THE THAKALI
A Himalayan Ethnography

Michael Vinding
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This monograph presents a comprehensive ethnography of the Thakali with particular reference to the Thak Khola valley of Mustang district, Nepal – the homeland of the Thakali. Based on several years of fieldwork since 1972, it provides a wealth of hitherto unrecorded detail and much insight on Thakali history, culture and society.

Following an introduction to the valley and its peoples, the author describes how he lived among the Thakali. Much attention is then devoted to a history of the valley, thus providing a long-term perspective on its society and culture. How the Thakali make a living – the subsistence economy and their need and sources for cash – is recounted. Thakali kinship terminologies are analysed and the use of kinship terms and traditional behaviour patterns between relatives is examined. After an account of the form and function of Thakali patrilineal descent groups, the author examines the Thakali household, inheritance system, and residence patterns.

Individual chapters then present the following subjects: social stratification; marriage; the life cycle of the individual; the political systems in Thak Khola; the Thakali world view and death ceremonies as an example of Thakali ritual; a description of the main festivals; the history of Thakali emigration and the life of Thakali living outside Thak Khola.

The final chapter examines continuity and change, impression management, cohesion and conflict, and a developing identity crisis among the Thakali. The book ends with a discussion of the future of the Thakali. As a major contribution to the literature on the peoples of Nepal, this monumental study is of importance to ethnographers, anthropologists, historians and to all those interested in the Himalayas.

512 pages, 51 colour plates, maps, glossary, bibliography, index
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For Bina
PREFACE

This is an ethnography of the Thakali of the Thak Khola valley, Mustang District, Nepal. It was submitted to the Faculty of Arts, University of Aarhus, in May 1997 as a dissertation for the *doctor philosophiae* (Dr. phil.) degree. No additions or major changes have been undertaken since then.

It has been my good fortune to have studied under Professor, dr. phil. Johannes Nicolaisen and Professor, dr. phil. Erik Haarh. They have been an invaluable source of inspiration and encouragement. Needless to say, their death has been a painful loss to me.

A number of friends and colleagues have contributed in different ways in the preparation of this book. I would like to express my warmest appreciations to Professor, dr. phil. Amin Geertz, Professor, Dr. David Jackson, Dr. Don Messerschmidt, Professor, Dr. Ton Otto, Dr. Charles Ramble, Dr. James Ross, Professor, dr. phil. Per K. Sørensen, and dr. phil. Jesper Trier. I would also like to thank Mr. Svend Algren for preparing the maps.

Special thanks are due to my Thakali friends, especially (the late) Sarchekyop Thakali and his daughter Sarmendo whose house has become my second home; Krishnalal Thakali, M.P. and Palindra Thakali for their assistance in the field; and (the late) Narendra Gauchan and his son Surendra with whom I studied Thakali history.

I am grateful to His Majesty’s Government of Nepal for permitting research in Nepal and to the Danish Government’s Research Council for the Humanities for financing part of the expenses for fieldwork and the production of the book.

Finally, special gratitude is due to my beloved wife Bina for her strong support and encouragement in the long years of research.

This ethnography is addressed to scholars. It is, however, my hope that it may also be of use to Thakali seeking their roots and contribute to the strengthening of Thakali identity.

Thimphu, August 1998
INTRODUCTION

As a small boy from the land of Hans Christian Andersen, I sometimes feel inclined when confronted by complicated terminologies, to say, as does the boy from the fairy-tale, The Emperor’s New Clothes, ‘But he has nothing on!’

Johannes Nicolaisen, Primitive Kulturer

As recently as fifty years ago no Westerner had visited Thak Khola, and in the West almost nothing was known of the Thakali. Today, they have been studied by more than a dozen anthropologists, and the literature on the Thakali and Thak Khola is voluminous.¹ Considering they only number about 15,000 persons, the Thakali may well be the most studied people of Nepal.

Several factors contribute to this situation. First, foreign scientists interested in the Himalayan Region often do fieldwork in Nepal because of the relative ease of obtaining permission for research, compared with neighbouring countries. Second, anthropologists have historically been more attracted to the people of the hills and mountains than those of the plains. Third, fieldwork in Thak Khola involves no great hardship: communication is good, the climate is pleasant, people are friendly and cooperative, and accommodation and food are excellent. Finally, the Thakali are a good choice for anthropologists interested in trade, migration, and social change.

Nepal was virtually a closed country for foreigners from its foundation as a state in the late 18th century until 1951. The few Westerners who visited the

¹ For an annotated bibliography on the Thakali, see Vinding and Bhattachan 1985. See also Bibliography.
country were permitted to travel only along the main trail from India to Kathmandu. Until 1950 information on Thak Khola and the Thakali was scarce. Traders and pilgrims from neighbouring countries had been visiting the valley for centuries, but few left written accounts of their journeys. Hari Ram, from the Survey of India, passed through Thak Khola in 1873, and based on his observations the area was detailed on a map published by the Survey in 1915. The Japanese monk Ekai Kawaguchi stayed secretly in Thak Khola for several weeks in 1900 and later published a brief account on the valley.

The first European to visit Thak Khola was the German Hans Kopp who in November 1944 passed through the valley on his way from Tibet to Kathmandu. In April 1950 a French mountain expedition visited Thak Khola; Maurice Herzog’s account of the expedition includes little information of interest on the Thakali.

In 1952 Toni Hagen (a Swiss geologist) and Giuseppe Tucci (an Italian Tibetologist) were the first scientists to visit Thak Khola; Tucci’s account of his visit includes some interesting observations on Thakali history and religion.

Jiro Kawakita (Japan) was the first anthropologist to visit Thak Khola. Kawakita was a member of Kihara’s scientific expedition to the Nepal Himalayas (1952–53) and stayed one week in Thak Khola in 1953. He later made some brief visits to Thak Khola and has written on various aspects of Thakali society and culture.
Shigeru Iijima (Japan) spent one month in Thak Khola as a member of Kawakita’s 1958 expedition. He has revisited Nepal several times to study the Thakali of Kathmandu. The main focus of Iijima’s articles is social and cultural change.

Corneille Jest’s (France) main fieldwork was among the Tibetan-speaking people of Dolpo. He has frequently visited Thak Khola since 1960 and has published several articles on the Thakali, dealing mainly with religion and festivals.

Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf (England) was the first anthropologist to live for a long period among the Thakali. He spent some six months in Thak Khola in 1962 and revisited the valley in 1976. Professor C. von Fürer-Haimendorf’s works deal with trade, history, social organization and religion. Dor Bahadur Bista (Nepal) assisted C. von Fürer-Haimendorf in Thak Khola in 1962 and has published an article on the Thakali.

Pierre Valeix (France) stayed in Marpha for about one year in 1969–70 and has published his findings in a single article.

Donald A. Messerschmidt (USA) who is known mainly for his work among the Gurung has published a few articles on Thakali history, trade and credit associations.

Andrew E. Manzardo (USA) did fieldwork among Thakali immigrants (mainly in Pokhara) from 1974 to 1977. His Ph.D. dissertation and articles deal with ecology, animal husbandry, trade, impression management, change, and religion.

Reinhard Greve (Germany) stayed in Thini for some months in 1977 and 1980 and has published an article on local healing rituals.

Krishna Bahadur Bhattachan (Nepal) is a trained Thakali anthropologist. His M.A. dissertation and articles deal with social change among the Thakali.

Ram Bahadur Chhetri (Nepal) has written an M.A. dissertation and a few articles on the Thakali of Pokhara.

Barbara Parker (USA) carried out fieldwork for 18 months in Marpha in 1981–83. Her Ph.D. dissertation and articles deal mainly with religion.

Susanne von der Heide (Germany) has studied the Thakali since 1981. She has written a book, a doctoral dissertation and several articles on the Thakali.

William F. Fisher (USA) conducted two years research among Thakali in Myagdi and Baglung districts in 1982–84. His Ph.D. dissertation and articles deal with Thakali migration, ethnicity and social change.

I myself carried out fieldwork among the Thakali in 1972, 1975–78 and 1980–81, and during subsequent periodic visits between 1983 and 1997. My contributions to the anthropology of the Thakali comprise a small book and a dozen articles which deal with history, economy, kinship, marriage, political organization, religion and festivals.

Since 1992 research in Thak Khola (and other parts of Mustang district) has been carried out by ‘The Nepal German Project on High Mountain Archaeology’. Many (mainly German) scholars have worked in this multi-discipline project – archaeologists, Tibetologists, geographers, anthropologists, dendrochronologists, cartographers and architects, including A. von den Driest, F.K. Ehrhard, R. Graafen, N. Gutschow, W. Haffner, H. Hüttel, R. Kostka, M. Kretschmar, E. Pohl, P. Pohle, C. Ramble, B. Schmidt, W. Schön, D. Schuh, C. Seeber, and A. Simons.

Thakali history and culture have also been studied by Thakali laymen, including, among others, Dhruba Kumar Bhattachan, Narendra Gauchan, Omkar Prasad Gauchan, Prakash Gauchan, Narendra Sherchan, Chandraman Thakali and Krishnalal Thakali. While Western anthropologists have focused mainly on trade, migration and social change, the Thakalis’ central interest has been the question of their origin. Their contributions are published in Nepali language and have therefore seldom been quoted by foreign scholars.

When I began my study in 1972 comparatively little was known about Thakali society and culture. Although the literature is now quite extensive, there is much inaccurate information. Moreover, even a compilation of the extant literature fails to give a comprehensive picture of Thakali culture and society.

The purpose of this monograph is to present a comprehensive ethnography on the Thakali with particular reference to the Thak Khola valley of Mustang district – the homeland of the Thakali.

The bulk of the book is based on primary data collected during fieldwork in Nepal. Some of the chapters are based on my earlier publications; information has been updated and revised, whenever appropriate. Information on other Himalayan societies has been included, but a systematic comparison of Thakali society and culture with those of other Himalayan societies is beyond the scope of the present work.

8 Only important misinformation has been quoted in the present monograph, as it would serve no useful purpose to list all.

9 One monograph has been published on the Thakali (S. von der Heide 1988). It is, however, rather brief and covers only select aspects of Thakali culture and society.
Chapter I gives an introduction to the Thak Khola valley and its peoples. Chapter II describes how I lived among the Thakali and the methods used to collect information. The bulk of the data were obtained through participant observation and formal and informal interviews with key informants. Quantitative information was obtained from a survey among a sample of 121 Thakali households, using a fixed questionnaire. Information was also obtained from government offices. Finally, historical texts and myths were obtained, examined and translated.

Chapter III deals with the history of the Thak Khola valley. Using primary and secondary sources, it has been possible to reconstruct the history of the valley in greater detail than for any other area of Nepal, except the Kathmandu Valley.

Chapter IV details how the Thakali of Thak Khola make a living. It describes the subsistence economy, the need for cash and ways to obtain an income. The chapter also analyses the Thakalis' traditional credit and savings associations (dikur). It is generally accepted that the dikur primarily helps the poorer section of society. While this may originally have been the case, I conclude that these associations now benefit mainly the rich. The chapter also examines the various factors that have facilitated and hindered economic development in Thak Khola.

Chapter V presents the Thakali kinship terminologies and examines the use of kinship terms and traditional behaviour patterns between relatives. It also analyses the underlying principles of the Thakali kinship terminologies. I conclude that the terminologies are not prescriptive, although many equations and distinctions suggest that the terminologies originally were of the symmetric prescriptive terminology of the simple two-line type. The terminologies agree with marriage rules and actual marriage patterns: marriage with the category to which cross-cousins belong is preferential, but not prescribed.

Chapter VI examines the form and function of Thakali patrilineal descent groups.

Chapter VII deals with the Thakali household. It examines the household as a corporate group, the inheritance system, household types, residence patterns, and the development cycle of the household. I correct earlier reports on the Thakali inheritance system. I also conclude that the ideal among the Thakali is the household based on the nuclear family, and that the preference for this type of household is due to social considerations, rather than ecological and economic ones.

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10 I have used a simplified spelling of Thakali, Nepali and Tibetan words in the main text of this book. For a transliteration of foreign words, see the glossary.
Chapter VIII examines how the Thakali are stratified according to caste, descent, sex and age. The clans and lineages have equal status, but contrary to earlier studies I conclude that some lineages are held in low esteem. Likewise certain social categories are looked down upon, including witches, people with the evil eye, children of mixed parentage and illegitimate children.

Chapter IX deals with Thakali marriage. It examines in detail the criteria that the Thakali consider when selecting a spouse. Then follows a description of the various modes of Thakali courtship and marriage. The chapter also examines polygyny, divorce and remarriage. The traditional Thakali way of marriage was through capture, but this has now been replaced by arranged marriages. It is commonly believed that capture is a crude and primitive form of courtship in which young women are forced into marriage against their will. I conclude that this is not correct: a woman can be captured against her will (although it usually takes place only after she has given her consent), but she cannot be forced to marry. I also argue that the woman is in a better position to reject a proposal is better under capture than under arranged marriages.

Chapter X looks into the various stages in the social and sexual life of the individual, viz. birth, childhood, adolescence, adulthood and senescence. I conclude that, among other things, an earlier report of widespread prostitution among Thakali women lacks any foundation.

Chapter XI deals with the political systems in Thak Khola. It examines in detail the political system of Syang village in Pacgau and describes in brief the systems in other villages. The chapter also examines the relationship between the local communities and the Nepalese state. I conclude that the Thakali have developed democratic political institutions, including a village assembly, a government, and written laws.

Chapter XII explores the Thakali world view and details the death ceremonies as an example of Thakali ritual. The religious tradition which is dominant in the ritual aspect is not, however, necessarily dominant in the cognitive aspect. I conclude that Tibetan Buddhism is an important element of the Thakali ritual, whereas its impact on the cognitive aspect remains limited. For example, the Thakali have radically different ideas from orthodox Buddhism concerning the existence of a permanent soul and life after death.

Chapter XIII describes three main Thakali festivals, namely the torenla, the phala and the lha phewa.

Chapter XIV examines the history of Thakali emigration and the life of the Thakali living outside Thak Khola. Contrary to earlier reports, I conclude that for the bulk of the Thakali who left from Thak Khola in the 1960s and 1970s it was not so much a question of subsistence, but of maintaining an already
relatively high standard of living. Moreover, education, health services, and business opportunities were greater in the south, to which they migrated.

The literature on the Thakali includes some stimulating discussions on Thakali society and culture. Chapter XV, which is entitled 'A Reappraisal of the Thakali' examines the most important issues – continuity and change, impression management, cohesion and conflict, and the Thakali identity crisis. The chapter ends with a discussion of the future of the Thakali.
Chapter I

THE THAK KHOLA VALLEY

THE SETTING

The Natural Environment

The Himalayas are the highest mountains in the world and separate the Gangetic Plain from the Tibetan Plateau. In the eastern part of Nepal the border with Tibet (currently the People’s Republic of China) follows the Himalayas, while in the west it runs along the Tibetan marginal mountains, which are located some 30–80 km north of the main Himalayas. Between the Himalayas and the Tibetan marginal mountains lie the Inner Himalayan valleys of which Thak Khola – ‘the Valley of the Border Country’ – is one.¹

The 30 km long Thak Khola valley is in the southern part of Mustang district, some 300 km northwest of Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal. Thak Khola extends from the village Ghasa in the south to Jomsom (the district headquarters) in the north. It is characterized by extreme elevations. To the west and the east the valley is flanked by some of the world’s highest mountains, including Dhaulagiri I (8,167 m) and Annapurna I (8,091 m). It is open towards the north and the south; the lower reaches of the valley incline from 1,900 m in the south to 2,750 m in the north.

¹ Constituting a transit zone between the Nepalese Hills and the Tibetan Plateau, the name Thak Khola, appositely, is a composite of a Tibetan and a Nepali word. The southern part of the present Thak Khola (Thaksatsae) was originally called thag, which may be derived from Tibetan mtha’, ‘end, border, border-country’ (Jäschke 1881, p. 239) or, perhaps better, thag, ‘distance, distant (land)’ (ibid, p. 227), as to Tibetans it constituted the border of their civilization. In Nepali khola (or kholo) is commonly translated as ‘small river’, but it may also denote ‘valley’ (Turner 1931, p. 130).
Table 1: Rainfall and air temperature, Marpha (2,566 m), 1980

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>month</th>
<th>rainfall (mm)</th>
<th>temperature (Celsius)</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>mean max.</td>
<td>mean min.</td>
<td>highest max.</td>
<td>lowest min.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
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<td>15.5</td>
<td>-8.4</td>
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<tr>
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<td>19.4</td>
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</tr>
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<td>4.7</td>
<td>25.1</td>
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<td>19.8</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>24.5</td>
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<tr>
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<td>19.0</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>23.0</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>16.9</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>NA</td>
<td>13.2</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>69.1</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>November</td>
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<td>14.0</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>-3.4</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>-3.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Marpha Agricultural Farm

The Kali Gandaki river (*omdo kyu*) originates in the mountains on the border of Tibet, some 80 km north of Thak Khola. In the northern part of Thak Khola the riverbed is several hundred meters wide, but further south (at Kalopani) the river narrows and then drops 750 meters on the southernmost 10 km of the valley.

In Thak Khola there is a great diversity in climate, flora and fauna, attributable largely to physiographic features. The difference between the valley floor and the summits of the highest mountains is up to 6,000 m, making it the deepest valley in the world. Also, the lower part of the valley (south of Kalopani) is located on the wet, southern side of the Himalayas, while the upper part lies on the arid, cold northern side. Thus the annual rainfall at Kalopani is 1,041 mm, while it is as little as 248 mm at Jomsom, only 20 km further north.

Most of the rain falls in the summer, which lasts from June through September (Table 1). In winter (November through March) there is occasional

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2 Kali Gandaki is named 'Black Gandaki' because it is coloured black by sediments. For the etymology of the name Kali Gandaki, see Witzel 1993.

3 The figures for Kalopani and Jomsom are the average for the period 1970–80 and 1973–80, respectively. They were obtained from the Meteorological Service, HMG of Nepal.
snowfall, but it usually melts within a few days. In spring and autumn days remain warm, while nights are cold. Throughout the year from late morning to early evening a strong wind blows from the south, sometimes reaching up to 45 knots.4

The southern part of Thak Khola lies on the border between subtropical and temperate climates, and the forests located close to the villages are partly deciduous, partly evergreen. The deciduous trees cease at Kalopani. Blue pine dominates up to Tukce where open cypress forest takes over. North of Marpha rainfall is low and evaporation high, and the natural vegetation in the valley floor is bush steppe.

The vegetation varies much with altitude, but other factors (e.g. slope, exposition, type of soil, and sunniness) are important as well, and the following description therefore gives a somewhat simplified picture of the vegetation. In the northern end of Thak Khola, the vegetation in the valley floor is bush steppe.

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4 The wind blowing from the south is called nambar, while the north wind is known as phamar.
(Oxytropis spp. and Sophora spp.) and various types of berries (Berberis spp.). There are also a few trees, such as poplar (Populus ciliata) (syopla) and willow-tree (Salix tetrasperma) (cyam). Caragana-Artemisia steppe (Caragana gerardiana and Artemisia spp.) starts above the village and continues up to an altitude of approximately 4,100m. Open cypress forest (dong) with Cypressus torulosa (cang syiki) is found between 2,900m and 3,500m. Juniper (Juniperus indica) (pa syiki) appears at about 3,300m and dominates up to 3,900m. Forest (ngha) with juniper and pine (Pinus excelsa and Pinus wallichiana) (thang dung) is situated between approximately 3,500m and 3,900m. Fir (Abies spectabilis) (ki dung) and birch (Betula utilis) (khya dung) dominate between 3,900m and 4,100m. Rhododendron (par dung) is also found at this altitude in parts of Thak Khola. Above 4,100m is dwarf juniper (Juniperus squamata) (pa dung), and at 4,200m is pasture (pang) with Caragana brevospina.5

Animal life in Thak Khola includes jackal (syal), hare (rhopang), forest leopard (mhang), fox (phyau), muskdeer (lho), langur (bandar), deer (pho), black bear (tokong), and goat-antelope (ghoral).6 A large number of species of birds (nemyang) are found, including partridges (tangco), pheasants (nathang), vultures (ha), eagles (tikya), hawks (khya), sparrows (khya nemyang), owls (hukku), pigeons (dokung), crows (daprang), and ravens (pui kong).7

Settlements

The Thak Khola valley is divided into two parts, namely Thak in the south and Yhulngha in the north. Nowadays these areas are better known by their Nepali names – Thaksatsae and Pacgau.8

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5 For the ecology of Thak Khola, see Dobremez and Jest 1971, and Miche 1982 and 1985.
6 Bats (phopang) are also found in Thak Khola; they are classified by Thakali as birds.
7 For the birds of Thak Khola, see Flemming 1969.
8 Yhulngha and Pacgau both mean ‘the five villages’, while Thaksatsae denotes ‘the seven hundred Thak’. According to Dr. Harka Gurung, Ghandruk village in Lamjung district is known as Ghandruk satsaya, ‘some say because of 700 houses, but I found there were no more than 300 houses’ (Gurung 1980, p. 168). Thakali claim too that Thaksatsae means ‘the seven hundred houses of Thak’; it is, however, unlikely that there ever have been 700 households in Thaksatsae, and I therefore guess that the figure refers to the original number of inhabitants. According to Dr. Messerschmidt (personal communication), satsop may simply imply ‘a great many’. In a recent article Dr. Ramble mentions that Tibetan documents from Pacgau and Baragau sometimes refer to this area as ‘Thag-sa-se’; while this may be an attempt to replicate the Nepali Thaksatsae, if taken literally it denotes ‘the Se [people] of the place Thak’ (Ramble 1997, pp. 501–502); for the se people, see note 33 and Chapter III. Thaksatsae is mentioned in an official document from 1828 (Pant and Pierce 1989, p. 66), and the name was probably introduced in the early 19th century.
For administrative purposes the valley is divided into six Village Development Committees (VDC): Jomsom, Marpha, Tukce, Kobang, Lete and Kunjo.

The five original villages of Pacgau are Thini, Syang, Marpha, Chairo and Cimang; Jomsom, Dhumpa and Samle are later settlements. Thaksatsae comprises Tukce, Khanti, Sauru, Kobang, Larjung, Nakhung, Naprungkhung, Dhampu, Titi, Taglung, Kunjo, Chayo, Lete, and Ghasa villages, as well as several minor settlements.

In the northern part of Thak Khola (from Larjung and above) settlements are nucleated, and houses usually form a compact cluster, built wall to wall. In this part of the valley land is scarce, and villages are located on land which is unsuitable for agriculture. In Pacgau where agriculture is based on irrigation, settlements are generally larger than in Thaksatsae; Marpha, Syang and Thini being the largest, each having more than 100 households. In the southern part of the valley villages are nucleated too, but they are less compact than in the north; this is true especially for the smaller settlements.

The oldest settlements in Thak Khola (e.g. Garab Dzong and Syang) are situated on the top of steep cliffs and were originally protected by walls. The unification of Nepal in the 18th century ended war in Thak Khola, and trade and agriculture became more important than defence in the selection of a location for new settlements. In Syang some villagers moved down close to the fields where they established a new settlement. Also, in the 19th century traders from Kobang and other villages in Thaksatsae moved to Tukce which is an ideal location for trade, but unsuitable for defence purposes.

A few new settlements have been established in recent years. In 1972 there was only a single house at the airfield in Jomsom, but now there are more than 40 buildings (mostly hotels and government offices). In the late 1970s descendants of the Thakali’s former servants established a new settlement on the northern outskirts of Tukce.

Houses vary much in size and quality, but in general are larger and better than most Nepalese houses. The largest and best houses were built in the late 19th century and early 20th century by the rich traders of Tukce. The Thakali house is built around a courtyard which gives protection against the strong wind, and Thakali spend most of their time in the warm sunshine in the courtyard, cooking, spinning, weaving, looking after babies, chopping wood, socializing, relaxing, sleeping, etc. Another important feature of the Thakali house is the well-maintained interior, especially the kitchens.\(^9\)

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\(^9\) Garab Dzong, now in ruins, was an important settlement south of the present Thini.

Since the 1970s the development of infrastructure has been dramatic, especially around Jomsom which became the district headquarters in 1975. Jomsom now has many government offices, a small hospital, an army garrison, a police station, a jail, a radio station and an airport. Another army garrison is situated at Kesang in the high forest east of Thini. Post offices are found in several villages, and there are two banks in Jomsom. Primary and lower secondary schools are found in all major villages, and there are higher secondary schools and health posts in most VDC. A government agricultural farm is located in Marpha, and offices providing agricultural and veterinary services are found in some other villages. All villages have a potable water supply, and since 1983 the northern part of the valley has had electricity, supplied from a 240 kVA hydropower plant at Mharsyangkyu (Chokopani) south of Cimang. In 1996 a satellite telephone service – the first of its kind in the country – was established in Mustang district.

Transport and Communication

The Thak Khola valley is approximately 70 km (three days' walk) from the nearest motorable road at Beni to the south of the valley.11 Historically, the trail through the Thak Khola valley was one of the main trade routes between Tibet and Nepal and it follows the valley floor. Formerly, all bridges were constructed of wood by the local communities, but the major ones have now been replaced by suspension bridges financed by the government. In winter, travellers cross the Kali Gandaki river opposite Larjung and Tukce, using wooden planks that are removed at the onset of monsoon.

In 1959 a large number of Tibetan refugees came to Mustang, and in 1962 a small airfield was constructed in Jomsom for the transportation of supplies. Regular air-service commenced after the airfield was extended in 1972–73. Now there are daily flights to Pokhara, and since 1985 the air service has also been operating during the monsoon.

The Peoples of Thak Khola

According to the 1991 Population Census, 14,292 persons were living in Mustang District. In Thak Khola there were a total of 6,049 persons: 668 in Kunjo

11 The Pokhara–Baglung–Beni road opened in the 1990s. In 1997 it was named the Bhupi Sherchan Road after the famous Thakali poet Bhupi Sherchan. See Chapter III, note 225.
VDC, 914 in Lete VDC, 659 in Kobang VDC, 652 in Tukce VDC, 1,630 in Marpha VDC and 1,526 in Jomsom VDC.\textsuperscript{12}

Table 2: Number of households in Thak Khola according to ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VDC</th>
<th>Jomsom</th>
<th>Marpha</th>
<th>Tukce</th>
<th>Kobang</th>
<th>Lete</th>
<th>Kunjo</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thakali:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamang</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mawatan</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yhulkasom.</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artisans:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kami</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damai</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarki</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towa</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhongta K.</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tangbetan</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magar</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chantel</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>209</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>942</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The author’s 1977 census.

\textsuperscript{12} HMG Nepal 1994a, p. 84. The figures include civil servants residing in the district on a temporary basis. According to the 1981 Population Census there were 12,399 persons in Mustang district, that is 1,172 persons less than in 1971 (the 1971 figure has been adjusted on the basis of district boundary changes adopted in 1975) (Gurung 1984, p. 221). The decrease from 1971 to 1981 is probably due mainly to counting errors, rather than emigration.
The only information on the distribution of Thak Khola's population according to ethnicity is a census undertaken by the author in 1977. At that time, 942 households with a total of 3,873 persons were living permanently in Thak Khola. Sixty-nine per cent of the households were Thakali, while artisans and Towa/Rhongta Khampa each accounted for 11 per cent, and Magar/Chantel and Tangbetan for 5 and 3 per cent, respectively (Table 2). Thakali were a majority in all six VDC, from 91 per cent of the households in Marpha VDC to 45 per cent in Tukce VDC.

The Thakali form a majority in all major villages, except for Jomsom and Tukce. Most of the smaller settlements are dominated by other groups, and there are no Thakali in Samle, Dhumpha, Mharsyangkyu and Larkyo. The groups that immigrated to Thak Khola from the south (artisans, Magar and Chantel) are mainly found in southern Thak Khola, while the groups that came from the north (Towa, Rhongta Khampa and Tangbetan) have settled in the north.

THAKALI

The Thakali number an estimated 15,000 persons. Formerly, the distribution of Thakali was limited to the Thak Khola valley, but now only some 20 per cent of the population are found there; the majority live in towns and rural areas in the south.

The Thakali have predominantly Mongoloid racial features. According to Shafer, the Thakali language belongs to the Gurung Branch of the Bodish

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13 The 1991 Census provides information on ethnicity, but the data is misleading. According to the 1991 Census, there were 14,292 persons in the Mustang district out of which 7,720 persons were 'Bhote-Gurung', 2,810 'Bahun', 741 'Kami' and 3,021 were 'Others' (Gurung 1994, p. 8). Apparently, the 1991 Census has classified Tibetan speakers as 'Bhote-Gurung' while Thakali have probably been grouped under 'Bahun' or 'Others'. According to Salter and Gurung, 'only 2,810, or one-fifth of all Thakalis, still reside in the home district of Mustang' (1996, p. 19); obviously, the 2,810 persons refer to the 2,810 'Bahun' in the 1991 Census.

14 According to the 1991 Population Census, the Thakali numbered 13,731 persons out of whom only 7,113 (52 per cent) reported Thakali as mother tongue (HMG 1994b, p. 18 and 22)(see also Salter and Gurung 1996, p. 19). The 1981 Census did not report on ethnicity, only on mother tongue; 5,289 persons reported Thakali as their mother tongue (Chhetri 1986, p. 244). As mentioned in the preceding note, official population census data on ethnicity is incorrect. According to Fisher, the Tamang Thakali numbered 8,367 persons in 1984 (1987, p. 139). This number would have increased to about 11,000 persons by 1996. To this figure one should add the Mawatan Thakali and the Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali – a total of some 4,000 persons.

15 A physical anthropological study of the Thakali has not been undertaken. The dimensions of the body, the pigmentation (skin, hair and eyes), as well as the presence of the
18 The Thakali

Section of the Bodic Division of the Tibeto-Burman languages. This branch includes the languages spoken by the Thakali, Tamang, Gurung, Chale, Mananggi of Manang district, Narpa of Nar and Phu villages in Manang district, Shopa of Tangbe, Tetang, Chusang, Chaile and Gyaka villages in Mustang district, and Chantel. The majority of the Thakali living outside the Thak Khola valley speak Nepali (an Indo-European language) and many have little or no knowledge of the Thakali language.

The Thakali comprise three endogamous groups, namely the tamang whose homeland is Thaktsa; the mawatan, who are the indigenous people of internal epicanthic fold and the sacral spot, and the shape of the nose profile and the hairiness of the body suggest, however, that the Thakali have predominantly mongoloid racial features.

Shafer 1955. Mazaudon 1978 refers to the Gurung Branch as the Tamang sub-family.

In 1857 Hodgson published a short list of words of the Thakali language, which he referred to as Thaksya (Georg 1996, p. 9). Hodgson’s work was the main source used by the Linguistic Survey of India (Grierson 1909, p. 406), where the Thakali language is also called Thaksya. Shafer 1955, too, refers to Thakali as Thaksya. Is Thaksya a misinterpretation of Thaktsa, the homeland of the Tamang Thakali? According to Hale (1970, p. 5), the Tamang Thakali refer to their language as tapang. The main works on the Thakali language are Mazaudon 1978 and Georg 1996. According to Georg, the ‘tamangische sprachen’ include Tamang, Gurung, Thakali, Manang and Chantel. Thakali is divided into a southern dialect (Tamang Thakali) and b) a northern dialect; the latter includes a) ‘Nord-Mustang’ (Tetang, Tsuk [Chusang] and Tangbe; b) Syang, Thini; and c) Marpha (1996, p. 11).

In 1932 the Government of Nepal decided that the Tamangs should officially be called tamang. Prior to this the Tamangs were called lama, bhote or murmi, and included in the caste of bhote (Höfer 1979, pp. 147-148). Hodgson wrote in 1848 about the murmi or tamar tribe (1874, part II, p. 31). I am not aware of earlier references to the tamar (tamang), but the term murmi was used in 1819 by Hamilton (1819, p. 52). The word murmi may be derived from Tibetan mur for frontier and mi for people, making murmi ‘people of the frontier’ (Macdonald 1975, p. 129). For the Tamang, see C. von Fürer-Haimendorf 1956, Lama 1959, Höfer 1969, 1981 and 1994, Clarke 1980, Toffin 1986, Holmberg 1989, Macdonald 1989 and Tautscher 1996.


The homeland of the Mananggi is called nyeshang in Tibetan and mano chachum in the local language; the people are called nyeshangpa in Tibetan and mananggi in Nepali, while they refer to themselves as mano chachumthe (Gurung 1976, p. 295). For the Mananggi, see Gurung 1976, van Spengen 1987 and Watkins 1996.

The people of Nar and Phu villages are called narpa in Tibetan, while they refer to themselves as narthe (Gurung 1976, p. 295 and 297). For the Narpa, see Gurung 1977 and C. von Fürer-Haimendorf 1983.

The peoples of Tangbe, Tetang, Chusang, Gyaka and Chaile are described below. The inclusion of the languages of these peoples in the Gurung Branch was first suggested by Mazaudon 1978, p. 158, citing Vinding (personal communication).

The Chantel are described below.
Marpha village; and the *yhulkasompaimhi*, who originate from Thini, Syang and Cimang villages in Pacgau. The groups speak their own distinct dialects of the Thakali language distinguished by vocabulary, tone, and pitch.

A Tamang Thakali is a socially accepted member of one of the following patrilineal clans: cyogi (Nep., gaucan), salgi (Nep., tulacan), dhimcan (Nep., shercan) and bhurgi (Nep., bhattacan). The Tamang Thakali refer to themselves as *Thakali* ('people from Thak') in conversation with Nepali and English speakers, but in the Thakali language they refer to themselves as *tamang*. The Tamang Thakali formerly used the surname 'Thakali', but since the beginning of the present century they have used the Nepali names of their clans.

A Mawatan Thakali is a socially accepted member of one of the following patrilineal clans: rheten phobe (Nep., lalcan), puta phobe (Nep., hiracan), ghumlthowa phobe (Nep., juharcan) and ghumli cyangpa phobe (Nep., pannacan). In the Thakali language the Mawatan Thakali formerly used to refer to themselves as *puntan*, but nowadays they use the ethnonyms mawatan and mari-emhi, 'person from Marpha'. In conversations with Nepali and English speakers they call themselves Thakali. The Mawatan Thakali formerly used the surname Punel (or no surname at all), but for the last forty years or so they have used the Nepali names of their clans.

A Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali is a socially accepted member of one of the following patrilineal clans: gyalgi phobe, kya phobe, jhisin phobe, che phobe, sakar phobe, srane phobe, bom phobe, san phobe, syangtan phobe and pasin phobe. They seldom refer to themselves, or are referred to, as *yhulkasompaimhi* ('people from the three villages'), but use syangtan ('people from Syang'), thin and cimtan according to their ancestral village. In Nepali and English the Yhulkasompaimhi refer to

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25 The Thakali of Thak Khola speak Thakali as well as Nepali. Many also speak Tibetan and/or English. A handful of Thakali also speak Japanese.

26 In an official document from 1860 the Thakali leader Balbir is referred to as Subba Balabir Thakali (see Appendix 1). Iijima refers to Balbir, alias Kalu Ram, as Kalu Ram Timtsen [Dhimcan] (1977a, p. 428); it is unlikely that the Tamang Thakali have ever used the Thakali clan names as their surnames. The ethnonym Thakali and its use as a surname were introduced in the 19th century. Earlier the Thakali did not use surnames.

27 The ethnonym *puntan* means 'the people of Pun(dri)'. In the text *cimang bemchag* Marpha is called *pundri* (*spun gri*) (Ramble and Vinding 1987, p. 18). Although the name *Puntan* relates to the old name for Marpha village, the Mawatan Thakali dislike the name because some Tamang Thakali mistakenly have related it with the Thakali word for 'leprosy' (*phu*).

28 Marpha is locally known as *ma* or *mawa*, which may mean 'lower'. Marpha is situated in the valley floor, but the original settlement (called Tamang or Jhong) is said to have been on a plateau above the present village.

29 Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali refer to the Mawatan Thakali as *puni*, while Tamang Thakali use the term *puntan*. Nepali speakers refer to the Mawatan Thakali as *marphali* ('person from Marpha') or *pumel*. 
themselves as Thakali and, depending on the speaker's knowledge of Thak Khola, are referred to as *thakali*, *pacgauli* ('a person from Pacgau'), *syangtani* ('a person from Syang'), *thinnel* ('a person from Thini') and *cimtani* ('a person from Cimang'). The Yhulkasompaimhi write their surname as Thakali.

Tibetans classify the Thakali as *mon*, which is the general name for non-Tibetan speaking peoples of the Himalayas. In the local Tibetan dialects the Thakali are referred to as *thagpa* ('people from Thak') and their language as *se kai*.\(^3\)

The ethnonym *thakali* is Nepali and means 'a person from Thak'.\(^3\) The use of this ethnonym appears to date from around mid-19th century;\(^3\) prior to this the Thakali were known as *thakse*.\(^3\)

The Thakali disagree as to who is Thakali and who is not. The Tamang Thakali claim that only they are Thakali. They argue – with justification – that the word Thak originally was used exclusively for the present Thaksatsae. Since, the argument continues, the ethnonym 'Thakali' means 'a person from Thak', only the people of Thag (or Thaksatsae) – that is the Tamang Thakali – are Thakali. The Mawatan Thakali and the Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali claim that they too are Thakali. In support of this claim they mention that their languages and cultures are basically similar to those of the Tamang Thakali, and that formerly marriage relations existed between the groups.\(^3\) Being more powerful and articulate than their neighbours, the Tamang Thakali have, however, been successful in imposing their ideas on other Nepalese and anthropologists.

Kawakita and Iijima used the ethnonym Thakali exclusively for the Tamang Thakali and divided the people of Pacgau into Punnel (in Marpha), Thinnel (in Thini), Syangtani (in Syang) and Chimtani (in Chimang).\(^3\)

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31 The word is written *thakli* by the Thakali, a form which is found in a document from 1906 (in the author's possession), while their homeland is written *thāk*. Turner lists *thakali* as well as *thakāli* for 'a native of the district of Thāk in Nepal' (1931, p. 293).

32 The ethnonym Thakali is used in an official document from 1855, see Appendix 1, Document 5.

33 An official document from 1811 refers to the Thakali as *thakse*, see Appendix 1, Document 2. Hamilton (who stayed in Kathmandu in 1802–03) used the term *thagsi* for the Thakali (1819, p. 28). Is *Thakse* a short form of *'se (kai) speaking people of Thak'* (C. Ramble, personal communication) or the *Se* people of Thak? The *Se* people will be discussed in Chapter III; see also Ramble 1997.

34 All three groups agree that Hansa Raja of Thak was married to a princess from Thini. It is not possible to say whether marriage between the three Thakali groups formerly was socially accepted.

noted, however, that these peoples, 'would appear to be sub-ethnic groups of the Thakalis from a cultural and physical viewpoint.'

In some works Jest used the ethnonym Thakali implicitly for the Tamang Thakali only, in others for the inhabitants of Thak as well as Pacgau.

C. von Fürrer-Haimendorf's view on who are Thakali and who are not is inconsistent. In some works he divided the Thakali into two groups according to their location – Thaksatsae and Pacgau – and mentioned that 'the differences in the dialects and cultural patterns of the two regions are so slight that their respective populations appear clearly as two sub-sections of the same tribe.' However, in another work he called the inhabitants of Thaksatsae 'genuine Thakali', noting that the inhabitants of Pacgau were not 'Thakali in the true sense.'

Bista's view is inconsistent too. In one work he wrote that the term Thakali 'in common usage refers not only to the inhabitants of Thak-Sat-Sae, but to those of Panchgaun as well', in another that the people of Pacgau '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.'

Manzardo has consistently used the term Thakali exclusively for the Tamang Thakali, while the Mawatan Thakali and Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali are referred to as Panchgaonlis.

In the late 1970s I departed from the accepted views and proposed that the Thakali comprised three separate, endogamous ethnic groups; that these groups were known as Tamang, Mawatan and Yhulkasompaimhi; and that membership of these groups was defined on basis of clan affiliation.

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36 Iijima 1963, p. 49.
38 Jest 1966, p. 28.
39 C. von Fürrer-Haimendorf 1966, p. 142. See also C. von Fürrer-Haimendorf 1975, 'The Thakali area is divided into two regions ... Thaksatsae ... and ... Panchgaon.' (p. 134).
41 Bista 1967, p. 90.
42 Ibid, p. 96.
44 By an ethnic group I understand a population which identifies itself, and is identified by others, as constituting a category distinguishable from other categories of the same order. However, if the definition also includes shared fundamental cultural values (Narroll 1964), the Tamang Thakali may not qualify as an ethnic group. For a discussion of the definition of ethnic groups, see Barth 1969.
45 Vinding 1979, p. 192.
This definition of membership is important because at that time the constitution of the Tamang Thakali Community Reform Organization (thakali samaj sudhar sangh) of Pokhara limited membership to ‘that individual or family who can assure the Managing Committee of being Thakali on the basis of language, culture and morals.’ As we shall see, Thakali culture and morals vary a great deal from person to person, and in practice the organization used clan affiliation as criteria for membership. The rules of the Tamang Thakali’s national organization (thakali samaj sewa samiti) which was formed in 1983 define a Thakali as an individual who belongs to one of the four Tamang Thakali clans – Gaucan, Tulacan, Shercan and Bhattacan.

The classification of the Thakali into three separate ethnic groups, the terms ‘Tamang Thakali’, ‘Mawatan Thakali’ and ‘Yhulkasompaith Thakali’, and the definition based on clan affiliation have now been generally accepted by anthropologists.

**Towa**

In the Thakali language *towa* refers to the Tibetan speakers living north of Thak Khola, especially those of Baragau. The Towa constitute the second largest group in Thak Khola and are found in Paegau and the northern part of Thaksatsae; they form a majority in Dhumpha (near Thini) and Tukce villages.

Some Towa are said to have come from Lo, Manang, Mugu and Tibet, but the majority are descendants of villagers from Baragau (primarily Chongkhor, Khyinga and Phelag) who became bonded labourers in Tukce because they (or, more commonly, their parents) were unable to repay their debt to Thakali moneylenders.

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46 Manzardo and Sharma 1975, p. 31.
47 Manzardo and Sharma note that ‘all Thakali households in Pokhara are members of this organization; indeed membership is automatic upon arrival in Pokhara’ (ibid, p. 31).
49 See Greve 1981/82, Parker 1985a, Fisher 1987, and S. von der Heide 1988a. Parker uses, however, other terms, ‘...there are three endogamous groups of Thakali speakers ... Thaksatsae or Tamang ... Maa, Puntan or Marphali ... and Panchgaon or Yhul Nga’ (Parker 1985, pp. 6–7). Georg 1996 uses the terms *marphatan* (p. 5) while his informants apparently used the term *mari-e mi* (p. 241). My classification and terms have also found their way into guide books, e.g. Henss, 1993, p. 57.
50 C. von Furer-Haimendorf mentions that ‘the Thakalis and other neighbours refer to these Bhotias [of Baragau] as Baragaonlis ...’ (1975, p. 136). In the Nepali language the people of Baragau are referred to as *baragaule* (or *bhote*), but in the Thakali language they are called *towa*. In Tibetan *stod* means ‘upper’ and hence ‘western’ Tibet, and within Tibet, the inhabitants of western districts are called *stod pa*. 
There are no longer bonded labourers in Thak Khola, and the Towa are free to live and work wherever they like, but only few have returned to their ancestral village. In the past decades the general economic situation of the Towa has improved, and many have their own property in Thak Khola.

Culturally, the Towa form a heterogeneous group. They speak Baragau Tibetan or Thakali as their first language. Some refer to themselves as Gurung (as do the Tibetan-speaking people of Baragau), while others (especially in Thaksatsae) call themselves Thakali. The Towa of Thak Khola marry among themselves and with Tibetan-speaking villagers of Baragau.

The Tamang Thakali consider themselves superior to the Towa whom they call arangsi karangsi—a derogatory term for immigrants without property in Thak Khola.

Rhongta Khampa

The Rhongta Khampa are descendants of Tibetan traders who settled in Thak Khola several generations ago. According to local tradition, Tukce was originally inhabited by twelve Rhongta Khampa households known as khampa syusum cungngi. The Rhongta Khampa formerly paid taxes separately from the Thakali, and the group had its own headman-cum-tax collector (mukhiya). There is only one Rhongta Khampa household left in Tukce, but there are 19 households in Jomsom VDC.

The Rhongta Khampa speak Tibetan and refer to themselves as Rongta Khampa. To outsiders they identify themselves as Thakali, and only few are able to distinguish them because they dress like Thakali and speak fluent Thakali. The Rhongta Khampa are better off than the Towa and many have their own property.

51 In Nepal, it is more prestigious to be identified as ‘Gurung’ than as ‘Bhote’ (‘Tibetan’). Mananggi also use Gurung as surname; it used to get a few into the Gurkha regiments, and is said to have eased visa acquisition for travel out of Nepal (D. Messerschmidt, personal communication).

52 Khampa syusum cungngi, cf. Tib., bzhi gsum bcu gnyis, lit., ‘four (times) three (is) twelve’. In the Thakali language khampa refers to Tibetans in general, while the Tibetan name khams pa refers specifically to a person from Kham (Eastern Tibet). The Rhongta Khampas of Tukce may be related to the Tibetan speaking Khampas of Humla district. According to Rauber, two of the Khampa clan originate from Thak Khola (1980. p. 62). She mentions that around 1850 the number of Khampa households grew from six to twelve, and that these are referred to as khams pa bzhi gsum bcu gnyis (Tib.) (ibid, p. 66). This may not be correct because the term bzhi gsum bcu gnyis was used for the Rhongta Khampas in a petition submitted to the government in Kathmandu in 1833 by ‘Hiksum Tsungi (cf. Tib., bzhi gsum bcu gnyis; addition mine), a Khampa trader visiting Thak Khola for trade.’ (Regmi 1984b, p. 88; a copy of the petition is presented in Appendix 1).
Tangbetan

The Tangbetan homeland is Tangbe village in Baragau, five hours walk north of Thak Khola. The Tangbetan are descended from relatively recent migrants from neighbouring Manang District. The Tangbetan are ideally endogamous, and they have their own language, customs and cultural identity.

In Thak Khola the Tangbetan are found only in Jomsom where they form the largest single community. The first Tangbetan settled in Jomsom around the beginning of the twentieth century and are said to have been young men who did not want to live in a polyandrous household. Formerly, the Tangbetan worked for rich Thakali traders, but now most are financially independent.

The Jomsom Tangbetan speak Tangbetan as their first language. They have strong ties with Tangbe, including marriage relations. There have been cases of polyandry among the Jomsom Tangbetan.

Artisans

In 1977, there were a total of 99 artisan households in Thak Khola, namely 49 blacksmiths (kemi); 45 tailors (duli) and 5 shoemakers (sarki). The artisans have the lowest status in the Nepalese caste hierarchy and are classified as panī nacalnya choi chito halnuparnya; that is ‘water-unacceptable castes’ whose contact is thought to pollute so much that a higher caste person has to undergo a purification ceremony. They are therefore commonly known as ‘untouchables’. The Thakali refer to them as rhi mawa, ‘person of low descent.’ The blacksmiths and the shoemakers have equal status, and (by the reckoning of the artisan castes) rank higher than the tailor-musicians. Each of these castes is ideally endogamous. The artisans speak Nepali as their first language.

The artisans are engaged primarily in their traditional crafts. The blacksmith and tailor families have a group of clients for whom they traditionally work. Tailoring is done by men as well as women, while only men work as blacksmiths. Major work is done on a daily wage basis, others are paid on a piecework basis. Under the daily wage basis system the blacksmith and the tailor work in the client’s house, and as a part of the payment they receive daily meals. Food is also provided to the blacksmith’s assistant (his son, daughter or wife) who works the bellows, and they usually bring along smaller children, hoping that the client

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53 This conjecture on the origin of the Tangebetan was proposed by Gauchan and Vinding (1977, p. 101); see also Ramble and Seeber 1995 (p. 108).
54 Information on the Tangbetan is scarce. For a brief introduction, see Ramble and Seeber 1995.
may feed them too. The tailors and the blacksmiths receive an annual gift from their clients. In Syang this gift is given during the Torenla festival and comprises one kilo of buckwheat and ten small pieces of bread. The artisans may also receive a small portion of meat when clients slaughter an animal.

The tailors and the blacksmiths have a low income from their traditional occupations, and many supplement their income by working as casual labour for the Thakali. Blacksmiths also produce colour from limestone and earn an income white-washing houses. Finally, the tailors work as drummers at political meetings, marriages, and festivals and for these services they receive a small payment and food. Most artisan households own one or two small fields, but none does farming as their main occupation; in Chairo a blacksmith has, however, established a small apple orchard.

Besides a few shoemakers living permanently in Thak Khola, shoemakers from the south work temporarily in the valley, moving from village to village.

The artisans are believed to be a source of pollution to the Thakali. Consequently, Thakali do not eat food and drink water served by an artisan, and sexual contact is also forbidden. The artisans are barred from temples and the kitchens of Thakali houses. In the 1970s artisans working in Thakali houses sat in the open courtyard. However, in recent years some Thakali have started allowing their artisan servants inside their houses, even inside the kitchens. Some artisans work in hotels and serve food and water to foreigners.55

Magar and Chantel

The Magar speak a Tibeto-Burman language and are found mainly in the hills south of the Dhaulagiri mountains.56 The Chantel live in the hills south of Thak Khola where they are traditionally engaged in copper mining.57 The Chantel appear related to the Magar, but they speak Nepali or their own language which is related to Thakali.58 In Thak Khola the Magar and Chantel are found mainly in Kobang and

55 In a recent case (1995) a Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali woman who owns a hotel at Jomsom Airport had her artisan servant girl serve tea to her Thakali guests. None of the guests wanted to offend the host who is a prominent member of the Communist Party of Nepal, Unified Marxist-Leninist, (CPN/UML) and accepted the tea.


57 For the Chantel, see Michl 1974, and A. de Sales 1993.

58 The inclusion of Chantel in the Tamang Branch of the Bodish Section of the Bodic Division of the Tibeto-Burman languages was first suggested by Bovd Michailovsky (Mazaudon 1978, p. 158). Later, A. de Sales reported that the language of the Chantel 'is in fact a dialect of Thakali origin akin to that spoken in Thini in Mustang district' (1993, p. 93).
Kunjo VDC. The first Magar and Chantel are said to have come to Thak Khola to work as miners, but now they make a living as peasants and labourers.

**Tibetan Refugees**

In 1959 the 14th Dalai Lama and more than 100,000 of his fellow countrymen fled Tibet following the suppression of an uprising against the Chinese occupation.59 More than 1,000 Tibetans settled in the Mustang district, including many guerrillas (the so-called Khampas). From Mustang the guerrillas made raids into Tibet, but in 1974 the Nepalese Government put an end to this situation, and most of the refugees were resettled in Pokhara and Kathmandu.60 In Thak Khola the Government took over the refugee camp in Chairo and the military camp in Kaisang (near Thini). In 1975 the Red Cross built a new camp at Chairo which houses some 200 refugees whose main income is from carpet production and the sale of ‘Tibetan antiques’ to tourists.

**Temporary Residents**

An estimated 400 civil servants (mostly school teachers) work in Thak Khola, and there are also about 500 soldiers based in Jomsom and Kaisong. Most of the civil servants and all the soldiers are southern Nepalese who reside in Thak Khola on a temporary basis. Employment opportunities are better and salaries are higher in Thak Khola than in the hills further south, and hundreds of men from those areas are now working in Thak Khola as construction labourers, agricultural workers, servants and herdsmen. The temporary residents are almost exclusively men. The Thakali call them mon – people of the southern hills.

**THE NEIGHBOURING AREAS**

The hills south of Thak Khola have a subtropical climate, and the main crop is paddy. The population is heterogeneous and comprises Nepali-speaking castes (bahun, chetri and artisans) and various Tibeto-Burman speaking peoples, including Magar, Thakali, Gurung and Chantel.

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59 Numerous books have been written about Tibet. For the most complete study on the period leading up to the Chinese occupation of Tibet, see Goldstein 1989. For Tibet under Chinese occupation, see Smith 1996.

60 For the Tibetans in Mustang (and their CIA connection), see Peissel 1972 and Smith 1996, pp. 508–509.
The area immediately north of Thak Khola is known as Baragau. Baragau is culturally and linguistically divided into a northern and a southern part. The southern part comprises the Muktinath valley and the villages south of Kagbeni (including Kagbeni). The people of this area speak a Western Tibetan dialect and are culturally Tibetan.

North of Kagbeni are five villages, Tangbe, Tetang, Chusang, Gyaka and Chaile. The villages are together known as Shoyul, the people as Shopa and the language as sekai. The Shopa comprise several separate groups and the villagers speak various different dialects. North of Baragau is Lo, popularly known as Mustang. Lo was formerly an independent kingdom, but since the 1780s it has been a part of the Kingdom of Nepal. Until 1951 it formed a separate principality, ruled by a local king who was a tributary of the king of Nepal; at present Lo has no special status within the Kingdom of Nepal, but the king has retained the title of Maharaja. The people of Lo are called Lopa and speak a Western Tibetan dialect. Culturally, Lo is a part of Tibetan civilization.

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61 In Nepali bara gau means ‘the twelve villages’. This name is derived from an older Tibetan name yul kha bcu gnyis, which also mean ‘the twelve settlements’ (Schuh 1994, p. 43). Today, 19 settlements are found in the area – but there are many deserted settlements (Ramble and Seeber 1995).


63 The Baragau Tibetan dialect is ‘startlingly unlike’ the standard Central Tibetan language (Ramble 1984, p. 11).


65 These are the Nepali names for the five villages. In the Baragau Tibetan dialect the villages are known as Taye, Te, Tshug, Gyaga and Tsele, while in the local sekai language they are known as Tangbe, Timi, Tshugsang, Gyu/Gyuga and Tsangle (Ramble and Seeber 1995, p. 108).

66 Ramble and Seeber 1995, p. 108. Schuh has suggested that the name sekai (Tib., se skad) may be an abbreviation for se rib kyi skad (Tib.), ‘the language of Serib’ (1994, p. 10). For Serib, see Chapter III.; see also Ramble 1997.

67 Information on Shoyul is limited. The main contributions are by Ramble 1993, and Ramble and Seeber 1995.

68 The first time the word Mustang (Mustan) occurred is in a letter from Father Giuseppe da Gargnano dated 26 October 1759 (Peissel 1968, p. 276). The first publication which used the word Mustang (Moostang) is Kirkpatrick 1811.

69 The village Geling, which is located immediately south of Lo, is culturally a part of Lo but has traditionally been a separate political entity. The separation of Geling from the Kingdom of Lo appears to have happened in 1754 (Schuh 1994, p. 85).


71 The Thakali refer to the Lopa as lotan.

Chapter II
LIVING AMONG THE THAKALI

Fieldwork is vital to anthropology. It provides the raw material on which the theories are built; further, it is the experience gained in the field which enables anthropologists to understand other societies and cultures.

Fieldwork is, indeed, a very special experience. Usually it involves considerable hardship but also great pleasure. There exist only general guidelines on how to conduct fieldwork, and in the field the anthropologist has to find his/her own way through trial and error. This chapter describes how I tried to find my way among the Thakali.¹

THE INITIATION (1972)

I started to study anthropology in 1969 at the University of Copenhagen under (the late) Professor Johannes Nicolaisen. In 1970 I decided to travel overland to Nepal which then was believed to be the lost Shangrila and a heaven for hippies and young travellers on shoe-string budgets. Besides yearning to see exotic places and peoples, I hoped to identify an area or a people for my future specialization. In Nepal I was fascinated by the Tibetan refugees, and when I returned to Denmark I took courses in Tibetan language and culture under (the late) Professor Erik Haarh. The following year I took a B.A. in anthropology. I felt that the time had now come for me to go to the field – to be a real anthropologist.

Tibet was then closed to foreigners and I decided to study the Tibetan-speaking people of Dolpo district in Nepal. Nicolaisen and Haarh supported the

¹ The first part of the present chapter has been published in Vinding 1994a.
idea, and it was agreed that my study should focus on pastoral nomadism. I consulted Dr. phil. Jesper Trier who had been to Nepal several times to study traditional Nepalese paper. He informed me that Dolpo was a restricted area and suggested instead that I should study the Thakali of the Thak Khola valley.

In the following months I attended lectures on fieldwork techniques by Professor Nicolaisen, or ‘Nic’ as he was known to his students and friends. ‘Nic’ was the fieldworker par excellence, and his influence on my approach to fieldwork has been immense. I also read the articles which had been published on the Thakali. From these I gathered that no anthropologist had lived in Thak Khola for more than one year, and that there existed no detailed information on Thakali society and culture.

I was 21 years old when I arrived in Nepal in January 1972. My budget for eight months fieldwork was US$2,000. ‘Nic’ and Haarh had talked the Danish Research Council for the Humanities into funding half of the budget while I financed the other half myself.

In Kathmandu I went to the Ministry of Home Affairs in order to obtain a research and residence permit. I met with a senior official to whom I explained that the purpose of my visit was to study nomadism, and, since Dolpo was the only district in Nepal where nomadism was found, I would like to go there. He did not directly tell me that Dolpo was closed to foreigners, but in a most disarming way he said that it would be difficult and would take a very long time to obtain a permit. Instead, he advised me to choose another place to study nomadism – for example Pokhara or Kathmandu! This was how I was introduced to the subtle art of saying ‘no’ in Nepal. Moreover, that was how the Thakali came to be ‘my’ people.

There was no reason to study pastoral nomadism in Thak Khola since it is only of minor importance to the locals. Considering the lack of basic ethnographic information and given my interests, I decided to prepare to write a monograph on the Thakali.

I obtained a research permit for Thak Khola within a fortnight, and through a trekking agency I hired a young Sherpa called Pemba to help me through the first difficult months. A few days later we flew to Pokhara, the starting point of our journey (the road from Kathmandu to Pokhara was then under construction).

It took us six days to walk to Thak Khola. The towering mountains stood majestic against the azure sky, and as we walked through the valley I was amazed.

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2 See Trier 1972.
3 Professor Nicolaisen, who died in 1980 at the age of 59 years did not write much about his fieldwork among the Tuaregs, except for one excellent article (Nicolaisen 1978). For his obituaries, see Ferdinand 1980 and 1981.
by the abrupt change in the vegetation from the lush green forests in the south to the greyish-brown, semi-desert in the north.

At Marpha we stopped at a small house to visit Pasang Kambache Sherpa, a friend of Pemba’s. Pasang had accompanied Professor David Snellgrove on his famous journey in the Nepal Himalayas in 1956. Snellgrove had taken Pasang to Europe where he stayed for more than a decade, including several years in France studying horticulture. There Pasang had met King Mahendra, who had requested him to return to Nepal to develop horticulture, and that was how Pasang ended up in this remote corner of the kingdom. Although he had persuaded only a few progressive farmers to plant apples, Pasang was convinced that one day Thak Khola would be covered with fruit trees. The future was to prove him right.

Marpha is a most pleasant village. The Japanese monk Kawaguchi, who visited the valley in 1900, was the first foreigner to praise its beauty. Today Thak Khola is visited by several thousand trekkers a year and most feel that Marpha is the jewel of the Nepal Himalayas. The village consists of neat whitewashed houses, situated next to green fields and orchards. The main street is surprisingly clean for a Nepalese village. Even in 1972 there were a few good inns in Marpha, and Pemba tried his utmost to persuade me to take residence there. Dr. Trier, however, had advised me to stay in Syang which he had found more traditional than Marpha.

On a biting, cold morning (5 February 1972) we left Marpha, reaching the fields of Syang an hour later. We climbed slowly up to the village, which is situated on a small plateau 100 metres above the fields. Except for a small cow which was chewing a rag, the village seemed deserted. The narrow lanes were littered with bones, horns, discarded shoes and clothes. It started to snow. I remembered Marpha and began to wonder whether Syang was an ideal location after all.

Fortunately, we met a man who took us to his sister’s inn. We went through an open courtyard with animals and entered a small smoke-filled kitchen. The women served us Tibetan butter-and-salt tea which tasted peculiar, but felt good to my frozen body.

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5 Kawaguchi describes the residence of the local headman, ‘... the windows of the front room commanded a charming view of a peach orchard ...’. Five or six hundred yards beyond his residence was the Kaliganga river, gliding serenely along with a fresh green wall of small pine-trees to set off its waters. Towering behind and above the emerald grove stood a range of snow-capped peaks, the tout ensemble making a view delightful for its primitive joys and natural beauty’ (Kawaguchi 1909, pp. 64-65). C. von Fürer-Haimendorf was equally delighted when he visited Marpha in 1962: ‘Indeed, Marpha offers a most pleasant contrast to the dirty streets and lanes of Tukche’ (1989, p. 87).
Several men dropped in for a glass of alcohol and a chat. The atmosphere was warm and congenial. I took a liking to the place and the people, and I made up my mind in favour of Syang. It was not an objective choice, but since I had no research hypothesis to test, I did not have to select a village which fulfilled certain objective criteria.

Through Pemba I told the villagers that I would like to spend some time in their village and asked whether there was a house for rent. The villagers, who were not accustomed to foreigners staying in their village, became a little suspicious. To avoid a lengthy explanation, I said that I liked the village and intended to study the Thakali language. This answer appeared to satisfy them and after some discussion they took us to a vacant house. The house had only one room and a kitchen, but it was suitable for me and within half an hour I had finalized a deal with the landlord.

As we were leaving the village we saw a funeral procession. My first thought was to follow the procession, but since I did not know how the villagers would react to my presence I decided against it. On the way back to Marpha I wondered whether the funeral had been a bad omen: later I came to know that in Nepal funeral processions are, in fact, considered auspicious.

As soon as Pemba and I had moved into our house villagers came to see who we were and to inquire as to the purpose of our stay in Syang. Some villagers were merely curious, but others seemed a bit anxious about our presence. This did not surprise me: in close-knit peasant communities villagers are often suspicious of outsiders.

I explained that the people in my country had very little knowledge about Thak Khola, as the Thakali had about my country. I had come to Thak Khola to find out about their culture and traditions so that my countrymen could come to know about the Thakali. One villager who was obviously more suspicious than the others asked why I had chosen to live in Syang and not one of the other villages. I explained that I had visited several villages in Thak Khola, and that I found Syang particularly friendly and the food very tasty (I should also have mentioned the water, but at the time I was not aware how much the people of Syang value the quality of their water). This explanation satisfied most villagers, but they never really understood why I spent my time and money living in their village.

During the first week I made a map of the village. With the help of a young man with whom we had become friendly, I also prepared a list of the households and their composition. In the beginning, I proceeded with caution and asked only general questions. Fortunately, shortly after our arrival a major festival (Torenla) took place. It lasted for several days, and there were archery contests.

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6 For the Torenla festival, see Chapter XIII.
and games of cards which continued through the night. These activities were accompanied by a huge consumption of beer and spirit. Pemba and I joined the villagers in the festivities, and the festival thus became a good occasion to come to know the villagers. Things, however, nearly went wrong one night when Pemba, under the strong influence of alcohol, almost got into a fist-fight with a villager over a game of cards.

Before my arrival in Syang I had planned to live with a family in order to be in close contact with the villagers. I had to select a family with much care, because once I had moved into their house it would be very difficult to move out again. Close to our place was an inn where the food and the beer were excellent; moreover, the owner was a very pleasant and knowledgeable priest who always had time to answer my questions. One day I asked him whether I could live in his house. He accepted – on the condition that I behaved well.

Six weeks after my arrival I moved into his house and Pemba returned to Kathmandu. I was given a room on the roof which was reached by a ladder constructed of a single piece of timber with notches cut for steps. The room served as store-cum-guestroom and contained a bed, some wooden boxes for storage, and a small altar where my landlord made daily offerings and kept religious texts and ritual instruments. The room had a small window which was shuttered in the winter. That was a great shame because the room would have provided a magnificent view of the Niligiri and Tilicho mountains. At first I covered the window with transparent plastic sheets, but later I installed a pane.

My landlord was comfortably off, but not among the richest in the village. Fate had been cruel to him: in the past decade he had lost his parents, wife, and two sons. His household consisted of his youngest daughter, and two sons and a daughter of his deceased brother (his eldest daughter had recently married and left the household).

My daily work was planned mainly according to the current activities in the village. During harvest I collected information on agriculture, during funeral ceremonies information on death, and so on. However, I would also identify a subject on which I lacked information, and for the next few days I concentrated on that particular subject.

Besides Thakali, most villagers in Syang speak Nepali and Tibetan; however, in 1972 none spoke English. I decided to learn Thakali rather than Nepali (which is the lingua franca of Nepal) because without knowledge of the language one cannot, I believe, really understand a culture. Moreover, people...
appreciate an outsider who takes the trouble of learning their language, and they are more likely to treat him as insider rather than an outsider. Finally, valuable information can be obtained by listening to village gossip and arguments.

There exists no textbook on the Thakali language, and I therefore had to learn it the natural way. My landlord and his family were very helpful and patiently taught me the Thakali words for various objects. After a few months I had mastered sufficient Thakali to conduct simple conversations, but not long formal interviews. I partly made up for that by interviewing English-speaking Thakali informants in Jomsom and Marpha.

Formal and informal interviews are the most important means of data collection in the field, but valuable data can also be collected through observations. During my stay there were several funerals and through careful observations I collected detailed information on Thakali death ceremonies. In order not to look too conspicuous I took no notes or indoor photographs while attending the ceremonies, but as soon as there was a break I would withdraw to a corner and jot down my observations.

Initially I conducted informal interviews with a great number of villagers and was able to identify those who gave the most satisfactory answers to my questions. These became my key informants; that is, the informants from whom I collected the bulk of information. They included ritual specialists, political leaders, teachers, and other knowledgeable persons.

One of my key informants was the chief village priest. I first found him to be a man of few words and with little knowledge of Buddhism. It was only later that I came to know that he had purposely played ignorant to size me up. Later I used the same tactic myself to test informants.

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serious anthropologists seem to acknowledge, namely the ability to understand the language of the people amongst whom one works' (1965a, p. 204). While Professor Snellgrove did make a valid point (C. von Führer-Haimendorf did not speak Nepali or Thakali), some anthropologists believe that he came down unnecessarily hard on Professor C. von Führer-Haimendorf. For a more balanced review, see Snellgrove 1965b.

Snellgrove’s contributions to the ethnography of Tichurong (Dolpo district) have been sharply criticized by the American anthropologist James F. Fisher. ‘The English Tibetologist David Snellgrove devotes half a chapter to Tichurong in Himalayan Pilgrimage. Although this publication records for the first time the Tibetan name for this region, the rest of the information is so inaccurate that it would be pointless to recite the encyclopedia of errors it contains’ (1986, p. 210).

When Dr. Ramble first arrived in Lubra in Baragau in 1981, he decided against speaking in Nepali because ‘this would mark me more surely and permanently than anything else as an outsider’ (1984, p. 11).
There were other problems with regards to interviews, besides my limited command of the Thakali language. When I visited informants they were often not at home (even when I had made appointments beforehand), or they would be too busy to concentrate on my questions.

I took my meals together with my host family and we ate the same food, namely buckwheat porridge for lunch, and rice and lentil soup (*dal bhat*) for dinner. At that time I was a vegetarian, and when the others were served meat, I was given a vegetable curry. My landlord's daughter was an excellent cook, and during my stay in Syang I never really missed Western food.

Drinking water was taken directly from Syang river. It originates in the mountains, and villagers believe it to be exceptionaly good. Since there are no settlements above Syang there was little risk of the water being polluted, and I never had stomach disorder during my stay. Except for a bad cold, I was spared from sicknesses.

I had a supply of medicine with me. When the villagers came to know about that they started to approach me with all sorts of ailments. Initially, I helped them as best as I could. However, I realized that this was not a sustainable solution and that the villagers had to learn to use the hospital in Jomsom which was only 25 minutes walk away. I started, therefore, to advise the villagers to seek assistance at the hospital and in more serious cases I took them there myself.

My landlord ran a small inn. The household distilled spirits almost daily and there was plenty of hot water. I arranged a sort of a shower stall in which a boy would pour hot water over me from the roof. It was a pretty cold affair in winter and I managed to take a shower only once a month, but in summer I was a frequent visitor at a hot spring close to Syang river.

Fieldwork is, however, not so much a physical as it is a psychological test. Anthropologists come to know not only the societies they are studying, but also themselves. The psychological problems commonly arise due mainly to lack of privacy, loneliness and lack of progress in the research work. Although the basic idea of fieldwork is to live in close contact with the informants, everybody needs to be alone on occasion. Anthropologists often find little or no privacy. Fortunately, I never faced that problem, because I had my own room where I could withdraw.

The problems of lack of privacy and loneliness do not contradict each other. Although anthropologists are more or less constantly surrounded by people, they may at times feel lonely, because there is no one with a similar background to discuss art, literature, politics, etc. Loneliness never really became a problem because in 1972 I stayed in the field only for six months. Whenever I wanted to have a real talk I would visit an American Peace Corps volunteer in
Jomsom. Also, shortly after my arrival in Syang I got myself a puppy which became an excellent companion. When I left Thak Khola Pasang Sherpa was happy to take care of her.

In 1972 most of the men in Syang wore Tibetan boots and coats in the winter. One day I had an urge to ‘go native’ and acquired local dress and boots. To my surprise the villagers did not think that the dress suited me. Moreover, they could not understand why I wanted to wear a local dress when I had good Western clothes (which already then had become a status symbol). Soon I was back in my normal clothes which, after all, proved to be more practical.

Thakali place great emphasis on status and at gatherings such as weddings and religious ceremonies, people are seated according to status. In 1972 I was only 21 years old and at formal gatherings I was not invited to sit among the elder and respected men, but could join the young men of my own age. I did not mind that since it was more fun and, more importantly, I could freely move around and observe what went on.

In evenings men used to gather at a small square in the centre of Syang for a chat. Thakali like to joke and I soon found out that as a fieldworker it is important to have a good sense of humour and to be able to give tit for tat.

During fieldwork it is important sometimes to forget about data collection and just relax. Many anthropologists relax by reading the novels they never had time to read earlier. I relaxed by playing volleyball and walking in the mountains with my dog. Once a week I went to Jomsom to collect mail and to visit the Peace Corps volunteer. In 1972 there was only a single house at Jomsom airfield. Some Tibetan refugees ran an inn there. Although food in Syang was excellent, it was nice to get a bowl of Tibetan noodle soup for a change.

I also visited other surrounding villages. Villagers would ask me where I was going, and to make fun they would mimic the question in the Syang dialect. In Marpha children would call me ‘white person’ (mhi dar) and syangtan napla—a nickname given by the people of Marpha to those from Syang.

Although anthropologists may collect much information at the beginning of a period of fieldwork, there comes a time when most feel that they have not really achieved much. This is a major problem especially for anthropologists who are in the field the first time. So it was for me. Many anthropologists mention a sudden breakthrough. I waited for this breakthrough and as time went by, I feared it would never come. However, after some time I realized that I was gradually collecting more and more data and that I had to stay up late to write notes; this was reassuring.

In addition to my research, I had an agreement with Moesgaard Museum in Aarhus, Denmark, to collect ethnographica from Nepal. In Syang I purchased
more than 100 items, including clothes, shoes, kitchen utensils, agricultural tools, etc. I tried my best to explain what the things were going to be used for in Denmark, but nobody really understood.9

My stay in Thak Khola lasted six months, as planned. Anthropologists seem to be more prone to culture shock when they return to their native country than on arrival in the field. I was no exception. Having understood the values – but certainly also the problems – of life in a Himalayan village, I found life in Denmark a bit dull.

THE MAIN FIELDWORK (1975–78)

I returned to Nepal in July 1975 and this time I was better prepared. With sufficient funds at my disposal I could afford a tape recorder and a good camera. I was also much better prepared professionally, since I had a more detailed knowledge of anthropological methodology and theories, as well as the literature on the Himalayas.

When I arrived in Nepal, Mustang district was closed following a clean-out operation in 1974 by the Royal Nepal Army against the Tibetan guerrillas in the district. Rumours had it that Thak Khola would soon reopen, but eventually I had to wait more than one year in Kathmandu.

There are more than a hundred Tamang Thakali households in Kathmandu. The Kathmandu Thakali are mainly businessmen, and most of the young people are well-educated and speak English. Shortly after my arrival I met a young Thakali who told me an interesting story on the history of the Tamang Thakali. When I asked him for more details, he advised me to contact Mr. Narendra Gauchan who, he said, was the authority on the subject. I went to see Mr. Gauchan who had a small hotel in the center of town. When I told him the purpose of my visit, to my great pleasure he agreed to explain the histories (rhab) of the Thakali clans. The following eight months I spent a few hours each morning with Mr. Gauchan and his son Surendra studying the rhab. This exercise greatly improved my knowledge of Thakali language and culture.

In winter some 35 per cent of the population in Syang migrate to the hills south of Thak Khola. The women run small inns along the major highways and trails.

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9 Some years later a group of villagers from Syang visited Kathmandu. I took the opportunity to show them a museum so they could understand where the things I had bought in 1972 had ended. The visit was a success, except that the villagers complained that the things I had bought had been too old and not of good quality. In 1993 a small ethnographic museum was opened in Jomsom with Japanese assistance.
while men and mules transport goods from the roadheads to the bazaars in the hinterland. In order to obtain information on this seasonal migration I joined some friends from Syang who were transporting goods from Naudanda in Syangja District (south of Pokhara) to Beni. I also spent some weeks visiting the women in their inns. The inns provide travellers with food and accommodation, and those at the bus stops are also nightspots for those who want to relax and drink. During my stay in the inns I lost many a night’s sleep due to drunkards who could not take no for an answer. Once I was even close to a fight, but fortunately my hostess intervened and saved me. This was, indeed, very different from fieldwork in Thak Khola.

On my way back to Kathmandu from that fieldtrip the bus I was travelling on stopped at Pokhara airport. In an inn belonging to a woman from Syang I was informed that my ‘father’ and ‘sister’ (my landlord and his daughter) had just arrived by plane from Jomsom. I collected my belongings from the bus and went to meet them. My father was very touched and praised the gods that we were both alive. Together with some other villagers they were on a pilgrimage to Kathmandu to receive blessing from a high Tibetan lama who was spending the winter in Bodhnath (near Kathmandu).

My ‘sister’ had never been out of Thak Khola before and like so many other Nepalese she saw and flew an aeroplane before she had even seen or driven in a car. The flight from Jomsom to Pokhara lasts only twenty minutes and was over before she had time to be frightened, but the seven-hour bus ride to Kathmandu proved to be an ordeal. Having never travelled in a motor vehicle before, my ‘sister’ was petrified and sick throughout the journey. She was exhausted and very relieved when we eventually arrived in Kathmandu.

In Kathmandu I shared a small house with an old friend from Denmark. Although the space was limited, we managed to accommodate my ‘father’ and ‘sister’, and three other villagers. They stayed with us for more than a month, which gave me ample opportunity to go over questions which had arisen from my 1972 material.

It was fascinating to observe them adapt to city life. For them Kathmandu was strange and dangerous, but also captivating. For villagers the most frightening thing about Kathmandu is the traffic. Unable to figure out how it operates, they believe that their best chance is to run across the streets as fast as possible. So whenever we had to cross a street, we all held hands and I would lead them across. Food was another problem. They cooked all their meals at home but missed their daily Tibetan tea very much. I took them to restaurants, but my ‘sister’ usually did not dare to touch the food.

In February my friends left Kathmandu and I gave up my house and moved into a house of a German friend and his Nepalese wife. That spring Thak Khola
did not open as expected, and to add to my misery I contracted hepatitis and was confined to bed for a month. I was low spirited and decided to return to Denmark if Thak Khola did not open in the autumn.

At this crucial time I met Bina who later became my wife. To my surprise I realized that there was more to life than the Thakali. I got my good spirits and health back, and after a few months the Government finally reopened Thak Khola to foreigners.

In September 1976 I trekked up to Thak Khola. It was wonderful to return to Syang. Most villagers seemed truly pleased to see me back. I think this was partly because they knew that I had helped several villagers in Kathmandu, but more importantly, my return proved to them that I had enjoyed my previous stay. This time nobody asked why I had come to live in Syang.

At the house my ‘father’ had my old room cleaned and my luggage brought up. Neither of us ever considered the possibility of my living elsewhere. By now I knew that I would return to this house many times in the future, and to make my stay more comfortable I installed a pane, and added a cupboard, a desk, and a chair to my meagre inventory. I had no intention of playing the ‘tough anthropologist’ and brought with me a comfortable mattress from Kathmandu.

There were other things which made my stay more pleasant now than in 1972. Bina, who was working as an airhostess, sent a regular supply of pipe tobacco and magazines with colleagues flying to Jomsom. Moreover, in 1976–77 several tourist hotels opened in Marpha and Jomsom, offering hot showers and Western food. I seldom ate at the hotels, but it was reassuring to know that I had an alternative. By now I was no longer a vegetarian, and I looked forward to my daily meals, especially when yakmeat was on the menu.

Although I was now able to speak and understand a great deal of Thakali, I decided to hire an assistant to help me with formal interviews, to assist in a survey, and to copy records from Government offices and villages. I was introduced to Krishnalal Thakali, a high school teacher from Jomsom. Krishnalal was an intelligent, young man whose family originated from Thini, and he was eager to learn more about his own society and culture.

The first month I spent many hours explaining to Krishnalal about anthropology, the purpose of my research, and especially about interview techniques. To ensure that he became a part of the solution to my problems and not a part of the problem, I made the following points clear with regard to interview techniques. First, I wanted him to give me the informants’ answers to my questions, not his own. Second, the questions should not lead the informants with the answers; for example, we should ask, ‘Which crops do you take in winter?’, not ‘Do you take wheat and barley in winter?’ Third, the rechecking of answers did not imply that I did
not trust him and the informants. Fourth, it was important to be patient with informants, and to show old people respect even if they were not good informants. Finally, I expected him to follow leads which he thought were of importance to my research.

There were many advantages in employing a local person as research assistant; Krishnalal knew about past and present conflicts, local gossip, the financial situation of villagers, etc. Moreover, he had a network of contacts in other villages which proved very useful when we visited them. Finally, he spoke the local language and during interviews informants were thus able to speak in their own language. There may, however, also be disadvantages. A local assistant may feel caught between the anthropologist and fellow villagers who may want to hide certain facts from the anthropologist. Moreover, a local cannot spend as much time with the anthropologist as an outsider who is separated from his family. Finally, a local assistant may have strained relationships with some fellow villagers and the anthropologist may, therefore, be deprived from using some potentially important informants. Fortunately, these problems never arose in the case of Krishnalal.10

Krishnalal was a fast learner and was soon working with a minimum of supervision. When two people work closely together there are bound to be occasional misunderstandings, but Krishnalal and I resolved ours, and he became not only an excellent assistant but also a good friend.11

I spent the next 15 months in Thak Khola, but thanks to the air service from Jomsom I managed a few short visits to Kathmandu. I collected data on all aspects of Thakali culture and society, covering not only Syang but the entire Thak Khola valley. Information was collected through observation, listening, and informal and formal interviews. I obtained copies of various records from Government offices in Jomsom as well as of local historical documents. I also conducted a survey among a sample of 121 households.

Although I lived in Syang, I made frequent trips to other villages. My knowledge of the culture and society in Syang made it easy for me to check the validity of the data I obtained in other villages. Most of the data were obtained from key

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10 For the role of assistants, see Berreman 1972.
11 Krishnalal stopped working as my assistant when I left Thak Khola in 1978. Later he worked for several other anthropologists, including Sidney Schuler, Reinhard Greve and Susanne von der Heide. To employ a person who has worked for another anthropologist in the same area is, of course, a short-cut to valuable information, but there is a danger that the research may become based on the same informants and that information may be 'filtered' in the same way. At one time Krishnalal contemplated studying anthropology, but eventually decided to become a politician. In 1995 he became a member of the National Assembly, nominated by His Majesty King Birendra.
informants, many of whom were village elders. Some went out of their way to help me. Once an informant even told me that since I was writing a book on the Thakali, it was his duty as a Thakali to assist me and to provide me with correct information. The collection of kinship terms for distant relatives usually caused some confusion, but this informant would sit in deep concentration and would carefully go over his answers twice before replying.

High caste Hindu villages are usually divided into factions, and if an anthropologist makes friends with one, he is unlikely to make friends among the others. Villagers in Thak Khola are not divided into factions, but there are, as in all societies, some families who are not on good terms with one another. However, I never really felt my close relations with one or another family to be an impediment in my research.

I spent the days collecting information, and when other household members had gone to bed I typed my notes on a small portable typewriter. A copy of the notes was sent to Bina as a safety measure. The notes included the name of the informant (written in code), the date and place of the interview, and the main topics for easy reference. Confidential information was written in Danish to prevent misuse.

Fieldwork is a two-way process and sometimes the roles get reversed. Informants were also interested to know about my family and customs in Denmark; I had expected this and had brought photographs of my family. My friends were sad to learn that my father had expired shortly after my return to Denmark in 1972 and a few years later they were deeply shocked when I informed them about my mother's remarriage. Most villagers had only vague ideas about life in the West and were impressed when I told them about machines which could harvest, thresh and winnow an area as big as all the fields in Syang in one day. Once, when I described about how much milk a Danish cow produced, one informant asked about the price, and after a few calculations he wanted to know whether such cows were for sale in Nepal!

Many inquired about my personal finances. I provided the information they asked for, just as I expected them to answer my questions. They considered me very rich when I told them about my research grant, and to give a more balanced picture I explained about high prices and taxes in Denmark.

One of my best informants in Thaksatsae was an unusually wise and witty old widow whom other villagers feared for her sharp tongue. To me she has always personified Mom Lhasarphi of the Tulacan clan story. Whenever I

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12 Srinivas has noted that 'factionalism is widespread if not universal in rural India and it constitutes a big hurdle to fieldwork (and perhaps, more importantly, to development) ...' (1979, p. 24).

13 For the Tulacan clan story, see Vinding 1992.
interviewed her I soon became the informant. When I told her that we usually
bury our dead, she asked whether we were Muslims and if we also married our
sisters (to the Thakali marriage with father’s brother’s daughter is considered to
be incestuous). When I told her that we kept the corpse in a freezer for some days
before burial, she exclaimed, ‘It’s good that I shall die in Thak Khola!’

It is important that the anthropologist behaves correctly and observes lo-
cal customs in order not to offend the people among whom he or she lives. For
example, I made offerings when I visited temples, and whenever I met a lama I
bowed my head to receive his blessing. Also, whenever I was presented a cup of
local liquor, I dipped the tip of my ring finger of my right hand into the cup three
times and sprinkled a few drops on the floor as a libation before drinking, fol-
lowing local custom. Further, I would not crack dirty jokes when my ‘father’ and
other elders were present. Also, I would rather miss a good photograph than risk
offending somebody.

Srinivas has observed that ‘an anthropologist should collect gossip, not be
its object.’14 I tried my best to live up to this advice because if I did not I felt I
would spoil it not only for myself, but also for future researchers in Thak Khola.
There are two kind of realities: what has actually happened and what people be-
lieve has happened. So whenever I had a female guest staying overnight, I would
make a point of sleeping in a separate room.

I had several friends in Syang and neighbouring villages, but the relation-
ship with the family with whom I was staying was unique. I insisted on paying a
fixed daily amount for food and accommodation. When I asked my ‘father’ how
much I should pay, he told me to decide myself. I kept a record and gave my ‘fa-
ther’ money whenever he needed some. I paid him reasonably well, but it
definitely did not make him a rich man.

The members of ‘my’ household treated me like a family member. If I
wanted a cup of tea I would help myself in the kitchen. The household altar was
situated in my room, and some evenings I was asked to empty the cups with of-
fering water and light a butterlamp to the gods. I used the appropriate kinship
terms or personal names to address the members of the household, while they,
irrespective of age, called me Michael.

Many anthropologists claim that during fieldwork they were adopted as a son
(or daughter) into the family with whom they were staying. I had – and still have
– close relations with ‘my’ family, but it would be wrong to say that I was ‘adopted’
into the family. First, I was not a member of the household in an economic sense,
but a paying houseguest. Second, even though I called the head of the household

14 Srinivas, op. cit., p. 27
'father', I never bowed down in respect to him, neither did he expect me to do so. In short, I did not have the rights and obligations of a household member.

Due to a fortunate incident I became very popular in Syang. The village is situated on a small plateau some 100 metres above the river from which the villagers fetched their water. For many years the villagers had unsuccessfully requested local politicians to install a drinking water supply system. During a trip to Kathmandu I discussed the matter with H.K. Kuløy, then UNICEF Representative to Nepal and Bhutan. He promised to supply the necessary materials and to pay the cost of transportation if the villagers would provide unskilled labour on a voluntary basis. I gave him my word, and a few months later the UN airplane landed in Jomsom with the materials and some technicians to supervise construction. The villagers willingly provided voluntary labour and the project was completed within three weeks. Some villagers requested personal taps right next to their houses, but I politely refused. Needless to say, the villagers were extremely happy and later arranged a formal function in the courtyard of the village temple to thank me. It was now apparent that I had connections in Kathmandu and later villagers from Baragau contacted Krishnalal to ask for my help.

I left Thak Khola in December 1977 and a few months later Bina and I married. I felt that I had left Thak Khola prematurely due to my marriage, but on the other hand it was appropriate to stop data collection and to start working on the extensive material which I had already collected. I made three more trips to Thak Khola before our departure from Nepal in July 1978. One of these was our honeymoon. My friends in Thak Khola knew about my marriage and were excited to see my bride. Bina, who had never lived in rural Nepal before, fell in love with Thak Khola and soon made friends with some local women.

CLOSING THE GAPS (1980–81)

Back in Denmark I got a research post at the University of Copenhagen. As a part of the research I worked on my Thakali field material and published several articles. The field material consisted of more than 600 pages of typed notes, photographs, tape recordings and copies of historical documents, and at times I blamed myself for not having selected a well-defined and limited research problem, as suggested by my supervisors back in 1972.

Once every twelve years the Tamang Thakali celebrate the *tha phewa* festival. In order to attend this festival, but also to recheck some information, I returned to Thak Khola in November 1980 for a five-month stay.
This visit provided my best fieldwork. During a period of only five months I was able to recheck and update most of my old material and collect much new data. This was possible because I knew exactly what to go for and where to get it. For example, to check my material on the political organization in Marpha, I sat with my old key informants and went through a list of questions which I had prepared in Denmark.

Bina had visited Thak Khola briefly in 1978, but the 1980–81 trip was her first fieldwork. I was, of course, a bit anxious about how she would take it, but fortunately she enjoyed it as much as I did. She spent many hours alone with Thakali women, and thus was able to provide me with valuable information which I would otherwise not have had access to. In addition, she functioned as a translator (in Nepali) whenever I failed to manage on my own.

REVISITS

From 1981 to 1986 I worked in Kathmandu for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the International Labour Organization (ILO). In winter we often had visitors from Thak Khola. Initially, I was concerned that my new life would intimidate my friends. They knew that I worked in a big office, lived in a nice house and had my own car, but fortunately their initial shyness disappeared as soon as we sat down and talked about Thak Khola and viewed my slides from there. I sensed that my Thakali friends were pleased to see that fate had been good to me. Some girls even told Bina that in Thak Khola I had been poorly dressed and not at all good looking, but now they found me attractive.

In addition to these visitors, I kept contact with a few old friends from Thak Khola who now lived in Kathmandu. Krishnalal had been nominated member of the Remote Area Development Committee. Nar Bahadur Hirachan, an old friend from Marpha, had become a member of the National Assembly and was later appointed Assistant Minister. And Palindra Thakali who was a young school boy when I first met him in Syang in 1972 and whom I had taught English, now studied animal health and development at Tribhuvan University. We spent many evenings together going over my material from Syang.

In those years I visited Thak Khola several times (1983, 1984 and 1985). Although the purpose of these visits was to relax and visit friends, I was soon back in the old role of an anthropologist, so I decided not to carry a note book. Thak Khola is a great place to work, but it is also a great place to spend a holiday.

Since my first stay in Syang I had paid my ‘father’ a fixed daily rate for my food, but during our later visits my ‘father’ would not accept any payment.
Although I had expected that this eventually would happen, I was deeply touched when he refused my money. Needless to say, I now consider his house my second home.

During my visits to Thak Khola I noticed how much the valley had changed since 1972. When I first came to Syang in 1972 the villagers seemed generally poor and ‘backward’, but now the general living standard and quality of life had improved. I was not the only one to notice this. One old women told Bina that when I had first come to Syang there had been no water in the village, the villagers had been uneducated and poor, and they dressed in old rags. This had all changed. I had, she claimed, been like the goddess of fortune (laksmi) to Syang and my ‘family’.

More than a hundred Thakali households live in Kathmandu and I socialized with several families. The Thakali of Kathmandu are, in general, an affluent and well-educated group. Some of their problems are familiar to a Westerner: middle class families complained about how difficult it was to maintain the standard of living (or to find money for a video recorder), while one of the biggest and most successful businessmen complained that his sons were idlers who took no interest in the family business.

In the traditional field situation there are many contrasts between the anthropologist and the people whom he or she studies: educated/uneducated, rich/poor, modern/traditional, urban/rural, etc. During my life with the Thakali of Kathmandu the roles were sometimes reversed. For example, the person who first introduced me to personal computers was a young Thakali (who had established the first computer company in Nepal), and, when I later joined a course in computer software, the teacher was a Thakali woman. Once a Thakali friend asked me to take his watch to Denmark for repair—it was a solid gold Rolex. In 1984 the Thakali Youth Association in Kathmandu invited Dr. M.C. Regmi, Dr. Don Messerschmidt and myself to a seminar on Thakali society and culture. That day it was the Thakali who asked me questions about their society and culture.

Since 1986 I have visited Thak Khola several times (1988, 1990, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1997 and 1998). Major changes have taken place. In 1972 there was only a small Tibetan inn at Jomsom airport, but now there are hotels with attached bathrooms and satellite TV. My elder ‘sister’s’ son, who was born immediately before my first visit in 1972, is now working in Malaysia (scores of other Thakali are working in Korea and Japan).

In autumn 1992 I received a letter from my ‘brother-in-law’ that my ‘father’ had passed away. When the daughter of an expired Thakali meets a close relative who has not been present at the funeral she is supposed to weep as a sign of mourning. Although I am close to my ‘sister’ I was uncertain how she would re-
act when I arrived in Syang in the spring 1993. But when she saw me she threw herself into my arms and started to weep and in the traditional sad tune she expressed her grief. For the next half an hour or so we sat around the fireplace weeping and consoling one another about our mutual loss.
Chapter III

THE HISTORY OF THE THAK KHOLA VALLEY

In the past decade several studies – archaeological excavations and studies of written and oral records – have been undertaken on the history of Mustang and it is among the best recorded of Nepal’s 75 districts. The first part of this chapter attempts to compose a picture of the early history of Mustang district while the second part examines the history of Thak Khola after the foundation of modern Nepal in the late 18th century.

PREHISTORIC TIMES

One of the most interesting features of Mustang district are the numerous caves which are seen in the soft conglomeratic cliffs. The caves are situated high above the rivers and are extremely difficult to reach.

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2 The present chapter is based on Vinding 1988. Information has been revised and updated to take into account the findings of recent studies.

3 When the caves were first constructed they were accessible from the front side. Later, landslides cut away the front part of the caves, making them impossible to reach (except with modern mountaineering equipment).
The first foreigner to mention the caves was Professor Tucci who visited the area in 1952:

"From this place [Tukce] upwards many caves are excavated in abrupt cliffs: the fact that on the rocks in the proximity small gompas [monasteries] either in ruin or still open to worship can occasionally be seen, does not mean, as one might at a first glance suppose, that these caves were retreats (mgon k’ang, ri k’rod) for hermits. The country was never inhabited to such an extent or so rich and productive as to maintain so big a community of ascetics as that which one may suppose to have taken shelter in these caves. There is hardly any doubt that the grottos were old settlements before the introduction of Buddhism and with it, of a higher culture. The aboriginal people were troglodytes, using the caves in winter and shifting to the plateaus in summer for grazing, just as was the case for a long time in Western Tibet also. But the fact that caves are excavated in cliffs of very difficult access might also suggest a certain insecurity and a standing danger of incursion. When the situation changed and civilization increased, villages grew and developed in the valley along the rivers."\(^4\)

Although Professor Tucci’s observations were largely conjectures, recent research has confirmed his explanation.

Since 1992 the Nepal-German Project on High Mountain Archaeology has carried out excavation works at the cave systems of Mharsyangkyu (Chokopani), Phudzeling, and Mebrag in Mustang district. Preliminary investigations suggest that these cave systems all date to around 800 B.C.

In 1979 the construction of a hydropower project at Mharsyangkyu south of Cimang led to the discovery of three caves which for centuries had been buried by rock debris. The caves contained hundreds of grey ceramic vessels, embossed metal objects (looking like hides), ornaments (muskdeer teeth, shell pendants, beads of bone, copper arm- and earrings), a broken wooden spoon and human bone fragments from at least 21 individuals. The dead were buried with their ornaments, and the ceramic vessels were probably filled with meals for the dead.\(^5\) While preliminary studies suggested that the caves at Mharsyangkyu were used exclusively for funeral purposes, recent excavation of caves at the south face has revealed that these had been used for human occupation going back to 800 B.C.\(^6\)

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4 Tucci 1956, p. 10.
5 Simons et al. 1994a, p. 52.
6 Ibid. See also Simons et al. 1994b, p. 94.
Phudzeling is located one hour's walk east of Kagbeni. On a terrace about 30 meters above the river are the remains of some 34 houses. In the heavily eroded rocks about 70 meters above the terrace are numerous caves. At the top of the rocks are the ruins of a stone tower. Radiocarbon dates of the sites suggest that people lived in the caves as far back as 800 B.C. Later the population established themselves in houses at the plateau. The oldest date obtained from the ruins at the plateau goes back to the 13th century A.D., while the latest is mid-17th century. During this period the caves served as shelter during attacks from enemies and as quarters for hermits.

Mebrak is situated between Dzong and Dzar in the upper Muktinath valley and comprises of six multistorey cave systems. Ruins of houses are found in front of them. Pottery fragments found in these caves also date back to 800 B.C. – indicating a connection with the cave systems in Mharsyangkyu and Phudzeling.

Besides Mharsyangkyu, Phudzeling and Mebrag there are other prehistoric sites in Mustang district. In 1991–92 a team headed by Dr. Hütte excavated a settlement-mount known as Khalun at Khyinga village in Baragau. Hütte has concluded that Khalun was inhabited in the second century A.D. (the period of habitation may, however, reach back as far as the second century B.C.), and the occupation of the mound came to a close before the end of the 14th century. He has divided the history of the settlement into four periods: Period I (?–2nd/3rd cent. A.D.), Period IIA (3rd/4th–7th cent. A.D.), Period IIB (8th–9th cent. A.D.), and Period III (10th–12th–13th cent. A.D.). Dr. Hütte has summed-up his findings as follows:

"The end of Period IIA in the seventh or eighth century, which is concomitant with the abandonment of a monumental fortified complex in the center of the mound, could be a result of the Tibetan conquest of the lands bordering it on the west, of the annexation of gLo about 645, of the fall of Se-rib. In this period, there are – in the settlements of the eighth to ninth centuries – no other fortifications in function. The appearance of the settlement changes radically after the pacification of Se-rib (709).

"Far-reaching changes also took place at the beginning of Period III in the late tenth century. At this time, the Buddhistic revival in Tibet began, and since then, Tibetan influence makes itself noticeable in Khalun as well, in the form of obvious evidence of Lamaistic Buddhism. In the fortress-architecture of the third period, a new element makes its appearance: the..."
mound was now fortified by a system of concentric circular-walls ... The abandonment of the settlement in the thirteenth or fourteenth century coincides with Gung-thang's seizure of Mustang in the thirteenth century ...

"[Khalun], once deserted, would never be re-inhabited. This could be evidence for an epidemic as the cause of the site's depopulation. In any case, there is no need to postulate military action as the reason for the end of the last settlement of Khalun.9

"The 'foreign relations' of the settlement, at least in Periods I and II, were directed primarily to the south, as imports from India and Nepal are found in surprisingly great amounts and of high quality. Tibetan influence can be identified with certainty in Period III at the earliest, or not before the end of the tenth century. On the basis of anthropological research, we may assume that the pre-Tibetan inhabitants of Khalum were of Mongoloid origin, presumably Tibeto-Burmans.10" "The historical economic basis of the settlement could not yet be established with certainty: the quality of the imported goods is too high for a simple peasant-village, and the architecture would also seem to indicate a cultural level above that of mere agriculturalists. This leads to the assumption, that the inhabitants of Khalun earned their living not only by farming, but that they also participated in foreign trade with far-distant partners along the salt road between Tibet and India."11

At present, the vegetation cover at Khyinga is extremely sparse. Archaeological studies of Khalun indicate that the vegetation cover was formerly much richer. During excavations a great amount of faunae material was found, which mainly consisted of bones and bone fragments of slaughtered and hunted animals.12 Based on an analysis of the samples, Angela von den Driest has concluded, 'So far, the faunal samples yielded seven wild animals and one domestic species which do not belong the recent fauna known from the area and which are now distributed either in more southern (tahr, goral, muntjak, wild boar and water buffalo) or in more eastern resp. northwestern regions (red deer, weasels). All eight species mentioned above cannot live under arid or tundra like conditions.

9 It has recently been suggested that the abandonment of Khalun and Phudzeling was due to landslides, 'Although political changes as a reason for the abandonment of the settlements can not be ruled out, there is little doubt that disruption of the agricultural system by landslide activity would make it difficult to maintain human settlement within the area' (Jussi Baade et. al., n.d.).
10 The anthropological research which Hüttel refers to was undertaken by M. Kunter, B. Ludowici and B. Alt; see Kunter et. al. 1994.
They need forest or grass jungles with patches of trees where they can find refuge, especially big game species such as tahr, red beer and wild boar.”

The Ancient Period

Until the 19th century Mustang district was influenced mainly by Tibetan civilization and the principal source for historical studies of ancient Mustang is a variety of texts written in Tibetan script and language, including biographies, registers and pilgrim guides. In this period the kingdom of Lo was the political, cultural and religious center of the upper Kali Gandaki area and consequently Tibetan sources deal especially with this kingdom, while references to Thak Khola are few.14

The most important local texts on ancient Thak Khola are the village records (bemchag15) of the five original villages of Pacgau, viz. Thini, Syang, Marpha, Chairo and Cimang. A facsimile of the Cimang bemchag and an English translation of the text have been presented by Ramble and Vinding.16 Pacgau was once ruled by the king of Sum Garab Dzong (near present day Thini), and the Cimang bemchag deals mainly with the foundation and boundaries of that kingdom.17

The Marpha bemchag has been copied by several persons, but it still remains unpublished and untranslated.18 In recent articles Professor Schuh has presented a list of contents of the Marpha bemchag as well as extracts of the text.19 While the Cimang bemchag deals mainly with the foundation of the kingdom of Sum Garab Dzong and the kingdom’s relations with its neighbours, the Marpha bemchag deals with local political organization, organization of labour and trade, internal

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13 A. von den Driesch 1995, p. 84.
14 For a reproduction and translation of some Tibetan texts on places of pilgrimage in Thak Khola, see Snellgrove 1979. As guidebooks to be used by pilgrims, the texts describe the sacred locations and the holy objects found there, but include only limited information on the history of the area.
15 According to Schuh, ’the name bem-chag is not of Tibetan origin. It derives from the Mongolian word bicig ‘letter’ which was used during the 13th century as a designation for legal documents of a certain type’ (1990, p. 2).
17 The Cimang bemchag deals mainly with the foundation and boundaries of the kingdom of Sum Garab Dzong, but in Thak Khola and Baragau the texts known as bemchag are usually compilations of local laws. According to Professor Schuh, the Kagbeni bemchag also deals very briefly with historical events about the foundation of the political order of the area concerned, because ’the history of the creation of a legal order is of great importance for its justification and continuation.’ (1995, p. 6).
18 The Marpha bemchag has been copied by, among others, A.W. Macdonald, C. Jest, T. Skorupski and D. Schuh.
19 Schuh 1990 and 1995. See also below.
economic organization, regulations concerning the monastery, and customary laws and regulations.\textsuperscript{20} The Syang bemchag has been photographed by Schuh, but it remains unpublished. Finally, the Chairo bemchag apparently has not been copied by Western scholars.

The Thakali do not have their own script, but Thakali texts have been written using Tibetan and Devanagari script.\textsuperscript{21} The most important example is the four clan histories (\textit{rhab}) of the Tamang Thakali which deal with the origin of the clan ancestors and gods and how they established themselves in Thak Khola. Translations of the \textit{rhab} have not been published, but fairly accurate retelling of the texts are found in Gauchan and Vinding 1977.\textsuperscript{22}

Local oral tradition is also an important source for historical studies, especially in Thak Khola where textual material provides little information on the early history. Even where the oral tradition deals with events described in texts it includes details which are not found in the written sources. Examples of local oral tradition on the history of Pacgau are presented in Appendix 2.

\textbf{Lo and Serib}

The history of Tibet dates back to the 5th century A.D. when the first Tibetan state emerged in the Yarlung valley, some 200 km southeast of Lhasa.\textsuperscript{23} In the 7th century this kingdom became a major power under King Songtsen Gampo. According to the Dunhuang Annals which count among the earliest surviving Tibetan historical records, Songtsen Gampo conquered Zhang Zhung, then a separate kingdom in Western Tibet with its own language and culture.\textsuperscript{24} This conquest also

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{20} Schuh 1990, pp. 4–6.
\item \textsuperscript{21} Blair writes, 'As with the Tharus and the Gurungs, the Thakali-Marphalis never developed their own written language. Hence their history must be pieced together from an analysis of their language and legends' (1983, p. 43). While the Thakali never developed their own script, they have produced written records of historical value, using the Tibetan or the Devanagari script.
\item \textsuperscript{22} Improved retellings are found in Vinding 1992. Facsimiles, critical editions and translations of the \textit{rhab} are in preparation.
\item \textsuperscript{23} For the Yarlung dynasty, see Haarh 1969. Other sources on the ancient Tibetan monarchy include Bacot et al. 1940–1946, Richardson 1962, Snellgrove and Richardson 1968, Stein 1972, and Sørensen 1994.
\item \textsuperscript{24} Bacot et al. 1940–46, p. 29. According to Petech, the first reference to Zhang Zhung dates to about A.D. 600. A friendly connection with the Tibetan royal house was established when the Zhang Zhung king married the sister of Songtsen Gampo. Then they quarreled because of the disrespectful treatment meted out to the Tibetan princess, and in 644/645 the Tibetan emperor defeated and dethroned his brother-in-law (1997, p. 230). For the Zhang Zhung language, see Haarh 1968.
\end{itemize}
included Lo, and a nearby kingdom called Serib. In 705 Serib revolted, but in 709 its king was captured and Serib again came under Tibetan rule.

Although there exists no concrete proof, several scholars have surmised that the Lo mentioned in the Dunhuang Annals is identical with the Lo kingdom of the Upper Kali Gandaki area, and that Serib comprised the present Baragau and Pacgau areas. It is uncertain whether the southern part of Thak Khola (Thaksatsae) was a part of Serib.

Under the reign of Songtsen Gampo’s descendants Tibet continued to be a dominant power in Central Asia, but in 842 the kingdom disintegrated when King Lang Darma was murdered after rivalries between various political and religious factions in the country.

Following the fall of the ancient Tibetan kingdom, the center of Tibetan civilization shifted to the old Zhang Zhung kingdom which by the 10th century had been Tibetanized. The area was now known as Ngari and consisted of two main kingdoms, Purang and Guge. The kings of these kingdoms were strong supporters of Buddhism and Indian Buddhist teachers were invited to Ngari in the 11th century. Following these visits Buddhism again flourished in Tibet and Tibetan missionaries went to Lo and Serib to convert the local population to Buddhism and the reformed Bon religion.

One of the Bon missionaries was Lubra Tashi Gyaltshan who founded a monastery at Lubra in Baragau around 1160.

In the following centuries Buddhism and Bon became well established in the area; for example, the bibliography of a 13th century Bon master mentions that he had as many as 198 disciples from Lo and 246 from Serib. This spread of Buddhism and Bon extended down to the present Thaksatsae where

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25 Bacot et al. 1940–46, p. 31. See also Francke 1926, p. 83.
26 Bacot et al. 1940–46., p. 41–42.
28 Richardson 1962, p. 32.
29 Jackson 1976, p. 40.
31 Jackson 1976, pp. 40–42.
32 Jackson 1978, p. 200. The organized religion which existed in Tibet before the introduction of Buddhism under Songtsen Gampo is called Bon. This religion was reformed under influence of Buddhism; Buddhists refer to the reformed Bon as ‘White Bon’ (bon dkar) and the unreformed one as ‘Black Bon’ (bon nag). ‘White Bon’ is in essence a Tibetan Buddhist sect. For details, see Chapter XII.
33 Ibid., pp. 204–205. See also Ramble 1983.
34 Jackson 1978, p. 207.
the Buddhist temple Meki Lhakhang was founded no later than the early 15th century.35

In the 12th century three important powers emerged around Lo and Serib. One of these was Ladakh which in the early 12th century invaded Lo and Serib.36 Another was Gungthang northeast of Lo.37 Finally, around year 1200 a powerful kingdom was established in Jumla in Western Nepal.38 In the early 13th century the Jumla kings conquered parts of Ngari and Gungthang and its influence probably also included Lo and Serib.39

In 1252 Gungthang had regained sufficient strength to send an army against Jumla40 and to conquer Lo and Baragau which then constituted the northern part of Serib.41 After the conquest Baragau was separated from Serib and became known as 'Lower Lo' (Tib., glo smad).42 To consolidate its power in Lower Lo, Gungthang established a fort at the present Dzong village in the Muktinath valley.43

In the 13th century the people of Lo spoke a Tibetan dialect, while the population in the present Baragau and Thak Khola may have spoken sekai, a language akin to the present-day Thakali.44 In connection with the Gungthang expansion Tibetan nobles were established as leaders in Baragau. In the following centuries the Tibetan language was apparently adopted by sections of the local population, and while the people of the upper part of Baragau (Tangbe, Tetar,
Chusang, Gyaka and Chaile villages) and Thak Khola have retained their original Sekai language, the people of the Kagbeni and Muktinath areas speak a West Tibetan dialect.45

In the middle 14th century the power of Gunthang weakened and Lo was conquered by Jumla.46 Towards the end of the 14th century Gunthang once more became a dominant power and the Gunthang general Sherab Lama reconquered Lo.47 Sherab Lama’s descendants established themselves in Lo, and his grandson Amepal was the founder of the Lo royal house from whom the present Lo (Mustang) Maharajas descend.48

The 15th century was the golden century of the Kingdom of Lo. Under the kings Amepal (flourished circa 1425), his son Agon Zangpo (fl. ca. 1450) and his grandson Tashi Gon (d. 1498), Lo was an important regional power and its kings ruled a vast domain in Western Tibet.49 In Nepal, their domain extended south of Thak Khola.50 Ngorchen Kunga Zangpo (1382–1456) and other important lamas were invited to Lo and temples were built.51

The 16th and 17th centuries were marked by conflicts between the various states of the present Mustang district, internal conflicts in Lo and the influence of the regional powers Jumla and Ladakh. Not surprisingly, during this period major fortresses were built in the southern part of the district. The 16th century was a difficult one for Lo. Gunthang, the protector of Lo, lost its power

45 See also Ramble, who writes, ‘Instead of regarding the Se-skad speaking villages of northern Baragaon as being sandwiched between the Tibetan speakers of Muktinath to the south and of Lo to the north, we should rather think of the Baragaon Tibetans as the odds-ones-out in the land of Serib’ (1984, p. 104). Ramble also notes that the Western Tibetan dialects of Phelag and Khyinga villages in the Kagbeni area have a high percentage of Se-skad words in their vocabulary and that these villages are considered to be of low rank by the other villages in Baragaon (p. 105). According to my informants, the villagers of Phelag and Khyinga formerly spoke a language akin to Thakali. See also Jackson 1978, pp. 212–214.

46 Jackson 1976, p. 47.
47 Jackson 1978, p. 214.
48 Ibid., p. 216.
49 Jackson 1980, p. 133.
50 According to the text Tsarang Molla, King Tashi Gon ‘subdued [all lands] from the three districts of Ngari down to the capital of Gru’ (Jackson 1984, p. 148). Gru seems to have been the name for Parbat, the principality on the Kali Gandaki south of Thak Khola’ (ibid., p. 154). Gru is derived from Tib., ‘bru (pr. dru), ‘grain’.
51 The most important temples built during this period include the Champa (Maitreya) Lhakhang in Lo Manthang, built 1445–1447 under King Agon Zangpo (Jackson 1984, p. 147 and Henss 1993, p. 112); the Thubchen Lhakhang (the temple of the image of Shakyamuni Buddha) in Lo Manthang, built circa 1465 under King Tashi Gon (Jackson 1984, p. 148 and Henss 1993, p. 118); and probably also the Tsarang temple (Jackson 1984, p. 42–43 and Henss 1993, p. 131).
and never regained it. The biography of Lama Sonam Lodro of Lo (1516–1581) mentions conflicts between leading families in the area, and that the harvest was lost to the southern people (mon) in 1544.\(^5^9\) In order to save his relatives from starvation the lama went to the Meki Lhakhang temple in Thaksatsae to buy rice, barley and buckwheat.\(^5^3\)

In the first half of the 16th century Trokyab of the Kyekya Gangpa lineage, whose father had come to Mustang from Tibet at the end of the 15th century, established himself as ruler of the Muktinath valley and adjacent areas.\(^5^4\) Trokyab or his son built the fortress of Kagbeni in the second half of the 16th century.\(^5^5\)

In the late 16th century Jumla seems to have played a role in the affairs of Lo. The biography of Lama Chokyab Palzang of Dolpo (1536–1625) mentions that in the 1580s the king of Jumla requested him to travel to Lo to mediate in an internal conflict.\(^5^6\)

A new chapter in the history of Lo took shape at the end of the 16th century when the army of King Tshewang Namgyal of Ladakh invaded Purang, Jumla and Lo.\(^5^7\) Although Lo came under Ladakhi supremacy, affinal ties between the royal houses created a close relationship between the two kingdoms and Ladakhi influence in Lo was limited to the payment of tribute against protection.\(^5^8\)

While under Ladakhi supremacy, Lo held control over the Kagbeni and Muktinath area in Baragau. The king's local officials tried, however, to free themselves from Lo's influence and in 1652 a fight broke out between the king of Lo

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52 For Sonam Lodro's bibliography, see Snellgrove 1967; for his dates, see Jackson 1978, p. 218. For this episode, see also Schuh 1995, p. 44.
53 Snellgrove 1967, p. 91. See also Jackson 1978, p. 218.
54 Schuh 1995, p. 53. The lineage is known as Kyekya Gangpa, named after the place in Lo (Kyekyagang) where Trokyab's father settled.
55 Schuh 1995, p. 25 and p. 53. Scholars disagree as to when the forts of Baragau (Dzong, Dzar and Kagbeni) were established. Schuh has given the 15th century (1990, p. 6), the second half of the 15th century (Schuh 1992 quoted in Haffner and Pohle 1993, p. 48) and the second half of the 16th century (1994, p. 41). On the basis of dendrochronological data Gutschow concludes that 'without doubt, construction of the castle [of Kagbeni] began in 1568' (1994, p. 27). The present castle is the oldest of the existing buildings in Kagbeni, and it thus appears that the present Kagbeni was founded in the 16th century. The fort or Dzong is known as Peak of Supreme Victory (rab rgyal rtse); e.g., see the bibliography of Sonam Lodro (Snellgrove 1967, p. 90 and 1961, p. 202). While the present fort (now in ruins) was apparently constructed in the 16th century, an earlier fort known as the Demon Fort was built in Dzong in the 13th century (note 43). It is not clear whether the fort Peak of Supreme Victory was built on the same site as the Demon Fort.
57 Jackson 1978, p. 219.
58 Ibid.
and his local minister. The king had his minister beaten at Kagbeni, but Jumla intervened on the side of the minister and many people died in the following war between Jumla and Lo.⁵⁹ Even the clergy became involved in the conflicts and in 1682 monks from Lo and Serib fought at a monastery in Central Tibet.⁶⁰

According to Professor Schuh, in the late 17th century the rulers of the Muktinath Valley⁶¹ separated from Lo;⁶² this probably happened with the help of King Bahadur Shahi (1665–1675) of Jumla and as a price the rulers of the Muktinath Valley had to accept Jumla hegemony.⁶³ In the following period, a representative of the king of Jumla visited Baragau yearly and the customs post of Kagbeni was headed by a delegate from Jumla.⁶⁴

The position of Lo and its relationship to Jumla in the 17th century is not clear. According to Professor Schuh, Jumla’s sovereignty over Mustang was firmly established ‘by at least the reign of Virabahadur Shahi, i.e. the 1630s.’⁶⁵ While the kings of Lo (Mustang) accepted the suzerainty of Jumla and paid Jumla an annual tribute, Lo acted with varying success as an independent state.⁶⁶ According to a local source, King Samdrub Palbar, who flourished circa 1675, ‘possessed the force of heroism, and skill in deeds. And when Lo, Jumla, Tibet and others were at war, he won fame for being victorious against whoever opposed him.’⁶⁷ Also, according to another local source, the king of Lo still collected taxes in Dolpo around year 1680.⁶⁸

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⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 220.
⁶⁰ Snellgrove 1967, p. 250. See also Jackson 1978, p. 221. The information is found in the bibliography of Sonam Wangchug (1660–1731), which was written in the early 18th century. This is the latest (presently available) reference to Serib. Today, the name of Serib is completely forgotten in Thak Khola.
⁶¹ The 17th century rulers of the Muktinath valley with their seats at Dzong and Dzar, supported priests of the Nyingmapa school, including Urgyan Palzang, who founded the famous Kutshabterngha monastery at Thini around 1668 (Ehrhard 1993, pp. 26–30). C. von Füsser-Haimendorf gives the date of the foundation of Kutshabterngha as the middle of the 18th century (1975, p. 141).
⁶² Schuh 1994, p. 41. However, according to Snellgrove, the kingdom of Lo included the whole of the Upper Kali Gandaki valley during the time of the founder-lama of Shey Monastery of Dolpo, Tendzin Repa (1961, p. 202), who was a contemporary of Lama Sonam Wangchug (1660–1731) (Snellgrove 1967, p. 11 and 77).
⁶³ Schuh 1995, p. 22.
⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 24.
⁶⁵ Schuh 1994, p. 77 and p. 82.
⁶⁶ The payment of a tribute by Lo to Jumla in the 1630s did not rule out the payment of tributes to other states. For example, in 1638 King Sengge Namgyal of Ladakh (d. 1645) collected ‘offerings’ (tribute) from Lo (Jackson 1978, p. 219).
⁶⁷ Jackson 1984, p. 150.
⁶⁸ According to the bibliography of the lama Sonam Wangchug of Dolpo (1660–1731), tax-gatherers came to Dolpo from Lo when he was a young man (Snellgrove 1967, p. 245).
In 1705 a treaty which regulated relations and trade in the Mustang region was concluded and signed by the king of Jumla, the king of Lo, the king of Parbat (a kingdom immediately south of Thak Khola), and the headmen of Thag, Thini and Marpha.\textsuperscript{69} From the text of the treaty one may deduce that Parbat and the petty states of the present Mustang District were all under the suzerainty of Jumla, that Parbat ruled up to Dana,\textsuperscript{70} that Baragau was separate from the kingdom of Lo, and that Thag, Marpha and Thini were three separate, autonomous entities.\textsuperscript{71}

The wars between Jumla and Lo continued. In 1719 the king of Lo married a Ladakhi princess (whose own mother was from Lo). On her way to Lo the princess was captured and imprisoned at Kagbeni by the Jumla army, but she was later freed when help arrived from Ladakh and Parbat.\textsuperscript{72} A few decades later Jumla again attacked Lo. By this time Ladakh had lost its former power (and later ceased to exist as an independent kingdom) and was unable to help Lo which subsequently (again) came under Jumla supremacy.\textsuperscript{73} According to Schuh, 'in the period of 150 years that Mustang belonged to the group of states dominated by Jumla, the relationship was not entirely free of conflict ... military action was not only used to solve them [these conflicts]; for example, one quarrel that broke out between Jumla and Mustang in 1754 was finally settled by an agreement negotiated by the 7th Dalai Lama.'\textsuperscript{74}

While in the 18th century Jumla controlled Lo, Parbat appears to have had some influence in Thak Khola, because in 1774 King Kirti Bam Malla of Parbat confirmed the rules for conduct of the monks and nuns of the Meki Lhakhang temple at Kobang.\textsuperscript{75} In those times, it was not unusual for a ruler to recognize and pay tribute to several superior powers,\textsuperscript{76} and in the second half of the 18th

\textsuperscript{69} Schuh 1994, p. 75. In the treaty Thini is called som bu and Marpha is spung khris.
\textsuperscript{70} Professor Schuh has written, 'According to the aforementioned document Kli-bum, the current-day Dana, was the northernmost outpost of Parbat' (1994, p. 76). However, Malebum (Tib., kli bum) refers to the capital of the kingdom of Parbat (today known as Beni) as well as the kingdom itself. In spite of this wrong identification, Schuh is probably right that Dana was the northernmost outpost of the kingdom of Parbat.
\textsuperscript{71} Schuh 1994, p. 76.
\textsuperscript{72} Jackson 1978, p. 223. See also Shrestha 1976. Francke, who gives a vivid description of the battle, gives the year 1723 (1926, p. 233). See also Schuh 1994, p. 68.
\textsuperscript{73} Jackson 1978, p. 223.
\textsuperscript{74} Schuh 1994, p. 82.
\textsuperscript{75} C. von Fûrer-Haimendorf 1975, p. 141. For Kirti Bam Malla, see Stiller 1973, p. 181. For Parbat, see Shrestha 1976.
\textsuperscript{76} In the late 18th century the king of Lo paid tribute to Jumla as well as Lhasa. In 1790, after Lo had come under the Gorkha rulers, King Rana Bahadur Shah order the King of Lo to pay to Kathmandu the tribute (Rs 929) which he formerly had paid to Jumla. However, the King of Lo was ordered to continue to pay a traditional tribute (Rs 71) to the government of Lhasa.
century Thak Khola paid a yearly tribute to Lo and probably also to Jumla and Parbat.

In the second half of the 18th century King Prithvi Narayan Shah of Gorkha conquered the numerous small kingdoms comprising contemporary Nepal. Parbat fell to the Gorkhali army in 1786, and the king of Lo and the rulers of the other petty states of the present Mustang then submitted to the Gorkhalis without fighting. This was a clever move: Mustang escaped death and destruction at the hands of the Gorkhali army and, more importantly, by submitting the local rulers were granted authority over their lands. The Gorkhali army passed through Mustang in order to attack Jumla from the north-east. Jumla had collected an army of some 22,000 men and was able to repel the Gorkhali army for two years. In 1788 the Gorkhas fought a war with Tibet and Jumla used the occasion to invade Lo and some villages further south. The war between the Gorkhas and Tibet soon came to an end, and in 1789 Gorkha finally conquered Jumla. The fall of Jumla settled once and for all the status of the people of the Mustang district as subjects of the king of Nepal.

Sum

The above account of the history of ancient Upper Kali Gandaki area is based on Tibetan texts from Lo, Dolpo, Tibet and Dunhuang. Several sources mention a land called Serib (which, as noted above, probably comprised the present Pacgau and until the 13th century also the present Baragau), but they provide no information on this land.

Surprisingly, available local sources (texts and oral tradition) contain no references to Serib. According to local sources, the present Pacgau was originally called Sum and its center was the fortress Garab Dzong, situated on a summit.

(Schuh 1989, p. 91; see also Stiller 1973, pp. 258–259). In another article Schuh adds, 'Yet another document available to me shows that even Jumla, like the Kingdom of Mustang dominated by it, surrendered a yearly tribute to the Tibetan ruler. This document again demonstrates the complexity of the reciprocal dependency characterising the relationships of the various states of the western Himalayas, both to each other and to their huge neighbour of the Tibetan highlands' (1994, p. 78).

77 Pant and Pierce 1989, p. 91.
78 For a study on the foundation of the modern Nepalese state, see Stiller 1973.
79 Ibid., pp. 181–182.
80 Ibid.
81 Ibid., p. 185.
82 Rose 1971
83 Stiller op. cit., p. 185.
about one kilometer southwest of the present Thini. Garab Dzong was an important center of the late Serib. In 1992 timber samples were taken from the ruins of Garab Dzong. Dendrochronological studies of the samples indicate that construction of the settlement began in 1534 and that construction also took place as late as 1779. Thak Khola’s inclusion in the Nepalese State in 1786 meant an end to the wars that had ravaged the area in the previous centuries, and Garab Dzong (which was ideal to defend) was abandoned probably because of the long distance to the drinking water source and the fields, or because a landslide destroyed the irrigation system.

The main source on the history of Sum is the Cimang bemchag. Unfortunately, the value of the bemchag as a historical document is limited. First, the text includes several obscure and difficult passages and the meaning is not always clear. Second, the text covers a period of at least some 700 years (11th–18th centuries). Third, other than the local oral tradition, most of the events and persons described in the bemchag are not mentioned in other sources and it is, therefore, almost impossible to date these events and persons. Fourth, the text mentions only two kings of Garab Dzong, namely King Thokarcen and King Tangmican. It is not clear whether these kings are different persons. In spite of these shortcomings, the Cimang bemchag is the only available text which deals in detail with ancient Pacgau. It is, therefore, a useful supplement to the external sources on which the above account is based.

It is impossible to date the Cimang bemchag accurately. The text consists of several sections; it is clear that the sections were not written at the same time and by the same persons. The text includes a reference to the Central Government of Tibet (ganden phodrang) which was established only in the 17th century and

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84 The first reference to Garab Dzong is found in Gauchan and Vinding 1977, p. 137.
85 Being in ruins, Garab Dzong is locally also known as yhul gho, lit., ‘the settlement in ruins’.
86 Schmidt 1992/93, p. 23. For the excavation of Garab Dzong, see Pohl and Tripathee 1995, Pohl 1996, Pohl and Roth 1996. According to the Cimang bemchag, King Thokarcen built a new fortress (Garab Dzong) because the existing fortress was an old one. This is supported by archaeological studies: excavations indicate a settlement at Garab Dzong prior to the 16th century (Pohl and Tripathee 1995, p. 99).
87 According to Baade, Mäusbacher and Wagner, a large-scale landslide south of Garab Dzong which took place a few hundred years ago, might have affected the fields and the food supply of the settlement (1997, p. 95).
88 For a translation, see Ramble and Vinding 1987.
89 The Cimang bemchag was written by the monks Urgyan Chosang and Kacen Legkye. After the main text are four paragraphs which have been added by Tshewang Rinchen and Legshe Kacen. Unfortunately, nothing is known about these persons. They (or their patrons) seem, however, to have been followers of the Bon tradition because the swastikas found in the text all run anticlockwise.
the text cannot therefore be earlier than that date. Furthermore, the text mentions that the Grain King (the king of Parbat) altered the boundary between Pacgau and Thaksatsae. Considering that Parbat exercised some degree of authority in Thak Khola in the 18th century, the last section of text may tentatively be dated to the first half of the 18th century.90

According to the Cimang bemchag, Garab Dzong was established by King Thokarcen, who was born in Western Tibet. King Thokarcen contemplated becoming king of Lhasa, Ladakh, Jumla, Lo and Dzong (in the Muktinath valley), but having realized that there were already kings in these places he went to Sum where he was accepted as king by the six groups which then comprised the local population.91 The local population included various religious specialists, and King Thokarcen asked his subjects to provide him with an astrologer, a specialist to worship the serpent-spirits (lu), and a specialist to perform rituals for his longevity (tše sgrub).

King Thokarcen had three sons, namely Drensumpal, who was born in a time of remembrance (dran); Lhasumpal, who was born at a time his father was worshipping the gods (lha); and Kyisumpal, who was born in a time of happiness (skyid). According to the local oral tradition King Thokarcen also had an illegitimate son named Syasumpal. Once some subjects planned to poison King Thokarcen, but Syasumpal warned his father about the plot; Syasumpal was later sent to Cimang (at Sum’s southern border) to establish a border post.

The Cimang bemchag twice mentions an incident between the king of Sum and a king called Punari.92 According to the oral tradition, Punari was king of Sum and fled to Omang above Thini when King Thokarcen established himself in Thini. The Cimang bemchag mentions that King Tangmican threatened to evict King Punari. King Punari was the lord of water and warned that he would stop the supply of water to Thini. This alarmed King Tangmican and eventually he and King Punari agreed to establish marriage relations; according

90 The first part of the Cimang bemchag mentions a treaty between Sum and Thag which according to Schuh was ‘issued most probably no later than the 17th century’ (1990, p. 2). The Cimang bemchag also includes a later treaty between Sum, Marpha and Thag, which was ratified in a female fire–ox year, probably either 1697 or 1757. See also Schuh 1990, p. 2. The last section of the Cimang bemchag was written in an earth–horse year. Considering that it was written at a time when Parbat exercised some degree of authority in Thak Khola and probably before Thak Khola’s inclusion in the Nepalese State in 1786, the last section may be dated either 1678 or 1738. The year 1738 is most likely, which would mean that the treaty between Sum, Marpha and Thag mentioned above dates to 1697.

