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HRAF-47 California-14

A SURVEY OF NEPAL SOCIETY

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A SURVEY OF NEPAL SOCIETY

by

Stanley Maron
Leo E. Rose
Juliane Heyman

with a chapter by
Nikki R. Keddie

Human Relations Area Files
South Asia Project
University of California
Berkeley, California

PREFACE

Through the Bureau of International Relations and the Institute of East Asiatic Studies, the University of California, Berkeley, entered into a contract with the Human Relations Area Files, Inc., for the preparation of research materials on India, Pakistan and Nepal.

The analytic and descriptive material contained in these pages carries through the winter of 1955-1956. While much background and current material is available in some areas and fields of interest, the attempt to present a description which will do justice to diverse peoples is difficult, even with Nepalese consultants on the staff. It is felt that the developments presented are significant and can aid in future interpretation of the changes in these countries.

The University of California Faculty Committee in charge are Thomas C. Blaisdell, Jr., Director; David G. Mandelbaum; Woodbridge Bingham; and Richard L. Park.

Of the project staff, John H. Cover, Director of the Bureau of Business and Economic Research at the University of Maryland, is chairman; Olive I. Reddick, Chairman of the Department of Economics and Sociology, Hood College, is associate research supervisor; Elizabeth K. Bauer, executive secretary; Juliane Heyman, library co-ordinator; and Ynez Haase, cartographer.

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This volume is a product of the co-operative efforts of four staff members: Leo Rose, Stanley Maron, Juliane Heyman and Nikki Keddie.

Stanley Maron is the principal author of A Survey of Pakistan Society. He is a leading student of social and cultural change in South Asia, where he lived and taught for several years.

Leo Rose is the author of a companion volume entitled, Nepal Government and Politics. He has been engaged in research concerning Nepal for several years, and recently was awarded a grant by the Ford Foundation to pursue his studies further in England, India and Nepal.

The special interest of Juliane Heyman is International Relations. She has traveled through many countries of Asia.

Nikki Keddie is a social historian with particular interests in labor and agrarian problems. She has written on Nepalese labor for The Economy of Nepal volume, and has made another survey of labor conditions in Pakistan for the volumes entitled A Survey of Pakistan Society and The Economy of Pakistan.

Appreciation is extended to Trailokya Nath Upraity, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Education, Government of Nepal; Professor Hugh B. Wood, Educational Adviser to the Government of Nepal; and Bhuwan Lal Joshi,

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Nepalese educator, for assistance in the
accumulation of source materials.

John H. Cover
Chairman

CONTENTS

| | Page |
|-----------------------------|------|
| Preface. | iii |
| Production Staff | v |
| Acknowledgments | vii |
| Table of Contents | ix |
| List of Tables | xii |

A SURVEY OF NEPAL SOCIETY
Annex "A"-1-Sociological Background

| Chapter and Code | | Page |
|----------------------------|---|------|
| Part A. Social Environment | | |
| I-a | General Character of the Society (Leo E. Rose) | 1 |
| II-b | Historical Setting (Stanley Maron) | 4 |
| III-c | Geographical Setting (Juliane Heyman) | 32 |
| IV-c | Size and Geographical Distri- bution of Population (Juliane Heyman) | 50 |

| | Page |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Part B. Social Divisions | |
| V-d | Ethnic Groups (Leo E. Rose) . . . 59 |
| VI-k | Religions (Stanley Maron). . . 83 |
| Part C. Social Groups | |
| VII-f | Social Structure (Leo E. Rose) 103 |
| VIII-g | Family (Stanley Maron). . . . 149 |
| Part D. Ideas and Communication | |
| IX-j | Education (Juliane Heyman). . 159 |
| X-i | Artistic and Intellectual Expression (Leo E. Rose) 178 |
| XI-l | Public Information (Juliane Heyman) 201 |
| XII-e | Languages in Nepal (Leo E. Rose). 207 |
| Part E. Labor | |
| XIII-m | Labor Force (Nikki R. Keddie) 225 |

| | Page |
|--|------|
| Part F. Health and Welfare | |
| XIV-p Health and Sanitation (Juliane Heyman). | 227 |
| XV-q Public Welfare (Juliane Heyman). | 241 |
| Part G. Values and Attitudes | |
| XVI-h, r Social Values and Patterns of Living (Leo E. Rose) | 247 |
| Glossary of Terms Used | 291 |
| Bibliography of Works Cited | 301 |

LIST OF TABLES

| Table No. | | Page |
|-----------|---|------|
| 1 | Population Density of Selected Countries. | 51 |
| 2 | Area, Population and Density by Regions | 53 |
| 3 | Population Distribution by Sex | 56 |
| 4 | Children of School Age and Students in Nepal | 169 |

MAP

| | |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| Ethnic Groups | in pocket at back |
|-------------------------|----------------------|

PART A
SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Annex "A, " Subparagraph 1a

CHAPTER I

GENERAL CHARACTER OF
THE SOCIETY

A wide variety of factors has helped determine the general character of society in Nepal. Probably the single most important factor has been Nepal's geographical position in the heart of the sub-Himalayan hill area. Situated between India on the south and Tibet, at times controlled by China, on the north, Nepal has served as one of the primary meeting grounds for the Hindu culture of India and the various Chinese-influenced cultures of the Central Asian regions. Furthermore, Nepal served historically as one of the most widely used areas of transit between the Indian subcontinent and Central Asia and China--not only in commodities of trade but also in ideas and art forms. Consequently, Nepal was for many centuries subject to subtle but intensive influence from the vital and powerful neighbors to its north and south. At the same time, the strategic geographical position made necessary a policy of balancing the two influences in order to remain independent of both.

Nepalese society is not, however, merely a replica of Indian, Tibetan or Chinese society, nor is it even just a synthesis of these various cultures. Indigenous influences can be found at work frequently and

these tend to give to Nepalese society and culture a distinctive character. Moreover, the "isolation" policy followed by the Government of Nepal in the last century and a half was effective in limiting outside influence. It would seem probable, for instance, that Hinduism in Nepal today is much more similar to the operation of that institution in India in 1800 than in 1955. However, the 1950-1951 rebellion in Nepal abruptly ended Nepal's isolation from its neighbors and there are numerous indications that the social and cultural concepts prevalent in modern-day India and China are beginning to be reflected in developments in Nepal.

From the economic viewpoint, Nepalese society is backward and undeveloped even when compared only with its other Asian neighbors. The economy is primarily agricultural in form, with an estimated 90 per cent of the populace directly dependent upon agriculture for its livelihood.¹ Industry is almost nonexistent with the exception of a few small factories operating in the Terai area close to the Indian border. Even handicraft or cottage industries are basically family organizations and do not provide occupation for a significant number of the Nepalese people. The small merchant class, the Newari

¹George V. Bowers, Agricultural Development in Nepal (Washington: Foreign Operations Administration, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Cooperating, 1953), p. 14.

artisans, the educated class--mainly government servants or members of the nobility--are the only substantial element of the Nepalese population not engaged in agricultural pursuits.

A number of institutions provide the social bases in Nepal. The extended joint family system is one of the most important institutions helping to mold the social behavior of the Nepalese. Of almost equal importance are the caste and tribal systems in which most Nepalese are members from their birth. A Nepalese seldom functions as an individual. Rather, almost all of his social actions are undertaken as a member of a family, a caste or a tribe. Individualism, as a social concept, is contrary to the dominant themes in traditional Nepalese culture.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL SETTING

The origins of Nepalese history are lost in legends. Archaeological data which might shed light on the early years are practically nonexistent because the Nepalese Government has not encouraged such research within its borders. However, there seem to be a number of sites which might yield valuable finds, once proper excavation takes place. The only area which has been studied at all by Europeans is the Terai.¹

It appears that the Kathmandu Valley was at one time a lake. According to legend, a deity struck the surrounding hills with his sword and opened a passage for the water. For the Hindus, the god is Vishnu, and for the Buddhists it is Manjusri.² Once the Valley was drained, settlers from the nearby hills poured down to cultivate the fertile soil. For a long time, Nepal was equated with the Kathmandu Valley. The towns which grew there became important trading centers, while the hill people

¹Perceval Landon, Nepal, II (London: Constable and Company, Ltd., 1928), p. 1.

²W. Brook Northey and C. J. Morris, The Gurkhas: Their Manners, Customs and Country (London: John Lane the Bodley Head, Ltd., 1928), p. 32.

to the east and west remained virtually inaccessible and unknown.

With the settlement of the Valley, the mythical age of Nepal began. There are many legends which describe the early dynasties and the adventures of heroes. Chinese, Indian, and eastern Himalayan influences are detectable in these tales, and often the three are mixed.³ The only materials of consequence the historian now has at his disposal are the chronologies naming the genealogies of the various rulers, along with references in Tibetan and Chinese sources. It was only with the arrival of the British and other Europeans that more detailed accounts were recorded.⁴

According to one legend, the name Nepal derives from Ne Muni, the patron saint of the country, who set up a dynasty of shepherd kings many centuries ago. Since "pala" means cherished or looked after, Nepal might mean the country looked after by Ne.⁵ A number of alternative derivations are given by Levi.⁶

The Gopalas, or shepherd kings, and their successors, the Abhiras, were the forerunners of the present shepherd peoples who occupy the northern hills, particularly the

³Sylvain Levi, Le Nepal, I (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1905), p. 8.

⁴Ibid., Chapter II.

⁵Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas: Their Manners, Customs and Country, p. 34.

⁶Levi, Le Nepal, II, pp. 66-67.

Gurungs and the Bhotias. They came originally from the plains of Tibet.⁷

The earliest occupants of the Valley were the Kiratas. They were displaced by the Newars around the sixth century B. C.⁸ Levi refers to the theory that the Newars originally derived from the Nairs of south India, but he contends that their proper origin must be placed north of the Himalayas.⁹ On the other hand, Regmi contends that, "Tibet cannot be set up as the homeland of the Newars."¹⁰ He asserts, "The Newars form the oldest living group, not only in Nepal but in the whole of India. Their civilization goes back to a period older than Mohenjodaro."¹¹ He argues that the correct origin of the Newars must be found in the peoples of northeastern India, the same stock as has produced the Manipuris, Rajbansis, and Assamese tribes. Probably it is the same pre-Aryan stock as has produced the Kols and Bhils.¹²

The description of the Newars in early times which Levi gives is quite idyllic. He

⁷Ibid., I, pp. 8-9.

⁸Dilli Rama Regmi, Ancient and Medieval Nepal (Kathmandu, 1952), p. 1.

⁹Levi, Le Nepal, I, p. 220.

¹⁰Regmi, Ancient and Medieval Nepal, p. 13.

¹¹Ibid., p. 11.

¹²Ibid., p. 13.

pictures them as divided into tribes, clans and subclans, without any notion of caste. There was absolute and complete equality by birth. Although exogamy was observed, the wife belonged to the whole tribe. No restrictions were placed on foods which could be consumed, except for the tribal totem. The dead were sometimes burned, but more often buried. Such was the state of the Newars when the Buddhist missionaries entered the Valley and began to convert them.¹³

The Buddhists met with initial success, apparently because they disturbed the social organization of the Newars to a minimum extent. There are good reasons to believe that the famous Buddhist Emperor Asoka visited the Valley in person, and there are six stupas in the vicinity of Kathmandu which are attributed to him.

Some centuries after the introduction of Buddhism, Brahmanism became a major religious and social force in the Valley. How Brahmanism entered the Valley is unknown, but popular accounts credit Shankaracharya, the Hindu reformist of the eighth century. According to legend, Shankaracharya arrived in the Valley from India, and found a confusion or intermixture of castes. He conquered the Buddhist monks, punished the vanquished, and substituted the worship of Shiva for that of Buddha. The Shaiva cult took root and developed

¹³Levi, Le Nepal, I, p. 224.

along with many of the Buddhist forms which remained. The major change in the social organization of the Newars was the establishment of the caste system. According to Levi, the major consequence was the growth of castes within a Buddhist society.¹⁴

Apparently the conqueror of the Valley, who in all probability was not the south Indian Shankaracharya, proved the forerunner of other invaders and refugees. Real or pretended members of the royal families of India attempted to establish footholds in the Valley, largely by virtue of their Rajput origin and status as ksatriyas or warriors. One such dynasty, which succeeded in gaining control of the Valley, was the Mallas. According to Levi, they intermarried with the local people and adopted many of the indigenous customs so that they became "local warriors, worshippers at the same time of Buddhist and Brahmanical gods, who served naturally as a link between the two sects."¹⁵

By the seventh century, Nepal had attained a high level of prosperity and political organization. According to Northey, "Nepal could be compared with the best administered states of India at that time."¹⁶ During the same century, Tibet rose to sudden prominence as a major power in Asia. With an army

¹⁴Ibid., p. 226.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 227.

¹⁶Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas: Their Manners, Customs and Country, p. 36.

estimated at 100,000 men, Tibet placed itself as a third force between China and India, and reduced Nepal to the status of a vassal state. A daughter of the king of Nepal was married to the Tibetan ruler, as also was a Chinese princess. These two are credited with introducing Buddhism into Tibet.¹⁷

In addition to Buddhism, Nepal was also responsible for introducing new forms of art and architecture, literature, crafts and industries into Tibet. Sanskrit literature, in particular, became extremely important because of the Buddhist texts. Many scholars from Tibet traveled to Bengal, which was then a thriving center of Buddhism, in order to copy and translate the manuscripts.¹⁸ It appears to have been another instance of the conquered civilizing the conqueror.

Tibetan power waned during the succeeding centuries, and by the eleventh century the paramountcy of Indian influence was again asserted. Many Brahmans fled to Nepal before the Muslim invaders, and there they reinforced the local Brahmans. A conscious attempt was made to preserve the Hindu tradition from extinction and Nepal soon became an important center of Hinduism. Orthodoxy appears, however, to have been restricted largely to the ruling classes and not to have substantially affected the masses.

¹⁷Landon, Nepal, I, p. 28.

¹⁸For further details, see Chapter VI.

Some of the Brahman refugees fled to the western hills where they came in contact with a mountain tribe known as the Khas. The Khas absorbed as much as they could of Brahmanical learning, and even their language was affected, for it is today more like a corrupt dialect of Hindi. The offspring of the Brahmans and the hill women have come to be known as Chetris, apparently a corruption of ksatriyas, and it is from this tribe that the later ruling family of Nepal arose.¹⁹

In the fourteenth century, King Harisinha of Tirhut was driven out of his lands by the Mughal invaders. He fled to Nepal where he established a mountain kingdom. Many learned Brahmans accompanied him, and great efforts were made to codify the literature and reinforce the Brahmanical tradition. It was left to one of the Malla kings, of the dynasty that had ruled the Valley for many centuries, to translate Brahmanical principles into practice. He divided all his subjects into Hindus or Buddhist, depending on whether they were followers of Shiva or Buddha. The Hindus were subjected to the strict rules of caste, while the Buddhists were divided into occupational groups.²⁰

In the fifteenth century, a Malla ruler succeeded in establishing his power over the whole of the Valley and surrounding territories. However, he made the fatal mistake at the time

¹⁹Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas: Their Manners, Customs and Country, p. 39.

²⁰Levi, Le Nepal, I, p. 16.

of his death of dividing his kingdom among his three sons. Thereafter followed a continual sequence of wars between the three kingdoms of the Valley, identified by the three major cities: Kathmandu, Patan and Bhatgaon.

Around the sixteenth century, the king of Gurkha, a town about 65 miles west of Kathmandu, was overpowered and killed by members of the Hinduized clans of his tribe. These latter were the Chetris, or descendants of refugee Brahmans and hill women. The new king, son of a petty nearby ruler, claimed descent from the Rajputs of Chitoor who had been driven out by the Mughals. He established the Gurkha dynasty which came to rule over the whole of Nepal. The Gurkhas have insisted on their Indian Rajput ancestry, and have been staunch Hindus. They are called Gurkhas after the name of their former capital, but the original derivation of the name appears to be Gorakhnath, the patron deity of the yogis who frequented the Himalayas.²¹

Gurkha Invasion

During the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the Gurkhas steadily expanded their kingdom until it reached in the west to the Kumaon hills, and in the east to the Kathmandu Valley. From about 1736, the Gurkhas began their attempts to enter the Valley. The first attempts met with disaster.

²¹Ibid., p. 254.

However, by the end of another quarter century, dissension among the three kingdoms of the Valley broke their united strength and facilitated the entry of the Gurkhas. Final victory was achieved in 1769, with the capture of Jaya Prakash, the mad ruler of Bhatgaon. Prithwi Narayan, the conqueror, moved his capital to Kathmandu and founded the royal line which still rules Nepal.²²

Prithwi Narayan's successors, Singha Pratap Sah and Rana Bahadur Sah, his son and grandson respectively, as well as Bahadur Sah who acted as regent during the latter's infancy, continued a vigorous policy of Gurkha expansion. They became masters of the whole of Nepal, invaded Kumaon and Sikkim in turn, and then invaded Tibet in quest of loot.²³ However, at this point they incurred the wrath of the Chinese Government at Peking, for the Chinese Emperor was terrestrial protector and spiritual disciple of the Grand Lama. The Emperor dispatched an army estimated at seventy thousand men to punish the Gurkhas.

Although the Chinese advance was both costly and exhausting, the Chinese army marched to within twenty miles of Kathmandu in 1792, much to the consternation of the Gurkhas, who fought valiantly but unsuccessfully.

²²Landon, Nepal, I, p. 66; II, p. 275.

²³Schuyler Cammann, Trade Through the Himalayas: The Early British Attempts to Open Tibet (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), p. 113.

The Gurkhas capitulated and a treaty of peace was signed. On their side, the Chinese were anxious to quit the country before the winter blocked the passes to their rear. Nepal was forced to cede some territory and once again affirmed its subservience to China by agreeing to send tribute every fifth year to Peking.²⁴

British Influence

The first official British contact with Nepal came in 1765, at the time of the Gurkha invasion of the Kathmandu Valley. The Newar rulers appealed to the British for help and an expedition under the command of Captain Kinloch made an unsuccessful attempt to penetrate the country. The British were stopped in the Terai by a combination of the Gurkhas and severe malaria and forced to retreat.

In 1791, the Gurkha conquerors of Nepal had become thoroughly entrenched in power and finally consented to enter into a commercial treaty with the British. During the same year, there were hostilities between Nepal and China, and the Gurkhas appealed to Lord Cornwallis for assistance. The British were undoubtedly anxious to avail themselves of the opportunity to further their interests in Nepal by rendering service to the rulers, but the British also

²⁴Levi, Le Nepal, I, p. 180; Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas: Their Manners, Customs and Country, p. 52. See also Landon, Nepal, II, Appendix XXI.

had extensive interests in China which could not be lightly jeopardized. Lord Cornwallis chose the middle path and sent a mission under Colonel Kirkpatrick to arbitrate the dispute. By the time Kirkpatrick arrived, in 1792, the Nepalese had already submitted to the Chinese and the services of the British were not desired. The net result was that Cornwallis succeeded in antagonizing both sides.²⁵

Relations between the British and the Nepalese deteriorated steadily. Occasional border incidents hastened the process. In 1814, the British claimed that the border incidents had assumed the proportion of an invasion or at least an encroachment on British protected territory, and war was declared.

Although British fortunes varied at first, a successful offensive was mounted by General Ochterlony and the Nepalese were forced to sue for peace. A treaty of peace was signed in 1816 by which some Nepalese territory was made over to the British. Permission to have a British Resident in Kathmandu was made an essential condition and the post was filled in the same year. In addition, Nepal ceded Kumaon, Garhwal and part of the Terai.²⁶

²⁵ Cammann, Trade Through the Himalayas, p. 134.

²⁶ Daniel Wright, History of Nepal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1877), p. 53.

Internal Developments

At the time of the war with the British, the king of Nepal was still a youth and effective power was vested in the Prime Minister, General Bhimsen Thapa. A smallpox epidemic broke out shortly after the arrival of the British Resident, and the young king was among the victims. He was succeeded by the three year old prince, Raj Indra Bikram Sah Bahadur Shamsheer Jung.

Power remained with Bhimsen, but the king became increasingly restive as he grew older. Spurred on by an ambitious wife, he made an unsuccessful attempt to rid himself of Bhimsen in 1833. Another attempt was made in 1836, and finally in 1837 Bhimsen was removed from office, placed under confinement, and subsequently he died, either by his own hand or by poison. His corpse was dragged through the streets of Kathmandu and flung on a rubbish heap.

The enemies of Bhimsen, known as the Kala Panre faction, assumed control of the government and retained it until 1843. In that year, a nephew of Bhimsen by the name of Matabar Singh returned from exile in India. He obtained favor with the court and army, and promptly had members of the Kala Panre faction executed.²⁷

²⁷Ibid., pp. 54-55; Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas: Their Manners, Customs and Country, p. 64.

Meanwhile, a young man destined to have a profound influence on Nepal had begun a brilliant military career. Jang Bahadur, son of a Nepalese official and nephew of Matabar Singh, had entered military service at an early age and by 1845 had become a colonel with considerable influence. In concert with one of the king's wives, he organized a coup which was successful in the overthrow of Matabar Singh.²⁸

It is not known clearly what events transpired during the next decade, except for a bloody massacre in the capital which involved the deaths of many of the leading nobles.²⁹

Jang Bahadur, strongly supported by his brothers, emerged as the dominant power in the land, and became Prime Minister. The king at one point fled to Banaras, led several unsuccessful invasions of the Terai, and was finally captured and imprisoned in Kathmandu. The deposed king and his successor were kept under close surveillance and were allowed very little contact with persons other than members of their immediate family or servants. In effect, Jang Bahadur became the undisputed ruler of Nepal.³⁰

²⁸Landon, Nepal, I, pp. 105, 116.

²⁹Wright, History of Nepal, p. 58; Landon, Nepal, I, p. 124.

³⁰Wright, History of Nepal, pp. 58-59; Landon, Nepal, I, p. 132; Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas: Their Manners, Customs and Country, p. 71.

Russia followed a policy of steady expansion in Central Asia during the middle of the nineteenth century. British concern over the spread of Russian influence toward India may have been a factor in the Crimean War which started in 1854. At the same time, Chinese forces had been withdrawn from Tibet to assist in suppressing the Taiping Rebellion. Probably because of the preoccupation elsewhere of the major powers interested in Tibet, Nepal seized the opportunity to invade the areas adjacent to the Nepalese border. Tibet capitulated and Nepal agreed to evacuate the occupied territory in exchange for an annual payment of ten thousand rupees or one thousand pounds sterling. Import duties on goods from Nepal to Tibet were remitted and a Gurkha official was allowed to reside in Lhasa to protect the interests of Nepalese traders. In this, the Nepalese may have been taking a leaf from the British book.³¹

The assumption of power by Jang Bahadur brought an important change in the relations with the British. The Government of Nepal became a strong friend and ally of Britain, and remained so until the end of British rule in South Asia. During the British war against

³¹Wright, History of Nepal, pp. 61-62; Landon, Nepal, I, pp. 144-46; Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas: Their Manners, Customs and Country, pp. 74-75. See also Landon, Nepal, II, Appendix XXII for details of the treaty.

the Sikhs in 1848, Jang Bahadur offered eight regiments of Nepalese troops, but the British declined the offer. Two years later, Jang Bahadur made a sensational visit to Britain, which turned out to be a great personal success. The impressions of British strength which he gained during his travels apparently convinced him that British power was unbeatable. When the Mutiny broke out in 1857, Jang Bahadur immediately offered full assistance, and even led the estimated 8,000 Nepalese troops himself.³²

The motives for this attachment to the British are not clearly known. Part of the Nepalese policy would seem to have been based on the firm belief that the British would smash the Mutiny and that it would be best to remain on good terms. However, the same objective might have been served by playing the game of Cornwallis, with an offer to arbitrate. It is more likely that Nepal hoped to regain some of the territory lost to the British in the ill-fated war which ended in 1816. Since Nepal could not hope to win back the territory through armed conflict with Britain, the alternate course of seeking recompense for services rendered may have suggested itself.

Jang Bahadur was succeeded as Prime Minister by his brother, Rana Udip Singh, a

³²Wright, History of Nepal, p. 64; Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas: Their Manners, Customs and Country, p. 76.

pious and scholarly man. The latter proved much less competent to deal with the intrigues and factions of the ruling class. In less than eight years, he was assassinated in his palace by his own nephews. While most writers attribute the assassination to a struggle for power within the ruling family,³³ a more important factor may have been the expansion of Russian power which took place in 1884-1885, and the desire for a stronger government to meet the threat. By 1884 Russian troops were at the borders of Afghanistan, and the following year there were border clashes. Britain took serious note of the events and for a time it seemed there might be hostilities. It is possible that Bir Shamsheer, the new Prime Minister of Nepal, in collaboration with the British, wanted to be prepared for such an eventuality. However, the previous prime minister had made an official offer of assistance to the British in the event of a continued Russian advance through Afghanistan.³⁴

Bir Shamsheer died in 1901 and was succeeded by a brother, Deva Shamsheer. Although of genial disposition and inclined toward reforms, Deva Shamsheer proved incapable of retaining a position of authority among the Ranas and within four months he was forced by his remaining brothers to abdicate.³⁵

³³Landon, Nepal, II, p. 71.

³⁴Ibid., p. 64.

³⁵Dilli Rama Regmi, A Century of Family Autocracy in Nepal (Nepali National Congress, 1950), p. 167.

He was succeeded by another brother, Chandra Shamsher, a man of considerable strength and competence, but of much more conservative outlook. Chandra withdrew some of the reforms instituted by Deva, notably the system of primary schools and the abolition of slavery.

Chandra maintained close friendly ties with the British, and a careful eye on Russian expansion in Asia. He attended Lord Curzon's Durbar in Calcutta in 1903. The following year he gave material assistance to the Young-husband expedition which took advantage of the Russo-Japanese war to gain unchallenged entrance of British influence into Lhasa. The treaty which Britain signed with the Tibetan Lama provided that Tibet would not cede or lease territory to any foreign power nor would any foreign intervention be allowed. Thereby, possible Russian advance into Tibet was effectively blocked. Undoubtedly, this must have been an end with which the Nepalese were in full sympathy.

When the first world war began in 1914, Chandra repeated the gesture of Jang Bahadur and offered generous assistance to the British in both men and materials.³⁶

The reward for services rendered was received in 1923, the year in which Britain formally recognized the independence of Nepal. In

³⁶Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas: Their Manners, Customs and Country, pp. 83-85.

addition, arrangements were made for an annual remittance to Nepal.³⁷

During the last years of Chandra's reign, he finally introduced some badly needed reforms, including those which he had previously rescinded. Slavery was abolished in 1926, as well as the practice of forced labor. Other changes were introduced with regard to taxes and trade, but the sum total had little effect on the overwhelming problems of the country.³⁸

Chandra Shamsheer died in 1929, and was succeeded by his brother Bhim Shamsheer. The career of the latter as Prime Minister was relatively brief. It was characterized by an attempt to enrich himself quickly at the expense of the public treasury and to install his illegitimate sons in more favored positions. To accomplish this, he got the other members of the Rana family to swear an oath on the sacred Bagmati River that the illegitimate sons would be inscribed on the list of accession. The sons of Chandra were bitterly incensed by this maneuver, which placed them further from power. Bhim seems to have been aware that the resentment might lead to a plot against him and it is believed that he was planning to counter it with a bold move against Chandra's sons. Whatever plan he may have had was prevented by

³⁷Regmi, A Century of Family Autocracy in Nepal, p. 188.

³⁸Ibid., p. 183. The edict was promulgated in 1924, effective in 1926.

his death in 1932 under mysterious circumstances.³⁹

Bhim was succeeded as Prime Minister by the next brother, Judha Shamsheer, who was already quite advanced in age. In 1934, the sons of Chandra had sufficient strength in the family council, and apparently the support of Judha, to push through a change in the list of accession so that illegitimate sons would be excluded. Ten Ranas were purged by this move, mostly the sons of Bir and Bhim, and the way was cleared for the sons of Chandra. Those purged either were assigned posts outside the Kathmandu Valley or went to India. Great bitterness arose from the episode because those responsible had gone back on a sacred oath, a matter of great consequence to nobles claiming Rajput blood. In many respects the purge proved the single most important factor in the final undoing of the Ranas, for the ousted men took a leading part in the agitation for a change in government which finally resulted in the events of 1951.

During the same year as the purge, an agreement was reached with the British whereby a Nepalese legation was opened in London. Close ties between the two countries were maintained. When the second world war began in 1939, the Government of Nepal promptly

³⁹Ibid., p. 209; Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas: Their Manners, Customs and Country, p. 86.

declared its support for Britain and mounted a recruitment campaign which eventually brought an estimated four hundred thousand men into the ranks of the Indian army. Many of the Nepalese were used in labor battalions, but some were sent abroad for combat duty.⁴⁰

One result of this widespread recruitment, and the experience gained by Nepalese soldiers in other countries, was to introduce new ideas and aspirations into Nepal, which in turn contributed to the general dissatisfaction of the populace and encouraged the growth of popular movements. The purged Ranas did not hesitate to give financial and other assistance to the dissident groups.

The Praja Parishad, or People's Party, was formed in 1938. In collaboration with the Indian publication Janata, a series of articles was published disclosing the extent of exploitation prevalent in Nepal. Support for the movement was obtained from the Congress Socialist Party of Bihar, India.⁴¹ Within the country, many young men looked to the Praja Parishad as a rallying place for all having liberal views. Of great importance, the previously docile king began to take an active interest in political affairs. Partly because of his inherent dislike of the Ranas, the king was induced to contribute financially to the Praja

⁴⁰Regmi, A Century of Family Autocracy in Nepal, p. 209.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 241.

Parishad.⁴² In general, the Praja Parishad called for the rule of law in Nepal, and urged peaceful transition to a constitutional monarchy.

In 1940, the Ranas seized a list of members of the Praja Parishad and widespread arrests took place. The suppression was thorough and the Praja Parishad ceased to function. Popular unrest, accentuated by the additional hardships imposed by the war, continued, but there were no organized dissident groups.

By 1945, Judha Shamsheer had come to feel the burden of rule heavily. His own advanced age, combined with the uneasy position within the country and the pressure from other Ranas for more forceful government, were factors which led him to resign from the post of Prime Minister. He was succeeded by Padma Shamsheer, the only legitimate son of Bhim.⁴³ Since his illegitimate brothers had been excluded from the Rana family council, Padma found himself isolated and hence in a weak position as Prime Minister.

The end of the war brought a series of rapid changes in India as the political leaders there mounted their campaign for independence. Developments in India had their repercussions in Nepal, as well as among the Nepalese leaders voluntarily or compulsorily exiled in India. Of

⁴²Ibid., p. 244.

⁴³Ibid., p. 260.

great significance, Padma Shamsher proved to be a man of liberal views with a determination to introduce constitutional reforms. It seemed that an era of democratic government was about to begin.

However, a strong faction within the Rana family, headed by Mohan Shamsher, the eldest son of Chandra, strongly opposed the policies of the Prime Minister and the general drift of the country. By the end of 1947, Mohan had succeeded in getting most of the effective power into his own hands, and early the next year he was able to force Padma to resign.⁴⁴

Mohan Shamsher became the next Prime Minister. He took a decided stand against major reforms, although he declared himself in favor of some moderate changes. With the change in administration, and the known conservative views of the new Prime Minister, political agitation became more intense. A number of political parties sprang up, mostly among Nepalese in India. The most important was the Nepali National Congress,⁴⁵ originally founded in Calcutta in 1946. A leading figure in this organization, in terms of both policy and financial assistance, was Subarna Shamsher, a brother of the deposed Padma. Internal dissension led to several splits in the Nepali

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 291.

⁴⁵"Nepal: Chronology," Indian Press Digests, I, No. 4 (Berkeley: Institute of East Asiatic Studies of the University of California, 1952), p. 100.

Congress and a general fragmentation of the efforts for political change.

Important leaders of the newly independent India supported and encouraged the opposition groups. This did not deter Mohan from demonstrating Nepal's traditional friendship with its larger neighbor through the offer of troops to assist in the Hyderabad incident.⁴⁶

The relations between Nepal, Tibet and China have been somewhat unclear. China had gone to war with Nepal in 1792 in protection of Tibet, and the treaty of that year stipulated that tribute would be sent periodically from Kathmandu to Peking. Tribute missions, which were more often trade missions, did go at irregular intervals until 1912. Moreover, Nepal's rulers have long claimed that the relationship has never been one of suzerainty. On the other hand, Chinese maps are reported to have included Nepal as Chinese territory.⁴⁷ At the same time, since the Tibeto-Nepalese war of 1854-1856, Lhasa had sent tribute missions to Kathmandu. The

⁴⁶Regmi, A Century of Family Autocracy in Nepal, p. 298.

⁴⁷Margaret W. Fisher and Joan Bondurant, "Indian Views of Sino-Indian Relations," Indian Press Digests (Monograph Series, No. 1; Institute of International Studies, University of California at Berkeley, February, 1956), p. 146.

tribute mission arrived in Kathmandu as late as 1953, or several years after the Chinese occupation of Tibet, but has not appeared since.⁴⁸

With the first indication of the proposed Chinese occupation of Tibet, and even before Mao had returned from his talks in Moscow, the Nepalese prime minister went to New Delhi to enter into new treaties with India which guaranteed the sovereignty of Nepal. Two documents were signed, one a treaty of friendship and mutual security, the other a trade agreement.⁴⁹ Even before the treaties were signed, Nehru declared before the Indian Parliament that Nepal was geographically part of India. He made it clear that, "it is not possible for any Indian Government to tolerate any invasion of Nepal from elsewhere."⁵⁰

At the same time that the treaties were being negotiated in New Delhi, the Indian Government urged the Nepalese prime minister to institute badly needed reforms, and particularly some form of representative government. A compromise was worked out providing for a parliament of two houses. After a series of difficulties, the parliament finally met in Kathmandu on September 22, 1950. However,

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 145.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 146.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 147.

it did not have an opportunity to function long enough to produce any results.⁵¹

The Chinese Government announced its occupation of Tibet late in October, 1950. Within a fortnight there were sensational developments in Nepal. King Tribhuvan suddenly fled from his palace and took refuge in the Indian embassy in Kathmandu, apparently with the prior knowledge and consent of the Indian Ambassador. The Prime Minister countered by proclaiming Tribhuvan's three-year old grandson the new king. However, Tribhuvan refused to abdicate. He was offered asylum by India and was flown out of the country in an Indian plane.⁵²

Once the king, who was known to be anti-Rana in sentiment, was out of the country an armed uprising broke out in Nepal. The insurgents declared their goal to be the overthrow of the Ranas in the name of the king.⁵³

The Nepali Congress was the major group involved in the insurrection. The insurgents made some progress, while negotiations were pursued in New Delhi for a settlement. Then early in January, 1951, government troops went over to the rebel side for the first time. This disaffection of the troops added to the

⁵¹"Nepal: Chronology," Indian Press Digests, I, No. 4, p. 102.

⁵²Ibid., p. 103.

⁵³Fisher and Bondurant, "Indian Views of Sino-Indian Relations," p. 147.

pressures on Prime Minister Mohan Shamsher, and he was forced to capitulate.⁵⁴

King Tribhuvan returned to Kathmandu in mid-February and was given a tumultuous welcome. A coalition cabinet was formed, which included five Nepali Congress leaders, but which was still headed by Mohan Shamsher. However, it signaled the end of exclusive Rana rule in Nepal. A general amnesty was granted to all political prisoners and the insurgents were asked to lay down their arms. Many rebels refused to accept the compromise and continued their civil war, which was suppressed only when Indian troops came to the aid of the new Government.⁵⁵

The interim government lasted only a few months. By November, 1951, the Nepali Congress leaders were in a position to demand a "homogeneous" cabinet, and they resigned. Two days later, Mohan Shamsher and the other Rana ministers also resigned. The king called upon the President of the Nepali Congress, M. P. Koirala, to form the new Government. The new Cabinet consisted of eight Nepali Congress members and four Independents.⁵⁶ So ended, officially, the Rana rule of Nepal. However, Ranas have maintained positions of power

⁵⁴"Nepal: Chronology," Indian Press Digests, I, No. 4, p. 105.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 107.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 110.

and influence through participation in the new political groups. For example, Subarna Shamsheer, brother of ex-Prime Minister Padma Shamsheer, became Finance Minister in the Koirala Cabinet.⁵⁷

One of the most important of the insurgents who refused to lay down arms was Dr. K. I. Singh. He continued fighting until Indian troops aided in his capture. He subsequently escaped from jail, and eventually made his way to Tibet. During his absence from Nepal, he became a national hero. For some time it was feared that he would attempt to set up a revolutionary government with the help of the Chinese Communist government. After much public pressure, he was finally allowed to return to Nepal, and was pardoned by the king. He has since concentrated on establishing mass contacts, and appears to have taken the Gandhian approach as his model. Much to the surprise of observers, the Communist Party of Nepal has refused to extend co-operation to him.⁵⁸

There have been a succession of cabinets in Nepal, alternated with advisory councils to the king, and direct rule by the king. Strong personal differences between political leaders in the country seem to prevent collaboration, as the plethora of political parties indicates. The last of a series of cabinet crises occurred

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 19.

⁵⁸Fisher and Bondurant, "Indian Views of Sino-Indian Relations," pp. 148-63.

in March, 1955, at which time Crown Prince Mahendra assumed "direct rule" in the absence of his father, who was under medical treatment in Switzerland. King Tribhuvan died later the same month, and Mahendra ascended the throne.

Political leaders pressed for a return to Cabinet government, but negotiations dragged on unsuccessfully for many months. Finally, on January 27, 1956, direct rule by the King ended when Nepal's fifth ministry in five years was sworn in. Tank Prasad, president of the revived Praja Parishad, was appointed Prime Minister. General elections are being prepared for the National Assembly, which should bring a major turning point in the development of representative government in Nepal. Meanwhile, agencies of the Indian and United States Governments and the United Nations are co-operating with the Nepalese Government in various development projects.

Annex "A," Subparagraph 1c

CHAPTER III

GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING

Geographical Location, Boundaries
and Area

The kingdom of Nepal lies along the southern slope of the Himalayan Mountains, north of India, with the Tibetan highland on the north, and the broad Ganges plain of India on the south.

Nepal is located between longitude 80° east and 88° east and between latitude 26° north and 30° north, which is similar to the latitude of Florida. The long axis of the country is approximately north 70° west.¹ Kathmandu, the capital, is located at $85^{\circ}20'$ longitude and $27^{\circ}45'$ latitude. This is about the same latitude as Tampa, Florida.

Nepal is a completely land-locked country, bordered by India on the south and west, by Sikkim on the east, and Tibet on the north. Nepal is separated from Tibet by a continuous range of some of the highest mountains in the world, the peaks varying from 16,000 feet to 29,000 feet. On the east, the boundary for Sikkim is comprised principally of the Kanchenjunga massif and the Singhelela range.

¹Robert S. Sanford, The Mineral Deposits of Nepal: Interim Report (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Mines, March, 1953), p. 2.

