

L H A P H E W A

THE THAKALI 12-YEAR FESTIVAL

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PREFACE

The main festival of the Thakalis is **lha phewa**, "the appearance of the gods" which is celebrated only once every twelfth year. It takes place in the Thak Khola valley in Mustang district, Nepal - the homeland of the Thakalis.

At the last festival (January 1981) I noticed many young Thakalis from Kathmandu and other cities who had come to Thak Khola to participate in the festival. Many spoke no Thakali and had little knowledge of Thak Khola and traditional Thakali culture.

The **lha phewa** will soon be celebrated again (December 1992) and I have put together the present book so that the young urban Thakalis can better understand the festival. The book includes a rather lengthy introduction which I hope will be of use to the Thakalis who are seeking their roots. Although the book has been written for English speaking Thakalis, the description of the festival is the most detailed yet to be published and may be of some interest to anthropologists.

The first part is an introduction to Thak Khola and the Thakalis. The second part describes the **lha phewa** festival. Then follows a retelling of the clan histories of the Gaucan, Tulacan and Bhattacan clan which are recited during the festival. The book ends with a prayer to the four clan gods.

I would like to close this preface with warm thanks to my wife Bina for her assistance and encouragement during our stays in Thak Khola and her help in writing this book.

83° 30'

83° 45'

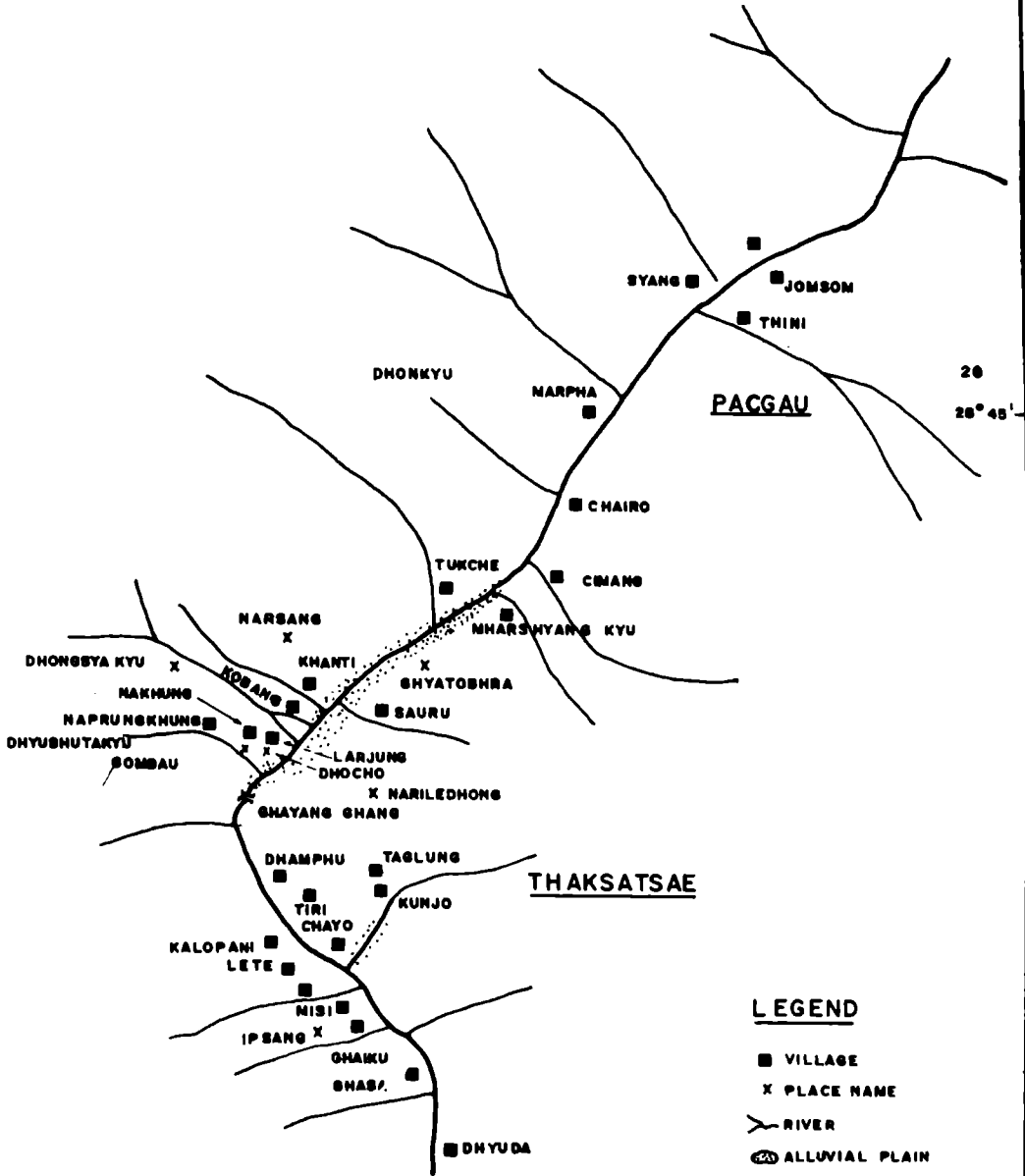
MAP OF THAK KHOLA



28° 45'

28

28° 45'



83° 30'

83° 45'

THAK KHOLA AND THE THAKALIS

The Thak Khola Valley

The Thak Khola valley is situated in the southern part of Mustang district, Nepal. The altitude of the 30 km long valley inclines from 1,900 m in the south to 2,700 m in the north. Thak Khola is surrounded by some of the world's highest mountains, including Dhaulagiri (8,167 m) and Annapurna (8,078 m). The Kali Gandaki river which rises in the mountains on the border with Tibet enters from the north and flows through the valley.

In Thak Khola winters are long and cold, and summers are short and warm. The climate and the vegetation vary according to the altitude. Due to minimal rainfall and high evaporation caused by strong winds, the northern part has a semi-desert vegetation; on the mountain sides where rainfall is higher are forests with pine, fir, birch, rhododendron, juniper and cypress. In the south rainfall is more than twice as high as in the north, and rich forests with coniferous and deciduous trees are found close to the villages.

The villages are nuclear settlements situated near the bottom of the valley, usually where tributaries join the Kali Gandaki. The biggest villages are Marpha, Tukche, Syang and Thini, some of which have more than 100 houses. An old caravan route which connects Tibet with the hills and plains further south runs through the valley, but the nearest motorable road is at Baglung, three days walk to the south. A small airport is located at Jomsom providing several weekly flights to Pokhara and Kathmandu.

The northern part of Thak Khola between Jomsom and Cimang is known as Pacgau, and the southern part between Tukche and Ghasa is called Thaksatsae. For administrative purposes the valley is divided into six village development areas (formerly known as village panchayats), namely Thini-Jomsom, Marpha, Tukche, Kobang, Lete and Kunjo.

In 1977 there were approximately 942 households in the valley; 69 percent of them were Thakalis. People of Tibetan descent (mainly from Baragau north of Thak Khola) and occupation castes (tailors and blacksmiths) accounted for 11 percent each, while the remainder were mainly Magars and Tangbetans.

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History

The route which runs through the Thak Khola valley is one of the most important links connecting Nepal with Tibet. The Thak Khola valley is ecologically a transit zone between the arid Tibetan plateau in the north and the Nepalese hills in the south, and it is thus a natural entrepôt in the exchange of Tibetan salt and Nepalese foodgrains. Throughout the history neighbouring powers have sought to become overlords over the Thak Khola valley in order to control and exploit the lucrative trade. The Thakalis have thus for centuries been in direct contact with the Tibetan civilization, and Thakali society and culture are much influenced by it.

The recorded history of the present Mustang district dates back to the 7th century when the area came under the supremacy of the Tibetan Yarlung dynasty. In the following centuries the area was controlled mainly by Tibetan overlords but also by the powerful kingdom of Jumla in Western Nepal.

Little is known about the history of Thaksatsae prior to 1786 when Thak Khola came under the Shahs of Gorkha.

Tibetan sources indicate that the Meki Lhakhang temple in Kobang was founded no later than the early 15th century and that this area was a place where people from Lo (Mustang) bought foodgrains. Secondly, the Cimang village record (**bemchag**) refers to the area south of the river Mharsyang Kyu as Thag and mentions that this area was once ruled by a king called Hansa.

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

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This later tradition is based on the **cyogi rhab** which is the clan history of the Gaucan clan. According to this story, Ani Airam, the ancestor of the Gaucan clan, was born in the North-West (**nhup can**), which probably is a reference to Western Tibet. Ani Airam left the North-West and arrived at Sinja (in the present Jumla district). At Sinja he cut a sandalwood tree and subsequently three birds flew from the tree; these birds were Lha Langba Nhurbu, the god of the Gaucan clan; Lha Churing Gyalmo, the goddess of the Tulacan clan; and Lha Gangla Singi Karpo, the goddess of the Sercan clan.

Ani Airam left Sinja together with some travelling companions, probably Samledhen Samlecyang and Dhakpa Gyalsang who are the ancestors of the Tulacan and Sercan clans, respectively. The party travelled eastwards to the present Dolpo district and crossed a pass into the present Mustang district. From Sangda (the first village in Mustang district when coming from Dolpo) they continued to Phalag and onwards to Thini. From Thini they followed the Kali Gandaki river to Ghyatobhra (opposite Tukche) where they met Pau Kuti, the ancestor of the Bhattacan clan.

Together they reached Tamo in the northern part of Thaksatsae. Ani Airam referred to the inhabitants of this place as **thatan**. He enquired about these people, and Pau Kuti cynically remarked that they eat “rice of gold and dhal of turquoise”; that is porridge of bitter buckwheat and nettle soup.

Afterwards the ancestors continued to Taglung. Ani Airam did not like that village and named the inhabitants **parang purung**, apparently a reference to their strange language. The ancestors then left Thak Khola and continued on the trail to the Ghorapani pass. Below the pass the ancestors were stung by nettles and lost their way. When they asked their way of a man from Phalate village, he replied, “go along the way”. This silly answer angered Ani Airam, and he therefore cursed the local people.

Following this experience the ancestors decided to return to Thak Khola. In Thak Khola they examined the water at Kalopani, the soil at Nakhung, and the stones at Nariledhong. The ancestors found these to be of excellent quality, and they therefore decided to settle in Thak Khola.

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After the four ancestors had established themselves, the people were divided into four clans, and it was decided that these groups should marry with each other. Afterwards Ani Airam said, "Although our birthplace is not the same, we should have the feeling that we have been born in the same place so that we may have good feelings when we gather", and the people prayed, "Oh four gods, although our birthplace is different, let us live together remembering that our place of gathering is the same."

It is not possible to date the events described in the **cyogi rhab**. Indeed, it is impossible to know which elements are historical and which are legendary though containing some kernel of historical fact. Although this reduces the value of the **cyogi rhab** as a historical document, the text does provide us with some important information on the origin of the Tamang Thakalis. First, at least one of the ancestors of the four clans was born in Western Tibet or Northwestern Nepal. Secondly, the ancestors originated in different places, but they met and became one society in Thak Khola. And thirdly, Thak Khola was already inhabited when the four ancestors arrived there.

Based on this information, as well as other historical and linguistic studies, I would propose the following hypothesis on the origin of the Thakalis.

The first settlers in Thak Khola spoke a proto-language of the present Tamang, Gurung and Thakali languages and had Mongoloid racial features. This tribe may have been a part of the so-called Kirata people who moved into Nepal from the eastern Himalayas between the fourth and second millennium B.C.

Throughout its history, foreigners have arrived and settled in Thak Khola. Some of the immigrants (including, among others, the Rhongta Khampas, the Magars, and the Tangbetans) retained a separate ethnic identity, but others were accepted and included in the Thakali society, either as members of existing lineages or as founders of new, separate ones. Hansa Raja and the four ancestors of the Tamang Thakali clans were probably immigrants who were accepted into existing local communities in Thak Khola.

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The present-day Thakalis thus descend mainly from the proto Tamang-Gurung-Thakali tribe, but their ancestry also includes immigrants from Baragau, Western Tibet, and Western Nepal.

Thak Khola's inclusion in the Nepalese State in 1786 meant an end to the wars which had ravaged the area in the previous centuries. The Thakalis could now cultivate their fields, raise their animals, and engage in trade in peace.

The price the Thakalis paid for this peace was, however, high. The government's policy in rural areas was to maximize revenue and to maintain law and order with a minimum of interference in the affairs of the local communities. The taxation of local communities varied a great deal in the different parts of the kingdom and was laid down in royal orders issued by the government in Kathmandu.

The people of Thak Khola paid a variety of taxes to the government. The main one was a homestead tax (**serma**) which was paid collectively by the local community, and it remained fixed regardless of changes in the number of households. To ensure a regular revenue, the government engaged non-local contractors (**ljaradar**) to collect the tax. This tax collection system (**ljara**) subjected the peasantry to harassment and extortion since there was little the government could do to prevent the contractor from collecting unauthorized taxes.

In the 18th century the taxation in Thak Khola was very heavy. The poorest villagers were unable to pay their share of the homestead tax, and many therefore left Thak and settled elsewhere.

In the 19th century the government's most important source of revenue in Thak Khola was not the homestead tax but custom duties. The caravan route which runs through the Thak Khola valley used to be one of the most important trade links between Tibet and Nepal. Trade was based on exchange of Nepalese foodgrains for Tibetan salt and wool. Tibetan nomads would collect salt from the lakes of Western Tibet and bring it to Likche, which was an important mart some 60 km north of the Nepalese-Tibetan border. In summer traders from Lo, Dolpo and Baragau would

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travel to Likche to exchange foodgrains (barley and rice) for salt and wool. The traders would then bring the salt and wool to Baragau and Thak Khola, using transport animals such as yak, jho, donkey, sheep, and goat. A dangerous section on the trail between Ghasa and Dana, as well as heavy monsoon rains and the summer heat, prevented the northern traders from taking their animals further south, and they therefore exchanged their goods in Thak Khola. The Thakalis paid for the salt with locally produced barley and imported rice.

In winter villagers and traders from the south came to Thak Khola to exchange rice for salt. They did not use animals to transport their goods but porters (**dakre**). Although exchange rates were more favourable further north, the southern traders would seldom venture north of Thak Khola due to the cold and a general dislike of the local Tibetans whom they considered dirty and ritually impure.

Due to its location as a transit zone between the Tibetan plateau in the north and the Nepalese hills in the south, Thak Khola became a natural entrepôt in the exchange of Tibetan salt and wool for Nepalese foodgrain. Some Thakalis participated in the salt-grain exchange without leaving their home, but others travelled to the north to buy salt which they later exchanged for rice in Dana and Tatopani.

Besides salt trade in the Kali Gandaki area, Thakalis also traded in Tibet, India and the Kathmandu valley in the 18th and 19th centuries.

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

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In 1854-56 Nepal and Tibet were at war. For the war the Nepalese Government recruited troops and porters among villagers. Only members of the pure castes could become soldiers while members of the impure castes were used as porters and other auxiliaries. In 1855 officials were sent to Thak Khola to recruit Thakalis as porters; but two Thakali leaders namely Subba Dhansaram and Subba Balbir submitted a petition that in the time of the Malla kings of Parbat the Thakalis used to be recruited as soldiers and that, according to administrative arrangements made in 1813-14, the inhabitants of Thak were exempted from unpaid labour obligations during war and other occasions. The government accepted this petition (and thus recognized the Thakalis as a pure caste), and subsequently the Thakalis were recruited only as soldiers for the war.

Balbir served as translator during the Nepal-Tibet War 1854-56. According to Thakali informants, Balbir performed his duties with much distinction, and after the war he was presented copies of the 108 volume Tibetan canon (**kangyur**) and the 220 volume commentarial collection (**tangyur**). These scriptures are still in his family's possession.

In 1860 Balbir had a serious dispute with another Thakali leader named Chyalpa. That year the contract for the collection of customs duties at Dana was initially given to Captain H.K.Chetri. Chyalpa Thakali then offered a higher bid, but eventually the contract was given to Captain Chetri's son who subsequently recruited some Thakalis to work for him, including Balbir Thakali.

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

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Until 1862 the Thakalis were free to take salt south of Dana as long as they paid customs duties at the custom office in Dana. This situation changed, however, in 1862 when the government terminated free trade in salt and grain. Traders were not allowed to take salt further south than Dana and had to trade exclusively with the customs contractor. This monopoly (**rakam**) in favour of the customs contractor continued until 1927 except for brief periods.

In 1869 Balbir held the contract as custom collector in Dana. It is not known when Balbir first got the contract and for how long he held it, but his son Kaviram had the contract in 1876.

Little is known about Kaviram Thakali except that he shifted his residence from Kobang to Tukche and that he died young. At his death his widow voluntarily relinquished the contract. The contract is then said to have gone to the family of Patiram of Larjung.

Patiram and Kaviram both belonged to the Sercan clan but to different lineages. Patiram is said to have held a mining contract in Baisa Khani in Myagdi district. Informants mention that Patiram was extremely rich and that he once boasted that his wealth could block the Kali Gandaki river.

Informants state that Patiram, his youngest son Krishna Prasad, and his son-in-law Ram Prasad were all **subba**. In 19th century Nepal a subba was a senior official in the civil administration, but this title was also given to the customs contractor in Dana. In connection with the award of the customs contract, the contractor was required to provide a guarantor who would pay the royalty to the government in case the contractor could not fulfil his obligations. The guarantor was known as **jamani subba** while the contractor was called **thekka subba**. There is documentary evidence that Ram Prasad was customs contractor in Dana, but it is uncertain whether Pati Ram and Krishna Prasad held this contract. Pati Ram may, however, have gotten the title of subba in connection with the mining contract in Myagdi or as guarantor to his son-in-law.

In the late 19th century Balbir's and Pati Ram's families competed for the customs contract, but at the turn of the century Balbir's descendants

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emerged as the most powerful Thakali family - a position which they have kept till today. Pati Ram's family was less fortunate. According to local saying, "Pati Ram's wealth, Ram Prasad's pleasure" (**patiramko dhan, ram prasado jhillimili**), Ram Prasad squandered away the wealth of his father-in-law. For example, it is said that Ram Prasad had a servant to carry his waterpipe while riding. However, Krishna Prasad (Pati Ram's son) is also said to have lost much money.

In 1895 the customs contract was held by Kaviram's son Harkaman Thakali (1860-1903). Harkaman also had the contract in 1899 when the Japanese monk Kawaguchi passed through Thak Khola.

In 1902 the situation in Thak Khola took a dramatic turn when the customs contract was awarded to Man Lal Gurung from Ghanpokhari in Lamjung district. The circumstances for this are unclear, but they may relate to political changes in Kathmandu. Initially, Man Lal held the contract only till 1903, and in the following years the contract was back in the hands of the members of the Balbir lineage. However, Man Lal and his sons got the contract back, once from 1905 to 1910 and again from 1918 to 1920.

Harkaman died in 1903, but his younger brother Ganeshman took up the challenge against the Gurung subba, assisted by Harkaman's sons (Mohanman, Hitman, Chetman and Guptaman), and his own (Komal Bahadur, alias 'Sete'). Informants mention that these persons all became subba before the salt monopoly was abolished in 1927.

The relationship between the Thakali and Gurung subba is not clear. Shortly after Man Lal Gurung obtained the customs contract in Thak Khola, he became bond brother with Harkaman, and also their sons established such a relationship. In spite of this, the Thakali subba and their supporters are said to have secretly opposed the Gurung subba. To avoid this opposition, Nar Jung Gurung (Man Lal's eldest son) shifted the customs office from Tukche (where the Thakali subba had their home) to a plain opposite Chairi, outside the control of the Thakali subba. The Thakalis were, however, not united in their opposition against the Gurung subba, and several of them cooperated with the Gurungs, including

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Dham Narayan Gauchan and Cham Narayan Gauchan who are said to have been guarantors for Man Lal and his sons.

The competition between the Thakali and Gurung subba increased the price of the customs contract, and in the early 20th century the royalty reached Rs. 150,000 a year. This was a fortune, equal to about 56 kg of gold. In order to pay this sum of money, the customs contractor obviously had to trade very large quantities of salt and grain at high profit margins. Moreover, an interruption in the flow of commodities, fluctuations in exchange rates, changes in the monopoly status, decreasing demand for salt in the Nepalese hills, etc., could turn the contractor's projected profit into a loss.

In the 1920's the royalty was reduced first to Rs. 110,000 and later to Rs. 90,000. The reduction in the royalty payable to the government related to a decline in the supply of salt. Also due to their competition, the Gurung and Thakali subba may in the 1910's have given unrealistically high bids, and the bids (and the royalty) later were reduced to accord with the market situation.