91 It is not clear what kind of groups (local groups, clans, etc.) the text refers to.

92 In the first story the king of Sum is King Thokarcen, but in the second he is King Tangmican.
to the oral tradition King Punari's daughter later married King Tangmican's son.93

One of the stories in the Cimang bemchag deals with the death of King Tangmican. Once King Tangmicen ordered his subjects to remove a hill that blocked the way of the sunrise. The subjects resented this, and 'after five or six men had gone to the mountain and were felling trees, King Thangmican got his hands caught in the cleft of the trunk and he, the king, fell to his death from the crag. Such events comprise the story of Sum Garab Dzong.'94 Local oral tradition confirms that King Tangmicen was murdered by his subjects.

The Cimang bemchag mentions the various taxes which Phelag, Dangkardzong and Lubra (and Marpha) should pay to Garab Dzong; this indicates that these villages were once under the suzerainty of the ruler of Garab Dzong.95

According to the Cimang bemchag, Chairo village in Pacgau was founded by Pompar Sonam who came to Pacgau from Kagbeni. Sonam was given land in Chairo on which he established some watermills. The bemchag mentions that the people of Pacgau paid him a small tax for the use of the mills.

The Cimang bemchag deals in detail with the boundary between the present Pacgau and Thaksatsae. The border was originally at the river Mharshyangkyu and the Dotsham Hill (north of Tukce) and it was first demarcated by King Thokarcen of Sum (Pacgau) and King Hansa of Thag (Thaksatsae). Later the border was altered by the king of Parbat. The bemchag mentions that the king of Parbat gave his daughter in marriage to the king of Jumla, and that in this connection he ordered ritual specialists in Lubra to perform a ceremony for the health and prosperity of the king of Jumla. This episode, as well as the fact that the king of Parbat altered the border between Sum and Thag, indicates that Parbat once controlled Thak Khola.

The first episodes in the bemchag imply that the present Thak Khola comprised two lands, namely Sum in the north and Thag in the south. Later, the bemchag refers to Pacgau by its present name Yhulkangha; it also indicates that Pundri (Marpha) had split from Sum.

Recent research indicates that King Thokarcen probably lived in the 16th century. First, according to the Cimang bemchag, King Thokarcen built Garab Dzong; excavations of the fortress indicate that it was built circa 1534. Secondly,
the Cimang bemchag mentions that King Thokarcen would like to establish
himself as king, but Jumla had already been taken by King Surtipa, Lo by King
Aka Samdrup and the Muktinath valley by Trokyab.\textsuperscript{96} According to Professor
Schuh, King Surtipa is probably King Surtishahi of Jumla (1618–1628).\textsuperscript{97}
Likewise, King Aka Samdrup may be King Samdrup Dorje, who flourished
circa 1620; or, alternatively, his son Samdrup Rabtan (flourished circa 1650),
or his grandson Samdrup Palbar (flourished circa 1675).\textsuperscript{98} Finally, according
to Schuh, Trokyab established himself as ruler of the Muktinath valley in the
16th century.\textsuperscript{99}

This information indicates that King Thokarcen probably established himself
as ruler of Sum in the 16th century. This was part of the Tibetan/Lo expansion into
the old Serib – an expansion which, as mentioned above, started in the 13th cen-
tury. But while the presence of Tibetan-speaking rulers in some parts of the old Serib
(the Muktinath Valley and the Kagbeni area) led to a Tibetanization of the area, in
the southern part of the old Serib (Sum) the Tibetan-speaking rulers (e.g. King
Thokarcen) were absorbed into the local culture and society.

\textbf{Marpha}

Although several scholars have photographed the Marpha bemchag, the text re-
mains unpublished and untranslated. In recent articles Professor Schuh refers
to three different versions of the Marpha bemchag (MB\textsubscript{1}, MB\textsubscript{2} and MB\textsubscript{3}), which
he photographed in the late 1980s.\textsuperscript{100} The Marpha bemchag is important because it provides information on Marpha in the late 18th century.

According to Schuh, MB\textsubscript{1} and MB\textsubscript{2} are basically two copies of the same
code of laws ratified in 1796 by an assembly of all citizens (yul mi). Both texts con-
tain later additions of paragraphs and reformulations; these changes were always
discussed and decided upon by the assembly.\textsuperscript{101}

The Marpha bemchag of 1796 consists of approximately 48 paragraphs, ten
of them dealing with the political organization. The rest deal with organization
of labour and trade, internal economic organization, regulations concerning the
monastery, and customary laws and regulations.\textsuperscript{102}

\textsuperscript{96} Ramble and Vinding 1987, p. 13.
\textsuperscript{97} Schuh 1995, p. 19.
\textsuperscript{98} For these kings and their dates, see Jackson 1984, p. 134.
\textsuperscript{99} Schuh 1995, p. 20.
\textsuperscript{100} Schuh 1990, p. 2 and 1995, p. 11.
\textsuperscript{101} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid., pp. 4–6. For the content of each paragraph, see Schuh 1995, pp. 13–16.
Besides citizens, the texts mention two more groups of persons, namely slaves (g.yog po) and bonded servants (bha do), who were forced to stay with their masters. Sexual intercourse between members of these groups and female citizens was explicitly forbidden and fined. Slaves and bonded servants were not members of the assembly of citizens.

Schuh mentions that MB3 includes a regulation which dates back to 1738. According to this regulation the judiciary power would be entrusted to the headman (rgan pa), the four mi thus, the so-called eight great men (mi chen brgyad) and the twelve 'nobles' (mi drag bcu gnyis). Schuh notes, 'It seems to me that the twelve nobles represented the old aristocratic groups among the families of Marpha who had lost their predominant role during the 17th century, so the decision of 1738 actually meant a step back in the development of democratic structures. The reason for this is mentioned in the decision itself: There had been serious problems with the enforcement of public law and order within the community.'

With regard to the nobles, Schuh continues, 'Looking into the bem-chag of 1796, we find that the group of nobles did not have any specific function any longer. They are only enumerated as one of the groups of persons present at the ratification of bem-chag. They were again present in a meeting which took place in 1808. Hereafter no text available to us mentions them again.'

Thag

According to the Cimang bemchag, Thag comprised the area immediately south of the Mharsyang river. This land probably extended down to Ghayang Ghang, a few kilometers south of Larjung. Thag – which in Tibetan means 'distant country' – was the southernmost area under influence of Tibetan civilization.

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103 Professor Schuh translates g.yog po as 'slaves'; Jäschke has 'servant, man-servant' (1881, p. 519).
104 Ibid.
105 Professor Schuh does not translate the word mi thus. Today, the mi thus are known as thyumi in the Thakali language, and they are the headmen of the village as there no longer is one senior headman (gamba). The word thyumi is probably derived from Tibetan thu mi. The word thu mi is part of the name of the minister Thumi Sambhota (also called Thonmi Sambhota) who was sent to India by King Songtsen Gampo in order to procure an alphabet for writing. The Tibetan word thu bo means 'chief' (Jäschke 1881, p. 232), and thu mi may thus be an ancient title for an senior office holder, a minister or councillor. For Thonmi Sambhota, see Sørensen 1994, pp. 167-168. For thyumi, see also Ramble 1993, p. 299.
106 Schuh 1990, p. 3.
107 Ibid.
Little is known about the history of Thag prior to 1786 when Thak Khola came under the Shah rulers of Gorkha. Tibetan sources indicate that the Meki Lhakhang temple in Kobang was founded no later than the early 15th century, and that this area was a place where people from Lo bought foodgrains. Second, the Cimang bemchag mentions that Thag was once ruled by a king called Hansa Raja. Third, various sources indicate that Thaksatsae was under Parbat suzerainty in the 18th century.

This is the only reference to Hansa Raja presently available in literary sources. However, according to oral tradition Hansa Raja was a prince from Jumla who married a princess from Thini called Nima and received Thag as dowry from his father-in-law. Tamang Thakali maintain that they descend from Hansa Raja, but simultaneously they claim to descend from four ancestors who came to Thak Khola from Semja near the present Jumla.

This later tradition is based on the cyogi rhab, the clan history of the Gaucan clan. According to cyogi rhab, Ani Airam, the ancestor of the Gaucan clan, was born in the North-West (n Hulu -p can) – probably a reference to Western Tibet or Northwestern Nepal. Ani Airam left the North-West and arrived at Semja (in the present Jumla district). At Semja three birds – red, blue and white – flew from a sandalwood tree; the birds symbolized Lha Langba Nhurbu, the god of the Gaucan clan; Lha Chyuring Gyalmo, the goddess of the Tulacan clan; and Lha Gangla Singi Karmo, the goddess of the Shercan clan.

Ani Airam left Semja and eventually arrived at Thak Khola. At Mharsyangkyu he purified himself in the holy water. Ani Airam continued to Gyatodak (opposite Tukce) where he met Pau Kuti, the ancestor of the Bhattacan clan. Ani Airam did not have a very good opinion of the local inhabitants (whom he referred to as thana12) and told Pau Kuti that they ate ‘rice of gold and dhal of turquoise’ – that is porridge of bitter buckwheat and nettle soup.

Ani Airam then travelled to Taglung. He did not like the village and named the inhabitants parang purung, apparently a reference to their strange language.

108 As far as is known, there exists no bemchag from Thag.
109 Jackson 1978, p. 218. Me ki lha khang means ‘the temple of the lower part’ or ‘the temple of the bottom’. The name probably refers to the fact that the temple marked the southernmost point of Tibetan civilization. Alternatively, the name may refer to the temple’s location at the river (the other main temple in the area – the Nari temple – is situated in the mountains).
110 C. von Fürer-Haimendorf (mistakenly) refers to ‘Hangsha Raja of Thini’ (1975, p. 139).
111 Tamang Thakali informants cannot explain this apparent contradiction. Some believe that the Tamang Thakali descend from the four ancestors mentioned in their clan histories (rhab), and that only a few of them descend from Hansa Raja. See also Gauchan and Vinding 1977, p. 136–137.
112 Thatan, lit., ‘the people of Tha(g)’.
Ani Airam left Thak Khola and continued south. Below the Gorapani pass Ani Airam was stung by nettles and lost his way. When Ani Airam asked his way of a man from Phalate village, the man replied, 'go along the way'. This silly answer angered Ani Airam, and he therefore cursed the local people.

Following this experience Ani Airam returned to Thak Khola. In Thak Khola he examined the water at Kalopani, the soil at Nakhung, and the stones at Narilhedong.\textsuperscript{113} Ani Airam found these to be of excellent quality and decided to settle in Thak Khola.

The last section of the \textit{cyogi rhab} mentions Samledhen Samlecyang and Dakpa Gelsang.\textsuperscript{114} Unfortunately, the text provides no information on these persons, except that the former is the ancestor of the Tulacan clan, the latter the ancestor of the Shercan clan. The four ancestors decided that they (that is, their descendants) should marry with each other, and that relations between Ani Airam and Dakpa Gelsang should never sour; and, similarly the relationship between Pau Kuti and Samledhen Samlecyang. Ani Airam declared, 'Although our birthplace is not the same, we should have the feeling that we have been born in the same place so that we may have good feelings when we gather.' The people prayed, 'Oh four gods, although our birthplace is different, let us live together remembering that our place of gathering is the same.'\textsuperscript{115}

\section*{The Origin of the Thakali}

It is not possible to date the events described in the \textit{cyogi rhab}. Indeed, it is impossible to know which elements are historical and which are legendary, though there is perhaps some kernel of historical fact. In spite of these shortcomings,

\textsuperscript{113} The location of Narilhedong (lit., 'the forest at lower Nari') is uncertain. Informants mention that Narilhedong is a forest on the eastern side of the valley, opposite Khanti. However, Narsang above Khanti (on the western side of the valley) is called Nari and Narilhedong may be located there.

\textsuperscript{114} According to Thakali informants, the ancestor of the Shercan clan is called Dakpa Gelsang or Dhakpa Gyalsang. This name has been accepted by anthropologists (e.g. Iijima 1960, p. 179: Dhakpa Ghelchan; Jest 1974, p. 187: Tragpa Gyalsen; and Vinding 1981, p. 208: Dhakpa Gyalsan). When I first suggested the name Dhakpa Gyalsang, the original \textit{rhab} were not available to me. In several versions of the \textit{bhuqj rhdb} the name of the Shercan ancestor is \textit{la dvags pa rgyal mtshan}. \textit{La dvags pa} is the proper Tibetan spelling for Ladakh in India, while \textit{rgyal mtshan} is a kind of decoration cloth, of a cylindrical shape, carried on a pole, as a sign of victory, but also a personal name. \textit{La dvags pa rgyal mtshan} may therefore be translated as 'Gyaltshan from Ladakh'.

\textsuperscript{115} Vinding 1992, p. 61. The phrase 'place of birth is not the same, place of meeting is the same' is a standard Tibetan idiom indicating harmony and unity between entities of distinct origin; e.g., see the following song of the Sixth Dalai Lama: 'Peacock from Eastern India, Parrot from
The Thakali

cyogi rhab is an important document because it presents the history of the Tamang Thakali according to their own tradition. Most importantly, it tells that Ani Airam, the ancestor of the Gaucan clan, was born in the northwest, probably Western Tibet or northwestern Nepal; that Ani Airam met Pau Kuti, the ancestor of the Bhattacan clan, at Gyatodak in Thak Khola; that Thak Khola was inhabited – apparently by a tribe called thatan – when Ani Airam came to the valley; and, that the ancestors of the Tamang Thakali originated in different places, but they met and became one society in Thak Khola.

The Mharsyangkyu area is an important key to the origin of the Thakali. People lived in caves in the Mharsyangkyu area as early as the 8th century B.C. The Mharsyangkyu river is sacred to the Thakali and its water is considered a purifier. When Ani Airam, the ancestor of the Gaucan clan, arrived in Thak Khola he purified himself in Mharsyangkyu. According to local tradition, Nari Jhowa, the Tamang Thakalis' protective deity, first showed herself to the Thakali in the form of a golden deer. When the Tamang Thakalis' ancestors failed to shoot the deer with their arrows, they purified themselves and their weapons in Mharsyangkyu. Also, at the start of the lha phewa festival, the priests of the four Tamang Thakali clans wash themselves and the clans' objects in Mharsyangkyu. Further, the final examination of the dhom (the ritual specialist of the Thakali indigenous religious tradition) takes place at Mharsyangkyu. Finally, the effigy of the dead which is made during the death ceremonies should be made of cypress branches from the Mharsyangkyu area.

Furthermore, according to local tradition, four brothers lived as hunters in the forests of Mharsyangkyu. They started to cultivate the land and when the harvest turned out good, they sacrificed a pigeon to the local gods. The next season the production increased and the brothers sacrificed a chicken. The following seasons the production continued to increase and the brothers sacrificed a goat, then a yak and, finally, a horse. This angered the gods who sent a flood which destroyed the fields and killed the people. Afterwards the brothers went to the forests to hunt. They succeeded in shooting a muskdeer. The youngest brother was sent to the river to clean the deer's stomach. When he cleaned the stomach an eagle took a part of it. The youngest brother tried to follow the eagle, but in vain, and it was late when he returned to his brothers. When he re-

the depth of Kong-po district; Though their origin, their place of birth is not the same, Their rendezvous takes place in Lhasa, the Centre of Religion' (Sørensen 1990, p. 261).

117 See Appendix 2.
118 For the lha phewa festival, see Chapter XIII.
119 For the same theme in Baragau, see Ramble and Seeber 1995, p. 109.
turned he saw that his brothers had eaten the meat of the deer. He got very angry, then left and settled in Thini. His brothers remained in the Mharsyangkyu area.  

Thakali, Tamang, Gurung, Mananggi, Narpa and Sekai languages are closely related. Based on the closeness of the languages, one may surmise that the peoples speaking these languages originally formed a single tribe. The Tamang Thakali call themselves tamang while the Gurung refer to themselves as tamu, and the proto-Tamang-Gurung-Thakali tribe may therefore have called themselves tamu. The tamu tribe may have belonged to the Kirata people who according to Professor Bista, moved into Nepal from the east between the fourth and second millennium B.C.

It is not possible with any degree of certainty to conclude a possible relationship between the tamu tribe and the early dwellers of the caves of Mharsyangkyu, Phudzeling and Mebrag. The identity of the early cave dwellers of Mustang district has not been established. According to Hüttele, there may be a link between the graves at Mharsyangkyu and the graves at Leh (in Ladakh).

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120 This story is very similar to one found in the account of the Gauan clan (cyogi rhab), see Vinding 1992, pp. 57–58. The Jhisin clan of Thini is said to have originated from Mharsyangkyu and some local informants believe that the youngest brother was the ancestor of the Jhisin clan.

121 In a study of ten Tibeto-Burman languages, Glover found that the percentage of probable cognates in the Swadesh 100-word list among Tamang, Gurung, Thakali and Mananggi languages was higher than 50 per cent. The percentage of probable cognates between Thakali and Gurung, Tamang and Mananggi was 65 per cent, 57 per cent and 59 per cent, respectively, while the percentage between Thakali and Tibetan was only 28 per cent (1970, p. 23). Based on the assumption that speech form of any community retains 86 per cent of the vocabulary of the 100-word list over a millennium, Glover concluded – very tentatively – that Gurung, Tamang, Thakali and Mananggi formed a single language around 350 A.D. (p. 25). For a reconstruction of the proto-Tamang-Gurung-Thakali language, see Pittman and Glover 1970. For a comparative study of these languages, see Mazaudon 1978.

122 To these peoples one should probably add the people of Baragau (who today speak a Tibetan dialect) and the Chantel.

123 Pignède 1966, p. 33. The ethnonym tamu may be rendered as ‘highlander’ (Salter and Gurung 1996, p. 45).

124 The Gurung may originally have called themselves Se (Strickland 1987, p. 72 and H.L. Tamu quoted in Des Chene 1996, p. 98). The word se is interesting. The Newari term for the Tamang is Sem or Se (Höfer quoted in Macdonald 1989, p. 170). The word se is also found in connection with the Thakali; first, the present Baragau and Pacgau was originally called Se-rib; second, Thakali language is also known as Se-kai; and third, in the 13th century, Gungthang built a fortress in Dzong to suppress the Tamang Se Mon. Could it be that the proto-Tamang-Gurung-Thakali tribe originally was called Se and not Tamu? For a recent discussion of the ethnonym Se, see Ramble 1997.

which are of ‘indo-arische charakter’. Kunter concludes on the basis of an anthropological analysis of human skeletal material from Khyingar that the population of the Muktinath Valley in the 8th–13th centuries were of mongoloid race. It is hoped that future archaeological and anthropological research will solve this puzzle.

My hypothesis on the origin of the Thakali – which, indeed, cannot be more than a qualified guess – is as follows. In the first millennium B.C. – perhaps earlier – a tribe of cave dwellers lived in several settlements in the present Mustang district – Mharsyangkyu, Phudzeling and Mebrag. These cave dwellers may have been related to cave-dwellers of Western Tibet (incl. Ladakh) and may have been of caucasoid stock. Later (around the fifth century A.D.?) a section of the tamu tribe (who had mongoloid racial features and spoke a Tibeto-Burmese language) established themselves in the present Thak Khola and Baragau.

Throughout history foreigners have arrived and settled in Thak Khola. Some of the immigrants (e.g Rhongta Khampa, Magar, and Tangbetan) retained a separate ethnic identity, but others were accepted and included in the Thakali society, either as members of existing lineages, or as founders of new, separate ones. Examples of immigrants who established new lineages within the local communities may include King Thokarcen (the ancestor of the Gyalgi clan of Thini), Bom phobe khe (the ancestor of the Bom clan of Thini) and Namti Lama (the ancestor of the Namti lineage of the Kya clan of Thini). It is also possible – if, indeed, cyogi rhab deserves credit – that some or all of the ancestors of the four Tamang Thakali clans were foreigners: Ani Airam, the ancestor of the Gaucan clan, came from Western Tibet (or Northwestern Nepal), and Ladakhp Gautilsen, the ancestor of the Shercan clan, from Ladakh.

To conclude, I conjecture that the present-day Thakali are descended mainly from the proto Tamang-Gurung-Thakali tribe, the tamu, but their ancestry also includes immigrants from Baragau, Western Nepal, Western Tibet and

126 Hüttel 1994, p. 58. Personally, I would guess that the early cave dwellers of Mustang district were related to the cave dwellers of Guge in Western Tibet. As far as I am informed, it has not yet been established whether the early cave dwellers of Guge were of caucasoid or mongoloid stock.

127 Kunter 1994, p. 156.

128 In an interesting study, M. Witzel has tried to elicit information on the history of settlement in the Himalayas based on the names of rivers (hydronymy). Based on the list of names of rivers in Thak Khola presented in Gauchan and Vinding 1977, Witzel concedes that ‘the time of the Thakali migration is unclear so far’ (1993, p. 250).

129 The adoption of foreign male immigrants into existing lineages is rare. However, one of the lineages of the Tulacan clan is descended from a Tibetan immigrant.

130 For the myth of origin of these ancestors, see Appendix 2.
Ladakh. The modern Thakali probably also carry genes from the cave dwellers who lived in the area in the first millennium B.C.

THAK KHOLA AS PART OF THE NEPALESE STATE

Thak Khola's inclusion in the Nepalese State in 1786 meant an end to the wars that had ravaged the area in the previous centuries. The Thakali could now cultivate their fields, raise their animals, and engage in peacetime trade. As there no longer was a need to live in fortified settlements, the Thakali could establish settlements closer to the water sources, the fields and the caravan route.131

The price the Thakali paid for this peace was, however, high. The government's policy in rural areas was to maximize revenue and to maintain law and order with a minimum of interference in the affairs of the local communities.132 The taxation of local communities varied a great deal in the different parts of the kingdom and was laid down in royal orders issued by the government in Kathmandu. Several of the orders on revenue collection and other administrative matters in Thak Khola in the 19th century have been translated and published by M.C. Regmi;133 these documents are the main source of information on the Thak Khola valley in the 19th century.

The Early 19th Century

The people of Thak Khola paid a variety of taxes to the government.134 The main one was homestead tax (serma) which was paid collectively by the local community, and it remained fixed regardless of changes in the number of households. To ensure a regular revenue, the government engaged non-local contractors

131 For example, in the early 19th century people left Garab Dzong and settled in present-day Thini. See also Schuh who has noted that, 'in southern Mustang easily accessible settlements like Thini and Marpha evidently arose in the 18th century at the earliest, through resettlement from protected sites that were more difficult to reach' (1995, p. 25).

132 The relationship between the rulers in Kathmandu and the peasantry (during the period 1846 to 1951) has been expressed succinctly by Regmi, 'The Rana government was careful not to kill the goose that laid the golden eggs, but neither did it let the goose grow fat' (1978a, p. 27).

133 These documents are presented in Appendix 1.

134 The people of Thak Khola paid taxes not only to the government in Kathmandu, but also to the king of Lo. In 1790 King Rana Bahadur Shah in a grant to the king of Lo confirmed the various customary payments which the king of Lo enjoyed from Thak and Thini (Stiller 1973, p. 258; Pant and Pierce 1989, p. 91). It is not known for how long the people of Thak and Thini continued these payments.
(ijaradar) to collect the tax. This tax collection system \((ijara)\) subjected the peasantry to harassment and extortion since there was little the government could do to prevent the contractor from collecting unauthorized taxes.\(^{135}\)

In the 18th century the taxation in Thak Khola was very heavy.\(^{136}\) The poorest villagers were unable to pay their share of the homestead tax, and many, therefore, left Thak and settled elsewhere.\(^{137}\) This increased the burden on the remaining villagers, but the only action the government took was (in 1798) to issue an appeal to emigrants to return home.\(^{138}\) This appeal had little effect, and in 1802 the government abolished the \(ijara\) system in Thak and entrusted revenue collection to the local village headmen against a payment of Rs 6,900 a year.\(^{139}\) However, in order to increase revenues the government reintroduced the \(ijara\) system in 1807, and in 1811 the royalty had increased to Rs 13,000.\(^{140}\) The government

\(^{135}\) Regmi 1972, p. 138.

\(^{136}\) The people of Thak also paid taxes to the foreign rulers before the Shah dynasty. Informants mention that Thak paid Rs 501 to Kirti Barn Malla – the last king of Parbat (second half of the 18th century).

\(^{137}\) Regmi op. cit., p. 140. See also Appendix 1, Document no. 2. The distribution of Tamang Thakali was originally limited to Thasang which extended from Khanti in the north to Ghayang Ghang in the south. In the early 19th century at the latest, but probably much earlier, some Thakali left Thasang and settled in Tukce in the north and Taglung, Kunjo, Lete and Ghasa in the south.

According to Rahul, King Prithvi Narayan Shah of Nepal presented the rulers of Bhutan with several estates in Nepal in order to win their friendship. Rahul notes that, ‘Bhutan’s privileges increased particularly after the conflict between Nepal and Tibet in 1788, and Bhutan had estates even beyond Kathmandu in Lower Mustang, in the Tamang country, and in Yolmo, the country of the Western Sherpas. In 1855, however, Jang Bahadur of Nepal annexed these Bhutanese estates in Nepal in retaliation for Bhutan’s alleged support for Tibet and refusal to help Nepal in the war between Nepal and Tibet’ (1971, p. 39). Rahul does not give the exact location of Bhutan’s estate in Lower Mustang, but Samdruling monastery in Lo which belongs to the Kagyupa order, is said originally to have belonged to Bhutan; it was established by King Wanggyal Dorje, who flourished around 1780 (Jackson 1984, p. 135 and 151). Moreover, the temple in Taglung (which was destroyed in the 1980s) belonged to the Drukpa branch of the Kagyupa order of Tibetan Buddhism after which Bhutan (\(druk yul\)) is named. For Bhutan, see Aris 1980, 1988 and 1994.

\(^{138}\) Regmi op. cit.

\(^{139}\) Ibid. There are two kinds of revenue collection by the village headmen, namely \(thekbandi\) and \(thekthiti\). According to Regmi, ‘nineteenth century official documents usually use the terms \(thekbandi\) and \(thekthiti\) as if these were interchangeable ... (but) ... \(thekbandi\) may be defined as a settlement with \(mukhiyas\) (village headmen) in their individual capacity for the collection of revenue for a specific period. When the settlement was made on a long-term basis with the village community as a whole represented by the \(mukhiya\), the system was known as \(thekthiti\)’ (1978a, p. 73).

\(^{140}\) Regmi 1972, p. 140. Regmi implies here that the \(ijara\) system was in force in Thak Khola in 1811. However, a few years later Regmi published the following document, ‘On Falgun Sudi
Meki lhakhang (temple) at Kobang
Snowfall at Syang

Syang with its main fields below
The main lane at Marpha
Cimang: a nucleated village

Thasang (Kobang area)
Noblewoman from Baragau
Jomsom airport in the mid-1970s

Jomsom airport in the mid-1990s
was well aware that the increased tax burden would cause emigration from Thak and instructed the tax collector not to ‘allow any Thakse to leave the kot and reside at Tukuche or Lete.’

In the 19th century the government’s most important source of revenue in Thak Khola was not the homestead tax, but custom duties. The caravan route through the Thak Khola valley was used to be one of the most important trade links between Tibet and Nepal.

Trade was based on exchange of Nepalese grain for Tibetan salt and wool. Tibetan nomads would collect salt from the lakes of Western Tibet and bring it to Liktse, which was an important mart some 60 km north of the Nepalese–Tibet border. In summer traders from Lo, Dolpo and Baragau would travel to Liktse to exchange barley and rice for salt and wool. The traders brought the salt and wool to Thak Khola, using transport animals such as yak, jho, donkey, sheep, and goat. A dangerous section on the trail between Ghasa and Dana, as well as heavy monsoon rains and the summer heat, prevented the northern traders from taking their animals further south, and they exchanged

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6, 1867 (February 1811), Muktirama Newar was granted authority to collect revenue in the Thak region. The appointment was effective Baisakh 1, 1868. He replaced Mahabir Karki. The same day, the following regulations were promulgated in the name of Muktirama Newar: (abstract translation) 1. Collect revenue from the budhas (headmen) of Thak according to the amount and in the installments stipulated by them in their pattas and transmit the proceeds to the central treasury (Tosakhana) … 7. Report to us if any budha causes any difficulty or obstruction in the collection of revenue according to these thekbandi arrangements’ (Appendix 1, Document no. 2). One month later (March 1811) the government issued a royal order to the headman (budha) Chayaram Budha of Thak-Thini which orders him to ‘collect such amounts, and transmit the proceeds to us, in addition to the payment stipulated earlier on thekbandi basis’ (Regmi 1979, p. 53). These information indicate that in 1811 the land tax in Thak was collected by local village headmen (budha) on a thekbandi basis. The village headmen handed over the tax to Muktiram Newar (a government official or a contractor?) who in turn transmitted it to the central treasury.

141 Appendix 1, Document no. 2. This document is important because it shows that the inhabitants of Thak (i.e. the Tamang Thakali) in 1802 were referred to as thakse, and that Thak did not include Lete and Tukee.

142 For a study of trade between Nepal and Tibet, see C. von Furer-Haimendorf 1975.

143 At times Tibetan authorities imposed restrictions on trade: ‘There was a time when the Tibetan authorities permitted only traders from Lo and Dolpo to purchase salt in Tibet, while those from regions further south were allowed to trade in wool and livestock, but not in salt’ (C. von Furer-Haimendorf 1975, p. 184, 188). Some traders would buy salt in Tibet and sell it to Thak Khola, while others would sell it in Lo to traders from Baragau who would transport it to Thak Khola for sale.

144 Tibetan speaking people of Western Nepal commonly use castrated male sheep and goats for carrying grain and salt. A strong animal can carry about 15 kg.
their goods in Thak Khola. The Thakali paid for the salt with locally produced barley and imported rice.\textsuperscript{145}

In winter villagers and traders from the south (\textit{dhakre}) came to Thak Khola to exchange rice for salt. They did not use animals to transport their goods, but porters. Although exchange rates were more favourable further north, the scantily clad southerners would seldom venture north of Thak Khola due to the cold and a general dislike of the local Tibetans.

Due to its strategical location as a transit zone between the Tibetan plateau in the north and the Nepalese hills in the south, Thak Khola served a natural need for the storage of goods at the border between the two climatic zones and thus became a natural entrepôt in the exchange of Tibetan salt and wool for Nepalese foodgrain.\textsuperscript{146} Some Thakali purchased, stored and exchanged salt and grains without leaving their home, others maximized profits by buying salt in the north and exchanging it for rice south of Thak Khola, e.g. at Dana and Tatopani.\textsuperscript{147} Besides salt trade in the Kali Gandaki area, Thakali

\textsuperscript{145} Most authors mention that the grain which the Tibetan-speaking traders received for their salt was rice grown in the hills south of Thak Khola (e.g. Manzardo 1978, p. 11). It has, however, generally been overlooked that a considerable amount of the barley grown in Thak Khola was bartered for Tibetan salt. C. von Fürer-Haimendorf mentions that, 'while considerable quantities of barley grown in Baragaon and Panchgaon were annually bartered for Tibetan salt, the part played in this trade by the products of Thaksatsae had always been small. Some barley grown by the villagers of Thaksatsae might find its way to Tibet, not because the growers had a surplus of food grain available for export but because they preferred to sell barley to Tibet and purchase rice from the lower regions' (1975, p. 187; 1978, p. 347 same wording). Also part of the produce of Baragaon was exchanged for salt, 'The cultivators of Baragaon, for instance, take part of the \textit{ua}-barley they grow to Lo, and there barter it for salt, some of which they keep for own use, and the rest they exchange for rice in Ghasa or Dana' (1975, p. 172).

I am not sure that the part played in this trade by the products of Thaksatsae was significantly less than in Pacgau; if, however, C. von Führer-Haimendorf is right, the reason may be that the main variety of barley grown in Thaksatsae (\textit{cika}) is a less attractive foodgrain than the variety (\textit{karu}) grown in Pacgau.

\textsuperscript{146} Hamilton, who stayed in Nepal 1802-1803, mentions that 'Thakakuti [Thak], someway below Kagakoti [Kagbeni], is the chief mart for the trade with Tibet through Mastang [Mustang]' (1819, p. 274).

\textsuperscript{147} A document from 1811 mentions that traders from Thak and Thini used to visit Chokar (Chongkhor?) in Baragau for trade, and that this trade dates back to 'when Thak and Thini constituted a separate territory under the rule of Jumla' (Regmi 1979, p. 52). The document also mentions that the traders from Thak and Thini used to pay customs or transit duties (\textit{jagat}) in Chokar, and that there was a \textit{jagat} checkpost in Kagbeni. The customs office in Kagbeni was established no later than the second half of the 17th century, during which period it was headed by a delegate from Jumla (Schuh 1995, p. 24).

Another document from the same year (1811) mentions that traders from Thak and Thini used to trade in salt even south of Dana: 'Pratiram Budha and Chhayaram Budha of
also traded in Tibet, India and the Kathmandu valley in the 18th and 19th centuries.\textsuperscript{148}

The kings of Parbat (south of Thak Khola) were overlords in Thak Khola in the 18th century. In order to collect customs duties from the traders along the Kali Gandaki river, the kings of Parbat are said to have established a customs office (bhansar) at Dana, an hour’s walk south of Thak Khola.\textsuperscript{149} In 1786 Parbat fell to the Shah kings of Gorkha, and the collection of customs duties at Dana came under the administration of the newly founded Nepalese State.\textsuperscript{150} According to one document, customs duties at Dana were collected by a contractor (ijaradar) in 1853, but this system (ijara) was probably introduced already in the late 18th century.\textsuperscript{151}

Thak-Thini have submitted the following petition: Formerly, the inhabitants and traders of Thak and Thini did not have to pay export duties on general merchandise (karna) wherever they visited beyond Dana. They only paid the following duties: 3 pathis of salt on each load supplied to the south (madhes). 6 or 7 pathis and 3 mana of salt from each dhakhee trader’ (Regmi 1979, p. 53).

It is not clear whether Thakali traders used pack animals in those days. As mentioned earlier, there is a difficult section on the trail between Ghasa and Dana, making it dangerous to take pack animals south of Ghasa. An early 19th century source indicates that pack animals were not used on this sector: ‘Danakoti [Dana] ... is a place of some trade. There is there a bad hill, but except over that, oxen could, with some difficulty, carry loads all the way from Rerighat (a mart some days walk further south) to Kaga Koti [Kagbeni]. Goods are, however, conveyed mostly, if not entirely, on men’s shoulders, or on sheep’ (Hamilton 1819, p. 274). However, a Government order from 1862 mentions that, ‘Thakali taking salt on pack animals must sell it at the Dana customs house at the current rate. They may then take their animals further down to bring up rice, and on this they must pay the usual duty’ (C. von Füßer-Haimendorf 1975, p. 188; emphasis added).

The above source does not mention which pack animals the Thakali used in the mid-19th century. Tibetan traders use yak, sheep and goat to transport goods down to Thak Khola; the Thakali have herds of these animals, but mainly females raised for the production of milk, meat and wool.

\textsuperscript{148} Referring to a document from 1803, Regmi notes that the Thakali ‘conducted trade not only with Tibet but also with Kagbeni, Mustang and Chharka [Tsharka], and with Patan in Kathmandu Valley’ (1972, p. 149). And in a document from 1858 Thakali traders from Pacgau complain that they are not being allowed to visit Butaul, Nawalpur and Balampur (on the Indian border) for trade (Regmi 1980, p. 75). These documents (as well as some of those quoted earlier) show that the Thakali had an extensive trade network already in the early 19th century. Consequently, it is difficult to accept Manzardo’s proposal that in the early 1860s ‘the Thakali, according to our account, were only minimally involved in trade at that time’ (1978, p. 24).

\textsuperscript{149} The king of Parbat probably also collected a homestead tax in Thak Khola. According to an informant there exists a copper plate issued by the last king of Parbat (Kirti Bam Malla) which orders the inhabitants of Thasang (the present Kobang VDC) to pay a yearly homestead tax of Rs 500.

\textsuperscript{150} Appendix 1, Document no. 1.

\textsuperscript{151} Appendix 1, Document no. 3.
In 1854–56 Nepal and Tibet were at war and the Nepalese government imposed a ban on export of foodgrains to Tibet. The salt-grain exchange between the two countries came to a halt. To indemnify the customs contractor (who paid Rs 29,001 a year in royalty) the government cancelled the contract and posted government officials to collect customs duties at Dana. The *ijara* system was, however, reintroduced after the war.

For the war the Nepalese Government recruited troops and porters among villagers. Only members of the higher castes could become soldiers, while members of the lower ones were used as porters and other auxiliaries. In 1855 officials were sent to Thak Khola to recruit Thakali as porters; but two Thakali leaders – Subba Dhansaram and Subba Balbir of Kobang – submitted a petition stating that in the time of the Malla kings of Parbat the Thakali used to be recruited as soldiers and, according to administrative arrangements made in 1813–14, the inhabitants of Thak were exempted from unpaid labour obligations during war and other occasions. The government accepted this petition, and subsequently the Thakali were recruited only as soldiers for the war.

Balbir served as translator during the war. According to Thakali informants, Balbir performed his duties with much distinction and after the war he was presented copies of the 108 volume Tibetan canonical collection of Buddhist scriptures (*kangyur*) and the 220 volume exegetical collection of Tibetan Buddhism (*tengyur*). These scriptures are still in his family’s possession.

In 1860 Balbir had a serious dispute with another Thakali leader named Chyolpa. That year the contract for the collection of customs duties at Dana

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152 Ibid.
153 During the Rana period a *subba* was a senior official in the civil administration. Originally, *subba* was the title for a governor of a district, later known as *bada hakim* (Agrawal 1976, p. 7; see also Kirkpatrick 1811, p. 202). Later, the title of *subba* was also given to some customs contractors, e.g. the customs contractor at Dana.
154 Appendix I, Document no. 4. Balbir and Dhansaram both belonged to the Lhachirin subclan of the Lhakhang Dhungi subclan of the Shercan clan, but to different lineages. Balbir had a second-generation cousin named Atmaram, who is said to have been a *subba* too. It is not known how Dhansaram and Atmaram acquired the title of *subba*.
155 For example, Kalu Ram Timtsen [sic] argued that the occasion of certain Tibetan festival would be the best time for Nepali to attack because the Tibetans would be drunk. This and other advice proved correct and contributed to the Nepalese victory (Iijima 1977a, p. 428).

Balbir’s real name is Kalu Ram. If the names of his father and grandfather (Nanda Dhani and Kipananda Dhani, cf. Nep., *dhani*, ‘rich’) are any indication, he was born into a well-off family. It is generally believed that he earned the name *balbir* (‘strong [and] brave’) during the Tibet War 1854–56 e.g., (C. von Führer-Haimendorf 1975, p. 143 and Iijima 1977a, p. 428). This may not be so because in a document from 1855 he is already referred to as Balbir (Appendix 1, Document no. 4).
156 Appendix I, Document no. 5. An informant mentions that Chyolpa was from Taglung village.
was initially given to Captain Hem Karna Khadka Chetri for Rs 44,501. Chyolpa Thakali then offered a higher bid, but eventually the contract was given to Chetri's son Lt. Champa Singh Khadka Chetri, who subsequently recruited some Thakali to work for him, including Balbir Thakali.

Following this Chyolpa made up a plan to stop the flow of salt to Dana by imposing a ban on the sale of foodgrain from Thaksatsae, and called a meeting of all Thakali to discuss the plan. At the meeting Chyolpa received some support, but he eventually had to give in due to opposition from Balbir. Chyolpa then filed a complaint against Balbir at the court in Baglung. The court sent constables to arrest Balbir, who was beaten and put in fetters. Balbir managed to escape from his captors and went to Kathmandu where he submitted a petition to Prime Minister Jung Bahadur Rana. The prime minister accepted the petition and ordered the arrest of Chyolpa Thakali and his fellow conspirators.

The Period of the Salt Monopoly

Until 1862 the Thakali were free to take salt south of Dana as long as they paid customs duties at the customs office there. This situation changed, however, in 1862 when the government terminated the free trade in salt and grains:

"According to an order (sanad) issued by Jung Bahadur in 1862, a deputation of Thakali had requested a reduction in the land revenue of Rs 12,500 which until then had been paid by the 700 households of Thaksatsae. In support of their plea they argued that 216 families had left Thaksatsae and settled in Kaski, Lamjung and other parts of the middle-ranges. The government did not grant the requested reduction of tax, but offered the Thakali a choice between the status quo ante and the payment of land revenue and other taxes according to the rules then applying to the Humla region of Jumla district. The Thakali decided, perhaps not fully realizing the implications, to opt for the latter course, and the government order of 1862 describes in twenty-six paragraphs the manner in which taxes should henceforth be collected. The greatest change brought about by the introduction of the Humla rules was the termination of free trade in salt and grain. A customs post was established at Dana, a village south of Thak

C. von Führer-Haimendorf is unclear about the date of introduction of the contract for customs collection and the monopoly in trade of salt; he has given the years 1860 (1975, p. 188), 1861 (ibid., p. 188) and 1862 (ibid., p. 143).
customs duty was charged on most commodities carried past that post in either direction, and – most important of all – a monopoly of the trade in salt was granted to the collector of customs.\textsuperscript{150}

"(The order) contained the following clause: 'Thakali taking salt on pack animals must sell it at the Dana customs house at the current rate. They may then take their animals further down to bring up rice, and on this they must pay the usual duty. Anyone who makes one journey carrying salt is allowed to make two journeys carrying rice. The Dana customs office will not allow anyone to make more journeys.' In another clause it was stated explicitly that the Thakali would not be allowed to take salt further south than Dana and would have to trade exclusively with the customs contractor and not make any trade deals with the people from the lower regions who came to Thaksatsae to buy salt ... As the order was addressed to the 'mukhya (headmen) and the people of Thak' it did not contain rules regarding the salt-trade of people from Dolpo, Lo, Baragaon and Panchgaon, but it would seem that any salt brought by such traders had to be sold to the customs contractor."\textsuperscript{160}

The introduction of this monopoly (\textit{rakam}) in trade of salt in favour of the customs contractor had an adverse effect on the business of other traders in Thak Khola and Baragau and they requested the Government to abolish it and reintroduce free trade.\textsuperscript{161} The government accepted the petition and the monopoly was

\textsuperscript{150} The custom office in Dana was not established in the 1860s, as it is mentioned in documents from 1855. Also, I disagree with Professor C. von Furer-Haimendorf's statement that 'until 1850 no customs duty was levied on the import of salt by the government of Nepal' (ibid., p. 188). The collection of customs duty on the import of salt and the establishment of a customs office in Dana probably dates to the late 18th century at the latest. Iijima has mistakenly written that the Dana customs office was opened by Harkaman Thakali (1977\textit{a}, p. 429).

\textsuperscript{160} C. von Furer-Haimendorf 1975, pp. 142–143.

\textsuperscript{161} Ibid., pp. 188–189. These observations are important, but certain points are unclear, especially the linkage between the payment of taxes and the salt monopoly. C. von Furer-Haimendorf notes that 'until 1850 no customs duty was levied on the import of salt by the government of Nepal, but the people of Thaksatsae paid a consolidated tax of Rs 12,500 in return for which they were free to trade in salt without any restrictions' (1975, p. 188). It seems, however, that the tax of Rs 12,500 was the homestead tax which the Thakali had been paying to the government since the late 18th century, and it is unlikely that this tax was linked with trade issues. C. von Furer-Haimendorf does not mention whether the tax of Rs 12,500 was reduced or abolished after the introduction of the salt monopoly.

\textsuperscript{161} The history of Baragau is beyond the scope of the present work. It is here sufficient to mention that in 1790 the rulers of Kathmandu gave Baragau, Manang and Nar as free estate (\textit{birta}) to Topal Bista of Dzar (Schuh 1994, pp. 43–44) – a direct descendant of Trokyab, who established himself as ruler in the Muktinath valley in the 16th century. Topal Bista and other
abolished in 1863 and again in 1874. However, in 1876 the government reintroduced the monopoly, probably in order to increase the royalty which it received from the customs contract. Except for a brief period in 1886 the monopoly continued until 1927.

In 1869 Balbir held the contract as custom collector in Dana. As customs contractor Balbir also held the office of district magistrate and was given the title of subba. It is not known when Balbir first got the contract and for how long he held it, but his son Kaviram (also known as Kabiraj) had the contract in 1876 against an annual payment of Rs 82,000.

Little is known about Kaviram Thakali; he is said to have shifted his residence from Kobang to Tukce and to have died young (at the age of 35). At

Baragau noblemen probably yielded considerable influence in the area until the rise of Balbir. For example, in 1811 transit duties (jagat) at Kagbeni were collected by a local nobleman called Thituwa Bista (Regmi 1979, p. 52). The shift of power from Baragau to Thakṣaṣṭaṣa may be connected with the Nepal–Tibet War. In 1866 the villages of Baragau were handed over as khangi to General Jagat Jang Bahadur, the eldest son of Prime Minister Jang Bahadur Rana (Regmi 1981e, p. 55). Formerly, revenue in Baragau had been collected under the contract (thekka) system, but in 1866 this system was terminated and replaced by the system known as mukhiyabhar, that is revenue collection through local village headmen (mukhiya) (ibid.). I am not aware of the exact meaning of khangi, but according to Professor Schuh, General Jagat received the villages as jagir (1994, p. 52), that is land or other sources of revenue assigned to government employees in lieu of their emoluments (Regmi 1988, p. 267). These events sealed the end of the political and economic hegemony of the lords of the Muktinath valley (Schuh, ibid.).

Appendix 1, Document no. 6.

Ibid.

C. von Führer-Haimendorf 1975, p. 143. Balbir is usually referred to as Balbir Subba. Most anthropologists agree that Balbir became customs collector in Dana in 1869 and in this capacity received the title of subba (e.g. C. von Führer-Haimendorf, ibid., and Manzardo and Sharma 1975, p. 26). However, Balbir is referred to as Balbir Subba in a document from 1855 (Appendix 1, Document no. 4). This may indicate that Balbir became a customs contractor earlier than reported in the literature (in Thak or elsewhere), or that he received the title of subba as a reward for his services under the Nepal–Tibet War 1854–56, as suggested by Iijima (1977a, p. 75). Bista has mistakenly dated the rise of the Thakali subba and the monopoly in the trade of salt to the beginning of the 20th century (1971, p. 55).


Appendix 1, Document no. 7. Members of the Balbir lineage usually refer to Balbir’s son as Kabiraj, but in official records (e.g. Document 7) he is called Kaviram Thakali.

Other informants mention that it was his father (Balbir) who shifted residence from Kobang to Tukce. Information on the history of Tukce is scarce. According to local tradition, Tukce means ‘plain of grain’ (cf. Tibetan bru, grain; and che, plain or field?) because it was originally a plain where foodgrains were bartered for salt. An alternative meaning of the toponym is ‘(The Place of) Grain Barter’, cf. Tib., bru brje bo. The oldest building in the village is probably the Tashi Choling temple, which may have been built in 1621 (C. von Führer-Haimendorf 1975, p. 141).
his death his widow voluntarily relinquished the contract, which is said then to have gone to the family of Patiram of Larjung.

Patiram and Kaviram both belonged to the Shercan clan but to different lineages. Patiram is said to have held a mining contract in Baisa Khani in Myagdi district. Patiram was known as ‘Patiram the Rich’, and he is said to have boasted that his wealth could block the Kali Gandaki river. Informants state that Patiram, his youngest son Krishna Prasad, and his son-in-law Ram Prasad were all subba. In 19th century Nepal a subba was a senior official in the civil administration, but this title was also given to the customs contractor in Dana. In connection with the award of the customs contract, the contractor was required to provide a guarantor who would pay the royalty to the government in case the contractor could not fulfill his obligations. The guarantor was known as jamani subba, while the contractor was called thekka subba. There is documentary evidence that Ram Prasad was customs contractor in Dana, but it is uncertain whether Patiram and Krishna Prasad held the contract. Patiram may, however, have acquired the title of subba in connection with the mining contract in Myagdi, or as guarantor to his son-in-law.

In May 1885 Ram Prasad Thakali (Patiram’s son-in-law) was appointed contractor (ijaradar) for mines in the Parbat, Baglung, Gulmi and Rukum area in Western Nepal. The following year he was awarded the contract as customs collector in Dana against a yearly payment of Rs 97,000. That year the government accepted a petition from traders in Thak Khola and Baragau that they be allowed to sell their salt anywhere they liked. The abolition of the monopoly put Ram Prasad in a difficult position and he pleaded to the Government that the monopoly be reconfirmed in his favour: ‘If I am not permitted to engage in the salt trade on a monopoly basis, how can I fulfill my contractual obligations to the

It is likely that Tashi Choling was originally an isolated monastery. Tashi Choling is commonly known as The Queen’s Temple (rani gumba); according to Rai, the name refers to Queen Subarna Prabha Devi (the second wife of Rana Bahadur Shah) who visited Thak Khola and Muktinath in 1807 and later paid for the renovation of this temple in 1836 (Rai 1994, p. 65). According to local tradition, the first settlers of Tukce were some Rhongta Khampa, while the first Tamang Thakali are said to have lived at Jhong, which is a plain above the present village. As mentioned above, in 1802 the government forbade Tamang Thakali to settle in Tukce. Construction of the impressive houses of the rich traders which dominate the architecture of Tukce began in the 1870s at the earliest.

171 Appendix 1, Document no. 7. However, Regmi mentions in another publication that the yearly payment amounted Rs 97,306 (1988, pp. 243).
government, which amounts to thousands of rupees?" Fortunately for Ram Prasad, the Government accepted his petition and reconfirmed the monopoly in his favour.

Table 3: The Balbir lineage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Balbir</th>
<th>Kabiram</th>
<th>Harkaman</th>
<th>Ganesh B.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mohanman</td>
<td>Hitman</td>
<td>Cetman</td>
<td>Guptaman</td>
<td>Komal B.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Anangman</td>
<td>Candraman</td>
<td>Govindraman</td>
<td>Ishwariman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Krishman</td>
<td>Gunjaman</td>
<td>Prabhakaran</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shangkarman</td>
<td>Indraman</td>
<td>Guendraman</td>
<td>Anil</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shamsherman</td>
<td>Yogendraman</td>
<td>Bhupendraman</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:

a) Subba, contractor in Dana
b) Subba, contractor in the Tarai
c) Subba, civil servant

In the late 19th century the Balbir and Patiram families competed for the customs contract, but at the turn of the century Balbir's descendants emerged as the most powerful Thakali family – a position which they have kept till today. Patiram's family was less fortunate. According to a local saying ('Patiram's wealth, Ram Prasad's pleasure'), Ram Prasad squandered away the wealth of his father-

172 Ibid.
173 According to Iijima, 'Chetman died at the age of twenty-five. The three surviving sons inherited the title and prerogatives of Subbas. Subba Mohanman succeeded his father as magistrate of the Thak-Dana Customs Office' (1977a, p. 429). According to my informants, Guptaman never received the title of subba. Moreover, it is uncertain whether Mohanman, Hitman and Guptaman inherited the title and prerogatives of subba at the death of their father in 1903.
174 Patiramko dhan, rām prasādko jhilimili. Jhilimili, lit., 'glitter, flash', has here been translated as 'pleasure'.

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in-law. For example, it is said that Ram Prasad had a servant to carry his waterpipe while riding. However, Krishna Prasad (Pati Ram's son) is also said to have lost much money.\textsuperscript{175}

In 1895 the customs contract was held by Kaviram's son Harkaman Thakali (1860–1903).\textsuperscript{176} Harkaman apparently also had the contract in April 1899 when the Japanese monk Kawaguchi Ekai passed through Thak Khola.\textsuperscript{177} In 1902 the situation in Thak Khola took a dramatic turn when the customs contract was awarded to Manilal Gurung (1857–1907) of Ghanpokhari in Lamjung district.\textsuperscript{178} The circumstances for this are unclear, but they may relate to political changes in Kathmandu.\textsuperscript{179}

Initially, Manilal held the contract only till 1903 when it went back to Harkaman.\textsuperscript{180} However, Harkaman died shortly afterwards,\textsuperscript{181} and the customs contract soon went back to Manilal Gurung and his eldest son Nar Jang

\textsuperscript{175} Pati Ram's house plus two fields were sold in the 1940s by one of his descendents for a total of Rs 725.

\textsuperscript{176} Upreti 1980, p. 169. Harkaman Thakali was probably awarded the contract some years earlier, because it is said that he was very young when he first got the contract, and that his mother's brother (Harka Bahadur) stood as his guarantor. For Harkaman's dates, see C. von Furer-Haimendorf 1975, p. 144.

\textsuperscript{177} Kawaguchi mentions a 'local Governor, named Harkaman Suppa' (1909, p. 45).

\textsuperscript{178} Messerschmidt and Gurung 1974, p. 208.

\textsuperscript{179} In 1846 Jang Bahadur Kunwar (later Rana) and his six brothers took power in Nepal in a coup. Jang Bahadur died in 1877 and was replaced by his brother Ranaudip. In 1885 the sons of the youngest brother (Dhir Shamsher) killed Ranaudip, and Bir Shamsher (the eldest of Dhir's 17 sons) was declared prime minister. Bir Shamsher died in March 1901 and was succeeded by his brother Dev Shamsher, but only three months later (June 1901) another brother, Chandra Shamsher, staged a successful coup d'état. Chandra Shamsher was a powerful ruler and held the post of prime minister until his death in 1929. He was succeeded by his brother Bhim Shamsher who died in 1932. Bhim Shamsher was succeeded by another brother, Juddha Shamsher who ruled Nepal until 1945. The prime ministership was then given to Padma Shamsher (a son of Bhim) who retired in 1948 and was replaced by Mohan Shamsher (a son of Chandra Shamsher). The Rana family's monopoly on the prime ministership in Nepal was overturned in 1951. For the Rana family, see Rana 1978 and Sever 1993.

\textsuperscript{180} Messerschmidt and Gurung 1974, p. 210. Informants mention that the customs contract was awarded for a period of three years (see also C. von Furer-Haimendorf 1975, p. 143). It is not clear why Manilal Gurung held the contract for a shorter period. Fisher confirms that Manilal Gurung held the contract from 1902 to 1903, and again from 1905 (1987, p. 123). However, according to Regmi, Harkaman and Ganesh Bahadur were awarded the contract in March 1902 (1988, p. 244). If this is correct, Manilal may have been awarded the contract in March 1901 or March 1900.

\textsuperscript{181} According to C. von Furer-Haimendorf, Harkaman died in 1903 (1975, p. 144).
Gurung (1879–1941) who held it from 1905 to 1910, and again from 1918 to 1920.182

Table 4: Customs contractors in Thak Khola 1862–1928183

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Contractor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1862–1864</td>
<td>Hem Karna Khadka</td>
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<tr>
<td>1865–1867</td>
<td>Hem Karna Khadka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1868–1870</td>
<td>Balbir Thakali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871–1873</td>
<td>Balbir Thakali</td>
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<tr>
<td>1874–1876</td>
<td>Balbir Thakali</td>
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<tr>
<td>1877–1879</td>
<td>Kaviram Thakali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880–1882</td>
<td>Kaviram Thakali</td>
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<tr>
<td>1883–1885</td>
<td>Ram Prasad Thakali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886–1889</td>
<td>Ram Prasad Thakali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889–1891</td>
<td>Kaviram Thakali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1892–1894</td>
<td>Unknown (Manilal Gurung?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895–1897</td>
<td>Unknown (Manilal Gurung?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898–1900</td>
<td>Kaviram Thakali (or Manilal Gurung?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902–1903</td>
<td>Manilal Gurung (or Harkaman Thakali and Ganesh B. Thakali?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903–1904</td>
<td>Harkaman Thakali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905–1907</td>
<td>Manilal Gurung</td>
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<tr>
<td>1908–1910</td>
<td>Nar Jang Gurung</td>
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<tr>
<td>1911–1913</td>
<td>Ganesh Bahadur Thakali</td>
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<tr>
<td>1914–1917</td>
<td>Ganesh Bahadur Thakali</td>
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<tr>
<td>1918–1920</td>
<td>Nar Jang Gurung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920–1922</td>
<td>Ganesh Bahadur Thakali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923–1925</td>
<td>Hitman Shercan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926–1928</td>
<td>Mohanman Shercan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The relationship between the Thakali and Gurung subba is not clear. Shortly after Manilal Gurung obtained the customs contract in Thak Khola he


183 Fisher 1987, p. 123. Fisher’s rendering of the names has been corrected. For example, Fisher’s Balbir Sherchan and Kabir Ram Sherchan should be Balbir Thakali and Kaviram Thakali, as the use of the surname Shercan was introduced only around the beginning of the 20th century. Also, Kaviram’s youngest son was named Ganesh Bahadur Thakali, not Ganesh Man Shercan. My suggestions in parentheses.
and Harkaman established a fictive brotherhood (*mit*), and their sons also established such a relationship. In spite of this, the Thakali *subba* and their supporters are said to have secretly opposed the Gurung *subba*. To avoid opposition, Nar Jang Gurung shifted the customs office from Tukce (where the Thakali *subba* had their home) to the plain opposite Chairo on the west bank of the Kali Gandaki river, outside the control of the Thakali *subba*. The Thakali were not united in their opposition to the Gurung *subba*, and several cooperated with the Gurung, including Dam Narayan and Cham Narayan of the Gaucan clan, who are said to have provided the necessary security (*jamani*) for Manilal and his sons.

Harkaman's younger brother Ganesh Bahadur took up the challenge against the Gurung *subba*, and around year 1910 he succeeded in getting the customs contract back to the family. The competition between the Thakali and Gurung *subba* increased the price of the customs contract, and in the early 20th century the royalty reached Rs 150,000 a year. This was a fortune, equal to about 56 kg of gold.

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185 According to C. von Führer-Haimendorf, in the 1870s Kaviram moved his residence and also the customs office to Tukce (1975, p. 144). There is, however, documentary evidence (Appendix 1, Document 7) that the customs office was in Dana in 1886, and, according to my informants, it remained there until 1928. However, the Thakali *subba* established a branch office in Tukce for use in summer, and it was this office which Nar Jang shifted to Chairo. This move took place during the period 1917–1919 (ibid., p. 145). Informants mention that Nar Jang made this move after he had been threatened with being thrown in the Kali Gandaki (where he is said to have taken a daily bath regardless of the season) if he remained in Tukce.
186 As mentioned above, the introduction of the salt monopoly in favour of the customs contractor had an adverse effect on the business of other Thakali traders, and some of these were probably pleased when Harkaman's family lost the contract to Manilal Gurung. By providing security, Dam Narayan and Cham Narayan acquired the title of *jamani* subba. The connection between the Gurung *subba* and the Thakali of the Gaucan clan was strengthened by the marriage of Manilal's son Nar Jang with a Gaucan woman.
188 In 1910 gold cost Rs 31 per *tola* (11.66 g) in Kathmandu (Regmi 1981c, p. 116).
189 The royalty payable to the government was Rs 150,000 in cash. It is not clear how the customs contractor got this sum of cash, because the trade is reported to have taken place on a barter basis, 'people from Lo and Baragaun brought the salt to Tukce and received grain in exchange, while people as far as Lamjung, Kansa, Baglung and Gulmi came to Thaksatsae to exchange grain for salt' (C. von Führer-Haimendorf 1975, p. 190; see also Bista 1971, p. 52, and Manzardo 1978, p. 10). However, the Thakali used not only imported rice to pay for the salt, but also locally produced barley. Moreover, according to informants, salt was not only exchanged for rice, but also sold for cash. See also C. von Führer-Haimendorf, ' Merchants and consumers from areas south of Tukce came there to purchase their requirements of salt, and they too paid either in cash or in grain' (1975, p. 145); and Iijima, 'Cash is sometimes used in trading operations, but barter is more common' (1963, p. 47).
tractor had to trade very large quantities of salt and grain at high profit margins.\footnote{190} Moreover, an interruption in the flow of commodities, fluctuations in exchange rates, changes in the monopoly status, decreasing demand for salt in the Nepalese hills, etc., could turn the contractor's projected profit into a loss.

In the 1920s the royalty was reduced first to Rs 110,000 and later to Rs 90,000.\footnote{191} Professor C. von Führer-Haimendorf has related this to a decline in the salt trade, 'The reason for this decline of the salt trade was not a fall in the demand for Tibetan salt – the competition of Indian salt being not yet effective – but a sharp drop in the amount of salt exported by Tibet from the area north of Thak Khola.'\footnote{192} In a footnote C. von Führer-Haimendorf adds, 'According to a personal communication of Mr. Don Messerschmidt, the temporary decline of the flow of salt into Mustang and Thak Khola was probably due to the successful efforts of Gurung customs contractors to divert the Tibetan salt-trade to the Marsyangdi route over which they had control.'\footnote{193} Dr. Manzardo has rejected this explanation and claimed there was no decline in the salt trade, and the reduction in the royalty was the result of a successful scheme by the Thakali subba to increase their own profit, 'A still more plausible explanation, however, is that the Thakali subba, when he was in power, and his agents, when the Gurungs were in power, were not accurately assessing the amount of salt which was being imported. It is quite possible that the difference between revenues collected and revenues said to have been collected was merely a source of increased income for certain Thakali. Thak Khola being a remote district at that time, it is unlikely that there would have been an inquiry (Nep: daudaha) unless the discrepancy was very large. In the text we noted that Man Lal's bid for the contract was excessively high and that the Ranas' were allowing him credit to pay off his debt. If the Thakali were shortweighing the Thak Khola customs records, then the Gurung's own income was being lowered. By bidding up the price of the contract and shortchanging the contract holder, it is likely that the Thakali were soon able to make short work of their Gurung rivals. There is no reason to assume that the

\begin{footnotes}
\item[190] C. von Führer-Haimendorf mentions that in Tukce the contractor would buy salt from northern traders at the rate of 32 lbs per rupee, and later sell it to traders from the south at the rate of 10 lbs per rupee (1975, p. 189). Even with this high profit the contractor would have to buy and sell 990 mt of salt a year to cover the cost of the contract (Rs 150,000). This is 2.7 mt a day, and it would require about 60 porters to transport it out of Thak Khola. It is hard to imagine that the customs contractor traded this huge quantity of salt.
\item[192] Ibid.
\item[193] Ibid. See also Messerschmidt and Gurung 1974, pp. 205–208. The Marsyangdi route is the route along the Marsyangdi river, east of Thak Khola, in Lamjung district.
\end{footnotes}
Thakali would then discontinue the shortage once the Gurungs had been defeated.  

Neither Professor C. von Führer-Haimendorf nor Dr. Manzardo support their propositions with documentary evidence. There does exist documentary evidence that the Tibetans who traditionally supplied salt to Thak Khola in 1895 began to send their salt to other destinations, and the flow of salt was resumed only after a meeting at the border between the contractor (Harkaman Thakali) and the Tibetans.  

Manilal Gurung had the same problem in 1905. These episodes support C. von Führer-Haimendorf’s proposition that the reduction in the royalty payable to the government related to a decline in the supply of salt. Also, due to their competition, the Gurung and Thakali subba may in the 1910s have given unrealistic high bids and the bids (and the royalty) were later reduced to accord with the market situation.  

Meanwhile, in 1907, Manilal Gurung had died and left his son, Nar Jang, as his principal heir. Nar Jang is said to have held the contract from 1908 to 1910 and again from 1918 to 1920. In the end, the enmity and rivalry between the Thakali and Gurung subba was so strong that Nar Jang was forcibly driven out of Thak Khola and into Manang, where a battle ensued and there were reportedly some deaths. Ultimately, Nar Jang settled at Thonje in Manang where his father had established a trading post.  

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196 Ibid. As suggested by C. von Führer-Haimendorf and Messerschmidt, the Gurung subba may have tried to divert the supply of salt from Thak Khola to the Marsyangdi area after they had given up the customs contract in Thak Khola. However, considering that Manilal had problems with the supply of salt to Thak Khola when he was customs contractor in 1905, it is unlikely that the decline of the flow of salt to Thak Khola in the 1920s was due to the successful efforts of his son. An alternative guess is that the Tibetan suppliers sent their salt to areas where prices were higher than in Thak Khola, that salt supplies were interrupted by bandits along the supply route, or that the Tibetan government temporarily stopped the supply of salt due to disputes with the Nepalese government.  

197 There could be other explanations for the reduction in the royalty. For example, the Thakali and Gurung subba could have agreed not to compete against each other and to share the profit arisen from the reduction in the royalty. The lower bids could be explained to the government as a result of a decline in the salt trade. And Manzardo (see above) has suggested that the Thakali subba forced the Gurung subba out of the contest, and subsequently reduced their bid and thus achieved a reduction in the royalty payable to the government. None of these explanations, however, make sense, because the subba are said to have made little or no profit during the final years of the monopoly (see also note below). Moreover, informants mention that it was the Thakali subba who approached the government to get the old custom collection system abolished.  

198 Don Messerschmidt, personal communication.
Informants mention that in the 1920s the Thakali subba made little or no profit from the customs contract, and consequently they began to work for the abolition of the contract system and the reintroduction of free trade.\textsuperscript{199} Although this would mean an end to their monopoly in the trade of salt, they would no longer have to pay a royalty to the government. The abolition of the monopoly would, of course, result in a loss of revenue to the government, but the Thakali subba were close to the Rana rulers. In 1927 the government abolished the old customs collecting system, including the customs contractor's monopoly on the trade of salt.\textsuperscript{200}

When the monopoly ended the members of the Balbir lineage were the richest persons in Thak Khola and surrounding areas. The wealth of the family was founded primarily on the customs contract which it had held almost constantly since 1869. Besides trade in salt and foodgrains, the Thakali subba had a major income from trade in wool. The wool was bought in Tibet and transported to the southern border where it was sold and exported to India. In the late 19th century the Thakali subba also held a contract for collection of customs duties in the upper part of the Marsyangdi river.\textsuperscript{201} Further, the subba family owned extensive land and while the surplus of barley (the winter crop) was exchanged for salt, buckwheat (the summer crop) was used for consumption. Finally, the subba were major moneylenders. Default loans occasionally gave a loss, but more often it was a good opportunity to acquire land and (bonded) labour at a cheap price.

Besides the subba, the customs contract benefitted their affinal relatives and other trusted friends who assisted in the buying and selling of salt and grain, the collection of customs duties, and the keeping of records and accounts.\textsuperscript{202} But to other traders the monopoly was an evil. The restrictions imposed on trade in salt, in effect, put them out of this business and they concentrated their efforts on trade in other commodities, especially wool and live animals (goats and sheep). Some traders also travelled to Kalimpong in India to buy Tibetan tea and other goods for sale in Thak Khola and neighbouring areas.

\textsuperscript{199} See also C. von Führer-Haimendorf (1975) who mentions that 'during the final years of the monopoly, the customs contractors' account are said to have shown a loss of about Rs 40,000 per year' (p. 145). C. von Führer-Haimendorf doubts, however, whether this actually was the case. 'We may doubt whether the Thakali subba really suffered in any year a loss of Rs 40,000' (p. 146).

\textsuperscript{200} It is not clear whether the customs collecting system was abolished in 1927 or 1928. C. von Führer-Haimendorf gives the year 1928 and also 1932 in the same book (1975, p. 146 and 188).

\textsuperscript{201} Messerschmidt and Gurung 1974, p. 204.

\textsuperscript{202} This includes especially members of the dhyatan lineage of the Tulacan clan with whom the members of the Balbir lineage had (and still have) close affinal relations.
In the early 20th century the majority of Thakali, especially in the villages situated away from the caravan route (Taglung, Kunjo and Naprungkhung) made a living primarily from agriculture and animal husbandry (yak, goat and sheep). These Thakali had little or no income from trade and the monopoly did not affect them much, except for the restrictions imposed on import of salt for household consumption.\(^{203}\)

The wealth of the Thakali subba and their connections to the rulers in Kathmandu gave them a dominant position in the political affairs in Thak Khola and neighbouring areas. Within their own community the subba used their political influence to introduce reforms of Thakali culture. In the 19th century Thakali society and culture were much influenced by Tibetan civilization. However, in the beginning of the 20th century the sons of Harkaman Thakali introduced reforms to substitute Tibetan elements in Thakali culture with elements from the culture and religion of the Hindu rulers in Kathmandu. This ‘de-Tibetanization’ included, among others, the introduction of new surnames (Gaucan, Tulacan, Shercan and Bhattacan\(^{204}\)), the abolition of the Thakali’s traditional Tibetan-style winter dress, a ban on the consumption of yak meat, and a ban on capture marriages. The Thakali subba obviously introduced these reforms in order to appear less ‘Tibetan’ in the eyes of the high caste rulers in Kathmandu, and this move may well relate to the loss of the customs contract to Manilal Gurung in 1902.\(^ {205}\)

Ada Naren of Marpha

The present examination so far has focused on Thaksatsae and the Tamang Thakali. In the 19th century the economic situation in Pacgau was similar to that of Thaksatsae, as described above. The bulk of the villagers lived in poverty, and

\(^{203}\) According to informants from Thaksatsae as well as Pacgau, households were allowed to import only five pathi (approximately 22 litres) of salt for their own consumption during the period of monopoly. This was not sufficient (especially for households raising animals), and informants from Taglung mention that villagers therefore had to smuggle salt during the period of the monopoly.

\(^{204}\) In the late 19th century the Tamang Thakali used ‘Thakali’ as their surname. For example, a document from 1886 mentions Kaviram Thakali and Ram Prasad Thakali (Appendix 1, Document no. 7). It is not known exactly when the Tamang Thakali invented Nepali names (Gaucan, Tulacan, Shercan and Bhattacan) for their clans and began to use these as surnames, but Harkaman was referred to as Harkaman Thakali in 1895 (Uprety 1980, p. 169) and his younger brother as Ganesh Bahadur Thakali in 1902 (Regmi 1988, p. 244). Moreover, in a local document from 1906 (in the author’s possession) Ganesh Bahadur signed himself as Ganesh Bahadur Thakali.

\(^{205}\) For a discussion of these changes, see Chapter XV.
those who could not pay their share of the homestead tax left their home and settled elsewhere.206 There were also a handful of rich traders, as indicated by the big houses along the main street in Marpha.

The biggest house in Marpha is 'the house with the fat pillars' in the southern end of the village, built by Ada Naren of the Lalcan clan. The Japanese monk Kawaguchi Ekai met Ada Naren in October 1899 and refers to him as 'the chief of the village of Malba.'207 The meeting took place in Tsarang, an important village in Lo, and Ada Naren was on his way back to Marpha from one of his periodic visits to a yak ranch which he owned in the northwestern plains of Tibet. Ada Naren had bought some scriptures in Tibet and he invited Kawaguchi to Marpha to recite these. However, Ada Naren left shortly afterwards on a business trip to India and it was only in March 1900 that Kawaguchi went to Marpha. Kawaguchi writes, '(I) was given the freedom of the family chapel, which consisted of two neatly furnished apartments, the innermost of which contained a fine set of Buddha images, as well as the Tibetan edition of the Sacred Text and other volumes of ecclesiatical writings ...'208

The peace which Kawaguchi enjoyed in Marpha was spoiled by a trader from Tukce who had gone to Calcutta on business209 and whom Kawaguchi had asked to deliver some letters to Sarat Chandra Das.210 In Calcutta the Tukce trader had learned that Das was an employee of the British Government and he, therefore, concluded that Kawaguchi (who he thought was a Chinese Lama) in reality was a British agent on some secret mission in Nepal.211 The villagers in Marpha were, of course, concerned to hear this because 'if there were any truth in the rumour, he [Ada Naren] and his folks would be visited with what punishment heaven only knew.'212 Kawaguchi decided to unveil his identity to Ada Naren whom he found 'a man of conscience, who could be trusted with a

206 Vinding 1984, p. 64.
208 Kawaguchi 1909, pp. 64–65.
209 Ada Naren’s business trip to India and the Tukce traders trip to Calcutta illustrate the extent of the business of some Thakali traders in the late 19th century.
210 Sarat Chandra Das (a Bengali) is the author on several books on Tibet, including a dictionary (Das 1902).
211 This was not a far-fetched conclusion. S.C. Das had in fact visited Tibet as a spy for the British, and he is immortalised in Rudyard Kipling's Kim as Hurree Chunder Mookerjee (Hopkirk 1982, p. 55 and 1996, pp. 224–226). While it is unlikely that Kawaguchi was engaged as a spy for the British, he may unknowingly have provided S.C. Das with information of some intelligence value.
212 Kawaguchi 1909, p. 66.
Kawaguchi showed his passport to Ada Naren who ‘understood just enough English to follow out the spelling of some words in that language’ and explained his plan to secretly visit Tibet. Ada Naren apparently convinced his fellow villagers that Kawaguchi was not a spy and Kawaguchi stayed in Marpha until June when he left for Tibet.

Kawaguchi does not refer to Ada Naren as subba, but according to local informants Ada Naren had been given the title in connection with a contract on collection of customs duties in Tsharka (Dolpo district). Tamang Thakali informants confirm that Ada Naren was a tax collector in Tsharka, but they reject that Ada Naren was officially appointed subba.

The Post-Monopoly Period

As mentioned above, the old customs collecting system and the monopoly in trade in salt ended in 1927. To replace the administrative and judicial authority of the customs contractor the government sent a magistrate to Thak Khola and established a court at Kobang. However, the court functioned in Kobang only during the summer months, and in the winter was moved to Dana where it was warmer. This arrangement, necessitating the periodic move of records, was found impracticable and after three years the government established the court permanently in Dana.

The government established, in 1928, a customs office in Jomsom and entrusted the collection of customs duties to government officials. This system did not function satisfactorily, and in 1930 the government appointed some members of Balbir’s lineage as customs collectors in Jomsom against an annual payment of Rs 12,000. This contract was only of minor importance to the Thakali subba and the management of the customs office was entrusted to some relatives from Jomsom.

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213 Ibid.
214 Ibid.
215 In this case, and some others, the subba title may have been used unofficially as a term of respect. In 1899 Kawaguchi also met Ada Naren’s father Sonam Nhurbu (1909, p. 64). In a document from 1906 that includes the signatures of, among others, subba Manilal Gurung and subba Ganesh Bahadur Thakali, Sonam Nhurbu is referred to as subba too. The document is also signed by subba Man Bahadur Thakali of Tukce; was he a jamani subba of the Gaucan clan?
217 In 1954 the government closed down the Jomsom customs office and the collection of customs duties on salt entering Nepal was done only at the customs office at Nechung in Lo near the Tibetan border. It is not known when the customs office at Nechung was established. According to C. von Führer-Haimendorf, it was in operation in the 1930s (1975, p. 191).
With the abolishment of the salt monopoly in 1927 trade was again open to all. Consequently, the profits which earlier had been made by the customs contractor became divided among a large number of traders. In the 1930s a new trail was constructed between Ghasa and Dana, making it easier to take pack animals south of Thak Khola. At the same time Thakali traders began to acquire mules. This animal is well suited for transportation along the Kali Gandaki. Thakali mule owners bought salt and wool in Lo and Tibet which they later sold in Tatopani, Beni, Baglung, Tansen, Butwal and Pokhara. On the return trip the mules brought mainly rice back to Thak Khola. However, while some Thakali traders sought to maximize profits by buying salt in the north and exchanging it in the south, other Thakali traders are said to have purchased, stored and exchanged salt without leaving Thak Khola.

Initially only rich Thakali traders acquired mules. In the 1930s only two households in Jomsom (both Tamang Thakali) had mules and there were none in Marpha, Thini and Syang. Traders from these villages used jho and ox to transport salt and foodgrains, but only down to Tatopani, as the jho cannot survive further south. Later the Thakali of Pacgau acquired mules and today mule business is a major source of income in these villages.

In addition to salt, wool and live sheep and goats were important trade items. According to informants, the Thakali traded about 50,000 kg wool annually in the 1930s, while in the 1940s they used to buy about 18,000 goats a year from Tibet to be sold in the south for the dasain festival.

Thakali trade was not limited only to goods imported from Tibet (salt, wool and live animals). In winter traders took their mules to Butwal (near the Indian border) where they bought rice, sugar, cigarettes, cloth, and the like, which they sold in the bazaars in the hills or in Thak Khola. Traders who did not have mules used porters, and even after deducting the cost of portage, the goods were sold for handsome profits. Some even travelled to Kalimpong in India to buy Tibetan tea and incense, which they took by train to the Nepalese border, and from there onwards by porter to Thak Khola.

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218 According to Gurung (1980, p. 200) there are two old trails on the western side of the valley. The higher one is 450 meters above the river and is said to have been initiated by Manilal Gurung. The lower one is from 1935 and the cost of construction was paid by a royal priest.

219 See also C. von Führer-Haimendorf 1975, pp. 189-190.

220 See Chapter IV.

221 For Thakali trade in wool and livestock, see C. von Führer-Haimendorf 1975, pp. 191-196.

222 An informant from Marpha recalls that in 1935 he travelled to Kathmandu where he bought Rs 1,400 worth of cloth. From Kathmandu he took the cloth to Tansen where he sold it with a handsome profit. The cloth was transported by 14 porters; each porter carried 60-65 kg and was paid Rs 20 for the entire (two-week) trip.
90 THE THAKALI

With the expansion of trade in the south, Thakali women began to establish small inns along the main trails to provide food and lodging for Thakali traders. The inns also served others, including soldiers from the British Army travelling on home leave.

In the postmonopoly period the Thakali subba expanded their business south of Thak Khola to take advantage of growing business opportunities, a decline in their share of the salt trade, and limited investment opportunities in Thak Khola. The Thakali subba already had houses and farm land in Dana (where the winter customs office was located) and their trading network extended to India, but for the first time members of the subba family settled permanently in the south.

The first to do so was Hitman Shercan’s eldest son, Anangman Shercan (1912–1996), who in 1930 (at the age of 18) was appointed head (subba) of the tax office in Taulihawa at the Indian border. Other family members went into business. Since 1924 the Gurung subba had held a contract in Butwal on the collection of customs duties, but in 1936, and from 1939 to 1942, the contract was held by Lalitman Shercan (Mohanman’s eldest son). Further, Krishnaman Shercan (Hitman’s second son) had a contract in Rajapur from 1939 to 1942, and Nagendraman Shercan (Mohanman’s second son) one in Nepalganj over the same period.

The middle sons (Mohanman’s son Shangkarman and Hitman’s son Indraman) were asked to stay back in Thak Khola to look after family interests, while the youngest ones (including Hitman’s son Bhupendraman) were sent to college in India.

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223 Iijima has given a vivid description of this event, ‘Around 1930 Anangaman Sherchan, a member of a prominent Thakali family, was appointed Treasury Officer of the Central Government and assigned to the Terai, the ‘Land of Awal’ (the Land of Fever) in southern Nepal. His family members and other Thakali bid him a tearful farewell, certain that they would never see him again if he went to this ‘fearful land’. Contrary to their expectations, Anangaman Sherchan returned to Thakola safely, despite the unhealthy climate of the Terai. Following this experience, the Thakali started to travel to the south in increasing numbers, where they came into frequent contract with the Hindu inhabitants’ (1963, pp. 46–47).

224 Krishnaman first became a contract subba (thekka subba), but he was later appointed subba in the civil service (sarkari subba, or kitab khana subba). As a civil servant he worked for about three years near Ridi where the retired ex-prime minister Juddha Shamsher lived for a short period.

225 Bhupendraman (1936–1989), alias Bhupi, went to school at Banaras in 1952. According to Hutt, Bhupi was probably the most popular and widely read Nepali poet of the 1970s and 1980s (1991, p. 119). Bhupi’s reputation was established with the 1969 collection ghumne mechmāthī andho mānche (A Blind Man on a Revolving Chair). Bhupi’s poems are witty, satirical and angry; they often speak for the cause of the suppressed and downtrodden. As a
In the early 20th century the subba family extended its influence to the areas north of Thaksatsae, economically as well as politically. The members of the family lent money to needy villagers in the north. Debtors who were unable to pay the interest had no alternative but to sell some of their land to the Thakali subba, or to let a family member work as bonded labour for the creditor. Thus the Thakali subba accumulated large landholdings in Pacgau and Baragau. Lending was not limited to poor villagers, but included also the Mustang royal family.

In the 1930s members of the Balbir lineage became external headmen (cikyap) of the villages in Pacgau and Baragau. The villagers in Thak Khola and Baragau often request powerful neighbours to mediate in conflicts which cannot be resolved locally. However, the villagers of Pacgau and Baragau are said to have asked the members of the Balbir lineage to become cikyap of their villages because they believed that these could look after their relations to the government better than any local. Harkaman Thakali's sons divided the villages: Hitman's family got Syang and Cimang in Pacgau, and Tangbe, Tetang, Chusang, Gyaka and Chaile in Baragau; Mohanman's family got the remaining part of Baragau as well as Geling village, while Guptaman's family received Marpha and Thini. The cikyap mediated in conflicts within and between villages, initiated the rehabilitation of irrigation systems, and (in the 1950s) the establishment of schools. As payment the cikyap received from each household (in Syang) two mandays of free labour and about seven kg of barley; some cikyap were also presented plots of uncultivated land.

Decline in the 1960s

In March 1959 the Dalai Lama fled Tibet following an unsuccessful uprising against China which had occupied the country in 1950. In the following months thousands of Tibetans fled to India, Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim. Some of the Tibetans who settled in Mustang were armed guerrillas who remained outside the communist Bhupi was jailed in the 1960s, but in 1979 he finally received recognition and was awarded membership of the Royal Nepal Academy (ibid., pp. 119–121).

226 According to informants, the members of the Balbir lineage never forced fellow Tamang Thakali to work for them as bonded labourers.

227 Thakali traders and businessmen often take loans to finance new ventures if they can get a loan cheap, or if they lack capital for a new venture. The Thakali subba too obtained loans to finance new business ventures. Several loans were obtained from rich traders in Tetang (in Baragau), and some were repaid only in the 1970s.

228 Until recently the members of the Balbir lineage were among the biggest landowners in Pacgau and Baragau.
authorities' control until 1974 when the Royal Nepalese Army forced them to lay down their weapons.

The political developments in Tibet, as well as the insecurity along the caravan route caused by the guerrillas, disrupted the flow of salt from Tibet and increased the price in Nepal. In 1959 the exchange rate at Tukce was 2 measures of salt for 1 measure of barley, but in 1962 11–12 measures of salt were exchanged for 10 measures of barley. In the 1950s cheap Indian salt entered the market in the southern and middle parts of Nepal. Due to the disruption in the flow of salt from Tibet and the increase in the price of this salt in the 1960s, as well as the construction of roads from India to the middle hills of Nepal (which reduced transportation costs significantly), Indian salt soon took over the market in Nepal. The amount of Tibetan salt entering Thak Khola has now been reduced to a minimum.

Trade in wool also declined in the 1960s. Following the war between India and China in 1962, India restricted the import of Chinese goods, including Tibetan wool, and Thakali wool traders lost their most important market.

Due to these 'push' factors – as well as some important 'pull' factors – a large number of Thakali emigrated from Thak Khola in the 1960s. The emigration was greatest from Tukce which was heavily dependent on trade: in 1962, 64 of 92 houses in the village belonged to Thakali, but in 1972 there were only 9; fifty-five of the Tamang Thakali households who had resided in Tukce in 1962 were ten years later living in places outside Thak Khola.

Since the 1970s conditions in Thak Khola have improved much and, as described in the next chapter, at present living conditions in Thak Khola compare favourably with other parts of Nepal.

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230 In 1972 Indian salt was sold in Pokhara for Rs 2 per measure (pathi) while Tibetan salt cost Rs 4.50 even in Tukce (C. von Fürer-Haimendorf 1978, p. 348).
231 For a description of the present salt trade in Thak Khola, see Chapter IV.
233 For an analysis of these 'push' and 'pull' factors, see Chapter XIV.
Chapter IV
MAKING A LIVING

This chapter examines how the Thakali of Thak Khola make a living. It describes the subsistence economy, the need for cash and ways to obtain an income. The chapter also examines the Thakali traditional credit and savings associations (dikur). Its ends with an analysis of the factors that have facilitated and hindered economic development in Thak Khola.¹

THE SUBSISTENCE ECONOMY

The Thakali of Thak Khola produce many of the goods needed by the household through agriculture, gathering and animal husbandry.

Gathering

The Thakali make use of stones and clay for the construction of houses and fences, limestone for white-washing houses and soil for colouring walls. Wood is utilized as fuel, for building houses and bridges, and for making tools and utensils. Pine is the main fuelwood in Thaksatsae, while cypress and juniper are used in Pacgau. Forests are found close to the villages in Thaksatsae, and wood is transported by oxen and men; in Pacgau most of the forest is situated 800–1,000 m

¹ The present chapter is a revised version of Vinding 1984. While information has been updated, the chapter presents a picture of mainly the early 1980s. Several works include information on the economy of the Thakali of Thak Khola (e.g. Iijima 1977), but on the whole information remains sparse. Thakali trade has been described by C. von Furer-Haimendorf 1975, animal husbandry by Manzardo 1984, and the dikur system by Messerschmidt 1978, Fisher 1984 and Chhetri 1995.
above the villages, and wood is transported mainly by oxen and *jho* (a hybrid between common cattle and yak).

Small pieces of resinous pine (*methang*) are used as kindling and in the southern part of Thaksatsae as a source of light, while resin is utilized as a glue. In the southern part of Thaksatsae mountain bamboo is used for making baskets, mats, brooms and other utensils and tools. Pine-needles (*san*) are gathered by women in winter and spring and used for making composted fertilizer. Grass from pastures (*pang chi*) and field boundaries (*dhum chi*) is used as fodder for horses.

Wild fruits and berries are collected, and the kernels of apricot and peach are utilized for making oil. Wild garlic (*pang nho*), mushrooms (*timu*), edible plants (*dho*) and grasses are collected and used in cooking; for example, in summer green leaves of the sweet buckwheat (*gyapre dho*) are gathered and eaten raw with curd or boiled. Bamboo grows and is used only in the southern part of Thaksatsae. Wild herbs and plants are also collected for producing medicine and dyes.

**Agriculture**

Agriculture (*kheti lawa*) is the main economic activity in Thak Khola. In Pacgau there are two main types of fields, namely irrigated fields close to the villages (*ta le*), and non-irrigated forest fields (*dong le*) situated up to 1,000 meters above the villages. Two crops are obtained annually from irrigated fields, while only one crop is grown on non-irrigated fields. Irrigated land accounts for an estimated 70 per cent of the cultivated area.

On irrigated fields the main winter crop is six-row naked barley (*karu*), while two-row hull barley (*cika*) and wheat (*gho*) are the secondary crops. Garlic (*nho*) is cultivated in a small section of a wheat field. Sweet buckwheat (*gyapre*) is the main summer crop and is usually cultivated in those fields where barley and

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2 Wild fruits collected in Thak Khola include, among others, peach (*kyakam*), apricot (*cili*), apple (*kusyo*) and an unidentified fruit known locally as *khalya*. Numerous berries are collected. The most popular are known as *timung*, *tangsar* and *palang*.

3 Numerous mushrooms are collected, e.g. *nakata* and *tilinha*.

4 For example, the root (*bhri*) of the pasture rhubarb (*pung kyung*) is used for producing a yellow-brownish colour.

5 There are two varieties of six-row barley: a white (*karu*) and a black one (*syon*). There are also several varieties of wheat: *tob gho* (Tibetan wheat), *nhang gho* (local variety) and *bikas gho* (improved wheat).

6 In Marpha the cultivation of garlic and maize is forbidden according to local law, but this section of the law is no longer observed.
wheat are the winter crops; maize (mokai), beans (simi) and vegetables are the secondary summer crops.\(^7\)

### Table 5: Agricultural pattern in Thak Khola

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Type of Field</th>
<th>Season</th>
<th>Main Crops</th>
<th>Secondary Crops</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pacgau</td>
<td>Main fields</td>
<td>Winter</td>
<td>Naked barley</td>
<td>Hull</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Wheat and garlic</td>
<td>barley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Irrigated)</td>
<td>Summer</td>
<td>Sweet buckwheat</td>
<td>Maize and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Radish</td>
<td>Beans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Vegetables</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Forest fields</td>
<td>Summer</td>
<td>Potatoes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mustard</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bitter buckwheat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Radish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thaksatsae</td>
<td>Main fields</td>
<td>Winter</td>
<td>Hull barley</td>
<td>Wheat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(North)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Naked barley</td>
<td>Garlic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Summer</td>
<td>Sweet buckwheat</td>
<td>Potatoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Maize and beans</td>
<td>Mustard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bitter buckwheat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Vegetables</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marginal fields</td>
<td>Summer</td>
<td>Potatoes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thaksatsae</td>
<td>Main fields</td>
<td>Winter</td>
<td>Hull barley</td>
<td>Naked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(South)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Wheat</td>
<td>barley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Summer</td>
<td>Maize and beans</td>
<td>Buckwheat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Vegetables</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marginal fields</td>
<td>Summer</td>
<td>Hull barley</td>
<td>Potatoes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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7 There are two varieties: one with white and red flowers (saikan gyapre) and one with red flowers (sai cyang gyapre).

8 Maize was introduced in Thak Khola in the 1940s (Iijima 1963, p. 46). There are two varieties, white (tar) and yellow (ur).
In Pacgau radishes are the traditional vegetable, but since the 1960s numerous new vegetables have been introduced, including carrot, tomato, cabbage, cauliflower, peas and spinach.\(^9\)

In the forest fields villagers cultivate mainly bitter buckwheat (\textit{bhre}), potatoes (\textit{taya}) and mustard (\textit{nanum}). Mustard is a major crop in Syang, while little is cultivated in Marpha. In Thini large quantities of radish are grown in some forest fields close to the village.\(^10\)

The agriculture cycle in Syang illustrates the cropping pattern in Pacgau. The winter crops are sown (\textit{pumpa}) in early November. There are no major agricultural activities in winter, except that the fields are irrigated (\textit{le yang kyu jangpa}) six or seven times between the sowing and the harvest. Weeding (\textit{mra sewa}) starts in the middle of March and continues for two to three weeks. The forests fields are enhanced with goat manure (\textit{ra du}) and mustard is sown in April, potatoes are laid in early May, and bitter buckwheat is sown in late May.

The harvest (\textit{tompa}) of the winter crops starts in early June with the harvest of hull barley. The plant is cut with a sickle (\textit{gora}) and the ears are detached from the stalks using a tool with a big iron comb (\textit{dhasin}).\(^11\) The ears are carried to the house and dried, and later threshed with flails (\textit{ghyasya}).\(^12\) The harvesting and the threshing is performed by either sex, but mainly by men. Winnowing is done by women, using bamboo fans; during winnowing, the women whistle to call the wind.

Following the harvest, fields are irrigated and ploughed (\textit{le gyowa}). If necessary, fields are manured before ploughing. The best fields are manured only in autumn, while those of low quality are manured in the spring as well. The fields are sown with maize and beans by a woman walking behind the plough (\textit{ghor}) dropping seeds into the furrow. In order to cover the seeds and to facilitate irrigation the surface is smoothed (\textit{thetya thewa}), using a wooden board (\textit{thetya}) drawn by a pair of \textit{jho} and weighted down by a man.

Activities between the sowing and the harvest of sweet buckwheat are less labour intensive than the two harvest periods. Maize is weeded and soil heaped around the stalks in the second half of July. Mustard, bitter buckwheat and po-

\(^{9}\) There are two varieties of radish: a white, round one known as \textit{lapu} (or \textit{tob lapu}), and a long red and white sweet variety (\textit{mula} or \textit{mon lapu}).

\(^{10}\) The production of the forest fields is low compared with workload, and in recent years cultivation in almost all forest fields has ceased. For example, in 1972 Syang had forest fields in three separate locations, in 1988 only in one, and in 1995 cultivation had ceased.

\(^{11}\) In Thaksatsae the ears are clipped off with bamboo staves used in a scissor-like manner.

\(^{12}\) The flails consist of a long stick to which a beater made of four or five short pieces of bamboo is tied with leather thongs in such a way that it rotates as the thresher lifts the flail and then hits the earth with its broad side.
tatoes are weeded at the end of July and sweet buckwheat at the beginning of August. Radish is harvested in the middle of August, mustard in the beginning of September, bitter buckwheat in the middle of September, and maize in the last week of September; the potato harvest (*taya dowa*) commences at the end of September.

Table 6: The agriculture cycle, Syang

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crop</th>
<th>Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Village fields</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fields</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-bitter buckwheat</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>irrig.</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,850 m</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maize/beans</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sweet buckwheat</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest fields</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>potatoes</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>irrig.</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3,700 m</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to local villagers, sweet buckwheat takes exactly 108 days to mature, and it is forbidden to harvest the crop any earlier. The harvest usually takes place in the second half of October, the exact day being determined by the village astrologer. The ears are cut with a sickle and spread out on a big blanket and beaten with staves (*lhadung*). After the harvest, fields are irrigated and animals are allowed to graze in the fields for about two weeks. The fields are then fertilized, ploughed, and sown with barley and wheat.

Except for a few fields at Tukce and Sauru, the fields in Thaksatsae are not irrigated. An estimated 50 per cent of the fields give two annual crops while others give only one; two yearly crops are more common in the north than in the south. In Pacgau the irrigated fields continuously give two yearly harvests, but in Thaksatsae fields are sometimes left fallow to regain strength.

In the southern part of Thaksatsae hull barley is the main winter crop and maize and beans the main summer crops on fields which give two yearly crops; naked barley and wheat are the secondary wintercrops and buckwheat the secondary summer crop. Hull barley and potato are the main crops in the fields
which produce once yearly. In summer, vegetables are grown in a corner of a maize field or in a field with fruit trees; in addition to the vegetables found in Pacgau, pumpkin, watermelon and soyabean are also grown in the southern part of Thaksatsae.

In the northern part of Thaksatsae hull barley and naked barley are the main winter crops in the fields which give two annual harvests while sweet buckwheat and maize are the main summer crops; wheat is the secondary winter crop while bitter buckwheat, potato, mustard and vegetables are the secondary summer crops. Potato is the main crop in the fields which give only one harvest a year.

Agricultural activities are undertaken by household members, sometimes supplied by hired labour. Like other Nepalese groups, the Thakali practice reciprocal exchange labour. For example, the weeding of the winter crops is typically done by informal gangs of women who on rotation weed the fields of each other. Exchange is reciprocal, but gangs may work an extra day for a member against the standard daily wage.

### Animal Husbandry

Animal husbandry (*dhunda chyangpa*) also plays a significant role in the subsistence economy of the Thakali. Cattle and *jho* are an integral part of the subsistence economy, while goat, sheep, yak and mule are kept primarily to produce goods or services for market sale. These animals will be described later.

There are two types of cattle in Thak Khola, namely Himalayan dwarf cattle (*mhe*) which are found mainly in Pacgau, and common Nepalese hill cattle (*mon mhe*) (*Bos taurus* and *Bos indicus*) which are kept mainly in Thaksatsae. In addition to reproductive purposes, cows are kept for milk and dung production. The dwarf cow is milked for a period of six months with a daily maximum production of three *mana*. If a calf dies its skin is sometimes stuffed with straw and placed beside the cow to stimulate continued lactation.

The dwarf cattle are the village garbage collectors. Animals roam freely and eat grass, straw, human faeces, and discarded paper and cloth; at home the cattle are fed straw (*chi*), husks and the grain leftovers from the production of

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13 For hire of labour, see below.
14 For a study of cooperation in Nepal, see Messerschmidt 1981. Among Tibetans, see Miller 1956.
15 One *mana* measures 0.545 litres. Eight *mana* equal one *pathi* (4.36 litres), and 20 *pathi* equal one *muri*. One *pathi* of paddy weighs 2.48 kg (Regmi 1978a, p. 163). The Thakali also have a local *pathi* (*sin pyang*) that equals half of a national *pathi* (*dhwang pyang*). One local *pathi* contains six local *mana*. 
alcohol (phatala). Although milk production is low, the Himalayan dwarf cattle is a useful animal - from low value inputs it produces a valuable output, dung for fertilizer. The villagers value dung and collect it in baskets when they take their cattle for watering.

In addition to dung, bulls are kept for reproduction and transport, and oxen for transport and traction. The cattle are kept in the village during winter and at upper pastures in summer. Kobang and Larjung have a cooperative system for herding cattle. Participating households supply labour on a rotational basis and every morning two herdsman take the village herd for grazing.

The jho is a cross-breed between yak and common cattle. Being hybrids, jho are usually sterile.16 The Thakali dislike breeding hybrids and jho are therefore imported from Gorkha, Rasuwa and Solukhumbu districts.17 The jho kept in Thak Khola are offspring of a yak bull and a zebu cow, a variety of cattle best adapted to the local ecological conditions.

In 1977 there were 270 jho in Pacgau, and Syang had the largest number (99). Formerly there used to be many jho in Marpha, but in 1977 there were only four.18 There are only a few jho in Thaksatsae as they do not adapt well to local ecological conditions. Jho are used mainly for traction and to transport wood and other products from the forests down to the village. The jho can carry up to 120 kg and the Thakali prefer the male (jhopa) which is stronger than the female (jhomo). In winter jho are sometimes used to transport salt down to Tatopani and to bring back rice. They are fed with straw and leftovers from the production of alcohol, and in summer are let loose in the upper pastures (pang yang piwa). In Syang the villagers appoint a man to look after the cattle and the jho in summer; his salary is paid by the participating households according to the number of animals they have in the herd. The Thakali do not slaughter and eat cattle or jho, and old animals are sold to Tibetan-speaking people living in Thak Khola or further north.

16 Writing about the jho, Ekvall mentions, ‘valuable though the results of the first cross may be, the line of descent ends with the hybrid’ (1968, p. 15). According to my Thakali informants, the male jho (jhopa) is always sterile, but females (jhomo) occasionally bear offspring.

17 Iijima has reported that the Thakali ‘breed dzo [jho] (a hybrid of yak and cattle), mules, horses, and donkeys for use as pack animals in their trading operations’ (1977, p. 80). As mentioned in the text, the Thakali do not breed jho and mules. Prejudice against producing hybrids is found in Tibet too, ‘It is widely held that hybridization is not quite the proper thing, either because the local gods may become angry and send cattle epidemics, storms, and killing hail or because it is poor long-term herd management’ (Ekvall 1968, p. 15).

18 C. von Führer-Haimendorf writes, however, that in 1976 there were 35 jho in Marpha, down from 89 in 1962 (1981a, p. 184).
Hunting

Hunting (*shikar kyangpa*) is forbidden by national law and plays only a minor role in the local economy. Formerly, muskdeer (*lo*) was a favorite game animal because of the musk, and the chukor patridge (*tangco*) because of its delicious meat. In autumn rose finches (*nemyang wola*) descend to the villages, and at night young men blind them with torches to catch and eat them.

Formerly, when villagers killed predators, such as leopards, they would tie the body to a pole and carry it around neighbouring villages, where they would receive money and drinks as a reward. As hunting is now forbidden by the Government, this custom is no longer done openly.

THE NEED FOR CASH

Although the Thakali of Thak Khola produce many of the goods needed by the household, none is self-sufficient and all households have to buy goods and services. In addition, cash is needed for paying taxes and to cover expenses for religious ceremonies, marriages and entertainment.

Goods

Local Foodgrains

Most households produce sufficient grain to meet their requirements, but some do not produce all varieties of local foodgrains and must buy certain products at the market. For example, buckwheat porridge (*syangden*) is one of the two staple meals in Pacgau, and households with little land cultivate sweet buckwheat as the only summer crop and buy their limited requirements of maize and beans locally, or in Thaksatsae. Also, many households in Jomsom do not produce potatoes and import this crop from Lete and Baragau. Furthermore, many inns buy barley at the local market for the production of alcohol. Finally, mule owners from Pacgau purchase large quantities of maize and hull barley from Thaksatsae; the maize is usually purchased in November when the price is low.

Rice

Paddy is not cultivated in Thak Khola, and until a few decades ago most Thakali had rice only on special occasions. This has changed and except for the poorest
households the Thakali now eat rice once a day. Rice is expensive in Thak Khola due to high transportation costs, and is a major demand on the household budget.

Mule owners buy rice in Beni and transport it to Thak Khola in autumn and spring. Households that have jho and oxen usually travel to Tatopani in winter to buy rice. Households without mules sometimes buy their rice in Beni and get a mule owner to bring it back to Thak Khola; although the transportation cost is high, it is cheaper than buying it in Thak Khola. The Thakali usually do not porter their own rice. It is more cost-effective to use mules; moreover, the Thakali do not like to be seen carrying heavy loads. Some rice is also bought locally from shops and traders.

The Nepal Food Corporation (NFC) sells rice in Thak Khola at subsidized rates, but villagers can buy only limited quantities.

Animal Products

After an animal has been slaughtered the meat is dried and later used for making curry. The rich eat meat daily, while the poor have it only in connection with festivals and marriages. A meal includes only a few, small pieces of meat and the meat consumption is low. In Thaksatsae and Pacgau only about one out of five households raise goats, sheep or yak, and others buy meat and other animal products in the market.

The local supply of yak meat comes from old females which are slaughtered when they reach about 15 years. Although some Tamang Thakali do not eat yak meat, demand exceeds local supply and old castrated males are imported for slaughter from the north. Animals are slaughtered in the autumn when they are fat. Several households go together to buy a yak, and the various parts of the animal (meat, lungs, liver, etc.) are divided into equal shares (tisu) and allocated by drawing lots. The hide is sold, while the tail (yha me) is given to the man who arranges the purchase and slaughter of the animal.

The demand for goat and sheep meat also exceeds the local supply. Animals are imported from Lo and Tibet; in addition, sheep are bought from southern herdsmen who bring their animals to Thak Khola to graze in summer.

The Thakali seldom consume plain milk. They do, however, drink milk in their tea; in summer the tea is made from the cow's milk and in winter from

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19 While the cultivation of rice is not feasible in Thak Khola, Professor Takaya has collected samples of rice in Ghasa – the southernmost village of the valley (Watebe and Torigoe 1977, p. 18).
20 Nepalese Law forbids the slaughter of female animals; nonetheless, their slaughter is widespread throughout the country except for villages inhabited by high-caste Hindus.
21 In 1980 a white yak tail cost Rs 100 to 150 and a black one Rs 20; the white tails are painted red and used as head-dresses for mules.
milk powder imported from China and India. Yak milk is made into butter and used for butter tea. Only few Thakali have their own yak and most households buy butter in the market. The demand for butter exceeds the local production, and traders from Dolpo come to Thak Khola to barter butter (one weight unit of butter is exchanged for seven units of naked barley). Hard cheese (churpi) made from buttermilk is eaten as a sweet (one unit of cheese costs one unit of rice).

Wool is used for making shawls, blankets, carpets and coats. Sheep are reared only in the southern part of Thaksatsae and while most of the wool used there is produced locally, the Thakali further north import wool from Lo, Dolpo and Tibet. Goat and yak hair is used for making blankets, sacks and ropes.

Other Foodstuffs

In addition to rice and animal products, the Thakali buy tea, salt, cooking oil, lentils, sugar, spices, biscuits, and other foodstuffs at the market. Tibetan salt is brought to Thak Khola by northern traders in summer. Since the 1970s National Trading Ltd (a Government corporation) has been selling Indian salt in Jomsom at a subsidized price which is much lower than the market price of Tibetan salt. Block tea for butter tea and dust tea for milk tea are bought in local shops. Cooking oil is produced locally from mustard seeds, but the demand exceeds the production, and oil is imported from Lo and the south.

Clothes and Footwear

Thakali men wear Nepali-style trousers, shirts and waistcoats. In autumn men wear a woollen vest, sweater, a jacket or woollen blanket. Men’s traditional winter dress is a woollen Tibetan style overcoat (pai kon). In the 1970s this coat was worn by most men in Thini, Syang and Cimang and also by some in Marpha, but the Tamang Thakali gave it up a long time ago and instead wear Western-style coats and jackets.

Thakali women wear a Nepali-style blouse and sarong for everyday use, and a saree for special occasions, and in winter a woollen sweater, shawl and a Western-style overcoat or jacket. Some women (especially in Pacgau) still wear the traditional Thakali dress, which consists of a pair of wide cotton trousers (nho ngai or nhokon), a cotton or velvet blouse (colo), a long cotton or woollen belt (phiki) tied around the waist, and a black velvet or multistriped woollen apron in the back. The traditional winter dress is an ankle-length woollen overcoat (tangsar) for daily use and a sleeveless multistriped woollen coat (phutum) for special occasions.

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22 The butter is packed in a skin or wrapped up in birch-bark (tarnga lha).
Woollen clothes are made locally from high quality Tibetan wool. Thakali women prepare the yarn on a hand spindle, but the weaving is done by women of Tibetan descent living in Thak Khola, or women from Baragau. Sweaters are knitted throughout the valley, and in the southern part of Thaksatsae blankets and shawls are woven from local wool. Cotton material is bought from local shops and southern traders visiting Thak Khola, or during visits to the south; it is made into clothes by local (non-Thakali) tailors.

Western-style clothes have become popular in recent years. Young men wear Western shirts and trousers, such as blue jeans. Almost all men (and also some women) wear nylon and down-filled jackets, and ready-made sweaters and shawls are also popular. Women’s dress has not changed much; however, some young women studying in Pokhara and Kathmandu wear jeans and tracksuits. The Thakali first bought Western clothes second-hand from tourists. In recent years the bazaars of Pokhara and Kathmandu have been flooded with cheap ready-made garments from Bangkok and Hong Kong, and most of the Thakali’s western clothes originate from these places.

In summer the Thakali traditionally wear local-made leather shoes, but nowadays they use ready-made canvas shoes, leather shoes and plastic sandals. In Pacgau some men and women wear Tibetan style winter boots made from leather and cloth, but most people find them old-fashioned and instead use their summer shoes or hiking boots bought from tourists.

Other Goods

In addition to foodstuffs, clothes and footwear, the Thakali buy numerous other goods in the local market or in the south, such as kitchen utensils, electric torches, batteries, matches, kerosene, oil, soap, pens, paper, sweets, medicine and cigarettes to name a few items. Although smoking is considered an impure practice from which sin may accrue, many Thakali – including women – smoke cigarettes; most smokers use cheap brands, but some prefer more expensive filter cigarettes. Kitchen utensils are traditionally made from copper and brass, but in recent years ready-made aluminium and stainless steel pots and plates have become increasingly popular.

Services

Most households have no more land than they can efficiently exploit with their own labour resources. The two main harvests are, however, very labour intensive and during these periods many households temporarily employ additional
labour. Those households which have more land than they themselves can exploit lease land on tenure or hire labour on a more permanent basis. Also, herds of yak, goats, sheep and mules are often attended by hired herdsmen. Some households have sufficient labour in relation to their resources but need to hire labour because members work as teachers, run an inn, or are engaged in other non-agricultural activities.

In Thak Khola there are four main categories of labourers. First, in early summer Tibetan-speaking men and women from Baragau, Lo and Dolpo traditionally come to Thak Khola where they work for four to five weeks during the harvest of the summer crops. The daily wage is four mana of naked barley in Pacgau and one pathi of hull barley in Thaksatsae (plus meals). Since the late 1970s the number of labourers from Baragau has decreased, because the people of Baragau prefer to trade in India or to work in Manang where wages are higher than in Thak Khola. Also, a few men from Baragau and Lo work in Pacgau for one year or longer, herding yak, goats and mules.

Second, men from the middle hills (especially Magars from Myagdi district, but also Tamangs from Central Nepal) come to Thak Khola to work for half a year or longer as general helpers or herdsmen. Wages are higher in Thak Khola than in the south, and although prices are also higher a thrifty person can save more. The number of labourers from the south has increased in the past decade and includes masons, housebuilders, carpenters, electricians and plumbers. Some work on a contractual basis (e.g. building a wall, making a door or harvesting a field for a fixed amount), while others are paid a daily wage.

A third category of labour is artisans. In Thak Khola most artisans have little or no land and their income from their traditional occupation is so meagre that many households supplement it by working for Thakali farmers. Artisans are paid the standard daily wage. A few men work for longer periods as herdsmen, and some women as general helpers in Thakali households.

Finally, some Thakali need to sell their labour to subsist. They work exclusively for other Thakali, either on a daily basis or for longer periods as herdsmen and general helpers.

Other sources of labour are available. Households may call on close relatives for a helping hand; children (and their family) are expected to help their parents free of charge, while others are paid the standard daily wage. While not all households employ labourers as helpers and herdsmen, all Thakali need the services of specialists to perform certain tasks which they cannot do themselves due to the lack of skills, or for socio-religious reasons. The occupations of black-

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23 In Pacgau the daily wage had in 1990 increased to five mana of naked barley.
smith and tailor are associated with impurity, and no Thakali have taken up these occupations. The blacksmiths and tailors work for the Thakali on a daily wage basis. The Thakali need the services of carpenters to build and repair houses and to make furniture. The occupation of carpenter is not associated with impurity and a few Thakali have specialized in this field, but due to the high demand outsiders also work as carpenters in Thak Khola.

Rent, Loans and Interest

Most Thakali own the house in which they live, but a few poor or newly established households stay in rented houses. The houses usually belong to a relative and the rent is traditionally low.

In Thak Khola leasing of land (le dowa pimpa) is limited. The lessors are generally Thakali living outside the valley, patrilineal descent groups, temples, local villagers who are too old to look after their fields, or rich households with limited labour resources. Most of the lessees are themselves landowners.

Rent is paid in two ways. Under the first system (sum sang nhe) found only in Thaksatsae, the lessee (le dowa mhi) provides the seed (blu) and pays the landlord one third of both harvests. Under the second system the lessee pays a fixed amount of money or grain regardless of the actual production; rent is usually paid in cash in Thaksatsae and in kind in Pacgau. In Syang fields are measured according to the seed capacity of the land, and tenants pay three units of naked barley for each unit seed required, while they can keep the summer crop themselves.24

Many Thakali have taken loans and need money to pay interest and repay the principal. Loans are usually obtained for investment purposes, but poor people also take loans to finance daily household expenses, marriages and death ceremonies. Loans are obtained from banks, moneylenders, local credit and saving associations, and from funds belonging to patrilineal descent groups, villages and temples. A debtor is known as 'the person who has taken money' (khiwa mhi) and a creditor as 'the rich' (bhlowa).

The traditional interest was ten per cent, and this rate was still in effect in 1972. Since then the rate has increased and on the private market it is 15 to 36 per cent, while the banks charge 10 to 16 per cent according to the purpose of the loan. However, the rate on loans from patrilineal descent groups, villages and temples remains at 10 per cent and consequently these loans are much sought after.

24 In Lubra in Baragau the lessee pays the owner half of the yield (Ramble 1984. p. 213).
Taxes and Fees

In the 19th century land tax to the Government constituted the biggest demand on the household budget. In the 20th century the tax decreased in real terms and in 1972 the collective land tax for Syang was only Rs 260.26. Since 1978 the peasants in Thak Khola have paid their land tax on an individual basis. In 1978 a Thakali who owned an acre of land paid Rs 32 in tax. Following political unrest in Nepal in 1979 the tax was reduced to Rs 8.36 – or the cost of a packet of filter cigarettes.

Since the 1970s the Government has been charging a fee for timber cutting. Thakali have always had free access to the forest surrounding their villages and complain that the fee has made housebuilding a costly affair. In Thak Khola primary schooling is free, but in secondary schools male students pay a monthly fee (tuition is free for girls).

Finally, the villages in Thak Khola have their own local rules and transgressions for which fines are levied; e.g., cutting wood from protected forests, sowing and harvesting before prescribed dates, cattle entering fields, and failure to participate in communal work.

Capital Investments

In Thak Khola the major capital investment goods are jewellery, houses, land and animals. The women’s main jewellery is a coral and turquoise necklace (khanti). Gold jewellery and other ornamental objects are not made in Thak Khola but are acquired during visits to Pokhara or Kathmandu.

House prices vary according to quality, size, age and location. The houses at Jomsom Airport are the most expensive in the valley, while prices are lowest in the villages away from the main caravan route.

There is a limited supply and sale of houses and people in need of a house often build their own. Costs have greatly increased in the past decades due to increases in labour costs and the high fees imposed on timber harvesting. In

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25 The value of the Nepalese rupee has declined considerably vis-a-vis the US dollar during the quarter century since the 1970s. In the early 1970s its value was Rs 8.60 to USD 1; by May 1998 it had declined in value to Rs 63 to USD 1.

26 Prices have increased greatly in Thak Khola over the past quarter century, commensurate with the declining rupee value. The price of some staple goods has multiplied as much as twenty-fold. For example, a cup of milk tea which cost Rs 0.25 in 1972 rose to Rs 5 by 1997, a house in Syang valued at Rs 6,000 in 1972 sold for Rs 120,000 in 1996, and porter fees rose during the same period from Rs 15 to Rs 300 per day.
addition, new houses are of a better quality than the old and have glass windows, wooden floors and (since the 1990s) usually also bathroom and toilet.

The supply of land is also limited. In most villages there are only one or two sales a year, but more fields are occasionally for sale when a household emigrates from the valley. The price of land has increased much in recent years commensurate with the overall inflation, the introduction of apples as a cash-crop, and, along the main trail, the possibility of constructing tourist hotels.

The most expensive land is at Jomsom Airport. This barren plain (puthang) originally belonged to Syang village and was used for grazing animals. In 1962 a small airstrip was constructed. It was extended in 1972–73 and soon people from Syang began buying up the surrounding land. By village rule, a household can buy one plot of barren village land measuring 20 by 20 yards annually. The price is one rupee a yard; that is, Rs 40. Initially there was ample land, but later the demand increased and the village sold the last plots at an auction (baro lasi cungba) for about Rs 300 to 500 apiece. Only villagers from Syang were invited to bid, but as soon as the land became private property it could be sold to outsiders. Realizing the value of the land, Thakali from Jomsom, Marpha and Thaksatsae bought most plots, paying several thousand rupees apiece. The price continued to rise and a plot along the main trail cost Rs 25,000 in 1981 and Rs 33,000 in 1983; in 1992 a villager from Syang paid Rs 130,000 for one of the best plots.

Following the increase in the value of land villagers in Pacgau have started to buy plots of barren land on the outskirts of the villages; some have established small orchards while others keep the land as an investment. In 1980 an ex-soldier from the British Army returned to Syang and purchased half of the plain above Jomsom Airport. There used to be agricultural fields on this plain, but they were abandoned long ago due to inadequate water supply. The ex-soldier planned to

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27 Manzardo notes that only few of the emigrants who left Thak Khola in the early 1960s sold their land and explains that 'this was partly because the land was worthless and buyers were hard to find, but the picture has changed' (1976, p. 437). I am not in agreement with this explanation. First, it is unreasonable to state that land was worthless: agriculture is one of the main economic activities in Thak Khola and land has always had some value. Further, according to informants, it has always been easier to sell than to buy land in Thak Khola. In the early 1960s a large number of Thakali left Thak Khola and it became difficult to get a good price for land. Even so, informants explain that the emigrants retained their land mainly for security's sake in case they had problems in the south, and also to keep ties back to their home village.

28 The cost is calculated by adding the length (20 yards) and the width (20 yards), not by multiplying the two.

29 In 1997 this plot was valued at Rs 600,000.
establish an orchard and tried to bring water to the plain from a remote source using polythene pipes, but the water source is insufficient.

WAYS OF MAKING AN INCOME

The Sale of Goods Produced by the Household

Agriculture

Many households have a surplus of certain crops which they sell for cash, barter for goods, or use as payment for services. In the southern part of Thaksatsae there is a large surplus of maize and hull barley. Maize is sold to mule owners from Pacgau and Baragau, while hull barley is purchased by people from the north who use it for brewing alcohol and to feed mules. Naked barley is the main winter crop in the northern part of Thaksatsae and in Pacgau, and is used for making alcohol, snacks, and flour for mixing in butter tea. Many households have a surplus of this crop and sell it to northern traders or use it to pay labourers.

In Syang, Thini and Cimang hull barley is used for malung yeast. The yeast is sold to Marpha and Thaksatsae where there is no production of yeast. Some villagers (especially in the southern part of the valley) have a surplus of potatoes and sell them in Jomsom and in the south. A few farmers cultivate an improved variety of wheat (RA 21) which they sell to the Agriculture Inputs Corporation (AIC).

Animal Husbandry

Although cattle and jho are kept as an integral part of the subsistence economy, they are also a source of some cash income. Some cow-owners sell milk, and jho may be used for carrying fuelwood for sale and rented out as plough animals. The Thakali do not eat the meat of cow and jho, and old animals (and even fat dead ones) are sold to Tibetan-speaking people. Goat, sheep, yak and mules are one of the main sources of cash income in Thak Khola, especially in Pacgau. In 1977, 33 per cent of the households in Thak Khola had one or more herds of these animals; the figure was 40 per cent in Pacgau, and 24 per cent in both the northern and the southern part of

30 Yeast is also made from bitter buckwheat. This yeast is colloquially known as 'fist yeast' (chyam bhram) because it is formed in the fist.

31 The Thakali do not eat beef, pork and buffalo meat in Thak Khola, but during visits outside the valley some consume these kinds of meat.
In Syang (2,850m) the goats are taken to the pastures 400m above the village in November and stay there during the winter. Any snowfall usually melts away within a few days, but in heavy snowcover the goats are brought down to the village and fed buckwheat straw. The first kids are born in mid-March. Two weeks later the herd is moved down to the village where it remains until June. The kids are kept in a shed during the daytime, while the does and the castrated bucks graze around the village. The kids are kept separate from the does during the night, but in the morning they spend an hour feeding. Kids are given leaves from the poplar tree (syola) until six weeks of age when they begin grazing with the herd. At about two months of age the kids are no longer allowed to nurse and the does are milked every morning; goats give about one mana of milk daily during the first months they are milked.

In the middle of June goats are shorn and taken to the high pastures (about 3,800m above the village) where they are kept until early November. During the
night animals and herdsman sleep in a small stone hut situated at the forest fields (kids continue to be kept apart from the does). Milk is boiled into curd, and twice a week it is carried down to the village in bags made from the stomach of a goat.

In summer all the billy goats are collected into a single village herd and kept separate from others. In 1980 the person responsible for this herd received half a *pathi* of sweet buckwheat for each animal in the herd. He also received the dung, and the villager who takes this job is usually in need of manure for his forest fields. Alternatively, farmers who need manure let goats stay on their fields, and under this arrangement they provide food for the herdsman as payment for the dung.

When the summer crops have been harvested in early November goats are taken down to the village to graze the fields for two to three weeks. This arrangement benefits the herd owner who receives free fodder for his animals, as well as the field owner who gets free manure. It is during this period (*nol*) that mating usually takes place.

The does begin to bear offspring when they are two years old. Their reproduction ends 10 to 12 years later when they are slaughtered. The male kids are castrated at about six months of age, but occasionally a fine male is taken aside for breeding purposes. Castrated males are sold or slaughtered for meat when they are three to six years old. In Thak Khola they are not used for transporting goods.

A herd with 40 mature does may produce 30 kids in the best years, but through the loss of kids to jackals, forest leopards and the cold, usually no more than half survive. In some years large numbers of goats die due to cold and sickness. For example, in the winter of 1975–76 about 400 goats died in Syang due to scabies (*luto*). Some households lost only a few animals, but one lost 80 out of 90 animals and subsequently stopped rearing goats. Also, many goats and yak died due to heavy snowfall in the winter 1981–82 and earlier. Brain infection (*lyo khor shyuwa*), hoof diseases (*bya nai*) and ‘water in the heart’ (*tin chyu sawa*) are other common causes of mortality.

Sheep are reared only in the southern part of Thaksatsae. The main sheep-rearing villages are Lete and Ghasa. In 1977 there were a total of 2,300 animals; the average herd had about 140 animals. Sheep are kept for their meat, wool, milk, and dung. Wool is an important product and is woven into blankets and rugs. Sheep are not raised in Pacgau because of the lack of suitable winter pas-
ture and, according to informants, sheep lose their wool on the thorny bushes above the village.\(^{33}\)

Yak are reared all over Thak Khola. The main yak-rearing villages are Marpha, Kobang, Larjung and Naprungkhung. In 1977 there were 1,550 yak in Thak Khola, and the average herd had about 30 animals. Most herds are owned by single households, but some are held jointly by two or three households.

From April to November yak graze on the highest pastures, and in winter on pastures closer to the village. In addition to this vertical movement, yak are sometimes moved horizontally within the valley. For example, in Kobang yak are kept in pastures above the village in winter, but in summer they are moved on to Marce on the east side of the valley.\(^{34}\) In winter snow seldom stays for more than a week, and the yak dig out and eat grass beneath the snow. In case of heavy snowfall the yak can survive without grass for several days by using their bodily fat reserves stored up in summer from grazing on the rich mountain pastures, but if the snowfall continues the yak are brought to pastures closer to the village, or even into the village itself where they are fed on straw.

The herdsman (pri chan) lives in a small tent made from bamboo mats, blankets of woven yak hair (bra phyowa) or canvas. A low, stone wall is built along the inner side of the tent to give shelter against rain and wind. Bulls mate with the cows (pri) from June through September. In winter the individual bulls live alone, and the herdsman locates them once a month to ensure that they are alive and have not left the pastures. Gestation is nine months and the calves are usually born between April and July. Cows and calves are separated at night, and cows are milked in the morning. Milking starts two to three weeks after the birth and cows give about three mana of milk a day. In winter they are milked only if the herdsman needs milk for his own consumption. The milk is used for making butter and hard cheese (churpi).\(^{35}\)

The Thakali also utilize the yak’s meat, blood, hide and hair. The hides are used for making ropes, while hair is woven into blankets. Twice a year hundreds of locals as well as Thakali emigrants and southern people, gather at the pastures to drink blood (ka thungpa). The blood drunk in late April is believed to prevent gastric problems and malaria, while the blood drunk in late July is said to make

\(^{33}\) However, until recently herdsmen from the south used to graze their sheep in summer on the pastures of Pacgau (and Thaksatsae). They have ceased to come to Pacgau, but continue to visit Thaksatsae.

\(^{34}\) In summer, some herds are also moved to Parce above Tukce. Besides Marce and Parce, the upper slopes of Mt. Dhaulagiri (muli) is the third major summer pasture in the area.

\(^{35}\) Yak are raised primarily for produce that is sold. Manzardo notes, however, that ‘milk production is primarily for household consumption, although butter is sold ...’ (1984, p. 26)
people fat and healthy.\textsuperscript{36} An animal is caught with a lasso (\textit{shyak cho}), tied, and a vein in the neck is opened. After a dozen or so cups have been filled the cut is closed by placing dung over it and the animal is let loose.

A yak herd (\textit{pri brang}) consists of a core of cows (\textit{pri}), their offspring and a few bulls. North of Thak Khola young males are castrated and used for transport and traction, but this is not done in Thak Khola where \textit{jho} and oxen are used for these purposes instead.\textsuperscript{37} Young, uncastrated males are sold to Baragau, Lo, and Dolpo when they are four or five years old. Occasionally a young male of good breed is taken aside for reproductive purpose. Cows are slaughtered when they are 15 to 18 years old and no longer productive. As mentioned earlier, in Thak Khola the demand for yak meat exceeds the local supply and old castrated males are imported from the very same areas to which young males are exported.\textsuperscript{38}

The return from a yak herd depends primarily on the survival rate among calves. In 1979 one herd included twelve cows, eight of which gave birth. Forest leopards and jackals killed six calves and only two survived. In 1980 the herd

\textsuperscript{36} In Baragau the blood is believed to have other qualities too, 'as the blood of the yak is being ladled out of the chest cavity they [the men] drink mugfuls of it, explaining that it not only increases vigour but enhances sexual potency' (Ramble 1984, p. 218).

\textsuperscript{37} Manzardo, apparently referring to pre-1960 Thaksatsae, writes, 'The Thakalis placed their emphasis on the husbandry of pack animals; especially mules, donkeys and yak ... success in trade is due to the ability to transport grains to places where it is scarce. The Thakalis ability to raise the necessary animals gave them the ability to carry out this trans-Himalayan trade at a profitable level' (1984, pp. 22–23). As mentioned in Chapter III, the success of the Thakali in the trans-Himalayan trade was not due primarily to their ability to raise transport animals, but to Thak Khola’s strategical location for trade between the Tibetan plateau and the Nepalese hills. It was also pointed out that some Thakali participated in the salt-trade without leaving Thak Khola: they bought salt from northern traders in summer, stored it, and sold it in winter to traders from the south. Moreover, the Thakali never raised mules. Finally, I am not aware that in the recent past the Tamang Thakali raised and used donkeys and yak for transportation.

\textsuperscript{38} Manzardo mentions that the Thakali used to keep yak as pack animals on the northern sector of the trans-Himalayan trade (1984, p. 22 and 30). My informants say that the Thakali of Pacgau mainly used \textit{jho}, and Tamang Thakali mainly mules, to transport barley to Lo/Tibet and salt back to Thak Khola. The yak was (and still is) kept primarily for the sake of its products, not for transport purposes. Manzardo also mentions that the yak is not kept for its meat and that the consumption of yak meat is banned among the (Tamang) Thakali (p. 25). However, many Tamang Thakali consume yak meat (Vinding 1979/80a). In December 1984 two yak were killed in Kobang and a local Thakali informed me that most Kobang Thakali eat yak meat. Finally, it is observed that milk production from the yak 'is primarily for household consumption, although butter is sold for use in preparing the salty Tibetan-style tea favoured in the area and for use in religious rites' (p. 26). In Thak Khola the yak is primarily a 'cash produce' animal, and its milk is used almost exclusively for making butter for sale. Only a fraction of the milk product is consumed by the owner of the yak herd.
included thirteen cows, and all had calves. That year leopards and jackals killed seven calves and two died from other causes. While forest leopards and jackals have been unusually hard on this particular herd, the example illustrates the adverse affect that predators have on yak herding in Thak Khola. Heavy snowfall and avalanches are other big killers.³⁹

Most Thakali households keep a few chickens. Eggs are served to important guests, and are eaten by sick people and women after childbirth. Some households obtain an income by selling eggs and chickens to hotels. A few entrepreneurs have tried to establish poultry farms but many chickens died due to sickness and the effort faded.

