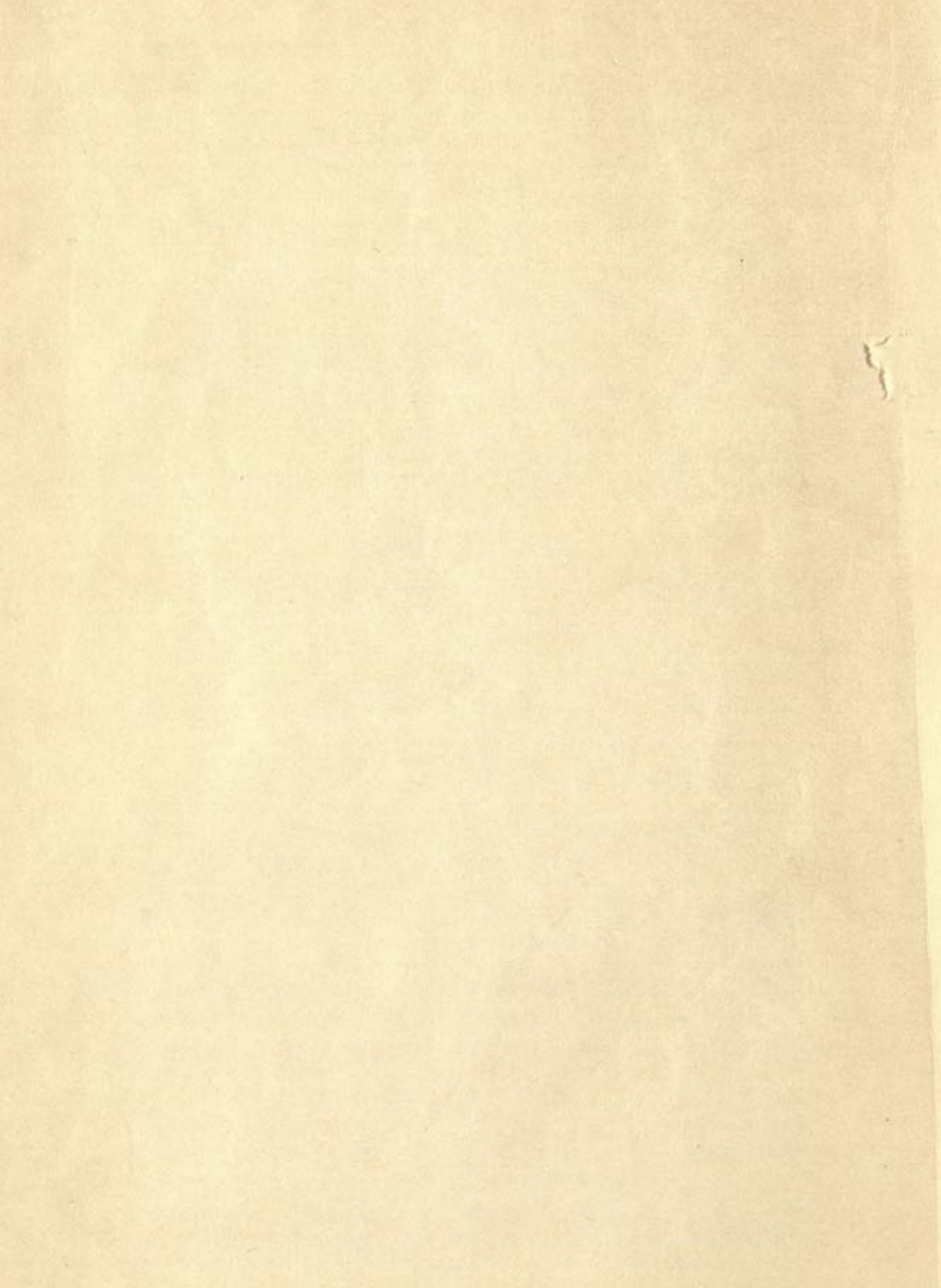


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4th Edition 2000 Copies 1980

Printed at PEARL OFFSET PRESS
5/33, Kirti Nagar
New Delhi-110015

TO
KING AND COUNTRY

FOREWORD

It gives me real pleasure while presenting the "People of Nepal" to its readers. This book happens to be the first of its kind ever written by a Nepali and published by HMG. It is hoped that the present volume will be usefully utilized by the scholars, students, administrators, and development planners alike in addition to its being of considerable interests to the general readers.

A sovereign country having adopted Panchayat Democracy as its way of life and method of development could not afford to ignore any one segment of the country. The knowledge of the entire Nepali Society was, therefore, considered very necessary for everybody. The idea of the Department however, could not have been materialized without the admirable and very willing effort of a competent person in the subject. The Department of Publicity, HMG. would like to congratulate Mr. Dor Bahadur Bista for this successful adventure of field research which at times had been very tiring, demanding enough of courage, patience, and the skill in writing up the text.

CHITRA BAHADUR K. C.

Secretary,

Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, HMG.

Kathmandu,
11th June 1967

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

It is very gratifying to have one's own effort recognised and appreciated. The fact that the two thousand copies printed less than three years ago were in short supply within two years, with a pressing demand for more, was an indication of the growing interest in the subject. So it is with very great pleasure that I introduce this second and revised edition to interested readers in Nepal and abroad. I have taken the opportunity to update the population figures and bibliography and to correct some errors that had crept into the first edition. I have also tried to integrate some necessary changes both in facts and in their interpretations as suggested by sympathetic readers and critics. I also took the liberty of splitting a chapter on a group of Terai people called Rajbansi, Bodo, Dhimal and Satar into three separate chapters. A small group of people known as the Dhangars have been introduced for the first time. Aside from these minimum and very necessary changes, I have decided to leave the bulk of the text as is in spite of some sincere suggestions for drastic changes from some of my best friends. For this I have to beg for their indulgence with the excuse that there is no single approach I could find that would satisfy everybody with regard to the alleged discrepancies or the irregularities in size, arrangement and division of different chapters. It was not feasible for me to obtain the same amount of information on each group within the time available, and I thought it would be unfair to waste some of the data I had for the sake of uniformity. So I decided to put down whatever useful information I had for immediate use until more detailed information on all the people was available.

The division of the three main groups, the Himalayan, the Middle Hills and the Valley, and the Terai people, has been equally arbitrary. Because of the increasing mobility of different groups of people across geographic boundaries the regional divisions indicate only the stereotypes, as indeed do many of the customs and cultural phenomena I have discussed in the following chapters. For the same reason I have resisted the temptation to include an ethnographic map. The dynamics of group integration into a paramount national life have been outlined in the concluding chapter.

I have been equally lucky to receive encouragement and practical help from a number of friends for this edition as I was in the first. James F. Fisher was very helpful in editing the entire text and improving and updating the chapter on

Magars as he was fresh back in Kathmandu from his field study of Magars in Dolpo. I am extremely grateful to him, to Boyd Michailovsky for the help in correcting the grammar, to Rebecca Monette of the Summer Institute of Linguistics for proof reading and to Uttam Kunwar for making all the former issues of Roop Rekha available for my use. My brother Khem Bahadur assisted in preparing the expanded bibliography, my son Hikmat in preparation of index and final arrangements at the press. Thanks are due to all of them and to my wife for her endurance and patience in bearing the entire responsibility of the family during all these years of research and study that I had to do away from my family. Her assistance in many ways while I was engaged in writing were equally important.

I must thank my friend Dr. Harka Bahadur Gurung, Honourable member of the National Planning Commission, for constantly inspiring me to bring out the second edition and for a number of his suggestions for the revision of the book.

My special thanks are due to Mr. Swayambhu Lal Shreshtha for his sympathetic criticism and for letting me consult his text of unpublished criticism of the previous edition of the book.

In conclusion, I would fail myself if I did not express grateful thanks to all the enthusiastic friends and readers without whose constant urging this edition would have been delayed for quite some time.

Kathmandu

DOR BAHADUR BISTA

Dec. 1971

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

When, after 1950, Nepal changed her policy of isolation and began to take a modern and realistic attitude toward the world at large, she opened her doors wide for all sorts of people, aid missions, and expeditions from outside. Only a very few outsiders had been admitted until then. Now, however, in this modern era Europeans, Americans, and others have poured into Nepal, the 'Land of Mystery', hitherto almost unknown to the world. Some have come with offers to help, develop and modernize Nepal. Some have come with purely scholarly interests of revealing the mysteries of life among the Nepali people, some with mere curiosity or for climbing the snow peaks of the Himalaya.

Many people around the world wanted to know about Nepal and her people. But more important for Nepal—many Nepali people themselves became eager to know about the world, and above all, about their own country.

Nepal had been closed not only to the outside, but there was no incentive or encouragement even for the Nepalis themselves to travel inside the country. Because of the difficult terrain in the hills, the deadly malarious conditions in the plains, and the complete absence of any means of efficient transportation or communication, people in different parts of the country remained very much confined to their areas and relatively ignorant of the rest of the country. No one, except for a very few government officials, had ever travelled over the country. It was, therefore, with great enthusiasm and pleasure that I took the opportunity to visit and study the Sherpa people of eastern Nepal in early 1957 in the company of Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf, Professor of Asian Anthropology at the University of London. I travelled and worked with him among the Sherpas and gained some knowledge of the Rais and Limbus as well, when we visited their areas on our way to Darjeeling, in neighbouring West Bengal.

When Professor von Fürer-Haimendorf studied the Gurungs in the west and the Chhetris of Kathmandu Valley, I also accompanied him; and by 1962 I had visited the Thakalis and various border people in Mustang and Dolpo with him.

I am very much indebted to Professor von Fürer-Haimendorf for training in the field as well as in his classroom at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, where I was a student of cultural anthropology. He has also read the manuscript and given invaluable suggestions.

Despite my growing field experience and knowledge of many groups of Nepali people, this book would never have come to fruition without the plan, inspiration and financial assistance for extended field visits provided by the Department of Publicity and Mr. Kul Sekhar Sharma, Chief Secretary of His Majesty's Government, under whom the Department of Publicity was administered until 1964. I am extremely grateful to Mr. Sharma and to the Department of Publicity, His Majesty's Government of Nepal.

Many thanks are due to Mr. Donald A. Messerschmidt, former Peace Corps Volunteer now residing in Kathmandu, who took considerable interest and relentless trouble to correct technicalities and helped bring the book into proper shape. Mr. Messerschmidt assisted in the typing of many sections, with the glossary, bibliography and the photography. Reudi and Regina Bossarts of Switzerland are to be thanked for their help in typing.

Others who read the manuscript in various forms and who gave considerable assistance in criticism and suggestion include Leo E. Rose, Director, Himalayan Border Countries Project, School of International Studies, University of California Berkeley; Mrs. Frances Wilde of England; Thomas B. Smith, former Peace Corps Volunteer; Lionel Caplan and Charles McDougal, both of the University of London; and Boyd Michailovsky, American Peace Corps Volunteer. To all of them I am sincerely indebted.

I owe a deep sense of gratefulness to Mr. John C. Cool, a personal friend and Deputy Director of the United States AID mission to Nepal, who provided many facilities and encouragement and assisted in countless ways toward the ultimate completion of the book.

There are many others, foreign and Nepali, whose names are not mentioned but who offered advice, encouragement, suggestions and willing help. My thanks to all of them, but especially to those Nepalis in outlying villages and towns who were invaluable sources of information and hospitality during my wanderings. Those times were fruitful and their memories pleasant.

Kathmandu

June, 1967

DOR BAHADUR BISTA

INTRODUCTION

The Kingdom of Nepal lies in South Asia between the east meridians of $80^{\circ}4'$ and $88^{\circ}12'$ and the north parallels of $26^{\circ}22'$ and $30^{\circ}27'$. Nepal is bordered by India on the west, south, and to the east, and by Tibet region of the People's Republic of China in the north. Its area is 54,718 square miles, and the present population is about thirteen million. Nepal embraces a part of the main Himalaya range in the north including Mount Everest (29,028 feet), the highest mountain in the world, and also a part of the Gangetic plain in the south.

Geographically the country can be divided into four major regions :

- (1) the Himalayan highlands with snow mountains and glacial valleys ;
- (2) the lower Himalayan ranges with their green forests and long slopes leading to fertile valleys, such as Kathmandu, Pokhara, Surkhet and several smaller ones :
- (3) the forest areas of the inner Terai, the low river valleys and the foothills of the Churiya, Siva-Lekh range—all of them with a very hot climate ; and
- (4) the flat and fertile land of the Terai, the north edge of the Gangetic plain.

With a few exceptions the great majority of the Nepali people live in well defined, specific geographic regions. The Tibetan speaking Mongoloid people live in the high Himalayan regions of the north, with an alpine climate at altitudes of between 8,000 and 16,000 feet.

Immediately south of the Himalaya are attractive mountain valleys. This region is inhabited by various Tibeto-Burman and Indo-Aryan speaking hill and valley people. Its altitude is between 3,500 and 7,000 feet above sea level. The climate is cool—temperate to warm-temperate. Sixty percent of the people live here.

To the south of this region the stretch of land which consists of the low river valleys and unhealthy forest belts is inhabited by various indigenous people whose origins and affinities are quite obscure. Here, as is the case in the high Himalaya, there are fewer inhabitable areas than in the middle ranges. Also lacking is the charm of the mountain surroundings at higher altitudes. The altitude is 1,000 to 2,500 feet above sea level.

The fourth and most economically important geographical region is populated by various Indo-Aryan language speaking Mediterranean type people and some indigenous people such as the Tharus and Dhangars. The Dhangar language had been identified as being Dravidian for some time, but a systematic study has been conducted only recently by Kent Gordon & Richard Hugoniot of the Summer Institute of Linguistics. This is agriculturally the most productive of all the regions and is therefore usually called the granary of Nepal. More than thirty-five percent of the people live in this region, which is thirty to fifty miles wide and five hundred miles long. The land is rich in production of rice, corn, wheat, sugarcane, tobacco, jute, pulses, mustard and a variety of forest products. The climate is tropical savanna with a summer monsoon.

The people living near the borders of the north and south have easy access to the neighbouring countries for trade and social intercourse. Both of these border areas are within the sphere of influence of the respective neighbouring countries in matters of race, religion, language, culture and economy, whereas the middle regions are far removed and isolated from such outside influence and foreign culture. For this reason the middle hill people have always been stern nationalists. The Nepali language, which is the national language, is widely spoken and understood in this middle region. Likewise, the energetic middle hill people make some of the best soldiers in the world. They are sought by the British, Indian and Royal Nepal armies. A majority of the country's administrative officers come from this region. Any knowledge that the outside world—beyond India and Tibet—had about Nepal was about these people. This was partly because of the Gurkha soldiers and partly because the court of Nepal and other offices in Kathmandu have been, by tradition, predominantly staffed by these people.

Owing to the lack of communication between different groups, each remained in its traditional area, isolated from other groups until quite recently. Every single group spoke a different language or dialect, developed its own marriage and social rules, and became ethnocentric in almost every respect. There was no feeling of being one nationality, one nation.

The only mobility that can be traced within the country until modern times is a very slow and restrained migration of the middle range people, and this almost always from the west to the east along the mountains and from the mountain ranges south to the Terai.

When Prithvi Narayan Shah defeated the smaller warring principalities and brought them together to form one united Nepal during the middle of the 18th Century, he felt impelled to say that his hard earned country was a garden for all types of people. Certainly, Nepal was united politically; but much yet remained to be done to unite it socially, culturally and economically. The situation at that time was not propitious for extending relations with the outside world. The giant empires were a matter of serious concern for the freedom-loving people of Nepal. So the subsequent governments of Nepal felt that they had no choice than to shut themselves in completely and close the borders. The isolation was complete with the result that the country remained one of the most primitive and backward in the world. The art and culture that flourished in medieval Nepal was confined and frozen for a century and a half. For this long period the technology of Europe, America and Japan was absolutely forbidden. It was only after the close of World War II, when the world situation had changed, that Nepal was able to uncoil herself, open her borders and establish relations with the outside world. The ice had been broken successfully under the able leadership of His Late Majesty, King Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah.

