or religion intact, but almost all that they have today is Tibetan in origin. Those living outside the traditional area retain very little of their original culture, art, or religion, and usually adopt the cultural patterns of their immediate neighbours.

The entire community of Tamangs is vertically divided into several sub-groups, known as thars. Each thar has its own name, twenty-five of which I have recorded here. I suspect that there are more.

Baju      Goley       Moktung       Shyangbo
Bhlon     Gomden     Ngardong     Shyangden
Bomjan    Grandan    Ngarpa       Thing
Chyawa    Lo          Pakhrin      Thokur
Dong      Lopchan    Payen        Titon
Ghising   Moktan     Shingden     Waipa

All of these clans are exogamous, but each clan’s member can intermarry with any other clan’s except in the case of the two clans Goley and Dong who consider themselves to be “brother clans”.
Thami, like their Tamang neighbours, are subdivided into several thars—Rishmi, Angkami, Polorishmi, Dolakhe, Dumpali, Ishirishmi, Dangurishmi, and Shirishmi.

All the members of one clan are said to be descended from the same ancestor. In the case of brother clans their common ancestors were brothers. But as among so many other peoples in Nepal these theories are open to all sorts of questions and no one so far has made any attempt to prove common ancestry genealogically, if indeed it could be done. Theoretically, all the clans are equal in social and ritual status. But the offspring of a marriage between a Tamang man and a non-Tamang woman are considered lower and are not allowed to share the common cup with other Tamangs despite the fact that they take the clan name of their Tamang father. In some places the terms bara jat and athara jat are used to describe the people of higher and lower status respectively. The terms mean literally "twelve clans" and "eighteen clans". Northey and Morris write of the bara jat as being of higher status than athara jat* and Professor C. von Furer-Haimendorf mentions the same thing.** I have not come across these terms in actual use among the Tamangs in the areas I have visited. In any case, intermarriage between these two divisions usually does not take place. This is the only horizontal division in the otherwise completely vertically divided exogamous and patrilineal clans of the Tamangs. Northey and Morris also refer to a clan called murmi.*** I have found no trace of this clan either. In some places, however, the headman of a clan is called mulni.

A Tamang man can marry any girl from any clan except his own or his brother clan. Preferred marriage is between cross-cousins, that is, to one's mother's brother's daughter or his father's sister's daughter. Parallel-cousin marriage of a man to his father's brother's daughter or mother's sister's daughter is not tolerated. Sons and daughters of one's father's brother belong to the same clan as oneself.

A widow can marry her late husband's younger brother but not the elder brother. Polyandry is absolutely forbidden but there are a few cases of polygyny found among some rich men. There is no stigma attached to a young man marrying an elderly widow, or to a divorcee or an unmarried girl becoming pregnant. The love affairs of unmarried girls or boys do not prejudice their future marriages. If the lover of an unmarried pregnant girl refuses to marry her, he can take the

---

*** Northey and Morris, op. cit.
PEOPLE OF NEPAL

baby after it is weaned and pay some compensation to the girl. Then the mother is free to marry another. But marriage or sexual relationships between members of the same clan are never tolerated. Offenders are expelled immediately and have no other choice but to go to an entirely new area to settle.

In the case of wife-abduction, the new husband must pay sixty rupees as compensation to the former husband of the woman he has taken. Adultery is punishable by a fine of 40 rupees which is given to the aggrieved husband as compensation. The husband can keep the wife with him if he so desires after receiving the payment from an adulterer.

Marriages are of the three standard types: arrangement, capture, and by mutual agreement. Only the very rich follow the arrangement practice in selecting partners for their sons or daughters. When done, the couple is usually only fourteen or fifteen years old. When the arrangements are agreed upon the boy's father takes the boy and goes to the girl's parents' house accompanied by 40 or 50 people and brings the bride back to his house where the actual wedding ceremony takes place. The wedding consists of putting the tika mark on the forehead of both the boy and the girl by all senior members of the family and relatives. The neighbours and relatives are fed boiled rice, mutton, or buffalo meat, and given much spirit to drink.

A capture marriage usually occurs when the boy selects a bride who may not consent easily, or in order to avoid the long procedure and expenditure of an arranged marriage. It is done even in the case of preferred cross-cousin marriages to save trouble, time, and expense. If the captured girl persistently refuses to get married for three days, she is allowed to return to her parents. If she agrees, a proper wedding ceremony is organized, and friends and relatives, including the girl's parents, are invited. A girl may be captured from a fair or a market. If her parents take the offence too seriously they approach the boy's family making demands for compensation. Once they are pacified the rest of the procedure follows smoothly.

Most Tamang young people get married by mutual agreement. When a boy and a girl are in love and decide to marry the boy asks his parents to approach her parents for their consent. Once consent is given the wedding can be organized in the same way as in the case of an arranged marriage. If by any chance either the boy's or the girl's parents do not consent to the match the only choice for them is to elope and remain hidden until their parents agree or totally ignore them.

In cases of marriage by capture and by elopement the bride and the groom go to the girl's parents' house only when the parents have given their consent.
Usually they are accompanied on this visit by a party of 20 or 30 people, and their activities are known as zendi. The new couple must take a bottle of spirit as a gift to the girl’s parents. The girl receives dowries from her friends, relatives, and parents. Her parents give brass and copper pots and utensils, clothes, ornaments, and sometimes cattle, while the others give her a rupee or two or even five rupees each. These gifts are called gordha, and the husband must return any of them which he may have appropriated should he divorce his wife later. The amount of gordha usually depends upon the amount her parents are prepared to spend on the feast provided for the guests.

A zendi is usually held within three days of the taking of the girl by the boy. The couple may stay for several days when they come with their friends to the girl’s parents’ house for zendi, while the party itself returns the next day. When the young couple return home they are accompanied by a group of people and carry a gift of a bottle of spirit for the boy’s parents.

If a man has an only daughter and no sons he can bring in a husband for his daughter to inherit his own property. The husband is not subsequently allowed to take another wife, but should he do so while he is enjoying the property of his first wife’s father it automatically goes back to his first wife. Should the wife leave the husband her father has brought in she is not entitled to her father’s property; if she dies, the husband can, with her parents’ permission, marry another woman.

Interestingly, Thami marriage customs are very similar to those of Chepangs living west of Kathmandu.* According to Kesar Lall, Thami marriage is a singular process, at once simple and complicated.

To seek a girl’s hand for his son, Father Thami goes to a girl’s house accompanied by the mijars (village elders and tax collectors). He takes with him four manas (about three and a half pints) of rakshi (rice or millet wine). Consent to the marriage by the girl’s parents takes the form of a feast to the visitors and their own kinsfolk. After this ceremony, known as chardam, the girl simply goes to live with the boy.

However, years later, when the wife will have become a mother and when any one of her children is ready for his or her own betrothal, the mother must undergo a second wedding ceremony. Until she goes through

---

* Some Chepangs maintain the belief that they originated as an off-shoot of the people in Dolakha of the east. Further study into this matter might disclose a relationship with Thami.
it, mijars and relatives would not attend the chardam ceremony for her progeny.

Lamas usually marry the daughters of other Lamas and teach their sons to act as Lamas. "In this way", notes Führer-Haimendorf, "a class of Lamas have grown up and though neither strictly endogamous nor formally privileged, this class now forms an upper stratum distinct from the ordinary cultivators." ** "Lama", however, is a broad term. The priestly class among the Sherpas and all the disciples and monks of any monastery are also popularly called "Lama". There is also a clan called Lama among the Sherpas. All non-Tamangs, when trying to be polite, use the flattering term "Lama" for any Tamang individual.

The Tamangs are professedly Buddhists. There are ghyangs, Buddhist temples, in every village of considerable size. The gods and the religious paintings in the temples are all after the Sherpa style; the religious texts are all in Tibetan script. The few festivals and the ritual ceremonies conducted in the ghyangs are after the proper Buddhist fashion like those of the Sherpas and other northern border people. The Lamas of the Tamang community, trained in these Lamastic Buddhist ritual procedures, are the official priests who conduct different kinds of ceremonies and funerals. In some of the ghyangs they perform chho, a worshipping ceremony on the first days of certain months; for example, chho is observed on the first day of Magh (in mid-January) and in observance of nara, a feast ceremony for the full moon day in August. Most of the ghyangs have an endowment of lands for their maintenance and for giving occasional feasts.

Tamangs inscribe prayers and the names of gods on stone tablets and put them by the roadside framed by a stone wall. These are called hiki. Hikis and manis (chortens of Sherpa style) are built as memorials to dead relatives. When one is completed a big feast is given to the villagers. All of this is supposed to bring some merit which will help both the dead and the person who spends the money and time in the building process. Lamas are employed for such occasions. At the wedding ceremony, however, Lamas are not necessary; they have no role. But they are employed in reciting religious scriptures for the general welfare and at the name-giving ceremony of a new born baby. The name-giving ceremony is done on the seventh day for a girl and the ninth or eleventh day after birth for a boy. Many Tamang Lamas have studied in Sherpa monasteries and a few even in Tibet.

* Kesar Lall, "The Thami", The Rising Nepal (Kathmandu), March 18, 1966.
Other Tamang religious activities include the cult of animal sacrifice, or Jhankrism. Jhankrism is not peculiar to the Tamangs but is found throughout the country among almost all other groups of people. Tamangs call their Jhankri priest bompo. He conducts kyon gyalsi, the "driving away of the spirits", when people fall ill. He worships and sacrifices animals at the shipda than, a shrine for worshipping and offering sacrifices to the earth deity at the time of bhumi puja in the month of Kartik, October-November, and he officiates at other seasonal agricultural rites.

The bompo propitiates gods and spirits whenever necessary. He decides when a lha, a clan deity, should be worshipped and which family has the responsibility. Each clan has its own lha and usually the richer members bear the expenses, but all members of the clan living nearby join in the festivities. Each family attending the ceremony brings its contribution of rice and other food, and some money, so the family giving the ceremony is partly compensated. The lha is usually worshipped between November and February. When proper Lamas worship their clan deity and observe bhumi puja, they do so with offerings of vegetables only; they do not sacrifice any animals.

Tamangs also perform, on rare occasions, a ritual known as phola lhasu, a kind of feast of merit in honour of a clan god. This is extremely expensive. When proper Lamas perform it they avoid animal sacrifices of the type that the Jhankri priest would do, but they give a lavish feast to the villagers and make enormous figures of cooked rice. A phola lhasu can be given by either one individual family or by all the members of a clan resident in one village.

Tamangs observe the Hindu festival of dashain in honour of the goddess Durga by sacrificing goats and chickens and feasting on them.

The Jhankri bompo is usually chosen from among the clan members and is considered that clan's priest, whereas a Lama can be of any clan. The bompo receives one pathi (six to eight pounds) of grain per year from each family in return for the services he renders. He also receives the heads of the animals he sacrifices. The bompo can call the spirits and becomes possessed in order to enable the gods or spirits to speak through him. When he dies his spirit selects a new bompo to take his place.

Between the Jhankri and the Buddhist Lama priests, the Lama ranks higher, commanding greater respect from his clients and enjoying a greater income. But Jhankrism is not less important in the socio-religious life of the Tamang community. At funeral rites only the Lama is entitled to preside, and a Lama must be present at the time of cremation at the traditional site which is always on the top of a
hill. All villagers bring a bundle of firewood, incense, drinks, and rice to the cremation. Then, within 7 to 13 days of death, a funeral ceremony called *sprku tongsi* is done at the convenience of the family survivors. The villagers are invited and given food to eat at this occasion. They bring rice and fifty pice each as their contribution when they come to the feast.

Another ceremony is held some time in the period beginning thirty-five days after the funeral and before six months have elapsed. This ceremony involves much greater expense. Many guests are invited, and they bring rice and a few rupees with them. All these gifts are reciprocal; each family, whenever there is a death in the family, provides a feast for the villagers and receives some food and money. The food and money thus collected is usually not quite enough to meet the entire cost but is of considerable help.

The leader of most social activities of the village is the *mulmi*. He is elected by the people for a definite number of years in some cases, while in others the post of *mulmi* is hereditary. The office is endorsed by the district government. A new *mulmi* is officially appointed by the villagers on the day of *bhumi puja*, the worship of Mother Earth. The *mulmi* is the agent for collecting land revenue from the villagers, from which he receives a certain percentage when he takes it to the district revenue office. He is also entitled to one day’s free labour from each household within his jurisdiction. The *mulmi*, with the help of the village elders, also controls the forest in his area which is the source of firewood and timber for the village houses. He is entitled to settle disputes and to levy fines and punishment except in the case of a few serious punishments: capital punishment, life imprisonment, shaving the head for degradation of caste, or loss of caste, all of which are discharged by a higher government official. Whenever the villagers have complicated caste disputes over marriages between members of unequal caste they invite Lamas to adjudicate.

Tamangs have, unfortunately, been greatly exploited. A few are sending their children to the new free primary schools provided by the government. Some Tamangs are even to be found studying in institutions of higher education, and a few seem to be taking increased interest in political matters.

The numbers of sophisticated and educated Tamangs living in Kathmandu are deceiving. Very few of them represent the Tamang community discussed in the present essay. In most cases the Kathmandu Tamangs of standing are totally detribalised and their families are most likely to have lived in India for two or three generations and to have lost all contact with their places of origin.
The Magars of middle and western Nepal are considered by many to be among the most attractive of hill Nepalis. They lay claim to an exciting role in Nepal's formative history. Their kingdom in ancient times was one of the very strongest of west Nepal in and around Palpa district during the time of the 22 and 24 rajya principalities. Today, Magar communities can be found in the traditional localities of western Nepal, from the high ranging Himalayan valleys to the plains of the Terai, and eastward well into the districts beyond Kathmandu.

Magars have Mongoloid physical features with well proportioned facial contours and a yellowish colour.

Their language, of the Tibeto-Burman family, is relatively developed as compared to some related dialects of Nepal, and is noticeably different even from their closest neighbours, the Gurungs. This is understandable, as Magars have long been in closer contact with the Indo-Aryan speaking Mediterranean-type people, namely the Khas (Chhetri) and Brahman. There are several instances in history where Magar and Khas have fought together under one banner, for one cause, to share the common victory. The 18th century king, Prithvi Narayana Shah of the Thakuri caste, the founder of the modern Kingdom of Nepal, had great confidence in the Khas and Magar troops who together formed the bulk of his military forces. Some Magars believe that they have the same origins as the Thakuris. But this is something which needs more research and exploration. The Bhusal Rana Magars of Gorkha are said to have been in possession of some old manuscripts and copper plates of the former Magar kings. It is also said that they have some genealogies written in the Magar language, and a study of these, if found, might shed more light on their origins.

Bhusal Rana Magars were the traditional authorities and leaders who decided cases and disputes among their people and advised them on many matters. They arbitrated disputes of commensality, breach of tribal endogamy or clan exogamy in marriage, and the like, but some fifty years ago the Bhusals were deprived of their authority and forced by the then Rana government of Nepal to report to the central government whenever such disputes arose.

The original home of the Magars was called Bara Magaran, the twelve regions of Magars, which included all of the hill districts of Lumbini, Rapti, and Bheri Zones. Present day Magar settlements range from Tanhu District of Gandaki Zone westward to include the districts of Palpa, Argha-Khanchi, and Gulmi in Lumbini Zone; Syangja, Kaski, and Parvat in Gandaki Zone; Dolpo,
Myagdi, and Baglung in Dhaulagiri Zone; Rukum, Rolpa, Piuthan, and Sallyan in Rapti Zone; and Dailke and Jajarkot in Bheri Zone. The Magars have spread all along the hills of east Nepal and to a few places in the eastern Terai.

The population report of 1952-1954, although a little out of date, shows the numbers of people speaking Magar language and the pattern of geographical spread. Of the total 273,780, the majority, over 180,000, were counted in the western hills, and some 50,000 in the eastern hills. From the eastern Terai the numbers of Magars declined from over 22,000 to a mere 35 people in the far western Terai, with over 800 more found in Kathmandu valley.

Reasons for this kind of distribution are several. There is a general trend of migration from west to east because the land in the west is old and overcrowded. In addition, many Magar men are skilled craftsmen in masonry, carpentry, building, stonecutting, quarrying, et cetera, and they tend to migrate in search of employment. As evidence of this, there are several sizeable Magar villages in the eastern hill areas near copper mines and slate quarries.

Generally speaking, Magars live in warmer areas than their northern Gurung neighbours, who stay near the high Himalayas for sheep pasturage. Yet there are a few places where even the Magars are high up and in close enough proximity to northern border people to have adopted their dress, customs, and religion, and even Tibetan influence in language.

The basis of Magar economy in all areas is agriculture. Some also work as craftsmen, either as carpenters or stonecutters, as indicated above. However, the copper mines in the east have closed with the importation of less expensive copper sheeting from India. And were it not for their role in the Gurkha regiments of the Indian and British armies, their self-sufficiency might be endangered. Magars constitute the largest number of Gurkha soldiers outside Nepal. Every Magar village has a number of Gurkhas on active duty in India and Malaysia remitting regular money to their families, as well as retired soldiers drawing pensions from various military sources. Quite a number of Magar Gurkhas have attained the ranks of commanding officers, as Colonels and Majors, in Indian and British regiments as well as in the Royal Nepal Army. They are renowned for their honesty, discipline, and good humour, which account for their military success.

The present agricultural economy of the Magars is largely self-sufficient. Besides many varieties of vegetables and fruits, they grow the standard food grains: maize, millet, and wheat in the dry terraced fields surrounding the villages along the higher mountain sides, and rice in the wet fields down the slopes and along the river valleys.
Magar wives collecting wood
Their houses are built according to the style of the areas they live in, a standard which varies from one locale to the next. Most traditional is the two-storey stone house with thatch or in some cases slate roofing. Many of the smaller houses in the western communities are round or oval in shape and washed with ochre or reddish mud. Magar houses in the eastern hills are never round and are most often white washed. They have stone walls, wooden shingle roofs, and are two-storeyed with a verandah along the front.

The Magar tribe has a number of clan divisions known as thars, the members of each of which believe in a common origin. These patrilineal thars are subdivided into strictly exogamous lineage groups. Some clans have many lineages; others have few. As a rule all the clans and lineages are of equal status, although in fact the social levels vary as in other societies. Here are the names of some of the clans and their lineages:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ale</th>
<th>Rumkhami</th>
<th>Rewali</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dudh</td>
<td>Tirkey</td>
<td>Bidari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fengdi</td>
<td>Hiski</td>
<td>Thumsing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suryabansi</td>
<td>Maski</td>
<td>Thapa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Torchaki</td>
<td>Murung Chan</td>
<td>Thanglami</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agri</td>
<td>Pun</td>
<td>Aslami</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benglasi</td>
<td>Prengel</td>
<td>Pulami</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burathoki</td>
<td>Ramjoli</td>
<td>Darlami</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dudh</td>
<td>Sabrey</td>
<td>Raskotip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esmali</td>
<td>Tirkey</td>
<td>Birkatta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gurung Chan</td>
<td>Rakhal</td>
<td>Sinjapati</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gharti</td>
<td>Rana</td>
<td>Gaha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baijali</td>
<td>Bhusal</td>
<td>Saru</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gungja</td>
<td>Khasu</td>
<td>Ghyalang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramjoli</td>
<td>Martu</td>
<td>Fewali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rokaha</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sinjali</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some people consider the Dura people of Lamjung district as Magars, but there is considerable question on this point and more study should be made regarding their origins.

Magars as an ethnic group are endogamous in their marriage rules, much as are all other caste or ethnic groups in Nepal. A few Magar women do marry outside of the group, but the men—unlike Chhetri or Brahman men—almost
always marry within the group. Theoretically, they can marry anyone within the Magar community except members of their own patrilineage or with their own father’s sisters or their daughters. A man can, however, marry his mother’s brother’s daughter, although it is considered proper to avoid this relationship.

A great majority of Magars are in close enough contact with Brahmans and Chhetris to follow Brahman-Chhetri marriage traditions almost exactly. Marriage arrangements are made by the parents of the couple, although there are cases where the young people make their own selection of partners before their parents make the arrangements. There are no preferred marriage partners as among the Gurungs, so the young Magar boys and girls have more freedom of choice than their Gurung peers. But with the ever increasing influence of Brahmans and Chhetris there has been a restricting force set upon their freedom. There are many communities that have not felt this influence and still pattern their marriages on traditional free choice or arrangement. In no case among Magars do we find marriage by capture, a common practice among many other ethnic groups in Nepal.

In a traditional marriage by arrangement, the parents of the boy take the initiative by sending their representatives to the girl’s parents with a bottle of rice beer. When the proposal is accepted, the boy’s parents can arrange a wedding procession consisting of friends and relatives of each party, and hire a musical band. The wedding party is preceded to the girl’s house by the musicians, and all are entertained with food and drink. A similar procession and feast sees the return of the new bride to the boy’s home.

On occasions we find that a boy and a girl have found mutual attraction ahead of arrangements and have moved quietly into the house of a friend or relative of the boy. The boy may or may not have informed his parents for their approval. If he has, then the parents make a special preparation for welcoming the new bride. If the boy’s parents are previously unaware, the couple has to stay in the friend’s or relative’s house until his parents are willing to accept them at which time they volunteer to send representatives to the parents of the bride to seek approval for the marriage. They then invite relatives and neighbours to welcome the new bride home and give the young couple their blessings. The bride and groom receive the red tika mark of curd and rice on the forehead from the groom’s sister’s husband and all others who are senior to the groom in relationship including the father and mother. This part of the ceremony is also common in the case of properly arranged marriages. If a Brahman priest is not employed for the occasion, the boy’s sister’s son or cousin’s son acts as priest.
After several days, when the girl's parents have given their consent, the young couple, in company with three or four friends and relatives, go back to her parents in order to pay respects. This is called duran, and can be done as late as several months afterward, if it is found to be convenient for the boy and his family. His family has to prepare gifts of rakshi liquor, beer, a leg of mutton, and a goat for the bride's parents to be taken along to the duran observance. The new couple spends that night at her parents' house and returns home the following day.

After a few months to a year the couple returns to her parents' house for char tirne, the "paying of dues". With this completed the marriage is fully recognized and given legality. Char tirne must be observed, however belated.

Should that couple be of rich standing they are accompanied to char tirne by a party of 35 to 40 people and must take along a leg of mutton, if not a live goat, and bottles of rakshi. A payment of one and a half rupees, called kakh chodaune, or literally "being separated from the lap" is made to the girl's father. He is also given 22 rupees to distribute among the bride's mother, mother's brothers and sisters, and his brothers. The couple also visits the mother's brother's houses to pay their respects, and present meat, liquor and other foods to them. The following day they return home.

There is one more visit to be made three days following char tirne to the bride's parents' home, for the observance of paile farkaune, the "last return", which concludes the wedding formalities. Gordha, dowries, may be given to the girl by her parents and relatives at this occasion. They consist of copper and brass vessels, jars, silver and gold ornaments, clothes and mattresses, cattle, sheep, goats, etcetera.

Marriage practices among Hindu Magars in close contact with Brahmans and Chhetris are no different from those of the Chhetris. They complete the standard formalities of arrangement by the parents, and swayamvara—the significant ceremony of formally choosing one's husband and the exchanging garlands and gold rings, followed by the wedding procession with the musical band of Damais (tailor caste). The rituals are conducted by Brahman priests, including the kanyadan, or giving-away ceremony, and the other observances of the Hindu form. Only this form is considered proper and is the standard followed by a great many Magars including large numbers who do not have Brahman priests and who do not follow strictly Chhetri marriage tradition.

* See Part I, Brahman, Chhetri, and Occupational Castes of the Hills, for a more detailed discussion of the standard Hindu marriage ceremony.
Over a century ago Brian Hodgson wrote that the Magars are in the main Hindus only because it is the fashion. The majority of Magars are Hindus, and as such they have Brahman priests who lead them in the same pattern of religious practices as the Brahman-Chhetris. With the exception that Magars do not wear the sacred thread, they are in every other respect exactly the same as the Chhetris in their attitudes and behaviour. The fact, however, that there are Magars living near Buddhists in the districts of Myagdi and Dolpo who have adopted Buddhism suggests that it is largely a question of association.

In talking about the association of Magars with the Khas, Hodgson brings in another interesting situation. He writes that although Magars still retain their vernacular tongue, tartar faces, and the like, through association for generations in the military service under the predominant Khas, and through the commerce of Khas males with Magar women, the Magars have acquired the Khas language, though not to the oblivion of their own, and Khas habits and sentiments, but with sundry reservations in favour of pristine liberty.

Magars worship the same gods and goddesses as Brahmans and Chhetris: Vishnu, Mahadev, Ramachandra, Krishna, Ganesh, Lakshmi, Saraswoti, Bhagavati, et cetera. They observe the same festivals of dashain, tihar, sankranti, and others, in addition to which they celebrate a number of tribal occasions, festivals for worshipping clan deities, and other gods and goddesses. Many Magars join the Hindu Kali festival of Gorkha at the old fort of Prithvi Narayan Shah. Thousands of goats are slaughtered at the door of the temple of Kali. Bhatta Brahmans are the temple priests, while Bohra Chhetris and Bhusal Rana Magars are the attendants of Kali.

Hindu Magars observe birth pollution for ten days, with the name-giving ceremony conducted on the eleventh day. The ceremony for shaving the head of a boy is done at the age of five or six years. They always cremate their dead and mourn for thirteen days after the death of the nearest relative. A Brahman priest conducts the funeral and the death anniversaries yearly.

Those Magars who do not employ a Brahman priest have slightly different rules to follow on all occasions. In the place of the Brahman, one may employ one’s sister’s son or a daughter’s husband to preside over the various religious ceremonies. This individual is given gifts of clothing, food, and money for doing the job. The practice of employing the sister’s son or a daughter’s husband as priest

---

** Ibid.
is not entirely peculiar to Magars. Many other groups, especially the occupational castes and the Brahmans themselves, have this system. Those Magars who have not taken Brahman priests observe birth pollution only for three days, and the name-giving ceremony is done on the fourth day. Some among them bury their dead.

Magars seem to be Hinduised to such an extent that they present a difficult and tricky problem for Hindu caste society. In the process of adopting the Hindu religion and social order Magars became as caste conscious and pollution conscious as the Chhetris and Brahmans. But, in traditional Hindu society there is hardly a place for anyone who does not already fit into one or another particular caste. Magars as a tribal group do not have a well defined position in a strictly stratified caste structure.
The Sunwar and Jirel peoples of eastern Nepal are very small ethnic groups compared to the Magar community to which they are considered to be related. Not much is really known of their origins. Some believe that they are offshoots of the Magars, others that they came from Simraungarh in the east Terai. In physical appearance they are quite similar to the Magars, to whom they are neighbours; they are as robust and their womenfolk equally attractive with their round faces and narrow eyes. Sunwar language seems only slightly different from the Magar dialect, but Jirels speak a dialect which is more related to the Sherpa language. One theory which corresponds to the language distinctions is that Jirels are the descendants of mixed Sunwar and Sherpa marriages. Sunwars therefore place the Jirels a step below them in status, although Jirels maintain that they should be ranked as equals. Furthermore, the Jirels exhibit a strong Sherpa influence in social and religious customs, while Sunwars, like many Magars, have been under considerable Brahman and Chhetri influence.

The habitat of Sunwars is along the valleys of the Likhu kholo and of the Khimti kholo. Jirels are found mainly along the Jiri and Sikri valleys. These areas lie in Ramechhap and Dolakha, the two districts of Janakpur Zone, and a small portion of Okhaldhunga district in Sagarmatha Zone. These are the traditional areas of Sunwar and Jirel kipats, which have only recently been abolished and replaced by a more direct government control of lands.

The traditional figure for the number of Sunwar households, including Jirels, is 700. Now, in fact, there are many more scattered throughout the eastern hills. The total number of Sunwars and Jirels and their geographic distribution is shown in the 1952-1954 government census report. Although considerably outdated these figures are the only ones available and do show at least an approximate number and a habitat pattern. At the time of the census, all Jirels, numbering nearly 3,000, lived in the Jiri area, and of the 17,299 Sunwars just over 16,000 lived in the eastern hill areas listed above. Of the remainder, the majority were registered in the eastern Terai, with, oddly, one registered in Kathmandu Valley.

Sunwars and Jirels are peasant farmers who cultivate the hill slopes and river valleys. Many Sunwars are recruited into the Gurkha regiments of the British and Indian armies, as well as into the Royal Nepal Army. These military activities give support to their meagre economy. Jirels, it seems, are not accepted or not attracted into the military service, leaving them at a comparative economic and
social disadvantage. In a random sampling of one of the Sunwar villages five percent of the total population were found to be serving in the military. Another five percent were drawing pensions from past service, and three percent were at the time in India at various other jobs unrelated to the military.

During the Rana regime, twelve Sunwar villages united and approached the government with a petition, whereby, should they be given permission to practise Hinduism and employ Brahman priests they would relinquish the taxfree status of the wet fields of their traditional kipat lands. To this effect the Shah King awarded them a lalmochar certificate.

Both Sunwars and Jirels grow enough rice, wheat, maize, barley, millet, and corn, in addition to a variety of vegetables and fruits to make them almost self-sufficient. With income from outside sources they can afford to buy necessary clothing and domestic goods. Many from these communities travel seasonally to Assam, Bhutan, and Sikkim to work in road construction gangs and on other government projects, returning each spring. Some stay behind, never to come home.

Since 1958, a SATA (Swiss Association for Technical Assistance) multipurpose development project has had some effect in helping to improve the conditions of the Jirel peoples of the Jiri-Sikri valley. A number of Jirels have been trained as carpenters, stonecutters, and builders while employed by the project. With the wages earned they have been able in large measure to pay off old property mortgages to the money lenders. In addition to the jobs created by the multi-purpose project, new schools have been opened up for Jirel children.

Sunwar and Jirel houses are solidly built and look very impressive from the outside. The structures are of stone and mud and have one storey above the ground level with room enough for living space and storage. Sheds are built separately for keeping their few livestock animals. Many houses have carved wooden windows painted black against the whitewashed walls. Roofs are usually of wooden shingles although a few have slate and others are thatched with straw.

