Asian Highland Societies

In Anthropological Perspective

Edited by
Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf

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PREFACE

THE majority of the essays contained in this volume are based on contributions to a symposium held at New Delhi in December 1978 within the framework of the Tenth International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences. This symposium, chaired jointly by Professor B.K. Roy Burman and myself, was concerned with the anthropology of highland societies, and even though no geographical limitations had been set the contributions dealt almost exclusively with Asian societies and above all with populations of the Himalayan region.

When at the end of the symposium it was proposed that I should undertake the task of editing a volume consisting of the papers presented, I requested the participants, several of whom had spoken from notes, to let me have amplified versions of their contributions suitable for publication. However, only a limited number of publishable papers were forthcoming, and in order to make up a viable volume I added several essays whose authors had not been able to attend the Congress, but who had been engaged in anthropological research in highland societies comparable to those discussed by the original contributors to the Delhi symposium.

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INTRODUCTION: PROBLEMS AND EXAMPLES

Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf

THE idea that mountain people have a characteristic life-style which distinguishes them from lowland populations is not confined to any particular part of the world or any one period in the history of mankind. Nor is it based merely on the assessments of outside observers intent on dividing ethnic groups into neat categories. Quite on the contrary, a recognition of their separateness prevails among many communities inhabiting regions of high altitude, and similarly the peoples of the plains are usually conscious of the different nature of any mountain dwellers with whom they may regularly come in contact. This sense of difference is reflected also in certain value-judgments. Hillmen, proud of the prowess and intrepidity with which they master the difficulties created by a harsh environment often look down upon the plainsmen whom they regard as soft and effeminate, while the latter may consider the sturdy denizens of the mountains as crude and backward. As most, though not all, of the historic centres of sophisticated civilizations were situated in regions of low elevation, there is some justification for the assumption that people living in a mountainous environment incline to be conservative rather than innovative, and that for that reason archaic cultural forms, long eroded in open country, have persisted in the isolation of mountain valleys difficult of access.

The anthropological studies contained in this volume seem to support the view that highland societies tend to exemplify life-styles no longer in existence in areas favouring material progress and more rapid social and political changes. The Himalayan kingdom of Nepal, which figures so prominently in the majority of the essays demonstrates both in its totality and in many of its distinct parts that mountains can act as barriers preserving cultures which without such physical protection might have been submerged by civilizations of very different character. Thus neither the Hindu renaissance of post-Buddhist India nor the waves of Islamic conquests sweeping through Asia were able to dislodge the Buddhist centres which had been established in remote regions of the Central Himalayas.

Even hills far less forbidding than the Himalayas can be seen as having acted as refuge areas for primitive tribal societies such as could never have held their own in easily accessible lowlands. We have only to look at India to recognize that the few remnants of foodgathering and hunting communities such as the Malapantaram of Kerala or the Chenchus of Andhra Pradesh live invariably in hilly country. Similarly the main concentrations of agricultural tribal societies such as the Gonds of the Deccan and the Munda-speaking tribes of Orissa and Bihar are found in highlands which until modern days provided little attraction to the people of the plains. The same applies to the mountainous areas surrounding horseshoe-like the plains of the Brahmaputra valley. In these mountains tribes such as the Nagas, Mizos, Adis, Nishis and Apa Tanis remained virtually immune to the influence of outside civilizations until the end of the 19th century, or in the case of the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, as late as the middle of the 20th century. The emergence of one of the latter tribes from a condition of almost complete isolation and their successful adjustment to the economic and political systems of the wider Indian society is described in my recent book *A Himalayan Tribe: From Cattle to Cash* (Delhi 1980), and several of the contributions to this volume discuss the varying ways in which tribal societies of the highlands of Nepal have been affected by the recent improvement of communications and the modernization and economic change which came in its wake. In the following pages I shall broadly sketch the problems arising from such changes and in doing so outline the background against which many of the individual studies contributed to this volume may be seen.

All along the Himalayan main range there are areas of high altitude where small communities subsist by combining agriculture and animal husbandry with vigorous trading activities. Unable to maintain themselves on the yield of land lying at levels between 10,000 and 14,000 feet, they have developed a complex system of barter by which the produce of the agricultural zones of Nepal and India are exchanged for such Tibetan commodities as salt and wool. The Himalayan mountain dwellers thus acted largely as the middle men between two distinct economic zones: the arid highlands of Tibet and the more fertile monsoon zones of Nepal's middle ranges and lowlands as well as the corresponding zones of India. The caravan trade linking these two regions must have continued for thousands of years though its form may have

changed in details. The permanent factors were certain features of the environment which limited the modes of transport, and the type of people capable of standing up to the exertions and hardship involved in the crossing of one of the mightiest mountain barriers of the world. Wheeled transport was excluded and so were pack animals unable to withstand the extreme cold of the high passes. Similarly only people used to the rigours of life at high altitude could undertake the crossing of these passes season after season without being daunted by the hazards of their enterprise.

Populations in this category are few and of very limited numerical strength. Their homes are valleys in the shadow of the world's highest mountain peaks where settlements are of necessity small in size because cultivable land is restricted and the available pastures set limits to the growth of herds. Within the Kingdom of Nepal there are the Sherpas, once renowned as long distance traders linking Indian trade centres with the Tibetan towns of Lhasa and Shigatse, and today not less famous as intrepid mountaineers. Yet, they are only one of the many Bhotia populations occupying the greater part of Nepal's northern border zones. Referred to by the generic term Bhotia—derived from Bhot, the local name for Tibet—they are Tibetan in speech and culture though dwelling outside the frontiers of Tibet proper. Their familiarity with the language and customs of Tibet enabled them to establish easy relations with Tibetan traders and their Buddhist religion made them feel at home in any Tibetan town or village.

Bhotias of Mustang and the valley zone flanked by Annapurna and Dhaulagiri operated one of the main trade-routes of Western Nepal in conjunction with the Thakalis, a trading community of somewhat differer t character. Further to the west, in the regions of Dolpo, Mugu and Humla, most of the trade is in the hands of Bhotias of various types, all of whom depend for their livelihood on the commerce in which they have been engaged for countless generations. Tragically, the complex system of barter involving men and pack-animals alike has recently been upset by political events outside the borders of Nepal as well as by economic changes within the kingdom. When China took over control of Tibet in 1959 the frontier with Nepal was at first closed completely and later opened for only a very limited trade. Deprived of the Tibetan salt which used to be imported in large quantities, Nepal came to rely increasingly on Indian salt, and the improvement of communications in the southern part of the country facilitated the import of such salt.

Humla, the northwesternmost district of Nepal, is most seriously affected by these developments. Agriculture is strictly restricted by topographical factors. In an environment totally lacking large compact areas of cultivable land, the members of a village community have to utilize a large number of scattered plots in order to extract the maximum yield from a basically unpromising land. Much of the cultivated acreage is marginal, and has to be allowed long periods of fallow if the soil is not to be exhausted and exposed to rapid erosion. Communities whose land extends over levels between 8,000 and 10,000 feet grow two crops a year: millets, buckwheat and potatoes in the summer and barley as a winter crop. In the regions above those levels winter barley cannot be grown, and the cultivating season there is so short that only summer crops can be raised. The use of the plough, drawn by yak or yak/cow cross-breeds is general but only in the villages closest to Tibet is the ploughshare tipped with iron, while in the rest of Humla ploughs are made entirely of wood. In the regions of high altitude where only one crop ripens, the production of grain does not meet the requirements of the population and the deficit has to be made up by trade.

The raising of livestock is an essential facet of the economy of Humla, and its importance increases in proportion to the altitude of settlements. In low lying villages ordinary cattle and some cross-breeds between yak and cow are kept, but above 10,000 feet yak, sheep and goats are the main domestic animals. Yak are bred not only for the sake of their milk and meat but also for their carrying capacity in high and rugged country, and goats and sheep, though also eaten, are used mainly as pack-animals. Without pack-sheep and goats, the only animals able to negotiate routes too difficult even for yak, the salt and grain trade on which the Bhotias depend would inevitably come to a halt, and only the owners of sizable flocks of sheep and goats could contemplate engaging in the profitable trade with the people of the middle and lower regions of Nepal.

The traditional trading system of the people of Humla was based on the fact that in Tibet grain is much more valuable than salt, while in the middle ranges of Nepal salt could be exchanged for as much as eight times its volume in grain. At a time when communications between India and the Nepalese lowlands were poor, and a belt of malaria-infested jungles separated the lowlands from the middle ranges, hardly any Indian salt penetrated into

Nepal and the entire need for salt was met by imports from Tibet. As long as this situation persisted and the whole of the Tibetan border regions were open to traders from Nepal, the people of Humla were assured of good profits and a relatively high standard of living. For in such Tibetan markets as Taklakot, an ancient commercial centre, they could exchange the grain their animals carried across the passes for several times its volume in salt. The source of all salt which found its way to Humla were the salt-lakes north of Taklakot and until the Chinese occupied Tibet some Bhotias from Nepal travelled with their yak and sheep as far as the lakes, and there loaded their animals with salt after paying a tax to Tibetan officials. Apart from salt they could also buy wool and live animals from Tibetans.

The coming of the Chinese and the strict control imposed on the border trade has deprived the Nepalese Bhotias of the possibility of travelling any distance into Tibet and of doing business with individual trading partners. They still take grain to Tibet but must sell it at government trade depots at fixed prices and purchase salt at a rate determined by the Chinese. Thus there is no longer any bargaining and the quantity of wool available to the Nepalese is strictly limited. The pattern of movements, however, has remained more or less the same. The people from Humla undertake the first trading journey to Taklakot after the harvest of the winter crops at the end of June. They carry partly rice, bought during the preceding winter in the middle ranges, and partly barley grown on their own land. In Taklakot they obtain 2½ measures of salt for one measure of barley, and about 5 measures of salt for one measure of rice. Such trips may be repeated in July and August, until the Humla traders have accumulated a sufficient store of salt for their trading expeditions to the middle ranges of Nepal. After the end of the monsoon and the harvest of the summer crops, they set out with pack-sheep and goats carrying salt, and move along tortuous trails and across several passes south to the rice-growing areas inhabited by Hindu castes. There they exchange their salt for rice, nowadays at an average rate of one to one. They bring the rice back to Humla, and in November set out for a much longer journey, again bartering salt for rice or other grain, partly for their own consumption. All the Humla people owning large flocks of sheep and goats spend the whole winter on these migrations, for in their own villages there is at that time of the year no grazing for their flocks, and the needs of animal

husbandry thus coincides with those of the trade in grain and salt. On their return journey in April they use their pack-animals to carry the grain obtained by barter back to their home-villages.

The difference between the exchange rates prevailing in Tibet on the one hand and in the middle ranges of Nepal on the other, constitutes the profit of the traders and enables them not only to live themselves during part of the year on grain grown at altitudes lower than that of Humla, but also to bring back quantities of rice and other grain in excess of those required for their barter transactions in Tibet. In past years their profits were much larger and only one generation ago the people of the rice-growing areas would give six to eight measures of rice for one measure of Tibetan salt which at that time had a rarity value, no Indian salt reaching the middle ranges of Western Nepal.

It is obvious that the whole elaborate movements of people, animals and trade goods depend on the possibility of selling Tibetan salt to the producers of a surplus of rice and grain occupying the middle ranges of Nepal. If their needs were to be met entirely by supplies of cheap Indian salt, the whole system would break down. The Tibetans could no longer dispose of their salt and the people of Humla would be unable to obtain the grain which they need for supplementing their stores of home-grown grain. They would then have no commodity to offer in exchange.

The construction of motor roads from the Indian border into the middle ranges and the consequent influx of cheap Indian salt would thus have disastrous effects on the economy of the high altitude dwellers of the northern borderlands. For those populations cannot subsist solely on the yield of their land, and if deprived of the profits from the salt trade they might be unable to maintain themselves in their present habitat. Even the seasonal migrations of their flocks of sheep and goats, necessitated by the lack of winter grazing in Humla, depend on the sale of salt in the middle ranges, for without being able to barter salt for grain, the herdsmen could not feed themselves in areas where they have no other sources of supply.

The way of life of the trans-Himalayan traders would then come to an end and the Bhotia population of Humla and several other border areas would join the many populations of the world who could survive only by abandoning their ancestral lands and drifting into areas more favoured by current economic and political forces. They would become refugees not because they were driven from

their land by a foreign power but because their skills and their role as middlemen in a complex trading pattern have been made redundant by the establishment of a new economic order.

The decline and ultimate emigration of the high altitude dwellers on Nepal's northern border would have a disastrous effect on the Buddhist institutions which have grown up among the Tibetan-speaking Bhotia communities. After the destruction of Buddhism in Tibet by the Chinese, many lamas sought refuge in Nepal, and have given some new impetus to Buddhist practice among the local population. Thus a reincarnate lama from Tibet who recently settled in Humla has set out to revitalize Buddhism among the Bhotias of the area. Thanks to his inspiration villages have pooled their resources to restore temples fallen into disrepair, and the performance of Buddhist ritual in such newly rebuilt temples has acted as an incentive to all those religiously inclined but lacking the inspiration previously provided by the great Tibetan monasteries beyond the border. At a time when inside Tibet Buddhist belief and practice are being ruthlessly suppressed, the survival of the off-shoots of Tibetan religion and culture in the Himalayan countries is of more than local importance, and a contraction of the economic basis of the Bhotias will be viewed with apprehension by the adherents of Tibetan Buddhism.

While it would be unrealistic to ignore the long-term threat which hangs over all the border people who relied for centuries and perhaps millennia on the trans-Himalayan trade in salt and grain, some comfort can be derived from the recognition of the enormous resilience Bhotias have evinced throughout the ages. This resilience is nowhere more clearly exemplified than among the Sherpas of Eastern Nepal. The virtual collapse of their trade with Tibet and of many trading contacts assiduously built up and passed on from generation to generation has not led to any despondency or loss of initiative. As professional mountaineers and tourist guides they have entered a new field of enterprise and brought to it all the skill and spirit of adventure which they had developed as independent traders. Sherpa culture may be undergoing many changes, but Sherpas as a community have every chance of survival.

The different life-styles of nomadic foodgatherers in tropical forests, semi-settled slash-and-burn cultivators in the hills of Peninsula India, rice-growers dwelling in the substantial villages

of Nagaland, archaic peasant-communities of the Deccan, and Himalayan traders journeying with their caravans through tortuous gorges and across snow-covered passes of the world's highest mountain ranges—all represent facets of human development indicative of the enormous variety of cultural potentialities. The disappearance of any of these populations or the erosion of their traditional style of life would diminish the complexity of mankind's cultural dimensions and thus be one more step towards the grey uniformity already threatening to spread over the greater part of the world.

CHAPTER I

SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND SPATIAL MOBILITY AMONG THE THAKALIS OF WESTERN NEPAL

Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf

THE valley of the Kali Gandaki which lies at an average altitude of 7500 feet between the Annapurna range and the eastern slopes of Dhaulagiri, is the traditional home of the Thakalis, a Tibeto-Burman speaking population of Mongoloid racial make-up. Their role of a trading community which for long exercised unchallenged control over the salt-trade following the Kali Gandaki route has been described in Chapter 6 of my book *Himalayan Traders* (London 1975) and an account of their general cultural background formed the substance of my essay 'Caste Concepts and Status Distinctions in Buddhist Communities of Western Nepal' in *Caste and Kin in Nepal, India and Ceylon* (London 1966).

In the present paper I propose to outline the Thakalis' social structure as I found it in 1962. During a revisit to some of the Thakali villages in 1976 I became aware of profound changes in the Thakalis' economic situation, but realized that the segmentary system of patrilineal clans and lineages had remained more or less unaltered at least in so far as the more conservative agricultural villages were concerned. The region with which we are concerned in this context is known as Thak Khola and this is divided into Thaksatsae ("Thak of the seven hundred" [households]) and Panchgaon ("The Five Villages").

CLANS

The internal structure of Thakali society is of great simplicity and of a symmetry not often encountered in societies of so high a degree of material advancement. All Thakalis, whether residing

in Thaksatsae or settled in such distant places as Galkot, Baglung, Pokhara or Bhairawa, are members of a single endogamous unit. Although recent social and religious reforms inspired by Hindu ideas of caste status, and carried through by a comparatively small pressure-group in disregard of the sentiments of the traditionally minded majority, could well have resulted in fission, Thakali society has remained united, and there is no trend towards the emergence of endogamous divisions comparable to the Indian sub-castes.

Another factor, which in a different social atmosphere might have caused a split in Thakali society and the subsequent development of two endogamous groups of unequal status, is the sentiment of superiority harboured by the people of Tukche and other villages in upper Thak Khola vis-à-vis the inhabitants of the six villages in the lower part of Thaksatsae.

The latter villages are denied active participation in the important festival of Showelawa, which serves as an initiation rite for boys and once a year draws together the people of the seven villages of upper Thaksatsae. Yet, no one has ever suggested that intermarriage between the upper and the lower regions of Thaksatsae should be discouraged. Though the percentage of marriages between persons of the two parts is low, there is no indication that the somewhat arrogant attitude of the people in the seven upper villages is a threat to the character of Thakali soceity as an endogamous unit.

The fundamental equality of the Thakalis in both parts of the Thaksatsae derives from the fact that members of the same clans are found in all the thirteen villages, and an insistence on basic status distinctions with reference to locality would strike at the root of clan-solidarity. The division of the Thakalis into four exogamous sections or equal rank is anchored in their mythology and traditional history, and underlies their system of marriage-regulation as well as the organization of a twelve yearly Lha-pewa ('god's coming') festival which gives ritual expression to the unity of the entire tribe.

The four clans which evince the classical features of patrilineal descent groups are traced to the very beginning of the Thakalis' legendary history. The ancestors of the four clans are also held to be the ancestors of the entire Thakali tribe, and the origin of the four clans is thus most closely linked with the legendary origin of the Thakalis as a separate ethnic unit.

The original names of the four clans are Choki, Salki, Dimzen and Burki, but some 50 years ago the Thakalis substituted for those names the now current names of Gouchan, Tulachan, Sherchan and Bhattachan. This adoption of names with a Thakuri flavour—'Chan' being one of the well-known Thakuri clans—was part of a still continuing movement to justify a claim to a higher status in the caste-hierarchy of Nepal. The new names are universally used in writing and in conversation with outsiders, whereas in speaking among themselves most Thakalis use the traditional terms Choki, Salki, Dimzen and Burki. With this change of names the Thakalis have begun to use for 'clan' the term *chan* but the original word still in current use in Marpha, a village of Panchgaon, is probably *powe,* though its Tibetan associations make it suspect to the modern, status-conscious Thakali.

The clan is an exogamous, patrilineal descent group, and its main role in present-day Thakali society is the regulation of marriage. Clan-membership determines a person's marriage to the extent of excluding about one quarter of all Thakalis from the ranks of potential marriage partners, and I have never heard of a case where this restriction was flaunted. Even illicit sexual relations between clan-members were as inconceivable to my Thakali informants as brother-sister incest, and I had no means to ascertain whether they ever occurred in secret. There is no Thakali parallel to the Gurung legend of a brother and sister who fled to the high mountains to indulge in their unlawful love and came to a tragic end. Another function of the clan is the periodic propitiation of the clan-deity, whose favour benefits not only the clan responsible for the maintenance of his shrine, but concerns the whole of Thakali society. For the four clan-deities, have separate roles, and the neglect of any of them can result in disaster affecting the whole tribe.

Once in twelve years the clan-members gather for the joint worship of their deity. It is significant that all the four clans celebrate this great sacrificial rite at the same time and in a manner which unites Thakali men and women in an act of common worship. The four clan-deities appear thus not only as the divine protectors of their specific clans, but as tribal gods receiving homage from the entire Thakali community.

At all times other than the twelve-yearly festival the cult of each individual god is maintained by the clan-priest (*pare*), whose services are also at the disposal of clan-members wishing to gain

the god's favour in connection with any personal problem. This clan-priest is also the guardian of a sacred book containing the clan's legendary history as well as an account of the institution of the cult of the clan-deities. At the great clan-festival each clan-priest recites his book in solemn fashion, and those recitations serve—at least ideally—to emphasize the unity of the Thakali community. For the accounts of the four clan histories coincide in their reference to the four clan-ancesotrs' migration from the Jumla region to Thak Khola, and to their occupation of Thaksatsae.

All the four books suggest that the ancestor of the Bhattachan clan reached Thak Khola by a route somewhat different from that taken by the three remaining clan-ancestors, and there are various indications that this ancestor was credited with specially close associations with Tibet. However, these distinctions in the clans' earliest history are not expresssed in their present status. All Thakalis emphasize the fundamental equality of the four clans.

This equality in status is maintained even in the part of Thaksatsae where two clans have an overwhelming numerical preponderance over the two remaining clans. Thus of the households of Tukche, Khamti, Kobang and Nardzung 42% were in 1962 of Sherchan clan, 27% of Tulachan clan, 18% of Gouchan clan, and 13% of Bhattachan clan. In the lower part of Thaksatsae, from where I have no exact figures, the representation of the four clans is less uneven, but it would seem that even so the total numerical strength of the Sherchan clan exceeded that of any one of the three other clans.

This lack of balance in the size of clans has little practical importance as the clan is neither an economic nor a political unit. Clans do not own land nor do clan-members cooperate in matters of tribal policy. Their links are mainly of a ritual nature, and a crisis would only arise if one clan experienced so unproportionate a growth, that it outnumbered the three other clans taken together. In such an event the members of the largest clan would not find sufficient marriage partners, and the result of such a situation might ultimately redress the imbalance by forcing some members of this clan into involuntary celibacy or into unorthodox unions with non-Thakalis, which would divorce them from Thakali society.

I have pointed out that the clan is a ritual rather than a political unit and this fact is demonstrated by the character of the only two

clan-officials. The clan-priest (*pare*), whose office is hereditary, has a purely religious function, and the one other clan-dignitary, known by the Tibetan term *gamba*, acts only during the twelve-yearly festival and then in a ceremonial role involving neither power nor authority.

Unlike the clan-deities of many Hindu castes (e.g. Chetris of Nepal and Rajputs of India) and many Indian tribal populations, a Thakali clan-god resides in one particular shrine, and there is no possibility of instituting a parellel cult-centre in a different locality.

A duplication of clan-priest and ritual objects is thus excluded, and though—as we shall see presently—a clan may divide into different lineages, its unity is retained not only ideally, but also in such practical matters as the organization and financing of the cult of the clan-deity. Each clan has a common fund (*guthi*), the income from which is used to defray the expenses of the twelve-yearly festival, and any respectable man of the clan may be entrusted with the administration of the fund. This is usually done by lending the capital to clan-members at an interest of 10%. There are two ways of dealing with the interest. It may either be collected annually and given to the same or other clan-members in the form of new loans, or there may be no collection of interest until the time of the twelve-yearly festival when the compound interest on all loans is calculated and collected.

The fund of the Sherchan clan amounted in 1962 to close on Rs 20,000 and was administered by one of the *subba*. For the sake of greater security joint bonds to several men, usually brothers or close kinsmen, had to be given for each loan. The debtors brought the interest annually to the *subba* who used it for the grant of new loans.

A different system was followed by the members of the Tulachan clan. The funds of this clan were not centralized, but each of its lineages (*gyuba*) (see below) had separate resources for the cult of the clan-deity, and contributed from these to the expenditure of the festival. As some lineages were larger and wealthier than others, the funds were not equal either. The richest lineage had a fund of about Rs. 10,000, while other lineages had *guthi* ranging from Rs 1200 to Rs 150. Some time in the 1950s all these funds were pooled, however, and at the time of my inquiry, the members of the Tulachan clan had instituted a centralized control over all the funds intended to defray the expenses of the cult of their clan-deity.

Membership of a Thakali clan is acquired by birth or—in the case of women—by marriage. A man cannot change or lose the membership of his natal clan by any imaginable means, but a woman passes on marriage from her father's clan into that of her husband, and, should she conclude a second or third marriage, into that of her current husband. There are not many occasions when clan-membership finds visible expression, but one of them is the twelve-yearly worship of the clan-deities, and at that time unmarried girls including nuns as well as divorced women worship the deity of their natal clan, while married women and widows worship their husband's clan-god. Married women are not prevented from paying respect also to their father's clan-deity, but their main worship is directed to that of their conjugal clan.

Thus only men are considered permanent clan-members. Women are expected to leave their natal clan on marriage, but cannot be counted as permanent members of their husband's clan, for a divorce or a second marriage may bring about another change in their clan-membership.

An aspect of the clans which lacks today any practical implications, but still finds expression at the twelve-yearly festival is their association with different colours and symbols. Thus Gouchan is associated with the colour green and a dragon, Tulachan with the colour red and the elephant, Sherchan with white and the Shingi, a mythical lion-like creature, and Bhattachan with black and the yak. The elephant is regarded as the elder brother of the dragon, and the Shingi as the wife of the yak. Neither the books nor tradition have any explanation for this pairing off of two and two of the clan-symbols, nor has it any bearing on the attitudes and conduct of the members of the clans so linked. I have never heard a suggestion that Gouchan and Tulachan stand in any closer relationship to each other than to either of the other clans, nor that the assumed marital link between Shingi and yak reflects a special tie between Sherchan and Bhattachan.

LINEAGES

The Thakali clans are too large and nowadays too widely dispersed to allow of the practical cooperation of their members except on the rare occasion of the twelve-yearly clan-festival, when at least in principle all clan-members assemble in one

place and join in an act of worship. They are groups of cooperation in respect of that particular ritual, while at all other times they evince the less tangible cohesion of groups of recognition. In other words, all members of a Thakali clan recognize each other as agnatic kin and are hence debarred from intermarriage, but do not, on the strength of that sentiment alone, cooperate in any enterprise other than the cult of the clan-god. Yet, each of the four clans forms a framework for descent groups of lesser span and a more compact composition. These descent groups are the named lineages (*gyuba*), which consist of anything between 10 and 50 households and are usually associated with a specific locality or historical personality. Their number is in principle unlimited but although new lineages may result any day from a process of fission, I could find no evidence for the emergence of even a single new lineage within the memory of the present generation.

The lineage is a group of agnatic kin for whose regular cooperation there is customary provision. While all members of a clan recognize each other as the descendants of one legendary ancestor, opportunities for face-to-face contacts are too few to foster any strong feeling of cohesion or solidarity. Members of a lineage, on the other hand, are expected to feast together at least once a year, to observe death-pollution for each other, to ensure by obligatory visits that a bride introduces her husband to the members of her natal lineage, and to deposit a bone-fragment of every deceased member in a common stone-shrine (*khimi*). I have found no lineage whose members could still trace their descent through all stages back to a common ancestor, but in a society in which until recently writing was used solely for religious purposes the absence of genealogies of great depth is not surprising and lineage members are content with the knowledge that they *are* close kinsmen without being disturbed by their inability to trace the exact links between all of the families constituting the lineage. Nor is the average Thakali capable of enumerating all the lineages comprised within his clan. The following table of lineages is hence not necessarily complete, but the omission of any particular *gyuba* cannot seriously distort the picture of the entire system.

Clan: *Gouchan* (*Choki*):

Lineages: 1) Dehaten gyuba represented in Nardzung and Barangja.

2) Gho-tshe-tan represented in Sauru.

3) Tanjang or Tanang powe represented in Tukche and Nabrikot.
4) Balamtan represented in Tserok, and Taolung.
5) Lara gyuba
6) Gera gyuba.

Clan: *Tulachan* (Salki):

Lineages: 1) Dehaten gyuba represented in Tukche.
2) Dumba powe (or Lama gyuba) represented in Tukche.
3) Chyakba gyuba (rich man's gyuba) represented in Taolung.

Clan: *Sherchan* (*Dimzen*):

Lineages: 1) Dehaten gyuba (extinct)
2) Lha-kang dungi, so called after Lha-kang (temple) in Kobang, represented in Tukche and Kobang.
3) Mar-dungi, represented in Kobang.
4) Sarchung gyuba, represented in Tukche.
5) Nardzung gyuba, represented in Nardzung (6 houses), Choya (3), Dambu (7), Ghasa(9), Tsha (1), Pokhara (2) and in the Kanikua area by 22 houses.
6) Sere-gyeb-palden-dzang represented in Nabrikot.
7) Thaukri gyuba represented in Tukche and Kobang.
8) Pamar gyuba represented in Tukche (1), Nardzung (1), Tili (2), Beni (3), Pokhra (1), Kasoli (1), Butwal (1).
9) Tazu gyuba represented in Kharti.

Clan: *Bhattachan* (*Burki*):

Lineages: 1) Dehaten gyuba represented in Tukche.
2) Para-dorje represented in Kani and Balung.
3) Cha-minge-gynou represented in Khamti and Nabrikot.
4) Te-parsing represented in Jomosom.

The most tangible symbol of a lineage is the *khimi*, an ancestral shrine in which a small piece of bone of every deceased member is deposited. The *khimi* of most lineages are situated in the hills above Kobang and Nabrikot, and this bears out the tradition that the first Thakali settlements were situated in that area. Whereas with the dispersal of the Thakalis over the lower regions other symbols of lineage-unit are gradually fading, the adherence

to the ancestral *khimi* is observed by all Thakalis except those who have broken all ties with their community and have married non-Thakalis. However far away from Thak Khola a Thakali may live and die, his heirs will save a small fragment of bone from the ashes of the pyre on which the body was cremated and bring it sooner or later to the *khimi* of their lineage.

I have been told that in case of serious dissension within the lineage, one faction might secede and found a new *khimi*. This is presumably the way in which the original four clans ramified into lineages, and judging from the small size of some of the lineages, we may well assume that in their case the split occurred in the not too distant past. Yet, none of my informants could remember any concrete instance of the division of a lineage and the resulting construction of a new *khimi*.

While the *khimi* is the visible symbol of the unity of all living and dead members of a lineage, the practical solidarity of the living members is cemented by an annual feast known as *dzho*. This lineage-feast is usually held in the month of Asos (September-October) within a few days of Dassain. The expenditure is met from a common fund (*guthi*), and annually two members of the lineage resident in the same village are appointed to arrange for the preparation of the food and the accommodation of the assembled lineage members in their houses. These managers of the feast are known as *kundal,* and all members of the lineage act in this role in rotation, a man's turn coming usually only once or twice in his life. The feast is presided over by the *gamba,* who is the seniormost member of the lineage in terms of generations and not of birth-order. According to this reckoning of seniority, a man who is the oldest surviving member of the seniormost generation will act as *gamba,* even though there may be a member of the next descending generation senior to him in terms of birth-order.

On the eve of the feast the *gamba* visits the houses of the two *kundal,* and assures himself that all is ready for the reception and entertainment of the guests. Early next morning one of the *kundal* takes food offerings to the *khimi* shrine and worships the acestors. Only after this act of piety has been performed, may the feasting begin. In the course of the day the members of the lineage assemble, and partake of the food and drink prepared by the families of the two *kundal* and voluntary helpers from the vicinity.

The overt purpose of the feast is to provide the whole kin-group

with an opportunity to come together in an atmosphere of informality and conviviality. In this atmosphere wives recently married into the lineage have a chance of getting to know each other and their new affines, and those living perhaps in villages outside Thaksatsae and hence attending the *dzho* only once in several years, can renew contacts which may have grown tenuous with distance and time. The duration of the gathering depends on the funds available, and if supplies last the kinsmen may stay together for three or four days.

I am inclined to think that until about a generation ago, the holding of such annual reunions was customary in all lineages. Already in 1962 they had been discontinued by lineages mainly based on Tukche, and the funds of the *guthi* were spent on public works such as road building or the provision of shelters for travellers. Tukche families belonging to a lineage whose other members continue to hold *dzho* gatherings, tended to absent themselves, thus falling into line with those lineages that had dissolved their funds and given up the custom of *dzho* altogether. One man of Tukche rationalized this development by saying that in the old days people formed a lineage fund so that once a year they could have their fill of good food and drink, whereas later most Thakalis became so prosperous that they always ate good food, and did not need any special occasion to enjoy a feast. Another old man explained that some years ago his lineage gave up the *dzho* because the slaughter of the sheep needed for the feast was 'sin', and the elders thought it wiser to use the *guthi*-funds for meritorious works such as the improvement of roads.

Neither explanation is convincing. Lineages based on the predominantly agricultural villages still hold their annual *dzho*-gatherings, and it is mainly the traders of Tukche, who lost interest in the conviviality of lineage-feasts. A sense of superiority prevented them from enjoying the company of their simpler kinsmen from other villages, and particularly the members of the Sherchan *subba* family may have hesitated to demean themselves by joining a feast of agnates, many of whom were of a much lower economic status.

Another manifestation of the lineage as a corporate unit is the custom that a newly married couple should visit the houses of all the members of the bride's natal lineage, and offer in each of them a gift of rakshi and fried bread. The couple begins this round with a visit to the house of the bride's parents immediately after

the celebrations in the groom's house. The formal salutation of all the inmates and the presentation of gifts are repeated in each household, and this suggests that for ritual purposes all houses of a woman's natal lineage are equated with her own parental house. By accepting the gifts and giving the couple their blessing, the members of a lineage sanction, so to say, the departure of the bride to her husband's lineage, and accept the husband in the role of an affine.

The death of a lineage-member receives also ritual recognition. While the members of the deceased's own household observe 13 days' mourning, the other people of the lineage observe only one day's death-pollution. The Thakalis' ideas in this respect are somewhat confused and I heard it said that 'close kinsmen even if no longer residing in one house' also observe a mourning period of 13 days. This, however, is not obligatory, and the confusion stems from the fact that traditional Thakali practice conforms to that of Tibetan Buddhism, while the whole idea of death-pollution is a new idea introduced recently in the course of a movement which favours the imitation of Hindu custom.

Although all men of a lineage consider each other as agnatic kinsmen, no Thakali is able to trace his genealogical links with every member of his lineage. Descent from a common ancestor in the male line is the firm assumption underlying joint action in various ritual matters, but the Thakalis have neither written records nor professional genealogists to preserve the knowledge of the exact links between collaterals further than three to four generations back. Yet, within each lineage there are several groups of kindred which for want of a better term—and in the absence of any Thakali term—we may describe as sub-lineage. The characteristic feature of such a sub-lineage is the fact that all its male members are descended from a known ancestor, and that they can trace their genealogical links in every detail. The size of such a group of kinsmen varies greatly. Members of wealthy and prominent families are aware of the exact genealogical position of numerous collaterals, whereas men of insignificant status may be able to enumerate only those descended from the same grandfather. Examples of the former type are the sub-lineages of Tukche: one belonging to the Lha-kang lineage of the Sherchan clan, and one to the Dehaten lineage of the Tulachan clan. Each of these sub-lineages could trace its descent to an ancestor five generations remote from the children then unmarried.

In 1962 the living male members of the sub-lineage of Sherchan clan numbered 42.

There are neither ritual nor economic activities in which all the members of such a sub-lineage are expected to cooperate, except of course, those which concern them in their capacity of lineage members. If they are on good terms they may invite each other to the ceremonies connected with the cult of their common ancestors, and theoretically it is possible that this cult is centred in one single house, known as the *ma-dhim*. In practice, however, only the descendants of a common grandfather are likely to join for the worship of their ancestors, while those whose grandfathers were brothers tend to set up separate cult-centres, and this is done by obtaining cult-objects from one ot the existing *ma-dhim*.

It thus appears that the members of a sub-lineage as here defined either worship their ancestors in one *ma-dhim*, or are at liberty to separate the cult-objects and establish with those taken from an existing centre of a junior line a new place of worship in one of their own houses. The movement of the separated cult-objects is within the extended family, and its direction is always from junior to senior branch, whereas by inheritance a cult-centre goes invariably to the youngest son. In a diagrammatic representation of this process the original *ma-dhim* must always stand on the extreme right of a conventional genealogical chart, whereas the separated cult-objects must move from right to left.

EXTENDED FAMILIES

The descendants of one grandfather cooperate in most cases in the cult of their ancestors and recognize only a single *ma-dhim*. They form thus a corporate group which we may call an extended family. To the outsider such an extended family appears as a kin group of clearly defined identity, and in many cases its compactness is reflected in residential clustering. In Tukche the houses of the members of several such extended families stood in close proximity and this favoured the maintenance of continuous personal contacts. Particularly the women of such an extended family spend much of their time in each other's houses, and join in numerous domestic tasks.

Yet, extended families are not always free of tensions and the joint ownership no less than the eventual division of property can give rise to jealousies and conflict. One of the extended families

of Tukche was for years rent by dissensions, which owing to its wealth and importance had their repercussions throughout Thaksatsae. Four brothers and their respective sons aligned themselves in such a way that the eldest and the third brothers and their descendants formed one faction whereas the second and fourth brothers with their sons formed the other faction. Whereas the sons of the second and fourth brothers cooperated in their business enterprises outside the Thak Khola as well as the conduct of the affairs in Tukche as closely as full brothers might have done, they jointly opposed the sons of the two other brothers. An extended family whose economic and political influence pervaded the whole of the Thak Khola was thus split from top to bottom and the rivalry of the two sets of brothers resulted in the development of factionalism in Tukche and several of the neighbouring areas.

Close agnatic ties are thus no guarantee of solidarity and mutual support, but in justice to the Thakalis it must be said that rivalries within an extended family are the exception rather than the rule, and that most brothers and their offspring support each other economically as well as in disputes with persons outside the extended family.

There is no tradition of a joint family in the terms of Hindu customary law, and most brothers divide their property, and particularly agricultural land, without separating formally. After such a division they retain joint rights to property in the sense of being co-heirs to the assets left by any member of the extended family who died without male issue. If there is an unmarried daughter whose father wants to designate her as heir to his immovable property, he has to obtain the consent of the other members of the extended family, for the rights of collateral agnates outweigh those of a daughter unless her position is made secure by a will endorsed by the father's closest agnates.

While the facets of social structure based on agnatic ties are the most permanent and least controversial, the social unit most prominent and effective in all matters of daily life is the nuclear family which forms the core of the average household. In contra-distinction to many other ethnic groups of Nepal, the Thakalis consider the ideal household to be one consisting of husband and wife, their unmarried children and one or two servants. The addition of residential servants is thought normal and desirable, particularly among the traders of Tukche, who seldom demean themselves by engaging in agricultural work.

DOMESTIC RITES

The cohesion of a Thakali family finds expression in the numerous acts of domestic worship which are initiated by an individual householder though kinsmen and friends may join in the worship, and a *shaman* may be required to establish contact with supernatural powers by the chanting of invocations unknown to laymen. But the decision to hold such a rite and the obligation to finance it, lies always with individuals and is not a responsibility of any social group.

Central to nearly all domestic rites is the worship of the ancestors and deceased members of the sub-lineage. Their support and benevolence is thought essential for the prosperity and well-being of a household, and Thakalis go to great length to secure their ancestors' attention and assistance. Not every house possesses an ancestor shrine, but every householder is free to perform a rite of ancestor worship in the house of his sub-lineage where the ritual objects essential for the cult are kept. This house is generally the *ma-dhim* of his branch of the sub-lineage, and hence it is owned by one of his close agnates.

While ordinarily theinterior room of such a house may be used as a store for provisions, trade-goods and domestic utensils of many types, such as brass-vessels of various shapes and sizes, on the occasion of the worship of ancestors it turns into a sanctuary for the performance of sacrifices and sacred rites. The most important of those is the *Lha-chesi,* referred to as *kul-devata* puja in conversation with non-Thakalis. This latter term suggests that this rite serves the cult of the clan-deity, but the Thakali term *Lha-chesi* means literally "god-worship", but is thought of as an act of homage directed towards the ancestors of the lineage as well as departed affines and even dead friends and neighbours.

The performance of a full-scale *Lha-chesi* is an expensive affair and it seems that until recent years the most prominent trading families had spent very large sums on extravagant celebrations of the *Lha-chesi* rite. Thus a senior member of one of those families told me that in past years he had spent up to Rs 4000 on the entertainment of kinsmen and guests invited to attend the *Lha-chesi* rite in his house. Certain simplifications have since been introduced and people of modest means can perform the rites with a minimum complement of participants, thereby avoiding the expense of feeding numerous agnatic kinsmen and affines.

Essential for the performance of a *Lha-chesi* is the participation of a shaman, one agnatic kinsman and one man standing to the householder in the relationship of son-in-law. Normally, however, the householder invites all agnatic kinsmen living in the neighbourhood and their wives, as well as all real classificatory sisters and daughters together with their husbands. The latter, referred to as the 'sons-in-law', do most of the work and appear thus as playing a more prominent role than the agnates.

The social structure and its ritual expression described above persists in its traditional form mainly in the agricultural villages whereas Tukche, once the main centre of trade and leading village of Thaksatsae, has suffered a dramatic decline. The Chinese occupation of Tibet and the resultant reduction of the trans-Himalayan trade have destroyed the basis of its economy, and led to an exodus of the majority of the wealthier inhabitants of Tukche.

RECENT ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CHANGES

When I studied the Thakalis in 1962 some prominent merchant families of Tukche still dominated a large region, including areas lying to the north known as Panchgaon and Baragaon. At that time several wealthy Thakalis traders had already extended their operations to areas outside Thak Khola and some had established themselves in Kathmandu, Pokhara and in the lowlands referred to as Terai. Such Thakalis returned to Thak Khola only for some of the summer months. Yet the social fabric of the Thakali community of Tukche and the neighbouring villages was unimpaired, and the leading families still exerted their influence on the rest of Thaksatsae and even Baragaon.

By 1976, the last time I visited Thak Khola, the situation had fundamentally changed. The decline of the trans-Himalayan trade, resulting from the Chinese occupation of Tibet, had led to an exodus of the majority of the Thakalis of Tukche. They had moved to Pokhara and other places in the middle ranges and established themselves there as shopkeepers and merchants. Large parts of Tukche looked now utterly desolate. Many houses were locked up, and in others there were only caretakers inhabiting a few rooms on the ground floor. Other houses were in ruins, and there was a whole quarter where the houses abandoned by their owners had collapsed. While in 1962 the population was 495 it had now shrunk to 223, and of these only 33 were true Thakalis still resident

in Tukche. The rest of the population consisted of non-Thakalis, the offspring of bond-servants and dependants of the erstwhile leading Thakali families. Their parents or grandparents stemmed either from Panchgaon, the area immediately adjoining Thaksatsae, or from Baragaon or more rarely Mustang. Some of them had acquired land of their own, but most tilled land still belonging to Thakalis. Such people are described as *arrangsi-karangsi*, a term for landless residents which has always had a slightly derogatory implication, and distinguishes them from the old established property-holding families known as *kuria*. Though the new system of village self-government, the so-called 'panchayat raj', gives them every opportunity to rise above their earlier underprivileged position, they seem to be still intimidated by their old masters. Even their membership of the panchayat, on which they are in a majority, has failed to give them self-confidence. They follow invariably the lead of the chairman and vice-chairman who are two of the few members of the Thakali elite still remaining in Tukche.

The decline in the population and the economy has affected also the cultural and religious life of Tukche. Whereas in 1962 there were numerous wealthy men to commission Buddhist rituals in which lamas from several villages took part, there are now few such events, and even *Lha-chesi* rites, so essential as symbols of the solidarity of kin-groups, are seldom performed and never in the traditional lavish style.

In the Thakali villages south of Tukche, different conditions prevail. These villages have more and better land than Tukche, and the inhabitants never depended on trade with Tibet as much as the merchants of Tukche did. Here too the standard of living has gone down but not to the same extent as in Tukche. Hence the pressure to move to the middle-ranges and lowlands was much less compelling. In most villages the Thakalis continue to constitute the majority of the population, and there is certainly no sign of a general abdication of the old Thakali families. The non-Thakalis are here not represented on the village panchayats, even in the few villages where they are numerically predominant.

The two strata within Thakali society tend to retain their respective identities. There is little intermarriage between the members of the four original Thakali clans, Sherchan, Tulachan, Gouchan, and Bhattachan on the one side and the people stemming from Panchgaon or Baragaon on the other. Neither of

the two strata favours mixed marriages, though matches resulting from love affairs and elopements do occasionally occur. The old established Thakalis and the various newcomers differ also in their ritual practices. Both participate in the performance of Buddhist rituals, but only Thakalis of the four clans attend the worship of their respective clan-deities.

An indication of the aspirations of the former dependants of the Thakalis is the way in which they use the term "Thakali" as a surname. The members of the four genuine Thakali clans refer to themselves invariably by their clan-names, e.g. Shankarman Sherchan or Hira Bahadur Gouchan, whereas those men now residing in Tukche or other Thakali villages who hail from Panchgaon or Baragaon, or are descendants of Magar servants, add the name "Thakali" to their first name, e.g. Lal Bahadur Thakali. The result is that if a man uses "Thakali" as his surname one knows that he is *not* a Thakali in the true sense, whereas a man adding one of the four clan-names to his personal name is at once recognized as a genuine Thakali. It stands to reason that persons of the latter type will describe themselves as "Thakalis" if outsiders ask them specifically for their caste or tribal affiliation.

While the use of the term 'Thakali' is definitely misleading in the case of descendants of Bhotia immigrants from Baragaon or Mustang, there is far more justification for people from Marpha or other villages of Panchgaon to describe themselves to outsiders as "Thakalis", for the general social structure and cultural traditions of the people of Panchgaon are very similar to those of the inhabitants of Thaksatsae, and even their language is akin to that of Tukche. Yet, the proper Thakalis tend to consider themselves superior to the people of Panchgaon, not so much because of cultural or ethnic differences, but because in the past they had dominated them economically as well as politically, and men and women of Panchgaon used to work as servants in the houses of rich Thakali traders.

Marpha, the major village of Panchgaon, which lies only 4 miles north of Tukche, has stood up to the economic changes of recent years far better than most of the villages of Thaksatsae. Unlike the society of Thaksatsae with its division between *kuria* and underprivileged *arrangsi-karangsi*, that of Marpha was never a stratified community and although there were always differences in the affluence of the various families there were no class distinctions comparable to those of Tukche. With very few exceptions all

villagers belong to one of the four traditional clans of Marpha, and intermarry only among themselves.

The shrinkage of the trade with Tibet has affected Marpha much less than Tukche, for the economy of Marpha was never geared predominantly to trade. There remains a small volume of trade in Tibetan salt and wool with Mustang, but the main basis of the economy is the cultivation of barley and buckwheat to which fruit farming has been added in recent years. The people of Marpha and other villages of Panchgaon are also active in animal husbandry and own substantial herds of yak and goats. The possession of mules and horses enables them to engage in transport business and in the past they provided much of the carriage for Thakali merchants. As in other regions of high altitude a large part of the population has always spent the winter months in areas of milder climate, and this type of transhumance was combined with petty trade and the keeping of temporary roadside inns where Marpha women catered for the wants of travellers. In the old days the Marphalis invariably returned home in the month of March, but with the decline of Tibetan trade, and the growth of commercial opportunities in the middle-ranges and lowlands, more and more Marphalis extended their stay outside Thak Khola, and some bought houses and land in the regions of Pokhara, Tansing, Butwal and Bhairawa. By 1976 a substantial number of Marphalis had permanently settled in their second houses and rarely visited Marpha. Yet, their places have been taken by members of growing families, and unlike Tukche, Marpha contains no empty and decaying houses. Indeed it was pointed out to me that the houses of Marpha, crowded together on a finite site surrounded on three sides by steep hill-slopes, could not accommodate all the Marphalis if those who had emigrated chose to return to their home village.

Political events outside the borders of Nepal and economic changes beyond their control have compelled the people of Thaksatsae and Panchgaon to adjust themselves to novel situations no one could have foreseen even thirty years ago. Their resilience and mobility have enabled them to achieve such an adjustment while retaining the overall framework of their social structure.

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CHAPTER II

ECONOMIC STRATEGIES AND ECOLOGICAL CONSTRAINTS: CASE OF THE KHAM MAGAR OF NORTH WEST NEPAL

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ABSTRACT

IN this paper I examine the economic strategies of the Kham-speaking Magars who inhabit the hill region south of the Dhaulagiri and Dolpo ranges. These Magars are adapted to mixed high-altitude farming and pastoralism in varying degrees. As a means of investigating the variations in economic strategies from one Magar community to another, I have applied data to an ecological model of environmental constraints and potentials. Several factors emerge from this analysis which may account for the differences in economic strategy:

(1) access to pasture and grazing land;
(2) trade opportunities and market options;
(3) effects of seasonal labour requirements;
(4) cultural attitudes/religious taboos on types of animal husbandry; and
(5) access to education and changing job opportunities in the organized sector.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Ecological models have become a popular approach in anthropology to describe a subsistence economy and to determine what constraints or limiting factors operate in that system. If the ecological model is comprehensive then it enables the researcher to examine the interrelation of environment and economy. Any environment of a subsistence economy includes elements of the physical environment (abiotic), such as climate, soil, water; elements of the biological environment (biotic), such as plant

vegetation, forest, fauna, etc.; elements of the cultural environment (anthropic), such as local technology, cultural attitudes and beliefs, and social organization; and external elements that impinge on or are exploited by the society (institutional), such as government structures, outside markets, outside traders, and outside employment opportunities. The constraints operating in the choice of a particular economic strategy lie not only in the physical and biological environment but also in the economic and cultural system within which decisions are being made. Setting up a complete model allows the researcher/analyst to see which constraints are important and how they affect economic decision-making.

For comparative purposes setting up such a model for a number of communities that appear similar but employ a variety of economic strategies, reveals a number of common and differential constraints. By then examining the differential constraints and their effect upon the systems in question one can carry the analysis further. One can ask questions about why economic strategies differ, how important a particular constraint is in a variety of situations, how economic strategies may have developed or are developing, and what changing trends can be predicted. Such an analysis also reveals areas of needed research and needed data.

It must be remembered that the ecological approach is not a theoretical one in and of itself. It is merely a method of interrelating the important factors to be considered for analysis. The analysis itself is a combination of logical inference, application of existing or new theories about the effect of certain constraints, and the juxtaposition of various factors to weigh their relative importance. Thus, two researchers may employ the same model with the same variable and constraints to attempt a variety of goals and reach a variety of results. One example of the theoretical application of this model in a culture area similar to the one under study here, is a recent article by Hitchcock (1974). He bases his analysis on Liebzig's law, a theory that one constraint will be more limiting than any other. If one can identify this constraint, he argues, one will have found the factor which shapes the basic economic strategies. One can also predict the future trend of adaptation. Hitchcock has singled out forest resources as the significant limiting factor.

My goal is somewhat different in this paper. Because I am still at a preliminary stage of data collection and analysis, I wish to use this model as a comprehensive way of explaining the system and economic strategies employed. This approach has a descriptive goal. It is used to examine the factors that are important and need further research, and by logical inference used to analyse in brief the direction in which these communities are moving because of their constraints. This yields as well possible future trends as development activities introduce new factors of resources and opportunities. Because my data are mostly qualitative and not quantitative, it is not within the scope of this exercise to prove or disprove a theory of the importance of differential factors. Rather, I will describe the operation of these factors in the communities under study. I have ignored the question of individual decision-making in this paper: Individual decision-making affected in part by the access different households have to economic resources. While this is an important consideration, my concern here is with the overall system, not the detailed variation within communities.

ETHNOGRAPHIC/ENVIRONMENTAL BACKGROUND—THE ENVIRONMENT

The Kham-speaking Magar are an ethnic group exploiting the land along the Sani Bheri, the Bheri, Uttar Ganga, and their tributaries in the districts of Rolpa, Rukum, and the western part of Dhaulagiri along the Bhuji and Nishi kholas (river). Kham is a Tibeto-Burman language not to be confused with the Tibetan dialect spoken in the Kham province of Tibet. These people claim a common origin and consider themselves a single cultural entity. They are distinct culturally from the Magar settled in Palpa and Gandaki to the east who speak a separate language, Magarkura, and are made up of a different set of clans.[2] The Kham Magar (as they are hereafter referred to for convenience) are divided into five broad clans (*thar*): Buda, Roka, Ghatri, Pun and Jhankri. They are patrilineal, and practise a system of preferential matrilateral cross-cousin marriage. The clans are divided into named sub-groups which are exogamous. Marriages are contracted locally between these sub-groups. The Magar practise polygyny to a limited extent and residence is neolocal. The elder sons divide the family estate within a few years after marriage, while the youngest son remains in the family house to care for his parents in their

old age. Property, both movable and immovable, is divided equally among all sons regardless of whether or not their mother is divorced from their father or whether their mother is the later wife in a polygynous marriage.[3]

There are two occupational castes in these communities in addition to the Magar: the Kami and Damai. The Kami are traditional blacksmiths who moved into the area after several copper deposits were discovered. They make and repair iron tools and pots of copper and brassware for the Magar households. The Damai are traditional tailors and musicians. Both of these groups supplement their income from the services they provide the Magar by wage labour in the village and some seasonal labour outside, such as portering, wage labour and army service. Most own a minimal amount of land, but their holdings are usually the less fertile, marginal land high in the valleys, and only provide a small percentage of their total income.

The Kham Magar have a mixed economy based on hill agriculture and animal husbandry. They raise cattle and sheep and goats; pastoralism is a major economic strategy. They live in dense settlements above a river valley and exploit the lands along this valley and the surrounding ridges. These settlements range in altitude from 6500 to 8000 feet and the ridges range from 10,000 to 13,000 feet. The village transect is as follows:

The four communities under comparison are:

(1) THABANG—the southernmost settlement, which is located in a tributary of the Sani Bheri, Thabang Khola. Village situated at 6500 feet and land supports a wide variety of crops including rice: corn, barley, wheat, buckwheat and potato. People raise mostly cattle and some villagers have flocks of sheep and goats up to 150 in number. They have gradually decreased emphasis on herding.

(2) LUBANG—(called Lukumgaon by Nepali-speaking groups in the area) a settlement north of Thabang in the Lubang Khola, a tributary of the Sani Bheri that begins near the Nishi Khola valley. Located at 6800 feet. Similar cropping patterns to Thabang, and flocks of sheep and goats up to 800, but usually 200–300, if large.

(3) TAKA—a community north of Lubang on the Uttar Ganga. Located at 7200 feet. Less emphasis on double cropping of corn/barley than (1) and (2) and the highest concentration

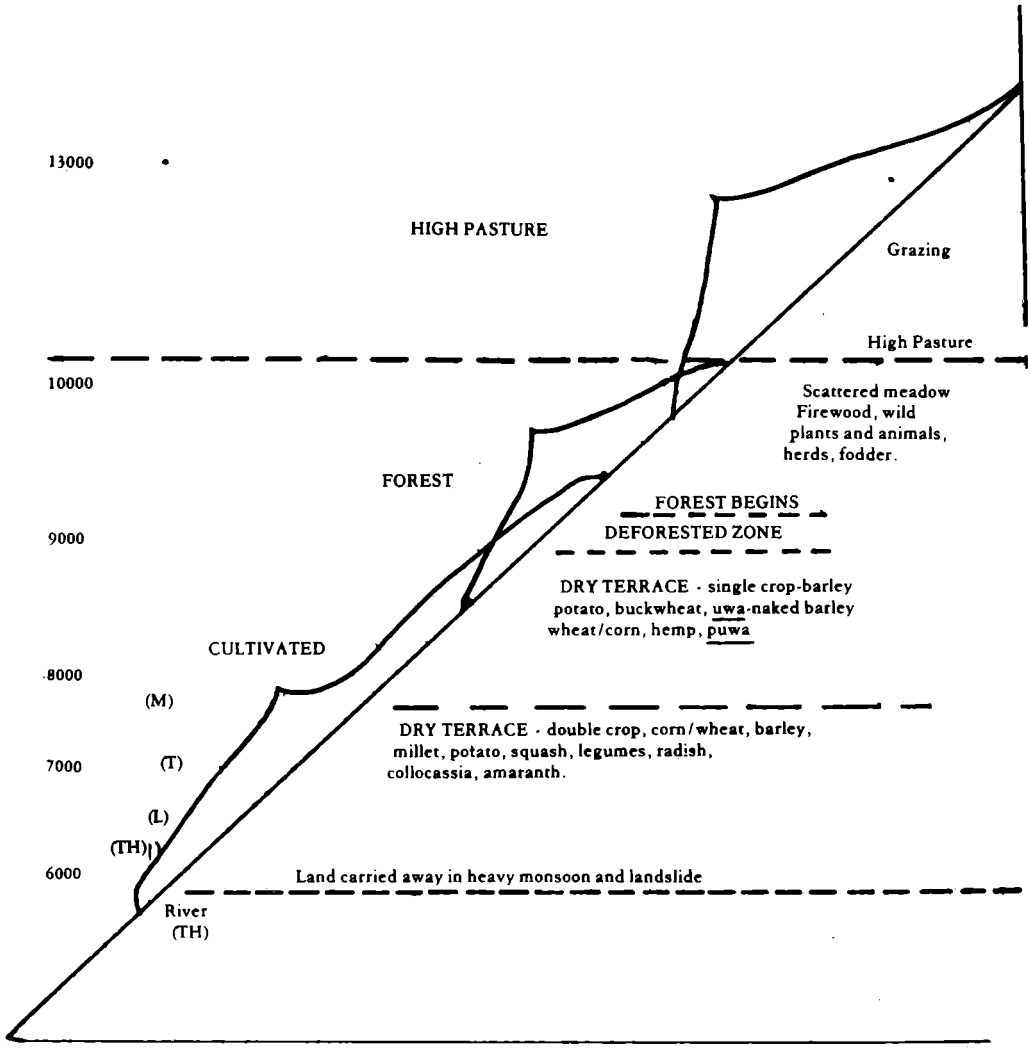
of sheep and goats. Herds of up to 3000 head. Also raise buffalo.

(4) MAIKOT—a community located on the Bheri north of Taka and located at 8000 feet. Cultivation mostly restricted to barley and *uwa* (naked barley). A community half the size of the other three with herders of flocks up to 1000 head, usually several hundred.

In all four communities farmland is scattered on either side of the river valley up to 9–10,000 feet where forest and pasture areas begin. A transect of the land is presented in chart 1.

Chart 1

VILLAGE TRANSECT



TH = THABANG VILLAGE
L = LUBANG VILLAGE
T = TAKA VILLAGE
M = MAIKOT VILLAGE

Maikot is the smallest settlement with a population in the main village cluster of about 200 households. Lubang and Thabang have about 400 households in the main cluster, and Taka more than 500 households. The houses are built very closely together with room for a pig sty in Thabang and Taka, and space for a few cattle or buffalo in Lubang, Taka, and Maikot houses. Cattle and buffaloes are not kept in the households except for milking purposes. They remain in *gots* (sheds) near the village in the winter and in *gots* high on the ridges in the summer. Buffaloes are raised by some families in Taka and Maikot, and by one or two in Lubang. One animal is generally kept in the house to provide milk and the rest grazed with the cattle. Cattle are brought into the village in the spring and fall after the harvest and grazed in the cut fields. Harvesting is done by area, so that the animals graze on all of the fields in one section. As the harvest progresses the cattle rotate from section to section to graze. People who have no cattle permit them to graze on their fields in exchange for the manure they produce.

This practice places a constraint on choice of crop rotation as all villagers must plant the same crop in a given section so it will ripen at the same time as crops in adjacent fields. A few people may decide to plant wheat in areas where barley has been planted as the main crop but they must cut the wheat while still green if the barley ripens earlier and cattle are put there to graze. Each season or agricultural year, therefore, requires a collective decision to determine which crop will be most profitable. This decision is made on the basis of that year's predicted climate or the conditions in previous years. In most cases, this decision is unnecessary as the best fields are usually used for barley and maize, in order to have a double crop. If insects have been particularly bad for the maize or precipitation is low, the village may decide to plant wheat in these fields.

The next best fields are planted in wheat or a single crop of maize and the poorest fields with potatoes and possibly wheat. In this area of Nepal, maize is heavily intercropped with squash, beans, radish, and soyabeans. Soyabeans, are an important snack to be roasted with maize. The nitrogen in the soya plants is high in content and significantly increase the maize yield of these fields. The highest fields are increasingly planted with potato. Potato cultivation is steadily increasing and marginal lands in the last twenty years were turned from pasture to potatoes. In bad agricul-

tural years potatoes have become the staple diet for the summer and until the maize crop ripens in the early autumn, potatoes provides 90 per cent of the diet. The following charts show cropping patterns by altitude and village and the range of agriculture in the four communities. (Charts 2 & 3.)