A new legal code has been introduced guaranteeing equality to all the people in the eyes of the law. Much effort is being put into the construction of not only an east-west highway, but also a number of other internal roads, airline routes, tele-communication links and postal services throughout the country. Suitable educational institutions are being provided for all the people. All of this will help to encourage change of attitudes, inter-community marriages and cultural exchanges to fully unite the nation.*

Some writers in the past have quite unjustly placed the people of Nepal on their own theoretical social ladder. In this regard the past governments of Nepal misled them by creating an unnatural vertical social ladder, framing the legal code accordingly. People with so many different origins and cultural backgrounds

* Then the accounts I have given in the following chapters concerning the peculiarities of the different groups will be only a record of the past, although I have used the present tense in describing life as it is today. In some cases changes are coming more rapidly than readily imagined. I find certain communities have changed considerably during the period of two or three years during which I have been writing.

cannot possibly be arranged into strict social frameworks. However, the values of the Hindu caste system tend to pervade the entire Nepali situation. As a result, people outside the caste system—i.e. Gurungs, Magars, Rais, Limbus, Tharus, et cetera—are tempted to rank themselves within the traditional Hindu caste hierarchy, seeking a relatively high position either equal to or just beneath that of the Chhetris, who are ranked second in the caste hierarchy.

The present monograph is an attempt to record some of the existing interesting differences, and similarities, among various groups of people. But I do not claim, by any means, to have done this job completely. To visit so many different groups of people personally and to study them within a very short time was not an easy job for me, nor would it be for any other individual. Although there are a few books that are useful, I have found it necessary to visit all these people personally to be able to understand them better. But since I could not spend enough time among each group, there are some people whom I know less well than others. I studied some ethnic groups several years ago, while with others I have been working until quite recently. Some societies are changing very quickly, and complete accuracy is difficult.

There are some groups of whom I have been able to give only brief descriptions because of my limited knowledge. I feel, therefore, that even after the appearance of this book the remarks of Professor Tucci, the famous Tibetologist and one of the authorities in Nepali history and religion, that "the ethnographical study of Nepal, despite the many researches undertaken, is still one of the most complex in the world,"* will remain as true as ever. It will take many years of continued research in this field before anyone can claim to have complete information about all the people of Nepal.

* Giuseppe Tucci, *Nepal, The Discovery of the Malla* (London, 1962), p. 76.

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PART I

MIDDLE HILLS AND VALLEY PEOPLE



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BRAHMAN, CHHETRI AND THE OCCUPATIONAL CASTES OF THE HILLS

The Brahman and Chhetri population of Nepal has had, more than any other people, the dominant role in the formation of the modern Kingdom of Nepal in the political realm and in the all-pervading social and religious realms. The Shah Royal Family and their right-hand men have traditionally been drawn from the Thakuri and Chhetri castes. However, effective power became limited in fact to one particular Chhetri family, the Ranas, who gained absolute control over the administration of the country. The Ranas provided the hereditary prime ministers of the country for just over a century, from A.D. 1846 to 1951. The Office of Prime Minister, as well as all other first-class positions in both the military and the civil services, was occupied by Rana family members. The majority of the remaining important positions were filled by other Chhetris, Brahmans, and a few high caste Hindu Newars. Since the power of administration was restored to the Royal throne in 1951, this situation has been gradually changing, and increasingly more and more people belonging to other ethnic groups, cultural groups and caste groups are found within the government positions.

Brahmans rank highest in the caste hierarchy, and along with Chhetris they formed a majority of the influential and wealthy people of traditional Nepal. They are also the most widely distributed throughout the country. Nepali, an Indo-Aryan language, is their mother tongue and has been adopted as the state language. Nepali is also the mother tongue of the small number of occupational castes, the Damai (tailor), Sarki (cobbler), Kami (blacksmith), and Sunar (goldsmith) castes, and of such other castes as Sanyeshi and Gharti. The number of occupational-caste people is estimated to be only a small percentage of the total Nepali-speaking population, spread unequally throughout the country. The total number of people speaking Nepali as their mother tongue, then, is well over million, or about half of Nepal's entire population.

More than half of all Brahmans and Chhetris live in the western hills, where they form about eighty per cent of that area's total population. In the remainder

of the hilly areas they are more or less evenly distributed, although they are a definite minority in the lowland Terai.

Traditional accounts state that the Brahmans, along with some Rajputs, came to the western hills of Nepal from India for the first time during the twelfth century when they were dislodged by the Moslem invasions. The Brahmans and a few Rajputs who are said to have come from Kannauj and Chittore first met the Khas, the predominant race in the hilly regions of Kumaon, Garhwal and the western districts of Nepal. These Khas were then a very powerful people with a number of Khas principalities still intact. Prof. Tucci discovered that a large and impressive empire was founded by the Khas during the 11th, 12th and 13th centuries. This empire included a large part of western Tibet and spread as far as Dullu and Kaskikot in western Nepal.¹ On the same subject the Nepali historian Baburam Acharya says,

At the time when the Lichhvis had established their rule in Nepal, some "Khas" shepherds of Aryan stock, had settled in Western Nepal and established the independent state of "Kartipur" which consisted of the present western region of Nepal, Kumaon, and Garhwal. ... Later, the boundary of their states extended to Mustang in the hills as well as to the Terai. ... Their state survived till the end of the medieval period.²

Although the Khas spoke a language closely allied to Sanskrit and were a people racially akin to the Brahmans, being of the so-called Mediterranean type, they were not considered of the same stock by the orthodox Hindus of the plains. The *Manu smriti* code of Hindu caste behaviour states that they were to be treated as Shudra, low caste, because of their neglect of caste rules. But when they came into contact with the immigrant Brahmans of the plains, many of the Khas were given the very high Kshatriya status. Brian Hodgson wrote in the last century,

To the earliest and most distinguished of their converts (Khas) they (the Brah-

¹ Tucci, *op. cit.*, pp. 60-61 and 68, and "Preliminary Report on Two Scientific Expeditions in Nepal", Instituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, *Serie Orientale Roma* X no. 1 (Rome, 1958) pp. 129-30.

² Baburam Acharya, "Nepal Ko Samskritik Parampara" ("The Cultural Tradition of Nepal"), translated and condensed by the Regmi Research Project, *Gorkhapatra* (Kathmandu), Bhadra 15, 2020 (August 31, 1963).

mans) communicated, in defiance of the creed they taught, the lofty rank and the honors of the Kshatriya order.¹

The progeny of a Brahman man and a local Khas hill woman became referred to as Khatri. They were also given the status of Chhetri and became popularly known as Khatri Chhetri, the term Khatri being a corruption of the Sanskrit form Kashatriya-Kshatri. "To this progeny also, then," continues Hodgson, the Brahmins, in still greater defiance of their creed, communicated the rank of the second order of Hinduism; and from these two roots (Khas and Khatri), mainly sprung the now numerous, predominant, and extensively ramified, tribe of Khas..... now the proud title of Khsatriya, or military order of the Kingdom of Nepal.²

The presence of a large number of Matwali Chhetri, who do not wear the sacred thread, in the west and north west part of the country indicates that the process was less than complete. Some Khatri do not call themselves as such, but instead identify themselves only as Chhetri or use only the clan name of their Brahman progenitor. Some of them were given a name altogether different from that of their Brahman father.³

Brian Hodgson mentions that some people refused to be converted to Hinduism; for example, the Magar clans of Thapa, Rana and Gharti. Those who refused remained Magars, he implies, while those converted became Thapa Chhetri, Rana Chhetri, et. cetera.⁴ But here, I feel, Hodgson has clearly been misled. It is common for similar clan names to occur among various groups of people. Moreover, people wanting to raise their caste status invariably adopt new family names. Although the Khas are considered to have been converted wholesale into Hinduism and given the status of Chhetri, there are many Khas in Jumla, Tibrikot, Humla, Mugu, Dailekh and other adjoining districts of the West who were

1 Brian H. Hodgson, "Origin and Classification of the Military Tribes of Nepal", *Papers Relative to the Colonization, Commerce, Physical Geography, Ethnography, Etc. of the Himalaya Mountains and Nepal*, No. VII of *Selections from the Records of the Government of Bengal*, No. XXVII (Calcutta, 1857), pp. 150 ff.

2 Ibid., p. 142.

3 "Thapa Vamshavali" *Itihās Prakash* (History Publication), No. 1, Ed. Yogi Narahari Nath, (Kathmandu, 1955) pp. 119-120.

4 Hodgson, *op. cit.*, pp. 141 ff.

apparently not given the sacred thread and the status of Chhetri. They are locally known as *matwali*, 'those who drink liquor.' In many of these areas they pose as Matwali Chhetris. However, they practise a shamanistic cult of Mashta with a strong influence of Lamaism from Tibet, and the evidence for their being Hindus is very marginal.

Thakuris are the aristocracy among Chhetris and as such have the highest social, political and ritual status. If the average ambitious Khas, and later on Magars, aspired to be Chhetris, the most powerful ones became Thakuris during the medieval period. So at present Thakuri is a generic term describing a group that developed into the highest social and political order out of the select people from among Khas, Magar and possibly a few Rajput immigrants from India.

There have been cases in the recent past of some non-Chhetris acquiring Chhetri status and wearing the sacred thread through political influence. In each case they have adopted new Chhetri titles. Many powerful Rana Chhetris, during their regime prior to 1951, gave the status and title of Chhetri to the relatives of their favoured non-Chhetri wives.

Brahmans and Chhetris were traditionally concentrated in the mid-western parts of Nepal, but at present they are more widely spread throughout the country. Their living conditions and house types vary greatly according to the area. They have always tried to impose their allegedly superior cultural and religious practices on whichever ethnic group they happened to live in proximity with, but in fact it is obvious that these Brahmans and Chhetris have been influenced in turn by their neighbours to a considerable extent.

In the hills the average Brahman or Chhetri lives in a small, sturdy, two storey stone or mud-brick house roofed with thatch. Village houses are usually loosely scattered along hill slopes, on hilltops, in flat valleys, or along ledges, as the case may be. In most parts of the country the Brahman and Chhetri houses are washed with red ochre or whitewashed. The inside walls are usually whitewashed and the floors are always cleaned with a fresh, wet mixture of cowdung and mud.

The main occupations of Brahmans and Chhetris are farming and government service. Brahmans also act as family priests. All are Hindu by birth and forever. Besides farming, Chhetri and Thakuri men traditionally join the military services and are renowned for being among the best soldiers in the world. Like all other people involved in agriculture, Chhetris living in rural areas are idle for at least three months of the year. The fortunate ones among them are rich landlords,



The Khas (Matwali Chhetri) Village of Podmara in Jumla.



Khas (Matwali Chhetri) of Humla.



A Thakusi trader Camping on his return trip from Taklakot.

moneylenders, senior officers in the army, political leaders, and the like; but the great majority are just average farmers.

Brahmans are of two different types : Purbiya (eastern) and Kumain. The name Kumain is derived from one of the districts (Kumaon) of northern India's Uttar Pradesh State, to the west of Nepal. These two types of Brahman must have migrated from different parts of India at different periods to different points in Nepal. It is interesting to note that each of these groups considers itself purer and higher than the other.

The Jaishi, issue of irregular unions of Brahman men and women, are not allowed to act as priests. Nevertheless they are called "Jaishi Brahman". They are mainly peasant farmers. The Jaishis seem to be quite a large group, although there is no way of determining their numbers exactly. The progeny of a mixed marriage between a Brahman man and a Thakuri woman is known as Hamal and is accepted in the Thakuri caste circle.

As some social stigma is attached to an unorthodox union and to marriages between unequal castes, the designation Jaishi, being the result of such irregularities, is not owned with pride.

Some of the Brahman and Chhetri clan names are as follows in alphabetical order :

<i>Kumain Brahman</i> :	Adhikari	Gartola	Pyakural
Bhatta	Aryal	Ghimire	Pudasai
Bista	Baral	Gotame	Purtel
Dotel	Baskota	Guragain	Regmi
Joshi	Bastola	Homegain	Rimal
Kadariya	Basyal	Kadel	Risal
Khatiwada	Bhandari	Khanal	Satyal
Lohini	Bhatta	Kuikel	Sedhai
Paitola	Bhattarai	Lamichhane	Sigdel
Pandey	Chamlagain	Lamsal	Silwal
Paneru	Chapagain	Nepal	Subedi
Pant	Dahal	Neupane	Timilsena
Soti	Devkota	Ojha	<i>Thakuri</i> :
Upreti	Dhakal	Parajuli	Bam
<i>Purbiya Brahman</i> :	Dhital	Paudel	Chand
Acharya	Dhungel	Pokhrel	Kalyal

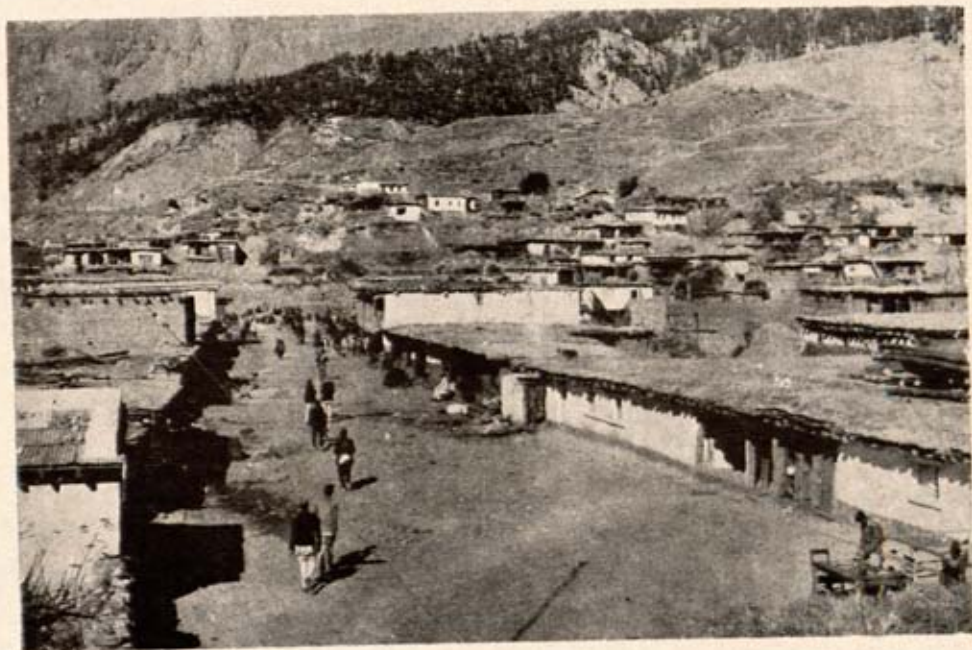
Khand	Baniya	Kathayat	Rawal
Malla	Basnet	Khadayat	Sijapati
Pal	Bista	Khadka	Thakurathi
Sahi	Bogti	Khulal	Thapa
Shah	Bohra	Kawar	Woli
Singh	Bura	Mahat	
Chhetri :	Doeja	Raut	
Airi	Karki	Rana	

Some Brahman and Chhetri individuals, when they are frustrated and tired of their domestic lives, renounce the worldly life and become *sadhu* mendicants, wearing only saffron robes, living upon alms and charity, and spending their days primarily in meditation and recitation of sacred texts. But in this process some take a wife, or female *sadhus* a husband, and produce children. These children, since their progenitors have renounced their caste status, cannot claim caste or go back to caste society. Such people are called Sanyeshi. There are many Sanyeshis. They can take up any profession they want to follow, but many become temple priests and Mahant, manager-treasurers of Mahadev (Shiva) temple endowments. Sanyeshi have various family names: Giri, Puri, Bharati, Saraswoti, Aranyak, Ban and Parvat are a few.

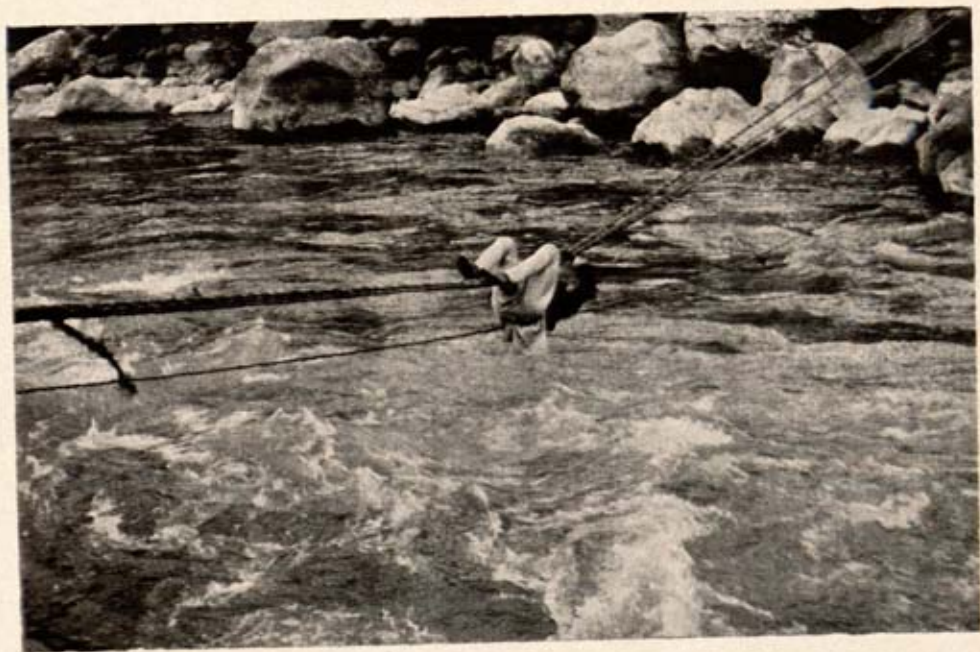
The occupational castes of the hills also have subdivisions. For example, the Kami (blacksmiths) include Sinchokre, Langmote, Lama, Banth, Gharti, Ghimire, Paret and Gadel. The exact origin of these occupational castes is obscure, as is that of their counterparts among Newars.