Traditional dress of these two groups is, for the men, the typical hill Nepali clothing: tapered trousers tied at the waist and a tied or buttoned blouse sometimes topped with a western suit jacket; women wear velveteen blouses and colourfully designed saris with gold ornaments in their noses and ears and on their wrists and fingers. The men usually carry a khukuri knife in their waistband when they travel out of the village. In a small purse inside the sheath of the khukuri they carry the necessary materials for making fire—a small flint, some dried flammable fibre, and a small piece of striking steel.
Sunwars and Jirels, among themselves, use the classifying terms *bara thar* and *das thar* respectively. *Bara thar* and *das thar* mean literally the "twelve clans" and "ten clans", but in fact there are not just ten or twelve clans. The names today are just used to show differing social categories. By tradition the *bara thars*, Sunwars, employ Brahman priests and practise Hinduism, while the *das thars*, the Jirels, practise Lamaistic Buddhism.

Some of the clans under *bara thar* and *das thar* are listed here:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><em>Bara Thar</em> (Sunwar)</th>
<th><em>Das Thar</em> (Jirel)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brachey</td>
<td>Deppacha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bamana yata</td>
<td>Devlinga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chavey</td>
<td>Chhungpate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dargarcha</td>
<td>Jhupucha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durbicha</td>
<td>Mayokpa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garshe jata</td>
<td>Sherva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gongrucha</td>
<td>Thavo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halocha</td>
<td>Turpito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jhainti</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jijicha</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katicha</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mulicha</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novlimcha</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rahachey</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each of the clans are exogamous within the two groups of Sunwar and Jirel which are themselves endogamous. A clan member must marry outside of his own clan, but not outside the group as a whole. There are, however, cases where these marriage rules have been broken and *bara thar* clans people have married into *das thar* clans people. Cases of Sunwar women marrying completely outside, with Chhetris, are also found.

Sunwars and Jirels do not allow cross-cousin marriages, a practice common among Gurungs, for instance, but there are allowances for one who wishes to marry his wife’s younger sister or wife’s brother’s daughter. Even junior levirate is practised, wherein a man can bring in his elder brother’s widow in marriage. Widow remarriage and the second marriage of women whose husbands have deserted them for several years are found quite frequently. In the village of Okhre along the Khimti river valley, 25 percent of the total were found to be second marriages for women.
Most marriages are done with mutual agreement of the young people themselves, although the two other familiar forms of marriage, capture and agreement, are not unknown. It is not uncommon for Sunwars to bring in and marry somebody else's wife. In such cases of abduction the man always has to capture the girl involved even though she has consented previously to join him. In this way she is not considered a cheap woman by society for running off of her own volition. A compensation of 60 rupees is paid to the offended husband, the rate set by an old government law, but in fact the previous husband often demands and the abductor often pays a much larger amount.

If a Sunwar brings in a Jirel wife, contrary to preferred endogamy of the two groups, he can take her into his kitchen with the consent of his collaterals if he summons them and gives them a feast as a fine for ignoring the rules of group endogamy.

A capture marriage, or a marriage by elopement, has to be formalized and given legal and social recognition by the boy paying respect to the girl's parents within a fortnight or so. Until this formality is completed the young couple must remain hidden. They can return to their bridal home, his home, only after both pairs of parents involved give their approval. But resentment on the part of the boy's father does not present as serious a problem as the objection of the girl's parents does. In some cases the parents of the girl go and retrieve their daughter from the boy and may give her away to another in marriage. It is no disqualification for a girl to be captured and retrieved by her parents; in fact, it often increases her worth and importance as a marriage prospect.

In the case of a MARRIAGE by arrangement the usual practices of the Chhetris are observed with a few minor variations. The arranged marriages have four stages of completion. First, theki chardam is observed, whereby the boy's parents send gifts of insurance to the girl's parents after knowledge of the girl's parents' consent for the match has been received. Theki chardam gifts consist of a goat, a chicken, millet beer, salt, mustard oil, tumeric, and one rupee in cash. All items mentioned are given in specific and locally standard weights and measurements. These gifts confirm the future matrimonial relationship between the two families.

The intermediary who has taken the food gifts to the house of the prospective bride kills the goat and chicken, roasts the meat, and prepares the beer and mixes mustard oil with it. Then a priest, called a naso, invokes the ancestor gods of the girl's family and offers the food to them, after which the intermediary distributes the meats and beer to the family and any other relatives present for feasting. The
rupee is given to the girl’s father’s nearest agnatic male kin who is called *karsinge daju-bhai* and acts as the chief representative of the girl’s father throughout the marriage transactions. He makes the formal speech announcing that the marriage negotiations have been settled, naming the boy and his father and the girl and her father, the date of the proposed marriage, and the auspicious hour.

Considerable time may pass before the actual wedding. Two or three months prior to the decided wedding date the boy’s parents are supposed to send *biha theki* to the prospective bride’s house. *Biha theki*, the “wedding gift”, consists of more millet beer and a small basketful of dried fish or, even better, a dried pheasant if one is available. An *athapat* is included with *biha theki*. It is simply a piece of paper on which is written the specific dates and hours of the wedding ceremony as prescribed by an astrologer.

On the wedding day similar gifts must be sent along to the girl’s house in addition to many other things considered essential for a proper ceremony. An earthen jar filled with millet beer is sent in company with the same persons involved in the preceding transactions. The marriage procession consists of 100 or 200 people preceded by the groom and a musical band of Damais (tailor caste). Various specific gifts are taken with the groom to be presented to prescribed relatives of the girl: one bottle of rakshi, a leg of mutton, and two and one half rupees are given to the bride’s mother; a wooden jug of curd, a goat, and one half rupee are given to the bride’s father; and a goat is presented to the *karsinge daju-bhai* for his role as intermediary on her father’s behalf. The bride receives ornaments and clothing from the groom.

From this point on the wedding ceremony and ritual are almost identical to the Chhetri standard. A Brahman priest presides.

The final and fourth stage of the arranged Sunwar marriage is the post-wedding observance, concluding the occasion. On the day after the bride is brought home to the boy’s house his family provides a feast for all the relatives to introduce the new bride. The groom himself goes round in the morning inviting people to come for the afternoon feast. He distributes areca nuts to all the male relatives as invitations. To the female relatives he recites an oral invitation, but they receive gifts of five or ten pice from the bride when they arrive.

The feast is usually of beaten rice, boiled rice, mutton, and pork, and large quantities of spirit for drinks. Following the afternoon festivities the couple leaves for the bride’s parents’ home with gifts and spends a night or two there. They take a bottle of spirit, more beer, and a basket of rice bread. On the sixteenth day
after the wedding this sort of visit is repeated, and the wedding is formally considered complete.

A Sunwar bride receives dowries of pots, pans, ornaments, clothes, cattle, and goats depending upon the economic status of her parents and her parents' relatives who present the dowries.

Sunwars are becoming increasingly Hinduised, while Jirels remain within the Buddhist tradition. Their religious acts and performances are not strongly influen-
ced but they retain the use of their respective Brahman priests and Lamas. The Jirel Lamas are either Sherpas or Jirel Lamas who have been trained by
the Sherpas. Both groups observe the Hindu festival of dashain in honour of the
goddess Durga, tihar, and other important religious festivals found observed by
Hindu peoples throughout Nepal. In addition, each clan has its own deity which
is worshipped once annually by all the clan members together at a specified site. Some clans gather to worship their deity in the forest, while others do it in one
member's house. The date for clan deity worship is either the full moon day of
baisakh (mid-April to mid-May) or the full moon day of mangsir (mid-November
to mid-December). A priest from among the clan, called a phombo, if Jirel, or
naso, if Sunwar, presides and conducts the worship.

Both communities cremate their dead and employ Brahmans or Lamas, whichever the case, to conduct funerals. Birth rites, weaning rites and other such
life rituals are conducted by their respective priests. The Brahman priests of Sun-
wars are said to only conduct rituals outside of the house, never within. The Sherpa Lama for Jirel religious ritual is not allowed to touch anything. He is only to recite
the appropriate books and instruct others in the necessary activities involved.

In the case of funerals, the son or nephew of the deceased person is supposed
to conduct all activities necessary for the funeral, under instruction of the priest or
Lama. Mourning is observed for eleven days by the nearest relatives.
GURUNG

Gurungs are a hardy hill people living along the southern slopes of the Annapurna Himalaya in west-central Nepal. Their traditional territories extend from Gorkha District east through Lamjung and Kaski to Syangja District, all in Gandaki Zone. Gurungs are also found north along the Kali Gandaki river above the important town of Baglung in Baglung district of Dhaulagiri Zone, along the Marsyangdi river in Manang development district, and along the Buri Gandaki valley. Of late many Gurungs have migrated southward into the Rapti Valley of the Inner Terai to take up a new life on fertile land recently cleared of malaria.

The Gurungs are related ethnically to their neighbours the Magars and Thakalis, and even to the Kiranti tribes of eastern Nepal. They, with their Magar and Khas counterparts, formed the bulk of the Shah armies, the original Gurkhas, which swept across Nepal to conquer Kathmandu Valley in 1768 and to unite the Kingdom under one rule. Today every Gurung village boasts of many young men in the Gurkha regiments of the British and Indian armies, and in the Royal Nepal Army and police forces as well.

The bulk of Gurung population is centered in the two districts of Lamjung and Kaski. The census of 1952-1954 recorded the number of Gurung-speaking people at close to 163,000, over ninety percent of whom lived in the western hills. The remainder are spread throughout Nepal in small numbers east to west. These numbers are certainly inaccurate at this date, especially since the opening of the Rapti Valley to settlement, but they are significant for pointing out that among Gurungs, as in every other group in Nepal, there has been some geographic migration.

This wide distribution of the Gurungs within the country is not as easily explicable as that of the Newar and Thakali trading communities or of professional groups like the Brahmans. Unlike Brahmans and Chhetris, very few Gurungs intermarry with non-Gurung women, so they remain very much the same in their ways of life. Wherever they are, their economy is based mainly on agriculture and sheep breeding. They grow rice, wheat, maize, millet, and potatoes. The lower parts of their terraced fields are irrigated and sown with rice in summer and wheat in winter. The upper parts of the cultivated area are dry and support the remaining crops. These higher dry fields surround the villages, which are usually situated either at the top of a hill or on a slightly sheltered sunny slope near the top. In addition to growing cereals and potatoes they keep sheep as a source of meat and wool. High alpine pastures are occupied along the slopes of
A Gurung girl
Gurung girl dancing

A Gurung lady
Gurung hill village in Lamjung

Dor Bahadur Bista
Ghado dance of the Gurungs

Dor Bahadur Bista

Gurung boys rest on their way to work

D. Messers
Annapurna, Lamjung, and Himal Chuli during the warm months of the year. Each village has two to six flocks of sheep depending on its size. One flock usually consists of 200 or 300 sheep.

Every Gurung family owns a dozen or so sheep and they combine to employ three or four herdsmen who look after the whole flock. These herdsmen, who use fierce mastiffs as sheepdogs, travel along river valleys covering a large area from alpine grasslands to the warmer lowlands of the inner Terai. They take their sheep to higher pastures in April and keep them there till September. At the beginning of October they take the flocks down to their villages, where they take part in the festival of dashain. During dashain every family slaughters a ram and has a big family feast with many of other kinds of entertainment. As soon as the dashain festival is over, the flocks are taken down to the warmer valleys where they stay until February or March.

Whenever Gurung shepherds take their sheep to the pasture areas of the high Himalayas they have to pay taxes to the local villages which have the exclusive grazing rights in these pastures. But when sheep are kept on fallow land waiting to be ploughed, they need not pay any tax as the fields are fertilized by the accumulating dung and the urine. When shepherds are on the move they need not pay for stays up to three days even in high pastures, but they must pay if they intend to stay for more than three days in one place.

Shearing is done twice a year, in March or April and in September or October. Eighty percent of the lambs born die each year. This is a great loss, for lack of veterinary services. Gurungs also keep buffalo and cows in addition to their sheep. The cattle do not move with the sheep but are kept in the villages or close by in the fields the year round.

The most important source of Gurung family income is from the pensions and salaries of those who become soldiers. A great majority of Gurungs join the Indian and the British armies and go to various parts of India, to Malaysia, and to England. A small number join the Royal Nepal Army. Only an insignificant few take any other kind of paid employment.

Gurungs who do not go out in search of army service stay at home to look after their cultivation and livestock and to make trips to the border regions, both Indian and Tibetan, for salt in exchange for foodgrains. Some people take ghee north to exchange for Tibetan sheep's wool and Himalayan goat's hair. The rate of exchange has generally been equal weights of ghee and wool. Trade routes extend along the upper valleys of the Kali Gandaki, Marsyangdi, and Buri Gandaki rivers.

Traditional dress of the Gurung men includes a short blouse tied across the
front, and a short skirt of several yards of white cotton material wrapped around the waist and held by a wide belt. Gurung men and boys who have been in contact with the military and they are in the majority now wear neatly pressed shorts and shirts, and often a military cap or beret with their regimental insignia affixed. On special occasions or when entertaining visitors to the village, the ex-soldiers turn out in their full military attire complete with an array of medals earned in battle. They are proud to have served overseas, many of the eldest during World War I in France and Germany, and others during World War II campaigns in the North African deserts, Italy, France and Germany, and in the battle areas of South-East Asia against the Japanese. Present day Gurkha contingents have seen action from Kashmir to North Borneo in Malaysia.

Gurung women have not cast off their traditional costume, despite their own contact with the outside through husbands and fathers. They must always wear a cotton or velveteen blouse tied at the front and a sari skirt of printed material, usually of a dark reddish colour. Their ornaments include gold and coral necklaces, which represent the wealth of their husband and gold ear and nosering s given to them traditionally at the time of marriage. Their ears and noses are pierced when they are small girls. Like almost all women of Nepal, they delight in coloured bangles.

The young women and girls are notably flirtatious with young men and even strangers; they will call out jokes and make coy advances to the traveller passing by the fields where they are working, or through a village, and they can be heard laughing and joking loudly among girls and boy friends while fetching firewood on the forested hillsides. They are generally a very attractive people, with round faces, bright eyes, and broad smiles.

A Gurung community is divided into two main groups known as char-jaat and sora-jaat, or literally “four clans” and “sixteen clans”. The char-jaat group is considered higher in status than sora-jaat. These two groups do not intermarry under normal circumstances; they are distinctly endogamous units divided into strictly exogamous clans. Char-jaat do constitute four distinct clans, but sora-jaat, although they may have started at one time with sixteen, now contain more than sixteen exogamous clans. And, although a great many Gurung villages house both groups, as in Lamjung for example, social intercourse is limited because the char-jaat villages are more exclusive, representing at times only one or two of the four clans, and they are situated on the high ridges close to the alpine pastures. Lamjung’s sora-jaat, on the other hand, are found farther south in close proximity with the Magars, and practise farming almost to the total exclusion of shepherding.
Char-jaat clans are Ghale, Ghodane, Lama and Lamichane. Sora-jaat clans include Ghyabre, Kyabche, Kurumchhe, Jangre, Thorje, Dorjali, Railami, Foju, Chormi, Pom, Thin, Migi, Khatra, Yoj, Paingi, Kholali, Sogun, and Thorjami.

Ghales are the aristocrats among Gurungs. They and Ghyabres follow many Brahman-Chhetri ritual taboos and do not, for instance, eat the meat of chicken or buffalo, as other Gurungs do. Some Ghales believe that they originally came from Tibet, while some other Gurungs maintain that all came from India. Both of these theories are questionable. Gurungs may well have been in the Himalayan regions for a considerable period of time, as have been so many other hill tribes of Nepal.

Some of the Gurung clans are subdivided into pads, families. For example, Ghale-pads are: Rildung, Geldung, and Samare. Ghyabre-pads are: Tu, Puru, Ko, and Kidu. For each pad, or sometimes for a whole clan, there is a headman whom Gurungs call chiva. His house is the "leader's house", or chiva-ti, or "head house," kra-ti. Members of the pad or of the clan assemble in this house on various occasions. On the tika day of dashain every clan member arrives with the head of a ram he has slaughtered, and feasting and festivities follow. To meet the expenses of this particular feast, a piece of land is set aside to remain in the charge of the chiva. The field is called kra-marung, the "head field".

Clan observances related to the chiva and his house are still a common practice among the Ghale, but other Gurung clans have given up the tradition and do not go to the chiva-ti with the ram's head. Some may send just the ears of the sheep and not bother to present themselves.

Should a feud or quarrel divide a pad or clan, and should the rebellious members wish to separate, they can establish their own head house, and divide the head field as well.

Marriage arrangements among Gurungs are unique. By tradition, the practice of cross-cousin marriage is preferred, but the young boys and girls are given full opportunity to make their own choice. All cross-cousins, that is both father's sister's daughters and mother's brother's daughters are possible marriage partners for a boy, the father's sister's daughter is much preferred. Among some Gurungs it is even a custom to pay compensation of thirty rupees to the other party if one does not wish to marry one's own cross-cousin. Marriage partners can be found both inside and outside the home village. In one of the villages where the number of marriages were counted, some forty percent of them had taken place within the village and sixty percent with other villages.

There are a number of other tribes in Nepal among whom marriage is by choice. Members can marry anyone they like within their tribe except those who
fall within prohibited categories, usually the parallel-cousins. But whenever there is a system of preferred marriage, there is normally no question of making a choice. It is predetermined who should marry whom. For example, among the Thakalis, the preferred partner for a boy is his mother’s brother’s daughter. But marriage is by capture not by mutual agreement (see Thakali). Among Gurungs, however, the institution of rodi gives ample opportunities for the young boys and girls to develop mutual understanding and love, but their minds have been so conditioned that they most often find attraction only in their cross-cousins. Marriages of parallel-cousins are, however, strictly prohibited. This means that a boy cannot marry his father’s brother’s daughter, nor can he marry his mother’s sister’s daughter.

When a boy chooses a girl either the expected candidate or someone else informs his parents. His parents then send one of their friends or male relatives as their representative to the girl’s parents’ house with a present of one rupee and a bottle of spirit. The visitors are entertained with food and drink if the girl’s parents accept the proposition but are curtly dismissed if they do not. When the girl’s parents have agreed, the boy can make arrangements to fetch the bride at his convenience. Usually he goes with one of his friends to the girl’s house and escorts her home. But nowadays some people arrange a party and a musical band to go in a procession to fetch the bride.

After the bride is brought home a feast is given to the villagers and relatives. The bride stays for only two or three days and then returns to her parents’ house where she stays for another four or five years. During this period both she and her husband keep going backwards and forwards visiting each other and spending a night or two together in either of the two houses. This goes on until she has a child after which the boy arranges to fetch the bride back to his house permanently. When the girl is finally taken to her husband’s home she is given a dowry by her parents. The dowry consists of copper and brass cauldrons and water jars, sheep and cattle, and clothes and ornaments.

A year or two after the birth of a son to this new couple the boys of the village come together for the ceremony and dance of putpute. It is done in the courtyard of the house in which the parents of the baby are living. The dancers are paid twenty to fifty or sixty rupees according to the status of the baby’s father. The money is spent later on a feast. The brother and other near relations of the baby’s mother bring presents of clothes, ornaments and food for the child. There is one more ceremony, hair cutting, when the boy is five or six years of age. For this occasion the boy is tied with a rope round his neck to a wooden
post as is a cow or a buffalo. His hair is cut and after he is untied his mother shouts "Suri, Suri" from inside the house as if she were calling a cat. The boy enters the house responding to his mother’s call saying "mi-yaon, mi-yaon" as if he were a cat. A feast follows.

Ghyabre are the priests of all except Lama Gurungs who have priests among themselves. One of the jobs of a priest is to officiate at the christening rite of a newborn baby. This is done on the eleventh day after the birth. Ghyabres also conduct the funeral service and a post-funeral service called pa-ye.

There are two ways of disposing of dead bodies, cremation and burial. By studying the position of the constellations at the moment of death the priest decides the method of disposal of the body.

There is a common burial ground for the deceased of a village. If the ground becomes crowded an old grave may be dug up and the bones removed to make room for the new body, but it must be a grave belonging to the same family as the dead person. When a grave is dug some rice grains are scattered before the body is lowered into it. A small piece of gold or silver is put into the mouth of the body and some food and liquor is put on top of the body before the grave is filled with earth.

For cremations a hollow, round stone structure is built with holes near the bottom through which firewood can be placed. The dead body is put on top and the wood thrust in from below and lighted. Gurungs have separate burials for those who die in an accident. The funeral shroud is always provided by an affinal kinsman, that is, a wife’s brother or mother’s brother for a male and a brother for a married woman. The funeral ceremony is attended by sisters and other female relatives of the deceased. Death pollution lasts for thirteen days, and affects all the brothers, brother’s sons, and other close relatives who observe mourning during this time. The decedent’s son observes mourning for six months or a year. The mourner does not eat meat or drink any liquor. For the thirteen days of mourning after a death the close relatives do not eat any salt. The dead together with other dead ancestors are offered food until the final ceremony of pa-ye is done for them. Their ancestor-god is offered food near the family hearth inside the house.

Pa-ye, the final rite for the dead relative, is performed about one year following death. It consists of making an effigy of white cloth on bamboo sticks three feet long. This effigy is draped with gold ornaments and is known as the pla, representing the dead person. The Ghyabre priest addresses the spirit of the dead and finally sends it off to a place called lanasa. Lanasa is somewhere in the north
and is comparable to the swarga, "heaven", of Hinduism. Once the spirit is admitted to lanasa its surviving relations need not worry about it. Because the pa-ye is an expensive affair requiring the slaughter of sheep and a feast for neighbours and relatives, several families may perform it together at their convenience even several years after the death.

As there is such a long interval between the death and the final ceremony of pa-ye, the spirit may give trouble to the surviving members of its family. To appease it the family makes a small shrine up on the hill and offers food to the spirit. The shrine is a small rectangular niche about one foot square and six inches deep. This niche is pulled down after pa-ye has been completed, as the spirit is supposed to have gone to lanasa and cannot come back to give any more trouble.

Whenever there is a death in the village members of the funeral party take food to the niches of their dead relatives. While the service of pa-ye is being conducted they tie the pla effigy with one end of a rope, the other end of which is taken outside the house to the courtyard where it is tied to a lamb. The sex of the lamb must be the same as that of the dead person. The lamb is fed during the service and finally taken to a crossroad of the village where it is slaughtered. All the neighbours and relatives invited for the occasion bring clothes or ornaments and put them around the pla. At the end of the service all this is taken by the officiating Ghyabre priest. Finally the Ghyabre closes the way back from lanasa by sacrificing a chicken on a path lest the spirit become nostalgic and make an attempt to come back to this world and give more trouble to his surviving family members. Some male relatives arrange syarga, a dancing performance in honour of the dead person on this occasion. In some cases the syarga is done on the day of death before the corpse is taken out of the house. Some villages have the system of collecting people in their head house before they all go to a funeral procession and of coming back again to the same house once the funeral procession is over before they finally disperse.

Sometimes Gurungs build a stone chautara for resting along a main trail. They plant trees on it and dig a small water storage pond for cattle beside it in the name of a dead relative. Many others build similar resting places in order to acquire merit. A big feast is given at the same time. So while travelling in these areas one finds quite a number of such chautaras and ponds. Some women observe widowhood and do not marry again after the death of their husband. But widow remarriage is recognized. Those who observe widowhood break the glass bangles and take off their necklace of small glass beads which are the sign of a married
woman. A man can marry the widow of his elder brother. Brothers get an equal share of the parental property although the youngest of the brothers gets a little more than the rest.

Some Gurungs have now taken Brahman priests just as some other peoples, Some Magars for instance, have adopted the Lamaistic form of Buddhism. Even today there are a few Gurung Lamas educated in Lamaistic practice in the districts of Manang and Larkye. A Gurung boy has been recognized as an *avatari*, a reincarnation of a Lama of one of the monasteries in the border region. Some older villages still have *chortens* to be seen, but those who have come into contact with the Brahmans and Chhetris have become more Hinduized and caste conscious than others.

In Kaski and Lamjung, Gurungs live in small, round, oval or rectangular houses clustered together in a village. A village of average size has one hundred and fifty to two hundred houses. The biggest Gurung village, Siklis in Kaski, has seven hundred houses. The houses are built of irregular stones cemented with mud and have either slate or thatched roofs.

Gurungs are clearly Mongoloid in their features and yet easily distinguished from the real Tibetans living further north in the border settlements. Those in the original districts of Kaski and Lamjung speak a Tibeto-Burman tongue while others who have settled elsewhere, especially those living to the east of Kathmandu, have lost their mother tongue and speak Nepali. Giving an account of both the Gurung and Magar, Brian Hodgson, in one of his essays, says: “From shedding themselves less early and heartily to Brahmanical influences than the Khas (Chhetri) they have retained, in vivid freshness, their original languages, physiognomy and, in a less degree, habits”.*

Beside the clan heads there are administrative headmen for every village. Their duty is to collect revenue for the government and take it to the district headquarters. Their other duty is to cater for touring government officials. For both of these services they receive a certain percentage of the revenue income. They used to receive free labour for the cultivation of their own fields but now the people have been relieved of this obligation by the government.

The villagers sometimes form an *ad hoc* council for settling small, local problems. But the institution has not been very effective so far. They go to the government courts for anything they cannot settle themselves in the village. Some villages have a community house built in the middle of

---

the village. This house, which is called *thandi*, serves as the village council's meeting house and also for the occasion of dancing by the girls in the village.

The Gurungs have a very interesting dance tradition. They used to have two types of dance—*sorathi* and *ghado*. But in Kaski and Lamjung the *sorathi* is dying out. There is a season for dancing, starting on *Shripanchami* day in January and lasting through February, March, and April until the day of *chandi-purnima*. During this period they can dance at any time they like, but they usually do so on the days when they abstain from their agricultural work. They abstain from work on days of festivals, the new moon, and full moon and whenever somebody dies in the village and the day following the first hailstorm of Spring. The dance is performed by two unmarried girls. Before the actual performance starts the floor is cleaned with a cow-dung and earth wash and the performers sit with their eyes closed and mouths shut. Then they are said to become possessed by ancestor-spirits for their performance.

On the first day of the dance season the guardian-teacher of the dancing girls invokes several other gods. These gods are supposed to stay with them until he sends them back at the end of the season, which is the full moon day of April. In addition to the guardian-teacher there is a woman director who teaches the girls the movements of the dance. The girls are recruited into the dancing group at the age of nine, ten or eleven, and remain till they are eighteen or nineteen when they get married. They must remain in the group for an odd number of years and should never leave when they have been in it for an even number. Most girls remain in it for five or seven years.

*Rodi* is another interesting Gurung institution. This is a club for boys or girls of more or less the same age—usually ten or eleven—under the supervision of an adult. The adult, an experienced elderly woman for the girls and a man for the boys, volunteers to help them and allows them to use his or her house as a dormitory. This house is then called the *rodi-ti*. It is not a permanent dormitory as some Indian tribes have, but the meeting place of one group only; other groups have other dormitories. Nor do all children in the village necessarily join a *rodi*. Those who are in a *rodi* remain together until they are seventeen or eighteen, when they get married. In the evenings girls bring their rugs and blankets and sleep in their dormitory every night except during the monsoon; the boys usually spend their evenings in the girls' dormitory and come back late to sleep in their own. The seniormost member of a *rodi* acts as *chiva*, the leader. The members are called *rog yo me*. The male and female guardians of the *rodi* are known as *ueva*.
ava and neva ama respectively. The membership usually consists of twelve to fifteen young people.

All the members of a rodi usually work together in the fields, or go together to fetch wood from the forest. Sometimes one rodi invites another rodi from a different village to help them working in the fields. Sometimes a boys' rodi makes a long trip to visit a girls' rodi in a distant village. However, they do not go to an entirely strange village where they do not know anyone, but always to a village where at least one or two girls are acquainted with the boys of the visiting rodi. The boys' rodi is there entertained for two or three days with buffalo or goat's meat, chicken, and other delicacies which the girls take pride in preparing. The neva ama and ava of the host rodi together help organise everything during such occasions of entertainment. During their stay the boys may work in the fields during the day, if it is an agricultural season, and enjoy the feast in the evening. At the end of their visit the boys make presents of money, bamboo-pipes for holding cigarettes, or bamboo-combs which they make with great skill. Whenever the rodi girls go to a fair or pay a visit to a place of religious interest they are accompanied by the neva ava as a guardian. One such trip is made to Phewa Tal, a large lake near Pokhara on Magh Sankranti, the first day of Magh (mid-January to mid-February).

When one of the rodi girls gets married all the fellow members of her rodi, except Ghale and Lamicchane girls, accompany her while she is taken to her future husband's house. Some of the girls stay overnight with her while others return the same day if the village is near enough. All these girls are presented with money by the bridegroom. Those who return the same day receive a rupee each while others spending the night receive five to seven rupees each.

In these hilly areas, where there is no other entertainment or recreation as there is in cities, the rodi is an ideal substitution and is, in fact, much more lively and entertaining. The young people in their free and frank intercourse without self-consciousness or inhibitions are in a much more enviable position than their counterparts in the cities.
The Thakali people come from Thak Khola, the high valley of the Kali Gandaki River four to six days’ walk northwest of Pokhara in western Nepal. To the traveller in and around Pokhara on almost every main route Thakalis are familiar people and their bhattis, the trailside “inns”, are convenient stops for lunch, tea, or the evening rice meal and night’s sleep. Few outside visitors realize, however, that these bhattis are only temporary establishments during the winter season of travel, and are in fact, only one facet of the interesting and adventure-some Thakali social and economic structure. Their homes at Thak Khola lie along a valley which cuts its way through between the Annapurna and Dhaulagiri Himalayas. It is in Thak Khola that we find the transition from Hindu Nepal of the middle hills to Buddhist Nepal of the mountains and northern border region, and the jump from lush subtropical vegetation to the edge of the high and dry Tibetan plateau.

The Thakali have regular Mongoloid features with round faces, flat noses, high cheek bones, narrow eyes, and yellow skin pigmentation. Their language belongs to the Tibeto-Burman family, along with related dialects of Gurung, Magar, and the like. This tribe has spread since the late nineteenth century all along the Kali Gandaki Valley from the present site of Tukche, and even from Jomosom to the north in Panchgaun, south through the middle hills into the district of Bhairawa in the Terai, and along several other tributary valleys even to the upper Marsyangdi Khola in the east near Gorkha. There are two apparent reasons for this distribution. One is that some one hundred years ago in the mid-nineteenth century Thakalis were awarded the monopoly over the Tibetan salt trade. For this sole right they paid over twelve thousand rupees collectively to the government. Many Thakalis, however, who found it hard to pay such high taxes left the area and went to live in the middle range valleys where the people paid very little revenue and depended on agriculture, unlike the almost purely trading population of Thak Khola. The second reason is that the Thakalis have developed into one of the most successful long-distance trading groups in Nepal and, as a result, they invest money in almost any undertaking which looks good

*The present study of the Thakalis is based on research work done in Thak Khola by Professor Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf and myself as his research assistant. I am grateful for his valuable suggestions and, indeed, for the permission to publish my work before his monograph on the Thakalis comes out. This research was made possible by the generous grant of the National Science Foundation of the United States of America.
A Thakali village on the bank of Kali Gandaki.
to them, be it the purchase of cultivated land, money lending, opening a new shop, bidding for a government contract, or the like. In so doing they spend more and more time outside Thak Khola and in time many have left the home area for good to settle wherever they found it most convenient for their trade and profession. Pokhara, in the bustle of new economic growth and development, has attracted many, but Thak Khola is still considered the homeland of Thakalis.