On the south, Nepal is bordered by the Indian states of West Bengal, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh; and on the west by the Kumaon region of India, from which it is separated by the Kali River. This river largely defines the western frontier. Thus, Nepal has natural borders of mountains and rivers in the north, east, and west. The northern frontier with Tibet is not well marked, while the frontier between India and Nepal has been surveyed and boundary monuments have been placed at frequent intervals.²

The country is roughly rectangular in shape, with an area of 54,345 square miles,³ about the same area as that of the states of Iowa or Wisconsin. The country is about 500 miles long, east to west, and 100 miles wide from north to south, with a maximum breadth of about 150 miles.⁴

Topography and Hydrography

The topography of Nepal is extremely rugged, with the result that the few valleys are very important. Geographically, the country can be divided into three major regions based on topography: the Terai, the Mid-Terai, and the Mountain Region. A fourth area, the Kathmandu Valley, also called Nepal Valley or

²Ibid., p. 3.

³Y. P. Pant, "Nepal's First Census," The Economic Weekly (July 30, 1955).

⁴"Fifty Times Higher than Everest," United Nations Review, I (October, 1954), p. 18.

Capital Valley, is frequently added, largely because of its national importance.

The Terai is a narrow plain, representing roughly twenty per cent of the country.⁵ It is situated south of the Siwalik Range, along practically the whole length of the southern frontier of Nepal, from the Sarda or Kali River in the west to the Mechi River in the east. The Terai is the northern continuation of the great Ganges Plain of India. The altitude ranges from 200 to 1,000 feet above sea level. This rather level land is frequently cut by streams and rivers. The soils, although generally quite fertile, are often sandy and gravelly in spots. Recurring floods have caused severe erosion and sedimentation damage in many places.⁶ A dense forest belt, chiefly of sal trees, extends along the northern fringe of the Terai and the southern foothills. These forests, known in Nepal as bhabber or jhadi, stretch from east to west. The Terai is more accessible and better developed than the rest of Nepal and is very similar to the adjacent area in India.

⁵S. Theuvenet, Report to the Government of Nepal on Irrigation (Rome: Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, September, 1953), p. 2.

⁶George V. Bowers, Agricultural Development in Nepal (Foreign Operations Administration, United States Department of Agriculture, Cooperating, 1953), p. 7.

The Mid-Terai is a transition area characterized by swamps, jungles, cultivated patches and hills. This region lies between the Mahabharath Lekh Range and the Siwalik Range, in Nepal called the Churia Range. It has broad valleys and forms about fifteen per cent of the area of the country.⁷ The quality of the soil is essentially inferior to the Terai. It is of clay, gravel and sandstone. This territory is notorious for its malarial fever attributable to mosquitoes which breed in the extensive swamps. Sal forests cover the more rugged hills and mountain slopes.⁸

The Mountain Region in the north extends from 10,000 to 29,000 feet above sea level and covers about 65 per cent of the total area. It includes the so-called Lesser Himalayas and Inner Himalayas. The area has steep slopes and poor soils, requiring for cultivation an extensive system of terraced fields. The perpetual snowline varies from 12,000 to 16,000 feet above sea level. The timberline is at about 12,000 feet.⁹

The Kathmandu Valley, although the largest in Nepal, has an area of only about 250 square miles.¹⁰ It lies south of the mountain

⁷Theuvenet, Report on Irrigation, p. 2.

⁸C. J. Morris, The Gurkhas: Their Manners, Customs and Country (London: John Lane The Bodley Head, Ltd., 1928), p. 139.

⁹Sanford, The Mineral Deposits of Nepal, p. 4.

¹⁰Theuvenet, Report on Irrigation, p. 2; Bowers, Agricultural Development in Nepal, p. 12.

of Gosainthan between the country of the seven Gandak rivers and the seven Kosi rivers. The Valley, surrounded on all sides by mountains, is in the form of a gently undulating plain, averaging fifteen miles in length and thirteen miles in breadth.¹¹ The Valley is drained by the Baghmata River and has fertile soils in which crops flourish. The geological formation of the Valley suggests that it was once the bed of a lake except for occasional small hills which escaped submersion.¹² In the Valley, which lies at an elevation of about 4,500 feet, are Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal, and the cities of Patan and Bhatgaon.

Lying around the large central valley and separated from it by an intermediate range of hills, are smaller valleys, such as the Chitlong Valley to the southwest, the Nawakot Valley to the north, and the valley of Banepa to the east.¹³

Three large rivers, the Karnali, the Bandak and the Kosi, as well as their tributaries, drain Nepal. The country can be divided into three sections with relation to these river basins.

¹¹W. Brook Northey, The Land of the Gurkhas or Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal (Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons [1937]), p. 23.

¹²John Claude White, "Nepal: A Little Known Kingdom," The National Geographic Magazine, XXXVIII (October, 1920), pp. 245-83.

¹³Northey, The Land of the Gurkhas, p. 23.

The first, the Karnali section, extends from the western border eastward to include the Dhaulagiri mountain, 26,795 feet high; near the Kali Gandaki gorge. It consists of the Kali or Sarda, and its affluents, the Karnali and the Rapti, all of which ultimately form the Gogra, or Gogari.

The second, the basin of the Gandak section, or Sapt Gandaki area as it is known by the Nepalese, extends from Dhaulagiri eastward to include the Ganesh Himal, or the Trisuli Gandaki gorge. The chief tributaries of the Gandak are the Bari Gad, the Kali or Krishna Gandaki, the Seti Gandaki, the Marsyandi, the Buri Gandaki, or Buriganga, and the Trisuli Gandaki. All these rivers form the Narayani or Great Gandak, which enters India at the boundary between the Indian states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

The Kosi section, also known as Sapt Kosi, extends from the Trisuli Gandaki gorge, draining the Great Himalayan range from Gosainthan at 26,291 feet altitude, to Kangchenjunga at 28,160 feet. This area includes the seven principal affluents of the Kosi: the Indrawati, the Sun Kosi, the Tamba Kosi, the Likhu Kosi, the Dudh Kosi, the Arun and the Tamur.

With almost equal intermediate distances of about 180 miles,¹⁴ the three rivers continue their courses through the Nepal Terai plain to northern India, flowing into the Ganges.

¹⁴Theuvenet, Report on Irrigation, p. 2.

In each of these three sections,

The range has been pierced by the headwaters of the three rivers, so that the crest zone has been carved into great massifs which have been left standing more or less as isolated blocs, south of the Indo-Tibetan watershed.¹⁵

The Great Himalayan range enters Nepal on the northwest, immediately south of Khojarnath, and rises at once to the group of Api, which has an altitude of 23,399, and Nampa, which has an altitude of 22,162 feet. The range extends beyond Nepal and the Tamur River, tributary of the Kosi, in the remarkable massif of Kangchenjunga on the borders of Sikkim.¹⁶ In the whole great system of the Nepal Himalaya, including both crest zones but excluding the Kangchenjunga group, there are three summits over 27,000 feet, six over 26,000 feet, and fourteen over 25,000 feet.¹⁷

The most important peaks in the western section are the Api, Nampa and Dhaulagiri. In the Gandak divisions are the great mountain groups of Annapurna at 26,492 feet, Himal

¹⁵Kenneth Mason, "A Note on the Nepal Himalaya," The Himalayan Journal, VI (1934), p. 81.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷H. W. Tilman, Nepal Himalaya (Cambridge: The University Press, 1952), p. 1.

Chuli at 25,801 feet, Manaslu at 26,658 feet, and Ganesh Himal at 24,299 feet. In the east are the peaks of Gosainthan at 26,291 feet, Cho Uyo at 26,750 feet, Everest at 29,002 feet, Lhotse at 27,890 feet, and Makalu at 27,790 feet.¹⁸

From the Great Himalayan range emerge lesser ranges and Nepal is intersected by mountains and deep valleys in almost every direction.

Many of the great rivers of Nepal cut into the Great Himalayan crest-zone, and some cut through it. The following big streams cut through the main chain of the Himalayas: Karnali, Bheri, Kali, Gandaki, Marsyandi, Buri Gandaki, Trisuli, Sun Kose and the Arun.¹⁹

The remarkable behavior of many rivers cutting across from the Tibetan plateau through the much higher Himalayan range has given rise to two main theories. One of them postulates that at an early stage the Himalaya had ordinary, consequent drainage, and that in a later stage south-flowing rivers were cutting back through the range capturing rivers on the Tibetan side. The alternate theory postulates that the rivers had their present courses,

¹⁸Kenneth Mason, Abode of Snow (New York: Dutton, 1955), pp. 28-36.

¹⁹Toni Hagen, "Uber Gebirgsbildung und Talsysteme in Nepal Himalaya," Geographica Helvetica, IX (1954), p. 325.

which were the easiest routes down an irregular surface sloping towards the Gangetic plain, before the Himalayan range had risen.²⁰

Since the entire country is covered by a network of river channels, Nepal has large possibilities for hydroelectric development.

Nepal has few lakes, and most of these are in the valley of Pokhara.

The most important towns outside the Kathmandu Valley are: Baitadi, Jumla, Sallyana and Nepalganj and Mustang in the west; Pokhara, Nawakot, Palpa, Butwal, Gurkha, Amlejhganj, Bhimpedi and Rasua Garhi in the central part; and Biratnagar, Ilam, Hanumannagar, and Dhankuta in the east.

Geology

Very little is known about the geology of Nepal. Until 1950, when the first geologic study of Nepal was begun by the Swiss geologist, Toni Hagen, not even a reconnaissance geologic survey of the country had been conducted.²¹ The first geological map of Nepal is now being prepared under the United Nations Technical Administration by Toni Hagen.

It is evident that Nepal has a very complex geology - an area subjected to intense

²⁰ Ibid., p. 312.

²¹ Sanford, The Mineral Deposits of Nepal, p. 6.

mountain-building pressures, creating recumbent anticlinal folds and nappes.²²

Climate

Adequate data on Nepal's climate for all areas are not available. Rainfall and altitude are the two most important climatic factors. The monsoon usually lasts from June to September, two and a half to three months. In this period occurs about 80 per cent of the total yearly precipitation.²³

Monsoon rains usually start in eastern Nepal in early June, reaching Kathmandu in the middle of the month and western Nepal late in June. Rainfall in the Terai is about the same as in adjacent areas of India, approximating 100 to 150 inches in eastern Nepal, and 50 to 75 inches in western Nepal. The high mountains precipitate most of the rain from storm clouds passing over; hence, it is probable that the rainfall on the southern slopes of the Himalayas is heavier than the recorded figures.²⁴ The western part of Nepal is drier than the eastern part.

Even though the country is only about 100 miles wide, it has a great diversity of climatic conditions. The climate ranges from a tropical

²²Ibid., p. 8.

²³Theuvenet, Report on Irrigation, p. 3.

²⁴Sanford, The Mineral Deposits of Nepal, p. 6.

130° F. maximum in the Terai to an arctic climate in the high mountains. Four climatic zones are suggested for Nepal:

1. The tropical region of the Terai and the forest-clad slopes of the lower hills up to an altitude of about 4,000 feet. This region sometimes swelters under a burning sun that scorches everything; at other times it is flooded by torrential monsoon rains.²⁵

2. The temperate central region enfolding the high-lying valleys up to an altitude of about 10,000 feet.

3. The northern alpine region comprising the upper part of the Himalayan range, towering from 10,000 feet to 29,000 feet.

4. The climate of the Kathmandu Valley and environs may be divided into rainy, hot and cold seasons. Rains begin in June and last until October, the average fall approximating 60 inches annually. The cold season extends from the middle of October to the middle of April. January, the coldest month, has a daily average minimum of 36° F. and an average maximum of 64° F. May and June are the

²⁵Maurice Herzog, Annapurna (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1953), pp. 29-30.

hot months, but the temperature seldom exceeds 90° F. Violent thunderstorms are common and occasionally severe earthquakes occur.²⁶

Flora and Fauna

The three climatic zones support, in general, fauna and flora which are characteristic of three distinct zoogeographical regions, of which the lowest is Gangetic, the central is Himalayan, and the northern is Alpine.²⁷

The low alluvial land of the Terai is the granary of Nepal, though the greater portion consists of swamps, jungles and forests. The plant life of the Terai, including both wild and cultivated plants, is similar to that of adjacent India. Here are found cotton, rice, wheat, jute, pulse, sugar cane, tobacco, opium, indigo and some fruits and vegetables. The forests yield a magnificent supply of sal, sisu, or shishan, semal, toon, and other trees and acacias, mimosas, cotton tree, large bamboos, rattans, palms and numerous ferns and orchids.

Rice, wheat, maize, barley, oats, ginger, tumeric, chilies, and potatoes are grown in the

²⁶Encyclopedia Britannica, XVI (1939), p. 221; Asian Annual, 1955: The Eastern World Handbook (London: Eastern World, 1955), p. 74.

²⁷Nepal, Report of the National Education Planning Commission (Kathmandu, February, 1955), p. 2/2.

middle zone. In this region, and particularly in the Kathmandu Valley, many varieties of fruits and vegetables are found, including mangoes, pineapples, peaches, pears, oranges, bananas, apples, plums, papayas, cherries, strawberries, gooseberries, asparagus and artichokes.

The forests of the middle region contain tree rhododendrons, birch, pines, oaks, spruces, larches and firs, as well as horse chestnuts, walnuts, maples, hill bamboos, wild cherry, paper plants, roses, orchids, ferns and wild flowers.

In the Alpine zone exist coniferae of many kinds: junipers, yew, box, hollies, birch, dwarf rhododendrons, primulas, orchids, magnolias and other alpine flora.²⁸

The bird life of the Terai region is much the same as that found in the Indian Malabar coast and Assam and includes horn-bills, barbets, fruit-pigeons, bulbuls and woodpeckers. Along the cultivated areas and on the edge of the forests are found some of the more common birds of the Indian plains. The cold season attracts migration of many species of birds from Tibet, which breed in the mountains and descend to the plains for a brief change.²⁹

²⁸See Tilman, Nepal Himalaya, p. 261, for a list of plants collected during the 1949 expedition to central Nepal.

²⁹Report of the National Education Planning Commission, p. 2/3.

In this lower zone are found tiger, leopard, panther, wolf, hyena, jackal, elephant, rhinoceros, gaur, wild buffalo, many species of deer, the black bear, pea-fowl, francolins, wild jungle fowl and the smaller vultures. The Terai is perhaps one of the most celebrated big game preserves in the world, and it is here that distinguished guests of the ruling family were entertained on a lavish scale in the big shooting camps held in the winter season.³⁰

The fauna . . . are characteristically Himalayan. Many of the species occurring in this region are peculiar to Nepal, as for example, the ferret, badger, racoon and the crestless porcupine. The whole genera of such birds as yuhina, siva, minla, ixulu are nearly, if not wholly, restricted to this region. Most of the reptiles in this zone are purely Himalayan species.³¹

There are also wild dogs, cats of many sorts, squirrels, hares, the pangoline, species of deer, antelopes and vultures.

In the Alpine zone are found the true bear (ursus isabellinus, or brown bear), the yak, jharal, ibex, musk deer, wild goats and sheep, marmots, the eagle-vulture (gypaetus) monals, tragopans, blood and cheer pheasants and snow-cocks.

³⁰Morris, The Gurkhas, p. 139.

³¹Report of the National Education Planning Commission, p. 2/3.

The pine forests contain many species of warblers, tits, and finches. Above the tree line the birds become scarce and the kinds most commonly met are ravens, dippers, all-creepers, accentors and Alpine birds known as Hodgson's Grandala.³²

In all of Nepal one can find some 70 varieties of snakes, including all the most deadly, the king cobra and Russell's viper.³³

Among the domesticated animals the following are most widespread: cows, oxen, buffaloes, sheep, goats, chickens and ducks. Horse-keeping, pig-breeding and the use of elephants for cultivation or transportation are not very important.³⁴

Communication and Transportation

The topographical features of Nepal make transportation exceedingly difficult. There are

³²Ibid., p. 2/5. See Dillon Ripley, Search for the Spiny Babbler: An Adventure in Nepal (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1952), Index of Birds, pp. 299-301. Also Tilman gives a list of birds collected in the Langtang Khola and the adjacent district of central Nepal.

³³R. N. W. Bishop, Unknown Nepal (London: Luzac, 1952), p. 57.

³⁴E. Rauch, Agriculture of Nepal: Suggestions for Its Development, Report for the Swiss Coordinators Committee for Technical Assistance and the Government of Nepal, 1950-1951, p. 8.

only 300 miles³⁵ of motorable roads in the entire country, of which about 158 miles are in the Terai region and 79 miles in the Kathmandu Valley.³⁶

The first motorable road into Kathmandu is now under construction. This road starts near Bhimpedi in the Terai, which so far has been the bus and truck terminal. As of 1955, only one or two vehicles had actually made the trip. It appears that some time will elapse before the road will be ready for even limited traffic.³⁷ At this time Kathmandu is connected with India by a succession of railroad, road and trail. There is a railroad from the Indian border to Amlekhganj, then a road from Amlekhganj to Bhimpedi, a footpath from Bhimpedi to Thankot in the valley of Kathmandu over two passes, 6,225 feet and 7,700 feet respectively. From Thankot to Kathmandu there is a road.

Communications otherwise are by footpaths and trails suitable only for human porters and pack animals. The longest trail seems to be the one which crosses the country from Darjeeling to Pithoragarh in Kumaon, more than 500 miles away, but there appears to be no commercial inducement to travel the

³⁵A. J. Van Dyke, Report (Washington, International Cooperation Administration, 1955), p. 1.

³⁶Bowers, Agricultural Development in Nepal, p. 3.

³⁷Van Dyke, Report, p. 1. See also The Economy of Nepal, Chapter XIII.

entire distance. As with most trails in the country, it is principally for local convenience.

Many of the communications with India consist of trails through the lower foothills of the Terai to the railheads across the border. The Indian railways extend to the border of Nepal at thirteen points. From west to east, these are Tanakpur, Gauri Phanta, Chandan Chauki, Kauriala Ghat, Katarnian Ghat, Nepalganj, Jarwa, Nautanwa, Bhikna Thori, Raxaul, Jaynagar, Jogbani and Darjeeling.

Inside Nepal, there are two short narrow gauge (2' 6") railroads, which are really extensions of the Indian railroads. The most important operates from Raxaul, in India, or Birganj on the Nepal side, to Amlekhganj, a distance of 29.3 miles; the other connects Jaynagar and Bijulpura. In addition, there is an aerial cableway from Bhimpedi to Kathmandu, covering a distance of 13.7 miles; it carries only freight to and from Kathmandu Valley.³⁸ Most of the total freight, however, is carried on the backs of coolies.

Air travel within the country is just beginning. The Indian National Airways makes flights from Calcutta via Patna to Kathmandu. There are also small airports at Biratnagar, Simra, Pokhara and Butwal. The Himalayan Aviation Corporation connects these cities with Kathmandu.³⁹

³⁸Bowers, Agricultural Development in Nepal, p. 3.

³⁹Ibid., pp. 5-6.

Traffic with Tibet is most difficult. There are several trade routes which are not more than foot-trails over mountain passes. The most important trade routes are the Kerong and Kuti trails, which lead northwest and northeast from Kathmandu to Tibet, crossing at 9,000 feet and 14,000 feet, respectively.⁴⁰ It is possible to use the Kuti road even during the winter months, and it is the favorite route of pilgrims who enter Nepal from Tibet, as well as the shortest between Kathmandu and Lhasa; however, animals are unable to traverse it.⁴¹

Among the other important passes in the north are from west to east the Nara Lagna Pass east of Nanda Devi, the Pindu Bhanjyang Pass and the Mustang Pass west of the Dhaulagiri Range, the Gya La Pass, the Nangpa La Pass west of Mount Everest and the Rakkha Pass between Mount Everest and the Kanchenjunga Range.

⁴⁰ Asian Annual, 1955, p. 75.

⁴¹ Ali Shah Iqbal, Nepal: The Home of the Gods (London: Sampson Low, Marston, n.d.), p. 236.

Annex "A," Subparagraph 1c

CHAPTER IV

SIZE AND GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION
OF POPULATION

The population of Nepal is 8,431,537 according to the interim census which was conducted for east Nepal in 1952 and for west Nepal in 1954. East Nepal, with 17,041 square miles of territory, has a population of 3,764,757. West Nepal, including the Kathmandu Valley, with 37,304 square miles of territory has a population of 4,666,780.

The district of Mahotari is included in the above figures for east Nepal. Although enumeration for Mahotari was not completed at the time the census for east Nepal was taken, the Interim Census Report of 1954 covering western Nepal includes Mahotari. Consequently, the above figures have been adjusted, despite the two-year lag in enumeration, as though Mahotari had been enumerated with East Nepal.¹

¹The Interim Report on the Census gives the population for east Nepal as 3,344,797 and the area as 16,222 square miles and for west Nepal 5,086,740 and the area 38,132 square miles. Government of Nepal, Department of Statistics, Interim Report on the Census (Basantapur, Kathmandu, 1954). All figures quoted in this chapter are from the Census.

The average population density of Nepal is 155.1 persons per square mile, which is lower than that of most European countries, India, Pakistan, and Japan, but higher than the population density of China, Indonesia, the United States and the U. S. S. R.

Table 1

Population Density of Selected Countries

| <u>Country</u> | <u>Persons per square mile</u> |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Belgium | 748 |
| United Kingdom | 634 |
| Japan | 616 |
| India | 312 |
| Pakistan | 208 |
| France | 202 |
| <u>Nepal</u> | 155 |
| Indonesia | 139 |
| China | 134 |
| United States of America | 54 |
| U. S. S. R. | 25 |

Source: United Nations Statistical Office, Statistical Yearbook, 1955 (New York: United Nations, 1955), pp. 26-27, 31-33, 35. Area is square km. converted into square miles.

East Nepal, with 220.9 persons per square mile, is more densely populated than west

Nepal, which has 125.1 persons per square mile. The most densely populated region is the Kathmandu Valley with about 1,994 persons per square mile. The least densely populated area is the Mid-Terai with approximately 105 persons per square mile in the eastern part and 95 in the western part. The mountain region, which is the largest area and contains the greatest number of people, has a density of about 175 and 113 per square mile for east and west Nepal, respectively.²

The Kathmandu Valley has a high population density because of its fertile soil and favorable climate. The three largest towns of Nepal--Kathmandu, Patan and Bhatgaon--are located there. The population of these towns has been estimated, but not substantiated, at 150,000 persons for Kathmandu, 105,000 persons for Patan and 93,200 persons for Bhatgaon.³

Extensive plains with fertile land and adequate rainfall are usually conducive to high densities as in the case of the Mahotari district with a population density of approximately 513 per square mile and the Rautahat district with a population density of 455 per square mile, both of which are in the eastern Terai and have these conditions. However, even though a particular region may have good rainfall and

²Ibid., pp. 1, 27.

³Asian Annual, 1955: The Eastern World Handbook (London: Eastern World, 1955), p. 75.

Table 2

Area, Population and Density by Regions

| <u>Region</u> | <u>Area in square miles</u> | <u>1952 or 1954 total population</u> | <u>Population density in sq. miles</u> |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| East Nepal (total) | 17,041 | 3,764,757 | 220.90 |
| Hills | 10,094 | 1,763,184 | 174.68 |
| Internal Terai | 1,829 | 192,640 | 105.32 |
| Terai | 5,118 | 1,808,933 | 353.40 |
| West Nepal (total) | 37,304 | 4,666,780 | 125.10 |
| Hills | 30,651 | 3,448,870 | 112.50 |
| Internal Terai | 2,163 | 205,097 | 94.80 |
| Terai | 4,282 | 597,989 | 140.00 |
| Kathmandu Valley | <u>208</u> | <u>414,824</u> | <u>1,993.77</u> |
| Total | 54,345 | 8,431,537 | 155.10 (average) |

Source: Government of Nepal, Interim Report on the Census (Basantapur, Kathmandu 1954), pp. 1, 27.

fertile soil, these advantages may be offset by other unfavorable factors. For example, the Nawalpur district with a density of 58 per square mile, and the Kanchanpur district, with Nepal's lowest density of 29 per square mile, are malarial and pestilential areas.

The hilly regions are generally more thinly populated because of the poor quality of the soil and the ruggedness of the terrain. However, some districts in the hills, particularly the central hill region between Kathmandu and Pokhara, have high population densities because of intervening large valleys with deep alluvial soils which permit intensive cultivation of vegetables and fruits.⁴

According to Y. P. Pant, agriculture under most favorable conditions can maintain about 250 persons per square mile.⁵ Nepal's average density is below this level.

The Census does not provide statistics of occupational distributions, or of a vital or cultural nature, such as livelihood categories, rural and urban sectors, religion, age structure, mortality, literacy and other groupings. It is not possible to calculate the percentage of the urban and rural population. However, Pant claims that over 90 per cent of the population is rural, deriving its living from farming.⁶

⁴Dorothea Wehrwein, 'Nepal: Agricultural Conditions and Development' (unpublished manuscript, November, 1955).

⁵Y. P. Pant, "Population of Nepal," Eastern Economist, XXV (October 14, 1955), p. 597.

⁶Ibid.

It can be assumed that industrial towns like Biratnagar and Birganj have had a disproportionate increase in their population in recent years, with the limited introduction of industries, but no data are available.

From the Census, it is not possible to determine whether there is any general movement of population. Pant suggests that there is little migration because of the lack of transportation facilities, the difficulties of inter-regional migration,⁷ and the stay-at-home habit of the people.

Nearly all the people of Nepal live in villages and towns where the houses are close together. Rarely does one find an isolated dwelling. There are an estimated 29,819 villages, of which 11,601 are in east Nepal and 18,218 in west Nepal. The average population of the villages is 282; however, since the range is wide, an average is of little significance. There are about 1,521,234 families. The average family size varies locally, ranging as high as 10.45 in Nawalpur, west Nepal.⁸

Males are more numerous than females in Nepal. There are 4,229,347 males and 4,202,190 females. In India the Census shows that in the aggregate there are 947 females per

⁷Y. P. Pant, "Nepal's First Census," Economic Weekly, VII (July 30, 1955), p. 913.

⁸Interim Report on the Census, pp. 1-2, 27-28.

1,000 males,⁹ while in Nepal the aggregate can be estimated at 994 females per 1,000 males.¹⁰

Table 3

Population Distribution by Sex

| <u>Area</u> | <u>Males</u> | <u>Females</u> |
|-------------|------------------|------------------|
| West Nepal | 2,358,804 | 2,307,976 |
| East Nepal | <u>1,870,543</u> | <u>1,894,214</u> |
| Total | 4,229,347 | 4,202,190 |

Source: Government of Nepal, Department of Statistics, Interim Report on the Census, pp. 2, 28.

In the western part, the number of males exceeds that of females by 50,828, while in the eastern part the number of females exceeds that of males by 23,671. Taking Nepal as a whole, there is an excess of 27,157 males. These figures contradict the popular belief in Nepal that there is an excess of females over males, perhaps based solely upon local observation in the eastern portion. Polygamy, early marriages, and social restrictions upon

⁹Government of India, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, India, 1955: A Reference Annual (Delhi: Publications Division, 1955), p. 10.

¹⁰Pant, "Population of Nepal," p. 597.

females have been attributed to this supposed excess of females.¹¹

Since no accurate census was taken prior to 1952, it is impossible to calculate the rate of growth of the population. Rough estimates of the population were attempted in 1910 and in 1920. The so-called census of 1920 placed the population at about 5,532,785. In 1941 a Census Department was established with the intention of preparing statistics for Nepal. Information was not forthcoming and no report has been published. The population, however, was estimated at that time at over six million.¹²

According to the estimates of these previous census reports, the validity of which is in question, the population increased from 5,537,785 to 6,283,715 between 1920 and 1941. This represented a 12.9 per cent gain for the twenty-one year period. The total population in 1954 was 8,431,537, which would mean that the population had increased 34.2 per cent in thirteen years, or 2.6 per cent per year. This seems a very high rate of population growth, probably reflecting the inaccuracy of the earlier figures, rather than actual population changes.

The rate of growth for the Kathmandu Valley was slightly less than for the whole of Nepal, if we assume validity of the 1941 census. The population of the Kathmandu Valley was 323,336 in 1941 and 414,705 in 1954. This is a

¹¹Pant, "Nepal's First Census," p. 913.

¹²Interim Report on the Census, p. 1, B.

28.25 per cent increase for thirteen years or a 2.17 per cent increase per year.¹³ Again, this relationship appears most unlikely.

A Department of Statistics was established at Kathmandu in 1950 which was expected to take an official census on a scientific basis, but political unrest suspended its work temporarily.¹⁴

The 1952 and 1954 census reports are confined to an enumeration of people. It is believed that the next census will be more complete.¹⁵

¹³Ibid., pp. 75-76.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 1.

¹⁵Pant, "Population of Nepal," p. 597.

PART B
SOCIAL DIVISIONS

Annex "A," Subparagraph 1d

CHAPTER V

ETHNIC GROUPS

Anthropological and sociological research on Nepal has not as yet established the origins of the Nepalese people. The general physical characteristics of the population are known, and in this way they can be classified into certain basic racial groups. In many instances, however, it is possible only to conjecture as to which of the sub-branches of these racial groups the various tribal peoples in Nepal belong. The Nepalese population is mainly the result of large-scale migrations from all of the areas surrounding Nepal. The diverse racial and cultural groups which predominated in these various regions have intermarried over the centuries.¹ This has tended to result, in certain sections of the population at least, in a people who are uniquely Nepalese, and who cannot be categorized within any single racial group.

Ethnically, Nepal consists of two primary elements: Mongolians who migrated to Nepal by way of Tibet, Sikkim and the tribal areas of Assam and Bengal and Indo-Aryans from the

¹Perceval Landon, Nepal, II (London: Constable and Co., Ltd., 1928), Appendix XVII, p. 239.

Indian plains to the south and from the sub-Himalayan hill areas to the west of Nepal. In addition there are small remnants of Dravidian tribes that may have formed the original population in certain areas of Nepal. However, the Dravidian influence on the ethnic composition of the Nepalese people is negligible.² The Mongolian elements in western and central Nepal probably are descendants of emigrants from Tibet, while those in eastern Nepal are a mixture of Tibetans, Lepchas from Sikkim, and Mongolian tribes from Assam and Bengal. A possible exception are the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley area who will be discussed subsequently. The Indo-Aryan element stems from a number of sources in the vast Indian subcontinent, but with Khas tribesmen from the northwest hill areas and Rajputs from Rajasthan contributing substantially to the population of the hill areas, while the Indian states adjoining Nepal to the south have provided a large share of the population in the Nepal Terai.

The factors behind these successive migrations into Nepal are, of course, impossible to determine. If the legends of the various Mongolian tribes provide a suitable basis for conjecture it would seem that economic motives played a dominant part in the movements of

²R. L. Turner, "The People and Their Languages," in W. Brooke Northey and C. J. Morris, The Gurkhas, Their Manners, Customs and Country (London: John Lane The Bodley Head, Ltd., 1928), pp. 63-64.

most of these groups. On the other hand, the Indo-Aryan migrations, at least until the twentieth century, seem to have had a predominantly political motivation. For over two thousand years Nepal served as a political refuge for Indians fleeing from the plains, usually, it would appear, to escape political and religious persecution. For instance, many Indian Buddhists fled to Nepal in the wake of the triumph of Brahmanic Hinduism in India. Another example is the heavy Rajput migration to Nepal in the sixteenth century which followed the conquest of Delhi and most of Rajasthan by the Moghul Emperors.³ Similarly, the migration of Bengali and Mithili Brahmans into Nepal in the thirteenth century was probably the result of the Pathan conquest of Bengal in that century.⁴ However, in recent years the motivation behind most of the migration from India to Nepal seems to have been economic as the main groups that have entered are merchants, traders, farmers, and a small number of persons interested in handicraft and manufactures, particularly as enterprisers and workers.

Before proceeding with an analysis of the various tribal groups in Nepal a precise definition of the term "Gurkha" is necessary. By

³Sylvain Levi, Le Nepal, I, Tome 17, Annales du Musee Guimet (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1905), pp. 254-55.

⁴D. R. Regmi, Ancient and Medieval Nepal (Kathmandu, 1952), p. 12.

common usage among English and other Western authors this term has come to refer to members of any of the so-called "military tribes" from which recruits for the "Gurkha battalions" in the British Indian Army were drawn. This would include Thakurs, Chetris, Gurungs and Magars from western Nepal and members of the various Kiranti tribes-- Limbus, Khambus and Rais--in eastern Nepal. However, careful usage restricts the word "Gurkha" to the western tribes who conquered Nepal under the dynasty that has ruled the country since the latter half of the eighteenth century. It is the latter definition which will be utilized in this handbook.

Main Tribal and Caste Groups in Nepal

Newars

The Newars constitute a large proportion of the population inhabiting Kathmandu Valley and they are also numerous in the various districts immediately adjacent to the capital of Nepal. Moreover, the position of the Newars as the principal indigenous trading and mercantile class in Nepal has led to a limited dispersement of Newaris throughout the whole of the country. Small Newari trading communities can be found, it is reported, in most Nepalese

villages even in the outer areas of the country.⁵

As far as physical characteristics are concerned, the Mongolian type dominates although it has been considerably modified by an extensive infusion of Indo-Aryan stock over the centuries.⁶ Gibbs states that in appearance the Newars vary greatly and undoubtedly in many cases the influence of Indian blood can be seen. As a whole, he continues, the Newars are taller and of slighter build than are the other Tibeto-Burman tribes in Nepal who have not mixed to a similar extent with emigrants from the Indian plains.⁷ D. R. Regmi says that the Newars have definitely Mongolian physical features similar to those of the tribesmen of Assam and other northeastern Indian tribal groups.⁸

The early history of the Newars is uncertain and even Newari traditions are contradictory. The Newars claim to be the original inhabitants of Kathmandu Valley, having resided there since the time Manjusri, in their

⁵Ibid., p. 21. See also Giuseppe Tucci, Tra giungle e pagode (Rome: La Libreria dello Stato, 1955) and E. Vansittart, "The Tribes, Clans and Castes of Nepal," Journal, Asiatic Society of Bengal, LXIII, Part 1 (1894), p. 214.

⁶Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas, Their Manners, Customs and Country, p. 156.

⁷H. R. K. Gibbs, The Gurkha Soldier (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink and Co., 1944), p. 32.

⁸Regmi, Ancient and Medieval Nepal, p. 13.

legendary accounts, first drained the lake which filled the valley at an earlier period.⁹ Regmi supports this claim to an early Newari habitation of the valley and places them there as far back as the sixth century B. C., pointing to ancient Indian chronicles which mention a Kiranti tribe in this area which he takes to be the Newars.¹⁰ On the other hand, the Newars also have a tradition which associates them with the Nairs of South India. In this legend the Newars are descendants of Nairs who invaded Nepal, under Nanyadeva, in the eleventh century A. D.¹¹ This theory, however, has been modified by most authorities writing on this subject who suggest that there might have been an infusion of Indian blood into the Newar tribe at this time.¹²

Another issue of dispute concerning the origin of the Newars centers around the question of whether they originally entered Nepal from Tibet or from areas to the southeast. Most authorities, including Levi, incline

⁹Ali Shah Iqbal, Nepal: The Home of the Gods (London: Sampson Low, Marston, n. d.), p. 157.

¹⁰Regmi, Ancient and Medieval Nepal, pp. 1-2.

¹¹Leonhard Adam, "Social Organization and Customary Law of Nepalese Tribes," American Anthropologist, Vol. 38 (1936), p. 535; also Regmi, Ancient and Medieval Nepal, pp. 143-47.

¹²See, for instance, Levi, Le Nepal, I, p. 220.

towards the Tibetan origin theory with Levi stating that "their traits like their language show their kinship with the peoples of Tibet."¹³ Regmi, however, states that anthropological studies have indicated that many of the tribes now inhabiting the hilly regions of Assam and Bengal belong to one race and all of them migrated to this region in the sixth and seventh centuries B. C.

An inspection of the physical features of a Newar will reveal in sufficient manner his close affinity with the tribes of North-eastern India, so that the same period of migration must be taken to have brought the Newars to the valley of Kathmandu.¹⁴

The Brahmans

It would appear from the inadequate historical sources available on medieval Nepalese history that most of the ancestors of the Brahmans entered Nepal at the time of the great Muslim invasion and conquest of northern India from the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries A. D.¹⁵ There were, however, Brahmans already in Nepal before this period, for Nepal had been governed by Hindu kings as far back as the seventh century A. D. at least, and they,

¹³Ibid., p. 221.

¹⁴Regmi, Ancient and Medieval Nepal, p. 4.

¹⁵Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas, Their Manners, Customs and Country, p. 123.

of course, had their Brahman scholars, advisers and religious preceptors.¹⁶

The Brahmans who entered Nepal after the twelfth century usually were political refugees and in most instances did not bring women of an equal caste status with them. They intermarried, therefore, with the Brahman women already in Nepal and only the descendants of these marriages among the refugees can legitimately claim status as Brahmans. However, there are some indications that the Brahmans in Nepal were not so strict with regard to the maintenance of caste status as Indian Brahmans have tended to be.¹⁷

The Brahmans were Indo-Aryans and their descendants today are probably the groups with the most definite Indo-Aryan physical traits in Nepal due, undoubtedly, to the strict marriage laws required of their caste. The Brahman families can be found in almost all districts, with the possible exception of the Nepal-Tibet border region and in the extreme eastern section of Nepal.¹⁸ Their dual role as priests for the various tribes and as land-owners probably is responsible for their dispersion throughout Nepal.

¹⁶Regmi, Ancient and Medieval Nepal, pp. 98-100.

¹⁷Brian Hodgson as quoted in Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas, Their Manners, Customs and Country, pp. 124-25.

¹⁸C. J. Morris, "Some Aspects of Social Life in Nepal," Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society, XXII, Part 3 (July, 1935), p. 435.

Thakurs and Chetris (Khas)

These two tribal and caste groups hold a position in the Nepalese social system just below that of the Brahmans. The Thakurs, according to Landon, claim to be the descendants of the various royal dynasties that ruled over large parts of Western and Central Nepal prior to the time of the Gurkha conquest of the country as a whole.¹⁹ The present reigning family, the Shahs, are Thakurs and many of the noble families in Nepal today are also within this tribal family. Regmi, however, presents a slightly different definition of this term. He says:

The term Thakuri is by present usage applied to the Ksatriya settlers of the Himalayas, whose origin is commonly believed to have been somewhere in Rajputana [Rajasthan] as distinct from the class of the Khasa Ksatriyas who by popular understanding are definitely debarred from using this term for reasons of inferior origin.²⁰

The Chetri tribe would seem to have a dual origin if the scattered historical accounts are correct. The existence of an Indo-Aryan race called the Khas in Nepal is mentioned in early Indian chronicles as far back as the year

¹⁹Landon, Nepal, II, p. 241.

²⁰Regmi, Ancient and Medieval Nepal, p. 9

1,000 A. D.²¹ The present day Khas are the descendants of these early inhabitants of the hill areas of western Nepal combined with the Rajput families which fled to Nepal from Rajasthan at the time of the Muslim conquest of their original homeland. The name Khas was used, apparently, to cover the old inhabitants and the newcomers alike.²² The Khas tribe is also the result of the mixture of Indian Brahman blood with that of women of the hill tribes in western Nepal. The progeny of these unions could not, under Hindu law, be admitted as bona fide Brahmans, but they were granted a position within the second highest of the Hindu castes, the Ksatriyas, and eventually were classified as Chetris.²³

As far as physical characteristics are concerned the Thakurs are predominantly Mongolian in appearance and bear a strong resemblance to the Magar and Gurung tribesmen whose ruling class they formed at the time of the Brahman migration to Nepal five hundred years ago.²⁴ The Chetris, on the other hand, prefer to emphasize their Indo-Aryan descent and to assert proudly the Indian origin

²¹Landon, Nepal, II, p. 241.