Marriage among Brahmans and Chhetris is, as a rule, monogamous; yet polygyny is very frequently found. In fact, men used to take pride in having more than one wife. Some of the middle class landowners had as many as five or six wives at a time, while many of the rich and powerful Ranas had several dozen wives and concubines. In such cases they did not always stick to the rules of caste endogamy. Polygamous Brahman or Chhetri men have taken wives from almost every ethnic community, that is, from the Gurung, Magar, Tamang, Sherpa, Newar and other groups, but never from occupational castes.

Brahmans and Chhetris, with the exception of Thakuris, do not practise cross-cousin marriage. Thakuris have a system of marrying maternal cross-cousins, that is, a boy can marry his mother's brother's daughter, but they do not condone paternal cross-cousin marriage to one's father's sister's daughter. Rana Chhetris have



Jumla Town



A rope bridge over Karnali.

adopted the Thakuri custom of marrying maternal cross-cousins, but no other Chhetris or Brahmans have followed the practice. The restriction on marrying one's own father's sister's daughter is consistent with the system of worshipping and entertaining one's daughter, sister and sister's daughter. If a girl married back into her mother's parental family, the whole code of behavior, rituals and relationship terms would have to be altered, a process which is not possible in a society where relationship and kinship play such an important part in the everyday life of the individual. A daughter-in-law has a completely different status in her husband's house than in her parents' house. A total change in her way of life occurs from the day she gets married.

Most Brahman girls are married at the early age of ten or eleven, while most Chhetri girls are married only when they are fully grown. Tradition maintains that the sixth year is the most holy age for a Brahman girl's marriage and her parents achieve the greatest amount of *punya*, 'merit', if they give her in marriage then. *Punya* is so important that sometimes a rich Chhetri couple will 'adopt' a Brahman girl of the age of eight or ten, never older than eleven years, to give her away to a Brahman boy in marriage simply with the intention of accumulating *punya*. This acquisition of *punya* is believed to help the couple have a son, to win prosperity, and eventually to reach *svarga*, 'heaven', when they die.

Marriage is the concern of the father both for a girl and for a boy. But in fact it weighs more heavily upon the girl's father, the reason being that any lapse on the part of the girl in sexual morality is never tolerated, since it brings great disrepute to her father. Similar misconduct in a boy is more or less ignored and there is no loss of face for his father. It is more difficult to seek a match for an older girl than for a girl of twelve or thirteen. This rule, however, no longer applies to educated urban dwellers. In the rural districts the position of a boy becomes questionable if he has remained unmarried until his middle twenties. But today Brahman and Chhetri families of good standing and education do not follow the traditional rules of early marriage, which is nowadays common among the peasant class only.

Generally, a relative acts as the middleman in marriage negotiations. Since village exogamy is observed, it usually involves a good deal of running back and forth for the middleman, who is known as *lami*, until the transaction is completed. The practice of comparing names by an astrologer, to see whether the proposed couple will make a good match, still persists but it is done only in a perfunctory manner. Once it is found by the astrologer that the two people are a good match,

it is the job of the priest of the boy's family to discover an auspicious date, based on the lunar calendar, best suited for the boy. There is usually a set of specific dates for weddings given in the calendar, and it remains for one to be chosen.

There are two important considerations taken into account in deciding wedding days. First of all, a marriage can take place only in the months of *baisakh-jest* (mid-May to mid-July), *mangsir* (mid-November to mid-December), *magh*, and *phagun* (mid-January to mid-March). Secondly, the planet Venus must be visible in the sky. For a modern and unorthodox marriage neither of these things is taken seriously into account.

Once the date is fixed by the groom's party, the bride's parents are informed. On the prescribed date the groom goes out in a procession formed by his relations and friends. The number of people invited to take part in the procession varies according to the economic and social status of the groom's father. There are fifty to sixty people in the case of an ordinary peasant, four to five hundred in the case of rich farmers or other middle-class people, and in the case of the affluent Ranas there used to be several thousands, including a detachment of the Royal Nepal Army. The wedding party, the *janti*, consists only of men except for one or two maid servants who are there as personal attendants to the bride and the groom. The whole *janti* party is preceded by a musical band, and is received with great respect and enthusiasm by the bride's people at her home. They are entertained with a feast before the actual wedding ceremony takes place.

There is one ceremonial rite to be completed preceding the final wedding rite. This is called *swayamvara*, literally meaning 'choosing one's own husband', and the bride and groom exchange garlands of flowers and gold engagement rings. *Swayamvara* may be conducted either on the wedding day soon after the boy's party arrives at the house of the bride, or a few days prior to the actual wedding day.

The entire wedding ceremony lasts for about twenty-four hours, from the time the *janti* arrives late in the afternoon until roughly the same time the next afternoon when the bride's people send her off with the groom's party. The most important part of the entire wedding ceremony is *Kanyadan*, when the parents of the bride make a gift of her to the groom. This must take place at the exact auspicious moment calculated by the priest, the moment when the hands of the bride are put into the cupped hands of the groom. She has then been given to him. After this the parents are relieved of the most important of their obligations. They can break the fast which they have been observing for the last twenty-four

hours in order to keep them pure and clean for performing the pious act of *Kanyadan*.

The young daughter is considered a sacred object, more so even than the sacred cow, and she therefore brings much *punya* to her parents. Just prior to the *Kanyadan* moment the bride and groom are seated on a bed which is provided by the girl's parents as a gift to the new couple. While sitting there the bride and groom hang their legs into a copper vessel or, in the case of the Ranas and the Royal Family, a silver vessel. The parents of the girl wash the feet of both the bride and groom. The girl's nearest relatives are also expected to wash her feet. For this purpose they need a small bowl, cup, or silver spoon which they bring with them as a present to the bride. Although not many people do the actual washing of the feet nowadays, the present they bring for the bride is nonetheless called *gor dhuwa*, 'foot-washer'. The foot-washing ritual is accompanied by the recitation of Vedic lore by the Brahman priest of the bride's parents' family.

Kanyadan follows immediately; the groom receives his bride as a gift, and whatever dowry the parents are giving for the purpose of prestige is given at this time. The groom also hands over his presents, mainly clothing and ornaments, to the bride. When the foot-washing and *Kanyadan* are completed, the bride is taken into her room and changed into the clothes brought as presents from the groom; and she is beautifully made up with cosmetics and decorated with ornaments and *tika*, also brought by the groom. When she is thus dressed, she is carried outside the house into the courtyard where a sacrificial fire is burning and all sorts of offerings of food for sacrifices and other articles for various rituals are in readiness. There is also a place prepared for the bride and groom to sit on one side of the quadrangle that encloses the ritual articles, the altar, and the central sacrificial fire. The bride and groom spend several hours in the courtyard performing rituals of various descriptions, sometimes going around the quadrangle and sometimes worshipping and making offerings to various deities—Ganesh and the gods of fire, sky, wind, earth, and water.

Another ritual performed at this time is the placing of vermilion powder in the part of the bride's hair by the groom. Vermilion in a woman's hair is a sign of marriage; she is theoretically required to re-apply it daily with powder mixed in with the original powder presented at the wedding for as long as her husband is alive.

In the meanwhile, guests from both sides surround the place and watch the ceremony, exchanging jokes and pleasantries amidst big bursts of laughter. The

jokes sometimes lead to misunderstandings, and in a few instances in the rural areas they may even cause an open fight.

Brahmans and Chhetris look on marriage from a totally different angle than that of any other ethnic community in Nepal. It is not a mere biological, social, or economic matter, but more of a spiritual obligation. The learned Brahman or other knowledgeable person tells his young folk that a husband and wife do not come together by mere chance, accident, or even arrangement, but that they have been destined to live together as husband and wife from their previous lives. This idea discourages divorce between them. Then, of course, prestige is involved also in the question of divorce; and as a result there are very few divorce cases, although there is provision for it in the legal code. People either put up with whatever luck they may have been favoured with in spite of their unpleasant or dull lives, or if they are rich and can afford to live separately they will live apart so far as their daily lives are concerned, remaining husband and wife only in name.

A man fulfils the most important of his duties by bringing home a wife and by begetting at least one son. By having a son he ensures a safe passage over various obstacles which he will have to cross before he reaches *swarga*, 'heaven' or 'the land of the souls', after death.

✓ A woman acquires her proper caste status only after her marriage. An unmarried girl cannot offer certain kinds of food cooked by herself to her parents. The girl's parents not only accumulate *punya* by making a gift of their daughter to a boy of suitable background, but also clear their passage to the next life by discharging the burdensome obligation of giving her away. Because a daughter is often described as one held in custody for another, the parents feel relieved only when she is collected by the rightful person. Giving away their daughter by no means terminates the social obligations of the girl's parents toward her. A daughter is not entitled to a share in the property of her parents as are all her brothers, but she must be invited with her husband and children to all family festivals and ceremonies. It is not enough merely to invite them. One must also provide the best food one can afford and give presents of money and other things when they go back home. The obligation of entertaining the daughter with her husband and children is passed on to the son when a man dies.

Once a new bride is taken home she is more under the command of her mother-in-law than of her husband. This usually continues for several years until she has a child or succeeds in winning her husband to her side away from his parents.



Brahman barber each other in an
all Brahman village.



A Chhetri.

This happens easily among the peasant class Brahmans and Chhetris, whereas middle-class families consider it highly improper for a newly married couple to separate from their parents. But after a girl has children she gradually feels more and more secure and at home.

The new bride has a very hard time in her husband's house. Only for the first few days after marriage is she indulged because of other people's curiosity. Soon after that she has to work very hard to win the confidence not only of her husband but of all other members of her husband's family—the father, the mother, and the wives of her husband's brothers, if there are any—before she can establish herself in the household.

Among the occupational castes, marriage customs are a simplified version of the Brahman and Chhetri type. These lower castes drink large quantities of liquor and create a much more informal wedding atmosphere.

Some Chhetris in the far western districts of Doti, Dadeldhura, and in the surrounding areas never eat the rice cooked by their wives. The women are given only menial work to do. Throughout the western hills including Dhaulagiri and Lumbini Zones it is a common practice for Chhetris and Brahmans to take a bride price for their daughters from their would-be husbands. The payment varies from one hundred to a thousand rupees.

Among certain of these people in Dadeldhura and Baitadi who indeed wear the sacred thread and claim the status of Chhetris, there is a practice of selling their daughters to rich Thakuris or Brahmans, who dedicate the girls they buy in the name of certain deities. According to local tradition these girls, when they become mature, can cohabit with any man they want and become prostitutes, but it is irreligious for them to marry a man. As a result they produce children who do not have an officially recognized father. Such men are called *devko* and women, *devki* or *dev dashi*, which means 'attendant of a deity'. These women, of course, perpetuate the trade and custom by remaining 'single' all their lives.

All Brahmans and Chhetris and the occupational castes are Hindus, and as such they follow the religious practices and observe the religious festivals of Hinduism. They worship Shiva, Vishnu, Rama, Krishna, and thousands of other deities of the Hindu pantheon. The only exceptions are the Chhetris and Matwali Chhetris of Karnali Zone and Dolpo who worship Mashta alone and do not know or care about any Hindu deities or festivals. Their religious leaders are Dhamis (Jhankri).

They worship gods and goddesses on a number of religious festivals. Most

important of them is *dashain* or *durga puja*, observed for a whole fortnight in October. During this period they worship the goddess Durga (Kali) and indulge in feasting and merrymaking. On the tenth day of the fortnight they have a *tika* festival. On this occasion each individual male or female has to pay respect to his or her senior relatives, who reciprocate by putting a coloured *tika* mark on the forehead of the junior person. This is done inside the immediate family and outside of it within the extended kin group and among other relatives.

Tihar is another big festival, which falls a fortnight after the last day of *dashain*. *Tihar* is also known as *dipavali*, 'festival of lights', since every family puts dozens of lamps on the outside of the house for the last three of the five days of the festival. They worship various deities on different days and offer food and decorate and worship one per day : a crow, a dog, a cow, a bull, and Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth. On the last day all the women worship and offer gifts of food to their brothers. This is *bhai tika*, and such worshipping and blessing of brothers by sisters is believed to protect them against evils.

In addition to the above mentioned festivals there are a number of other occasions when Hindus worship one or the other god and have a feast. On most of these occasions excluding *tihar* they need a Brahman priest to conduct the *puja* ceremonies. The Brahman priests read excerpts from the holy Vedic text for the general welfare of their *jajman*, 'clients'. The Brahmans also recite the *puranas* and the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* epics in Sanskrit and translate them orally into Nepali for the benefit of their *jajman*.

Brahman families appoint some other Brahman as their priest. Most of the Brahmans living in rural areas appoint their sister's son, father's sister's son, or daughter's son as family priest.

Besides the regular festivals at home or in the village, individual families visit local temples and shrines, of which there are many, and also make pilgrimage to rather distant temples. The farther away the temples or shrines are the greater their importance. Many Nepalis place a very high priority on pilgrimages to the temples of Viswonath (Shiva, in Benaras), and to *char dham*, the 'four places' of pilgrimage. The *char dham* are located at the four corners of India, namely, Jaganath at Puri, Ramesworam in Madras State, Dwarkanath in Gujarat, and Badrinath in Uttar Pradesh. An equally important and holy quest of Hindu pilgrims is Pashupatinath in Kathmandu.

Brahmans and Chhetris always cremate their dead by the side of a river. A

small piece of bone is preserved at the end, while the rest is burnt down into ashes and thrown into the river. The preserved piece of bone, *asthi*, is taken into the middle of the river and buried there, or, if the family can afford to do so, it is taken to Benaras in India and cast into the Holy Ganges.

Mourning for a death is observed for thirteen days by all the surviving family members and other near relations; distant relations observe it only for a day by bathing and fasting. Those who mourn for thirteen days abstain from eating salt, oil, meat, pulses, and a number of other things. The men shave their heads, abstain from wearing the red *tika* mark on their foreheads and attend no ceremony of songs or dancing. They also observe ritual pollution during this period; they may not offer food or even water to a person who is not in mourning nor can they go to a temple or make offerings to a god.

The son of a dead person has to restrict himself to a number of austerities during the period of the thirteen days' mourning. He must shave all the hair from his body and wear only a white loincloth called *langauti* and a small scarf tied about his head. He must wear nothing more than these two small pieces of white cloth. He eats only one meal a day consisting of boiled rice, *ghee* and sugar. Besides this, he has to conduct a ritual under the guidance of a Brahman priest that takes several hours daily for thirteen days and requires bathing several times in cold water during the ritual performance. This whole funeral activity is called *kriya*; and at the end a big feast is given to the relatives, neighbors, and particularly to all those who participated in the funeral procession and went to the cremation *ghat*. Food, clothing, furniture, pots, pans and such other things considered necessary for the decedent in the next life are all given as gifts to the officiating Brahman priest.

At the conclusion of the funeral ceremony the survivors have the obligation of performing an annual *shraddha* ceremony in the name of the dead. *Shraddha* is also a ritual conducted by the decedent's son or husband and officiated at by a hired Brahman priest. It is followed by a small feast. A close male relative or a Brahman does the ceremony in the absence of a son.

The occupational and artisan caste people cannot employ a Brahman priest for their funeral ceremonies but use instead the sister's son or daughter's husband to act the part. This person does not read from a text, but merely guides the funeral process.

There are several important observances and life-cycle ceremonies to note. A woman has to observe pollution for the first four days during her monthly course.