According to the census of 1954, the total number of Thakali-speaking people was 3,307, a few of whom were even registered from the mid-western Terai. This figure represents the actual number who spoke the language as their mother tongue, and it can perhaps be safely assumed that there are a few percent more who, having lived for several generations in the midst of non-Thakali speaking people, have forgotten their Thakali language and speak Nepali as their mother tongue.

Thak Khola lies in one of the two northern development districts of Dhaulagiri zone. The traditional area of the true Thakalis is known as Thak-Sat-Sae, or “seven hundred Thaks”, although by now they have greatly increased in number and have spread much further abroad.

At the northern end of Thak-Sat-Sae is Tukche, which has remained the main trading centre for about one hundred years. Tukche is the most recently settled Thakali village. The name is derived from a Tibetan term meaning the salt trading grounds, referring to the original site of salt trade and barter directly above the present town. Tukche used to be inhabited by the richest and most influential of the Thakalis and was called the capital of Thak-Sat-Sae. Of late, however, the richer and more successful families have gradually moved away from Tukche and at present Thakalis do not even constitute the majority population of the town. Many of the Tukche houses are occupied by border peoples of the North and, of late, by refugees from Tibet.

South of Tukche there are other Thakali villages along the Kali Gandaki valley as far as one day’s journey. The last of them is Ghasa, where the valley is narrow at the southern end of the beautiful pine forest.

Thak-Sat-Sae on the whole receives very little rainfall. For this reason the Thakalis build their stone houses with flat roofs, convenient for drying their grain and vegetables for winter storage. The houses stand against one another in a line to form small alleys or sometimes tunnel-like passageways running along the entire length of the village. Khanti village is an excellent example of tunnelling.

The interior of a Thakali house is very large and spacious. In most cases
there is a large enclosed courtyard in front used for livestock and storage. Behind it is the main living room, with long low benches lining one wall and a large ornamental fire place at the end, in which no fire is ever lit. Shiny brass pots and goblets line the shelves above. To one side is the everyday kitchen and fire pit. One large back room is the family chapel where two copper jugs of water are kept which symbolize the ancestor spirits. Other adjoining rooms are used for sleeping and storage.

The Thakalis, with their outstanding aptitude for business and trade are among the most successful businessmen in Nepal. They are more profitably encouraged in the fields of trade and industry than in any other field.

The economy of Thak Khola is largely based on the salt trade. As middlemen the Thakalis get their salt from Tibet, either directly or through neighbouring border traders, and in turn exchange it for rice, wheat, and barley from the lower hills. Because of Tukche’s insufficient rainfall for extensive farming and its proximity to the Tibetan frontier a few days march north along the valley, it is almost entirely a trading centre. Villages south of Tukche receive more rain and are more self-sufficient, raising good harvests of barley, wheat, buckwheat, maize, radishes, and potatoes. In fact, almost all the villages except Tukche do their own agricultural work relying on a constant supply of cheap labour from higher and drier villages where farming is negligible.

While still in possession of the salt monopoly and of a government appointed feudal order called amali, which subjugated the regions of Panchgaun and Baragaun to the north as far as Lo (Mustang) Thakalis could conscript all the labour they might need. The government appointed headman, always an already important Thakali personality, was called amali. He had control of local administration, collecting revenue, settling local disputes, and maintaining law and order. (Amali was quite common throughout Nepal, especially in the more remote, less accessible areas, until quite recently.) Under this system, the Panchgaun and Baragaun people had no choice but to come down and work for the Thakalis during the harvest season, receiving grain as wages. Many of these neighbouring border villagers found themselves bound as bond-servants to the aggressive money-lending Thakali overlords. The economic domination of the Thakalis over the immediate non-Thakali population was, and is yet to some extent, so effective that they have always gotten their domestic servants from the non-Thakalis. Thakalis, however poor they may be, never work as domestic servants.

Tukche especially has always depended on outside labour for agricultural and other work. Besides the requirements of a main trading centre and a few
acres of cultivated fields, there are peach and apricot orchards. Many of the fruit are allowed to rot, after which the stones are broken open to extract the kernels which are pressed for oil. Often the fruits are dried in the sun and stored for winter eating.

Transportation to and from Thak Khola is of two varieties. Bulky loads of grain, and Indian and Nepali factory-made goods, i.e., canvas shoes, cotton material, cigarettes, matches, oil, and other such oddments, are carried up from the middle hill regions from such important trade centres as Bhairawa in the Terai and from Pokhara on the backs of porters. But from Thak Khola northward the river valley is wide and flat enough to make use of pack animals—mules, ponies, dzopa (dzopkyo), and even goats. Nothing is carried on the back of human beings between Thak Khola and Tibet.

An interesting system of financial cooperatives has maintained the relative economic security of Thakalis. Several friends or relatives who need some ready capital for investment or to meet debts organize an arbitrary party of interested investors to form a dhigur. Members may sometimes number as many as twenty-five or thirty, and each is expected to contribute an equal share of money yearly, anywhere from one hundred to one thousand rupees each as decided among themselves. The year’s lump sum is then given to one member, usually on the basis of immediate need, or by lottery or bidding. He only gets the money in one year, and can do whatever he wants with it with no more responsibility to the group than to meet his yearly payment for as many years as there are members. The men who have less immediate need usually wait for their turn in a later year. Should a man invest and make a large profit it is all his; any loss is only his loss. The next year another man receives the renewed capital sum, and so on until each man takes his share. At the end of the period the dhigur is automatically dissolved.

The dhigur system is ideal for any trading community. In it no single individual is ever left without capital. The moment anyone needs money he can go around and collect enough people to form a new dhigur for his immediate benefit and take the first year’s fund to invest where he sees fit. There are hundreds of dhigurs functioning at the present time, and every year a number of old ones expire and new ones come into being.

Thakalis form a strictly endogamous tribe which is divided into four exogamous clans. That is, one cannot marry other than a Thakali, but must marry outside one’s particular clan. The four clans are equal in social and ritual status, but are arranged in order of precedence for such purposes as the worship of the
clan gods. On such occasions the clan Gau Chan comes first, followed in order by Tula Chan, Sher Chan, and Bhatta Chan. These are terms of Sanskritic origin whereas the traditional tribal names are, in the same sequence: Chyoki, Salki, Dhimzen, and Bhurki. Locally these latter terms are more commonly used than the Chan names. The whole tribe collectively identifies itself as “Tamang”, so called, but whether it has any affinities with the proper Tamang discussed earlier remains to be explored.

The general term, Thakali, was derived from the place name Thak, and in common usage refers not only to the inhabitants of Thak-Sat-Sae, but to those of Panchgaun as well. However, the Chans of Thak-Sat-Sae are most specifically known as Thakali and they more than any others consider that they alone are true Thakalis, and that no other group has a right to the name.

Each of the four Thakali Chan clans has its own gods which are worshipped collectively once every twelve years. This, more than any other single factor, contributes to cementing Thakali tribal unity. The gods of all four clans are represented in the forms of animals, as listed here:—

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clan God</th>
<th>Clan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dragon</td>
<td>Gau Chan (or Chyoki)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elephant</td>
<td>Tula Chan (or Salki)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lion</td>
<td>Sher Chan (or Dhimzen)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yak</td>
<td>Bhatta Chan (or Bhurki)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The four clans are again subdivided into a number of family groups called ghyupa, or phowe, in the Thakah dialect. Each clan includes eight to ten of these family groups which in fact are the most effective membership groups, each with an identifying name. The ghyupa name is referred to only when the Thakali talk among themselves and is never mentioned outside the clan. All members of the family unit come together on occasions of feasts during the worship of their ancestral god and share a common khimi shrine. The khimi shrine is built of stones and mud, usually about three feet square and four feet high, with a little hollow inside. In the hollow must be placed a piece of bone of each family member at his death. Each ghyupa has its own khimi at a central place near the villages of Nabhrungkot and Khanti, about two miles south of Tukche, a site said to be the original settlement of the Thakalis. Besides this central concentration of khimi shrines there are found to be two in each Thakali village within Thak-Sat-Sae, but none outside the area.
Thakali marriage customs are distinctive. They practise cross-cousin marriage, that is, the marriage of either one’s father's sister’s daughter, or the mother’s brother’s daughter, a custom prevalent also among the Tamang, Gurung, and other middle hill peoples. Thakalis marry not only cousins of the same generation, but also of different generations.

Marriage is usually by capture. But, in deference to tradition, some young and educated Thakalis now prefer the arranged marriage, following the example of the caste oriented Hindus. The capture marriage is common among many Nepali tribes. In it, a group of young men, usually friends and relatives of the boy, goes out in the evening and captures the girl in question when she comes out of her house. They take her to a house belonging to one of the boy’s relatives and leave her under strict guard until the approval of her parents has been secured. The wedding cannot take place until her parents’ approval is obtained, and the girl cannot be taken into the boy’s house until the wedding is completed. The boy’s party may or may not have informed the girl’s parents previously about the capture of their daughter. In cases where the parents have given previous consent, the girl may find herself being dragged from her home. This is still considered a capture marriage and the boy’s people must beg for forgiveness for offending the parents and secure proper permission to complete the wedding. The practice of polyandry as found among the neighbouring people of Dolpo, Baragaun, and Lo (Mustang) is not found among Thakalis, but the reverse, polygamy, wherein a man may take more than one wife, is occasionally found. Parental property is divided among all the sons, but the youngest receives the most, including the house. Elder sons usually go out on their own as soon as they are married.

The religion of the Thakalis is a mixture of Buddhism, Jhankrism, Bonpo, and Hinduism, but they lay claim to Jhankrism, a kind of Shamanistic cult, as their original religion. Later they were initiated into Buddhism, and adopted the Bon-po as well, but the latter is not at all strongly followed. The only Bon-po gomba in the whole of Thak-Sat-Sae is found at Nabrungkot village. There are others in the adjoining region of Panchgaun, one at Jomosom and another in desertion at Thini.

At present there is among Thakalis a widespread contempt of both Buddhism and Bon-po, which they refer to as "religions of the Bhotes". There is a strong move to completely disassociate themselves from the border peoples both in relation to ethnic origins and religion and as we shall see even with restrictions upon the current use of Thakali language and traditional dress. Among the young men and women there is an attempt to establish some link between the present Thakalis and the Hindu Thakuri people of Jumla and Sinja in Nepal’s far west. More for
this reason than for any other they are very hostile to the Buddhist tradition and claim to be high caste Hindus. But even here there is conflict, and it is difficult to understand their hostility toward Buddhism generally, because the Thakuri kings themselves, in the past centuries of power, seem to have been under the influence of Tibetan Buddhism.*

Besides the growing association with Hinduism, there is a renewed interest in a revival of the primitive religion of Jhankrism, again in direct opposition to any Buddhist leanings. Buddhism, none the less, certainly is the more sophisticated and has a more impressive tradition with its elaborate rituals. And to link Thakalies with Buddhism in the past, several old Buddhist gombas still exist in Thak-Sat-Sae. Some of them used to have beautiful frescoes dating to the sixteenth century. For the most part, the gombas have fallen into disrepair and many of the frescoes have either been pulled down or covered with new paintings of a lesser standard. A campaign of replacement has been undertaken by a group of some twenty nuns of Thak-Sat-Sae who are also active in the maintenance and the regular ritual service of the gombas. Thus Buddhism has now become the religion of professionals—monks and nuns—and not of the common Thakali people. Only one or two young Thakali disciples are studying to become lamas.

There have been three avatari-lamas, reincarnations, recorded among the Thakalis. The first was identified about fifty years ago, but his parents refused to let him be taken into the monastery to be trained, for he happened to be the son of the richest and most powerful family of Thak-Sat-Sae. This man's family later took the leading part in demonstrating hostility to the hitherto flourishing Buddhist religion. A second avatari-lama was found some thirty-five years ago, and he too does not act as a proper lama, nor does he command any respect from the Thakalis as a lama. The third reincarnation has abandoned his gomba and has taken an interest in trade.

Such as they are, the lamas, nuns, and a few disciples, both Thakali and non-Thakali, hold many festivals and ceremonies in the local gombas. Dyokyapsi is a ritual ceremony of colourful dancing and performances with gorgeous dresses and masks. It is held in November in Kyupar gomba near Tukche. We are told, however, that even the most attractive religious festivals have been bringing smaller and smaller audiences from among Thakalis of late. But there are yet quite a number of non-Thakalis from adjoining areas who find the dyokyapsi ceremony of considerable interest.

The Thakali tribal festivals are of more importance. The most significant is *lha feva* which falls in the month of November of every Monkey year of the twelve year cycle according to the Tibetan calendar. The last one was held in 1956, and the next observance should fall in 1968. *Lha feva* means the "coming of god" in Tibetan. It has lately been referred to more often by the Sanskritic term, *Kumbha mela*, a Hindu festival name. During the festival, which lasts about a week, the images of the four clan gods are taken out of their temples, worshipped, and taken around with all the ritual paraphernalia, while the people are feasting and enjoying the fun. Four men called *pandes*, one for each clan god, recite and interpret the clans' books telling the story of the coming of each god and the journeys of the four original ancestors of the four clans.

There is another tribal festival called *shyobett lava*, or more commonly known by the Sanskritic name *kumar jatra*, the "ceremony of the boys". This is a kind of initiation ceremony for young boys, and includes training in archery, riding, singing and dancing. The observance is held for four or five days during August, and originally included at least thirteen initiate boys between the ages of five to eight. Of late the number of participants has been dropped to five, and, although it used to be compulsory for every Thakali boy, the practice has been considerably relaxed, often overlooked.

Ancestor-god worship takes place in the main house, or *mha tim* of each group of kinsmen. The ancestor-god, *dhu-tin-gya* is common to all four clans and represents the spirit of all dead ancestors. *Dhu-tin-gya* has no image. It is symbolized by a pair of small copper jugs containing water placed in an interior room of each *mha tim* where none but the nearest family kinsmen is allowed entry. The worship tradition includes an elaborate ritual and food offerings, and a great feast to which hundreds of relatives and friends are invited. The entire ceremony is presided over by a Jhankri priest, and as it is very expensive the annual celebration has been displaced by one every four or five years.

When an elder son separates from his parents the *mha tim* remains the same until such time as the parents have died and the elder son has a family of his own. He may then share the original spirit by taking one of the copper jugs to his house. This involves installing a replacement jug beside the remaining original jug in the old *mha tim* and likewise in his own home, which then becomes the main house of his own offspring.

Thakali society is rapidly changing its structure. There is a great deal of talk about reforms in Thak-Sat-Sae, such as have already been initiated in the changing marriage rules, the banning of gambling, and a ban on the respectful Tibetan
custom of offering a *khata* scarf to an honoured visitor, friends, headman, or lama. There is, surprisingly, even a ban on the speaking of the Thakali dialect when one is away from Thak Khola. Young people are not permitted to wear ornaments or the traditional Thakali dress, and as a result the common Nepali dress has been adopted by all. Religious reforms have been initiated by the pulling down of Buddhist *mani*-walls, and a ban on the employment of lama priests for funerals. But in this regard there is a significant Buddhist undercurrent kept alive by the presence of Tibetan refugees and lamas and believing laymen. Administrative reforms are evidenced in the giving of a new secret constitution to the council of thirteen *mukhiyas*.

Traditionally, Thak-Sat-Sae is divided into thirteen village units, each headed by a *mukhiya*. The thirteen *mukhiyas* hold their offices by hereditary right, subject to the approval of the district government at Baglung. And since the advent of the current Panchayat administrative system, effective control has increased. The *mukhiyas* convene their high council in Thak Khola twice yearly, once in July and again in October. At the July session they do the accounts of the grazing tax collected from the owners of sheep. Other matters are considered in October on the significant day of *tika* during the high Hindu festival of *dashain*.

The reform constitution, referred to above, was formulated by thirteen *mukhiyas* in 1952, thereby investing all administrative privileges of the former individual *mukhiyas* in this high council. But for unknown reasons, they have kept the contents of the constitution a complete secret so far. At any rate, it has filled the vacuum of the central and also the district government’s meagre means of control in this specific northern border region. This institution is now gradually being replaced by the new Panchayat system.
Between Tukche and the riverside village of Kagbeni of Baragaun, lie the five villages of Panchgaun: Jomosom-Thini, Syang, Marpha, Chivang, and Chherok. The people of Panchgaun we shall call Panchgaunle, although they persistently refer to themselves as Thakali, and indeed speak a variation of the Thakali dialect. They look like Thakalis and have adopted much of the Thakali culture, but in the true sense of the word they are not Thakali. By their sentiment, on the other hand, and their adoption of Nepali dress and customs, they dispell any notion to call them Bhole—it repels them.

Their house style is identical to the Thakalis’—whitewashed mud construction, flat roofed, with an inner courtyard for livestock and storage. Few Panchgaun houses approach the size and grandeur of some to be found in Tukche, and the villages seem not to be as neatly patterned.

Jomosom, or Dzongsamba (in Tibetan meaning “new fort”), houses the Nepal Army checkpost which maintains a constant watch over all traders and travellers going to or from the northern frontier region of Mustang.

Marpha is an interesting village in the centre of Panchgaun along the river trail up from Tukche to Jomosom. Approaching from either north or south the traveller passes by long well kept mani-walls and beneath a large whitewashed chorten built in the form of an archway. The village abuts the sandstone cliffs, with its fields stretching away toward the river below. The main cobbled alleyway takes one past the houses and courtyards from which issues the sweet smell of juniper boughs spread as bedding for the livestock.

In line with their neighbours, the Panchgaunle cultivate and trade, and a good number of families have taken to bhatti keeping, their familiar roadside “inns” ranging as far south as the Terai and east to the Marsyangdi khola in Lamjung district. It is not uncommon to find several families keeping bhattis the year round for several consecutive seasons, although the majority return home to cultivate each spring.

Within the Panchgaun social structure one finds very prideful distinctions. The people of Marpha are divided into four exogamous groups, or clans, much the same as the Thakalis, complete with imitative names: Hira Chan, Juhar Chan, Panna Chan, and Lal Chan. (It is interesting to note that the titles Hira, Juhar, Panna and Lal in order mean diamond, jewel, emerald, and ruby.) Together they are called Punel, although they show reluctance to depart from the Thakali. One cannot marry with anyone but a Punel, nor within one’s own clan. Likewise the
people of Thini are Thinel, and those of Syang, Syangdan, et cetera, although in the latter cases there is considerable intermixing and intermarriage. On the whole there is little or no social intercourse between Panchgaunle and the Thakali people.

The religion of Panchgaun includes Buddhism, Bon-po, and Jhankrism, with some limited recent adoption of Hindu ways in imitation of the Thakali. On a barren hill near Thini, with an inspiring view of the entire area, is the Buddhist gomha Ku-tsap-ter-nga, the quest of many Tibetan pilgrims who come to see five treasured relics said to date back to sam-ye gomha, the first Buddhist monastery of Tibet, built in the 8th century A.D.* Ku-tsap-ter-nga is named for these relics.

Another Buddhist gomha of interest is a Chherok, near Marpha. It stands across the river from the main route in a beautiful grove of evergreen trees. Thini and Jomosom both have Bon-po temples, although the one at Thini was the victim of religious feuding some years back and it stands now in decay and desertion.

Chepang are one of the least known minority groups of Nepal and little formal study has been made of them. The first scholar to mention Chepangs was Brian Hodgson, more than 100 years ago. Grouping them with a related group, the Kusundas, he states that they were "living entirely upon wild fruits and the produce of the chase..." Later on he adds that the "Chepangs are a few degrees above their confreres (Kusundas), and are beginning to hold some slight intercourse with civilized beings and to adopt the most simple of their arts and habits."* Hodgson associated Chepangs with a people of Bhutan called Lho. He was led to this belief because of the proximity of their languages.

The second scholar to come across the Chepangs very recently was Dr. Rene von Nebesky-Wojkowitz who had met them on a trip a day and a half's journey west of Kathmandu. He thought those few Chepangs he had met "distinctly showed Mongoloid features, viz. slit eyes and prominent cheek bones; many had flat, broad noses with a deep saddle and the skin of two or three was of a very dark pigmentation."**

In my own acquaintance with Chepangs in their home areas I also thought that their features were basically Mongoloid and showed more resemblance to the Rais of east Nepal than with any other people except that they were definitely darker than the Rais.

Some of the Chepangs believe that their community is an offshoot of the Kiranti (Rai-Limbu) group that come from Sunathali, Dolkha in the east. They speak the Chepang language, a Tibeto-Burman dialect which is quite different from the language of the Tamangs living close to them in the same area. I do not know if the Chepang language has any affinity with the Rai language. Of further interest is the similarity of marriage practices of Chepangs and Thamis, who live in proximity with Tamangs.

One of their traditional stories maintains that they descended from Sitajee, the heroine of the famous Hindu epic Ramayana. According to the Chepang story, Sitajee gave birth to a son named Lohari while she was in exile in a hermitage near the Gandaki river. One day Sitajee took her baby out with her because she wanted

---

to show it to the monkeys who were playing with their own babies. She went to the river without the knowledge of the sage Balmiki, her protector. After a while when Balmiki saw the cradle empty he thought the baby was stolen. Thinking that Sitajee would be shocked and blame the sage for not watching it properly he created a living likeness out of *kusha* grass. Sitajee returned with her own child and was amazed to find another in the cradle. Balmiki then explained everything and advised her to raise both children as her own sons. The sage called the new boy by the name Kushari. When Lohari and Kushari grew they were natural enemies of each other. The descendants of Lohari were called Chepang and of Kushari, Kusunda, the food-gathering and hunting people living in the forested areas west of the Chepang country. Chepangs say that the Kusundas shoot their arrows and kill the Chepangs on sight.

Some other Chepangs say that the Chepangs and the Kusundas have the same origins as the Thakuris. Kusundas are still in their primitive state. Only a few have been reported to have settled permanently and begun cultivation. Others gather food and hunt in the forest. They live in caves or in temporary huts in the forests of the southern parts of Gorkha and the south central part of Tanhu districts. They are believed not to number over a few dozen.

Chepangs say that there were at one time four Chepang rajas who were defeated by the Raja of Patan. The four Chepang rajas were called Poney Raja, Gill Raja, Rini Raja, and Raji Raja. Their common court was at Pukunthali and Raji Raja was the seniormost among them.

Chepangs seldom indulge in violence. But since they are all illiterate and ignorant, and most of them shy and timid, they are equally exploited by Brahmans, Chhetris, and even by Tamangs. No Chepang is known to live outside his traditional region, consisting of the southern part of Dhading district, the western part of Makwanpur, the northern part of Chitwan and the southern part of Gorkha district. Their present population is over 16,000. They live along the steeper slopes of the Mahabharata range at elevations of between 2,500 and 4,000 feet. Tamangs live higher, and Brahmans, Chhetris, Gurungs and Newars live lower than the Chepangs along the same range of mountains.

Chepangs are economically at a disadvantage compared to the people living around them. Practically every single family is indebted to the Kumain Brahmans and to a certain extent to Chhetri, Newar and Tamang neighbours. The amounts they borrow vary from five rupees to several thousand, depending upon the size of the land-holdings of the debtor. The land they cultivate was the Chepang *kipat*
Man Bahadur Chepang carries his share of maize beer home.
One year old Buddhiman Gang has 110 children, grand children, great grand children.

Dor Bahadur Bista
until 1928. But now it is all government *raikar* land.* Most of their lands are mortgaged as a security against the amounts they borrow from the moneylenders. Most of what they borrow is spent on wedding feasts and funerals.

Chepangs used to carry timber from the forest near their area to Kathmandu Valley where they sold it to housebuilders and furniture makers. The forest department has since restricted the falling of trees and Chepangs now go to various national project sites and seek temporary employment. They work at Trishuli Hydro-Electric Project, at the road building of Hetaura and Rapti Valley, and the road maintenance of Tribhuwan Rajpath, et cetera.

Chepangs make the distinction between two economic groups, those who have developed a purely agricultural economy and others who still partly depend upon food-gathering, hunting, and fishing. The former group lives in the eastern part of the region and is known as the Pukunthali; the latter lives in the western part and is known as the Kachhare. Kachhare Chepangs are more backward and primitive than the Pukunthalis. The Kachhares like to be called Sunpraja and have no subdivisions, while the Pukunthalis are called Praja and have a number of exogamous clans. The clan names of the Pukunthalis are: Bhara, Jarnge, Rum, Prosho, Bare, Saune, Jungrange, Rupakote, Jyamrange, Bangrange, Naike, Podbange, and Ringbange.

Both Pukunthali and Kachhare Chepangs grow maize, millet, wheat and and a little rice. Kachhares also practise shifting cultivation. The yields of the land some of the Pukunthalis cultivate would make them self-sufficient if they were careful, but since they have to pay large amounts as interest on the money they borrow and also because they lavishly use the grains in making liquor which they consume in large quantity their conditions are pitiable. However, they take a great pride in being able to consume as much liquor as they do and criticise the Brahmans and Chhetris for not doing so.

The various clans of the Pukunthalis observe strict clan exogamy. They are free to marry with any member of the Chepang community, except with members of the same clan. The Kachhares, because they do not have any clan subdivisions, can inter-marry with any member outside the kin group of within three or four generations. In fact there is no objection to either a Pukunthali or Kachhare’s marrying even a non-Chepang, a Tamang, Newar, Gurung, Brahman, or Chhetri. All other people except the Chepangs have a restriction against marrying outside their

---

* *Raikar* is “state landlordism; land on which taxes are collected and appropriated directly or through intermediaries by the state”, according to Mahesh C. Regmi, *Land Tenure and Taxation in Nepal*, Vol. I (Berkeley, 1963), p. 271.
own community. All non-Chepangs marrying a Chepang come back to live among
the Chepangs and call themselves Chepangs. I did not find a single case where a
Chepang man had married a non-Chepang woman, but there were several cases
of Chepang women marrying non-Chepang men. The children of such marriages
were all considered Chepangs. There are several families known as Lamicchhane-
Chepang (Lamicchhane being a Gurung clan), Gurung-Chepang, Kamar-Chepang
(from Sanyeshi), Tamang-Chepang, and Newar-Chepang freely inter-marrying
with the pure Chepangs.

Chepangs eat rice boiled, cooked by any one except the very lowest caste
Hindus, while no other people except the lowest castes accept the boiled rice from
the hands of a Chepang. So, naturally, the children of a Chepang mother and non-
Chepang father would come back to live among the Chepangs where they are
easily accepted and allowed to intermarry with any member of the group.

Chepang men do not marry their father’s sister’s daughter, but the case
of a man marrying his mother’s brother’s daughter is tolerated although not
encouraged. People having both a daughter and son usually try to seek families
where they can find spouses for both to save trouble and expense. They can
have one feast and one party arranged on the same day for both the weddings and
the exchange of brides from their houses. But this kind of exchange marriage
can happen only in the case of arranged marriages, which is not so very common.
Most of the marriages are either by capture or by elopement. Of all three types
of marriages, elopement is the most frequent. There may be about an equal number
of marriages by arrangement and capture. In some cases of arranged marriage
the ages of the boys and girls are 12 to 15, or as high as seventeen. But it is usually
after 20 or 25 years of age that a boy would capture a girl or a girl would elope.

In the case of an arranged marriage a party of about 40 to 60 people is organized
at the boy’s house on the date agreed by both parties and preceded by a musical
band played by Damais (tailors) to the girl’s parents’ house where they are enter-
tained with food and drink in the evening. The whole party spends the night in
feasting while the band plays continuously.

The next morning a chicken is slaughtered to indicate the auspicious moment
of the wedding after which the invitees of the bride’s parents put tika marks of
mixed curd and rice on the foreheads of the bride and groom and give gifts of
money, usually five, ten, or fifteen rupees. The money thus collected is called
gordha, dowry, which sometimes totals as much as 300 rupees. Part of this money
is given to the bride to pay off the debt the groom’s family incurs in buying gold
and silver ornaments for the bride and the remainder is used as gifts to be given
by the bride's father to all the married sisters, daughters, and nieces of the bride's parents' family who come with gifts of liquor and food. The parents of the bride may give ornaments, utensils, and cattle as dowries to the bride. The boy has to present a bottle of rakshi and 22 rupees as a customary payment to the parents of the bride and pay respect before he takes the bride away to his own house where a feast of boiled rice, buffalo meat, and mutton, and a large quantity of spirit is waiting.

One of the more self-sufficient and important Chepang families spent 1,000 rupees for food and drink alone during the wedding of a son. They do not spend so much when they have a marriage by elopement or by capture.

When a boy brings in a captured or eloping wife he gives her presents of clothes and ornaments. He invites a few friends for a party with drinks and food and everything is settled peacefully. But if the girl of his choice does not elope with him willingly he may drag her off by force with the help of his friends from a festival, a gathering, or from a field where she is working. A captured girl is allowed to go back to her parents' house if she refuses to be married. But in marriages by elopement and capture the couple afterwards have to go with a bottle of spirit and 22 rupees to pay respects to the girl's parents. Their wedding is not completed or legalised until they pay these respects. It can be done at any time at the convenience of the new couple. The wife's parents or her brothers cannot be present at any kind of function at her house until this ceremony is completed.

Tradition demands that at least at the time of the birth of a baby or at the head-shaving ceremony of a boy, and at the funerals of the wife or of the husband, the wife's parents' family must be present. But in most cases of marriage by capture and by elopement they will not bother to pay respect to the parents of the woman until either there is a birth or if not then, when the wife herself dies. At the death of the wife no funeral can be held until her parents are represented. Therefore, at this time, the husband goes with the dues to the wife's parents if they are alive and if not he goes to her brothers and asks them to be present at the funeral. Thus, in some cases the period between the capture or elopement of a girl and the actual completion of the wedding ceremony by paying respect to the parents or to their heirs can be as long as 50 or more years.