²²Vansittart, "The Tribes, Clans and Castes of Nepal," p. 221.

²³Ikbal, Nepal: The Home of the Gods, p. 178.

²⁴Gibbs, The Gurkha Soldier, p. 8.

of their ancestors.²⁵ Despite their claims, their physical characteristics are probably as much Mongolian as they are Indian, although they do differ in certain respects from the Mongolian hill tribesmen. Gibbs' description reads:

The greater number have a distinct appearance being slighter, taller and darker than the other tribes but one occasionally comes across Chetries who are not readily distinguished from Magars. . . . The normal Chetri has a more pronounced nose than the flatter one of his more Mongolian compatriots; he also usually has a heavy beard and hair on the limbs and body whereas the other Gurkhas rarely boast more than a few wisps of a moustache even when a grown man.²⁶

The first homeland of the Thakur and Chetri tribesmen was the hill areas of central and western Nepal. Today, they can be found scattered over the whole country. This is probably due, first, to the fact that these two tribes have provided a large proportion of the political leadership in Nepal for the last five hundred years and, second, that they have been granted in the past extensive landholdings in all the areas of the country.²⁷

²⁵Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas, Their Manners, Customs and Country, pp. 125-26.

²⁶Gibbs, The Gurkha Soldier, pp. 10-11.

²⁷Ibid., p. 8.

Magars and Gurungs

These two tribes originally inhabited the plains and hill areas of central and western Nepal between Kathmandu Valley and the Karnali River. In Magar legend their ancestral home was situated in the valley of Dhoreh on the banks of the Karnali,²⁸ but the area most closely associated with this tribe is farther east in the Terai and hill districts near Butwal and Palpa.²⁹ The Gurungs for the most part inhabit the areas of Nepal directly to the north of the Magars in both the hill areas and in the Himalayan border region between Nepal and Tibet. The most extensive concentrations³⁰ of Gurungs are found in the areas around Gorkha, Lamjung, Kaski, Bhirkot and in District West No. 1.

Both the Magars and Gurungs can be found in all sections of Nepal today in increasing numbers.³¹ This is partially the result of the Gurkha conquest of Nepal in the eighteenth century. Magars and Gurungs formed the basic element in the armies led by the Thakuris and Chetris who conquered Nepal, and many of them formed tribal colonies in both eastern

²⁸H. H. Risley, The Tribes and Castes of Bengal, II (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1892), p. 74.

²⁹Landon, Nepal, II, p. 243.

³⁰Gibbs, The Gurkha Soldier, p. 21.

³¹Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas, Their Manners, Customs and Country, p. 185.

Nepal and in the far western districts.³² This original impetus was assisted in later decades, apparently, by an increasingly serious over-population problem in central Nepal which forced Magars and Gurungs to migrate both to the east and the far west of the country.³³ Thus, while central Nepal is still the area where there is the highest concentration of Magars and Gurungs, substantial colonies of these two tribes can be found throughout Nepal.

The Tibetan origin of the Magars and Gurungs is strongly suggested by their physical characteristics, customs and religion which bear a close resemblance in many respects to those of present-day Tibet. Both these tribes were emigrants into Nepal as recently as a thousand years ago. The Magars, because of their geographical position, have had much greater contact with the Indo-Aryan elements who have entered Nepal, and for this reason they do not exhibit as decided a Mongolian appearance as do the Gurungs.³⁴ Nevertheless, judged by their physical characteristics, the Magars must be classed as Mongolians. Their naso-molar index is slightly lower than that of the Tibetans, but their

³²Vansittart, "The Tribes, Clans and Castes of Nepal," p. 213.

³³Gibbs, The Gurkha Soldier, pp. 16-17.

³⁴Ibid., p. 17 and Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas, Their Manners, Customs and Country, p. 186.

complexion, eyelids, stature and the general cut of their features mark them as an admixture in which the Mongolian element predominates.³⁵ The Gurungs, on the other hand, bear a strong resemblance to their Tibetan neighbors, while the Indo-Aryan influence, both of a physical and cultural nature, is minimal.³⁶

Murmis and Sunwars

Closely related to the Magars and Gurungs in many respects are two smaller tribes, the Murmis and Sunwars, who inhabit the area to the north and east of Kathmandu Valley. The Murmis, also known as the Tamangs or Lamas, are concentrated along the Buri Gandak River above Arughat to the northwest of Kathmandu, although they can also be found in District West No. 1, and in the northern part of Gorkha district. Smaller colonies also are in Lamjung and Upardang-garhi and in certain sections to the northeast of Kathmandu Valley.³⁷ The Sunwars are a very small tribe inhabiting the area on each side of the Likh Khola River in eastern Nepal, and between it and the Kunti Khola River further to the east.³⁸

³⁵Risley, The Tribes and Castes of Bengal, p. 74.

³⁶Vansittart, "The Tribes, Clans and Castes of Nepal," pp. 224-25.

³⁷Gibbs, The Gurkha Soldier, p. 26.

³⁸Ibid., p. 30; see also Risley, The Tribes and Castes of Bengal, p. 282.

The origin of these two tribal groups is as uncertain as the other tribes in Nepal. The Murmis claim to be among the earliest settlers in Nepal, probably the descendants of a Tibetan tribe that wandered down into Nepal many centuries ago. Their physical characteristics, and the fact that their exogamous divisions, thars or clans, bear Tibetan names, seem to lend support to the opinion that they are descended from a Tibetan stock, modified to a limited extent by intermixture with Nepalese.³⁹ A Murmis legend, quoted by Northey and Morris, attributes the origin of the tribe to a Hindu,⁴⁰ but this is a common claim even among Nepalese tribes of Tibetan or Mongolian origin and probably is erroneous.

The Sunwar traditions would suggest that this tribe once had a very close relationship with the Magars, and were perhaps a sub-branch of that tribe. One Sunwar legend maintains that the tribe came originally from Simungarh near Bara Chhatri in western Nepal, and that wandering east they came to Chuplu on the Likhu Khola River where they made their new homeland.⁴¹ However, there are other

³⁹Risley, The Tribes and Castes of Bengal, p. 111.

⁴⁰Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas, Their Manners, Customs and Country, p. 258.

⁴¹Risley, The Tribes and Castes of Bengal, p. 282.

traditions which mark the Sunwars as descendants of emigrants from Tibet.⁴²

Physically, the Murmis and Sunwars are almost purely Mongolian. The Murmis closely resemble the Gurungs in appearance, dress, customs and even language.⁴³ No Indo-Aryan influence is apparent in this tribe at least so far as physical characteristics are concerned. The Sunwars, on the other hand, have mixed to a considerable extent with the various Kiranti tribes inhabiting the easternmost sections of Nepal, which has influenced their physical appearance.⁴⁴ As a rule, members of this community have very prominent cheek-bones and a reddish complexion. They are usually small in stature.⁴⁵

The Kiranti Tribes

Kiranti is a term used generally to denote a number of tribes inhabiting the hill areas and mountainous regions of eastern Nepal. Included within this community are three major tribal groups--the Limbus, Khambus and Yakhas, the two latter frequently classified together under the name of Rais--and a number

⁴²Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas, Their Manners, Customs and Country, p. 256.

⁴³Ibid., p. 260 and Gibbs, The Gurkha Soldier, pp. 25-26.

⁴⁴Gibbs, The Gurkha Soldier, p. 30.

⁴⁵Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas, Their Manners, Customs and Country, p. 257.

of minor tribes, such as the Danaurs and Thamis.⁴⁶ The Limbus occupy the most easternly section of the Nepal hill area between the Arun River and the Sikkim border.⁴⁷ The other Kiranti tribes are found chiefly to the west of the Arun River all the way to Kathmandu Valley, although they are concentrated particularly between the Likhu Khola and Arun Rivers.⁴⁸

All of the Kiranti tribes would appear to be of Mongolian origin. The legends of the various tribes contradict this classification as both the Limbus and Rais have traditions that the founders of their respective tribes came from Banaras in India and were, therefore, of Indo-Aryan descent.⁴⁹ However, the physical characteristics of the Kirantis, when considered jointly with many of their customs and traditions, would indicate a Mongolian origin. This is substantiated by a second Limbu legend, which maintains that the original Limbus came from the Village of Yangma across the Himalayas in Tibet.⁵⁰ The former tradition

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 215.

⁴⁷Vansittart, "The Tribes, Clans and Castes of Nepal," p. 235.

⁴⁸Gibbs, The Gurkha Soldier, p. 27.

⁴⁹Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas, Their Manners, Customs and Country, pp. 218-19, 238.

⁵⁰Sarat Chandra Das, Journey to Lhasa and Central Tibet (London: John Murray, 1902), p. 132.

concerning the Banaras origin of the founder of the Limbu tribe may refer to early Indo-Aryan migrants to east Nepal who achieved positions of leadership among the Limbus. It might also reflect the general tendency of the Mongolian tribes to claim Indo-Aryan origin due to the greater prestige value of Indian descent in the Nepalese social scale.

The physical appearance of members of the various Kiranti tribes is definitely Mongolian with little variation. There appear to be slight differences between the Limbus and other Kirantis attributable to intermarriages of Limbus with the Lepchas who stem from Sikkim. Lepchas have been admitted into membership in the Limbu tribe on an extensive scale and this has had a limited influence, although the Lepchas are also a Mongolian tribal group closely related to the Tibetans in many respects.⁵¹ With regard to the Rais, however, Northey and Morris described them as "perhaps more Mongolian than any of the other races inhabiting Nepal. [Their] complexion is fairer and has a decided yellow tinge, while [their] eyes are set rather far apart."⁵² In recent decades there has been extensive intermarriage between the various Kiranti tribes and the slight distinctions that may have existed are tending to disappear.⁵³

⁵¹Risley, The Tribes and Castes of Bengal, pp. 16-17.

⁵²Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas, Their Manners, Customs and Country, p. 238.

⁵³Landon, Nepal, II, p. 244.

The Bhotian (Tibetan) Tribes

There are in Nepal a number of tribal groups who are classified together under the general category of Bhotias or Tibetans. Of these, the most important are the Sherpas who inhabit the northeastern Nepal-Tibet border area particularly between the Arun and Tamba Kosi Rivers, concentrated heavily in the area around Solakhambu.⁵⁴ Other Bhotian tribes are to be found along other portions of the Nepal-Tibet border between the Tamba Kosi and the Kali Rivers, with some concentrations as Rasua Garhi on the Kirong Pass, along the Buri Gandaki River, and in Mustang.⁵⁵

The Bhotian tribes are distinguished from the other tribes in Nepal--such as the Gurungs, Murmis, Sunwars and Kirantis--not so much in physical appearance as in the lesser degree to which they have been influenced by Hindu culture and religion. The Bhotians can scarcely be distinguished from their neighbors across the Tibetan border in appearance and in customs. It would seem likely that the Bhotias constitute the most recent element in the Tibetan migration to

⁵⁴Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas, Their Manners, Customs and Country, pp. 252-53.

⁵⁵Jiro Kawakita, "Some Ethno-Geographical Observations in the Nepal Himalaya," The Japanese Journal of Ethnology, XIX, No. 1 (1955) and Tucci, Tra guingle e pagode.

Nepal which has been in process for nearly two thousand years, and is continuing even up to the present time.⁵⁶ In such cases they would not have been exposed to Hindu and Indian influence for as lengthy a period as most of the other tribes in Nepal.

The Tharus

The Tharus are a non-Aryan tribe whose settlements are scattered throughout the jungle areas in the Terai, both in Nepal and India, from the Kosi River in east Nepal to the Sarda River on the western Nepal-Indian border.⁵⁷ The origin of the Tharus is still the subject of considerable controversy. Their physical appearance would seem to indicate that they are an aboriginal race, probably Dravidian, whose ancestors were gradually driven up into sub-Himalayan jungles in the Terai by Aryan or Mongolian invaders two or three milleniums ago.⁵⁸ They are not, apparently, related to the Newars or any of the Mongolian hill tribes although, through intermarriage with these groups, they have acquired some Mongolian features,⁵⁹ particularly in the eyes and

⁵⁶Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas, Their Manners, Customs and Country, p. 253.

⁵⁷Risley, The Tribes and Castes of Bengal, p. 313.

⁵⁸Francis Leeson, "The Tharus of Nepal," Statesman, Sunday Magazine Section (February 28, 1954), p. 2.

⁵⁹Ibid.

cheek-bones. In other respects their physical characteristics are of a strictly Dravidian-Indian type. They have long wavy hair, dark complexion, and as much hair on the face and body as is usual with Indians. In stature and build also they are Indian rather than Mongolian.⁶⁰ The Tharus have a legend which ascribes the origin of their tribe to widespread intermarriage between aboriginal tribesmen and Rajput women of the Ksatriya caste who had been sent to the Terai in the wake of the Muslim invasion of Rajasthan.⁶¹ However, the Tharus have none of the physical characteristics usually associated with high-caste Rajputs.

Minor Tribal Groups

There are a number of small tribal groups in Nepal which constitute minor but separate elements. Several of these, such as the Dhimals, Ksundas and Chepangs, are probably of Dravidian or Turanian descent, resembling the Kooch and Uraon tribes on the Indian plains. In physique they are, "small, puny and ill-formed, and in appearance dark, with features that betray their Dravidian origin."⁶² The Dhimals are found principally

⁶⁰Risley, The Tribes and Castes of Bengal, p. 313.

⁶¹Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas, Their Manners, Customs and Country, pp. 140-41.

⁶²Ibid., p. 201.

in the eastern Nepal Terai and around Darjeeling⁶³ while the Ksundas and Chepangs are nomadic tribes who limit their sphere of travel largely to central Nepal and the area slightly to the east.⁶⁴

Another minor tribe is the Thakalis who are of Mongolian extraction and who inhabit the region around Muktinath in north-central Nepal close to the Tibetan border. In appearance they greatly resemble the Gurungs, from whom they can hardly be distinguished. The Rohanis, who inhabit the head of the Tarkhola River, not far from the area in which the Thakalis reside, are a small tribe similar in most respects to the Thakalis. The Binges and Kolmes are two other small tribes inhabiting this area and they also are obviously of Mongolian extraction.⁶⁵

Other Minority Groups

The isolation policy followed so long and successfully by the rulers of Nepal succeeded in excluding foreigners, other than Indians and Tibetans, from Nepalese territory. There is a small Muslim population in Nepal, mostly serving as traders and merchants, although in the southeastern corner of the country in the area

⁶³Risley, The Tribes and Castes of Bengal, p. 225.

⁶⁴Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas, Their Manners, Customs and Country, p. 201.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 202.

close to East Pakistan there is a small Muslim colony engaged in agriculture. No sources have been discovered which account for the origin of this Muslim colony.

Westerners in Nepal are almost exclusively officials of their countries or of United Nations specialized agencies. The ban on missionaries--inaugurated by the Gurkha King, Prithvi Narayan, who conquered Kathmandu Valley and most of present-day Nepal--has been maintained even after the collapse of the Rana regime in 1950, with the exception of a Jesuit missionary who was allowed to enter the country in 1951 as an educator only. There are, furthermore, no indications at this time that the Nepalese Government plans to relax its restrictions in this sphere in the near future. In fact, some of the more important political organizations in Nepal have been agitating for stricter land ownership laws which would bar all foreigners from acquiring and owning land within Nepalese territory, a step which would limit the growth of a foreign colony there.

Conclusions

The complex ethnic composition of Nepal, combined with the dearth of adequate statistics limit observations to the dominant ethnic traits in this country. It would appear that the Mongolian element is predominant, at least racially, but this is based on the observation that in all areas except the Terai it is the

Tibeto-Burman physical characteristics which are most noticeable. Certainly there has been considerable intermingling of the Mongolian and Indo-Aryan strains in many of the hill districts in western and central Nepal and perhaps more so, among the Newaris in Kathmandu Valley. Certainly the Mongolian appears dominant in the eastern Nepal Hill areas and along the northern frontier, while the Indo-Aryan is indigenous along the whole of the southern area which borders on India. In other regions, the western and central Nepal hills and Kathmandu Valley, the mixing of the two races has proceeded to such an extent that it is impossible to draw any general conclusions as to their ethnic composition.

It is probable that the Indo-Aryan element is in the ascendancy due to the large-scale migrations from India into Nepal particularly in recent decades, and to the large number of Nepalese who spend part of their lives within Indian territory either as soldiers or laborers and who often acquire Indian wives. A second factor is the social prestige normally attached to Indo-Aryan descent in Nepal. Under some circumstances this could serve as an impetus to intermarriage between the two ethnic groups which would contribute to the gradual Indianization of the Nepalese population, a process which has been taking place for many centuries now.

CHAPTER VI

RELIGIONS

Buddhism was at one time the predominant religion in Nepal. Buddha himself is believed to have been born at Rummindei, formerly known as Lumbini, in the Terai area. The great Buddhist King Ashoka apparently visited the Kathmandu Valley in the third century B. C. and set up six great stupas.¹ Dating from almost the same period are the shrines at Swayambhunath and Buddhanath which became famous pilgrimage sites. Buddhists, and some Hindus as well, from all over India and Tibet followed the pilgrimage routes to these centers of worship.²

The Kushans, who ruled during the early years of the Christian era, "seem to have propagated ritualistic Buddhism with wonderful figures, in wood carvings and sculptures" and apparently obeyed the main tenets of Buddhism.³ However, sometime after the sixth century, Hinduism made its appearance in the Kathmandu Valley. According to popular belief, the valley

¹Perceval Landon, Nepal, I (London: Constable and Company, Ltd., 1928), p. 3. Sylvain Levi, Le Nepal, II, Annales du Musee Guimet (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1905), Tome 18, p. 1.

²Landon, Nepal, I, p. 3.

³D. R. Regmi, Ancient and Medieval Nepal (Kathmandu, 1952), p. 50.

was visited by the south Indian philosopher, Shankaracharya, who once again established social order and caste distinctions. Probably the Hindu invader was a king of similar name. In any event, the worship of Shiva became well founded and has remained ever since a leading component of the religious beliefs of the Nepalese in both the Valley and the Terai. But Brahmanism, and the worship of Shiva, did not eclipse Buddhism. The two traditions, with all their ramifications, developed simultaneously and with a large measure of mutual influence. Some writers have supposed that Hinduism drove out Buddhism, but this Landon has stoutly denied. He has contended that the prevalent religious note in Nepal is co-existence of the two traditions.

It would be a mistake to suppose that in this duality there is necessarily any hostility. Hinduism and Buddhism have effected a condominium in Nepal, and greatly as the latter has been coloured by the association, it is not true to say that Hinduism is gradually ousting it. ⁴

The peaceful co-existence and even fusion of Buddhism and Hinduism has been facilitated by still a third tradition, Tantrism, which runs as a common theme through both of the other two traditions as found in Nepal.

⁴Perceval Landon, Nepal, II (London: Constable and Company, Ltd., 1928), p. 212.

Tantrism

The dominant influence in the folk religion of Nepal prior to the rise of Buddhism and Hinduism, at least in the Valley, appears to have been Tantrism, as was also the case in Bengal and perhaps throughout most of northern India and its environs.⁵ The essential concept of Tantrism is that there are two universal forces, the male and the female, which interact to produce the drama of worldly existence. The male principle is consciousness and the female principle is activity or energy. Tantrism stresses yogic practices which will enable the individual to participate in the divine drama, and thereby attain liberation from earthly existence.⁶

Participation in the divine interaction of the two principles brings the highest state of bliss or mahasukha. The individual is enabled to reach this state because there is in each person the two forces. The female energy resides in the left side of the body and the male energy in the right side. Through proper yogic exercises, these forces can be brought jointly upward through special passages to join in the brain. At that point, the individual experiences a state of bliss arising from nonduality or the

⁵Shashibhusan Dasgupta, Obscure Religious Cults (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1946), p. 20. See also Chapter VI, Religions, in the handbook, A Survey of Pakistan Society.

⁶Dasgupta, Obscure Religious Cults, p. 78

absence of finite limitation. In some forms of Tantrism, there is a further development toward a still higher state of bliss. When nonduality has been achieved within the male body, there is the need to proceed to union with the female body, both physically and spiritually, in order for complete nonduality or liberation to be attained.⁷

Buddhism

The message of Buddha was that each man is capable of seeking salvation or escape from the ocean of sorrow which is life. Self-discipline and right conduct are the path to the highest goal, nirvana, which can be attained by the individual through his own efforts and not through caste and other ritual observations. To a large extent, Buddhism achieved widespread popularity because it represented a revolt against Brahman orthodoxy and oppression. According to Oldfield,

It was the great Teacher and Lawgiver of Buddhism who brought about the social and religious reformation by which his countrymen were freed from the tyranny of the Brahmans and emancipated from the degrading trammels of caste.⁸

⁷Ibid., p. xxxvii.

⁸Quoted in Landon, Nepal, II, p. 211.

However, there is little information about the existence of Brahmanism in Nepal prior to the rise of Buddhism. It is not possible at present to ascertain whether Buddhism in Nepal represented a similar revolt against Brahmanical orthodoxy, or whether it became popular there for other reasons. Affinities with indigenous forms of Tantrism would seem to be a more plausible explanation.

The original Hinayana form of Buddhism, which stressed self-discipline as the path to nirvana or final liberation gave way in northern India to Mahayana Buddhism with its metaphysics and more complicated theories of nirvana. Along with this change came the political rise of Buddhism, which was all-powerful at the time of the great Pala empire in Bengal in the seventh century. The monasteries of Bengal became centers of Buddhist learning, and Buddhists from Nepal and Tibet came to have Sanskrit texts translated into their own language.⁹

Under Tantric influence the original notion of nirvana, whether construed as the cessation of the continuous cycle of rebirths or as a state of tranquillity, grew into the

⁹Dasgupta, Obscure Religious Cults, p. 12. Nagendra Nath Vasu, The Modern Buddhism and Its Followers in Orissa, with Introduction by Mahamahopadhyaya Shastri (Calcutta: Nagendra Vasu, 1911), p. 4.

concept of mahasukha or supreme bliss. It was understood to be the perfect experience which occurs when there is complete union between the male and female principles of the universe.

When Nirvana was thus identified with the state of supreme bliss, the attainment of an absolute state of supreme bliss was accepted to be the summum bonum of life by all the Tantric Buddhists. For the realisation of such a state of supreme bliss they adopted a course of sexo-yogic practice. This conception of Maha-sukha is the central point round which all the esoteric practices of the Tantric Buddhists grew and developed.¹⁰

The form of Buddhism associated with the quest for mahasukha or supreme bliss is known as Vajrayana, and it is the third phase succeeding Hinayana and Mahayana. In Bengal, Vajrayana developed between the eighth and eleventh centuries.¹¹ It is probable that there was a parallel movement in Nepal, for it is known there was a frequent exchange of scholars and pilgrims between Bengal and Tibet by way of Nepal. However, there is no definite information available at present about the history of Buddhism in Nepal during those centuries.

¹⁰Dasgupta, Obscure Religious Cults, p. 37.
¹¹Ibid., p. 13.

The affinities with Buddhism in Bengal are striking, but it is also possible that Vajrayana Buddhism developed in Nepal by diffusion from Bengal.

The existence of Buddhism in Nepal from an early period, is asserted by Eliot, who favors the theory of parallel growth. According to Eliot, Buddhism probably existed in Nepal

since the time of Asoka and underwent the same phases of decay and corruption as in Bengal. But whereas the last great monasteries in Bengal were shattered by the Mohammedan invasion of 1193, the secluded valley of Nepal was protected against such violence and Buddhism continued to exist there in name. It preserved a good deal of Sanskrit Buddhist literature but has become little more than a sect of Hinduism.¹²

Landon also stresses the affinities with Bengali Buddhism. He maintains that Buddhism in Nepal

is less remarkable as a form of the extravagances of northern Buddhism than as a guide to, or at least a suggestion of, the

¹²Charles Eliot, Hinduism and Buddhism: An Historical Sketch, I (London: Edward Arnold and Co., 1921), p. xxviii.

last phases of the faith in Bengal before it was reabsorbed rather than reconquered by Brahmanism.¹³

By the twelfth century, the Buddhist dynasty in Bengal was overthrown by Hindu invaders. The Hindu dynasty was short-lived for it was overthrown within a century by the Mughals. Many of the monasteries were destroyed and the inmates fled to Nepal and Tibet. The forms of Buddhism which they brought with them either blended with those already prevailing, or assisted in the growth of Vajrayana Buddhism out of an earlier phase of Buddhism. No major changes have taken place since, except for those changes which have resulted from syncretization with Hinduism. According to one of the leading authorities of the last fifty years, Buddhism in Nepal, except for Lamaism, is still largely Vajrayana.¹⁴

Because Vajrayana Buddhism stresses the path to bliss through sexual union, images of the deities are frequently shown in erotic poses. Tucci, in describing his trip through Nepal, remarks on the prevalence of erotic images throughout the country.¹⁵

¹³Landon, Nepal, II, p. 216.

¹⁴Shastri, The Modern Buddhism and Its Followers in Orissa, pp. 7-8.

¹⁵Giuseppe Tucci, Tra giungle e pagode [Through Jungle and Pagoda] (Rome: La Libreria Dello Stato, n. d.), p. 32.

Lamaism

Buddhism reached Tibet by the seventh century, but it made little initial headway against the indigenous Bon religion. It was not until the middle of the eighth century, when Padmakara or Padma-Sambhava was invited to Tibet from India, that Buddhism displaced the Bon religion and assumed paramountcy. Padma-Sambhava introduced monasticism, and established several centers of scholarship for the study of Buddhist texts.

According to Eliot,

Lamaism may be defined as a mixture of late Indian Buddhism (which is itself a mixture of Buddhism and Hinduism) with various Tibetan practices and beliefs. The principal of these are demonophobia and the worship of human beings as incarnate deities.¹⁶

An important element of Lamaism is the belief that deities are incarnated in human form. "Lama" is a Tibetan word which means "supreme one." In the strict sense, it should be applied only to abbotts and the most learned of the ordained monks. However, it has come by courtesy to be generally extended in popular

¹⁶Eliot, Hinduism and Buddhism: An Historical Sketch, III, p. 382.

usage to all ordained monks.¹⁷ It is not clear whether the learning signifies that they are divine incarnations, or whether divinity is attained through learning.

Another important element of Lamaism is the belief in demons, founded on the notion that there are good and bad spirits in the world. A curious result is that images of the good deities are often portrayed in horrible poses, particularly those within the temples.

The idea inspiring these monstrous images is not the worship of cruelty and terror, but the hope that evil spirits may be kept away when they see how awful are the powers which the Church can summon.¹⁸

Lamaism is important only in the northern part of Nepal, where Buddhist monasteries have been established. The Tibetan influence is pronounced, and the people of the area also appear to be of Tibetan or Mongoloid origin.¹⁹

The Lamaist temple is known as a gompa. Unlike to the Hindu temple, which is usually located in the center of the town or village,

¹⁷Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, edited by James Hastings (New York: C. Scribner, Sons, 1908-1927), VII, pp. 784-89.

¹⁸Eliot, Hinduism and Buddhism: An Historical Sketch, III, p. 382.

¹⁹See Chapter V, Ethnic Groups.

the gompa tends to be located in high places which are often remote from settled areas.²⁰

Hinduism

The system of caste which attributes special prerogatives to the Brahmans may have been introduced into Nepal at an early date by Aryan invaders. If so, it was subsequently dealt a severe blow by the rise of Buddhism, which seems to have virtually annihilated whatever Brahmanism existed for at least several centuries.

However, with the Muslim invasion of India, many orthodox Hindus were driven into the mountainous area north of the Terai in search of refuge. A Hindu dynasty had already been established in the Kathmandu Valley, and many of the refugee scholars were welcomed there. In addition, some refugee rulers, such as the King of Tirhout, established dynasties in principalities of varying size, and for varying periods. The Brahmans who fled to Nepal were seriously concerned lest the Mughals should utterly wipe out the Hindu tradition on the plains. In order

²⁰Jiro Kawakita, "Some Ethno-Geographical Observations in the Nepal Himalaya," The Japanese Journal of Ethnology, XIX, No. 1 (1955), pp. 42-43. Translated by Toshio G. Tsukahira.

to safeguard the tradition, they established in Nepal citadels of orthodoxy intended to perpetuate Hindu learning and beliefs. The local Hindu kings co-operated with them, and great force was added to the strengthening of Brahmanism in Nepal. The ruler of the Kathmandu Valley, Jaya Sthiti Malla, "organized anew the society and religion of Nepal upon a strictly caste basis" in collaboration with the refugee Brahmans.²¹

Another source of Brahmanical strength derived from the Gurkha rulers of western Nepal, who conquered the valley in the eighteenth century. They claimed to be descendants of refugee Rajputs, originating in Ujjain, and orthodox Hindus.²²

Among the masses, Hinduism took hold in a different form. The Tantric division into two universal forces became identified with Shiva, the meditating male god, and Shakti, the divine energy incarnated as his consort. The worship of Shiva has long been a religious form parallel to Buddhism. The Newars, for example, have been divided into two groups: Buddhamargis and Shivamargis. Marg means

²¹Landon, Nepal, II, p. 216.

²²Eliot, Hinduism and Buddhism: An Historical Sketch, II, pp. 116-19; W. Brook Northey and C. J. Morris, The Gurkhas: Their Manners, Customs and Country (London: John Lane the Bodley Head, Ltd., 1928), p. 75.

path or way, indicating that the individual is a follower of Buddha or Shiva.²³

According to Waddell,

the Nepalese allow their caste rules to sit very lightly upon them. A Hindoo's caste, in practice, usually resolves itself into what he will eat and drink, and what he will not. The Nepalese, however, have not yet much altered their habits in these respects, but eat and drink things that are tabooed by every strict Hindoo.²⁴

Eclecticism

One tradition within Buddhism developed the notion of a primordial Buddha, the Adi Buddha, who was construed as a First Cause and supreme deity. In practice, there came to be little recognizable difference between worship of the Adi Buddha and Shiva. Landon quotes an old saying that: "To worship Buddha is to worship Shiva."²⁵

²³K. P. Chattaopadhyay, "An Essay on the History of Newar Culture," Journal and Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, XIX, No. 10 (1923), p. 467.

²⁴L. A. Waddell, Among the Himalayas (Westminster: Archibald Constable and Co., 1899), p. 307. See also Chapter XVI, Social Values and Patterns of Living, below.

²⁵Landon, Nepal, II, p. 216.

Tantrism, which stresses yogic practices rather than ritual, permeated all religious thinking in Nepal and introduced a strong element of egalitarianism.

The Tantric influence in Kathmandu has not been a force of discrimination and isolation. It is all embracing and pervasive. Thus almost all temples have come to adopt the mode of worship in accordance with the Tantric system. People of all castes, not excepting the untouchables, and of all creeds, including the Shavite Hindu Newars, have tenaciously revered the Tantric rules. And in return they have been granted equality of rights to worship in the temples, sometimes even in the face of deep seated caste prejudices.²⁶

Actually, such equality may apply only in the larger temples, but no information is available.

The Nath cult, whose origins are shrouded in mystery, displays a curious combination of elements from Tantrism, Buddhism and Hinduism. It appears to be essentially a form of the Siddha cult which is of very ancient origin and which stresses the control of the psycho-chemical processes of the body which can be attained through yogic practices. Culture of the body leads to perfection and immutability,

²⁶Regmi, Ancient and Medieval Nepal, pp. 14-15.

thereby permitting the individual to attain an immortal spiritual life.²⁷ For the Nath cult, as for most of the other esoteric cults associated with Tantric Buddhism, Shakticism or Shaivism, we find that the practices contain mainly two elements. One of these is the complicated pattern of rites and rituals which is neither Hindu nor Buddhist in origin, but rather represents a heritage common to all the popular religious systems of India. The other element is yoga in its various forms, which is also a common heritage.²⁸

The chief deity of religious eclecticism in Nepal is Matsyendranath, also known as Machendranath. For the Buddhists, Matsyendranath is the incarnation of Avalokitesvara. For followers of the Nath cult, he was the spiritual guide of Gorakhnath, the most important teacher of the cult, who in turn is the patron deity of the Gurkhas as well as patron of a class of Shaiva ascetics.²⁹ According to Northey and Morris, "What St. George is to England, Machendra is to Nepal."³⁰

Among other deities, Kawakita reports the names of Bhagaban, Mahadeo, Vishnu, and

²⁷Dasgupta, Obscure Religious Cults, p. 220.

²⁸Ibid., p. 223.

²⁹Levi, Le Nepal, I, p. 352.

³⁰Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas: Their Manners, Customs and Country, p. 163.

Ganesh. The major female deities are Mahakali, Bhairabi, Durga, Banadevi, Sitalamai, and Mahalakshmi.³¹

The name Bhagaban is derived from Sanskrit and means deity. In India, it is usually spelled as Bhagavan. It is used in the Lamaist religion as a general term for the various gods and buddhas.

Mahadeo is a corruption of the Sanskrit mahadeva, which means great god. It is often used to designate the godhead manifested by the various particular gods, or may be used as another name for Shiva, who is sometimes regarded as a supreme godhead. His consort is Mahakali. The trident is frequently used as a symbol of Mahadeo or Shiva.

Vishnu, or his incarnation as Krishna, is worshipped throughout the Terai. The worshippers of Vishnu are known as vaishnavas, and in many ways have formed a successor movement to Tantrism. Emphasis is placed on spiritual love or devotion rather than on physical love and yogic practices.

Ganesh is portrayed as having an elephant's head on a human body. He is regarded as the god of knowledge. Kawakita reports many elephant-faced stone images of Ganesh in the Terai.

³¹Kawakita, "Some Ethno-Geographical Observations in the Nepal Himalaya," Part I.

Mahakali, Bhairabi and Durga are three manifestations of one female deity, or Shakti. They are, in their different forms, the consorts of Shiva. Their worship is frequently accompanied by animal sacrifices, and it is said that it was at one time the custom to offer human sacrifices. However, Kawakita found no such traces.

Sitalamai is the goddess of smallpox, and is revered by both Buddhists and Hindus, although she is by origin a Hindu deity. In fact, adjoining the famous Buddhist temple of Swayambhunath is a small temple to Sitalamai which is visited by members of both religions.³²

Festivals

The most popular festival in Kathmandu Valley is the Machendra-jatra, or the day when the image of Matsyendranath is ceremonially taken in his car from the temple at Patan for a short journey to the south and then back to town. Soon thereafter, on a specially appointed day, the image is exhibited publicly to the crowds who come from all parts of the Valley.³³ The ritual takes place during the early part of June. It is generally believed to bring the rain upon which the life of the Valley depends.³⁴

³²Landon, Nepal, I, p. 202; II, p. 217.

³³Ibid., I, pp. 211-12.

³⁴Ibid., p. 212.

Machendra is the most notable deity of Nepal and, like the others, is worshipped by followers of both creeds [Buddhism and Hinduism]. The god himself is a roughly hewn block of wood of a dark red colour. Once a year, on the approach of the rainy months, he is carried in a car (of which the upper structure, raised to a height of some sixty feet, is renewed annually) to a shrine on the banks of the Bagmati. He is then taken to the maidan. . . . , and there first his shirt and then the red log itself is exhibited to enthusiastic crowds.³⁵

The most important of the Hindu festivals is Dussera or Durga puja, which commemorates the victory of the goddess Durga over the buffalo demon. The festival lasts ten days and usually takes place early in October.³⁶ During the last days of the festival, large numbers of buffaloes and goats are sacrificed to the goddess, the Great Destroyer. The Tantric influence is seen in the identification of Durga as Shakti or the divine female energy.³⁷

Twenty days after the conclusion of Dussera is another Hindu festival known as Diwali. It lasts for five days and is particularly

³⁵Ibid., footnote.

³⁶Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas: Their Manners, Customs and Country, p. 75.

³⁷Shastri, The Modern Buddhism and Its Followers in Orissa, p. 12.

consecrated to Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and the consort of Vishnu.

According to Hindu mythology, Vishnu is said to have killed at this time of the year Marakasur, a hitherto invincible giant, after a desperate battle, and to have entered his city in triumph early on the following morning. The people illuminated the city and received him with joy, and from this cause the festival is called "The Festival of Illumination," and is kept up to commemorate this great victory of Vishnu.³⁸

Gambling, which is normally forbidden, is allowed during three days of the festival, and this has come to be one of the main attractions. Altogether, the festival lasts five days.³⁹

During Diwali, every house is illuminated each night by as many small lamps or other kind of illumination as the householder can manage. The lamps are set out in rows along the windows and also on the roofs. On the last day, the daughters of the household regard their brothers as deities, and go through a ceremony which includes placing the caste mark, by the sister, on the brother's forehead.⁴⁰

³⁸Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas: Their Manners, Customs and Country, p. 78.

³⁹Ibid., pp. 78-79.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 79.

Another major festival celebrated throughout Nepal is Holi. It is held in honor of Krishna, and usually takes place early in March. In many ways, it resembles spring festivals throughout the world, with emphasis on fertility. Obscenity, however, apparently is no longer as prevalent as formerly.⁴¹ The main ceremony consists in the erection of a wooden post, or a pine tree, with streamers of red and white cloth. On the last day of the festival, the pole and streamers are burned with much ceremony, symbolizing the burning of the body of the old year.⁴²

⁴¹Ibid., p. 80.

⁴²Ibid.; for further information about festivals in Nepal, see Daniel Wright, History of Nepal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1877).

PART C
SOCIAL GROUPS

Annex "A," Subparagraph 1f

CHAPTER VII

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Castes and Tribal System

The position of an individual in the social hierarchy in Nepal is largely determined by two factors: the caste to which the person belongs and the tribal group of which he is a member. Other factors--such as Indo-Aryan origin, orthodoxy in the observance of Hindu rites, ceremonies and customs, dietary habits, and, to a certain extent, the occupation followed by an individual--can be influential considerations. However, in essence these factors are closely tied up with the caste and tribal systems and they represent merely different aspects of a basic institutional pattern.

The caste system in Nepal presumably has never achieved the degree of rigidity which characterized the operation of this institution in most areas within India.¹ A comparatively high degree of flexibility has marked the functioning of the caste system in Nepal since the period in the first millenium A. D. when Brahmans and other caste Hindus

¹W. Brook Northey, The Land of the Gurkhas or the Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal (Cambridge: W. Heffer and Sons, Ltd., [1937]), p. 109.

from the Indian plains first introduced Hindu social and religious concepts into the country. The reasons behind this relative lack of rigidity are complex but are largely explained, it would seem, by the nature of the society with which the Indian emigrants came into contact in Nepal.

Buddhism, superimposed on an animistic base, was the predominant religion in Nepal prior to 1000 A. D.² Buddhism developed in India in part as a reaction against Brahmanism and, in particular, against the Brahmans' insistence on strict observance of caste regulations. Buddhism in its early stages specifically rejected the caste system and Buddhist social concepts had a broadly different orientation from that of Brahmanical Hinduism. The early Hindu migrants into Nepal, therefore, found their fundamental social and religious ideas in basic conflict with those already predominant in that country.

For a number of reasons, neither side was in position to win a complete victory over the other, the result being an interesting synthesis of both. The Brahmans diplomatically allowed caste Hindus--other than themselves--a degree of flexibility that would never have been admissable in India.³ The Buddhists, for their part, gradually accepted the caste

²Sylvain Levi, *Le Nepal*, I, *Annales du Musee Guimet*, Tome 17 (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1905), pp. 4-12.