She is treated as untouchable during this period, at the end of which time she must wash herself and all the clothes she has used during the period before she may touch anybody. A mother and her newborn child are considered untouchable until the eleventh day, at which time a purifying ceremony and the name-giving ceremony are conducted. An appropriate name for the newborn baby is determined by an astrologer according to the positions of the stars at the exact moment of birth. It is very important that the moment of birth should be recorded carefully, although in fact most people living in the countryside can only give an approximate hour of the day.

It is important that the father of the baby be present at *nivaran*, the name giving ceremony. This is much more important in the case of an unmarried girl's giving birth to a baby, since the occasion is for the official declaration of the biological as well as the social fatherhood of the man. However, babies born in proper wedlock have no problems even if the father cannot be present for the occasion since the case is obvious; any near collateral cousin or a real brother of the baby's father can act in his stead for the ceremony. But failure to bring a father for a baby born outside of wedlock, or in a doubtful case of a married woman, leads her and the baby automatically into the status of untouchability.

The next ceremony for the child follows about five or six months after *nivaran*. It is the weaning ceremony, called *pasni*. Various kinds of food and other things are prepared for the occasion. All the relatives of both the father and the mother of the baby are invited, and they give food and other presents to the child. Normally, a girl is weaned when she is five months old, whereas a baby boy is weaned only in the seventh month.

When a boy is five or seven years old, he takes part in a ceremony called *chudakarma* or *kshyaur*. His head is shaved, leaving only a small tuft of hair at the back of the head called a *tupi*, 'top-knot'. This top-knot indicates that he is Hindu. Only the brother of the boy's mother can officiate at this ceremony. If there is no real brother a cousin can be brought in.

One more important formal ceremony before marriage in the case of a boy is the *bratabandha*, also called *upanayana sanskar*, performed when he receives the sacred thread. Brahman boys are given the sacred thread when they are seven or nine years old, while Chhetri boys usually receive their thread at the age of thirteen or fifteen or even later than that. With the wearing of the sacred thread the child takes



Chhetri Women of far West.



A wedding procession going through a Patan Street.

on several new caste responsibilities. For instance, he is now eligible to eat in company with his seniors, whereas as a child he had to eat separately.

Girls have no ceremony to undergo after *pasni* and before marriage. However, at the age of nine, ten, or eleven some people give their daughters a full set of adult clothes, that is, a sari and a blouse. The girl is then free to wear the sari and blouse if she chooses. In rural areas girls of eleven or twelve wear women's dress, but few urban girls wear it until they are at least sixteen or seventeen years old.

When a girl attains puberty and has her first menstruation she is taken to another house where she is confined for a fortnight, during which period she cannot see or be seen by her brothers, father, father's brothers, or male cousins. She must not touch water or food not meant for her, and for a whole fortnight she is treated as untouchable even by other women. She has to repeat this for seven days during her second mense and only for four days each subsequent period except that she need not hide from her brothers and cousins after the second time. She must at all costs avoid touching even her own son during her period if he has received his sacred thread. This custom is disappearing among modern, educated urban girls.

A son is very important for any Brahman or Chhetri, not only economically and socially, but also from the point of view of his parents' next lives after death. In marriage a man and wife fulfill not only their economic, social, and biological needs, and the obligations of the previous life, but they create something in store for the next. In like manner, a son is not only important as insurance for the parents in their old age, but he is also necessary for conducting their funeral rites and important for taking the deceased across the land of *preta*, the 'spirit of the dead', to *swarga*, 'heaven'—or to *narka*, 'hell', as the case may be. Without funeral rites the decedent is condemned to hover around in mid-air in the form of an evil spirit which causes trouble for the surviving folk. A son, therefore, is highly gratifying merely because he is a son.

NEWAR

The Newar people are the indigenous inhabitants of the valley of Kathmandu. They are the people seen in the greatest numbers in the capital city, and they are found in great numbers in every market town and village in the outlying districts, the hills and the Terai. They are small shopkeepers, big businessmen, importers, exporters, farmers, craftsmen and so on. Among them you will find artisans and caste groups ranging from the lowest to the highest, from sweeper to priest, both Buddhist and Hindu. They are a unique and interesting people, and one of the oldest known groups in Nepal.

Many scholars, foreign and Nepali, have studied the Newars, and much has been published concerning them. It is natural, therefore, for most people who have any knowledge of Nepal to have heard or read of the Newars. The term Newar itself was derived from the name of the country, or vice versa. When we refer to Nepal in association with just the Newar people we usually mean only the Nepal Valley, Kathmandu Valley.

At present the term 'Newar' describes a fairly complex group of people. It is not really fair to discuss them under just one title, as has been done with every other group in these pages, but for brevity and uniformity Newars must be treated as one subject here. After all, theirs is a cultural entity, although it is not one single ethnic group in the sense that Gurungs, Magars, or Tamangs are for example. In fact, the Newars were a 'nation' apart, until they merged into the larger Nepal formed during the eighteenth century by a large and powerful group that came from outside Kathmandu Valley. These later arrivals, the Shahs of Gorkha and other Chhetris and Brahmans, dominated the valley in short order and set about to unify the country politically, while the Newars underwent a significant process of change.

Today the term 'Newar' embraces people of both Mongoloid and Mediterranean physical types who speak both Nepali, an Indo-Aryan language, and Newari, a Tibeto-Burman language which includes some half a dozen dialects.

Because of the complexities in the composition of Newar society, scholars in the past have developed various interesting theories about their origins. The Newari language, although greatly influenced by Sanskrit, is still distinctly a Tibeto-Burman tongue. Although it uses Dev Nagri script today, it does have its own script as well.

Sylvain Lévi put forward the theory that Newars migrated to Nepal from "regions north of the Himalayas".¹ Some other scholars² suggest that the Newars may have originated in South India, with ties or distinct similarities to a Hindu community on the Malabar coast called the Nair, or Nayar. This theory was probably based on the mere phonetic similarity of terms that describe them and on one or two other coincidences of customs. Not believing either of these theories complete, Christoph von Furer-Haimendorf draws his own conclusion that "the bulk of the Newar people had been settled in the Nepal Valley since prehistoric times."³ Regmi, however, speculates that the early Newars may have an ancestry connected with both the Kiranti and the Lichhavis, one-time rulers of the Nepal Valley.⁴

During the course of history a considerable amount of cultural influence has been exerted on the Newar culture by various immigrant groups. These immigrants were ultimately absorbed into the Newar community. Of all the people who migrated to the Nepal Valley, the Malla Kshatriyas of India were the most distinctive. The beginning of Newar civilization is estimated to be around the 6th century B.C. when the Kiratas, Kolliyas, Salmaliyas, Sakyas, Lichhavis and Shresthis combined to form the earliest known group of the Nepal Valley.⁵ The Mallas ruled from the thirteenth to the eighteenth century, when they were finally replaced by the Shah Kings. The Mallas brought with them the influence of a Hindu socio-religious base. To an otherwise non-caste country they introduced the caste system after the fashion of the Indian Hindu caste hierarchy followed by the vast majority of Indian immigrants to Nepal.

Today, the bulk of the Newar population is concentrated inside the Valley in the large cities of Kathmandu, Patan, Bhadgaun, Kirtipur and half a dozen smaller towns. In addition, a fair number of Newars have settled in villages and markets outside Kathmandu Valley during the course of the last two centuries.

The Newars total nearly 400,000 people, of which fifty-five per cent are living

1 Christoph von Furer-Haimendorf, "Elements of Newar Social Structure", *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Society* London, 1956), Vol. 86, Part II, pp. 15-38, quoting Sylvain Lévi, *Le Nepal*.

2 Dr. Gopal Singh Nepali, *The Newars* (Bombay, 1965), pp. 28-29.

3 Furer Haimendorf, *op. cit.*

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

5 Shanti Surav, "Aitihāsik Pristhabhumima Newar ra tinko Sanskriti". *Hamro Sanskriti* Vol. 3 No. 3 Dept. of Culture HMG 2026. Jeth 30. pp. 33-34.

in Kathmandu Valley. The rest are spread almost equally through the eastern and western hills and adjacent Terai plains. In their movement away from the Valley some Newars, unlike other people of Nepal, have made an exception to an otherwise general rule of migrating eastward; they have settled in the western towns of Pokhara, Tansen, and Butwal, and even in the far western Silgarhi Doti. The differences in migration trends reflect specialization of professions. Newars have always travelled for trade and business, while all other groups, Thakalis excepted, migrate in search of land for farming or for other employment. There have been very few Newars living in these outlying districts who have taken to agriculture as their sole occupation, whereas in Kathmandu Valley great numbers of Newars are strictly farmers.

Newar housetypes in the outlying districts are basically the same as in Kathmandu Valley. Houses are built closely together and line the cobbled streets and alleys. The standard house has several storeys, many and large framed doors and windows, and often a verandah overlooking the street below. Roofs are almost always of tile or slate, with only the few very poorest Newars in the villages using thatch roofing. Elaborately carved wooden doors and windows are the mark of Newar aristocracy.

Subdivisions within Newar society are at the same time unique and involved. One's religion is either Hindu or Buddhist or even both; and furthermore, one belongs to a particular subgroup which is ranked in order by the rules of the caste hierarchy. For reference in the ensuing discussion the following diagram outlines the Newar caste system.¹

Caste	Traditional Occupation	Personal Surname
✓ 1. Deo Brahman	Family Priests	Raj Upadhaya
2. Bhatta Brahman	Temple Priests	Bhatta
3. Jha Brahman	Temple Priests	Jha
✓ 4. Gubhaju	Family Priests	Vajracarya
Bare	Gold and Silver Smiths	Sakyabhikshu
5. Shrestha (Sheshya)	Merchants	Shrestha, or Malla, Josi, Pradhan, Raj Bhandari, Maske, Raj Lawat, Amatya, Raj Vamsi and others.

¹ From Rosser, "Social mobility in the Newar Caste System" in Haimendorf, ed., *Caste and Kin in Nepal India and Ceylon*, London, 1966.

Caste	Traditional Occupation	Personal Surname
6. Uray (Udas)	Merchants and Craftsmen	Tuladhar (merchants) Lo-haka : mi (masons), Awa : (tilers) Sika : mi (Carpenters) Madika : mi (confectioners), Tamrakar (coppersmiths), Kamsakar (workers in alloys)
✓ 7. Jyapu	Farmers	Maharajan, Dangol, Suwal, Duwal, Sapu (cow-herd), Kabhuja, Musa, Lawat, etc.
8. Kuma	Potters	Kumale, Prajapati
9. Saymi	Oilpressers	Manandhar
10. Khusa	Palanquin Bearers	Khusa, Tandukar
11. Nau	Barbers	Napit
12. Kau	Blacksmiths	Naka : mi
13. Bha	Funeral Duties	Karamjit, Bha
14. Gathu	Gardeners	Bammala, Mali
15. Tepe	Cultivators	Tepe
16. Pum	Painters	Citrakar
17. Duhim	Carriers	Putwar, Dali
18. Balami	Fieldworkers	Balami
19. Pulu	Funeral Torch Bearers	Pulu
20. Chipa	Dyers	Ranjitkar
✓ 21. Jogi	Musicians and Tailors	Kanphatta, Giri, Dom, Kusle, Danya
✓ 22. Nay	Butchers and Musicians	Kasain, Khadgi
✓ 23. Kulu	Drum-makers	Kulu
✓ 24. Pore	Fishermen and Sweepers	Pore, Deola
✓ 25. Chami	Sweepers	Chami, Camkhala
26. Halhulu	Sweepers	Halahulu

Scholars believe that the Newars were predominantly Buddhist in the early period. Later, Brahman and Rajput immigrants from India brought Hinduism with them. From the thirteenth century onwards political power came into the hands of the Malla Kings, high caste Hindus, concurrently with the gradual degeneration of Buddhism, which in time incorporated the rigid caste formula. However, the two religious groups have never antagonized each other to any obvious extent ; only mutual integration has taken place.

The Gubhajas are traditionally Buddhist priests, but a majority of them work as masons, carpenters, wood carvers, ivory workers, painters, goldsmiths, silver-smiths, brass smiths and bronze smiths. The Bare caste, second in ritual status among Buddhist Newars, are also artisans. These Gubhaju, Bare, and other Newar artisans developed unique architectural monuments, various domestic arts and an urban civilisation, a heritage which contemporary Nepal is proud to claim.

The Uray and Sheshya—or more commonly, hereafter, Shrestha—of either religious group are traditionally businessmen and shopkeepers. In the rural areas of Kathmandu Valley and throughout the hill districts many Shresthas have settled as farmers. In the markets and cities they work as civil servants or in other professions.

Within the Shrestha community there are three hierarchically ranked groups which describe themselves as *chha-thare*, *panch-thare* and *char-thare*, literally 'six-', 'five-' and 'four-grade' Shresthas. The *chha-thare* are the highest class among them and in fact consider themselves above almost all Newars. They do not call themselves 'Shrestha', but use their family names, for example, Pradhan, Malla, Pradhananga, Munshi, Joshi, Rajbhandari and so on. Some people believe that *chha-thare* is not the correct word to describe them. The term appears to be a corruption of the Nepali word Chhetri which immediately brings to mind another element of status classification. The *chha-thare* Shresthas do follow many traditions very similar to those of the Chhetris. *Char-thare* is the term used slightly to describe the new entrants from the lower castes.

Uray or Udhas are general merchants or craftsmen in various specialized fields.

Jyapus are the farmers of the community, whose grain and vegetable produce is seen in the market places. They use an hoe for field work and never use bullocks as is most generally done in the hill and Terai regions. For carrying loads they use a yoke balanced across the shoulders, slung with two baskets. Jyapus also run domestic errands for wages for other caste people, but culturally and religiously they



7
A Basket Shop.

are interdependent with the Gubhaju, Bare and Uray. Kumales are almost exclusively potters by trade.

The following groups, briefly, are the skilled labourer castes who work to make the Newar community run smoothly : the Chipa are colour dyers ; Saymi run the oil presses ; Kau are blacksmiths ; Pum are painters and printers ; Mali work as gardeners and florists and also play an important role in the ritual life of the temples by performing as the masked and costumed dancers in ritual performances ; Nau are barbers and nail cutters, but they leave cutting the toe nails of anyone beneath the Jyapu in caste to the Nay caste of butchers. Duhim are poor agricultural labourers, often called upon to porter loads as well, and are also masked performers in religious dances. Bha have the specific role of pipers during funeral processions. Pore are the keepers of the temples of Tantric deities in addition to being sweepers. Kulu, Pore, Chame and Halahulu are considered the lowest of the Newar caste hierarchy.

First among Hindus are the priestly Deo Brahmins. The Bhatta Misra and Jha Brahman act as temple priests, recite religious texts, and take roles as lawyers, pleaders and advocates. The Misra and Jha Brahman were 'adopted' into the Newar community several centuries ago after migrating up from India, but they still maintain contact with their original community in Tirhut in Bihar State. Therefore the Misra and Jha are referred to as "Tirhute Brahman." Other Newars do not consider them Newar. The Deo Brahmins migrated from India to Nepal Valley independently of the Brahmins discussed in the previous chapter. Today there is absolutely no social intercourse at caste levels between the two groups although many are living in close proximity in urban Kathmandu, Patan and Bhadgaun.

The Shrestha Hindus have virtually the same standing ritually and economically as their Buddhist counterparts. But because of the greater political power of the Hindu aristocracy from the time of Malla kings through to the Rana days, the Hindus have enjoyed more prestige and social recognition. Therefore there was an incentive to many Buddhist Newars to turn to Hindu ways. Dr. Colin Rosser gives an excellent account of this process in his article "Social Mobility in the Newar Castes System."¹

The low caste Jogis are tailors and play musical instruments on special occasions, notably at the weddings of those caste people listed above them.

Marriage customs among Newars are as interesting and often as involved as

1 Colin Rosser, *op. cit.*

their social-religious organization. During certain months of the year the wedding bands of Newar marriages can be heard and seen parading through the streets and alleyways during the night, and the festivities at Newar homes always draw inquisitive crowds.

Marriage is as a rule patrilocal and monogamous. The parents traditionally arrange marriages for their sons and daughters, although with the modernization of Nepali society, the number of young people who choose their own partners is increasing. Marriage by elopement is more commonly practised by the Newars living outside of the large urban areas. The marriage partners must belong to different descent group lineages within the same caste group. Among the Shresthas, since they are divided into the three grades discussed earlier, one's marriage partner must be from the same grade as well. Buddhist Newars living in a *baha*, a residential quadrangle around a central court with Buddhist shrines and temples, consider themselves to be of common descent, and intermarriage therein is a taboo. In some areas the rule of 'seven generations' of descent is also observed; members who fall within the common descent group of seven generations are restricted from intermarriage.