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

The wealth of the Thakali subba and their connections to the rulers in Kathmandu gave them a dominant position in the political affairs in Thak Kholā and neighbouring areas. Within their own community the subba used their political influence to introduce reforms of Thakali culture. In the 19th century Thakali society and culture was heavily influenced by Tibetan civilization. However, in the beginning of the 20th century the sons of Harkaman Thakali introduced reforms to substitute Tibetan

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elements in Thakali culture with elements from the culture and religion of the Hindu rulers in Kathmandu. This 'Nepalization' included, among others, the introduction of Nepali surnames (Gaucan, Tulacan, Sercan and Bhattacan), the abolishment of the Thakalis' traditional Tibetan-style winterdress, a ban on the consumption of yak meat, and a ban on capture marriages. The Thakali subba obviously introduced these reforms in order to appear less 'Tibetan' in the eyes of the high caste rulers in Kathmandu, and this move may well relate to the loss of the customs contract to Man Lal Gurung in 1902.

After the abolishment of the salt monopoly in 1927, trade in salt was again open to all traders. Consequently, the profits which earlier had been made by the customs contractor became divided among a large number of traders. In the 1930's a new trail was constructed between Ghasa and Dana, making it easier to take pack animals south of Thak Khola. At the same time Thakali traders began to acquire mules. This animal is well-suited for transportation along the Kali Gandaki. Thakali mule owners bought salt and wool in Lo and Tibet which they later sold in Tatopani, Beni, Baglung, Tansen, Bhutwal and Pokhara. On the return trip the mule owners brought mainly rice back to Thak Khola.

In addition to salt, wool and live animals were important trade items. Thakali trade was not limited only to goods imported from Tibet (salt, wool and live animals). In winter traders took their mules to Bhutwal (near the Indian border) where they bought rice, sugar, cigarettes, clothes, etc. which they sold in the bazaars in the hills or in Thak Khola. Some even travelled to Kalimpong (in India) to buy Tibetan tea, incense, etc.,

With the expansion of trade in the south, Thakali women began to establish small inns (*bhatti*) along the main trails to provide food and lodging for Thakali traders. The inns also served other travellers, especially soldiers from the British Army on home leave.

In March 1959 the Dalai Lama fled Tibet following an unsuccessful uprising against China which had occupied the country in 1950. In the following months thousands of Tibetans fled to India, Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim. Some of the Tibetans who settled in Mustang were armed

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guerillas (the so-called Khambas); they remained outside the authorities' control until 1975 when the Royal Nepalese Army forced them to lay down their weapons.

The political developments in Tibet as well as the insecurity along the caravan route caused by the Khambas disrupted the flow of salt from Tibet and increased the price in Nepal. In the 1950's cheap Indian sea salt had entered the market in the southern and middle parts of Nepal. Due to the disruption in the flow of salt from Tibet and the increase in the price of this salt in the 1960's, as well as the construction of roads from India to the middle hills of Nepal (which reduced transportation costs significantly), Indian salt soon took over the market in Nepal. The amount of Tibetan salt entering Thak Khola has now been reduced to a minimum.

Also trade in wool declined in the 1960's. Following the war between India and China in 1962, India restricted the import of Chinese goods, including Tibetan wool. In this way Thakali wool traders lost their most important market.

Due to this decline in the trade in salt and wool, and the insecurity caused by the Khambas as well as several other push and pull factors, a large number of Thakalis emigrated from Thak Khola in the 1960's.

As mentioned above, the general economic situation worsened in the 1960's due to the decline in the salt and wool trade. However, since the 1970's there has been a recovery, especially in Pacgau. The development of infrastructure has been dramatic, especially around Jomsom. There are dozens of government and quasi-government offices in Jomsom and several in other villages in Thak Khola. Jomsom has a small army garrison, a police station, a jail, and a wireless station. Post offices are found in several villages, and there are two banks in Jomsom. Primary and lower secondary schools are found in all major villages, and there are higher secondary schools and health posts in most village development areas. A government agricultural farm is located in Marpha, and offices providing agricultural and veterinary services are found in some other villages. Almost all villages have a potable water supply, and since 1983 the northern part of the valley has had electricity. There are no roads in

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Thak Khola, but there is a small airport in Jomsom, and it is possible to reach Pokhara and Kathmandu in less than an hour.

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The Thakalis number an estimated 9,000 persons. Formerly, the distribution of Thakalis was limited to the Thak Khola valley, but now-a-days only some 20 percent of the population are found there; the majority live in towns and rural areas in the south.

The Thakalis have predominant Mongoloid racial features. The Thakalis of the Thak Khola valley speak Thakali as their mother tongue which is a Tibeto-Burman language related to Tamang and Gurung language. The majority of the Thakalis living outside the Thak Khola valley speak Nepali (an Indo-European language) as their first language, and many have little or no knowledge of the Thakali language.

The Thakalis comprise three separate endogamous groups - namely the **tamang** whose homeland is Thaksatsae; the **mhawa** who is the indigenous people of Marpha village; and the **yhulkasompaimhi** who live in Thini, Syang and Cimang villages in Pacgau.

These groups speak their own distinct dialects of the Thakali language. The dialects are distinguished by vocabulary, tone, and pitch. For example, a field is called **le** in Yhulkasompaimhi, but **ke** in Tamang. Also, the Mhawa speak with a higher tone and faster than the other Thakalis. Among the Tamang and Yhulkasompaimhi it is usually possible to identify the village of a speaker on the basis of his vocabulary, tone, and pitch.

A Tamang Thakali is a socially accepted member of one of the following patrilineal clans: **cyogl (gaucan)**, **salgl (tulacan)**, **dhimcan (sercan)** and **bhurgl (bhattacan)**. The Tamang refer to themselves as **Thakali** ("one from Thak") in conversation with Nepali and English speakers, but in Thakali language they refer to themselves as **tamang**. Since the beginning of the present century the Tamang have used the Nepali names for their clans as surnames; formerly, they used the surname 'Thakali'.

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A Mhawa Thakali is a socially accepted member of one of the following patrilineal clans: **rhoten phobe** (lalcan), **puta phobe** (hiracan), **ghumll thowa phobe** (juharcan) and **ghumll cyangpa phobe** (pannacan). In Thakali language the Mhawa Thakalis refer to themselves as **mhawa** or **mhari mhi**; both these names mean “one from Marpha”. In conversations with Nepali and English speakers they call themselves Thakali. The Tamang refer to the Mhawa as **puntan**; the Mhawa dislike this term because it can be mistaken for the Thakali word for “leprosy”. The Yhulkasompaimhi refer to the Mhawa as **mhowatan**, or **puni**. Further, Nepali speakers refer to the Mhawa as Thakali, **marphall** (“one from Marpha”), or **Punel**. The Mhawa formerly used the surname Punel or no surname at all, but for the last forty years or so they have used the Nepali names of their clans.

A Yhulkasompaimhi Thakali is a socially accepted member of one of the following patrilineal clans: **gyalgi phobe**, **kya phobe**, **jhisin phobe**, **che phobe**, **sakar phobe**, **srane phobe**, **bom phobe**, **san phobe**, **syangtan phobe** and **pasin phobe**. The Yhulkasompaimhi seldomly refer to themselves, or are referred to, as **yhulkasompaimhi** (“one from the three villages”), but use **syangtan** (“one from Syang”), **thin** and **chimtan** according to their ancestral village. In Nepali and English languages, the Yhulkasompaimhi refer to themselves as Thakali and, depending on the speaker’s knowledge of Thak Khola, are referred to as Thakali, **pacgaull** (“one from Pac gau”), **syangtanl** (“one from Syang”), **thinnel** (“one from Thini”) and **chimtanl** (“one from Cimang”). The Yhulkasompaimhi write their surname as Thakali.

Tibetans classify the Thakalis as **mon** which is the general name for non-Tibetan speaking peoples of the Himalayas. In the local Tibetan dialects the Thakalis are referred to as **thakpa** (“one from Thak”) and their language as **se kal**.

Economy³

The economy of the Thakalis of Thak Khola is a mixture of subsistence and market economy.

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The household produces many of the goods it needs through agriculture, collecting, and husbandry. However, no household is self-sufficient and therefore has to buy foodstuffs, clothes, footwear, cigarettes and other goods and services at the market. Households also need cash for paying taxes and school fees and to cover expenses for religious ceremonies, marriages and entertainment.

The Thakalis make an income to cover these expenses through the sale of goods produced by the household (e.g surplus grain and livestock products), local trade and business, business outside Thak Khola and (in the case of the poorer households) the sale of labour. In the past decades cash incomes from animal husbandry and salt trade have declined while incomes from the sale of cash-crops (especially apples) and hotel business have increased.

One of Nepal's most eminent planners has observed that the aftermath of a quarter century of development efforts in Nepal has been one of increasing poverty. The picture of the average hill peasant is an appalling one. Families generally do not produce sufficient foodgrains to meet their requirements, and consequently one or more members work in the south as labourers during the winter to make cash for buying foodgrains and other essentials. Forest resources are fast disappearing, and women spend several hours a day collecting firewood and fetching water. Villages have no electricity, no water supply system, and, if any, little access to health care facilities. While there is often a primary school in the village, the enrolment is poor, especially among girls. The poorest villagers cannot make a living and therefore emigrate to the Terai or India.

The Thakalis of Thak Khola do not fit this picture. Most enjoy a relative high standard of living, and only few have major problems making a living. Basic infrastructure has improved much in recent years, and most villages have electricity and potable water supply systems. School enrolment is very high - also among girls.

There are several reasons for this situation: in Thak Khola land holdings are relative large and more equally distributed than in most hill and mountain areas; the population growth is lower than the national average;

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the Thakalis are in general this-world oriented and business minded; in Thak Khola opportunities for obtaining credit and non-agricultural incomes are good; the Thakalis form close-knit societies with strong traditional political organisations; the Thakalis put much emphasis on education; the Thakalis have a nuclear family household system; and the Government has implemented many successful projects in Thak Khola, and the valley now has a reasonable good infrastructure and basic services.

The main problem facing the Thakalis of Thak Khola are that some development projects (such as the former USAID financed Resources Conservation Utilisation Project) have been designed with little understanding and consideration of local conditions; the self-reliance of the local communities is decreasing; the Thakalis have become increasingly dependent on the outside market; and the poorest quintal of the Thakalis continue to live in poverty.

Clans⁴

There are four exogamous patrilineal clans among the Tamang Thakalis, namely **cyogl (gaucan)**, **salgl (tulacan)**, **dhimcan (sercan)**, and **bhurgl (bhattacan)**. The ending **-gl** is an abbreviation of **ghyu** ("lineage"). The Nepali names were introduced around the beginning of the present century and are now used exclusively.

The clans are not localized but probably were so at one time. Gaucan is said to come from Nakhung or Naprunghung, Tulacan from Dhojo or Bhujungkot (which are now deserted villages), Sercan from Gang (the old Kobang), and Bhattacan from Narsang (the old Khanti).

Each clan has a named ancestor and a clan god. The ancestor of Gaucan is **ke anl alram** and its god is **lha langba nhurbu** ("the jewel elephant"). The ancestor of Tulacan is **ke samledhen samlecyang** and its goddess is **lha churln gyalmo** ("the seamonster queen"). The ancestor of Sercan is **ke dhakpa gyalsang** and its goddess is **lha gangla singl karmo** ("the white lioness of the glacier"). Finally, the ancestor of Bhattacan is **ke pau kutl**, also known as **ke damce damru**, and its god is **lha hyawa ranggyung** ("the self-created male yak").

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Each of the four clans has a religious specialist known as **pare** who functions as the mediator between the clan and its god. The four **pare** come from particular subclans or lineages: **pare phobe** of Gaucan, **pare phobe** of Tulacan, **lhakhang dungl phobe** of Sercan, and **pare ghyuwa** of Bhattacan.

The four gods are taken out of their temples and worshipped during the **lha phewa** festival. The four gods are also worshipped during the **shol shol lawa** festival which is celebrated three years prior to the **lha phewa**. During these festivals the **pare** recite the four clan stories (**rhab**).

The four **pare** walk in a line with Gaucan **pare** in the front followed by the **pare** of Tulacan, Sercan and Bhattacan. This order reflects the kinship relations between the gods and only plays a role during these festivals. In daily life there are no status differences between the clans.

Each of the four clans has a leader (**gampa**). The post of leader is open to any member of the clan, but it is often inherited from father to son. The leader is nominated by the members of the clan and usually has the post until he dies or retires. However, the members of the clan are free to discharge their leader if they think that he is not doing a good job.

Each clan consists of a number of named subclan groups or lineage groups. These are the most important patrilineal descent groups among the Tamang Thakalis. The subclan groups are further divided into two or more lineages, but these do not usually function as social groups.

Gaucan includes **tancang** (or **lara**), **ghera**, **dhom**, **balamten**, **ghosetan**, **lam** (or **lama**), **ghai mhirki**, **pare**, **mhatasi**, **sapretan**, **dhyatan**, and **sonam mhirki syarki**.

Tulacan includes **dhyatan**, **lam**, **chyupa**, **jaungman** (incl. **cainl**), **dhungpa**, and **pare** (alias **chaine**).

Sercan includes **lhakhang dungl**, **mhadungl**, **narcho**, **yonten chogi**, **pompar**, **gangsya**, **pal gera**, **sarten**, **tarcha**, **lemendhen lemencyang**, **sarke ge palten cyang**, **dhom** (1), and **dhom** (2).

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Bhattacan includes **dhyatan**, **tsar mhirki**, **nacyang mhirki**, **tepalsang mhirki**, **lam**, **bara dhorche sara dhorche**, **mhicen**, **khunara**, and **pare**. These subclan and lineage groups are known as **phobe** or **ghyuwa**. The names of the groups refer to the name of the founding ancestor (e.g. **khunara**), the post with which the ancestor or the present members are associated (e.g. **pompar**, "king"), or to the locality where the members of the group originally lived (e.g. **lhakhang dung**i, "close to the temple").

Each clan originally had a subclan or lineage known as **dhyatan phobe**. Now there are only three, as the Sercan **dhyatan phobe** has died out. The four **dhyatan phobe** are said to have been founded by the youngest brothers of the four clans and are therefore not allowed to intermarry.

Certain of the religious specialists among the Tamang Thakalis are recruited exclusively from certain groups. The priests of the so-called "white bon" (**bonkar**) which in Thaksatsai is found only in Naprunghung are thus recruited exclusively from the Gaucan **lam phobe**. The religious specialists of the indigenous pre-Buddhist religion of the Thakalis which are known as **dhom** are recruited exclusively from **dhom phobe** and **balamten phobe** in Gaucan and from the two **dhom phobe** in Sercan.

The religious specialist who acts as the mediator between the villagers of Taglung and their protective deity **mhan cham pra** is recruited exclusively from **mhatsi phobe** of Gaucan. Further, **narsang chungpa** who acts as the mediator between the Tamang Thakalis and their protective deity **nari jhowa** is recruited exclusively from **dhom phobe** of Sercan.

The organization of the groups varies, but in general it is as follows. The group has a leader, **gampa** (or **thalu**) who looks after the funds and the documents of the group and who arranges the meetings. Furthermore, he usually functions as mediator in case of conflict inside the group and represents the group in case of conflict between a member of his group and a member of another group. The leader is nominated by the members of the group and the post is open to any man living in Thak Khola though it is often inherited. The leader is usually an elder man respected due to his age, wisdom, good reputation, authoritative personality, and for his ability to speak and discuss. The leader usually has his post until he dies

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or retires but can be discharged if the members feel that he is doing a bad job.

The group also has an assistant (**gundal**). It is the duty of the assistant to carry messages from the leader to the members of the group and also to do most of the work in connection with the meetings. The meetings usually take place in the house of the assistant. The post of assistant is held for one year, and the duty is passed in rotation between the members of the group living permanently in Thaksatsai.

The funds of the groups formerly consisted of fields but now are mostly cash. The fund is lent out with interest to needy members of the group. The yearly interest is then used for covering the expenses of the meetings.

The main meeting is **jho cawa** which most groups celebrate in September or October. The members of the group gather for three days to eat and drink together. The leader presents his account and the new assistant is nominated. The group's old documents are taken out and read. These may include genealogies, but more often they consist of rules on how the meeting should be conducted and how the interest on the fund should be spent; some ancestors have also written down advice counselling not to be greedy, not to quarrel, to help each other, and to share the food equally.

On the third and last day the group usually invites the women who have married out and their husbands. This extended group (**ni mah syang**, or **nemyang syang**) may have a separate fund to cover the expenses for this particular meeting.

Each group has its own reliquary stone structure (**khimi**) in which a bone from dead members is placed. The **khimi** are found in the area of Naprunghung, Nakhung, Kobang, and Khanti, except for those of **ghera phobe**, **mhatasi phobe**, and **chyupa ghyuwa** which are near Taglung. The **khimi** is whitewashed every year during a ceremony (**khimi ramden**) which is held in connection with **jho cawa**.

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Some Thakalis make a fund for the building and maintenance of a reliquary stone wall (**mane**) to be constructed in their name when they die. A ceremony (**mane ramden**) during which the **mane** is painted is held every year in the name of its founder. Anyone who passes the **mane** during this ceremony has to be offered beer.

The members of the group invite each other and gather when a member of the group gets married. At the wedding, the bride's group gathers in her house and is presented beer and alcohol by the groom's side. Later, the groom's group gathers in his house to welcome him and his bride on their return from the bride's house. The members of the groom's group celebrate the marriage, and each household presents the groom with a turban and the bride with a shawl.

The members of the group also gather when there is a death within the group. The women born and the women married into the group are expected to cry during the ceremonies. The household of the dead presents dark shawls with which the women cover themselves as a sign of mourning.

Household⁵

Among many castes and ethnic groups in Nepal the household based on the joint family is the ideal type - although it may not be the most frequent type; but among the Thakalis the household based on the nuclear family is the ideal norm as well as the most frequent type. This is because, although the newlyweds join the household of the husband's father, they stay there for only a few years and then establish their own independent household, at the latest when a younger brother of the husband marries (except when the husband is the youngest or only son). The Thakalis explain that they prefer the nuclear family household because in his household every man is the architect of his own fortune and, moreover, it does not have the conflicts latent in the household based on the joint family.

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Marriage⁶

The frequency of marriages between Thakalis and persons from other 'castes' is low. They occur mostly with persons of the same status in the caste hierarchy as the Thakalis; however, there are several hypergamous marriages (that is, a Thakali man married to a woman from a 'lower' caste) while hypogamy is rare (that is, a Thakali man married to a woman from a 'higher' caste).

Most marriages are between classificatory cross-cousins - that is a man and a woman, who are related as mother's brother's son and father's sister's daughter, or as mother's brother's daughter and father's sister's son (**solti - soltisy**). Thakali parents prefer marriage between real cross-cousins, but this type of marriage accounts only for 18 percent of marriages.

The traditional Thakali way of marriage was through capture. It was later replaced by "begging" as the most popular form. Capture is now banned in Thak Khola. It is commonly believed that capture is a crude and primitive form of marriage in which young women are captured and forced to marry against their will. This is not correct. First, women usually had given their prior consent, and the capture was therefore a mock event. Secondly, they could not be forced to marry a man against their will.

I would even argue that a woman's position to reject a proposal from a man who she does not like is better under capture than begging. Under the former her captor was not allowed to mistreat her and he would have to let her go if she opposed marriage; in contrast, under the latter it is difficult for a woman to resist pressure from her parents to accept a marriage which they already have agreed to.

Thakali divorce rates are relative high - an estimated 10-15 percent of all marriages. Divorce takes place in the first years of marriage and is rare among couples with children. Most divorcees eventually remarry. People who become single due to the death of their spouse usually have children and do seldom remarry.

Political Organization

Thaksatsae is divided into thirteen 'villages', namely Tukche, Kanti, Kobang, Larjung, Bujungkot, Nakhung, Naprunghung, Tiri, Dhamphu, Taglung, Kunjo, Lete and Ghasa. Some villages have satellite settlements. A few of these are big, but they do not have the status of an independent village; for example, Sauru is a part of Kanti village, and the people of Chayo belong to either Taglung or Kunjo.

Bujungkot is an interesting case. In the late 19th century the people of Bujungkot abandoned their village due to problems with the supply of drinking water and settled in Larjung. Their descendants live side-by-side with the Larjung households, but they are still considered Bujungkot households and have their own headman and forests.

The households which are represented in the village assembly are called **kuriya** while others are referred to as **padkea**. The **kuriya** include Tamang households which have land and a house in the village and where the head is a male aged 18 and 61 years; however, a few outsiders (e.g. Mhawa) have obtained this status. The **kuriya** are obliged to be represented in the village assembly, to carry the duty of village worker and to participate in public works programmes while the **padkea** only take part in public works programmes; households which are headed by a retiree, do not carry any obligations.

The village assembly (**yhul tumba**) meet once a year to discuss issues of general interest and to check the village accounts. It also meets on an **ad hoc** basis when important matters suddenly arise.