³Ibid., pp. 28-32.

system as an integral part of the Hindu-Buddhist society that developed in Nepal and, among the Newars at least, a Buddhist caste system eventually emerged.⁴ Morris, in conjecturing on this question, stated that:

. . . . A wave of Lamaism from the north has met with a wave of Hinduism from the south. There has been no real collision at the places of impact but only a gradual coalescence. . . Lamaism in the north, orthodox Hinduism in the south; and between these two extremes are at present to be found every possible variety of mixture of the two religious ideas and all that they signify not only in the thoughts of the people but also in outward display and ceremonial custom.⁵

Another factor explaining the lack of rigidity in the Nepalese caste system is the manner in which this institution has been superimposed on the tribal system into which a large percentage of the population of Nepal

⁴K. P. Chattopadhyay, "An Essay on the History of Newar Culture," Journal and Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, XIX, No. 10 (1923), p. 495.

⁵C. J. Morris, "Some Aspects of Social Life in Nepal," Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society, XXII, Part 3 (July, 1935), p. 435.

was divided. The existence of tribal units in India and Nepal has always constituted one of the more difficult problems hampering the proper functioning--in a high caste Hindu's view at least--of the caste system. A tribal form of social organization does not fit easily into a caste hierarchy which is primarily occupational and racial in origin. Blunt, in his work on the caste system, suggested this problem when he stated:

A tribe is not a close corporation like a caste; it admits aliens who are willing to throw in their lot with it, especially women obtained by purchase or capture. It is not necessarily endogamous, though circumstances, especially its own and its neighbours' unwillingness to give their maidens to strangers, tend to make it so.⁶

In Nepal, this problem was complicated by the fact that Hindu political supremacy was due not so much to a conquest of the various tribes as to the high social prestige which was attached to an Indo-Aryan origin, even in ancient and medieval Nepal. There are numerous instances in Nepalese history in which a Buddhist-Mongolian tribe would accept Hindu kings, it would seem, because this

⁶E. A. H. Blunt, The Caste System of Northern India (London: Oxford University Press, 1931), p. 4.

raised the social prestige of the tribe.⁷ In India, according to Porter, the

aryan practice was to establish a member of the royal house in authority over conquered tribes and one of the tribal king's duties was to enforce caste custom and prevent varnasankara or confusion of castes.⁸

However, as the Hindu kings in Nepal usually were there only with the acquiescence of the fundamentally non-Hindu tribal peoples, there were practical political limitations on the powers of the Hindu royalty to enforce caste regulations.

Furthermore, the problem of assigning the various tribal groups--with the exception of the Thakurs and Chetris--to a definite status within the Nepalese caste system has never been solved. Most of the tribes in Nepal are neither completely in nor completely out of the caste structure, but rather have an ill-defined position somewhere on the periphery of this institution. About all that can be said is that their status falls somewhere between that of the higher castes--Brahmans,

⁷D. R. Regmi, Ancient and Medieval Nepal (Kathmandu, 1952).

⁸A. E. Porter, "Report on Bengal and Sikkim," Census of India, 1931, V, Part 1 (Calcutta: Central Publications Branch, 1933), p. 451.

Thakuris and Chetris--and the lower caste units in Nepalese society. The process of determining caste position in Hindu social philosophy is extremely complex and is the result of developments over a period of many centuries. This process is not well advanced in Nepal except among the higher castes and the Newars, who have been within the sphere of Hindu influence for over fifteen hundred years. The other Mongolian tribes in Nepal, for the most part, have had extensive contacts with Hindu elements for too short a period and with too limited results for them to be accepted by orthodox Hindu castes as an integral part of the caste system.

Another factor which differentiates the Nepalese caste system from the Indian is the minor role that occupational status plays in Nepal in contrast to India, where occupational castes are still of great importance. The British sociologist, L. S. S. O'Malley, commented that

the Nepalese castes are the least fettered, especially in regard to occupation. They are tribal and not functional castes, and a man may adopt nearly any occupation. A Brahman will work as a syce . . . or garden cooly, a Chhetri as a Khitmatgar, a Jimdar as a cook, etc.⁹

⁹L. S. S. O'Malley, 'Report: Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and Sikkim, "Census of India, 1911, V, Part 1 (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1913), p. 451.

As a general rule in Nepal a member of a caste can follow any occupation, with the exception of a few that are considered degrading, without endangering his caste status. It is only within those few occupational categories barred to the higher and intermediate castes--such as blacksmith, tailor, tanner, musician, etc.--that occupational castes have developed in Nepal.¹⁰ The Newars are an exception to this general rule, however, and it would appear that occupational castes have developed on an extensive scale from the highest to the lowest levels within the caste structure in this particular group.

There would appear to be, then, relatively more mobility in the Nepalese than in the Indian caste system. Caste, therefore, does not play as important a part in Nepalese life as it does in India, and caste regulations with regard to eating, drinking and marriage customs are comparatively less rigid. It is, after all, the regulations concerning marriage and commensality which are basic to the proper functioning of the social structure in a caste system. When groups can eat together and intermarry they are usually considered as social equals and where, as in Nepal, the rules on these subjects are not strictly adhered to, the caste system loses, to a certain extent, the rigid and inflexible character often ascribed to its operation in India.

¹⁰Ibid.

It should be noted, however, that this is not true of the higher castes in Nepal who have usually attempted to protect their exalted position within the Hindu caste system by a strict and orthodox adherence to traditional Hindu concepts. Northey says:

For though . . . those that belong to the Mongolian military tribes are not very rigid in such matters, it is very different in the case of the upper classes, whose lives are completely ordered by it, as one speedily discovers . . . It is indeed hardly too much to say that [a member of the upper classes] never performs a single action of any consequence without first considering whether his caste will be in any way affected thereby. . . . As strict Hindus, the ruling family and aristocracy of Nepal are rigid in complying with all the customs and observances of their faith.¹¹

There is some evidence that the Nepalese caste system is tending to become more and more rigid and that even the Mongolian tribes are becoming increasingly "Brahmanized" in their social and religious customs and thinking. The handbooks prepared by British Indian Army officials over the past century on the customs and practices of the military tribes are a good indication of this

¹¹Northey, The Land of the Gurkhas, p. 113.

process.¹² When Hodgson, the British Resident in Kathmandu in the first half of the nineteenth century, first recommended the recruitment of Nepalese into the British Indian Army, his principal argument was that they were much less concerned with caste regulations regarding diet and associations and, therefore, they would be far less trouble than the overly caste-conscious Hindus of the plains.¹³ A reading of the subsequent British Indian Army handbooks on the "Gurkhas" shows conclusively that the "Gurkha" tribesmen became more concerned with their dietary habits, indicating a tendency towards a more rigid adherence to basic Hindu regulations concerning these matters.

The factors behind the gradual spread of Hinduism are numerous but the most important would seem to be first, the higher social standing accorded to Indo-Aryan origin and Hindu orthodoxy and, second, the fact that

¹²See for instance E. Vansittart, "Tribes, Clans and Castes of Nepal," Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal, LXIII, Part 1; W. Brook Norlthey and C. J. Morris, The Gurkhas: Their Manners, Customs and Country (London: John Lane The Bodley Head, 1928); H. R. K. Gibbs, The Gurkha Soldier (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink & Co., 1944).

¹³William Wilson Hunter, Life of Brian Houghton Hodgson, British Resident at the Court of Nepal (London: J. Murray, 1896), pp. 106-10.

the political and social leaders in Nepal have, for many centuries, been strict Hindus who have done everything in their power to assist the "Hinduization" of the Nepalese social structure. The penal code in Nepal, for instance, was based on the Hindu Sastras, thus making the maintenance of Hindu law a state policy.¹⁴ Moreover, the anti-caste, anti-Brahman Hindu reform societies, such as the Brahmo Samaj and Arya Samaj, were suppressed by the Nepal Government whenever they attempted proselytizing activities in Nepal.¹⁵

Under the system in force in Nepal, each caste was governed by its own laws and customs. Neglect or breach of these laws not only entailed communal punishment, such as expulsion, but also was subject to legal prosecution, since the courts treated such offences as offences against the state as well as the caste.¹⁶ The highest functionary in this

¹⁴Shrivastava, Nepal Ki Kahani [Story of Nepal] (Delhi: Atmaran and Sons, 1955), p. 110 (private translation); L. S. S. O'Malley, Indian Caste Customs (Cambridge: University Press, 1932), p. 26.

¹⁵D. R. Regmi, A Century of Family Autocracy in Nepal (Nepali National Congress, 1950), p. 226.

¹⁶O'Malley, "Report: Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and Sikkim," pp. 456-57.

system was the Raj Guru, who was appointed by the Government to his position. The Raj Guru had the right to advise the Government on social and religious matters and it was his duty to prescribe the fitting penance and purificatory rites for violation of caste regulations. He presided over the ecclesiastical court, known as the Dharma Adhikari, which tried cases relating to caste. Even the Buddhists and Muslims in Nepal were subject to prosecution before this tribunal.¹⁷

Under the Raj Guru were subordinate officers who exercised jurisdiction in caste matters over groups of villages and were authorized to take fees from people who were temporarily outcasted.¹⁸ Within the castes themselves matters of caste discipline were tried by Panchayats whose membership might be restricted to the caste involved or might include the leaders of the various castes represented in a particular village or area.¹⁹ With both social and legal pressures weighted heavily in favor of Hindu concepts about what constitutes proper social behavior, it is easy to understand why Buddhist social ideals have gradually been replaced, and why even the Mongolian tribal groups have slowly become more and more Hinduized in their customs and practices.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 457-58.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 458.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 484.

It is still too early to ascertain what effect the 1950-1951 rebellion and the subsequent overthrow of the Rana regime, with its strict Hindu outlook, will have on the caste system in Nepal. Many of the political leaders who participated in the rebellion and who have attained important government positions in the period since 1950 have been influenced by developments in India, where the ruling party, the Indian National Congress, has declared itself in favor of removing caste distinctions. It would seem probable that the Government will no longer attempt to support the caste system by punishing violators of caste regulations as it did prior to 1950, although available reports do not specifically indicate whether the penal caste regulations have been revised or abolished. One Nepalese author, Shrivastava, has stated in a recent work that the enforcement of these regulations has become very loose since 1950.²⁰ Furthermore, in 1954 the Advisory Assembly passed a resolution calling for the abolition of "untouchability," an indication that important political leaders in Nepal are interested in reforming this particular aspect of the caste system at least.²¹ However, it should be remembered that the alleged movement towards greater rigidity and orthodoxy on caste matters has been the prevailing tendency during the past century.

²⁰Shrivastava, Nepal Ki Kahani, p. 111.

²¹Statesman, December 3, 1954, 7:4.

Tribal System

For a large proportion of the people in Nepal, social status is determined by the tribal group into which the individual happens to have been born. With the exception of the Newars, it has been the general practice in Nepal to treat all the members of a particular tribal group as though they belonged to the same general caste category. Thus, despite the existence of minor social distinctions within the Magar tribe, all Magars would be considered by other Nepalese as on an equal social basis.

It has already been stated that, except for the high-caste tribes, the exact position of the various tribes within the Hindu caste structure has never been precisely defined. The tribes can be divided into two principal categories as far as social standing is concerned: high-caste tribes and intermediate caste tribes. Within the high caste category are found three tribes whose order of rank is as follows: (1) Brahmans, (2) Thakurs, and (3) Chetris.²²

As far as the intermediate castes categories are concerned, the relative ranking of the various tribes is not so easily established. Gait, in his report for the 1901 Census, gives

²²E. A. Gait, "Report: Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and Sikkim," Census of India, 1901, VI, Part 1 (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1902), p. 377.

this ranking: (1) Gurung; (2) Magar; (3) Sunwar; (4) Jimdar (Khambu); (5) Limbu; (6) Yakha; (7) Manjhi; (8) Murmi; (9) Sherpa; (10) Tharu; (11) Thami; (12) Hayu; (13) Khawas; (14) Gharti; and (15) Kamara.²³

Other authors, such as Northey, Morris, Turner, Gibbs, Levi and Landon, present lists which differ in certain details from Gait's list and from each other. In general, however, the tribes usually are ranked into six main subcategories: the Gurungs and Magars are placed at the top, while the Newar tribe is given the second position, followed by the Kiranti tribes, the Khambu, Limbu and Yakhas. Next in line usually are the Sunwars and Murmis, who are given approximately equal status, while the Tibetan tribes such as the Sherpas are ranked slightly below them. At the bottom of the scale are found Tharus, Thamis, Hayus, Thakalis and numerous other small, non-Aryan tribal elements.

There would appear to be a number of factors that help explain the social rank given to the various tribes. Of primary importance is the racial origin, factual or imaginary, of the tribe. The Indo-Aryan elements are given the highest status, with their relative rating in theory, dependent upon and due to, the social position of their ancestors in Hindu society. At the top of the intermediate group

²³Ibid., p. 377.

are the Mongolian tribes, while slightly below them fall the tribes that have emigrated to Nepal from Tibet in relatively recent times. The lowest social group in the intermediate category consists of tribes of Dravidian or mixed Dravidian-Mongolian origin.

Within the intermediate category the ranking would seem to depend principally upon three factors: the nature of the association of the tribe with the ruling hierarchy; the degree to which the tribe has accepted Hindu customs and practices as far as dietary habits, marriage rules, and religious ceremony and rites are concerned; and the comparative position of similar tribal groups in India when a comparison is possible. These are generally applicable, rather than rigid, criteria. For instance, the Magar and Gurung tribes were closely associated with the Thakur dynasty, the Shahs, that finally established its dominance over the whole of Nepal in the mid-eighteenth century and for this reason they are given precedence over the other intermediate tribal groups. The Newars, for their part, have been more influenced by Hinduism than have most of the other Mongolian tribes; consequently they are ranked higher than the latter tribes. The Dravidian tribes, while having had a longer association with Hinduism than the Mongolian tribes, are usually given a low status on the Hindu social scale in India, and they are placed in a similar position in Nepal.

It should be emphasized that these rankings have usually been made by Western authorities who were largely dependent for their information upon two sources: the high-caste government officials with whom they were in touch and the Nepalese recruits in the British Indian Army. The reliability of these two sources on this question cannot be automatically assumed, since only the opinion of a relatively select group within Nepalese society is reflected. Certainly it seems unlikely that most of the tribes accept a subsidiary social position readily and it is doubtful, for instance, that a Newar or Limbu would consider himself lower on the social scale than a Magar or Gurung.

Tribe and Caste Internal Social Structure

The Brahmans

The Brahmans of Nepal occupy relatively the same high social position as, historically, in India. As a group, they are placed at the summit of the caste structure in Nepal.²⁴ They are expected to abide strictly by caste regulations with regard to food, drink, marriage and the faithful completion of caste and religious rites and ceremonies. Failure to

²⁴Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas, p. 122.

follow Brahmanic rules of conduct can lead to expulsion from the caste, which usually means relegation to the status of outcaste.

So far as Brahmans are concerned, caste rules are strictest on the subject of marriage. For a Brahman male to take a non-Brahman woman for his first wife might even lead to his expulsion from the caste, although this would not normally be the case as long as the woman was not of too low a caste in origin. However, the progeny of this type of union could not, under any circumstances, be classified as Brahman and would have to take a lower position in the caste scale, perhaps the caste of the mother.²⁵ If a Brahman should take a non-Brahman woman as a second wife, it would almost never result in his expulsion from the caste, but again the children of this marriage would have to take a lower caste classification. Any Brahman woman who marries a male of a lower caste automatically loses her caste status and would normally acquire the caste of her husband. The same would usually be true of the children of this type of marriage. Remarriage by Brahman widows or by divorcees is strictly forbidden by Brahmanic custom and this principle is adhered to by the Brahmans in Nepal.²⁶

²⁵Ibid., p. 123.

²⁶O'Malley, Indian Caste Customs, pp. 92-94.

Brahmanic dietary laws are also very strict and a Brahman is minutely regulated on the questions of what foods can be consumed, who can cook these foods for the Brahman, and with whom the foods can be eaten. The most important food restriction applies not only to Brahmans, but to all orthodox Hindus, the prohibition on consumption of the flesh of the cow in any form.²⁷ Vegetarianism is not obligatory with Brahmans but it would appear to be quite common, at least with the Brahmans living among the Magar and Gurung tribesmen in Western Nepal.²⁸ A Nepalese Brahman will not eat rice cooked by a member of any other caste nor in the presence of a lower caste person.²⁹ However the caste restrictions on the taking of water is not as strict in Nepal as in most areas of India, for Nepalese Brahmans will accept water from all but the low caste and outcaste groups.³⁰

²⁷Ibid., p. 115.

²⁸Jiro Kawakita, "Some Ethno-Geographical Observations in the Nepal Himalaya," Part I: "Cultural Distribution with Reference to Religion," The Japanese Journal of Ethnology, XIX, No. 1 (1955). Translated by Toshio G. Tsukahira.

²⁹Gait, "Report: Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and Sikkim," p. 377.

³⁰Ibid.

The Brahman caste in Nepal is divided into two main classes, the Upadhyaya and the Jaisi Brahmans. An Upadhyaya Brahman is the legitimate child of an Upadhyaya Brahman father and his Brahman wife, while Jaisi Brahmans are the descendants that resulted from an extramarital relationship between an Upadhyaya Brahman and a Brahman widow.³¹ According to the strict tenets of Hinduism, a widow cannot remarry. However, if a Brahman widow should contract an unofficial relationship with a Brahman, the children would be termed Jaisi, and the second class of Brahmans in Nepal had this origin. The Jaisi are distinctly of a lower class status than the Upadhyaya, as is indicated by the rule that the higher caste Brahmans cannot eat with the Jaisi Brahmans without endangering their caste status.³²

Thakurs and Chetris

Directly below the Brahmans on the social scale in Nepal are the Thakurs and Chetris, the tribal groups that have provided most of the political leadership in Nepal for many centuries. The members of these two tribes are Ksatriyas, who wear the sacred

³¹Vansittart, "Tribes, Clans, and Castes of Nepal," p. 239.

³²Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas, p. 122.

thread and are noted for their strict adherence to orthodox Hindu customs and practices. The Thakurs rank ahead of the Chetris, however, largely because the Thakur families are, theoretically, the descendants of the various royal families that ruled parts of Nepal prior to the Gurkha conquest of the entire country.³³

The Thakur tribe is divided into a number of clans: the Bam, Bansi, Jyu, Jiva, Man, Navakotya, Samal, Sen, Chand, Kalyan, Pokhrel, Singh, Hamal, Khan, Raika, Surajbansi, Raksya, Ismali, Malla, Rucal, Uchai, and Shah. The clans are often further subdivided into kindreds which frequently indicate the district in which a clan originated.³⁴ Most of the Thakur clans would seem to be comprised of the descendants of the royal Rajput families that migrated to Nepal hundreds of years ago. However, two or three have their origin in intercaste marriages between Thakurs and members of other castes. A Hamal Thakur, for instance, is the progeny of an Upadhyaya Brahman with a Thakur woman or a Thakur with a Brahman woman, while an Uchai Thakur is the result of a union between a Thakur and a Magar woman.³⁵

³³Ali Shah Iqbal, Nepal, the Home of the Gods (London: Sampson Low, Marston, n.d.), p. 178.

³⁴H. R. K. Gibbs, The Gurkha Soldier.

³⁵Vansittart, "Tribes, Clans and Castes of Nepal," p. 239.

One rather different caste custom followed by the Thakurs is that a member of this tribe need not adopt the sacred thread until he marries. This means that many of the normal caste restrictions concerning diet do not apply to Thakurs until after marriage; in the interval eating with members of other classes is permitted. However, after marriage a Thakur will only take rice prepared by a Brahman or another Thakur and the normal high caste regulations concerning dining companions also must be followed. A Thakur man may marry any Thakur girl of a clan other than his own so long as the caste rules with regard to tribal endogamy and clan exogamy are respected.³⁶

The Chetris, like the Thakurs, are divided into clans which in turn are subdivided into kindreds. There are about twenty Chetri clans, the most important of which are the Rana, Thapa, Adhikari, Baniya, Basanyet, Bhandari, Bohra, Bura, Gharti, Karki, Khatri, Khandka and Bisht.³⁷ Many of these clan names, such as Bura, Bharti, Rana and Thapa, are also the names of prominent Magar tribal clans. This situation is due to the fact that at the time of the arrival of Brahmans in Nepal the Magars who accepted Hindu practices and customs were granted status as

³⁶Gibbs, The Gurkha Soldier, p. 9.

³⁷Ibid., p. 12; Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas, p. 127.

Ksatriyas, were classified as Khas rather than Magars, and were allowed to wear the sacred thread while the Magar clansmen who resisted conversion to Hinduism were placed in a lower caste category.³⁸

There is also a subtribal group known as Matwala Chetris which is, according to Gibbs, the offspring of a Chetri father and a Magar or Gurung mother. Members adopt the clanname of the Chetri father but are not admitted into the caste of the father and no real Chetri, not even the father, will eat with them; nor do they wear the sacred thread. The Matwallas in recent years have tended to renounce any claim of connection with the Chetris and tend to form a separate tribal group. Some of the Matwala Chetris clans are Basanyet, Bhandari, Bisht, Bohra, Bura, Chalaune, Rana, Rawat, Rewle and Woli. These are found principally in the Sallian area of Western Nepal.³⁹

The Chetris follow the basic Hindu tenets with regard to marriage customs, adhering to the principles of clan exogamy, tribal endogamy and hypergamy, while respecting the bans on widow and divorcee remarriage.⁴⁰

³⁸Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas, p. 125.

³⁹Vansittart, "Tribes, Clans and Castes of Nepal," p. 221; Gibbs, The Gurkha Soldier, pp. 12-13.

⁴⁰Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas, pp. 127-30.

Under the dietary regulation in force a Chetri may eat boiled food with, or that has been prepared by, a member of any of the other Chetri clans, as well as Brahmans or Thakurs, but not the lower castes.⁴¹ This would seem to indicate that there are no important social distinctions between the various clans of Chetris and all of them are on an approximate level of equality, but this may not actually be the case. During the long period in which the Rana family dominated the government structure in Nepal, there were claims that they were given a privileged social position and ranked higher than the other noble families with the exception of the Royal Family.⁴² The tendency of the Ranas to seek marriage alliances with prominent Ksatriya families on the plains or the Nepalese Royal Family, rather than with Chetri families in Nepal, may be further indication that the Ranas considered themselves on a higher social level than members of the other clans which are nominally on the same social stratum.⁴³

The Newars

The Newars are probably the Nepalese tribe with the most highly developed and

⁴¹Gait, "Report: Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and Sikkim," p. 377.

⁴²D. R. Regmi, Whither Nepal (Kathmandu, 1952), p. 16.

⁴³Ibid.

complex social structure. The Newars are approximately evenly divided between those who classify themselves as Buddhist--Buddhamargis--and those who prefer to call themselves Hindus--Sivamargis. However, a synthesis between Buddhism and Hinduism has proceeded to such an extent among the Newars that it is impossible to distinguish between the two groups in many aspects of their social organization.⁴⁴ This is particularly true among the lower class Newars who generally are categorized as "mixed" or "heterodox" Buddhists by the authorities writing on the subject, since they do not definitely belong to either group.

The Newar caste system, as described here, has a long history going back at least to the fourteenth century A. D. when a Newar Hindu king, Jayasthiti Malla, invited Brahman pandits from India to prepare a treatise on the caste system of Nepal. According to Levi, these Brahmans decided that the Buddhist Banras were the true descendants of Brahmans and Ksatriyas who had been converted to Buddhism, but who were entitled, nevertheless, to a status equal to that of Brahmans and Ksatriyas.⁴⁵ The Newar population was divided into sixty-four castes, almost the number that most authorities

⁴⁴Chattopadhyay, "An Essay on the History of Newar Culture," p. 495.

⁴⁵Levi, Le Nepal, Vol. I, p. 230.

maintain still applies today, indicating that there have been few major changes in the Newar caste system for many centuries, although some castes have been granted a higher status than they had originally.⁴⁶

An important feature of the Newar caste system is that most of the castes have some particular function to perform in the various tribal religious festivals. The castes and hereditary occupational sections are as much religious as they are secular organizations.⁴⁷ Both the Hindu and Buddhist Newars are subject to a code of caste law known as the Gatti. By it the relative position and social duties of each caste are laid down and their privileges protected. Each family in each caste is assigned certain hereditary duties connected with the celebration of festivals and other religious ceremonies. Each family must carry out its duty on pain of fine or loss of caste. Violations of the Gatti are tried by a caste panchayat that has the power to fine or to expel violators from their caste.⁴⁸

The caste system plays a prominent part not only in the social organization of the Sivamargis but also in that of the Buddharmargis as well. The traditional Buddhist

⁴⁶Chattopadhyay, "An Essay on the History of Newar Culture," pp. 548-52.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 470.

⁴⁸O'Malley, "Report: Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and Sikkim," p. 484.

opposition to caste has, apparently, been modified by fifteen hundred years of continual contact with Hinduism and by the existence of a Hindu ruling class among the Newars. There are, according to Oldfield, 68 caste, subcaste and outcaste divisions among the Newars.⁴⁹ Fourteen of these are classified as Sivamargis, sixteen as Buddhamargis, twenty-nine as mixed Hindus and Buddhists and eight as outcaste or pariah classes. Levi follows Oldfield's categories, but other observers, such as Hodgson, Chattopadhyay, Hamilton and Vansittart, differ as to the total number of classes into which Newar society is divided; however there is considerable similarity in their descriptions. These classes function in the typical caste manner even among the Buddhamargis; the Hindu regulations concerning marriage and dietary habits apply with only minor modifications.⁵⁰

The Sivamargis are divided, in the normal Brahman classification, into the four traditional caste categories: Brahmans, Ksatriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras. These, in turn, include a number of subcaste groups. The Brahmans serve principally as priests and landowners; the Ksatriyas and Vaisyas as traders, merchants and landowners, while the Sudras are primarily domestic servants.⁵¹

⁴⁹H. A. Oldfield, Sketches from Nepal (London: Allen, 1880), p. 188.

⁵⁰Chattopadhyay, "An Essay on the History of Newar Culture," p. 495.

⁵¹Levi, Le Nepal, Vol. I, pp. 238-40.

According to Lévi and Oldfield, there are three classes of Brahmans. At the top are the Upadhyaya Brahmans, who serve as priests of the highest castes. Below them are Lawarju Brahmans, who serve as priests to the lower castes and, lastly, the Bhaju, whose religious function is limited to ceremonial rites for the dying.⁵² Chattopadhyay doubts whether the latter two categories actually function as a subcaste group.⁵³ There are, apparently, no caste restrictions that prevent the three Brahman groups from eating together or intermarrying, which suggests that they constitute a single caste group separated into sections which are assigned slightly different functions.

Lévi and Oldfield also divide the Ksatriya caste among the Sivamargis into three groups. The first of these is the Thakur or Malla class, consisting of the descendants of the old Newar Hindu royal family, the Mallas. After them come the Nikhus, classified as Ksatriyas, but given a religious function, rather than the military or political function common to Ksatriya castes. Finally, the Sheashus or Srestras constituted the warrior caste during the period in which there was an independent Newar Kingdom; for this

⁵²Ibid., p. 239; Oldfield, Sketches from Nepal, I, p. 177.

⁵³Chattopadhyay, "An Essay on the History of Newar Culture," p. 502.

reason, they are classified as Ksatriyas. The Thakurs do not intermarry with the two other Newar Ksatriya classes, indicating that they form a separate subcaste faction.⁵⁴ However, according to Chattopadhyay, the Nikhus and Srestras intermarry and eat together, an indication of membership in the same caste or subcaste.⁵⁵

The Vaisya caste is subdivided by Levi and Oldfield into four groups: the Joshi, Acharya, Bhanni and Gulcul Acharya. The sources available attribute different religious functions to these groups and the distinction between them is drawn on this basis. The Joshis are not priests but have the duty of expounding the Sastras to the other classes. The Acharyas serve as priests of the Talleju temples of Kathmandu and Bhatgaon, while the Bhanni are cooks of the gods in these temples. The Gulcul Acharyas function as priests for the smaller temples.⁵⁶ According to Hamilton, the Joshi are the descendants of a Brahman father and a Newar mother⁵⁷ while the Acharya are, in Hodgson's account, the descendants of the ancient Vaisya kings of

⁵⁴Ibid., pp. 508-09.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 505.

⁵⁶Levi, Le Nepal, Vol. I, pp. 239-40.

⁵⁷Francis Buchanan (later Hamilton), An Account of the Kingdom of Nepal (Edinburgh: Constable, 1819), p. 33.

Nepal.⁵⁸ Intermarriage and interdining between these four groups is forbidden by caste rules.⁵⁹

There are three classes of Sudras: the Mukhi, who are ordinary cooks and table attendants; the Lakhipar, who assist the Mukhi in their task; and the Bagho Shashu, who perform all domestic work except cooking. These are all "clean" Sudra castes and water can be accepted by all Newar Hindus from them, while food can be accepted from the first two.⁶⁰

The Buddhamargis are divided into three main caste groups: the Banras, Udas and the mixed castes or heterodox Buddhists. The Banras are accorded a status equal to that of the Brahmans among the Hindus. There are nine subdivisions among the Banras formed principally on economic lines. On the highest level are the Gubharju, who are priests of the highest class as far as the Newar Buddhists are concerned. The next four classes--the Barrhaju, Bikhu, Bhikshu and Nebhar--are all gold and silversmiths. The sixth class, the Nebharbharhi are workers in brass and tin, making metal images of gods

⁵⁸B. H. Hodgson, Essays on the Language, Literature, and Religion of Nepal and Tibet (London: Trubner, 1874).

⁵⁹Chattopadhyay, "An Essay on the History of Newar Culture," pp. 505-06.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 512.

and tinning metal dishes. After them comes the Tankarmi or makers of guns and cannons in iron. Finally, there are the Gangsabharhi and Chivarbharhi who are carpenters, workers in wood, and plasterers.⁶¹

Chattopadhyay traces the origin of the Banras to ancestors who were formerly celibate monks in Buddhist monasteries but were forced by the Gurkha conquerors to take wives. He maintains, together with Oldfield and Levi, that class distinctions among the Banras are "merely official, following the professions, not constituting any bar on commensality or intermarriage."⁶²

The term Uda includes Newars who follow a variety of occupations but are looked upon as members of the same caste. They are divided into seven classes, formed along occupational lines: Sikamis or carpenters, Maddikarmi or bakers, Thambals or makers of copper, brass and zinc vessels, Kassars or workers in metallic alloys, Lohakarmis or stone masons, Awas or tile makers and Uda Proper or traders and foreign merchants. However, all these classes eat together, and intermarriage is permissible among them. The Udas accept food from the hands of the Banras although the reciprocal is not true. They are the equivalent of the Vaisyas in the Newar Hindu caste system.⁶³

⁶¹Levi, Le Nepal, Vol. I, pp. 240-41.

⁶²Chattopadhyay, "An Essay on the History of Newar Culture," p. 513.

⁶³Ibid., pp. 520-21.

As to the mixed or heterodox Buddhists, there is little agreement among the various authorities in the field as to whether they should be classified as Buddhists, Hindus or as a separate group. Oldfield maintains that they are Buddhamargis, although he admits that they are heavily influenced by Hindu concepts.⁶⁴ Gubhaju, in the 1901 Indian Census, criticizes this classification and states that many of these classes should be placed in the Sivamargi list.⁶⁵

The mixed castes are divided into thirty sections by Oldfield and Levi. The first six of these are termed Jaipus, and these classes eat together and intermarry. These six divisions are: Jaipus and Bonis who are cultivators of the soil; Mus who are cultivators of the herb called Mussa; Danghus who are land surveyors and measurers; Karbujas who are hereditary musicians at funerals and who are also employed in agriculture; and Kumbars who are potters. The other classes are Dalli, a class of sepoy; Nalli, Yungwar and Gaukau who do various services in preparing the car of Matsyendranath for this religious festival; Chitrakar, painters of portraits, pictures and houses; Bhat, dyers of red color woolen and

⁶⁴Oldfield, Sketches from Nepal, pp. 184-87.

⁶⁵Gait, "Report: Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and Sikkim," pp. 453-54. This information was furnished by a Gubhaju of Kathmandu who discussed Oldfield's table with Gait.

hair clothes; Chhippah, dyers of blue colored cloth; Kana, ironsmiths; Nau, barbers; Sarmi, mustard oil extractors; Kaussa, inoculators against smallpox; Tippah, vegetable cultivators; Kalthar, wound-dressers; Pulpul, carriers of lights at funerals; Konar, spinning wheel makers; Gartho, gardeners; Tatti, workers in cotton-wool cloth; Ballah and Lamu, Palki-bearers for the royal family; Pihl, makers of wicker-work baskets and umbrellas; Gaowah and Nanda Gaowah, cowherds; and Ballahmi, woodcutters and sellers of household fuel.⁶⁶

Finally, at the bottom of the Newar social scale are eight castes considered to be "impure" or outcastes. The other castes can neither eat nor drink, accept water from them, nor intermarry with them. Even their touch is considered to pollute a caste Hindu or Buddhist. Levi classifies these castes as mixed, but Gubhaju states that they had all become Sivamargis in recent years.⁶⁷ Since the outcastes are, in effect, outside of both the Buddhist and the Hindu religious system--as neither Banras nor Brahmans will serve as their priests--this question cannot be answered with any finality. The eight "impure" castes among the Newars are: Nai or Kassai who are butchers, killers and sellers of

⁶⁶Levi, Le Nepal, Vol. I, pp. 241-43.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 244; Gait, "Report: Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and Sikkim," p. 455.

buffalo meat; Joghi, who are musicians at Newar festivals; Dhunt, another musician caste; Dhauwi, woodcutters and charcoal burners; Kulu, leather workers; Puriya, fishermen, executioners and dog-killers; Chamkallak, sweepers; and Sangar, washermen.⁶⁸

Magars, Gurungs, Murmis and Sunwars

The internal social structure of these four tribes is much less complex than that of the Newars. While there are subdivisions within each of these tribal groups which do affect the social standing of the individual members, they have not yet reached the point where they constitute a regular caste or sub-caste hierarchy. These divisions are important only insofar as the attitudes of the tribesmen themselves are concerned and do not, in most instances, affect the standing of the tribe members in the social structure of Nepal as a whole. For example, socially the attitude of a Newar toward a Magar would not distinguish between Magar clans.

While fifty years ago a number of the Western commentators on the Nepalese social structure assumed that the clan system in the various tribes would eventually develop into a full-fledged caste structure, this does not

⁶⁸Chattopadhyay, "An Essay on the History of Newar Culture," pp. 546-47.

seem to have occurred. The ban on marriage within the clan is a major deterrent to the development of the clans into castes or sub-castes since a caste system normally functions according to the principle of endogamy. The tribe continues to be the main determinant of position within the social hierarchy in the case of these tribal groups.

The Magar tribe, according to Gibbs, is divided into seven clans: Ali, Bura or Burathoki, Gharti, Pun, Rana, Roka, and Thapa.⁶⁹ However, other authorities, such as Landon,⁷⁰ or Northey and Morris,⁷¹ list only six clans among the Magars, excluding the Roka clan which Gibbs includes. All clans appear to be approximately equal in social status.⁷² Interclan marriages are normal as the rules of clan exogamy apply; consequently, the social distinction between the various clans cannot be very great. There are, furthermore, no restrictions concerning interclan commensality, which is another indication of the social equality of the various Magar clans.⁷³

The marital regulations only specifically ban marriage between an individual and

⁶⁹Gibbs, The Gurkha Soldier, p. 17.

⁷⁰Perceval Landon, Nepal, II (London: Constable and Co., Ltd., 1928), p. 244.

⁷¹Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas, p. 190.

⁷²Ibid., p. 190.

⁷³Gibbs, The Gurkha Soldier, p. 17.

members of the clan of which that person's father is a member. Prohibited degrees are reckoned by the standard formula followed by most Nepalese hill tribes in which three generations in the father's ancestral line is the usual criterion.⁷⁴ A somewhat complex system of cross-cousin marriages is allowed under which, for instance, a Magar may marry the daughter of his mother's brother but not the daughter of his father's sister. On the other hand, a Magar girl may marry the son of her father's sister.⁷⁵ According to Gibbs, the modern tendency is to avoid cousin marriages and for a man to marry outside his parents' clans.⁷⁶ A widow may not remarry by the standard ritual (byah), but may live with a man and, in such cases, is counted as his wife. Her children are considered legitimate and rank as Magars and they share in their father's property on equal terms with the children of a wife married in the regular form.⁷⁷

The Gurungs are divided into two major groups: the Charjat Gurungs, who are subdivided into four clans, and the Sorajat Gurungs, who are subdivided into sixteen clans. The clans, in turn, consist of kindreds

⁷⁴H. H. Risley, The Tribes and Castes of Bengal, II (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1892), p. 74.

⁷⁵Gibbs, The Gurkha Soldier, p. 17.

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷Risley, The Tribes and Castes of Bengal, II, pp. 74-75.

or families.⁷⁸ At one time, apparently, intermarriage between the two major divisions of the Gurung tribe was forbidden. Risley classified the Charjat and Sorajat Gurungs as two distinct endogamous subcastes.⁷⁹ However, according to Northey and Morris, "the once rigid distinction between the two classes is beginning to break down," and intermarriage between the two groups has become quite common.⁸⁰

The Charjat Gurungs are, traditionally, the aristocracy of the tribe and are entitled to social precedence within the tribal structure. This is due, in theory, to a legend which traces the origins of the Charjat Gurungs to the high-caste wife of an early Shakur king, while the Sorajat Gurungs trace their ancestry to this king's second wife who was of low-caste birth. Within the Charjat division, one of the clans, the Ghales, enjoy the highest social position since they are, supposedly, the descendants of the Gurung dynasty that ruled the tribe prior to the advent of the Gurkha monarchy, and also because they functioned as priests for the Charjat Gurungs until pre-empted from this position by the Brahmans.⁸¹

⁷⁸Vansittart, "Tribes, Clans and Castes of Nepal," pp. 227-28.

⁷⁹Risley, The Tribes and Castes of Bengal, p. 304.

⁸⁰Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas, p. 192.

⁸¹Ibid., pp. 192-93.

As far as marriage regulations are concerned, a Gurung may marry any person outside of his own clan. Cross-cousin marriages are permitted, but only in accordance with a custom that differs somewhat from that practiced by the Magars, for a Gurung is permitted to marry the daughter of his father's sister as well as the daughter of his mother's brother.⁸² A Gurung is not necessarily restricted to finding a marital companion within his own tribe, for the regulations requiring tribal endogamy are no longer strictly enforced. Intertribal marriages between Gurungs, Magars, Sunwars, Murmis and Kirantis have become quite common despite the disapproval of older and more conservative Gurungs. As far as widows and divorcees are concerned, the rules followed by the Magars banning remarriage but allowing cohabitation also apply to the Gurungs.⁸³

Closely related to the Gurungs in many respects are the Murmis, or Tamangs, who have, according to Gibbs, a "particular affinity for Gurungs of the Ghale clan." The Murmis are divided into two main divisions: the Bara Tamangs, subdivided into twelve thars or clans, and the Atharajat Murmis, subdivided into eighteen thars. The Bara Tamangs are supposed to be socially the

⁸²Gibbs, The Gurkha Soldier, p. 25.

