

FAITH-HEALERS IN THE HIMALAYAS

Casper J. Miller, S. J.



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FAITH-HEALERS IN THE HIMALAYAS

AN INVESTIGATION OF TRADITIONAL HEALERS
AND THEIR FESTIVALS
IN DOLAKHA DISTRICT OF NEPAL

by

Casper J. Miller, S. J.

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To my sisters
Laura, Emilie and Joan
and my brother
Christopher

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Note on Transliteration

Transliteration of Nepali and tribal words follows the system of equivalents listed below. In the case of many proper names the spellings follow the form in which they are usually written in English, e.g., Tamang (instead of Tāmāñ), Kalingchok (instead of Kālīñcok) and others. Proper names that are less familiar are given with the spelling used in the Survey of India Map or transliterated as pronounced by the people. All other spellings follow Bal Chandra Sharma, Nepālī Śabda-Koś (Kathmandu, 2019 B.S.), but local pronunciations are indicated when significantly different.

अ = a	क = k	ट = ṭ	प = p
आ = ā	ख = kh	ठ = ṭh	फ = ph
इ = i	ग = g	ड = ḍ	ब = b
ई = ī	घ = gh	ढ = ḍh	भ = bh
उ = u	उः = ũ	ण = ṇ	म = m
ऊ = ū			
ऋ = ṛ	च = c	त = t	य = y
ए = e	छ = ch	थ = th	र = r
ऐ = ai	ज = j	द = ḍ	ल = l
ओ = o	झ = jh	ध = dh	व = v
औ = au	ञ = ñ	न = n	श = ś
			ष = ṣ
			स = s
७ = ṅ	= ṁ	क्ष = kṣ	ह = h

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INTRODUCTION

by Professor Alexander W. Macdonald

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Since the opening up of Nepal to foreign research in 1953, Nepal has not only been studied by foreigners. In the field of Anthropology, important contributions have been made by Dor Bahadur Bista, People of Nepal, Kathmandu, 1967, by Khem Bahadur Bista, Le Culte du Kuldevata chez certains Ksatri de la vallée de Kathmandu, Paris, 1972, and by Bihari Krishna Shrestha, Diyar Gaunka Thakuriharu, Kathmandu, 1972. To these works can now be added that of Casper Miller, a resident of Nepal since 1958 and a Nepalese citizen since 1971. There are several good reasons for drawing attention to his research. It teaches us much about a part of Nepal where little published research has as yet been undertaken. It will certainly be of interest to planners and administrators preoccupied by the development of health-services in the hill-areas. It is moreover the first study to be sanctioned by the degree of Master of Arts in Sociology at the Institute of Nepal and Asian Studies in Tribhuvan University. As such its publication marks a date not only in the history of the University but also in the development of sociological and anthropological studies in Nepal.

The days of the first timid attempt to define jhāṅkrī are far behind us. The importance of the phenomenon of spirit possession in Nepal is now widely recognised; but it is still difficult to situate this phenomenon against the general background of Nepalese religion. Religion in this country is generally portrayed as a syncretism of Hinduism and Buddhism rooted in an all-pervasive Animism. Most of us find the term Animism unsatisfactory; and some of us would prefer the expression "nameless religion", which has known a certain fortune since its use by Professor R.A. Stein in his book on Tibetan Civilization London, 1972. But does the Tibetan "nameless religion" correspond to the Nepalese version or does it differ from it? If so, how? These are not easy questions to answer. One cannot just substitute "jhankrism" a term coined some years ago by Professor Kawakita - for Animism.

At first, Western observers, perhaps more influenced than they realised by their Sanskrit-studying predecessors, were inclined to banish "possessed" Nepalese individuals to the lower and outer limits of the society, and this despite the fact that one of the first known, documented cases of possession in Nepal concerned a member of a Malla royal family. Today, however, we realise that possession is both a central and a peripheral phenomenon, and that it can be both controlled and uncontrolled. The jhāṅkrī is indeed a man whose social status can not be grasped if expressed in purely economic terms. He is treated, whatever his poverty or his affluence, whatever his caste, whatever hi

social rank or occupational status, with respect and with a kind of good-natured awe, because of his undoubted competence in his particular sphere of action. It has yet to be proved that spirit possession in Nepal is directly linked to social inequality and political oppression. As Miller points out, the jhānkrī has, seemingly, never been linked to a political power and his activity has never created problems in the eyes of the hierarchical elites.

Today, when medical practice of a Western type is gaining ground, it is significant that Government seeks to bring the jhānkrīs in on its side, rather than campaigning directly against them. They are not considered as enemies but as potential allies. While this seems like good politics, the tolerant application of common sense, Miller warns us that, socially, a Western-style doctor is no substitute for a jhānkrī: their roles are not permutable. In a sense, the western-style doctor is more caste- and custom-bound than is the jhānkrī. This is an important point; for we are faced here with a problem which is central for all who are concerned with development. Western medicine, Western techniques can only be introduced beneficially if there is an awareness of the structure of rural Nepal, of its needs, its habits, and the functioning of its component parts.

Another significant point made by Miller is that, in the rituals he has studied, a facet of the individual, a part of his make-up, becomes manifest which tends to be obscured in his role in society as a Buddhist or a Hindu. To quote Auden, we are concerned here with "private faces in public places" rather than with "public faces in private places". The circulation of prestations between the afflicted individual and the spirit-powers which the jhānkrī mobilizes on his or her behalf does not, in such cases, concern the sufferer as a member of the kingdom's social compact but as a being whose relationship to his kin, both dead and alive, and to the spirit-powers which are part and parcel of his and the jhānkrī's world requires re-structuring. What is derived from the jhānkrī, what he constitutes a reference for, is not man's social and caste position, but the truth about an individual in his relationship to those divine powers which influence his and the jhānkrī's local situation. The jātrā, the pilgrimage of individuals to the pūjā thān, the parade before the spirit-powers in the holy place where are condensed the vital forces of the local landscape class the participants, classify them in their relationships with the ancestors and the local spirits. Mahadev, the great god, may be invoked in such assemblies; but here he does not derive his strength from his role in the administration of the kingdom. He is the local great god: he is not yet Śiva. In this local compact, the jhānkrī is a caste- and a social free-wheeler. I would suggest that in the last resort it is the site itself and not the jhānkrī which classes the participants in these periodical roll-calls of those who are in the earth, on its surface, and in the sky above. However this may be, the jhānkrī is, to some extent, prior to the official arrival of Hinduism, the creator and the maintainer of certain forms of religious centralisation in the Nepalese hills. Moreover the jhānkrī's office is dramatic; and the scenario which he animates still exercises a firm hold on people's minds. For he asks and transmits the answers to what are, at any place and time, great questions: they concern man's suffering, on a fragment of the earth's surface, under a local sky.

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This book owes much to the interest, encouragement and advice of others. For the opportunity to pursue research under the auspices of the Institute of Nepal and Asian Studies, Tribhuvan University, I am indebted to the then Dean of the Institute, Professor Prayag Raj Sharma. I wish to thank him especially for the personal concern he took in seeing that this work advanced through the various stages required by the Institute for the Degree of Master of Arts by Dissertation.

Professor Alexander W. Macdonald has been my guide and guru from start to finish, beginning with his seminar on Spirit Possession when he was professor of Sociology at the Institute of Nepal and Asian Studies (1973-75) and continuing after his return to his duties in France. I was indeed fortunate to have had the benefit of his wise direction and take this opportunity to express my deep gratitude.

I am also grateful to Dr. J. Gael Campbell and Prof. Dor Bahadur Bista for reading the manuscript and making valuable suggestions. Dr. John N. Gray, now of the University of Adelaide, and his wife Jacqueline have both been a source of encouragement to me and I will always be thankful for their interest and advice. My sincere thanks go as well to Ms. Genevieve Stein who generously shared some of her deep knowledge of the Thamis with me.

For cheerful companionship at one time or another on sometimes difficult field trips I am deeply indebted to Rev. Frank Clooney, S.J., Rev. Lawrence Maniyar, S.J., Sri Mahendra Limbu and Sri Suman Dahal. Together we are full of grateful admiration for the hospitable and patient villagers of Dolakha District.

I would like to express my appreciation to Ms. Amrita K.C. for expertly typing the manuscript, to Sri Sherjang Gurung and Srimati Jyoti Khanal for preparing the maps, and to Rev. James J. Donnelly, S.J., for undertaking the exacting work of proof-reading with his usual generosity and skill. Lastly, throughout my research I depended on the brotherly support of my colleagues at the Human Resources Development Research Centre, Drs. John K. Locke, Ludwig F. Stiller, and J. Timothy Lawless, all of the Society of Jesus. To them especially I offer my sincere gratitude.

INTRODUCTION

This book deals with traditional faith-healers,¹ called jhāṅkrīs, and their clients in the district of Dolakha, Janakpur Zone, in the north-east of the Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal. I went to Dolakha District,² an historic meeting ground for many diverse Nepalese tribes,³ to investigate those functions of jhāṅkrīs that distinguish them from other specialists like priests and doctors, to discover what kind of organization (if any) they have among themselves, to learn how the ordinary people view them.⁴ There was a practical aspect to my work as well: what might be the possibilities of training jhāṅkrīs in modern methods of diagnosis and simple treatments?

My field-work was carried out in the Nepali language with jhāṅkrīs and their clients who all spoke Nepali in addition to their mother tongue if different. Through meeting a number of these traditional healers of various ethnic groups (Tamang, Sherpa, Thami, Jirel, Chetri, Kami) and those they serve (including Newar), through questionings and observations, through participating in their festivals, I formed some answers. In the pages that follow I will share the experiences of six field trips of lengths varying from a few days to several weeks at a time, the first being in October of 1974 and the last in August of 1978. It is these experiences that are the basis for the answers; they contain the answers within themselves as I will try to show.

The first serious attempt at defining a jhāṅkrī was made in 1962 by Professor A.W. Macdonald when he wrote that he "is a being who goes into trance and at that time voices speak through his body which allow him to diagnose illnesses and sometimes to cure them, to give advice concerning the future and to clarify present facts in the light of events which took place in the past. He is, therefore, at the same time a privileged intermediary between spirits (which give and cure sicknesses) and men; between the past, the present and the future; between life and death and, in another perspective, between the individual and a certain social mythology. He can, it seems, be of any jāt and he can take as pupil, in order to transmit to him his knowledge and his techniques, a person of any other caste."⁵

In another article, in 1966, Macdonald refers to jhāṅkrīs as "magico-religious specialists whom one can provisionally designate as healers,"⁶ and recalls the above definition in order to look at it again in the perspective of certain documents. He then goes on to stress that he believes "that the true jhāṅkrī is he who, after having first of all suffered possession by a spirit foreign to his everyday world, manages to control it and to regulate it."⁷ My research among the jhāṅkrīs of Dolakha District serves to confirm the elements of Macdonald's pioneering definition, especially his emphasis on the aspect of control.

In 1967, the Nepalese anthropologist Dor Bahadur Bista defined "jhankrism" in the Glossary of his People of Nepal as "shamanism, animism,"⁸ and in the passages in his book concerned with the Tamangs obviously oversimplifies when he writes that their "religious activities include the cult of animal sacrifice, or Jhankrism."⁹ Further and fuller descriptions of jhāṅkrīs became available with the publication of papers presented at a symposium on the Anthropology of Nepal sponsored by the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, in 1973.¹⁰ The realization that "shamans," whether called by the Nepali term jhāṅkrī or by other words from local languages, played similar and important roles in society throughout the whole country grew even stronger when in 1976 many of the foremost anthropologists who have done work in Nepal published some of their findings in Spirit Possession in the Nepal Himalayas.¹¹ The Journal of the Institute of Nepal and Asian Studies of Tribhuvan University, Contributions to Nepalese Studies, helped to fill in some of the blanks in the ethnographic picture of Nepal in this area with the article by David E. Watters on "Siberian Shamanistic Traditions among the Kham Magars of Nepal"¹² and the special issue of June 1976 dealing with anthropology, health and development.¹³

It is because new facts or descriptions, no matter how small in themselves, are of value in the work of piecing together what is an amazingly complex jigsaw that I venture to present the following pages. The second chapter deals with the festival of Janai Pūrṇimā held on top of Kalingchok mountain and includes a description of the festival plus observations on the oral traditions about jhāṅkrīs engaging in magical battle there.¹⁴ The third and fourth chapters are concerned with Thami jhāṅkrīs involved in a Newar festival at the temple of Tripura-Sundari in Dolakha town and seen in their own village of Dumkot. The fifth chapter describes a Tamang jhāṅkrī, known as Gūṭhiyār-Jhāṅkrī, who functions only once a year in connection with the shrine called Deoliṅgeśwarī Mahādevthān above the village of Thadi. In the sixth chapter other jhāṅkrīs (Chetri, Tamang, Kami, Thami) and their clients are described in order to better understand the place of jhāṅkrīs in the lives of the people and the difficulties involved in providing them with training.

I found (and the following pages should reveal where and how) that the jhāṅkrīs of this district whom I was privileged to meet, no matter what their ethnic group, all have a basic unity of approach to the world, a world-view, which they share in common with their patients. Briefly, it consists in a belief in powerful invisible forces whose uncontrolled intrusion into our visible world brings disorder of all kinds: sickness, misfortune, disharmony in relationships. Ordinary men are helpless in the face of these forces but the jhāṅkrī, by virtue of his calling and training, has the ability to come into controlled contact with them and negotiate their withdrawal. At the same time as jhāṅkrīs share with each other and their clients this unity of world-view, they lack any kind of formal organizational unity among themselves. There exists the relationship between master and disciple, essential for what is basically a non-literate tradition, but with one exception all the jhāṅkrīs we shall meet here are emphatic that there is no fixed hierarchical relationship among masters, not even one based on age.¹⁵

This means, as I understand it, that the jhāṅkrī's role is complementary to both priest and doctor. The priest (whether Brahmin or Lam and his services are required for the predictable aspects of man's relationship to God, with religion as such, and so there is no direct competition with the jhāṅkrī who does not deal with life-cycle rituals (except as in the case of the Thamis where the jhāṅkrī is priest as well, there being no other religious specialists). As regards the doctor trained in Western methods of diagnosis and treatment, though he may at first view the jhāṅkrī as his rival, I believe that a closer look would reveal to him that, at least according to the world-view of his village patients, he the doctor is treating symptoms while the jhāṅkrī is getting at causes. There is room, and need, for both. The doctor will certainly realize that a shared world-view between patient and physician can be a powerful factor leading to a cure; he should also realize that his modern medical education, based on a secular view of the world, has deprived him of this advantage which the jhāṅkrī continues to possess. Idealistic schemes to train jhāṅkrīs to be a doctor's co-workers should take into account the practical difficulties stemming from their lack of organizational unity which they see not as a lack but as a freedom. These things will be developed in the descriptions that follow.

Footnotes

1. "Traditional faith-healer" seems to me to be the least satisfactory English rendering of the Nepali word jhāṅkrī. "Witchdoctor" is probably the most unsatisfactory because of the pejorative meaning and images it has acquired in the popular mind, although a case could be made for its fundamental accuracy in that a jhāṅkrī often treats sick people whom he diagnoses as being the victims of witchcraft. As for the suspicion that a "witchdoctor" himself may be a male witch, the jhāṅkrī's clients are quite prepared to admit that possibility; they reason that if he has power to cure sickness and misfortune he has power to cause it as well. Throughout this book, I will use the Nepali term jhāṅkrī to designate these traditional healers except in cases where the people actually use a tribal language equivalent among themselves and with others.
2. Two recent publications in Nepali contain valuable information on Dolakha District: 1. Dhanabajra Bajracharya and Tek Bahadur Shrestha, Dolakhāko Aitihāsik Rūprekhā (Kathmandu, 2031 B.S.), 2. Mecideki Mahākālī (Kathmandu, 2031 B.S.), the Gazetteer-type four volume survey of the country, in its section on Dolakha in volume two, pp. 138.
3. Basing himself on information found in 1969 in the files of the Dolakha District offices for Panchayat and Land Reform, Walter Frank learned that "in Dolakha within a total population of 133,000 people, the Chhetri form the majority, with 36.5% of the district population, followed by the Tamang with 16.5% and the Brahman with 12%. Altogether, we registered 20 different ethnic groups in the

37 gaon panchayats of the district, but none of them except Chhetri, Tamang and Brahman reaches even near 10%. Dolakha is the home of the Thami; above 70% of all the Thamis within our investigation area are settled here. The Jirel-Surel, a small group of 3,125 people, are living in Dolakha altogether and cannot be found anywhere else." "Attempt at an Ethno-Demography of Middle Nepal," in Contributions to the Anthropology of Nepal, ed. Christoph von Furer-Haimendorf (Warminster, 1974), pp. 89-90. Dolakha is one of seventy-five districts in the Kingdom.

4. It should be realized that jhāṅkrīs too are "ordinary people" and that none of them in my experience devotes his full time to this work. In their day to day economic and social activities they are normally indistinguishable from other men; almost all of their specifically jhāṅkrī work takes place at night. During the day, they are farmers and herdsmen like their neighbours or practise a trade as blacksmiths or cobblers. For they must earn a living like everyone else and the fees they collect for their healing services only supplement somewhat their basic income. My contacts with jhāṅkrīs have convinced me that, pace Economic Anthropologists and especially Marxists, the economic aspect of their work is relatively unimportant. There is no evidence that the jhāṅkrīs here are exploiters of their clients. The compensation that jhāṅkrīs receive for their labour and skills is just one factor, and certainly not the operative one, in the total picture which this book attempts to present. This point will be dealt with in Chapter Six.
5. Alexander W. Macdonald, "The Healer in the Nepalese World," Essays on the Ethnology of Nepal and South Asia (Kathmandu, 1975), p.115. For another translation of a French article into English, see Macdonald, "Preliminary Report on Some Jhāṅkrī of the Muglan," in Spirit Possession in the Nepal Himalayas, ed. John T. Hitchcock and Rex L. Jones (New Delhi, 1976), pp. 309-341. The original French article is "Notes préliminaires sur quelques jhāṅkrī du Muglân," Journal asiatique No. 1 (1962): 107-139.
6. Macdonald, "The Healer," Essays, p. 113.
7. Ibid., p. 118.
8. Dor Bahadur Bista, People of Nepal (Kathmandu, 1967), p. 172.
9. Ibid , p. 55. In the second edition of the book, however, Bista states only that the Tamangs' "religious activities include Jhan-krism," thus avoiding the possible false implication that animal sacrifice and Jhankrism are identical. People of Nepal (Kathmandu, 1972), p. 59. His description of the Tamang jhāṅkrī rituals does correctly bring out that real aspect of blood-sacrifice which is in opposition to the Buddhism the Tamangs profess.

10. Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf, ed., Contributions to the Anthropology of Nepal (Warminster, 1974), with the following contributions in particular: Nicholas Allen, "The Ritual Journey, a Pattern Underlying Certain Nepalese Rituals"; Alain Fournier, "Notes préliminaires sur des Populations Sunuwar dans L'Est du Nepal"; John T. Hitchcock, "A Shaman's Song and some Implications for Himalayan Research"; András Höfer, "A Note on Possession in South Asia" and "Is the bombo an Ecstatic? Some Ritual Techniques of Tamang Shamanism"; Wolf D. Michl, "Shamanism among the Chantel of the Dhaulagiri Zone"
11. John T. Hitchcock and Rex L. Jones, eds., Spirit Possession in the Nepal Himalayas (New Delhi, 1976). "Shaman" is a handy term but like many extremely useful and much-used words attempts to define it precisely stir up controversy. Mircea Eliade begins his monumental survey of the subject by saying that "a first definition of this complex phenomenon, and perhaps the least hazardous, will be: shamanism = technique of ecstasy." Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy (Princeton, 1964), p. 4. But he immediately specifies that "any ecstatic cannot be considered a shaman; the shaman specializes in a trance during which his soul is believed to leave his body and ascend to the sky or descend to the underworld." Ibid., p. 5. For Eliade then, soul-journey is an essential element in true shamanism or what could be called classical shamanism as found in the arctic regions among the Tungus people from whose language the word "shaman" comes. While admiring Eliade's vast erudition, many authors are unhappy with his definition because it does not include the element of spirit-possession. Johan Reinhard discusses this definition-problem and then proposes the following useful definition which includes both elements and in addition stresses the social purpose of the phenomenon: "A shaman is a person who at his will can enter into a trance (in which he either has his soul undertake a journey to the spirit world or he becomes possessed by a spirit) in order to make contact with the spirit world on behalf of members of his community." "Shamanism and Spirit Possession: The Definition Problem," in Spirit Possession, ed. Hitchcock and Jones, p. 16. According to this definition, jhānkris are shamans.
12. David E. Watters, "Siberian Shamanistic Traditions among the Kham-Magars of Nepal," Contributions to Nepalese Studies 2, No.1 (February 1975): 123-168. The parallels here with the classical shamanism as described by Eliade are striking indeed and illustrated with excellent photographs.
13. Contributions to Nepalese Studies 3, Special Issue on Anthropology, Health and Development (June 1976). All five articles, together with their photographs, illustrate Nepalese concepts and practices in regard to sickness in regions of the country (including the urban setting of Kathmandu) where people have a choice in the matter of treatment and can go to a traditional healer (jhānkri) or an Ayurvedic specialist (baidya) or a doctor at a hospital.

14. Macdonald describes a visit to Kalingchok during the festival of 1969 in "The Janaipurnimā and the Gosāikunda," Essays, pp. 301-302.
15. The exception, which perhaps proves the rule, will be met in the third chapter among the Thami jhānkriś of Dumkot. Macdonald states that "this master (guru)-pupil (celo) relationship is moreover the only relationship existing on the human level in the jhākri brotherhood." "Preliminary Report," in Spirit Possession, ed. Hitchcock and Jones, p. 310. This is true as long as one is speaking of formal or permanent relationships. As we shall see, the Kalingchok festival provides the jhānkriś with opportunities for setting up temporary and informal hierarchies of skill. But the point to be noted is that a jhānkri is characterized on the one hand by his freedom from the control which a formal hierarchical organization might exercise over him and on the other hand by his own ability to exercise control over invisible spiritual powers. I.M. Lewis emphasizes this aspect of control as being characteristic of shamanism and writes that the shaman "incarnates spirits ... always in a controlled fashion. His body is a vehicle for the spirits. We can also see that the shaman's vocation is normally announced by an initially uncontrolled state of possession: a traumatic experience associated with hysteroid ecstatic behaviour. This, I think, is a universal feature in the assumption of shamanistic roles and is even present, though in muted form, when these pass by inheritance from one kinsman to another. Thus, in the case of those who persist in the shamanistic calling, the uncontrolled, unsolicited, initial possession seizure leads to a state where possession can be controlled and can be turned on and off at will in shamanistic seances. This is the controlled phase of possession, where as the Tungus say, the shaman 'possesses' his spirits although they also possess him." Ecstatic Religion (Baltimore, 1971), p.55.

JHĀNKRĪS AND KALINGCHOK JĀTRĀ

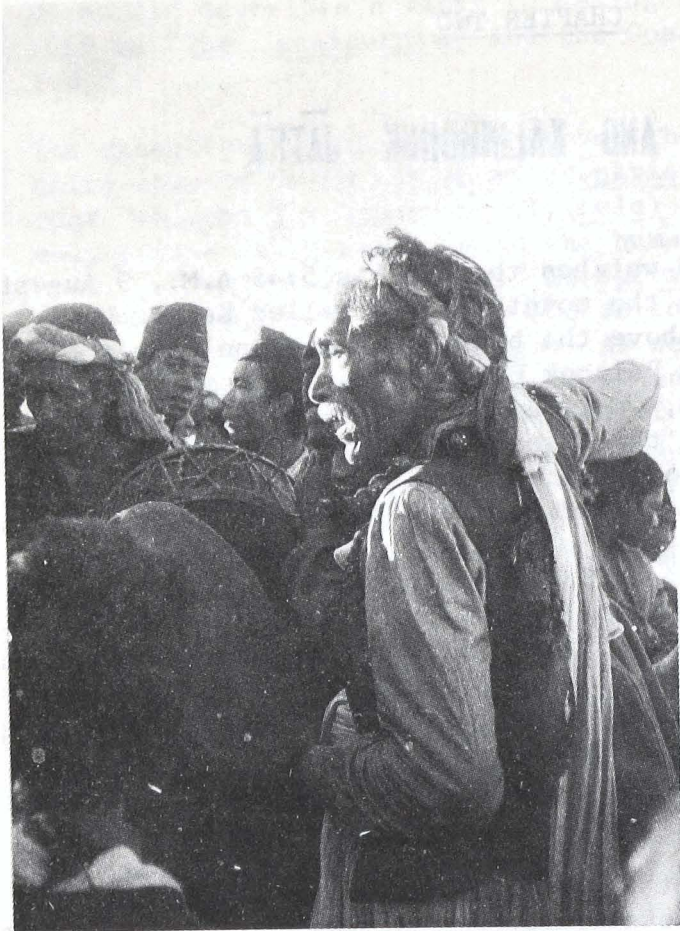
A Prayer for Power

By western calendars and watches the time is 5:45 A.M., 9 August, 1976. In north-eastern Nepal the mountain peak called Kalingchok (12,513 ft.) thrusts itself above the blanket of monsoon clouds that buries the villages of Sindhu Palchok District to the west and those of Dolakha District to the north, east, and south. A white-haired man stands in front of a stone at the edge of the peak, a sacrificial goat at his side. He calls in a loud voice, above the sound of drumbeats, to a man in the group of villagers with him, "We must beg for power (bal māgnu parcha)!"

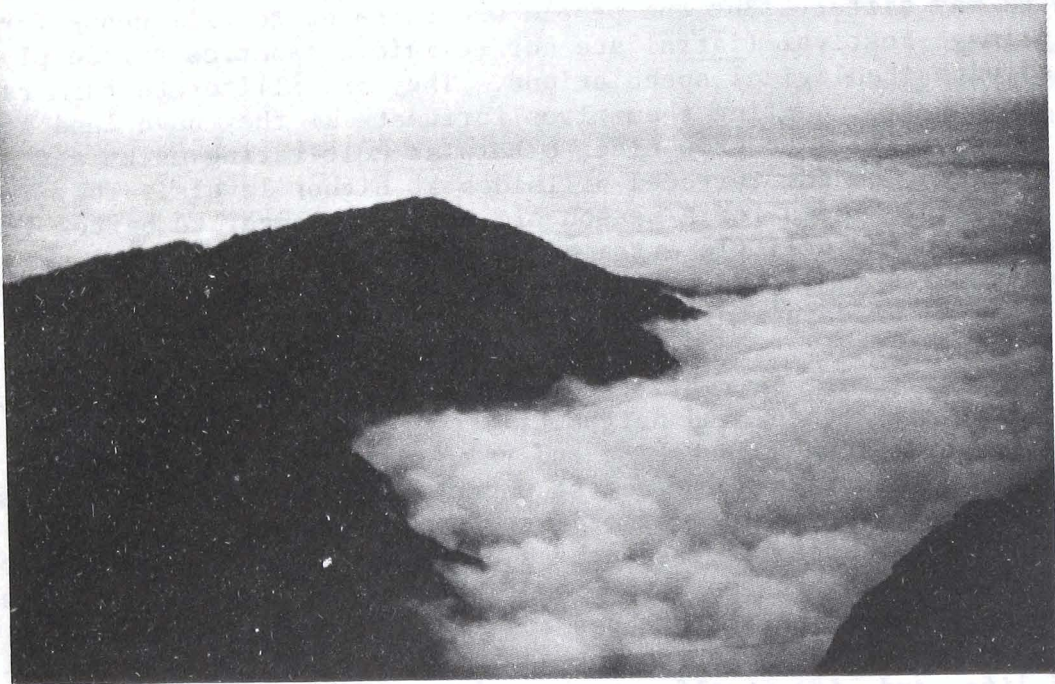
He has come to the right place and at the right time. There is a power at work here. Yesterday, this dry and treeless summit was silent; tomorrow, it will be the same. But today the mountain top seethes with human activity as people representing all the castes and tribes living in these districts crowd there together. Like a magnet set to a time-clock Kalingchok has drawn to itself perhaps a thousand pilgrims and nearly two score jhānkris.

Here on Kalingchok contact is being made with invisible powers, invisible realities.¹ What those realities are and what they are imagined to be may differ. But the people who climb up to Kalingchok for the pilgrimage-festival (jātrā) are not religious fanatics nor deeply concerned with theological speculations. They are illiterate farmers for the most part, counting themselves fortunate if they have land low enough in the valleys to grow rice, otherwise cultivating maize and millet and wheat on the terraced hillsides at higher levels. They are men who travel to India for a season or sometimes longer to barter their bodily strength for a little extra cash; they are women who keep the farms going while their men are away and have themselves never travelled farther than a few days' walk.

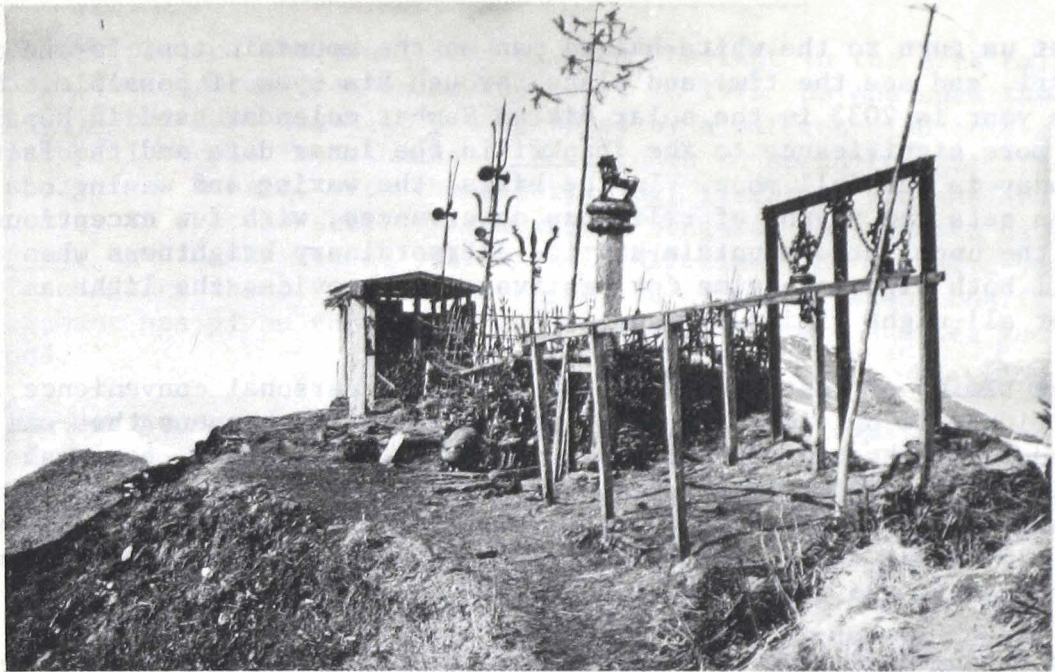
These people must be realists or perish. In their circumstances, health and family harmony and neighbourly cooperation are essential to survival, just as much as sunshine and rain. But these very things which are so necessary are in fact so uncertain; they are beyond man's control, at least the control of ordinary men. And so, daily at home and periodically on pilgrimages such as today's, one offers worship to the visible images of unseen powers and then hopefully waits for blessings in return. But experience shows that these blessings of health, fruitfulness and harmony are subject to interference. These essential goods of life, and life itself, can be and are destroyed without warning and with no visible, tangible cause. How does one cope with a world where unseen powers interfere and bring on unforeseen disaster? One way is to turn to a man who claims to see and to have power. The jhānkri is such a man.



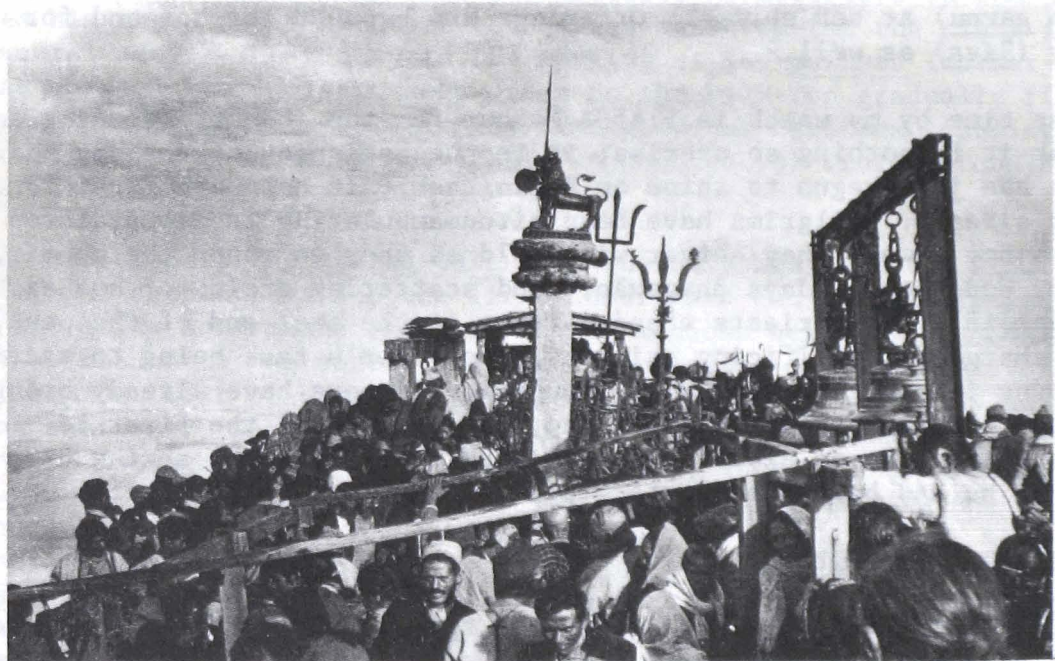
1. "We must beg for power."



2. Looking down from Kalingchok on Janai Pūrṇimā at the everyday world buried under clouds.



3. The summit of Kalingchok seen at ordinary times.



4. The summit seen during Kalingchok Jātrā

Let us turn to the white-haired man on the mountain top, for he is a jhāṅkrī, and see the time and place through his eyes if possible. For him the year is 2033 in the solar Bikram Sambat calendar used in Nepal. But of more significance to the jhāṅkrī is the lunar date and the fact that today is the full moon. In the hills, the waxing and waning of the moon sets the rhythm of religious observances, with few exceptions, and in the unpolluted mountain air its extraordinary brightness when at the full both signals a time for festivals and provides the light as well for all-night vigils.

The timing of festivals is not a matter of personal convenience for the participants but is a result of movements in the heavens that can come under our observation but not our control. Certainly personal convenience has little importance today for the monsoon season is holding sway. Added to the difficulty of climbing to the heights of Kalingchok at any time, there are the particular hazards of the season: rain, slippery paths, the leeches.²

It is the full moon of the month of Sāun (July-August), a month with special meaning for the jhāṅkrī and the other pilgrims there. Sāun means a month of sickness and trouble. Hill people dread its coming each year. For during Sāun the gods have gone down to the underworld leaving men defenceless against the attacks of other invisible forces that bring sickness, disaster and death. Sāun is a time to be endured until the gods begin to return from their underworld sojourn. With the full moon the re-entry begins. Today the pilgrims gather from all sides to worship the Mother Goddess Kālī and to pay her a ceremonial visit (darśan garnu) at her shrine. Offerings are brought for her and for Mahādev (Śiva) as well.³

The time by my watch is 5:45 A.M. but for the jhāṅkrī standing on the peak it is nothing so precise; it is the beginning of the day and the sun has just begun to shine on Kalingchok. It has been light for an hour already. Pilgrims have been circumambulating the mountaintop shrine since dawn. They shiver with cold as they go round the summit, praising God aloud, "Jaya Bhagawān," and scattering grains of husked rice (achetā). Two priests stand waiting at the east end of the peak, one in charge of sacrificing chickens, the other's task being to sacrifice young female goats (pāṭhī). Though worshippers have already brought chickens for sacrificing this morning, the jhāṅkrī is the first to bring a pāṭhī. He is also the first jhāṅkrī to reach the shrine area today, as he had been the first to arrive here last year as well.

Shelters for the Night

Where had he and the other pilgrims spent the previous night? The nearest villages are hours away. Finding shelter in this normally uninhabited mountain range poses a problem. On the summit itself there is a small shelter (dharma-sālā) built by Dharmadas, an elderly merchant of Charikot. His other donations to Kalingchok Māi (Mother Goddess) include the still-unfinished construction of a series of stone steps

on the last part of the trail leading from Charikot to the area called Bangala a few hundred feet below the top. In 1975 no one used the dharma-sālā but last night it was occupied by a saffron-clad holy man from Paśupati temple in Kathmandu. He intends to spend tonight, the full moon night itself, with the elderly jogī (ascetic) who resides permanently in a stone shelter from which "Bangala" derives its name. This jogī, now in the second year of his fulfillment of a twelve-year vow of residence there, is another beneficiary of Dharmadas' charity; the merchant has given the jogī a year's supply of rice and tea and firewood.

Another stone hut lies a few yards away from the summit on the edge of a meadow. Here many people crowd for sleeping-space and to buy the few items on sale there: trinkets, cigarettes, biscuits, sweets and bottles of village liquor (raksi). This year there are no fires inside and no hot tea for sale, a popular item the year before. The shopkeepers from Gorthali in the Sun Kosi valley below explain that selling tea had proved to be unprofitable for in the chaotic surroundings of the crowded hut many customers neglect to pay. Besides, to fetch water requires a half-hour descent to Sun Dhārā (Gold Fountain), the source of the Sun Kosi. Thus raksi is the only beverage available this year and is in ample supply. Not only do the Tamangs and Sherpas and Thamis buy the liquor, but Chetris as well, albeit with explanations on the part of some that really they should not be drinking it. A man wrapped in a blanket and sitting by the entrance of the hut watches the comings and goings unobtrusively, looking especially for incipient quarrels. He is a policeman from the District Headquarters in Charikot. Besides him there are five other constables deployed for the night in the general area. Their duty in the morning at the māithān (mother-goddess shrine) itself is to keep order as the hill top gradually fills with people and where in the charged atmosphere of devotees jostling for positions at the places of worship an outbreak of violence could mean a fatal fall.

In addition to the dharma-sālā (for the holy man) and the stone hut (for the shopkeepers and the first-comers who can squeeze inside) there are a few herdsmen's shelters on the meadows below Kalingchok both to the north and to the south which can accommodate small numbers of pilgrims. But most pilgrims to Kalingchok Jātrā spend the night in natural shelters. Scattered throughout the hillsides along the paths leading to Kalingchok and within a forty-five minute walk of the māithān are indentations in the rock with a ledge for sitting and an overhang projection above for protection from the rain. One of the largest of these shallow cave-like shelters (oḍār) can be seen from the māithān; looking towards the west one can pick out this oḍār as a thin cut in the hillside, several hundred feet long, visible because of the bright-coloured clothes of the pilgrims sitting there in a long line.

The location of other ledge-shelters can be discovered not by the eye but only by the ear. From these shelters come now and then the drumbeats that signify the presence and activity of jhānkris. The dramatic quality of the trail to Kalingchok, with its deep gorges and sheer

drops into the mist below, is accentuated by the sound of these drums coming up from unseen sources. In particular, there is one spot a half-hour's walk from the summit, where a chasm several yards across opens up between two rock faces. The beginnings of a path leading down can be seen but only the sound of the jhāṅkrī drums below could convince a person that human beings inhabit such a place even if just for a night.

The Jhāṅkrī's Dress and Drum

The jhāṅkrī who has the distinction of arriving first at the māi-thān in the morning of this full moon day of Sāun had in fact spent the night in the above-mentioned large oḍār, visible from the summit. When dawn came he prepared to set out for the shrine of Kalingchok Māī. For this occasion, his costume is the traditional one of the jhāṅkrī, a full and pleated white skirt (jāmā) falling to his feet, necklaces (mālā) of dark-red Elaeocarpus seeds (rudrākṣa) and bandoliers of bells criss-crossed on his chest and back. He wears a headdress made of white, green and red strips of cloth, braided to form a circlet on his head and falling loose behind his back.⁴ Along with these strips of cloth on his back there hangs a monal pheasant (dānphe), its irridescent feathers in perfect condition, attached to his rudrākṣa necklace. Though last year he arrived at the shrine in the company of ordinary villagers, he is joined today by another younger jhāṅkrī who is dressed in the same way.⁵

Both jhāṅkrīs carry drums. The sound of these drums begins as the two of them leave their night's shelter and will continue until their worship is concluded more than an hour later. The drums are played sometimes by the jhāṅkrīs, sometimes by other male members of their party but as the group nears the summit of the mountain the jhāṅkrīs themselves keep the drums in hand.⁶

These large, double-headed drums (ḍhyāṅgro), covered with the skin of a mountain goat, are so closely identified in people's minds with the jhāṅkrīs that the word ḍhyāṅgro is often used to mean the person using one, in the context of a festival such as today's. People will say that this or that many ḍhyāṅgro were in attendance. The villagers of this part of Nepal consider the drum an essential item for a jhāṅkrī and reserve that title for those that possess a ḍhyāṅgro; other words such as janne mānche (a knowing man) are used for men who while knowing something of the jhāṅkrī rituals have not reached the stage of knowledge and proficiency represented by the drum and its use.

Grasping the three-sided and pointed handle of the drum in his left hand so that the broad side of the drum faces him and beating the outer face with a snake-curved drumstick (gajo) of cane, the jhāṅkrī moves nearer to his yearly goal of Kalingchok Māī. He does not walk now, but dances. Bare feet kept close together, he hops over the rough stone trail in rhythm with his own drumbeats.

Preceding him and his jhāṅkrī companion two young men in ordinary Nepali dress dance with brass water vessels (Tamang: bumbā; Tibetan: bum-pa "vase") in their hands. There are flowers and leaves in these pitcher-like vessels. With heads bowed they hold the bumbā aloft, twirling and circling solemnly in time with the jhāṅkrīs' drums. As they dance several men sing with full voice a repetitive song in which each verse ends with the words: saio saio saio le bombā saio saio. Later in the morning, as various groups of worshippers arrive and depart, each of them singing saio saio, with men and women in separate singing groups, the overlapping of the songs will produce a spontaneous polyphony. Far from clashing, the unpremeditated blending brings about a curious pleasing effect.⁷

The sound of these drums, the first of the festival morning, causes a great stir of activity in the stone shelter-shop near the māithān. For it signals the start of an annual spectacle staged on Kalingchok against the backdrop of the Himalayas. The people eagerly push their way out into the cold morning air to see the jhāṅkrīs. The two of them have now reached the iron bridge, set at a slight incline that makes it a stairway as well, which spans a narrow chasm a few feet distant from the top of Kalingchok.⁸ Pausing in their dance for the moment and grasping the iron guard-rail of the stair-bridge, the bumbā-carrying youths and the jhāṅkrīs with their followers climb the twenty rungs. Once across, the older jhāṅkrī resumes his hopping dance, knees slightly bent, while the younger man behind him begins to trace a circle pattern with his feet as he goes. The group begins its clockwise circumambulation of the shrine areas on the summit.

The Holy Places and the Offerings

Before we follow the jhāṅkrīs in their ritual journey around the top of Kalingchok, let us consider the layout of the holy places there and the significance given to them. The foci of attention for the pilgrims are a small pond (kuṇḍa) east of the dharma-sālā and two stones at the far eastern end of the summit. The metre-long rectangular stone to the north-east, where fowls are sacrificed, stands vertically in the ground. The blood of young female goats (pāṭhī) is offered at the squarish stone placed at a slightly lower level at the south-east. Male goats (boko) cannot be presented to Kalingchok Māī although it is usual to offer them to other gods at other shrines.

The pond is called Bhagawatī Kuṇḍa. The Sanskrit word kuṇḍa, besides its basic meaning of a bowl-shaped receptacle (either a waterpot or a round hole in the ground for water or for fire), is also one of the names of Śiva. The feminine form kuṇḍā has the meaning "mutilation" and is a name of Durgā. A further meaning of kuṇḍa both in Sanskrit and Nepali is "adulterine": a son born to an adulterous woman by another man while her husband is still living. I feel certain that for the villager pilgrims today the word kuṇḍa means simply the sacred pond they see before them, without actually denying any of the associations the etymology might suggest (to a Freudian, for instance) but without really being aware of or interested in them either.



5. The first jhānkri of the day.

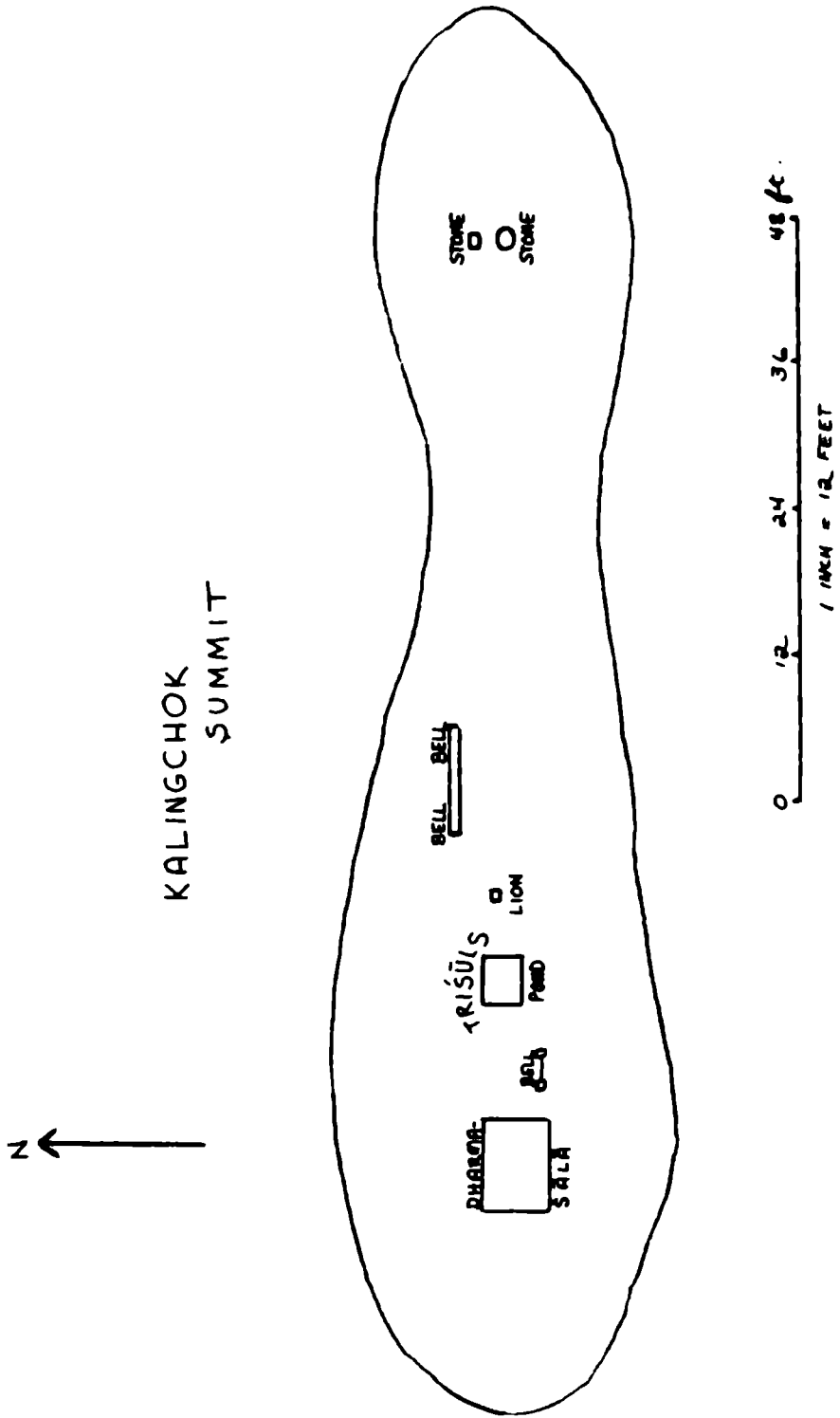


6. The stair-bridge to the top.



7. The jhānkri crossing the chasm.

DIAGRAM 1. KALINGCHOK SUMMIT



Bhagawatī Kuṇḍa measures about four feet square with a depth of four feet also. A back wall of natural rock rises about two feet above the water; stones have been brought to build up walls to the same height at the sides and it is open to the south.⁹ The pond is housed under a wooden framework as well and roofed with thousands of small iron tridents (triśūl), offerings of generations of devotees, overflowing into a huge pile to the rear. Here no blood may be spilled.

During the festival the greatest crowds are here at Bhagawatī Kuṇḍa. Pilgrims make offerings of rice (acheta), incense, lights, flowers and coins; they sprinkle milk brought in small bamboo containers (ḍhuṅgri) and toss ears of maize onto the pile of triśūls. Some add more triśūls to the ever-growing heap. Besides these pocket-size tridents, no more than six inches long, large ones are stuck in the ground and stand up against the skyline not only at the kuṇḍa but also at the sites of bloody sacrifice at the opposite end of the hill.

We might note here, in the context of Śiva's trident, a tension that is unresolved on the theoretical level but which does not create practical problems for the individual participants at the festival. Many differ in their understanding of the object of their worship but agree in their acceptance of a polarity whose two poles are the stones where blood is poured out for the unseen reality that enjoys it and the pool where invisible beings can be approached only with milk and vegetable offerings. Thus at Bhagawatī Kuṇḍa there exists a clarity of understanding among the hundreds of worshippers today as to what is to be offered but a lack of clarity and uniformity as to whom the offerings are intended to please. This lack of clarity does not occasion any debate or discussion. Devotees invoke the names of their choice: Bhagawatī, Mahākālī, Mahālakṣmī, Mahāsaraswatī, Setī Devī, Śiva, Mahādev. No one will object. But it takes little imagination to picture the reaction among the fervent crowds if someone were to bring an animal to the kuṇḍa and spill its blood in sacrifice. The tolerance for variations in theoretical belief is not guaranteed to extend to a corresponding variation in practice. I do not think that the six constables on deputation from Charikot would prove sufficient to cope with the outraged feelings that would be aroused.

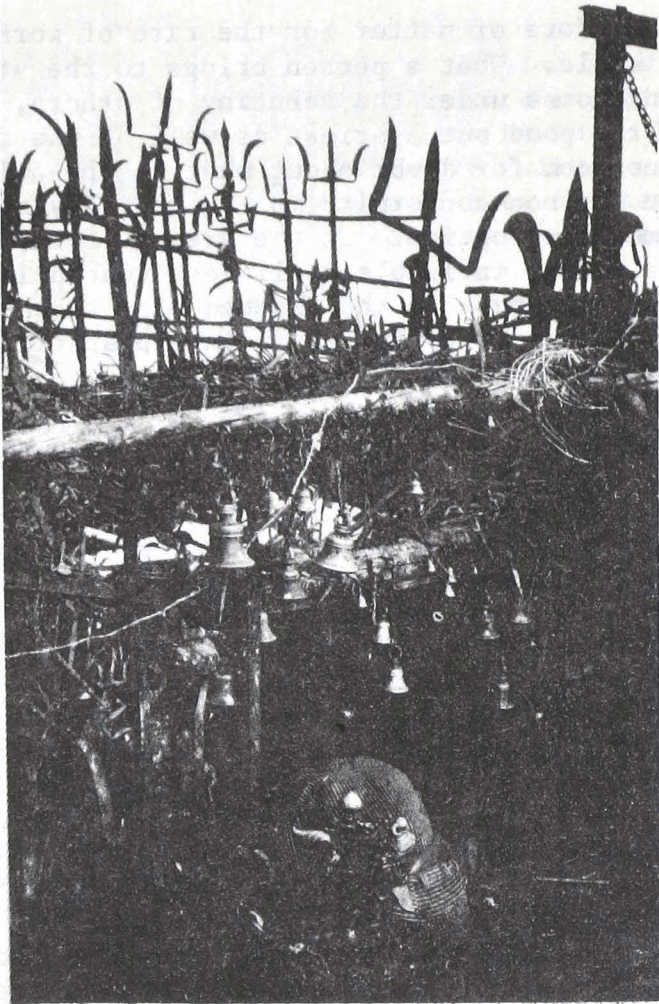
A similar situation exists at the stone where the blood of fowls is offered. A priest is in charge here but still, names and ideas differ. A Chetri from Charikot identifies the god worshipped in this place as Ganesh, Thami jhāṅkrī from Dumkot call it Śikārī (Hunter); another Thami claims that this stone is for the worship of Ban-Jhāṅkrī, a non-human being who lives in the forest and kidnaps children in order to teach them the most powerful magic formulas. But everyone is unanimous that only fowls are sacrificed here; unlike ideas about the stone, this is a question of practice that can come under the external control of the priest.

When it is a question therefore of matter for the rite of worship we are in the realm of the visible. What a person brings to the stone or to the pond as his offering comes under the scrutiny of others, not only other worshippers as at the pond but a priest as well at the stone. In this situation there is no room for doubt about what is the suitable gift to present, nor any room for non-conformity in the unlikely event of an individual desiring some other option. In the area of form, however, and interior intentions, i.e., invisible realities, conceptions can and do vary with much greater ease. In the absence of a teacher recognized as superior and with authority to impose an interpretation on others, variations are bound to occur.

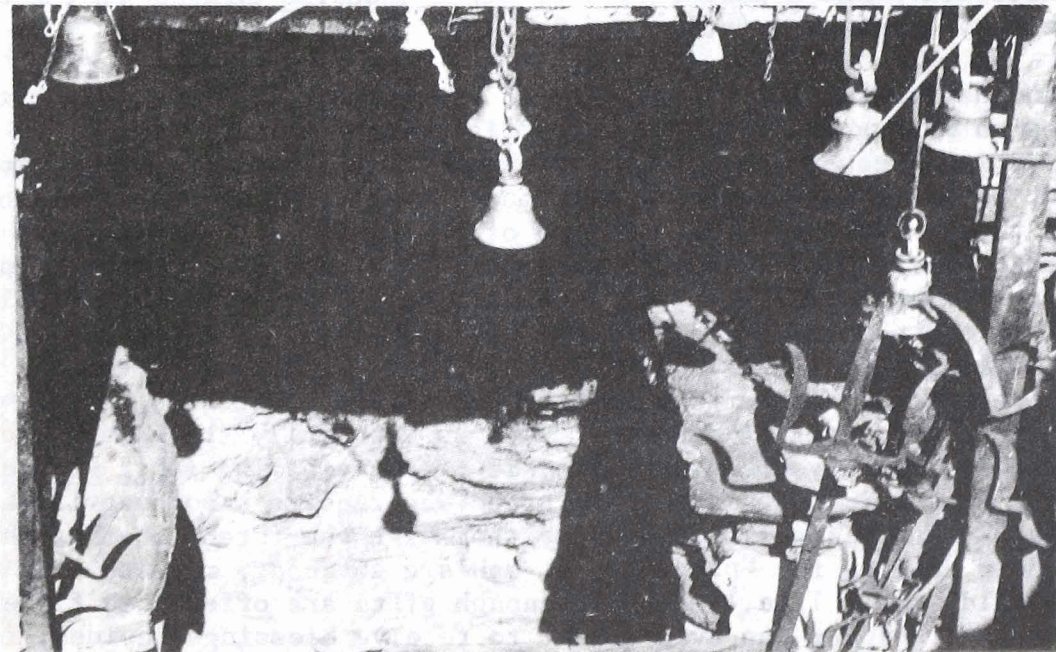
Among jhāṅkrīs, the individual teacher or master (guru) communicate his conceptions to the disciples (śiṣya, usually pronounced śikṣe) who willingly put themselves under his guidance. While undergoing the guru's instructions the śikṣe accepts his teaching but is also free to move on to another master. When asked to name their guru, jhāṅkrīs usually are able and proud to give several names.¹⁰ But masters themselves have no obligations to anyone else, no rungs of their own in a hierarchical structure where others above them could require uniformity of doctrine. About this independence among formed jhāṅkrīs, a result of the lack of strict hierarchical organization, there is unhesitating agreement on their part.

A jhāṅkrī might claim superior knowledge or superior powers but the validation of such claims does not come from a universal authority that can recognize degrees of ability and give labels to them. The validation depends rather on the degree of success he attains in his work of making contact with invisible powers in the interests of those who come to him for healing in all its forms. His clients are his source of validation. His superiority over other jhāṅkrīs depends on the dynamic reality of his reputation.

Another reflection prompted by these worshippers who approach the shrines on Kalingchok today with identical offerings in their hands but with varying ideas in their minds is that these ideas do not have much content beyond the fact of giving a name to the invisible reality contacted there. Naming it is a method of bringing the unseen somehow into the ambit of visible reality. Once named, and with its worship located in a particular spot, it enters into the tangible world in a controlled way, long enough for the worshipper to present his gifts and beg it to be satisfied. For if it is satisfied by gifts which are within the worshipper's control the hope is that it will not enter his life to see blindly the enjoyment it desires. This is especially the case where the named but really unknown reality is pleasure-eating (bhog khāṇne), the term used for those invisible forces who require blood sacrifices. The blood of sacrifice is offered to them with the intention that they, with their desires for "pleasure" at man's great cost, may stay out of man's world, man's life.¹¹ And if enough gifts are offered sufficiently often the worshipper can even expect to receive blessings besides, for this is what happens in human affairs: an individual who accepts gifts feels obliged to reciprocate with equal or greater ones.



8. Bhagawatī Kuṇḍa roofed with trisula.



9. Bhagawatī Kuṇḍa empty of water in winter.

What we are left with, then, in the absence of an external teaching authority above the pilgrims and among the jhāṅkrīs is a living tradition that insists only that the polarity mentioned earlier be observed: the two stones are the place for blood sacrifice (bhog dine, lit. giving pleasure) and the pond is the place where such pleasure, such sacrifice is not given (bhog na dine).¹²

In addition to these three places of special veneration and worship, other objects ornament the site of Kalingchok. Most prominent of all is a tall stone pedestal surmounted by a brass lion that stands to the east side of the entrance to Bhagawatī Kuṇḍa. The inscription records that this imposing monument, altogether twelve feet high, was donated by Col. Rājpad Bhakta in the year 1973 B.S. On the other side of the pond hangs a large bell dated 2003 B.S. and inscribed with the name of the donor Shanker Sham Sher Jang Rana, son of the Rana Prime Minister Chandra Sham Sher. Two other large bells are suspended on chains from a metal frame that stands behind the kuṇḍa. These were donated by Col. Dal Bahadur, eldest son of Chandra Bir Ballab Chetri, in Baisākh (April-May) 1966 B.S.¹³ It is these two bells that one passes first when making the clockwise circumambulation of the hilltop shrine area.

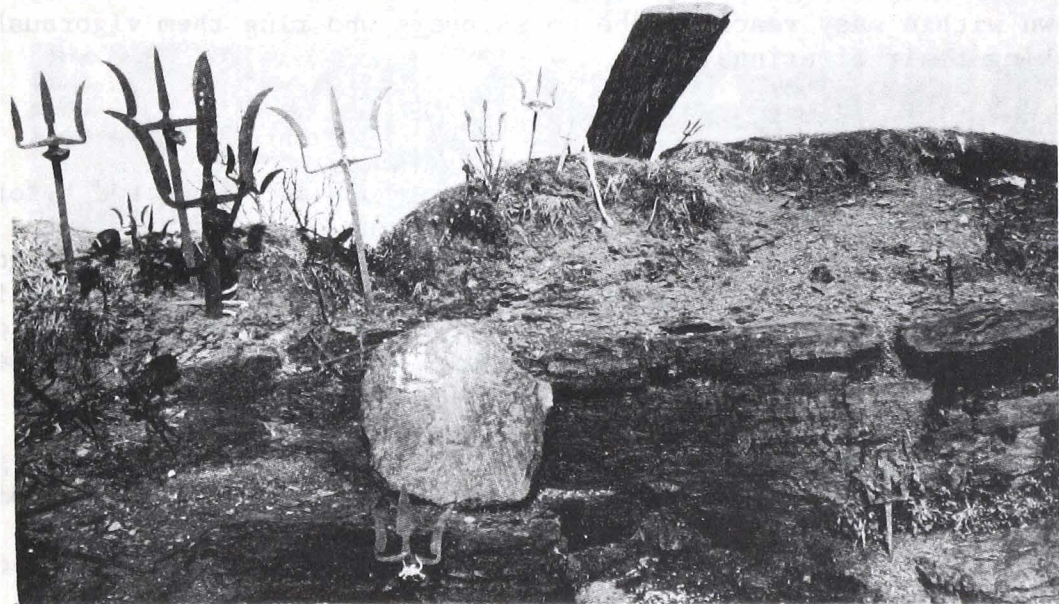
On these bells as well as on some of the large triśuls the donors were able to express in a lasting way the names of the Goddess they wished to honour, as follows: Śrī Kālīṅcokī Kālī Māī, Kālīṅcok Śrī Kālī, Śrī Tin Kalincok Bhagawatī, Kālīṅcok Durgā Bhawānī. On the freshly painted signboard inside the dharma-sālā her name is given as: Śrī Kālīṅcok Bhagawatī, Śrī Uttar Kailās Kālīṅcok Bhagawatī. Other lesser benefactors have made their contributions too in the form of many small bells in the area of the pond, especially at the entrance where they hang down within easy reach of the worshippers who ring them vigorously when making their offerings.