The village has a headman (**mukliya**). The post is ideally open to any member of the village assembly, but in practice it is restricted to the Tamang. The villagers often choose a close patrilineal relative (younger brother, son or nephew) of the former headman, and in some villages the post has been in the same family for generations.

The headman usually sits until he dies or retires. He is not reappointed every year, but if the assembly is dissatisfied, it may replace him with

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another villager. This does not take place often; it happened in the 1960's in Larjung and in 1976 in Khanti.

The headman plans and supervises village worship such as the annual worship for the protection against smallpox (**mel puja**). He also initiates public works programmes, - the construction of bridges, roads, drinking water supply systems, river protection works, etc.

The headman mediates in conflicts within the village. When a villager seeks assistance, he places four **palsa** in the front of the headman and presents his problem. If the problem is serious, the headman appoints some mediators (**baladmi**) to advise him, including one from each side of the conflict. If a villager feels that the judgement is not fair, he has the right to bring it to the council of the headmen of the thirteen villages of Thaksatsae.

Until recently, most of the headmen also functioned as collectors of the village land tax (**mukliya**).

The headman is assisted by two village workers (**gundol**). The duty of village worker rotates among the **kuriya**, and the duration of the post is one year. The village workers assist the headman with practical arrangements in connection with village worship and public works programmes and serve as village cries. Further, they control that nobody cuts wood from protected forest and that animals do not enter the fields. If they find an animal in the fields, the owner is fined a few rupees which go to the village treasury.

The headmen of the thirteen villages form a council known as "the thirteen headmen" (**tehra mukhiya**). The headmen elect among themselves a chairman (**mir mukhiya**), a vice-chairman (**upa mir mukhiya**), and an accountant (**tabli mukhiya**); the others are ordinary members (**sadasya**). At present the chairman, the vice-chairman and the accountant sit for a period of one year, and the posts rotate among the thirteen headmen.

The chairman is **primus inter pares**, and his main duty is to chair the council meetings. The vice-chairman chairs when the chairman is absent,

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and the accountant looks after the accounts. The council has no secretary; when there are documents to write, one of the headmen is asked to do it.

Thakatsae has a large number of old documents, mainly orders received from the government concerning administrative matters, such as taxes. The documents are kept in a box which has three locks. The keys are kept with the chairman, the vice-chairman and the accountant, and the box can be opened only when all three persons are present.

The thirteen headmen meet twice a year. Formerly, the meetings (**tehra mukhlya tumba**) took place in a building in Kobang close to the **malki lhakhang** temple, but now the council has a small room in the Kobang school. The thirteen headmen shall attend these meetings without prior notice; if a headman is unable to be present, he should send a respected villagers as his replacement along with a written authorization.

The main meeting takes place in June and lasts three days. On the first day the headmen rest and socialize. On the second day they check the accounts. In Thaksatsae the forests are owned by the individual villages, but the pastures are common property. In summer the pastures are used also by Gurung and Magar shepherders from the south for a fee of one sheep per herd. Formerly more than 20 herds used to come, but now there are only a dozen. The animals which Thaksatsae receive as fee are divided equally among the 13 villages. Each village receives a maximum of two animals; any surplus is sold, and the proceeds are given to the Thaksatsae treasury.

On the third day the council changes chairman, vice-chairman and accountant, settles disputes between villages and hears villagers' appeal cases. Formerly, it was forbidden for Tamang to take cases to government courts without prior permission of the thirteen headmen, but this rule has now been abrogated. The headmen settled all cases, except those relating to murder and other serious crimes which were referred to proper courts.

The second annual meeting takes place on the tenth day of the **dasain**

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festival. A sheep is sacrificed for the welfare of the people of Thaksatsae, and children and other villagers visit the headmen to receive blessings and *tlka*. Afterwards, the headmen dine and drink together.

The chairman may also call **ad hoc** meetings of the council if important matters arise - such as conflicts with Pacgau over land and forests. For these meetings the chairman may ask the headmen to bring along one or more respected men (**baladmi**). The headmen and **baladmi** discuss the problems and reach decisions through consensus - not through voting. Traditional Thakali society thus prefers deliberation and concensus over voting; for Westerners voting means an end to conflict, but in traditional Thakali eyes voting is the beginning of a conflict.

Religion⁸

Thakali religion is a syncretism of elements from an indigenous tradition known as **dhom**, Tibetan Buddhism and Hinduism.

Dhom is the oldest tradition. It is related to the pre-Buddhist religious traditions in Tibet (commonly referred to as **bon**), and, more distantly, to the traditions of the indigenous Nepalese shamans (**jhakri**). Like the Nepalese **jhankri**, the **dhom** is a kind of shaman who heals people, especially those attacked by evil superhuman beings. The **dhom** differs, however, in at least three important ways from the **jhankri**. First, in contrast to the **jhankri**, a **dhom** has to belong to a particular subclan; second, unlike the **jhankri**, the **dhom** does not go into trance; and third, unlike the **jhankri**, the most important duty of the **dhom** is to perform the death ceremonies.

The **dhom** tradition differs radically from Tibetan Buddhism: in Tibetan Buddhism the post of ritual specialist is open to both sexes, but in **dhom** only to men; in Tibetan Buddhism any person can become a ritual specialist, while the post of **dhom** is restricted to numbers of certain patrilineal groups; the sacrifice of animals is strictly forbidden in Buddhism, but is an important element of the **dhom** tradition; Buddhism is based on written texts, while the **dhom** tradition is based on oral texts; and finally,

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as opposite to Buddhism, in the **dhom** tradition there are no monks, nuns, and monasteries and no hierarchy among the ritual specialists.

Tibetan Buddhism spread into the Thak Khola valley in the 12th century and became an important element in the religious activities of the local people. Temples and monasteries were established, the Tibetan script was introduced, and locals were initiated as ritual specialists.

In the late 18th century the Thak Khola valley came under the Shah dynasty of Kathmandu. These Hindu rulers looked down on the Thakalis whom they considered impure because of their habit of eating yak meat. In order to change their image in the eyes of the Hindus, some Tamang started in the early 20th century to abolish some of the elements of their traditional culture which linked them to closely with Tibet, including the eating of yak meat.

As a result of these reforms and the emigration of Tamang from Thak Khola to areas inhabited mainly by Hindus, Buddhism now plays a less important role in the religion of the Tamang. The decline of Buddhism has been less pronounced among the Mhawa and the Yhulkasompaimhi, and in Marpha and Syang there even has been a revival of Buddhism in recent years.

At the same time as Buddhism declined among the Tamang, elements of Hinduism were introduced, and it now plays an important role in the religion of the Tamang living outside Thak Khola, many of whom use brahmins for certain ceremonies and celebrate Hindu festivals, such as **dasal** and **tihar**.

The Thakalis believe that the universe is full of superhuman beings who possess a power which man does not. The superhumans may use this power in ways which are beneficial or harmful to man. Demons (**dui**) are harmful while gods (**lha**) can be both beneficial and harmful: they reward the righteous, but punish the sinners.

The Thakalis employ various strategies, e.g. offerings, to satisfy and pacify the superhumans from bringing misfortune, sickness and death.

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However, it is impossible to keep all superhumans satisfied all the time, and anyone can therefore be hit by misfortune and sickness anytime. Thakali religion is thus in essence how man deals with a world of potential, harmful superhuman beings.

In orthodox Tibetan Buddhism as presented in the texts and in the teaching of the leading priests, the non-existence of a permanent soul and the cycle of rebirth are two of the cornerstones of the doctrine. In contrast, the Thakalis do believe in the existence of a permanent soul, and they do not subscribe to the belief in an endless cycle of rebirths.

The body houses three non-physical parts, namely the **sam** (the mind), the **bla** (the soul) and the **rho** (the vital spirit). The **sam** is the power which guides a person's actions, and it may be translated as "mind" or "heart". It is located in the chest. A man who acts good is said to have a good heart (**sam shawa**). The **bla** is the soul. Man can lose his soul. When the soul leaves the body (except in dreams), man loses his physical and mental strength and becomes like a stranger. However, the loss of the soul does not necessarily cause death. The **rho** is the vital power which keeps the body alive. Man dies if the **rho** leaves his body. Accordingly, to breathe one's last is called "to cut/separate the vital power" (**rho cewa**).

The soul continues to live after the body dies. During the death ceremonies ritual specialists give the soul superhuman powers so that it can hunt and bring back the cause of death (**mhang**). The cause of death is trapped, killed and buried. The soul is guided to heaven. The road to heaven is dangerous and difficult, and a ritual specialist therefore explains to the soul about the hindrances; if the soul carefully follows the instructions, it will reach heaven (**sangge**).

Informants have vague ideas about heaven. It is a place above the mountains where our ancestors and other dead relatives live. It is the land of eternal life. Some informants think that life in heaven is similar to that on earth while others believe that it is much better.

If a person dies an unnatural death, the soul finds the road to heaven blocked and turns into a ghost. If a person dies with unfulfilled wishes or

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if the death ceremonies are not performed properly, a person also finds the road to heaven blocked, but in this case the soul returns to the village and possesses a person in order to tell about its problems. This is known as **mhang malwa**.

Thakali ethic is based on a mixture of Buddhism and pre-Buddhist traditions. The Thakalis thus do not accept and observe all the precepts of Buddhism; for example, they do not consider it a sin to drink alcoholic drinks. In Buddhism the reason why one should not act badly is that bad behaviour causes a low rebirth in the next life. On the other hand, the Thakalis are concerned more with the consequences in this life - that is the negative sanctions of the superhuman world. Also, in a wider perspective bad actions jeopardize the very existence of the family and the local community. Thus, the purpose of the Thakali ritual is to satisfy and pacify the superhuman beings in order to prevent and do away with sickness and misfortune. When a Thakali sponsor a ceremony, he usually seeks results here and now while his concern for 'merit' and life after death is limited.

According to Thakali ideas, a man should look after the material needs of his family. He should be fair to his wife and children and not treat them badly (e.g. not beat the wife and not force the children to work too hard). He should help relatives in need. Also, he should work for the good of the community. If he is rich, he should be generous towards the poor, give donations to his clan and community, and sponsor religious ceremonies. Further, he should not kill humans, steal, lie, give false testimony, and break oaths.

The Thakalis do not believe in extreme conduct. For example, one should neither be a big spender nor stingy. Also, one should be brave but not foolhardy: a man is a fool if he brings himself in danger in order to help another.

One of the best sources on ideology and ethic is the myths. Thakali myths tell how a king got killed because he misused his power, how a village got destroyed because its people cheated another village, how a son was praised because he exposed a plot against his father, and the like. Very

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popular among the Thakalis is the history of the Tulacan clan which tells how the eighteen ancestors of the clan misused the power which they had received from a goddess, how they neglected a warning from an old grandmother who had a bad dream, how they boasted, "Who can harm us ? Whom do we fear ?" - and how they all got killed !

Emigration⁹

As mentioned earlier, some 80 percent of the Thakalis now live outside their traditional homeland, - the Thak Khola valley.

The majority of the emigrants are found in bazaars and villages in Myagdi and Baglung districts and other hill areas south of Thak Khola. However, many Thakalis also live in urban areas such as Pokhara, Kathmandu, Butwal and Bhairawa.

The earliest record on Thakali emigration dates to the late 18th century when Thak Khola valley became a part of the Shah rulers domain. The Shah rulers imposed heavy taxes on the villages. Many poor were unable to pay their share of the collective land tax and therefore left and settled elsewhere.

The emigration continued in the first half of the 19th century. In connection with a request for reduction in the land revenue in 1862, the Thakalis argued that 216 families had left the area and settled in Kaski, Lamjung and other parts of the middle ranges.

However, not all the Thakali who emigrated from Thak Khola in the 19th century did so because of the high taxes. Informants mention that in the 1870's Subba Pati Ram Thakali from Larjung obtained a contract for mining in Myagdi and that a number of Thakalis working for him settled there permanently. Furthermore, in the first half of the 20th century many Thakalis left Thak Khola and established themselves as agriculturalists, businessmen, and inn-keepers in Dana, Tatopani, Beni, Baglung and other bazaars along the main trading routes south of Thak Khola.

A large number of Thakalis left Thak Khola in the 1960's and early 1970's.

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For centuries the Thakalis had prospered from the exchange of Nepalese grain with Tibetan salt. However, in the early 1960's incomes from the salt trade declined due to the political situation in Tibet and because of competition from cheap Indian salt. Unlike the usual emigration from the hills of Nepal, most of the families who left Thak Khola in the 1960's were not so poor that they faced serious problems making a living; rather it was a question of maintaining an already relatively high standard of living. For many poor and middle class emigrants the life of hotel/shop keeper and businessman in the warm south was more attractive than life as a farmer-cum-businessman in the cold Thak Khola. Besides the economic problem, there were security problems in the area. Also, education and health services and business opportunities were better in the south than in Thak Khola. Finally, the richest families already had large investments in the south and would be able to better manage their investments by living permanently there.

In the late 1970's the rate of emigration slowed down, and now-a-days only few Thakalis are emigrating from Thak Khola. Some emigrants have even returned to Thak Khola. Changes which have taken place in Thak Khola during the 1970s and 1980s have curbed the previous flows. The possibilities for cash-crop farming (horticulture, vegetables, etc.) and business (hotels, contracting, mule business, etc.) are very good, and educated Thakalis can get jobs locally as civil servants. Also basic services such as health services, education, water supply, transportation and electricity have greatly improved.

Thakali emigration has been mainly from the mountains (Thak Khola) to the hills. However, there has also been emigration from the rural areas where the first emigrants settled (Myagdi and Baglung) to Pokhara and other urban areas.

Finally, in the 1980's there has also been an increase in the number of Thakalis who have settled more or less permanently abroad (Japan, USA, and Europe). This is due to an increase in the number of Thakalis marrying foreigners and an increase in the number of young Thakalis going abroad for studies and work.

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Some anthropologists have called the Thakalis a success story. Several factors account for this success: the Thakalis have a special business mentality, there is a high degree of cohesion in Thakali society, the Thakali inheritance system encourages independence, and credit is easily available through the **dikur** system.

It is correct that there are some very rich Thakali businessmen, that some migrants have connections to the most powerful circles in Nepal (including the Royal Palace), and that several Thakali migrants have been elected to the National Assembly from districts where the Thakalis constitute only a small percentage of the population.

The picture is, however, more complex. The Thakali migrants range from very rich businessmen in Kathmandu to poor farmers and innkeepers along the highways and trails in Western Nepal. Most of the latter are not success stories. Among the former there are some who have raised to prominence through illegitimate means; several have been in jail. Also, there are many Thakalis who have lost substantial amounts of money in ventures which have failed.

While the Thakalis are not an unqualified success story, compared to other ethnic groups the Thakali emigrants and their descendants have adopted well to their new environment and are generally well off economically. Several factors account for this; perhaps the most important is that the bulk of the Thakali emigrants, unlike many others, had capital to invest when they established themselves in the south and therefore were not forced to work as manual labourers to make a living.

Studies on the Thakalis¹⁰

In relation to their number the Thakalis may be the most studied group in Nepal. The Thakalis have been studied by a dozen trained anthropologists who have published numerous works on them.

There are several factors contributing to this situation. First, Western anthropologists interested in the Himalayan Region come to Nepal because of difficulties in obtaining research permits in neighbouring

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countries. Secondly, anthropologists are generally more attracted by the people of the hills and mountains than by those of the plains. Thirdly, fieldwork in Thak Khola involves no great hardship: communication is reasonable, the climate is pleasant, people are friendly and cooperative, and the accommodation and food are excellent. Finally, the Thakalis are a good choice for anthropologists interested in trade, migration and social change.

In addition to the Western professional scholars, Thakalis (including, among others, Dhruva Kumar Bhattachan, Narendra Gauchan, Omkar Prasad Gauchan, Prakash Gauchan, Narendra Serchan and Chandra Man Thakali) have studied and published works on Thakali history and culture. While Western anthropologists have focused especially on trade, migration and social change, the main interest of the Thakalis themselves has been the question of their origin. These studies are published in the Nepali language and have only seldom been referred to in the works of Western anthropologists.

Besides the older generation, young university educated Thakalis have studied their culture and society. The sociologist Krishna Bahadur Bhattachan has researched problems of modernization and social change, Som Prasad Gauchan the political aspects of Thakali society, and Yasso Kanti Gauchan socio-cultural change among the Thakalis of Kathmandu.

Notes

1. The present section is based on Michael Vinding, "A History of the Thak Khola Valley, Nepal", *Kallash*, Vol. XIV, No. 3-4, 1988.
2. For a translation of the Cimang village record, see Charles A.E. Ramble and Michael Vinding, "The Bem-chag Village Record and The Early History of Mustang District", *Kallash*, Vol. XIII, No. 1-2, 1987.
3. For the economy of the Thakalis of Thak Khola, see Michael Vinding,

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"Making a Living in the Nepal Himalayas: The Case of the Thakalis of Mustang District", **Contributions to Nepalese Studies**, Vol. 12, No. 1, 1984.

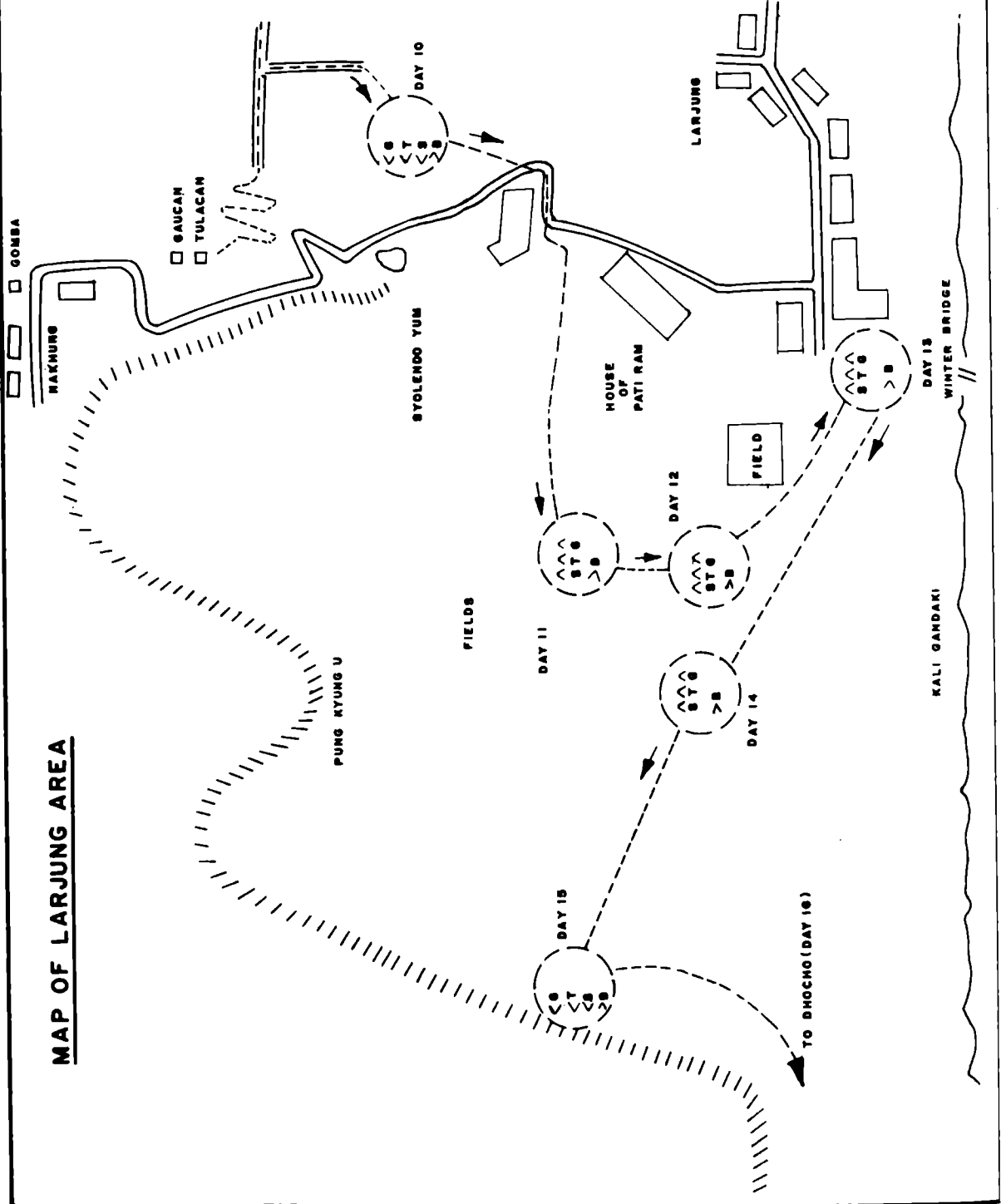
4. The present section is based on Michael Vinding, "A Note on Patrilineal Descent Groups among the Thakalis of the Nepal Himalayas", **Folk**, Vol. 23, 1981.
5. For the Thakali household system, see Michael Vinding, "The Thakali Household and Inheritance System", **Contributions to Nepalese Studies**, Vol. 7, No. 1-2, 1979/80.
6. For an analysis of the Thakali marriage system, see Michael Vinding, "Marriage Systems of the Thakalis and Related Groups of the Bodish Section of Sino-Tibetan Speaking Peoples. **Folk**, Vol. 21-22, 1979/80.
7. For a list of Thakali kinship terms, see Michael Vinding, "A Preliminary Report on Kinship Terminologies of the Bodish Section of Sino-Tibetan Speaking Peoples", **Kailash**, Vol. VII, No. 3-4, 1979.
8. For Thakali religion, see also Michael Vinding, "The Thakalis as Buddhist: A Closer Look at Their Death Ceremonies", **Kailash**, Vol. IX, No. 4, 1982.
9. For Thakali emigration and the Thakalis living outside Thak Khola, see W. Fisher, **The re-creation of tradition: Ethnicity, migration, and social change among the Thakali of central Nepal**. Unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1987.
10. For a list of publications on the Thakalis, see Michael Vinding and Krishna B. Bhattachan, "An Annotated Bibliography on the Thakalis", **Contributions to Nepalese Studies**, Vol. 12, No. 3, 1985.