⁸³Risley, The Tribes and Castes of Bengal, pp. 304-05.

superior, but, like the Gurung divisions, the distinctions between the two groups have tended to disappear in recent years.⁸⁴ The Murmi marriage customs are basically similar to those of the Gurungs, with clan exogamy and tribal endogamy the preferred practice. While intermarriage between the Bara and Atharajat Murmis was once frowned upon, it has become quite common recently as have intertribal marriages between Murmis and Gurungs.⁸⁵

The Sunwar tribe is also divided into three main groups: the Maila, consisting of twelve thars or clans; the Jetha, consisting of ten clans; and the Kancha.⁸⁶ There are, apparently, no social distinctions between the various clans with the possible exception of the Jirel clan of the Maila group, which is supposedly a mixed clan arising from a cross with some tribe not belonging to the Mukhya group (Khas, Magars, and Gurungs). Intermarriage among all the clans is permitted with the exception of the Jirel clan, but it is doubtful whether this restriction has been maintained until the present time. Marriage

⁸⁴Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas, p. 259.

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 256.

customs with regard to clan exogamy and widow and divorcee remarriage are the same as those practiced by the Magars.⁸⁷

Kiranti Tribes

The three tribes considered in this section are the Khambus, Yakhas and Limbus, who together constitute the Kiranti tribal group, according to present terminological usage. The Khambus and Yakhas are often classified together as Rais or Jimdars, although there is some confusion on this subject. A number of commentators maintain that the Jimdars are a separate tribe which has intermarried with the Khambus and Yakhas on such a scale that the distinctions between the three groups have disappeared.⁸⁸ Other authorities have assumed that the term Rai or Jimdar is nothing more than an honorific title used by the Khambus and Yakhas today. According to Northey and Morris, when the Gurkhas conquered eastern Nepal they granted commissions to the Khambu leaders under which they obtained the title of Rai or chief, and this term is used today to designate

⁸⁷Risley, The Tribes and Castes of Bengal, p. 292.

⁸⁸See for instance, Victor Barnouw, "Eastern Nepalese Marriage Customs and Kinship Organization," Southwestern Journal of Anthropology, II, No. 1 (Spring, 1955), p. 16.

the whole tribe as well as the Yakhas with whom the Khambus have intermarried extensively.⁸⁹

The internal structure of the Limbu tribe appears to be complicated, and there is no agreement on its proper subdivisions among the sources available on the subject. Risley states that the tribe is divided into thirteen endogamous subtribes, each of which includes a number of exogamous clans.⁹⁰ Northey and Morris claim that the land of the Limbus is divided into ten districts, each inhabited by a separate subtribe group.⁹¹ The legendary origin of the Limbu tribe explains the basis for its subdivision and also, probably, accounts for the confusion as to the number of these subdivisions. A Limbu tradition attributes the origin of the tribe to ten brothers who migrated to eastern Nepal accompanied by three spiritual advisers. The ten subtribes are supposedly the descendants of these ten brothers⁹² and it is probable that the three additional subtribes mentioned by Risley trace their legendary ancestry to the three spiritual advisers who accompanied the brothers to Nepal. The subtribal distinctions do not appear to be of any great importance and Risley's

⁸⁹Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas, pp. 215-16.

⁹⁰Risley, Tribes and Castes of Bengal, II, p. 16.

⁹¹Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas, p. 218.

⁹²Ibid., pp. 218-19.

classification of them as endogamous sub-tribal groups is in question. Certainly they do not constitute subcaste groups, since none of the regulations with regard to marriage and commensality that usually accompany this form of hierarchical structure is apparent among the Limbus.

Even less is known about the internal structure of the Rai tribes than about that of the Limbus. Northey and Morris state that the Khambus and Yakhas are subdivided into 72 subtribes, of which the ten most important are the Atpahare, Bantawa, Chamling, Kulung, Lohorong, Nawahand, Nechali, Sangpang, Tulung and Chaurasia. Of these ten, three claim to have come originally from Lhasa in Tibet and seven from Banaras in India.⁹³ Risley, in his work, divides the Khambus and Yakhas into 70 subtribes and clans.⁹⁴ In any case, the lines drawn between the various clans no longer appear to be of importance.

The marriage customs of the three Kiranti tribes are very similar, with the principle of clan exogamy constituting the main restriction. Cross-cousin marriage of the types favored by the Magar and Gurung tribes is never permitted among the Kirantis. While the practice of tribal endogamy is considered

⁹³Ibid., p. 238.

⁹⁴Risley, Tribes and Castes of Bengal, II, pp. 76, 141, Appendix I.

the ideal by tradition-minded Kirantis, and a Khambu should marry within his own tribe, intermarriage among the three Kiranti tribes is common. Moreover, while marriage outside the Kiranti tribal group is considered as contrary to accepted social and caste customs traditionally, there is evidence of considerable intermarriage between Limbus and Lepchas from Sikkim, who are outside the Hindu caste system. Marriages of Khambus and Yakhas with Lepchas are less frequent, but do occur without any serious social disfavor attached. Normally what would happen in cases of intermarriage between a Kiranti male and non-Kiranti female is that the woman would be adopted by some member of the Kiranti tribe prior to the marriage ceremony, thus nominally adhering to the principle of tribal endogamy.⁹⁵

The relative social standing of the three Kiranti tribes is not clear. Northey presents a hierarchical structure with the Rai tribes at the top and the Limbus slightly lower on the social scale.⁹⁶ Barnouw, however, states that the three tribes are considered to be on a plane of equality.⁹⁷ Tribal regulations with regard to marriage and commensality would

⁹⁵Barnouw, "Eastern Nepalese Marriage Customs and Kinship Organization," pp. 16-17.

⁹⁶Northey, The Land of the Gurkhas, p. 93.

⁹⁷Barnouw, "Eastern Nepalese Marriage Customs and Kinship Organization," p. 16.

seem to indicate that this latter interpretation is a sounder description of intertribal social relations today.

The Bhotian Tribes

The Bhotian tribes are almost wholly Tibetan in their manners and customs and they appear to be largely unaffected by Hindu social concepts so far. There is no caste system among the Bhotias⁹⁸ and tribal subdivisions are based solely on the tsosum (clan). Information available regarding the Bhotias deals principally with the Sherpa tribe, the best known of the Bhotian tribes in Nepal. Probably other Bhotian tribes are organized similarly to the Sherpas but evidence is inadequate.

The Japanese sociologist, Kawakita, has described the clan system in the Sherpa tribe in some detail. Each tsosum (clan) consists of a number of families; each of these families (nangzang) has a head called the shepachemo. Its members are called nyesang. It is usually claimed that all the nangzang nyesang within a tsosum are descended from a common patrilineal ancestor. Families in the main line of descent are called trongning. The head family in the main line within each tsosum is called the tshong.

⁹⁸Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas, p. 253.

Families who claim that they are descended patrilineally from the ancestor of the tshong constitute the nangzang of each tsosum. Members of the various nangzang are known as phazang to each other.

Marriage is patrilocal and each tsosum observes strict exogamy. Inter-marriage between phazang is also taboo. There is another term for relatives, phungyha, which includes not only members of the same tsosum, but also those related through the female line. Phungyha relatives are also forbidden to marry. Even if two tsosum should be only collaterally related, this apparently bans marriage between members of the two clans.⁹⁹

There is a minor subdivision among the Sherpas called the kagate. The origin of this group is stated to be from ancestors who came from Tibet, settled in the eastern part of Nepal and were engaged in paper-making. However, the Kagate Sherpas do not appear to constitute a separate element within the Sherpa tribe, since the two groups intermarry freely and are, in fact, indistinguishable in appearance and customs.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹Jiro Kawakita, "Some Ethno-Geographical Observations in the Nepal Himalaya," Part I: "Cultural Distribution with Reference to Religion."

¹⁰⁰O'Malley, "Report: Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and Sikkim," p. 510.

Other Tribes and Castes

There are numerous small tribes in Nepal about whose internal structure or caste organization little is known. The most important of these is the Tharus inhabiting large sections of the Nepal Terai. The Tharus is subdivided into six subtribal groups: the Chitaunia, Belwadhiya, Kochila, Iswajitauni, Naua, and Purbiya, which are further subdivided into numerous clans or septs. The rule of clan exogamy is followed by the Tharus as far as marriage customs are concerned.¹⁰¹ Another tribal group is the Dhimals, which is divided into three classes: Agnia, Later, and Dungia. Each of these three groups consists of a number of clans. The members of the three basic sections are not prohibited from intermarriage, although the Agnia Dhimals consider themselves of a higher social ranking than the other two and as a rule marry within their own group.¹⁰²

In Nepal there are also a number of occupational castes which have many of the attributes of a tribal system and are termed "menial tribes" by Leonhard Adam. The most important of these are the Damai, tailors and musicians, Kami, blacksmiths, Sunnar, goldsmiths, Kumhal, potters, Pore, sweepers, and Sarkhi, shoemakers, leather

¹⁰¹Risley, Tribes and Castes of Bengal, II, p. 314 and Appendix I, pp. 138-39.

¹⁰²Ibid., II, p. 225.

workers.¹⁰³ There are also two castes consisting of former slaves who have been freed either by their masters or by an edict of the Nepal Government. The first of these is the Gharti, which consists of slaves who had been freed prior to the 1924 Government edict freeing all slaves in Nepal. The other caste is termed the Siva Bhaktis. All slaves who were freed under the 1924 law automatically belong to this caste. The latter caste may intermarry with the former and there is some indication that it is gradually being absorbed into the Gharti caste.¹⁰⁴ Almost without exception, these castes are on the lowest rung of the social and caste ladder in Nepal and have either a low caste or "untouchable" status.

¹⁰³Leonhard Adam, "Social Organization and Customary Law of Nepalese Tribes," American Anthropologist, XXXVIII (1936), p. 536.

¹⁰⁴Porter, "Report on Bengal and Sikkim," p. 473.

CHAPTER VIII

FAMILY

The extended-joint-family system is generally found throughout Nepal, although there are some signs that it is now beginning to modify.¹ In addition to the nuclear parents and their children, the household may also be shared by the father's brothers along with their families. According to Morris² it is not uncommon for households to comprise twenty to thirty persons. In the four villages studied by Kawakita, the families averaged 5 to 8.5 members.³

The figures given by Morris may reflect a confusion between family and household. It appears to be fairly common in Nepal for more than one family to share a common household. Under normal usage, a household would be defined as centered around a common kitchen or hearth. However, in Nepal there are houses which, though they contain different kitchens, may be considered as a single household because all the members are related.

¹C. J. Morris, "Some Aspects of Social Life in Nepal," Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society, XXII, Part 3 (July, 1935), pp. 444-45.

²Ibid.

³Jiro Kawakita, "Some Ethno-Geographical Observations in the Nepal Himalaya," Part II, unpublished translation, p. 105.

Each family has a head, who may be called a house master. The head or house master is generally the most prominent male member of the family, and not necessarily the eldest. Selection is made on the basis of strength and ability to develop the family. In this sense, the status of head or house master is not an ascribed, but an achieved, one.⁴ The family is usually designated by the name of the head or house master.

Either personal differences or the growth of the family may lead to branching off with the selection of a new head while the old one still lives. In such cases, another kitchen will be built, and some division of the rooms will take place, although all will remain in the same building. There are many different ways and circumstances under which a household can be divided. Kawakita describes a one-storied house in Tharughat Bazar with a wall in the center dividing the house into two parts. In one lives the mother and in the other her son and his wife, each with a different kitchen.⁵

Normally, the kitchen or hearth provides the focal point for the family. Property

⁴Ibid., p. 120

⁵Jiro Kawakita, "Some Ethno-Geographical Observations in the Nepal Himalaya," Part I: "Cultural Distribution with Reference to Religion," The Japanese Journal of Ethnology, XIX, No. 1 (1955), p. 33. Translated by Toshio G. Tsukahira.

is owned in common, and contributions are made to the joint household funds by all earning members. The head or house master is in charge of the funds and usually makes the final decision on expenditures.

The importance of the hearth as a symbol of family unity is very great. In the north of Nepal, and apparently elsewhere in the country, the hearth is regarded as sacred. Only members of the family are allowed to approach it. To dirty the hearth or fireplace in any way would be a serious sin, for it would mean defilement of its sacred purity.⁶

The sons' wives are brought back to the parental home after the marriage ceremony, unless a division has taken place. Usually the eldest female member of the family is in charge of the kitchen, and the sons' wives are expected to work under her supervision.

There is a custom among the Thakalis whereby the fathers of the prospective bride and bridegroom arrange their children's marriage. After the ceremony, the girl is sent to her husband's house, but her father does not recognize the marriage until the first child is born. He then gives many presents,

⁶Giuseppe Tucci, Tra giungle e pagode [Through Jungle and Pagoda] (Rome: La Libreria Dello Stato, n. d.), pp. 70-71.

including jewelry, money, clothing and food, to the husband's father.⁷

The houses in the Kathmandu Valley are usually two-storied, with the ground floor used for the animals and storage. The family occupies the second story, and it often is crowded. The typical village in the Valley consists of about half a dozen such houses, built of stone or baked mud, with a thatched roof and space for the smoke to escape since no chimneys are used. Outside the Valley, the house is usually made only of bamboo and reeds, in which case division of households is more apt to take place. One author suggests that every man builds himself a hut when he marries, but that does not appear to be the general rule.⁸

The most common source of friction in the household derives from disagreements among the women members of the family who share a common kitchen. In polygamous households, where there is more than one wife, the eldest wife has precedence, and even the stronger legal claim on her husband. But when a younger wife is more attractive to him, disputes will follow, particularly since the full marriage ceremony is usually performed only for the first wife. In addition,

⁷Kawakita, "Some Ethno-Geographical Observations in the Nepal Himalaya," Part I, p. 81. For additional information about marriage customs, see Chapter XVI pp. 265-78.

⁸R. N. W. Bishop, Unknown Nepal (London: Luzac, 1952), p. 46.

there will be numerous children underfoot in crowded quarters, other relatives of varying status, and the ever-present household animals. Particularly in the Kathmandu Valley, where the houses are larger but fewer in number,

The atmosphere is far from peaceful, as the house, though often quite large, will be overrun with children, and various indigent relatives, whose kinship is frequently of a surprising remoteness.⁹

Among the Gurkhas, children are always welcome. The birth of a child is the cause for much feasting and celebration, particularly for a boy, and especially for the first-born. The reason for the rejoicing in the birth of the first son is that only a son can properly carry out the funeral rites of his parents.¹⁰

Family savings are usually put into jewelry which is worn by the women members. Indeed, the wealth of a man is usually judged by the number of armlets, bangles, anklets, necklaces, rings, earrings, studs, brooches and other ornaments with which his wife is bedecked.¹¹ In cases of divorce resulting

⁹Ibid., p. 51.

¹⁰W. Brook Northey, The Land of the Gurkhas or the Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal (Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons, Ltd., [1937]), p. 112.

¹¹Bishop, Unknown Nepal, p. 49.

from the wife's infidelity, she may be required to return the ornaments to her husband.¹²

Infidelity formerly was treated as a great crime. The punishment was meted out by the aggrieved husband with his kukri. The nose and lips of the wife were cut off and the man was hacked to pieces--unless he was willing to humiliate himself by crawling under the outstretched leg of the husband. Now, cases of infidelity are dealt with through the law courts or by a court of arbitration consisting of eight or ten village notables. The husband is usually awarded his original marriage expenses, which are considered ample compensation for the loss of a faithless spouse.¹³

There is a difference of opinion among observers about eating habits within the family. Bishop states clearly, "The Gurkha family dines together; there is no segregation of women and children."¹⁴ On the other hand, Northey and Morris state,

Where women are present the food is cooked by them, and, when ready, set before the men-folk of the house. The women do not eat with the men, however,

¹²Northey, The Land of the Gurkhas, p. 105.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Bishop, Unknown Nepal, p. 52.

and their share consists of what is left over after the men have finished.¹⁵

Table service consists of small beakers and plates. Food is eaten with the hands, without the use of cutlery. Guests of another caste are usually served on the veranda outside the house. All meals are consumed with the members of the family either squatting or reclining on the floor.¹⁶

The homes are very simply furnished. There are no beds, as members of the family sleep on mats spread on the floor.¹⁷ The peasant's hut may consist of little more than a kitchen with sleeping quarters and a sitting room. On the other hand, the nobility have built extraordinarily large and well furnished palaces with every modern convenience.

The kinship structure is elaborate, and family ties are very strong. In Eastern Nepal, the bride and groom will show considerable respect to their parents-in-law, and will usually remain silent in their presence. The bride will not look at her father-in-law, although she need not avoid him. However, there is a definite avoidance relationship between the man and his wife's elder sister, as

¹⁵W. Brook Northey and C. J. Morris, The Gurkhas: Their Manners, Customs and Country (London: John Lane The Bodley Head, Ltd., 1928), p. 95.

¹⁶Bishop, Unknown Nepal, pp. 52-53.

¹⁷Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas, p. 95.

well as between the woman and her husband's elder brother. In these cases, the two parties do not speak to each other, they do not look at each other if it can be helped, and usually one will leave the house if the other enters. The woman should be particularly careful to keep her hair covered so that it cannot be seen by the husband's older brother.¹⁸

On the other hand, a joking relationship exists between the husband and his wife's younger sister, and also between a wife and her husband's younger brother. The banter between them often contains sexual allusions. For example, the husband might tell the younger sister that he would much prefer to sleep with her rather than with his wife. However, it appears that the joking always remains on the verbal level.¹⁹

An interesting aspect of the joking relationship is that the persons concerned are potential mates. In the event of his wife's death, a man may marry her younger sister, but not an older sister. Similarly, a woman may marry her dead husband's younger brother, but not his older brother.²⁰

The wife's brothers have a very special position. The older brother is treated with

¹⁸Victor Barnouw, "Eastern Nepalese Marriage Customs and Kinship Organization," Southwestern Journal of Anthropology, XI, No. 1 (Spring, 1955), p. 24.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid., pp. 24-25.

respect by the husband, for the former is the potential head of the wife's family. Respect is shown ceremonially by the husband on the tenth day of the Dussera festival when he must visit the head of his wife's family, whether it be his father-in-law or brother-in-law. He takes along a bottle of wine and a leg of mutton. The family head places a rice mark on the foreheads of the man and wife, as well as well as their children, and gives them all his blessing, and a token gift of money. A feast follows at which the mutton and wine are consumed.²¹

The wife's brother plays an important role in many of the ceremonies for her sons. It is the maternal uncle who performs the first tonsure rite, just as it is the boy who shaves his uncle's head after the funeral of the latter's father or mother. The ties between the maternal uncle and the sister's sons are supposed to be close. Barnouw quotes a Nepalese proverb which runs: "One must respect even a dog which comes from the village of a mother's brother."²²

Children treat their father's older brother much as a father, since he is the potential head of the family. The father's younger brothers may be treated more familiarly, but attitudes of respect are still maintained.²³

²¹Ibid., p. 25.

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid.

PART D

IDEAS AND COMMUNICATION

CHAPTER IX

EDUCATION

Literacy

The Nepal Interim Census reports of 1952 and 1954 do not provide data regarding the literacy of the people of Nepal. It is estimated however, that 98 per cent of the people are illiterate.¹ This is one of the highest illiteracy rates in the world.

Systems of Education

Several different types of education are found in Nepal. The Nepali, Hindi and Sanskrit schools--sometimes called pathshalas--provide a classical education of traditional form which emphasizes languages and usually leads to government employment, priesthood or the profession of reciting the legends and religious rites prescribed by social custom. The English schools are modeled after similar schools in India. Graduates of these schools usually find employment with the government by virtue of their ability to read and write Nepali and English. The basic school, modeled

¹The entire chapter is based on: Nepal, Report of the National Education Planning Commission (Kathmandu, Nepal, 1955). pp. iii, 20/a/10.

on the Gandhian pattern of education in India, emphasizes rural and vocational training. The core of the curriculum in these schools is craft work; children learn spinning, weaving, wood-work and agriculture. These three types of schools all recognize primary, middle, secondary and higher levels of learning. Finally, there are the gompas along the northern border of Nepal which are designed for training religious leaders of the Buddhist faith.²

History

Although the beginnings of formal education in Nepal are not known, two distinct systems have emerged based on the forms of schooling traditional to Buddhism and Hinduism. Though not widespread, these two systems of education flourished for centuries before the introduction of the English system which was imported from India less than seventy-five years ago. Of the few schools in Nepal, most reflect the Aryan-Sanskritic influence which has always dominated the other types.³

The Buddhist influence may be seen in the few gompas some of which may still be found today along the northern borders of Nepal, although they are more common in Tibet. The gompas were founded as monastic schools to

²Report of the National Education Planning Commission (Kathmandu, Nepal, 1955).
p. 3/2.

³Ibid., p. 2/17.

train two classes of priests or lamas. One group dedicated themselves to a life of celibacy, study and meditation in cloistered monasteries where they spent the rest of their lives. The other group led a normal life in the community where they married and raised families. The priests of the latter group read the scriptures to the people and performed those tasks that required some secular learning with which they had become familiar during their studies in the gompas and later in the monasteries.⁴

Except for the sacred sites of ancient worship like Gum-vihara, Mani Chaitya, Khajnuvahi, Mana Deva Samskarita Vihara in Patan and Blirigares Vara, Nepal has almost totally lost the tradition of monastic education. The only relics of this ancient system in Nepal are the gompas of the border area.⁵

Judging from the ancient inscriptions of Nepal, the ancient kings of the country founded and financed many viharas, or schools. The Buddhist teachers, however, were more absorbed in abstruse speculations than they were in paying attention to the need of the Nepalese masses for simple learning.⁶

Though Buddhist viharas flourished and multiplied under the liberal donations of the kings of Nepal, they disintegrated rapidly at the first Aryan impact of Vedic religion and

⁴Ibid., pp. 2/17 - 2/18.

⁵Ibid., p. 2/20.

⁶Ibid.

Brahmanism. The introduction of the Sanskrit system of education into Nepal, gradually pushed the Buddhist system northward to Tibet.

In the sixth century when King Vasanta Deva introduced dual gods such as Matsyendra which combined the attributes of the Aryan and Buddhist deities, many new religious schools were founded. The multiplication of these institutions led to their classification in the seventh century as schools for the religious cults of Saivism, Vaisnavism and Buddhism.⁷

Learning was fostered and promoted through the medium of Sanskrit. The area of the hills was famous for Vedic and Puranic studies, while the area around Mithila was the center of philosophy. In the Kathmandu Valley, where Tantrism and Buddhism were propagated, Sanskrit prevailed.⁸

Children from five to eight were sent to reside in the hermitages of the masters where they had to prosecute their studies up to the age of twenty or twenty-five, after which they returned to the community and domestic life.

When this Aryan system was in vogue, the home of every great scholar maintained a school where learning was imparted to the rulers and benefactors. The teachers did not charge any fee for teaching their students. The government recognized these scholars and

⁷Ibid.,

⁸Ibid., p. 2/21.

their institutions by granting them certain funds on ceremonial occasions. The life in these institutions was simple, and great stress was laid on plain living and high thinking.

It was only in 1877 that an organized institution came into existence where grammar, literature and astronomy were taught in Sanskrit. A few years later a building was constructed to the west of Ranipokhari, now Durbar High School, where an English school and a Sanskrit pathshala were housed.

In 1933 arrangements were made at the Durbar High School for the teaching of the Vedas, grammar, logic, astronomy and Sanskrit literature up to the standard of the madhyama examination, the equivalent of the matriculation examination. In 1951 a Sanskrit Mahavidyalaya, or Sanskrit College, was established in Kathmandu.⁹

Nepali, the national language of Nepal, was introduced in the schools, and in 1934 became the medium of instruction as well as examination for the school certificate.¹⁰

The curriculum of the Sanskrit schools emphasizes learning through rote memory, usually based on early religious writings. Subjects such as arithmetic, science, and social studies were only rarely found in these schools before 1951.¹¹

⁹Ibid., p. 2/23.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 2/24.

¹¹Ibid., p. 4/8.

The influence of the British on education in India had little effect on the education of Nepal. For more than a century after the westernization of Indian education, Nepal clung to her ancient educational systems, dominated by the religious influence.

Even after Prime Minister Bir Shamsheer inaugurated Durbar High School, reorganized Sanskrit education on modern lines, and created a nucleus of new schools along western lines, the development of education, and particularly of English education, was very slow.

The English schools are graded into lower primary, upper primary, middle school and high school. English is taught from the third grade, and the medium of instruction in the high schools is usually English. Much emphasis is placed on languages; Sanskrit and Nepali are required. Arithmetic, science, some geography, civics, history, agriculture, accountancy, weaving, drawing and painting are also taught, though most of these subjects are optional.¹²

In 1918 Tri-Chandra College was opened on an intermediate level and later it became a degree college. This college has both liberal arts and science divisions and is affiliated with Patna University in India. In the last few years several high schools and intermediate colleges have been established.

¹²Ibid., p. 4/7.

The Gandhian basic schools, which follow the Gandhian pattern of education established in India, were introduced in Nepal after 1944. This type of education is designed to make the individual self-sufficient and capable of meeting the basic needs of life. But basic education is inflexible and has failed to adapt itself to actual conditions. For example, in villages where nearly all cloth is imported, spinning and weaving nevertheless form part of the curriculum. No adaptations have been made to fit basic education to urban life.¹³

Thus today, there are remnants of Sanskrit education, Buddhist education, Bhasa pathshalas which are based on the Nepalese language, and Gandhian basic education as well as British education.

Administrative Organization

Education in Nepal is loosely organized under the Ministry of Education of the Central Government, and to some extent under the University of Patna, an affiliating university in northern India.

The extent of control of the Central Government is determined by the amount of financial aid extended to the schools. There are three types of schools: (1) Government Schools, supported and administered entirely by the Central Government; (2) Government

¹³Ibid., p. 4/9.

Aided Schools, started independently but now meeting certain requirements and receiving varying amounts of financial aid from the Central Government; (3) Independent Schools, which operate independently, both financially and administratively. All schools except government schools receive some support from the collection of tuition fees. Since government schools are free, there is great competition for admission.¹⁴

In 1953 the inspection and supervision of these schools, except the gompas, was organized under seven zonal divisions.

Extent of Education

Accurate data on the number of schools in Nepal and their enrollment are not available. Until a few years ago, there was no central office to supervise education. In 1953 a national inspectorial system was established, but there is still no uniform system of records from which to draw information. New schools are opening very rapidly--and some are closing almost before their opening can be recorded.

According to the Report on the National Education Planning Commission, two sources provide the most reliable data available on school activities: a special edition of Education News, of May 1, 1954, published by the Nepal

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 3/1-3/2.

University of Education and a note from the office of the Chief Inspector of Schools dated September 25, 1954, which provides information on enrollments. According to these sources and the 1952 projected census, 73,607 children are enrolled in 1,341 schools. As seen in Table 4 this represents 3.5 per cent of the children of school age; or by grade levels: 3.7 per cent of the children of primary school age; 3.3 per cent of middle-school age; 3.9 per cent of high school age; and two per cent of the college age group.

There are, according to these estimates, 1,028 English schools, 243 Sanskrit schools, and 49 basic schools, of which 921 are primary schools, 316 are middle schools and 83 are high schools. The number of higher institutions including Tri-Chandra College is 21; there are no universities.¹⁵

Most educational institutions provide co-educational facilities up to the high school. There are five high schools for girls. However, the enrollment of girls is only 3,242 or 4.4 per cent of the total enrollment. Girls are admitted to Tri-Chandra College and there is a women's college. The college enrollment of girls¹⁶ totals only 63.

Most of the schools are concentrated in urban centers leaving education unavailable to most of the country.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 3/15.

¹⁶Ibid.

Notable Inadequacies of the Education System

Only primary schools can be found in villages. High schools, which generally have the upper-primary and middle school grades attached to them, are usually located in larger towns and serve a large area or region.

The schools, most of them privately operated, serve only a very selected group. The schools emphasize memorizing and children without a photographic mind soon drop out. The most disturbing feature of the educational system is the failure of students to follow through the primary and high school stage. It is estimated that of pupils who take the final examination in high school, not more than 40 per cent are successful. Most schools spend considerable time on language instruction and on preparation for the final examination. Language teaching may occupy from 40 to 80 per cent of the curriculum time.¹⁷

Most schools charge fees for their pupils ranging from Rs. 0.5, about six cents, per month in the primary schools to Rs. 6, about seventy-five cents, per month in the high schools.¹⁸

Other characteristics of the school system are the limited buildings and equipment and inadequately trained teachers. Many buildings are of the one-room type with one or

¹⁷Ibid., p. 4/2.

¹⁸Ibid.

Table 4

Children of School Age and Students
in Nepal

| | No. of school age children (estimated) | No. of enrolled students (estimated) | Per cent enrolled of related age |
|--------------------------|---|---|---|
| Primary (age 6-8) | 701,087 | 26,186 | 3.7 |
| Middle (age 9-13) | 998,929 | 33,408 | 3.3 |
| High (age 14-15) | 326,819 | 12,697 | 3.9 |
| Higher In- stitutions | <u>65,800</u> | <u>1,316</u> | <u>2.0</u> |
| Total | 2,092,635 | 73,607 | 3.2 (Average) |

Source: Report of the National Education Planning Commission (Kathmandu, Nepal, 1955). pp. 3/15, 3/16.

perhaps two teachers. In the Terai, the buildings are usually thatched roofs on bamboo poles, open on all four sides, or shielded by leaf and

fiber matting for shade and wind break. There is a serious shortage of instructional materials, particularly of books written in Nepali. There are no audio-visual aids available. Frequently there is not even a chalk-board, and seldom can one find maps, globes, bulletin boards and similar pictorial materials.¹⁹

Teachers and Their Training

There is an acute shortage of teachers in Nepal. Adequate data are not available as to the training of the 3,500 teachers.

The middle and primary schools are staffed by teachers whose training varies from mere literacy to high school matriculation. The basic schools are largely staffed by teachers with one or two years of training at the Basic Education Training Center. Some of these teachers are retired army men who bring to the children some first-hand experience of the world. Many of the others have never been away from their districts.

At the high school level teachers with a bachelor's degree can be found only in the larger towns. Of 920 high school teachers, it is believed that not more than 100 have the bachelor's degree. Few, if any, have had professional training. Most of those holding the degree studied at Indian institutions.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 4/3.

The colleges are staffed with persons holding the bachelor's and master's degree. In the field of professional education, there is only one person with the Master of Education degree; perhaps a dozen hold the bachelor of teaching or equivalent degree.²⁰

The salaries of teachers are very low. Primary teachers in the villages may earn about Rs. 25 or \$3.00 per month, and this is often uncertain, depending upon the payment of fees by the pupils, or an occasional donation. Indeed, the teacher in Nepal is underpaid and overworked, and often has to supplement his income by farm work.

The National Education Planning Commission

With the political changes in the country there came an awakening to the need for education. The Education Board was established in 1952 and under a joint agreement of the Government of Nepal and the United States Operations Mission, the National Education Planning Commission was appointed in March, 1954, to survey existing educational conditions and recommend a national scheme of education.

The National Planning Commission surveyed public opinion, and analyzed present-day education. Opinion was studied through a questionnaire and personal interviews with

²⁰Ibid., p. 4/5.

Nepalese from all walks of life. Public opinion showed that there was a great desire for education, a dissatisfaction with existing schools and a need for practical instruction. It was found that the Nepalese wanted a single dynamic education system under Central Government leadership, but administratively shared with the local community. Nearly all agreed on universal primary education as a base, followed by secondary education for an increasingly larger number, and the establishment of colleges co-ordinated under Nepal's own National University.²¹

Since education in Nepal is wholly inadequate and the present schools, systems, philosophies and facilities are quite unsuited to the needs of Nepal, the National Education Planning Commission undertook the preparation of a plan for national education. The Commission reported that because of the scarcity of the schools, there was hardly any tradition of education in Nepal. The national school system that was to be established would be a new educational structure which would retain the good and useful characteristics but discard the obsolete and impractical features of the existing schools.²²

The main features of the plan are as follows:

²¹Ibid., pp. 5/1 - 5/27.

²²Ibid., pp. 4/10; 4/11; 4/10 - 4/11.

Universal Education. The target is to wipe out illiteracy and involuntary ignorance within twenty-five years by primary education for all and adult literacy for all.

National Education. There is to be only one system of public, government-supported education. The plan insists on free primary education immediately; while secondary education should be as tuition-free as possible under the circumstances.

There are provisions for five years of primary, five of secondary, four to seven of college and university education, and additional education for adults.

It is hoped that there will be one primary school for each 1,000 persons by 1965 and that one-fourth of the children of primary school age, about 300,000, can be in school within ten years. By 1975 there should be voluntary universal primary education and by 1985 compulsory universal primary education.

The secondary schools should be multi-purpose, offering general and vocational education to an increasingly larger group who can profit by training for vocational leadership. The curriculum should provide social studies, science, language, mathematics, physical training, health and vocational training in agriculture, home-making, business education, nursing, teaching and the preparation for other professions as well as general college training.

Higher education, according to the plan, will be organized under a National University. The Commission suggests university organization for existing colleges within two or three years; a complete university by 1965. There should be a merger of the present Tri-Chandra College, the Women's College, the Sanskrit College and the night college into a new liberal arts and science college, with departments of languages, Sanskrit studies, social studies, mathematics, science, military science, health and physical education, business science and administration, and fine arts.

Besides this proposed liberal arts college, the National University is to comprise a College of Agriculture and Forestry, Teacher Education, Nursing, Medicine and Dentistry, Home Science, the Law School and the Polytechnic Institute.²³

An Engineering School has been set up under an expert assigned by UNESCO;²⁴ the Law School has been established, and foreign aid arrangements have been made for the establishment in the very near future of a Teacher's College and a Nursing School.

Teacher training is of the greatest importance in Nepal. Under the proposed plan,

²³Ibid., pp. 7/1 - 7/11.

²⁴Consultative Committee for Cooperative Economic Development in South and South-East Asia, Fourth Annual Report of the Consultative Committee, Singapore, October, 1955 (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1955), p. 99.

professional and general education will be provided for teachers to develop this educational program. The target of the Commission is to train at least 1,000 primary teachers per year for the next ten years. Thereafter, the rate would be increased 2,000 to 4,000 per year continuously to provide for new schools and replacements for retiring teachers. The target for the training of secondary school teachers is 100 per year for ten years, and ten to twenty college teachers per year.²⁵

A National Teacher Training Centre offering short-term courses has been established and several groups have completed the training. About 300 students receive training in elementary education each session.²⁶

The plan further provides for the decentralization of education in organization, administration and control. The Ministry of Education is to provide leadership and the necessary uniformity, set minimum standards and direct the training of teachers. However, education is to be financed mainly from local resources.²⁷

Adult Education

The National Education Planning Commission has recommended an extensive campaign to eradicate illiteracy and pave the way

²⁵Report of the National Education Planning Commission (Kathmandu, Nepal, 1955).
p. 7/7

²⁶Ibid., p. 20/6.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 7/8-7/11.

for further adult education. The goal of universal literacy is considered second only to primary education. A beginning has been made on an adult literacy program. In 1953 the Ministry of Education with the help of the United States Mission invited Dr. Frank Laubach of the World Literacy Foundation to Nepal. A primer and charts were prepared by Dr. Laubach and his team of Nepalese educationists. Graduates from the Teacher Training Centre have been trained to organize and teach adult classes.²⁸

Summary

Nepal's educational facilities are seriously inadequate. There is a great shortage of schools, teachers, and books, and a lack of proper financing. The existing schools have been designed for special limited groups. Most of the schools are located in the Kathmandu Valley and other urban centers; the vast majority of the Nepalese children have no access to schools.

The National Education Planning Commission has prepared an ambitious plan for a uniform country-wide pattern of education. The lack of a widespread system of education

²⁸U. S. International Co-operation Administration, Monthly Progress Report, November, 1955.

has permitted the Commission to plan a fundamental and inclusive program without concern for reform of the few existing schools.

The task of implementing the recommendations of the Commission lies ahead; and success depends upon several major factors including political stability of the country, and a rapid change in the social and economic system.

CHAPTER X

ARTISTIC AND INTELLECTUAL
EXPRESSION

Architecture

Kathmandu Valley has always been the center of Nepalese architectural and artistic developments and the Newars have provided most of the artists and artisans whose creativity has made the Nepalese schools in these various fields respected in the history of Asian art. In the past half century, it is true, archaeological surveys have uncovered a number of monuments in the Terai area of Nepal that are of some significance both historically and stylistically. However, these should be included properly within the fold of Indian rather than Nepalese art and architecture. It is apparent that most of them were built under the patronage of Indian dynasties and by Indian artists.

In addition, the available sources usually have restricted analyses to the arts of the Kathmandu Valley area, probably because this was the only part of Nepal which Westerners were permitted to visit for many years. Some of the recent foreign expeditions into the more remote areas of Nepal on the Tibet border, such as the one led by Giuseppe Tucci,

indicate that the architectural and artistic styles in these areas do not differ significantly from those found in Kathmandu Valley.¹ Whether this is true for other areas of Nepal as well cannot be determined from the sparse materials available.

Newari artisans have been responsible for a number of significant contributions to architectural styles which have influenced architecture in several other Asian countries. During the golden age of Newar architectural achievement--approximately between the tenth and seventeenth centuries A. D.--Newari architects and artists were active in Tibet, China, Mongolia and India. For example, a Newari artisan, Arniko was Kublai Khan's favorite sculptor, architect, and metal-worker in the thirteenth century A. D. Arniko first visited China after serving as the leader of eighty Newari artists who had built a golden pagoda in Tibet on the order of the Chinese Emperor.²

The earliest structures still standing in Kathmandu Valley are probably Indian rather than Nepalese in origin. These are the stupas, attributed to the Indian Buddhist Emperor, Asoka. They are found in the city of

¹Giuseppe Tucci, Tra giungle e pagode [Through Jungle and Pagoda] (Rome: La Libreria dello Stato, 1955).

²D. R. Regmi, Ancient and Medieval Nepal (Kathmandu, 1952), pp. 34-36.

Patan, a few miles from Kathmandu. There are five stupas, four in the cardinal squares of the citadel and one at its center. Dr. D. R. Regmi has described the "Asoka stupas" in some detail:

According to Regmi:

These stupas are of the shape of a hemisphere, constructed out of bricks on a plinth of the same (two, however, on a pavement of stone) and devoid of any architectural decorations. . . . At the top there is a small chapel, which is the only ornament. . . . The chapel is dedicated to Vairochana. The hemisphere contains in its innermost recess a chapel, entered through a by-door, now a depository for ceremonial purposes. At each lateral chapel attached to the hemisphere, which has changed from a simple stone vault into a multiple Pagoda, the images of the four meditating Buddhas, Amitabha, Ratnasambhava, Akshobya and Amoghasiddha, betray a deep infusion of the influence of the other sect, viz., the Mahayana which, of course, represents the pre-tantric sculptural work. The central stupa is more like a chaitya [miniature stupas surrounded by a courtyard] and stands on a tier of brick and stone platforms, unlike the mere mass of bricks characteristic of the other stupas. The summit is a canopy cube-shaped and in the

form of rings like the toran, which maintains a parasol (Chhatra) standing on a tripod of metal.³

Two of the best known stupas in Kathmandu Valley are those located at the famous temples of Swayambhunath and Buddhanath, located on the outskirts of Kathmandu. While Swayambhunath may have originated as a Buddhist shrine, today it is also a center of worship for Nepalese Hindus and the temple contains many features which are Hindu or Tantric in inspiration rather than Buddhist. Swayambhunath, which stands on a small hillock, contains a large number of chaityas, pagodas, and other shrines. The age of the temple has not been determined, but according to legend it is nearly three thousand years old though, of course, not in its present form.⁴ The summit of the hill is a flat surface, approximately one thousand square yards in area. Almost every inch of this space is studded with religious images of the Great Buddha and his satellites, the Dhyani Buddhas.