Chart2. CROPS IN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE IN THE FOUR COMMUNITIES

Thabang	*Lubang*	*Taka*	*Maikot*
Maize	Same	Maize	Naked Barley
Wheat	"	Wheat	Millet
Barley	"	Potatoes	Barley
Potato	"	Barley	Buckwheat
Buckwheat	"	Buckwheat	Maize
Millet	"	Millet	Wheat
Squash, Legumes	"	Torre-Mustard	Sweet Buckwheat
Soyabeans	"	Amaranth	Squash, Legumes
Amaranth	"	Squash, Legumes	Soyabeans
Collocasia		Soyabeans	
GATHERING/WILD FOREST PRODUCTS			
Hemp, Puwa	(Hemp)	(Hemp)	Hemp
Nettles	All	All	All
Barley weeds	Rest	Rest	Rest
Mushrooms	Same	Same	Same
Wild spinach			Most Walnuts
Walnuts			In the Area
Berries			
Peaches			
Grapes			

Herding is an important part of Magar livelihood. Originally, these people were mainly herders who settled in the area because of the excellent pasture land. Gradually they increased their emphasis on farming and today only some of the villagers own sheep and goats. Many of the clan origin stories centre around herding. In Thabang, the dominant clan, the Buda, discovered the pasture area north east of the valley while moving north with their flocks. When searching for a stray sheep they came down the western side of the ridge into the valley. Impressed by the abundance of wildlife—particularly wild pig, a traditional delicacy

low altitude
PATTERN 1
Thabang Lubang (Taka) (Mai)
barley
potato
maize
soyabean
radish
pinalu
spinach
legumes
amaranth
low-medium altitude
PATTERN 2
Thabang Lubang (Taka Mai)
wheat
hemp and puwa
high altitude
PATTERN 3
Thabang Likuhn (Taka/Mai)
barley
high altitude
PATTERN 4
Taka Maikot
wheat
High altitude marginal land
PATTERN 5
All four
potato
high altitude
PATTERN 6
Maikot
uwa-naked barley barley
barley
potato
wheat
barley
wheat
uwa-naked barley
JAN
FEB
MAR
APR
MAY
JUNE
JULY
AUG
SEPT
OCT
NOV
DEC
JAN
FEB
MAR
APR

—and the fertile land, they decided to try some farming and stayed on. Clans in other villages have similar stories of their immigration from the area around Jumla or to the east with their flocks. Lubang itself means "place of the sheep". The population of animals in each community is described below in Chart 4.

Chart 4. ESTIMATED LIVESTOCK POPULATION

Village	*Sheep/Goats*	*Cattle*	*Buffaloes*	*Pigs*	*Total Households*
Tabang	10,000	5,000	—	5,000	400
Lubang	11,000	4,000	70	—	400
Taka	18,000	5,000	500	2,000	500
Maikot	10,000	4,000	100	—	200

(1) NATURAL RESOURCE AVAILABILITY AND MANAGEMENT
(2) CULTURAL ATTITUDES AND TRAINING

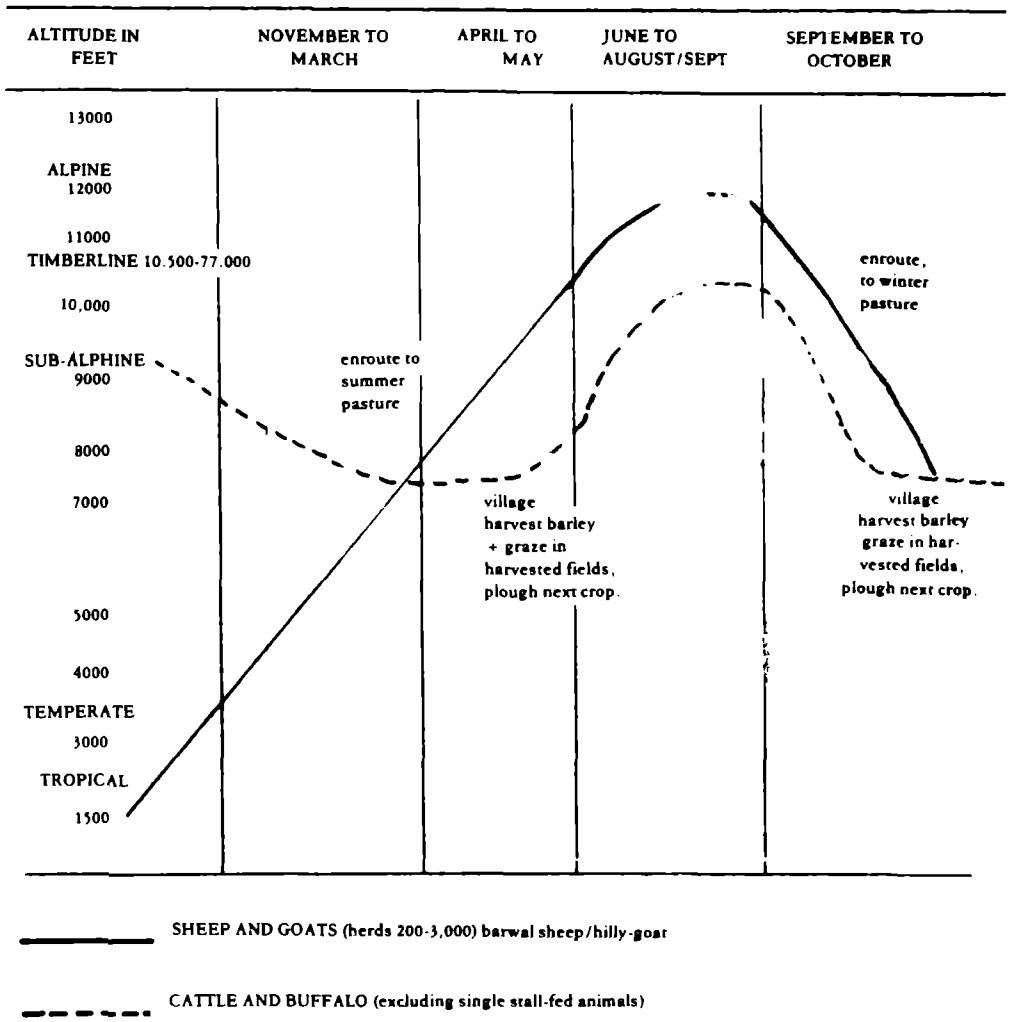
The highest concentration of herding animals is clearly in Taka and Maikot and the greater emphasis on herding there is borne out by religious participation. Traditionally the most important festivals in the whole region were *Dassain* and *Chaidh Astami*. These take place when the herders are moving through the villages on the way to summer and winter pastures. In the northern communities, *Chaidh Astami* is of almost equal importance to *Dassain*, while in the two southern communities only *Dassain* has retained its central importance. In the summer there is a festival to the god, Baraha, which requires the sacrifice of a sheep in the shrines in the high pastures. This festival is still a central festival in all the four communities, but is no longer obligatory. A family may go every year or only once every few years to perform a sacrifice. A few families do not go at all. Attendance is higher in the northern communities, however.

All of these herders are transhumant. The sheep are taken to high traditional pastures in Maikot area and sometimes into Dolpo. They are grazed in that area till September and then gradually move down to the foothills of the Mahabharat range north of the Dang valley until March-April when they again move up towards Maikot, and the pastures around Dhorpatan and Jal Jale. Although the sheep and goats are not pack animals and are not used for trading purposes except peripherally, a certain amount of rice and cloth is carried on the backs of a small

percentage of the herd on the return in the spring. In the migration north in the summer, grain is carried from the village for the herder's use.

The movement of herds far north and far south is not a strategy resulting from inadequate local pasture, but from climatic conditions. The local areas are too cold in the winter for the flocks, so they must be taken to the Mahabharat ranges during the coldest months. Unless the sheep are grazed far north in the summer, they do not grow long enough or thick enough coats to yield a good quality wool. See the following chart, 5, for a description of herding movements.

Chart 5



The main herders are men, of either the household owing the animals or hired from the same or nearby village. In Taka, Maikot, and Lubang, many herders take their wives and children on winter

migrations, where the women help with the herding, spin and process wool, and do the cooking. Hired herders receive a traditional payment of one sheep (never a ram) every season and food. In this way a herder can amass a considerable flock of his own over time. Most families prefer to do their own herding and do not trust hired men with their flocks, however, sheep must be carefully tended to protect them from cliffs and well-cared for to protect them from numerous diseases and parasites. Cattle are less prone to disease than sheep, according to informants, and are more often entrusted to hired labourers.

Because families from northern villages near Taka go south with the sheep and goats, double cropping is less common in these areas. The families often do not return in time to harvest winter barley and may leave too soon to plant it. In Maikot this is not a significant factor since most of the land is too poor to allow two crops a year and upper fields may freeze during the winter.

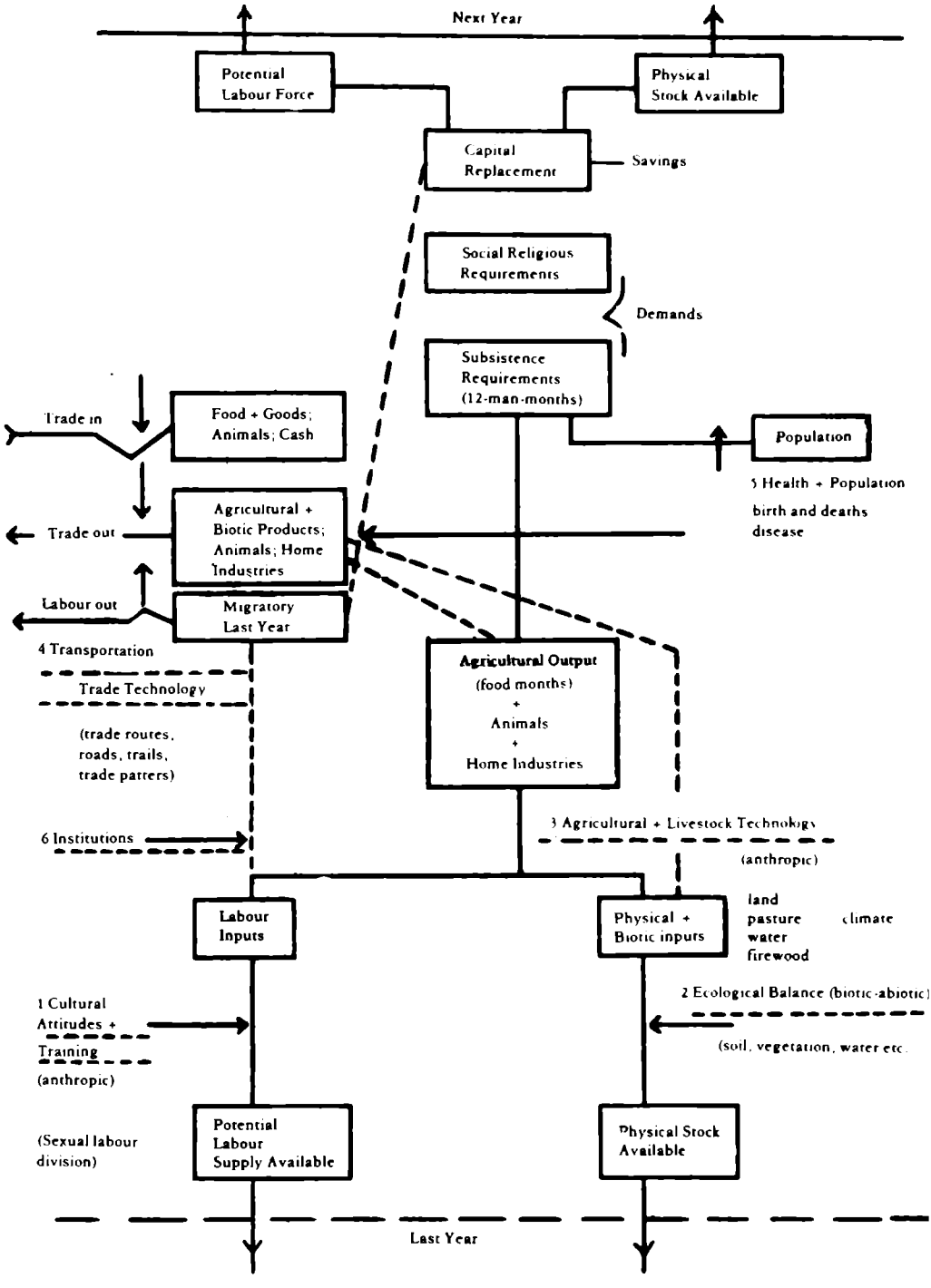
Hunting and gathering still play an important part in Magar subsistence. Deer, wild pig, and wild birds are often hunted, especially by herders in high pasture and forest. Numerous wild plants—mushrooms, nettles, and a variety of wild fruits and greens—are collected year round to supplement their diet. For this reason, vegetable cultivation is very limited in quantity and variety. In the winter, nettles are the main vegetable eaten with boild maize mush. In the spring and summer mushrooms and greens are dried and then made into a curry to eat with boild grains. In Taka and Maikot, fish are found in abundance in the large streams and fishing is a favourite past time of both sexes of all ages.

In addition to wild food crops, two fibre plants grow wild on the marginal lands: *puwa*, a nettle fibre, and hemp, *bhango*. These are stripped by hand to yield a coarse fibre, like jute, and washed, pounded and spun into thread for cloth, grain sacks, rope and shoulder bags for the herders. Women once wore *puwa* skirts and *surs* (a piece of cloth crossed and tied at the shoulders to form a large pocket at the back for carrying various goods while working or travelling.) These have been replaced by manufactured cotton in all but a few households in the north. Men still wear *surs* and loincloths and wrap cloths of *puwa*, although the wealthy men only wear cotton. I will discuss the economic importance of these fibres later in the paper.

THE MODEL

With this brief background it is now possible to describe the model of the economic system and the environmental constraints of the system in Chart 6, adapted from Barry Bishop (1970). Any subsistence economy must account for the flow of inputs and

Chart 6



outputs, both cash, goods and labour. These serve to meet subsistence demands and social-religious requirements (i.e. life cycle rites, festivals, *pujas* (ritual ceremonies), exorcisms, etc.), to channel surplus goods and cash into savings or capital, and to create opportunities for trade. The inputs of the system are human and animal labour, cash and goods from trading ventures, and existing physical and biological resources. The outputs are production goods (animals, cottage industry products, and agricultural products), labour outside the village and surplus goods and cash. The allocation of resources and products are based on the existing ecological constraints and potentials of the system. A society's economic strategies are an adaptation to the constraints and potentials. If one takes Barth's assumptions that man tends to maximize his environment in the choice of strategies, discovering the differential constraints on the economic system should yield reasons for the use of certain economic strategies and allow one to predict directions in which a community can and may move economically. Obviously, any such model is abstract and to an extent idealized, but it is my contention, along with most adherents of an ecological approach, that such a model can give one a fair idea of the system at work and explain certain economic strategies in a community if one omits the question of individual variation in decision-making.

The constraints which act upon the economic system are:

(1) *natural resource availability and management;*
(2) *cultural attitudes and training;*
(3) *technology—agricultural and animal;*
(4) *trade patterns and transportation;*
(5) *health and population;* and
(6) *institutions* (external such as government, markets, businesses, schools, etc.)

The last could be discussed with (2) in that outside institutions affect change in cultural attitudes, but I feel it more appropriately discussed as a separate constraint. These constraints are not in fact isolated but interrelated in many ways. For purposes of analytical clarity, I have taken them separately and avoided detailed discussion of questions of cause/effect between them. It is the constraint that is of importance to me here, not the reasons for its existence or its relation to another constraint.

Given that Magars in these communities despite very similar cultural and social identity engage in pastoralism to a significantly different degree, what can account for this difference? What are the constraints on each of these communities that can account for these differences?

(1) NATURAL RESOURCE AVAILABILITY AND MANAGEMENT

The land to the north of Lubang is less fertile and less grain can be produced to meet village subsistence needs. Herding of sheep and goats takes the pressure off the cultivated land, since a sizable percentage of the population leave for extended periods of time and consume grain from outside the village in the winter months. The argument that Fürer-Haimendorf advanced to explain the stress on trading in Tibetan and Thakali communities seems applicable to the Magar situation. He argues that "a self-contained peasant economy based upon agriculture and animal husbandry could not be sustained by the natural resources of valleys lying above 10,000 feet. Even below that level larger concentrations of populations could grow only where the income from trade supplements the yield of subsistence farming." The Magars, unlike the group he discusses, are not primarily traders, but herding of sheep and goats serves the same purpose for them. The herders consume outside grain when they graze the flocks in the south and as mentioned above bring enough rice on the return trip for consumption on the way and to meet their own ceremonial needs in the village. Migratory labour serves the same function in that the labourers bring or send back cash and live for extended periods on grain not locally produced.

Because the land is better in the southern communities, Thabang and Lubang, more stress can be put on agriculture. More fields are double cropped. In Maikot this is to a large extent not possible; in Taka, even where it is, herding family may not plant a crop if they will not be there to tend it or if there is no one left behind to tend the plot for them. This ecological situation explains in part the difference in extent of herding between north and south, but does not explain the reason for the recent decline in herding in the south from its former level.

Forest and pasture are still extensive in all communities, and firewood is in fact more plentiful in Thabang and Maikot within walking distance of a day than in either Taka or Lubang.

Excepting Maikot, most of the available marginal land below the forests has been exploited in the last 20 years for potato cultivation and some cultivation of maize and wheat. Although this does not remove pasture land for sheep and goats, who were never grazed below the forests, it has forced cattle higher up for available fodder. Thus there is more competition than previously between sheep and cattle.

The access to grazing land has changed south of Maikot, however, since the initiation of the *panchayat* system of government. As the high pastures near Maikot were traditionally the domain of clan groups in the area, herders from outside paid a nominal fee in cash or grain or animals for the use of the pasture. When the *panchayat* system went into effect, the *panchayat* assumed responsibility for these pastures and raised the traditional fees initially to a few paise per head of adult sheep and goats. Then the rate went to 0.25 rupee and is now 1 rupee. The government also collects a tax of 0.25 rupee per head for use of government forest. This is also true in the Mahabharat range where the traditional winter pasture is located. Although there is sufficient pasture in the summer in and around the individual *panchayats,* the herders move north with their sheep for the climatic reasons mentioned earlier. The change in grazing rights and fees is one reason for the decrease in herding in Thabang and Lubang.

As emphasis on cultivation increases, there is a corresponding increase in cattle production because of the use of cattle for ploughing and manure. Local fertilizer is a mixture of one part manure to three parts leaf compost. The need for manure introduces a certain amount of internal trade as use of cattle for ploughing or manure can be paid in salt as well as labour. Some of the families who have no cattle make trips in the winter to southern bazaars to get Indian salt in Thabang to use as a barter item in the village. In Thabang, where poorer families also use pig manure for fertilizer, by mixing it with compost in the pig stys attached to the house lack of cattle is less of a problem.

(2) CULTURAL ATTITUDES AND TRAINING

The raising of pigs is a major occupation in Thabang and increasingly so in Taka. In Lubang and Maikot, there are no pigs although villagers consume pork brought from Taka or Thabang

and sometimes use the lard in place of *ghee*. The reason for not raising pigs in Lubang and Maikot is not economic but religious. Although there is no adoption of the Hindu injunction against pork in these two villages, Baraha, the central Magar god mentioned earlier, forbids the presence of pigs in the village because it is polluting to him. He must be propitiated annually to insure a good crop, to protect the herds, and to prevent illness. Raising pigs would anger him, informants claim, and make the *puja* ineffectual. The reason he considers pigs polluting is unclear and no informant could tell me why this was the case. Interestingly, in Thabang no such belief exists about Baraha. Instead, there is the taboo, apparently introduced through Hinduism, that one cannot cook or eat pork in the house, lest the *pittar* (ancestor spirits) become angry and make one's children ill. Baraha seems to have no objection to pig raising there, and the *pittar* only object to its consumption in the house. Some people do not eat pork, because they consider it polluting, but have no objection to raising pigs in their courtyards and selling them locally. In Taka and Lubang pig raising is religiously forbidden, but its consumption for a large number of households has no apparent restrictions. In Taka the economic advantages of pig raising have induced people to reject the taboo of Baraha and the number of pigs in Taka is steadily increasing. Not all of the villagers are pleased with the lifting of the taboo, which is often cited as a reason for a crop failure, epidemic or other disaster.

Labour inputs are one element of the system most affected by cultural attitudes and training. The potential labour supply is a function of the economically active percentage of the population, but the choice of activities undertaken by this part of the population depends upon the accepted division of labour and choice between village or extra-village employment. Herding requires a sizable percentage of the labour force, mostly adult males, to stay with the animals outside the village. Magar women assume responsibility for most of the agricultural labour in the village, leaving males free to tend animals over long periods of absence from the village. Women are the main labourers in all activities except ploughing, which is restricted to men by religious belief. This is not a constraint on their control of the agricultural sphere, however, for cattle herders bring the cattle into the village during the harvest and remain until the fields have been ploughed for the next crop. Women who need additional labour for

ploughing, weeding, planting, and domestic chores, such as firewood collection or grain grinding, either request a worker from a kin-related household or hire poorer villagers, especially Kami or Damai.

Because the cultural attitudes permit women considerable power and influence in the allocation of household income, labour and surplus for farm management and hiring local labour, there is sufficient labour input even when most of the adult males are absent from the village. Although women usually cook, there is no strong feeling that males should not do so. Men are also trained to cook when young so they will be self-sufficient in the *gots*. If a woman is engaged in an agricultural task, a male in the household, usually her teenage son or nephew, will cook if necessary. Teenage boys and even older men will also carry water if there are no available women or children and this entails no loss of male prestige. While in other villages in Nepal women do much of their private gossip at the village spring or well, in these villages, women tend to confine their private gossip to the fields where there are seldom males.

Men will also, if in the village, care for small children while the women go to work in distant fields or to collect firewood from the forest. It is common to see a number of men at political meetings carrying a child in a shawl wrapped around their shoulders. Indeed women often plan their trips around public meeting when they know their husbands can care for the children, and get very upset if their husband is too lazy to attend. In Thabang, where herding has decreased in importance, but the traditional division of labour still holds, men who have no flocks or cattle will spend many leisure hours in the village instead of helping with agricultural labour. These men are often relegated the task of child care by women if there are no other elder children in the house to assume responsibility. Below is a chart of the traditional division of labour.

Messerschmidt (1974) argues that one significant factor in the decrease of herding among Gurungs is the employment of many adult men in the British army during the two world wars. This, he claimed, depleted the number of men available to graze sheep and goats. In the Magar situation, this does not seem to be a factor for several reasons. There are a sizable number of both pensioned and active soldiers in the villages under study. If one examines the chart below of the number of pensioned soldiers (Indian and

Chart 7. DIVISION OF LABOUR

Activity	*Male*	*Female*	*Child*	
Ploughing			B	G
Sowing			B	G
Weeding / Preparing ground by hand			B	G
Reaping			B	G
Herding cattle near the village			B	G
Herding cattle in *Gots*			B	G
Herding sheep and goats			B	
Cutting fodder				
Cutting wood				G
Fetching wood			B	G
Cooking, etc.			B	G
Collection of compost				
Carrying water			B	G
Spinning wool				
Weaving fibre				
Collecting fibre			B	G
Stone, wood, basket work				
Collecting from forest			B	G
Hunting			B	
Grinding Grain				
Portering				

Activity usually performed by this category of persons
Activity equally performed by these categories
Activity secondarily performed by this person
B = boy children G = girl children
1 in Maikot only, both men and women perform this activity.
Chart derived from that used by Macfarlane, *Resources and Population*. 1976

Chart. 8 SOLDIERS IN THE FOUR COMMUNITIES

Village	*Pensioned Soldiers*	*Presently Serving*	*Other labour in India*	*No. of House-holds in village*
Thabang	65	25	150	400
Lubang	45	15	60	300
Taka	70	25	200	500
Maikot	3	3	20	200

British armies), and currently serving soldiers, there are about the same numbers in all villages except Maikot.

Some of these soldiers are Kami and Damai and about a fourth of the migrant labourers are from these two castes. Unlike the Gurung settlements, Magar settlements are quite dense and their land and traditional pasture distribution is not equal. The soldiers seem to have been sons of larger families who could be spared from herding without affecting the needed labour inputs or sons of poorer families who never engaged in herding to begin with. Also the fact that Taka, the most active herding population, and Thabang, the least active, have similar numbers of soldiers implies that this is not significant here.

The Magars split household property soon after a son's marriage. If there are many sons in a family the movable and immovable property must be split into very small amounts. Thus a household will benefit by sending a son to the army, leaving the herds to a smaller number of brothers. This son will get enough capital from his salary and pension to buy more land on his return or increase the number of animals if he so desires. If he has not yet split from the family, the overall holdings will be much larger. Families of one lineage group who have small herds of 15-30 animals will graze their animals collectively and either take turns herding or hire one man for the whole flock. Unless the family is wealthy and has a large herd, it is not necessary to keep all available males in the village to raising sheep and goats. Only sons of wealthy families seldom go into the army.

Maikot's lack of soldiers is not due to a stress on herding, but on lack of emphasis on soldiering for cultural reasons. Because the village is quite isolated these Magars were not attuned to the opportunities that soldiering opened and were not recruited. Most of these Magars do not speak Nepali well and are not conversant with the customs and behaviour of the dominant Nepali culture.

Another cultural factor seems to be operant in the raising of buffaloes. Taka villagers are active in raising buffaloes and participate to a limited extent in the *ghee* trade in the main bazaars. Maikot villagers also raise some, but not as many. Part of the de-emphasis in Thabang and Lubang may be due to lack of interest culturally in milk products as part of their diet. The main reason given by informants for not raising buffaloes is the high incidence of disease of buffaloes, and the greater amount of

effort and fodder needed to raise them in comparison to cattle. Since they put stress on the meat rather than the dairy products, it is easier and more economical for them to buy animals from outside the area when needed for festivals or rituals. This difference in emphasis is reflected in the housing styles in the south and north. While northern houses have space on the ground floor to house buffaloes, southern houses have room for pigs and use the space below for a separate kitchen or storage area. Northern villages have flat-roofed houses where women usually work. In the southern villages all work is done in courtyards, leaving no place to stall buffaloes. There seems to be no strong ecological reason for the difference in incidence of buffalo raising, but it is rather due to cultural factors. The trade factors will be discussed under the next constraint.

(3) TRADE PATTERNS AND TRANSPORTATION

One of the constraints which reveals the largest amount of difference between communities is trading patterns. The traditional southern herders usually sold their wool in the south in the spring before returning to the northern pastures and used wool from the summer shearing for their own blankets or sold it in the village. Northern villages sold some of their wool in the south as well, but the bulk of their wool and live animals are traded in a more extensive area ranging from Surkhet to Pokhara. Taka has the widest range of markets for their blankets and have extensive markets to the west towards Tansen and Baglung, while the Maikots trade to a limited extent in these markets and in the area around Dhorpatan. They received good prices for their animal and wool products, and still do.

As the Nepalese market had become more and more flooded with Indian wool goods, the demand for the traditional coarse wool of the Barawal sheep and the traditional blankets and coats made from this wool has declined in the south and the markets of Bhairawa where Indian goods are easily obtainable. As the desire for Indian goods has increased, the southern villages have a less stable market. The northern villages, having traditionally controlled the east-west markets where these products are still highly in demand, find their market expanding. While southern communities have lost their monopoly in the face of Indian wool, northern villages have not; in fact, with

population growth and the greater generation of cash in the hills, their market has increased.

One solution to the marketing problem would be to introduce a type of sheep with a finer, softer wool that could be made into finer blankets and other wool products. One farmer in Taka has introduced a ram from Jumla of the Jumli variety and it has begun to produce a breed with a finer quality of wool. No one has yet tried to introduce any breed elsewhere, however, although one herder in Thabang is considering it. Because the other herders do not know much about this breed and distrust its ability to adapt to the area, they have made no effort to bring in this variety. Since the Taka herder only recently introduced this ram, it is hard to tell if other herders will be influenced to do the same.

In addition to wool, Magar women weave cloth of raw cotton thread from the bazaars, *puwa* and hemp. Cotton is brought up by the villagers on their winter trips to the bazaars or when they go south with the herds. This is woven into cloth for local fabrics and sold locally or used in the household. *Puwa* grows wild in all the villages and is cultivated in Thabang. Hemp is grown wild in all the villages, the highest concentration being in Thabang and Maikot, Thabang villagers also cultivate it. They produce the most cloth from this and *puwa* of the four communities and use it for a variety of household and saleable goods, including grain sacks, *johlas*, shoulder bags, matting, coarse covers and rope. The seeds of the hemp plant are also an important trade item for use in *achars,* or pickles, and as an oil. The seeds are very popular among a variety of groups in Rapti Zone for these uses. These and the raw fibre are sold in the bazaars and to other villages. The raw fibre sells for 6-8 rupees and the cloth for 10-15 rupees per loom. Chart 7 shows the cost-benefit of the various cloth products. The fibre is also traded for salt and spices locally. The seeds are bartered in equal exchange for rice in Tansen, Ghorahi and Butwal. One *patti* of seeds equals one *patti* of rice. The wood left after stripping the fibre burns well and is used as a torch at night or as a light to cook by in place of kerosene. To the north where *bhango* is less plentiful, *sala*, or pine chips, are used for this purpose.

One factor in the decrease of herding in Thabang is entrepreneurship. Thabang villagers are in general more aware of and better able to operate successfully in the non-Magar culture, than villagers in the other three communities. They have more

Chart 7 CLOTH INDUSTRY—PROFIT/MANDAY

Cloth	*wash/ pound/ day*	*spin/ weave/ day*	*weave/ day*	*knead/ sew/ day*	*price in Rs.*	*cost raw mat.*	*profit in Rs.*	*profit manday*
Cotton (7-10 days)		1	7-10		80-100	25	55-75	5-10
Wool (blan.) (13 days)		7	2-3	2	80-240	50-100	30-140	2-10
Hemp (8½ days)	½	7	1		10-15	6-8	7-15	80-1.50
Puwa (12-13 days)	2	7	3-4		20-30	8-10	10-30	1.35-2.30

orientation to the opportunities in outside markets that are not traditional and have begun to engage in more entrepreneurial activities than before.

One trade item which induced people to become entrepreneurs was *chordesh*, or hashish. The sale of this product of the hemp plant became a highly profitable activity for entrepreneurs about 30 years ago. Some of the more wealthy herders used their animals as capital or borrowed money to begin trading this item. Unlike herding, the trade was low risk, low cost, once the initial capital was obtained, and required less time and effort to make a profit. It also exposed them to a more modernized environment and made them more attuned to new goods and a new life-style. There is almost no traditional use of the drug locally, except occasionally to combat the cold or as a stomach medicine to relieve cramps and check diarrhoea.

Since 1974, trade in *chordesh* has become illegal, and these traders have turned to new enterprises such as trading in luxury goods, or used their profits to buy luxury goods and land. They have not returned to herding. They view herding as too much effort without sufficient profit with the competition in their traditional markets. The new entrepreneurship will no doubt continue to expand as markets and opportunities to trade a variety of goods expand and transportation improves. These entrepreneurial activities did not cause the change in herding, but became a more viable strategy for a certain percentage of the population in light of the change in traditional pasture right and the decline in the wool market.

The main markets for these people are Tansen, Bhairawa,

Butwal, Ghorahi, Nepalganj, and bazaars towards Pokhara. Nepalganj and Tansen are the big centres for the *ghee* trade and the others serve as the main bazaars for cloth, cigarettes, rice, Indian salt and kerosene. Many Magars go on trading trips for rice and other goods during the winter months even if they are not herders. If the crop is bad in a given year, many people will go south to buy grain since the local prices will be exorbitant due to grain scarcity. Rice is especially expensive in the village. While, in one of the main bazaars the price remains about 9-10 rupees per *patti* year round, in these communities the price ranges from 20-35 rupees per *patti*.

The *ghee* trade is far from optimal for two reasons. Because there are no close bazaars and Magars have no cooperative trading ventures, *ghee* traders store the *ghee* for several months until they get a sufficient quantity to make the trip profitable.

Storage methods are very inefficient, however, and a good percentage of the *ghee* spoils before it can be taken to market. Once in the markets, the Magar traders are prey to the clever bargaining of the buyers. These buyers set very low prices and refuse to bargain with the hill traders. The traders cannot afford to stay a long time in the bazaar because it is both expensive and time-consuming. They are forced to sell their *ghee* at the buyer's low and unprofitable price and return home before the cost of the trading trip exceeds their profits.

Other trade outside is for needed supplies that are not locally available, such as salt, cloth, flashlights and other western commodities, peppers, and other spices, and some mustard oil. Most of the salt used now is Indian salt from the southern bazaars. Some salt is still brought into the northern villages by Tarakot Magars or Dolpo traders and traded for barley or maize (see Fisher, 1975, for a discussion of this trade route) but much of the salt is Indian. No local people in these villages are actively involved in the Tibetan salt trade now. The old salt routes are still frequented by many traders from the north, however, and Maikot is still oriented mainly to these routes. The prices in Maikot for most goods including grain are set to match Dolpo prices rather than those of the rest of that zone or of the southern bazaars. In the other three villages prices are based on bazaar prices with a mark up for the cost of transportation.

One of the main constraints on trade patterns within and outside this area is transportation. There are no roads in any of this

area, only bridle paths. All supplies must be carried by porters. Although the sheep and goats carry some food supplies, as mentioned earlier, they are never used to move a large quantity of trade items. A few wealthy villagers have horses which they use to bring supplies to small shops, but even these animals are used only occasionally. Thus, commodities from outside are very expensive and only brought up in small quantities, usually for personal household use. More trade takes place locally for this reason. Some of the traders from the south come through the area with rice, spices, kerosene, cloth and some maize or wheat and sell these items for cash. Villagers from the east come through Lubang and Thabang with peaches in the summer and trade them for potatoes. Peppers, turmeric, and fenugreek (*miti*) are exchanged for maize or barley in all four villages.

Because of the lack of roads, trade in perishable goods is limited to a small area. Walnuts grow throughout the area and are sold in small quantities locally or used to make cooking oil. In the last 15 years, some entrepreneurs have planted orchards in Taka and more recently in Thabang and Maikot. The orchards are quite successful and the fruit of a good quality. It is impossible to export apples to a distant market, however, so they can only be sold in and near the village. These fruit farmers are concerned with the marketing problems. Often they discuss the marketing possibilities of the planned Pokhara-Surkhet road to be built through the area. They plan to expand their orchards if this road is built.

The lack of roads is thus one of the biggest trade constraints on these communities and to a large extent it is a perceived constraint. They see roads as the answer to the problems of the *ghee* trade and the main way to open new trade opportunities. Potatoes are another commodity that have a good market value. They grow in great quantities but transport problems limit their sale outside the village. Some villagers believe that potatoes could also be a profitable trade item in future if roads were built. Now even wealthy villagers eat potatoes whenever possible and save their grain to pay hired labourers, make liquor, or sell for cash locally. If potatoes could be marketed the wealthier families would probably eat more grain and sell their potatoes. While this would decrease the amount of grain available for sale in the village, the decrease would be negligible as it requires three times as many potatoes to equal the food value of the same amount of

grain. Also, while only wealthy villagers have a grain surplus to sell, poor as well as wealthy villagers have a sizable potato crop.

Another entrepreneurial activity that could develop with roads and a better quality of wool or sheep is trade in wool products. The entrepreneurs who have stopped herding themselves, could well begin to trade in wool if there were a good chance of making a profit.

(4) HEALTH AND POPULATION

Population is an important constraint in any economic system. It is population that determines the demands of any community and the labour stock available to produce the agricultural and other goods needed to support that population. To effectively evaluate the role of population in changes or differences in economic strategy, specific demographic data are needed: crude birth/death rates, change in population over time, and the effect of health and disease on the population. As I do not have these data for the four communities, I have bracketed this constraint. Population has increased in this area, but I would estimate that its effect has been similar for all four communities and thus does not really explain differences among them. Of course, systematic study is needed to settle this question conclusively.

Population growth has served as a constraint on herding in a general sense in that more and more land has come under cultivation as the population grew. The introduction of the potato greatly affected this expansion as marginal land of low fertility can support potatoes even when it cannot support any other crop. This is least acute an effect where marginal land is still in great quantity and the population is relatively small. The Magar inheritance system whereby all sons split property equally soon after marriage exacerbates the need for more cultivated land; as population increases, households inherit less land from the ancestral estate. Without a change in agricultural technology, to increase the yield or insure good crops, this will be an increasing pressure on herding as more and more marginal land is cultivated.

Although firewood and building materials are not yet a problem, they will become so as the population increases. More wood will be needed to meet the demands of an increasing population and cattle, sheep and goats, and people will have to compete for forest resources in the near future. (See Hitchcock 1975). At present forest and pasture land is sufficient and not a constraining factor in the system. It is other factors, i.e.

land rights, trade patterns, cultural attitudes, rather than the ratio of animals to land that explains a difference in economic strategy. This area could probably support a greater animal population than it carries at present. I would argue that an increase in grazing fees combined with the adoption of other economic strategies was the important factor influencing the decline in herding in the south rather than the availability of resources locally.

In the future as land pressure does increase a question of trade-off between cattle and sheep and goats will arise. If a new breed of sheep could be introduced, such as the Jumli sheep, and emphasis placed on sheep over cattle, better use of resources would ensue. Manure is main product of cattle and the labour cattle provide for ploughing is the only use of their energy. Milk is not consumed in any sizable quantity locally, nor is much produced by the cows. Most of the milk is consumed in the *gots* by herders during the summer months. Some northern farmers also adhere to the belief that milking a nursing cow is bad for the calf. Some decrease in the cattle population would not decrease the amount of manure produced too greatly, as the only manure used is that collected in the sheds or while the cattle are actually grazing on the fields after the harvest.

One reason for the large number of cattle is the high rate of disease. Many cattle die and thus there is a need for a greater population at any one time than is economically feasible or useful. Pigs are also a good source of manure and unlike cattle do not compete for forest resources. Pigs are fed the waste products of the household, especially the fermented grains left over from distilling liquor or making beer. Since liquor is a product used in all festivals, parties, fairs and rituals, most houses have plenty of grain to feed the pigs. These grains are an excellent diet for the pigs and the use of them is one reason for the high quality of the meat.

(5) INSTITUTIONS

The institutional constraint has had the most influence in the area of *education*. Some of the younger males who would have become herders or gone into service in the Indian and British armies have gone to local middle schools and high schools in Rukumkot, Piuthan and Libang. The Highest concentration of educated males is in Thabang. These young men are now engaged in or seeking government jobs. They have the ability to read

and write Nepali and sufficient training to work in government positions as teachers, clerks or health assistants. As educational opportunities and school enrolment increase, this will have a larger effect upon the channelling of the labour supply. Educated males, and later, females will not be content to assume traditional roles as herders or farmers. They look towards employment in government or get involved in entrepreneurial activity.

Until recently language has been a major constraint on government employment. Even after courses in school, most teenage boys are still not proficient enough in Nepali or English to impress district interviewers. Teachers are better now, however, and teenage boys travel much more than their age group used to distant bazaars and district centres where they pick up colloquial Nepali. As more and more people attend school they will also learn to speak Nepali as well as Kham.

CONCLUSION

There seem to be five main factors that account for the difference in economic strategies among these communities. The first is the differential access to pasture and grazing land. Although there is no shortage of land in any of these areas, there is a constraint on the southern communities to use the northern pastures due to the change of pasture rights and charges. It is now very expensive for herders from the southern communities to graze their sheep and goats in traditional summer pastures as well as winter ones. While herders in Taka are far enough north that they can graze their sheep and goats north of the village for part of the year within the limits of their own *panchayat* or where the fees are smaller, Lubang and Thabang herders cannot. The second constraint, trade patterns, further constricts southern villages because they have a diminished market for their goods. While Taka and Maikot herders can still sell large quantities of wool products and animals on an east-west market transect, southern communities are dependent more on southern bazaars where Indian wollen goods compete with their own poorer quality products. Because they have less traditional trading connections in the more profitable marketing areas, southern communities are excluded from the northern market. The third constraint, seasonal labour and availability of herders, does not cause a difference in strategy. Although Thabang and Taka have more seasonal labour than either Maikot or Lubang, there is sufficient manpower

in all four *panchayats* to engage in extensive herding. In Thabang, it is not the option to work outside the village that has caused the change in strategy, but the opening of a new and profitable entrepreneurial activity, trade in hashish or luxury goods. Although this hashish trading option no longer exists, it was a factor that encouraged some villagers to sell their herds to create capital to become entrepreneurs. Given the first two constraints on herding, they are unlikely at present to return to herding unless the opportunities of wool marketing change. They are also unlikely to become entrepreneurs who trade in wool products unless the marketing and technology of wool manufacture changes or a better sheep is introduced.

The fourth constraint on their economic strategies is cultural attitudes to other forms of animal husbandry. The choice of raising pigs or buffaloes seems to be based mainly upon cultural attitudes. Both are viable in all four communities and the access to markets for buffaloes and pigs the same. In Taka and Maikot, villagers see buffalo raising as profitable and desirable, while in Lubang and Thabang villagers simply do not. The arguments each community advances for or against buffalo raising could be equally applied to all four communities; the difference in strategy is a question of cultural attitudes not economic viability. Pig raising is also constrained by cultural attitudes; in this case ritual/religious belief. In Thabang and Taka this belief does not or no longer exists to the same extent as before. In Maikot and Lubang raising pigs is still considered taboo for the whole community.

Education is increasingly becoming a factor in economic strategies. As more and more people become educated, they can take advantage of government employment opportunities and engage in trade with Nepali-speaking groups to a greater extent. In Thabang, this factor is most important as there is more awareness of the need for education and the opportunities it creates. The highest enrolment in school is in Thabang; there is an increasing awareness in Taka, but not enough people have yet been educated for government employment to be a significant choice for villagers. In conjunction with other constraints education would serve to limit herding, but by itself does not. Rather than channelling much of potential herding population into government jobs, education channels seasonal migrants and potential army soldiers into a different kind of extra-village employment.

Given the present constraints on the system, it is possible to

make suggestions and predictions about future economic strategies. Since it is clear that herding is not declining because of lack of land *per se*, but rather the expenses required for a diminishing profit margin, there are several possible trends for these communities. These depend upon future constraints as well as present ones. If there are new roads that make trading more viable, but no competitive new breeds of sheep, most likely herding will continue to decrease in the south. If, however, a new breed of sheep with a good quality of wool were introduced, southern herders would probably continue to herd and more southern villagers decide to begin herding. For this to be a successful strategy, however, it would be important that the population of cattle not increase beyond the sustaining limit of the existing forest resources. Perhaps introducing better veterinary services would decrease the cattle death rate and people would opt to raise less cattle. In any case, for the environment to continue to support the existing or an increased number of sheep, some controlled use of forest resources must be instituted, be it plantation of fodder trees for the cattle, wiser use of trees or firewood, or pasture improvement concurrent with both of these.

Another option if roads open, as they surely will at some future point, is trade in potatoes to distant markets or marketing of apples, pears or peaches. Both of these would be viable adaptations to the existing ecology of the area if the transportation constraint was removed. If production of local fibre and wool products would be improved by the introduction of a better or faster spinning and weaving technology, cloth products would have a better marketing value. Given the existing technology, women spend most of their leisure time to produce only enough cloth for household or village consumption. (See Chart 9 for time required for cloth production). Their marketing value outside of course depends upon demand in outside bazaars. Given the present time required to make these products, hemp and *puwa* cloth cost too much in time in relation to cost of transporting these goods to a market and the market price. These two fibres are very popular in the bazaars, however, as the cloth that is produced from them is extremely strong and durable.

All of these constraints of course require further research to establish a correct picture of future trends. The exact limit each constraint places on the system is here discussed qualitatively

but not quantitatively. Data which are needed to prove these apparent trends and the viability of various strategies include: the exact holding capacity of the physical forest and pasture resources, the effect of population on the system (demographic data over time), marketing costs of trade items, and data on the relative capacity of individual households to take these options and what percentage of individual households have done so. This last item should include trading and entrepreneurial strategies of individuals, patterns of financing, and detailed data on the markets in which they trade.

The usefulness of this model lies in that it helps the researcher to identify the important factors affecting economic strategies and reveals areas in which further research and investigation would be useful, both in the region under study and in similar ones.

Earlier in this paper, I noted that for methodological convenience I would discuss the various constraints and potentials as separate factors and to a large extent bracket this interrelation. The use of such an approach does not in fact obscure these interrelations. In the course of bracketing these and attempting to discuss them separately, their intricate inter-connection becomes quite apparent. The study of this interrelation based on quantitative methods is another area of research that could be an important follow-up to this investigation.

NOTES

1. Ongoing research for this paper is being conducted under the auspices of the University of Wisconsin, Madison and the Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu (CNAS). While my primary research concerns the status of women among the Kham Magar, this paper is a preliminary assessment of a problem that deserves further consideration and is written in the hope of generating further research. I gratefully acknowledge the staff of CNAS for their helpful comments during the formulation of this paper and extend my thanks to Gabriel Campbell and Edward Worchester for additional comments and suggestions.

2. The Magars who speak Magarkura have been described by John T. Hitchcock in *The Magars of Banyon Hill* (1965). They are divided into the Thapa, Rana, Ale and Burathoki clan groups. There is no historical evidence to determine whether they are in fact a separate group from the Kham Magars who may have assumed the Magar name after migrating into Nepal or whether they were part of a different migration. The eastern Magars are more Hinduized than the Kham Magars and are adapted to a more agriculturally-based subsistence pattern.
3. For a more complete description of the social systems and marital patterns, refer to Augusta Molnar, "Marital Patterns and Economic Independence", 1978.
4. The statistics in the following table are taken from a survey conducted in the

area in 1977 by Dr. Joshi for a prefeasibility study of a project in the Rapti Zone (1978). These are adjusted where my own estimates differ.

5. Of course this model can be useful when data on individuals are collected in detail such as access to wealth and capital. Individual constraints yield a variety of individual choice in any community. Although I am concerned with generalizations here, individual variation is of particular importance in planning recommendations to ensure that the majority of individuals in the community can exploit new opportunities when certain constraints are removed.
6. Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf, *Himalayan Traders* (1975).
7. *Ibid.*, p. 286.
8. Personal communication, Michael Oppitz.
9. There are some females who have studied in school, but the number is small. In Thabang, there is one girl who had read to S.L.C. (level of School Leaving Certificate) and in Taka there are two. For purposes of argument, however, female education is not an issue because they would not become herders even if illiterate.

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CHAPTER III

THE THEORY OF *RÜ* KINSHIP, DESCENT AND STATUS IN A TIBETAN SOCIETY

Nancy E. Levine

FOLK theories of human reproduction and of the nature of substance transmissions between parents and children provide a useful starting point for the investigation of kinship systems. Such theories can be examined as a summarization of beliefs and conceptions about kinship, as a reflection of behavioural realities and as a guide to social action (see, for example, Strathern, 1972). The theory of procreation and parent-child relationships espoused by the Nyinba, a Tibetan-speaking people of north western Nepal, is of particular social significance in that it explains kinship, provides a basis for the conceptualization of relations of complementary filiation and descent, and also underlies a system of social inequality.

The primary element and organizing principle in Nyinba procreative or genealogical theory is the concept of *rü*. Past studies of Tibetan kinship have found the elucidation of this concept to be exceedingly problematic. The term has met with such diverse translations as "tribe", "clan", "patrilineage", "family genealogy", "paternal relatives", "bone relatives", or, simply, "bone". This profusion of definitions and explanations can be attributed to a number of factors, among them the complexity of the concept and of the various meanings it encompasses, the existence of variation in its social significance among different Tibetan groups and, perhaps most crucially, the lack of fit between European and Tibetan models of kinship. The influence of European models on the anthropological vocabulary may be held responsible for the lack of adequate analytic concepts for

describing exotic systems of kinship, descent and inequality, such as are found in the Nyinba case.

This paper takes as its subject matter the analysis of *rü* and its meanings. The introductory section will provide an account of features of Nyinba culture and social structure which will be relevant to later discussions. In the second section I shall describe the folk theory of procreation and examine the concept of *rü* in its various levels of meaning. Following this will be an outline of the logic of Nyinba kinship theory and a consideration of how such theories are best explained. Then I shall discuss how the theory summarizes, reflects and gives meaning to social realities. A final section brings together comparative data on the kinship systems of other Tibetan peoples in order to assess the representativeness of the Nyinba system and to provide an initial test of my analysis.

THE NYINBA: PAST AND PRESENT

The Nyinba people, who numbered approximately 1,200 individuals in 1974, occupy a series of alpine valleys in Nepal's far north-west. They are conscious of their distinctive ethnic identity and strive to preserve cultural, social and political integrity in the larger Nepalese polity. Despite an emphasis on cultural uniqueness and a pretense to social self-sufficiency, the Nyinba are very much dependent on their ties to the outside world. The effects of these ties are felt in the economy, in the political and legal systems, in the ritual sphere and, indirectly, in the sphere of kinship as well.

Participation in the salt trade, long a mainstay of the economy of the Tibetan borderlands (Fürer-Haimendorf 1975), has encouraged the development of networks for mutual aid in both Tibetan and Nepalese communities. Ideally, one man per Nyinba household should participate full-time in this trade, travelling to Tibet in the summer, to the middle hills of Nepal in autumn and on to the border of India in winter. Salt and, occasionally, wool as well are exchanged for the grain produced in the middle hills and lowlands of Nepal. Recent variations on the basic trading cycle involve side-trips to Kathmandu or Indian towns to purchase manufactured items.

Until the Chinese Communists gained ascendancy in Tibet, the Nyinba looked to better endowed Tibetan religious establishments for education and training. Wealthy Nyinba made charitable

donations to monastic establishments, and their lamas invited Tibetan colleagues to participate in major ritual events. In the past, pilgrimages, undertaken at least once in a lifetime, were oriented towards Tibet. Today's destinations are the sacred shrines of India and historical Buddhist sites in Nepal, because travel in Tibet is restricted. In the case of people in serious disputes, pilgrimages provide an excuse for long-term absences from home and may result in temporary residence among Tibetan "foreigners." Then too, northern Tibetan-speakers frequently winter in the mild climate of Nyinba valleys. The end result of these practices is that the Nyinba, particularly the well-travelled amongst them, have considerable knowledge about the socio-cultural systems of their Tibetan-speaking neighbours.

Although culturally oriented toward Tibet and partaking of a Tibetan cultural identity, the Nyinba always have had to contend with external political control by Nepali peoples. The fact of this external control and of their ultimate accountability to a Nepalese legal system has had not unexpected effects on the political organization and legal traditions of their community. Despite this situation and the long history of economic interactions with Nepalis, there has been no strong move towards the Sanskritization of social practices.

Most Nyinba prefer to gloss over their minority status in Nepal. They also prefer to overlook the fact that their community is essentially a community of immigrants, that they are the descendants of the sorts of "foreigners" they differentiate themselves from and the product of marriages with these outsiders. They tend to or prefer to see themselves as a collection of people whose ancestors became Nyinba. Today, immigrants are unwelcome and marriages outside the community face strong disapproval. Immigrants and their children are excluded in certain ways and even may be ostracized by their neighbours.

The Nyinba community is not undifferentiated and egalitarian. Rather, and it is a fact of primary social significance, people are subdivided into two hierarchical categories or social strata. In the vast majority are the higher ranked landholding citizens. Subordinate to them are the politically and economically disadvantaged descendants of their former slaves. The two strata are normatively endogamous—the citizens are deeply concerned with maintaining the purity of their pedigrees. Aside from the requirement for a recent history of suitable marriages, high rank

presumes membership in an established Nyinba clan. Slaves are not much concerned with keeping genealogies (for obvious reasons) and they are not entitled to claim membership in any named clan units. The recognition of descent is conceptualized in terms of *rü* and is, in turn, linked to the system of hierarchical strata, as will be made clear in the discussion to follow.

The corporate unit of primary organizational significance in Nyinba social structure is the household. Households with estates in land are obliged to pay taxes and to take on the responsibility of village management; their male members have the right of full participation in local political affairs. It is not inaccurate to say that descent affiliation and clan membership provide the individual with two of his most significant social identities. That is to say, these identities are pre-eminent and determine what other statuses will be open to the individual (the use of the terms social identity and status follows Goodenough, 1965).

RÜ: KINSHIP, DESCENT AND RANK

The diverse meanings of *rü* (*rus*)[2] frustrate any ready translation into English. Lexicographers such as Jäschke (1972:532) and Das (1970:1188) have compounded the problem by listing the term under two separate entries, divorcing such meanings as "family" and "lineage" from that of "bone." An examination of Nyinba uses of the term and its synonyms suggests that these meanings are interrelated and fall into three rather than two basic subclasses. While these subclasses or levels of meaning are translatable, no English word or anthropological idiom seems to fit the concept of *rü* as a whole. In the discussion immediately following, I shall examine each of the subclasses, or levels, distinguished by a subscript numeral and suggest a gloss that best conveys the sense of the term, while the Tibetan word *rü* will be used for the untranslatable general concept. In Table 1, below, the various synonyms for this concept and the subclasses of meaning it comprehends are listed. The use of the table facilitates comparison with other Tibetan peoples and minimizes the distraction inherent in the use of a multiplicity of Tibetan words in the text.

Rü$_1$ refers to "bone" as the bodily substance found in human beings and animals. As will be shown, this is the root concept or basis for all other meanings of *rü*. *Rü*$_2$ describes categories of

Table 1. *RÜ* AND ITS SYNONYMS

Rü [a]		
Rü (1) or "Bone"	*Rü* (2) or "Clan"	*Rü* (3) or "Social Stratum"
Rükhog (*rus khog*)	*Gyudag* (*brgyud dag* or *brgyud rtags*)	*Gyudag* (*brgyud dag* or *brgyud rtags*)
Dung (*gdung*) [b]	Rugyud [rus brgyud]	*Rigyud* (*rigs brgyud*)
	Dungyud (*gdung brgyud*) [b]	

[a] The term *jat* may be used for any sense of *rü*, as will be discussed below.
[b] An honorific term used when speaking to or about a person of high rank.

people sharing common agnatic descent from recognized ancestors. It is in this sense that *rü* can be used to refer to patrilineal descent categories. Inasmuch as descent is traced beyond known genealogical linkages, *rü* $_2$ is best translated as "clan". Finally, *rü* $_3$ (most commonly discussed in terms of its synonym *rig*) describes the ranked hereditary social strata to which all Nyinba are differentially assigned at birth.

The various meanings of *rü* are all interrelated, being based in beliefs about procreation and the role of *rü* or bone in procreation. The Nyinba believe that a characteristic substance, labelled as bone, is passed on from father to inchoate offspring during the act of intercourse which triggers a conception. This substance is said to be transmitted through the male's sperm which, in its whiteness, is identified with bone. The soft, fleshy and red parts of the child's body are thought to derive from the mother's bone as transmitted through her uterine blood. However the direct, bone-to-bone (through sperm) transmission of the father is of far greater import, as it is believed to be the principal influence on the child's physical makeup.

Thus the Nyinba see themselves as linked to their fathers through a heredity of bone (which is comparable, though not identical to the notion of genetic inheritance). Nyinba individuals are linked to their father's fathers in the same way, through successive filial steps involving the transmission of bone. This theory is taken further along in the notion that distant ancestors are connected to their present-day descendants through a series of bone/agnatic ties and that all living clan members have bone from the same basic stock. A phrase used to describe common clanship is *rü chigpa* (*rüs gchig pa*) or "one bone people"; the

people of a clan are termed *rüpa* (*rüs pa*), "clan ones" or "bone people".[3]

The stipulation of a common ancestor gives a focus to clanship and provides a rationale for the value given to it. The fact that clanship is "bone-specific" and that bone is seen as being passed on patrilineally results in unambiguous, non-overlapping clan memberships. Whereas none but leading elders are well-acquainted with the distribution of clan memberships throughout the Nyinba community, everyone can identify his or her own clan, can point to fellow clan members living nearby and can do the same for a mother's and spouse's clan.

Commonality in bone is expressed publicly primarily through the practice of commensality. "Eating together" for the Nyinba involves the sharing of plates and utensils, acts which result in a sharing of oral secretions. Commensality is proper only within the nuclear family, between husbands and wives, between members of the same clan or clans which normatively intermarry. This, the Nyinba say, is because those people who have similar bone (or bone of recognized equivalent status) have similar physical constitutions and thus similar mouths. In fact, people may converse more often about the qualities of mouth than of bone in the context of daily life, perhaps because the connection between norms of commensality and attributes of mouth is all the more tangible.

It is the belief in the common physical make-up of agnates that explains proscriptions on clan endogamy. Although the community has not had to deal with any proven case of incest within living memory, it is said that violations of this rule would be cause for severe punishment. Incest is thought to evoke mystical sanctions as well: the transgressors are left marked by a condition of cleft bones observable in their skeleton after death, and their children born malformed, stillborn or so sickly as to be unable to survive past infancy. Although all marriage within the clan is prohibited in theory, unions between "distant" (*thag ring bo*) agnates are tolerated, if disapproved of. In speaking of distant agnates, the Nyinba specify a genealogical linkage of more than seven generations from a common ancestor. This standard is comparable to Tibetan custom (Goldstein 1975a: 62) and in accordance with Nepalese law (Regmi 1976: 6). In one village a series of distant intra-clan marriages in the past few generations has been interpreted in such a way as to lend support to an ongoing clan segmentation.

As noted above, commensality is confined to members of clans who consider themselves equal and who express their equality through the establishment of affinal relationships. This implies stratum endogamy, marriage being confined to people who have similar mouths and similar bone, people who are of the same *rü*, in the sense of *rü* or social stratum.

The Nyinba recognize two major strata in their own society, that of the landholding citizens and the stratum of the descendants of a population of slaves, freed in 1926. Members of hereditary lama families regard themselves as representatives of a separate priestly stratum, but for all social purposes they are classed with the higher stratum of landholders. Several Nyinba villages also include a few families of low caste Nepali-speaking ironsmiths. These are considered to be of a different and decidedly inferior *rü* or *rig* (being known as *rigs ngan,* people of "evil birth"). Since they are culturally Nepalese and definitively non-Nyinba, they are peripheral to the indigenous status system and need not be considered further in this discussion.

It is only the upper stratum which is subdivided into named clans and for whom clan-specific pedigrees are a prerequisite of claims to high rank. Members of the ex-slave stratum are said to guide their marriages according to the same general rules followed by other Nyinba, though not with reference to named descent categories. In this way, merely being able to point to a clan affiliation certifies an individual's higher status. Certain clans, those with a long tradition of residence in the area, are accorded greater prestige. And members of "new" clans have been known to experience some discrimination initially, a problem which will be discussed in a later section of the paper.

When Nyinba landholders are asked why they do not marry members of the other stratum they refer to the perceived physical differences between the two groups, particularly to the belief that their "mouths and bone do not agree" (*kha ma 'grig rus ma 'grig*). Norms of stratum endogamy are thus based on the premise that people of different *rü* are, in essence, different types of human beings for whom the mingling of substances in procreation is inappropriate and therefore condemned. Such marriages or liaisons do, inevitably, occur; their offspring are termed "half-breeds" (*bshag tsha*). It may be noted that the subdivision of society into ranked strata is a common feature of Tibetan societies, and typically is accompanied by stratum endogamy and the confin-

ing of commensality to people whose mouths are perceived to be similar (cf. Aziz 1978: 59; Fürer-Haimendorf 1964: 35; Ijima 1964: 96; Jest 1975: 252, 257).

The fact that members of different strata are separated in matters of marriage or sexual contact and oral contact as well is explained by their possession of different *rü*. While *rü* is seen to be an attribute of bodily bone, the effects of its transmission are not confined to the individual's bone. Rather it is a substance which is said to influence the person's physical make-up and mental predispositions. Members of a clan have the same *rü* and this is the source of their commonality, so that *rü* is the defining feature of clanship. People within a given stratum also have common *rü*, but of a more general type for which the line of derivation is neither known nor relevant. Marriage rightfully is confined to the members of a single stratum who have the same general sort of physical constitution and who can produce offspring of a pure or unmixed heredity. Appositely, it is precluded among those persons who are of a make-up so similar as to constitute incest. In this way, bone can be seen as a hereditary constitutive substance which provides the natural basis for relations of kinship, descent and rank, as transmitted through men.

We have now examined the various subclasses or levels of meanings of *rü*, meanings which are interrelated and stem from Nyinba procreative and kinship theory. In other words, the term *rü* can be considered polysemous. $Rü_1$, as inheritable bone possessed by each individual, appears to be the prior or most basic sense of the term. It is the possession of similar $rü_1$ which defines the memberships of $rü_2$ and $rü_3$, clan and stratum. These meanings are related through the process of "widening of reference via the relaxing of conditions on the use of the word, or for inclusion in the class designated by it" (Scheffler and Lounsbury 1971: 7-8). $Rü_2$ refers to persons whose similar bone derives from common descent and $rü_3$, the most inclusive or extended use of the term, includes all persons whose substance is compatible.

In a footnote in Table 1, I indicated that the Nyinba are wont to use the word *jat* as a synonym for all senses of *rü*. *Jat*, a Hindu concept, is used to describe diverse reference groups, such as lineage, tribe, race, breed, caste, species and so on, groups determined by birth and heredity (Dumont 1970: 62-63; Kolenda 1978: 10). In that sense, its meanings parallel those of *rü*, although the basis for stratum inequality and the social as well as cultural mani-

festations of the *rü* system differ markedly from the characteristics of a caste system. It also is interesting for comparative purposes that *jat* membership appears to stem from the inheritance of "coded substance", though again beliefs about the nature of the substance inherited and notions of non-procreative modes of substance transmission differ markedly from Nyinba theories (for a discussion of Hindu theories of caste, see Marriott and Inden, 1973, 1977). In short, *jat* can be considered a loanword in the Nyinba dialect which has lost much of its special Hindu significance in the borrowing. It has been assimilated as a synonym for *rü* and is perceived as the proper term for self-presentation in dealings with Nepalese Hindus, wherein the Nyinba take the opportunity to assert that their *jat* (i.e., *rü*) is as high ranking as any Nepalese clean caste.