Water buffalo were introduced in the southern part of Thaksatsae in the 1970s, and there are now more than a dozen animals in that area. In the 1980s villagers in Ghasa started rearing ducks, and some Thakali in Thak Khola have also started rearing and consuming rabbits (rhi bong).⁴⁰

**Fruits and Vegetables**

In 1966 the Government established a small agricultural farm on the outskirts of Marpha. The extension programme of this farm (now known as National Temperate Horticultural Research Centre) has been a major success and fruits and vegetables are now a major source of income for many Thakali.⁴¹ From a modest start, by 1984 the farm covered 9.1 ha, had 44 permanent staff and several buildings, including a distillery.

Apples (syau) are the most important fruit. More than 30 varieties are grown, especially golden delicious, red delicious and royal delicious. Apples are well suited to the ecological conditions in Pacgau and are of excellent quality. Conditions are different in the southern part of Thaksatsae and the apples there are not as tasty as further north. Other important fruits in Thak Khola are peach (aru) and apricot (lhata cili); almond (kagati badam), pear (naspati) and walnut (okhar) are also grown. The government farm as well as some private farmers have tried to cultivate grapes, but the result has not been satisfactory.

Fruit seedlings are available from the government farm and private nurseries. Most farmers intercrop grain between newly planted fruit trees for about two years and then shift to vegetables. The apple trees yield after three to four

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³⁹ In the winter of 1981–82 many yaks died due to heavy snowfall.
⁴⁰ The Nepal Army garrison in Jomsom rears pigs and farms fish, using warm water from a nearby hot spring. Thakali do not traditionally eat pork and pig raising has no great potential in Thak Khola. There are several hot springs and local farmers may adopt aquaculture.
⁴¹ For a study of the farm, see Kvaløy and Sandvig 1990.
years, and the annual production increases to an average yield of 50 kg after eight years.\textsuperscript{42}

In 1983 apple production was estimated at 250 metric tonnes.\textsuperscript{43} The government farm produced about 32mt and the remainder was produced by private farmers, indicating success of the entire enterprise. There were 546 private orchards in Thak Khola with a total of 22,947 apple trees; about 90 per cent of the trees were found in Pacgau and the northern part of Thaksatsae.\textsuperscript{44} Considering apple cultivation was introduced only two decades earlier this represents a major achievement – in fact more than half of all households in Thak Khola have adopted it. Seventy-six per cent of the orchards were small (less than 50 trees), located next to the owner’s house or in a nearby field. Only 9 per cent of the orchards had more than 100 trees, but these included more than half of all trees. There were four plantations with more than 500 trees and the biggest had about 2,000 trees. The largest orchards are found mainly in forest fields above Thini, Marpha, Cimang and Tukce.

The apples provide owners of the smaller orchards with an extra income, but those who own large orchards receive a substantial income.\textsuperscript{45} Apples are sold to tourists, civil servants, the government farm distillery, private distilleries in Syang and Tukce, and to traders who resell them in Pokhara and Kathmandu.\textsuperscript{46} Following the rapid growth in production farmers began facing problems selling their apples in the early 1980s, and in the following years some 34 private cold storage facilities with a total capacity of more than 400 mt were constructed under a project funded by the UNDP.

In addition to fruits, the government farm has also introduced vegetables, mainly cauliflower, cabbage, carrots, and spinach which are grown for home consumption and for sale. Hotels and civil servants are the principal buyers. Ecological conditions in Thak Khola are excellent for vegetable seed production. Several farmers cultivate vegetables seeds for sale to the Agriculture Inputs Corporation.\textsuperscript{47}

\textsuperscript{42} At the government farm the yield average 135 kg, but one tree produced as much as 400 kg in one season.

\textsuperscript{43} According to officials at the government farm, apple production in Mustang district reached 250 mt in 1983 and 800 mt in 1990. In 1995 the production was well over 1,000 mt.

\textsuperscript{44} For the distribution of the orchards and the trees, see Vinding 1982, p. 72.

\textsuperscript{45} In 1992 one farmer produced 150 mt of apples.

\textsuperscript{46} The distillery in Syang is owned by an entrepreneur from Marpha.

\textsuperscript{47} In 1992 private farmers produced a total of 1,933 kg of vegetable seeds from a total area of 61 ropani (= 3 hectares). The seeds were produced by 17 farmers in Kobang, Tukce and Marpha VDC. Mustard spinach (rao sag) was the most popular seed (1,155 kg), followed by carrot (345 kg). Most of the farmers produced about 100 kg, but one produced 500 kg. The farmers were paid about 200 Rs per kilogram.
As mentioned above, villagers collect a variety of products from the forests and pastures for their own consumption. However, products are also gathered for sale. In some villages (e.g. Cimang, Dhumpu, Taglung and Kunjo) the sale of mushrooms is an important source of income. Similarly, *yarca ghumbu*, which is considered an aphrodisiac, is collected in high pastures and sold to local traders who resell them in the south. Similarly, wild pasture onion is collected, dried and sold as a herb (*jima*). Some households (especially in Cimang) produce and sell oil (*khala chyuku*) made from the kernels of various fruits which is used to oil hair and massage children and the sick. Wild peach (*khambu*) and apricot (*cili*) are collected and sold locally. Grass from field boundaries and pastures is collected and sold as horsefeed. Some villagers collect and sell fuelwood to hotels and government offices and employees. Many government offices and private hotels have been constructed in Jomsom and Marpha and villagers collect and sell stones to the construction contractors and hotel owners. In the southern part of Thaksatsae villagers make baskets, mats, brooms, and the like from mountain bamboo and sell these goods to villagers further north. In the same area cannabis (*gaja*) is collected and sold to traders, who resell it in the south.

Formerly hunting was an important source of income. It is now forbidden, but muskdeers are occasionally killed because of the high value of the musk (*lho*). Most of the musk exported from the district comes, however, from Tibet where it is bartered from Chinese soldiers in exchange for watches and other consumer goods. The impeyan pheasant (*pathang*) is also killed; the tail and head feathers are used for making arrows.

### Local Trade and Business

#### Salt Trade

Until the early 1960s many Thakali obtained an income from the salt-for-grain exchange between Tibet and Nepal. The previous chapter described this trade up to 1962, and the present section examines how the trade operates today.

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48 *Yarca ghumbu*, lit., ‘summer grass winter insect’. The *yarca ghumbu* is neither a plant nor an animal but a combination of both. The insect is the swift moth *Hepialus armoricanus* which hibernates underground with its head close to the surface, at altitudes of about 5,000 meters. In spring it is killed by a fungal parasite (*Cordyceps spp.*) that grows its stem from the head of the moth. In 1983 the collection of *yarca ghumbu* was declared illegal in Nepal (C. Ramble, personal communication).
Briefly, trade traditionally operated in the following way. In summer, northern traders brought salt and wool down to Thak Khola, using yak, jho, mules, ass, goats and sheep as transport animals. The monsoon makes it difficult to take animals south of Thak Khola for barley and rice. In winter, traders from the south carried rice to Thak Khola, but because of the cold it was difficult for them to go further north and they exchanged the rice in Thak Khola for salt. Due to their favourable geographical location the Thakali did not have to transport commodities to make a profit, only store them for a few months. Some Thakali operated in this way, while others increased profits by buying the salt in the north and selling it further south, using jho and mules as transport animals.

By the early 1960s the amount of salt which entered Thak Khola had been reduced and the salt trade lost much of its former importance in the economy of the Thakali. This is attributable, in part, to inexpensive Indian salt entering the market in the south as well as to political developments in Tibet in 1959. At present only a few Thakali trade in salt.

In the summer of 1977 a trader from Lo arrived in Syang with a herd of goats and sheep carrying Tibetan salt. At the start of his journey the trader had gone to Liktse in Tibet where he had exchanged naked barley for salt at the rate of 28 pathi salt per 10 pathi barley. At the Nepalese custom office at Nechung near the border he paid Rs 0.12 for each pathi barley he carried to Tibet, and Rs 0.06 for each pathi salt he carried south. In Pacgau the salt was exchanged for barley at the rate of 16 pathi salt for 10 pathi barley, thus the trader obtained 17–18 pathi of barley for each 10 pathi he had started with. In addition, the trader sold wool from his sheep as well as a few animals for slaughter.

Although he had made a good profit, the trader complained that the business was not as good as in the old days. In the 1960s one pathi naked barley could be exchanged for 2.5 pathi salt in Liktse, and one pathi salt for one pathi barley in Tukce, and the profit had been almost double the present margin. Also, in the past it was possible to exchange all the salt in one day, but now he had to search for buyers in several villages and it took almost a week to exchange all the salt.

In December 1977 traders from Pacgau took their surplus salt on jho to Tatopani where they exchanged it for rice at the rate of 16 pathi salt for 10 pathi rice. The traders thus ended up with exactly as much rice as the amount of naked barley they had paid for the salt. In 1983 the rates had changed and in Thak Khola one pathi salt exchanged for one pathi naked barley. The Thakali traders made up for this increase by charging one pathi rice for one pathi salt in Tatopani, but the higher price made it difficult for them to find buyers. In 1983 Tibetan
salt cost Rs 5.00 per kg in Thak Khola, while Indian salt sold for Rs 1.75 per kg. Many villagers, therefore, use Indian salt for cooking; but, due to difference in the taste, they prefer Tibetan salt for butter tea.

Local Hotel Business

An estimated ten per cent of the households generate an income from inns. Most Thakali are willing to provide travellers with a meal and a place to sleep, but in each village there are several well-established inns (bhatti). Until a few decades ago it was mainly traders who stayed at the inns, but the clientele now also includes government servants, soldiers, and tourists. In remote villages such as Cimang, Naprungkhung and Taglung the inns are frequented mainly by locals. The inns' main income is from the sale of alcohol, while meals are of lesser importance.

Relatively few tourists visited Thak Khola in the 1960s, but their number increased dramatically in the 1970s and 1980s. In the early 1980s 6,000 to 7,000 tourists visited Thak Khola annually, and the number had increased to approximately 14,000 by the early 1990s. This makes Thak Khola – together with the Mt. Everest Region – the most popular trekking destination in Nepal. Some trekkers come in groups organized by trekking agencies in Kathmandu, and these provide tents, porters, and food. Others are individuals who stay and eat in local hotels. Although group trekkers are generally older and better off than individual trekkers, the latter are a more important source of income to the local hotel owners. The tourists follow the main trail route and there are many hotels in Jomsom, Marpha, Tukce, Kobang, Larjung, Lete and Ghasa. Very few tourists visit villages outside this route; hence, there are no tourist hotels there.

Following the increase in trek tourism in the 1970s some Thakali upgraded their old inns while others built new hotels. For example, in 1972 there was only one inn at Jomsom Airport, but a decade later there were five tourist hotels in addition to four in Jomsom itself. In 1993 there were 53 tourist hotels in Thak Khola with a total of 751 beds. The best hotels offer clean rooms with attached bathroom, hot shower, Western and Chinese food, and satellite television. Others

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49 During the period 15 July 1980 to 14 July 1981 a total of 6,545 tourists registered at the police check post at Jomsom (Office of the Police Inspector, Jomsom, personal communication). Twelve years later (15 July 1992 to 14 July 1993) the number of tourists had risen to 13,763. The tourists came from 47 different countries, mainly Germany (2,205), United Kingdom (1,556), the Netherlands (1,448), USA (1,328), France (1,226), Australia (976) and Israel (912) (Annapurna Conservation Area Project Office, Jomsom, personal communication).
have a cuisine and service inferior to that of most village inns. The owners of the big hotels obtain their main income from this business.\textsuperscript{50}

In addition to their regular business, most inns sell cigarettes, matches, biscuits, and other consumer goods. Hotels sell beer, soft drinks, canned food, toilet paper, and other tourist goods. There are also shops which sell such consumer goods as foodstuffs, kitchen utensils, tools, torches, batteries, matches, cigarettes, kerosene, cooking oil, paper, soap, pens, thread, needles, etc. The biggest shops are in Jomsom which is not only an old trading center, but also the district headquarters. They sell to locals, government employees and villagers from the north. The big shops are looked after by a person on a full-time basis and usually provide the household with its main income.

\textit{Contracting and Other Business}

Since the 1970s Government and foreign donors have funded several major projects in Thak Khola, including army barracks, government offices, a refugee camp, a 240 kW hydropower plant, bridges, water supply schemes, irrigation systems, trail improvements, and an extension of the airport. Construction is now one of the major sources of capital in the valley, and provides a major source of income to a handful of local contractors, mainly from Marpha. Main contractors usually subcontract the work (and the subcontractors themselves employ smaller contractors), and in the end the actual cost of the work is often half the amount of the main contract.

Electricity was introduced in Thak Khola in 1983 and industrial development is limited. There is an oil mill in Kobang and a few carpentry workshops which produce and sell furniture, such as tables, beds, chairs, and shelves to government offices and hotels. Private distilleries have been established in Syang and Tukce. There is a carpet factory in Chairo which originally belonged to a Mawatan Thakali, but was later sold to a Tibetan refugee cooperative.

\textit{Business Outside Thak Khola}

For centuries the Thakali have been middlemen in the salt-for-grain exchange between Tibet and Nepal. Some Thakali traded in these commodities without leaving the valley, while others travelled to the north with rice and barley, and/or to the south with salt and wool. In connection with this trade some Thakali women moved south in winter where they ran small temporary inns along the

\textsuperscript{50} In 1992 the owner of one of the most popular hotels in Thak Khola had an annual turnover of about Rs 3 million.
routes serving Thakali traders and other travellers, including soldiers from the British and Indian armies travelling on home leave.

This picture has now changed. Most of the men who leave Thak Khola in winter have mules which carry grain and other goods from the highways to bazaars in the hinterland. Women still operate inns along the old caravan routes, but also settle in Pokhara and along the highways to serve bus passengers. The seasonal migrants leave Thak Khola after the harvest of the summer crops (October/November). While they formerly returned in March, they now return in May before the harvest of the winter crops.\textsuperscript{51}

The extent of seasonal migration is high among the Mawatan Thakali and Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali (in 1977, 55 and 37 per cent of the population, respectively), but lower among the Tamang Thakali (21 per cent of the population in northern Thaksatsae and 11 per cent in the southern part).\textsuperscript{52}

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{lll}
\hline
\textbf{Age group} & \textbf{males} & \textbf{females} \\
\hline
00–09 & 36 & 43 \\
10–19 & 38 & 52 \\
20–29 & 57 & 75 \\
30–39 & 54 & 54 \\
40–49 & 26 & 41 \\
50+ & 18 & 13 \\
\hline
\textbf{Total} & \textbf{38} & \textbf{47} \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Seasonal migration among the Syangtan Thakali (1983–84)}
\end{table}

Note: Figures indicate percentage of seasonal migrants in relation to the total population in the age group concerned.

\textsuperscript{51} Primary schooling is compulsory in most villages in Thak Khola, and school going children stay in the south only during the winter holiday (December through February) when schools in Thak Khola are closed.

\textsuperscript{52} According to Valeix 76 per cent of the population in Marpha migrated south in the winter 1969–70 (1974, p. 275), while C. von Furer-Haimendorf mentions that in 1976 'between late November and March, close on three-quarters of the population of Marpha used to move south' (1981, p. 185). According to my information, the figure was 55 per cent in 1977. In December 1984 I was informed that the number had decreased even further, due mainly to increased business opportunities in Thak Khola itself.
This is because these groups traditionally pursue different economic strategies, and it may also relate to higher foodgrain production per capita in Thaksatsae than in Pacgau.

Among the Syangtan Thakali the frequency of seasonal migration is higher among women than among men; further, the number of seasonal migrants is highest in the 20–29 age group (Table 8). Young people prefer to spend winters in the south which is warmer and more exciting than Thak Khola, while older people do not like to be away from their home during the important torenla festival which falls in February/March.\textsuperscript{53} Moreover, old people have more land than the young and invest in goats and yak, also, because of the need for manure, while young men without much land prefer to invest in the more profitable mules. Finally, female migrants run inns in the south, and in that business it is an advantage to be young.

\textit{Mule Business}

In Pacgau mules are the single most important source of cash income for many households. In 1983 there were 320 mules in Syang; ownership was not limited to only a few households, and one third of all households in Syang had mules. There are also many mules in the other villages of Pacgau, but only a total of 110 in Thaksatsae (1977).\textsuperscript{54} A person can look after six to eight mules and most mule owners have this number of animals. Most of the mules in Thak Khola have been imported from India.

The Thakali operate mainly on the Naudanda-Baglung-Beni/Galkot route and the trails east of Pokhara (e.g., Dumre to Lamjung). Men from Syang are found almost exclusively on the former route, while those of other villages also operate east of Pokhara. Few Thakali operate on the Pokhara-Jomsom route and most of the mules found there belong to people from Baragau and Lo.\textsuperscript{55}

Mule owners contract with shopkeepers in the hinterland and businessmen who have contracts with the Nepal Food Corporation (NFC) and Agriculture Inputs Corporation (AIC) to bring rice, salt, fertilizer, seed grain, cement, and other goods to the bazaars in the hinterland. The mule owners usually do not

\textsuperscript{53} For a description of the \textit{Torenla} festival, see Chapter XIII.

\textsuperscript{54} In 1977 there were 290 mules in Marpha, 160 in Thini, 130 in Jomsom and 30 in Cimang. The people of Baragau and Lo keep donkeys for transportation, but for years this animal has not been kept by the Thakali. S. von der Heide writes, however, that the Thakali keep donkeys (1988b, p. 18).

\textsuperscript{55} In the late 1980s a number of Thakali started operating in the hills of Far Western Nepal. Mules are transported from Pokhara to the West by truck. Since the opening of the Pokhara-Baglung-Beni road in the 1990s, Thakali no longer operate on this route.
buy and sell the goods their mules carry\textsuperscript{56} and are, therefore, carriers, not traders.\textsuperscript{57} While a carrier makes a major investment (in mules) to secure a profit, a contractor may make a profit with no investment and little work.\textsuperscript{58} The mule owners are aware of this, and some take contracts directly from NFC and AIC. The mule owner’s net profit from a seven month winter season in the south is as high as 30 to 40 per cent of the investment, provided his mules are not killed by leopards or die in a fall.

In October mules make one or two trips to Pokhara to transport rice for the owner’s household, and from November to the beginning of June they stay permanently in the south. In summer mules graze and relax on the pastures in Thak Khola, and in this way their pack sores get time to heal. Mule owners are aware that their animals need good pasturage and rest in summer to regain their strength, but if they have no \textit{jho} they use their mules for two to three weeks to carry wood and pine-needles from the forests to the village. Also, the mules work occasionally on a commercial basis in summer.\textsuperscript{59}

Mules are looked after by household members or hired labour. Households with young unmarried sons, and young men who have taken a loan to buy mules, usually look after their own, while others hire labour. In 1972 the extent of hired labour was limited, and the hired mule drivers were mostly poor Thakali, men from the north, and a few artisans. The extent of hired labour has increased in the past decade and nowadays the mule drivers are mostly men from the south. In 1984, 64 per cent of the 42 herds in Syang were looked after by hired labour, and 78 per cent of the hired mule drivers were from the south.\textsuperscript{60}

\textsuperscript{56} However, according to Valeix (1974, p. 275), in 1969 traders from Marpha bought rice in Bhairawa and transported it to Pokhara where the price was double.

\textsuperscript{57} The Thakali are usually referred to as one of the major trading groups in Nepal. However, since the 1960s trade (i.e. the buying and selling of goods which have not been manufactured by the trader) has been of minor importance in the overall economy of the Thakali of Thak Khola.

\textsuperscript{58} For example, one businessman had a contract to transport 400 mt of grain at the rate of Rs 130. He paid the carriers (mule owners) Rs 1 15 per 100 kg, thus making Rs 60,000 in gross profit.

\textsuperscript{59} For example, in 1983 a mule owner used his seven animals to transport cloth and grain to Dolpo and wool back for a businessman in Baragau, making Rs 3,150. The mules spent several days grazing along the route and the trip therefore took five weeks. In the early autumn the mules carried wool down to Pokhara for the same businessman, making another Rs 2,450.

\textsuperscript{60} In 1984 three brothers and the widow of their elder brother had a total of 45 mules (9, 21, 7 and 8). In winter one of the brothers (the owner of the 21 mules) lived in the south and supervised six hired mule drivers (all men from the south), while his brothers and sister-in-law stayed back in Syang.
Inn Business

The women who migrate south in winter leave Thak Khola in October after the harvest of the summer crops and return by the end of May for the harvest of the winter crops. The migrant women run inns at the bus stops along the highways and along the main trails in the hills of Dhaulagiri, Lumbini and Gandaki Zones. Women from Syang are found mainly along the highway between Pokhara and Bhairawa (Pokhara, Naudanda, Syangja, Waling and Khasauli) and along the trail from Naudanda to Baglung, while the women from the other villages of Pacgau also operate along the highway and trails east of Pokhara. Until recently women from Pacgau also stayed near the military camps in Taulihawa and Gorakpur.

Women establish their inns in small rented houses or built temporary huts, but a few rich families have their own houses in the south. Inns are run by one or two adult women, usually sisters or sisters-in-law. Most women have a young local girl or one from their home village to help.

The business is based on the sale of meals, alcohol, tea, meat and snacks. Along the trails customers are mainly Thakali and mule drivers, while bus passengers are important customers along the highways. Regular customers get a discount, and bus drivers are given a free meal if they park their buses in the front of an inn and in this way provide customers. The sale of alcohol is an important source of income for the inns, and in towns and along the highways truck drivers and others visit the inns to get drunk. Along the caravan routes mule drivers visit the inns in the evening and drink a few glasses of alcohol. Some inns occasionally make a good income from soldiers from the British and Indian armies who return to Nepal on home leave and want to relax for a few days before going back to their village.

Sale of Labour

Some Thakali are civil servants and work as school teachers, technical assistants, secretaries, peons, etc., while others work for quasi-government corporations. The

61 In the winter of 1975-76 most of the migrant women from Syang stayed in Khasauli and operated a total of 12 inns; additionally, women from Syang married to southern men and settled permanently in the south had another four inns. Following the opening of the highway between Bhairawa and Kathmandu via Narayangarh, business in Khasauli, Waling and Syangja has diminished, and the majority of the women from Syang now operate on the Naudanda-Baglung route.

62 Taulihawa is located close to the Nepal-India border, some 40 km west of Bhairawa. Gorakpur is in India, some 100 km south of Bhairawa. The camps at Taulihawa and Gorakpur used to be transit camps for Nepalese soldiers (Gurkhas) in the British and Indian armies. The camp at Taulihawa has now closed.
civil servants in Mustang District receive a hardship allowance and their salaries compare favourably with those in the private sector. The job of school teacher is attractive for young educated Thakali, especially women, because it gives status and it is not hard manual work. In addition, there are many holidays and short working hours, and teachers have sufficient time to help with the family farm or business.

Some Thakali make an income by providing specialized service to other villagers. Many carpenters and a few ritual specialists acquire their main income in this way. The posts of village headman, village secretary and village worker are primarily a social obligation and carry little or no remuneration.

The sale of labour is an important source of income for poor households, and members work as daily labourers and as long-term herdboys and general helpers for other Thakali. However, poor Thakali only seldom work as porters for tourists. Households in need of labour request close relatives to work for them for a few days and although this is a social obligation, relatives (except for children and their families) are paid the standard daily wage. In this way even rich households sometimes obtain an income from the sale of labour.

A few Thakali are soldiers in the British, Indian and Nepalese armies. The soldiers in the British Army have very high salaries and usually retire with substantial savings. Soldiers on home leave make an extra income by bringing back radios, watches, sarees, etc., for sale in Nepal.

Since the early 1990s about 50 Thakali men, mostly from Marpha, have been working as labourers in factories and other businesses in Japan, Korea, Malaysia and other East Asian countries. In 1993 agents charged Rs 450,000 to arrange for entry and work in Japan; in 1997/98 the fee had increased to Rs 800,000–900,000. The work is well-paid and some Thakali are said to have saved up to US$ 36,000 (Rs 1.8 million) during a two-year stay in Japan. However, working hours are long and accommodation is poor, and at least one Thakali (who is said to have worked 18 hours a day) has died in Japan.

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63 The hardship allowance is 100 per cent of the basic salary (1984). In 1981 a primary school teacher who earned the School Leaving Certificate (10 years of schooling), made Rs 510 a month. Formerly, the salary was not so high, and in 1973 a teacher at the High School in Jomsom left his job because he found his salary (Rs 202 a month) too low.

64 In winter, teachers work only from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

65 For example, in 1981 the secretary to the village council in Syang received Rs 301 a year.

66 In 1972 a porter received Rs 15 a day excluding food; in 1984 porters asked for Rs 40 and by 1995 the rate had inflated to Rs 200 to 300 a day.

67 However, in one instance a Thakali soldier was caught smuggling and was dismissed from service.

68 In 1995 informants estimated that about 300 Thakali (including about 50 from Thak Khola) were working abroad. The majority were said to be from Khani Khowa.
VARIATIONS IN ECONOMIC STRATEGIES

The previous section dealt with the various means employed by the Thakali to generate an income for the purchase of goods and services. Few references were made to individual differences, however, and the present section will examine variations in individual household economic strategies by economic class.

In studies of rural Nepal, households are usually classed into economic categories either on the basis of landholding or grain production in relation to food needs. This would be misleading in a study of the Thakali, however, because a major portion of the household income comes from non-agricultural activities. For example, only half of the rich households in Syang have a substantive income from the sale of grain. A more accurate approach is based on knowledgeable key informants' classification of the households in their village. It is then possible to proceed with an analysis of the economic strategies employed by the households of each class.

In 1981 there were 106 households in Syang. Thirty-seven per cent of the households were classed as rich (Table 9).

Rich is defined as having sufficient income and facing no immediate economic problems. Half of them had a substantial income from the sale of grain. Cash crop animals were an important source of income: Forty-six per cent of the households had mules, while 36 per cent had goats or yak.

Half of the households also earned an income from inn business in the south, while a quarter had a shop or an inn in Thak Khola. Thirteen per cent had an income from other sources (such as the sale of wood, apples, vegetables, business or government service). It is interesting to note that 20 per cent of the rich households had no major income from the sale of foodgrains and cash produce animals, but had a substantial income from inns, shops or other business. Half of the rich households were moneylenders. Five per cent of the households had taken loans in connection with investments. Members of rich households did

69 See e.g. Caplan 1972.
70 A better approach is, of course, to conduct a detailed economical survey among a selected number of households. This has, however, not been possible because of time and funding constraints.
71 The Thakali take two main meals a day, namely rice and sweet buckwheat or maize porridge. Sweet buckwheat is the main summer crop in Syang and almost all households produce sufficient to meet their requirements. The main winter crop is naked barley which is used for making beer, alcohol and flour. Most households have a surplus of this crop, but only some sell a substantial amount (that is more than one muri per household member).
72 Thirty-nine per cent of the rich households have one herd of these animals, 10 per cent have two herds, while 13 per cent have three herds.
not work for others to make an income, but as a social obligation they occasionally worked for relatives in need.

Table 9: Economic strategies according to class, Syang village, 1981

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic class</th>
<th>Rich (N=39)</th>
<th>Middle (N=41)</th>
<th>Poor (N=26)</th>
<th>Total (N=106)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sale of grains</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goats/yak</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mules</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inn in the south</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inn/shop in Thak Khola</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other business</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sale of labour</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income from loans</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Figures indicate the percentage of households of a particular class engaged in the economic strategy concerned.

Thirty-nine per cent of the households in Syang were categorised as middle class. In half of the households one or more women ran an inn in the south in winter and 30 per cent had mules. Other sources of income were of minor importance: five per cent of the households had an income from the sale of grain, 7 per cent from goats/yak, 7 per cent from an inn/shop in Thak Khola, 5 per cent from other business and 15 per cent from the sale of labour. Forty-four per cent of the middle class households had taken loans, mainly in connection with investments in mules; none were moneylenders.

Finally, 24 per cent of the households were classified as poor. These households had little capital and 70 per cent sold their labour in order to subsist. Another important source of income for them was inn business in the south. Twenty-seven per cent had goats or mules, but these had been procured with loans and required payment of high interest rates. A total of 58 per cent of the poor households had outstanding loans; besides investments, poor households obtained loans to finance major household expenses, such as marriage ceremonies.
To summarize, economic strategies generally vary by economic class. Moneylending, sale of grain, raising of goats/yak, and inn/shop business in Thak Khola are strategies pursued mainly by rich households, mule business is pursued by rich and middle class households, and the sale of labour by poor households. Running inns in the south is pursued by half of the households and is not restricted to any particular economic class.

Although there are many exceptions, the social structure of the household relates to some extent to economic class. A rich household is typically an old, well-established family whose head has inherited his full share of the paternal property and where adult sons/daughters have contributed to the welfare of the household. The middle class family consists most often of young families where the husband has received only a part of the paternal estate and where the children have not made any substantial contribution to the household. Poor households often consist of single persons.

These findings and conclusions are drawn from Syang village, but in other parts of Thak Khola economic strategies also vary according to economic class. The economy in Pacgau is similar to that of Syang, although inns, shops and other businesses are more important in Marpha and Jomsom than in Syang. Also, there are some differences between Pacgau and Thaksatsae with regard to the importance of individual strategies. For example, the sale of grain is a more important source of income in Thaksatsae than in Pacgau. On the other hand, the mules and inn business of the south are of marginal importance in Thaksatsae.

SAVINGS AND CREDIT ASSOCIATION

Most Thakali keep anywhere from a few hundred to a few thousand rupees in their home as accessible capital, but seldom more due to the risk of losing it, and because such money does not earn any profit. Surplus capital can be invested in several ways, such as lending money out to other villagers, or purchasing jewellery, animals and land. One can also establish a savings account in the local bank, but this is done by only a handful of businessmen to avoid keeping large amounts of money in their homes. One can also invest surplus money by participating in a voluntary rotating savings and credit association (dikur).

Similarly, there are many ways to obtain a loan, e.g. from local moneylenders, and from funds belonging to temples, villages and patrilineal descent groups. Still another is to participate in a dikur. In addition to these traditional sources, loans can be obtained from institutional credit institutions, such as the
Agriculture Development Bank (ADB), Nepal Bank (Pvt.) Ltd., and Nepal Industrial Development Corporation (NIDC). These institutions require collateral against loans, and it is difficult for poor people to obtain a loan. Initially the rich and educated Thakali used these sources, but others are now using them as well. Although institutions have become a major source of credit, dikur are still widely used. The form and function of these associations are set out below.

Form and Modus Operandi

Anyone planning to set up a dikur first contacts relatives and friends who he thinks would be interested in participating. As a sign of respect he places five paisa in the front of them and sets out the terms of the dikur, such as the number of members, the size of the first installment, etc. When a sufficient number of persons have agreed to participate (usually no less than 21 persons), the founder invites them to his house for a meeting. The members first discuss and agree to the rules of the dikur which then are written down. Next, members nominate one or two persons among themselves as head of the dikur (gowa). It is their duty to see that the rules of the dikur are followed and to keep account of the money paid and received by the dikur.

The following hypothetical example illustrates the modus operandi of the dikur. The dikur has 31 members who pay an initial installment of Rs 200. Meetings take place twice a year and the increment is ten per cent per annum; the interest on the shiku fund (see below) is also ten per cent. The founder of the dikur pays this money out of his own pocket, while others can deduct it from their bids. Individuals who receive the funds have to give other members a glass of alcohol which represents an expenditure of Rs 60.

At the first meeting everyone except for the founder (A) pays Rs 200. Then 'A' receives Rs 5,990 after having paid Rs 10 to the heads. Members who wish to receive the second fund then start bidding; in this example 'B' bids highest, Rs 2,010.

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73 The word dikur derives from du khor, 'grain cycle', cf. Tib., bru 'khor. Among the Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali dikur is known as bhreko. The etymology of the word bhreko is uncertain, but it may be derived from breh khor, 'buckwheat cycle', cf. Tib., bra bo 'khor. In Baragau and Lo rotating funds in goats are known as rakhor (lit., 'cycle of goat') (Ramble 1984, p. 221).

74 The founder of the dikur is called dikur rhiwa mhi, lit., 'the person begging for the dikur'.

75 Interest is not cumulative; in the example mentioned in the text the increase is Rs 10 every half year throughout the life of the dikur. C. von Furer-Haimendorf has, however, reported cumulative interest with payments of Rs 100, Rs 110, Rs 121 and Rs 133.3 over a four year period (1975, p. 197).
At the second meeting all members (except B) pay Rs 210 each. After deducting the amount of his bid (Rs 2,010) ‘B’ is given Rs 4,290.76 From the bid of the Rs 2,010, ten rupees are given to the heads while the balance is placed in a special fund called *shiku*.77 In the bidding for the third fund ‘C’ bids highest (Rs 2,210) and is given the money in the *shiku*.

At the third meeting members (except C) pay a total of Rs 6,600. After deducting the Rs 2,000 which ‘C’ received in the *shiku*, Rs 100 in interest and Rs 2,210 for the bid, ‘C’ is given Rs 2,290. In total he has received Rs 4,290. The remaining Rs 4,310 is once again placed in the *shiku* after Rs 10 has been deducted for the heads. Bidding for the fourth fund follows and ‘D’ bids highest (namely Rs 3,210) and is given the Rs 4,300 in the *shiku*.

At the fourth meeting all members (except D) pay a total of Rs 6,900. ‘D’ receives none of this money, but has to pay Rs 825, namely the difference between the amount of the fourth fund (Rs 6,900) and the money he received from the *shiku* (Rs 4,300), interest on the *shiku* (Rs 215) and the amount of his bid (Rs 3,210). In total, ‘D’ receives Rs 3,475. After deducting Rs 10 for the heads the *shiku* amounts to Rs 7,715. The *shiku* thus exceeds the amount which should have been collected at the fifth meeting (Rs 7,200), and it is therefore given away at the fourth meeting. Members who wish to receive the *shiku* then start to bid and ‘E’ bids highest (Rs 2,300) and is given Rs 4,600 which is the difference between the amount paid at the fourth meeting (Rs 6,900) and his bid.78 After ‘E’ has received his money the *shiku* amounts to Rs 3,115 and the bidding for the fund at the fifth meeting starts. ‘F’ bids highest and receives the *shiku*.

The association continues in this manner until all members have received the *dikur* or the *shiku* once; it is then dissolved and what remains in the *shiku* is divided equally amongst the members.

Variations

Originally *dikur* utilized grain; money *dikur* were introduced only later. In 1981 there were grain *dikur* in Jomsom and Thini while those which existed in Syang in 1972 had ceased. There has not been a grain *dikur* in Thaksatsae for many years. All grain *dikur* use naked barley which is the traditional cash crop in Pacgau. Sweet buckwheat, which is the second major crop in Thak Khola, is for

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76 The receiver of the *dikur* is called *dikur dhawa mhi*.
77 Messerschmidt 1978 presents the most detailed study of the *dikur* system. He mentions that the Thakali word *shiku* also means ‘a round wooden vessel (for holding curds, oil, or ghee)’ (p. 151).
78 The receiver of the *shiku* is called *shiku te dhawa mhi*. 
household consumption, and it is therefore not used in dikur; in addition, the harvest of sweet buckwheat occasionally fails, while this is not the case with barley.\textsuperscript{79}

In 1981 there were 30 to 40 dikur in Thak Khola.\textsuperscript{80} Dikur are found in all major villages; for example, in 1981 there were, among others, six dikur in Syang, five in Kobang and three in Larjung.

Grain dikur usually consist of ten to fifteen members while money dikur have no less than 21 members. In dikur with high payments, two or more persons may hold one share, and it is possible for one person to hold double shares in the same dikur.\textsuperscript{81} Membership is not limited to the people from one single ethnic group or village; for example, people from Marpha participate in dikur in Syang and Thini. Dikur members are usually men, but widows and single women also participate. If a member dies his rights and obligations are inherited by his heirs.

The grain dikur originally had no increment, but in money dikur the yearly increment is 10 per cent. Meetings are held annually in grain dikur, and bi-annually in money dikur; in Pacgau they usually fall around November and May because of seasonal migration. Meetings often take place on the 10th and 15th of the month, which are considered auspicious days. Many Thakali observe Sunday as the day to refrain from giving away money and other goods (ale nima), and meetings are usually not scheduled on these days.

The founder always receives the first fund; other members may also be nominated to take the following funds. In grain dikur the order of rotation is determined by drawing lots and in money dikurs by bidding. Bidding usually takes place as described below, but a tender system has recently been introduced where members submit their bids in sealed envelops before or at the meeting.

As mentioned above, the dikur has one or two heads. The main duty of the head originally was to ensure that the grain given by members was of good quality. The head did not receive any payment for his work, but meetings took place in his house and he got a small income from alcohol sales. The heads now receive a small remuneration for their services; for example, in one dikur each head receives five rupees per meeting while in another they receive one per cent of the total installments.

Meetings may take place either in the house of the leader or the fund receiver. If a member cannot attend, he is obliged to send someone with his

\textsuperscript{79} Ramble reports rotating funds of wheat in Lubra (1984, p. 237).
\textsuperscript{80} Reporting on the number in 1962, Bista has noted that 'there are hundreds of dhigurs functioning at the present time' (1967, p.89). If Bista's information is correct, there has in recent years been a significant decrease in the number of dikur.
\textsuperscript{81} Messerschmidt has reported on a dikur where five persons held one share (1978, p. 144).
installment. To ensure that instalments are paid, members are required to have a guarantor, usually before they receive the dikur or the shiku. A guarantor should be acceptable to all members, any of whom have the right to reject a candidate. In some dikur members may stand as guarantors for each other. Members usually choose a close relative as their guarantor, for example, father, brother, father's brother, cousin, father-in-law, or brother-in-law. If a member fails to make his payment, the fund receiver may agree to receive it at a later date; but if he insists, the guarantor has to make the payment. In such a case the guarantor can claim a field or other property worth the same amount as the installment. Informants from Syang and Thini state that members have always made their instalments and, if necessary, they take loans or sell capital goods to raise installment money. As described below, however, there have been problems in other villages.

The Socio-Economic Role

Anthropological studies of the dikur describe it in positive terms and state that it has helped the Thakali become successful businessmen.\(^\text{82}\) I agree that the dikur system in general has positive socio-economic functions, but the negative aspects have been overlooked.

In the old grain dikur there was no increment and bidding, and all members paid and received exactly the same amount of grain. Needy members received the fund before wealthy ones, so the system benefitted the poor. The introduction of increments and competitive bidding has changed this—the dikur now mainly benefit the receivers of the last funds, the rich.

With increments the receivers of the first fund get less than the later ones. For example, if a grain dikur has ten members and an initial payment of ten pathi with an increment of two pathi per year, the founder receives 100 pathi and the taker of the last fund 280 pathi, both against a payment of 190 pathi. The founder of the dikur is a needy person and in some dikur he pays no increment, but even so, the receiver of the last fund gets more. In the above example, the receiver of the last fund would get a total of 262 pathi and the founder 100 pathi against a payment of 190 and 100 pathi, respectively. Some dikur have rules which fur-

\(^{82}\) For example, Manzardo has noted that, 'In addition to its role in maintaining cohesion within Thakali society, however, dikur gives the Thakalis a means of redistributing income, so that capital for investment reaches the places where it is most needed to establish or expand new business' (1978, p. 99). And Messerschmidt has observed that dikur 'are formed in spite of cooperation among friends' (1978, p. 156), and that they 'foster economic cooperation in the community' (p. 157).
the benefit the takers of the last funds, and in one dikur members pay an increment only after they have received the fund.\textsuperscript{83}

Bidding also benefits receivers of the last funds. Rich members wait until the end to take the dikur when there is little bidding and these are low, while poor members in need of capital compete against each other in the beginning of the dikur when bids are as high as 30 to 40 per cent of the fund to be received. To avoid this members may agree not to bid against each other and to share the fund amongst themselves. The founder is always nominated for the first round and does not have to bid, but dikur may require nominated members to pay an amount for their nomination.

Finally, rich may exploit the poor by standing as their guarantors, charging up to 20 per cent of the fund to stand security.\textsuperscript{84}

In sum, dikur originally benefitted the poor in need of capital, but the introduction of bidding and increments has changed this and dikur now usually benefit the takers of the last funds. From having begun as credit associations which provided the poor with cheap capital, dikur are now more like saving associations which provide the rich with a high profit on their investments. Whom the system benefits depends, of course, on the actual increment and bidding as well as interest rates. The system benefits the takers of the first funds when increments and bids are low, and the takers of the last funds when increments and bids are high.

People bid high for the dikur when they lack alternative credit sources. Also, members trust that they can invest their dikur money and make a higher profit than the price they paid for the dikur. This has actually been the case for most of those who invested their money in mules; and in Kathmandu a Thakali invested his dikur money in land a decade ago, making a small fortune with the rapid rise of land prices there. In spite of these changes the main objective of the dikur system – to provide immediate help to the founder – has not altered. For example, when a Thini man lost five mules members of his clan established a dikur to provide him with capital for new animals.

Some Thakali are concerned that the rich, rather than the poor benefit and have suggested that new dikur be designed to benefit the needy. In Thini some mule owners have established a dikur which functions as an insurance system where members who lose mules are nominated for the next fund. Also, in Kathmandu some Thakali once suggested establishing a dikur where members would be classified into three categories according to their wealth, and where the rich would pay higher instalments than the poor. The idea was rejected because

\textsuperscript{83} Messerschmidt 1978, p. 150.

\textsuperscript{84} C. von Fürer-Haimendorf 1975, p. 199.
others argued that such economic classification could lead to social stratification among the Thakali.

Anthropologists have noted that the dikur associations maintain cohesion within Thakali society and foster economic cooperation in the community. These observations are correct—as long as the system works well. Several decades ago, a number of dikur members in Marpha (and even their guarantors) were unable to pay their obligations and fled from the village. Village leaders subsequently forbade the establishment of new dikur within the village, and anyone who broke the rule was to be fined Rs 500. And, in 1959, the thirteen headmen of Thaksatsae decided to forbid the formation of new dikur for a time on the grounds that they had proliferated to such an extent that the network of resulting obligations and rights had brought an excessive complexity into the economy of the Thakali.

DEVELOPMENT IN THAK KHOLA

In Nepal three decades of planned development has resulted in improvements in basic infrastructure, but due to a high population growth rate and poor performance in the agricultural sector, the real GDP per capita has remained low. Nepal, formerly a major rice exporting country, now imports foodgrains. The forests are being depleted at an alarming rate, leading to serious environmental deterioration. One of Nepal's most eminent scientists and planners has observed that 'the aftermath of a quarter century of development efforts has been one of increasing poverty.'

The picture of the average hill peasant is an appalling one. Many families do not produce sufficient foodgrains to meet their requirements, and consequently one or more members must work as labourers in the south during the winter to make cash for buying foodgrains and other essentials. Forest resources are fast disappearing, and women spend several hours a day collecting firewood and fetching water. Most villages have no electricity, no water supply system, and little, if any, access to health care facilities. While there is often a primary school in the village, the enrolment is poor, especially among girls. The poorest villagers cannot make a decent living and therefore emigrate to the Terai or India.

85 See note 82 above.
86 Villagers were, however, free to take part in dikur outside the village.
The Thakali, however, do not fit this picture. Given Thak Khola's remoteness and hostile environment most first-time visitors are surprised to see how well developed the valley is. The basic infrastructure has improved much in recent years. Primary and lower secondary schools are found in all major villages and there are higher secondary schools in Jomsom, Marpha, Kobang and Lete. There is a small hospital in Jomsom and most of the VDCs have a health post. Almost all villages have potable water supply. Pacgau and the northern part of Thaksatsae have had electricity since 1983. There is no road in the valley, but a small airport is situated at Jomsom, and it is now possible to reach Pokhara and Kathmandu in less than an hour.

A few villagers face serious problems making a living, but the majority live a secure life producing sufficient foodgrains and making enough cash to buy essential goods and services at the market.

Factors which have Facilitated Development

Several factors contribute to the high living standard in Thak Khola, as compared with other hill and mountain areas in Nepal. The most important are examined below.

First, foodgrain production per capita in Thak Khola is higher and more equally distributed than in most hill and mountain areas. In Thak Khola there is a total of 1,022 ha of agricultural land (Table 10). The population is estimated to be equally divided between Thaksatsae and Pacgau, namely approximately 2,600 persons in each part. However, 72 per cent of the land (736 ha) is in Thaksatsae and only 28 per cent (286 ha) in Pacgau.

It is difficult to estimate the total foodgrain production in the area due to lack of reliable information on cropping intensities and yields. According to a Nepalese agricultural expert who has lived in the area for many years, the average cropping intensity in Thak Khola is an estimated 140 per cent, and the average yield approximates 1.2 mt per ha. If these estimates are correct, and an estimated 80 per cent of the total land area is used for foodgrain production,

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89 Most of the primary schools in Thak Khola were established in the 1950s and 1960s at the initiative of the local elite. For example, Marpha school was built in 1959.
90 For example, when the buckwheat crop was destroyed in Syang in 1982 villagers were able to buy foodgrains at the market and did not require government assistance.
91 These figures are estimates based on the 1991 Population Census. The 1991 Population Census includes persons residing in the area on a temporary basis (e.g. civil servants); these persons have been excluded in the estimates presented here.
92 In Pacgau most fields give two annual crops and the cropping intensity may be as high as 170 per cent. The estimated average cropping intensity of 140 per cent is based on the assumption.
the total annual foodgrain production in Thak Khola is 1,374 mt, or 264 kg per capita.93

Table 10: Distribution of cultivated land in Thak Khola94

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VDC</th>
<th>1st</th>
<th>2nd</th>
<th>3th</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thini</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marpha</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tukce</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kobang</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lete and Kunjo</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>210</td>
<td>404</td>
<td>408</td>
<td>1,022</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Figures in hectares
Source: Land Survey Office, Jomsom, 1977

Cropping intensities and yields are higher in Pacgau than in Thaksatsae, and while only 28 per cent of the land is found in Pacgau, an estimated 40 per cent of the total foodgrain production is from that area. Consequently, the

that 60 per cent of the total agriculture land in Thak Khola has a cropping intensity of 170 per cent, and the remainder an intensity of 100 per cent.

Parker mentions poor soil as one of the reasons for Marpha (supposedly) being a food deficit village (1985, p. 149). As mentioned in the text, yields are (surprisingly) high in the area. See also Haffner and Pohle who, referring to Kagbeni in Baragau, write, ‘A suitably long vegetational period allows for two harvests in the fields: winter barley and buckwheat. Harvest yields on the calciferous, well fertilized and irrigated soils are strikingly high, attaining not seldom a 15-fold return on the initial seed’ (1993, p. 45). According to Pohle, the average yield per one measure (pathi) seed in Kagbeni is 13 to 14 measures for barley, 6 to 7 measures for buckwheat, and 40 measures for maize (1993, p. 81). Pohle adds, ‘The high yields in Kagbeni are due, in the first place, to natural preconditions that are relatively favourable for agricultural pursuits (calcareous silty fan plain soils, suitable thermic properties, sufficient irrigation); secondly, they are the result of intensive farming’ (ibid., p. 65).

93 This calculation is based on the assumption that 10 per cent of the land area is used for houses and other non-productive purposes, and that another 10 per cent of the land is used for cash crops, especially fruits.

94 The figures also include land used for houses and stalls, and the total land area used for cultivation is only an estimated 90 per cent of the above figures.
average annual foodgrain production per capita is an estimated 317 kg in Thaksatsae and 212 kg in Pacgau. With a post harvest loss (incl. milling) of 20 per cent, there is an estimated 211 kg edible foodgrain per capita per annum in Thak Khola (254 kg in Thaksatsae and 170 kg in Pacgau), which is well within the official grain requirement of 140 kg per capita for the mountain region, and (in Thaksatsae) also within a more generous estimate of 190 kg. On the basis of these calculations, the generally accepted view that Thak Khola is a food deficit area is flawed.

Table 11: Land distribution in Pacgau and Nepal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Pacgau household (%)</th>
<th>Pacgau land (%)</th>
<th>Nepal household (%)</th>
<th>Nepal land (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rich</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: The author's 1977 survey (60 households), and Asian Development Bank and HMG of Nepal 1982.

Land in Thak Khola is owned by individuals, temples and patrilineal descent groups. In Thaksatsae the average landholding per household is 1.4 ha and in Pacgau 0.5 ha, compared with the national average of 0.4 ha for the hill and mountain region. Although the average holding in Pacgau is only slightly higher than the national average, most of the land is irrigated and highly productive.

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95 According to the Agricultural Statistics of Nepal published by the Food and Agriculture Ministry 1972, the amount of edible foodgrains required per head per annum is 140 kg in the mountain region (quoted in Gurung 1981, p. 33). Asian Development Bank/HMG of Nepal (1982, p. 41) assumes, however, the minimum level of grain consumption to be 190 kg per capita per annum.

96 Manzardo notes that 'the Thakali were unable to grow sufficient crops to meet their yearly needs, using traditional agricultural methods' (1977, p. 434). Parker writes on Marpha that 'the area is food deficit due to the rough terrain, the poor soil, and the limited availability of water for irrigation' (1985, p. 149).

97 The average holding per capita is 0.29 ha and 0.13 ha in Thaksatsae and Pacgau, respectively.

98 World Bank 1979, p. 12.
Land is more equally distributed in Thak Khola, as compared with the national average. In Pacgau the poorest 50 per cent of the households own 22 per cent of the land, while the middle 27 per cent own another 32 per cent, and the richest 23 per cent the remaining 46 per cent of the land (Table 1). Further, in Thaksatsae the poorest 46 per cent of the households own 25 per cent of the land, the middle 27 per cent own another 28 per cent, and the richest 27 per cent the remaining 47 per cent of the land. This distribution is less skewed than the national average where the poorest 56 per cent of households own 12 per cent of the land, the middle 38 per cent another 44 per cent, and the richest six per cent the remaining 44 per cent of the land.

Second, in Thak Khola population growth is estimated to be lower than the national average. Detailed demographic data are not available from Thak Khola, but according to official population figures, the population in Mustang District decreased from 13,571 persons in 1971 to 12,399 persons in 1981. Although these figures may not be precise, it is safe to conclude that the population growth in Thak Khola is lower than the national average of 2.66 per cent per annum. Consequently, pressure on land and other resources remains less in Thak Khola than in other parts of Nepal.

Third, for centuries Thakali have been living along one of the major trading routes between Nepal and Tibet, and most (but certainly not all!) Thakali are this-world oriented and business minded. The conservatism, resistance to change, closeness, and rigid caste rules which hinder development in some areas of rural Nepal are not prevalent among the Thakali.

This world view is manifested in several ways. For example, when Thakali sponsor a religious ceremony they want results here and now, and not to be repaid sometime after death. Also, 94 per cent of the informants in a sample of Thakali emigrants in Pokhara found that a person who puts himself in danger by helping others is a fool. Also, the Thakali business acumen is illustrated by the variety of ways they make an income outside the agriculture sector.

Further, young men are willing to borrow capital at high interest rates because they are confident they will make a profit. In this connection, it is important to note that while most Thakali are business minded, only a few are true innovators and venture capitalists. The young men who invest in mules are in a well established and not a venture business. Thakali venture capitalists are usually well off, have good connection with the government bureaucracy and political leaders, and are able to obtain low-interest loans for their investment ventures. They

99 Gurung 1982, p. 19
100 Bhattachan 1980, p. 60.
themselves are often political leaders. It is only after these entrepreneurs have proven that a certain business is profitable that other Thakali follow their example. The spread of apple cultivation in Thak Khola illustrates this point.

A final example of the Thakali business mentality and lack of conservatism pertains to Thakali women, who are free to operate inns on their own in the south in winter.

Fourth, in Thak Khola credit facilities are good. As examined in detail above, there are many sources of credit in Thak Khola, such as banks, money lenders, and traditional credit and saving associations.

Fifth, in Thak Khola opportunities for non-agricultural income are good. As detailed above, Thakali make good incomes from rearing goats, sheep and yak, from mule business, the cultivation of fruits and vegetables, running inns and hotels in Thak Khola and the south, from the salt trade, various other businesses (such as construction), letting out houses, and the sale of labour. For example, in Syang one third of all households earn an income from mules with net earnings of about Rs 700,000 a year. The demand for skilled and non-skilled labour is great and the poor have no problem getting a job, as illustrated by the hundreds of outsiders working in the valley.

Sixth, Thakali form close-knit societies with strong traditional political organizations. In Pacgau each of the five original villages (Thini, Syang, Cimang, Marpha and Chairo) form separate political entities, while in Thaksatsae there is a council of headmen of the 13 original villages. As in other societies there are differences in opinion about how to handle public affairs, but in case of disagreements the village headman's authority and orders are generally accepted. This is possible mainly because each village is dominated by a single ethnic group and because the traditional political system has remained in force for centuries.

The strong local political organization has been useful in the planning and implementation of development programmes. In Thak Khola project authorities do not have to deal with several independent formal and informal political leaders, but only need the agreement of the leaders of the traditional political organizations (as well as those of the village/district councils) to obtain the commitment of the local communities. The traditional political organizations have also proven useful mobilizing local labour and enforcing rules relating to the use of public service systems (e.g. potable water supply and irrigation systems).

Seventh, the Thakali emphasize education, and the literacy rate is high. In most villages primary schooling is compulsory and children are fined if they do

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101 For further details, see Chapter XIII.
102 Thaksatsae is dominated by Tamang Thakali, Marpha by Mawatan Thakali, and Thini, Syang and Cimang by Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali.
not attend. Enrollment is therefore high, and in Mustang district the female enrollment in primary schools (43 per cent of the total enrollment) is among the highest in Nepal.¹⁰³ To improve the quality of education, some villages finance teachers to work in their schools. Also, some rich parents send their children to expensive boarding schools in Pokhara and Kathmandu. Although the full impact of this emphasis and efforts are yet to be seen, the literacy rate is high in Thak Khola; for example, in Syang (which is one of the less developed villages) 42 per cent of the population above 14 years of age can read and write a letter in Nepali and/or Tibetan.

Eighth, the Thakali have a nuclear family household system. Among the Hindus in Nepal the ideal norm is the joint family household, but among the Thakali the nuclear family household is the ideal as well as the most frequently encountered type.¹⁰⁴ While most newly married couples join the household of the husband's father, they reside there only for a few years. They establish their own independent household at the latest when a younger brother of the husband marries. If the husband is the youngest (or only) son he frequently stays in a joint household to look after his parents in their old age.

The Thakali state that they prefer the nuclear family household to the joint family household because the latter leads to conflict among family members. In addition, informants explain that that members of joint family households have little incentive to work hard and make a profit since they have to share their income with their brothers' families. On the other hand, the nuclear family household promotes initiative and hard work because members divide their income only with spouse and children.

Finally, the government has implemented many successful projects in Thak Khola, and the valley now has a reasonably good infrastructure and basic services. Most projects have been undertaken with external assistance. For example, UNDP has financed projects for husbandry, agriculture and fruit development, while FAO has implemented a vegetable and seed production project funded by the Swiss Government. UNICEF has assisted in water supply systems, repair of schools and temples, and distribution of free school books, while ILO (with Danish financing) has implemented several irrigation schemes. USAID has funded a forest resources conservation project, and a hydropower project was undertaken.

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¹⁰³ The figure of 43 per cent female enrollment in Mustang district was provided by the District Education Office, Jomsom, in 1981. According to Shrestha and Sharma, the female enrollment in Mustang district was 34 per cent in 1976 (1980, p. 98). This was the highest for any district in Nepal, except for Kathmandu district where the female enrolment was 36 per cent. The national average was 19 per cent.
¹⁰⁴ For further details, see Chapter IX.
with OPEC assistance. In 1996 Dhaulagiri Technical School under the Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training opened in Kalopani; the school provides training for the tourist industry.105

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have also assisted in the development of Thak Khola; for example, CARE (with Danish funding) has undertaken water supply schemes and various other local development activities. Also, in 1997 Japan provided financial assistance to the Mustang Development Service Association for the construction of an Agriculture Training Centre in Syang village.106

In Nepal some development projects are not being satisfactorily implemented, but in Thak Khola most projects have been reasonably successful. This is attributable, in part, to the active participation of the local population in the identification and implementation of some of the projects. In the case of Marpha Agriculture Farm, government officials are well qualified, dedicated and hard working (and therefore highly respected by the local population). Furthermore, the benefits of most projects have reached the majority of the villagers and not only a small elite. For example, the water supply systems and hydropower project have provided drinking water and electricity to all villagers. Similarly, the distribution of free books reaches all primary school children. In the case of Marpha Agriculture Farm, the most outstanding result is that it has been instrumental in the adoption of apple cultivation by more than half of the households in the valley.

Problems

Although the standard of living is higher and basic infrastructure better in Thak Khola than in most other parts of rural Nepal, the villagers face some problems in the quest for development.

First, some development projects have been designed with little understanding and consideration of local conditions. In Thak Khola forest resources are being overutilized due to an increased demand for fuelwood and timber. This combined with poor management and failure to replant has led to a depletion of the forests.

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105 In 1997 the school had 23 students and 43 members of staff. All students were men, and only one was from Mustang district. The school does, however, also conduct part-time training for locals.
106 The present list does not include all past and present development projects in Mustang district. Some projects not listed are part of programmes (e.g. the World Bank/Danish supported Basic Primary Education Programme) that cover several districts or the whole country.
As a part of its programme in the early 1980s, the USAID-financed Resource Conservation and Utilization Project established several small plantations (mainly with poplars) close to the villages in Pacgau. Most of the saplings died, but even if the trees had survived they would have been of little use to the villagers. First, poplar is not as useful as pine for timber and fuelwood. Secondly, while poplar is an important fodder tree in the middle hills, ecological conditions are different in Thak Khola. Instead of new plantations the programme should have concentrated efforts on improving the management and utilization of existing forests.

For more than two decades, the Government of Nepal has considered building a road from Baglung to Mustang to reduce the cost of rice and other imported goods, and to open up Pokhara and Kathmandu to products from Mustang district, especially vegetables, fruits and wool. A better alternative would be to build a ropeway. A ropeway is cheaper than a road. Also, landslides make roads extremely expensive to maintain, while ropeways are less vulnerable to this problem. Further, to run vehicles Nepal needs to import fuel, while a ropeway would run on locally produced energy. Moreover, the number of trekkers on the Jomsom trail is likely to decrease if a road is built, causing hardship to many inns and hotel owners along the route. Finally, villagers express concern that a road would open up their valley to undesirable elements from the outside.

Second, the self-reliance of the local communities is decreasing. In the past Thakali have themselves financed and built several trails, bridges and schools as well as almost all the irrigation systems in the valley. Some of the infrastructure development undertaken in Thak Khola in recent years could, if villagers had found them useful, have been undertaken with popular participation, but have been constructed instead at high cost using local contractors. Villagers now believe that the government can – and should – provide anything they ask for. The government has done little to change this perception.

Third, the Thakali have become increasingly dependent on outside markets. Thakali are integrated in the market economy and more dependent on

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107 On 25 August 1996, the Minister for Works and Transport informed the House of Representatives, that 'a target has been set to make Beni in Myagdi district accessible by road in the current fiscal year [i.e. July 1996 – July 1997] and construction works will begin soon to extend the road to Jomsom of Mustang district' (The Rising Nepal, 26 August 1996). The minister did not disclose the cost of the project nor the source of funding. In the Budget Speech of the Fiscal Year 1997/98, the Finance Minister mentioned on 10 July 1997 that 'a necessary amount has been appropriated for roads connecting district headquarters like ... Baglung–Beni–Jomsom' (HMG 1997, p. 30).

108 To build a 57 km long ropeway between Beni and Jomsom has been estimated to cost Rs 66.7 million at 1976 prices (Société Générale pour l’Industrie 1976), while a 179 km long road between Beni and Lo Manthang would cost Rs 852 million at 1978 prices (CEMAT 1978).

109 These arguments were first presented in Vinding 1984, pp. 97–98.
outside goods, capital and services than their forefathers (as are most peasants in rural Nepal). This integration is a double-edged sword. It is one of the reasons for the high living standard in Thak Khola, but on the other hand it is dangerous for the Thakali to be too dependent on an outside market over which they have no control. The decline in the salt trade around 1960 clearly illustrates this point. In the future it may become apples, mules or tourists.

Fourth, the poorest fifth of the population face problems making a living. Special programmes should be planned and implemented for the benefit of this section of the population.

CONCLUSION

The Thakali economy is a mixture of subsistence and market economies. The Thakali produce many of the goods needed by the household through agriculture, gathering and husbandry. However, no Thakali household is self-sufficient and therefore has to buy goods and services on the market. Households also need cash for paying taxes and to cover expenses for religious ceremonies, marriages and entertainment.

The Thakali earn incomes to cover these expenses through the sale of goods produced by the household, local business and trade, business outside Thak Khola and the sale of labour. In recent decades cash incomes from animal husbandry and salt trade have declined, while incomes from the sale of cash-crops (especially apples) and hotel businesses have increased.

Income generating strategies vary to some degree according to economic class. There are also differences between Thaksatsae and Pacgau; for example, the sale of grains is a more important source of income in the former area, while mule and inn businesses are more important in the latter.

Studies of the Thakali refer to them as traders and businessmen.\(^{110}\) This is not quite correct. As described above, nowadays there is little trade in Thak Khola. Formerly, trade in salt (and secondarily in wool and live animals) from Tibet was an important source of income for some Thakali, but for the majority of villagers agriculture was the main means of living.\(^{111}\)

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110 For example, see S. von der Heide, 'The Thakali engage there [Thak Khola] in stock-breeding and farming but are distinguished chiefly as merchants' (1988b, p. 1).

111 See also C. von Fürer-Haimendorf: 'Different conditions prevail in the villages south of Tukce, such as Kobang, Sauru and Larjung. These villages have relatively more and better land than Tukce, and agriculture has always played a more important role in the economy' (1981a, p. 179)
All anthropological studies on the local credit and savings associations (dikur) have described the system in positive terms and state that it has helped the Thakali become successful investors, and that it maintains cohesion within Thakali society and fosters economic cooperation in the community. While the present study agrees that the dikur system has many positive elements, the system has changed much in the past decades and it now benefits the rich rather than the poor. Also, the system maintains cohesion only as long as it works well. There have been several cases where the village headmen have banned the formation of new dikur.

One of Nepal’s most eminent planners has observed that the aftermath of a quarter century of development efforts in Nepal has been one of increasing poverty. The Thakali do not fit this picture. The reasons for the Thakali’s high standard of living are as follows: in Thak Khola land holdings are larger and more equally distributed than in most hill and mountain areas, population growth is probably lower than the national average, and opportunities for obtaining credit and non-agricultural income are good. Moreover, the Thakali are in general this-world oriented and business minded, they form close-knit societies with strong traditional political organizations, they emphasize education, and their households are based on the nuclear family. Finally, the government has implemented many successful projects in Thak Khola and the valley now has a reasonably good infrastructure and basic services.

The main problems facing the Thakali are that some development projects have been designed with little understanding and consideration of local conditions, that the self-reliance of the local communities is decreasing, that they have become increasingly dependent on the outside market, and the poorest fifth amongst them continue to live in poverty.
Chapter V

KINSHIP AND AFFINITY

This chapter presents the Thakali kinship terminologies and examines the use of kinship terms and traditional behaviour patterns between relatives. It also analyses the underlying principles of Thakali kinship terminologies.¹

THE KINSHIP TERMINOLOGIES

Thakali kinship terminologies are presented in Tables 12-14.² A kinship terminology is the set of terms used in addressing or speaking of relatives.³ The Thakali kinship terminologies are related to those of other languages of the Gurung Branch of the Bodish Section of Tibeto-Burman languages, but also include some Nepali kinship terms (e.g. mama, maiju, phupu and kaka).⁴

¹ The first two sections of the present chapter are based on Vinding 1979, while the section on kinship terminologies and marriage systems is based on Vinding 1979/8oa. These are the only works which deal in detail with Thakali kinship and affinity.
² The present lists were first published in Vinding 1979. The lists presented in S. von der Heide 1988 (pp. 96-101) are reproduced in toto from Vinding 1979. The list of Tamang Thakali kinship terms presented in Manzardo 1978 (p. 263) is incomplete, as it does not include the terms yangkhe, yangmom, athrowa, aku, akuma, ken, anthrowa, angryangma, ngeren, phupu, maiju, syungme, ale, syangbo, acyamha, nguca, abhren, chawa, konca, and koime. Also, Manzardo’s list may not be entirely correct. For example, according to Manzardo, SS, BS and ZS are called dza. According to my information SS is konca, BS (male speaking) is cha, BS (female speaking) is konca, ZS (male speaking) is konca, and ZS (female speaking) is cha.
³ Notes and Queries on Anthropology, 1951, p. 76.
⁴ For a preliminary report on the kinship terminologies of the Bodish Section of Tibeto-Burman languages (excluding Gurung), see Vinding 1979. For Gurung kinship terms, see Pignède 1966 and Glover and Gurung 1979. For the etymology of Sino-Tibetan kinship terms, see Benedict 1941.
Thakali kinship terms include basic terms (e.g. mha) and composed terms. The latter are composed of a basic term and a descriptive affix; for example, the Tamang Thakali term for great grandfather (yangkhe) is composed of the term for grandfather (khe) and the prefix yang- (‘again’). Most Thakali terms for senior relatives are composed of a root and the prefix a-; e.g., awa (‘father’), ama (‘mother’), and ani (‘mother’s brother’s wife’).

Suffixes are used mainly to indicate seniority. Among the Mawatan Thakali father’s elder and younger sisters are called ngeken and ngicyang, respectively. These terms are composed of the root nge/ngi (‘father’s sister’) and the suffixes -ken (‘elder’) and -cyang (‘younger’). The Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali use the suffixes -kan, -tan, and -cyang for ‘eldest’, ‘elder’ and ‘youngest’; for example, father’s eldest, elder and youngest sisters are called nyakan, nyaptan, and nicyang, respectively. Another set of suffixes is used in the terms for father’s brothers and father’s brothers’ wives, namely -thyowa, -phowa, and -cyangpa.

Suffixes are also used as sex modifiers. The suffixes -mo, -me and -syā indicates female relatives, and the suffixes -wo and -bo male relatives; for example, among the Tamang Thakali a male cross-cousin is called solti while a female is soltisyā.

Most terms comprise relatives from one generation only, but some include more; for example, the Tamang Thakali term konca includes relatives from the first as well as the second decending generation (e.g. sister’s son and son’s son).

The sex of the relative whom the speaker addresses or refers to is important and Thakali terms are all restricted to one sex only. The only exception is the Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali term cyon which refers to males as well as females, e.g. younger brother (male speaker) and younger sister (female speaker).

Most relatives are called by the same term regardless of the sex of the speaker, but there are several exceptions; among the Yhulkasompami Thakali ZH, BS, ZS, BD, ZD, yB and yZ are called by different terms according to the sex of the speaker.

Relatives are usually called by different terms depending on whether the relationship is established through a male or female relative; for example, Thakali distinguish between father’s brother and mother’s brother and between brother’s

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5 The use of the prefix a- in kinship terms for senior relatives is a common feature in Tibeto-Burman kinship terminologies.

6 Cross-cousins are children of siblings of opposite sex, while the children of siblings of the same sex are called parallel-cousins.

7 The Tamang Thakali kinship terminology comprises 37 terms. Eleven terms include relatives from more than one generation, namely khe, mom, phi, acyang, kaka, ngeren, phu, mha, cang, konca and koime.
son and sister’s son. The terms for grandparents do not differ according to the sex of the person through whom the relationship exists; for example, among the Mawatan Thakali father’s father and mother’s father are both called khepen.

Some terms include consanguineal or affinal relatives only, while others comprise both. Fifteen Tamang Thakali terms comprise consanguineal as well as affinal relatives, 14 only affinal relatives and 8 only consanguineal relatives.

THE USE OF KINSHIP TERMS

The Thakali address and refer to relatives by using kinship terms, personal names, nicknames and titles. Which is used depends on the relative seniority of the speaker and the relative whom he addresses or is speaking of, as well as the age of the latter. Seniority between consanguineal relatives is determined by generation, and, if relatives are of the same generation, by actual age. A person is senior to those relatives whom his/her spouse is senior to.

Thakali address and speak of junior relatives by name, nickname, kinship term or title, while senior relatives use name or nickname for the junior relatives who have not grown up, and kinship terms or titles for adults. Junior relatives should ideally address and refer to senior relatives by using kinship terms and titles only, but children often address and refer to each other by name and nickname. Relatives who are close friends sometimes address each other by name.

Among the Yhulkasumpaimhi Thakali a series of brothers is known as (from eldest to youngest) pon, mocyang, sonte, plihte, and naihte.\(^8\)

Table 12: The Tamang Thakali kinship terminology\(^9\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yangkhe</td>
<td>FFF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yangmom</td>
<td>FFM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>khe</td>
<td>FF, FFB, MF, MFB, HF, HFB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mom</td>
<td>FM, FMZ, MM, MMZ, HM, HMZ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>awa/apa</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>athowa</td>
<td>FeB, FFBS (e.t. F), FMZS (e.t. F)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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\(^8\) The suffix -te indicates an object in a series. For example, a series of sacks is called tete (first), nhite (second), somte (third), plihte (fourth), and nghate (fifth).

\(^9\) The following abbreviations have been used in Tables 12–14:

F: father
M: mother
KINSHIP AND AFFINITY

kaka  
aku  
mama  
akuma  
ken  
amu  
anthowa  
angcyangma  
aphi  
acyang  
geren  
phupu  
maiju  
syungme  
acyo  
ale  
ana  
picyang  
solit  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Kinship</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B: brother</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z: sister</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S: son</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D: daughter</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e: elder, e.g. FyB: ‘father’s elder brother’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>el: elder, but excluding the eldest; e.g. FelB: ‘father’s elder brother’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>est: eldest; e.g. FestB: ‘father’s eldest brother’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(e): elder than the speaker; e.g. FBS(e): ‘father’s brother’s son, elder than ego’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(el): elder than the speaker, but excluding the eldest; e.g. FBS(el): ‘father’s brother’s son, elder than ego, excluding the eldest’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(est): elder than the speaker, and being the eldest; e.g. FBS(est): ‘father’s brother’s son, elder than ego, being the eldest’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>y: younger; e.g. FyB: ‘father’s younger brother’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(y): younger than the speaker; e.g. FBS(y): ‘father’s brother’s son, younger than ego’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.t.: elder than</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>y.t.: younger than</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m.s.: male speaker</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f.s.: female speaker</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Kinship</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>kaka</td>
<td>FyB, FFBS (y.t. F), FMZS (y.t. F), HyB</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aku</td>
<td>MZH</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mama</td>
<td>MB, MFBS, MMZS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>akuma</td>
<td>FZH</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ken</td>
<td>WF, WFB</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ama</td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anthowa</td>
<td>FeBW, FFBSW (FFFBS e.t. F), FMZSW (FMZS e.t. F)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>angcyangma</td>
<td>FyBW, FFBSW (FFBS y.t. F), FMZSW (y.t. F)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aphi</td>
<td>MeZ, MFBD (e.t. M), MMZD (e.t. M), WeZ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acyang</td>
<td>MyZ, MFBD (y.t. M), MMZD (y.t. M), WyZ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ngeren</td>
<td>FeZ, FFBD (e.t. F), FMZD (e.t. F), HeZ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>phupu</td>
<td>FyZ, FFBD (y.t. F), FMZD (y.t. F), HyZ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maiju</td>
<td>MBW, MFBSW, MMZSW</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>syungme</td>
<td>WM, WMZ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acyo</td>
<td>eB, FBS (e), FFBS (e), FMZSS (e), MZS (e), MFBDS (e), MMZDS (e), HeZH</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ale</td>
<td>yB, FBS (y), FFBS (y), FMZSS (y), MZS (y), MFBDS (y), MMZDS (y), HyZH</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ana</td>
<td>eZ, FBD (e), FFBSD (e), FMZSD (e), MZD (e), MFBDD (e), MMZDD (e), HeBW</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>picyang</td>
<td>yZ, FBD (y), FFBS (y), FMZSD (y), MZD (y), MFBDD (y), MMZDD (y), HyBW</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>solt</td>
<td>MBS, MFBS, MMZSS, FZS, FFBS, FMZS</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Table 13: The Mawatan Thakali kinship terminology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>soltisya</td>
<td>MBD, MFBSD, MMZSD, FZD, FFBDD, FMZDD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>syangbo</td>
<td>WB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acyamha</td>
<td>eZH, FBDH (FBD e.t. ego), MZDH (MZD e.t. ego)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mha</td>
<td>yZH, FBDH (FBD y.t. ego), MZDH (MZD y.t. ego), DH, BDH (m.s.), SDH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nguca</td>
<td>eBW, FBSW (FBS e.t. ego), MZSW (MZS e.t. ego)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cang</td>
<td>yBW, FBSW (FBS y.t. ego), MZSW (MZS y.t. ego), SW, SSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>abhren</td>
<td>HeB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chawa</td>
<td>WZH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cha</td>
<td>S, BS (m.s.), FBSS (m.s.), MZSS (m.s.), WZS, ZS (f.s.), FBDS (f.s.), MZDS (f.s.), HBS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chame</td>
<td>D, BD (m.s.), FBSD (m.s.), MZSD (m.s.), WZD, ZD (f.s.), FBDD (f.s.), MZDD (f.s.), HBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>konca</td>
<td>SS, DS, ZS (m.s.), FBDS (m.s.), MZDS (m.s.), WBS, BS (f.s.), FBSS (f.s.), MZSS (f.s.), HZS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>koime</td>
<td>SD, DD, ZD (m.s.), FBDD (m.s.), MZDD (m.s.), WBD, BD (f.s.), FBSD (f.s.), MZSD (f.s.), HZD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
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<tr>
<td>dhepen</td>
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<td>mompe</td>
<td>FM, FMZ, MM, MMZ, HM, HMZ</td>
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<tr>
<td>awa (apa)</td>
<td>F</td>
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<tr>
<td>akhen</td>
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<td>aka</td>
<td>FyB, FFBS (y.t. F), FMZS (y.t. F), HyB</td>
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<td>khicyang</td>
<td>MZH</td>
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<td>MB, MFBS, MMZS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>akhama</td>
<td>FZH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ken</td>
<td>WF, WFB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ama</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
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<td>acyama</td>
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<td>angkai</td>
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<td>ngi</td>
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<td>syungme</td>
<td>WM, WMZ</td>
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<tr>
<td>acyo</td>
<td>eB, FBS (e), FFBSS (e), FMZSS (e), MZS (e), MFBDS (e), MMZDS (e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Kinship Terminology</td>
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<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>ale (cyon)</td>
<td>yB, FBS (y), FFBSS (y), FMZSS (y), MZS (y), MFBDS (y), MMZDS (e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ana</td>
<td>eZ, FBD (e), FFBSD (e), FMZSD (e), MZD (e), MFBDD (e), MMZDD (e)</td>
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<td>micyang</td>
<td>yZ, FBD (y), FFBSD (y), FMZSD (y), MZD (y), MFBDD (y), MMZDD (y)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ngu</td>
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<tr>
<td>solti</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>nguilyang</td>
<td>MBD, MFBSD, MMZSD, FZD, FFBDD, FMZDD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>soltisya</td>
<td>MBD, MFBSD, MMZSD, FZD, FFBDD, FMZDD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>syangbo</td>
<td>WB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chamo</td>
<td>WZ, WFZ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chawo</td>
<td>yZ (f.s.), FBDH (FBD y.t. ego, f.s.), MZDH (MZD y.t. ego, f.s.), WZH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mha</td>
<td>yZ (m.s.), FBDH (FBD y.t. ego, m.s.), MZDH (MZD y.t. ego, m.s.), DH, BDH (m.s.), SDH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cang</td>
<td>BW, FBSW, MZSW, SW, BSW, SSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ca</td>
<td>S, BS (m.s.), FBSS (m.s.), MZSS (m.s.), WZS, ZS (f.s.), FBDS (f.s.), MZDS (f.s.), HBS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>came</td>
<td>D, BD (m.s.), FBSD (m.s.), MZSD (m.s.), WBS, BS (f.s.), FBSS (f.s.), MZSS (f.s.), HZS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>konca</td>
<td>SS, DS, ZS (m.s.), FBDS (m.s.), MZDS (m.s.), WBS, BS (f.s.), FBSS (f.s.), MZSS (f.s.), HZS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>koime</td>
<td>SD, DD, ZD (m.s.), FBDD (m.s.), MZDD (m.s.), WBD, BD (f.s.), FBSD (f.s.), MZSD (f.s.), HZD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14: The Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali kinship terminology
kyan  WF, WFB
khe  HF, HFB
ama  M
acyam  MZ, MFB, MMZD, WZ, BWZ
amthyowa  FestBW, FFBSS (FFBS est. t. F), FMZSW (FMZS est. t. F)
amphowa  FelBW, FFBSS (FFBS el. t. F), FMZSW (FMZS est. t. F)
amcyangpa  FyBW, FFBSS (FFBS y.t. F), FMZSW (FMZS y.t. F)
nyakan  FestZ, FFBD (est. t. F), FMZD (est. t. F), HestZ
nyaptan  FelZ, FFBD (el. t. F), FMZD (el. t. F), HelZ
nicyang  FyZ, FFBD (y.t. F), FMZD (y.t. F), HyZ
ani  MBW
syungme  WM, WMZ
mom  HM, HMZ
pon  estB, FBS (est.), FFBSS (est.), FMZSS (est.), estS
acyo  elB, FBS (el.), FFBSS (el.), FMZSS (el.)
mayung  yB (f.s.), FBS (y., f.s.), FFBSS (y., f.s.), FMZSS (y., f.s.)
cyon  yB (m.s.), FBS (y., m.s.), FFBSS (y., m.s.), FMZSS (y., m.s.), yZ
      (f.s.), FBD (y., f.s.), FFBSD (y., f.s.), FMZSD (y., f.s.), HyBW
srhin  yZ (m.s.), FBD (y., f.s.), FFBSD (y., m.s.), FMZSD (y., m.s.),
      WyBW
ana  eZ, FBD (e.), FFBSD (e), FMZSD (e), HeBW, WeBW
chiwa  MZS, MFBDS, MMZDS
china  MZD, MFBDD, MMZDD
utung  MBS, MFBSS, MMZSS, FZS, FFBDS, FMZDS, eZH (f.s.), FBDH
      (FBD (el), f.s.), MZDH (MZD (el), f.s.)
olyang  MBD, MFBSD, MMZSD, FZD, FFBDD, FMZDD
syangbo  WB
mha  ZH (m.s.), FBDH (m.s.), MZDH (m.s.), DH, BDH (m.s.), SDH
chawo  yZH (f.s.), FBDH (FBD (y), f.s.), MZDH (MZD (y), f.s.), WZH
cang  BW, FBSW, MZSW, SW, BSW (m.s.), SSW
akan  HestB
aptan  HelB
acyang  HyB
ni  WBW
ankan  HestBW
amtan  HelBW
amcyang  HyBW
cha  S, BS (m.s.), FBSS (m.s.), MZSS (m.s.), WZS, ZS (f.s.), FBDS
      (f.s.), MZDS (f.s.), HBS
There is no corresponding series of terms for sisters.\(^{10}\) The term \textit{pon} is used by parents and younger siblings to address and refer to the eldest brother.\(^{11}\) The term \textit{mocyang} is used by parents and elder siblings to address the second eldest son, but it may also be used to address the youngest son.\(^{12}\) \textit{Sonte}, \textit{plihte}, and \textit{naihte} are used by parents to refer to their third, fourth and fifth son, respectively.

The way members of a nuclear family address and refer to each other varies from family to family. In one family where there are five brothers, the parents address their sons as \textit{pon}, \textit{mocyang}, name, name and name (or \textit{cyangba}), respectively; they refer to their sons as \textit{cha thyowa} (‘eldest son’), \textit{cha parba} (‘middle son’), \textit{sonte}, \textit{plihte} and \textit{cyangpa} (‘youngest’), respectively. The fourth son is sometimes also referred to as \textit{cha cyangpa gocaiwa} (‘[the one] above the youngest son’). The elder brothers address their younger brothers by name; however, the term \textit{mocyang} is also used to address the youngest brother, and this term is also used by the eldest brother to address the second eldest brother. The elder brothers refer to the younger brothers as \textit{cyon}, but the youngest is also referred to as \textit{cyangpa}. Finally, the younger brothers address and refer to the eldest brother as \textit{pon}, and to elder brothers as \textit{acyo}.

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\(^{10}\) The Nepali language also includes a series of kinship terms used to address and speak of the brothers in a family, namely (from eldest to youngest) \textit{jetho}, \textit{mailo}, \textit{sailo}, \textit{kailo} and \textit{kancho}. The corresponding terms for a series of sisters are \textit{jethi}, \textit{maili}, \textit{saili}, \textit{kuili}, and \textit{kanchi}. These kinship terms are commonly used by senior relatives when addressing junior relatives, by parents to refer to their children, and by elder siblings to refer to their younger siblings. Younger siblings use the kinship terms \textit{daiju} (elder brother) and \textit{didi} (elder sister) to address and refer to elder siblings, but to be more specific they may refer to an elder sibling by using the kinship term for ‘elder brother’ or ‘elder sister’ in a combination with one of the above terms. A man may thus refer to his eldest brother as \textit{jetho daiju}; he may not, however, use the term \textit{jetho} to address his elder brother.

\(^{11}\) In Tibetan \textit{dbon} means ‘grandson, nephew’ (Jäschke 1881, p. 389). For a discussion of the term \textit{dbon}, see Uebach 1980.

\(^{12}\) Most kinship terms are used in address as well as reference, but some are used in address only, others in reference only. For example, among the Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali, the term \textit{mocyang} is used only in address, and the terms \textit{macyung}, \textit{cyon}, \textit{srhin} and \textit{acyang} only in reference.
Thakali kinship terminology includes two kinship terms which women use to speak of women who have married into the same clan as themselves, namely tayusya when the speaker’s husband is older than the husband of the woman whom she refers to (e.g. HyBW), and amtansya in the opposite case (e.g. HelBW). These terms are not used in address.

The Thakali words for ‘wife’ and ‘husband’ are be and pha, respectively. These terms (and personal names) are never used in address and only seldom in reference. Spouses address each other by using the second singular personal pronoun (kyang), or an interjection such as ‘hey’ (whoi); they refer to each other by using the third singular personal pronoun (the), or as ‘the mother of (my) child’ (kola ama) and ‘the father of (my) child’ (kola awa). One should not refer to a person’s spouse as be or pha, but use the appropriate kinship term: e.g.: ‘Where has (my) son-in-law gone?’ (mha khatang yola), or the third singular personal pronoun (the), e.g.: ‘Where has he gone?’ (the khatang yola).

Among the Thakali marriage usually takes place between persons who are already related to each other, and many relatives are therefore related in several ways. In this case one should use the kinship terms which reflect the closest relationship. For example, a man who is married to his sister’s husband’s sister, is related to his sister’s daughter as asyangkoime (e.g. MB-ZD) through his sister, and as akuma-koime (e.g. FZH-WBD) through his wife’s brother. The former is considered closer than the latter and is therefore used. In case the relationships are equally close, the one established first is used.

Marriage between real or classificatory cross-cousins is frequent among the Thakali, and many men are related to their father-in-law as sister’s son (konca). The son-in-law has important duties at his parents-in-law’s death ceremonies, and the relationship mha-kyan (DH–WF) is used, as it is considered more important than konca-asyang (ZS–MB). In first generation cross-cousin marriage, the son-in-law and the father-in-law sometimes continue calling each other konca and asyang.

The use of kinship terms is not restricted to relatives. For example, in Nepal women are usually addressed by non-relatives as ‘elder sister’ (didi) or

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13 The second singular personal pronoun is kyang among the Tamang Thakali and kih among the Mawatan Thakali and Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali.
14 Speaking to a woman, one can also refer to her husband as ‘the father of (your) child’ (kola awa).
15 Marriage is not allowed between an asyang and his koime, while an akuma is allowed to marry his koime, and the former relationship is therefore considered closer than the latter.
16 For example, a man may be related to his brother-in-law as WB–ZH (syangbo–mha) through his sister, and as ZH–WB (mha–syangbo) through his wife.
'younger sister' (baini), while men are addressed as 'elder brother' (dai) or 'younger brother' (bhai). This is also the case in Thak Khola; for example, when a Tamang Thakali visits an inn in Marpha, he address the womenfolk as ana (eZ) and picyang (yZ).

In Nepal fictive brotherhood (mit) is a widespread custom with important social, economic and political functions. These relationship are usually established between persons from different ethnic groups. In Thakali fictive brotherhood between men is called rowa and between women ngyahla. Bond brothers refer to each other as rowa and address each other as brothers, while bond sisters speak of each other as ngyahla and address each other as sisters. A man addresses and refers to his wife's bond sister and his bond brother's wife as romo, while in turn they address and refer to him as rowa. The children of bond brothers/sisters address and refer to each other as siblings.

Members of the tailor and blacksmith castes address adult Thakali men as talu (‘master’) and women as talusya. If the artisan is close to the Thakali whom he addresses, he may use the terms acyo (eB) and ana (eZ); these terms are used even if the artisan is older than the Thakali whom he addresses. Artisans address male Thakali children as babu (‘male child’) and nani (‘female child’). The Thakali never use kinship terms to address tailors and blacksmiths, but the words ‘tailor’ (duli) and ‘blacksmith’ (kemi), or personal names.

Labourers from the south address the head of the Thakali household for whom they work as ba (‘father’), his wife as ama (‘mother’), his adult sons as dai (‘elder brother’), and his adult daughters as didi (‘elder sister’), and the children as bhai (‘younger brother’), kancha (‘youngest brother’), baini (‘younger sister’) and kanchi (‘youngest sister’), or by name. Similarly, Thakali-speaking servants usually address the head of the household as akhe (‘grandfather’) or awa (‘father’), his wife as mom (‘grandmother’) or ama (‘mother’), his adult sons as acyo (‘elder brother’), his adult daughters as ana (‘elder sister’), and children by name. The Thakali usually address their servants by name.

The way people address each other is a good indication of their relative status. If a person addresses another using the personal name he usually has a higher status than the one whom he addresses (e.g. senior relatives versus junior ones, Thakali versus artisan, and master versus servant), but if he uses a kinship term or a title, he is likely to have a lower status.

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17 For information on fictive brotherhood in Nepal, see Okada 1957 and Messerschmidt 1982b.
18 Similarly, a female member of the tailor and the blacksmith castes is called dulisya and kemisya, respectively.
Kinship terminologies are classification systems which reduce scores of relatives to a limited and manageable number of kinship categories. It is the kinship terminology which enables a person to keep order in his kinship universe.

Among the Thakali there is a correlation between kinship categories and marriage rules. Marriage is prohibited between all categories, except for (among the Tamang Thakali) solti–soltisy (e.g. MBS–FZD and FZS–MBD), akuma–koieme (e.g. FZH–WBD), acyamha–acyang (e.g. eZH–WyZ) and kaka–nguca (e.g. HyB–eBW).

There is also a correlation between kinship categories and general behavior patterns; for example, a cha (e.g. BS) should obey any man whom he classifies as athyowa (FeB), while an utung (e.g. FZS and MBS) is allowed to joke with any woman whom he classifies as olyang (e.g. MBD and FZD).

There is, however, no general correlation between kinship categories and specific behaviour patterns, rights and obligations, and a man may have different rights and obligations to persons belonging to the same kinship category, depending on whether they are considered close (dung) or distant (bhya). For example, brother’s son has a claim to the estate of his father’s elder brother (athyowa) if the latter have no children, but he has not such a claim with regard to distant athowa. Also, daughter’s husband (mha) plays an important role during the death ceremonies of his father-in-law (kyan) and is obliged to be present, while this is not the case with distant mha, such as receivers of daughters of classificatory clan brothers. Further, when a woman returns to Thak Khola after having spent the winter in the south, she should greet (among others) her mother’s brother (asyang) by bowing down to his feet (bale gappa); this is not required in case of distant asyang, such as distant members of a woman’s natal clan.

The ideal behaviour patterns between some important relatives are described below.

Parents and Children

Parents are responsible for the socialization of their children. It is their duty to see to it that their children grow up to become good Thakali. They should be kind to and love their children, but punish misbehaviour and disobedience. Parents are said to be soft on children of the opposite sex, as they are less involved in their socialization, as compared with those of their own sex. Children should

19 There have, however, been a few marriages between persons related as asyang–koime. For further details, see Chapter IX.
obey their parents and follow their orders. If a child is told to fetch water he
should do so without complaint. Also, children should use respectful language
when talking to their parents.20

The relationship between parents and children of opposite sex is known
as pewa. This means that they are not allowed to talk freely with one another,
especially about sex. A son should not use words connected with sex (sexual
intercourse, condom, bra, abortion, menstruation, etc.) when his mother (or
anyone else with whom he has a pewa relationship) is present. If by mistake he
does, he should apologise and beg her pardon by saying, 'I am sorry'
(tholosya).21

Parents should look after the material needs of their children and provide
them with adequate food and clothing. When a son establishes his own house-
hold, his parents should give him a part of his share of the common property (if
possible a house and some fields); similarly, when a daughter marries (or at the
latest when she gives birth to her first child), she should be presented with tools
and kitchen utensils.

Parents take all decisions regarding the future of their children, such as
when they should leave school and start working on the farm. However, parents
consult adult children on important matters; for example, Thakali children have
the major say in the selection of their spouse. When a child establishes his own
household, his parents no longer have a say in his affairs. However, he should
continue to respect his parents and help whenever they request him to do so.
When the parents can no longer support themselves, it is the duty of their sons
(especially the youngest one) to look after them.

**Siblings**

Age is an important factor in Thakali kinship, and siblings are classified into
different kinship categories according to age. The relationships between elder
and younger siblings resemble the ones between parents and children: an elder
brother is like a father to his younger siblings and an elder sister like a mother;
this is so especially when there is a significant age difference between the
siblings.

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20 For example, if among the Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali a daughter asks her father where he
is coming from, she should use the honorific form khatai jyongla; on the other hand, a father
will use the ordinary form khatai khala to ask his daughter where she is coming from. How-
ever, if he is angry he will use the derogative and insulting form khawa bula.

21 Ramble reports a similar type of relationship among the Baragau Tibetans, where it is known
as ngo-tsha srung-mkhan, lit., 'those who must preserve (a sense of) modesty' (1984, p. 139).
Thakali children are taught to obey and respect elder siblings and to protect and help younger ones. Same-sex siblings spend most of the day working together and elder siblings play an important role in the socialization of their younger same-sex siblings. Siblings should not discuss sex. However, elder siblings sometimes crack dirty jokes even when younger same-sex siblings are present; the opposite is not allowed.

There exists a *pewa* relationship between opposite-sex siblings. Opposite-sex siblings do not spend much time together and elder siblings are not much involved in the socialization of younger siblings of the opposite sex. Thakali tend therefore to be more soft on younger siblings of the opposite sex than on those of their own.

Among Hindus the ideal norm is the household based on the lineal-collateral joint family, that is husband and wife living together with their married sons and the sons’ wives and children. Where this household is the norm, the relationship between brothers’ families is often bad, as conflicts are frequent in connection with the division of the paternal estate.²² Among the Thakali married brothers do not live in the same household and at the death of their father they share the paternal estate equally, and there are few conflicts between them. Many brothers are neighbours and have close economic cooperation.

In Thak Khola there is a high degree of village endogamy and married sisters often live in the same village. Married sisters have no obvious reasons for conflicts and the relationship between them is usually very good.

**Husband and Wife**

In Thak Khola husband and wife are often born and raised in the same village and they therefore know each other and one another’s families well before marriage.²³ Most husbands and wives are classified as cross-cousins and have a joking relationship before marriage. The ideal behaviour between spouses is more formal and reserved than between cross-cousins, and newly married couples usually have difficulties adjusting to their new kinship roles (and to married life in general).²⁴ The birth of a child is a stabilizing factor, and divorce rate among couples with children is low.

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²² See e.g. C. von Führer-Haimendorf 1966b, p. 41.
²³ This is true especially for the Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali and Mawatan Thakali, among whom more than 85 per cent of marriages are village endogamous. Among the Tamang Thakali 43 per cent of all marriages are within the same VDC. For details, see Chapter IX.
²⁴ It is not uncommon for a young man and a woman who have had a joking relationship before marriage to become almost shy and formal towards each other when they are together
A wife should respect and obey her husband, work hard, be faithful and look after him and their children well. A husband should be kind and faithful to his wife, provide her with adequate food and clothing, and not drink and gamble too much.

As the head of the household the husband represents the household in the village assembly and is responsible for the well-being of its members. Major decisions should be taken in consultation with the wife, and the petty cash and the key to the safe are usually entrusted to her.

The relationship between husband and wife is, in general, based on mutual respect and understanding; this is true especially between older couples. A Thakali woman respects her husband if he treats her and their children well and fulfills their material needs; similarly, a man respects his wife if she works hard and looks after their children well. A wife shows her husband affection by cooking him something special and by not calling him names if he occasionally gets drunk or gambles. Similarly, a Thakali husband shows his wife love by buying her clothes and kitchen utensils. Spouses do not kiss, hug or show other signs of affection in public.

Grandparents and Grandchildren

Thakali children live in the same village as their paternal grandparents and, in Pacgau (where there is a high frequency of village endogamy), as their maternal grandparents. Grandchildren see their grandparents almost daily and are left with them when their parents are busy. In Pacgau many children live with the grandparents for two or three months in winter, when their parents stay in the south.

Grandparents are very fond of their grandchildren and tend to spoil them. When a child visits his grandparents he gets sweets and other good things to eat. Children should obey and respect their grandparents; while parents sometimes beat their children, grandparents rarely do.

Parents' Siblings and Siblings' Children

The father's brother is like a father and should be treated accordingly. The relationship with FyB is generally warmer than that with FeB, and if there is little age difference between a nephew and his uncle, the latter becomes like an elder

with other people as newly-weds. McDougal reports on the Kulunge Rai a kind of semi-avoidance among those just married, which he links to the shame they feel because people now know that they have sex (1979, pp. 99–100).
brother. When a man dies, it is the duty of his brothers to see that his widow raises his children properly and manages his estate. If children become orphans, it is the duty of the paternal uncles to look after them.

Children often visit their maternal grandparents and they see much of their mother's unmarried sisters. The relationship to the married sisters is less close – especially if they live in another village. Mother's sister is like a mother, but tends to be more soft, especially to her nieces.

The mother's brother has an open and relaxed relationship with his sister's children, but he should not make sexual allusions while his nieces are present. Young men are close to their mother's brother and contact him for help and advice. Later in life he may even help by giving them a loan or by standing as their guarantor in a dikur. The relationship between children and their father's sister is relaxed, but not so close as in case of the mother's brother. A man is permitted to marry his wife's brother's daughter.²⁵

Cousins

Parallel cousins (i.e. the children of brothers or of sisters) address and refer to each other as siblings, and their ideal behaviour pattern is similar to that between siblings. Brothers' children are raised in the same neighbourhood and should help each other like brothers; while this usually is the case, there are examples of jealousy and conflicts. The relationship between sisters' children is less close (but not necessarily less friendly), especially in Thaksatsae where they typically live in different villages.

The relationship between cross-cousins (i.e. the children of opposite-sex siblings) is a so-called 'joking relationship'; the relationship is symmetrical, that is, both persons tease and make fun with each other. Joking is mainly verbal and only seldomly includes horse-play, and is most widespread between young cross-cousins of the opposite sex. When asked about his relationship to the daughters of his mother's brothers and father's sisters, a young Thakali man blushed and laughed, 'Always joking and fun'. Whenever a young Thakali meets his unmarried female cross-cousin, he should tease her – and she is expected to return his jokes. Unmarried Thakali women have limited sexual freedom and in spite of the joking (which usually has sexual overtones), sex between unmarried cross-cousins is not common. Same-sex cross-cousins have an open relationship, but there is less joking and teasing than among cousins of the opposite sex.

²⁵ Among the Kulunge Rai too, if a man's wife dies, he is permitted to marry her brother's daughter (ibid., p. 91).
Parents-in-law and Son/Daughter-in-law

According to Thakali ideas wife-receivers are indebted to wife-givers, and the former have a lower position than the latter. During the wedding the bridegroom must bow down in respect to all male members of the bride’s lineage, and when a man returns to Thak Khola from a visit he should visit his parents-in-law and bow down to their feet as a sign of respect.

A son-in-law should help his parents-in-law whenever he is asked. Parents-in-law often ask their son-in-law for help during harvest and, except for food, he receives no remuneration. The son-in-law is obliged to be present at their death ceremonies, and it is he who disposes of their bodies. A man is not a frequent guest in the house of his parents-in-law. During the visits he is usually a bit tense, especially if the parents-in-law are not his uncle and aunt. If the son-in-law gambles or drinks too much, womanizes, or does not look after his wife and children well the parents-in-law will criticize him and remind him about the conditions on which they gave away their daughter. Parents-in-law can also be helpful to their son-in-law by giving his wife presents, by looking after his children, by providing him with a loan, or by standing as his guarantor in a dikur.

A woman should respect and obey her parents-in-law. After marriage she often lives for a few years in a joint household with her parents-in-law; if she is married to the youngest son, she will live with them until they die. A newly married woman is expected to work hard, and the relationship between daughter-in-law and mother-in-law is not always amicable, but it usually improves after the birth of the first child. When a young couple establish an independent household, the mother-in-law no longer has a direct say in the affairs of her daughter-in-law, but she will criticize her if she is not a good and faithful wife. The father-in-law is like a father to his daughter-in-law; they are not supposed to talk much together, and there often develops a warm relationship between them.

26 This contrasts sharply with Hindu society where the son-in-law is considered an honoured guest in the house of his in-laws.

27 However, if man helps his father-in-law for several days, he is usually paid the standard daily wage.

28 This is true for many groups in Nepal. Pignède reports on the Gurung: ‘Relations between the daughter-in-law and her mother-in-law are often less [than] harmonious’ (1993, p. 247). And Jones and Jones report on the Limbu: ‘A young childless woman living in her husband’s household is the object of furious resentment by the other women. She is treated somewhat as a servant or a child until she has given birth to children, when she becomes an equal’ (1976, p. 125).
Siblings’ Spouses and Spouses’ Siblings

A joking relationship exists between a person and his/her spouse’s younger same-sex siblings; that is, between eZH and WyZ, and eBW and HyB. There are several examples of marriage between these relatives, but a man has no special rights to his deceased wife’s younger sisters, or to his deceased elder brother’s wife. There is no joking between a man and his wife’s elder sisters, or between a woman and her husband’s elder brothers. Sex and marriage are not allowed between these relatives, and it is considered improper for HeB and yBW to become too friendly.

A man should respect his wife’s elder brother, while his relationship to the younger brothers is more relaxed. The relationship between a woman and her husband’s sisters is usually good in case of first generation cross-cousin marriages, but some women have a strained relationship to their husband’s elder sisters, whom they consider to be ‘junior mothers-in-law’.

KINSHIP TERMINOLOGIES AND MARRIAGE SYSTEMS

As mentioned above kinship terminologies are classification systems. The present section seeks to present and explain the underlying principles of these systems.

The most important equations and distinctions in the Tamang Thakali kinship terminology are as follows. In the first ascending generation relatives are distinguished and called by separate terms. The terms used for husband’s parents are the same as those used for grandparents, while wife’s parents are called by the affinal terms ken (WF) and syungme (WM).

The terms for cognates of the zero generation show symmetry in that one set of terms is used for siblings and parallel cousins and another for cross-cousins. Affines of the zero generation are called by separate terms. WB is called syangbo; the root syang means ‘male wife-giver’, and among the Mawatan Thakali and the Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali this root is found in the kinship term for MB (asyang). ZH (m.s.) is called by the affinal term mha; HeB is called abhren, while HyB is classed together with FyB; BW is, according to seniority, called by the affinal terms nguca and cang; finally, WZ is classified as MZ, and HZ as FZ.

29 A joking relationship between a person and his/her spouse’s younger same-sex siblings is found among many groups in Nepal, e.g. the Limbu (Jones and Jones 1976, p. 68).

30 Among the Kulunge Rai, ‘if a married man dies before the final rite of his marriage has been performed, his younger brother has prior claim to his widow’ (McDougal 1979, p. 79).
First and second descending generations show symmetry in that one set of terms is used for children, children of same-sex siblings, and children of spouse's same-sex siblings, while another set is used for grandchildren, children of opposite-sex siblings, and children of spouse's opposite-sex siblings. Children and grandchildren's spouses are called by affinal terms; SW and SSW are grouped with yBW and called cang, while DH and SDH are classified together with ZH (m.s.) and called mha.

The Mawatan Thakali kinship terminology has, in general, the same features as that of the Tamang Thakali. The main differences are as follows: eZH is classified together with male cross-cousins; yZH (m.s.) is called by the affinal term mha, and yZH (f.s.) is called chawo; HB is classified as FB (the Tamang Thakali have only HyB=FyB); and, WZ is called chamo (and not classified together with MZ as among the Tamang Thakali).

The Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali kinship terminology shares the same basic features as the Tamang Thakali and the Mawatan Thakali. The main differences are that husband's parents are not classified as grandparents, but are called by separate terms; matrilateral parallel-cousins are distinguished from siblings and patrilineal parallel-cousins; eZH (f.s.) is classified as a male cross-cousin; yZH (f.s.) is called by the term chawo and ZH (m.s.) by the affinal term mha; WZ is classified with MZ (as among the Tamang Thakali); and, HB is called by a set of separate terms according to seniority (and not classified as FB).

The Thakali terminologies have several of the essential distinctions and equations of the symmetrical prescriptive two-line type, including the equation between children of opposite-sex siblings and children of spouse's opposite-sex siblings; the use of one set of terms for siblings and parallel-cousins, and another set for cross-cousins; and the use of one set of terms for children, children of same-sex siblings, and children of spouse's same-sex siblings, and another for children of opposite-sex siblings and children of spouse's opposite-sex siblings.

Many of the equations and distinctions in the Thakali terminologies, however, do not agree with the symmetrical prescriptive terminology; for example,

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31 A symmetric prescriptive terminology of the simple two-line type has ideally the following features: in the first ascending generation one set of terms is used for parents' same-sex siblings and parents' same-sex siblings' spouses, while another is used for parents' opposite-sex siblings, parents' opposite-sex siblings' spouses, and spouse's parents; in zero generation one set of terms is used for siblings and parallel cousins, and another for cross-cousins, spouse's siblings, and siblings' spouses; and finally, in the first descending generation one set of terms is used for children, children of same-sex siblings, and children of spouse's same-sex siblings, while another is used for children of opposite-sex siblings, children of spouse's opposite-sex siblings and children's spouses. The terms of these sets are defined and separated according to sex, and mostly also according to age.
some Thakali categories are used exclusively for affinal relatives (symmetrical
prescriptive terminologies do not have these types of categories). These differ-
ences can be explained on basis of the assumption that the Thakali kinship
terminologies were originally symmetrical prescriptive of the simple two-line type.
The missing equations were originally present in the Thakali terminologies, but
they disappeared after marriage was no longer prescribed with the category to
which cross-cousins belonged.\textsuperscript{34}

In the first ascending generation spouse’s parents were separated from
parents’ opposite-sex siblings and parents’ opposite-sex siblings’ spouses; hus-
band’s parents from wife’s parents; parents’ opposite-sex siblings from parents’
opposite-sex sibling’s spouses; and parents’ same-sex siblings from parents’ same-
sex siblings’ spouses. Some of the relatives retained their old classification, while
others were reclassified, either into old categories together with other relatives,
or into new, separate categories. For example, wife’s parents got the categories
\textit{kyan} and \textit{syungme}, while husband’s parents were classified in the category used
for grandparents.\textsuperscript{33}

In the zero generation, siblings’ spouses and spouse’s siblings were sepa-
rated from cross-cousins; siblings spouses from spouse’s siblings; and (among the
Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali) patrilineal parallel-cousins from matrilineal ones.
Spouse’s siblings were classified as parents’ siblings, except for HeB among the
Tamang Thakali, WZ among the Mawatan Thakali, and HB among the
Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali who were classified into new categories.\textsuperscript{34} Siblings’
spouses became known by new affinal terms, namely \textit{mha} for ZH, and \textit{cang} for
BW. In the first descending generation children’s spouses were separated from
opposite-sex siblings’ children and spouse’s opposite-sex siblings’ children and
called by new affinal terms, namely \textit{mha} for DH and \textit{cang} for SW.

The above analysis shows that the Thakali terminologies have several of the
equations and distinctions of the symmetrical prescriptive terminology of the two-
line type, and that those equations and distinctions which do not agree with this

\textsuperscript{32} Allen 1976 has similarly proposed that changes in Sherpa terminology are a result of changes
in marriage patterns.
\textsuperscript{33} This downwards extension of the terms for grandparents to spouse’s parents is also found in
the Chusangtan and Khumbu Sherpa terminologies (Vinding 1979, p. 217 and Allen 1976,
p. 573).
\textsuperscript{34} The terms \textit{asyang} (e.g. MB) and \textit{syangbo} (e.g. WB) both have the root \textit{syang} and are there-
fore here considered one. The Tamang Thakali use the Nepali term \textit{mama} for MB, but
originally they used the term \textit{asyang}. This downwards extension of the terms for parents’ sib-
lings to spouse’s siblings, so that wife’s siblings are known as mother’s siblings, and husband’s
siblings as father’s siblings, is also found in the Nyeshangpa (Mananggi) terminology (Vinding
1979, p. 215).
type can be explained as later developments.\(^{35}\) Considering this and that the terminologies of languages close to Thakali have many of the essential features of the symmetrical prescriptive type too,\(^{36}\) the Thakali terminologies are likely originally to have been symmetrical prescriptive of the simple two-line type.\(^{37}\)

One of the most important features in the Thakali kinship terminologies is the equation (by male speakers) between children's spouses and siblings' spouses (these relatives are, however, separated by sex, and in some instances also by age).\(^{38}\) The Thakali term *mha* includes ZH, DH, and SDH, and refers to men.

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35 The present examination has not attempted to, and indeed cannot, explain the many differences existing between the terminologies. Several important questions are left open and can only be answered if more comprehensive material becomes available. For example, why do the first ascending generation of the Thakali terminologies have none of the features of the symmetrical prescriptive terminology of the simple two-line type, when some of these features are found in related terminologies? Further, why do the Thakali use affinal terms for wife's parents, but extend downwards the terms for grandparents to include husband's parents? Also, why do the Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali distinguish between patrilineal and matrilineal parallel cousins, when this is not the case among the Tamang Thakali and the Mawatan Thakali?

36 The terminologies of the Tamang, the Baragau Tibetans, the Gyasumdo Tibetans and the Helambu Sherpa show in first ascending generation all the essential features of this type. Further, the kinship terminologies of the Tamang, the Chusangtan, the Baragau Tibetans and the Gyasumdo Tibetans show symmetry in the first descending generation in that one set of terms is used for children, children of same-sex siblings, and children of spouse's same-sex siblings, and another set is used for children of opposite-sex siblings and children of spouse's opposite-sex siblings. For further details, see Vinding 1979/80.

37 This was first proposed by Allen, who has concluded that Byansi kinship terminology is 'a clear example of the type known (among other labels) as symmetrical prescriptive' (1975, p. 81). According to Allen, a terminology is prescriptive 'in that affines and cognates are not distinguished' (ibid.), or 'in that it presupposes marriage with a category of relative' (1976, p. 571); further, a terminology is symmetrical if there is no distinction between patrilineal and matrilineal relatives, or between wife's parents and husband's (1975, p. 81). Symmetrical prescriptive terminologies of the simple two-line type are well-known from South India (Dumont 1953, 1957), but their existence in the Himalayan region, though first reported by Lall in 1911 (Byans valley in Alomora District, U.P.), was for a long time generally ignored. Having analysed one instance from the area, Dr. Allen proceeded further in a study of Sherpa terminology and proposed that 'the present day Sherpa terminology (or terminologies), and in general other Bodish and Bodic terminologies, all descend from an 'ancestor' of symmetrical prescriptive type' (1976, p. 581). Inspired by Dr. Allen's research, I collected and published ten kinship terminologies of the Bodish Section of Tibeto-Burman languages (Vinding 1979). In an analysis of the terminologies I concluded that they were not symmetrical prescriptive of the simple two-line type, but they included to a varying degree all features which indicated that they were originally of this type (Vinding 1979/80, p. 340).

38 The equation (by male speakers) between children's spouses and siblings' spouses is also found in related kinship terminologies of the Bodish Section of Tibeto-Burman languages. The terminologies belonging to the Gurung Branch of the Bodish Section of Tibeto-Burman
who have received a woman from the speaker’s patrilineal descent group, and who are junior to the speaker. A *mha* has a subordinate position vis-a-vis the speaker, and wife-receivers senior to the speaker (such as FZH) are not classified as *mha* (male Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali, however, classify eZH as *mha*, while Tamang Thakali use the term *acyamha*). Female speakers do not classify yZH as *mha* (except among the Tamang Thakali), but use this term exclusively for wife-receivers of descending generations (e.g. DH and SDH); this indicates that women are not considered wife-givers in their natal patrilineal descent group, but only in their husband’s patrilineal descent group. Male speakers classify FBDH and MZDH (FBD and MZD younger than the speaker) as *mha*; the inclusion of MZDH in this category presupposes that M and MZ marry into the same patrilineal groups.

The term *cang* refers to women of zero or descending generations married into male speaker’s patrilineal descent group. This category includes BW, SW, and SSW (but not FBW). Female speakers use the term *cang* to classify women of zero or descending generations married into the same patrilineal descent groups as themselves (e.g. SW and SSW, but not BSW); in addition, women also classify BW as *cang*.

The Thakali terms for MB (*asyang*) and WB (*syangbo*) have the root *syang*. The terminologies of the Bodish Section of Tibeto-Burman languages were originally symmetrical prescriptive of the simple two-line type, and the category *syang* comprised males of first ascending generation belonging to the opposite line of the speaker (e.g. MB, FZH and WF). FZH and WF were later separated from this category, and furthermore the term *syang* was extended downwards to WB, and today the category *syang* refers to (for male speakers) wife-givers of zero and ascending generations.

In a symmetrical prescriptive terminology of the simple two-line type there is no difference between affines and cognates, and between wife-givers and wife-takers. The above analysis of the Thakali categories *mha*, *cang*, and *shang* shows that key affinal relatives are classified in a category which does not include cognates, and that key wife-takers are not classified together with key wife-givers. This indicates that Thakali marriage is not *prescribed* with the category to which cross-cousins belong, and that those whom a group of patrilineal males give their women are not necessary those from whom they receive women.

languages (e.g. Thakali, Gurung, Tamang, Nyeshangpa (Mananggii), Narpa, and Chusangtang) use the term *mha/mho* and *cang/co* for children’s spouses and siblings’ spouses (the former for males, the latter for females), while the corresponding terms in the terminologies of the Bodish Branch of the Bodish Section (such as Baragau Tibetans, Gyasumdo Tibetans and Helambu Sherpa) are *makpa* and *namo/namla*, respectively. For these terminologies, see Vinding 1979.
Thus, to a Thakali man there are five important categories of relatives: First, his *phobe* which includes the men of his patrilineal subclan; second, his *celi* which are the women born into his patrilineal subclan; third, his *tayusya* which are the women married into his patrilineal subclan; fourth, his *mha* which are the men who have received a woman from his patrilineal subclan; and finally, his *syang* which are the men of the patrilineal subclan from which he has received his wife. The men belonging to the same patrilineage thus share the same *phobe, celi, tayusya*, and *mha*, while they may have different *syang*.

CONCLUSION

The kinship terminologies of the three Thakali dialects are basically similar to each other and to those of the other languages of the Gurung Branch of the Bodish Section of Tibeto-Burman languages.

Kinship terms are used primarily to address and refer to relatives. However, they may also be used by non-relatives to address each other. The way persons address each other is a good indication of their relative status. If a person addresses another by using the personal name or a kinship term used for junior relatives, the speaker usually has a higher status; e.g. senior relatives versus junior ones, Thakali versus artisans, and master versus servants. The opposite is true if the speaker uses titles or kinship terms for senior relatives.

Kinship terminologies are classification systems which reduce scores of relatives to a manageable number of kinship categories. Among the Thakali there is a correlation between kinship categories and marriage rules. There is also a correlation between kinship categories and general behaviour patterns, but not between kinship categories and specific behaviour patterns, rights and obligations, and a Thakali may have different rights and obligations to persons whom he calls by the same term depending on whether they are considered close or distant.

There are ideal behaviour patterns between relatives. Junior relatives should respect their seniors. The relationship between opposite-sex relatives is characterized either by formality or joking; for example, a man cannot mention things connected with sex in the front of women classified as sisters, but may crack jokes with women classified as cross-cousins.

The Thakali terminologies have several of the equations and distinctions of the symmetrical prescriptive terminology of the simple two-line type. In this terminology there is no difference between affines and cognates, and between wife-givers and wife-takers. Among the Thakali key affinal relatives are classified in categories which do not include cognates, and key wife-takers are not classified.
together with key wife-givers. These and other equations and distinctions which do not agree with the symmetrical prescriptive terminology of the simple two-line type can, however, be explained as later developments. Among the Thakali marriage is thus not prescribed with the category to which cross-cousins belong, and those to whom a group of patrilineal males give their women in marriage are not necessarily those from whom they receive.

In an article on the marriage system of the Tamang of Central Nepal, G. Toffin has written: ‘M. Vinding (1979/80) a critiqué l’emploi du qualificatif ‘préscriptif’ pour désigner les systèmes matrimoniaux des Gurung, Thakali, Tamang, etc. D’après lui, ces groupes ne font qu’autoriser ce type d’ unions et se marient surtout entre personnes n’ayant pas de relations de parenté entre elles. Cependant, d’après sa propre enquête chez les Thakali, sur un total de 111 unions conjugales recensées, 68% des mariages se font avec une cousine croisée (p. 328–329). M. Vinding rapporte également que 74% des Thakali qu’il a interrogés donnent leur préférence à un mariage entre cousins croisés plus éloignés (p. 327). De tel chiffres infonirent singulièrement sa thèse. Il est d’autre part tendancieux et erroné de réduire un système matrimonial à de ‘jural marriage rules’, c’est-à-dire en fin de compte à la seule notion d’obligation juridique, comme le fait cet auteur (p. 339). Un système matrimonial est un tout organique: il est formé d’une terminologie de parenté, de règles de mariage et d’un ensemble de prestations entre alliés. L’article de M. Vinding a cependant le mérite d’attirer l’attention sur les différences entre les terminologies de parenté actuelle de ces groupes népalais et la terminologie idéal correspondant au mariage de cousins croisés.’

Toffin is right that the figures in my article reject the thesis that Thakali marriage is exclusively among persons who are not related. His criticism would certainly be relevant if in my paper I had made such a thesis. I did not.

What I said in my paper is that there are three ways to define and classify marriage systems – on the basis of actual marriage patterns, jural rules, and kinship terminologies. But while some anthropologists prefer to define marriage systems on the basis of kinship terminologies, I proposed to use jural rules, because classification based on actual marriage patterns and kinship terminologies tend to be arbitrary. I then proceeded to define a prescriptive marriage system as one where there is ‘a positive marriage rule according to which a person is obligated to marry a person of a particular category.’

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39 Toffin 1986, p. 22.
Salt trader from Lo on a visit to Syang
Goats carrying bags of salt at Syang

Mules carrying rice entering Jomsom
Ploughing with cross-breeds (*jho*) at Syang
Lassoing yak at Marce

Cupping blood for drinking from yak at Marce
Child, now a truck driver, at Syang
Syang baby

Syang child carrying puppy as she would a baby
Elder Thakali women of Syang
Tamang Thakali sisters at Khanti

Family photograph at Syang
Among the Thakali it is not compulsory, or prescriptive, for a woman to marry the category to which her male cross-cousins belong: It is fully acceptable for her to marry her deceased father’s sister’s husband, or her deceased elder sister’s husband. The Thakali do therefore not have a prescribed marriage system. Thus I oppose Toffin’s use of the label ‘prescribed’ for Thakali marriage systems. Thakali prefer marriage between cross-cousins, but this is not necessarily the same as marriage being prescribed with the cross-cousins.
Chapter VI

CLANS AND LINEAGES

This chapter examines descent groups and compromise descent groups among the Thakali.¹

THE TAMANG THAKALI

The Tamang Thakali comprise four exogamous, patrilineal clans: Cyogi, Salgi, Dhimcan, and Bhurgi. In the early 20th century, Nepali names (Gaucan, Tulacan, Shercan and Bhattachan) were introduced and are now commonly used.²

The Thakali do not know the literal meaning of their original clan names, and the literature offers no solution. The ending -gi is probably an abbreviation of ghyu (Tib., brgyud), ‘lineage’.³ The Bhurgi Rhab, written in the Tibetan script, renders the clan names as mchod, gsal, grim btsan and bur.⁴ The clan names may thus be – and this cannot be more than a qualified guess – translated as follows: Cyogi, ‘the respected lineage’; salgi, ‘the pure/clear

¹ The present chapter is based on Vinding 1981. Other important works on Thakali descent groups include Manzardo 1978, C. von Furer-Haimendorf 1981, and Fisher 1987.
² The first to have used the Nepali clan names as surnames may well have been the sons of Harkaman Thakali (Mohanman, Hitman, Chetman and Guptaman), sometime in the 1920s or 1930s. According to C. von Furer-Haimendorf, the Nepali clan names were introduced around 1930 (1981b, p. 3).
³ Georg (1996, p. 4) has expressed reservation about this conjecture, which was first proposed in Vinding 1981, p. 208. However, the proposal is supported not only by informants but also by the account of the Cyogi clan (Cyogi Rhab) where Salgi is referred to as sälägyu.
⁴ The spelling of names and other words is inconsistent and varies not only between the different versions of the Bhurgi Rhab, but also within the same version.
lineage'; dhimcan, 'the illustrious and mighty lineage'; and bhurgi, 'the prominent lineage'.

Since the Nepali clan names were introduced in the present century, it is somewhat surprising that the Tamang Thakali do not know their meaning. The account of the Cyogi clan, the Cyogi Rhab, written in the Devanagari script, renders the clan names as gaucan, tulacan, syercan, and battacan. The ending -can may be an attempt by the names' inventor(s) to connect the Tamang Thakali with the Thakuri clan Chand. Gau means 'cow' and may be related with the gaucan clan god. Sher means 'lion' and appears related with the Shercan clan god. Bhutt may mean 'exchange' and may be indirectly connected with the Bhattacan clan god. The meaning of tulā is a puzzle.

The clans are not localized, but they probably were formerly. Gau can is said to have come from Nakhung or Naprungkhung, Tulacan from Dhojo or Bhujungkot (villages that have long been deserted), Shercan from Ghang (the old Kobang), and Bhattacan from Narsang (the old Khanti).

The clans have a named ancestor and a clan god. The ancestor of Gau can is Ani Airam and its god is Lha Langba Nhurbu, God Jewel Elephant; the ancestor of Tulacan is Samledhen Samlecyang and its goddess is Lha Chyurin Gyalmo, in Tibetan mchod means 'honoured, respected' as well as 'offering, libation' (Jäschke 1881, p. 166); gsal is 'pure, clear, bright' (ibid., p. 588); grims is 'intelligent, clever' (ibid., p. 77); btsan means 'powerful, illustrious' (ibid., p. 434); and 'bur-ba, 'to rise, to be prominent' (ibid., p. 934). Alternatively, cyogi could also be derived from Tib., chos, 'doctrine, religion' (ibid., p. 163), or Tib., gtso bo, 'chief, lord' (ibid., p. 434).

For can among the Gurung, see Pignède 1966, pp. 162–165. Alternatively, the ending -can may be a Nepalization of the Tibetan btsan, 'powerful, illustrious'.

In Nepali gau means 'cow' (Turner 1931, p. 151). The Gau can clan god is glang po nor bu (Tib.), 'the Jewel Elephant'; in Tibetan, glang means not only 'elephant', but also 'cow, ox'.

In Nepali ser means 'lion' (ibid., p. 621). The Shercan clan god is gangs la seng ge dkar po (Tib.), 'the White Lionness of the Glaciers'.

In Nepali battā means 'fee, discount, commission, percentage', while in Hindi it also means 'exchange' (ibid., p. 416). The Bhattacan clan god controls the exchange of salt for grain. According to Turner, tulā is the sign Libra (the Scales) in the zodiac, while tulo is Scales. (ibid., p. 288). Any connection between the Scales and the Tulacan clan remains unclear.

As mentioned in Note 4 above, in the rhab the spellings of particular words and names is inconsistent and vary much not only between the different versions of the same text, but also within the same text. Ani Airam is also spelled e.g. a ni e le ram, Samledhen Samlecyang e.g. sam glo dran bsam [sic] glo shyang, Ladakhpa Gyalsang e.g. lha dakpa gelsang, and Damce Damru e.g. dam tsha'i dam rgyu, dam tshig 'dam ru and de tshig dam ru.

The meaning of Ani Airam is not clear.

God Jewel Elephant is male, his colour is red (ola), his direction is the East (szer), and his element is fire (me); he is the elder brother (aço) of the four clan gods.

The meaning of Samledhen Samlecyang is not clear, but the suffixes -dhen and -cyang mean 'big, elder' and 'small, younger', respectively.
Goddess Sea-Monster Queen;¹⁵ the ancestor of Shercan is Ladakhpa Gyalsang⁶ and its goddess is Lha Ghangla Singi Karpo, Goddess White Lioness of the Glacier;¹⁷ finally, the ancestor of Bhattacan is Pau Kuti, also known as Damce Damru,¹⁸ and its god is Lha Yhawa Rangjyung, God Self-Created Yak.¹⁹

Each of the four clans has a ritual specialist known as pare, who is the mediator between the clan and its god. The pare come from particular subclans or lineages: Pare Phobe of Gaucan, Cheni Phobe of Tulacan, Lhakhang Dungi Phobe of Shercan, and Lhepu Cyang Ghyuwa of Bhattacan. The post of pare is usually passed on to a son or brother’s son.

The four gods are taken out of their temples and worshipped during Lha Phewa, a festival that is celebrated every twelfth year; the four gods are also worshipped during Soisoi Lawa which takes place three years prior to Lha Phewa.²⁰ During these festivals the pare recite the four clan histories (rhab).²¹

The four pare walk in a line with the Gaucan pare in the front followed by the pare of Tulacan, Shercan and Bhattacan. This order reflects the kinship re-

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¹⁵ An alternative translation of the Thakali word chyurin (Tib., chu srin) is 'crocodile'; chu srin (Tib.) in Sanskrit is makara. Goddess Sea-Monster Queen is female, her colour is blue/green (pin), her direction is the South (lho), and her element is water (kyu); she is the elder sister (ana) of the gods. Bista reports that the Gaucan clan god is a dragon and Tulacan is an elephant (1967, P. 125). C. von Führer-Haimendorf has repeated the same mistake, 'Thus Gouchan is associated with the colour green and a dragon, Tulachan with the colour red and the elephant ...' (1981, p. 6).

¹⁶ Ladakhpa Gyalsang means 'Gyaltshan from Ladakh'.

¹⁷ Goddess White Lioness of the Glacier is female (although 'White' in her name is rendered with the male suffix -po), her colour is white (tar), her direction is the West (nhup), and her element is earth (sa); she is the younger sister (picyang).

¹⁸ Damce Damru is derived from Tibetan dam tshig, 'a solemn promise' and dam 'cha ba, 'to promise'; that is, '[He] who has given a solemn promise'. The Salgi Rhab mentions how Pau Kuti was named Damce Damru (see Vinding 1992, p. 69).

¹⁹ God Self-Created Yak is male, his colour is black (mlang), his direction is the North (jya), and his element is wind (nambar); he is the youngest brother (ale) of the gods.

²⁰ For Lha Phewa and Soisoi Lawa, see Chapter XIII.

²¹ For a retelling of the rhab, see Vinding 1992. Facsimiles, critical editions and translations of the rhab are in preparation. According to some informants the original version of the Dhimcan Rhab is said to have been lost in a fire. The Dhimcan Rhab recited during Lha Phewa is basically similar to the Cyogi Rhab and was written in connection with the 1956 festival. Vinding and Gauchan 1977 includes a retelling of another version of the Dhimcan Rhab, written in 1968 by Narendra Gauchan. Whether the Dhimcan Rhab was actually destroyed accidentally in a fire -- or deliberately as claimed by Manzardo (1978, p. 49) -- is uncertain. If the original version of the Dhimcan Rhab has indeed been deliberately lost (either in a fire or stored away), it may have been an attempt by some members of the Shercan clan to hide the proper name of their ancestor (Ladakhpa Gyalsang), because it indicates that he originated from a Tibetan area (Ladakh). Today, this ancestor is referred to as Dhakpa Gyalsang.
lations between the gods and only plays a role during these festivals; in daily life there are no status differences between the clans.

Each of the four clans has a leader (gamba). His main duties are to plan and supervise the clan’s activities during Lha Phewa and Soisoi Lawa, and to look after the funds established to finance these festivals. The post of leader is open to any clan member, but it is often passed on from father to son. The leader is nominated by the members of the clan and usually has the post until he dies or retires; however, clan members are free to discharge him if they are dissatisfied with his performance.