The stupa itself occupies the main part of this sacred compound. To the east, overlooking the plain, are the staircase

³Ibid., pp. 24-25.

⁴Perceval Landon, Nepal, I (London: Constable and Co., 1928), p. 198.

and the golden Vajra on its circular stand or "Dhatu-mandal" of greater age than itself, round the drum of which are cut in strong relief the symbols of the year-cycle in the Tibetan calendar. . . . On either side of the head of the stairs is a rest-shed or "mandapam," . . . which are dedicated to Tantric worship, and a stone-slung bell. . . . Round the main shrine is the usual series of large gilt figures set in stone iron-curtained shrines roofed and string-coursed with gilt copper, dedicated to the five Divine Buddhas. In a recess beneath each is a figure of the beast or bird sacred to the Buddha, and at his left hand is a smaller shrine dedicated to his celestial consort. . . . A multitude of smaller shrines, of guardian beasts, of chaityas, of sacred pillars crowned with images of divinities, peacocks or sarduls, of representations of the holy footmarks, fill up the rest of the sacred compound. To the west of the stupa stands a building wherein, as at Boddhnath, Buddhist priests tend and keep alive for ever a sacred flame. Between it and the garbh are pillars crowned with exquisite gilt bronze-work, and between these again are a couple of statues of which the southern is perhaps the finest piece of work ever achieved by those masters of bronze modelling, the Newars. Not far from these statues, and almost adjoining the

Temple of the Flame, is the shrine of Sitala [a Hindu goddess] Dispersed about the area of this holy plot of ground are numerous other symbols which at first sight have as little to do with Buddhism as the shrine of Sitala. A large number of lingams are to be found, but most of them have either been camouflaged as chaityas or have been decorated with the four faces of the Divine Buddhas, thus, in a measure, salving the conscience of the Buddhist priests.⁵

Buddhanath has maintained its Buddhist character to a much greater extent than Swayambhunath. This temple is considered one of the most important Buddhist shrines in Central Asia and is an object of pilgrimage for Tibetan as well as Nepalese Buddhists.⁶ Unlike the Swayambhunath stupa, the Buddhanath shrine is quite simple. The stupa, the central shrine, is surrounded by the dwelling houses of the Lamas, or Buddhist priests. The stupa is enclosed by a wall. The base consists of three successive pavements; on top is Barbha, which is approached by a row of stairs. At the corner of the terrace stand small stupas which contain a row of niches.⁷

⁵Ibid., pp. 200-02.

⁶Regmi, Ancient and Medieval Nepal, p. 27.

⁷Ibid.

While the stupa is probably a copy of an Indian prototype, the pagoda style which predominates in most Nepalese temples is essentially a Nepalese invention in design and structure. It is in these pagoda-like structures that the Nepalese have made their principal contribution to Asian architectural styles. This pagoda type of architecture is the dominant style in Kathmandu Valley. Among typical examples of this style of architecture are the Taleju temple, situated close to the Royal Palace in Kathmandu, the shrines of Machendranath in Patan and of Changu Narayan to the north of Bhatgaon, and the Nyatpola or "five-roofed Temple" in Bhatgaon.⁸ Regmi has given an excellent description of the Nepalese pagodas:

The body is a square entablature of bricks rising in diminishing proportions to a great height, sometimes to the sixth story, with a roof on four sides of the wall at each story, which are sloping and conforming in regularly diminishing proportions to the size of the entablature. The roofs, tiled or copper gilt, are quadrangular and the uppermost roof is always of gilt copper. The entablature may stand on a terraced platform of stone and of as many stages as there are storeys, as in

⁸Landon, Nepal, II, Appendix XX, pp. 262-63.

the case with the Nyatpola temple. Ordinarily the entablature rests on a colonnade of wooden pillars. The roofs are connected with the entablature by struts, which are set up in a projection at an angle of 45 degrees. . . . The cornices in the window or above the door and the outer beams are finely decorated with elaborate carvings, rich pictographs of deities or foliage or designs in arabesque. The windows are nearly square and screened by a trellis ornamented by carving. They are also provided, specially on the front side, with balconies which project forward and give the whole window a slanting appearance. The doorway is surmounted by an architrave with a gilt copper finial (kalasa) at the middle point and containing carved images of deities in bold relief on the surface, where the principal figure, that of a mythological Sarava, holds two serpents in his hands, to bite them off. . . . The interior of the temple is as magnificent. Elaborate and beautiful carving is a common element of the decoration.⁹

Not only the temples, but also many of the old palaces and houses in Kathmandu, Patan and Bhatgaon, follow this type of architecture. Usually they are not as tall as the more famous temple, but rarely do they have

⁹Regmi, Ancient and Medieval Nepal, pp. 29-30.

less than three stories. Their outward appearance is impressive and many of the houses and palaces are examples of the Newari wood carving talent in its most highly developed stage.

The age of the pagoda style of architecture in Nepal is still a subject for conjecture, but most commentators agree that it dates back to a period prior to the development of this style of architecture in China, the country with which the pagoda style is usually most closely associated. The earliest examples of pagoda architecture presently known to exist in Nepal date much earlier than the oldest known pagodas in China.¹⁰ Furthermore, Chinese visitors to Nepal as far back as the seventh century A.D., such as Wang Hiuen-t'se, have left written descriptions of buildings in Kathmandu Valley which were obviously pagodas in form. The fact that these visitors have described these buildings as amazing and unique forms of architecture is taken by such authorities as Sylvain Levi to indicate that this style was unknown in China at that time.¹¹ Moreover, since the pagoda style of architecture was unknown in ancient and medieval India, it would appear that the Newari artisans were not merely reflecting architectural forms prevalent elsewhere but had, rather,

¹⁰Sylvain Levi, Le Nepal, II, Annales du Musée Guimet, tome 18 (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1905), pp. 10-12.

¹¹Ibid.

developed a new style of architecture which was destined to influence architectural concepts in many areas of Asia.

In the past century, particularly during the Rana period, the noble families have tended to ignore the traditional Nepalese architectural styles in the construction of both religious and residential edifices. The tendency has been to copy what Landon calls "the uninteresting stucco style which India" adopted from the British.¹² Most of the palaces built by the Ranas show strong evidence of Western, mainly British, influence and they bear no resemblance to the pagoda type of architecture, with its exquisite wood carvings, which flourished in Kathmandu Valley under the various Newar dynasties.

Art

In art as in architecture, the Newars have been the Nepalese group which has made the most significant contributions. The Newari artisans were particularly outstanding in the fields of wood-carving, copper, bronze and brass work, metal statuary and, to a lesser extent, painting.

The Newari talent for wood-carving is most noticeable in the traditional Nepalese architecture. In this style

¹²Landon, Nepal, I, p. 184.

every cornice, every lintel and every sill, every door, every window and pillar has the richest decoration of images and foliage. . . . The images of deities in struts and doorways, the variegated projections of arches, the ornamentation of doors with intricate designs of flowers and fruits, gracefully tapered pillars, the ornamental architecture

all are proof of the skill of Newari wood-carvers.¹³

The excellence of the Newari copper, bronze and brass craftsmen is fully recognized in the countries surrounding Nepal. There is, for instance, a permanent colony of Newari artisans resident in Lhasa, Tibet, which has been responsible for much of the best metal work done in that country.¹⁴ In Nepal itself, the golden door of the Durbar in Bhatgaon is probably the most notable example of Newari craftsmanship in metal work. However, almost every important structure in Nepal boasts some examples of this handiwork. Newari brassware--incense burners, candelabras, vases, and religious and secular vessels of other types--is also considered to be of the highest aesthetic quality by many authorities in this field.¹⁵

¹³Regmi, Ancient and Medieval Nepal, p. 30.

¹⁴Landon, Nepal, II, Appendix XX, p. 271.

¹⁵"On Some Nepalese Incense Burners," Rupam, No. 7 (July, 1921), p. 13.

It is, however, in the realm of metal statuary that the Newari artisans have achieved their finest results. In this field, the Newari artisans have played an integral role in the history of art on the subcontinent as a whole. One authority has commented that:

The Nepalese school is of great importance in the history of Indian art, as it upholds and continues the tradition of the best quality of Indian sculpture at a time when Indian art on Indian soil itself was in a declining stage.¹⁶

Another commentator said that:

indeed, some of the remarkable specimens of Nepalese metal statuary of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries have proved to be the most representative and even unique masterpieces of Indian Art.¹⁷

It was from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century that this form of artistic expression reached its highest stage, but earlier Newari metal statuary was also of significant aesthetic quality. Anada Coomaraswamy has

¹⁶"The White Tara," Rupam, No. 17 (January, 1924), p. 58.

¹⁷"A Copper Figure from Nepal," Rupam, No. 3 (July, 1920), p. 1.

summarized the history of Nepalese metal imagery in these words:

On the whole we may say that Nepalese art has remained throughout decidedly more conservative than that of the plains, a natural consequence of isolation. In the older Nepalese figures, the Indian character is altogether predominant, and there is no suggestion whatever of anything Mongolian; they recall the work of the Gupta period, and are, perhaps, as near as we can hope to get to examples of Taranatha's 'School of the East' and they cannot be wholly unrelated to works of the Bengali school of Dhiman and Bitpalo. They are characterized by a very full modelling of the flesh and almost florid features: the bridge of the nose is markedly rounded and the lips full. On the other hand, those of a later date, and up to modern times, are no longer so robust and fleshy, but svelte and slender-waisted and more sharply contoured: the nose becomes aquiline, sometimes even hooked, the lips clear-cut and thin, and the expression almost arch. Thus the development involves an attenuation and refinement of the form: at the same time, iconographically speaking, the forms are

often much more complicated and the ornament richer.¹⁸

While Newari metal statuary evinces numerous indications of the strong influence of Indian art forms, it should not be assumed that the Newaris were merely imitative. The religious inspiration which provided the motif for most of the statues of this nature differed considerably between India and Nepal. In the latter country, it was the unique combination of Brahmanic Hinduism, Buddhism and Tantrism which largely influenced the composition of the Newari statues. In India, on the other hand, a purely Hindu conception seems to have been the dominant theme.

There was considerable confusion for some time over the relationship between the Nepalese and Tibetan schools of metal statuary. The earliest opinion was that the Nepalese school was merely a subbranch of the Tibetan school with which western art critics had become familiar at an earlier date, and the two schools were even grouped together as the Tibeto-Nepalese school. However, subsequent investigations have indicated the incorrectness of this assumption and the dominant opinion today seems to be that Nepal rather than Tibet was the real creative force in this field. The editor of an Indian art magazine, Rupam, commented:

¹⁸Ananda Coomaraswamy, "A Nepalese Tara," Rupam, No. 6 (April, 1921), p. 1.

We have more than once commented on the fact that out and out Nepalese images are labelled and described in many museums as Tibetan works, and the whole relation of Tibetan to Nepalese Art has been misunderstood or deliberately ignored. The Lamaistic School was the result of a direct pupilage to the Nepalese tutors; and although it developed many special features--the groundwork of the Nepalese style was always a staple part of the Tibetan work. Evidences are now pointing to the fact that many Nepalese images must have been made to order for the use of Tibetan worshippers.¹⁹

In the field of painting, the Newari artists once again show many indications of being strongly influenced by trends within the sub-continent to the south. Most of the more important northern Indian schools of painting are reflected by similar developments within Nepal. The earliest Nepalese paintings which have been discovered so far--illustrations of palm leaf manuscripts of either the eleventh or twelfth centuries A. D.--are within the traditions of the Ajanta frescoes and the Indian art schools, such as the Gujarati and Pali schools.²⁰ Incidentally, it has been suggested

¹⁹"A Tibeto-Nepalese Image of Maitreya," Rupam, No. 11 (July, 1922), p. 73.

²⁰Regmi, Ancient and Medieval Nepal, p. 33.

that the Tibetan school of painting, which is best known for its temple banners and murals, became familiar with Indian art developments through the medium of Nepalese art.²¹ This is another indication of the great influence that Nepalese artists and artisans have had on artistic developments in Tibet in particular, and in Central Asia in general.

Examples of later Nepalese paintings are not commonly known among western and Indian art critics. The few examples that have been seen usually fall definitely within the sphere of one or the other Indian schools of painting. The Moghul school and the Rajput school, both of which flourished from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, A. D., were influential in Nepalese painting,²² although not until after the conquest of Kathmandu Valley by the Gurkha dynasty, apparently.

The condition of arts and crafts in modern Nepal seems to be in a state of decline. The Newari artists, artisans and architects no longer find their skills much in demand. Regmi has commented on this unfortunate development in these words:

²¹Azit Ghose, "Tibetan Paintings," Rupam, Nos. 27-28 (July-October, 1926), p. 84.

²²"A Nepalese Painting in the Hodgson Collection, Paris," Rupam, Nos. 33-34 (January-April, 1928), p. 27.

Great was the past of Nepal, magnificent its marvels. But they are gone. The decay after the sixteenth century A.D. is due to a state of political disruption and anarchy. A new valuation of the artistic and cultural aspect of life was born. The old ideal of a unified monarchy, the ideal of cohesion and concord built on conscious pantheism and toleration had died out. The rulers refused to act themselves as guardians of national culture and civilisation. . . . And this has swept away what our forefathers handed down to us; it has spoiled the very tune of our national distinction and glory.²³

Music

Music plays a prominent part in the social life of the Nepalese. There are two forms of musical expression prevalent in Nepal: the classical, which consists largely of religious or historical chants, and the folk songs, which are usually secular in character. The influence of Nepal's two neighbors--Tibet to the north and India to the south--can be seen most clearly in Nepal's music.²⁴

²³Regmi, Ancient and Medieval Nepal, p. 36.

²⁴Allen Percival, "The Music of Nepal," Appendix B of R. N. W. Bishop, Unknown Nepal (London: Luzac and Col, 1952), p. 115.

India's influence is, apparently, the dominant force in Nepalese classical music, which shows some similarity to musical forms popular in India prior to the period of the Muslim invasion of the subcontinent. Percival speculates that the Hindus who took refuge in Nepal at this time introduced this type of music. He describes these tunes as pentatonic and written in a mode corresponding to the Ionian.²⁵ There is a resemblance to the Indian raga, the system of improvising on a basic scale of important notes.

Secular folk songs take a variety of forms in Nepal. In the eastern hill areas they resemble the Tibetan folk songs. Though the subjects vary, the songs are usually concerned with love, last regrets, valor, war, or praise of the geographical features of Nepal.²⁶ The Nepalese often improvise the words of the song on the spot in a manner similar to the West Indian Calypso or the Portuguese Fado. This form of singing is a custom prevalent, particularly among the Limbus, who reportedly use it as one phase in their courtship technique.²⁷

²⁵Ibid., p. 116.

²⁶Ibid., p. 117.

²⁷W. Brook Northey and C. J. Morris, The Gurkhas; Their Manners, Customs and Country (London: John Lane The Bodley Head, 1928), pp. 220-21.

Literature

Nepal has a long literary tradition extending back at least a thousand years and probably much earlier. The oldest Nepalese manuscripts yet seen by western or Indian scholars--written on palm leaves--date back to the eleventh century A.D., but there are indications that a literary group existed in Nepal centuries before that. Some authorities have speculated, for instance, that the Indian alphabet, which was adopted by the Tibetans somewhere around 800 A.D., was brought into that country through Nepal where it had been in use previously for a considerable length of time.

The early Nepalese manuscripts were mainly of three types: Vamsavalis, or chronicles of Nepalese dynasties; Puranas, or sacred stories; and translations of the Hindu legends and religious texts. The Vamsavalis were the product of two groups in ancient and medieval Nepal--the Buddhist, mainly Newar, chroniclers, and the Hindu Brahmans.²⁸ There is, according to Levi, considerable variation between these two types of chronicles, because both groups apparently tended to interpret Nepalese history in accordance with their own religious and political predilections.²⁹ The Puranas, which

²⁸Levi, Le Nepal, I, p. 197.

²⁹Ibid.

are also both Hindu and Buddhist in origin; provide a number of interesting insights into the synthesis that has taken place between these two religious systems in Nepal.³⁰

Most Nepalese literature has been written in one of three languages--Nepali, Newari or Sanskrit--although Hindi has come into use in recent years.³¹ According to Regmi, prior to the tenth century A.D. Sanskrit was the only written language. The dynasty that ruled Kathmandu Valley at that time encouraged the use of Newari as a written, as well as a spoken, language.³² From the tenth century until the Gurkha conquest of Kathmandu in 1767, literature in Nepal was written in both Newari and Sanskrit. The Gurkha dynasty, however, suppressed the use of Newari as a literary medium and encouraged the use of Nepali or Khaskura--the Indo-Aryan language spoken and read by the Gurkha conquerors.³³ As a result, from 1767 until the overthrow of the Rana regime in 1951, there are few, if any, volumes published in Newari. Since 1951 there have been some indications of a revival of Newari as a written language, although

³⁰Ibid., pp. 205-07.

³¹Ibid., p. 196.

³²Regmi, Ancient and Medieval Nepal, p. 175.

³³Tucci, Tra giungle e pagode, Chapter I.

Nepali is still the official language of Nepal and is used by the Government in official documents.

Literature in Nepal has expanded in scope and content in the twentieth century. No longer are Nepalese scholars content merely to translate Indian Hindu classics as they did previously. Nepalese novelists, poets and historians have created a new Nepalese literature utilizing most of the literary media common to the West and modern India.³⁴ However, until 1951 at least, the new Nepalese literary class had produced almost nothing in the fields of political or economic theory and practice, and even the histories continued to be based primarily on legendary accounts of events prior to the Gurkha conquest of Nepal.³⁵ Histories of the Rana period, in particular, were discouraged by the Rana rulers of Nepal. Since 1951 there have been a number of works dealing with political and historical subjects published in Nepal, a response, probably, to the removal of this prohibition.

³⁴The bibliography on Nepalese literature compiled by LeRoy Makepeace, Publications Procurement Officer of the U.S. Department of State (microfilm copy in University of California library) gives a good indication of the character of Nepalese literature prior to 1951.

³⁵Ibid.

There are a number of libraries in Kathmandu or its vicinity which contain valuable collections of Nepalese literature. Probably the most important collection of old Nepalese manuscripts is in the Durbar (Government Secretariat) Library. Unfortunately, this collection has never been adequately catalogued and it is impossible even to estimate the number and content of the volumes housed here.³⁶ The Nepal Museum, although not a library, appears to have some documents of historical value; however, these documents have not been properly catalogued.³⁷

There are a number of private libraries in Nepal which are important collections of Nepalese literature. Probably the most important is the library of General Kaiser Shamsheer, located in Kathmandu. This consists of from fifteen to twenty thousand volumes which, according to Makepeace, have been completely and accurately catalogued. In this library can be found volumes in several languages, both western and Asian, including numerous works in Nepali and Hindi.³⁸

³⁶Cecil Bendall, in his work, Journey in Nepal and Northern India, (Cambridge, 1886), gives a graphic account of the difficulties he experienced in attempting to catalogue the Durbar Library Collection and the unfortunate circumstances which prevented him from completing this task.

³⁷Makepeace bibliography.

³⁸Ibid.

Two other important private libraries are those owned by Bala Krishnan Shamsheer, a prominent Nepalese literary figure known as the Shakespeare of Nepal, and Hamraj Sharma, the former Raj Guru (Religious Adviser to the Royal Family) in Nepal and an important religious leader. Both these libraries are reported to be of considerable value, although Makepeace had not seen either of them personally.³⁹

³⁹Ibid.

CHAPTER XI

PUBLIC INFORMATION

Means of communication in Nepal are quite meager. Dissemination of information takes place chiefly by word of mouth, a slow and inaccurate process. Messages are generally transmitted from one place to another by messenger or peon.¹ Sometimes, village headmen call their villagers together to circulate some important news or information, as in the case of the questionnaires that were distributed by the National Planning Commission. The village headmen read the questionnaire to the villagers, gathered their reactions, wrote down their answers to the questionnaires, and then the villagers thumb-printed their replies.²

Newspapers and Periodicals

There is a great shortage of news organs. Nepal has only a few newspapers and journals, most of which are published outside

¹George V. Bowers, Agricultural Development in Nepal (Washington: Foreign Operations Administration, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Cooperating, 1953), p. 6.

²Report of the National Education Planning Commission (Kathmandu, Nepal, 1955). p. 5/4.

the country. The Nepal Government Gazette, a weekly in Nepali, has been published by the Government of Nepal for about sixty years.³ The Government of Nepal also publishes the Gorkha Patra in Nepali, originally as a weekly but now a triweekly, and the Nepalese News Bulletin, which actually consists of mimeographed releases in English.⁴ There is only one daily newspaper in Nepal, the Samaj. Other newspapers are the Nepal Pukar, the official organ of the Nepali Congress,⁵ the Naya Bato, the spokesman of the Nepali National Congress,⁶ a weekly published in Banaras, India, and the Nepal Sandesh, a weekly published in Patna, India. In addition, LeRoy Makepeace, Publications Procurement Officer of the United States Department of State, lists the following publications⁷ available in Nepal in 1952:

³Margaret Fisher, "Report on Source Materials for Nepal" (unpublished private manuscript, 1955), p. 52; Interview with T. N. Upraity, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Education, Government of Nepal, July 29, 1955, Berkeley, California.

⁴Fisher, "Report on Source Materials for Nepal," p. 52; U. S. Department of State, Survey of Publications in Katmandu, by LeRoy Makepeace, Publications Procurement Officer (New Delhi: U. S. Embassy, Despatch No. 2014, 1952); microfilm.

⁵Statesman, October 19, 1954, 5:1.

⁶Hindu, July 15, 1954, 6:5.

⁷U. S. Department of State, Survey of Publications in Katmandu.

National Congress Bulletin, published irregularly in Kathmandu. D. R. Regmi is the editor of this publication.

Tarang (the Wave), a weekly in Hindi, published in Kathmandu, which supports the Nepali Congress.

Gorkha, an independent weekly in Nepali, published in Darjeeling.

Prabhat, a literary monthly in Nepali, published in Calcutta.

Saba (Service), an independent monthly in Nepali, published and edited by Shyam Prasad Narayan in Banaras, India.

Hanro Kathan (Our Story), a nonpolitical literary Nepali monthly edited by K. K. Sharma and N. Rai and published in Darjeeling, India.

Jana Mitra, a pro-Communist Nepali monthly, which started publication in Kathmandu in 1951.

Awaz, a daily, and Jagarang, an anti-Nepali Congress newspaper, have ceased publication.

A periodical not listed by LeRoy Makepeace because it appeared after 1952 is the Nepal Guardian, published in English by Barun Shamsher. There is also, apparently, a magazine called Free Nepal,⁸ but no information about this publication is available.

⁸V. Berezhev, "The Situation in Nepal," New Times (May 13, 1953), p. 16.

Radio

There is one radio station, Radio Nepal, controlled by the Government and located in Kathmandu. The broadcasts are in the Nepali language except for two daily local newscasts in English.⁹

Although no statistics are available, a negligible percentage of the people of Nepal have radios. The National Education Planning Commission has proposed the use of radio as a tool in adult education, in disseminating ideas for village improvement, and for demonstrating better ways of working. A start has been made in radio education through the co-operation of the Government of Nepal with the United States Mission to Nepal. Radio Nepal plans to increase its power so that it can be received in any part of the country.¹⁰

The National Education Planning Commission has further suggested that inexpensive battery-operated receiving sets should be distributed to schools¹¹ and to 100 selected villages in remote areas of Nepal.¹² In 1955 fifty receiving sets had been ordered from foreign countries. Each of these sets included

⁹United States International Cooperation Administration, Official Mission Report (Kathmandu, August, 1955), p. 4.

¹⁰Report of the National Education Planning Commission (Kathmandu, Nepal, 1955).

¹¹Ibid., p. 13/6.

¹²Ibid., p. 7-C/1.

a receiver, loud-speaker, microphone, battery and repair kit.¹³

Types of programs and their effective dissemination are under study.¹⁴ It is hoped that these plans for radios and radio education will facilitate communication among the peoples of Nepal.

Films

There is no film industry in Nepal. Before 1950 there were no public cinemas.¹⁵ A few movie houses now exist in Kathmandu and some other towns. Films shown at Palpa were not approved by authorities who feared the dissemination of unorthodox ideas and closed the cinema in that town.¹⁶ The National Education Planning Commission has proposed that educational films should be made available to the people of Nepal.¹⁷

¹³U. S. International Cooperation Administration, Monthly Progress Report for November, 1955, p. 13; processed.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Paul Rose, Nepal: A Little Country with Big Problems (U. S. Operations Mission, Nepal, 1953), p. 2; mimeographed.

¹⁶Giuseppe Tucci, Tra giungle e pagode [Through Jungle and Pagoda] (Rome: La Libreria dello Stato, n. d.), p. 104.

¹⁷Report of the National Education Planning Commission (Kathmandu, Nepal, 1955). pp. 11/7-11/8.

Publications

At present there are no modern printing facilities, although an outdated, overloaded government press, and two poorly equipped, commercial printing firms exist in Nepal.¹⁸

Most of the few books and pamphlets available in Nepal have been published in India.

The National Education Planning Commission has proposed the establishment of a National Educational Press with a capacity of printing about three million books per year.¹⁹ In addition to textbooks, the press would publish some general literature to meet the needs of adult literates and of the libraries that are to be established.²⁰

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 20/12, 13-A/2.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 21/12.

²⁰Ibid., p. 13-A/2.

CHAPTER XII

LANGUAGES IN NEPAL

The complex ethnic structure within Nepal--reflecting the diverse origin of the various groups who have migrated to Nepal during its long history--has its counterpart in the language structure of the country. According to one of the best known western authorities on Nepalese languages, Professor Ralph L. Turner, "there are spoken at least a score, if not indeed a still greater number, of languages, all mutually unintelligible, and some broken up again into numerous and often very different dialects."¹ Professor Turner ascribes this complicated linguistic situation first to the various migrations which have brought the present population into Nepal and, second, to the difficulties of intercommunication imposed by the unusual geographical features of Nepal which have tended to impede contact between the various peoples of the country.²

¹Turner, R. L., "The People and Their Languages," in W. Brook Northey and C. J. Morris, The Gurkhas, Their Manners, Customs and Country (London: John Lane The Bodley Head, Ltd., 1928), p. 63.

²Ibid.

The languages of Nepal are divided into three basic family groups by Turner. The first of these is Munda, a division of the Austro-Asiatic language group also spoken in the tribal areas of Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar in India. Within this group the principal languages spoken in Nepal are Khambu, Yakha, Hayu, Limbu and Thami.³ The second category of languages is Tibeto-Burman and within this category are found the Gurung, Magar, Newari, Sunwar and Murmi languages. The third language group is the Indo-Aryan branch of the Indo-European family of which the principal languages spoken in Nepal are Nepali--or as variously called: Gurkhali (language of the Gurkhas); Khaskura (language of the Khas); or Parbatiya (language of the mountains)--and the various dialects of Hindi spoken in the Nepal Terai of which the most important are Mithili, Bhojpuri and Kumaoni.

Recent research has shown that in all probability the earlier inhabitants of North India belonged to the Austro-Asiatic ethnic group or at least spoke Austro-Asiatic languages, and some authorities also include a number of the languages spoken in Nepal in this category. There is however, no agreement among linguistic experts on this particular classification.

³Turner, in this instance, is using the linguistic division system developed by J. Przyluski, Les Langues du Monde (Paris: Champion, 1924), p. 399.

The noted British scholar on Indian languages, George Grierson, categorizes the principal languages in this group as part of the Tibeto-Burman family and does not include any of the more important languages spoken in Nepal in the Austro-Asiatic group.⁴ For instance, he classifies Limbu, Khambu, Yakha, Hayu and Thami as Tibeto-Burman languages in contrast to Turner who places them in the Austro-Asiatic family. Turner ascribes this difference in classification to the fact that the original Austro-Asiatic languages have absorbed a great deal from the Tibeto-Burman languages spoken by the Mongolian invaders who gradually conquered most of Nepal and intermarried with the original inhabitants.⁵ Obviously no clear-cut distinction can be made with regard to the classification of these languages under these circumstances.

The Nepalese tribes speaking Tibeto-Burman languages probably entered Nepal from one of two directions: either by way of Tibet or from the tribal areas of Assam, Sikkim and Burma where Tibeto-Burman languages are common. Gurung, Magar, Sunwar and Murmi show strong evidence of heavy Tibetan influence. The answer with regard to Newari is not, however, quite so simple and there is considerable

⁴George Grierson, Linguistic Survey of India (Calcutta: Superintendent, Government Printing, India, 1920). See Volumes III and IV.

⁵Ralph Lilley Turner, Nepali Dictionary (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., 1931), Introduction, p. xii.

difference of opinion on the subject. The Indo-Aryan languages are, of course, the result of numerous migrations from various sections of the Indian plains and western sub-Himalaya areas into Nepal.⁶

To attempt to estimate the percentage of the population of Nepal who speak these various languages is impossible. The most recent available census figures taken between 1951 and 1954, do not indicate at any point the number of people conversant with the languages known to exist in Nepal. At best one can merely estimate on the basis of inadequate sources. It has, for instance, been stated that the population of the Newars is approximately one million and it can be assumed that most of them are acquainted with their tribal language since they are largely concentrated in the area around Kathmandu Valley. Also, the census figures show that over three million people inhabit the Nepal Terai areas, and since Hindi dialects are the principal languages of this area it would seem likely that nearly one-third of the population of Nepal is familiar with some Hindi dialect. Aside from these two languages, however, it is impossible to conjecture with any hope of accuracy on the extent to which the other languages are spoken. This is true even for Nepali, the national language, since there are no statistics available indicating the extent to which it has become a second language among the various tribal groups throughout the country.

⁶Ibid.

The Major Nepalese Languages

Nepali

As is obvious from the names of the languages most of them are associated with and confined to separate tribal groups within Nepal. The one exception to this general statement is Nepali which has become virtually the lingua franca of Nepal and the language in which most inter-tribal communications take place. Because of its predominance it has taken on the character of a national language and is the language utilized by the Government in its official transactions. Moreover, it is the language in which most Nepalese literature has been written, at least since the time of the Gurkha conquest.

Among a large part of the Nepalese population Nepali is, then, a second language which is learned in addition to the native tongue. The extent to which Nepali is spoken and understood by the people of Nepal is difficult to determine and the commentators on this question are not always in agreement. Two decades ago one authority maintained that

It is not at all uncommon to meet people, more particularly those living in the most northerly part of the country, who speak Nepali only very imperfectly; but there are definite signs that it is gradually tending to displace the tribal languages altogether,

and it seems reasonable to suppose that in course of time they will altogether disappear.⁷

However, there are some indications that even today this process has not advanced very rapidly and there are areas of Nepal where Nepali is not generally known. For instance, the Japanese sociologist who accompanied the Japanese expedition into the Himalayan areas of Nepal in 1953 stated that the Gurung tribesmen near the Tibetan border spoke Tibetan as their second language and were mostly unacquainted with Nepali.⁸

Furthermore, the results of a trial census taken at the village of Bonepa in District East No. 1, Central Nepal Hill area, in 1950 and another taken in 1952 at Simrongadh, a district subdivision of Bara, Eastern Nepal Terai, gave an indication of the limited extent to which Nepali is spoken. In Bonepa only 22.5 per cent of the people spoke Nepali while 76.8 per cent spoke Newari, a Tibeto-Burman language. In Simrongadh, 99 per cent of the people spoke Bhojpuri, a Hindi dialect, and Nepali was virtually unknown.⁹

⁷C. J. Morris, "Some Aspects of Social Life in Nepal," Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society, XXII, Part 3 (July, 1935), p. 434.

⁸Jiro Kawakita, "Some Ethno-Geographical Observations in the Nepal Himalaya," Part II (unpublished translation).

⁹Report of the National Education Planning Commission (Kathmandu, 1955), p. 3/12.

Despite these local exceptions it would seem that Nepali is rapidly becoming a truly national language. This appears to be a relatively recent development in Nepal and was, undoubtedly, the result of the Gurkha conquest of Nepal, since Nepali was originally the language of the Khas and Thakurs, who provided the political and social leadership for the Gurkha invaders. One British authority, commenting on the languages spoken by the Gurkha recruits in the British army, said:

All now-a-days can speak Nepali the lingua franca of Nepal though thirty or forty years ago it was common to find recruits who knew only their own tribal language.¹⁰

Nepali belongs to the Indo-Aryan family, and like most other languages common to northern India is derived from Sanskrit.¹¹ The proof that Nepali is descended from Sanskrit

¹⁰H. R. K. Gibbs, The Gurkha Soldier (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink & Co., 1944), p. 7.

¹¹Sanskrit forms part of a larger group called Indo-Iranian or Aryan which belongs to the Indo-European or Indo-Germanic family. From this group are descended Tocharian or Chinese Turkestan, Slavonic and Baltic languages, Armenian, Greek Italic (Latin and its modern descendants), Keltic and Germanic. Turner, Nepali Dictionary, p. xii.

rests upon the fact that many details of its grammatical structure can be explained only through the corresponding forms in the earlier language, and that much of its vocabulary is identical with that of Sanskrit.¹² Also the alphabet employed in Nepali is Nagari, the phonetic system common to the other Indo-Aryan languages.¹³ While the derivation of Nepali from Sanskrit cannot be disputed, its exact position within the Indo-Aryan family is less certain. According to Turner, its closest relative is Kumaoni, a group of dialects spoken in the Kumaon region to the west of Nepal.¹⁴ This would seem to correspond with the generally accepted version of the origin of Nepali since it was reputedly brought into Nepal by Khas tribesmen who came into this country through Kumaon. The direct connection of Nepali with the Indo-Aryan languages of the western Himalayas is indicated, according to Turner, by "early sound-changes" common to both but not shared by the languages of the plains directly to the south of Nepal.¹⁵ Nepali was also heavily influenced by Rajasthani, a dialect akin to Hindi spoken by the Rajput refugees who entered Nepal between the twelfth and seventeenth centuries.

¹²Grierson, Linguistic Survey of India, IX, p. 21.

¹³Turner, Nepali Dictionary, p. xiii.

¹⁴Turner, "The People and Their Languages," pp. 70-71.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 72.

However, once the Khas had entered Nepal their relations with the western Himalayan peoples were largely terminated and they established closer contacts with the Indians to the south. Hence, subsequent developments in Nepali progressed along similar lines to those of the adjoining plains. Moreover, having been "brought into close contact with languages of Tibeto-Burman origin . . . Nepali has not escaped influence from them."¹⁶ Also, many words have been borrowed, rather than derived, from classic Sanskrit and these have been eventually adopted in the common speech.¹⁷ All these factors have been influential in shaping the form and content of modern Nepali.

Newari

This is the language spoken by the Newars who constitute the bulk of the population in and around Kathmandu Valley, but who can also be found throughout Nepal serving in the capacity of traders, merchants and shopkeepers for the various hill tribes. Grierson classified Newari as a "Non-Pronominalized Himalayan language of the Tibeto-Himalayan Branch of the Tibeto-Burman languages" which implies that it is either Tibetan in origin or had a very close

¹⁶Turner, Nepali Dictionary, p. xiii.

¹⁷Ibid.

relationship to the Tibetan language.¹⁸ Most of the other commentators who have written on this subject have agreed with Grierson.¹⁹ However, D. R. Regmi has expressed his disagreement. He admits that Newari is properly classified as a Tibeto-Burman language and that this is indicated by the monosyllabic nature of the words in the language. He claims, however, that this does not mean that Newari is an off-shoot of Tibetan and he states that research has shown that more than 75 per cent of the Newari words have no affinity with Tibetan. Regmi also points out that the Newari alphabet is obviously Indian in origin and that there is no evidence of Tibetan influence.²⁰

¹⁸George Grierson, Index of Language Names (Calcutta: Superintendent, Government Printing, India, 1920), p. 150. Grierson in this respect was following the conjectures first outlined by B. Hodgson, "Notices of the Languages, Literature and Religion of Nepal and Tibet," Asiatic Researches, Vol. XVI (1828), p. 409, and elaborated by August Conrady, "Das Newari, Grammatik und Sprachproben," Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenlandischen Gesellschaft, Vol. XLV (1891), pp. 1-35.

¹⁹See, for instance, Sylvain Levi, Le Nepal, I, Annales du Musee Guimet, tome 17 (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1905), pp. 251-52.

²⁰Dilli Rama Regmi, Ancient and Medieval Nepal (Kathmandu, 1952), p. 21.

Newari is probably the most important of the Tibeto-Burman languages in Nepal not only because it is spoken by more Nepalese than any other of the languages in this category but also because it is the only Tibeto-Burman language in Nepal which has an extensive literature to its credit. It is, therefore, the only Nepalese language that can compete with Nepali in this respect, even though the Gurkha conquerors made a determined effort to suppress Newari as a medium of literary expression.²¹ There are some indications of a revival of Newari as a literary language since the overthrow of the Rana Government in 1951 as there is no longer an official government policy suppressing the use of Newari in literature and as the medium of instruction in schools.

Magarkura and Gurungkura

These are two closely related languages spoken by the Magar and Gurung tribesmen of central and western Nepal and, to a certain extent, in limited areas of eastern Nepal. Both of these languages are classified within the Himalayan Tibeto-Burman family by Grierson.²² One author claims that the language of the Magars differs from that of the

²¹Giuseppe Tucci, Tra giungle e pagode (Rome: La Libreria Dello Stato, 1955), chapter 1.

²²Grierson, Index of Language Names, pp. 66 and 127.

Gurungs only as dialects of one great tongue, the type of which is the language of Tibet.²³

There is some question as to whether all Magars and Gurungs speak their respective tribal tongues. Northey and Morris state that the Magars of Gulmi and the district of Piuthan do not speak Magarkura²⁴ while Gibbs maintains that only the Ale, Rana and Thapa clans of the Magar tribe actually use it to any extent.²⁵ Apparently, in the case of the other Magar clans, Nepali is the language used except for certain Magars who have a close relationship with the Gurungs to the north.

Northey and Morris also point out that Gurungs who have moved away from their original homeland usually tend to adopt the language of the area in which they are living.²⁶ There appears to be a tendency for Nepali to replace Magarkura and Gurungkura as the medium of communication even in the home districts of these two tribes, but how far this process had advanced is difficult to determine with any authority.²⁷

²³E. Vansittart, "Tribes, Clans and Castes of Nepal," Journal, Asiatic Society of Bengal, LXII, Part I, p. 225.

²⁴Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas, Their Manners, Customs and Country, p. 186.

²⁵Gibbs, The Gurkha Soldier, p. 20.

²⁶Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas, Their Manners, Customs and Country, p. 186.