Marriages as a rule are monogamous but there are occasional cases of men marrying two or more wives at the same time. Hari Chepang of Shingle village married 11 wives at a time but at the time of this recording (August, 1964) two of them were already dead and the remaining nine were living in four different houses in the same village where the husband visited them in turn.
The Kachhare Chepangs have more simplified wedding procedures than those of the Pukunthalis. One important Kachhare wedding ritual is that the boy has to eat the remains of food his prospective bride has eaten. This precedes all other wedding activities. Kachhares also give cattle, a goat, or a chyuri tree (an indigenous fruit tree, the kernels of which are pressed for oil) growing nearby as a dowry to their daughter. They can make money by selling the chyuri oil.

Pukunthalis have a name-giving ceremony on the ninth day for a newborn female and on the 11th day for a male child. They observe birth pollution for that period, and on the day of name-giving the priest sprinkles cow’s urine in order to purify the house, names the baby, and ties a yellow thread blessed by him around the wrist of the baby and the parents. Then the pollution period is over for the family members except for the mother of the baby who observes the pollution for 22 days by not touching water and food prepared for other people.

Chepangs hold a head-shaving ceremony for their sons at the age of five or six years. The boy’s mother’s brother is invited for the occasion to shave the head of the boy, leaving a small tuft of hair at the top.

All the important Hindu festivals such as dashain, tihar, and sankranti are observed by the Chepangs in addition to their own tribal festivals such as nwagi and their clan deity worship. Nwagi is performed on a Tuesday during the third week of bhadra (first week of September). It is an occasion for offering the new food and fruits of the harvest to the dead ancestors before the living members of the family can eat them. No one eats the hill variety of rice until he has performed nwagi. This is performed in one of the clan’s senior member’s house where all the clans people come together for the ceremony. A pande, priest, belonging to the same clan conducts the entire ceremony. If there are more than one pande, or if there are any young men wishing to learn to be a pande among the clan members, they all come together to act and practise under the chief pande during the performance.

The pandes begin to recite and invoke the ancestors on Tuesday evening and continue throughout the night, and on Wednesday morning they cook the food with the new produce of the year and the seniormost male member offers the food and dedicates a chicken to the ancestors. Each household participating in the nwagi brings new dry rice which is taken home by all present.

Each clan also worships its clan deity at a special annual observance. The worship of a clan deity is done at different times by different clans. The Bhara clan people do it on the full moon day in May; the Rums do it on the full moon
day in February, and so on. Some have their deity at the top of the mountains while others have it at the source of a mountain river. Chepangs also worship at the temples and shrines of other ethnic groups living in the area. Such temples are of Devi, Mahadev, Mahankal, and Kalika. They visit Devi Ghat, the confluence of the Trishuli and Tadi rivers, where a large crowd from all the surrounding districts come together to bathe for the sake of merit. Chepangs perform *bhumi puja*, the worship of the earth deity, before they sow maize in March. Each family does this individually by offering a chicken’s egg and some grains of rice. They do not require a *pande* on this occasion.

The *pande* plays an important role in a number of religious and social activities of the Chepangs, such as the name-giving ceremony for a newborn baby, worship of a clan deity, funeral, and *mwagi*. He is also a curer of illnesses. For all these purposes he invokes and propitiates various deities and the ancestors. He may beat a tamborine with a crooked stick or only recite on some occasions. A new *pande* can be trained by another expert or can be selected by the gods in which case he receives *mantra* spells in his dreams.

A *pande* wears any kind of ordinary clothes as others do and is treated like any other laymen by the Chepangs. He is paid each time for services to his clients. His is not a full time job, so he runs his farm and keeps cattle as other people do. Although the Chepangs have been living very close to the Tamangs they do not employ a Tamang Lama nor have they borrowed any part of the Tamang culture or religion.

The Pukunthali Chepangs seem to be emulating the habits of Hindus in observing *dashain* by worshipping the goddess Durga, and the *tihar* worshipping of brothers by their sisters. They observe birth and death pollution like Brahman and Chhetris. When someone dies they cremate the dead body beside a river unlike the Tamangs who cremate their dead at the top of a hill. The eldest or the youngest son mourns for 13 days after the death. The man who mourns shaves his hair, moustache, beard and eyebrows, he wears a white scarf, does not speak to or touch anybody, and eats only boiled rice and *ghee* for 13 days after which he changes into white shirt, white cap, and a white loincloth all provided by his mother’s brother. A brother’s son or a husband’s brother’s son does this in case there is no son of a deceased man or woman respectively. The brothers and close agnatic cousins also observe death pollution and mourn for 13 days by abstaining from eating salt, meat, millet, pulse, mustard oil, milk, and curd.

On the 13th day the surviving family of the dead person performs a funeral ceremony presided over by a *pande*. The *pande* invokes the spirit of the dead person
and requests it to join the group of other dead people. He offers a ball of boiled rice and beer. The family invites all the collaterals, the affinal kin, and the villagers who are all given a feast of boiled rice, buffalo, goat, and chicken's meat, beer, and spirit. The invitees also bring some beer with them. The married sisters and daughters, and their married daughters bring a goat and a bottle of rakshi each. The food is cooked by their husbands. The sisters and daughters and their daughters, who bring the presents of goats and drinks, are given a gift of five or ten rupees in return.

The fairly well-to-do family of the village headman at Gahiri Gaun spent 100 rupees in cash, 200 rupees worth of rice and beer, six goats, one buffalo, and five chickens at the funeral of the headman's wife. The six goats and five chicken were the gifts brought by the headman's sisters and daughters and the cash was spent in giving them return gifts at the end of the day before they left for their homes.

Once the funeral is done in the name of a dead person the spirit is supposed to go and join the group of dead people and from that time onwards the spirit is offered food along with others only on the days of mwagi.

A great majority of the Kachhares build their low thatched huts along steep, almost vertical slopes thousands of feet apart from each other. Some maize and millet is grown around them. They have to work like serfs for the richer people living in the fertile lower valleys and collect wild foods and fish to keep themselves alive. They keep a few goats and cattle which their children watch. They have a few earthen vessels, and pots and utensils, and baskets made out of bamboo as household goods. The Kachhares cook their food in earthen pots and eat from green leaves. They never wash themselves or their pots and pans. Men wear a loin cloth and a vest or a waistcoat or just a scarf and women wear a skirt and blouse. But the Pukunthali women wear saris and blouses and also some gold or silver ear and nose-rings and bracelets like Tamang women. The Pukunthali men wear the same costume as the Kachhares but much cleaner and in a better condition.

Chepangs do not possess skills of any kind except the weaving of baskets and leaf umbrellas for protection against rains.

A few people are now interested in having a school for their children and they are also aware that the government is trying to help them improve their condition. The young men who go out to work outside at the government project sites hear various rumours and bring them back home. So even those people, who have never been outside of their own region—of whom there are many—are not entirely out of touch with developments in the country.
PART II

TERAI PEOPLE

BRAHMAN, RAJPUT, AND OCCUPATIONAL CASTES

Nepal borders India along a strip of the Ganges plain called the Terai, and as the people living along the northern border with Tibet are of Tibetan origin and under the influence of Tibetan religion and social customs and speak Tibetan dialects, so are the Terai people of Indian origin, speaking languages akin to those to the south and practising Indian religious and social customs. But in the Terai diversity is greater, encompassing several very different languages: Bengali, Maithili, and Bhojpuri in the east and Hindi and Urdu in the west. Social customs, religion—Hindu and Islam, marriage practices, and even economy to some extent vary according to ethnic group and geographical affinity to corresponding regions in India across the political border.

The languages of the Terai vary according to the area and correspond to the languages spoken in the neighbouring parts of India. Thus the people at the border in Jhapa and Morang districts speak Bengali, the language of West Bengal and east Bihar; those in western parts of Morang and west to Sarlahi speak Maithili, the language in neighbouring Bihar. People west of Sarlahi all the way through to Rupandehi speak Bhojpuri, and to their west the main language is Hindi except for the slight influence of Urdu found in parts of Uttar Pradesh state. Of course many other dialects are spoken as well.

The geographic environment of the Terai changes little from east to west. It is the continuous flat plain of the vast Gangetic basin of North India. The altitude is barely more than 250 feet above sea level at any point, and the climate is of the tropical monsoon type—very warm and wet during the summer, with more pleasant winters. The temperature may reach as high as 120°F. in June-July in the western Terai, and during the summer months this same area receives the famous hot desert air known as loo in India. The monsoon starts in late July and lasts through September. The annual average rainfall is between 40 and 60 inches. The land is very fertile alluvium, supporting rice, wheat, jute, sugar cane, tobacco, and various kinds of pulses, of which the major share is exported to India.

The social and economic organization of the Terai peoples is similar to that
of Brahmans, Chhetris, and the occupational castes of the hill regions of Nepal, but by virtue of their Indian origin their way of life is almost identical with that of North India. These border people have migrated up from India at various times in history, some 200 or 300 years ago, others more recently. The vast majority of them are Hindu, but there are many Moslems. In contrast to the liberal and often pseudo-Hindu hill people, these people of the Terai and border areas are orthodox in their beliefs, following Hinduism and the caste rules as closely as possible to the classical Hindu pattern. Except along the northern strip of the Terai near the forest zones and in the less developed areas of the western Terai—all of which are the indigenous habitat of the Tharu, Danuwar, and other related Nepali people—the Terai is populated by people whose movements from one side of the border to another have been unrestricted. For marriage and other socio-economic relations the border is ignored. Social and kinship ties are much more important to them than political separation.

Agriculture is the primary occupation of all the border people although there are one or two areas which have been industrialized to a certain extent. The social organization of this agricultural community is based on the Hindu occupational castes, a number of categories arranged in a vertical ladder of hierarchy. Caste status almost exactly coincides with economic status. The higher the caste, the more affluent an individual is; the lowest in hierarchy are the poorest.

Prevalent Hindu castes of the Terai and border areas are listed here in descending order by status grouped roughly in ritual status position:

- Brahman
- Bhuinar
- Rajput
- Kayastha
- Nuniyar
- Dhanuk
- Kurmi
- Kewat
- Guala
- Hajam
- Mali
- Barai
- Haluwai
- Mallah
- Koiri
- Badahi
- Lohar
- Teli
- Kaluwar
- Dhobi
- Halkhor
- Dom
- Dushad
- Chamar
- Tatma
- Khatave

Most of these castes listed are occupational castes, although their basic economy is agriculture. Many castes, especially Brahmans, Rajputs, and Kayasthas have a number of sub-castes each with a name of its own.
Brahmans fall into two groups: Maithili and Patra. Maithili sub-castes are rich land owners, money lenders, and zamindars—the village land registrars and revenue collectors. Patra Brahmans can act as priests only during the funeral ceremony and accept gifts given in the name of the dead.

Bhuuihars are also land owners, money lenders, traders, and zamindars. They claim the status of Brahman for themselves, but are not accepted quite as such by others. They never act in the role of priests.

Rajputs are Kshatriyas, the traditional warriors of Hindu society. Because of the Rajput glory in past Indian history all Rajput Kshatriyas prefer to distinguish themselves as just “Rajput”, omitting “Kshatriya”, or “Chhetri” as the hill Kshatriyas call themselves. In any case, their background distinguishes them from the Khas-Chhetris and most Thakuri-Chhetris of the hill regions. Rajput physical features and skin colouring are different, and they are much more orthodox in their Hindu religious practices. Rajput sub-castes include: Gautam, Raghubansi, Ujjain, Suruwal, Gain, Pal, Garbhar, Kumar Chauhan, Bachhgoti Chauhan, Beduwar, Vaish, Karcholiya, and Bisen. Each of these sub-castes is ideally equal to the others in social and ritual status, but in fact wealth and kinship play very important roles in deciding one’s social position in relation to his fellow Rajputs.

Kayasthas are also landowners and moneylenders, although professionally they are better known as clerks and accountants to the zamindars and therefore they are addressed by the polite terms “Diwanji” or “Munimji”. Kayastha sub-castes are: Karn, Shrivastava, Amast, Saksera, Das, Bhatnagar, Jauhari, and Mathur. Some of these sub-castes include further sub-divisions known as mul; for example, Karn-muls are Ardahi, Kewtar, Mullik, Kanth, and Kharjpur. Shrivastavas and Amasts follow some Mussalman customs while Karns and the others follow the Hindu tradition.

Nuniyars, also called Baniyas, are traders and shopkeepers. Dhanuk, Kurmis, and Kewats work as personal attendants to rich Brahmans and Rajputs in the eastern Terai districts where they are in a minority. But in Parsa and in the districts west of it there are many rich Kurmi zamindars. The Dhanuk women also work as personal attendants to the women of rich Brahmans and Rajputs.

Gwalas keep cattle and sell the milk, ghee, and curd. Ahirs and Yadavs are their subcastes. Hajams are professional barbers and their women are women’s nail cutters. Besides this, they have very important roles to play during many of the religious ceremonies and weddings in the houses of high-caste people. The Hajam is sent around the village distributing invitations for wedding or funeral feasts. During the wedding he has to see to a number of errands including washing...
the feet of the chief guest, arranging jars of pure water, collecting special wood for the sacrificial fire and carrying the groom on his back from the inside of the house to the mandap, the place in the centre of the courtyard prepared for the wedding ceremony.

A Mali is a gardener-florist. He cultivates and sells flowers and garlands, in addition to supplying flowers and garlands on the occasion of weddings and other ceremonies for his higher-caste client families. He also has charge of making maur, the ceremonial hat for the groom in a client’s wedding.

Barais prepare pan, betel leaves with spices, for their clients during the wedding and other ceremonies. Haluwais, or Kanus, are confectioners who make sweets for weddings and feasts. Mallahs are fishermen and boatmen of the community and also hire out as agricultural labourers on a wage. Koiris are vegetable growers. They sell their produce in the village, or trade them for other needed goods and articles. A Badahi is a carpenter who makes wooden ploughs, bullock-carts and other such necessities in the farming and village community. The Lohar men are equal in caste to Badahi carpenters, except that they specialize in iron-smithing and make sickles, plough shares, nails, and horseshoes.

The Telis are oil pressers. They collect seeds from the villagers and press them for cooking oil which they in turn sell for cash or kind. They also sell fertilizer and cattle-feed. There are three types of Teli: Magahdiya, Kanu, and Kannaujiya. The Kalwar and Sundhi castes are of the same social status as the Teli but are just general traders and do not press oil.

Dhobis are washermen. The Dhobi and his entire family wash clothes on a wage basis.

Halkhors and Mesters clean the village latrines and do several other equally dirty and menial jobs. During the wedding procession, however, they are hired to play a pipe in the musical band. Dushad and Dom caste people are responsible for disposing of carcasses, taking care of the cremation grounds and selling wood for the funeral pyre. When a client of a Dushad or Dom practices charity in the hope of shaking off the evil effects of certain planets—especially during solar and lunar eclipses—the required observance includes giving gifts of food, cash, or clothes to the Dushad or Dom. They are also employed as agricultural labourers.

Chamars have charge of dirty and menial work in the community and eat any animal carcass except dog, cat, and horse. The Chamars play drums in the wedding band.

Tatmas and Khataves are agricultural labourers working on a wage. They specialize in ditch-digging and the like. In wedding processions they carry the
palanquins of the bride and groom. Khataves are often called “Mushahar”, meaning one who eats rats, because they do just that without qualms. They are generally a poor lot, own no land, and often do not even dwell in the same village for any length of time, but keep moving for hire from one village to the next, even back and forth across the border.

In only a few of the Terai districts can one find all of these castes in residence. The members of the various occupational castes and the fewer higher castes form a socially and economically interdependent group. The higher-caste people are usually rich landowners in need of the services of most of the occupational-caste people. In return the occupational castes are tied to their respective roles because the income from the meagre land ownings of those who have land is not enough for their self-sufficiency.

One’s caste and occupation is strictly his own, and it is considered improper for one to do a job not specifically assigned to his caste. It is considered irreligious for an orthodox Hindu to give up his caste occupation to take some other work. This attitude, of course, is changing, but there is a vast number of caste-conscious people with traditional beliefs who cannot imagine life otherwise.

To give an example of the interdependence among these castes, a Hajam (barber) needs a Dhobi to wash his clothes, a Haluwai to make sweets on feast occasions, a Mali to make flower garlands for a wedding ceremony, and so on. All of these people have well defined permanent relationships established with individual client families. The relationships are inherited generation after generation, and although it is not absolutely impossible to change ties, it certainly is very difficult and complicated.

The various occupational families such as Dhobi, Mali, et cetera, are referred to by their higher-caste clients as pauni pasar. Some pauni pasars are relatively well off economically when they happen to be associated with affluent client families. This is not always the case, however. Pauni pasar families sometimes exchange clients or even sell them for cash if they happen to be moving to a different village. One Mali informant in the district of Dhanusha told us that he was offered 1,000 rupees by another Mali for his clientele in a wealthy Rajput village. This phenomenon explains to some extent the significance of the permanent relationship. The various pauni pasar families receive not only the market price of their services, but at the same time there is a regular payment in kind to be had at the time of harvest and during festivals. The amount of payment is determined not only by the quality of the service rendered, but also by the economic and social status of the client family concerned.
Social status in this society depends entirely on wealth and the ability to spend it. A Rajput’s wealth, pride, and vanity are his marked traits. The average Rajput will say clearly that all Rajputs are very proud to the extent that they are sensitive and prone to pick quarrels and fights. Especially during wedding parties, when there are Rajputs of several villages assembled, they become quite extrovert, offend one another, and quarrel almost inevitably.

Manara Katti is one of the predominant Rajput villages near the border in the district of Mahottari, where “until a few years ago”, Rajput informants said, “no outsider could pass through the village on horseback or elephant-back.” The rider had to dismount and walk, thereby accepting the superior status of the Rajputs of that village. Anyone who dared ride through this village invited trouble.

Terai villages are totally different from those found in the hill regions of Nepal. Groups of 30 or 40 up to 100 or more houses are situated in the middle of a vast and level cultivated area. The standard houses are on one level, with the ground floor having bamboo latticed walls which are plastered with cowdung and mud. The roofs are thatched and a few are tiled. The houses are usually rectangular with a small courtyard completely enclosed in the centre of the structure. This basic plan is improved upon by the richer householders who construct their homes of brick or concrete, with flat roofs. The very poorest people have small huts with no enclosed courtyard.

Village streets are very dusty during dry weather and a muddy mire in the rains. There is no incentive to improve them, and only a few of the large and important towns have asphalt roads—Biratnagar, Birgunj, Bhairawa, and Nepalgunj.

In some Rajput and other high-caste villages the standard house design is expanded to include a separate living hall quite apart from the main house where the womenfolk live and work. The outside living hall, known by the term *darwaja*, is where the men spend most of their time. Male visitors are entertained in the *darwaja*, and all business is discussed there. The corresponding *haveli* is exclusively for women and includes the kitchen and dining place and always houses the sleeping rooms of the married men of the house.

Marriage among Terai people, as a rule, is by arrangement by the parents. It is also patrilocal and monogamous. Each caste is strictly endogamous; intercaste marriage is not tolerated. The popular and traditional practice is to marry at the early age of ten or twelve years, but now more and more young people, mostly boys, are sent instead to school until the age of 20 years or more.

Wedding procedures and ceremonies are basically the same as those of
A village street scene in the eastern Terai, Sarlahi District
A buffalo is quite common in the Terai.

Absence of bridges over many Terai rivers makes transport difficult.
the hill Brahmans, Chhetris, and occupational castes, with a few variations here and there. Rajputs have one outstanding peculiarity in marriage tradition. The Rajput of either Nepal or India is restricted to a particular geographic area when arranging for a partner. According to the rule, the bride is without exception taken from west to east, that is, all Rajput girls are married to boys living in the areas east of them. At the same time Rajputs giving their daughters are considered inferior in status to the families who draw brides for their sons. Thus every village is considered superior to the neighbouring village to its west.

A Rajput never marries a person related through common descent, but two brothers or cousins can bring in wives from the same family. A widower can marry the younger sister of his deceased wife. The higher castes—Brahmans, Bhuhihars, Rajputs, and Kayasthas—do not practise widow remarriage nor do they ever recognize the second marriage of any woman. Lower castes may, on the other hand, condone second marriages for widows.

There is not much intermarriage between the Terai people and related hill caste people, although hill and Terai neighbourhoods quite often overlap, and villages of one and the other are found in close proximity.

The higher castes, especially Rajputs, enforce very strict discipline upon their womenfolk. A woman would never appear without covering her face before men who are senior to her husband, or before other outsiders. Whenever she has to travel within or outside the village she covers her face and usually walks along back alleys. But once she is outside of her family circle or in a totally foreign place she may not follow these rules. The outside world is far removed and impersonal to her. She may be quite indifferent to it, while she is always very mindful of and sensitive to her domestic responsibilities and the code of etiquette within the circle of her relatives. From the time she enters her husband’s house she assumes the responsibility of the family completely and entirely for the rest of her life. There is no other alternative for her. She feels free and quite confident inside the domestic circle, outside of which there is uncertainty and insecurity.

In the eastern Terai the system of tilak, or bride wealth (the opposite of bride price), is very common among Bhuhihars and Rajputs, and to a lesser extent among others. The worth and qualifications of a girl are weighed in terms of the amount of tilak her father can present to the boy before marriage. Tilak consists of gold ornaments, silver wares, and cash. The average people have to pay two to four thousand rupees before they can expect to have their daughters accepted by the parents of a boy of matching status. A few rich people pay up to fifteen thousand rupees. A young Rajput informant in the district of Mahottari claimed that he
received ten thousand rupees worth of *tilak*. This payment is only the beginning of a marriage. Unlike the high caste Hindus of the hills, the Terai Hindus hire professional dancers and singers, usually from India, to entertain the guests during the wedding. The girl’s parents and their relatives give her dowries consisting of ornaments, clothes, furniture, pots, pans, and cattle. The groom receives gifts of clothes, a bicycle, a wrist watch, et cetera.

Lower castes have a simplified version of this same marriage system. Some Kayastha subcastes write an agreement between the two parties concerned prior to the actual wedding. Procedures from there on are similar to those of Rajputs and Brahmans with the exception that the Kayastha groom stays behind with his bride at her parents’ home when rest of the party leaves after three or four days. On the 16th day he returns home, usually with his bride. But in some cases if the parents of both the boy and girl have agreed beforehand, the boy returns alone, leaving his bride to stay on with her parents. In such cases the boy’s parents have to organize a party to fetch her after perhaps a year or so. During the groom’s stay at his bride’s parents’ house he is treated with the utmost care and respect.

The lowest castes have the same principles of marriage as those of higher status but for them a sister’s son or daughter’s husband has to act as priest in place of a Brahman.

All of the castes under discussion are strictly Hindu, although the degree of orthodoxy declines as one descends the scale of hierarchy. They worship all the deities of the Hindu pantheon: Brahma, Vishnu, Mahadev, Gauri, Parvati, Lachhmi, Saraswoti, Durga, Rama, Krishna, Ganesh, Bhimsen, and so on. There are one or more temples in each village, and the Terai boasts two particularly holy places of pilgrimage, the temples of Rama and Janaki at Janakpur in Dhanusha district, and the birthplace of Buddha at Lumbini in the district of Rupandehi.

Numerous religious festivals are observed. *Dashain* or *durga puja* is the most important of all Hindu celebrations, marked by the worshipping of the goddess Durga, eating good food, wearing one’s best clothes, and the like. This festival lasts for a whole fortnight in October but is celebrated with more festivity on the eighth, ninth, and tenth days of the fortnight as is the case in the hills as well. In some parts of the Terai the celebrants carry an image of the goddess Durga around the village during these three days, a custom not found in the hill regions. Any Hindu except of the lowest caste can lend his hand in carrying this earthen image.

A fortnight after *durga puja* the festival of *divali* (called *tihar* in the hills) is celebrated. Various animals are worshipped as in the hills and some people also perform the *bhai tika* observance of sisters worshipping their brothers.
Holi is another important festival, observed in February. Everybody becomes gay and ecstatic at this time. Men and children go around singing and dancing and throwing coloured water and powders at each other. The women usually gather in a place apart and do the same quite independently of the men.

Almost every family keeps a family deity called gossain, in the home near the hearth. They worship their gossain daily, offering special food on the occasion of festivals and family ceremonies, and set aside one special day each year for a special gossain observance. The gossain may be Durga, Bhagavati, Devi, or any other such deity.

All Hindus cremate their dead and perform a funeral ceremony similar to that which we have discussed among the Brahmans and Chhetris of the hill regions. The lower castes who do not wear the sacred thread cremate their dead without the aid of a Brahman priest. Kayasthas are the only exception to this rule and employ Patra Brahmans for the funeral.
One of the largest groups of people living in the Terai is identified by the generic term Tharu. Tharus, with a population of over 360,000, live throughout the length of the Terai with a slightly heavier concentration in the middle and west. In fact, the areas of Tharu settlement do not terminate at Nepal's western border; they extend well beyond to the north of Uttar Pradesh state in India.

The traditional territory of the Tharus is called Tharuwan or Tharwot. It consists of the forested land along the south base of the Siwalik mountain range and a few miles south into the Terai which is in the north of the heavily populated Gangetic plain.

The Tharus are probably the oldest and original inhabitants of the Terai. They usually live very close to the heavy forest region. A great number of the villages of Tharuwan are found in small clearings in the middle of the forest itself. Most of the large compact Tharu settlements are found in tropical, malarial areas, infested with wild animals such as elephants, rhinoceros, bears, tigers, and poisonous snakes. Easily accessible areas in the open are generally inhabited by other people.

The Tharu language has been greatly influenced by various north Indian languages found nearby: Urdu, Hindi, Bhojpuri, Maithili, and Bengali. The Tharu people have dark complexions, muscular slim bodies, and an average height of five feet two inches.

Mahalanobis, Majumdar, and Rao* have found the Tharus to be definitely a Mongoloid tribe. In features they possess more or less oblique eyes, mostly brown or yellow-brown complexion, very sparse and straight hair on the body and the face, with a nose of medium size; while in other features they resemble the Nepalis more than any of the Australoid or pre-Dravidian castes and tribes. S. K. Shrivasvastava summarizes these statements: "Tharus are a Mongoloid people or predominantly so, who have successfully assimilated non-Mongoloid physical features as well."**

There are several popular stories about the origin and the racial affinities of the Tharus. Most of them sincerely believe that they came from Rajputana in India at the time of the Musalman invasion. Some Tharus maintain that they are descendents of Rajput women who fled with their domestic servants rather than fall victim to an enemy. Equally various are the stories about the origin of their name, Tharu. But Nesfield writes,

---


** Ibid.
"it is safer to consider the name derived from the dialect of the tribe itself rather than search for it in Hindu etymology, because an aboriginal name underived from any Sanskrit or neo-Sanskrit source is the fit appellative of an aboriginal, casteless, and un-Brahmanised tribe whose customs have been only slightly modified by contact with those of Aryan invader."*

Tharus are by tradition peasant farmers. Some of them are rich landlords and a few, in the east Terai, have successfully taken up business. But a great majority of them are very hard-working tenant cultivators whose methods of cultivating in the central and western Terai are very primitive judging by the general standards prevalent in the plains. Most of the Tharus in Dang-Deukhuri have been very greatly exploited by the ruthless zamindars, landlords and revenue agents. They are virtually slaves in the hands of the zamindars, sold and bought at will. Since most of them are landless sharecropping peasants they have to rely entirely on the mercy of the zamindars. Every year they are buried more deeply in debt until eventually they are sold to other zamindars trying to cultivate new areas of land. They also practise shifting cultivation wherever there is still enough room for clearing new sites in the forest. Tharus also keep cattle, sheep, and goats.

It is said that most of these lands were originally cultivated by the Tharus and in course of time cleverer people came and got the better of them. It is also said that there were a few Tharu rajas. There are ruins of an old fort in Sukauragarh in the Dang valley which is said to have been built by the Tharu raja, Dangai-Bhusai.

In every village in Dang-Deukhuri there is an official called a mahato whose duty is to maintain law and order. He is in effect the leader of his village. He used to be elected by the villagers themselves, but now in most cases he is appointed by the zamindars. A mahato receives two days of free labour during the rainy season and two days for the dry season from each household of his village. This is a service rendered by his villagers in return for the leadership he has provided them. The mahato also does the job of going round the village to collect representatives from each household whenever there is a common problem to be discussed, such as a village dispute or the setting up of an order of precedence for irrigating the rice fields during the sowing season. The village council together with the mahato has a social sanction called khada under which it can fine an offender. The fine varies

---

from one to twenty rupees. The money thus realised is kept in a common village fund which is eventually spent for a village feast.

Tharus are said to have been theoretically divided into two main categories, namely Pradhan and Apradhan. Pradhans are of six different kinds and are all considered superior in social status to the Apradhans. Apradhans are subdivided into 26 different groups bringing the overall Tharu groups to 32. Since the division seems to be superficial, no one really seems to bother about who is a Pradhan or an Apradhan except for a few family groups. I have arranged some of the well known Tharu groups below, without showing any differences in the two categories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chitauniya</th>
<th>Majhaura</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dangaura</td>
<td>Mardaniya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dangbadiya</td>
<td>Morangia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathariya</td>
<td>Rajhatriya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khas</td>
<td>Rana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kochila (or Cooch Bihari)</td>
<td>Rautar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lalpuria</td>
<td>Solariya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lampuchhuwa</td>
<td>Sunaha</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each of these above mentioned groups is more or less confined to a specific area. For example, the Kochila, or Cooch Bihari, and the Khas live in Mahottari, Saptari, Morang, and in Jhapa. The Kochila are subdivided into the following pads: Chowdhery, Kha, Singh, Prasad, Roy, Hujdar, Majhi, Dhami, Panjiyar, Khavas and Bauchhar.

Rana, Rajhatiya, Solariya, Dangaura, and Kathariya live in Dang Deukhuri. Of all these Dangaura have a number of pads, among which are: Pachhaldangiya, Daheet, Demandaura, Kathkatuwa, Maduwa, Ultahawa, Dhaulahuwa, Gamuwa, Dharkatuwa, Phunnahuwa, Padgainya, and Nunhawa.


Some of the pads are further subdivided into a number of exogamous units. For example, the Pachhaldangiya are divided into Jagannathi Guni and Khadgi Guni. Ultahawa, on the other hand, have four subdivisions: Bakhariya, Kawa, Tantahawa, and Baukhahi. Some other clans are not subdivided by pads; they have, instead, a number of exogamous family groups of common descent.

Tharu marriages are monogamous and patrilocal. Most marriages are early,
are arranged by the parents of the couple concerned and are always within the tribe. The marriage partner can be anybody within the tribe except members of the same exogamous gotra unit. There are small regional variations in the basic marriage patterns.