THE MEANING OF T' AG

The concept of *t'ag* (*khrag*) is the essential counterpart to *rü* in Nyinba kinship theory. Since it is perceived as a derivative of *rü*, it is best explained following the elucidation of the concept of *rü*. *T'ag* is accounted the basis of kinship and filiative ties through women, and is a contributing factor in the ascription of rank or stratum membership. However, it is not implicated in any mode of reckoning descent. As we shall see, the Nyinba concept of *t'ag* stems from presumptions about the bilateral nature of relations of genealogical connectedness, presumptions which would seem to be universal (cf. Fortes 1978: 21; Scheffler 1973: 750–751).

T'ag sums up diverse ideas about kin relationships through women, ideas given tangible reference in the physical substance of blood. The Nyinba hold that at the time of conception the woman's uterine blood joins with the man's sperm. This explains how a child is the sum of the distinctive substance contributions of both father and mother, with the mother being specifically responsible for the soft, red and fleshy parts of her child. This bodily substance is *t'ag*, which corresponds in a general sense to the physical constituent blood.

I have stated that *t'ag* does not have any independent status as far as procreative theory goes, but rather is a derivative of *rü*. This is because the primary component of the woman's uterine blood is said to be the *rü* she obtained from her father. It is this *rü* that is passed on to a woman's children through the medium of her blood

and which, in turn, becomes the child's blood. Whereas men pass on their *rü*, or bone, as bone, women pass on their bone as blood. Accordingly, there is no notion of a pure line of blood transmitted through matrilineal links. The implications of these beliefs for the Nyinba model of kinship will soon be apparent; the underlying logic of beliefs about *t'ag*—which are more complex than I have indicated—will be discussed below.

The notion of *t'ag* as a derivative substance which cannot be transmitted integrally to future generations is coupled with the belief that women's substance contributions are of lesser consequence than those of men. People expect children to "take after" the father, more so than after the mother, and also expect his contribution to continue to have a greater effect when carried on to future generations. The lesser social importance of *t' ag* is reflected in an absence of synonyms for its various meanings such as are found for *rü*. Though less "important", *t'ag* provides the explanatory framework for relationships of matrilateral kinship, complementary filiation and the bilateral features of the ranking system. Each of these facets of *t'ag* will be discussed in turn.

The filiative tie between a mother and her child serves as the fulcrum of ramifying kin relations with all maternal relatives. These kin are known as "*t'ag* relatives" or "mother's relatives". In contrast, agnates are known as "*rupa* relatives" or "father's relatives". Unlike relations based on *rü*, matrilateral kinship is of limited genealogical depth and span—it is remembered for only three generations past the original mother-child relationship.

The kin relationship between the children of true siblings is particularly important and extends, in lesser degree, to the children of classificatory siblings as well. However, the nature of the relationship differs according to the sex of the siblings. The children of two brothers are known as *rupa pun* or *phapun* (*rus pa spun* or *pha spun*), that is, "clan siblings" or "siblings through fathers", and they are linked by their common clan identities, as well as by patrilateral kinship. Matrilateral parallel cousins are known as *t'ag pun* or *mapun* (*khrag spun* or *ma spun*)—"siblings through *t'ag*" or "through mothers". But the children of cross-sex siblings are potential marital partners and therefore are termed "affines" (*gnyen*), and it is said to be an affinity created through *t'ag*.

T'ag also refers to distinctive social identities created by the individual's filiative ties to his or her mother's clan. People readily

can specify their *rü* and *t'ag* and do so by citing the name of their own, followed by the name of their mother's clan. *T'ag* identities do not form a separable set of descent categories. The name of one's *t'ag* is no more than the name of the mother's clan and the identification thus provided is best described as a sort of secondary or complementary affiliation to the mother's clan.

Finally, the *t'ag* affiliation serves as a prerequisite for stratum membership. Norms of stratum endogamy ensure that most marriages are between people with similarly ranked *rü* (implying compatible bodies and mouths). The response to occasional violations of these norms indicates that the rank of both parents has equivalent importance in establishing the child's status. As noted above, persons with either *t'ag* or *rü* of the lower stratum are in a difficult position. They are termed "half-breeds" and are apt to have trouble finding spouses. Most do get married eventually—to members of the lower stratum. (Though it is considered appropriate for them to marry persons of like "half-breed" status, the rarity of mixed marriages decreases the likelihood of finding a comparable partner of suitable age.)

T'ag, which can be glossed as "blood" and is identified with the physical constituent blood, is thus a concept which encompasses a range of relationships and statuses, all non-agnatic or proceeding through women. The concept includes matrilaterally established kinship, affinity as between cross-cousins and notions of a complementary relationship to one's mother's clan. It is complementary filiation to the mother's clan which is calculated in ascertaining stratum membership: a person not only needs to be a member of a clan of a certain stratum, but must be able to demonstrate matrilateral filiation with a clan of that stratum too. *T'ag* and *rü*, or blood and bone, are both indices of good (or inferior) birth, though the former has a lesser effect on the physical constitution of the person and is a less important component of the individual's social persona. And, to repeat, blood relationships are derivative, being based on an initial tie of *rü* which has been channelled through women and thereupon changed into *t'ag*.

SUBSTANCE AND THEORIES OF HEREDITY

For the Nyinba, the theory of *rü* and *t'ag* provides an explanation of existing social realities and a guide for normative action

within the system. These notions may be viewed as a system of symbols of what might be termed, following Ortner (1973), the "root metaphor" type. That is to say, it "provides a set of categories for conceptualizing ... aspects of experience, or ... formulates the unity of cultural orientation underlying many aspects of experience ..." (Ortner, 1973: 1340). However to the people themselves, bone and blood are not arbitrarily chosen symbols of kinship. The Nyinba perceive them to be intrinsic features of kin relationships. Thus blood and bone are "natural indices", because the association between physical substance and kinship as generated through procreation is perceived as given in the nature of things (contrast Schneider, 1972: 45 fn).

Considering bone and blood as essentially metonymic descriptions of kinship helps to clarify certain features of a belief system which might otherwise seem to be puzzling and which, for the Nyinba, are notoriously difficult to explain. For example, the notion that children inherit what is described as specifically bone from their fathers is coupled with the belief that children take after their fathers in *all* possible regards: appearance, skills, temperament and so on. It becomes obvious that the hereditary transmission is not confined to skeletal attributes, but rather that bone (or sperm) is the vehicle for this transmission and serves as the most adequate descriptive index of the entire hereditary package. In this regard we can recall that the characteristics of mouth provide an equally vivid manifestation and are used as a sign of hereditary attributes in certain contexts. The underlying logic of the woman's (lesser) contribution to her children's make-up is essentially similar. Here I also can add that the Nyinba often speak of the maternal substance as blood and flesh (*sha*), and that the latter typically is used to describe matrilateral kinship in the majority of Tibetans societies. The point to be made here is that several substances could do equally well as "natural indices" of kinship, just as smoke, redness, flames all are fine indices of fire (see Leach, 1976: 12–15), but the selection of bone as the key organizing concept made it the subject of cultural elaboration.

As a final note on this subject, I will briefly discuss some of the apparent inconsistencies in the theory of *t'ag*. When questioned on the subject, informants agreed that *t'ag* itself cannot be passed on. However, *t'ag* relationships are perpetuated for three generations, and throughout this time are seen to be based on commonality of blood. This seeming puzzle is readily resolved by again consider-

ing blood as pre-eminently a descriptive or summarizing concept which encompasses a range of hereditary attributes contributed by mothers to their offspring. What women actually contribute is their entire substance (distilled in their uterine blood). This substance is shaped primarily by their inherited *rü*, but also is influenced by their inherited *t'ag*. While the three generational span of maternal kinship confirms that maternal *t'ag* is passed on, it is a less important aspect of substance inheritance, overshadowed by the transmission of the dominant *rü* attributes, and therefore dwindling into insignificance within a few generations.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF RÜ AND T' AG IN NYINBA SOCIAL STRUCTURE

In this section of the paper, I shall devote my attention to the import of clan membership and complementary filiation in the Nyinba social structure as a whole. Clanship provides individuals with particular social identities conferring various privileges or disabilities, including those of rank. Complementary filiation to a clan also is crucial for ascriptions of rank and social position. However, among the Nyinba it is not accurate to consider descent a central organizing principle of social structure—as in the classic African cases. Clans have the minimum of corporate attributes (Fortes, 1970b; 111), and it is more apt to speak of descent categories than "groups" (for discussions of the problems in linking the analytic concept of descent to the constitution of social groups see Keesing, 1975; Scheffler, 1964, 1966; and Strathern, 1972; 7ff). The ways in which descent is and is not important to social organization will be summarized below.

Clans or *rüpa* do not regularly merge as units in action, nor do segments of the clan assemble for any purpose. Clans own no lands, nor do they have exclusive rights over any sort of property. These functions are assumed by households, village sections or villages. What clans do have is the exclusive right to a name and to a pedigree that links their members to a common ancestor. Clans also have a special relationship to a guardian deity. Though acknowledged and worshipped by the entire community, the clan god's priest is recruited from amongst the clan's membership. These facets of clanship, while not the basis for collective action, are highly significant to clan members and can be seen as symbols of corporate distinctiveness (cf. the discussion of such symbols in Harris, 1976: 304).

Clanship serves to place individuals within the local ranking system and also identifies those individuals as members by birth in Nyinba society. People think of the established clans as specifically Nyinba in derivation and are discomfited to find the same clan names (suggesting common ancestry) in groups they deem inferior to themselves. This is not to say that the Nyinba pay no heed to the clan and ranking systems of the Tibetan world around them. High ranking persons from Tibet find a warmer welcome than do ordinary persons and both are treated more favourably than Tibetans of unascertainable or inferior status. However, all such people are ultimately regarded as outsiders to the local clan and ranking system people with whom oral and sexual contact, thus commensality and marriage, are precluded. And it follows that outsiders are considered people of different *rü*, people of different hereditary physical make-up.

Beliefs about *rü* in this way are extended to encompass the entire ethnic group (which is, in itself, internally subdivided into two endogamous *rü* or strata). The usage of *rü* as a principle of ethnic differentiation and marker of ethnic boundaries (cf. Barth, 1969) is nicely illustrated by the following tale, reported in 1979 by Tshewang B. Lama, my Nyinba research assistant:

> Several centuries ago, a quarrel arose between members of one Nyinba village and the village of Dozam, half a day's journey east. At the time the two villages maintained affinal relations, and Nyinba citizens held parcels of land in Dozam, as they still do today. The quarrel was a particularly serious one: Dozam was asserting that the Nyinba village's major clan was of inferior *rü*. According to ancient custom, the dispute was settled by an ordeal. A representative of each group was tested by the application of a hot iron rod to his mouth. Whichever one escaped unscathed was considered to be in the right.
>
> It was in this way that Dozam won. But their victory did them little good. The other Nyinba chose to show their support for their neighbours and closed ranks against Dozam, with whom they thereafter refused to marry.

At present time, Dozam is a small village lacking regularized affinal relationships with other villages. While Dozam people are more than eager to take Nyinba spouses, Nyinba of landholder stratum simply do not reciprocate. Thus in matters of marital exchange Dozam has accepted a position of inferiority vis-á-vis the Nyinba.

The Nyinba see marriage outside their community as compromising the purity of their *rü*—in contrast to inter-strata marriage, which nullifies *rü* purity. The fact of bilaterality in rank ascription means that if either parent is non-Nyinba, the offspring are marked by a legacy of foreign bone or blood. Such children hold an ambiguous status, particularly in the upper stratum, and are considered unsuitable for marriage or commensality by their Nyinba relatives. However, as we shall see, the prejudice against people with foreign bone (which is perpetuated indefinitely) seems, not surprisingly, to be a greater handicap to overcome in the long run than that of foreign blood.

The Nyinba community was created by successive waves of immigrants and the problems of gaining acceptance in a closed ethnic group were reportedly serious for all but the very earliest settlers. It is said that the later arriving immigrants suffered various indignities ranging from positive rudeness to attempts to push them off their lands. In the present it is all too obvious that new immigrants are treated with considerable hostility. Since nearly all available farmlands are already under cultivation, the only way for newcomers to become resident in the Nyinba region is through marriage with a community member. As such unions are vehemently disapproved, immigrants are extremely few, making up less than 0.5% of the present-day population.

Immigrants thus face the interrelated problems of becoming integrated into the community, losing their taint of foreignness and gaining the right to marry freely within the appropriate stratum. And it is marriage that can be considered the mark of and key to acceptance. In actuality, the problems faced by foreign men are far less acute than those faced by women. This seems paradoxical in view of the fact that men's substance contributions are of greater importance in determining their children's make-up and have effects on more generations of descendants. But it is explicable in terms of demographic realities. The Nyinba population is weighted heavily towards females: among landholders of the upper stratum they constitute approximately 60 per cent of the population (Levine, 1978). One result of this is a surplus of young women who have to choose between marrying beneath themselves, thereby producing children of ambiguous status, or not marrying at all. Many women have opted for the former, and thus new immigrants are invariably able to find wives. Their sons, who have Nyinba mothers and Nyinba, *t'ag* have a slightly, if not

substantially, easier time of it. I shall illustrate such problems and their resolutions by reference to the history of one newly arrived clan.

Tenzin (this and all names to follow are pseudonyms) immigrated to the Nyinba region from Dolpo more than a century ago. Tenzin was a skilled lama and this won him entrée to his new place of residence. Tenzin's son was able to marry a Nyinba woman of the upper stratum; they had three daughters and one son who survived to adulthood. Two of the girls were simply unable to marry and remained single throughout their lives. The third managed to marry into a poor, but respectable family (although her children suffered the stigma of "low *t'ag*", it affected her grandchildren minimally). The son, Pasang, Tenzin's grandson, married twice. His first wife was from an upper stratum Nyinba clan and she bore him a son. The second wife was a foreigner of a good, lama family. She bore three daughters.

Pasang's children thus are the great-grandchildren of the immigrant Tenzin. The son is the product of two generations of good *t'ag*, yet he still is considered a bit of a foreigner While he was able to marry a woman of good status, his in-laws were discomfited by the marriage. Today they claim it was permitted only because their daughter was sickly and Pasang, a doctor, could provide free medical care. Things were far more difficult, however, for the second wife's daughters. Only one has been able to marry a Nyinba man. The second, in her mid-twenties, has never wed and is considered a spinster. The youngest married a Nepali policeman who was temporarily stationed nearby and has since moved with him to Kathmandu.

Pasang's son has had several children of his own. The oldest, a boy and Tenzin's great-great-grandchild, married a girl of good family in 1974. Even after so many generations, people are somewhat ambivalent about the boy's social position. While he is considered to be of a "new clan" and of relatively low *rü*, no one thought his wife's family was particularly remiss in allowing the marriage. As one informant said, summing up the situation of another new family. "they have taken wives of high clans for three generations and now they are like us."

'This example makes evident several facts about the Nyinba system of ranking according to *rü*. First of all, it is essentially

ethnoncentric: the clans or *rü* affiliations of foreigners are not accorded parity with Nyinba clans. Individuals with whom I discussed the matter suggested that the relative rank of a newcomer in his or her own community had little meaning beyond the specification of an upper or lower stratum identity. Such identities have to be reassigned within the local system. Secondly, the system is subjective, based not on some fixed standard of clan ranking, but rather on the local *opinion* of relative ranking. Consequently, it is flexible, open to modifications of opinion, though such changes appear to be limited in scope and proceed very slowly indeed. Thirdly, the changes in the ranking of a clan are effected through cumulative improvement in the *t'ag* of clan members. Some informants spoke of this improvement as if it involved change in the *rü* itself—suggesting that *rü* is perceived as somewhat mutable. Other evidence of the impermanent nature of *rü* can be found in the toleration (if not approval) of intra-clan marriages seven generations beyond an actual genealogical link. One can suggest that the cumulative *t'ag* of ancestresses (though not relevant for kinship beyond three generations and not remembered in any detail) serves as a differentiating factor here, just as divergent maternal ancestry differentiates between clan segments elsewhere (cf. Fortes, 1970a: 39). This accords with the interpretation, presented above, that *rü* and *t'ag* are best seen not as substances of fixed provenience, but as indices of what is perceived to be the disparate hereditary transmission of men and women.

New immigrants to the Nyinba community seem to pursue a policy of marriage with established families, and we can well understand the reasons for this. It obtains for their children kin of unquestioned position and simultaneously serves to raise the valuation of their clan identity in local opinion. It is the only way they can become members of a community that regards itself as differentiated from the rest of the world through its hereditary physical constitution, conceptualized in terms of *rü* and *t'ag*.

TIBETAN COMPARISONS

In this section I shall provide the groundwork for a comparative analysis of descent and kinship in Tibetan societies. The data presented and the discussion following will focus on folk theories of kinship and the structure of descent and ranking systems. The purpose of this comparison is to ascertain whether my analysis of

the Nyinba checks out against and can be extended to other societies speaking Tibetan and Tibeto-Burman languages. Due to the paucity of comparable data, fairly diverse sources have had to be consulted. I have tried to be careful in evaluating evidence drawn from different sub-regions and widely separated time periods. The survey extends from the Tibetans of Tibet proper, Ladakh, Solu-Khumbu and Dolpo in Nepal, to the Lepchas of Sikkim and other Tibeto-Burman tribal groups, groups chosen primarily for the availability of suitable data.

1. TIBETAN KINSHIP AND DESCENT

One of the fullest accounts of Tibetan kinship is provided by Aziz, (1978), based on research among refugees from Dingri, southern Tibet. The people of Dingri recognize four hereditary strata or *gyudpa.* Membership in these strata is determined by hereditary attributes acquired from both parents, although it would seem that the contribution of the father is more important (Aziz, 1978: 51-66). Prince Peter, who worked among Tibetans settled in Darjeeling, reports a distinction made between *rügyud* and *shagyud,* or "bone and flesh lineages", which function in the regulation of marriage (1963: 423, 1965: 197). O'Malley reports that violations of incest among those sharing bone results in a condition of cleft bone (cited in Levi-Strauss, 1969; 373). It has, however, been argued that in Tibet *rü* and *sha* describe only patrilateral and matrilateral kinship—not descent (Goldstein, 1975: 62).

In Ladakh there are social groups known as *pha spun*. Unfortunately, the information on the *pha spun* is quite limited, but accounts suggest that group recruitment is based on patrifiliation rather than descent (see Prince Peter, 1956). The historical literature refers to similarly named groups elsewhere as clans (Rona-Tas, 1955, but see Bogoslovskij, 1972: 21).

Reconstructions of ancient Tibetan social structure frequently mention *rü* in connection with the subdivision of society into clans (for example, Desideri, 1932: 192; Richardson, 1952: 50-51; Tucci, 1955; 204-5). Bogoslovskij (1972), arguing from an evolutionary, Marxist perspective, suggests that Tibet was governed by corporate clans prior to the seventh century. The clans lost their functions as royal power grew and were replaced by a feudal order. However, as Stein (1961) has noted, the vocabulary used in archaic

descriptions of ancient Tibetan social structure is not well understood. Usages of such terms as *rü* and *rig* (compare Table 1) appear to overlap, and it is difficult to draw conclusions about their social functions.

2. RÜ AMONG THE SHERPA

The Sherpa now have been studied by a number of investigators who have provided data on various facets of their lives. About their kinship system and social structure we know that in both Solu and Khumbu, the Sherpa recognize membership in exogamous clans, known as *rü*. Clan members trace descent from a common ancestor and consider themselves to be of one bone. In Khumbu the clan fulfills no corporate functions, though clanspeople feel a vague solidarity, based on the common worship of a deity (Fürer-Haimendorf, 1964: 18–22). In contrast, Solu clans form corporate localized groups holding woodlands and pasturage in common as well as recognizing separate deities. *Sha,* a line of kinship traced through the mother, is recognized for three generations (Oppitz, 1968). In both regions, clan affiliations are of supreme importance, determining the individual's status in the society, and it is the clans of first settlers which rank higher, with lower ranking persons being termed "those of different mouth" (Fürer-Haimendorf, 1964: 23–37; Oppitz, 1974: 124, 130).

3. DOLPO: CLANSHIP AND STRATIFICATION

Dolpo people are divided into four ranked strata or *rü*. The highest stratum includes the descendants of first settlers, the second comprises both new immigrants and the offspring of marriages between the first settlers and such immigrants. The lower two strata are composed of artisans in metals and bamboo. Commensality is prohibited between the strata, as is marriage. For the upper two strata alone, memberships in clans known as *rü* (or *dungyud* among the lamas) are significant. These clans are named, their members observe rules of exogamy and worship distinctive gods, but engage in no joint, clan-specific activities. The people of Dolpo also distinguish *sha* as a type of kin relationship, one which is described as a maternal line of a few generations depth (Ijima, 1964; Jest, 1975: 241). Jest has illustrated the significance of *rü* for these people by reference to a proverb. The

proverb states, "While a Brahman has a pure mouth, Tibetans have pure bone". He interprets this to mean that the purity of *rü*, sustained through proper marriages, is as important to Tibetans as caste rules are for Brahmans (1975: 257).

4. DESCENT AND KINSHIP THEORY AMONG THE LEPCHAS

To discuss the Lepchas in this context is to take the comparison one step further, from exclusively Tibetan peoples to those speaking Tibeto-Burman languages (see Benedict, 1972: 6-8 for a discussion of the classification of Tibeto-Burman languages and the place of Lepcha in this classification). However the Lepchas have lived alongside Tibetan peoples for several centuries and, moreover, as I shall show, other Tibeto-Burman speaking groups have features in common with Tibetan peoples in the spheres of kinship and descent.

The Lepchas are organized into clans known as *putsho*. Some clans are localized, particularly those in the smaller villages where circumstances conducive to emigration have not intervened. When clan members live nearby one another it is traditional for them to gather together every third year to worship their clan god with the assistance of a special clan priest. There are no other functions peculiar to clanship (Gorer, 1938: 148-151; Siiger, 1967: 38, 114-115).

Lepcha kinship theory stipulates that children are formed as the product of their parents' substance contributions. The father's semen is the source of the child's bone and brain; the mother's vaginal secretions are the basis of its flesh and blood (Gorer, 1938: 283). These beliefs may be the rationale for the recognition of clanship and they seem to underlie the proscriptions on marriage between descendants of male ancestors (for nine generations) and descendants of a common maternal connection (for four generations or more). There are hints that "descent" through women is recognized, but little data to substantiate this (Nakane, 1966: 234; Siiger, 1967: 113-117).

Nakane has suggested that clanship is of greater import to the Lepchas than to their nearby neighbours, Tibetans of peasant families. The latter rarely live among their agnates tend not to know their pedigrees and seem not to perceive clan memberships as important social identities. Nonetheless these Tibetans use the

term *rü* and believe that the bone is inherited from the father, flesh from the mother.

5. TIBETO-BURMAN GROUPS

The limited data we have on these societies suggest that the systems of kinship, clanship and social stratification of Tibetan and Tibeto-Burman groups show certain similarities. To cite a few examples, there is the case of the Gurung *jat* system which is based on ranked clans and whose members are thought to be physically differentiated (described by Doherty, 1974; Messerschmidt, 1976; Pignede, 1966). The Limbu speak of common descent as "relationship by the bone" and confine the use of shared eating utensils to members of the lineage (Jones and Jones, 1976: 54-55). Notions of bone inheritance also serve as the basis for conceptualizing clanship among the Lhomi, Rai and Thakali (Bista, 1967) and among the Tamang as well (MacDonald, 1975). In fact, as Levi-Strauss notes, though with reference to marital systems:

> From Tibet and Assam to Siberia and throughout China, we have met, as the 'Leitmotiv' of the indigenous theory of marriage, the belief that bones come from the father's side and flesh from the mother's side (1969: 393).

It is apparent that more detailed analyses of the kinship systems of these peoples are needed. In particular, we require data on indigenous theories of kinship, clanship and social inequality so that we can comprehend the extent and nature of the social and cultural similarities prevailing throughout the Tibeto-Burman culture area. Even with limited data, it is possible to discern features of kinship in common among these peoples. For one thing, we can conclude that beliefs about bone, flesh and blood are a central component of kinship theories not only in Tibet, but also among Tibeto-Burman groups and elsewhere in Asia. These theories supply the logic for systems of descent and/or social ranking in the societies surveyed. It is bone that universally provides the basic idiom of beliefs used in conceptualizing patrilateral connections. Notions of blood or flesh sum up kin connections through women and in some, if not all, groups also encompass relations of complementary filiation. It is interesting too that among all the widely-separated Tibetan groups surveyed, the same basic kinship vocabulary was, or still is, in usage, though

the word in most common usage for a particular aspect of kinship or descent relations does seem to differ from group to group. (I can note that the Nyinba were familiar with all the terms used by the other societies surveyed here, though they may not have used certain of these terms often themselves.)

Thus it seems that patrilineal descent constructs (Scheffler, 1966) are given recognition in all the groups, although it is questionable whether descent categories in the form of clans are recognized by the people of Central Tibet. Among Tibetan speakers in Nepal there are such categories, but apparently only in Solu are they relevant to group structure. Although Nyinba clans are not localized groups, Nyinba legends allege that this was the situation in the past, and local models of social structure are presented in such a way as to suggest that such is perceived as an ideal state of affairs. The variation in the social "functions" of descent across Tibetan societies is an issue of theoretical interest and also deserves further attention.

Finally, one can conclude that *rü* provides individuals with a social identity of key significance in their society. The statuses attached to *rü* affiliations may differ, but the mode of affiliation—through a sequence of patrifilial links—is unvarying. And among Tibetans, Gurungs and, no doubt, other Tibeto-Burman peoples, *rü* identities also signify the individual's position in the local ranking system. The attribution of relative rank to diverse *rü* has been explained for the Nyinba in terms of notions about procreation and the constitution of human beings, that is, in terms of the folk "biological theory", and as further shaped by genealogical models of kinship and descent.

To summarize, children are thought to gain distinctive substance from their fathers and mothers who, in turn, received their substance from their parents. Thus the theory holds that kin, especially agnatic kin, are both physically and mentally more similar than non-kin. Individuals whose ancestors have not intermarried are seen as heterogeneous as regards their physical make-up and even as incompatible. Tied to a hierarchical, maritally closed system, the theory of *rü* readily lends itself to the rationalization of hereditary inequality, a characteristic feature of Tibetan social structure.

This paper has focused on the Nyinba theory of *rü*, its internal logic and social concomitants. As we have seen, the Nyinba perception of kinship differs greatly from the European notion that

maternal and paternal kin are physically related to ego in the same way. Similarly, the Nyinba folk "biological theory" differs from folk theories of other societies. This theory or model of kinship fits in well with Nyinba social realities. It summarizes facts about and explains those realities, and, in so doing, provides a rationale for normative action within the system. Because the theory of *rü* is so comprehensive—encoding information about kinship, filiation, descent as well as rank—it is not easy to explain. But this very complexity attests to its significance for Nyinba society.

NOTES

1. This paper has benefited from the readings of earlier drafts by Tahir Ali, Mark Oppitz and Hanna Rauber. Special thanks are due to my research assistant, Tshewang Bahadur Lama, who answered numerous questions by mail after I had left the field. The original research (1973-75) on which this paper is based was supported by the National Science Foundation and National Institute of Mental Health.
2. The transcription of Tibetan terms in the text of the paper follows Nyinba pronunciation. The same spellings are used with reference to other groups so as to avoid the confusion of alternate spelling. When a new Tibetan term or phrase is first introduced into the text it is followed by its classical spelling in parentheses.
3. Among the words used to describe clanship, *gyudag* is in very common usage. It conveys the general meaning of a category of people sharing similar heredity and also is used to describe species or breeding stocks of animals or plants (cf. Goldstein, 1975b: 301-302). *Rügyud*, another term in frequent usage, implies heredity through the *rü*, i.e., through men.
4. In this regard, it can be noted that brothers cease commensal relations with a sister after her marriage, and a crucial ritual in the wedding involves bride and groom sharing a cup of beer. This can be interpreted in terms of the association made between indirect oral contact as in sharing a plate of food and sexuality which involves direct oral contact. Thus commensality is possible only between persons of similar antecedents where sex is impossible or irrelevant (i.e. persons of the same sex), or where it is under stringent control, as within the family. Eating together is scandalous when improper sexual overtones might be inferred.
5. Incest was the explanation given for the repeated stillbirths and sickly infants produced by two women. However, legal sanctions could not be brought to bear, because in one case, the incest was suspected and not proven, and in the other, the husband was alleged to be his wife's agnate through his illegitimate great-grandfather, which again could not be proven.
6. It is virtually impossible to question members of the lower stratum about this, because it is a sensitive issue, one which is used by the majority to justify their hereditary superiority. As a result, the bulk of my information on the subject has come from persons of the upper stratum and may not represent the ex-slaves' beliefs (or pretensions) about their position in the system.

7. Stein (1961: 4-19) presents accounts of diverse Tibetan origin legends which suggest that Tibetans may conceptualize the various strata or *rig* as being supra-descent groups, or a sort of superordinate "phratry" system. However I did not encounter any Nyinba lengends to support such an interpretation.
8. In this regard the Nyinba kinship system diverges from the systems of Central Tibet wherein cross-cousin marriage is considered incest. The Nyinba, however, are not alone among Tibetan-speakers in Nepal in following this practice, as the cases of Limi, Helambu (Goldstein, 1975a: 58) and Dolpo (Jest, 1975: 259) show.
9. Interestrata marriages are much rarer—they have been lawful for only a generation or so and are still subject to very heavy censure. As a result, there are so few offspring of unions between men and women of different strata, that it is impossible to conclude whether persons of ex-slave *t'ag* suffer fewer disabilities than those of ex-slave *rü*.
10. This term may be similar to the term used for the patrilineages of the Angami Nagas: *pusta* (cf. Hutt(1921: 116, also cited in Levi-Strauss, 1969: 395). In Tibetan, this term can be used to specify "descendants" (Jaschke, 1972: 368) and the Nyinba use a phrase conveying similar meaning, specifically *tsha'o tsha bzhug*, to refer to patrilineal descendants.

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CHAPTER IV

DEATH, DISEASE AND CURING IN A HIMALAYAN VILLAGE

Alan Macfarlane

THIS is an account of the prevalence of suffering and the reactions to pain among the Gurungs of Nepal[1]. It is based on fieldwork lasting fifteen months carried out in 1968-70 and is therefore written in the 'historic present'.[2] But although much has changed and there are considerable regional differences among the highland peoples of the Himalayas, it can still be argued that a detailed study of both the prevalence of various forms of disease and misfortune and of attempted cures contains a number of lessons for those interested in the wider area and in the present. The Gurungs themselves are a linguistic group of roughly 158,000 persons (1961 census). They mainly live at an altitude of between 4,000 and 7,000 feet in Central Nepal, just to the north of the town of Pokhara. The particular study took place in the village of Thak in the Siklis valley. The economy is largely based on the cultivation of maize and rice, animal herding and migrant labour to the British and Indian armies. The hillsides are steep and rocky so that communications are still mainly by foot and there is little mechanization of agriculture. The temperature is moderate, seldom reaching above 100°F or below freezing. The people themselves are an amalgam of several different groups who have been in this area for several centuries and who combine in their social and religious systems a mixture of the Tibeto-Burman and Indo-Aryan traditions. There is a very great similarity between the Gurungs and other ethnic groups in Nepal such as the Tamangs, Magars, Limbus, Rais. There are also similarities in ecology and social structure when they are compared with many other groups in the middling range foothills of the Himalayas. Thus, although this is a specific and detailed case study, it is likely that many of

the patterns are widespread in this culture area. Since there have been three monographs published on this particular group, those who are interested in the more detailed demographic, economic and religious background may pursue these matters there.[3]

CAUSES OF DEATH

Very little is known about the incidence of various diseases as causes of death in Nepal in general. The few health surveys of the country confine themselves to analysing present prevalence of illness, and the meagre statistics which can be culled from hospital records clearly give a very distorted picture of the pattern in rural areas[4] Yet huge vaccination and other campaigns are launched on the basis of very little knowledge of local conditions. Furthermore, the economic and social future of Nepal depends very much on what happens to the relationship between the fertility and mortality rates, and we cannot hope to understand the latter unless we have some idea of what the major causes of mortality in village society are. It is this combination of almost total ignorance and the extreme importance of the subject which justifies the following very tentative account of the situation in one Gurung village. The impressions and statistics on which the discussions are based are extremely unsatisfactory, but they may possibly give a glimpse into a subject which needs much greater study. There are two major reasons why the account needs to be treated with caution. Firstly, the author is not a trained doctor, as will be apparent, and was not able, therefore, to pose the questions which would have elicited the maximum of information, or to analyse the results in a sophisticated way. Secondly, in the absence of any system of coroner's examinations and medical certificates, or even of simple vital registration of deaths, the only way to gather information is by retrospective questioning. This was carried out on 100 sample households in Thak during the taking of a census. Informants were asked the cause of death of all infants and children stated to have died, and also the date and cause of death of parents, and one other near relative who had died recently. Naturally, answers came in the form of descriptions of symptoms; for example a person was said to have died of a "lump in the stomach" or "fever". This could describe a number of ailments and checking through with a doctor left many such cases unclassified. Furthermore, there is likely to be loss of memory.

Finally, the figures are too small for any statistical significance to be attached to them. Yet they do show certain broad features of the situation, for example the low rate of mortality at childbirth, the absence of certain epidemic diseases and the importance of dysentery/gastro-enteritis and T.B. For this reason, and those stated above, it seems worth recording the findings. Nor are the categories much cruder than those now available for such countries as Ceylon, which include, for example "Convulsions of children under 5 years" as a cause of death. [5]

According to replies to the census, the major causes of death were as follows:

Table 1. STATED CAUSES/SYMPTOMS OF DEATH IN THAK CENSUS, GURUNGS AND OTHERS, 1969

Cause	*Infancy*	*1-9 years*	*10-49*	*50+*	*Total*	*%*
Dysentery/enteritis	5	16	3	15	39	19.5
Tuberculosis	—	7	13	7	27	13.5
'Cancer' (lump)*	—	—	9	13	22	11
'Fever' (typhoid, etc.)*	—	6	2	8	16	8
Swollen body (heart/kidney)	—	—	2	12	14	7
Pneumonia/bronchitis	7	5	—	1	13	6.5
Typhoid	—	1	6	5	12	6
Accidents (falls/burns)	2	3	5	2	12	6
Warfare	—	—	10	—	10	5
'Stomach painful'*	—	3	2	1	6	3
Childbirth (mothers)	—	—	4	—	4	2
Infant at childbirth	4	—	—	—	4	2
Ulcers/'body wounds'*	—	—	2	2	4	2
Malaria	—	—	4	—	4	2
Meningitis	1	—	1	—	2	1
Measles	—	2	—	—	2	1
Malnutrition—infant	2	—	—	—	2	1
Epilepsy/insanity	—	—	1	1	2	1
Quinsy/tonsular abscess	—	1	—	—	1	0.5
Leprosy	—	—	1	—	1	0.5
Lockjaw (tetanus)	—	—	1	—	1	0.5
Nephritis	—	—	1	—	1	0.5
Goitre	—	—	—	1	1	0.5

*The possible diseases which these broad symptoms may refer to will be discussed below. But since it is impossible to classify many deaths, the table does not give an accurate index of certain diseases—for example typhoid may appear under several of the headings above.

Although too much weight cannot be attached to the relative incidence of various causes it is clear that dysentery/gastro-enteritis, tuberculosis, and chest infections are high on the list. Deaths from fighting in foreign armies accounted for ten men, the second highest cause of mortality among those aged 10-49, but only 5% of all deaths. Maternal mortality only accounted for 2% of the total 200 cases. Perhaps even more interesting than the high figures are the omissions; though a few cases may be concealed under "fever" etc., there are no reported cases of cholera, smallpox, bubonic or pneumonic plague, and only two cases of measles. Over the last sixty years Thak seems to have avoided any serious epidemics. If we look at the separate age groups, we get some idea of the major cause of mortality at each stage. Pneumonia and dysentery/gastro-enteritis account for over half the infant deaths; accidents and complications at birth account for less than one-third. In the years 1–9, gastro-enteritis/dysentery is the greatest killer. In the age group 10-49, one-fifth of deaths were believed to be caused by T.B. and one-sixth by warfare. Typhoid and malaria also reached their peak in this stage. The last period, when 16 people were merely described as dying of "old age" (not included in this table) again saw a predominance of "dysentery" and "lumps in the stomach".

It is a commonplace observation that mortality varies with the seasons. The incidence of those deaths where I was given the month when death occurred are best shown in a diagram. It will be seen that almost all infant deaths occur in the summer months, and the same is true of children and adults. But mortality is just as high before the onset of the monsoons in *Asar* as it is when the village is flooded and dank. Nor do the few weeks of cold weather, often brigning frost and snow to Thak and leaving the lightly-dressed villagers shivering, seem to raise the mortality; mid-January to mid-March are two of the least dangerous months.

The best way to take this discussion further is to study each cause and/or symptom in turn and to see how it affects men and women, Gurungs and non-Gurungs, and various age groups, over time. We may start with dysentery, gastro-enteritis and associated disorders. This group of disorders is known to be particularly dangerous in infancy, childhood and old age. It is associated with poor sanitation and hygiene. The widespread habit of defecating in fields near the village, or in stream beds or on pathways, so that water or flies transfer the amoeba or bacilli to the human mouth,

is the main cause of these ailments. Often a patient may be infected for many years without being seriously ill, but there are many side-effects such as amoebic liver abscess which may also be fatal. Rates in Nepal are generally very high. A medical survey of central Nepal found that "amoebiasis", one branch of these disorders, was the most widespread of all diseases; out of 866 cases brought to the dispensary, 121 were of this kind. About 14% of the patients surveyed had "gross clinical amoebiasis". The highest rate was found in a hill village at 10,000 feet where a 40% rate prevailed. "Gastritis/enteritis" was listed separately, and occurred in 40/866 cases. [6]

There are certain reasons for expecting mortality and morbidity not to be particularly high from these causes during recent years in Thak. One factor is the Gurung belief that it is bad to leave cooked food to be eaten the following day; it is either carefully covered and stored, or thrown away. This helps to lower the chance of infection. Another factor is that whereas water used to be fetched from streams that were easily polluted, some 12 or so years ago a water-pipe was laid from a spring over 1½ miles away. Although it often breaks and is mended with an old cloth or earth, it is unlikely to be polluted in the same way as the old sources. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that the incidence of dysentery in the village is much higher during the monsoon months. During the monsoon we had numerous requests for dysentery medicine; many villagers used the streams that gushed near their houses, the water having run down the gulleys and fields which had served as latrines for the last nine months.

Unfortunately, the symptoms of those whose deaths have been included under the heading "dysentery/enteritis" are not detailed enough to enable us to be sure that all such cases were, in fact, the results of these disorders. Usually an informant spoke of death being accompanied by heavy diarrhoea (*po* (Gg) = stomach, *cher* (Nep.) *diba* (Gg)), or "blood in the faeces" (*ragat masee* (Nep.). Both may equally apply to some other diseases. Yet it is worth examining the distribution of the supposed deaths from this disease as follows.

Why all infants and those aged 10–49 happen to be female I am unable to say. If anything, the proportion said to die of these symptoms is higher in the 1960s than the 1950s, but this may reflect a better memory of what is often a hardly sensational cause of death. Among the old people, chronic dysentery probably

combines with several other ailments and brings about death through weakness. A higher proportion of the women than of the men were from lower caste families (8/21 females, 2/18 males), though again it is difficult to decide what this means.

Table 2. SUPPOSED DEATHS FROM DYSENTERY/ENTERITIS, THAK

years	*infancy*		*1-9 years*		*10-49*		*50+*		*total*	
	M	F		F	M	F	M	F	M	F
1900-1949	—	1	3	4	—	1	4	1	7	7
1950-1959	—	1	2	3	—	1	4	2	6	7
1960-1969	—	3	3	1	—	1	2	2	5	7
	—	5	8	8	—	3	10	5	18	21

Note: the table includes 10 non-Gurungs.

Without extensive stool tests it is impossible to assess types and rates of dysentery in the village. In a brief medical survey of the village, undertaken with the aid of a mission doctor and described below, eleven persons admitted that they were currently suffering from bad diarrhoea; this constituted between 1/4 and 1/5 of those asked whether they were thus afflicted. There was an equal proportion of males and females. The main feature of the distribution was that all those suffering were aged under 16, and 9/11 of them were under ten years. It is likely that if the survey had been undertaken during the monsoons, instead of the comparatively healthy month of January, the proportion would have been much higher. Dysentery is not a complaint for which people often go to hospital. An analysis of those who attended Pokhara hospital from Thak during the years 1961-69 shows that of over 100 patients, only one woman came specifically complaining of diarrhoea, while five others complained of abdominal pains (which could be dysentery or a number of other conditions). One reason for this absence of hospital visiting is clear: those who are most seriously affected are infants, young children and old people. They are not able to make the twelve mile journey to the hospital by themselves. Those who attended hospital were almost all aged between 20 and 50. Perhaps even more important is the fact that this type of illness is so widespread that it is accepted as inevitable, not worth spending time and money on. This is not merely due to shortage of cash or ignorance of medicines. A retired British Gurkha army officer, who had been

to England and knew perfectly well that there are now medicines to treat various types of dysentery, and had the money to buy them, made no attempt to procure such medicines even after a week of bad diarrhoea day and night. When medicine was freely available at our house, however, people thronged to get it.

Since the factors causing this group of complaints are commor to all Gurungs, it is not surprising to find that the rich are no more immune than the poor. But the lower caste Tailors and Blacksmiths are begrudged use of the piped water in the village and, when possible, use other trickles which may be more easily contaminated. We might therefore expect to find a higher proportion of dysentery/gastro-enteritis cases among them than among Gurungs. There is some evidence that this is so. While approximately 18% of Gurung deaths were said to have been caused by dysentery, 25% of those of untouchables were ascribed to this cause. In the health survey, 3/9 of the lower caste villagers examined had dysentery symptoms, and only 7/53 of the Gurungs. An improvement in village sanitation would thus benefit the lower castes, the young, and the old most of all; in other words the dependent elements in the village population.

Turning now to another ailment, tuberculosis, it has frequently been asserted that Gurkha soldiers have imported certain of the "civilized diseases" with them, and tuberculosis is the most commonly cited of these. Tests on Gurkha soldiers confirm that "primary infection" is "many times that prevailing in Nepal," nevertheless this needs to be set against the generally much higher state of health of ex-soldiers as compared to those who never leave the village.[7] Throughout Nepal, up to 4% of the chest x-rays on those aged over 14, showed the presence of probably active TB. In the medical survey of Central Nepal it was found to be the 8th most common ailment, with 37/866 patients suffering from it. Its distribution was general, though "it was somewhat less frequent at the higher altitudes" (i.e. above 4,000 ft.) Males and females suffered equally, and the average age of those affected was 28 for females, 30 for males.[8] One other figure we have is that approximately 2% of the potential recruits are turned down for the British army after an x-ray examination reveals suspected tuberculosis.[9] Because of the bad reputation of this disease, large-scale BCG vaccination campaigns are now being started.

It is not certain when TB was first introduced into Nepal. The

first possible case from Thak dates from 1925, but it seems likely that there were cases elsewhere long before this. One difficulty in assessing its significance is the variety of symptoms, and the difficulty of describing cases. Some 27 possible deaths from this cause were noted. In 12 cases there is more than 50% likelihood that TB was the cause of death in 13 cases about a half and half chance, in two cases less than 50% chance. But some of those that have wrongly been listed as TB would undoubtedly be replaced by other TB cases placed under other headings such as "cancer", "fever" etc. The list shows that the only words used to describe this condition are *dumgi* (*damko* (Nep) = panting) in cases where the stomach has swollen and the sufferer panted heavily, and *sukri* (Nep.) where the body progressively wasted away. In the case of adults, the duration of the illness before death was reported to be several years, in that of children, a number of months. It will be seen that in 11/27 of the cases another member of the same family was also believed to have the disease; for example, two of the Blacksmiths supposed to have it were brothers, and a third was their cousin.

How the disease was first brought into the village, we do not know. Certainly some people, like the two men now living in Thak who were invalided out of the army because of TB, caught it while serving in India or Malaya. But the fact that almost half of the adult deaths (9/20) supposedly caused by this disease were those of women (a greater proportion of female than male deaths, since we know the supposed cause of death of twice as many adult males as females) suggests that army service is not of great direct significance here. The cases, uncertain as they are, may be broken down as follows.

Table 3. SUPPOSED DEATHS FROM TUBERCULOSIS, THAK

	M	*F*	*M*	*F*	*M*	*F*	
Period	*Age 1-9*		*10-49*		*50+*		*Total*
1925-49	—	2	1	—	1	2	6
1950-59	1	2	3	4	—	—	10
1960-69	—	1	4	1	2	—	8
date unknown	1	—	—	—	—	2	3
	2	5	8	5	3	4	27

The table above shows growth in cases during the mid-century and then a stable rate. The actual dates of supposed cases do not suggest any particularly hazardous years. It can be seen that almost half the cases occur in the age category 10-49; most of these were aged over 20. A successful BCG campaign would therefore increase the life expectation of the economically most active part of the population.

The evidence of tuberculosis in Thak from other sources is even more fragmentary. The medical survey of the village did not include any special tests to locate TB, though advanced cases would probably have been noticed by the doctor. In only two cases, both children (aged 10 and 14), were the glands in the neck swollen, suggesting possible infection. Of the more than 100 Thak inhabitants who had visited the mission hospital in the last few years, four were found to have tubercular infection. They were aged 13, 15, 16 and 20. Two of those treated at the hospital had the same infected glands as those noted in the village survey. Three were boys and one, the eldest, a girl. The major impression from the above, is that while tuberculosis is not as yet enormously widespread in the hills, it is still one of the major causes of child and adult mortality.

Moving to another cause of death, people often described the cause of death as a *gola* (Nep. round ball or lump) in the stomach. This was believed to be a disease which especially afflicted women, and was said to be caused by lifting heavy objects. It was also known as *ganu* (*ghanu* (Nep) = thick, dense) or *dolda riva* (*dhollo* (Nep) shrunken, flaccid *riva* (Gg) bones) in women and *pyoh* (enlarged spleen) in men. Our assistant on the census who spoke some English insisted that this was "cancer", but this seems very unlikely except in a few cases. Some 11% of the deaths were said to be caused by this, yet the medical survey of Central Nepal only encountered 8/866 cases of cancer or under 1%.[10] It seems unlikely that the rate in Thak could have been over 2-3% of all deaths. Dr.Turner thought it possible that in some cases the hard object people felt in their stomach was their own backbone. A number of cases of people attending the hospital at Pokhara and complaining of *gola* had been diagnosed as suffering from malnutrition, leading to this sensation. The following analysis of the distribution of this symptom shows some interesting features. There has been a complete cessation of cases, except for one, since 1958. This might be linked with the building of the new

water pipe in about 1958, or it could reflect improved diet since then. But it may merely mean that such cases have been described differently. As *gola* declined, the number of "swollen body" leading to death rose. One fact that is not illustrated by the table is that it is an ailment particularly affecting lower caste men; 5/13 of the men dying of this supposed illness were Tailors or Blacksmiths, and only 1/9 of the women. The majority of those who die with such symptoms are over 50. Given the recent decline of deaths from such a cause, it is not surprising to find no complaints of this trouble in the village medical survey, nor any reference to such "cancer" or "lumps" (except for general abdominal pains) among those who went from Thak to Pokhara hospital.

Table 4. SUPPOSED CASES OF "CANCER" OR "LUMP IN THE STOMACH"

Period	*Aged 10-49*		*50+*		*Total*	
	M	*F*	*M*	*F*	*M*	*F*
1900-49	2	2	5	2	7	4
1950-59	3	1	3	3	6	4
1960-69	—	1	—	—	—	1
	5	4	8	5	13	9

Another symptom which is seen as a cause is 'fever'. Again this symptom could indicate a number of complaints; typhoid, malaria, chest infection and so on. The words used were usually *kuphat pordiba* (*kuphat* (Nep.) = unfit, *pordiba* (Gg.) = to have/be) or *jar kaba* (*jaro* (Nep) = fever, *kaba* (Gg.) = to come); in other words the patient ran a high temperature before dying. In four of the 16 cases, the temperature was explicitly stated to last 15 days which would fit in well with a diagnosis of typhoid. In no cases was the fever stated to have lasted for over two months, or under a week; usually it varied between a week and a month. No other symptoms could be elicited, except that in one case a person did not eat and in another the person also suffered from a headache. For what it is worth, the distribution of cases is as follows. Half the cases are recorded in the period 1950-9, while very few have been noted since 1960. The symptoms are mainly found in those aged under six or over fifty. Only one of the 16 cases is that of a lower caste villager. Not surprisingly, very little

evidence emerges from the medical survey concerning "fever". Only one person, a man of 25 suffering in all probability from influenza, complained of a temperature and headache. A girl of three was taken to hospital with "fever" and a woman of sixty had fever, watery eyes, and weakness generally when she attended hospital. One other man had a headache and fever.

Table 5. SUPPOSED DEATHS FROM "FEVER"

Period	*Age 1-9*		*10-49*		*50+*		*total*	
	M	*F*	*M*	*F*	*M*	*F*	*M*	*F*
1900-49	—	1	—	1	1	1	1	3
1950-9	2	—	—	1	4	1	6	2
1960-9	1	—	—	—	1	—	2	—
Date unknown	1	1	—	—	—	—	1	1
Total	4	2	—	2	6	2	10	6

Moving on to heart and liver complaints, it has frequently been suggested that there is a considerable amount of heart trouble in the hills of Nepal as a result of carrying heavy loads up and down steep hills.[11] On the other hand the survey of Central Nepal found this to be only the 17th most common disease, with 17/866 cases; it was confined to "higher altitudes" and consisted principally of rheumatic fever. A number of people were said to have died with their body swollen (*jiu* [Nep]-body *rhomba* [Gg], swollen). This could, of course be the symptom of a number of ailments, particularly of the heart and liver. Normally the deceased was said to have been ill for a period of a year or more. In one case the eating of salt aggravated the disease. The distribution of cases is as follows. The numbers are so small that subdivisions have very little meaning, yet we may note that this is predominantly a cause of mortality among those over 50, and that there seems to have been an increase in recent years. It is possible, as suggested above, that cases previously called "lump in the stomach" have recently been described as "swollen body". Half of the fourteen cases occurred in the hamlets down below the main village of Thak, a much higher proportion than their population would warrant. Although the villagers living down in

these hamlets have more climbing to reach the main village, they have less far to carry heavy loads of rice, maize and wood. Why, living 500 feet lower, they should suffer more from this complaint I am unable to say. No one in the village health survey complained of or was seen to have a "heart condition". Among the 100 + patients going to Pokhara clinic, three men (aged 32, 53, 76) were diagnosed to have such a condition.

Table 6. DEATHS FROM A "SWOLLEN BODY"

Period	*Age 10-49*		*50 +*		*Total*	
	M	*F*	*M*	*F*	*M*	*F*
1900-49 ...	—	—	2	1	2	1
1959-59 ...	1	—	—	1	1	1
1960-69 ...	1	—	6	2	7	2
	2	—	8	4	10	4

The next group of ailments to consider are chest infections. It is very likely that some of the "fever" cases above were really respiratory diseases, especially pneumonia in the young and bronchitis in the old. A temperature is one of the symptoms of both these ailments. A study of Europeans, Malays, Sinhalese and both these ailments. A study of Europeans, Malays, Sinhalese and Gurkhas in Malaya showed that the Gurkhas had the highest fairly high incidence of pneumonia in Nepal as a whole.[13] In the medical survey of Central Nepal, bronchitis was the 14th most common ailment (21/866 cases) and was generally found at higher altitudes. Only one case of pneumonia was noted. It is not surprising to find so few pneumonia cases in the above survey for, as can be seen from the following table, its incidence is mainly restricted to those under five years of age, who would not have travelled to the clinic held by the survey doctor. The above symptom is the most frequently cited in cases of infant deaths, and the second most common in child deaths. Yet there is no evidence, from the distribution of the actual dates when the above occurred, that there have been any pneumonia epidemics. The much lower rate during the last ten years, as opposed to the previous ten, is difficult to explain. Given the relative number of male and female deaths about which we have details, the sex ratio above is approximately even. The description of the actual cases

was nearly always that the heart of the victim had palpitated, the heartbeat had been uneven, and then stopped entirely. The widespread nature of this illness is indicated by the fact that in three cases it was simply called the "child's illness" (*balak betha*, Nep.). In one case it was stated that it is believed that a child with this ailment will either die within eight days, or recover. Indeed, in only one of the seven cases where we know the supposed length of the illness was the child ill for more than 10 days.

Table 7. DEATHS ACCOMPANIED BY HEART PALPITATIONS; POSSIBLY DUE TO PNEUMONIA

Period	*Age 0-11 months*		*1-5 years*		*total*	
	M	*F*	*M*	*F*	*M*	*F*
1901-49 ...	—	—	—	2	—	2
1950-59 ...	4	—	1	1	5	1
1960-69 ...	—	2	—	—	—	2
unknown ...	—	1	—	1	—	2
	4	3	1	4	5	7

Note: One case of a man aged over 50 was diagnosed, before his death, as bronchitis. It is omitted in the table.

No cases of pneumonia were encountered in the hospital records or medical survey for Thak; which confirms that this is a serious killer which would go undetected by those working at health clinics to which patients are brought. Probable bronchitis, however, was encountered in 4/51 of the people aged 10 + in the medical survey of Thak; symptoms were bad coughing and large amounts of coloured sputum. Although in two cases it was chronic, it is difficult to say whether it was likely to be fatal. Only three people who attended Pokhara hospital from Thak had symptoms suggesting bronchitis; two were diagnosed as having bronchitis, the third died soon after being discharged. This man had a cough, a hoarse throat, had chest pains, and expectorated yellow sputum. Three other patients who travelled to hospital complained of bad coughs. There are now several drugs which could deal with pneumonia and other chest infections; if available in the village they could save many infant lives.

Typhoid overlaps with pneumonia since one of the typical

ways in which typhoid actually kills people is to weaken them, and then they develop pneumonia. It is therefore impossible to distinguish from the previous category, and there may also be typhoid cases concealed under the heading of "fever" above. The symptoms of those cases which seem likely to be typhoid are often a high temperature for one or two weeks, frequently called *kuphat pordiba* (illness [Nep.] undergoing [Gg]). Typhoid may also overlap with tetanus in a few cases. In three cases the disease was called the "eight-day sickness" (*aath dina betta*, Nep) which is the name given to tetanus in parts of Europe. It is widely believed that if the person is going to die, he or she will do so before the 8th day. In typhoid it is the third week of the disease that is critical, but it is possible that in some cases the minor symptoms are not noticed by the Gurungs.

Typhoid and para-typhoid diseases arise from the same chain of events as dysentery/enteritis; the transmission of bacteria from faeces, through water, milk or food. In towns, where it often arises from polluted water supplies, there are often epidemics until the cause is discovered, but it may appear more spasmodically in villages where the sources of possible infection are more widespread. Typhoid cases were very rare in the findings of the survey of Central Nepal, only 2/866 cases, and both of these were from Pokhara. On the other hand tests throughout Nepal found that up to 46% of those aged five or over showed signs of infection with typhoid organisms,[14] the rate varying with the type of water supply. Plotting all the cases of 'typhoid', 'fever' and 'pneumonia' separately and together onto a graph over the years did not show any obvious epidemics. The highest number of cases in any one year was three (of the above combined). What does seem to be significant is that while there have been 11 deaths from typhoid/"fever" in the years 1950–9, all of them Gurungs, during the last ten years, 1960–9, there has been only one Gurung death from either of these causes. There have also been three lower caste deaths; which could be explained by their continued use of non-piped water, as suggested earlier. Although cases of typhoid still occur in Thak—the girl next door to us was taken to Pokhara with typhoid while we were in the village—it does not now seem to be the serious cause of mortality that it was in the 1950s. No cases were noticed in the village medical survey, and no cases from Thak are included among the patients attending the Pokhara clinic. The installation of the water pipe may have cut

mortality quite considerably here.

Accidental deaths are likely to be over-represented in the total of deaths (6%) since they are more likely to be vividly remembered. There are many hazards surrounding life and work in a Gurung village, but the recorded accidental deaths show that only certain of these are significant as far as mortality patterns are concerned. The chief danger of fire is not that people get burnt when a house is on fire, a danger that is decreasing anyway as the number of wood and thatch houses declines with the use of stone and slate, but rather the danger to infants and young children from the open fire in the centre of the living room. The Pokhara hospital, which has to deal with the terrible burns which result from such accidents, was especially aware of this problem. In terms of human life, however, such a cause of death is not common. Only 2/200 of the deaths in Thak was said to have been caused by an infant falling into the fire, and one other child died after its clothes caught fire. The only adult death connected with fire was that of an old woman who was said to have died of shock after her house caught fire. Only one burn was noted in the village medical survey, and during our fifteen months stay, only one child was brought to us with a moderately severe, but by no means dangerous, burn. There was a bad fire in Thak in 1965 in which three houses were burnt down. Two men who were trying to retrieve possessions were burnt and taken to Pokhara hospital. One of them remained in hospital for 1½ months with severe burns; he might well have died if there had been no hospital. No other people from Thak had been to hospital with burns. It therefore seems doubtful whether fire is much more of a danger than in England.

The other major type of accident is falling, which accounts for over a third of accidental deaths. Only one child, who fell off one of the high Gurung verandahs, died in this way. Two young people fell to their deaths down cliffs while collecting fodder during our time in the village, one of them concussing himself and drowning in the stream below. Two cases were reported from the past; an old man of 67 who had fallen down a cliff, and a younger man who had fallen from a tree. Considering the many precipitous parts of the village fields, this is really a testimony to the sure-footedness of the inhabitants. The other child death is somewhat mysterious; a little boy is said to have died after drinking a large quantity of the local millet beer. The other two

adult deaths were those of a young man who was crushed by a huge rock under which he was burrowing for roots, and of the richest man in the village who accidentally set off the gun in his own tiger trap. We were also told of a Brahman who was killed by a landslide, but he lived outside the area of our hundred sample families.

It appears that accidental deaths are not of great statistical significance. Yet they are obviously of great emotional importance since they are often dramatic, unexpected, destroying healthy people. They are of great ritual importance also; it is believed that a person who dies in such a way is likely to be captured by evil spirits and himself to become an evil *moh* or spirit, unless particularly intense ritual action is taken to prevent this. Nor are there reported deaths from a number of expected causes. Although cases were noted in other, nearby villages, no one in Thak was struck by lightning, committed suicide, was killed as a suspected witch, or was murdered. No one was reported to have been killed by snakes, leopards, wild boar, bears, or mad dogs, all of which had been present in the past. Nor had anyone been drowned in monsoon-filled rivers, died from poisoning, died from cuts or thorns turned gangrenous, or been shot by accident while hunting or during the frequent rituals requiring gunfire (except the tiger-trap case mentioned above). Nor were any accidents of these types encountered in the village medical survey, though during our time in the village we were constantly being asked to treat minor cuts and bruises, and to take out thorns. Only one of the patients who went from Thak to Pokhara hospital suffered from one of the above accidents: she had a snake bite, but it was already healing after a month's interval before she attended the hospital clinic. It is difficult, therefore, to see how accidental deaths could be reduced in number.

It has been stated that some 20,000 Gurkha troops were killed in the First World War, and another 24,000 in the Second.[15] Gurungs represented about one-fifth of those fighting in regular Gurkha regiments in the First World War; if they formed the same proportion in the Second, then some 9,000 would have lost their lives in the two wars (assuming they suffered casualties in the same proportions as other ethnic groups). Adding "peace time" deaths, this tribe is likely to have lost at least 10,000 adult males in warfare. When we realize that adult males at any one time cannot have numbered more than 50,000, it will be seen that

this is a major loss. In Thak, 'warfare' has been given as the cause of death of some ten men; it is the second most frequently given cause of death for those aged 10–49, though it is possible that its dramatic nature may have led to a better recall of this type of cause than of other reasons for death.

Although deaths in the army still occur (one woman lost her brother while we were in Thak), there have been no other recorded deaths from this cause during the 15 years prior to 1969. Whereas three men are remembered as dying in the First War and between four and six in the Second, unless there is another large-scale conventional war this type of mortality will not recur. All except one of the men were married. A number of the soldiers have several children, for they were mostly older men, four aged 30–39, four aged 40–9. In three cases the wife is known not to have re-married and there is no known instance where an army widow has re-married; the reasons for this are connected to pension arrangements. To what extent mortality from warfare is compensated for by the improved health and living conditions resulting from army service, both of those serving, and of those in the village, it is difficult to say. But there seems little doubt that the Gurungs, on the whole, have a better mortality record than many neighbouring groups, and that this has largely been the result of their improved standard of living which is the result of army wages.