Kalingchok Māī: Mother and Eldest Sister

After this description of the holy places on Kalingchok and before we rejoin the jhāṅkrīs for their circumambulation of the summit, it will be of interest to point out that for them this māithān of Kalingchok is the greatest of the many māithān in the district. Kalingchok Māī is the eldest sister (jeṭhī didī) of all the other shrines.¹⁴ The list of her younger sisters (bahinī) varies according to the different informant and the part of the district with which they are personally familiar. But the best known and one about whom there is general agreement is Tripura-Sundarī at her fort-like temple of Devikot on the northern edge of Dolakha town. Another sister in Dolakha is Bāl Kumārī whose walled shrine can be seen only from a distance in a thick grove of trees on the eastern slopes of the hillside on which the town is built. No one but the priest of Devikot may enter this grove, just as he alone is allowed into the inner shrine of Tripura-Sundarī. A third sister is sometimes mentioned: Bajra Joginī. Her shrine, open to all, is located in a large meadow next to the High School on the southern outskirts of the town.



10. Looking east towards the stones of sacrifice.



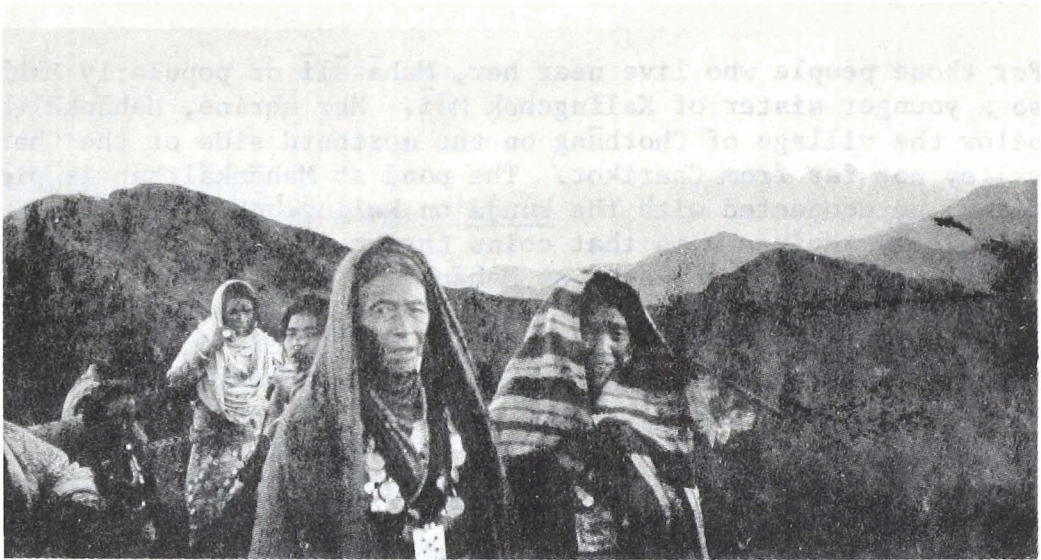
11. The stones for sacrificing fowls and female goats.

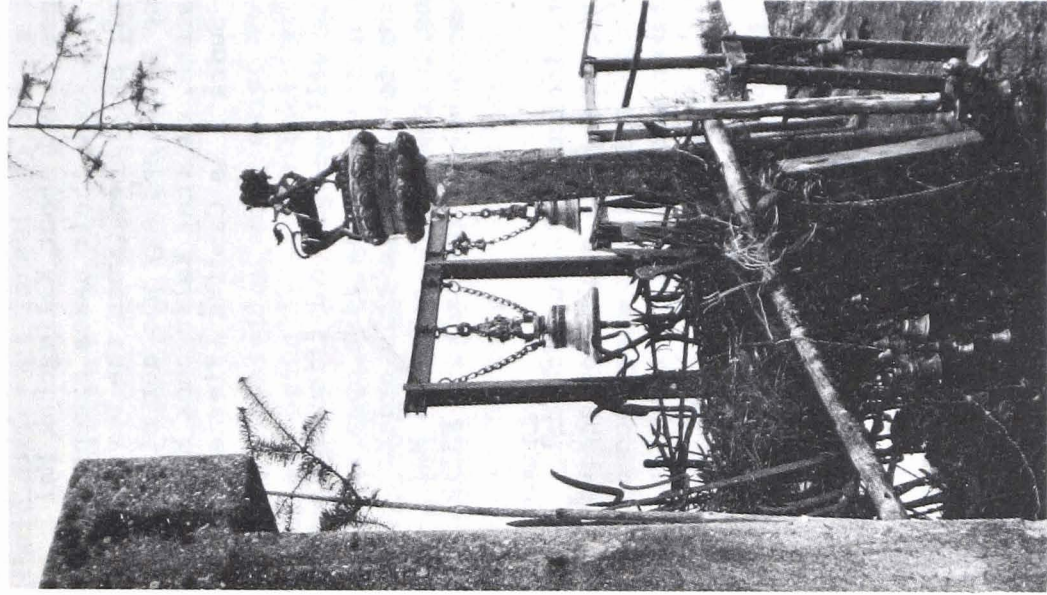
For those people who live near her, Mahākālī or popularly Mahānkāl is also a younger sister of Kalingchok Māī. Her shrine, Mahānkālthān, lies below the village of Chothāng on the northern side of the Charnā-watī valley not far from Charikot. The pond at Mahānkālthān is piously believed to be connected with the kunḍa on Kalingchok. The local people support this by their claims that coins thrown into stagnant water on the mountain top have reappeared at Mahānkāl's spring-fed pond thousands of feet below.

Kamala Māī is another younger sister. She is worshipped on the first day of the month of Māgh (January-February) in a tree-shrine at a meadow called Gurumti in Suri Panchayat where two tributaries of the Tama Kosi join. I attended her festival in 1976 and found that the object of worship is again a black stone but without any sign of moisture (except that the shrine is built near a confluence). In an indentation in the trunk of a tall simal tree (the cotton tree, *Bombax malabaricum*) there are several large, flat stones, leading like steps to the oblong-shaped stone which leans against the trunk surrounded by several long triśūls. A Brahmin priest and his Chetri clients worshipping at the tree on the festival day identified the stone as Gurumti Kamalā Māī and he chanted her praises in Sanskrit during the ritual. Later in the afternoon an elderly Chetri jhāṅkrī came with a group of disciples (one Chetri, one Newar, three Sherpas) to the tree and worshipped Mahādev there.

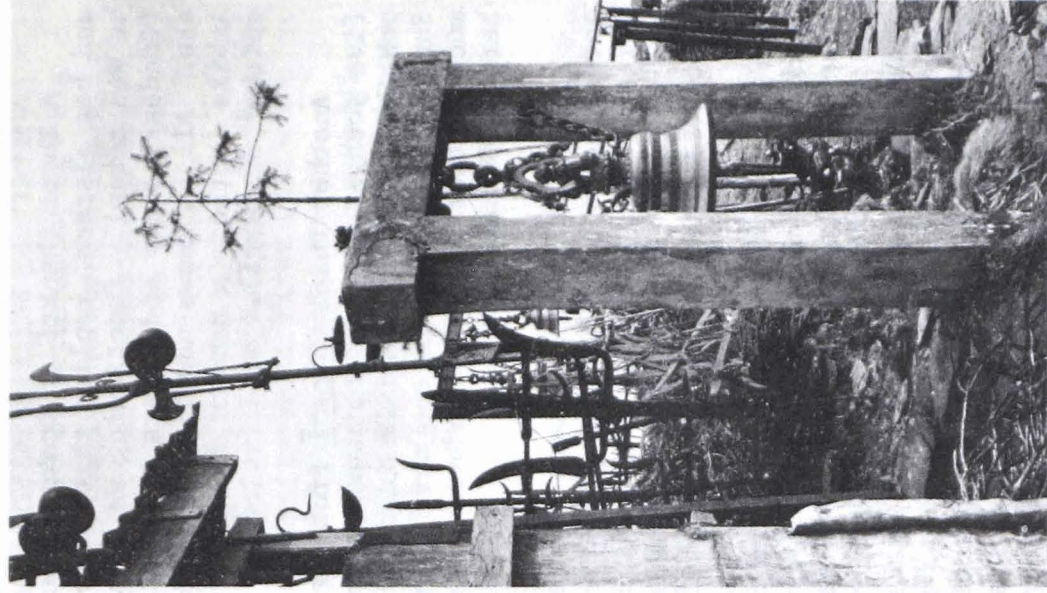
To the south-west of Kalingchok, in the valley drained by the Dabi Kholā tributary of the Sun Kosi, two Māī of the area are named as Kalingchok Māī's sisters: Baidhī and Kālikā. Baidhī Māīthān is situated above the Thami settlement of Piskar; worship is offered here on the occasion of Daśain in the fall and Caite Daśain in the spring. Kālikā Māī's shrine is on the southern side of the Dabi Kholā valley and further west on a wooded spur.

Still further south, above the village of Tauthali in Jethul Panchayat (Sindhupalchok District) stands the shrine of Tauthali Māī. This younger sister's cult is in the charge of Newars from Tauthali village who support her worship from income deriving from potato fields around the village of Rol Khānī. Tauthali Māī's big festival begins on the evening of Daśamī, at the conclusion of the Daśain celebrations, and all the groups of the area take part: Brahmin, Chetri, Newar, Tamang, Thami. The only restriction is that no jhāṅkrīs may attend in their role as jhāṅkrīs. Men who are jhāṅkrīs do participate in the jātrā but are careful not to appear with their paraphernalia nor to exhibit any signs of being in actual physical contact with the powers of the invisible world, e.g., by bodily trembling (kāṃnu). A jhāṅkrī who appeared in costume, with his drum, at the Kalingchok jātrā last year confirmed this report when I met him returning in ordinary dress from the festival at Tauthali. He claimed that he would get a good beating if he tried to perform as a jhāṅkrī there.¹⁵





12. Bells and lion east of Bhagawatī Kuṇḍa.



13. Bell and trisūls between dharmasālā and ku

Still other sisters of Kalingchok Māī are listed by a venerable jogī Brahmananda who sometimes resides in Dumkot village of Chemawati Panchayat. He refers to the goddess as Kalingchok Mahānmaī. She is the eldest (jethī). The second sister (māilī) is Sundarawatī (popularly called Sunārātī) at the head of a waterfall across the valley from Dumkot. Another jogī lives here, a young man named Sagar whose fame, according to the local people, has reached as far as Kathmandu. The third sister (sāiplī) is Kālikā in Dumkot itself; the fourth (kāiplī) is the shrine of Kālikā in Nibāre of Sunkhānī Panchayat; the fifth and last of his list (kānchī) is a certain Kamalā Māī in Lāduk Pañchayat to the north.

A Thami jhānkri of Dumkot, when questioned about Kalingchok Māī and her sisters, replied that he could not know their names except when he was actually functioning as a jhānkri; only then, when the Devī (Goddess) comes and mounts him, will she speak and say who her sisters are. All he knows now, in his normal state, is that Kalingchok Māī is Ambikā (Mother; a name of Pārwatī) and Sunrātī is Candikā (Fierce; an epithet of Durgā).

Another Thami jhānkri from the same village had no difficulty naming five younger sisters that he was aware of and left his list open to the possibilities of more. He identified the following in this order: Sunrātī, Deodhuṅgā to the north, Sailung to the south, a Kamalā Māī much further south in Sindhuli Garhi (which he has visited) and Kālikā here in Dumkot.

There are seven sisters altogether, including Kalingchok Māī, according to a third Thami jhānkri of the area. He could not account for all their names but knew that Deodhuṅgā and Sailung were second and third on the list. The sixth was taken away by a landslip at a place called Nangretaksar. Sunrātī is the youngest.

It is somewhat surprising to find two well-known Mahādevthān included among the sisters of Kalingchok Māī, namely Deodhuṅgā (14,628 ft) near the Tibetan border north of Bigu, and Sailuṅgeśwarī Mahādevthān (10,358 ft), the highest point on the ridge south of Charikot. Kalingchok stands between these two peaks to her north and south, almost equidistant from both. However, no one mentions the most famous shrine of Mahādev in the district, that of Deoliṅgeśwarī Mahādevthān to the north-east, as being one of the sisters. But even here there is a reluctance to be dogmatically exclusive; when I asked a devotee of Śiva at the yearly festival if this were also a māīthān, he replied cautiously that a Māī might be there (Māī holā) Rather than be surprised, we perhaps should find it natural in a district dominated by the twin peaks of Gaurī-Śaṅkar that the Great God and Goddess should not be separated.

Besides all her younger sisters Kalingchok Māī has a younger brother as well. He is Bhimsen or Bhīmeśwar in his Dolakha temple whose fame spreads far beyond the town and the district. There exists a shrine to Kalingchok Māī built into the western wall of her brother

Bhīmeswar's spacious open-air compound. The heap of long tridents there along with hundreds of smaller ones, all hung about with bells, gives the impression of a bristling metal tree. These trisūls are the offerings of her devotees who for any reason are unable to make the difficult ascent to her mountaintop shrine.

As for the significance of this family-like linking of various shrines it could be said to unify the whole area, employing kinship terms to express a oneness* between the pilgrimage places and perhaps also between the pilgrims themselves. Yet the oneness between the different shrines is not an identity (obvious to the people because of their different locations) nor is it an undifferentiated similarity. They are united in a family relationship where differences of age signify a hierarchy among the members. It is really the superiority of Kalingchok Māī and her festival today which finds expression in the acknowledgement of her status as eldest sister. Not even the priest of the powerful Tripura-Sundarī disputes that.

Does a similar unity exist among the pilgrims on Kalingchok this morning? Actually it is their great diversity which first strikes the observer as he sees the crowd: Tamang, Sherpa, Thami, Brahmin, Chetri, Newar, Jirel, Damai, Kami, Sarki, Magar (ranked here according to the roughly estimated number of people from each group in attendance) As Mother to each of the individuals approaching her stone with blood-sacrifices or her pond with unbloody offerings, does Kalingchok Māī possess the power to unite her children among themselves, at least for the moment?

On the one hand, as a sort of negative sign of some kind of unity, there seem to be few of the quarrels and violent rivalries between villages that are a notorious characteristic of another festival in the district, that of Deolīngeswarī Mahādevthān. Apparently the night before the festival is spent peacefully enough. A Tamang in his twenties did appear at the māithān in the morning with a cut over his eye and confessed that a Sherpa had struck him with a stone, but he made little of the incident. His only comment was that his mother would scold him when he arrived back home in the evening. Of course the presence of the Charikot police is an important factor in the preservation of the peace. As for the stories that narrate of jhānkrīs doing magical battle during the Kalingchok Jātrā, normally these combats are joined not at the shrine itself but when the jhānkrīs are journeying from or returning back to their villages.

On the other hand, more positive evidence of the special kind of unity in action at Kalingchok today would be, among so many signs of equality in the huge crowd, the prominence of the jhānkrīs themselves. All pilgrims are welcome here at the shrine, caste or tribe make no difference; nor does anyone claim any priority or receive any special attention. Except, that is, the jhānkrī. He announces his arrival with drum and dance. He is preceded by attendants bearing the sacred bumbā and followed by singers chanting lustily. The people of his village follow him as they would an elder brother, one of themselves but

with a special relationship to the Mother Goddess. The crowd parades him as he approaches the iron bridge that will take him across into the presence of Kalingchok Māī

In the ordinary life that rolls on from day to day in the valleys on all sides below, it is the high-caste who occupy the top rung in the socio-religious structure of this Hindu kingdom.¹⁶ But here on top of the mountain and at this moment in the calendrical cycle the jhāṅkrī, representing an older tradition in the hills, assumes the highest rank. The high-caste are here but inconspicuously so. The people have left their hierarchical Hindu structure behind them, in their villages below the clouds, and enjoy here a different kind of unity, a community, with the jhāṅkrī mediating for man with whatever forces are represented by Kalingchok Māī.¹⁷

Roughly forty jhāṅkrīs will circumambulate the holy peak this morning. With the help of their drums and the secret knowledge embodied in their incantations (mantra), they will enter into a closer contact with those invisible forces than is possible for either priest or layman. For it will be a controlled contact.

Circumambulation and Sacrifice

The first jhāṅkrī of the day is ready to begin his clockwise circumambulation of the summit and we too are ready to rejoin him. We understand better just where we are standing or at least the complexity of our situation. We are not simply on Kalingchok Mountain, Dolakha Dt., Janakpur Zone, as a political map would tell us; nor on Kalingchok Mountain, 12,513 ft., five hours by bus on the Arniko Highway from Kathmandu and two days walk from Barabise, as a trekkers guide might inform us. I once asked a villager in which district Kalingchok lay and he answered, using an English noun in his Nepali sentence: it is in the centre. That is where we are now; Kalingchok is a centre to which so many different people have been drawn and in which they may stand above these many differences for a space.

The elderly jhāṅkrī and his younger companion dance past the dharma-sālā on their right and come to the rear of the Bhagawati Kunda. They turn to face the kuṇḍa and the pile of triśūls heaped there. They bow from the waist several times, beating their drums rapidly and steadily as they pause at this spot. They then move on to the two large bells hanging side by side and stop to ring them vigorously. As their group carries on with the singing of saio saio the jhāṅkrīs come to the north-eastern end of the mountain top, where the priest stands ready to perform the sacrifice of fowls, and pause momentarily at the rectangular stone, changing their drumbeat again to the rapid rhythm. They round the corner of the peak to reach the square stone where the other priest presides over the sacrifices of female goats. The two men carrying the bumbā and the two jhāṅkrīs, beating their drums steadily again, all bow devoutly towards the stone. The older jhāṅkrī now looks sharply around and asks in a commanding voice: where is the goat for sacrifice? A black animal is brought to him and a white one for his younger companion as they both recite barely audible mantra.

Meanwhile, other pilgrims keep coming in greater numbers onto the summit of Kalingchok. Now a different sound mingles with the tune of saio saio and the drumbeats and the bleats of the sacrificial animals: "Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare, Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare," sung by a group of men with cymbals clashing. It is a sound from another world, the world of Hinduism, but no one pays it any special attention, certainly not these jhānkrīs absorbed in their incantations. This group, not present the previous year, passe by several times and serves as a symbolic caution against trying to attach only one meaning or one purpose to the shrine of Kalingchok and its festival today.

The elder jhānkrī pauses in his prayers, looks up, and says in a loud voice, "We must beg for power, for strength (bal māgnu parcha)." He makes the statement at this place and time just as he is about to enter into a brief contact with invisible forces, named as Kalingchok Māī a contact externalized by a controlled up-and-down shaking (kāmmu) of his shoulders. For this contact he does require strength and from this contact he will draw strength for his work of healing in the coming year. In the world-view of both the sick and the healers, the jhānkrī needs strength to ward off from himself and others the unwanted and unpredictable intrusions of invisible non-human powers which bring sickness and misfortune. He needs strength to protect himself and those he serves from interference in this life coming from those family members who died a violent death or for whom something was lacking in the proper performance of their funeral rites. Strength is needed too for warding off the evil attacks of human enemies who can cause harm either by simply willing it or by the use of magical rites, i.e., women witches (boksi) or enemy jhānkrīs who pervert their powers for evil.

In this context of his statement about strength we can recall too that his strength as a jhānkrī depends much on what people think of him and that coming to Kalingchok each year in full dress, making sacrifice creating an impression with his dancing and drumming, all this contributes to the strength of public opinion concerning him, at least among his own fellow-villagers. This image of himself in the role of a successful jhānkrī is so important as a validating factor, for the jhānkrī must make it on his own, without a hierarchical organization to accredit him

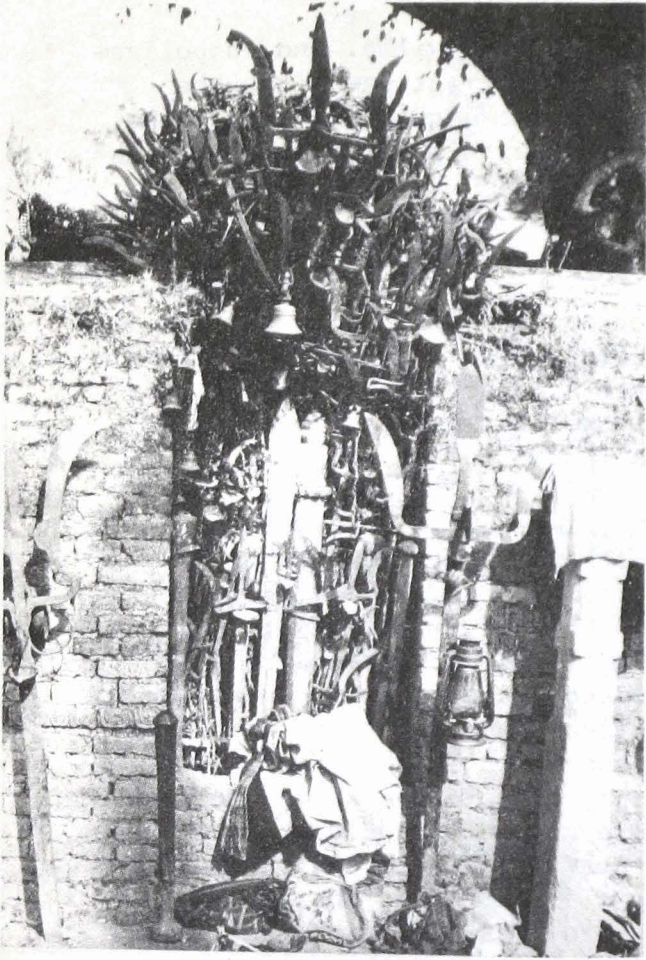
After this reminder that strength is needed, both jhānkrīs give their drums to others in the group to play. The elderly jhānkrī takes his bumbā from the attendant, pours water into his hand, and then sprinkles it on the head of the goat to make it shake its body. Until it shakes itself the sacrifice cannot proceed. This little rite of sprinkling and shaking (parsanu) is variously understood by people as being either a sign from the animal that it accepts to be sacrificed or a sign that the animal is in fact an acceptable offering. The younger jhānkrī does the same for his white goat. Neither animal reacts to the water and so the jhānkrīs continue in their efforts.

Another group of worshippers now approaches the māithān with a goat who shakes as soon as the water is sprinkled on it. The priest pulls back the animal's head and slits its throat with his curved knife (khukurī); then pulling back the head farther he sprays the blood from the still-living body onto the stone. He cuts off the head and a portion of the neck and leaves them in front of the stone. Lastly he removes a tuft of hair from the animal's neck and sticks it to the stone. By-standers come forward, touch their right hands there and apply a mark (tīkā) of blood and achetā to their foreheads.

In the meantime, the two jhānkris anxiously wait for their goats to give them the sign. They stand over the animals and murmur mantra as other members of the group continue to pour water. The men with the ḍhyāngro are told to stop their drumming. The group's attention focusses on the two animals while a man takes a lighted incense stick and moves it around their bodies, down their backs and under their legs. The water in the bumbā is all poured out now and a man is sent to refill one of them with holy water (jal) from Bhagawati Kuṇḍa. At last the white one shakes its head and at once the priest takes it and slits its throat. As the blood is sprayed on the stone the jhānkri calls out "Here you are, O God, O Goddess Bhagawatī (Lau Parmeśwar, Parmeśwarī Bhagawatī)!" The head of the goat is not left at the stone in this instance but is taken by the jhānkri's companions. Before they pick it up the priest cuts off a section from the tail and stuffs it into the mouth of the severed head.

Efforts are still being made to make the black goat shake. The animal is doused with water but still stands motionless. Finally, to everyone's relief, it gives itself a good shake and the elder jhānkri comments, "It is all right (thīk cha)." The priest is about to proceed with the sacrifice when one member of the jhānkri's party comes forward with his khukurī to claim that right for himself. The two men begin struggling, each with a knife in one hand and pulling the animal with the other. A policeman on duty at the spot immediately intervenes in favour of the priest. Tempers subside and there is even a graceful compromise. The priest does the actual cutting but uses the knife of the other man to do it, allowing him to assist as well. The priest cuts off the animal's head and sets it in front of the stone. He then removes a section of neck and puts it aside for himself. He lets the other man take over for the last operation, the cutting off of part of the animal's tail to be put into its mouth.

The previous year a somewhat similar dispute had broken out. As a jhānkri in peacock feather headdress drew near the rectangular stone with a chicken in his hands, he began the controlled trembling (kāmnū) which might be said to be a jhānkri's trademark, signifying contact with the invisible world. In this state the jhānkri pleaded with the priest to stand aside and let him proceed with the sacrifice using his own khukurī. For the priest, a Newar from Bhimsenthān in Dolakha, this sacrifice was a job which he did not want to give up; for the jhānkri, a Tamang from Dhārpā, this sacrifice was a physical and spiritual necessity, outwardly expressed by the trembling of his whole body. There was



14. Shrine to Kalingchok Māī at Bhīmsenthān. 15. A priest sacrifices a female goat for a



16. The jhāṅkrī who performed the sacrific

no use of force on either side, only a struggle of wills, and no policeman intervened. Finally, and reluctantly, the priest gave into the jhāṅkrī; the representative of order and routine worship gave into the trembling representative of immediate contact with the invisible forces of the other world.

But at today's festival the priest finds support from another representative of order, the policeman, and together they hold their ground against the man of the jhāṅkrī's group and his desire to perform the sacrifice with his own hands. The earnestness of these jhāṅkrīs and their followers at this moment of sacrifice would seem to indicate that they have no doubts about the importance of what they are doing and of the reality of all it presupposes in the way of world-view.

The sacrifice successfully completed, the jhāṅkrīs move on to complete their ritual journey. By now two other jhāṅkrīs have crossed over the bridge and begun their round with dancing and drumming. The time is 6:10 A.M. Soon more and more groups with their jhāṅkrīs will be arriving. Last year thirty-seven jhāṅkrīs were counted during the approximately three hours the festival lasted, the majority being Tamang and Sherpa plus Thami and Chetri and at least one Magar and one Jirel. Others had visited the māithān the previous day. This year too some jhāṅkrīs, Thamis from the village of Suspa, came to the shrine to perform their sacrifice in the evening before the full moon day. They then spent the night in a herdsman's shelter near the summit and returned to their village in the morning without again visiting the shrine. Though I did not attempt to count the jhāṅkrīs this year, deciding instead to remain with these first two as long as they stayed in the Kalingchok area, the number of them in attendance seemed to be the same or greater than in 1975. Some jhāṅkrīs, like the first arrival this morning, participate each year while others are more irregular; some faces, familiar to me from last year and from the photographs I had taken, were missing but new ones took their place.

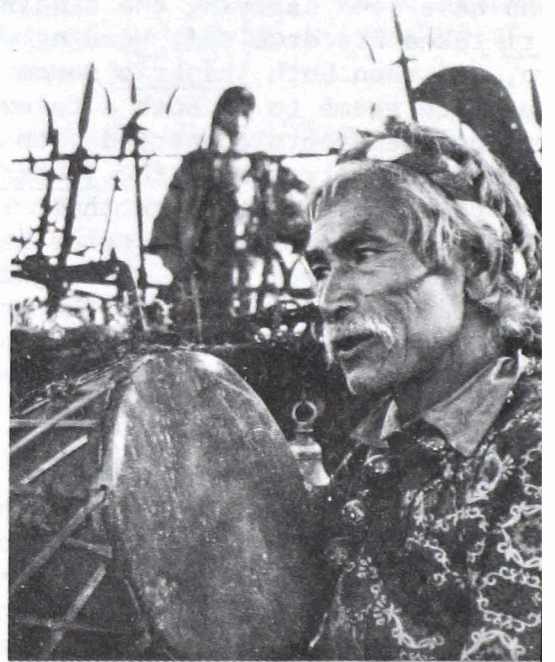
In a few steps the jhāṅkrīs reach Bhagawati Kuṇḍa where they stand on the outskirts of the large crowd and beat their drums. They begin to tremble, not violently but with control, manifesting in this way both their special relationship to Kalingchok Māi and their mastery of this relationship as well. Their sacrifices completed at the stone for blood offerings (bhog dine), they now bow in the presence of Bhagawatī who here at the pond will not accept blood (bhog na khānne).

The Conclusion of the Ceremonial Visit

The jhāṅkrīs begin a second circumambulation. But on reaching the area of the chicken sacrifices, the elderly jhāṅkrī turns to go back to the bridge even though the other members of his party protest. They want to continue round again in the normal way. Besides, the crush of people moving clockwise around the summit is now so great that to go against this living stream will be dangerous as well as difficult because of the steep drop on all sides. There are a few moments of confusion and then the jhāṅkrī's will prevail. He forces his way through



17. The jhāṅkrīs from Suspa.



18. The jhāṅkrī bowing at Bhagawati Kuṇḍa. 19. The jhāṅkrī turning to leave, darśan

the mass of people with the younger jhāṅkrī, the singers, and the rest of his group following him.

Beyond the dharmasālā the crowd thins out and the jhāṅkrīs can resume their dancing step down to the stair-bridge. They have accomplished what they came to do, their yearly ceremonial visit to Kalingchok Māī. The singers add a new verse now to their song in which they announce in Nepali that they have done darśan: "Darśana garī saio saio, saio le bombā saio saio."

The main work of the morning is over for them but the jhāṅkrīs continue their dancing once across the bridge and move on until they arrive just below the shop-shelter. Then they turn back towards the summit, bowing down three times in that direction and beating their drums rapidly as they did in front of Bhagawati Kuṇḍa. One of the group brings an ordinary flat stone from the side of the path and sets it down in the centre. On it is placed a shallow saucer of rakṣī. Another man squats down on the path in front of the saucer facing the jhāṅkrīs; taking a sprig of leaves from a bumbā, he dips it into the saucer and begins to sprinkle drops of rakṣī into the air. Not much is actually sprinkled since he shakes the sprig of leaves thirty to forty times before dipping it again into the liquid. He matches his wrist action to the beating of the drum which has changed back now to the rhythm of the saio song.

Another member of the group steps forward, picks up the saucer, pours some liquor into his palm and drinks it, calling it Bhagawānko prasād (an offering to a deity shared among the devotees). Then he hands the saucer to the senior jhāṅkrī who drinks about half before passing it to the younger. He takes a sip and gives it to the two young men who have been carrying the singing for the group. Now the younger jhāṅkrī takes his drum and, bending down to the stone, sings for a minute or two, and then both jhāṅkrīs dance round the stone several times. This closing rite seems to be both a farewell to Kalingchok Māī and a way of separating the events connected with her worship on the summit from the relaxation and refreshment the jhāṅkrīs are now about to take on the hill side before returning to their lives below. That would seem clear from their respectful bows towards her shrine; but I do not have any information from them about the significance of these offerings sprinkled into the air or the reason for the attention given to a stone picked up at random from the trailside. It appears to be a cautionary gesture of worship and reverence towards the unseen powers in sky and earth.

Oracle for a Mother

The jhāṅkrīs start down the path again, continuing on for some fifty yards until they reach a hilltop meadow where a woollen blanket is spread for them on the sloping grassy hill side. But before they can take food or drink, a woman in her late thirties approaches them with a worried look. The worry concerns her son, she explains to the jhāṅkrīs. He went to India a year ago, looking for work, and she has not had any word of him since. She asks the jhāṅkrīs to find out about him: is he alive or dead and, if alive, is he in good health? When will

he be returning home to her? In her mind, the jhāṅkrīs are a visible link with the invisible, in this case distant people (her son) and future events (his return).

The woman requests them to undertake that process of discovering unknown and future realities which is known as jokhānā (divination, oracle). While the older man sits by, listening and resting, the young jhāṅkrī performs the jokhānā for the anxious mother. He takes his drum and begins to beat steadily and quickly, at the same time shaking slightly so that his bandolier of bells jingles in time with the drum. After chanting for a short while he goes into more violent tremblings yet continues to drum. When he begins to sing again, a man seated to his right places his hand on the drumhead to deaden the sound somewhat in order that the forthcoming information about the missing son might be heard more distinctly. Whenever the jhāṅkrī pauses in his chant, the man removes his hand and the sound of the drum becomes louder once again.

A young man squats down behind the jhāṅkrī; he gives support with his frequent shouts of encouragement to the invisible source of the desired knowledge. "Come on, O Supreme God (Lau Parmeśwar)!" he calls out often in a loud voice, using a masculine form at certain times and at other times changing to feminine Parmeśwarī (Supreme Goddess) or using the proper noun Kālikā Māī. He exhorts the god or goddess to truthfulness and admonishes the Supreme Being to be honest in his or her revelations. "You must tell the truth, O Supreme God; O Kālikā Māī you must speak truly, O Supreme Goddess (satya bolnu parcha, Parmeśwar Kālikā Māī, sāṅco bolnu parcha, he Parmeśwarī)!" Though his voice and words give the impression of great earnestness, his broad smile and occasional winks at the onlookers indicate that he is enjoying it. However that may be, the young man's language is revealing of how the jhāṅkrī's utterances are understood when he is in this state of trembling contact with the invisible world: Parmeśwar, Parmeśwarī speak through him, using his voice to mediate their message.

During this time the worried mother never notices the young man. Her eyes are fixed on the jhāṅkrī; her ears are tuned to the revelation concerning her lost boy. Within fifteen minutes she learns from the lips of the jhāṅkrī that yes, her son is alive and in good health. Besides all, he will return to her within sixty-four days. She sets a one rupee note down in front of the jhāṅkrī and then without a word blends back into the crowd of pilgrims. But the jhāṅkrī does not end his chanting with her departure. He carries on for another ten to fifteen minutes not conducting a new jokhānā for a new purpose but concluding the rite undertaken for the distraught mother. From time to time an attendant sprinkles raksī into the air using a flower dipped into a bottle placed in front of the jhāṅkrī. The jhāṅkrī retained a serious attitude throughout the time-consuming and physically taxing ritual; not that solemnity or seriousness is expected in the context of such a performance but being a mediator between two worlds is not easy and he is naturally tired.

The jokhānā is ended now and the jhāṅkrī rests while some of the men of the group hand round the drums and dance about with obvious enjoyment. They are playing at being jhāṅkrīs for a few minutes, having some fun without the sweat and hard work that real ones experience. Bread and vegetables and homemade liquor are passed around as the jhāṅkrīs chat pleasantly with people of other groups who come to greet them (including a Jirel jhāṅkrī). They then perform a closing ceremony in front of their bumbā; reciting mantra rapidly under their breath, they scatter grains of achetā into the air.

It is 7:35 A.M. and time for the group to go. Once again they take up the song of saio saio the men alternating with the women, as they prepare to return home under the leadership of the elderly jhāṅkrī. What is his name? Discovering a jhāṅkrī's name can often be a delicate procedure. Nothing is likely to arouse suspicions more than a direct question followed by an entry into a notebook (a ritual that belongs to another, literate, world) and the jhāṅkrī is quite right if he thinks this possession by another of his name means power over him in some way. Thus to avoid questioning him or his group on this detail, I inquired about him from other pilgrims there, but in vain. I had thought that surely this man must be well-known; he attracts much attention when he comes down the trail in the vanguard of all the other jhāṅkrīs who will put in an appearance today. But no one seems to know or care what his name is or from what village he comes. There are even differences of opinion as to whether he is a Tamang or a Sherpa. Though we may be curious to name him and pinpoint him on a map, our curiosity is not shared by the people there.

Finally, however, some Tamang men of another village group do identify (and correctly as it turns out) the elderly jhāṅkrī as being from Chāsā in Kharthali Panchayat of Sindhu Palchok District, in the Sun Kosi valley near Barabise. None of those whom I ask knows his name, however, except the people of his own group today. He is Gore Tamang, the "Gore" undoubtedly from goro (fair) because of his light complexion.

Relationships Between Jhāṅkrīs

One of my purposes in returning to the Kalingchok Jātrā this year was to see if there were any evidence for the traditional accounts of open hostility and competition between rival jhāṅkrīs. Nearly everyone I meet in the district of Dolakha speaks of these conflicts whenever the subject of Kalingchok comes up. In one of the earliest descriptions given to me, Birka Bahadur Thami claims that on the occasion of Kalingchok Jātrā, both on the way and on the mountain itself, there are such battles, which he calls jujhe, among magic practitioners (tāṅtrik). As an example he says that a jhāṅkrī starts to boast and act proudly (ghamaṅḍa garcha) and then taking a handful of achetā blows on it. He repeats a mantra in his mind and then throws the achetā in the direction of another jhāṅkrī. (Presumably the purely mental recitation of the magic formula is so that others may not hear and possibly steal the powerful incantation for themselves). As a result the other

jhāṅkrī's drum either explodes or flies off into the sky. The aggressor jhāṅkrī then makes his victim ill so that he falls down and perhaps even dies.

Would a jhāṅkrī actually cause death to another in this way? I pursue the question with Birka Bahadur. He hesitates now (perhaps not sure why I ask) and then says that the jhāṅkrī will let his victim lie there for many hours but then he must raise him up (uṭhāunu paryo). After being raised up the vanquished jhāṅkrī has to acknowledge the victorious jhāṅkrī as master (guru) by showing him signs of respect as superior.

During last year's Kalingchok Jātrā I remained at the summit throughout the morning hours, to observe all the jhāṅkrīs as they came, to count and photograph them. There were no signs of such collisions between jhāṅkrīs in the shrine area at least. By the time that the last jhāṅkrī had danced his way round the holy places on the peak, all the others had started off for their villages and so I had no chance to see if anything occurred among them on the meadows or on the return journey. This year my plan was to stay with the first jhāṅkrī of the day to see what might possibly develop in this direction.

But Gore Tamang does not have any significant encounters with other rival jhāṅkrīs during the festival. At the māīthān while he and his companion were engrossed in the process of sprinkling the goats with water, the third and fourth jhāṅkrīs of the day began their circumambulation of the shrine but the two pairs gave no notice to each other. This was the attitude I observed the previous year among all the various groups at the summit: no open hostility, simply an ignoring of one another even when coming face to face or rubbing shoulders in the packed crowd.¹⁸ Later, while Gore and his party were resting at the meadow, the jhāṅkrī Shetag Jirel from Gorthali approached the group and spoke with them in a friendly and relaxed way.

After Gore had left for his village, with no further contacts with other jhāṅkrīs, a scene occurred at the stair-bridge that is of interest in this context. At the point in the trail immediately in front of the bridged chasm a group of three jhāṅkrīs (two in full jhāṅkrī dress) dance for some time with dhyāṅgros in their hands before crossing over the bridge and ascending to the māīthān. They are Thamis from the village of Latu (Chaukuti Panchayat, Sindhupalchok District) near Barabise. Two of them hop in orthodox fashion but the third, in ordinary Nepali dress, dances in a queerly exaggerated manner, striking ridiculous poses and then holding them dramatically in a way that makes his two partners grin with amusement. He seems to be drunk. The crowd on the hill side are delighted with the performance and watch with great enjoyment. The jhāṅkrīs carry on with their singing and dancing, seemingly oblivious of time, supplying the people with entertainment that is an integral part of every festival.

Meanwhile, another group comes down from the opposite direction after doing darśan: Harkha Bahadur (a guru whom we will meet later in connection with the Devikot Jātrā) and his two sons-in-law, Thami jhānkris from Dumkot. They make an impressive sight especially with their unusually long headdresses made of strips of red and white cloth hanging down nearly to their heels; one of the son-in-law disciples carries a large iron trident in his hand. They cross over the bridge only to find their way blocked. They wait for a few minutes at the bottom of the iron stairs but the Latu jhānkris show no signs of moving forward onto the stairs and out of their way.

It seems an ideal occasion for hostility and confrontation between jhānkris to take place, if they take place at all on Kalingchok. And to aggravate the situation still more, another venerable-looking jhānkri comes down the path from the direction of the stone hut and is stopped in the same way by the Latu jhānkris dancing in the middle of the trail. This would seem to be a time, if ever, for jhānkris to engage in a test of strength.

The jhānkris coming from the māithān and the old jhānkri from the direction of the stone hut now move in on the dancing, road-blocking jhānkris. But instead of a magic battle between the groups or even signs of impatience on the part of the inconvenienced men, there are expressions of good will, a show of mutual respect as they begin bowing down to one another. With smiles on their faces, they tilt their heads and raise their hands, palm outwards, in the gesture used in Nepal when inquiring of another if everything is all right with his health and general well-being. The eldest jhānkri of the Latu group takes the hand of one of the young Dumkot jhānkris and raises it to his forehead in a reverential manner. Here at least, in the shadow of Kalingchok Māī (because so near to the Mother Goddess of them all?) harmony and not hostility is the prevailing spirit among these jhānkris who have met here by chance.¹⁹

A Magical Battle?

Later in the morning another scene takes place that has significance in itself but more so, for the present context, because of the mistaken interpretation given to it by at least one casual Nepali observer. It is nearly 10:00 A.M. now and there is no sign of jhānkri activity on Kalingchok or the nearby meadows. Seemingly everyone has begun the journey home. But after going a few hundred yards down the trail to the west, I hear the sound of several drums coming from behind the half-ruined walls of a herdsman's shelter above the trail. Thakurlal, a tailor from Gorthali whom I had questioned in his village two days before about the tradition of magical battles, is waiting for me as I near the spot. He suggests I stop and take a look at what is going on inside the shelter. Jhānkris are competing, Thakurlal tells me; one of those magical battles I had asked about is in process right now.



20. A jhānkrī absorbed in his dance.



21. Shetag Jirel and Chuinchuin Thami circumbulate the crowded summit.



22. Crowd enjoying the Latu jhāṅkrīs' dance.



23. Harkha Bahadur with son-in-law disciples



24. The two Tamang jhānkrīs from Māndrā seated in front of a bumbā...



25. with the younger jhānkrī facing them.

A glance inside the ruined shelter, open to the sky, certainly seems to confirm Thakurlal's statement. I see a large crowd of Tamang men and women, some seated and some standing and some squatting on the walls where they can get a better view of the focus of their attention: three men in jhānkrī dress and with dhyāngros in their hands sitting in the centre of the square. Two of the jhānkrīs are middle-aged while the third is a young man. The middle-aged pair sit on a rug, facing west, and the young man sits alone across from them on another rug, facing east. On the ground between them is a large copper bumbā which forms a centre-piece for piles of food offerings and a great number of smaller vessels with flowers in them.

All three men are beating their dhyāngros vehemently. Above the drumbeats one of the pair of jhānkrīs is shouting in a loud and seemingly angry voice at the jhānkrī on the rug opposite him. The younger man does not look up; his face sags with exhaustion and he is sweating profusely. Someone from the crowd wipes his face clean with a handful of leaves. Still shouting, the older jhānkrī stands up and starts to move towards the younger one. Picking up the copper bumbā he pours some of its liquid over the seated youth who continues his drumming even though his head is now dripping with the mixture of water and milk and his body is shaken with tremblings.

It certainly would seem that Thakurlal is correct and this is a case of jhānkrīs challenging one another to magical combat with one jhānkrī now flaunting his power over a younger rival. This is what Thakurlal interpreted the scene to mean. But the people who know these jhānkrīs personally, i.e., their fellow-villagers, reveal in answer to questioning that the older man is actually teaching the younger. They stand in the relationship of master and disciple; besides, they are father and son. The other jhānkrī there is the young man's paternal uncle.

In today's ceremony the father is giving a mantra to his disciple-son. The pouring of water seems to come as a climax. After the father sets down the bumbā and returns to his place, he directs his still-trembling son's drumming with a gesture of his hand, making him go slower and slower. He finally signals him to stop and the young man gets up. Drum in hand, the son goes shaking to the opposite side and sits down next to his uncle. "Now it is finished (aba bhayo)," says a man at my shoulder. Evidently a new stage has been reached in the training of the disciple which, his fellow-villagers say, has been going on for several years now. He wears a long tupī (the tuft of hair at the crown of the head) which is a distinguishing mark of many, but not all, jhānkrīs. Its length indicates too that he has been undergoing an apprenticeship for some years.

The guru now takes the large copper bumbā and sprinkles the crowd with its liquid, using the flowers that had been placed inside the vessel. The disciple, bleary-eyed and exhausted, takes strands of yellow thread from a plate in front of him. The people surge forwards toward the jhānkrīs to have the threads tied round their necks. The procedure



26. The disciple seated with his guru-father and uncle.



27. The disciple tying thread around a woman's neck
as the guru places the bumbā on her head.

varies somewhat from person to person but generally the guru pours liquid from the bumbā into the individual's cupped hands three times; the person washes his face with it each time and then bends forward to the disciple to receive the thread around his neck. As the young jhānkrī ties the yellow thread his father places the bumbā on top of the recipient's head and chants mantra in a loud, commanding tone. Both men and women come for threads, but the majority are women. In only one instance, a woman has a thread tied around her right wrist and then another around her left wrist. Most people place an offering of a rupee note or a coin in a plate at the time of receiving the thread and the blessing with the bumbā. For some minutes, it is only the young jhānkrī who gives the threads and everyone comes to him but then, as there is still a large number of people waiting, his uncle begins to help him. People are getting concerned about the time of day and want to get moving. As it is, they will reach their village of Māndrā (Ghātī Panchayat, Sindhu Palchok District) only tomorrow.²⁰

Seeing the villagers' attention during the time the jhānkrīs were chanting and beating their drums, and now, watching their eagerness to receive the water of blessing and the thread (which they refer to as a prasād which brings them lacchin, good fortune), I am impressed by the essential seriousness of their attitude without at the same time any mock solemnity or artificial religiosity. The people are informal and no attempt is made to impose silence on them during the rituals. They become silent when they want to hear but feel no scruple about talking to friends or moving about in the crowd. Casual, yes, but play-acting, no. There is some important reality here which they, both jhānkrīs and villagers, are acknowledging in their actions, though their concepts and words may be inadequate to express it.

The underlying seriousness is emphasized by the guru's masterful speech and actions. He gives commands to the other jhānkrīs and attendants in an authoritative voice. He is severe in his facial expressions, decisive in his gestures. He is the master here; master of the disciple-son to whom he is imparting knowledge today, master of his fellow-villagers in so far as they decide to depend on him to mediate with the invisible world, master of those invisible powers that manifest their presence through his trembling body only at his bidding but come all unbidden into the lives of other men to upset their orderly course.

A Magical Battle

As these Tamang jhānkrīs and villagers set off now for Māndrā, we go further down the trail to the first resting-place (bisāunī) where an incident takes place in which a bumbā becomes the means of a Thami jhānkrī from Latu scoring a technical victory over Shetag Jirel. This incident, though painful for Shetag, will be useful for illuminating some aspects of the tradition of magical battles between jhānkrīs (which always end in the humiliation of one and the acknowledgement of the other as superior) as well as suggesting what might be the foundation in fact for such traditional accounts.

The resting-place lies about a half an hour's walk from Kalingchok and its māithān. A long stone bench is built into the side of the hill where travellers can sit and lay down their burdens. A few yards beyond it the trail forks, one branch leading into the Sun Kosi valley to the south-west, the other going north-west into the Bhote Kosi valley. The same Thami jhānkrīs from Latu are resting there at the bisāunī. In a few minutes the jhānkrī Shetag Jirel comes along from Kalingchok. Though last year he had circumambulated the summit of Kalingchok in the thick of the crowd today he did darśan at a quieter time, going up to the shrine itself only at the very end, between 9:30 and 9:45 A.M., after most people had already left for home. As Gore had been the first, Shetag was the last of the procession of jhānkrīs to worship Kalingchok Māi until the next festival.

Shetag continues walking along the trail, past the crowded resting-place area, and then returns in a moment. The Latu jhānkrīs pay him no attention. But after their rest, as they head down the trail towards the fork in an obvious hurry to return to their village, they suddenly stop in their tracks. At the fork and right in their path sits a small bumbā. Their fellow-villagers take up the song of "saio saio, saio le bumbā, saio saio" and the jhānkrīs begin beating their ḍhyāngros, but they are upset and angry. Even as they are engaged in doing reverence to the sacred vessel that stands between them and their village, the jhānkrīs demand to know who has placed it here. Though not a physical obstacle in any way (the path widens out at this point) it is impossible for them to move on until the jhānkrī who has put it there has removed it.

It is Shetag Jirel, of course, who has done this without their knowledge while they were resting. He comes forward to meet the Latu jhānkrīs. The drumming and singing and dancing go on while the eldest Thami jhānkrī speaks to Shetag with a show of friendliness and smooth respect, explaining their difficulty and requesting him to pick up his bumbā. The youngest Thami jhānkrī, however, does not try to conceal his annoyance. Shouting angrily to the crowd he asks who can pick up the bumbā. There is discussion now among the bystanders about the belief that only a jhānkrī who knows the kahiran (story, description) of the bumbā can pick it up; presumably only its owner knows its "story" and thus possesses the power to take it up again.

Shetag listens to both the old and the young Thami jhānkrīs but does nothing. The old man continues the approach of diplomacy, carrying on a whispered conversation with Shetag as they squat in front of the sacred vessel. But the younger Thami jhānkrī becomes more and more agitated. He takes his wooden ritual dagger (thurmī) from his belt and plunges it with a defiant gesture into the bumbā of the Jirel jhānkrī. Now the three Thami jhānkrīs join together in blaming Shetag for his action in delaying their journey. Shetag remains silent. No one seems to know why he has put his bumbā there in the path or why he does not remove it now. Did he do it to inconvenience them purposely, was he ignorant of the fact that it would block their way, had he done it with-

out reflecting on the consequences - none of the villagers there, either from Gorthali or from Latu, seems to know.

Finally, amid the continuing sounds of saio saio from the singers and the growing noise of the fairly large crowd which has gathered, the young Thami jhānkri asks again, rhetorically, who has the power to pick up the bumbā; he then bends down quickly and lifts it into the air. Raising it triumphantly he heads down the trail towards the Sun Kosi valley and home. Shetag stands looking slightly bewildered, but still saying nothing, as he sees his bumbā being carried away. Before turning to follow their companion the other two jhānkris tell Shetag to come with them and he will get his bumbā later. Shetag has clearly suffered a defeat at the hands of the younger man who in a daring gesture attempted to pick up the sacred vessel, and, by succeeding, has demonstrated his power while the Jirel jhānkri owner stood by, helplessly unable to prevent it. But more humiliations are to follow.

The travellers on the trail soon sort themselves out into two groups. The two older Thami jhānkris, along with most of their own villagers from Latu, and the Gorthali people overtake and pass the bumbā-bearing jhānkri and a few of his friends. Shetag follows behind him. The jhānkri with the bumbā keeps up a steady monologue in which he rehearses again and again the incident near the bisāunī, emphasizing the foolishness of Shetag to place the vessel there and his own exploit of picking it up. Shetag, he says, does not even know the kahiran for his own bumbā. Defending himself for taking possession of something that is not his, the Thami boasts to those with him that the bumbā belongs to him now because he had the power to take it and he knows the kahiran for it. His friends nod reassuringly. At one point on the trail he stops to chant the praises of this bumbā, holding it in front of him in both hands and singing about its place of origin as being either from the heavens above or from the underworld below. This, perhaps, is a sample of the kahiran. Whenever he speaks to Shetag it is with a tone of superiority; at one place, about twenty minutes from the fork, he halts and turns to shout at him angrily, calling the Jirel abusive names. After this outburst Shetag goes ahead of him on the path, evidently giving up hope of getting back his bumba in these circumstances.

The Thami jhānkri is now accompanied by only three or four supporters. He stops every few feet and turns to them with the same little speech each time in which he defends his own actions and condemns Shetag. Each time the people express their agreement. These delays may indicate that by this time the jhānkri is feeling less sure of himself than when at the height of the excitement he had snatched the bumbā from the ground and held it aloft in triumph. He may be uncertain of what the outcome of his impulsive action will be and is stalling for time. For it is clear that the incident will enter a new stage when he has reached the next resting-place where the Latu and Gorthali people are waiting for him along with their jhānkris, including the injured Shetag.



28. Shetag Jirel with Thakurlal behind him.



29. The Thami jhāṅkrī from Latu lecturing Shetag Jirel.

These villagers waiting at the bisāunī are interested in the dispute that has broken out between their respective jhānkrīs and curious to see the confrontation that they expect will take place here in a few minutes. But their emotions do not appear to be aroused nor do I see signs of friction between the two village groups. It is the jhānkrīs' quarrel not theirs. One of the Gorthali people admits to me that Shetag had made a mistake by putting the bumbā in the path. Others tell me that Shetag will get his bumbā back only if and when he makes ritual food and drink offerings (sagun) to the Thami jhānkrīs.

After some minutes the young Thami jhānkrī can be seen approaching the bisāunī where everyone, and especially Shetag, is expectantly looking for his dramatic entrance with the controversial bumbā in his hands. When he arrives the eldest Thami jhānkrī, who tried to settle the affair diplomatically with Shetag at the beginning, brings the two of them together. It is agreed that Shetag should offer sagun to his adversary; then he will receive his sacred vessel in return. Shetag gets together the following items as sagun and sets them on the ground in the pathway: a large cup of liquor, a dish of cooked potatoes (left over from the morning meal), some strips of tobacco extracted from his belt and a one rupee note. The eldest Latu jhānkrī then tells the other jhānkrī to hand back the bumbā which he is still clutching firmly. But he refuses to do so until Shetag joins his palms together in a gesture of respect and bows to him. This done to his satisfaction, the Thami jhānkrī places the bumbā on Shetag's head for a few seconds, then sets it down on the ground between them. Shetag presents him with the cup of raksī. The Thami drinks from it and hands it back to Shetag for him to drink; now they bow to each other.

The Thami jhānkrī seems to have forgotten all the abuse he directed towards the Jirel earlier and makes a great show of friendship. He is all smiles and yet this friendly attitude is really not one of equality but of condescending superiority. He has shown this superiority in the sight of all in the matter of the bumbā. Does he experience some feelings of relief too in having had the whole thing settled so promptly and, after gaining the upper hand in the affair, being rid of the vessel? Would he consider it really prudent to have another jhānkrī's bumbā in his possession for any length of time, without fear of magic retaliation?

On the other hand, Shetag's face shows what seems to be acute discomfort and embarrassment. I overhear him quietly telling one of the Gorthali people that it is because of this sort of thing that the jhānkrī Kancna Thapa did not attend the Kalingchok Jātrā from their village this year. Such a remark may indicate that today's happening is part of a larger dispute with antecedents stretching back into the past.

After the two disputants drink from the cup of liquor the other two Thami jhānkrīs drink. The food offerings are shared among the four of them. Then all four jhānkrīs take their drums in hand and tremble there together in some kind of unity among themselves and with the unseen powers that manifest their presence in the movement of the shaking



30. The Thami jhāpkri placing Shetag's bumba on his head before returning it.



31. The Thami jhānkri relishing his victory.

bodies. But it is not a unity of equality. Without benefit of any organization to set up a hierarchy among them, these jhānkrīs have arranged, at least momentarily, a kind of hierarchy of skill with unfortunate Shetag at the bottom.

We recall that those stories of jhānkrīs competing with each other for superiority always end in a stereotyped way: the vanquished jhānkrī bows to the victor, acknowledging him as superior with this sign of submission. Today's incident ends in the same way exactly. But where were the magical preliminaries? The only element that could be called a manifestation of magical powers, at least in the eyes of the participants and observers, would be the Thami jhānkrī's ability to pick up the Jirel jhānkrī's bumbā at all. It is possible or even likely, is it not, that when the story of today's encounter at the crossroads is told and retold in the villages, beginning with this very evening, it will be embellished with magical details. Exploding ḍhyāngros or even flying bumbās could find a place in the account. Or it may be that today's drama, after a short notoriety, will sink into the general tradition, losing its specific details. It would be interesting to ask the Latu and Gorthali villagers to recall the story after a few years and to see if it has expanded with imaginative detail or been contracted into the stereotype of the general tradition or remembered at all with any degree of accuracy.

Let us note too that the legendary conflicts usually do not take place on the summit of Kalingchok itself, near the māithān, where the jhānkrīs meet each other in a context of worship. It is later, when people have eaten and drunk (especially) and are on their way home that struggles for superiority are engaged. So say the story-tellers and so it is today. It is possible that similar scenes are being enacted on other of the many trails leading from Kalingchok to the villages north, east and south.

In this matter then, I propose that today's two incidents of the Māndrā Tamang jhānkrīs' putative battle and the Thami-Jirel jhānkrīs real conflict can serve as examples of the kind of incidents which lie behind the strong tradition that exists of magical duels between jhānkrīs at the Janai Pūrṇimā festival on Kalingchok. This is because, firstly, the scene of the Tamang guru-jhānkrī from Māndrā shouting aggressively at his disciple-son was actually interpreted by the man from Gorthali as a jhānkrī battle in progress and secondly, the conflict between the Thami jhānkrī and Shetag Jirel over the bumbā lacks only the magical details to make it fit the traditional description.

The End for Another Year

Today's events on Kalingchok, in their concreteness whose significance I have tried to grasp and suggest, are over now. The pilgrimage-festival (jātrā) is ending as the groups move on to their villages. Their singing can be heard far into the distance. They may not meet again until the moon's revolutions once more magnetize this uninhabited range,

drawing them and hundreds of earnest pilgrims back to Kalingchok Māī, the Mother Goddess who is eldest sister to their other shrines and before whom the trembling, dancing, drumming jhāṅkrīs come with their offerings of blood to beg for an increase of power.²¹

Footnotes

1. These powers can be and usually are called "spirits" in English but I think "invisible powers" corresponds more closely to the sense of the Nepalese term deutā: something whose existence and presence is postulated by its powerful effects but about which little else is really known because it is unseen.
2. The people's need for recreation and entertainment and change of scene is being met by today's festival but, pointing to the difficulties involved, pilgrims tell me that this pleasure-aspect is secondary at the Kalingchok Jātrā. Informants contrast the festival here today with the one held at Sun Kosi village in Maṅgsīr (November-December), saying that people go to the latter festival primarily in search of a good time.
3. This festival of Sāun Pūrṇimā (often referred to as Bhadau Pūrṇimā since it frequently falls in the solar month of Bhadau or Bhādra) is a complex religious phenomenon, indicated by its several names: Janai Pūrṇimā, when the thread-wearing higher castes change their janai (sacred thread); the day of Rakṣa Bandhan, when protective string-amulets are tied on the wrists of all castes; Ṛṣi-tarpaṇī meaning the day water offerings are made in honour of the ancient holy men (ṛṣi). There is a festival at Gosāīn-kuṇḍa on this day as well. See Macdonald, Essays, pp. 297-308, concerning this festival. My informants from Dolakha District have never spoken of a desire to travel to Gosāīn-kuṇḍa; Kalingchok seems to be enough for them. Deoḍhuṅgā, in the northern part of Dolakha District near the Tibetan border, is another scene of a jātrā today. It is also on the occasion of Janai Pūrṇimā that jhāṅkrīs perform a gurupūjā in honour of their protective deities. This festival of many names seems to have something for everyone.
4. More elaborate versions of the jhāṅkrī headdress include peacock feathers or porcupine quills attached to the headband.
5. I did not discover the relationship existing between these two men except that they are from neighbouring villages.
6. The handles of these drums are always carved. Another essential item in the gear of a jhāṅkrī is the wooden ritual dagger (thurmī or, sometimes, thurpi; Tamang: phurba) with the same shape and similar carvings as the drum handle. This dagger is kept tucked inside the jhāṅkrī's waistband and during healing sessions and other ceremonies, it is stuck into a container of unhusked rice

(dhān). I do not know the reason for the insistence on unhusked rice unless it is to insure that the grains are whole and unbroken and thus holy.

7. When I inquired about the meaning of saio saio some people there on Kalingchok translated it for me by the Nepali imperative nāca, nāca (dance, dance), although a connection with the Tibetan zer (say, speak) seems possible. The word bombā in the chorus was sometimes pronounced as bumbā and, more rarely, banabā or bombo, the Tamang equivalent (probably from Tibetan bon-po) for the Nepali term jhānkri.
8. It might be wondered how pilgrims reached the summit before the Rana government spanned the chasm with this bridge. In fact, there is another path leading to the top from the east which can be reached even by pilgrims coming from the west if they make a short detour below the trail, thus avoiding the chasm. On two previous visits to Kalingchok (not at the festival time) I was told by the few people who turned up there for worship that it was obligatory to ascend to the peak from the west over the bridge and to descend from the east by the path. However no one observed this rule of traffic on Janai Pūrṇimā. An hour's walk to the south-west of Kalingchok is another, lower peak named Ganesh Thumko where, according to a Chetri informant, the māithān had first been located. He did not know when or why it had shifted.
9. The water in the Bhagawatī Kuṇḍa is explained in various ways. Many of the pilgrims believe that the water has come there miraculously and, for them, the presence of water on top of the mountain is a motive for belief in the presence of invisible powers (deutā). But others say that the water is brought as offerings by pilgrims or comes from the rainfall. During the Kalingchok Jātrā I observed people adding milk to the liquid in the pond. One person proposed to me that there is an underground source for the stagnant, milky water. Macdonald writes of the worshippers here offering rice "to the thān of the goddess, a black stone oozing moisture, half-imbedded in the earth." "The Janaipurnimā," in Essays, p. 301. He also observed that at a well-attended jātrā in Yol-mo (Helambu) in December 1961 the Tamang and Sherpa pilgrims worshipped a black stone sweating with moisture, which led him to reflect that "for the moment, I think that what constitutes the essence of a holy place is a dark stone out of which water comes." "The Tamang as Seen by One of Themselves," Essays, pp. 151-152. However the water comes to this pond on Kalingchok there exists a widespread conviction that it never dries up. But people who live in the nearer villages, such as Dumkot or Tārebhīr, have seen, as I did in January 1975, that at times the kuṇḍa is empty and the black stone (the back wall) is moistureless. A jhānkri of Dumkot accused Sherpas of emptying it out in order to get the coins thrown there as offerings by the pilgrims.