Among people of modest means there is also the practice of exchange marriage. The families concerned decide to exchange brides for their sons. By doing this both families can cut down the cost of gifts, presents, dowries, and other expenses.

Among the Tharus of Chitwan and some other areas there is also a system of working for a wife. A young man has to work for the parents of a girl of his choice for two or three years before he can take her for a wife. There are also occasional cases of marriage, by elopement. In this kind of marriage, the boy has to pay compensation in money and other materials.

In normal cases of marriage by arrangement among the eastern Tharus it is generally the girl’s father who goes out in search of a match for his daughter. Among the western Tharus some relatives help the father to find a boy. In both cases the girl is usually older than the boy. Sometimes a girl of 15 or 16 years of age is given to a boy of seven or eight years of age. The main consideration is the wealth and the social status of the families concerned. When a suitable match is found by the girl’s father he approaches the boy’s father with his offer. He presents some money to the boy which is kept until the boy’s father pays a return visit to examine the girl. The boy’s father can return the money and dismiss the proposal if he does not like the girl. Once the negotiations are complete and both families agreed, the girl’s father goes to the boy’s father’s house where he is received by the host and his friends and relatives. The girl’s father puts a tika mark or curd and rice on the forehead of the boy’s father. Then one of the men elected for the purpose stands up and asks the girl’s father to make a formal announcement of the engagement, whereupon the girl’s father stands up and makes the public announcement mentioning the names of the boy and the girl and saying that he is proposing to give his daughter to the boy. Then he also mentions the name of the boy’s father. The same procedure is repeated by the boy’s father. Both of them repeat the sentence three times. The party of the girl’s father then returns home after being entertained with food and drinks and having fixed the date of the wedding.

On the day of the wedding the groom goes into the deurhar, god’s room, of his own house and completes the ritual of worship under the direction of his family guruva, the priest. He also worships a dagger which he holds in his hand throughout the period of the wedding until the bride is brought back home.

At the beginning of the wedding day the family guruva blesses some mustard
oil in which some black dal cakes are then fried and distributed to the family members to eat. Then the groom proceeds with a party of 50 or 60 people to his bride’s house, preceded by a musical band of drums and pipes played by professional musicians. The people from villages along the way offer food and drink to the members of the procession. Those who accept the food and drink are expected to make gifts of one or two rupees in return, according to the standard of food provided. Thus the procession takes a long time to get to the bride’s house. When they arrive at the village they go round the temples and shrines of that village before they go to the bride’s house.

Entering the house of the bride, the groom is taken into the deurhar of the family where he is offered food and home-brewed beer. The groom sticks the dagger he has been carrying into the ground. After this he comes back to another part of the house where his friends are waiting to spend the night. In the meanwhile the maidens of the village come to the house and sing. The songs consist of bad names and abuse addressed to the groom for taking their friend, the bride, away.

The following morning the groom’s party leaves for home. The groom is sometimes carried in a doli hammock. Two, three or four hours after the departure of the groom’s party the bride is also carried to the groom’s house, followed by a party of 40 or 50 people including a few women. The groom in the meantime waits outside his house, sometimes for several hours, because he cannot enter his house alone without the bride. The bride is given a lamp and a cup of poison by her parents to take with her at the time she leaves their house. The cup of poison is given to the bride so that she can commit suicide in case she happens to fall into the hands of an enemy. This custom is attributed to their Rajput origin.

As soon as the bride arrives at the house of the groom the female members of the family bring a pot full of glowing embers, a lamp, a waterpot, and some cotton seeds to the front of the main entrance of the house. They scatter rice grains over the bride and the groom. The groom then sprinkles vermilion powder over the dagger he has been holding and over the head of the bride before they enter the house. The heads of the bride and the groom are knocked against each other three times before they enter the house. Both the bride and the groom enter the deurhar of the family where the groom sticks his dagger into the ground. After this a short ritual of throwing rice grains and sprinkling water over the altar of the deity is done. Then the bride goes and sits among the women of the house with whom she spends the entire period of her stay till she returns to her parents the next day.

The bride takes a bottle of liquor, a straw mat, and pig’s head when she goes back to her parents’ house as presents to them from her husband’s family.
A Tharu young man

A Tharu girl with a characteristic smile

Dor Bahadur Bista
Tharu women of Dang Valley

Dor Bahadur Bista

A Dangaura Tharu Girl

Dor Bahadur Bista
A Rana Tharu

Tharu girls dancing during Holi
Her husband’s family also goes to pay respect to her parents at some stage once the main activities of the marriage ceremony are over. This is called the *nata pherne*, the changing of the relationship. Once the ceremony is over the bride goes back to her parents’ house to stay for another few years. Only occasionally does she visit her husband’s house during festivals with a group of her own friends. During this period the bride keeps the gifts of ornaments and clothes given to her by her parents and by her husband.

If by any chance the groom falls ill on the day of the wedding he can stay behind in his house and his dagger, which represents him throughout the wedding, is sent in his place.

Tharus, in general, practise their own tribal religion which consists of worshipping a number of spirits and some Hindu deities which have been incorporated. The Tharus in the east Terai, who have been living in closer contact with high-caste Hindus, employ Brahman priests to perform a number of Hindu religious ceremonies. Brahman priests are also employed to conduct weddings and other domestic *puja* ceremonies.

Those who still practise their traditional Tharu religion have their own *guruva* priest. Mainly, the Tharus of Chitwan, Nawalpur, Dang-Deukhuri, and Kailali-Kanchanpur are the ones who still practise the traditional Tharu religion and employ a *guruva*. The Rana Tharus use the term “Bharra” for their *guruva*. *Guruvas* are always men except among the Rana Tharu of Kailali and Kanchanpur where some women *guruvas* are employed. There are two different types of *guruvas* in Dang-Deukhuri, Kailali, and Kanchanpur called Desbandhiya and Ghar *guruva*. The Desbandhiya *guruva* holds a hereditary office ensured by the *lalmohar*, the seal certificate given by the King of Nepal.

Desbandhiya *guruvas* have an official position with a privilege recognized by the entire village whereas Ghar *guruvas* are family priests assigned to a few individual families only. Every lay family has an obligation to both of these *guruvas*, the Desbandhiya of the whole village and Ghar *guruva* of the family. The former receives an allotment of paddy each year from each registered tenant of his village, while the latter receives one day’s free labour per year from each client family. The payment of paddy from each family to the Desbandhiya *guruva* is not very much, since there are several families of tenants under each registered tenancy and all contribute to make up the total registered amount of paddy. Desbandhiya *guruva* can also act as Ghar *guruva* to a few families in addition to being the official Desbandhiya for the entire administrative village unit. The Ghar *guruva* also invokes the deities of his patient whenever he treats illness in the family.
Tharus have their *kul devta*, an ancestral deity, installed in their family house. This deity is either Kali Bhagvati, Mainyan, Parvatiya, or Goraiya. Goats are sacrificed to Kali Bhagvati and Mainya, and pigs to Goraiya. The worship of *kul devta* is purely a family affair. *Goraiva* is an evil spirit which is symbolized in a small ball of earth without any image in it. The family deity, Mainyan, is represented by pure earth mixed with cotton and crude sugar, with a small piece of gold in it. It is shaped into a ball and a small iron trident is placed on top. Kept with it is an iron sword called *saunra*, a small bag made of white cotton material, and a small box full of red vermilion. Beside all of these is kept a cane rod. The senior member of the family sleeps in the room of the *deurhar*, the family deity, which is always situated at the eastern corner of the house. Any kind of ritual religious activity in the family is always conducted in the name of the senior member of the family.

As in most parts of the Terai the Tharu villages also have a village shrine of *barham* in the centre of their village. But the Tharu villages of Dang-Deukhuri and Kailali-Kanchanpur call their village shrine *bhuinhar* instead of *barham*. *Bhuinhar* consists of several wooden carved boards erected on the ground near a tree, whereas *barham* is a small mud platform. People worship and make offerings in the shrine when inhabitants of the village fall ill. Both kinds of shrine are worshipped in March and in August. All the villagers combine to contribute food and cash to purchase a chicken, a goat, or a pig as a sacrifice for such occasions. They also worship Shanker, Parvati, Durga, Devi and Satya Narayan, among other deities.

Almost all the Tharus living in the east districts of Sarlahi Mahottari, Saptari, and Morang cremate their dead while most of those in the middle and western districts of Chitwan, Dang-Deukhuri, Kailali, Kanchanpur, Banke and Bardia bury them. Those who cremate take the corpse to a riverside, wash it clean with water and smear it with *ghee* before they burn it down to ashes. All the Tharu villages in the west Terai have a common burial ground outside the village. They dig a hole a few feet deep in the ground and spread a piece of white cotton material at the bottom before they lower the dead body and cover it with another piece of white cotton cloth and earth.

Death mourning is observed for three, five, seven, or as long as, but not more than, eleven days by the survivors of the family, according to their convenience. The mourners abstain from eating vegetable oil, turmeric, meat, and fish. At the end of the mourning period the family *guruva* gives mustard oil, blessed by him, which the mourners put on their heads. The *guruva* also completes the last funeral rite in the *deurhar* of the family. He invokes the family deity by meditation and recita-
tion and the soul of the dead person is then sent to live with its family deity ever after. On the last day of mourning the family gives a feast of boiled rice and dal to all the relatives and neighbours.

When an old member of a family dies the survivors throw all the articles belonging to that person outside the village. The belongings consist of earthen pots, pans, old clothes, wooden pounders, ladle, straw containers, dishes, and boxes of woven cane.

The joint family system is usual in the Tharu community. In joint families the father has full authority over all members of the family. When he dies his younger brother takes his place or, if there is no brother, the eldest son. However intelligent or bright a junior member of the family may be he can on no account act as leader and even a stupid man, if he is the eldest, has to be responsible for family affairs. The same principle applies among the women of the family. The mother is the highest in order of precedence, then the wife of the eldest son, and so on.

In a family where there are several married brothers with their wives, the family organization of household duties become quite complicated. The eldest brother’s wife becomes the virtual commander of the household under the supreme authority of the mother, who hardly interferes unless a serious deadlock arises. The eldest brother’s wife gives tasks to all the women of the family. The responsibility of cooking is entrusted to the youngest since this is the first job every daughter-in-law is given when she comes into her husband’s house. She may not, as a rule, eat anything cooked by senior members of the family. She is relieved of this obligation only when a new daughter-in-law comes to the house. Anything to be reported to the mother has to be done by the eldest daughter-in-law of the family. No other member is allowed to approach the mother directly. Any daughter-in-law who violates the rules or does not fulfil the job given to her is punished. The punishment may be physical; she may be given extra work or have to go without food. The main store of the house is under the control of the mother and normally only the eldest daughter-in-law is allowed access. But there are occasions of puja and other festivals or wedding ceremonies in the family when all the daughters-in-law have access to the store. On such occasions the junior daughters-in-law need not wait for orders to be given by the mother or by the eldest daughter-in-law. They are expected to use their own initiative in doing whatever work comes their way and in fetching necessities from the store.

A little loss or a slight mishandling by the junior daughters-in-law is tolerated on such occasions. As all the junior daughters-in-law are responsible and pay
respect to the eldest daughter-in-law, so all the younger brothers are responsible to the eldest brother.

The cause of separation of such families can be a family quarrel or a mutual agreement among all the brothers. The property is divided equally among the brothers. In some cases when the brothers divide their property peacefully and amicably they may decide to live in the same household and maintain separate accounts. Whenever they think that they would be better off living apart from the others they will quietly go out of the common house and since the property is already divided, there is no need to make any fuss.

Tharus live in one storey huts with bamboo walls and thatched roofs and are well known for keeping their houses exceptionally clean in spite of the primitive structure of their buildings. Gusseppe Tucci, talking about the Tharus of Banke and Bardia, says, "The Taru (sic) are not content merely to build their houses in a comfortable and spacious manner, such as is rarely to be found among peoples of their cultural level, but they also decorate them with great care."* The houses are built in groups of ten to twenty on either side of the village lane. The walls of bamboo lattice-work are plastered with mud and cowdung both inside and out. As such they are very ill-protected against fire and burglary.

As with all other societies in Nepal, the Tharu community is undergoing a tremendous change. There is a wave of reform among educated young Tharus. They have changed their food habits, adopted the Hindu religion and introduced modern education. There is a Tharu organization known as the Tharu Welfare Society which provides hostels in Birgunj for school children and students of both sexes. It has also made an effort to publish information about Tharus. This society encourages education among the Tharus of the interior regions and teaches them clean habits, such as giving up pork and not keeping chickens and pigs inside the house.

* Tucci, *Nepal*, pp. 7-76
Among the indigenous Nepali people, other than the preceding Tharu, we find Danuwar, Majhi, and Darai. They have striking cultural and physical similarities to the Tharus and inhabit neighbouring regions in the Terai forests and inner valleys. No doubt some individuals among them have invented interesting stories of their originally having been Rajputs who migrated to the forested areas of Nepal in order to escape the Moslem onslaught in India, but it is more likely that these peoples have been here for, at the least, several thousand years. They might belong to the group of aboriginal races inhabiting other more or less secluded regions of India.

In their appearance, attitudes, and behaviour, they are not much different from Tharus. They are very dark and seemingly bony, yet display great health and strength. They are considered to have developed immunity against malaria. They live in hot, humid, and greatly malarious areas in proximity with the Tharus, but are more dependent on fishing and less on forest game and farming. They travel along the river valleys penetrating far upstream along the deeply cut narrow gorges and valleys where they have settled.

Living close to them along the river valleys are the people called Barhamu and Kumhale, farmers and potters respectively. These Barhamus and Kumhales number very few; they appear more Mongoloid than Danuwars, Darais, and Majhis, and speak a distinct Tibeto-Burman tongue.

Tharus, as we have said, live exclusively in the Terai and inner Terai areas, notably in the Rapti, Dang, and Deukhuri valleys. Danuwars, Majhis, and Darais have spread much farther upstream. There is a settlement of Danuwars in Duku, a village along the Bagmati river in Kathmandu Valley itself, and more of these people are found along the Bagmati south to the Terai.

Majhi is actually a term used by the hill peoples for those people called Bote in the Terai (not to be confused with Bhoite of the northern border regions). They are also occasionally referred to as Kushar. All are identical, Majhi, Bote and Kushar; they speak one language and follow the same patterns of life.

Danuwars are the largest of the three groups under discussion, numbering about 11,000 scattered throughout the low hills of eastern Nepal and in the Terai, besides those found in Kathmandu Valley. Very few are found in the areas west of Kathmandu. Comparatively, the number of Majhis is about 6,000 likewise recorded throughout the eastern low regions. No Majhi is found in Kathmandu Valley.
Darais are recorded in Chitwan and in the low forested areas north of it. Their numbers barely exceed 3,000.

The settlements of these three peoples are very small, scattered, and generally far apart from one another. No single village ever has over five or six houses, with the exception of one or two numbering a dozen houses at the most. Those who inhabit the river valleys construct their homes of rounded river stones, with roofs thatched with rice grass. Those who live in the inner Terai have low thatched huts with wattled walls. Their huts stand quite apart from one another.

The Darais and Danuwars are dependent upon farming and fishing; Majhis are almost entirely fishermen or ferrymen on the rivers where they use small dugout canoes for transport. These dugout log canoes are thick and shallow and never sink although they might upset if a passenger becomes excessively nervous whereupon the craft flips over throwing everyone into the river. Because so few hill people know how to swim, often only the boatman reaches shore.

These Terai dwellers own very little in the way of domestic possessions. One will find only a few earthen pots and hand-woven baskets made of bamboo and wild grasses in their huts.

The people are all very shy and provincial by nature. They have little fear of wild animals but are very much frightened of other people. They dislike traveling. Majhis and Darais seldom leave their habitat more than an hour's walk. Many have made efforts to reclaim the forests near their villages, but should they get ahead the more advanced hill peoples living nearby, usually Brahmans and Chhetris, quickly exploit them for their own benefit. Consequently the river people have remained just that, and are landless. Those living in the forested areas of the Terai and inner Terai are likewise exploited by the merchant classes.

In my travels I observed an interesting transaction being made in one of the Majhi and Darai villages in Chitwan. Apparently a merchant had lent some money to one of the villagers some time back and in the interim seized part of the man's land. The villager went ahead, however, and harvested his fields, placing his paddy in storage where he kept watch on it. During the season of scarcity, July and August, the merchant came to the village and distributed this share of paddy from the confiscated fields to the hungry villagers. In February he returned once again to reclaim the entire amount of his loan in the form of oil seeds, with an additional charge of 25 percent interest over the original amount. Thus, in total, he had claimed four times the original amount because of the big difference in the market price of these commodities. This is just one example of the simplicity and the helplessness of the people and the attitudes of the cleverer classes living around
them. And because of experiences of this nature, the village people are extremely sus-
picious of any and all outsiders, giving them the appearance of shy and timid
folk.

Traditionally, the Danuwar, Darai, and Majhi wear very few clothes. The
women have a simple sari and blouse. Men wear a loin cloth, and sometimes a
blouse. Children run naked in the dust. Majhis and Danuwars living in higher and
cooler valleys wear more clothing, usually made from coarse factory material.
Their simple and almost non-existent costume is a result of climate, isolation and
poverty combined.

Socially and ethnically these three people taken together are totally indepen-
dent and different. None of them have any of the social subdivisions found in the
majority of other Nepali groups. They appear a race apart, and none except
Danuwars have reached the stage of organising their communities into social,
religious, economic, or political organisations. Consequently, whatever divisions
and social rules we might suspect are largely influences from whatever other group
of people with whom they live in proximity.

The Danuwars found in the northern part of Mohottari district seem to have
followed the pattern of Tharu social organization. They have the practice of deciding cases by a village council.

A Danuwar informant, who was greatly influenced by the Rajputs and other
Hindus of his area, gave me the names of two distinct types of Danuwars. Those
living along the upper river valleys he called Kachhare (living in Kachhar) and those
in the Terai were termed Rajhan. A third type is also known to be called Bahaduriya. Rajhans, he said, are superior and some of them even wear the Hindu sacred thread. A few of the Danuwar family names that exist in that area are Kumar, Singh, Rae, and Khan. They are the same names found among several other ethnic
groups of Nepal, but are nothing more or less than family names in this context.

Majhis, in the same manner, have a few family names and also give the name
Kachhare to those living in the upstream valleys. Majhi informants in the western
part of Parsa district gave the family names of Sundhuwan, Kachhare, Thar Bote, Mushar Bote, and Kushar Bote.

The most common type of marriage among these three groups of people
is by mutual agreement; that is, a boy and a girl usually between 20 and 30 years
old decide between them to live as husband and wife. There have been some cases
of capturing a girl only among the Danuwars, but they do not seem to work out
well. So Danuwars and all others find it more suitable to follow the custom of
marriage by mutual agreement. Some Danuwars also arrange marriages for their sons and daughters. Danuwar informants at Trishuli Valley expressed their view that marriage by arrangement is a very complicated thing. In the first place the boy’s people have to approach the girl’s parents several times before they are even asked about the purpose of their visits. After many visits the girl’s parents ask formally why they’ve come, although they have known all along the proposal in mind. Demands are made then for good clothes and ornaments for their daughter, and food and drink for themselves. It takes a long time before they actually get down to productive negotiations.

Once the wedding arrangements are settled favourably the groom is taken by a group of people in company with several Damais playing drums and pipes to the bride’s house on a pre-arranged date. The groom pays 16 rupees to the bride’s father at this occasion. Following a few formalities, wherein the bride’s parents give the bride and groom a tika on the forehead and the groom salutes his new bride’s parents and the whole company feasts and drinks with great pleasure, the groom escorts his new bride back home. The bride is carried in a hammock-like sling covered and unseen by others.

In cases of marriage by mutual agreement, the young couple does not have to inform and pay respects to their parents until they have actually started living together. But the boy must pay 40 rupees to his father-in-law before the marriage is socially recognised. Forty rupees is a large sum for the majority of these people, and a young couple might have to wait for years or a whole lifetime before the payment is met. In the interim, so long as the payment is not made, the husband will have no claim for compensation should his wife take another husband and leave him. Even more critical is the fact that if the payment has not been made by the time a child is born to the couple, or in the event of a death or other social or religious occasion of the couple, the girl’s parents cannot be represented as they should be. Every couple, therefore, tries as best they can to make the payment, but in fact there are many who die an unhappy death without it.

Danuwars living in the east Terai have adopted the system of paying dowries to their daughter’s husbands in imitation of the Rajputs and Brahmans in that area. Some others have adopted the system of paying a bride price of 100 or 200 rupees.

The Bote-Majhis of the Terai also have the system of marriage by arrangement, since among them the mother’s brother’s daughter is the preferred marriage partner for her father’s sister’s son and arrangement is more practical than free choice. Should a girl then marry someone other than the preferred cross-cousin,
the husband must pay compensation to the cross-cousin, the natural candidate. Neither Bote-Majhi nor Danuwars ever marry their father’s sister’s daughter. All of these groups allow marriage of one’s elder brother’s widow, but not of a younger brother’s widow.

When a woman leaves one husband for another the amount of compensation due to the first husband decreases by half each succeeding time. The third husband of a woman, then, pays half the amount that the second husband has paid, and the fourth in turn pays a quarter of the first compensation to the third husband. If along the line the woman is widowed by the death of her husband the next husband is not required to pay compensation, nor are any succeeding husbands.

Danuwars living close by other peoples, including the Tharus, consider themselves the highest caste. They do not eat pulses cooked even by Brahmans, the highest of all Hindu castes. As a rule, then, Danuwars are not found marrying outside their group. In the case of a few individuals who break this tradition immediate expulsion is the rule. Tharus, Darais, Bote-Majhis, and Kushars all tolerate intermarriage, and the general rule is that the male children are accepted into their father’s group, while the female children go with the mother’s group.

Danuwars, Darais, and Majhis maintain a family deity within their homes behind the hearth where no one except members of the immediate family is allowed entry. These family deities, their ancestor-gods, are worshipped and chickens and goats are slaughtered to them during dashain, the great Hindu religious festival, and on the full moon day of phagun (mid-February to mid-March).

Bhaggu Bote (Majhi) of Thori in the south of Chitwan, while talking about the worship of his kulkulayan, the family deity, said, “My grandfather was said to have sacrificed buffalo every year at the shrine, but in my father’s time it was more expensive so he slaughtered sheep instead.” Then with a tinge of humour and half-credulity on his face he added, “But I have been so impoverished that I cannot even buy a sheep, so I sacrifice only a chicken.”

These people also worship Ban Devi, goddess of the forest. Among Danuwars one’s sister’s son or a daughter’s husband acts as family priest on these occasions, while among Darais and Majhis the old and experienced act as priests. They do not have any religious prayers, codes, or spells of their own. Neither do they have a written language, and very few people are literate among them.

The Bote-Majhis observe birth pollution for four days and death pollution for 13 days. Danuwars observe both birth and death pollution for ten days. All of them cremate their dead.
Their women do not inter-dine with any group of people other than their own, although the men may not observe this rule strictly, at least within the various neighbouring groups, because they are more disposed to travel away from the home locale.
RAJBANSI, BODO, DHIMAL AND SATAR

In the eastern Terai we find several more of the indigenous inhabitants of Nepal and adjoining districts of India. They are the Rajbansi (or Koch), the Bodo (or Mech), the Dhimal, and the Satar (or Hor). All of these peoples seem to fall generally within the same group as Tharus, Danuwars, and others previously discussed in their physiognomy and racial traits. But unlike the Tharu they are concentrated mainly in the districts of Jhapa and Morang, or more definitively, between the Kosi and Mechi rivers in Nepal and further east and south across the Indian border.

Of them all, the Rajbansi and Satar are the most numerous, the Rajbansi numbering over 40,000 and the Satar in Jhapa district alone estimated at 20,000.* However, the Rajbansi and Satar population in Nepal, that which is given here, is only a fraction of the numbers found in India.

The Rajbansi, originally known as Koch, are said to have been a very powerful nation during the 17th and 18th centuries. About that time, however, they were absorbed and overcome by the British in India, and in Jhapa and Morang their territories were annexed to the Kingdom of Nepal by King Prithvi Narayan Shah in 1774. The Koch country, writes Hodgson, "once included the western half of Assam on one side and the eastern half of Morang on the other, with all the intervening country..."**

Hajo, the founder of the enormous Koch (Rajbansi) state also tried to unite Koch, Mech (Bodo), and others by giving his daughters to Mech chieftains to form a powerful defence against intruders and invaders. His descendants, however, abandoned the policy and not only cast off the other tribes with scorn but despised their own religion, tribal name, culture, and language in favour of Hinduism and its Sanskritic culture. In the process, only the rich and powerful few were able to obtain Kshatriya status of the Hindus and were given the name Rajbansi. The poorer Koch, having already developed a dislike for their religion and culture, turned to Islam and became Musalman instead. At present then we find three types of Koch: the Rajbansi Hindus, the Musalmans who were not officially given the name of Rajbansi but who call themselves Rajbansi nevertheless, and lastly the remnants of the old Koch community who did not convert to either religious community. Hindu and Musalman Rajbansis speak a language called Rajbansi or Tajpuri, while the Koch remnants speak their original dialect greatly influenced by


Sanskrit. Presumably only the very poor Koch remained in their original cultural state.

Bisu, one of the grandsons of Hajo, was a brave and powerful person who had conquered a number of chiefs and their territories, built his capital at Koch (or Cooch), and given the Sanskritic name Bihar to the territory (hence Cooch Bihar) while adopting Hinduism and its culture. The Brahmans, in deference to the wishes of this brave and powerful chief, Bisu, gave him and his people the title of Kshatriya, the warrior caste second to Brahmins in the hierarchy. Bisu himself was given the name Biswa Singh thereafter. ***

The original Koch, and now Rajbansi, are among the very oldest people of their area. They are mentioned in the Mahabharata, the famous Hindu epic which is believed to be more than 3,000 years old. Koch chiefs were recorded to have fought on the battlefield of Kurukshetra during the Mahabharata period.

The Satar people are said to be the same as the Santhal people of Bihar. The majority of Satar keep moving continually back and forth across the Nepal-India border, not content to remain settled in one place for any length of time.

Bodos and Dhimals are often classed with Satars; they all live close to one another. Dhimals are mainly concentrated along the banks of the Mechi river. The climate is not very healthy particularly for those who live in or near the forests, all except the Rajbansi. For the most part these peoples are acclimatised, having been in their habitat for thousands of years. They are immune to malaria.

These are a dark, hardy looking people of medium height, with short, wide noses, round prominent nostrils, narrow eyes, large ears, thick lips, and thick dark hair. They appear more closely related to the Mongoloid mountain people than to the plains people living around them, except that they are considerably darker.

Their language and dialects have been greatly influenced by the Sanskritic group of languages about them, for example, Bengali and Maithili.

Brian Hodgson describes the nature and character of these interrelated groups.
as shy at first, but after acquaintance boisterous and inquisitive. They are pacific toward their own people and their neighbours, and appear totally free from arrogance, revenge and cruelty. Bodos and Dhimals, he felt, are more like the mountain people in their straightforwardness and honesty. All of them are fond of music and dance, and they dance and sing on the occasion of festivals and wedding ceremonies.*

The main occupation is farming; they raise maize, rice, wheat, and mustard. Some among them grow cotton. Bodos and Dhimals use some of the cotton in their own spinning and weaving. Some of them dye the materials; others leave it plain. All the surplus cotton and mustard is sold for cash or bartered for rice.

Very few of the people except the Rajbansi own land or even remain permanently in one location for any great length of time. Satars, Bodos, and Dhimals are nomadic in their living habits, clearing a patch in the forest and cultivating the area for one or two seasons before giving it up and moving on to another place, only to return to the first after another few years have passed. This type of shifting cultivation is not peculiar to the Terai, or eastern hill region of Nepal, but it is found to a degree in the whole of South and Southeast Asia.

These Terai peoples are not at all good farmers, but by shifting and moving, cultivating and growing what they can they do maintain themselves. Nowadays, because of this rapid deforestation of these areas of Nepal, they are being forced to stay in one place in the plains and to concentrate on more long-range and careful farming. They also fish and hunt, supplementing their agricultural economy to a small extent. But there are clever people in the neighbouring areas who have taken advantage of their simplicity and naiveté promoting their hard labours yet leaving them landless and dependent.

The typical village may boast of 10 or 15, or even as many as 30 thatched huts in a group with a common open yard in the centre. This courtyard is the centre of social activities. The women of the house work very hard and keep the houses relatively clean. When a new house is to be built the men join in to help each other with the construction.

Men and women are skilled in making several types of baskets of bamboo and other wild reeds. They are also clever at styling fish nets.

Each village has a council of elders which meets as often as is found necessary to discuss problems or decide disputes among community members. Whenever

---

People of Nepal

Satars are meeting in council they install a pole on some public thoroughfare and decorate it with leaves as a public invitation to the meeting.

Each of the tribes is divided into a number of smaller units. Among Satars they include: Baske, Besra, Hasda, Hemram, Kisku, Murmu, Saren, and Tudu.*

Marriage as a rule is monogamous and polygamy by either sex is not tolerated except in the case of a man bringing in a second wife with the permission of a first who is known to be infertile. Women command a great deal of respect and confidence from their menfolk, and it is the responsibility of the mother to see their daughters married. Hodgson writes that daughters inherit the family property when the mother dies, and that the husband lives with his wife’s mother after marriage and obeys her. Marriages are arranged by mothers although a grown up woman can select a husband for herself. He reports that a girl’s marriage costs the mother ten rupees, a boy’s costs five rupees.**

The custom of paying a bride-price for marriage is found among these peoples. Among Rajbansis the payment is very high compared with the others. The poor man who cannot pay for a bride must go and work for her parents. Sometimes a boy works for one, two, or as long as three years before he earns his bride. This system is also prevalent among the Tharus of the area and also among the groups in Chitwan. Bride price is paid also in the event the girl is a widow or a divorcee, although payment is much lower for them than for a girl in her first marriage, because popular belief is that the woman will be returned to her first husband after death.