²⁷Gibbs, The Gurkha Soldier, pp. 21-22. The study made by the Japanese sociologist in 1953 would contradict this assumption somewhat, at least by implication. See Kawakita, "Some Ethno-Geographical Observations in the Nepal Himalaya," Part II.

The Kiranti Languages

The principal languages within this group are Limbu, Khambu, Rai, Yakha and Dhimal. These languages all bear a good deal of resemblance to each other, and according to one source, there has been so much intermarriage between the various Kiranti tribes that the old distinctive languages have largely disappeared.²⁸ Therefore, they are normally grouped together under the single category of Kiranti languages. They are spoken by a number of tribal groups who inhabit the eastern section of Nepal and are particularly dominant in the eastern hill districts. As has already been discussed in this chapter, there is some question whether these languages should be classified within the Austro-Asiatic or Tibeto-Burman families. Whatever their basic classification should be, there is general agreement that they are monosyllabic and are largely of the complex pronominalized type, thus having a close resemblance both to Tibetan and to the various Tibeto-Burman languages spoken in Sikkim, Bhutan and certain hill areas of Assam and Burma.²⁹ There is no known written literature in these languages with the possible exception of a Vamsavali or chronicle of the

²⁸Ali Shah Iqbal, Nepal: The Home of the Gods (London: Sampson Low, Marston, n. d.), p. 187.

²⁹Grierson, Linguistic Survey of India, III, Part 1, pp. 273-74.

Limbu people mentioned by Grierson. The Gurkha rulers of Nepal are said to have burnt copies of these works whenever they were discovered which may explain why none of them has ever been found by western scholars.³⁰

Hindi Dialects

Among the peoples inhabiting the Terai areas of Nepal, various dialects of Hindi are the languages most commonly in use. As a general rule, the Nepal Terai population tends to adopt the dialect of Hindi which is spoken in the area of India directly adjacent to it.³¹ For example, the Tharu tribesmen who reside in the western and central Nepal Terai mostly speak Bhojpuri, a Hindi dialect common in the area to the south in the Indian state of Bihar. On the other hand, in the eastern Nepal Terai, Mithili, another Hindi dialect, is most frequently heard.³² These two dialects of Hindi are the most important spoken in Nepal, but the migration of Indians into Nepal in recent years has resulted in the addition of a number of other Hindi dialects, particularly in larger towns of the Terai.

There have been some demands since 1951 from the Hindi-speaking areas of the Terai

³⁰Ibid., p. 283.

³¹Grierson, Linguistic Survey of India, V, Part 2, p. 189.

³²Shrivastava, Nepal Ki Kahani [Story of Nepal] (Delhi: Atmaram and Sons, 1955), p. 98.

that Hindi be made a second national language and given an equal status with Nepali in this respect. The Government partially acceded to this demand when it permitted the use of Hindi in the Advisory Assembly set up in 1954 but it has not yet officially raised Hindi to the status of a national language.

Tibetan Dialects

The population of Nepal includes a large segment of people who are in many ways more Tibetan than Nepalese in religion, culture, customs and language. This group--usually called Bhotias³³--is the predominant element in a large portion of the Nepalese population along the Nepal-Tibet border. Probably the most important of the Bhotian tribes are the Sherpas who inhabit northeastern Nepal; the Bhotian tribe which resides in the neighborhood of Tsumje, almost directly to the north of Kathmandu Valley; and the Bhotias residing in the area along the Buri Gandaki river and in Mustang district. Among the Sherpas, the Tibetan dialect is called Kangba, while the Bhotias in Tsumje speak the Khim dialect and the Bhotias further to the west mostly use the Nan dialect.³⁴ According to Kawakita the

³³"Bhotias," literally "Tibetans," from "Bhot" meaning "Tibet."

³⁴Kawakita, "Some Ethno-Geographical Observations in the Nepal Himalaya," Part II.

Tibetan language is also used as a second language by the Gurung tribesmen who reside in the more northerly areas of Nepal. He said:

Going up along the main stream of the Buri Gandaki . . . Nepali gradually gives place to Tibetan [as a second language to Gurungkura] at Philem and its neighbourhood, and in Gapsha even children can understand Tibetan well.³⁵

Miscellaneous Tribal Languages

There are a number of small tribal groups in Nepal who have retained their own languages at least as the medium of communication within their own group, and some of these warrant mention. The Murmis and Sunwar tribes both speak languages belonging to the Tibeto-Burman family and closely resembling Gurungkura.³⁶ The Thakali tribe in north-central Nepal has its own language which, according to one source, is unlike any other language in Nepal,³⁷ possibly indicating only that it is part of the Austro-Asiatic family since the author in this case had not come into contact with this linguistic group in Nepal. The Ksundas, Chepangs, Binge and Kolme are all

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Grierson, Linguistic Survey of India, III, Part 1, p. 189.

³⁷ Kawakita, "Some Ethno-Geographical Observations in the Nepal Himalaya," Part II.

very small tribes found chiefly in central Nepal although their nomadic existence takes them at times into other areas. These are, according to Northey and Morris, obviously of Dravidian extraction and speak their own languages which probably belong to the Austro-Asiatic group of languages.³⁸

³⁸Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas, Their Manners, Customs and Country, pp. 201-02

PART E

LABOR

CHAPTER XIII

LABOR FORCE

Labor in Nepal is concentrated in agriculture, which provides a livelihood for over 90 per cent of the population.¹ Outside of agriculture, avenues of employment include handicrafts, portering, trade, military service, and government work. All these fields are limited in scope, however, and many occupations are restricted to certain castes. Unemployment is widespread and many Nepalese have had to go abroad to make a living, either as soldiers, servants, or wage laborers.

The majority of agriculturalists are tenant farmers, and there are also large numbers of small owners and wage laborers. Agriculturalists cultivate very small plots, and their income is so meagre that they are often forced into debt. Agricultural wage laborers find employment easily only in the peak seasons, and may be unemployed for most of the year. Women and children join in the farm work, except where strict Hindu custom restricts women's participation. Among some tribes, women do most of the agricultural work.

¹George V. Bowers, Agricultural Development in Nepal (Washington: Foreign Operations Administration, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Cooperating, 1953), p. 14.

Porterage is an important area of work which may be full-time or may be used to supplement agricultural income. The lack of roads and pack animals means that nearly all goods and supplies are carried by humans. Even the few automobiles brought into Kathmandu are carried over the mountains by large groups of porters. Women as well as men are porters. Factory work is concentrated in Biratnagar, where there are a few thousand factory workers.

Forced labor in Nepal has recently been outlawed, but it still exists in some forms. Tenants still have to perform traditional services without pay for landlords in many areas, and debt-slavery and serfdom have not been effectively abolished.

In recent years there has been a rise of leftist-led organizations among both urban and rural workers. Several demonstrations and strikes have occurred in support of better conditions for the traditionally-subservient working people.²

²For a more detailed survey of labor, see The Economy of Nepal, Chapter IX.

PART F
HEALTH AND WELFARE

Annex "A," Subparagraph 1p

CHAPTER XIV

HEALTH AND SANITATION

Diet

In general, the diet of the people of Nepal appears to be insufficient and poorly balanced, though almost no data are available on the consumption of food or the average supply of calories in the Nepalese diet. However, one medical observer has claimed to the contrary that the people inhabiting two central valleys are able to maintain a "fairly adequate state of nutrition."¹

The diet is based on rice in some regions, potatoes and cereals in others. Rice is the staple food in the Terai and in the valleys of the lower elevations. It is not grown or even procurable in most of the mountain region. Potatoes and cereals, such as Indian corn, millet,

¹Carl E. Taylor, "A Medical Survey of the Kali Gandak and Pokhara Valleys of Central Nepal," Geographical Review, Vol. 41 (1951), p. 437.

and barley, form the basic foods in the hills.² In addition to the rice the meal usually consists of spices, particularly chilies, sometimes meat, and most common of all, the split pulse known as dal. From millet a rough kind of bread is made as well as a type of porridge known as dhenro.³ Chapatti, a flat cake not very different from the Mexican tortilla, is a standard food of the Sherpas.⁴

Vegetables, although seasonal, are considered among the basic foods of Nepal. The peasants are particularly fond of garlic, onions, beans and radishes which are generally plentiful. Often, the villagers gather edible bamboo shoots in the nearby forests. Fresh fruits are available in the valleys, but are very seasonal. Most of the people of Nepal do not get an adequate supply of fresh fruits.⁵

²Brook W. Northey and C. J. Morris, The Gurkhas: Their Manners, Customs, and Country (London: John Lane The Bodley Head, 1928), p. 94; George V. Bowers, Agricultural Development in Nepal (Washington: Foreign Operations Administration, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Cooperating, 1953), pp. 21-28; Daniel Wright, editor, History of Nepal (Cambridge: University Press, 1877), pp. 29-31.

³Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas: Their Manners, Customs, and Country, p. 94.

⁴Wilfred Noyce, South Col (New York: William Sloane Associates, 1955), p. 258.

⁵George Moore, "Health Clinics in the Helembu, Nepal," Public Health Reports, Vol. 69 (April, 1954), pp. 343, 348.

Milk and dairy products are major supplements to the diet. The chauris, a hybrid bovine resulting from yaks bred with domestic cows, yield rather large quantities of milk. Cheese and ghee, or clarified butter are made from the milk.⁶ Those families with adequate income also consume meat and eggs. Indeed, the Gurkhas and Sherpas are very fond of meat. The higher classes eat large quantities of game such as deer, wild boar and pheasant, as well as goats, pigs, buffaloes, sheep, ducks and chicken. The amount of meat in the diet is greater among the people of the hills than those of lower regions.⁷ On feast days, meat is very popular, especially mutton, buffalo and chicken.⁸ Beef is not eaten by the Hindus. Fish is considered a great delicacy by most Nepalese.

The food and drink habits vary among the different tribes and castes. Most tribes abstain from eating the flesh of cows, except the

⁶Ibid.

⁷Jiro Kawakita, "Some Ethno-Geographical Observations in the Nepal Himalaya," The Japanese Journal of Ethnology, XIX, No. 1 (1955), pp. 98-99 in the translation by Toshio G. Tsukahira.

⁸Giuseppe Tucci, Tra guingle e pagode (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1955), p. 34; Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas: Their Manners, Customs, and Country, p. 94.

Murmis who will eat cows but not kill them.⁹
Gurkhas do not eat female goats or sheep.
Gurungs, but not Magars eat pigs and buffaloes.¹⁰ The buffalo is not eaten by the Limbus, Rais and Sunwars.¹¹

The ordinary peasant eats only one full meal a day, while the wealthier may take two. On rising, the Nepalese peasant usually drinks tea, or a native rum made from sugar. The Sherpas brew their tea with a base of rice or barley. When the fermented mash is ready it is put in a bowl, and hot water poured over it.¹² The first meal of the day is about ten o'clock in the morning. It consists of rice, chilies, dal, and meat in the case of the wealthy. At noon there is more tea, and about half past six, those who can afford it have a meal similar to the earlier one.¹³

⁹Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas: Their Manners, Customs, and Country, pp. 259-60.

¹⁰E. Vansittart, "Tribes, Clans, and Castes of Nepal," Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, LXIII (1894), pp. 225-26.

¹¹H. R. K. Gibbs, The Gurkha Soldier (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink and Co., 1944), p. 30.

¹²Norkey Tenzing and James Ramsey Ullman, Tiger of the Snows (New York: Putnam's, 1955), pp. 112-13.

¹³R. N. W. Bishop, Unknown Nepal (London: Luzac & Co., 1952), pp. 52-53.

The peasant food is monotonous and apparently unhealthy. A large amount of spices are consumed, partly to add some variety and flavor. Almost all food is cooked thoroughly, but eating is done with hands which are seldom clean.¹⁴

General Health Conditions

Poverty, isolation and lack of education have restricted resort to medical care. No accurate statistics on public health are available. It is estimated that there are only 52 doctors in the country, about 34 of whom work in the Kathmandu Valley where 400,000 people live. The remaining twenty doctors are available for eight million people.¹⁵ Only ten doctors are licensed.¹⁶ The others are medical practitioners who have had approximately two years training at Banaras or Kathmandu.¹⁷

¹⁴Moore, "Health Clinics in the Helembu, Nepal," p. 343.

¹⁵D. P. Nath, "Survey Report on Health Services: Nepal," unpublished manuscript, Bihar, India, June 3, 1954, p. 24.

¹⁶Bowers, Agricultural Development in Nepal, p. 18; George Moore, Public Health Program of Nepal, Final Report (U. S. Operations Mission, Nepal, October, 1954), p. 1.

¹⁷Taylor, A Medical Survey of the Kali Gandak and Pokhara Valleys of Central Nepal, p. 423.

Vaids, who are practitioners trained in the ancient Hindu ayurvedic system of medicine, are found in several localities.¹⁸ Indigenous roots, herbs and plants are the basis for most of the medicines prescribed under this system.

There are not more than ten trained nurses, all in the Kathmandu Valley. No dentists, oculists or opticians are recorded in Nepal.¹⁹

Inside the Kathmandu Valley there are ten poorly equipped hospitals with a total of 355 beds. Along the border of India there are about 24 small hospitals, totaling 305 beds.²⁰ A small tuberculosis sanatorium is located at Toka.²¹ A few dispensaries with inadequate supplies and drugs can be found in some other parts of Nepal. It is estimated that 99 per cent of the population do not have proper medical care.²²

A hospital with 500 beds has been planned for Kathmandu for which the Government of

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹U.S. International Cooperation Administration, Official Mission Report (Kathmandu, 1955), p. 17.

²⁰Bowers, Agricultural Development in Nepal, p. 18.

²¹Nath, "Survey Report on Health Services: Nepal," p. 33.

²²Bowers, Agricultural Development in Nepal, p. 18.

India has supplied the necessary equipment, but as yet no building is available.²³

Health services in Nepal are very rudimentary. There is no separate Ministry of Health but the department functions under a minister who has the portfolio of health together with other responsibilities. Similarly, the Secretary of the Health Department is also the Secretary for the departments of Local Self-Government and Education. The head of the Health Department, who is called the Director-General of Health Services, is not a full-time officer, but also has a private practice.²⁴

The complete absence of a public health organization is one of the most serious defects of the existing health system. The World Health Organization and the U. S. Mission to Nepal are helping the Government of Nepal to develop a new public health program which will take preventive measures against diseases and ill-health. Projects of local health services, maternity and child care training in villages,

²³Nath, "Survey Report on Health Services, Nepal," p. 16; Government of Nepal, Ministry of Planning and Development, A Draft Outline of Five Year Plan, transmitted by the International Cooperation Administration (1955), pp. 29-30.

²⁴Nath, "Survey Report on Health Services," pp. 4-5.

insect-borne disease control, village sanitation and venereal disease programs are included in this new public health program.²⁵

Medical Training

There are no facilities for medical training in Nepal. The National Education Planning Commission has recommended the establishment of a Medical School where doctors, medical assistants and medicinal compounders can be trained.²⁶ With the help of the World Health Organization and the United States Mission to Nepal, a College of Nursing is to be established in Kathmandu. A nursing education program has already been started in the capital and courses in health are offered to specialists in the Village Development Program.²⁷

²⁵Paul Rose, Nepal: A Little Country with Big Problems (U.S. Operations Mission to Nepal, 1953), p. 20; mimeographed; U.S. Foreign Operations Administration, Health Summary (September, 1955), p. 46; Moore, Public Health Program of Nepal, pp. 11-14.

²⁶Report of the National Education Planning Commission (Kathmandu, Nepal, 1955), pp. 10/25 and 10/26; Draft Outline of Five Year Plan, pp. 29-30.

²⁷U.S. Foreign Operations Administration, Health Summary (December, 1954), p. 50.

Major Health Problems

The most common diseases in Nepal are malaria; kala-azar, or black fever; intestinal parasites; tuberculosis; eye diseases; and venereal diseases. The number one public health problem is probably malaria, which is found mainly in the Terai. This disease is also one of the major reasons for lack of economic development. Many potentially productive areas remain isolated because human beings cannot survive there due to the present incidence of malaria.²⁸

It has been supposed that some particularly severe form of malaria is present in the Terai, which has contributed to the Terai's reputation of being one of the most unhealthful regions in Asia. The late summer months have the highest incidence of malaria.²⁹

Prior to 1952 practically no control existed for insect-borne diseases. There was no organization, nor any facilities provided for treatment of malaria, and very little study had been made of it.³⁰

In 1953 a preliminary survey of the Heytaunda Valley in the Terai was conducted

²⁸Bowers, Agricultural Development in Nepal, p. 18.

²⁹Taylor, A Medical Survey of the Kali Gandak and Pokhara Valleys of Central Nepal, p. 426.

³⁰Moore, Public Health Program of Nepal, p. 426.

by a team of Nepalese and American experts. The purpose of the survey was to discover the amount and varieties of malaria present, to map out methods of control and to enlist the support of the villagers. Seventy per cent of the people tested in this area of about 260 square miles, proved to have or have had malaria. Because of the heavy incidence, many persons left their villages each summer for the hills in order to escape the disease. Several ghost villages were discovered, the inhabitants of which had either been killed or driven off by malaria.³¹ Surveys in several other areas have since been undertaken.

In the Himalayan Terai three principal malaria vectors or insects were found, two of which breed in the submontane streams and the third in more quiet, though not stagnant water.³²

The American health specialist, George Moore, estimates that malaria is responsible every year for the sickness of about three and a half million persons, about forty thousand

³¹Government of Nepal, Department of Publicity, Nepalese News Bulletin, I, No. 8 (February 10, 1953), pp. 7-10.

³²Taylor, A Medical Survey of the Kali Gandak and Pokhara Valleys of Central Nepal, p. 426.

direct deaths, another forty thousand indirect deaths, and for great economic loss to the country.³³

Although there are no exact figures, it is believed that 95 per cent of the population of the Mid-Terai has malaria, 70 per cent of the population of the Lower Terai, but only ten per cent of the population of the Hill country.³⁴

A malaria control program has been started with the help of the World Health Organization, the United States Mission to Nepal, the Malaria Institute of India and the Rockefeller Foundation. Besides making surveys, the program includes the training of malaria technicians, the development of plans for administration including budget, and the securing of supplies and equipment. Many villages and houses have been sprayed and all persons sick with malaria in the sprayed areas were treated with Resochin tablets. Splenic and blood surveys which have been carried out on a small scale in widely separated areas have confirmed a heavy incidence of malaria in Nepal at elevations lying between 1,000 and 2,500 feet above sea level.³⁵

³³Moore, Public Health Program of Nepal, p. 3.

³⁴Nepalese News Bulletin, p. 8.

³⁵U. S. Foreign Operations Administration, Health Summary (January, 1955), p. 47.

The malaria control program has received widespread appreciation and support by the people of Nepal.³⁶

Next to malaria, the most prevalent disease in the Terai is said to be kala-azar, or black fever. It is most common in the area of rice cultivation, less so in the Terai forests.³⁷ Treatment and DDT spraying have been adopted for the control of this disease under the insect-borne program.

There are frequent epidemics of cholera, plague, typhoid and smallpox in the Terai, usually in spring and early summer.

Amebiasis, or amoebic dysentery, is the disease most widespread in the hill regions. In the interior of Nepal, human defecation frequently takes place where paths cross streams, so that the water becomes contaminated. Water is consumed without filtration through sand or soil, and without chemical treatment or boiling. It is not surprising that the principal health problem of the hills is amebiasis and that there is a correspondingly high incidence of other intestinal infections, such as ascariasis and trichuriasis, which are parasitic diseases.

³⁶Rose, Nepal: A Little Country with Big Problems, pp. 19-20.

³⁷Taylor, A Medical Survey of the Kali Gandak and Pokhara Valleys of Central Nepal, p. 427.

Crowding, poor sanitation and lack of medical care promote the spread and intensity of these infections.³⁸

Another major health problem is goiter. Surveys of goiter prevalence were made and 63 per cent of the population in the Kathmandu Valley and up to 97 per cent of the hill peoples were found to be affected.³⁹

Tuberculosis, venereal diseases, trachoma, cataract and other diseases are widespread. Lack of sunlight and ventilation, overcrowding, a diet lacking in fresh fruits and vegetables, and the rigors of mountain life make the people highly susceptible to tuberculosis. However, most people living at high altitudes are probably tuberculin-negative, having never been exposed to tuberculosis. They have developed no immunity towards this deadly disease, so that in spite of being physically fit and strong, when they come into the valley or congested areas of the Terai where tuberculosis is common, they succumb quite easily to the disease.⁴⁰

The high incidence of ocular diseases is typical of Asian countries and is usually traceable to defective hygiene or inadequate

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 428-29.

³⁹ Moore, Public Health Program of Nepal, p. 12.

⁴⁰ Moore, "Health Clinics in the Helembu, Nepal," p. 348.

diet. Respiratory diseases and rheumatic fever also occur with considerable frequency in high altitudes. Filariasis and asthma are common in the valleys. Kathmandu has been sprayed to control the mosquito which causes filariasis.⁴¹

⁴¹Rose, Nepal: A Little Country with Big Problems, p. 20.

CHAPTER XV

PUBLIC WELFARE

Clothing and Shelter

The people of Nepal are poor; they are badly clothed and inadequately sheltered. Most of the peasants wear a langoti, or strip of cloth around the loins, a piece of cloth around the waist and a cotton waistcoat. Trousers and shirts are sometimes worn at high altitudes. The dress of women consists of a cholo, or bodice, a skirt formed of many lengths of cloth wound round and round the waist, and a shawl.¹ In the hills the garments are predominantly of black cotton brought in from Tibet.

Since the climate is severe in the mountains, the cotton clothes are not adequate and woolen blankets and shawls are worn, as well as cloaks of nettle fiber, coats padded with cotton wool or of homespun goat wool.² Only

¹Brook Northey and C. J. Morris, The Gurkhas: Their Manners, Customs and Country (London: John Lane The Bodley Head, 1928), pp. 91-92. George Moore, "Health Clinics in the Helembu, Nepal," Public Health Reports, Vol. 69 (April, 1954), p. 342.

²Dillon Ripley, Search for the Spiny Babbler (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1952), p. 177. R. N. W. Bishop, Unknown Nepal (London: Luzac, 1952), pp. 49-50.

a few can afford to wear garments lined with fur.³ The people usually go barefoot, even in winter time, though some wear crude sandals or Tibetan cloth boots. The clothing of the people of Nepal is generally very ragged.⁴

Most houses of the villages in the Kathmandu Valley are made of stone and mud bricks. They have thatched roofs and raised eaves.⁵ Outside the Valley the houses are frequently of bamboo and reeds, and sometimes the houses are swept away by heavy monsoons and rains.⁶

Most houses have two stories and contain only a few rooms. Usually there is a sleeping room and a room for cooking. A family's animals may be stabled on the ground floor, while the upper floor is reserved for the family.⁷ In front of the house there is a veranda which is used as a sitting room and forms an indispensable adjunct to a home where inside accommodations are so limited. An open hearth, without a chimney, is common and smoke escapes by a hole in the roof or under raised eaves.⁸

³Daniel Wright, ed., History of Nepal (Cambridge: University Press, 1877), p. 28.

⁴Bishop, Unknown Nepal, p. 50; Moore, "Health Clinics in the Helembu, Nepal," p. 342.

⁵Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas: Their Manners, Customs and Country, p. 95.

⁶Bishop, Unknown Nepal, p. 46.

⁷Moore, "Health Clinics in the Helembu, Nepal," p. 342; Bishop, Unknown Nepal, p. 51.

⁸Bishop, Unknown Nepal, p. 51.

The homes of the Sherpas are generally well-constructed buildings of stone and stout timber, roofed with wooden slats.⁹ Houses in some villages are built very close together giving the appearance of poverty and overcrowding.

According to the interim census, there are 1,755,546 houses in Nepal for a population of 8,431,537 persons or 1,521,234 families.¹⁰ This means that on the average, there are about five persons per house. No statistics are available, but since the houses are small and usually have no more than two rooms, it appears that the people of Nepal live in very crowded conditions.

Village Development Service

In order to raise the standard of living of the eight and one-half million people of Nepal, a program has been mapped out to bring basic improvements to the villagers. In 1952 a countrywide Village Development Service was initiated by the Government of Nepal to meet the needs of the people of the villages, particularly the need for food, shelter, clothing,

⁹Moore, "Health Clinics in the Helembu, Nepal," p. 343; John Hunt, The Conquest of Everest (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1954), p. 72.

¹⁰Government of Nepal, Department of Statistics, Interim Report on the Census, pp. 1-2; 27-28.

education, health, roads and communications.¹¹ The objective of the Village Development program is "to carry out the physical reconstruction of an area and the development of its economic life, and at the same time achieve the social reconstruction of the community."¹²

The lack of trained personnel has been recognized as the greatest limitation to the widespread development of the program.¹³ The Village Development Service is to reach all the villages of Nepal, and the goal is one village development worker for every five hundred families. The workers live in the villages, plan the programs with the village people in line with their needs.¹⁴ It is estimated that 4,000 trained persons will be required to man the Service. They will be trained in five years through training centers.¹⁵

¹¹Paul Rose, Nepal: A Little Country with Big Problems, A Summary Report of TCA [U. S. Technical Cooperation for Nepal] Activities, June 3, 1953, p. 11; Nepal's Program for Development through Village Development Service (United States Operations Mission, August, 1955), p. 2.

¹²Nepal's Program for Development through Village Development Service, p. 1.

¹³Rose, Nepal: A Little Country with Big Problems, p. 11.

¹⁴Nepal's Program for Development through Village Development Service, p. 4.

¹⁵Rose, Nepal: A Little Country with Big Problems, p. 11.

The first training center for village development workers was started in Kathmandu¹⁶ in 1952. Another has been opened at Parwanipur and one more is planned at Nepalganj.¹⁷

At the Kathmandu center, a group of village improvement specialists receive training in various fields such as livestock improvement, entomology, irrigation and extension methods in order to provide the village improvement workers with the necessary technical assistance.¹⁸

The graduates of the training centers are assigned as village development workers in villages around a main central location called a village development center, or village improvement center.¹⁹ These centers are located at Pokhara, Kathmandu, Biratnagar, Bhairawa, Hitaura and Illam.²⁰ Four more development

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷U. S. International Cooperation Administration, Monthly Progress Report for November 1955, p. 16.

¹⁸George V. Bowers, Agricultural Development in Nepal (Foreign Operations Administration, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Cooperating, 1953), p. 38.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 39. Rose, Nepal: A Little Country with Big Problems, p. 11.

²⁰Bowers, Agricultural Development in Nepal, p. 39; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Survey of Asia and the Far East, 1954 (Bangkok, 1955), p. 157.

centers are planned, so that there will be ten development centers altogether.²¹

The village development workers assist the villagers to increase their income by demonstrating better methods of production. They teach the villagers to read and write, to improve village sanitation, and to safeguard and improve their health. The workers also help the villagers to develop a feeling of pride and accomplishment in village activities.²²

In 1955 the program was in a major transition or adjustment stage. It had not progressed as fast as expected because of the reorganization of the Government of Nepal.²³

For further information on Education and Public Health, see Chapters IX and XIV, respectively.

²¹Nepal's Program for Development through Village Development Service, p. 4.

²²Rose, Nepal: A Little Country with Big Problems, p. 12. United States of America Operations Mission to Nepal, Report to the Government of Nepal: Report of Activities Supported by U. S. Funds Made Available during that Portion of FY 52 during which Program Was Underway and All of FY 53, pp. 2-3.

²³U. S. International Cooperation Administration, Monthly Progress Report (November, 1955), p. 17.

PART G
VALUES AND ATTITUDES

Annex "A," Subparagraph 1h, 1r

CHAPTER XVI

SOCIAL VALUES AND PATTERNS OF LIVING

Social Values

A comprehensive analysis of Nepalese social values is impossible at the present time due to the paucity of information. No concerted study has yet been made of the social concepts of the Nepalese people and the ways in which these are put into practice, though this is certainly a fruitful area for basic and pioneering research. The sources available which deal, peripherally, with the question of social values in Nepal have only a limited relevance. They tend to deal with the subject in only the most general and unprofessional manner. Moreover, such works suffer from the fact that the authors have in most instances, come into intimate contact with a special segment of the Nepalese population and lack a knowledge of the general society. This limitation is particularly apparent in writers who deal with those Nepalese who were recruited into the British Indian Army. Few of them have closely observed Nepalese on their home grounds.

One inference that can be made tentatively on the basis of the materials available concerns Nepalese as individual personalities. Most of the more competent observers have

noted the great influence which the family, caste, and tribal systems have on the pattern of behavior of most individuals in Nepal. Only rarely, it would seem, does a Nepalese act as an individual personality, or in conformity with private interests and desires. The individual seems usually to frame his social behavior in conformity with the traditional concepts of social behavior which are an integral, even basic, feature of the family, caste and tribal systems in Nepal.

The attitude of the Nepalese toward the various forms of public authority in their country can only be a matter for speculation. Nepalese history would seem to indicate that there is little of a revolutionary or anti-authority spirit among the vast bulk of the population in Nepal. The tendency has been, it would seem, for the Nepalese to accept the de facto authorities and grant to them the obedience and respect traditionally associated with the holding of government offices. The challenges to authority occurring in Nepal have usually come from disgruntled elements in the ruling group itself rather than from rebellious actions on the part of the general population. The experiences of the British military authorities with Nepalese recruits is a further indication of the respect with which the Nepalese regard persons in a position of authority. One attribute of the Nepalese recruits which particularly impressed the British officers was their obedience and

loyalty to their commanders even under circumstances where it was scarcely deserved.

It would seem fairly evident from recent history in Nepal that nationalistic sentiments are in the process of developing, and that certain elements of the population, particularly among the educated class and political workers, are already strongly pervaded by a spirit of nationalism. This is, apparently, a relatively recent development, at least among the people living in the remoter areas of the country. Landon mentions that there was no generic term which was in common use among all the inhabitants of Nepal referring to the people as a unit. To the residents of the Terai or the hill areas of east and west Nepal, the term Nepali referred only to the inhabitants of Nepal (Kathmandu) Valley, while they considered themselves as Kirantis, Magars, Gurungs, Tharus or one of the other tribal groups.¹ The effect that nationalism will have on the family, caste, and tribal systems is impossible to gauge at this time. Certainly, the basis for conflict between nationalism and the more parochial sentiments do exist and may prove of some importance in the evolution of Nepalese social values.

Despite the development of nationalism in Nepal there are still indications that regional

¹Perceval Landon, Nepal, I (London: Constable and Co., 1928), p. 239.

sentiment has not seriously declined. This would seem to be particularly true in the Terai and eastern hill areas which have a long history, prior to 1951, of exploitation by the ruling group in Nepal while at the same time, they were ignored in economic and educational development projects.² There appears to be considerable sentiment in these areas in support of regional autonomy. While this is not necessarily contrary to the development of nationalist sentiment, the possibility of conflict between nationalism and regionalism is present in Nepal.

With regard to the question of the attitude of Nepalese toward foreigners, there is little agreement in the materials available. Some observers have emphasized the dislike and suspicion with which the average Nepalese citizen supposedly viewed the presence of foreigners in his land. This attitude was one of the arguments used by the Nepal Government authorities to justify their exclusion policy under which no westerner could enter Nepal without the express permission of the Government authorities in that country. Landon was expressing the official Nepalese view on this subject when he said:

The presence, even the look, of a stranger is to them fraught with evil influence; his intrusion into woods,

²D. R. Regmi, Whither Nepal (Kathmandu, 1952), p. 11.

hills and rivers, temples, pools, and springs of Nepal is often scarcely less than sacrilege. All of them are distinct with a divine immanence that the Nepalese would not, and perhaps could not, explain to a foreigner.³

However, the experiences of the various scientific and mountaineering expeditions which have entered Nepal in the last thirty years would seem to indicate that the unfriendly attitude of Nepalese towards foreigners no longer exists, if it ever did. Most of the personnel accompanying these expeditions have stressed the friendliness and co-operation of the Nepalese people, even in areas never previously visited by Westerners. It is true that two or three expeditions experienced some difficulties in their relations with the people of the area of their exploration, but these have been, it would seem, the result of special circumstances rather than due to any basically unfriendly attitude among the people towards foreigners in general.

Patterns of Living

The customs and ceremonies observed in Nepal with regard to birth, marriage, death, or other events do not evidence any common pattern for the country as a whole. Each of the various tribes and castes has its own traditional

³Landon, Nepal, I, p. xii.

customs which are usually reflections of the multicultured character of Nepalese society. It is possible to denote at least four major cultural patterns affecting customary and ceremonial behavior: Hindu, Buddhist, Tantric, and animist.

A combination of the latter three was probably the predominant influence during much of Nepal's ancient and medieval history, but all three have gradually fused with Hindu social practices over the course of the last thousand years.

With the spreading of Hinduism in Nepal and the gradual extinction of Buddhism . . . it is not surprising that the rites and ceremonies practised in the matter of births, marriages, deaths and so on, tend to approximate more and more closely to those observed in India by orthodox Hindus.⁴

While the tendency toward standardization of customs in conformity with orthodox Hindu practices is an apparent development in Nepal, it has not yet proceeded to the point where the customs of Buddhist and animist origin have been supplanted completely. Moreover, even among the tribal or caste groups

⁴W. Brook Northey, The Land of the Gurkhas or the Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal (Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons, [1937]), p. 109.

which have yielded most completely to Hinduism, a large number of customs of non-Hindu origin distinguish these tribal groups from the Hindus of the plains to the south. The basically eclectic nature of religion in Nepal [Hinduism, Buddhism and Tantrism] is a sufficient guarantee that the social practices of no one of the major traditions will prevail to the exclusion of the others. The synthesis of ideas and customs achieved in Nepal is likely to continue even though the emphasis may vary from time to time.

Most of the published works upon which this chapter is based were written from twenty-five to fifty years ago and a number of them even earlier. While these descriptions may have approximated the social standards and customs within limited areas and at the time of observation, it should be remembered that the first half of the twentieth century has been one of gradual but continuous social change in Nepal. These changes have affected the basic pattern of living of a large proportion of the Nepalese people.

Undoubtedly the most important trend discernible in this country is the tendency, both among the Newars and the hill tribes, towards an acceptance of Brahmanic Hindu concepts of proper social behavior.⁵ The views

⁵Jiro Kawakita, "Some Ethno-Geographical Observations in the Nepal Himalaya," The Japanese Journal of Ethnology, Vol. 19, No. 1 (1955), p. 51. Translated by Toshio G. Tsukahira.

of these groups with respect to widow remarriage, divorce, burial ceremonies, and food habits are approaching Hindu orthodoxy.

Broadly speaking, the population of Nepal can be divided into five basic groups so far as social practices and customs are concerned. The first of these are the hill tribes which have accepted and followed the social pattern developed among the high-caste tribes, the Thakurs and Chetris, and also among the Brahmans. In this group are to be found the Magars and Gurungs and to a lesser extent the Sunwars. The Newars constitute the second distinct group. The third group is comprised of the Kiranti tribes inhabiting the eastern hill areas of Nepal. Fourth are the Bhotias, who reside in the Nepal-Tibet border area, and who also represent a fundamentally different cultural pattern than is found among the more Hinduized tribes to the south. The fifth group consists of the aboriginal tribes, such as the Tharus and Dhimals, whose social customs have retained their basically animistic character modified only moderately by their contact with Hinduism.

It is possible to identify some customs common to all or most of these five groups, particularly among the first three groups mentioned. However, each group has a sufficient number of individual customs to warrant separate classification. Further, the manner and extent to which each adapts its practices to the dominant Hindu mores often

varies from group to group. While it is true that there is no absolute uniformity in the social customs practiced within each group, there is sufficient similarity so that they do appear to constitute separate entities.

Birth and Weaning Customs

A concept widely encountered in Nepal is that of the "impurity" of the parents and, in some cases, of the other immediate relatives as well, following birth.⁶ The length of the period for which the parents and relatives are considered "impure" differs. For high-caste Thakurs and Chetris the period is thirteen days for a boy and eleven for a girl.⁷ The time period in most of the hill tribes in east Nepal is much shorter, commonly six days for a boy and five for a girl⁸ while the Magars and Gurungs use an eleven day period for a child of either sex.⁹

⁶Ali Shah Ikbal, Nepal, the Home of the Gods (London: Sampson Low, Marston, n. d.), pp. 178, 182.

⁷Ibid., p. 178.

⁸W. Brook Northey and C. J. Morris, The Gurkhas: Their Manners, Customs and Country (London: John Lane The Bodley Head, Ltd., 1928), p. 240.

⁹H. R. K. Gibbs, The Gurkha Soldier (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink & Co., 1944), pp. 36-37.

During the period of impurity the mother is required to remain in a separate room and to avoid contact with anyone but her nearest relatives. Her touch is thought to pollute objects and persons and no one may eat food or drink water that the mother may have happened to touch. The restrictions on the father are not quite so severe but he is obliged to eat alone until the purification ceremony has taken place. Neither parent is allowed to worship the household god while in the state of impurity.¹⁰

Another common practice among the tribes in Nepal is the purification ceremony, Nawaran, which takes place on the last day of the period of impurity caused by the birth of a child. The central feature of this ceremony is the feast which the father provides for all the relatives of the child. In most cases, a Brahman or tribal priest is invited to this feast and the naming ceremony is conducted at this time. Among some of the tribes, a mixture of water and cow's urine is sprinkled over the assembled guests and this is considered to end the period of impurity. After this, the parents are free to resume their normal eating and drinking practices and can join once again in the religious rites of the family.¹¹

The birth ceremonies among the Newars differ in many respects from those common in

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas: Their Manners, Customs and Country, pp. 193-94, 220, 240.

most other parts of Nepal. When the child is born, it is immediately washed, rubbed with sesamum oil, placed in the mother's lap and its birth horoscope is written. The father also bathes, and ceremonially views the child at this time. On the third day after birth, the impurity connected with the cutting of the navel cord comes to an end and the relatives all bathe in holy water. During this three-day period, worship of the gods is forbidden. Three days later, all the relatives affected by the impurity have their nails and hair cut by a barber. The home of the parents is smeared with cow-dung, and the parents bathe in holy water, sprinkle the pancagavya, the five products of the cow used in Hindu religious rites, and show the child the sun. There is a gift of twelve lamps presented to the Victorious Sun, worship of the Three Jewels, and an honorarium given to the family priest and other clergy. Then a meal is served to the caste-brothers. On the eleventh or twelfth day the name-giving ceremony takes place.¹²

The Limbus of eastern Nepal have a practice under which a Brahman or Phedangma, Limbu tribal priest, is consulted at the time of birth. The priest notes the exact time of birth and a horoscope is prepared. This is usually

¹²John Brough, "Nepalese Buddhist Rituals," Journal of the School of Oriental and African Studies, Vol. 12, Part 3-4 (1948), p. 674.

written down on a paper known as the China Kapaz which is retained by the parents, who consult it on all important occasions throughout the child's life.¹³

The Tharus in the Nepal Terai follow birth customs uncommon to the rest of Nepal. In this tribe there is a form of lustral ceremony or baptism used for new-born children. On the day of its birth the child is immersed in water while the eldest man in the family pronounces over it certain auspicious words. Then the child is "fumigated" with smoke from a tuft of dry grass containing the head of a snake and the sting of a scorpion. This is intended to keep the child safe for life from attacks by secret enemies of all kinds.¹⁴

No source available to the author has described the customs and ceremonies of the Bhotian tribes in Nepal at the time of the birth of a child. However, it would seem probable that they follow the general pattern common in Tibet since the Bhotias are still largely Tibetan in all but nationality.