10. The mobility of many of the young men of the district, with their travels to India and Kathmandu for temporary employment, provides them with opportunities to meet gurus of their own tribe or of other tribes and castes.
11. Writing of the Nuer in Africa, E.E. Evans-Pritchard expresses some of the complex paradox of sacrifice when he reminds his readers that "we have, nevertheless, to bear in mind that the purpose of Nuer piacular sacrifices is to establish communication with God rather in order to keep him away or get rid of him than to establish a union or fellowship with him. ... Sacrifice is made to persuade him to turn away from men and not to trouble them any more. It is made to separate God and man, not to unite them. They are already in contact in the sickness or other trouble. The sacrifice is intended to rid the sufferer of the spiritual influence whose activity is apparent in the sickness." Nuer Religion (London, 1956), p. 275. And "Nuer, like other people, want it both ways. They want God to be near at hand, for his presence aids them, and they want him to be far away for it is dangerous to them." *Ibid.*, p. 177.
12. In this connection again Evans-Pritchard's observations on the worship of spirits among the Nuer come to mind, namely, that God "does not demand sacrifices of men and cause them ill if they are not made. The spirits do. They demand attention, and they are not to be satisfied with cucumbers. They require bloody offerings. And if they are not given animal sacrifices they seize their devotees and make them sick. Nuer, therefore, do not hesitate to bargain with these spirits, speaking through their mediums, in a downright way which astonished me. ... What do you require of us this year in sacrifice that we may not be troubled by you? The lower in the scale is the conception of spirit the more it is thought of as taking delight in what is offered." *Ibid.*, p. 283.
13. Alain Fournier writes of a certain Col. Dal Bahadur Karka in his paper on the Sunuwar people of Dolakha District, "Notes préliminaires sur des Populations Sunuwar dans L'Est du Nepal," in Anthropology of Nepal, ed. Haimendorf. He first states that "les Surel, qui furent dépossédés de leurs terres en 1918 par une famille Chetri, sont à présent des métayers." *Ibid.*, p. 63. Then he explains that "après avoir dépossédé les cinq mukhiyā de Suri de leur kipat, en leur faisant signer une procuration où ils renoncèrent a tous leurs droits, le Colonel Dal Bahadur Karka reçut en 1918, le kipat de Suri sous forme de birta, du gouvernement Rana, pour le récompenser de ses brillants services." *Ibid.*, p. 78. The date on the bell, 1966 B.S., is equivalent to A.D. 1909. If this is the same Col. Dal Bahadur his generosity to Kalingchok Māi was well-rewarded nine years later.

14. Such a kinship grouping has its counterparts elsewhere to the north. Rene de Nebesky-Wojkowitz reminds us that "when describing various groups of early Tibetan deities we observed frequently that many of these form so-called 'brotherhoods' and 'sisterhoods', comprising mostly thirteen, seven, and especially nine members. Such characteristic classifications of divine beings are, however, also found in the mythology of many shamanistic peoples." Oracles and Demons of Tibet (London, 1956), p. 538.
15. In the course of our conversation he put it this way: it is not allowed to take out the deutā, or, to cause the deutā to come out (deutā nikālnu hundaina) - an expression which highlights the aspect of control which the jhāṅkrī exercises over the deutā. To quote Lewis again, "we are perfectly justified in applying the term shaman to mean, as Raymond Firth (Firth, 1959, pp. 129-48) rightly stresses, a 'master of spirits', with the implication that this inspired priest incarnates spirits, becoming possessed voluntarily in controlled circumstances." Ecstatic Religion, p. 56.
16. Bedh Prakash Upreti, a Nepali anthropologist who is keenly aware of the changes going on in his country, especially in the region of his birth in far-eastern Nepal, when commenting on the accelerating adoption of high-caste Hindu values by older Limbus especially, gives as his opinion that "this is due to the post-1950 emergence of Nepal as a distinct national entity politically and socio-culturally. The need to define distinct national values as expressed in dress, language, food, among other manifestations, was felt because of Nepal's desire to withdraw from Indian political hegemony. Furthermore, the government declaration that Nepal is the only Hindu state in the world (see Constitution of Nepal, 1962) compelled the policy makers, deliberately or not, to define these values in relation to Hindu ideals. So the values expressed in the definition of Nepal as a distinct sovereign state are primarily high caste Hindu values." "Limbus Today: Process and Problems," Contributions to Nepalese Studies 3, No.2 (September 1976): 65.
17. V.W. Turner offers "two major 'models' for human inter-relatedness, juxtaposed and alternating. The first is of society as a structured, differentiated, and often hierarchical system of politico-legal-economic positions with many types of evaluation, separating men in terms of 'more' or 'less'. The second, which emerges recognizably in the liminal period, is of society as an unstructured or rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated comitatus, community, or even communion of equal individuals who submit together to the general authority of the ritual elders. I prefer the Latin term 'communitas' to 'community,' to distinguish this modality of social relationship from an 'area of common living.' The distinction between structure and communitas is not simply the familiar one between 'secular' and sacred,' or that, for example, between politics and religion. ... It is rather a matter of giving recog-

dition to an essential and generic human bond, without which there could be no society." The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure (London, 1969), pp. 97-97. I suggest that on Kalingchok, we are closer to the model of "communitas" than structure.

18. I observed the same phenomenon at the Kumbheśwar Mela in Patan during the Janai Pūrnimā festival in 2031 B.S. (1974): even when groups of jhānkrīs came face to face within the crowded temple compound, they did not so much as look at one another.
19. Is this any more than "a moment in time"? Perhaps not. Certainly more information would be required about all the parties involved to draw any solid conclusions but I include the incident here because it is a moment in time and happened the way it did.
20. A ceremony interestingly similar to the one we have just walked into here is described by Nebesky-Wojkowitz who writes that "a peculiar group of Tibetan mediums are the male 'Pawo' (dpa' bo) and the female 'Nyenjomo' (bsnyen jo mo), to be found mainly in the Chumbi Valley, in Sikkim, and in Bhutan. They are laymen and laywomen who, though not connected with the few Bon monasteries existing in the first-mentioned area, are regarded by the Buddhists as typical representatives of the Bon creed. Actually, they seem to be a remnant of the earliest, unorganized Bon as it existed before the so-called 'white Bon' (Bon dkar) had developed after the example of Buddhism. The dpa' bo and bsnyen jo mo are believed to be sorcerers and sorceresses who become possessed by the spirits of the dead, and who are able to communicate, while in the trance, with their own protective deities. Their main task is to perform divinations and to cure illnesses. ... After the period of instruction has been successfully completed, the new dpa' bo or bsnyen jo mo will have to perform a so-called Bon khru gsol, which is carried out in the following way: a few flowers and officinal herbs are laid in a small bumpa which is then filled with ordinary water. The bumpa is wrapped in a white ceremonial scarf, and strings of white wool are tied around its mouth. The novice has to place this vessel on the palm of the left hand, and while whirling a small sand-glass shaped drum with his right hand, he invokes all the bon skyong requesting them to descend upon the bumpa. After a while the vessel is supposed to start shaking, the indication that the multitude of the bon skyong has arrived. The ceremony ends by pouring some of the water contained in the bumpa on the head of the newly initiated, and subsequently also on the heads of all those present. Some people drink this water, or they wash their eyes with it, since it is supposed to have turned in the course of the ceremony into an efficacious medicine." Oracles and Demons, pp. 425-426.

21. Although this time of the full moon of Sāun sees the largest number of jhāṅkrīs at Kalingchok there are other festivals here besides. Some jhāṅkrīs celebrate Kāgaṣṭamī in the following month of Bhādra (August-September) by going to Kalingchok; a Thami jhāṅkrī who attended in 1974 said that there were ten or twelve jhāṅkrīs there at that time. He made the pilgrimage to the māīthān then rather than on Janai Pūrṇimā in order to avoid the large crowds. Another festival in which jhāṅkrīs take part is held on the occasion of the full moon of Kārtik (October-November) following the celebration of Tihār. The full moon of Jeṭṭ (May-June) is also the occasion for a small-scale jātrā. Villagers come at any time, even when the last hour's ascent is through snow as in January 1975, in order to have darśan of Kalingchok Māī and accompany their requests for health, prosperity and success in all their undertakings with offerings at her shrine.

NARIS AND JHĀNKRĪ DURING DEVIKOT JĀTRĀ

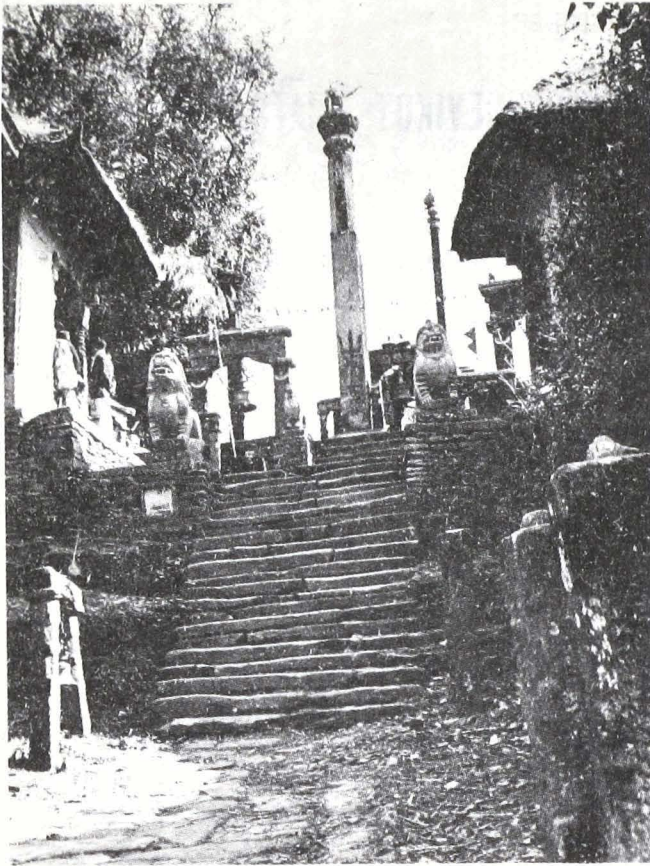
Naris: Choice of the Goddess

Another festival, the Devikot Jātrā in Dolakha, will be the occasion now in this chapter for expanding the concept of a "jhānkrī" in several different directions, because of the Thamis who take part in it. I first learned of the Thamis' special function at the festival almost by chance on a visit to the temple of Bhīmsen in Dolakha on 24 October 1974 (8 Kartik 2031 B.S.).¹ The large compound of Bhīmsenthān was crowded with Newar worshippers (the non-Newars of the surrounding area had come the previous day) bringing male goats (boko) for sacrifice on this the ninth day, Nawamī, of the Dasain festival.² A young man leaving the shrine area remarked that on the next day, Daśamī, in the morning, two men would drink the blood of a buffalo, not here at Bhīmsenthān but at Devikot, the shrine of Tripura-Sundarī standing fortress-like about 300 yards to the north and at a lower level of the spur on which Dolakha is built.³ Who are these two men, I inquired. He only replied vaguely that they were like Brahmins. Another man added that they are of the Thami tribe and live in the village of Dumkot four hours walk north of Dolakha; they come each year in the evening of Nawamī and camp here in front of Bhīmsenthān.

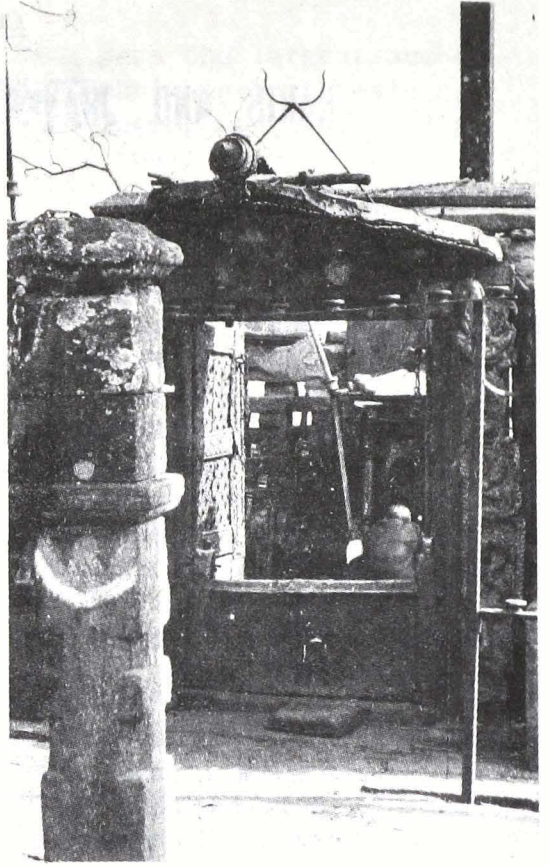
I made plans to return to Bhīmsenthān in the morning. My Chetri host in the village of Phulbarī, an hour away to the south of Dolakha, tried to dissuade me for, though he too had heard of such a ritual, he assured me that it was performed secretly and it would be useless to attempt to witness it. Fortunately he was mistaken and I found myself one of hundreds of people who flock to the courtyard of Devikot to see this rite. I will now describe that scene, drawing on what I observed on Daśamī of 1974 and 1975 and what I learned during three short visits to the village of Dumkot.

On approaching Bhīmsenthān on the morning of Daśamī I see a straw shelter, not there the previous day, set up to the west of the steps leading to the temple entrance. About thirty poorly-dressed men (and a few women) sit crowded together under the shelter. Their features, with wide-set eyes and broad noses and prominent ears, mark them as non-Newar visitors to this all-Newar town. An older man among them identifies the group as he invites me to join them: we are Thamis from Dumkot. He immediately adds without prompting: today two of us will drink blood.

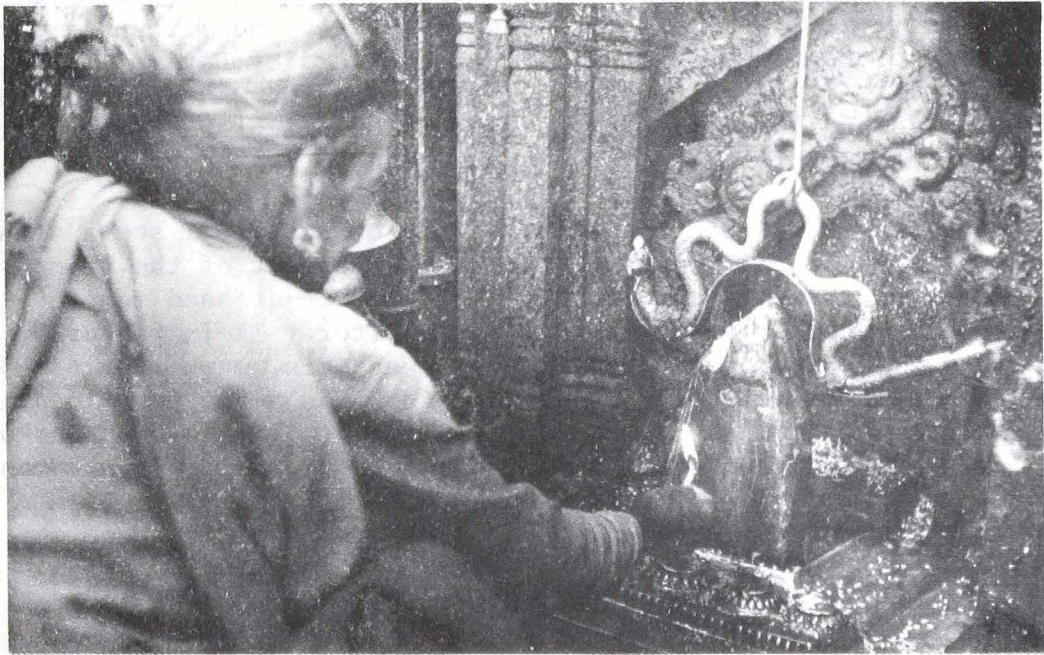
I learn that these two are called nari in the Thami language and are referred to as hipathāmi in the Dolakhali dialect spoken by the Newars here.⁴ There are two pairs of these naris and they alternate each year in performing the ceremony at Devikot. They remain naris until their death. Since last year's Devikot Jātrā it so happens that two of the naris have died, one from each pair, and have been replaced already. For this morning's ritual, therefore, one of the pair of naris is experienced and the other is new. The same will be true in the following year when the other pair takes its turn.



32. Entrance to Bhīmsenthān.



33. Looking into the shrine of Bhīmeśwar with the culkāpsi behind it.



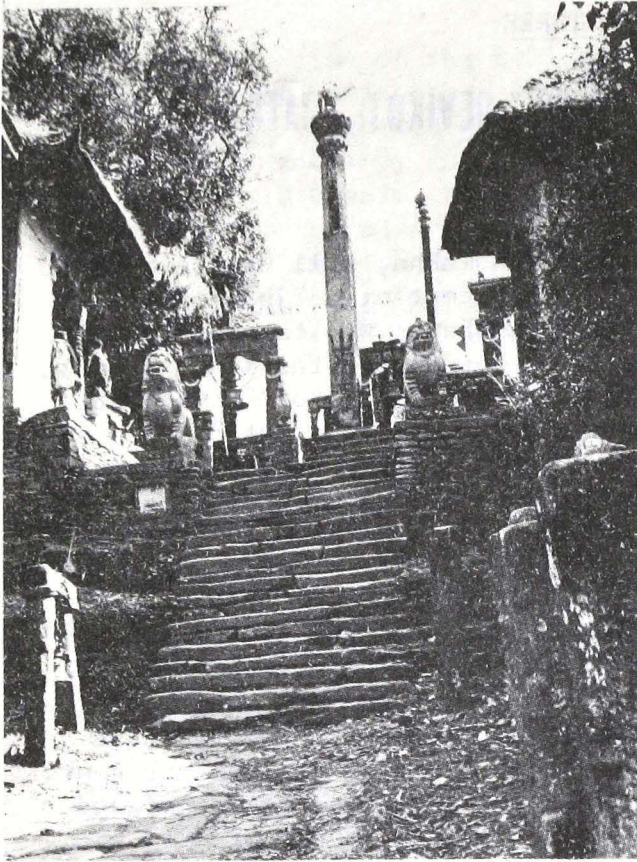
34. The stone lingam struck by the angry porter.

How are the new ones chosen? The goddess Tripura-Sundarī, whom the Thamis usually refer to simply as Devi or Mahārānī, does the choosing. A few days after the death of a nari she moves (sarnu) into the new man of her choice. This is manifested by a state of trembling in the chosen one. Tripura-Sundarī is completely free in her choice, the Thamis insist, and theoretically at least can move into any male Thami she wishes although it is normally expected that the new man will be a son of the deceased nari. But this expectation was not realized with exactness in the case of either of the two new naris: one of them, whose name is Ratna Bir, is a nephew of a deceased nari and the other, named Ratna Bahadur but nicknamed Phalame (the iron one) because of his dark skin, is a grandson of a former nari. Phalame's father is still living but was passed over by the Mahārānī because he is sickly and partially crippled with paralysis in one arm; such is the explanation given by Phalame's grandmother, the widow of the previous nari, as to why it was her eighteen-year old grandson and not her son who was chosen. She does not conceal her disappointment that her son was overlooked by the Mahārānī as a successor to her husband.

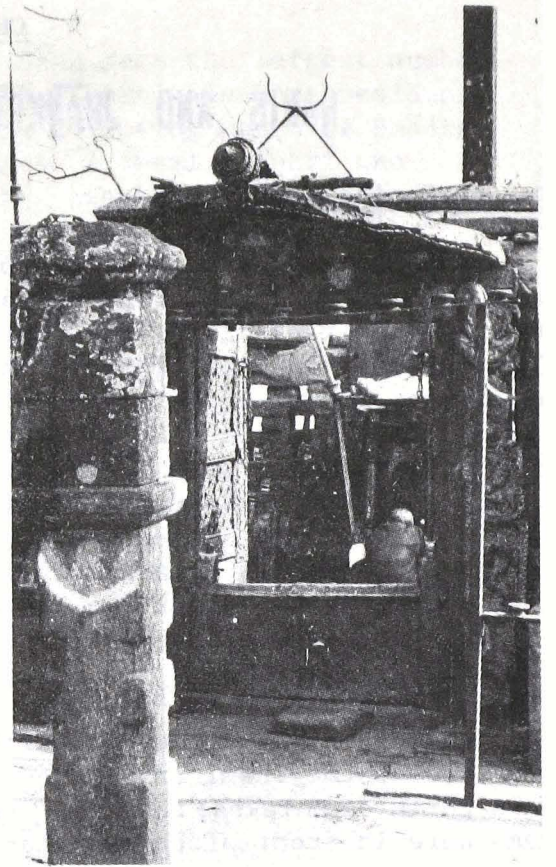
That Tripura-Sundarī demands ritual purity as well as bodily integrity when she makes her selection of a new nari is illustrated in the story of her choice of the other young man Ratna Bir. Ratna Bir's father, Buddhiman, describes his son's choice in the following way. My father, says Buddhiman, was a nari in his time and after his death the Devi moved into my younger brother who served as nari until his death five months ago in the month of Jeth (May-June). My brother has a son of his own, a boy of fourteen. As we were carrying the dead body of my brother the nari to the hill top to burn it according to our death rites (Thami: mampra), the Goddess first moved into his son, my nephew. This boy began to shake (kamnu) and to shout, "I do not eat defiled (jutho) food and the meat of a bull." Then the Goddess moved from this boy into my son Ratna Bir; she caught his head and made him shake. From that time on my son shook whenever he started to do any work, whether morning, noon or night. He is twenty-eight and the only son of my senior wife. I have another son by the junior wife. My son Ratna Bir considers it an honour to be a nari and is pleased that the Goddess moved into him.

The expression used by Ratna Bir's father is a graphic one: the Goddess grabbed hold of his son's head (śir samāunu) after her rejection of the younger boy. Clearly the Mahārānī and her demands cannot be treated lightly. The very title itself, Mahārānī, suggests an imperiousness in her dealings with others.

Ratna Bir's partner is a middle-aged man named Man Bahadur who has the title of mūl-nari (chief nari) inherited from his predecessor (an elder half-brother) and making him priest of a cave-shrine in the village, a function that will be described in the next chapter. Phalame's partner is Sukh Bahadur, a well-built man in his thirties.



32. Entrance to Bhīmsenthān.



33. Looking into the shrine of Bhīmeśwar with the culkāpsi behind it.



34. The stone lingam struck by the angry porter.

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35. The fort-like temple of Devikot.



36. Lal Bahadur Thami with naris Ratna Bahadur and Sukh Bahadur.



37. The nari Ratna Bir with the jhānkri guru Harkha Bahadur.

It is nearly 10:00 A.M. and the mūl-nari Man Bahadur and Ratna Bir sit together silently in the shelter. They are trembling slightly. Sukh Bahadur and Phalame, the two naris whose turn is today, rejoin the group now after a walk to the bazaar; they take their places to the right of the other pair. After sitting down, they too begin to tremble. At this point they differ from the former pair only in that they have had their heads shaved, except for the tuft (ṭupī) at the crown, in preparation for their function this morning at Devikot.

Jhāṅkrīs: Gurus of the Naris

What other preparations have the naris had for their difficult task? After being chosen by Tripura-Sundarī, they have been instructed by two jhāṅkrīs. Their immediate preparation is also in the hands of these same jhāṅkrīs who now sit opposite them. The older of their two jhāṅkrī gurus is Harkha Bahadur, whose name has come up already in the description of Kalingchok Jātrā. The other is a middle-aged man named Chuinquin and nicknamed Selange because his grandfather had lived in Shillong in Assam. In each of my visits to Dumkot I attempted to learn more about these two jhāṅkrīs who besides their ordinary work of healing are the gurus of the naris. The results are meagre but still of some significance. What seems especially worth noting in the context of the question of hierarchical organization among jhāṅkrīs is that Harkha Bahadur is always identified by Thami informants, including the mūl-nari Man Bahadur and the other guru Chuinquin as well, as being the first in rank of the two gurus. They are both gurus in regard to the naris and yet Harkha Bahadur is first.

Man Bahadur emphasizes that Harkha must remain with the four naris during the days that they are at Dolakha each year at the close of the Daśain festival. Harkha teaches us trembling (kāmne) and knowledge (gyān-buddhī), Man Bahadur says in a statement that strikes me as unusual, putting as it does the teaching of a bodily state of trembling on the same level as the teaching of the chants that embody the esoteric knowledge.

Chuinquin too instructs the naris and claims a share in the preparation of Ratna Bir for the following year's ceremony but he readily acknowledges that Harkha ranks above him as guru to the naris. In fact, Chuinquin says, Harkha has precedence over all the jhāṅkrīs of Dumkot. He makes some quick calculations and then says that in their village area there are altogether seven jhāṅkrī gurus, meaning trained jhāṅkrīs who take disciples, and all seven of them must show respect (mānnu) to Harkha Bahadur, the guru of the naris. I translate "mānnu" as "show respect", realizing that it can have the stronger meaning of "obey" but, without evidence or concrete examples of what form the relationship of the seven jhāṅkrīs to Harkha actually takes, the broader and milder expression seems preferable.

Do we have here a case of a stable hierarchical ranking among jhāṅkrī gurus besides the ordinary superior-inferior relationship that

prevails between a master and his own disciples? Clearly more information would be required before a definite answer could be given. At least one man, Lal Bahadur (the intelligent and literate elder brother of Man Bahadur), attributes this superior status of Harkha to the fact of his age. Harkha is the oldest jhāṅkrī in the community of Thamīs in Dumkot and therefore first, he says. In later sections we shall have the opportunity to observe Harkha and Chuinčin in action and thus learn more about them and their role as jhāṅkrī gurus to the four naris.

It should be pointed out here that, along with statements about the jhāṅkrīs as being gurus to the naris, there co-exists the strong conviction that really the naris have no guru, at least no human ones. Tripura-Sundarī is the real guru. Just as it is she, the Mahārānī, who makes the selection of the naris, so too it is she who is ultimately responsible for their instruction. For example, Chuinčin finds no difficulty in saying that the naris have no guru except the Devī herself and then following up this statement with remarks about Harkha's role as guru. In the same way, with Chuinčin there present, his friends and neighbours name Chuinčin as being a teacher of the nari, along with Harkha and in subordination to him (though not his disciple), and Chuinčin gives his assent to such statements; they then go on to assert without hint of contradiction that the Mahārānī of Devikot, and even her brother Bhīmeśwar, teaches the new nari everything he has to do. It seems that the human gurus, Harkha and Chuinčin, can be of help in the time of remote and proximate preparation for the blood-drinking ceremony, but in the moment itself it is really the Mahārānī who takes over. For in the Thamīs' view of the matter (the Newars see it in a different way) the naris do not actually drink the blood of the still-living buffalo at Devikot: the Mahārānī does.

Mental Framework of the Sacrifice: Newar and Thami

The Newars of Dolakha, for whose benefit the Thami naris come each year to play their part in the rituals at Devikot, see the blood-drinking ceremony as a representation of a familiar legend. In this legend Bhagawatī goes about the world ridding it of evil in the form of all the wicked giants (rākṣas). But she eventually encounters a terrible demon called Raktabīr (blood-hero or blood-warrior) who has the ability to multiply itself many times in death. For whenever Bhagawatī slays a Raktabīr with her sword a new Raktabīr springs up from each drop of blood that strikes the ground. Thus the number of her foes only grows greater with each slaying. The attendant-servants (gaṇ) of Bhagawatī then come to her aid. These gaṇ are in fact the Thamīs in the Dolakhali version of the legend which I heard. The Thamīs of Bhagawatī's retinue begin drinking the blood of the slain Raktabīr before the drops can touch the ground. Thus Bhagawatī is able to complete her work and good triumphs over evil.

Such a legend might seem to put the Thamīs in a favourable light; after all, it is they who save the day for Bhagawatī as she faces an

ever-growing legion of these blood-warriors. But however heroic and necessary it may be, it is nevertheless a disgusting service that they perform for her, with the result that the Newars consider the Thami attendants in the legend and the real-life Thami naris of Dumkot as something less than human. From the viewpoint of the Newars, this drinking of demon-blood, represented by the buffalo, puts the Thamis in the category of demon themselves; no matter how noble their intentions, they are demons by association. So, although the Thamis are part of the legend and essential to the ceremony this morning, their role relegates them to a position far beneath the Newars of Dolakha.

The Thamis know quite well in what low opinion they are held by the Newars. It is a source of pain and indignation to them. The Thamis say with bitterness: the Newars call us betāl (demon, goblin, vampire). The guru Harkha Bahadur, when explaining why the naris' naked bodies are smeared with oil and marked all over with daubs of red powder by the Newars before the ceremony, complains: in this way they make the naris into blood-drinking demons. Harkha and the group of men with him go on to say that not only the naris but, by extension, all the Thamis are made into betāl, rākṣas, daitya. These words are synonymous for the Thamis and convey the meaning of non-human creatures, evil demons, wicked monsters.

It is obvious that the Thamis would not continue to cooperate in this unless they had a different explanation or understanding of what was happening at Devikot. Yes, we go to Devikot and drink the blood, the naris admit, but in truth it is the Mahārānī herself (khās Mahārānī) who drinks. She is behind us; that is why we keep our backs turned to her shrine when the blood is directed into our mouths there in her temple courtyard. The Mahārānī is behind us; she mounts and rides (caḍḥnu) all four of us and our guru Harkha Bahadur as well.⁵ We are not betāl; we are the thāpanā of the Mahārānī.

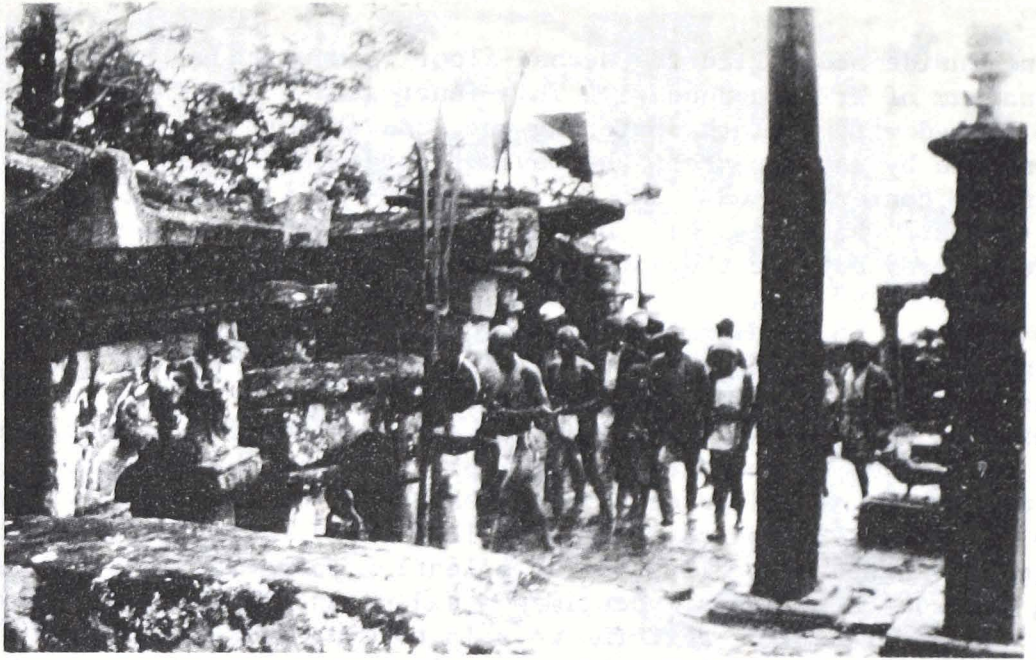
Their use of the word thāpanā presents a problem of translation into English. The noun has the meaning of setting up an image of a god or goddess, establishing or fixing in one place the presence of a god or goddess. Can it be said that the Thami naris understand their role as providing the goddess with a fixed and definite point of entry into this visible world by means of which she becomes visible in their trembling bodies for that moment and satisfies her desire for blood-pleasure? Admittedly this is a different conception from that expressed in the Newar understanding of the legend of Bhagawatī and Raktabīr. As I see it, it is a case of the invisible becoming visible in the Thami naris and their jhāṅkrī gurus; it is an application in a different area of the basic jhāṅkrī function of mediatorship between two worlds, one visible and controllable by men with ordinary knowledge and skills, the other invisible and uncontrollable except by men with extraordinary knowledge and skills, i.e., jhāṅkrīs. And this is why it is necessary to have a jhāṅkri as guru for these four men.

Preliminaries to the Sacrifices

Before discussing the contrasts between jhāṅkrī and nari and priest, let us simply see what they do now. The time is 10:00 A.M. and a Newar temple-attendant, slightly intoxicated, comes rushing into the Thamis' shelter, shouting roughly that they must hurry up and get ready. He reminds them that since one of this year's pair of naris is new he will not know what to do and so they must not waste any time in getting to Devikot. This Newar, a kasāī (butcher), is one of the two men whose task it is to slit the buffalo's throat and direct its blood into the mouths of the naris. Just then the sound of horns announces the approach of a small procession of men carrying a sacrificed goat from Bhīmsenthān and of other men behind them bearing baskets of marigolds and the small white flower called bukī phūl (*Anaphalis nubi-gena*). A Thami rushes out to them on the steps and brings back flowers which he sets in front of the naris. The four naris sitting in a row and their two jhāṅkrī gurus opposite them facing east take bunches of flowers in their right hands and begin to chant together, trembling all the while. Harkha Bahadur keeps the index finger of his right hand pointed at the circle of flowers on the ground between them all during the chanting which lasts for several minutes. When the chanting is finished, flowers are placed in the caps of the four naris and then they consume a small portion of semi-solid fermented grain from leaf-plates set before them.

The pair of naris for this year (1974; 2031 B.S.) begin undressing. Though still trembling slightly and remaining in a sitting position, they deftly remove all their clothing and change their old loin-cloths for new white ones in the process. The temple-attendant returns and resumes his rude shouting at them but they remain dignified and unhurried. The new nari for this year, Phalame, never speaks or asks questions. He watches the older man Sukh Bahadur and follows his lead. Dressed now only in loin-cloth, they tie an additional strip of white cotton around their waists. Another long strip of white cotton cloth is tied around their heads and hangs down their back; a bunch of the bukī phūl is inserted into this headband which serves to keep their long tupīs securely in place. They are ready now to leave the shelter.

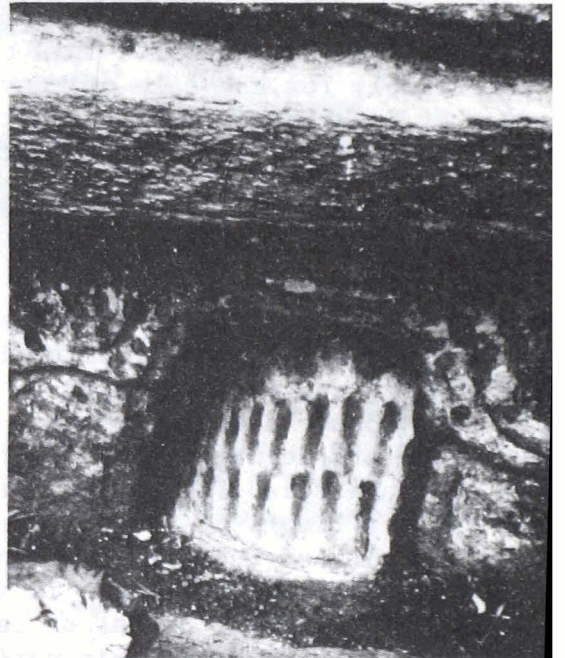
Up to this point the naris have been proceeding with their preparations without haste, in spite of the attendant's shouts, but once on their feet they move quickly. They rush up the steps to Bhīmsenthān and head for a tap at the west side of the temple compound where they take a quick water bath. Then with Sukh Bahadur leading the way, Ratna Bahadur and the other two naris plus the two jhāṅkrī gurus and fellow villagers circumambulate Bhīmeśwar's shrine and then hurry down the trail to Devikot, about three hundred yards to the north. Several hundred Dolakhalis follow behind the small group of Thamis and a large crowd of a hundred or more are already assembled in the courtyard of Devikot. The people are concentrated in the south-east corner where a little shrine of Ganesh is built into the wall and they throng the stone stairs leading up to the temple door on the first floor. Others



38. The naris circumambulate Bhimsenthān after bathing.



39. The curtain veiling the shrine of Tri



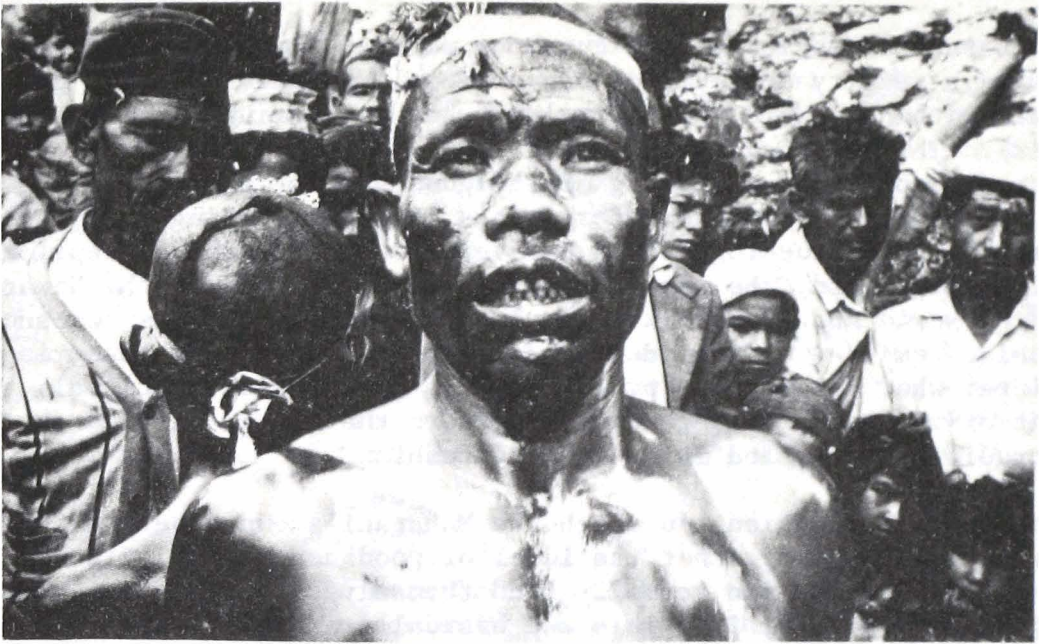
40. The shrine of Ganesh built into the

have gone inside and filled the second-floor room which adjoins the inner sanctum of Tripura-Sundarī. This inner shrine whose wooden door is veiled with a cloth depicting the Goddess astride a tiger is never entered by anyone except the Devikot priest. All other worshippers must be content to have darśan of Tripura-Sundarī through her pujārī (priest) who takes their offerings inside and then returns to give them prasād outside the door in the adjoining upper room.

As soon as the four naris reach Devikot they hurry up the stairs, accompanied by their jhāṅkrī gurus Harkha and Chuinchuin. The two naris for this year offer worship to the Goddess and then, after being rubbed all over with mustard oil, their chests and backs are daubed with red powder. The crowd on the stairs parts for them when they re-emerge twenty minutes later and go down to the shrine of Ganesh, a stone painted with alternate stripes of red and yellow. They face the stone with palms joined together and lips moving silently, sometimes kneeling and sitting back on their heels, sometimes standing and shaking, while the elderly pujārī of Devikot performs worship to Ganesh. Ganesh, whose name means "god of the gaṇ" and is also called Gaṇapati (Master of the gaṇ), is worshipped at the beginning of every religious ritual in Nepal not only because such is the privilege granted him by his father Śiva but also because he is the Master who can keep the potentially troublesome attendant-spirits (gaṇ) in control and prevent them from interfering with the successful performance of any ceremony. This worship of Ganesh seems especially appropriate now as the naris assume the role of the gaṇ of the Goddess.

Implications of the Sacrifice: Newar and Thami

A young male buffalo is brought through the tightly packed crowd to the area of the Ganesh shrine and the two naris turn their backs to Devikot to face the animal. This change of position is not arbitrary nor done simply for the sake of convenience. In the Thamis' understanding it is by this position that their naris express the offering of themselves to the Mahārānī for her to ride (caḍhnu). It is by riding the naris at this point that the Mahārānī will be in position to drink the blood about to be sprayed into the mouths of the naris. Now the naris become the thāpanā of the Goddess, as they understand it. In the Hindu story of Bhagawatī and Raktabīr, which they are going to see re-enacted now, the Newar spectators have a symbol of moral righteousness triumphing over irrational evil; but the non-Hindu tribal Thamis viewing and participating in the scene today contemplate rather an invisible power becoming visible in their midst and satisfying through them its desire for blood-offerings. They call it "Mahārānī" and no attempt is made to rationalize her appetite for blood; she has chosen the naris for this purpose because she wants it so. Because of this double view of the ceremony, and the double view of the world and reality which it implies, there is a doubling of religious specialists here as well: the Newar priest of Devikot on the one hand and the Thami team of jhāṅkrī gurus and their naris on the other. This provides the possibility of contrasting priest and jhāṅkrī (and even further, jhāṅkrī and nari) in an effort to see more precisely the characteristic jhāṅkrī role.



41. The naris Ratna Bahadur and Sukh Bahadur in trance.



42. A Thami bystander intently watches the new nari.

The first conception of the ceremony mirrors a view of existence that portrays reality in terms of conventional morality in which good (Bhagawatī with her sword and the help of her gaṇ) triumphs over evil (Raktabīr). This is the way the world should be but it does not account for the continued suffering of the good and for the unpredictability with which misfortune enters men's lives, reversing this orderly pattern of good crushing evil. However inadequate the conception may be in this regard, the ceremony exists as a reminder to the Newars of what the world should be like: regular and orderly. It is for such a ceremonial reminder of the ideal order that a priest's presence is appropriate: what the Devikot priest does is to oversee the ritual enactment of the symbolic legend, making sure that it is carried out in the traditional way and in an orderly fashion.

The second conception, in which the Mahārānī's own appetite for blood is satisfied, images not the ideal of good conquering evil but the situation in which men actually find themselves, a situation wherein, judging from events, invisible and basically amoral powers enter our visible world with a hunger for blood. These powers are neither good nor bad in themselves but they are bad for man if their appetites are not appeased with animal blood for then they are the cause of misfortunes of all kinds. This second conception is the area of the jhāṅkrī. Controlled contact with such invisible and amoral powers when they intrude into men's lives is the function peculiar to him, for it is through a jhāṅkrī that invisible powers can become visible, both by being named and by becoming sensible in his characteristic trembling; once externalised in this way their withdrawal can be bargained for and effected by blood-offerings. Jhāṅkrīs are present here at Devikot today because, as the Thamis see it, now is a time of controlled contact with an invisible, blood-desiring power. It is a jhāṅkrī that teaches the naris their trembling and knowledge, as Man Bahadur the mūl-nari had said. I understand this to mean that preparation by the jhāṅkrī gurus is necessary in order to make sure that the contact is a controlled one; Harkha Bahadur and Chuinquin share their expertise with the naris in order that the naris may survive this potentially dangerous contact during which the Mahārānī rides them and uses them as her thāpanā.

But if this be so, it can be asked why the jhāṅkrī gurus do not perform this ceremony themselves. Why do not Harkha and Chuinquin replace the naris; or conversely, why are not Sukh Bahadur, Phalame, Man Bahadur and Ratna Bir simply called jhāṅkrīs instead of naris? The answer to both questions is tied up with an aspect of Tripura-Sundarī that I call her exclusivity. But first of all, it should be stated clearly that the naris are not jhāṅkrīs, according to their own repeated testimony and that of others. In fact, they insist that as naris, they cannot be nor become jhāṅkrīs.

In answering these questions, I reason as follows. A jhāṅkrī, though having a special relationship to his tutelary deity or guru-deutā, is and must be open to the whole gamut of the invisible in his

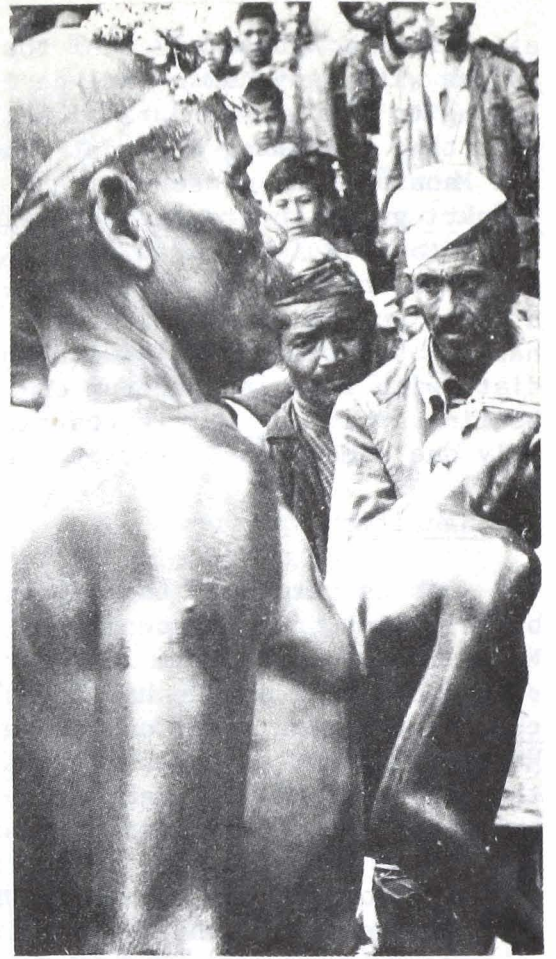
efforts to diagnose and heal the sick who are the victims of myriad forces with many names, all desiring blood-offerings. Naris, however, belong to Tripura-Sundarī alone; they do not and may not put themselves into that trembling but controlled contact with any other force except the Mahārānī who chose them and uses them. And though the naris need jhāṅkrī gurus to prepare them with techniques and chants, at the moment of contact it is Mahārānī herself who takes over even as guru. What I am proposing then as the fundamental difference between a jhāṅkrī and a nari, so fundamental that one cannot be the other, is that a jhāṅkrī has an open relationship with the invisible world; he is called to mediate with a whole spectrum of invisible powers, and with a view to healing, while a nari is restricted to an exclusive relationship to only one named power of that world, the Mahārānī Tripura-Sundarī.

The Sacrifice

Let us return to the description of the scene at Devikot. The buffalo lies on the ground quietly and without struggling. The two Newar men whose duty it is to cut its throat approach the Devikot priest and hold out to him the short straight knives (Dolakhali: cupica) that the kasāī caste use for killing and butchering animals. He first sprinkles the knives with red powder and then rubs some on the cheeks of the two men. They slit the skin of the still-quiet buffalo's throat and begin incising deeper with their knives while with their fingers they search for the main artery. The buffalo is groaning now and the two naris wait, their backs to Devikot, sitting on their heels in a half-crouching position.

A loud shout from the two Newars announces that they have found the vein for which they were searching. The naris lean forward; a stream of blood is directed into the mouth of Sukh Bahadur and then into the mouth of his partner, the new nari Phalame. The boy's first reaction is to retch but then he rises to his feet along with Sukh Bahadur. They rinse their mouths with water from a brass pot (karuwā), turn around once clockwise and kneel down again, sitting on their heels ready to drink again. They and all the people in the first row of the crowd pressing around them are splattered with blood.⁶ Once more they drink and this time Phalame is able to do it without gagging. They rise, rinse their mouths again, turn once and then drink for the third and last time.

During this time both naris have been trembling slightly and their eyes have a fixed stare. Later Phalame is to say that he has no remembrance at all of this his first experience at Devikot. To jump forward a year in our story, to the festival of 1975 (2032 B.S.), I would like to point out that everything again proceeds as just described (except for the fact that it is Man Bahadur and the other new nari Ratna Bir who drink the blood). But I am aware in 1975 that it is not only these two naris who tremble during the ceremony but that the other pair, dressed in ordinary clothes, and the two gurus Harkha and



43. The naris trembling and circling before the sacrifice. 44. The two kasai wait and watch.



45. After drinking the blood, Ratna Bahadur rinses.



46. The mūl-nari Man Bahadur and the new nari Ratna Bir.



47. The naris' jhānkri guru Harkha Bahadur going into t



48. Harkha Bahadur in trance and needing support.

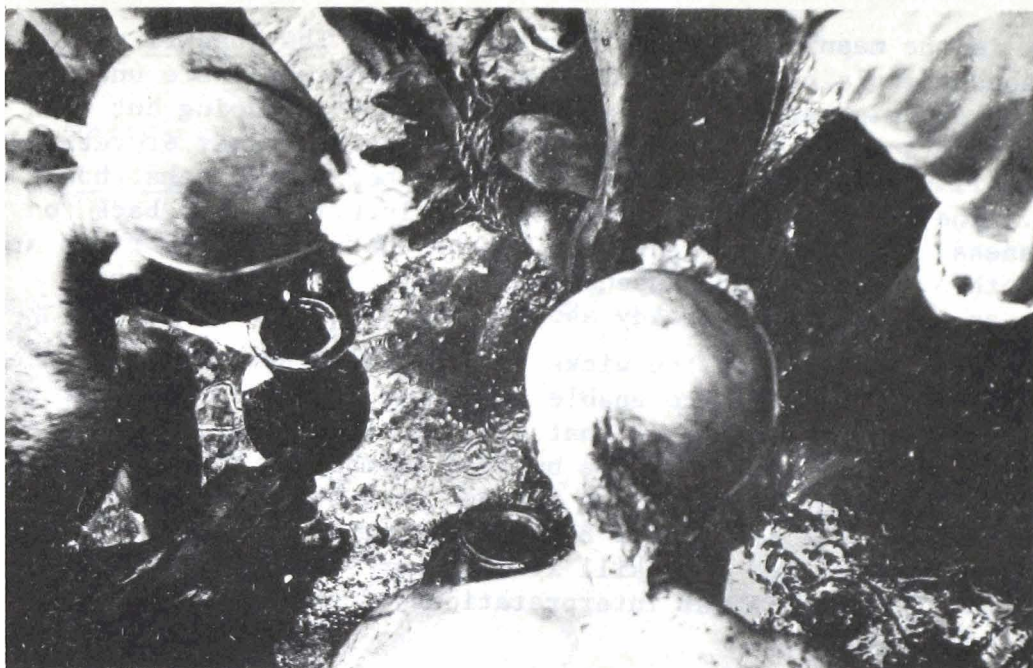
Chuinchuin also shake during the time they wait for the buffalo to be brought and while its blood is being shed. Harkha shakes so violently that he has to be supported by two men lest he fall. His trembling increases even more when the blood is directed by the two Newars in the mouths of his nari disciples. Though as a jhānkrī he is a "spirit-master", Harkha's condition seems to be saying that the Mahārānī is mastering him at least for these few minutes. Once the blood is drunk he shows himself again in control of his movements. A Dumkot Thami, looking over at Harkha, informs a Newar next to him: he is the guru.

According to the naris it is not only at this climactic ceremony at Devikot that the Mahārānī comes and mounts them as signified by the state of trembling. They have been experiencing this shaking throughout the previous night in their shelter. In fact, the Mahārānī has been coming to them in this way since the last new moon (auṅsī), early each morning when it is still dark, and so they have been waking up in a shaking state all during this lunar fortnight.

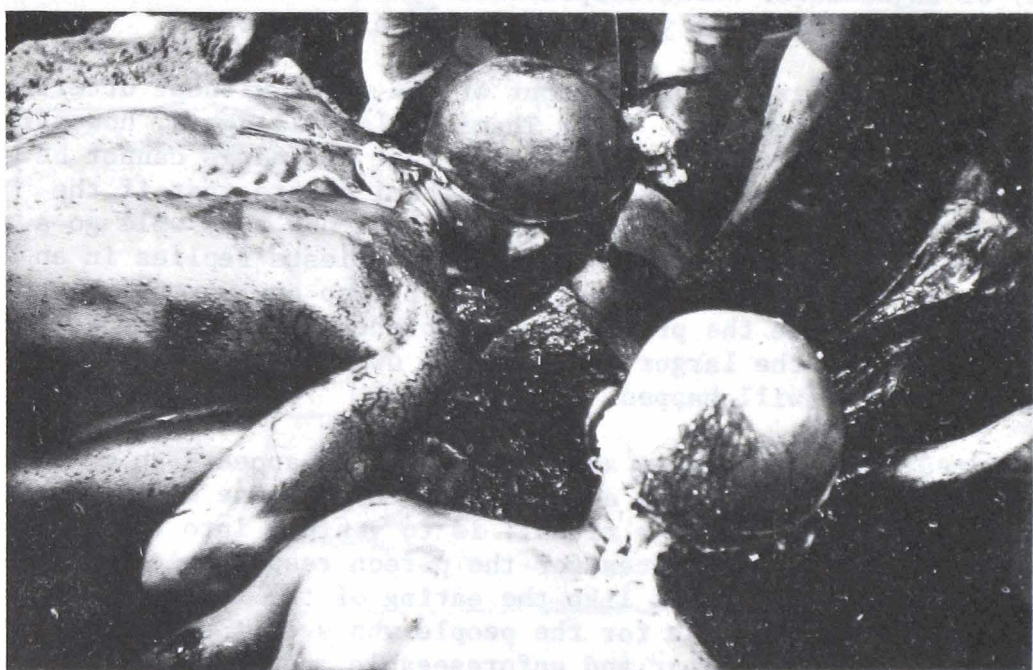
After the Sacrifice: Ritual at Rājkuḷeśwar

After drinking the third time, Sukh Bahadur and Phalame rise to their feet and move off quickly, not back up to Bhīmsenthān but toward the town by a different, lower path. The crowd surges behind them to witness the naris perform their concluding rituals at Rājkuḷeśwar and an adjoining courtyard. In a few seconds, they reach the oldest section (ṭol) of the town, Dungal Tol. When they come to a ruined temple of Nārāyaṇ, opposite the Dungal Tol Simbuthān built in the middle of the wide main path of the town, the naris turn for a moment and look back towards Devikot. Moving ahead they soon arrive at a temple of Paśupati in the centre of the path where they again stop and face in the direction of Devikot. A few more minutes of rapid walking brings them to the place called Rājkuḷeśwar.

Rājkuḷeśwar is a house-like temple to the east of the path and at a higher level with an open court in front which is reached by several stone steps. As an explanation of its name I was told that the kuḷāyan (lineage deity) of the former kings of Dolakha is kept here. The naris stop in front of the steps and face the building as two priests of Rājkuḷeśwar approach them with flaming wicks of white cloth, an inch wide and several inches long, in their hands. The priests place two wicks each into Sukh Bahadur and Phalame's outstretched palms. The naris set these burning wicks on the steps in front of them. Next the priests give each of them a wick which they throw over their left shoulders. Now for the third time the priests hold out to them flaming wicks and these the naris put, burning end first, into their mouths. The two men keep them in their mouths, letting the end hang down from their lips, until they have completed the next and final step in today's ritual, namely, the beating of a buffalo in a nearby courtyard.



49. The blood being sprayed into the mūl-nari's mouth.



50. The mūl-nari prepares to rinse his mouth.

What is the meaning of these burning wicks? The jhāṅkrī guru Harkha Bahadur explains that until this moment the naris are unaware of what is happening around them and of what they are doing but when the flame enters their mouths they return to their senses, or rather, in the Nepali phrase, their senses return to them (hos auncha, hos phircha). The fire does not burn them; it only brings them back to consciousness.⁷ The naris agree with Harkha that during the rites at Devikot nothing of all that happens leaves any impression on their memories, as was remarked already about the new nari Phalame.

Another explanation of the wicks is given by a Newar present there. He claims that the light is to enable the hipathāmi (Dolakhali for nari) to see an evil demon (rākṣas) so that they can then mark it with a sign (cinu). They do this by striking a buffalo (symbol of the demon) with their sticks a few minutes from now further down the path. This sign or mark on the buffalo is to help Bhagawatī, her eyes blinded by rage, to identify the demon and thus kill it with her sword. Again we see, comparing the Thami and Newar interpretations of the same event, two different understandings.

In 1975, a situation develops here at Rājkuḷeśwar which, though tense for all concerned, does serve to illustrate Harkha Bahadur's leadership. Jumping forward again one year: when the naris reach Rājkuḷeśwar to receive the burning wicks from the hands of the priests, they are told to wait. The priests explain that they cannot give them the wicks yet because two large pots (ghyāmpo), which they call Bhagawatī, are still sitting in front of the building. The naris must wait until Bhagawatī is carried from Rājkuḷeśwar to the courtyard area further down the path where the buffalo is tied. The old gūṭhiyār (trustee) of Rājkuḷeśwar whose responsibility it is to see that the pots are transported has not yet arrived from his house.

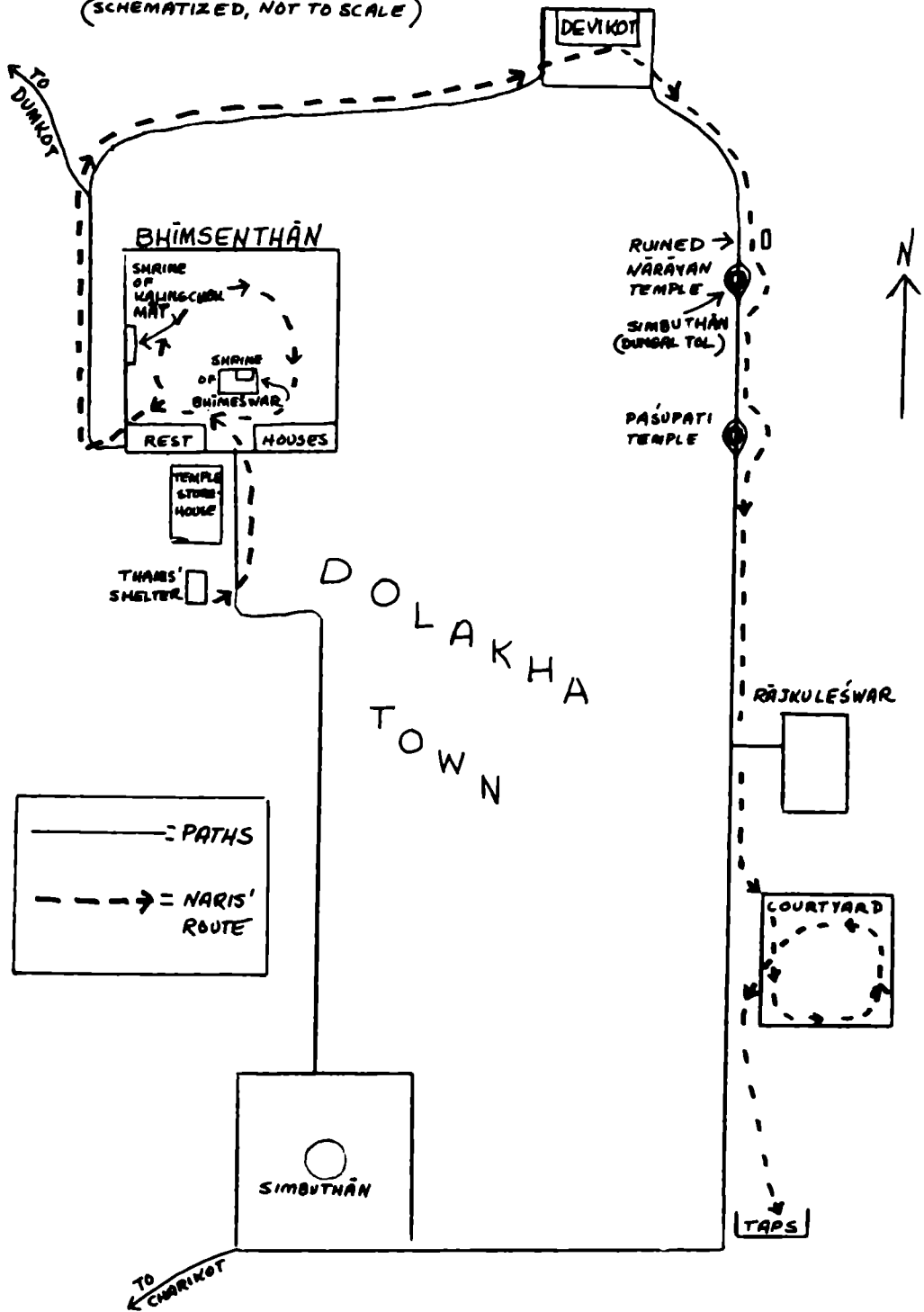
The naris stand trembling in front of the steps without uttering a word but looking exhausted. Their Thami fellow-villagers, however, react angrily: they protest to the priests that the naris cannot be kept waiting while in this state. A young Thami shouts that if the priests do not give the wicks to the naris right now they will go away without eating the light (battī). One of the priests replies in an angry voice: go away then, we do not care. But no one moves. In spite of his belligerent tone the priest seems apprehensive as he looks around at the Thamis and at the larger group of his own Newar people, all watching to see what will happen.

If indeed the priest is as apprehensive as he appears to me to be, I can understand why. To break a tradition, to omit one of the elements in the order of events within a ritual, is to venture into the unknown and may have serious consequences for the person responsible. Just as the source of a ritual element like the eating of the light is obscure and may have several meanings for the people who see it so too the result of omitting it is unclear and unforeseeable and, for that reason, partakes of the fearfulness of the unseeable world. I propose that there is a sense or an obscure fear that if the naris do not eat the

DIAGRAM 2.