MAP OF LARJUNG AREA



LEGEND

- HOUSE
- ≡ TRAIL
- - - ROUTE OF THE GODS
- RIVER



LHA PHEWA

The main festival of the Tamang Thakalis is **lha phewa**, lit., "the appearance of the gods¹". The four clangods appear only once every twelfth year, - in the year of the monkey (**prelo**). The **lha phewa** has a prelude, namely **sol sol lawa** which is celebrated three-four years prior to the appearance of the gods². The present section describes how **lha phewa** was celebrated in January 1981³.

DAY 1⁴

The **lha phewa** was organized and supervised by a committee which was comprised of the headmen of the thirteen villages of Thaksatsae, the leaders of the four clans, and other respected men.

The committee had a budget whose main source of income was voluntary contributions from the local Thakali associations (**samaj**): Pokhara presented Rs. 7,500, Bhairawa Rs. 5,100, Kathmandu Rs. 5,000, and Galkot Rs. 1,301. The budget was used for building a temporary health post and toilets, procurement of a dozen pressure lamps, food for the priests, entertainment, and the like.

Each of the four clans also had their own committee which organized and supervised the clan's activities during the festival. For example, the Gaucan committee consisted of 11 members, namely two leaders and nine assistants; one assistant was provided by each of the eight Gaucan subclans residing in Thak Khola, except for Lam Phobe which provided two.

At noon, the organizing committee met in Kobang school. The chairman (a member of the Subba lineage) read out a document which detailed the programme and the duties of the clans during the festival⁵.

In a small adjoining room which belongs to the thirteen villages, the four clan priests (**pare**) performed a ceremony. The chief headman (**mir muklya**) lit a small butterlamp and the priests recited the text **solcep**; this text is recited when minor offerings are presented to the clan gods and before the priests eat their meal⁶.

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During the recitation clouds were gathering, and to prevent rain the priests recited the text **thangrau** and burned some cypress.

Afterwards the priest recited the text **syang rhap**⁷; this text is recited before the priests or the clangods depart from a place.

When the function at the school was over the priests and four young virgin boys (**kumar**) - one from each clan - departed for the holy river Mharsyang Kyu. They were all dressed in the colour of their clan: Gaucan red, Tulacan green, Sercan white and Bhattacan black⁸. They walked to the old courthouse in Kobang, through a field, and down to the riverbed. At Khanti they crossed the Kali Gandaki and walked up to Mharsyang Kyu.

The organizing committee sent along a cook and a man to pay for the priests' expenses. The thirteen villages of Thaksatsae each provided two chickens for the priests, while rice and lentils were paid for by the organizing committee.

When the group reached Mharsyang Kyu the priests recited the text **shyu rhap**; this text is recited when the priests and the gods arrive at a new location⁹.

The priests installed themselves in one of the (two) houses and made a small altar where they placed the clans' sacred objects: Gaucan's sword (**patang**), Tulacan's axe (**namcyatarl**), Sercan's small axe (**lhabe**), and Bhattacan's long handled pickaxe (**myungto**); small watercontainers (**phambu**); Gaucan's, Tulacan's and Sercan's peacockfeather fans (**mramul**) and Bhattacan's stick (**syungti**); and Gaucan's helmet made of iron, copper and brass (**garnyorpulu**).

The evening meal was taken shortly after dark¹⁰. Prior to that the Gaucan priest lit a butterlamp at the altar and recited the **solcep**. Afterwards the Gaucan and the Bhattacan priests drank a glass of alcohol (the Sercan priest was a teetotaller, and the Tulacan priest was too young to drink alcohol).

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DAY 2

In the morning the priests drank tea and ate a small plate of potato stew (**bla**). A group of young Thakali men from the south arrived together with two Japanese girls; one of the men had a video camera with him.

At 8.30 a.m. the priests went to Mharsyang Kyu where they washed themselves and their weapons in the icy water. Then they dried and purified themselves in the smoke of burning cypress, and refilled the water containers (**phambu**). Finally, the priests made a large number of sacred strings (in the colour of their respective clans) which were later distributed to worshippers.

The priests returned to the house, where they recited the **solcep** and had lunch. After a short rest they recited the **syang rhap** and departed for Khanti.

At 2.00 p.m., the priests reached Khanti where more than a hundred people had gathered at the riverbed below the village to welcome them. Among those gathered was a Thakali minister who had brought with him a crew from Royal Nepal Film Corporation. Besides Tamang Thakalis there were also many villagers from Pacgau¹¹.

On arrival the priests recited the **shyu rhap**. Then, the Bhattacan priest tied strings with big bells (**thorlung**) around his bouy and started to shake and dance. A young Bhattacan man held a shawl containing salt in front of him, and the priest ate the salt three times. Afterwards a group of Bhattacan women presented their clan priest with drinks (**kelsang**)¹².

From Khanti the priests left for nearby Kobang. During the festival the priests had to follow prescribed routes which were supposed to have been used by the clangods originally. Therefore, at Kobang the priests walked through a field and continued to the square in front of the old courthouse. Here, the Bhattacan priest again started to shake and dance, but this time the shawl containing the salt was held in front of him by a woman. The priest again ate the salt three times.

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Shortly afterwards, the priests walked through a small kitchen garden, and the Sercan priest was offered drinks by a group of women from his clan. The priests then separated and walked up to their temples: the Gaucan and the Tulacan temples are situated next to each other on a hill immediately below Nakhung while the Bhattacan and the Sercan temples are located on a hill above Kobang.

At the temples the priests received the images of the clangods. The Gaucan, Tulacan and Sercan images are wooden masks, while the Bhattacan's is a head of a yak. The Gaucan, Tulacan and Sercan priests carried their masks to the source of a small river called Dhongsya Kyu which is located 15 minutes walk northwest of Kobang. At the source, the priests recited the **shyu rhab** and placed the masks in the following order: Gaucan first and the highest, followed by Tulacan in the middle and Sercan slightly below. Instead of the head of the yak, some long wooden sticks which symbolized its bones were placed in the water. They were then left there for three nights.

The four priests and the virgin boys spent that and the following nights in a small cave called Pyung Kyu U on the outskirts of Larjung.

DAY 3 AND 4

On those days the priests should normally recite the histories of the four clans (**rhap shewa**); however, they refused, because as part of a reform to cut expenses at social functions, the thirteen headmen had decided, without consulting the priests, that they should no longer be presented a turban (**tote**) and their wives a shawl (**tatum**). Furthermore, the priests complained that other traditional rules were also not being observed. For instance, it is forbidden to ride a horse in Thasang (i.e. Khanti, Kobang, Larjung and Naprunghung) from the time the priests return from Mharsyang Kyu; several persons had already broken the rule and had only been fined Rs. 1 - not Rs. 3 as prescribed.

There was more bad news. In the morning of the third day news arrived from the south that a young Thakali woman had died after a childbirth.

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When an old woman heard that, she said that the festival was surrounded by bad fortune and mentioned that the Tulachan priest's wife had also died recently. All that was because the gods who are supposed to meet only once every twelfth year had met in the interim period ¹³.

The thirteen headmen faced more problems. In Thaksatsae gambling is forbidden except during certain festivals, and **lha phewa** is not one of them. Several men had requested the headmen to permit gambling saying that they needed to relax in the evenings. When the women heard about that, they complained to the headmen that if the men could not do their work without gambling, the women would be pleased to look after the gods and the guests - if the men took care of the house, children and the cooking. As a compromise the headmen decided to allow gambling for six days only.

DAY 5 ¹⁴

At noon a few men and women gathered at Pyung Kyu U and offered foodstuff and 108 butterlamps to the clangods (**cho pulwa**). The priests recited the **solcep**, and the offerings were placed at a small altar where the weapons of the clans were arranged. At the end of the ceremony the offerings were distributed to those present.

At 2 p.m. the priests left for Dhongsya Kyu where a large number of people were gathered. Normally, there is no water in Dhongsya Kyu, but it is believed that once every twelfth year - at the time of **lha phewa** - water miraculously appears. In 1981 there was only very little water. The masks were cleaned in the water, and the priests recited the **syang rhap**.

The masks were then taken in a procession to the temple at Nakhung. Numerous people stood along the route to receive the gods' blessings: people bowed their head and were touched with the masks. At Nakhung temple the gods were welcomed with drinks (**kelsang**) by the Gaucan, Tulacan and Sercan clans. Then the masks were covered with clothes in their respective clan's colour, and the priests recited the **shyu rhap**.

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DAY 6

In Nakhung temple a Buddhist priest prepared the paint for the masks of the Gaucan, Tulacan and Sercan gods¹⁵. At Pyung Kyu U a few people offered foodstuff and 108 butterlamps to the gods, and the priests continued to refuse to recite the clan histories.

DAY 7

Several households offered foodstuff and 108 butterlamps at Pyung Kyu U.

The priests still refused to recite the histories of the four clans. However, at a meeting with the organizing committee they agreed to start the recitation from the following day, even though their demands were not met.

In Nakhung temple the Buddhist priest continued to work on the masks. Red soil was placed in the cracks of the wooden masks to make the surface smooth for painting.

DAY 8

The offerings continued at Pyung Kyu U.

At Nakhung temple the Buddhist priest started to paint the mask of the Gaucan god: white at the base, then pink, and finally red. At the Bhattacan headquarters, another Buddhist priest worked on the head of the yak. The head was modelled around an old skull which is believed to be the original head of the Bhattacan clan god Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung.

In the evening the Gaucan priest recited the Gaucan clan history (**chokl rhap**). About thirty people, mainly women, were gathered to hear the recitation. The clan histories exist as written texts, but their structure indicates that they originally were oral texts. The texts are written in old Thakali language which includes many Tibetan words; hence it is difficult

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even for Thakalis to follow the stories. Therefore, a Buddhist priest retold the story in Nepali for those Thakalis from the south who did not understand the language. Afterwards, the Bhattacan priest recited the Bhattacan clan history (**bhurkl rhap**).

DAY 9

The offerings continued at Pyung Kyu U, and in the afternoon the Sercan priest recited the Sercan clan history (**dhimcan rhap**).

At Narsang temple the Buddhist priest completed the three wooden masks in the late evening.

DAY 10

The priests and the virgin boys left Pyung Kyu U in the early afternoon. At a cross road in the northwestern end of Larjung they separated: the Gaucan, Tulacan and Sercan priests proceeded to Nakhung temple, while the Bhattacan priest went to his clan's temple above Kobang.

The latter's route went through some fields. When the priests are walking, they are forbidden to speak and to climb walls so, when the Bhattacan priest came to a low wall blocking his way, he gestured to his assistants who dismantled it. At the temple he was handed the head of Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung.

The Bhattacan priest returned to the cross road where he joined the other priests returning from Nakhung temple. The returning procession was preceded by a Thakali layman who beat on a two-sided drum similar to the kind used by Buddhist priests, except that it was held pointing towards the ground¹⁶. Behind him walked three men carrying the masks of the Gaucan, Tulacan and Sercan gods followed by the three priests and the virgin boys.

At the cross road the priests (and the gods) were offered drinks (**kelsang**). Then the procession entered a nearby field where the bodies of the four

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gods had been prepared. The bodies consisted of a wooden frame covered with a cloth in the clans' colour. After the priests had entered the field, the Bhattacan priest shook and danced like a yak; in front of him was a young Bhattacan man with an outstretched shawl containing salt. Afterwards the Gaucan, Tulacan and Sercan priests recited the **shyu rhap**. Then they went over to the Gaucan god where men belonging to the clan fixed the mask to the body. This was repeated with the other gods.

Shortly afterwards the gods were lifted with long wooden poles by men from the respective clan and taken three times clockwise around the field.¹⁷ They were carried in the usual order, first Gaucan followed by Tulacan, Sercan and Bhattacan¹⁸. The procession was led by the man with a drum, followed by the priests and the gods. During the last circle the priests recited the **shyu rhap** after which the gods were placed on the ground next to each other. The Gaucan, Tulacan and Sercan gods were placed facing South-West, while the Bhattacan god was placed facing the opposite direction. A large number of Thakalis and people from the neighbouring villages had come to seek the gods' blessings which they received by touching the gods' head with their own forehead. When the ceremonies were over, the gods were left in the field for the night.

The priests and the virgin boys spent that and the following nights in their clan's headquarters.

DAY 11

In the morning a number of Thakalis visited the gods and offered butterlamps and prayers.

In the afternoon people gathered in the field. The priests recited the **shang rhap**, and the gods were carried a few hundred meters to **kyonkhor che**, a field below Pyung Kyu U. En route the gods and the priests were offered drinks (**kelsang**), and the procession passed through an orchard where after some discussion an apple tree was removed because it stood in the way.

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On arrival, the procession made three circles in the field, the priests recited the **shyu rhap**, and the gods were placed on the ground. The Gaucan, Tulacan, and Sercan gods all faced Mt. Dhaulagiri (West) while the Bhattacan god faced the North. According to the clan histories, the former gods were born in the West while the latter was born in the North.

Afterwards blessings were given by the Gaucan god. The Gaucan priest recited the text **Ongkuji** and distributed red strings and food offerings to those present. Then he read the Gaucan clan history, and for his services the Thaksatsae community presented him with a turban¹⁹.

DAY 12

In the morning people made offerings to the gods. Some Sercans offered a big butterlamp to their clan goddess while the priest recited the **solcep**.

The festival is an occasion for the emigrant Thakalis to visit local holy places and to sponsor religious ceremonies. For instance, a wife of a member of the Subba lineage sponsored recitation of some holy texts and invited more than a hundred people for lunch, including the Marpha's elite.

The organizing committee was again criticized for not observing the traditions. Complaints were made that the gods had not met the previous night as they should have according to tradition.

Also, according to tradition a Thakali priest (**dhom**) should make offerings to the gods on the 12th day. A **dhom** arrived from Lete in the afternoon - only to be told that the offerings would take place the next day !

In the afternoon the gods were carried approximately one hundred meters further south. Afterwards the Sercan priest distributed offerings and recited the clan history. In return he received a turban from the Thakali community, and he and his wife also received numerous ceremonial scarves (**kata**) from individual Thakalis.

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In the evening the old Tulacan priest recited the Tulacan clan history in the local panchayat building²⁰.

DAY 13

That was the day of the full moon and the main day of the festival.

In the morning, next to the trail from Larjung to Nakhung the **dhom** from Lete performed a ceremony to the four clan gods²¹. At the start of the ceremony the priest made an altar with offerings such as "offer cakes" (**kantu**), butterlamps and beer. Then, he chanted prayers and beat his drum, while a sheep was prepared for sacrifice. First, water was sprinkled on a copper vessel containing three hot white stones and a small branch of cypress, and in the ensuing steam the sheep was purified. Next, the priest poured water on the sheep's head and along its spine and took some hair from the animal's head, shoulders and back. After that a long wait ensued because the sheep refused to shake its body - to indicate its willingness to be sacrificed. After three unsuccessful attempts the priest poured a big jug of water over the sheep, and it finally gave a vigorous shake. While some men held the sheep down on its back, a villager made a small incision with a knife below the breastbone, inserted his bare hand, and tore out the heart. This was given to the priest who sprinkled the blood on the offerings at the altar. The man who had killed the sheep cut the tip of the ears, the tongue, and the hooves and gave them to the priest who placed them at the altar. With that the ceremony ended, and the men who were present cooked and consumed the meat.

In the early afternoon the gods were carried approximately a hundred meters to a tree situated at the bank of the Kali Gandaki, next to the southernmost house in Larjung; that place is known as Khyongkhor.

Later that afternoon several plays were staged at an open ground close by. Due to that hundreds of people had gathered, including Magars from villages further south. Among the audience was a group of women from the Subba lineage - all wearing traditional Thakali dress and expensive jewelry.

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The first play was about a hunt. The actors were five Bhattacan men: a hunter, a dog-owner, two hunting dogs, and a deer. Early in the morning, the five men had gone to a stream above Naprunghung where the hunter had offered nine pairs of small flags to the gods before departing on a 'hunt'. The men had later returned to Larjung where they had been presented a dried foreleg of a goat at the place where the sheep had been sacrificed.

The deer suddenly entered the arena followed closely by the dogs. The man performing as the deer had a muskdeer's skin tied to his back, the dried goat leg to his waist and a pair of horns on his head. The men who played the part of the dogs had bells tied around their body and crawled on all fours. Finally the dog-owner and the hunter entered armed with bow and arrows. During the hunt the actors ran into the audience and made fun of them. After a while the deer escaped and the play ended. However, the hunt continued at Khyongkhor where the deer was finally 'killed' and its meat (the foreleg of a goat) was offered to the clangods.

Next a group of men entered with a long piece of rope with which they tried to encircle a large part of the audience. Some managed to escape, but those who were caught within the rope had to pay a fine to be set free. The people did not mind that since it is considered auspicious to be caught on that occasion.

Then four Sercan men dressed as young women (**lha came**) entered the ground. They had purified themselves at Dhongsya Kyu early in the morning. The 'women' spread manure in the field, and a Gaucan man sowed it with three local measures of barley. Most of the grains were actually thrown to the audience. The grains are considered auspicious, and the women stretched out their shawls to catch some.

Then three Tulacan men entered: a ploughman and two 'oxen'. The man yoked the oxen and started to plough. He concentrated on the edges of the field which gave an opportunity to have fun with the audience in the front row. After a while a Tulacan man dressed as a woman entered holding a spindle and a basket with snacks and beer which she served

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to the hungry men. To the great amusement of the audience the 'woman' frequently rubbed her backside.

Afterwards, the four Sercan 'women' returned to weed the field. While they were weeding a group of young Tulacan men suddenly appeared, captured the youngest girl, and vanished from the scene. The men later hid the girl behind the Gaucan god.

The final sketch was a wedding ceremony (**khimi thuji**) between the Tulacan boy and the Sercan girl. A group of elder Sercan men sat behind a long, low table. In entered a group of Tulacan men singing traditional marriage songs. Then, the boy's side presented beer and alcohol to the Sercan men who accepted it, thus finalising the marriage. At last the bride and the bridegroom entered and bowed down in respect to the members of her clan. By that time most of the audience had left the ground and the programme came to an end.

In the evening the gods met and talked with each other (**degal detji**). The Tulacan goddess was the first to be carried over to the Gaucan god and was placed facing him. She presented a bottle of alcohol and a ceremonial scarf to her elder brother, and for the next twenty minutes the siblings spoke about what they had experienced during the past twelve years. (The conversation was actually carried out by men who sat inside the gods' bodies). The goddess was then carried back to her original position. Then, there followed half an hour's break because none of the Sercan present knew how to talk on behalf of their goddess. When they were finally ready, their goddess first visited the Gaucan god and then the Tulacan goddess. In the end the Bhattacan god visited his three elder siblings.

During the conversations the younger sibling first presented him or herself. The elder sibling then enquired about how the younger had been in the past twelve years. The conversation depends very much on the actors' skill and wits. For example, the Tulacan goddess asked the Gaucan god (who controls the storm) why there had been so many storms in recent years, and he replied that this was because the Thakali women no longer wore the traditional dress but saree and jeans instead.

Lha Phewa

DAY 14

In the afternoon, the gods were carried a few hundred meters southwest close to a place where they had been on day 12, and some men from Marpha helped to carry the Bhattacan god. During the recitation of the **shyu rhap**, the gods were placed on the ground. Since the text mentions specifically when the individual gods should be placed, it is forbidden to do otherwise. The Bhattacans came to place their god too early; therefore the other clans demanded each a bottle of beer, one rupee and a ceremonial scarf as fine. The Bhattacans, however, refused to pay.

Afterwards the Bhattacan priest recited the Bhattacan clan history, using a text which he had written in the Devanagari script. During the recitation a leading Buddhist priest in Thaksatsae (a Tulacan) explained the story, but later at the request of the audience he took over the recitation using an old copy of the text written in the Tibetan script. When the recitation was almost over, it started to rain so it was stopped for the day.