Each clan is subdivided into a number of named subclans or lineages, known as phobe or ghyuwa, which each has its own ossuary (khimi) (Table 15). These subclans and lineages are the most important patrilineal groups among the Tamang Thakali. The names of the groups refer to the name of an eponymous ancestor (e.g. Khunara), the post with which the ancestor or the present members are associated (e.g. cheni, ‘family priest’, pare, ‘priest’, and pompar, ‘nobleman, leader’), or the locality where the members of the group originally lived (e.g. lhakhang dhungi, ‘close to the temple’).

22 God Jewel Elephant is regarded as the elder brother (aryo), Goddess Sea-monster Queen is the elder sister (ana), Goddess White Lioness of the Glacier is the younger sister (piyang), and God Self-created Yak is the younger brother (ade). C. von Furer-Haimendorf has (mistakenly) reported that the lion is regarded the wife of the yak (1981b, p. 6).

23 The Gaucan clan has two leaders; the present leaders are from the Tancang and Dhyatan subclans.

24 By a lineage I understand a patrilineal descent unit where the relationship between any two members can be exactly stated in genealogical terms; if this cannot be done, I shall refer to the patrilineal unit as a clan or subclan. To the Thakali the terms phobe and ghyuwa are interchangeable, and they cannot explain why some subclans and lineages are called phobe and others ghyupa. One possible explanation could be that phobe is an ancient local term, while ghyuwa is a foreign term, cf. Tib., brgyud pa.

25 The present lists are slightly different from the ones presented in Vinding 1981. The lists in Vinding 1981 included a total of 40 subclans/lineages, while the lists presented by Manzardo 1978, Jest (quoted in Manzardo 1978) and C. von Furer-Haimendorf 1981b included only 22, 28 and 22 entries only. Fisher’s 1987 lists are generally identical with the ones presented in Vinding 1981. It is difficult to collect information on the subclans and lineages. First, only a handful of informants are able to name the subclans and lineages of their clan. Second, information obtained from different key informants does not often agree. And third, in some cases it is unclear whether a particular lineage should be counted as a separate one, or as a branch of another.

26 The members of the Lhakhang Dhungi subclan originally lived close to the Meki Lhakhang temple in Kobang. Some informants mention that Lhakhang Dhungi paid for the construction of Meki Lhakhang, while Mha Dhungi paid for the gold (mhar).
Each of the clans originally had a subclan or lineage known as Dhyatan. Now there are only three, as the Shercan Dhyatan has died out. The four Dhyatan are said to have been founded by the youngest brothers of the four clans, and these subclans are therefore not allowed to intermarry.

Some ritual specialists are recruited exclusively from specific groups. The priests of the so-called ‘White Bon’ tradition are recruited exclusively from Lam of Gaucan. The religious specialists of the indigenous pre-Buddhist religion of the Thakali, which is known as dhom, are recruited exclusively from Dhom and Balamtan of Gaucan and the two Shercan Dhom.

Table 15: Tamang Thakali subclans and lineages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gaucan</th>
<th>Tulacan</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Tancang</td>
<td>1. Lam</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Ghera</td>
<td>2. Chyupa</td>
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<td>3. Dhom</td>
<td>3. Jaungman</td>
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<td>5. Ghosetan</td>
<td>5. Dhungpa</td>
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<td>6. Lam</td>
<td>6. Dhyatan</td>
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<td>7. Ghai Mhirki</td>
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<td>8. Pare</td>
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<td>9. Mhatasi</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Sonam Mhirki Syarki</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Dhyatan</td>
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</table>

27 See also Fisher 1987, p. 221. Rai reports, that the Shercan Dhyatan built a new khimi in April 1990 (1994, p. 20); Rai also mentions that the Shercan Dhyatan is extinct (ibid., p. 124).
28 Rai mentions that Dhyatan means ‘the locals’, and that they are identical with the Thatan (the indigenous people of Thak Khola) mentioned in the Cyogi Rhab (1994, p. 13). Local informants confirm this information.
29 In 1995, in Kathmandu, a Gaucan Dhyatan married a Bhattacan Dhyatan woman; the marriage was opposed by many Tamang Thakali, who considered it to be incestuous.
30 For the ‘White Bon’ tradition, see Chapter XII.
31 The four clans each originally had a subclan/lineage from where the dhom serving clan members were recruited. The Bhattacan dhom subclan died out a few decades ago (the last dhom was an informant of C. Jest). For the dhom tradition, see Chapter XII.
Notes:

a. Ghale has not been included in the list as it is extinct. (Among the Gurung ghale is the clan of the kings.) Vinding 1981 includes an additional subclan called Sapretan. It has been omitted here, because it is a segment of the Dhom phobe and does not have its own khimi (Fisher 1987, p. 221). Fisher (ibid.) includes a subclan or lineage called Kal Kyu on which I have no information.

b. Tancang is also known as Tanang or Lara.

c. Ghera was originally part of Tancang, and members of Ghera refer to their subclan as Ghera, Tancang or Lara Ghera.

d. Dhom has three named subdivisions (Bhlenten, Sapratan, and Nakhungtan Cyang), but all three share one khimi and have a single jho cawa (ibid.).

e. Lam is also known as Lama.

f. Pare is also known as Mhiti Cyang or Mhiting Cyang.

g. Jhongtan, also known as Jhongtan Nawa Hulaki, has not been included in the list as it is extinct. The members of this lineage are said originally to have lived in Jhong above Tukce and to have functioned as messengers (cf. Nep., hulaki, 'postman'). Is this lineage identical with Kangtan (Ghangtan), which Fisher (ibid.) has included in his list?

h. Chyupa is also known as Chyukpa.

i. Jauman or Jaungman includes the one remaining family from the Caingi lineage.

j. Cheni or Chaine is also known as Pare.


Table 15 (cont.): Tamang Thakali subclans and lineages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shercan</th>
<th>Bhattacan</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Lhakhang Dhungi</td>
<td>1. Cyang Mhirki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Mha Dhungi</td>
<td>2. Nacyang Mhirki</td>
</tr>
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<td>3. Narcha</td>
<td>3. Tepalsang Mhirki</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Yonten Chogi</td>
<td>4. Lam</td>
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<td>5. Pompar</td>
<td>5. Bara Dhorche</td>
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<td>8. Sartan</td>
<td>8. Lhepu Cyang</td>
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<td>10. Lemendhen Lemencyang</td>
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<td>11. Sarkege Palten Cyang</td>
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<td>12. Dhom (A)</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. Dhom (B)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Notes:

a. Dhyatan has not been included as it is extinct.
b. Lhakhang Dhungi is also known as Lhakhang Dhangi.
c. Tarcha is also known as Tarche or Teje
d. Lemendhen Lemencyang (also known as Lemendhen Lemencyang Salendhen Salencyang) and Sarkege Palten Cyang originally formed a single subdivision. According to Fisher, 'These two groups are apparently one, sharing the same khimi' (ibid.).
e. Fisher mentions a third separate lineage, Dhom (C), which is found in Khani Khowa (ibid.). According to Fisher, the three subdivisions share a common khimi, but meet separately for jho sawa (1987, p. 228). As far as I am informed, there are two Dhom subclans, each having its own khimi.
f. Dhom phobe has not been included as it is extinct.
g. Cyang Mhirki is also known as Tsar Mhirki, Chawang Mhirki or Chewa Mhirki.
h. Bara Dhorche is also known as Bara Dhorche Sara Dhorche.
i. Mhicen is also known as Mhicyung.
j. Lhepu Cyang is also known as Pare.
k. According to Fisher, Dhyatan is divided into two separate branches; members of one branch reside in Beni and Kathmandu, members of the other reside in Khani Khowa. (ibid., p. 221). However, according to my informants, the two branches use one khimi and should count as one group.

The priest who acts as the mediator between the Tamang Thakali and their protective deity Nari Jhowa is recruited exclusively from Dhom of Shercan, and the priest of the protective deity of Taglung village (Mhasumpra) is from Mhatasi of Gaucan.

The organization of the groups varies, but in general it is as follows. The group has a leader (gamba or thatu) who looks after the funds and documents of the group and who arranges the meetings. He usually functions as mediator inside the group and represents the group in case of conflict between a member of his group and a member of another group. The leader is nominated by the members of the group and the post is open to any man living in Thak Khola, though it is often passed on from elder brother to younger brother, or from father to son. The leader is usually an elder respected due to his age, wisdom, good reputation, authoritative personality, and for his ability to speak and discuss. The leader usually has his post until he dies or retires but can be discharged if the members are dissatisfied with him.

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32 Fisher reports, however, that there are several instances where this post is held by an individual residing outside of Thak Khola (1987, p. 227).
33 C. von Führer-Haimendorf reports, however, that the gampa is 'the seniormost member of the lineage in terms of generations and not of birth-order' (1981b, p. 9).
The group also has an assistant (gundal).[^34] It is the duty of the assistant to carry messages from the leader to group members. Meetings usually take place in the house of the assistant and it is his duty to do the practical work in connection with meetings. The post of the assistant is held for one year, and the duty is passed in rotation between members of the group living permanently in Thaksatsae.

The funds of the groups formerly consisted of fields but now are mostly in cash. The funds are lent out with interest to needy members, and the interest is used for covering expenses of the meetings.[^35]

The main meeting is *jho sawa* which most groups celebrate in September or October.[^36] The members of the group gather for three days to eat and drink together.[^37] The leader presents his accounts and the new assistant is nominated. The group’s old documents are taken out and read. These may include genealogies,[^38] but more often they consist of rules on how the meetings should be conducted and how the interest on the funds should be spent; some ancestors have also written down advice counselling members of the group to settle disputes through talking them out and to share the food equally.[^39]

On the third and last day the group usually invites the women who have married out and their husbands. This extended group (*nimahyang*) may have a separate fund to cover expenses for this meeting.

Each group has its own ossuary (*khimi*), which is a stone structure between two and three meters high, where a bone of the skull (*astu*) of dead members is placed. The ossuaries are found in the fields at Naprungkhung, Kobang and Khanti, except for those of Ghera, Balamtan, Mhatasi, and Chyupa which are in

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[^34]: Some groups have two assistants.

[^35]: For example, the Lhakhang Dhungi subclan has sold all its fields, except for the one where its *khimi* stands. Most of the subclan members live in Kathmandu, and half of the interest is set aside for a big party which takes place during the *Lha Phewa* festival.

[^36]: Some groups have stopped arranging *jho sawa*.

[^37]: Members living outside Thak Khola do not usually participate in *jho sawa*.

[^38]: C. von Fürer-Haimendorf writes that ‘the Thakali have neither written records nor professional genealogists to preserve the knowledge of the exact links between collaterals further than three to four generations back’ ([1981b, p. 11]). Some Thakali do possess written genealogical records. In 1994 Shangkarmar Shercan published a genealogy of the Lhakhang Dhungi subclan, showing the exact lines between collaterals seven generations back. While some Thakali are able to trace back their ancestry fifteen generations, most are able to mention only the name of their father, grandfather and perhaps great-grandfather.

[^39]: Such advice is found in the documents of Cyang Mhirki of Bhattacan.

[^40]: The ossuaries of Ghera (Gaucan) and Chyupa (Tulacan) are both located near the (now ruined) Taglung temple, whereas that of Mhatasi (Gaucan) is near Kunjo and that of Balamtan (Gaucan) in Titi.
the Taglung area. The *khimi* is whitewashed every year and the ancestors presented food offerings during a ceremony (*khimi ramden*) which is held immediately before the start of *jho sawa*.

The *khimi* are important as a Tamang Thakali becomes a recognized ancestor or ancestress only after his/her bone fragment has been placed in the ossuary. Informants mention that the bones of most Tamang Thakali, regardless of their place of residence, are in fact placed in the ossuaries. However, the practice is not strictly observed. In Khani Khowa bone fragments often languish for the want of an individual to carry them or from the uncertainty on the part of the heir over his reception by the members of the subclan in Thak Khola. Only bones of 'pure' Tamang Thakali are allowed to be placed in the ossuaries. When a Tamang Thakali man marries a non-Tamang Thakali, his offspring become 'impure'. It takes three generations of marriage with women of 'pure blood' to re-establish purity, and consequently the bones of the son, the grandson and the great-grandson of a Tamang Thakali and a non-Tamang Thakali are not permitted in their subclan's ossuary. The Tamang Thakali of Thak Khola believe that a significant number of Tamang Thakali of Khani Khowa are of mixed parentage, and Tamang Thakali from this area are usually questioned in detail before they are permitted to deposit a bone of a dead relative in their subclan's ossuary.

Bones of unmarried women are placed in the *khimi* of their natal subclan, while those of married women are placed in that of their husband. The bones of Tamang Thakali of mixed parentage are placed outside the *khimi*.

Some Thakali establish a fund for the building and maintenance of a reliquary stone structure (*mane*) to be constructed in their name when they die. A ceremony (*mane ramden*) is held every year in the name of its founder. The *mane* is painted white during this ceremony, and anyone who passes it is offered beer.

The members of the group invite each other when a member marries. The bride's group gather in her house where they are presented beer and alcohol by the groom's side. Later, the groom's group gathers in his house to celebrate the marriage. Each household presents the groom with a turban and the bride with

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41 | The *khimi* of the Lam subclan, from which the priest of the Bon religion are recruited, is painted red. Some groups do not have *khimi ramden* because all members live outside Thak Khola.

42 | Fisher 1987, p. 223.

43 | The bones of divorced women are deposited in the *khimi* of their natal subclan, but only if their husband was a 'pure' Tamang Thakali.

44 | It is unclear where the bones of Tamang Thakali of mixed parentage are exactly placed. Some informants mention that they are placed at the foot of the stone structure. Others that some *khimi* have an upper compartment for 'pure' Tamang Thakali and a lower one for those of mixed parentage and for non-Tamang Thakali women married to a member of the subclan.
a shawl. After the wedding the newly married couple visit the houses of the members of the bride’s natal group, where they bow down to each and every member and present the house a bottle of alcohol.

Members also gather when there is a death within the group. The women born and the women married into the group are expected to cry during the ceremonies. The household of the deceased presents the women dark shawls to cover themselves as a sign of mourning.

The subclans and lineages mentioned above are further subdivided, but the subdivisions are usually not named and do not function as social groups. There are, however, exceptions. Dhom phobe of Gaucan has three named subdivisions (Bh lentan, Sapratan and Nakhungtan Cyang), but they have a single cho sawa and all share one khimi. The Narcho subclan of the Shercan clan comprises three subdivisions. The subdivisions gather for a common jho sawa and share the same khimi, but due to the subclan’s large size only subdivision members are invited for marriage and death ceremonies. Lhakhang Dhungi comprises five subdivisions, namely Lha Chirin, Paira, Bauncyang, Paisara and Shekong Cyang; the five subdivisions share the same khimi, but have separate jho sawa because of its large size.

When a subclan becomes too large, members start inviting only members of their own subdivision for marriage and death ceremonies (like Narcho). The next step in the separation process is that the subdivisions start arranging separate jho sawa (like Lhakhang Dhungi). The final step is that one (or several) of the subdivisions establishes its own khimi and thus becomes a separate group.

Example of subclans and lineages which originally formed a single group are Ghera and Tancang; Mha Dhungi and Lhakhang Dhungi; Sartan and Pakera; and the two Dhom of Shercan.

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45 Fisher 1987, p. 221.
46 The five subdivisions are named according to seniority. Lha Chirin is a subclan comprising two lineages, the four others are lineages. Paisara has died out. Balbir lineage (the subha lineage) is a subdivision of the Lha Chirin subclan. Fisher renders the names as: Lha khang dhunge, Paira, Paisaraa, Bauncyaang and Singe cyaang (1987, p. 222).
47 Fisher 1987, p. 221.
48 When a subclan or lineage divides, members of the new group establish their own khimi. A string is tied from the old khimi to the new one, and some bones are taken along the string to the new khimi. Informants from the Ghera subclan mention, however, that no bones were taken from their original khimi in Naprungkhung to their present in Taglung (a distance of many kilometers).
49 Tancang of Gaucan originally comprised five lineages, namely Lara, Shaicyang, Bhuicyang, Sangge Dhorce and Ghera; Ghera later became a separate group.
50 Fisher 1987, p. 221.
Separation is caused not only by growth, but also by conflicts. In case of serious dissent, members may be expelled from their subclan, whereafter they are forced to establish their own group and *khimi*.

**THE MAWATAN THAKALI**

The Mawatan Thakali comprise four patrilineal clans, namely *Rhoten Phobe*,\(^{51}\) *Puta Phobe*,\(^{52}\) *Gumli Thowa Phobe* and *Gumli Cyangpa Phobe*.\(^{53}\)

In the 1950s Nepali names were introduced and are now commonly used when speaking in Nepali;\(^{54}\) the names – *Lalcan, Hiracan, Juharcan* and *Panncan* – refer to precious stones: ruby, diamond, jewel and emerald, respectively.\(^{55}\)

The clans are not localized, but are said to have been at one time. Rhoten is believed originally to have lived at Rhopen Forest at Jhong above Marpha, Puta at the valley/gorge Punti Gyung, and Gumli at the forest Chyokor Ngha. If the clans, indeed, originally lived at these places, the names Rhoten and Puta may refer to the clans’ place of origin.\(^{56}\)

The clans have no named founding ancestors and no clan gods. The clans are exogamous. Gumli Thowa and Gumli Cyangpa originally formed a single clan and are not allowed to intermarry.\(^{57}\)

The clans play an important role in the traditional political organization of Marpha village. The Mawatan Thakali are divided into four groups (*cho*). Originally, the clans formed their own *cho*, but the Gumli Cyangpa numbers few persons and its *cho* has therefore been extended to include the Ducen Nhurbu lineage of the Puta clan.\(^{58}\)

Mawatan Thakali households which include a male member between the age of 18 to 61 have the right and duty to send a male member to the village assembly. At the annual meeting (*yul jhompa*) members elect four village head-

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51 Rhoten is also known as *ratan* or *ratum*.
52 Puta is also known as *putan* or *putum*.
53 Gumli is also known as *gumtan*. Thowa, lit., ‘big’, cyangpa, lit., ‘small’.
54 According to Valeix, the Nepali names were introduced in 1960 (1974, p. 271).
55 Tamang Thakali informants claim that the Mawatan Thakali copied the ending -*can* from the names of the Tamang Thakali clans in an attempt to appear as Thakali to outsiders.
56 According to Parker, the clan names *gumli* and *puta* may ‘represent some large container such as a basket (*gumbli*) or clay jar (*puten*)’ (1985, p. 47).
57 Parker writes, however, that ‘Marphalis deny that these two clans were ever a single clan’ (1985, p. 45).
58 Ducen Nhurbu lineage is a part of the Gumli Cyangpa clan in a political context only. For example, members of the Ducen Nhurbu lineage can marry members of the Gumli Cyangpa clan.
men (thyumi) – one from each of the four cho. The headmen sit for one year and may be re-elected for a new term.

The village has ten workers (chowa) who assist the headmen with practical arrangements and serve as village criers. They also ensure that nobody breaks village law. The duty of chowa rotates among the villagers for the duration of one year. The cho of Rhoten and Puti provide three workers each, while the less numerous cho of Gumli Thowa and Gumli Cyangpa provide two each. Each village headman appoints two respected older men from his own cho as mediators (mhicen). The mediators sit for a period of one year and advise the headmen in conflicts and other important matters.

The four clans comprise a total of eighteen subclan or lineage groups, which are known as phobe or ghyuwa. Rhoten includes Rhoten Thowa, Karma Chirin, Gam Naren, Cyang Dangba, Pai Sangge, Langdu Kancha and Kemi Pane Prasad; Puta includes Pai Laso, Lara, Kyang and Pya; and, Gumli Thowa includes Gumli Thowa, Dam Prasad, Pai Kemi, Syukinha, Pal and Lam. Gumli Cyangpa is not subdivided into subclans. Only few of the groups are named, namely Rhoten Thowa, Lara, Kyang, Pya, Gumli Thowa, Syukingha, Pal and Lam. The names refer to the post with which the ancestor was associated (e.g., lam for 'priest'), the location of the group (e.g., syukingha, 'cypress forest'), or to the fact that the group was originally part of another group (e.g., pal, 'fruit').

Some of the subclans originally formed a single group, but later separated due to conflicts. According to local informants, Pal was founded by a man who was expelled from Syukingha after his daughter became pregnant by an artisan, while Pai Laso and Lara separated after a competition between two ancestors.

Among the Mawatan Thakali the dhom are recruited exclusively from Lam subclan.

The form and the function of the Mawatan Thakali subclan and lineage groups are basically similar to those among subclans of the Tamang Thakali – the

59 The subclans and lineages which have no name are usually known as the subclan of so-and-so. I have here named them after the oldest known ancestor.

60 To avoid any misunderstanding, this information is not necessarily true.

61 A member of the Pai Laso lineage told the following story: ‘Pai Laso and his brother (the ancestor of Lara Ghyuwa) were very rich. They often competed with each other, and Pai Laso always won. Once, in the forest, the brother found a piece of bark from the birch which was more than three feet long. He folded it up and went to Pai Laso and said that they should see who could find the biggest piece of paper from the birch. Pai Laso agreed. The brother produced the big piece of bark and won the contest. Pai Laso got very angry when he realized that he had been duped, and told his brother that they should separate. Pai Laso asked the brother to settle in Marpha, while he himself remained in Jhong above Marpha.’

62 There has not been a dhom in Marpha for the past three decades.
groups have a leader (thyumi), an assistant (dhimpa) and a fund (cho). Formerly, the groups met in Jhong above Marpha in late May for phobe pa thungpa.\(^{63}\) For ten days members of the groups ate and drank together, and there would also be a small play (lha newa).\(^{64}\) In the 1960s the people of Marpha decided to stop phobe pa thungpa to cut expenses for social and religious purposes.\(^{65}\)

Following the termination of the phobe pa thungpa, mane pa thungpa is now the most important meeting of the groups. Mane pa thungpa takes place in the middle of July and for three days members of the groups eat and drink together in the house of the assistant. Long rows of reliquary stone walls (mane) are found along the trails leading to Marpha. The group whitewashes its mane and a ceremony is held in the name of the ancestors who paid for their construction and maintenance. In order to cut social expenses the people of Marpha decided in 1977 to have a ceremony in the village temple for all the village’s mane.

The women who have married out of the group and their husbands are invited for the beer drinking on the third and last day of the mane pa thungpa; some groups have a separate fund to finance this meeting. A few groups own collections of Buddhist scriptures and gather yearly for their recitation (che dowa). Some groups have ad hoc parties (jhomsi sawa), which are financed from members’ contributions.

Formerly, the groups had their own separate cremation places (cha) at Jhong. It is difficult to carry dead people from Marpha to Jhong, and since the 1960s the Mawatan Thakali have used a common cremation place at the bank of the Kali Gandaki river. Each clan has an ossuary (khimi) at Jhong where a bone from dead members is placed. Members invite each other for marriage and death ceremonies, as described above for the Tamang Thakali.

The subclan groups comprise two or more lineages, but these have no internal organization, no common funds, and no separate meetings.

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63 According to an informant, the start of the phobe pa thungpa was fixed to the 11th day of the seventh month, after the sowing of barley. A few days after this feast, the barley is ready for harvest.

64 I have only sparse information on the lha newa. An informant stated that three men representing a god and two goddesses would walk in a procession followed by thirteen men carrying swords, shields and the leg of a sheep. Villagers would welcome the gods with drinks (kelsang), while goat-owners would offer them milk.

65 Informants mention that the phobe pa thungpa stopped because people began to collect wood and leaves during their stay in Jhong instead of relaxing and socializing. C. von Fürer-Haimendorf visited phobe pa thungpa in 1962 and has published a few notes on the feast (1981b, p. 88).
THE YHULKASOMPAIMHI THAKALI

The Yhulkasompaimi Thakali belong to one of the following patrilineal clans or lineages: Gyalgi, Kya, Jhisin, Che, Sakar, Shrane, Bom, San, Syangtan and Pasin. The clans and lineages are known as phobe. Che and Shrane are lineages, while the others are clans.

The clans which are found in one village only (Sakar, Bom, San, Syangtan and Pasin) are corporate groups, while this is not the case for the clans whose members live in more than one village (Gyalgi, Kya and Jhisin). The clans (except for San) are subdivided into a number of corporate subclan/lineage groups (Table 16).

Gyalgi includes the subclans Gyalgi Samtu and Dancan which are found in Thini and Cimang, respectively. Kya originally comprised three segments -Sarti, Bharti and Namti. Sarti and Namti are now extinct. Bharti is divided into the subclan Karsang and the lineage Lhaki Sonam which are found in Cimang and Thini, respectively. Jhisin consists of two subclans, both known as Jhisin; they are found in Thini and Syang. Sakar, Syangtan, Pasin and San are found only in Syang, while Bom is found exclusively in Thini. Shrane is found in Jomsom, while Che comprises two segments which are found in Syang and Chairo, respectively.

The names of the clans and lineages refer to the name of the founding ancestor (e.g. Plihte Sonam), the ancestors’ occupation or title (e.g. gyalgi, cf. Tib., rgyal po, ‘the lineage of the kings’; gamba, ‘headman’), or the lineage’s original location (e.g. syangtan, ‘the ones from Syang’; sakar, ‘[the place of] white soil’). Further, kya means ‘head’ or ‘chief’, pal means ‘fruit’ or ‘glory’, while jhisin are wooden poles used in retaining walls.

Some of the ancestors are known. King Thokarcen, the ancestor of Gyalgi, had four sons, Lhasumpal, Drensumpal, Kyisumpal and Syasumpal, who are the founders of the subclans Chuku, Gyabcan, Pal and Dancan, respectively.

The ancestor of Kya is Sralangghum; he had two sons, Sarti Lama and Barti Lama, who are the ancestors of the subclans Sarti (now extinct) and Barti, respectively.

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66 The only exception are the three subclans of the Syangtan clan which are known as Lhaki Ghyuwa, Nhite Ghyuwa and Palten Ghyuwa.
67 The last male member of Namti died in the 1970s, but his daughter is still alive.
68 Some members of the Bom clan live in Jomsom, but they are considered residents of Thini.
69 The Che lineage comprises only two families, one in Syang and another in Chairo. They do not form a single corporate group. The family in Syang functions as a member of Khyodo Syang subclan of Jhisin.
70 For King Thokarcen and his sons, see Appendix 2.
71 For Sralangghum, see Appendix 2.
Table 16: Clan and Lineage Groups among the Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Clan</th>
<th>Lineage Groups</th>
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<td>Gyalgi</td>
<td>Gyalgi Samtu*</td>
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<td>Chuku*</td>
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<td>Gyabcan*</td>
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<td>Pal*</td>
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<td>Dancan*</td>
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<td>Gam Sone*</td>
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<td>Lhaki Sonam*</td>
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<td>Jhisin (Syang)</td>
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<td>Khewa Pai Angyal*</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Gampa*</td>
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<td>Syangtan*</td>
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<td>Pasin*</td>
<td>Pasin Thyowa*</td>
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<td>Mhacya Parpa*</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Pasin Cyangpa*</td>
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</table>

Note: Corporate groups are marked with an asterisk (*).
The ancestor of Namti is Namti Lama, the ancestor of Jhisin is King Punari, and the ancestor of San is Jinlap Pompar.

Kya, Jhisin, Che, Sakar and Shrane are not allowed to intermarry; the same holds ideally for Syangtan and Pasin. Formerly, Gyalgi could not intermarry with three lineages which are now extinct, namely Bompo, Rachan and Nhakin.

The Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali are said originally to have lived in Thini, except for the Syangtan, San, and Pasin clans which are indigenous to Syang.

The aya lama (who is more or less similar to the dhom of the Tamang Thakali) are recruited exclusively from Kya, and the village astrologer in Thini (khaiwa) from Bom. Formerly, the bompo priests (the priests of ‘White Bon’) were recruited exclusively from the (now extinct) Bompo clan.

The traditional political organization in Thini and Syang is similar to that in Marpha. In the 1970s the traditional system in Thini was abolished, but in

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72 For Sarti Lama, Barti Lama and Namti Lama, see Appendix 2.
73 King Punari had two sons, namely the monk Gailong Dhorche, who had no issue and Namkha Dhorche from whom the present clan members descend. King Punari’s father’s name is said to be Jiwa Chin. For King Punari, see Appendix 2.
74 Nothing is known about Jinlap Pompar, except that his wife’s name was Yu Mhendo, ‘Turquoise Flower’. Pompar means ‘nobleman, leader, king’, but informants do not recall that San was formerly a noble lineage.
75 It is not known why marriage is forbidden between these clans/lineages, except that the ancestresses of Kya and Jhisin are said to have been sisters. Some decades ago there were only a few eligible young women in Thini whom the men of Kya could marry, and it was therefore decided that they would be allowed to marry women from Jhisin, but no marriage actually took place.
76 There have been two marriages between the Syangtan and Pasin clans. Informants mention that many were opposed, but the marriages were eventually accepted. There has not been any marriage between the two clans for several decades.
77 Little is known about these groups. There is said to have been a special relationship between Chuku and Bompo, between Gyabcan and Rachan, and between Pal and Nhakin. In Thini the priests of the Bon religion (bompo) were formerly recruited exclusively from the Bompo clan. Rachan means ‘goat herder’ and if this is any indication, Rachan may have been a lineage of goat herders. In the 1970s there were two women surviving from the Bompo clan. They were accepted as cel of Chuku. Formerly, Bompo would invite members of Chuku (but not those of Gyabcan and Pal) for their marriage ceremonies, and vice versa. Bompo shared a cremation place and khimi with Gyalki Samtu (i.e. Chuku, Gyabcan and Pal), and during death ceremonies they would invite the members from the three subclans. It is not known whether this arrangement started when there were only a few men left in Bompo.
78 As the only groups in Syang, the clans Syangtan, San, and Pasin each have a holy cypress tree (phola) for worship. These clans are the only ones which are not classified as kutu or dutu (see below).
79 The two last bompo priests in Thini were from Pal and Gyabcan; the latter passed away in the early 1970s.
Syang it continues to exists side by side with the official nationwide local political system.

In Thini members of the village assembly were divided into two groups known as Phajan Thyowa (‘the big group’) and Phajan Cyangpa (‘the small group’). The former included Bom, Shrane and Chuku, and the lineage Gampa Tampa of Gyabcan and the lineage Gam Sone of Kya clan, while the latter comprised Jhisin, Pai Sonte, Cham Dhorche, Gam Kemi, Pal, and the lineage Gam Sone of Gyabcan. Once a year the village assembly held a meeting (yhul jhompa) to elect a village headman (gamba), a vice headman (thyumi) and eight mediators (mhicen). Each phajan supplied four village workers (chowa).

In Syang Phajan Thyowa comprises Syangtan, Pasin Thyowa and Pasin Cyangpa, while Phajan Cyang includes Sakar, Jhisin, Che, San and Mhacya Parpa. At the village assembly meeting (yhul jhompa) in August the members of Phajan Thyowa nominate a village headman (thyumi) from Phajan Cyangpa, and vice versa. Each phajan provides three village workers (chowa).

In Cimang the Kya clan provides the ritual specialists (aya lama) and the Dancan clan the village headman.

Among the Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali there are two types of corporate descent groups. Gyalgi Samtu, Karsang, Sakar, Bom, Syangtan and Pasin are subdivided into corporate subclans or lineages at a lower level, and are below referred to as clan groups (although Gyalgi Samtu and Karsang are actually subclans). The form and function of the other corporate descent groups are basically similar to the subclans among the Tamang Thakali and the Mawatan Thakali, and they are referred to as subclan groups (although some are actually clans or lineages).

The form and function of the subclan groups are, in general, as follows. The groups have a leader (kya thyumi) and two assistants (dhim syangpa), namely a syangpa who is responsible for making beer, and an assistant (dhimpa). Members take these duties in turn, serving one year as dhimpa and the following as syangpa. San, Yisi Cheta, Marcya Parpa, Dancan and Lhaki Sonam have their own clan houses, while others meet in the house of the dhimpa.

The subclan groups meet for drinking parties (pa thungpa). The main party is jho sawa which takes place once a year, usually in the spring or the summer. Expenses for food and beer are covered from funds which ancestors have established for this purpose. In connection with jho sawa the group whitewashes its

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80 The Gam Sone lineage is also known as Kya Phobe Cyangpa, and the lineages Pai Sonte, Cham Dhorche and Gam Kemi as Kya Phobe Thyowa. In contrast to Syang and Marpha, in Thini members of the same clan did not always belong to the same cho.

81 For example, in Cimang Dancan and Kya both have pa thungpa in the Thakali month prela (mid-May to mid-June).
mane and worships the ancestors who established them (*mane ramden*). The women who have married out of the group and their husbands are invited on the third day of *jho sawa*; this extended group (*nemyangsya*) may have separate funds for its drinking parties (*nemyangsya pa thungpa*). The groups may also have ad hoc parties (*jhomsi sawa*) financed by members' voluntary contributions. The members of subclan and lineage groups invite each other for death and marriage ceremonies.

The clan groups (Gyalgi Samtu, Karsang, Sakar, Bom, Syangtan, and Pasin) also meet for drinking parties. Bom and Syangtan have their own clan houses, while the others meet in private houses. Gyalgi Samtu has its annual *jho sawa* in September. The leaders of Chuku, Gyabcan and Pal form a collective leadership. Each leader is given one third of the common fund, and the yearly interest which they pay is used to cover expenses for food and drinks. On the last day of the party female clan members (*celi*) who have married out since the last meeting and their husbands bow down in respect to all male members of the clan, and each son-in-law presents three rupees for alcohol.

When a man marries all the members of his clan should be invited, but in case of women it is only obligatory to invite the members of the subclan/lineage group along with the heads of the other subclan/lineage groups belonging to the same clan group. When a Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali dies the households of the clan group send a person to his/her house to help; the deceased's family should provide food only to members of their own subclan, but rich households sometimes provide food to all clan members present.

Syangtan clan has a temple and its members gather once a year for a recitation of its Buddhist scriptures (*che doowa*). Marcya Parba has financed one of the main statues in the village temple of Syang, and the group gathers annually to worship this god. Marcya Parba, Syangtan and San each have a holy cypress tree (*phola*) where they formerly held annual sacrifices.

In Thini the temples belong to certain clan and subclan groups. The Kutshabterngha temple originally belonged to Gyabcan, and members gather once a year to worship the main god of the temple (Guru Rinpoche). The Bompo Gumpa (originally a Bon temple, but now containing statues of Bon as well as Buddhist deities) in the centre of the village belongs to Chuku, and the (extinct) Paldong temple to Jhisin. The goddess *Bhue Ama* belongs to Kya, and Bom has

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82 The Syangtan Phobe temple is of the *ngor pa* sub-order of the *sa skya pa* order.

83 In the 1970s Jhisin sold the ruined temple to Bom, which built a clan house on the land. I am not aware whether the Ngorpa Gumpa (now in ruins on the northeastern outskirts of Thini) belonged to a particular clan.
a clan deity called Dhorche Phurpa. Pal own a copy of a collection of Buddhist scriptures (mdo mang) that is recited annually.

The groups have their own cremation places (cha) on the hills. There are separate cremation grounds in Thini for Jhisin, Bom, Karsang and Gyalgi Samtu,\(^{84}\) in Cimang for Dancan and Kya, and in Syang for Syangtan, San, Pasin, Che, Plilte Sonam, Yisi Cheta, Khyodo Syang, and Kisum Pal.

The clan and subclan groups have an ossuary (khimi) where a bone from dead members is placed. In Syang and Cimang the groups which share the same cremation place also share the same khimi.\(^{85}\) In Thini the khimi are no more, and when a person dies relatives construct a small ossuary (phu) in which they place his bone.

In Thini the clan and subclan/lineage groups were formerly divided into two categories, namely kutu and dutu.\(^{86}\) Kutu is said to have included Gyalgi Samtu, Kya and Jhisin, while dutu comprised Nhakin, Bompo, Che, Shrane and Bom. Little is known about these groups, except that they used separate routes when carrying bodies to their cremation places, and each group (especially Kutu) claimed higher status than the other.

CONCLUSION

The Thakali comprise three separate, ideal endogamous ethnic groups. Each group comprises a number of exogamous, patrilineal clans which, in turn, are subdivided into a number of subclans and lineages.

Clans and lineages are descent units, that is, all members descend from a real or mythical ancestor.\(^{87}\) The Thakali clans and lineages do not form corporate

\(^{84}\) The extinct Bompo shared a cremation place with Gyalgi Samtu, while the extinct Namti had its own. Also, Shrane, Nhakin, and Che had a common cremation place.

\(^{85}\) The only exception is the Pasin clan which has five khimi. These belong to the lineage groups Mhacya Parpa and Pasin Cyangpa, and to the three lineages which make up the subclan group Pasin Thyowa.

\(^{86}\) Kutu and dutu (or kuiru and duiru) probably mean 'the nine clans' and 'the six clans', respectively (ku and du mean 'nine' and 'six', respectively, while the ending -ru probably means 'clan', cf. Tib., rus). By comparison, according to Salter and Gurung, 'the Gurung tribal structure is not four-fold [as the Hindu caste system] but rather is based on multiples of the number three. The three-fold Gurung components include the kugi of the nine clans, kwonma of three clans, and khye (Ghale) of three clans' (1996, p. 47). As mentioned above, the clan structure of the Mawatan Thakali was originally three-fold although it is now four-fold, as among the Tamang Thakali.

\(^{87}\) 'A lineage consists of all the descendants in one line of a particular person through a determinate number of generations. A patrilineal or agnatic lineage consists of all the descendants
social groups, they are merely exogamous units. The corporate groups which have been referred to above as corporate clans and subclans include women who have become members through marriage and are therefore, strictly speaking, not clans, but so-called 'compromise clan groups'. Male and female members of a patrilineage are called phobe and celi, while women who marry in are called tasyu. The Thakali clan includes the phobe and the celi only, while the compromise clan includes the tasyu but excludes married celi.

The importance of descent to the Thakali individual varies according to sex. The tie of patrilineal descent gives a Thakali man a sense of unity, and in case of conflict and need he can count on the support of his patrilineal relatives. Patrilineal descent is less important to a Thakali woman, as she changes membership upon marriage, from the compromise subclan of her father to that of her husband. After marriage she will participate in the jho sawa of her husband's group, and after her death one of her bones will be placed in the khimi of her husband's group. A woman continues to have important ties to her patrilineal relatives. Together with her husband she participates in the jho sawa of her natal group, and if she leaves her husband with good reason, she can count on the support of her patrilineal relatives. When a woman dies her patrilineal relatives play an important role in the death ceremonies.

Three aspects of the Thakali clan and lineage system are of particular interest. First, among most ethnic groups of Nepal, the clans are merely exogamous units. In contrast, among the Thakali the (compromise) clans are corporate groups. The Thakali (compromise) clans have an internal organization, common property and common meetings.

Second, among the ethnic groups of Nepal the most important descent group is usually the local lineage group, that is a group of agnates living in a certain location and who can trace their descent from a common ancestor, typically four to five generations ago. As pointed out by Pignède for the Gurungs, 'When establishing himself in a village a man becomes the starting point of a new local group ... Where the living members of a lineage form a recognized social group it may be called a lineage group' (Notes and Queries 1951, p. 88-89).

Third, the Thakali clan and lineage system are of particular interest. First, among most ethnic groups of Nepal, the clans are merely exogamous units. In contrast, among the Thakali the (compromise) clans are corporate groups. The Thakali (compromise) clans have an internal organization, common property and common meetings.

Among the Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali, however, Gyakgi, Kya and Jhisin are merely exogamous units.
descent group'. In contrast, the Tamang Thakali patrilineal groups are not localized. A Tamang Thakali who migrates and settles outside Thak Khola does not become the starting point of a new local descent group, but continues as member of his ancestral descent group, as do his descendants. The Tamang Thakali of Khane Khowa have not established their own local descent groups and *khimi*, even though they are sometimes discriminated against at the hands of the Tamang Thakali of Thak Khola when depositing the bone of a dead relative in the ancestral ossuary. While migration has not caused the creation of local descent groups, it has had a negative effect on the function of the subclan and lineage groups, as migrants, in general, are inactive group members.

Table 17: Exogamy among the Tamang Thakali clans and subclans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gaucan</th>
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exogamous unit

91 The ossuaries (*khimi*) are located in Thasang, the homeland of the Tamang Thakali (the Naprunkhung, Nakhung, Kobang and Khanti area). Ghera, Mhatasi and Chyupa, however, have their *khimi* in the Taglung–Kunjo area and Balamtan in Titi, probably because the ancestors of these subclans had a conflict with members of their original group and decided or were asked to leave Thasang. At the time of their establishment these subclans were localized descent groups, but today members are also found outside the Taglung–Kunjo–Titi area.
Among the Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali – in contrast with the Tamang Thakali – the corporate descent groups are traditionally localized.\textsuperscript{92} Clans which are found in more than one village (Gyalgi, Kya and Jhisin) are merely exogamous units. The difference in the descent system of the Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali and the Tamang Thakali is an example of a general difference between the two groups: among the Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali the village is the most important socio-political unit while inter-village institutions and relations are limited. Among the Tamang Thakali socio-political relations and institutions are well-developed at the village level as well as the inter-village level.

Third, in a society divided into exogamous clans, if clan A and clan B are permitted to intermarry, any segment of clan A can marry with any segment of clan B. But among the Tamang Thakali, the four Dhyatan subclans are considered 'brothers' and members are therefore not allowed to intermarry. In other words, the four clans divide the Tamang Thakali into four 'vertical' exogamous units, while the Dhyatan subclans cut across and create a 'horizontal' exogamous unit (Table 17).\textsuperscript{93} This system may be unique in the ethnographical literature.\textsuperscript{94}

\textsuperscript{92} I refer to the traditional situation when the Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali lived in Thini, Syang and Cimang only. Today, the corporate groups are not localized, as they include members living both in and out of Thak Khola.

\textsuperscript{93} According to Dr. Ramble, it may have happened as a result of the indigenous people (dhyatan = thatan = 'people of tha[k]?') marrying into the incoming clans and being ascribed membership of the four clans, as in the case of the Chantel and also some Tamang (C. Ramble, personal communication).

\textsuperscript{94} However, see previous note.
Chapter VII

THE HOUSEHOLD AND INHERITANCE SYSTEM

This chapter examines the household as a corporate group, the inheritance system, household groups, residence patterns, and the development cycle of the household.¹

The Household as a Corporate Group

The household (dhongpa) is the most important socio-economic group in Thakali society. A household consists of a group of relatives who place their labour and property into a common fund and satisfy their material needs from the turnover of the fund; moreover, members live together and use the same hearth (kotong) for cooking.²

When a couple establishes its own independent household, the husband places his labour and property into the household's common fund. The husband's property may be his full share of the paternal property, but often it includes only a lesser share. This share is given to a son when he establishes an independent household (phaso puso). It usually consists of one or two fields, tools for farming, utensils for cooking and some cash money. Rich parents may give

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¹ The present chapter is a revised version of Vinding 1979/80b. This is the only work which deals in detail with the household and inheritance system of the Thakali.

² The equation between hearth and household is known in many Himalayan societies. Berreman notes on the Rajputs of Himachal Pradesh, 'All [members of the household] eat from the same hearth - a distinguishing feature recognized by the people themselves, who refer to this family unit or household as the chula (cooking hearth)' (1972, p. 144). See also Chapter XI.
their sons a house, but there are also parents who cannot afford to give their sons anything.\(^3\)

Parents ideally give their sons equal shares when they leave the natal household. If the parents' financial situation has been reduced by the time a younger son leaves the household, he may receive less than his elder brothers, but every single item is recorded and inequalities are made up when the ancestral property is finally divided.

Although sons are ideally given equal shares, the amount depends on their age when they leave the household. If a son resides in the natal household longer than his elder brothers, contributing to the welfare of the household and perhaps supporting elderly parents, he usually receives a cash compensation; on the other hand, if he spends fewer years than his elder brothers, his share may be reduced accordingly.\(^4\) It is entirely up to parents to decide if extra payment should be made.

The most important contribution a wife makes to the household is her labour which is at least as valuable as that of her husband. She also brings her own private property and the presents received from parents and guests at her wedding.

Thakali parents give their daughters a small amount of grain, a few agricultural tools, cooking utensils, and sometimes also jewellery, cash money and a field as dowry (daisa). In recent years the amounts given as dowry are said to have increased due to Hindu influence – especially among the Thakali living outside Thak Khola. Dowry may be given at the time of marriage, but many parents prefer to wait until their daughter has given birth to a child which usually ensures that the marriage will last.

A woman's private property is known as pewa.\(^5\) It includes money which she has made under su nhor sawa. This is an arrangement, commonly practised among the Mawatan Thakali and the Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali, by which par-

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\(^3\) Information on a son's claim to the paternal property is ambiguous: some informants mention that sons can claim a reasonable part of the ancestral property when they leave the natal household, others that such a claim cannot be made.

\(^4\) There is an alternative way to compensate a son who resides in the household longer than his elder brothers. If the eldest son was given a field when he left the household at, say, the age of 20 years, his younger brother may receive a field of the same value when he becomes 20 years old. The field is cultivated under a system known as tho sawa, whereby household members cultivate and harvest the field for which they receive the production of sweet buckwheat (the summer crop), while the youngest son keeps the production of barley (the winter crop) himself. Nowadays, this practice is rare.

\(^5\) According to Turner, pewa means 'the private property of a married woman given her by her parents, dowry' (1931, p. 389), while in the section 'Inheritance Right of Women' in Nepal's Legal Code it is defined as 'movable or immovable assets gifted in writing by the husband
ents allow their unmarried daughters to keep the profit made on certain property (*tho sawa*). If a daughter is allocated a field she receives the winter crop (barley) while the summer crop (sweet buckwheat) is used to cover the cost of production; if she is given a goat she gets the milk products and the kids.

A woman's private property may also include money which she has made from operating an inn in the south during winter. Women are usually required to hand over the profit made from inn business to the common fund, but unmarried daughters may be allowed to keep the profit when they reach the age when their eldest sister has left the household.

At her wedding the bride receives clothes and jewellery from her husband’s family; these presents belong to the husband, and the wife has only usufruct rights.

A woman has the right to keep for herself the property which she brings with her at the time of marriage. Women usually prefer to keep their property for themselves until they have given birth to a child and are confident that the marriage will last. Many women keep their property separate even after years of marriage. In one case a woman used her private property for the education of her children after the household’s common fund had been depleted.

If a married woman has a field as her private property, household members work on it, and while the production of the summer crop is used to cover labour costs, she keeps the winter crop for herself. Similarly, a woman keeps the profit made on investments of her cash.

Property placed in the common fund belongs to those who put it there, but their rights are limited. Income from the property is shared with other members, and it can only be disposed of with the consent of the household’s other adult members, as the following example illustrates. Some years ago a Thakali sold a house which he had inherited from his father, and in which he and his family were living. His wife was informed about the transaction only after it had been concluded. The wife became angry because her husband had not informed her; and, in her opinion, he had received too little for the property. She, therefore, went to the buyer and informed him that she would place the case before the village headmen and mediators unless he paid an additional Rs 1,000 on the top of the Rs 8,000 he had already paid for the house. The buyer agreed to pay the additional amount. The informant who recalled this case added that most Thakali only conclude major deals when they are certain that the other party has discussed the deal with other adult members of his household.

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or by relatives on the husband’s side, and any increment made or occurring thereto’ (*Nepal Press Digest* 1972, p. 40).
When a woman places her private property into the common fund, the amount is written down and it is returned to her in case of divorce. The wife receives no compensation for her labour because, informants explain, she has received food and clothes since the fund was established. The husband receives the remainder of the fund; thus he acquires the profit or absorbs the loss made on the fund.

The Inheritance System

Earlier reports on Thakali inheritance mention that a father can leave his estate to any of his children and there is no provision for fixed shares.\(^6\) That is not correct: legitimate sons have a claim to an equal share of their father’s estate, and while the estate can be divided (nhor jhuwa) in different ways and at different times, the result is always that legitimate sons share the property equally among themselves.\(^7\)

A Thakali may divide his estate when he becomes too old to work, when he retires from the village assembly at the age of 61, when his youngest son marries, or when the youngest son reaches the age when the eldest son has left the household.\(^8\) A man may discuss the matter with his wife and sons, but the decision is entirely his own.

The first step in the division of the paternal estate is to make up any inequalities in the amounts the sons have received when they left the household. The next step is to set aside a part of the property for marriage of unmarried sons and daughters, including dowry. The remaining part of the paternal estate is divided as described below.

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\(^6\) According to Manzardo, Dahal and Rai, ‘Thakali can leave their property to any or all of their children, sons or daughters or they may choose (though this is not often done) to give a share to an outsider’ (1976, p. 96–97). Similarly, Manzardo has noted that, ‘Thakali inheritance patterns encourage independence since a father can leave his estate to any of his children … There is no provision for fixed shares as in the case of the Nepal castes, hence a son is encouraged to make his own way, since he cannot count on a share of an estate’ (1977b, p. 440). Finally, Manzardo mentions, ‘this leaves the son in an uncertain position in regard to his patrimony and encourages him to set off on his own at an early age …’ (1977a, p. 64). Dr. Manzardo made the following last-minute correction in his article, ‘subsequent research has shown that the most common form of inheritance among the Thakali is the equal shares for all male heirs’ system, the most prevalent form in Nepal’ (1977a, p. 79).

\(^7\) Information on the Thakali inheritance system was first corrected in Vinding 1979/80, which was submitted to Contributions to Nepalese Studies in 1977.

\(^8\) In Marpha men are obliged to divide their property at the latest at the time of their retirement from the village assembly. There is no such rule in Syang.
If the father is alive at the time of division, he may keep a part of the property, including the house and some fields, while the remainder is divided equally among the sons. After the division parents commonly stay in a joint household with their youngest son who becomes the head of the household. The share of the parents is written down and utilized for covering the expenses of their death ceremonies. What remains is divided among the sons. Considering that the youngest son has had his aging parents staying with him in a joint household for a number of years, he receives a larger share than his brothers. The share of the youngest son always includes the paternal house. This way of dividing the paternal property is common among the Tamang Thakali.

An alternative way known as pho konba is more common among the Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali. Under this system the entire property is divided among the sons, while the parents keep only a few necessities, including clothes and jewellery. The sons divide the property equally; however, the youngest son gets a bigger share in case he has stayed for a long time in a joint household with the parents. The youngest son’s share always includes the parents’ house. After the division, the parents maintain a separate household in a room in the house of the youngest son. The sons are obliged (in writing) to provide their parents with food and firewood, and to cover the expenses of their death ceremonies.

If a man dies before his property has been passed on to his sons, his widow and sons decide whether to divide the property immediately or at a later date. The property is usually divided if the youngest son is married or has reached the age when the other brothers left the household.

If the property remains undivided, it is placed under the tutelage of the widow. The widow has the right of maintenance from the property, but she cannot dispose of it without the agreement of her sons or – if the sons are minors – her husband’s brothers. If the paternal estate is divided, a Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali widow is looked after by her sons under the pho konba arrangement, while among the Tamang Thakali she is given a share of the estate and lives in a joint household with her youngest son; the widow has only usufruct rights to her share. A widow may also return to her natal household. In such an instance her situation and status revert to that of a divorced woman. In both situations the woman is said to ‘return to the soil of the syang’ (syang sa ri yewa) – that is to the household of her father or brother. A widow returning to her natal household

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9 In case a man dies before he has received his final share of the paternal estate, his sons have the right to receive their father’s share. If the man has no sons, his wife has usufruct rights to her deceased husband’s share.

10 This arrangement is also known in Baragau (Ramble 1984, p. 191) and Ladakh (Peter 1963, p. 352).
changes membership from the compromised patrilineal descent group of her husband to that of her father. She no longer needs to remain chaste to her deceased husband and may remarry. She takes with her the same amount of property as she placed into the common fund, but she forfeits her right to maintenance from the property of her deceased husband and her right to the children from the union. Consequently, only childless widows return to their natal households.

Thakali make a written will (thalu thampa) if they want their property divided in a special way. A man who has stayed for many years in a joint household with his youngest son may want to give him a bigger share than the others, a man without sons may want to give his daughters a major share of his property, or a man may want to set aside money for the construction and maintenance of a reliquary stone structure (mane).

If an heir disputes a will, representatives from the patrilineal group of the deceased and the village leaders decide on how the property should be divided. If a man bequeaths half of his estate to the local temple, the village leaders may decide that the sons should share equally the immovable property, while the movable property should be used to cover expenses for the death ceremonies, and what remains should be distributed according to the will. Usually, there is not much left after the payment of the death ceremony expenses, and the sons will be advised to spend some money later according to their father’s wish.

Daughters have no claim to the paternal estate, but they have the right of maintenance as long as they remain members of their natal household. If a daughter is unmarried or a nun at the time of division of the paternal estate, arrangement for her maintenance are similar to those of a widow, as described above. There are, however, ways by which a Thakali can transfer part of his property to his daughters. He can divide his property and give the daughters a share, or he can give them property as daisa or su nhor sawa. Or he can (without the knowledge of his sons or brothers’ sons) give his daughters a part of the movable property.

It is also possible to settle the dispute in the District Court in Jomsom. I am informed that no Thakali has ever used this option.

To assess the opinion on women’s inheritance rights, the heads of 121 Thakali households were asked who in their opinion should inherit the estate of a man without sons. Twenty-six informants had no opinion or, for various reasons, refused to give an answer. Thirty-eight informants expressed the view that the estate should be shared among his brothers and their sons, while 37 thought that it should be given to the deceased’s daughters. Finally, six informants wanted the estate divided among those who had cared for the aging man. The informants were also asked whether daughters should have same inheritance rights to the paternal estate as sons; only two informants supported the idea.
If a man has no sons his property is traditionally inherited by his close patrilineal relatives (siki), that is, by his brothers and brothers' sons. The widow has the right to keep her husband's property until she dies, but she cannot dispose of any immovable property without the consent of her deceased husband's brothers. Daughters traditionally have no claim to the paternal estate, but it is now accepted that men without sons give them the major share of the estate, as long as there remains a share for the siki.\textsuperscript{13}

**Household Forms**

The form of households can be established on basis of kinship relations between household members. In a sample of 121 Thakali households in Thak Khola, 61 per cent of the household were based on the nuclear family, 17 per cent consisted of single members, 16 per cent were based on joint families (including one collateral joint family), and 7 per cent were special cases (Table 18).

The mean number of household members in the sample was 4.1 and the median size was 4 (Table 19).\textsuperscript{14} The number is low because the most frequent household form is one based on the nuclear family.

**Residence Pattern**

It has earlier been reported that the Thakali have a neolocal residence pattern.\textsuperscript{15} That is not correct: patrilocal residence is the dominant residence form among

\textsuperscript{13} In a recent case in Syang, an old man without sons divided his property so that his two daughters got the main share, while his three nephews (brother's sons) received a lesser share. The nephews accepted this, and, according to informants, it is doubtful that they would have been successful if they had filed a complaint with the village headmen.

\textsuperscript{14} This is low as compared with other Nepalese groups: the mean number of household members is 4.1 among Tibetan speaking people in Dolpo district (Jest 1975, p. 213), 4.8 among Tibetan speaking people in Baragau in Mustang district (Schuler 1977, p. 81), 5.0 among Gurung in northeastern Lamjung district (Messerschmidt 1976, p. 39), and 6.0 among the Bahun in Belaspur district (Caplan 1972, p. 20).

\textsuperscript{15} Manzardo notes that 'the Byanshi do retain some of the features noted in both Thakali and Sherpa society, namely the nebulous freedom from joint family control as nuclear families are formed at marriage through neolocal marriage patterns ...' (1977a, p. 68). Manzardo does not define what he means by 'neolocal marriage patterns'; it is, however, implicit that he follows the standard definition, namely 'where a newly wedded couple, as in our society, establish a domicile independent of the location of the paternal home of either partner ...' (Murdock 1949, p. 16).
### Table 18: Household types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yhulkasompaimhi</th>
<th>Tamang</th>
<th>Mawatan</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single households:</td>
<td>7 (15%)</td>
<td>5 (9%)</td>
<td>8 (33%)</td>
<td>20 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuclear households:</td>
<td>28 (61%)</td>
<td>34 (67%)</td>
<td>12 (50%)</td>
<td>74 (61%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuclear</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broken nuclear</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint households:</td>
<td>6 (13%)</td>
<td>9 (18%)</td>
<td>4 (17%)</td>
<td>19 (16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lineal joint</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broken lineal joint</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collateral joint</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special cases:</td>
<td>5 (11%)</td>
<td>3 (6%)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:

The 20 'broken' nuclear family were as follows: six consisted of a married couple without children, five were married couples whose children had left the household, five were widowers with unmarried children, two were widows with unmarried children, one was a divorced man with children, and one was a divorcee with her children.

The 20 single persons included 7 widows, 1 widower, 6 unmarried men, 2 unmarried women and 4 divorced women.

The lineal joint households consisted of a married couple, their son and the son's wife, while the broken lineal joint households comprised a widow or widower, his/her married son and the son's wife.

The collateral joint family included a married couple, their children and the husband's younger unmarried brother.

The composition of the eight special cases were as follows: an unmarried woman and her illegitimate child; a divorced man, his widow mother, and his unmarried brothers (a monk); a widower, his unmarried son, and his unmarried brother (a monk); an unmarried man, his widowed mother, his younger unmarried siblings, and his father's mother; a man, his wife, their divorced daughter and her two daughters; two unmarried brothers, their divorced brother, and their divorced sister; a man, his wife, their children, and the husband's father's sister who was a divorcee; and a widower and his three grandchildren (the father of the children was a widower, who together with his brother had been living in the south for several years).
Table 19: Number of household members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of household members</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yhulkasompaimhi (N = 46)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mawatan (N = 24)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamang (N = 51)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total (N = 121) 20 15 17 20 14 10 18 4 1 2 4.1

Figures indicate number of households.
Source: The author’s 1977 survey.

Table 20: Residence pattern

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yhulkasompaimhi</th>
<th>Tamang</th>
<th>Mawatan</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Husband’s paternal household</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband’s own household</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New independent household</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Their natal household</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 29 41 15 85

Figures indicate number of households.
Figures in brackets indicate column percentages.
Source: The author’s 1977 survey.

the Thakali of Thak Khola. In a sample of 85 Thakali couples, 94 per cent had established themselves as newly-weds in the household where the husband was
a member prior to the marriage – either the husband’s paternal household or the husband’s own independent household (Table 20).\textsuperscript{16} Four per cent of the couples had established a new independent household (in one case in the wife’s village)\textsuperscript{17}, while in two per cent of the cases the husband and wife had remained in their respective natal households for some years after marriage.\textsuperscript{18} Matrilocal residence (that is when the newly-weds establish themselves in a household where the wife was a member prior to marriage) is not represented in the sample, but this type of residence is found in Thak Khola.\textsuperscript{19}

The Development Cycle of the Household

The frequency of household types is a function of several factors of which residence is only one. The development cycle of the household is a more important factor and explains the lack of correlation between the frequency of household types and the frequency of residence types.

The most important feature of the development cycle of the Thakali household is that newly-weds only stay for a relatively short period in a joint household with the husband’s father. Most couples leave the joint household within the first five years of marriage, or at the latest when the husband’s younger brother marries. The situation is different when the husband is the youngest or the only son. At marriage he and his wife join his father’s household and usually stay there until he takes over the household at the time of his father’s retirement or death.

\textsuperscript{16} It is interesting to note that in 24 cases the husband already had his own independent household at the time of marriage. These are mostly men who in a mature age established an independent household without getting married, or men who at a relatively young age established an independent household following the death of their father. A few were widowers and divorcees.

\textsuperscript{17} This couple stayed in the household of the husband’s father immediately after the wedding, but shortly after settled in the wife’s village on her insistence. The couple’s son later married a woman from his father’s village and settled there. These cases are exceptions to the rule that the newly-wed couple always settles in the husband’s village. This rule is related to the patrilineal inheritance system.

\textsuperscript{18} Both these cases are found among the Yhulkasompaimh Thakali among whom it was formerly common for parents in need of labour to give away their daughters on the condition that they could keep them at home to work for a few years. In 1974 a meeting of the Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali banned this custom (\textit{syaptu chimpa}) and imposed a fine of Rs 50 on offenders. This ban was reconfirmed at a meeting in 1977.

\textsuperscript{19} For example, in 1982 in Syang an old widower without sons agreed to give away his youngest daughter in marriage only after his son-in-law (who happened to be his sister’s son and his wife’s brother’s son) had agreed to settle in his household. A man who settles in the household of his wife’s father is known as \textit{go mha}. 
The development cycle of the household and the frequency of household forms reflect a traditional preference. Informants mention that the Thakali prefer the household based on the nuclear family because the household based on the joint family leads to conflicts. In a joint household the daughter-in-law usually works harder than any other member and is expected not to eat too much (it is unseemly). She sees her mother-in-law as the main cause for her miseries and their relationship is often strained. This becomes a problem for the husband/son, and even if he tries to remain neutral both women tend to accuse him of siding with the other. In collateral joint family households the main cause of trouble is said to be the relationship between the married brothers’ wives, each of whom feel that they, their husband and children benefit less from the joint enterprise than other members. This in turn causes the brothers to quarrel over money.

Although the Thakali are well aware of the potential conflicts in households based on joint families, lineal joint family households are formed because somebody (the youngest son) has to look after the aging parents. The data from the sample confirms this: in 15 of the 18 households based on the lineal joint family the husband was the youngest or the only son.

The sample does not include any household based on the lineal-collateral joint family (that is, a family including a man, his wife, his married sons and the sons’ wives and children), but in 1977 two households in Thak Khola belonged to this type. One comprised of a man, his wife, his two married sons, the sons’ wives and children. The household owned several enterprises, and the father and his eldest son were involved in local politics. The eldest’s son’s wife was the younger sister of the younger brother’s wife, and the fact that the daughters-in-law were sisters was said to be the main reason why this household was not troubled by conflicts usually found in households based upon lineal collateral

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20 Conflicts between members of joint households are well documented for Hindu communities; for example, see Madan’s study of the Pandits of rural Kashmir (Madan 1965).

21 There are, of course, many Thakali households where the relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law is good. Informants say that this is especially true for households where the husband and his wife are first generation cross-cousins. In such cases the daughter-in-law knows her parents-in-laws well, and she is usually on good terms with the husband’s sisters.

22 Madan reports on the Pandits of Kashmir, ‘sisters-in-law seem to be always disagreeing with each other, so much that if two particular sisters-in-law do not have any disputes, the pandits regard it as rather unusual’ (1965, p. 171).

23 As described above, the Yhulkasompaimahi Thakali have an alternative to the lineal joint households, namely the parents give up all their property and stay in a separate household (usually in a room in the house of their youngest son), living on food and wood supplied by their sons.
families. In 1980 the father became 61 years old and retired from the village assembly, and, as dictated by traditional village rule, the sons split into two separate households.

In the 1950s one of the subba (a widower), his married sons, and the sons’ wives and children formed a single household, although all members were not residing together. In his youth the father had been engaged in the traditional salt trade, but later he had established a profitable business south of Thak Khola, including a cigarette monopoly and a rice mill. The father and the sons were also involved in politics at local and national levels. There were several good reasons for the father to want his sons to stay together. First, he was strongly influenced by Hindu values and had no intention of following Thakali tradition unless there was a reason for doing so. Second, investments had been made in distant places, and he had problems finding trustworthy managers other than his sons. Third, he was involved in a conflict with his elder brother concerning the economic and political leadership in Thak Khola and surrounding areas. The father was an authoritarian person who kept his sons together, but after his death the sons are said to have quarrelled over money (one was known as a business wizard, another as a big spender) and split into five separate households (but kept the rice mill as common property).

Conclusion

The household is the most important socio-economic group in Thakali society. A household consists of a group of relatives who place their labour and property into a common fund and satisfy their material needs from the turnover of the fund; moreover, members live together and use the same hearth for cooking. Households can be distinguished according to kinship relations between household members. In Nepal the household based on the joint family is commonly the ideal (although it may not be the most frequent type), but among the Thakali the household based on the nuclear family is the ideal as well as the most frequent type.

Earlier reports mention that the Thakali have a neolocal residence pattern. The present study shows that patrilocal residence is the dominant residence form. The development cycle of the household explains the lack of correlation between household form and residence pattern. The newly-weds (except when the husband is the youngest or only son) join the household of the husband’s father, but

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24 Another reason may be that the youngest son and his wife are childless.
stay there only for a few years and then establish their own independent household, at the latest when a younger brother of the husband marries.

The Thakali explain that they prefer the nuclear family household because in such a household every man is the architect of his own fortune, and it does not have the conflicts latent in the household based on the joint family.

In Thak Khola most households do not have more land and animals than they can utilize with their own labour. Households which have more resources rely on hired labour and inter-household cooperation, or rent out their resources. Also, elder brothers may delay their departure from the joint household, but they leave at the latest when a younger brother marries. When a son establishes his own household he receives only a part of his share of the paternal estate. Young couples are usually able to look after more than this share and the resources of the paternal estate would therefore often have been more effectively utilized if there had been formed a lineal collateral joint household; but, as explained above, social considerations are more important than economic ones in the formation of Thakali households.

It has been reported that the Thakali inheritance patterns encourage independence since a father can leave his estate to any of his children. That is not correct: the division of the paternal estate can take place at different times and in different ways, but the result is always that all legitimate sons get an equal share of the property.
Chapter VIII

SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

This chapter examines how the Thakali are stratified according to caste, descent, sex and age.¹

CASTE

The main historical source on the caste system in Nepal is the 1854 Legal Code (Muluki Ain).² This code classifies the various castes and ethnic groups of Nepal into two main categories, namely pure or ‘water acceptable castes’ (pani calnya jat) and impure or ‘water unacceptable castes’ (pani nacalnya jat). The pure castes are divided into ‘wearers of the sacred thread’ (tagadhan)³ and ‘alcohol drinkers’ (matwali), while the impure castes are classified into touchables (choi chito halmnuparnya) and untouchables (choi chito halmnuparnya).⁴

A person is at birth assigned the caste status of his (her) father³ and keeps this status throughout life.⁶ One of the main characteristics of the caste system is its all-embracing nature: it includes not only Hindus, but all human beings. For example,

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¹ None of the works on the Thakali deal in detail with social stratification.
² For the Muluki Ain, see Höfer 1979 and Sharma 1977.
³ The tagadhari are also known as ‘the twice-born’.
⁴ Choi chito halmnuparnya (lit., ‘touch water drop put is necessary’) signifies that bodily contact with so-called untouchables necessitates the so-called water drop purification. The term choi chito halmnuparnya signifies that bodily contact does not necessitate the purification ceremony. The so-called untouchables are also called achuti (lit., ‘untouchable’) (Höfer op. cit., p. 67).
⁵ One may, however, be assigned a lower status if one’s mother has a lower status than one’s father (ibid., pp. 69–88).
⁶ Degradation can take place, either voluntarily or as a punishment (ibid., pp. 177–183).
the Tibeto-Burman speaking peoples are classified as 'alcohol drinkers' within the category of pure castes, and Europeans (mleccha) are 'impure', but 'touchables'.

Originally, the Tibeto-Burman speaking peoples of Nepal were independent tribes. They knew that the caste system of their Hindu neighbours gave them a lower status than high-caste Hindus – but it was usually a matter of little importance to them. During the second half of the 18th century the various parts of modern Nepal came under the rule of King Prithvinarayan Shah of Gorkha and his descendants. The laws of the Kingdom of Gorkha were based on Hindu tradition according to which a citizen's rights and duties depended on his caste status. Consequently, it became a matter of importance to the Tibeto-Burman tribes how they were classified in the caste system, as illustrated by the following example which relates to the Thakali.7

In 1855–56 Nepal was at war with Tibet. The Nepalese Government recruited troops and porters among villagers. Members of the higher castes were recruited as soldiers, while members of the lower ones functioned as porters and other auxiliaries. In 1855 officials were sent to Thak Khola to recruit Thakali as porters; but two Thakali leaders submitted a petition that in the time of the Malla kings of Parbat, the Thakali were recruited as soldiers, and according to administrative arrangements made in 1813–14, the inhabitants of Thak were exempted from unpaid labour obligations during war and other occasions. The government accepted the petition, and subsequently the Thakali were recruited only as soldiers.

The Legal Code of 1854 does not mention the caste status of the Thakali, but considering that they are not wearers of the holy cord (tagadhari), it is safe to conclude that they belonged to the category 'alcohol drinkers' (matwali). The Code divided the alcohol drinkers into 'non-enslavable' (namasinya) and 'enslavable' (masinya). Tibetans (bhote) were classified as 'enslavable alcohol drinkers', while some Tibeto-Burman speaking groups (Magar and Gurung) were 'non-enslavable alcohol drinkers'.8 It is uncertain whether the Thakali were considered 'enslavable' or 'non-enslavable', but considering that they were living on the periphery of Tibet, they may have been considered bhote and classified as 'enslavable alcohol drinkers'.9

In the early 20th century some Tamang Thakali abolished certain elements in their culture which linked them too closely with Tibetan civilization, and at the same time began to adopt elements from Hindu civilization. The aim of these reforms was to appear less 'Tibetan' in the eyes of the high caste rulers in

7 Appendix 2, Document 5.
8 Höfer, op.cit., p. 45.
9 However, the Government accepted to recruit the Thakali as soldiers in 1855. This may indicate that the Thakali were accepted as 'non-enslavable'.
Kathmandu. Some Tamang Thakali even claimed that they were Thakuris, like the then Rana rulers in Kathmandu. To support this claim they refer to the Gaucan clan history (*Cyogi Rhab*) which mentions that the ancestors of the Tamang Thakali came from Semja – a place in the heart of the Thakuri homeland.¹⁰

Those efforts have been only partly successful: high-caste Hindus do not classify the Tamang Thakali as bhote, nor do they accept them as being Thakuris.

In 1962 King Mahendra promulgated a new Constitution of Nepal, and in 1963 a new Legal Code. Article 10 in the Constitution, entitled 'Right to Equality', mentions that 'no discrimination shall be made against any citizen in the application of general laws on grounds of religion, race, sex, caste, tribe or any of them.'¹¹ Similarly, this Legal Code does not make any reference to caste. Although the caste system has thus been dead in officially Nepal for more than thirty years, it is very much alive in daily social, economic and political life.

The caste system is based on the concept of purity. Although the majority of Thakali are not Hindus, they believe in this basic concept. According to Thakali ideas, the population in Thak Khola is divided into two main categories, namely 'pure' (*cokho*) and 'impure' (*pani nacalnya*). All persons are considered 'pure', except for persons belonging to the castes that in the 1854 Legal Code were classified as *choi chito halmuparnya* (that is 'untouchables'); in Thak Khola these persons are the artisans (tailor and blacksmith). This distinction manifest itself in different ways. Thakali do not accept rice and drinking water from artisans and traditionally do not permit artisans access to the kitchen, as these actions would make them and their kitchen impure.¹²

**DESCENT**

**Lineages**

The Tibetan societies north of Thak Khola are divided into three ranked, ideally endogamous groups (*bgyud*), namely nobles (*dpon po* or *sras po*), commoners

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¹⁰ For *Cyogi Rhab*, see Vinding 1992, pp. 54–62. The Tamang Thakali have not only themselves put forward this theory in books and articles, but (according to informants) they also managed to get a Thakuri to support their claim in an article in the leading Nepalese daily (Malla 1977). Moreover, they have tried their best to get anthropologists to publish and support this theory.


¹² The Thakali caste system is basically similar to the stratification systems found among the Tibetan-speakers of Dolpo district and the Sherpa of Solukhumbu district. There is, however, an important difference: in the Thakali system all Thakali have equal status, while the 'im-
(phal pa), and artisans (mgar ba); among the commoners, the priest families (bla mchod) rank higher, while those families who traditionally provide special services (‘ulag) to the royalty rank lower than ordinary commoners.13

Among the Thakali the clans and lineages have equal status. There are, however, indications that the Thakali were formerly divided into ranked clans and lineages. First, the Cimang bemchag mentions kings in Thak Khol. Second, the names of some clans and subclans indicate high status: Gyalgi phobe (cf. Tib., rgyal po, ‘king’) among the Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali and Pompar ghyupa (cf. Tib., dpon po, ‘lord’) among the Tamang Thakali were probably noble lineages. Third, according to a local saying, the Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali are separated according to seating order, the Mawatan Thakali according to cremation place, and the Tamang Thakali according to mouth (that is, according to whom a person shares a cup with).14 Finally, Marpha formerly included twelve noble families; the earliest reference to the twelve nobles (mi drag bcu gnyis) dates to 1738, the latest to 1808.15

While the clans and lineages within each group have equal status, some subclans and lineages are held in higher or lower esteem than others. Among the Tamang Thakali the descendants of Balbir Thakali are held in high esteem due to their past and present economic and political position. The women born into or married into this (compromise) lineage distinguish themselves from other Thakali by wearing an oversize gold ornament (tilan), which is hung across the chest, as done by the female members of the Royal family and the Rana lineage. Some members of this lineage claim that they are the nobility among the Thakali. This view is shared by S. von der Heide, who has referred to this lineage as ‘a kind of aristocracy among the Tamang Thakali’16 and ‘a genuine aristocracy’.17 The members of the Balbir lineage are held in high esteem; but they do not, however, have special inherited rights within their society and, therefore, do not form a separate social class.18

13 Ramble 1984, p. 120–148 and passim. See also C. von Fürer-Haimendorf 1975, pp. 151–152.
14 The saying goes like this, “thin daleci phyawá, mawa chacai phyawá, támang sungcei phyawá.”
15 Schuh 1990, pp. 2–3.
17 S. von der Heide 1988b, p. 66.
18 ‘Social classes entail differences in status and civic rights often conditioned by their descent, in the access to positions of power or influence, in wealth, and also in occupation and habitual modes of living, in apparel and the right to use certain ornaments’ (Notes and Queries on Anthropology 1971, p. 93).
Subclans held in low social esteem include the Tarche Phohe of the Shercan clan, which provides porters to carry the beddings of the four clan priests during the *Lha Phewa* festival. Some women prefer not to marry into Tarche Phohe because of its low social standing. Jhongtan Nawa Hulaki – originally found in Jhong above Tukce, but now extinct – was held in low esteem because its members used to work as postmen (*hulaki*). Finally, in Marpha, Rhoten phobe and Putan phobe are said to have formerly included a lineage known as Yo Phobe, 'the lineage of thieves'; these lineages were looked down upon, and they had their own separate cremation grounds.

**Witches**

Witches (*sontisya*) are women who are believed by others to possess superhuman malevolent powers which they may use to harm ordinary humans. Such power is passed from mother to daughter. The daughter of a suspected witch is thought to become active as a witch, herself, only after her mother has taught her about witchcraft. Instructions are thought to be passed through dreams and end with a test. In a dream the mother takes her daughter to a forest and orders her to kill a tree, using her superhuman powers. If she succeeds, the daughter is believed to be a witch. However, a daughter of a suspected witch may avoid becoming one herself if her mother dies before teachings are completed, if she becomes a nun, or if she learns magical formulas (*mantra*) to keep away witches in dreams.

The belief in witches is very strong, even among young and well-educated Thakali in Kathmandu who otherwise have limited knowledge about traditional Thakali beliefs and customs.

Witches are not discriminated against in daily life. For example, no action is taken against women whom ritual specialists identify as being the cause of their patients' sickness.

Thakali are vehemently opposed to their sons marrying witches, and marriage prospects are therefore bleak for daughters of suspected witches. Some never marry or become nuns; others may marry the son of a suspected witch, or an outsider who does not know about their background. In the 1980s a young man from Thini fell in love with a beautiful and hardworking girl from Syang. The girl's deceased mother was believed to have been a witch, and although she had died while her daughter was still an infant, the boy's parents opposed the match.

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19 For the *Lha Phewa* festival, see Chapter XIII.

20 Informants are vague about whether or not the power from witches is inherited by their sons. Most informants believe that the power is inherited by daughters only; others believe that it is transferred to sons also, but that men cannot become active witches.
Syang and Thini are situated only an hour's walk from each other, but there are few marriages between them, mainly because the people of Thini believe that there are many witches in Syang. Formerly, suspected witches were not allowed to stay in Thini at night: once a villager married a woman from Syang who was believed to be a witch, and it is said that even she was not allowed to stay overnight in Thini.

The Evil Eye

When fermented grain (bo) is spoiled during the production of beer and alcohol, the Thakali believe that it is caused by women with the evil eye (mhangsya). The power of mhangsya is believed to be passed from mother to daughters. Mhangsya do not harm humans, and they are therefore not feared in the same way as witches. Thakali do not like their sons marrying suspected mhangsya – but the feeling is not so strong as in the case of witches.

Khaccar

Offspring of parents belonging to different ethnic groups or castes are called khaccar. This is a derogatory term, and it is an offense to call somebody khaccar. Thakali believe that mixed marriages produce 'impure blood', and that it takes three generations of marriage with mates of 'pure' blood to purify it.

Khaccar are not discriminated against in daily life. However, khaccar (and their mothers) are not permitted to be cremated at their patrilineal descent group’s cremation ground nor to have a bone placed in the group’s ossuary (khimi). Only 'pure' Thakali are permitted to make offerings to the ancestors and to be allowed within the area of the sacred hearth. Further, being a khaccar is a disadvantage when being evaluated as a potential marriage partner, although not so much as being considered a witch or a mhangsya.

Illegitimate Children

Illegitimate children are called nhyalu (nhyalusya for females). These are derogative terms, used as insults.

21 Children of mixed parentage are also known as cela ci lithium, or, according to Fisher, celang melang (1987, p. 223).
22 Some Thakali, however, do not like to share the same cup with a khaccar.
23 C. von Furér-Haimendorf reports that among the Sherpa 'very little shame is attached to having a themba [illegitimate] child or to being a themba' (1964, pp. 90–91).
In case an unmarried Thakali woman becomes pregnant, her parents will ask her to identify the father of her child. If he is from the same ethnic group, her father and members of her subclan will ask him to marry the girl; or, if he refuses, to pay a delivery charge (*sukeri chai*). After this payment, the child becomes a member of the father’s patrilineage and has the right to be cremated at its cremation ground and to have a bone placed in its reliquary stone structure (*khimi*).

Illegitimate children usually grow up with their mothers, but some are raised in their father’s household. In case an illegitimate son grows up with his father, he has right to an equal share of the paternal estate; if not, he can only claim a payment at the time he establishes his own household.

In winter many Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali and Mawatan Thakali women run inns in the south. Some women may have affairs with local men. In case an unmarried woman becomes pregnant she has three options: to marry the father of her child, to have an abortion (which is illegal), or to give birth to an illegitimate child. There are more than a dozen illegitimate children in Thak Khola, mainly among the Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali and the Mawatan Thakali, as only few Tamang Thakali women operate inns in the south.

Formerly, when an unmarried woman became pregnant, the village headman would order her to identify the father of her child. If she refused to disclose his name, or if he belonged to another ethnic group, she was fined. Some women were reportedly beaten by their relatives and punished by the villagers. Once an unmarried woman from Thini became pregnant by a man from the south. When the villagers came to know about it, they put a garland of donkey’s dung around her neck, placed her on a donkey the wrong way around and paraded her through the village lanes. The woman later married a man from a neighbouring village and settled there. Women are no longer fined if they have

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24 One cannot refuse to pay *sukeri chai*. In the early 1980s a young man paid Rs 950 to a girl whom he had made pregnant. Informants found the amount quite reasonable.

25 I have contradictory information on a father’s rights to his illegitimate child. Some informants say that a man has the right to the child if he has paid the mother a delivery charge, others maintain that the mother can claim a compensation for raising the child, and that she is free to reject any amount in case she wishes to keep the child for herself.

26 This claim should be made while the father is still alive.

27 In the mid-1970s in Syang there were seven illegitimate children — six were the offspring of local women and men from the South and one was the product of a local (married) man and a local (unmarried) woman.

28 In Syang and Thini the fine was Rs 200 to Rs 500, while in Marpha it was Rs 24 to Rs 50. If the father was an artisan the woman would be thrown out of the village.

29 To be placed on a horse or a mule the wrong way around is a bad omen. For an example, see the Tulacan clan history (*Salgi Rhab*) (Vinding 1992, p. 66).
an illegitimate child with a man from another ethnic group, but they are looked down upon, and it is difficult for them to find a suitable husband.

If a Thakali produces a child with an unmarried woman from his own ethnic group, he will usually marry her; there are, therefore, only a few illegitimate children whose parents belong to the same ethnic group. A Thakali is less likely to marry a woman he has made pregnant if she belongs to another group. In this case he may accept paternity and pay the woman a fine; the child then usually grows up with the mother, but is accepted as a member of the father’s clan. If the man does not want to admit the child’s paternity, he may pay the woman some money to keep the affair secret. That is the way Thakali formerly settled affairs with non-Thakali servant women.

Thakali women are, in general, faithful to their husbands, but there are cases of extra-marital affairs. If a man suspects that he is not the biological father of his wife’s child he will seek a divorce, although some are known to have tacitly accepted social paternity. During my fieldwork, a Thakali took his pregnant wife to the village headman to seek a divorce, claiming that she had been unfaithful to him. The evidence was obvious: she was pregnant after spending the winter in the south while he had been in Thak Khola. The headman accepted the husband’s plea and ordered the wife to pay her husband a fine for committing adultery. The husband divorced her and later remarried, while the wife and child moved back into her father’s household.

SEX

Most informants believe that it is fate that some people are born as men and others as women.

The Thakali have a patrilineal inheritance system, and capital (land, house, animals and money) is primarily owned by men. The limited access to capital makes it difficult for women to establish themselves independent of men, but in daily life it is of little importance as the management and turnover of men’s property is shared within the household regardless of sex.

Thakali women play an important role in the village economy. Women are not restricted to domestic and agricultural work on the family farm, but also engage in income-generating activities. Inns in Thak Khola are operated and managed by women, and in winter scores of women establish and operate inns

30 In Syang this rule was abolished only in the 1970s.
31 In Syang there are six such cases. One woman later succeeded in marrying a local man, another married a southerner, while four others still remain unmarried.
in the south. There are only few restrictions on women's participation in economic activities. Women are not allowed to plough nor to slaughter animals. The cutting of wood with an axe is done exclusively by men because it is considered too hard for women; women do, however, cut and collect small branches of wood, using a big curved knife.

Women cannot become members of the traditional village assemblies; consequently, they cannot become village leaders. Women may, however, wield considerable informal political influence through their husbands, especially if the husbands are leaders. Also, women can influence the political process by presenting their views directly to the village headmen. For example, in Tukce the village headman once restricted gambling after a delegation of village women had complained about its negative effects. Under the 1962 Constitution as well as the present 1990 Constitution women have equal political rights, but in Thak Khola elected representatives have so far all been men.

In Tukce women formerly used to have tea parties, but they stopped in the 1960s when most Thakali migrated from the village. At present, tea parties are found only in Jomsom. The groups meet by rotation in members' home, and on the day before the party members send a small parcel with liquor, beer and foodstuff to the hostess. At the party the women discuss the latest news and gossip; the tea parties are also a forum for discussion of marriage proposals.

Women have limited possibilities within Thakali religious institutions. Except for a handful of nuns, all ritual specialists are men, and within the Lamaistic hierarchy the leading posts are restricted to male ritual specialists. Women are considered unclean during menses and childbirth, but restrictions are few, and (unlike most Nepalese women) Thakali women cook the family meal even during their time of menses.

32 None of the ethnic groups and castes of Nepal allow women to plough, but in Tibet it can be done occasionally by women (Carrasco 1959, p. 48). Thakali mention that women are not allowed to plough because 'this would turn the world upside down.' Ploughing is considered a sinful action because it involves the killing of numerous beings (worms, etc.). Women are not supposed to kill, and therefore they are prohibited from ploughing.

33 I have been told, however, of women who occasionally cut wood with an axe.

34 In Mustang district only one woman has been elected chairman of a local body, namely the Mustang Maharani who once served as chairman (pradhan pance) of Lo Manthang village council (gau pancayat).

35 In 1977 there were three separate tea party groups in Jomsom; one included four Tamang Thakali, three Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali, and four Rhongta Khampa. In Tukce membership was restricted to Tamang Thakali only.
Thakali women are neither reserved, timid, nor shy when they are together with men. It is not considered improper for Thakali women to talk to male strangers, and in their inns in the south Thakali women mix freely (but not sexually) with male customers to boost business. Women smoke in public, and drink alcohol and gamble during festivals. It is, however, considered improper for women to get drunk (this is not the case with men).

Contrary to men, women should not have sex before marriage; however, some women do have premarital affairs. The Thakali do not allow extra-marital affairs, but society judges an unfaithful wife more harshly than an unfaithful husband. If a man finds out that his wife is having an affair, he will usually (but not always) divorce her. Thakali women are free to leave their husbands whenever they like, but the life of a divorcée is economically hard and not very attractive, and women with children seldom divorce their husband, even if he is unfaithful. A Thakali woman would rather punish her unfaithful husband by nagging.

AGE

The Thakali do not have age-sets and age-grades.\(^{36}\) However, among the Yhulkasompaimhi young men of about the same age form groups (rowa) which play an important role in the Phala festival.\(^{37}\)

Thakali enjoy different rights, obligations and status according to age. A Thakali becomes a full member of the local community when he/she becomes 16 years of age. In several villages a person ‘retires’ politically and loses most of his/her rights and obligations towards the local community at 61 years of age, but retains the social status of old age.

LOCATION

The Tamang Thakali of Thasang (the area from river Mharsyang Kyu in the north to the gorge Ghayang Ghang in the south) consider themselves superior to the Tamang Thakali of the southern part of Thaksatsae, whom they refer to as

\(^{36}\) ‘The age-set is a formally organized group of age-fellows, that is, youths or girls, men or women. Each age-set may pass through a series of stages each of which has distinctive status, ceremonial, military or other activities. Such stages are generally known as age-grades’ (Notes and Queries on Anthropology, 1951, pp. 67–68).

\(^{37}\) For the Phala festival, see Chapter XIII. For rowa, see also Chapter X.
ghangchi marpo (‘one [from] below the hill’) or by the nickname taya pho (‘potato stomach’); only Tamang Thakali of Thasang participate in the Syopen Lawa, which is an initiation rite for young men. The Tamang Thakali of Thasang also feel superiority vis-a-vis the Thakali living in the more southerly Myagdi and Baglung districts (khani khowa), who they call khowali.

The Thakali are fond of giving their neighbours nicknames. For example, the people of Thini are known as lhata ghyo (‘old Tibetan winterboots?’) and male pho (‘radish stomach’); the people of Syang as bhrebragyang (‘[eaters of] bitter buckwheat bread’); the people of Cimang as ba nga (‘goiter’); and the people of Marpha as polobhri (‘nettle root’), because their words bite like nettles. The people of Tukce are referred to as phokta (‘full stomach’), because of the many poor (servants) whose thoughts are concentrated on getting a full stomach. The people of Khanti are known as pang nho (‘pasture garlic’), while the people of Kobang and Larjung are known as gare (‘having goitre’) or gandah (‘goitre’). The people of Nakhung are referred to as dong mhi (‘forest people’) and the people of Naprungkhung as bhrebragyang (‘[eaters of] bitter buckwheat bread’). The people of Dhampu, which is located in a bay, are called kokho (‘side, flank’). The people of Taglung are known as bhrekhan (‘[eaters of] food of bitter buckwheat’), the people of Chayo as dung kyu (‘[eaters of] sausage water’) and the people of Lete as tayakan (‘[eaters of] food of potato’). Finally, the people of Ghasa are known as nambar kyang (‘hit by the wind’). These nicknames have no serious significance and are used just for fun and good humour.

CONCLUSION

Social stratification according to caste, descent, sex and age is important in the social, economical, political, and religious spheres of daily life in Nepal.

The caste system is a classification system based on the concept of ritual purity. At birth a person is assigned the caste status of his/her father and (with only few exceptions) he/she keeps this status throughout life. The caste system includes not only Hindus: also non-Hindus are classified and assigned a caste status. In Nepal, the Tibeto-Burman speaking ethnic groups – including the Thakali – are classified as ‘pure castes’, but within this broad category they have a lower status than the priestly and warrior castes (the so-called ‘twice-born’ castes).

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38 S. von der Heide claims to be the first to report that the Tamang Thakali of Thasang refer to the Tamang Thakali of the southern part of Thaksatsae as ghangchi marpo (1988, p. 7). To set the record straight, this was first reported by Gauchan and Vinding 1977 (p. 131 and 183).
The Thakali also classify people into status groups or castes on the basis of purity. The Thakali caste system has only two categories, namely 'pure ones' and 'impure ones'. The main difference between the Hindu and the Thakali caste systems is that in the former all humans are unequal, while in the latter, all humans are equal except for the so-called 'untouchables'.

The Thakali are stratified according to sex. Thakali women enjoy fewer rights than men – especially rights of inheritance and political rights. However, Thakali women contribute much to the income of the household and compared to the status of women in Nepal in general and Hindu women in particular, they enjoy relatively high status and much freedom.

The Thakali comprise three separate ethnic groups. Within each group the clans and lineages have equal status. Thus the Thakali represent, as pointed out by C. von Furer-Haimendorf, a basically egalitarian society, organized on segmentary lines and devoid of institutionalized internal status distinctions.39 However, some lineages are held in low social esteem and some social categories are looked down upon – people believed by others to be witches, people believed to have the evil eye, children of mixed parentage and illegitimate children.

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39 C. von Furer-Haimendorf 1975, p. 155. However, as explained above, this was not so in the past, at least among the Mawatan (and Yhulkasompaimhi?) Thakali.
Chapter IX

MARRIAGE

The first part of this chapter examines the criteria which the Thakali consider when selecting a spouse. Then follows a description of the modes of courtship and marriage. The chapter also deals with polygyny, divorce and remarriage.¹

CRITERIA FOR SELECTION OF A SPOUSE

The Thakali consider the following criteria when selecting a spouse for themselves or their children.

Ethnicity

The Tamang Thakali, the Mawatan Thakali and the Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali are ideally endogamous, i.e. members should marry only within their own group. Formerly, the communities fined villagers who married outsiders, but this rule has now been abrogated.

Actual marriage practices conform in general with this rule. An estimated five to ten per cent of the marriages of Thakali women of Thak Khola are with outsiders.² The majority of these women are Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali and Mawatan Thakali, who met their husbands while running inns in the south; their

² Women who marry non-Thakali all live in the south, and it is therefore difficult to obtain reliable information on the frequency of this type of marriage. The figure of five to ten per cent is therefore a guessimate. In 1977 I was informed about more than 30 Thakali women of Thak Khola who had married outside their own ethnic group.
husbands are mainly Gurung and Magar. The frequency of marriage with outsiders is low among Tamang Thakali women, as only few spend the winter in the south; Tamang Thakali women have married local Mawatan Thakali and Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali men, and at least one is married to an American. The high frequency of marriages within the group is a product of socialization. Thakali girls see their relatives and other villagers marrying mainly within their own group. When a woman marries an outsider, children are told that she has brought shame on her family. Moreover, villagers believe that women married to outsiders have a difficult life: they are said to be strangers in their husband’s village and miss their friends and family in Thak Khola, and during the initial years of marriage are dominated and mistreated by their mother-in-law.\(^3\) Moreover, in time of need they have no one to turn to as their parents and brothers have broken relations to show their contempt and disapproval.\(^4\)

Thakali men who marry outsiders face fewer problems. Their parents and relatives may disapprove of such marriage, but they accept it as a fait accompli. Further, the men do not have to adjust to a new village and a new family; but, their children will not be ‘pure’ Thakali and their wives usually find it hard to adapt to Thak Khola’s climate and food. About five per cent of Thakali men of Thak Khola are married with women from other ethnic groups – mostly local women (Thakali, Towa, Lopa, and Magar), but also women from the south (mainly Gurung);\(^5\) a Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali is married to an American and a Tamang Thakali to a Czech.

When Thakali marry outside their own group the spouse usually has the same status in the caste hierarchy, e.g. Gurung and Magar. There are some hypergamous marriages, while hypogamy is rare.\(^6\) For example, Tibetan-speaking people (bhote) have a lower status in the caste hierarchy than the Thakali, and while there have been several marriages between Thakali men and Bhote women, marriage between Thakali women and Bhote men are extremely rare. On the

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3. Most of the Thakali women who marry outsiders continue to run inns and do not settle in the village of their husband.

4. Although most Thakali parents break relations with a daughter who marries an outsider, the relationship is often re-established after she has given birth to a child.

5. In a 1977 sample comprising 111 marriages of Thakali men from Thak Khola, only five were with women from other ethnic groups, namely a Tamang Thakali married to a Towa woman (tobyas) who was born in Thaksatsae; a Tamang Thakali married to a Magar; a Mawatan Thakali (living in Thaksatsae) married to a Tamang Thakali; a Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali married to a Tamang Thakali; and a Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali married to a Lopa woman.

6. Hypergamy is marriage of a woman to a man of higher status; hypogamy is when the man has a lower status. Nepal’s 1854 Legal Code forbade hypogamous marriages and sex with women of higher castes; hypergamy was permitted, but not between pure and impure castes (Höfer 1979, p. 81).
other hand, the so-called wearers of the sacred thread (Bahun, Thakuri and Chetri) have a higher status than the Thakali; a few Thakali women have married into these castes, but not a single Thakali man.\(^7\) Marriage between Thakali and artisans is strictly forbidden; informants recall only one such case.\(^8\)

**Kinship**

Kinship is an important criterion in the selection of a spouse. Marriage is forbidden between all relatives except for solti-soltisya (e.g. MBS–FZD and FZS–MBD), akuma-koime (e.g. FZH–WBD), acyamha-acyang (e.g. eZH–WyZ) and kaka-nguca (e.g. HyB–eBW) among the Tamang Thakali; ngui-nguilyang (e.g. MBS–FZD and FZS–MBD), akhama-koime (e.g. FZH–WBD), ngui-chamo (e.g. eZH–WyZ) and kaka-cang (e.g. HyB–eBW) among the Mawatan Thakali; and utung-olyang (e.g. MBS–FZD and FZS–MBD), akuma-koime (e.g. FZH–WBD), utung-acyam (e.g. eZH–WyZ) and acyang-cang (e.g. HyB–eBW) among the Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali.\(^9\)

Persons born into the same clan are considered brother and sister, and sex and marriage between them is strictly forbidden.\(^10\) Sex and marriage is also forbidden between a man and a woman whose mothers are born into the same clan.\(^11\)

Thakali parents prefer their children to marry a first-generation bilateral cross-cousin, because this type of marriage strengthens already existing ties between the families, and the spouses and their families know each other well.\(^12\) In

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7 The present chapter deals with the Thakali of Thak Khola. A few members of the Balbir lineage living in Kathmandu are married to Bahun and Thakuri women.

8 According to the 1854 Legal Code, Europeans (mleech) belong to the category of impure but touchable castes. Europeans are no longer treated as impure and more than half a dozen Thakali have married Westerners.

9 Among the Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali marriage is also allowed between asyang-koime (e.g. MB-ZD), but only if the asyang belongs to another lineage than the mother of the koime, e.g. FBHD and FWFBS. This type of marriage is not permitted among the Mawatan Thakali, nor among the Tamang Thakali.

10 S. von der Heide reports, however, of a relationship between a man and a woman of the Bhattacan clan which resulted in pregnancy (1988c, p. 155).

11 Among the Tamang Thakali marriage between a man and a woman whose mothers are both born into the same clan is acceptable as long as they were not born into the same subclan. There are, however, examples of marriage between persons whose mothers belong to the same subclan; such marriages create scandal, but are eventually accepted.

12 In 1977 a sample comprising the heads of 98 Thakali households, 74 per cent preferred their children to marry a first generation cross-cousin. Ramble notes, however, that, 'The Thakali of Thak Khola are beginning to abandon it [the practice of cross-cousin marriage] in their endeavour to enter the mainstream of Hindu society, and a few of them even condemn the
general informants express no preference for marriage with the one or the other cross-cousin, but according to a Thakali proverb, mother’s brother’s daughter is the closest cross-cousin, and in actual life marriage with MBD may be more frequent than with FZD.

Although parents prefer their children marrying a first generation cross-cousin, this type accounts for only 18 per cent of all marriages. The reason for the discrepancy between parents’ preference and actual marriage pattern is that Thakali children usually have the final say in the selection of their spouse – and they give higher priority to other criteria.

Location

Syang, Thini, and Cimang are situated less than two hours’ walk from each other, but 85 per cent of all marriages among the Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali are village endogamous. Informants explain that women prefer to live among their own relatives and friends after marriage, and that parents want their daughters and grandchildren close by. Moreover, the relationship between Syang and Thini is strained by disputes over land and forest. Finally, people of Thini prefer not to marry women from Syang where they believe there are many witches.

The Mawatan Thakali of Thak Khola are found almost exclusively in Marpha and marry within the village; there are, however, marriages between the Mawatan Thakali of Marpha and those who have settled in the south.

The Tamang Thakali of Thak Khola marry mainly within the valley, but lack the high degree of village endogamy found among the Mawatan Thakali and the

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13 The proverb goes, ‘the cypress is close to the rock, mother’s brother’s daughter is the close cross-cousin’ (prahri kaue syuki dung, aysang chame olyang dung). Ramble quotes a similar saying from Baragau about matrilateral cross-cousin marriage, ‘To get a pinch of snuff will take you twenty-one requests. To get your maternal uncle’s daughter will take only one request’. And another in the Nepali language, ‘You don’t need to cook pickled cabbage sauce, and you don’t need to flatter your maternal uncle’s daughter’ (1984, p. 138).

14 In the author’s 1977 sample, comprising 111 Thakali households, sixty per cent of the first generation cross-cousin marriages were of the maternal type, i.e. marriage with MBD. According to Pignède, Gurung prefer the daughter of his mother’s brother to that of his father’s sister (1966, p. 233).

15 Author’s 1977 sample comprising 111 Thakali households.

16 This finding is based on a sample of 46 marriages.

17 In a sample comprising 19 cases all marriages were village endogamous.
As mentioned earlier, the Tamang Thakali of the northern part of Thaksatsae (Thasang) look down upon the Tamang Thakali of the southern part, and only few women from Thasang are married into the southern part.

Social Status

As described in the previous chapter, people believed by others to be witches, people believed to have the evil eye, children of mixed parentage and illegitimate children have a low social status in Thakali society. Also, certain lineages are held in low esteem. It is a disadvantage to belong to one of these categories when being evaluated as a potential spouse.

Physically Handicapped and the Mentally Retarded

Minor physical handicaps, such as a harelip or a goitre, makes a person less attractive, but are no hindrance to marriage. But it is not easy for persons to find a spouse if they have a serious physical handicap, such as a lame leg or a major harelip. Also, it is difficult for dumb persons (lato) to find a spouse, but most do eventually marry. Persons who are dumb and mentally retarded seldom marry.

Character

The Thakali of Thak Khola are primarily peasants and work hard to make a living. Consequently, to parents an ideal spouse for their children is traditionally a hard worker. He (she) should also have a good character and reputation, be

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18 In 1977 in a sample comprising 46 Tamang Thakali men, 43 per cent had married a woman from their own VDC, 33 per cent one from another VDC within Mustang district, and 24 per cent had taken their wife from outside the district (mainly from Myagdi district).

19 See also C. von Führer-Haimendorf 1981b, p. 2.

20 It is not a disadvantage to have a sixth finger or a toe – the Thakali believe that these bring luck in financial matters.

21 In Nepali a dumb person is called lato (male) or lati (female). According to Turner the word lato means ‘dumb, deaf and dumb, foolish, stupid’ (1931, p. 553). As in the English language, in Nepal the word for a person who is not able to speak is thus used as a synonym for a person who is not very clever or intelligent. Regardless of whether they are mentally retarded or not, deaf-and-dumb persons in Nepal are treated as fools by persons who do not know them well.

22 Traditional Thakali work ethic contrasts with that of the Pandits of rural Kashmir, where ‘the hall-mark of an aristocratic pandit family is that none of its living members or ancestors has ever engaged in manual labour ... It is not uncommon for a petty pandit landowner to choose
helpful to relatives and other villagers, behave properly, and be honest. The ideal husband should neither drink and gamble too much, nor womanize. The ideal wife should be faithful to her husband and not gossip too much. The spouse should be economical and not squander the household income. This applies equally to women, because in Thakali society the wife controls the household's petty cash.

**Wealth**

The Thakali believe that a poor man can become rich if he works hard and knows how to save and invest, while a rich man will squander away his fortune if he is idle and drinks and gambles too much. A woman's parents therefore traditionally place more importance on the character of her suitor than on his financial position; other things being equal, however, it is better to marry into a well-off family than a poor one.

There is a Thakali proverb about women who cannot get a rich husband and who remain single because they refuse to marry a poor one. In Thak Khola there are only a handful of unmarried women above thirty years of age, mostly nuns and women believed to be witches. This indicates that Thakali women who cannot get a rich husband eventually accept one of modest means rather than remain a spinster.

Thakali women receive only a minor share of the paternal estate as dowry, therefore the financial position of a woman's parents is not a major issue when she is being evaluated as a potential spouse. Some informants mention, however, that a rich father-in-law may benefit his son-in-law, for example by providing a loan for investments. Others argue that daughters of rich parents tend to be spoiled and that it is better to marry a woman who is used to hard work.

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23 Thakali men prefer their wife to be a virgin, but they do not mind if she has had one or two pre-marital affairs. More than this would, however, damage her reputation.

24 However, many young Thakali do not believe that hard work pays: they say that only clever (and dishonest) persons become rich, such as (according to informants) politicians, government officials, real estate investors, contractors, etc.

25 The proverb goes, 'I cannot get rice, (but) I will not eat porridge' (mlaikan ngoyang ayang, shangten ngate dsā), or, in short, 'Cannot get rice, (but) will not eat porridge' (kan ayang, shangten sauari ayar).

26 Among Hindus, women are given a substantial dowry, and a woman's eligibility relates very much to her parents' economic position. Some urban Thakali have adopted these ideas and practices.
Occupation

The Thakali of Thak Khola are primarily peasants and occupation is traditionally not of importance in the selection of a spouse. Some, however, prefer their children to marry a teacher because the position gives status and a secure monthly income. A few Thakali serve in the Nepalese, Indian and British armies. The soldiers in the British Army are considered highly eligible because of their high salary and posting abroad.

Education

Formerly, only priests and nuns received a formal though traditional religious education. In the past decades an increasing number of young men and women have become literate. Illiteracy is now considered old fashioned and backwards, and most Thakali prefer their spouse to be literate.

Age

Most Thakali are between 18 and 26 years old when they marry for the first time; the mean marriage age for men and women is 23.1 years and 21.4 years, respectively.

The marriage age depends on several factors, primarily the labour situation in the household. Households in need of female labour often delay a daughter's marriage or speed up that of their son to get a daughter-in-law in the house. Persons who are considered unsuitable obviously marry late (or never), but also persons who are considered highly eligible are said to marry late because of problems of finding a suitable spouse.

Among Hindus the ideal bride is a young, virgin girl and child marriages are common. Child marriage has been forbidden in Nepal since 1963 and the present minimum age of marriage for men and women is 18 and 16 years, respectively.

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27 Urban Thakali are mostly independent businessmen, but among the younger generation there is a growing number of wage earners. In Kathmandu Thakali parents prefer their daughters to marry doctors and engineers because of their high incomes.

28 Others argue that it is not good to marry a teacher because they are not of much help on the farm. Moreover, male teachers have no time for business and female ones cannot look after their children properly.

29 In Kathmandu Thakali graduates prefer their spouse to be a graduate also; this is especially true for women.

30 Author's 1977 sample of 92 first-time marriages.
In the past decades there have been only a few cases among the Thakali where the bride or the groom was below the legal marriageable age. In Hindu society unmarried women are considered less eligible when they become 25 years old. Thakali women marry late, and it is only when they become more than 30 years old that their prospect of marriage is reduced.

In Thakali society the husband is usually older than the wife, but there are many examples of the opposite. Ideally there should be no more than six or seven years’ difference between the spouses. However, a Thakali proverb mentions that it is good for a young man to have an older wife and for a young woman to have an older husband. Informants explain the proverb as follows: if a young man has an older and experienced wife, she will look more carefully after the household’s finances, and if a young woman has an older husband he will give her an easy and comfortable life.

**Relationship Between the Families**

Some families have exchanged women for several generations; a well-known example is the Balbir lineage and the Tulacan Dhyatan subclan. If relations are good, parents would usually like to strengthen relations further through new marriages. On the other hand, it is unlikely that a family will request another for a woman if the two families have a strained relationship or if there has previously been an unsuccessful marriage between the families.

**Love**

Affection is important to young Thakali when they select a spouse; their parents, however, give less importance to this criterion.

Thakali are no better than others at explaining why two people fall in love with each other. Most informants relate love to physical appearance; an inform-

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31 These minimum marriage ages are valid only if a person marries with his/her guardian’s consent. If not, the minimum marriage age is 18 years for women and 21 years for men (Bennett 1979, p. 69).

32 Offenders are not punished because the Thakali do not register marriages with the local administration, and the police do not take the initiative to control child marriages. However, once a young Thakali girl eloped with a man from another caste with her widowed mother’s consent. This upset her patrilineal relatives, and the case was reported to the police; subsequently, the mother and her daughter were jailed for a short period.

33 The proverb goes, ‘to meet an old wife is a blessing for a young man, to meet an old husband is a blessing for a young woman’ (pyung cha ngo ho sayang be khyu dho, mun chame ngo sayang pha khewa dho).
ant explained that 'Boys fall in love with the most beautiful girl in the village, not with the ugly one.'

Thakali men say that the ideal woman is tall, well-proportioned and not skinny. Her bosom (which is a less important sex object than in the West) should be neither too big, nor too small. She should have a fair, flawless complexion with red cheeks and a long black hair.34 Her teeth should be even and white, and her lips not too full, but like an arrow. She should have medium-size black eyes.35

The ideal man is tall and well-built, and preferably a bit on the fat side than thin. He should have little body hair36 and no beard or moustache.37 His hair should be black, well combed and reach the ears. He should have a fair complexion (but less fair than the ideal woman) and no pimples. He should have a pleasant face, white even teeth and a good smile.

Thakali, of course, fall in love not only over looks and dress. A young man may not look like an Indian movie star, but may still be very popular with the girls due to his wit or because he is a good singer.

Astrological Sign

The Thakali of Thak Khola use the Tibetan astrological system.38 This system is based on a twelve-year cycle and each year is named after an animal. Astrological forecasts are used in connection with birth, marriage and death. The use is widespread among the Mawatan Thakali and the Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali, but limited among the Tamang Thakali where there has been a general decline of Buddhism.

When a young man has identified a prospective marriage partner, his parents will consult an astrologer – preferably from their own subclan – to determine if the animals of the young man and woman are compatible. The

34 The ideal woman among Bahun and Chetri is very fair. Women who according to Western ideas have a nice colouring are in Nepal considered too dark and nicknamed 'black' (kali). Thakali like their women to be fair, but not snow-white as among Bahun and Chetri. The marriage advertisements in Indian dailies provide the best up-to-date information on the picture of the ideal woman in India and Nepal.

35 The ideal woman among the Bahun and Chetri has big doe eyes.

36 The Thakali have predominantly Mongoloid racial features and have less body hair than the predominantly Caucasian Bahun and Chetri. Thakali do not like people with much body hair; a female informant said, 'they are like monkeys.'

37 Beards are rare among the Thakali, but many old men have a moustache. Young men traditionally have no moustache, but in the 1980s this became quite popular.

38 For Tibetan astrology, see Chapter XII.
animals are usually more or less antagonistic to each other, but the bad influence of unlucky combinations can be neutralized through the performance of rituals, e.g. the recitation of religious texts. Thus, the main purpose of the astrological forecast is to identify the rituals which should be performed to avoid bad luck and misfortune, rather than to select or reject prospective candidates. However, some parents are known to have dropped a prospective daughter-in-law because her animal (year of birth) did not agree at all with that of their son.

Factors Which are not Considered

In the West many people select a spouse with whom they share common interests. This factor plays no role among the Thakali of Thak Khola.39

MARRIAGE CEREMONIES

Marriage is usually initiated by the bridegroom. It may also be instigated by his parents if they have identified a woman whom they would like their son to marry. The role of the bride and her parents is usually limited to accepting or rejecting suitors. However, if a woman’s parents have identified a suitable husband for their daughter, they may let his parents known that they are interested in marriage. Sometimes young women take the initiative by telling their lover that they would like to marry.

There are three types of marriage in Thakali society, namely capture (rhosi bowa), arranged, known as ‘begging’ (rhiwa), and elopement (rhosi yowa). Capture is the traditional way, but later arranged marriage became popular, and capture is now banned.40

39 The Thakali of Thak Khola – especially women – have little spare time, and few villagers have ‘interests’ or hobbies in the Western sense of the word. When a woman has an hour’s free time, she usually spins wool, weaves blankets or knots rugs, preferably in the company of other women so that they can chat together. Or she may just take a midday nap in the sun. Some young women and girls are fond of singing and dancing and participate in the ‘cultural programmes’ which the schools in Thak Khola organize a few times a year. Men spend their free time chatting at a meeting place in the village centre or in a local inn over a glass of alcohol or tea. In summer young men pass their spare time playing volleyball. Some read books and magazines. There have been video shows in Thak Khola since the 1980s – especially in Jomsom and surrounding villages – and more and more people spend an evening watching a movie. Some villages (e.g. Syang) have now banned commercial video shows.

40 Capture was banned among the Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali in the late 1970s.
Marriage by capture is initiated by the groom – with or without his parents’ consent. The suitor proposes to a woman by giving her a sign (mal) – traditionally a small piece of cloth (den srup lum) and a needle (den dhau lum), but nowadays a ring is also used. The cloth symbolizes the suitor’s promise to look after the woman’s material needs, and the needle that he will protect her. If the woman accepts the sign, she agrees to the marriage; by refusing she indicates her unwillingness, and the suitor will usually drop his proposal.

A few weeks later the suitor and some of his close friends will capture the woman while she is out collecting leaves in the forest, fetching water or working in the fields. The woman is overpowered and taken to a hiding place (which may be inside or outside the village). It is considered proper for a woman to resist her captors, regardless of whether she has accepted a sign or not.

At the news of the capture the woman’s parents will send their sons and other patrilineal relatives to the captor’s house to demand her back. The captor’s family expects this and they have therefore locked up their house. The women’s side will try to force an entry. It is usually only a play, but if the woman’s brothers are genuinely upset a fight may erupt between the two sides. After the woman’s relatives have expressed their anger, they return to their house.

Women are as a rule treated well during their captivity. But if a woman refuses marriage after accepting the sign, her captor is likely to abuse her verbally.

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41 There are some variations in the marriage ceremonies among the three Thakali groups. The following descriptions relate to the Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali.

42 Men did not have to give a sign before capturing a woman, but most did. In 1974 the Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali made it compulsory to give a sign before capture.

43 Informants do not know the meaning of these symbols, but the following story – which was told to me by a Thakali informant – throw light on their meaning. In old days a war broke out between the king of Dzong in Baragau and the king of Mustang. The king of Dzong went to Jumla to seek help. At Jumla the palace guards refused to let him in. The king of Dzong asked the guards to permit him to send their king a gift. They agreed and brought the gift to their king. The gift comprised a handful of soil, some mustard seeds, sewing needles and gold. The king of Jumla did not know how to interpret the gift, but his wise old adviser explained, ‘The soil indicates that the visitor has land, the mustard seed that there is food in his land, the needles that he has an army; and the gold that he has wealth.’ After the riddle was solved, the king of Dzong was granted an audience by the king of Jumla. For another version of this story, see Schuh 1994, p. 16.

44 During fieldwork a young man was very much in love with a young woman whom I knew well. He had tried several times to give her a sign, but each time she refused. In his distress, he approached me to give the woman a small present on his behalf. At the time I was unaware of its significance. When I gave it to the woman she became extremely angry and scolded me for bringing her such a gift! She later married another villager.
However, he is not allowed to maltreat his captive – if he does, he will be fined by the village headman.

Some hours after the capture, two of the woman’s relatives are allowed to see her. They are escorted to the hiding place where they will ask the woman whether she consents to the marriage. If she does, the women will bow down to their feet in respect (*jyu thiwa*); but if she is against the marriage, her captor must release her immediately.45

When the woman’s parents are informed that their daughter has accepted the marriage, they invite members of their patrilineage to their house. Soon afterwards a delegation from the groom’s side arrive, singing traditional marriage songs. The head of the delegation (*shyupar*) is a respected man who knows the traditional marriage songs. He places a wooden vessel of beer (*pa paru*) in front of the bride’s father. At first the father (as expected by the groom’s side) acts offended and rejects the beer. The *shyupar* apologizes for the trouble the capture has caused, and informs him that the woman is happy and has accepted the marriage. He then describes the virtues of the groom and requests the woman’s father to drink the beer – that is, to accept the marriage.

This is usually the time for the bride’s family to voice any misgivings they may have against the groom and his family. For example, the bride’s father may complain that the groom did not greet him the last time they met, and ask why he should give his daughter away to a stranger. And one of the bride’s uncles may argue that some months ago the groom interrupted the water supply while irrigating his fields. Regardless of whether the complaints are valid or not, the *shyupar* has to apologize on behalf of the groom. If one of the bride’s relatives makes a serious charge, the *shyupar* will placate him by offering a ceremonial scarf (*khata*) and a bottle of beer.

After some coaxing the bride’s father will finally agree to accept the beer, provided the groom signs a marriage agreement. The agreement specifies the conditions of marriage, especially the husband’s obligations and the wife’s rights. If the husband does not fulfil his obligations, his wife can claim a divorce and economic compensation. The marriage agreement in known literally as the wife’s ‘amulet’ (*srungpa*).

When agreement has been reached, the bride’s father offers a few drops of beer to the gods and drinks some himself. He then passes the bottle to the other male members of his patrilineage, who also give their consent by drinking the beer.

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45 According to local custom the captor must release his captive if she is against marriage. If he fails to do so the woman’s relatives will contact the village headman to see that she is released and the captor fined.
The wedding takes place a few days later. It is the duty of the groom’s side to carry the invitations of the bride’s father to his relatives. If a relative is unable to attend, the messenger asks him for a cap (or a shawl in case of a female relative) which later will be shown to the bride’s father as a proof that the invitation was delivered.

The first part of the wedding is called ‘to meet the wife-givers’ (*syang dhowa*). The groom and members of his subclan bring the bride back to her house, where her family are sitting in the main room. The young couple bow down in respect (*jyu thiwa*) to the feet of all the members of her subclan (including infants), and the groom’s side offer beer and alcohol to the bride’s relatives. The groom then signs the marriage agreement, and he and the bride again bow down to her relatives. The bride’s parents present their son-in-law with a turban (*gaiti*) and their daughter with a shawl (*kyatam*). They bless the couple and express the hope that they will have many children, live peacefully together, be prosperous, etc. Afterwards, the members of the bride’s subclan bless the couple and present them with white ceremonial scarfs (*khata*). The ceremony ends when the couple bow down for the final time to all the members of the bride’s subclan.

The newly-wed couple leaves for the groom’s house. The groom’s party accompany them singing traditional marriage songs. On the way villagers bless the couple and offer them drinks (*kyalsyang*).

At the entrance of the groom’s house a ritual specialist performs a small ceremony to prevent the daughter-in-law from bringing bad spirits and misfortune into her new home.\(^46\) The groom’s parents present the newly-weds with a turban and a shawl, while the members of his subclan give them white scarfs. The groom’s relatives and friends celebrate the marriage by drinking, eating, and dancing into the early hours of the morning.

**Arranged Marriage**

Arranged marriage, known as ‘begging’ (*rhiwa*), is initiated either by the groom or his parents. In contrast to marriage through capture, the groom cannot proceed without informing his parents and obtaining their approval.

When a young Thakali informs his parents that he would like to marry a particular woman, they may take the opportunity to mention whom they would prefer as their daughter-in-law (usually a first generation cross-cousin). However, if the son insists, his parents will accept his choice, unless the woman is from another caste, is believed to be a witch, has a bad reputation, or if they have a

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\(^{46}\) The ceremony is optional.
strained relationship with her family. In that case they will reject the woman, and there will be no marriage through ‘begging’. However, the parents cannot prevent their son from eloping with the woman.

If the parents are in favour of the marriage, a delegation from their side, including the suitor’s paternal uncles and elder brothers as well as some respected men from his patrilineage, visits the woman’s house.47 When the woman’s parents realize the purpose of the visit, they summon their close relatives immediately.

The head of the delegation (shyupar) presents a bottle of beer known as maima chang to the woman’s father and requests his permission to speak. The woman’s father accepts the beer, and the shyupar presents a formal marriage proposal by saying: ‘Our son (name) from the subclan (name) has reached the age of marriage. He would like to marry your daughter (name). In our tradition, those who have a son must beg (for a wife), (while) those who have a daughter must give (her away). We have therefore come to your house to ask for your daughter.’ The shyupar then places a bottle of beer in front of the woman’s father and requests him to accept it.

According to custom the woman’s father should at first refuse the proposal. That is done by saying that his daughter is neither good looking nor a hard worker. The shyupar contradicts the remarks and praises the virtues of the woman. If the girl’s father has a good reason for rejecting the proposal (it may be that one of the suitor’s close patrilineal relatives once refused to give a daughter to a man from the woman’s lineage, or that there has been a divorce between members of the two families), he will say so and the delegation will leave empty-handed. If he is against the marriage but has no valid complaints against the suitor’s family, he will say that he needs his daughter in the house and that her marriage must wait a few years. In case the father continues to refuse without giving any specific reason, the head of the delegation will say, ‘We may have less property than you, but we are one people. The law of nature is such that all men and all women have to marry one day, so please accept our beer.’

Before the woman’s father accepts the beer, he will usually say that his daughter has to be asked first.48 A few women from the suitor’s family will try to persuade the daughter to accept a sign (mal). If she accepts, the engagement (pa dangpa) usually takes place the same day.49

47 The suitor’s father is usually not a member of the delegation.
48 Most parents consult their daughter before accepting her engagement, but it is entirely up to her father to take the final decision.
49 If the girl rejects the proposal, women from the suitor’s family (and also her own sisters and parents if they are in favour of the marriage) will try to get her to change her mind. However, if she continues to refuse there will be no marriage.
During this ceremony the woman's relatives sit according to seniority. A man from the suitor's subclan pours beer in a cup in front of the woman's father, who with a cypress branch offers a few drops to the gods and then drinks some—thereby accepting his daughter's engagement. After that the male members of the woman's subclan are served beer.

One of the woman's relatives may refuse to accept the beer if he has a grudge against the suitor's family. The suitor's delegation will try to iron out the differences, but if this does not help and the complaint is valid the head of the delegation will present the man with a ceremonial scarf, a bottle of beer and four (or eight) rupees. This gesture should not be rejected.

The delegation presents the woman's parents with a shawl for their daughter. Finally, a man representing the suitor bows down to all the male members of the woman's subclan.

If a woman breaks an engagement, she must return the amount of beer her fiancé has used for the *pa dangpa*, plus an equivalent amount as penalty.

At *pa dangpa* a woman's father agrees to his daughter's engagement. The engagement is later approved by the woman's subclan at a function called *ten dhang lu* which takes place no later than one year after the *pa dangpa*.

Those invited for *ten dhang lu* include the members of the bride's subclan, the eldest married daughters of the families of the subclan (but not their husbands), and the heads of other subclans belonging to the same clan. It is the groom's duty to deliver the invitations on behalf of the bride's father.50

Before the *ten dhang lu* starts the head of the subclan checks that all members are present. If someone is absent, the groom's side is asked to produce a cap or a shawl of the absentees as proof that they were invited. The groom's side presents the head of the woman's subclan with a bottle of beer (*pa paru*), three rupees to the woman's mother as a payment (*ten*) for the milk with which she suckled her daughter,51 and three rupees (*dhang lu*) to the woman's clan. The latter was formerly used to buy grain for making beer, but nowadays the fee is merely symbolic.52 If the newlyweds have problems (quarrels, infertility, etc.) in the first year of their marriage, the groom's family will request the bride's clan to spend the fee as soon as possible.

50 The invitations are usually delivered by men who have received a woman from the groom's family, i.e. his *mha*.

51 This presentation is also found in Baragau where it is called *nu rin*, lit., 'breast price' (Ramble 1984, p. 143).

52 This symbolic presentation may indicate that Thakali marriage formerly involved a substantial bridewealth. Bridewealth is practised in Baragau, where a more substantial gift in the form of cash will discreetly follow the ceremonial presentation (Ramble 1984, p. 143). Among the Tibetans of Dingri the value of bridewealth exceeds that of dowry (Aziz 1978, p. 170).
The head of the bride’s subclan accepts the beer, and other members are then served according to seniority. Then the groom and the bride bow down three times to all members of her subclan, and only then the groom’s side is invited to sit down. A marriage contract is usually agreed to and signed at the ten dhang lu.  

Marriage song: Praise to the wife-givers

/Well done
wife-givers
well done/

Today is an auspicious day
today is an auspicious day
well done
/.../
Tibet’s auspicious day has been searched
South’s auspicious day has been searched
Our auspicious day has been searched
well done
/.../
The male moon
the female sun
both have been separated
well done
/.../
The East and the West
both have been separated
well done
/.../
The North and the South
both have been separated
well done
/.../
The soil below
the sky above
both have been separated
well done

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53 The marriage contract may also be signed at the wedding.
The wedding takes place a few days or weeks after the *ten dhang lu*. In Thak Khola most weddings fall in summer because this is the only season when all villagers are present. An auspicious time (*sar*) for the wedding is identified by an astrologer.\(^{55}\)

In the weeks preceding the wedding the families of the bride and groom clean and paint their houses and prepare beer, alcohol and food. The households of their subclans each send a person to help.

The day before the wedding a delegation from the groom’s side visits the bride’s father. They present him with a bottle of beer and ask whom they should invite for the wedding. The wife-receivers (*mha*) of the groom’s subclan deliver invitations on behalf of the bride’s father to the members of his subclan, women of his subclan who have married out, the heads of the other subclans of his clan, and his wife’s brothers. Those who are not able to attend give the messenger a cap or a shawl as a proof that they had been invited. The invitation is again repeated on the morning of the wedding.

On the wedding day members of the groom’s subclan gather early in his house to help and to celebrate. In the afternoon the groom and his relatives leave for the bride’s house in a procession (*da*) singing traditional marriage songs (*mha koe*) and preceded by a group of drummers (*tailors*).

At the bride’s house her relatives gather in the main room. The men sit according to seniority, while women who are not occupied in the kitchen stand nearby. When the procession arrives, the groom bows down to the feet of the bride’s father and then to all her male patrilineal relatives. The groom’s side serves beer and alcohol to the bride’s father and his relatives, who accept them, thereby agreeing to give away their daughter in marriage.\(^{56}\)

The bride is brought into the main room, dressed in a red saree and wearing jewellery presented by the groom. The bride and groom exchange blessings (*tika*) and flower garlands (*mala*), and the groom places some red vermillion

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54 In Tibet, the moon (*sbla-*ba) is usually conceived of as feminine and the sun (*nyi-*ma) as masculine (Ramble 1984, p. 284).

55 Among Hindus, weddings take place during certain months and on certain days that are considered auspicious (usually mid-May to mid-July, mid-November to mid-December and mid-January to mid-March). Among Thakali, weddings traditionally take place in summer.

56 This is the most important part of the marriage ceremony. Among the Tamang Thakali it is called *khimi cuwa* and includes offering beer at the altar for the ancestors (*khimi*). Thus, it is not only the living, but also the deceased members of a woman’s subclan who agree to give her away in marriage.
powder (sindur) in the parting of his bride's hair. The newly-weds then bow down twice to all her patrilineal relatives who bless them in return.

Before the newlyweds take leave, the groom's party sings in praise of the bride's family (see marriage song above). The bride's parents present their daughter's dowry which consists of agricultural tools, kitchen utensils, clothes, grain and money. The tools, utensils and clothes are carried by the groom's tasyu (i.e. women who have married into his subclan) and the grain and money by some of his patrilineal male relatives; those who carry the bride's dowry should have both their parents alive.

On the way to the groom's house the marriage procession sings traditional marriage songs (malam towa). En route relatives and villagers offer drinks to the newly-weds (kyalsyang). The groom's side thanks them with a song (malam kyurwa).

At the groom's house the newly-weds are received by his parents, while a blacksmith fires a gun. They are escorted into the main room where his relatives have gathered. The groom's parents present their son with a turban and their daughter-in-law with a shawl. Afterwards the members of the groom's subclan present the newly-weds with ceremonial scarves.

A few hours later the bride's father, brothers and paternal uncles (and sometimes also her mother) visit the groom's house where they are offered food and drinks. Later the groom escorts them back, and when they part he presents them with a bottle of beer, which is literally known as the 'sleeping beer' (syum chang). He returns to his house where his relatives and friends celebrate into the early hours of the morning.

Elopement

A couple are considered husband and wife if they elope and spend three nights together. By eloping, the young lovers present their parents with a fait accompli, and the practice is therefore used when the parents of the woman or the man are against the marriage. However, elopement sometimes takes place with the knowledge and encouragement of the woman’s parents, either because their daughter is pregnant and they fear that her lover’s parents may oppose the marriage, or in order to save the expenses of a proper marriage. Inter-caste marriages

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57 This part of the wedding has been adopted from Hindu culture and is not followed by all.
58 Parents may, of course, forcibly try to take their daughter back from her lover before they have spent three nights together. This has actually happened. Once a Tamang Thakali woman from Thak Khola eloped with a Newar. Her parents located them and took their daughter back by force. Later, she was married to a local Tamang Thakali.
are established almost exclusively through elopment, while the method is rare when the couple belong to the same ethnic group.