DEVIKOT JĀTRĀ : THE NARI'S ROUTE

(SCHEMATIZED, NOT TO SCALE)



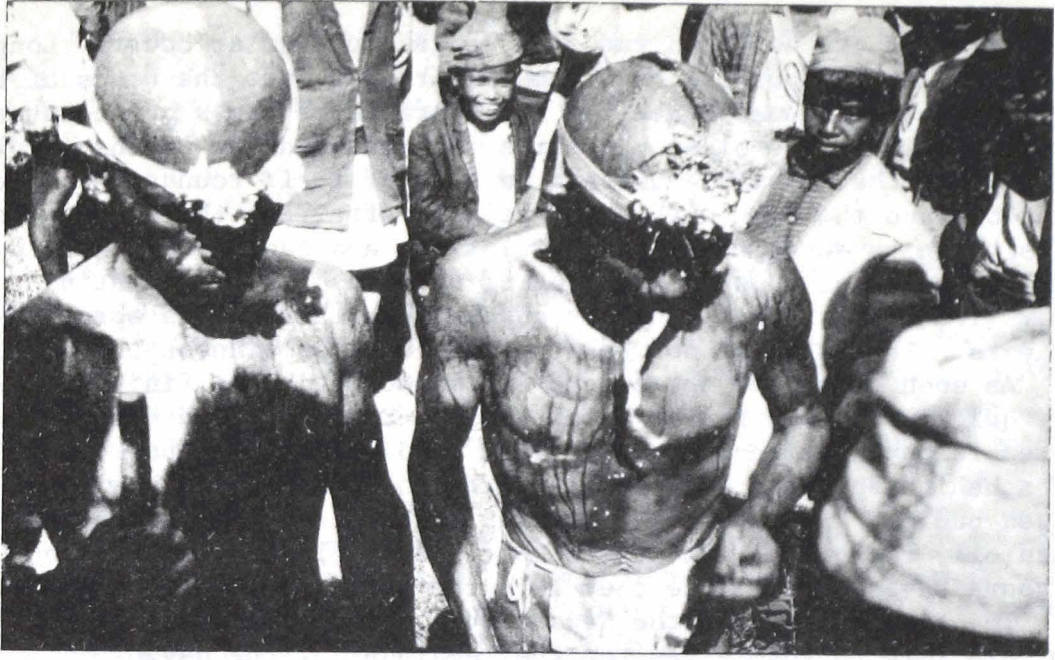
light nothing will ever be the same again. The sameness of the ritual, year after year unchanging in its basic structure though life itself is continually changing, expresses everyone's desire that life too be stable and orderly at all levels of family and community; it expresses everyone's cherished illusion that life and society are in equilibrium. Ritual asserts that in spite of appearances everything is still the same, or, if unexpected changes in one's life cannot be ignored, ritual asserts that such changes are not significant. Ritual's message is one of comfort and reassurance to men buffeted by the unpredictabilities of actual existence. Now if ritual itself is going to be subject to interference and unpredictable changes, it loses the force of its message. If this interpretation has validity, then it is clear why no one moves; everything at Rājkuḷeśwar remains frozen, as it were, in an atmosphere of tension created by this ritualistic "no man's land" in which the participants find themselves.

Finally it is Harkha Bahadur, the naris' jhānkrī guru, who breaks through this impasse and takes responsibility for a move. He mounts the steps so that he stands above the naris and the crowd of Thamis and Newars. In a quiet voice he tells the priests to get on with the ceremony and give the wicks without keeping the naris waiting any longer. He does not shout or threaten but he goes on to express a conviction deeply held by the Thamis (one which I was to hear often during discussions of the Devikot Jātrā) when he says to the priests, "We (Thamis) are essential to your (Newar) worship (hāmīharu na bhaikana tapāīnharuko kāmāi caldaina)." In so saying Harkha softens somewhat the blunter expression which the Thamis use among themselves: "Without us the Newars would not have a god (hāmīharu na bhaikana Newārharuko deutā hundaina)." Harkha is telling the priests: you need us, we do not need you.

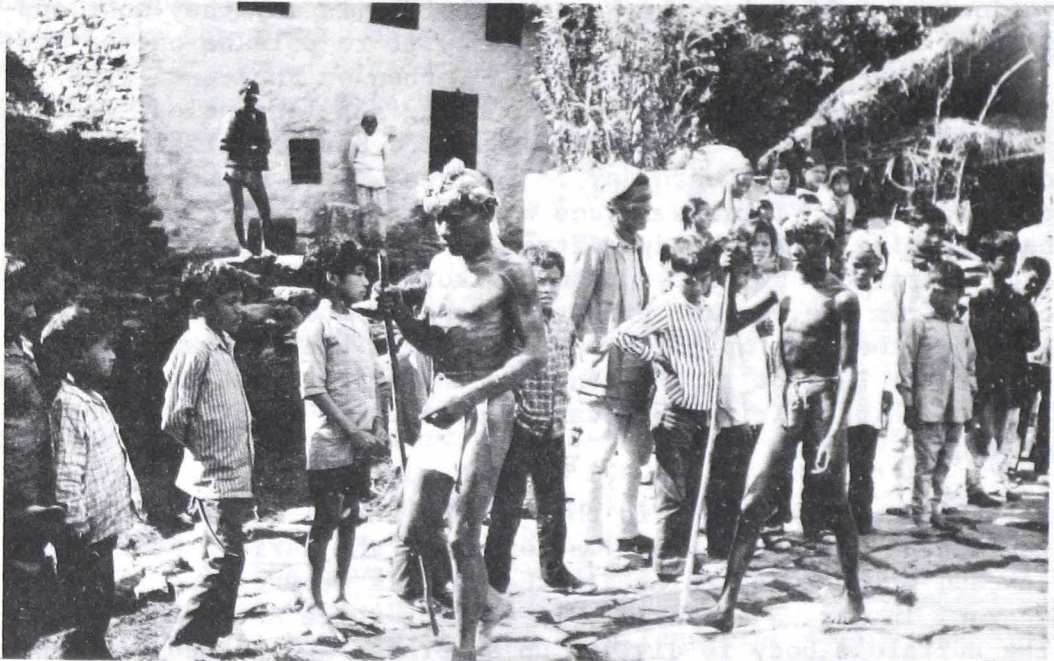
This scene is significant for me because it is the only time that I see Harkha Bahadur publicly assuming a leadership role. He is always called the guru and is ranked ahead of Chuinquin but it is only this delay in the proceedings at Rājkuḷeśwar that provides an occasion for him to exercise leadership in relation to the Newars. With Chuinquin standing silently in the crowd and another prominent Thami Lal Bahadur (whom we will see later acting as a leader in Dumkot) making no moves, Harkha really does seem to be first (pahilā), as he is called, in this time of crisis.

But the confrontation now ends abruptly with the arrival of the old gūthiyār on the scene, bustling through the crowd. As soon as he starts the process of removing the two pots to the courtyard further up the path, the priests begin the distribution of the flaming wicks to the naris. Before the naris reach the point where they put the flames into their mouths, the gūthiyār (with two assistants to carry the large pots) has gone down the steps and into the crowd towards the courtyard.

After eating the light only one thing remains for the naris to perform today and for this the ceremonial pattern is the same both in 1974 and 1975. The naris proceed down the path to where a young buffalo



51. Man Bahadur and Ratna Bir at Rājkuṣwar.



52. Sukh Bahadur and Ratna Bahadur going counter-clockwise around the courtyard.

stands tethered at the northern end of a large rectangular court. Long poles, brought for the purpose from Dumkot, are put into the hands of the two naris and they circumambulate the courtyard three times in a counter-clockwise direction. The older man takes the lead and the new nari follows behind. As they pass the buffalo on each of their rounds they give it a light blow on the back with their poles. After the third blow the buffalo is taken to an adjacent grassy platform and sacrificed there by Newar tailor-musicians (kusle) in front of the two pots representing Bhagawatī. The blood is not drunk by anyone this time but is sprayed over the pots. The naris do not take part in or even witness this sacrifice. As soon as their three-fold circumambulation is finished they move quickly on to a row of water taps to the rear of a nearby Nārāyaṇ temple beyond the courtyard. They throw their long poles into the bushes behind the taps and then into the cold waters they plunge their naked bodies, exhausted with shaking and covered with a mixture of mustard oil, red powder, and the deeper red of blood. It is noon and two hours have passed since they left the shelter at the temple of Bhīmsen. Their usefulness to the Newars over for a time, the Thamis of Dumkot are left to themselves for the remainder of the day.

Antagonism Between Dolakhalis and Thamis

There exists an antagonism between the users and the used. We have already seen the resentment caused in the Thamis at being called betāl by the Newars. The Thamis also resent that, as they see it, they get so few ritual or material benefits for their essential services to the Dolakhalis. It is not only for the Devikot Jātrā today that there are obligations to fulfil for the Newars; the Thamis say they must supply sixty loads of wood from Dumkot and carry it to Dolakha on the new moon day (aunsi) before the Daśain festival, then on Phūl-pātī (the seventh day of the festival) they have to bring six long poles, like walking sticks, for the use of the Newars in the Khaḍga Jātrā held in Dolakha on Ekādaśī (the eleventh day). Besides these demands on the Thamis for wood, their ritual services will be needed again tomorrow. For at the beginning of the Khaḍga Jātrā it is the Thamis who carry the heads of sacrificed buffaloes from Devikot to a place called Khingalcha not far from the Devikot priest's house at the southern end of the town. There they cut up the heads with their khukurīs and bring the pieces back to Devikot to give them to the priest. He then offers this meat in worship of Tripura-Sundarī and gives it as prasād to his temple workers.

One of these buffalo heads is that of the animal sacrificed outside Devikot today, the one whose blood was drunk by the naris. After the naris drink and go on to Rājkuḷeśwar, the head is severed and taken up to the Mahārānī in her inner shrine; it is kept there until the Khaḍga Jātrā. The buffalo's body is divided up as prasād and pieces are distributed to various places in the town, such as Rājkuḷeśwar which gets one of the rumps. The portion of the buffalo body which remains at Devikot is dried out and used for the daily offerings to the goddess; it must be made to last the whole year until the following Daśain.

Now the Thamis not unnaturally resent the fact that although their naris drink the buffalo's blood, carry its head in the Khadga Jātrā, cut it up into pieces at Khingalcha, and then deliver it to the Devikot priest, still they get no part in it, no prasād. They feel strongly that the whole head should be given to them to eat, and yet they get no share in it at all.

What do they get? To hear the Devikot priest describe it the Thami are feasted royally on three days: Daśamī, Ekādaśī, and the day they return to their village of Dumkot. They get great quantities of parched rice (ciurā), buffalo meat, and beer, he says, taking pains to emphasize how they stuff themselves. And they do not bring full loads of wood like they should, he complains. These feastings are at the expense of the Bhīmeśwar gūṭhī which supports both Bhīmsenthan and Devikot with the income from its rice fields at a place called Belbu to the south-east of Dolakha town. But the Thamis' description of the meals they get is different: we get four grains of parched rice (chār geḍā ciurā), they say in bitter understatement. This, they claim, is the only tangible benefit they gain from their yearly pilgrimage to Dolakha.

It is hard not to sympathize with the Thamis. While others celebrate the year's most joyful festival in their homes amid familiar surroundings, the Thami jhānkrī gurus and their four nari disciples, along with close relatives and friends, journey from Dumkot to what is really a different world for them, the world of Dolakha with its Newar culture and its Dolakhali language. Here the Thamis live for a few days in a crowded straw shelter, open to the winds, and eat the simple food they have brought with them from Dumkot, basically fried maize flour (sātu), except for the three meals provided for them by the Newars. As the wife of the mūl-nari Man Bahadur expressed it to me in Dumkot, on the eve of their departure for Dolakha in 1975, with a ruefully witty rhyme: aruko Daśain, hāmro basāin. Easy to understand but difficult to translate, it was explained to me as meaning: while others celebrate Daśain (while remaining at home), we Thamis have to pick up and settle down elsewhere.

Techniques of Compulsion

Still with all these difficulties and the barely-concealed antagonism between the Thamis and the Newars, the naris do come each year from Dumkot to Dolakha. What would happen if the Thamis decided they had had enough and withdrew their services? It did happen once that the naris refused to go to Dolakha for the Devikot Jātrā. Though the remembrance of the incident differs in Dumkot and in Dolakha concerning the precise reason for this refusal the versions all describe the result (in which the Newars used trembling and physical force to bring the naris to Dolakha) in near identical terms. There is agreement too that the quarrel had its origins in a land problem.

According to the mūl-nari Man Bahadur, the event took place in his father's time and he says that the cause was a dispute which was eventually settled by the intervention of the central government.⁸ Gobinda Thakuri, a Dumkot Village Panchayat member and grandson of the first

Thakuri settler in this originally all-Thami settlement, confirms that the quarrel with the Dolakhalis was over kipaṭ, adding that the controversy began back in 1962 B.S. (A.D. 1905) and that the Thamis lost their kipaṭ in 2005 B.S. (A.D. 1948).⁹ Since that year, he says, the kipaṭ has become raikar and the government collects tax on its produce.¹⁰ But Gobinda is unsure of the year in which the confrontation between the Dolakhalis and the Thamis about the naris' duties at Devikot occurred. He has no personal recollection of it (being too young) although he is familiar with the story that the Thamis tell of the Newar reaction to their refusal to go to Devikot.

Their account says that when the naris failed to make their usual appearance at Dolakha on the evening of Nawami and still had not arrived by the morning of Daśamī, the festival day itself, the Dolakhalis were naturally disturbed. Without the naris' the Devikot Jātrā could not be held. But not only were the Dolakhalis upset; in the absence of the naris, the Mahārānī Tripura-Sundarī mounted (caḍhnu) them, the people of Dolakha, instead. The townspeople began to shake. In this state of trembling all the Dolakhalis hurried over the four-hour trail to Dumkot to the place where the Thamis were assembled. They seized the arms of the naris and dragged them to Devikot by force.

The people of Dolakha keep a remembrance of the incident too. The seventy-six year old priest of Devikot, Dhan Bahadur Joshi, although he cannot recall the year or even the reason for the Thamis' refusal to come, remembers that it happened when he was a child and that the naris had been forcibly dragged from their village. Another old man, a Bhīmsenthān gūṭhīyār named Purna Bahadur Shrestha, is able to determine the date; it happened in the year 1969 B.S. (A.D. 1912), he says. He knows the year exactly because his grandfather died two years later in 1971 B.S. (A.D. 1914). Purna, who was born in 1954 B.S. (A.D. 1897), was a boy of fifteen at the time.

In Purna Bahadur's version of the affair, a version affirmed by others at Bhīmsenthān, there was indeed a dispute over land although the villains were not the Newars of Dolakha but the Thakuri newcomers to Dumkot valley. Furthermore, the trouble concerned not kipaṭ but gūṭhī land in Dumkot whose produce was intended for the benefit of the Thamis involved in the Devikot Jātrā.¹¹ The grain from this land was used specifically for making the beer which the Thamis drink several days before the annual blood-drinking ceremony. In the year in question, according to Purna, the Thakuris took the step of preventing the Thamis from getting the harvest from this land. The Thamis did nothing positive to protest this action of the Thakuris, but they refused to go through with the ceremonies in Dolakha connected with the gūṭhī land and simply stayed at home on Nawamī. The next morning, the day of the jātrā, the goddess Tripura-Sundarī mounted the Devikot attendant-servant (ṭahaluwā), Jaya Bhakta, who prepares the articles for the daily worship. Jaya Bhakta began to shake and in this trembling state went straight to Dumkot and brought the Thami naris back with him, at the same time somehow setting matters straight with the Thakuris and vindicating the Thamis' right to the grain harvest from the gūṭhī land. Since that time, says Purna, there has been no trouble.

Though the villains differ in the Thami and Newar versions of the occurrence, the victims seem to be the same: the Thamis. When Lal Bahadur Thami, Man Bahadur's elder brother, tells the story, after stressing that the whole town of Dolakha came in a state of trembling to get the naris from Dumkot, he adds the detail that the Dolakhalis bore in their hands the swords (khadga) from the Khadga Jātrā. He concludes his narration by saying that the Thamis were forced to go then and they have to go still. Man Bahadur too lays stress on this aspect of compulsion when, during preparations in his village shortly before the Devikot Jātrā in 1975, he tells me: the king (sarkār) has written an inscription on stone (śilāpatra) saying that the Thamis must go to Devikot and drink the blood from a buffalo whose throat is cut and if they do not go their own throat are to be cut. So, Man Bahadur continues, even though we Thamis are not given good food, drink, or shelter in Dolakha, still we have to go because of the king and the inscription. As to which king has given this order, he can only say: our king (hāmārā rājā). In various ways, then, the element of force is brought out.

Enough has been said to indicate the complexity of the situation but only further investigation, especially into land records, would be able to illuminate the actual causes of the dispute. Perhaps the true villain of the piece is really the government of those times, whether of 1962 or 1969 or 2005 B.S., which through inactivity and ignorance of conditions in the area did nothing to prevent Thakuris and/or Dolakhali Newars from victimizing the Thamis, or, even if exploitation was not at work, did nothing to make intelligible to the Thamis whose lives were being affected just how or why their relationship to the land was being altered.

For our purposes of clarifying the notion of what a jhānkrī is and does and of seeing how he differs from other religious specialists, it will be useful to stress one aspect of the above story, namely, in the absence of the naris, Dolakhalis (whether the whole town as the Thamis say or only the temple-attendant of Devikot) were overcome by that shaking which is a visible sign of contact with invisible powers. But unlike the jhānkrīs, and the naris whom they train in "trembling and knowledge" (as Man Bahadur says), the Dolakhalis could not control this trembling. It forced them down the trail to Dumkot and compelled them to drag the naris back with them to Devikot. Again, it is the factor of control which serves to distinguish the jhānkrī (and those trained by him like the naris) from an ordinary man or even a temple functionary like Jaya Bhakta. Note that in the version remembered in Dolakha the Devikot priest is not affected at all; the problem of control does not arise for him as a priest.

We might ask why all this trembling, what purpose does it really serve. As I see it, in this context the trembling is in fact an effective means for the Dolakhalis to avoid taking responsibility for their use of physical force against the Thamis; it is an effective means as well for them to avoid the alternative of having humbly to request the naris for the gift of their services and by so doing be put in an inferior relationship to the Thamis. Both these difficulties are neatly

side-stepped if the Newars can demonstrate, as they do by this shaking, that it is not they but the Mahārānī who is responsible. To attribute thus one's physical state of trembling to an invisible power and to disclaim the ability to do anything about it until a certain desired object is attained is in fact to possess a unique tool for getting one's own way, which is exactly what the Dolakhalis achieved. In realizing their objective, inability to control the shaking is precisely the most important element because by that inability they are able to manipulate the Thamis. For jhāṅkrīs, however, ability to control is the essential element in their work of manipulating invisible forces to bring about cures.

Shaking is an idiom that Thamis understand and when the Dolakhalis employed it to pressure them the Thamis yielded. Though both Thamis and Dolakhalis preserve the memory of physical force being used on that eventful day, it might be wondered after all whether the spiritual force would not have been sufficient in itself and whether, in fact, the dragging of the Thamis to Devikot was an act of violence or merely an act of drama. For if it is true, as I am suggesting, that the Dolakhalis were able by their shaking to communicate to the Thamis that it was not they but the Mahārānī herself who summoned the naris to her shrine, they would have obeyed her summons, I believe, for this powerful Mahārānī is always obeyed.

Tripura-Sundarī: the Powerful Link

It is worthwhile here to call attention to the mysterious power of this goddess Tripura-Sundarī of Dolakha because it is she who provides the link between the tribal Thamis with their jhāṅkrī masters and nari disciples and the Hindu Newars of Dolakha with their Devikot priest. There exists an aura of inexplicable strength about her that contributes much to the force of the tradition which brings the Thamis back year after year, in spite of their complaints, and which makes her worship important in the eyes of the Newars.¹² Several incidents will illustrate this.

The first was related to me in Dolakha by a man, still in his thirties, who was born and raised there but now, after graduate studies abroad in the West, occupies a high government post elsewhere in the kingdom. He returns year after year to Dolakha and his parental home for the Daśain festival. The personal experience he shares here is valuable because of the atmosphere it conveys concerning Devikot.

The story he relates (in the first person) is as follows: when I was a boy of about fifteen or sixteen, I felt great reverence towards the Goddess and decided to go one night with two of my friends to Devikot to read scriptures (pāṭh) in her honour. Going there at night made us somewhat tense and one of my two companions was especially nervous and fearful. We went to the upper floor of Devikot and squatted down in front of the door leading to the inner shrine of Tripura-Sundarī which no one but her priest may enter. A small oil lamp was our only light. Our scripture recitation was suddenly interrupted by a shout from my nervous friend. He cried out that a demon (betāl) had

grabbed hold of his leg and was trying to drag him away; but nothing was there. Soon after this we got another fright when a village madman wandered into the room. After we finished reading the scriptures we three remained sitting together and talking as our lamp burned lower and lower. Without warning, the door from the outside corridor burst open and a cat bounded across the room to the door of the inner shrine where it stood facing us from in front of the curtain. The cat looked very large to us. "A demon has come (betāl āyo)!" screamed the high-strung boy. We dashed out of Devikot and ran back to our homes thoroughly frightened. The next day the boy who had shouted "betāl āyo!" was so seriously ill that he was unable to leave his bed. He died not many days later, after six or perhaps nine days. But by the time of his death his appearance had changed in a terrible way: he had become very thin, with sunken eyes and long hair, and in the end he swallowed his tongue. People said that the betāl had eaten him.

The second incident, told me by the Devikot priest, Dhan Bahadur Joshi, illustrates the Goddess' great strength and the way she communicates this to her priest. Dhan Bahadur had been explaining to me that male goats (boko) are sacrificed to Tripura-Sundarī inside her inner shrine and that the priest must perform these sacrifices himself (not the kasāī) since only he may enter that room. In the time of the priest just before Dhan Bahadur's immediate predecessor occasionally such large goats were brought to the temple that it required the strength of several men to pull and push them to the door. And yet, although the priest alone inside the shrine seemed old and feeble, he would kill the animal offer the blood, and then throw the bodies out through the door. People were amazed at this display of strength and were unable to understand how the pujārī could do it. One day a man decided to put the aged priest to the test. He brought the biggest goat he could find; it took four or five men to drag it to Devikot. They pushed the animal over the threshold of the door to the priest inside. To the wonder of all, the old man dispatched it with no difficulty and threw the body out through the door as usual. The man who had brought the goat took sixty rupees from his pocket and gave it to the priest with the words: "O Supreme Goddess, give protection (he Parmeśwarī, rakṣa garnu hos)."

The third incident, an attempted theft at Devikot, is both more recent and more illustrative of the power of the Goddess and the power she communicates to her priest. I first heard of the event (which occurred one month before this Daśain festival of 2031 B.S.) from the Chetri family with whom I was living at the time in Phulbarī village, several miles from Dolakha. These Chetris did not know the circumstances, only that the would-be thieves had failed because of the power of the Goddess. I next heard of it in Dolakha town itself where the account was filled out with the following details. It seems the thieves had entered Devikot during the night and, after breaking the lock on the door to the upper waiting-room, had then broken the large lock on the double-door of Tripura-Sundarī's inner shrine. They had even opened the shrine door a few inches but had not gone any further. Their tools had been dropped outside the door when they left, presumably in haste.

When a number of worshippers arrived at Devikot in the morning they realized that thieves had tried to break into the chamber of the Goddess. As they waited for the Devikot priest to come for the customary morning pūjā, some of them, seeing the shrine door slightly ajar, thought they would look inside to see if any damage had been done. But when they tried to push the door open further it was like a solid wall, unmovable. Alarmed at this and conjecturing that this same phenomenon may have made the thieves flee, frightened at their own rashness, the people decided to do nothing more until the arrival of Dhan Bahadur Joshi, the Devikot priest.

When the old man finally came, the people there told him what had happened and especially how they had been unable to push the door open any further. The priest said nothing. He squatted in front of the door and spoke only one word: Mother (Mā)! Then with no effort the old man opened the door that had been like a wall just a few moments before and entered the shrine of Tripura-Sundarī Māī.

Such is the story that was told to me in the town. The Devikot priest himself corroborated it when I saw him, specifying a few more details and adding his own theory as to why the thieves had been frightened away, as he believed. He brought me inside Devikot to show me what they had done to get through to the inner shrine. After breaking the lock on the waiting-room door, the thieves had bored a hole into the wall to the left of the curtained double-door and taken out some bricks from the wall. The lower left bolt on the door had been removed and the Tibetan lock forced open.

Dhan Bahadur went on to repeat that when worshippers came in the morning and found Devikot broken into they were unable to push the door open any further for it was as firm as the wall; nor could they move or lift the lock that was lying on the threshold. In the meantime he washed and dressed and came to Devikot. He went upstairs and without any effort picked up the broken lock, pushed open the door, and entered the inner room. Everyone was astonished and said, "Blessed be God (Dhanya Parmeśwar)!" When he looked around inside he saw that nothing had been taken. The thieves did make off with the curtain which bore the likeness of Tripura-Sundarī astride a tiger but they did not get far with it. It was discovered thrown in the bushes just outside Devikot. And the Devikot priest's theory as to what really happened is that the thieves had been frightened away by noise (śabda) coming from inside Tripura-Sundarī's chamber.

For me to accompany the priest to Devikot later and observe him as he went about the morning worship was itself an interesting commentary on the incident. On reaching Devikot, he removed his shoes at the foot of the outside stairs and put his hand inside a niche at the side of the door, feeling around for the key of the main door which is always kept there within easy reach of anyone, including thieves. Upstairs in the waiting-room, whose walls are covered with photographs of Tripura-Sundarī's devotees, the priest found the tray of offerings already prepared by the ṭahaluwā. He squatted in front of the curtained door

leading to the inner shrine and drank a spoonful of water from a sacred vessel (kalaś) placed to the right of the door. He opened the Tibetan lock with a key and remarked that the key had been right there on the night of the break-in, although the thieves had not used it. After thus unlocking the door, Dhan Bahadur pushed on it. The door stuck. He pushed again but still it did not yield. On the third attempt the door opened and he entered. Could it be that the thieves had had a similar experience when they pushed on the door and so too the people who had come the morning after the abortive burglary? However that may be, the townspeople certainly gave a theological interpretation to the hard-to-open door that morning and it is possible that the thieves did too the previous night.

Dhan Bahadur remained inside for a few minutes and, after ringing some bells, reappeared with the tray for giving ṭikā, a vertical black line with a red dot above it. To the several worshippers gathered there he gave, as prasād, a fermented drink in brass cups; the liquid is kept in a big pot (ghyāmpo) inside the shrine and renewed each Daśain.

Although Tripura-Sundarī is believed to strengthen her priest, at the same time she makes great demands on him. Dhan Bahadur says that he may never omit her twice-daily worship which he refers to as niyam pūjā in the morning and sandhyā in the evening. Even if sick he is not excused; when he is too weak to walk to Devikot he is carried. As long as he is alive he must perform her worship for she allows no one else to substitute for him and enter her secret chamber. Thus during his lifetime the Devikot priest is unable to prepare a successor or to confide to another the mysteries of the inner room and its rites, as a master would to a disciple. Whereas the priesthood of Bhīmsenthān in Dolakha is hereditary, the Devikot priesthood is not. The present priest has no inkling of who his successor may be. The choice of a successor is the Mahārānī's prerogative.

Techniques of Choice

The Goddess moves (sarnu) into the man of her choice, Dhan Bahadur and other Dolakhalis say, using the same verb that the Thamis employ to describe her choice of a new nari. But the visible manifestation of the move differs in the two cases. In the case of the Thami nari her moving is recognized by the state of trembling it produces in the chosen one. She mounts his back, she grabs his head. But in the case of the Newar priest of Devikot, her selection comes to light in a much different way

The process of selection was described to me three times by knowledgeable people of Dolakha, each time with slight variations. According to the old priest of Bhīmsenthān, Purna Bahadur Shrestha, the people of Dolakha gather together after the death of the Devikot priest and put forward names of suitable candidates for his successor. Someone in the assembly, it does not matter who, volunteers to write down the names on slips of paper. After four or five names have been suggested and written down, the papers are rolled into little balls and placed on the doorstep

at Devikot. A little girl of seven years, after bathing and worshipping, chooses one of the little balls of paper. The man whose name is written there is acknowledged to be the choice of Tripura-Sundarī for the office of her priest. He then enters the inner shrine and reads there the instructions of his office.¹³

Acher Bahadur Joshi, a middle-aged gūṭhīyār of Bhīmsenthān, offered another description of the process, independently of Purna Bahadur. Two or three days after the death of the priest, the people (janatā) of the town settle among themselves on the names of two candidates. Then the word pāune (obtaining) is written down on one slip of paper and the words na pāune (not obtaining) on another. Both papers are rolled into balls. A little girl takes the two papers and gives one to each of the candidates. They unroll them and the man with pāune obtains the post of Devikot Pujārī. There is no question of asking him if he will accept the responsibility or not. If the chosen one should happen to be unwilling beforehand, says Acher Bahadur, the Goddess will now make him willing and happy to be her priest. This to me is a striking example of the people's belief in her great power.

The present incumbent of the office of Devikot Pujārī, the seventy-six-year old Dhan Bahadur Joshi, prefaces his version of the selection procedure by emphasizing that it is the Goddess who does the choosing of the priest. Her choice of him took place thirteen years ago. According to Dhan Bahadur, within two or three days after a priest's death, a group of the respected men (Hindi: bhalādmi) from the different neighbourhoods in Dolakha town hold a meeting in the upper waiting-room of Devikot. During these intervening days between the death of one priest and the choice of another, though no worship is offered inside her chamber, one of the temple assistants performs daily pūjā on the lock of the door.

The men of Dolakha assembled there carry on a discussion about suitable candidates for the post of Tripura-Sundarī's priest. Eventually they come up with the name of one acceptable person, acceptable to them at least. He need not be present at the time. Someone writes his name down on a piece of paper, while two other slips of paper are being prepared, one marked hune (being) and the other marked na hune (not being). (Here one of Dhan Bahadur's sons interjected that the words written down are rather pāune and na pāune; his father ignored the interruption and went on). These two balls of paper are placed at the door of Tripura-Sundarī's shrine. Then, after bathing and worshipping, a very young girl picks up one of the balls of paper. If when unrolled it proves to be hune the man is then brought from his home to Devikot (unless he is present there already) and at once takes over as the new priest. If na hune another name must be put forward and the process repeated until a hune is obtained. When a hune is finally reached the man chosen must accept, Dhan Bahadur maintains, whether he wants to or not. How does the new priest know what his duties are? Inside the shrine he will find out, was Dhan Bahadur's laconic answer, and he would not elaborate any further.

What I find significant in all this is the use of the same terminology of choice and of the Goddess moving into the man of her choice but at the same time a very different mode of manifestation in each case. The Goddess herself is invisible, so invisible that not even her image, presuming that there is one inside her shrine, is ever seen by anyone but her chosen priest. Her choosing too remains invisible and unknown until some sign of it is given. Among the Thamis of Dumkot her choice is expressed and recognised in the idiom made familiar to them by the jhānkrīs who are their only religious specialists (except the naris), namely by a trembling which comes suddenly and without prior consultation or formal discussion. I suspect there is great pressure on certain male relatives of the dead nari to exhibit this sign and I know the people have definite expectations as to who the successor should be. But as we have seen in the case of the two most recent naris these expectations are not always realized.

In regard to the Dolakhalis, though maintaining her freedom of choice through a non-hereditary system, the Goddess respects the sensibilities of the members of the closely-knit Newar society. She has to manifest her choice to men who as members of gūṭhī organizations of all kinds are conditioned to operate in a communal and disciplined way. These two different methods of arriving at a successor illustrate the continuity that has to exist between society and religion; people cannot be in their religion other than they are in their society. When it is a matter of choosing a man for a permanent role in their society, not even the Mahārānī, the great Goddess Tripura-Sundarī, is powerful enough to grab the head of a Dolakhali and shake him or to make the Thamis sit down with their jhānkrīs and, after lengthy discussion, write down names on little slips of paper.

Similarly, the aspect of exclusivity that is attached to the Mother Goddess Tripura-Sundarī is not merely a religious notion unrelated to daily life. When the townspeople tell the story of the attempted theft and climax it with the Devikot priest saying the one word Mā (confirmed later by the priest himself who explained that the word means Āmā, i.e., Mother) they are perhaps revealing something about themselves and the structure of their families. This Mother, into whose presence only the Devikot priest dare come, is exclusive and possessive. I proposed this exclusivity of hers as an explanation of the difference between jhānkrīs and naris; I now suggest that it is somehow connected with the relationship that exists between mother and son in the Nepalese family where ethnic groups follow a patrilineal virilocal pattern of marriage as is the case in this middle-hill region around Dolakha. In such a pattern (as I have observed it) the new wife comes into the family of her husband as an outsider with no one there with whom she can easily form an alliance. She finds that her husband's strongest bond is with his mother. The new wife will develop the same kind of bond when she herself becomes the mother of a son for it is only then that she will have another person in the family bound to her by a natural relationship of blood.¹⁴ From this relationship she acquires status in the family. The lack of wife-husband intimacy is filled by the mother-son bond. The strength of the

relationship is put to the test when the son grows up and it is time for the process to be repeated and another outsider brought into the family as his bride, necessary for the family's continuance but threatening to the mother-son bond.

The new bride is a rival in the eyes of the mother who will try to keep for herself her son's affections. The mother will make clear to the son in every possible way that his first duty is to her. The son thus experiences that his mother's undoubted and nurturing love for him is also a possessive, exclusive love. Either he neglects to develop a deep relationship with his wife or he attempts to conceal it from his mother. The Thamīs and the Newars of Dolakha both regard the Mother Goddess Tripura-Sundarī not primarily as a tender, nurturing mother but as a demanding, restrictive one. This is what many of them, as sons and husbands, have experienced motherhood to be in their own families, especially in those days after marriage when a mother asserts in the face of rivalry that her relationship to her son is primary.

What I wish to bring out from the above remarks about Nepalese motherhood is: not only do the people posit an invisible world to account for and to serve as an explanation of unpredictable events and disorder in this visible world but the contours that they give to the invisible world are ones that are familiar to them from their own society and especially their families. The invisible world is a "familiar" one in both senses of the word. In so far as they imagine it at all they do so in terms of the basic relationships in their communitarian and domestic lives. Though they differ widely in many aspects of social life, the village tribal Thamīs and the urban Hindu Dolakhali Newars come close together in this matter of mother-son relationship.

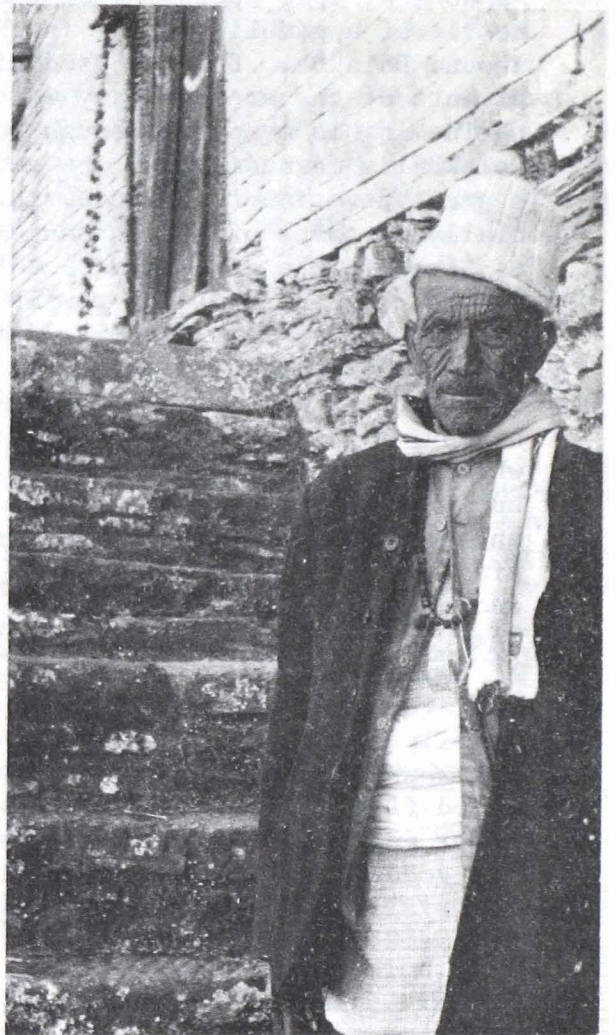
Techniques of Mediation

Furthermore, and to conclude this chapter, when a society posits an invisible world it at the same time requires thereby a person or persons to function in the role of intermediary between worlds. Such a person contacts the invisible world on behalf of the community at large. For this purpose the intermediary must find a means either by journeying to the invisible world or by presenting his person as host to forces coming from that world into this or by making acceptable offerings to the invisible powers. He must do this in some kind of visible way so that by the manifestation of certain signs the society he serves can somehow verify that he is fulfilling the function required of him and that contact is indeed being made.

Looking back over the events and background of the Devikot Jātrā, with its dramatis personae of both worlds, we can see that the Thamīs do have such an intermediary in the jhānkri in regard to the whole invisible world and the Dolakhali townspeople have one in the Devikot priest in regard to Tripura-Sundarī. But the methods of these intermediaries differ. The jhānkri (and the nari in the limited way discussed earlier) exhibits his trembling body as a visible sign of invisible powers present there riding on his back; the Devikot priest disappears



53. The Thami nari Ratna Bir...



54. and the Devikot pujārī Dhan Bahadur Joshi.

alone into Tripura-Sundarī's presence to make offerings and partakes of her invisibility during the time of contact, but even he provides the people with a visible sign of his function through displays of extraordinary strength.

The nari seems to stand midway between the jhānkrī and the priest. He is a trembling ecstatic who remembers nothing of what happens when the Goddess mounts him and drinks blood; he is also a functionary tied down to a timetable and a regular appearance at a calendrical rite. I see the nari at Devikot Jātrā as neither jhānkrī nor priest though resembling both. A jhānkrī trains him and a priest uses him. The next chapter will consider the mūl-nari Man Bahadur and the jhānkrī Chuin-chuin and how they function together in the Thami village of Dumkot itself.

Footnotes

1. The god worshipped here is known both as Bhīmsen and Bhīmeśwar. The people of Dolakha say that the five Pandav brothers of the Mahabharat epic spent one of their twelve years of wandering (the result of a gambling loss) in the thick jungles then growing around Dolakha. Bhīmsen used his great strength to help the inhabitants of the area in many ways and in gratitude they set up a shrine in his memory. Though Dolakha is not named in the epic the Dolakhalis maintain that the reference is to this area and have a great devotion to Bhīmsen, invoking him as Thākur (Lord) especially in times of sudden danger. Bhīmeśwar, on the other hand, is Śiva and the discovery of a lingam-shaped black stone in what is now the centre of the temple compound was the origin of his worship here. The legend told to me several times relates that a porter stopped at this spot one day to cook his rice. He made use of the black stone there, along with two other stones brought from nearby, to set up his cooking stove. Rice in the part of the pot which rested on the black stone refused to cook; not only that, but when the porter shifted the pot around, the cooked rice became uncooked again when it came in contact with the black stone. In his frustrated anger the porter struck the stone with his ladle and out flowed milk (and in one version, blood as well). He then knew it was a god and so began the worship of Śiva (under the name of Bhīmeśwar) here at Dolakha. A legend among the Limbus of Myāñluñ village in Tehrathum District has a similar ending: a hungry porter angrily strikes one of the three stones of a make-shift stove with his khukuri when it will not stop shaking and is shocked to see blood flow from the wound. The divinity present there (and who later emerged in the form of a cat) was eventually identified as the goddess Sinhabāhinī. Ministry of Education, Janak Educational Materials Centre, Mahendra Mālā Class 9 (Kathmandu, 2029 B.S.), pp. 9-12.

2. The time for daily blood sacrifice at Bhīmsenthān is from morning until early afternoon only, but on these two days of the year the time is extended even up to 4:00 P.M. to cope with the great crowds. Priests and people explain the fact of blood sacrifices here by saying that the god has three forms, according to the time of day. The morning form (variously named as Bhīmsen, Bhagawatī, or Bhairab is bhog khāne but in the afternoon and evening the god is in the bhog na khāne forms of Śiva (afternoon) and Nārāyaṇ (evening). When blood sacrifices are being offered in the mornings, Bhīmeśwar (Śiva) is believed to retreat to the top of a wooden pillar called culkāpsi directly behind the main shrine. But he cannot be ignored completely when sacrifices are being performed and so the neck portion of the victim is thrown up to him on the pole and sticks there. Usually several such hairy necks can be seen on the culkāps

3. Tripura-Sundarī Māī is one of the forms of Durgā. David Snellgrove writes of a visit to a temple of Tripura-Sundarī in western Nepal at Tibrikot where her "image is attended night and morning by Brahman pujārīs." Himalayan Pilgrimage (Oxford, 1961), p. 27. Shrines of Bhairab, Maṣṭā, and Jākrī Babiro are also found in the Tibrikot area and Snellgrove remarks that "there is no doubt that Maṣṭa and Babiro represent indigenous beliefs, while Tripura-Sundarī and Bhairav-nath are in a sense foreigners." Ibid., p. 28. Further to the west, in the Jumla area, there is another shrine of Tripura-Sundarī in Talphī in Chaudhabis Kholā also served by a Brahmin who comes twice a year in Asoj and Chaitra (the times of the two Daśain festivals in Nepal), according to Prayag Raj Sharma. "The Divinities of the Karnali Basin in Western Nepal," in Anthropology of Nepal, ed. Haimendorf, pp. 350-351. G. Auer and N. Gutschow give Tripura-Sundarī as an alternative name for the goddess Taleju Bhaktapur: Gestalt, Funktionen und religiöse Symbolik einer nepalischen Stadt im vorindustriellen Entwicklungsstadium (Darmstadt, 1974), p. 19.

4. The Dolakhalis like to say that while the Pandavs were in the area they decided to make their own secret language so that they could communicate with each other without anyone else understanding them. This, they claim, is the origin of their Dolakhali language. Actual it is a dialect of Newari which Newars from Kathmandu Valley find a most unintelligible at first hearing; after some days' residence they can find their way through its variations.

5. It is well known that the same terminology of mounting and riding on the back is used in the context of voodoo possession cults in Haiti. In another geographic area Lewis writes of "that widespread symbolism for possession according to which the spirit, when incarnated in its earthly host, is said to ride its 'horse'. Thus, for instance, in the richly dramatic bori spirit possession cult of the Hausa-speaking peoples of west Africa ... possessed women are described as the 'Mares of the Gods'." Ecstatic Religion, p. 58. This imagery of riding on the shoulders is encountered in other parts of Nepal as well. A Limbu woman described her state of

possession to Shirley Kurz Jones by saying that the goddess Yuma Sammag comes upon her shoulders and upper body. "Limbu Spirit Possession - A Case Study," in Spirit Possession, ed. Hitchcock and Jones, p. 24. At the other end of the country, in the far west, we learn from Walter Winkler that "one motion the dhāmi may make at the beginning of possession is to bend his elbows and touch his fingers to his shoulders thus indicating that the god is 'riding' on his shoulders." "Spirit Possession in Far Western Nepal," *ibid.*, p. 252. And during the Kartik full moon festival in the far western village of Babiro, Jumla District, Marc Gaborieau witnessed two men "play the role of bāhan in the literal sense of the word, that is vehicles for the main god: while dancing, they carry the principal god - embodied in his dhāmi - on their hip or shoulder." "Preliminary Report on the God Maṣṭā," *ibid.*, p. 230. During the winter Māghe Sankrānti festival as celebrated in the western Terai, the Tharu pujārī places a baked-clay horse on the stone thān as the mount of the god Berrwā. Macdonald, "Two Festivals among the Tharu of Dang," Essays, p. 276.

6. In Dumkot I happened to hear a Thakuri explain to one of his young relatives, a boy of about ten, that when the Thamis drink the blood of the buffalo not a single drop is spilled. He repeated again that no blood touches the ground, it is all drunk by the naris (just as in the legend). Anyone who has seen the ceremony knows that this is not the case. This seemed to me to be an example of a way of thinking among Hindus which goes as follows: the ideal is the real and what actually happens is mere transitory phenomenon of no importance in itself and unable to affect reality. The legend says that no drops touch the ground, therefore they do not.
7. In classical shamanism, the shaman is a "master over fire" and feels no pain at its contact. Eliade, Shamanism, p. 206.
8. Kipaṭ is a communal form of land tenure according to which "a kipaṭ owner derived rights in kipaṭ lands by virtue of his membership in a particular ethnic group and their location in a particular area." Mahesh C. Regmi, Landownership in Nepal (Berkeley, 1976) p. 19. Regmi notes that, besides the Limbu, "other kipaṭ-owning communities, which included Rai, Majhiya, Bhote, Yakha, Tamang, Hayu, Chepang, Baramu, Danuwar, Sunuwar, Kumhal, Pahari, Thami, Sherpa, Majhi, and Lepcha, were scattered throughout the eastern and western midlands. The kipaṭ-owning communities came under varying degrees of Indo-Aryan political and economic control in the course of time." *Ibid.*, p. 88.
9. Whatever credence may be given to Gobinda Thakuri's memory of dates, it is true that decisions aimed at reducing the kipaṭ lands of various communities were made at different times by the government during this and the last century. *Ibid.*, pp. 98-99. It might be asked how the Thakuris acquired land in this Thami area. Gobinda says that his grandfather migrated to Dumkot from Gorkha and bought

land from the Thamis. His descendants now number eighteen households there. This is probably a simplification since in most areas of Nepal it was against the law to sell kipaṭ lands. But Regmi explains that "kipaṭ-owners circumvented it by relinquishing their lands to outsiders without mentioning any monetary transaction. ... There is evidence that mortgages too were common. In the absence of strong pressures from kipaṭ-owning communities for strict enforcement of the ban, the government apparently saw no reason to interfere in such transactions." Ibid., p. 100.

10. Raikaṛ is a "system of state landlordism" with the present connotation of "lands that are owned by individuals subject to payment of tax to the state." Ibid., p. 16.
11. Gūṭhī is "a form of institutional landownership" according to which lands were endowed "for the establishment or maintenance of such religious and charitable institutions as temples, monasteries, schools, hospitals, orphanages, and poorhouses." Ibid., p. 17.
12. Regarding Tripura-Sundarī the historians of Dolakha note that many tales are heard there about her amazing power. Bajracharya and Shrestha, Dolakhāko Aitihāsik Rūprekhā, p. 6.
13. The Devikot priest also functions as priest of Bāl Kumārī, a younger sister of Tripura-Sundarī Māī, in a grove of trees below the south-east section of Dolakha town. Dhan Bahadur Joshi was unwilling to speak about the cult of Bāl Kumārī except to say that worship is offered there only at certain times of the year, giving Daśain as an example. Acher Bahadur Joshi, a gūṭhīyār of Bhimsenthān, took me to see this grove, which no one but the Devikot priest may enter, and from its edge I could see only a stone-walled enclosure among the trees. Acher Bahadur says that human sacrifices were performed here in former times.
14. Gopal Prasad Rimal's drama Masān expresses vividly this fierce desire for a son on the part of a wife, a desire which cannot be satisfied by adoption but only by physical motherhood. The tragedy climaxes when the barren wife learns from her husband that he himself had secretly caused her sterility some years earlier by means of a "medicine". Unable to convince her that they do not need a son in order to be happy together, the husband watches her leave him for good and bitterly says: in my next life may I be born your son. Masān (Kathmandu, 2017 B.S.), p. 84.

JHĀNKRĪS AND NARIS BEFORE DEVIKOT JĀTRĀ

Bonds with the Past

During our talks together in Dolakha the Thamis often urged me to visit them in their own village of Dumkot. I was subsequently able to do this on three widely-spaced occasions, several days each time, the last being just prior to the Devikot Jātrā of 1975. On each visit the Dumkot Thamis pointed out a small cave in the hill side above their village as being of significance for them as a community. Before describing the activities of the mūl-nari Man Bahadur and the jhānkrī guru Chuinchain at that cave and presenting another facet of jhānkrī activities, it will be useful to provide some background here concerning the Thamis' understanding of their origins.

Although the bulk of the Thami population of Nepal now lives in Dolakha District and the remainder in Sindhu Palchok District immediately to the west, they are convinced that they emigrated to this hill region from the plains of the Terai. We came from below, they say. Furthermore they name Simraungadh, a fortified city whose ruins still exist in the plains, as their original home.¹

Simraungadh was the fortress capital of Hari Simha of Tirhut.² Muslim invaders forced him and his court to flee the city in the winter of A.D. 1325. According to some accounts, Hari Simha entered the Kathmandu Valley about a year later after wandering in the Terai during the months following the destruction of his capital. He brought with him and introduced into the Valley the worship of the "mysterious Taleju, whose temple in Kathmandu is the highest in the town and whose shrine in the Darbar of Bhatgaon is inaccessible to Europeans."³

But according to the account of the Gopāl Vamśāvalī which was written about sixty years after the event, Hari Simha did not come to the Valley of Nepal but died at a place called Tinpatan while fleeing from Simraungadh to Dolakha with his family and court and others. After his death, his son and the rest of the group continued their flight to Dolakha but on arrival there, instead of finding refuge, they were imprisoned at first and had their possessions confiscated by the Dolakhali noblemen.⁴

Were the present-day Thamis' ancestors part of the group of refugees from Simraungadh? Though not impossible it would be premature to answer without documentary evidence. The Thamis are named in an inscription kept in the temple archives of Bhimsenthān in Dolakha and dated 688 Nepal Sambat (A.D. 1567). The inscription speaks in a way that indicates three divisions of society at the time: "prajā sanja thāmī." Prajā refers to the Newar populace, sanja to the Bhotiya peoples in the area like the Tamangs who have a northern origin, and thāmī are grouped by themselves.⁵ Bajracharya suggests the Thamis' poverty as a reason for this independent listing.⁶ But if the Thamis had indeed come as unwelcome refugees from Simraungadh their separate grouping could be understood on that basis. As refugees, dependent for their security on the

good will of the people of Dolakha, it is further possible that they were coerced then or later into acting as blood-drinking betāl in the Newar rituals at Devikot.

The Thamis preserve the memory of a king called Śu Śu Rājā who some say was a contemporary of Kāndo Rājā, identified by them as a Newar king of Dolakha. According to the naris, it was this Kāndo Rājā "who made us naris and made us drink blood."¹ But although Śu Śu Rājā is identified by some Thami informants as being their first king in this area and thus the link between Simraungadh and Dolakha, his name does not head the list when they recite the names of the rulers of long ago. The traditional series of names runs like this: Hai Hai Rājā, Huin Huin Rājā, Śu Śu Rājā (sometimes pronounced Suin Suin), Golma Rājā Golma Rānī, Pāndu Rājā, and ending with the name of Kāndo Rājā. The first two names are sometimes abbreviated to Hai Rājā and Huin Rājā. Though the names may sound strange it will be observed that the contemporary jhānkri Chuinchuin would be right at home among them.

Some Dumkot Thamis identify Hai Rājā, Huin Rājā, and Golma Rājā Golma Rānī as being Thakuri rulers of the Nepal Valley. Matters become no clearer when we realize that in the Tamang village of Deolang to the north, the Tamang gūthiyār of Deoliṅgeśwari Mahādevthān (whom we will meet in the next chapter) recites the same list of names and says they were all Newars. Another curious fact is that as he reads the words Śrī Śrī from a copper plate inscription in his possession he pronounces them as Śu Śu and claims that this is the proper name of a king, when it is clearly part of the honorific titles prefixed to the name of king Jaya Jagajjaya. Again at the end of the inscription Deoliṅgeśwari Mahādev is given three honorific "Śrī" and the king is given two. If the name Śu Śu Rājā is actually a corrupted form of the title Śrī Śrī Rājā, it is possible that the other names have been subject to corruption as well. It is tempting to conjecture that the first name always given, that of Hai Rājā, is in fact Hari Rājā, the last king of Simraungadh.

Linguistic considerations of the Thamis' own language provide, if not historical conclusions, at least similarly interesting clues to their possible southern origin. Genevieve Stein in a personal communication of November 1976 concludes from her linguistic studies in Dolakha and Sindhu Palchok Districts that the Thamis speak a pronominalized Tibeto-Burman language but hesitates to put it together with the Kiranti languages (as previously done by the Linguistic Survey of India) because "although pronominalized, it does not present as complex a verbal morphology as these languages do, neither a proper dual nor an opposition inclusive/exclusive." The Thami dialects she has heard have not "developed tones, but a strong demarcative accent," in contrast to the Tamangs around them whose language has four tones. In vocabulary she notes affinities between Thami and the language spoken by the Chepangs living to the south-east in Dhading and Makwanpur Districts.⁷

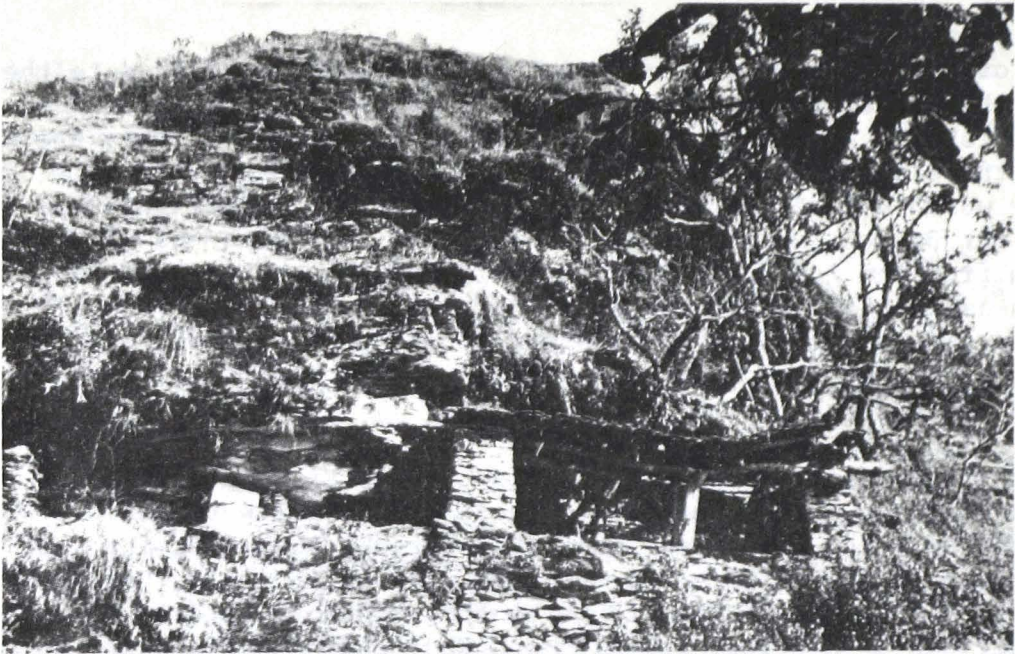
Ms. Stein recorded the story according to which the Thamīs "would have come from Simraongarh: ni-ko thañmi paila simañghar-ñi wañ-te kumañghat-ña ho?-yoñ-so; kumañghat-ñi-ñi wañ-yoñ-tale nepal ðhimi ya-si-yon-du ðhai-na ho?-yon-so" which she translates as follows: "our Thami came first from Simraongarh and settled in Kumanghat; having come from Kumanghat to Nepal, they arrived in Thimi and settled in that place." The location of Kumanghat is unknown to me; Ms. Stein conjectures that it may be as distorted as Simañghar. Thimi is a well known Newar city of Kathmandu Valley near Bhaktapur.

Another source gives the same story, along with a popular etymology of the name Thami connecting it with the Nepali verb thānu (to halt). In this version one of the many sons of an original couple who settled in Thimi went to the east and became the Rai-Limbu. He then returned to Thimi to tell his brothers about the plentiful land in the east and to encourage them to go back with him. They replied that they would stay where they were (hāmī yahīñ thāminchaun) and from that time on were called Thami.⁸ Note, however, that the Thamīs' own pronunciation of their name is "Thañmi" and not "Thāmi". Another explanation of the name could possibly be seen in the Tibetan words mtha' (frontier) and mi (man) which in combination means "border people" or "barbarians",⁹ a name which original inhabitants of an area might apply to newcomers from another land.

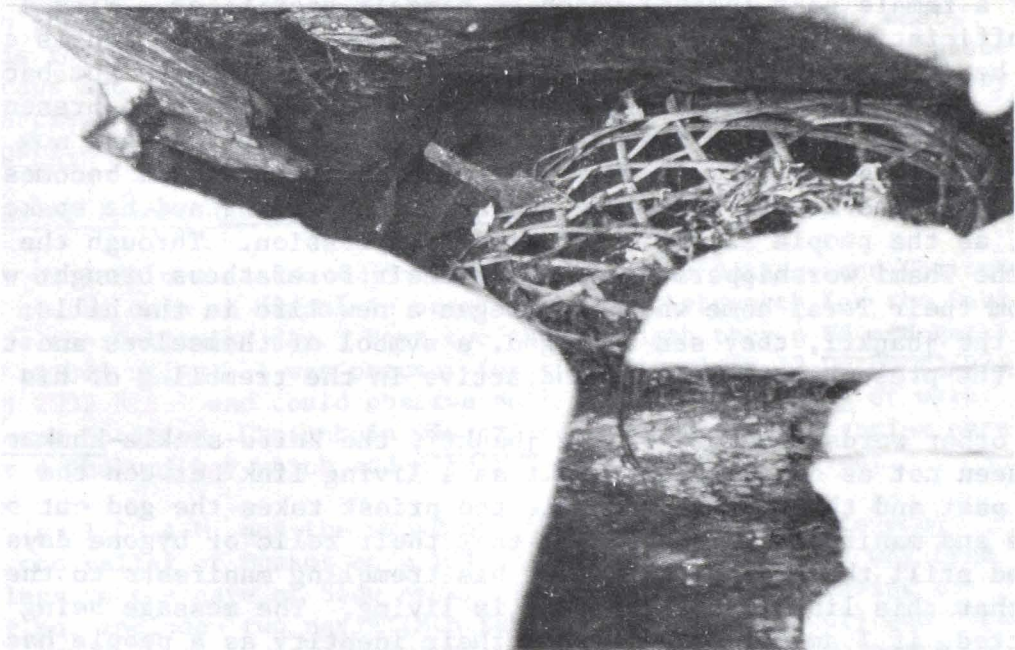
The importance of the scene now about to be enacted at the cave by the mūl-narī and the jhāñkrī is largely that of strengthening the Thamīs' bond with their past, no matter how vaguely or imprecisely it is remembered, and thus strengthening them as a people in the present. Let us go now to this cliffside cave on the northern edge of the village of Dumkot. The cave is called Sādu (Thami: white) Āpuk (Thami: cave) in the local dialect and is often abbreviated to Sādopa by Thakuri neighbours and Thamīs themselves. A brief but steep climb brings the worshippers first to a dilapidated shed (dharmā-śālā) built on a wide ledge adjoining the cave. To reach Sadu Apuk itself one walks through the shed and then crawls out onto a narrower ledge with room for only one person and a sheer drop below. It is impossible to stand upright because of a rock overhang. The cave turns out to be really a shallow indentation in the rock face, perhaps two feet in width, a foot and a half in height and with a depth of little more than two feet. A white-washed stone partially blocks the opening but one can look inside and see the god that is worshipped there. The tiny cave contains a wicker basket (tokarī) and inside the basket, partially visible, are: a knife (Thami: nyāñcurī), a sickle (Thami: nyāñkaratī) and an iron-handled khukurī (Thami: nyāñmesa). Man Bahadur calls this three-form god Biśwakarma and draws attention to the fact that the god is three. And this, says Chuinquin, is the god we brought from Simraungadh.

The Functions of Priest and Jhāñkrī at the Cave

Whatever may be the real historical origins, this cave with its rusty relics, believed to be from Simraungadh and worshipped as a god,



55. The cave of Sādu Āpuk and the dharma-śālā.



56. "The god we brought from Simraungadh."

is part of the Dumkot Thamīs' present identity and links them to their past as they understand it now. Both mūl-narī and jhāṅkrī are involved in its worship. As mūl-narī Man Bahadur is the priest of the cave and must go there every full and new moon to offer incense. A yearly occasion for worship comes during Daśain on the day of Nawamī when the Thamīs set out for Dolakha and the Devikot Jātrā; at this time the mūl-narī begs strength from the god for the narīs while the jhāṅkrī guru Chuinčin trembles as the god mounts and rides him. During the twice-monthly offering of incense and this more elaborate once-a-year pūjā on Nawamī, the knife-sickle-khukurī god remains inside the cave, invisible to the worshippers who assemble there.

A third occasion when worship is offered at the cave is the full moon day of the month of Jeth (May-June), in alternate years, but which the Thamīs call the three-year pūjā (tīn barṣako pūjā).¹⁰ The last three-year pūjā was in 1975 and the next will be in 1977. During this ceremony, as it was described to me by the principal actors, the mūl-narī functions as a priest (pujārī) and Chuinčin as a jhāṅkrī in a way which will enrich our idea of what a jhāṅkrī contributes to his people.¹¹

The priest's responsibility at this time is to take the three-form god out of the cave. Through his mediatorship the normally hidden god becomes visible to the eyes of the Thami worshippers; they see the god that accompanied their ancestors from Simraungadh. The priest, still as mediator, offers flowers, incense, light, achetā as well as the blood of a female goat (pāṭhī) which he himself sacrifices. With a priest officiating the whole scene is passive as far as the god is concerned; he is removed from the cave, he is worshipped, he is put back in again. He is moved rather than moving. But the jhāṅkrī's presence there introduces an active element. The jhāṅkrī serves the god now by being an intermediary through whom the god's active presence becomes visible. The god mounts and rides (caḍnu) the jhāṅkrī and he shakes (kāṃnu), as the people say in the familiar expression. Through the priest the Thami worshippers see the god their forefathers brought with them from their Terai home when they began a new life in the hills; and through the jhāṅkrī, they see that god, a symbol of themselves and their past-in-the-present, still vital and active in the trembling of his body.