Six cases of death where the symptoms were merely described as pains in the stomach and a swollen stomach are beyond classification. Death occurred after several months in four of the cases, after three years and after a week in the other two. Tuberculosis of the abdomen, heart/liver diseases, chronic anaemia, each probably accounts for one or two cases. A chronic peptic ulcer was the only stomach complaint disclosed by the medical survey of Thak, apart from dysentery, but abdomen pains were reported by five people from Thak who went to Pokhara hospital. In all these five cases, however, the patients complained of other symptoms also; chest pains in three cases, diarrhoea in two others. In none was a diagnosis of TB or other serious disease made.

Infant and maternal mortality rates in Thak are low in comparison to other parts of Nepal. Of the 86 female deaths whose cause we know, only four were deaths of mothers at childbirth. Even of the women aged 10–49 whose cause of death is known,

less than one-fifth died from this cause. Indeed, only one case from the central village of Thak was recorded—and that occurred during our stay in the village. The low rate, at least during the last twenty years, is confirmed by the *poju* or magical practitioner. When a woman died in childbirth it was believed that her spirit was especially vulnerable to evil forces and might itself become an evil spirit. The magician therefore had to perform a rite known as the *sigra moshi tiba* when such a death occurred. The *poju* thus had a good reason for remembering cases of maternal mortality. He stated that no woman had died in childbirth in the village of Thak or nearby for at least the previous ten years. He remembered one case about fifteen years ago, but said that otherwise there had been no instances during the previous twenty years. He suggested that before twenty years ago such deaths had been more common. Other informants, for instance two aged over 55 each, could not think of any cases in the village or nearby over the last twenty or thirty years.

It is possible, as the *poju* himself suggested, that the presence of the hospital has lowered the rate somewhat. But this factor should not be stressed too much. There is no evidence that maternal mortality was ever high, and it is doubtful whether women have ever gone to hospital frequently with childbearing complications. The hospital records only refer to one Thak woman being admitted during the last ten years, in this case after a miscarriage. Villagers themselves could only think of one case in the village, and one case from a nearby hamlet. Probably the hospital gives increased confidence. The wealthier families, at least, knew that if there were birth complications, the woman could be carried over the extremely bumpy six-hour track to Pokhara.

What kind of complications cause death it is difficult to say. In both of the cases where a description was given the after-birth had not come away. In both cases the woman was aged 45, and in one of them she had already had eight children.

As for infant mortality near or at birth, this also appears low. We know that in two out of the four cases where the mother died at childbirth, the child also died then or shortly afterwards. Yet the number of children recorded as dying at birth, as a proportion of all live-births, is extremely small. If we confine ourselves to women aged 54 or less at the time of my census, they reported some 232 livebirths, of which only three died within a day of birth. Nor do many infants die in the weeks after birth from

malnourishment. Only two infants were reported to have died because they received inadequate milk from their mother. In one case the mother was too ill to feed her baby properly; it died at four months. In the other case the woman's breasts were dry and the baby died at a month. If a woman is unable to give suck, it is believed that the infant should be fed on buffalo milk, or by another woman who has recently had a child. One other possible cause of death in infancy was given by women during a questionnaire on childrearing. They stated that a number of babies had died of suffocation because the mother had fallen asleep while feeding them; three cases were mentioned, though names were not given. No such cause was mentioned in the census.

In four cases the cause of death was described as a festering, growing wound. In two cases the old people had retired to India, and both had swollen legs. In one case a boy of ten had a sore on his face (*poro taba*,? *poro* (Nep.) = small hole, *taba* (Gg.) = have), and the whole of his face swelled up for one month. Finally, a woman of 45 had a growing sore on her buttocks, which killed her after fifteen months. This may have been cancerous. Ulcers, phlebitis, or a number of other ailments could account for the other cases. One peptic ulcer was discovered in the village medical survey, and one man went to hospital from Thak with an abscess under his armpit and a woman with the same on her breast.

Malaria is termed *aulo betha* (*aulo* [Nep] = marsh fever or malaria, *betha* [Nep] = illness) in Thak and its symptoms are generally recognised. In the lower parts of Nepal it used to be one of the major killing diseases; thus it was the third most common complaint encountered by the survey of Central Nepal(60/866 cases). The general health survey of Nepal found no significant difference in incidence between mountainous and lowland regions of Nepal, but they admitted that many villages in the 'mountainous' regions were, in fact, in river valleys.[16] Thak is said by villagers and doctors to be too high (c.5,000 ft.) for malaria-carrying mosquitoes and all the four cases of malaria were those of men, three Gurungs and a Blacksmith, who had caught the disease while on a trip to the south of Pokhara. All four cases had occurred before 1950. Massive campaigns in collaboration with WHO have been largely successful in controlling malaria in many parts of Nepal.

We may now deal with other minor causes of death. Two

deaths of what seems to have been meningitis were reported; in both cases the sufferer's back was bent backwards like a bow. One was an infant aged seven months, the other a child aged sixteen. Both occurred over twelve years ago. No cases were noted in the medical survey, hospital records, or survey of Central Nepal. Nor were any cases of measles noted in either of these sources or in the survey of Central Nepal. But one young informant in Thak suggested that children's deaths had declined in recent years because there were no longer measles epidemics (*to-misa*? *thopo* [Nep] = spot), which had once, he said, killed many children. We would expect this disease to be easily recognizable from the characteristic spots; if it had occurred extensively in the past it seems likely that this would have been apparent in the census. In fact only two cases were noted: one was a girl of three who died in about 1942, another a girl of five in about 1956.

In the survey of Central Nepal there was one noted case of epilepsy, and the hospital records for Thak referred to one young man of twenty who went to the hospital suffering from giddy attacks which may have been epileptic. In response to the census, one Blacksmith stated that her father had died of *chare rog* [Nep] = epilepsy), in a neighbouring village some 22 years ago; this is the term for epilepsy, but the informant stated that only some three days before the death was his affliction known to other villagers, which does not really fit. It was also claimed that one Gurung man had died of "insanity" and drink in India; this could be related to the fact that his grandson was the only mentally defective boy in the village. Apart from one spastic boy, and a mongol boy (Down's syndrome), there was also one slightly mentally disturbed woman. She was aged 44, and had once been married with several children.

The other supposed causes of death, one case of each, are listed in the table: nephritis, tetanus, an over-grown goitre, and quinsy or nephritis. No one with any of these ailments except goitre (which will be discussed in more detail below) went to Pokhara hospital.

There are no traces of epidemics of any kinds in the Thak records. There were no smallpox scars in Thak, although it has been found that this disease is fairly prevalent (between 3-27% of those aged 10-29 examined had scars) in Nepal, and especially in the Western Mountains.[17] Nor were there any reported deaths from this cause, although there is a Gurung name for it (*pro*) which

suggests that there has been some encounter with it in the past. I was told that some six or seven years previously, three or four people had died of this disease in the neighbouring village of Taprang, but no one in Thak had been affected. The likelihood of future epidemics is slightly lessened by government inoculation campaigns. I was told that the inoculators had visited Thak some fifteen years ago, and then not again until three years ago. They again visited the village while we were present. Partly due to insufficient warning being given, partly due to the absence of any exhortation, explanation, or inducements/sanctions, a large number of people were missed on the visit during our presence. As pointed out concerning Nepal generally, the situation is alarming. [18]

There is no evidence of bubonic or other types of plague, of cholera, of influenza, of scarlet fever, mumps or polio epidemics. The situation is very different from that in the Terai where, up to recently anyway, it was reported that there were "frequent epidemics of cholera, plague and smallpox ... usually in the spring and early summer[19]." Although rabid dogs occasionally reach the village, the prompt slaughter of all the village dogs (as occurred in Thak some three or four years previous to our visit) helps to prevent the spreading of the disease, and no deaths from rabies are reported from Thak. A large number of other potential afflictions are also omitted from the list of diseases above, notable among them leprosy and syphilis.

The second Malthusian check, after plague, is famine. There are no recorded deaths from famine in the Thak records, though it is, of course, possible that some of the deaths from other listed causes were precipitated by malnutrition after harvest failure. Nor do we know whether famine was a serious cause of mortality among the Gurungs in the nineteenth century. It seems likely, however, that their diversified agriculture, part pastoral, part arable, as well as the abundant forest resources of plants and animals would have sustained them through difficult years. But as the Gurungs become more and more dependent on grain crops the threat of famine increases. If there is hail in July, the maize crop may be destroyed; if it hails in September-October, the rice harvest may be completely lost. The decline in livestock and forest resources makes this more and more of a threat. Such hail, furthermore, frequently occurs; probably one or other harvest is

seriously damaged every five years or less. Thus in about 1964 the maize crop in Thak was destroyed, and some of the rice also. In 1968 most of the maize was lost, and the rest had to be used for seed for the following year. In 1969 five minutes of hail in the autumn destroyed over a quarter of the rice harvest.

At present, even if both crops are completely destroyed, absolute starvation would probably not occur. The rich families have considerable reserves of grain from the previous year and other nearby villages usually prove a surplus which may be bought at Pokhara (the hail usually has a very localized distribution, just sweeping up one or two valleys). On the occasion when both maize and some of the rice failed some five years ago, the richer families had no need to buy grain, though the middling to poor had to purchase it from Pokhara at nearly twice the normal price. Some of these less wealthy villagers had to sell off some of their capital possessions, land, gold, cooking vessels, or to borrow from richer villagers. But no one died of hunger. Some 25 years ago, I was told, the rice and maize crops were both completely destroyed. One young man, just born at the time, said that a number of people died of hunger, but there is no evidence of this in the replies to the census and another older man stated that there were no deaths, for grain was obtainable from other villages. At present, it seems unlikely that this check to population growth will operate for a few years, but it is quite possible that it will begin to take effect, in combination with epidemic disease, well before the end of the century.

We have already seen how the third of Malthus' natural checks, warfare, has at present ceased to play any real part in controlling population. It seems unlikely that the Gurungs will ever again be involved in a large-scale conventional war. Even if they were, and casualties were on the same scale as previous World Wars, deaths would not curb population growth effectively—though it would temporarily limit fertility.

Although, as repeatedly pointed out, the statistics on cause of death are extremely flimsy, it seems likely that the two main impressions from this discussion are correct. The first is that water-borne faecal diseases—dysentery, gastro-enteritis, typhoid—and tuberculosis are the two major causes of death in Thak. The second is that both causes are likely to decline rapidly in the next few years, and indeed have already started to do so. In the case of water-borne diseases, the installation of a water-pipe

some twelve years ago has lowered mortality quite considerably. There are plans to extend and improve such piped water facilities, and similar piped water is being made available in other villages. Furthermore, it now seems likely that the government and/or private bodies will continue even more serious BCG campaigns in this area in the near future. This will have an effect similar to that of the malaria campaign in the Terai. A combination of these two public health measures will mean that the crude death rate could be cut by half among the Gurungs between 1960 and 1975.

We may now turn to the more prosaic afflictions which are a constant background to daily life, and to the various ways in which Gurungs try to combat disease. Apart from the humanitarian problem of preventing needless suffering, this background of sickness and pain is important in a number of ways. At the economic level, it is often argued, especially by development planners who are trying to explain the failure of attempts to increase agricultural output, that sickness and malnutrition so weakens people that they are unable to carry out their tasks properly. It is also often argued that a background of frequent physical pain and death will have very deep effects on attitudes in a society. It will strongly influence individual psychological development and, at a more general level, lead to a fatalistic attitude, to beliefs in witchcraft and evil spirits, and to a preoccupation with warding off evil.

The following account of the main types of illness can only be impressionistic. It is based on two main sources. The first is records of those visiting Pokhara ("Shining") Hospital from Thak *panchayat*. Approximately 40 women visited the hospital between 1961-9, and 68 men in the years 1965-9. In most cases a brief diagnosis was made. Secondly, during January 1970, Dr. Gerald Turner of the same hospital visited Thak and undertook a brief examination of some 64 villagers: 13 were children aged 1-9, 42 were adults aged 10-49; 9 were aged over 50. No blood or other complicated tests were taken, just a brief examination of throat, eyes, heartbeat etc. was made. We also distributed medicines throughout our stay, and hence had a stream of people at our door with various ailments. Those diseases, such as tuberculosis and dysentery, already discussed

in the previous chapter will be omitted here.

The only blood disease for which evidence was found was anaemia. This condition was discovered in a third of those examined in the village. Half of those suffering had only slight anemia, the other half had serious anaemia (50% or more). It is well known that there are as many possible causes of this condition as there are types of anaemia. It may, for instance, be a vitamin deficiency, lack of iron, or heavy infestation by worms, which causes the trouble. Perhaps the most interesting feature of the distribution of cases in Thak is that there is no correlation with socio-economic level. The wealthier and slightly better fed were no less anaemic. In fact, if anything, the situation was the reverse of this, if we can judge from only 21 cases. If we limit ourselves to those aged less than 20, who were principally affected by anaemia, it appears that of 16 *carjat* Gurungs examined, some 50% suffered; of 15 *sorajat* Gurungs, only 35% suffered, and of five Blacksmiths only 20% (i.e. one case) was found to be anaemic.[20] Indeed, only one out of the total of nine Blacksmiths examined showed signs of anaemia, although their diet was far less satisfactory as regards protein and green vegetables than that of the Gurungs. It is also worth observing that in a couple of cases where boys were boarded at Pokhara there were signs of considerable anaemia, which suggests that village diet is still much better than that in the bazaar town.

If we turn to the more directly nutritional ailments, there is clearly a considerable amount of vitamin deficiency in the village. Some of it is obviously seasonal, and this helps to explain why only two cases of Vitamin B deficiency, both women of the *carjat*, were encountered in the village medical survey. A further seven people, four men and three women, went to hospital with symptoms which were diagnosed as vitamin B deficiency. The characteristic symptoms were a burning sensation all over, giddiness, and irritation in the eyes. No evidence of protein or calorie deficiency were noted in the hospital records or village surveys, and it seems likely that Thak fits in with the patterns of higher altitude Nepalese villages where a good balance of meat, milk, and other proteins has been observed.[21]

There are practically no facilities for dental treatment in Nepal. The 'Shining' hospital in Pokhara now performs extractions, and this is, in fact, its major service for villagers from Thak. Some fifteen people, nine men and six women, complained of

toothache when they went to the hospital clinic; some of them had pyorrhoea and one had osteomylitis. In the village survey, six people were found to have pyrrhoea or other teeth disorders, including an erupting wisdom tooth. Only one of these was a Blacksmith; often the Blacksmiths and Tailors had good teeth. A number of Gurungs cleaned their teeth with ashes from the fire each day, and a few (from the army) even had toothbrushes. We had a considerable number of requests for help when teeth ached. Normally the villagers have to bear such pain without much chance of relief. It is believed that the pain is often caused by a small worm growing at the roots of the teeth (*sa pulung*: Gurung, 'tooth worm'). A general survey of Nepal shows a very low rate of carious teeth, but cites work on Bhotia villages which describes "virtually universal presence of peridontal disease in persons over age 50."[22]

Of the 'Ear, Nose and Throat' ailments, little was noticed. One boy had been to hospital with earache, another with a polyp in his nostril. One woman had enlarged tonsils according to the village census and another a sore in her nose. Finally one had waxed-up ears. Coughs and sore throats, often symptoms of other ailments, were common. No cases of postfebrile deafness, of which 14 cases were found in the Survey of Central Nepal,[23] were discovered. The only deaf people were two women, a Tailor and a Gurung, both of them deaf and dumb from birth, and two others, a Gurung woman of 66 who had grown deaf during the last few years and a young Tailor of 24. A few old people were a little deaf, but certainly no more so than their equivalents in the West.

'Eye diseases' were the ninth most common complaint in the survey of Central Nepal, with 33/866 cases and another 18 cases of cataracts, and high rates are reported for Nepal generally (14–18% of those aged over 50 were blind).[24]Three cases of people from Thak going to hospital with sore eyes were found; these were probably cases of severe conjunctivitis. This malady was extremely common in the village and there was a constant stream of people with red and almost totally gummed-up eyes. The habit of cleaning the eyes with the corner of the nearest piece of cloth was understandable, but probably helped to spread infection. Such infection often ran in families, and was especially common among children and old people. There were no totally blind people in the census area, although two old people, both over 60, had cataracts and were almost blind. Three others, all aged over 60 and all

female, also had growing cataracts—two of them in both eyes. Unless these were removed at the hospital, the sufferers would be blind in a few years.

The major endocrine ailment in the village was goitre. This has long been known to be a serious ailment in Nepal, though recent research has suggested that the correlation of goitre areas with those areas using Tibetan salt (which is deficient in iodine) is not perfect.[25] Class III goitres (those 'visible at some distance') are not common in Thak. Only one really pronounced goitre was discovered in the census area, and one or two class II ('visible') goitres were also seen. Only four people went to the hospital complaining of an enlarged goitre, all men. Dr. Turner's systematic search of villagers discovered that approximately one in three of those examined had a class I goitre ('palpable but not visible'). Three-quarters of the sufferers were female and there was a higher proportion than one might expect among lower caste villagers. The lack of iodine undoubtedly varied even between nearby villages. A village on the other side of the river to Thak (Klamro) was notorious for bad goitres. It is also possible that when Tibet was closed at the beginning of the 1960s, and salt was then obtained from India, the situation improved. But in the past, as we have seen, only one death was ascribed to a goitre.

It is impossible to be sure about how common genito-urinary disease is, though we can be fairly sure that it does not, among the Gurungs, assume epidemic proportions. Nevertheless it has been suggested that symptoms which may be related to gonorrhoea were discovered in 6–13% of all males aged over 10 years in western mountain villages. This was a higher rate than in other parts of Nepal, and it is possible that syphilis (possibly about 1% rate) is also more frequent in the hills area.[26] The survey of Central Nepal found that gonorrhoea (43/866 cases) was the fourth most common complaint and syphilis (14/866) the nineteenth. The author concluded that "the infection rate is now high throughout the hill country." On the other hand, in the Terai, only 3/1834 cases were diagnosed gonorrhoea at Biratnagar hospital.[27]

Only one case of genito-urinary illness was noted in the village survey: this was a young man with mild urine infection. One possible case of spermathorea in a young man of twenty was the only case taken to hospital. I have no evidence on impotence or sterility except what may be gained indirectly from the census.

No one was noted as having gone to the hospital asking for treatment for sterility, and we only had one enquiry about this from a man who already had a five-year-old daughter and had been trying unsuccessfully to have another child for some two years. Childlessness rates usually vary in the range of 3–8% of all women,[28] but it is impossible to be sure of the rate for the Gurungs. It is believed that childlessness is always the fault of the woman and constitutes a reason for divorce, yet there were no women in Thak who had been rejected from their marriages in other villages on account of supposed sterility. There were, however, three women living in the village who had had no children, although their husbands had had children by other women. Thus of over one hundred married women in the Census, only three appear to be sterile, a rate of less than 3%. The male rate appears even lower. Only one case of a living man unable to propagate children (he had tried threee wives) was discovered.

Without a detailed examination it is impossible to be sure whether Pignede was right in thinking that venereal disease is, in fact, uncommon among the Gurungs, his evidence being that it is infrequently encountered in medical inspections of Gurung troops.[29] Yet we found no evidence to contradict his view: only one possible case of venereal disease was taken to hospital and nothing was noted in the medical survey. It seems likely that we would have been asked for treatment if these diseases had been widespread.

If we had detailed and accurate information on other gynaecological and obstetrical matters, particularly miscarriage and stillbirth rates, we would be able to deduce more about the presence of venereal disease. The little we do know does not run counter to the argument that such disease is not widespread in Thak. The census questionnaire asked explicitly "How many conceptions (including children born dead) have you experienced?" and also, as a cross-check, "How many of the above conceptions ended in the birth of a live child?" In Gurung, a child is *pasi*, and to lose a child through a spontaneous abortion is *pasi waba* (which is the same wording as for a procured abortion; *waba*, to throw away, reject). Despite the attempt to get information, however, it is certain that the census is not complete. Only two Gurung women admitted to miscarriages, at five and two months, an impossibly low rate. Cross-checking with other informants showed cases of omission.

Judging from other societies, it is unlikely that Gurung rates will be below 3% of all conceptions. The rate among the lower castes was much higher; 4 miscarriages and a stillbirth out of a total of 81 conceptions—a rate of approximately 6%. It is impossible to be sure, but it seems likely that this does reflect a difference in incidence, rather than merely in attitude or memory.

As regards other feminine ailments connected with the procreative cycle, the Gurungs do not seem to be especial sufferers. We have already noted that complications at childbirth are rare. Most women seem to find it easy to breast-feed their children, though one woman during our stay in the village went to hospital because her breasts were sore. Menstrual troubles occur occasionally; two women complained at the hospital of delayed periods, though it is possible that one of them may have been pregnant. Three women came to us asking for medicine to help with menstruation. In one case it was a girl of twenty, unmarried and at college, who had great pain at her periods. In this case the menstrual bleeding was termed '*mahina waba*' (*mahina*, Nep. = month, *waba*, Gg, = throw away) though normally it was termed *korvé taba* (*korvé? taba* (Gg) to have or be). In another case a woman in her mid-thirties, who already had five children, complained of extensive bleeding at her periods, leading to weakness. Finally, a Tailor woman, aged 27 and already the mother of seven, suffered very heavy and dangerous menstrual bleeding. The Gurungs take very little notice of changes in the female sexual cycle, laying no special emphasis on puberty, menstruation, or the menopause. There is, contrary to many societies, no centering of ritual and pollution beliefs on these events. Possibly connected to this is the fact that women do not seem to suffer too much from ailments related to the sexual cycle; they are relaxed and casual about these changes.

Mortality statistics, however, do show that female mortality used to be high just after the menopause.[30] There is no Gurung word for the menopause and we saw little indication of problems at this stage except in one case, that of a woman of 45 who had returned from Malaya two years previously. She bled for over a week at each period and became very weak. She visited the local hospital. Another woman of 45, noted in the hospital records, was described as having stomach ache, back ache, fever and abdomen pains; these may well have been menopausal symptoms.

There are many other debilitating and painful illnesses which

afflict the villagers. The rapid change of temperature during the early few weeks of snow and ice, and frequent soakings in monsoon rain may indirectly help to explain the frequent chills and fevers from which they suffer. Tramping about in the mud for days on end during rice planting leads to swollen and cracked feet. Fungus infections, on the other hand, do not seem to be particularly common. No cases were taken to hospital from Thak, and only one case was noted in the village survey. Intestinal parasitic infections were probably very common, but it was not possible to carry out a systematic survey for worm infestation.[31] A number of villagers came for medicine for roundworm and threadworm, and there may have been hookworm and tapeworm also, though no symptoms of these were discovered. Such intestinal infections were not often thought serious enough to take to hospital. Thus the medical survey of Central Nepal only noted eight cases and the general medical survey of Nepal did not think that hookworm was a particularly serious complaint at present.[32] Nevertheless, a good deal of discomfort and loss of protein could be avoided by dispensing the cheap and simple drugs which can deal with threadworm and roundworm.

Musculo-skeletal complaints are fairly frequent in Nepal: arthritis, for instance, was the eleventh most common complaint brought to the clinic operated during the survey of Central Nepal. One arthritic patient and two others with possible rheumatic aches and pains went from Thak to the hospital, but it is likely that the majority of sufferers did not seek a remedy. In the village survey, almost one in ten of those aged ten and over had rheumatism or arthritis, mostly in the fingers and knees. The afflicted were aged from 24 years upwards, which shows that these are not just afflictions of the old. Two other people were also suffering from pain in the knees and backache. None of the above were lower caste, except for one boy with pain in the knees. Without special examination it is impossible to be sure, but as yet there is no evidence that the carrying of immensely heavy loads (up to 100 lb.) over extremely rough country has any damaging effects on the villager's musculo-skeletal structure. During our stay we had very few cases of sprains, and none of broken bones. We noticed no cases of malformation of limbs due to earlier badly set fractures.

Only a very detailed survey would indicate the amount of disease in the nervous systems of villagers. Eight such cases were

encountered by the survey of Central Nepal, and two people from Thak went to the hospital with such symptoms. One suffered from convulsive attacks, which may have been epileptic, the other from sciatica. Both were young men. In the village itself serious cases were rare: one boy of fifteen suffered from cerebral palsy and was a spastic, and we have noted that deaths from meningitis were not unknown. But otherwise, convulsive seizures, jerking movements, Parkinson's disease, and the many other varieties of nervous disease were not noticed. One curious exception, which will be discussed at greater length when we deal with religion, was the fact that certain young girls in the village were sent into a 'possessed' state by certain drum rhythms. In one case a girl became very violent in this state, and it was believed that she would have died if a special drummer from a nearby village had not been sent for. This is not, in fact, a state merely confined to girls. At the frequent village dances members of the audience, including men of all ages, start shaking and have to be held down by their friends. Certain men and women are known to be subject to these attacks. This slight hint that below the apparently placid and contented surface of village life there is considerable disturbance is supported by the enormous demand for aspirins during our stay. People were constantly complaining of headaches and depression. Most of the *poju's* rites are designed to deal with situations of anxiety and uncertainty. My best informant, a young and extremely intelligent but somewhat frustrated man, was especially prone to headaches and went several times to the hospital to procure medicine. There was only one person with a noticeable stutter in the village. Otherwise neuropsychiatric disorders seemed rare. Villagers did not appear anxious and though they drank a considerable amount of the local millet beer, addiction was not obvious.

In the previous section on mortality we have already dealt with physical ailments (wounds, burns, bites etc.) and with the major respiratory diseases (bronchitis, pneumonia etc.). Skin diseases are also extremely common in the village, especially scabies. Perhaps because they only lead to pain and irritation rather than permanent damage, such ailments are not listed in the survey of Central Nepal, yet they are one of the major causes of obvious suffering in village life. The major types of skin disease are scabies and septic sores. The latter often turn into crusted eruptions when scratched and are particularly bad among children and during the monsoon season when leech bites often turn septic. The houses are

infested with fleas and other insects which also bite and cause sores. Apart from toothache, such skin troubles were the major cause for which people went from Thak to Pokhara hospital, which indicates how much suffering they cause. Nine men and three women complained of various sores according to the hospital records. Likewise they were a major complaint in the village survey. One-sixth of those examined had obvious sores, varying from mild impetigo on the lip to septic sores all over the body. Gurungs and service castes were equally affected. Half of the cases could very simply be dealt with by the application of the extremely cheap remedy, gentian violet.

No cases of bladder stone were discovered in any of the records, survey etc., and it is said to be a complaint which is not especially prevalent in Nepal. [34]

An idea of the general physical condition of a group of adults in the village will show the general state of minor illness within which people live out their lives. They were examined by chance, not because they complained of illness.

Female, age 35, Gurung	Coughing, eyes burning, stomach pain, bronchitis, anaemic, small goitre.
Female, age 40, Gurung	Coughing, mild bronchitis, no anaemia, rash/sore on side of face.
Female, age 44, Gurung	Lower ribs very sore.
Female, age 82, Gurung	Cracks on sides of mouth (vit. B. def.), early cataracts in both eyes, septic sores, pyorrhoea.
Male, age 35, Gurung	Had TB operation seven years ago, occasional pains in chest now, a cold.
Female, age 43, Blacksmith	Breathless, difficulty in walking, chronic cough, sputum coloured, pains all over.
Female, age 13, Blacksmith	Bad diarrhoea after eating.
Male, age 19, Blacksmith	Blood and physique good; no goitre or dysentery. Occasional pain in legs since a child.
Male, age 7, Blacksmith	Septic sores all over body (scabies).
Female, age 16, Blacksmith	50% anaemia, dandruff, small

goitre, occasional diarrhoea and abdominal pains, pain in knee.

These ten cases indicate that when they had time to think about such things, villagers almost always have some minor complaints. During the few months of intense agricultural work, however, they were able to work as normal and seemed to forget about their complaints. It is not surprising that when they go to hospital they take the opportunity to complain of more than one ailment.

Without a much more intensive study over a number of months by an experienced doctor, it is impossible to go any further in analysing the incidence of disease. As far as seasonal variations are concerned, the above analysis of mortality patterns, which showed that the six monsoon months were far more dangerous as regards health than the six cold weather months, is probably a fair indication of disease in general. If we are to single out any particular features, it is that the hot months just before the monsoon are particularly dangerous for old people, while the three months from mid-April to mid-July are particularly dangerous for infants. Thus, while we found that people spent more time complaining of, and talking about, illness during the slack agricultural period of the 'cold' weather, the statistics show that they were most subject to dangerous illness in the hot weather and monsoons.

It has been suggested above that there are a few signs that there is a different incidence of disease between Gurungs and lower castes: thus goitre seems more common among Blacksmiths, while anaemia seems to get more common the higher up the socio-economic pyramid one looks. The general impression, however, is that, in the absence of great differentiation in diet, housing, and the access to medical treatment, the health expectations and horizons of pain of all villagers are fairly similar. The one exception, already noted, is the effect of the introduction of the water pipe, which is used predominantly by Gurungs. This lack of differentiation is an important index of the lack of real 'classes'. The Gurung village in which we stayed was an extremely homogeneous unit. Everyone in the society would suffer from some minor ailments almost all the time.

When a villager finds himself or his child ill he may choose between a wide range of possible remedies, or he may choose to do nothing. The principles of selection will be discussed below, for we must first classify the types of treatment available. Although

the distinction is not a clear-cut one as far as villagers are concerned, we may make a broad division between the use of 'medicines' which are rubbed on, injected, or swallowed, and which are thought to work through their own virtue, and 'ritual action', particularly sacrifice, which works through the power it generates in the supernatural field. Within the first category come western medical treatment and local herbal remedies, in the second are rituals performed either by the private individual or by special experts.

Rough estimates of the yearly recourse to different methods of treatment are as follows.

Table 8. TYPES OF MEDICAL TREATMENT USED BY THAK 100 HOUSEHOLDS, 1969

Medicines	*Approx. nos. occasions*
Pokhara (mission) hospital	10-15
Pokhara (government) hospital	? 0-5
Village shop	? 5-15
Bazaar doctors/drugstores	? 10-80
Local herbal	? 50-200
(Our dispensary)	400-600
Ritual *Poju* (jhankri)	200-300
Private rituals	?100-150
Mantra (spells)	? 50+
Dhami (possession)	? 5-15

n.b. under 'ritual' only those rituals performed *after* a person became ill have been included; if the very many sacrifices, charms hung round the neck etc. to ward off future evil were included, the number would probably be doubled. '?' denotes an estimate based on guesswork.

Although much of the above table is based on somewhat flimsy guesswork, the general outlines seem sure enough. While a person from approximately one in ten of the village families might go to the local hospital, each family in the village would employ the local *poju* two or three times a year and do a private healing ritual at least once a year. It is very difficult to estimate to what extent the villagers used the many patent medicine stores and bazaar doctors in Pokhara. In all the seven household inventories where informants were asked whether they had spent money on medicine, the reply was 'yes'. Five of these seven had

definitely bought this medicine in the bazaar. A number of people whose houses we visited on medical business brought out bottles and jars of patent medicine.

Western-type medical facilities were practically non-existent in central Nepal in 1950 when the medical survey of central Nepal was carried out. There was a small dispensary at Pokhara run by a 'compounder' of two years training. That was all. This dispensary only received a qualified doctor in 1960. Meanwhile the 'shining' or Mission hospital commenced work in 1953, the 'Soldiers Board' hospital in 1958, and a mission-run Leprosorium in 1957. Yet the expenditure on medicine per head of the population, and the doctor-patient ratio in Nepal are still among the very lowest in the world. It has been informally calculated that in 1968 the expenditure on medicine was about 10 pence per person p.a.—whereas in the United Kingdom it was some £18 per person. To cure one case of TB costs at least Rs 172 over a two-year period—without food. This would absorb the medical allowance of 86 persons for two years. In Thak, for example, the situation was as follows. One of the small shops sold a little ointment (penicillin), otherwise ex-Gurkhas could walk for four hours to the north to the army-financed dispensary (for British pensioners only) at Siklis, or south of Pokhara, about the same distance over very rough country. There was also one man in the village, an ex-medical orderly who, on his own initiative, occasionally gave penicillin injections (for almost any ailment).

There were a few villages, perhaps one in each major valley, with a small dispensary. One example was Mohoriya, where an Indian-army sponsored medical post had been set up in 1959.

Later it was taken over by the Nepalese government. It has drugs for minor complaints like headache, coughs, stomach upsets, eye infections worms and cuts and bruises. Unfortunately I was unable to discover how much medicine was actually distributed, for the doctor in charge was away in Pokhara during our week in the village. He was said to spend much time away from the village. He was also said to receive Rs 300 per month, twice the sum paid to the headmaster of the Thak primary school, and his assistant Rs 75. If this is true, some Rs 4,500 were paid annually in wages, whereas only some six or seven hundred rupees of medicine was freely provided. This was not enough to cater for local needs and forced the doctor, we were told, to charge large sums for injections, tooth extractions, etc. The fact that the

doctor was a very young man of about 22 and not a Gurung (but a Tibetan, a people somewhat despised by Gurungs) did not ease matters. Judging from the cases we encountered in the village, the dispensary seemed to have had little impact on health. Many of the same type of criticism could be made of other health clinics in the country at that time, for example the government clinic at Sikha, where most of the money went on salaries and expensive training, little on medicine. There seems little doubt that, if the aim is to provide the cheapest and most effective medicine, one of the villagers, perhaps with a week's training at the local hospital, would be happy to give out medicine for Rs 50 per month. As we found during our temporary dispensary-running activities at Thak, such work is not a full-time business and does not require any great expertise. The medical needs of a group of villages can be dealt with in an hour a day. A short course on giving injections, diagnosis, and bandaging plus Rs 100 of medicine and Rs 50 fee per month would provide as good if not better service as that in Mohoriya for one third of the price.[35]

In Pignede's time people seldom went to hospital at Pokhara, mainly because of the distance and expense (both of medicine and accommodation). Considerably more use is made of Pokhara facilities by the Gurungs living in the Siklis valley, for Pokhara is nearer and is their natural market centre. They can combine a visit to fetch cigarettes, sugar and other commodities, with a visit to the hospitals. The Soldier's Board hospital to the south, run by the government, always seemed deserted when we visited it, except for the medical staff. I was not able to find out how often Gurungs attended it, but there is no doubt that those from Thak preferred the Mission hospital. This hospital not only prescribes drugs, performs major surgery, and delivers babies, but it also provides in-patient facilities. Medicines were not free and their price was added to by the customs duties which have recently been charged on medicines brought into Nepal. Yet the prices are much lower than those in the bazaar. The hospital is short of many pieces of equipment, for example the X-ray machine which would make it easier to diagnose TB. Its services, among the best outside Kathmandu, are being improved by rebuilding and by extension of the leprosorium to which it is allied. We heard none of the usual criticisms of western-type hospitals, that they are places where people always die, that the doctors and nurses are witches who eat the souls of patients, that such institutions are impersonal and

frightening. The only criticism we heard in the village was from one young Gurung whose wife went to the Mission hospital with painful breasts. He said that the hospital gave out poor medicine so that the patients would take longer to recover and hence have to spend more. After some argument he admitted that the doctors were not to blame, but thought that it was the orderlies. As with their own medicine and ritual, if the hospital failed to cure a person no blame was attached to it and no anger felt.

We have already mentioned the various public health campaigns; malaria eradication, smallpox vaccinations etc. The latter, though it caused considerable blistering and bad temper among infants, did not appear to arouse fear or opposition from villagers. Those who were given due notice tended to be vaccinated, probably out of a mixture of desire to comply with government orders and the vague feeling that it might be beneficial. The only other 'western' medical technology available, albeit somewhat diluted, is located in the bazaar medicine shops. The contents varied from very powerful modern western drugs to bottles of local herbal potion. How often villagers attended such shops and how effective their medicine was would make an interesting study, but such a survey could not be undertaken during our visit.

When Pignède was in Mohoriya in 1958, he observed that Gurung pharmacology was 'flourishing' and that local herbal remedies dominated the medical field. He described such remedies for headache, fever, stomach-ache, dysentery, dizziness, cuts and burns, coughs, lung troubles, skin and eye troubles. It is probable that in Thak, likewise, such herbal remedies were once extensively used; but the availability of supposedly more powerful medicines in Pokhara and, possibly, the transition from the high pastures where herbs were more abundant, has meant that when we visited the village only a few very simple remedies were left. We were told that in the past shepherds and hunters used to bring many plants through the villages and these were bought by Gurungs. Now people no longer want them, or know how to prepare them for use, and so they are taken south to be sold in the Terai or India. Some plants from the high forests many hours from the village are still occasionally fetched by the villagers: for headaches and sore joints there is a root called *potamsala* which is smeared on the face and eaten. For fevers

another root called *teedo,* is beaten and strained before eating. For blisters and skin infection *nermo-shi* (*shi,* Gg., = wood) is used. The local forest, to which villagers go daily in certain seasons, is believed to contain very little of medical value. For sick eyes one may apply the juice of *tsodru* fruit, and we saw a girl chewing a rhododendron flower which she said was good for her throat. Another, orange berry called *bia,* was also said to be good for headache if crushed and rubbed on. Otherwise, use is made of plants and objects from house and garden. For broken bones a plant called *had jorne* (Nep. literally bone joining) is applied with a splint tied round it. For headaches there was *sadwa,* also grown in the garden, and the burnt-out mantels (wick) of pressure lamps were also said to be good for headaches. Ashes form the fire, mixed with water, was widely held to be useful for a sore stomach, and we were told that a little millet beer was a good cure for dysentery. Millet paste was often rubbed on burns, and *bissaro* (suffron), obtainable at Pokhara, was put on cuts. Juice from a very ripe cucumber (*lokhai*) was said to be good for coughs; and a vegetable called *olbi* was eaten to cure stomach pains. The above list hardly suggests a detailed and systematic pharmacopia. The confused state of affairs, in which each person has his own private remedy, is illustrated by questions I asked as to what were the supposed cures for dysentery. Five of the twelve informants to whom I put this question suggested something called *kauou,* though some described it as a plant, some as a small animal like a frog. One suggested a vegetable called *lowtah* (*tah,* Gg. = vegetable) pulped and drunk, another recommended sour buffalo milk and rice. Two suggested pulp made from the *belkuti*(?) fruit, and another two thought that millet beer, chicken meat and spices would help. The same twelve respondents, asked what the remedy for TB (*dumgi*) was, suggested in five cases that juice from a thorn tree (*donshee*) might help, if drunk; the other seven said they knew of no cure.

Though it is possible that we missed a good deal of this informal healing activity, there was little evidence of the use of herbal 'medicines', nor of much faith in this type of cure. It is likely that if a person was ill he tried some near-at-hand remedy first of all, for instance millet beer or ash water. Certainly in the case of a bad burn or cut he would rub on some saffron or millet porridge. Yet there seems to be little system about this; there is nothing like the subtle symbolic association between disease and

cure which we find, for instance, in an African tribe.[38] The Gurungs appear to know little about the medicinal properties of the plants around them and to show little interest in the subject. This is clearly related to their lack of interest in the analysis of how diseases actually operate.

One other method of healing may be mentioned here. This is similar to the 'bleeding' and 'cupping' practised until recently in Europe. The technique is employed in cases of specific sprains, or pains in joints or in the back. Such pains are believed to be the result of, or associated with "bad blood", and such blood should be drained off. It is a technique which many people are supposed to be able to use, though shortage of equipment probably means that most operations are performed by the family of the *poju*. In a particular case I witnessed, an old man had a sore back, due, he thought, to carrying heavy loads. A few small scratches were made with a little knife (= chura, Nep. razor) and a little cup-like object was placed over the spot. This *nara* or cup was made partly of wood, partly of some malleable substance which made it possible for the operator to suck out the air and thereby create a vacuum. After some twenty minutes the suction cup was removed and a largish clot of blood was thus removed. The whole technique was called *nara toba* (Gg.); it was done without any special ritual.

We may now turn to ritual techniques to deal with disease. A full treatment of Gurung religious and magical beliefs and practises will have to await a later date. Here we will give only a brief sketch of the very complex situation that exists. When a person decides, or is told, that an illness is caused by some mystical force, there are two major courses of action open to him. If the source of the trouble is believed to be one of the village godlings, then the sick person or his family may make a small offering to the offended deity. This is additional to the annual sacrifice made by most families in order to keep themselves free from the wrath of such godlings. These village gods are not aroused by moral offences, but by neglect on the part of their worshippers. If they are not given proper ritual treatment at the right time, or their small shrines (*than*, Nep.) are damaged, they may cause sickness. The three main deities to whom Thak villagers appealed were *Bogmoti Debi*, *Buje Deorali* (*buje* = grandmother/old woman), and *Bhaiar*. The former two, being female, are offered female chickens, the latter is offered a cock. Sometimes the *nak* (Nep; Gg. = *lbu*) or snake god who lives

near each house has been offended and needs a propitiatory sacrifice. The main feature of the ritual is the offering of some blood and, often, the smoke from burning oil, to the offended spirit. This is termed *bwok peeba* (Gg?, 'share giving') and makes the spirit happy, so that he or she withdraws the illness. Usually the rite is performed by the head of the household, though the actual killing of an animal is always done by a male. If a person recovers after such a reestablishment of relations with the godling, then this supports the original diagnosis. If he continues ill, then the diagnosis must have been wrong and the sufferer turns to other possible supernatural agents. How often sacrifices were made to godlings I cannot say, but probably in any one year at least half the households in the village would make at least one such sacrifice.

The Gurungs believe that each person is inhabited by a number of 'souls' (Gg. *plah*); nine for men and seven for women. By far the most common cause of serious illness, particularly of long-term illness, is thought to be because one or more of these 'souls' have wandered off, or been captured by evil spirits or witches (a witch = *boksi* [Nep.]), or *pum/pumshaw* (Gg. male/female)). Another frequent cause of illness, not involving loss of *plah*, is a direct attack by some malignant force. In all such cases the ritual healing treatment is performed by a specialist; Lama, Brahman, *dhami*, or as in 90% of the cases in Thak, the *poju*. In some Gurung villages, especially where there is a resident Lama and no *poju*, the situation is not as monopolistic as in Thak. But since we only witnessed the system in Thak in any detail, it will be the work of the *poju* that is described here. The variation from village to village may be seen by comparing the villages of Mohoriya and Thak. Pignède described how the lower castes in Mohoriya did not employ lamas, *poju*, and *klevri*, the Gurung ritual experts.[41] I confirmed this during my visit to Mohoriya, though *pojus* did say powerful *mantras* (spells) for the service castes. But in Thak the *poju* frequently performs rites in lower caste houses in exactly the same manner as in Gurung ones. It does seem, however, that lower caste households in Thak also employ *dhami*, or people who become possessed with a spirit when a drum is beaten. In the one description of such a session that I was able to obtain, two people became possessed and acted like an animal. They sniffed round those present to determine who the witch was. Other parts of the rite, for instance the making of small images,

appear to have been very similar to those of the Gurung *poju*.

The *poju* can employ a wide range of diagnostic techniques when he is consulted about an illness. He will judge partly from the nature of the illness. Blindness, sleeplessness, a temperature, all are signs that evil spirits termed *bhuts* and *prets* have been at work. If one talks to oneself, keeps alternating between sickness and health, then an ancestor is probably responsible. Scabs are usually caused by godlings (*deowta*), while cuts that do not heal are the work of witches. But since the same symptom may be caused by totally different agents, for example defective vision, temperature and loss of consciousness may be caused by godlings or evil *masan*, it is necessary to go beyond a naive reliance on symptoms. Almost always the *poju* feels the pulse of the sick individual. By flexing the various fingers and seeing how they affect the pulse, he can sometimes tell which type of supernatural power is responsible for the illness, or whether it is merely a "natural" disease. In some cases this is supplemented by reading the hand, or in Thak the finger joints, of the patient. This examination of what are known as the *parga* helps to decide whether a person is in an inauspicious year, or whether his nativity clashes with that of any other members of the family, a situation which could well lead to the illness. Another method of divination is to draw a diagram with three wavy lines. The number of squiggles is random, and from counting them in a certain way a set of numbers emerges from which the *poju* may calculate the cause of illness. This is one of the many varieties of the *mut* (*mut* [Nep.]? = opinion or vote) *moba* technique. Another is to draw a diagram with twelve divisions and then to get the patient to place a grain of rice in one of these. Depending on which he chooses, the *poju* can diagnose his illness. The actual calculations and variety of divination systems are almost endless and allow for enormous flexibility.

To judge from the actual rituals performed, we may classify the types of cause of disease as follows. Firstly there is a category of 'natural' causation, for example when a person eats dirty or decaying food and then has a stomach ache. This is not within the province of the *poju* and he may recommend people to go to the local hospital for treatment. Secondly there are *deowta* or godlings, peeved at being neglected. Thirdly there are the spirits of ancestors, *bhaio* (Nep. = *bayu*, wind or spirit of the dead). Fourthly there are witches, male and female. Fifthly there are the

snake gods, *nak* (or *lhu*) and, possibly, the godlings that dwell in houses (*lha*). Sixthly, there are various types of evil spirit—*bhut*, *pret, moh, masan* each of which has its special characteristics. Seventhly, there are forest and field spirits, the former being the more powerful, small human-shaped creatures called *hanketa*. Finally, there are the forces related to the year and date of birth and the present *parga* of the patient and his household.

Each of the above entails a specific set of rituals which may be used to counter its power. Thus symptoms are not classified by the part of the body they affect, or their intensity, but by the type of agent supposed to have caused them. I collected detailed information concerning 43 rituals, most of them to ward off sickness, and all used by the *poju*. Many of them last over an hour and are complex symbolic performances, probably dating back to the old *bon* religion of pre-Buddhist Tibet. The central principle of many of them is to attract down the evil spirit, or wandering soul of the sick person, feed it with blood and other foodstuffs, and thus to make it happy or drive it out. Often the rite is extremely dramatic and enacts the expulsion of evil and suffering. The rites are also graduated. If a simpler and less expensive one does not work, it may be worth trying a more elaborate one in which, for example, a goat is sacrificed instead of a chicken. One example of such a rite may help to give substance to this brief summary.

A rite which the *poju* at Thak performed more than half a dozen times during 1968 was the *pih ngeh sheba*. It is performed against all kinds of evil agents. It takes over ten hours and occurs at night, starting at about six in the evening. Throughout the rite the *poju* recites a series of *pic* or myths which accompany and give power to each ritual action. The rite takes place within the patient's house, until towards the end when the *poju* proceeds to a nearby hillock. The *poju* makes a number of *kedu* (little rice figures) which represent gods, and others of millet representing evil spirits. Pebbles, sand and water are specially brought from the place by the river where bodies are burnt, and four metal loop-shaped tacks and an arrow are also collected together. Likewise a variety of special pieces of wood and a goat (of any size) are brought. The *poju* starts the ritual in his ordinary clothes, but later dons a special belt and head-piece which are supposed to frighten away evil spirits. He sits on a rain shield (*syakhu*). Having put the *kedu* on a rice mat he sprinkles them with ash, and likewise sprinkles himself, the patient, and a patch of ground across

the doorway. Then he starts to recite, accompanying himself at intervals on a drum. Meanwhile water has been heating on the fire. The light is then extinguished and, it is believed, the *rih* (evil spirit) enters. The sick person has been partially covered by a carrying basket and the *poju* then throws spoonfulls of very hot water and handfuls of the cremation dust at him. All the time the *poju* is reciting and, at intervals, blowing his horn. This goes on for up to an hour and the family and neighbours sit huddled in the dark. Then the sick person is stroked with a coin, which is believed to suck out the evil *graha* (luck/fortune) and the coin is immersed in a pan of boiling water. The *poju* next draws a triangle in the earth and puts the patient on his sitting mat in the centre of it. Now millet flour is thrown at the patient through a flame, so that it sparks and fizzes and he jumps about in mock (and sometimes real) pain. The *kedu* of the evil spirit is circled round the patient's neck nine or seven times (depending on sex) and is then stroked against the patient. Then the ash at the door is examined for footprints; if those of a chicken, centipede, human, buffalo or other animal appear it indicates what evil spirit was involved (the door is kept closed during the proceedings). And so the ritual goes on. We have only reached half way but a full description and analysis must await another publication. Later a goat is sacrificed, the *poju* rushes into the house with the head of the goat in his teeth, a lighted arrow is shot off into the darkness. Each act is a symbol and many of the minor actions have been left out of this account. Clearly the audience do not have much idea about what all the actions mean, and do not understand the drone of words that accompanies them all. The main drama of the luring and forceful expulsion of evil is obvious to all, however.

Most Gurungs appear to see little conflict between 'medicines' and healing rituals. Throughout their history they have used the two alongside each other. Now that western doctors have replaced those medicines obtained from the high forests, the Gurungs do not find it difficult to continue to use 'medicines' alongside the rituals of the *poju*. The villager's chief interest is in the comparative efficacy and cost of various remedies: at present it could well be argued that western medicine has advantages as far as efficacy is concerned, but is more expensive and less interesting or socially satisfying than ritual. Numerous examples of the way in which people used the two systems alongside each other occurred during our stay; they paid no attention to the fact that the premises

were totally different, but merely sought the most effective treatment. The importance of this is that it suggests that western medical technology does not necessarily discredit the older 'magical' practices. The two may blend well. Thus those who had seen western medicine in action in the army were easily absorbed back into the village and immediately sought magical healing. On many occasions people came to us for medicine, for example for coughs, when they had already undergone a small magical rite for the same affliction. If they recovered they might decide that either of the two remedies had been responsible. For instance, the old woman in the house next door to us had a severe skin rash and went off with a whole tube of our skin ointment which she vigorously applied. A few days later we learnt that she had recovered, after the *poju* had performed a special rite over her! Perhaps the outstanding example was the *poju* himself. While still daily carrying out magical rites, he was a great admirer of the 'Shining' hospital where he had been cured after being severely burnt. On one occasion all his family had Asian 'flu and he sacrificed a cock in front of the house to drive it away. A few days later we met the whole family just returning from the hospital where they had been for injections.

Yet it would be wrong to paint a completely harmonious picture. There are signs that some of the younger, more intelligent, people are aware of a clash between the two systems. Thus a boy at school in Pokhara said that he would prefer to use western medicine for minor complaints, while other people, he thought, still preferred the *poju*. The headmaster of the local school, who had been for some time in Kathmandu, was also somewhat keener on western medicine and a little sceptical of the *poju*. But the fact that his father, who had neither been in the army nor away from the village, nor received any formal education, was more sceptical than any other villager about magical healing, suggests that education and army service are less important than personality and intelligence in causing scepticism. This is also illustrated in the case of the *poju's* son. He had received little education, unlike a number of young men in the village, and had not been able to get into the army. Yet he was by far the most articulate and sensitive informant on the question of the irreconcilability of the two systems. Probably the fact that he was at this time taking over his father's role as *poju* made him especially sensitive to the clash. When I asked him whether a general *puja*

carried out for the benefit of the village sick was good or bad he replied that he had "two thoughts" ([Gg] *ni,* [Nep.] *bicar*). "Science"—and he used the word which he had heard on the radio—told him that this was a bad custom, but as a Gurung he thought it was good. He then said that as a practising *poju*, when he was doing a sacrifice, he had the same two thoughts. He listened to the radio a good deal, and it seems clear that he had picked up some of the denunciations of 'superstitious healing' from that source.

Although I was unable to find out how much time is devoted on 'Radio Nepal' to denigrating 'old superstitions', it is clearly a belief among some development planners and medical practitioners that alternative, traditional, systems must be swept out of the way. Yet there seems little reason for such attacks. Nepal is so ill-equipped medically that there is plenty of work for everyone. Given the present inadequacies, the ritual experts are probably doing as much good, judged in terms of human happiness and hope, as are the doctors. Nor if Thak is representative, do they intentionally obstruct the work of other doctors.

One major difference between the magical and medical practitioners is that western-type doctors really do have access to a superior technique (judged solely by the criteria of physical results). There is still much hocus pocus embedded in 'western' style medicine, and poor medical facilities plus the inability to change the basic causes of disease means that patients often become ill again when they return home. Yet it *can* be legitimately argued that if a patient is prepared to spend time and money attending a good doctor (if there is one available), he does have a higher chance of recovering from typhoid or TB than if he sacrifices cocks and says spells. Undoubtedly a number of villagers realize this, and hence they are keen to obtain western medicines. There is no doubt that if there was an effective dispensary, run by someone who was trusted, and providing cheap treatment, there would be no shortage of patients. But the present cost of medical treatment is still too high for all but an occasional visit by a middling-rich or affluent villager. I remember no case where a poor Gurung family went to the local hospital, and it is doubtful whether the lower castes from the village will ever go. It is impossible to persuade them that Rs 50 for medical treatment which may save a person from crippling disease, is money well spent. Whereas the *poju* was aware of the wealth of the family

he was treating and his fees were geared accordingly, western medicine is standardized in cost. Consequently there is a growing double standard of health. One of the major features of a class system is being created—money can buy better health.

A rough indication of the relative cost of hospital treatment as compared to treatment by the *poju* shows the following. In the household inventories which I obtained, three out of seven people said that they had spent between Rs 5-10 in the previous year on medicine, the other four had spent between Rs 20-24.[42] As a proportion of their total budgets, these sums are very small. But none of the family members had been seriously ill. For a major illness, requiring a minor operation or a few days in hospital, up to Rs 100 would probably be required. When I asked how much it would cost for a lower caste man, obviously dying of some liver or heart disease, to be taken to Pokhara and given medicine, several people gave this figure. Likewise, when a man had a bad thorn in his hand he went to a nearby clinic and spent some sixteen days away from the village. Each injection cost him Rs 2½ and the actual extraction Rs 7. The whole visit cost about Rs 100 and he had to go again later since the arm was not properly cured. Such cash amounts are beyond the reach of the poorer villagers. Even villagers of middling wealth may have to sell off capital. Thus when I visited a man whose son was later diagnosed as having TB, I found him wrapping up his wife's golden ear-rings which would have to be sold to pay for the treatment. Probably over half the cost arises from the need to pay for food and lodging near the hospital, rather than the actual medical treatment. Some villagers have relatives with whom they may stay, but many have to hire accommodation, and food is notoriously expensive in town. The fact that the *poju* is at hand and can treat sick people in their own homes is probably one of his main attractions. A sick person is naturally loath to walk or be carried down a 2,000 feet rocky slope, and then over twelve miles of rough ground, to a place where he will be among strangers.

It seems hardly worth trudging off to Pokhara for small ailments—a cut, sprain, headache, bites, cough, sore chest. Thus, as he walks around the village, the *poju* is constantly being asked to do small rites, blowing *mantras* to heal a sore, tying a charm round a fretful baby's neck, blowing down a tube onto a woman's swollen and painful gums. For such small cures he is given 1 rupee, plus either a meal or a bowl of husked rice. For

the many rites which take a number of hours he will be given a meal and drink, millet or maize and a little rice worth about Rs 3., a piece of the sacrificial animal worth about the same, and Rs 3-5. Thus a major rite will cost a person about Rs 10-15. Probably a similar sum will be spent on feeding neighbours, but this is merely an exchange, for the giver will later be entertained free on a number of similar occasions. Since a person also has to pay for the initial divination, and may well go on to do other rites, it is likely that for the treatment of a serious illness up to Rs 30 may be spent (in cash and kind). This obviously compares favourably with treatment in Pokhara. When an old man in the second richest family in the village was very ill, the *poju* did a big rite for him and several smaller rites. The total cost was about Rs 30. Later he was taken to the Shining Hospital where he and those accompanying him stayed for several days, at a total cost of up to Rs 100. After being discharged from the hospital, he died in the village. Neither treatment had been effective, but the former was cheaper, more dramatic and emotionally satisfying.

In the treatment by the *poju,* the cause of the disease was located in an evil supernatural power, and this may have given those concerned satisfaction since they now knew *why* he was ill. Then the bringer of disease was dramatically expelled and destroyed. This dramatization, combined with the near presence of family and neighbours (who are required in most rituals to be present and to participate, especially in blessing the invalid) would give comfort. Even if the physical aspects of the disease were not dealt with, and it is clear that only psycho-somatic illness could be effectively attacked by such methods, the ritual would help dispel the depression and anxiety which accompanies illness. At least other people could be seen to care, and something active was being done. The *poju* himself was an enthusiastic and dedicated practitioner and had an extremely gentle and reassuring 'bedside manner'. During our departure from the village, when we were both in a highly wrought-up state, he performed a small ritual over us, blowing, blessing and putting a small *jantra* or charm round our necks. His manner was so calm and reassuring that we were immediately soothed and refreshed: it was easy to see his likely effect on sick and worried people.

Naturally enough, in many cases both western and ritual healing methods fail to cure a person. Such failures do not, however, mean that people question the general efficacy of such

methods. As anthropologists have shown,[43] there are many ways of explaining such failures within the current system of thought. In the case of ritual healing, the original diagnosis may have been at fault, so that the wrong rite was enacted. Or it may have been that the rite was marred by some technical error, either on the part of the ritual expert, assistant, audience or patient. The Gurungs do not, however, appear to have the idea that the mental and emotional state of the patient is important here; he need not feel penitent, and the rite will not be spoilt by hidden hostilities among the participants. Even if it is the correct rite, perfectly performed, it may be too late, or the evil power against whom it is directed may be too powerful to dislodge.

The many difficulties, and the doubtful resolution of the conflict against sickness, are given dramatic expression in an action which takes place near the end of most of them. The *poju* examines a particular item, often a part of the sacrificed animal such as the liver, to see whether the rite has been successful and the patient will recover. Often the omen is not entirely good or entirely bad, and a wide margin of error in prediction is allowed for. What seems strange to an observer is that the patient never seems angry when, immediately after an expensive rite, the *poju* pronounces that it has all been vain, the omens are bad. It seems to be felt that it was worth making the attempt and, probably, that omens are fallible and may turn out to be wrong. The result of all these mechanisms explaining failures is that the ritual expert never appears to be blamed if a person does not recover; nor do people lose faith in his methods. Indeed, they are likely to come back for more: failure reinforces the system just as much as success and merely requires that it be tightened up, rather than destroyed. We have already seen how, if one rite does not work, one should try another.

The same types of explanation are probably also given by villagers when western medicine is not successful. It may have been a wrong diagnosis, leading to the wrong medicine being used. The medicine may have been wrongly applied. The disease may already have become too ingrained, or be too powerful for any type of medicine. The doctor is not to blame, nor is the system of western medicine. When, finally, a person dies, there is no point in blaming anyone. A person's death is foreshadowed in the moment of his birth; the hour is written on his forehead, and no medicine or ritual can avert it. Gurungs often used the phrase

kal kaba (*kal* [Nep.] = death, fate, *kaba* [Gg.] to come) to describe the reason for death occurring. There is no point in feeling guilt or anger.

It will be seen that the amount of success/failure in the two methods of healing is not necessarily the important factor in selecting between methods of treatment. Efficiency is hidden by the fact that people may select explanations of success and failure to support the system which they find preferable on other grounds. Thus, if western medicine fails in a particular case they can notice and stress this, or they may say that it is explained by one of the factors described above. If a person is cured they may select out a previous injection, or a previous ritual, as responsible for this, since almost all seriously ill people receive both types of treatment simultaneously. Thus choice between the two is largely a matter of faith; no one understands *how* either actually operates, so that the 'scientific' truth or falsehood of the two systems cannot be compared. The factors which lead a person to use one or the other system are the relative cost, the relative availability, the relative enjoyment, and the relative prestige of the practitioners. A villager will probably have heard that certain treatments are especially well performed at the hosptial—sore teeth extracted, bad burns healed, TB cured, for example—while the *poju* is known to be especially good in cases of shivering, listlessness, headache, and other symptoms which are believed to be caused by evil spirits or witches. Since the *poju* is himself consulted in almost all serious cases of illness, he, more than anyone else in the village, will have an idea of the types of disease which he can cure and those types which will need western medicines. Like the General Practitioners in the West, he refers certain types of case on to the hospital, suggesting the rite of the jabbing needle if his own rites do not help.

The Gurung reaction to the various discomforts and pains which formed the constant background to their lives was varied. They appeared to take as part of the natural order much illness against which westerners would try to fight, especially dysentery, sores and bad coughs. This was obviously because there had been little opportunity to fight them in the past. When we supplied medicines for all these ailments, villagers were eager to procure them. Sudden accidents, burns, cuts, sprains, seemed to upset them disproportionately. Their normally gentle, calm, behaviour would be immediately transformed into alarm, excitement,

anxiety. We saw this happen on several occasions. Children suffered accidents and there was then much hysterical fussing by the relatives. How far this was due to the fact that the sufferers were children it is difficult to say. The only parallel in daily life was the panic and fluster when large animals threatened to cause an accident by the water tap in the centre of the village. Certain other ailments, particularly the Asian 'flu which spread round the village during our stay, caused great depression among the sufferers. They would lie moaning gently to themselves, sometimes rocking slightly backwards and forwards. But the sore throat, headache, stiffness of joints and temperature which accompanied the disease may have also included physiological pressures inevitably leading to depression. Often sick people were as cheerful as healthy persons. Both adults and children were very stoical when we applied painful medicines or took off dressings, and babies seemed to cry less than those of comparable age in the west. Another feature was that there seemed to be a tendency for illness to run in families. Often all the members of a family asked for medicine in one day. It is hard to say how much this was the genuine result of infection and contagion in a situation of extremely intimate living, and how far it was because one member of a family reported back about our medicines and the rest came out of curiosity. Certainly there was some hypochondria and attention-seeking in a number of cases.