POLYGAMY

In Thakali society a man is permitted to have more than one wife at the same time (polygyny). The frequency of polygyny is low among the Thakali of Thak Khola: in 1987 there were only five polygynous marriages (four among the Yhulka-sompaimhi Thakali and one among the Tamang Thakali). Polygyny was formerly more common; for example, in 1972 there were seven polygynous marriages in Syang, but at present there is only one. Informants gives as the reason for this decline that young women do not want to share their husband with another woman, and that such marriages often lead to conflict between the wives. Also, according to some male informants, it is difficult to support two wives financially.59

The main reason for taking a second wife is if the first wife is barren. The Thakali usually blame the woman if a couple cannot have children, and formerly childless women seldom objected to their husband taking a second wife. The husband would often receive a woman from his wife’s subclan – once a Thakali married his wife’s niece (WFBSD).

Polygyny is not restricted to a particular economic class, but the men who take a second wife are, in general, better off than the average.

Most polygynous marriages are between persons of the same ethnic group, but a Tamang Thakali is married to a woman from his own group as well as to a Mawatan Thakali; and another Tamang Thakali who is now settled in the south first married an American woman, and with her consent, took a second wife from his home village in Thak Khola.

The relationship between the wives (and between the first wife and her husband) varies from case to case. In some families the wives live in the same house and share the same kitchen, in others they live in separate houses.

Among the Tibetan-speaking people living in the areas north of Thak Khola, women are allowed to have several husbands at the same time, but this form of marriage (polyandry) is prohibited among the Thakali.60

59 This is not a convincing argument. Besides working on the farm Thakali women are involved in cash-generating activities (running an inn, weaving, etc.), and it is probably a good investment to take a second wife.

60 The polyandrous marriages in Baragau and Lo are usually of the adelphic type, that is, the husbands are brothers. Local informants mention that this marriage form is a strategy to keep
Divorce is called 'to dispose of the wife' (be piwa) or 'to return to the soil of the natal household' (syang sa yang yowa), depending on whether the situation refers to a male or a female. A divorced man is called phodol and a divorcee modholsya.

The divorce rate among the Thakali of Thak Khola is estimated at 10 to 15 per cent. This rate is higher than among Hindus, but similar to other Tibeto-Burman speaking groups.

Divorce usually take place within the first years of marriage. Most couples are said to have problems during the initial years of their marriage as women find it difficult to adjust to the new kinship role (as daughter-in-law) and to life in a new household.

If a woman temporarily moves back to her parents they will try to persuade her to return to her husband, unless he has behaved badly or mistreated her. If the husband wishes to reconcile with his wife, he and some respected members of his patrilineage will visit his parents-in-law. The wife's father will summon his closest patrilineal relatives and the head of his subclan to his house. The husband's side presents a bottle of beer and a ceremonial scarf to the father-in-law and asks for the return of his daughter. The father-in-law may reject the request and mention what the son-in-law has done wrong. The husband's side will apologize on his behalf and promise that he will behave better in future. The discussion may continue for hours. If it is the first time the couple has had problems and if the father believes that his son-in-law will improve, he and his wife will persuade their daughter to return to her husband, and then he will accept the beer.

the paternal estate intact. In pre-1959 Tibet, polyandry was also related to the tax system (Goldstein 1971 and 1978). For a comparative study of polyandry, see Prince Peter 1963.

The figure is an informed guess, as no statistical information exists on Thakali divorce rates in the literature, and I have not collected any myself.

For example, among the Limbu of Eastern Nepal the divorce rate ranges from 13 to 21 per cent (Jones and Jones 1976, p. 4). The Thakali and the Limbu support Kolenda's observation from India that 'a low divorce rate seems to be characteristic of areas with a large number of Hindu joint family households, and that a high divorce rate seems to correlate with the occurrence of the nuclear family household' (Kolenda 1966, quoted in Jones and Jones 1976, p. 133).

This is also true for the Limbu: 'We cannot overstate the point that the relationship of a woman to her mother-in-law is central to the stability of a Limbu marriage' (Jones and Jones 1976, p. 124).

In 1972 I witnessed a man from Syang begging his in-laws for the return of his wife. After several hours of discussion the father-in-law finally agreed that his daughter should return to her husband. Just as he was about to accept the bottle of beer his daughter rushed out from a
The Thakali do not consider marriage a sacred institution which cannot be broken, and they believe that divorce is the best solution if a married couple is incompatible and without children. If the two sides are irreconcilable a meeting is arranged between the man’s and the woman’s patrilineal relatives, the village headman and some mediators to work out the conditions of the divorce. First, the household’s common fund is divided. The wife receives the amount she placed into the fund at the time of her marriage. She receives no compensation for her later contributions (labour or cash) to the household because, informants explain, the household has covered expenses for her food and clothing. The husband receives the remainder of the fund and thus acquires the profit or absorbs the loss made on the fund since its inception. Next, the meeting will decide whether one of the spouses should compensate the other. The husband is ordered to pay if he has broken the conditions of the marriage contract by committing adultery, or if he has gambled or drunk too much, mistreated his wife, or thrown her out without a good reason; similarly, the wife is considered guilty if she has not worked properly, refused her husband sexually, been unfaithful, not taken care of their children, drunk too much, or left her husband without a good reason. The settlement varies case by case – but the fine for throwing out or leaving a spouse without a valid reason can be considerable. If neither of the spouses is to blame for the failure of the marriage, neither is fined. Formerly, in connection with the signing of the marriage contract the wife’s parents could demand that their son-in-law deposit some gold as security; if he broke the agreement he forfeited his gold. If a married woman elopes with another man, her ex-husband is entitled compensation from her new husband – not from her.

Divorce is rare among couples with children. Most couples have their first child after two to three years of marriage and are likely to have overcome initial marriage problems (or to have divorced already). Moreover, if a woman with young children becomes dissatisfied with her husband, she is unlikely to leave

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65 The mediators usually belong to the same ethnic group as the husband and wife, but respected Tamang Thakali men (usually of the Balbir lineage) are sometimes asked to mediate in conflict among the Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali.

66 Divorce is usually occurs at the demand of the wife.

67 As mentioned in Chapter VIII, married Thakali women often have some private property which is not part of the common fund. In case of divorce, she takes this property with her.

68 In 1983 the fine was up to Rs 5,000.

69 The same holds true for the Limbu, where Jones and Jones in 24 found only in the case in which the woman had given birth at the time of separation (1976, p. 125).
him because, in case of divorce, she may lose her children. In case of divorce, the husband has the right to the sons. If there is an infant son, he will be entrusted to his mother, and will return to his father’s household when he is three to four years old. The situation of daughters is more flexible and women sometimes get custody of their daughters, in which case the father does not have to contribute to their maintenance.

A man usually has a difficult time after a divorce. Thakali women contribute much to the household by collecting pine needles in the forests (for manure), working in the fields during sowing, weeding and harvest, watering animals, fetching water, cooking, etc. A single man will be burdened with these additional tasks, and it is no longer easy for him to satisfy his sexual desires.

A divorced woman usually lives with her parents or a brother immediately after her separation. Being a member of a well-established household, she does not face the same practical problems as her ex-husband. However, the life of a divorcee is not very attractive, and most of them eventually remarry. Nonetheless, some women decide to remain single, especially if they have been maltreated by their former husbands or if they have a child living with them; in such cases they will establish their own household after a few years.

REMARRIAGE

As mentioned above, divorce usually takes place when a couple is young and without children, and most divorced persons eventually remarry.

The situation is different for persons who become single due to the death of their spouse. A widow (yokosya) who has children is not supposed to remarry; if she has young children she should, however, ideally marry her deceased husband’s younger brother. Similarly, a widower (khere) with grown-up children should not remarry; but if he is young he may remarry – preferably his wife’s younger sister or another woman of his deceased wife’s lineage.\(^\text{70}\)

CONCLUSION

The Thakali consider several criteria when selecting a spouse for themselves or for their children. The most important are ethnicity, kinship, locality, social sta-
status, physical and mental state, character, age, the relationship between the families and love.

The frequency of inter-ethnic marriages is low. They take place mainly with persons of the same status within the caste hierarchy as the Thakali; there are some hypergamous marriages, while hypogamy is rare.

Most marriages are between classificatory cross-cousins. While Thakali parents prefer their children to marry a first generation cross-cousin, this type of marriage accounts only for 18 per cent of all marriages.

Among the Mawatan Thakali and the Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali marriages are almost exclusively village endogamous. The Tamang Thakali marry mainly within the Thak Khola valley, but the frequency of village endogamy is not as high as among the other Thakali.

The traditional Thakali way of marriage was through capture.71 It was later replaced by arranged marriages. Capture is now banned among the Thakali. Today, many Thakali believe that capture is a crude and primitive form of forcing a young woman to marry against her will. This is not correct: capture usually took place only after a woman had given her consent, and she was not forced to marry her captor.72 It could even be argued that under the capture system a woman was in a stronger position to reject a proposal because pressure, if any, came only from her captor, while under arranged marriages it is difficult for a woman to resist pressure from her parents to accept a marriage which they have already agreed upon.73

When parents select a spouse for their children, marriage may be used to fulfil economic, social and political goals – either by strengthening the ties between two families which are already related, or by establishing affinal ties between non-related families.74

71 Rauber reports capture of men (!) among the Humli-Khyampa: 'Households to whom only daughters are born marry out all of them except for the eldest. For her, a husband (T: mag-pa) is either begged or captured for marriage' (1987, p. 216). Unfortunately, Rauber does not provide further information on this interesting practice, which in Nepal may be unique to the Humli-Khyampa.

72 See also C. von Fürer-Haimendorf who writes, 'The 'capture' of a bride is usually only a device to avoid long negotiations and expensive preparations; it does not mean that an unwilling girl can be forced into a marriage' (1967, p. 200). Bride-capture in Baragau, by contrast, 'has a touch of realism about it, for it is very likely that neither the prospective bride nor any of her family has any prior knowledge' (Ramble 1984, p. 141).

73 By forcing their daughter to accept a suitor against her will, parents run the risk of their daughter eloping with her secret boy-friend. For example, some years ago a Tamang Thakali woman eloped with her (Tamang Thakali) lover a few days before her wedding was scheduled with another Tamang Thakali. And in Syang a woman once decided to become a nun a few days before she was going to marry against her will.

74 Royal families formerly used the exchange of women for strategic purposes. For example, former enemies established affinal ties to confirm and guarantee a new political alliance.
In capture marriage the youth decided themselves – leaving their parents more or less with a fait accompli. Consequently, under this form of marriage women were not exchanged for strategic goals. In the late 19th century the Balbir lineage of the Shercan clan emerged as the most powerful family in Thak Khola. As a part of their drive to replace ‘primitive’ Thakali customs with those of the high-caste Hindus, the lineage initiated arranged marriages. It also used marriages for strategic purposes: all first marriages of the children and grandchildren of Harkaman Thakali were exclusively with the Dhyatan subclan of the Tulacan clan.

Informants give several reasons for the Balbir lineage exchanging women with only one other subclan. First, to avoid wives from different families playing lineage members against each other.75 Second, to cement the ties between the two groups. Third, to share their power and wealth with as few affines as possible. Fourth, in Thakali society wife-receivers are considered indebted to the wife-givers; by exchanging women with only one subclan the members of the Balbir lineage avoided becoming indebted to their wives’ brothers because they themselves were the wife-givers of these men.

The case of the Balbir lineage is not, however, typical of Thakali society. Even after the introduction of arranged marriages, Thakali children usually have a say in the selection of their spouse, and women are seldom exchanged for strategic purposes.

An important aspect of Thakali marriage is that the bride is given to the groom not by her parents, but by all the male members of her patrilineage/subclan, from the newborns to the deceased. Another is the secular nature of Thakali marriage: it is an agreement between a wife-receiver and patrilineage/subclan which is not sanctioned by the superhuman world (except for her ancestors).76

Polygyny is permitted among the Thakali. The frequency is low, but it was formerly more popular. Polyandry, which is found among the Tibetan-speaking peoples living in the areas north of Thak Khola (and in Jomsom), is forbidden among the Thakali.

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75 This has not always worked out as planned. Two brothers of the Balbir lineage married two sisters who later became so estranged that they no longer wanted to see each other.
76 As mentioned in Chapter XII, the ancestors are part of the superhuman world.
Chapter X

THE LIFE CYCLE

This chapter describes various stages in the social and sexual life of the individual, namely birth, childhood, adolescence, married life and senescence.¹

BIRTH

Thakali say that women feel like vomiting when they become pregnant and they develop a taste for hot and sour food. As pregnancy advances, women are not allowed to work too hard – especially lifting or carrying heavy loads. From the sixth month, women should avoid sex because it is believed to damage the foetus. It is also believed that the foetus might be harmed if its parents commit sins; therefore, men do not kill animals during their wife’s pregnancy.

It is said that the baby falls from the upper stomach (pho nowa) to the lower one (pho mawa) about ten days before delivery. When that happens women are fed chicken meat to facilitate delivery. For the same reason women continue with their daily chores; as a result, they occasionally give birth while working in the fields or in the forest.

Thakali women prefer to give birth at home. There are no professional, traditional midwives in Thakali society; instead, a close female relative or a neighbour with prior experience assists during delivery. Males are not allowed in the delivery room, but the baby’s father has to be at home, as his presence is believed to hasten the birth. If he is absent, some of his clothes are placed under his wife’s head to facilitate the process. Since the Thakali have little

¹ None of the works on the Thakali deal in detail with the various stages in the social and sexual life of the individual.
knowledge of how to deal with complications, women occasionally die during childbirth.²

After delivery the umbilical cord (*bui kong*) is cut and the baby is slapped lightly. The mother and her baby are washed with warm water and the baby is wrapped in an old saree. The mother is given chicken meat, eggs and warm rice beer. She should avoid vegetables as these are believed to give her baby diarrhoea; also, she should not drink cold water because it would make her teeth weak. The time of birth is written down for use in astrological forecasts. The placenta (*rho*) is placed in an old piece of cloth and buried at an isolated place.

Those present during delivery become temporarily impure (*dhip*), and are purified at a ceremony (*sang tewa*) which takes place on the third day (or on another day of an uneven number) after the birth.³ A ritual specialist says prayers and offers cakes (*kandu*), and a close wife-receiver (*mha*) purifies the rooms with smoke from incense (*sang*) and flour mixed with butter (*sur*). In the early morning a woman from the household brings water and some white stones from the Kali Gandaki river. The stones are heated in the fireplace and placed on a tray with incense, and sprinkled with water. Household members and others who were present during the delivery purify themselves in the smoke and by drinking the water from the Kali Gandaki river. The ritual specialist blesses the child and ties a woollen string around its wrist.⁴ Other household members get a similar string. Only after this ceremony is the child allowed to wear its own clothes.

After the purification ceremony a specialist in Tibetan astrology prepares the child’s horoscope (*kekor cyawa*) which is written down and kept for future use. The astrologer also identifies a suitable name for the child – usually the name of the day on which the baby was born, e.g. Pasang, ‘Friday’.⁵ The child is also given a name by its parents. Formerly, the Thakali used Tibetan names (like Tshering and Sonam), but nowadays they have been replaced by Nepali names (like Bhim Prasad, Bal Bahadur, Maya and Kumari).⁶ Some children get a nickname; for example, a girl is called *bulung* (‘insect’) if she is small as a

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² For example, Caesarean section is not performed.
³ The following describes the *sang tewa* ceremony, as performed by the *aya lama* in Thini.
⁴ In Syang, villagers formerly placed a spear (*bhara*) and a shield (*gharn*) at the baby’s head during the *sang tewa* ceremony to give the baby power to control its enemies.
⁵ Palsang (Tib., *dpal bzang*, lit., ‘glory [and] good’) and Pasang (Tib., *pa dangs*, Friday, the planet Venus) are different names, though Pasang is also pronounced Palsang for some reason in Mustang.
⁶ Some Thakali have given their sons Western names, like Jim, Romeo, and Michael. A member of the Balbir lineage named his son Johnny because he admired Joan of Arc.
child, and those who have an extra finger or a toe are called lhadhu ('extra six').

Parents make special arrangements to protect their newborn baby if the preceding one had died shortly after birth or had become seriously ill. A popular way to protect a newborn is to make it impure – and thus unattractive to harmful spirits. For this, the parents take the baby and a cock to a blacksmith, who sacrifices the cock and gives the baby some iron and copper bangles. A child who has been through this ceremony is called 'Blacksmith' (kemi). When it becomes older, the child is brought back to the blacksmith to have the bangles removed. That terminates the special relationship between the blacksmith and the child, who once again becomes a 'pure' Thakali.

Another way to protect a child is to give it to the care of the goddess Nari Jhowa, the main protector of the Tamang Thakali. For this the parents sponsor a ceremony at the goddess' temple (above Khanti) during which they make offerings and request her to protect their child. Children committed to the care of Nari Jhowa are called chyolpa ('deposit').

CHILDHOOD

Babies spend most of the day on a woollen carpet or (among the Yhulka-sompaimhi Thakali) in a basket lined with blankets. They are looked after by their parents, elder siblings or grandparents.

Every morning the baby is massaged with oil (kulpisawa). The nose and ears are cleaned with a mixture of water and wheatflour (chim bra), the eyes with drops of mother's milk, and the genitals and rectum with oil. Soot mixed with butter (gajal) is applied around the eyes for beautification and protection.

When a baby is a few months old it is given its first solid food, usually a mixture of bitter buckwheat flour and butter (mhalta). Later, rice and meat (usually chicken) are added to the diet. Weaning usually takes place when a child is 18 to 24 months old, but some continue to breastfeed for a longer period. Some women allow an older child to breastfeed even after the birth of a new baby – in one case, it was a six-year old school-going boy.

The Thakali do not traditionally celebrate the Hindu ceremony of making a child for the first time taste rice boiled in milk (anna prashan), but nowadays

7 One Thakali has an extra toe on the little toe of his right foot, and another has an extra finger on his left thumb.

8 The Thakali do not practise infanticide. However, once a baby with a serious harelip died shortly after birth. I was informed that it had fallen from the bed and died.
the ceremony is observed by a few Thakali in Thak Khola (mainly Tamang Thakali). The ceremony takes place when a male child is six (or another even number) months old, five (or another uneven number) in case of females. The first rice is fed to the child with a silver coin by the father, followed by other household members and guests. Children are allowed to receive tika (a mark of blessing placed on the forehead) only after this ceremony has taken place.

Girls learn about childcare from observing and helping elder sisters and sisters-in-law. When they have their first child, they also get advice from their mother and mother-in-law. Examples of advice, relating mainly to the protection of babies against evil spirits, are given below:

— Before breastfeeding the mother should rub her baby’s foot against her nipple to prevent witches (sonti) and the spirits of dead people (sinti) from entering the baby with the milk.

— Before taking her baby out in the dark, the mother should spit on the sole of her feet and place some of the spit on the baby’s forehead (bale gi kuwa) to protect it against witches and the spirits of dead people.

— A knife should be placed at the head of a sleeping baby to protect it against evil spirits.

— When a baby sneezes its mother should say, ‘cross the way of the hill and the way of the water’ to protect it against witches.

— When a baby yawns its mother should say, ‘ugh!’ to prevent witches from entering it.

— If a baby loses its soul (bla), the mother can bring back the soul by sprinkling water from the nearest river over the baby, repeating, ‘the soul has come, the soul has come’.

— When the baby’s father leaves for a journey, he should take some water at the first river he crosses and throw it in the direction of his house and say, ‘soul, please return’. This will send back the baby’s soul in case it has followed him.

— When parents enter their home they should touch the fireplace before touching their baby to get rid of witches that may have followed them.

— If a baby chokes while breastfeeding, the mother should blow on its head and say, ‘sanga sung yowa.’

9 The first rice feeding ceremony is, however, widely observed among the Thakali living outside Mustang district.

10 In Pokhara the Thakali feed babies a head of the bhadrai bird during the ‘first feeding’ ceremony; it is believed that this makes the child clever (Chhetri 1980). The bhadrai is the black-headed shrike (the species is Lanius schach), also called buddhicara (‘intelligence bird’), because it mimics well (Charles Ramble, personal communication).

11 Soot from the fireplace (mlang) may also be used for this purpose.

12 The literally meaning of sanga sung yowa is not clear.
— When a baby cries, ‘aaa-aaa aaa-aaa’ it wants milk, but if it cries wildly it is sick.

— If a baby gets hiccups some of its relatives are thinking of it.

— If a baby looks happy and laughs while sleeping, it is because the gods are telling it about the good things in life, but if it looks unhappy, they are explaining about the sad things in life.

Thakali children start to crawl when they are about nine months old and try to walk some months later. If a child limps on the right leg, it is given a present (e.g. clothes) by its mother’s brother, but if it limps on the left the present should be given by its father. Most children are able to walk when they are about 18 months old.

Once children start to walk, they are taught to indicate when they have to urinate or defecate. The mother will take her child to a cattleshed or outside the house, hold it in a squatting posture in her arms and whistle (believed to facilitate the process). The behind is cleaned with a small piece of wood or a rag, but some also call on a dog to do the job. Only few wash their children after defecation.

Thakali children start to talk when they are about two years old. When children are four or five years old they play all sorts of games. In one game children indicate with their fingers a leopard (mhang), a small knife (karda), or a curved knife (khukri): the leopard beats the knife, the khukri kills the leopard, and the knife destroys the khukri. Girls also play house (kamara dhim lyangpa) and the game of jacks (kai lyangpa).

Parents are fond of their children and will always try to comfort a sobbing child, but if it refuses to stop crying, it will be called names (e.g. dulisya, ‘tailor woman’) and may even receive a slap. If a child is impossible and cries wildly, parents may lock it up in a dark storeroom to get some peace; the child will be released only after it has apologized and promised to behave well.

An important aspect of socialization is to teach children the use of kinship terms and the right behaviour towards their relatives. From an early age, children are told to obey and respect senior relatives and not to address or refer to them by name. As long as they are small, parents bear with mistakes (and get a good laugh when a child gets mixed up), but when older children make a mistake they are told to ‘catch the relation’.

Chyokor lawa takes place when a boy is three or five years old.13 This is a Hindu custom which has been adopted by the Thakali to celebrate a son’s first haircut.14 It is widely celebrated among Thakali living outside Thak Khola, but

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13 Odd numbers are usually associated with luck, even with ill-luck.
14 For the Hindu tonsure ceremony, see Pandey 1969.
in Mustang mainly by the Tamang Thakali. Before the ceremony the boy takes a bath in the Kali Gandaki river. Later, on the roof of his house, relatives will place a yoke on his neck and grass in his mouth, and his mother’s brother will cut his hair. Afterwards the boy is dressed in new white clothes, and blessed and given presents by his mother’s brother and other relatives.\(^{15}\)

Formerly the Tamang Thakali had a small celebration when a daughter was given her first traditional dress (\textit{nhokon colo}), usually at the age of five or six. Only close relatives were invited for this occasion. The girl would be dressed in her new clothes and would bow down in respect to the senior relatives present.

Both boys and girls start school when they are about 6 or 7 years old. Schools are found in all but the smallest villages. In rural Nepal there is usually a day’s walk between higher secondary schools, but in Thak Khola there are four (Jomsom, Marpha, Kobang and Lete) within five hours’ walk.\(^{16}\) The Thakali place much importance on education, and in most villages schooling up to form three is compulsory. Consequently, primary school and female enrollment rates in Thak Khola are among the highest in Nepal.\(^{17}\)

At the primary level tuition and books are provided free by the Government. School buildings and the quality of education are good. The student teacher ratio is one of the best in the country, and (in recent years) many teachers have been trained in modern teaching methods.\(^{18}\)

At the primary level the major subjects are Nepali language, social studies (incl. history and geography) and mathematics. English language is taught from form three.

\(^{15}\) I have not witnessed this ceremony myself. I do not know why relatives place a yoke on the boy’s neck and grass in his mouth. The white dress is later presented to an artisan.

\(^{16}\) In the 1990s private English medium boarding and day schools opened in Thak Khola. In 1997 there were two private boarding schools in Jomsom.

\(^{17}\) In 1976 34 per cent of total school enrollment in Mustang district comprised female students. This was the second highest among Nepal’s 75 districts. Female enrollment was highest in Kathmandu (36 per cent) and lowest in Acham (9 per cent). The national average was 19 per cent (Shrestha and Sharma 1980, p. 98). By 1988 the figure for Thak Khola had increased to 46 per cent (personal communication, District Assembly Chairman). According to the 1981 Census there were a total of 3,434 persons in Mustang district aged 6 to 15 years. In 1983 there were a total of 2,012 students in Mustang, or approximately 60 per cent of the children of school-going age. Primary schooling is compulsory in most villages in Thak Khola, and an estimated 90 per cent of the 6 to 12 year old Thakali children now go to school.

\(^{18}\) In 1988 the student teacher ratio in Thak Khola was 12:1. In 1977 the student teacher ratio in Mustang district was 16:1 which was the second best among Nepal’s 75 districts. The national ratio was 28:1; the lowest was in Manang district (11:1), and the highest in Sindhupalchok district (40:1) (Shrestha and Sharma 1980, p. 100).
Most children leave school after form four and five. Those who continue are mostly boys from well-off households. Children who leave school after form four are functionally literate, that is, they are capable of reading and writing simple letters. In Mustang district the literacy rate in the population of six years of age and over has increased much in recent years: in 1971 the rate was only 16 per cent (the national average was 14 per cent), but in 1987 it had jumped to an estimated 31 per cent, and in Thak Khola it was estimated at 50 per cent.

When children leave primary school they start to work full-time on the family farm and business. Boys cut wood, herd animals, and work in the fields, while girls go to the forests to collect pine needles and cypress branches, weed the fields, and do housework like cooking, cleaning, and washing. Initially children perform these activities together with their parents or elder siblings, but from about age 15 they are capable of doing them on their own.

Table 21: School enrollment, Thak Khola, 1988

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>F as % of M</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tr>
<td>Primary (Form 1-5)</td>
<td>609</td>
<td>551</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>1,160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Secondary (Form 6-7)</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>142</td>
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<tr>
<td>Higher Secondary (Form 8-10)</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>795</td>
<td>670</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>1,465</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: District Assembly Chairman, Jomsom

19 Shrestha and Sharma 1980, p. 94.
20 Personal communication, District Assembly Chairman, 1988.
21 According to the author’s 1981 survey, 42 per cent of the population in Syang above the age of 14 years could read and write Nepali and/or Tibetan. According to the Population Census 1991, the literacy rate among Thakali was 62.2 per cent, against the national average of 39.3 per cent (Gurung 1998, pp. 127-128).
ADOLESCENCE

Thakali boys become physically adult when they are about 15 to 16 years old, while girls mature about a year earlier.

For men the entry into adult life does not involve ceremonial initiation. The Tamang Thakali Syopen Lawa is a festival where a small group of virgin boys worship the goddess Nari Jhowa and are initiated into the skill of archery. The boys are aged five to seven, and Syopen Lawa therefore cannot be considered a rite of passage from boyhood to manhood. In Syang and Thini (and formerly also Cimang and Marpha) the young men of the village form a number of groups known as rowa which are active during the Phala festival. In 1977 there were three groups in Syang, namely the eldest (thyowa), the middle (parpa) and the youngest (cyangpa); the members of the groups were in their early thirties, mid-twenties and early twenties, respectively. Formerly, in Syang there was only one rowa group which functioned as the village militia; it comprised 16 members appointed by the village, and between the eldest and the youngest member there had to be an age difference of at least thirteen years.

The first menstruation is not observed in any special way among the Thakali. When a girl has her first menstruation her mother (or an elder sister) will help and advise her to use a small cotton cloth to absorb the menses. The cloth should not be washed when men are present. During menstruation a woman is not allowed to make offerings, otherwise she goes about her work as usual.

Thakali children learn about sex and reproduction by observing animals and by watching comic sexual plays during the Phala festival. Teenagers get information by listening to jokes and gossip, and by discussing the subject with close friends. Sex is taboo as a subject of conversation with parents and siblings of opposite sex.

The Thakali youth work very hard. In winter one of the main activities is to collect firewood, pine needles and fresh cypress branches. In Pacgau this work is done mainly by the young men and women who rise at five o’clock.

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22 The Nari Jhowa myth (Appendix 2) tells that the ancestors of the Thakali promised the goddess that each year, from the 5th to the 15th of the month of phala, thirteen virgin boys should worship her. Only boys from Thasang participate in this festival. For the past many years the number of boys participating in the festival has been only half a dozen or so; in 1958 only three boys participated (Iijima 1960, p. 193). For a description of Syopen Lawa, see S. von der Heide 1992.

23 Iijima mentions that Syopen Lawa is a rite of passage from boyhood to manhood (1960, p. 194).

24 In Syang the Phala festival is known as Khila. For the Khila festival, see Chapter XIII.
in the morning and climb up to the forests (which are situated 800 to 1,000 meters above the village). They return with their load around 10 a.m. After lunch they usually take a nap or sit around chatting in the warm sun. In the afternoon the young women occupy themselves with housework, while the young men chop firewood. The young women help prepare the evening meal, and after dinner they clean the dishes. In the evenings women relax by spinning yarn.

While Thakali women have very little time for leisure, men usually gather in the evenings at a street corner or in an inn to discuss the latest news. In summer some men play volleyball (which is the most popular sport in Thak Khola). Marriages, death ceremonies, festivals and volleyball tournaments provide breaks in the daily routine. Groups of young men and women from neighbouring villages come to take part in the festivities and tournaments. In the nights girls and boys meet in the inns and sing against each other – but nowadays many prefer to listen to the latest Hindi film songs. It is during these times that young men and women are able to mingle together in an easy, light-hearted manner and sometimes fall in love.

When a young Thakali man falls in love, he will joke with his sweetheart and try to impress her. If her parents run an inn, the young man will have a perfect alibi to see her often, otherwise he will try to meet her while she is working in the fields or fetching water.

When a young man is confident that a girl has reciprocal feelings towards him, he will approach her indirectly; for example, he may tell her about a beautiful girl in a neighbouring village, whose description will fit the girl to whom he is declaring his affection. To evade his advances, she may reply that the girl in the neighbouring village prefers to remain single; but she may also show her interest by teasing him and in case she helps run an inn, by occasionally giving him a free glass of tea.

Thakali men prefer a bride to be virgin, but in practice they are only concerned that she is not a 'loose' woman. Thakali frown on women who are believed to have had many lovers, and parents are therefore against their unmarried daughters having pre-marital sex; however, they may tacitly accept their daughter having an affair if her lover is their ideal choice or if they are engaged.

It is difficult for young lovers to find a private place, and sexual affairs therefore usually take place in the forest or in the fields outside the village (in

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25 Love magic is well-known among Tibetans (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, pp. 500–502), but Thakali do not use magical means to get a person to fall in love with them.
summer the sweet buckwheat provides good cover). Some young men try to visit their lover in the night. This is risky because the only way to enter a locked house is through a narrow ventilation hole in the roof;\textsuperscript{26} moreover, they have to be very quiet because young girls usually sleep together with their younger sibling.

Considering the limited possibilities of conducting an affair with Thakali women, many Thakali men are said to have their first sexual encounter with a non-Thakali woman.\textsuperscript{27} Formerly, there were scores of Tibetan-speaking female servants in Tukce, and affairs between them and local men were said to have been common. Also, until the mid-1970s young women from Dolpo, Baragau and Lo came to Thak Khola in summer to assist in the barley harvest. The women slept in a courtyard or on a roof, and young Thakali sometimes tried to have sex with them.\textsuperscript{28} Although the men could be rather rough, they never forced the women.\textsuperscript{29} Finally, prostitutes are found in the bazaars and at the bus stations in the south, and some of the Thakali who spend the winter in the south satisfy their sexual needs with these women.\textsuperscript{30}

Hundreds of Thakali women (especially from Pacgau) spend the winter in the south where they run inns along highways and main trails. In order to increase sales the women often flirt openly with male customers. Consequently,

\textsuperscript{26} The hole in the roof is narrow, and it is very difficult to enter a house this way. Once a boy wanted to climb down through the hole to his girlfriend, but got stuck for half an hour before his friend managed to pull him out.

\textsuperscript{27} Sex between a Thakali and a member of the artisan castes is strictly forbidden. If such an affair takes place and becomes known, the lovers will most likely have to leave Thak Khola and settle elsewhere.

\textsuperscript{28} Many Tibetan-speaking women from the areas north of Thak Khola are sexually active before marriage: 'In an obvious way, the prevalence of illegitimacy in Baragaon is a function of relatively permissive attitudes concerning pre-marital sex, a lack of preoccupation with female chastity, and a corresponding lack of emphasis on controlling female sexuality' (Schuler 1981, p. 89).

\textsuperscript{29} I have been informed about only two rape cases in Thak Khola. In one case two young Thakali men raped a non-Thakali woman living permanently in Thak Khola. The case was settled without the interference of government officials and the men were fined a few hundred rupees each.

\textsuperscript{30} In the West a prostitute is a woman who offers sex against payment. According to Hindu ideology, a whore (\textit{beshya}) is a woman who has had intercourse with more than three men in her life. The Badi (an 'untouchable' caste) of Western Nepal have their main income from prostitution (Cox 1992). Prostitution is traditionally not widespread in Nepal and until a few years ago, interested tourists in Kathmandu found it difficult to locate prostitutes. There are, however, prostitutes in the major towns, usually located around bus stations. In Pokhara there used to be a brothel run by a Thakali woman (the girls belonged to other ethnic groups), but it has now closed down.
many Nepalese believe that Thakali inn-keepers are prostitutes;\textsuperscript{31} in fact, prostitution appears to be rare among Thakali women.\textsuperscript{32}

**ADULTHOOD**

Thakali men are in their early twenties when they marry, while women are a few years younger. Most newly-weds initially live in a joint household with the husband’s family. The families hope and expect that the couple will have a child as soon as possible. Newly-weds are therefore said to have sex frequently, and most are indeed blessed with a child within the first years of marriage.

But some couples are less fortunate. Villagers feel sorry for childless couples. Infertility is blamed on the woman, and it is believed that women who have had an abortion are punished with infertility.\textsuperscript{33} Formerly, Thakali men often took a second wife if the first did not give birth after some years of marriage; however, as mentioned earlier, polygamous marriages are no longer popular.

Most couples establish their own independent household soon after they have their first child (except if the husband is the youngest or the only son). When this happens the husband receives only a part of his share of the paternal estate, and most couples have a difficult time making ends meet. To earn cash income (in Pacgau) a young man will usually borrow money and invest in mules while his wife will run an inn in the south during winter.

When a couple establish their own household they must themselves perform the daily chores which they previously shared with younger siblings. These years are hard, especially for women, because they are often pregnant or recovering from childbirth. When the workload becomes too overwhelming (especially after childbirth), the couple may leave a child with the grandparents for a few months.

\textsuperscript{31} Kawakita has noted that women from Marpha ‘manage tea shops, as well as houses of prostitution’ (1974, p. 88). The people of Marpha reacted strongly against this statement and protested to the Government of Nepal and the Japanese Embassy in Kathmandu. Kawakita formally apologized, withdrew the first edition, revised it without this information and reissued it later.

\textsuperscript{32} For obvious reasons it is not possible to collect reliable statistical information on the frequency of prostitution among the Thakali women. My conclusion is based on informal interviews and observations. Cases of illegitimate children indicate that some unmarried Thakali women do have affairs during their stay in the south, but this does not necessarily mean that they are prostitutes in the Western sense of the word.

\textsuperscript{33} Abortion is forbidden by Nepalese law – even women who have been raped cannot get an abortion. It is punished with a long prison sentence. In Nepal only unmarried women have abortions. The rich get abortions done in India, the poor use local quacks.
The Thakali are mainly peasants and traditionally consider children an economic asset and a security in their old age. Nowadays, however, Thakali prefer few children because they have realised that in this way they can give their children education and a larger share of the inheritance. A son is still considered a security in old age and most couples continue to have children until a son is born.\textsuperscript{34} The most popular contraceptive practices are the pill and female sterilization (which is done in Pokhara); the extent of male sterilization and the use of condoms is limited.

Life begins to improve for the parents when the eldest child leaves school and starts to work full-time on the farm. The most profitable period in the life of a Thakali couple is in their 40s and 50s. The husband will have inherited his full share of the paternal estate and the children contribute much to the welfare of the household. If there are several adult children (or servants), parents do not do much manual work, but manage and supervise household activities. The head of the household thus has time to take more interest in village affairs, and if he is a respected person and a good speaker, he may be elected village headman.

The departure of the first child marks the beginning of the decline of a household. Whenever a child marries and leaves the household, there is one less labourer on the farm. If a household has considerable land and animals it may no longer have sufficient labour to exploit its resources and will therefore have to hire people. The decline continues until the youngest son marries, at which time the parents are usually in their late fifties.

**SENESCENCE**

The Thakali usually divide their property among their sons at the time of the youngest son's marriage. After the estate has been divided, parents stay in a joint household with the youngest son; in Pacgau they may form an independent household and live on food and firewood provided by their sons. Retired persons do not work hard, but while they are still active they will help their children during harvest, look after the grandchildren, take animals for watering, spin wool, etc.

In their old age, Thakali start to become concerned about life after death. Consequently, many old Thakali, especially women, spend much time praying and taking part in other religious activities in order to gain merit.

\textsuperscript{34} The goddess \textit{Bhue Ama} of Thini is believed to have the power to bless childless couples with children, especially sons. She is worshipped only once every twelfth year. A rich Thakali had five daughters, but very much wanted a son. At the 1981 festival for \textit{Bhue Ama} he and his wife begged the goddess for a son. One year later the wife gave birth to one
Mawatan Thakali and Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali men retire from the village assembly when they become 61 years old. This occasion is known as ‘providing exemption beer’ (tharsyang tewa); the name refers to the beer a man has to present to the village headman to be exempted from the obligation of being an assembly member. In Syang, at his last assembly meeting a man places one rupee and four paisa, a scarf (khata), and ‘exemption beer’ (tharsyang) in front of the village headmen and requests permission to retire. When this has been granted he also presents beer to other assembly members who in turn bless him by placing butter on his temples. In Thak Khola rich men traditionally distributed foodgrains and had holy scriptures recited to celebrate their retirement; this custom has been banned in most villages, but it is still practised in Syang.

Women are not members of the village assembly, therefore they do not have to present tharsyang. The village headmen will simply inform the woman that she is no longer required to participate in communal works.

CONCLUSION

An interesting aspect of the life cycle among the Mawatan Thakali and Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali is that villagers retire at the age of 61. Their estate is divided among their sons, who in turn are obliged to provide them thereafter with foodstuffs and firewood. At retirement men cease to be members of the village assembly.
The Thak Khola valley is traditionally divided into two separate parts, namely Thaksatsae in the south and Pacgau in the north. Thaksatsae is a union of 13 villages, while Pacgau comprises five independent villages.

The first section of this chapter examines in detail the traditional political system of Syang village in Pacgau. Then follows a brief description of the systems of the other villages in Pacgau and Thaksatsae. The last section deals with Thak Khola as part of the national political system.

THE POLITICAL SYSTEM IN SYANG, PACGAU

Syang is situated on a plateau close to the Kali Gandaki river at the northern end of the Thak Khola valley. The land belonging to the village covers an area of approximately 85 km², most of which is mountainous, but there are also fields, forests, and pastures. The village borders Marpha at the southwest, Dangkardzong (Baragau) at the north and Thini at the east. The border with Dangkardzong runs along a mountain ridge while that with Thini mainly follows the Kali Gandaki river. The border with Marpha does not follow well-defined topographical features, but runs horizontally through the middle of a mountainside.


2 Syangtan Thakali who have land or house in Syang, but live in the south, are still counted as dur.
Civic Rights and Duties

In 1981 there were 111 households in Syang, comprising 101 Syangtan Thakali; two Thin Thakali, two Mawatan Thakali, two Towa and four artisan households.

The majority of the households were *dur*, that is households represented in the village assembly. To obtain this status the head of the household must be a male Syangtan, aged between 16 and 61 with permanent residence or property in the village. The assembly may accord this status to non-Syangtan households owning land in the village, provided the household head fulfils the other conditions. One Mawatan Thakali, one Thin Thakali and one Towa household were admitted into the assembly after they had requested permission to use the village pastures for their animals; the assembly decided if they wanted to enjoy the benefits of the village, they should also carry the duties.

Households which were not represented in the village assembly included those headed by women (*mhorangmo*), retired assembly members and a Towa household which settled in the village in the late 1970s. The artisans are not eligible to a seat in the assembly.

A household’s duties towards the village community vary according to its status. The *dur* are obliged to participate in assembly meetings, to perform the duty of headman, secretary, and village worker when required, and to participate in public works programmes. Other households participate only in public works programmes, and those headed by a retiree only if explicitly asked.

The establishment of new households is thus a matter which concerns not only family members, but also the village community. When a person establishes his own household, he usually informs the village headmen. Otherwise, he will be ordered to appear before them and asked about his status. If he swears that he has not started using a separate hearth (that is, has established a new household) no further action will be taken.

Members of a new household are obliged to participate in public works programmes immediately after it has been established. However, the household head will first be admitted into the village assembly at a special meeting which takes place once every third year. The duty of village worker applies only after the household head has become an assembly member.

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3 In 1975 a Mawatan Thakali *lama* established a monastery in Syang. The monastery is now headed by his reincarnation, who is a small boy. The monastery is not represented in the village assembly and is exempted of all duties towards the village community.

4 There is no fixed date for this meeting, but it should be convened during the first ten days of the Nepali month of *bhadra* (August–September).
The Village Assembly

The village assembly (yhul jhompa) meets at least twice a year. The main meeting takes place at the end of August.4

The day before the meeting village criers announce the time and venue. The meeting starts in the early morning and takes place in the courtyard of the village temple.5 Two village workers guard the entrance and admit only assembly members.6 The doors are closed at the start of the meeting and the village workers note the names of absentees, who are later fined.

The members of the village assembly are divided into two groups (phajan), namely ‘the big group’ (phajan thyowa) and ‘the small group’ (phajan cyangpa). The former includes the (sub)clans Syangtan, Pasin Thyowa and Pasin Cyangpa, and the latter Sakar, Jhisin, Che, San and Mhacya Parpa. The groups gather in separate rooms adjoining the courtyard.

First, each group elects a new headman from among the members of the other group. Members will propose and review various candidates. If a consensus cannot be reached, the group agrees on two or three candidates and the members will each place a small stone at (the symbol of) their choice; the candidate who receives the most stones is elected.

Any assembly member may be elected headman.7 The headman is typically in his 40s or 50s; he is a good speaker, a patient listener, honest, and helpful. His financial position is not important.

Next, they nominate a person from the other group for the post of secretary. The secretary should be able to read and write Nepali, and therefore teachers are often nominated.

After lunch the assembly meets in the courtyard for the plenary session. The headmen, the secretary, the mediators and the members of the Village Development Committee (VDC) sit on a narrow platform along a wall, while ordinary members gather in the middle of the courtyard.8 A representative from phajan thyowa announces whom his group has elected headman from phajan thyowa.

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5 Assembly meetings now take place in the courtyard of the new community house that was built in 1990 at the outskirts of the village.

6 The wives of assembly members are not allowed in. At lunchtime women bring food to their husbands. They leave it at the gate, and it is handed to the members by the village workers.

7 According to village rule, the second son in a family should become a householder priest (tawa). Householder priests were formerly exempted from serving as headman, as they already served the village in their religious capacity. Moreover, only men whose household includes a woman above the age of 15 are eligible to serve as headman.

8 For Village Development Committee (VDC), see below.
The elder of the two is known as the senior headman (thyumi thyowa) and the other as the junior headman (thyumi cyangpa).

The post of headman is time-consuming and considered a burden. Formerly, nominees could opt out by paying a fine, but in 1975 the assembly made it compulsory for nominees to serve. In 1977 a nominee tried to reject the nomination, and when this proved unsuccessful, he escaped under the pretext of going to toilet. Some village workers found him hiding in his house, and he was brought back and installed as headman.

Next, the groups will announce their nominees for the post of secretary. To decide this the senior headman draws lots and the one who is drawn becomes the secretary.

Afterwards, the outgoing secretary presents the village accounts. He explains the incomes and expenditures incurred during the past year, using stones of different sizes symbolizing Rs 1,000, 100, 10, 1 and 0.5. Any assembly member is free to check the accounts.

The main incomes are rent from fields and interest on money belonging to the village. The rent on fields depends on size and quality, while the interest on village loans is 10 per cent. The rates are lower than on the open market, and preference is given to villagers who have not held the village fields and money before (that is newly established households).

The assembly members retire at the age of 61 (tharce). The retiring member places one rupee and four paisa, a ceremonial scarf (khata) and a bottle of beer (tharsyang) in front of the senior headman and requests permission to retire. When this has been granted the retiring assembly member will serve beer to the other assembly members who in turn will bless him by placing butter on his temples.

The change of headmen is a formal affair. The outgoing headmen take an oath (kyang chinpa) by placing a hand on a religious text and promising that they have not done anything wrong during their tenure. The headmen and

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9 The last time a nominee avoided becoming village headman by paying a fine was in 1972.
10 Syang is definitely not poor. The Jomsom Airport area belongs to Syang village. When a small airfield was constructed in 1962 the villagers of Syang built a house nearby. It was rented out for Rs 1,200 a year (1972) to some Tibetan refugees who ran a hotel. The Tibetans left in 1974 and some years later Syang sold the house to a local villager for Rs 60,000.
11 Assembly members do not have to retire at an assembly meeting. Most members simply visit the senior headman and present him with beer and money and ask for permission to retire.
12 Informants explain that it is more binding for an official to swear that he has not done anything wrong at the end of his term than giving a promise at installation. However, according to the Marpha law book of 1796, the highest official, the Grand Elder (gan chen) had to swear his oath of office before taking up the position (Schuh 1995, p. 16).
the secretary then receive a ceremonial scarf, while the new headmen are presented with a turban (*gaiti*) and the new secretary with a ceremonial scarf. After the meeting the newly appointed officials walk in a procession to the senior headman’s house. Villagers will stop the procession and offer the new headmen drinks (*kyalsyang*).

The village assembly also meets in the beginning of November.\textsuperscript{13} The main purpose of this meeting is to appoint new village workers (whose term of office first starts at the next assembly meeting the following August).

Besides these two annual meetings, the assembly also meets on an ad hoc basis when a situation demands it, such as conflicts with neighbouring villages.

Every third year in August the village assembly holds a major meeting (*kyaca sowa*) in the courtyard of the old, ruined temple (*guma nim*) on the outskirts of the village.\textsuperscript{14} The purpose of this meeting is to conduct an official count of the households in the village, to admit new assembly members, to introduce new village rules and to evaluate former office-holders.\textsuperscript{15}

The assembly first discusses the village laws. For this part of the meeting persons who have held a public office since the previous meeting form one group, while other members are divided into three groups according to age, namely 15 to 29 years, 30 to 49 years and 50 to 61 years. Proposals for new rules and amendments to old ones are first discussed in the groups and later in a plenary session. If consensus cannot be reached, the group of office-holders will decide.\textsuperscript{16}

The admission of new assembly members is a simple affair; their names are recorded and they are not required to take an oath.

The assembly also evaluates the performance of the men who have served as headman or VDC official in the past three years. For this purpose members divide into the two *phajan*. If one group finds that a former official has done something wrong, it will bring up the matter in the plenary session. If the matter is of minor importance the assembly gives the former official a reprimand, but in case of misconduct and malpractice he will be fined: this happened some years ago to a vice-chairman (*upa pradhan*) of the local village panchayat.

As mentioned earlier, women are not eligible as members of the village

\textsuperscript{13} There is no fixed date for this meeting, but it should be convened around the beginning of November.

\textsuperscript{14} This meeting takes place in the year of the dragon (e.g. 1988), the sheep (e.g. 1991), the dog (e.g. 1994) and the ox (e.g. 1997).

\textsuperscript{15} For example, in 1994 the village decided to change the retirement age to 65 years.

\textsuperscript{16} Rules are usually introduced and passed by the assembly. However, the headmen have the right to introduce new rules without the approval of the assembly; but, this does not happen often because the headmen are afraid of being criticised and fined by the assembly.
assembly. However, since the early 1980s the women of the village have held a meeting at the same time as the assembly to discuss the affairs of the village. The women send to the headmen proposals which they want the assembly to consider. A ban on gambling (except for certains days) was introduced in this way. In August 1994 at the initiative of the women of the village, the assembly decided that villagers would not be permitted to receive private visitors after 10 p.m.

**Village Administration**

The administration of the village consists of the two headmen (*thyumi*), the secretary and six village workers.\(^1\)

The headmen serve for a period of one year. They are usually not re-elected, and in the past ten years more than a dozen different villagers have served as headman. Their duties are to plan and supervise public works programmes and communal worship, and mediate and judge in disputes relating to civil law. During their term of office the headmen have absolute power within the village; an English-speaking informant referred to them as ‘dictators’.

The duties of the secretary (*donggewa*) involve writing documents and letters, and keeping the village accounts (*ci lawa*).

The two *phajan* each provide three village workers (*chowa*). The post of village worker is time-consuming and the duty rotates among the *dur* according to a written schedule. New households are usually placed on the top of the list.

Households in need of male labour sometimes hire a person to perform the duty of village worker on their behalf.\(^2\) The job is usually taken by young men who have only a few fields and animals and who need an extra income.

The village workers function as village watchmen, looking out for stray animals in the fields and ensuring that nobody breaks the village rules, such as washing clothes at the public taps or bringing firewood back to the village after dark. They are also criers who walk through the village lanes shouting out official announcements. The village workers elect among themselves two persons (*nerpa*) to collect fines and keep the village treasury box.

The headmen and the secretary receive a small remuneration from the village treasury, while the village workers are paid no salary.\(^3\) However, the village workers and the council members receive half of most of the fines which

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1. Informants mention that in ‘the old days’ Syang had only one headman (*gamba*); the headman served for a period of two years.
2. In 1980 the price was Rs 1,000–1,200 for the one-year period. In addition, the person also receives a share of the income from the fines and the mill.
3. In 1980 village headmen received Rs 110 each and the secretary Rs 301.
are collected; this income is pooled and spent on parties which they arrange two or three times a year.

The headmen and the village workers (but not the secretary) look after the operation and maintenance of the village mill (chetang) which is situated at the river below Syang. The eight households have the duty of operating the mill in turns. From early morning a member of the duty officer's household is at the mill to assist villagers with the milling. For this service villagers pay a fee (usually a twentieth of the volume ground) which the duty officer keeps for himself. After the buckwheat harvest the mill is in use until late in the night, and during this period the duty officer earns a good income.

The village also has a group of mediators (mhicen) who advise the headmen on important matters and mediate conflicts. Traditionally, each phajan provided two mediators, but now the assembly appoints a handful of respected elder men, including the chairmen of the four village wards.

Village Law

Syang has a number of rules which apply to all villagers. The rules are written down in a law book (bemchag), some of which are examined below.

The forests of Nepal are owned by the State and administered by the District Forestry Office under the Ministry of Forestry. Nevertheless, the people of Syang consider the forests situated on village land as their own property. Deforestation is a serious problem in Syang, and the village has therefore introduced rules to protect the forests. Most forests are protected, but on a rotational basis so that at least one is utilized. Villagers are allowed to cut dry wood and collect leaves and needles in any forest, but it is forbidden to cut green trees in the protected forest. Animals are allowed to graze anywhere. In 1980, the fine for cutting wood in protected forest was Rs 8 per load. It is also forbidden to bring forest products into the village after dark to control illicit cutting.

Buckwheat is the main summer crop in Syang. It is easily damaged by frost and hail. Villagers believe that the risk can be reduced by sowing the crop at an

20 There is no fixed price and villagers pay whatever they like. However, it is customary to pay 1/20 of the grain.
21 For the role of the mhicen (N. bhaladmi) in Thak Khola in the 19th and 20th century, see Karmacharya 1995.
22 Forests are better looked after and preserved if they are owned and managed by the local communities. In the early 1980s the Government therefore began handing over forests to local communities.
23 Grazing animals inhibit regeneration and a ban on grazing in protected forests is greatly needed.
auspicious time; the time is identified by an astrologer and announced by the criers. Villagers are fined if they sow the buckwheat beforehand.

Card-playing is the most popular form of gambling among the Thakali. In Syang gambling is forbidden, except for three days during the Toremla festival and seven days during the Diwali celebrations. The fine for gambling was formerly Rs 8, but the amount was too small to effectively prevent it, so in the late 1970s the village raised it to Rs 500. Similarly, the fine for owners of gambling dens was raised from Rs 16 to 1,000. Up to 1990 nobody had yet been caught gambling under the new rules. In recent years Syang has introduced a number of other laws to combat so-called 'social evils'. For example, commercial video shows have been forbidden; the owner of a video parlour is fined Rs 500, and his customers Rs 50 each. In 1994 the village assembly decided that villagers should not be allowed to entertain guests after 10 p.m. If a houseowner break this rule, he is fined Rs 500 and his guests Rs 50 each. Since the introduction of electricity, it is mandatory for houseowners to have a light outside their house turned on until 11 p.m.

The fields of Syang are situated about 100 metres below the village. They are fenced off by low stone walls, but these do not effectively keep out the animals. Village workers therefore check the fields several times a day. Any stray animal is caught and returned to its owner who is fined Rs 3 or 6, depending on whether the animal is caught during the day or in the night. If the village workers cannot identify the owner, they will make an announcement saying that the animal will be auctioned off if nobody claims it within a period of eight days. If an owner of a field can prove that an animal has caused substantial damage to his crop, he can claim full compensation from the animal's owner.

Syang has a piped water supply system. The supply of water is limited, and it is therefore forbidden to wash clothes and kitchen utensils at the public taps; in 1980 this fine was Rs 8.

Syang has a simple gravity irrigation system which was constructed centuries ago; it is operated and maintained by the villagers. Irrigation water is needed only during a few weeks during the cultivation cycle. In these periods all villagers want the water first, and in order to avoid conflicts the village headmen prepare a distribution schedule. If a villager in the upper part of the system

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24 For a description of Toremla, see Chapter XIII. Diwali is an important Hindu festival which is celebrated by most communities in Nepal.
25 These are the 1980 rates for cows, jho, horses and mules. Goats count as 1/4 of a large animal, therefore the fines are Rs 0.75 and Rs 1.50.
26 The order is determined by drawing lots (gyan pumpa).
misses his turn and stops the water while the lower fields are being irrigated he is fined; in 1980 this fine was Rs 8.27

The school in Syang was established in 1958. In the 1970s the village assembly made primary schooling compulsory. Children start in kindergarten at the age of five and must continue until they have completed 5th grade or reached the age of 16. The fine for shirking is Rs 1 per day.28

According to village rule, if a family has three or more sons, the second shall serve the village as ritual specialist. While they are young the householder priests (tawa) take religious education and later serve as caretakers of the village temple. Formerly, one could avoid becoming a tawa by paying a fine to the village, but this is no longer possible.

When a villager breaks a rule, the village workers will write down his name, the nature of the offence and the amount of fine to be paid. A few times a year a nerpa visits the persons on the list and collects the fines. The income from most fines (e.g. for cutting fresh wood, letting animals go loose in the fields, and washing clothes at the public taps) is divided equally between the village treasury, and the council members and the village workers, while the fine for illegal gambling and a few others are deposited in full to the treasury. Any villager who catches a stray animal in the fields receives half of the fine while the other half goes to the village treasury.

In Syang punishment includes only the payment of fines. Physical punishment, such as public flogging, is said to have been used in the past. The village council has no official power to enforce fines. In spite of this villagers always pay them. If a villager finds a particular fine unjust, he is free to bring it up in the assembly. Should a villager ever refuse to pay a fine, he is to be expelled from the assembly and forbidden to use the village’s irrigation and drinking water, pastures, forests, etc. More importantly, he would be boycotted socially: others would not marry with his family, and he would not be permitted to use his clan’s cremation ground and reliquary structure. In other words, he would no longer be considered a Syangtan Thakali.

27 In Mustang the villages use different systems of distributing irrigation water. For example, at Lubra in Baragau the order is determined by drawing lots, while for the first crop in Chongkhor the sequence follows the order of the houses (which are numbered from 1 to 32), while the sequence is reversed for the second annual crop (Ramble 1984, p. 206). The amount of time which each house is allocated does not depend on the size of its landholding, but is fixed at two days (ibid., p. 207).

28 If a child stays away for several days the fine is reduced to Rs 0.50 a day (1980). However, if a child goes to the south during winter and does not attend when the school reopens in March the fine is Rs 1 a day.
As mentioned above, since August 1994 it has been forbidden in Syang to entertain guests after 10 p.m. A group of women see that this rule is not broken. In May 1995 two brothers were drinking in the house of a friend. At 10:30 p.m. the house was visited by a group of women, who took the house-owner and the two brothers to the house of the village headman. The headman scolded the three men. The three men refused to pay the fine and when the headman used abusive language, it ended with a rough-and-tumble. Villagers were much concerned about this incident. The next day, however, the three men payed the fine and apologized to the headman by presenting him with the standard symbols of apology, namely a bottle of beer and a ceremonial scarf.

Syang has an unwritten rule that villagers should resolve internal conflicts themselves, and that disputes should be taken to the police and district court only if both parties agree. In the 1980s a conflict arose between two local teachers. One of them had completed grade five and the other grade seven. The district education office, however, appointed the former headmaster of the school because he had papers showing that he had passed grade eight. The other teacher complained to the education office which released the cheat and fired the headmaster. The headmaster then brought the case up in the village assembly, and while the assembly disapproved of his cheating, it found the other teacher's action inappropriate. The assembly therefore ordered the teacher to make a formal apology which he did by presenting the headmaster a bottle of beer and a ceremonial scarf. According to local tradition a formal apology ends a dispute and the two parties were told to forget the incident.

Public Works Programmes

Public works programmes in Syang include the construction and maintenance of irrigation canals, the drinking water system, roads, bridges, the school, the temple, etc.

When a task has to be undertaken the village headmen usually order one adult person per household or, if necessary, all adults to participate. The criers announce the programme, including the fine for staying away. These fines are divided equally between the village treasury on one hand and the headmen, the secretary, and the village workers on the other.

In 1977 the villagers of Syang constructed a piped water supply system. UNICEF supplied two hydraulic pumps, polythene pipes, cement, and two technicians, and paid the transport costs of the materials to Jomsom, while the villagers contributed local construction materials (stones, wood, etc.) and
unskilled labour. The project was completed within 20 days. The UNICEF technicians trained four villagers who were appointed by the headmen to operate and maintain the system. For this job each maintenance worker (kyu lawa mhi) received Rs 360 a year (1980) from the village treasury. In 1982 the Government built a second drinking water supply system in the village. The new system is based on gravity and does not require regular maintenance, therefore the post of maintenance worker has been abolished. In 1994 eight villagers had installed private connection pipes to their houses.

In November 1980 the Kali Gandaki river destroyed a section of the main trail below the fields of Syang. The village headmen decided to make a new alignment through a small field further away from the river. The village has the right to expropriate private land against a payment of appropriate compensation. In this case the field was small and of poor quality and since it was worth only a few hundred rupees, the owner donated it to the village. The headmen ordered all villagers between the age of 15 and 61 years to participate, but households with two or more adults were allowed to keep one at home. Villagers who did not participate were fined Rs 8 if they were present in the village, while those staying in the south were fined Rs 4.

In the summer of 1985 a landslide blocked the Syang River. When the river finally broke through, the flood destroyed the intake of the irrigation system as well as a bridge. This happened at the time when the fields were being irrigated, and the headmen decided to repair the intake immediately. More than one hundred villagers participated in the work. The women carried stones, while the men removed the silt and reconstructed the intake. Within five hours the irrigation canal was again operative. Unfortunately, the intake was destroyed by a new flood the next day. It was repaired only to be destroyed again a few days later. The villagers repaired the intake for the third time, and there were no more floods that year.

In the early 1990s the villagers of Syang (with financial assistance from a NGO) constructed 11 public toilets. Each toilet is looked after by a users group numbering 3 to 16 houses. The toilets are locked and keys are kept by the members of the users’ group. A group leader is in charge of the management of the toilets, but it is the duty of users to clean them after use. Villagers do this and the toilets are quite clean.

29 In 1981 the village headmen appointed one of the maintenance workers to look after the system against a payment of Rs 1,340.
30 In 1997 houses with a private connection paid a fee of Rs 150 a year to the village.
31 At present villagers pay the same fine, regardless of whether they are present in village or not.
Village Worship

Dasain is the most important Hindu festival in Nepal. During this festival which usually falls in October, people visit their elder relatives to receive blessings and tika (a mixture of vermilion powder, rice and curd placed on the forehead). In Syang the village council meets in the school and sacrifices a sheep on behalf of the village, and children and other villagers come to receive tika from the headmen. The sheep, which is purchased from the village treasury, is cooked and eaten by the members of the council, the village workers and the mediators.

On the outskirts of Syang there is a big cypress tree known as Pholha, which is the home of the village’s protective deity (pholha). In May the village sacrifices a sheep at a small cypress tree next to the pholha. On the same day a male goat (yangda) is also sacrificed by a dried-up cypress tree at the northern end of the fields; this sacrifice is called lewa puja lawa. The animals are purchased by the village treasury, and the meat is shared by the council members, the village workers and the local panchayat members.

The village sponsor a ceremony against smallpox (mai puja). The ceremony takes place at a small cypress tree situated in the middle of the fields and includes the sacrifice of a hen.

During the Phala festival, a group of young men drive away the evil spirits on behalf of the village community.

The village owns and operates a temple, which is situated in the centre of the village. A householder priest lights a butterlamp in the temple every day, and on the 10th and the 25th of every month there is worship and book recitation. Each household (dur) contributes 3 kgs of grains a year to support the temple.

Relations to Other Villages

Syang borders Marpha in the south, Dangkardzong in the north, and Thini in the east. The border with Marpha runs horizontally through a south-facing mountainside above Marpha river. The lower part belongs to Marpha and the upper to Syang. The middle part which is an open steppe, is common property; the villages use this land for grazing animals, but only Syang has the right to the dung. Both villages claim that the common property originally belonged to them. Informants from Marpha explain that ‘in the old days’ a village headman named

32 The sheep is killed by an artisan (tailor).
33 For the Phala festival, see Chapter XIII.
Kheperl Bonkyok exchanged this land with Syang for a beautiful fur coat. When the villagers of Marpha heard about the deal they are said to have executed their headman by putting him in a sack and rolling him down the hill. According to villagers in Syang the land was originally theirs, but some fifty years ago Marpha cheated them out of it. The story goes that some people from Marpha went to the disputed land and counted the number of pillars in the herdsmen’s huts. Then they went to Syang and claimed that the land was theirs. When the villagers objected, the Marpha people said if the land belonged to Syang, they should be able to say how many pillars there were in the herdsmen’s huts. The people of Syang were unable to answer that and instead said, if the land belonged to Marpha, then they should know it. The Marpha villagers then mentioned the number of pillars in each hut, and this proved to be correct. The villages finally solved the conflict through a mediator from Chairo who suggested that they keep the land as common property, and both the villages agreed to it.

The northern border between Syang and Thini is disputed. Syang claims that its land extends approximately 50 meters north of the entrance to the military camp in Jomsom. Formerly, a reliquary stone structure (mane) marked the border, but some years ago it was demolished by the army. Thini claims that the border is several hundred meters further south. The disputed area is used for grazing animals and the villages have had many fights over it. For example, in the 1950s Thini tried to build a house on the land, but it was demolished by Syang. In 1959 the two villages signed an agreement according to which the disputed land belongs to Syang, except for a 144 yard wide strip which is common property.

In 1962 the Government built a small airstrip on the disputed property to fly in relief supplies for Tibetan refugees who had entered the area in 1959. The villagers of Syang built a house next to the airfield which they rented out to some Tibetan refugees who ran it as a hotel. In 1972–73 the airstrip was extended, thereby making the region more accessible to tourists. There are now more than 40 buildings around the airfield, including many hotels.

In 1981 the Government prepared a map of Mustang district including the boundaries of the village panchayat. The map showed the airport as a part of Thini-Jomsom Panchayat. Marpha Panchayat (to which Syang belongs) complained to the Chief District Officer. When this did not help, it sent a delegation to Kathmandu to complain to the Home Minister, but in vain. A second delegation, however, obtained a written statement from the Government saying that the border between Marpha and Thini-Jomsom panchayat follows the alignment agreed to by Syang and Thini in 1959.
The main section of the border between Syang and Thini follows the Kali Gandaki River. The southern part of Thini includes the forest-covered slopes of the Niligiri mountain. Syang has traditionally had the right to use the Niligiri forest against an annual fee which in 1972 was Rs 31, but following a dispute in 1979 it was raised to Rs 301.34 The dispute started when a villager from Syang wanted to fell 50 trees. He obtained permission from the chairman of Marpha Village Panchayat as well as the District Forest Office (DFO) in Jomsom. The DFO marked the trees and the villager from Syang sent some southern labourers to fell them. One day some villagers from Thini found several muskdeer traps close to the place where the men were working. They searched the labourers and found some strings similar to the ones used in the traps. The men were brought to the DFO and locked up. However, in the night they threw flour in the eyes of the DFO staff and escaped. Nobody believed this account and the DFO staff was later suspended. The man from Syang was contacted by some Thini representatives who upon hearing his explanation informed him that the chairman of Marpha had no authority over Thini's forests; instead he should have obtained a permission from Thini-Jomsom Panchayat. The dispute was finally settled when the Syangtan man agreed to pay a fine of Rs 600 to Thini-Jomsom Panchayat.

There is another version of the events leading to the increase in this annual fee. A written agreement between Syang and Thini states that if the bridge over the Kali Gandaki between the villages is deliberately damaged, the village responsible should forfeit its right to use the Niligiri forest. One day, the bridge was found to have been rendered unusable. Representatives of Syang came to Thini, accusing the latter of violating the agreement, on the grounds that no one from Syang would have damaged a bridge that existed primarily for its own benefit. Thini, however, had inside information to the contrary, and, under physical duress, the Syang representatives confessed that members of their own village had committed the act in an attempt to deprive Thini of its rights to the forest. The annual fee was subsequently raised to Rs 301.35

A new conflict broke out between Thini and Syang in 1984. The conflict started when Syang restricted people from Thini-Jomsom from obtaining access to the forest on their common northern border. Thini retaliated by suspending Syang's rights to the Niligiri forest. The headmen of Syang then ordered all women above the age of 15 to collect pine needles and dried wood in the Nilgiri forest. On their return the women found the bridge over the Kali

34 The fee was originally Rs 4. The small amount indicates that the villagers of Syang have probably been using the Niligiri forest for several hundred years.
35 Charles Ramble, personal communication.
Gandaki blocked by a group of men from Thini, who forcibly took the women's baskets and burned them. The next day the women protested to the Chief District Officer in Jomsom, but in vain. The headmen of Syang then ordered all men above the age of 15 years to cut wood in the forest; the fine for staying away was Rs 100 a day. After a few days with some minor skirmishes the villages finally agreed that Syang could temporarily continue to use the forest until a mediator could settle the dispute.

TRADITIONAL POLITICAL SYSTEMS IN PACGAU

The traditional political systems of the other villages of Pacgau are basically similar to that of Syang.

Marpha

The village assembly in Marpha is divided into four groups (cho). The four Mawatan Thakali clans each make a cho, but since the Gumli Cyangpa clan is very small its cho has been extended to include the Ducen Nhurbu lineage of the Puta clan.

There are four headmen (thyumi) in Marpha. They are elected at the main annual meeting of the village assembly, which takes place on the 5th of the Nepalese month of sawan (around 20 July). The members of each cho nominate among themselves a candidate, who then is approved by the other cho. A cho may, however, be asked to provide two candidates, and in this case the selection is done by the other cho. The tenure of a headman is one year, but the incumbent may be re-elected for a new term. The duty of thyumi is time-consuming, and able men are therefore nominated at least once in their lifetime. Formerly, the headmen had to stay in Thak Khola during their term, but now they serve on a rotation basis so that they can trade in the south during the winter. From 20 July to 20 November the four headmen serve for one month each; the eldest of the headmen then serve during the five winter months, whereafter the

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36 The dispute took place in winter when a large number of villagers were in the south. An urgent message was sent to them, but the majority preferred to pay the fine rather than return.

37 As mediator the two sides agreed on Govindraman Shercan of Tukce (a member of the subba family). Unfortunately, Shercan died before he could settle the dispute.

38 For the political system of Marpha, see also Parker 1985, pp. 48–67. For the political system in the 18th century, see Schuh 1990 and 1995.
others serve for one month each. Accounts are checked by the mediators (mhicen) and handed over each time the headmen rotate.39

The village council also includes a secretary (dongge) and an accountant (ci lawa). Further, there are eight mediators (mhicen) – two from each cho – who are selected by their respective headman. Finally, there are ten village workers – three each from the cho of the Rhoten and Puta clans and two each from the others. The duty of village worker rotates among the members of the cho.40 The village workers elect one from among themselves as the head worker (minkya).

Marpha has local rules similar to Syang, including one which forbids the throwing of garbage and snow in the main street.

The village assembly has a major meeting (phosang jhomzi) every third year at a place called Phosang where there is a big cypress tree which is home to the village’s protective deity (pholha). The meeting lasts several days and is chaired by an ad hoc group of eight respected men (two from each cho). The assembly evaluates the performance of the former office holders, and an official is punished if only one of the cho demands it; the fine is Rs 8 per cho.41

At the meeting the assembly conducts a census (kyachi) of the number of households, persons, and animals in the village. The census classifies the households into several categories – those which are represented in the village assembly (dur), households headed by women (mhorangmo), outsiders (arangsi karangsi), etc. The tax burden of the individual household depends on the category to which it belongs. Reclassification takes place only at the time of the census; if a member of the village assembly sells his property and leaves Marpha, he still carries the obligations of a dur household until the next census.

In public works programmes the work is usually divided into four equal parts and assigned to a cho by drawing lots. Sometimes the work is split into two parts and the cho of the Rhoten and the Gumli Cyangpa clans form one team, and Puta and Gumli Thowa the other.

Irrigation water is distributed in two ways. In the upper (northern) part of the command area the cho are each allocated the water for a certain number of days by drawing lots; within the cho the turn of the members is fixed by draw-

39 This was the system of rotation in 1990. In 1980 the post of headman rotated after every 45th day.
40 All male Mawatan Thakali who have a house or land in Marpha and are aged between 16 and 61 traditionally have to carry the duty of village worker, even if they live permanently in the south. In 1976 the Rhoten and the Gumli Cyangpa clans decided that migrants were no longer required to serve, while the Puta and the Gumli Thowa clans continued to fine members who declined to accept.
ing lots. In the lower (southern) part, the fields at the beginning of the canal always receive the water first and those at the tail end last.

In 1982, at the initiative of some young members of the community, the traditional political organization was merged with the official local elected bodies by handing over the functions of the headmen to the chairman of the Village Panchayat and the chairmen of the four wards of Marpha. In line with traditional practice, the four cho each provided a ward chairman. In August 1984 the village assembly decided, however, to revert to the traditional system on the grounds that the governing of the village had become too loose under the new system.

Thini

In the traditional political system of Thini[^42] which existed until the 1960s, the village assembly included two groups, namely cho thyowa which comprised the (sub) clans Bom, Shrane and Chuku, the lineage Gamba Tamba of Gyabcan clan and the lineage Gam Sone of Kya clan; and cho cyangpa which included the subclans Jhisin and Pal, the lineage Gam Sone of the Gyabcan subclan, and the lineages Pai Sonte, Cham Dhorchhe and Gam Kemi of the Kya clan.

Thini had a single headman (gamba), who was elected by the village assembly for a period of three years. Below him was a deputy headman (thyumi) whose term lasted for one year. Every alternative year cho thyowa elected a person from cho cyangpa for this post, and vice versa. Besides the headman and the deputy there were also eight mediators (mhicen), eight village workers (chowa) and a secretary.

In the 1930s Gamba Kalu of Bom Phobe became the headman in Thini and he and his sons kept power until the 1960s. One of the sons (Shankarlal) was particularly active. He established the school in Thini and in 1951 the irrigation system was rehabilitated at his initiative[^43] But Shankarlal also destroyed some of the temples and most of the reliquary structures in the village. He even ordered the villagers to change their traditional names and gave them Nepali names instead. Once when registering his gun, Shankarlal signed himself as 'the

[^41]: Close to Phosang is a small waterfall. According to informants, formerly officials were sometimes made to stand under the ice-cold water as punishment.

[^42]: An informant mentions that 'in the old days' the households of Thini were divided into three group (phajan). Each group looked after one of the three canals which then constituted the irrigation system of Thini. The upper canal was known as sriṃ kyor, the middle as bar kyor and the lower as man kyor.

[^43]: During the rehabilitation of the irrigation canal all adults in Thini worked for seven days. During the work a villager was killed in an accident.
head of the subjects' (prajapati); when it learned about this, the Government removed Shankarlal as the official tax-collector of the village (mukhiya).

**Jomsom, Cimang and Chairo**

Jomsom does not have a traditional political system as well-developed as that of Syang, Marpha and Thini, because it is a relatively new settlement and not dominated by a single ethnic group.44

The fields of Jomsom and Thini are situated on the same plateau and irrigated by the same system. The villages have had an agreement on water sharing since at least 1938.45 Since 1959 Jomsom and Thini have provided four village workers each to look after stray animals in the fields and to operate and maintain the irrigation system. In Jomsom the Tamang Thakali and the Rhongta Khampa provide one worker each, while the Tangbetan provide two; Thin Thakali residing in Jomsom are still considered as part of Thini.

In Cimang there are two clans, namely Dancan and Kya. The village is small and has one headman (thyuimi) and three village workers. The headman is recruited exclusively from Dancan because – as explained by informants – the Kya clan carries the responsibility of providing ritual specialists (dhom).

Chairo has 14 households, mainly Tamang Thakali and Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali (from Cimang). The village has one headman and two village workers.

**The Cikyap System**

In the early 20th century the villages of Pacgau and Baragau paid several thousand rupees in land tax to the Government. The tax had not increased much since the beginning of the 19th century and had actually decreased in real terms, but it was still a burden. The villagers in Pacgau and Baragau were well aware of the subba's friendship with the rulers in Kathmandu, and around 1930 they are said to have requested the subba to use their influence to have the tax reduced. The subba succeeded and subsequently the villagers in Pacgau and Baragau asked the members of the subba family to become (external) headmen and tax-collectors (cikyap) of their villages.

Harkaman's sons divided the villages among themselves: Guptaman got Marpha and Thini in Pacgau;46 Hitman received Syang and Cimang in Pacgau

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44 In 1907 there were only seven households in Jomsom.
46 Guptaman Shercan was the first cikyap of Thini and Marpha. The post was later taken over by his son Govindraman Shercan.
and Tangbe, Tetang, Chusang, Gyaka and Chaile in Baragau;⁴⁷ and Mohanman the remaining part of Baragau as well as Geling village.⁴⁸ In Dolpo the subba's close affinal relatives of the Dhyatan subclan of the Tulacan clan acted as their agent for the collection of the land revenue. The cikyap mediated in conflicts within and between villages in Pacgau and Baragau. As payment for his services, the cikyap received free meals and fodder for his horse whenever he visited his village, and once a year he was also presented a goat (later only a chicken). Further, the villagers worked gratis a few days a year in his fields.⁴⁹ Finally, in Thini, Syang, and Marpha the cikyap lent each household ten pathi of barley.⁵⁰ The beneficiaries were obliged to pay interest on the loan without being permitted to finally clear it by returning the capital. The initial interest was as high as 4 pathi a year, but it was later reduced to 3 pathi and further to 2 pathi.

The cikyap system and the non-repayable loans were abolished in the 1960s. Informants from Marpha, Thini, and Syang claim that the Thakali subba forced the cikyap system and the non-refundable loans (and moneylending) upon the people of Pacgau and Baragau in order to dominate and exploit them. Informants also complain about brutal punishments, such as flogging. However, the cikyap also initiated the construction and rehabilitation of irrigation systems, and in the 1950s they started the first schools in Pacgau.

Inter-Village Political Organizations in Pacgau

The forests and pastures of Pacgau are owned by the individual villages, except for the pasture Chatra Pang and a forest above Chairo which are the joint property of the five villages. Formerly, the five villages of Pacgau used to meet every third year to discuss the use of these resources, but the meetings ceased in the early 1960s; meetings were re-introduced in 1974 and the villages now meet annually.

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⁴⁷ Hitman Shercan did not serve as cikyap in these villages. Initially, he gave the post to his wife's sister's son Damalal Shercan. After Damalal's death the post was held by Hitman's son Indraman Shercan.

⁴⁸ Mohanman Shercan was the first cikyap in Baragau. The post was later taken over by his son Sangkarman Shercan.

⁴⁹ The cikyap were also moneylenders. There were many poor people in Pacgau and Baragau, and when a loan defaulted the cikyap took over the collateral, usually a plot of land. Consequently, the cikyap owned much land in Pacgau and Baragau.

⁵⁰ Non-repayable loans given by the cikyap were not introduced in Baragau. However, non-repayable loans are known in Lubra, where the households are committed to paying its temple contributions in perpetuity, based on earlier loans (Charles Ramble, personal communication).
In August 1977 the meeting took place in Marpha's community building. The participants included the headmen, mediators and members of the local village panchayat from the five villages. There were two major items on the agenda.

First, in 1976 the villagers of Marpha had cut a large number of trees from the common forest without consulting the other villages. The wood was used to cover the canal which runs parallel to the main lane through Marpha. The representatives from Marpha argued that they should not be fined because the wood had been used for development purposes, but as a goodwill gesture they offered to present Rs 101 to Pacgau's common fund. The other villages accepted that, but it was agreed to charge a fee of Rs 1 per 10 cubic feet of wood cut in the future.

Second, the villages decided to establish a common fund to finance future meetings and cultural programmes. The fund received an initial capital of Rs 1,900, out of which Marpha contributed Rs 500, Thini 500, Syang 400, Cimang 300, and Chairo 200. The villages keep their respective contribution and pay only the interest (10 per cent per annum).

Thini, Syang, and Cimang are known as 'the three villages' (yhulkasom or yhulsom) and are the homeland of the Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali. The three villages traditionally met every third year at the Dhumpha river to discuss matters of common interest. Around 1960 the villages established a formal organization which has the authority to introduce laws that apply to all Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali.

For example, in 1974 the assembly of the three villages passed several rules relating to traditional marriage customs and in 1977 rules relating to death ceremonies. It also decided in 1977 to exchange singers during the Phala festival in order to strengthen and develop traditional Yhulkasompaimhi culture. To finance these and other activities, the villages established a common fund to which Thini and Syang contributed Rs 500 each and Cimang 300. The villages keep their respective contributions and pay only the interest (10 per cent per annum). They now meet annually and the venue rotates among them.

THAKSATSAE

Thaksatsae is divided into thirteen 'villages', namely Tukce, Khanti, Kobang, Larjung, Bhurjungkot, Nakhung, Naprungkhung, Titi, Dhumpu, Taglung, Kunjo,

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51 In May 1997 the Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali took further steps to strengthen local culture. The meeting of the villages decided that children should learn and speak Thakali. At a wedding the groom should present the bride with a traditional dress instead of a saree, and he should apply butter in the parting of his bride's hair, not red vermilion powder (sindur).
Lete and Ghasa.\textsuperscript{52} Some villages have satellite settlements, some of them large, yet these do not have the status of independent villages; for example, Sauru is a part of Khanti village, and the people of Chayo belong to either Taglung or Kunjo.\textsuperscript{53}

Bhurjungkot is an interesting case. In the 19th century the people of Bhurjungkot abandoned their village due to problems with the drinking water supply and settled in Larjung. Their descendants live side by side with the Larjung households, but they are still considered Bhurjungkot households and have their own headman and forests.\textsuperscript{54}

The traditional political organization varies from village to village, but in general is as follows.\textsuperscript{55} The households which are represented in the village assembly are called \textit{kuriya}, while non-members are referred to as \textit{padkea}. The \textit{kuriya} include Tamang Thakali households having land and houses in the village, and where the household head is a male between 18 and 61 years of age; however, a few outsiders (e.g. Mawatan Thakali) have also obtained this status. The \textit{kuriya} are obliged to carry the duty of village worker and to participate in public works programmes;\textsuperscript{56} the \textit{padkea} only participate in public works programmes, while households headed by a retiree do not carry any obligations.\textsuperscript{57}

The village assembly (\textit{yhuł jhompa}) meets once a year to discuss issues of general interest and to check the village accounts. It also meets on an ad hoc basis when important matters suddenly arise.

The village has a headman (\textit{mukhiya}).\textsuperscript{58} The post of headman is ideally open to any assembly member, but in practice is restricted only to the Tamang

\textsuperscript{52} There is an older division of Thaksatsae, namely \textit{chadi dhu} which included Tukce, Khanti and Kobang; \textit{preh dhu} which comprised Larjung, Bhurjungkot, Nakhung and Naprungkhung; and \textit{du dhu} which included Titi, Dhumpu, Taglung, Kunjo, Lete and Ghasa. \textit{Chadi, preh} and \textit{du} mean ‘eleven’, ‘eight’ and ‘six’, respectively. Informants do not remember the significance of these numbers.

\textsuperscript{53} According to Schuh, ‘Nowadays Thag [Thaksat5ae] comprises 13 villages’ (1995, p. 20). In fact, there are 13 political units (‘villages’), but more than 13 settlements (villages and hamlets).

\textsuperscript{54} The Bhurjungkot forest is situated above Larjung, while the Larjung forest is located east across the Kali Gandaki river.

\textsuperscript{55} For notes on the political organization of Ghasa village, see Karmacharya 1994, pp. 21–22.

\textsuperscript{56} In the 1960s and 1970s a large number of Tamang Thakali left Thak Khola. Some sold their properties, but others kept them as a security. Households that have settled in the south but who still have land in Thak Khola do not carry these duties.

\textsuperscript{57} Some villages have a limit to the number of days households can be called to participate in public works programmes. In Taglung the limit is 18 days for \textit{kuriya} and 13 days for \textit{padkea}.

\textsuperscript{58} Taglung has a deputy headman, whose main duty is to look after Chayo, which is located an hour’s walk away. Formerly, the deputy headman was elected among the Taglung households of Chayo, but nowadays he may be elected from any Taglung household.
Thakali. The villagers often choose a close patrilineal relative (younger brother, son or nephew) of the former headman, and in some villages the post has been in the same family for several generations. The headman usually serves until he retires or dies, but if the assembly is dissatisfied with his performance he may be replaced by another villager. This does not happen often; only once in the 1960s in Larjung and in 1976 in Khanti.

The headman plans and supervises village worship, such as the annual worship against smallpox (maipuja). He also initiates public works programmes: the construction of bridges, roads, drinking water supply systems, river protection works, etc. The headman mediates in conflicts within the village. When a villager seeks assistance he places four paisa in front of the headman and presents his problem. If the problem is serious, the headman will appoint some mediators (bhaladmzi) to advise him, including one from each side of the conflict. If a villager feels that the judgement is unfair, he has the right to bring it to the council of the thirteen headmen of Thaksatsae. Until recently, most of the headmen also functioned as land tax collectors (mukhiya).

The headman is assisted by two village workers (gundal). The duty of village worker rotates among the kuriya and the duration of the post is one year. The village workers assist the headman with practical arrangements in connection with village worship and public works programmes and serve as criers. Further, they see that nobody cuts wood in protected forest, and that animals do not enter the fields. If they find an animal in the fields, the owner is fined a few rupees which go to the village treasury.

The headmen of the thirteen villages constitute a council known as 'the thirteen headmen' (tera mukhiya). Originally, the council had a treasurer (tabil mukhiya) who functioned as chairman; the tabil mukhiya was the headman of Kobang, who came from the Dhom lineage of the Shercan clan. In the 1930s the Tamang Thakali established the Thaksatsae Dharma ancha.

According to Bista (1967, p. 94), the thirteen headmen hold their office by hereditary right. The land tax was paid collectively by the villagers, but now it is paid by the individual landowners. Most villages (e.g. Khanti and Kunjo) have two village workers, but in Tukce (which is a larger village) there are four. The village headman does not perform the duty of village worker. Some villages (e.g. Tukce) hire one of the village tailors to assist the headman and to look out for stray animals in the fields. Several authors date the establishment of the council of thirteen headmen to the 1930s. (Kawakita 1957, p. 56; Iijima 1960, p. 195; Bista 1971, p. 58; Fisher 1987, p. 290). I believe that they have mistaken the establishment of the council of the thirteen headmen with the
to its constitution, the Thaksatsae Dharma Panchayat was formed to settle local disputes, promote nationalism and communal harmony, spread education, prevent epidemics and other diseases, promote trade and commerce, cottage industry and handicrafts, and take strict measures against evil traditions and undesirable activities infesting the community.\textsuperscript{65} The form and the functions of the Thaksatsae Dharma Panchayat have generally remained unchanged since the 1930s. The thirteen headmen constitute the working committee of the Dharma Panchayat. The working committee has a chairman (\textit{mir mukhiya}), a vice-chairman (\textit{upa mir mukhiya}), and a treasurer (\textit{tabil mukhiya}); the other headmen are ordinary members (\textit{sadasya}). The chairman, the vice-chairman and the accountant serve for a period of one year, and the posts rotate among the thirteen headmen.\textsuperscript{66} The chairman chairs council meetings while the vice-chairman takes over in his absence. The council has no secretary; when documents have to be written, one of the headmen is assigned to it. Documents are kept in a box which has three locks; the keys are kept with the chairman, the vice-chairman and the accountant, and the box can be opened only when all three persons are present.

In 1984 the Tamang Thakali established a national association (\textit{thakali samaj sewa samiti}). In this connection, the thirteen headmen of Thaksatsae decided that the post of chairman should no longer rotate. Thus, in 1985 the council elected Shangkarman Shercan (of the Balbir lineage) as chairman. Shangkarman held the post for seven years, whereafter Krishna Mohan Shercan (of the Dhom lineage) of Kobang took over.

The十三 headmen meet twice a year. Formerly, the meetings (\textit{tera mukhiya jhompa}) took place in a building in Kobang close to the temple of Meki Lhakhang, but now the council has its own private room at the Kobang school. The thirteen headmen must attend these meetings even without prior notice; if a headman is unable to come, he should send a respected villager as his replacement along with a written authorization.

The main meeting takes place in June and lasts three days.\textsuperscript{67} On the first day the headmen rest and socialize. On the second day they check the accounts.

\textsuperscript{65} For the Thaksatsae Dharma Panchayat Constitution, see Karmacharya 1994 and 1995.
\textsuperscript{66} According to an informant, the post of chairman rotated between the \textit{chadi dhu}, \textit{preh dhu} and the \textit{du dhu} (see note 52 above). According to Bista, the most senior \textit{subba} presided at the meeting of the thirteen headmen (1971, p. 58); and, according to C. von Fürer-Haimendorf, 'within this council the principal families of Tukche exercised virtually unlimited authority' (1981, p. 177).
In Thaksatsae the forests are owned by the individual villages, but the pastures are common property. In summer the pastures are also used by Gurung and Magar shepherds from the south against a fee of one sheep per herd. Formerly, more than 20 herds used to come, but now there are only a dozen or so. The animals which Thaksatsae receives as a fee are divided equally among the 13 villages. Each village receives a maximum of two animals; any surplus is sold and the proceeds are given to the Thaksatsae treasury.

On the third day the council changes chairman, vice-chairman and accountant, settles disputes between villages and hears villagers' appeal cases. Formerly, Tamang Thakali were forbidden to take their cases to government courts without prior permission of the thirteen headmen, but this rule has now been abrogated. The headmen settled all cases, except those relating to murder and other serious crimes which were referred to proper courts.

The second annual meeting takes place on the tenth day of the annual Dasain festival. A sheep is sacrificed for the welfare of the people of Thaksatsae, and children and other villagers visit the headmen to receive blessings and tika. Afterwards the headmen eat and drink together.

The chairman may also call ad hoc meetings of the council if a situation demands it, such as conflict with Pacgau over land and forests. For these meetings the chairman may ask the headmen to bring along one or more respected men (bhaladmi). The headmen and bhaladmi will discuss the problems and reach decisions through consensus.

Besides managing common resources (such as pastures) and functioning as local court, the council of the thirteen headmen also issue rules relating to social reforms. These reforms are discussed in Chapter XV.

THAK KHOLA AS A PART OF THE NATIONAL POLITICAL SYSTEM

The modern Nepalese state was founded in the second half of the 18th century by King Prithvi Narayan Shah of Gorkha. In 1846 Jang Bahadur Rana and his

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67 The meeting starts on the 3rd of the Nepali month of Sawan (around 18 June).
68 The main pastures of Thaksatsae are located above Tukce (Parce), Kobang, and Cimang (Marce), and on the slopes of Dhaulagiri (Mulighang).
69 Households in Thaksatsae do not pay this fee.
70 The fine for breaking this rule was Rs 500. The rule was in force in 1962 (C. von Furer-Haimendorf 1975, p. 146).
71 According to the Nepalese law local communities were empowered to settle conflicts locally, except those relating to murder and a few other crimes. See also Höfer 1979, p. 41.
72 Each headman is required to bring maize, radishes and some fruits. These goods are car-
brothers took power in a coup and their descendants ruled Nepal until 1951. During this period the king was reduced to a figurehead with no real political power.

The Rana rule came to an end in 1951 after a popular uprising led by the Nepali Congress Party (NC). The first general election in Nepal in 1959 resulted in a victory for the NC, and its leader Bishweshwar Prasad Koirala was appointed Prime Minister. However, in 1960 King Mahendra dismissed the government, jailed the cabinet and banned political parties. In 1962 King Mahendra promulgated a new constitution of Nepal; the political system laid down in this constitution was known as the partyless democratic Panchayat System.

In 1990 Nepal got a new constitution based on constitutional monarchy and multi-party democracy. There are two houses in the parliament: the House of Representatives (pratinidhi sabha) and the National Assembly (rastriya sabha).\textsuperscript{73} The House of Representatives has 205 members elected on the basis of adult franchise from 205 single member constituencies.\textsuperscript{74} Nepal is divided into 75 districts (jilla). The district comprises a number of Village Development Areas (VDAs), which are grouped into a number of sub-districts or blocks (ilaka).\textsuperscript{75} The VDAs are divided into nine wards. They have a Village Development Committee (VDC) (gau bikas samiti) which comprises a chairman, vice-chairman and one member from each ward, elected by the adults who have resided in the VDA for at least one year. Each district has a District Development Committee (DDC) (jilla bikas samiti) which comprises a chairman, vice-chairman and one member from each ilaka. The chairman and vice-chairman are elected by the members of the VDC from among themselves. The DDC members are elected by the VDC members from within each of the ilaka.

The Panchayat System in Thak Khola

Prior to the introduction of the Panchayat System Thak Khola was part of Baglung district. When Mustang district was created in 1962 it extended south to Tatopani, and the district headquarters was at Dana, immediately south of Thak Khola. However, in 1974 the area south of Ghasa was transferred to Myagdi district, and Jomsom became the new headquarters of Mustang district.

\textsuperscript{73} The 60-member National Assembly is basically an advisory body.

\textsuperscript{74} Mustang district forms one constituency.

\textsuperscript{75} In Mustang district there are 16 Village Development Areas and nine ilaka. In Thak Khola there are six Village Development Areas, namely Thini-Jomsom, Marpha, Tukce, Kobang,
Mustang was divided into 16 village panchayats (gau panchayat). There were six village panchayats in Thak Khola, namely Thini-Jomsom, Marpha, Tukce, Kobang, Lete and Kunjo.

In most parts of Thak Khola the traditional political institutions continued to exist side by side with the Panchayat System. Roughly, the villages' internal affairs were the domain of the traditional institutions, while the external affairs were the domain of the national political system. The following example illustrates how the two systems co-existed in Marpha Village Panchayat and how the Thakali changed the rules of the national political system to bring them in line with traditional practices.

Marpha Village Panchayat included Marpha, Syang and Chairo villages. It was divided into nine wards; four in Marpha and Syang and one in Chairo.

Although Marpha, Syang and Chairo belonged to the same panchayat, they functioned as separate entities. For example, the forests of Syang could only be used by the people of Syang. Also, the chairman, who was from Marpha, had no say whatsoever in the internal affairs of Syang village.

According to the rules and regulations of the Panchayat System, the ward chairmen had to be elected by the electorate in their respective wards. However, in Syang they were appointed by the village assembly. The appointment was done in the same way as that of the village headmen. Thus, the assembly members from ward no. 5 appointed the chairman of ward no. 6, the members from ward no. 6 appointed the chairman of ward no. 7, and so on.

Further, according to the Panchayat System the chairman and the vice-chairman of the village panchayat should be directly elected by the electorate. However, Syang, Marpha and Chairo had an informal agreement according to which Marpha provided the chairman and Syang or Chairo the vice-chairman. They were not elected, but appointed by the respective village assemblies.

Under the Rana regime the state interfered little in the affairs of the local communities as long as they paid their taxes and maintained law and order. This situation changed after the fall of the Rana regime in 1951. Since then the Government has been seeking to promote the welfare of the people.

Under the Panchayat System there was a dramatic rise in the number of civil servants serving in the districts and in the transfer of Government funds for development purposes. In the 1980s the Government provided about Rs 20 million annually for development activities in Mustang district. This amount excluded the cost of major programmes funded by foreign donors, such as an electrification project.

Among the funds which Mustang district received from the Government was an annual allocation of about Rs 2 million which the district assembly
allocated for local use. The money was divided so that each village panchayat got at least one project every year. Projects included mostly small scale local infrastructure works, such as irrigation, school buildings, bridges, playgrounds, etc.

The district assembly also introduced local taxes and duties to finance development activities. The most profitable duty was one levied on animals passing south through the district. The district council fixed the rates and through tender appointed a contractor as the collector of duties. In 1988 the contractor paid Rs 80,200 a year. He collected the duties at the small settlement of Chithangdhong between Larjung and Kalopani. The duty was Rs 5 per sheep/goat and Rs 1.50 per mule. No duties were imposed on animals heading north.76

Elections in Mustang District

Until the introduction of the Panchayat System political power in Mustang district was in the hands of two families, namely the Raja of Mustang and the subba of Tukce.

During the first general election in Nepal, in 1959, the subba family and the Thakali were divided in two groups – one supported Mohanman Shercan and the other his brother Hitman. Hitman’s son Yogendraman was a candidate of the Nepali Congress Party, while Mohanman’s son Lalitman ran as an independent candidate. Yogendraman won the election and was later appointed assistant minister in B.P. Koirala’s cabinet. In 1960 King Mahendra took the power and jailed the Congress leaders, including Yogendraman. Yogendraman was released some years later, but shortly afterwards he was killed in an accident.77

The first election under the Panchayat System took place in 1963. Until 1980 there were indirect elections to the National Assembly (rastriya pancayat), and the members were thus elected by a handful of other leaders. In 1963 Narsing Bhakta Tulacan from Tukce was the only candidate in Mustang district; he was later appointed assistant minister.

There were two candidates at the 1968 election, Narsing Bhakta Tulacan from Tukce and a bahun from south of Thak Khola (at that time Mustang district extended down to Tatopani). The subba were against Tulacan and supported Lete and Kunjo.

76 The reason for taxing the animals going south and not north is that in autumn large numbers (according to informants 14,000 in 1988) of sheep and goats from Tibet pass through the valley to be sold in the south during the Dasain festival.

77 Informants are convinced that this accident was a political murder. According to the relatives of B.P. Koirala, he held Yogendraman in high esteem and believed that Yogendraman
the southerner, but Tulacan won the election. However, the southerner filed a complaint against the way the election was conducted; the appeal was accepted and the southerner became Mustang's representative to the National Assembly.

At the election in 1973 there were four Tamang Thakali candidates – from Tatopani, Lete, Kobang and Tukce. They realised, however, that if they all stood the Tamang Thakali vote would be split and none of them would be elected. They agreed to decide the candidature by drawing lots. Amritlal Shercan from Tukce won and was subsequently elected member of the National Assembly.78

In 1979 the Tamang Thakali could not agree on a single candidate, thus Nar Bahadur Hiracan, a contractor from Marpha, was elected. This was a tremendous boost to the people of Pacgau (especially Marpha) who for more than a century had been dominated by the Tamang Thakali.

In Nepal there was widespread unrest in 1979. The situation calmed down only after King Birendra, who had become King in 1972, announced that the people of Nepal would decide in a referendum whether they wanted a multi-party system or preferred to continue with the Panchayat System with appropriate reforms.

The referendum took place in May 1980. The Panchayat System got 54 per cent of the (valid) votes, against 46 per cent for the multi-party system. In Mustang district the Panchayat System achieved an overwhelming victory. Out of the 6,899 votes cast, 85 per cent were for the Panchayat System, 10 per cent for the multi-party system, while 5 per cent were declared invalid. This was the second highest per cent age of votes for the Panchayat System among the country's 75 districts. There are several possible explanations for this high support for the Panchayat System in Mustang. First, the people of the district have always sided with the rulers of Kathmandu. Second, they are strong supporters of the King, who visted the district several times and had taken a particular interest in the area. Third, the district had developed much under the Panchayat System. Fourth, in contrast to the Congress Party the panchayat supporters had funds and an effective organization at the district and village level. And fifth, at the polls yellow symbolized the Panchayat System and blue the multi-party system; among Buddhists yellow is a holy colour, and a vote for yellow was thus a vote for the religion and the King.

Following the referendum the Constitution of Nepal was amended in 1980. According to this amendment the members of the National Assembly were one day would become the Prime Minister of Nepal.

78 Informants say that the four Tamang Thakali candidates also agreed that the winner should pay the others a total of Rs 40,000 to cover various election expenses. Further, Shercan was a man
elected directly by the electorate.\textsuperscript{79} The next election to the National Assembly took place in 1981. Several candidates stood for the election. The Tamang Thakali vote was again split and Nar Bahadur Hiracan was re-elected.\textsuperscript{80} Hiracan was later appointed assistant minister in the Lokendra Bahadur Chand cabinet. The last election to the National Assembly under the Panchayat System took place in 1986. There were several candidates, including some from Pacgau, Baragau and Lo. This time the vote in Marpha (and Pacgau) was split between Hiracan and his brother-in-law. The Tamang Thakali mainly supported the chairman of the District Panchayat (\textit{jilla pancayat}), Rudra Prasad Shercan from Larjung. Shercan won the election, but with only 41 votes more than the son-in-law of the King of Mustang.

In the spring of 1990 violent pro-democracy demonstrations broke out in Kathmandu. The situation endangered the very existence of the monarchy, and King Birendra agreed to lift the ban on political parties and to introduce a multiparty democracy. A new constitution was promulgated in November 1990.

The first election to the new 205-seat House of Representatives took place in 1991. The Nepali Congress Party (NC) won 110 seats, the Nepal Communist Party, Unified Marxist-Leninist (abbreviated to UML) won 69 seats,\textsuperscript{81} while the two parties of former panchayat leaders (National Democratic Party-Chand and National Democratic Party-Thapa) won a total of five seats. In Mustang district the UML candidate, Om Bikas Gaucan of Jomsom, got 2,347 votes, Nar B. Hiracan (NDP-Chand) 2,209 votes, and Ananda Shercan (NC) 2,082 votes. Mustang which only ten years earlier had been a stronghold of the Panchayat System, had elected a communist to the House of Representatives. NC had been expected to win, but lost because of internal conflicts.

At the local elections in July 1992 Nepali Congress Party won the posts of chairman and vice-chairman as well as six out of the nine seats in the District Development Committee (the other three went to supporters of the former Panchayat leaders). Once again the people of Mustang had sided with the rulers in Kathmandu.

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\textsuperscript{79} The Third Amendment went a long way in making the Panchayat System a democratic one. First, the members of the National Assembly were elected directly by the people. Second, the Prime Minister was nominated by the King on the basis of recommendation by the National Assembly. And third, the Prime Minister became responsible to the National Assembly. However, political parties continued to be banned.

\textsuperscript{80} Informants say that Hiracan had the backing of the King of Mustang. Although the King has no formal political power, he enjoys considerable influence in the northern part of the district.

\textsuperscript{81} Nepal Communist Party, Unified Marxist-Leninist was formed in January 1991 by the merger
In 1994 the NC government fell due to internal conflicts. At the following election to the House of Representatives the UML won 88 seats, the NC won 83 seats and the National Democratic Party won 20 seats. In Mustang district the NC candidate, Sushilman Shercan (son of Yogendraman Shercan), received 2,969 votes, the UML candidate 2,749 votes and Nar B. Hiracan (NDP) 1,028 votes. After the election the UML formed a minority government which, however, fell after less than a year in office. A coalition government of the NC, NDP and the Nepal Sadbhavana Party (NSP) was formed in September 1995 under Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba. The Deuba government fell in March 1997 due to internal disagreements, and a coalition government of UML and fractions of the NDP and the NSP was formed under Prime Minister Lokendra Bahadur Chand (NDP). The internal conflict within the NDP continued, and in October 1997 Surya Bahadur Thapa (NDP) became the new Prime Minister. In December 1997 Thapa expanded the council of ministers, including Sushilman Shercan as Assistant Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation. In March 1998 the main faction within the UML became a separate party, the Nepal Communist Party, Marxist-Leninist (ML). In April 1998 Surya Bahadur Thapa resigned and Girija Prasad Koirala (NC) became Prime Minister; no Thakali was appointed minister.

At the local elections in May 1997 the NC won the posts of chairman and vice-chairman of the VDCs of Kunjo, Lete and Kobang. In Jomsom VDC, the UML won the post of chairman and the NC the post of vice-chairman, while in Marpha VDC the post of chairman went to the NC and the post of vice-chairman to the UML. In Tukce VDC the former servants of the Thakali (the Towa) used their majority, and their representatives (from the UML) won the posts of chairman and vice-chairman. In the northern part of Mustang district most of the elected persons were independent candidates. Nilman Gaucan (NC) was elected chairman of the District Development Committee.

CONCLUSION

The Thak Khola valley is traditionally divided into two separate parts, namely Thaksatsae and Pacgau. Thaksatsae is a union of thirteen villages, while Pacgau comprises five separate villages.

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82 In February 1992 NDP-Chand and NDP-Thapa merged to the National Democratic Party (Rashtriya Prajatantra Party).
83 The polling involved attempts at ballot-rigging. According to informants, a political leader
The villages of Thak Khola have well-developed political institutions, including a village assembly, a government, and a collection of written rules and regulations. The assembly introduces rules and regulations and appoints the government. The local government provides security, ensures that violations of rules and regulations are punished, and is responsible for the proper utilization and maintenance of common services and property. The collection of rules and regulations covers a surprisingly wide range of subjects: provisions and procedures regarding the assembly and the government, operation and maintenance of public services (drinking water, irrigation water, bridges, roads, etc.), the utilization of common property (forests and pastures), taxes and fines, social and religious customs, labour and trade, internal economic organization, regulations concerning temples and monasteries, and the private life of citizens.

The traditional political and judicial system is based on a principle of equality – but women are discriminated against. Women do not qualify for membership of the village assembly and hence the office of village headman. With few exceptions, all households in the village are represented in the assembly. The post of headman is ideally open to any member of the village assembly, and in Pacgau a relatively large number of household heads actually become a headman at least once in their lifetime. In Thak Khola ecclesiastical and temporal powers are clearly separated, and in some villages religious specialists cannot become headman.

The traditional political system in Thak Khola can be characterized as democracy. Villagers are proud of their democratic institutions and refer to a local proverb which says that the rules of Pacgau are decided by voting. Another interesting aspect of the local political systems is their dynamic structure, as exemplified by the changing of rules in Marpha and Thaksatsae regarding the formation of government.

—and his wives tried to cast their ballot in Marpha after having voted in Jomsom. This created much commotion whereafter representatives of the three main parties decided to close the polling station two hours before the official closing.

84 The villages of Baragau also have well-developed traditional political institutions, see Ramble 1984, 1992/93 and 1993.
85 Besides the rules and regulations mentioned in the text, see also Schuh 1990 and 1995 and Karmacharya 1994 and 1995.
86 By comparison, Gurung women may temporarily take the seat of their husband in the village assembly, 'If he [the head of the household] is absent, which is often the case, his wife can replace him and join in the debate [of the village assembly]' (Pignède 1966, p. 204).
87 As mentioned in Chapter III, until the early 19th century a group of nobles had a special status in Marpha. See also Schuh 1990.
88 The proverb goes as follows, 'the rules of Pacgau are cut by (the) stone(s) (used when
The political system of Pacgau includes some interesting features which are not found in the Western or parliamentary form of democracy. First, the term of office of government members is limited to one year. Members may be nominated to a second term, but they usually do not continue in government for many years with the result that many male villagers become government members at least once in their life. Second, government members are evaluated at the end of their term and are fined if the assembly has been dissatisfied with their performance. Third, the different groups (clans) in the village assembly do not elect their own representatives in the government, but those of the other groups. Fourth, the headmen take the oath of office at the end of their term. And fifth, the villages have rules and regulations which in Western eyes clearly violate basic human rights, e.g. the regulation in Syang that forbids villagers to entertain visitors after 10 p.m.

There are some differences between the political systems of Thaksatsae and Pacgau. Pacgau comprises a number of independent villages, while Thaksatsae is a union of thirteen villages. The villages of Thaksatsae have their assembly, government and rules and regulations, but the council of the thirteen headmen is empowered to introduce rules and regulations which are applicable to all thirteen villages. The villages in Pacgau are like the 6th century B.C. Greek city states (polis), while Thaksatsae is more like a tribal society. The political organization at the village level is strong in Pacgau because the fields in the area are irrigated and the construction, maintenance, and operation of the irrigation systems require strong political institutions. Moreover, the villages of Pacgau such as Marpha, Thini and Syang each have more than 100 households, while a typical village in Thaksatsae has only about 20 to 30 households. This difference is also evident from the way people identify themselves. The Thakali of Pacgau identify themselves by referring to their village; thus, a Thakali from Marpha refers to himself as Mawatan, a Thakali from Syang refers to himself as Syangtan, etc., while a Thakali from Thaksatsae refers to himself as Tamang. Another difference is that the political system in Pacgau is more democratic than in Thaksatsae. In Pacgau the headmen rotate annually and many villagers serve as headman at least once in their lifetime, while the headmen of Thaksatsae serve for longer periods.

Commenting on the study of the Cimang bemchag by Charles Ramble and myself, Dieter Schuh has criticized us for classifying Thags (Thaksatsae), gsun po (Sum) and spun kris (Marpha) as villages, as they should be treated as petty states (1995, p. 7). Schuh's criticism would have been valid if we had called Thag, gsun po, and spun kris 'villages'. We did not. I agree that these political units should be treated as petty states – which in fact I have indi-
The strong local political institutions in Thak Khola have facilitated the implementation and maintenance of small-scale development projects. Thak Khola has been a part of the Nepalese state since the 1780s. Since the 1950s the Government has been seeking to promote the welfare of the people and it therefore plays an important and direct role in local affairs. In spite of this the people of Thak Khola have been able to maintain their traditional political systems – the internal affairs are the domain of the traditional political systems, while the external affairs are the domain of the national political system.

Until King Mahendra's coup d'état in 1960 the political power in Mustang district was in the hands of the members of the Balbir lineage and the King of Lo. The period of the 1962 Constitution (the period of the Panchayat System) saw important changes in the power structure in Mustang. First, the members of the Balbir lineage lost their formal political power; during the period of the Panchayat System none of the members of parliament were from the Balbir lineage. Second, the new political leaders were not only Tamang Thakali. For example, Nar B. Hiracan of Marpha became an MP and an assistant minister, and the only two persons from Mustang district who became members of the Central Panchayat Policy and Evaluation Committee (the de facto politbureau of the Panchayat System) were Nar B. Hiracan of Marpha and Krishnalal Thakali of Thini. In 1995 Krishnalal Thakali was nominated to the National Assembly by His Majesty the King.

The introduction of constitutional monarchy and a multi-party democracy has given the members of the Balbir lineage a comeback. Under the Panchayat System local political leaders decided themselves whether to stand for election. With the introduction of multi-party democracy decision-making has shifted from the district to the centre (Kathmandu). The local branches of the political parties propose candidates, but the final decision is made by the parties' so-called 'high command' in Kathmandu. The members of the Balbir lineage have traditionally been close to the leaders of the Congress Party and since the introduction of the 1990 Constitution two members have been members of parliament and assistant ministers. In 1991 Diwakarman Shercan (a son of Krishnaman Shercan) was nominated to the National Assembly (the Upper House). He served as an assistant minister for two years, but he lost his seat in 1993. And, in 1994, Sushilman Shercan was elected to the House of Representatives; he served as assistant minister for four months from December 1997 to April 1998.
The 1990 revolution has led to an increased political polarization at all levels in Nepalese society. Even in Mustang district party affiliation has become a matter of importance. In 1993–94 a young man from Syang constructed a building in front of the terminal at Jomsom Airport. Local officials approved the drawings before construction, but when one storey had been completed the local administration forced him to pull down part of the building which – it was argued – was built on public land. The Congress Party controlled the local administration and villagers were convinced that local Congress leaders hit back at the young man because he and his friends were believed to be supporters of the Communist Party.

In Thak Khola there was a clear separation between the traditional political systems and the national system during the Panchayat period. For example, the men who served as local headmen were normally not active in village and districts councils. Following the introduction of a multi-party democracy in 1990, party affiliation has become a factor in traditional politics. For example, in Syang a group of young men wanted a communist as vice-chairman of the VDC. None of them were, however, willing to carry the burden so they proposed a Towa (whose father years ago had left Baragau and settled in Syang). The elders, however, rejected the proposal and scolded the young men – not for having proposed a communist, but for having put forward an ‘outsider’.

This example illustrates that the introduction of political parties has not done away with ethnicity as a major factor in political life. This is important, because in future the ethnic factor is likely to be high on Nepal’s political agenda.91

91 See also the discussion on ethnicity in Chapter XV
Thakali religion is a syncretic blend of elements from an indigenous tradition known as dhom, Tibetan Buddhism and Hinduism.

Dhom is the oldest stratum and is related to the pre-Buddhist religion of Tibet commonly referred to as Bon and, more distantly, to Nepalese shamanism (jhakri). Tibetan Buddhism spread into Thak Khola in the 12th century – temples and monasteries were established, the Tibetan script was introduced, and locals were initiated as ritual specialists. In the late 18th century Thak Khola came under the Shah dynasty reigning from Kathmandu. The Hindu rulers looked down on the Thakali whom they considered impure because of their habit of eating yak meat. In the first half of the 20th century the Tamang Thakali elite tried to improve their image in the eyes of the Hindu rulers by abolishing elements of their traditional culture which linked them too closely with Tibet. As a result of these reforms – as well as migration to Hindu-dominated areas – Buddhism now plays a less important role among the Tamang Thakali. Hinduism is now an important element in the religion of the Tamang Thakali living outside Thak Khola, many of whom use Hindu priests (brahman) for certain ceremonies and celebrate Hindu festivals, such as Dasain and Diwali. The decline of Buddhism has been less pronounced among the Mawatan Thakali and the

1 According to Tibetan tradition, Buddhism was introduced into Tibet in the 7th century during the reign of King Songtsen Gampo. Studies indicate that there were basically two religious traditions in pre-Buddhist Tibet, namely an organized religion known as bon, and a nameless folk-tradition which is commonly known as 'the religion of men' (mi chos) (Stein 1972, Tucci 1980, Haarh 1969, and Snellgrove and Richardson 1968). The literature on the Tibetan religions is vast. For Tibetan Buddhism, see Ekvall 1964, Samuel 1993, Snellgrove 1987, Stein 1972, Sørensen 1990 and Tucci 1980. For Bon, see Hoffmann 1950 and 1961, Karmay 1972, Kærne 1995, Ramble 1984, Snellgrove 1967, Stein 1972 and Tucci 1980. For Nepalese shamanism, see Hitchcock and Jones 1976.
yhulkasompaimhi Thakali, and Marpha and Syang have seen a revival in recent years.

This chapter examines the Thakali world view and the ritual specialists whom the Thakali employ to satisfy and pacify superhuman beings. Then follows as an example of a Thakali ritual a description of the death ceremonies. The chapter ends with a discussion on whether the Thakali are Buddhists.

THAKALI WORLD VIEW

Superhuman Beings

The Thakali believe that the universe is full of superhuman beings who possess powers which ordinary human beings do not have. The superhuman beings can be either beneficial or harmful to man; demons (dui) are harmful, while gods (lha) reward the righteous and punish the sinners, as the following example illustrates.

_Nari Jhowa_ is the protective deity of the Tamang Thakali. In order to get the goddess to settle in Thak Khola, the ancestors of the Tamang Thakali promised that each year thirteen virgin boys would worship her. This worship was stopped in the 1970s. In December 1976 Thak Khola was hit by a severe snowstorm which killed a herdsman and many yaks. Some months later _Nari Jhowa_ appeared in a dream and told a man that she had sent the snowstorm to punish the Tamang Thakali because they had broken their promise to her.

The Thakali employ various strategies, such as offerings, to satisfy and pacify the superhumans from causing harm. However, it is thought impossible to keep all superhumans satisfied at all times, and anyone can therefore be affected at any time by misfortune and sickness. Thus, Thakali religion is in essence man’s survival in a world full of potentially harmful superhuman beings.

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2 The description of the death ceremonies is based on Vinding 1982. Other important contributions on the religion of the Thakali include C. von Füer-Haimendorf 1967, Jest 1969, Manzardo 1985 and Parker 1985. The present chapter is merely an introduction to Thakali religion, as a detailed examination would require a separate volume.

3 Informants do not name this power, but it appears similar to the Tibetan _mtu_. Beings having a human body may possess this power, e.g. some ritual specialists. The present section examines only those superhuman beings who do not have a human body.

4 For the myth of _Nari Jhowa_, see Appendix 2.
The pantheon of Tibetan Buddhism is extraordinarily large and includes, among others, Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, local gods and goddesses, guardians of the faith, saints, teachers, and kings. Many of these superhuman beings are depicted in paintings and murals in temples, but besides Guru Rimparche and the historical Buddha, Thakali laymen have little knowledge about them.

Guru Rimparche was born in Uddiyana in the 8th century and was invited to Tibet during the reign of King Trisong Detsen. Although Buddhism had been introduced in Tibet earlier, it became firmly established only after his visit. To Thakali Guru Rimparche is a miracle worker who travelled in Tibet and the surrounding areas – including Thak Khola – to fight the enemies of Buddhism. According to local myths he meditated in the cave Guru Sangphu above Naprungkhung, and, moreover, the imprints of his knees and hand are found at Kutshabterngha.

Most laymen know little about the life of Lord Buddha (sangge), except that he was born in Lumbini in Nepal and attained Buddhahood in Bodh Gaya in India. Thakali believe that Lord Buddha now lives in a far-away heaven and does not interfere in the affairs of this world, and when they pray and make offerings to him it is not to ask for his assistance, but in order to gain merit.

In Thak Khola are many temples (lhakhang) and private chapels (lha-brang). In the temples and chapels are statues and books, representing Buddha’s body and speech. According to Buddhist philosophy paintings and statues provide support for meditation, but to Thakali laymen the statues are manifestations of gods to whom one can direct prayers and offerings. The temples are looked after by a guardian (kunyer), who offers incense and fresh water each morning and incense and butterlamps each evening. On the 10th and the 25th day of the month Buddhist priests assemble in the temples for recitation of texts (che dowa).

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5 *Guru Rimparche*, The Precious Guru, is also known as The Lotus Born (*Padma-sambhava*). Uddiyana has been identified by Tucci as the Swat valley in Pakistan (1980, p. 38).

6 The cave above Naprungkhung is known as *Guru Sangphu*, ‘the Guru’s Hidden Cave’. Kutshabterngha, ‘five treasures of bodily representation [of Guru Rinpoche]’, is the most famous temple of Thak Khola. For Tibetan guides to the sacred places of Thak Khola, see Snellgrove 1979.

7 Several of the temples of Thak Khola are referred to as gumpa. A gumpa (Tib., *dgon-po*, lit., ‘a solitary place’) is strictly speaking a monastery. Today, there is only one monastic community in Thak Khola, namely in Syang.

8 For a description of the temples of Thak Khola, see Rai 1994.
Local Protective Deities

Lha Thyowa is the protective deity of Thini. The god has two manifestations, namely a white, male body (kundo karpo) and a red, female one (kundo marpo). Lha Thyowa is the teacher (guru) of Shebi Lha and Pholha, the deities of Cimang and Syang, respectively. Lha Thyowa is worshipped in a small whitewashed temple which is located on the outskirts of Thini. Only men are allowed inside. The temple consists of a single, small room with a fireplace for burning cypress and a place for offering butterlamps. In the back are about 20 stones, 10 to 25 cm high, and covered with red mud; some are painted white and look like masks. Lha Thyowa is said to reside in these stones. Formerly, the worship of Lha Thyowa was done by an aya lama from the Namti lineage of the Kya clan; Namti is now extinct, and the duty has therefore been taken over by the Bharti lineage. A sheep is offered to Lha Thyowa on the 15th of the month gubita (around 1 April).

Cimang has two protective deities known collectively as Shebi Lha; the two deities are related as elder brother (acyo) and younger sister (piyang). Their bodily manifestation is a pair of tree-trunks wrapped in cloth and kept in a small shrine above the village. A local aya lama is in charge of the worship of Shebi Lha. A goat is offered to Shebi Lha in the months of bibla (September–October) and bumla (December–January).

Syang has two protective deities, a male god named Pholha and a female goddess called Dholha, who reside in a tall cypress tree (commonly known as Pholha) a few hundred meters above the village. In the 1950s the villagers promised the Tibetan Shang Lama that they would stop sacrificing animals at the Pholha, but a few years later sacrifice was re-introduced at a small cypress tree next to the Pholha; in this way the villagers kept their promise to Shang Lama and at the same time managed

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9 Lha Thyowa, 'the big god'. There is no myth on the origin and life of Lha Thyowa. An informant mentioned that Lha Thyowa came to Thini from Kyasin Dong Kyusin Dong. The location of this place is not known.
10 The protective deities of Cimang and Syang also have a male and a female manifestation.
11 This is the only sacred place in Thak Khola closed to women.
12 For aya lama, see below.
13 For the myth of Shebi Lha, see Appendix 2.
14 The female goddess is also known as Molha. In Tibet the pho lha and the mo lha protect man and his home. A person's pho lha and mo lha reside in his right and left armpits, respectively (Tucci 1980, pp. 387–388).
15 An aya lama of Marpha was in charge of the worship of the Syang pholha. In the 1960s the last aya lama migrated from Marpha.
to satisfy their protective deity. Nowadays, the village sacrifice a male castrated sheep in the month of prela (May-June). Before going south villagers make offerings and fix small flags at the Pholha for their safety; villagers also consult the Pholha, who through a local medium predicts about the future. Marpha too has protective deities called Pholha and Dholha who reside in a big cypress, situated a few hundred meters upstream of Marpha river; villagers visit them for worship, but sacrifices no longer take place.

*Nari Jhowa* is the protective deity of Thasang, the homeland of the Tamang Thakali. Her bodily manifestation is a six-armed, 70–80 cm high alabaster statue, which is kept in the temple *Nari Gumpa* above Khanti. The goddess is missing a few toes on the right foot which she is said to have lost due to frostbite whilst living in the snowy mountains. She also has some black spots on the face which are said to be pockmarks. According to local belief, once a smallpox epidemic hit Thak Khola killing a large number of villagers; *Nari Jhowa* took pity on the Thakali and carried the disease on their behalf. In October 1982 the statue of *Nari Jhowa* was stolen, but it was recovered a month later in Kathmandu when the culprits tried to sell it. It is now back in Thak Khola.

Taglung’s protective deity is called *Mhasumpra*. *Mhasumpra* actually comprises five separate deities, considered to be brothers; the eldest is the main deity. Their bodily manifestations are self-created stones which are in a shrine in a small cypress grove above the village. The five brothers are worshipped during

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16 For Shang Lama, who otherwise has nothing to do with Syang, see Snellgrove 1961 and 1979.
17 On the same day a billy goat (*yangda*) is sacrificed at a dried-up cypress tree in the northern end of the fields; this sacrifice (*lew puja lawa*) is done to protect the crop against insects.
18 For the myth of *Nari Jhowa*, see Appendix 2. See also S. von der Heide 1992.
19 The statue looks more like a Hindu deity than a Buddhist one. However, Snellgrove identifies the statue as *Avalokiteshvara* (1956, p. 181). This identification is in agreement with a local Tibetan text which mentions that 'there is the so-called 'Lord of sNa ri', which was brought from the Mountain and the Guru’s Hidden Cave, conceived in alabaster, that wish-granting stone. It was not made of stone, but was spontaneously produced. Avalokitesvara, really self-produced ...' (Snellgrove 1979, p. 125). The *bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara* has many forms, but none with six arms like *Nari Jhowa*. Also, in spite of the masculine suffix -wa in her name, *Nari Jhowa* is recognized as being female, while *Avalokiteshvara* is male. In accordance with their general inclination towards Hinduism, some Tamang Thakali claim that *Nari Jhowa* is the Hindu goddess *Narsing Devi*, while other say that she is a manifestation of *Mahalaksni*, the Hindu goddess of prosperity. *Nari Jhowa* is depicted on a Nepalese stamp.
20 According to The Rising Nepal 13 November 1982 the culprits were some Ghale men (Ghale is spoken by only a few thousand people and is related to Gurung and Tamang). Local informants believe, however, that the theft could not have taken place without the assistance of some Thakali.
21 For the myth on how *Mhasumpra* got its name, see Manzardo 1985.
the month of phala (August/September). The gods are washed in pure water and the milk of a one-coloured cow, and a large number of goats and sheep are sacrificed. Only the four minor gods are shown to the villagers.

Sauru has a protective deity called Tamo. It is located at a big cypress tree. A goat is sacrificed at the tree on the 8th of the month of khila (around 23 July).

Other Local Deities

There are several other local deities in Thak Khola. The most important of them in Thini is Bhue Ama whose bodily manifestation is a small sandalwood dagger with a multi-faced hilt. It is kept in a small temple together with her replica Dontang Byo, and her fierce manifestation Tetang Byo which is supposed to prevent evil spirits from obstructing her blessings. Bhue Ama does not like to be seen and therefore appears only once every twelfth year during which time she is worshipped. She is believed to bless worshippers with wealth, longevity and offspring (especially males). Locals mention several examples of her power: in 1981 a couple with five daughters begged her for a male child, and one year later the wife gave birth to a son!

Tho Rimparche is another important local goddess in Thini. She is said to be the elder sister of Lha Chyurin Gyalmo, the goddess of the Tulacan clan. Informants mention that in ancient times the people of Thini once sacrificed a human to Tho Rimparche. This upset the goddess so much that she left the village; she agreed to return only after the villagers promised that in future they would offer only goats. The statue of Tho Rimparche is kept in the Lhakin temple in Thini, and a ritual specialist from the Bharti lineage is in charge of her worship.

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22 Bhue Ama is also called Bumo Ama. In Tibetan bu mo and a ma mean 'daughter' and 'mother', respectively. According to Somlai the word Bumo Ama means 'provider' (1982, p. 160). However, considering that the goddess was a virgin when she gave birth to her children, I believe that Bumo Ama is a short form of bu mo (gsar ma) a ma, 'the virgin mother'. For the Bhue Ama myth, see Appendix 2.

23 For the Tibetan ritual dagger (phurpa), see Meredith 1967.

24 The temple is called Lhakin. In Tibetan a house is called khyim, and the name Lhakin may thus be derived from Tibetan lha khyim, 'god house'. The temple belongs to the Bharti lineage.

25 The festival was last celebrated in 1993. For a short description of the 1981 festival, see Somlai 1982.

26 According to Thini informants, Lha Chyurin Gyalmo originally lived in Thini. She was part of the dowry of Nima of Thini who married King Hansa of Thag (see Chapter III). Tamang Thakali informants refute this.
Can

The *can* is the protector of the house and the family. It resides in a small white-washed stone structure on the roof of the house, which is used for burning incense (*sang*). The structure (*canga*) is approximately 0.5 meters high and adorned with a pair of horns (*ru*) from a male blue sheep (*pho dar*). On the top is an opening where cypress branches are placed. Most houses in Pacgau have a *canga*, but in Thaksatsae there are only a few. Offerings are done at the *canga* by the *aya lama* for the prosperity and welfare of the household.

Lu

*Lu* are water-spirits with a human head and a serpent’s body. They live in the subsoil and near sources of water where they are believed to guard over great treasures. If someone pollutes the place where the *lu* resides, he will suffer misfortune and sickness (especially leprosy and skin diseases). Pots with valuables are kept in houses and fields as offerings to the *lu*.

Clan Gods

The four Tamang Thakali clans each have a clan deity. Gaucan’s deity is God Jewel Elephant (*Lha Langba Nhurbu*), Tulacan’s is Goddess Sea-Monster Queen (*Lha Chyurin Gyalmo*), Shercan’s is Goddess White Lioness of the Glacier (*Lha Ghangla Singi Karpo*) and Bhattacan’s is God Self-Created Yak (*Lha Yhawa Ranggyung*). The material body of the latter is the head of a yak, the others are wooden masks. The four clan gods appear and are worshipped once every twelfth year during the *Lha Phewa* festival. The Mawatan Thakali and the Yhulka-sompaimhi Thakali do not have clan gods.