There is also a custom of marriage by force among Satars. Either a boy or a girl can force a partner to marry. When a boy insists that the girl marry him he puts vermillion powder in the parting of her hair, which automatically makes her his wife by tradition and popular belief. The boy risks a severe beating at the hands of the girl’s people, and should the girl be unwilling yet to marry him she can leave him and return home and subsequently marry another. But she is always considered wedded first and forever to the boy who first applied the vermillion powder to her hair. In the same way a girl can force the boy of her choice to marry her by forcibly entering his home and staying there. She cannot be forced out of the house but may be persuaded to leave. However, if she remains adamant the boy must marry her.***

---

*** Shrestha, op. cit.
In marriages by mutual agreement between the boy and the girl and in those arranged by parents, a wedding ceremony is held when negotiations are completed. On an auspicious day a procession of the friends and relatives of the groom and his parents goes to the bride’s house. The party is entertained with food and drink at the bride’s parents’ house after which they return home with the bride. The actual wedding ceremony is held at the groom’s house. For a Dhimal wedding a deoshi, the priest, presides over the ceremony, invokes specified deities and offers them food and drink. Afterwards the groom’s parents provide a feast for friends and relatives.

The Rajbansi Hindus worship a number of deities and observe festivals common to the plains people. The Musalman Rajbansis practise Islam as do those Musalman groups around them. Many of the Satars and others have been attracted to Christianity. And yet, there are a great many who do not fall into any of these religious categories and worship a number of deities including some of the Hindu pantheon.

The most important Satar festival is celebrated in December after the paddy is harvested. Chickens, pigs, goats, and pigeons are sacrificed on this occasion. Similar kinds of festivals are celebrated in February and in June. Several deities are worshipped including Thakur, Morang Buru, and Moreko. The festivals include singing, dancing, feasting, and drinking.

All of these tribes’ people except Hindu Rajbansis bury their dead immediately. Bodos, Dhimals, and Satars have no fixed burial ground but take their dead to the nearby forest. Food and liquor are offered on the grave when it is filled with earth and a few stones have been placed loosely on top. The members of the deceased man or woman’s family observe mourning and pollution for three days. They are restored to purity when they bathe and the priests or their elders sprinkle pure water over them. A funeral feast follows, and a pig and chicken are slaughtered.

When the feast has been got ready and the friends are assembled, before sitting down they all repair once again to the grave, when the nearest of kin to the deceased, taking an individual’s usual portion of food and drinks, solemnly presents them to the dead with these words, ‘Take and eat: heretofore you have eaten and drank with us: you can do so no more: you were one of us: you can be so no longer: we come no more to you, come you not to us.’ And thereupon the whole party break and cast on the grave a bracelet of thread priorly attached, to this end, to the wrist of each of them.
Next the party proceed to the river and bathe and having thus lustrated themselves, they repair to the banquet, and eat, drink, and make merry as though they were never to die.*

Popular belief maintains that all relatives and acquaintances will meet again in the next world.

---

The first Musalmans to arrive in Kathmandu were Kashmiri traders who came from Tibet during the reign of Ratna Malla in the late 15th and early 16th centuries. It is believed that they were traders of rugs, carpets, shawls, and other woollen goods and that they travelled back and forth from Kashmir to Lhasa via Ladakh. A few among them were invited to Kathmandu by an envoy of Ratna Malla in Lhasa.

During the 17th or 18th century other Musalmans were brought from India to Nepal in the service of some of the Chaubisi rajas of Nepal’s western hills to train soldiers in the use of firearms. In these early times, however, the total numbers of Musalman traders and instructors could hardly have been more than a few dozen. Today’s large numbers of Nepali Musalmans are descendants of yet another group who migrated into the Terai areas as agricultural labourers and into the hills as sellers of bangles, glass beads, and leather goods during or after the Indian Mutiny of 1857.

In physical appearance Musalmans do not look any different from other Mediterranean physical types living in Kathmandu and throughout Nepal, and they are not easily distinguishable from Brahmans, Chhetris, and some Newars of Indian origin. In dress and customs, however, some Kathmandu Musalman men distinguish themselves either by growing beards or by wearing a Turkish hat, or both. By far the large majority do not wear dress much different from that of other non-Musalman Nepalis about them.

Most Musalmans in the Western Terai speak Urdu as their mother tongue, a language quite closely related to Hindi. In other parts of Nepal they are greatly influenced by the languages spoken in those areas, wherever they happen to be living. The Musalmans of the Western Hills hardly speak any Urdu. They speak Nepali as their mother tongue.

The most recent census, that of 1952-1954, gives the total Musalman population in Nepal as 208,899. Over half of these are found in the eastern Terai region, the western hills and Kathmandu Valley. In the western hills they are scattered all the way from Kathmandu to Doti. Those in Kathmandu Valley today total approximately 1,300. These Valley Kathmandu Musalmans consider themselves more sophisticated and of a higher social order than those of the outlying districts. The few people of Kashmiri descent consider themselves of an even

* Although there are many Musalmans living in the hills, for reasons that the great majority live in the Terai they have been placed among the Terai Peoples.
higher social and cultural order than the Hindustani Musalmans or those of later arrival to Nepal.

Most Terai Musalmans are farmers. A very few of them are tailors and bangle-sellers. Most of them are fairly self-sufficient farmers; a very few are landless wage earning labourers and even fewer are measurably rich.

Those who live in the western hills have little land but support themselves by selling bangles, throughout the hills during the dry winter season. They are known as churaute, bangle sellers, in rural areas.

Kathmandu Musalmans do not farm. They are most often traders and shop-keepers and some few among them have achieved affluence and a higher education and have found positions in government, as teachers and in other professional jobs.

Musalmans have maintained their traditional style of architecture in mosques found both in the Terai and in Kathmandu Valley. Their houses, however, are not different from the common styles in the particular localities they inhabit.

Musalmans have maintained their traditional style of architecture in mosques found both in the Terai and in Kathmandu Valley. Their houses, however, are not different from the common styles in the particular localities they inhabit.

Musalmans have maintained their traditional style of architecture in mosques found both in the Terai and in Kathmandu Valley. Their houses, however, are not different from the common styles in the particular localities they inhabit.

Musalmans have maintained their traditional style of architecture in mosques found both in the Terai and in Kathmandu Valley. Their houses, however, are not different from the common styles in the particular localities they inhabit.

Musalmans have maintained their traditional style of architecture in mosques found both in the Terai and in Kathmandu Valley. Their houses, however, are not different from the common styles in the particular localities they inhabit.

Musalmans have maintained their traditional style of architecture in mosques found both in the Terai and in Kathmandu Valley. Their houses, however, are not different from the common styles in the particular localities they inhabit.

Musalmans have maintained their traditional style of architecture in mosques found both in the Terai and in Kathmandu Valley. Their houses, however, are not different from the common styles in the particular localities they inhabit.

Musalmans have maintained their traditional style of architecture in mosques found both in the Terai and in Kathmandu Valley. Their houses, however, are not different from the common styles in the particular localities they inhabit.

Musalmans have maintained their traditional style of architecture in mosques found both in the Terai and in Kathmandu Valley. Their houses, however, are not different from the common styles in the particular localities they inhabit.

Musalmans have maintained their traditional style of architecture in mosques found both in the Terai and in Kathmandu Valley. Their houses, however, are not different from the common styles in the particular localities they inhabit.

Musalmans have maintained their traditional style of architecture in mosques found both in the Terai and in Kathmandu Valley. Their houses, however, are not different from the common styles in the particular localities they inhabit.

Musalmans have maintained their traditional style of architecture in mosques found both in the Terai and in Kathmandu Valley. Their houses, however, are not different from the common styles in the particular localities they inhabit.

Musalmans have maintained their traditional style of architecture in mosques found both in the Terai and in Kathmandu Valley. Their houses, however, are not different from the common styles in the particular localities they inhabit.

Musalmans have maintained their traditional style of architecture in mosques found both in the Terai and in Kathmandu Valley. Their houses, however, are not different from the common styles in the particular localities they inhabit.
Mussalman mosque at Jaleswor, eastern Terai
Rana government eventually opened a Musalman primary school and by the 1940's Musalmans were allowed to attend secondary schools and soon after, to college.

Meanwhile traditional Urdu schools developed. Some Musalmans went to study Urdu and Persian in India. Higher degrees in those educational institutions are Maulana, Hafiz, Kari, and Fazil. A Hafiz, Kari, or Fazil graduate is required to be able to read properly the Koran, the classical religious text, and a Fazil should also be able to translate and interpret the original Arabic text.

Two groups are recognizable in the social ranking. The first consists of four divisions: Saiyad, Seikh, Pathan, and Mogul. Saiyad and Seikh have Arabian origins and as such are the descendants of the original followers of Mohammed, founder of Islam. Pathans are believed to have come from Afghanistan and the Moguls to be descendants of the Turks.

A second class consists of occupational groups, later converts to the Islamic religion. They are found throughout Musalmans areas in Nepal but the majority are in the Terai and western hills. They are: Ansari (weavers), Sabji Farosh (vegetable vendors), Dhobi (washermen), Naddaf (cotton teasers), Daffali (tassel and bangle sellers), and Mochi (cobblers). Both of these groups have family subdivisions. Descent is patrilineal and therefore family names are reckoned along the father's line. In the western hills, however, only two categories are prevalent, Miya and Fakir. The latter have lower social positions. Musalmans of the Terai further distinguish themselves as northern Musalmans from their southern Musalmans neighbours in India.

As Musalmans the world over, they believe in one god Allah, and in Mohammed His prophet. However, in the course of history Islam has been divided into two main sects known as Shia and Sunni. The great majority of Indian and Nepali Musalmans follow the Sunni belief, and in particular the Hanfi school, one of four subdivisions. They are more traditional and respect their prophet Mohammed more than some others.

Prophet Mohammed was born in Mecca and died in Medina in Saudi Arabia in 632 A.D. These two places are considered as holy and are the goals of Musalman pilgrims the world over. At least once in a lifetime the devout Musalman should visit these shrines. For a Nepali this trip costs about Rs. 4,000, and is considered an obligation only for those who have more than Rs. 10,000 in savings. There are other obligations as well. Musalmans pray regularly to god, observe the Roza fast in the month of Ramzan, and should give at least two and one half percent of their income regularly to a common Musalman charity.
All good followers of Islam observe these and a number of other obligatory rules. They all should worship the one god, Khuda, and follow the teachings of Mohammed who alone received the particular Islamic insight. A Musalman disobeying these rules is considered kafir, a heathen, and is rejected by the community. Mohammed's teachings demand of individuals loyalty to god and religion, honesty, truthfulness, and patience and condemn as a sin stealing, inflicting injury, deceit, adultery, debauchery, anger, and the like. The good Musalman drinks no alcohol, eats no meat slaughtered by other than another Musalman and may touch no pig. Sinners will be sent to hell and the good religious ones to heaven by one of four angles, Iz-Ra-il. The angel Jib-Ra-il brought the holy text, the Koran, from God to Mohammed; Ni-Ka-il is responsible to provide daily food to the people; Is-Ra-Fil will be the one to announce the time of destruction of this world.

Musalmans of Nepal observe a number of religious occasions traditional in Islam. The most important of them is Roza, observed by fasting and praying five times daily through the entire lunar month of Ramzan. Since the lunar months fall short of the solar months there is a difference of ten days at the end of each year and an entire month after three years. To make up for this the month of Ramzan is moved back by one month every third year. It is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. This occasion fell in the months of January-February in 1965, and will fall in December-January in 1967.

The months begin on the first day of the bright fortnight. But Roza starts only when the crescent moon is visible in the sky and lasts until the crescent reappears at the end of the month. Every able-bodied Musalman is supposed to observe Roza by fasting from sunrise to sunset and by praying at a mosque five times daily. During the fast hours he abstains from eating and drinking and also observe various other austerities but still perform their routine occupational work. On the first and concluding day of Roza a festivity called Id-Ul-Fitra, the breaking of fast, is observed. Friends and relatives are invited for feasts and prayers.

Roza is the most important but not the only religious observance. There are several others which we will discuss briefly here in the order of the months they fall in by the Islamic calendar.

Moharrum is primarily celebrated by Indian Musalmans and those in Nepal's Terai. The occasion marks the assassination of Imam Hussain, grandson of Mohammed. Ten days during the first month are set aside during which, each morning, food is offered in the name of Hussain. Musalmans in the Terai also play a special game with sticks at this time.

Rajjav is the name of the seventh month, during the last week of which
another festival, Meraj, is observed. The 27th of the month is important as the day when Mohammed was called by God up into the sky. Mohammed is said to have travelled the realms of the universe in a few seconds, returning with the message of the Islamic god to earth. People believe that Mohammed rode on a very fast winged horse called Burra during this journey.

On the 14th of Shavaan, the 8th month, the Shab-I-Barat festival is observed by eating fine foods, keeping a vigil for the night, visiting the graves of dead relatives, and praying for the welfare of both the living and the dead.

Bakra Id is an important observance of three days, beginning on the 10th day of the 12th month. Many people sacrifice animals, usually goats in the Terai and buffalo in the hills, and enjoy the ensuing feast. Some rich people offer to buy entire animals at times to share with the poorer members of the community. Prayers are read at specific times during this observance. Bakra Id is also the time to begin the Haz, or holy pilgrimage to Mecca.

Weekly religious observances include the assemblage of all Muslims in the mosques on Fridays for mass prayers. Various ceremonies during the cycle of life require the reading of namaz, prayers. The father or a guardian reads the prayers for the welfare of a new born baby at the time of birth. Special washing of the baby and mother are performed along with religious ritual and prayer on the sixth, twentieth, and fortieth days after birth.

Musalman boys are circumcised in an important religious ceremony between the ages of four and eight. Namaz are recited and a feast is prepared for family members and close friends and relatives.

Musalman marriage is very different from other traditions in Nepal. Musalman individuals can marry with almost any other Musalman except a sibling. That is, the only partners technically unacceptable are those who have suckled the same breast, even though perhaps not born of the same mother and father. Parallel- and cross-cousin marriage is acceptable. In reality, however, Musalman social stratification is rigid and plays an important role in actual selection for marriage. One tends to remain within his own social group, particularly among those of higher standing.

Marriageable age is twelve to sixteen for a girl and sixteen to eighteen for a boy. Most marriages are monogamous, but there is no restriction on a man's keeping up to four wives if he so chooses. Once divorced, however, remarriage to the same spouse is prohibited.

Marriages are always arranged and negotiated by the parents of the couple concerned. Once the parents agree to establish the relationship the fathers of both
the boy and the girl meet at her father's house where a formal offer of the girl is given. The boy's father accepts before witnesses. The occasion is called nisvat, engagement.

The formal wedding takes place sometimes up to a year after nisvat. The two families involved exchange some gifts of food in the meantime. On the day of the wedding the groom goes out to the bride's house with a party of friends and relatives. He also brings gifts of clothes and jewellery for the bride. The girl's parents give pots, pans, clothes and jewellery, as much as they can afford, as dowry. In the case of Terai Musalmans Rs. 50 or 60 are given to the groom's father by the bride's father as a further dowry.

In a contract signed at the wedding the groom promises to pay a certain amount of money to the wife in case a divorce is desired in the future. This is like bride-price, called mahr, and can range from Rs. 50 to several thousands depending upon the financial and social status of the families involved.

There is no stigma attached to widow-remarriage or a second marriage. Adultery is punished and fined, although tradition demands that an adulterer should be "flogged 100 times, dead or alive".

Musalmans always bury their dead. A dead body is washed clean with water, then anointed with camphor and perfumes before being taken to the grave. Male relatives carry it to the common graveyard as soon as the washing and anointing is done immediately after death. The grave is dug right away and the corpse is lowered fully clothed. Rich Musalmans erect a memorial over the grave.
PART III

NORTHERN BORDER PEOPLE

INTRODUCTION

Nepal's northern border with Tibet is high Himalayan country. Its valleys and mountain slopes are inhabited by a Tibetan-speaking border people whose cultural and religious roots are Tibetan. The most famous among them are the Sherpas of Solu-Khumbu, the Mt. Everest region. For practical reasons all of these border people, Sherpa included, have been collectively identified as Bhote after the Nepali term bhot, i.e. Tibet. Bhote, then, for these northern Nepalis, is not only inaccurate, but has come to be an offensive and derogatory term in somewhat common usage.

The northern border people, when examined closely, are so different from one group to another that any one title means little more than the term Pahadi given to people living in the middle ranges of Nepal, or Madhise for those living in the plains of the southern Terai bordering India. The northern border people, scattered among the many high river valleys, east to west, have ways of life and dialects that are often totally unintelligible to their neighbours.

The only available census, that of 1952-1954, gives the total number of border peoples as 70,132, of whom the majority live in the eastern hills (52,255) with the remainder found in the west (17,588) and in Kathmandu Valley (289).* Their settlements are high, from just under 9,000 feet to over 16,000 feet above sea level. The climate at these altitudes is cold and brisk. Rainfall varies from less than 10 inches per annum at Mustang in the west to 40 inches in the eastern district of Sankhuwa-Sabha along the upper Arun valley, and slightly less in Solu-Khumbu.

The famous and colourful Sherpa people live in the northern districts of Sagarmatha Zone along the Dudh Kosi and its tributary valleys and in the Helmu and upper Trishuli valleys. They are found spread out all along the eastern hill districts, although their original homeland is by tradition the district of Solu-Khumbu. Solu-Khumbu Sherpas are among the best known border peoples. Solu-Khumbu is also called Shar-Khumbu, shar meaning “east” in Tibetan; Khumbu is the name of the region. The word Sherpa is derived from the term sharva, meaning the people “living in the east”. Through the course of time the name Sherpa has gained so much currency that it almost acts as a tribal name, and it does in fact define a specific group of people. Before Sherpas were so highly publicized by mountaineering expeditions they introduced themselves to other societies by the term ‘Shar Khombo’, the inhabitants of Shar-Khumbu.

Nepal’s Solu-Khumbu is the natural habitat of the Sherpas, although they retain much of the Tibetan culture. Despite their close affinity with Tibetan language, culture, and religion, Sherpas feel as much Nepali as any other people. In line with this they dislike being associated with the term Bhone.

In the subdistrict of Solu there are considerable numbers of non-Sherpas living side by side with Sherpas, just as some Sherpas live in other non-Sherpa communities of the eastern hills. But wherever Sherpas live, their’s are among the highest settlements in the mountains. Nowhere in their region are there other communities settled above them. In Khumbu, villages range between 10,000 and 14,000 feet above sea level, clinging to the steep mountain slopes. The big rivers, the Dudh Kosi, Bhone Kosi, and Imja Khola flow in deep cut narrow gorges leaving some of the villages at the top of steep escarpments.

There is much snow in Khumbu, usually two to four feet during a winter, and the weather is very cold. No kind of work can be done in the open during these months. Only the old people stay in the villages while almost all able-bodied Sherpas come down to warmer regions at least for the winter. During this period they may trade, beg, or find some work. They travel much more extensively than any other community in the middle ranges, and it is quite common for the whole family of a Khumbu Sherpa to leave the house locked up for four or five months during the winter, often until the first part of spring. In this time they travel down to the lower, warmer valleys or keep on south as far as

A Sherpa boy recognized as a re-incarnate Lama

Dor Bahadur Bista
A Sherpa house in Solu Khumbu.
Kathmandu or the plains of the Terai. They normally return for the festival of losar in February. From losar onwards the days get warmer and the snow begins to melt. March, April, and May have the most pleasant days, coloured with flowering rhododendrons, azaleas, and other plants.

Tradition ascribes four seasons of three months duration to the Sherpa 12-month year. Beginning in February the seasons adhere roughly to the natural weather changes and agricultural periods. The first, chika, is a fine season when winter fades into spring, and when the people go out under clear sky and sunshine to plough and sow their potatoes, buckwheat, and barley. Yarbu, from about mid-May to August, is the rainy season. Solu-Khumbu receives about 30 inches of rainfall in these three months. The third season, tyum, is beautiful again when the meadows sport bright carpets of violets, primulas, gentians, edelweiss, and other blossoms, and the harvest is gathered. But winter snows are near and finally dominate land and life through the last season, ghumbu, November to February.

Sherpa economy is directly related to their mountain environment, and falls into four distinct categories: field agriculture, animal husbandry, trade, and a recent innovation—mountaineering. The people of Solu have considerable latitude for agriculture and raise the staples maize, wheat, and potatoes, in contrast to the more pastoral activities of Khumbu. Farming in Khumbu is limited to only a few patches of sandy soil on ledges. Consequently, Khumbu Sherpas concentrate their effort on animal husbandry of cattle and yak, grazing them along the vast and grassy alpine slopes. In 1957, we counted as many as 2,900 head of cattle, yak, and cross-breeds, divided among a population of 2,052 in 411 households. Yak provide wool and important milk by-products, especially butter. The women-folk make mats from the wool and sell them in the lower regions in exchange for grain or money, while the butter is used to meet their own needs. Butter is used in the traditional salted Tibetan tea which is drunk in great quantities.

Of equal importance with cattle-raising is cross-breeding, cow to yak, for their valuable offspring, the male dzopkya and the female dzum. Dzopkys are very strong and durable beasts, ideal for carrying loads and coping with both the cold and relatively warm climate in contrast to the wilder pure yak bulls accustomed to the severe higher altitudes. Dzopkys are docile enough to be easily tamed and used as plough bullocks. They are in great demand in Tibet and are exported across the northern border and to similar areas of Nepal at the rate of more than 600 yearly in exchange for nak the female yak. A dzopkya in Tibet brings more than twice the price of a yak.
Dzums, extremely valuable for their milk products, have a good market in Solu and other similar areas. Thus the breeding of these hybrids in Khumbu is constantly stimulated by demand for males in Tibet and females in other regions of Nepal. Khumbu is considered ideal for their breeding; Solu is not high enough for keeping yak, and it is said that such cross-breeding is not allowed in Tibet. This is a fortunate situation as it has helped to maintain the economy of the Khumbu Sherpas more than any other enterprise until recently when Sherpas began specializing in mountaineering.

Khumbu lies on one of the important trade routes linking Nepal with Tibet through Nangpa La (Nangpa Pass). Namche Bazaar, at 11,300 feet above sea level, is the main trading centre, a village of 84 substantial stone houses with wooden roofs. Salt, sheep’s wool, meat, and yak cross Nangpa La from Tibet to Namche. Trade for Tibetan sheep’s wool used to be very necessary as sheep were not kept locally. Lately, however, home-made sheep wool garments are gradually being replaced by factory-made articles. The salt trade is still active, with Khumbu Sherpas as middlemen. They in turn exchange it with the people of the middle regions of Nepal for foodgrains.

The scope of employment of Sherpas as guides and high altitude porters is gradually increasing as the number of expeditions, scientific and mountaineering, increases yearly. There is a growing traffic of Sherpas from Khumbu for jobs and for the purchase of more factory made goods from outside. This has brought the Sherpa into closer contact than ever before with non-Tibetan speaking peoples of Nepal and with foreigners.

The standard Sherpa house has one storey built of stone with a shingle roof. On the ground floor the livestock, firewood, and potatoes are kept. The living room upstairs is patterned with a fire pit, shelves lined with shining pots, and the eldest’s bed all near the entrance leading up from the stables. Along the front wall are several windows, a long low bench and low tables. The side and back walls have shelves and cupboards for storage. A simple corner latrine and refuse dump opens to the stables below. Employed help spread this refuse and night soil on the fields. Houses of rich families include a small colourfully painted chapel room at one end, with gold and bronze Buddhist images.

Sherpa traditional dress, and that of the other eastern border peoples generally, varies little from that of the Baragaunle, Lopa, and Manangba of the west described later.

Sherpa society, unlike others of the northern border region, is divided into a number of exogamous clans, that is, it enforces the custom of marriage outside
Basketmakers from Helambu.
the clan. The clan names are in fact only important in marriage. Beyond this there is no other real significance of the clan as a unit. (The community settlement usually acts as a unit in the various festivals and other village activities.) Some important clan names are: Chhusherwa, Chiawa, Gardza, Gole, Goparma, Hirgoma, Lakshindu, Lama, Mende, Mopa, Ngawa, Paldorje, Pankarma, Pinasa, Salaka, Shangup, Sherwa, Shire, and Thaktu.

These many clans fit into two endogamous groups, khadev and khamendu, the former being of higher status. All members of one or the other of these divisions are equal. They can share a common cup among themselves and can intermarry freely, so long as they do not violate the restriction of marrying within their own clan. If, for example, a khadev man or woman marries or lives for a long continuous period of time with a khamendu, he or she will lose the higher status and be forced to live as a khamendu. An isolated incident of co-habitation may be ignored or tried by the village council, including the village headman, and a fine realized before the offender is taken back to his original caste circle.

Fraternal polyandry is found among the Sherpas, that is, two brothers may marry one joint wife. Sometimes two brothers marry two common wives together. Their attitude toward sex is very relaxed in general, except where it violates the clan restriction. Cross-cousin marriage, the marriage with a father's sister's daughter or a mother's brother's daughter, is not allowed. Since only two brothers, and no more than two, can marry one wife, parents of three sons usually make a celibate monk of the middle child. The elder and younger sons can then take a common wife. A family with more than three sons is uncommon. In one case only did we see four brothers, of whom the first and the second had taken one wife and the third and fourth another. Among some people of the northern border region* the eldest brother marries, and he also receives the sole right over the property. Other younger brothers are free to join in later on. But among the Sherpas the two brothers go out together in the wedding procession and take part in the formal activities, thereby establishing an equal right over the wife and the parental property. Solu does not boast as many polyandrous marriages as the Khumbu region. The main reason is close and continual contact with so many ethnic groups of different cultural traditions. The Solu people, consequently, are more self-conscious than the relatively isolated Khumbu Sherpas. Although Khumbu Sherpas travel widely in Nepal with expeditions, and visit many types of people on their way, once they arrive home in Khumbu they are amidst their

* The Lopa of Mustang, for example.
own people and prefer to retain their particular customs. The outside contact does not change them much, it seems, in contrast with the Sherpas of Solu.

Polygyny, the taking of more than one wife at a time, is also found on rare occasions among the Sherpas. A fair number of marriages begin as polyandrous ones but not all of them are successful.

Among Sherpas not only do the younger brothers have the right over their elder brother's widows, but even a younger sister has the right over her deceased elder sister's husband. In the latter case the widower cannot remarry to another without his younger sister-in-law's permission. In the same way a wife can demand compensation from an adulterous woman who has had sexual relations with her husband, just as the offended husband of an adulterous woman can demand compensation from the man involved.

Normally Sherpas choose their own marriage partners, although occasionally parents arrange partners for their sons and daughters if they are to be married very young. The Sherpa marriage is done in four stages. Sodene, the first stage, sees a young person making his choice of a partner; as in an arranged marriage some relatives of the boy's parents go to the girl's parents with a gift bottle of chhang, rice beer, from the boy's parents. The girl's parents may instantly refuse without touching the chhang. Then, of course, the matter is closed. But if the parents accept the chhang it is implied that they accept the relationship, at least for the moment, provided no difficulty crops up later. The most important result of this rite is that the boy, if he is of age, has the right to go and sleep with the girl in her parent's home. This arrangement may last for several years or until the couple has a child, preferably a son. Then they will proceed with the next stage, demdzang, or, if some difficulty has arisen in the meantime, they may break up and each of them will seek another partner and start all over again. Marriage partners are usually sought within the same village or at least in a neighbouring village, so that the boy can travel in the evening to sleep with his fiancee and hurry back early next morning to his own house.

Preparations for demdzang begin when everybody in both the girl's and the boy's family is satisfied that the marriage will work out well and successfully. For this ceremony a party of 50 to 60 people—men and women in their beautiful dresses and ornaments—go out in a procession to the girl's house. They will be entertained with chhang, rice, and meat, not only in the girl's parents' house but also in a few other houses of their relatives. The party will have to sing and dance in return at each house. Thus they spend two or three days in feasting, singing and dancing before going back to their homes. The boy and the girl do not take
part in the ceremony, but the girl may do her normal work about the house. Demdang in this way formally confirms the marriage negotiations. Several months or even years may pass again before anything more happens.

The third stage of marriage, called thedzang, begins when the boy’s parents feel that the girl should be brought home in the near future. They send some relatives with a bottle of chhang to discuss the date of the wedding, namely zendi. The girl’s parents may give a date or, if they think the time has not come, they may just postpone it indefinitely. In that case the boy’s parents will have to make another approach to fix the wedding after some months or even a year. This will be called the pedzang.

Zendi heralds the actual wedding day. Except for the addition of ghen kutub, the wedding rite, it is like demdang. Ghen kutub means putting the mark of butter on the forehead of the bride and groom. The party spends a day and night in dancing and feasting as in demdang and finally leaves with the bride. The bride’s parents give her a dowry not only from their house but also from relatives and friends who are asked to contribute. The dowry usually consists of rugs, woollen carpets, yak-wool mats, and even cattle in some cases.

One interesting change takes place in the social position of a man as soon as he brings his wife home. He is addressed from then onwards by his juniors and his equals as “so-and-so’s-father,” not just by his own name. He must have at least one child before his wife comes to live in his house. In this way the first child is very important for a man because it raises his social position.

Sherpas observe a number of gay and colourful festivals during the year. Most important of them are losar and dumie. Losar is observed to celebrate the new year. According to the Tibetan calendar the new year begins some time toward the end of February. It is the first day of the bright fortnight of the lunar month of phagun. Sherpas celebrate the festival with lots of feasting, drinking, singing, and dancing. Most Sherpas who go to the warmer regions during the cold months of ghumbu turn back hurriedly for the occasion.

Dundza is an interesting and gay festival, celebrated for seven days in the village gomba, or monastery, during the month of July. By then the agricultural work is finished, trips to Tibet have been completed, and the people are preparing to take their livestock to the very high alpine pastures. The village Lamas conduct the ritual part by recitation and worship of Guru Rimpoché, Phawa Cheresi, Tsamba, and a host of other deities while the villagers collect in the evenings at the gombas and have their share of food and drink. The young people have their fun by singing and dancing while the old ones enjoy lavish jokes.
The Dumdza festival has various significances. It brings prosperity, good health, and general welfare not only to the whole village but to the entire nation, including the King, by the merit acquired in the worship and the prayers sung, and by fighting and warding off evil spirits. It is a great occasion for feasting and merriment and for bringing all the otherwise scattered villagers together.

The local deity, Khumbu-hyulha, is worshipped on every religious occasion. Khumbu-hyulha is a 19,121 foot mountain surrounded by villages on three sides and the pasture land of Khumbu on the north. This deity is symbolized by an anthropomorphic figure with a white face and riding on a white horse.

Equally important and most colourful of all the festivals of Solu-Khumbu are the mani-rimdu celebrations. They are observed by the monks of the monasteries and watched and enjoyed by several thousands of enthusiastic people from the entire region of Solu-Khumbu.