One basic attitude to sickeness was that it was a communal affair. The sick person should not be isolated, even if he had TB or what we would consider to be infectious or contagious disease. If anything, the patient should be surrounded even more closely, given group support during his or her temporary weakness. This feeling is shown most clearly in healing rituals, which can be seen mainly as a means of crowding together as many concerned neighbours and friends as possible into a small room with the sufferer. The western concept of isolation is therefore alien to the Gurungs; illness is an attack on society, and like animals in a field when threatened, people must huddle closer together for protection and support. While the patient lies passively in the centre, his friends and relatives need to be actively struggling against the evil that has brought the disease, forming a ring round him. Disease is only partly controllable, success is by no means automatic, but it is worth trying all possible remedies, ritual and western, in order to ensure relief; just as it is worth combining

Hinduism, Buddhism, and local religious methods in order to tap as much spiritual power as possible, even though they may appear (to the outside observer) to be based on entirely contradictory premises.

The future medical prospects for the Gurungs depend entirely on the economic and social prospects for Nepal as a whole. If one believed that Nepal's wealth will increase, that foreign aid will continue to pour in, that expenditure on health campaigns and medical services will grow, it could be argued that the availability of western medicine will be increased and the incidence of disease will lessen. How long such benefits can continue in the face of increased crowding, worsening diet growing pressure on natural resources, and a general lowering of the standard of living consequent on continued very high population growth, it is impossible to say. If the economic situation deteriorates, and particularly foreign aid-instigated health facilities decline, then the Gurungs will probably retreat to their own stand-by system of ritual healing and herbal cures which have served them for so many centuries.

NOTES

1. The London-Cornell Project for East and Sout-East Asian Studies and the School of Oriental and African Studies, London, provided financial support for this research. Professor C.von Fürer-Haimendorf supervised the research. H.M. Government, Nepal, allowed the research to be undertaken. Dr. Gerald Turner then of the 'Shining Hospital', Pokhara, helped in numerous ways described below. The inhabitants of the village where we stayed made us welcome. To all these institutions and individuals I am most grateful. I am also grateful to the Syndics of the Cambridge University Press for permission to use material which first appeared in *Resources and Population: A study of the Gurungs of Nepal* (Cambridge, 1976).
2. During the period 1970-5 there has been a national plan to set up health posts, each covering a population of approximately 15-20,000 persons. There are eleven of these in Kaski district, for example. Each is staffed by a Health Assistant who deals with routine referrals. Since 1975 a Leprosy Control Programme has also been in operation, locating and treating this disease. I owe this information to Mrs. M. Pearson of Liverpool University.
3. Macfarlane, *Resources and Population;* Donald A. Messerschmidt, *The Gurungs of Nepal; Conflict and Change in Village Society* (Warminster, England 1976); B. Pignède, *Les Gurungs: une population himalayenne du Népal* (Paris, 1966).
4. The most detailed study of the incidence of disease in Nepal is contained in chapters 5-10 of R.M. Worth and N.K. Shah, *Nepal Health Survey* (Honolulu, 1969). For some interesting comparative material for other central Nepalese

villages, see *Contributions to Nepalese Studies* (Jnl. of Nepal and Asian Studies, Tribhuvan University), vol. 3, June 1976, a special volume devoted to 'Anthropology, health and development'.

5. Cited in G. Myrdal, *Asian Drama* (1968), ii, p. 1416.
6. C.E. Taylor, 'A medical survey of the Kali Gandak and Pokhara Valley of Central Nepal', *Geographical Review*, 41 (July-Oct. 1951), pp. 428-31.
7. John Aspin, 'Tuberculosis among the Gurkhas', *Tubercle*, July 1947, xxviii, no. 7 and no. 8. According to J. Morris, 'Social life in Central Nepal' (Cambridge University M.Sc. thesis, 1935), pp. 44-5, "the physical condition of nearly all Gurkhas improves most markedly during the first year after their enlistment".
8. Taylor, 'Medical Survey', pp. 430-1.
9. This figure was suggested to me, from memory, by the then British recruiting officer, Colonel Langland. There is a list of types of disability for which recruits were rejected in 1932 in Morris, 'Social life', p. 46. Out of a total of 22,888, over one quarter were finally rejected as unfit.
10. Taylor, 'Medical Survey', p. 429.
11. J. Morris, *A Winter in Nepal* (1963), p. 97. Dr. Gerald Turner, then a mission doctor at Pokhara, commented that "this suggested explanation is clearly not true. The heart disease found here is often rheumatic in nature or from other causes, but not due to this cause" (private communication).
12. D.C. Morley, 'Ghurka Bronchitis', *Jnl. Roy. Med. Corps*, xcv (1950), pp. 185-95; cited in H.B. Gurung, 'Pokhara Valley, Nepal Himalaya' (Edinburgh Univ. Ph.D. thesis, 1965).
13. Worth, *Nepal Health Survey*, p. 99.
14. *Idem*.
15. *Nepal and the Gurkhas* (H.M.S.O., 1965), p. 36; B.P. Shreshta, *The Economy of Nepal* (Bombay, 1967), p. 35.
16. Worth, *Nepal Health Survey*, pp. 87-8.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 69-70.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 71.
19. Taylor, *Medical Survey of Kali Gandak*, p. 427.
20. The *carjat* in Thak tend to be the wealthier strata; for a more detailed account of this ranking system see Macfarlane, *Resources and Population*, pp. 17-8.
21. Worth, *Nepal Health Survey*, p 49.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 97. Dr. Turner commented that "the incidence of tooth caries is 'fairly high'".
23. *Ibid.*, p. 429.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 93.
25. *Ibid.*, p 49ff.
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 59-60.
27. Taylor, 'Medical Survey', p. 429. The Biratnagar figures came from a private communication from Dr. P.J. Cunningham.
28. See the table in M. Nag, *Factors Affecting Human Fertility in Non-Industrial Societies* (New Haven, 1962), p. 184. The rates may drop as low as 2%, or rise up to 20%.
29. *Gurungs*, p. 246.
30. Macfarlane, *Resources and Population*, p. 277.
31. According to Dr. Turner, writing of the patients at Pokhara mission hospital,

"worm infestations are exceedingly common. Few escape this, and our laboratary, which has been functioning for two years, now often picks up triple infestations, including hookworm which is widespread".

32. Worth, *Nepal Health Survey*, p. 73.
33. Dr. Turner commented that "this must cause backache, lumbago, at times sciatica. There is firm evidence of this in coolies in India."
34. Worth, *Nepal Health Survey*, p. 105.
35. A description of an attempt to carry this out, utilizing school teachers as health workers, was made among the Sherpas and described in S.D.R. & A. Lang, 'Kunde Hospital and a demographic survey of the Upper Khumbu, Nepal', *New Zealand Medical Jnl.*, 74, no. 470 (July 1971).
36. There is a summary of such fears in Margaret Mead (ed.), *Cultural Patterns and Technical Change* (New York, 1955), pp. 205-8.
37. *Gurungs*, pp. 105-6.
38. V.W. Turner, *Lunda Medicine and the Treatment of Disease* (Papers of the Rhodes-Livingstone Museum, 15, 1964).
39. Here we await the findings of Mr. Simon Strickland, attached to the Department of Social Anthropology at Cambridge, who is currently studying ritual and myth among the Gurungs in a village a few miles to the north of Thak, as part of a wider study of Gurung society.
40. The term 'godling' is used by John T. Hitchcock, *The Magars of Banyan Hill* (New York, 196), chapter 3. It seems more appropriate for these small deities than the grander term 'gods'.
41. *Gurungs*, p. 58.
42. These are Nepalese rupees. In 1969 there were approximately 25 rupees to the £ sterling, and 10 rs. to the dollar.
43. Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (1971), pp. 641-2 summarizes the work of Tylor, Frazer, Evans-Pritchard and other anthropologists on this subject.

CHAPTER V

THE LAW OF DEBT IN NEPAL: PRIVATE RIGHTS AND STATE RIGHTS IN A HINDU KINGDOM

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THE Nepalese civil codes have been studied up to now mainly by social anthropologists who dealt with caste hierarchy and religious problems (Gaborieau, 1966, 1972 & 1977; Macdonald; Bouillier; Höfer). They emphasized the king's i.e. the state's rights in controlling the people and the familial, social and religious behaviour.

All these topics fall in the branch of law which we would call criminal; it is characterized by the fact that in those matters it is the king who initiates the prosecution in the interest of the state. In the traditional Hindu law, the Dharmashastras (*dharmaśāstra*), which remain the main source of the Nepalese law, this branch is called *prakīrnāka* (Lingat, 263-269). It is opposed to the other branch, which we would term private law, dealing with private litigation, where prosecution is started by the complaint of a subject and traditionally called *vyavahāra* (Lingat, 269-283). The old Sanskrit terminology has however been replaced by another coined in India during the period of Muslim domination and kept also by the British Raj: the criminal branch is termed *phaujdārī* (P. *faujdārī*) and the civil branch *dēwanī* (P. *diwānī*) (see code of 1935, I, 9-10, para 18-19; code of 1963, 5-6, para 9-10).

The law of debt falls in the civil branch: it is indeed the first topic of private litigation in the traditional Hindu law (Manu, VIII, 47 sq.) as well as in the Nepalese law. Its study provides a new perspective in the interpretation of the Nepalese legal texts; and a most interesting one since it stands at the intersection of private and state rights; it is part of the wider topic of transactions, *len-*

den (H.), or in older texts, *lin-din* (N.), literally taking, *linu*, and giving, *dinu*. Now transactions are of two kinds (code 1853, 91, para 12). First, state transactions, *sārkariyā,* involving the state as one of the two partners, as for instance the dealings of the peasant with the state; these state transactions have already been amply studied by M.C. Regmi (Regmi, 1963-1968, 1971 and 1976). The others are the private ones, *duniyā,* in which the partners are both subjects of the king dealing with their private property: for example, sale and purchase, exchange, deposits, etc. ...; the law of debt in the Nepalese codes is treated under this wider topic of private transactions.

This paper analyzes the legal theory of debt: what are the rules of lending and borrowing? What are the obligations and rights of both creditor and debitor? When does the state interfere in the transaction? What was the historical evolution of the law in this matter? How do these private transactions compare with other private, state or religious transactions? In other words, where does the theory of debt stand in the general theory of social relationships outlined in the Nepalese codes? This paper thus focusses on legal theory; we shall compare it to the actual practice as revealed in historical documents and anthropological studies only in passing.

Our main sources are the official texts. We have a long series of documents on the subject. The most detailed ones are the three successive legal codes of 1853, 1935 and 1963 through which we can trace the basic principles as well as the evolution of the law. Most of the material is found in the chapters devoted to private transactions (code of 1853, 88-111; code of 1935, III, 107-128; code of 1963, ch. 17-22, 150-174). Complementary references are to be found throughout the three codes, for instance in chapters on court procedure, state transactions, inheritance; and, in the first code only, in chapters about slaves and bondservants (code of 1853, 349-368).

But while, on many other topics, there is little evidence before or after the three codes, on the law of debt, there is a much longer series of documents. It started from the so-called code of Rām Shāh, king of Gorkha, ascribed to the second half of the 17th century but available only in a version of the early 19th; then, government orders of the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th century (Regmi, 1971; Nepali) supplemented by observations of British travellers like Kirkpatrick, Hamilton and Hodgson; finally,

even after the 1963 code, new enactments were made by the government within the framework of the land reform programme.

The nature of these legal texts and the problems of their interpretation have been explained in other publications the reader may consult (Gaborieau, 1977, 193-200: Höfer, 1979, 39-42).

CREDITOR DEBTOR RELATIONSHIP: ELEMENTS AND TERMINOLOGY

In the Hindu tradition borrowing and lending on interest is a lawful transaction, the elements of which are clearly defined with a precise terminology. How far does Nepalese law follow this tradition? Did new foreign elements interfere?

Debt. The term which is most often used in legal texts as well as in common speech is rn (Sk.), the technical word of the Dharmashastras usually pronounced *rin*. It has the most extensive meaning: it signifies both what has been borrowed or lent, i.e. the loan; and the obligations and rights which result from the transaction, i.e. the obligation for the debtor to repay the loan and the interests (if any) and the claim of the creditor for such a repayment. In the second sense, *rin* has only one synonym in Nepali, *sar-sapāti*; *dain* (A.), taken from the Islamic culture and commonly used in India with the same two meanings, is not found in Nepal.

Loan. All other technical words refer only to the loan: *paīco* is the real vernacular term for any sort of loan in cash or kind; *karja* or *karjā* (from A. *qarz*), with the same meaning, is the common legal term; *sapāt* has also usually the same meaning in legal texts, but tends to be reserved in common speech for short term cash loans.

Loans are of two kinds: in cash and kind. This distinction is traditionally rendered by the two terms *dām*, literally money, from the name of a very small coin; and *anna,* literally grains, for loans in kind are usually in grains (code of Rām Shāh; code of 1853); in the texts of the 20th century, Islamic terms are usually substituted, *naqd* (A.) and *jins* (A.) respectively. This opposition is to be kept in mind since traditionally higher interests are levied on loans in kind.

Creditor and debtor. The two persons involved in the transaction are designated by two series of terms: one is descriptive, the other implying a value judgment. On the one side, the creditor is described *rin dine*, the one who gives the loan. But, even in legal texts he is given honorific titles: he is usually named *sāhū*, which is

the form of address as well as of reference for honourable and rich persons, opulent merchants and has become the general name for money-lenders. He is also called *dhanī*, owner, rich man.

The debtor is described by the phrase *rin line*, he who takes the loan, or shorter adjectives carrying the same meaning like *rini*. But he is most often designated by the rather depreciatory term of *asāmī* or *āsāmī*, a word of Arabic origin which means one who is named, whose name is entered in a register, a person under a jurisdiction, a customer; in short, a person in an inferior position.

This terminology is thus not value free: the relationship of the credior to the debtor appears as unequal: the former is honoured while the second is rather despised.

Principal and interest. In the Hindu tradition levying interest is not only lawful (in contradistinction to the Islamic law where interest, *ribā,* is sinful) but it is expected. Interest-free loans are granted only as favours; usually the debtor has to repay, on one side, the principal called *sāū* or *sāwā* (N. perhaps derived from *sāhu*); on the other side, the interests *byāz* (H. loan word); the words *nājā* or from 1945 *munāphā* (A. *munafaa*) were introduced for interest earned in commercial and industrial enterprises. The whole, principal and interest, constitute what is due to the creditor, *sāhu ko thailī* (N.), the "purse of the money-lender"

Pledge. Then comes the question of security. The creditor may or may not ask for a pledge as a security for the repayment. If he does not, the loan is called *kāpāli,* (N.) literally "on the head" (of the debtor). If he does, one says that the debtor has deposited a pledge, *rākhnu*, and that the creditor has taken it, *linu*. Several words are used for pledge: *nāso* and *dharot* are general non-specific terms meaning any kind of deposit against a loan or not; two other words are specific to mean a pledge deposited as a security against a loan: *dhito,* the real Nepali word (from Sk. *dṛṣt,* confidence?) and *bandhaka,* the Sanskrit technical term used all over India; in Nepali we come across this erudite form or in its old Nepalese form *bādhā;* it means literally bond, a tie, i.e. what ties the debtor to the creditor.

There is a twofold classification of pledges. First, according to the nature of the property involved; in the 1853 code (pp. 105-108, specially para. 8 and 9), they are of three categories in the following order: 1) immovable property (*acal* in later codes): houses and land (*ghar, khet, jamin*); 2) bodies (*jyū*): cattle (*caupāyā*) and men, the latter being either slaves (*kamārā, kamārī*) or bondservants

(*bādhā, badhetyāni*); 3) movable property (*cal* in later codes) like gold, silver, jewellery and household utensils. The second category is typical of the Hindu traditional context where bound human beings were treated as property; it is also the one which changed with the evolution of the law: slavery was abolished in 1925 and slaves are no longer mentioned from the 1935 code onwards; after 1951, money-lenders were no longer allowed to keep bond-servants, who are not mentioned in the 1963 code.

The second classification refers to the use the creditor makes of the pledge. If he does not use it, the pledge is known as *dṛiṣṭi bandhaki,* "pledge on sight"; we would say non-usufructuary mortgage; this is generally the case for movable property and may happen for bodies and immovable property. If the creditor uses the pledge, making an income out of it, this is known as *bhog-bandhaki,* "enjoyed mortgage"; we would say usufructuary mortgage; this is the way bodies and immovable property are most often pledged. Practice and vocabulary are here in accordance with those of India in modern times (Wilson).

Acknowledgement of debts. The last element of the debtor/creditor relationship is the acknowledgment of the debt and the engagement of the debtor to pay his dues. Traditionally, in the Dharmashastras as well as in early Nepalese law, no written acknowledgment was obligatory: the engagement of the debtor backed by witnesses, *sākṣī* (Sk. N.), was enough. That is why the only native word for such an engagement is *bhāka,* from *bhāsa,* speech, word. But written acknowledgments are known in practice from the earlier texts and are designated by a borrowed word, *tamasuk* (from A. *tamassuk*); here again can be seen an influence of administrative procedure during the Muslim period. The word *bākhā* was however kept in a compound word, *bhākha pātra,* meaning a written engagement, distinct or not from the *tamasuk,* to pay off the debt at a given time.

All the elements of the debtor/creditor relationship have been surveyed. It is quite clear that the Nepalese law refers to the very old tradition of the Dharmashastras, as attested by the main word *ṛṇ*. But other words testify that from this common tradition there were two kinds of developments: some are particular to this country as attested by a set of purely Nepali words like *pāico, sāhu, sāū, dhito, bhākhā*; Nepal has in part evolved its own vocabulary; on the other hand, other words point to an Indian influence either through the common Hindu tradition, with words like *anna,*

dām, byāz, bandhak; or through the Islamic tradition introduced during the Mogul period (see words like *asāmī, tamsauk*).

RULES FOR VALIDITY OF DEBTS

Before going into the details of the rights and obligations of creditor and debtor, let us analyse the general rules of validity for debts claims and their evolution.

Computation of interest. The most frequently recurring rule is about the rate of interest. When the 1963 code was promulgated and land reform started, it was officially publicized that in order to curb indebtness the rate of interest had been reduced to 10 per cent per annum. Was this a novelty? When reading through the whole series of the texts, one soon realizes that the law had always been such. There is even an odd text of king Prithvi Narayan dated 1773 saying that interest should be abolished altogether (Nepali, 187). It can be summed up with three rules (code of Rām Shāh, para 4-5; code of 1853, 92, para 13-14; code of 1935, III, 111, para 5 and 5k; code of 1963, ch. 17, § 151, para 6 & 7):

(1) A maximum rate of interest is stated. Up to the code of 1935, it was 10% per annum, *dasaud*, for a loan in cash; 20%, *bisaud*, for one in kind. From 1935 onward, there is only one legal maximum rate of 10% for both cash and kind.

(2) Compounded interests (*byāz ko byāz*) are prohibited.

(3) Interests should not be levied for a period more than 10 years so that at the rate of 10%, $10 \times 10 = 100$, the amount of interests is equal to the principal. The total to be repaid by the debtor is only the double (*dobar*) of the loan; at a rate of 20% (for grains before 1935), the total to be repaid amounts to the treble (*tebar*).

The inspiration of this lenient legislation can be easily traced to the Dharmashastras, which fixed a maximum rate of interest, prohibited compounded interest and set a limit to the total amount to be repaid: double of the principal for cash; quintuple for grains (Manu, VIII, 140-143; 151-153). This is a good example of the rule of *dharma* having become a rule of law; in India the rule is summed up in the formula: "*dām dupat*", twice the amount of money (Wilson, p. 121): the Nepalese legislator kept strictly to the traditional principles as far as money is concerned; for grains, he has even softened the antique rule.

But does this mean that the religious injunctions were followed in practice? From the legal texts alone, we get an impression to

the contrary. This becomes apparent in the oldest text: "Previously, interests used to be levied indefinitely and after many years (...) many people were unable to pay off their debts, (...); all the people became indebted; therefore [new regulations are framed, etc ...]" (code of Rām Shah). All later codes have the same kinds of formulae which imply that in actual practice higher rates of interest were levied and allowed to accumulate for longer periods. There is evidence that in the first half of the 10th century interests went as high as 25% and even 50% (Regmi, 1971, 98-99); this is openly admitted by the code of 1853 which validated all the debts with a rate of interest higher than 10% which were contracted before November 1851 and allowed a higher rate for commercial loans; it also records that up to that time it was customary for the creditor to exact from the debtor, in addition to the interests, presents in kind: clarified butter and curds (code 1853, 102-103, para. 4; 93-94, para. 5). The continuance of such illegal practices is also noticed in the 1935 code (III, 111, para. 5). The present day officials know that high interests and presents are still exacted. But the law is one thing, actual practice another. From the legal point of view, a principle of *dharma* has been made a rule of law; the tribunals will not enforce the payment of interests higher than 10%. But the texts openly admit that there is a wide gap between legal theory and practice.

Time limit of debt claims. For how long will the creditor or his heirs be liable to pay their debts? From the origins up to the 1963 code included, there is no time limit for the claims of the creditor; the debt runs through generations; it is inherited and passes from the debtor to his heirs, heirs' heirs, etc ... indefinitely, being partitioned among the heirs (code of 1853, 93, para 1; code of 1935, III, 117, para. 21).

This general principle requires however two qualifications. The obligation to pay one's ascendants' debts is conditional on the acceptance of the inheritance: "If a son abandons his share of inheritance saying: 'I will not take my share [in the inheritance from] my father and will not repay the [loans he has] taken from creditors,' then the creditors may seize the property of the father but they cannot arrest the son who has refused to inherit the property of his father." (code of 1853, 93, para 2; see also 89, para1; code of 1935, III, 117, para 21; code of 1963, 155, para 21-22). Second qualification: are liable to pay the deceased's debts only those who get a share of his inheritance, i.e. sons, grandsons,

etc ..., or in their absence male collaterals or, as the case may be, daughter and daughter's son, or in case of escheat, the state; women who have normally no share in the inheritance are not liable to pay the debts of their father and the creditor has no claim on their personal property: *dāijo* given by their parents, or *pewā* given by their in-laws.

On time limit and the conditional inheritance of debts, Nepalese law diverges from the Dharmashastras (see last part of this paper). It is only recently with the land reform that rules were framed to abolish long standing debts; these new regulations were not inspired by the traditional law, but by other considerations of general policy.

Proofs of the claims. In the Hindu tradition, the proof of the claims of the creditor or of the defence of the debtor was afforded by witnesses, *sākṣī* (Sk.). The 1853 code still admits the oral testimony of witnesses, *sākṣī* or *gawāhī* (p.); but written proofs were gradually enforced. First, the acknowledgement of debt, *tamasuk*, signed by the debtor and two witnesses who should not be related to the creditor; each of the parties should have a copy of it; such documents, already in use in 1853, were made obligatory from 1935 on; the courts would not enforce the claims which were not backed by written proofs (Code of 1935, III, 109, para I-2; code of 1963, ch. 27, 151, para 1-2); moreover these acknowledgements were to be renewed every ten years or at the death of the debtor. Secondly, from an early date registration was made compulsory when human beings, i.e. bondservants, and land were pledged; from 1935 on, the government insisted on having all debts registered; even if land or human beings were not pledged, a copy of the deed should nevertheless be deposited with the administration; otherwise complaints would not be heard in the courts; the transaction would remain private without official guaranty. The 1963 code has a similar clause (150, para 1). With the land reform a drastic change occurred; all debts, old & new, had to be registered; but it is doubtful that all transactions were actually put under control; from my fieldwork in central Nepal (1964–1968 and 1975) I got an impression to the contrary.

Capacity to contract debts. The codes are silent about the capacity to stand as a creditor, may be because, the creditor being respected, his capacity should not be questioned outright. All provisions are about who has the capacity to become a debtor.

He should normally be a free man of mature age. Money

transactions are men's affairs. The mature age is fixed at 16 (Code of 1853, 90, para 5 and 99, para 12; code of 1935, 154, para 18); young boys should have the consent of their parents or tutor. Further restrictions are framed within the framework of the joint family: normally only the head of the joint family has the capacity to contract debts since he has the control of the undivided estate. Other men of a joint property only with the consent of the head of the household, failing which the creditor could seize only the personal gains and/or the shares of inheritance of such brothers and sons, not the whole estate (Code of 1853, 93, para 3-4; code of 1935, 110-113, para 6-9; code of 1963, 151-152, para 9-11).

Women's capacity is much more restricted. Married women cannot contract loans secured against family property without the consent of the family head, i.e. husband or adult son. They can only pledge their own property, if they have any; and here again there are limitations: secret transactions of a married woman with her creditor, without her husband's knowledge, are assimilated to adultery (code of 1853, 99, para 12-13); the creditor's claims are limited by the fact that he cannot exercise any constraint on a married woman, who belongs to her husband, to enforce the payment of his dues.

The limitations on the slaves' capacity are similar. They can secure loans only against their own personal property, if they have any; their master is not liable for their debts; the creditor cannot exercise any constraint on them because they belong to their master (Code of 1853, 97, para 7). After the abolition of slavery in 1925, these provisions had become objectless and disappeared from the code of 1935.

This comparison between slave and wife throws nevertheless a bright light on the social structure: both have a comparable status in such a society with a strong patrilineal bias: both master and husband are called *khasam*, lord, master. Only adult free males have full legal capacity and this only when they have become heads of their own households.

Strict conditions are thus made for the validation of debts. A maximum rate of interest is fixed, the onus of the proof lies on the creditor, capacity to contract debts is limited, inheritance of debt is conditional. The evolution of the legislation has not been marked by the lowering of the rate of interest, as often falsely publicized, since the official rate has always been the same; but

by controlling the proofs through written acknowledgements and registration; and, more recently, by putting a time limit to the claims of the creditors. These new steps aimed mainly at protecting debtors and controlling—with little success—the lending and borrowing transactions.

RIGHTS OF THE CREDITOR

The Nepalese law, in spite of clauses for the protection of the debtor, bends heavily in favour of the creditor. His duties are few: they have been analyzed above. His rights are many.

In his unequal relationship with the debtor, he ranks first; he is in the highest position. In the Dharmashastras, the question of debts is treated under the heading of the king's duty to enforce the payment of debts; for instance, Manu first outlines the creditor's rights (VIII, 47-50) before going to safeguards for the debtor (VIII, 51sq). Nepalese law continues this tradition; the first British people who visited Nepal were interested in this subject since they worked for a Company of merchants; they remarked that the Nepalese law offered tolerably good protection to the creditors although the tribunals were slow in hearing the complaints (Kirkpatrick, 204; Hamilton, 104; Hodgson). In the legal texts we have from 1853 onwards, the creditor stands first; he is the man in his right, an upright man; such is the etymological meaning of *sāhu* (from Sk. *sādhu*). This inequality in favour of the creditor is also manifest in the calculation of court fees: he pays 10% of the amount involved while the debtor pays 20% (Code of 1853, 90, para 6).

Provided his claims are lawful and proved, the law stands by his side, confirms his rights and gives him large powers to enforce the payments of his dues. We shall analyze successively what he can recover from the debtor and what means he can resort to for that purpose.

What can the creditor get? He has traditionally a claim on both the property and the body of the debtor and his heirs. As a first resort, he may appropriate the pledge, if any, after the date stipulated for the repayment has elapsed: "After the stipulated time has elapsed, the debtor cannot redeem [his pledge]; it can be seized by the creditor [who] is allowed to seize and sell all [the pledged properties:] land, precious metals, goods, jewellery, cattle, slaves, etc..." (Code of 1853, 107, para 10). If the pledge

consists of immovable or movable property, there is no problem in the unlimited use the creditor may make of it. Among the pledged "bodies", cattle and slaves are similarly used or sold; a problem arises only with bondservants, (*bādhā*); it had been customary, before 1853, to seize them and sell them as slaves to recover the debts (Nepali, 186-187; Regmi, 1971, 118-120); but in the wake of steps periodically taken to reduce slavery, drastic restrictions were put on this practice; from 1834, such transactions were controlled by the government (Regmi, 1971, 190): from 1857, this practice was prohibited but it must have continued since severe punishments were stipulated for infractions (Code of 1853, 355, para 1).

If there is no pledge, the creditor may seize the property of the debtor and of his heirs; seizing is termed *pac garnu* (N.), *hāt hāl*. (N.) or *jāyajāt garnu* (from P. *jā-i-dād*). It is clearly written in all the codes that the creditor has the right to seize all kinds of property, except women's personal property; at the death of the debtor, he is entitled to pay himself on the succession before the estate is partitioned among the heirs (Code of 1853, 90, para 6 and 93, para 1); code of 1935, III, 115-117, para 18-19; code of 1963, 154, para 19 and 87, para 42).

As a last resort he could formerly seize the person of the debtor or his family or his heirs and make them work for him. He was allowed to do so in the *Dharmashastras* (Manu, VIII, 177) and, in Nepalese law, up to the code of 1853 included (Code of 1853, 99, para 15). Before 1853, it was even a recognized practice to turn such debtors into bondservants and even slaves; British authors (Hamilton, 235) say that in most cases free men were made slaves out of insolvency. Some documentary evidence is available on the subject (Regmi, 1971, 190). After 1853, the power of the creditor over the debtor was restricted to bondage, which since 1935 assumed a milder form (Code of 1935, III, 127-128). After 1951, and in the code of 1963, the creditor is no longer given any right on the body of the debtor.

Means used by the creditor. Traditionally he could use any means, pacific or violent, going to the king's courts only as a last resort. All these means are explored in the Dharmashastras (Manu, VIII, 49 and 79; Kane, III, 438-442). In the Nepalese legal texts we get a glimpse of the practice in Nepal as well as of its evolution.

In the 19th century, the creditor had a great freedom to recover his dues by his own means without going through the judicial

machinery which neglected complaints for the recovery of debts (Hamilton, 104). When persuasion or threat were not successful, he could resort to violence, either moral or physical.

For moral violence, there was the traditional Indian method, called *dharna* (Wilson, 138): the creditor would sit and fast in front of the door of the debtor until he paid; should he die during his fast, the sin would fall on the debtor: "A poor creditor, in general, has no resource against a powerful debtor, except sitting Dharna on him; and unless the creditor be a Brahman, he may sit long enough before he attracts any notice." (Hamilton, 104).

Physical coercion was the most often sought resort of a creditor who was powerful enough. He could not only seize the estate of the debtor, but mishandle him as amply documented in the first half of the 19th century (Hodgson): he could humiliate him by throwing him in garbage or latrines, fetter him, imprison him in his house and make him work. The 1853 code testifies to those practices but puts limitations on them: property could be seized only in the presence of honourable witnesses (96-97, para 1-6); physical coercion and mishandling were regulated: "When a creditor arrests a debtor who does not repay the loan he has given him, he may not throw him in the sewer, nor confine him in latrines, nor fetter him, nor tie him; he must give him food and water; and he may either lock him in an upper room or in the ground floor to compel him to work as a repayment or keep him confined there to compel him to pay his debts." (Code of 1853, 98, para 15). Such private imprisonments must have been common since the code discusses the order of precedence of several creditors wanting to arrest the same debtor (Code of 1853, 100, para 17-20; 109, para 4). Married women and slaves were protected from direct physical coercion, not because of any kindness toward them, but because it would infringe on their husband's or masters' rights (code of 1853, 97, para 5 and 7).

By contrast, the pressure of the tribunals was mild at that time, as summarized in the following article: "If the debtor has money, make him pay; if he has no money but got a house, rice-fields, land, household utensils, cattle, make him pay out of this property; if he has not even such property, have him make a written arrangement [with the creditor]. Take [as court fees] 10% of the amount from the creditor and 20% from the debtor. The creditor will not get the debtor imprisoned for his debt; the tribunals should not jail him." (Code of 1853, 90, para 6; see also

97, para 6). In the 19th century law, the tribunals could thus, at the request of the creditor, seize all the property of the debtor; if there were many creditors, the property was to be equitably partitioned among them according to a procedure called *dāmāsahī* (H.) (Code of 1853, 109-111). If after that, part of the debts remained unpaid, nothing could be done except writing down an acknowledgement of the amount still due; the creditor could not have a debtor imprisoned in a state jail by way of punishment; jailing for debts was not allowed, except in case the debtor had hidden some of his property (Code of 1853, 110, para 5).

Since the beginning of this century, the evolution of the law has been to eliminate private coercion, as clearly stated in the 1935 code: "Except in the case when the debtor has abandoned his claims on his mortgaged property by a written agreement, [the creditor] must not seize by force what he is entitled to take [from the debtor]; he must either obtain the latter's agreement or lodge a complaint in the court. If [a debtor] complains that his creditor has taken anything by force from him, and if it be true, the court must tell the creditor to lodge a complaint and wait for the decision of the court; and he must be punished according to the law of theft with violence." (Code of 1935, III, 115, para 16). Besides the suppression of private coercion, there has not been much change in the law except that jailing for a short time has been introduced in case of swindle and also total insolvency, but then only at the request of the creditor; in any case the debtor will remain in jail for a maximum period of one year, not renewable even if other creditors lodge a complaint. (Code of 1935, III, 116, para 19; code of 1963, 154-155, para 19).

Two points emerge from this review of the creditor's rights: the Nepalese law vindicates his rights before those of the debtor; and throughout the 19th century, it gave him wide powers of coercion on the property and the body of the debtor. This liberty to carry on private justice for the vindication of some private rights was a characteristic of the traditional Nepalese law, in the case of the recovery of debts as well as in the permission given to a husband to take revenge on his wife's paramour (Hodgson; Gaborieau, 1974 and 1977, 28-231).

OBLIGATIONS AND RIGHTS OF THE DEBTOR

The debtor, *asāmī*, is in an inferior position. The creditor

being the "upright man", he appears as being in the wrong, as guilty; in any case he is in a dependent position.

Obligations. The law emphasizes his obligations which have been outlined above. He must pay the debt (loan plus interests) which has been contracted either by himself or (conditionally) by his ascendants for many generations; in this second case, paying the debt of the ascendant is a necessary condition for coming into possession of one's share of inheritance; it is only in the time of the land reform that old debts have been abolished—at least on paper.

Rights. From the Dharmashastras up to the modern Nepalese law, there were clauses for the protection of the debtor, most of which have also been outlined above; we shall summarize them here, stressing to their sources and evolution.

Scrutiny of proofs. The Dharmashastras already enjoined careful scrutiny of the proofs put forward by the creditors (Manu, 51-58); the Nepalese codes treat the same topic in increasing detail, insisting on written acknowledgements, registration, receipts of payments given by the debtor; on periodical renewal in writing of the creditor's claims, at least every ten years; anyway a debt which had been standing for more than ten years without renewal could not be considered valid (Code of 1935, III 109 sq, para 1-4; code of 1963, 150, para 2). Harsh sanctions were stipulated in the three codes for creditors who presented false claims. All these provisions, which could seem modern, are in fact traceable to the Dharmashastras and their mediaeval commentators (Kane, III, 439, 442).

Limitation of interests and redeeming of pledges. Clauses on this second topic are similarly inspired by the Dharmashastras (Kane, III, 418-427), according to which taking moderate interest is lawful, but usury is to be condemned. Nepalese law even softened the traditional rules. The rate of interest for grains, which used to be higher than the rate for money, was reduced in 1935 to the same level: 10% up to the doubling of the capital. Provisions were made to stop devices used—up to this day in fact—by the creditors to increase their profit: for instance, when interest was stipulated on paper at 10% in money, they would compel the debtors to pay in grains which would bring a much higher return in the market; this was made illegal from the first code (Code of 1853, 96, para 6).

Clauses were also inserted to allow the debtor to redeem his

pledges, even land, whenever he returned the money (Code of 1935, III, 113-115, para 12-13).

More generally, the codes directed the courts to choose the most lenient interpretation of the documents shown by the creditors to back their claims; if they were invalid the debt would be written off; if there was no mention of interest, no interest would be charged, etc ...; in any case arrangements and instalments were preferred to seizure and coercion.

All these provisions about proofs, interests and pledges, although they progressively softened the traditional rules, remain in the line of the Dharmashastras. Other ones aiming at protecting the property and the body of the debtor may be explained by an indirect British influence through India.

Protection of property. While up to the 1853 code included, all the belongings of a defaulting debtor should be seized, from 1935 on, the debtor was allowed to keep his most indispensable goods; "When the debtor is made to pay his creditor, one should leave him one pair of bullocks, one set of agricultural tools, one set of households utensils, one set of bedding, the clothes he wears, and, if he has grains, the quantity of grains needed to feed his family for six months; leaving him all the above mentioned goods, remit all the other movable and immovable property to the creditor according to the law." (Code of 1935, III, 115, para 18; same in code of 1963, 80-81, para 26).

Protection of bodies. The body of the debtor and of the members of his family came even to be more protected: enslavement for debt was gradually abolished before the middle of the 19th century. Then the power of the creditor to keep debtors or members of their family working as bondservants was progressively reduced and finally abolished. First only members of lower castes, known as *bādhā basne jat*, could become bondservants (Code of 1853, 357, para 7; code of 1935, III, 127, para 41); their list is nowhere available; my hypothesis is that it was the same as that of the enslavable castes, *māsine jāt*, which was progressively reduced during the 19th century and came to exclude all twice born and higher ranking tribes to include only members of lower tribal population and impure castes (Gaborieau, 1977, 169; Höfer, 1979, 124); this hypothesis is backed by a single reference (Code of 1853, 360, para 17). From 1853, bondage was strictly regulated. Normally, only a man aged at least 16 could become a bondservant; a woman could enter this condition only if

she was the daughter of a man who had no son, i.e., if she was his heir, and only if she was aged at least 16. In the agreement signed before a court, the bondservant should be mentioned nominally; if he died before the repayment of the loan, the creditor was not allowed to seize any other member of his family. As long as the loan was not repaid, the bond servant was forced to work for his master; if he escaped or absconded, he was treated as a runaway slave and anybody could arrest him; if caught, he was given back to his master who could then fetter him if he wished so. However, his fate was a bit better than that of the slave since he was less severely punished if he committed any crime against his master; and, more important, his bondage, in contradistinction to the status of the slave, was personal and not inheritable; it ended either with his death, or at the expiration of his contract or when he repaid the loan; as any pledge, he was redeemable. There are, in historical literature, divergent opinions about the rules of the contract between the bondservant and his master; some say he worked in lieu of interest only and had to repay the loan to get free; some others say that the loan was interest free and that he worked to repay the principal; it is impossible to say what was the actual practice, but the law is clear: a debt where the pledge is a bondservant is treated like any other debt; the debtor has to pay the loan plus the interests which should not exceed the amount of the loan, i.e. in total twice the amount of the original loan; by working with his master, the bondservant would thus repay both principal and interest; an official rate was fixed; the bondservant's day work was estimated at two annas per day; out of this the creditor retained one anna for food; the remaining anna was deduced from the dues of the bondservant to the creditor. He was set free when his contract came to an end, or earlier if he repaid in cash the remaining dues; as any mortgage he could be transferred by his creditor to another creditor. (The provisions about bondservants summed up in the foregoing paragraph are found in the code of 1853, 349-361, 690-691).

These provisions were not really obeyed; the creditors continued to exact much more from their bondservants for longer periods of time; that is why the 1935 code contains clauses which are similar in content, but coined in a different phraseology and presented as a novelty (Code of 1935, III, 127-128, para 41-45). The use of the word *bādhā* was banished to be replaced by the phrase "a person who works to diminish the dues to the creditor" (*sāhu ko thailī mā kaṭṭā hune garī kām garne*);

agreements to stay as bondservants were no longer registered in the courts: from that time on, such contracts were made privately between creditors and debtors; the latter, from that time, could be of any caste; according to the law, the work of the debtor would pay the dues to the creditor (loan plus interest) at the rate of ten rupees per year; for instance, if the loan was of 100 rupees, with a total interest of 100 rupees more, it would take 20 years for the bondman to redeem himself through his work. Such a bondservant could be transferred to another creditor only with his consent. He was a little more protected than in the previous code; he should have entered freely into this condition; he should be a man aged at least 18 or a woman aged 16 (if married, with the consent of her husband); he should be paid a salary; the contract was nominal; it was suspended when he was ill and ended with his death, the creditor not being allowed to seize any other member of his family to replace him. If the bonded debtor is a woman, should the creditor have sexual relations with her, he loses all his dues and she is set free immediately. The bond servant is free at the expiration of his contract; he can redeem himself whenever he likes. If he runs away, he cannot be arrested; he has only to pay a compensation of 0.16 rupees per day of absence up to the doubling of the principal.

After 1951, keeping bondservants was prohibited on paper and they are not mentioned in the 1963 code; the practice continued in fact: I have seen bondmen working for their creditors, still under the name of *badhā*, as late as 1964 in central Nepal.

ANALOGIES (I): CREDITOR'S RIGHTS AND OTHER PRIVATE AND STATE RIGHTS

The creditor-debtor relationship will be better understood if we compare it to other ones either between men in this world or between men and otherwordly beings. Let us first study analogous relationships in this world.

Comparisons between the creditor/debtor relationship and other ones are explicitly made in the legal texts; here are two examples: "If a creditor, a landlord or a village headman, while seizing the property from the house of his debtor, his tenant or the ryot under his jurisdiction, takes no more than the value of the principal plus 10% interest, there is no offence." (Code of 1853, 96, para 3).

"When a tribunal orders the seizure of the undivided estate

of a joint family to pay the following seven items: arrears of dues to the state, arrears of taxes, arrears of the rent due to the *jāgirdār*, arrears of the rent due to the landlord, compensation for burning down another man's house, compensation for theft, dues to a creditor, then all these dues must be paid out of the undivided estate without putting aside the shares of any of the coparceners." (Code of 1853, 93, para 1).

What are the common features of all these transactions as well as of others? What are the differences? Where do the transactions of the creditor with his debtor stand?

The common features are the following. There are two partners, X and Y. X has given something to Y or has been deprived of something by Y. In return or in compensation, Y must pay something to X.

The codes give criteria to classify and rank all these transactions. First one must distinguish between state transactions (*sarkāriyā len den*) and private transactions (*duniya len den*). Inside each of these two classes, there are two subclasses of criminal and civil transactions. To rank those classes and subclasses and individual transactions inside each of them, there is one criterion: in case of default, the ones where the aggrieved party is to be paid first out of the property of the defaulter rank before the others (Code of 1853, 88, para 1).

The result of this ranking is the following. State transactions rank first. The first partner, X, is the king, either himself present in the royal tribunal or in his council, or represented by judges and officers. The second one, Y, is any of his subjects. The first subclass of this class is made of criminal affairs. The king affords his subjects peace, protection and order; if any of his subjects has troubled the order, he has to be punished in many ways, one of which is the payment of fines or the confiscation of his property; these claims of the king in criminal cases rank first, before any other state or private claims (Code of 1853, 214, para 8).

The second subclass relates to civil law. The king gives land to his subjects to build houses and for cultivation. In exchange he is allowed to levy a part of the produce of the land and exact forced labour through government officials, village headmen and *jāgirdār* (Regmi, 1963-1968 and 1976; Gaborieau, 1977, 157-166). In those civil matters again, the claims of the king override any other private claim.

Claims arising from private transactions are to be satisfied

only in the second place. The first partner, X, is any subject of the king, acting not as an employee of the government but in a private capacity to manage his own rights and property; the second partner, Y, is any other subject acting also in a private capacity. The first subclass comprises criminal cases. For instance, Y is an incendiary who has burned down the house of X, or a thief who has stolen anything belonging to X; then the claim of X for compensation ranks immediately after any state claim and before other private claims.

Private civil claims constitute the second subclass. The dealings of the landlord with his tenants come first in it; the latter who have taken land on lease must pay a share of the produce to the former whose claims come before those of the creditor and who, in 1853, could have his defaulting tenant jailed while the creditor could not jail a defaulting debtor (Code of 1853, 97, para 4). The dealings of the creditor with his debtor come in the second position in this subclass with other similar transactions like recovery of deposits, sale and purchase, exchange, etc ... After them, the law would consider only odd private claims like those of the husband to get compensation from his wife's paramour, or of a master to get compensation from the abductor of his slave or bond-servant; disputes about inheritance, etc.

The creditor/debtor relationship is thus given a low rank, a low priority in the whole legal system of Nepal. Among the many claims from the state and from private subjects on the same person who happens to be also a debtor, the creditor's claim is practically the last but one. This is a characteristic feature of traditional kingdoms of South Asia where the king's interests override private interests; and among the latter, those of the landlord override those of the man who deals with money. This is why, at the level of the 1853, code the creditor's interests are largely left to private justice. The later codes do not seem to have changed much in this hierarchy of interests; private justice was eliminated in favour of government controlled, more human procedures; but there is no real modernization of the law of debt.

ANALOGIES (II): CREDITOR/DEBTOR RELATIONSHIP AND RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN OTHER WORLDLY BEINGS AND MEN

The religious model. The Nepalese law derives mainly from traditional Hindu law and makes frequent reference to the Dharmashastras, books which not only provide rules for administering

justice but give them a religious backing; in particular, there are lengthy justifications to the obligation to pay one's debts and the way it must be done (Kane, III, 414-417). The Nepalese codes, contain also a great deal of religious law; did they follow the age long tradition in giving a religious backing to the law of debt?

In the Dharmashastras, the whole question of worldly debts is treated by analogy with spiritual debts. Every man owes three spiritual debts: to the gods, to his ancestors and to the seers; he repays them respectively by performing sacrifices, by begetting sons and by studying the Vedas. "The same sanctity came gradually to be transferred to one's promise to repay monetary debts. (The same word *ṛṇ* had been applied both to spiritual and secular debts.) It is on account of this that the son was not only desired for repaying the spiritual debt owed to one's ancestors, but he was also expected to free his father (if the father could not himself repay the monetary debt) from the liability he incurred to his creditor." (Kane, III, 416-417). Moreover, a punishment is promised in the other world to the defaulting debtor who will be "reborn again and again in the house of his creditor as a slave in order to repay his debt by his labour." (Kane, III, 416). These religious considerations found the obligation to repay one's debts.

They also explain the details of the rules of inheritance of debts. Every man must secure the welfare of his ancestors in the three ascending generations by performing the funerary rites and completing the payment of their spiritual as well as worldly debts. This is why unpaid debts pass on to the son, grandson and greatgrandson of the deceased. These descendants have the pious obligation to pay off the debts of their ancestors even if they have not inherited any property (Kane, III, 416-417; 442-450).

Secularization of Nepalese law. In the Nepalese law of debt, the obligation to pay one's debts is presented as a rule of law, not as a religious duty. The liability to pay one's ancestors' debts is not connected with the obligation to perform funerary rites; the latter is unconditional; the descendants must perform those rites under the threat of a fine; the former is conditional; the descendant is liable to pay ancestral debts only if he takes the inheritance; on this point Nepalese law follows neither the Dharmashastras nor the Anglo-Hindu law which compel the son to pay his father's and remoter ascendants' debts even if he receives no inheritance. It does not follow either the Hindu tradition on the time-limit for the liability; the Dharmashastras rule that it stops

with the grandson or greatgrandson on the analogy of the funerary rites; the Nepalese law does not provide any such time limit, thus severing any connection between the law of debts and the ritual for the ancestors. In conclusion, there is no explicit nor implicit link between the religious law of debts to the other worldly beings and the legal model of worldly debts. This disconnection is altogether surprising because on other topics, like inheritance and escheat, the Nepalese law explicitly follows the religious model (Gaborieau, forthcoming, Parts I and II); on the law of debt, it is remarkably secularized, even more than Anglo-Hindu law. The religious model, although known to learned Brahmans (who collaborated in the redaction of the codes) is not mentioned in the codes or in ordinary conversations. Why it is so, I cannot ascertain; historical research would be needed on this question.

Influence of the worldly model on popular religion. In Nepal it is rather the other way round: relationships with gods are conceived on the model of the worldly creditor/debtor relationship as clearly seen in the ritual sequence of a vow. The devotee who wants to obtain a boon acts as any man in need of money: he goes to a temple and deposits a pledge, which of course is symbolic and consists of rice and coins. This pledge is called *badhā*, as any worldly pledge, if the deity is the lineage tutelary god (Turner, 430) or *bhākal* akin to *bhākhā*, promise to repay a loan, for any other deity (Turner, 473). The devotee is then in the position of any debtor who has pledged some of his property. The loan he will get from the deity, who is treated as a creditor, is the forthcoming boon. When the devotee has got it, he is under the obligation to repay it plus the interest; he will do so by offering a sacrifice to the deity and only then will he be able to redeem his pledge, which he will be allowed to take back.

Vestiges of the religious model. The foregoing remarks do not mean that the law of debt is wholly secularized in Nepal.

Most of the detailed rules on the validity of debts (rate of interest, proof and capacity) are inspired by the Dharmashastras (see second part of this paper). In this sense of particular provisions, as opposed to the whole theoretical framework, the Nepalese law of debt maintains a connection with the traditional Hindu law.

Then, as far as the law of debt is connected with other topics of the codes, it clearly remains within the theoretical horizon of Hindu law. In the field of personal law, it is replaced in the frame-

work of the joint family system with the specific rules of inheritance, the legal incapacity of women and of men who are not heads of a family. In the field of social relationships, up to the first half of this century, the law of debt bore testimony to the various gradations in freedom: free men were better treated than bondservants who in their turn were in a better position than slaves (Gaborieau, 1977, 199).

The most important status gradation in the Dharmashastras as well as in Nepalese law is the caste hierarchy. It has a bearing on many topics of the law where rights, duties and sanctions vary according to the caste status of the persons involved (Gaborieau, 1977, 198-200). Do the debtor's and creditor's rights and obligations vary according to caste status?

They clearly do in the Dharmashastras. The lower the caste of the debtor, the higher the interest charged for a loan. (Manu, VIII, 142). In repaying loans out of the estate of a debtor, a Brahman creditor should be served first before the members of lower castes (Kane, III, 441). And, more important, the creditor/debtor relationship is a hierarchical one, the creditor standing higher; care is taken by the ancient authors that this ranking would not contradict too much the caste hierarchy; if the creditor belongs to a caste lower than that of the debtor, he must treat him with respect; he must not make him work for him; he can do so only if the debtor belongs to a caste equal or inferior to his own (Manu, VIII, 177).

Nepalese law does not follow this tradition. Rules for the transactions of the creditor with the debtor are almost totally free of such caste considerations. Caste is considered only in matters of bondage and slavery; members of lower castes alone can become bondservants or slaves; and even in that case, there is no mention of the relative status: a creditor could turn into slaves and bondservants people of a caste higher than his own. With this single exception, the law of debt is free of caste differentiation: whether the creditor is an untouchable and the debtor a Brahman or vice versa, this does not make any difference—at least in theory; in practice most of the creditors are members of higher castes. This points again to the secularization of the law of debt.

It can be safely said that the religious analogies and implications, which had a great weight in ascertaining the law of debt in the Dharmashastras, have almost completely disappeared from

the Nepalese law which is on this topic much more secularized than even Anglo-Hindu law.

CONCLUSION

The Nepalese law of debt derives part of its vocabulary and its clauses from the traditional Hindu law, but in a strange manner.

From a social and economical point of view, it remains archaic, in the spirit of South Asian kingdoms where the king's and the landlords' interests overrode those of the people engaged in money transactions. That is why, in spite of an often reasserted lenient legislation, the Nepalese state was unable to control the transactions between creditors and debtors.

From a religious point of a view, it appears—in spite of many vestiges—as modernized, i.e. secularized. In writing off all the religious backing to the obligation to pay one's debts and the inheritance of debts, the Nepalese legislator has done away with the whole theoretical structure of the Hindu law on the subject.

This conclusion may now be linked with our introductory remarks. Social anthropologists have up to not focussed on the part of the legal codes which has a bearing on caste hierarchy and religion; it concerns topics on which the Nepalese law, before 1963, was not yet secularized: rules for obligatory rites, observances regarding purity and impurity, ascription of caste status, contacts between the various castes through exchange of water and food, marriage and sexual relations, with the provisions of punishments and penances for breach of these rules.

But, as I have emphasized elsewhere (Gaborieau, 1977, 198-199), there are clearly two distinct parts in the Nepalese law. The one mentioned in the preceding paragraph (Code of 1853, 349-696) is the second one which is not yet secularized. The first one (Code of 1853, 1-348), on the contrary, is secularized and contains no mention of the caste hierarchy and of penances; it covers most of the civil law, except marriage and a great part of the criminal law. The law of debt falls in this first part. It offers thus a new perspective for the study of the Nepalese law in its secularized aspects.

It also helps us putting it in a better historical perspective.

The Dharmashastras were wholly pervaded with religious considerations. The Nepalese codes, in spite of many archaic features, have made a great step toward modernization and secularization; they embody a particular evolution in the Indian subcontinent, Anglo-Indian law having taken another path. Nepal is still a Hindu kingdom; it has nevertheless felt, as long ago as 1853, the impact of the modern world in civil and criminal law, but in its own way.

NOTES

1. Nepali words have been translated according to the system of Turner's dictionary. When relevant for the discussion, the origin of the words has been indicated between brackets by the following abbreviations:
   A. : Arabic
   H. : Hindi
   N. : Nepali
   P. : Persian
   Sk. : Sanskrit

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CHAPTER VI

THE RECENT SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACT OF TOURISM ON A REMOTE SHERPA COMMUNITY

Janice Sacherer

THE Sherpa community of Rolwaling as first studied in 1974 was the most isolated, traditional, and economically backward of all the Sherpa communities in Nepal (Sacherer 1974; 1977a; 1977b; 1977c).

Because it is an east-west valley running parallel with the Tibetan border just to the south of Gauri Sankar, yet connected to neighbouring Tibet to the north and Khumbu to the east only by 5,700-metre passes, it was never a major trade route as were other Sherpa regions (Schneider 1973). Approximately 7km. in length and never more than 1 km. wide, the economically productive area of the valley ranges from the lowest potato fields at 3,600m to the highest yak pastures of 5,000m, making it an extremely difficult environment even by Sherpa standards.

Because of this ecological severity, Rolwaling was the last settled of all the high valleys in east Nepal with first time settlement dating back to no more than 110 years ago. This settlement was itself the result evidently, of a large growth in population following the introduction of the potato into nearby Khumbu and Tibet around 1850 (Haimendorf 1972). The original settlers of Rolwaling were in fact the poorest members of these other communities and in many cases literally ran away to the valley to escape bad debts, criminal and legal problems in these other areas. Interestingly, the religious tradition of the place says that it is one of a number of *beyul*, hidden and sacred valleys created for the refuge of pious mankind by Padmasambhava, the Indian yogin who brought Buddhism to Tibet. In this fashion, we see that historical necessity, economic realities, and religion were interwoven from the earliest times.

The traditional economic base within the valley was potato agriculture and yak rearing, supplemented with man-carried trade in other regions of Nepal and Tibet. Economic and social ranking were based on the order of arrival within the valley as the ancestors of the present population settled first on the relatively flat fields at the bottom of the valley, leaving later immigrants to clear their fields from the steeper and rockier sections of the valley walls. Originally, anyone could settle in the valley after serving a probationary period of 5 to 7 years, and the last people to immigrate in were an old man and his wife who arrived in the early 1940s. The present population meanwhile is about 200 persons altogether.

Because of the extreme physical constraints on the human population (narrowness of the valley, geographic isolation, frost free growing season of 6 months at most), the Rolwaling Sherpas had to devise a unique system of crop and herding rotation based on changes of altitude. This meant that they have built three large villages and three separate high altitude yak camps to house their population at different times of the year, never resting in any one place more than three and a half months. Commencing in late March, they begin planting potatoes at 3,600m., moving the yak ahead of them until they plant their last potatoes at 4,100m. and take their yak up to 5,000m. Potato harvest begins at the lowest altitude in early August and finishes up at the highest fields in late September. October is almost exclusively devoted to the cutting of grass for the winter while December through February is spent in the lowest villages at 3,600m. August is the month when the yak cross-breeds are sold to Sherpas from lower altitude areas such as Solu, and December through February are the months when Rolwaling seed potatoes are sold to a large number of surrounding low altitude communities. Traditionally, the potatoes were always bartered for grain which was carried up by the lowland peoples while the sale of the yak cross-breeds was the only source of the valley's earned cash.

This intricate system of physical mobility was very closely tied with the religious calendar so that every major economic undertaking and every move was accompanied by religious rites to insure the success of these ventures. Tremendous amounts of the potato-created food surplus were used in village-wide celebrations based in the Buddhist temples, *gomba*, with the longest festivals occurring during the slack winter season and

again in the month of July after the mid-term weeding of the highest potatoes and before the harvest of the lowest fields. Some festivals were inherited with certain pieces of land, so that their owners were obliged to pay for the food and drink at these festivals. Others were financed by volunteers with generosity being a prerequisite for high social standing, and still others rotated among the total community on a fixed basis so that even the richest had at one time (about every two years) received hospitality from the poorest.

The traditional Rolwaling political system included an elected village headman, elected *gomba* officials, two people charged with maintaining the protective walls around the growing potato fields, and after 1972, a school committee and one *panchayat* representative. There were time-honoured rules regarding the cutting of the forest, the digging of certain wild vegetables, and the use of the water powered grist mills. Semi-annual meetings were called by the village headman to determine community projects for the coming year including bridge building and trail maintenance. Labour for these was provided on an equitable household basis and included, as did the village political meetings, the full participation of the women. All of the positions except for that of field protectors were dominated by the older and richer Rolwaling families while the annually elected posts of protectors were rotated among everyone including households headed by single women. Thus, some power and prestige was circulated even among the poorest and least powerful and these officials had the right to fine everyone including the headman.

One final interesting aspect of the traditional life of Rolwaling was the very large number of young monks in the valley in 1974. The local *gomba* was headed by a particularly dynamic old head *lama* at the time, but it was also obvious that he alone could not have been responsible for 45.4% of the young men in their twenties having sworn themselves to a celibate life. Because of the poverty of the Rolwaling community, these celibates did not live in a monastery but stayed instead in their parental homes. When investigating the genealogies of these young monks, it turned out that almost all of them came from very large families of sons with the most classic case being a family of five sons and two daughters where four of the sons were monks. In addition, 73% of all the Rolwaling men working outside the valley in the spring of 1974 as tourist porters or high altitude expedition Sherpas were composed

of these young monks. Over all, the average number of children found per 'normal' couple in Rolwaling was 4.2 while the average number of children in the monks' families was 5.9 and among these monks who worked outside the valley for tourism, 7.1.

THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACT OF TOURISM 1974-1977

Historically, the first westerners to visit Rolwaling were Sir Edmund Hillary and Charles Riddiford who crossed the Trashi Labtsa pass from Khumbu and continued westward through Rolwaling to Kathmandu as part of the 1951 Mt. Everest Reconnaissance. During the next eight years, there were four or five expeditions to the valley, at least two of which crossed illegally into Tibetan territory. The last group to do so was a Japanese Alpine Club expedition to Gauri Sankar which was then surrounded by Tibetan bandits and robbed of nearly everything (Sacherer 1977c). As this occurred in 1959, the same year as the political reorganization of Tibet by the Chinese, Rolwaling was then closed to all mountaineering and tourist groups until 1972. Because of this, it became even more economically backward than the other Sherpa regions.

The fall of 1974 saw the first large scale visitations by foreign tourists who even at that time, outnumbered the local residents at the height of the season. Since then, ever increasing numbers of them have come as Rolwaling has gained an international reputation as one of the most traditional and beautiful of the Nepalese tourist spots.

Economically, the impact of all these tourists has been quite dramatic both in regard to the inflation of wages and to the upward spiral of prices, although wages have so far kept much ahead. The average rate for portering across the Trashi Labtsa has been raised from 70 rupees for the 5-day trip to 140 rupees and upwards ($11.67 at 1978 rates) depending on the number of trekkers aspiring to cross and the subsequent demand on porters. Thus, the physical isolation of the valley has turned into an economic bonus under tourism, first as an initial tourist attraction and then because the Rolwaling people are the only ones who know the difficult route across and are willing to undergo the rigours of repeated crossings (they are in fact paid expedition wages for the 3 days above snowline). Finally, it enables them, especially the women and adolescents, to work within their home area rather than

incurring the trouble and expense of trekking to Kathmandu first to obtain work in other regions. This is not only economically advantageous, but socially beneficial as well, since it maintains the continuity of social and family life. In 1974, the average per capita income was 1,000 rupees ($160 at 1974 rates) for the sale of the yak cross-breeds, although nine households had no yak at all. Even at that time, however, a high altitude expedition Sherpa could earn approximately 10,000 rupees ($1,000 at 1974 rates) by working two expeditions a year and selling his used equipment. In 1977 it was possible for a young Rolwaling man to make even more as an expedition Sherpa while his younger brothers and sisters and his wife could easily earn 1,500 to 2,000 rupees ($125-$167 at 1978 rates) each, by portering over Trashi Labtsa 6 to 8 times a year. Given these figures for income, the 2 to 5 rupee rise in the price of food grains per *pathi* is rather insignificant.