In other words, because of the jhāṅkrī, the knife-sickle-khukurī can be seen not as dead artifacts but as a living link between the Thamīs' past and their present; while the priest takes the god out of the cave and manifests to the people that their relic of bygone days is indeed still there, the jhāṅkrī by his trembling manifests to the people that this link with their past is living. The message being transmitted, if I am correct, is that their identity as a people has been strong enough to survive both their uprooting "from below" (whether the jungles of the Terai or the civilized city of Simraungadh) as well as their transplanting in alien territory inhabited by Newars and Bhotiya tribes. We brought this god from Simraungadh, Chuinčin told me; they also brought with them a determination to remain themselves

even after being uprooted. The dramatic impact of the trembling jhāṅkrī lies in the communication which says: we are ourselves, we are Thamis still, though small in number, though pushed and pulled by those who consider themselves superior to us, we have continued to exist; we will continue to exist as long as our god remains visible and active.

It may help to reflect for a moment on what would be the significance of the jhāṅkrī's not trembling at the time of the three-year pūjā when the triple sign of their historical identity is set before their eyes by the priest. Would it not be a sign that it no longer mattered whether they were themselves or not? Would it not be a sign of a lack of the will-to-live as a distinct people?

In this connection too a problem or goal like that of national identity and integration can be seen in some of its complexity when viewed in the context of groups like the Thamis whose conscious identity does not rest on the fact of their being citizens of Nepal but of being members of tribal clans in a limited area that happens to be within the geo-political boundaries of Nepal. How does one acquire a national identity without losing what is precious in one's tribal identity? Further, how will different groups learn to acknowledge one another's national identity, in which all share equally, as being of more significance in matters of human rights (to say nothing of world citizenship) than age-old convictions of superiority and inferiority based on caste concepts of purity and pollution?

The explanation of the three-year pūjā and of the jhāṅkrī's role therein has not been verbalized by the Thamis themselves, it is true, but such theorizing could hardly be expected of them. That is what ritual is for. They participate in the living reality that takes place at the cave and they speak of it in the terms of a religious vocabulary, of the ancient god worshipped by the priest and of the god now riding the jhāṅkrī.¹²

Functions of Priest and Jhāṅkrī on Nawamī

Let us look now at the yearly worship which Man Bahadur and Chuinchain perform at the cave on Nawamī in order to beg for strength for the Devikot Jātrā the following day. Here too the strength they need and get is that of tribal unity. I was present for this ritual on 13 October 1975 (27 Asoj 2032 B.S.) and could observe both pujārī and jhāṅkrī at work. On the same occasion Chuinchain was called on to perform a curing ceremony for a Thakurī boy which added to the interest of the event.

It is 11:00 A.M. and the sound of jhāṅkrī drums begins to echo through the valley of Dumkot as a little procession makes its way from the village to the cave of Sādu Āpuk. The small group of Thamis, two dozen or so, includes two naris (Man Bahadur and Sukh Bahadur) and three jhāṅkrīs (Chuinchain and two young disciples). The other two naris (Ratna Bahadur Phalame and Ratna Bir) and the guru Harkha Bahadur are not members of the party even though Man Bahadur had told me the previous

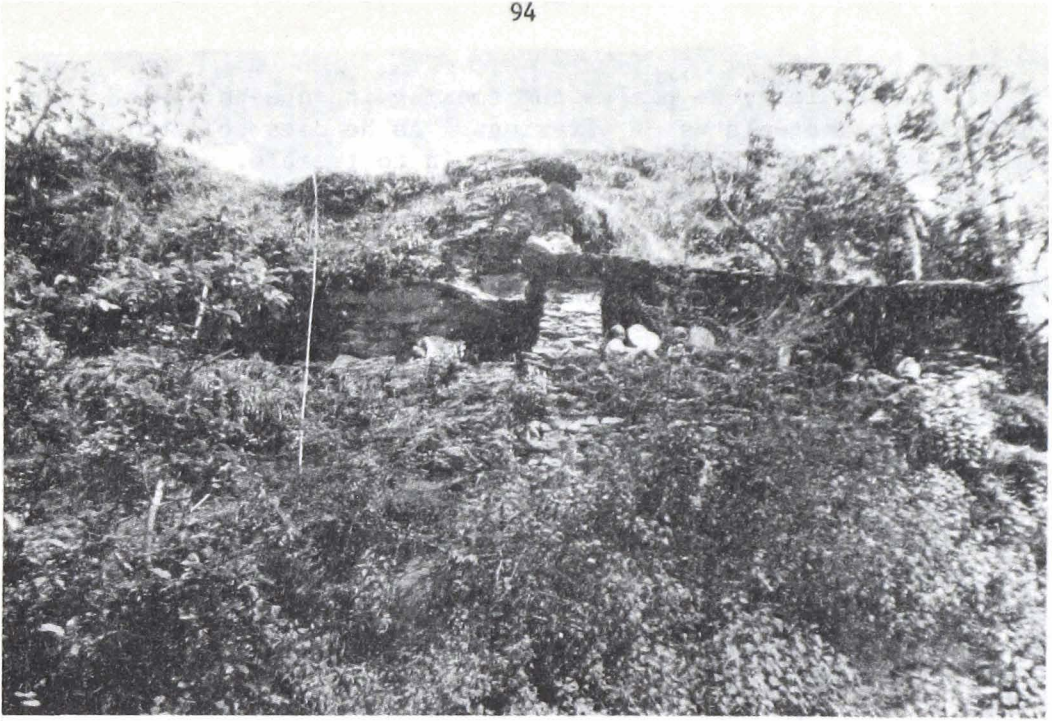
day that they would be present; they join the group only in the late afternoon on the journey to Dolakha.

The line of Thami men, women and children have to approach Sādu Āpuk through fields belonging to a Thakuri, one of the grandsons of the first Thakuri settler in the area, for the sacred cave with its ancient Thami relics is now on his property. The Thakuri's house is only a few minutes walk from the cave and his verandah makes a convenient resting place before the steep climb. Besides, he is a friendly man who enjoys the diversion of visitors today. While Man Bahadur proceeds up to the cave with the others Chuinquin and his disciples remain for a while chatting with the Thakuri. The three jhānkrīs are wearing ordinary clothes on this occasion except for their necklaces of rudrākṣa beads and bandoliers of bells. They have given their dhyaṅgros for the moment to some of the children who enjoy beating them as they ascend to the cave. During their conversation on the verandah the Thakuri tells Chuinquin that his son Uttar Bahadur, a strapping boy of seventeen, often complains of severe stomach pains; he asks the jhānkrī to do something for him today. Chuinquin promises the father that he will treat the boy up at the cave and then both father and son join the jhānkrīs on their climb up the hill side.

The Thami worshippers are assembled in the dharmā-śālā with chickens and marigolds in their hands. They have set down leaf-plates of offerings containing achetā, clarified butter, eggs and coins, in a row at the end of the shed nearest the cave. Man Bahadur has already crawled out onto the ledge and faces the cave opening. He has removed all his clothes except for a loin-cloth and is painting the stone which blocks the mouth of the cave with a whitish-gray mixture of mud and water. After applying this whitewash (kamero) to the rock face above and on both sides of the cave, he takes red mud and smears it on the lower section of the stone. By noon Man Bahadur is finished with his decorating work and goes off to bathe in a nearby stream. When he returns, he crawls out again onto the ledge to complete the adornment of the outside of the cave with offerings of marigolds.

Meanwhile the three jhānkrīs begin singing to the accompaniment of their drums. Chuinquin leads the chant with a strong voice, changing the tune from time to time. He is sure of the words but his two disciples are not; they clearly look to his leadership here and follow along as best they can in dependence on him. The three of them have taken their position at the west end of the shed, near the cave, where they have stuck their ritual daggers (thurmī) into the ground. Two leaf-plates containing semi-solid fermented grain are set down in front of them in the same row with the other offerings brought by the people. The nari Sukh Bahadur comments that this intoxicant, which he calls both by the Nepali word jāṅḍ and the English-derived word barāṅḍī, is essential to their functioning as naris at Devikot.

Man Bahadur squats now in front of the little cave-opening with a clay pot in his hand full of burning coals and incense. He chants in a barely audible voice for fifteen minutes and then, moving the entrance



57. The mūl-nari at the cave; children with qhyāngros.



58. The mūl-nari decorating the cave entrance.

stone slightly to the left, he places the smoking incense-pot inside the cave along with two leaf-plates of offerings. As he does so, Chuinquin and his disciples stop their drumming and begin to tremble. A very slight trembling comes over the nari Sukh Bahadur too as he sits in the midst of the worshippers but Man Bahadur remains unmoved.

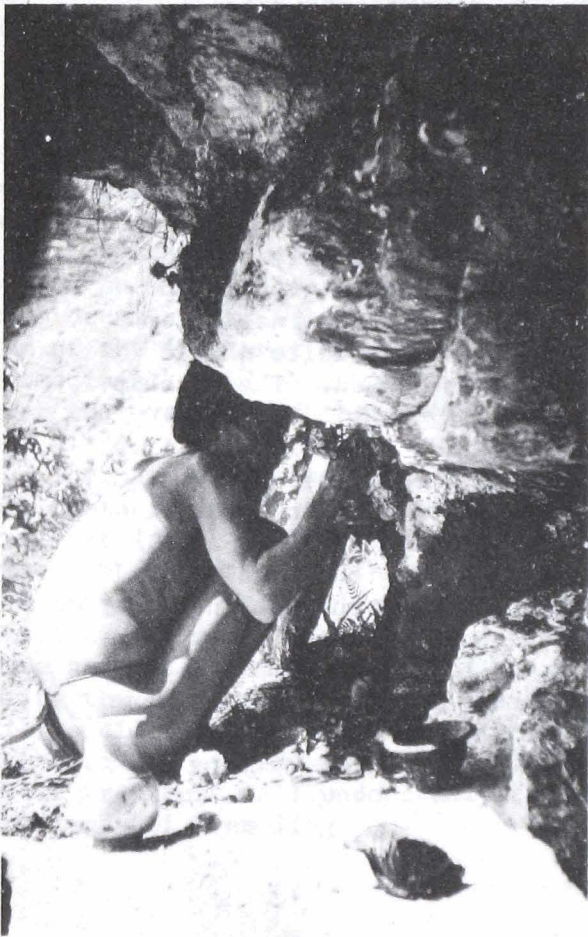
After the priest places the incense and the leaf-plates inside the cave in the presence of the god, he begins ringing the small bells that hang to the right of the cave entrance. He rings them continuously for twenty minutes as smoke pours out of the mouth of the cave. During this time, Chuinquin takes the two plates of jāṇḍ and hands them over to Lal Bahadur for safe-keeping; they are not to be consumed now but reserved for later. It will be recalled that the naris eat a small portion of this intoxicant from leaf-plates in their shelters at Dolakha on Daśamī. While Man Bahadur continues to ring the bells the jhāṅkrīs keep up their drumming and singing and at three points they pause to shake violently. But, as is to be expected from jhāṅkrīs, these violent spasms of the body are nevertheless kept under control.

Man Bahadur finally stops ringing the bells but carries on with his worship. Sitting back on his heels and with palms joined at his breast, he moves his lips rapidly but inaudibly. In his nakedness, he perches on this cliffside ledge in front of the cave and begs with an almost palpable intensity for strength from the god linked with his people's identity as a tribe. He is the image of dependence, a priest who offers what is thought to be pleasing to the gods and waits for their favour in return. Just a few feet away is Chuinquin, a jhāṅkri, another image of a relationship to the invisible world, different from the priest in that he as jhāṅkrī is in immediate and controlled contact with it. Not only does the jhāṅkrī make offerings to invisible powers; his body is host to those powers when and for how long he determines.

The contrast between priest and jhāṅkrī which I see illustrated in the scene at the cave is a contrast between a one-sided dependence and an interdependence. The priest expresses a one-sided dependence because he sets up a relationship with the invisible world through offerings which call for but do not strictly oblige a favour in return; the invisible powers retain their transcendence in such a relationship. But the jhāṅkrī and the god are interdependent and this is an important part of the meaning of the rider-mount vocabulary of possession. A rider and his mount form a unity, sharing each other's power to accomplish together what neither could do alone. When the god rides the jhāṅkrī, he forsakes to some extent his transcendence and becomes immanent; he makes his invisible presence visible and puts his uncontrollable power within the control of the jhāṅkrī. The skilful jhāṅkrī can then manipulate through his knowledge of chants and spells these invisible powers for the good of individuals or the whole community. A third possible attitude towards the invisible world would be that of denial or agnosticism and a consequent independence, which is a tendency, though by no means a necessary outcome, of the secular viewpoint. But people of this third view are not present at the cave.



59. Man Bahadur adorning the cave with marigolds.



60. The mūl-nari chanting and ringing the bell.



61. Ā Thami girl carefully holding her offer

It is now 1:00 P.M. The praying of the priest and the chanting, with tremblings, of the jhāṅkrī come to an end. Man Bahadur shifts the stone back into place with both hands. He goes off to get dressed, his work finished, and Chuinchuin takes charge of the proceedings from now on. Chuinchuin turns to the little group of worshippers and calls for the mūl pūjā (principal offering), by which he means the chicken that is to be offered first, and also for Sunrātrīko pino, a chicken that will be sacrificed to Sunrātrī Māī last of all. He takes the mūl-pūjā and sprinkles some achetā and water on its head three times altogether, ending with a fourth sprinkling of achetā. He then does the same for Sunrātrīko pino and for the six or seven other chickens the people have brought with them, including one little chick carried carefully by a small girl as her offering. He cracks two eggs on the head of his ritual dagger and pours their contents into a leaf-plate. Chuinchuin takes the mūl-pūjā in his hands and utters some prayers in a low voice; he plucks a few feathers and places them with the offering-plates, pulls back the chicken's head and slits its throat with his khukurī. He pours out the blood over the leaf-plates while the Thamīs throw flowers and achetā, invoking the names of Nārāyaṇ and Parmeśwari. Chuinchuin pulls off the chicken's head and puts it on one of the plates.

Chuinchuin follows the same procedure for all the chickens but without any praying or the throwing of flowers and achetā. He asks if there are any more to be offered and then calls for Sunrātrīko pino. He hands over this final offering to one of his disciples who sacrifices it in the usual way.

The next step in the ceremony involves a scrutiny of the chicken livers. One of the Thamīs in the group slits open the sacrificed chickens' stomachs and all the people eagerly crowd around as each liver is examined carefully. Bad livers, i.e., those with irregularly shaped perforations in them, are inauspicious omens and indicate trouble and pain in the coming year. Once the sacrificing and the examination of the livers is over (some good, some bad), there is a definite change of mood at the dharma-śālā as if a climax had been passed. The worshippers relax with a great deal of laughing and joking now. It is the time for the preparation and distribution of prasād. A small wood fire is built at the east end of the shed for cooking the livers and some eggs. While the people are waiting for the prasād Chuinchuin looks around for Man Bahadur. Where is the pujārī, asks the jhāṅkrī, and then Man Bahadur comes forward, fully dressed now, to receive a marigold from Chuinchuin. Other Thamīs watch the fire and tend the cooking of the meat and eggs. When sufficiently roasted the livers are removed from the fire and pulled into little pieces. The meat is combined with the fried eggs and the mixture distributed among all present. Everyone drinks some liquid maize beer (jāṅḍ) which in this ritual context they call sagun, i.e., an auspicious offering especially before setting off on a journey.

Thami Jhāṅkrī and Thakuri Patient

In the meantime Chuinchuin turns his attention to the problem of the sick Thakuri boy. All during this late morning and early afternoon pūjā Uttar Bahadur and his father have been sitting quietly and inconspicuously at the east end of the shed. Chuinchuin calls Uttar to come and sit behind him near the cave as he and his disciples beat their dhyāṅgros and chant for a few minutes in what seems to be a concluding rite followed by general distribution of ṭikā and flowers. After this Chuinchuin takes Uttar to the west end of the dharma-śālā. The jhāṅkrī sits down facing south and looking out over the valley while Uttar sits opposite him, not on the ground but on the slightly-raised stone wall, with the hillside dropping away below him.

As the jhāṅkrī begins beating his drum and chanting, Uttar's father turns to me and says that in the hills here the jhāṅkrī is our "doctor". Chuinchuin now and then leans close towards the boy and blows short puffs of breath at his head. After a few minutes Uttar begins to react. He starts shaking to the rhythm of the drum, his shoulders and crossed legs moving up and down with increasing force as if surrendering to the hypnotic effect of the beat. As his trembling becomes more violent his father tries to pull him down from the stone wall onto the ground, fearful lest his son fall backwards over the cliff. Uttar pushes him away but after several such attempts his father finally succeeds in bringing him down to ground level and out of physical danger.

After ten minutes of this treatment, the jhāṅkrī strikes the ground several times with the pointed handle of his drum, snaps his fingers towards Uttar and waves his arm with a gesture of dismissal, then begins the drumming again. Uttar trembles occasionally now, sometimes glancing up and around at the crowd of people who have been observing him keenly but now seem to be losing interest. After another ten minutes Chuinchuin stops drumming and Uttar gets up. The boy did not say a word the whole time of the treatment nor does he speak now; he only gives a few groans of weariness, moving his shoulders back and forth as if they are paining after the exertion of the shaking.

The anxious father questions the jhāṅkrī about his son's condition. Chuinchuin tells him not to worry, the boy will be all right, but further treatment is necessary. The jhāṅkrī then arranges to come to Uttar and treat him at home after the next full moon. Uttar's father seems satisfied thus far. He confides to me that his son's stomach pains are the result of a piśāc, the name he gives to whatever is the harmful invisible cause at work. Later I hear him discussing with Uttar the fact that during the treatment today "It did not speak (bakena)", referring to Uttar's silence all during the treatment. Whatever it is that is troubling him and causing his pains remained bottled up inside him. Future treatment will undoubtedly aim at this speaking-out during the experience of trembling.

Although he looks the picture of health, Uttar's stomach pains are presumably real with an equally real cause or causes. Are they merely physiological causes which could be cleared up by proper diagnosis and treatment by a doctor trained in modern medicine? Or are they physiological causes which themselves have been caused by psychological tensions present in this boy's life and of which he and his father are only partially aware? What I know of his circumstances suggests that his sickness is indeed a psychosomatic one. He is seventeen, a restless age when he would like to see more of the world; he has told me of his great desire to come to Kathmandu and find work. He has the example too of an elder brother who long ago left Dumkot for India where he has succeeded in raising his status from that of a farmer to that of a salaried service-holder in Siliguri. For a youth of seventeen a little house in an obscure village of a remote valley can easily seem confining and produce a longing for escape. Yet, at the same time, Uttar is liable to experience a natural fear of leaving the familiar, of taking a risk. Besides, there is his religious duty to his mother and father. His presence here in the home means security for their old age.

It does not require any special kind of insight to realize that such a situation as Uttar's is capable of producing real tensions. With his lack of education and experience Uttar may be quite unable to formulate and express his tensions in any other way than physical pain. He seeks relief from these tensions, if only temporarily. Treatment by a jhānkrī, with its hypnotic drumming and the physical exertion of trembling where one surrenders to the automatic movements of the body, could be a means for him to release those tensions for a period. Especially if he is brought to the point of speaking out, it might help him to work through those tensions and give them verbal expression, albeit in the symbolic language of traditional terminology (like piśāc). There is another important factor too: the treatment focusses the attention of others on his problem and its physical expression in his sickness. Those present provide him with active support in his difficulties by their interest and concern. In other words, jhānkrī treatment may be precisely what the situation calls for rather than a visit to a doctor even if it were feasible.

Uttar's father tells me that there is no need for him to pay the jhānkrī any fee for the short and inconclusive treatment he performed today. But after the full moon, when Chuinčin comes to the house to treat Uttar again, the jhānkrī will receive a money-gift (guru-bheṭi) for his services, on condition that he is able to cure the boy. The fact that the cave of Sādu Āpuk happens to be located on the property of this Thakuri family may account for the fact that Chuinčin got no profit from his work today. One quite unusual feature of the treatment is that it was performed during the daytime; normally such attempts at curing which involve the use of a drum and states of trembling are only done at night.

It can be pointed out here that though Thamis and Thakuris live in the same village they lead separate lives as far as ritual and religion are concerned, except when a Thami jhānkrī is called upon to treat

a sick Thakuri as today. The Thakuris are neither much interested in nor very well informed about the other activities of their Thami neighbours, such as the cave pūjā or even the Devikot Jātrā. What they do know about the events that take place at Dolakha on Daśamī frankly disgusts them. They are not present themselves since they are enjoying the festival at their own homes in Dumkot at the time but they have heard some of the details. What especially shocks the Thakuris, as several have told me, is not just the drinking of blood but the fact that the naris turn their buttocks (cāk) towards the goddess' shrine as they do so and then go naked through the town. These elements of the ritual strike them as crude.

This attitude on the part of their Thakuri neighbours can be considered as one of the possible sources for the Thamis' own mixed feelings towards their role in the ritual. On the one hand, there is a feeling of pride and identity as expressed in frequently heard sayings like: without our going, the Newars would not have a god, and in the satisfaction shown at being chosen by the Mahārānī (as Ratna Bir considered it an honour); on the other hand, there is that consciousness of being coerced, as when Man Bahadur says that if the naris do not go to drink the blood their own throats will be cut. They remember too what happened the one time they did refuse to go to Dolakha; it was no use refusing.

Journey to Dolakha

But once again the time has come to go. The people leave the cave area now to return home for their main meal of the day. For the naris, it will be their last food until their work at Devikot is accomplished. Man Bahadur goes to the courtyard of his brother Lal Bahadur's house, just above his own little dwelling. There Lal Bahadur shaves Man Bahadur's head and face. When this is finished the two brothers go down to Man Bahadur's house. The tiny one-room windowless hut is crowded with people; Man Bahadur's wife is feeding the three jhāṅkrīs and their several children, along with Lal Bahadur's daughters, with a maize preparation (cyāṅkhlā), meat and jāṅd. Everyone is eating and drinking at a leisurely pace, with many extra helpings at the cheerful urgings of Man Bahadur's wife. In spite of Lal Bahadur's warnings that it is getting late and time to go, no one seems to hurry the meal in the least.

At 4:00 P.M. Lal Bahadur finally gets the group moving. Looking dignified in clean white Nepali dress and black coat, he leads the way down the trail with Man Bahadur, Chuinchuin and disciples following behind. Lal Bahadur is the leader in this situation. Though the mūl-nari Man Bahadur and the guru jhāṅkrī exercise leadership in their own ritual spheres, the literate and practical-minded Lal Bahadur is in charge now when it is a question of organizing movements and keeping things progressing on some sort of schedule.

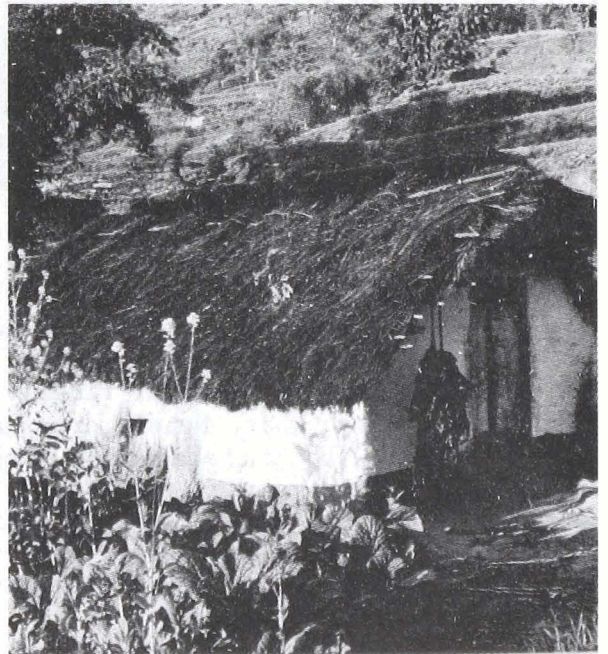
The group moves in single file down the narrow trail that winds between fields, using a shortcut that leads past a small shrine of



62. Gobinda Shahi Thakuri and family (Uttar in rear).



63. Lal Bahadur's daughter framed in her doorway.



64. The house of the mūl-nari Man Bahadur

Bhīmsen and then to the house of Sukh Bahadur in the lower part of the village. After Sukh Bahadur joins the group we descend to the river and, crossing the bridge, follow a level path that leads around the spur of the hill to a resting-place (cautārā) under tall trees. Here some twenty-five or thirty Thamis are assembled, including the guru Harkha Bahadur, the nari Ratna Bahadur Phalame and the new nari for this year's Devikot Jātrā, Ratna Bir, with his head shaved. An old man stands by with marigolds and bunches of the white bukī flower in his hands; earlier today I had met him when he was returning from the jungle above Dumkot with the flowers and the two long sticks that the naris will use tomorrow in the courtyard adjoining Rājkuḷeśwar. The old man takes pride in the fact that providing the flowers and sticks for the naris is his job each year. Many of the Thamis waiting here have brought large baskets with them which they hope to sell when they reach Dolakha.

We rest for a few minutes and when Lal Bahadur finishes a smoke he gives the signal to Harkha Bahadur, Chuinquin, the naris and the others that it is time to move on. The pace is very fast now, almost a trot, as the day grows on towards evening. Once we cross the next stream the climb to Dolakha is a gradual one over a narrow trail leading through fields, until we reach the broad main trail whose stone steps rise steeply to Bhīmsen's shrine above Dolakha. It is 6:30 P.M. and quite dark when we finally reach Bhīmsentān. The Thamis must now put up the straw shelter that is to serve them as home for the next few days.

In spite of the serious business they are about and the austerity with which they will celebrate Daśain here in Dolakha, the mood of this group of Thami men, women and children appears genuinely light-hearted. All along the trail there has been the sound of loud uninhibited laughter as they joke back and forth. Though the Newars may use them for their own purposes and fail to value or properly compensate them; though the Thakuris look down with disgust on what they are required to do for the sake of the Newars; though the Thamis themselves sometimes express their feelings of being coerced into this yearly cycle with no way of escape, still their spirit of unity and identity as Dumkot Thamis provides them with the inner strength to make the journey today. Fundamentally, I believe, they go freely to Dolakha because by so doing they can affirm this social identity of theirs. I have tried to show how the mūl-nari Man Bahadur as priest of Sādu Apuk and the guru Chuinquin as jhānkri there have both done their part today to renew and strengthen that identity through the ritual expression they gave to it at the cave.¹³

Footnotes

1. At a recent symposium at Thakur Ram Campus in Birganj on the importance of Simraungadh as a site of great historical and archaeological interest, the Narayani Zonal Commissioner promised government assistance to any researchers who wished to explore its ruins. He spoke of the black stone statues still in existence there. He also noted "that the practice of sacrificing more than five thousand buffaloes during the five yearly Gadimai fair in the area

which contrasted with the way people living in nearby Bihar hold in contempt the sacrifice of buffaloes and the consumption of their meat should naturally be an intriguing subject of research for historians and anthropologists." The Rising Nepal, 29 November 1976. Plates showing examples of the sculpture and carving to be seen among the ruins accompany the article by Thomas O. Ballinger, "Simraongarh Revisited: A Report on Some Observations Made at the Ruins of the Former Capital of Mithila in the Terai of Nepal," Kailash, 1, No. 3 (1973): 180-184.

2. During the middle ages many towns, including both Dolakha and Simraungadh, were forest-surrounded fortresses. The name Simraungadh is a contraction of Simra ban (forest) gad̥h (fort). Bajracharya and Shrestha, Dolakha, p. 4.
3. Luciano Petech, Medieval History of Nepal (Rome, 1958), pp. 111-112
4. Dhanabajra Bajracharya, ed., Itihās-Saṃśodhako Pramān-Prameya, Pahilo Bhāg (Lalitpur, 2019 B.S.), pp. 232-234.
5. Bajracharya and Shrestha, Dolakha, pp. 98-99.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 67.
7. Similarities in Chepang and Thami marriage customs have been pointed out by Bista but also a belief among some Chepangs at least that "they originated as an offshoot of the people in Dolakha of the east." People of Nepal, pp. 57-58.
8. Mecīdekhi Mahākālī, Vol. 2, p. 109. Such popular etymologies are punning stories, such as the one collected by Kesar Lal in Bigu. "On the bank of a stream a man was hewing a tree into a beam, and as he did so, bits of wood got into the water. Lower down the stream, a woman noticed the pieces of wood floating down, and getting curious, she walked upstream until she came to the man. 'What are you making?' she asked him. 'A tham for a house,' he said. 'Ah, you are a thami then,' she exclaimed. Tham, in Nepali, and tha'n in Newari of course mean a beam. Thami, it was explained to me, meant one who makes a beam." "The Thami," The Rising Nepal, 18 March 1966.
9. Macdonald, "The Tamang as Seen by One of Themselves," Essays, p. 144.
10. Chuinchuin sometimes uses the term dewālī pūjā in connection with the three-year ceremony at the cave but this refers to another aspect of it, the worship of the Thami kul deutā Bhume, and not to the god whom they brought with them from Simraungadh. Man Bahadur explains that at the time of the three-year pūjā at the cave Bhume is "made" out of twelve mounds of wheat flour and then carried down to the Bhumethān below the village. Bhume is an earth deity (from

bhūmī meaning. "earth"), perhaps the oldest god of all, and is worshipped by many tribes in the hills and the Terai of Nepal, such as the Tamangs, Gurungs, Tharus, Chepangs. In regard to the Thamis, we should take the term kul deutā as applied to Bhume here in the wide sense of a tribal god rather than just a particular lineage divinity. For an explanation of the meanings of kul deutā see Khem Bahadur Bista, Le Culte de Kuldevata (Paris, 1972), p. 56.

11. The previous pūjārī of the cave had been the mūl-narī Buddha Bahadur, elder step-brother of Man Bahadur. Buddha Bahadur was the son of their father's elder wife; Lal Bahadur and Man Bahadur are sons of the younger. Man Bahadur says that after his death the god of the cave will choose one of his two sons, either the elder or the younger (no telling which), to succeed him. Both these sons are now working in India but have not settled there permanently. Even though the choice is the prerogative of the god, he will not choose a man from another family, says Man Bahadur; the choice will stay within the limits of the line. Similarly, the choice of Chuinchuin as the jhānkri for the cave pūjā was not a human one, although it was expected. His predecessor in the role had been his elder brother and before him their father and grandfather. But Chuinchuin was unwilling to hazard any guesses about the next choice of the god. Obvious possibilities would be his younger brother (one of Chuinchuin's disciples) or his young son.
12. Admitting freely that the universality of religious feelings must have a real basis in fact, Emile Durkheim proposed in 1912 that "this reality, which mythologies have represented under so many different forms, but which is the universal and eternal objective cause of these sensations sui generis out of which religious experience is made, is society." "The Social Foundations of Religion," (excerpts from The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life) in Sociology of Religion (Middlesex, 1969), ed. Roland Robertson, p. 47. Though I see how this can apply to the worship of the god brought from Simraungadh, I do not think Durkheim's proposition, stimulating as it is, can explain all forms of worship. A more balanced view seems to be that of Evans-Pritchard who understands religion and social structures to be inter-related, coordinated, and yet not identified. Nuer Religion, p. 313.
13. Before leaving the subject of the Thamis of Dumkot, whose simplicity and lack of greed I came to admire, I would like to express the hope that the preceding pages (and the accompanying photographs may help to counteract a judgement made about the Thamis by authors with an eye to military recruitment, written nearly fifty years ago and recently reprinted. "One more caste inhabiting Eastern Nepal remains to be mentioned. This is the Thami. Only about three to four thousand in number, they live chiefly on the banks of the Sunkosi and Tamburkosi rivers. Coarse in appearance, and the inferior of the other races in social and religious matters, they do not merit further description." W. Brook Northey and C.J. Morris, The Gurkhas: Their Manner, Customs and Country (Delhi, 1974), p. 260.

JHĀNKRĪS AND DEOLANG JĀTRĀ

Elements in the Popular Picture of Deolang Jatra

Jhānkrīs and pujārīs interacted on Kalingchok, at Devikot and Rājkuḷeśwar, and at the cave in Dumkot in ways which served to point up the contrast between them and between their approaches to the invisible world. They used different tactics and techniques in the manipulation of that world to man's advantage. It was with growing curiosity then that I set out for the Tamang village of Deolang in January 1975 in search of the jhānkrī connected with the festival held yearly on the full moon of Pūs (Swasthānī Pūrṇimā) at the shrine of Deoliṅgeśwarī Mahādev.¹ For, judging from the reports received about him from Chetri, Tamang and Thami informants in various villages of Dolakha District, this Tamang jhānkrī exhibited unusual characteristics. He turned out to be, in fact, a pujārī-jhānkrī, even a gūṭhiyār-jhānkrī, combining in himself diverse elements in a paradoxical synthesis, rich in symbolism, which contributes further to our understanding of what a jhānkrī is.

Deolang Jātrā is the only occasion on which this jhānkrī makes an appearance or has any function and the festival enjoys a certain notoriety in Dolakha District. No one can speak of it without an edge of excitement or a touch of exaggeration. One of the first villagers to mention the festival to me described it as the greatest in the land (muluk), an overstatement which rather touchingly revealed the narrow limits of his world. People's enthusiasm for the Deolang Jātrā is based on a number of factors which together create the complex magnetism that draws hundreds from all directions and all communities. Before narrating the events of the festival and describing the role of the pujārī-jhānkrī as I saw it, it is valuable to relate the way in which the devotees themselves describe it.

The first point villagers usually emphasize in their accounts is that only one jhānkrī appears at the festival. Now since jhānkrīs abound in these hill villages it is inevitable that among the pilgrims there will be any number of them in attendance, yet they are present not as jhānkrīs but as ordinary men. They wear no special dress and carry no drums. Only one jhānkrī comes as jhānkrī, the people say. The second point stressed is that this jhānkrī comes without warning in the middle of the night. No one sees him coming, then suddenly he appears at the shrine of Mahādev, surrounded by a band of attendants who shout and brandish clubs. Thirdly, it is Mahādev who rides the jhānkrī at this time (Mahādev caḍcha); the expression that the jhānkrī comes in the shape or form of Mahādev (Mahādevko rūpmā) is also heard. People believe that if they can touch the jhānkrī now (in spite of the attendants who try to keep them away) their prayers for progeny, both sons and livestock, will be granted. Yet the jhānkrī channels Mahādev's boons (bardān) to them in such a way that he gets no profit for himself but remains poor and without sons all his life. A fourth colourful element in the dramatic picture people have in their minds when they think of Deolang Jātrā is the jewelry (gahanā) of Mahādev, considered

to be very old and worth hundreds of thousands of rupees. These ornaments are put on display during the festival and the jhāṅkrī wears one of the crowns of Mahādev. At the conclusion of the jātrā, the jewels are placed at the stone worshipped as Mahādev's lingam, the liṅga in the name Deoliṅgeśwarī. A good number of non-Deolang people add, mistakenly, that a Newar pujārī brings these ornaments from Dolakha Bhīm-senthān each year.

Another popular belief about the festival, which turned out to be only partially true, concerns the jhāṅkrī's drum. Before making his appearance at the Mahādevthān the jhāṅkrī stops for some time in a clump of trees for the sacrifice of a young male goat to the god called Bhairung. The flesh is roasted and shared among his club-wielding attendants. People say that the jhāṅkrī then takes the goat-skin and stretches it over a pre-made frame, thus making a new ḍhyāṅgro each year. Though this last detail seems to have caught the imagination of many people, it is mistaken; the drum is not made new at each festival. But the sacrifice of the goat and the sharing of its flesh is true indeed and, as we shall see, rich in symbolism.

Legends of the Shrine

Time and again pilgrims during the two festivals I attended (1975 and 1976) praised the Mahādevthān here as a place of unique importance in comparison with other shrines of Mahādev in the district because of its legendary discovery by a cow. The legend takes various forms but the point is always the same: Mahādev was here and no one knew of it until a cow revealed his presence. Pilgrims worship the cow's footprints on a flat rock bordering the trail that connects Deolang with Thadi. It was here at this spot, called Gāiko Śilā (the cow's stone), that an elderly Tamang told me the following version, after first scattering achetā and poinsettia leaves as an offering to the cow. During his narration other pilgrims passed by and made offerings of achetā and milk.

Once there was a cow, begins the Tamang's story, who came from a herdsman's shelter on the eastern side of the Tama Kosi. She crossed over and climbed up the steep hillside to a point several thousand feet above the river in Deolang valley (where we are standing now). Here she left her footprints on the rock. Another rock was blocking the way going north but it opened for the cow long enough to let her pass through. She continued on her way around the spur into Thadi valley until she came to the spot where the shrine is now located. Only the cow knew that Mahādev was there. She offered her milk and then returned home by the same route, with the huge rock once more opening for her to pass. When she arrived back at the shelter her calf was crying for milk but there was none left. Her owners became suspicious when they realised that, although she had a calf, she had no milk to give. Next day the cow returned to Mahādev in the same way as before but this time men followed her, holding on to her tail. The rock blocking the path opened up again and let the cow through with the men trailing behind. Now, however, the rock remained open. The men witnessed the cow giving her milk and thus they realized that Mahādev was there. From

that time on, men began worshipping Mahādev in that place.

Another version of the legend, and one which connects the cow with the jhānkrī, was told by a man from the Chetri village of Khare on the opposite side of the Tama Kosi from Deolang. The shrine of Deoliᅅgeśwari Mahādev, he begins, originates from the cow of Mahādev. The discovery of the holy place occurred perhaps fifty or sixty years ago.² At that time the incarnate (avatāri) lama at Rolwaling, grandfather of the present avatāri lama there, had a yak cow (caurī gai) who would not give milk to anyone; at milking time she was always dry. Not only that, after dark the cow was never in her shed nor did anyone know where she went each night. At the same time, the people of Deolang, several days' walk away on the other side of the Tama Kosi, were noticing that there was milk at an uninhabited spot some distance from their village but no one knew from where it was coming. One man especially wondered about this. He was a daᅅgur (daᅅgur, explains the narrator, means dhāmi and is a synonym for jhānkrī in this area).³ The daᅅgur knew it was not his cow that was going and giving milk there.

Of course, the narrator continues, though no one realized it at the time, it was the avatāri lama's cow which was coming to the spot each night, offering her milk to Mahādev, and then returning to Rolwaling by morning. No one knows how she was able to make the journey so quickly; perhaps she flew. One day the daᅅgur did not eat anything; his stomach was empty. That night, at midnight, he had a dream in which he was directed to go to the place where milk was being found and there, he was told, he would see a cow giving milk. The daᅅgur got up at once; taking his pūjā articles, he left the house and reached the spot at 4:00 A.M., feeling a bit afraid. Then he heard the sound of triśūls shaking and bells ringing. The cow was making these sounds and, even though the daᅅgur had not yet seen her, he knew that his dream was indeed true. He drew near and saw the cow pouring milk from all her udders onto a stone. When the daᅅgur saw this, Mahādev mounted on his back (āᅅgmā caᅅhera) and he began to shake.

At this point the cow noticed the daᅅgur looking at her. Now that she had been seen by a man she stopped giving her milk and was unable to fly away to give milk to her calf. When she did not appear in Rolwaling next morning the cowherd in charge began searching but could not find her anywhere. At the same time, the daᅅgur sent word to the avatāri lama that the cow was with him. Men came from Rolwaling to fetch her; it took them three days journey to bring her back. This was the beginning of the Deolang Jātrā.⁴

And so, the narrator concludes, on the night of the festival the present daᅅgur comes over the path from Deolang village to the shrine built above the village of Thadi in the same way as did the daᅅgur of the story. He comes swiftly over the rough path without any stumbling or hesitation, as if he were flying. No one can touch him as he comes, even if they try. Mahādev rides him and he trembles.

On another occasion as I approached this place of the legendary cow's footprints, my Tamang companions brushed away the leaves to let me see the footmarks of the cow (gāiko pāilā), several slight indentations about six inches long and about three inches apart. Though they bowed and offered leaves of gāitihāre, they had no hesitation about touching these holy relics to indicate which of the many similar scratches are the sacred ones. A few minutes further down the trail they showed me that other reminder of the cow: the huge cleft rock, about ten feet high, that lies in the path and through which we pass for about five feet. My companions told me that this too is deutā (god) but made no offerings or signs of respect here.

The word deutā is wonderfully broad, designating anything connected with the invisible, out-of-layman-control, universe. What classifies this cleft rock as deutā is its wonderful extraordinary appearance and its connection with the fabulous cow at whose coming and going it would open and close. Once men saw this happen (as they followed behind the cow), it became fixed and controllable in the sense of being a rock that anyone could traverse back and forth, yet still retaining some sacredness because of association. So too with the cow herself who used to come (no one saw how) from so far each night to give her milk and then return before morning - it is when she is discovered by the jhānkri and seen in the act of pouring her milk on the stone that she loses hold of her extraordinary powers and comes into the control of the jhānkri. No longer able to come and go in her marvelously invisible way, she awaits the arrival of the cowherds called by the jhānkri and is then led meekly back over the three-day trail to her shed in Rolwalin.

To see is to bring under control. No ordinary man can see the invisible powers that intrude here and there in human affairs; but a jhānkri sees them to the extent that he names them, carries them on his back, talks to them, bargains with them. When their presence is harmful he separates them once again from the human sphere into which they have inserted themselves, either on their own initiative or drawn here by the evil intentions and curses of human enemies. Thus it is here a jhānkri that sees the cow and discovers the presence of Mahādev. Mahād then makes himself visible in the jhānkri's trembling, visible and in this case available for the granting of the great boon (bardān) of fruitfulness.

Dramatis Personae of Deolang Jātrā

Let us now turn to the present jhānkri of the shrine and the gūthiyārs. As I make inquiries in the village of Deolang for the house of the jhānkri, a boy asks if it is the gūthiyār-jhānkri that I am looking for. The name itself suggests that this jhānkri is of a quite special type, attached to an institution like a gūthī. But, as I was to find out, the title does not mean that he has a voice in the gūthī or in the arrangements for the festival. Rather it means that he is a jhānkri used by the gūthī. He gets no profit; on the contrary, because of his position he is doomed to a life of poverty and insecurity without hope of ever having a son, as will become clearer.

People in the village of Deolang give directions to the gūṭhīyār-jhāṅkrī's house but tell me that he will not be at home now; he will be found today, the day of preparation for tonight's festival (14 January 1975; 13 Māgh 2031 B.S.), at the house of the gūṭhīyār Gardul Singh Tamang. Gardul's house turns out to be a well-built two-storey structure with a large courtyard and surrounded by the similarly substantial houses of his brothers. Neither the jhāṅkrī nor the gūṭhīyār are there and so I climb up to the jhāṅkrī's own house. The contrast is striking. Instead of a comfortable homestead like Gardul's the jhāṅkrī's dwelling is a miserable low-roofed one-room affair. He is not at home but further searching leads me to him in a neighbour's house. He invites me inside and introduces himself as gūṭhīyār-jhāṅkrī. This term, he says, is the preferred designation for him, although he does refer to himself as pujārī as well.

His name is Dawa Tamang. He is fifty-eight now (in 1975) and has been gūṭhīyār-jhāṅkrī since the age of thirty-seven. He claims that his father and grandfather were gūṭhīyār-jhāṅkrīs before him. Furthermore, he wants me to know that this appointment comes from sarkār (the king, the government) and thus the gūṭhīyār-jhāṅkrī is like the rājā of the area.

Dawa has reached thus far in his self-praise when the gūṭhīyār Gardul arrives at the house along with his brother Maila. The gūṭhīyār-jhāṅkrī and I move out into the courtyard where there is more room and, with Dawa Tamang now meekly listening instead of holding forth, Gardul brings the discussion down to earth. He explains that he and an elder step-brother (called Maila but not the same as Gardul's younger brother Maila) are the Panchayat Members for Deolang's two wards and the gūṭhīyārs for the shrine of Mahādev.⁵ It is their responsibility to identify the new gūṭhīyār-jhāṅkrī chosen by Mahādev when the present one dies. How will they recognize him? The god Mahādev moves (sarcha) to the man of his choice and manifests this in the man's shaking and by his words when in that trembling state. No guru is required for his training; Mahādev himself is his guru and teaches the new jhāṅkrī what to do.

Remembering the statement just made by Dawa that his father and grandfather were gūṭhīyār-jhāṅkrīs before him, I ask Gardul if Mahādev always moves to the son of the previous jhāṅkrī. No, he replies, that cannot be; Mahādev does not move to the son because the jhāṅkrī never has a son. Mahādev will not choose a man with a son nor, once chosen, will the jhāṅkrī ever have a son in the future. Dawa listens to this explanation without comment. He has no sons, though he has two daughters his predecessor, Kapur Singh, had no son either and never married, says Gardul in answer to my questions. He then mentions another factor in Mahādev's choice; the gūṭhīyār and the gūṭhīyār-jhāṅkrī are always of the same clan (thar) of Tamangs, namely, Ngarden. We will see later that the question of clan here is a complex one.

Dawa's probably innocent desire to impress me with his status and background as gūṭhīyār-jhāṅkrī has thus come to nothing with the arrival of Gardul on the scene. Perhaps he takes it as part of his fate. For, indeed, his lot as the chosen one of Mahādev is not a happy one. He will always be poor as he is now; he will never have any sons to be his security when he grows older. His fellow villagers explain it in words such as these: when the gūṭhīyār-jhāṅkrī suddenly bursts into the shrine compound tonight, surrounded by attendants brandishing clubs to keep the crowds away from him, many people will try to touch him. They know that Mahādev is riding him. They touch the jhāṅkrī and ask for what they want from Mahādev. They say, give me a son or give me a cow or give me a buffalo. Some even make the sound of the animal they desire. Mahādev gives them sons in this way and so the gūṭhīyār-jhāṅkrī has no sons for himself. Mahādev gives them cows and there is none for the jhāṅkrī himself. People beg for riches from Mahādev as they touch the jhāṅkrī; they receive what they ask for and thus he is poor and has nothing.

And so we see that although the gūṭhīyār-jhāṅkrī has the distinction of being the chosen one of Mahādev and is the centre of attention for many at the yearly festival, it profits him not at all as far as the material goods of this world are concerned. He is an empty channel.

Gardul goes on to explain that Dawa, referring to him now by the title of pujārī-jhāṅkrī, does not perform any healing seances (cintā) for the villagers when they are sick; there are other jhāṅkrīs, ordinary ones, in the village for that purpose. The pujārī-jhāṅkrī is exclusive for the Deolang Jātrā. In other words, not only is he fixed as regards place but he is also fixed as regards time, functioning as he does only on this one occasion.⁶

When Gardul speaks of the gūṭhī, he claims that he and his elder step-brother Maila and the jhāṅkrī Dawa are all equal (hāmī barābar). But Gardul is clearly more "equal" than the others. For he keeps charge of the key to the boxes containing the treasures of Mahādev. Though the boxes themselves are stored in the upstairs of the elder step-brother's house Maila takes little interest in the affairs of the festival; the boxes are kept there only out of deference to his age, says Gardul. Regarding the gūṭhī land, its boundaries are set down in a copper plate inscription (tāmāpatra) which Gardul keeps. Though the land designated therein has all become taxed land (rakam) now, except for a small token piece, still the copper plate remains as a legitimation of Gardul's position as gūṭhīyār. Its importance as such was indicated to me a year later, in January 1976, when I came to know that not everyone willingly acknowledges this position of his.

A few days before the Deolang Jātrā in that year, on the path from Dolakha down to the Tama Kosi, I chanced to fall in with an elderly Tamang woman from Thadi who had nothing good to say about Gardul Singh. She was returning to her village from the District Court in Charikot where she had instituted a case against him with the accusation that he has no right to be the gūṭhīyār and that the tāmāpatra belongs to her. She boasted that she was Shingden, the highest ranking clan (she

says) among the Tamangs, adding that Gardul and the jhānkri Dawa are not Ngarden as they claim but Cusubija and other Tamangs will not take water from them.⁷ I do not think much of Dawa's ability as daṅgur either, she went on; he did not start as a young boy but only learned the chants later.

Though the old lady walked with me that day and the next, lodging in the same house at night, she would not answer my questions about the details of the case she has brought against the gūthiyār. Perhaps my obvious eagerness to know more put her off; at any rate she merely continued to make vague promises to tell me the whole story but never fulfilled them. When I cautiously brought up the subject later in Deolang, the gūthiyār's younger brother Maila claimed ignorance of any such case.

Gardul and his brothers maintain that the position of gūthiyār has been hereditary in their family for as long as human memory serves. The source of the above dispute, however, may be not very far back in the family history, for I happened to learn that Gardul's grandfather had taken a Newar woman as wife. Though the family gives Ngarden as their clan, a relative by marriage tells me that they are Ngarpa and explains this as meaning "fallen, from Newar (Newārbata khaseko)."⁸ It is true that Gardul and his sons do not have typically Tamang features and could easily pass for Newars. Their Newar appearance is perhaps the source of the confusion for villagers who come from other valleys to the festival and see Gardul arriving at the shrine with the boxes containing Mahādev's treasures; they jump to the conclusion that this man is a Newar coming from Dolakha. It may be too that the old Tamang woman thinks that Gardul's family has lost the right to be gūthiyār because of the grandfather's marriage outside the tribe.

Possession of this tāmāpatra then does have special importance. Back at his house it is with great care that Gardul fetches it from its place of safekeeping in the upper storey to show it to me. He chuckles with amusement as I try to read the tiny letters; a magnifying glass would have been required to make out the words easily. But then he produces from his pocket a paper on which the writing has been transcribed, the work of Hem Gajadhar, a Khadka Chetri from the village of Bulung to the south. After giving details of the gūthī land boundaries, the inscription ends with the date 850. Gardul is convinced that this is 850 in Bikram Sambat which would make it incredibly old, i.e., A.D. 793. No amount of arguing from internal evidence of language and vocabulary and alphabet can shake his conviction; he seems to take the suggestion that it might be 850 Nepal Sambat, i.e., A.D. 1730, as a personal affront.⁹ He cannot accept that it could possibly be so recent for "not even my grandfather could remember when the tāmāpatra had been given and he lived before the reign of King Tribhuvan," (A.D. 1911-1955).

The gūthī still provides a goat for the annual sacrifice to Bhairung and the people from the villages round about provide enough ghee to keep the lamps at the shrine burning all night during the festival. Gardul says that he has taken on himself the responsibility and the expense of keeping the two trails from Deolang to the shrine in good repair and recently fixed the upper one where a landslide had taken place.

Seeing the gūṭhīyār Gardul at work today, busy with the many preparations for the festival, and the gūṭhīyār-jhāṅkrī Dawa sitting idly by with nothing to do (until Mahādev rides him) brings to mind Gardul's statement: we are equal (hāmī barābar). Equal they are not. Perhaps what he means is complementary. The gūṭhīyār is a practical man, eager and able to cope with road repairs and gūṭhī finances and organizational details; a successful man, well-fed and well-housed, with a wife fruitful with five sons; a man very much at home in this world. The gūṭhīyār jhāṅkrī is in every way a contrast and all because of his special relationship to the invisible power called Mahādev, seen as the source of the elusive blessings of this world. These are blessings that as gūṭhīyār-jhāṅkrī he mediates to those who use him as a point of contact with the unseen reality. But this jhāṅkrī is by definition merely an empty channel for these favours, nothing more; he gains no personal profit from his role as mediator, no prestige even, only fame of an unenviable sort.¹⁰

One more dramatis persona must be introduced here before proceeding with an account of the festival itself. One of the gūṭhīyār-jhāṅkrī's interchangeable titles, in addition to daṅgur and pujārī-jhāṅkrī, is mūl-jhāṅkrī (chief jhāṅkrī) which could suggest that, in spite of the insistence by most pilgrims that he is the only jhāṅkrī at the festival, there is another involved officially as well. And there is such a man, called sāno jhāṅkrī (small jhāṅkrī). He serves as a forerunner of the mūl-jhāṅkrī, reaching the shrine some minutes previous to Dawa's arrival there and then serving as an assistant to him in the activities that will be described. And like the mūl-jhāṅkrī, the sāno jhāṅkrī will never have any sons.

Preparations for the Performance

In what follows I will combine elements from the two Deolang Jātrās that I attended, the one held on 26-27 January 1975 (13-14 Māgh 2031 B.S.) and the other on 16-17 January 1976 (2-3 Māgh 2032 B.S.) while pointing out significant divergences when they occur. A double visit to the festival was not only desirable but necessary in order to observe and participate in the events at the gūṭhīyār's house and later in the simultaneous activities at Bhairungthān and Mahādevthān.

It is now past noon on the day before the full moon and the upper trail leading from Deolang to Thadi valley and the shrine of Mahādev is a colourful sight with its continuous line of pilgrims making their way from villages to the south: Tamangs, Sherpas, Thamis, Brahmins, Chetri. These groups, usually made up of a dozen or more men and women and children, move at a leisurely pace. There is a good deal of teasing and joking. Everyone carries a bundle of some kind, including food for today and tomorrow, since they will spend the night at the shrine in vigil and return to their homes on the full moon day itself.

The pilgrims bring offerings for Mahādev. Some of the people carry small iron triśūls in their hands with oranges or amalā (hogplum) stuck on the points. Other pilgrims bring wooden containers of curd or short sections of bamboo with milk to pour out at the shrine. In exchange for these offerings they expect to receive the answers to their prayers. For though the gūthiyār-jhānkrī comes tonight in the form of Mahādev, it is not everyone who can touch him nor is everyone interested in doing so. A large number of people are content to come before the stone of Mahādev, present their gifts, and make their requests. Still others, notably the Bhotiyas now making their way down from Lamabagar and Rolwaling, find a sufficient reason to come there in the shops and crowds that throng the fields above the shrine.

At the gūthiyār's house, Gardul's wife has been busy during the day with the preparation of food and drink, making maize beer for her husband and visitors as it is required. Gardul confides to me at our noon meal that this is his thirteenth bowl of beer of the day. He adds that he will reach twenty before it is time to leave home for the jātrā. Though he says beer does not affect him in any way, he admits that raksi does and it will be available at the festival tonight. Gardul mentions that neither he nor the jhānkrī are allowed to eat millet for five days, including tomorrow. The only other dietary prohibition for them at this time is beef (gāiko māsu). According to Gardul, Tamangs may and do eat beef at other times provided the cow has died accidentally. At no time, however, do they eat the flesh of pigs, though they will eat wild boar if available.

The gūthiyār's morning had been occupied in finding a suitable goat for the sacrifice to Bhairung tonight and arranging for a boy to take it to Bhairungthān in the afternoon. At 2:30 P.M. a young Tamang, Laxman, arrives at the house with a small male goat (boko). As Dawa and a few of Gardul's brothers and sons look on, Gardul removes his cap and, with palms joined, begins to pray; he then sprinkles achetā on the goat's back. No water is used. Everyone in the courtyard waits in tense silence for the goat to give the shake which is the necessary prelude to any animal sacrifice. But the goat is oblivious of both the attention and the achetā and does not try to shake it off; instead it wanders around the courtyard for several minutes until it comes to a female goat in a pen. They sniff each other curiously and then the young goat shakes itself. Immediately the silence is broken by happy and excited voices shouting to one another, "It shook (parsyo)!" As I was to learn later, it must not shake again until the actual moment of sacrifice six hours from now at Bhairungthān.

The goat is kept tied up in the courtyard for the time being; later in the afternoon Laxman will take it to Bhairungthān. There is other last minute work for the gūthiyār to see to now, namely, the preparation of cotton wicks for the lamps which will burn all night at the shrine. As Gardul busies himself with this an old woman arrives at the house bringing a small wooden container of ghee for the lamps. Gardul says that each household of the area brings him a half mānā (a

mānā is about a pound) or three-quarters mānā of ghee as its contribution. The next important job to be attended to will be the inventory of Mahādev's treasures, but in the meantime Gardul and his sons Jetha (about twenty) and Maila (about eighteen) sit in the sunny courtyard, sewing hems and sleeves onto new goat-hair jackets (lukuni) and chatting cheerfully. The gūṭhīyār-jhāṅkrī Dawa sits idly by.

As it gets on towards 4:00 P.M. Gardul, with two of his brothers and Dawa, goes to the house of the other gūṭhīyār Maila. Their courtyards are adjacent but the boundary line between wards seven and eight of Orang Panchayat cuts right between them so that Gardul is the Panchayat Member for ward eight and Maila for ward seven. Now it is time to open the boxes and check their contents before sending them on to the shrine. I had been told that when the boxes are opened the jhāṅkrī begins to shake at the sight of Mahādev's ornaments. But today Maila's baby grandson is sick in the house and so, it is explained, the jhāṅkrī will not tremble when the ornaments are taken out in his presence. I was unable to discover the deeper reason for this. Would it be dangerous for the sick child or others in the household or the jhāṅkrī? Or would Mahādev be considered unwilling to come and manifest himself where there is sickness? At any rate, the decision not to shake was clearly the jhāṅkrī's. Everything we have learned and observed up to now about jhāṅkrīs shows that they are in control of their trembling. That is the whole point of being a jhāṅkrī. It would be unfair to look down on them for being able to turn trance off and on, as if this indicated insincerity or sham. They are not victims of trance but masters of it.

The jhāṅkrī waits downstairs as Gardul, Maila, and Gardul's brother Thulo Kancha carry three copper boxes (two feet by ten inches and one foot deep) from upstairs and place them on a seat at the side of the verandah. Before the boxes are unlocked, Dawa puts on two rudrākṣa necklaces with bells tied to them, wearing them over his shoulders so that they cross in front of his chest. These necklaces are not his personal property but are kept here in Maila's house during the year; the jhāṅkrī wears them from now until the end of the ceremonies next day and they are the only specifically jhāṅkrī gear that he uses.

A small drum, a foot and a half long, is brought down and placed on the verandah. Gardul refers to it as a damaru, although it is unlike the double-headed drum that is commonly meant by that term and looks like a narrow mādal. This is the drum that pilgrims to the festival talk about as being made anew each year with the skin of the goat sacrificed to Bhairung. Actually its skin is taken from a musk deer (kas-tūrī). It has no strap and will be carried under the left arm not of the mūl-jhāṅkrī but of the sāno jhāṅkrī who plays it when he enters the shrine compound tonight.

Gardul unlocks the boxes and examines their contents, piling them up here and there on the verandah seat: three copper plates (thāl), two feet in diameter; three copper water pots (gāgrī); three copper lamp stands about two feet in height; a three-pronged copper stand, about two feet high, resembling a tree trunk with three branches; three leaf-shaped silver flowers to be attached to the above branches.

In addition there are a half-dozen or so head-ornaments or crowns called jantar-sikrī. The jantar (amulet) is a heavy square piece of metal, with a raised flower-like design in its centre, which hangs from a sikrī (chain). When worn like a crown the jantar centre-piece lies on the forehead in a diamond shape. Though Gardul and Dawa say that the jantar is gold and the sikri silver, both pieces have the same dull metallic colour. The boxes contain besides more than a dozen small copper cows, votive offerings from devotees of the god who was discovered by a cow and who blesses his worshippers with cows. Long necklaces of Indian rupees and a bag of coins complete the inventory of treasures.

There is no ceremony involved in all of this; it is a business operation, getting the boxes downstairs, checking quickly that everything is there, loading them into baskets and giving them into the charge of two porters with instructions to take them to the straw hut adjoining the shrine compound and guard them until the gūthiyār comes. The jhānkrī leaves for home now and we will not see him again until he comes to Bhairungthān for the sacrifice. Gardul returns home too and brings down another bag of old coins which he keeps in his house.