Mani-rimdu is celebrated twice yearly in Khumbu, in May at Thami monastery, and in November at Tengboche, and twice in Solu, in November at Chiwong and Thaksindhu monasteries. Old people have great satisfaction in seeing the religious dances of the monks in various costumes and masks of the various deities, while the adolescents have their own fun. It is indeed a great occasion for Sherpas. The festival lasts about a week altogether, but the outdoor performances which are enjoyed by the laymen last only for two or three days.

In addition to these big festivals there are a number of other smaller occasions which are no less important from the social point of view. Yardzang is celebrated in July in the high pastures while the people are tending their cattle, and the corresponding fa-ngi festival is held at the same time in the lower villages. All of these festivals have two aspects in common, the worship of deities and merrymaking: singing, dancing, drinking, and feasting.

There is one occasion when the people not only abstain from drinking and dancing but even fast, either for the whole day or with only one light meal a day. This is nyungne, which is observed for three days by laymen and for a whole fortnight by monks and nuns. The participants of nyungne attend gomba services and recite sacred texts with the Lamas, if they can; those men and women who cannot recite the texts just repeat the mantra: om mani padme hum. This is a kind of penitence for all sins committed during the preceding year.

There are about two dozen gombas in the whole of Solu, Khumbu, and the closely allied area of Pharak, of which four have 20 to 30 monks each residing permanently under one abbot. Of these four, Tengboche monastery is the best known and commands the greatest deference from the people. This is entirely
because of the learned *avatari*—Lama reincarnate—in residence there, an abbot who imposes strict discipline upon his juniors. There are about 30 young disciples presently at Tengboche. Every morning the monks hold a very impressive service, in addition to a number of special services throughout the year. Tengboche is the most magnificently painted and best maintained *gomba* and has in its possession several thousand volumes of the religious texts, the *tenjur, kangyur,* etcetera, and other possessions like *thankas*—intricately designed religious paintings—and beautiful images of deities and Lamas.

A short distance north of Tengboche is the Buddhist nunnery called Debuje. There are less than two dozen nuns in residence, several of whom are old and learned and preside over the many young disciples. The functions of Debuje are very similar to those of Tengboche and on several occasions the two join together at one *gomba* or the other in religious observances. But there are certain months, days, and even hours of the day during which a nun is not allowed on the grounds of Tengboche and the monks are not permitted to see them. Some young disciples, however, make nocturnal adventures to Debuje, and should a nun become pregnant both parties are immediately expelled from their *gombas* and relieved of their vows. Many of these truant couples have settled in the nearby village of Milingbo, where they make homes together.

Chiwang *gomba* is the largest in size and in property holdings. It has been maintained primarily through the donations of one rich family in Solu. At present Chiwang monastery has 32 monks in residence including one reincarnate Lama from the Thatyo monastery of Tibet.

Sherpas are non-violent and will not kill any animal. Their whole code of behaviour is in keeping with the code of the Ningma-*pa* sect of Tibetan Buddhism. All of the *gombas* of Solu-Khumbu are presently Ningma-*pa,* although one, Pangboche, is said to have been of the Sakya-*pa* sect at one time.

Sherpas eat meat regularly, so to circumvent the prohibited taking of animal life Tibetan butchers come once a year to Khumbu to slaughter their old animals. At other times animal victims of accidents are butchered.*

Modern education is gradually being introduced into the Sherpa region of Solu, Khumbu, and Pharak, with an increasing number of primary schools. The expedition Sherpas, of course, have picked up a minimal command of English through which they communicate with their foreign employers. There

*It is a well known story that some of the Sherpas at times develop misunderstandings with their expedition Sahibs by refusing to slaughter a chicken, whereas they do not mind buying, cooking, or eating it.
are several Sherpas who have been to Europe, America, and even around the world.

They never sit idle, but are constantly on the move in every season, either travelling to Tibet, to the Terai, to other villages for this or that, or on up to their higher pastures to tend the herds. And the agricultural season keeps them active in their home fields. They pay no mind to severe weather or difficult conditions. This is the key to their success in mountaineering and their great popularity among foreigners in Nepal.
LHOMI

The upper Arun valley in the district of Sankhuwa-Sabha, east Nepal, is perhaps one of the roughest and most difficult regions of the entire northern border. There live the Kath Bhote people, sometimes called Kar Bhote, an independent and hardy lot who call themselves by the term Lhomi. Their half dozen or so scattered villages cling to the steep mountain slopes above the Arun river which has cut a deep narrow gorge through the mountains. The settlements are often completely cut off from one another, and effectively blocked from easy communication with Tibet. Trade, then, is almost entirely with the South reaching as far as the Terai. Unlike the Sherpa community which depends to a great extent on trade and animal husbandry, the Lhomis subsist almost entirely on field agriculture and manage to raise enough maize, barley, wheat, potatoes, and especially millet, their main diet, to be considered self-sufficient. Besides a simply prepared millet gruel they drink great quantities of millet chhang which resembles European and American beer only in its after effects.

Cattle, dzum, and sheep are kept in numbers by the villagers, the former for plough bullocks and the latter for wool and meat. The dzum are bred and sold to Olangchung Gola people. It has not been until very recently that some Lhomis have learned to milk their cows. Field ploughing is done entirely by bullocks, and the villagers are never found pulling a plough as is sometimes seen among the Sherpas of Khumbu. What woollen clothing they have has come from Tibet, but they make some cotton-like garments out of a plant fibre, sisal hemp, which grows wild.

The needs of these Lhomis are very limited. They do travel as far as the Terai plains in winter, to the districts of Saptari, Mahottari, and Sarlahi, where they maintain themselves partly by trading and sometimes by begging, a not too uncommon practice among various border peoples.

Social structure includes a division into several clans called rhu: Nuppa, Thikappa, Khombua, Pubgsua, Bauchha, Nava, Chyangba, et cetera. These rhu are in turn subdivided into several exogamous extended family groups. To mention one for an example, the Nuppa rhu includes three extended family groups called Hamo, Hyugok, and Thongdo.

Lhomis do not practise polyandry as the Sherpas of Solu-Khumbu do. Marriage is always by choice and is completed in several stages. At first a girl is taken into a boy’s house without any fuss or particular ceremony. After a few years when the young couple have issue they go to the girl’s parents’ house with
their children and the traditional bottle of chhang and the boy’s payments of sixteen rupees for the father, fifteen rupees for the mother, one rupee for each of the maternal and paternal uncles of the girl, and one rupee for the pembu, headman, of her parental village. This ceremony is called chhyo-chang and is highlighted by the signing of an agreement between the two parties. The girl’s parents may then give some dowry, usually of cattle or sheep. At any time after chhyo-chang, but usually shortly following its completion, the ceremony of bhalin is conducted in the groom’s house. This consists of putting the butter mark, or tika, on the heads of both the bride and the groom.

Lhomi women have equal rights with men. Whenever a man takes a second wife he cannot stay in the same house with his first wife. He must leave his home and property to the first wife and find a new place for himself and his new wife. Such a second marriage is not a very common procedure. If a male adulterer is caught and the aggrieved husband demands payment, chinara, a fine of eleven rupees, must be paid him by the guilty party. But the people generally take little notice of such offences. Divorce can be achieved by either party by paying forty-two rupees to the other partner if bhalin has been completed, or if not, twenty-two rupees.

Each Lhomi village is governed by one headman called a pembu. The group of villages from Tunkhaling in the south to Ritak in the north has an official entitled gova ranking above the individual pembus. All the remaining villages, Hatiya, Hangau, Sakshilla, and others, have a second gova of their own. Govas and pembus are the administrative agents of the government charged with maintaining law and order in their domain, collecting government revenues, and making proper and necessary arrangements for touring government officials. They are also entitled to settle disputes and levy fines. They receive as a commission for their work three days’ labour from each household in the case of each pembu, and two days’ each to the govas. The offices of pembu and gova are hereditary. One gova who resides in Chamtang village can trace his title to his great-great grandfather.*

Lhomi are very kind and friendly people. But they are not as culturally and economically well off as the Solu-Khumbu Sherpas or the Shiva people of Olanchung Gola, their neighbours to the west and east respectively. They seem an extremely happy and cheerful people nonetheless. Their relative cultural-

* He showed us a lalmohar, an authoritative certificate bearing the King’s red seal, dated 1796 A.D., which was for the renewal of the offices of an ancestor of his.
economic status is apparent in the appearance of their villages. Village houses are erected on piles, with walls of bamboo and roofs thatched with wild straw. The Sherpa house, in contrast, is a very strong and permanent stone and wood structure.

With one exception, Gomba, each village is charged with the responsibility of maintaining at least one bridge over the river nearest to it. Some have responded very well to this responsibility, whereas other villages have not taken the trouble. The bridges are not of the sturdy wooden design seen in Solu-Khumbu, for example, but are built entirely of native bamboo and rope in spans swinging high over the canyons. They are tricky to cross and require frequent repairs. Falls and loss of life are not infrequent.

Buddhism among these people is not very refined. Shamans, or Jhankris, called loben in the local dialect, are as active as the Lamas themselves. Lhomi society has at the same time no feeling against the killing of animals as so many similar tribes have. In fact, the Lhomis have special occasions for animal sacrifice. At a special ceremony in May, preceding the sowing of crops, three sheep are traditionally slaughtered by each village by the side of the river Arun. And in the same way they slaughter one sheep in September before the millet harvest commences.

The new year's celebration, losar, is observed in February. Pigs, chickens, and other livestock are slaughtered for feasting. Every family invites daughters and their husbands and children to observe losar together and entertains them with food and chhang. On such social occasions the people sip chhang from a large wooden vessel through bamboo tubes.

There are only one or two very poorly maintained gombas in the region, one of which is found in the village of Gomba and to which all of that village's revenue has been put for maintenance and the conducting of its religious festivals. A lalmohar was given to that effect to the Lama about one hundred and sixty years ago by King Rajendra Bikram Shah. Inside, at the altar of this old gomba, are kept many images.

The patron deity of Lhomi villages is not found in a mountain as is the Khumbu-hyulha for the whole of Khumbu, but instead there is a specially-named hyulha deity for each village, for whom a shrine is erected just outside the village. The village of Chepua, for example, has Dorze Forpa as its hyulha. Each extended family group, in turn, claims one common serpent-like deity, lu, which is worshipped any time between the new moon of the seventh Tibetan month, June, and the full moon of the ninth, August.
Death and the funeral are observed by the cremation of the body and the erection of a chorten, called pukang, in memory of the deceased. In the case of the cremation of an important pembu or a Lama, a Lama must put fire to the pyre. The son of the deceased should on no account put fire to his parent’s pyre. Mourning is observed for three days. Property rights are divided equally between the sons, as is the custom also among the Sherpas, and if a man has no son his property is inherited by his brother’s sons.

Although the Lhomi people are a small, isolated, and relatively insignificant tribal entity, they do stand out as an interesting part of the whole pattern of northern border people.
THUDAM AND TOPKE GOLA PEOPLE

East of the Lhomi of Sankhua-Sabha in the administrative district of Taplejung dwell the related people of Thudam and Topke Gola. Thudam and Topke Gola are place names, villages, the latter being mainly a trading centre on the route connecting Chainpur in the south with Sar in Tibet. The people of Thudam have no lands for their own cultivation so they have rented some farm land east of the Arun river belonging to the Lhomi village of Chemtang, where they raise millet and potatoes.

To further their economy they make incense by pulping juniper wood. The incense of juniper is a pleasant scent in great demand in Tibet. Each of the twenty wood-pulping water mills produces about two hundred rupees worth of incense yearly which is traded north across the border. The mills are owned by individual families of Thudam. The industry provides a good subsistence economy for the people, but they are in great need of training to avoid waste and destruction of the juniper forest if they keep up the present rate of cutting.

The wood-pulping machines consist of a wooden shaft a few feet long turned by water power and a block of rough sandstone fixed to the ground. A small juniper log is fastened to an arm at the end of the shaft and as the shaft turns the log is scraped to and fro over the sandstone block and ground to a fine pulp, which, to finish the product, is dried in the sun.

Yaks are kept by the Thudam people, the bulls being used mainly as pack animals. As in the villages of related peoples there is a penibu headman, although he lives in Olangchung Gola, a neighbouring village. He is represented in Thudam by a ngorimba, an assistant.
As we have seen before, trade with Tibet by the Sherpa and other Nepali northern border communities is of considerable importance. The most important trade route in eastern Nepal passes along the upper reaches of the Tamur valley. The Tamur, unlike the rugged Arun, is a pleasant valley in which we find Olangchung Gola, or locally, Holung, the main trading centre. The people of Holung, often referred to as Shiva, and of the surrounding villages are very closely related to the Thudam and Topke Gola people.

Holung is a trading centre of just over one hundred houses; no field cultivation is practised. Many successful and rich traders are in residence here. Holung houses a government customs office controlling the export and import of goods to and from Tibet. Exports to Tibet include grain, cotton thread and material, sugar, gur (a crude sugar), cigarettes, matches, and other such goods generally of Indian origin, in exchange for wool, woollen carpets and Tibetan salt. Until a few years ago several hundred yaks and ponies were imported yearly into Nepal. But this trading of livestock has ceased.

Yak, mules, and dzum are used by traders as pack animals. Sar is the nearest town in Tibet, about a four or five day’s journey from the border. The route from Holung leads north to Tibet and south to Taplejung, Tehra Thum, Dhankuta, Dharan and Biratnagar. The traders travel extensively in Tibet as far as Lhasa and in India to Delhi, Bombay, and Calcutta. They are well-informed about the outside world, and although they have had no formal education many have learned to read and write. Possession of transistor radios, with which they tune in on music and daily news broadcasts, is common.

Formal education among the Olangchung Gola people is gaining ground. There were, at the time of these field studies in 1958, four boys from Holung enrolled in the missionary schools of Darjeeling.

The houses of Holung and related villages are built with stones up one floor and with wood above that. The ground floor is used for storage, while the people live, dine, and sleep in the room above. The inside living room arrangement is somewhat similar to that of the standard Sherpa house. These village houses, though, in contrast to the scattered arrangement of the Sherpa settlements, are built in a row on either side of a cobbled street.

The village of Holung is said to be about two hundred years old. It is governed, along with four other nearby villages, by a gova, the headman, who collects government revenues, maintains law and order, and settles disputes. He is assisted
Mask dancer of Tibetan legend

Dor Bahadur Bista

Wolangchung Gola

Dor Bahadur Bista
by a karvari who helps carry out his duties. The four other local villages—Yangma, Ghunsa, Lengdep, and Lungthung—are agricultural. The villagers cultivate the staples barley, wheat, and potatoes, and keep dzum and dzopkyo.

Socially, the people are divided broadly into three categories somewhat comparable to the two Sherpa groups. Here in Olangchung Gola the first and highest people in social status are Shiva, said to be the first inhabitants of the region, and secondly the Fedzava who came later and are lower in the social order. The people called Longme stand lowest, in a position similar to the khamendeu of the Sherpas. Each category consists of a number of families who have a common main house, called the manang, where they gather every month for lhasu, a worship for general welfare and a time for feasting.

In marriage, monogamy is the rule. But the younger brother has the option of marrying his elder brother’s widow. Quite a number of the men here marry Tibetan girls.

Unlike the Sherpa tradition of the youngest son’s occupying the parent’s house, it is the eldest son who stays in this system. All of the sons get an equal share of the parental property. Families with a daughter but no son, bring in a husband for their daughter to take the inheritance.

Religious tradition is represented by an old Buddhist gomba about 90 feet long in Holung, built by an avatari, a reincarnate lama, called Ho-Syo-Dorje. The gomba is very beautiful but is presently in great need of maintenance and repair. It boasts several sets of the tanjur and kangyur scriptures comprising several hundred volumes, and a number of beautiful thankas painted in gold. There are many large images and a life-size statue of Phawa Cheresi (Avalokiteswar) whom the local people refer to as “Krishnaji” when speaking to an outsider, presuming that all outsiders and non-Buddhists would only understand the Hindu Krishnaji.

The gomba possesses a large white “mushroom mani” with a beautiful script reading: om mani padme hum. It is called Cheresi (Avalokiteswara) to which the mantra refers. They tell the story of a man who some forty-five years ago picked the mushroom while it was growing, little realizing that God meant to grow all three deities together, Cheresi along with Guru Rimpoche and Hopame. For his mistake the unfortunate fellow was punished by God and died soon thereafter. The Cheresi “mushroom mani” has remained in the gomba.

There is also a butter lamp which has burned continuously since the gomba was built. Outside are a dozen or so mani prayer wheels spinning by force of water.

The festival called fotuk is celebrated at the gomba on the eve of the full moon in November. Lamas give a dancing performance with masks and costumes
representing different deities. On the last day they throw a torma into the fire and have a mock fight between Palden-Maksung Gyabo, the god of the locality, and Thudama-Cyabo, the god of Thudam. Torma are sacrificial figures usually made from barley flour to represent deities or evil spirits. In this case the torma are made of buckwheat to represent an especially evil spirit.

Losar, the Tibetan New Year, is observed during the month of February. In the third month of the Tibetan year on the day of the full moon and for two days preceding it, there is an occasion called nhesu for a dancing performance of some Tibetan legends. The stories of Dowa Sangmu and Aji Lhamu and other myths are performed. Ten managers are elected yearly to collect money from everybody who passes along the trade route including Tibetan travellers, and to prepare food for the dancers. The local gova also gives food for the performers.

Nyungne is observed in July with fasting and recitation of texts in the name of Cheresi.

In the village of Ghunsa is found another gomba called Nupe gomba. An avatari Lama is presently in residence there.
LOPA OF MUSTANG

We jump across Nepal now from east to west to take up yet another set of northern border tribes concentrated along the upper Kali Gandaki River; the west’s main trade route to Tibet, and in surrounding high valleys north of the middle range Thakali, Gurung, and Magar areas.

The first of these and most northerly are the people of Mustang, one of the two northern districts of Dhaulagiri Zone. The development district of Mustang consists of Lo, Baragaun, Panchgaun, and Thak Khola.

The inhabitants of Lo are called Lopa. Their capital is a small fortified town known locally—and properly—as Manthang, but referred to commonly by outsiders as Mustang. The town includes over 200 houses and many gombas.

Geographically, Lo is part of the high Tibetan plateau and in the rain-shadow of the main Himalayan range. The region is arid, dry, and very cold. The grey and reddish-brown surface of the landscape is fantastically eroded in places, and to a traveller coming up from the vegetation-rich middle ranges of Nepal there is a feeling of remoteness here, very strange and different from anything else in the rest of the country. Most of the district is a rock desert swept over by a very strong, cold, dry wind throughout the year. Fortunately, there are a number of streams, including the headwaters of the Kali Gandaki river. Wherever the people have found a slightly sheltered valley or ledge they have dug canals and by irrigating the land have made small areas of cultivation. These oasis villages in the middle of the barren landscape look very attractive especially in autumn, at the time when the buckwheat is ripening. Their fields produce wheat, barley, potatoes, and buckwheat.

Naturally, life is hard, and without their facility for trade between Nepal and Tibet to supplement farming it would be impossible to live there. Life was even more difficult when the people had to form the retinue of the local “raja”, performing domestic services and labouring on his lands without wages in return. Since being freed from these obligations recently the people have shown a good deal of initiative and a new spirit to improve their lot.

The villages of Lo lie between 10,000 and 12,000 feet above sea level. The houses are built of mud and whitewashed outside. Inside they are rather crude and dirty looking. The villages of mud-walled, mud-roofed houses usually stand at one end of the cultivated area. Caves of prehistoric dwellings are seen in rocky cliffs at frequent intervals.

The Lopas traditionally trade cereal grains from the middle ranges of Nepal
for salt and wool from Tibet. In the mid-19th century the Thakalis to the south of Lo were granted the monopoly on salt trade by the government and in time they controlled every other article of trade as well, making the efforts of the Lopa hardly worthwhile. The monopoly was abolished some 30 years ago, but it was not an easy task for the backward, already impoverished and totally illiterate people to develop trade quickly to their advantage. Competition with the more expert and affluent people to the south was prohibitive to them. Thus exploited, both by their “raja” and by the clever businessmen, Lopas lived a very pitiable life in spite of the key position they occupied along the main trade route.

Unlike the inhabitants of other border regions not many from among the Lopas come down to lower and warmer districts during winter. Instead they make their trips to Tibet at this time and fetch salt and wool. During the summer months they transport their trade goods down to Thak where they store what they have or sell it to their Thakali counterparts. The Thakalis in turn exchange the salt with the middle range people for grain, and until a few years ago the wool was taken to the Indian border and sold to agents of Indian woollen factories. The little wool traded now is used in Nepali manufacturing centres.

Lopas keep large herds of sheep, yak, donkeys and mules as a means of transportation as well as for meat and wool. But when the refugees from Tibet poured into this area in 1959 the economy of Lo was greatly altered. Suddenly there were more people to feed on the already limited food resources. The great number of cattle, sheep, and horses brought in by the Tibetans encroached upon the meagre pastureland of the arid area, and as a result thousands of cattle either starved or died in epidemics. To give an example, the village of Gherni alone, of less than 100 houses, lost some 600 yak and several hundred other animals.

Socially, the people of Lo can be divided into three different classes. The highest, Kutak, sometimes referred to as Bista, constitute the nobles around the “raja” and his family. These Kutaks are few in number and used to be concentrated around the town of Manthang. Today they have moved out and live scattered among the other villages of Lo.

The second group of Lopa, called Shelva, constitute the majority population. They are equal in caste status to the Kutaks but are not quite as important socially.

A third group known as Righin are the lowest in ritual status. They are comparable to the khamendu among Sherpas.

The “Raja of Mustang” used to be the de facto administrator of Lo until 1952. His title thereafter has been only honorary, along with which he holds the rank of Lt. Colonel in the Nepal Army. The “raja” is referred to by his people
Charang Gomba in Mustang.
as Lo-pembu or Manthang-pembu. He no longer lives in the original house within Manthang town but at Thekar, about a mile to the northwest. He has lands and large houses in almost every village of Lo, most notable of which is 400 year old castle in Charang.

The whole of Lo is divided into seven administrative units called tso, and each tso has one or more villages within it. The administration of each tso is controlled by a body of four or five men elected yearly in rotation from among the villagers. Each village pays a certain amount of revenue according to the number of houses based on an old and currently inaccurate accounting.

Population expansion is slight due mainly to the practice of polyandry and a high infant mortality rate among Lopas. Of a man’s sons, the second is usually made to become a monk by his parents and all the remaining sons marry a common wife.

There are several Buddhist gombas in Lo. One or two of them are regular monasteries and the others are just village temples. There are also a number of shrung-khang temples to a patron deity usually of fierce aspect, called either “Gombu” or “Shrung-ma”. All of the gombas are of the Sakya-pa sect except one in Samdoling which is of Karma-pa, a sub-sect of Kagyu-pa of Tibet.

Young boys used to go to Tibet for initiation before they became monks of a monastery. But because of waning interest and the strictly enforced discipline, all of the monasteries in Lo have been deserted and are in very poor repair. However, following the exodus of monks from Tibet in 1959, several of the declining monastery gombas have been reoccupied and improved and a new spirit is noticeable. Some have been rebuilt and repainted, but there are still two very large gombas in the town of Manthang and one of 17th century vintage in Charang which need urgent attention.

Thuk-chen Gomba in Manthang is the largest in the whole of Nepal. It stands 35 to 40 feet high and has seven rows of five huge wooden pillars each supporting the ceiling. On the far side of the vast hall there is a 20 foot high image of Buddha flanked on either side by equally high images of Avalokiteswora and Maitreya, the future Buddha. The 300 year old gomba at Charang village has beautiful frescoes on its walls and several priceless thanka paintings.

The gombas, and the village houses as well, are built only of mud but are capable of standing several hundred years in such a dry and rainless zone.
The people living in Baragaun, the area between Lo (Mustang) in the north and Panchgaun and Thak in the south, we shall call Baragaunle. Both their language and physical types closely resemble those of Lo. They are called Baragaunle for want of a generic term, and the designation Bhoti is repellent to them. Actually, they would prefer to be called Gurung, if only other people would do so. In general, these Baragaunle are a little more advanced than the Lopas because they travel more and are, therefore, in closer contact with other communities in Nepal and India.

Traditional dress of the Baragaunle is the same as the general costume pattern and ornaments of their neighbours in Lo and Manang (but not including Panchagaunles, Thakalis, or the Dolpo people). The men dress in a light blouse shirt and light cotton or wool long pants topped almost always by a long dark cloak. The cloak is often slipped off the right shoulder, or both shoulders, and tied around the waist in warm weather, leaving back and chest bare. Their high Tibetan boots of leather, or of cloth with leather soles, are bound tightly at the calves. The hair is traditionally tied in a single long braid. They often wear the Tibetan hat trimmed in fur, and most of the men string a small turquoise stone from the ear lobes, a turquoise, or precious dzee stone, or both, around the neck, and tucked into the waist band is a long dagger in its silver scabbard.

Their women wear their hair with a centre part and in two braids, on special occasions topped with a small cap. Over their silk or sometimes cotton blouse they wear a sleeveless full length dress with large pleats folded at the back and a plain waistband. A colourfully striped apron adorns the front—all after the Tibetan fashion.

Baragaun houses and villages are very similar to those of Lo. The houses are all mud-walled and mud-roofed with equally poor ventilation and just as dirty. Almost every village in this region, as well as in Lo, has an old fallen dzong, or fort. There must have been considerable feuding among these little principalities in days long gone by to force the people to erect such fortresses and maintain them until peace and order were finally guaranteed by the Shah rulers of Nepal during the 18th century.

Kagbeni is an interesting village and undoubtedly the most frequently visited by outsiders in Baragaun. It appears as a tiny fortress straddling the junction of main routes up from Thak, down from Lo (Mustang) and Tibet, from Dolpo, Muktinath and from Manang, at the site of one of the upper Kali Gandaki’s
Women of Muktinath trek south in winter.
few bridges. The local Tibetan name is just Kak, or "block", which it certainly is. The Nepali term -beni refers to the confluence of two holy rivers, here being the Kali Gandaki and Muktinath khola.

The town of Kagbeni has an old tumbledown look, with medieval looking alleys and covered passages, and stone houses built close together. Behind the outer doors are airy courtyards for storage and livestock, and the living quarters in back. This was once a feudal kingdom, but today both the descendants of the old nobility and the remains of their ancient palace are in poor condition. There are also remains of an old gomba of the Sakya-pa sect and a large image of Maitreya, the future Buddha.

The landscape is less arid and less dry than in Lo, but irrigation is still necessary for cultivation. The people grow wheat, barley, buckwheat, and some potatoes. They also keep goats and sheep, mules and donkeys. They are more successful in trade than the Lopas, but less so than the Thakalis.

Until very recently Baragaun villages supplied a large number of bond servants to the rich Thakalis. It is said that Purang alone, a village of 100 houses, had 35 men and women working as bond servants to a single rich Thakali household at Tukche at the same time. It was told that almost every household in the villages of Baragaun had to supply an adult member of the family to its Thakali moneylending masters.

There are now 18 Baragaun villages, including the six Muktinath villages. There may have been at one time only 12, hence the name Baragaun, meaning "twelve villages". Some villages have three different caste groups, as in Lo, while others are single-caste, divided into a number of intermarrying family groups. While some villages are strictly endogamous single units, others join to form groups of two or three intermarrying villages.

Marriage practices include three types: capture, agreement with parents, and elopement. Nine rupees must be paid as compensation by the boy to the girl’s parents in all cases, and in cases of capture or elopement forgiveness must be obtained from the parents before the wedding formalities. Any man other than a member of the highest caste group has to pay 100 rupees if he wishes to marry a girl from the highest caste known as Bista-Thakuri.

Of extreme importance in the marriage formalities is the asking of forgiveness after having captured or eloped with a man’s daughter. In both cases the girl is kept in the house of one of the boy’s relatives either within or outside the village. On the second day some relative of the boy is sent (with consent of the girl in the case of capture) with a bottle of chhang, beer, to the house of the girl’s
parents to apologize. This messenger does not go directly to the house, but stops at a distance of about 100 yards and shouts with a loud voice, begging forgiveness for the offence and asking the parents to accept the new relationship. Then he walks 50 yards closer and repeats the same plea a second time. Finally he enters the house, anticipating a quarrel or even a fight. The whole day is spent in brawling, abusing each other, or even striking with knives at one another. In certain cases it takes as long as seven days to calm the offended parents of the girl. Once this is done the payment can be presented and the wedding ceremony proceeds immediately.

Baragaunle practise polyandry, but, unlike the Sherpas, only the eldest brother has the right to marry. Younger brothers can join in later on but have no rights over the wife or the parental property if they separate from the eldest brother. The practice of marrying cross-cousins is quite common but it is not obligatory as among the Thakali people, for instance.

Baragaunles are primarily Buddhists, but there are some Bon-po. Bon-po is said to be the pre-Buddhist religion of Tibet, but it appears after recent study to be nothing more than an imitation in defiance of the Buddhist religion. Bon-po mani-walls and gombas are circumambulated counterclockwise in direct opposition to Buddhist tradition. That is, the Bon-po believer must walk to the right of his shrine, whereas the Buddhist approaches by the left. Likewise, the Bon-po prayer wheels are spun clockwise, the Buddhist, counter-clockwise.

Mani is the shortened form of the mantra: ॐ mani padme hum. The mani-wall is a collection of stones or one large rock face inscribed with the mantra. The Bon-po mani is inscribed as: ॐ mati nu a sale du. It is nevertheless called mani. In further imitation of Buddhism, Bon-po has deities similar in appearance to those of the Buddhists, but with different names.

Of the Buddhist gombas there is one of the Ngak-pa sect and a second of Karma-pa sect in Baragaun. All others are Sakya-pa gombas. There is a large Bon-po gomba in Lubra. All of these gombas are very old and, with the exception of one Sakya-pa gomba of Dzong village, not a single one of them is in good repair. Gombas are usually maintained by individual families of the village who are entrusted with a piece of land belonging to it. This land is looked after by the second son of that family who is expected to be a monk and who on no account is entitled to the parental property.

Muktinath is the scene of an interesting fair, as one of the most important places of pilgrimage for Hindus, Buddhists, and Bon-pos alike, on the full moon
day of August. Hundreds of horses are brought to the Muktinath fair, called yartung, as it also serves the purpose of a horse show in addition to its religious significance. It is a very colourful sight to see thousands of people scattered all over the green grassy slopes of this high mountainside at 13,000 feet, besides the grove of pipal trees and the swift flowing icy cold stream.