The surplus money has so far been used primarily to raise the standard of living rather than as savings or productive investment. One very beneficial aspect is that this increase in cash has allowed people to purchase needed clothing which they can no longer obtain by buying wool in Tibet, and has in this way, made up for the deficiency caused by the cessation of the Sherpa's Tibetan trade since 1959. It has also meant a rise in both the amount and particularly in the quality of food consumed, with Rolwaling people stating very simply, "If many westerners come, we can eat wheat; if they don't come, we have to eat millet". The most popular consumer items meanwhile, are down jackets, sleeping bags, plastic containers, flashlights, wrist watches and transistor radios. In regard to the latter, a wider familiarity with Nepalese national culture, especially the Nepalese national language, has been acquired by young children and women who otherwise would not leave the valley and be exposed to it. Since the medium of instruction in the local primary school is the national language, a familiarity with it before entering school saves a great deal of time for both students and teacher.

The most spectacular effect of these new economic opportunities is the opportunity for economic advancement on the part of the poorer members of the community. In 1974, only the poorer families sent people out to work for tourists while in 1977 even the richest families were contributing members to the tourist trade in order just to maintain their position. In the meantime, some of

the poorest families attained a middle status as the initial disability of having many sons was converted by the labour scarce cash economy into a great advantage, and the characteristics of individual enterprise and adaptability came to be economically favoured over traditional conservatism. Thus, young men who were thought of as not very clever in 1974, managed in only three years to learn to speak English and Japanese, to cook western and Japanese food, and to maintain standards of hygiene hitherto unknown, so that the more backward young men of today are usually those from the traditionally wealthy families. Wealth status has by and large shifted away from such traditional items as women's jewellery and rests instead on the amount of western consumer items and mountaineering equipment one possesses as well as the cleanliness of family members.

So far a substantial amount of this new found wealth has also been put into traditional activities such as sponsorship of religious activities. In 1977, the most expensive religious festival had been shortened by 3 days but was sponsored by young expedition Sherpas as were several other of the holidays and the support of the local head lama as well.

This new wealth was also beginning to circulate to other areas outside of Rolwaling as the Sherpas there had to solve their labour shortage (the peak of the tourist season comes just at potato planting, potato harvesting, and grass cutting times) by hiring Sherpas and Tamangs from lower altitude settlements to work in their fields. Also, of course, they contributed cash to these other communities by their purchases of grain with cash at higher than previous values. The latter is exceptionally fortunate in view of the fact that the Rolwaling potato harvest in recent years and subsequently the volume of the potato seed trade has been greatly reduced by the arrival of a potato blight (Gjaerum, Steineger, Telneset 1975).

One of the most obvious aspects of social change in the period of 1974-1977, was the shift of political power from the older generation to the younger. In 1974, there was considerable tension between the two, with the old men complaining bitterly that "the young men earn a few hundred rupees and act like they're kings". By 1977, this conflict had been resolved in favour of the younger men, particularly those with tourist and mountaineering experience which, it was assumed by the majority of the villagers, had better equipped them to deal with a changing world.

By 1977, the village headman had been replaced by a younger man and all five of the *panchayat* ward members elected from Rolwaling were also young men. The field and pasture protectors continued to be rotated among everyone and the school committee, which has almost no important decisions to make, remained the same. In the case of the changes, the young new officials were mostly middle strata rather than upper strata men and had attained their new prominence with the elevation of their economic status through tourism and mountaineering. Although a few of the old men are unhappy about their premature demise, many are pleased to be relieved of their obligations and have time to devote themselves more fully toward their religious preparations for old age. The past village headman will become the head *lama* of the local *gomba* for example, when the term of the present visiting *lama* runs out. Most of the old men are content that the young men continue to support the religion both socially and economically with few modifications, and all welcome the money brought into their own families through tourism.

A more subtle erosion of traditions is occurring, however, as people become increasingly busier and begin to be absent from certain traditional festivals which coincide with the peak of the tourist season. This is most obvious in the case of Manying, a vegetarian feast of three days' duration scheduled at the same time as the Hindu festival of Dassein, with the purpose of praying for the souls of all the animals sacrificed by the Hindus during this time. Because it occurs in the midst of the fall trekking season when more than half the village, including women and adolescents, are engaged in portering over Trashi Labtsa, it is becoming more and more a festival of small children and old people. Already by 1974, the major religious festival of Dorsem had been shifted from winter to summer when all of the expedition monks would be in the valley to celebrate it, so it is possible that a similar shift may occur with Manying even though it is more seasonal in character. More difficult to measure but equally evident to those familiar with Rolwaling both before and after tourism, is the observation that people simply do not have leisure for the relaxed socializing that they had before. The absence of many of the young men for high altitude expedition work and their own participation in the Trashi Labtsa porter trade has particularly increased the work load for the women. While most of them find it economically advantageous and socially more interesting to porter for tourists, using a small por-

tion of their earnings to hire lowland labourers to help in their fields, they are still left with the formidable task of harvesting hay at the height of the tourist season. Since much of this involves climbing up cliffs, sometimes with the aid of ropes, and then descending them again with up to 50 kilos of grass, there is no possibility that this economic activity can be performed by lowland people. As such, it remains the weakest element of the total economy, a dangerous and burdensome responsibility which rests more and more on the women.

The most lamentable casualty of the labour shortage has been the declining value of education. Financed by the Himalayan Trust and local free labour, the Rolwaling primary school was built and staffed in 1972, and was well attended by both boys and girls in 1974. By 1977, the facilities of the school had been greatly improved including free textbooks supplied by the national government. Because of the labour shortage, however, most of the girls had been taken out of school and the young boys were far more interested in learning to speak and write English than in the standard Nepali curriculum. Counter-balancing this is the cessation of the Tibetan writing and religious school, so that the importance of the various languages has changed from Tibetan and Nepali to English and Nepali, but the total number of languages and writing systems to be learned remains the same. Because it is unwritten, Sherpa remains a language for personal and business communication, a useful secret language when dealing with outsiders, but has no real relevance for literacy.

The discontinuance of the part-time Tibetan religious school coincided with the death in 1975, of the highly respected head *lama*, as did other secularizing trends. How much they are a result of the loss of this one exceptional man and how much the result of tourism and integration into the national culture (along with the general demise of Tibetan Buddhism since the recent political reorganization of Tibet) will never be known. What is certain however, is the declining value of the Tibetan literary and monastic tradition. The most expensive religious festival has been shortened from seven days to four (and the tests and rituals changed) because, as people explained "No one wants to give that much money now that Gelung Pasang is dead". Yet more serious for Buddhist traditions is the fact that although most of the men presently in their twenties can more or less sound out the Tibetan liturgical texts phonetically, the younger men while literate in

Nepali and English, are not even able to do that, much less comprehend their more subtle meanings. A simple solution which may eventually be adopted, is the transcription of all these texts into the Nepali national script. Meanwhile, the greatest departure from Tibetan religious traditions so far, has been the commencement of occasional animal slaughter in the valley. Owing to its status as a hidden sacred valley created by Padmasambhava, no animals were allowed to be killed in the valley in past times either by the local Sherpas or by low caste travelling butchers. As a result, meat was an occasional luxury resulting from the accidental or illness-related death of domestic animals. By 1977, however, it was publicly acknowledged that a few goats and sheep had been sold to lowland Nepalis for the Dassein festival and a few more to passing tourist groups as well as one meat feast for a school sponsored picnic (under the influence of a lowland Nepali teacher). In all these known cases, the actual killers of the animals had been outsiders, although some of the young Rolwaling men were also suspected of secretly slaughtering a few animals on their own.

Finally, the most spectacular example of the growing secularization in the valley is the marriage of nine of the ten monks in their twenties. Again, how many of these men had become monks through the dynamic persuasion of the former head *lama* and how many of their own volition backed by economic expediency, is a moot question. Certainly they would not have married in such numbers nor in such a short time save for their new found affluence due to tourism. Today it is possible through tourist-oriented wage work to have enough money to buy food and yak and to construct houses to supplement what was formerly an inadequate inheritance.

The end result is one of great demographic importance since the marriage boom has brought about a corresponding baby boom. While in 1974 the valley was experiencing a negative growth rate, it has in the past 3 years alone, experienced an 11% net population increase. Clearly, this trend will result in serious economic dislocation if allowed to continue and has the potential for outright economic tragedy in the absence of tourism, an ever present possibility due to the strategic location of the valley and the ease with which the northern border is still violated by thoughtless tourists (Rolwaling was temporarily closed in the spring of 1978 for just such reasons).

So far, only one family has permanently migrated out of the valley although they continue to support village festivals and maintain their property there. In the fall of 1974, several young girls had migrated out to work on Tibetan carpets in the factories of Kathmandu and also to search for husbands, a trend which has now been halted due to the renewed economic opportunities in the valley, including the freeing of large numbers of monks for marriage. It seems likely in the future, however, that some of the more enterprising young men will seek to establish hotels and restaurants in Kathmandu, something which a few of them have already considered.

Meanwhile, integration into Nepalese national life continues with the promising prospect that some of the newly gained tourist wealth will soon begin to be applied to more directly productive enterprises. The Lamusangu-Jiri road now under construction will make Rolwaling an easy four days' walk instead of the current eight days and already a number of the young men are calculating reduced cost ratios of various goods and the possibility of establishing tourist oriented hotels and restaurants within Rolwaling to supply higher profit commodities than the current sale of local raw products such as wood and potatoes. Family planning material has been requested by one-third of the women of reproductive age and the village headman is interested in promoting the acceptance of blight resistant potatoes being distributed by a nearby government potato seed multiplication farm, an innovation which, theoretically at least, could raise productivity enough to absorb the expanding population and provide much needed fodder for the livestock.

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CHAPTER VII

THE THULUNG MYTH OF THE BHUME SITES AND SOME INDO-TIBETAN COMPARISONS

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THE greater the altitude of a region of South Asia, the more likely it is that its population will be referred to as tribal. The traditional and stereotypic ethnographic map of a tribal area shows a patchwork or mosaic of sub-areas, each with its own language, customs and ethnonym, and the typical tribal study takes one such group as its unit of description. More or less implicit comparison with the society of the ethnographer is doubtless inevitable, and in so far as the description is specifically anthropological it will be influenced in a general way by comparative perspectives. However, for those interested in going beyond the one tribe/one culture approach various sorts of explicit comparison are possible. Acculturational studies amount in effect to comparison with the neighbouring large-scale society, and systematic comparison may also be made with neighbouring tribes. Sometimes these tribes will speak unrelated languages (e.g. Garo and Khasi), but often a framework for comparison is provided by language family trees.

The Thulung Rai are one among the traditionally non-literate peoples of eastern Nepal sometimes referred to as Kiranti, and their language is classified with other Rai languages in the Bodic division of Sino-Tibetan. Although bilingual in Nepali and in many ways quite Hinduised, the Thulung retain a certain amount of their own mythology, and in an unpublished thesis I have attempted to compare the corpus I collected with the mythologies of the other Bodic-speaking peoples (who include Tibetans). The undertaking was conceived as a preliminary step in the direction of the sort of

work Dumézil has been doing for the Indo-European speakers. The motive for confining attention to one segment of the language family was of course to keep the volume of material within manageable limits (just as a Munda comparatist might exclude the rest of the Austro-Asiatic speakers), but there are methodological risks here. In the I-E case the Celtic-Sanskrit (i.e. most distant) comparisons have been among the most instructive—moreover one might be failing to ask the most interesting questions of the Thulung material if over-commitment to the Stammbaum model were allowed to stand in the way of comparison with the Indic world. The present paper in fact grew from a comparison between a particular Thulung myth and a well known Hindu one. Taken in conjunction with other materials from the borderlands between India and China, this rapprochement points to a family of ideas which seem characteristic of the area, and which pose culture-historical and structural problems that deserve further work.

The Thulung myth in question was related by DB, then in his mid-fifties and the most active and respected of the three fully qualified traditional priests in Mukli, which was itself universally regarded as the first permanent Thulung village. Priesthood typically passes from father to son, and DB's father was a priest. As tape-recorded, the myth was the fourth in a string of five episodes which can be separated from each other both on internal grounds (plot, dramatis personae) and by comparison with episodes from other narrators. The narration took place after the evening meal when a number of relatives had gathered on the death of an old lady. DB had officiated at the burial but the narration itself was not part of a ritual. The Thulung do not give titles to their myths, but I call this episode "The Foundation of the *Bhume* Sites". These sites contain sacred stones which are often referred to in ritual chants. Several times a year they are the scene of daytime *bhume* rites at which the priest makes offerings (beer and blood from the beak of a fowl) and invokes for the community's agricultural success. In June a much larger-scale *bhume* named after the Sakhle site is attended by priests from neighbouring hamlets and attracts a considerable audience (of the order of 50 people). Otherwise the rites are only very sparsely attended though some villagers may collect afterwards to dance. It is clear enough that with growing Hindu influence the cult is in decline, as are the priest's activities in general. Most of the priest's rites are held in individual households and are directed primarily to the household

ancestors, and the *bhume* sites (an elongated, flat-topped mound in one case, a towering silk-cotton tree in a small walled enclave at the Sakhle) are the only public sacred sites in a Thulung village, excluding those obviously due to Hindu influence.[1]

The previous episode on the tape tells of one Mapa Raja of Luwale, culture hero of the linguistically distinct Khaling Rai subtribe who live on the Dudh Kosi to the north of the Thulung. Mapa is introduced to rock salt by the Sherpas. The episode opens with Mapa falling ill with leprosy. His wife and her younger brother carry him on a journey but at a certain place he turns to stone. His wife, her brother, and then Mapa's two eldest sons try to resuscitate him, but fail. Finally his third and last son, who has previously received from his father clairvoyant powers and ritual knowledge, succeeds by means of his invocations and offerings of beer and a cock's blood. Shortly afterwards Mapa abandons his wife and her brother at Salabesi and tells the youngest son to carry him further.

"The two of them went down to Yaliu, but the wind made it impossible for them to stay long and they went on down to Sase.[2] The gnats would not let them stay there either and they came down to the site of Sakhle. Here there was a stone which suddenly turned round and allowed them to leave. While they were there one of Mapa's thumbs fell off. This was not good, and he told his son to carry him further. When they came to Rindapu hamlet in Dewsa they rested, and there too a *bhume* site was founded—the Sakhle *bhume* site had been founded where this thumb had fallen off, and another was founded where they rested at Dewsa Rindapu. Next they rested at Amras and another *bhume* site was founded there.[3] Then they went to Luwale where another was founded. Then they went to Rapcha, where Mapa said to his son: 'You have a meal. I shall not eat. Go and look for firewood.' The son turned him so that he was transverse to the slope of the hill, put him down, and went to look for wood. When he returned his father had become a stone (*Silā*), a god (*deutä*). Rapcha should have been the first to offer him beer from a gourd, in other words to worship him, but the Phuleli people came south and made the offering first, so they now possess the authority (*hak*) there. We others do not have the right to perform the Sakhle at Rapcha without the permission of Phuleli."

The narrator was unwilling to be cross-questioned, the story and the ideology of the *bhume* cult were not widely known, and

there are many points in the narrative on which one would like further information. However, for my present purpose a narrow focus will have to suffice. What we have here is surely the priest telling the myth of origin of the *bhume* sites where he officiates, and by implication, the origin of the rites performed there, which constitute by far the greater part of his public non-household duties (the once-yearly communal *huTpa* rite is even less salient in village life than the *bhume* rites). The loss of a digit is mentioned only in connection with the Sakhle site where DB regularly officiates, but in so far as the loss is the result of Mapá's leprosy one may suppose that in longer versions he would lose digits elsewhere. My feeling (I wish I had stronger evidence for this) is that the reason for the location both of this and of the other sites (excluding Rapcha) was that they were where digits fell; it is clear that the reason for the location and pre-eminence of the Rapcha site is that it possesses, in the form of a stone, what is left of Mapa's body. We know that even at the outset of his journey Mapa was liable to turn into stone, and given that every *bhume* site contains a sacred stone, it would make good sense if the stones in those founded directly by Mapa were his petrified digits. There is some justification for playing down the fact that the narrator fails actually to say this: he is speaking very fast, and two of the other myths he told that evening are distinctly shorter, one can reasonably say more cursory in style, than parallel versions collected from other narrators. Moreover the precise relationship of stone and digit is the sort of topic about which one might expect a certain vagueness—cf. Hocart (1970 Ch. 3).

Some of these suggestions find support in what is, unfortunately, my only other version of the story. The informant, again in his fifties, had heard it from his father-in-law, a Khaling priest in Kanku village.

> An old man from Phuleli in the north went down to the plains and on his way fell ill with leprosy at Halesi. Being unable to return, he sent for his relatives from Phuleli to carry him in a basket. When they reached Sakhle his little toe fell off, and he instructed the people there how to perform a *bhume* ceremony. At Kanku his right little finger fell off. At Khali the bearer looked over his shoulder and found there was no man in the basket, and that his aged relative had turned into a stone.[4]

The fact that the Thulung commonly prefer the Nepali term *bhume* implies that comparable cults are widespread in Nepal, and

this is the case. Allen (1976: 523) gives references to reports by Höfer, Fürer-Haimendorf and Pignède from the Tamang and Gurung, and one could add Höfer (1971), Kawakita (1974) on 'Bhumeism' among certain Hinduized Magars, and the passing reference of Sagant (1979: 93)to the *syāme-bhume deutā* of the Limbu. The Tamang address their cult to the *shipda neda* of a region, i.e. in Tibetan orthography to the *gzhi-bdag gnas-bdag* "masters of the soil masters of the inhabited site" (Höfer), and Pignède's *Sildo-naldo* (despite his own suggestion) is probably cognate. The *gzhi-bdag,* often coupled with the *sa-bdag*, are familiar to Tibetologists, and I suspect that one could reasonably press the comparison to include the early Chinese soil gods. For Chavannes (1910) the cult of the gods of the soil and that of the ancestral temple are equally fundamental in Chinese religious thought; the former takes place at a mound associated with a tree and furnished with a stone tablet sometimes called the "seat" of the gods. Leaving China aside, Bodic myths explaining the origin of the agricultural cult do not seem to be common, and this in itself would give the Thulung narrative a certain interest. It also deserves attention as one among various indications that, before the massive Hinduisation of the last couple of centuries innovations reached Thulung society mainly from the north. Similarly, still considering local history, one might wonder whether the ritual supremacy of Rapcha and Phuleli was not associated with some political hegemony; DB's fifth episode shows the Khaling controlling the southward flow of Tibetan salt via the Sherpas to the Thulung. If there is indeed here a hint of political organisation above the level of the linguistically defined sub-tribe, it could only refer to the period before the Gorkha conquest of the 1770s. However, what intrigues me most about the Thulung narrative is the comparison between it and the Indian myth of Shiva and Sati.

The story is quite well known in a number of versions, see references in O'Flaherty (1975: 334), particularly Sircar (1948). Sati feels insulted by her father Daksha and as a result dies or commits suicide. Shiva is furious with Daksha and also mad with grief. He picks up the corpse of his dead wife, and dances over the earth with it on his shoulder or head. To free him from his infatuation the gods conspire to deprive him of the body, and Brahma, Vishnu and Shani enter Sati and dismember her piece by piece, or alternatively Vishnu follows behind Shiva and cuts pieces off the corpse with his arrow or his discus. In any case the limbs which fall

to the ground become *pīthas*, the "seats", of the goddess and sites of Devi worship, and Sircar collates the lists which relate particular Hindu shrines with particular pieces of Sati's body. The most famous of all the *pīṭhas* is perhaps Kāmakhyā in Assam where her *yoni* fell, but in detail the lists have little by way of common tradition and there is no clear rationale for the relationship of body part to locality. Each *pīṭha* is associated with a *liṅga* representing Shiva in the form of Bhairava. Although names and minor elements of the story can be traced back to the Mahabharata and even earlier, the linking of Sati's dismemberment to particular shrines is a feature of tantric Hinduism, and relatively recent in the written record (? 14th-15th century).

Let it be admitted straightaway that there are vast differences between the Thulung myth and the Indian one (not to mention the cults to which they relate). Firstly there is the question of scale. Mapa's whole anticlockwise circuit could be comfortably fitted into two days walking. Shiva is sometimes described as "revolving round the world for one year full" (Sen 1922 (II): 292), and the lists of *pīṭhas* cover the greater part of India. Mapa is male, more or less alive, and carried by a son, while Sati is female, dead, and carried by a husband. A human leper losing a couple of digits is not the same as a deity being dismembered by other deities. Mapa's youngest son is presumably a prototype priest, like those who still invoke and make offerings at *bhume* sites; Shiva is an ascetic, a Renouncer. However, having said all this, I cannot help feeling that the rapprochement is still justified by the shared underlying structure. Both stories relate the dispersal of parts of the body of an anthropomorphic being who is carried on a journey by a relative, and in both of them the separated bodily parts turn into, or are represented by, stones which are the essential elements at a series of sacred sites.

One way to pursue the comparison would be to study the number and arrangement of the sites. The Hindu texts give various totals, some of them e.g. 108, obviously chosen for their symbolic associations; where the total is four ('the *catuṣpīṭha* concept'), each is associated with a cardinal point. The Thulung myth mentions nine locations if one includes the initial petrifaction and Salabesi; Sakhle, the southern-most point of the journey, is in the middle of the list, and if Luwale is the starting point as well as the penultimate stage, one might attempt to interpret the journey as a circumambulation of Rapcha (in spite of the fact that the latter

is actually on or very close to the circumference). Luwale and Rapcha are in the north-east segment of the circuit, while Kāmakhyā is in the north-east of India (opposite to the inauspicious south-west?). But I very much doubt whether this sort of consideration can be given much weight since Thulung traditional thought so conspicuously avoids emphasis on the cardinal points and the use of symbolic numbers.

Another approach is to broaden the scope of the comparison. The Indian connection between *pīṭhas* and cardinal points leads us back to another part of Nepal. The four ancient stupas still surrounding the city of Patan in the central valley have long been recognised as reflecting a spatial projection of the notion of the *mandala,* and German workers have recently been giving us much richer material from the other Newar cities (formerly city states). Kölver (1976) presents a local "map" of Bhaktapur which shows it as a mandala with Tripurasundari in the centre (cf. Stahl in press) surrounded by three concentric circles containing the *aṣṭa-* (eight) *mātṛkā,* the *aṣṭabhairava* and the *aṣṭaganeśa* from outside in. For each deity in the depiction there exists somewhere in the streets of the city or close outside it a corresponding *pīṭha* though the actual location of the shrines is of course less symmetrical than is depicted. Kathmandu too is surrounded by three esoterically interpreted concentric "rings" of eight *mātṛkā pīṭhas,* which are visited consecutively in the course of a *pīṭhāpūjā* (Gutschow 1977). Gutschow has not so far found any myth directly relating these circles of shrines to the body of a deity, but the Sati dismemberment myth is certainly applied to lists of *pīṭhas* within Nepal (Parajuli 2028: 128–145, Lienhard 1978: 257ff). Moreover these urban spatio-religious schemata, which are surely not unique to the Newars, provide a convenient transition from the myth of Sati to that of the Tibetan demoness.

The Tibetan king credited with the introduction of Buddhism was a historical empire-builder who died in 649 A.D., but the narratives attached to his name are largely mythical in character. Under the influence particularly of his Chinese wife, the King comes to realise that Tibet is like a demoness lying on her back with her heart beneath Lhasa and her limbs extending outwards. To keep her under control and render the land fit for civilisation he must build the Jo-khang temple exactly over her heart and surround it with three concentric rings of four temples. The innermost ring nails down her shoulders and hips, the next her elbows and

knees, the last her hands and feet. The textual references, which start in the 12-13th century, do not always relate the same named site to the same limb, but the *schema* is well established.[5] No doubt all the temples contain sacred stones, whether carved (iconic) or not. Certainly the Jokhang centred on a celebrated aniconic stone covering the passage to the supposed subterranean lake that represented the demoness's heart blood; it also contained a *liṅga* (Richardson 1972), though this was far less prominent and may be irrelevant here. The surrounding temples can be identified with greater or lesser degrees of certainty and precision, though their real geographical distribution again naturally falls short of the neatness of the schema.

The Tibetan demoness (compared by Aris to the tortoise of certain Chinese traditions) differs from Mapa and Sati in one obvious way: since she extends across the whole empire there is no need for her to be carried round it in order to be dispersed. Moreover the mode of attachment of goddess to shrine is different: if *pīṭha* connotes sitting down, one Tibetan source (the Rgyal-rabs of 1368) talks of the temples as "nails of immobility" (*mi 'gyur-ba'i gzer*) and suggests as a possible alternative to them *sa-phur,* i.e. pegs, pins or ritual daggers driven into the earth. Nevertheless the demoness resembles the other mythical beings in that her body, like theirs, provides a means of expressing the homogeneity of a series of cult sites, and hence presumably, the religious unity of the territory across which they are distributed.

To return to India, a less earthy homologue to the demoness can be recognised in the Diamond Body of the Buddha (his *vajra-kāya*), a concept used by several of the Tantric schools (Tucci 1940 : 21 & passim, 1932–41 III (2) : 38–44). The territory of India, identified with this body, was divided into 24 parts each with its own *pīṭha* presided over by a *vīra* deity. With the decline of Buddhism in India, the 24 deities, originally widely distributed, came to be limited to the north-west where the series of shrines was visited by a 13th century Tibetan pilgrim. Particular places were associated with different parts of the Diamond Body (e.g. Kulu with the knees), but the associations do not seem to be explained by the myth concerning the original appointment of the deities nor by the topography of north-west India. In the iconography the 24 deities are distributed into three circles or mandalas, respectively of the spirit, word and body, and esoterially the whole scheme is intended to be transposed into the body of the initiate.

On a more popular level of belief, Parry (1979: 6) reports that the region of eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar is sometimes envisaged as a body with the head at Prayag, torso at Kashi and feet at Gaya (three particularly sacred cities sometimes treated as a triad in the mediaeval religious literature). Similarly Kashi itself may be envisaged as a prone figure with its head on the southern boundary at Asi and its feet at Varuna in the north.

Gaya has its own self-advertising myth tacked on to the Vayu Purana (Jacques 1962). By means of his austerities a giant (*asura*) called Gaya obtains a body of surpassing purity, which Vishnu advises Brahma to use for a sacrifice. The giant willingly falls to the ground, head to the north, feet to the south, but there is considerable difficulty in rendering him immobile. A stone slab (*śilā*) brought from the home of Yama is placed on his head and finally Vishnu succeeds in stabilizing him with his mace. It is mentioned in passing that his belly and feet are also held down by two mountains. The giant is granted his prayer that the territory of Gaya should be holy ground, Gayasiras (the two miles over which his head extends) being specially singled out. Moreover the stone placed on his head is no ordinary stone but the petrified daughter of Dharma, who by virtue of her own austerities has been granted a wish similar to Gayasura's. Different parts of the Dharmasila (loins, right hand, etc.) have different 'mountains' (i.e. holy sites) placed on them, and Jacques speaks of its or her 'anatomy'.[6]

The emphasis on Gayasura's immobilization (*niś* + $\sqrt{cal}$) recalls the Tibetan demoness, while in the case of Dharma's daughter the unsystematised relationship between shrines and body parts is more reminiscent of the Buddha's Diamond Body. It is also worth noting the emphasis the text gives to the importance at Gaya of placing *pinda* offerings directly on the sacred earth itself (ibid: 246). Compare the following report (Pieper 1975: 68-9), again from Bhaktapur: 'It is believed that a goddess Chowasa Ajima, who takes everything unclean and spoiled, dwells under the city and is manifest in the pavement. Black stone slabs with various ornamentations are placed in the brickwork of the street surface to mark her body, and people take their leftovers and household waste as sacrifices to these stones.' The earthy quality of the *bhume* cult from which we started is still detectable in these urban contexts.

Sircar makes a passing comparison of Sati's dismemberment, not only with that of Isis, but also with the posthumous distribution of the relics of the Buddha. A local variant on the latter

theme has been reported from north Thailand by Keyes (1975). The twelve years of the Duodenary cycle are placed in correspondence with twelve shrines, each of them possessing a relic, and most of them thought to have been visited by the Buddha; theoretically the schema allows each individual to select the optimal pilgrimage site in view of his year of birth. Keyes notes that four of the shrines are located in the Ping valley, whose main capital was Chiang Mai, four are in neighbouring principalities, and four are further afield (the remotest two being in Bodh Gaya and in the Culamani heaven). However no relationship to cardinal points is mentioned and there is no indication that the three groups are segregated in the traditional 'astrological pictures' which relate years and reliquaries.

Of all the bodies we have met that are imagined as projected onto the surface of the earth, buried in it or dispersed across it, only Mapa's is divided into digits and remainder. This is clearly related to the fact that leprosy is a disease which attacks the extremities. One might suggest that the leprosy in turn was a rationalisation to explain the loss of body parts: there are other instances in my corpus where I suspect a watering down of motifs which contemporary Thulung perceive as sanguinary or barbaric, and it is more likely that earlier versions of the story contained greater emphasis on Mapa's bodily losses than that they contained even less. But this argument is not very cogent. The leprosy may well have other sorts of meaning since in Tibetan it is the disease of the *klu,* the guardians of the watery subsoil. Moreover there might be good reasons for the myth not treating Mapa's body like Sati's: among certain Nagas the child victim was taken from house to house having a finger joint cut off at each, but had to remain conscious until the final sacrifice (Grant Brown 1911: 36). Moreover there are other dismemberment-type myths that concentrate on a single body part. When Masana Bhairava proceeded through Bhaktapur, his protruding tongue was cut successively into three pieces each commemorated by a stone or group of stones located along the main street. The triad receives worship and represents the unity of the city, while the rest of Bhairava was buried in a jar at what is now a cremation ground (Gutschow & Shrestha 1975). Comparably, after Mahadeva's *liṅga* fell to the ground, it was cut up with hatchets and the 31 pieces were distributed across the three worlds (Wilford 1795: 367, said to be from the Skanda Purana); in this case Mahadeva was reborn entire under another name.[7]

The materials considered in this paper have been somewhat scattered in space and time, but the central theme has been that of sets of sacred sites distributed over a territory and related one for one with parts of the body of a supernatural being. As well as looking for further instances one might expand the investigation in a number of directions. The components of social structure (clans, varnas), as well as of the cosmos, may also be related one for one with parts of the bodies of supernatural founders or sacrificial victims (c.f. e.g. Macdonald, 1980). These body metaphors interact with the familiar and more abstract schema of the centre and cardinal points in ways that we have only touched on here and there (the equation of a divine body with the *vertical* axis mundi is of course common). We have not considered territories smaller than a city, but comparisons could easily be made e.g. with the male being called Vastu who in the Coimbatore district is associated with the ground under or around all buildings, and particularly temples; he needs to be propitiated before the construction and is conceived of in the texts as a sort of corpse, a left-over which fell to earth after the primal sacrifice (Beck 1976: 226-8). This direction of thought would lead directly to the general topic of foundation sacrifices, within which Gayasura so clearly belongs (the hypothetical Fourth Century earthquake which Jacques (p. xxv) suggests may have given rise to the Gayasura myth could surely not be the whole explanation). One other interesting topic would be to look at the relationship between rulers and the sort of supernatural beings we have considered with a view to its relevance to local theories of legitimacy.

Finally, though it is really outside the scope of the paper, a word must be said on the historical relationship between the Thulung and the Hindu myth—assuming that there is one. Reducing matters to the crudest possibe models, there are three types of genetic relationship one can postulate when faced with cultural similarities between the highland areas and the great literate civilisation to the south. The most obvious is to treat the hill-people simply as the recipient of influences from the plains, so that in this case Mapa would be a distorted highland version of a pre-existing Sati, the result of diffusion from the Hindu world of tantric ideas or their congeners. It is highly unlikely that this particular similarity could be the result of the massive Hinduisation of recent centuries, but it is harder to rule out earlier influences either directly from the plains or transmitted via Tibet. Secondly,

one might postulate the reverse direction of influence. Whatever his Harappan precursors, in popular belief Shiva is strongly associated with the Himalayas, and it may be that Hinduism, especially tantric Hinduism, owes more to the Indo-Mongoloids than has generally been recognised (cf. Walker 1968 s.v. Mongolians). In either case one could refine the argument by allowing that it would not necessarily be either the Mapa or the Sati that we know which served as model for the other, but earlier forms which are not attested. Pushing this idea to its limit leads to a third position, which is the one I favour both in this matter and with regard to certain questions of social structure. The further back one goes in time the more speculative and the less interesting it is to postulate that one culture has influenced the other, and instead one can think in terms of independent development from a substratum of ideas that may once have been widespread in the Indo-Tibetan (or even East Eurasian) area. If for the sake of argument one adopted this third position, one might go on to suggest that in some respects at least, e.g. the scale of his journey, Mapa was likely to be closer to the substratum than Sati. It would be premature to come to definite conclusions, but it is possible that the surviving oral traditions of such highland peoples as the Thulung have a useful contribution to make to our understanding of the history of the subcontinent.

NOTES

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1. Allen (1976, 1974) gives further information on Thulung priests, Allen (1975) contains the Thulung text of DB's narrative, and Allen (in press) gives an overview of Thulung mythology.
2. Yaliu, located high up in Mukli, formerly had a *bhume* site but it was abandoned in favour of the Bhumethan which is close to, if not at, Sase.
3. Here we re-enter Khaling territory.
4. Phuleli *may* be the Nepali name for Luwale. Halesi is well known as the site of a large, thrice-yearly fair (*mela*) centered on a shrine which, nowadays at least, is regarded as Hindu. The normal way to carry an invalid, as any other load in this area, is in a basket supported by a tump-line across the forehead.
5. The sources are treated by Aris (in press). Tibetan sources know of other

divinities stretched out on their backs over a tract of land and associated with its civilization or sacralization—in particular Rudra and the indigenous sGam-bu Phyva (Stein 1972: 508, 1973: 466-8).

6. Gaya's claim to outstanding holiness seems to be connected with 'the union of the two purities', i.e. those of the two superimposed bodies (Jacques p. 98). It is curious that Vishnu's mace, the ultimate instrument in the immobilization, was itself made from the bones of an *asura* who gained a divine favour (unspecified) by his austerities. Should one see the mace as a third body superimposed on Dharma's daughter (the relevant *śloka* (V. 12) seems ambiguous)? The Garuda Purana omits the Dharmasila: Gayasura is induced to lie down on a bed of lotuses he has picked for Shiva and is struck down by Vishnu's mace. Since then Vishnu has stayed in the city of Gaya on the ossified remains (Dutt 1968: 213).
7. I am not sure what to make of the remark that village goddesses are Prakrti's digits (Sen 1922 (I): 88).

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CHAPTER VIII

RESOURCE DISTRIBUTION AND MULTIPLE ETHNIC IDENTITY IN SIKKIM

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CONVENTIONAL focus and traditional concern in anthropology have been with culture, tribe, race, ethnicity and alike. However, there has been an informal division of work among anthropologists and sociologists. While the former have been concerned with the study of the 'tribe', the latter were engaged in uncovering the aspects of 'ethnic groups'—as a minority segment of the larger urban and/or plural society. Though one may find considerable data on the genesis and identity of particular ethnic communities in the classical monographs of Evans-Pritchard, Fortes, Leach, Bailey, etc., there has been a new concern for ethnic studies in anthropology recently. In this context, mention may be made of Kunstedter's (Kunstedter Peter, 1967) concern for the tribal minorities in South-East Asia and Kuper and Smith's (Kuper Leo, M.G. Smith, 1969) analysis of ethnic pluralism in Africa. However, there have been criticism that anthropological researches are devoid of the analysis of the nature and persistence of ethnic boundaries, organization of the ethnic groups and dynamics of inter-ethnic relations. In the light of the above considerations, Barth's and his colleagues (Barth, F. 1969) work on the comparative ethnic studies, incorporating the genesis and persistence of ethnic boundaries, incorporation of the ethnic population, organization of inter-ethnic relations and consequent competition for resource distribution, has been well-received. This was the background in which the 9th International Congress of Anthropology and Ethnology was exercised with conceptual problems of ethnicity, and the result was the publication of two volumes on ethnic implications (Despres, Leo, 1975; Henry, F, 1976). In the light of the above, if we endeavour to understand the complex

inter-ethnic relations in Sikkim, we may have to analyse the resource distribution vis-à-vis ethnic identity in the Sikkimese social milieu.

Ethnicity Defined

In the early anthropological literature little distinction was made between cultural, racial and ethnic phenomena. This resulted in a bio-cultural conception of the ethnicity. Among such efforts, one of the most important may be identified with M.G. Smith's definition of ethnicity in pre-colonial Africa as "... common provenience and distinctiveness as a unit of social and biological reproduction; it accordingly connotes internal uniformities and external distinctness of biological stock, perhaps of language, kinship, culture, cult and other institutions." (Smith, M.G. 1969:104-05). Theoretical and methodological implications of this definition are so grave that no serious researches have been made keeping this in view. In this context Frederik Barth's analysis must be mentioned. For him ethnic group in anthropological literature is generally understood to designate a population which: (i) is largely biologically self-perpetuating; (ii) shares fundamental cultural values realised in overt unity in cultural forms; (iii) makes up a field of communication and interaction; (iv) has a membership which identifies itself, and is identified by others, as constituting a category, distinguishable from other categories of the same order.

After enumerating the above points of views, he rejects the "traditional proposition" that race = culture = language (= nation) as removed from the empirical situation. He suggests "no simple one-to-one" relationship between ethnic units and cultural similarities and differences. For him ethnicity is "... in terms of his (a person's) basic most general identity, presumptively determined by his origin and background. To the extent that actors use ethnic identities to categorize themselves and others for purpose of interactions, they form ethnic groups." He further clarifies his concept: "Since belonging to an ethnic category implies being a certain kind of person, having that basic identity, it also implies a claim to be judged, and to judge oneself, by those standards that are relevant to that identity" (Barth, F. 1969: 14). In this way, he rejects the first three formulations put forth by him in favour of the fourth one. It is to be noted here that for Barth ethnicity is

one of a poly-ethnic type of statuses.

Undoubtedly ethnicity persists in those societies that have been labelled as complex, multiple, multi-ethnic, segmented, heterogeneous, urban, industrial, pre-industrial or plural. An ethnic group in such a larger society recognizes its culture as being different from the latter. Members of such an ethnic group feel themselves, are considered to be, and are bound together by common bonds of race, nationality or culture. Thus, Schermerhorn identifies an ethnic group "... collectivity within a larger society having real or putative common ancestory, memories of a shared historical past, and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements defined as the epitome of their people-hood ... A necessary accompaniment is some consciousness of kind among members of the group." (Schermenhorn, R.A., 1970:12). If added to this the economic dimension, ethnic complexity may clearly be discerned. Thus, Whitten ascribes ethnicity to those "patterns of human interaction, which form the basis for categorical social relations with observable, or projected economic consequences. (Such) categorical social relations are characterised by stereotypical criteria as distinct from structural relations which are characterized by extant exchange patterns between interacting individuals. Land access is intimately tied to the economic consequences of ethnic status" (Whitten, N.E., 1976: 60).

From socio-economic dimension emerges a concern for maintenance of ethnic identities and boundaries. For that ethnicity is used as an ideology:"... ethnicity is an ideology of and for value dissensus and disengagement from an inclusive socio-political arena, that is, for pursuing major values deemed not shared by others in the arena. I distinguish economic ideologies first from class ideologies, which ... assume or call for value consensus, which demand the achievement of values and scarce goods deemed *shared* by the total arena ... To the contrary, an ethnic ideology says in effect that we do not agree on the ultimate values (or goals, or ends) of this system, and we want to be left alone (perhaps with enough resources) to pursue "our" own ends, whatever you may be doing. Applied to others, it says, we will treat you as if you are pursuing different values for those we have" (Aronson, Dan R., 1976: 14-15).

Such ethnic identities have been used for political and cultural mobilization as a tool to gain a larger share of what is to be gained from a plural system. In this case, "ethnicity may serve as the

ideological basis for political mobilization, if the ethnic participants coordinate their activities for the pursuit of goods that are not commonly held by non-ethnics in the wider system. ... Ethnicity as a means of cultural mobilisation has structural properties when viewed from the perspective of social organisation and interaction. Thus, the researcher moves from the cultural cognitive domain of abstraction into the social domain when he focuses on the processes by which individual actors manipulate their ethnic identity for the purposes of social interaction and group formation." (Holzberg, C.S., 1976: 142). This leads to the conflict between "the needs of the ethnic groups as perceived by its leadership on the one hand and the conceptual and analytical patterns to which sociologists and anthropologists are socialized on the other." (Provinzano, James, 1976: 385). Naturally, the ethnic groups continue to concern themselves with the development of ethnic consciousness and as an adjunct to their organization.

APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF ETHNICITY

A glance at the various definitions put forth by individual scholars suggests that specific definitions were conceived mainly keeping in view the particular community being studied. In other words, there is no effort to conceive the ethnic phenomenon conceptually for universal or almost universal application. No doubt it is too difficult a task because of the ambiguity, complexity and lack of enough reliable data on ethnogenesis. That is why Despres finds "a theoretical framework capable of informing comparative ethnic studies" yet to emerge. However, some broad approaches for uncovering the ethnic complexities may be identified.

1. *Subjective or Interactional approach:* No ethnic studies in the contemporary social sciences is complete without reference to Barth's study of Pathans and his theoretical formulations. He rejects the ambiguous and uncritical aspects of ethnicity and emphasizes the limits of interaction within a territorial boundary. Within a given locality where poly-ethnic complexity prevails, there is a competition for limited resources. Who gets what and how depends on the relevant identity of the members vis-a-vis the community in question. For such identification of the membership to the ethnic communities, he adopts subjective criteria, when

he opines that a population "identifies itself, and is identified by others, as constituting a category distinguishable from other categories." In this scheme of things ethnic groups are formed to the extent that actors use ethnic identities themselves and others for purpose of interaction. It also presupposes a set of rules governing situations of inter-ethnic contacts. Thus, he seems to have elected to conceptualize ethnicity as one of a poly-ethnic type. "The presentation of this thesis remains couched in troublesome conceptual and epistemological ambiguities and, ... research is too limited to sort out and model all of the variables that may be involved. Still, the data presented in support of this view have been sufficiently persuasive to warrant its further consideration" (Despres, Leo, 1975 : 3).

2. *Objective approach to multi-ethnic societies:* As against Barth's subjectivist conception of ethnicity, objective criteria were suggested for identification of ethnic groups. At the same time, an exclusively objectivist or cultural conception of ethnicity was being considered equally unserviceable. This led to uncovering of the complex societies known as multi-ethnics. Furnivall, an economist and an administrator, may be termed as the pioneer of the study on pluralism. It was he who coined the term plural society to conceive the social and cultural divisions characteristic of South-East Asian societies (Furnivall, J.S., 1939 and 1948). Among the anthropologists, M.G. Smith emerged as the chief exponent of this approach in this tudy of the West Indies (Smith, S.G., 1965). In a similar way, Benedict studied the multi-ethnic society of Mauritius, (Benedict, B., 1965), Kunstedter uncovered tribal minorities in South-East Asia (Kunstedter, P. 1967) and Kuper and Smith analysed the pre-colonial and emergent post-colonial African Socio-cultural scene (Kuper, Leo and M.G. Smith, 1969). In these studies, emphasis has been placed on the cultural differentiation of population units within an overall system of a multi-ethnic unit. This approach seems to have blurred the political factors that determine the functioning of complex societies. "It emphasizes the importance of the values and institutions of the various groups in the society and the value consensus that exists between them. It also belittles the role that actual or potential force plays in arriving at the value consensus that permits societies to exist, even in the face of unequal distribution of their resources. There is little appreciation of the dissatisfaction of social groups with their societies. Conflict is ignored or minimized because

groups are viewed as getting what they want out of their societies (Kuper, Leo 1971: 183).

The above approach was also criticized not because of its emphasis on plural societies, but for the impossibility of dissociating ethnicity from class status. There was also a methodological problem involved in it. "Ethnicity is both an objective and a subjective phenomenon, the interrelation between these two aspects being, once again, an empirical question. Any conception of it to an insignificant role distorts reality ... (Thus) ethnic groups are defined *both* by objective culture modalities of their behaviour (including most importantly their linguistic behaviour) and by their subjective views of themselves and each other." (Van Den Berghe, P.L. 1975: 72).

3. *Ideological or Sociology of Dependence Approach:* Operational difficulties with the first two approaches led to further conceptual exploration to establish ethnic identity. The most sophisticated attempt to account for the complex interplay of class and ethnicity is found in the 'sociology of dependence' approach, which was applied to uncover the Peruvian social milieu. This approach rejects the concept of plural society in the Peruvian context because it presupposes fairly well-drawn ethnic boundaries. "The approach interprets Peruvian social structure in terms of multiple and interrelated chains of dependence between persons or groups of unequal power, wealth, and status. These chains converge at the apex into the national and, beyond it, the international ruling oligarchy, as the structure of control is extremely centralised. Peruvian social structure is conceived as a multitude of binary relations of dependence and domination based on half a dozen or so interrelated dimensions.

"Besides centralization and inequality, these relations of dependence and domination are characterized by the fact that the closer one approaches the bottom of the pyramid, the more atomized and marginalized people are to national life; and, conversely, as one approaches the apex, the better interconnected and integrated the organs of domination." (Van Den Berghe, P,L. 1975: 73-74). Van Den Berghe gives four arguments in favour of accepting this approach to ethnicity as the most fruitful. Firstly, it anchors the study of ethnicity squarely in the matrix of relations of power and relations of production. Secondly, it rejects the cultural determinist approach that the *Indios* are the heirs of the pre-Columbian civilisations and the *Mestizos* the carriers of

Spanish culture. Thirdly, the concept by relating ethnicity to class allows for a flexible description of a fluid and complex situation. And lastly, by avoiding the extreme subjectivism (which reduces ethnicity almost purely to the mutual perceptions and definitions of the situation by the members of the groups present), this approach links ethnicity to objective relations of power and of production.

The above approach goes closer to the Marxist bipolar class concept. However, there are suggestions to consider ethnicity as an ideology of and for value dissensus and disengagement from an inclusive socio-political arena. Aronson, who suggests this approach, views ideology of ethnicity distinct from the class ideology in which the latter presupposes pursuing major values deemed not shared by others in the arena. "If ethnicity is an ideology for disengagement, then we need to give priority in the study of ethnicity not to boundaries once established, or to mechanisms of maintenance, but instead to independent variables which make or deepen the appeal of such ideologies, and the consequences of such ideologies for the arenas in which they arise. We must look harder than we have at the 'ethnic entrepreneurs' who formulate and manage the ideologies, and how situations are defined or reinforced to their advantage ... (This approach asks why and when ethnic groups come to be, and not how they. like all kinds of groups, build institution, elaborate an internal culture, define 'outsiders' and struggle to maintain themselves." Aronson, Dan R., 1975: 17-18). James Provinzano, who studied the Chicano migrant farm workers in south-western United States of America, poses the same issue: "If consciousness of deprivation and concomitant organisation are not sufficient to unite the migrants in a labour organization, what other factor is available to an organiser? The answer to that question is ideology. In this case, specifically, ethnic ideology or pride in one's ethnic identity." (Provinzano, James, 1976: 395). He pleads to the social scientistis for making every effort to comprehend and incorporate the use of ideology by particular groups into the analytical tools devised to deal with the observed phenomena.

RESOURCE DISTRIBUTION IN SIKKIM

A. *Physical Resources:* (i) *Territorial Division:* Sikkim is essentially an Himalayan enclosed basin of nearly 40 miles width,

between two deeply dissected north-south traverse ridges, each of them 80 miles long. Physically, it consists of the greater Himalayan and Inner or Lesser Himalayan zones. The greater Himalayan region in the north is a snow desert, where highlanders graze their yak and other herds during the summer and lead a nomadic-cum-pastoralist life. There are only three locations—Tsungthan, Lachen and Lachung—with permanent settlement, and where efforts are being made to raise some cash crops such as potato and apples. In fact, the inhabited Sikkim is the region of the Inner Himalayan zone. The river Tista and its tributaries deeply dissect the Inner Himalayan highlands of Sikkim. The river beds and banks of Tista and its tributaries are fertile land. The northern slopes of the Inner Himalayan Zones are cold and normally used for pastorage; while the southern slopes are marked for slash-and-burn-type or rotational dry cultivation. Banks and slopes of the rivers need extensive terracing for permanent wet cultivation.

(ii) Economic Resources: North Sikkim is snow desert where pastoral economy is in practice. Wool, cheese, butter, hide, apple and potato are the commercial commodities, which are not easily perishable and can be stored for longer periods of time. Yak and ponies are the most precious pack animals. The Inner Himalayan northern slopes have the same features. The southern slopes of Inner Himalayan highlands produce maize, millet, beans, etc., and people also resort to hunting and collecting of forest goods in their spare time to supplement their limited agricultural economy. A significant crop is that of cardamom, which is grown on the wet slopes. Southern Sikkim produces rice, maize, potato and ginger in small terraced fields. This region is famous for orange, banana, pineapple, fruits, etc., the tropical and highly perishable fruits which need quick transportation to the centres of consumption. This is the simple generalized picture of rural Sikkim. However, urban centres, or the appropriately commercial centres, such as Mangan, Gangtok, Singham, Rangpo, Melli, etc. are something like free zones where various commodities are transacted. These are the places where surplus rural populations flock to seek employment as industrial workers, white collar, unskilled manual labour and in other sundry ways. These commercial points are not only political and cultural nerve centres, but are also the centres of organized sectors of production in the factories, where even an inarticulate working force is conveniently

exposed to ideological conversion. Needless to add that these are the centres which function as the windows to the outside Sikkimese world. Ideas, articles and individuals enter the Sikkimese social context through these centres.

B. *Human Resources:*

(i) ETHNIC COMMUNITIES IN SIKKIM: Sikkim is known to be the home of the Kirati tribesmen from prehistoric times. Limbu, Lepcha, Rai, Magar, Gurung and other marginal communities are traditionally included among the Kiratis. All the above tribes inhabit eastern Nepal, Darjeeling (district of West Bengal) and Sikkim. The important point to be noted here is that the Lepcha is known to be the autochthonous tribe of Sikkim. However, besides the Lepcha, there is a considerable size of the Limbu (who are also known as the Yak thanba) among the earliest settlers to Sikkim. From our point of view, it is to be remembered that there are three septs (clans) with three distinct legends of their origin among the Limbu. The *Bhuphuta* or *Phedap* Limbu believe that they are indigenous people of Sikkim. Their tradition states that in the ancient days, their ancestors sprang up from a cleavage in the earth in Sikkim. A section of the Limbu are animist and they are mostly the *Bhuiphuta*. The *Kashigotra* Limbu, who are largely Hinduized, consider themselves a migrant to Sikkim from the Gangetic plains and specifically from Varanasi. The *Tshongs* or the Lamaist Limbu belong to the *Lhasa Gotra*, and believe to have migrated to Sikkim from the Tibetan province of 'U' (Lhasa) and Tsang (Teshilhumbo.) It is significant to note that the Limbu have divided into animists, Hindus and Lamaist. Besides their Limbu dialect, which is spoken by all the three clans alike, they speak Nepali, which is the *Linguafranca* as well as one of the state languages of Sikkim.

Bhotias in Sikkim came from Tibet and settled down in the north and north-eastern highlands. They converted the indigeneous folk into Lamaism, established a chain of Lamaseries in every nook and corner, and gave monarchy as a gift to Sikkim. The Tibetan explorers, Lamaist missionaries and perseverant traders established a centralised theocratic political system in Sikkim. In the early phase of its existence, this newly established theocratic system needed support from the local population. The Bhotia found an ingenious device to court favour from the Lepcha and the Limbu tribes. They contracted ritual blood brotherhood

with the Lepcha chiefs. The Bhotia rulers commanded their courtiers to marry with the Lepcha and the Limbu women and they themselves cited the examples by acquiring Lepcha and Limbu wives. The Lepcha like the Bhotia had been traditionally polyandrous. This gave an easy access to the Bhotia courtiers to marry among the Lepcha families of repute. Thus, an ingenious institution of aristocracy, known as the *Kazi*, emerged as the strongest support to the Bhotia rulers. This institution of Kazihood had a well-guarded membership and numbers to the *Kazi* houses were strictly controlled by the Namgyal rulers. However, the Limbu remained outside the Bhotia patronage. Thus, they put forth another ingenious device of *Lhomentsong* to win the confidence of the Kirati tribes. It is claimed that Phuntsog Namgyal, the first Bhotia ruler of Sikkim, invited all the tribal chiefs to a meeting where he proclaimed that the Bhotia (the victorious Lhopas or the inhabitants of the southern slopes of the Himalayas—a Tibetan term), the Memba or the Monpa (the Lepcha), and the Tsong (the Yak thamba or the Limbu) were of one family. The king (a Lhopa) should be considered the father, the Lepcha (the Monpa) the mother and the Limbu (the Tsongs) the sons of the same family, forming a council called '*Lhomontsong*' (Sinha, A.C., 1975: 14).

By the second half of the nineteenth century, the Nepalese had already inhabited the better part of what is now known as Darjeeling district of Bengal. That was the time, when the Sikkim court was weak enough and the courtiers were badly divided among themselves on all the vital issues faced by the state. An influential section, the Sikkimese Kaziz favoured the Nepalese settlement in Sikkim. That is how the Newar *Thikkadar* families came to Sikkim as contractual landlords, miners and minters for the Sikkim Durbar. The Newar traders are divided into two: the Lamaists and the Hindus. Many of them combine rituals of both the religious and domestic levels. They are predominantly an urban community. After the initial conflict with a section of the Sikkimese court, they bought peace and had the best of relations with the *Kazi* aristocrats and the British colonial administrators. They are bi-lingual or multi-lingual people, retaining their Newari language for domestic use, and using Nepali language for outside communications. Among the Sikkimese Nepalese, they are the richest, educationally advanced and occupy various positions in the administration and public life.

Among the castes of Nepalese origin there are in Sikkim the Brahmans, Thakuris and Chetris, as well as such service castes as Kami, Sarki and Damai. They are Hindus and speak Nepali at home as well as outside. Ritually the Brahmans are considered superior and are followed by the warrior castes in social hierarchy. Many of them are vegetarian; they believe in the concept of purity and pollution; and maintain social distance from the beaf eating, polyandrous and rather egalitarian Lamaists. They are proud of being Hindu and draw their inspiration from the Hindu kingdom of Nepal and the Hindu places of pilgrimage in India. They consider themselves the inheritors of the great Hindu civilisation and a martial race of the Gorkha kingdom. The three untouchable castes of Sarki, Damai and Kami have recently been declared as scheduled castes. Though these untouchable artisan castes do not occupy an equal status with that of the Brahmans and the warrior castes, they share their world view and identify themselves with the Nepalese Hindus.

Besides Lepcha and Limbu, there are several tribes normally enumerated among the Kirati. Magar, Gurung, Rai, Sherpa, Tamangs, etc. all have their own dialects. At the same time, Nepali is their *lingua-franca* for inter-ethnic communication. They are largely animistic, but many of them are orthodox Hindus. Sherpas are Lamaist. Magar, Gurung and Rai represent various levels of Hinduism. On different occasions they identify themselves differently. Limbu and Lepcha are with them for several considerations, still the two are apart from them. However, two points may be noted here. Firstly, in spite of religious and cultural diversity, Nepali language, Nepali dress and way of life have unified them into a strong community. Secondly, since the first two sections of the Nepali are migrant to Sikkim, in the case of Kirati a larger number of their brethren are in Nepal than in Sikkim, being immigrant provides them with a sense of unity. Besides the Nepalese, there are two distinct communities, which need to be mentioned here. The *Marwari* are big businessmen and *Deswali* or *Madesia* are petty hawkers in the urban centres. Both of them came to Sikkim for trade and are clustered territorially and occupationally in limited areas.

(II) ETHNIC COMPLEXITY AND RESOURCE DISTRIBUTION:

In this way, Sikkim is a plural society "characterised by coexisting, locally autonomous, homologous, and non-complementary minimal socio-cultural segments, hierarchically arranged in

terms of access to politic, economic and jural resources, and integrated at the national level by virtue of differential but common participation in the super-ordinate political and economic institution." (Holzberg, C.S., 1975; 146). This plurality has been managed by the central authority of the Chogyals, which was the power to be of the land. As we have briefly demonstrated above, management of the ethnic relations had been one of the main concerns of the Bhotia rulers. It had been because of the fact that ethnic complexity did not remain a localised problem, rather it permeated the very system of Sikkimese state structure. "This historical process in the formation of the present population of Sikkim is clearly reflected in the actual scene of a local community. Contacts between Lepchas and Bhotias, and those between Lepchas-Bhotias and the Nepalis are of an entirely different nature. The religious differences which cover various aspects of social life are very great: both Buddhists and Hindus maintain their own values and ideas, and have little in common, although they reside side by side in the same locality and follow similar techniques of rice cultivation." (Nakane, C. 1966: 221).

The British empire had identified this problem almost nine decades back, when the District Gazetteer of Sikkim was compiled. In the words of its author, "The Lepchas are rapidly dying out: while from the west, the industrious Newars and Gurkhas of Nepal are pressing forward ... Here also religion will play a leading part. In Sikkim, as in India, Hinduism will assuredly cast out Buddhism, and the praying wheel of the Lama will give place to the sacrificial implements of the Brahmin. The land will follow the creeds; the Tibetan (the Bhotias) proprietors will gradually be dispossessed and will betake themselves to the petty trade ... Thus, race and religion, the prime movers of the Asiatic world, will settle the Sikkim difficulty for us in their own way." (Risley, H.H., 1894; xxi). Risley identified three parties in Sikkim in the last decade of the nineteenth century: the Lepcha or national party (consistently friendly to our (the British) Government, a foreign or Tibetan (Bhotia) party (steadily hostile) and a party of the Nepalese settlers in Sikkim. The Sikkimese rulers had also realised the gravity of the situation. And that is how a line, a few miles north of Gangtok, was drawn east to west, forbidding the Nepalese settlement north to this line. The Nepalese are not permitted to settle down north to this line and even for temporary travel northwards, they are required to obtain work permits from the Govern-

ment. However, south of this line, the Nepalese population kept on increasing and rose manifold within fifty years.

By 1950, the ratio between the Lepcha-Bhotia combine and the Nepalese turned to be one-to-two in Sikkim. This agravated the inter-ethnic relations. With the advent of democracy in India, the Nepalese organised themselves in the populist political movement and demanded their democratic rights against the theocratic feudal system of Sikkim. "After much discussion and bargaining a formula was agreed upon in which the Nepalese were equated with the Lepcha-Bhotia combine for the distribution of seats in the State Council (the State Legislative Assembly). ... The principle behind this provision for the equal representative bodies was extended to the distribution of the administrative posts, economic facilities, and other state sponsored activities. This arrangement is known as the parity system." (Sinha, A.C. 1975: 28). In fact, if there is one word which nearly defines the ethnic politics of Sikkim for the last twenty-five years since the first general elections held in Sikkim to date, it is the politics of the parity system. The Nepalese seem to have never reconciled themselves to this arrangement of the ethnic equation. But neither are the Lepcha-Bhotia willing to forego their unequal privileges. The issue remained dormant for sometime. But all of a sudden it erupted violently in the mid-'70s and cost the then Chogyal his very rule. This ultimately led to Sikkim's merger with India. The Sikkimese constitution was redrawn and various concessions were granted to the Nepalese, but the parity system remained in practice. At the moment, the Nepalese populist leaders are in a mood of open defiance to the parity system and violating the Nepalese immigration line in a bid to settle down in the sparsely populated northern Sikkim.

Besides the political implications, the economic and territorial distribution of resources accentuates the ethnic competition. North Sikkim, with its pastoral and dairy economy, is a Bhotia reserve. Temperamentally, they dislike the hot, moist and damp climate of the low-lying southern Sikkim. They are highlanders of the cold and dry climate and were happy with their trade and commerce across the Himalayas. Many of them are settled down in other parts of Sikkim, but they are of relatively modest socio-economic background and have chosen hilltops for their habitation. The Lepcha are normally found in the Inner Himalayan region mostly on the southern slopes of hills and are engaged

in dry slash-and-burn-type of rotational maize, millet and buck-wheat cultivation. The non-Lepcha penetration to their land has been so complete, that compact Lepcha settlements are found only in the Lepcha reserves of Dzongu and Dikchu, the private estates of the ex-Chogyal's household. Theirs is the marginal subsistence economy in which very little surplus is left for commercial transaction. Thus, though the Lepcha join hands with Bhotia at times because of the religious association, they very much feel ignored by the power to be. This is the region where cardamom is grown, but that too is mainly in the hands of the *Kazi* aristocracy consisting of both the Lepcha and the Bhotia stocks.