Many Newars—especially Buddhist Newars—do not consider marriage as a particularly sacred or unbreakable union or relationship. It is looked upon from a matter of fact point of view. Divorce is not subject to much criticism. But Hindu Newars tend to follow the attitudes of Brahmans and Chhetris and avoid divorce.

A majority of Newars observe the symbolically arranged marriage of their daughters with a *bel* fruit before they ever marry a man. The *bel* fruit marriage is done when the girl is seven to nine years old, or before she attains puberty; and since it is the general belief of Hindu and Buddhist Newar communities that a proper marriage with full rites can be held only once in a lifetime, her subsequent marriages, if any, are considered of only secondary importance. Although a Newar girl marries a boy later on with almost the full ritual, the girl retains her marital status with the *bel* fruit. So a woman can, if she wishes, break her marriage with her husband by giving the gift of areca nuts she received during the wedding back to him or by putting those areca nuts beside the dead body of her husband in the event of his death. The wife, by this act, becomes free to enter into another marriage union and also escapes the obligation of mourning for the death of her husband.

The Newar marriage is completed after several stages of formalities. At first the father of the boy locates a girl whom he considers to be a suitable bride for his

son. Then he appoints one of his relatives as a mediator to carry on the negotiations back and forth. Meanwhile, the horoscopes of both the boy and the girl are analysed by an astrologer who determines whether the two will make a good match. Once it is agreed that the horoscopes are compatible, several presentations of small gifts of food, sweets, areca nuts and fruits are sent to the girl's parents by the boy's parents. The wedding ceremonies follow.

The noted Newar scholar Purna Harsha Bajracharya¹ says that on the day before the marriage ceremony a *pathi*, or about one gallon, of milk with some molasses and cardamon is sent to the girl's home. This ceremony, called *duradai*, is a symbolical act of repayment to the girl's mother for suckling her. The following evening, the girl's parents give a feast to their relatives and friends. The invitees bring their gifts for the girl, usually brass and copper bowls and silver plates and spoons. The maternal uncle of the girl usually brings a goat. The mother gives her a box for keeping vermilion powder, and her father gives a bronze mirror.

On this same wedding evening a procession is organized at the house of the boy. The party consists mostly of male relatives and friends of the family, numbering a hundred or more depending upon the status of the family. After having been entertained with sweets, dried fruits, betel nuts and cigarettes, they leave for the girl's house preceded by a musical band. Except in a very few cases among the *chhathare* Shresthas, the groom stays behind at his own house. The procession usually arrives at the girl's house between nine and ten o'clock at night. The members are entertained again with sweets and nuts, after which all but the groom's father and a few close relatives return to their own houses. After midnight the girl is carried in a hammock (This is being replaced by cars in the urban areas) slung on a long pole to the house of a friend of the boy's father, who accompanies her. Some people take the bride directly to the groom's parents' house.

Early the next morning the bride is taken to the groom's house and welcomed at the gate by her mother-in-law. The bridegroom's mother bathes the bride's feet with holy water, gives her a key and takes her into the house. Inside, a priest completes the ritual, invoking and offering food to various deities. At the end, the bride distributes areca nuts to all members of the family including the groom. This day's ceremony is completed as the bride and groom eat ritual food from the same plate.

1 Purna Harsha Bajracharya, "Newar Marriage Customs and Festivals". *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*, Vol. 15 (1959).

In the evening a big feast is provided to friends and relatives at which a son-in-law of the bridegroom's family serves curds, the bride-groom's mother serves wine, and the groom serves sweets.

The following day the bride is formally received into the family kitchen where they all eat boiled rice and other food. The day after that the bride is taken to the family deity where the family priest conducts a ceremony wherein the groom combs the hair of his bride, puts medicated oils in her hair and applies vermilion to her forehead. This evening the bride's father, accompanied by a few near relatives, comes to fetch her back to his house where she is offered fruit, nuts and liquor. The groom is invited to accompany her and on arriving there is offered sweets, nuts and the like. Following these simple observances of respect for the new marriage relationship between families, the groom returns home with his bride to make a home within his larger extended family.

The Newar woman in her husband's house has much more authority and freedom than her Brahman or Chhetri counterpart. She is readily accepted into the extended family group and adapts quickly to her new role in relation to the family and in particular to her husband.

Returning now to the more general social-religious organization of Newar society, it might appear at first glance that the vast majority of people living in Kathmandu are Buddhists. Until the 1952-1954 official census report this was thought to be true. That report however points out that far less than half of the Newar population of the Valley are Buddhist; and when the number of Buddhists from other ethnic communities, Sherpas, Tamangs and the like, is considered, the point is obvious: despite appearances Buddhist Newars are a definite minority. This illustrates the process of Hinduization of Buddhist Newars because of the higher prestige enjoyed by high caste Hindus.

As far as religious practices and the worship of the Hindu and Buddhist deities are concerned, neither religious group can be strictly placed in one category. Both parties visit and worship the same deities in Hindu and Buddhist temples. In fact, many of the temples and shrines in Kathmandu Valley have both Hindu and Buddhist deities often adjacent to each other. For example, the famous Swayambhu Chaitya on the hilltop just west of Kathmandu city is purely a Buddhist shrine, but on the same grounds is a shrine to Saraswati, a Hindu goddess of learning; and in fact there is even a Hindu goddess situated within the entrance of the big Buddhist chaitya itself. Hindus and Buddhists visit both sites to pay their respects. There



Temple Carving.

are many other examples of this phenomenon in Kathmandu and in other parts of Nepal as well.

Almost all of the large religious festivals are observed and participated in by both groups with equal enthusiasm. Only domestic ceremonies and rites can be said to be peculiar to one or the other religious group. In fact, Colin Rosser "noted many cases throughout the Kathmandu Valley of individual Newar families employing a Brahman for some of its domestic rituals and a Gubhaju for others within the same household (sometimes indeed both priests would be present at the same time)"¹. The Gubhaju, who are also called Bajracharya and addressed as *gurju*, are the family priests of Buddhist Newars. Deo Brahmans, who are addressed as *juju*, are the Hindu priests. Bares, known as Sakyas or Sakyabhikshu, Misra and Jha Brahmans act as temple priests and recite religious texts among their respective groups.

The religious practices of lower castes are much less involved since they have little in the way of domestic ritual ceremony and therefore do not have to hire priests.

Gubhaju and Bare boys have to undergo an initiation ceremony before they are actually accepted as Bajracharya or Sakyabhikshu. The initiation ceremony is believed to date back to earlier days when boys were initiated into a celibate life of discipline before being admitted to a *baha*, the monastic residence. The initiation ceremony was called *bare chhuigu*.

Usually this ceremony of *bare chhuigu* is organized for all the Gubhaju and Bare boys of one residential *baha* once in seven years. The Hindu Newars have a similar initiation ceremony called *kaita puja* or *brata bandha*. For a Gubhaju boy, however, there is one more ritual to observe called *acharyabhishek*, after which he is considered eligible to act as a priest.

The Buddhist monasteries of the early days, indicated by the great number of *bahas* in Kathmandu and Patan, are believed to have degenerated under Hindu influence and the introduction of the caste system. The caste system, writes Regmi, got regularized and hardened in due course and monasteries dying out produced the priest class of the Buddhist community, its monks easily turned into priests under the influence of Vajrayana ritualism. What Vajrayana started, Shaiva (a form of Hinduism) influence later on consolidated and hardened...²

1 Colin Rosser, *op. cit.*

2 Regmi, *op. cit.*

On the same subject David Snellgrove writes :

It is certainly an interesting problem how monks, who were once self-professed and presumably came from all classes of Newar society, and spiritual masters, who once owed their position to their personal knowledge and reputation, should have become an hereditary caste closed to the rest of society. This is something which has occurred in no other Buddhist country.¹

Of all the Nepali people, Newars observe the greatest number of festivals and feasts. They spend a great amount of money and food on such occasions, the food consisting of buffalo meat, beaten rice, vegetables, pickles, curd and large quantities of beer and spirit. They take great pride and pleasure in spending great amounts for good food for the large feasts, more so than for domestic or family needs. Even the Jyapus, who are mainly peasants of small to average means, spend heavily for feasts and festivities.

The largest public festival in Kathmandu is *indra jatra*, which lasts for eight days in *mid-Bhadra*, usually coinciding with the end of September or the first week in October. At this time the people worship Indra, the God of rain, and a number of religious dances are performed by artists wearing most colourful dresses and headdresses representing various deities. They parade carts carrying Kumari, the "living goddess", and Ganesh and Bhairav, represented by a Bare girl and two Bare boys respectively, through the streets of Kathmandu city. Although the greater part of this festival is quite old, the *rath jatra*, or "cart festival", is said to have begun in the year 1756 A.D., during the reign of King Jaya Prakash Malla. At that time a girl of Bare caste was said to have been possessed by the goddess Kumari, who claimed that she was the protector of the Nepal Valley. Ever since, a girl representing Kumari has been worshipped. A beautiful house with golden windows was built for her, and every year she was taken round the city at the time of *indra jatra* by her attendants Ganesh and Bahirav. Even today a virgin girl of Bare caste is chosen for the position and can keep her role until she sheds blood from a cut or by menstruation, and two boys of seven or eight years are chosen to be her escorts. These three children are put into their temple-like cart for the parade and the townspeople worship them with offerings of flowers and vermilion powder.

Another equally important festival is *gai jatra*. All families in which one or

¹ David Snellgrove, "Shrines and Temples of Nepal" in *Arts Asiatiques* VIII (Paris, 1961).

more members died during the preceding year send decorated cows around the city. Those who cannot afford the actual cow may employ a small boy to wear colourful clothes and a basket covered with painted papers on his head to represent the cow. This is done to help the dead members of the family to enter the gates of heaven. *Gaijatra* occurs one month ahead of *indrajatra*. Morning sees the "cows" through the city streets, and later in the afternoon some people come out in various costumes to act as clowns, criticising or mimicking the social, political or individual peculiarities of the society or of certain officials and amuse the thousands of spectators gathered for the occasion along the streets. Lately the journalists of Kathmandu have begun to use the occasion in producing special *gaijatra* issues of some newspapers to the same effect.

Rathjatra of Machendranath in Patan and Kathmandu are occasions for thousands of people to enjoy the sight of forty-eight foot high carts being dragged through the narrow streets of the town. The observance in Patan city lasts for more than a month, beginning in May, while the cart is being dragged slowly on its way. At several points the procession stops for several days. When all is done at month's end, the brocade vest of the god Machendranath is displayed from the balcony of the high cart to the thousands of people collected to see it at Jawalakhel where the festival terminates.

Newars observe a number of other religious festivals, including *dashain* and *tihar*, celebrated by the majority of Nepali people throughout the country. Family occasions play an equally important role on a small scale and involve feasting and rituals often just a few days apart.

Most of the Newar traders and merchants found settled in outlying districts, away from Kathmandu Valley, observe these same large and small religious occasions, though usually on a smaller and less elaborate scale. To be sure, they follow the pattern of ritual in all aspects of the religious life, from the pollution of birth to the cremation, mourning, and pollution of death.

On all of these occasions the men and women are dressed smartly. Women of the Buddhist community are fond of gold ornaments in their ears, over the head, and around the the neck. Modern young girls, however, do not wear the gold and ornaments of the older generations. The woman's sari and blouse is either covered by a padded, quilted, material or by thin coloured muslin in the form of a gown. The Indian style sari and blouse is becoming more and more popular among Newar women. School girls wear white trousers and a dress, with a fine scarf around the

neck, reminiscent of the Punjabi Indian costume. Young men and boys wear European-style trousers and shirts, while the older generations still prefer the Nepali traditional dress.

The dress of Jyapu men and women is an exception to general Newar costume. They wear their own home-made garments from homespun cotton materials. The women have black saris with red bordering, their blouses are of finely woven cotton material, and huge waist-bands of plain cotton complete the costume. The style of wearing the sari varies from the standard of other Newar communities. Furthermore, Jyapu women have tatoos on their calves and ankles, which are exposed while wearing the sari, and they ornament themselves with gold earrings and silver necklaces.

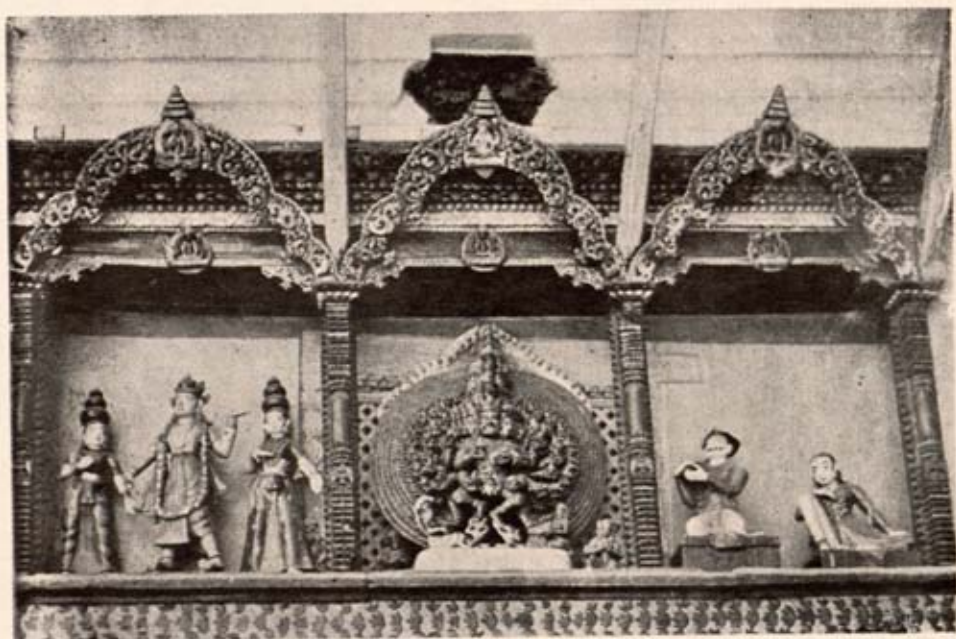
Jyapu men wear the Nepali suit without the western suit jacket which is seen so often on other Nepali men. Instead, they wear a waist-band of plain white cotton material and a waistcoat of their own style, which is slightly different from the western one.

The Jyapu woman is kept busy throughout the year because of her obligation to weave all the cotton material for family clothing requirements, in addition to her responsibilities in the family fields.

Over the centuries the Newars have developed a purely urban mode of living. Even those who are strictly farmers or skilled artisans in support of the remaining population are town dwellers.

Newar settlements in the cities of Kathmandu and Patan consist of enclosed quadrangles with lines of brick houses on all four sides supporting exquisitely carved wooden doors and windows. The quadrangles of the Buddhist *baha* communities invariably have a Buddhist shrine in the center and often a temple built into the line of houses along one side. Later on, the Hindu residential areas were also designed in the same manner. These quadrangle arrangements are simply known as *chok*, or 'courtyard'. The Hindu *chok* is comparatively recent and often does not include a temple. A *baha* or *chok* is usually inhabited by one patrilineal descent group of all castes and at all levels of society. But in the present push for expansion of the towns, main roads, and shopping centers, the Newar residential areas are not following the tradition of a common patrilineal locality.

It is quite usual under all circumstances for the Newar family to stay as closely associated as possible. Haimendorf illustrates this Newar characteristic rather



Carving over the Gate in the Palace Square.



Macchendra Nath and the worshippers.

clearly. A Newar, he says,

sees in the precincts of his town the historic limits to the spread of patrilineal exagamous descent groups and considers the citizens of other towns as members of an out-group, even if they should bear a clan name identical with his own.¹

Newars were not as widespread as many other people until some time back. Adventure was apparently not attractive to them. However, during the last two hundred years Newars seem to have left their original home and settled down in distant districts to the west and east. They must have felt relatively secure in making such moves after the consolidation of Nepal by the Shah Kings, or perhaps the intrusion of a large number of powerful people from outside the Valley frustrated them to the extent that they risked moving business and family life away from Kathmandu Valley.

But the style of living, the cultural traditions, and the occupations of trade and business have all been preserved intact even in those communities which are removed by weeks' journeys from their place of origin. It is quite common while travelling in rural Nepal to come across small pockets of Newar culture in areas totally foreign to their traditional Kathmandu Valley environment.

The unique feature of Newar social-economic organization is the presence of a great number of *guthis*, a kind of "common trust" consisting mainly of cultivated lands as assets. The lands in the beginning were endowments of one or several families, but in the course of time they have become the property of the entire *guthi* membership. Most members are of a common descent group, but there are a few larger *guthis* which include several descent groups.