Other equally colourful and gay occasions are the festivals of dyokyabsi celebrated in various gombas usually during October and November. They are reminiscent of the mani-rimdu festivals of the Sherpas of Solu-Khumbu. One village, called Tetang, which has no monks from among the populace, observes the occasion as a village festival of drinking and dancing. It is customary for the boys and girls between 18 and 25 to come and sleep in the village gomba for five days during dyokyapsi. All inhabitants of the village are expected to return home for the occasion, and anyone failing to arrive, without proper and acceptable reasons, is liable to a fine of 20 rupees.

For their village administration, Baragaunle elect representatives from among the village men in rotation. Each village has a council-house called chi-khang and whenever necessary a larger grand council of all Baragaun is held in either Dzarkot or Kag beni. On such occasions the high caste Bistas preside. Bistas of Dzarkot and Dzong, two of the six Muktinath villages, rank highest in status and are sometimes called pembu, a term for headman.
Beyond the mountains west of the upper Kali Gandaki river valley lies the remote and fascinating mountain region of Dolpo. The area is confined by the Dhaulagiri Himalaya on the south and Tibet on the north and includes the headwaters of the Karnali river, important to extreme western Nepal. The infrequent visitor to this out-of-the-way maze of villages and mountain peaks cannot help but wonder at the unique, attractive, and most unusual landscape. From the scattered villages of Dolpo, some as high as 15,000 and 16,000 feet above sea level, the surrounding 20,000-foot peaks do not have characters as forbidding as when seen from lower viewpoints. But the overall magnificence is inescapable. The terrain is rather bare, with almost treeless grassland valleys. But they take on a colourful lustre in July and August with a carpet of bright alpine flowers. The rough stone houses of Dolpo are all clustered into a narrow space, making the villages look like forts. Some of them are among the highest human settlements in the world.

The Dolpo people do not have a tribal name as, for instance, that of the Sherpa, or Lhomi or others, nor do they call themselves after the district name as do the Lopa. Here, for our purposes, we shall refer to the inhabitants as the Dolpo People. The area consists of four separate subdistricts called Namgung, Panzang, Tarap, and Chharbung, cut off from one another by high mountain passes. Close to two dozen tiny villages lie scattered in these subdistricts over 500 square miles. Each house has two storeys with a dark and poorly ventilated living room built directly over open livestock stables on the ground level.

As one stands in awe of the geography, one might also wonder at the appearance and behaviour of the Dolpo people. Physically they look no different than the Lopa, although their costume, especially that of the women, is different in pattern. Dolpo women wear a pair of trousers made out of locally woven woollen materials in a dark brown colour, a short blouse of plain imported cotton material, and a waistband of attractive design. (The contrasting plain woman’s dress of Lopa includes a full sleeve tunic over a long cotton skirt, the tunic tied around by an ordinary waistband.)

The married Dolpo woman wears a brass headdress of two rectangular plates with turned up edges on the top and back of the head, tied around with a small leather cord. On the occasion of festivals they turn out with most colourful and attractive dresses enhanced by silver and brass ornaments. But daily dress and appearance is generally dirty.

The whole of Dolpo region lies away from main routes, affording the people
Dolpo pilgrims relax by the wayside.
very little contact with outsiders. Some of them go south to Tichu-rong along the Barbung khola for a few months of the year, but seldom beyond. Rather, they stay at home during the winter when the men spin and the women weave woollen blankets, which have a good market throughout the western hill villages.

An outsider visiting the area feels in a different world, a world beyond normal standards of behaviour. The people are very pleasant by nature. They are not unfriendly or hostile, but may behave in a manner which seems unreasonable to an outsider at one moment and sensible the next.*

The villages are administered by village officials elected by the people and approved by the district government. These headmen settle small village disputes themselves, but leave the more serious problems or questions which they cannot settle until a government official comes to the area. These higher government officials are usually Thakalis appointed for a three or four months’ term by the district government.

Although the Dolpo people are in general illiterate and ignorant, they are not very poor. They grow barley, potatoes, and wheat in their fields, but their main occupation is cattle and sheep breeding. They derive considerable income from selling yak, sheep, goats, and their locally woven woollen blankets. These transactions are most often settled on a barter basis. Very little money is in circulation in the region. Even land is bought and sold in exchange for cattle or sheep. For example, one ropani of land (approximately ¼th of an acre) is reckoned at 14 sheep or two mature yak bulls.

There used to be a trickle of salt trade through Dolpo but it has stopped in the last four or five years because of Tibetan brigands who ambush traders along the border. A more serious loss for them has been the winter pasture for their livestock in Tibet. All the Dolpo people used to send their animals for three to seven months of the year to graze on the grassland of Changthang. There the western Tibetan Drokpa tribesmen tended the cattle, for which they received compensation in grain as well as some share of the animal products. At the time of the Tibetan exodus, several thousand cattle were brought down into Nepal

* For example, they might not let anyone into their homes until he pays a rupee, but once given entrance the visitor is not treated as a stranger but taken part in the life of the family. Or, if asked to carry a load for a day the Dolpo worker may demand 30 rupees; when this is refused he may turn up a few hours later and work for half a day merely in return for a cup of tea. Someone might ask 15 rupees as the rent for a night’s shelter in his home, or he may provide the shelter, with food and all sorts of delicacies for a half dozen lines written on his behalf to some remote government office.
and the area of Dolpo was so overcrowded that all of the Tibetan animals perished by starvation and epidemics. Tragically, Dolpo people not only lost the privilege of grazing in Tibet but the limited pastureland in their own district was encroached upon by many more animals than it could support.

Dolpo society is divided into a number of exogamous clans, the names of which include Hava, Syuro, Lama Yandung, Bura, Dhara, Thanni, Anni, Pura, Nupri, Roka, Gugi, and Lama. Some clans have animal totems. The Hava, for example, have a sheep totem, Syuro have a goat, and Lama Yandung have a horse. In these cases a clan member cannot slaughter and eat the meat of his totem animal, and no one eats horse meat. They worship their totem animals when someone within the clan is ill.

Marriage is both by choice and arrangement. Tibetans who have settled there have intermarried with the Dolpo people. Divorce can be achieved either by husband or wife with the payment of 80 rupees to the other partner. There is no prejudice against pre-marital or extra-marital sexual unions. If an unmarried girl becomes pregnant her lover must pay the villagers some barley, which is then made into chhang, beer, and enjoyed by all. He must also pay something to a lama priest who celebrates a ritual service for the polluted village called the “purification of the village.” Brothers usually marry a common wife, no matter what the number of brothers. In some cases even two friends have married a common wife.

Both Buddhism and Bon-po religions are practised in Dolpo. One does not choose which of these to belong to, but is born into whichever tradition one’s family follows. A man knows whether he is Bon-po or chhe-wu, the term for a Buddhist, but beyond the acceptance of one or the other religion in principle there is little or no difference in his practice or behaviour.

It is an amusing sight to watch the villagers zig-zagging through the maze of Buddhist and Bon-po chortens that have been built together in one place. At Buddhist chortens both believers circumambulate clockwise, or left, after the Buddhist custom, while at the Bon-po chorten they both circle from the right.

The so-called lamas are not learned but know just enough to practise the ritual services. They let their hair grow into long, uncombed bundles which are tied around the head giving the appearance of a big brimmed hat.

For funerals or other such occasions a person may employ either a Buddhist or Bon-po lama, whichever is available at the time. The ritual, of course, is not exactly the same and the lamas have different books to recite from and different deities to invoke and worship, but either is equally acceptable.
woman wears headdress in Dolpo
The dead are disposed of in different ways. Some throw the corpse into the river, while others, after the manner of Tibet, cut the flesh into small pieces and crush the bones to feed to the vultures.
Manang is a pleasant little valley on the upper reaches of the Marsyangdi khola, east of Panchgaun, Baragaun, and Lo, and north of the predominantly Gurung districts of Kaski (Pokhara) and Lamjung. Manang, as the name of an entire development district, is a misnomer. It is no more than the name of one large village at the head of the valley. Instead, the immediate vicinity is called Nyeshang locally, and its people are likewise called Nyeshang, although they are commonly referred to by outsiders as Manangba. The Manang development district encloses three distinct areas: Nyeshang, Nar, and Gyasumdo, all culturally interrelated.

The valley of Nyeshang lies above the 10,000 foot mark along the northern flanks of the Annapurna Himalyan range. It is a beautiful setting, boasting large pine forests which descend directly from the snows of Annapurna to the upper Marsyangdi khola. Unlike the Sherpas around Mt. Everest, Manangba have never served as guides to mountaineers but in fact are renowned as being especially intolerant of all outsiders including neighbouring Nepali people who might venture into Nyeshang.

Manangba claim to be Gurung, but are not accepted as such by their proper Gurung neighbours to the south. Their language has been described by scholars as being very different from any other Tibetan dialect.* It might be a Gurung dialect as they insist, but proper studies on these ethno-linguistic matters have not been made.

Manangba have effectively monopolized the trade of the entire valley including the route north into the neighbouring Nar Valley and by having taken advantage over their simpler and more peace-loving neighbours they are in return altogether hated and dreaded by them.

Physically they appear more stalwart and taller than their Kali Gandaki neighbours. But they wear the same Tibetan fashion in dress, although their womenfolk tend to brighten up a little with blouses and aprons sporting pastel blues and pinks. Of late the men are adopting western shirts and slacks which they have seen on trading ventures throughout Southeast Asia.

Nyeshang embraces seven villages, the largest of which are Manang and Braga with about 300 houses each. During the 1950’s these particular two villages had an often violent running feud which most certainly was reflected in their

past bad attitude toward strangers. Some recent travellers report more favourable and friendly receptions.

The houses of Nyeshang and Nar are alike, one storey mud and stone flat-roofed structures with open stables below and an open porch and living rooms above. These houses are built along the steep slopes so as to form a terrace at every floor. Notched logs are used as ladders. The houses are not as clean and spacious as those of some of their neighbours.

They keep cattle and yak and a few horses for travel, and raise barley, potatoes, and buckwheat, the main diet. Rice is a luxury portered in during the winter months from southern districts. In contrast to other Buddhists, they slaughter and eat meat and even occasionally hunt several species of wild goat and deer, the hides of which they trade farther south in Nepal and India.

Manangba men above the age of 15 or 16 are ardent traders, their travels taking them as far as Calcutta, Rangoon, Singapore, Hong Kong, and North Borneo. It is remarkable to note that they are familiar with the modern conveniences of jet air travel, railroads, elevators, and automobiles considering their illiteracy and their primitive way of life and remote home environment. They trade in semi-precious stones, silks, and gold, and return from abroad with transistor radios, wrist watches, cosmetics, and silk. They can often be seen in the spring travelling from village to village in the middle hills of Nepal selling semi-precious turquoise and coral stones.

Their trips away from Nyeshang usually begin in the fall after the harvest, and most of the men have returned by spring planting. Not infrequently some of the young men stay away for several years at a time. While the men are abroad the women are busy on trips south into Lamjung and Gorkha districts, and even to the Terai. They return with loads of rice, corn, oil, and suntala oranges in season. Access routes to Manang take one along the precipitous track up the Marsyangdi khola from Lamjung district, a trail which skirts the cliff-sides, often on shaky wooden platforms supported by wooden pegs driven into cracks in the rocks. The only other routes are over an 18,240 foot pass in the Lamjung Himal, from the west above Muktinath over the 17,500 foot pass, Nyeshang La, or from Tibet.

The Manangba practise polyandry, whereby the wife may have several husbands. They are nominally Buddhist, but give little thought or care to it and have allowed their few temples and old monasteries to fall into general disrepair. Bo-dzo gomba below Manang village is of fair size and appears at one time to have supported a large community of monks. The gomba at Braga, built
dramatically amidst high cliffs and crags, is of the Kagyu-pa sect and possesses images estimated to be from 400 to 500 years old,* suggesting that the area was at one time strongly and actively influenced by Tibetan Buddhism. There are signs of a revitalizing of Buddhism, especially in the past few years with so many Tibetan refugees settling in the valley.

Recently a small settlement of Manangba has been founded in Mate Pani on the outskirts of Pokhara bazaar, a week's walk south from Nyeshang. They have established respectable shops selling all sorts of Indian and Nepali manufactured goods and clothing. Enough interest has arisen now for the building of a Buddhist gomba on a hill in Mate Pani, with a view of the entire Pokhara valley. During the winters since 1964 a monk from Nyeshang has travelled to Mate Pani to oversee the construction. This gives proof of a new and rising interest in religion among the Nyeshang people.

LARKE PEOPLE

Larke is the northern border region of Gorkha district in Gandaki zone lying between Himal Chuli and Manaslu Himal on the west and Ganesh Himal on the east. It includes the upper reaches of the Buri Gandaki khola, and is subdivided into two parts, Nup-ri and Tsum, corresponding to the Buri Gandaki's upper valley and the tributary valley of the Shar khola, the East River. These upper valleys are as high as the Kali Gandaki above Thak Khola, with the one difference that here the monsoon rains are not blocked and as a consequence the landscape is lush and green, and the fields support good harvests of corn in addition to the staple grains.

The ethnic diversity of the Larke people remind one of their neighbours in Manang development district. The high valleys along the two streams are inhabited by Tibetan types. Their ethnic affinity to the Gurungs who live further south and lower has yet to be studied in depth. Like the Manangba of Nyeshang, these people of Nup-ri and Tsum are Buddhists, but they are more actively so, quite possibly because of their closer proximity and greater commerce across the northern frontier with Tibet. From the junction of the Shar khola and the Buri Gandaki southward we find proper Gurung people who practise Buddhism and whose general social culture is greatly influenced by the Tibetan. David Snellgrove writes:

In appearance these Gurungs are easily distinguishable from the Tibetans of the higher villages ... One observes at once their softer features, which are enhanced by a rather higher standard of cleanliness. But their way of life is the same, set within the same physical conditions. They practise Tibetan religion and speak Tibetan as well as Gurung.*

The economy of these Larke people is based on agriculture and trade. The Sherpas of Solu-Khumbu frequent the area bringing dzopkyos to sell, and in fact on the southern slopes of Himal Chuli there is reported to be a village of Sherpas who migrated westward several generations ago.

The Buri Gandaki valley serves as another of the important trade routes north to the Tibetan frontier, being here in close proximity with the Tibetan town of Kyirong. The routes pass along the Shar khola through Tsum, or through Nup-ri to the trading village of Larke at the border. At Larke village the trail

up from the Marsyangdi and Dudh kholas also ties in. Salt and wool from Tibet are exchanged for the food grains and merchandise of Nepal.

There are a number of Buddhist gombas in Larke region, but none has a more interesting story than Pung-gyen monastery of the Nyingma-pa sect on the high east slopes of Manaslu Himal. This gomba was destroyed and all its inhabitants killed by an avalanche during the winter of 1953 shortly following an unsuccessful attempt by Japanese mountaineers to scale Manaslu peak. Immediately the local people concluded that the mountain god had become angry at them for allowing foreigners to trespass upon the holy sanctuary and that he had hurled the avalanche down upon the gomba in his fury. The following year the Japanese returned but were not given passage to the slopes, and it was not until 1956 that they finally succeeded in conquering Manaslu, at the same time contributing a large sum of money towards the building of a new Pung-gyen gomba.
EPILOGUE

In previous chapters the various ethnic groups have been discussed as if they were completely individual cultural entities, which taken alone look as they have been described. But in fact, very few groups have lived in complete isolation, independent of each other, although the degree of group interaction and interdependence does vary according to the situation, depending upon geographical proximity, cultural similarity, and other such factors. In varying degrees most Nepali peoples have been influenced by several groups other than their own. When looked at from this point of view their group norms, values, and standards are not as pure, indigenous, or original as they might seem to be in some cases. There is a great deal of social intercourse, economic interdependence, and cultural reciprocity between the various ethnic, caste, and cultural groups. These are manifest in various aspects of inter-caste, inter-ethnic, and inter-cultural life of the people. Some of the factors that have played important roles influencing inter-group relations are discussed in the following.

(1) The widespread movement of Brahmans has influenced various basically non-Hindu groups by way of Brahmanic ritualism. A majority of the Magars, a great many Gurungs, almost all of the Sunwars, many Rais, Limbus, Tharus, and Danuwars have adopted social values, caste attitudes, wedding procedures, and the like of the Brahmans.

(2) The economic predominance of Brahmans and Chhetris throughout almost the entire country, except in some extremely remote areas and in places where climatic conditions are absolutely prohibitive, stands out very clearly. Since economic success in an entirely agrarian society depends on the owning of land and the lending of money to the peasants an economic interdependence is imperative. This also leads to a very close understanding of each other and to imitations of certain habits and customs. The natural intuition and shrewdness accompanied with the teetotaler habit of the Brahmans and Chhetris has encouraged the ambitious individuals among other ethnic groups to emulate the habits of cleanliness and abstinence from drinking alcohol, while many well-to-do Brahmans and Chhetris are taken into the habit of drinking alcohol.

(3) Newars have likewise made significant impact upon other peoples. The more advanced material and artistic culture of the Newars has been adopted by many others across the land. Their contribution has been mainly in the architectural style and trade skills; and there is a great demand for the artifacts produced by them, such articles as pots, pans, potteries, bronze images, and the like. Newar
settlements are scattered throughout the country, but mostly concentrated about
the district headquarters. Newars are there as shop keepers, as civil servants in the
administrative offices, as school teachers, and as craftsmen such as carpenters, build-
ders, and metal workers. They also lend money occasionally. For all of these things
they have to depend very heavily upon the people living in the surrounding areas.

(4) Intermarriage between different ethnic and caste groups to some degree
has always taken place. The high caste people were allowed to bring wives from
almost any group except the very lowest who were considered untouchable
until recently, although there was a restriction against a marriage between a male
of a lower caste and a female of a higher caste, or of an ethnic group considered
as of higher social status than that of the male.

(5) Government efforts affecting intergroup relations include the Panchayat
system. Panchayat Democracy, the current central factor in Nepal's government,
has gone far toward bringing people of different regions and of different
origins together by providing the institutions of local government in the form
of panchayat assemblies at various levels. The entire country has been divided
into fourteen zones and seventy-five administrative districts within recent years.
Each district is comprised of a number of village assemblies depending upon the
size of the population. The elected councils hold the responsibilities of framing
rules, collecting taxes, and the administration within their specific jurisdiction
for both regular government and special development activities. These executive
bodies are called, respectively, Village Panchayats, District Panchayats, and
Zonal Panchayats. The National Panchayat at the head, serves the purpose of
a national parliament. Thus for the first time in the history of Nepal the entire
population has been brought into play under a well organized, modern
administration. With the increased responsibility for their own development
through the gradual process of administrative decentralization and their own
panchayats, the common people throughout the country are beginning to realize
that they are members of a nation rather than strictly of one ethnic group or of
one caste group or another. The fully democratic panchayat elections at various
levels have cut across caste, ethnic, religious, and linguistic lines.

Second in the government efforts to amalgamate Nepal is in education. Under His Majesty's government, primary education has spread countrywide, helping the younger generation to break through the small embryos of caste, ethnic group, or geographic restrictions with the effect of uniting the entire nation in knowledge and understanding.

The legal code bestowed by His Majesty, the King, has all the features of a
democratic legal system. It guarantees for the first time equal rights and opportunities for all the people of Nepal, regardless of ethnic origins, caste, creed, or sex. This legal code also prohibits all kinds of polygamy and allows inter-caste and inter-ethnic marriages. In this short time there has been a surprising degree of response, especially through inter-caste and inter-ethnic marriages.

Most recent in the government's efforts is the land reform movement. The rich people can no longer benefit by controlling vast land holdings, as the ceiling of twenty-five bighas (forty acres) in the Terai and of eighty ropanis in the hills has been affixed. New farmers' cooperatives are being established to offset the shift in property and financial holdings.

Likewise, the anticipated industrial boost within the next ten to fifteen years is expected to influence the various levels of society, and eventually to draw all kinds of peoples together in the industrial centres of the country.

By all appearances, Nepal has a bright future. Even as the workings of the Nepali nation are being amalgamated from within, a further step has been affected within the larger community of nations. As a member of the United Nations and a number of other international agencies the voice of Nepal is being heard on important worldwide issues. The growth of this one people, this one nation, is encouragement for others.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Glossary Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>avatari-lama</em></td>
<td>reincarnate Buddhist monk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>bhot</em></td>
<td>Tibet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>bhumi-puja</em></td>
<td>worship of the earth deity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>chautara</em></td>
<td>rest platform at a trailside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>chhang</em></td>
<td>Sherpa or Tibetan term for home brewed beer of cereal grain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>chorten</em></td>
<td>Buddhist shrine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>dal</em></td>
<td>pulses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>dev or deva</em></td>
<td>god</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>dzopkyo</em></td>
<td>hybrid bull; the cross between a yak and a cow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>dzumi</em></td>
<td>hybrid cow; the cross between a yak and a cow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>ghat</em></td>
<td>riverside platform for cremation and bathing; ferry landing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>ghee</em></td>
<td>clarified butter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>gomba</em></td>
<td>Buddhist temple or monastery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>gordha</em></td>
<td>dowry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>jajmari</em></td>
<td>client of a Hindu priest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>janti</em></td>
<td>groom's party in a wedding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>jat</em></td>
<td>caste or ethnic group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>jatra</em></td>
<td>festival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>jhankris</em></td>
<td>shamanism, animism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>khol</em></td>
<td>river or stream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>khukuri</em></td>
<td>traditional Nepali knife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>kipat</em></td>
<td>a form of communal land tenure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>kipatiya</em></td>
<td>one member who shares the communal right to the <em>kipat</em> land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>lalmohar</em></td>
<td>red seal of the King with authority of land right, trade, business monopoly, <em>et cetera.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>lama</em></td>
<td>Buddhist priest or monk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>mani</em></td>
<td>Buddhist stone inscription from the mantra: <em>om mani padme hum</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>mantra</em></td>
<td>religious incantation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>pad</em></td>
<td>Tharu term for clan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>pembu</em></td>
<td>headman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>puja</em></td>
<td>worship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>punya</em></td>
<td>merit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>rakshi</em></td>
<td>Nepali home made liquor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>sadhu</em></td>
<td>Hindu mendicant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>shudra</em></td>
<td>Hindu word for low caste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>swarga</em></td>
<td>Hindu word for heaven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>thanka</em></td>
<td>Buddhist scroll painting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>thar</em></td>
<td>clan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>thari</em></td>
<td>division or classification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>tika</em></td>
<td>coloured mark on the forehead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>zemindar</em></td>
<td>landlord, and government authorized revenue collector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>zendi</em></td>
<td>Sherpa for <em>janti</em>, or wedding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BIBLIOGRAPHY


No. 1. “Thapa Vamshavali” (Genealogy of Thapa)


INDEX

Acharya, Baburam, 2
Bakhtiyari, 82
Ancestor worship, 38, 67, 76, 82, 84, 87, 96, 97, 98, 114, 115, 121
Ancient and Medieval Nepal, 16, 23
Artisans, 15, 18-19, 100-104
See also Craftsmen, Occupational castes.
Aryan, 2, 109
Art, used for weddings, 6, 20, 36, 68
used for death rites, 75

Bajracharya, Purna Harsha, 20
Baragaunle, 85, 138, 156-159
Barnouw, Victor, 36
Bhote, 32, 48, 85, 117, 135, 136, 156
Birth rites, 12, 54, 62, 69, 75, 95
Bodo, 123-128
Bonpo religion, 85, 90, 158, 162
Bote. See Majhi.

Brahmans and Chhetris,
of the hills, iii, vii, 1-14, 15, 16, 18, 20, 22, 29, 36,
40, 42, 48, 57-63 pass., 64, 67, 69, 70, 73, 77,
92, 100, 118, 124n., 169
of the Terai, 99-107 pass., 109, 113, 120, 121, 124,
129
Buddhism,
Lamaistic (Tibetan), 38, 54, 55, 62, 69, 77, 80-90
pass., 124n., 135-168 pass.
Newari, 18, 19, 20, 22
priests, 15, 18, 50
See also Lamas.

Caste, vi, vii, 16, 23, 56, 85, 100-107 pass., 109, 121,
169, 170, 171
heirarchy, 1, 17-19, 22-23, 63, 124
Newar sub-divisions of, 15-28 pass.
of Terai people, 100-106 pass.
responsibility of, 13
status, 9, 64, 100, 130
See also Artisans, Craftsmen, Occupational castes,
Untouchability.

48, 57-58, 64, 70, 81, 108, 117-118, 123, 129, 135
Chaitiya, Swayambhunath, 22
Chenjong, Iman Singh, 29
Chepang, 53, 91-98
“Chepang and Kusunda Tribes of Nepal”, 91
Chhetris. See Brahmans and Chhetris.
Craftsmen, 15, 50, 58, 65, 170
See also Artisans, Occupational castes.

Dances,
festival, 43, 86, 125, 141, 142, 151-152, 159
harvest, 44
ritual, 74, 76, 86
social, 78
wedding, 43, 106, 125, 140-141
Daruwar, 100, 117-122, 123, 169

Darai, 117-122
Department of Statistics, 16, 31, 48, 57-58, 64, 70, 81,
108, 117-118, 123, 129, 136
Dhimal, 123-128
Divorce, 20, 45, 133, 134, 146, 162
Dolpo people, 156, 160-163
Drokpa, 161
Dura people, 59

“Eastern Nepalese Marriage Customs and Kinship
Organization,” 36
“Elements of Newar Social Structure,” 16, 17, 26
“Ethnographic Notes on the Tamangs of Nepal,”
51, 54

Festivals,
bhai tika, 11, 106
bhumi puja, 38, 55, 97
dashain (durga puja), 10, 24, 45, 55, 62, 69, 71, 88,
96, 97, 106, 124
gai jatra, 24
holi, 106
indra jatra, 23-24
losar, 137, 141, 147, 152
mani rimdu, 142, 159
of the Musalman, 132-133
rath jatra, 23-24
tihar (dipavali), 10, 11, 24, 69, 96, 97, 106
Führer-Haimendorf, Christoph von, iii, 16, 17, 26,
51, 54, 80n., 136n.

Geographical distribution. See Population
Gharti, 5
Gurkhas. See Military
Gurkhas, The, 29, 40, 45, 51
Gurungs, iii, vii, 5, 15, 48, 57, 58, 60, 66, 70-79, 80,
92, 93, 94, 153, 156, 164, 167, 169
Guthi, 26-28
Haerendorf. See Führer-Haimendorf, Christoph von.
Hair-cutting rites, 13, 74-75, 95, 96
Himalayan Pilgrimage, 90, 164, 166, 167
Hodgson, Brian, 2, 3, 62, 77, 91, 123, 124-125, 128n.
Hor. See Satar.

Initiation rites, 22, 87, 133, 155
See also Birth rites, Hair-cutting rites, Life rites,
Name-giving rites, Rodi, Weaning rites.
Islam, 99, 123, 127, 131-134
See also Moslem, Musalman.
Itihas Prakash (History Publication), 2, 86

Jaishi, 4
Jhankrism, 55, 85, 86, 87, 90, 147
“Jhapa Ka Satar-Ek Parichaya” (The Satar Community
of Jhapa), 124, 126
Jirel, 64-69
Possession by spirits, 78
Priests, Brahman, 11, 60, 62-63, 65, 66, 68, 77, 113
See also Buddhism; Castes, Newar sub-division
of; Lamas, Mendicant.
Punya. See Merit.

Rai, iii, vii, 29, 30-39, 40-47 pass., 48, 91, 169
Rajbansi, 123-128
Rana government, 1, 3, 42, 57, 65, 131
Rao. See Mahalanobis, Majumdar, and Rao.
Rapti Valley, 49, 70, 93, 110
Regmi, Dilli R., 16, 23
Regmi, Mahesh C., 93
Refugees. See Migration.
Reincarnate, Reincarnation, 88, 86, 143, 151
See also Lamas, Buddhism.
Rodi, 74, 78-79

Sacred thread ceremony, 13, 14
Sanskrit. See Language
Sanyeshi, 1, 5, 94
Satar, 123-128
Shah, Kings, 26, 29, 31, 65, 147
Mahendra Bir Bikram, cii
Prithvi Narayan, vi, 57, 62, 123
Royal Family of, 1, 8, 65, 70, 156
Shahs of Gorkha, 15, 29
Sherpa, iii, 5, 22, 29, 31, 40, 54, 64, 69, 135, 136-144,
145, 147, 148, 150, 151, 158, 160, 164, 167
Sherpas of Nepal: Buddhist Highlanders, The, 136
Shiva people. See Tamur Valley people.
Shrestha, Kesar Lall, 53, 54n.
Shrestha, Swayambhu Lal, 124n.
Shrines. See Temples,
Shrines and Temples, 23
Shrivastava, S. K., 108
Shudra, 2
Slaves. See Gharti.
Snellgrove, David, 23, 90, 164n., 166n., 167
Spirits, possession by, 78
Statistics, Department of, 16, 31, 48, 57-58, 64, 70,
81, 108, 117-118, 123, 129, 135
Sunwar, 64-69, 169
Tamang, 5, 15, 22, 29, 40-48-56, 84, 91, 92, 93, 94,
97, 98
Tamur Valley people, 150-152
See also Olanchung Gola people.
Temples, Hindu, 11, 22, 25, 27
See also Monasteries.
Tera, v, 1, 15, 16, 18, 31, 33, 39, 48, 49, 58, 64, 70,
71, 80, 81, 83, 89, 99-134 pass., 135, 137, 145,
165, 171
Thakali, iii, 17, 70, 74, 80-90, 124n., 153, 154, 157,
158, 161
See also Panchgaunlc.
Thakuri (Chhetri), 1-14 pass., 57, 83, 86, 92, 101,
124n.
Thami, 48, 51, 53
""Thami, The,"" 54
""Thapa Vamshavali"" (Genealogy of Thapa), 2
Tharu, vi, vii, 39, 100, 108-116, 117, 119, 123,
126, 169
Tharus, A Study in Culture Dynamics, The, 108
Thudam people, 149, 150. See Topke Gola people.
Tibet, v, vi, viii, 16, 29, 48, 50, 54, 58, 73, 77, 80-90
Tibetan language. See Language.
Tika, 8, 11, 44, 52, 60, 88, 94, 111, 120
Topke Gola people, 149, 150. See Thudam people.
Tucci, Biuseppe, viii, 116

Untouchability, 12, 170.
See also Occupational Castes, Pollution.

Village government, 29, 39, 41-42, 49-50, 56, 77-78,
82, 88, 109, 119, 125, 130, 146, 149, 150, 154-
155, 159, 161, 170
See also Panchayat.

Weaning rites, child, 13, 52, 69
Wojkowitz. See Nebesky-Wojkowitz, Rene de.

Yakha people, 29, 35