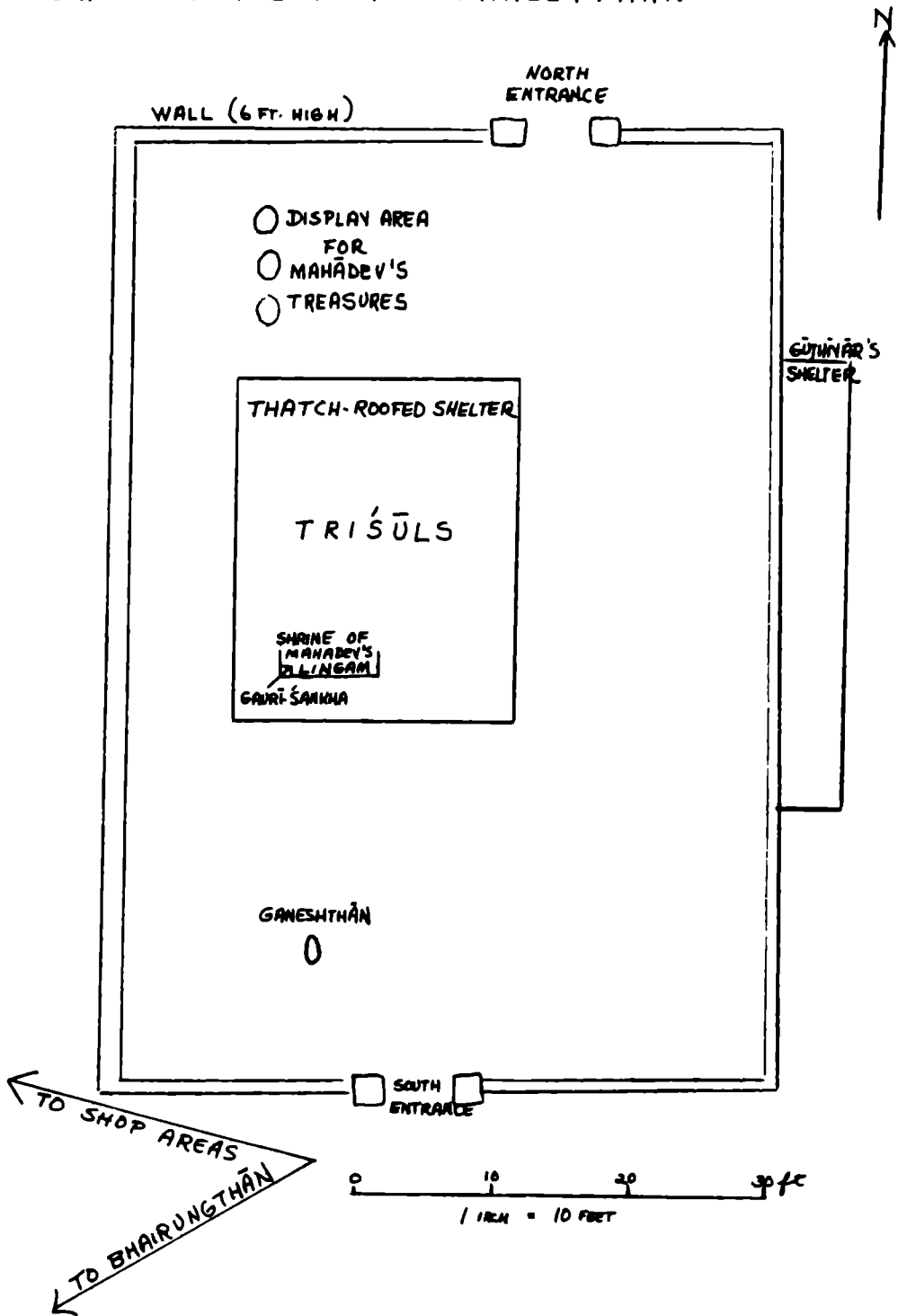
The Scene at Mahādevthān

The hour has now arrived when Gardul must make the journey to Mahādevthān to put the ghee into the lamps around the shrine and arrange the wicks. After leaving Deolang and rounding the spur that leads to the next valley, we can see in the distance, on the other side of the Thadi Kholā, the small Tamang settlement of Thadi. Just above it, a cluster of tall trees marks the place of the shrine which lies at its edge. People crowd the three terraces on the hill side above the Mahādevthān. Here merchants have set up their shops, a dozen or more, with poles and matting. The larger establishments are operated by Newars from Laduk; here one can buy cloth, shoes, soap, gaudy trinkets, torch cells, even transistor radios. Other shops offer tea and biscuits, sweets and sel rotī (deep-fried rice-flour bread). Home-made raksī is sold too but not openly; those who want it can find it. Farmers sit by the trail side and try to attract the attention of buyers for their prize vegetables, especially giant-size radishes. The crowds continue to grow with groups from villages in all directions converging on the shrine. By night they will number about fifteen hundred.

As the darkness increases, the shop areas jam with customers and curious "window-shoppers". People overflow onto the higher and narrower terraces where they huddle together in little groups for warmth against the chill air of Māgh. Once night has fallen a few sleep, some dance, many sing. The singing is not religious in nature, as it was on Kalingchok, but just for fun, mainly teasing songs sung back and forth between groups of men and groups of women. The different groups here and there over the hill side singing at their own pitch, beginning and ending at different times, do not clash but blend to create a continuous flow of music, very pleasing to the ear. On Kalingchok it was the same song sung by everyone, but here the different songs produce a polyphonic effect which seems from my listening-point to unify the whole assembly

DIAGRAM 3.

ŚRĪ DEOLĪNGEŚWARĪ MAHĀDEVTHĀN



of pilgrims into one performing unit, each with his own part and yet capable of enjoying the total.

Groups of Sherpas are dancing. In one group only women dance but in another both men and women, arms linked together, form a circle and dance to the tune of a mouth-organ and the beat of the spectators' clapping. Tailor-musicians (damāin) manoeuvre through the throngs with their horns and drums, providing music for anyone who feels moved to dance to it. As the musicians work their way across the terraces, men rise from the sitting groups and dance with simple footwork and much graceful waving of the arms and hands.

The shrine compound seems to attract fewer people's attention than the shop area, at least in these early hours of the night. A stone wall about six feet high, with a north and a south entrance, encloses a rectangular compound measuring about fifty by seventy feet. Within the compound is a thatch-roofed hut (chāpro) about twenty by twenty-five feet in size, open on four sides but nearly enclosed on the west by a rise in the ground. Mahādev is worshipped at the south end of this shelter where a small wooden framework houses the object of pūjā itself: a flat black stone lying horizontally almost at ground level and called a lingam (liṅga) in spite of its non-phallic shape. Behind the stone and rising above it are thousands of triśūls piled there by devotees over the years. The opening of the wooden framework is hung about with bells and in general the impression is very similar to the shrine of Bhagawatī Kuṇḍa on the top of Kalingchok. But instead of the pond there is the flat rock. This is the stone on which the cow made her offerings of milk to Mahādev.

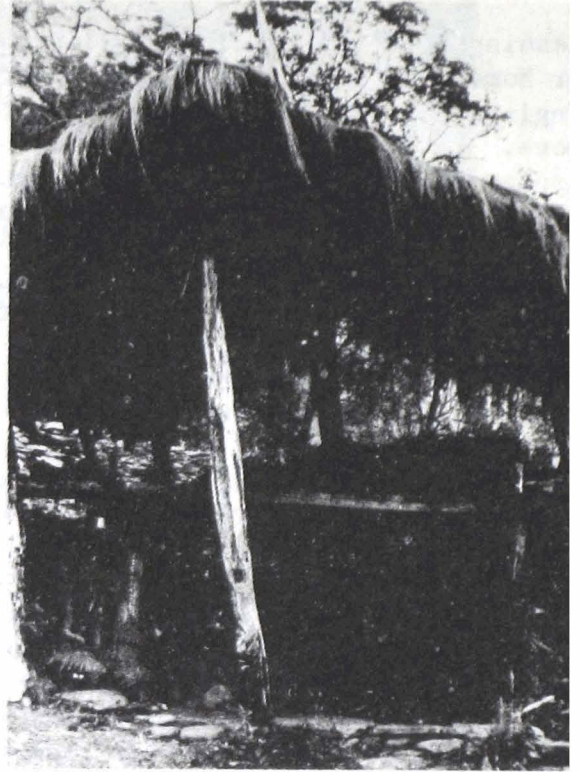
A skull-like object lies on the black stone. Dead-white in colour, it has two widely-spaced openings near the top that resemble eyes and two small bumps above them that remind one of animal horns. For many people this object is a head (ṭāuko), some calling it the head of Mahādev (Mahādevko ṭāuko), others the head of the legendary cow (gāiko ṭāuko). And surely its appearance, with its eye-like openings and horn-like protuberances, does evoke the memory of that mythical animal. Gardul identifies it as a conch shell (śaṅkha) and calls it Gauri-Śaṅkha.11

Between the south entrance to the compound and the chāpro, another stone stands by itself; this is Ganeshtān. Adjoining the compound on the east and sharing one wall with it is the straw-roofed hut reserved for the use of the gūthiyār Gardul, his family and friends, and the jhāṅkrī during the festival.

Inside this compound, groups of devotees sit huddled in small circles along the walls keeping watch with lighted lamps in leaf-plates. These lamps, protected from the wind by leaf-plate covers with holes in their centres, are kept burning until morning. The people in these groups, Baun-Chetri from their appearance (some are Brahmins from Sunkhani Panchayat) sit quietly all night, talking in low voices and paying hardly any notice to what else goes on at the festival. In the morning they will just as quietly let their lamps burn out, after taking the



65. A pilgrim making offerings at Gāiko Śīla.



66. Deolīngeswarī Mahādevthān, with the c visible on the lingam.



67. Pilgrims approaching the shrine with p for fruitfulness.

blessing of the fire, then do darśan at the stone of Mahādev and start for home. Their attitude is a contrast to the noisy throngs shopping, singing, dancing, drinking and sometimes quarrelling on the terraces above. Even the dramatic entrance of the jhāṅkrī later tonight and the display of Mahādev's fabled treasures will not be able to stir them from their places.

It is now about 8:00 P.M. and the number of worshippers is growing. With their offerings of rice (achetā), red powder (abīr), flowers and leaves (phūl-pātī), fruit and milk, they jostle for positions in a mass three or four deep in front of the shrine. Gardul is there too. Accompanied by several helpers, he moves from one metal lamp stand to another (they are attached to the four cross-poles of the chapro), adding generous amounts of ghee to each one and singing out in honour of Mahādev in a loud, strong voice. He wears a broad smile on his face; he nods in acknowledgement and gives friendly winks to people he knows in the crowd. He appears to be blissfully happy being gūthiyār; by this time too he has added some rakṣī to the minimum of twenty bowls of beer he has drunk today. Gardul deposes two of his helpers to keep these lights alit and they move about throughout the night tending the lamps and supplying them with ghee as needed, while he visits the shop area and also catches a bit of sleep in his shelter from time to time.

At certain periods during the night when the worshippers become especially numerous, someone, usually of the gūthiyār's family, tries to keep order at the shrine and assist the people in making their offerings to make things move faster. At times such a helper sits up on top of the pile of triśūls and, taking the bamboo containers of milk people bring, sprinkles the contents in the direction of the stone below, liberally splashing the bystanders as well. The milk seeps down through the pile of triśūls and drips onto the stone. Later, after his dramatic appearance at the shrine, the gūthiyār-jhāṅkrī himself will squat in front of the lingam, placing the offerings there and putting prasād of flowers and red powder, moist from the milk, into the hands of the worshipper who generally applies his own ṭikā and gives ṭikā to others in his family group. If the jhāṅkrī or other helper is not there the people make their own offerings and take prasād themselves after making their petitions.

As Gardul and his friends are filling the lamps and squeezing their way through the crowds of people around the shrine, a Newar woman from Jagat village squats directly in front of the stone. Something angers her (she has been jostled perhaps or told to finish her pūjā quickly and move along) so she turns in her place shouting abuse at those near her and waving her arms threateningly. Then facing the lingam of Mahādev once more, she begins to tremble (kāṃnu) in the way that jhāṅkrīs do. While shaking she calls out to Mahādev in the short staccato style that jhāṅkrīs use, "O Mahādev, please liberate from evil ghosts and spirits (He Mahādev, bhūt piśāc chutāidinuho)!" This produces strong reactions in the men standing round. Everyone talks at once, some saying indignantly that it is unheard of for a woman to shake like this, others demanding that she be made to stop by force.¹² A few



68. The gūthiyār Gardul Singh Tamang and son Jetha.



69. One of the gūthiyār's relatives assisting.



70. A worshipper ringing the be

of the men are amused by her performance. But in spite of all the discussion no one interferes with her and she continues in this way for about fifteen minutes.

Some time later another person, this time a man and therefore one for whom such behaviour is acceptable, begins to shake as he stands in front of the shrine. While trembling violently, he shouts the accusation that men from the village of Tinekhu have stolen a bell and three stones (śila) from Deoliṅgeśwarī Mahādevthān for their own recently-begun shrine and festival there. His trembling increases until his face seems a blur and he falls to the ground. Bystanders say, and later he confirms, that he is a Tamang jhānkri from Thadi. His nearness to the shrine may explain his zeal for it and his violence towards the rival shrine of Tinekhu.¹³

The crowd inside the shrine compound swells as night goes on and many people can be heard talking with growing excitement about the coming of the jhānkri. When will he come? is it almost time for him to come? these are the questions rippling through the crowd at the shrine, even though the majority of people still remain busy with the purely pleasurable aspects of the festival in the areas above the compound. Those who are waiting for his coming in the form of Mahādev often look in the distance towards the south and the wooded spur that separates Deolang and Thadi valleys. For they know that the jhānkri is there at Bhairungthān. We will go back now a few hours and accompany the young man Laxman from Gardul's house to Bhairungthān and there observe the jhānkri during the sacrifice preliminary to his sudden arrival at Mahādevthān.

Journey to Bhairungthān

Laxman carries the goat over his shoulders as we set off from the gūṭhiyār's house about 4:00 P.M. From time to time he sets the animal down and pulls it along by the rope but this proves more difficult because the boko likes to stop and nibble on the grass. A friend of Laxman's joins us and the two youths joke together about the goat's being so unaware of the fate that lies ahead that it can think about eating. We are not the only ones on the narrow path that hugs the hill side with the Tama Kosi rushing thousands of feet below; there are local pilgrims from Deolang and others coming from the village of Bulung to the south. Some people are even returning from the jātrā already. A woman passes us carrying a wooden container with a milky liquid in it; holy water (jal), she says, water that has bathed the god (deutālāi nuhāeko pānī). She is taking it home to sprinkle it on the fruit growing in her garden.

From time to time, Laxman expresses nervousness about the goat he is leading to the sacrifice. He says that the boko must not shake again until the time of the sacrifice later tonight and Gardul has charged him to see that it does not do so. If the boko does shake again, while still in his responsibility, he will get a beating from the gūṭhiyār. Laxman gives no indication as to how he is to prevent

this from happening but still he keeps a careful eye on the animal and later, at Bhairungthān, he will bundle it up against the cold and possible shivers.

After worshipping the cow's footprints at Gāiko Śilā and passing through the cleft-rock we stop to rest with a number of other pilgrims at a large flat rock that overhangs the river. One of the women offers to sell us some of the raksī she is taking to the festival. Are there ever any accidents along the trail, I ask, looking down at the river far below. Yes, answer our fellow travellers, sometimes people fall and die. A result of drinking raksī, I ask again, joking with the woman bringing it for sale. No, as a result of their own fate (āphno daśāle), she replies with a gesture of her hand to her forehead, the place whereon an individual's destiny is already written.

Bhairungthān is but a few minutes away now and although Gardul has instructed Laxman to go directly there and wait for the jhānkri's arrival, Laxman remains at the resting place in the gathering darkness, seemingly unwilling to proceed any further. Perhaps he is beginning to regret taking on this assignment which means not only missing the merriment at the jātrā but sitting, cold and lonely and in total darkness, among the grove of trees where Bhairung enjoys his drink of blood each year. His reluctance, as it seemed to be, is understandable. I am beginning to wonder if we will ever move on when an elderly Tamang arrives at the resting place from the direction of the festival. After a cheerful greeting, he announces to us and the other people resting there: I have met all my friends (iṣṭa) and all my ritual brothers (mīt) so now I am going home and will return later to the deutāthān. His remark well illustrates an important aspect of this and other festivals as an opportunity to fulfill in an efficient and pleasant way the social obligations a man has of keeping in touch with his many relatives and friends.

The man then turns to Laxman and questions him about his plans for the night. This man, as I discover later, is the husband of Gardul's elder sister. Gardul's brother-in-law (bhinājyū) encourages Laxman to move on but tells him: you go to Mahādevthān and enjoy yourself there now, I will come again to the festival and let you know when it is time to return to Bhairungthān with the goat; do not worry about being late for I will see to it that you get there on time - you will not be late because nothing can be done there until I come.

This piece of advice evidently please the young man for he gets up at once, all reluctance gone, and sets off at a quick pace for the jātrā and its shops and the crowds of singing people. Laxman points out Bhairungthān to me as we pass it on our right, certainly not an attractive place on a night like this. When I had asked Gardul earlier for the difference between Bhairung and Mahādev, he must have wondered at my simplicity. The difference, he says, is that Bhairung is on the near side (oro) and Mahādev is on the far side (woro) of the valley, thus explaining it in a perfectly clear and spatial way with questions of essence untouched. There are differences, of course, that Gardul is

well aware of (and perhaps he merely misunderstood my question) but I believe that location is really the operative one for him and for most people. Another devotee to whom I put the same question at the shrine of Mahādev answered it this way: the difference is that Bhairung enjoys blood sacrifices (bhog khāncha) and Mahādev does not. In reply to my direct question, "Who is Bhairung?" Gardul answered by referring to the god who is near the gate of Hanuman Dhoka in Kathmandu, Seto Bhairung. In other words, Bhairung is the local pronunciation of Bhairab.

Once we reach Mahādevthān around 6:30 P.M. Laxman leaves the goat in the care of his companion near the shrine compound and heads for the shops. Looking in on the gūṭhīyār's shelter adjoining the compound, I see that the three boxes of treasures are here with the porter (and guard) asleep next to them; he does not notice my presence. The only other person in the long, narrow shelter wakes up at my arrival and introduces himself as being, like me, a paradeśī (foreigner, stranger) here, meaning in his case that he is not from Deolang or Thadi but from another village (Bulung) and is employed in Kathmandu. As we talk, the gūṭhīyār Gardul arrives and is shocked to learn that Laxman has come. Gardul becomes very agitated; the boko for Bhairung should not have been brought to Mahādevthān, he says, and rushes off to locate Laxman. After some minutes of searching in the crowds around the shops, he finds the boy. "Who told you to come here?" he asks angrily as he propels Laxman, with the boko in his arms, back towards Bhairungthān.

The Scene at Bhairungthān

We return to Bhairungthān about 7:30 P.M. The thān itself is merely a clump of bushes measuring about five feet high, perhaps four feet in length, and with a depth of about two feet. There is nothing to mark it off from similar clumps of bushes round about. The large trees that make the area a landmark lie about ten yards away to the south. No one else has come yet and so we sit on the cold ground waiting for the jhāṅkrī and his men. Laxman keeps the boko warmly wrapped lest it shiver. Nearly an hour later, Laxman announces that the jhāṅkrī is coming; he can hear his necklace of bells jingling in the distance.

In a few minutes Dawa arrives. With him is an old man, Karma Tamang (of Jimba clan) and Karma's son, a youth of about twenty. Besides these three adults, a troop of about twelve pre-adolescent boys are following behind. These boys prove very useful as the night goes on but first of all they get a fire blazing a few feet to the side of the Bhairungthān bushes and then sit around it warming themselves. For the next two and a half hours, as the different steps of the jhāṅkrī's ritual here unfold, these boys will be amusing themselves by joking and teasing as they jostle one another for better positions near the fire.

The jhāṅkrī squats down in front of the clump of bushes. He and Karma open a bundle of long banana leaves and spread them lengthwise

on the ground directly in front of the bushes. Karma takes a bag of husked rice (cāmal) and uses a saucer-like scoop to make a row of nine piles on the banana leaves. He tries to make the piles roughly equal in size, taking from one pile and adding to another to even them up. They are supposed to be one mānā each but he is not scrupulous. Karma next takes a piece of white cloth, tears it into nine narrow strips about a foot long and places them on the bushes so that they hang down. The jhāṅkrī puts two burning incense wicks (bāṭeko dhūp) on the leaves and then with palms joined begins to chant. His chant is made up of names, both of gods (like Hanumān Dhokā Mahākālī Bhairung and Rakta Bhairung) and historical persons (like Rana Prime Ministers Jang Bahadur, Juddha Shumshere and Bhim Shumshere), whom he calls upon to come with the words ājan ājan, ending each series with masāna ningu. During this nine-minute chant he shakes his body slightly from time to time so that the bells around his shoulders ring softly.

Now the time has come for the sacrifice. The jhāṅkrī calls for the boko and Laxman brings the animal to him. There is a repetition of the effort to get the goat to shake its body as was done earlier today by Gardul in his courtyard with the jhāṅkrī watching, but with a striking difference. Now it is the jhāṅkrī Dawa who sprinkles achetā (and pours water as well) on the goat's head and back. But not only that. When the animal does shake itself, the jhāṅkrī shakes violently at the same time.

The identification that I believe is being illustrated will go even further. For Karma now takes a long straight knife and, with Dawa to his right, slits the animal's throat. As he does so, the jhāṅkrī gives a loud cry, as if in pain. While the animal is still living, Karma sprays its blood over the nine piles of cāmal and Bhairung receives the offering he requires. The jhāṅkrī then lays by the fire and sleeps until the time comes for him to distribute the flesh of the victim as prasād.

Through his shaking and his shout, the jhāṅkrī clearly identifies himself with the animal victim. This man, who is identified with the god Mahādev when he enters the Mahādevthān in a few hours, now identifies himself with the animal whose meat will be shared out among the gūṭhiyār and other male Tamangs in a very short time. Animal, man, and god are joined in Dawa the jhāṅkrī and through the sharing of the animal's flesh other men are brought into that union.

While the jhāṅkrī lies in sleep, the old man Karma butchers the boko and passes small chunks of meat to the boys who roast them on sharpened sticks in the fire. The boys enter into this eagerly; up to now they have paid no attention to the jhāṅkrī and Karma except to pause once in their noisy chatter to look over at Dawa during his chant. As Karma oversees this work, he tells me that he is over seventy and has been performing this ritual yearly since he was a boy, like his father before him. His son, who stands nearby and watches everything, will do it in his turn after Karma is gone.

It is nearly 10:30 P.M. before the work of singeing the carcass and roasting the meat is finally finished. Karma rouses Dawa from his sleep so that he can help him count the pieces and check to see if they are thoroughly cooked. Some pieces are sent back to the boys at the fire. They enjoy this being together, laughing and joking (practical jokes too, like touching the arm of an unwary companion with hot meat on a spit and making him jump) and with the anticipation of a piece of tender mutton.

While this counting of the meat is going on, the gūṭhiyār Gardul arrives with about twenty other men, most with long poles in their hands, including the brother-in-law who had caused the mix-up with Laxman and the goat. As they wait for the distribution of the meat, Gardul and his brother-in-law have an earnest conversation and I overhear the older man saying to the gūṭhiyār, "I do acknowledge you as guru (ma tapāīnlāī guru māndachu)." Evidently the misunderstanding over authority in this matter has been either cleared up or, more likely, smoothed over.

In another fifteen minutes Dawa and Karma finish the counting of the meat. There are two piles, one with a hundred and eight pieces and the other with seventy-eight. Before it is distributed the jhānkri sits down again in front of Bhairungthān and after chanting in a low voice for a moment or two takes a copper cup of beer in his hands. He drinks some of it and then, after the cup is refilled to the brim, passes it to Karma. Karma drinks half a cup, has it refilled and then calls to Gardul who leaves the group of men and sits down between Karma and Dawa in front of the bushes. The gūṭhiyār drinks the whole cup of beer but refuses the refill that is offered him. Now Dawa gives Gardul several pieces of meat, some of which he eats and some of which he keeps in its banana-leaf wrapper.

Now that the gūṭhiyār has received his share of the sacrificial meat, the others will receive their participation (prasād) in the flesh of the victim. Dawa and Karma carry the meat around in a cloth and give some to each man and boy there. Everyone stays in his own place, squatting on the ground sloping up in front of Bhairungthān. There is no pushing or shoving to get the meat; it is a model of patience and self-control, unlike what goes on at Mahādevthān. As soon as the meat is placed in their open palms, they eat it with apparent enjoyment. Not even the paradeśī is overlooked and at the end several people inquire solicitously if I have received a piece of the meat. No one leaves the spot until everyone has received a share.

Those in whose hands this ritual has developed certainly possessed gifts of symbolism, poetry and drama. We saw the jhānkri shake when the animal shakes its "acceptance" to be a sacrificial victim; we heard the jhānkri's cry when the still-living victim's throat is slit and its blood poured out; we received from the jhānkri's hand the flesh with which he has indicated his identification. And now that Bhairung has had the blood, and the gūṭhiyār with his relatives and friends has had the flesh, the jhānkri is ready, empty and ready for Mahādev. Mahā-

dev will mount and ride him now and those who touch him will receive from Mahādev the gifts of sons and cattle that he himself can never enjoy.

Dramatic Entrance

It is 11:00 P.M. Everyone but Dawa hurries to another grove of trees fifteen minutes away on the path to Mahādevthān where we wait for the jhānkrī to join us. He remains behind at Bhairunghān and I am not permitted to stay there with him to observe the closing rites, if any. On our way to the grove of trees someone points out a field where the jhānkrī will perform a divination (jokhānā) with cāmal on a plate before rejoining us. A bonfire burns at the grove and the three copper lamp stands have been set up there with wicks burning in ghee. Men and boys take turns blowing on three conch shells as Gardul's brother-in-law loudly rings a handbell. Their sound fills the air and for people at the shrine (visible from this spot about twenty minutes walk away) these blasts of the conches increase their anticipation for the imminent, yet sudden, arrival of the jhānkrī.

Then at 11:30 P.M. the jhānkrī appears at the trees and goes to the edge of the hillside facing Mahādevthān to chant some prayers; at this sāno jhānkrī, his forerunner, starts off at full speed for the shrine with the drum under his arm. The gūthiyār and others there tell me of sāno jhānkrī's miraculous speed, saying that no one can keep up with him nor can he be stopped by anyone or any obstacle on the trail. Though they emphasize the difficulty of the path most of it follows the edge of fields and, while narrow, is quite smooth. And when sāno jhānkrī reaches the shrine compound, he enters with attendants who do manage to keep up with him somehow. But who would want to quibble with these harmless exaggerations?

Back at the shrine of Deolīngeśwarī Mahādev anticipation increases. People can see the lights among the trees in the general direction of Bhairunghān; they hear the conches, and like children who keep up a fiction of suspense because they enjoy being surprised, they wait in a hubbub of excited talk for the performance to begin. Then suddenly, just as in all the accounts, a group of men burst into the shrine compound. They shout and threaten with their sticks and clear a way for sāno jhānkrī. His advent serves to sharpen the suspense even more.

The mūl-jhānkrī Dawa sets off from the grove of trees only a few minutes behind sāno jhānkrī but reaches the shrine more than fifteen minutes after his forerunner. His arrival here now as the vehicle of the gift-giving Mahādev comes as a climax. The jhānkrī's attendants repeatedly shout, "Out of the way, out of the way (haṭa haṭa haṭa)!" and he enters the compound clashing a pair of cymbals. But, though he is the mount of Mahādev, the jhānkrī exhibits none of the shaking which traditionally signifies this state to others (and which is mentioned in the people's accounts of his entrance). It may be that either his function, fixed as it is to this one time and place, is so well known

to all that there is no need to demonstrate it in the traditional way or his entrance itself, a movement from one place to another, substitutes for shaking. He approaches the shrine and as he faces the flat stone lingam the men with sticks continue their shouting and keep people away. They do their job well and no one touches him. The largest crowds of the night are now converging on the shrine where the pūjārī-jhānkṛī squats, still clashing his cymbals, with Karma Jimba's son beside him beating sāno jhānkṛī's drum (sāno jhānkṛī is not there). The worshippers are anxious to do darsan and make their offerings and, most importantly, offer their petitions to Mahādev. There is no attempt to touch the jhānkṛī once he is stationary here at the shrine.

An Angry Interlude

Now that the jhānkṛī has made his dramatic entrance it is time for Gardul to set out the ornaments of Mahādev on the large copper plates behind the shrine in the north-west section of the compound. But he is delayed for the moment because of a dispute that breaks out directly in front of the shrine between two Tamangs, one of whom is the Panchayat Member for this ward eight of Gongar Panchayat in which the shrine is located. The quarrel concerns both the contributions of ghee to the gūṭhī and the rights over a forest on the ridge at the western end of Thadi valley. As far as can be made out from the angry shouts (all in Nepali, not Tamang), it involves a question of unclear jurisdiction: does the forest fall under the authority of the gūṭhī or the Panchayat? Gardul, both a gūṭhīyār and a representative of Panchayat authority (although of another Panchayat), decides to intervene to make peace.

He begins well, speaking gentle words in a soothing tone with palms joined in front of his chest in a conciliatory gesture. It is a convincing portrayal of a respected function of Nepalese village leadership: to smooth over differences or at least suppress their expression. But even while begging the two not to quarrel, Gardul takes sides with the Panchayat Member from Thadi. The other man, however, refuses to admit that they are right and he is wrong. He shows at least surface calm now, thanks to Gardul's intervention, but his continued refusal to back down finally arouses the gūṭhīyār's own emotions. Dropping the soothing tone of voice, Gardul speaks roughly in an effort to gain the upper hand but the man will neither admit defeat nor show anger again. He simply tells Gardul that he would like to discuss the matter some other time and, with a leave-taking gesture (namaste), turns to go. This attitude renders Gardul speechless for a few seconds but then he shouts out to the man who turns and is once more involved in the discussion. He makes an attempt (sincere or not, I cannot tell) to get away once again but Gardul does not let him go.

The situation explodes when the man speaks two words to Gardul in Tamang, "Lau Asang (all right, maternal uncle)." This sends the gūṭhīyār into an uncontrollable rage. He begins giving blows to the man, pushing him around the compound in front of the shrine and screaming in his fury. The man does not fight back. Once, after receiving

a particularly hard blow he says softly, "Please beat me (malāī kuṭnu hos)." He speaks cautiously to Gardul, calling him now by the Nepali term māmājyū (respected maternal uncle). As the situation grows uglier, a young man (related to Gardul by marriage) rushes out of the compound and returns at once with Gardul's bhinājyū. This older brother-in-law says nothing to Gardul; he merely tugs on the gūṭhīyār's coat from behind until he finally pulls him away from the quarrel, giving the other man an opportunity to slip out of the compound. With his ill-fated attempt at settling a quarrel having backfired completely, Gardul goes with his brother-in-law to set out the ornaments of Mahādev and proceed with the night's rituals. All this time, during the noise and confusion of the quarrel, the jhānkri carried on with the clashing of his cymbals as he sat in front of the shrine.

What was it in that Tamang word that so infuriated the gūṭhīyār? Asang is a kinship term for mother's brother, a person with whom there is a special relationship not only in Tamang society but in many societies throughout Nepal and the world, a relationship in which the maternal uncle is something like a male mother to his nephew, nurturing and non-critical (unlike a paternal uncle who is assimilated to one's father). In Tamang society, because of the custom of cross-cousin marriage as the preferred type of union, there is an added weight of meaning: mother's brother is a possible father-in-law. The other possible father-in-law is the husband of father's sister and he too is designated by the term asang.¹⁴ A person's asang will necessarily be of a different clan, one with whom a marriage alliance can be contracted. There seems to be nothing in the meaning of this word that could anger Gardul; in fact, the word itself seems to be saying, "Our relationship is such that we should not quarrel."

I suspect that it was not the content of the word but the fact that it was spoken in Tamang which was the spark that touched something deep in Gardul and set him on fire. In the context of his Newar grandmother and the resulting disagreement over the clan status of succeeding generations, it would be natural for Gardul to be hypersensitive about his Tamang-ness. And so the introduction of the Tamang asang into the hitherto Nepali-language quarrel had the power to sting him into violence. I did not have the opportunity to question Gardul about this nor did I think it prudent to do so. This is not the first quarrel of the night (though it is Gardul's first, I believe); several fist fights have broken out already in the shop area. It will not be the last either during this festival notorious for its brawling; in the morning we will see Gardul intriguing in an inter-village dispute and this quarrel we have just witnessed will be a useful background.

Coronation and Cheering

The gūṭhīyār now busies himself with the arrangement of Mahādev's treasures on the three copper plates which rest on stands about a foot above the ground in front of the three copper lamps. Small mounds of achetā have been placed on each of the round plates and, on the north



71. Gardul and younger brother Maila.



72. Gardul holding the jantar-sikri crown of Mahādev with the copper cows and necklaces displayed.

one, three supārīs (areca-nut) for the god Ganesh. Assisted by his eldest son Jetha, Gardul begins arranging the necklaces of coins, about twenty of them, on the middle plate. On top of the necklaces, he sets five of the reputedly gold and silver jantar-sikri, the crowns of Mahādev. Then, last of all, he puts a silver-cloth serpent (not seen during the inventory at Maila's house) on top of these head-pieces.

On the north plate the gūthiyār places more than a dozen small copper cows with their heads all pointing towards the centre plate. Two of the cows have small holes in their backs into which Gardul affixes round cup-like receptacles which will be filled later with offerings of coins and achetā brought by devotees coming for tīkā. One of Gardul's brothers holds a copper cow in his hands which appears just as ancient as the others on the plate, in spite of the bright red ribbon around its neck. But this cow is new. A Thakuri from the village of Tashinam, across the valley on the other side of the Tama Kosi, has brought it to the Deolang Jātrā tonight and handed it over to the gūthiyār as a thank-offering to Mahādev. He had asked Mahādev for a cow and he received it.

Gardul attaches the three silver leaflike petals to the triple-branched stand and then sprinkles red powder (abīr) over all the plates. He is now ready to proceed to the crowning of the gūthiyār-jhānkri Dawa with the jantar-sikri of Mahādev. While the gūthiyār was arranging these ornaments on the plates Dawa left his place in front of the lingam and in a slow and solemn dance, tracing circles with his footwork and clashing the cymbals over his head with each deliberate step, made his way to a position opposite the gūthiyār with the plates between them. Karma Jimba's son accompanied the jhānkri and beat the drum in rhythm with the cymbals. They both continue playing as Gardul sets out the ornaments; others in the group take the conch shells from the south plate and give occasional blasts or ring a handbell. Sāno jhānkri appears now and takes the drum from Karma Jimba's son.

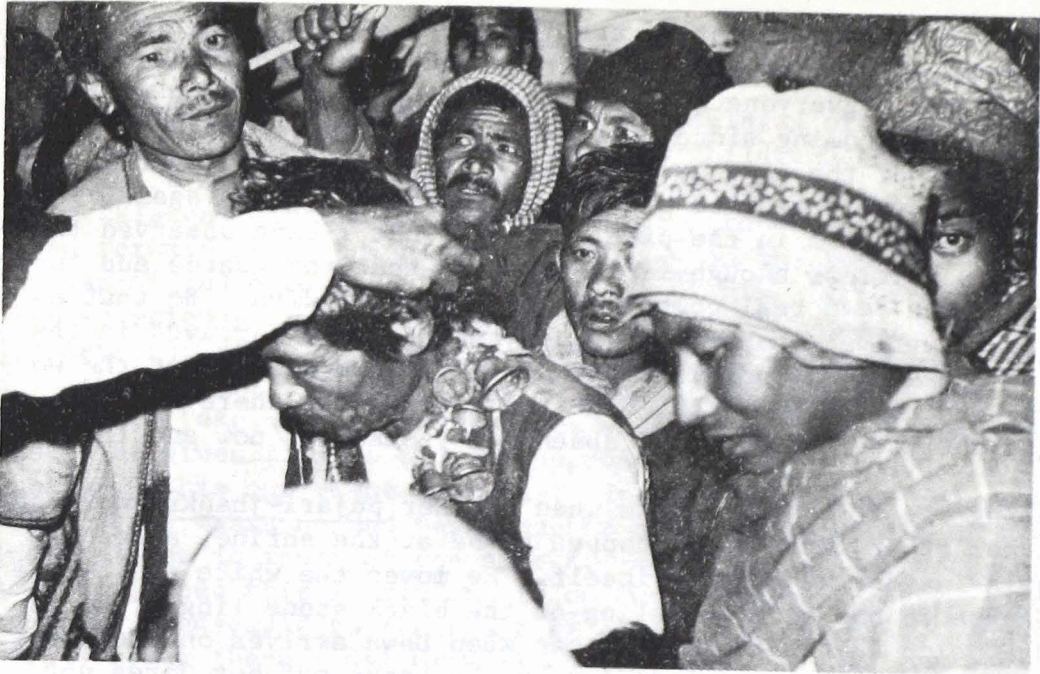
Gardul takes a jantar-sikri from the box where it had been kept in reserve and leaning across the plates places it on Dawa's head. For the jhānkri, this moment of glory with the privilege of wearing Mahādev's crown is some compensation for all the deprivations he must personally endure as the channel of Mahādev's blessings to others.

Gardul takes another smaller jantar-sikri and holds it out toward sāno jhānkri who shakes his head vigorously no. This gesture of Gardul's (in 1976) is a departure from the previous year's procedure when no crown had been offered to sāno jhānkri. The gūthiyār, now smiling broadly, extends the crown to him again several times and at last the younger man leans forward and lets it be placed upon his head. Now the gūthiyār throws liberal amounts of red powder on the mūl-jhānkri, sāno jhānkri, the attendants with their sticks, his own brothers and sons, and finally on all those within range in the crowd that is closely packed around the plates. The man next to me says, as we both stand covered in red, "This is the prasād of Mahādev."

The mūl-jhāṅkrī, sāno jhāṅkrī and their attendants begin dancing around the plates. Dawa holds his cymbals high above his head as do the men with their sticks and they move solemnly in the dance, individually circling as they go clockwise as a group. There is much pushing from the crowd behind as people try to see what is going on so some of the gūṭhīyār's men form a protective ring around the plates. As the dignified dance proceeds, Gardul calls out, "Our King Birendra (hāmra Rājā Bīrendra)!" and all shout "Jaya!" in reply, repeating the jaya sixteen times altogether in time with their steps. Then Gardul leads another cheer, "Hai Rājā Huin Rājā!" and the dancers go off again in their circle, this time shouting the word "Yā!" as their response. They repeat it forty times. Gardul joins in the cheering enthusiastically, raising one arm, then another, with every jaya or yā. When the forty yā are finished (this number probably depending only on Gardul's energy at the time), he shouts, "Śrī Śrī Śrī Śivādev Mahādevkī" and the people's response, repeated a few times only, is either "Lāgalau" or perhaps "Ragarau."

The cheering in 1976, described above, exhibits some significant differences from the previous year's performance. In 1975 the gūṭhīyār, after beginning with the invocation of the names of various gods whom he honoured with a triple Śrī (e.g., Śrī Śrī Śrī Rudrarāj) as was customary in Malla times, introduced himself at the end of the list with a double Śrī (the number allotted to Malla kings), "Śrī Śrī Gūṭhīyārki." To this the reply was a single "Jaya!" as for the gods, i.e., after each name the people shouted jaya once. Gardul then called out one by one the names of ancient rulers: Hai Hai Rājā, Huin Huin Rājā, Śu Śu Rājā, ending with Golma Rājā Golma Rānī, the response being a "Yā!" for each. There was no mention of His Majesty King Birendra. These differences, as well as the crowning of sāno jhāṅkrī this year, show that the gūṭhīyār's routine is not invariable. There is scope for his creativity and the inspiration of the moment. The introduction this year, and right at the beginning, of the ruling king's name may perhaps indicate a growing sense of national integration, in spite of ethnic differences that do exist and are illustrated in the microcosm of a festival like tonight's. The image of a common ruler of all is one that can embrace the distinctions of language and culture. As an elected member of a Village Panchayat and sharing responsibilities for government ideally conceived as a service, Gardul is in a better position than his father was (as mijār or headman) to realize his membership in the larger society of the nation and to communicate this to others. His visit a month ago to Kathmandu with several of his sons and daughters for shopping and sight-seeing must have further enlightened him and may have been a proximate cause of his remembering tonight to bring the crowd together in cheering "Hāmra Rājā Bīrendra" first of all.

The cheering over, Dawa and sāno jhāṅkrī return to the shrine. As the jhāṅkrī Dawa moves through the crowd people stretch out their hands to touch him. His attendants guard him and keep them off but are careful not to hit anyone. Their shouts and stick-waving create a dramatic effect, one which has caught the popular imagination and is never left out of any account I have heard of the Deolang Jātrā.



73. The gūṭhiyār-jhānkrī Dawa Tamang receiving crown as sāno jhānkrī stands behind him.



74. The gūṭhiyār-jhānkrī, flanked by guards with sticks, returning to the shrine "in the form of Mahādev."

It is similar to the element of the jhānkrī's sudden appearing "from no one knows where," as the story-tellers emphasize in their descriptions of the festival. Everyone I talked to at the shrine knows quite well from where he is coming since they can see the lights and hear the warning blasts of the conches from the direction of Bhairunghān, but it adds to the excitement to pretend one does not. Then again, what may it have been like in the past? Though what I have observed these two years is harmless enough it is possible that the guards and their sticks may have seen real combat action in former days. Be that as it may, the gūṭhīyār-jhānkrī and sāno jhānkrī, still arrayed in the crowns of Mahādev, sit now in front of the lingam and assist the worshippers with their offerings. The two of them are there throughout the night but not continuously, absenting themselves now and then.

During one of those periods when neither pujārī-jhānkrī nor sāno jhānkrī nor other worshippers happen to be at the shrine, a teenage boy crawls inside the sanctum itself. He moves the white skull-like Gaurī-Śaṅkha to one side; kneeling on the black stone lingam, he is reaching inside as far back as he can when Dawa arrives on the scene. Dawa shouts at the boy and immediately he backs out but dares not turn to face the jhānkrī who proceeds to give him a lengthy scolding. The jhānkrī accuses the boy of having burned the white conch by moving it near the burning wicks but no damage is visible. Then after berating the boy for his attempt to steal the coins thrown inside as bheṭī by the worshippers, the jhānkrī turns to me and, with a good-natured smile, says the boy is a rascal (badmās) and resumes his place in front of the shrine.

This teen-ager is not the only one with thieving on his mind to-night. Many boys, including some of those same ones who had helped to roast the meat at Bhairunghān, spend a good part of the night and following morning along the west side of the chāpro on the high ground there, watching the worshippers below and sometimes venturing out onto the pile of trisūls to hunt among them for coins. Every now and then someone among the worshippers loses patience and, with shouts and threats, orders them to get down. At one time, after several unheeded warnings, a man picks up a long trisūl from the pile and aims it at one of the boys who has refused to obey. The boy jumps back when the trisūl comes at him and, sobered by the experience, gets down as he was ordered.

I reflect on the powerful effect this whole festival must have on such children, on their imaginations and emotions especially, just as it had on the adults here when they were young. The long night without sleep, the full moon for light, the crowds, the singing and dancing, the lights and bells and offerings, the blast of conches and the sight of Mahādev's fabled treasures, the religious fervour of many of the worshippers, the sometimes violent quarrels among the adults, the glittering displays in the shops and the good, sweet things to eat - all the experiences of the festival are freely absorbed by the children, except for items in the shops which only money can buy. And so a little petty thieving, even from Mahādev, seems worth the risk involved.

Worshippers and Petitions

Gardul remains squatting down behind the plates of ornaments while a steady stream of people, men and women and children, come to place five pice coins and a few grains of achetā on the plates with the cows and the necklaces. They bend to touch their foreheads to the plates, then lean forward as Gardul gives them a ṭīkā on the forehead from the little heap of red powder he keeps in front of him. After receiving ṭīkā the worshippers join their palms and bow. The steady rush of people lasts for forty-five minutes and then people come at intervals throughout the night. Gardul stays at his post for an hour and then tells Jetha to take over. Jetha smiles with embarrassment but becomes serious as he gives ṭīkā to all who approach. As eldest son he will be gūthiyār in his own right some day. Jetha remains here for several hours; as night wears on and fewer people come, he dozes off in his sitting position in front of the plates. Near dawn a very young brother replaces him; when this little boy is on duty, the worshippers ignore him and help themselves to the red ṭīkā powder. By morning there are many coins lying there. Gardul will collect and use them for expenses in connection with the shrine, to purchase milk for offering at the Mahādevthān and strips of cloth to hang there as flags (dhwajā) at the time of the full moon of Sāun, i.e., Janai Pūrṇimā.

One of the last people to come to offer a coin and pray for favours here is a Tamang woman with a young son of about ten. She takes him up to the plates and tells him to put a coin there. He does. Then she tells him to touch his head to the plates. He looks confused. She barks at him and gives him a push; he does bend forward a bit now but not far enough and she shouts at him again, pushing his head down. He draws back quickly with a look at her of seeming panic on his face. Other boys standing around observe all this and laughingly ask her, "Is he a mute (laṭo)?" It seems he is. Frowning deeply, the mother takes powder from the plate and, with eyes filled with what I interpret to be mixed anger and frustration and desire, presses the ṭīkā hard on his forehead as if physical force itself could bring about what she so much wanted for him and herself.

During most of the night worshippers crowd to the shrine with their offerings and prayers. After presenting milk and achetā and flowers and fruit, they ring the bells hanging there and then pray with eyes closed tight and head tilted back, palms pressed tightly together, straining like children making a wish. Most of their prayers are inaudible but occasionally one hears people uttering aloud the prayer they have in their heart, a prayer of petition to Mahādev. One man prays in a strong voice, placing great emphasis on each word, "Śri Mahādev Goddess, you must fulfil my desire (Śri Mahadev Parmeśvarī, cittā puryāidinu parcha)!" A woman prays, "I beg for a buffalo (bhainsī māgchu)!" Another, "May my child not die (mardaina mero nanī)." Still others pray for sons.

Some people return with thanks to Mahādev, fulfilling a promise (bhākal) to publicly acknowledge the fact that their prayers were

answered. There is a case of this at the festival today, in addition to the man from Tashinam who offered a copper cow. In the morning, around 8:30 A.M., musicians (damāṅ) enter through the north door playing their instruments, four with horns and one with a large drum. They proceed to the space in front of the shrine, not particularly crowded at this time, where two men and a woman dance to their music. Other men, bearing a white cloth hammock (dolī) suspended from a seven foot bamboo pole, follow the musicians into the compound. They rest one end of the pole on the wooden framework of the shrine shelter and hold it there in front of Mahādev as a red cloth is thrown over the hammock. Now a man approaches with a small child in his arms and places him in the dolī. The pole-bearers lift their burden again, this time with the baby boy inside, and leave the presence of Mahādev; with the musicians again leading the way they carry the dolī out through the south door. The child's father has fulfilled today a promise he had made to Mahādev four years ago: give me a son and I will bring him there to show him to you after four years. Presumably the stipulation of four years was to ensure that the boy lived through the dangerous first months and years of infancy. This happy procession, with its music that set people dancing, causes a stir among the crowd and draws many more into the shrine enclosure. A demonstration like this, when a man fulfills a vow in such a public way, serves as an endorsement of Deo-liṅgeśwarī Mahādevthān and the usefulness of petitioning Mahādev here for gifts of children and cattle.

The emphasis on progeny (santān) as the gift par excellence surely expresses a deep human desire for fruitfulness and remembrance after death; if you have sons you will not be forgotten, at least at the time of the yearly offerings to the ancestors. But it is also a matter of present survival in the hills. People want to have sons who can work on the fields now and provide food and shelter for parents when they are old, to have cattle who can supply manure for crops and the ritual purification of the house as well as milk for food and worship or to sell for that extra cash needed to buy cloth and salt. It is not only tender feelings of fatherhood or motherhood (if indeed motherhood is always tender, as was questioned in regard to the Māī) but unemotional realism that prompts these prayers for santān. At the very end of the festival today, during the Rāj Pūjā when the ornaments are placed on the lingam, the gūthiyār will pronounce a blessing as he gives ṭikā, saying, "Santān hos (may you have offspring)." This is the universal prayer and the blessing that all desire.

Another Quarrel and Its Significance

After the hammock bearing the little four-year old gift of Mahādev leaves the compound, about 9:00 A.M., an incident occurs that throws light on the festival as an outlet for village and tribal rivalries. It is interesting for what the gūthiyār does and for what the gūthiyār-jhānkri does not do. The occasion is provided by the circumstance that there is no proper regulation of the flow of worshippers at the shrine. Precedence is determined by pushing. Coupled with the impatience of

people to reach the lingam and make their offerings and petitions is the fact that, finally there, the worshipper naturally resents being hurried. This is a high point in the person's yearly religious cycle and so when others shove from behind or the side there is often an angry reaction and an exchange of heated words at the very moment of pūjā.

Now at a particularly crowded moment, when the jhānkri Dawa and sāno jhānkri are both at their job of assisting the worshippers, a Chetri from the village of Khare at last succeeds in reaching the place of pūjā. As he is beginning his devotions he feels himself being pushed. He shouts angrily at those pressing around him, including the gūthiyār's son Jetha who is standing a few feet away to the side, next to a woman with a baby in her arms. Jetha too admonishes the crowd about being careful not to push lest the baby get hurt. The Chetri, thinking perhaps that Jetha was replying to him, begins to lecture the people, and Jetha in particular, that "this is everybody's god, Mahādev belongs to everyone (yo sabaiko deutā ho, Mahādev sabaiko ho)!" Of course everyone expresses their agreement at this and several people repeat the same phrases in an effort to calm him. But Jetha defends himself to the Chetri, telling him that he was only warning the people to be careful of the child. At this the Chetri becomes even angrier and begins to abuse the boy. He asks him belligerently, "Whose son are you?"

Now Jetha loses control of his temper. The boy becomes an angry man, shouting at the Chetri in the exact tone of voice and with the same manner and words his father had used the night before in his quarrel. He rushes forward and pushes the Chetri away from the shrine (he never did return to finish his interrupted pūjā), shoving him hard with his open hand. Others come and surround the two and hold them back. Jetha continues to shout while the Chetri, surprisingly, begins to weep.

Attracted by all the noise Gardul arrives on the scene and, after inquiring briefly about what has happened, joins his son in the shouting. Sāno jhānkri leaves his place at the lingam and mixes in with the growing crowd which is quickly forming into two groups, one composed of the gūthiyār and his son and their Tamang supporters from Deolang and the other of Chetris from Khare. Some in each group are calling for a fight while a few are doing their best to settle the matter quietly, addressing their opponents as māmā (which illustrates the use of this kinship term, maternal uncle, to express closeness even between persons of different castes). During this period of pushing and shoving sāno jhānkri takes off his jantar-sikri (which is small for him and tends to slip off) and holds it up in the air above his head.

The quarrel seems to end suddenly as Gardul, Jetha, sāno jhānkri and one or two other supporters abruptly leave that area of the compound and retreat behind the shrine shelter to the place where the plates of treasures are still on display. But it is not the end, only the interval in an intricate dramatic performance. For, after a few minutes spent in talking together quietly, sāno jhānkri calls out to

the gūṭhīyār in a voice that all can hear, "My golden headpiece, where is it, my golden headpiece (ṭāukoko sun, khoi, ṭāukoko sun)!" He throws up his now-empty hands and shows everyone, "It is lost, my golden headpiece is lost (harāyo, ṭāukoko sun harāyo)!"

Gardul, Jetha and sāno jhāṅkrī rush to the place in front of the shrine where the crowds are still assembled and announce again to everyone that the crown of gold is missing. Sāno jhāṅkrī falls to the ground moaning. The gūṭhīyār's party now accuses the Khare Chetris of stealing the treasure; they name one man in particular who though there a few minutes ago during the early stages of the quarrel has left the compound already. Gardul puts the suspicion on him because, he tells the excited crowd (especially the Deolang Tamangs who are now unified around him), this man was present when sāno jhāṅkrī still had the headpiece but now both he and the headpiece are gone.

A search is made for the suspect and in a few moments he reappears through the south door. A long series of accusations and denials follows but there is a new tone to the dispute. Gardul and Jetha no longer show the violent anger they are both quite capable of; their words and gestures are still those of angry men but lack the fire of genuine indignation. Sāno jhāṅkrī returns to the shrine and laughs softly as he confides something to Dawa sitting there and taking no part in all that is going on around him; sāno jhāṅkrī's mood too is a drastic change from the hysterical moans and rolling on the ground of a few minutes earlier. The whole affair has an air of unreality about it now with only a show of seriousness. The accused man from Khare continues to plead his innocence and both groups begin searching the compound, looking on the ground for the missing headpiece. One of the gūṭhīyār's relatives stands on the edge of the crowd with a slight smile on his lips. I ask him if the headpiece is really lost. "No, I know where it is," he replies as he continues to observe with amusement the discomfiture of the Khare people.

Not finding the headpiece inside the compound, both groups carry on the search outside. When they return unsuccessful the gūṭhīyār goes again to the treasure display, then comes in front of the shrine and, bending down, makes a show of looking on the ground once more. He suddenly straightens up and with the announcement that he has discovered the missing jantar-sikrī shows it round to everyone. Yes, it is sāno jhāṅkrī's crown, "found" at last, but with its chain broken. There is a show of reconciliation between the two groups. The Chetri weeps again.

With this ending of the drama the Khare Chetris leave the Deolang Jātrā to go back to their village with yet another incident to add to the tradition of tension between them and the Tamangs of Deolang. For, as the Chetri accused of theft admits to me later, the dispute today is not an isolated event but part of an old quarrel between the two groups. This man, a jhāṅkrī in his own community in Khare, claims that he knew all the time that the sāno jhāṅkrī's headpiece had not been stolen by anyone or even lost. The Deolang people manufactured the

whole affair, he says, and were only seeking a pretext to cause trouble for them. As we talk about it several hours later, resting by the banks of the Tama Kosi on the trail to Khare, the accused man spots a friend coming down the path towards us and calls out to him with a laugh, "Deolang almost murdered us today (Deolaṅgle jhandai māryo)!"

What is the reason for today's quarrel, I ask. The Khare jhāṅkrī thinks he explains it all when he says with a mixture of amusement and contempt in his voice, "Drunk men (khāeko māṅche)!" He expresses, I believe, not just a contingent fact about the gūṭhiyār and his group but his own ritual superiority to them. For the Tamangs not only drink, as a matter of fact, but they are a tribe which permits and even approves of drinking as an integral part of their social life. They are matwālī. Brahmins and Chetris (except the distinct group called Matwālī Chetris) are not; their caste is non-drinking and this is a distinguishing mark which, because of a system that ranks groups on the basis of what goes into the body, sets the Baun-Chetri group above the drinking castes in the social hierarchy.

Some Brahmins do drink, some Chetris to whom it is forbidden do drink, and their numbers are growing. Even as we sit here (and the words "khāeko māṅche" hardly spoken) the Khare Chetri's friend coming down the trail asks him if he has any rakṣī to share. But this is the area of practice and does not affect the ranking of castes and tribes. Though individual Brahmins and Chetris may drink, they also enjoy the distinction of belonging to these non-drinking, thus ritually superior, castes. The best of both worlds. The ideal is clear and unchallenged, let the actual take any form it wishes; for it seems, as mentioned earlier, that what-should-be exists so securely with its own kind of unshakeable stability that the actual fleeting events and actions of this changing world lack the power to touch it. What-should-not-be really is not.

The Khare jhāṅkrī says the quarrel with Deolang is an old one but does not elaborate. Is there perhaps at the roots of this old quarrel a resentment on the part of older inhabitants of the Tama Kosi basin, i.e., the Tamangs, towards the relative new-comer Baun-Chetri? The first families of Brahmins and Thakuris and Chetris moving in from the west and settling on land received from the Shah unifiers of Nepal would not have made an immediate impact on Tamang society in those days of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries when people were fewer and land more plentiful. But as years went by and pressure on land increased, tension could also increase, especially if the literate men among the newcomers used their literacy and traditional cleverness to take advantage of the unlettered tribals. Often in need of resources for expensive ceremonies like weddings and funeral rites which involve providing hospitality to large groups, the Tamangs would naturally, if resentfully, turn to the newcomers for help, even at a high interest. Added to this would be the irritant of the Baun-Chetris' unquestioned claim to superiority of status based on Hindu law and custom and expressed in ways of life quite different from the tribal people's practices, such as in the matter of drink. I am not asserting this to be

the underlying cause of the quarrel we witnessed at Deolang but am suggesting that it would be no surprise if a thorough study reveals it to be along these lines.

Does this long-standing tension between the Deolang Tamangs and the Khare Chetris, which broke out today in the form of a quarrel, shed any light on the function of jhānkrīs in society here? Specifically, one might ask, does spirit-possession among Tamang jhānkrīs perhaps have its origin in such a historical conflict situation and/or do Tamangs make use of their jhānkrīs to express these tensions and resentments? I believe the theory which sees spirit-possession as often being the protest of the politically impotent or socially disadvantaged is useful in analysing individual cases of sickness, especially among young wives and daughters-in-law in the small polity of an individual family, but does not explain the presence and activities of tribal jhānkrīs in the wider society of these hills.¹⁵ For the tribal jhānkrīs not only pre-date the arrival of the high-caste settlers from the west but they continue to carry out their functions not as political spokesmen for the gods (a powerful role that would be at least conceivably open to them as mediators) but as magico-religious specialists in time of sickness or misfortune.

Why the jhānkrīs, in my experience, do not use their privileged position between gods and men as an instrument for political manipulation is an intriguing one. I believe the answer lies at least partially in their fundamental shrewdness in sensing just how far they can go with their clients. Sickness and misfortune lie outside their clients' control and so the jhānkrīs are allowed and encouraged to employ their specialized abilities as intercessors in these areas where ordinary men are incompetent; but as for practical decision-making and the ordering of human activities for the common good in the village, i.e., politics, or even for organizing subtle protests against enemies of higher social position, the villagers can do that very well themselves without being dictated to by someone who claims to be the mouthpiece of invisible powers.

Thus the vehicle of Mahādev, the mūl-jhānkrī Dawa, stayed on the sidelines. And even though sāno jhānkrī played a role in the plot to discomfit the Khare Chetris, it is unlikely that anyone would have taken him seriously if he had used spirit-possession, accompanied by, let us say, an oracle from Mahādev, as a weapon in the conflict. This little drama was directed by the gūṭhiyār and politician Gardul, the man of this world, and he employed as his technique not spirit-possession but a frame-up, one of the oldest political weapons in the world.

A more likely effect of the growing numbers of Baun-Chetri in this formerly predominantly tribal area of Nepal is not a change in the role of the tribal jhānkrīs but an increase in the number of jhānkrīs among the Baun-Chetri themselves. These high-caste groups possess no immunity from the sickness and misfortune that are the soil from which "jhānkrī-ism" grows. In such crises many of them (Chetris more

than Brahmins, it is true) turn to jhāṅkrīs. And for those Baun-Chetri who wish to pursue the vocation of jhāṅkrī for the welfare of their own family and community an area like the Tama Kosi basin offers them the opportunity to take tribals as their gurus. It is a sign of distinction for a Chetri jhāṅkrī to say that he had a Tamang guru for the Tamangs are commonly believed to possess the most ancient knowledge (vidyā) of these matters.

This question of which direction "jhāṅkrī-ism" moves in Nepal is a long way from being answered or even, I suspect, understood in the same way by the different people who ask it. The historian of comparative religions looks in the four directions for clues of where "jhāṅkrī-ism" comes from while the jhāṅkrī himself points above to an invisible world; the psychologist looks into the heart of man while the social anthropologist examines the web of relationships which is society, quivering with the tensions that both result from and cause sickness and misfortune. The full answer, like the question, will not be entirely geographical and will require an openness and sharing among all those attempting to formulate it.

The End for Another Year

It is now almost 10:00 A.M. and time for the last event of the Deolang Jātrā, the Rāj Pūjā when the gūṭhiyār Gardul puts the crowns and necklaces and other ornaments of Mahādev at the shrine itself. Jetha brings water in a copper pot and together he and his father wash down the black stone lingam and the areas around it, removing the traces of red powder and achetā there. The gūṭhiyār moves the skull-like conch to the right and out of the way so that the principal object of worship, the stone on which it rests, can be better seen. The gūṭhiyār-jhāṅkrī Dawa, no longer wearing his silver and gold headpiece, reclines on the grass above the Ganeshthān. Neither he nor sāno jhāṅkrī take any part in the Rāj Pūjā.

The gūṭhiyār arranges all the jantar-sikrī on the ground just in front of the black stone in the same way as they had been arranged on the plates during the night. He strings the necklaces of coins across the entrance to the sanctum so that they hang down in front of the lingam. This is the way he "dresses Mahādev in his jewelry (Mahādevlāi gahanā lāunu)."
He makes offerings of achetā and flowers while milk is poured on the pile of triśūls above the stone. As the milk drips down onto the lingam Gardul sits to play the cymbals for a few minutes and then gives ṭikā and blessings to his family members, including his wife and three daughters who had not received ṭikā when the ornaments were first put on display. The gūṭhiyār's blessing, as noted earlier, is "May you have progeny (santān hos)."
During this time a woman come to the shrine and prays to Mahādev, "I ask for a buffalo (bhaiṅsī māgchu)."

The Rāj Pūjā is finished by 10:30 A.M. The gūṭhīyār puts away the ornaments for another year and sends the boxes to his shelter adjoining the shrine compound. Dawa joins the group there for some refreshments and then the two of them, gūṭhīyār and gūṭhīyār-jhāṅkrī, sit together side by side: the empty channel of Mahādev's blessings next to the man of means. We are equal, Gardul had said. Perhaps we could agree that both are equally necessary to what seems to me a richly complex festival.

Footnotes

1. Swasthānī Pūrṇimā, the full moon of the lunar month of Pūs, sometimes falls in the latter half of the solar month of Pūs and sometimes in the first half of the solar month of Māgh. The villagers keep track of it by saying that the time for this full moon and the Deolang Jātrā is "when Pūs is going and Māgh is coming (Pūs jāndo Māgh āundo)." The site of the jātrā, the shrine of Mahādev, is not located in the village of Deolang (Orang Panchayat) but in the valley of the Thadi Kholā and above the Tamang village of Thadi (Gongor Panchayat) to the north of Deolang. But since the jhāṅkrī and the trustees (gūṭhīyār) who are in charge of the yearly arrangements live in Deolang the festival is popularly known as Deolang Jātrā.
2. The shrine is certainly older than this man believes. The copper plate inscription detailing the gūṭhī land for the shrine dates from the eighteenth century. The gūṭhīyār says the festival began in the time of Hai Rājā, Huin Rājā, Golma Rājā, Śu Śu Rājā, which is a way of saying it was a long time ago.
3. Some Chetri informants, while insisting that the word dhāmī is a synonym for jhāṅkrī, also use it sometimes in a specialised sense for a man who is possessed by the lineage deity (kul deutā) and drinks the blood of a goat while in a trance during the dewālī pūjā (worship of the kul deutā). In far western Nepal the word dhāmī designates an oracle who is attached to a shrine and who "goes into a trance at certain times and the worshippers may directly question the god who speaks through his mouth." Marc Gaborieau, "Preliminary Report on the God Maṣṭā," in Spirit Possession, ed. Hitchcock and Jones, p. 225. For the healing activities of these dhāmī see also Walter Winkler, "Spirit Possession in Far Western Nepal," *ibid.*, pp. 244-262. The word daṅgur is frequently used for the jhāṅkrī of Deolang Jātrā, sometimes in the form daṅgure. This is close to the word qāṅgre which Sharma in his dictionary defines as a disciple of a dhāmī or jhāṅkrī and derives from the word ḍhyaṅgro, the jhāṅkrī's distinctive drum. However, the daṅgur of Deolang Jātrā has no ḍhyaṅgro. Furthermore, in my experience, the word qāṅgre refers to a person who acts as a medium for a ghost (bāyu) when a jhāṅkrī performs the bāyu utārnu ceremony to rid a household of the restless spirit of a family member who died an unnatural death. Therefore, I am not convinced that daṅgur and qāṅgre are necessarily connected.