Among Jyapu Newars most of the *guthi* lands are cultivated by the members themselves, but in the rest of the Newar communities the lands are leased out to tenants, who are obliged to pay their rent to a specially appointed *guthi* member. The man in charge of these rents is expected to conduct worship of the deity to whom the lands are dedicated and also to arrange one or more feasts for the entire membership group. These obligations are given to each member in rotation yearly or in some cases every second, third or fifth year. Most *guthi* lands' net incomes are in excess of their requirements and are therefore profitable for the incumbent, but there are a few which can bring the person in charge of rents a considerable loss.

Guthis are of three types : religious, public service and social. Almost

¹ Fürer-Haimendorf, *op. cit.*

every Newar family is a member of a *digu puja guthi*, a religious *guthi* for worshipping the deity of an extended family. These *guthis* involve the membership of a common descent group, which gather to partake of the worship and feasts. There are a number of temples which also have *guthi* organizations responsible for their worship observances, and in these cases include membership from more than one caste or common descent group.

Other *guthis* are organised specifically for cremating the dead, conducting funerals, and maintaining temples, rest houses, bridges, roads, and the like. Their membership is drawn from several extended family units of common residence, and not necessarily of common descent. Thus a service *guthi* might include members of several caste levels and different religious groups, as in the case of those charged with the maintenance of temples, rest houses or bridges, etc.

For pure entertainment, fellowship and activities of common interest, the social *guthi* is organized. It includes members of one common locality, although not necessarily of common descent or relationship by marriage. The membership of the religious and service *guthis* is compulsory and inherited, while the social *guthi* is a voluntary organisation.

Each *guthi* is a well-organized unit with strict rules and conditions of membership and activities. The seniormost member is called *thakali*, the "eldest"; he acts as chairman and maintains the discipline of the rest of the members, who are called *guthiars*. The *guthi* decides disputes arising between members and takes action against the offender or against those who act in defiance of the rules and regulations of the organisation. A majority vote can levy fines or even expel a member, depending upon the gravity of the crime. Common offences include bad manners, irregularity in attendance, failure to fulfil one's assigned role in the *guthi*, breach of ritual observance, breach of caste rules and inappropriate sexual behaviour.

All Newars except Jogis, the tailor caste, cremate their dead by the riverside; the Jogis bury their dead. Whenever a death occurs in any Newar family, all the members of that person's cremation *guthi* and all his relatives are immediately informed. Those few persons who do not have such *guthis* are joined only by their relatives. The dead person is not removed from the house until all are present; then a green bamboo bier is prepared and the corpse is transported on it to the burning ghat. The dead body is covered by a yellow or red satin shroud which is removed at the time of burning and kept for further cremations in the house of a *guthi* member.

There is a strong tradition among most Newars, except *chhathare* Shresthas, that the funeral procession should consist of as many individuals wailing and crying as possible.

Mourning and pollution is observed by the next of kin for twelve days and for an entire year by the son. The rules and abstentions are similar to those of Brahmans and Chhetris.

KIRANTI

Introduction

The Kiranti people of east Nepal, more commonly known as Rai and Limbu, form together one of the largest single ethnic groups in Nepal, second only to the Tamangs. As numerous as they are, they are divided into a number of smaller *thar* tribal units, the major two being Rai and Limbu. Rai is technically a term meaning 'headman', but has over the years become the popular generic term of reference for an entire ethnic group. The Rai in some districts are called 'Jimidar' or 'Jimi', in other areas 'Khambu', and in some places they are referred to by a particular *thar* clan designation. In the course of time 'Rai' came to include the Yakha people, a third subdivision of the Kiranti.

Limbu people are addressed as *subba*, a term which, like *rai*, means 'chief' or 'headman'. In general, however, when speaking of the Kiranti people we refer to Rai and Limbu, not Rai and Subba.

Northey and Morris have written, concerning the origin of these terms, that when the Shah Gurkhas conquered the Kiranti tribes, the Gurkha Kings established some of the Jimidars as local rulers and gave them the title of *rai*, and Limbu headmen were similarly called *subba*. In time the use of these names came to include whole groups, and now we find Jimidars called Rai, Limbus called Subba, and the Yakha people called Dewan.¹

The Kiranti people speak a number of Tibeto-Burman dialects collectively known as the Kiranti language. Their Mongoloid appearance, pale yellowish pigmentation, and flat faces with almond shaped eyes, make them easily distinguishable from Chhetris and Brahmans living near them in the hills, and they can even be distinguished from Tamangs and Sherpas.

There are several theories concerning Kiranti ethnic origins. Some speak of coming from Tibet, while others insist that Kiranti have always lived in these hills of Nepal. One of the old Kiranti religious texts, the *Kirant ko Veda*,² indicates that at least some of their ancestors and ancient rajas came from Tibet. Whatever may have been their places of origin, Kirantis have been associated with the history

1 W. Brobk Northey and C. J. Morris, *The Gurkhas* (London, 1928) p. 216.

2 Iman Singh Chemjong, *Kirant ko Veda* (Bihar : 1961)

of Nepal for thousands of years. Their feats of bravery have been recorded in the great Hindu epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* and in the ancient annals of Nepal. Kiranti kings ruled Kathmandu Valley until the 2nd century A.D., and some historians believe that there may be a strain of Kiranti in the present day Newar community. Not much was recorded about Kirantis for a long period after their ruling era until the early nineteenth century when the Shah kings of Nepal began their expansion eastward. Thereafter the last Kiranti raja recorded was the Raja of Bijaypur, whose domain consisted of parts of Kosi, Mechi, and Sagarmatha Zones. His capital was at Bijayapur situated on a small hill about two miles east of Dharan in the district of Sunsari, Kosi Zone. The ruins of the old fort are still in evidence. Bijayapur's Kiranti raja was defeated near the end of the 18th century and his territory was annexed thereafter to the Kingdom of Nepal.

RAI

Of the two main subdivisions of Kiranti, the Rai are the most numerous. In the last official census in 1961¹, the Rai totalled about 240,000 as compared to 138,705 Limbus. Of the Rai population at that time all but 23,000 were found in the traditional hill regions, in the Kirant Pradesh and its neighbourhood, while most of the remainder were living in the eastern Terai plains near the Indian border with only a small number in Kathmandu Valley and the areas west of it.

These numbers are of course presently out of date, especially since the Terai has only recently been opened up by the near total eradication of malaria; hitherto uninhabitable lands are being put to the plough by the poorer hill farmers who have flocked southward. We must also take into account the numbers of both Rais and Limbus who for generations have lived in and around Darjeeling in India's West Bengal, Nepal's eastern neighbour.

The part of Kirant Pradesh which is traditionally inhabited by Rais is called *Manjh-Kirant*, 'Middle Kirant.' There the Rai settlements are spread along the valley slopes of the Dudh Kosi and Arun Rivers and their tributaries. *Pallo-Kirant*, or 'far Kirant', is Limbu territory. *Manjh-Kirant* includes Rai settlements in the districts of Solu-Khumbu, Okhaldunga, Khotang Bhojpur and Udaipur in Sagar-matha zone. Some old records indicate that Rais formerly occupied a much larger area than that in which they are found today. On *lalmohar* certificates affixed with the red seal during the reign of King Rajendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev (1816-1847) are indications that parts of Solu-Khumbu district and its pasture land, presently occupied in the main by Sherpas, belonged previously to the Rai community.

Most Rai settlements lie at altitudes of three to six thousand feet above sea level. Their small one storey houses are built of stone and are usually thatched or in some cases roofed with slate. These houses normally stand out in the cultivated dry fields quite apart from each other, in the same manner as Sherpa villages. Larger villages may spread along a slope for several miles. An example is the village of Bung comprising ninety-six houses scattered along the Hongu Valley, a tributary, of the Dudh Kosi: it is an hour's walk from the lower end to the topmost house.

¹ Department of Statistics, *National Census part II*, 1961 A. D. (Kathmandu, 2018 B. S.).

In July the low houses are almost hidden in the tall maize, but the same village in November is quite different and most attractive with yellow fields of flowering mustard and bright red poinsettias bordering the trails.

The houses of Bung, and of most other Rai villages in this particular area, invariably have two doors, one to the east and a second facing south. The Rai houses found along the upper Arun River are built on wooden piles, raised about five feet from the ground with access by a knothed wooden ladder to a frontside verandah. The walls are of bamboo and the roofs of bamboo matting. Beneath the piling, on the ground level, pigs, chickens and sheep are kept. A larger version of this same house pattern is used by the Tibetan-speaking Lhomi people living to the north.

Typical Rai household articles consist of a few brass pots, iron pans, earthen jars and basket containers for storing grain. Some Rais do not possess brass pots; their women fetch water from the river or spring in large bamboo pipes.

The Rais cultivate both dry and wet fields—the dry terraces in maize, millet, wheat, and some mustard, and the wet fields in rice. They grow enough grain to meet their daily needs and use the excess to make spirits and beer, which they enjoy in great quantities. In addition they grow various types of vegetables, beans, potatoes, and the like, and fruits such as oranges, bananas, jack fruit, and guavas. Their staple diet is a thick porridge of hand-ground flour of maize, wheat and millet, and on significant occasions they eat rice. Vegetables, beans and pulses are taken with their two daily meals. Both the Rai men and their womenfolk smoke cigarettes prepared from locally grown tobacco. The tobacco leaf is wrapped in the fine inner silk of maize.

The Rais of some villages have put in an incredible amount of work to raise stone walls and footings for their beautifully terraced fields along the steep mountainsides, which they irrigate to raise paddy. And in addition to cereals and vegetables they raise cotton, which is made into a coarse material for clothing. Some villagers collect the wild fibres of sisal hemp, which is processed at home and woven into a very coarse but extremely durable material. These cotton and sisal materials satisfy the domestic needs of some Rais living in the interior areas. Weaving is done by the women during their leisure between agricultural tasks. Those Rais in closer proximity to outside market places and larger towns rely on factory made cotton goods. Some women also make rugs of sheep's wool.

Rai women wear necklaces of red glass or plastic beads and of silver quarter-

half- and one-rupee Indian coins, and silver bangles and rings. Young girls carry a small jew's harp on a tassel that hangs from their blouse near the left shoulder. These instruments are three inches long, made of bamboo. The girls play them while walking or during short breaks while working in the fields and in the evenings.

Men in more isolated areas wear a vest and loincloth made out of coarse locally woven material. All men including boys nine or ten years old wear a *khukuri*, the Nepali knife, in their waist-band. Women wrap a very small skirt around their waists with a blouse above. The people near market towns, however, wear somewhat more lavish clothes of cotton material.

The requirements of living and farming in Manjh-Kirant, as in all of interior Nepal, make the Rais a hard working people. The planting and harvesting season from spring to autumn gives them plenty of work to do, and during the slack winter months the villagers make trips south to the important towns of Dharan, Janakpur and Jayanagar in the Terai to buy and pack home the necessary supplies of salt, oil, and materials for clothing or to find work for wages. They carry goods for trade rather than money on these trips.

Shifting cultivation is also practised by Rai farmers. Some of their dry fields, usually small clearings in the forest, are left fallow for two or three years before they are ploughed and planted again. One farmer may have several such fields and shift from one to another in successive seasons. Before the land is ploughed the grass and dry undergrowth are burned away, supplying the soil with ash residue.

Bullocks are used for ploughing. Two bullocks are hitched to a double yoke, to which is attached on a long shaft the wooden plough with an iron tip. Other farm tools are a small mattock or hoe and a sickle for harvesting. Except for small variations in style or design these are the standard methods and tools used throughout the hill regions.

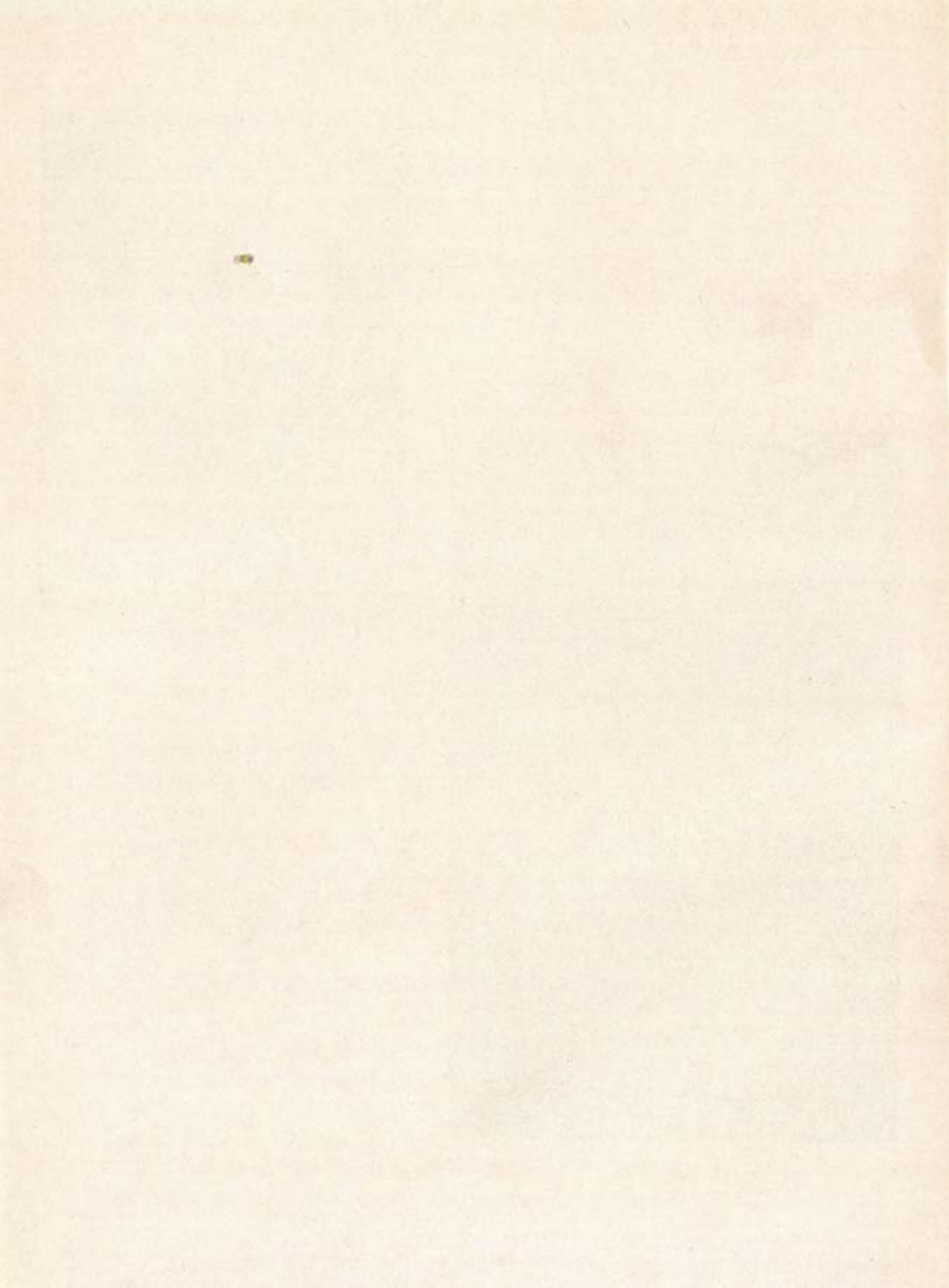
Almost all Kiranti land used to be under the *kipat* system whereby the people exercised inalienable communal rights over the land. The *kipat* system is common to several other Nepali ethnic communities. The Kiranti *kipat* was tax free and included dominion over all cultivated lands, forests, streams, and rivers within its bounds. Taxes were raised not from the land but traditionally from each household. Each *rai* would collect six or seven rupees from each of his subjects. Since this tax was uniform and equal for each household regardless of the size of a man's landholdings, a great number of the poorer Rai farmers have demanded that the



Terraced fields.



A Rai Girl.



age-old *kipat* establishment be abolished and replaced by a fairer land revenue system. This has come about in part.

The land of a Rai farmer is his own. Seldom are fields rented or cultivated by anyone other than the owner. A Rai farmer on Manjh-Kirant *kipat* was called a *kipatiya*, but any farmer of another ethnic group, even a Limbu, on the same *kipat* was called *raiti* and subject to taxes on his land, which he paid to the *rai* of the village.