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28 The blue sheep was first described in 1833 by Brian Hodgson who gave it the scientific name *Ovis nayaur* on the assumption that it was a sheep (*Ovis*), not a goat (*Capra*). The blue sheep has, however, several traits of the goat, and Hodgson later placed it in a separate genus *Pseudois* within the *Caprini* tribe (Schaller 1980, p. 196).

29 For the four clan gods, see Chapter VI.

30 For the *Lha Phewa* festival, see Chapter XIII.
Ancestors and Family God

The central room of the Thakali house (thimten) has a low platform which is the ritual sanctuary of the house. Here is the sacred hearth and an altar (phuyum) with two or more copper jugs (bhumpu); a pot with valuables (ter) is usually buried below the altar. The jugs symbolize the family's ancestors and ancestresses (khe mom) and are filled with water and cypress branches. Each morning a household member offers incense of cypress (sang) at the altar and in evenings a butter lamp. The jugs are cleaned and filled with fresh water and green cypress branches on the 15th and the 30th day of the month, that is the day of the full moon and the day of the dark moon.

Informants mention the deity Dutingya, who is the god of the patrilineage (kuldevata). Surprisingly, informants know very little about this god; only that Dutingya is worshipped during the three-day Lha Chyowa ceremony which involves, among other things, the offering of sacrificial cakes (kandu) and the sacrifice of a sheep. The worship is done by a dhom among the Tamang Thakali and an aya lama among the Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali. Nowadays, only few households perform the Lha Chyowa ceremony.

Ganpo Caca

Ganpo Caca, ‘Small Old Man’, is a dwarf who walks with a limp. He collects all kinds of rubbish, and therefore has a strong revolting smell. If Ganpo Caca is thought to have moved into a house and the householder wants to get rid of him, he should throw away some old clothes and purify the house with incense. Some

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31 Similar jugs are also found among the Tamang, see Höfer 1994, pp. 318–319.
32 See also Bista, who mentions the ancestor god dhu-tin-gya (1967, p. 94).
33 For a description of Lha Chyowa, see Jest 1969; see also Manzardo 1985 and C. von Führer-Haimendorf 1981.
34 The meaning of Dutingya is a puzzle. The account of the Tulacan clan (Salgi Rhab) refers to dutingya lha chyowa as well as kutingya lha chyowa. Lha chyowa is an offering to the gods. According to Narendra Gauchan, Dutingya is not the name of the family god, but refers to a ceremony where six muri of grain is required to feed the guests, while kutinga refers to a ceremony, where nine muri are required (Gauchan and Vinding 1977, p. 122). Du and ku probably refer to ‘six’ and ‘nine’, respectively. Tin is said to be an old word for ‘twenty’; a muri equals twenty pathi, and tin may therefore be an old word for twenty local measures. Tin also means ‘year’ and Dutingya may refer to a god (or a ceremony?) that should be celebrated every sixth year, while Kutingya may be celebrated every ninth year. An informant in Syang refers to the god as Dutink.
35 Ganpo Caca and the Nordic pixie are both dwarfs, but the former does not have the latter’s pointed ears and hat.
people, however, do not mind having Ganpo Caca living in their house, because besides rubbish he also collects foodgrains and other valuables. Ganpo Caca possesses a golden stick which he carries with him. If the householder gets the chance, he should take the stick and place it under the ceiling. In order to retrieve it Ganpo Caca piles grains, coins, gold, and other valuables beneath the stick. In that way the householder is believed to acquire an inexhaustible source of wealth.

If a poor person suddenly becomes rich, villagers sometimes suspect it to be the doings of Ganpo Caca. The valuables which Ganpo Caca brings are stolen from other houses. If a villager suspects Ganpo Caca stealing from his house, he should throw some ash from the fireplace over the threshold, saying, 'We have only ash, no grains, so please stay away!' Informants believe that householders are aware of their guests' wrongdoings and that they try to hide having Ganpo Caca residing in the house. For example, in winter householders will rise early to remove the snow from the front of their house in order to erase Ganpo Caca's footprints.

There are said to be very few Ganpo Caca in Thak Khola. None of my informants have seen one, but several claim to have seen his footprints. Informants in Syang mention that the last Ganpo Caca disappeared from the village in the 1950s, but the stench remained for another ten years.

_Aku Paldong_

_Aku Paldong_, 'Uncle Ball', is round like a ball. He rolls through the narrow village lanes at night. If one is hit by _Aku Paldong_ and falls, one becomes sick and may even die.

_Kich Kinne_

_Kich kinne_ is the spirit of a dead woman who has died unhappy; for example, during delivery or with unsatisfied sexual desires. She appears as a beautiful young woman, but she has a hollow back and her feet are turned in the opposite direction. She roams the village at night and seduces unsuspecting young men. If a young man has an affair with a _kich kinne_ he becomes sick and may even die. To prevent this the young man should secretly tie a string to her leg during their affair. As soon as she leaves (before dawn) the young man should follow the string. It will lead him to the cremation ground where he will find it tied to a

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Informants mention that _Aku Paldong_ looks like one of the small balls of fat (_chi paldong_) which hang over the fireplace in a Thakali kitchen.
Precentor (*umce*) at Syang
Reading the scriptures in the village temple of Syang

Lobsang Temba, founder of the monastery of Syang
Precentor (umce) in phag che dress at Syang
Killing 'the cause of death' (*mhang*) at Syang

'Leading the way to heaven' at Syang
Dhom during a ceremony at Thaksatsae
An *aya lama* administers a cure to a friend at Thini

Three *aya lama* perform at a ceremony at Thini
Women at the Phala festival at Cimang

Archery contest at the Torenla festival at Syang
Yak dancers at the Phala festival at Cimang
bone. If he crushes the bone he kills the *kich kinne*, who then will be unable to harm him.

*Syopta*

*Syopta* is a tall, strong savage with a long, unruly hair who lives in forests and other uninhabited places.\(^37\) He attacks humans and sometimes keeps them captive for a few days. When that happens people lose their soul (*bla*) and become sick, but they seldom die.

Once a villager from Syang was returning from Marpha at nightfall. At the mills outside Marpha he suddenly had a fright, and he does not recall what happened to him next. However, his animals (*jho*) returned by themselves to Syang where his wife unloaded them, thinking that her husband was on his way. One hour later he turned up at the village dazed and covered with bruises. He was put to bed and recovered a few days later. Villagers believe that he was attacked at the mills by a *syopta*.\(^38\)

*Witches*

Witches (*sontisya*) are women who are believed by others to possess superhuman powers which they may use to harm ordinary human beings. Witches are thought to unconsciously harm others, because they cannot control their evil power, especially when asleep; the most dangerous ones cannot control themselves even when they are awake. Witches attack people irrespective of sex. They are thought to enter their victim’s body, e.g. through the food they serve. This is believed to causes sickness and may even lead to death, if the witches are not exorcised in time.

*Ghosts*

The Thakali believe that when a person dies his soul goes to heaven. However, if a person dies an unnatural death (e.g. commits suicide) the soul finds the road to heaven barred and turns into a ghost (*sinti*). Ghosts live at the cremation

\(^{37}\) *Syopta* is in general similar to the Nepalese *ban jhakri*, ‘forest shaman’. It is believed that the safest thing to do when chased by a *ban jhakri* is to run downhill for if it is a male the long crest-hairs would fall over his eyes and if a female, her long, pendant breasts would encumber her movements (Gurung 1980, p. 5).

\(^{38}\) Sometimes men from Syang get drunk during their trips to Marpha. However, informants rejected my suggestion that the villagers who are said to have been attacked by the *syopta* at the mills had fallen and hurt themselves due to intoxication.
grounds, but at night they roam the villages and attack humans and animals, causing sickness and death. They especially attack the people whom they believe are to blame for their misfortune.

Zombies

A zombie (rolang) is a corpse which has been possessed by an evil spirit. Although none of my informants claim to have seen one, they describe it as being stiff with outstretched arms. In order to prevent a corpse from turning into a zombie, the Thakali keep a constant watch until it has been cremated. The rolang is considered extremely dangerous because its touch and breath are believed to be lethal. In Marpha and Tukce there are sacred gates at either end of the village to prevent the rolang from entering, and in Thini a sacred stone structure on the outskirts of the village serves the same purpose. In the old days the entrance door of private houses was purposely made low and narrow to prevent the rolang from entering, since he is thought to be unable to bend his arms and head.

The Soul and Life after Death

According to Thakali belief, the body (shuwa) consists of four elements, namely air (respiration), water (blood), fire (body warmth), and soil (flesh and bones). The body houses three non-physical parts, namely the sam, bla and rho.

The sam guides a person's actions, and it may be translated as 'mind' or 'heart'. It is located in the chest. A man who does a good deed is said to have a good heart (sam sawa). The bla is the soul. When a person loses his soul, he loses his physical and mental strength and behaves like a stranger. However, the loss does not necessarily cause death. The rho is the vital power or the life principle which keeps the body alive. A man will die if the rho leaves his body. Accordingly, in Thakali language to breathe one's last is literally 'to cut/separate the vital power' (rho cewa).

Thakali believe that the soul continues to live after a person dies. It takes three and a half days for the soul to realize that its body is dead – when it walks on the riverbank it leaves no footprints in the sand, when it looks in the mirror it sees no reflection, and when it returns home, it sees a lot of people gathered and women weeping. During the death ceremonies ritual specialists give the soul

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Informants generally agree that the bla continues to live even after a person dies, but they are less clear about what happens to the rho and the sam. It is generally believed that the rho and the sam dissolve and disappear.
superhuman powers to capture and bring back the cause of death (mhang). The cause of death is trapped at the doorstep, ritually killed and buried. The soul is then guided into an effigy and taken to the clan's stone reliquary from where it ascends to heaven. The road to heaven is dangerous and difficult, and a ritual specialist therefore guides the soul which – if the instructions are carefully followed – will reach heaven.

Informants have vague ideas about heaven (sangge). It is a place above the mountains and the abode of their ancestors and other dead relatives. It is a land of eternal life. Some informants think that life in heaven is similar to that on earth, while others believe that it is much better. The Thakali keep in contact with their ancestors; for example, during death ceremonies villagers request the deceased to carry parcels to their dead relatives. During the Torenla festival the ancestors are invited to join the celebrations. The living relatives will guide them by describing the route from heaven via the mountains to the village. Like other superhuman beings the ancestors are, however, potentially dangerous, and at the end of the festival they are requested to return to their abode.

As mentioned earlier, the soul of a person who dies an unnatural death finds the road to heaven blocked and turns into a ghost. The road will also be obstructed if a person dies with unfulfilled wishes, or if the death ceremonies are not performed properly, but in such a case the tormented soul will return to the village and possess a living person in order to recount its problems. This is known as mhang maiwa.40

Some years ago a woman from Baragau (tobsya) died in Tukce. She used to run an inn in the south and had amassed much wealth. Before her death she had lent a Tamang Thakali several thousand rupees. When she died, the Thakali denied having taken any loan, but later agreed to repay half the amount. A few months later the deceased possessed a local Thakali woman and explained that a big rock was obstructing her way and that there was a wide river which she could not cross. She mentioned that she was unhappy because the Thakali (to whom she had lent the money) had cheated her family. Also, she repented of the life she had lived and advised others to live decently. Shortly after that the debtor repaid her family the full amount.

In another case a Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali possessed a local villager and said that he could not find the way to heaven, and that he was unhappy because his brothers had cheated his daughter by claiming that he owed them Rs 15,000.

40 The meaning of the word mhang maiwa is not clear. The noun mhang refers to demons, especially the cause of death, and to people with the evil eye. Further, the verb mhang mangpa means 'to dream'. The verb maiwa means 'to land' (e.g. when an aeroplane lands). Mhang maiwa may thus mean 'the landing of the spirit'.
He also complained that he was freezing because his family had not given his son-in-law a blanket during the death rites. The deceased who return in mhang maiwa usually have something to complain about. Mhang maiwa thus makes the Thakali think twice before cheating a dead man’s relatives. It also ensures that relatives spend sufficient money on death ceremonies, because nobody want to be responsible for a dead person’s failure to reach heaven.

Some Thakali believe in heaven and hell and that a man is judged after his death. A white pebble is placed in one of the weighing pans for every good deed, and a black one in the other for every bad one. If the white pebbles outweigh the black ones, the deceased enter heaven, if not he is sent to hell (nyelopa). Hell is below the earth and is divided into two parts, one freezing cold, the other burning hot.

The Calendar

The Thakali recognize two main seasons, namely summer (byar) and winter (gun). The year is divided into twelve months (la): a la, tiung la, gubi la, lu la, pre la, ce la, khi la, pha la, bib la, lang la, bab la and bum la. The year begins on the first day of a la, that is around mid-January. Each month consists of thirty days and begins on the day of the new moon. The 15th of the month is the day of the full moon (mer), while the 30th is the day of the dark moon (tong).

The Thakali week has seven days, namely (beginning with Sunday), nima, dau, mingmar, lhakpa, phurpa, palsang and paima. A day is called chaiwa; for

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41 I have, however, been informed that the deceased sometimes return to say that they have sufficient to eat because their relatives had distributed plenty of grain to other villagers during the death ceremonies. As described earlier, the Thakali believe that goods which are distributed in the name of the deceased are actually received by the deceased.

42 These are the names in Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali. The Tamang Thakali names of the months are shyusi la, toren la, gubi la, lu la, pre la, kesa la, dhota la, pha la, dasain la, nghato la, tab la and bum la. Most names are copied from Tibetan, for example lu la, cf. Tib. lug zla, ‘the month of the sheep’.

43 The Thakali calendar follows the phases of the moon, and it is therefore sometimes necessary to insert extra days or a month to make up the difference with the phases of the sun. Consequently, the start of Thakali new year varies according to the Western calendar; it falls usually around mid-January, sometimes in February. Tibetans recognize two new years, namely the King’s New Year (rgyal po lo gsar) which falls on the first day of the first month (around 15 February according to the Western calendar), and the old Farmer’s New Year (so nam lo gsar) which falls on the first day of the eleventh month, that is around winter solstice (21 December). In 1978 the King’s New Year fell on 8 February and the Farmer’s New Year on 30 December (in 1978 there was a double fifth month). For the Tibetan new year, see Waddell 1894, pp. 504-505, and Stein 1972, p. 213.
example, the third day of the month is referred to as *chaiwa sum*. The day is divided into morning (*nhongo*), daytime (*dini*) and evening/night (*nesai*). There is a more detailed classification of the day with the following periods: 'cockcrow' (*naka phyawa*), '(one can) see a little light' (*misir mangpa*), 'the day has come' (*nam nhangpa*), 'the sun has risen' (*dini phyawa*), 'the sun (is) half(way)' (*dini de*), 'the sun sits above the hill' (*dini gangye tampa*), 'the sun has gone' (*dini tpyowa*), 'the day is dark' (*nam priwa*) and 'half of the night has gone' (*mhon de pyowa*).44

**Astrology**

Traditionally, the Thakali use the Tibetan astrological system and consult astrologers at birth, marriage, death, and other important occasions. Each year Tibetan monasteries publish almanacs which provide information on the days of the year. Thakali priests buy these and consult them to advise clients on whether to undertake a particular activity on a particular day, such as commencing a journey or making a major business deal.45

The Tibetan system of reckoning time is based upon a twelve-year cycle where the years are named after animals. In Thakali language the years (*lo*) are called *bib lo* ('the year of the mouse'), *thang lo* ('the year of the ox'), *tak lo* ('the year of the tiger'), *yae lo* ('the year of the hare'), *maipulu lo* ('the year of the dragon'), *saepulu lo* ('the year of the serpent'), *ta lo* ('the year of the horse'), *lu lo* ('the year of the sheep'), *pre lo* ('the year of the monkey'), *ce lo* ('the year of the bird'), *khi lo* ('the year of the dog') and *phag lo* ('the year of the hog'); these names are similar to the Tibetan ones, except for the dragon and the serpent years, which in Tibetan are called 'bugand sbrul'.46 According to the Tibetan astrological system, people born in the same year share the same basic characteristics. Every twelfth year (when a person is 13 years, 25 years, 37 years, etc.) is particularly dangerous and is known as 'the year of trouble' (*kya lo*). Most Thakali wear a special amulet during those years to protect themselves against sickness and misfortune.

The cycle of the twelve animals is combined with a cycle of five elements - fire (*me*), earth (*sa*), iron (*phay*), water (*chu*), and wood (*shin*) - to form a sixty-year cycle. The relationship between any two of these elements is either excel-

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44 Nowadays most Thakali have watches and divide the day into hours as in the West.
45 Most Thakali living outside Thak Khola use almanacs based on the Indian system and consult local astrologers who use that system.
46 The Thakali use the Tibetan rather than the Thakali name for several of the animals; for example, in Thakali a dog is called *nakyu*. 
lent, friendly, neutral or antagonistic. For example, fire is excellent for earth, a friend to water, neutral to wood, and an enemy to iron. Thus, persons born in a fire dragon year and an earth hare year are considered excellent marriage partners, while there should be no marriage between a fire dragon and an iron dog.

Weekdays are also important in Tibetan astrology. For example, one should not give away money and other property on a Sunday (*ale nima*). The individual weekdays are also good or bad for certain animal birth years. For example, for a tiger Tuesday is excellent, Friday is good, while Wednesday is bad. If a tiger is born on a Tuesday, he will probably have a long life, while the opposite is true if he is born on a Wednesday. The individual days of the months are either good or bad for certain activities. For example, the 7th and the 10th day of the month are good for travel, while one should not travel on the 6th and the 15th. Further, the individual days of the month are either good or bad for certain animals. For example, for a tiger the 5th, 9th and 27th day of the month are good, while the 3rd, 12th and 14th are bad.

Thakali order individual horoscopes in connection with birth and death, and if the present year is their ‘year of trouble’. Only a handful of Buddhist priests know to prepare an individual horoscope. The horoscope examines the relationship between various factors (e.g. the person’s year of birth and the present year), and assess how these influence the person’s vital principle (*srog*), his body (*li*), his power (*ongta*), his luck (*lungta*) and his soul (*lhakhu*). Each of the aspects are given one of the following values: best, better, good, neutral, bad, worse, worst. If a person’s *li* is bad in the present year, it does not necessarily mean that he will become sick, but that he is vulnerable to sickness. The horoscope also prescribes what the person should do in order to avoid death, sickness and misfortune. The most common remedies are reading of religious texts and making offerings.

**Dreams**

To dream is known as *mhang mangpa*. Thakali believe that the soul (*bla*) leaves the body when one is dreaming. Dreams are considered important because they often predict the future. Some interpretations of dreams are given below.

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47 See also p. 118. In Lubra too one should not give away property on a Sunday (Ramble 1984, p. 234).

48 *Lungta* (Tib., *rlung rta*), lit., ‘wind horse’, is also the name for the small flags with printed prayers and pictures of a horse and other animals, that flutter in the wind on Tibetan and Thakali houses, religious stone structures and the like.

49 For the interpretation of dreams among the Gurung, see Pignère 1996, p. 304.
— A rising sun means that your house will be blessed with happiness and prosperity.
— Clear water is a very good omen.
— Dirty water symbolizes tears and means that you will weep much in the future, possibly indicating the death of a close relative.
— Milk and fruits predict that tomorrow will be a good day.
— To see another person dying or dead indicates that you will have sufficient to eat.
— A broken central pillar in your house is extremely inauspicious — it means that the head of the household will die.
— A dog is inauspicious and represents an evil spirit (sri). If you did not kill it in your dream, you will become sick and may even die.
— A horse is the protective deity of the house (can). If a Thakali sees a horse in a dream, he should offer barley grains at the canga the next morning. Nowadays only a few observe this practice.
— A yogi is auspicious and represents a god.
— Cows and snakes are serpent spirits (lu). If a Thakali sees a cow or a snake in a dream, he should offer drops of milk in the air and a small ball of roasted barley mixed with butter (sur) in the fireplace the next morning. Nowadays only a few observe this practice.
— In Thini a yak represents the god Lha Thyowa. If a Thin Thakali dreams of a yak he should offer barley grains in the direction of the Lha Thyowa temple the next morning.
— A man dressed all in white represents a god, and it means that tomorrow will be a lucky day.
— Children are a bad omen, because they symbolize witches.
— A dead relative who is well-dressed and looking rich means that the dreamer may become sick.
— A dead relative who is dressed in old rags is also inauspicious, but not as bad as if he is well-dressed.
— To see oneself dressed in white signifies that tomorrow will be a happy day.
— To see oneself walking uphill is an auspicious sign, while walking downhill is inauspicious.
— To see oneself bathing in oil indicates that one’s house will be blessed with good fortune.
— To see oneself walking on human excrement means that tomorrow will be a very good day and you may receive or inherit some property.
— Drinking milk and eating fruits indicate that tomorrow will be a profitable day.
— Losing your upper tooth indicates that one of your close senior relatives will die, while losing a lower tooth means the death of a junior relative.
— To see oneself totally naked means that one is going to die.
— Beating up another person indicates that your luck is ascending (*lungta dharpa*), while being beaten by another person means that your luck is descending (*lungta kuipa*), and you may become sick.
— Riding on a horse towards the south is inauspicious and a sign of death. Somebody you know is going to die, maybe yourself.50

**Ethics**

Thakali ethics are based on a mixture of Buddhism and pre-Buddhist traditions, and the Thakali thus do not accept and observe all the precepts of Buddhism; for example, they do not consider it a sin to drink or deal in alcoholic beverages.51 Buddhism preaches that people should not act badly because it causes a low rebirth in the next life, but the Thakali are concerned more with the consequences in this life – that is the negative sanctions of the superhuman world. Also, in a wider perspective bad actions jeopardize the very existence of the family and the local community.

According to Thakali ideas, a man should look after the material needs of his family. He should be fair and not mistreat his wife and children, for example not beat the wife nor force the children to work to hard. He should help relatives in need and work for the good of the community. A rich man should be generous towards the poor, donate presents to his clan and community, and sponsor religious ceremonies. Further, he should not kill humans, steal, lie, give false testimony and break oaths.

The Thakali do not believe in extreme forms of behaviour. For example, one should neither be a big spender, nor a miser. Also, one should be brave, but not foolhardy: a man is a fool if he puts himself in danger in order to help another.

One of the best sources on ideology and ethics are the myths. Thakali myths tell how a king was killed for misusing his power, how a village was destroyed for cheating another village, how a son was praised for exposing a plot against his father, and the like. Very popular among the Tamang Thakali is the account of the Tulacan clan (*Salgi Rhab*) which relates how the eighteen ances-

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50 For an example, see Vinding 1992, p. 66.
51 There are, of course, variations in what individual Thakali consider right and wrong. For example, some (especially among the clergy) consider it a sin to drink alcohol and to smoke.
tors of the clan misused the power endowed on them by a goddess, and how their arrogance led to their demise.54

RITUAL SPECIALISTS

The Thakali believe that the universe is full of superhuman beings who possess powers which may be used to harm ordinary men. In order to prevent harm, ritual specialists are employed to satisfy and pacify superhuman beings. The ritual specialists follow different traditions. Some situations require the performance of ceremonies, which only one kind of ritual specialist conducts; others require ceremonies which may be performed by different specialists. Myths tell about conflicts and jealousy between specialists of different traditions, but in daily life relations are usually friendly.

Buddhist Specialists

Tibetan Buddhism is divided into a number of different schools. In Thak Khola Nyingmapa (in the West popularly known as the 'Red Hat' sect because of the colour of the priests' garments and headgear) is dominant.53 The Nyingmapa believe that the path to higher spiritual levels is open not only to persons who have taken a vow of chastity, but also to laymen. In Thak Khola the majority of the Buddhist ritual specialists are married village priests, but there are also monks, nuns and incarnate lamas.

Householder Priests

Buddhist priests who have not taken the vow of chastity form the biggest single group of ritual specialists in Thak Khola. The Thakali refer to them as tawa; they are also referred to as khimpa or dungpa ('householder'), as most of them are married and members of ordinary households.

In 1976 there were 60 householder priests in Thak Khola. The majority were found in Marpha, Syang, and Thini, while there were only seven in Thaksatsae. In Marpha and Syang local law prescribes the second of three brothers to become a householder priest, while among the Tamang Thakali a similar

53 The Nyingmapa order traces its origins to the teaching of Guru Rinpoche and is the oldest of the Tibetan Buddhist schools.
rule was abolished long ago.\textsuperscript{54} In Syang the second-born son could formerly be exempted from becoming a householder priests by paying a fine to the village community. Many took advantage of this option because the work of a householder priest is time-consuming and the remuneration is poor. This resulted in a decline in the number of priests, and in the 1960s the village decided to make it obligatory to serve.

Since the householder priests already served the village in their religious capacity, they were formerly exempted from serving as village headmen. Householder priests are not allowed to kill animals. Further, they are not permitted to plough\textsuperscript{55} or carry manure (except for goat manure which is considered pure).\textsuperscript{56}

A boy becomes a novice when he is about six years old. He is taught to read and write Tibetan (the language in which the religious texts are written) by an elder householder priest or a monk. The novice takes part in the recitation of texts in the village temple and learns the rituals by assisting older priests. A householder priest may go into retreat for a period to concentrate on his studies. Formerly, the Thakali used caves as retreats, but nowadays a monastery or a private home fulfills the purpose. The duration of the retreat is typically three months and three days. Priests who have stayed in retreat (cham) are referred to as champa.

The knowledge of householder priests varies a great deal. Some understand the texts and study them to learn about the path to enlightenment. Others are able to recite the texts without knowing the meaning; that is, however, not important because the main purpose of a recitation is to say the sacred words aloud.

The householder priest who chairs the ceremonies in a village temple is called umce. The post of precentor is a prestigious position which brings the incumbent merit; however, the post is time-consuming and restricts the incumbent’s possibilities for going south for business, and precentors commonly serve only for a limited number of years.\textsuperscript{57}

\textsuperscript{54} According to C. von Führer-Haimendorf, in Marpha in 1976 ‘the old custom according to which every middle son should become a monk and every girl who is the second of three sisters a nun is no longer observed’ (1981a, p. 185). As mentioned in the text, local law prescribes the second of three brothers to become a householder priest (not a monk). Local law also prescribes the second of three sisters to become a nun; in practice, the girls are ordered to receive basic religious education, but none is expected to become a nun.

\textsuperscript{55} According to Ramble monks in most parts of Tibet will not plough the fields because of the inevitable killing of worms and insects (1984, p. 258).

\textsuperscript{56} The Sherpas consider goat manure better than that of yak, which is better than that of the cow, because the goat eats the top of the plant, the yak the middle and the cow the lowest part (Paul 1970, p. 100).

\textsuperscript{57} Ramble remarks from Lubra, ‘Far from being considered a prestigious office, the position of dbu-mdzad [umce] (‘precentor’) is the most unpopular in the village’ (1984, p. 267).
In Tibetan the word ‘lama’ (*bla ma*) is used only for the highest priests; the Thakali define a *lama* as a priest who has a throne (*thi*) in a temple. In Thak Khola there is only one householder priest who is a *lama*, namely Kyupa Lama, the head of *Kyupa Gumpa* situated south of Tukce. *Kyupa Gumpa* was formerly a monastery, but since the 1970s only the *lama* and his family have lived there. In 1984 the *lama* built and settled in a new temple in Tukce.

The most prominent householder priest in Thak Khola used to be Lama Dharma Dhoj (alias Lama Kancha), who was the head of the temples *Meki Lhakhang* in Kobang and *Kutsabterngha* in Thini. Lama Kancha (a Tulacan from Tukce) passed away in 1973. When he died Lama Kancha was meditating in the ‘Buddha position’ and the villagers therefore decided not to touch his body. According to informants, the next day the dead *lama* appeared to be sweating and on the third day milk flowed from one of his nostrils and blood from the other. The Thakali took that as a sign that Lama Kancha would be reborn as an incarnate lama. However, when his son later consulted Karmapa Lama (the head of the *Karmapa* sub-order of the *Kagyupa* order) he was advised that Lama Kancha would not return because of the poor state of Buddhism in Thak Khola.

*Monks and Nuns*

In 1981 there were five monks (*gailong*) in Thak Khola – four Mawatan Thakali and one Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali. Two Mawatan Thakali monks stayed in a monastery in Syang, while the others lived in households with relatives.

The most prominent among the monks was Lama Lobsang Temba of the Hiracan clan. He originally stayed at *Kyupa Gumpa* but after a disagreement with Kyupa Lama, he and his followers went to Nubri, east of Thak Khola. In 1975 Lobsang Temba returned and established a monastery in Syang.58 He died in New Delhi in 1987. Lobsang Temba was a charismatic leader and his followers referred to him as ‘Precious One’ (*rimparche*). He also established a monastery in Pokhara with the financial assistance of a Gurung. A few years after Lobsang Temba’s death a grandson of his Gurung patron was recognized as his incarnation (*tulku*). In 1976 there were twenty Thakali nuns (*jjomo*) in Thak Khola, namely fourteen Tamang Thakali, five Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali and one Mawatan

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58 In 1981 three monks (Lobsang Temba, his cousin and a young non-Thakali novice who served Lobsang Temba) and a nun (a Mawatan Thakali) stayed permanently in the monastery. Five young village priests stayed temporarily in connection with their education and six nuns (three from Syang, one from Khanti and two from Baragau) were connected with the monastery. In 1988 there were four monks, fourteen nuns and five students attached to the monastery.
Thakali. Most of the nuns (especially among the Tamang Thakali) were elderly women who were initiated when they were young. According to informants, parents let a daughter become a nun to gain merit or if the mother is believed to be a witch. Adult women also become nuns. For example, in Syang a young woman left her husband to become a nun. A few months later another young woman who was under parental pressure to marry became a nun to avoid it.

Nuns are connected with a particular temple or a monastery. However, they do not usually live there, but in a relative’s household or alone.

**Incarnate Lamas**

Incarnate lamas (*tulku*) have the highest status in the Tibetan Buddhist hierarchy.\(^\text{59}\) Besides the *Dalai Lama* who is an incarnation of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, there are hundreds of minor incarnate lamas in Tibet. The majority of them are monks of the *Gelukpa* order (in the West popularly known as the Yellow Hat sect), but there are also married *tulku* in the *Nyingma* order. Formerly, there were several incarnate lamas in Thak Khola, but at present there are only two, the Marpha *tulku* and the incarnation of Lama Lopsang Temba.\(^\text{60}\) None of them live in Thak Khola and their influence on Thakalis religious life is therefore limited.\(^\text{61}\)

**Bon Priests**

In pre-Buddhist Tibet there were two religious traditions, namely an organized religion known as Bon and a nameless folk religion which is referred to as the ‘religion of man’ (*mi chos*). After the introduction of Buddhism to Tibet Bon priests started to imitate Buddhism, which resulted in the creation of what has been called ‘assimilated Bon’. Tibetan Buddhists often refer to the original and the assimilated Bon as ‘Black Bon’ (*bon nag*) and ‘White Bon’ (*bon kar*), respectively.

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59 According to Hoffmann (1961, p. 168) the reincarnation dogma — that is the idea that gods and famous holy men appear in other bodies again and again in a ceaseless series of reincarnations — contradicts the authentic and strict Buddhist teaching of the non-existence of a permanent soul.

60 The decline in the number of *tulku* has mainly been due to the general decline of Buddhism in Thak Khola. For example, Guptaman Shercan of the Balbir lineage was identified as *tulku* of the (now extinct) *Bodo Gumpa* at Kobang. He never received religious education and later he became the foremost advocate of the abolishment of Buddhist elements in Thakali religion. In the 1950s a young Shercan boy from Kunjo was recognized as the *tulku* of the Taglung temple. He studied for a few years under Lama Lopsang Temba, but then left religious life and now lives the life of an ordinary layman.

61 The Marpha *tulku* received his education in Sikkim. According to informants, the *tulku*, who now is in his thirties, has not yet decided whether to settle in Marpha.
White Bon is in essence identical with the old Tibetan Buddhist *Nyingmapa* order. There are, however, some differences. When asked to define these, Thakali Bon and Buddhist priests do not mention differences in doctrines and beliefs, but focus on ritual aspects. First, the gods look similar, apart from some minor variations and different names. Second, the texts have different titles. Third, when a Buddhist passes a holy object he keeps it on his right side, while a follower of the Bon religion (*bompo*) passes it on his left. Fourth, they use different magical formulas (*mantra*); for example, in Tibetan Buddhism the most popular mantra is *o mai padme hu*, but in Bon *o ma tri mu ye sa le 'du*. Finally, Buddhist priests (*chева*) use a small hand bell (*dilbu*), while Bon priests (*bompo*) use a small cymbal (*syang*).

Bon was formerly an important religion in Mustang and Dolpo districts, but nowadays there are only a few followers in Mustang, notably in Lubra (in Baragau) which for about 800 years has been an important Bon center. In Thak Khola Bon is found only in two villages, namely Thini and Naprungkhung.

The Tamang Thakali Bon priests are recruited exclusively from the Lam subclan of the Gauca clan. At present there are only two Bon priests in Naprungkhung. Formerly, the Bon priests of Naprungkhung studied in Lubra, and the priests of the two villages invited each other for important festivals and ceremonies; nowadays there is little contact between the villages. In the old days Bon was a major religion in Thini, but the Bon temples have all been abolished and there are only a handful of followers in the village. The priests were recruited exclusively from the now extinct Bompo clan, and the single Bon priest in Thini belongs to the Pal lineage of the Gyalgi clan.

**Dhom**

The *dhom* is the oldest religious tradition in Thak Khola. Among the Tamang Thakali the ritual specialist of this tradition is called *dhom* while among the

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62 For an iconography of the Bon religion, see Kærne 1995.
63 For the meaning of this mantra, see Snellgrove 1961, pp. 41–42.
64 For a study of Lubra, see Ramble 1983 and 1984.
65 There is also a small Bon temple in Jomsom which was build some 30 years ago by a Bon priest from Tibet.
66 The main temple in Thini was originally Bon, but some 40 years ago it was converted into a Buddhist temple. According to informants, there was formerly a Bon temple on the outskirts of the village. It was destroyed and the big statues were taken to the temple in the village and the small ones to Kutsabtengha temple.
67 It would require a separate book to examine in detail the *dhom* and *aya lama* and their rituals. A detailed study of the *aya lama* should be undertaken, as it is likely to throw light on the
Mawatan Thakali and the Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali he is known as aya lama. Although the traditions of the Tamang Thakali dhom and the Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali aya lama are basically similar, there are a few differences; for example, the aya lama have named local gods whose bodily manifestations are housed in temples, while that is not the case with the dhom.

The dhom and aya lama traditions differ in many ways from Tibetan Buddhism and White Bon. First, in Tibetan Buddhism and White Bon the post of ritual specialist is open to either sex, but in dhom exclusively to men. Second, in Tibetan Buddhism any person can become a ritual specialist, while the post of dhom is restricted to members of certain patrilineal groups: among the Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali the Kya clan, among the Mawatan Thakali the Lam subclan of the Juharcan clan, and among the Tamang Thakali the Dhom and Balamtan subclans of the Gaucan clan and the (two) Dhom subclans of the Shercan clan. Third, the sacrifice of animals is an important element of the dhom tradition, while it is strictly forbidden in Tibetan Buddhism and White Bon. Fourth, Tibetan Buddhism and White Bon rely on written texts, while dhom is based on oral tradition. Finally, in pre-Buddhist traditions of Tibet. It would also be of interest to compare in detail the Thakali dhom/aya lama, the Gurung khlyepri and the Tamang lamburg.

I have earlier suggested that aya lama is connected to the pre-Buddhist priests of Tibet (Vinding 1978, p.187). This has been confirmed by Ramble, who writes that the term a-ya 'appears in certain Bon Po texts, such as the gZi-brjid and gzer-myig, to denote a category of priests in the old Kingdom of Zhang-Zhung' (1992/93, p.57). The meaning of aya is a puzzle. Höfer renders the Tamang term ayo by 'charisma', although informants rendered the approximately literal meaning by 'will-power' or 'life-energy' (1994, p. 21). In the Zhang-Zhung language, a-yu means 'life, life-time' (Haarh 1968, p. 43) which is related to Skt., ayu, 'life'. Or is aya simply derived from the Thakali prefix a denoting negative and Tib., gas, right, that is a person who does not keep the right side towards the person or object that is reverentially to be saluted? Further, among the Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali the aya lama is recruited from the Kya clan; the name kya may be derived from the Zhang Zhung word rkya, 'lord, chief, respected, reverend' (ibid., p. 28).

According to an aya lama the aya lama of Thini and Cimang are called lha dhom because they get their power from gods (lha); the aya lama of Marpha is called prho dhom because they get their power from some spirits called prho; and the Tamang Thakali dhom is called mhang dhom. Other informants mention that there are two kinds of dhom among the Tamang Thakali, namely lha dhom, who is involved in ancestor worship and mhang dhom, who is involved in death ceremonies and healing rituals. According to Fisher, 'in Thak Khola an explicit distinction is drawn between Lha dhom and Mang dhom, where one does the work of mortuary rites, and ancestor worship while the other engages witches and spirits in the struggle for men’s health and sanity' (1987, p. 212). Among the Gurung, although almost all puchu and khlyepri are male, but the occasional one is female (Pignède 1966, p. 454).

The Tamang Thakali clans originally each had a lineage from which the dhom were recruited.
the *dhom* tradition there are neither monks nor monasteries, and there is no well-developed internal hierarchy among the ritual specialists.

The most famous Bon priest was *Naro Bonchung*. Bon priests, *dhom* and *aya lama* all name him as their spiritual ancestor. According to local myth after his famous contest at Mt. Kailash (in Tibet) with the Buddhist saint *Milarepa*, *Naro Bonchung* travelled south. In Upper Mustang his path was obstructed by a huge rock which *Naro Bonchung* broke with his rosary (*mala*) and reached Thak Khola.

The *dhom* and *aya lama* have less paraphernalia than the Buddhist priests. Their main artifacts are a drum, a stick with a bird, and a rosary. The drum (*na*) has a wooden frame covered with membrane on one side. On the other side are two sticks which cross each other in an ‘X’ for holding the instrument; two small bells are tied to the sticks. The priest holds the drum close to his body and beats it with a small straight stick in the direction towards the body. The bird stick (*rara*) is an approximately 30 cm long. On the top is a head of a bird made of metal; around the bird’s neck are pieces of metal and muskdeer hooves. The bird stick is used as a substitute for the drum at places and at times when drumming is forbidden, for instance inside the *Lha Thyowa* temple in Thini or when the buckwheat is in bloom. The rosary (*phramo*) contains 108 black seeds of *Sapindus*.

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72 According to an *aya lama*, *Naro Bonchung* was born in Teta Kyimolung near Mt. Kailash in Western Tibet. Kyimolung may, however, be a reference to *skyid mo lung*, name of a famous ‘Hidden Land’ (*sbras yul*), situated at the border between Tibet and Nepal (Charles Ramble, personal communication). Or is it a reference to Khyung lung du gul, which according to Petech (1997, p. 230) was the original capital of the kingdom of Zhang Zhung on Sutley river?

73 For the contest, see Appendix 2.

74 The Gurung *khleyphri* priest uses a similar artifact, ‘for the *khepre* [*khleyphri*] a small wooden bird called *nami* (G.) is the principal ritual artifact. This bird is the embodiment of the shaman’s patron deity or lord and the repository of his mystical power over the supernatural. The right to possess and use the wooden bird, which is hand held during rituals, is invested only with full attainment of *khepre* gurukhahd. Thereafter, every time the *khepre gurukha* completes a funeral or post-funerary ritual he attaches a white tassle (which is torn from a gift of the white cloth brought by affines of the deceased) to his personal wooden bird. The amount of experience that any one *khepre* shaman has had is accountable by the number of tassles (which resemble feathers)” (Messerschmidt 1976, p. 204).

75 It is beyond the scope of the present book to compare the Thakali *dhom* or *aya lama* with similar ritual specialists among other Tibeto-Burman speaking peoples of Nepal. However, several ritual specialists (e.g. the Limbu *bijua*, the Kham Magar *rama*, the Gurung *puhu* and the Eastern Tamang *bompo*) wear a headgear of feathers – of the pheasant or other birds, but in any case a symbol of shamanic ‘flight’ (Höfer 1995, p. 61). The Thakali *dhom* and *aya lama* do not wear this headgear – maybe because they do not go into trance. One could, however, argue that the bird stick like the feathers are a symbol of shamanic flight. The bird stick and the drum are considered equivalent, and the drum is a well-known means of transport used for shamanic flight; for example, at the contest at Mt. Kailash *Naro Bonchung* rode on his drum.
mukerossi (*ritho*), and some muskdeer tusks and snake spines. The *dhom*’s rosary is longer than the one used by Buddhist priests; it is hung across the chest (from the right shoulder to the left hip).

The *aya lama* are not permitted to eat impure food, such as chicken meat, eggs, garlic, nettle, a local spice called *yarmo* and milk from the local dwarf cow.76

Among the Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali the *aya lama* are recruited exclusively from the Kya clan. This clan is found in Thini and Cimang, but not in Syang. The Kya clan originally comprised three subclans, namely Namti, Sarti, and Bharti.77 According to a local myth the ancestors of these subclans were the masters of soil, natural disasters and rain, respectively.78 Informants doubt whether this division of work ever existed, but mention that formerly Namti was responsible for the worship of *Lha Thyowa*, Bharti for the 12-year festival of *Bhue Ama*, and Sarti for the *mhang rawa* death ceremony. The Sarti and Namti subclans are now extinct, thus the *aya lama* belong to the Bharti subclan. The *aya lama* in Thini and Cimang follow the same tradition and perform the same ceremonies. However, the *mhang rawa* death ceremony is performed solely by the *aya lama* of Thini, while blessings for longevity (*tsai kuwa*) are given by the *aya lama* of Cimang.

In 1981 Thini and Cimang each had three *aya lama*. The priests functioned mainly within their own village, but they also had clients among Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali in Syang, Jomsom and Chairo. In Thini a young man studies at least one year to become an *aya lama*. The teacher is an older *aya lama*, often the student’s father or an uncle. The studies end with an examination in the *Lhakin* temple, where the student and his teacher stay in isolation for three days during which the student performs the various *aya lama* rituals.

In 1981 there were three *dhom* in Thaksatsae. They all belonged to the Dhom subclan of the Gaucan clan and lived in Lete. Their clients were local Tamang Thakali. Like the *aya lama* in Pacgau they performed a variety of ceremonies, including death rituals. One of them became a *dhom* when he was 20 years old. He studied under his father who was also a *dhom*. At the end of his studies he and his father stayed for 13 days in a small cave at the Mharsyangkyu river. Every morning he took a bath in the holy river and purified himself in the smoke of burning cypress (*syuki*). Afterwards he ate a bit of cypress and smeared his body with ash. Then his father taught him how to identify various sicknesses and their

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76 Milk from the local dwarf cow is considered impure since it eats household refuse and human faeces, and chickens because they eat offal.

77 The names relate to the three cosmic spheres of the ancient Tibetan concept of the world, namely *gnam* heaven, *barthe* intermediate space and *sa* the earth (Haarh 1968, p. 135). See also ibid., pp. 314–315.

78 See Appendix 2.
cause (by feeling a patient's pulse) and the ceremonies for curing the sicknesses – including the prayers, the drum beat, offering cakes (kandu), etc. The stay at Mharsyangkyu concluded on the 13th day with an examination during which he performed the major rituals of the dhom. Goats and sheep were sacrificed to make the examination as real as possible. Afterwards relatives and villagers accompanied them back to Lete with fanfare, and presented him with scarfs of felicitation (khata) and money.

There are no more aya lama in Marpha. The last left the village in the late 1960s and settled in Pokhara. He used to perform a variety of rituals, including death ceremonies, and was in charge of the Pholha worship in Marpha and Syang.

Shamans

When speaking in Nepali the Thakali usually refer to the dhom (and the aya lama) as jhakri. Although the dhom and the jhakri are both healers, the jhakri is a shaman: he is possessed by a superhuman spirit and goes into trance; this is not the case with the dhom. Further, dhom are males who belong to certain patrilineal descent groups, while anyone can become a jhakri, irrespective of descent and sex. Finally, the dhom’s main duty is to perform death rituals, while jhakri never participate in these rituals.

In 1981 there were three jhakri in Thak Khola. One was a Tamang Thakali from Lete who also functioned as dhom. The second lived in Thini and was a tailor. His family came from Jumla in West Nepal and both his father and grandfather were jhakri. Once his father was held captive for seven days by a ghost (bhut) at the Langlangthang plateau above Jomsom Airport. During captivity he received teachings from the ghost and was given only white and black stones to eat. The present jhakri was trained by his father. The education finished with tests during which he spent three, two and one night at the cemeteries in Marpha, Syang, and Jomsom, respectively. Although the jhakri belonged to a caste of artisans, his clientele included Thakali from Jomsom and Thini. The Thakali used him when their sickness was believed to be caused by a powerful witch or a ghost.79

The third jhankri was a Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali from Syang, who in his early twenties disappeared for three days when he had gone to the high pastures to drink yak blood. According to relatives, he was chosen by his guru because he was born in the forest fields which are considered a pure place. Initially, the young man did not want to become a jhakri, but a few years later one of his mules disappeared. His guru appeared in his dream and informed him that he had

79 For a description of this jhakri, including diagnosis and therapy, see Greve 1981/82.
taken the mules because of the man's refusal to become a *jhakri*. The guru agreed to return the mule if the man promised to become a *jhakri*. The young man acquiesced and the next day the mule returned. He functioned as *jhakri* only when requested by villagers. During rituals he became possessed and behaved either like an animal (dog, cat or sheep), an old woman, or a person who stammers. He was a teetotaller, and he did not eat eggs, which he considered impure.

**Other Ritual Specialists**

The priest who looks after the goddess *Nari Jhowa* is known as Narsang Dungpa and is recruited exclusively from the Tarcha subclan of the Shercan clan. The Narsang Dungpa is, as the name indicates, an ordinary Buddhist householder priest.

The worship of Taglung's protective deity *Mhasumpra* is done by a priest (*pare*) who is recruited exclusively from the Mhatasi subclan of the Gaucan clan. The priest has no ritual functions except for the worship of *Mhasumpra*.

The worship of *Shebi Lha* of Cimang is done by a local *aya lama*. He is known as *Shebi Lha pare*.

In Thak Khola astrology is performed by Buddhist householder priests, monks and nuns. Thini, however, has a village astrologer (*khaiwa*). He belongs to the Bom clan, and the post is usually inherited from father to son.  

DEATH CEREMONIES

The Thakali have a large number of rituals. As an example of a Thakali ritual, the present section examines the death ceremonies as performed by Buddhist householder priests in Syang.  

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80 Informants mention that the names of the past thirteen *khaiwa* are listed in a record. The name of the earliest *khaiwa* is *Rincin Tsawang* he may be the *Rinchen Tshewang* mentioned in the Cimang *Benczag* as witness at the signing of the border agreement between Thini, Marpha and Thag (Ramble and Vinding 1987, p. 19), which may have taken place in 1697 (see Chapter III).

81 It is beyond the scope of this book to list and describe all ceremonies. For some ceremonies, see Iijima 1960, Jest 1969, Manzardo 1985 and Parker 1985a.

82 Thakali death ceremonies vary greatly according to the kind of ritual specialist who performs the ceremonies. For Thakali death ceremonies, see also Iijima 1960, Jest 1976, Kawakita 1974 and Manzardo and Sharma 1975, and Vinding 1984.
The Day of the Death

When a person is dying his close relatives gather to bid farewell. Beside the members of the household, the close relatives who should be present are his parents (if they are still alive), his children and siblings and their spouses. Daughters' and sisters' husbands (mha) play a key role in the funeral rites, and it is important that they are at hand.

Some Thakali make a wish (thalu thampa) on their deathbed, such as things their relatives should remember to do and how their property should be divided.

When the person dies male relatives will check his breath, feel his pulse and pull his arms and legs to make certain that he is dead. Once death is confirmed some of his male patrilineal relatives (phobe) and mha go to the roof of the house and call out loudly, 'Please do not go to the forest fields and the lower fields!' When villagers hear this announcement they know that the person has expired. Next, they cry out 'hoo hoo' three times, and request those who have taken the soul of the deceased to give it back; they address in particular the deceased’s ancestors and ancestresses (khe mom). Then they go down into the house where they receive a piece of white cloth. With it they return to the roof where they whistle three times, wave with the cloth, and addressing the deceased by name ask him to return to his house. Then they go downstairs again and cover the dead man’s face with the cloth.

Some phobe and mha of the deceased go to summon the people who need to come to the house. The senior householder priest (cheni) belonging to the deceased’s phobe is asked to come. It is also important to summon the close wife-givers of the deceased (syang), usually his brother-in-law. Those who come to inform the syang present him a small wooden container with beer (pa paru). The syang offers some of this beer, instructing the deceased to go to heaven. At the dead man’s house the syang’s wife (syangsa) offers the remaining beer to the deceased. This offering is important, because no other relative is allowed to make an offering to the dead before this one has taken place.

When the cheni arrives 108 butterlamps are offered and burned in the name of the dead. The cheni then performs the phok pumpa ceremony during which he pulls out a few hairs from the top of the deceased’s head to allow the soul to leave

83 Dongleya taleyang yolang ayang. Villagers are not allowed to work in the fields after this announcement, but they are permitted to cut wood and collect pine needles in the forests. The ban is in force from the time of death and until the body has been cremated – but only during the period between weeding and harvest.
the body and recites a text to guide the soul to heaven.\textsuperscript{84} When the ceremony is over the corpse is dressed in new clothes and laid on a bed in the main room of the house. If death has occurred at night, nothing more is done that same night.

Meanwhile, the deceased's heirs and his syang decide how much the former should spend on the death ceremonies, including distribution of presents to villagers in the name of the deceased. It is believed that these presents (dhon) are actually received by the deceased. For this reason and also because the amount given both indicates the economic position and generosity of the household, the syang will press the heirs to be munificent. Formerly, the heirs were obliged to spend as much as was requested by the syang, but not any more.\textsuperscript{85}

All permanent residents of the village are entitled to an equal share of the dhon. Thus a newborn baby receives as much as an adult, and the members of the tailor and blacksmith castes (regardless of their low social status) receive as much as a Thakali. The dhon consists of grain and sometimes also money. Rich households give each entitled person one local measure (shin dukya) of rice, barley and wheat, while poor households suffice with one measure of barley. These rates held in 1972. That year a poor man’s wife died. He was heavily in debt and decided therefore not to give any dhon. The villagers knew about his problems, but many disapproved because they believed that due to his decision, his wife’s soul would find the road to heaven obstructed and would instead return to the village and create trouble.

In 1977 the Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali banned the distribution of dhon in order to reduce ‘unnecessary’ expenses and imposed Rs 500 as punishment on those who broke the rule.\textsuperscript{86} Consequently, the custom of giving dhon has now died out.\textsuperscript{87}

Early the next morning the cremation ground (cha) belonging to the dead man’s phobe is cleaned and purified by the family who had last used it. This is done

\textsuperscript{84} In Tibet this ceremony is known as ’pho ba; for a description, see Evans-Wentz 1927 and Waddell 1894.

\textsuperscript{85} The distribution of dhon was also practised among the Tamang Thakali until around 1950. C. von Fürer-Haimendorf writes about the death of Mohanman Shercan of the Balbir lineage, ‘...not only all the villages of Thak and Panchgaon (including Marpha) were fed, but even villagers of Baragaon, who could not come as far as Tukce, were sent rice’ (1989, p. 90).

\textsuperscript{86} They also decided that the clothes of a dead man should be given to his sons, except for one pair to each of his mha; in the case of women the clothes should be given to her daughters. Finally, it was agreed that the syang cannot dictate the amount their brother-in-law has to spend on the death ceremonies of their sister.

\textsuperscript{87} In spite of the ban some households in Syang have distributed dhon – and paid Rs 500 in fine. Others have by-passed this rule by distributing presents while they were still alive (usually at the age of 49, 61, 73 or 85). These presents were not considered dhon, and the givers were therefore not fined.
by throwing beer and buckwheat flour over the stones. Afterwards the deceased’s mha take some wood to the cremation ground. They arrange the stones and the wood so that everything is ready for the cremation.

At the house large numbers of villagers come to pay their last respects. One of the first to arrive is the chief village priest (umce) who makes a death astrology chart (sinci korwa) and explains what has happened to the deceased, how and when his body should be disposed of, which texts are to be recited, and the like. Some of the dead man’s phobe and mha prepare a wooden bier and sew an expensive cloth around it. The deceased’s patrilineal female relatives (celi) gather. They mourn and comfort the deceased’s wife and daughters and help in the kitchen. Male villagers gather in a corner of the courtyard to discuss the latest news, while the young men joke with the girls. Only the closest relatives and friends look genuinely sad.

In the main room the cheni performs a ceremony (senor lawa) during which the deceased is offered food by the members of his phobe. The grain to be distributed to the villagers is spread out in the courtyard. The cheni sits next to the grain and recites the text yangku che while he beats a drum. Two mha stand next to the grain. One holds a big copper vessel containing a ball of butter, while the other holds a rice spoon, a lentil spoon and a stick with coloured strings (tarhna) in his right hand, and a goat’s leg in his left. During the recitation the latter strikes these several times over the grain and takes a little with the spoon and places it in the vessel. When the recitation is over a woman married into the deceased’s lineage (tasyu) begs the deceased to leave the spirit of prosperity (yang) behind. She then takes a few grains and goes back into the house. These two rituals are known as ‘to pull out the spirit of prosperity’ (yang dhiwa) and are performed to ensure that the spirit of prosperity does not leave the house.

Then two mha go to the roof of the house. They call the deceased and tell him that the grain to be given away is dhon presented in his name. After that they ask the villagers to come and collect the dhon. The villagers arrive soon after the announcement. The distribution takes place in a relaxed atmosphere; if a man has many children, others will make a joke when his household’s members are

88 In Tibet an arrow with coloured strings (Tib., mda’ dar) is a sign of prosperity, power and wealth (M. Oppitz, personal communication).
89 Some informants refer to this ceremony as ‘to take the essence’ (phui kinpa). ‘To take the essence’ refers to the situation when a person takes the first or the essence (phuï) of whatever he gives away in order to ensure that the spirit of prosperity does not leave with it. This is a popular Thakali custom. For yang among the Mawatan Thakali, see Parker 1985a and 1985c.
counted. When the villagers later eat the grain, they offer a small part in the name of the deceased and pray that he receives the grain which they eat.

After the distribution of dhon the corpse is placed on the bier inside the main room. The umce or a lama comes to the house and performs the phok pumpa ceremony. Afterwards 108 butterlamps are offered and lit in the name of the deceased.

A large number of Buddhist householder priests, monks and nuns from Syang and often also from the surrounding villages gather in the house for the ceremony. Some sit in the main room, others on the roof. During the ceremony the ritual specialists recite a text in a deep monotonous voice accompanied intermittently by their small hand-drums (damaru), thigh-bone trumpets (kangling) and small handbells (dilbu).

After the recitation the umce dons a special dress known as phag che. The hat has several carved figures, including a pig (phag). On his back is a cloth which symbolizes the flayed hide of an elephant and over this another which symbolizes a human skin. In the front is the skin of a forest leopard.90

The bier is then carried into the courtyard. Here the spirit of prosperity (yang) is again removed, this time from the corpse itself. On the left hand side of the bier stand three householder priests; one recites the text yangku che, another strikes the cymbals (silngya) and the third beats a big drum. On the right hand side, a mha stands holding a goat leg, a stick with coloured strings and a cypress branch in his left hand, and a rice spoon, a lentil spoon and a cypress branch in his right hand. During the recitation he strikes these things three times over the corpse to retrieve the yang from the deceased. When the recitation is over a tasyu strikes a small cypress branch over the corpse three times. Meanwhile, the sons and daughters, as well as close relatives younger than the deceased make prostrations (chya phulpa) to the dead.

Then the funeral procession starts. It is preceded by a tailor-musician beating a drum followed by a group of householder priests, monks and nuns playing shawms (geling), small hand-drums and handbells. Then come the sons and the close mha carrying the bier, and behind them walk the close family members and other mourners.

The procession stops at the ‘Stone Plain’ (dhothang) in front of the old school building in the northern outskirts of the village. The bier is placed on the ground and a small table is put at its foot. Cups of beer and alcohol are placed on the table and around it the celi place large bamboo trays (naki) with food.

90 These skins are also found among the Sherpas (see Funke 1960, illustration no. 178–180). According to Funke the skin of the elephant, the man and the leopard are called glang chen ko rlon (Tib.), mi lpags g.yang gchi (Tib.) and stag lpags sham thabs (Tib.), respectively.
offerings (cho), including various kinds of bread and grains. The close wife-givers (syang) cover the bier with a white cloth (syang tar nhampa). At the foot of the bier the umce blows a thigh-bone trumpet and starts to dance around it in a clockwise direction. He moves slowly and turns several times around his own axis. When he has completed the circle he blows the trumpet once again and the dance ends. The purpose of this dance (phasyal syowa) is to separate the soul from this world so that it can go to heaven. Some members of the dead man’s friendship group (rowa) enter in their oldest and darkest cloths. They walk barefoot around the bier in the clockwise direction three times and then disappear. The close young relatives prostrate to the deceased for the final time.

The bier is then carried to the cremation ground by the sons and the mha. A lama walks in the front holding an end of the white scarf (khata) tied to the bier in order to lead the way to heaven (gyam saiwa). After the bier householder priests, monks and nuns follow playing musical instruments, and behind them a few close male relatives of the deceased. The female relatives stay behind at the plain. Except for nuns, no women are allowed to follow the bier to the cemetery.

At the cremation place the mha clean the stone structure by throwing flour and beer on it. The clothes and ornaments are removed from the corpse and it is dressed in old clothes (or simply wrapped in a cloth). The corpse is placed inside the stone structure, either standing or sitting in the so-called lotus position. The mha takes a few hairs from the corpse; these are later placed at a reliquary stone structure (mane) near the school.

According to Thakali custom the pyre should be lit close to the knees by the closest mha. However, due to Hindu influence it is now usually done at the mouth by the eldest son; also, some sons shave off their hair and dress in white clothes. Grain and butter are thrown into the fire as an offering (jinsa pumpa). The priests and the relatives return to the village after the fire has completely consumed the body. They gather at the house of the deceased and are offered food and drinks.

As mentioned earlier, an astrologer identifies the best way to dispose the corpse. Corpses are usually cremated. However, if the astrologer advises that the flesh should be offered to fishes, the corpse is cut to pieces and thrown into the river; similarly, if the flesh should be offered to birds, the corpse is dismembered and offered to birds and vultures. From the time the sweet buckwheat starts to

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91 The length of the cloth should be at least two measures from elbow to finger tips (hat) and one measure from elbow to fist.

92 Among the Magars the clockwise direction symbolizes death (M. Oppitz, personal communication).
blossom and until it is harvested, it is forbidden to light a fire outside, to dig holes and to built houses in order not to damage the crop. The corpses of people who die during this period are traditionally dismembered and offered to birds or fishes. Also, in one case the corpse was buried, but later it was dug out and cremated.

**The Day after the Cremation**

In the morning the *mha* go to the cremation ground and dismantle the structure in which the corpse was cremated. Three stones are placed where the corpse was cremated, while the rest are piled in a heap ready for use the next time. The *mha* collect the ash and the remains of the bones. A few bones are taken back to the village while the rest are thrown into the Kali Gandaki river together with the ash.

At the dead man's house the *mha* make an effigy known as *dunda suma* (Figure 2). Three big measures (*shin pyang*) of naked barley are put into a pot together with a bone of the deceased. Cloth and ornaments belonging to the dead person are placed on a wooden cross which is then stuck into the pot. On the top of the cross is a head made of cloth on which is placed a crown with the five Buddhas (*rigs lnga*).

The main ceremony of the day is known as *sowa syangpa*. Only the deceased's closest family and a few priests participate in this ceremony. The priests prepare dough offerings (*kandu*) and recite texts. The family offers 108 butter lamps in the name of the deceased and presents food to the effigy. The food is later eaten by *mha*. It is believed that the food eaten by the *mha* is received by the deceased, and they are therefore served the best food and asked to eat as much as possible.

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93 The Thakali prefer to cremate their dead. Therefore, if the astrologer advises that the corpse should be offered to birds, the corpse is sometimes dismembered and cremated; similarly, if the corpse should be offered to fishes, the corpse may be sprinkled with water and cremated. While the body is usually cremated, in Syang it is sometimes cut into pieces and offered either to birds and vultures, or to fishes (by being thrown into the river). Some Gurung bury their dead (Pignède 1966, p. 282), others burn them (Messerschmidt 1976, p. 95). Burial is not practised among the Thakali.

94 In Syang, it is now possible to cremate bodies during this period if the relatives pay a fine to the village community.

95 According to an informant, in 'the old days' the corpse of rich people would be kept in a wooden box filled with salt, and would then be cremated after the buckwheat harvest. The custom of keeping the corpse in salt is also reported in a myth from Baragau (Schuh 1994, p. 37).
Afterwards the priests perform the ceremony *chachapar jangpa*. During this ceremony some bones of the deceased are crushed. The powder is mixed with clay and moulded into small figures known as *chacha*. These are later placed either in the reliquary stone structure of the deceased’s subclan (*khimi*), or in a reliquary stone structure made especially for the deceased (*phu*), or in the village temple.

**The Third Day**

On the second day after the funeral food and drinks are offered to the effigy. On the morning of the third day after the cremation a ceremony known as ‘third day to make’ (*syak sum lawa*) takes place. This ceremony is similar to the *sowa syangpa* ceremony described above. A few householder priests make dough offerings and recite texts, and relatives offer 108 butterlamps and food to the effigy; the food is later eaten by the *mha*.

Several important ceremonies take place in the evening. These are collectively known as ‘to catch the *mhang*’ (*mhang rawa*). The ceremonies start after dark when the *cheni* and a few other priests, as well as a large number of relatives and villagers, gather in the main room of the dead man’s house. The first part of the ceremony is known as *chyok pumpa*. During this ceremony the priests recite the text *konqo cheti* accompanied by drums and bells.

Then follows *namsi pawa* – to bring the ‘soul’. The closest *mha* and a few priests go to the reliquary stone structure at the northern entrance of the village where on the day of the cremation the *mha* has hidden a bone (or some hair or a piece of cloth) of the deceased. The priests give the *mha* a tray with some hull barley. The *mha* takes the bone, places it in the tray and covers the tray with bark from the Himalayan birch. The priests play shawms and the party returns to the house, where they receive a formal greeting. At the entrance, a crying *celi* of the deceased present the *mha* with different drinks, usually beer, alcohol and milk (*kyalsang*).

The *mha* places the tray in the front of the *cheni*. Then he goes to the roof together with a priest and a man from the deceased’s subclan to call the dead man’s soul (*bla ngoiwa*). He whistles three times, waves with a white cloth and addresses the deceased as follows:

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Oh Sonam (the name of the deceased), oh Sonam, oh Sonam, come, come, come, please come to your house, whether you are in the mountains, or in the valley, come, come, come.

Please bring the cause of death (mhang) with you.

If it is a man, take him by the top of his hair (mu) and bring him with you.

If it is a woman, take her by the braid, and bring her with you.

If it is a cross-breed (jho), take it by the nose ring and bring it with you.

If it is dog, take it by the chain and bring it with you.

If it is a yak, throw a lasso around its neck and bring it with you.

The mha then goes downstairs and gives the white cloth to the cheni. The priest places the hull barley and the bone from the tray into a clay pot together with various kinds of grain (naked barley, wheat, and the like) and two small bamboo tubes bound together, one of which contains oil and the other dried sesame seeds.

A celi who knows how to sing songs to the deceased comes forward. If she knows how, one of the daughters of the dead person is preferred for this duty. For the next forty minutes the celi puts cypress branches into the pot while she sings in a crying voice. In the song the celi tells the deceased that he is now dead
and that is why all his relatives and villagers have gathered in his house. She explains that they have now made his body: the white cloth around the pot is his clothes, the oil is his blood, the sesame seeds are his liver, the grains inside the pot are the twelve parts of the body (luiwa cyungi) and the cypress branches cut by his mha at the holy river Marcyang kyu are the head (gowa cusom). Finally, the celi tells the deceased he should go to heaven and not return to the village. A large number of villagers attend this part of the ceremony, mainly to hear how well the woman sings and leave soon after the song is over.

When the distant relatives and the other villagers have left, the mhang rawa ceremony takes place. The purpose of this ceremony is to catch the cause of death (mhang). The doors are closed, and the holes in the roof and pots are covered to prevent the mhang from escaping or hiding. Then a trap is made at the door. A thin layer of ash and soot are sprinkled on the doorstep. A line is drawn in the soot and four small dough figures are placed on the line. The first is a ‘butter lamp’ (ongku) used for offering beer and symbolizes the power of the priest; the second is an offering cake (kandu) shaped like a pyramid and symbolizes the priest (or his teacher); the third is a dog (nakyu) and symbolizes the soul of the deceased; and the fourth figure is a deer (pho) which symbolizes the cause of death. The figures are usually placed so that the deer is closest to the door, followed by the dog, the offering cake and the butter lamp.

When the trap is complete the priests recite the koncyo cheti; during the recitation they beat the drums, play the cymbals and blow the thigh-bone trumpets. The pot with the grain and the cypress branches, which is known as mhendo, is placed in a basket containing naked barley. During the first part of the recitation the mha shakes the mhendo several times and cries ‘ha-ha ha-ha’. The mhendo is then placed in front of the cheni who places a small ladder next to it. Towards the end of the recitation he removes the ladder.

As mentioned earlier the mha begs the soul to return to the house together with the spirit which caused his death (mhang). Informants explain that during the recitation the priest gives the soul power to hunt the mhang—‘as a dog hunts a deer, as a hawk hunts a bird’—and leads it to the trap where the mhang is caught, while the soul enters the mhendo via the ladder.

When the recitation is over, the cheni asks the mha to see if there are prints (mi) in the soot at the trap. Usually there are, but if not, the priest has to repeat the ceremony.99 There are many different kinds of prints, and on the basis

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98 If the deceased is a male there should be nine small local measures – eight heaped and one level; if female there should be only seven measures – six heaped and one level.

99 The first time I participated in this ceremony I was very surprised to see that prints had appeared in the soot. I thought that someone had secretly made them. The second time I kept
of the print it is possible to identify the mhang.\textsuperscript{100} a straight line indicates that the death was due to the \textit{rhi};\textsuperscript{101} the track of a snake shows that it was caused by the lu; the footprints of a bird shows that he died due to the evil gossip of other people (\textit{chakar mikar}); the prints of horse’s hooves indicate that it was due to the can; a string of small circles show that the death was caused by \textit{Ganpo Caca}; and hand prints indicate that he was killed by a witch.\textsuperscript{102}

The \textit{mha} carefully collects the prints with a dough figure resembling a man, and hands it over to the \textit{cheni} who places it in a tray. The four dough figures from the trap are placed over the door.

Then, the mhang is killed. Only a single butterlamp lights the room. While the priests recite the \textit{konceyo cheti}, the \textit{cheni} strikes the dough figure with a small axe, a small hammer, a small arrow and other small weapons. The wounded mhang is stabbed in the end with a ritual dagger (\textit{phurpa}). Afterwards the priests recite another text in order to send the mhang to heaven.\textsuperscript{103} During the recitation the \textit{mha} stands in front of the priests holding the dagger with the head of the dough figure. Afterwards the relatives are given some of the dough to eat. The rest is placed in a cow’s horn (or in a dog’s skull).\textsuperscript{104} The horn is wrapped in a piece of homespun cloth and bound up with a black and white string in an anticlockwise direction. Finally, the relatives stamp on the horn with their feet.

\textsuperscript{100} Many Tamang Thakali believe that the prints are made by the soul of the deceased, and that it indicates the rebirth of the deceased; for example, the footprint of a bird shows that the deceased has been reborn as a bird. Kawakita gives another interpretation: ’If the prints are those of a snake, it is proof that the soul of the deceased has already ascended to Heaven. If they are those of a bird, however, they prove that the muhan (soul) is still staying on earth. In most cases imprints of snakes are found’ (1974, p. 479). This interpretation has also been suggested by Iijima (1960, pp. 192–193).

\textsuperscript{101} To die due to the \textit{rhi} means that the person died because he reached that age when his father or brother had died. On \textit{rhi}, see Höfer 1994, pp. 96–97.

\textsuperscript{102} Informants give different interpretations of the prints. These were given by a priest who has performed the ceremony several times.

\textsuperscript{103} It does not seem logical first to kill the mhang and then to send it to heaven. However, this is done because the mhang could be the soul of a relative who has turned into a bad spirit because he died with unfulfilled desires.

\textsuperscript{104} I am not sure why the relatives eat the meat of the mhang. One informant mentioned that the dough eaten is the good meat while that which is placed in the horn is the bad meat of the mhang. Another said that the relatives eat the meat of the mhang because when one kills and eats an animal, it will go to heaven.
Meanwhile the celí sit with the mhendo and sing to the deceased. The women tell the deceased to go to heaven where he will meet his ancestors. They request him to inform their dead relatives that those living in the village are in good health. The celí also request the deceased to carry gifts with him to their relatives in heaven. The presents consists of pieces of bread, fruit, grain and the like wrapped up in ‘paper’ from the birch tree. The small parcels are tied to the free end of a long cloth which is wrapped around the mhendo.

The horn with the mhang is taken by the mha and a priest to a crossroads outside the village. Here the mha digs a hole and drops the horn into it. He fills up the hole and places three stones and thorny bushes (mhang pucu) on the top. The stones are covered with hay which is set on fire. Finally, the mha draws nine lines across the road leading to the village, takes some soil, spits on it, throws it in the direction of the hole and tells the mhang not to follow them and to stay away from the village. The priest blows three times on a thigh bone trumpet, the mha spits again, and then they return to the village. The mhang should no longer cause trouble to the villager as it is buried under soil, thorny bushes and fire. Should it, however, manage to come out, it will find itself in a place where several roads meet and not know which one to take. Should it by chance take the road leading to the village, it will find it cut off by the nine lines.

At the house the mha calls out to announce his return, and before they can enter some celí throw ash and dirty water out of the door; this is done to prevent Ganpo Caca from entering the house. In the meantime, the basket with the mhendo has been placed on a chair in the main room of the house, and trays with food offering made by the celí are placed in the front. It is now around midnight and the tired relatives and priests return home.

The Fourth Day

The ceremonies of the fourth day are basically similar to those performed on the day of the cremation. One could say that the deceased is cremated twice: on the first occasion his old body is cremated and on the fourth day his new one – the mhendo. It is only after the new body has been disposed off that the soul starts the journey to heaven.

105 Thakali never miss a chance to send a letter or a present with somebody going to a place where they have a relative. Travellers flying to and from Thak Khola are thus loaded with letters and small parcels. On this occasion, however, the Thakali are truly considerate. They send fewer and smaller parcels with a deceased old woman than with a young strong man.

106 It seems illogical to take these precautions because the mhang had earlier been killed and sent to heaven. However, one cannot be certain that the mhang has actually been killed and sent to heaven.
Figure 2: dunda sumba

- tiara with five Buddha (rigs Inga)
- ornaments, incl. coral necklace (khanti)
- jacket
- bowl with barley

Figure 3: decorated mhendo

- sun and moon
- small pieces of buckwheat bread
- cypress branches
- rigs Inga
- earrings of gold
- khoto
- khanti
- white cloth
- sword
- shield

Figure 4: mhangdu lingka
In the morning the close relatives gather in the house of the deceased. The mha wears new clothes. It is believed that it is actually the deceased who wears the clothes worn by the mha. The mha adorns the mhendo with ornaments which among others include a coral necklace (khanti) and a silver necklace (khto) (Figure 3). The cheni comes to the house and recites a short text while the relatives make prostrations in front of the mhendo — some up to 108 times.

Then several householder priests (tawa), monks and nuns and a large number of villagers gather in the house. The priests perform the ce pumpa ceremony, as in the morning of the day of the cremation. When the ceremony is over a priest draws an image of the mhang on a wooden plank. This image is known as mhangdu lingka; on its chest is written the syllable hri in Tibetan letters (Figure 4).

The members of the deceased’s friendship group (rowa) come to the house in their best clothes. Facing the mhendo the friends tell the deceased that they have come to kill the mhang. They also request their friend to go to heaven and not to return to the village. They then go out in the courtyard where the plank with the image of the mhang has been placed. They are offered drinks (kyalsyang) and are cheerful, as friends should be when they gather together. From a close distance each man shoots three arrows into the mhang’s head, heart and genitals. While shooting the friends sing and dance (harwa syowa): in the traditional songs they tell the mhang that they are shooting him, because he has killed their friend. When the shooting is over in the courtyard, the friends leave the house preceded by a tailor beating a drum, and just outside the house start to shoot again.

The mhendo is taken out in the courtyard and the yang dhiwa ceremony is performed, just as it was over the corpse on the day of cremation. The mhendo is

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107 In Tamang Thakali this jewellery is called khangalo and is traditionally used during weddings. Among the Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali the khoto, also, was formerly used during weddings. In connection with the 1981 Lha Phewa festival the Tamang Thakali of Kathmandu issued a publication entitled Khangalo after the name of this item of jewellery.

108 The wooden plank with the image of the mhang is made only if the deceased has been a member of a rowa group. Since only men form these groups, this ritual is not observed when the deceased is a woman. This plank is not made in the death ceremonies of the Mawatan Thakali and the Tamang Thakali. However, according to informants these groups had a similar custom ‘in the old days’.

109 Hri is a mystical word which refers to the essence of things, but it also means ‘kill’. An informant mentioned that on the plank is written nri—not hri. Tucci has a drawing of a ling ga with the word nri written on the chest; according to him the Tibetan word nri is derived from Sanskrit nr, ‘man’ (1980, p. 185). When Guru Rinpoche brought back to life the daughter of King Trisongdetsen, he wrote the syllable nri on the girl’s chest and with intense meditative concentration brought her back to life (Wangchuk 1998, p. 7).
then carried by the *mha* to the ‘Stone Plain’ in front of the old school building and placed on a chair. A table with cups of beer and alcohol is put in the front, and large trays with food offerings are placed next to it. The close relatives make prostrations to the *mhendo*, and the *umce* performs the *phasyal syowa* dance, exactly as he did around the bier on the day of cremation.

Afterwards, the *mhendo* is handed over to a *mha* who sits on a richly decorated horse. A *lama* leads the way holding an end of a white scarf tied to the *mhendo*. Behind them comes the other *mha*, some close patrilineal male relatives and a number of priests and nuns playing musical instruments.

The procession walks to the reliquary stone structure (*khimi*) of the deceased’s subclan (*phobe*). The *khimi* are mostly found around the old, deserted temple on the northern outskirts of the village and contain a bone from each dead member of the subclan. Here the friends shoot at the *mhang* for the last time, then they smash the plank with a big stone and burn it. The *mha* dismantles the *mhendo*. The cypress branches are placed on the top of the *khimi*, while the bone, the contents of the pot inside the *mhendo*, the ladder used during *mhang rawa*, and the presents sent by the *celi* with the deceased are all thrown into the *khimi*. A part of the food offerings is also thrown into the *khimi* while the rest is eaten by the members of the procession.

The procession then returns to the house of the deceased where the *rowa*, members of his *phobe*, his *mha* and other close relatives are invited for a meal. The friends are sometimes given a few rupees for their participation, while the ritual specialists receive an amount of grain equal to that in the basket holding the *mhendo*, while the *mha* are given double the amount. The *mha* are also given about Rs 100 (*gyole sai*) which they use for a common party. The *celi* receive a similar amount which they too use for a party.

**Other Ceremonies**

On the 7th, 14th, 21st, 28th, 35th, 42nd and 49th day the household offers a big butter lamp at the house altar in the name of the deceased. Well-off households may also invite priests to recite texts (*che dowa*). The 13th day is also important. On this day the household offers butterlamps, and some also sponsor book recitation either in their house or in the village temple. The *cyangpar* ceremony is sometimes performed on this day, also.

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110 The top of the *khimi* and the cypress of the *mhendo* both symbolize a man’s head. Similarly, the *khimi*’s middle part and the grain of the *mhendo* both symbolize the abdomen.

111 The thirteenth day after death is important to Hindus, and among the Tamang Thakali the *mhang rawa* ceremony is usually performed on this day.
The cyangpar ceremony, however, usually takes place on the 49th day (sipyu sirgu). According to Tibetan Buddhist belief it takes the consciousness (rnam shes) forty-nine days to pass through the stage between death and rebirth (bar do), and the main purpose of the cyangpar ceremony is to guide the consciousness to a good rebirth. In Syang the cyangpar ceremony takes place in the village temple where the household offers 108 butterlamps in the name of the deceased, and the priests recite the text 'od dpag med chos. When the recitation is over the umce burns a paper with a print of the dead man and his name over a butter lamp. A big piece of cloth bearing a small label with the name of the deceased is hung under the ceiling; it is believed that this gift facilitates the dead man's journey to heaven.

In Syang on the 15th of the first Thakali month (ala) a collective ceremony called korsyang pumpa is held for all those who have died in the past year. The households of the deceased gather in the main village square (lyangha lya) and serve tea, beer and alcohol to other villagers. One year after the death the household sponsors a ceremony (tyuran lawa) in the village temple. This ceremony marks the end of the mourning period.

CONCLUSION

Tibetan Buddhism is often associated only with large monasteries and with monks seeking supreme realization through meditation and rituals. What is described here is another aspect of Tibetan Buddhism. The kind of Tibetan Buddhism found in Thak Khola could be called the Little (or Folk) Tradition of Tibetan Buddhism or Village Lamaism, in contrast with the Great Tradition of Tibetan Buddhism found in the religious centres of Tibet.

112 See also Waddell 1894 and Snellgrove 1957 for the cyangpar ceremony which Snellgrove refers to as 'Guiding the Consciousness after Death' (p. 262).
113 The tyuran lawa ceremony is also known in Lubra, where it is called durin (Ramble 1982, p.342).
114 Sons and daughters should not drink milk for 13 days after the death of their mother, and eat no meat in case of their father. In addition, women should not wear jewellery and put oil in their hair for a period of one year when their parents die.
115 Tibet had not only large monasteries supported by the state or their own revenue-yielding estates, but also small monasteries. On the latter, Kværne has observed, 'On the whole, these monasteries did not aim at training doctores theologiae, but rather aimed at meeting the need of the local community for religious ceremonies of all kinds, and the rudiments of education, and to a large extent also diversion and entertainment in the form of mask-dances etc. on the occasion of the large religious feasts' (Kværne 1977, p. 88).
There are no large monasteries in Thak Khola. The only true monastic community is found in the monastery in Syang. In Thak Khola there are very few monks but a relatively large number of nuns and householder priests. The nuns are found mostly in Thaksatsae, and the householder priests mainly in Pacgau.

The householder priests are true ritual specialists. Their aim is not to reach supreme realization through meditation and rituals, but to help the villagers survive in a world full of potentially harmful superhuman beings. The main purpose of a Thakali ritual is to satisfy and pacify the superhuman beings in order to prevent sickness and misfortune. When a Thakali sponsors a ceremony, he usually seeks what benefits he can gain here and now, while his concern for 'merit' and life after death is limited.

The Thakali are usually described as being Buddhist. For example, Professor C. von Fürer-Haimendorf has noted that 'though they retained some elements of an older tribal religion, Buddhism became the dominant ideological force. Temples and monasteries were built in many of the Thakali villages, and considerable numbers of young men and women joined these institutions as monks and nuns. There can be little doubt that even fifty years ago the Thakali must have presented a picture of a Buddhist society subscribing to most of the values and beliefs of Tibetan Buddhism.'

It is difficult to describe the religion of the Thakali in general terms. First, their religion includes elements from several traditions (the pre-Buddhist dhom tradition, Tibetan Buddhism and Hinduism). Second, the Thakali form a heterogeneous group, and in a study of their religion it is important to distinguish between a number of subgroups according to ethnicity, locality, education, sex, age, etc; for example, some Thakali claim to be atheists. Finally, in a study of Thakali religion one should distinguish between the ritual and the cognitive aspects. The tradition which is dominant in the ritual aspect is not necessarily dominant in the cognitive aspect.

My hypothesis is that Tibetan Buddhism was – and still is, albeit to a lesser degree – an important element of the Thakali ritual, especially in Pacgau and the northern part of Thaksatsae, but its impact on the cognitive aspect was – and still is – limited. The Thakali death ceremonies support this hypothesis because they include many non-Buddhist elements, and to the learned monks from the big monasteries in Central Tibet, they may seem 'archaic' and 'primitive'.

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117 The non-Buddhist elements of the Thakali death ceremonies were overlooked by C. von Fürer-Haimendorf, who has written, 'Similarly private rites, and in particular the complicated sequence of the mortuary rites, followed orthodox Buddhist practice ...' (1966, p. 143)
Buddhism concerning the existence of a permanent soul and life after death. In orthodox Tibetan Buddhism as presented in the texts and in the teachings of the leading lamas, the non-existence of a permanent soul and the cycle of rebirth are two of the cornerstones of the doctrine. In contrast, the Thakali believe in the existence of a permanent soul, and they do not subscribe to the belief in an endless cycle of rebirths.

Whether or not it is correct to state that fifty years ago the Thakali presented a picture of a Buddhist society subscribing to most of the values and beliefs of Tibetan Buddhism depends, of course, on how one defines the values and beliefs of Tibetan Buddhism. If one includes the beliefs in the non-existence of a permanent soul and in an endless cycle of rebirths, the Thakali are, generally speaking, not Buddhist. A better approach is to use a broader definition and to define a Buddhist as one who regards him or herself as a follower of Lord Buddha; one may then proceed to describe and analyse the various forms of Buddhism. According to this definition, most of the Thakali of Thak Khola are Buddhists.
Chapter XIII

FESTIVALS

This chapter describes the three main festivals of the Thakali of the Thak Khola valley, namely *Torenla, Phala* and *Lha Phewa*.\(^1\)

**Torenla**

*Torenla* is the most important annual festival among the Thakali. It has been suggested that *Torenla* is the Thakali New Year festival.\(^4\) This may not be correct, because *torenla* is the second month of the Thakali calendar (February–March). In the Thakali language *toren* means ‘first’ and *torenla* may be translated as ‘the first month’; this is, however, not a reference to the first month of the Thakali calendar, but to the first month of the Tibetan calendar. *Torenla* is more likely an ancient spring festival because it is celebrated at a time (usually early March) when days start becoming warmer and fields greener.\(^3\)

The *Torenla* celebration varies from village to village; the present section describes how it was celebrated in Syang in 1977.

Preparations started a week before the festival. The houses were cleaned and whitewashed, and copper and brass pots were taken to the river to be scrubbed and polished. Large quantities of beer and alcohol were prepared and many households also slaughtered a goat for the occasion.

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1. For a brief description of the main Thakali festivals, see Manzardo 1985. The *Lha Phewa* festival has been described by Jest 1974a and Somlai 1982, and by Vinding 1983 and 1992. For notes and photographs on the *Phala* festival, see Jest 1974b.
3. Moreover, Thakali informants state that *Torenla* is similar to the Hindu spring festival of *Holi*. None of my informants ever referred to *Torenla* as their New Year festival.
In the evening of the 14th day of the month of torenla small round, flat breads were prepared from wheatflour mixed with a little sweet buckwheat and ground turmeric.4 The breads (chyuku gyang) were deep-fried in oil at the main fireplace in the central room of the house (dhim thyowa).5 A group of three or four women worked together; when they finished making bread in one house, they went to the next, and so forth. First, the women prepared four small breads which were put on a stick and placed at the altar (saphu).6 They also made 20 to 30 slightly smaller breads which were presented the next morning to the tailor and the blacksmith serving the household. While cooking the women were not allowed to eat the bread.

Around 11 p.m. a tailor went from house to house drumming, starting at the senior headman's house. This marked the start of the festival.

The next morning (the day of the full moon) around 3 a.m. the senior male household member made offerings to the ancestors (khimi cuwa) at the altar in the central room; the offerings take place at night because it is believed that the ancestors will not attend in daylight.7 Fresh water and cypress branches were placed in the sacred vessels at the altar;8 also, fresh cypress branches were placed in the stone structure on the roof (canga) where the household's protective deity resides. A cushion (thari) and a small table (cyoka) were arranged next to the altar. The cushion was reserved for the ancestors, and no living person is allowed to use it. Fresh breads, eggs, tea, alcohol, beer, and other foodstuffs were placed on the table. Then the senior male member invited his ancestors (and his parents-in-law and children, if deceased) to come and participate in the festival and threw small pieces of the food and drinks into the air, saying 'receive-receive' (cho cho). In this connection the senior male member described the route from heaven to the village: the sky (nam), the mountains (ghang), the bare mountain below the glacier (ya), the pastures ( pang), the forest (ngha), the rocks (dhak), the lakes (cho), the fields (shing), the road (lam), the river (chu), the residence of the protective deity (ca nga) and the altar (saphu).9 When the ceremony was over household members ate breads and drank. Similar offerings were also made.

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4 In 1977 this day fell on 3 March and in 1983 on 27 March.
5 That is the only occasion when this sacred fireplace is used.
6 The three small lower breads were round while the uppermost had three small peaks.
7 The offering is made by the eldest female member if all male members are minors (that is below 16 years of age).
8 The water should be fetched from a clear spring or river. It is believed that on this occasion if one sees the river 'sleeping' (that is, making no sound), one will become rich and have a happy life.
9 Several objects are called by their Tibetan name; for example, a river is called chu in Tibetan and kyu in Thakali.
in the early morning of the following two days, and before each meal a small part of the food was placed on the ancestors’ table.

That afternoon married women visited their natal home and presented their father and brothers breads, liquor, and beer, and in return received uncooked rice and a shawl (kyatam). On that day some also invited their married daughters and sisters with their husbands and children for a meal.

From the 15th and until the night of the 17th villagers ate, drank and gambled. The men played cards (tas lyangpa), the women a game called naka bhoti, the girls a game called pana, and the boys a game where they threw coins into a small hole made in the ground (paisha khopi). Since gambling was strictly forbidden after the 17th, some men gambled uninterruptedly from the early morning of the 15th till late in the evening of the 16th.

In the morning of the 18th the household head performed a ceremony known as kungo chyowa in his main field: he whitewashed the stones situated in the middle of the field (koecyang), burned incense and offered coloured strings, bread, grains, and a mixture of barley flour and butter (sur) to the gods of the field.

That afternoon the male villagers aged between 18 and 61 gathered at the archery ground (dhaci). The targets were two six-foot high wooden planks which were situated some 30 metres apart. The men divided themselves into two groups. The group which was led by the senior headman sat at a long table in the southern end of the ground, while that led by the junior headman sat at the

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10 If a woman is deceased one of her unmarried daughters will visit her natal home on her behalf.

11 In naka bhoti there can be any number of players, but usually no more than six. Say there are four players. Person X takes a handful of cowrie shells (or maize grains) in his closed fist and places it in the front of the other players. The other players then place 1, 2, 3 or 4 shells in the front of them (two players cannot have the same number). Then X will open his fist and place the shells in groups of four. In the end there will be either 0, 1, 2 or 3 shells left over. If there is 1 shell left, the player who has placed 1 wins, if there are 2, the player who has placed 2 wins, etc. In case none of the players has chosen the right number, X wins and receives a certain amount of money from each of the other players (usually one or two rupees). If person Y has the correct number, X gets nothing, and Y gets a chance to win. Therefore, a player has to have the correct number twice in a row to win money. If a player wins again, the amount is doubled. Finally, if X wins and then loses the subsequent game to Y, X should pay Y the amount which Y paid X in the preceding game.

12 In pana the stake is cowrie shells, not money. The shells are thrown up in the air, and the winner is the person who has most shells with the opening turned upwards.

13 In Baragau, too, an odd number of white stones (btsag-rollo) are set in the middle of fields and a ceremony is performed in February before the wheat planting (Ramble 1984, p. 208).

14 The time is fixed by an astrologer; it usually falls on the 18th day of the month, but it can also fall a day before or after.
opposite end; the formation of the groups did not follow any prescribed pattern, but close relatives usually joined the same group.

After the men had drunk beer (paid by the village) they walked with cypress and branches of willow in their hands to the ‘big’ (southern) target (dhaci thyowa). The senior headman’s group sang a traditional song in which they invited the ancestors to join them and described the route from heaven to the village;\(^{15}\) the headman then placed a small cypress branch and butter on the top of the target, while the others offered beer and grain into the air. The ceremony was repeated by the junior headman’s group. Then three men with both parents still living, the headmen, the upa pradhan, the secretary and the chief village priest each shot an arrow at the opposite target. Afterwards the men repeated the ceremony at the ‘small’ (northern) target.

When the ceremony was over the game of archery (me lyangpa) commenced and it continued until the 3rd of the next month.\(^{16}\) The Thakali use bows (dholen), arrows (me) and quivers made of bamboo. The players were divided into two or three teams by drawing lots.\(^ {17}\) In turn each player shot two arrows, and the team which first hit the targets 20 times won. The prize was Rs 20 from each of the players from the other team, which was divided equally among the members of the winning team. The game also ended when a player hit the small bull’s-eye (khoe); the winner received Rs 20 to 50 from each of the other players.\(^ {18}\) In return he offered them a glass of alcohol and a plate of meat in an adjoining tent where some women ran a temporary restaurant (for which they paid a fee to the village treasury). Players spent a good deal of time there and few were sober by evening.\(^ {19}\)

\(^{15}\) For the route, see above. The singer may also mention the important local sacred places, e.g., the site of the local protective deity (Pholha), Kusthaberngha temple, Guru Sangbi, Muktinath (salpi) and Cushing Rangiyung. Guru Sangbi (Tib., gu ru gsang phug). 'Guru's Hidden Cave', is a sacred cave above Naprungkhung where Guru Rinpoche is supposed to have meditated. Cushing Rangiyung is a sacred cave between Samar and Geling (north of Thak Khola) where there are some statues of calcite which are believed to be self-created. According to Snellgrove, the cave is called gcong gshi rang byung, 'Self-Produced Place of Promenade' (1961, p. 189 and 1979, p. 82). A better alternative is (g)cong zhi rang byung, 'Place of Self-Created [Images of] Calcite'.

\(^{16}\) The archery contests, however, stop on the 2nd if the 3rd happens to be an inauspicious day.

\(^{17}\) The drawing of lots was done as follows. Each participant gave an arrow to a young boy who mixed the arrows (which are marked) and divided them at random into two or three groups.

\(^{18}\) The prize for hitting the bull’s eye is high according to local standards. In 1980 a schoolteacher in Syang who had a monthly salary of Rs 510, received a prize of Rs 1,350; that was the highest prize ever paid in the village.

\(^{19}\) It happens that drunken players get into a verbal brawl, but I have only once seen it end in a fist fight.
On the final day of the archery the men gathered once again to sing to the ancestors. However, this time they requested the ancestors to return to their abode, the sky (nam).

In the morning of the 20th the elder women of the village (uime) gathered in the senior headman’s house for a ceremonial circumambulation of the fields (shingkor pumpa).\(^\text{20}\) Households which included a female aged between 30 to 61 years were obliged to send a participant; although they were not obliged to come, most women above 61 also took part.

The women proceeded clockwise from the village to the old temple, then down to the Syang river, from there they continued to the confluence of the Syang river and the Kali Gandaki river, then followed the Kali Gandaki south to the end of the fields and then turned back to the village. During the circuit the women stopped at prescribed places (such as the old temple, at Syang river opposite the cremation ground, etc.) where they sang and prostrated to the local gods; for example, at the fields the women requested the goddess Shing Namo for a good harvest. When the women had climbed up to the southern outskirts of the village they were met by villagers, who offered beer and liquor in the name of those who had died in the past year. After that they walked up to the Pholha to pray.

From the Pholha the women proceeded to the archery ground where the male villagers had gathered along two long tables. The women placed themselves in front of the tables and sang to the men. The men sang back and if a man gave a good reply, the women showed their appreciation by crying ‘well done, well done’. As a part of the duel the women begged money from the men who threw contributions into a shawl. When the songs ended two women dressed like a Tibetan couple performed a comic sketch. Around 8 p.m. the men and the women went over to the school building where they sang and danced through the night.

The next day the women went to all the houses in the village and blessed the members (molam pumpa). In return they were presented beer, liquor, tea and money; some men returned the blessings by singing praise to the women. That night the women gathered at the senior headman’s house for a party which was financed by the presents the women had received during the day; the women feasted again the following night until all the money was spent.

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\(^{20}\) As mentioned earlier, the present description relates how the *Torenlia* festival was celebrated among the Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali in Syang village. While the main features were the same in the other villages in Thak Kholo, there were some important differences. For example, in the villages in Thaksatsae the Tamang Thakali women no longer circumambulate the fields. For circumambulation of fields in Baragau, see Ramble 1996, pp. 145–146.
Phala is the main summer festival in Pacgau. As the name indicates, the festival is celebrated in the month of phala; in Syang the festival is, however, celebrated in the month of khila. The present section describes how Phala was observed in Syang in 1977.

Phala is the young men's festival. The young men of the village form a number of groups known as rowa (lit., 'friends'). In 1977 there were three groups in Syang, namely the eldest (thyowa), the middle (parpa) and the youngest (cyange); the members of the groups were in their early thirties, mid-twenties and early twenties, respectively.

Formerly, there was only one rowa group; it comprised 16 members appointed by the village and between the eldest and the youngest member there had to be an age difference of at least thirteen years. The group functioned as a village militia. Priests were not required to join since they had the duty of looking after the religious affairs.

Nowadays the young men in the village form their own rowa groups and priests are also included. The members select a leader (thyuimi) and a secretary (sacib). The group also has a person who is responsible for making beer (syangpa) and a general helper (dhimpa); these posts rotate among the members.

In the evening of 12 khila (27 July) the eldest rowa met in the house of the dhimpa which served as the group's headquarters during the festival. The leader explained the programme and ordered the syangpa to provide alcohol from one muri and beer from 10 pathi of barley. Next, a villager who was an excellent singer taught the rowa the traditional songs of the festival. Before the rowa went home that night the leader ordered them to report the next morning; latecomers were fined.

The next day the eldest rowa made their horses ready, and in the evening they ate and drank together with their wives (who are known asromo or romosya).

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21 Consequently, in Syang the Phala festival is called Khila.
22 The Phala festival is also celebrated in Thini and Cimang, while it is no longer observed in Marpha. In 1997 I was informed that the Phala festival no longer takes place in Syang and Cimang.
23 In their youth, some of the oldest men in Syang were appointed members of the village rowa, which indicates that this custom was alive until the beginning of the 20th century.
24 The thyuimi and the sacib also have these duties.
25 If the dhimpa has a small house, the group uses one of the clan houses in the village.
26 The cost of the grain was shared equally between the syangpa and the dhimpa.
27 Since most of the men did not have a horse they either borrowed from a relative or hired one in Jomsom, Thini or Marpha. In 1977 the price for hiring a horse was Rs. 100 for two
That morning the middle rowa group left on a pilgrimage to Tilicho Lake (above Thini).

The following morning the eldest rowa gathered and changed into identical Nepalese shirts and trousers. Then they walked in a procession to the school. Along the way the romo and other villagers offered them drinks (kyalsang) and wished them good luck, while the rowa sang. At the school the rowa mounted their horses, sang a traditional song and rode down to the Syang river. The leader announced a horse race to Ghole Cewa Lya on the other side of the river - a distance of a few hundred meters.

From Ghole Cewa Lya the rowa rode up into the mountains. The trip varied between horse racing and short rests. At the fields at Pangco the leader ordered three members to collect edible plants (dho) and another two to buy a ball of butter from the yakherders. Then the rowa rode up to a cave (syangli u) where they spent the night.

Early next morning (the day of the full moon) the chief priest (umce) joined them. After the morning tea the rowa walked to Cangpui U. On the way they washed themselves in a stream and placed a prayer flag on a small hill. Cangpui U is a subterranean cave which is situated about 1,000 meters above the village. The umce performed a ceremony at the entrance, and the rowa climbed down into the cave, which is about 10 metres below the surface. On the walls of the cave are five self-created figures known as the Snake Necklace (puki phramo), the White Garuda (khyungli karpo), the Big Penis (ongli chenpo), the Vagina (phamo dolmo) and the White Lion (singi karpo). The rowa offered butterlamps to these and climbed back up to the surface. At the entrance they prostrated themselves and the umce tied a holy string around their neck. Then they returned to Syangli U.

After lunch the group proceeded back to the village. At Pangco the leader ordered three members to collect edible plants. The three joined the others further down the hill, and together they rode down to Ghole Cewa Lya where relatives awaited them with drinks, snacks and clean clothes.

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days. In the early 1980s hotel owners began hiring out horses to tourists, and in 1988 the rate increased to Rs 300 per day.

28 Formerly the rowa sang in Thakali language, but nowadays its done in Nepali.

29 The first stop was at a small reliquary stone structure (mane) at Ghopkya. The second was at Nyalsya Tuwa Lya (lit., ‘the female friends resting place’). Formerly, the wives of the rowa would leave the village in the morning and wait for their husbands at this place. They would then ride together to the Syang Cave. The third stopping place was Pangco.

30 There is also a self-created figure in the rocks outside the cave, namely the Copper Lock (tama golcha).
A large number of villagers were gathered at the stone reliquary structures at the village's northern entrance to welcome them. The rowa rode through the village singing traditional songs and returned to the main street (daro thang) for a horse race. The street is narrow and one man rode straight into a wall and badly injured his leg. That night the rowa feasted together with their wives.

During the day (15 khila) the youngest rowa group visited the Kutshab-ternga temple, and the middle group returned from Tilicho Lake.

The next day the eldest rowa 'played the yak' (yha thypa). In the morning the rowa, accompanied by a large number of villagers went to the Pholha to pray and offer butterlamps. Afterwards they made two yaks: a big woollen blanket (pherpa) was placed over a rowa who stood inside a wooden frame, in front of which was fixed a yak head. The yaks were called the big (yha thypa) and the small yak (yha cyangpa). Two other rowa became the yak owners (dawa). The yaks circled the Pholha tree and walked down to the village.

The dance started in an open stall (ngue) which the yaks circled three times before proceeding into the street where villagers welcomed them with drinks (kyalsyang). The yaks caught female spectators and pretended to have sex with them. They also made fun of other villagers and abused them by using dirty words; this was permitted even in front of relatives in whose presence the wearers would not normally use such words.

The yaks went and danced at the 'Place of the Yak Dance' (yha lyangpa lya) next to a big red stone reliquary structure (chyo nhang) in the northern end of the village; then they continued through the narrow streets to the playground at the old school building (dhothang).

At the playground the yak dance was followed by a few sketches performed by some of the rowa and romo. First, two thieves (yo) and their wives (yosya) tried to steal the yaks, but after much tumult the owners drove them away. Next, a small boy caught the big yak and rode on it. The yak became ill, and when the cause of sickness had been determined by feeling the yak's pulse,31 a priest and his assistant cured it by performing ceremonies and making offerings.32 After that the boy rode on the small yak which also became sick. It was cured by two shamans (jhakri) who went into a trance (dev basnu).

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31 Thakali healers feel the patient's pulse at the wrist to identify the cause of the sickness. There the healer felt the yak's pulse on its horns!

32 The plays do not follow any fixed pattern, but depend on the actors' improvisations. One year I saw the 'healer' perform the phag che dance around the 'yak', similar to the chief village priest's dance around the corpse during death ceremonies.
When the plays were over the yak owners took the yaks behind the school building where they got a well-deserved rest and drinks. After the interlude, the yaks danced with their owners and the thieves.

Later the yaks returned to the stall of the dhimpa’s house where men and women joined them in a traditional Thakali dance. There were also song duels between men and women. The dancing and singing took place in a free and relaxed atmosphere with frequent exchanges of sexual jokes.

That evening there was a cultural programme in the school which also drew spectators from the neighbouring villages. The programme consisted of numerous songs and sketches performed in Nepali language. The merry-making continued into the night in most of the village inns. The rowa spent that night in the dhimpa’s house.

The following morning (17 khila) the rowa went to the Phola where they made an effigy which symbolized evil (mhang). It was set on fire and carried to the village by a young tailor, while the rowa and other villagers followed him singing traditional songs. The effigy was thrown away (mhang thyawa) at the entrance (gyo khang) of the village facing the lower settlement. The procession then went to Chyo Nhang where the rhowa performed a traditional Thakali dance.

From there the rowa proceeded to the school playground where they performed two comic sketches. The first was called ‘Playing the Yogi’ (jogi lyangpa) and included two actors who were dressed like yogis. To amuse the audience, they joined pieces of wood formed like a penis and a vagina, and tried to hit the spectators with them. The second play was called ‘The Fun is Coming’ (shemephwa) and showed the Thakalis’ economic activities (agriculture, animal husbandry and trade) and satirized their northern and southern neighbours.

On 18 khila the rowa went to all the houses of the village. The ‘yogi’ blessed the houses by going three times around the central pillar (ghum da) of the main room (dhim thyowa). In return the villagers presented them with alcohol and various foodstuffs (such as potatoes, salt, chilli, etc.) which they ate later that night. During the day the middle rowa visited the Pholha for worship.

The following day the eldest rowa visited the Pholha to beg forgiveness for their indecent behaviour and language during the festival. Then they settled the accounts and returned things which they had borrowed from other villagers. Later they had a picnic (jhompa). The festival traditionally ends on this day.

On 20 khila the youngest rowa visited the Pholha for worship. The eldest rowa may have another picnic if they still have food and money left.

During the festival villagers were allowed to hold archery contests for seven days, usually beginning on 15 khila.
LHA PHEWA

The main festival of the Tamang Thakali is *Lha Phewa*, lit., ‘the coming (or appearance) of the gods’. The four clan gods appear only once every twelfth year—in the year of the monkey (*prelo*). The *Lha Phewa* has a prelude, namely the festival *Soisoi Lawa* which is celebrated three or four years prior to the appearance of the gods. The present section describes how *Lha Phewa* was celebrated in January 1981.

The *Lha Phewa* was organized and supervised by a committee comprised of the headmen of the thirteen villages of Thaksatsae, the leaders of the four clans, and other respected men.

The committee had a budget raised by voluntary contributions from the local Thakali associations (*samaaj*): Thakali from Pokhara presented Rs 7,500, from Bhairahwa Rs 5,100, from Kathmandu Rs 5,000, and from Galkot Rs 1,301. The budget was used for building a temporary health post and toilets, procurement of a dozen pressure lamps, food for the priests, entertainment, and the like.

Each of the four clans also had their own committee which organized and supervised the clan’s activities during the festival. For example, the Gaucan committee consisted of 11 members, namely two leaders and nine assistants; one assistant was provided by each of the eight Gaucan subclans residing in Thak Khola, except for Lam Phobe which provided two.

**Day 1**

At noon, the organizing committee met in the Kobang school. The chairman (Shangkarman Shercan) read out a document which detailed the programme and the duties of the clans during the festival.

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33 In Nepali the festival is referred to as *bara barsa kumbha mela*, ‘The 12-Year Festival’.
34 The *Soisoi Lawa* preceding the 1981 *Lha Phewa* took place 21–25 March 1977. On the first day the four priests and the four virgin boys went to Mharsyang Kyu. The next morning they purified themselves and the gods’ weapons in the sacred river. Then they proceeded to Khanti and Kobang where the Bhattacan priest ‘danced’ like on the second day of the *Lha Phewa*. In the evening they recited the clan histories in the cave Pyung Kyu U. The priests spent the third and the fourth day in the cave relaxing and (in the afternoon) reciting the clan histories. On the last day the priests visited the four clan temples and knocked their weapons above the entrance doors.
36 Second day (*chaiwa nhi*) of the 12th month (*bumla*) of the Thakali calendar, corresponding to 8 January 1981.
37 The (typed) document was in the Nepali language.
In a small adjoining room which belongs to the thirteen villages, the four clan priests (pare) performed a ceremony. The chief headman (mir mukhiya) lit a small butterlamp and the priests recited the text Solcep; this text is recited when minor offerings are presented to the clan gods and before the priests eat their meal. During the recitation clouds were gathering, and to prevent rain the priests recited the text Thangrau and burned some cypress. Afterwards the priest recited the text Shyang Rhab; this text is recited before the priests or the clan gods depart from a place.

When the function at the school was over the priests and four young virgin boys (kumar) – one from each clan – departed for the sacred river Mharsyang Kyu. They were all dressed in the colour of their clan: Gaucan red, Tulacan green, Shercan white and Bhattacan black. They walked to the old courthouse in Kobang, through a field, and down to the riverbed. At Khanti they crossed the Kali Gandaki and walked up to Mharsyang Kyu.

The organizing committee sent along a cook and a man to pay for the priests’ expenses. The thirteen villages of Thaksatsae each provided two chickens for the priests, while rice and lentils were paid for by the organizing committee.

When the group reached Mharsyang Kyu the priests recited the text Shyu Rhab which is recited when the priests and the gods arrive at a new location.

The priests installed themselves in one of the (two) houses and made a small altar where they placed the clans’ sacred objects: Gaucan’s sword (patang), Tulacan’s axe (namcyatar), Shercan’s small axe (lhabe), and Bhattacan’s long handled pickaxe (myungto); small water-containers (bhumpu); Gaucan’s, Tulacan’s and Shercan’s peacock feather fans (mramui) and Bhattacan’s stick (syungti); and Gaucan’s helmet made of iron, copper and brass (garnyorpu).

The evening meal was taken shortly after dusk. Prior to that the Gaucan priest lit a butterlamp at the altar and recited the Solcep. Afterwards the Gaucan

38 The Gaucan priest had functioned in the 1977 Soisoi Lawa, but this was his first Lha Phewa. The Tulacan priest had participated in the Lha Phewa in 1944, 1956 and 1968. However, shortly before the start of the 1981 festival his wife died, thus he was impure and not allowed to function as priest. He was initially replaced by a young boy from his lineage; during the festival the boy was replaced by the priest’s brother’s son, whom the priest initiated at Mharsyangkyu. The Shercan priest had taken part in the 1968 festival as a young man, and the Bhattacan priest had participated in 1956 and 1968.

39 The copy of the text which the priests used was in Thakali language written in the Devanagari script.

40 Thakali (and Tibetans) consider smoke from burning cypress to be a purifying substance.

41 The clothes and the shoes worn by the priests were paid for by their respective clans.

42 During the festival the priests are not allowed to eat food or undertake activities which are considered impure such as eating garlic and having sex.
and the Bhattacan priests drank a glass of alcohol (the Shercan priest was a teetotaller, and the Tulacan priest was too young to drink alcohol).

Day 2

In the morning the priests drank tea and ate a small plate of potato stew (bla). A group of young Thakali men from the south arrived together with two Japanese girls; one of the men had a video camera with him.

At 8.30 a.m. the priests went to Mharsyang Kyu where they washed themselves and their weapons in the icy water. Then they dried and purified themselves in the smoke of burning cypress, and refilled the water containers (bhumpu). Finally, the priests made a large number of sacred strings (in the colour of their respective clans); the strings were later distributed to worshippers, who tied them around their necks.

The priests returned to the house, where they recited the Solcep and had lunch. After a short rest they recited the Shyang Rhab and departed for Khanti.

At 2.00 p.m., the priests reached Khanti where more than a hundred people had gathered at the riverbed below the village to welcome them.43 Besides Tamang Thakali there were also many villagers from Pacgau. Among those gathered was a Thakali minister who had brought with him a crew from the Royal Nepal Film Corporation.

On arrival the priests recited the Shyu Rhab. Then, the Bhattacan priest tied strings with big bells (thortung) around his waist and started to shake and dance. A young Bhattacan man held a shawl containing salt in front of him, and the priest ate the salt three times.44 Afterwards a group of Bhattacan women offered drinks (kelsang) to their clan priest.45

From Khanti the priests left for nearby Kobang. During the festival the priests had to follow prescribed routes which were believed to have been used originally by the clan gods. Therefore, at Kobang the priests walked through a

43 Women are traditionally not allowed to wear red clothes on this occasion, but the rule was no longer observed.
44 The youth was, as prescribed, from the Bara Dhorche Sara Dhorche subclan; this subclan is found only in Myagdi district.
45 The Bhattacan god Lha Yhawu Rangiyung (‘Self-Created Yak’) died in the cave Syangsen Dong U above Marpha at the hands of the ancestor of the local Gumli clan. During Soisoi Lawa, which is celebrated three years prior to the Lha Phewa, the Bhattacan clan formerly presented the Gumli Cyangpa clan a small yak. At the time of Lha Phewa, the yak was killed, and its head was handed over to the Bhattacan clan at the time when the priests arrive at Khanti from Mharsyang Kyu. This custom was last observed at the festival in 1944. However, according to informants, the custom was re-introduced at the 1993 Lha Phewa.
field and continued to the square in front of the old courthouse. Here, the Bhattacan priest again started to shake and dance, but this time the shawl containing the salt was held in front of him by a woman. The priest again ate the salt three times.

Shortly after that the priests walked through a small kitchen garden, and the Shercan priest was offered drinks by a group of women from his clan. The priests then separated and walked up to their respective temples: the Gaucan and the Tulacan temples are situated next to each other on a hill immediately below Nakhung while the Bhattacan and the Shercan temples are located on a hill above Kobang.

At the temples the priests received the images of the clan gods. The Gaucan, Tulacan and Shercan images are wooden masks, while the Bhattacan’s is a head of a yak. The Gaucan, Tulacan and Shercan priests carried their masks to the source of a small river called Dhongsya Kyu which is located 15 minutes walk northwest of Kobang. At the source, the priests recited the Shyu Rhab and placed the masks in the following order: Gaucan first and highest, followed by Tulacan in the middle and Shercan slightly below. Instead of the yak head of the Bhattacan, some long wooden sticks (which symbolized its bones) were placed in the water. The objects remained there for three nights.

The four priests and the virgin boys spent this and the following nights in a small cave called Pyung Kyu U on the outskirts of Larjung.

**Days 3 and 4**

On these two days the priests should normally recite the histories of the four clans (rhab shewa); they refused, however, because as a part of a reform to cut expenses at social functions the thirteen headmen had decided, without consulting the priests, that they should no longer be presented a turban (tote) and their wives a shawl (tatum). Furthermore, the priests complained that other traditional rules were also not being observed. For instance, it is forbidden to ride a horse in Thasang (i.e. Khanti, Kobang, Larjung and Naprunghung) from the time the priests return from Mharsyang Kyu; several persons had already broken the rule and had only been fined Rs 1 – not the prescribed Rs 3.

Then, some bad news came. In the morning of the third day news arrived from the south that a young Thakali woman had died after a childbirth. When an old woman heard that, she said that the festival was surrounded by bad fortune and mentioned that the Tulacan priest’s wife had also died recently. It was
thought to have happened because the gods who are supposed to meet only once every twelfth year had met in the interim period.46

The thirteen headmen faced more problems. In Thaksatsae gambling is forbidden except during certain festivals, and *Lha Phewa* is not one of them. Several men had requested the headmen to permit gambling saying that they needed to relax in the evenings. When the women heard about that, they complained to the headmen that if the men could not do their work without gambling, the women would be pleased to look after the gods and the guests – if the men took care of the house, children and the cooking. As a compromise the headmen decided to allow gambling for six days only.

**Day 5**

At noon a few men and women gathered at Pyung Kyu U and offered foodstuffs and lit 108 butterlamps to the clan gods (*cho pulwa*). The priests recited the *Solecp*, and the offerings were placed at a small altar where the clan weapons were arranged. At the end of the ceremony the offerings were distributed to those present.

At 2 p.m. the priests left for Dhongsya Kyu where a large number of people were gathered. Normally, there is no water in Dhongsya Kyu, but it is believed that once every twelfth year, at the time of *Lha Phewa*, water miraculously appears. In 1981 there was only very little water. The masks were cleaned in the water, and the priests recited the *Shyang Rhab*.

The masks were then taken in a procession to the temple at Nakhung.48 Numerous people stood along the route to receive the gods’ blessings: people bowed their head and were touched with the masks. At Nakhung temple the gods were welcomed with drinks (*kelsang*) by the Gaucan, Tulacan and Shercan clans. Then the masks were covered with clothes in their respective clan’s colour, and the priests recited the *Shyu Rhab*.

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46 In the 1970s the mask of the Gaucan god was stolen. It was later recovered, and as a safety measure the masks were taken from the temples and placed together in a safe.

47 In the Tibetan and Thakali calendar, days are sometimes deleted or added so that the calendar is aligned with the phases of the moon. In January 1981 the 6th day of the 12th month was deleted, thus the 5th day of the festival fell on the 7th day of the month, corresponding to 12 January 1981.

48 The present temple was built in the 1930s and belongs to the *Nyingmapa* order. The old temple was situated close to the Gaucan clan shrine; it is said to have been of the *Ngorpa* sub-order of the *Sakyapa* order.
Day 6

In Nakhung temple a Buddhist priest prepared the paint for the masks of the Gaucan, Tulacan and Shercan gods. At Pyung Kyu U a few people offered foodstuffs and burned 108 butterlamps to the gods. The priests continued to refuse to recite the clan accounts.

Day 7

Several households offered foodstuff and burned 108 butterlamps at Pyung Kyu U. The priests still refused to recite the accounts of the four clans. However, at a meeting with the organizing committee they agreed to start the recitation the following day, even though their demands were not met. In Nakhung temple the Buddhist priest continued to work on the masks. Red soil was placed in the cracks of the wooden masks to make the surface smooth for painting.

Day 8

The offerings continued at Pyung Kyu U. At Nakhung temple the Buddhist priest started to paint the mask of the Gaucan god: white at the base, then pink, and finally red. At the Bhattacan headquarters, Kyupa Lama worked on the head of the yak. The head was modelled around an old skull which is believed to be the original head of the Bhattacan clan god *Lha Yhawa Rangjung*.

In the evening the Gaucan priest recited the Gaucan clan history (*Cyogi Rhab*). About thirty people, mainly women, were gathered to hear the recitation. The clan histories exist as written texts, but their structure indicates that they were originally oral texts. The texts are written in a mixture of Tibetan and Thakali languages and it is difficult for most Thakali to follow the stories. Therefore, Kyupa Lama retold the story in Nepali for those Thakali from the south who did not understand the language. Afterwards, the Bhattacan priest recited the Bhattacan clan history (*Bhurgi Rhab*).

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49 The priest was the son of late Lama Dharma Dhoj (Lama Kancha) who painted the mask during the festival in 1968. The son lives in Pokhara and does not normally function as a priest.
Day 9

The offerings continued at Pyung Kyu U, and in the afternoon the Shercan priest recited the Shercan clan history (Dhimcan Rhab). In Narkhung temple the Buddhist priest completed the three wooden masks in the late evening.

Day 10

The priests and the virgin boys left Pyung Kyu U in the early afternoon. At a cross-road in the northwestern end of Larjung they separated: the Gaucan, Tulacan and Shercan priests proceeded to Nakhung temple, while the Bhattachan priest went to his clan's temple above Kobang.

The latter's route went through some fields. When the priests are walking, they are forbidden to speak and to climb walls, so when the Bhattachan priest came to a low wall blocking his way, he gestured to his assistants, who dismantled it. At the temple he was handed the head of Lha Yhawa Rangjyung.

The Bhattachan priest returned to the cross-road where he was joined by the other priests. The procession returning from Nakhung temple was preceded by a Thakali layman who beat a two-sided drum similar to the kind used by Buddhist priests, except that it was held pointing towards the ground.50 Behind him walked three men carrying the masks of the Gaucan, Tulacan and Shercan gods followed by the three priests and the virgin boys.

At the cross-road the priests (and the gods) were offered drinks (kelsang). Then the procession entered a nearby field where the bodies of the four gods had been prepared. The bodies consisted of a wooden frame covered with a cloth in the clans' colour. After the priests had entered the field, the Bhattachan priest shook and danced like a yak; in the front of him was a young Bhattachan man with an outstretched shawl containing salt. Afterwards the Gaucan, Tulacan and Shercan priests recited the Shyu Rhab. Then they went over to the Gaucan god where men belonging to the clan fixed the mask to the body. This was repeated with the other gods.

Shortly afterwards the gods were lifted with long wooden poles by men from the respective clans and taken clockwise three times around the field.51 They were carried in the usual order, Gaucan first, followed by Tulacan, Shercan and Bhattachan.52 The procession was led by the man with a drum, followed by

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50 As prescribed, the drummer came from the Tarche subclan of the Shercan clan.
51 Two men from Marpha helped carry the Bhattachan god. As mentioned earlier, there is a special relationship between the Bhattachan god and the people of Marpha.
52 This order was strictly followed. When the gods were lifted the Shercan were not ready, therefore the Bhattachan proceeded to lift their god. However, a lot of people protested, and the Bhattachan had to place their god back and wait until the Shercan were ready.
the priests and the gods. During the last circle the priests recited the *Shyu Rhab* after which the gods were placed on the ground next to each other. The Gaucan, Tulacan and Shercan gods were placed facing southwest, while the Bhattacan god was placed facing northeast. A large number of Thakali and people from the neighbouring villages had come to seek the gods' blessings which they received by touching the gods' head with their own forehead. When the ceremonies were over, the gods were left in the field for the night.

The priests and the virgin boys spent that and the following nights in their clan's headquarters.

**Day 11**

In the morning a number of Thakali visited the gods and offered butterlamps and prayers.

In the afternoon people gathered in the field. The priests recited the *Shyang Rhab*, and the gods were carried a few hundred meters to Kyongkhor Che, a field below Pyung Kyu U. En route the gods and the priests were offered drinks (*kelsang*). The procession passed through an orchard where after some discussion an apple tree was removed because it stood in the way.

On arrival, the procession made three circles in the field, the priests recited the *Shyu Rhab*, and the gods were placed on the ground. The Gaucan, Tulacan and Shercan gods all faced Mt. Dhaulagiri (west) while the Bhattacan god faced the north. According to the clan histories, the former gods were born in the west while the latter was born in the north.

Afterwards blessings were given by the Gaucan god. The Gaucan priest recited the text *Ongku Che* and distributed red strings and food offerings to those present. Then he read the Gaucan clan history, and for his services the Thaksatsae community presented him with a turban.\(^53\)

**Day 12**

In the morning people made offerings to the gods. Some Shercan offered a big butterlamp to their clan goddess while the priest recited the *Solcep*.

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53 As mentioned earlier, the organizing committee and the priests disagreed about what the priests should receive for their services. Just before the Gaucan priest started the ceremony, the organizing committee informed him that they would present him a turban immediately after the ceremony on behalf of the Thakali community. Since he was allowed to receive only two turbans during the festival (he received the first one from the members of the Gaucan clan on the second day of the festival), they would give him a turban measuring 26 feet (that is, double the normal length).
The festival is an occasion for the emigrant Thakali to visit local holy places and to sponsor religious ceremonies. For instance, a wife of a member of the Subba lineage sponsored a recitation of some holy texts and invited more than a hundred people for lunch, including Marpha’s elite.

The organizing committee was again criticized for not observing the traditions. Complaints were made that the gods had not met the previous night as they should have according to tradition.

Also, according to tradition a Thakali priest (*dhom*) should make offerings to the gods on the 12th day. A *dhom* arrived from Lete in the afternoon, only to be told that the offerings would take place the next day!

In the afternoon the gods were carried approximately one hundred meters further south. Afterwards the Shercan priest distributed offerings and recited the clan account. In return he received a turban from the Thakali community, and he and his wife also received numerous ceremonial scarves (*khata*) from individual Thakali.

In the evening the old Tulacan priest recited the Tulacan clan history in the local community building.54

**Day 13**

This was the day of the full moon and the main day of the festival.55 In the morning, next to the trail from Larjung to Nakhung the *dhom* from Lete performed a ceremony to the four clan gods.56 At the start of the ceremony the priest made an altar with offerings such as 'offering cakes' (*kandu*), butterlamps and beer. Then, he chanted prayers and beat his drum, and a sheep was prepared for sacrifice. First, water was sprinkled on a copper vessel containing three hot white stones and a small branch of cypress, and the sheep was purified in the ensuing steam. Next, the priest poured water on the sheep’s head and along its spine, and took some hair from the animal’s head, shoulders and back. After that a long wait ensued because the sheep refused to shake its body – to indicate its willingness to be sacrificed. After three unsuccessful attempts the priest poured a big jug of water over the sheep, and it finally gave a vigorous shake. While some men held the sheep down on its back, a villager made a small incision with a knife below

54 As mentioned earlier, the Tulacan priest was ritually impure due to his wife’s death. He was therefore not allowed to recite in front of the gods.

55 The main day of most Thakali festivals (*Torenla, Phala* and *Lha Phewa*) falls on the day of the full moon (the 15th day of the month). In Baragau the main day of the Muktinath *Yartung* festival also falls on the 15th of the month (Ramble 1984, p. 154).

56 The ceremony took place next to a big rock which is used by children as a slide; it is therefore known as 'the slide stone' (*syolendo yum*).
the breastbone, inserted his bare hand, and tore out the heart. This was given to the priest who sprinkled the blood on the offerings at the altar. The man who had killed the sheep cut the tip of the ears, the tongue, and the hooves and gave them to the priest who placed them at the altar. With that the ceremony ended, and the men who were present cooked and consumed the meat.

In the early afternoon the gods were carried approximately a hundred meters to a tree situated at the bank of the Kali Gandaki, next to the southernmost house in Larjung; that place is known as Kyongkhor.

Later that afternoon several plays were staged in an area of open ground close by. Hundreds of people had gathered for this, including Magar from villages further south. Among the audience was a group of women from the Subba lineage— all wearing traditional Thakali dress and expensive jewellery.

The first play depicted a hunt. The actors were five Bhattacan men: a hunter, a dog-owner, two hunting dogs, and a deer. Early in the morning, these five men had gone to a stream above Naprungkhung where the hunter had offered nine pairs of small flags to the gods before departing on a 'hunt'. The men had later returned to Larjung where they had been presented a dried foreleg of a goat at the place where the sheep had been sacrificed.

The play opened with the deer suddenly entering the arena followed closely by the dogs. The man performing as the deer had the skin of a muskdeer tied to his back, the dried goat leg to his waist and a pair of horns on his head. The men who played the part of the dogs had bells tied around their body and crawled on all fours. Finally the dog-owner and the hunter entered armed with bow and arrows. During the hunt the actors ran into the audience and made fun of them. After a while the deer escaped and the play ended. However, the hunt continued at Kyongkhor where the deer was finally 'killed' and its meat (the foreleg of a goat) was offered to the clan gods.

Next a group of men entered with a long piece of rope with which they tried to encircle a large part of the audience. Some managed to escape, but those who were caught within the rope had to pay a fine to be set free. The people did not mind, since it is considered auspicious to be caught on that occasion.

Then four Shercan men dressed as young women (tha chame) entered the ground. They had purified themselves at Dhongsya Kyu early in the morning. The 'women' spread manure in the field, and a Gaucan man sowed it with three local measures of barley. Most of the grains were actually thrown to the audience. The grains are considered auspicious, and the women stretched out their shawls to catch some.

Then three Tulacan men entered: a ploughman and two 'oxen'. The man yoked the oxen and started to plough. He concentrated on the edges of the field
which gave an opportunity to have fun with the audience in the front row. After a while a Tulacan man dressed as a woman entered holding a spindle and a basket with snacks and beer which she served to the hungry men. To the great amusement of the audience the ‘woman’ frequently rubbed her backside.

Afterwards, the four Shercan ‘women’ returned to weed the field. While they were weeding a group of young Tulacan men suddenly appeared, captured the youngest girl, and vanished from the scene. The men later hid the girl behind the Gaucan god.

The final sketch was a wedding ceremony (khimi cuci) between the Tulacan boy and the Shercan girl. A group of elder Shercan men sat behind a long, low table. In entered a group of Tulacan men singing traditional marriage songs. Then, the boy’s side presented beer and alcohol to the Shercan men who accepted it, thus acknowledging the marriage. At last the bride and the bridegroom entered and bowed down in respect to the members of her clan. By that time most of the audience had left, the ground and the programme came to an end.

In the evening the gods met and talked with each other (dehai deci). The Tulacan goddess was the first to be carried over to the Gaucan god and was placed facing him. She presented a bottle of alcohol and a ceremonial scarf to her elder brother, and for the next twenty minutes the siblings spoke about what they had experienced during the past twelve years. (The conversation was actually carried out by men who sat inside the gods’ bodies.) The goddess was then carried back to her original position. Then, there followed half an hour’s break because none of the Shercan present knew how to talk on behalf of their goddess. When they were finally ready, their goddess first visited the Gaucan god and then the Tulacan goddess. In the end the Bhattacan god visited his three elder siblings.

During the conversations the younger sibling first presented him or herself. The elder sibling then enquired about how the younger had been in the past twelve years. The conversation depends very much on the actors’ skill and wits. For example, the Tulacan goddess asked the Gaucan god (who controls the storm) why there had been so many storms in recent years, and he replied that this was because the Thakali women no longer wore the traditional dress but saree and jeans instead.

**Day 14**

In the afternoon, the gods were carried a few hundred meters southwest close to a place where they had been on Day 12, and some men from Marpha helped to carry the Bhattachan god. During the recitation of the Shyu Rhab, the gods were placed on the ground. Since the text mentions specifically when the individual gods
should be placed, it is forbidden to do otherwise. The Bhattachars came to place their god to early; therefore, the other clans each demanded a bottle of beer, one rupee and a ceremonial scarf as fine. The Bhattachars, however, refused to pay.

Afterwards the Bhattachar priest recited the Bhattachar clan history, using a text which he had written in the Devanagari script. During the recitation Kyupa Lama (who is a Tulacan) explained the story, but later at the request of the audience he took over the recitation using an old copy of the text written in Tibetan script. When the story was almost over, it started to rain, and the recitation was stopped for the day.