4. The gūthīyār of the shrine identifies the cow as being a wild buffalo (gaurī-gāī) of epic size. He complicates the story by saying that her discovery of Mahādev's presence took place before there were any men on the earth. Another epic cow, Kāmdhenu, figures obliquely in a legend about the origin of Pasupati. "Mahēswara, in the shape of a deer, disclosed himself in the form of light. ... Brahmā went upwards to see how far the light extended, and Vishnu went downwards for the same purpose. The place whence Vishnu departed is called Vishnu-Gupt, and the Mahādeva was called Pashupati. ... On comparing notes, Vishnu said that he was not able to find the limit to which the light extended, whilst Brahmā declared that he had gone beyond it. Vishnu then called for witnesses, and Brahmā produced Kāmdhēnu (the celestial cow), who ... corroborated Brahmā's assertion with her mouth, whilst she shook her tail by way of denying it. Vishnu then, seeing what was the truth, uttered a curse on Brahmā, to the effect that his image should nowhere be worshipped, and on Kāmdhēnu, that her mouth should be impure, but her tail sacred." Daniel Wright, ed., History of Nepal (Kathmandu, 1972), p. 82. Mention of the tail here and in the legend of Deolang (where men passed through the rock by holding on to the cow's tail) recalls too the Hindu belief that the dead have to pass through the river Vaitaraṇī to reach the kingdom of Yama and that therefore "most bereaved families pray that a sacred cow may guide and protect the spirit of their dead along this dangerous journey by allowing it to cling to her tail." Mary Anderson, Festivals of Nepal (Calcutta, 1975), p. 99.
5. Gardul's father, now deceased, had been gūthīyār of the shrine and headman (mījār) of the village of Deolang. He had two wives and many sons. From the first wife there were two sons, Jetha (who died in India) and Maila who is now gūthīyār along with Gardul. From the younger wife there were five sons, Jetha (Gardul), Maila, Thulo Kancha, Sano Kancha and Kancha. All the brothers lived with their parents in one large house until it began to lean dangerously. It was then torn down and the father built separate houses for his sons. Until his death, he lived with Kancha in the largest house. Gardul and Maila's mothers are also dead.
6. In trying to classify types of possession Rex L. Jones uses the categories of time and space in which "oracular possession is defined as (possession) where both time and space are designated." "Spirit Possession and Society in Nepal," in Spirit Possession, ed. Hitchcock and Jones, p. 5. Though the gūthīyār-jhāṅkrī of Deoliṅgeśwarī Mahādevthān fits into the slot of designated time and space, he does not function as an oracle.
7. Bista gives both Shingden and Ngarden in his alphabetical list of twenty-five Tamang clan names in People of Nepal, p. 55. But "Cusubija" is not found there nor in the table of thirty Tamang clans given by Macdonald in "The Tamang as Seen by One of Themselves," Essays, p. 138. It is an unlikely-sounding clan name and she may have been punning on the Nepali word cusuwā meaning

one who literally sucks (cusnu) another in the sense of exploitation. In Nepali the word cusnu (to suck) has this extended meaning of to gradually take another's property by immoral means.

8. Ngarpa is also listed among the clan names by Bista, People of Nepal, p. 55.
9. The inscription on the small (six inches by eighteen inches) plate begins with a salutation in praise of the ruling king Śrī Śrī Jaya Jagajjaya Malla. Jagajjaya Malla was the second-last king of the Malla dynasty to rule Kathmandu. His reign covered the years A.D. 1722-1736. The year 850 Nepal Sambat corresponds to A.D. 1730. At that time Dolakha was part of the Malla kingdom. During his reign Jagajjaya Malla took steps to control some rebellious Bhotiyas in the northern part of Dolakha district who were building forts and killing cows. He also set about the measurement of land in the Dolakha area in an effort to increase the royal revenues. Bajracharya and Shrestha, Dolakha, p. 43.
10. The gūthīyār-jhānkrī does receive a pāthī (eight mānā or about eight pounds) of unhusked rice (dhān) from the gūthī at the festival time.
11. The old Tamangni from Thadi (Gardul's enemy) calls this conch shell the head of Gaurī-Śānkar (Gaurī-Śānkarko ṭāuko). As one approaches the shrine from Deolang the double peak of Gaurī-Śānkar dominates the horizon to the north-east. The old woman explained that the peaks of this mountain (which she calls Gaurī Parbat) are Jethājyū on the west and Buhārī on the east. The lower, eastern peak has a particularly broad expanse of snow which she interprets in this way: the sister-in-law (buhārī) always keeps her face modestly covered with her wide shawl of snow in the presence of her husband's elder brother (jethājyū) and never shows her face.
12. The equivalent of women jhānkrīs does exist in some communities in Nepal, the example nearest to Deolang being the female shamans called ngiamī among the Sunuwars described by Fournier, "Notes préliminaires sur des Populations Sunuwar dans l'Est du Nepal," in Anthropology of Nepal, ed. Haimendorf, pp. 70-75. Although the Tamangs I questioned in Dolakha District denied that a woman could be a jhānkrīnī, I have heard of some being active in Tamang villages to the south-east of Kathmandu Valley in Lalitpur District. Witnesses have reported seeing them at the Gupteśwar Melā held at a cave above Bhardeu village each year on the full moon of Baisākh (April-May). But when I attended the festival in 1975 there were neither male nor female jhānkrīs taking part. An old Tamang jhānkrī in Bhardeu attributed this to the great poverty of the area resulting from four straight years of bad harvests. In such times of anikāl (lack of grain, famine) jhānkrīs could not afford to attend the festival in full dress and with proper sacrifices.

13. The festival at Tinekhu, a day's walk to the south of Deolang, has become a serious rival to Deolang Jātrā but for those still faithful to the older festival the newer one at Tinekhu is much inferior since it is the invention of mere men whereas Deolang Jātrā was begun by a cow. Tinekhu pilgrims admit that their festival began quite recently, within their lifetime, but say that Mahādev himself moved from Deolang to Tinekhu. Mahādev also moved to Tinekhu from Halesi, an underground shrine in Okhaldhunga District to the east, with the result that Tinekhu boasts two Mahādevthān and two ḍaṅgurs. Mahādev does not allow the ḍaṅgurs to use a ḍhyāṅgro; they must use a ḍamaru instead. The ḍaṅgurs stop at a Bhairungthān some distance from the two Mahādevthān for the sacrifice of two goats, a male and a female, then use the skin to make their ḍamarus before going on to the Tinekhu Mahādevthāns. Tinekhu Jātrā, therefore, from what I have been told about it, seems to be a copy of Deolang Jātrā, but has gone Deolang one better. Merchants who set up shops at Tinekhu give credit to its more convenient location for the growing attendance. In the context of the accusation that Tinekhu people had stolen a bell from Deoliṅgeśwarī Mahādevthān for their newer shrine it is interesting to note that in far western Nepal when people wish to build a new temple to Maṣṭā in their own village "they ask permission of the priests in charge of the main shrine and take an object with them - in Thārpā, they take a bell with a dhvajā - that they place in the new temple." Gaborieau, "Preliminary Report on the God Maṣṭā," in Spirit Possession, ed. Hitchcock and Jones, p. 228.
14. Haimendorf was the first to point out this custom of preferred cross-cousin marriage among the Tamangs and to give a list of Tamang kinship terms in "Ethnographic Notes on the Tamangs of Nepal," Eastern Anthropologist 9, No. 3-4 (1956): 169-170. In central Nepal the Thakalis and Gurungs have the same custom. Bista, People of Nepal, p. 91.
15. Lewis calls this peripheral possession and does not limit it to women. "Such peripheral cults ... also commonly embrace downtrodden categories of men who are subject to strong discrimination in rigidly stratified societies. Peripheral possession is consequently far from being a secure female monopoly, and cannot thus be explained plausibly in terms of any innate tendency to hysteria on the part of women. And where men of low social position are involved, although ostensibly existing only to cure spirit-caused illness, such cults again express protest by the politically impotent." Ecstatic Religion, p. 32. The expressions "downtrodden categories of men" and "politically impotent" are much too strong to apply wholesale to the tribals of this area at least.

JHĀNKRĪS AND THE JĀTRĀ OF LIFE

A Unity Regarding Life and Sickness

Kalingchok Jātrā, Devikot Jātrā, Deolang Jātrā: these are exceptional times in the yearly cycle, high points in the religious and social life of many people in Dolakha District and characterized by a rich variety of jhānkrī activity. Yet life itself is a jātrā, a difficult journey marked by passing joys but also painful struggles. The Nepalese sometimes call life a two-day festival (dui dinko jīvan melā) not because it provides certain pleasures (which they relish as only the poor can) but because its hustle and bustle are so hollow, so brief. For the joys of the journey are marred by seemingly undeserved sickness and misfortune which strike without warning or visible cause. The doctrine of karma with its supposition of unremembered wrong-doing in former lives holds out some explanation to the seeking and suffering human mind but closer to home and more demanding of attention than this possibility of forgotten transgressions is the presumed reality of invisible powers intruding into man's world right now to destroy his hard-won security and happiness. To heal these painful "adhesions" between two worlds which should be kept apart, the ordinary layperson is helpless; he calls himself a fool (murkha) in comparison with the jhānkrī to whom he turns then as a healing mediator capable of seeing and separating those worlds. In this chapter we will meet some of these traditional healers and their patients, selected for what they can teach us about basic attitudes, keeping in mind the practical question of whether jhānkrīs can be of help in achieving the goal of bringing modern health services to the people of these hills.

The jhānkrīs and clients presented here will also be of interest for the light they bring to the problem of national integration. For though these jhānkrīs and their clients come from different castes and tribes, they share among themselves many concepts and practices in common with villagers from other areas of Nepal described in Spirit Possession in the Nepal Himalayas. As the Government of Nepal pursues its objective of national integration, using the ideals and customs of Hindu society as the norm for the nation, it is important to realize that unity does exist and is in operation here and now, joining otherwise quite diverse members of the population in a common cultural attitude at this level of shared beliefs and feelings about sickness and the invisible world. Some educated Nepalese may tend to be sophisticatedly ashamed of this unity in regard to the spiritual causes of and cures for misfortune. Many western visitors may view it as crude superstition or quaint local colour, useful in so far as it provides them a few moments of entertainment - "Jhānkrī Dance" (glossed as a "witch-doctor dance" in the programmes) is a popular item among the groups that perform for tourists in the hotels of the capital, with the jhānkrī trooping out on stage in company with such artificial creations as Yak Dance and Peacock Dance. Torn out of context the jhānkrī and his hopping dance are a spectacle and no more. But in the eyes of the people he serves, the jhānkrī is much more than a spectacle for people's entertainment (though he is that as well); he is the one who heals, he is "our doctor."

Hari Bahadur, a Chetri Jhāṅkrī

Men and women sometimes differ in their attitudes towards the jhāṅkrīs they call when they are sick, the men occasionally expressing a touch of scepticism but the women hardly ever. The difference is not based directly on sex. Many men have travelled outside the confines of their village to the wider world of Kathmandu or the cities of the Indian plains. There they have learned of the Western medicines and modern methods of healing that are now slowly spreading to the hill regions of Nepal where, besides the jhāṅkrī, only Ayurvedic herbal specialists (baidya) are normally available. But the women of this area with few exceptions travel no farther than is necessary for them to visit their parental village.

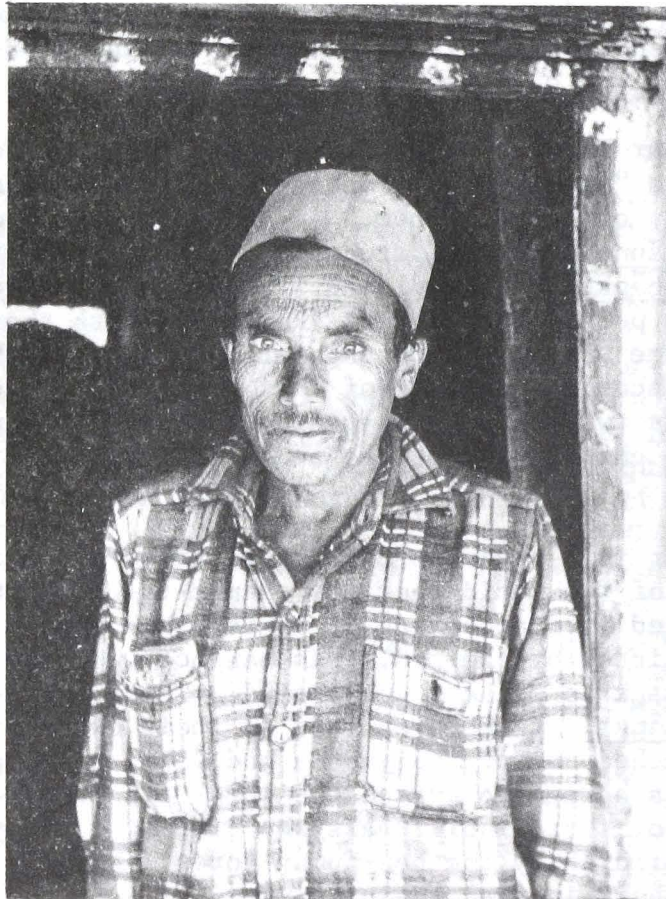
For example, a well-travelled Chetri of Phulbari (near Charikot) who spends the greater part of the year at a job in Kathmandu as a skilful electrician and mason expressed his attitude towards jhāṅkrīs in this way: since there are no doctors in the area jhāṅkrīs pretend to diagnose sicknesses and by trickery they fool the people. When the man finished his statement (its surprisingly strong scepticism expressed more for my benefit than from conviction, I suspect), his wife spoke up in defence of the jhāṅkrīs and demolished his theoretical objections by saying, "But Hari cured me." She used the criterion of experience. Her husband had to admit it. He himself had called the Chetri jhāṅkrī Hari Bahadur Basnyet from his wife's home village of Ukubari when she had been seriously sick a few years ago.

Hari Bahadur Basnyet, now a man in his fifties, became a jhāṅkrī, he says, because "people have troubles of various kinds and being a jhāṅkrī is a way of helping them. A jhāṅkrī can push aside (pañchāunu) and remove (haṭāunu) the misfortunes that people experience." As to how one becomes a jhāṅkrī Hari explains it thus: a god (deutā) touches a person and that person then shakes (kāṃcha). With the help of a guru who can teach the proper mantra the person discovers which god is touching him.¹ He becomes a devotee of that god and in this way becomes a jhāṅkrī. Hari's two statements are not necessarily contradictory; that a god should touch one who desires to be of service to others is most appropriate.

Although it is a frequent characteristic of vocation-experiences in other parts of the world that the shaman-to-be fights the call and has to be bullied into accepting it by terrible mental and physical sufferings inflicted by the god, this has not been the case with Hari or the other jhāṅkrīs I have questioned. These men either chose the calling of a jhāṅkrī themselves and on their own initiative found a guru or, if touched unexpectedly by a god, they willingly accepted their shaking as a sign to pursue the jhāṅkrī's career. The exception is in the case of those individuals who claim that they have been kidnapped as children by the non-human forest-jhāṅkrīs (ban-jhāṅkrīs) who gave them their initial training.



75. Padam Bahadur Thapa Chetri and family (Phulbari).



76. Hari Bahadur Basnyet (Ukubari), a Chetri jhānkri.

Hari Bahadur Basnyet does not claim any connection with such a ban-jhānkrī guru, though to do so is considered a mark of distinction. Hari's first guru was a Danuwar, i.e., a man of an eastern Terai tribe with a reputation at least in this locality for great skill in dealing with the powers that cause misfortune. Hari was a boy of fifteen at the time and living in Kathmandu Valley. The Danuwar guru, who resided at the shrine of Paśupati, granted Hari's request to be his guru and trained him in the use of mantras (in Nepali) over the period of a year. After learning mantras from the Danuwar, Hari took a Newar gubhāju from Balaju as guru for a time.² The gubhāju gave Hari instruction in astrology based on a book entitled Hanumān Jyotiṣa Arjun Gītā which Hari still consults. Using this book Hari can tell if a person's work will be successful or not, he says. He treats it with reverence and it was only after much hesitation that he showed me the title. A few years later, while in his twenties, Hari went to the village of Bigu two days' walk to the north to "study lama (lāmā paḍhnu)" under the direction of the head of the nunnery there. The Ṭhulo Lāmā (Big Lama) shared his learning and skills with Hari for some months. Hari did not give details concerning the lama's abilities or mantras but the belief among villagers is that some lamas possess the magic formula to avert the hailstorms which every farmer fears when grain is ripening in the fields. The nuns now at Bigu credit the present Ṭhulo Lāmā with this power.³

Although Hari sought help from such diverse gurus, he insists that a jhānkrī's ability ultimately depends on Bhagawān (God): "Only Bhagawān is skilful and if Bhagawān gives his help then a jhānkrī is skilful." But Hari does recognize superior powers in two men especially. In answer to my question as to who are the best jhānkrīs of all he surprised me with his answer, "The gubhāju of Taleju temple in Kathmandu is the best, adding that the Devikot pujārī is very skilful too since he has the knowledge required to enter the shrine of Tripura-Sundarī without dying. Whether the gubhāju of Taleju himself would accept the honour of being placed at the top of Hari's list of skilful jhānkrīs is an interesting point. In regard to the Kalingchok Jātrā, however, Hari is definite that there is no question of some jhānkrīs being recognized or reverence as superior to others. No jhānkrī is bigger than any other there; all are the same (kohī pani ṭhulo huḍaina, uttikai ho). No one is given special reverence because of great age either. Why should he be, asks Hari rhetorically.

Hari has often taken part in the jātrā on Kalingchok both on Janai Pūrṇimā and on Kāgaṣṭamī for Kali is his gurudeutā. He has no interest in the more widely known festival at Gosāin-kuṇḍa on Janai Pūrṇimā, for Kalingchok is "our Bhavānī and the Mother of the World (hāmro Bhavānī, Jagatko Āmā Bhavānī ho ni)." When Hari speaks of Kalingchok Māī as "our Bhavānī" he conceives "our" in a universal sense and emphasizes that any jhānkrī of any community may come to Kalingchok to take part in the jātrā, whether Brahmin or Chetri or Tamang or Thami or whatever Caste and tribe do not matter there, as we have seen; all come to the mountain top to worship Kali at the sacred pond with offerings and prayers both of praise and especially petition. Hari gives an example

of the praise, "Jaya Jagadamba Mamāyā Āmā Ambikā Āmā," and the petitions, "He Parmeśwarī Kālingchokī Māī, yasto gara, yasto gara hai (O Supreme Goddess Kalingchokī Māī, do like this, do like this)."

Hari offers triśūls to Mahādev there, adding to the huge heap above the pond and honouring Mahādev too as guru. Though some people mistakenly offer the triśūls to Kali, says Hari, they really belong to Mahādev. The jhāṅkrī calls Mahādev to come and offers him his head (śir cadhauncha) to be the point of entry. In Hari's understanding of the process the god does not merely ride the jhāṅkrī's shoulders but, after entering by his head, "comes into the whole body (jammai jīumā āuncha)."

Kali and Mahādev are Hari's gurudeutā as a jhāṅkrī but another god, his lineage deity (kul deutā) is also important to Hari Bahadur Basnyet. In the past Hari used the traditional drum (dhyāṅgro) and dagger (thurmī), that identify a man as a jhāṅkrī. But he has since given them away because of the kul deutā's anger. The kul deutā cannot abide (sahandaina) the drum or the dagger. In fact, the kul deutā should not even hear the drum (kul deutā dhyāṅgro sunnu hundaina). When Hari performs a healing ceremony (cintā) nowadays, then, he wears no necklaces of rudrākṣa nor any other sign that he is a jhāṅkrī; to accompany his chanting he takes an ordinary metal plate and beats it with any kind of drumstick available at the time.

Before proceeding with a healing ceremony, Hari uses divination as a help to diagnosis instead of the common jhāṅkrī practice of holding the patient's wrists. From the divination he identifies the cause of illness and proceeds accordingly. He may find that a god (deutā) or goddess (devī) or ghost (bāyu) is at the origin of the sickness; he then goes on to the process known as utārnu, a word Hari uses not only for the bāyu but also for the deutā and the devī. Turner translates the verb utārnu as "to cause to descend," i.e., as the causative form of the verb utranu meaning "to descend, dismount, get off."⁴ It follows that utārnu could also be very well translated as: to cause to dismount. In other words, the afflicting agent is considered to have mounted the victim, a person unarmed with the knowledge of the mantras necessary to control this force. The jhāṅkrī on the other hand causes his gurudeutā to mount him. He calls the gurudeutā when and for how long he wants and together they deal with the unwelcome and uninvited presence of the invisible force that has mounted the unwilling sick person. Mounted by his gurudeutā the jhāṅkrī discovers what food offerings will appease the source of the trouble. With the cooperation of the sick person's family who provide the offerings demanded, the jhāṅkrī thus causes the afflicting agent to dismount and depart. Clearly the jhāṅkrī is a spirit-master.

Hari is currently involved in the curing of a young man from the nearby settlement of Bishantol who is suffering from spells of uncontrollable shakings. Hari had cured him of this once before, but now the symptoms have reappeared and the family wants Hari to come again to perform another cintā for him. Hari is waiting for a member of the

family to come and fetch him. In the meantime the family is getting together the necessary materials (sāmān) for the ceremony and only when all is ready will the jhānkrī be summoned. How much sāmān has to be bought? It depends, answers Hari; for a rich man much will be required but for a poor man hardly anything. In other words, a sliding scale.

Hari's reply should be kept in mind by those who think of jhānkrīs as exploiters of the poor. Greed is not a characteristic of the jhānkrīs I know. Financially these men are not noticeably better off than their fellow-villagers. The extra income that they earn is too little to be significant and besides is hardly proportionate to the amount of time and exertion they spend in treating their patients. No one is obliged to call a jhānkrī or to call one rather than another when illness or other misfortune strikes. There is no jajmānī system at work here; a jhānkrī must depend on his reputation for his clientele. Like anyone in the community with special skills, he deserves some recompense according to his skill and time and labour; if his demands for this recompense exceed the patient's ability to pay he will acquire a bad name for avarice and risk losing his clients. Thus the jhānkrī is not likely, in the case of fellow-villagers who with few exceptions are just as poor as he is, to exploit them with exorbitant demands in the name of the gods for food, clothing and cash at the time of cintā and other ceremonies.

A greater temptation for the jhānkrī is to exploit the other world, that of the invisible powers, in order to acquire riches. To enter into league with the evil spirits has occurred to others besides jhānkrīs in the course of the world's history, but for the jhānkrī who yields to such a temptation it is not a matter of selling one's soul to the devil but of offering special worship to the powerful evil spirits called bīr masān who inhabit cremation grounds (masān). These bīr masān radiate danger and destruction to those who come into unexpected contact with them. Should a person walking near a cremation ground actually meet a bīr masān, he dies on the spot, it is believed. Even meeting the shadow (chāyā) of the bīr masān will make him fall seriously sick. But if a man of set purpose makes regular food offerings to a bīr masān and worships this evil spirit with the intention of thereby acquiring riches, he will be blessed during his lifetime with the wealth he desires. As in all such contracts there is a price to be paid but in the case of a bīr masān it is the family, not the individual responsible, who pays it after his death. For during his life he conceals what he is doing from his family and pretends (if anyone should inquire) to be offering the food to some god or other. When he dies in due course, the worship abruptly ceases and the trouble begins. For in its dis-appointment at no longer receiving its regular offerings the bīr masān attacks the dead man's son or some other family member with illness.

The term Hari uses for worshipping a bīr masān is mānnu (to honour, to serve, to accept, to obey). Another verb sometimes heard in this connection is pālnu (to keep, to foster), a word one uses of pet animals or even children. When I asked Hari what a man who thus worships a bīr masān is called, he answered: a jhānkrī. He means not that every jhānkrī maintains such a dangerous relationship with an evil spirit but that

a jhāṅkrī is able to do so. Whether any jhāṅkrī actually does is an open question but some are suspected of thus keeping a bīr masān and honouring it. This, says Hari, is the root cause of the sickness now afflicting the young man in Bishantol. His jhāṅkrī father had been worshipping a bīr masān. After the old man's death, as Hari understands it, the bīr masān sent this shaking sickness into the son for not carrying on the practice of his father.

Another way that a bīr masān can be a danger to a person is if a witch (boksi) sends the evil spirit into someone she wants to harm.⁵ The Chetri woman who spoke in defense of jhāṅkrīs ("But Hari cured me") was referring to such a case in her own life. The woman had fallen seriously ill and lingered at the point of death. Hari was called in and during the cintā for her identified the cause of the illness as a bīr masān sent into her by a witch. A bīr masān had struck (lāgyo), a term used to describe uncontrolled and unwanted contact with a harmful invisible agent, i.e., spirit intrusion, in contrast to the jhāṅkrī's willed and controlled contact.

In such a case Hari describes his procedure as follows. He lights a lamp and offers flowers and incense to his gurudeutā (Kali, he says). He then uses rice flour to make a checkerboard pattern of many little squares (koṭhā, literally "room") on the ground. He makes a different number of these squares to match the particular Kali he is calling. For Mahānkālī, he makes seven; for Sailuṅgeśwarī Mahārānī, fifteen; for Kālingchoki Māi, sixteen. In this context the latter goddess can be called simply Sixteen Kālī (Solā Kālī). Similarly, there can be a Thirty-two Kālī and a Sixty-four Kālī as well, for whom that number of squares or rooms will be made. To strengthen himself for the coming of the deutā (or more properly devī) Hari puts ashes on his body, a process called binding the body (jīu bāndhnu). When all is ready he "calls the god many many times and then the god comes (deutālāī bolāyo bolāyo bolāyo bolāyo bolāisakepachī aṅṅcha)." Once the deutā has come, Hari then addresses the evil spirit believed to be present in the body of its victim and calls on it to reveal itself clearly and disclose its demands for food offerings, e.g., the blood of a fowl or even the blood of a goat. Eventually, if the cintā proves to be successful, the sick person replies, in his or her own voice but speaking as the bīr masān, and answers Hari's questions: who are you, why did you afflict this person, what food offerings do you require as the condition of your withdrawal?

The woman recalls that Hari performed this kind of healing ceremony for her the first time seven years ago and again four years ago. Each time, she says, her sickness had been caused by a bīr masān sent into her by the same witch. Who was the witch? She hesitates to say it openly but finally admits that the witch was an in-law whom she had to address as elder sister (didī) and who lived nearby in the same village until her death two years ago. Her son added later that the woman in question was considered to be a witch by everyone in the area but was never accused publicly of witchcraft. No one will ever make such an accusation openly for fear of the legal consequences. If the

one so accused brings a court case against the accuser for loss of reputation (bejjatī), the alleged witch will surely win the case. In such a matter, as villagers well know, there is simply no proof of witchcraft that would stand up in court. A woman suspected (or privately named) as a witch continues to live in the village community in her roles of wife and mother and daughter-in-law or mother-in-law, feared but unmolested.

It is women who are suspected of thus using evil magic against others (although the jhāṅkrī too is feared for his powers in this respect) since in this society with its rule of clan exogamy they are outsiders brought into the family and clan and therefore of suspect loyalty. And so in this case, though no one dared openly accuse the woman of being a witch, whispered gossip carried the message that she was one indeed. Hari Bahadur Masnyet even took it upon himself to take matters into his own hands, it is said, by letting it be known that he would rid the village of her once and for all by killing her with a mantra within six months. This was eight or nine years ago. She did die, though seven years later.

Hari says that for some years now he has given up treating people afflicted by bīr masān. Evidently the young man he is currently involved in healing is in a special category; deprived of the food offerings given secretly by the boy's jhāṅkrī father, the bīr masān seems merely to be trying to attract attention to itself by the shaking it gives the young man. Hari explains that formerly some families would call him for healing ceremonies and tell him to go ahead with the rites even when it was revealed that a bīr masān was the cause of the sickness. He would carefully warn them before proceeding further that the bīr masān might ask for such a costly offering as a goat. When the people expressed their willingness to provide anything that was demanded Hari would carry on with the ceremonies. Yet in many cases when the bīr masān actually did exact the sacrifice of a goat as a condition for his departure from the patient and thus his cure, many balked and refused to provide the required animal. The disappointed bīr would then strike the jhāṅkrī Hari himself with sickness. Hari attributes his present weakened state of health to this lack of cooperation on the part of some of his clients in the past. Now, he says, I refuse to handle such cases and I am happy.

He still performs other healing ceremonies (cintā) for the sick as well as house blessings (gharko cintā) which keep evil influences away from a dwelling and can be done periodically even if there is no special misfortune troubling the inhabitants, and bāyu utāṛnu, a rite for pacifying family members who have died an unnatural death and are bringing about troubles in the household by their continued and unnatural presence there.

Since Hari Bahadur Basnyet is an experienced and qualified jhāṅkrī, his clients call him when there is serious sickness in the household. For ordinary indispositions the Chetri family here in Phulbari relies

on a close neighbour Sher Bahadur Gharti. Lacking paraphernalia and training, Sher Bahadur is not technically a jhānkrī but he does perform a simple healing rite of blowing (phū garnu) on the sick especially in the case of illnesses among the little children of the family. The blowing ceremony takes only a few minutes; after scattering some grains of achetā and lighting incense wicks, the one performing it inhales deeply and then blows out little puffs of breath, four or five, on the patient from a distance of one or two feet, repeating this a number of times. Sher Bahadur says that if there is no improvement the little ceremony can be done again on successive days and even twice a day. The one performing this rite takes no money for it and there are always several people in a village who are willing to do it for others. Recognized jhānkrīs like Hari can and do perform this rite of blowing as well but it is often easier to call someone less qualified, like Sher Bahadur simply because there are more of them. If the blowing does not produce cure or at least an improvement in the sick person's condition, then a jhānkrī is consulted, or, if a jhānkrī himself has been doing the blowing, he will advise an all-night healing ceremony to go more deeply into the causes of the sickness.

Purna Bahadur, a Tamang Jhānkrī

An example of the stages people follow in seeking a cure is seen in the case of Chandra, a young Chetri from near Charikot, whose father took sick during the unlucky month of Sāun, 2031 B.S. (July-August 1974). The old man's symptoms consisted of burning sensations all over his body. As Chandra tells it, the health worker at the government health centre in nearby Charikot town was consulted but could not cure him nor could the two or three "blowing men" (phu garne) who were called to him. It was then, after his father had been ill for about a month, that Chandra turned for help to a Tamang jhānkrī named Purna Bahadur. Purna came to Chandra's house and during the course of an all-night cintā he shook and danced. Although the sick man did not shake or speak at all, Purna identified the cause of the burning sickness as Śikārī (Hunter). Chandra explains that Śikārī is a kind of spirit (bhūt) which cannot be seen; it attacks the stomach and causes cramps. The old man was cured.

The jhānkrī's fee for this cure was five or six eggs (some of which he offered to Śikārī and some of which he took for his own use), four mānās of husked rice, and Rs. 20 in cash. In this instance there was no need to make blood offerings of a cock or a goat. It all depends on what Śikārī demands, Chandra points out. If Śikārī speaks through the patient and insists on such offerings, one must provide them but, if Śikārī remains silent, as in the healing ceremony performed for his father, eggs are a sufficient offering.

An indication of Chandra's attitude towards jhānkrīs is the fact that these arrangements to call the blowing men and the jhānkrī to his sick father were made on his own initiative, not merely at his father's request. Chandra puts it this way: we do not rely only on doctors here but we need these other people too. By doctors, he includes the workers

at the health post. Considering the lack of trained medical personnel (the only qualified doctors in the district are at the Jiri hospital two days' walk to the east), it is an understatement to say that the people do not rely only on doctors. To the Western observer the jhānkrī may seem a mysterious figure but to those he treats he is a familiar one who knows the patient and his family and is willing to spend long hours, whole nights, in an effort to isolate and identify and then dismiss whatever is causing the illness. For the Nepalese villager the Western-trained doctor is a much more mysterious figure.⁶

The jhānkrī Purna Bahadur Tamang comes from the village of Makaibari less than an hour's walk west of Charikot. The white houses below the main trail in Makaibari belong to Brahmin and Chetri families; above the trail and higher up on the hill side are scattered the red houses of the Tamangs, with a few Kami households lying between the two groups. Purna Bahadur lives with his childless wife high up in the Tamang section of the village. Purna, now fifty-three, began his jhānkrī career when in his late twenties. One day, while grazing his cattle in the forest, he began amusing himself by climbing trees and playing "like Hanumān," the monkey god of the Ramayana. He fell from a tree and landed with his head to the east and his feet pointing to the west. Purna emphasized several times this direction as being of significance; if he had landed in any other alignment he would have died. As it was, he suffered a broken leg as a result of the fall. The leg did not heal properly and he walks with a bad limp.⁷

On the following festival of Rikhidār Pūrṇi, which he also calls Rikhī-tarpaṇī (i.e., Janai Pūrṇimā, the full moon of Sāun), Purna saw a ban-jhānkrī. He did not see it directly; only the shadow (chāyā) and the air (hāwā) of the ban-jhānkrī were sensible to him. Since the ban-jhānkrī did not come in front of Purna (sāmune parena) it did not kidnap him. The ban-jhānkrī made him shake or rather, literally, gave him the shakes (ban-jhānkrīle kampa die). In spite of my curiosity Purna closed further discussion of the subject by saying that the ban-jhānkrī is his guru and should be spoken about only if pūjā is being performed. His young brother standing by, however, had no such scruples and with Purna's tacit approval described ban-jhānkrīs as creatures that look like men but are smaller in size, with hair that is long and loose. Purna's wife added the detail that their feet are turned inwards.⁸

In the time that elapsed between his fall from the tree and the festival of Rikhī-tarpaṇī, Purna studied under a human jhānkrī guru. Now on this same festival day, after experiencing the shadow of the ban-jhānkrī, Purna underwent a kind of initiation during which he ate a burning wick (diyo battī). In this ceremony, a virgin girl offered Purna one lighted wick, his human guru gave him five more, and finally Purna himself offered one lighted wick to the sky and the thirty-three crores of gods there. He then ate all seven of these flaming lights. It did not burn him, Purna explains, because it is not he but the deutā who actually eats the light.

When asked about his human jhāṅkrī guru, Purna fell silent and would not mention his name. The younger brother again spoke up and said that though Purna was not permitted to say the name of the guru, he is Lalibhadra Tamang, also of Makaibari and a relative. This was Purna's only human guru. After the revelation of his guru's name, Purna added that to learn only one mantra requires three months of training plus forty to fifty rupees as a gift to the guru (guru bheṭī). He has learned only half of the mantras that his guru could teach him and progressed no further than this because of lack of money. Then too, on the occasion of Janai Pūrṇimā, he must give his guru some rupees, a cock, bread and liquor.

When asked if there were any organization or hierarchical ranking among jhāṅkrīs Purna answered that jhāṅkrīs are not unified (ekmā chaina). Whether at the time of a festival or at any other time, they are separate from each other (chuttā chuttā) and the only relationship they recognize is the one of master-disciple (guru-celā). As far as ability is concerned, in his opinion the jhāṅkrīs that come from the northern border areas are the most powerful and the Danuwar jhāṅkrīs too are very skilful.

In spite of his lameness Purna does dance when performing healing ceremonies for his clients and manages to climb Kalingchok for the festivals. He says he took part in the Janai Pūrṇimā Jātrā in 2031 B.S. (1974) and went again for a smaller jātrā on the full moon of Jeṭh (May-June) in 2032 B.S. He has sometimes attended the other festival held on Kalingchok at the time of the full moon of Kārtik (October-November), a fortnight after Lakṣmī Pūjā.

Though the jhāṅkrī Lalibhadra Tamang is related to him, as a kind of elder brother, neither Purna's father nor grandfather were jhāṅkrīs. But he does count among his ancestors some healers whom he calls bedāṅg (cf. waidāṅga: "the science of medicine according to the system of the Ayurveda").⁹ He explained that bedāṅg are book-reading curers and are the same as baidde (baidya). That seems a simple-enough way of distinguishing them from jhāṅkrīs: the bedāṅg or baidde consults a book to see what remedy should be applied to the patient for a cure whereas the jhāṅkrī consults the afflicting agent itself, personally, and bargains with it for its speedy departure from the patient.

Unlike Hari Bahadur whose high-caste kul deutā dislikes the dhyāṅgro, Purna uses the traditional jhāṅkrī equipment when healing. Though he said he could not bring it outdoors, I was welcome to see it inside his dimly lit house. He has the usual drum with curved drumstick, necklaces of rudrākṣa and bells, and a headdress made of porcupine quills attached to a cloth band which is tied around the forehead. At present he possesses no ritual dagger (Tamang: phurbu); his phurbu had been destroyed in a fire at home in 2015 B.S. Another item in his equipment is an iron trident about two feet long. Purna does not have the traditional long white skirt (jāmā); he wears ordinary Nepali dress (daurā-suruwāl) for his ceremonies.

Anirudra Khati, a Kami Jhāṅkrī

Purna is by no means alone in claiming an experience with a ban-jhāṅkrī in the story of his vocation. Anirudra Khati, an elderly blacksmith from the village of Dumkot, counts ban-jhāṅkrīs in his own spiritual ancestry and connects them with the origins of jhāṅkrī-ism as well. Pointing to his dhyāṅgro and using it as a symbol of the jhāṅkrī vocation, Anirudra says that all this came from Mahādev and in the following way: Mahādev fell sick and needed someone to blow on him and cure him, so in a dream he gave a mantra and caused a disciple to come down to his aid. Thus Mahādev recovered his health. In another brief expression, Anirudra simply says that when Mahādev was sick he made a disciple to cure him and that is how it all began, for that disciple then taught others. This first disciple, the one made by Mahādev to cure himself, was a ban-jhāṅkrī.

From this little story we can feel just how mysterious sickness is: Mahādev himself was sick and without means to recover until he had made a jhāṅkrī-disciple who could blow on him. The purpose of jhāṅkrīs is the same today: to cure the sick. The first ban-jhāṅkrī disciple of Mahādev then became a guru to other disciples and passed on his knowledge to them. So it is today: guru-celā is the essential relationship and the way to be a jhāṅkrī. You do not learn it from a book.

Even now, says Anirudra, ban-jhāṅkrīs take children to their caves in the mountains and train them to be jhāṅkrīs. He himself was taken in this way as a child and kept for seven days during which he learned various mantras from his ban-jhāṅkrī guru. There is no danger for such a kidnapped boy from the ban-jhāṅkrī, but he must protect his little disciple from his wife, the ban-jhāṅkrīnī, who would otherwise eat the child. Unlike Purna Bahadur Tamang, who actually saw only the shadow, Anirudra does not hesitate to describe the ban-jhāṅkrī. First of all, the ban-jhāṅkrī has very long hair which spreads out all around him when he sits and which covers his furry face. His feet are turned inside. In all other accounts the ban-jhāṅkrī is invariably described as being quite small but Anirudra Khati says he is very tall, taller than a man, although he is not a man.

In addition to the ban-jhāṅkrī who abducted him when he was small, Anirudra has had three human gurus as well, a Kami (blacksmith), a Jirel and a Basnyet. There is a tradition among the Khati blacksmiths that they were originally Basnyets themselves. As Anirudra Khati tells it, a child whose parents were Basnyet was orphaned soon after birth. People said the child was unlucky and had caused the death of his parents (āmābābulāī tokne, literally, biting the parents) so he was left at a crossroads. A woman of the blacksmith caste took the child from the crossroads and raised him as her own. This child and his descendants became Khati. Anirudra points out that his family worships Dāre Maṣṭa as kul deutā, as do the Chetri Basnyets, and performs dewālī pūjā yearly on Rikhī-tarpaṇī, i.e., Janai Pūrṇimā. On that day Anirudra first goes to Kalingchok and on returning home sacrifices a male goat (boko) in front of a stone kept inside the house and drinks the blood directly from the cut throat of the animal while in a state

of possession by Dāre Maṣṭa. No dhyāṅgro is used during Dāre Maṣṭa's worship, only a bell, a yak's tail (chamar) and a sacred water vessel (kalaś).

Though Anirudra speaks of himself going to Kalingchok, he admits that he can now no longer make the journey in his old age and crippled as he is with a bad back. In recent years it has been the eldest of his six sons (three are in India and three in Dumkot) who goes to the mountain top and comes back home to drink the blood for Dāre Maṣṭa. But Anirudra has no regrets about missing the Kalingchok Jātrā; though as a young man he was always keen on going to Kalingchok, he now comments that the jātrā is not so special, just "Lau Parmeśwar" and doing darśan.

The mention of Dāre Maṣṭa here in the Tama Kosi basin of East Nepal turns our thoughts to the many Maṣṭa of the Karnali basin of the Far West. In the list of Maṣṭa given by Dr. Prayag Raj Sharma, Dādyā Maṣṭo is possibly the same as the Khati's Dāre Maṣṭa.¹⁰ As Sharma writes: "Although it is true that followers of the Maṣṭa are found in all castes, including the low service-castes, the number is fewer among them.... the cult always points to a connection with the Chetris.... most Chetris in central and eastern Nepal still have one or other name of the Maṣṭa as their Kula-devata."¹¹ One difference to be noted is that for the Maṣṭas of the Karnali region, as Sharma points out, "there is not a single stone or a piece of wood which represents the divinity in the shrine; only an empty niche," whereas Anirudra's Dāre Maṣṭa is represented by a stone in his house.¹² But a point of similarity is the use of the bell which Anirudra says is essential to the worship of Dāre Maṣṭa. Sharma observes that "the only symbol known to be associated with Maṣṭas is a bronze bell."¹³

Birka Bahadur and Bhakta Bahadur, Thami Jhāṅkrī

Another jhāṅkrī of Dumkot, the Thami Birka Bahadur, asserts that there are ban-jhāṅkrīs living in the mountain forests and even down in the valleys. There is a cave, or rather a hole in the ground, only four miles from Dumkot where a ban-jhāṅkrī is said to live. According to Birka, ban-jhāṅkrīs kidnap children and keep them for seven or fifteen days before releasing them; but they keep for that time only those boys who are found to have no physical scars on their bodies.¹⁴

Those whom the ban-jhāṅkrī kidnaps are able to see what he looks like; other men see only his shadow and hear the sound of his golden dhyāṅgro. Birka's now-dead jhāṅkrī guru Dorje Thami had been taken by a ban-jhāṅkrī and given training for seven days before being released and Birka too claims to have had such an experience, though of shorter duration. It happened to him long ago, but he recalls that it occurred in the month of Sāun (that unlucky month again). He was abducted by a ban-jhāṅkrī to a cave in the Gangrin jungle in neighbouring Lapilang Panchayat. He fell unconscious as he was being carried off but not before he had a clear look at the ban-jhāṅkrī. Birka saw a small creature, only three feet tall, that looked like a man with a red face and long,

loose hair. The ban-jhānkrī let Birka go after one night for he was discovered to have a dogbite scar on his leg. Birka adds that a ban-jhānkrī must keep the children he kidnaps out of the sight of his wife, the ban-jhānkrīnī, lest she eat them.

The ban-jhānkrīnī's reputation for cannibalism is universal among my informants. Is there perhaps something here of the same fierce aspect of the female that seems also to find expression in the worship of the various Māī? It is not the male ban-jhānkrī who is dangerous; though he takes the child by force, he shares with him his treasures of knowledge and carefully guards him from the ferocious, devouring woman in the cave. Where is the mothering instinct in this female jhānkrī? Or is the mother instinct so exaggerated in her that from being a desire to possess a child for her very own, on whom she can focus all her love and attention, it has become a desire to devour a child? Possessive and exclusive love does devour its victim. It does not permit the loved one to develop any other relationships.

Once again, as in the case of the terrible goddesses, it can be wondered if Nepalese women with their desperate need for sons do not provide the inspiration for that creature the ban-jhānkrīnī who haunts the male imagination. In a patrilineal virilocal society which for religious, social and economic reasons values a woman insofar as she is the mother of a son, there is built-in tendency for that woman to cling to her son fiercely and resist the entrance of any other person into his life. Carried to its extreme (which can be done in real life as well as in myth) and in a parallel to spirit-possession, the mother possesses the son and regards any other relationship in his life as an intrusion to be exorcised. Stories about ban-jhānkrīnīs who eat children are not just stories about ban-jhānkrīnīs. When people like Birka Bahadur tell a story they are also expressing something about themselves that comes from deep inside; for granted that the story is a traditional one, passed down from generation to generation, this only adds to its depth, giving it a profoundness in time as well as in content.¹⁵

In former days, before the Panchayat system of village government was introduced, Birka had the prestige of being not only a skilful jhānkrī but also the village revenue collector (jimmāwāl).¹⁶ Yet not long after I first met him he committed an act which led to his ostracism from the village. As one old man put it: Jimmāwāl is a foolish fellow with no sense for he married a girl from his own kul (lineage or family). For this foolishness, he was driven out of the village.

Birka's new wife, together with two other wives and their children, accompanied him into exile. He took refuge with them from the Thamis of Dumkot deep inside the dense and pathless jungle that lines the banks of the tributary of the Dolti Khola below and to the south of the village. There he has built a hut for his family and cleared a small area next to it for cultivation. Still as cheerful as he had been when I talked to him in his house in the village, he expressed no resentment at the treatment meted out to him. Whether the Thamis fully understand why they abhor incest or no, by this swift and uncompromising decision

to remove Birka from their society they have certainly made clear that no one may transgress their rules in this matter and remain part of the Thami body. The good of the tribal society as they conceive it outweighs the individual's private interests. And yet at another level it seemed to make no difference, namely, on the heights of Kalingchok. For Birka took part in the following year's Janai Pūrṇimā Jātrā there in full dress and in company with Chuinchuin Jhāṅkrī. It is an example of how on the summit of Kalingchok societas and all its necessary distinctions are left behind, below the clouds, and communitas reigns supreme.

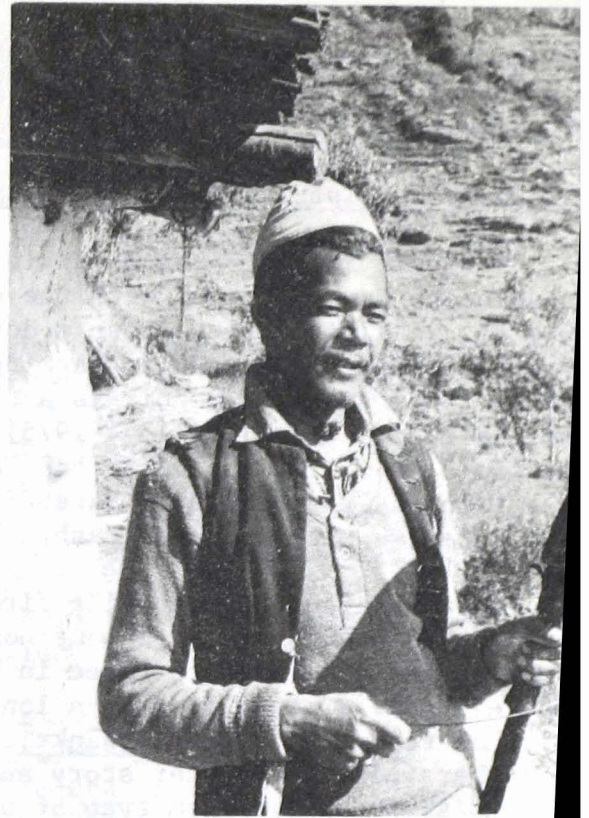
Not all jhāṅkrīs are so friendly and helpful as Hari Bahadur Basnyet, Purna Bahadur Tamang, Anirudra Khati, and Birka Thami. Another Thami of Dumkot named Bhakta Bahadur and nicknamed Gaptere was obviously wary of a stranger questioning him about his work as a jhāṅkrī. A friend of his apologized for Gaptere's suspiciousness and, in his presence, attributed it to his lack of education. The friend went on to explain simply and clearly that in Nepal there are no doctors and so this is the way the people take care of their sick: they call Gaptere and other jhāṅkrīs to treat them. Some live, some die.

Gaptere did let me look at his equipment which was hanging on the wall of his tiny house. His dhyāṅgro is small and crudely made but unusual in two ways: the framework for the skin was made of iron instead of wood and the handle had an odd, almost bell-shaped section from which extended a narrow piece for holding. His wooden ritual dagger (thurmī) is of the same shape. Besides the usual necklaces of rudrākṣa and riṭṭhā beads, plus bandoliers of bells, he has a yak's tail which he waves during healing ceremonies. He then relaxed enough to tell me that he is now forty-two years old and has been a jhāṅkrī since childhood. He claims that the goddess Kalingchok Māī first mounted him when he was only seven. He later studied under a guru named Gate Jhāṅkrī from the Thami settlement of Lapilang.

Gaptere has a good reputation for healing powers, according to Gobinda Bahadur Shahi, the Thakuri Panchayat Member in Dumkot, and is called frequently to attend to sick people in the village. During a later visit to Dumkot, at a time when Gobinda had been away from home for some weeks for a court case in Janakpur, I found his wife feeling sick and miserable with fever, sore throat and sores. She was barely able to go about her household duties and I wondered if she would call Gaptere who lived a short distance above her house. One evening, after her sickness had been going on for nearly a week, a visiting neighbour suggested that she do call him. But Gobinda's wife showed no interest. Her attitude was: what is the use of calling the jhāṅkrī? I believe her reaction to the suggestion would have been different if her husband had been at home and had been the one to recommend Gaptere Jhāṅkrī's treatment. Indeed such solicitude on the part of her husband for her health would have been part of the cure itself. For arrangements made with a jhāṅkrī to treat a sick person, man or woman, are a clear expression of love and concern; when relatives and friends crowd into the room to spend the night in vigil with the jhāṅkrī and his patient it



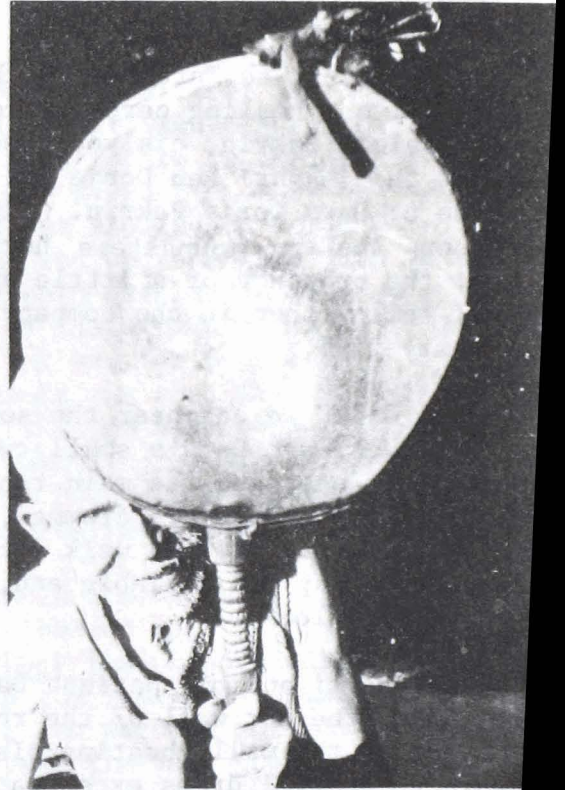
77. Purna Bahadur (Makaibari), a Tamang jhānkri.



78. Bhakta Bahadur Gaptere (Dumkot),
a Thami jhānkri.



79. Anirudra Khati (Dumkot), a Kami jhānkri.



80. Birka Bahadur (Dumkot), a Thami jhānkri.

speaks more eloquently than words of their support and their desire for his or her recovery. This is what I experienced at a healing ceremony at the village of Tarebhir, a full day's walk to the north of Dumkot.

Len Dorje and Tsering Pakrin, Tamang Jhānkrīs

Tarebhir in Chagu Panchayat is really two villages, the lower one occupied by Newar farmers with the name Khandel and the upper, perhaps 8000 ft. in altitude, by about a dozen Tamang households of Pakrin and Syangdan clans who engage in farming and paper-making.¹⁷ Often misty and at times snowy, Tarebhir is a bleak place in the fall and winter, especially in 2031 B.S. (1974-1975) after a ruinous agricultural season. The crops of millet and maize had been destroyed both by hail and excessive rain and the people of Tarebhir were reduced to buying staple grains from Barabise with borrowed cash.

Sitting around the cooking fire after the evening meal of maize porridge and radishes, my Tamang hosts there talked among themselves about jhānkrīs (there are three in the upper village) and one old woman kept everyone's attention for a long time with a story of how a dying baby had recovered after a jhānkrī treatment that cost forty rupees. The others listened to her story and implicit endorsement of jhānkrīs with no signs of cynicism even at what seemed to me a considerable fee charged. She was a true believer. Less enthusiastically than the old woman but still without scepticism, a man turned to me as I was listening to her tale and commented: there are no doctors here and so the jhānkrīs do what they can.

Another visit to Tarebhir in the winter of 2031 B.S. (January 1975) coincided with a healing ceremony for a sick man. During supper at the house of Jalman Pakrin, his young son Sainla and daughter Maili pass the word that the jhānkrī Len Dorje (of Syangdan clan) is going tonight to the house of Dawa Dorje Pakrin. Right after their simple supper of radish soup the two youngsters hurry off to Dawa's house, clearly excited at the prospect of a little excitement in their snow-covered village. I follow them in the company of Jalman's elder brother, a man of about sixty-five.

As we walk we can hear the sound of the jhānkrī's dhyāngro not far away. We reach Dawa's small two-room house in a few minutes and find the door open and the main room packed with people. In this tiny area about fifty people are crammed, men, women and children of all ages. There is no room to walk without stepping on someone. The atmosphere is gay and sociable and, on such a cold night, the physical warmth quite welcome.

The jhānkrī and his patient Dawa sit on either side of a cooking fire against the far wall of the room, opposite the door. Len Dorje squats facing the wall, beating his dhyāngro and chanting as we enter. He wears no special dress except a rudrākṣa necklace and a bandolier of bells; on his left wrist he has wrapped another string of rudrākṣa

beads. It is not as easy to pick out the patient for, though Dawa is said to have been ill since the month of Asoj (September-October), he is sitting up and talking with those around him quite naturally. Evidently his sickness is not critical. But his right cheek is slightly swollen and suggests a bad tooth at the root of his problem, though the spiritual cause of the tooth trouble is yet to be discovered by the jhāṅkrī.

As Len Dorje continues to play his ḍhyāṅgro, he starts to tremble in rhythm with the beat of the drum. People notice this and shout "Lau Parmeśwar" and "Lau Parmeśwarī." They direct their words of encouragement to the invisible power that the jhāṅkrī has been summoning and which has now revealed its presence in his shaking body. They urge the deutā to reveal the cause of Dawa's sickness: "Tell us what evil spirit (bhūt) is making him sick." For, as the old man with me says, they know that a bhūt has afflicted Dawa; the purpose of the cintā is to find out which one and what he wants. I ask many people there, including Dawa himself, if the patient is expected to shake and speak out, but the answer is always no.

After a while attention turns from Dawa to a sick girl whose mother takes the opportunity of tonight's cintā to approach the jhāṅkrī and seek help for her little daughter. Len Dorje calls for achetā and puts a dozen or so grains on his horizontally held ḍhyāṅgro while beating it from below. The little grains jump and dance on the drumhead as if they are alive. A child holds a burning stick near the ḍhyāṅgro so the jhāṅkrī can stop now and then to examine the patterns they form. This continues for about five minutes. He then holds up the drum vertically but in such a way that the rice does not fall off but comes to rest on the rim. The mother holds her daughter, awake but passive, in her arms and squats beside the jhāṅkrī; next to her is the girl's grandfather with a cup of milk. The jhāṅkrī now gives the child the achetā to eat, a few grains at a time and she chews slowly and deliberately, swallowing with the help of the milk. As she works on the last few grains the jhāṅkrī beats his ḍhyāṅgro as hard and loud as he can and blows at her. In spite of the violence of his drumming, right in front of her face, the child shows no sign of any emotion whatever. She seems completely withdrawn and indeed her sickness was described as sāto harāune, i.e., losing her senses. After she has swallowed all the achetā used for the jokhānā, her mother takes her to another part of the room and the jhāṅkrī Len Dorje takes a much-needed rest. He is pouring sweat and breathing heavily after his exertions.

After a few minutes the jhāṅkrī resumes his drumming and without pausing asks for tobacco. Someone wraps tobacco in a leaf and after lighting it puts it in his mouth. The jhāṅkrī does not inhale the smoke but blows out so forcefully through the home-made cigarette that sparks fly in the darkened room. After a few seconds nothing is left. He then orders a ritual cake (Tamang: torma; Tibetan: gtorma) to be made of rice. The jhāṅkrī later took the torma outdoors and left it down below the village as an offering to the bhūt who, according to its victim Dawa, remained unidentified.

A significant feature of the healing ceremony was the fact that Dawa's normally drab and bare dwelling was filled to capacity with friends and relatives and neighbours all in a party mood. Physically close together, psychologically united by their interest in both the patient and the healer, the people alternately watched the jhāṅkrī and talked among themselves with a good deal of giggling and laughing. Altogether a most enjoyable way to spend an evening in Tarebhir. And for the sick person, whether Dawa Dorje here or any other sick person who has such a cintā performed at home, the experience of being the reason for all those people's presence, of being the focus of so much attention from friends, neighbours, relatives who are positively willing him to be cured - this experience itself is a powerful medicine. Especially if the patient is thought to be a victim of witchcraft (a common assumption) all this benevolence manifested so concretely on the part of so many people is a counteracting agent, an antidote, to the malevolence of a single individual. Admittedly too the entertainment aspect of the healing ceremony draws many here: the visual drama of the trembling jhāṅkrī's contact with the invisible world, the sounds of his chanting to the accompaniment of drum and jingling bells, the suspense of wondering if there will be any communications from that other world, all in addition to the fringe delights of relaxing among one's friends. But the sick person knows that he or she is the reason for it all. How many of us ever enjoy in time of distress the support of so many other people for so many hours as do the beneficiaries of jhāṅkrī treatment? Certainly not those of us who fall into the hands of western practitioners of the medical arts.

Jhāṅkrīs and Modern Medicine

Invariably patients report some improvement, if not a complete cure, after a cintā, so it was surprising to hear Dawa say next day that he feels no better physically in spite of the jhāṅkrī's seance. His right cheek is still swollen and the pain is still there. When I offer him a course of aspirin, he eagerly accepts. It should not be imagined that he, or any other client of the jhāṅkrīs, is doctrinaire about the jhāṅkrī method of curing through spirit-possession. Dawa uses it because it is readily available, as well as familiar; aspirin is not ordinarily available. He remains open to other means in order to achieve the desired end of recovered health. Though a jhāṅkrī seance like last night's can create the optimum mental attitude of high expectations for a cure (which in the case of hysterical illnesses or psychosomatic symptoms may in fact be the cure), it is not sufficient in the case of a decaying tooth. Neither is aspirin of course. Both aspirin and spirit-possession are pain-relievers, aspirin by deadening the pain and the seance by focussing full attention and awareness on it. Dawa needs to see a dentist as well.

A reasonable conclusion is that sufferers of diseases which are neither purely mental nor purely physiological will benefit most not from a replacement of traditional jhāṅkrī methods by modern western medicines but from a combination of both. At present, the jhāṅkrī contributes much to the sick in terms of time and attention and a

shared world-view; rather than deprive the patient of these positive helps towards physical and mental health, ways should be sought to introduce modern medicine into the healing process. But how can this be done? Through training the jhānkrī himself?¹⁸ At first glance that would seem to be the ideal since the jhānkrī is the one that people can consult most easily, even if there is a hospital in the area; they can and will call him with hardly any interruption in their daily lives for his preliminary blowing ceremony and his all-night seance because in every village the jhānkrī is there, and not only one but several. But a visit to a hospital and a doctor is a lengthy day-time affair of long hours or days of walking and involving baffling technicalities for illiterate people, with registrations and cards and numbers and impersonal commands, culminating in a brief encounter with the doctor himself, clad not in familiar jāmā and rudrākṣa necklaces, drum in hand, but in white coat and stethoscope.

Yet let us reflect, before opting for this ideal solution, that one conclusion which has been reached after innumerable questionings is that there is no formal organization among jhānkrīs, only the limited relationship between master and disciple. Why is this so? Besides the inherent difficulties in setting up and maintaining a hierarchy among generally illiterate men in a mountainous region where lack of communications is a basic problem, there is the more basic difficulty that jhānkrīs do not desire such organization. Rather than have a hierarchical institution in which each jhānkrī (and his clients) would know his place, whether high or low, they prefer to leave the question of high-low, superior-inferior an open one, as being less risky for the majority in the long run (for only one or a few can be at the top). Not only that but a wider organization which would judge qualifications would also require a wider sharing of knowledge among jhānkrī gurus who are potential rivals in the competition for disciples and clients and naturally jealous about the essentially secret nature of their lore. This kind of sharing jhānkrīs are not prepared to do. The jhānkrī will only share his knowledge with a limited group of disciples who must be willing to recompense him for this. There are grave difficulties then, as I see it, in trying to broaden the jhānkrī's effectiveness as a healer through training him to introduce modern means of diagnosis and treatment into his repertoire of traditional methods.