DAY 15

At noon the gods were carried to a field further to the west and the Buddhist priest completed the recitation of the Bhattacan **rhap**.

Later that afternoon, the members of the organizing committee, old respected men and some women held a meeting in the school. According to a participant, the women were invited so that they would not complain later. The meeting discussed a number of issues and decided that in the future the route which the priests use should be made six feet wide while the route along which the gods travel should have a width of thirty feet. It was also decided to forbid planting of fruit trees at the gods' traditional resting places.

At the earlier festivals, the plays performed on day 13 had taken place at an empty plot of land opposite Kyongkhor. However, in the 1970's a prominent local Thakali had constructed a hotel on a part of the land, and in connection with the festival several temporary huts had been erected

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next to it. The meeting decided that the hotel would be allowed to stand, but the land next to it should be kept empty for use in future festivals.

DAY 16

According to the Tulacan **rhap** the eighteen forefathers of the Tulacan clan lived in Dhocho. They were very powerful, but they misused their power and were therefore killed by the other clans who in the process threw the Tulacan goddess in the river Kali Gandaki. In retaliation the goddess blocked the river at the gorge Kayang Ghang. When the river started to flow backwards, an old Tulacan grandmother agreed to get the goddess - but only after the other clans had made several promises. One of the promises was that only Tulacan men would be allowed to wear a special type of turban known as **sal-e-tote** and only Tulacan women would be allowed to put red colour in the parting of their hair and red strings in their braids. These rules were formerly enforced throughout the entire festival but were later only permitted on the 16th day.

At noon the gods were carried to Dhocho which is located about a kilometre south of Larjung. The Tulacan men wore beautiful green turbans, and the women had red strings in their braids. Only unmarried women of the clan and women married into it are allowed to wear the red strings; however, a few married women born in the Tulacan clan also wore them which caused some disapproval.

When the procession arrived at Dhocho, it started to snow and the gods were covered with bamboo mats. Since the Tulacan priest was very young, the Bhattacan priest recited the **ongkhu** and the Tulacan clan history on his behalf.

DAY 17²²

That was the final day of the festival.

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In the morning it started to snow heavily, and at noon only about twenty people were gathered at Dhocho. After the priests had recited the **shang rhap**, there were only two Sercan men present to carry their goddess. Since that was not possible, men from the other clans agreed to help on the condition that the Sercan clan pay a fine of Rs. 100 to each of them. Thus the Sercan goddess completed the last leg of her journey with the help of the other clans.

The gods were carried from Dhocho to the cave Gomba U which is located upstream from Dhyushuta Kyu (a tributary of Kali Gandaki). At Gomba U the gods were dismantled, and the masks of the Gaucan, Tulacan, and Sercan gods were placed inside the cave while the head of the Bhattacan god was placed above the entrance of the cave.

According to informants the masks would remain in the cave for 45 days and then be carried by the clan priests to their respective temples.

CONCLUSION

Most festivals include the worship of gods and are therefore religious ceremonies at one level. For instance, the 'official' purpose of the **lha phewa** is to celebrate the appearance of the four clan gods, to worship them, and to receive their blessings.

However, at another level, festivals contrast deeply with religious ceremonies: while the latter take place in a solemn atmosphere, the festivities involve drinking, gambling, merrymaking, and sexual overtones.

Festivals have important recreative functions. In traditional Thakali society there is little time for leisure, and, although the daily routine changes with the seasons, life is rather monotonous. The festivals break this monotony; like the holidays in the West they are time for relaxation, good food and fun. In addition they provide one of the few means of entertainment. Festivals like the **lha phewa** include small plays which, unlike the theatres in the West, involve much interaction between the actors and the audiences. The sketches deal in a humorous way with

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Thakali culture and how the Thakalis look at themselves and their neighbours. Moreover, the festivals provide information on Thakali history and how the society was organized in former times.

The four clan histories tell the history of the Thakalis. As in other societies, the 'official' history tends to legitimize the existing social order, and like other myths the stories have a moral: do not be greedy, do not boast, etc. The Gaucan clan history is the most important to anthropologists, but the most popular among the Thakalis is the Tulacan clan history: many old people shed tears when they hear about how the eighteen Tulacan ancestors neglected a warning of an old woman who had a bad omen in a dream, how they boasted, "Who can harm us ? Whom do we fear ?", - and how they got killed.

Finally, festivals create a feeling of solidarity among a group of people, - an ethnic group, a village, a clan, a group of young men, etc; but they also expose conflicts. During the 1981 **Iha phewa** men and women were deeply divided over whether gambling should be permitted or not. The festival also exposed a conflict between the Thakalis who were for social and cultural change and those who were against - a conflict which resulted in the priests' strike. Finally, it also exposed the cultural and linguistic gap between the Thakalis of Thak Khola and the emigrants living in the south.

Notes

1. In Nepali the festival is referred to as **bara barsa kumba mela**, "The 12-Year Festival".
2. The **sol sol lawa** preceding the 1981 **Iha phewa** took place 21-25 March 1977. On the first day the four priests and four virgin boys went to Mharsyang Kyu. In the morning of the second day they washed themselves and the gods' weapons in the holy river. Then they went to Khanti and Kobang where the Bhattacan priest 'danced' like on the second day of the **Iha phewa**. In the evening they recited the clan

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histories in the cave Pyung Kyu U. The priests spent the third and the fourth day in the cave relaxing and in the afternoon reciting the clan histories. On the last day the priests visited the four clan temples and knocked their weapons above the entrance doors.

3. For a description of the 1968 **lha phewa**, see Corneille Jest, "La Fête des Clans chez les Thakalis. Spre-lo (1968)", pp. 183-196 in C. von Fürer-Haimendorf (ed.), **Contributions to the Anthropology of Nepal**, Warminster 1974: Aris & Phillips. For the 1981 festival, see I.V. Somlai, "Two 12-Year Festivals in the Thak Khola", **Kailash**, Vol. IX, No. 2-3, 1982. I have criticized Somlai's description of the festival in the article "A Comment on 'Two 12-Year Festivals in Thak Khola', **Kailash**, Vol. X, No. 1, 1983.
4. Second day (**chalwa 2**) of the 12th month (**bumla**) of the Thakali calendar, corresponding to 8 January 1981.
5. The (typed) document was in the Nepali language.
6. The copy of the text which the priests used was in Thakali language written in the Devanagari script. According to informants the word **solcep** means "please eat/accept (our) offerings". Before eating the priest offer some of the food to the gods - and therefore recite the text **solcep**.
7. Informants mention that **syang** is the honorific form for "going, leaving".
8. The clothes and the shoes worn by the priests are paid by their respective clan.
9. According to informants the word **shyu** is derived from **shyur pa**, "to sit down". Furthermore, the text is identical with the text **shyang rhap**, except for the words **lha shyanga so** which become **lha shyulu so** in the **shyu rhap**.
10. During the festival the priests are not allowed to eat foodstuff and

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undertake activities which are considered impure - such as eating garlic and having sex.

11. According to an informant, women are not allowed to wear red clothes on this occasion; however, the rule is no longer observed.
12. According to the Bhattacan clan history the Bhattacan god Hyawa Rhangjyung ("the Self-created Yak"), died in the pastures above Marpha at the hands of the ancestor of the local Gumli clan. During the **sol sol lawa** which is celebrated three year prior to the Lha Phewa, the Bhattacan clan formerly presented the Gumli Cyangpa clan a small yak. At the time of the Lha Phewa, the yak was killed, and its head was handed over to the Bhattacan clan at the time when the priests arrive at Khanti from Mharsyang Kyu. However, this custom was last observed at the festival in 1944.
13. In the 1970's the mask of the Gaucan god was stolen. It was later recovered, and as a safety measure the masks were taken from the temples and placed together in a safe.
14. In the Tibetan and Thakali calendar, days are sometimes deleted or added so that the calendar can follow the phases of the moon. In January 1981 the 6th day of the 12th month was deleted, thus the 5th day of the festival fell on the 7th day corresponding to 12th January 1981.
15. The priest is the son of late Lama Kancha who painted the mask during the festival in 1968. The son is living in Pokhara and does not normally function as a priest.
16. According to tradition the **tarcha** (or **teje**) phobe of the Sercan clan shall provide the drummer.
17. Two men from Marpha helped carry the Bhattacan god. As mentioned earlier, there is a special relationship between the Bhattacan god and the people of Marpha.
18. This order is strictly followed. When the gods were lifted the Sercans

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were not ready, therefore the Bhattacans proceeded to lift their god. However, a lot of people protested, and the Bhattacans had to place their god back and wait until the Sercans were ready.

19. As mentioned earlier, the organizing committee and the priests disagreed about what the priests should receive for their services. Just before the Gaucan priest started the ceremony, the organizing committee informed him that they would present him a turban immediately after the ceremony on behalf of the Thakali community. Since he was allowed to receive only two turbans during the festival (he received the first one from the members of the Gaucan clan on the 2nd day of the festival), they would give him a turban measuring 26 feet that is double the normal length.
20. As mentioned earlier, the Tulacan priest was ritually impure due to his wife's death. He was therefore not allowed to recite in front of the gods.
21. The ceremony took place next to a big rock which is used by children as a slide; it is therefore known as "the slide stone" (**sjolendo yum**).
22. 19th day of the 12th month of the Thakali calendar, corresponding to 24 January 1981.

CYOGI RHAB

The History of the Birth and Arrival of Ke Ani Airam ²

*Oh God, you who know the important things of the past,
please tell us about the important things of the past.*

*Oh God, you who know the important things of the future,
please tell us about the important things of the future.*

*Oh God, you who know the important things of the present,
please tell us about the important things of the present.*

The ancestor (**ke**) Ani Airam was born in the Northwest (**nhupcan**). Ke Ani Airam left the Northwest and reached Balam. Ke Ani Airam left Balam and reached Tocapani. Ke Ani Airam left Tocapani and reached Taulasarka ³. Ke Ani Airam left Taulasarka and reached Sinjapati.

At Sinjapati there was a sandalwood tree with three branches. A man tried to fell the tree. When he struck, the roots dispersed and reached the pastures of the **slrya** cows ⁴. Again he struck, and the roots dispersed and reached the pastures of the **kamdani** cows. Again he struck, and the roots dispersed and reached the pastures of **aikbarnya** cows. Again he struck, and the roots dispersed and reached the pastures of **dharmya** cows. Again he struck, and the roots dispersed and reached the pastures of **malya** cows. Again he struck, and the roots dispersed and reached the pastures of **polpa** cows. Again he struck, and the roots dispersed and reached the pastures of **kallpa** cows. Again he struck, and the roots dispersed and reached the pastures of the **sampa** cows.

After that the herdsman found that the grass on the pastures and the milk from the cows decreased. He found that the calves increased by hundreds and thousands. He found that the milk could not become curd, and that the curd could not become butter. Thus it was told by the herdsman.

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The herdsman prayed to the gods, and from one of the branches of the sandalwood tree flew a red bird. The herdsman prayed to the gods, and from one of the branches of the sandalwood tree flew a blue bird. The herdsman prayed to the gods, and from one of the branches of the sandalwood tree flew a white bird.

The herdsman thought that it was because of the sandalwood tree that the cows gave no milk. Therefore he struck the tree three times with an axe, but the cuts disappeared as soon as they were made. Since it was impossible to cut the tree, the herdsman sent a message to Ke Ani Airam and asked him for help. Thus it was told by the herdsman.

The herdsman got a sword (**patang**) and cut the tree in the downwards and upwards directions, and a red bird flew from one of the branches of the tree. The herdsman got an axe (**namcyatari**) and cut the tree in the upwards direction, and a blue bird flew from one of the branches of the tree. The herdsman got a small axe (**lhabe**) and cut the tree in the downwards direction, and a white bird flew from one of the branches of the tree. In that way the herdsman succeeded to fell the tree. Thus it was told by Ke Ani Airam.

Ke Ani Airam went to the king of divination and asked him what the (red) bird symbolized. "I saw Lha Langba Nhurbu", the king of divination replied.

Ke Ani Airam went to the king of astrology and asked him what the (blue) bird symbolized. "I saw Lha Chyuring Gyalmo", the king of astrology replied.

Ke Ani Airam went to a leading diviner and asked him what the (white) bird symbolized. "I saw Lha Ghangla Singi Karpo", the leading diviner replied.

Ke Ani Airam made offerings to the gods. To Lha Langba Nhurbu he offered milk from the **kamdani** cows. To Lha Chyuring Gyalmo he offered milk from the **slrya** cows. To Lha Langba Nhurbu he offered milk from the **alkbarnya** cows. To Lha Langba Nhurbu he offered milk from the **dharmya** cows. To Lha Chyuring Gyalmo he offered milk from the **sampa**

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cows. To the King of the Gods (**lha ongba gyapcan**) he offered different kinds of milk. To Lha Ghangla Singi Karpo he offered flowers from the landslides. To Lha Ghangla Singi Karpo he offered flowers from the high pastures. To Lha Ghangla Singi Karpo he offered various kinds of flowers. Ke Ani Airam prayed to the Lord of the Gods and left Sinjapati.

From Sinjapati they reached Thasang. Ke Ani Airam called the people of that place **pangk lhepta** because they had bound their long hair around their heads like a turban.

They left Thasang and reached Mu. They intended to cross the mountains, but, when they had climbed high up, fog arose. Ke Ani Airam said, "We cannot find our way in this fog, thus it will be impossible to cross the mountains."

The fog came from the east, and they found it impossible to cross the mountains in that direction. The fog came from the south, and they found it impossible to cross the mountains in that direction. The fog came from the west, and they found it impossible to cross the mountains in that direction. The fog came from the north, and they found it impossible to cross the mountains in that direction. The fog came from the southeast, and they found it impossible to cross the mountains in that direction.

Ke Ani Airam offered a long strip of cloth to the gods. Ke Ani Airam offered pure grain to the gods. Ke Ani Airam offered various kinds of beer to the gods. They asked Lha Langba Nhurbu to stop and send back the fog coming from the east. They asked Lha Chyuring Gyalmo to stop and send back the fog coming from the south. They asked Lha Ghangla Singi Karpo to stop and send back the fog coming from the west. They asked Lha Hyawa Rhangjung to stop and send back the fog coming from the north. They asked Lha Chyuring Gyalmo to stop and send back the fog coming from the southeast.

Ke Ani Airam struck the ground three times with a sword, but they could not cross the mountains. Ke Ani Airam struck the ground three times with an axe, but they could not cross the mountains. Ke Ani Airam struck the ground three times with small axe, but they could not cross the

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mountains. Their teeth were chattering due to the frost, and they could not see anything due to the glare on the snow, and they could not walk further on due to the deep snow. Then Ke Ani Airam said, "It is very difficult to cross these mountains. Let us return since we cannot continue further."

So they returned to Mu. They left Mu and reached Barbung. They left Barbung and reached Ranga Tarang. They left Ranga Tarang and reached Charka. They left Charka and reached Namphre U. Ke Ani Airam named the inhabitants of that village **thorchya khewa**. In that village a man was felling a cypress tree. When Ke Ani Airam asked him what he was doing, the man did not answer but showed him his clothes. In that village a man was making a rope. When Ke Ani Airam asked him what he was doing, the man did not answer but acted dumb.

From Namphre U they reached Sangda. They left Sangda and reached Phalag. Ke Ani Airam named the inhabitants of that village **thorchya khewa** due to their coiffure. Ke Ani Airam found Phalag unsuitable for them so they left that village and reached Thini. Then they went and took a bath in a river which they named Mharshyang Kyu. Afterwards they continued to Ghyatobhra ⁵.

At Ghyatobhra fog arose, so they were unable to find their way. The fog came from the east. The fog came from the south. The fog came from the west. The fog came from the north. The fog came from the south-east. It was then they met Ke Pau Kuti.

Ke Pau Kuti offered a long strip of cloth to the gods. Ke Pau Kuti offered pure grain to the gods. Ke Pau Kuti offered pure beer to the gods. Ke Pau Kuti asked Lha Langba Nhurba to stop and send back the fog coming from the east. Ke Pau Kuti asked Lha Chyuring Gyalmo to stop and send back the fog coming from the south. Ke Pau Kuti asked Lha Ghangla Singi Karpo to stop and send back the fog coming from the west. Ke Pau Kuti asked Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung to stop and send back the fog coming from the north. Ke Pau Kuti asked Lha Chyuring Gyalmo to stop and send back the fog coming from the southeast.

The fog disappeared, and they saw a muskdeer. They sent their hunting dogs after it, and Ke Pau Kuti shot two arrows but could not hit it. The

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muskdeer came to Pangpo, and again they sent the dogs after it. The hunting companion of Ke Pau Kuti shot arrows after the muskdeer but could not hit it. Ke Pau Kuti shot two arrows after the muskdeer but could not hit it. Again they sent the dogs after the muskdeer. The dogs directed the muskdeer towards Ke Pau Kuti who shot two arrows after it. This time he hit and killed the muskdeer. Ke Ani Airam saw this and said that they had killed the muskdeer at Thokangche.

Ke Pau Kuti sent his hunting companion to the river to clean the stomach of the muskdeer. When he had gone, the others hid some of the meat which was going to be divided among the hunters. When the hunting companion returned, he was surprised to see how little meat there was to be divided. He therefore called Ke Pau Kuti **jhyulawa chane ke**⁶ and cursed them that, since they had tried to cheat him, they would also try to cheat their own relatives in the future. Ke Pau Kuti then gave him a share of the meat and told him to leave. Thus it was told by the hunter.

They left Thokangche and reached Tamo. Some of the people of that place had plaited their hair into three braids. Ke Ani Airam asked, "Who are these people?" Jhyulawa Chane Ke replied, "They eat rice of gold and dal of turquoise⁷." Ke Ani Airam thought that they must be the ancestresses of Thatan. Some of the people of that place had divided their hair in three parts, but they had not made any braids. Ke Ani Airam named them the ancestors of Tamo. Ke Ani Airam said that the ancestors of Tamo had founded Thatongkhor and were the ancestors of the Thatan. Ke Ani Airam said that the Thatan first gave their eldest son a house and later to the other sons.

They left Ghyatobhra and reached Tiri. They left Tiri and reached Taglung. Ke Ani Airam named the people of that village **parang purung** and said that they should not stay there since it was an unsuitable place. Then they reached Ghasa. They left Ghasa and reached Dana. They left Dana and reached Ghara. They left Ghara and reached Sikha. They left Sikha and reached Phalate.

At Phalate they lost their way and were stung by nettles. They met a villager whom they asked to show the way, but the man replied, "Go along

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the way.” This stupid answer angered Ke Ani Airam who called the man **rhongsi rhongnak. He then told the others that they should return, and to the people of Phalate he said, “The crop you take in the summer shall not suffice for the winter, and the crop you take in the winter shall not suffice for the summer. You shall be forced to buy grain and eat nettles as your food. You shall be forced to use the fibres of nettle for your clothes which shall be so short that it will not reach below the knees nor below the elbows, and your language shall resemble that of the crow”.**

Then they returned to Sikha, Ghara, Dana and Ghasa and reached Kalopani.

At Kalopani they weighed the water and found that it was most heavy there. They therefore named the place “the mother of black water” (**ama kalopani**). Then they went to Larjung. They left Larjung and reached Nakhung. At Nakhung they weighed the soil and found that it was most heavy there. Then they went to Narsang. They left Narsang and reached Narilhedong. At Narilhedong they weighed the stones and found that they were most heavy there.

“Thatongkor is a very good place, because it has the most heavy water, the most heavy soil, and the most heavy stones,” said Ke Ani Airam and continued, “We will earn fame, if we stay here.”

Ke Ani Airam then said, “It is through the blessings of Lha Langba Nhurbu that we can settle in Narilhedong. Lha Langba Nhurbu is the god who controls the wind blowing from the north and that from the south. It is through the blessings of Lha Chyuring Gyalmo that we can earn fame. Lha Chyuring Gyalmo is the goddess who controls the rain and ensures that it comes at the right time. Lha Ghangla Singi Karpo is the goddess who controls the avalanches.”

Lha Hyawa Rhanggyung arrived in Thatongkor from Kongpo Tsari, and the people worshipped him. Ke Ani Airam said, “Lha Hyawa Rhanggyung is the god who controls the salt. Lha Langba Nhurbu is the god who controls the evil. Lha Chyuring Gyalmo is the goddess who controls the water and who can swim in the Kali Gandaki river. Lha Chyuring Gyalmo

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is the goddess who controls the insects. Lha Ghangla Singi Karpo is the goddess who controls the avalanches. Lha Ghangla Singi Karpo is the goddess who controls the clouds. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung is the god who controls the offsprings of all living beings. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung is the god who controls the fertility of the crops."