Day 15

At noon the gods were carried to a field further to the west and Kyupa Lama completed the recitation of the Bhattachar clan account.

Later that afternoon, the members of the organizing committee, old respected men and some women, held a meeting in the school. According to a participant, the women were invited so that they would not complain later. The meeting discussed a number of issues and decided that in the future the route which the priests use should be made six feet wide, while the route along which the gods travel should have a width of thirty feet. It was also decided to forbid planting of fruit trees at the gods' traditional resting places.

At the earlier festivals, the plays performed on Day 13 had taken place at an empty plot of land opposite Kyongkhor. However, in the 1970s a prominent local Thakali had constructed a hotel on a part of the land, and in connection with the festival several temporary huts had been erected next to it. The meeting decided that the hotel would be allowed to stand, but the land next to it should be kept empty for use in future festivals.

Day 16

According to the Tulacan clan account the eighteen forefathers of the Tulacan clan lived in Dhojo. They were very powerful, but they misused their power and were therefore killed by the other clans who in the process threw the Tulacan goddess in the river Kali Gandaki. In retaliation the goddess blocked the river at the gorge Ghayang Ghang. When the river started to flow backwards, an old Tulacan grandmother agreed to retrieve the goddess – but only after the other clans had made several promises. One of the promises was that only Tulacan men would be allowed to wear a turban of a particular kind of red cloth (saletote) and only Tulacan women would be allowed to put red colour in the parting of their
hair and red strings in their braids. These rules were formerly enforced throughout the entire festival but were later only permitted on the 16th day.

At noon the gods were carried to Dhojo, which is located about a kilometer south of Larjung. The Tulacan men wore beautiful green turbans, and the women had red strings in their braids. Only unmarried women of the clan and women married into it are allowed to wear the red strings; however, a few married women born in the Tulacan clan also wore them, which was met with some disapproval.

When the procession arrived at Dhojo, it started to snow and the gods were covered with bamboo mats. Since the Tulacan priest was very young, the Bhattacan priest recited the *Ongku Che* and the Tulacan clan history on his behalf.

**Day 17**

This was the final day of the festival. In the morning it started to snow heavily, and at noon only about twenty people were gathered at Dhojo. After the priests had recited the *Shyang Rhab*, there were only two Shercan men present to carry their goddess. Since that was not possible, men from the other clans agreed to help on the condition that the Shercan clan pay a fine of Rs 100 to each of them. Thus the Shercan goddess completed the last leg of her journey with the help of the other clans.

The gods were carried from Dhojo to the cave Gumpa U which is located upstream from Dhyushuta Kyu (a tributary of Kali Gandaki). At Gumpa U the gods were dismantled, and the masks of the Gaucan, Tulacan, and Shercan gods were placed inside the cave while the head of the Bhattacan god was placed above the entrance of the cave.

According to informants the masks would remain in the cave for 45 days and then be carried by the clan priests to their respective temples.

**CONCLUSION**

Most festivals include the worship of gods and are therefore religious ceremonies at one level. For instance, the ‘official’ purpose of the *Lha Phewa* is to celebrate the appearance of the four clan gods, to worship them, and to receive their blessings.

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57 19th day of the 12th month of the Thakali calendar, corresponding to 24 January 1981.
58 Dhyushuta Kyu is popularly known as Boksi Khola, ‘Witch River’, because its ice-cold water bites like a witch.
At another level, however, festivals contrast deeply with religious ceremonies: while the latter take place in a solemn atmosphere, the festivities involve drinking, gambling, merrymaking, and sexual overtones.

Festivals have important recreational functions. In traditional Thakali society there is little time for leisure, and, although the daily routine changes with the seasons, life is rather monotonous. The festivals break this monotony; like holidays in the West they are time for relaxation, good food and fun. In addition they provide one of the few means of entertainment. Festivals like the Phala and the Lha Phewa include small plays which, unlike theatre in the West, involve much interaction between the actors and the audiences. The sketches deal in a humorous way with Thakali culture and how the Thakali look at themselves and their neighbours.

Moreover, the festivals provide information on Thakali history and how the society was organized in former times. For example, the Phala festival in Syang gives an indication of the militia in old days.

The accounts of the four Tamang Thakali clans tell the history of the Thakali. As in other societies, the ‘official’ history tends to legitimize the existing social order, and like other myths the stories have a moral. The Gaucan clan history is the most important to anthropologists, but the most popular among the Thakali is the Tulacan account — many old people shed tears when they hear how the eighteen Tulacan ancestors were killed after they had arrogantly ignored an old woman’s warning.

Finally, festivals create a feeling of solidarity among a group of people — an ethnic group, a village, a clan, a group of young men, etc; but they also expose conflicts. During the 1981 Lha Phewa men and women were deeply divided over whether gambling should be permitted or not. The festival also exposed a conflict between the Thakali who were for social and cultural change and those who were against — a conflict which resulted in the priests’ strike. Finally, it also exposed the cultural and linguistic gap between the Thakali of Thak Khola and the emigrants living in the south.
Chapter XIV

THAKALI OUTSIDE THAK KHOLA

Only some 20 per cent of the Thakali live in their traditional homeland – the Thak Khola valley. The majority reside in the hills further south and in Kathmandu, Pokhara and other towns. This chapter examines in brief Thakali emigration and the Thakali living outside Thak Khola.¹

Thakali Migration²

The earliest record of Thakali migration dates to the late 18th century when King Prithvi Narayan Shah of Gorkha and his family conquered the numerous small kingdoms which then made up present-day Nepal. The present Mustang district came under the Shah ruler’s domain in 1786. The ruler imposed heavy taxes on the villagers, and the families who were unable to pay their share of the collective land tax had no alternative but to leave Thak Khola.³

This emigration continued in the 19th century. In 1862 the Thakali requested a reduction in the land revenue and argued that, due to high taxes, 216 families had already left Thak Khola and settled in Kaski, Lamjung and other areas in the middle hills.⁴

Not all of the Thakali who left Thak Khola in the 19th century emigrated due to high taxes. In the second half of the 19th century Pati Ram from Larjung

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¹ The Thakali living outside the Thak Khola valley have been the subject of several works, including Bhattachan 1980; Chhetri 1980 and 1986; Fisher 1987; S. von der Heide 1988c and 1993; Iijima 1977a, 1977b and 1982; and Manzardo and Sharma 1975.
² Part of this section was published in Vinding 1984.
³ Regmi 1972, p. 140. See also Appendix 1.
and his son-in-law Ram Prasad held contracts for mining in Khani Khowa (the copper mining area of the present Baglung and Myagdi districts); a number of their Thakali employees are said to have settled permanently in Khani Khowa.

In the early 20th century Tamang Thakali began to acquire land in the hills south of Thak Khola. Some spent winter in the warm south and returned to Thak Khola in summer, while others settled permanently in the bazaars along the old trading route (Dana, Tatopani, Beni and Baglung) where they made a living from agriculture and business (running shops, inn-keeping and moneylending). In Khani Khowa the Thakali settled mainly in the higher-altitude villages lying along the ridges where they made a living as farmers.

In the 1960s and 1970s a large number of Tamang Thakali and Mawatan Thakali left Thak Khola and settled in Kathmandu, Pokhara, Butwal and other urban centres, as well as along the trails and highways connecting Pokhara with Kathmandu and Bhairahwa. Manzardo has observed that, ‘...the Thakali were unable to grow sufficient crops to meet their yearly needs, using traditional agricultural methods. Therefore, the Thakali were forced to find ways to bring in additional grain from the outside ... (and) ... engaged in the trans-Himalayan trade based on the exchange of grain from the middle-hills of Nepal for salt and wool from Tibet ... The eventual closing of the Nepal-Chinese border to trade in the 1960s brought a rapid end to their way of life ... Realizing they lived in a region where sufficient food for the year could not be raised and realizing that they no longer had a sufficient source of income to import food from other areas, they decided to migrate.’

I disagree with this proposition. First, several scholars have claimed that Thak Khola was/is a food deficit area, but none of them have presented any supporting evidence. As shown earlier, in the 1950s and 1960s food production

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5 According to Fisher, Pati Ram held contracts for mining in the 1870s, but his first mining contracts date back to the 1850s (1987, p. 121). According to M.C. Regmi, the Kingdom's output of metals was produced under two contracts (ijara), one for the eastern hill region from Sanga Sindhu to the Mechi river in the east, and the other for the Parbat-Baglung-Gulmi-Rukum belt in the west. Subba Ram Prasad Thakali was granted the contract for the mines in Western Nepal in 1885 (1988, p. 136). For mining in Western Nepal, see Gurung 1997.

6 Thakali emigration to Khani Khowa dates back earlier. According to Fisher, many Khani Khowa families trace back their residence in the area to 1820–1840 (1987, p. 118).

7 According to Fisher, the Tamang Thakali already started acquiring land in the south in the late 19th century (ibid, p. 125).

8 Ibid, p. 165.

9 Manzardo 1977b, p. 434.

10 According to Bista, in Thak Khola there is not 'sufficient rain for a self-supporting agricultural economy. Such wheat, barley, buckwheat, and potatoes as are grown do not suffice to meet local food requirements' (1971, p. 52). Chhetri has mistakenly written that in Thak
in Thak Khola was probably sufficient to feed the local population. Second, the proposition does not explain why only some Thakali decided to migrate. The question is not whether grain production in Thak Khola was sufficient to feed the local population, but whether those who left the valley were able to make a living. Informants mention that only a few of the emigrants were unable to live on in Thak Khola. Most had sufficient land, animals and capital to make a living, but following the decline in the salt trade, it became increasingly difficult for them to maintain their former standard of living. Also, in the early 1960s armed Tibetan refugees (the so-called Khampa) posed a security problem in Mustang district.

In addition to these 'push' factors, there were also 'pull' factors, such as business opportunities and public services being better in Pokhara and other urban centres in the south. Moreover, to many Thakali, life as a hotelier or a

11 Khola land remains under snow for at least 4 to 6 months, and that only one harvest can be reaped (1980, p. 26).
12 In a survey, only four out of 50 Pokhara Thakali gave the lack of land as the reason for migration (Chhetri 1986, p. 246).
13 My argument is (partly) supported by C. von Furer-Haimendorf, 'The choice of the leading men of Tukce was not whether to emigrate or to remain in their traditional home. They had to choose between a relatively luxurious life in Kathmandu or Pokhara accompanied by a loss of any real political power, and a reduced standard of living in Thak Khola compensated by the retention of very considerable influence in local affairs' (1981a, p. 201). Yet, by no means all Thakali had to leave Thak Khola in order to maintain their standard of living. The inhabitants of the largely agricultural villages were less dependent on trade than the merchants of Tukce. They survived trade without having to adjust their entire economy' (1978, p. 349). And (if I understand him right), according to Iijima, it was mainly the rich Tamang Thakali who emigrated after 1959, 'Accordingly, a large number of Thakali, who can afford, have gradually started to leave Thak Khola, mainly from the trading center of Tukuche ...' (1982, p. 26; my emphasis).
14 S. von der Heide has surmised that the emigration in the 1960s was due to the closing of the border to Tibet and overpopulation, 'That the Tamang Thakali population, which until then had remained in Thak Khola, for the most part migrated to Central and South Nepal after 1959/60 has to do, for one, with the closing of the Nepali-Tibetan border in 1959 and, secondly, with the ensuing overpopulation of Thak Khola, 60,000 Tibetan refugees having crossed the border during this period' (1988a, p. 42). I disagree that more than half of the Tamang Thakali migrated after 1960. Moreover, to link Tamang Thakali emigration to overpopulation is speculative: the number of Tibetan refugees who entered Mustang district in 1959/60 was significantly less than 60,000, and the number of refugees who stayed in Thaksatsae, the homeland of the Tamang Thakali, never reached even one hundred.
shopkeeper in the warm, exciting south was more attractive than that of a farmer in Thak Khola.\textsuperscript{15} Finally, the rich families already had large investments in the south and were able to manage them more effectively by living there permanently.

In the 1960s and 1970s Thakali migration was not only from Thak Khola to the urban areas in the south. In Khani Khowa, Thakali moved from the high-altitude villages to the bazaars along the riverbeds, and also further to Pokhara, Butwal and other urban centres.\textsuperscript{16} For example, 71 Thakali families settled in Kasauli (at Butwal) in the period 1963 to 1984: forty-five came from Khani Khowa and 16 from Thak Khola (in 10 cases the place of origin of the head of the household is unknown).\textsuperscript{17}

In the 1980s emigration from Thak Khola declined as business opportunities (cash-crop farming, hotel business, contracting, mule business, etc.), local employment opportunities and basic services (health services, education, drinking water supply, communication and electricity) improved; in recent years, some emigrants have therefore even returned to Thak Khola.\textsuperscript{18}

Since the 1980s several hundred young Tamang Thakali and Mawatan Thakali have gone to Japan, Korea, USA and Europe. Some have married foreigners, others have gone abroad for studies, but the majority are working in Korea and Japan as migrant workers.

Migrants may be divided into three categories – seasonal, semi-permanent, and permanent. Permanent migrants have disposed of all property in their home area, while semi-permanent migrants have retained some property (house and/or fields). According to informants, only a handful of Khani Khowa Thakali and other Thakali who are descended from men who left Thak Khola in the first half of the 20th century and earlier have property in Thak Khola; on the other hand, many of the men who left in the 1960s and 1970s have retained property in their natal villages.

\textsuperscript{15} See also C. von Führer-Haimendorf, 'The decision whether to move away from Thaksatsae is thus not made solely on economic grounds; the lure of the more exciting social life of a town with cinemas and other entertainments is thus a major factor in choosing between various courses of action' (1981a, p. 201).

\textsuperscript{16} In discussions of Thakali emigration in the 1960s studies have tended to focus on factors specific to the area – such as the decline in the salt-trade. While this is not incorrect, there was in this period a general emigration from the hills to the plains and from the rural areas to urban settlements. The reasons for this emigration were a general economic decline in the hills (due to, among other things, an increase in the population) as well as better economic opportunities in the plains/towns.

\textsuperscript{17} Fisher 1987, p. 130.

\textsuperscript{18} In 1982 Marpha village sold some plots of barren land south of the village. Twenty-two Mawatan Thakali from Pokhara bought a plot.
In 1984 there were an estimated 8,367 Tamang Thakali (Table 22). Some 18 per cent lived in their traditional homeland – the Thak Khola valley in Mustang district. The majority resided in the hills south of Thak Khola, especially in Myagdi and Baglung districts (nearly 40 per cent of the total Tamang Thakali population are found in these districts). Seventy-two per cent lived in rural areas and 28 per cent in cities with a population greater than 15,000. The urban Thakali were found mainly in Kathmandu and Pokhara in the Middle Hills, and in Butwal and Bhairahwa in the plains (the Tarai).

Table 22: Tamang Thakali population, 1984. Distribution by district

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Est. population</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Myagdi</td>
<td>1,596</td>
<td>20.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baglung</td>
<td>1,521</td>
<td>19.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mustang</td>
<td>1,421</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rupandehi</td>
<td>870</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaski</td>
<td>672</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathmandu</td>
<td>660</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parbat</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gulmi</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syangja</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palpa</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chitwan</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>638</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>8,367</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The migrants form a heterogenous group – from poor farmers in rural villages to rich, well-educated businessmen in the towns. The Tamang Thakali in Khani Khowa, Pokhara and Kathmandu are described below to illustrate the differences among the Thakali living outside Thak Khola.

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19 Ibid, p. 143.
Parading the clan gods during the Lha Phewa festival, 1981
Bhattacan *pare* during the Lha Phewa festival at Khanti

Tamang Thakali clan priests (*pare*)
The god Jewel Elephant (Gaucan clan god)

The goddess Crocodile Queen (Tulacan clan goddess)
The goddess White Lioness of the Glacier (Sercan clan goddess)

The god Self-Created Yak (Bhattacan clan god)
A Tamang Thakali filming at the Lha Phewa festival
Kyupa lama reciting the Bhattacan clan story

Humorous sketch during the Lha Phewa festival
Worshipping the god Jewel Elephant
Tamang Thakali women in their traditional dress

Ladies of the Subba lineage
While more than 80 per cent of the Tamang Thakali are found outside Thak Khola, nearly half of the total Mawatan Thakali population still live in Marpha village. The semi-permanent and permanent Mawatan Thakali emigrants are found mainly in Pokhara and along the highway to Kathmandu.20

Semi-permanent and permanent migration has been considerably less among the Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali than among the Mawatan Thakali and the Tamang Thakali, and consequently the Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali are still found mainly in Thak Khola. One possible explanation is that the Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali depended more on agriculture and animal husbandry than on trade, and therefore they were less affected by the recession in the early 1960s.21 Many of the Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali who have settled in the south are single women or women married to men from other castes.

The Tamang Thakali of Khani Khowa22

Some 40 per cent of the Tamang Thakali live in Myagdi and Baglung districts (Khani Khowa). They number about 3,100 persons – making 1.5 per cent of the total population in these districts. The Magar constitute the single largest group there, but there are also many Bahun, Chetri and artisans.

The majority of the Thakali who live outside Thak Khola were born in their place of residence. Most of the Tamang Thakali families in Khani Khowa have lived in the area for several generations and very few understand or speak Thakali. They dress and live like the local population, and to an outsider it is indeed difficult to distinguish them from the local Magar population.23

The majority of the Khani Khowa Thakali own land and identify themselves as farmers. Most have other sources of income, such as hotels, shops, contract-

20 In 1986 some 145 Mawatan Thakali households were living in the south as semi-permanent or permanent migrants; 87 households were found in Pokhara (S. von der Heide 1988c, p. 99). In 1977, I counted 124 Mawatan Thakali households in Thak Khola. Informants recalled 86 Mawatan Thakali households which had left the valley since 1960. This figure was on the low side due to recall problems.

21 However, as explained in Chapter IV, the extent of seasonal migration is highest among the Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali.

22 The present section is based on Fisher 1987.

23 A Tamang Thakali of the Shercan clan working for the United Nations went to Burma on an assignment. On a fieldtrip he was informed that there lived some Nepalese in a nearby village. In the village he met the Nepalese whom he could not distinguish from the local Burmese. When he asked one of the Nepalese about his caste the man said that he was a Thakali. It turned out that they were both of the Shercan clan!
ing, moneylending and business in high-value commodities. Wage-earning is not of importance, but since the 1960s service in the British Army has become an important source of income. The Thakali are in general better off than the other ethnic groups in the area.

Among the Khani Khowa Thakali the household based on nuclear family is the most frequent type, as it is in Thak Khola (Table 23). There are, however, some differences between these two groups of Thakali: the household based on the joint family is more frequent among the Khani Khowa Thakali than in Thak Khola, while the household based on single persons is more rare. Consequently, the number of household members is also higher among the Khani Khowa Thakali: 5.9 as compared to 4.9 among the Tamang Thakali in Thak Khola.

Table 23: Distribution of household types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Thak</th>
<th>Myagdi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuclear</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>34.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special cases</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Figures in per centage of total cases
(Thak N = 51, Myagdi N = 105).
For definition of household types, see Chapter VII.


24 According to S. von der Heide, business in high-value commodities is also important to the Tamang Thakali of Butwal, 'wie vorher bereits erwähnt, ist die Region Myagdi ein bekanntes Marihuana-Anbaugebiet, und eines der wichtigsten Verbindungslieder im Verteilungsnetz nach Kathmandu und Indien is Butwal. So haben sich sehr viele in Butwal lebende Tamang Thakali-familien aus Myagdi auf Aubau und Handel with Rauschgift specialisiert' (1988c, p. 118).

25 Mining was important until the 1930s, but no longer plays a role (Fisher 1987, p. 162).

The Khani Khowa Thakali marry mainly among themselves, but there are also marriage relations with Thakali living outside the area, including Thak Khola. A number of Thakali men have children with local Magar women.27

The religious complex of the Khani Khowa Thakali includes belief in a number of Hindu-derived deities and local deities, belief in ancestor spirits typical of all Thakali, and a belief in a number of malevolent demons, witches, and ghosts. Ancestor worship and mortuary services require the participation of a Thakali dhom, while the complex of malevolent supernatural forces is in the realm of the local non-Thakali shaman (jhadri). When a Tamang Thakali dies a bone fragment should be placed in his subclan’s reliquary stone structure (khimi). These are located in the homeland of the Tamang Thakali (Khanti, Kobang, Nakhung and Naprungkhung). Some Khani Khowa Thakali have the bone of deceased relatives carried back to Thak Khola and placed in their subclan’s khimi, while others keep it in their house.

The Thakali have used their economic power to become political leaders in the area. Although they constitute a small minority, they wield considerable political influence. Several have served as chairmen of the local village councils, and some have also been elected to the national parliament from these districts. In the political field the Thakali have been deeply divided and the local political achievements of the Thakali are thus not due to group-wise cooperation, but to the respect engendered by Thakali ‘men of influence’. Paradoxically Thakali have been more successful in gaining political office in locations where their population is scattered over a large number of villages than in locations where they are concentrated, such as in the bazaars.

In Pokhara, Bhairahwa, Butwal and Kathmandu the Tamang Thakali have formed local associations to promote their interests. The population in Khani Khowa is, however, widely dispersed and it does not form a single organization. However, in 1983 an organization consisting of more than 100 households was formed in Burtibang (Baglung district), and the following year another organization was formed in Darbang (Myagdi district).

The Khani Khowa Thakali have limited relations back to the Tamang Thakali of Thak Khola. A number of them come to Thak Khola to participate in the Lha Phewa festival, but there are also many who have never attended this festival which is of central importance to Thakali identity.

The Tamang Thakali of Thak Khola look down upon the Khani Khowa Thakali whom they refer to as Khowali, as they resemble local Magar in appear-

27 According to Fisher, ‘there are frequent relationships between Thakali men and Magar women ... some can accurately be described as marriages’ (1987, p. 201). Fisher does not define what he means by ‘marriages’.
ance and dress and, more important, because some are considered to be of impure descent (offspring of a Magar woman). Most women from Thak Khola are against marrying a Thakali from Khani Khowa.

The Thakali of Pokhara

Nepal is primarily a rural society. In the early 1950s the only real towns were Kathmandu, Bhaktapur and Patan in the Kathmandu valley. Outside the valley only Nepalgunj had a population of more than 10,000. In Western Nepal the biggest towns were Tansen (4,705 persons), Pokhara (3,755), Butwal (2,597) and Bhairahwa (1,154).

Pokhara was established in 1752 by Newar of Kathmandu at the invitation of the rulers of the petty state of Kashi. In 1952 the population numbered only 3,755 and in 1961 5,413, but since then the town has grown dramatically: from 20,611 in 1971 to 46,642 in 1981 and 95,286 in 1991. The main reason for this expansion was the opening in 1967/68 of the highway linking Pokhara with Butwal and Bhairahwa to the south (and hence India), and in 1973 of the highway between Pokhara and Kathmandu. Moreover, the town was made zonal headquarters in 1962 and then upgraded to a regional centre in 1972. The improved transportation facilities and the burgeoning administration led to an expansion of commercial activities and better social services, such as electricity, schools, hospitals, banks, small-scale industries, and hotels. For the people of the Western region Pokhara became the city of opportunities.

In 1954 there were about 20 Thakali households in Pokhara. In 1974 the number had increased to 83 and by 1984 it had reached 121 households and an estimated population of 672. In 1980, 20 per cent of the heads of households were third-generation migrants (i.e. their grandparents had come to Pokhara as migrants), 26 per cent were second-generation migrants, while 54 per cent were first-time settlers.

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28 According to the 1952/54 census Nepalgunj had a population of 10,813 (Gurung 1984, p. 214).
31 Gurung, op. cit., p. 112.
32 Between 1965 and 1975 the number of government offices increased from 17 to 75 (Blaikie, Cameron and Seddon 1980, p. 132).
33 Manzardo and Sharma 1975, p. 28.
34 Ibid, p. 40.
36 Chhetri 1980, p. 32. Figures based on a sample of 50 household heads.
The Thakali constitute only about two per cent of the total population in Pokhara. About half of the population are Nepali-speaking castes, 18 per cent are Newar and 12 per cent are Gurung. Thakali are found in 14 of the 16 wards of Pokhara, but almost half of all the Thakali live in two wards. Although there is a concentration of Thakali in the main market areas, these are not Thakali ghettos: in the ward where most Thakali live they constitute only seven per cent of the total population.

Most of the Thakali families migrated to Pokhara directly from Thak Khola, but there are also families who came from Baglung, Syangja and Butwal. Informants from Pokhara mention that they left Thak Khola due mainly to the lack of occupation and medical and educational facilities; the reasons for moving to Pokhara were mainly good business opportunities and modern amenities. Only few informants mentioned the lack of cultivable land as a reason for leaving Thak Khola.

In 1979 Dr. Krishna B. Bhattachan undertook a study of the Thakali of Pokhara. Among his informants, business was the most important way to make a living: forty-four per cent were in business (mainly retail business), 36 per cent in hotel business, 10 per cent in contract business, and only 4 per cent were civil servants. All informants considered themselves middle class. Sixty-two per cent lived in a nuclear family, 34 per cent in an ‘intermediate joint family’ and only 4 per cent in a joint family. The average household size was 5.7 members. Informants mentioned that joint families hinder economic participation and create family tension. Sixty per cent of the informants claimed to be Hindu and Buddhist, 20 per cent to be Buddhist and another 20 per cent to be Hindu. All informants spoke Thakali and Nepali, 50 per cent spoke Hindi, 40 per cent Gurung, 30 per cent Newari and 20 per cent English.

The Thakali of Pokhara marry almost exclusively within their own ethnic group. They take their wives mainly locally or from Thak Khola, and less often from Kathmandu, Bhairahwa and other urban centres.
In 1954 the Tamang Thakali of Pokhara formed an organization known as the Pokhara Thakali Social Reform Committee (pokhara thakali samaj sudhar samiti, PTSSS). Its governing body was basically similar in form and function to those in the villages of Thak Khola – a headman, a secretary and two social workers. In 1971 the organization was reformed and at the same time got a written constitution and a managing committee with 15 to 21 members. According to the constitution, membership was restricted to 'that individual or family who can assure the Managing Committee of being a Thakali on the basis of language, culture and morals.' Despite the vague wording, membership is in effect restricted to members of the four Tamang Thakali clans (Gaucan, Tulacan, Shercan and Bhattachan). A head of household who belongs to one of the four clans automatically becomes a member of the PTSSS when he takes up residence in the Pokhara area.

The purpose of the PTSSS is 'to help poor and needy Thakali, to try to eradicate misunderstanding and internal conflict among the Thakali, to work for the welfare of the caste and the class, and to maintain social harmony with other social groups.' As in Thak Khola, no case should be presented to the official judicial system before an attempt has been made to settle it internally. 'In the event of any sort of quarrel, legal cases or such, the case will be put before the managing committee. They will take steps to decide the case or set up a compromise between the parties concerned. If either party proceeds to court prior to notifying the Association’s managing committee and securing its permission, the Association has the full right to tax the party involved Rs 501. Generally the minor cases will be decided by the managing committee, but if necessary, the general meeting will handle the case internally.'

The PTSSS has introduced a number of social reforms: for example, the death mourning period has been reduced from 49 to 13 days, and capture marriage and the consumption of yak meat have been banned.

Although the Thakali constitute only about two per cent of the total population in Pokhara, they have major influence in the town’s economic and political

45 Manzardo and Sharma 1975, p. 28. Manzardo and Sharma mention that the two social workers – whom they refer to as ghumdal – were elected and part of the organization’s four-member executive body. In Thak Khola the social workers (gundal) are not elected, but the duty is taken in turn by the members of the village community.
48 Ibid, p. 265.
50 For a description of these reforms, see Manzardo and Sharma 1975. The first reform – on funeral practices – was in 1971 (Bhattachan, op. cit., p. 83).
affairs. For example, in the 1980s a Tamang Thakali became the town’s mayor and another was elected to the national assembly from one of the two local constituencies; the latter subsequently became an assistant minister.

There are also a large number of Mawatan Thakali migrants in Pokhara. There are some contacts between the Mawatan Thakali and the Tamang Thakali, but marriages are few. The Mawatan Thakali are not eligible as members of the PTSSS and they have therefore formed their own organization.\textsuperscript{51} In the early 1990s, the Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali of Pokhara also established their own organization.

The Thakali of Kathmandu

In 1984 there were a total of 119 Tamang Thakali households in Kathmandu.\textsuperscript{52} Ten years later the number had increased to an estimated 250. Besides Tamang Thakali there are also a few Mawatan Thakali and Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali households. The Thakali are found in several locations in the Kathmandu Valley – in the old, central town as well as the new suburbs.

The Thakali who settled in Kathmandu in the 1960s and 1970s came mainly from Thak Khola and from Pokhara and Bhairahwa. In recent years the majority of Thakali immigrants have come from Khani Khowa, and today the Khani Khowa Thakali form the single largest group among the Tamang Thakali of Kathmandu.

In Nepal the rich and powerful are drawn to Kathmandu – the country’s economic and political centre. Many of the Thakali of Kathmandu belonged to the economic elite in their former place of residence. Almost all members of the Subba family live in Kathmandu (the family’s next preferred place of residence is foreign countries). Among the Mawatan Thakali the two richest and politically most powerful families have bought property in Kathmandu; and among the Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali a military pilot (now deceased) and a prominent political leader have both settled there.

The Thakali of Kathmandu are the elite among the Thakali. The richest businessmen are wealthy even by Western standards (some are millionaires in US dollars). Many of the richest families have been involved in contract business

\textsuperscript{51} S. von der Heide 1988c, pp. 163. The Tamang Thakali Social Reform Commitee of Bhairahwa has (as the only one) accepted three Mawatan Thakali (migrants from Kobang) as members (ibid).

\textsuperscript{52} The members of the Balbir lineage (the so-called ‘Subba family’) were the first to establish themselves in Kathmandu. The family bought their first house in Kathmandu (Paknajol) in 1921 (Bhattachan 1980, p. 47). According to Fisher the family bought a house in Kathmandu only in 1954 (1987; p. 131).
(such as road construction). Another important source of wealth has been Kathmandu's inflated property market. As in other developing countries, in recent years land prices in the capital have skyrocketed due to land pressure and the lack of alternative investment opportunities.

For example, some years ago a Thakali settled in Kathmandu and within a few years he made a small fortune on business in South-East Asia. He bought a house with a small garden in a sleepy part of Kathmandu. The locality later became Kathmandu's most popular tourist centre, and when the Thakali sold his property in the early 1990s it was worth several hundred thousand dollars. In the same area a group of Thakali invested in a large plot of land which they divided into smaller plots and sold, making a handsome profit.

Below the richest families are the professionals and small businessmen – professors, medical doctors, teachers, owners of small hotels, owners of small business (several have computer firms). The Thakali belonging to this group consider themselves middle class. Most send their children to private schools and have a motorcycle, television and video. Many have their own property in Kathmandu.

In Kathmandu one can become a millionaire 'overnight' (as the Nepalese like to say). It requires a man with no scruples, good connections and luck. Some Thakali have succeeded, others have failed. Several have been jailed for theft, corruption and smuggling (not only in Nepal, but also abroad).

The Thakali place much emphasis on education. The Thakali subba (Mohanman, Hitman and Guptaman) sent their sons to schools and universities in India. The sons (the present 'grandparent generation') in turn sent their children to the best private schools in Nepal (Sct. Xavier) and India – not only the sons but also the daughters. The other Thakali followed the trend set by the Subba family.

For the older generation Kathmandu was the city of opportunities. For the most adventurous of their children and grandchildren the best opportunities are outside Nepal's borders – in Japan, Europe and the United States of America. The well-educated settle abroad to study or work as professionals (several Thakali are working as medical doctors abroad). They start with a temporary residence permit, but eventually manage to get permanent residence. Others have married foreigners and settled abroad.

As in Thak Khola and Khani Khowa, the young less well-educated Thakali of Kathmandu take employment as (usually illegal) workers in Japan and South-East Asia. In 1994 an estimated 300 Tamang Thakali worked in Japan. Most originate from Khani Khowa and their savings are used – among other things – to buy property in Kathmandu.
The Thakali of Kathmandu have in general done better economically than other newcomers in the city. There are several reasons for this: they usually have capital for investments when they arrive and do not have to make a living as labourers. Those in need of capital for initial investment receive help from relatives and other Thakali, mostly through the dikur system. Moreover, the local Thakali network provides advice and useful contacts for newcomers. The Thakali of Kathmandu marry mainly with Thakali from Kathmandu and Pokhara. Some men also take their wives from Thak Khola. On the other hand women from Kathmandu are not interested in marrying men from Thak Khola and settling there. Many Tamang Thakali of Kathmandu – especially among the Subba lineage – have married outside their own caste, including foreigners. Young educated Thakali see no reason why they should not marry a foreigner, but many are still so conservative that they would not like to marry a woman believed to be a witch or belonging to an artisan caste.

In 1978 The Tamang Thakali of Kathmandu founded in 1978 their own association, the Kathmandu Thakali Society (kathmandu thakali samaaj). Among other things, the organization arranges during the Torenla festival a picnic where Tamang Thakali eat, drink, hold archery contests, and gamble. As mentioned above, in recent years there has been an increase in the number of Khani Khowa Thakali who have settled in Kathmandu. At the same time their economic position has improved greatly (due mainly to various forms of business and remittances from relatives working abroad). Many members of the rich and well-established Thakali families from Thak Khola look down upon the nouveau riche Khowali, partly because of their supposedly impure descent and culture, partly because of the means some have used to become rich. Since its foundation the Kathmandu Thakali Samaj has been headed by a member of the ‘Subba lineage’. However, in the early 1990s the Khani Khowa Thakali 'revolted' against the establishment and one of their own was elected as chairman of the organization.

The religion of most of the Thakali of Kathmandu is a syncretic mixture of the indigenous Thakali dhom tradition, Buddhism and Hinduism. Some are influenced by Buddhism, others by Hinduism. One old Subbini agreed to see her daughter, who had married outside the caste, only after several years. However, she no longer accepts food from her daughter's hand. Many families celebrate the naming ceremony on 11th day and the first-rice feeding ceremony (anna prashan). Some young educated Thakali consider themselves atheists.

53 The first picnic was arranged in 1975. At the picnic it was agreed to form an association. It was formally founded three years later.
The Thakali elite is included in the Kathmandu elite. The Subba family has good relations to the Royal Family – a relationship which goes back to Hitman, who was liked by King Tribhuvan's queens. The inclusion in the Kathmandu elite opens doors to lucrative business contracts and political influence. But it also has its costs. The favorite pastime of Kathmandu's elite is gambling. Once a Thakali is said to have lost Rs 120,000 in two hours.

The Tamang Thakali National Association

As mentioned above, the Tamang Thakali of Pokhara, Kathmandu, Butwal and Bhairahwa have established local associations (samaj). A national Tamang Thakali association, the Thakali Community Social Services Association (thakali samaj sewa samiti) was formed in April 1983.54

The national society has authority over all local Tamang Thakali societies, including the council of the thirteen headmen of Thaksatsae. In areas which had local societies, the organizations were disbanded and reformed in line with the rules of the national society.55

The society has a general assembly (mahasabha) and a central committee (kendriya samiti). The general assembly consists of 61 members, while the central committee comprises 25 members. The members of these two bodies come from fourteen locations according to the following scale (no. of members of the general assembly/no. of members of the central committee): Thaksatsae: 8/4; Pokhara: 7/3; Kathmandu: 7/4; Bhairahwa: 5/2; Butwal: 6/2; Baglung district: 5/2; Myagdi district: 5/2; Syangja district: 2/1; Parbat district: 2/1; Chitwan district: 2/1; Palpa district: 1/1; Nepalganj: 1/1; Dhangadhi: 1/1; and Pyuthan: 1/0. In addition, eight members of the general assembly are chosen at-large.56

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54 According to Skar, 'before 1990, during the Panchayat system, ethnic associations were forbidden as public entities in Nepal, as were political parties ... A few of the associations, mainly of Tharus (1952), Magars, Gurungs (1954) and Tamangs, have existed underground since the early 1950s (the first democratic period in Nepal), whereas other associations have come about only recently after the restoration of democracy [in 1990]' (1995, pp. 31-32). This statement may not be entirely correct. The local and national Thakali associations have never operated underground; ministers and other representatives of the Panchayat System were openly members of these associations. See also Gurung 1998, p. 202.

55 Fisher 1987, p. 276. According to Fisher, the council of the thirteen headmen of Thaksatsae was neither disbanded nor reformed (ibid.). However, as mentioned in Chapter XI, the system of the thirteen headmen of Thaksatsae was actually reformed following the establishment of the Tamang Thakali national association.

56 Fisher 1987, pp. 263 and 274.
The constitution of the Tamang Thakali national association lays down the rules of the association, e.g. concerning the form and function of the central committee and the election of the members of this body. The constitution, however, also deals with various aspects of Tamang Thakali culture, such as lifecycle rituals. The rules, which may be seen as an attempt to introduce a more uniform Tamang Thakali culture and to cut expenses for life-cycle rituals, were been agreed to only after long and heated discussions. The constitution is still much debated, indicating conflicting interests between the various local Tamang Thakali societies and within the individual societies. These conflicts will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

Conclusion

The majority of Thakali live outside their traditional homeland – Thak Khola. The first documented migration took place in the first half of the 19th century when poor villagers who were unable to pay taxes left the valley.

A large number of Tamang Thakali and Mawatan Thakali left Thak Khola in the 1960s and 1970s. It has been argued that the Thakali were unable to grow sufficient crops to meet their yearly needs, and that they were therefore forced to find ways to bring in additional grain. This they did through the trans-Himalayan trade. However, this trade came to an end in the 1960s, causing people to migrate.

I have here argued against this theory. First, it has never been proven that Thak Khola was a food deficit area. On the contrary, my data suggest that this was not the case. Second, only a few of those who left were so poor that they could not make a living. The majority of the migrants had sufficient land, animals and capital to make a living, but following the decline in the salt trade (which was caused not only by interruptions in the supply of Tibetan salt due to the political events in Tibet in 1959, but also by the influx of cheap Indian salt in the markets in the south), they faced difficulties maintaining their former high standard of living. Also, there were security problems in Mustang district in the early 1960s due to the influx of armed Tibetan refugees, while education and health services and business opportunities were better in the south. Further, the richest families already had large investments in the south and were able to manage their investments more effectively by living there permanently. To sum up,

57 The draft constitution (mul bandej thakāli sewā samiti) was published in 1984; the final version (thakāli sewā samiti nepālko bidhān) appeared in 1985.
for the majority of Thakali migrants it was not so much a question of subsistence, as of maintaining an already relatively high standard of living.

Some anthropologists have called the Thakali a success story. It is correct that there are some very rich Thakali businessmen, that some migrants have connections with the most powerful circles in Nepal, and that several Thakali migrants have been elected to the national parliament from districts where Thakali constitute only a small percentage of the population. The picture is, however, more complex. The Thakali migrants range from the very rich businessmen in Kathmandu to poor farmers and inn-keepers along the highways and trails in Western Nepal. Most of the latter cannot be thought of as entirely successful. Among the former there are some who have risen to prominence through illegitimate means; several are now in jail. Also, there are many Thakali who have lost substantial amounts of money in failed ventures.

While the Thakali are not an unqualified success story, compared to other ethnic groups the Thakali migrants and their descendants have adopted well to their new environment and are generally well off. Several factors account for this. First, the bulk of Thakali migrants brought with them capital to invest and were not forced to work as manual labourers to make a living. Second, credit is available to Thakali through the dikur system. Third, in Pokhara, Kathmandu and other towns the Thakali communities provide social and economic assistance to newcomers. Finally, most Thakali are conservative businessmen who invest their profit in capital goods and business ventures – and not luxuries and vices.

58 According to Manzardo, 'The Thakali are one of the great success stories of Nepal' (1977b, p. 433). And according to C. von Furer-Haimendorf, 'Most of the Thakali who have moved to Kathmandu and other towns have established successful business ... There is probably no other numerically small community in Nepal that has been as successful in turning a changed economic and social climate to its advantage, though clearly at the cost of abandoning its ancestral homeland' (1978, p. 349)
Chapter XV

A REAPPRAISAL OF THE THAKALI

The literature on the Thakali includes some stimulating discussions on Thakali society and culture. This chapter examines the most important issues – continuity and change, impression management and cohesion and conflict. The chapter ends with a discussion of Thakali identity and the future of the Thakali in multi-ethnic Nepalese society.

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

Scholars have written about substantial changes in Thakali society and culture. Professor David Snellgrove, who passed through Thak Khola in 1956, has spoken of dramatic changes in Tamang Thakali religion: 'Thus they have no use for the Tibetan Buddhism which represents the whole culture of their forebears and even despise Tibetan itself as a language for dolts ... They prefer to call themselves Hindu, but to them Hinduism means no more than the acceptance of caste laws and prejudices and it is significant that while the Buddhist temples fall into disrepair, not one Hindu temple has yet been built ...' The older folks are bewildered, for no one in Tukchā has the necessary knowledge to argue the validity of the old religions tradition and they see the whole basis of life crumbling away.'

Professor Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf, who stayed in Thak Khola in 1962 has stated that, 'even fifty years ago the Thakalis must have presented a picture of a Buddhist society subscribing to most of the values and beliefs of Tibetan Buddhism ... In 1962, however, the cultural atmosphere had completely changed ... Anxious to raise their status and weakened in their faith in traditional

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1 Snellgrove missed a small temple in Tukce for the Hindu goddess Bhagavati.
2 Snellgrove 1961, pp. 177-178.
values many of the Thakali traders grew critical of the practices objected to by high-caste Hindus, and decided that only a radical reform of their whole way of life could improve their community's position in the caste-hierarchy.'

Professor Dor Bahadur Bista, who accompanied C. von Führer-Haimendorf in 1962, has written that 'Thakali society is undergoing rapid structural change', while Professor Shigeru Iijima has talked about 'drastic changes of the Thakali culture since 1959.' This theme of radical reforms and change among the Tamang Thakali has been summarized by Dr. Andrew Manzardo, who has noted that 'the eventual closing of the Nepali-Chinese border to trade in the 1960s brought a rapid end to [the Thakali] way of life.'

In an analysis of change among the Thakali it is important to distinguish between the changes that have taken place in Thak Khola before and after 1960. The former are the result of reforms initiated by the Tamang Thakali to raise their status in the caste hierarchy, while the latter have been caused mainly by the decline in the salt-trade and emigration from Thak Khola, as well as development and westernization in general.

The 1854 Legal Code of Nepal (Muluki Ain) is the main source on the caste system of Nepal. It does not mention the Thakali, but it is likely that they – like other Tibeto-Burman speaking tribes – belonged to the category of 'alcohol drinkers' (matwali). The Civil Code divided the 'alcohol drinkers' into 'non-enslavable' (namasinya) and 'enslavable' (masinya). Except for the Gurung and Magar, the so-called ethnic groups were classified as 'enslavable'. Considering that the Thakali were living within the sphere of Tibetan civilization, they were probably classified as 'Tibetans' (bhote), that is as 'enslavable'.

Although the 1854 Legal Code does not contain a systematically presented ethno-theoretical rationale for classification of the individual castes, it is clear that the status of a specific caste or person is linked with the specific amount of purity this caste or person possesses. Individual persons can become temporarily impure by consuming certain items or by their actions; since persons from different castes by definition possess different amounts of purity, certain foods and certain actions may pollute a persons from a higher caste but not a person from a lower-ranking caste. For example, the consumption of alcohol is permitted for the 'alcohol-drinking' castes, but not for Bahun.

4 Bista 1967, p. 94.
5 Iijima 1977b, p. 86.
6 Manzardo 1977b, p. 434.
7 Höfer 1979, pp. 141-149.
8 Höfer, ibid., p. 49 ff; see also Dumont 1966.
As a person can become temporarily impure through the death of a close relative, childbirth, murder, incest, sex, etc., a person can become more pure by adopting the habits of the higher castes. In India, the members of a caste can raise the status of their caste if they collectively adopt the habits of a higher caste. As Srinivas has observed: 'The caste system is far from a rigid system in which the position of each component is fixed for all time. Movement has always been possible, especially so in the middle regions of the hierarchy. A low caste was able, in a generation or two, to rise to a higher position in the hierarchy by adopting vegetarianism and teetotalism, and by Sanskritizing its ritual and pantheon. In short, it took over, as far as possible, the customs, rites and beliefs of the Brahmins, and the adoption of the Brahminic way of life by a low caste seem to have been frequent, though theoretically forbidden. This process has been called 'Sanskritization' in preference to 'Brahminization', as certain Vedic rites are confined to Brahmins and the two other 'twice-born' castes.'

With regard to mobility in Nepal, Professor Höfer has noted that, 'At first sight, it appears as if the MA [Muluki Ain] allowed only individual and downward mobility, that is, a change of caste status by degradation.' Höfer continues: 'As to the chances of collective mobility, there are no indications whatsoever found in the MA. There is no right derivable from the law which envisages a re-allocation of status. Such a situation could arise, for instance, if a caste had modified its customs and relations to other castes, ceasing to accept bhat [boiled rice] from certain other castes, etc. Nor is mention made of whether the King (the State) is entitled to modify the status of a caste. This tendency seems to be at variance with the ethnographic evidence, according to which certain castes are reported to have been 'promoted' or 'degraded' by royal edicts.' As an example, Höfer mentions a decree which Prime Minister Jang Bahadur Rana issued in 1863. The decree refers to the great merits the Limbu had earned during the wars against Tibet and during the Great Mutiny in 1857, and states that the Limbu should no longer be punished by enslavement. Höfer comments: 'At the first sight, the decree simply bestows upon the Limbu a higher social prestige by admitting them to the army and by abolishing their enslavability. In reality, however, it tacitly lifts the Limbu by one caste group higher and promotes them to 'Non-enslavable Alcohol-Drinkers'.

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9 Srinivas 1952, p. 30
10 Höfer 179, p. 177.
11 Ibid., p. 181.
12 Ibid., p. 182.
Characteristically, the decree leaves their interrelations with other castes with regard to, say, bhat acceptance or intermarriage, unchanged.\textsuperscript{13}

Around the beginning of the 20th century Harkaman of the Balbir lineage lost the lucrative customs contract on trade in salt to Manilal Gurung of Lamjung.\textsuperscript{14} The circumstances for this are unclear.\textsuperscript{15} There is, however, reason to believe that Harkaman’s sons concluded that they lost the contract because the conservative Hindu rulers of Kathmandu perceived them as being ‘Tibetans’ \textit{(bhote)}. The members of the Balbir lineage therefore initiated a number of reforms in order to distance the Tamang Thakali from Tibetan civilization.\textsuperscript{16} It was essential that the reform included the entire Tamang Thakali community because, as pointed out by C. von Führer-Haimendorf, in Hindu society no individual can have a higher ritual position than those with whom he intermarries and interdines.\textsuperscript{17}

Purity is the central element of the caste system, as it determines how castes are classified. Since there is a close relationship between purity and food habits, it was important for the Tamang Thakali to change their food habits in order to raise their status in the caste system.\textsuperscript{18} To Hindus the cow is sacred and the consumption of beef is strictly forbidden; beef-eaters are classified among the lowest

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid. According to Bista, the barrier between the pure castes and the impure ones is impassable (1991, p. 43). Höfer mentions, however, the case of the Newar caste of the \textit{Duyiya}, which is said to have been promoted by King Prithvi Narayan Shah from an untouchable to a pure caste in acknowledgement of their alleged assistance in the conquest of the Kathmandu Valley (1979, p. 181). A more recent candidate could be the the Europeans, who in the \textit{Muluki Ain} of 1854 (and also in the 1952 edition) are classified as \textit{mlech}, that is a touchable impure caste. However, members of the pure castes (‘Wearers of the holy cord’ and ‘Alcohol-Drinkers’) now in general accept Europeans as belonging to the category ‘Alcohol Drinkers’.

\textsuperscript{14} For details, see Chapter III.

\textsuperscript{15} If Manilal Gurung did obtain the contract in 1902, as stated by Messerschmidt and Gurung (1974, p. 208), it coincided with the coup d’état in 1901 which made Chandra Shamsher Rana Prime Minister and de facto ruler of Nepal. Chandra Shamsher was not friendly towards Tibet and Tibetans. For Chandra Shamsher and Tibet, see Shaha 1990, Vol. II, pp. 39-42.

\textsuperscript{16} Professor Bista has observed that the Tamang Thakali ‘practised, at the time of their rise to fame, a primitive tribal religion involving shamanism and animal sacrifice and remained ecologically outside the boundaries of Mustang. Nevertheless, in order to ‘civilise’ themselves the Thakali turned towards the north during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. They were attracted by the complicated and colourful rituals of Tibetan Lamaism’ (1971, p. 54). As described in Chapter III, the Tibetanization of Thak Khola is likely to have started in the 13th or 14th century. However, Bista is correct that in the second half of the 19th century the rich Thakali traders invested surplus money in Tibetan status symbols and supported Buddhism by funding the building of temples and other religious structures, the procurement of religious texts, religious ceremonies and the maintenance of monks and nuns.

\textsuperscript{17} C. von Führer-Haimendorf 1967, p. 198.

\textsuperscript{18} According to C. von Führer-Haimendorf, the Tamang Thakali, ‘until recently dominated by Tibetan Buddhism, used to be unfamiliar with the Hindu ideas of status distinctions prevalent in other parts of Nepal’ (1966, p. 140). For centuries Hindus have been visiting Thak
in the caste hierarchy. To Hindus the yak is in the same family as the cow and yak-eaters are considered impure. The Tamang Thakali therefore introduced a ban on the consumption of yak-meat, as well as of alcohol and beer;\textsuperscript{19} according to C. von F"urer-Haimendorf, this was initiated by Harkaman (1860–1905).\textsuperscript{20} Most Tamang Thakali claim that their group has given up the consumption of yak-meat and reports support this claim;\textsuperscript{21} in fact, however, some Tamang Thakali do consume yak-meat.\textsuperscript{22}

The Tamang Thakali also changed items in their material cultural which linked them too closely with Tibet. A ban was introduced on the use of the men’s traditional Tibetan-style winter dress, a woollen gown and boots.\textsuperscript{23} Other reforms included a prohibition on gambling.\textsuperscript{24} According to Bista, it was even forbidden to speak Thakali outside Thak Khola.\textsuperscript{25}

The Tamang Thakali also turned their back on Buddhism.\textsuperscript{26} The elaborate Buddhist death rituals were stopped and the employment of Buddhist priests for


\textsuperscript{20} C. von F"urer-Haimendorf 1966, p. 145. The reforms started around year 1900, that is five years before the death of Harkaman. The Japanese monk Kawaguchi stayed with Harkaman for a few days in 1899. Like Kawaguchi, a Mongolian called Serab Lama enjoyed Harkaman’s hospitality (Kawaguchi 1909, p. 46). Harkaman’s hospitality towards these Buddhist monks may indicate a positive inclination towards Buddhism. While Harkaman may have initiated the ban of the eating of yak-meat, it is likely that the main architects behind the reforms were his sons rather than Harkaman himself.

\textsuperscript{21} C. von F"urer-Haimendorf has noted that, ‘For the Thakali have given up the eating of yak …’ (1975, pp. 194–195). Likewise, Marzardo has written that, ‘Although the yak was once kept for its meat, it is no longer true’ (1984, p. 25).

\textsuperscript{22} ‘… many Tamang Thakali still eat yak meat and still drink local barley beer and liquor’ (Vinding 1979/80a, p. 327). And ‘In December 1984 two yak were killed in Kobang and a local [Tamang] Thakali informed that only few [Tamang] Thakali in that village do not eat yak meat’ (Vinding 1984, p. 100). Schuler has noted that renouncing of yak-eating seems to have been confined to a relatively small, modern segment of the Tamang Thakali population (1979, p. 67).

\textsuperscript{23} See also Bista 1971, p. 59. But according to C. von F"urer-Haimendorf, ‘Thakali gave up dressing in Tibetan fashion, except for wearing in winter a Tibetan warm gown (boku), for which the Nepali type of male dress had no equivalent’ (1966a, p. 145).

\textsuperscript{24} According to Iijima, the ban was in force in 1958 (1977b, p. 79).

\textsuperscript{25} Bista 1967, p. 94.

\textsuperscript{26} Not all members of the Tamang Thakali elite turned their backs to Buddhism. For example, Komal Bahadur Shercan, a nephew of Harkaman, was a supporter of Buddhism. See also C. von F"urer-Haimendorf 1981b, p. 78 and 84.
funeral ceremonies was discouraged. Financial support for the monks and nuns and for the operation and maintenance of temples declined sharply with the result that temples fell into disrepair. Religious monuments were even pulled down. The Tamang Thakali also abolished the rule that the second son should become a priest. In Tibetan Buddhism it is considered a great honour to have a son recognized as a reincarnate lama. Harkaman’s youngest son, Guptaman, was identified as an incarnation of the local Bodo Lama, but his father objected to him becoming a monk.

The reforms included not only the abolition of Tibetan elements in Tamang Thakali culture, but also the adoption of Hindu beliefs and customs. Local deities were seen as emanations of Hindu gods: Nari Jhowa, the protective deity of the Tamang Thakali, was seen as an emanation of Laksmi (the Hindu goddess of fortune) and the Tamang Thakali’s four clan gods were seen as emanations of other Hindu gods. Members of the elite began to use Hindu priests (brahman) for ceremonies. Moreover, capture marriage was banned and elements of Hindu wedding ceremonies introduced. Furthermore, in the beginning of

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27 Bista 1976, p. 94. The objective of this and some of the other reforms was also to cut expenses for social and religious rituals.
28 Bista 1967, p. 94.
29 Political considerations and diplomacy sometimes play a role when selecting reincarnations of high lamas. A well-known example is the fourth Dalai Lama, who was a great-grandson of Altan Khan. It was Altan Khan who in 1578 gave Sonam Gyatsho (later known as the third Dalai Lama) the title ta-le (written as ‘Dalai’ by Westerners) (Snellgrove and Richardson 1968, p. 184 ff.).
30 The Bodo monastery was situated on the northwestern outskirts of Kobang, close to the ancestral home of the Balbir lineage. Guptaman later became the foremost advocate of the abolishment of Buddhist elements in Thakali religion. He established in Tukce a small temple for the Hindu goddess Bhagavati (Durga).
31 Iijima (1963, p. 43) and Sharma (1977, p. 296) have referred to these reforms as Hinduization (1963, p. 43). Iijima writes explicitly that he uses the term Hinduization in a similar way to the term Sanskritization used by Dr. Srinivas – that is the adoption of the customs, rites and beliefs of the Brahmins and the adoption of the Brahminic way of life by a caste in order to rise to a higher position in the caste hierarchy (Srinivas 1952, p. 30). However, in later articles Professor Iijima has used the term Hinduization as well as de-Tibetanization (1977b, pp. 82 and 85, and 1982, p. 24). Since the main thrust of the Tamang Thakali reforms was not the adoption of Hindu customs and beliefs, but the rejection of Tibetan cultural elements, I prefer the term de-Tibetanization, a term which also has been used by Dr. Ramble (1984, p. 10).
33 Bista 1967, p. 94. The majority of high caste Hindus do not permit cross-cousin marriage. However, among the Thakuris, the caste of the King of Nepal and the Rana, cross-cousin marriage is permitted, which may be the reason why the Thakali saw no reason to change this custom.
the 20th century the Tamang Thakali introduced Nepali names for their four clans: Cyogi, Salgi, Dhimecan and Bhurgi became Gaucan, Tulacan, Shercan and Bhattacan, respectively.

Initially, the aim of the reforms was to distance the Tamang Thakali from Tibetan civilization so that the Tamang Thakali would not be classified as Tibetans (bhote) by the Hindu rulers of Kathmandu. In the later stages of the reform process, some members of the younger generation went a step further and claimed that the Tamang Thakali were Thakuri, that is the caste of the Hindu rulers of Kathmandu. In support of this claim they alleged that they descended from Hansa Raja, a Thakuri prince from Semja in Western Nepal, who had settled in Thak Khola. Gaucan and the Bhattacan clan stories were cited as further evidence since they indicate that the Tamang Thakali clan gods originated from Semja.

The members of the Subba lineage were the dominant economic and political group in Thak Khola in the first half of the 20th century and many ordinary Tamang Thakali complied with the reforms initiated by the members of the Subba lineage. However, more conservative Tamang Thakali opposed the reforms. As mentioned above, the ban on the consumption of yak-meat was not observed by all Tamang Thakali. Further, although a resolution was passed by the council of the thirteen headmen declaring marriage by capture illegal, ‘popular opinion saw nothing wrong in the continuance of an approach to marriage which had the sanction of customary law, and headmen who had, perhaps reluctantly, consented to the official ban, quite openly co-operated in the celebration of such weddings.’ Some Tamang Thakali also resisted the denigration of Buddhist practices, ‘and there was sufficient support for their revival so that in Tukce, the commercial centre of Thak, it was possible even to restore one of the disused temples. Many of the prominent men took an ambivalent attitude. While disclaiming any personal interest in Buddhist religion, they provided their womenfolk with the means to employ lamas for the performance of domestic rites, and to support the communities of nuns remaining in charge of the local shrines.’

Did the Tamang Thakali achieve their aims? The Tamang Thakali have successfully achieved the main aim of the reforms and are in general no longer considered bhote by Kathmandu’s economic and political elite. But the attempt by some Tamang Thakali to be recognized as Thakuri has failed: high-caste

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34 For Hansa Raja, see Chapter III.
Hindus (the wearers of the holy cord) do not accept the Tamang Thakali as Thakuri. As C. von Führer-Haimendorf has remarked: 'In the change-over from Buddhist to Hindu values they [the Tamang Thakali elite] received no encouragement from the Hindu castes dominant in the centres of political power, for it was a matter of supreme indifference to Brahmans and Chetris whether a group of hillmen and traders considered barely superior to Bhotias followed Hindu or Buddhist customs, and their claim to Thakuri status appeared to high-caste Hindus as bordering on the ridiculous.'

As mentioned above, referring especially to the situation after 1960, some scholars have spoken about rapid structural change of Thakali society and an end to Thakali way of life. Dr. Messerschmidt has dispensed with the usual interpretation of radical cultural change, and instead focused on a basic underlying adaptive continuity: 'What has been interpreted as rapid change for the Thakali is more continuous than discontinuous, demonstrating a fairly standard and historical patterned response to change ... The assumption of recent change representing a rapid end to Thakali culture is premature, based on insufficient evidence and poorly informed hindsight which only a careful historical approach can improve ... The Thakali, as one of Nepal's many enterprising ethnic groups, represent an example of adaptive resilience and innovation, exemplified by their patterned response to changing circumstances around them. This response is best described as part of a process of continuity; it is not the rapid or radically discontinuous change that it may appear to be at first glance and as it has been described heretofore in the literature. Thakali reactions to changing circumstances and to new social, religious, political conditions seen in this light must now be included with all other factors that have previously been identified as part of the Thakali ethnic make-up and cultural identity.'

I agree with Messerschmidt that there is an underlying continuity in Thakali society and culture and that it is inaccurate to talk about a rapid end to the Thakali way of life. As mentioned above, the reforms were not followed by the entire Tamang Thakali society. Moreover, several examples of the continuity in Thakali society and culture have been given in the preceding chapter. For example, Tibetan Buddhism was introduced in Thak Khola several hundred years ago, but pre-Buddhist ideas still dominate the cognitive aspect of

38 Ibid., p. 201.
39 Messerschmidt 1982a, p. 275. Messerschmidt was inspired by some articles on the history of the upper Kali Gandaki region which Professor David Jackson and I had published a few years earlier. Messerschmidt has mentioned that the articles (Gauchan and Vinding 1977 and Jackson 1978), 'compel us to reconsider and reorder our assumptions about recent and long term change in Thakali culture: in short, to put them into perspective' (ibid, p. 272).
Thakali religion. Another example is an abortive attempt in the 1970s by some Tamang Thakali of Pokhara to abolish the traditional Thakali rule which proscribes marriage within the same clan and to introduce Thakuri rules, according to which marriage is allowed between a person and his or her own agnates, if the link is further back than sixth ascending generation, and his or her mother's agnates, if the link is further back than fourth ascending generation. The proposal was eventually rejected by the Tamang Thakali of Pokhara and the traditional marriage rules are still followed. The Thakali of Thak Khola also strongly objected to the proposal, as marriage within the clan is considered incestuous. Informants mentioned, that if some Thakali started such marriages, they would no longer be considered Thakali and would have to find wives elsewhere for their sons.

These examples contradict the proposition that the changes in the 1960s brought a rapid end to Thakali way of life. However, permanent changes in Thakali society and culture have taken place in the present century which it would be inaccurate to interpret as merely a process of continuity. For example, until the mid-1960s trade in Tibetan salt was an important element of the Thakali economy, but today this economic activity is of no importance.

Evolution of culture and society is not a question of change or continuity, but change and continuity. The elements which make up culture and society change at different speeds. A comparison between present-day Thakali society and culture with the situation twenty years ago would reveal that some elements have changed much, others little; some have disappeared, while new elements have been introduced.

For example, some Thakali of Thak Khola travel on airplanes, utilize electric rice cookers and solar heaters, and watch satellite television, but at the same time they continue to use centuries-old technologies, such as heated stones for baking buckwheat pancakes and small hand-driven stone mills for grinding salt and lentils. Another example of change and continuity are the Thakali kinship terminologies. The Thakali terminologies have several of the equations and distinctions of the symmetrical prescriptive terminology of the simple two-line type, indicating that they were probably originally of this type. However, due to later changes there are also equations and distinctions which do not agree with this type. Moreover, the Thakali kinship terminologies include indigenous terms as well as more recently imported Nepali kinship terms. Thus, by picking out some elements one may argue that Thakali material culture and kinship terminologies (and Thakali society and culture in general) have changed much, but by choosing others one could with equal right argue for the opposite. This underlines the importance of a holistic approach.
A final aspect of Thakali change and continuity should be mentioned, namely revitalization of Thakali culture. As mentioned above, the reforms in the early 20th century included not only the abolition of Tibetan elements in Thakali culture, but also the adoption of Hindu beliefs and customs. These reforms have led to a counteraction and a revitalization of indigenous Thakali culture and customs. The force behind the revitalization has been mainly urban youth, who have experienced cultural rootlessness. The 'traditionalists' won an important victory in connection with the formulation of the constitution of the Tamang Thakali National Association. Thus the section 'Cultural Preservation' of the constitution encourages the use of the Tamang Thakali indigenous customs and rituals, language and indigenous priest, the dhom. Whether these intentions will translate into a real revitalization of indigenous Tamang Thakali culture yet remains to be seen.

IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT

In his doctoral thesis Dr. Andrew Manzardo aimed to seek out the factors which accounted for what he called the Tamang Thakali's unusual success. Manzardo identified two main factors, namely their ability to maintain close group cohesion and their use of impression management.

Impression management as a device for describing and analysing social interaction in terms of the means by which people seek to control the impressions others receive of them was first proposed by Dr. Ervin Goffman. It was later developed by Dr. Gerald Berreman in his description and analysis of the problems for research generated by the conflicting interests of the various castes and by their divergent cultures and life-styles in a Hindu village in the Indian Himalayas.

While there has been opposition to the reforms ever since they were first introduced, the revitalization appears to be only a few decades old. Professor Iijima has observed, 'The revival of the Thakalis' native animism called dhom or jhankri is a recent phenomenon. They are quite enthusiastic about it at present unlike two decades ago. I know an instance of a funeral ceremony performed in jhankri style in Kathmandu a few years ago on behalf of a famous Thakali politician by the will of the deceased. This kind of phenomenon could not be observed in Kathmandu before the 1950s' (1982, p. 32). On the revitalization of Tamang Thakali culture, see also Fisher 1987, p. 294 ff.

Manzardo 1978.
Berreman 1972.
Manzardo has expressed his views on Thakali impression management as follows: 'What is remarkable about the Thakali is not that individuals or individual villages could manipulate their group image, rather it was that the Thakali could cooperate in creating a consistent image for the group as a whole, which differed significantly from their own 'back area' behavior. Even more remarkable, however, was the ability for the Thakali to change their collective image, as a group, when that became historically necessary. Even later, the Thakali developed a system which enabled them to put on several simultaneous, but internally consistent shows of impression management, yet at the same time maintain their own cohesion as a bounded group.'

Dr. Messerschmidt has summarized Manzardo's position as follows: 'Manzardo who spoke of the rapid end to Thakali culture later suggested that much of what have been documented about Thakali change in fact is an elaborate façade, a carefully staged example of 'impression management'. Underneath the façade Thakali identity is solidly conservative and still rooted in strong historical traditions.'

In a discussion of impression management Professor Berreman has pointed out that the ethnographer seeks access to back-region information, while the subjects seek to protect their secrets since these represent a threat to the public image they wish to maintain. Neither can succeed perfectly.

I agree with Dr. Manzardo that some Tamang Thakali consciously try to manipulate the image of their group in order to distance themselves from their Tibetan-speaking neighbours. The reason for seeking to manipulate the image of the entire group is the Hindu axiom that no individual can have a higher ritual position than those with whom he intermarries and interdines. However, contrary to Dr. Manzardo, I believe that Thakali impression management is not operating at the collective level, but at the individual level. For example, while most Tamang Thakali claim that the members of their group do not consume yak meat, some Tamang Thakali openly admit to outsiders that they do. Similarly, some Tamang Thakali openly declare themselves to be Buddhists and claim (rightly) that the language, culture and religion of the Tamang Thakali are closely related to Tibetan civilization.

In recent years Manzardo has taken a more balanced view on impression management: 'In middle-age, however, my characterisation of the Thakalis as 'master manipulators' seems to me to make Thakalis seem too sinister. While admitting that conscious manipulation is characteristic of some individuals of any

46 Messerschmidt 1982, p. 266.
47 Berreman 1972, p. xxxiv.
group, nowadays, I would prefer to think of the Thakalis as having fluency in several symbol systems, transitioning between them as one might switch from Nepali to English or Newari. Calling this behavior 'multi-cultural fluency' rather than 'manipulation' eliminates the sinister edge to the description.\(^{48}\)

The distinction between impression management and 'multi-cultural fluency' is important. Impression management is the conscious manipulation of one's image to further one's interests, while 'multi-cultural fluency' is the ability to communicate and interact effectively with outsiders. Multi-cultural fluency requires fluency of foreign customs and languages and is essential to individuals who depend on foreigners, such as minorities, traders, diplomats, staff of multinational organizations, employees of export companies and ethnographers.

Multi-cultural fluency is not unique to the Thakali. Nepal is a country of minorities, and most members of the minority groups are fluent in the Nepali language (the lingua franca and the state language of Nepal). The Thakali have been under the suzerainty of their neighbours in the north and the south and depended on them for trade, and to Thakali traders and local leaders multi-cultural fluency was essential. On the other hand, Thakali subsistence peasants had minimal contact with the peoples of the north and south and therefore had less need for multi-cultural fluency. Today, knowledge of Tibetan customs and language is of minor importance, while fluency of the Nepali language is essential. In the last two decades the importance of fluency of Western (and Japanese) customs and languages have become important for local political leaders, businessmen and hoteliers.

COHESION AND CONFLICT

The second factor behind the Thakali success identified by Manzardo was cohesion. Manzardo writes, 'I believe that their success depends heavily on their group cohesion and resulting cooperation, as well as on the modification of Thakali institutions to promote continued cohesion in spite of new problems which have arisen ...'\(^{49}\)

Several important examples of cohesion can be found among the Thakali. In economic affairs the dikur system stands out. In political affairs cooperation is highly developed, as exemplified by the political system of Syang village.\(^{50}\) In

\(^{48}\) Manzardo 1992, p. 5. For the reaction of some Thakali to Manzardo's dissertation, see Bhattachan 1997, p. 10.

\(^{49}\) Manzardo 1978, p. viii.

\(^{50}\) See Chapter XI.
Thaksatsae there is also strong cooperation at the inter-village level (the union of the thirteen 'villages'). The Tamang Thakali associations in Kathmandu, Pokhara and other places, as well as the national association, are other examples of cooperation in political affairs among the Thakali.

There is, however, another side to the story - the conflicts. In Thakali society discord is found at various levels - individual against individual, family against family, village against village. Conflicts belong to what Berreman has called the back-region: they are secrets which the subjects seek to protect since these represent a threat to the public image they wish to maintain.

The oldest documented conflicts in Tamang Thakali society relate to the salt customs contract. First, in the 1860s Balbir (the founder of the Subba lineage) had a serious dispute with another Thakali named Chyolpa. Second, when the monopoly on trade in salt was introduced it had an adverse effect on the business of other local traders, who subsequently made several petitions to the government to abolish the monopoly. Third, in the late 19th century Balbir's son and grandsons and the family of Pati Ram Thakali contested for the contract. Fourth, when Balbir's grandsons lost the contract to the family of Manilal Gurung in early 20th century, several Tamang Thakali cooperated with the Gurung.

As mentioned above, there has been discord within Tamang Thakali society with regard to reforms of traditional customs. In the 1940s and 1950s, conservative Tamang Thakali resisted the denigration of Buddhist practices and the ban on marriage by capture. There has also been disagreement with regard to the ban on the consumption of yak-meat and a proposal to allow marriage within the patriclans. Disagreement was also exposed during the 1981 Lha Phewa festival.

There have also been serious conflicts within the Subba lineage, with contentions over money, political power and women. The oldest conflict is between the families of Harkaman's sons, especially Mohanman and Hitman. The conflict goes back to the 1920s and came out into the open at the 1959 parliamentary election when Mohanman's son Lalitman and Hitman's son Yogendraman were contenders from the same constituency. Among the subba

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51 The literature on the Thakali include only few references to conflicts. The reason for this may be discretion on the part of the anthropologists to protect their subjects and informants. For examples of conflicts in Thakali society, see Vinding 1979/80b, pp. 35-36 and 1994, pp. 179-181; C. von Fürrer-Haimendorf 1981a, p. 182 and 1989, p. 89; Fisher 1987, e.g. pp. 282-283; and S. von der Heide 1988c, pp. 79-80.

52 See Chapter III.


54 See Chapter XIII.
there has also been disagreement over the division of the paternal estate. Suitable brides (and bridegrooms) are a scarce commodity among the Thakali elite, and enmities sometimes arise when close patrilineal relatives would like to marry the same woman. Two sisters married to two brothers of the Subba lineage are no longer on speaking terms because they both wanted their sons to marry the same woman.

In recent years the quest for political power has been a major source of conflict among the Thakali of Mustang district. At the 1979 general election the Tamang Thakali of Mustang district could not agree on a single candidate, resulting in the election of a candidate from Marpha. Again in 1981 the Tamang Thakali vote was split, and the incumbent from Marpha retained his seat. During the 1986 election the Marpha vote was split, while the Tamang Thakali stood united behind a single candidate who subsequently won. At the election in 1991 (the first multi-party election since 1959) there were several candidates from each ethnic group, representing different parties. It was won by a Tamang Thakali communist – mainly because of disagreement within the Congress Party between two Tamang Thakali leaders.

Conflicts are also found in the local and national Tamang Thakali associations. In Kathmandu there has been disagreement between the old well-established families from Thak Khola (led by the Subba family) and the newcomers from Khani Khowa. As mentioned above, in Pokhara there has been disagreement with regard to the introduction of new marriage rules. In Khani Khowa the Thakali local political achievements are not due to group-wide cooperation, but to the respect engendered by men of influence. In Darbang in Khani Khowa the attempt to form a local Tamang Thakali association did not proceed smoothly; Fisher reports: ‘Personal and political differences divided factions within this community and made it difficult for either a strong individual leader or a consensual association to emerge: any attempt on the part of one faction to organize the community was undercut by the others ... the Darbang association ... reflected the tension between competition and cooperation apparent among Thakali in other fields of interaction – such as, economics and politics.’

In the 1980s in Bhairahwa the question of membership led to a serious conflict within the Tamang Thakali community. According to Dr. Fisher: ‘In Bhairawa, for example, the formal samaj association had existed since 1973, but
after the association was disbanded in 1983 in order to re-form it according to the guidelines set by the Mul Bandej [the Constitution of the Tamang Thakali National Association], Thakali in the area were unable to reach agreement on the reforms. The disputed issue was the criterion for membership in the association; prior to 1983 the Thakali samaj [association] in Bhairawa had included among its members several households from Panchgaon resident in Bhairawa but the new criterion established by the Mul Bandej explicitly limited membership to members of the four Tamhang Thakali clans meant that those households, which had been members of the samaj for years, were to be excluded. The community became factionalized between those who would not join a new association that excluded families who had been members for years, and those who insisted that the new association conform to the guidelines of the Mul Bandej. This dispute effectively prevented the reorganization of the local association: all community activities were cancelled and for the first time in ten years no Torangla festival was celebrated in Bhairawa.  

The formation of the Tamang Thakali National Association has exposed serious conflict within the society. As expected, there has been disagreement between the various local associations with regard to the allocation of seats in the general assembly and the central committee of the national association. Further, there has disagreement over the part of the constitution which relates to Tamang Thakali culture and ritual practices. Fisher reports from Myagdi district: ‘There was no consensus of criticism, even within the same region: some informants stated that there should be no compulsion to perform rituals in a particular fashion, that Thakali should perform rituals in accordance with their own desires and the means available in particular areas or districts; others argued that if Thakali settled in different areas do not follow the same rules and traditions, Thakali culture will be forgotten. A Thakali shaman (dhom) living in Myagdi District sarcastically noted that ‘the Thakali residing in Kathmandu, Pokhara, and Bhairawa and places like that are wise and they make many rules and regulations, but they themselves do not follow the rules. The Thakali who reside in Myagdi are following the real traditions of the Thakali.’

Finally, in 1990 the secretary of the Central Committee of the Tamang Thakali National Association registered the association as member of the Nepal Federation of Nationalities. This was protested by members of the Balbir lineage and some other prominent Tamang Thakali who argued that the secretary had acted on his own and that the Tamang Thakali National Association was not for-
nally a member of the Nepal Federation of Nationalities. Behind this disaccord is an important issue: whether the Tamang Thakali should ally themselves with the other Tibeto-Burman speaking ethnic groups in their struggle against the economic and politically dominant high-caste Hindus. This issue is discussed below.

To conclude, there is a relatively high degree of cohesion in Thakali society, and this is one of several reasons for the Thakalis' relative high standard of living.62 However, conflicts are an equally important aspect of Thakali society, and an analysis of Thakali society would be incomplete and misleading if it focused only on cohesion.

TAMANG THAKALI IDENTITY

According to Dr. Manzardo, due to impression management the Tamang Thakali appear different, but behind the mask they do share a core of common cultural and religious trails. He writes: 'I propose that underlying all this [impression management], providing the firmest sense of shared Thakali identity, is the practice of certain traditional rituals. These constitute a religion behind the duplicitous masks, which serve to concretize Thakali identity and provide the Thakali with a certain 'back area' which gives the individual relief from his cultural performance in an area shared only with his cultural peers. These rites provide the individual a stay against cultural vertigo, and together with ascription by birth are what most Thakali will seek to know about another's claim to Thakali identity, hence his claim to shared identity and, in that basis, cooperation.'63 Dr. Manzardo also mentions that the idiosyncratic elements of Tamang Thakali religion are important because they are exclusive, open only to individuals who are accepted as ethnic Tamang Thakali.64 While some of these idiosyncratic practices are merely the worship of spirits tied to specific localities in Thak Khola and have been abandoned by many of the Tamang Thakali who migrated to other areas,65 the enactment of rituals propitiating the ancestors has come to be central to the group's identity.66

I agree with Dr. Manzardo that what he calls 'traditional rituals', especially ancestor worship, constitute a central element of Thakali religion.67 However, the

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62 For other factors, see Chapter IV.
64 Manzardo 1985, p. 84.
65 Ibid.
66 Manzardo 1978, p. 298.
67 Fisher has also highlighted the importance of ancestor worship to Tamang Thakali identity (1987, p. 248).
'traditional rituals' are not unique to Tamang Thakali: several of these (e.g. *Lha Chyowa*, the death ceremonies and the *Torenlä festival*) are shared by the Mawatan Thakali and the Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali. Moreover, while the enactment of rituals propitiating the ancestors are important to the Tamang Thakali, it is the membership of one of the four Tamang Thakali clans more than these rituals which tie the Tamang Thakali together and gives them a sense of shared identity.\(^{68}\)

Dr. Manzardo has observed, 'Unlike many other groups in Nepal, the Thakali seem to thrive on social change. Instead of causing a loss of identity or social breakdown, the Thakali reaction to change is unified and involves cooperation between members of the entire group to permit orderly changes in social behavior.'\(^{69}\)

It appears, however, that social changes have created an identity crisis among the Tamang Thakali. Speaking about the changes in Tamang Thakali religion in 1956, Professor Snellgrove has observed that 'the older folks are bewildered, for no one in Tukchā has the necessary knowledge to argue the validity of the old religion tradition and they see the whole basis of life crumbling away.'\(^{70}\) Professor C. von Führer-Haimendorf has spoken of confusion in religious beliefs in Thak Khola in 1962: 'The zeal of the reformers ... threw the whole value system of the Thakali into a confusion which in 1962 had not yet been resolved ... Thus diverse attitudes to questions of morality prevailed within the Thakali community, and this lack of agreement in the moral assessment of common occurrences resulted in strain and tension.'\(^{71}\) Professor Iijima has described an identity crisis among the young Tamang Thakali of Kathmandu, causing conflict with their parents.\(^{72}\)

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\(^{68}\) The 1971 constitution of the Tamang Thakali Social Reform Organization of Pokhara limited membership to 'that individual or family who can assure the Managing Committee of being a Thakali on the basis of language, culture and morals' (Manzrado and Sharma, p. 31). This definition is not useful, as the Tamang Thakali do not share the same language, culture and morals. Consequently, the Tamang Thakali National Association defines a Tamang Thakali on the basis of descent - a definition which was first proposed by Gauchan and Vinding (1977, p. 98).

\(^{69}\) Manzrado 1978, p. 61.

\(^{70}\) Snellgrove 1961, p. 178.


\(^{72}\) Iijima 1977, p. 88 and 1982, pp. 29–35. A major issue of contention is the children's education and future occupation. Most Thakali parents want their children to become independent businessmen and professionals, or well-paid government servants (especially doctors and engineers). Many children follow the wishes of their parents, but some want to be artists. The best example is Hitman Sherchan's youngest son Bhuipi (1936–1989), who against his father's wishes became a poet. According to Dr. Michael Hutt, Bhuipi Sherchan is probably the most popular and widely read Nepali poet of the past twenty years (1991, p. 119). Young Thakali
The Tamang Thakali identity crisis was also apparent at the organizational meeting of the Tamang Thakali National Association which was held in Pokhara in April 1993. Dr. Fisher has given a vivid description of the meeting: 'Debates and disagreements returned to the same few points: religion, cost-cutting, and the allocation of representatives and fees. Debates over the first of these – religion – continually raised the questions ‘Who are we? What is our history? What are our traditions? Are we Thakuri or Bhoite?’; if the meeting had a theme or a quest, these questions best characterize it ... The controversial question of religion was raised early on the second day when one delegate inquired ‘What is our dharma (religion, duty, religious duty) – are we Hindu or are we Buddhist?’

To conclude, change has in general caused an identity crisis in Tamang Thakali society, especially among the urban youth, many of whom experience cultural vertigo.74

THE FUTURE

In a study of the Tamang of central Nepal, Dr. Holmberg has observed: 'The Tamang as a named category of people – like many other groups found through highland Nepal – emerged not out of time immemorial from hidden Himalayan valleys but with the formation of the state of Nepal ... Commonly named caste and ethnic groups such as Tamang, Gurung, Newar, Chetri, Bahun, Kami, Sarki, Damai, Thakali, Bhoite, Sherpa, Magar, Chantel, Sunuwar, Tharu, Rai, and Limbu are not isolates with great historical depth and continuity of form, but have acquired specific identities as Nepal consolidated ... A more appropriate characterization of the configuration of groups in Nepal is one of constant reordering subject to formation, reformation, and oscillation. State ideology and policy in conjunction with local conditions shaped ethnicity in Nepal.'75

Dr. Fisher has proposed the same idea with regard to the Thakali, writing that 'ethnic identity is relational, emerging over time through interaction with other groups and, more important, with the state. Thakali identity, in particular, are following the footsteps of Bhupi and are making a name for themselves in the field of arts. For example, Dipendra Gaucan is recognized as one of Nepal's most promising filmmakers, and in 1996 Nirmal Shercan's debut short film 'The Egg Head' was presented at the International Short Film Festival in Oberhausen, Germany.

74 It is, however, important to mention that the Thakali urban youth in general are not rootless. Membership of a small, well-defined ethnic group and of the local Tamang Thakali association give the youth roots: they know that they are not alone.
75 Holmberg 1989, pp. 12–16.
emerged or solidified only after the consolidation of the state in the eighteenth century and the codification of the *Muluki Ain*, the legal code of 1854.76

I disagree with Dr. Holmberg and Dr. Fisher that Thakali ethnicity emerged with the formation of the state of Nepal. According to the Cimang *bemchag* which dates prior to the foundation of the Nepalese state (late 18th century), the Thakali were divided into the same three subgroups which we know today.77 The groups consisted of a number of clans which exchanged women. The groups were subject to fusion and fission: immigrants were invited to become members of the society, while members were sometimes thrown out. Some immigrants established new clans, while others were adopted as members of existing clans. The inclusion of Thak Khola into the newly established Hindu Nepal state in the late 18th century and the legal code of 1854 led, however, to more closed ethnic boundaries and ethnic exclusiveness because, as explained earlier, in the caste system no individual can have a higher ritual position than those with whom he intermarries and interdines.

In recent years, ethnicity and religion have become important political issues in Nepal. The new political freedom which followed the 1990 Revolution has exposed – and widened – the differences within Nepal society between the peoples of the hills (*pahare*) and the inhabitants of the plains of Indian origin (*ma desi*); between the dominant Nepali-speaking high castes and the Tibeto-Burman speaking ethnic groups; and between Hindus and Muslims.

During the drafting of the 1990 Constitution, language and religious freedom became major issues. Buddhist, Muslim and Christian associations demanded a secular state. These demands were strongly opposed by traditional Hindu organizations who feared that the declaration of Nepal as a secular state would open its borders to a flood of Christian missionaries, who might have political as well as religious patronage and motives. Communal groups also demanded that the status of Nepali as a national language be abolished and that Nepal should become a federal state, each autonomous region having its own official language. Groups in the Terai called for the recognition of Hindi as a second national language.78

On 9 November 1990 King Birendra promulgated the new constitution.79 It defines Nepal as multiethnic, multilingual, indivisible Hindu Kingdom (Article 4). The King must be an adherent of Aryan Culture and the Hindu religion (Article 27).80 The Nepali language is the official language of the nation, while

76 Fisher 1987, p. 18.
77 See Chapter III.
80 The Constitution does not define 'Aryan Culture' or 'Hindu religion'.
all the languages spoken as the mother tongue in the various parts of Nepal are national languages (Article 6). Every person shall have the freedom to profess and practise his own religion as handed down to him from ancient times having due regard to traditional practices, provided that no person shall be entitled to convert another person from one religion to another (Article 19).

The Constitution gives citizens the freedom to form unions and associations, but this shall not be deemed to prevent the making of laws to impose reasonable restrictions on any act which may jeopardize the harmonious relations subsisting among the peoples of various castes, tribes or communities (Article 12). Further, the Election Commission shall withhold recognition from any political organization or any party formed on the basis of religion, community, caste, tribe or religion (Article 112).

In July 1990 nineteen ethnic associations founded the Nepal Federation of Nationalities (nepal janajati mahasangha). The nationalities of the federation have for long been dominated economically and politically by the Hindu higher castes and the main aim of the federation is that its members should have a fair share of the economic and political power in Nepal. The Federation has criticized the 1990 Constitution for reflecting the interests of the dominant Hindu society. They are dissatisfied that Nepal is officially a Hindu kingdom and that the Nepali language is the only state language.

81 Twenty-two ethnic associations are now affiliated with the federation, namely the Chantel, Danuwar, Dhimal, Dura, Jirel, Rai, Limbu, Meche, Cepang, Majhi, Tamang, Magar, Thami, Rajbangsi, Sunuwar, Gurung, Tamang Thakali, Tharu, Sherpa, Newar, Jhangar and Yolmo. In addition, an association representing the Rai and Limbu peoples has associate membership. See also The Rising Nepal, 8. June 1996 and IWGIA 1996, p. 208. Gurung also lists 22 associations, but has Kirat instead of Limbu, and Jyapu instead of Yolmo (1998, p. 203). For lists with 19 associations (excluding Dura, Cepang, Majhi and Jhangar), see Fisher 1993, p. 12 and Skar 1995, p. 32. For a general introduction to these ethnic groups, see Bista 1967 and Salter and Gurung 1996.

82 The leaders of the main political parties (which are dominated by high-caste Hindus) support (at least in public) the ethnic minorities’ demand for a fair share of the economic and political power, but only as long as it does not threaten national integrity and unity. The political parties have now realized the importance of the ethnic association and in June 1996 Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba inaugurated the third general convention of the Nepal Federation of Nationalities.

83 Ethnicity and religion also emerged as issues in connection with the 1980 referendum on Nepal’s future political system. A ‘Mongoloid-origin People’s Conference’ was organized and several ethnic associations presented memoranda to the Constitutional Reform Commission, which was constituted after the referendum. The Commission ignored the proposals, including one that Nepal should be a secular state.

84 Christian groups have criticized the ban on conversion. Hutt points out that the ban on conversion may contravene Article 18 on the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (Hutt 1994, p. 44).
In connection with the 1991 general election the Election Commission denied registration to several parties representing the Tibeto-Burman speaking peoples of Nepal, but granted it to the Sadbhavana Party, which advances the interests of the peoples of recent Indian origin (madesi). The apparent principle is that a de facto regional or ethnic party will be tolerated so long as its name and constitution do not make its regional or ethnic nature explicit.  

Nepal has, in general, been spared the violent ethnic, religious and political conflicts that have troubled the other South Asian countries. The situation is, however, changing. The conflict between Indian Muslims and Hindus has spilled over into Nepal. In 1995 violent clashes between Muslims and Hindus took place in Nepalganj in the southwestern part of the country. Radical religious groups are now active in the area, including the Hindu group Shiv Sena. Also, in 1995 the Maoist group United People’s Front (samyukta jana morcha) launched a ‘People’s War’, which has led to serious unrest in Rolpa and Rukum districts in Western Nepal.

The denial to the ethnic minorities of the right to form political parties – that is to advance their political ideas and goals within a democratic framework of democratic institution – may lead to ethnic violence in Nepal. In 1993 Gopal Gurung, President of the Mongol National Organization warned, ‘The Mongol National Organization wants real democracy, provincial government, secular country and human rights, not only in constitution but in practice. There will be a blood bath in this Himalayan Kingdom if the minority but powerful Hindus neglect the majority of the indigenous Mongol people.’

In June 1996 leaders from some radical ethnic organizations and political parties issued a joint statement, demanding that ‘international conventions relating to the rights of ethnic and indigenous people should be signed and legislation which conflicts with the basic rights should be repealed. Nepal is a multi-national state. It is, therefore, desirable to make it a federal state by granting all such communities the sovereign right to independent states.’ One of the leaders, Gopal Khambu, President of Khambuwan [Rai] National Front (Khambuwan Rastriya Morcha) warned: ‘The government is not willing to open a dialogue

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85 Whelpton 1994, p. 50.
86 For the ‘People’s War’, see South Asia Human Rights Documentation Centre 1996. Although the ‘war’ is fought by people of different ethnic background, the majority of the population in Rolpa district are Magar and the unrest may develop into an ethnic conflict.
88 Gurung 1993.
even on such a sensitive issue. This shows that we must adopt the path of bloodshed and conflict. The Khambuwan Rastriya Morcha has been formed with the aim of establishing Khambuwan autonomy... The Khambu [Rai] people are not alone in this regard, for we have also people who are demanding similar autonomy for the Limbu, Tamang, Magar and Khas people. The brave Gurkha soldiers are on our side. As such, we can easily compel the handful of rulers who have been sucking the blood of the people in the name of democracy to bend their knees.90

Similarly, the President of Magarant Liberation Front (Magarant Mukti Morcha) has demanded that, 'the territory inhabited today by the Magar people, to be declared Magarant ... We demand that only the Magar and indigenous people will be permitted to vote ... The persons who oppose the Magar Homeland Movement will be dealt with severely ... For the preservation of culture and identity of Magars, all non-Magars and non-indigenous outsiders should best leave the Magarant Nation (State) territory for the good of all ... No other political party is permitted to be active in the Magarant Nation (State) territory except Magarant Liberation Front (MLF).'91

Nepalese intellectuals have joined the criticism of the Bahun-Chetri domination of Nepal. Professor Dor Bahadur Bista has blamed the Bahunism (bahunbad) for the lack of development in Nepal.92 According to Professor K.P. Malla, 'Wherever there is Brahmin cultural influence, there had to be this kind of stratification between the high and the low, the pure and the impure. This is the main contribution of the Brahmins to our society.'93 And K.B. Bhattachan and K.N. Pyakuryal has warned: 'The sentiments of the various ethnic groups may be interpreted as ephemeral political gimmicks but the recorded history of the past 200 years of Chhetri-Bahun domination in the political, social, and cultural life of the Nepalese people is not. So far, such sentiments have been viewed by the dominant group as nothing more except psychological upsurges against deprivation, but if these grievances take form of a political movement, the shape of present-day Nepal may not long remain the same in future ... The time bomb of ethnic violence is already ticking and no one knows when it will detonate. But there is still time to correct the present course and prevent disaster.'94

92 Bista 1991. Bahunism (bahunbad), or Brahmanism (brahmanbad), is in contemporary Nepal used as a pejorative term for alleged Bahun values and attitudes (the caste system, dependency, fatalism, nepotism and sycophancy) and for policies perpetuating the dominant position of Bahun in the administration and government.
During an interview in 1985 the Thakali anthropologist K. B. Bhattachan asked me about the origin of the Thakali. I replied that people can change their language and culture, but not their race. When a Thakali looks in a mirror he sees a mongoloid face, not the caucasoid face of a Thakuri. This proves that the bulk of the Thakali’s ancestors were of mongoloid stock. I called upon the Thakali to bury this discussion and instead say, ‘We are Thakali, and we are proud of being Thakali.’

Today, I fear that the Thakali cannot afford to bury the question about their identity and ethnic affiliation. Some Thakali argue that they are Thakuri and should ally themselves with the dominant Hindu castes. Others feel closer to the ‘Mongols’ and demand that the Thakali should fight for the rights of the suppressed Tibeto-Burman speaking groups. And some believe that the Thakali should remain neutral and try to please both sides. One of the advocates of the neutral line told me that he had read with interest my retelling of the histories of the Tamang Thakali clans. The Cyogi Rhab showed that the Tamang Thakali were of mixed origin and that it was possible for peoples of different origin to live peacefully together. He then quoted the Cyogi ancestor Ani Airam, ‘Although our birthplace is not the same, we should have the feeling that we have been born in the same place so that we may have good feelings when we gather.’

The present debate among the Tamang Thakali as to whether they are ‘Mongols’ or not resembles the earlier dispute about their origin and identity. At that time the Tamang Thakali elite sought higher caste status to gain economic and political influence. Now the stakes are potentially higher – whether to be on the winning or the losing side in a potential violent battle between the ethnic groups of Nepal, whether to cast their lot with the present establishment dominated by high-caste Hindus or with the Federation of Nationalities. It is a question that the Thakali cannot evade because the leaders of the Federation of Nationalities are likely to say, ‘If you are not one of us, you are one of them!’ When that question arises impression management will no longer suffice!

95 Bhattachan 1985.
97 Vinding 1992, p. 61
Appendix 1

DOCUMENTS

1. WEIGHTS AND MEASURES IN DANA, 1791

Royal order to Kashiram Upadhyaya: We have received reports that at Dana you have seized weights and measures on the ground that (the owners) have refused to let them be stamped (with the royal seal). Weights and measures have not so far been stamped there in this manner, and all sources of revenue at Dana have been placed under the authority of Jayanarsing. Return the weights and measures that you have seized. You will be held guilty if you create any obstruction in this regard.

Date: Marga Badi 9, 1848 B.S. (November 1791).

2. REVENUE COLLECTION IN THAK, 1811

On Falgun Sudi 6, 1867 (February 1811), Muktirama Newar was granted authority to collect revenue in the Thak region. The appointment was effective Baisakh 1, 1868. He replaced Mahabir Karki. The same day, the following regulations were promulgated in the name of Muktirama Newar:

(Abstract translation)

1. Collect revenue from the budhas\(^1\) of Thak according to the amount and in the installments stipulated by them in their pattas and transmit the proceeds to the central treasury (Tosakhana).
2. Impose fines on moneylenders who charge interest at more than 10 per cent as well as those persons who indulge in gambling. Transmit the

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\(^1\) A budha is a village headman.
proceeds of such fines exclusive of the amount of revenue stipulated by you.

3. While administering justice, transmit to the central treasury income from fines and penalties exceeding Rs 100 in one case exclusive of the amount of revenue stipulated by you. Impose fines on any budha who suppresses information about such cases and transmit the proceeds similarly to the central treasury.

4. Impose fines, if the nature of the offense so warrants, on any person who is guilty of cow slaughter, burglary or rebellion, in the presence of local respectable persons (bhala manis) [baladmi] and transmit the proceeds to central treasury exclusively of the amount of revenue stipulated by you. In case it is held that the guilty person must suffer punishment on his person or family, arrest him and put him in fetters. Refer the case to us and take action as ordered.

5. Dispose of complaints against local ryots and budhas. Fines collected from any ryot who confesses his guilt may be included in the amount of revenue stipulated by you. The proceeds of fees and fines collected from budhas who confess their guilt shall be transmitted to the central treasury exclusive of such amount.

6. In case you receive information about buried property, punish the person who has surpressed information relating to such property. Include a sum of Rs 100 in the amount of revenue stipulated by you, and transmit such property, and the balance of the fine, if any, to the central treasury exclusive of such amount.

7. Report to us if any budha causes any difficulty or obstruction in the collection of revenue according to these thekbandi arrangements. We shall issue a royal order for his dismissal.

8. Do not allow any Thakse to leave the kot and reside at Tukuche or Lete. If he refuses to do so, collect taxes due from him at both places and include the proceeds in the amount of revenue stipulated by you.

9. Dispose of disputes between moneylenders and debtors in an equitable manner and transmit to the palace a fee amounting to 10 per cent of the amount under dispute exclusive of the amount of revenue stipulated by you.

10. Pay salaries to the following staff at the following rates from the revenue collected by you:

- Tahasildar Mukti Ram: Rs 400
- Eight peons: Rs 240
- One bahidar: Rs 60
11. Arrange for the transmission of the amount of revenue stipulated for Thini and Panchgaun in Laskari rupees in one installment in the month of Marga (November 16–December 16).

Date: Falgun Sudi 6, 1867 B.S. (February 1811)


3. PETITION OF KHAMBA TRADERS, 1833

Hiksum Tsungi, a Khamba trader visiting Thak-Khola for trade, submitted the following petition to Kathmandu:

‘We visit Thak for trade in salt and sheep. Previously, the local functionaries used to collect jagat and nirkhi duties from us at the same rates as from other traders.

‘These days, however, they collect these duties at arbitrary rates. They charge a duty of 1 mana for each 10 lugal (i.e. leather bags containing salt, foodgrains, and other commodities carried on the backs of sheep and goats) from some traders, and for each 6 lugals from others. But from us they collect 1 mana as duty for each 3 lugals.

‘Previously, we used to provide salt for their personal consumption on a mutually acceptable basis. We also used to pay one rupee to the jagat collector for each household while coming from Tibet. While returning home, we used to pay 1 mana of foodgrains for each manload, or for each 3 lugals carried by sheep. These days, however, the collectors forcibly take as much as they like.

‘As arrangement had previously been negotiated with Thituwa Bista, Bhajudev, and others according to which we used to make a consolidated payment of Rs 21 in consideration of our four or five months long visit for the purpose of trade, instead of payment assessed on the number of sheep or quantity of salt sold by us. These days, however, we have to pay both the abovementioned amount of Rs 21 and payment assessed on the number of sheep or quantity of salt sold by us.

‘Previously, we did not pay any jagat duty on wool, but now it is collected from us. If any animal strays from our fold, they confiscate it as unclaimed property.

‘We Khamba traders will no longer be able to visit (Thak-Khola) for trade if the customary arrangements are violated in this manner.’

A royal order was issued on Friday, Falgun Sudi 3, 1889 (February 1833) directing tax-collectors in Thak-Khola to collect duties from the Khamba traders at customary rates.

Source: Regmi Research Series, Vol. 16, No. 6 (June 1984), pp. 85–86.
4. SALT TRADE DURING THE NEPAL–TIBET WAR, 1855–56

a) In Baisakh 1912 (April 1855) the *Ijara* for the collection of customs duties on the Nepal–Tibet trade at Dana was suspended because such trade was dislocated by the Nepal–Tibet war. In the Vikrama year 1910 (A.D. 1853), the *Ijara* had yielded a revenue of Rs 29,001. Dittha Srilal Bhatta was then deputed to Dana to collect the duties under the *amanat* system. Baisakh Sudi 11, 1912 (April 1855).


b) Order to the village headman and revenue functionaries of Thini and other villages in the Panchgaun area: 'We have placed the Dana customs under *amanat* management for the Vikrama year 1911 (A.D. 1854). We have now received reports that you are offering salt to the *amanat* officials at higher rates than those you had charged the *Ijaradar*. Indeed, you have held up the supply of salt even at such higher rates. Such action on your part has reduced the amount of revenue accruing to the government, and you may be held liable to meet the loss and also duly punished. You are therefore ordered to supply salt to the Dana customs on a regular basis and obtain payment at reasonable rates.'

Jestha Badi 5, 1912 (May 1855).


c) Order to Srilal Bhatta: Captain Ambar Simha Kunwar Ranaji has reported to us that supplies of provisions to the army have been held up because you have issued orders that not a single *mana* of foodgrains should reach Tibetan territory. We have ordered you not to allow traders to take a single *mana* of foodgrains to Tibetan territory for the barter trade in salt. You have misinterpreted our order and held up supplies of provisions to the army. You are, therefore, punished with a fine of five rupees. Issue orders to traders engaged in bartering foodgrains with salt that they should purchase salt against cash payment, and not procure the commodity through barter with foodgrains. Do not allow traders to barter their foodgrains with Tibetan salt, but do not hold up supplies of foodgrains carried by the common people, or meant for the army. If you again hold up supplies of foodgrains to the army, you shall be punished under The Military Act (Jangi Ain). Use revenues collected at Dana to purchase foodgrains for the army and maintain stocks of such foodgrains. Jestha Badi 9, 1912 (May 1855).

d) Dittha Srilal Bhatta was ordered not to permit any foodgrains to reach Tibetan territory, but to exchange foodgrains procured for the war with salt from local traders. The order added, 'We have sent you to collect customs duties at Dana on *amaniat* basis even through Premaranjan Dani had offered to pay Rs 31,000 a year. Try your best to raise revenue in excess of this figure.'

Ashadh 1, 1912 (June 14, 1855).


e) Traders who smuggle salt from Tibet without paying customs duties at Dana were punished with a fine amounting to half the value of the smuggled salt. Thakali traders, however, were punished with a fine of only one rupee and one anna each. On Chaitra Sudi 4, 1912 (March 1856), Prime Minister Jung Bahadur issued an order to Dittha Srilal Bhatta to discontinue such a discriminatory practice, and collect fines from Thakali smugglers at the same rates as from other smugglers.


On Aswin Sudi 12, 1912 (September 1855), the following order was sent in the name of the Thakali community inhabiting the Thak-Khola region:

His Majesty intends to undertake preparations for war in the north. Accordingly, troops have been recruited not only from among the four castes and thirty-six sub-castes of the Kingdom of Gorkha who have been traditionally recruited as soldiers, but also from among others. People were also recruited as porters all over the country.

We have sent officials from here to recruit porters. However, Subba Dhansaram and Subba Balbir of Thak have submitted the following petition: 'During the time of the Malla Kings, we Thakalis used to be recruited as soldiers. Because Thak is situated in a mountainous region, special administrative and other arrangements had been made for it in 1870-71 (A.D. 1813–14). It was from that time that the inhabitants of Thak were exempted from unpaid labour obligations during war and other occasions.'

Inasmuch as the country must act according to the desires of His Majesty, we hereby direct that because you have been traditionally recruited as soldiers, you shall no longer be recruited as porters. A regiment of Thakali troops shall, therefore, be formed. After the task set by His Majesty is completed, we shall make arrangements which are convenient to you.
As soon as Subba Dhansaram and Subba Balbir reach that region, assemble all Thakali males and enroll them. In case anybody does not do so, but conceals them, or suppresses information relating to their whereabouts, or escapes, the Subbas will arrest him, put him in irons, and recruit him as a porter in the Jagannath regiment. Irrespective of whether you are wealthy or indigent, if you work faithfully according to your capacity, we shall appoint as government servants those who are willing to work in that capacity, or let them stay at home under such arrangements as are desired by them, until the time of your sons and grandsons.

Any person who incites the people to disobey our order, or prevents them from being enrolled, shall be put in iron, produced before us, and punished with confiscation of property or otherwise according to military law.


6. CONFLICT BETWEEN CHYOLPA AND BALBIR THAKALI, 1860

In early A.D. 1860, a contract for the collection of customs duties at Dana in Thak had been given out for Rs 44,501 to Captain Hemakarna Khadka Chhetri. Subsequently, a higher bid was offered by Chyalpa Thakali. Ultimately, however, a new contract was given out to Lt. Champa Singh Khadka Chhetri, Captain Hemakarna Khadka Chhetri's son on an annual payment of Rs 55,501.

Lt. Champa Singh Khadka Chhetri recruited three local people to work for him: Subba Balabir Thakali, Ramashankar Thakali, and Dhana Prasad Thakali. Chyalpa Thakali, who had been unable to obtain the contract, then persuaded Ramashankar Thakali and Dhana Prasad Thakali to resign. Subba Balabir Thakali, however, refused to join them.

Chyalpa Thakali and his associates then prepared the following plan: 'The sale of foodgrains from Thaksatsae to Pacgaun and Barhagaun will not be permitted. This will stop foodgrain exports to Tibet, with the result that no salt will be available in exchange. Once salt imports are disrupted, the Dana customs will collapse, and the condition of Thaksatsae will improve.' They then announced that the inhabitants of Thaksatsae would hold a public meeting at Purang to discuss the plan, and that any village headman (mukhiya) who did not attend the meeting would be fined one rupee, and other persons eight annas, every day.

Some Thakalis put their signature on the notice circulated by Chyalpa Thakali and his associates for holding the meeting, whereas others refused to do so. The notice also declared that any inhabitant of Thaksatsae who sold foodgrains would be punished with a fine of three hundred rupees.
Subba Balabir Thakali was one of those who refused to sign the notice. He said: ‘Everyone should be free to decide whether or not to sell his foodgrains. I am willing to sign any notice if the proposal is to approach the royal palace for the promulgation of appropriate regulations. But I will not sign any document proposing a ban on the sale of foodgrains.’

A quarrel ensued between Chyalpa Thakali and Subba Balabir Thakali. However, other persons prevented them from coming to blows. The proposed meeting could not be held. These events took place in the month of Shrawan (July–August).

In Kartik (October–November) Chyalpa Thakali and three other persons filed a complaint at the Baglung court against Subba Balabir Thakali. The court sent constables along with Chyalpa Thakali to arrest him. Subba Balabir Thakali was beaten up and put in fetters. However, he was not told what charges had been framed against him.

Subba Balabir Thakali was subsequently able to elude his captors. He visited Kathmandu and submitted a petition through the Itachapli court. The petition was represented to Prime Minister Jung Bahadur through the Kaushal office.

The Prime Minister ordered that Chyalpa Thakali, Dhana Prasad Thakali, and Prem Ranjan Thakali be arrested by the Itachapli court on the charge of having put Subba Balabir Thakali in fetters in an unauthorized manner.


7. PETITION OF SUBBA RAM PRASAD THAKALI, 1886

On Bhadra Sudi 2, 1943 (September 1886), Subba Ram Prasad Thakali of the Dana Customs in Thak submitted the following petition:

‘In the year 1933 Vikrama (A.D. 1876), orders had been issued in the name of Subba Balabir Thakali, and his son, Kaviram Thakali, authorizing them to procure on a monopoly basis salt purchased from Tibet by the people of Barhagaun, Panchgaun, Thak, and Ghelung. This arrangement continued until the year 1942 Vikrama (A.D. 1885).

‘This year the people of those areas submitted a petition to the government praying that they be allowed to sell their salt anywhere they like. The government has now issued an order directing that no restrictions whatsoever be imposed on the trade in salt.

‘If I am not permitted to engage in the salt trade on a monopoly basis, how can I fulfill my contractual obligations to the government, which amounts to thousands of rupees?’
Subba Ram Prasad Thakali, therefore, prayed that the local people be ordered to sell the salt purchased by them from Tibet only to the Dana Customs, and not supply the commodity to Manang and other areas.

The petition was referred to Prime Minister Bir Shumshere by the Kausi Tosakhana. The following order was then issued:

'Orders had been issued in the years 1920 and 1931 Vikrama (A.D. 1863 and 1874) directing that no restrictions whatsoever be imposed on trade in that region. On the basis of those orders the people of Barhagaun, Panchgaun, etc. had been permitted to sell their salt anywhere they liked. Now Subba Ram Prasad Thakali has produced a copy of the 1933 Vikrama (A.D. 1876) order in the name of Kaviram Thakali, reconfirming the monopoly that had been granted to his father, Subba Balabir Thakali, so that revenue from the Dana Customs, which then amounted to Rs 82,000 yearly, might not be adversely affected. Now the amount has gone up to Rs 97,000. The monopoly is hereby reconfirmed in favour of Subba Ram Prasad Thakali, and the order issued in the name of the local people, permitting free trade in salt, is rescinded.'

Date: Marga Badi 3, 1943 (November 1886).

Appendix 2

MYTHS AND FABLES

KING THOKARCE1

Long time ago King Thokarcen came to Thini from Khamsung in Tibet.2 The king had a third eye which could destroy whatever he looked at.

At that time there lived in Thini a king called Punari. When he heard about King Thokarcen’s power, Punari became frightened and fled to Omang above Thini.3 King Thokarcen then settled in Thini. However, King Punari stopped the flow of water to Thini.

One morning, while King Thokarcen stood on the roof of his house gazing at the mountains, wondering why the water had stopped, he noticed smoke rising from the forest. He immediately sent his soldiers to find out where the smoke was coming from. In the forest they found an old man sitting by a campfire. He was sweating profusely, eating porridge of bitter buckwheat with nettle soup and chilli.

When the soldiers returned they told the king that they had found an old man weeping, eating rice of gold with soup of turquoise and the red sun.4 When the king heard that he ordered the soldiers to find out why the old man was crying. The soldiers went back and the old man told them that he was not crying, but sweating. He also told them that it was he who had stopped the water because

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1 This and several of the following myths were first presented in Vinding 1978. The article was unfortunately marred by poor language and numerous priting errors. For King Thokarcen, see Chapter III. Stories about King Thokarcen are also found in the Cimang Bemchag, see Ramble and Vinding 1987.
2 The location of Khamsung is unknown.
3 Omang are some forest fields above Thini.
4 The rice of gold is an allusion to porridge of bitter buckwheat, the soup of turquoise to nettle soup and the red sun to the chilli.
he had been driven away from his home. However, he proposed to let the water flow again if King Thokarcen would give him a handful of soil and a mirror of the sky.\(^5\)

King Thokarcen accepted the proposal. The two kings met and agreed that King Thokarcen should continue as the king, and that King Punari would be allowed to live in Thini and be given whatever he needed. At the time the wives of both the kings were pregnant, so they decided to establish marriage relations if one got a son and the other a daughter. After the agreement had been reached, King Thokarcen vowed that it should last as long as the river did not flow upwards, and the crow did not turn white.

**THE SONS OF KING THOKARCEN**

When King Thokarcen settled in Thini he had no sons. The king prayed to the gods and was blessed with a son whom he named Lhasumpal. The king wanted another son and wished earnestly from his heart; when the son was born, the king named him Dhasumpal. After having received two sons King Thokarcen was very happy, but he still wished for another son; since the third son was born at the time of happiness he was named Kisumpal.

Apart from these sons King Thokarcen had an illegitimate son named Syasumpal who once saved his father's life. Some people in Thini had planned to kill King Thokarcen and other members of the royal family by presenting them with poisoned beer. Syasumpal came to know about the plot and warned his father. The king became very happy when his son exposed the plot and said, 'We shall not hate the man who brings us good news.' Syasumpal was later sent to Cimang to establish a border post.

**SARTI, BHARTI AND NAMTI LAMA**

When King Thokarcen came to Thini from the north he brought along his personal ritual specialist named Namti Lama, who had power to control the rain.\(^6\)

At that time there lived in Thini two brothers called Sarti Lama and Bharti Lama, who were the sons of Sralangghum. Sarti Lama had control over the soil, while Bharti Lama had control over the natural disasters.\(^7\)

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5 A handful of soil and a mirror of the sky is an allusion to a place to live.
6 Namti, cf. T, nam, rain; cf. Tib., gnam, sky
The powers of the three priests complemented each other and together they ensured the people of Thini with good harvest. One day, however, they quarreled among themselves as to whose power was the most important. Sarti Lama said that without his power the soil would turn bad and the crops would fail regardless of the other two. Bharti Lama said that without his power there would be natural disasters and the crops would fail regardless of the other two. And Namti Lama said that without his power there would be no rain and the crops would fail regardless of the other two.

Thus they argued for a long time, and when they could not reach an agreement they started to fight. Sarti Lama looked only after the soil of his own fields, Bharti Lama prevented the natural disasters only from his own fields, and Namti Lama sent rain only to his own fields. Due to that the crops in all fields failed and the villagers became very unhappy. Bharti Lama tried to end the dispute, but the other two continued. That is why the lineages of Namti Lama and Sarti Lama have died out.

THE ANCESTOR OF THE BOM CLAN

The ancestor of the Bom clan was a high lama who came to Thini from Tibet. When he arrived at Thini he settled outside the village at the place of the present Changpi Chorten.

One day King Thokarcen was looking from his palace when he saw smoke rising in the north. He ordered his soldiers to find out where it came from. The soldiers followed the direction of the smoke and arrived at the place of the ancestor of the Bom clan. There they found him performing a religious ceremony. The soldiers returned and informed the king that they had seen a high lama. The king ordered the soldiers to find out whether the lama could cure the sick. The soldiers went back and the ancestor of the Bom clan told them that he could.

When King Thokarcen heard that he made a plan to test the skills of the lama. He tied a piece of wood to one end of a long rope and threw it into a fire. He then ordered his soldiers to take the other end to the lama and tell him that their king was sick. As he was unable to come, the king had sent an end of a rope which was tied to his wrist, and if the lama was good he should be able to determine the king's condition by feeling his pulse via the rope. The lama agreed, and felt the rope and advised the soldiers that their king was burning hot.

King Thokarcen was amazed when he heard the report, but he was not fully convinced. A few days later he tied a big stone to an end of a rope and threw it into an ice cold river. He then sent the other end with his soldiers to consult the
After he had felt the king's pulse via the rope, the lama informed the soldiers that their king was now freezing cold.

When King Thokarcen heard that he knew that the lama was a powerful one and invited him to settle in Thini. Before accepting the invitation, the lama, in order to see whether the place was suitable threw grains of barley into the air and said, that if the seeds turned into young plants after three days, the place would be acceptable to him. That happened and the place became known as 'the place of young barley' (changpi).

The ancestor of the Bom clan settled in Thini. He was appointed as the village astrologer and accepted into the local marriage exchange system. When he died he was cremated at Changpi and the villagers constructed a stone reliquary structure (chorten) in his memory. This structure still stands to this day and is known as Changpi Chorten.

THE DEATH OF KING THOKARCEN (VERSION ONE)8

Once there was a big tree close to the pass Mesu Kandu La which blocked the early morning sun to Garab Dzong.9 That annoyed King Thokarcen and he therefore ordered his subjects to cut down the tree. The subjects went up to the pass, and in spite of the bitter cold managed to cut it down. To complete the unreasonable task the subjects suffered so much hardship that they decided to kill the king.

After they had felled the tree, they requested King Thokarcen to come and advise them on how to cut it into small pieces. When the king arrived the subjects had already split the tree trunk and held the cleft open with wedges. They induced the king to put both his hands into the crack, and when he had done that they swiftly removed the wedges, thus trapping the king. Then they rolled the trunk down the mountain together with king Thokarcen.

Since that time there has been no king in Thini.

THE DEATH OF KING THOKARCEN (VERSION TWO)10

The Mesu Kandu mountaintop blocked the early morning sun to Garab Dzong. That annoyed King Thokarcen, therefore he ordered his subjects to cut the mountaintop.

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8 This story is also found in the Cimang Benchag, see Ramble and Vinding 1987.
9 Mesu Kandu La is the pass leading from Thini to Lake Tilicho.
10 Sonam Wangmo 1990 reports a similar story from the oral and literary history of the Brokpa of Merak and Sakteng in Eastern Bhutan.
The subjects feared their king very much, so that they left without protest for Mesu Kandu. However, soon they realized how impossible their task was and that made them very angry. In order to put an end to the suffering an old grandmother devised a plan to kill the king and asked some men for help.

Every morning King Thokarcen stood on a big cliff at Garab Dzong and watched his subjects as they left for the mountain. One morning the grandmother went to the cliff with her small grandchild tied on her back. She rocked the baby so hard that it began to cry. While the king's attention was focused on her some men appeared from behind and pushed him over the cliff, thus killing King Thokarcen.

THE JEWEL CAT

A long time ago the villages around Thini possessed a magical cat called Jewel Cat (*no nhurbu*) which brought prosperity to whichever village it stayed at. Since the cat did not belong to one particular village, the villages had made an agreement that the cat should stay a certain period in each village. They had also agreed that if the cat should die in one of the villages, the people of that village would pay a fine of one *paisa* for each hair on the cat's body.

It so happened that Jewel Cat died while it was living in Dhothang. In order to avoid paying the fine, a villager from Dhothang one night secretly placed the body of Jewel Cat in Gungle village. Soon the other villages knew that Jewel Cat had died in Gungle. Though the villagers of Gungle knew that the cat had not died in their village, they agreed to pay the fine. But they ran out of money when there remained only the hairs on one of the ears.

The villagers of Gungle became furious for having been cheated by another village. They therefore cursed that the village where Jewel Cat had died should be destroyed after three days. True enough three day later a big earthquake struck Dhothang and killed most of the villagers. The villagers of Gungle repented at what they had done and left Thak Khola and settled in Ghandrung. The survivors from Dhothang also went and settled in Ghandrung.

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11 Dhothang is said to have been located in the eastern corner of Jomsom village (near the High School).
12 Gungle is said to have been located at the first tributary of the Kali Gandaki, north of Jomsom.
13 Ghandrung is a major Gurung village in Kaski district.
KING SHELI OF MARPHA

The people of Marpha are descended from Sheli Raja and Mom Narchyakomo. Sheli Raja came to Thak Khola from Jumla with his brother Hansa Raja.\footnote{For Hansa Raja, see Chapter III.}

Once there was a conflict between the two brothers. Hansa Raja sent his army to attack Sheli Raja, who was living in Jhong above Marpha. The attack took place during the barley harvest. When the approaching army from the distance saw the villagers on the roof of their houses threshing barley with flails, the soldiers thought the villagers were war-ready soldiers. That gave the soldiers such a fright that they fled to Jumla.

Sheli Raja had a daughter named Jyomo, who was given in marriage to one of the sons of King Tangmican of Garab Dzong.\footnote{For a parallel version in the Cimang Bemchag, see Ramble and Vinding 1987.} Sheli Raja gave her a big dowry, including a basketful of gold. Jyomo had only one daughter, who was married to a prince from Jumla whose father was a friend of King Tangmican. King Tangmican gave his granddaughter a big dowry, including a measure (pathi) of gold and a measure of silver, and 21 soldiers for her protection.\footnote{For a slightly different version of this myth, see Somlai 1983. Mr. Somlai obtained the myth from Krishnalal Thakali, who earlier had worked as my assistant.}

BHUE AMA\footnote{Bodhgaya is the place in India where Shakyamuni (the historical Buddha) attained buddhahood.}

Long time ago Goddess Bhue Ama lived in Bodhgaya inside a sandalwood tree.\footnote{Khe Sralangghum is the ancestor of the Kya clan in Thini.}

She had vowed to lead a celibate life and spent her time on religious practices.

One day while Goddess Bhue Ama was meditating, a boy suddenly appeared on her right shoulder. She was very surprised and wondered how she could possibly get a son without being in contact with a man. While she was wondering, a girl appeared on her left shoulder. The goddess became even more surprised, and while she was reflecting about it the father of her children appeared on the top of her head. The goddess became so embarrassed that she decided never to leave the tree.

Khe Sralangghum of Thini lived in a time when man could fly in the sky and travel into the earth.\footnote{Once Khe Sralangghum was travelling in the south, when he saw goddess Bhue Ama in a dream. From the very next day he started searching for her, but with no result. Few days later Khe Sralangghum arrived in}
Bodhgaya. There he met a herdsman who told him that he had a white cow which disappeared every morning, and when it returned in the evening it had no milk. The story made Khe Sralangghum very curious. He suggested that next morning they should follow the cow to see what happened.

The next day Khe Sralangghum and the herdsman kept a close eye on the white cow. The cow grazed for some time in the forest, then it went and stopped at a sandalwood tree where its milk flowed by itself into the tree. Khe Sralangghum looked inside the tree and found Goddess Bhue Ama (who he recognized from his dream) bathed in milk.20

Khe Sralangghum took Goddess Bhue Ama to Thini and the villagers worshipped her. But shortly afterwards the goddess disappeared from Thini. Khe Sralangghum thought that she had probably returned to her home, and he therefore flew to Bodhgaya where sure enough, he found her in the sandalwood tree. Khe Sralangghum returned with the goddess back to Thini, but a few days later she again disappeared. Once more Khe Sralangghum flew to Bodhgaya to fetch her. When he found her, he asked her why she kept disappearing all the time, and Goddess Bhue Ama explained to him why she wanted to live in hiding.

Upon hearing her story Khe Sralangghum made a proposal that he would leave her in peace if in return she agreed to appear once every twelfth year, and if she would make a duplicate of herself which the people of Thini could worship during the period of her hiding. The goddess agreed and made a duplicate of herself which she named Dontang Byo. She gave the duplicate to Khe Sralangghum and told him that the blessings of Dontang Byo were the same as her own. She then promised him that she would appear once every twelfth year, and that during her appearances she would bless her worshippers with wealth, longevity and offspring.

The bad spirits (mhang nheba) once stopped Goddess Bhue Ama from blessing her worshippers. In order to solve the problem, Goddess Bhue Ama created a fierce looking manifestation of herself and gave it to Khe Sralangghum. This manifestation is called Tetang Byo and it stops the influence of bad spirits.

SHEBI LHA

A long time ago Shebi Lha lived in a big cypress tree above Cimang. He could not speak. Shebi Lha had a sister, who had got separated from him, and she roamed the Lhaki Forest below Cimang searching for her brother.

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20 For the same theme, see Snellgrove 1979, p. 127 and Sørensen 1994, pp. 193–195.
In Cimang there lived a poor young boy who worked as a goatherder. One afternoon while the boy was grazing the goats in the Lhaki Forest, he took out a bag of roasted grains to have a snack. Before eating he offered some grains to the gods. As soon as he had made the offering, a beautiful goddess appeared and asked him, 'Have you seen my brother?' She repeated the question three times and then disappeared. The boy wondered what the goddess had meant and decided that he would ask his master in the evening. However, by evening he had forgotten all about it.

The next day the boy returned to the Lhaki Forest with his goats, and in the afternoon the same thing happened as on the previous day. Also that evening he forgot to tell his master about it.

The following day the boy went again to the Lhaki Forest. Again the goddess appeared and asked him the same question. This time he placed a small stone in his breast pocket to remind himself.

By evening the boy had again forgotten all about the goddess. However, when he bent over to pour water over his master's hand after the evening meal, the stone fell from his pocket and hit the master on the head. Thinking that the boy had hit him, the master scolded him angrily. The boy apologized and told about his encounter with the goddess in the Lhaki Forest.

Next day the master told the other villagers about the beautiful goddess and the villagers decided to search for her. When they found her, they begged her to come and stay in the village for their protection and prosperity. In return the villagers promised the goddess to find her brother and to build them a temple. The goddess agreed and the villagers brought her to Cimang and built her a temple. They also found her brother in the cypress tree and brought him to the temple, where he was reunited with his sister.

NARI JHOWA

The ancestors of Thatan used to go hunting for their diversion. Once during a hunt they saw a golden deer at Chichi Ghyang. Instead of killing the deer they decided to capture it. They followed the deer for three days without success and then decided to kill it. The hunters encircled the deer in a forest and when they saw it, they shot

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21 The present myth is a revised version of the myth of Nari Jhowa included in the Shercan clan history (dhimean rhab), told by Narendra Gauchan and published by Gauchan and Vinding 1977. See also S. von der Heide 1992.

22 Chichi Ghyang is a small forest on the eastern bank of the river Kali Gandaki, a few kilometers south of Larjung.
arrows in all directions. But they were unable to hit it and the deer managed to escape. The ancestors had never missed a deer before. Though they had followed the animal for six days, they had not even been able to hit it with a single arrow, and they wondered whether there was something wrong with their weapons.

The next morning the ancestors went to Mharsyangkyu and cleansed themselves and their weapons in the holy river. In order to keep away the bad influence of witches (pumi) and the spirits of the dead (sinti), they purified themselves and their weapons in the smoke of burning cypress.

From Mharsyangkyu the ancestors went to Larjung and started to track down the golden deer. The ancestors saw the deer at Bhudhighang and followed it to Dhyushuta where it vanished. While they were searching the area the deer sprang out from a hiding place under a watermill and escaped into the forest. The hunters encircled the forest and slowly tightened the circle. When the deer appeared they shot their arrows, but they all missed and the golden deer escaped from the enclosure with great speed. The ancestors were amazed.

They decided to hunt down the animal the very same day and once again began to follow the track. It led them along a river bank, through a forest and finally into a cave. The ancestors became very pleased because they knew that it would be impossible for the deer to escape. They decided to capture the deer alive, but if that proved impossible they would kill it. And whosoever tried to help the deer escape would be punished. The ancestors blocked the entrance and entered the cave. Inside they found the golden deer in the form of a goddess and the ancestors repented for what they had done. They apologised for the trouble they had caused and told her, that they would bear the consequences of their sinful action.

The ancestors prostrated themselves in front of the goddess three times and begged forgiveness for not having recognized her. The ancestors prostrated themselves in front of the goddess three times and begged her to forgive them for shooting arrows at her and for encircling her in the forest. The ancestors prostrated themselves in front of the goddess three times and begged her to forgive their innocent actions. Later the ancestors said that the goddess had smiled when they had prostrated themselves in front of her and had repented their actions.

The Self-Created Goddess (lha jhowa rangjyung) told the ancestors that she had been moving around in the form of a golden deer to show herself and to make them greedy, and that she had gone into the cave to show them her true form. The Self-Created Goddess told the ancestors that their prayers of forgiveness had pleased her and that she forgave them their sins.

The ancestors prostrated themselves in front of the goddess three times and begged her to settle in their land to protect them from troubles and bad times. The Self-Created Goddess agreed if in turn they would fulfill three wishes
of hers. Her first wish was to live in a holy place in the north where the first rays of the morning sun came and from where the Kali Gandaki river could be seen. Second, the goddess did not want to meet any orphan, widow or widower during her journey to her new abode. And third, each year from the 5th to the 15th day in the month of phala, thirteen virgin boys should worship her. The ancestors promised the goddess that they would fulfil her wishes and bowed down in respect.

On the 12th of phala the ancestors carried the Self-Created Goddess from Gumpa U. However, at Dhyushyuta the procession passed a widow with long, uncombed hair. When the goddess saw the woman she said ‘fie’ (thui) and turned her head. From that moment she never spoke again.

At Nakhung members of the Gauca clan welcomed the goddess with offerings (kelsang) and prostrated themselves in front of her three times. At Dhojo members of the Tulacan clan welcomed the goddess with offerings and prostrated themselves in front of the goddess three times. At Kobang members of the Shercan clan welcomed the goddess with offerings and prostrated themselves in front of her three times. And at Khanti members of the Bhattacan clan welcomed the goddess with offerings and prostrated themselves in front of her three times.

At Narsang the ancestors recalled the Self-Created Goddess’ wish to live in a holy place in the north where the first rays of the morning sun came and from where the Kali Gandaki could be seen, and they realised that all those wishes could be fulfilled at the holy place of Narsang. The ancestors therefore settled the Goddess in Narsang and named her the ‘Goddess of Nari’ (nari jhowa).

On the full-moon day of phala the villagers of Thasang gathered and worshipped the goddess of Nan. The ancestors requested the goddess to get rid of witches, bad spirits, diseases and bad times. The ancestors bowed to the goddess and asked her to bless them with offsprings, and to give them power to conquer their enemies and to establish good relations with their allies. They vowed to serve her without making mistakes and to be loyal to her. The ancestors were very happy to be able to worship the Goddess of Nari and begged her for forgiveness, if they had failed to serve her properly. Then they prostrated themselves in front of the goddess and begged for permission to leave.