Most of the Nepalese tribes have some form of weaning ceremony known as the Bhat Khuwai. This usually takes place six months after birth for a boy and five months after

¹³Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas: Their Manners, Customs and Country, pp. 219-20.

¹⁴Francis Leeson, "The Tharus of Nepal," Statesman, February 28, 1954, p. I:2.

birth for a girl.¹⁵ While the ceremonial practices at this time vary slightly among the different tribes, most of them include three basic procedures. First, the father is obligated to hold a feast, to which all the relatives of the child and a Brahman or tribal priest are invited. During the ceremony preceding the feast, each guest places a caste mark upon the forehead of the child and then places a bit of cooked rice, usually only a grain or two, in the mouth of the infant. Finally, each guest drops a coin in a plate or other gift for the child.¹⁶

The Newars have a number of events spaced between the naming and the weaning ceremonies. Approximately one month after birth, on a day suitable for a religious procession, the child is taken by its parents to the home of its maternal grandfather. A festival is celebrated there to which all the caste-brothers of the father are invited. In the child's second or third month, at an auspicious moment according to its horoscope, the ears are pierced with a golden needle by either a maternal uncle or a barber. If possible the relatives are given a feast, but if this is not possible, only the uncle or the barber is fed.

¹⁵E. Vansittart, "Tribes, Clans, and Castes of Nepal," Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, LXIII (1894), p. 239.

¹⁶Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas: Their Manners, Customs and Country, p. 127.

In the sixth or eighth month, again on an auspicious day, the weaning ceremony takes place. The Three Jewels are worshipped along with the household god, and after some portion of milky food has been first offered to a deity, the child is given a taste of it from the hands of the senior member of the clan. The relatives and the caste-brothers are then given a feast.¹⁷

Special Caste or Tribal Ceremonies

There are a number of customs and ceremonies which are important to an individual's membership in a caste or tribe. One of these is known as the mit relationship, into which Nepalese of any caste or tribe may enter with one another. The meaning of the word mit is friend, and a mit relationship may be compared to a "blood brotherhood." This relationship can be contracted between men of different tribes, castes and classes and between people who are already related by blood. It constitutes a type of life-long friendship and mit brothers are considered to have all the attributes of blood relations. The ceremony, for instance, automatically rules out any possibility of marriage between one of the mit brothers and the relatives of the other. According to custom a mit will normally never

¹⁷Brough, "Nepalese Buddhist Rituals," pp. 674-75.

call his blood brother by his name unless circumstances force him to do so. Mits cannot sleep in the same place together, nor will a mit speak to his blood brother's wife, mitini, until a ceremony known as the Chino Satne, or recognition ritual, has been performed.¹⁸

Another ceremony of paramount importance is the Pani Patiya, which must be performed by all Nepalese who profess to be Hindus, whenever they return from a trip to a non-Hindu country.¹⁹ This ceremony absolves the individual from loss of caste automatically incurred upon crossing the sea according to traditional Hindu rules of conduct. The ceremony, originally, was complex and expensive for the person involved and required a dispensation from the Raj Guru himself. An intricate purification ritual, similar in some respects to that followed by an outcaste who is in the process of being readmitted into his caste, is necessary. Even important governmental officials such as Maharaja Jan Bahadur and Maharaja Chandra Shamsheer were obligated to undergo the Pani Patiya on their return from trips to England and Europe.²⁰ During and after the first and second world wars, however,

¹⁸Gibbs, The Gurkha Soldier, pp. 44-45; Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas: Their Manners, Customs and Country, p. 102.

¹⁹Gibbs, The Gurkha Soldier, p. 43.

²⁰Landon, Nepal, II, p. 125-26.

the Pani Patiya ceremony was greatly simplified, by order of the Raj Guru, to allow the large number of Nepalese soldiers who had served abroad in the British Army to regain their caste status with a minimum of inconvenience and expense. Under this system a small sum, two annas, or about five cents, was paid to the Raj Guru and he, in exchange, granted the soldier a certificate of dispensation.²¹

Another important caste ceremony is known as Bhor Patiya. It is performed to re-admit a person to caste if he has unwittingly broken caste rules by eating with a low caste person, accepting water from a member of an "unclean" caste, or any similar violation. Anyone who has broken these caste rules regarding food and water, no matter how innocently, is considered to be Pani Band or outcasted and is unable to eat with other caste members, even his own relatives, until he has performed the purification ceremony. If the individual has deliberately violated caste regulations, he is liable to much more severe punishment, including heavy fines and punishment besides outcasting, and the ceremony involved in regaining caste status is much more complicated and expensive, requiring the approval of both a caste panchayat and the Raj Guru.²²

²¹Ibid, II, p. 142; Gibbs, The Gurkha Soldier, p. 43.

²²Government of India, L. S. S. O'Malley, "Report: Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and Sikkim," Census of India, 1911, Vol. V, Part 1, pp. 447-48, 484.

Among the Newars there are certain customs practiced which are not common to most of the other tribes in Nepal. One of these is the tonsure which takes place in a child's third, fifth or seventh year--always an odd number year--at the hands of a maternal uncle or an elder of the clan. A top-knot is formed by shaving the rest of the head. The remaining hair is then cut short. Before a month has passed, the parents must bathe in holy water, worship the Three Jewels, and invite to dinner elders resident in a monastery. In the fifth year, the Newar child commences his education with a study of the alphabet and other branches of knowledge. At this time, another ceremony occurs during which the teachers are offered rice or betel nuts. The ceremony surrounding the tying of the girdle takes place on an auspicious day for the son in the tenth year and for a daughter in the fifth or seventh year. If the ceremony is for a son an argha-offering is made first to the sun, followed by the Jar-worship ceremony and the worship of the Three Jewels. After that follows the kayata-bandha or girdle tying and the caste brothers are then given a feast. If it is a daughter, the phari-ya launa or girdle tying ritual involves her marriage to the Bel fruit, a ceremony which will be described in the section on marriage customs which follows.²³

²³Brough, "Nepalese Buddhist Rituals," p. 675. See below, pp. 274-75.

For the Brahmans, Thakurs, Chetris and high-caste Newars, another important caste ceremony centers around the bestowing of the sacred thread upon the male members of these groups. According to Northey and Morris, the ceremonial practices of these groups on this occasion are similar to those practiced among orthodox high-caste Hindus in India.²⁴ The age at which this ceremony takes place varies to a considerable extent. Since the financial expenditure accompanying this ritual can be very heavy, it is quite common for a family to combine this rite with others, and in this way avoid a double expenditure.

For instance, the high-caste Nepalese men quite frequently wait until they are being married or until someone else in their family is being married before they don the sacred thread, and the two ceremonies are combined.²⁵ Thus, the age at which the sacred thread ceremony takes place usually depends upon the age of the individual at the time of his marriage, and since both child and adult marriages are common in Nepal, this may vary from five to twenty-five. However, it is not unusual for a family with extensive financial resources to hold a separate ceremony for the donning of the sacred thread. In these instances, the individual is normally somewhere between the age of ten and fourteen when the ritual is held.

²⁴Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas: Their Manners, Customs and Country, p. 122.

²⁵Gibbs, The Gurkha Soldier, p. 9.

The ceremonial practices (Upanayan) accompanying the sacred thread rites are relatively simple with the principal event being the shaving of the head of the person being honored with the exception of a small knot towards the back of the crown. A Brahman will usually preside at the event but a barber does the tonsorial operation. A feast is provided by the family of the boy to which the relatives and caste-brothers are invited.

Marriage Customs

The multicultural character of the Nepalese social structure has resulted in a wide variety of customs and practices with regard to marriage and family life. While the Hindu forms tend to predominate in most of the tribal groups, there are still many remnants of Buddhist and pre-Buddhist social practices which influence in varying degrees the patterns of behavior.

There is no single legal or customary rule in Nepal restricting the type of marriage. Polygamy, polyandry and monogamy are all not prohibited and are practiced, although the first two usually do not occur within the same tribal group. Polygamy is permitted and practiced in the Hindu social system, while polyandry is a form of marriage common among the peoples of Tibet. The Hinduized Nepalese have, therefore, accepted polygamy as a proper marriage form, while certain groups of the

Bhotias of Nepal still retain polyandry as the proper, if not always possible form of married life. However, the facts of Nepal's economic poverty have been primarily responsible for forcing a monogamous marriage pattern on a large proportion of the population in this country.

According to Kawakita, among the Bhotias fraternal polyandry is the most common form of polyandrous marriage although avuncular and father-son polyandry are practiced at times. Under the former system, a woman upon marriage is considered to be not only the wife of the man she marries but also of his younger brothers, although not of his elder brothers. She does not undergo any ceremony with the younger brothers, but is permitted to have sexual relations with them as if she were their wife. Her husband by marriage is termed by Kawakita as the "accentuated husband" though no special marital rights appear to go with this position which are not enjoyed to an equal extent by his younger brothers. In avuncular polyandry, the woman is the wife of the man she marries and of his paternal uncles, while in father-son polyandry she is the joint wife of the father and his sons by earlier marriages.²⁶

Marriage customs in Nepal are influenced by the restrictions placed on the institution by caste and tribal regulations. The general pattern

²⁶Kawakita, "Some Ethno-Geographical Observations," Part 2.

of tribal endogamy and clan exogamy, under which a person must marry outside of his own clan but within his own tribal group, limits the available marriage partners. Moreover, the principal of hypergamy, under which an individual should marry only someone of an equal or higher social status, further limits the range of choice in marriage where this regulation is applicable. The endogamous group in which a man may properly look for a wife may number its members in the hundreds. When one considers that there is an excess of males over females in Nepal, particularly in the western half, the result is a great competition for brides.

Limitation of choice to a small group has resulted in interesting forms of violation. Tribal endogamy and hypergamy are sometimes ignored and inter-tribal marriages now tend to become more common. In some instances, tribal endogamy is nominally adhered to through a ceremony in which the bride-to-be is adopted into the husband's tribe prior to the performance of the marriage ceremony.²⁷ Moreover, cases of "captive brides" in which a female of one tribe is kidnapped by males of another tribe and subsequently married without her family's permission still occur in some of the more remote areas of Nepal.²⁸ Furthermore, the excess

²⁷H. H. Risley, The Tribes and Castes of Bengal, II (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1892), pp. 16-17.

²⁸D. N. Majumdar, The Fortunes of Primitive Tribes (Lucknow: Universal Publishers, 1944), p. 89.

of males complicates the enforcement of the orthodox Hindu regulations forbidding widow remarriage; consequently a number of Nepalese tribes and castes now permit the remarriage.

The age at which marriage customarily takes place varies from tribe to tribe, largely determined by the degree to which the tribal group has come under Hindu influence. The Hindu custom allowing child marriages, which usually take place between the ages of seven and thirteen, has been practiced on a considerable scale among the high-caste Brahmans, Thakurs and Chetris, and also in the Magar tribe in western Nepal.²⁹ However, among the Kiranti tribes in eastern Nepal and the Newars in Kathmandu Valley, the marriage age appears to be between twelve and sixteen for women, and fifteen and twenty for men.

In most of the tribal groups in Nepal, marriages are usually arranged between the parents of the prospective bride and groom. At times an intermediary--termed a Lame by the tribes in western Nepal and a Vakil by the Newars--undertakes the actual negotiations in the name of the groom's family. The usual betrothal process in western Nepal consists of a preliminary visit by the prospective groom's father, or an intermediary, to the parents of the girl chosen. On this occasion no presents are

²⁹Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas: Their Manners, Customs and Country, p. 127.

exchanged, but if the negotiations proceed in a manner satisfactory to both parties, the groom's father is invited for another visit. On the second visit he brings with him a plate of curds and, among some tribes, other foods such as betel nuts, liquor or meat of some kind. If the gifts are accepted by the girl's parents the betrothal is considered to be finalized, and the two families proceed with planning the details of the wedding ceremony.³⁰

Among the Kiranti tribes of eastern Nepal and the Sunwars inhabiting the same general area, arranged marriages are the exception rather than the rule.³¹ The young people in these tribes tend to arrange for their own partners and parents step in only in the latter stages of the courtship. There are none of the cautious negotiations which are the normal prelude to marriage in many other parts of Nepal. Although occasionally a youth may select a wife without the knowledge and consent of his parents, it is more usual for the family to be consulted and their approval obtained prior to the formal announcement of a betrothal.

According to Northey and Morris, one Kiranti tribe, the Limbus, has a unique method for selecting marriage partners.

³⁰Ibid., pp. 127-28.

³¹Victor Barnouw, "Eastern Nepalese Marriage Customs and Kinship Organization," Southwestern Journal of Anthropology, II, No. 1 (Spring, 1955), pp. 16-17.

A common way of selecting a bride is by open singing competitions held for this specific purpose. Thus, either the boy or girl will commence by singing a couplet to which the other must reply. The couplets are composed on the spur of the moment, and each succeeding one should improve on the one before it in wit and humour. The contest goes on until neither party is able, for lack of further ideas, to continue, and in order to win a bride the man must produce such a couplet that the girl is unable to reply. If the man is defeated in the contest he at once runs away, leaving some other competitor to win his fair victor's hand.³²

It is customary for the groom's family to pay a bride-price to the family of the girl among most of the tribes in Nepal. None of the sources available to the author mentions a dowry system, so it would appear that dowries are seldom, if ever, paid.

The family system in Nepal is patrilineal and patrilocal in structure. The bride moves into the home of the groom's family. There is no evidence of a matriarchal system operating anywhere in Nepal. Customarily, the bride becomes a member of the tribal and caste group of the husband, should the marriage be intertribal and intercaste in nature.

³²Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas: Their Manners, Customs and Country, pp. 220-21.

The marriage rites of the various Nepalese tribes differ considerably, but many include these basic ceremonies which are traditionally associated with Hindu marriage customs in India: The rasbarag, or comparison of horoscopes of the bride and groom, is customary both among the tribes that have adopted Hinduism, and among those which retain the Buddhist or animist customs relatively intact. The marriage is presided over by a Brahman or tribal priest who chants sacred prayers over the head of the couple. The Tilak, or placing of caste mark on the head of the bride, is a feature of the Hindu ceremony. Also, the sendurdan, or marking of the parting of the bride's hair with vermillion powder by the groom, is a regular part of the Hindu marriage ceremony as followed in Nepal. The pheri bhaunwan, or circumambulation of a sacred fire or pole, either three, five or seven times, is another custom of some importance, although tribes vary the number of times the couple circumambulate, and the object around which they move.³³

The marriage rites of the Chetris tribe, as described by Northey and Morris, are a standard of ceremony commonly followed by Nepalese, but with the exception, at least, of the

³³E. A. H. Blunt, The Caste System of Northern India (London: Oxford University Press, 1931), pp. 74-75.

Newars, Limbus and Bhotias. Among the Chetris, on the day set for the wedding, the groom sets out for the home of the bride accompanied by his male friends and relations. On arrival at the bride's home he is met with a shower of rice. The groom is required to remain outside the bride's house, where he and his friends are feasted, while the bride attires herself in the ceremonial robes. The groom is then summoned within, accompanied by a "best man" and a number of assistants. He finds his bride, sponsored by young female relations, standing beside a blanket which has been laid upon the floor.

The couple seat themselves on the blanket, the groom on the left, but before the ceremony is completed, the couple must change places. The bride's mother feeds the couple curds, after which the groom is led outside the house where a small temporary structure with a roof of red cloth has been erected. Seated upon a blanket within, the groom listens to the chanting of a Brahman priest who proffers a vessel containing water. The groom scoops up a little water in his hand, and at the moment indicated by the priest allows it to return from his hands into the vessel.

The main portion of the marriage ceremony commences when the bride rejoins the groom at this point. Both parties repeat the ceremony of lifting and returning water from brass vessels. They then assume an attitude where they can place their hands together and

supplicate the supreme deity to propitiate all the lesser gods. The "best man" produces the groom's gifts--clothes and jewelry--which the girl puts on, and the groom is told by the girl's parents that he is now their son-in-law. The groom's father takes him on his back and the girl's brother does likewise with her and they are both carried three times around the sacred fire.

The groom then provides more jewelry which he places upon his bride and sprinkles a little vermillion powder upon the part in her hair. She seizes him by his girdle and leads him three times around the sacred fire. After this the bride washes the feet of the groom, and the formal ceremony is considered concluded. The groom spends the night in the house of the bride, and the next day the couple is taken to the home of the groom's father where another feast is given for relatives and caste brothers.³⁴

Kawakita describes a wedding ceremony among the Buddhist Bhotias which differs from those of the Nepalese Hindus. The lama officiates at the wedding ceremony, which is usually held in the daytime. If the groom's house has an altar room (chhogang), the lama comes to the house. Otherwise, the groom and his party go to the local gompa (shrine). Early in the morning of the wedding day the lama begins the ceremony by reading an appropriate

³⁴Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas: Their Manners, Customs and Country, pp. 127-28.

sutra and conducting a worship service. At this time he makes two thorma (cone-shaped cakes of dough) out of tsampa or barley flour dough. When this is done, the groom is told that he can go to his bride's home. Thereupon, the members of the two nangzang, or families involved, have a lengthy exchange of courtesies, which is followed by a wedding reception at the home of the bride. One notable characteristic of this wedding ceremony is that the bride does not participate in any religious ceremony.³⁵ However, whether this is true for the Bhotian population of Nepal in general is impossible to say since Kawakita's area of observation was limited to only one of the regions in which Bhotias form the majority of the population in Nepal.

The Newars follow certain marriage customs which are unique among the tribal and caste groups in Nepal. The most dissimilar is the ceremony in which Newar women are "married to" the Bel fruit. This ceremony would usually take place in a girl's fifth or seventh year and the marriage ceremony is combined with the girdle-tying ceremony (phari-ya launa). This "marriage" is preceded by a morning of fasting and a purification ceremony which is conducted in the girl's home.

³⁵Kawakita, "Some Ethno-Geographical Observations," Part 1.

The girl then visits a priest where the marriage ceremony takes place.³⁶

A few years later, at the time of the first appearance of menses, the Newar girls undergo another premarital ceremony. This occasion is marked by protracted ceremonies which last twelve days. During this period the girl is maintained in the strictest seclusion, and even light is excluded from the room in which she keeps her vigil. No one is allowed to visit her during her incarceration, but when the twelve days are over an elderly female relative calls upon her and places a betel nut in her mouth. A woman barber comes later and cuts the girl's nails. On the thirteenth day, a priest comes and performs further ceremonies, and the girl comes out from her retirement and proceeds to the temple where she offers prayers.³⁷

The marriage ceremony of the Newars differs in certain respects from those practiced by other Nepalese. An intermediary, a vakil, from the prospective groom's family calls on the family of the girl. If he returns with a platter of curds, the betrothal is considered completed. The next day the boy's father calls on the girl's parents with a quantity of meat, some liquor, and betel nuts for the bride's mother in order that she may propitiate her household gods. Two weeks

³⁶Iktal, Nepal, the Home of the Gods, p. 172.

³⁷Brough, "Nepalese Buddhist Rituals," p. 675.

later the visit is repeated and the boy's father is treated to a feast at the girl's house. He visits the girl herself, presenting her with four duck eggs and some gold bracelets.

On the same night a feast is arranged, and wedding guests arrive with presents for the bride. The next day the groom makes his first appearance at a feast. When the feasting is over the girl's father takes his daughter by the hand and bids her to rise. As she does so, her prospective father-in-law hands her four parcels of betel nuts, and these she hands to her parents as an indication to all that she will shortly be leaving their house. The girl is then taken to the home of a friend where she spends the evening. The next morning the father-in-law meets her there and escorts her through the principal streets to his home, where his wife greets the girl by washing her feet. The girl is presented with packages of betel nuts, which she offers to the gods and afterwards gives to the male members of the family which she has joined. Two days later the bride and the mother-in-law eat together for the first time with all the relatives present. In another two days, the girl's father arrives with a present and to see how the girl is getting along. At this time the girl performs a ceremony offering ducks and goats to the gods, after which she finally can visit her parents for the first time. It is only after all this has been

completed that she can finally consider herself well and truly married.³⁸

The position of widows in Nepal varies among the tribes and caste groups. The Brahmanic Hindu code strictly forbids widow remarriage and the Nepalese Brahmans and high caste tribes follow this rule. However, among the non-Hindu and the low caste Hindu groups in Nepal, widow remarriage is usually permitted.³⁹ The only regulation is that a widow cannot be remarried through the ceremony, Byah, with which unmarried women are married, but either through a much simpler ceremony, Lyate, or through merely moving in with a man and cohabiting with him as his wife. Also, among some of the tribes at least, a widow is banned from remarrying in the gotra of her deceased husband, and must also abide by the restrictions which limited her marriage choice prior to her first marriage.⁴⁰

Under Brahmanic law divorce is not permitted since marriage is considered to be a holy sacrament. In India, however, only the high caste Hindus strictly adhere to this regulation and divorce is allowed under certain conditions by most of the lower castes and tribes. A similar dichotomy between high caste

³⁸Ikbal, Nepal, the Home of the Gods, pp. 173-74.

³⁹Risley, The Tribes and Castes of Bengal, II, pp. 74-75, 112-13, 226, 292, 314, 393-94.

⁴⁰Ibid.

and low caste practice appears to apply to divorce in Nepal. The Nepalese Brahmans and the Ksatriya tribes do not permit divorce, but most of the other tribal and low caste codes of conduct do allow it. The position of a divorced woman in these groups is quite similar to that of a widow. She is allowed to remarry, although not by the Byah ceremony,⁴¹ but her children are considered legitimate and enjoy equal rights with the children of a wife who was married by the Byah ceremony.

Death Ceremonies and Customs

There are four methods used in Nepal for the disposal of the dead: cremation, underground burial, disposal in a river, and exposure to wild beasts and predatory birds. The first method is the traditional Hindu practice. The latter three methods are more closely associated with the form of Lamaistic Buddhism practiced in Tibet and certain of the hill and highland areas of Nepal which have incorporated many of the pre-Buddhist animistic customs of these people. According to some observers, it is not uncommon for a tribal group to use two, three or even all four methods for disposing of the dead, dependent principally, it would seem, upon the desires of the dead man's clan or family.

⁴¹ Ibid.

The ceremonies associated with cremation follow the general Hindu pattern in Nepal. The funeral should take place on the day of death or, if this is impossible, on the following day. A suitable place is selected, preferably by the banks of a river, and a pyre is erected. If the deceased is a man, the pyre consists of nine tiers of logs; in the case of a woman it has only seven tiers.

The attendance of a Brahman is not essential on the funeral day, but in most cases a priest is summoned to offer up prayers for the spirit of the departed. The corpse, enfolded in a shroud, is carried to the pyre followed by male relations and friends of the dead person. Just before the corpse is laid upon the pyre, a piece of wick soaked in ghee is inserted between the teeth. When the body is finally in position, the wick is lighted by the nearest relation present, who also sets fire to the pyre. In order to make the wood burn more quickly, ghee is poured over it.

On the thirteenth day after the funeral the period of mourning for the near relatives of the deceased comes to an end. At this time a feast is given in the house of the deceased by the next of kin. All who assisted at the funeral are invited as well as a Brahman who performs the ceremony of purification for all present.

The chief mourner is, in every case, the son. Where, however, there is no son, the nearest relative assumes the role. In the case

of the death of a parent the son mourns for a thirteen day period. During this time he shaves his head, moustache and eyebrows, and dresses completely in white. He is allowed to eat only once a day, and his meal consists of rice, ghee and bananas. In the case of the death of a son, the father mourns for the same period and observes the same restrictions with regard to food, but does not shave his moustache and eyebrows. Similarly a husband mourns his wife for the same period, but is not required to shave at all, while a married sister living away from home is mourned for only five days, and only by her brothers.⁴²

Among the Magars, Gurungs, Murmis and Sunwars, cremation is becoming the preferred manner of disposing of the dead, but the old tribal custom of burial is still practiced to a considerable extent.⁴³ If cremation is used, the ceremonies follow the general pattern described in the previous paragraph. If burial is the custom, immediately after death the corpse is tied with three pieces of rope to a stout pole and carried to the grave. There it is stripped, dressed in new clothes, and laid on its back in the grave with the head pointing to the north. The forehead is smeared with sandalwood paste.

⁴²Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas: Their Manners, Customs and Country, pp. 133-35.

⁴³Gibbs, The Gurkha Soldier, p. 44.

One of the maternal relatives of the deceased, usually a maternal uncle, is then chosen to act as priest for the occasion. He conducts the appointed ritual for the propitiation of the dead. First, he places in the mouth of the corpse some silver coins and some coral. Next, he lights a wick soaked in ghee, touches the lips of the corpse with the fire, and scatters some parched rice about the mouth. Finally, he covers the face with a cloth called the pujunri. Two bits of wood, about three feet long, are set up on either side of the grave. In one, nine steps or notches are cut forming a ladder for the spirit of the dead to ascend to heaven; on the other, each person present at the funeral cuts a notch as evidence of his participation.

As the maternal uncle steps out of the grave, he bids a solemn farewell to the deceased and calls upon his spirit to ascend to heaven by the ladder that stands ready for him. When the earth has been filled in, the stick notched by the funeral party is taken away to a distance and broken in two pieces, lest by its means the dead man's spirit should do mischief to any of the survivors. The poles used to carry the corpse are also broken up, and the spades and ropes are left in the grave.

When the mourners return home, one of their party goes ahead and makes a barricade of thorn bushes across the road midway between the grave and the house of the deceased. On the top of the thorns he places a big stone on

which he takes his stand, holding a pot of burning incense in his left hand and some woollen thread in his right. One by one the mourners step on the stone and pass through the smoke of the incense to the other side of the barrier. As they pass, each takes a piece of thread from the man who holds the incense and ties it around his own neck. The object of this ceremony is to prevent the spirit of the dead person from coming home with the mourners and establishing itself in its old haunts. The spirit is conceived of as a miniature man. It is believed that the spirit is unable to make its way by foot through the thorns, while the smell of the incense, to which all spirits are highly sensitive, prevents it from surmounting this obstacle on the shoulders of one of the mourners.⁴⁴

For seven days after death, the relatives of the deceased observe formal mourning and do not eat salt with their food. On the eighth day a propitiatory offering of meat, rice, eggs, plantains and sweetmeats is presented at the grave, and a feast is given by the chief mourner. For the next six months small daily offerings are made in the deceased's house to a piece of cloth torn from the shroud. At the end of this time a tribal priest is called in to perform the final ceremonies.⁴⁵

⁴⁴Risley, The Tribes and Castes of Bengal, II, pp. 75-76.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 112.

The Newars generally have adopted cremation as the method by which they dispose of their dead, but their ceremonies vary in certain respects from the other groups which use this method. Among the Newars, as soon as a person dies, duck eggs are placed at each of the four corners of the bier holding the corpse. The body is then washed and prepared for cremation. Before the shroud is folded on the body, a duck's egg and a piece of fish are placed in its mouth. The body is then carried by the male relatives and friends to the pyre where the traditional Hindu ceremony is observed. The women remain at the home of the deceased and prepare for the ceremony of bilampi which must be performed before any of the male mourners can re-enter the house. A chafing dish containing mustard seed and other ingredients is lit, and when the men return, each places his face in the smoke and fumigates himself.⁴⁶

The Sherpa ceremonies connected with death have been described by the Japanese sociologist, Kawakita, who visited the Sherpa areas in 1953. He writes:

When a villager died, his family would immediately summon a lama. The lama would bring a divination book called the Tsipe. There are two kinds of divinations:

⁴⁶Ikbal, Nepal, the Home of the Gods, pp. 174-75.

the Sonzi Korwa and the Shitsi Korwa. The former concerns the fortunes of the living, the latter of the dead. In this instance the Tsipe is used for the Shitsi Korwa. The divination might prescribe one of four ways of disposing of the corpse: (1) water funeral (Top Chhu la du, or abandonment in a river); (2) earth funeral (Top Sa la du, internment in the ground); (3) fire funeral (Top Me la du, or cremation of the body); and (4) bird funeral (Top Chha la du, or exposure to the birds).

If it was determined that the dead person was destined to become a god, an image inscribed with his name was made and kept either at home or in the temple. However, if he was found to have been possessed by evil spirits, the following ritual was performed to free his body from their grasp. The lama would make an effigy called mik pi ten to represent the dead person's body. The effigy was made by attaching arms and legs to a khurma, a small bamboo basket used at planting time. Inside the khurma, rice, wheat or barley was placed, and the effigy was dressed in the dead man's clothes. A piece of paper on which was written a passage from the sutras was then placed within the khurma. After a prayer, the lama would remove the paper, burn it, and mix the ashes with some tsampa. This he would hide in some secret place. As for the mik pi ten, the lama would take the

clothes with him and the rest would be brought to the place where the evil spirit was supposed to dwell.⁴⁷

The Limbus in eastern Nepal practice both cremation according to the Hindu custom, and burial. If the latter method is used, the pattern of customs is as follows: The corpse is placed in the grave lying on its back with the head to the east. The grave is lined with stones, and a cairn, consisting of four tiers for a man and three for a woman, is erected. The Phedangma, or tribal priest, attends the funeral and delivers a short address to the departed spirit concluding with a command for the spirit to go where his fathers have gone and not to return to trouble the dreams of the living.

Neither food nor clothes are placed in the grave, as is done by some other Nepalese tribes, but sometimes a brass plate with a rupee in it is laid under the head of the corpse. For nine days after the funeral the sons of the deceased live on plain rice without any salt. For a month or two the relatives wear flowers in their hair and avoid merry making. The special characteristic sign of mourning is a piece of white rag tied around the head. There is no periodical ceremony conducted by the

⁴⁷ Kawakita, "Some Ethno-Geographical Observations," Part 1.

family of the deceased for the propitiation of ancestors.⁴⁸

According to Leeson, among the Tharus earth burial seems to have been the historical manner for disposal of the dead, but cremation is now replacing it. Cremation follows the traditional Hindu pattern described previously. One additional Tharu death ceremony is the ritual fumigation which precedes cremation or burial. On the night prior to the funeral a "Feast of the Dead" is held with the corpse in attendance. The scent and smoke of the banquet which accompanies this ceremony is intended to refresh the soul of the deceased. On that same night, the corpse is painted with vermilion and exposed on a mound outside the house where the spirit of the dead is supposed to frighten away wild animals from the crops.⁴⁹

Inheritance System

According to Northey and Morris, the laws of inheritance in Nepal do not, on the whole, differ very much from those in force in India prior to independence.⁵⁰ Under the inheritance system developed in Hindu customary law, it is the joint family which is the main determinant of the rights of inheritance.

⁴⁸Risley, The Tribes and Castes of Bengal, II, p. 19.

⁴⁹Leeson, "The Tharus of Nepal," p. I:2.

⁵⁰Northey and Morris, The Gurkhas: Their Manners, Customs and Country, p. 103.

Some property is owned jointly by the family rather than by any individual person, although there is also scope for personally owned property. The family's property is inherited by the male members jointly, although the eldest son sometimes is granted a preferential position. However, this property cannot be disposed of at the discretion of any individual. The approval of other male members of the family, who have reached their majority, must be obtained before it can be sold or otherwise separated from the family holdings. Personal property, which is usually any wealth the individual may have accumulated through his own endeavors rather than inherited as a share of the joint family holdings, is distributed according to the desires of the individual. Normally, however, only his direct descendants would inherit in this situation and collateral family members would not share in the distribution.

Among certain tribes, the inheritance rules vary. Among the Gurungs the eldest son is entitled to the best of the livestock, such as the buffaloes and cows. The land is divided equally among the rest of the members of the joint family, including the daughters and sisters if they are not of marriageable age.⁵¹

The Dhimal tribe in southeastern Nepal does not follow the Hindu inheritance system. Rather the inheritance of property is regulated by tribal custom under which the village

⁵¹Ibid.

panchayat is the administering and executing unit. Under the principles followed in this tribe, the sons inherit equal shares. If there are no sons, the uterine brothers divide the property. Next in order of inheritance is the wife, then the daughters, and finally the cousins of the deceased.⁵²

The Limbus also have an inheritance system which diverges in certain respects from the practices of most of the other tribal groups. A man's sons, natural or adopted, divide his property. However, an adopted son, or a son by a wife only informally married (kanchi sadi), takes only one-half of a legitimate son's share. The division of the property is usually made by the tribal council who, as a general rule, set apart an extra share for the eldest son. The youngest son is allowed to choose his share first, and then the other shares are allotted to the remaining brothers.

If there are no sons, the sons-in-law actually living or willing to live in the family homestead are entitled to divide the property. Brothers of the deceased are the next heirs, and married sisters, if they attend the funeral, usually get a small share of the inheritance. An exception to these rules of inheritance occurs in the case of daijo or property given to a sister or daughter or acquired from a maternal uncle or father-in-law. This property is equally distributed among the sons of the woman

⁵²Risley, The Tribes and Castes of Bengal, I, p. 227.

to whom it was given. In the event of a woman's dying without children, daijo property reverts to her own family.⁵³

Kawakita, in his study of a Bhotian village, noted an inheritance system which also differed from the general Hindu pattern. Among the Bhotias, all wealth that was not handed down directly by a father or grandfather to a male heir had to be contributed to the local temple (gompa) or paid to it in the form of fees for memorial services. If, for example, a father dies leaving the mother, two sons and two daughters, the property is divided among all five of the survivors. If, then, the mother dies, her share is divided equally between the two sons. However, they do not have free possession of this property. Rather, it must be sold to members of their own clan (phazang) for money to be used to pay for their mother's memorial services. If the sons wish to retain their share of their mother's property themselves, they must contribute an equivalent sum of money to the temple for memorial services.⁵⁴

⁵³Ibid., II, pp. 19-20.

⁵⁴Kawakita, "Some Ethno-Geographical Observations," Part 1.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED

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bhaber - Terai forest belt.

Bhat Khuwai - weaning ceremony.

Bhor Patiya - purification ceremony for readmitting a person to caste if he has unwittingly broken caste rules by eating with a low caste person or committed some similiar violation.

Bhotias - literally, Tibetans; from Bhot, meaning Tibet. .

bilampi - ceremony which must be performed by male mourners before they may re-enter the house of the deceased.

Brahman - Hindu priest: highest caste in the Hindu caste system.

Buddhamargis - Newari Buddhists.

byah - standard marriage ritual.

chaitya - miniature stupas surrounded by a courtyard.

chapatti - flat cake made from various coarse flours.

chauris - hybrid bovine, resulting from yaks bred with domestic cows.

chhogang - altar room in a house.

China Kapaz - paper on which is written a child's horoscope drawn up at the time of his birth (among the Limbus of eastern Nepal).

Chino Satne - ceremony by which wife of a blood brother is recognized.

cholo - bodice worn by women.

daijo - property given to a sister or daughter or acquired from a maternal uncle or father-in-law.

dal - split pulse.

Dharma Adhikari - ecclesiastical court which tried cases relating to caste.

dhenro - porridge made from millet.

Gatti - code of caste law to which both Hindu and Buddhist Newars are subject.

ghee - clarified butter obtained from milk of buffaloes, cows, goats and sheep; has culinary purposes as well as religious use for Hindus.

gompa - Lamaist temples in northern Nepal; also used for schools designed for training religious leaders of the Buddhist faith.

Hinayana - one of the three schools of Buddhist faith.

jhadi - Terai forest belt.

kagate - minor subdivision among Sherpas.

kala-azar - black fever.

kalasa - gilt copper finial ornament.

kanchi sadi - informally married wife; usually a second wife.

Kayata-bandha - girdle-tying ceremony for a boy, among Newars.

khurma - small bamboo basket used at planting time; also used in mik pi ten.

Ksatriya - the warrior caste among Hindus: Between the Brahmans and the Vaisyas in the Hindu caste system.

kukri - large knife carried by all members of the military tribes in Nepal.

Lame - intermediary in arranging marriages in Western Nepal.

Lyate - simple ceremony by which widows and divorcees may remarry.

madhyama - matriculation examination in Sanskrit and other classical learning.

mahadevan - great god (Sanskrit).

mahasukha - highest state of bliss brought about by divine interaction of male and female principles in Tantrism.

Mahayana - one of the three schools of Buddhism.

mandapam - rest-shed.

marg - path or way.

mik pi ten - effigy made by lama to represent dead person's body.

mit - friend; mit relationship may be compared to "blood brotherhood."

mitini - wife of a blood brother.

nangzang - family among the Bhotians.

Nawaran - purification ceremony following birth of a child.

nirvana - highest goal of Buddhism--the cessation of continuous cycle of re-births; or state of tranquillity.

nyesang - family members, among the Bhotians.

pancagavya - the five products of the cow used in Hindu religious rites.

Pani Band - outcasted.

Pani Patiya - ceremony which must be performed by all Nepalese Hindus whenever they return from a trip to a non-Hindu country.

pathshalas - Nepali, Hindi and Sanskrit schools.

phari-ya launa - girdle-tying ceremony for a girl, among Newars.

phazang - name by which various families in a clan are known to each other, among the Bhotians.

Phedangma - Limbu tribal priest.

pheri bhaunwan - circumambulation of sacred fire or pole at wedding ceremony.

phungyha - relatives, among the Bhotians.

Praja Parishad - People's Party.

punjuri - cloth used to cover the face of the dead before burial among certain tribes.

Puranas - sacred stories.

raga - Indian system of improvising on a basic scale of important notes.

Raj Guru - High priest attached to the royal court; adviser to the King.

rasbarag - comparison of horoscopes of bride and bridegroom before marriage.

sendurdan - marking of the parting of the bride's hair with vermilion powder by groom at wedding ceremony, among Hindus.

shepachemo - head of the family among Bhotians.

Shitsi Korwa - divinations concerning the future of the deceased at the time of death.

Shivamargis - followers of Shiva, Newari Hindus.

Sonzi Korwa - divinations concerning the future of the living.

stupa - a large mound, often containing Buddhist relics.

Sudra - peasant or farmer caste among Hindus.

tangoti - strip of cloth around the loins worn by the peasants.

thorma - cone-shaped cakes of dough.

tilak - caste mark on head of bride at wedding ceremony, among Hindus.

Top Chha la du - bird funeral, or exposure to the birds.

Top Chhu la du - water funeral, or abandonment in a river.

Top Me la du - fire funeral or cremation of the body.

Top Sa la du - earth funeral, or internment in the ground.

trongning - families in main line of descent from common patrilineal ancestor, among the Bhotians.

tsampa - barley flour dough.

tshong - head family in each clan, among the Bhotians.

Tsipe - divination book used by Sherpas in connection with death ceremonies.

tsosum - clan, among Bhotians.

Upanayan - ceremonial practices accompanying tying of the sacred thread.

vaids - practitioners trained in the ancient Hindu ayurvedic systems of medicine.

vaishnavas - worshippers of Vishnu.

Vaisya - merchant and artisan caste among Hindus.

Vajrayana - one of the three schools of Buddhism.

Vakil - intermediary in arranging marriages, among Newars.

Vamsavalis - chronicles of Nepalese dynasties.

varnasankara - a social system in which the members fail to abide by strict caste regulations with regard to marriage and commensality.

viharas - schools, founded by ancient Buddhist kings of Nepal, devoted to abstruse Buddhist learning.

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