South Sikkim, where wet paddy and tropical fruits are grown, is inhabited by the Nepalese. It is to be noted that river banks need hard manual work for terracing the rice fields. Perishable tropical fruits such as orange, banana, pineapple fruits, jack fruits etc. require quick transportation to the centres of consumption. In the hilly tract, such transportation requires considerable manual labour. Besides the agricultural sector, there are growing industrial units in Sikkim. Liquor, fruit preservation, tannery, paper pulp, mining and other middle scale industries are growing near the urban/commercial centres of the state. The industrial working force is almost exclusively of Nepalese origin. Recently, experimental cash crop farms, dairy farming, piggery, poultry, etc., are being organised by the State Government on the outskirts of the towns. Needless to add that Bhotia-Lepcha are negligible in these enterprises in comparison to the Nepalese farmhands and employees for animal husbandry. Manual transport in the Sikkimese towns is an exclusive preserve of the Nepalese. Again the road construction and transport operation is largely manned by the Nepalese.

Markets and urban centres function something like neutral contact zones between the communities. At the cost of over-simplification; if we generalise, we find wholesale business in the hands of the Marwari settlers, who trade between Indian plains and Sikkimese towns. Then come the Newars, who had traditionally been commercial links between Lhasa and Kathmandu valley. Now they concentrate on the meagre trade between the Sikkimese towns and Nepal. At the third level are the Bhotia traders, who had been trading across the entire Himalayan ranges. Since the Indo-Chinese borders are closed

for commercial transaction, the Bhotia traders have taken to petty trade in woollen and dairy products in the urban centres. Lastly, there are *Deswali* or *Madesia* petty hawkers, who move in and around the towns with their commodities on their heads and transact on a very limited scale. One significant point may be noted here that unlike the first three stocks of the communities, who are settled down in Sikkim for the last many generations, the *Deswali* petty traders' community is exclusively a male society in Sikkim. They leave their families behind their natal place in Bihar and/or Uttar Pradesh; remit their earnings to invariably joint families and visit them occasionally as if on leave from their occupations.

(iii) ETHNIC COMPLEXITY VIS-A-VIS SOCIAL INTERCOURSE:

There have been ethnic combinations for economic and political gains in Sikkim. The Sikkimese identity is yet to emerge. We have noted the concept of 'Lhomentsong', a claimed cultural commonwealth of Lepcha, Bhotia and Tsongs or Limbu, but it is in practice only loudly mentioned by the Bhotia and is ignored by the other two communities. However, even Lepcha and Limbu show interest in the concept of 'Lhomentsong' (thus the Lamaists' unity) when threatened by the Hindu 'Paharias' (the Nepalese who are thus referred to in Sikkim). The Namgyal monarchy and the institution of the Kazihood were the two strong points of the lamaist solidarity against the Nepalese demands. The lamasery or the *gompa* had traditionally been the pivot of community life and the centre which united both ethnic groups, the Lepcha and the Bhotia. Various similarities may be identified between the two communities such as: (i) a household consists as a rule of an elementary family; (ii) property is equally divided among sons; (iii) both follow the custom of bride-price; and (iv) both practise polyandry and polygyny.

The Japanese anthropologist, Chie Nakane, who did field work in Sikkim more than two decades back, found a Bhotia local community like an island, surrounded by the Lepcha. The Bhotia marriage takes place between such islands. Hence the marriage circle tends to include a fairly large area from hill to hill. "This composition indeed reflects the Bhotias' historical settlement in Sikkim as immigrants. There are no localized clans, or lineages among the Bhotias ... the clan has little sociological importance. For the Lepcha it is a matter of great concern as an individual to which clan he belongs; for example a Lepcha introduces himself

always by his clan name, while the Bhotia hardly mentions his clan name at all, unless he is asked for it. Many Bhotia clan names are associated with a locality, but there is no sense of a genealogical ideology involved. They do not regard the clan members as descendants from a common ancestor, as in the case of Lepchas. In fact, many Bhotia clan names are derived from the name of a place where their recent ancestor used to live." (Nakane, C., 1966: 236-37).

The cultural and social gap between the Lepcha-Bhotia and the Nepalese is too great to permit assimilation in spite of their century-old neighbourhood. The potential productive force among the Lepcha-Bhotia is reduced because of the priestly activities which are obligatory for the individual families. On the other hand, the Nepalese contract marriages (and many times polygyny) to increase their labour force so as to raise the farm and domestic output. In comparison to the Nepalese, the lamaist have a higher consumption rate. It is mainly because the lamaist have to feed the monks regularly to earn merit; they have to donate in cash and kind to the monasteries; and provide free labour service for repairing the heavy structured *gompas*. The lamaists themselves, their priests and their rituals require consumption of country liquor, which is made of rice or millet. This is a heavy economic drain on their limited resources. Unlike the Nepalese, the lamaists are eaters of beef, which is a costly food. The lamaist houses are made of expensive timbers and by expert carpenters, involving further expenditure. The lamaist marriages not only require higher bride-prices, but lavish wedding-feasts are also offered.

The Hindu Nepalese do not drink as heavily as the lamaists. They eat little meat. Their staple food may be maize and millet, which is cheaper than rice and is grown on the less fertile soil. Their side dishes are made of vegetables, collected from the forest or the kitchen gardens. Even their houses can easily be built out of locally procured mud and jungle straw. Their marriages require negligible expense, if at all they involve any. All the Nepalese contract marriages, some polygamous, and these have led to a demographic problem which is intimately tied to economic and social factors: "The impoverishment of the Lepcha-Bhotia peasants tends to lower their birth rate and to increase their death rate, and the high bride-price usual among Lepchas and Bhotias delays marriage in the poorer section

of the community, or gives rise to the practice of polyandry. This lowers the birth rate as opposed to that of the Nepalis, who normally marry early and sometime practise polygyny. On the whole, the average number of children is much higher among the Nepalis than among the Lepchas and Bhotias." (Nakane, C. 1966: 259). All this has led to the widening of the already existing gulf between the communities, and thus, providing extra reasons for maintaining the distinct identities.

(iv) IDEOLOGY AND MULTIPLE ETHNIC IDENTITY:

So far as our analysis of the Sikkimese situation is concerned. membership of an ethnic community is being used as an ideology. Resources are limited and competitors are many. This leads to a silent struggle for controlling them on ethnic lines. Ethnic lines were first drawn objectively; then they began to be subjective. And now it seems ethnic identity has assumed an ideological dimension. In case we rank the Sikkimese society into a hierarchical structure, we shall find some very unique phenomena.

ETHNICITY AND SOCIAL STATUS IN SIKKIM

Ethnic Stocks		*Cultural Identities*	*Community Status*	
Bhotia				
	Kazis		Kazis	
Lepcha				
			Brahmins	
		(Upper)		
			Kshatriyas	
	a. Thakuris		Marwaris	
Nepalese	b. Newaris	(Middle)	Newar Pradhans	
	c. Kiratis	(Lower)	Artisan	Rai
			Castes	Magar
			Deswalis	Gurung
			Kamai	Limbus
			Sarki	Sherpa

Firstly, the communities such as the Kazis, Brahmans and the Kshatriyas, among them the Basnets, are very proud of their status and make all possible efforts to maintain their privilege. Secondly, the middle range communities such as the Newars and the Marwaris make all possible endeavour to keep their commercial and other financial interest intact. Thirdly, at the lower ladder, the so-called untouchable Nepalese Hindu

castes such as Kami, Damai, and Sarki used to be just the marginal Nepalese till very recently. Now, they assert themselves as the Sikkimese scheduled castes and demand special privileges granted by the Indian Constitution. The non-aristocratic Bhotia and Lepcha along with the Kirati tribes such as Tamang, Sherpa, Limbu, etc., are claiming to be accorded the privileged position of the scheduled tribes recognised by the Indian Constitution. To realise this demand, they are assiduously identifying their distinctiveness, which separates them from others. In this way, every community claims to be privileged and they have discovered something or other desirable in their specific identity. Thus, ethnicity has emerged as an ideology either for safeguarding the privileged status of for maintaining a decidedly lower social status in favour of concrete material benefits. In either case, it is being used as a convenient tool. There are no objective or subjective criteria for such a claim. Ethnicity is being used as an ideology for acquiring or maintaining a status.

MULTIPLE IDENTITY OF ETHNICITY IN SIKKIM—LEVELS OF IDENTITY

Ethnic Stocks	*Tribal*	*Religious*	*Cultural*	*Political*
Lepcha	Rong	Lamaist/ Animist	Kirati	Lepcha-Bhotia—privileged sons of the soil
Limbu	Yakthamba	Hindu/ Lamaist	Kirati	Tsong
Newar	—	Lamaist/ Hindu	Newari	Nepali

The above table indicates various efforts to clearly identify one's distinct ethnic characteristic through ethnic ideology. We find several sets of people claiming different identities in different contexts. We have already examined the Lepcha's being a member of the 'Lhomentsong' commonwealth along with the Bhotia and the Limbu. Thus, they claim along with others, special treatment for being the earliest settlers of the land, known as the Rong tribesmen. Even among them, the Lepcha lay a special claim because the Bhotia rulers established the Namgyal dynasty after partly converting the animist Lepcha into Lamaism. On other occasions, they include themselves among the Kirati tribesmen.

Thus, the Lepcha have an ideological identity of being Lepcha, which differs in its context, content, and claim from situation to situation. Likewise, the Limbu have various levels of identity of Yakthamba tribals, Hindu/Lamaist, Kirati tribesmen and as the Tsongs. In the same way, the Newars are Hindu/Lamaist, Newaris, and Nepalese. In this way, at least these three communities possess a multiple ethnic identity with a view to appropriation of limited resources of various sets. However exclusive may be the demands of the particular tribe or caste on material resources or territorial, all the communities accept the urban centres as the neutral zones of interaction. In these zones, the specific ethnic attributes are postponed in favour of inter-ethnic cooperation or competition. It is instructive to note that multiple identity is controlled by the types of resources. In spite of these claims and counter-claims, these multiple identity ethnics serve as the buffer and bridge between the conflicting ethnic groups. For example Limbu are counted among the tribals, lamaists as well as the Nepalese. Our analysis is based on limited data, but an examination of ethnic interaction at different levels may reveal multiple identity of each community in question.

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CHAPTER IX

SEX ROLE ARRANGEMENT TO ACHIEVE ECONOMIC SECURITY IN NORTH HIMALAYAS

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THE North-western Himalayas have attracted many anthropologists and sociologists to study various tribes and castes dwelling in the region. It is well established through the studies conducted earlier that the societies inhabiting this mountainous region differ in many respects from the societies living in plains (Majumdar, 1962; Berreman, 1963, 72, 75; Saxena, 1955; Parmar, 1975). The differences between the hill societies and those of the plains lie mainly in the management of economy, structure and organisation of the domestic unit; choice of the marriage form and the world of religion. The first three spheres are greatly interdependent with reference to dwellers of the north-western Himalayas since economy plays an important role in the survival and existence of the society. In order to cope with the tough economic situation the north-western Himalayan societies have adopted certain means and evolved mechanisms to regulate their 'roles' in accordance with the hard economic situation. In the north-western Himalayan societies in their cultural pattern the social and economic systems remain dependent on each other and thus create a situation of co-existence with each other; and in this way they are complementary.

Life in the north-western Himalayan areas is generally very tough. Though agriculture forms the basis of economy for the dwellers of this region, no single economic pursuit alone can satisfy the needs of the people, for land holdings are small and of low fertility hence many working hands are required to produce a moderate yield; domestic animals are small and

yield little milk, wool and other products. Recently introduced horticulture needs orientation, skill and scientific knowledge to produce good results and these are, by and large, lacking among the majority of the people. Trade, which was an important aspect of the economy of many of the north-western Himalayan dwellers spread over an area extending the hills of Uttar Pradesh to Ladakh, has dwindled with the sealing of the Indo-Chinese border in 1962. However, this economic condition as a profile of the area is not a new proposition but the fact remains that the hard economic conditions prevailed for ages and the people living in this Himalayan area have survived only after following certain practices, adjustment to different situations by suppressing or having subdued 'roles' in the interest of economic security to encounter the hardships posed by the geo-economic setting of the area. 'Sex role arrangement' at the 'domestic unit' level is just one mechanism, but a major aspect of life, evolved by these dwellers to encounter the situation and achieve economic security. The sex role arrangement seems to work well, as an arrangement among these people of north-western Himalayas, at the 'domestic unit' level in different forms to face the problem.

The mechanism evolved out of sex role arrangement remains the central theme of discussion in the present research. The arguments highlighting the sex role arrangement among the north-western Himalayan dwellers are based on the field research conducted in some villages in the north-western Himalayas in two districts of Himachal Pradesh namely Sirmur and Kinnaur for a period of nearly four years (1970-74) among the people alluded to as Sirmurese and Kinnaurese in general; although these general appellations include several ethnic groups forming the society at large in the respective district. These two areas form the primary site of the present research and for other areas in this region substantial literature is available (Majumdar, 1962; Berreman 1963, 72; Prince Peter, 1963, Chandra, 1973; Parmar, 1975). The Sirmurese and Kinnaurese both present some similarity at the regional level in their cultural matrix. However, it is the Sirmurese on whom the present discussion, is focussing while the Kinnaurese are referred to only to substantiate the arguments, if necessary.

The village studied in district Sirmur, which I call Renuka, is situated in the Trans-Giri tract of the district nestling amidst the mountains of the outer Himalayan range at a height of nearly

2000 metres and lies at a distance of about 200 kilometres south-east of Simla—the state capital. In the village, there are Brahman, Kanet, Koli, Lohar, Dome and some smaller groups such as Sunar and Vaishya forming the Sirmurese society. The Kanet who are a scheduled tribe in Kinnaur are not scheduled in Sirmur and hence enjoy the status of a caste group; and social distance observed between the Kanet and Koli in Kinnaur is much relaxed in Sirmur.

Before analysing the sex role arrangement among these people, I would like to discuss the economic system of the north-western Himalayan dwellers in general and of Sirmurese in particular, as this would elucidate the tough economic situation needing some special mechanism and adjustment in terms of 'roles' of the dwellers for the want and assurance of economic security from the geo-economic and ecological setting of the area.

The basis of the economic system in this region is agriculture coupled with sheep rearing, domestication of animals, recently introduced horticulture (apple orchards) and the specialised occupation depending upon one's affiliation with the artisan caste groups viz. smithy, weaving and leather work etc. In general land is not very fertile and demands a comparatively high labour in-put to give sufficient yield.

In Renuka on an average an individual owns nearly one acre of land and the figure at the household level is nearly five to six acres of land. These figures, include both cultivable and pasture land (Chandra, 1974; 32).

TABLE SHOWING LANDHOLDING IN RENUKA

Caste	*Number of House-hold*	*Land holding (in acres)*	*Average land possessed per household (in acres)*	*Average land possessed per indi-vidual (in acres)*	*Landless*
Kanet	33	350.32	10.62	1.51	—
Koli	21	37.69	2.14	0.37	2
Brahmin	13	42.39	3.48	0.62	—
Dome	4	2.10	0.75	0.16	—
Lohar	2	3.40	1.70	0.24	—
Sunar	1	0.80	0.80	0.80	
Agrawal	1	0.30	0.30	0.00	—
Total	75	4.37	5.98	0.96	2

From Sirkanda, a village situated in similar geo-economic setting in Tehri Garhwal in Uttar Pradesh, Berreman reported, "... a minimum of about one-half acre of cultivated land per consuming adult" formed the viable unit and "for the average 4.5 acre family land holding, there should be at least 2 or 3 adults to work it, including at least one of each sex", ... (Berreman, 1977: 164). Thus the land-holding in Renuka seems slightly more as compared to Sirmanda. However, one should keep in mind that the land-holding, as evident from the table, is also shared by domestic animals as well as pasture land. Like other Himalayan areas, in Renuka also cultivable land is scattered at different levels on the slopes of the various hills. Terrace cultivation remains the major method of cultivation in the whole of north-western Himalayas. The land is divided into three levels viz:

1. Land at a level higher than that of village—*Kanda.*
2. Land at the village level—*Gaonang*
3. Land at a level lower than that of village—*Neole.*

These cultivable lands are spread over an area of nearly four kilometres both above and below the village level and hence, to manage these far-off lands, it is necessary to stay there for long and as such some of the household members stay in temporarily built shelters constructed for the purpose called *Dohchi.*

Besides having agriculture as primary pursuit, these dwellers have domestic animals, sheep herds and other minor economic resources also. All these put together fulfil the requirement of the household and this remains the traditionally upheld view of the Sirmurese of Renuka. Domesticated animals form a strong basis of economic structure among these people. In fact no society living in the north-western Himalayas is without domestic animals which are the subsidiary source of economic production and add significantly to the household economy. On an average a domestic unit in Renuka owns four cows, two pairs of bullocks and some sheep and goat. Among the ethnic groups of higher status like Brahman and Kanet the number of owned domestic animals is even more than the mentioned one. These animals are of great help to these people in different ways viz. ploughing and other agricultural activities, draught animals, and providing wool and protein-rich flesh. Domestic animals need proper care and constant watch and for this some of the household members are specifically allotted this

task. Cash economy has only recently been introduced to this region by way of introducing and promoting horticulture and cash crop items like ginger. In brief, the economic structure of these people is such that it requires joint venture at least at the 'domestic unit' level to survive the hard economic condition since it involves several spheres and activities ranging from land to the district level offices. No single economic pursuit alone can sustain the household unit and as such efforts are made by these people to tap different economic resources to achieve economic security. Thus the economic structure of this region is such that it requires joint venture of several members (of both sexes) at the household level where different persons take charge of different economic fronts, share and exchange their roles and arrive at an arrangement of activities by way of adjusting their roles within as well as with the other sex at the primary economic, social and kin unit—the household.

Further, a feeling to maintain and transfer as such the undivided estate—cultivable land, domestic animals and other household property items—to the next generation prevails among these people. For this, cooperation and mutual trust among the members at the domestic unit level is needed. An arrangement or mechanism to develop mutual trust among the potential claimants of the household property and their feeling to work jointly to run the household economy smoothly in the common interest seems a must for these people in the economic conditions prevailing in the north-western Himalayas.

The dwellers of Renuka in particular have found a solution to the problem of achieving economic security in arranging their sex roles at the household level. The sex roles have been arranged in a way that involves redistribution of some overlapping functions, mutual trust among brothers, division of labour with some temporary shifting of expected roles to other brothers and adjustment with regard to sharing of wife in common. Nevertheless, exchange of wives also prevails in some outlying parts of the north-western Himalayas where brothers do exchange their wives periodically *in the interest of economic security* (italics mine). Berreman reported about the non-polyandrous Garhwal "... sexual relationship within the family are not greatly different from those among fraternally polyandrous families of Jaunsar-Bawar ... Brothers have the right of sexual access to one another's wives ... Brothers share their wives' sexuality but not their reproductivity." (Berreman, 1962:

62). Here it could not be out of place to put forward the fact that the Garhwal economy is in no way different from that of the north-western Himalayas in general. People do need many helping hands and mutual trust and cooperation at the sibling level to run the jointly owned household economy based on agriculture and other subsidiary pursuits.

The sex role arrangement among these dwellers takes place at two levels:

1. Within the same sex (of male members) and
2. With the other sex, for women play an important role in this situation.

Considering the fact that no individual alone can run the household economy having various ends to meet, it is desired among the male members at the sibling level, to remain united in the joint system at the domestic unit level and share the household property jointly; and run the household economy in joint venture. It is this situation that yields scope with regard to adjustment of sex roles, behaviour and temporary or even long-term basis transference of one's roles to another or in turn assuming 'role tasks' of the uterine kin (male). Here at this point it could be explained what is meant by sex role arrangement within the same sex among the male members.

The notion of sex roles includes adjustment of roles which have some bearing on sex. To illustrate this, all activities needing arduous labour in economic pursuits—agriculture, tending domestic animals and sheep flocks and other business—kinship status and role depend upon sex at the 'domestic unit' level viz. husband-wife and father-child relationship and adjustment with regard to temporary shifting or assuming 'other sex roles' like men performing 'women's or wife's role' e.g. cooking, physical care of children, management of interior and exterior of the house (Cf. Mulligan, 1972:37). Besides this among uterine brothers at the 'domestic unit' level the 'sex role arrangement' would involve adjustment with regard to discharging of 'husband role' towards common wife/wives in terms of physical relationship, social obligations, fathering her children and providing her economic, social and other security. Transferring the status of father to the eldest brother who assumes the role of head of the household, is another important aspect of sex role arrangement among these people. Though, biologically speaking, one may be father of a particular child born to the wife shared, it is not expressed in normal condi-

tions and the child is taken care of by the eldest brother of his biological father as the role of social father is vested in him and which is a part of his duties and obligations towards his household unit (C Chandra, 1972). Similarly, the uterine brothers also share the responsibility of the wife/wives held in common but, once again, it is usually the eldest brother who is responsible at large to perform all social obligations that are expected from the husband. Thus it is the subdued role that other members of the 'husband unit' would have towards their wife/wives shared in common among the brothers merely by the virtue of their being younger and thus not holding the charge of the household. However, under the sex role arrangement at the operational level, these roles could be temporarily transferred to other brothers of the 'husband unit' as well in the event of the person holding the status of head of the household and performing such roles goes out of the house for some time on some business trip—the agricultural land situated at *Kanda* or *Neole*, to some far off place with animals and to tehsil or district headquarters to attend court or some other business in the interest of household economy. Such situations yield some scope for others to have a chance to perform these roles and thus avoid any friction or problem which may shatter the common interest to maintain the household economy and the aim to achieve economic security may get lost.

Though among the male members the head of the household assigns the different roles pertaining to the household economy, however, it remains on a temporary basis only and in the broader sense, is kept in rotation in order to let everyone (brother) of the 'domestic unit' pass through different stages, created out of circumstances, satisfying himself for sometime at least in the interest of the household economy and to counteract any hostile tendencies within the household unit. The women of the house are also equal partners in the struggle to achieve economic security. Their labour is in no way less valued than that of the male members. They work equally with men in the fields, help them in looking after domestic animals and, of course, take physical care of husbands and children. Except ploughing a wife does virtually everything to help her husbands in cultivation which otherwise are the men's tasks. In plains societies, specially among the high castes, women generally don't participate in outdoor activities. In contrast, the north-western Himalayan women have generally to work hard, share the labour with their men

(husbands) and then have to adjust to the tune of the given situation, where they have to put an effort to check the high population growth thus avoiding rapid increase of the potential claimants to the household property, fragmentation of joint labour and, above all, pressure on land. This is an important aspect emerging out of the sex role arrangement among these people in the interest of 'joint property' and 'joint labour' to extract the fullest possible yields from the land and subsidiary economic resources without increasing pressure and land in terms of rapid population growth, at least at the 'domestic unit level'.

In the whole belt of north-western Himalayans from Jaunsar-Bawar to Ladakh, a set of choice for marriage forms prevails with major emphasis on polyandry with its allied forms such as 'polyandry and polygyny'. In all such marriage forms the basic element involved is the sharing of the wife/wives by uterine brothers who are her husbands and perform all 'husband role'-tasks. Even the non-polyandrous people dwelling in the Himalayas, like the society in Garhwal, exchange wives among the brothers and thus share the sexuality but refrain from accepting any responsibility for her productivity (cf Berreman, 1962). Now once again looking from the viewpoint of the preferred marriage form, i.e., polyandry—a system providing wife-sharing—it is to be understood how this system helps these people to control high population growth which if allowed to grow spontaneously would shatter the whole economic structure by causing heavy pressure on land and other resources; thus restricting the number of claimants significantly to a low number.

While analysing the ratio of females to be shared by the men under the conjugal dyad the figure emerging from Renuka is approximately three men to one woman. Thus three men share one woman's 'wife role tasks'—including her sexuality and reproductivity. The woman is a decisively determining factor for the population growth depending upon fecundity and fertility rates. Mathematically it sounds reasonable to argue that in this situation where a woman is shared as wife by three men, though the fecundity may be high, fertility is checked at the maximum of one child in a year, thus checking two births which might have taken place if the society had monogamy as a prevailing choice for marriage. Here I would like to make it clear that while talking of fertility I am concerned with the mathematical proposition at the society level and not the fertility at the population level in which lies the interest

of demographers as they might argue that if in a population all women are married (physically) then there will be no adverse effect on fertility of the population, no matter what the choice of marriage form and other customs and practices that may be prevalent in the society. The low birth rate of 3 per cent in Sirkanda, as reported by Berreman, in contrast to that of all India figure of 4 per cent (Berreman, 1977:169) is a positive indication in this direction. This way the increasing number of potential is checked and at the same time working hands are obtained to work on the land and to run the household economy smoothly in its totality. Further, sharing wife's sexuality along with other 'wife role-tasks' without affecting population growth fulfils the minimum definition of wife for these people, considering the fact that the children born to her will jointly be owned by all the brothers who share her in common as wife and in due course each of them will have his chance to perform the 'father-role' (social) which has been temporarily transferred to the person holding that role at the moment.

An all-India feature (at least in rural parts) of *the combination of an extended period of lactation with a taboo on intercourse during lactation providing birth control* (italics mine) is also helpful to Renuka people in spacing and thus checking population growth intently. As reported by Berreman " ... The relatively low birth rate, resulting in a low overall population growth rate, may be attributable in large part to the custom of allowing a long period—on the order of 3 years—of nearly total reliance on mother's milk for infant nourishment, resulting in post-partum subfecundity during the long lactation period, combined with a taboo on sexual relations during lactation. This appears to be a birth spacing and limiting mechanism that contributes in a significant way to the low population growth rate ..." (Berreman, 1977:177.69). This practice of continuing lactation for a long period with imposed prohibition on sexual relations not only with one man (husband) but with the other members of the 'husband unit' as well, certainly leads to the check on population growth just as an adjustment to the sex role arrangement in the society.

Economic hardship among north-western Himalayan dwellers has much been emphasised as a cause for the prevalance of polyandry. (Majumdar, 1944, 62; Kapadia, 1955, Saxena, 1955, Chandra, 1972: 74). Therefore, it is evident that all such marriage forms, decidedly, have been preferred over others in the interest

of economic security. In such marriage forms, which are present as profile of the society, an adjustment of the sex roles remains the main consideration in the light of what has been just discussed here, i.e., to achieve economic security at the domestic unit level by way of uniting the potential claimants of the household property for their labour to be used in joint venture, regulating their sex roles in terms of seeking cooperation at the household level among the males (brothers) and other members (wife/wives and children), and an effort to check the population growth by way of regulated sexual behaviour. The sex role arrangement of Sirmurese of Renuka village thus helps understand and explain the system of keeping the members of a 'domestic unit' united in terms of claimants of the wife, land and other household property which are held jointly, and mechanism evolved to keep the number of such claimants low and the ratio of working hands or adults to children high at the domestic unit level.

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CHAPTER X

POLITICAL SYSTEMS IN THE CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS, BANGLA DESH: A CASE STUDY

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ADOLF Bastian wrote nearly 100 years ago: "This was the front view (of India, W.M.) in the alluring trimming of Brahmans and bayaderes ... The *pars posterior* in further India was left out of consideration, as ultragangetic lying beyond the sacred precinct, a *pars aversa,* not suitable to be taken into consideration by the conventional fashion and accordingly one turned away looking down ones nose. So the peoples of further India sat mourning in sackcloth and ashes, because a highly honourable authority had warned them impressively and sharply that they had not proved worthy of the full attention of the historians." (Bastian 1881: xiii).

Bastian referred to a limitation of the understanding of cultures formulated by the non-classical philologies. He criticised the stagnation of concepts of history which attributed "culture" by a trick of definition to a limited number of peoples only. In the meantime, nearly a hundred years have passed, but it seems as if Bastian's critique is still valid in another sense.

Recent anthropological researches (Lehmann 1963; Sopher 1964; Bernot 1967) as to the relationships between mountain and plains' people in Bangla Desh and Upper Burma classified these relationships as symbiotic. The societies of the plains were said to supply concepts of what the tribal societies ought to be like, at the same time designating the normal way of political progress: political centralisation. They were said to have supplied political and technical informations and models to frame a political organization in order to overcome the situation of insecurity caused by the raiding hill tribes; they were said to supply goods to the hill tribes as well. The tribal groups in turn exchanged their surpluses

on the markets of the plains peoples, and this exchange process was coined symbiotic, too.

Leach criticised the functionalist notion of social equilibrium and tried to overcome with his concept of an unstable equilibrium a) the theoretical limitations of functional theory and b) to conceptualise political processes and structural changes in Upper Burma in a time-perspective (Leach 1954).

Though today the term "culture" is not denied to the tribal groups in these areas any more, I can't help feeling that they suffer still from not being given the full attention of the historian. A thorough analysis of the political development reveals a major theoretical deficiency. To identify it we have to study the political processes through time.

The Chittagong Hill Tracts are located in Bangla Desh, bordering Upper Burma and Arakan to the east and south respectively and the Chittagong District to the west. This hilly area is inhabited by a number of tribes who have mostly immigrated into this area during the last four hundred years. With two exceptions, all tribes belong to the Tibeto-Burman language-family; they display Mongoloid features. Their economies, cultures, social and political organisations bear much resemblance to the Assam and Upper Burma tribes.

The CHT-groups are roughly divided into valley-living (we are dealing with the Chakma and Marma here) and ridge-top-living tribes (we are concerned with the Bawm, Mru and Khumi here). The former took over to plough cultivation during the last 80 years as the pressure on the swidden fields increased and the fertility of the soil decreased. Shifting cultivation has, however, not been given up completely, and during the last years many Chakma and Marma had to return to shifting cultivation as their lands were submerged due to the construction of a dam in connection with a hydro-electric scheme in the hills. Fruit gardening has gained much importance in producing cash crops in recent years.

The ridge-top-living tribes all practise shifting cultivation and with the exception of the Bawm and a few hill-Marma who have started to grow fruits as cash crops, the hill tribes very much adhere to their old way of production though the returns from their fields decrease more and more.

To begin with, I shall characterise the political systems of the tribal groups we are concerned with here during the early colonial times (1850–1870). Then I shall describe the administrative

changes that took place, and consequently the effects of colonial and post-colonial rule upon the political systems will be outlined.

Looking through the early documents and descriptions one gets the impression that the shadow of the total power of the neighbouring Asiatic Despoties of the plains darkened the perception of different political systems in the hills; tribal societies used to be perceived as the wild appendices of the hierarchical societies of the plains.

As I have mentioned, the way of life of these groups suggests a distinction into valley tribes (Chakma and Marma) and hill tribes (Bawm, Mru and Khumi). The political systems of the valley tribes show similarities, but are quite distinct from those of the hill tribes. Most of the groups we know as Marma today left Arakan in the late 18th century following the Burmese annexation of Arakan. Their political structure was influenced by the political structure of the Arakanese petty kingdoms. They settled partly in the coastal plains of Bengal, partly in the hills at the border to Arakan and Upper Burma.

The Chakma, living formerly in northern Arakan and the southern part of the CHT, moved northwards since the 16th century and came into contact with the Moghul society later. The political system of the Chakma was influenced by the political systems of the Moghul, but the basic structures were shaped by the political systems of the Arakanese, and I should like to argue that Marma and Chakma have a common Arakanese stratum, as far as their political systems are concerned.

The Chakma society of the 1850s was governed by two basic contradicting political processes, results of the contact with Moghul society. The Chakma are traditionally divided into 40 kinship groups, which were the most important units of their organisation and frames of political integration. Each group had its own representative, his office descended usually from father to son; the village communities, however, controlled the transfer of power. At the top of the tribal hierarchy was the Chakma "Chief". This office had no place in the traditional political order and came into being during the time of constant fighting with the expanding Bengalis during the 17th century. As far as I can see the Chakma Chiefs established themselves first as military leaders of those Chakma groups which were entangled in the fighting with the Moghul troops, Bengali and Arakanese in the hinterland of Chittagong. They occupied quite different positions in comparison to the

representatives of the kinship groups. The Chakma Chiefs—though they belonged to a clan—had no followers attached to them by kinship alliances and were not rulers of the clans nor the clan representatives. In the perspective of the political system of the Moghul administration they were considered as *jagirdars*. The Chiefs obtained permission to trade with the Bengalis on payment of a cotton "tax" which was to be delivered to the Moghul authorities. Cotton was a most important item of trade as it was grown in the hills only. The Chiefs monopolised the trade, collected the cotton tax, a trade tax, from the representatives of the kinship groups, handed over a part to the Moghul administration and kept a part of the tax for their own disposal, thus establishing their own means of subsistence. In addition they received land grants from the Moghul administration. Thus they were installed as *zamindars*, according to the revenue system of the plains.

Securing the trade monopoly they were able to exert an ever growing political influence over the representatives of the kinship groups. One of the most important external impact towards political centralisation came thus into being: the creation of a Moghul-backed office, economically and politically opposed to the kinship order of the Chakma society.

During the 60s and 70s of the last century the Chakma Chiefs succeeded in parcelling out the whole of the tribal area to private persons though it was common property of the shifting cultivators. These subdivisions, called "taluk" as in the plains, were sublet to Bengalis and dethroned representatives of the kinship groups. This development was incompatible with the socio-economic order of the tribe and led to a complete disintegration of local structures. The Permanent Settlement Regulation created a replica of a feudal society in Bengal, based on the transformation of common property of land into privately owned lands. The Chakma Chiefs, having no right to the lands (even the British administration denied any land rights to them) treated the persons living on it as private property instead, thus creating "human taluks", which were sold, subdivided and inherited like landed property. As a check against possible reactions of the Chakma (one usurping Chief had once been killed) the Chiefs set up an armed force that was recruited from various Chakma and other tribal kinship groups.

A similar development took place in the southern part of the Hill Tracts, populated by various Arakanese and Chin groups,

which were all independent of each other. At the beginning of the last century one of the representatives of the kinship groups of these Arakanese succeeded with British help in monopolising the tax-collection thus dominating all other groups. Though a similar body of subcollectors and an armed force as among the Chakma was temporarily set up, the Marma society could resist major social changes on kinship and territorial levels. Though the largest kinship group provided the chief, claiming the highest rank consequently, all other units were considered politically equal.

The political organisations of the hill tribes (Mru, Khumi, Bawm) differed considerably from those of the valley tribes. They totally lacked any form of territorial organisation, but nevertheless the political systems of the hill tribes were by no means homogeneous. The Bawm constituted as ethnic group through the integration of Mru and Khumi and Marma into a Chin-stratum during the first four decades of the last century on their way from the Chin Hills into the CHT. Their society was headed by authoritarian chiefs; it was differentiated into high-and low-ranking clans which were separated by marriage restrictions and different ceremonies. Additionally they were divided into wife-giving and wife-taking clans. Wife-givers enjoyed a higher status, wife-takers a lower; but as they performed simultaneously both functions, this differentiation had no influence on the political set-up. High-ranking clans held clientèles from the low-ranking clans, thus securing a surplus of agricultural products by their services. The systems of feasts of merit, however, prevented the accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few. In fact, it was exactly this system that ultimately led to the downfall of the leading, high-ranking clans of the Bawm.

The rigidly organised kinship groups of the Mru and Khumi were the most important level of political integration. Some of these groups had "rulers", whose political influence, however, did not transcend their respective kinship groups and those that had promised allegiance during the time of intertribal feuds and migration. High-and low-ranking clans did not exist, but they were divided into wife-giving and wife-taking groups, too. Feasts of merit led to the distribution of wealth. Mru and Khumi might be classed as acephalous.

All these political systems were transformed in quite decisive aspects by British colonial rule, but not in an uniform way. Most interesting, the development of the political organisations of the

valley tribes was directly opposed to that of the hill tribes. To give a background of this development, the characteristics of colonial rule have to be identified.

This policy was dominated by a number of issues:

1. The pacification of feuding tribes,
2. The application of a hierarchical, territorial principle of administration by introducing a new economic system,
3. The securing of access to the resources of the district.

(Government for instance set apart one-third of the forests of the district for its own commercial disposal.)

The most important issue, however, was the land question. Different attempts to introduce plough cultivation in substitution for shifting cultivation failed, and only at the beginning of this century the shift from swidden to plough cultivation became inevitable in the valleys due to the increasing shortage of land and the decreasing carrying capacity; in the hills, shifting cultivation is carried on.

The British with their foible for strong Chiefs thus created all conditions for the formation of an indirect rule. Considerable economical and political privileges were conferred upon the Chiefs and the appointed administrative staff: administrative duties were combined with personal advantages and profits; the aspect of inner-village control of indigenous political authorities was abolished. The administration even put Bengali police forces at the disposal of the headmen and Chiefs. Indigenous methods of jurisdiction were partly substituted by the new jurisdictive and coercive powers of headmen and Chiefs. The clientèle-systems which existed among all the tribes prior to the British annexation were looked upon as slavery and stood abolished. This abolition of reciprocity-systems was substituted by Bengali moneylenders' activities.

The subsequent changes of the internal political order resulted in the partial substitution of formerly elected political representatives (village-chiefs, etc) by appointed members of the Chiefs' relatives or followers. They were partially integrated into new forms of territorial administration. Segmentation, a possible check of usurpation, was forbidden by Government. This development was accompanied by the implementation of a formal colonial framework: military posts, courts, hospitals, schools and roads were constructed.

The result was a political and economic centralisation among

the valley tribes; among the hill tribes quite opposite developments took place. The abolishing of the clientèle-system and termination of inter-tribal raids and feuds led to the decay of the traditional military organisation, consequently loosening rigid kinship systems; strong chiefs—as the Bawm used to have—lost the legitimation of their office and this led to the total passing away of the Chief's office at all, the inner-ethnic differentiation into high- and low-ranking clans and to the emancipation of the latter. Today nearly all important positions among the Bawm are in the hands of members of formerly low-ranking clans. Marriage restrictions of political or economic significance were given up.

This evolution was accompanied by the adoption of Christianity which gave a new legitimation to the new evolving order.

Among the Mru and Khumi the rigid social organisation was broken up and privileges of single families vanished. Today they have thoroughly egalitarian societies, apart from the integration of some of their headmen into the administration, as is the case among all ethnic groups.

Due to the less important role of men (feuds and raids were forbidden), the formerly differentiated position of the sexes changed, and nowadays women participate more than before in private and to a certain degree in public life, too.

Those are the most important social and political changes during the last century.

The economic development was a similar one in a way: Those who succeeded in acquiring or managing large plots, worked by subtenants, were able to produce agricultural surpluses. In recent years, people have taken to fruit gardening, when subsequent to the submergence of 40% of all cultivable area in the CHT by the construction of a dam for a hydroelectric scheme, the pressure on the land increased. More than 100,000 persons were displaced. This led to a further economic polarisation, and when people were partially rehabilitated, new Bengali settlers and the rehabilitation officers got the lion's share. New strategies were devised to secure an economic take-off. The result, however, was the total subjugation of the tribal population concerned under Bengali officers, moneylenders and businessmen. Schemes devised to the control of shifting cultivation even aimed at the abolition of the paddy-production and, finally, at the total abolition of shifting cultivation. The period after 1965 saw an increased Bengali influx into the hills

(which is in contradiction with existing rules). Safeguards of the tribal people were abolished and they were formally dispossesed of their lands. Today all marketing and transportation facilities are in the hands of Bengali traders and businessmen who dictate the prices, give loans at outrageous interests (600% sometimes) and compel the people to mortgage the standing crop at nominal prices.

With a few individual exceptions the tribal groups are nearly totally in the hands of traders, businessmen and local Government forces which even compel them to buy in selected shops.

Taking the war of independence as a cover, an increasing number of Bengali troops and police forces moved into the hills. A whole division has been stationed in the hills.

During the British times, about 100 years ago, when a large force was required to suppress border raids, the relationship of civilians to policemen was 106:1. Today, in times of peace, it is 8:1. Army and police personnel are systematically expelling tribal people from their lands; they loot and burn houses, kill or rape the inhabitants or arrest them and hold them for ransom. 8,000-9,000 members of the tribal population are now in detention in a number of Army Camps and jails, some of them for 2-3 years, without trial and without any connections with their relatives. In the meantime, even concentration camps have been constructed and "populated". More than 50,000 Bengalis entered the northern subdivision after independence. The original owners of the land are still living in the jungles.

Even international aid is used to transform this region into a military camp.

Since a short time ago a so-called peace-force has been set up by the people, trying to resist this development.

There is scanty information about recent economical and political developments, and this information available proves right what I formulated tentatively a few years ago: The ultimate aim is the total expulsion or extinction of the tribal groups in the CHT.

This development demystifies an important theoretical approach concerning the relationships between the hill-and the plains' people. Western interpretation of the political development in the tribal belt in Eastern India and Upper Burma (with the exception of Leach) saw political centralisation as the only normal course of development. This course, far from being normal, is proved wrong by the political involution in the CHT.

Plains' societies have been said
(a) to live in symbiosis with hill societies, the former providing goods and concepts of culture, the latter agricultural products and (b) to have supplied alternative models of political organisation (e.g. centralisation) to end tribal feuds and to provide political stability.

This is precisely the point where a theory perceiving cultural dichotomies (male-female, left-right, house/village-jungle, valley tribes-hill tribes etc.) darkens the perception of principal economic and political contradictions. It is true that the Bengali traders supply goods to the tribal population, it is true that these in turn send their surpluses to the plains. But by a trick of definition the capitalistic exchange-process is divested of its exploitative character and turned into a symbiotic one. What might seem to be a reduction of social and economic facts to formal structures turned out to be the concealment of suppression and exploitation. By the definition of political stability in terms of suppressing peoples' reactions against usurpation, terror and rape, naturally, the Bengalis supply concepts of stability; again this is the point where anthropological theories block the way to a more realistic perception of reality. The concepts of stability, equilibrium and symbiosis are certainly the less suited to conceptualise political developments in these areas (if at all).

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CHAPTER XI

MODERNISATION IN THE CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS/BANGLA DESH: A CASE STUDY

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THE Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT)/Bangla Desh are inhabited by 12 different ethnic groups who are in general shifting cultivators in the hills and plough cultivators in the flat lands. The two largest tribes, the Chakma and Marma, live in the valleys, each of which consists of more than 130,000 persons. The bulk of the Tippera lives in the Indian state of Tripura, but some 10,000 are also valley inhabitants of the CHT. The hill tribes proper, settling on the mountain slopes and tops of the hills, are the Mru (ca. 15,000 persons), the Khumi (ca. 2,000) the Bawm (ca. 8,000), the Pangkhua (ca. 1,000) and the Mizo, formerly called Lushai (some 100).

Originally classed with the valley tribes, but nowadays mostly living in the hills too are the Taungchengya, a sub-group of the Chakma, which split away from the main tribe long ago (ca. 12,000 persons), the Mrung, a sub-group of the Tippera (both together ca. 35,000) and the small groups of the Sak (ca. 3,000) and Khiang (ca. 1,000). All these groups, except the Chakma and Tippera, speak Tibeto-Burman languages, the Chakma, an old form of the East-Bengali dialect, and the Tippera an idiom of the Bodo languages.

The third large group besides the traditionally distinguished groups of the hill and valley people is an uncounted number of Bengali immigrants whose influence and numbers are increasing more and more. In the 1960s there were approximately 25,000 Bengali Muslims and ca. 2,000 Hindus, more came in the following decade, and about the present number I could gain no information.

Chakma and Marma, the two largest groups, practise Buddhism, the Tippera are Hindus, most of the Bawm, the Mizo and a part of the Pangkhua and Khiang are Christians, and the rest of the ethnic groups animists.

As far as the people can read and write, the Marma use Burmese letters (Marma means Burman), the Bawm and Mizo since their Christianisation use latin letters (systems of transcription were developed by Christian missionaries), administrative correspondence still is widely in English, and the Bengali inhabitants use Bengali writing, just as Bengali is the medium of instruction in the governmental schools of whatsoever tribe. The other ethnic groups are still mostly illiterate.

The basis of all economies in the CHT is agriculture, though there are decisive differences. The hill tribes proper practise shifting cultivation (locally known as *jhum*). The valley tribes are to a large extent plough cultivators of wet rice, many of them, however, practise shifting cultivation as well, and quite a number are shifting cultivators only.

The official government policy always considered the CHT as a 'backward area with primitive, reluctant tribal groups without any culture and civilisation. Modernisation, therefore, in the eyes of the Bengali administration can only result from impacts of development schemes of the plains' population.

In this paper I shall try to show how modernisation is actually working in the Hill Tracts. Until now socio-economic analyses of this area do not exist at all, only some monographs and some shorter articles. Former anthropological works on the CHT drew their conclusions mainly from one or two villages only. My investigations in the CHT were the first to use a large sample of 600 households in 24 villages of 8 different tribes. This does not only allow inter ethnic comparisons but also takes into account the three fold ecological and economical division of the Hill Tracts. One of these villages was visited for a longer period in 1964 and 1968, two more in 1969, and investigations in the rest of the villages were made during the first months of 1971.

I have chosen 5 villages with plough cultivation and gardening in the northern and in the middle part of the Hill Tracts, the inhabitants being Chakma and Marma. A typical feature there was a special form of plough cultivation, called fringe-land-cultivation. Fringe land is arable land in the Karnafuli lake area which is submerged during the rainy season and emerges during the dry

period when the water level of the lake drops. This land can be cultivated only during a very short time in the dry season. Besides that I got data from a Chakma village with mixed cultivation(fringe-land-cultivation, shifting cultivation and gardening) and two Chakma and Taungchengya villages who were inhabited by shifting cultivators only.

The shifting cultivators of the southern part of the CHT are represented by 16 smaller villages, 7 of which have taken to gardening in recent years. They were inhabited by Bawm, Khiang, Hill-Marma, Taungchengya, Mru, Khumi and Tippera.

Whatever inquiries in the post-colonial development of the CHT will be made, they cannot evade the consequences of the construction of the Kaptai dam which created the artificial Karnafuli lake, the most lasting interference in the life of the hill tribes until now. The Karnafuli Multipurpose Scheme (also known as Kaptai Hydel Project) was considered one of the most important development projects of former East Pakistan. Actually, first of all Chittagong, and here especially the harbour, were the beneficiaries of the hydro-electric power. For the tribes of that part of the Hill Tracts the project turned out to be a catastrophe.

During the first years of the 1960s the lake had inundated 253 sq. miles, 50,000 acres of settled cultivated land, which is about 40 per cent of the district's total cultivable area. Finally, more than 100,000 persons, 90 per cent of these Chakma, were displaced and never adequately rehabilitated. 40,000 Chakma emigrated to the neighbouring Indian states of Tripura and Assam, a large proportion of them was settled later on by the Indian government in NEFA (North East Frontier Agency).

As to the rehabilitation, the affected Bengali plough cultivators were resettled first on the best land, the Chakma, Marma and Taungchengya had to take a backseat. No rehabilitation at all was provided to the displaced shifting cultivators of the reservoir area, who lost 113,000 acres of land. The best solution might have been to deforest land in the Reserved Forests, which comprise one-third of the Hill Tracts' total area. But the Forest Department officers were particularly uncompromising in holding on the Reserved Forest land, which is a rich source for the production of teak, bamboo and other timber, the profits of which go into the pockets of Bengali contractors and the said department.

Accordingly there is a high rate of land scarcity not only of flat

land, but also of land for shifting cultivation. Many of the not adequately rehabilitated plough cultivators had to return fully or partly to the traditional method of shifting cultivation. The displaced shifting cultivators of the reservoir area had to look for *jhum* land on the hill ridges and tops, thus pressing additionally on the land of the other shifting cultivators.

Instead of opening some of the reserved forests for the purpose of jhuming, the Bengali government started two new projects in the course of "development planning", the Jhum Control Scheme and the Standard Horticultural Holding. The ultimate object of the Jhum Control Scheme was "to introduce correct form of land uses and to discourage jhuming" (Pilot Scheme: 3). The justification for the plan to abolish jhum totally at long date, was derived from the fact that the rotation-time in jhum had fallen to 2-3 years, so the yield per acre was not enough to feed the population. It was never mentioned why the rotation-time had come down, namely because of the pressure on the land caused by the lake. It is very easy to interchange cause and effect officially. At the time of my inquiry the scheme was only working in the rehabilitation areas and brought considerable trouble to the shifting cultivators whose jhuming was controlled and restrained so that the yield of the overjhumed fields was permanently decreasing. The second governmental development project planned the introduction of the so-called Standard Horticultural Holding. The aim of this project was to abandon the rice production in the CHT for the sake of horticulture, thus meeting the demands in the plains, at the same time bringing about the total dependence of the hill tribes on the Bengali markets. The population resisted the administrative compulsion to cultivate fruit combinations at will, the advantages and disadvantages of which were not inquired into and proved at all. The result of this wrong, only ethnocentric orientated government policy were local famines in 1964, and, as a novum in the history of the CHT, cases of starvation.

So far as to the failed "modernisation" by the side of the Bengali government. Now let us regard the change which was caused by the different reactions of the hill tribes to the exogenous impacts. With the spreading of plough cultivation in the CHT (until 1860 only jhum was practised in this area) separate developments were within sight. Before that innovation everybody had the same rights to the land, swidden land was and still is considered as communal property with the private right to usufruct only. In

succession of the British, the Bengali government claims the land as state property, but this is contradictory to the traditional common law of the hills. Jhum land cannot be bought or sold. The jhum-tax the shifting cultivators have to pay is levied because the State has acquired the supreme rights to the land, but not as a rent for a particular plot. As access to the land is equal and swidden fields are not subject to any financial transactions, usually everybody has the same chance in the system of shifting cultivation. Therefore the societies of the hill tribes proper, who all practise jhum, turn out to be rather egalitarian ones.

Plough land, on the other hand, is leased by the administration. The rent is paid according to the quality and size of the land. It can be inherited, and all potential heirs cling to it. The problem is that the plough land was always limited, not only after the dam. The land which is nowadays still available is insufficient for the families who want to cultivate on flat land. The percentage of landless families in my sample of plough cultivators had already gone up to as much as 29 per cent in the case of one village. These people have to work as day-labourers, usually finding work only during the harvest-time, that is for 3-4 months every year. Not only these diverging conditions of ownership led to a polarisation between formerly rather equal people, but also the gradual transition to market production.

There has always been a certain surplus-production which was sold in the markets, spices, tools and luxury goods were bought in return from the plains. The traditional cash crops are cotton, rice, chillies and sesamum, still cultivated for that purpose by the Mru, Khumi, Tippera, Taungchengya and the bulk of the Hill-Marma. The shifting cultivators of the reservoir area have turned to turmeric and ginger, root crops being the new, most promising cash crops besides cotton.

Most ethnic groups are still selling rice as cash crop because of their high indebtedness, with the result that they have to borrow rice, or money for rice some months later in the shops of Bengali or from the few rich tribal money-lenders.

The flat land cultivators and the Bawm in the hills (to a less extent some Bawm-influenced Khiang and government-influenced Hill-Marma) found a new response to the scarcity of land in turning to horticulture. This new branch of production has gained its importance as a new method of growing cash crops to meet the increasing demands of the plains. The first to start with orchards

were the Bawm, who were influenced by the Lushai by whom they were Christianised. The first garden was established by a Lushai in 1936 in the southern Bawm area.

The valley people, however, started horticulture not before the construction of the Kaptai dam in the context of the rehabilitation programme. But because government aid was incomplete and inappropriate gardening became a success only after the people took the initiative and organisation into their own hands.

The land rights in garden cultivation are similar to those of the plough cultivators. Garden-land is rented on government lease, the tax at the time of my inquiry was Rs. 2 per acre. The families produce individually and are the proprietors of the fruits. Garden possession comprises the possibility—however illegal—to sublet and to come to new sources of income that way.

The Bengali middlemen have monopolised the marketing facilities and they naturally pay the minimum price. The exploitation by the middlemen is one of the greatest problems of the cultivators. 98 per cent of all the business and of all the shops in the markets of the Hill Tracts are in the hands of people from the plain districts. As measures of self-defense against the uncontrolled reign of moneylenders the valley people (and at my time one Bawm village too) started to establish cooperatives for credit and marketing.

A change is also conceivable in the forms of organisation of labour. The hill people still are working in voluntary groups consisting either of relatives, neighbours or friends of the same age-group. The valley people, however, widely employ hired labourers; mutual neighbourly help has lost its importance. As to horticulture, gardens are worked by family members, partly with the help of day-labourers. Gardening is organised according to the principles of private enterprise, there are no voluntary working groups.

In the course of the economic development means of transport and protection were improved; some metalled or at least jeepable roads were constructed, the new situation of many villages at the banks of the lake brought about the necessity to have boats. All the boats were constructed by Bengalis, the former Marma boat-building died out; store-houses, granaries and chicken houses spread widely. Since 1964/65 the Agricultural Department compels the flat land farmers to buy fertilizer.

Some innovations were introduced in handicrafts. In addition to the traditional cottage-industries for their own consumption, there

are already tendencies among the Bawm and the valley-inhabiting Marma to produce for a market economy, still mostly on a tribal level, however.

The changed natural environment led to an extension of fishing activities in the Karnafuli lake area.

During the years after the dam construction some private and government-aided schools (primary schools, junior high schools, middle English schools, high schools and 2 colleges) were instituted, in some cases without employing a teacher at the same time. The number of literates grew, according to my inquiry, for the Marma to 41 per cent, for the Chakma to 36 per cent, for the Taungchengya to 9 per cent, and highest of all for the Bawm to 51 per cent, 14 per cent of which with higher education. The Census of Pakistan 1961 counted for the whole of East Pakistan 17.6 per cent literates. But one should not regard the high rate of literacy a result of government aid. Much of this literacy is attributable to the Pali Tole, Buddhist schools of instruction of the Chakma, Taungchengya and Marma, and in the case of the Christian Bawm nearly exclusively to their missionary schools, run by Bawm teachers, never by Bengalis.

As a result of these improved educational facilities, a small-scale division between hand-and brain-work is already noticeable. Some men with higher education are holding offices on the lowest administrative level or are employed as teachers at government (or as mentioned in the case of the Bawm also missionary) schools. The Christianised Bawm have the possibility of working as pastor or mission's clerk.

The influx of luxury goods in the hills is increasing. Most of them were in the hands of the Bawm, followed by the Chakma and Marma in the valleys. The other groups were too poor to acquire luxury goods. A factor mainly responsible for the leading role of the Bawm in this aspect may be: the expression of norms and values of a rank-stratified society of the Chin type, in which the accumulation of goods (luxury goods mainly) was highly esteemed, in the Christian perspective. The fact that the standard of living of the Bawm is the highest among the hill people finds its explanation here.

Clearly we find the richest families among the plough cultivators, particularly among the Marma. The quality of plough land varies, but with first-class land one can gain considerable results, results not only by the high yields, but also by subletting the land

in return for half the harvest, or the money for the value of half the harvests three years in advance. Though such transactions are prohibited they are widely practised.

Furthermore, a lot of money is earned by the marketing of garden products on a large scale. Even though the middlemen are Bengali who dictate the prices, profits are still pretty high. But this is only applicable for the rich individuals. Considering the general conditions of the villages the Bawm as an ethnic group are better off.

And the other groups of shifting cultivators are poor, but on a rather equal level among themselves, whereas the flat land cultivators show a strong polarization between rich and poor. The tendency to capitalistic wage-labour is inevitable under the existing conditions. In that respect the shifting cultivators still are in a better position, because as long as jhum land is available they can cultivate it. Taking into account that the average harvest rate (relation between seed and yield) in jhum and plough land is nearly the same, shifting cultivation, which is still possible to improve by scientific means, together with a general development of horticulture and the provision of marketing facilities has better prospects for the future.

Regarding modernization in the CHT we can see the different stages of integration of former subsistence economies into the market economy of post-colonial Bengal, resulting to a great extent in economic deprivation of the majority of the tribal people, enriching a few well-to-do hillmen and helping the Bengali businessmen in monopolizing the entire trade relations between hills and the plains.

Outsiders of the district had no access to the land of the CHT, at least officially. But recently government has declared the tribal lands open for sale to everybody. Money-lenders found it very easy until now to acquire rights in the cultivation (this is the application of the taluk-system of feudal Bengal to the land-system in the CHT); now it will take a few years only to transform money-lenders into zamindars.

CHAPTER XII

CEREMONIAL AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE AMONG THE BURUSHO OF HUNZA

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INTROUDCTION

A Thesis familiar from Durkheim's *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* is that ritual is concerned primarily or fundamentally with representation of the social order. It is a thesis which even in programatic form admits of some ambiguity and has lent itself to varying interpretations in terms of the procedures and results of newly developed ethnographic methods.[1] Here, through a descriptive analysis of the customary dance ceremonies of a people of the Karakorum region, I will explore one way in which it can be understood.

In extending Durkheim's thesis to include forms of action which make no direct reference to religious premises, I follow a practice now widespread and closely associated with the semiotic conception of culture in which ritual appears as a system of expressive signs—a generalized communicational mode analogous to the phonological system of human language. The analysis I want to make, however, is developed in marked contrast to some of the central features of the semiotic approach. These features are exemplified, for example, by Levi-Strauss in *Totemism* and by Leach in his recent text on structuralist methodology (Leach 1976). Both work on the basic assumption that the meaning of a cultural form—its 'cognitive' value—can be separated from its meaning for the actors who take it up in particular temporal contexts. Levi-Strauss makes this the starting point of his analysis and concerns himself with the so-called superstructural level of conceptual schemes and operations to an extent, as critics have concluded,[2] that the actor is quite irrelevant for him. Leach upholds the separa-

tion on pragmatic grounds saying that in actuality either one ends up elucidating the structure of ideas or the structure of behaviour but seldom both. In his view the two analytical tasks though different, are, in any case, complementary, since they refer to a "single interacting whole". and hence their results are transformable one to the other—presumably in terms of formal code based on the principle of oppostion (Leach 1976: 3-5).

The general theoretical stance of Levi-Strauss and Leach has been aptly characterised as "message-centred" (Fortes 1966:9). It is based on the view that explanation must be concerned—is, at root, perhaps always concerned—with the logical operators of thought. Thus ritual beliefs and actions alike are taken not at face value but at another level, as vehicles for the construction of messages. They are seen as the units or elements of a symbolic discourse the true referents of which lie in the social order. The task of the analyst is then conceived as a matter of coming to understand, from the standpoint of the "detached and external onlooker" [Jakobson (1961), as cited in Fortes 1966:8] what is conveyed in this discourse about the system of social relationships. The system itself, thereby, is presumed to exist somehow or somewhere else. And notably, furthermore, the message decoded by this process need not be consciously understood by its givers, bearers or receivers. Its extraction depends, as Leach puts it, referring to rites of passage, "upon the anthropologist's ability to make a syntactic analysis of the overall structure of the proceedings" (see Skorupski 1976:49-50).

In what follows I shall argue implicitly that an approach based on these assumptions is inadequate on both descriptive and explanatory grounds, that it misses important features of the practices in question and, in particular, that the distinction it postulates between the "symbolic-expressive" part of ritual on the one hand and the "instrumental", or intentionally-formulated, part on the other is misleading and untenable. For if we are to fully account for the way in which the social order is expressed in ritual, it is indispensable to specify, in their performative contexts, the meanings which guide and motivate the ritual practitioners themselves. The importance of capturing this level of meaning-in-action is vividly illustrated in the central episodes of the dance ceremonies of the Burusho of Hunza where, through speech, gestures and bodily movements, performers are seen to represent social facts about themselves and others and in so doing to cause these

facts to be declared or established.

In general the kinds of meanings with which I am concerned are manifested in the rules that define what constitutes appropriately intelligible action in a particular context. It is assumed that the complete set of rules for conducting proper or valid ritual proceedings—elicited under differently occasioned circumstances—is what gives these proceedings their overall structure. Accordingly I attempt here to elucidate aspects of the structure of Burusho dance ceremonies by stating some of the necessary rules and conditions for holding and performing them in an acceptable way, or, as the linguist might put it, felicitously. It is first necessary, however, to describe the setting in which dance ceremonies take place and I begin therefore with an overview of Burusho society.

ETHNOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND

A tradition of celebratory public dancing by men—often in connection with some larger politico-religious rite—occurs in a number of populations settled in the high riverine valleys of the western Karakorums. My intention here is to describe and interpret it as it is found among the Burusho of Hunza, a culturally and linguistically distinct tribal group which prides itself on its unique ceremonial forms and accords special importance to the holding of dance ceremonies.

The Burusho reside on the western edges of the Karakorums in the barren, rock-strewn valleys cut by the southward flow of the Hunza and Nagar rivers. Their terraced settlements are strung along almost the entire lengths of the two rivers, but are concentrated in a small region centred on the point where the rivers meet. This core area of ancient and comparatively dense habitation comprises a narrow crescent-shaped valley about nine miles long, overshadowed on one side by a semi-circle of peaks reaching upwards of twenty-two thousand feet. Here, in what they regard as their mother country, the Burusho number approximately 26,000.[3] They are primarily subsistence farmers engaged in the cultivation of wheat, barley, buckwheat, millet and a variety of vegetables. In addition they keep a few livestock—mainly sheep, goats and small-sized mountain cattle—and wherever possible on their limited land holdings grow trees for fruit, wood, nuts and leaf fodder. Because of the dessicated environment their livelihood

depends entirely on the supply of irrigation water which is borne to each settlement on winding aqueducts, from springs and melting glaciers often located miles away across steep mountain terrain.