The king of the East (Ke Ani Airam) established Lha Langba Nhurbu as his god. The king of the South (Ke Samledhen Samlecyang) established Lha Chyuring Gyalmo as his goddess. The king of the West (Ke Dhakpa Gyalsang) established Lha Ghangla Singi Karpo as his goddess. The king of the North (Ke Pau Kuti) established Hyawa Rhangjyung as his god. The king of the East established Lha Langba Nhurbu as his god, and Lha Langba Nhurbu settled in the east. The king of the South established Lha Chyuring Gyalmo as his goddess, and Lha Chyuring Gyalmo settled in the south. The king of the West established Lha Ghangla Singi Karpo as his goddess, and Lha Ghangla Singi Karpo settled in the west. The king of the North established Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung as his god, and Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung settled in the north. And all the gods settled in the southeast.

The four gods blessed the people so that they could have coins of gold. The four gods blessed the people so that they could have coins of silver. The four gods blessed the people so that they could have turquoise. The four gods blessed the people so that they should not suffer.

Ke Ani Airam was proclaimed the ancestor of Cyogi. Ke Samledhen Samlecyang was proclaimed the ancestor of Salgi. Ke Dhakpa Gyalsang was proclaimed the ancestor of Dhimcan. Ke Dhamchi Dhamru (Ke Pau Kuti) was proclaimed the ancestor of Bhurgi.

In this way the four gods became the gods of the Chan people after they had been established in the four directions. Then they shared the water, the blankets, and the people in four parts. The four clans decided that they should marry among themselves. They decided that the relationship between Ke Ani Airam and Ke Dhakpa Ghyalsang and that between Ke Samledhen Samlecyang and Ke Dhamchi Dhamru should never become

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bad. These decisions were taken at the time the four ancestors were at Narilhedong.

Then they went to Nakhung where Ke Ani Airam prayed to the gods that his descendants become numerous. At Sakarche they made fields and ploughed the soil with a plough of gold.

Ke Ani Airam then said, "Although our birthplace is not the same, we should have the feeling that we have been born in the same place so that we may have good feelings when we gather." Ke Ani Airam then prayed to the gods that they should stay with their people.

Lha Langba Nhurbu proclaimed Ke Ani Airam the ancestor of Cyogi. Lha Chyuring Gyalmo proclaimed Ke Samledhen Samlecyang the ancestor of Salgi. Lha Ghangla Singi Karpo proclaimed Ke Dhakpa Ghyalsang the ancestor of Dhimcan. Lha Hyawa Rhanggyung proclaimed Ke Dhamchi Dhamru the ancestor of Bhurji.

And the people prayed to the gods, "Oh four gods, although our birthplace is different, let us live together remembering that our place of gathering is the same."

Notes

1. The present retelling is an updated version of the one presented in Surendra Gauchan and Michael Vinding, "The History of the Thakaali according to the Thakaali Tradition", *Kallash*, Vol. V. No. 2, 1977.
2. Ke Ani Airam is in the text referred to as **anlmi alleram ke**.
3. I have not been able to identify Balam and Tocapani, but an informant mentions that Taulasarka is the village Taklakot in Tibet at the northwestern corner of Nepal.
4. The name of this and the other cows in the text refers to the particular colour of the cow.

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5. Ghyatobhra is located opposite Tukche.
6. **Jhyulawa chane ke** means literally "the ancestor of the Chan who hides things."
7. This is another of the ancestors' cynical remarks on the inhabitants and cultures of the places they visit. Rice of gold refers to buckwheat porridge (**shangden**) and dal of turquoise to nettle soup - a dish for the poor.

SALGI RHAB

The History of the Origin and Arrival of Lha Chyuring Gyalmo

*Oh goddess, you who know the important things of the past,
please tell us about the important things of the past.*

Lha Chyuring Gyalmo was the queen among the goddesses, and Lha Ongba Gyapcan was the Lord of the gods. The Lord of the Gods created Lha Chyuring Gyalmo and gave her power over the earth, the fire, and the air.

Lha Chyuring Gyalmo came to earth at Sinjapati and lived in a sandalwood tree. The tree had four branches of different origin, which had grown in a period of three years, three months, and three days.

One of the four branches dried out and from that branch a black bird flew to the north. When the bird reached Mt. Kailash, it changed into three hailstones from which Lha Hyawa Rhangjung appeared.

A blue bird flew from one of the branches of the sandalwood tree, and Lha Chyuring Gyalmo appeared due to the activities of the Lord of the Gods. When Lha Chyuring Gyalmo appeared, she was offered milk from the **kamdani** cows. When Lha Chyuring Gyalmo appeared, she was offered milk from the **aikbarnya** cows. When Lha Chyuring Gyalmo appeared, she was offered milk from the **malya**, **polpa**, **dharmya** and **sampa** cows.

Due to the activities of the Lord of the Gods, Lha Chyuring Gyalmo left Sinjapati and reached Pangki Lhepta. Lha Chyuring Gyalmo left Pangki Lhepta and reached Mu. Lha Chyuring Gyalmo left Mu and reached Mt. Dhaulagiri. Lha Chyuring Gyalmo left Mt. Dhaulagiri and reached Dhocho.

When Lha Chyuring Gyalmo arrived at Dhocho, the eighteen ancestors of the eighteen houses of Dhocho recognised her and worshipped her with white, yellow, red, and black sugarcane and prostrated themselves three times in front of her. When Lha Chyuring Gyalmo arrived at Dhocho, the eighteen ancestors of the eighteen houses of Dhocho offered her

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pure beer and different kinds of pure grains and prostrated themselves three times in front of her. When Lha Chyuring Gyalmo arrived at Dhocho, the eighteen ancestors of the eighteen houses of Dhocho offered her milk from the **kamdani, alkbarnya, malya and polpa** cows.

The eighteen ancestors of the eighteen houses of Dhocho begged Lha Chyuring Gyalmo to bless them with jewels, gold, silver, copper, and iron. The eighteen ancestors of the eighteen houses of Dhocho begged Lha Chyuring Gyalmo to bless them so that they could become powerful and their horses fat and strong. When Lha Chyuring Gyalmo blessed the eighteen ancestors of the eighteen houses of Dhocho, they said that she was a speaking goddess, and suggested calling her with prayers. When the eighteen ancestors of the eighteen houses of Dhocho called Lha Chyuring Gyalmo with prayers, she entered their houses in a cloth made of cypress.

The eighteen ancestors of the eighteen houses of Dhocho became very powerful after Lha Chyuring Gyalmo took up residence in their village. When they became powerful, the eighteen ancestors of the eighteen houses of Dhocho cut the legs of the stray yaks. When they became powerful, the eighteen ancestors of the eighteen houses of Dhocho cut the legs of the stray sheep. When they became powerful, the eighteen ancestors of the eighteen houses of Dhocho cut the legs of the stray goats. When they became powerful, the eighteen ancestors of the eighteen houses of Dhocho grabbed the loads from the porters.

When the ancestors of the Thatan saw the eighteen ancestors of the eighteen houses of Dhocho misusing their power, they called a meeting. At the meeting they made a vow to kill the eighteen ancestors of the eighteen houses of Dhocho. The ancestors of Thatan planned to kill the eighteen ancestors of the eighteen houses of Dhocho by inviting them to the worship of the family god (**Iha chyowa**) and serving them poisoned food, beer and liquor. The ancestors of Thatan promised each other not to betray the secret.

The ancestors of Thatan celebrated the worship of the family god and invited the eighteen ancestors of the eighteen houses of Dhocho by

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sending them a pot of beer. The eighteen ancestors of the eighteen houses of Dhocho accepted the invitation and left for the houses of their wife-receivers (**mha**).

On their way they met a priest (**dhom**) at an open meeting place. The priest told the eighteen ancestors of the eighteen houses of Dhocho that in a dream he had seen the ancestors of Thatan putting poison in the food and in the drinks; therefore they should not eat or drink anything.

The eighteen ancestors of the eighteen houses of Dhocho reached the houses of their wife-receivers. The ancestors of Thatan served them food and drinks in a most respectful way. The eighteen ancestors of the eighteen houses of Dhocho did not eat or drink anything but took a little food from each dish and gave it to the dogs. When the eighteen ancestors of the eighteen houses of Dhocho saw the dogs die, they left in great anger. Afterwards the ancestors of Thatan said that they had failed to kill the powerful eighteen ancestors of the eighteen houses of Dhocho.

The ancestors of Thatan again called a meeting to find another way to kill the eighteen ancestors of the eighteen houses of Dhocho. They decided to build a bridge at Larjung and to cut and prepare the wood at the forest Narilhedong. They would flatter the eighteen ancestors of the eighteen houses of Dhocho to place their hands in the cleft of the tree trunk, then remove the wedges, and roll the trunk with the eighteen ancestors of the eighteen houses of Dhocho down the hill. The ancestors of Thatan promised each other not to betray the secret.

Then the ancestors of Thatan politely requested the eighteen ancestors of the eighteen houses of Dhocho to help them build the bridge at Larjung. They flattered them by saying that they were fat and strong like horses and that they were very powerful men. Then they asked them to cut and prepare the wood for the bridge. The ancestors of Thatan requested the eighteen ancestors of the eighteen houses of Dhocho by presenting them pots of beer and scarfs of felicitation (**kata**). The ancestors of Thatan greeted the eighteen ancestors of the eighteen houses of Dhocho and begged them to go. Then the eighteen ancestors of the eighteen houses of Dhocho promised that they would go.

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The youngest ancestor of the eighteen houses of Dhocho said, "I had a dream. I saw the eighteen ancestors of the eighteen houses of Dhocho riding southwards on black horses. (This is a bad omen and) we should therefore not go."

Then grandmother (**mom**) Lhasarphi said, "I also had a dream. I saw the eighteen ancestors of the eighteen houses of Dhocho riding on donkeys facing the opposite direction. (This is a bad omen and) you should therefore not go. The ancestors of Thatan plan to kill you, so please do not go !"

"Who can harm us ? Whom do we fear ? We shall break the head and the mouth of those who try to harm us in two pieces like we do with the head of a goat. We shall break the head and the mouth of those who try to harm us in two pieces like we do with the head of a yak," boasted the eighteen ancestors of the eighteen houses of Dhocho.

Then the eighteen ancestors of the eighteen houses of Dhocho, from the youngest to the eldest, went to cut wood at Narilhedong. The ancestors of Thatan said that they had not been able to split a tree trunk even after having placed wedges into it and requested the eighteen ancestors of the eighteen houses of Dhocho to put their hands into the cleft of the trunk in order to break it. The eighteen ancestors of the eighteen houses of Dhocho placed their hands into the cleft and said that they would break the trunk like they broke the head and the mouth of a goat, a sheep and a yak. When all the eighteen ancestors of the eighteen houses of Dhocho had placed their hands into the cleft, the ancestors of Thatan removed the wedges and rolled the trunk down the hill. Thus the eighteen ancestors of the eighteen houses of Dhocho, from the youngest to the eldest, were killed at Narilhedong.

The ancestors of Thatan returned with music to celebrate their success in killing the eighteen ancestors of the eighteen houses of Dhocho.

(Meanwhile at Dhocho) Mom Lhasarphi said to the other ancestresses of the eighteen houses of Dhocho, "I had a dream. I told them not to go, but they would not listen. Now they are all killed, so let us escape before the ancestors of Thatan come to kill us too."

Salgi Rhab

Instead of listening to Mom Lhasarphi the eighteen ancestresses of the eighteen houses of Dhocho began to weep and cry. Mon Lhasarphi therefore took her grandson (**kuncha**) Bhum and left the village.

When the ancestors of Thatan returned celebrating with music, they saw the eighteen ancestresses of the eighteen houses of Dhocho laying on the ground weeping and crying. The ancestors of Thatan searched the eighteen houses at Dhocho to find out how the eighteen ancestors of the eighteen houses of Dhocho had become so powerful. During the search the ancestors of Thatan discovered Lha Chyuring Gyalmo dressed in cloth of cypress, and they wondered, "What is this ? It is neither a pot, nor a tray, but it has bestowed power to the eighteen ancestors of the eighteen houses of Dhocho; therefore let us break it, let us spear it, let us burn it."

The ancestors of Thatan struck it with nine spears, but they could not spear it. They struck it with nine axes, but they could not break it. They set fire to it with nine heaps of wood, but they could not burn it. The ancestors of Thatan could not find out what it was which was impossible to spear, to cut, and to burn, and they therefore threw it in the Kali Gandaki river.

Lha Chyuring Gyalmo floated down the river and stopped (at the gorge at the hill) Ghayang Ghang. When Lha Chyuring Gyalmo stopped at Ghayang Ghang, the Kali Gandaki changed direction and started to flow northwards to Thabhri bridge and Larjung. The people of the south wondered why the Kali Gandaki was now flowing northwards and threw a handful of rice into the river as an offering. The people of the north and the people of the south sent letters asking why the Kali Gandaki had changed its course.

The ancestors of Thatan consulted the King of Divination, but he was unable to help them. The ancestors of Thatan wondered what it meant since the King of Divination could not help them. Therefore they decided to consult the King of Astrology.

Salgi Rhab

The ancestors of Thatan left Thag and reached Kagbeni. They left Kagbeni and reached the cave Bhote U where they met the Lama astrologer. The ancestors of Thatan prayed to the gods and requested the lama to help them. The lama consulted his astrological charts and told them that it was due to Lha Chyuring Gyalmo (that the Kali Gandaki was flowing northwards). The ancestors of Thatan asked the lama how they should pray and please Lha Chyuring Gyalmo. He told them that Lha Chyuring Gyalmo needed her own people to worship her. Then the ancestors of Thatan left Bhote U and reached Kagbeni. They left Kagbeni and reached Larjung.

At Larjung the ancestors of Thatan started a discussion. During the discussion the ancestors of Thatan discovered that they had not killed Mom Lhasarphi and Koncha Bhum and wondered where they could have disappeared to. They therefore consulted a local astrologer to identify the most suitable person among them to search for Mon Lhasarphi and Koncha Bhum. The astrologer found Ke Pau Kuti the most suitable person for the job.

Ke Pau Kuti took his bow and arrows. The ancestresses of Thatan offered him drinks and wished him success in his undertaking. Ke Pau Kuti offered some beer and prayed that the flowers should turn into fruits.

Ke Pau Kuti left Larjung and reached Poloche. Ke Pau Kuti left Poloche and reached Sape Ghyang. At Sape Ghyang it was becoming dark when suddenly Ke Pau Kuti saw a fire at the holy place Ipsang (on the other side of the river). When Ke Pau Kuti saw the fire at the holy place Ipsang, he took his bow and stuck it in the ground and pointed an arrow in the direction of the fire.

Early the next morning Ke Pau Kuti left Sape Ghyang and reached the hill Ipsang Ghang. Ke Pau Kuti tied white, yellow, red and black ribbons to the branches of a tree and offered pure grains and beer and started to search for the target which he had aimed at the night before. During his search Ke Pau Kuti found a fireplace under a tree. He looked up into the tree and searched the ground but found no one.

Salgi Rhab

When Mom Lhasarphi saw Ke Pau Kuti under the tree, she knew that the eighteen ancestors of the eighteen houses of Dhocho had been killed. When Mom Lhasarphi saw the bow and arrows of Ke Pau Kuti, she assumed that he had come to kill her and Koncha Bhum and started to weep. Some of her tears fell on the hand of Ke Pau Kuti. Ke Pau Kuti was very surprised when a drop of water fell on his hand as there were no clouds in the sky and wondered how this could be. Ke Pau Kuti then saw a piece of Mom Lhasarphi's cloth near the top of the tree and cried, "Oh, Mom Lhasarphi."

With tears in her eyes Mom Lhasarphi said, "You have killed all the eighteen ancestors of the eighteen houses of Dhocho by flattering them, and now you have come with bow and arrows to kill Koncha Bhum and me."

Ke Pau Kuti requested Mom Lhasarphi to climb down, but she refused. Ke Pau Kuti then promised not to kill or harm her and Kuncha Bhum, but Mom Lhasarphi replied, "A promise is not sufficient because you have killed all the eighteen ancestors of the eighteen houses of Dhocho by flattering them."

When Mom Lhasarphi refused to come down, Ke Pau Kuti swore to her that he would obey her and not destroy their belongings. Then Mom Lhasarphi agreed to come down.

(When Mom Lhasarphi had come down) Ke Pau Kuti asked her, "Where is your grandson?" Mom Lhasarphi replied, "I do not know where he is."

Ke Pau Kuti swore that he would not harm Koncha Bhum, and Mom Lhasarphi then showed him a tree under which Koncha Bhum was hidden. Ke Pau Kuti went there and brought back Koncha Bhum.

Ke Pau Kuti begged Mom Lhasarphi and Koncha Bhum to return with him. Mom Lhasarphi refused and told Ke Pau Kuti that he should keep his word, and named him '(He who has) promised to keep an oath' (**dhamchi dhamru**).

When Ke Dhamchi Dhamru realised that they refused to go, he explained,

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“In the houses of the eighteen ancestors of the eighteen houses of Dhocho we found something which was dressed in a cloth of cypress. We tried to break it, but we could not break it. We tried to spear it, but we could not spear it. We tried to burn it, but we could not burn it. When we could not find out what it was, we threw it in the Kali Gandaki river. The river carried it down to Ghayang Ghang where it stopped. After that the river started to flow northwards and reached the bridge at Thabhri and Larjung. We consulted the King of Astrology who found out that it was due to Lha Chyuring Gyalmo. When we asked him how to pray to Lha Chyuring Gyalmo, he told us that she needed her own people to worship her. Therefore, I beg you to come. You can choose between a large vessel of gold or a tray of silver but please come.”

Mom Lhasarphi replied, “I do not want a vessel of gold nor a tray of silver - I want the holy place Ipsang.” Ke Dhamchi Dhamru then established the boundaries from the cave Ipsaang U to the river Kali Gandaki and from the hill Katau Ghang to the river Kamdhyanu Kyu.

Afterwards Mom Lhasarphi said, “The relationship between the clan of Samledhen Samlecyang and the clan of Dhamchi Dhamru shall never break.” In this way they made an agreement.

Mom Lhasarphi left Ipsang and reached Tikabang. Mom Lhasarphi left Tikabang and reached Katau Ghang. At Katau Ghang Mom Lhasarphi and Koncha Bhum refused to continue, so Ke Dhamchi Dhamru promised her, “Your clan shall be the only one permitted to wear the red turban (**sale tote**) and the **dhar** turban (**dhare tote**).”

(After this promise) Mom Lhasarphi and Koncha Bhum left Katau Ghang and reached Kalopani. They left Kalopani and reached Ghayang Ghang. At Ghayang Ghang Ke Dhamchi Dhamru requested Mom Lhasarphi to pray to Lha Chyuring Gyalmo, but she said, “Since I am mourning the death of the eighteen ancestors of the eighteen houses of Dhocho, I cannot put a mark on my forehead (**tika**) and red strings in my hair. Hence, I cannot pray to Lha Chyuring Gyalmo during this period of mourning.”

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Ke Dhamchi Dhamru then gave his word that the ancestors of Thatan would take over the mourning of the eighteen ancestors of the eighteen houses of Dhocho. He placed a turban on the head of Koncha Bhum and presented Mom Lhasarphi a shawl with prints of berries and red strings for her hair and placed a mark on the forehead of them both.

Afterwards Mom Lhasarphi prayed to Lha Chyuring Gyalmo, "The ancestors of Thatan did not kill the eighteen ancestors of the eighteen houses of Dhocho because (they resented) their superhuman power. It is said that the ancestors of Thatan flattered them and insisted that they place their hands in the cleft of the trunk and that the ancestors of Thatan then removed the wedges and rolled the trunk down the hill. This is not true. They have not killed the eighteen ancestors of the eighteen houses of Dhocho in this way."

Mom Lhasarphi got tears in her eyes when she recalled that the eighteen ancestors of the eighteen houses of Dhocho, from the eldest to the youngest, all had been killed. She continued, however, her prayer, "Oh Lha Chyuring Gyalmo, please come out. The king of Lo (Mustang) has asked in a letter why the river Kali Gandaki is now flowing northwards. And the people of the south have offered a handful of rice asking the same question. Therefore I beg you to come out."

Mom Lhasarphi held out her shawl and said to Lha Chyuring Gyalmo, "I, Mom Lhasarphi, and Koncha Bhum shall obey you and not make any mistakes so please come out. My clan shall obey and serve you so please come out !"

Koncha Bhum worshipped Lha Chyuring Gyalmo with white, yellow, red and black ribbons and pure grain saying, "offering offering" (**chyo chyo**). With tears in her eyes Mom Lhasarphi offered holy beer saying, "offering offering" and begged Lha Chyuring Gyalmo to come into her shawl. After Mom Lhasarphi had held out her shawl and prayed with tears in her eyes, Lha Chyuring Gyalmo came into her shawl and the river Kali Gandaki started to flow again.