There is the practical difficulty of how to reach him in the first place, given the difficulties of communication in Nepal and the fact that, presumably reluctant to organize, he would have to be reached individually or at most with a small group of his own disciples. There exists the equally practical difficulty of who would reach him and teach him, given the shortage of doctors, health-workers and paramedical personnel. Finally, if all the jhānkrīs were taught the same body of knowledge, i.e., simple diagnosis and remedies plus the signs of when to refer a case beyond their competence to a specialist, would they value the knowledge or, in their shrewd way, would they see this common knowledge as the thin end of a wedge that would ultimately make all jhānkrīs the same and destroy the master-disciple relationship? Would

they bother to use the knowledge at all or, granted their creative abilities, would they transform it out of all recognition and possible medical utility?¹⁹

These are formidable difficulties indeed, much greater than those of training doctors and building hospitals in the hills. And so I would recommend that the ideal be abandoned and a real solution adopted, namely, instead of training the jhānkrī in medicine, train the doctor in anthropology. Bright young doctors, if really bright, might learn more easily from jhānkrīs than vice versa, if they could overcome a natural-enough tendency to despise the jhānkrī as a benighted exploiter of the poor, sunk in superstition, a tendency that is easy to pick up along with their secular education. The doctor can learn when to leave patients to a specialist like the jhānkrī, a specialist in those sicknesses (the majority?) which are rooted in stressful situations in the family. The doctor can profitably learn from the jhānkrī some valuable lessons in how to relate to each of the many patients whom the nurse ushers in and out of his presence with such dispatch, regarding them as whole persons and not just wheezing chests or rheumy eyes or extended bellies. For even though the doctor cannot spend a whole night with one patient as a jhānkrī willingly does, he can still let the patient know, even in a few moments of examination, that he is being treated as a person and not as an object. Such an attitude, or its opposite, is communicated swiftly and non-verbally through the doctor's eyes and his hands and his whole behaviour.

Another important factor for the patient is the comparative cost and complication of treatment. Len Dorje's lengthy treatment of Dawa last night cost not more than five rupees and was a self-contained process. A trip to the doctor or dentist, if there were one within reasonable range, might not immediately be any more successful but would almost certainly be a great deal more costly since, even if the examination were free, the usual outcome is to emerge with a slip of paper indicating any number of expensive medicines that must be bought and, more problematic perhaps, be taken according to a definite dosage and time schedule. This is difficult to explain to the illiterate villager and difficult for him to follow, yet not to adhere to it spells failure of the treatment either from infrequent underdoses or dangerous overdoses. With the jhānkrī, however, whatever has to be done is done then and there, or postponed to another night in order to give time to assemble the easily available articles needed for the worship required for a cure. Coupled with the jhānkrī and the patient's similarly high expectations for a cure, this makes the doctor's more cautious manner and often drawn-out treatment seem inferior in comparison.²⁰

Any Nepalese doctor who might object to considering a jhānkrī as a professional colleague from whom he could learn something should be made aware of the tremendous interest in such traditional practitioners now being shown by members of the medical profession in the Western world, especially psychiatrists and those concerned with mental health

and psychosomatic diseases.²¹ I would like to see Nepal take a really enlightened attitude towards the jhānkrīs, not trying to ignore them as if they were skeletons in our closet because they do not fit into the categories of high-caste Hinduism or modern secularism. Jhānkrīs are a witness that there is more to reality than either orthodox Hinduism or especially one-dimensional secularism can represent. Less still should the attitude be one of actively suppressing the jhānkrīs or crusading against them.

If doctors take a negative attitude towards jhānkrīs, the losers will be the sick. For once jhānkrīs know that they are being attacked by the doctors and that their clients are being discouraged from consulting them, they are more than likely to stage a counter-attack and attempt to frighten the people from going to the doctors. After all, the jhānkrī has the whole invisible world on his side. He can come into controlled contact with the forces that bring all these illnesses and other misfortunes into men's lives. Since he has all that power at his command by means of his magico-religious knowledge, people feel that the jhānkrī is able not only to turn misfortune away from them but can also turn it in their direction if disposed to do so. I recall a villager's statement as he glanced towards a jhānkrī at a Māghe San-krānti festival near Suri Dobhan: "We must not make them angry." The jhānkrī, if angered, is the equivalent of a male witch. This is part of a world-view that presumably the secularly educated doctor does not openly share. In the case of a confrontation, where a choice would have to be made, the chances of the villagers' choosing loyalty to the familiar and powerful jhānkrī over allegiance to the unfamiliar doctor (who neither claims nor manifests any such controlled contact with the source of all their troubles) is great. It is in the interest of all parties, but especially of the sick villager, not to provoke such a confrontation.

Let the doctors learn from the jhānkrīs, and I would expect in the long run to find the jhānkrīs learning something from the doctors, at their own pace and in their own intelligent way, as Western-type medical services spread through the hills. Let the patient use both. Let the sick of Nepal, so long and so pitifully deprived of the advantages stemming from progress in discoveries in the West, benefit now from both the modern and traditional practitioners.²²

Len Dorje and Tsering Pakrin, Tamang Jhānkrīs, Continued

I found the jhānkrī Len Dorje ill-at-ease and uncommunicative the next day when I put a few questions to him. He became a jhānkrī simply by the god mounting him with the resultant shaking. He claims to have had no guru except this deutā who taught him all the mantras he knows. He admits that his grandfather was a jhānkrī, but denies at first that his father was one or that his son would be one until the others in the room react strongly to this. Jalman Pakrin speaks up and says emphatically: his father is a jhānkrī his grandfather is a jhānkrī, he is a jhānkrī. At this Len Dorje is forced to make the admission

that his father was a jhānkrī as well. Yet it should be noticed that Jalman did not take the further step of saying: and his son will be a jhānkrī too. There is nothing automatic about sons following fathers as in a hereditary occupation. This would run counter to the consistent belief in personal choice, either by the man himself or the gods, as the determining factor in a vocation.

Another jhānkrī of Tarebhir, Tsering Pakrin, makes a similar claim to having had no human instruction in the matter of mantras. But he does call the man who made the ḍhyāṅgro for him his guru. Tsering Pakrin says that the drum-maker guru Pancha Lal (of Coidang village, between Tarebhir and Bigu) acquired this skill from the lamas of Sailung, a Tamang village where there is a daughter foundation of the Bigu Gumbā. After completing the drum Pancha Lal came to Tsering's house and, when Tsering had entered into a state of trembling, explained the meaning of the carvings he had made. When the explanation was finished he told Tsering: now you are a jhānkrī. Thus, because of Pancha Lal's construction and explanation of the ḍhyāṅgro, Tsering calls him his guru, but everything else he learned directly from the deutā. For Pancha Lal's work Tsering Pakrin had to pay him a sum of twenty-five rupees at the rate of five rupees for each of the following items: the skin of a wild goat (ghoral), the preparation of the skin, the framework, the cane for tightening the skin on the frame, and the drum handle.

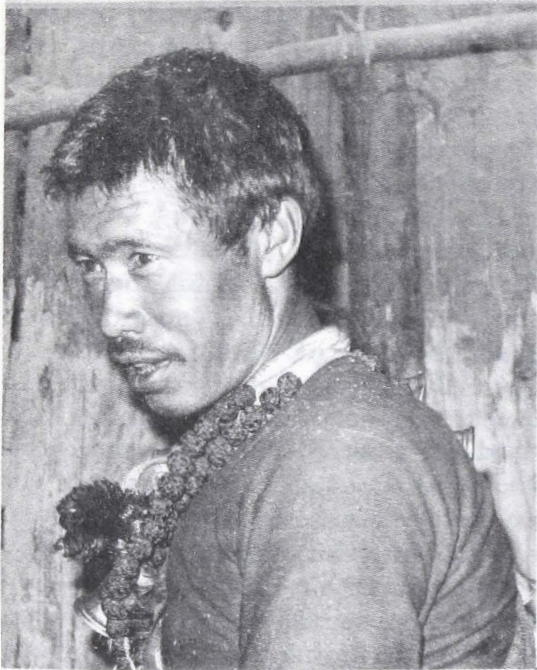
It was instructive to see how Jalman Pakrin motivated Tsering to dress up in his jhānkrī costume so that I could take a photograph. Tsering first wanted to know how much money I would be making from the use of his picture but Jalman explained to him that his photo would appear in a book and underneath it would be written the words "Pakrin Jhānkrī", thus making him and the Pakrins well known. The hope of name and fame was enough to send Tsering hurrying to put on all his regalia.

Jhānkrīs and Development

Before leaving Tarebhir, I want to point out how frequently in this remote spot one hears the word undho (below, down there), referring to the larger centres of population at lower altitudes. "Below" is where everything good is found, where life is easy, where electricity brings light and heat, where schools and hospitals and entertainment are available, in other words, all the material and social benefits of the modern world. The men know. They have been "below", bartering their bodily strength when young for cash to spend not on luxuries but for necessities and, in this year of failed harvests, for food itself. Just as more than two centuries ago the mountaineer rājā of another small valley to the west looked from Chandragiri Pass "down below" upon the Valley of Nepal and desired to possess the riches of that fertile land and those splendid cities, so too the mountaineers of Tarebhir today look down and see and desire.²³ The desire of Prithvinarayan (founder of the ruling Shah dynasty) for the wealth of the Kathmandu Valley became a reality because of his military genius and determination; the desires of his successors for the distribution of



81. Paper-making in Tarebhir.



82. Len Dorje Syangdan (Tarebhir),
a Tamang jhāṅkrī.



83. Tsering Pakrin (Tarebhir), a Tamang jhān

that wealth and the social benefits it can provide throughout the country he created are still in process of fulfilment. The jhāṅkrīs in this area do not take any active role in this process of socio-economic development. They remain in the magico-religious realm although, as was pointed out earlier, potentially they could use their privileged status as mediators with the invisible world to influence political events and development in their villages. Just one example of an obvious situation in which they could intervene in this way as spokesmen for the gods would be the local elections. For a jhāṅkrī to give an endorsement of one candidate over another for a position in the Village Panchayat while in a state of shaking, mounted by a powerful god, would seem to have great weight. If an endorsement from the Back to the Village National Campaign can be such a powerful force in elections that, once a candidate secures it, other opponents drop out and he is elected unopposed, it can be at least imagined that an endorsement from a theoretically higher authority, say Kalingchok Māī or Dāre Maṣṭa or Mahādev himself, would be even more influential.

But why does not the jhāṅkrī involve himself in this way in the world of men and affairs of state? Why do not the gods say something through him and give some political guidance? The obvious answer would be that evidently the gods are not interested. If they wanted to involve themselves in this way in the world of men, they presumably could. But their interests seem confined to accepting men's offerings of food and drink in return for which they keep out of ordinary human affairs. The presence of God is a disturbing thing, bringing with it the unsettling of normal life. Much better for man if the two worlds, visible and invisible, remain on their separate courses.

The gods do get the credit for blessings, especially children and cattle, received by those who accompany their requests with offerings at the shrines, but these blessings are by no means automatic; sometimes the gods do not give due consideration to the devotion of their worshippers, as exemplified in the case of Dharmadas, the great benefactor of Kalingchok Māī. I knew him as a kindly old man who sat in his little 'general store' in Charikot and always offered me a sweet or an areca nut (supārī) whenever I stopped to greet him. But a pious Chetri woman told me some details about him and added her interpretation to recent events in his life. Her remarks illustrate a widespread religious attitude. She says: Dharmadas has done so much dharma (religion, religious duty), so many good works at great expense, especially in connection with the māīthān on Kalingchok and yet 'God did not consider this (Bhagawānle bicār garena). For Dharmadas lost his wife two years back and this year lost his only son who drank himself to death, people say, in Kathmandu.

In other words, Dharmadas was generous towards Bhagawān with many gifts but instead of receiving blessings in return he has received the opposite in his old age, the loss of wife and son. Something went wrong somewhere. The woman's conclusion ('God did not consider') is another way of saying that the world of the invisible, into which man

tries to insinuate his interests by the giving of gifts, is basically uninterested in us. Following the same line of thought, I suggest that the jhānkrī does not voice the gods' political preferences for the reason that the gods are not believed to have any. If Bhagawān can be so unmindful of the plight of a man like Dharmadas in such an essential matter of life as the survival of one's son, and after all that Dharmadas has merited according to our human idea of the purpose of gift-exchange, then what are the chances of Bhagawān having the slightest concern for our political arrangements or development plans? The gods live in the changeless world of fully-developed reality; we live in the undeveloped, impermanent, and therefore fundamentally unreal world. To put it bluntly, the gods could not care less and everybody knows it. In such a context, a jhānkrī is unlikely to come out with joint-communiqués from that other world. At least in this part of Nepal the jhānkrīs do not wield any political clout as oracles or act as agents of change and development.

Kami Thami, a Jhānkrī Reformed

From Tarebhir, Bigu is four hours to the north. Its red-roofed gumbā and the long line of white one-storey convent cells that stretch out in front of it, flanked by the two-storey residence of the Lama on the west and the two-storey kitchen and storehouse on the east, all set against a background of tall pines, make an inviting picture for the traveller.²⁴ The community of thirty or so Buddhist nuns (ani) speak of their Tibetan Lama, as does everyone else, as the Big Lama (Ṭhulo Lāmā). He came from a Gelugpa monastery in Tibet to rule over this Kargyupa convent and he speaks with respect of the Nyingmapa order as well. He points out the pictures of the founders of all three orders in the murals of his tastefully appointed room and says, "We revere them all (hāmī sabai mānchaup)."

But his tolerance has limits. As a devout Buddhist he is frankly distressed at the blood sacrifices that Hindus and tribals offer up to their gods and he makes it a point, when speaking to such people, to do his best to dissuade them from this practice. His campaign has yielded some results, he says with satisfaction, for several people have given up the shedding of animal blood after his talk to them. He reports that those who are well-disposed in mind mend their ways at his urging but those who are not in such good dispositions only become angry when he talks to them on the subject. With regret he confesses that no one in the nearby Thami village of Alampu to the east has abandoned the practice. But he is consoled by the fact that a Thami jhānkrī of Bigu has been converted as a result of his advice.

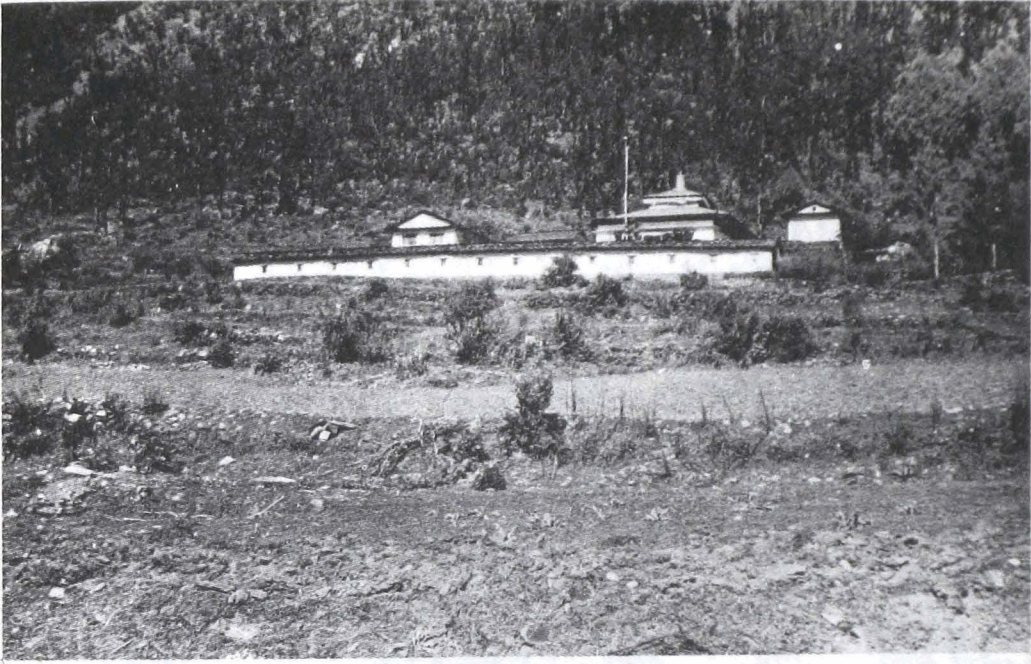
The jhānkrī's name is Kami Thami. Kami (literally blacksmith) is merely a name, not his caste or occupation, for he is a farmer like the other inhabitants of Bigu, all Sherpa except himself and his father Sarki Thami. Sarki (literally cobbler) is a jhānkrī too, but an unrepentant one who continues the killing of animals. Their two houses lie on the hillside a few minutes' walk below the convent. Kami Thami's second daughter, Maili, is a nun there, having joined the previous year as the only Thami among a majority of Sherpa and minority of Tamang ani.

Maili's entrance into religious life coincided with the visit of an avatārī lāmā, the reincarnation of the first Thulo Lāmā of Bigu Gumbā and now residing at Tarkegyang in Helambu. He received her into the convent at the age of sixteen. She still visits her home often since it is so close and her parents express their satisfaction at the fact that she has become a nun. Kami Thami says that it was partly his daughter's entrance into the religious life of the Buddhist community and partly his own contact with the Thulo Lāmā that motivated him to give up the sacrifice aspect of his work as a jhāṅkrī.²⁵

Maili's mother recalls that her husband sat with the Thulo Lāmā for seven days of instruction at the gumbā six months ago. Since that time he has "given up jhāṅkrī (jhāṅkrī choḍheko)," indicating that, in her mind, giving up sacrifice and giving up being a jhāṅkrī come to the same. But Kami Thami still considers and calls himself a jhāṅkrī. He continues to perform the blowing ceremony for the sick and still dresses up in his jhāṅkrī costume to attend the festivals on Kalingchok. The previous Kāgastamī festival in Bhādra (August-September) saw him participating there in full dress, dhyāṅgro in hand. But during the festival he refrained from performing any sacrifices at the shrines; he had darśan of the Goddess only. As for the Kalingchok Jātrā on Janai Pūrnimā he has given up participating at that time altogether, not for any religious scruple, however, but because it is too crowded.

At the same time as he showed me his jhāṅkrī equipment, Kami Thami wanted me to see the picture he bought when he decided to give up the killing of animals. The framed picture shows a Buddhist deity all in red which he calls Chepāngmu; a similar representation is seen in the room of the Thulo Lāmā who calls it Chepame (probably Tibetan: Che dpag med, i.e., Amitāyus). When I photographed Kami Thami in his jhāṅkrī dress he wanted this picture included and had his young son hold it next to him.

Kami Thami's house is of tiny proportions like Thami houses in Dumkot and elsewhere and so too is the house of his parents a few steps away. His miniature mother, all wrinkles and rags, deepens in me the impression of the Thamis as people who have learned to survive on very little. Everything about them is small and compact. Her husband Sarki Thami was not at home but she pointed out the old man's dhyāṅgro, unusual in its almost oblong shape. The old woman told us of the change in her son's life since he has come under the influence of the Thulo Lāmā. He is quite particular now about keeping ritually pure (cokho). Not long ago he had become polluted (jūṭho) by drinking liquor with some "Bhotes" and afterwards spent a whole night bathing at the nearby stream to purify himself. It is true that her husband has not followed the son's example by giving up any of his old practices as a jhāṅkrī, yet it does not disturb her either way; rather it pleases her that both son and husband are jhāṅkrīs, albeit one is reformed (in the eyes of the Lama) and the other is not.



84. Bigu Gumbā.



85. Kami Thami's daughter Maili, a nun of Bigu Gumbā.



86. Maili visiting her home below the gumbā.



87. Kami Thami dressed in his jhānkri costume.

The above-described conversion of the Thami jhānkrī can serve perhaps to point up that acculturation of tribal peoples to their neighbours who practise a world-religion, whether Hinduism or Buddhism, is a feature of Nepalese life now as no doubt it has been since the first contacts were made. One of the values most often mentioned in regard to Nepalese culture in the context of national integration is that of mutual religious tolerance but the impression may be created that this real tolerance includes an attitude of benevolent respect and appreciation for each other's religious values. This tolerance is more like simple ignorance of contradictory differences or peaceful co-existence when these differences are known. For, to make it concrete in the example at hand, the Thulo Lāmā most definitely does not look with benevolence on the blood sacrifices so important to the Hindus and tribals. He regards it as a great sin. He would like nothing better than that Hindus cease being Hindus in this respect and be converted to the Buddhist view in the matter; he tries by persuasion to bring this about. For him it is not a question of a genial attitude which approves indiscriminately of whatever others do; for such an attitude says in effect that, after all, religion and its practices are of no real significance and thus it does not matter what is done in its name as long as the laws of the nation are not violated. Rather, his attitude is one of toleration insofar as he is unable to do anything about it. But given a man of good disposition the Thulo Lāmā will do his best to bring him round to what he considers the true theory and practice in regard to animal sacrifices.

This case of the jhānkrī's conversion then highlights a difficulty inherent in basing national integration on values specific to one religion, no matter which, for people with equal claims to citizenship may be of one religion or another or a mixture or none. Individuals may express strong convictions concerning the superiority of one religion over another but the nation that is working for integration can hardly afford to do so either explicitly or implicitly. Differences based on religion exist in every nation but they can threaten national unity only if national unity is based on religion. This Thami jhānkrī's conversion reminds us too of something we need to be reminded of continuously; society in Dolakha District or anywhere else is not static and people learn from each other what they want to learn.

Final Scene

Before leaving Dolakha District, the scene of great festivals at Kalingchok and Devikot and Deolang, with their pageantry and display of jhānkrī activity, I would like to record a scene, one step in the jātrā of life, which took place in a house in Laduk, a day's walk to the east of Bigu Gumbā. It is a one-room house, with the cooking fire in the centre, a couple of goats tied up inside the door, the family possessions stored in the corners and hanging down from the low roof. The man of the house, a Tamang of Yonjon clan, is cooking the supper of black millet porridge for his wife and two-year old son and himself. The woman sits staring into the fire, her hair and clothes in disarray, the boy on her lap. She mechanically pushes a piece of wood into the

fire now and then, but shows only apathy to everything around her including the lively child. She is obviously unwell. Her husband whispers that her sickness has been caused by a witch, a woman who knowingly causes harm to others, he continues, either by employing a magic spell or simply by her eye. My companion, Mahendra Limbu, offers the sick woman some all-purpose camphor medicine with instructions to add a few drops of it to hot water and drink it. But she does not stir or even look up. Her husband tells us that she is afraid of the medicine. He says she is a person of the hills (pahāḍko mānche) and that is why she is ignorant and fearful. He puts himself in a different category from her because he has worked in India before their marriage.

What will you do for your wife in her sickness, I ask the man. He replies: I will call a jhānkrī, there are no doctors; in the hills we have jhānkrīs in place of doctors. If there were doctors, what would you do, I ask. He answers: if there were doctors, I would call the doctor and then I would call the jhānkrī.

This scene in its silence and deceptive simplicity, when viewed in the light of all that we have learned in Dolakha District, brings out the essential function and value of the jhānkrī to the people whom he serves: he rescues them from the helplessness they experience in the face of forces beyond their control. When a family member is sick and one has to do something but does not know what, the jhānkrī knows a way, he has a means. And he demonstrates in his shaking, brought on by the descent of the god upon his back when called, that he is in controlled contact with the invisible forces which are the source of the misfortunes that plague man and thus he can mediate, through bargaining and agreed offerings, a withdrawal of those forces from man's life.

The jhānkrī and his patient share this same world-view. How long will this world-view last? Will it succumb to the inroads of secularism that accompany the spread of schools in the district? Does such a world-view really disappear or does it merely go below the surface to co-exist, but at a deeper level, with the secular viewpoint? As long as this shared world-view does persist the jhānkrī will be needed and called even when modern medical facilities become available.²⁶ The jhānkrī may now be "in place of doctors" as the Tamang and so many others like him express it, but the doctors, if and when they come to these remote villages, can never fully replace the jhānkrī.

Footnotes

1. Eliade writes that "however selected, a shaman is not recognized as such until after he has received two kinds of teaching: (1) ecstatic (dreams, trances, etc.) and (2) traditional (shamanic techniques, names and functions of the spirits, mythology and genealogy of the clan, secret language, etc.). The twofold course of instruction, given by the spirits and the old master shamans, is equivalent to an initiation. Sometimes initiation is public and constitutes an autonomous ritual in itself. But absence of this kind of ritual in no sense implies absence of an initiation; the latter

can perfectly well occur in dream or in the neophyte's ecstatic experience." Shamanism, p. 13. Eliade's remarks apply quite well to the jhānkrīs in this section.

2. Gubhāju is a Newar caste whose members have the personal surname of Bajracharya and the traditional occupation of family priests. However, "a majority of them work as masons, carpenters, wood carvers, ivory workers, painters, goldsmiths, silversmiths, brass smiths and bronze smiths." Bista, People of Nepal, p. 18. They are credited with having tāntrik vidyā (tantric knowledge), with "tantric" here being synonymous with "magical" in village vocabulary.
3. One of the ani said that hail never falls in Bigu and attributed this to the power of the Ṭhulo Lāmā's mantra. Some time later the nun currently in charge of the communal kitchen, when questioned on the point, stated that hail does fall in Bigu. When she was informed of the other's denial of this (and the reason) she qualified her statement by saying that only a little hail falls and does not do any damage to the crops "because of the Ṭhulo Lāmā's mantra." Twisting the facts? Not necessarily. It is a case of interpreting the facts according to their religious beliefs which is the prerogative of a religious outlook on life. Non-religious people interpret facts too, of course, in order to make sense of them but they use non-religious criteria. In Ruth Benedict's memorable phrase. "No man ever looks at the world with pristine eyes." Patterns of Culture (New York, 1946), p. 18.
4. Ralph Lilley Turner, A Comparative and Etymological Dictionary of the Nepali Language (London, 1931), p. 47.
5. What exactly is a witch? It seems that "there is no unanimity among anthropologists. The classic distinction between 'witchcraft' and 'sorcery' in Africa was first outlined by Professor Evans-Pritchard (1937, p. 21) in the following words:

Azande believe that some people are witches and can injure them in virtue of an inherent quality. A witch performs no rite, utters no spell, and possesses no medicines. An act of witchcraft is a psychic act. They believe also that sorcerers may do them ill by performing magic rites with bad medicines.

The distinction here is between different types of means: the end is similar. Both witches and sorcerers injure people. ... Unfortunately, these analytic distinctions have not always worked when applied to societies other than the Azande." A.D.J. Macfarlane, "Definitions of Witchcraft," in Witchcraft and Sorcery, ed. Max Marwick (Middlesex, 1970), pp. 41-42. In my experience most villagers believe that the boksī employs definite magical means such as spells and rites to harm her enemies, although just the look of certain women, i.e., the evil eye, is thought to be harmful.

It would be closer to Evans-Pritchard's terminology to call the Nepalese boksī a sorceress. Linda Stone has collected much valuable information on witch beliefs in her article "Concepts of Illness and Curing in a Central Nepal Village," Contributions to Nepalese Studies 3 (June 1976): 55-80.

6. In an interview reported in the newspaper Gorkhapatra on 26 April 1975, the Minister of State for Health gave the following statistics: Nepal has 374 doctors, one for every 33,000 people; 335 nurses and 620 assistant nurses; 62 hospitals in 45 districts with a total of 2,168 beds; 82 ayurvedic dispensaries, 32 health centres, 351 health posts. In a report in the newspaper The Rising Nepal of 20 February 1976, we are reminded that twenty years ago there were only 50 qualified doctors in the country and only 600 hospital beds.
7. "Infirmity, nervous disorder, spontaneous vocation, or heredity are so many external signs of a 'choice,' an 'election.' Sometimes these signs are physical (an innate or acquired infirmity); sometimes an accident, even of the commonest type, is involved (e.g. falling from a tree or being bitten by a snake)." Eliade, Shamanism, pp. 31-32. Purna's accident was interpreted by him as such a sign.
8. A beautiful female phantom called kicakannī that seduces and eventually kills unwary men is characterized by this same peculiar feature of having her feet on backwards. She is usually careful to keep her feet covered with her skirts lest she be recognized. The kicakannī figures in many stories including one about King Pratap Malla of Kathmandu who had been carrying on an affair with a mysterious and beautiful woman until one day he noticed that her soles and heels were reversed. He escaped from her clutches only with the help of a skilful gubhāju and his magic. Mahendra Mālā, Class 10, p. 5.
9. Turner, Dictionary of Nepali, p. 459.
10. Prayag Raj Sharma, "The Divinities of the Karnali Basin in Western Nepal," in Anthropology of Nepal, ed. Haimendorf, p. 253.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 248.
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*
14. Kidnapping by a ban-jhānkrī might have the function at times of being an extremely convenient alibi for a runaway from home.
15. Apropos of these stories of experiences with ban-jhānkrīs is the observation that "there are also 'sicknesses,' attacks, dreams, and hallucinations that determine a shaman's career in a very short time. We are not concerned with whether these pathogenic

ecstasies have really been experienced, or have been imagined, or at least later enriched by folkloric motifs, to end by being integrated into the frame of the traditional shamanic mythology. Essential is the fact that these experiences justify the vocation and the magico-religious power of a shaman." Eliade, Shamanism, pp. 35-36.

16. Jimmāwāl is defined as a "non-official tax collecting functionary on Khet land in the hill districts and Kathmandu Valley," Khet land being "irrigated land on which paddy and wheat can be grown, in the hill districts and Kathmandu Valley." Mahesh C. Regmi, Land Tenure and Taxation in Nepal (Berkeley, 1964), vol. 2, p.167.
17. The pulp for paper-making is obtained by soaking the stalk of a plant called simply kāgate pāṭ (lit. paper leaf, a kind of Daphne) found in the forests above the village. Women spread the pulp on wire mesh stretched over rectangular wooden frames and prop them up between the houses and in the fallow fields. Both men and women work at peeling off the thin but strong sheets of paper (appx. 50 cm. by 77 cm.) after the air has dried them; they obtain about five sheets a day from each frame. Each sheet costs twenty-five pice in the shops of Charikot although the Tamangs claim that they receive only a few pice from the merchants whom they supply.
18. Gunnar Myrdal suggests that, for South Asia, "Since indigenous medical practitioners will continue to minister to the needs of the rural population for a long time to come, there is good reason for the health authorities to be well disposed toward a development that would give these practitioners some instruction in Western medicine. In view of their trusted position among the people, native doctors, given some training in modern medicine, could undoubtedly play an important role in the various health programs now getting way in rural areas." Asian Drama (Middlesex, 1968), vol. 3, p. 1600. By indigenous practitioners Myrdal means "priests, astrologists, cultists, magicians, exorcists, and charm-sellers, as well as secular physicians and numberless specialists, such as surgeons, cuppers, tooth-extractionists, and thorn-pullers." Ibid., p. 1598.
19. There is another possibility, which became a reality in south-west Nepal. "The problem of too precipitous government advances in this direction without time for a holistic education to engender more than personal gain motivations was revealed by an experiment in Nepalganj: jhankaris were invited to a few weeks' training and issued certificates, but when they returned to their villages, tended towards upsetting monopolistic practices on the strength that only they were certified by the government." C.J. Wake, "Health Services and Some Cultural Factors in Eastern Nepal," Contributions to Nepalese Studies 3 (June 1976): 118.

20. Myrdal, again in the wider context of South Asia, tries to see the situation through the patient's eyes when he writes that "although indigenous medicine has deteriorated and receives little official support, it has not lost its grip on the rural population or on lower classes in the cities. The reasons are not merely economic, though the higher cost of modern medical care may play a part. In the eyes of the villagers, a practitioner of native medicine has qualities transcending those of a Western-trained doctor. The former seems more interested in the sick, and yet he does not waste time and money on the dying. He does not isolate his patients in hospitals far from their friends and relatives. Neither does he laugh at them when they ascribe their diseases to vengeful gods or to magic. He gives treatment with his own hand and never says he does not know what the difficulty is. He charges a relatively low fee and does not ask for payment in advance of result. These attitudes and the vested interests of practitioners of indigenous medicine might impede the growth of modern medical services in rural areas, were it not that the supply of such services falls far short of meeting the demand that does exist." Myrdal, Asian Drama, vol. 3, pp. 1598-1599. Except for the fact that jhānkris do refuse to treat certain cases (such as broken bones), the above passage describes the situation well. Linda Stone's findings, in a village within easy reach of the Trisuli hospital, are also significant in this regard. She learned that "although villagers display a high regard for Western medicines (pills, ointments, injections, etc.) they are somewhat less enthusiastic about the institutions of Western medicine, such as the Trisuli hospital. My research suggests, that the hospital is used infrequently or as a last resort, not because it embodies a system of alien or threatening ideas of illness, but because it lacks institutional success or institutional integration with village life. Specifically, villagers point out the quality of hospital services varies according to one's wealth and status, that doctors give only cursory examinations, that distributed medicines are old, and that provision for the observation of local caste restrictions is not made." "Concepts of Illness and Curing in a Central Nepal Village," Contributions to Nepalese Studies 3 (June 1976): 78.
21. "The advent of psychosomatic medicine as a formal branch of medicine may be dated from the publication of Flanders Dunbar's Emotions and Bodily Changes in 1935. The growth, development, and pervasive influence of psychosomatic medicine upon medicine as a whole has been truly spectacular. Anthropologists have from the first been among the most sympathetic students and supporters of psychosomatic medicine. Anthropologists had known for many years, from observations made in the field on non-literate peoples, that feelings and somatic functions were closely interrelated." M.F. Ashley Montagu, "Contributions of Anthropology to Psychosomatic Medicine," Anthropology and Human Nature (New York, 1963), p. 148. He goes on to call the anthropologist "the indispensable associate and collaborator of the psychiatrist....Working together, psychiatrist and anthropologist would complement each other." Ibid., p. 153.

In view of Nepal's needs and resources such a team as envisioned by Montagu is surely the impossible dream. A young doctor struggling to adjust to life in the hills and attempting to meet the needs of thousands of villagers will never be able to enjoy the advantages of being a member of a team composed of himself, a psychiatrist and an anthropologist. What he can do, however, is to be open to the insights of psychiatry and anthropology so as to be aware of the full dimensions of the health problems he will be attempting to solve. And if he cannot count on the collaboration of a psychiatrist and an anthropologist, he can at least learn from the barefoot specialists who are indigenous to the area, i.e., the jhānkrīs.

22. The following report of the situation in China is of special interest to us in Nepal in the context of the problem of the practical relationship between traditional and Western medicine in a developing country:

Medicine and public health is the focus of intense debate - including political discussion - in China. In fact, the current policy is an effective blend of traditional methods and modern Western medicine, and the training schemes involved are, in their own way, quite impressive.

By 1985, there should be a full complement of qualified doctors servicing the rural areas. Meanwhile, the quality of the barefoot doctors, mostly recruited year by year from among the more politically conscious young people, is steadily improving. From the beginning of this year, they have been supervised by fully-trained hospital doctors who settle in the rural areas for periods of three months at a time, while the barefoot doctors themselves swap places with them temporarily at their hospital in the nearest city....

By the early 1960s, there were sufficient doctors in the cities, but there was a desperate shortage in the rural areas. The answer was the creation of the barefoot doctor programme, combined with the sending of qualified teaching doctors to the countryside. It was a bold means of solving the problem; it not only provided the framework, but also meant that the question of professional competence could be resolved with the passage of time....

Another effective but somewhat disingenuous aspect of the Chinese medical care system is the extensive use of traditional Chinese medicine "in combination" with modern Western medicine. ... There is also an incongruous cohabitation of Confucian and Taoist

philosophy with Maoist thought, which deserves attention.

However, as every doctor knows, whether or not he admits it, few drugs are effective unless the patient's will to cooperate in his own recovery is activated. This psychological participation on the patient's part can be achieved through various forms of sacrificial ritual, for instance by high fees, painful treatment, exercises, prayers, diets or the prescription of unpleasant drugs. Of all these possible "recovery rituals," the most suitable for China - indeed the only one it could afford - was the continued toleration of the traditional medicine in which most people still believed. This accounts for the rash of official Chinese press reports on successful cures of patients using traditional medicine where western medicine had proved ineffective.

The real cause of the recovery in such cases probably was that a barefoot doctor, trained primarily in Chinese medicine, could be on hand to attend the sick peasant every day, whereas no such facilities would have been available for treatment with Western medicine, and the drugs would have been too expensive.

Thus a mentality has been induced in the rural areas hostile to Western medicine on the grounds that it is "too strong," is "only suitable for foreigners" - and, above all, requires too big a drain on the brigade's collective medical fund. So Western medicine is avoided as much as possible and the mass of the people are convinced that the old methods are still the best. The main change since 1949 is that proper drugs are gradually becoming available to the peasants.

Far Eastern Economic Review, 8 October 1976, pp. 34-35.

23. Prithvinarayan Shah himself describes the scene in his Dibya Upadesh. "From Chandragiri's top I asked, 'Which is Nepal?' They showed me, saying, 'That is Bhadgaon, that is Patan, and there lies Kathmandu.' The thought came to my heart that if I might be king of these three cities, why, let it be so," quoted in Ludwig F. Stiller, S.J., The Rise of the House of Gorkha (New Delhi, 1973), p. 75. And further: "At this time these two astrologers said to me, 'O King, your heart is melting with desire.' I was struck with wonder. How did they know my inmost thoughts and

so speak to me. 'At the moment your gaze rested on Nepal, you stroked your moustache and in your heart you longed to be king of Nepal, as it seemed to us." Ibid., p. 93.

24. A history of the Bigu gumbā, a description of its present organization, and short case-histories of the nuns living there in 1974 is given in Christoph von Fürer Haimendorf, "A Nunnery in Nepal," Kailash 4, no. 2 (1976): 121-154.
25. Haimendorf gives Maili's case-history as follows: "Sange Chegi (alias Bakti Ama), age 20, is the only Thami in the nunnery, and is the daughter of a local jankri (shaman). As a young girl Sange Chegi was ill for a long time, and her father thought that her illness might be caused by his work as a shaman which involved the sacrificing of animals. He approached the Guru Lama, vowed to follow Buddhist teaching, went to meditate in a hermitage, and sent his daughter to the gompa to become a nun. The Guru Lama accepted her and when the reincarnate lama came to Bigu, he ceremoniously cut her hair. Sange Chegi's health improved, but even now she is not strong. Her father relapsed into his practice as a shaman, but the girl continues to live as a nun in Tashi gompa." Ibid., p. 146. My information, collected from her parents a few months after Haimendorf's stay at Bigu and without knowledge of his findings, obviously differs not only as regards the girl's age but more importantly concerning her vocation as a nun and her father's as a jhānkrī. Her parents first told me that she had joined the convent on her own volition but later added that, because of her poor health (pains in the shoulders since childhood) and weakened condition, they could not send her away to work in another's house (as a daughter-in-law) and so sent her instead to the convent. It was after she joined the religious community there that her father saw his jhānkrī practices in a new light and reformed.
26. Research in Central Nepal in an area served by a mission hospital led to the conclusion that "if there is one point to be drawn from the data presented, it is that the Nepali villager's concepts of medicine are not a tabula rasa upon which westerners can freely impress all sorts of notions about viruses and antibiotics. Nor is the problem one of finding ways of replacing village methods with more "scientific" ones. While the hospital unquestionably has much to offer in the treatment of diseases, it could never pre-empt the psychotherapeutic role of the jhānkrī. If health care in Nepal is to be improved, one must start with the assumption that the villagers' faith in their own healing techniques - be they herbal or ritual - is not going to be shaken by the occasional visits of medical teams or even by the building of hospitals. The problem facing the public health worker is one of finding the means of integrating western ideas into the village system. From the villager's point of view, the process has already begun." Harvey S. Blustain, "Levels of Medicine in a Central Nepali Village," Contributions to Nepalese Studies 3 (June 1976): 103. In

the same issue there is a report that "in a survey of 19 village panchayat areas (a collection of rural settlements into one administrative area), not one was without its shamanistic curer. ... Of those who may be broadly grouped as shamans an estimated 600 were said to be present in these 19 village panchayat areas serving a population of some 67,000 (in 1971). ... Their significance lies in their numbers and in their ubiquitous presence. ... Eight of these areas had relatively easy access, within two hours' walk, to a modern hospital, clinic or health post. This access to modern facilities does not appear to have displaced shamanistic curers. In one instance, ten were found within 20 minutes' walk of a well-equipped and well-staffed hospital; in another area served by a health post and also with fair access to several hospitals, 98 were found in a population of 7,000." Ferdinand E. Okada, "Notes on Two Shaman-curers in Kathmandu," *ibid.*, p. 107. And as for the city of Kathmandu, "an estimate of 150-200, based on their presence in certain neighbourhoods is probably not far from the mark." *Ibid.*, p. 111.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

My aim in carrying out field-work among traditional faith-healers in Dolakha District was to investigate those functions of jhāṅkrīs which distinguish them from priests and doctors (in the Western tradition), to discover what kind of organization (if any) these jhāṅkrīs have among themselves, and to learn how ordinary Nepalese people view them. Another aspect of my study was to enquire into the possibilities of training jhāṅkrīs in modern methods of diagnosis and treatment. My field trips revealed forms of jhāṅkrī activity that I did not expect existed and in this dissertation I have presented those activities in descriptive accounts, recording some new knowledge about jhāṅkrīs and at the same time analysing the social and religious significance of my materials. I have used the framework of the jātrās because these festivals provide jhāṅkrīs and lay people (both clients and spectators) with opportunities for action and interaction, and the anthropologist with matter for description and reflection. A brief summary of conclusions will be in place here now at this point of my enquiry.

In the Nepalese context "order" comprises both the healthy functioning of the individual human body and especially the healthy functioning of the social body whereby individual members clearly know their roles in the family and the caste or tribe and faithfully fulfil them, according to the ideal of the Sanskrit and Nepali term rta with its meaning of "fixed or settled order, law, rule (esp. in religion)."¹ The jhāṅkrī (like the doctor) aims at healing bodily disorder when it enters without explanation into an individual's life. As a jhāṅkrī, he is not concerned with the maintenance or restoration of social order when it is endangered or breaks down. It is the priest who, besides attending to the orderly and routine worship of the gods, aims at assisting the social body at crucial times in its members' lives. The priest presides over the birth, initiation, marriage and death of society's members. Though such events in a member's life-cycle might be called "orderly" in the sense of being expected and inevitable and part of that "fixed or settled order", still their manner of taking place is seldom orderly and they are filled with uncertainty and danger not merely for the individual but for the social body. For society and its relationships are decisively altered by the passing of one of its members into or out of the body or from one role to another within it. These events change, interrupt, and transform "order" on the social level while sickness of itself does not. I see this as a key to the understanding of the relatively lower degree of prestige and importance given to the jhāṅkrī (compared to the priest) in the social structure: although he is useful to society's sick members when they suffer as individuals in their physical bodies, he is not essential, as the priest is thought to be, to the smooth functioning of the social body.

The jhāṅkrī and the doctor differ in their interpretation of physical disorder and their methods of healing it differ correspondingly. While the doctor gives medicines to counteract the physical causes of

disease, the jhāṅkrī's diagnosis pinpoints spiritual causes and he uses magico-religious techniques such as shaking to demonstrate to his clients that now he is in controlled contact with those causes, negotiating their withdrawal. When his clients see the jhāṅkrī in this trembling state, they see a mime of what happens when a person from this visible world stands on the threshold of the invisible world. The jhāṅkrī's shaking is not merely a personal phenomenon. It is his way of communicating to his clients (who accept it as such) that an inter-world event is taking place. In their shared view sickness itself is such an event, with spirits intruding themselves into our world in a way that disrupts an individual's bodily well-being though leaving social structure unchanged. Therefore its cure requires a specialist who can insert himself where the two worlds meet.²

The jhāṅkrī is thus active in a region of reality into which neither the doctor nor even the priest personally enters. The doctor administers medicines, the priest presents prayers and offerings. Both of them remain safely on this side of the boundary between the visible and invisible world. But the jhāṅkrī operates right on that boundary and acts as a direct link, using his own body, not merely offerings or medicines, as a medium to bring about a cure. And so, although both jhāṅkrī and priest mediate with the invisible world (a world that does not concern the doctor), the priest contacts spiritual powers with offerings (which nevertheless demand a return) and keeping a safe distance, while the jhāṅkrī acts as a spirit-master, meeting power with power and, depending on his degree of skill, compelling the afflicting spiritual agents to identify themselves, make their demands known clearly, and promise to depart. This at least is the jhāṅkrī's claim and those who use his services accept it as valid to the extent that they are willing to let him do what he can for them.

In the affluent Western world, the sick are able to consult a variety of doctors with special competence in every conceivable illness. These specialists do not shake. Their credentials hang framed on the walls of their consulting rooms, validating them in a way which corresponds to their training and practice, for they deal with this-world problems on a this-world basis with no thought of excursions into or contacts with another sphere of existence. Both doctors and patients in the West view disease from a secular viewpoint, with few exceptions, and consequently there is little demand for a man who shakes. In the hill villages of Nepal, however, sickness in an individual's life is usually presumed to be the result of spirit-intrusion and men who shake are found here in great numbers to meet the demand for their services. Nepal's material poverty draws forth men like jhāṅkrī's to the extent that this poverty impedes the spread of modern education and its secular viewpoint concerning sickness.

There is no formal hierarchical organization among jhāṅkrīs. Although they are members of a hierarchised caste society in their day-to-day social life, when they function as jhāṅkrīs they are independent of it and each other and desire to remain so, free-lancers under no obligations to anyone but their client of the moment. For

their healing work society allows them freedom from its relatively rigid caste structure. In the situation of jātrā festivals too the jhāṅkrī functions in an undifferentiated, unhierarchised communitas which contrasts with everyday societas and its distinctions.

The master-disciple relationship does exist among jhāṅkrīs but only because this is the way to acquire the knowledge that gives control over spiritual realities. Those jhāṅkrīs who say they have had no one except a deutā or a ban-jhāṅkrī as their guru reject thereby even this minimal dependence on other jhāṅkrīs. Because of this lack of organization among them no one can officially put a label on the degree of ability a jhāṅkrī has achieved. He depends on his reputation, built upon cures or at least improvements in his patients' condition, as his validation.

Ordinary Nepalese people look on the jhāṅkrī as "our doctor" and turn to him when a family member is ill because he is easily consulted, without great expense and without disruption of one's daily pursuits. He is familiar, indigenous to the place and culture, sharing with the local people the same ideas on the probable causes of sickness and the methods of successfully treating it, thus engendering in clients expectations for an improvement or a cure. And as his shaking is a sign to them that he is now in a position to deal with the source of their troubles so too his very method or style of shaking is a sign to them that he is a spirit-master. His is not a deep cataleptic trance nor an uncontrolled epileptic one but a controlled state that wordlessly symbolizes the position of the jhāṅkrī poised between two worlds and says, "I am in contact with a world whose forces have intruded into your life but they do not master me (as they master you) - I master them."

The jhāṅkrī's treatments take place in an atmosphere of active concern on the part of the sick person's family and neighbours who crowd into the house to show their support and not only to enjoy the diversion. Clients usually experience relief and improved health after such an experience and everyone knows stories of extraordinary cures. Everyone knows too that, while not every affliction should be brought to a jhāṅkrī's attention, yet if there is a pattern of misfortune, the jhāṅkrī may be valuable in naming the underlying spiritual cause and then dealing with it. Though scepticism is sometimes expressed by men to the anthropologist during formal interviews, in practice the scepticism melts and the jhāṅkrī is called. One must do something and the jhāṅkrī is "our doctor" in the hills.

Because of the jhāṅkrī's involvement in the spiritual world on behalf of the sick and because of that other world's seeming lack of interest in our efforts at material progress, the jhāṅkrī's potential for involvement in politics and practical affairs remains undeveloped. The spiritual world's unconcern for our material progress is not surprising, considering that this world is believed to be not only illusory but heading for destruction besides. The present era is thought to be

the final stage of the deterioration that has been accelerating since the end of the Golden Age when gods walked on earth. Sanguine hopes for material development are part of another world-view which sees this present era as the Scientific Age and the Age of Progress; they are not part of the jhāṅkrī's view. Besides, his days are filled with earning a livelihood and many of his nights with attending the sick, leaving him little time for manipulating village politics by means of his oracles, even if it were to be taken seriously (which is doubtful). There are practical-minded men in each village who feel quite competent to manage its affairs without the help of jhāṅkrīs.

The jhāṅkrī knows little about this Scientific Age. He knows that people are sick here in the present and that being a jhāṅkrī is a way of helping them. The services he provides to the sick through his skill at relieving tensions and contributing to the cure of psychosomatic illness are to be encouraged as his contribution to the health of the nation, health which is not just one of the goals of development but an essential basis for improving the quality of life. In achieving the goal of bringing more modern methods of health care to the hills, already functioning indigenous methods (methods which as I write this are bringing comfort and relief to the sick in countless villages) should not be uprooted or even interfered with by attempts to train jhāṅkrīs along lines unfamiliar to them. Their caste and social mobility as jhāṅkrīs and their independence as individuals constitute a built-in obstacle to the success of efforts to train them in modern methods of diagnosis and treatment. An attitude of toleration and, even better, respect for their special contribution on the part of practitioners of other systems of curing will be the most effective form of encouragement that can be given to these traditional faith-healers in the Himalayas, the jhāṅkrīs.

Footnotes

1. M. Monier-Williams, A Sanskrit-English Dictionary (London, 1956), p. 223.
2. The idiom of shaking is suggestive of in-between states. The fish on the shore gasps and writhes, birds move their wings up and down to maintain themselves between earth and heaven and seldom keep to a straight course, dancers sway and shake to the music that lifts them out of their everyday world, hysterical people are given a good shaking to bring them back to their senses. There are cave-shrines in Nepal, such as Gupteśwar in Bhardeu village and Nārāyaṅthān above Godāmcawar village (Lalitpur District), which have a narrow opening called a Dharma-Dhokā (Religion-Door), through which one cannot enter and come into the presence of the deity without many twistings and contortions.

GLOSSARY

Since the meaning of Nepali and tribal words is indicated when they first appear in the text the following list contains only those words which are repeated in later sections without further explanation.

abīr: red powder used in worship

achetā: husked rice offered in worship

baidde, baidya: Ayurvedic physician

ban-jhānkrī: non-human forest-jhānkrī who kidnaps children

bardān: boon from the gods

betāl: demon

bheṭī: present made to a superior

bhut: evil spirit, ghost

bīr: hero, warrior

boko: male goat (uncastrated)

caḍhnu: to mount, ride

cāmal: husked uncooked rice

celo: disciple

chāyā: shadow, reflection

chuṭṭā: separated, divided

cintā: healing seance conducted by a jhānkrī

darśan: ceremonial visit, the blessing of another's presence

deutā: a deity

dewālī: worship of the deity of the family, lineage or tribe

dharma: religious duty

dharma-śālā: resthouse for pilgrims

dhyāngro: a jhānkrī's large double-headed drum

gajo: a jhānkrī's curved drumstick

gūṭhiyār: an official in charge of land endowments, a trustee

guru: teacher, master, spiritual guide

jajmānī: a system of obligatory exchange between patrons and clients

jāmā: pleated white skirt worn by jhānkrīs during festivals

janai: sacred thread worn by the upper castes

jantar: amulet

jātrā: pilgrimage, festival

jhānkrī: traditional healer

jokhānā: oracle, divination

kāmmu: to shake, tremble

karma: action; result of action in former lives reaching into the present

khukurī: curved Nepalese knife

kūl deutā: deity of the family, lineage or tribe

liṅga: phallus

mādal: long and narrow two-headed Nepalese drum

māī: mother; goddess

mānā: a measure equal to about one pound

mantra: spell, incantation

masān: cremation ground

mūl: chief

pāṭhī: a young female goat

pāthī: a measure equal to about eight pounds; eight mānās

piśāc: evil spirit, ghost

prasād: a sharing in food or other offerings made to a deity

pūjā: ritual worship

pujārī: priest

raksī: liquor

riṭṭho: the black seed of *Sapindus mukerossi*

rudrākṣa: the reddish-brown seed of *Elaeocarpus*

sambat: era (1 Bikram Sambat = 57 B.C.; 1 Nepal Sambat = A.D. 880)

sikrī: chain

ṭahaluwā: attendant, servant

thān: shrine

ṭhurmi: a jhānkri's wooden ritual dagger

ṭikā: mark placed on the forehead as prasād at conclusion of worship

criśul: trident

ṭupī: tuft of hair left on the crown of the head

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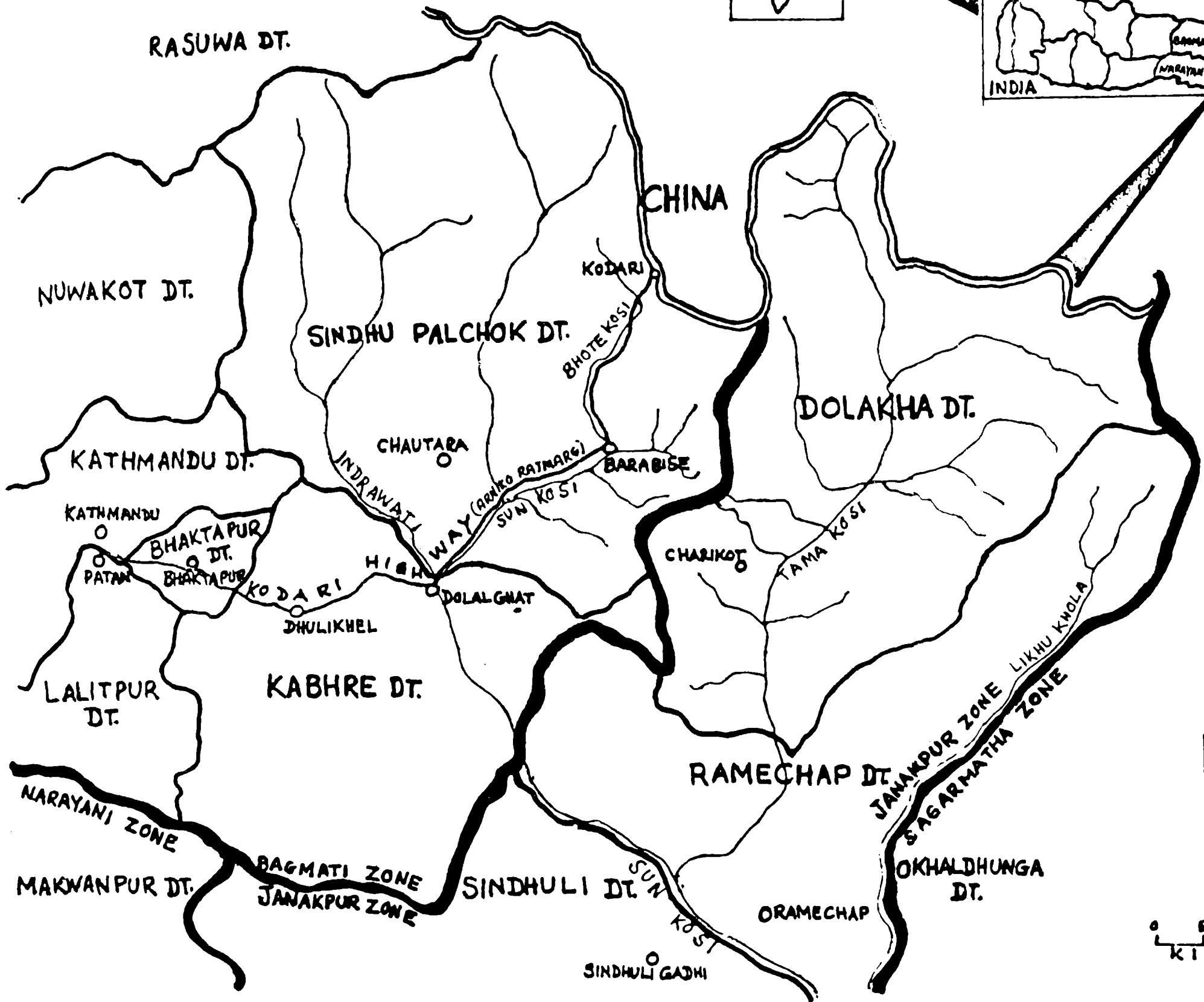
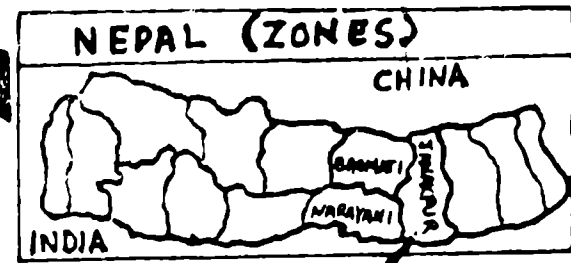
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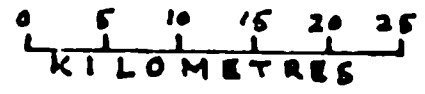
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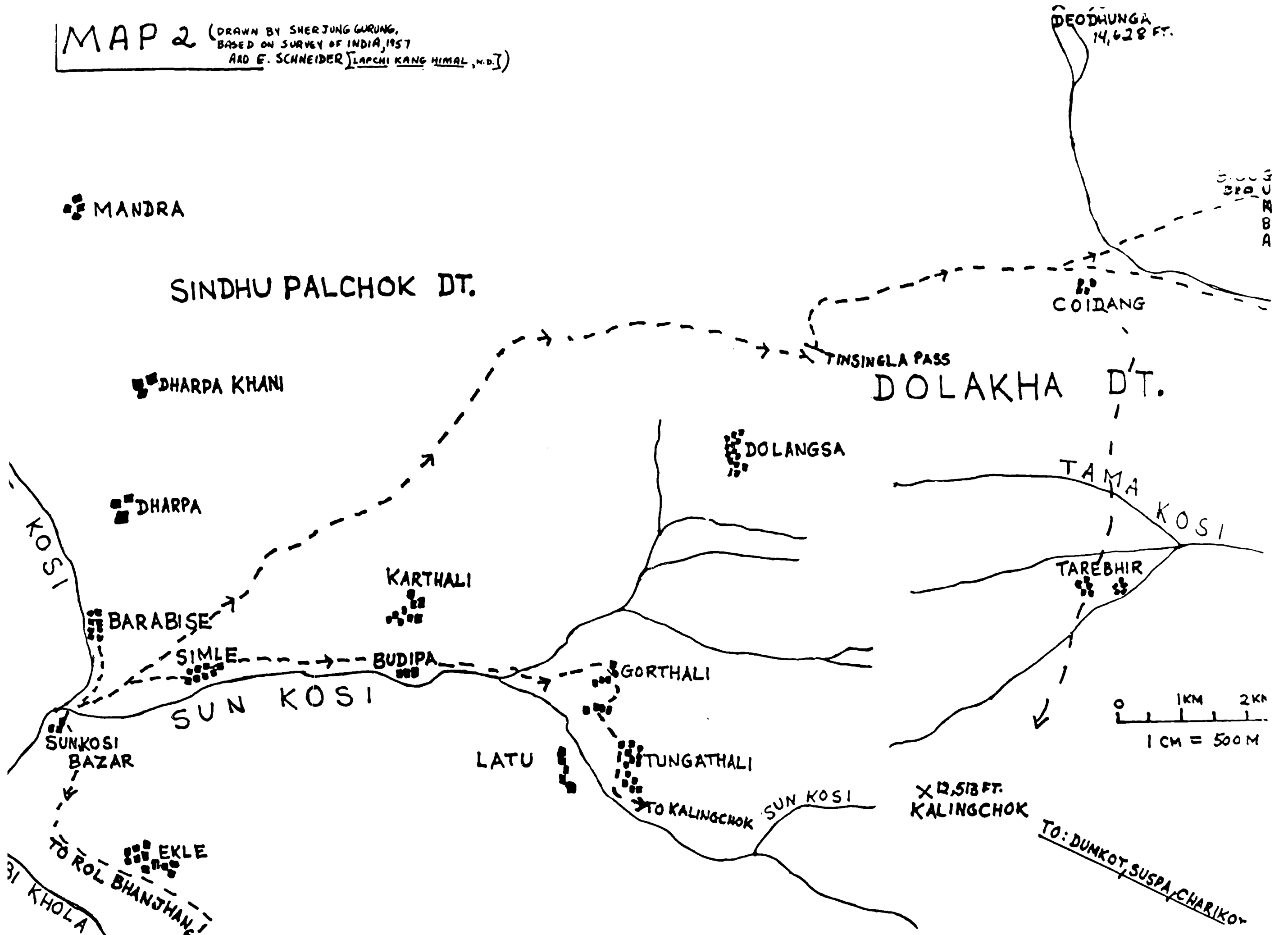
MAP 1 (DRAWN BY SHERJUNG GURUNG,
FROM MECI DEKHI MAHA KALI, Vol. 2.)



	INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY
	ZONAL BOUNDARY
	DISTRICT BOUNDARY
	RIVERS



MAP 2 (DRAWN BY SHERJUNG GURUNG,
 BASED ON SURVEY OF INDIA, 1957
 AND E. SCHNEIDER [LAPCHI KANG HIMAL, N.D.])



MAP 3

(DRAWN BY SHERJUNG GURUNG
BASED ON MAP FROM
LAND REFORM OFFICE, CHARIKOT
NO SCALE)

TO: DEODHUNGA
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