The Burusho of the core region are divided about equally between the twin former kingdoms of Hunza and Nagar which face each other from the right and left banks, respectively, of the Hunza and Nagar rivers. These kingdoms were multi-tribal, semi-independent states which possessed nearly complete autonomy over their internal affairs until the recent abrogation of their charters with the Government of Pakistan. They are now being incorporated into the administrative framework of the newly-established Northern Areas province. In each kingdom the Burusho formed the politically and numerically dominant grouping, occupied exclusively the central territories in which the royal capital was situated and enjoyed the privileged status which came from being regarded as the royal state's first or quintessential citizens. Furthermore, in each kingdom their large scale social structure was built of units partially or wholly defined and interrelated with respect to the position of the King (*Tham*). Today while the King is no longer recognized as the legal sovereign, the infrastructure of politico-jural relations through which kingship (*Thamkushi*) was effected at the local level is still largely intact—albeit subject to new stresses and strains—and it continues to serve as the primary basis for the organisation of collective social life. This is especially true for the Burusho of Hunza whose King, the last to be formally dispossessed in October 1974, did not actually relinquish many of his powers and privileges until his death in April 1976.

THE DANCE TRADITION AND BURUSHO IDENTITY [4]

That the overall form and coherence of Burusho society in Hunza is given by the framework of relations based on kingship is of particular relevance here because the dance tradition is considered to be the heritage of citizenship in the society as a whole. This is expressed in what might be called the totemic value of the dance event itself, regarded in its aspect as a powerful composite symbol of Burusho culture. Burusho themselves offer the view that the prescribed form of their dance ceremonies provides an idealised self-image for their society—in terms of which they apprehend its unity—and serves as well as the distinctive feature

or mark (*nishaan*) of their way of life—in terms of which they set themselves apart from neighbouring peoples. Participation in dance ceremonies is said to be emblemmatic of Burusho identity and thus the proper right and privilege of those who are full members of the community. In light of this it becomes necessary to examine what it means to hold civic status among the Burusho. As indicated above this is not a status correlated with an autonomous tribal social structure: Burusho society is embedded in and its corporate units are fused or interlinked with, the institutional structure based on kingship. Full membership in the Burusho community, though it has other prerequisites, presumes and implies membership in the locally founded units of the royal state—indeed it is principally demonstrated in the context of these units. The citizenship to which dance ceremonies refer, then, is a compound status implicated in both the royal and non-royal domains of public life and accordingly it is established with a dual set of credentials. Briefly, I shall explain how this is so.

Since the Burusho tribe as a whole has no separate institutional focus of its own, the widest community in which the Burusho participate as such is the moiety. This is recognized as a discrete entity through its incorporation in the kingdom. Within the moiety the politico-jural structure consists of two kinds of status bearing units: those based on the principle of centralized rule, or kingship, and those based on descent. The operational units of kingship are, after the state, the village (*Khan* = 'fortified village centre,' or *giram* = 'settlement'), the neighbourhood (*thali*) and the individual household (*ha*). And the counterpart units of the descent hierarchy are the phratry (*qaum*), the clan(*rom*), the lineage (also *rom*) and the adult male (*baligh*).

The two sets of units are articulated in the following manner: At the highest level the moiety is divided into three phratries associated with the ancient residential centres of Baltit, Altit and Ganish which ring the royal capital. These groups are distinguished by their myths of origin, subtle dialectal variations and their (former) politico-ritual rights and duties vis-a-vis the King. The phratries, in turn, are composed of exogamous patriclans. The patriclans are corporate groups with recognized ancestors, legendary heroes, elders, spokesmen, established procedures for handling intra-clan affairs and control over property. Like phratries, clans are associated with eponymous ancestral residential centres but are not localized in principle. Rather, members

of different clans—and in places of different phratries—are brought together to compose a village.

The village is a unit formed under the aegis of the royal state and since the formal dissolution of the latter is the most important corporate unit of society for governmental, religious and economic purposes. Each village is located within clearly marked territorial boundaries, possesses both royally-conferred and elective offices and engages in a wide-range of collective enterprises and institutions. As a whole, in the past, it had certain well-specified duties and obligations towards the King and in return exacted ritual, ceremonial and legal services from him and sent delegations who sat as members of his Court (*maraka*). Membership in the village *per se* is the basis for localized cooperative arrangements for the storage and distribution of water, for farming, credit, savings, barter, livestock breeding, worship, sacrifice, feasting, entertaining and for a variety of domestic tasks.

At the next level, within the clan, the significant unit is the lineage which may be defined as the largest descent-based group in which all members can trace genealogical connections to each other. The lineage is operationally more effective than the clan. Its authoritative elders are better able both to represent its interests and govern its internal affairs and their jurisdiction is of greater practical consequence. The ancestral lands of its members, for example, belong ultimately to the lineage as a whole. These lands are not alienable beyond the lineage without specific authorization and the lineage has final dispensation in all cases of intestate inheritance. Between lineage members relationships are modelled on the ties of kinship, address terms appropriate for consanguineal kin are employed and the ideal of brotherly amity is enjoined. However, like the phratry and clan the lineage too is not, consistently and by overall design, locally consolidated. Segments of disparate lineages, and even of disparate clans, compose the neighbourhood. Although the neighbourhood does not have the sharply defined collective identity of the village nor the village's many functional attributes it is nonetheless corporate. It is a durable, named group with recruitment based on residence within marked sections of the village. It has explicit sanctions and commitments overseen by an executive committee, and regularized arrangements for the safeguarding of women and property and for joint ritual and economic activities.

Finally, at the bottom of this nesting arrangement, the signifi-

cant unit is the household and not any kind of agnatic kin group. This is regarded as the elementary building block of society and Burusho measure the strength of their villages, clans, lineages and other political units in terms of its numbers. It must suffice to note that the basic processes of socialization, production and consumption are handled primarily in terms of household relations and that it is only the male head of the household who, by virtue of this by position, is endowed with the full jural capacities of an adult in all the institutional contexts associated with the neighbourhood, village and state.

In this way at every critical level of social structure a unit is constituted which cross-cuts and then supervenes on descent ties. The hierarchy of such encompassing units provides the framework for, and hence sets the limits on, the major forms of politico-legal, religious and economic institutions through which individuals realize their status as Burusho citizens of Hunza. As organizational media for the expression and enjoyment of citizenship dance ceremonies can be seen as exemplary in this respect.

THE TIMING AND AUTHORIZATION OF DANCE CEREMONIES

There appear to be no restrictions, other than practical ones, to prevent informal dances from being organized by any of the social units I have mentioned or for that matter by ad-hoc groupings such as political factions or parties of friends and neighbours. Where feasible such dances occur now and again under a modified set of conventions. However the ceremonial dances which are a part of the great ritual festivals or other public commemorations are associated only with two kinds of unit: the village and the kingdom as a whole. The most important dances of ritual performances in which he figures as the chief actor or recipient of action. These occasions produce full-blown versions of the dance ceremonies and accordingly it is to them we must look in order to extract the features which underlie all types of dance events.

Dancing is a seasonal activity and is regulated by a calendar that divides the year into four three-month seasons. These are fixed by reference to the movement of the sun: the first season starts with the vernal equinox and ends with the summer solstice, the second then ends at the autumnal equinox and so on. Dances take place from the beginning of *shini*, or the summer season, to the end of *dattu*, or the autumn season. This

period comprises the second half of the agricultural cycle, that is, the half which runs from the time the first grain harvest is ready to be taken into the time the last field is seeded with the next year's wheat crop and the long winter months of quiet retreat set in. Thus dances are associated with a season of abundance and heightened activity, when even the poorest households enjoy a plentiful supply of food and the tempo of social life is noticeably quicker. This is significant, in the first place, because dancing in every circumstance is customarily preceded and followed by feasting and hospitality that cannot be afforded during times of scarcity. This is also significant, however, at another level: beyond presupposing and celebrating material plenty dancing itself is conceived as a kind of prodigality, an indulgence of pride and exuberance akin to other forms of extravagance such as excessive drinking of the locally-produced grape wine. However, unlike drinking, which affects only individuals, dancing is believed to embody a latent threat to the harmony and stability of the community-at-large. Although when it is properly justified it may be salutary for all concerned it must be restricted to its appropriate context and circumscribed in various ways, lest it incite conflict or even, some aver, mystical retribution in the shape of accidents, crop failures or dieseas. There are repeated allusions to these beliefs by the authorities who organise and control the dance event and these ideas are also adumbrated in the actual movements of dancing and in the aesthetic criteria by which performances are judged.

The first dances of the year are held in connection with the great ritual festival of *ginani* which takes place at the beginning of *shini*, roughly in conjuction with the summer solstice, and marks the turning point of the agricultural cycle. *Ginani* may be regarded as a 'harvest festival' because its overt purpose is to ritually initiate the taking in of the year's first crop. Notably, the period leading up to *ginani* is one of great privation for many. The poorer households have to eke out a living with little to spare as their foodstocks are steadily depleted and their livestock grow scrawny and milkless from an uninterrupted diet of dried fodder. At the same time it is a period when it is necessary to engage in heavy labour in order to meet the demands of the agricultural schedule—ploughing, watering and planting must be done as soon as the departure of winter weather permits, in order to insure an early resupply of food. These conditions give rise to diffuse anxiety

and a wariness that colours all aspects of community life. In contrast the period following *ginani* witnesses a radical change of atmosphere. Once the harvest is underway social life is rejuvenated, and even though intensive labour is still required it is seen as heartening work and is interspersed with much visiting, gossiping and eating of full meals.

Ginani is awaited with great anticipation especially among the male youth (*juan*) and younger householders. They prepare for it with new clothes and stocking up of wine and—if they are truly ambitious—animals for slaughter. Men and boys who have gone abroad for employment try to return for *ginani*. On the second climactic day, following the household-based phase of ritual activities, crowds gather for the big dance in the royal courtyard. Official and self-appointed delegations drawn from the three full-citizen tribes of the Burusho, Guicho, and Shaen arrive from all parts of the kingdom and are greeted and fed by the King. In addition members of the jurally inferior fourth tribe, the formerly 'impure' Bericho, are also in attendance as musicians and servants and as observers in the general audience. This too is one of those rare occasions when women and girls, dressed in their finery, gather in large numbers in a public place. They come from the ancient settlements immediately adjoining the King's residence and occupy the surrounding high ground from where they can look upon, but not directly participate in, the ongoing activities.

The big *ginani* dance is set up under the auspices of the King and it formally inaugurates the dancing season. Subsequent to this, as I have indicated above, just about anybody can organise a dance and do so for diverse reasons. I witnessed, for example, dances organised by Burusho policemen in order to impress, honour or entertain their superiors. However, it should be emphasised that in the traditional scheme a dance may not take place in the absence of consensus among the members of the unit on which it is focused. The holders of a dance must avoid infringing on others' rights to hold or not to hold a dance, and must take care not to suggest that this proof of solidarity exists when it does not. This avoidance is not a simple matter, for many things about a dance signify its connection with a particular group of persons. Among these are the site, the timing, the degree and scale of ceremoniousness, the melodies played, the manner in which the participants were called and outside guests invited, and the material resources utilised. The earnestness with which

Burusho attend to these issues and the corporate nature of the interests at stake belie the apparent frivolity of the dancing itself. They point up the fact that the ability to hold and perform a dance in a particular, specifiable way, represents not merely a claim to entree but in a very real sense is constitutive of social identities. It would be insufficient to say, in other words, that social identities regulate access to dancing, rather it is the case that to take part in a dance is to acknowledge and display an aspect of one's self which is interconnected with but distinct from other aspects of one's total identity. As a general interpretive principle this concept of action as a constitutive element of identity has been applied by Harris (1978) to the study of religious enactments and it is of central importance to the present analysis as well. As in the case of religious performances characteristic of small-scale societies the roles of participants in Burusho dance ceremonies can be seen to "match those in other domains of social life" and the ceremonial system as a whole can be seen to "map the system of relationships among persons similar or different from one another by virtue of sex, age-status, position in the systems of descent, kinship and marriage, residence and citizenship" (Harris 1978:144). When dance performances are looked at from this perspective it also becomes clear why they have such a compelling interest for the Burusho. For in performing valid dance acts actors "display and use the authority and persuasiveness of the total system of relations among persons" (Harris 1978:145).

The interconnection between social entitlement and proper or valid dancing is expressed in the Burusho belief that dances are endowments, specifically, in the case of the great public dances, endowments by the King to a corporate unit. This is brought out in several ways in the dance ceremonies themselves and also in the procedures whereby the major dances are set up and announced. The decision to hold these dances comes ultimately from the King but only after much requesting, arguing and pleading on the part of the delegations of elders and big men who make up his court. When the time is fixed upon in this manner notice is sent to the group of royal musicians.[5] These persons, as noted above, are not Burusho at all but non-citizens of low, previously untouchable, status who reside immediately beneath the King's house and often serve him in a domestic capcity. They provide music at his behest. At a great ritual festival like *ginani* at the summer solstice, when there are dance ceremonies at the royal court followed by localised

ceremonies at villages, the musicians first play for the King and are then sent by him, on the next day, to play for the individual villages. The melodies they produce are said to be intoxicating and powerful to a degree that they can send dancers out of control and can cause injury to persons and property.

The basic, temporal organisation of all dance ceremonies is given by a set formula, although there are wide variations in elaborateness according to the significance of an occasion. The ceremony proper may be said to begin with the formation of the dancing court *jataq*. This is properly achieved only when the dignitary who is to preside over the dance takes his place at one end of an open site, but it may be prefigured by marking out a raised spot of some kind where the dignitary will eventually be seated. Once this is done the amorphous awaiting crowd is converted into the group of celebrants who then form a circle around the dance court. Henceforth any newcomer who enters the site must offer a salute in the direction of the presiding dignitary (except for females who go formally unrecognised throughout the proceedings). Eventually two concentric circles are approximated: an outer one consisting of all females and all infants under a certain age and an inner one consisting of males and having two poles: a dignitary or group of dignitaries forming one and the set of low status musicians forming the other. After these preparations are completed the actual dancing may begin.

The granting of an opportunity to dance can be a potentially explosive issue. At ceremonies presided over by the King it is usually a Prince or the Vizier who dances first and then elders and big men representing villages and descent segments follow according to a well-defined order of precedence. This makes for a dignified and smooth beginning. This order of turn-taking comprises the first, decorous phase of the ceremony. The King is then besieged with requests for the granting of specially authorised dance opportunities. His councillors seated on either side petition him loudly on behalf of certain pleaders; the merits of competing requests are pointed out; the argument becomes noisy and goes back and forth; enthusiasts try to take the dance floor and are pushed back. The musicians await the signal of the King who finally acknowledges someone as a grantee. The music starts and for the duration of the dance there is a semblance of harmony again.

At the royal ceremonies an extremely heterogeneous collec-

tion of citizens and youths are present. Big men, elders, court and village functionaries, headstrong young men who are often inebriated—all are vying to perform. The issue gets quite complicated and can easily get out of hand. Divisiveness and strife may begin to appear in the audience, political factions may be brought into play, serious insults might be exchanged and riotous behaviour ensue. Dances at the village and lower levels, organised as they are by a more homogeneous group on a much more intimate footing, do not face comparable problems. But at this level too turn-taking is carefully regulated.

The problem of who shall be the first to dance is solved by many villages which have a general purpose office called the "starter" (*satguin*). This is a person whose privilege it is to initiate many kinds of important activities, such as the first irrigation of the wheat fields, the first plowing, seeding, harvesting and so on. In this capacity some otherwise usually minor local figure gets the village's ceremonial dances underway without controversy. The presiding dignitaries at these events are typically a small number of village elders and senior spokesmen (*uyongko djanguyo*) lead by the village headman (*trangfa*). It is they who sit on the raised or "big" dais (*uyum man*) opposite the musicians, listen to pleaders, grant dances and accept and return the salutes of the grantees. In small-scale, highly personalised ceremonial situations one or two pleaders usually emerge and take charge of petitioning all cases. These are commonly middle-aged men who are clearly on their way to becoming big men or influential elders. They are known for being shrewd and articulate and adept at cajoling the dignitaries to their point of view. One by one they insure that all those present who should dance get the opportunity to do so. They also invite those on the dais to take their turn. As a rule however the leading dignitary never dances himself although he may ask a junior kinsman to dance in his name instead.

In all public ceremonies of any importance whether they encompass the kingdom as a whole or a single village it is only full jural adults who are eligible to claim a dance. As noted earlier, in Burusho society this means heads of households. In the major ritual festivals it is only heads of supra-household politico-jural units who are able to claim dances. Requests are made on behalf of these persons although, as I have just indicated, it may not be the same individual who is doing the pleading, accepting and performing of a dance.

A special type of a claim to a dance exists with reference to certain unique melodies (*dani*). The sole right to dance to a particular melody can be granted as a boon by the King to certain persons. This right is heritable and may attach to a descent line. Thus there are melodies named after a prominent ancestor to which only his patrilineal male descendants may dance. In specific ceremonial contexts these are requested on behalf of the senior-most descendant, accepted by him and then performed by him or whomever of his agnates he chooses. In the event of a village-level ceremony it is considered appropriate for an elderly recipient of a special melody to designate a paternal kinsman who is a youthful and pleasing dancer.

Dance ceremonies are brought to a close when the presiding dignitaries refuse to accept any more requests for turns on the floor and leave the dais or seat of honour and thus dissolve the dance circle. This takes place after all those who have the right to dance have been given that honour, and usually not before a certain number of speical requests have been accepted. To reiterate, in the royal context those who unequivocally have rights to dance are the court officials, village headmen (*trangfating*), and leading descent group elders, who are also court councillors (*akabirting*) and thus recognised by the King. Special requests may be made to the King on behalf of guests who are familiar notables, such as prominent Burusho from neighbouring territories, or citizens of Hunza who have acquired some distinction in "downcountry" occupations as, for example, military officers. The royally-governed proceedings are ended hastily when special requests begin to be made which do not have at least the tacit consensus of the audience behind them. This may happen when individuals start to make requests for themselves or on behalf of others whose imputed qualities or credentials are not widely accepted, and this inevitably results in vociferous debate, the making of counter-requests and the threat of violence. At this point the King is persuaded by his councillors to signal the end of the dance ceremony and to withdraw from the excited crowd.

In the village ceremony the right to dance is assumed to exist for all those who are self-supporting and effectively independent heads of households. Not all such householders avail of their rights however. Some senior descent group heads, village elders and village headmen do not consider it appropriate to dance before their juniors and prefer instead to act only as the presiding salute-

takers. Thus it is left primarily, though not exclusively, to the younger household heads to take the dance floor by prior right and complete the initial, regularised phase of the ceremony. Special requests then become admissible. They are put forward first on behalf of formally-designated guests (*maeman*) of the village and then on behalf of leading villagers who are not householders in their own right. Next in line are the young married men and youths of marriageable age. Finally, requests are entertained on behalf of individual villagers to honour some noteworthy event or achievement such as the visit home of a young man who has gained distinction or high status in the "downcountry" world—or simply in order to witness an unusually graceful dancer. The sequence of special turn-taking in the village ceremony is not inflexible and, in contrast with the royal ceremony, is not completed until the audience is fully satisfied and virtually all requests have been agreed to.

DANCING AS MEANINGFUL ACTION

It will be apparent from the foregoing discussion that the physical activity of dancing as opposed to the formal acquisition of a dance falls quite often to the lot of junior non-adult males. As might be expected, they are most eager for this and do not let an opportunity pass them by. Elders, distinguished men and other prominent citizens view the youths' dancing as an indulgence on both their parts and they are careful to see that the youths do not get carried away and commit gross excesses. In the royal ceremonies youths are never allowed to take the dance floor alone or to assume the role of lead performers. In the lesser, village ceremonies youths are allowed greater rein but they are still made to acknowledge their dependent status. Since it is their fathers and elder agnates who act as the controlling authorities in these contexts, serious altercations are unlikely to occur, but nevertheless a pervasive contrast in attitudes, expectations and behaviour between the categories of citizen householders, on the one hand, and their dependants, on the other, is expressed. A characteristic difference is manifested, for example, in judgments about beauty, grace and decorum in personal dancing styles. As elder citizens see it the young display altogether too much violent movement and lack the balance, grace and composure which comes from self-discipline. The youth for their part prefer a leaping, muscular style

of movement more directly responsive to the amplitude of the music. At the same time they are cognizant of the underlying ambivalence of their position as indirect recipients of the dance. The basic form of the dance stipulates acknowledgement of the presiding authorities with salutes proferred in their direction repeatedly through each individual performance. During its climatic moments dancers alternate between salutes to the grantors of the dance and to the musicians who are producing the particular music which engrosses them. Youthful and provocative dancers usually make it quite clear that one type of salute is made out of a sense of propriety while the other is the gesture of a true devotee.

An individual dance performace is begun in all cases by the chief grantee, or his appointed representative, who enters the dance court first and salutes the presiding dignitary and sometimes the musicians as well. He then begins the slow hopstep movement of the opening sequence, circling the court in either direction. Most of the time a complete circle is not yet made before he is followed in single file and in rough order of seniority by a number of other persons whose social identities vary in determinate ways according to the context of each-separate performance. Depending on the occasion, on who the lead dancer is and on the capacity in which he has taken the floor, a set of individuals who stand in certain social relationships to him is defined. The members of this set are considered to be under a moral obligation dance behind him. Thus in a royal ceremony if the headman or chief elder of a village is granted a dance it is incumbent upon his fellow villagers, adult and non-adult alike, to follow his lead. If the same individual has been granted a dance in a different capacity, say as the head of a descent group, it is the members of this group who are obliged to fall in behind him. Similarly, at the village level, the designation of a grantee entails expectations that certain persons who are present will join in the performance. Whenever a grant involves reference to an identity which derives from membership in a corporate unit such as a village it is all and only the members of this unit who are eligible to be secondary performers. But when a grant is made to a person in a more private capacity this enables varied persons who have personal ties to him to participate in his dancing. Particularly in small village ceremonies it is possible for affines, friends and foster kin to dance together. However, the basic rule for joining in behind lead

dancers is formulated with regard to important politico-jural statuses. A household head in a village ceremony must at least have the able bodied junior males of his household dancing behind him. If these persons fail to do so and let their chief dancer perform alone it is tantamount to insulting him and publicly denigrating the relationship which holds between them. When there is discord in households, reluctance or refusal to follow the lead of the head is one way of putting pressure on him. But this is unusual and considered in bad taste. The general obligation to accept the lead of their elder agnates is impressed on males early on in their boyhood and by their youth and early manhood they are typically bent on fulfilling it.

Aside from entering the line of persons behind a lead dancer, there is another way of declaring a tie of some sort with him. This is by giving what is called an endearment (*sadka*). An endearment now consists of a five-or ten-rupee note stuffed into the folds of the dancer's cap. Commonly several of these are given so as to form a crown-like effect on the head. Endearments are the expression of an essentially personal sentiment of regard and they may be meant for any one of the dancers on the floor. The act of giving an endearment is considered a rather extravagant thing to do and usually involves only youthful offerers and recipients. At the end of the dance the money displayed on the caps of the performers is dropped onto the musicians. As this money constitutes a substantial part of the payment for their services the musicians respond to its accumulation in the course of the dance with prolonged and vigorous playing. Thus the giving of endearments is also an accepted means to coax more and better music for a particular dancer. Someone with many endearments gets a good, long dance.

Stepping into line behind a lead dancer or the giving of an endearment to him are two obvious ways in which actors can communicate their intentions in the context of the dance event and thus accomplish socially consequential acts. Furthermore there exist possibilities for establishing or altering socially consequential states of affairs in other phases of the organisation of dance ceremonies as well. These will be briefly noted here with reference to the body of rules I have described.

At the level of the organisation of the dance as a whole: The holding of a dance or the refusal to hold a dance may effect a split in certain types of social units. The same act may also inaugurate a

new unit of a type comparable to the previous one or it may dismantle the previously existing unit altogether. The realisation of all three outcomes is seen to depend on prior, overt recognition of the fact that dances provide a social unit with the means to ceremonially authorise a particular conception of itself and to have this conception generally accepted. The King's ceremony is regarded as a critical demonstration of the corporateness of the kingdom. The village ceremony is consciously modelled on the King's ceremony and as such it is held to reproduce at a lower level an idealized version of the royal polity. In short, dance ceremonies are manifestly a form of self expression of the sponsoring group, an affirmation of group identity and composition as it is presumed to exist at the time, and thus the successful holding of dances is taken as an index of the group's solidarity and the vitality of its institutions. By the same token, and inasmuch as the idealised social state of affairs imputed by a public dance ceremony is seen to be at issue, the event also serves to bring out dissensus in the community. Individuals, by not participating or by organising a separate ceremony, are able to give notice that they disavow allegiance to the identity of the group in question or to its ruling opinion. Further than this, in view of far-reaching changes set in motion by involvement with the outside world, they may go so far as to reject the very idea of the group as represented in the dance ceremony and thus the legitimacy of the overall regime and the beliefs which give it purpose and sanctity. In one village community where such an occurrence took place, the holding of the dance itself made 'operative', as lawyers would say, a new formula of jural and ritual rights and duties between previous co-villagers, most of whom continued their close ties to each other in the private capacities of kin and friends.

Analogously, in the actual procedures of the performance itself particular intentional acts may carry operative force. As I have shown, stepping behind a dancer or giving him an endearment counts as an affirmation of a tie. This tie may already exist, as in the case of the head of household and it may be immutable as in the case of kinship. While the jural element in both these cases is by and large immune to dancing, their moral or tactical side may be significantly affected by it. A follower may declare a grievance or issue a warning or threaten disloyalty or opposition by refusing to take a person's lead or by taking some other person's lead or by giving some other person an endearment. But beyond this, he may

create new relationship altogether. In past times, it is said, that women sitting in the outer concentric circle initiated love affairs through the giving of an endearment by deputy. This is forbidden now, but it does happen that a claim to love or friendship between males is first established in and through dancing and endearments. When this occurs a new social bond is believed to exist between the two persons and the wider community expects that they shall conduct themselves differently than before.

CONCLUSION

In this essay I have presented an interpretation of dance ceremonies held periodically among the Burusho of Hunza in northern Pakistan. This interpretation has been based on references to the details of only two kinds of ceremonies: those organised by or on behalf of the kingdom and the village. These ceremonies are the most impressive in scale and degree of elaborateness and display certain features which are not present when dances are held by lesser social units. However, the reverse is also true: informally organised dances held by ad-hoc units such as political factions, or assemblages of kin, friends and neighbours illustrate certain conventions which are not found in the context of the royal court or in the village's public celebrations. A full description and analysis, needless to say, would have to take into account each of these kinds of ceremonies and specify the range and extent of differences they exhibit.

The present discussion has focused on the internal aspects of Burusho dance ceremonies and has sought to show how their structure enables them to serve distinctive ends: First, the rules and concepts in terms of which these ceremonies are constituted embody certain prime values and principles—and in this sense provide a self-conception—of Burusho society, in terms of which it apprehends and displays its solidarities. At the same time, from the actors' point of view, enactment of these ceremonies is seen as a powerful means to establish, or alter the moral quality of a personal tie, or to rearrange jural rights and political allegiances. In this way dance ceremonies may be seen to derive their significance from two complementary modes of relation to the social order: they both image and transform it.

NOTES

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1. These interpretations are critically evaluated in Skorupski (1976).
2. See, especially, Fortes (1966)
3. This figure represents the approximate number of Burusho in the core region only. As will emerge below there is good reason to treat this population as a separate unit. The total number of Burusho in the region, including the Burusho of Hunza and Nagar, may now exceed 60,000.
4. In this and the following sections of the paper the ethnographic present tense refers to conditions as they were prior to the abolition of kingship in Hunza by decree of the Pakistan government in October 1974. It should be noted that many of the practices associated with kingship, including most of those described here were still adhered to at the time of fieldwork in 1975-76. Some of them began to rapidly fall away after the death of the late King Mohammad Jamal Khan in April 1976.
5. There are usually five musicians at royal ceremonies: two or three each playing kettle drums (*damal*), one or two on the big drums (*dadan*) and one playing the ground pipe (*surnai*). At the village ceremoney there is one player of each instrument, and at lesser, informal events there may be only drummer (commonly on the big drum) and the piper.

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CHAPTER XIII

DIVERGENT TRENDS OF TRANSFORMATION AMONG THE KUMAON BHOTIA

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THOSE who are acquainted with the Indian cultural dynamics must have noted a unique phenomenon characterised by many of the tribal groups' gradual march towards the Hindu pole for Hindu social recognition as well as acquiring a higher status thereof, hitherto denied to them in the regional Hindu social framework. The phenomenon is quite old, and many of the present day Hindu castes and sub-castes have tribal background. The tribal absorption into the Hindu fold was accomplished through a prolonged and gradual process of cultural transformation, defined as 'Hinduisation'. Instances from tribal India are not lacking on this score.

The present paper records the case of Kumaon Bhotia who, in order to secure Rajput social status in their regional Hindu framework, had involved themselves in a similar cultural process. But what is most significant here is the recent trend of unexpected retraction of a section of them from the on-going process of Hinduisation in which the entire Kumaon Bhotia community had zealous participation.

THE KUMAON BHOTIA AND THEIR VALLEYS

'Bhotia' is a generic term commonly attributed to several *socially unrelated* groups of non-Tibetan borderland folk traditionally inhabiting the belt of ranges alongside the great snow-peaks of the Himalayas. The native population of Bhutan state, some groups found in the Nepal-Tibet borderland, the northern highlanders of Kumaon and Garhwal of the central Himalayan regions of India—all share the same designation although there

exist many socio-cultural differences among them. All these people, however, are widely known for their traditional international trade with Tibet. This activity continued down the ages and consequently became a distinct feature of their life.

Within the Kumaon, the Bhotias are also popularly known as the "Shauka". They live in the northern high altitude valleys of Pithoragarh district which was a part of Almora district till February 1960. In the Gazetteer of Almora Walton writes, : "Their country is called by the middle hill people (as) Bhot, and it lies in the main to the north of the great snowy peaks, and between them and the Tibetan boundary." (cf. 1961:3). However, the Hindu hillmen of Kumaon use the term 'Bhot' in a loose sense to describe an area which is higher in altitude than theirs and is also closer to the great snowy peaks of the north where the Bhotias are living since long. The international borderline between India and Tibet is obviously the northern boundary of Bhot and its southern boundary is conceived as a line roughly joining Kapkot and Askot. (Pant: 1935:40 & 72). It may be stated here that the area lying between the southern boundary and the traditional Bhotia valleys is populated by groups like Khasia Brahman, Khasia Rajput and others who form a substantial bulk of the population of Bhot. The Bhotias being transhumant people, do come down here to pass every winter when their villages in high altitude valleys remain under snow. In these winter villages they own houses, land etc. which account for a part of their wealth. We may, therefore, use the terms 'Lower Bhot' and 'Upper Bhot' to specifically denote the winter encampment areas and the high altitude abodes of the transhumant Bhotia, respectively.

A large part of Upper Bhot is completely rugged, mountainous and the human settlements here are confined only to four valleys, viz., Johar, Darma, Byans and Choudans—which extend from north to south in a roughly linear way. These valleys are drained by rivers like Kali, Dhauli etc. Of these valleys, the Choudans is situated south of the Byans. The other three valleys are flanked by high ridges covered with perpetual snow and extended upto the boundary with Tibet. At the northern extremity of these three valleys lie the passes. Traditional Bhotia villages lie in these valleys in Upper Bhot which make the summer abode of the Bhotias. During the days of trade, it was in these villages that the Bhotia women and children were left when their menfolk remained busy during the two or three trips from May to September, to the

Tibetan marts alongwith the merchandise laden on sheep, goat, yak, pony etc. With the advent of winter the Bhotias (excepting those of *Talla* [lower] Darma and Choudans used to come down to Lower Bhot. Leaving the families there, the Bhotia traders used to attend the trade fairs at Jouljibi, Thal and Bageshwar where they disposed of substantial bulk of wool and other Tibetan imports. Then they proceeded to Ram Nagar, Haldwani and Tanakpur via Almora or Ranikhet. On the way, they simultaneously performed the grain/salt-borax/barter transactions with the rural Kumaon Hindus and thus the export goods for the following trade season were procured. The wealthier and more enterprising Bhotias (who were mostly from the Johar and only a few from other valleys) even paid trade-visits to "larger centres such as Delhi, Amritsar, Cawnpore, Calcutta or Bombay" (op.cit: 57-58). Because of some formidable ecological limitations agriculture remained crippled in Bhot excepting Choudans and Talla Darma where raising of two crops is possible. Hence the Bhotias of these areas, besides their trade and pastoralism, had also the tradition of settled agriculture since long. (Das: 1977:4 & 9).

By all accounts trade had been the most rewarding assignment of the Kumaon Bhotias in which they enjoyed complete monopoly. There were various reasons for this. The conditions like the geographical proximity of their region to Tibet, their mutual intelligibility with the Tibetan traders, and the tradition of pastoralism among them, had already put them in an advantageous position. In addition to these, because of their cherishing relatively tolerant and compromising socio-cultural values, they succeeded in entering into *Mitra* (friendly) relationship with corresponding Tibetan Dogpa traders with whom the trade transactions used to take place. As a customary pre-condition of the land, individuals entered in the *Mitra* relationship would henceforth have comensal relations i.e. eating and drinking together etc.

Monopoly in trade explains the economic prosperity of the Bhotia and obviously theirs' was the highest standard of living in terms of material possession, income, food, dress etc. in the whole of the region. In sharp contrast, the condition of the Hindu hillmen, particularly those living in Lower Bhot and around, were quite miserable as many of them had "only a narrow strip of usually dirty cloth around their waist or blanket pinned on their shoulders" (Srivastava: 1966:180). This matchless affluence gave the Bhotia enough prestige in the regional economic sector. But it

failed to obtain for them similar results in regional Hindu social context. The Hindu view of social status is not divorced from the ritual status, and the typical Bhotia customs and practices, their reported inter-dining with the Tibetan Dogpa traders only gave them a position, no better than the Dom in the regional social scale. This was sharply inconsistent with the considerable prestige they attained out of economic success which led to a kind of status-discrepancy among them. Now two pertinent questions emerge: whether this status-discrepancy alone pushed the Bhotia to strive for a higher status in their regional setting, or whether there were certain other unavoidable realities to motivate them for acquiring higher status in the regional Hindu fold. The analysis of these major issues may consequently expose the dynamics of Bhotia Social transformation in Kumaon.

KUMAONI CULTURAL FABRIC AND BHOTIA SOCIETY: BHOTIA'S QUEST FOR RAJPUT STATUS

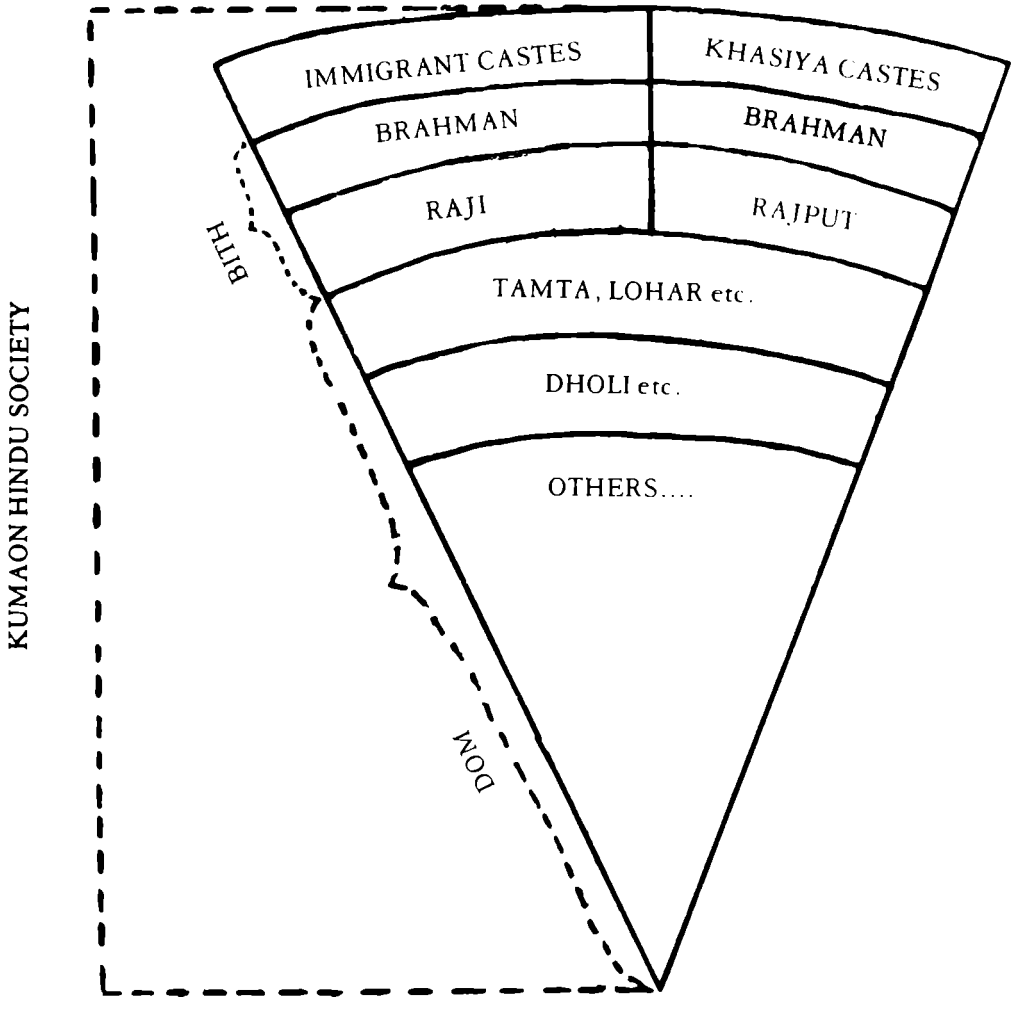
At the outset, it is useful to have a glimpse of the regional Hindu cultural setting represented by the local Kumaoni Hindu caste traditions. In the Himalayan regions of Uttar Pradesh castes are relatively few. Unlike the plains, in the Himalayan regions of Kumaon and Garhwal the two-fold division of castes into '*Bith*' and '*non-Bith*' is sharp. The *Bith* category comprises the higher castes of the region who include all Brahmans and Rajputs irrespective of their being Khasiya or later immigrants from the plains. However, historically the immigrant Brahmans and Rajputs constitute the ruling aristocracy of the region and as such hold the topmost positions in the scale of hierarchy among *Biths*, who, as a rule, maintain a social distance and do not marry with the numerically predominant Khasiya. "At some date of history the Khasiyas themselves split into Brahman and Rajput divisions, yet the immigrants from plains continued to assert themselves to be the real Brahmans and Rajputs and are more rigid in their customs and practices compared to the Khasiyas." (Das: 1976:2). The immigrant Brahmans and Rajputs, even today do not till the land by themselves but the Khasiya Brahman and Rajput have no such inhibition.

The Doms, according to some authorities (Stowell: 1919:7; Walton: 1919:97) are the aboriginal non-Aryan population of these hills who are non-*Bith* or ritually impure and so untouchables

(*Achhut*). They are village artisans who are more frequently described by their occupational subdivisions, e.g., *Lohar* (blacksmith), *Tamta* (Coppersmith), *Orh* (stone-worker and Mason) and so on. A sharp line of demarcation based on purity-pollution concept, has thus placed all the *Bith* groups together on one side and all the *non-Bith* low castes (untouchables) on the other side of the pollution-barrier" (Bailey: 1957: 8) and the caste hierarchy is basically dichotomous.

Thus the hierarchical aspect of the Himalayan caste society of Kumaon may be summarized at a general level as follows:

STATUS HIERARCHY IN REGIONAL CASTE SOCIETY



After this brief outline of the regional Hindu social setting we may now turn to the Bhotia. It may be stated that the Bhotia

valleys are not ordinary geographical entities, rather these are important structural units of the Bhotia socio-cultural framework. The Bhotia population is primarily seggregated valleywise; each valley-based group exhibits apparent customary characterstics which, in effect, help to register these valleys as being unique social constituencies in the wider Bhotia cultural world. And hence, from an analytical standpoint, the valley qualifies to be the most useful unit for correctly assessing the Bhotia social affairs.

It is, however, important to note that cultural variation is rather thin among the groups inhabiting Byans, Choudans and Darma and is mostly restricted to the minor areas e.g. habits, tastes, manners, courtesy rules and the like. These groups may be collectively called the 'Eastern Bhotia' who show remarkable similarity, in many major cultural fields like birth and death rites, marriage, religious and social outlook amongst them. But the Eastern Bhotia offer considerable cultural diversities with the Johari Bhotia which may be the result of the politico-historical happenings of the preceding few centuries apart from factors like isolation and lack of contact between the groups in question. The history of the Bhotia valleys reveals that the cultural similarity of Byans, Choudans and Darma may be due to the fact that though these valleys were ruled by different powers, this did not prevent social intercourse among the people there in the past. The chain of mountains separating these valleys was relatively less formidable. Sometimes, the Darmiya traders returned from Tibet via Byans and Choudans valleys when their own pass became blocked due to early snowfall. Moreover, during the winter months, the Darmiya and the Byansi Bhotias lived in some villages of Lower Bhot. Naturally, no major cultural difference could develop. On the other hand, people of these three valleys have marriage relations too. But the situation was different for the Johari Bhotia. The Pachchuli chain of mountains stood as a formidable barrier separating Johar valley from the rest of the Bhotia valleys of Kumaon, thereby obstructing social communication resulting in cultural isolation. The winter settlement of the Johari Bhotia, viz., Thal, Didihat and other places, are quite removed from the winter encampment areas of the Eastern Bhotia. Although the Eastern Bhotia and the Johari Bhotia met each other at Tibetan marts and also in the trade fairs of Jouljibi, Thal, Bageshwar and other places, such trade-meetings did not contribute to any intimate socio-cultural relationship. Thus, absence of a broad-based contact between the Johari

and the Eastern Bhotia groups resulted in widening cultural diversities.

We may now return to the phenomenon of the Bhotia's gradual march to the Hindu fold. Here it may be stated that the relative differences in the degree of Hinduisation among the Johari and the Eastern Bhotia further contributed substantially towards their cultural diversities. Of course, for this varying degree of Hinduisation of the different Bhotia groups some specific factors—historical and general—were responsible.

It is difficult to ascertain when exactly the process of Hinduisation started among the Bhotia. Absence of records relating to the event of the Bhotia social history is the biggest handicap in this regard. However, the general impression is that the phenomenon of status discrepancy among the Bhotia might have positively contributed to the Hinduisation.

Besides, a few past political events also had some role in the process. The Hindu Raja of Kumaon annexed the Johar valley in 1581 in order to effect security to pilgrims bound for Mt. Kailash and holy Mansarovar, as this valley was the passage to these holy centres. After this, the Johar was set for wider Hindu contact like the pilgrims from the plains even, apart from enjoying political patronage from the Kumaon Hindu Kingdom—all these were conducive to the initiation of Hinduisation there at a very early period. But the other three valleys of Darma, Byans and Choudans did not evoke much interest among the Hindu rulers of the region as the Johar did for the reasons stated above. In the absence of this and conversely due to constant interference of diverse political and social forces, the Eastern Bhotia life of these valleys in the past remained largely outside the gamut of Hinduisation which had started in the Johar valley already. This differential politico-social background, in a way, has further contributed to the growth of cultural diversity between the Johar and the Eastern Bhotia valleys even in those days.

By the time the British arrived in Kumaon the Johari Bhotia became considerably Hinduised. The sketchy accounts by all early British authors profess this. We learn from these sources that the Joharis had been assiduously cultivating a distinct style of life which was a sequel of their courting some Hindu standards. The Hindu notions of social discrimination reflected in the codes of commensality had percolated into their daily life as they accepted "half cookery *Kachci rasoi,* i.e. food cooked without clarified

butter from any one except (untouchable) Dom... (Although) they do not wear the sacred thread, but (they) adopt the uncut tuft of hair (*Sikha*) as all Hindus do... There is no doubt that of later years the Joharis have affected more and more to intimate the scrupulous caste observance of the Hindu. ... They refuse, too, to drink spirits, of which they consume large quantities, out of the same vessel with a person whom they consider to be of an inferior class, and altogether they have as much right as the Khasiyas of the less civilised parts of these districts to be considered Hindus..." (Atkinson: 1882:114 & 117). In contradistinction the Eastern Bhotia style of life is enormously traditional. The Johari Bhotia continuously professed that they were "not to eat with the Tibetans, but only to drink tea with them" (Sherring: 1906:68). But unlike the Johari Bhotia, the Eastern Bhotia displayed no conscious resistance on the matter of their reported inter-dining with the Tibetans. By way of constant emphatic denial the Johari could manage to soften the local Hindu attitude to a certain degree on benefit of doubt which the Eastern Bhotia could not gain.

While the Johari Bhotia made good progress in the process of Hinduisation, the Eastern Bhotia lagged far behind as evidenced in early records. Like the Johari Bhotia who "have assumed the affix 'Sinha' (Singh) to show their Rajput origin" the Eastern Bhotias styled themselves in the same fashion though "the knowledge of the Eastern Bhotias about Hinduism extends to little more than the name." (Sherring: 1906:64). But with the spread of British Administration and improvement of communication including opening of a new pilgrim route to Mt. Kailash and Manasarovar via Choudans and Byans valley, the age-old isolation of the Eastern Bhotia valleys was removed. The regular and multidimensional contacts that the Eastern Bhotia valleys have now, ultimately served the cause of their Hinduisation. The Bhotia society as a whole was, thus, poised for an intensive involvement in the process. As border people, the Bhotia enjoyed some special privileges including heavy reduction of tax etc.. Besides, the British policy encouraged the emergence of leaders and other elites to facilitate the task of administration in those remote pockets. These new Bhotia leaders and elites played a very crucial role in the Hinduisation of the Bhotia. Their most important strategy was to reduce the Bhotia cultural dissimilarities with the regional Hindu cultural tradition. This was to be accomplished by either completely eliminating or modifying all such customs in

Bhotia cultural inventory which offered sharp incompatibility with the Hindu cultural tradition.

It is an undeniable fact that in the matter of Hinduisation, the Johari Bhotia was ahead of other Bhotia, and the former was so much transformed culturally that when the British authorities attempted to make an inquiry into the local customs of the Kumaon division, they were convinced to treat the Johari Bhotia case separately. The Johari Bhotia displayed enormous cultural dissimilarities with the Eastern Bhotia (Lal: 1931: 17-31). The Bhotias of Mana and Niti valleys of Garhwal "inter-marry with the Bhotias of Pangana Johar in the Almora district. The great Hindu shrine of Badrinath and other associated temples lie in these (Mana & Niti) valleys: hence these Bhotias have come in contact with the Hindu residents, and assimilated their customs ..." (op. cit. 32).

In order to effect cultural conformity with the regional Hindu model, the Joharis modified their customs concerning the crises of life. They started celebrating the ceremonies connected with these events in a fashion similar to the high caste Hindus of Kumaon. The local Khasiya Brahmans usually officiated at the ceremonies. Stricter rules regarding marriage were enforced. Although bride-price system could not be fully eradicated instantly, an all-out effort was made to discourage its continuance. Marriage by gift (*Kanyadan*) was encouraged instead. There were stray cases also where no price was charged. It is noteworthy that when the Khasiya caste Hindus stuck to their tradition of bride price, the Johari Bhotia were endeavouring to eradicate it. By doing this the Johari were practically chiselling their cultural framework on the immigrant Rajputs' style which represented the cultural heritage of the Gangetic plains and which served as an ideal Hindu model to the local Khasiya castes as well. The orthodox Hindu attitude towards women was adopted. "*Parda* is so far practised that the elder brother never sees the face of his younger brother's wife, nor does he ever speak to her, or go into the same room with her." (Sherring: 1906:65). The traditional practice of death rite, the *Dhurung,* had been entirely abandoned by the Joharis long ago (op. cit.: 127). Apart from all these, the Johari started worshipping Hindu Gods and deities and observing Hindu festivals. "*Gita* and *Ramayana* are recited on ceremonial occasions. These Bhotias, like the immigrant Rajputs, also have pictures of Rama and Krishna in their homes," (Srivastava 1966: 201-2). All these efforts removed the cultural incompatibility substantially to ensure their Rajput status in the regional social setting.

Let us turn to the Eastern Bhotia situation of that time. Sherring reports: "These are much more backward than the others ... They are looked down upon by the other Bhotias, because of their primitive ways .... Although marriages are occasionally arranged through the parents ... yet practically the universal custom of the three *pattis,* Darma, Byans and Choudans, is to arrange marriage at the *Rambang* ... at which men and women meet and spend the night singing lewd love songs, and drinking and smoking. The Bhotias of Johar and Niti look down upon the *Rambang,* and will have nothing to do with it in their own country, having given it up many years ago." (Sherring 1906: 64-104). With the opening of another route to Mt. Kailash and Manasarovar through Choudans and Byans valleys, the visit of the Hindu pilgrims became an annual feature. District Board Schools opened in these parts were manned with caste Hindu teachers who became a constant source of contact. Meanwhile, Shri Narayan Swami, a Hindu ascetic from the plains, established an *ashram* and two schools in Choudans for poor Bhotias. The Swami's humanitarian works and the interest of a few local leaders created a favourable condition and expedited transformation of the Eastern Bhotia.

An intense campaign was launched to abandon the traditional *Rambang* institution immediately. The amoral *Rambang* songs were banned. Women were counselled to practise seclusion. A war on liquor was declared. People zealously came forward, destroyed their distilling apparatuses and vowed not to drink henceforth. After creating an ideal Hindu-type social environment, efforts were then mobilised to modify the customary *rites de passage* by Hindu parallels. The traditional *Dudung* (Bhotia death rite) included ceremonial sacrifice of *yak* (considered to be a cow by the Hindu) and hence offered enormous incompatibility with Hindu values. Besides, people were discouraged to follow the traditional marriage by capture. Consequently, many Eastern Bhotia families adopted Hindu death rite, *Shraddha,* and employed the Khasiya Brahmin to officiate at the ceremony. The Bhotias of Choudans and *Talla* (lower) Darma took the lead in this. But the Bhotias living in the northern most villages faced a problem. The local Khasiya Brahmans of Lower Bhot were reluctant to undertake a long arduous trek to these distant villages unless they were well paid. Sometimes it happened that in a family *Dudung* was performed for one of the deceased parent and *Shraddha* for the other. And above all, the Bhotias shortly discovered that their Brahman-

mainly interested in extracting money under various pretexts, taking full advantage of their ignorance. All these factors disillusioned them as they observed that despite their sincere attempts to Hinduise their cultural outfit, the regional Hindu attitude towards them did not change. People remembered the gay life of 'the good old days' and desired a return of the same. Many argued that it was just foolish to sacrifice happiness for nothing. Because of these factors, the process of Hinduisation, while remaining operative, lost its initial momentum.

The picture of Hinduisation of the Bhotia thus presented a duality. First, the Johari Bhotia's cultural achievement reached such a height that they surpassed the local Khaisya Rajput in cultural refinement and thus established cultural superiority over the latter. On the other hand, the eastern Bhotias failed to internalise the Hindu cultural traits for the reasons stated above, apart from the fact that their attempts were obviously superficial and half-hearted. They were singularly interested in "Shauka Rajput" designation which they preached readily but did little to qualify for it. And for this reason mainly the local Kumaoni Hindus were able to repudiate their claim. In the midst of such situation, events like independence of the country and after a few years, the closure of the border with Tibet took place. These events had far-reaching implications on the Bhotia cultural transformation.

THE TREND OF RETRACTION: REVIVAL OF TRADITION

After independence the constitution of the new republic came to offer numerous privileges to the people who were officially declared as the 'Scheduled Castes/Tribes' or 'Backward Classes'. The Kumaon Bhotia, notably the Johari, had severally criticised the British policy of marking them as 'Mongolian border tribe' and had pressurised the British Government to reclassify them as Rajput. Quite unexpectedly, they changed their stand now. Instead, all the Bhotia groups joined hands to press their demand for special statutory safeguards. The leadership in this sphere came mainly from the Bhotia of Johar and Garbyang village of Byans valley. It was quite surprising. The Johari's cultural achievement and their supercilious attitude towards the Eastern Bhotia and the local Khasiya Rajputs owing to this, and the latter groups' submission to the Johari cultural superiority have, in a way, meant their

victory in the struggle for Rajput status. Although the Bhotias of Garbyang had not attained that much of advancement as the Joharis did, they were nonetheless moving rapidly towards Hinduisation. Due to this they enjoyed considerable prestige among the Eastern Bhotia. Therefore, the latest move from this section of the Kumaon Bhotia community reflected a strange contradiction. Although their constant efforts to exact special 'social economic and political' privileges did not meet with immediate success, yet this made an impact on the Eastern Bhotias who till then had not been able to make any appreciable progress in terms of Hinduisation. At this crucial time another important event occurred which directly affected the entire Bhotia people.

The border with Tibet was sealed and the Bhotias' traditional trade with Tibet thus came to a halt. "The overwhelmingly trade-biased traditional Bhotia economy thus suffered a temporary set-back. This condition had prompted them to rearrange a new economic order to fill up the gap caused by the disruption of trade with Tibet." (Das: 1977:8). Under the changing conditions, the Bhotias badly felt the need for special constitutional privileges for them. The campaign for having themselves declared as 'Scheduled Tribe' by the Government was intensified. The educated Bhotia youth and others came forward to convince the authorities. A new elite group thus emerged and steadily gained hold on the common public. The Eastern Bhotia protagonists of Hinduisation were gradually losing influence on the common Bhotia. The new elite among the Eastern Bhotia established themselves in the vanguard of their affairs which became more and more apparent with their obtaining Scheduled Tribe status in 1967.

It is evident that both the Johari and the Eastern Bhotias unitedly fought for Scheduled Tribe status during the period when they were at different stages of Hinduisation. The follow-up cultural implications of their demand for tribal status were not similar. For the Johari Bhotia, the status of Scheduled Tribe was nothing more than a mechanism to acquire facilities, thereb ensuring steady progress. This had nothing to do with their cultural objectives. They refused to accept that this official status necessitated the revival of 'typically traditional culture' which they had given up long ago. In view of this, nothing contrary to Hinduisation could be detected there. Rather, the Johari, being comfortably placed culturally, maintained a steady progress, and of late a few influential families among them are reported to have discontinued widow

remarriage in order to lead the common Johari Bhotia in this regard. But in case of the Eastern Bhotia the story is different.

Being constantly frustrated in getting Hindu recognition, the Eastern Bhotia now found a convenient ground to cleverly cover up their failures. A different trend of transformation thus crept into the Eastern Bhotia cultural life. The majority of the new elite group which had recently became very forceful, belonged to those villages where, for the reasons stated earlier, confusion in the cultural sphere was conspicuous. Many of these new elites had a fair acquaintance with the plains areas where they stayed in connection with service, education etc. On returning to their valleys, they decided to organise the common people in order to end the chaotic atmosphere in their cultural sphere. A systematic course of action was chalked out. Dharchula, the sub-divisional headquarters, a fast-growing business centre and the most important place for all the Eastern Bhotia valleys, became the cockpit of these latest activities. Some of these elites staged dramas in some remote areas of Byans valley through which they gained popularity. Besides, they rendered selfless service to the problem-ridden poor families. In addition to all this, their persistent efforts to attain Scheduled Tribe status were even more impressive. The new leadership, thus, outwitted the advocates of Hinduisation.

After gaining a base at the grass-root level the new elite concentrated on the cultural front of the Eastern Bhotia. The *"Byans Anushuchit Janjati Byans Uththan Samiti"* was formed in 1969 under the active participation of the villagers of Nabi, Napalchu, Gunji, Kuti and Rongkang, initially with headquarters at Gunji village of Byans valley. The primary objectives of the *Samiti* are (i) to eliminate the evil practices of the traditional culture and (ii) to preserve the traditional cultural identity of the Bhotia people. One important activity of the *Samiti* was to hold *Byans Mela* (fair) at Manila. The *Mela Prabandhak* committee is obviously constituted by the new elite who wanted the revival of their traditional culture. A campaign was launched to modify certain aspects of the traditional framework. Educated young people were asked to defend the traditional Bhotia culture and shun all type of complexes. The intelligent educated young men, the new political elite and others spearheaded a concerted action to establish that there was nothing in traditional Bhotia culture which was alien to the original (Vedic?) Hindu form. A book written for this purpose professes this, drawing numerous

similes from Hindu epics and other ancient literatures. (Raypa: 1974: 48, 50ff). Moreover, the necessity of retaining "socio-cultural distinctiveness" was also emphasised so that the Bhotia fit into the definition of "tribe." This was one of the significant points to the common Bhotia, anxious to derive benefit from a Scheduled Tribe status. And this contributed positively to a retreat from Hinduisation.

The process of revival of traditional Bhotia culture, of course, with some reforms, was thus initiated. The practices connected with the life-cycle events were modified along traditional lines through a general consensus of village elders and others. Much importance was attached to the reintroduction of *Dudung* which had been the first casualty of Hinduisation earlier. The traditional death-rite, *Dudung,* therefore witnessed a good deal of modification. The question of *Yak* sacrifice which was obligatory by tradition, was now left to individual discretion. It was held that the poor Bhotia may complete *Dudung* by sacrificing a goat or with no sacrifice at all. But it was compulsory to make *Jo Yab Shimo* (effigy of the deceased) and *Amrhimo* during *Dudung* as was done traditionally. *Amrhimo* is a kind of traditional Bhotia lore, recited on the occasion of *Dudung*. Apart from all these, holding of *Dudung* in the months of *Sawan* and *Bhado* was banned because during these months the standing crops in the fields could be damaged as the customary *Gartimo* dance of the *Dudung* ceremony is inevitably held in the agricultural fields owing to want of spacious grounds in the residential sites of the high altitude villages.

In a similar fashion, several aspects of marriage custom were modified. Marriage feasts which involved huge expenditures in the past on items like meat and *chakti* (traditional Bhotia liquor) was brought under the purview of reformation. A certain quota was fixed regarding the amount of meat and *chakti* to be consumed on this occasion. This meant considerable saving and naturally was welcomed by all. In spite of all these, the revival of the *Rambang* tradition was strongly disfavoured, fearing that the interested parties may find scapegoats in it to discredit their traditional culture. All these reforms in various aspects undoubtedly appealed to the common people. The phenomenon of traditionalisation gained support and many Bhotia families who had earlier opted for *Shraddha* and had accepted the ritual authority of Brahman, deserted both. The *Samiti* now organises *Byans Mela* in August every year and gradually more and more villages have been parti-

cipating. Leaving the recreational and other aspects, one primary objective of this three-day fair, is to generate among people a love for traditional culture. Cultural competitions are held and each village is allowed to present two songs, at least one on the theme of past glories, traditions etc. of the Bhotia people. A shield named *'Chal Jayanti Deb Singh Jasuli Rangkuli'* is awarded to the village considered most disciplined. Formal and informal discussions are held on cultural issues and emphasis is always laid on social unity in order to build up prestige of the Bhotia people.

Due to these revivalistic efforts, the progress of Hinduisation among the Eastern Bhotia has suffered several setbacks. Its effect has so narrowed down that its influence is now restricted only to a few villages around Narayan Ashram and few others in Darma and Byans valleys. Therefore, the common Eastern Bhotia in general show least concern for Hinduisation, although, surprisingly they emphatically assert their "Shauka Rajput" origin. Further, they frequently proclaim that their traditional cultural practices, in no way, contradict the traditional Hindu way of life; rather, they quite wittingly point out that their traditional cultural outlook of tolerance, humanism and social freedom aptly represent the truest form of ancient Hindu ethos and tradition.

SUMMING UP

A general trend in the tribal situation in India is many tribal groups' desire for acquiring a higher status in the Hindu cultural fold. This is often backed by their claims to Hindu origin initially. Such aspiring groups gradually undergo the process of cultural transformation in order to culturally qualify their claim and ensure their position in the Hindu fold. Through such process of Sanskritisation—" a low Hindu Caste, or tribal, changes its customs, ritual and way of life in the direction of a, frequently, 'twice born' caste. Generally such changes are followed by a claim to a higher position in the regional caste society than that traditionally conceded to the claimant caste (or other groups) by the local community." (Srinivas: 1966:6). The Kumaon Bhotia case of cultural transformation along the regional Hindu lines provides a suitable example in this regard. In establishing Rajput status, the Johari Bhotia met considerable success by means of their exemplary cultural modification. Their involvement in Hinduisation was a long process. But among the Eastern Bhotia this process was initiated much later and efforts of these people to establish

their Rajput status was marginal in the sense that they did little to justify it culturally.

But after independence some emerging realities, in a way, helped the Eastern Bhotia to register the revival of their tradition, though with certain reforms therein, which acted to preserve their *distinct* Bhotia sub-cultural identity, supposedly needed under the existing socio-political situation.

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