They left Ghayang Ghang and reached Dhocho. When they reached

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Dhocho, Mom Lhasarphi said with tears in her eyes and Lha Chyuring Gyalmo in her shawl, "Although we could not meet at our birthplace, let us meet at our gathering place." Mom Lhasarphi remembered with tears in her eyes and Lha Chyuring Gyalmo in her shawl that Dhocho was the village where the eighteen ancestors of the eighteen houses of Dhocho had lived. Mom Lhasarphi remembered with tears in her eyes and Lha Chyuring Gyalmo in her shawl that Dhocho was the village where the eighteen ancestresses of the eighteen houses of Dhocho had lived.

They left Dhocho and reached Larjung. They left Larjung and reached Nakhung. In Thatongkhor the three most important things (stones, soil and water) are all available. The villagers of Thatongkhor welcomed Lha Chyuring Gyalmo with prayers and the goddess who was dressed in cloth of cypress took up residence there. The ancestors of Thatan had established themselves in Thatongkhor because this was the place where name and fame could be obtained.

Ke Ani Airam established Lha Langba Nhurbu as his god. Ke Samledhen Samlecyang established Lha Chyuring Gyalmo as his goddess. Ke Dhakpa Gyalsang established Lha Gangla Singi Karpo as his goddess. Ke Dhamchi Dhamru established Lha Hyawa Rhangjung as his god.

Lha Langba Nhurbu is the god who controls the winds blowing from the north and from the south. Lha Chyuring Gyalmo is the goddess who controls rainfall and ensures that it comes at the right time. Lha Ghangla Singi Karpo is the goddess who controls the avalanches. Lha Hyawa Rhangjung is the god who controls (the trade route of) the salt and the grain and ensures that there are sufficient supplies. The four gods live (in Thatongkhor) to prevent tragedies and strife. The four gods live there to control the witches and the demons of the dead. The four gods live there to upkeep the position of the ruler.

The people prayed, "Oh four gods, please bless us so that we can swim in the current of the Kali Gandaki river. Oh four gods, please protect us against avalanches. Oh four gods, please protect the offspring of all living beings. Oh four gods, please protect us against the serpents (lu), so that they do no harm. Oh four gods, please control the insects. Oh four gods,

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please send rainfall at the required time."

It is Lha Langba Nhurbu who lives in the East. It is Lha Chyuring Gyalmo who lives in the South. It is Lha Gangla Singi Karpo who lives in the West. It is Lha Hyawa Rhangjung who lives in the North. It is the four gods who lives in the Southeast.

And the people prayed to the gods, "Oh four gods, please bless us so that we can have coins of gold. Oh four gods, please bless us so that we can have coins of silver. Oh four gods, please bless us so that we can have coins of copper. Oh four gods, please bless us so that we can have coins of iron."

BHURGI RHAB

The History of the Birth and Arrival of Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung

*Oh God, you who know the important things of the past,
please tell us about the important things of the past.*

In ancient time there was no earth and no sky. There were no directions. There were no kings and no wars. There were no high priests and no ordinary priests. There were no masters and no servants. There were no hot season and no cold season.

The Lotus Born Teacher originated in ancient time ¹. He was born in a lotus flower and ordered that worship should take place. At that time there were preachings by the Lotus Born from Uddiyana.

In ancient time a hard substance originated. A hole originated in the hard substance. Water originated in the hole. Blue colour originated over the water. Ice originated over the blue colour. Soil originated on the ice. The northern wind carried the soil towards the south, and the southern wind carried the soil towards the north. In this way nine layers of soil originated. Grass appeared on the seventh, the eighth, and the ninth layer of the soil. The northern wind blew towards the south, and the southern wind blew towards the north. Soil originated in the upper as well as in the lower part and in the northern as well as in the southern part.

Khorlok, the king of the sky, originated. Tapkya, the king of the soil, originated. Somsur, the king of the mountains, originated. Sibsur, the king of the directions, originated. The directions, the kings, the battles, the high priests, the ordinary priest, the masters, and the servants originated. Houses and villages originated. As the houses originated, grandfather, father, son and grandson, and grandmother, mother and daughter originated. Thus it was told by Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung.

“Oh God, we have understood the history of creation. Oh God, please tell us about the birth and arrival of Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung.”

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So Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung explained the history about his birth and arrival.

The Lord of the Gods appeared in the human world for the protection of the human beings. The Lord of the Gods had the power over the earth, the fire, and the wind. Blessings were given, and the gods of the five elements appeared for the welfare of the human beings.

On the Earth the soil of Sinjapati was protected. Among the trees the sandalwood was protected. In the soil of Sinjapati there originated a sandalwood tree with four branches of different origin. Blessings were given for the protection of the four branches.

During a period of three years, three months, and three days, one of the four branches dried out, and from it a black bird flew towards the Northern Plain (in Tibet) for the protection of that area. When the black bird reached the Northern Plain, it turned into three hailstones.

Due to the activities of the Lord of the Gods, a nun called Lhamo stayed in religious retreat in front of Mt. Kailash and behind Lake Manasarovar. During her retreat nun Lhamo prayed to the Lord of the Gods. Due to the activities of the Lord of the Gods three hailstones fell in front of nun Lhamo on a day with a clear sky. Nun Lhamo took and swallowed the three hailstones, and after nine months she gave birth to a piece of flesh. Nun Lhamo felt ashamed of having given birth and threw the flesh into Lake Manasarovar.

When nun Lhamo threw the flesh into the lake, the Lord of the Gods took the incarnation of a white female fish in order to protect the flesh. The Lord of the North took the incarnation of a red female fish in order to protect the flesh. The Lord of the West took the incarnation of a yellow and black female fish to protect the flesh.

After Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung was born as a piece of flesh and thrown into Lake Manasarovar, he started to grow in all directions. During his stay in Lake Manasarovar, bones appeared. During his stay in Lake Manasarovar, flesh appeared on the bones. During his stay in Lake

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Manasarovar, skin over the flesh appeared. During his stay in Lake Manasarovar, hair appeared on the skin. After the god was born, beautiful front legs appeared. After the god was born, beautiful back legs appeared. After the god was born, teeth as good as those of a mother yak appeared. After the god was born, wool as good as that of a sheep appeared. After the god was born, long ears appeared.

After the god was born, he looked like a one-year old yak after only one day. After the god was born, he looked like a two-year old yak after only two days. After the god was born, he looked like a three-year old yak after only three days. After the god was born, horns appeared when he moved his head. After the god was born, long hair on the lower part of the body appeared when he moved his legs. After the god was born, a tail appeared. After the god was born, white spots on his forehead and on his back appeared. In this way Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung originated without parents.

Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung left Lake Manasarovar. When Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung came out of the lake, the yak herdsman of the King of Ghukul Whor caught a glimpse of the god. When he heard the description of the beautiful yak, the King of Ghukul Whor became eager to see it himself. When he saw the yak with the white spots on the forehead and along the back, the King said that the yak was self-created and prostrated himself three times in front of it.

Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung went and lived in the Nhakchimhe Forest. The yak herd of the King of Ghukul Whor increased by hundreds and thousands. During his stay in the forest, Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung drank the milk of the serpent. During his stay in the forest, Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung drank the milk of the forest tiger. During his stay in the forest, Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung drank the milk of the self-created deer. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung drank the pure water from the lake of the salt mine. The self-created god had a bright face with white spots on the forehead and along the back.

Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung ate 'the grass like hair' on the pastures of Mt. Kailash. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung ate 'the golden grass' on the pastures

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of Mt. Kailash. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung ate 'the grass like lentils' on the pastures of Mt. Kailash. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung rolled and cried "hur hur" three times on the pastures of Mt. Kailash. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung ate different kinds of flowers at Shangke Kambu near Mt. Kailash. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung ate the green grass and drank the blue water at Langchen Khambu near Mt. Kailash. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung ate the green grass and drank the blue water at Maja Khambu near Mt. Kailash.

Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung came to the slopes of Tulachya at Tachyo Khambu near Mt. Kailash. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung left Tachyo Khambu and reached Nhortyeling. During his stay at Nhortyeling, Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung discovered a salt mine with salt pure as crystal. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung ate the first of the salt pure as crystal and blessed the people so that they should have sufficient salt.

Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung left Nhortyeling and reached Tormaling. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung took the first of the salt from the saltmine, and blessed the people so that they should have sufficient gold.

Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung left Tormaling and reached Bhongpa Sinte Sinme. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung left Bhongpa Sinte Sinme and reached Bhongpa Dhose for the welfare of the people of that place. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung blessed the people so that they could have valuable mines with jewels, gold, silver, copper and iron.

Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung left Bhongpa Dhose and reached Mharme Chakha of the North. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung ate the first of the salt from the salt mine and blessed the place so that people can have sufficient salt.

Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung left Mharme Chakha and reached lake Nam Tsho of the North for the welfare of that place. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung blessed the place so that it could have eighteen big and eighteen small lakes. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung ate the green grass and drank the blue water near the lake and blessed the place so that the grass should be nutritious.

Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung left lake Nam Tsho and reached Nhakcham.

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Rhochedhalab, the owner of the salt mine, caught a glimpse of the god and thought that Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung was the god who blessed the world with salt and prostrated himself three times. When he saw the god's white spot on the forehead and along the back, the owner of the salt mine thought that Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung was The Self-Created Wild Yak and prostrated himself three times. When he saw the god's long legs, the owner of the salt mine thought that Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung was The Lord of the Yaks and prostrated himself three times. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung ate the green grass and drank the blue water at Nhakcham and blessed the place so that the grass could be nutritious. (Afterwards) the number of wild animals and yaks increased by hundreds and thousands.

Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung left Nhakcham and reached Upper Tsangpo. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung left Upper Tsangpo by crossing the middle of the river and reached Tanaka Thukten. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung ate the green grass and drank the blue water and blessed the place so that the grass could become nutritious.

Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung left Tanaka Thukten and reached Rhongchen Rhongchyung for the welfare of the people of that village. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung ate the crop from all eighty-eight fields so that nothing was left and blessed the fields so that the yield could increase.

Lha Hyawa Rhanjyung left Rhongchen Rhongchyung and reached Lhasa for the welfare of the people of that place. At Potala Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung blessed the Great King (the Dalai Lama) so that he could be on his throne of gold for the welfare of the people of Tibet. At Potala Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung blessed The Victorious Precious Thing (the Dalai Lama) so that he could be on his throne of silver for the welfare of the people of Tibet. At Potala Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung blessed The Victorious Precious Thing so that he could be on his throne of turquoise for the welfare of the people of Tibet. When Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung left Potala, he blessed the Great King who works for the welfare of the people of Tibet.

Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung zigzagged through a river and reached Samya for the welfare of the people of that place. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung gave

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blessings by moving his horns, his legs, and his tail with long hair. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung left Samya and reached Kongpo Tsari for the welfare of the people of that place ² .

When Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung reached the pastures of Kongpo Tsari, he lost his way due to snowfall, and he therefore made a new path by crossing nine mountains and nine passes. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung wandered around the pastures of Kongpo Tsari three times, eating the king of grasses. When Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung ate the king of grasses, he saw mountains beyond any description ³ . Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung became fat by eating the king of grasses and rolled three times crying "hur-hur". Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung wandered around the pastures of Kongpo Tsari three times, eating the green grass and drinking the blue water. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung ate various kinds of flowers and gave blessings. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung wandered around the pastures of Kongpo Tsari three times, ate the leaves of various kinds of trees and gave blessings. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung ate 'the grass like eyelashes' on the pastures of Kongpo Tsari. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung ate 'the grass like hair' on the pastures of Kongpo Tsari. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung ate 'the golden grass' on the pastures of Kongpo Tsari. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung ate 'the grass like lentils' on the pastures of Kongpo Tsari. When he had finished eating on the pastures of Kongpo Tsari, Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung rolled three times and cried "hur-hur". Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung shook his legs and body three times.

Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung ate the grass on the pastures of Kongpo Tsari in the downwards direction. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung ate the grass on the pastures of Kongpo Tsari in the upwards direction. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung ate the crops of the fields of Kongpo Tsari in the downwards direction. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung ate the crops of the fields of Kongpo Tsari in the upwards direction.

The people of Kongpo Tsari wondered what had happened since the crops would not grow. Four high and four ordinary people of Kongpo Tsari met to discuss the matter. The people of Kongpo Tsari said that it was a bad time since the crop had been trampled. The people of Kongpo Tsari

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said that it was a bad time since the yield of the crops was low. The people of Kongpo Tsari said that it was a bad time since the number of houses could not increase.

The people of Kongpo Tsari shot arrows nine times at Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung, but they could not hit him. The people of Kongpo Tsari shot with guns nine times at Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung, but they could not hit him. The people of Kongpo Tsari shot stones from catapults nine times at Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung, but they could not hit him. The people of Kongpo Tsari shot with different weapons nine times at Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung, but they could not hit him.

The people of Kongpo Tsari then threw nine lassos in the downwards direction after Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung. The people of Kongpo Tsari threw nine lassos in the upwards direction after Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung. The people of Kongpo Tsari dug nine holes and trapped Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung inside them. In order to keep Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung in captivity, the people of Kongpo Tsari established over him a white, a yellow, a red and a black reliquary monument (**chyorten**) in the four directions, and nine monuments in the centre.

The northern and the southern winds started to blow to the surprise of the people of Kongpo Tsari. The wind from the south blew during the day and during the night like the burning fire, pressing the people of Kongpo Tsari towards the north. The wind from the north blew during the day and during the night like the burning fire, pressing the people of Kongpo Tsari towards the south.

The people of Kongpo Tsari could not understand what was happening. Therefore they consulted the King of Divination who told them that it was due to the activities of Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung. The people of Kongpo Tsari consulted the King of Astrology who also told them that it was due to the activities of Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung.

When nine reliquary monuments were erected over Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung, nine earthquakes hit the place due to his great anger. When nine reliquary monuments were erected over Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung

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and nine tremors had taken place, the earth cracked in nine places due to his great anger. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung dug free the front part of his body by moving his horns. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung dug free the back part of his body by moving his tail. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung freed himself completely by moving his legs with the long hair.

The people of Kongpo Tsari repented that they had shot arrows nine times at Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung whom they had not recognized. The people of Kongpo Tsari repented that they had shot with guns nine times at Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung whom they had not recognized. The people of Kongpo Tsari repented that they had shot with catapults nine times at Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung whom they had not recognized. The people of Kongpo Tsari repented that they had trapped Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung whom they had not recognized, in nine holes.

The people of Kongpo Tsari prayed to Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung who was sitting on a throne of gold and begged him to bless the high priests. The people of Kongpo Tsari prayed to Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung who was sitting on a throne of silver and begged him to bless the king. The people of Kongpo Tsari prayed to and prostrated themselves in front of Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung who was sitting on a throne of turquoise and begged him to bless the crops in the fields. The people of Kongpo Tsari prayed to Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung who was sitting on a throne of copper and begged him to increase their wealth. The people of Kongpo Tsari prayed to Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung who was sitting on a throne of iron and begged him to let the good times increase.

Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung told the people of Kongpo Tsari that they had done useless work by shooting with guns at him nine times and that they had to face the consequences. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung told the people of Kongpo Tsari that they had done useless work by shooting with arrows after him nine times and that they had to face the consequences. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung told the people of Kongpo Tsari that they had done useless work by shooting stones from catapults after him nine times and that they had to face the consequences. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung told the people of Kongpo Tsari that they had done useless work by erecting nine

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reliquary monuments over him and that they had to face the consequences. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung said that Kongpo Tsari was not a suitable place for him to live and that one could not earn fame there. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung said that the people of Kongpo Tsari who were born in different places but living in the same place had done useless work.

Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung left Kongpo Tsari and reached Komchyang. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung ate the green grass and drank the blue water at the pastures of Komchyang. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung left Komchyang and reached Wiri Bharkor. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung ate various kinds of grasses at the pastures of Wiri Bharkor. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung drank the pure water at the high pass at Wiri Bhakor. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung left the high pass at Wiri Bharkor, crossed the Tsangpo river against the current, and reached Sakya. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung left Sakya and reached the Northern Plain where he blessed the grass so that it could be nutritious. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung left the Northern Plain and reached Tradum and Ligtse. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung left Tradum and Ligtse and reached the Chokor Plain where he ate the green grass and drank the blue water. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung left the Chokor Plain and reached the Kore pass where he ate the green grass and drank the blue water. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung left the Kore pass and reached Necyung. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung left Necyung and reached the royal town of Mustang.

When Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung arrived at Mustang, he ate the grass in the big fields in the upwards direction so nothing was left. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung ate the grass in the big fields in the downwards direction so nothing was left. When Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung was eating the grass in the upwards direction, the people of Mustang shot nine arrows at him. When Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung was eating the grass in the downwards direction, the people of Mustang shot with nine guns at him. The people of Mustang wondered who Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung was since they could not hit him with nine weapons. Dhorche Lhadha, the salt owner, arrived from the north and told the people that it was due to Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung that they had sufficient salt. Dhorche Lhadha then bowed down to the prefect Tashi Shangpa.

Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung left Mustang and reached the pastures at Hircha

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where he ate the green grass and drank the blue water. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung left Hircha and reached Jhyoma Ghaldhi where he ate the green grass and drank the blue water. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung left Jhyomo Ghaldhi and reached Tramar where he ate the green grass and drank the blue water. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung left Tramar and reached Jhaidhin where he ate the green grass and drank the blue water. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung left Jhaidhin and reached Geling where he ate the grass and drank the pure water. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung left Geling and reached Sochyungpar Ghyamadhen where he ate the green grass and drank the blue water.

Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung left Sochyungpar Ghyamadhen and crossed the Kali Gandaki river in the direction of the current. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung reached Tetang where he ate the first of the crystal salt. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung reached Muktinath where he met the big god and started to cry. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung then reached the place where the fire burns over the water, the stone, and the soil. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung reached the pastures at Dhanggho where he ate the green grass and drank the blue water. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung left that place and reached the pastures at Lubra where he ate the green grass and drank the blue water.

Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung left that place and reached the pastures at Garab Jhong of Thini where he ate 'the grass like hair' in the upwards direction and drank the pure water. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung reached (the holy place) Namahung (above Thini) where he ate the green grass and drank the blue water. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung reached Meso Kantu pass where he ate 'the grass like gold' in the upwards direction and drank the pure water. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung reached the pastures of Lake Tilicho where he ate 'the grass like gold' and drank the blue water of the lake.

Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung left Thini and reached Pholasa where he ate 'the grass like hair' and 'the grass like eyelashes' in the upwards direction and drank the pure water. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung then reached Marche pastures where he rolled three times crying "hur-hur". Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung reached Mharshyang river where he bathed and drank the water nine times, thinking that it was holy water.

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Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung left the Mharshyang river and reached Gyatoe Nanamkhor where he ate the green grass. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung left Gyatoe Nanamkhor and reached Pangpo where he ate the green grass and drank the pure water. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung left Palang Blhen (near Sauru) and reached a pasture where he ate the green grass and drank the pure water. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung then reached the lake at Tiri where he drank the pure water.

Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung left the lake at Tiri and reached the Nupsang pasture where he ate the green grass and drank the pure water. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung then reached Tengintong where he ate the green grass and drank the pure water.

Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung crossed the Kali Gandaki river and reached the pastures at Pengke Kongke where he ate the grass in the upwards and the downwards directions.

It was Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung against whom nine arrows were shot but could not be hit. It was Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung against whom nine guns were shot but could not be hit. It was Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung against whom nine stones from catapults were shot but could not be hit. It was Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung against whom nine weapons were shot but could not be hit.

The prefect Tashi Shangpa of Mustang said that Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung had gone to Thasang. The people of Lo (Mustang) offered a handful of salt to Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung when they came on business to Thasang.

Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung ate the green grass and drank the pure water of Salang Syulung. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung reached Bongadho where he ate the green grass and drank the pure water. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung reached the pastures of Ipsang where he rolled three times, crying "hur-hur". Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung left Ipsang and reached Dhyuta which he thought was the border between the North and the South.

Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung left Dhyuta and reached the holy waterfall at Rupse. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung drank twice from the water. While he was drinking, Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung met Ke Ani Airam. Ke Ani Airam said

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that Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung had protected the Northern Plain through his blessings and had taken the first of the salt from the salt mines of the Northern Plain.

At that time Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung met Lha Langba Nhurbu at the holy waterfall at Rupse. At that time Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung met Lha Chyuring Gyalmo at the holy waterfall at Rupse. At that time Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung met Lha Gangla Singi Karpo at the holy waterfall at Rupse. At that time Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung met Ke Samledhen Samlecyan at the holy waterfall at Rupse. At that time Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung met Ke Dhakpa Gyalsang at the holy waterfall at Rupse. At that time Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung met Ke Pau Kuti at the holy waterfall at Rupse.

Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung said that the waterfall of Rupse was the place where Lha Langba Nhurbu, Lha Chyuring Gyalmo, Lha Gangla Singi Karpo, and the four ancestors had met.

Ke Ani Airam said that Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung came from the Northern Plain which he had protected through his blessing. Ke Samledhen Samlecyang said that Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung had taken the first of the salt from the salt mines in the Northern Plain. Ke Dhakpa Ghyalsang said that Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung had taken the pure salt from the salt mines. Ke Pau Kuti prostrated himself three times in front of Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung and said that Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung was his protector and it was due to him that they could meet at the gathering place.

The four ancestors said that although they could not meet at their birthplace, they could meet at their place of gathering. The four ancestors said that the gods had come for the protection of Narilhedong.

At the time when there was a clear sky, the four ancestors requested the four gods to visit the village headman Dhorche for the protection of that place. The four ancestors and the four gods left the waterfall at Rupse and reached the (cliff called) Monkey Fortress (**bandar jhong**). The four ancestors and the four gods left the Monkey Fortress and reached Ghasa. The four ancestors and the four gods left Ghasa and reached the pastures at Ipsang. The four ancestors and the four gods left the pastures

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at Ipsang and reached the holy place Bonga. The four ancestors and the four gods left Bonga and reached the Bara pasture. The four ancestors and the four gods left the Bara pasture and Bara Som. The four ancestors and the four gods left Bara Som and reached Mt. Dhaulagiri.

Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung rolled three times in the pastures of Mt. Dhaulagiri, crying "hur-hur". Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung saw the village headman Dhorche of Thasang. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung said that among the lakes, Bhutar Lake was the most valuable one. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung said the three (important) things (stones, water and soil) could all be found in Thatongkhor. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung said the Lord of Gods had sent them to Thatongkhor. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung said that Thatongkhor was a proper place which the gods would protect. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung said that Thatongkhor was the place where the ancestors should establish their houses and villages.

Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung lived at the big pastures of Mt. Dhaulagiri for three years. At the pastures Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung ate 'the grass like gold'. At the pastures Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung ate 'the grass like eyelashes'. At the pastures Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung ate 'the grass like lentils'. At the pastures Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung ate 'the grass like hair'. At the pastures Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung ate various kinds of grasses. At the pastures Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung drank the holy water. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung lived at the upper, middle, and lower parts of Mt. Dhaulagiri, eating the holy grass and drinking the holy water.

At the time when Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung was living in the upper, middle and lower part of Mt. Dhaulagiri, the Lord of the Gods appeared before him. The Lord of the Gods ordered that the body of Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung should not die there. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung asked the Lord of the Gods where his body then should die. The Lord of the Gods ordered Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung to go to the big pastures at the holy Shyassen Forest (above Marpha). The Lord of the Gods ordered Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung that he must not be seen by men on his way to the Shyassen Forest. The Lord of the Gods ordered Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung to go to the Shyassen Forest where various kinds of healthy plants were available. After the Lord of the

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Gods had given these orders, Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung prostrated himself in front of him three times.

Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung left Mt. Dhaulagiri and reached Hyata Ghang. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung left Hyata Ghang and reached Palangpoti. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung left Palangpoti and reached the pastures at Ngyalang Shang. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung left the pastures at Ngyalang Shang and reached the Shyasen Forest.

Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung lived for three years at the pastures at the Shyasen Forest without hearing human voices. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung lived for three years at the pastures at the Shyasen Forest without hearing the barking of dogs. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung lived for three years at the pastures at the Shyasen Forest by eating the green grass and drinking the holy water.

Namchya Gholtok went with his hunting dogs and bow and arrows to hunt forest leopards. Namchya Gholtok took other villagers with him, saying that they were going to hunt deer. While pursuing a forest leopard, Namchya Gholtok caught a glimpse of Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung at the Shyasen Forest. Namchya Gholtok said that it was a dangerous, but a very beautiful yak which he would like to kill.

Namchya Gholtok sent his dogs after the yak, but they could not catch Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung, and instead they returned and bit Namchya Gholtok. Namchya Gholtok shot nine arrows at Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung, but the arrows returned and hit himself instead. Namchya Gholtok wondered what it was which the dogs could not catch and the arrows could not hit. Namchya Gholtok wondered what it was which was impossible to catch and to kill. Namchya Gholtok said that he had failed to kill the yak, but he would try again the next day.

When Namchya Gholtok arrived back in Marpha, he called a meeting and proposed that the next day the villagers should go to Shyasen Forest to kill the yak. Namchya Gholtok said that they should not fail to kill the yak, and he therefore suggested that villagers possessing guns should bring them along while others should bring their bow and arrows.

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The ancestor of the Ghumtan clan (Gumtan Ke) said that these were the activities of a god, and that they therefore should not try to kill the yak by shooting with guns and arrows after it. The ancestor of the Ghumtan clan prostrated himself three times, saying that Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung was the one whom they could not force to run away and whom they could not catch.

Namchya Gholtok did not agree with the ancestor of the Ghumtan clan and said that they should not fail to kill the yak the next day. The villagers of Marpha gathered to plan the hunt. Namchya Gholtok suggested that villagers possessing guns, spears, bows and arrows, and other kinds of weapons should bring them for the hunt. Namchya Gholtok suggested that they should start the hunt early the next morning.

The next morning all villagers went hunting led by Namchya Gholtok.

At Shyasen Forest the villagers encircled the yak and shot with nine guns, nine arrows, and nine different kinds of weapons at it, but they could not kill Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung.

In order to show his might and using his power, Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung cried "hur-hur" three times. To show his might and using his power, Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung sent flames from his mouth burning the people surrounding him. To show his might and using his power, Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung rolled three times and the earth shook and the hunters were all thrown to the ground. To show his might and using his power Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung spread the long hair on his belly and his tail, and a heavy hailstorm appeared from the clear sky.

The hunters tried to escape from the heavy hailstones. While trying to escape, some fell down from rocks and died. While trying to escape, some fell in the forest and died. Others were thrown to the ground and could not escape.

When all this happened, Namchya Gholtok repented what they had done and said that their troubles were due to them shooting at Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung with arrows and that they would have to bear the conse-

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quences. The hunters said that their troubles were due to them shooting with guns at Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung and that they would have to bear the consequences. Namchya Gholtok prostrated himself in front of Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung and begged him to stop the hailstorm. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung then swept the darkness away from the sky.

Now that Namchya Gholtok and the other hunters had gotten back their senses, Gumtan Ke prostrated himself in front of Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung and begged him to say what the villagers of Marpha should do to make amends. Gumtan Ke prostrated himself in front of Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung three times and begged him to be happy and to shine like nine suns.

When Gumtan Ke repented, Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung said that they could not escape from their sin of shooting with nine guns after him. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung said that they could not escape from their sin of shooting with nine arrows and nine other weapons after him.

Gumtan Ke prostrated himself in front of Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung several times and begged him not to punish them for their sinful actions. After Gumtan Ke had prostrated himself in front of him several times, Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung ordered that they should never disobey his orders and that they would have to make a promise to this effect. Gumtan Ke then swore that they would obey the orders of Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung until that day the Kali Gandaki river started to flow upwards. Gumtan Ke swore that they would obey the orders of Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung until that day the black crow turned white.

Afterwards Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung said that among the four gods of the five elements, he was the one who originated from the element of air. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung said that he was an incarnation of the Black Protective Deity. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung said that he was the self-created male yak. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung said that he was the guardian of Ke Pau Kuti. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung said that he would not disobey the orders of the Lord of the Gods and that his body was destined to die there. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung said that they should eat the flesh of his body because it would make them strong. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung ordered that they should not break their promise to him for centuries to come.

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Gumtan Ke promised that they would not break their promise to Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung for centuries to come. Gumtan Ke said that in case they broke their promise, the gods of the world above would destroy them. Gumtan Ke said that in case they broke their promise, the **chan** deities of this world would destroy them. Gumtan Ke said that in case they broke their promise, the serpent spirits of the world below would destroy them.

After Gumtan Ke had made these promises and taken the gods as his witnesses, Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung said that he would go to the Shyansen Forest Cave to die. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung ordered Gumtan Ke to take his flesh and bones, and give the flesh as an offering to the villagers. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung ordered Gumtan Ke to present his head to Khunara, the son of Ke Pau Kuti. Gumtan Ke promised to do so, and Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung went to the Shyansen Forest Cave and died there.

After Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung had gone to the Shyansen Forest Cave and died, Gumtan Ke caught a glimpse of flames over the god's dead body. Gumtan Ke saw a rainbow over the god's dead body and prostrated himself three times. When he did this, the flames and the rainbow disappeared.

Gumtan Ke took the head of Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung and kept it in the cave where it was surrounded by flames and a rainbow. Gumtan Ke worshipped Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung by offering various kinds of water. Gumtan Ke worshipped Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung by offering various kinds of milk. Gumtan Ke worshipped Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung by offering various kinds of flowers. Gumtan Ke worshipped Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung by offering various kinds of foodgrain. Gumtan Ke worshipped Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung by offering holy beer.

Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung was very pleased with the worship of Gumtan Ke and therefore sent a good dream to him. In the dream Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung told Gumtan Ke that he would protect him as long as he continue to worship him. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung told Gumtan Ke that his descendants and those of Ke Dhamchi Dhamru, the ancestor of Thatan, should obey the promises which they had made; otherwise they would have to bear the consequences. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung ordered Gumtan

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Ke to present his head to Khunara, the second of Ke Dhamchi Dhamru's three sons, on the third day of the twelfth month. In the dream of Gumtan Ke, Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung said that those who disobeyed his orders would have no descendants, their wealth would be destroyed, and their work would be unsuccessful.

After having had this dream Gumtan Ke sent a message to Ke Dhamchi Dhamru. When he received the message, Ke Dhamchi Dhamru said that Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung was his protector and for the last three years he had not known his whereabouts. With tears in his eyes Dhamchi Dhamru said that Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung had only obeyed the orders (of the Lord of Gods).

On the third day of the twelfth month Ke Dhamchi Dhamru worshipped Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung and presented to him three measures of holy barley in a vessel of silver. Ke Dhamchi Dhamru presented to Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung different kinds of ribbons. Ke Dhamchi Dhamru presented to Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung salt. Ke Dhamchi Dhamru presented to Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung different kinds of flowers. Ke Dhamchi Dhamru presented to Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung different kinds of foodgrain. Ke Dhamchi Dhamru worshipped Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung by making the sounds "gharlang ghurlung" from the front and "charlang chirlung" from the back.

Ke Dhamchi Dhamru and Khunara left Thasang and reached Chongepar. They left Chongepar and reached Dotsham Hill where they met a messenger sent by the younger ancestor of the Gumtan clan (**ke gumtan cyang**). They left Dotsham Hill and reached the Chairu Plain where they met the daughter and son-in-law of Ke Gumtan Cyang who had sent them with eggs and the holy beer to receive Ke Dhamchi Dhamru and Khunara. After they had met, Ke Dhamchi Dhamru renamed the river Ghang Kyu by the name Dhon Kyu.

They left Dhon Kyu and reached Marpha. All the villagers had gathered and begged for forgiveness for their sinful actions against Lha Hyawa Nhurbu, saying that they would bear the consequences of their actions. The villagers prostrated themselves three times and begged Ke Dhamchi

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Dhamru to forgive them for their sinful actions against Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung. Ke Dhamchi Dhamru told the villagers that he would repent on their behalf.

Ke Dhamchi Dhamru and Khunara left Marpha and reached Jhong. Ke Dhamchi Dhamru left Jhong and reached Shyasen Forest. Ke Dhamchi Dhamru left Shyasen Forest and reached the Chuksang Cave. Ke Dhamchi Dhamru entered the cave together with Ke Gumtan Cyang.

When they entered the cave, Ke Dhamchi Dhamru caught a glimpse of the head of Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung which was surrounded by flames of good luck. Ke Dhamchi Dhamru saw Ke Gumtan Cyang worshipping Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung. Ke Dhamchi Dhamru prostrated himself three times to the god with the long horns, asking where he had gone to. Ke Dhamchi Dhamru prostrated himself three times to the god with the bushy tail, asking where he had gone to. Ke Dhamchi Dhamru prostrated himself three times to the god with the long hair on the legs, asking where he had gone to.

Ke Dhamchi Dhamru became very sad and got tears in his eyes so Ke Gumtan Cyang tried to console and make him happy. Ke Gumtan Cyang said that although the body of Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung was dead, his soul was still alive. Ke Gumtan Cyang told Ke Dhamchi Dhamru that the head of Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung was kept for his protection. Ke Gumtan Cyang told Ke Dhamchi Dhamru that Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung had ordered them not to break their promise. Ke Gumtan Chyang told Ke Dhamchi Dhamru that he should not weep on this happy occasion.

Ke Dhamchi Dhamru held out a cloth between his hands saying that Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung should stay for his protection and obey the orders of the Lord of the Gods. Khunara held out a cloth between his hands saying that Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung should go with them to Thasang for their protection. Khunara suggested that the four gods of the five elements should gather. When Khunara had said this, the head of Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung flew into the cloth which he was holding between his hands. Though there were flames around the head of Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung, they did not hurt Khunara.

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Ke Gumtan Cyang took the head of Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung from the cloth of Khunara, placed it on his own head and prostrated himself three times. Ke Gumtan Cyang sang prayers to Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung and begged him to bless them with luck, eloquence, and wealth. Ke Gumtan Cyang sang three times, begging for wealth, happiness, and fulfillment of their wishes. After Ke Gumtan Cyang had sung these prayers, Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung said that he would fulfill all the wishes of Ke Dhamchi Dhamru and Ke Gumtan Cyang as long as their descendants did not break their promise.

Ke Namchya Gholtok worshipped Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung by singing and dancing and begged forgiveness for his sins. Ke Gumtan Cyang was the leader of the Gumtan, and all Gumtan worshipped Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung by singing and dancing. Pun Thowa was the leader of the Puntan, and all the Puntan worshipped Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung by singing and dancing.

After the people had worshipped him by singing and dancing, Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung ordered that there should be rain at the right time. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung ordered that the crops in the fields should yield well. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung ordered that the people of Marpha should have clean water and should not suffer from diseases. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung ordered that the flowers should turn into fruits and all the wishes of the people of Marpha should be fulfilled.

They left the Chusang Cave singing and dancing. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung reached the forest at Shyasen Dhong. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung left Shyasen Dhong and reached Marpha. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung left Marpha and reached the Chaira Plain.

At the Chaira Plain a salt trader from Lo (Mustang) caught a glimpse of Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung. The salt trader prostrated himself to Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung three times and offered him the first of salt and begged him to bless the salt route so that it should remain open. Also a foodgrain trader (from the south) caught a glimpse of Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung. The foodgrain trader prostrated himself to Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung three times and offered him various kinds of foodgrain and begged him for

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blessings so that there would be sufficient foodgrains. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung took the first of the salt and the foodgrains and left for Dotsham Hill.

Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung left Dotsham Hill and reached Tukche. At Tukche hundreds and thousands of traders caught a glimpse of Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung took the first of the salt and the foodgrains and left for the holy place Khanti.

Ke Ani Airam, Ke Samledhen Samlechyang, and Ke Dhakpa Gyalsang caught a glimpse of Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung when they returned to Khanti after having taken a bath in Mharsyang Kyu. They danced and sang and said, that they would gather in the place where the three (important) things all were available. The four ancestors of Thatongkor worshipped and prayed to Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung by singing and dancing. Khe Dhamchi Dhamru made the sound “gharlang ghurlung” from the front and “charlang chirlung” from the back side.

Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung left for Salam Byasi. When he reached Salam Byasi, Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung took the first of the salt three times. Various kinds of flowers, foodgrain and salt were offered to Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung. Holy Incense, butterlamps and beer were offered to Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung.

Ke Ani Airam established Lha Langba Nhurbu as his god. Ke Samledhen Samlecyang established Lha Chyuring Gyalmo as his goddess. Ke Dhakpa Ghyalsang established Lha Ghangla Singi Karpo as his goddess. Ke Dhamchi Dhamru established Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung as his god.

It is because of Lha Langba Nhurbu that houses and villages can be established. Lha Langba Nhurbu controls the wind blowing from the north and the one blowing from the south. It is because of Lha Chyuring Gyalmo that fame can be earned. Lha Chyuring Gyalmo controls the rainfall. Lha Ghangla Singi Karpo controls the avalanches. It is because of Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung that Thatongkor could be established. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung controls the road of the salt and keeps it broad. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung

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controls travel and makes it pleasant. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung controls the bad spirits so that the offspring of all living beings can have a long life. Lha Chyuring Gyalmo who has the power to swim in the Kali Gandaki river controls the insects. Lha Ghangla Singi Karpo controls earthquakes. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung controls the serpent spirits and the fertility of all living beings and the crops.

Lha Langba Nhurpu has his throne in the East. Lha Chyuring Gyalmo has her throne in the South. Lha Ghangla Singi Karpo has her throne in the West. Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung has his throne in the North. The four gods of the five elements have their thrones in the centre.

The people prayed to the gods:

*"Oh four gods of the five elements,
please bless the high priest,
so that he can sit on his throne.*

*Oh four gods of the five elements,
please bless the king,
so that he can sit on his throne.*

*Oh four gods of the five elements,
please bless us,
so that we can swim in the river.*

*Oh four gods of the five elements,
please bless us,
so that the yield of the crops will increase.*

*Oh four gods of the five elements,
please bless us,
so that the rainfall will be timely.*

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*Oh four gods of the five elements,
please control the dangerous spirits.*

*Oh four gods of the five elements,
please keep the road of the salt broad.*

*Oh four gods of the five elements,
please let travel be pleasant.*

*Oh four gods of the five elements,
please let us have peace for wars.*

*Oh four gods of the five elements,
please bless us,
so that we can have coins of gold.*

*Oh four gods of the five elements,
please bless us,
so that we can have coins of silver.*

*Oh four gods of the five elements,
please bless us, so that we can have turquoises."*

Ke Ani Airam was proclaimed the ancestor of the Cyogi clan by Lha Langba Nhurbu. Ke Samledhen Samlecyang was proclaimed the ancestor of the Salgi clan by Lha Chyuring Gyalmo. Ke Dhakpa Gyalsang was proclaimed the ancestor of the Dhimcan clan by Lha Ghangla Singi Karpo. Ke Pau Kuti was proclaimed the ancestor of the Bhurki by Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung.

The four gods of the five elements ordered the four ancestors to gather at their meeting place, since they had not been able to gather at their

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birthplace. The four gods of the five elements ordered the four ancestors to increase (the number of) villages in Thatongkor. The four gods of the five elements ordered that the four ancestors should earn fame in Thatongkor.

Notes

1. The Lotus Born Teacher (**lopon paima jyungne**) (sanskrit: **guru padma sambhava**) was born in Uddiyana, which has been identified as the Swat valley in Pakistan. He is also known as the Lotus Born from Uddiyana (**urgen paima jyungne**), or as the Precious Teacher (**guru rinpoche**) in Tibetan. He was invited to Tibet during the reign of King Trisondetsen and founded the first Buddhist monastery in Tibet at Samya in 763.
2. Kongpo Tsari is a 5,644 m high mountain in the Kongpo region of Tibet, immediately north of Arunchal Pradesh in India. It is considered a holy mountain. It is the home of a famous fairy who is worshipped once every twelfth year.
3. The king of grasses (in the text **tsalu du dorje**) is believed to enable humans and animals to see fantastic things.

PRAYER TO THE FOUR GODS OF THE FIVE ELEMENTS

*Oh Lha Langba Nhurbu
please bless us,
so that our wishes can be fulfilled,
let the flowers turn into fruits.*

*Oh Lha Chyuring Gyalmo,
please bless us,
so that we can earn fame.*

*Oh Lha Ghangla Singi Karmo,
please bless us,
so that we can receive many turbans
(of felicitation).*

*Oh Lha Hyawa Rhangjyung,
please bless us,
so that our trade will be successful.*

*Oh four gods of the five elements,
please bless us,
so that we can become the king of the North.*

*Oh four gods of the five elements,
please bless us,
so that we can become the king of the South.*

*Oh four gods of the five elements,
please bless us,
so that we can rule our own villages.*

PRAYER TO THE FOUR GODS OF THE FIVE ELEMENTS

*Oh four gods of the five elements,
please bless us,
so that our life can be as long as the rivers.*

*Oh four gods of the five elements,
please bless us,
so that our soul can be as solid as the mountains.*

*Oh four gods of the five elements,
please forgive us for our mistakes
(including all)
from the front and the back.*

*Oh four gods of the five elements,
please forgive us for our mistakes
(including all)
from the above to the below.*

*Oh four gods of the five elements,
please forgive us for the mistakes,
(including all)
from the beginning to the end.*