MILAREPA AND THE OLD BON PRIEST

Once the Jetsun Milarepa was travelling in Tibet. One day he arrived at a place in Western Tibet where there lived many Black Bon (bon nag) priests. The highest

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23 Jetsun Milarepa ('the Revered Mila the Cotton-Clad') was a great Tibetan ascetic and famous poet who lived from 1052 to 1135 (Chang 1962, p. xv). His life is described in a bibliography
of the Bon priests had much sympathy for Buddhism and went to visit Milarepa to ask for his blessing. Milarepa blessed the priest and gave him a new name.

Many years later the Bon priests was dying. His relatives gathered and the priest told them that he did not want his death ceremonies performed in the old Bon tradition, but they should get Milarepa to perform them.

After the Bon priest had died, his relatives could not agree on how to perform the death ceremonies. Some wanted to fulfill the priest’s last wish, while others wanted the ceremonies to be performed in the traditional way. In the end the latter won. The relatives made an effigy of the deceased (*shop*), sacrificed an animal and offered the meat. The effigy ate the meat and began to cry and talk.

Now it so happened that Milarepa’s younger sister had been invited to the ceremonies. She had never witnessed a Bon death ceremony before and was greatly impressed when she saw the effigy eating, crying and talking exactly like a living being. She thought that the Bon priests were very powerful and remembered her own brother who could do nothing but live a hermit’s life in the high mountains. So the next day she paid her brother a visit and told him about what she had seen and that in her opinion the Bon priests were more powerful than he was.

When Milarepa heard that he gave his sister a thunderbolt (*dhorche*) and told her to go to the dead priest’s house and touch the effigy with it. Milarepa’s sister did as her brother had instructed. As soon as she touched the effigy with the thunderbolt, it stopped talking and crying and died. The relatives were very surprised, and Milarepa’s sister explained to them what had happened. When the relatives heard her story, they realised that Milarepa was a powerful priest.

Next day the relatives of the Bon priest went to Milarepa together with his sister. Milarepa explained that it was the ghosts that had made the effigy talk, cry and eat the food they had served, and that the Bon priest had already been reborn as a small white insect which now lived in a piece of yak dung in a nearby village.

The relatives requested Milarepa to take them to the place. Milarepa took them to the yak dung, turned it over and showed them a white insect inside. To the insect Milarepa said, ‘If you are the Bon priest, please jump into my lap my son!’ Immediately, the insect jumped into his lap. Milarepa then started to meditate, and the insect turned into thirteen holy ‘A’ which disappeared in the sky. Entitled ‘the 100,000 words of the Revered’ which has been translated by Evans-Wentz (1928). The text ‘the 100,000 songs of Milarepa’ (*mi la ras pa’i mgur’ bum*) contains many stories about Milarepa and several of his poems. For a translation, see Chang 1962.

24 The Tibetan letter A is believed to hold magic powers, and it is frequently used in spells and incantations (*mantra*).
Upon seeing that the relatives realised that Milarepa was more powerful than the Bon priests, and they therefore expelled the priests from their land. The Bon priests are now found mainly in Nepal.

THE CONTEST BETWEEN MILAREPA AND NARO BONCHUNG

In the old days there was a very powerful Bon priest called Naro Bonchung. During death ceremonies Naro Bonchung would offer beer and alcohol to the effigy of the deceased, and the effigy would move its head to show its acceptance.

One day one of Milarepa’s disciples saw Naro Bonchung performing a death ceremony and was very impressed. When he told his master about what he had seen, Milarepa instructed him that the next time he went to the ceremony, he should take along his trumpet (dhampali) and blow on it.

The disciple did what his master had told him and to his surprise the effigy stopped moving its head. Naro Bonchung became furious and said to Milarepa’s disciple, ‘I know this is not your idea and that you do not have the power to stop my activities. Since this is the work of your guru, please ask him to come to my house tomorrow.’

The next morning Milarepa went to Naro Bonchung’s house. Naro Bonchung told him, ‘I know that it was you who stopped my ceremony last night. Now let us see who of us is the most powerful. If you are powerful, why don’t you take the lake next to my house into your hand?’

To Naro Bonchung’s surprise, Milarepa took Lake Manasarovar into his hand. Then Milarepa said, ‘Now let’s see how powerful you are. Why don’t you jump to the other side of the lake?’ To Milarepa’s surprise, Naro Bonchung jumped to the other side of the lake.

When Naro Bonchung had completed this feat, he said to Milarepa, ‘Since we are equally powerful today, let us meet tomorrow and see who can reach the summit of Mt. Kailash first.’

At dawn Naro Bonchung mounted his drum and started riding towards the summit of Mt. Kailash. When Milarepa’s disciples saw this they became very worried and rushed to wake their master.

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25 The present myth was told by Thakali ritual specialists, Buddhist as well as non-Buddhist. A more detailed version of the myth is found in the ‘Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa’. see Das (1881, pp. 206–211) and Chang (1962, pp. 100–109).

26 Dampali, a trumpet made of a human femur. The sound of this trumpet evokes the spirits.

27 Lake Manasarovar is a big lake in Western Tibet near Mt. Kailash. It is called ‘The Undefeated Lake’ (ma pham mtsho), because it was here Naro Bonchung failed to defeat Milarepa.
‘Precious One, Precious One, please wake up, please wake up, Naro Bonchung is already on his way towards the summit!’

‘Has the sun risen?’ Milarepa asked.

‘No’, replied his disciples, surprised.

‘Wake me up just before the sunrise!’ Milarepa ordered and continued to sleep.

Naro Bonchung had already climbed more than halfway up the mountain when Milarepa’s disciples woke their master. As the first rays of the sun hit the summit of Mt. Kailash, Milarepa flew to it upon the rays of the sun.

When Naro Bonchung realised that he had been defeated he threw his drum down the mountain in great anger, and in this way one side of the drum was damaged. That is why to this day the followers of Naro Bonchung use a one-sided drum.28

HOW MILAREPA CHEATED NARO BONCHUNG29

After the contest at Mt. Kailash Naro Bonchung and Milarepa decided to have a meal together. Since Milarepa had won, Naro Bonchung agreed to go to the river to fetch water.

When Naro Bonchung had left, Milarepa decided to play a trick on him. On the road to the river Milarepa created a mare which gave milk to a filly which in turn, gave milk to its own foal. When Naro Bonchung saw this he became very surprised and spent some time wondering what this was all about. In the meantime Milarepa burned all Naro Bonchung’s books. When Naro Bonchung finally returned he began to explain the cause of his delay when he noticed that all his books had been burned, and he then understood everything.

Naro Bonchung took the books’ ashes, mixed it with barley flour and ate it. Then he said to Milarepa, ‘You have cheated me and now I have no books. However, I have eaten the ashes of the books. Therefore, in future I and my disciples will remember their contents by heart. But you and your disciples shall depend on your books and without them you shall not be able to perform any ritual. My knowledge is in the brain, while yours shall be in the books. And while

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28 The drums of the Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali aya lama and the Tamang Thakali dhom have one side only, while that of the Buddhist lama has two. According to another version of the story, Naro Bonchung rode to the summit of Mt. Kailash on a one-sided drum. When he was defeated, he threw his drum, and at Mt. Kailash one can still see the imprints left by the drum.

29 This story was told by an aya lama – a follower of Naro Bonchung.
your disciples shall eat garlic, prum\textsuperscript{30} and nettles, mine shall not eat these things!\textsuperscript{31}

THE FIGHT BETWEEN THE BON LAMA AND THE BUDDHIST LAMA\textsuperscript{32}

Once there lived a powerful Bon lama in Thini who built a religious stone structure (mane) at the base of Garab Jhong to prevent the dew from damaging the buckwheat crop. After its construction the villagers were blessed with good harvests, and the Bon lama was highly respected.

The Buddhist lama became so jealous at the success of the Bon lama, that one night he destroyed the mane. Shortly afterwards the buckwheat was damaged by the dew.

The villagers became very angry and called a meeting to find the culprit. In a big pot they boiled some oil and ordered the Buddhist lama to play his bell and the Bon lama to play his cymbal in the oil. Nothing happened to the Buddhist lama, but the Bon lama burned his hands and the villagers therefore blamed him for the destruction of the crop.

That made the Bon lama furious. He cursed the Buddhist lama for destroying the mane and said that he should die. As soon as he had said those words, the Buddhist lama died. Then he turned to the villagers and said, 'It is the duty of the lama to bring peace and happiness to a village. But nowadays there is war between the lama, and I therefore do not want to remain in this world. And when I have gone no one shall occupy the seat of the Bon lama.' Then he took his chair and threw it into the river. He climbed on the chair and said, 'I shall now die, but you will find a sign in Lubra.' He then went into a deep meditation and never woke up again.

After his death, some people went to Lubra where they found a skull with the letter 'A'.\textsuperscript{33} They brought it back to Thini where it can still be seen.\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{30} Prum is a herb (Tib. thang phrom?).

\textsuperscript{31} Garlic, yarmo and nettles are considered unclean among the Thakali, and the aya lama do not eat these things.

\textsuperscript{32} An informant gave the name of the Bon lama as Oser Chuldung (Tib., 'od zer chul drungé) and that of the Buddhist priest as Lungi Palsang (Tib., lung gi dpal bzang). The theme of fighting among ritual specialists is common in the local oral tradition of Mustang district. For example, Ramble tells how Tsabkye Lama, the Buddhist founder of Chongkhor village in Baragau, was killed by local Bonpos (1984, pp. 172-173).\textsuperscript{33}

\textsuperscript{33} The letter 'A' is sacred in Bon religion (Hoffmann 1961, p. 94).

\textsuperscript{34} The skull which can still be seen in Thini, is mentioned in a local Tibetan text called 'The Record of the Five Representative Treasures'. For a translation, see Snellgrove 1979
FABLES

The Hoopoe

In old days the hoopoe was the messenger of the king of Garab Dzong. It was very conscientious and always carried out its duties well.

One day the king gave the hoopoe an urgent message to deliver, and immediately the hoopoe flew away. On its way it saw some good food and stopped for a meal. When it had finished eating, the hoopoe realised that it had forgotten the message. Being honest it flew back and told the king about what had happened. When the king heard the hoopoe’s explanation he became enraged and hit it with a small stick and swore, that from now on it would have to carry the stick on its head.

The hoopoe found the punishment very hard and said that from now on it would do everything opposite to the Thakali. That is why the hoopoe comes to Thak Khola in the winter when the Thakali move south, and goes south in the spring when the Thakali return to Thak Khola.

The Fly and the Vulture

One day a vulture and a fly discussed who of them was the first to reach the carcasses. Since they were unable to agree, they decided to see who could first reach a carcass at the bank of Kali Gandaki. The vulture made three small jumps and took off, but before it came into the air the fly flew secretly onto it and hid in its feathers. The vulture flew fast to the carcass, but at landing it made three small jumps to brake itself. That enabled the fly to reach the carcass before the vulture. Although the fly won the competition, the vulture and the fly continue to compete to this day.

The Cat and the Partridge

In the old days the cat and the partridge were the best of friends. One day they decided to steal some radishes from a field. The cat sneaked into the field while the partridge stood guard. While the cat was in the field, the partridge decided to play a trick on him and cried out that some people were approaching. Taken by surprise the cat ran out of the field so fast that he smashed against a stone wall, knocking his nose flat. When the cat realized what the partridge had done, he became furious and threw sand into the partridge’s eyes. To get the sand out, the partridge rubbed its eyes until they became completely red. That is how the cat got its flat nose and the partridge its red eyes, and from that day they became bitter enemies.
The transliteration of Tibetan words follows the system used by Jäschke 1881. However, while Jäschke used the acute to indicate aspiration (e.g. “ś”), an “h” has been used here (e.g. “sh”); also, instead of the diacritical ŋ, ng has been used. Nepali words have been transliterated according to the system used by Turner 1931, except that ng has been used instead of the diacritical ŋ. Nepali words not found in Turner have been transliterated on the basis of information provided by Thakali informants and should be taken with some caution (see below). References to Zhang Zhung words are from Haarh 1968. The Thakali language does not have its own script. Formerly, the Thakalis employed the Tibetan script for writing Thakali texts, but nowadays the Devanagari script is used. For this study Thakali words were written in the Devanagari script by informants and later transliterated according to the system used by Turner 1931. The present transliteration is, however, not entirely satisfactory. First, informants disagree on how to write Thakali words in the Devanagari script. Second, the spelling of the self-same person is often inconsistent. Third, the present system of transliteration is not equipped to indicate differences in tone, which is an important feature of the Thakali language. For studies of the Thakali language, including a phonetic rendering of Thakali words, see Mazaudon 1978 and Georg 1996. The following abbreviations have been employed: BT = Baragau Tibetan; CB = Cimang Bemchag; der. derived from; E = English; G = Gurung; MB = Marpha Bemchag; MT = Mawatan Thakali; pr. = pronunciation; N = Nepali; S = Sekai, Skt. = Sanskrit; T = Thakali; Tam. Tamang; Tib. = Tibetan; TT = Tamang Thakali; WT = Western Tibetan; YT = Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali; Z = Zhang Zhung. For the abbreviations used for kinship terms, see Chapter V. Finally, the foreign words used in the documents in Appendix 1 which have been cited in toto from Regmi Research Series, have not been included in this glossary.
abhren TT, kinship term, HeB
acham N, district in Nepal
acyam YT, kinship term, e.g. MZ
acyámā MT, kinship term, e.g. MZ
acyámāhā TT, kinship term, e.g. eZH
acyáng TT, kinship term, e.g. MyZ, YT, kinship term, e.g. HyB
acyángpa YT, kinship term, e.g. FyB
acyo T, kinship term, e.g. eLB
ādā nāren MT, name of a 19th century MT subbā
agon zangpo Tib., a mgon bzang po, King of Lo, flourished circa 1450
aka samdrup see: samdrup dorje
ąkan YT, kinship term, e.g. HestB
ąkhamā MT, kinship term, FZH
ąkhe TT, kinship term, e.g. FF and HF. Used mainly in Baglung and Myāgdi districts.
See: khe
ąkhen MT, kinship term, e.g. FeB
ąkhumā MT, kinship term, e.g. FZH
ąku TT and YT, MZH
ąku paldong T, name of a demon, cf. T, paldong, round; der. Tib., a khu dpal gdong?
ąkuma TT and YT, kinship term, FZH
ą la YT, first month of the Thakali year; TT, shyusi la
ąle TT and MT, kinship term, e.g. yB, T, money; cf. Tib., a las
ąle nimā T, lit., 'money Sunday', observing Sunday as the day to refrain from giving away money; cf. Tib., a las nī ma
ąmā T, TT and MT also: āmā, YT also: amā; kinship term, mother; cf. Tib., ma and N, āmā
amānāt N, the direct collection of customs duties by Government
āmcyāng YT, kinship term, e.g. HyB
āmcyāngpa YT, kinship term, e.g. FyB
amepal Tib., a ma dpal or a me dpal, name of 15th century founder of the Kingdom of Lo
āmphotowā YT, kinship term, e.g. FesBW
āna TT and MT, YT, ānā, kinship term, e.g. eZ
ānanda shercan N, name of a current TT
anangmān shercan N, name of a subbā of the Balbir lineage (1912–1996)
ānctyāng MT, kinship term, e.g. FyB
āṅctyāngma TT, kinship term, e.g. FyB
āṅkai MT, kinship term, e.g. FeBW
ānī YT, kinship term, e.g. MBW
ānī airam T, name of the ancestor of the Gauca clan
anil shercan N, name of a member of the Balbir lineage
ānąk YT, kinship term, e.g. HestB
anna prāshan N, the ceremony of giving a child its first solid food, usually rice boiled in milk; N also: pāsnī
annapūrṇa N, name of a mountain bordering Thak Khola (8091m)
ānthowā TT, TT also: āṅtīhowa, kinship term, e.g. FeBW
āpā see: āwa
āphi YT, kinship term, e.g. MeZ
āphowā YT, kinship term, e.g. FelB
āptan YT, kinship term, e.g. HeB
ārāngsī kārāngsī T, a derogatory term for immigrants with no property in Thāk Khola
āru T and N, peach
āstu N, bone of the skull (collected after cremation)
āsyāng MT and YT, kinship term, e.g. MB; cf. Tib., zhang (po)
āṭhhowā TT, TT also: āṭhība, YT, āṭhyowā, kinship term, e.g. FeB
āṭmārām N, name of a 19th century TT subbā
āvalokiteshvara Skt., name of a bodhisattva; Tib., spyan ras gzigs
āwa TT and MT, YT āwa; TT and MT also: āpā and āwā; kinship term, F; cf. Tib., pha and N, bā
āya lāmā YT, YT also: āyo lāmā; TT, dhom; ritual specialist of the local pre-Buddhist religion; cf., Tamāṅ, āyo, charisma, will-power, life-energy; der. Z, a yu, life, lifetime, which is related to Skt., āyu, life, or T, a-, negative (cf. Tib., ma-) and Tib., g.yas (pa), right, that is a person who does not
keep the right side towards the person or object that is reverentially to be saluted?

bā N, N also: bābā, father

bāb la YT, 11th month of the T year; cf. TT, tab la; Tib., stag-za

bābu N, N also: bābāi (emphatic), father, term of respect for an older man, term of address to a child

bādi N, name of an ethnic group of Nepal

bāgīlung N, name of district south of Thāk Kholā and also its headquarters

bāhādur shāhi N, name of King of Jumālā (1665–1675)

bāhung N, N also: bāun, Nepali colloquial version of brhnaq, priestly caste

bāhungbad N, N also: bāhungvada, Bahunism or Brahmanism. Pejorative term for bāhung values and policies

bāini N, kinship term, e.g. yZ

bāis khānī N, lit., ‘twenty-two mines’, mining area in Myāgdi and Bāgīlung districts

balamta TT, TT also: phalamtān, name of a patrilineal group

bal bahādur N, personal name

balbīr N, lit., ‘strong (and) brave’, name of 19th century TT sībbā, originally known as Kālo Rām, founder of the Balbīr lineage

bāle gāppa TT and MT, YT: bāle thīwā or jyu thīwā, showing a person respect by bowing down to his feet

bāle gi kawā YT, to protect a baby against witches

bandar T and N, monkey

ba nga T, goitre

ban jhākri N, lit., ‘forest jhākri’, name of a demon; see: jhākri

bar Tib., the intermediate space

bāra barsa kumbha melā N, lit., ‘the 12-year festival’; T, lha phewa

bārā dhorché TT, TT also: bārā dhorché sārā dhorché, name of a TT patrilineal group; cf. Tib., rdo rje

baragāū N, lit., ‘the twelve villages’, area in Mūstāng district; Tib., yul kha beu gnyis

baragāūle N, a person from baragāū

bārā hākīm N, past term for governor of a district

bar do Tib, intermediate existence between death and rebirth

bar kyor YT, name of the middle irrigation canal in Tānini; cf. Tib., bar

baro lasi cungpā YT, auction

bāuncyāng T, name of a TT patrilineal group

be T, wife

beṃchāg T, T also: bemsya, compilation of local laws, record, historical document; der. possibly Mongolian bičig, missive, or law book

benī N, the district headquarters of Myāgdi district, formerly known as malembum; cf. Tib., kli/kle bum

be piwā YT, lit., ‘to dispose of the wife’, divorce (from the point of view of the husband)

beshyā N, harlot, whore

bhādāu N, the month August–September

bha do MB, bond servant

bhadrāi N, the black-headed shrike

bhagavati N, a name of the Hindu goddess Durgā

bhāi N, kinship term, e.g. yB

bhairā(a)wa N, town in Rupandehi district in Nepal, renamed Siddharthananagar

bhaktapur N, name of town and district of the Kāthmāndu valley

bhālādmi N, arbitrators, reputed men of good character

bhālo N, N also: bhālā, spear

bhansār N, customs office

bhara N, spear

bharti YT, name of YT clan; cf. Tib., bar, the intermediale space

bhāt N, boiled rice

bhattacan N, name of TT clan; TT, bhurgī

bhāṭṭi N, inn, distillery

bhīṃ prasād N, personal name

bhīṃ shamshe rerānā N, Prime Minister of Nepal (1929–1932)

bhlenten TT, name of a TT patrilineal unit

bhīlowa TT, lit., ‘rich’, a creditor

bhote N, N also: bhōtiyā, Tibetan; cf. N, bhōṭ, Tibet, der. Tib., bod, Tibet

bhote gurung N, Tibetan or Manānggī speaking peoples who claim themselves to be Gurung

bhre T, bitter buckwheat (Fagopyrum tataricum); cf. Tib., bra bo, buckwheat
bhre brā gyāng T, bread of bitter buckwheat; cf. T, brā, flour and T, gyāng, bread
bhre kan T, nickname, lit., ‘[eaters of] food of bitter buckwheat’
bhreko YT, YT also: phrekor, credit and savings association; der. Tib., bra bo ‘khor, lit. ‘buckwheat cycle’; TT, ḍikur
bhri T, root
bhudhīhāng T, name of deserted village in Thākṣātse; N, bhurjingkot
bhūe āmā YT, YT also:bumo āmā, name of local deity of Thini; der. Tib., bu mo (gsar ma) a ma, lit., ‘the virgin mother’
bhūicyāng TT, name of a TT patrilineal unit
bhumpu T, sacred copper vase; cf. Tib., bum pa
bhupendraṃaṃ sher can N, name of a member of the Balbir lineage, better known as Bhūpi Shercan, famous Nepali poet (1936–1989)
bhurgī TT, name of TT clan; der. Tib., ‘bur (ba), to rise, to be prominent’; gi is an abbreviation of T, ghyu, lineage, cf. Tib., brgyud; N, bhaṭṭacan
bhurgī rhab T, name of a text (account of the bhurgī clan)
bhurjingkot N, name of deserted village in Thākṣātse; T, bhudhīhāng
bhūt N, ghost
bhūyā T, lit., ‘distant’; e.g. a distant relationship
bib la YT, 9th month of the T year; cf. Tib., byi zla, month of the mouse; TT, dasai la
bib lo YT, year of the mouse, cf. Tib., byi lo
bidhān N, N also: vidhān, arrangement, order, manner
bijuwa Limbu, name of a Limbu ritual specialist
bikās N, development
bikās gho T, improved wheat
birendra N, King of Nepal (1972–)
birethānti N, name of village north of Pokharā
bir shamshe rāṇā N, Prime Minister of Nepal (1885–1901)
birā T, grant of land
bishwešwar prasād
koirālā N, Prime Minister of Nepal (1959–60)
bla T and Tib., soul
blā T, potato stew
bla ma see: lama
bla mchod Tib., court priest, i.e. high priest; BT, priest family
bla ngoīwā YT, to call a dead person’s soul
blu T, seed
bo T, fermented grain
bodhgaya Skt., place in India where Buddha attained Buddhahood
bodhisatta Skt., lit., ‘a being destined for Enlightenment’, a being who has irreversibly embarked on the path to Buddhahood
bodhnāth N, T, bauddha, settlement northeast of Kathmandu with a big Buddhist shrine (stūpa)
bodo gumpa T, name of an extinct monastery at Kobāng; der. Tib., bod, Tibet?
boksi kholā N, lit., ‘witch river’, also known as Dhuyushuta Kyu
bom YT, name of a YT patrilineal group; der. Tib., dbon po?
bom phobe khe YT, name of the ancestor of the Bom clan
bompo YT, Tib., bon po, priest or follower of the Bon religion. YT, name of an extinct YT clan. Tamāṅg, name of a Tamāṅg ritual specialist
bompo gumpā YT, temple in Thini, cf. Tib., bon po dgon pa
bon T and Tib., name of the organized pre-Buddhist religion of Tibet
bon kār T, Tib., bon dkar, lit., ‘white bon’; name of the reformed Bon religion
bon nāg T, Tib., bon nag, lit., ‘black bon’; name of the unreformed Bon religion
brāhmaṇ see: bāhun
brāhmaṇbād see: bāhunbad
brā phyowa T, blanket of woven yak hair; cf. Tib., sbra
brgyud see: ghyu
‘brug Tib., pr., druk, dragon
‘bru rgyal po Tib., the king of Parbat, south of Thāk Khola; cf. Tib., ‘bru, grain
buddha Skt., lit., ‘Enlightened One’, title given to successive teachers or saints of Buddhism, especially to its founder, Siddhārtha Gautama
buddhicara N, lit., ‘small bird of wisdom’, the black-headed shrike
budhā N, past term for a village headman in northwestern Nepal

bui kong T, the umbilical cord

bulung T, lit., 'insect'; nickname; cf. Tib., 'bu

bunāyā TT, witch; YT, sotisāyā

bum la T, 12th month of the T year; Tib., yos zla

buftibāng N, name of village in Bāglung
district

butwal N, name of a town in Rupandehi
district

byā nai T, hoof disease; cf. Tib., nad, disease

byānsi N, name of ethnic group in Far-
western Nepal which is found mainly in Byans valley in Almora district, U.P., India

byā T, summer; cf. Tib., dbyar

cac MT, kinship term, e.g. S

càcà T, small, e.g. kolā cācā, baby; cf. Z, tsa, little, child

cāingi TT, name of a patrilineal unit
cāme MT, kinship term, e.g. D
cān T, household protective deity; cf. Tib.,

btsan
candramān thakāli N, name of a member of the Balbir lineage
cāng T, kinship term, e.g. SW
cā nga T, stone structure on the roof where the households protective deity (can) resides; cf. Tib., btsan khang, 'house of the can'
cāngpuī u T, name of an underground
cavern (T, u) in the mountains above Syāng; cf. Tib., gsang phug, 'the sacred/hidden cavern', also known as cāngpuī nai, 'the sacred place of cāngpuī', cf. Tib.,
gnas

cāng syikī T, YT, cāng sīkī, cypress
(Cypresus torulosa), cf. Tib., shug, juniper and Tib., shing, tree; N, dhupī
ce la YT, 6th month of T year, cf. Tib., byā zla
(pr. tja la), month of the bird; TT, kesa la
celāculi T, lit., 'mixed dust?', child of mixed parentage

celi T, kinship term used by a man to refer to women born into his patrilineage; cf. N, celi

cēlo T, the year of the bird; cf. Tib., byā lo
cēpāng N, name of an ethnic group of Nepal
cetmān shercan N, name of a member of the Balbir lineage

cha T, cremation place. TT and YT, YT also: jha, kinship term, e.g. S

chaccha T, small figures moulded of clay and the powder from crushed bones; cf. Tib., tsha tsha

chachapar jāngpā YT, YT also: chatarpā jāngpā, 'chaccha prints to put', death ceremony during which chaccha are prepared

cha cyāngpā YT, youngest son

cha cyāngpā gocaiwā YT, '(the one) above the youngest son', i.e. the fourth out of five sons

chadī dhu TT, the northern part of Thāksatsae; der. T, chugi, 'eleven'?

chaile T and N, BT tsele, S, tsangle, village in Bāragāu

chaine TT, name of a TT patrilineal group; see: cheni

chairo N, name of village in Thāk Kholā; Tib., tshe rog; YT, choro

chaiwa T, day of the month, cf. Tib., tshes

chāiwa nī T, second day of the month, cf. Tib., thes gnyis

chaiwa sum T, third day of the month, cf. Tib., tshes (g)sum

chakar mikar T, gossip, cf. Tib., bya kha mi kha, lit., 'bird talk man talk'

chakpōri Tib., lcags po ri, name of medical college in Lhasa

cham T, retreat, cf. Tib., mtshams

cham dhorche YT, name of a YT patrilineal group; personal name; cf. Tib., mtshams rdo rje

chame TT and YT, YT also: jhahe, kinship
term, e.g. D

chāmo MT, kinship term, e.g. WZ

champa T, person who has stayed in retreat, cf. Tib., mtshams pa. Tib., byams pa, name of future Buddha, Skt., Maitreya

champa lhakhang Tib., byams pa lha khang, name of temple in Lo Manthāng, built circa 1445

champā singh N, name of a 19th century customs contractor at Dānā, son of Hem Karna K.C.
chandra shamsher rana N, Prime Minister of Nepal (1901–1929)
changpa YT, person responsible for making beer; also known as syangpa; cf. Tib., chang, 'beer'
changpi chorten YT, name of a religious construction (Tib., mchod rten) outside Thini
chantel N, name of an ethnic group
cha parba YT, middle son; cf. Tib., bar pa
cha thyowta YT, eldest son
chatra pang YT, name of a pasture above Chairo
chawa TT, kinship term, WZH
chawang mhirki see: cyang rnhirki
chawo MT and YT, kinship term, e.g. yZH (f.s.)
chayaram N, name of a 19th century local village headman (budha)
chyo T and N, name of a village in Thak Khola
chima YT, name of a caste; cf. Skt., ksatriya
chita YT, king; cf. Tib., cho, 'YT patrilineal group'
chichaci T, straw
chichighyang TT, name of a settlement southeast of Lajung in Thak Khola
chimai YT, kinship term, e.g. MZD
chimbral T, dough made of flour and water used to clean babies
chinda T, sponsor, cf. Tib., sbyin bdag
chipaypaldong T, small ball of fat which is hung over the fireplace, cf. T, paldong; Tib., tshil dpal gdong
chithangdong T, name of a minor settlement in Thaksatsae; N., kokhethati
chitwan N, name of a district in Nepal
chitwo YT, kinship term, e.g. MZS
cho T, group or section, cf. Tib., tshogs. T, fund; cf. Tib., tshogs?. T, offering; cf. Tib., mchod, 'drink' or 'eat' (hon.); or Tib., tshogs, short for tshogs kyi 'khor lo, a tantric ceremony in which food is consumed?. T, lake, cf. Tib., mtsho
cho-cho T, 'receive-receive', 'drink-drink' or 'eat-eat'
choi chiTo hálnu naparñá N, lit., 'touch water drop put is not necessary', i.e. those water unacceptable castes whose bodily contact does not necessitate the purification ceremony
choi chiio hálnu parñá N, lit., 'touch water drop put is necessary', i.e. those water unacceptable castes (páni nacalnya jat) whose bodily contact necessitates the so-called water drop purification; artisans, untouchable castes
chongkhor BT, name of village in Bargaú; YT, chyokkor
cho pulwa YT, to offer butterlamps; cf. Tib., mchod me 'bul ba
chowá MT and YT, village worker, constable; cf. Tib., tsho ba
chu Tib, the element water, river
chukri YT, name of a YT patrilineal group
churpi T, hard cheese eaten as a sweet
chusang T, also: chuksang, BT, tshug, S, tshug sang, village in Bargaú
chusangtan YT, the people of Chusag
chya phulpa YT, prostration, cf. Tib., phyag phul ba
chydor pumpa YT, first part of the mang rawa ceremony; cf. YT, pumpá, to beat, to throw
chydor lata TT, the Hindu tonsure ceremony performed on male children; N, chewar
chydor ngha MT, name of a forest at Marpá
chydolpa T, 'deposit', name given to children committed to the care of the goddess Nari Jhowa, cf. Tib., 'chol ba or bcol ba, to commit a thing to another's charge. T, name of a 19th century TT leader
chyoné YT, TT, cheny, personal priest, cf. Tib., mchod gnas (po); or: chos gnas, religious head of family, family priest?
chyo nhung  YT, name of a big red reliquary structure (stūpa) in Syag
chyoriten  T, reliquary stone structure; cf. Tib., mchod rten; Skt., stūpa
chyu gyāng  T, name of bread fried in oil, cf. T, chyu, oil and T, gyāng, bread
chypa  TT, TT also: chypka, name of a TT patrilineal group
cikṣap  T, superior (external) headman; cf. Tib., spyi khyab
cławYT, keeping accounts, accountant; cf. Tib., rtsis pa
cik  T, (two-row hull) barley
cili  T, apricot
cimāng  N, name of village in Thāk Khōla; YT, cimā

cimtan  T, 'the people of cimā'; name of a YT subgroup; Nep., cimtani
cokho  N, ritually pure
celo  N, N also: cola, women’s cotton or velvet blouse
cushing  T, sacred site south of Geling village, cf. Tib., [g]cong zhi rang byung, [The Place of] Self-Created [Images of] Calcite’?
cyami  T, willow-tree (Salix tetrasperma); cf. Tib., lcang ma, N, bais
cyang dangkā MT, name of a MT patrilineal group
cyang mhirki  TT, TT also: tsar mhirki, chawāng mhirki, chewa mhirkī, name of a TT patrilineal group
cyangpa  T, small, youngest, lesser; cf. Tib., chung pa. YT, kinship term used by parents to address their youngest son
cyāngpar  T, name of a death ceremony, in Tibet used as guiding the consciousness (ram m shes) after death; cf. Tib., spyan 'dren pa.
cyogi  T, name of a TT clan; cf. Tib., mchod, honoured, respected, or gtso, the highest, the most excellent; gi is an abbreviation of T, ghyu, lineage; cf. Tib., brgyud; N, gaucan
cyogi rhāb  T, name of a text (the account of the cyogi clan)
cyoka  T, small table
cyon  MT and YT, kinship term, e.g. yB (m.s.)
da  T, marriage procession
daī  N, N also: dāju, kinship term, e.g. eB
daīsa  T, dowry; cf. N, dājo
dākpa gelsāng  see: dākpa gyałṣāng
dāl bhat  N, boiled rice with lentil sauce
danāi  N, name of a caste whose members traditionally work as tailors-cum-drummers; T, ḏui

dām(a)lal shercan  N, name of a 20th century TT
dāmaru  N, small two-membraned drum operated with pellets on strings
dām narāyān  N, name of a member of the Gaucan clan who aquired the title of jamānī subbā as guarantor for Nar Jang Gurung
dampali  T, trumpet made of a human thigh-bone; Tib., rkang dung or rkang gling
dām prasād  MT and N, name of a MT patrilineal group; personal name
dānā  N, village immediately south of Thāk Khōla
dāncan  YT, name of a YT patrilineal group
dangkar dzong  BT, name of village in Baragāu
danuvār  N, name of an ethnic group of Nepal
dāprarāng  T, crow/raven
darbāng  N, name of a village in Myāgdi district
dāro thāng  YT, the main street of Syāng village
dasain  N, N also: dasai, name of a major Hindu festival
dasain la  TT; 9th month of the T year; YT, bib la
daū T, Monday; cf. Tib., zla-ba (pr. dawa)

dauða  N, inquiry
daù T, owner, proprietor, master; cf. Tib., bdag po
dbon  Tib., grandson, nephew
dbon po  Tib., astrologer-priest
dekai deci  TT, item during the lha phewa festival where the gods meet and talk with each other; der. N, de(v), god and T, kai (Tib., skad), language
den dhu  T, a needle given as a sign (oath) to a woman by her suitor
den slup lum  T, a small piece of cloth given as a sign (oath) to a woman by her suitor
devanāgari  N, the script in which Sanskrit and Nepāli are written
dev basnu N, lit., ‘god dwells’, trance
dga’ ldan Tib., lit, ‘joyful’, name of one of the
great monasteries near Lhasa
dhaci T, target; cf. Tib., mda’, arrow
dhaci thyowa YT, ‘the big target’, one of the
two targets used in archery contests
dhak T, rock; cf. Tib., brag
dhakpā gyaltsang TT, TT also: dakpā gelsang,
the common name for the ancestor of the
Shercan clan; see: ladakhpa gyaltshan
dhac n, lit., ‘god dwells’, trance
dhac thyowa YT, ‘the big target’, one of the
two targets used in archery contests
dhain N, lit., ‘god dwells’, trance
dhamchi dhamru T, name given to Ke Pāu
Kuti, the ancestor of the Bhaftacan clan,
cf. Tib., dam tshg dam bca’ ba, ‘to
promise (to keep) an oath’
dhampu N, village in Thaksatsae; T, dhumpu
dhangadhi N, name of a town in Kailali
dhang lu YT, three rupees given as payment
by the groom’s side to the bride’s clan
dhani N, rich
dhansaram N, name of a 19th century subbā
of the Shercan clan?
dhar e tote T, silk turban, cf. Tib., dar, silk,
and Tib. thod, turban
dharsa T, cloth, a long strip of cloth; cf. Tib., dar
dhasin T, tool with a big iron comb used for
separating the ears from the stalks
dhasumpal see: drensumpal
dhau lagirī N, name of a mountain in Thāk
Kholā (8167m); cf. Skt., dhavalagiri,
‘white mountain’; T, mulighāng, N, name
of a zone in Nepal
dhim T, house, room; cf. Tib., khyim
dhimal N, name of an ethnic group
dhimcān TT, name of a TT clan; cf. Tib.,
grims, intelligent, clever, and Tib., btsan,
powerful; N, Shercan
dhimcān rhab T, name of a text (the account
of the dimcān clan)
dhimpa T, assistant, cf. T, dhim
dhim thyowa YT, the main room of the house
dhip T, impure; cf. Tib., grib (pr., dip)
dhoo T, edible plants; N, sāg
dhojo TT, TT also: dhocho, deserted village
in Thāksatsae; cf. Tib., rdo lcog?
dhollen T, bow
dholha YT, alternative name for molha, a
protective deity of Syāng village
dhom TT, the indigenous pre-Buddhist
religion of the Thākālī and the name of the
ritual specialists of this religion
dhom TT, name of several TT patrilineal
groups
dhon T, present distributed in the name of a
deceased person; cf. N, dan, gišt?
dhongpā T, household; cf. Tib., grong pa,
‘house’
dhongsya kyu TT, name of a river near Kobāng
dhorche T, thunderbolt, diamond, name of a
ritual implement, an important tantric
symbol; cf. Tib., rdo rje
dhorche phurpa T, name of a deity, clan deity
of the Bom clan; cf. Tib., rdo rje phur bu
dhota la TT, 7th month of T year; YT, ki la
dhothāng YT, ‘the stone plain’, name of plain
in front of the old school building in
Syāng, cf. Tib., rdo thang. YT, name of an
ancient settlement in the eastern comer of
Jomsom village?
dhun chi T, grass from field boundaries, cf.
Tib., rtswa
dhumphā TT, YT: dhomā, name of a village
in Pācāū
dhumpu T, name of a village in Thāksatsae;
N, dhampu
dhundā chyangpa T, animal husbandry
dhungpa TT, name of a TT patrilineal group
dhwāng pyāng TT, YT: dong pyāng, name of
national volumetric unit; N, pāthi
dhyātan TT, name of several TT patrilineal
groups
dhyushuta TT, place name in Thāksatsae
dhyushuta kyu TT, name of a river in
Thāksatsae
didi N, kinship term, e.g. eZ
dikur TT, traditional credit and savings
association, cf. Tib., ‘bru ’khor, ’grain
cycle’; YT, phreko
dikur dhawā mhi T, lit., ‘the owner of the
dikur’, the receiver of the dikur; cf. Tib.,
‘bru ’khor bdag po mi
dikur rhiwa mhi T, lit., ‘the person begging
for the dikur’, the founder of a dikur, cf.
Tib., ‘bru ’khor re ba’i mī
dilbu T, small handbell, cf. Tib., dril bu
dni T, daytime, cf. Tib., da ni, now; or: N, din?. T, sun

dini de YT, lit., 'the sun (is) half (way)', cf. 
Tib., phyed, half

dini gāngye tampā YT, lit., 'the sun sits above the hill'

dini phyawā YT, lit., 'the sun has risen', cf. 
Tib., pheb pa, phebs

dini pyowā YT, lit., 'the sun has gone away'

dipendra gaucan N, name of a current TT
diwabrman shercan N, name of a current 'IT
diwali N, N also: tihar and tiwar, festival of lamps
dkar chag Tib., list of contents
dokung T, pigeon
dolpo Tib., dol po, name of a district in 
Nepāl; N, dolpā; T, dolpu
dong T, open forest, cf. Tib., sdong po, trunk of a tree

dongge(wā) T, secretary
dong le T, forest fields (non-irrigated), cf. 
Tib., sdong gle
dongmhi T, nickname, lit., 'forest people', cf. 
Tib., sdong mi
dontang byo T, manifestation of the goddess
Buṣā Amā
dotsham ghān T, hill (ghāṅ) marking the 
border between Thāg (Thāksātsae) and Sum (Pācgaū); cf. Tib., rdo mtsams sgang, lit., 'the spur of the stone border'
dpon po BT, nobles; Tib., sras po
drensumpaal Tib., dran gsum dpa l, son of 
King Thokārčen; cf. Tib., dran pa, to long
for, to remember
dru Tib., 'bru, grain
drupa Tib., 'brug pa, name of suborder of the bka’ brgyud pa order
drukyl Tib., 'brug yul, 'land of the dragon',
Bhutan (named after the 'brug pa suborder)
du T, six; cf. Tib., drug

duenc nhuru MT, name of a MT patrilineal unit
du dhu TT, the middle part of Thāksātsae; cf. 
TT, du, six
dāi T, demon, cf. Tib., bdud, 'the evil one'. In 
Tibetan demons are usually called 'dre
dāuru YT; YT also: dūtu; cf. Tib., drug rus, 
the six clans
duli T, tailor; female: dulisyā; N, damāi
dumre N, name of a town on the highway between Kāthmāndu and Pokhara
dūnda sumba T, effigy of Pokhara

dung T, 'close', e.g. a close relationship; cf. 
Tib., thung, T, sausage
dung T, tree, cf. Tib., sdong (pa), trunk of tree

dung kyu T, nickname, lit., ['eaters of] sausage water'
dungpa T, householder priest; cf. T, 
dhongpa, household, and Tib., grong pa, house
dur YT, household; see: dhongpa
dura N, name of an ethnic group (= darāi?)
durgā N, name of a Hindu goddess
dūtinya TT, YT also: dūtīne, family god; N, kuldev(a)tā
dūtu YT, see: dūtu
dyiya N, name of a Newār caste
dzar BT, village in Bāragāū; cf. Tib., rdzar; N, jhārkot
dzar dzong yul du BT, lit., 'the six villages 
[including] dzar [and] dzong', the 
Muktināth valley; cf. Tib., rdzar rdzong
yul drug
dzong BT, village in Bāragāū; cf. Tib., 
rdzong; N, jhong

gābisa see: gāu bikās samiti
gailong T, monk, cf. Tib., dge slong, lit.,
‘beggar of virtue’; Skt., bhiksū
gailong dhorche YT, name of son (monk) of 
King Punāri of Thīni; cf. Tib., dge slong
edo rje
gaiti T, turban; N, pheṭā; Tib., thod
gajā N, cannabis, hemp
gajal N, soot mixed with butter which is 
applied around the eyes for beautification
and protection
galkot N, name of area in Bāglung district
gamba T, village headman, leader of 
patrilineal group; cf. Tib., rghan po,
‘headman’. YT, name of a YT patrilineal group
gamba kalu YT, name of a 20th century
headman of Thīni
gamba tambā YT, name of a lineage of 
Gyābcān clan
gam kemi YT, personal name; name of a YT
patrilineal group; cf. Tib., rghan po,
‘headman’ or Tib., rgan pa, ‘elder’ and Nep., kāmi?
gam nāren MT, personal name; name of a MT patrilineal group; cf. Tib., rgan po, ‘headman’ and N, nārāyan, personal name, lit., ‘God’
gam sone YT, personal name; name of a YT patrilineal group; cf. Tib., rgan po, ‘headman’; sone: abbreviation of sone?
gam sone YT, personal name; name of a YT patrilineal group; cf. Tib., rgan po, ‘headman’; sone: abbreviation of sone?
gandah Skt., goitre
gandaki N, name of a river and a zone in Nepāl
ganden phodrang Tib., dga’ ldan pho brang, the Government of Tibet
gānesh bahādur thakāli N, name of a subbā of the Balbir lineage
ganpo caca T, ‘small old man’, a superhuman being whose bodily manifestation is a dwarf who walks with a limp, cf. Tib., rgad po; or: Tib., rgan po, ‘an old man’; or: Tib., ‘gong po, ‘an enchanter, sorcerer’?
garab dzong Tib., dga’ rab rdzong, ‘joyous fort’, name of a fort near nini; T, garab
ghang
ghangchi
ghanspa
ghan pokhara N, village in Lamjung district
ghāsa N, village in Thāk Kholā; TT, nghāpsāṅ; YT, ngasāṅ
ghāyāng ghān TT, TT also: ghāyā tāk, hill that marks the border between the northern and the southern part of Thāksātsae
ghera TT, name of a TT patrilineal group
gho YT, TT: do, wheat, cf. Tib., gro
ghole cewa la YT, placename in Syāṅ
ghopkā Yī, placename in Syāṅ
ghor T, plough
ghoral N, goat-antelope, goral
(gemorhaedus goral)
ghorāpāṇi N, name of a pass between Thāk Kholā and Pokhārā
ghosetan TT, name of a TT patrilineal group
ghum da T, the central pillar of the house
ghyāsā T, flail
ghyo lasi pimpa T, to lease land; see: le dowa pimpa
ghyā(twa) T, lineage; cf. Tib., brgyud pa
glo see: lo
glo smad T, ‘lower Lo’, name given to Bāragāu when it was under the rule of the kings of Lo
gnam T, heaven
go T, T also: gowā, head, e.g. head of a dikur; cf. Tib., mgo, head
gopā T, sgog pa, garlic
golyagan YT, traditional female dress
go mha YT, a man who settles in his wife’s father’s household after marriage; cf. Tib., mgo mag pa?
gopāl gurung N, name of the President of Mongol National Organisation

gopāl khambu N, name of the President of Khambuwan Rāṣṭriya Morcha
gora T, sickle; Tib., bzo ra
gorakpur N, town in India near the Nepāl border
gorkhā N, name of district and also its headquarters in Nepāl; the home of the royal house of Nepāl
gounindramān shercan  N, name of a member of the Balbir lineage

gouā  see: go

gouā cusom  T, lit., ‘the head (as the) 13th (part)’, cf. Tib., mgo pa bcu gsum
gubi lā  T, 3rd month of the T year; Tib., rta(i) zla

guendramān shercan  N, name of a member of the Balbir lineage

guge  Tib., gu ge, name of ancient kingdom in Western Tibet
gulmi  N, name of district of Nepāl
gumā nim  YT, ‘the old temple’, cf. Tib., dgon pa mying ma

gumlī cyāngpa  MT, name of a MT clan; N, pannācan

gumlī thowa  MT, name of a MT clan; N, juhārcan

Guru Rinpoche is supposed to have meditated; T, gurū sāngbi

gyābcan  YT, name of a YT patrilineal group; der. Tib., rgyal (po) btsan, khyab pa, or: spyi khyab?
gyāka  T and N, BT, gyaga, S, gyu/gyuga, village in Bāragāū
gyalgī  YT, name of a YT patrilineal group; cf. Tib., rgyal po, ‘king’
gyalgī samṭu  YT, name of a YT patrilineal group; cf. Tib., gsum, three

Guru Rinpoche is supposed to have meditated; T, gurū sāngbi

gyasumdo  Tib., rgya (lam) gsum ‘dus, ‘meeting-place of three highways’, area in Manāng district

gyātādāk  TT, place name in Thāksātsae

g.yog po  MB and Tib., servant
gyo khang  T, entrance, cf. Tib., sgo khang
gyole sai  YT, lit., ‘cloth price’?, money given to mā during death ceremonies

hānra rājā  N, N also: hāsa rājā, name of a king of Thāksātsae

Guru Rinpoche is supposed to have meditated; T, gurū sāngbi

harka mān thakāli  N, name of a subbā of the Balbir lineage (1860–1903)
hāsa  N, duck

Guru Rinpoche is supposed to have meditated; T, gurū sāngbi

hitnian shercan  N, name of a 20th century subbā of the Balbir lineage

Guru Rinpoche is supposed to have meditated; T, gurū sāngbi

hri  Skt., mystical word

Guru Rinpoche is supposed to have meditated; T, gurū sāngbi

hukku  T, owl; cf. Tib., ‘ug pa

Guru Rinpoche is supposed to have meditated; T, gurū sāngbi

hulāki  N, postman

Guru Rinpoche is supposed to have meditated; T, gurū sāngbi

humla  N, name of a district in Nēpāl
indraman shercan N, name of a member of the Balbir lineage
ishwariman shercan N, name of a member of the Balbir lineage
jagat N, toll, transit duties, tax
jagat jang bahadur rana N, eldest son of jang bahadur rana
jagir N, land assigned to government employees in lieu of their emoluments
jamani N, bail, security
jamani subba N, guarantor of a customs contractor (subba)
jang bahadur rana N, Prime Minister of Nepal (1846–1856 and 1857–1877)
jat N, sort, kind, caste
jaungman TT, name of a TT patrilineal group
jethi N, kinship term, e.g. eD
jetho N, N also: jetha, kinship term, e.g. eS
jetsun milarepa Tib., rje btsun mi la ras pa, lit., 'the revered mila the cotton-clad', name of a Tibetan ascetic and famous poet (1040–1123); T, jiči milarepā
jha see: cha
jhakri N, shaman
jhamc see: chame
jhanger N, N also: jhangad, name of an ethnic group
jharche see: tharce
jlrisin YT, wooden poles used in retaining walls; cf. Tib., shing. YT, name of a YT patrilineal group
jho T, cross-breed between common cattle and a yak, cf. Tib., mdzo
jhomo T, female jho; cf. Tib., mdzo mo
jhompa T, picnic; cf. Tib., dzoms pa, meeting
jhomsa sawa MT, meeting of patrilineal groups, cf. Tib., 'dzoms pa and za ba, to eat
jhong TT, name of a settlement/fields above Tukce. MT, MT also: tāmāng, name of forest fields above Mārpha, said to be the original settlement; cf. Tib., rdzong?
jhongtan TT, TT also: jhongtan nawa hulāki, name of an extinct TT patrilineal unit whose members supposedly lived in jhong
jhopa T, male jho; cf. Tib., mdzo po
jhosa sawa TT, main meeting (party) of patrilineal groups; cf. Tib., ‘dzoms pa, meeting and Tib., za ba, to eat
jhowa rangjyung T, ‘Self-Created Goddess’, name for goddess Nāri Jhowa
jhyyang ra T, ‘northern goat’, Tibetan goat; cf. Tib., byang ra
jhyulawa chane khe TT, lit., ‘the ancestor of the Chan who hides things’; name given to Pau Kuti, the ancestor of the Bhaṭṭacan clan
jilla N, district
jilla bikās samiti N, District Development Committee
jilla pancāyat N, District Committee (until 1990)
jimbu T, YT, jīmā, N, jimmu, wild pasture onion
jinlap pompar YT, name of the ancestor of YT clan San phobe; cf. T, pompar, king
jinsā pumpā YT, grain and butter thrown into fire as an offering
jirel N, name of an ethnic group
jiwa chin TT, name of father of King Punāri; cf. Tib., spyī?
jogī T, yogi
jogī lyāgpā YT, lit., ‘playing the yogi’, comic sketch
jompā YT, meeting, party, picknick; cf. Tib., 'dzoms pa
jomson N., the district headquarters of Mustang district; T., jhongsampa, lit., ‘the new fortress’; cf. Tib., rdzong gsar ba
juddha shamsher rana N, Prime Minister of Nepal (1932–1946)
juhārcan N, name of MT clan; cf. N, juhār, ‘jewel’; MT., ghumli thowa phobe
jumla N, name of district and also its headquarters; name of an ancient kingdom
jya T, vulture; cf. Tib., bya, bird
jyā T, T also: cang, North; cf. Tib., byang
jāpu N, Newār caste (farmers)
jyomo T, nun; cf. Tib., jo mo
jyu thitwa T, to bow down to a person’s feet in respect; see: bale gappa
kacen legkye Tib., ?, name of the author of the Cimang bemchag
kāgaji badām N, almond
kagbeni  N, name of village in Baragāu; Tib., bkag or skags; T, kā
kagyupa  Tib., bka’ brgyud pa, name of order of Tibetan Buddhism
kaïlash  Skt., name of mountain in Western Tibet; Tib., ti se
kāli  N, kinship term used for fourth daughter
kālo  N, kinship term used for fourth son
kai lyāngpā  YT, the game of jacks
kaisāng  T, name of former forest fields above Thini, where the Royal Nepal Army now has a training camp
kaka  TT and MT, kinship term, e.g. FyB
kāli giṃdaki  N, lit., ‘black river’, name of main river of Thāk Khola; T, omdo kyu
kālimpong  N, town in West Bengal State of India
kāl kyu  TT, name of a TT patrilineal unit
kālo  N, black; female: kāli
kālopāni  N, lit., ‘black water’, name of village in Thāk Khola; T, mlāng kyu
kālo rām  see: Balbīr
kālyankolen  T, nickname given to the Himalayan crow (ngelang) and also to people who – according to the Thākāli – speak a strange dialect, e.g. the Tāmāng
kamarā dhim lyāngpā  YT, to play house; cf. Hindi, kamara, room
kāmi  N, name of caste; the persons of this caste traditionally work as blacksmith; T, kemī
kan  T, food, cooked rice
kānchi  N, kinship term; e.g. yD
kāncho  N, N also: kāncha, kinship term; e.g. yS
kāndu  T, offer cakes; Tib., gtor ma
kāngling  Tib., rkang gling, trumpet made of a human thigh-bone; see: damphali
kāntan  see: ghāntan
kangyur  Tib., bka’ gyur, name of Tibetan canonical collection of Buddhist scriptures
karda  N, knife
karma chirin  MT, name of a MT patrilineal group; cf. Tib., karma tshe ring
karmapa  Tib., karma pa, name of suborder of the Kagyupa order
karsāng  YT, name of a YT patrilineal group
karu  T, six-row naked barley (white variety); cf. T, kār, white and u(wa)?
kasauli  N, name of town near Butwal
kāski  N, name of a district in Nepāl
kāṭhmāṇḍu  N, the capital of Nepāl
kāṭhmāṇḍu thakāli samaj  N, the TT association of Kāṭhmāṇḍu
ka thungpa  TT, YT, tḥa thungpā, to drink (yak) blood; cf. Tib., khraṅ ‘thung pā
kavirām thakāli  N, also known as Kabirāj, name of a 19th century subba of the Balbīr lineage
kekcor cyawā  YT, to prepare a (child’s) horoscope; cf. Tib., skyes’khor byed pā
kelsāng  T, YT; kyalsyāṅg, offering of drinks (to humans); cf. Tib., skal bzang ba, lit., ‘good fate’
kiem  T, female: kemīsya, T also: sal kemī, blacksmith; cf. N, kāmi; or cf. Tib., mgar (ba) mi?
kiem pāne prasād  MT, name of a MT patrilineal group; personal name; cf. N, prasād, ‘favour’?
ken  TT and MT, kinship term, e.g. WF; cf. Tib., rgad po, old man?
kendriya samiti  N, central committee
kesa la  TT, 6th month of the T year; YT, ce la;
Tib., bya zla
kewa  T, old man; cf. Tib., rgas pa
kewa pāt angyal  YT, name of a YT patrilineal group; personal name; cf. T, kewa; cf. Tib., rgas pa dpal dbang rgyal?
khacar  N, mule, bastard, derogative term for offspring of parents belonging to different castes or ethnic groups; cf. Tib., kha tsha ra, a person of mixed Tibetan and Newār ancestry (usually the offspring of Newār traders and Tibetan women in Lhasa or Tsang)
khagalo  TT, silver necklace
khaiwa  T, name of village astrologer in mini;
Tib., mkhas pa
khala cyuku  T, oil made from the kernels of various fruits
khalun  BT, name of settlement-mount of Khyingya village in Baragāu
khālī  T, name of a local fruit
khambu  T, wild peach; cf. Tib., kham bu. Rāi, name of an ethnic group, also known as Rāi.
khambuwan rāṣṭriya morchā  N, Khambu
National Front, name of political group among the Khambu
kham magar  N, name of an ethnic group
khangpa  Tib., khams pa, a person from Kham (Eastern Tibet). E, Tibetan guerrilla. T, a person from Tibet
khangpa sysum cungngi  T, name of an ethnic group descending from – supposedly twelve – Tibetan traders, who lived in Tükece; cf. Tib., bzhi gsum bcu gnyis, lit., ‘four (times) three (is) twelve’
kâmsung  T, name of (unknown) birthplace in Tibet of King Thokarzren
khâni khowâ  T, nickname for the Thakali of Baglung and Myâgdi districts; cf. Nep., khani, mine
khanti  T, coral and turquoise necklace. T and N, name of village in Thâk Khola
khasauly  N, name of a town in Nepâl
khâttâ  T, scarf of salutation, cf. Tib., kha btags
khatai jyongla  YT, where are you coming from? (honorific)
khatai khala  YT, where are you coming from? (ordinary)
khawa bulâ  YT, where are you coming from? (derogative)
khe  TT, kinship term, e.g. FF and HF; see: ákhe. YT, kinship term, e.g. HF
khe mom  T, ancestors and ancestresses
khepen  MT, kinship term, e.g. FF
khepen bonkyok  MT, name of a former MT village headman
khere  T, widower
kheti lauâ  YT, agriculture; cf. N, khet, cultivated field, an irrigated field
khewa  T, old man
khicyâng  MT, kinship term, e.g. MZH
khi la  YT, 7th month of the T year, cf. Tib., khyi zla, month of the dog; TT, dhota la
khi lo  T, the year of the dog; cf. Tib., khyi lo
khimi  T, ossuary
khimi cuwa  TT, TT also: khimi cuci, name of ceremony where beer is offered to the ancestors
khimi ramden  T, name of ceremony during which the khimi is white-washed
khimpâ  T, householder priest, cf. Tib., khyim, house
khiwa mhi  T, debitor; Tib., khur ba’i mi
khlyepri  G, G also: kheprê, a kind of priest
khoe  T, bull’s eye
khola  N, N also: kholo, small river, valley
khor  T, circle; cf. Tib., ‘khor
khotha  YT, silver necklace; see: khâgalô
khowâli  T, nickname for the Thakâli of Khâni Khowâ
khunârâ  TT, name of a TT patrilineal group
khâyu  T, old woman
khya  T, sparrow hawk; Tib., bya khra
khyal dung  T, birch (Betula utilis); cf. Tib., sdong po, trunk of tree
khya nemiyâng  T, sparrow; see: nemiyâng
khyim  Tib., house
khyinga  BT, name of village in Baragâù; T, khang, khingâ
khyopan  YT, kinship term, e.g. FF
khyungli karpo  T, ‘the white garuda’, name of self-created figure in Cângpûî cave above Syàng; cf. Tib., khyung dkar po; or: khyung lung dkar po?
kich kimne  N, the spirit of a dead woman, who has died unhappy
ki dung  T, fir (Abies spectabilis)
ki  YT and MT, the second singular personal pronoun, ‘you’
kirdi  N, term for Limbu, Rai and kindred peoples, and for their languages
kirti malla  N, name of 18th century king of Parbat
kitâb khâna subbâ  N, past title for senior civil servant
ki bum  see: Beni
kobâng  T and N, village in Thâk Khola
koc  N, name of an ethnic group
koecyang  T, sacred stones placed in the middle of a field
koime  T, kinship term, e.g. SD
koko  N, side, flank
kolâ  T, child
kolâ âmâ  T, lit., ‘the mother of (my) child’, used by a man to refer to his wife
komal bahâdur shercañ  N, name of a subbâ of the Balbir lineage; also known as Sete Subbâ, lit., ‘White (Skinned) Subba’
koncâ  T, kinship term, e.g. SS
koncoy cheti  T, name of the main text and ritual of the rnying ma pa priests in Thâk
khorā YT, name of a YT patrilineal unit; cf. Tib., khyad, ‘superior’; or: Z, rkya (=Tib., rje), lord, chief, respected
kyaca sowa T, village meeting where census is undertaken; cf., T, kya, lit., ‘head (of household)’ and sowa, to revise, to turn over
kyachi T, census; cf. Tib., rtsi-ba
kyakam T, wild peach
kyā lo T, lit., unlucky year, each 12th year of a person’s life; cf. Tib., skag lo
kyalsyang see: kelsāng
kyān YT, kinship term, e.g. WF
kyāng TT, the second singular personal pronoun, ‘you’
kyāng MT, name of a MT patrilineal group
kyang chinpa YT, to take an oath; MT, dhen chinpa; Tib., dam sbyin pa
kyā phobe cyāngpa YT, name of a YT patrilineal group, cf. T, cyānga, younger
kyā phobe thyowā YT, name of a YT patrilineal group; cf. YT, thyowā, elder
kyasyn dom kyusin dom YT, to an oath; MT, dhen chinpa; Tib., dam sbyin pa
kya thyuimi YT, head of patrilineal group, cf. Tib., khyad thu mi
kyekya gangpa Tib., skye skyanga gang pa, name of noble lineage of Bāragāū, named after a place called kyekyagang (Tib., skyid sgang) in Lo
kyeziylung Tib., skyid mo lung, name of famous ‘hidden land’ (Tib., sbas yul) situated in Kutang district at the border between Tibet and Nepāl; according to Thākālī tradition the birthplace of the Bon priest Naro Bonchung
kyisumpal YT, Tib., skyid gsum dpal, lit., ‘glorious triple happiness’, name of son of King Thokārcen
kyodo syāng YT, name of a YT patrilineal group
kyonkhor che TT, name of plain near Lārjung
kyor T, canal (for irrigation purposes)
kyu T, water; Tib., chu
kyu lāvā mhi YT, maintenance worker of water supply
kyupa gumpa TT, lit., ‘the temple between [two] rivers’?, name of a temple south of Thūkce
kyupa lama TT, the head of Kyupa Gumpa

le You, month; cf., Tib., zla

ladakh Tib., la dvags, name of former Tibetan kingdom, now part of Jammu and Kashmir state, India

ladakha pa gyaltshan Tib., la dvags pa rgyal mtshan, name of the ancestor of the Shercan clan; T also: Dhākpa Gyalsāng

lakṣmi N, the Hindu goddess of fortune

lālcana N, name of MT clan; cf. N, lāl, ‘ruby’; MT, rohen phobe

lalitmān shercan N, name of a member of the Balbir lineage

lama TT and MT, name of several TT and MT patrilineal groups; cf. T, lama. Tib., road

lāma T, T also lāmā, priest; cf. Tib., bla ma, ‘the highest, superior’
lāma dharma dhoj TT, name of a prominent TT priest, also known as Lama Kāncha

lambu Tam., name of a Tamang priest

lamjung N, name of district in Nepal

lang darma Tib., glang dar ma, name of 9th century Tibetan king

lāngdu kāncha MT, name of a MT patrilineal group; cf., N, kāncha

lāng la YT, 10th month of the T year, cf. Tib., glang zla, the month of the ox; TT, ngato la

lānglāng thāng YT, YT also: lām thāng, name of plain above Jomsom Airport

lapu T, radish; cf. Tib., la phug

lārā TT, name of a TT patrilineal group. MT, name of a MT patrilineal group

lārā ghera TT, name of a TT patrilineal group

lārjung N, name of village in Thak Khola; T, Narjung; cf. Tib., sna rḍzung, lit., ‘the nose fortress’; or: nams dar rḍzung?
lārkyo T, name of village in Thak Kholā

lāto N, a dumb person; female: lātī

gle T, field, cf. Tib., gle

le doua nhi T, lessee; cf. Tib., gle bdag po mi

le doua pimpā YT, YT also: ghyo lasi pimpā, to lease land

legshe kacen Tib., ?, name of an author of the Cimang Bemchag

le gyowa YT, to plough

leh Tib., sle, capital of the former kingdom of Ladakh

lemen dhen lemen cyāng TT, TT also: lemen dhen lemen cyāng salen dhen salen cyāng, name of a TT patrilineal group

lente N, name of village in Thāk Kholā; T, kyula

lewā puja lauā YT, name of ceremony for the protection of the crops against insects

le yān kyū jangpā YT, to irrigate fields

lha T, god; cf. Tib., lha

lhabe TT, TT also: shrebe, a small axe with one head, the weapon of Ladakhpa Gyaltshan, the ancestor of the Shercan clan

lha brang Tib., private chapel

lha came T, virgin girl

lha chirin T, name of a TT patrilineal group; cf. Tib., lha tshe ring

lha chyowa TT, offering to the gods, especially to ḍūtingya, cf. Tib., lha mchod pa

lha chyurin gyāl moo T, name of the goddess of the Tulacan clan; cf. Tib., chu srin rgyal mo, ‘goddess crocodile queen’; Skt., makara

lha dhom T, a kind of dhom (priest)

lha dhu T, nickname for persons who have an extra finger or a toe, cf. Tib., lhag drug, ‘extra sixth’

lha dung T, sticks used for beating sweet buckwheat

lha gānla singi karmo T, name of the goddess of the Shercan clan; cf. Tib., gangs la seng ge dkar mo, ‘goddess white lioness of the glacier’

lha khang T, temple; cf. Tib., lha khang, lit., ‘god house’

lha khang drung T, TT also: lhakhāng drang, name of TT subclan which, among others, include the Balbir lineage; cf. Tib., lha khang thung, lit., ‘close to the temple’?

lha kyi YT, name of a YT patrilineal group; personal name. YT, name of a forest below Cimāṅg

lha kin YT, cf. Tib., lha khyim, lit., ‘god house’

lha kyi sonam YT, name of a YT patrilineal group; personal name; cf. Tib., bsod nams

lha kpa T, Wednesday; cf. Tib., lhag pa

lha kī T, soul, cf. Tib., bla/lha sku
mahārānī N, queen, the wife of the Rānā Prime Minister
mahāsabha N, general assembly
mahendra N, King of Nepal (1955–1972)
mai T, prints
mājju N, kinship term, e.g. MBW
māli N, kinship term used for second daughter
māilo N, N also: māila, kinship term used for second son
māmā chāng T, beer presented when requesting permission to speak
māi puja N, name of ceremony against smallpox; cf. N, māi, smallpox
maipulu lo T, year of the dragon; Tib., 'brug lo
maityāya Skt., name of future Buddha, Tib., byams pa
mājhi N, name of an ethnic group
makai N and T, maize
mal T, sign given to a woman by her suitor
mālā N, flower garland, rosary
malam kyunva YT, kind of marriage song; cf. T, smon lam
malam towa YT, kind of marriage song
male pho T, nickname, lit., ‘radish stomach’; cf. Tib., pho ba
malla N, name of a thākuri clan
māmā N, kinship term, e.g. MB
mānā N, a national volumetric unit (0.545 litres); T, dhwang dukyā
manāng N, name of a district and also its headquarters; T, nyāṅg sāṅg
manānggi N, name of an ethnic group, originating from Manāng; Tib., nyeshangpa
mānasarovar N and Skt., name of a sacred lake in Tibet near Mt. Kailash; Tib., ma pham mtsho, lit., ‘the undefeated lake’
man bahādur thakālī N, name of a TT (mentioned 1906)
maṇe T, reliquary stone structure, cf. Skt., māṇi, ‘jewel’ and Tib., ma ni, (abbreviation of) mantra of Avalokiteśvara, stones inscribed with mantra of Avalokiteśvara, often erected in memory of the deceased
maṇe pā thungra MT, lit., ‘to drink the beer of the maṇe’, meeting of patrilineal group
maṇe ramden T, ceremony during which reliquary stone walls (maṇe) are whitewashed; cf. Tib., rab gnas, to make firm or permanent, to consecrate?
manilā gurung N, name of gurung subbā (1857–1907)
man kyor YT, name of the lower irrigation canal in Thini; cf. Tib., man
mantra Skt., magical formula, incantation
marce T, name of pasture in Thaksātsae
mārī MT, name of village in Thāk Kholā; cf., Tib., ma ri, lit., ‘below, downwards’; N., mārphā
māriemhi MT, ‘people from Mārphā’, name of a Thakālī subgroup
mārphā N, name of village in Thāk Kholā; MT., mā, mawā; Tib., sprung khris?
mārphāli N, ‘person from Mārphā’; MT, māriemhi
mārphāli sewā samiti N, name of association of the Mawātān Thakālī of Pokhāra
marsyāngdi N, name of major river in Lamjung district
masinya N, enslavable
matwāli N, alcohol drinkers, a category among the pure castes
mawā MT, lit., ‘lower [altitude?]’, name of village in Thāk Kholā; cf. Tib., dma’ ba; N., Mārphā. MT, name of ethnic group, originating from Mārphā village in Thāk Kholā; see also: mawātān
mawātān MT, lit., ‘people of Mawā’, name of a Thakālī subgroup; MT also: māriemhi
māyā N, lit., ‘love’, common Nepalese female name
mayung YT, kinship term, e.g. yB (f.s.)
ndo mang Tib., collection of sūtra (Tib., mdo), i.e. scriptures in which the revelations of the Buddha or of his disciples are contained and transmitted
me T, the element fire, cf. Tib., me. T, tail, lower part, cf. Tib., smad. T, arrow; Tib., mda’
mebrag BT, name of place in Bāragāū with cave systems dating back to 8th century B.C.
mech N, name of an ethnic group, also known as mecya or bodo
meki lhakhāng T, name of temple at Kobang village, Thāk Kholā; cf. Tib., smad kyi lha khang, lit., ‘the temple of the lower part’
me lyāṅgpa  YT, lit., ‘to play arrow’, archery
mer  T, day of the full moon
mesu kandu  YT, name of a mountain top
above Thini, formed like an offer cake (kandu)
mesu kandu la  YT, name of the pass next
mesu kandu; cf. T and Tib., la, pass
methang  YT, small pieces of resinous pine
used as kindling; cf. T, me, fire and thang, pine
ngar ba  Tib., smith
mbā  T, kinship term, e.g. DH; cf. Tib., mag pa
mhcāya parpa  YT, YT also: mocyang, name of
a YT patrilineal group; cf. Tib., bar pa,
‘middle’
mha dhunghi  TI, TT also: mhar dhungi, name
of a YT patrilineal group
mha koe  YT, YT also: mha koi, marriage songs
mhalta  T, mixture of bitter buckwheat flour
and butter, the first solid food which a
baby is given
mhāng  T, demon, especially the cause of
death, cf. Tib., ngan?, T, leopard. T, a
person with the evil eye; female:
mhāngsyā. T, a dream
mhāng dhom  T, a kind of dhom (priest)
mhāngdu lingka  T, wooden plank with a
drawing of the mhāng; cf. Tib., ling ga
mhāng lhyawa  YT, to throw away the evil
mhāng maiwā  YT, possession of person by
the soul of a dead person; cf. YT, maiwā,
‘to land’
mhāng māngpa  YT, to dream
mhāng neha  YT, name of kind of evil spirits
mhāng pucu  T, name of kind of thorny
bushes
mhāng rawā  YT, YT also: mhāng rohawā, ‘to
catch the mhāng’, name of death ceremony
during which the cause of death (mhāng)
is caught
mhar  T, gold, cf. Z, mar
mharṣāya khu  T, T also: mhar cyāng khu, lit.,
‘river [of] pure gold’ or ‘river pure [as]
gold’? or der. Z, mar sang, yellow?, name of
river in Thāk Kholā sacred to the Thakalī;
site of a pre-historical settlement dating
back to 8th century B.C.; N, chokhopāñi
mhasumpra  TT, TT also: mhuisampura,
protective deity of Taglung village
mhatasi  TT, name of a TT patrilineal group
mhe  T, Himalayan dwarf cattle; N, lulu?
mhendo  T, pot with cypress branches
symbolizing the deceased; cf. Tib., me
tog, ‘flower’
mhi  T, man; cf. Tib., mi. T, eye; cf. Tib., mig
mhicen  T, mediator; cf. Tib., mi chen, great or
important man. TT, TT also: mhicyung,
name of a TT patrilineal group
mhi dar  T, ‘white person’ or ‘white eye’,
nickname for Westerner; cf. Tib., mi dkar
mhiti cyāng  TT, name of a TT patrilineal
group; also known as mhiting cyāng
mhon de pyaowā  YT, ‘half of the night has gone’
mhoral  T, single woman
mhorang  T, T also: mhorangmo, household
headed by a woman; cf. Tib., mo rang
(mo)
mi chen bryad  MB and Tib., ‘the eight great
men’; cf. T, mhicen
mi chos  Tib., ‘the religion of men’, the folk-
tradition of pre-Buddhist Tibet
mičyāng  MT, MT also: shrinca, kinship term,
e.g. yZ
mi drag bcu gnyis  MB and Tib., ‘the twelve
nobles’
milarepa  see: jetsun milarepa
mingmār  T, Tuesday; cf. Tib., mig dmar
minkyā  MT, head of the village workers
mir mukhiya  N, the chairman of headmen in
Thāksātsae; der. Arabic ‘āmir?
misir māngpa  T, ‘[one can] see a little light’
mit  N, bond brother; T, rowa
mi thus  MB, see: thyumi
mlā  T, uncooked rice
mlakan  T, cooked rice; cf. T, kan, food
mlāng  T, black
mlāng khu  T, ‘black water’, name of village
in Thāk Kholā; N, Kālopāñi
mleccha  Skt., ‘barbarian’, a category among
the impure, but touchable castes, which
includes Europeans
mocyāng  YT, kinship term, used by parents
and elder siblings to address the second
eldest son
modholṣāya  T, T also modusyā, a divorced
woman
mohannān shercan  N, name of a member of
the Balbīr lineage
mohan shamsher rāñā N, Prime Minister of Nepal (1948–1951)
nolam pumpa YT, to bless a person; cf. Tib., smon lam, prayer of expression a good wish
molha T, ‘female god’, name of protective deity of Syāng; cf. Tib., mo lha
mom TT, kinship term, e.g. FM. YT, kinship term, e.g. HM
momai YT, kinship term, e.g. FM
mom lasarphi TT, name of the heroine in the account of the salgi rhab
mom narchyakomo MT, name of the wife of Sheli rājā
mompe MT, MT also momwe, kinship term, e.g. FM
mon Tib., name for the non-Tibetan speaking peoples of the Himalaya
mon lapu T, radish; N, mulā
mon mhe T, common Nepalese hill cattle (Bos taurus and Bos indicus)
mon ra T, southern goat
mrāmu N, peacock feather fans
mra sawa YT, to weed the crops
mtha’ Tib., end, border, border-country
mthu Tib., magical power
mu T, sky, T, top of hair
mugu N, name of district in Nepal and also of its headquarters
mukhiya N, the headman of a village, chief, leader, local tax collector
mu khun srin rdzong Tib., ‘Mukhun Demon Fort’, fortress at Dzong in Bāragāū, erected in the 13th century; mukhung, der. Z, mu khyung, heaven, sky?
muktināth N, name of sacred site in Bāragū; Tib., chu mig brgya rtsa, ‘place of 100 springs’; T, salpī, salpuī
muktrim newār N, name of a 19th century tax-collector in Thāk Kholā
mulā N, radish; T, mon lapu
mul bandej N, lit., ‘main restrictions/obligations’, regulation, constitution
mulī TT, name of the pastures of Mt. Dhaulāgiri
mulighān TT, ‘Sky Mountain’, name of mountain (8167m); cf. Tib., muli li gangs; cf. T and Z, mu, sky; N, dhaulāgiri
muluki aīn N, name of Nepāl’s legal code; cf. N, muluki, ‘of the country’ and N, ain, ‘law’
muri N, a volumetric unit (87.2 litres), equal to 20 pāthi
murmi N and Tam.?, name of ethnic group; cf. Tib., mur mi, lit., ‘the people of the border/at the end’?; N, tāmang
mustāng N and E, name of the capital of former kingdom north of Thāk Kholā; cf. Tib., smon thang, ‘plain of aspiration’; T, maitāng. N and E, name of the former kingdom north of Thāk Kholā; see: lo. N and E, name of district which comprises three areas: Lo, Bārāgāū and Thāk Kholā
myāgdi N, name of district south of Thāk Kholā
myungto T, a long handled pickaxe, the weapon of the ancestor of the Bhaṭṭacan clan
na T, drum, cf. Tib., rnga
nācyāng mhiki TT, name of a TT patrilineal group
nagendrāman shercan N, name of a member of the Balbīr lineage
naihte YT, kinship term, used by parents to refer to their fifth son
nakā bhoti T, name of game played with cowrie shells
nakā phyawā YT, lit., ‘cockcrow’, early morning
nakāta T, lit., ‘hen comb’, name of a kind of mushroom
nakhung T, name of village in Thāk Kholā; N, nakung
nakhungtan cyāng TT, name of a TT patrilineal unit
naki T, winnowing-tray made of bamboo; N, nānglo
nakyā T, dog, cf. Tib., khyi
nam T, sky, heaven; cf. Tib., gnam. T, rain
namāsinyā N, non-enslavable
nambar T, the wind blowing from the south, cf. Tib., gnam, sky and T, bar, middle space?
nambar kyāng T, lit., ‘hit by the wind’, nickname
namecyātari T, a two-headed axe, the weapon of the ancestor of the Tulācan clan; cf. Tib., sta re, axe
nami G, stick with bird used by priests; see: rara
namkha dhorché YT, name of son of King Punāri; cf. Tib., (g)nam mkha’ rdo rje
nam nhānghá YT, ‘the day has come’, daybreak, cf. Tib., nam lang
nam pri-aut YT, ‘the day is dark’
namsi Tib., nam shes, consciousness
namsi pāwā YT, ‘to bring the namsi’, part of the māṅg rawā ceremony
namti T, name of YT subclan; cf. Tib., gnam, heaven
namti lāmā YT, name of the ancestor of the namti subclan
nānā YT, kinship term, e.g. eZ
nanda dhanī N, name of the father of Balbīr
nānī N, kinship term, female child
namum T, mustard
naprungkhung T, village in Thak Khola; N, naprungkot
napla T, lit., ‘flat nosed [person]’, a nickname
nar Tib., snar, village in Manāṅg district
narayangadh N, name of a town in Chitwan district
nar bahādūr hirācan N, name of current MT political leader
narcho TT, name of a TT patrilineal group
narendra gauca N, name of a 20th century TT
nārī T, T also nāri, place in Thāk Khola, also known as narsāṅg; cf. Tib., snā ri, ‘nose-ridge’; or: Tib., gnas ri, ‘sacred mountain’?
nārī gumpā T, name of temple at Nārī, also known as narsāṅg gomba; cf. Tib., snā ri dgon pa
nārī jhowa T, the deity of the Nārī temple, the protective goddess of the TT; cf. Tib., snā ri jo bo, ‘Lord of Nārī’
nārīlhedong T, ‘the forest of lower Nārī’, place in Thāk Khola
nar jang gurung N, name of a Gurung subba (1879–1941)
narjung see: lārjung
naro bonchung Tib., na ro bon chung, name of a Bon master; T, narā bhūn cyung
narpa Tib., snar pa, the people of Nār village in Manāṅg district; G, narthe; T, nartan
narsāṅg see: nārī
narsāṅg dunspa TT, name of the priest of Nārī Jhowa
narsing bhakta tulācan N, name of a 20th century TT political leader
narsing devi Skt., name of a Hindu goddess
naspāti N, pear
nāthang T, (Impeyan) pheasant
nauḍānda N, ‘nine ridges’, name of village south of Pokharā
nechung Tib., site of customs office in Lo; T, necyāṅg
nemāṅg T, bird; cf. Tib., (g)nam, space?
ne myāṅg syā see: ni māṅ syāṅ
nemāṅg wola T, ‘red bird’, rose finch
nepālganj N, name of town in Southwestern Nepal
nepāl janajāti mahāsanggha N, Nepal Federation of Nationalities; cf. N, janajāti, ethnic group
nepāpā T, village worker (chowā), who collects fines; cf. Tib., gnýer pa, caretaker, manager
nesai T, midnight; Tib., nam phyed
nepār N, name of ethnic group
ngari Tib., mnga’ ris, Western Tibet
ngeken MT, kinship term, e.g. FeZ
ngelang T, Himalayan crow
ngeren TT, kinship term, e.g. FeZ
nghā T, five; cf. Tib., lnga
nghā T, forest; cf. Tib., nags
nghāte T, the fifth object in a series
nghāto la TT, 10th month of the Thakāli year; YT, lang zla, month of the ox
ngho T, luck, happiness; cf. Tib., sngo ba, to bless, a blessing
ngi MT, kinship term, e.g. MBW
ngicyāṅ MT, kinship term, e.g. FyZ
ngimāśi YT, see: nīmāhsyāṅ
ngorchen kunda zangpo Tib., ngor chen kun dga’ bzang po, founder of the ngor pa sub-order (1382–1456)
ngor pa Tib., sub-order of sa skya pa
ngorpa gumpā YT, name of an extinct temple in Thini; cf., Tib., ngor pa dgon pa
nguca TT, kinship term, e.g. eBW
ngue T, open stall
ngui MT, kinship term, e.g. MBS
nguílyāṅ MT, kinship term, e.g. MBD
ngyahlā T, fictive brotherhood between women
nhakin YT, name of an extinct lineage
nhăng go T, local wheat; cf. Tib., nhàng, we

ghi T, two

nhite T, the second object in a series. YT, name of a YT patrilineal group

nho T, garlic; Tib., sgog pa

nhokon colo TT, Thakali female traditional dress, including wide cotton trousers (nhokon or nho ngai) and blouse (colo); see: nho ngai and colo

nho ngai T, also: nhokon or syokon, women's wide cotton trousers

nhongo T, morning, cf. Tib., snga dro

nhor T, wealth; cf. Tib., nor

nhor jhwa T, to divide wealth, property or estate

nhup T, the West, cf. Tib., nub

nhup câng T, 'North-West', probably Western Tibet; cf. Tib., nub byang

nhurbu T, jewel; cf. Tib., nor bu

nhyalu T, illegitimate child; female: nhyalusa; cf. Tib., nyal bu

nî YT, kinship term, e.g. WBW

nîcâyang YT, kinship term, e.g. FyZ

nîligiri Skt., 'Blue Mountain', name of a mountain in Thâk Kohlà; Tib., si ri gangs mo che

nimà T, Sunday, personal name; cf. Tib., nyi ma

nîmâhsyang TT, kinship group comprising a patrilineage plus persons married into it; see: ne: mûng sâyâ, ngûmû

nîrkhi N, a kind of duty

nîrml shercan N, name of a current TT

no YT, TT: nokar, cat

nol T, period after the harvest of the summer crop when animals are sent into the fields

no nhurbu YT, 'jewel cat', name of a magical cat

nôr Skt., 'man'

nûbri Tib., nub ri, 'Western Mountains', area in Gorkhâ district

nu rin BT, 'breast price', payment to bride's mother for the milk with which she suckled her daughter

nûwûkot N, name of district in Nepál and also its headquarters

nyakan YT, kinship term, e.g. FestZ

nyalsya fuwa lya YT, 'Resting Place of the Female Friends', placename in Syâng

nyaptan YT, kinship term, e.g. FelZ

nyelpa T, hell, cf. Tib., dmyal ba

nyeshang Tib., one of the three areas of Manang district

nyeshangpa Tib., the people of Nyeshang area; N, manânggi

nyingmapa Tib., mûng ma pa, 'the ancients', name of the oldest order of Tibetan Buddhism

'od dpag med Tib., name of one of the Buddhas; Skt., amitâbhâ

'od dpag med chos Tib., name of a religious text

okhar N, walnut

ola T, red

onyâng YT, kinship term, e.g. MBD

omâng YT, name of forest fields above Thîni; CB: wangpang

om bikas gaucan N, name of a current TT

omdo kyu T, the Kâli Gândakî river

ongku T, dough figure used for offering beer, symbolizing the power of the priest; cf. Tib., dbang bskur, empowerment

ongku che T, name of a text; cf. Tib., dbang bskur (pr., wongkour), empowerment and Tib., chos

ongûi chenpo T, 'the big penis', figure in Cângpuî cave at Syâng; cf. Tib., dbang po (pr. wong/ong), the male organ (Tib., pho mtshan) and Tib., chen po

ongtâ T, power, cf. Tib., dbang thang

oser chuldung Tib., 'od zer chul dung?', name of a Bompo priest of Thîni

pà YT, beer; TT, phi; cf. Tib., phabs, yeast?
pàçgâu N, (pr. panchgaun), 'the five villages', name of region in Thâk Kohlà; T, yhûnghà

pàcâûle N, 'people from pàcâu'
pà dûngpa YT, engagement ceremony

padkea TT, TT also: phaûk, household which is not represented in the village assembly

padmasamñhava Skt., 'the lotus born', see: guru rinpoche

padmâ shamshe rîna N, Prime Minister of Nepál, 1946–1948

pa dung T, dwarf juniper (Juniperus squamata)
pahā N, hill, mountain
pahāre N, a hillman
pāi gera TT, name of a TT patrilineal group
pāi kemi MT, name of a MT patrilineal group; personal name
pāi kon T, men’s woollen Tibetan style overcoat; cf. Tib., bod gos?
pāi laso MT, name of a MT patrilineal group
paima T, T also: paimpa, Saturday; cf. Tib., spen pa
paima T, T also: paimpa, Saturday; cf. Tib., spen pa
paima T, T also: paimpa, Saturday; cf. Tib., spen pa
paima T, T also: paimpa, Saturday; cf. Tib., spen pa
paisa N, smallest currency unit in Nepal; 100 paisa equal one rupee
paisa khopi N, name of game
paisa sangge MT, name of a MT patrilineal group
paisa sara TT, name of a TT patrilineal unit
paisa sonte YT, name of a YT patrilineal group; cf. T, sonte
paisa thabli N, name of a current YT patrilineal group
paisa thogpa YT, name of a YT patrilineal group; cf. T, pasin and T, cyangpa, ‘small, junior’
paisa thyowa YT, name of a YT patrilineal group; cf. T, pasin and T, thowa, ‘big, senior’
paisi MT, name of a MT patrilineal group
paisi khopi N, name of game
paisi MT, name of a MT patrilineal group
paisi sangge MT, name of a MT patrilineal group
paisi sara TT, name of a TT patrilineal group
paisi sante YT, name of a YT patrilineal group; cf. T, sante
pal T, name of MT and YT subclans; cf. Skt., phala, fruit; or: Tib., dpal, glory
palang T, name of a local berry
paldon gumpa YT, name of an extinct temple in Wi; cf. Tib., dpal ldan dgon pa
palindra thabli N, name of a current YT patrilineal group
palpa N, name of a district of Nepal
palsang T, Friday; cf. Tib., pa sangs, Friday, the planet Venus, T, personal name; cf. Tib., dpal bzung
palten YT, name of a patrilineal group; cf. Tib., dpal ldan
pana N, game played with cowrie shells
panchayat N, pañcāyat, any council of five members, name of the 1962–1990 partyless political system of Nepal
pang T, alpine meadow; cf. Tib., spang
pang chi T, pasture grass; cf. Tib., spang rtsi
pangco YT, name of place above Syang
pangki lhepta T, a ritual specialist
pang nho T, pasture garlic; Tib., spang sgog pa
pang yang piwā YT, to let animals loose at the upper pastures
pāni nacalnyā jāt N, ‘water acceptable castes’, i.e. the pure castes
pāni nacalnyā choi chito halnu parnyā N, the water unacceptable castes whose bodily contact necessitates the so-called water drop purification, i.e. the so-called untouchable castes or artisans
parbat N, name of a district. N, name of former kingdom, also known as malebum after the name of the capital (now Benī), cf. Tib., kli/kle bum
parce TT, name of a pasture in Thāksātsae
pār dungs T, rhododendron
pāre T, a kind of ritual specialist. TT, name of several TT patrilineal groups
parpa T, middle; Tib., bar pa
pasin T, a kind of timber; cf. Tib., shing. YT, YT also: pā, pācan and pacai, name of a YT patrilineal group
pasin cyangpa YT, name of a YT patrilineal group; cf. T, pasin and T, cyangpa, ‘small, junior’
pasin thyowā YT, name of a YT patrilineal group; cf. T, pasin and T, thowā, ‘big, senior’
pāti T, YT: pa siki, juniper (Juniperus indica); Tib., shug shing; N, dhupi
pātan N, name of district and town in the Kāthmāndu valley
patang T, a two-edged sword, the weapon of the ancestor of the Gaucan clan
pathang T, (impeyan) pheasant; see: nathang
pāthi N, national volumetric unit (4.36 litres), equal to 8 mānā
pa thungpā YT, ‘to drink beer’, party
patirām N, name of a 19th century TT leader
pāu kuti T, T also: pāl kuti, name of the ancestor of the Bhattachan clan, also known as dhamchī dhamru
pēwā T, relationship between a man and a woman who should not talk freely with one another, especially about sex
pēwā N, a woman’s private property
pha T, husband
phādke see: padkea
phae T, the element iron, Tib., lcags
phāg T, pig, cf. Tib., phag
phāg che T, a special dress
phāg lo T, the year of the hog; cf. Tib., phag lo
phajan YT also: phacan, groups in the local assembly; cf. Tib., pha tshan, cousin by the father’s side
phā la T, 8th month of the T year, cf. Tib., phag zla, month of the pig. T, festival which takes place in the month of phā la
phalāte N, name of settlement below Gorāpāni pass; T, kalsae
phal pa BT and Tib., commoners
phāmār T, north wind
phamo dolmo T, ‘the vagina’, figure in the Cānpūi Cave, Syāng
phaso puso YT, son leaves father’s household to establish his own; cf. Tib., pha, father, Tib., bu, son, Tib., so so, to separate
pho mawa YT, lower stomach; Tib., pho (ba) dma' ba
pho nowa YT, upper stomach
phopāng T, bat; cf. Tib., pha wang
phorang T, T also: phoral, single man; cf. Tib., pho rang ba
phosang jhosmi MT, village assembly meeting, which takes place every third year; cf. MT, phosang, name of a location, and MT, jhosmi, meeting
phramo T, rosary, cf. Tib., ‘phreng ba
phu YT, reliquary stone structure. G, village in Manānā district; Tib., snar stod, ‘upper Nar’
phudzeling BT, name of cave system in Bāragāu dating back to 8th century B.C.; cf. Tib., phun tshogs gling
phuī T, the first or the essence of something; cf. Tib., phud
phuī kinpā YT, to take the phuī
phupu N, kinship term, e.g. FYZ
phurpa T, ritual dagger; cf., Tib., phur bu. T, Thursday; cf. Tib., phur bu
phutum T, women’s sleeveless woollen coat
phyāu T, fox
phyūm T, YT also: phu, altar in the central room of the house
phui kinpa YT, to take the phuí
picyang TT, kinship term, e.g. yZ
pin T, blue/green
plih T, four
plihte T, the fourth object in a series. YT, kinship term, used by parents to refer to their fourth son
plihte sonam YT, name of a YT patrilineal group; personal name; cf. Tib., bsod nams
pokhara N, town in Western Nepal
pokharā thakālī samāj sudhār samiti N, Pokhara Thakāli Social Reform Committee
polobhrī T, lit., ‘nettle root’, nickname
pompar T, nobleman, leader, king; cf. Tib., dpon po, master, lord. TT, name of a patrilineal group
pompar sonam Tib., dpon po bsod nams, name of the ancestor of the pompar lineage
pon YT, kinship term, e.g. estB; cf. Tib., dbon, grandson, nephew
posi chāmpo T, pure grain, cf. Tib., gtsang ba
prabhākarmāṇि shercan  N, name of a member of the Balbir lineage
pradhan paśca  N, chairman of village council (gāû pañcāyat) under the partyless Panchayat System, which was abolished in 1990
prajāpati  N, ‘the head of the subjects’?, cf. N, praja, subject
pratinidhi sabhā  N, ‘assembly of representatives’, Nepal’s House of Representatives
prātirām budhā  N, name of a 19th century local village headman (budhā) of Thini
praJapati  N, ‘the head of the subjects’?; cf. N, praja, subject
protinidhi sabha  N, ‘assembly of representatives’, Nepal’s House of Representatives
prāṭirām budhā  N, name of a 19th century local village headman (budhā) of Thini
preh  T, eight; Tib., brgya
preh dhu  TT, the southern part of Thaksatsae; cf. T, preh
pre la  YT, 5th month of T year, cf. Tib., spre zla, month of the monkey
pre lo  T, year of the monkey; cf. Tib., spre lo
prho  T, kind of female spirits
prho dhom  T, kind of dhom (ritual specialist)
prī  T, female yak; cf. Tib., ‘bri
pri brānγ  T, yak herd
pri chan  T, yak herdsman
prithvi narayan shh  N, name of a district of Nepal
the founder of modern Nepal
prum  T, name of a herb (= yrmo?); Tib., thang phrom?; TT, leprosy?
puchu  G, a kind of a Gurung priest
pu kong  T, raven
pu kiphramo  T, ‘the snake necklace’, name of figure at Cangpui Cave, Syāng; cf. Tib., sbrul kyi ‘phreng mo
pumī  TT and MT, witch; female: pumisya
pumpa  YT, to sow
punāri  T, name of a former king of Sum (Thini)
punel  N, ‘the people of pun’, i.e. the Mawāṭān Thakāli
pung kyung  T, pasture rhubarb
puni  YT, the people of Mārpha
puntaN  MT and TT, ‘the people of pun’, i.e. the Mawāṭān Thakāli
punti  MT, MT also: pundri, Mārpha; Tib. transliteration: spun gri; cf. Tib., spung khris, ‘heap of peace’?
punti gyung  MT, name of a valley or gorge at Mārpha
purang  Tib., pu rangs, ancient kingdom of Western Tibet
puta  MT, MT also: putan and putum, name of a MT clan; N, hirācan
putāγ  T, plain at Jomsom airport; cf. Tib., phun (sum tshogs pa), excellent, and thang, plain?
pyā  MT, name of a MT patrilineal group
pyung cha  YT, young man
pyung kyū u  TT, name of a cave at Lārjung
pyūthen  N, name of a district of Nepal
ra  T, goat; cf. Tib., ra
rab rgyal rtsē  Tib., ‘Peak of Supreme Victory’, the palace of Dzong in Bāragāū
rachan  YT, name of an extinct lineage; lit., ‘the lineage of goat(herders)?; cf., T, ra, goat; cf. Tib., (pha) tshan, lineage?
ra du  T, goat manure; cf. Tib., ra lud
rāī  N, name of an ethnic group, also known as khambu
rāj  N and Skt., rule, government, kingdom
rāja  N and Skt., King
rājapur  N, name of town in the Tarai
rājangsi  N, name of an ethnic group, originally part of the Koc people
rakam  N, monopoly
rakhor  BT, ‘goat cycle’, local credit and savings association with goats
rama  Kham Magar, name of a Kham Magar ritual specialist
rām prasād thakāli  N, name of a 19th century subbā
rānā  N, name of lineage which ruled Nepal from 1846 to 1951
rānā bahādur slūh  N, King of Nepal (1777–1799)
ranaudip singh rānā  N, Prime Minister of Nepal (1877–1885)
rāni gumbā  N, ‘Queen’s Monastery’, name of temple in Tukce; Tib., bkra shis chos gling, ‘Religion’s Isle of Blessing’
rara  T, ritual stick with bird used by the dhom; see: nami
rāṣṭriya pañcāyat  N, the National Parliament
rāṣṭriya prajātantra party  N, ‘National Democratic Party’
rāṣṭriya sabhā  N, the National Assembly (Upper House of the Nepalese Parliament)
rasuwa N, name of a district in Nepal
ratan MT, name of MT clan (= roten); cf., T, ra, goat?
rayo säg N, mustard spinach; cf. N, raya, mustard and N, säg, vegetables, greens; YT, bas dho
rgan pa see: gamba
rgyal po lo gsar Tib., the King’s New Year
rhab T, account of a clan; cf. Tib., rabs, lineage, history
rhab shewa TT, to recite the rhab
rhí T, T also: shri, dangerous period when a man reaches the age when his father or brother died; cf. Tib., sri?
rhí màuva T, ‘[person] of low descent’, artisans; cf. Tib., rigs dma’ ba, ‘lower class’
rhíwà YT, ‘begging, asking’, arranged marriages; cf. Tib., ‘dri ba
rhoten MT, name of a MT clan
rhoten thowa MT, name of a MT patrilineal group
ridi N, town in Western Nepal
rig nga T, tiara with the five Buddhas; cf. Tib., rigs lnga
rimparche see: rinpoche
rinçin tswâng T, name of an early astrologer (khaiwa) of Tibet; cf. Tib., rin chen tshe dbang
rinpoche Tib., rin po che, ‘Precious One’, title given to high priests; T, rimparche, rhuparche
ritho N, seed of Sapindus mukerossi
rnam shes Tib., pr. namsi, consciousness
rnam thar Tib., hagiography, biography
rolâng T, zombie, cf. Tib., ro langs
rolpa N, name of a district of Nepal
romo T, term of address for bond brother’s wife or wife’s bond sister
romosya T, bond brother’s wife
ropani N, a measure of area, equals about 0.05 hectare
rowa T, T also: ro, friend, bond brother, group of age-fellows, cf. Tib., rogs pa
ru T, horn; cf. Tib., ru
rudra prasad shercan N, name of 20th century TT
rukum N, name of district in Nepal
rupaiya N, a Nepalese monetary unit equal to 100 paisa; abbreviation: Rs; E, rupee
rupandehi N, name of district of Nepal
ryot N, 19th century official
sa T, earth, cf. Tib., sa
sacib N, secretary of government or of an association
sadasya N, member of an assembly
saddhâvana N, ‘good thinking, goodwill’, a Tarai-based regionalist party representing the interests of people of recent Indian origin
saepulu lo T, year of the serpent; cf. Tib., sbrul lo
saicyâng gyapre T, buckwheat with red flowers
saikân gyapre T, buckwheat with white and red flowers
sailo N, kinship term used for third son
sâlî N, kinship term used for third daughter
sakâr YT, name of YT clan, cf. Tib., sa dkar, ‘white soil’
sakyapa Tib, sa sky pa, name of monastic order of Tibetan Buddhism
saletot T, a kind of turban; cf. Tib., gsal ba, ‘bright’ and thod, ‘turban’
salgi TT, name of TT clan; cf. Tib., gsal, ‘pure’ or ‘bright’; gi is an abbreviation of T, ghyu, lineage, cf. Tib., brgyud pa; N, tulacan
salpi T, T also: salpui, ‘Pure Grotto’, cf. WT., gsal, pure and Tib., phug (pa), rock-cavern, grotto; N, muktinath
sam T, mind, cf. Tib., bsam, consciousness
samāj N, association
samdruling Tib., bsam grub gling, name of monastery in Lo
samdrup dorje Tib., bsam grub rdo rje, King of Lo, flourished c. 1620
samdrup palbar Tib., bsam grub dpal ‘bar, King of Lo, flourished c. 1675
samdrup rabtan Tib., bsam grub rab brtan, King of Lo, flourished c. 1650
samle T, name of minor settlement in Thak Khola
samle dhen samle cyang TT, name of the ancestor of the Tulacan clan
sampa T, new; cf. Tib., gsar ba
sam sāwa T, person with a good heart
samnyunkta jana morcha N, United People’s Front, name of a political group
sām T, name of a TT patrilineal group
sān YT, name of a YT patrilineal group. YT, leaves (of pine)
sanad N, order, authorization
sān T, incense, cf. Tib., bsangs
sāngā sung yowā YT, incantation used when babies choke while breastfeeding
sāngdag BT, village in Bāragāū; T, sāngda
T, heaven
sāngge dhorche TT, name of a TT patrilineal unit; cf. Tib., sangs rgyas rdo rje
sāng tewā YT, a purification ceremony
sāpāhu T, altar
sāpretan TT, name of a TT patrilineal unit; also known as sāpretan
sār T, an auspicious time, e.g. for wedding
sārkār N, the government, authority
sārkāri stubbā N, senior civil servant
sārkege palten cyang TT, name of a TT patrilineal group
sārki N, T, sarki, name of caste whose members traditionally work as shoemakers, tanners
sārtan TT, name of a TT patrilineal group
sārti YT, name of YT clan; cf. Tib., sa, earth
sāru TT, YT, saū, a village in Thak Khola; N, jhumāgau
sāwā T, good
sāwā YT, YT also: cāwā, to eat
sāwān N, N also: sāun and shrāvan, name of the fourth Nepalese month (July–August)
sbrul Tib., serpent
se S, name of proto-Tamāṅg–Gurung–Thakāli tribe?; cf. Tib., shes (pa), to know, to be able?
se kai BT, Thakāli language and the languages spoken by the peoples of the five northern villages of Bāragāū; T, saikai; cf. Tib., skad, language
semjā N, one of the capitals of the ancient Jumlā kingdom, now known as sījā; T, sincā; Tib., ya rtse
sengge namgyal Tib., seng ge rnam rgyal, King of Ladakh, d. 1645
senor lawā YT, name of death ceremony
sērib Tib., name of historical area in Mustang district, covering present-day Bāragāū and Pācāgāū
serma N, homestead tax
sesen dong phusang TT, MT: syāngsen dong u, name of cave in forest above Mārpā where lha yāhwā rāngjyang died; cf. Tib., sdon, forest and phuk, cave; sang der. Tib., gtsang ba, pure?
sha Tib. (pr.), ‘nettle’; cf. Tib., zwa
shāicyāng TT, name of a TT patrilineal unit
shākyamuni Skt., name of the historical Buddha
shāmshermān shercan N, name of a member of the Balbir lineage
shāngkarmān shercan N, name of a member of the Balbir lineage, died 1998
shāngten T, YT also: shangte, buckwheat) porridge; cf. Tib., zan
shunkarlal thakāli N, name of a 20th century headman of Thini
shebi lha YT, name of the local protective deity of Cimāṅg
shekong cyāng TT, name of a TT patrilineal group; also known as shong kong cyāng
sheli rāja MT, name of King of Mārpā
sheme phewā YT, lit., ‘the fun is coming’, name of a comic sketch; cf. Tib., shags phebs pa?
sherab lama Tib, shes rab bla ma, name of 13th century Gungthang general, grandfather of Amepl, the founder of the Kingdom of Lo
sher bahadur deubā N, Prime Minister of Nepal (1995–97)
shercan N, name of TT clan; TT, dhimcan; can der. Tib., ishan, kindred, relations?
sherpa N, name of an ethnic group; cf. Tib., shar pa, 'easterners'
shikār kyangpa TT, hunting, cf. N, sikār, hunting and TT, kyangpa, to play
shiku T, special fund under the dikur system
shiku te dhawā mhti T, the receiver of the shiku
shin T, wood, cf. Tib., shing
shin dukyā T, N, susi māna, name of a local volumetric unit (made of wood), equals 2/3 of a national māna (i.e. 0.363 litres)
shing Tib., zhing, field
shingkor pumpā YT, ceremonial circumambulation of the fields; cf. Tib., zhing 'khor phes pa?
shing namo T, goddess of the field
shin pyang T, local volumetric unit (made of wood), equals half a pathi; cf. T, shm?
shi ra T, local goat; cf. Tib., ra
shiv senā Hindi and N, 'Shiva's Army', name of a political group
shop T, effigy of the deceased; cf. Tib., gsob, something stuffed
shopa BT, Tib., shod pa, the peoples of shoyul
shoyul S and BT, Tib., shod yul, the five sekai-speaking villages of Baragāū
shrane YT, name of YT clan; cf. Tib., sras (po)?
shrin YT, kinship term, e.g. yZ (m.s.)
shuwa T, the body; cf. Tib., gzugs
shyak cho T, lasso; cf. Tib., zhaps
shyang rhab TT, name of text which is recited during the lha phewa festival prior to the departure of the clan gods; cf. T, shewa, to go (hon.); Tib., gshegs pa (hon.), 'to go away'
shyupar T, person on behalf of a boy requests for a girl in marriage; cf. Tib., zhu ba, to request
shyu rhab T, name of text which is recited during the lha phewa festival when the clan gods arrive at a new location; cf. Tib., bzhugs, “please sit down” (hon)?
shyu la TT, 1st month of the T year; cf. Tib., chui zla ba; YT, ala
siki T, close patrilineal relatives
silngya T, cymbals, cf. Tib., sil snyan
simi N, beans
sinci korwā YT, to make a death astrology chart; Tib., gshin rtsis skor ba
sindhupālchok N, name of a district in Nepal
sindur N, red vermilion powder placed in the parting of a married woman's hair
sindi karpo T, 'the white lion', name of self-created figure in Cangpui Cave, Syāng; cf. Tib., seng ge dkar po
sinti YT, a ghost, cf. Tib., gshin 'dre
sipcyu sirgu YT, 49th day, cf. Tib., bszi bu zhe dgu
soisoi lāwa TT, name of festival which is celebrated three to four years prior to the lha phewa festival
solcep TT, name of text recited during the lha phewa festival when minor offerings are presented to the clan gods; cf. Tib., gsol (ba) 'debs (pa), to make a request
solṭi TT and MT, kinship term, e.g. MBS
soltisā YT and MT, kinship term, e.g. MBD
solukhumbu N, name of district of Nepal
som T, three; cf Tib., gsum
sombo YT, name of village in Thāk Kholā; cf. Tib., gsum; N, Thīni
somte YT, the third object in a series
sonam Tib., bsod nams, 'good fortune, merit', Tibetan personal name
sonam gyatsho Tib., bsod nams rgya mtsho (1543–1588), the third Dalai Lama
sonam lodro Tib., bsod nams blo gros, 'Merit Intellect', lama of Lo (1516–1581)
so nam lo gsar Tib., the Farmer's New Year; cf. Tib., so nam(s), agriculture
sonam mhirki syārki TT, name of a TT patrilineal group
sonam nhurbu MT, cf. Tib., bsod nams nor bu, name of a village headman of Mārphā, flourished c. 1900
sonam wangchug Tib., bsod nams dbang phyug, 'Lord of Merit', lama of Lo (1660–1731)
songtsen gampo Tib., srong btsan sgam po, name of 7th century Tibetan king
sonte YT, YT also: sone, kinship term used by parents to refer to their third son
sonti (sontisā) YT, witch; cf. Tib., gson 'dre; TT, bumisya
sowa syāngpa YT, lit., ‘to live to make’, name of a death ceremony; cf. Tib., ‘tsho ba or gson pa, life, and mdzad pa, to make (hon.)

spung khris see: pundri

srālāngghum YT, name of the ancestor of the YT kya clan; sra der. BT, sras po?

sras po BT, nobleman

srhin YT, kinslup term, e.g. yZ (m.s.)

sri YT, name of class of demons; cf. Tib., sri srin kyor YT, name of the upper irrigation canal in Thini

srog see: rho

srunghpa YT, amulet, marriage agreement (which protects a woman like an amulet); cf. Tib., srung ba

subbā N, former senior civil servant, also title given to some customs contractors, e.g. the customs contractor of Dānā

subarna prabhā devi N, name of second wife of King Rānā Bahādur Shāh

subbini N, female member of the subbā lineage

sum Tib., gsum, three. Tib., ancient name for present-day Pācāgū

sum garab dzong T, ‘garab dzong of hini’; see: garab dzong

sum makdu T, old name for the inhabitants of Thini (sum); cf. Tib., rmang drug, ‘the six foundations’?

sum sang nhe T, land leasing system (in Thāksātse) su nhor sawā YT, arrangement under which unmarried daughter keep the profit made on certain property; cf. T, nhor, wealth and YT, cawā, to eat

sunuwār N, name of an ethnic group su T, flour mixed with butter surtipa N, surti shahī, king of Jumla (1618–1626)

sushilman shercan N, name of a current TT political leader sutkērī chai T, delivery charge syā T, flesh, meat; cf. Tib., sha. T, suffix indicating feminine sex

syāk sum awā YT, lit., ‘third day to make’, name of death ceremony; cf. Tib., zhag gsum

syāl N, jackal syalapō T, lit., ‘the hunter’

syāng T, wife-giver; cf. Tib., zhang. T, a small cymbal; cf. Tib., zhang. T, name of village in Thākh Kholā; Tib., shang syāngbo T, kinship term, e.g. WB; cf. Tib., zhang po syāng dhawā YT, to meet the wife-givers; cf. Tib., zhang (po) ‘du ba?

syāngjā N, name of district and also its headquarters syāngli u YT, name of cave in mountains above Syāng

syāngpa YT, person responsible for making beer; cf. Tib., chang, beer

syāng sa ri yawa TT, lit., ‘to return to the soil of the syāng’, a divorced woman returning to her natal household; YT, syāng sa yāng yowā

syāngsen dong u MT, TT: sesen dong phusang, name of cave in forest above Mārphā where lha yhāwā rāngjyung died; cf. T, dong, forest and u, cave

syāngtān YT, ‘people from Syāng’. YT, name of a YT patrilineal group syāngtāni N, ethnonym, ‘people from Syāng’ syāng tar nhampā YT, white cloth given by the wife-givers to cover the bier; cf. T, syāng, wife-givers; tar, white; nhampā, to cover

syāptu chimpā YT, custom according to which a woman remain in her natal household a few year after marriage syasumpal YT, cf. Tib., ghon gsum dpal?, ‘thrice glory youth’, name of illegitimate son of King Thokārcen syāu N, apple syer T, East, cf. Tib., shar syokon T, women’s wide cotton trousers; see: rхо ngai

sylendo yum T, ‘the slide stone’, a big stone near Lārjung; cf. T, yumpa, stone; Tib., rdo, stone

syon T, six-row naked barley (black variety)
syopen lawa TT, name of Thakāli festival syopla T, T also: syolā, poplar (Populus ciliata)

syoptā T, a kind of superhuman being, in the form of a strong, tall man who lives in uninhabited places; cf. Tib., gzhi bdag

syowā YT, to dance syuki YT, YT also: siki, TT: syutì, cypress; cf. Tib., shug shing
syūkīnghā T, cypress forest. MT, name of MT subclan
syum chyang T, ‘sleeping beer’, bedtime beer presented by the groom to his parents-in-law on the night of the wedding; cf. Tib., gzim pa, to fall asleep, and chang, beer
syungme T, kinship term, e.g. WM
syungti T, stick

tabīl mukhiyā N, one of the thirteen headmen (mukhiyā) of Thāksātse who functions as accountant
tāb la TT, 11th month of the T year; cf. Tib., stag zla, ‘month of the tiger’; YT, bab la
tāgādhārī N, wearers of the holy cord, i.e. the highest subgroup among the pure castes; also known as the twice-born castes
tāglung N, name of village in Thāk Khola; T, tālu. Tib., stag lung, name of monastery in Tibet after which suborder of bka’ brgyud pa order is named
tāk lo T, year of the tiger; cf. Tib., stag lo
tā le T, (irrigated) fields close to the village. Mongolian (E: Dalai, as in Dalai Lama), ‘ocean’; Tib., ṛgya tsho
ta lo T, year of the horse; cf. Tib., rta lo
tālu N, master, head, term used by untouchable castes to address adult Thakali male or female (tālasyā). TT, leader of patrilineal group
tāmā golcya T, ‘the copper lock’, name of a self-created figure in the Cangpui Cave, Syang; cf. N, tāmā tālca
tāmāng N, name of ethnic group (not to be confused with Tāmāng Thākāli). T, one of the three groups which together constitute the Thākāli

tamāng se mon Tib., ancient name of ethnic group in present-day Mustāng district; a reference to the Thākāli?
tāmo T, ancient placename; or: ancient name for the indigenous people of Thāk Khola?; T, name of local god of Sauru village		
tamu G, Name of ethnic group; N, gurung; der. Tib., stod mi, ‘person from the upper part, highlander’?: name for the proto-Tamāng–Gurung–Thākāli tribe
tanāng TT, TT also: tancāng and lārā, name of a TT patrilineal group
tancāng see: tanāng
tāngbe T and N, name of village in Bāragāu; BT, taye; S, tānbe
tāngbetan T, ‘people from Tāngbe’, name of ethnic group
tāngco T, chukor patridge
tāng ka Tib., a coin; cf. Hindi, tangga
tāngmīcān T, name of king of Garab Dzong; Tib., rgyal sphyan mi bzung, ‘the king with the uneven number [= 3] of eyes’?
tāngsār T, women’s woollen coat (for daily use). T, name of a local berry
tānsen N, town in Pālpā district in Nepal; Magar: tānsing
tā T, white; Tib., dkar ba		
tārāī N, the low-lying land or plain at the foot of the Himālaya
tārche TT, TT also: tārča and teje, name of a TT patrilineal group
tarhna T, stick with coloured strings; cf. Tib., mda’ dar	
tarnγa lha YT, bark from the birch
tāshi choling Tib., bkra shis chos gling, ‘Religious Isle of Blessing’, name of temple in Tukçe; N., rāṇi gumbā
tāshi gon Tib., bkra shis mgon, king of Lo, death 1498		
tās ṭyangpā YT, to play cards; N, tās, a playing card
tas yu T, see: taysya
tātopāṇī N, name of village south of Thāk Khola; cf. N, tāto, hot and pāṇī, water
tatum T, T also: kyatam, shawl
taulihowā N, town in Kapilbastu district in Nepal		
tāwā T, householder priest; cf. Tib., grva pa (pr. dawa)
tāyā T, potato
tāyā dowā T, potato harvest
tāyā kan T, lit., ‘eaters of] food of potato’, nickname
tāyā pho T, lit., ‘potato stomach’, nickname
taysya YT, also: tasyu, kinship term used by a woman to refer to women who have married into the same clan as herself and whose husbands are younger than hers, e.g. HyBW. T, kinship term used by a man to refer to women who have married into his patriclan
teje TT, name of a TT patrilineal group

ten T, payment to the bride’s mother for the milk with which she suckled her daughter; see: nu rin
ten ḍhāṅg ṼYT, YT also: ten ḍhāṅg juwā, ceremony between engagement and wedding; YT, juwā, to put; see: ten; see: ḍhāṅg lu
tendzin rapa Tib., bstan ’dzin ras pa, ‘Cotton-clad Holder of the Doctrine’, founder-lama of Shey monastery of Dolpo, lived c. 1700
tengyur Tib., bstan ’gyur, ‘translation of the treatises’, the (approximately) 220 volume canonical exegetical collection of Tibetan Buddhism

tenī T, female muskdeer; male: lo
tepalsāng mhirki TT, name of a TT patrilineal group
ter T, offering comprising a pot with valuables; cf. Tib., gter, ‘treasure’
tera mukhiya N, lit., ‘the thirteen headmen’, the council of the thirteen headmen of Thāksātsae
tera mukhiya jhompa TT, the assembly of the thirteen headmen; cf. Tib., ’dzens pa
teta kyimolung see: kyimolung
tetan T, ‘the people of te[tàng]’, name of ethnic group
tetāng T and N, name of village in Bāragāū; B, te; S, timi
tetāng byo YT, name of the fierce manifestation of goddess bhue Ṽama
tete T, the first object in a series
thāg T, T also: thāk, name of the southern part of the present Thāk Kholā; cf. Tib., mtha’, end, border, border-country; or: thag, distance, distant (land)?
thāgpa BT, ‘belonging to Thāg’, Thākāli
thāk see: thāg
thākāli N, N also: thākāli, ‘people of thāk’, name of ethnic group
thākāli samaj sewā samiti N, ‘Thākāli Community Social Services Association’, the Tamang Thākāli National Association
thākāli samaj sudhār samgh N, ‘Thākāli Community Reform Organisation’, the Tamang Thākāli Association of Pokhara
thākgubtsen T, old name for the land or people of present-day Thāksātsae
thāk khola N, ‘valley of Thāk’, name of the area between Ghasā in the south and Jomsom in the north
thāksātsae N, lit., ‘the seven hundred thāk’, the southern part of Thāk Kholā; cf. N, sātṣya (pr. sātṣae)
thāksātsae dharma paṅcāyat N, name of local political organisation of Thāksātsae; cf., N, dharma, (religious) duty, righteousness and N, paṅcāyat
thākse N, name for Tamāng Thākāli used in early 19th century documents; lit., ‘the Se people of Thag’?
ṭhakuri N, name of caste, the ‘warrior’ or noble caste which includes the royal family
thālu thampā YT, written will, to make a wish; cf. Tib., bsam pa, will; or: tham ka, seal?
thāmi N, name of an ethnic group
thāng Ṽung T, T also: thāngli Ṽung, pine (Pinus excelsa/ Pinus wallichiana); Tib., thang shing; N, sallā
thāṅgraun TT, name of text which is recited to prevent rain
thāṅg syu T, resin (from pine)
thārce T, retired, released, freed; cf. Tib., thar ba
thāri T, cushion
tharsyāṅg YT, ‘exemption beer’, beer presented to the village headman to free oneself from the obligation of being an assembly member, cf. Tib., thar (ba) chang, freedom beer; also known as tercyang, cf. Tib., ster chang, give beer
tharsyāṅg tevā YT, ‘to provide exemption beer’, cf. Tib., byed pa, to provide
thāru N, name of an ethnic group
thāsāṅg T, the homeland of the TT, covering the present Kobāng VDC
thātān T, ‘the people of Tha(g)’
the T, the third singular personal pronoun, ‘he’
ṭhekbandi N, former revenue collection system
ṭhekā N, contract
ṭhekā sabbā N, former title for customs contractor
ṭhekthiti N, former revenue collection system
ṭheṭya T, wooden board used for harrowing
thetya thewā YT, to harrow
thi T, throne, cf. Tib., khri
thimten T, T also: dhimten, the central room of the Thakāli house
thin T, name of the people of Thini
thin, N, TT, thināṅg, name of village in Thāk Kholā; Tib., sgum po
thinel N, name of the people of Thini
thinuwa bista N, name of 19th century Bāragāu nobleman who collected transit duties
thokārcen T, name of ruler of Garab Dzong; cf. Tib., rgyal thod dkar can, ‘the king with the white turban’
tholosya T, lit., ‘I am sorry, please forgive me’, an apology; cf. Tib., mthol bshags
thonje N and G, village in Manāṅg district
tho rimparche T, name of local god in Thīnī; cf. Tib., mtho/stod rin po che, ‘the precious high (one)’
thorlung T, a kind of big bells
tho sawā YT, arrangement under which a householdmember keeps the profit made on certain property; T, tho, cf. Tib., thog, produce, property and T, sawā, to eat
thowa T, MT: thowā, YT: thyowā, big, eldest, greater; cf. Tib., mtho ba
thubchen lhakhang Tib., thub chen lha khang, name of a temple in Lo Manthāṅg, built c. 1465
thuī T, expression of disgust, ‘fie’
thumi T, YT and MT: thyumi, headman, leader (of a village, patrilineal group, and other groups); cf. Tib., thu mi, chosen, elected one, or: mthu, power, authority
thumi sambhoṭa Tib., thu mi sa ’bo ra, also known as thon mi sambhoṭa, 7th century Tibetan minister
thyowā see: thowa
thyumi see: thumi
tichurong Tib., dri chu rong, ‘valley of fragrant water’, southern part of Dolpo district
tīkā N, a mark placed on the forehead as a blessing
tikya T, eagle
tilari N, woman’s jewelry
tilicho T, name of a lake above Thīnī. T, name of a mountain
tilintha T, lit., ‘pig nose?’; name of a kind of mushroom
timu TT, YT: tyomo, mushroom; N, cyāu
timung T, name of a local berry
tin T, hearth. T, year. T, twenty?
tin chyu sawa T, lit., ‘water in the heart’, pleurisy?
tiri cho T, lake at titi (tiri) village; der. Tib., mtsho, lake and Tib., lti ri, pitcher?
tisu T, share of a slaughtered yak
titī N, name of village in Thāk Kholā; T, tiri
tiung la YT, 2nd month of the T year; TT, torenla
tob gho T, Tibetan wheat; cf. Tib., stod, upper
tob lapu T, round and hot horse radish
tobsya see: towa
tokong T, black bear
tolā N, a measure of weight (= 11.66g)
tompā T, harvest
tong T, day of the dark moon
topāl bistā N, name of 18th century leader of Dzār in Bāragāu
toren T, first; cf. Tib., stod, the first part (of time); cf. Tib., tho rangs, tho rengs, dawn, break of day
toren la TT, 2nd month of the T year; YT, tiung la. T, name of a festival which is celebrated in the month of torenla
tote T, turban; cf. Tib., thod
țówā T, term used for the Tibetan speakers living north of Thāk Kholā, especially those of Bāragāu; female: tobsya; cf. Tib., stod, ‘upper’ and hence Western Tibet; Tib., stod pa, ‘highlander’, the inhabitants of the western districts of Tibet
tribhuvan N, King of Nepal (1911–1955)
trisongdetsen Tib., khri srong lde brtsan, name of 8th century king of Tibet
trokyab Tib., khro bo skyabs pa, 16th century leader of Bāragāu
tsai kuwā YT, blessing for longevity given by the āya lama; cf. Tib., tshe sgrub
tsalu du dorje Tib., rtsva klu bdud rdo rje, ‘the herb of the thunderbolt of demonic serpent’, Codonopsis convolvulaceae. This herb is believed to have super-normal properties and is therefore also known as the ‘supreme herb’ (Tib., rtsva mchog)
tsarang  Tib., gtsang rang, important village in Lo; N, chârâng

tsar mhîrki  see: cyâng mhîrki

tsele  BT, name of village in Bâragân; N, chaile; T, caîli; S, tangle

tsharka  Tib., tshar ka, village in Dolpo district; N, chÎrkhÎ

tshering  Tib., tshe ring, 'long life', a common name for both men and women

tshe sgrub  Tib., name of ritual for long life realisation

tshewang namgyal  Tib., tshe dbang namgyal, 16th century king of Ladakh

tshewang norbu  Tib., tshe dbang nor bu, Tibetan lama (1698-1755)

tshewâng rinchen  Tib., tshe dbang rinchen, name of one of the authors of the Cirri-g

tshug  BT, Tib., tshug, N and T, chusang, S, tshugâng, name of village in Bâragân

tukce  T, name of village in Thâk Kholâ; cf. Tib., 'bru brije, 'grain barter'; N, Tukce

tulâcan  N, name of TT clan; N, salgi

tulku  Tib., sprul sku (pr. trulku), 'apparent body', re-incarnate person

tyuran lawâ  YT, ceremony held one year after the death; cf. Tib., dus re, 'a little while'; or T, toren?

uddiyana  Skt., ancient place name, probably the Swat Valley in present-day Pakistan; Tib., urgyan

uire  T, group of elder women; see: khâyu

'û lag  BT, provision of special services to the rulers, corvée

ume  T, precentor; cf. Tib., dbû mdzad

upa mir mukhiyâ  N, vice-chairman of thirteen headmen of Thâksâtsae

upa pradlûn  N, vice chairman of village panchayat

ur  T, yellow

urgyan chosang  Tib., urgyanchos bzang, name of one of the authors of the Cirri-g bemchag

urgyan palzang  Tib., urgyan dpal bzang, name of the 17th century founder of the Kutshabtemga temple

utung  YT, kinship term, e.g. MBS

VDC  English, abbreviation for 'Village Development Commitee', until 1990 known as gau paîcaît; N, gau bîkas samiti (abbreviated as gâbîsa)

vîra bahâdûr shâhî  N, name of king of Jumlâ (c. 1635-1665)

waling  N, name of a town in Syângjâ district

wanggyl dorje  Tib., dbang rgyal rdo rje, King of Lo, flourished around 1780

whoi  T., interjection, 'hey'

ya  T, bare mountain below the glacier; cf. Tib., g.ya'

yae lo  T, year of the hare, cf. Tib., yos lo

yang  T, prosperity, luck, spirit of prosperity, cf. Tib., g.yang

yangda  T, billy goat

yang dhîwâ  YT, to take out the spirit of prosperity

yangkhe  TT, kinship term, e.g. FFF

yangku  T, name of ceremony for prosperity, cf. Tib., g.yang 'gug

yangku che  T, name of text recited during yangku

yangmom  TT, kinship term, e.g. FFM

yarca ghûmbu  T, lit. 'summer grass winter insect'; the insect is the swift moth Hepialus armoricanus and the 'grass' a fugal parasite (Cordyceps spp.); cf. Tib., dbûyâ rtsvâ dgûn 'bu

yarlung  Tib., yar lung, name of area in Tibet where the Tibetan royal dynasty originated

yârmo  T, name of a herb; see: prum

yartung  Tib., dbûyâ ston, 'summer festival', the main festival of Bâragân

yha  T, yak; cf. Tib., g.yag

yha lyangpa  YT, 'to play the yak'; cf. Tib., g.yag glâng pa?

yha lyangpa lyâ  YT, 'the place of the yak dance', name of a place in Syâng

yha me  T, tail of the yak

yhol  T, village; Tib., yul

yhol gho  T, name for Garab Dzong, cf. Tib., yul gog, 'settlement in ruins'
**yhul jhompa** T, village assembly meeting; Tib., yul 'dzoms pa

**yhulkāsom** T, 'the three villages', i.e. Ñhini, Syâng and Cimâng villages in Thâk Kholâ; cf. Tib., yul k(h)a gsum; MB: yul sgo gsum

**yhulkāsompâimhi** T, 'people from the three villages', one of the three ethnic groups which constitute the Thakâli; cf. Tib., yul k(h)a gsum pa'i mi

**yhul(k)anghâ** T, 'the five villages', i.e. the northern part of the Thâk Kholâ valley; cf. Tib., yul k(h)a lnga; N, pâcgaû

**yisî chêta** YT, name of a YT patrilineal group; personal name; cf. Tib., ye shes, 'divine wisdom'

**yo** T, thief; female: yosya; cf. Tib., yo ba, erroneous, deceitful

**yogendramân shercan** N, name of a member of the Balbîr lineage

**yokosya** YT, YT also: yutisyâ, widow

**yolmo** Tamang, name of area and people in Sindhupâlchok district; cf. N, helambu

**yonten chogi** TT, name of a TT patrilineal group

**yowâ** YT, TT: yawa, 'to go', cf. Tib., 'gro ba or gyo ba

**yul mi** MB, inhabitant, native, citizen

**yu mhendo** YT, name of the wife of jinlap pompar, cf. Tib., gyu, turquoise and Tib., me tog, flower

**zhang zhung** Tib., name of ancient kingdom of Western Tibet


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