A major contribution to the Rai cash income derives from their employment in the Indian and British Gurkha regiments. A few Rais have recently found employment in the civil service and with the Nepali police and army. Almost every single Rai village has a few soldiers, police, or civil servants, and older pensioners. Most Rais working with the government services have previously either served or lived for some time in India. Some Rai men leave their villages to seek temporary work on wages during the dry months in Biratnagar, Dharan, Jhapa, Rajbiraj, Janakpur and Jaleswor, all in the eastern Terai and in Darjeeling. With the little money they are able to save they buy and take home articles of domestic requirement. Many who do not go out to work are found selling home grown produce and grain in the market towns. With the proceeds they can buy necessary domestic articles.

A farmer will usually keep some cattle, goats, pigs, and chickens both for his own immediate needs and for the little extra cash they bring in sale.

Borrowing and lending money in some parts of Manjh-Kirant is transacted on Shri Panchami day, the fifth day of the bright fortnight of *Phagun* (mid-February to mid-March), and in other parts at any time of the year. A majority of the people are in debt. The usual practice is for money transactions to be made against security in land. The common rate of interest is twenty-five per cent, but occasionally charges may be found as high as seventy-five per cent per annum.

Rais are renowned for their bravery, fearlessness and straightforwardness. They are also said to be proud and easily offended, and therefore have the makings of good friends or serious enemies.

The social structure of the Rai tribe includes a number of *thar* segments which in turn may be further sub-divided. Each *thar* is representative of a particular locale, part of a river valley or a group of settlements in close proximity, although nowadays they are very much mixed in almost all the areas. Some Rai *thars* and their related locales are listed here :

<i>Thar</i>	<i>locale</i>
Kulunge	Maha Kulung : the valleys of Hongu and Rawa Rivers
Chamlinge	Rawa River Valley
Khalinge	Rawa River Valley and in Solu
Pelmange	Rawa River Valley and in Solu
Falinge	Rawa River Valley and in Solu
Thulunge	Aiselukharka
Rumdali	near Okhaldhunga
Sotange	Sotang
Sampange	Phali and near Dingla
Tamchhange	Chirkhuwa valley in Dingla
Baingc	Bhojpur
Bantava	Bhojpur
Lohorong	upper Arun River Valley
Yamphu	Seduwa and Waleng in upper Arun
Ketra	Seduwa and Waleng in upper Arun
Saam	north of Sankhuwa
Athapre	Dhankuta
Chaurasia	near Dhankuta

With these we might also include the Yakha people of Tehrathum district. But Yakhas are considered by many to be a distinct group of Kiranti not fitting neatly into either the Rai or the Limbu groups. In this matter, however, not even all Rais consider themselves as belonging to a single entity. Rais also maintain that the people called Mech-Koch who live in Morang and in Jhapa are of the same origin as Rais.

Each of the above listed *thars* is found exclusively in its locale speaking a distinct dialect, usually unintelligible to members of another *thar*. In such cases communication is carried out in the Nepali language which is understood by all.

The Rai *thars* are more often endogamous units than not. Restrictions of geography have made it so, resulting in marriages within the *thar*. There is little communication between one locale and another, as is found among Brahman and Chhetri communities under similar circumstances. However, with the Rai *thars* are found exogamous lineages along a direct line of seven generations.

Descent is traced beyond seven generations, but after seven generations—i.e. in the eighth and subsequent generations—intermarriage can occur (i.e. it is insti-

tutionally sanctioned) between differently named segments of the same clan. When such a marriage takes place, the result is clan fission; that is, the two segments in question become separate, distinct clans with all the attributes thereof. There is a rite to formalize the division. In fact, clan fission and the coming into being of new clans is dependent on this process—i.e., on *hadphora*¹ marriage within the clan after the requisite depth of seven generations has been reached. Marriage can occur between relatives tracing their relationship through a female lineage after three generations, that is, in the fourth generation.²

Young boys and girls are free to indulge in romance and to make advances to almost any partner except as prohibited by both common descent and by degree of relationship. Ideally, all marriages are monogamous, that is, of one husband and one wife. The marriage can be one of three varieties: by arrangement, by capture, or by elopement or mutual agreement between the boy and girl.

An arranged marriage is the form observed by the few rich families. The boy and girl are usually between thirteen and fifteen years old. The boy's parents take the initiative, sending two or three male relatives to the house of the prospective bride. These representatives take a bottle of *rakshi* to the girl's parents. The girl's parents are not obliged to consent, but if they should agree to the match there is a round of drinks and the representatives return to the boy's father.

An auspicious wedding date is chosen either by a Brahman astrologer or with the aid of an almanac. On the day prescribed the bridegroom, in a party of friends and relatives preceded by a musical band of Damais (tailor caste), goes to the house of the girl, where they are entertained and fed rice, pork and drinks. During the evening, at a prescribed hour, the boy presents the bride with gifts of clothes, necklaces and silver ornaments, and applies vermilion powder to her hair.

The following morning, after the actual wedding ceremony is concluded, the bride is taken to the house of the groom where she is received with a special ritual. One observer writes: "A chicken is killed and some of its blood placed on three plantain leaves which are set down just inside the door. The girl must step over

¹ *Hadphora* means, literally, 'the breaking of the bones'. In this context the bones, *had*, represent the patrilineal clan unit broken through marriage after the seventh generation.

² Charles MacDougal, Personal Letter, December, 1965.

the blood-smearing leaves when she crosses the threshold. This is known as *sagun*.¹

Among Kulunge marriage is a gradual process. The first rite is *sagun*. The second and most important rite, *janti*, may follow by several years. The third rite is *daiju*, giving away of the bride wealth.

Quite a number of marriages are secured by capture. Capturing a girl is usually done in a large gathering of a marketplace, at festivals and fairs amidst confusion and quarreling, or sometimes quietly in the village when the girl comes out of her house to fetch water or do some other errand. The boy then takes the girl to the house of a relative for hiding for a few days while the parents are informed. His parents try to negotiate with the parents of the girl through representatives. It usually takes a few days before they can appease the offended parents of the girl. Finally, however, they come to terms and give their consent to the new relationship. The boy is then free to take his bride home where she is welcomed with the same kind of ritual ceremony as in the arranged marriage described above.

Marriage by elopement is done usually by very poor couples who may have already lost their parents, in which case there is little formality. In such cases the boy and the girl are sufficiently mature, usually in their late twenties, and they may have taken a considerable period for courtship. The girl is usually taken to the house of a relative of the boy and kept there until negotiations with the parents or between representatives of both partners are completed. The girl is received with the same kind of ceremony as in the previous cases at the boy's house, and the actual wedding ceremony is done at the boy's house.

In either of these three cases a *nokchhoe*, the religious leader among Rais, may be hired to invoke deities and bless the couple, and the young couple have to pay their respects to the girl's parents or their representatives. The boy must pay one and a half rupees each to the brothers of the girl's mother and half a rupee each to the brothers and cousins of the girl's father. A feast of boiled rice, meat, and home-made 'beer' has to be provided by the boy's family in all types of marriages.

After marriage, especially an arranged one, the girl spends the first year or two at her parents' house. But in the meanwhile both the boy and the girl are free to spend a few days together whenever they choose, at either the boy's or girl's house.

1 Victor Barnouw. "Eastern Nepalese Marriage Customs and Kinship Organization," *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* II, No. 1. (Albuquerque, 1955).



A Rai



An indigenous suspension bridge over Arun

Rais practise both junior levirate and junior sororate; that is, a man can marry his elder brother's widow, his deceased wife's younger sister or his wife's brother's daughter.

In the case of wife abduction, the second husband is made to pay compensation of one hundred or two hundred rupees—depending upon the social and economic status of the persons involved—to the first husband of the woman.

Should an unmarried girl become pregnant, her lover is expected either to marry her or to pay delivery expenses of fifty to sixty rupees, after which he leaves the girl alone. She is free to find another husband; having a child before marriage is not considered a serious disqualification.

When a married couple separates, any daughters go to live with the mother, sons with their father.

Rais practise a religion which is, strictly speaking, neither Hindu nor Buddhist, although they have been influenced both by the Lamaistic form of Buddhism of the Himalayan people living immediately north of them and by the Hinduism of the middle hills. The worship of many local deities, however, is their traditional religious practice. Jalpa Devi is one of the main goddesses living up in the snow mountains, and *saat kanya*, the 'seven virgins', are also worshipped by most Rais. There are also mythical common ancestors who rank as their chief deities: Sikata-khu-Budho, Balmo-Budhi, Kulung-Budhi, Mangtewa-Budhi, Molu-Sikari and a number of others. These deities are offered food on every ritual occasion and festival. According to local legends all of these ancestor gods vanished alive in days. *Nvagi* ancient is a rite performed to offer a few grains of rice to these ancestor deities before the people themselves begin to eat.

Most Rai households have a spirit called Khamang maintained in an earthen pot hung in a corner of the house. Khamang is considered the god of individual skills. The first piece of meat is always offered to it when game is killed during the hunt.

Every year a number of religious ceremonies must be performed. One, the harvest ceremony called *bhumi-puja*, is observed in September and in April. It is a ceremony to worship the earth. At this time many people perform *hom*, a sacrificial rite for acquiring merit.

Likwamang is another ritual performed in order to ensure that no measles, smallpox, boils, or other such diseases afflict the village. A ritual of similar intent, *nagi*, is observed for the general welfare of children and as protection against the

possible birth of a deformed child. Chickens, sometimes even pigs or a buffalo, are slaughtered and feasted upon with boiled rice and pulses by the villagers on some of these occasions. The worship of Chandi is a popular occasion which is accompanied by dancing and singing for five days in the month of November.

✓ The religious leader who presides over all of these ceremonies is called a *ngopa*. He sometimes becomes possessed by spirits and announces the verdicts of the gods. The *ngopa* also acts as a physician and treats the people by propitiating gods and spirits during an illness. Some Rais believe that the Milky Way as seen in the sky is a reflection of *saptakosi*, the 'seven Kosi Rivers', and they worship it as such.

✓ Rais bury their dead. Kulunge and Khalinge Rais bury in a cultivated field near their houses and offer food and drink for a month or so. Others make a burial just outside the village. A religious leader is required for the burial. He addresses the spirit of the dead and requests it to go to its final resting place to join the ancestors. And finally he puts a white piece of flag over the grave. Mourning is observed by the nearest kinsmen of the deceased, who abstain from eating salt, oil, meat and liquor for six days.

It is a common practice among Rais to construct a stone *chautara* rest-platform, erect a wooden bench, and plant a *pipal* tree to provide shelter and shade for wayfarers by the main trail as a memorial to the dead. The sons or any other relatives who inherit the property of the deceased person are supposed to finance these constructions and also to provide a feast in the name of the dead person. To the feast they invite all the villagers and relatives, even if they happen to live in a different village. The guests and the people who helped to construct the memorial are served boiled rice, buffalo meat, and drinks. These acts and memorials are believed to help the dead people in the next world, and those remaining in this gain merit. A stone tablet with an inscription of the date, the name of the deceased, and carvings of the sun and the moon at the top is erected in the middle of the *chautara*.

There can be one or more *rai* in a village. The *rai* is an undisputed leader to whom the villagers pay their taxes. He hosts any visiting government officials and handles many problems including the settling of common disputes that may arise in the village. The office of a *rai* is hereditary, passing to the eldest son. Until some time ago the office of a *rai* was divided equally among all his sons after his death; that is to say, the total number of householders was divided up into as many groups as there were sons. This accounts for the present small size of a *rai's* area of jurisdiction. In some instances there is one *rai* for only half a dozen households. In

some areas there are different *rais* for each clan. Traditionally all the lands in Manjh-Kirant and Pallo-Kirant were collectively registered in the name of the Kirant *kipat*. Taxes were collected from each household, so that the areas of jurisdiction of the *rais* were not the people's lands but only the individual households. This pattern is changing now.

Village unity is displayed in the participation by everybody in the rituals or social ceremonies of any of the households in attending funerals, and in abstaining from work whenever there is a death or an important religious ceremony in the community.

Ordinarily Rais do not have a large joint family system, as do the Tharus of the Terai for instance, although a Rai man lives with his parents for the first couple of years after marriage. But the Athapre Rais of Dhankuta did have a common house for the entire extended family group at one time. It is said that there was a large house just outside of Dhankuta bazaar with fifty-two hearths in it.

LIMBU

The Limbu tribe is second in size to the Rai among Kirantis. Like their Rai cousins the Limbu have an area traditionally their own called Pallo-Kirant, 'Far Kirant', or even more commonly just 'Limbuwan, the 'Land of the Limbus'. They are the predominant people in Limbuwan, although of course there are also members of almost every other ethnic group in Nepal including Brahmans, Chhetris, many Newar businessmen and shopkeepers from Kathmandu Valley and representatives of neighbouring ethnic groups like the Rai, Sherpa, Tamang and even Lepcha of Sikkim. Like the Rai, many Limbu farmers have in the past few years moved south into the promising Terai plains to take up lands recently opened to settlement and agriculture. Out of a total of 1,38,705 Limbus, 2,000 have been found in Jhapa and Biratnagar.¹

Limbuwan includes the area east of the Arun River extending to Nepal's eastern border with India's West Bengal. In contrast to the larger Manjh-Kirant of the Rai, the Limbu areas are relatively confined. The districts represented in whole or in part in Limbuwan include Tehrathum, Sankhuwa Sabha, and Dhankuta in Kosi Zone and Taplejung, Panchthar, and Ilam in Mechi Zone. Locally we find the designation Limbuwan prefixed by *das*, as Das-Limbuwan, meaning the 'Ten Limbu Lands', referring to the common belief that at one time in the early days there were ten Limbu rajas.

The proper term of address for Limbus is *subba*. To be addressed as *subba* is not only acceptable, it is in fact flattering. As mentioned in the section on the Rai people, the title *subba* was given to Limbu headmen at the time the territory of the Kiranti was annexed to the Kingdom of Nepal some one hundred and ninety years ago. At that time the Limbus were presented with a set of commemorative drums, of which they are very proud.

The Limbu language is a dialect apart from Rai and includes written form. What few books were written in the Limbu script are scattered and difficult to find.

Limbus have been in eastern Nepal for thousands of years. "The mountain is, in fact, his domain," writes Sylvain Levi.² "It is there that he continues to live and to dominate during the epic period."

1 Census Report, *op. cit.*

2 Northey and Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 214, quoting Sylvain Lèvi, *Le Népal*.

Most Limbu villages are located along the high slopes of the Tamur River Valley and of a number of tributaries. The houses, like those of their Rai neighbours, usually stand in the middle of dry cultivated fields. Sometimes there are wet rice fields close by, but more often the irrigated wet fields are farther down the mountain slopes. Limbu settlements are found between the altitudes of 2,500 and 4,000 feet above sea level. The houses are of one storey, built of stone with thatch roofs. They are washed with a red and white earth colouring; windows and doors are black. Houses of the few rich people are generally larger than the average, often roofed with slate and with a wooden balcony around the house at the first floor level. House construction in the important district towns and their vicinities has been influenced by Darjeeling house types and sizes. Village size might run from thirty houses to over one hundred on the older sites.

Typical household articles are brass, copper, and aluminium pots and pans, water jars, earthenware, baskets and wooden containers for storing grain.

Limbus raise enough rice, wheat, maize and millet for their own consumption. The paddy fields are most labouriously terraced and irrigated, whereas the fields of wheat, maize, millet, and mustard are dry and unirrigated.

Limbus abstain from work for a day whenever there is an earthquake. No one ploughs on days of the New Moon or Full Moon, or on days of important festivals. Paddy is planted in June-July and harvested in October and November. These fields are then left fallow until the next planting season. In the dry fields maize is sown in February-March and millet in June; they are harvested in August and November respectively. Wheat and barley are sown as a winter crop in October. These grains are not used entirely for eating but also for making great quantities of *rakshi* and beer.

Tongba is a favourite social drink. Every man has a large wooden mug which is filled on occasion with thick millet beer and drunk through a bamboo tube. Limbus also have various beans, pulse, potatoes and fruits such as oranges, bananas, guavas, and papayas.

Everything harvested is consumed locally. The farmers also keep buffalo and cows for milk and manure, and goats, sheep and chicken for meat. Both men and women smoke cigarettes. Some farmers grow their own tobacco.

There are fewer fallow areas than among the Rai. All the land is under the jurisdiction of the Limbu *kipat* and is consequently tax free. Each registered householder pays six and one half rupees to his village *subba*, a representative of the

government revenue office. This is strictly a house tax and has no relation to the extent of a man's land holdings. But in fact, no single family has ever paid more than a rupee or two per year because each registered household has been split up into at least half a dozen different family entities, all descendants of one single ancestor household.

The *subba* is the natural leader of his fellow villagers. There are usually eight or ten *kipatiya* families under one *subba*. A few Rais live and farm on Limbu *kipat* lands, but they are not considered *kipatiya*. Instead they hold the title of *raiti* and must pay land taxes to the *subba*. Sometimes a *subba* may have assistants to help him in carrying out his work. The office of a *subba* is inherited by his eldest son in addition to a share of the parental property, which is divided equally among all the sons.

Because Limbus are a little proud and sensitive they have been alleged by outsiders to be rather curt and surly. Their basic profession is farming, but a good many men go out to join the British or Indian Gurkha regiments, or to Kathmandu to join the armed police or to work in other government departments. They were encouraged to seek work in Kathmandu only after the Rana regime was deposed in 1951. A great many Limbu men go in search of seasonal work to Dharan, Biratnagar, Jhapa, Darjeeling, Sikkim and Assam. Thus every winter there is a regular outflow of people, most of whom return before the monsoon to work their fields. No doubt a few people stay behind, never to return home.

Other members of Limbu communities make trips to the important market towns with grain, fruits and animals to sell for a little profit. They return home with market goods to resell among the villagers, and with a few domestic necessities of their own.

The men typically wear a Nepali shirt and loincloth on ordinary days, and during festivals they wear the full Nepali suit and cap complete with a European style suit jacket. The women wear a sari and a blouse of colourful cotton material and wear silver necklaces, bangles, gold earrings, noserings and rings on their fingers. In general they dress in a little more sophisticated manner than the Rais, as Limbuwan is closer to, and more influenced by, the market and industrial towns of Biratnagar, Dharan, and especially Darjeeling—one of the most westernized places in India.

A majority of the Limbus are in debt, either to a rich ex-Gurkha officer or to a rich Brahman, Chhetri or Newar who has lent the money against the security



Drum dance of the Limbus.



A Fedangma Conducts Tongshim Rite.

of land. The official annual interest rate is ten per cent, but rates are paid as high as twenty-five and thirty per cent. As among Rais, almost all Limbu money transactions are made on *Shri Panchami* day in *Phagun*.

The Limbu tribe is divided into a number of clans, *thars*, some of which are listed here in alphabetical order with their respective sub-divisions.

Angbahang	Mangyung	Satihangma ¹
Angthupuhang	Palung	Shelle
Chongbang	Pegahang	Shewan
Chobeguhang	Pethegimbang	Shigu
Ektinhang	Punglang	Swansabu
Fanghang	Samahang	Thamsuhang
Fenduwa	Heena	Thebe
Furumbo	Hellok	Singthebe
Kanga	Phembu	Thuppoko
Lingden	Rupihang	Tumyangpa
Mabuhang	Tamaden	Ingbadokpa
Kambang	Tumbahimphe	Linkhim
Swangsabu		Mayam
		Ongchhongbo
		Phurumbo
		Yongya

Some of the above listed *thars* are further subdivided, each sub-division having a separate name of its own. Most of the *thar* members live together in more or less well defined locales. Some names are identical with the place name or residence of the group. Each of these sub-divisions is again divided into family groups which are strictly exogamous and intolerant of incest. Outside of this latter family category the Limbu is free to choose his marriage partner from within the Limbu tribe.

Marriage rules in general are similar to those of the Rai community. There can be marriage by arrangement, capture, or elopement, the procedures for each of which have been described in the preceding section on the Rais, and indeed are found among many other Nepali groups. As might be expected, however, the Limbu have a few minor wedding formalities and rituals which are completed in addition to, or with a little variance from, the standard. Ideal marriageable age is

¹ Satihangma are those who are said to know how to read Limbu script and to be in possession of early Limbu books.

cighteen to twenty years except in the case of some arranged marriages of younger partners.

Marriages are strictly monogamous and patrilocal. Limbu young men and women have freedom of movement and can meet while working in the fields, during wedding parties at fairs and festivals and in the market-places. During festivals and marriage ceremonies the young people get together for a dancing-singing performance called *Yalangma*. They join hands together and form a continuous line of eight, ten or twenty people and dance with a uniform rhythm by stepping backwards and forwards and going round and round in a circle together, all the while singing songs in unison.

Whether a marriage is arranged by the parents or by the couple, a Limbu boy first sets out 'in search of a bride' by himself on a day fixed by his *fedangma* priest. Another person is employed by the boy's parents to act as a middleman in the marriage negotiations after a prospective partner is found. This middleman is called *ingmiva*, and he is usually a relative of the boy. The middleman approaches the parents of the girl, and after consent for the match is obtained he returns to the boy who in turn goes to bring the bride from her parents' house to a resting place near his home. There, short of the house, he leaves her while he goes ahead to inform his parents. The boy dresses in a white Nepali shirt and trousers, wears a Nepali cap, and puts a *khukuri* knife in his waist band before he sets out to fetch the girl the rest of the way home. In the case of a properly arranged marriage the girl will be accompanied from her home by a group of fifty to sixty people, mostly young women like herself dressed in colourful dresses and ornaments. These young women and a few young men wait with the bride while the groom goes to inform his parents and change his clothes. This party is called *miksama*, and its members stay overnight and are entertained at the groom's house. *Yalangma* is danced and sung in the evening in the courtyard of the boy's house and the festivities may last until morning. Occasionally there is singing competition between the young men and women, or between a friend of the groom's and a woman of the *miksama* party. It is during these festive wedding occasions that many another young man prepares for future love adventures.

Yalangma is said to have originated as a dance song for the harvest of paddy and has been called the *dhan nach*, 'the rice dance'. This harvest song has a catchy tune and the dance is fascinating to watch. The rhythm and dance steps, some people believe, were developed as people trampled paddy for threshing.

Earlier in the afternoon of the wedding a small group of men comes to the groom's house to dance with drums which are hung around the neck and held in the hands. The groom's house is overwhelmingly crowded by the time the bride enters. Young boys become quite hilarious with a lot of practical joking and occasional outbursts of laughter. Then the bride is conducted into the house amidst the noise and music. Inside, she and the groom receive a *tika* on their foreheads from the parents and other relatives of the groom. The bride and groom are seated in a corner where they remain throughout the night while the *fedangma* priest recites *Mundhum*, the Kiranti religious text. The *fedangma* also puts *tika* on the forehead of the bride and the groom. The theory behind this all night affair is that it is a bad omen for the young couple to fall off to sleep while the *fedangma* is reciting the *Mundhum*, so the young people present keep making noise and the *miksama* party keeps singing and dancing all the time to keep them awake. The *fedangma* kills a chicken at the beginning of the ceremony and lets the blood flow onto a banana leaf, whereupon he reads the omen. Friends, relatives and neighbours are invited to the wedding and are entertained with food and drink. But every invitee must bring a little rice and up to a rupee in cash as his or her contribution.

After a few days the new couple goes back to the girl's parents' house with gifts of spirit and a whole pig. The father, mother and their brothers and sisters also have to be presented with gifts and money. The father receives five rupees, the mother two rupees and a half, and each of the other prescribed aunts and uncles of the bride receives a rupee. When all the wedding ceremonies are completed, the girl usually stays on with her parents for a few months or a year before coming to live permanently with her husband in his home. But until the *Saimundri* ceremony is completed, the husband cannot have full control over his wife or her property; and Limbu women do not usually surrender to *saimundri* until they are forty or more years old or until they have children.

A man can marry the widow of his elder brother or the younger sister of his dead wife, but if she is subsequently abducted from him he receives no compensation. Any man abducting somebody else's wife is made to pay one hundred to two hundred rupees compensation depending upon the financial status of the parties involved. Abduction is common among most Nepali groups. Sometimes a man wanting to marry another man's wife must elope with the woman in order to escape the wrath of her former husband.

As among so many other people of Nepal, the Limbus and Rais do not usually

practice a formal system of divorce although they do make some provision for it. A couple may choose to live apart, but divorce is actually only obtained when the wife takes a second husband.

Limbu religion is very closely allied to the Rai religion in that it has a number of local deities of mountains and rivers to worship. It has also adopted some religious practices of the Hindus in observing the great festival of *dashain* and employing Brahman priests occasionally to recite religious texts. Sylvain Lèvi writes about these attitudes :

The religious indifferences... among the Kirantis has hardly altered at all. In a Buddhist country they mumble the 'om mane padme hum' and make presents to Lamas; in a Hindu country they give themselves out to be followers of Shiva and worship Mahadev ; and Gauri.¹

Every Limbu household has a *mangena*, the ancestor-god, and *hyuma-him-dangma*, the spirit of the original grandmother who is believed to be the common ancestor of the entire Limbu tribe. Singbungba, Lungbungba, and Khangbungba, the gods of wood, of stone, and of earth, are also worshipped by all twice a year, in November and in March, beside a river and are offered food daily in the home. These worshipping ceremonies are called *udhauli-ubhauli*. Pathibhara, Kalika, and Thulodevi, gods living on the snow mountains, are also worshipped.

The Limbu have two different kinds of religious leaders or priests, known as *shamba* and *fedangba*. Either of these two can conduct rituals on behalf of their clients; they officiate at weddings, birth rites and funerals, propitiate ancestor-gods, ward off evil spirits, and treat their clients when they fall ill.

All Limbus have a ceremony called *tongshim* observed in the courtyard of the house for three days each year in the name of all the dead members of the family. Sometimes four or five extended families join together to conduct a common *tongshim* for economic expediency. *Tongshim* is technically the name of a small bamboo basket filled with earth with a small bamboo stick stuck upright in the middle. This is believed to represent the spirit of the deceased. A white scarf to represent a male and a necklace for a female are put on top of the stick. There are six, seven or even ten *tongshim* structures, depending upon how many dead people they represent, arranged around a twelve foot bamboo pole stuck in the centre of the courtyard. A *shamba* or *fedangma* dressed in a long white skirt, white blouse, and a hat

¹ Northey and Morris, *op. cit.* p. 216.

with feathers on his head and beaded necklace jumps around beating his drum. A couple of teenage boys, hoping to learn the acts of the priest, follow him around beating brass plates. Those who begin to shake hysterically after a while are considered to have been selected by their god and are therefore fit to be taught. Others fail to reach ecstasy and are dismissed.

The *tongshim* ceremony is performed for the welfare of the dead and the merit of the survivors, and is observed either in the months of November or March-April.

Limbus bury their dead on a hill, in a common burial ground for the entire village or for several neighbouring settlements. They erect a stone monument for the body about five feet long and three feet wide at the bottom with four tiers for a male or three tiers for a female. A one foot high pole is placed on top in the centre. The whole structure is covered with a cement plaster and left to dry with the date and name of the deceased inscribed on it in the case of a few rich people. Mourning is observed for seven days by the nearest relatives, except after the death of small children. If a small boy dies, mourning is observed for four days, and a small girl is mourned for three days. A resting platform, *chautara*, is built, and trees are planted within it along a main road to the village in the name of the dead, a practice like that of the Rais. Many Limbus have *themangba*, a death anniversary ceremony, performed for their dead relatives. For this observance some people employ Brahman priests and conduct the whole affair as a Hindu *shradha*.

Sometimes people dying of an accident do not go easily to the land of the dead, but instead they roam around their villages as spirits in the form of an eagle or a monkey. They are called *chil-deva*, 'eagle-god', or *badar-deva*, 'monkey-god'. Inefficiently conducted funeral rites on the part of the *fedangma* or *shamba* can lead a spirit to become one of these *devas*. The spirits are maintained in a tree where they are offered food regularly by the surviving members of the family.

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TAMANG

The Tamangs live in the high hills east, north, south and west of Kathmandu Valley. They are commonly seen on the streets of the capital city carrying large basketloads of goods by headstraps, the men and boys dressed in loincloths and long, usually black, tunics, and in winter wearing short-sleeved sheep's wool jackets, always with a *khukuri* knife stuck in the waistband. Women, seen in lesser numbers, wear a simple cotton sari and blouse adorned with a few ornaments.

Tamangs form one of the major Tibeto-Burman speaking communities in Nepal, and maintain a belief that they originally came from Tibet. No one seems to have any idea how long they have resided on the south slopes of the Himalaya. It is said that originally they were collectively called 'Bhote', meaning Tibetan, and that later on the term 'Tamang' was attached to them because they were horse traders. *Ta* in Tibetan means "horse"; *mang* means "trader". 'Tamang' has remained, and it is all the better because the term 'Bhote' has come to be a highly objectionable and derogatory term to most Nepalis.

We do not know the exact number of Tamangs today, but the figures found in the official census statistics of 1961 can give us some idea of both population and geographic distribution. Out of 518,812 Tamangs registered, almost exactly half were registered in the eastern hills, that is, east of Kathmandu Valley; about 20,000 in the eastern Terai areas; a little more than 23,000 in Kathmandu Valley. The western hills accounted for over 119,000 with a few scattered families in the central and western Terai areas.

In the east the majority of Tamang settlements are found in Bagmati Zone, just outside of the hills surrounding Kathmandu Valley, and in the hilly regions of both Janakpur and Narayani Zones. Some scattered settlements are found even as far east as West Bengal in the Darjeeling area. In these distant and traditionally non-Tamang areas they have been living close by various other peoples such as Magars, Gurungs, Rais, Limbus, Brahmans, Chhetris and Newars.

Two groups of people, known as Thami and Pahari, live in traditional Tamang areas of the eastern hills. They number only a few thousand and practice similar social, religious and economic customs to the Tamangs. Thamias have settled higher than the Tamangs in the upper Tama Kosi river valley.

In Tamang territory a strict *kipat* land system was maintained through the various clan divisions over many generations, and it has only recently been abolished. In the *kipat* system a clan had exclusive and inalienable communal rights over a large defined settlement and cultivation area. Only members of the particular clan could hold land or reclaim the uncultivated land within the *kipat* jurisdiction, which included the streams and forests. At the time that *kipats* were abolished, however, there were in fact several clans represented in many single *kipats* due to the great dispersion of clan members in the past. Today, the only *kipat* system legally intact in Nepal is found among the Limbu people. Tamang ex-*kipat* land today is actually owned and farmed by the same people who had held *kipats*, but with slightly changed land tenure and taxing arrangements.

The headman of a Tamang village is called *talugdar*, and acts as an agent of the government for collecting land revenues. Formerly, under the *kipat* system, each *kipatiya* paid five rupees yearly irrespective of the size of his land holdings. But now that the *kipat* system has been abolished, each farmer pays according to the size of his holdings. The current rate of payments is not high.

Tamangs prefer the higher, dryer elevations for living and farming, generally between 5,000 and 7,000 feet above sea level. In some cases they live even higher, but they are also found out of their traditional high habitat in the low Terai plains or in the Rapti Valley.

The old Tamang villages are compactly built, and the streets are usually paved with stones. The houses are well built with cut stone walls and wooden shingle roofs. In a few cases there are even slate roofs. Most of the houses have two storeys; the upper storey is generally used for storage of grain and other household possessions, while the ground floor is used as a kitchen, dining place and bed room. There is usually a balcony on the first floor and a verandah beneath it in front of the main entrance. The verandah is used as a living room.

Most Tamangs living in the compact traditional settlements are self-sufficient as far as food is concerned, although many of them need to borrow money at times. ✓ Almost all are the owner-cultivators of their land. In one village of Sindhu-Palchok District of Bagmati zone we learned that approximately 50 per cent of the people borrowed money occasionally. But none of these people were perpetually in debt. This was a village of about 200 houses. Perhaps 20 of the Tamang families in the village loaned money on a short term basis with an interest

rate of about twenty per cent. They did not collect the interest in cash but always in grain.

Tamangs living outside the traditional Tamang territory are in general very poor. They are not able to grow enough on the marginal land they cultivate and usually are found going out to earn wages as porters, coolies, domestic servants, muleteers, grooms and such in Kathmandu and other towns and villages. As farmers in the area of another ethnic group they are usually tenant farmers, and, being poor, they can afford to live only in low thatched huts.

Their staple crops at higher altitudes are maize, millet, wheat, barley and potatoes. Those who have settled in the lower, warmer and wetter regions also raise rice. All of them keep a few cows, buffalos and chickens.

Tamangs eat what they grow on their own lands : wheat and barley during the months May through July; potatoes in August through October; millet, maize and some rice from November to April or May. They will not allow buffalo meat, garlic, nettles or *paha*—the treetoad of the forest—in their houses, although there is no prohibition against eating these things if they are cooked outside in the open or in some other house.

Tamangs are in general very skilled at a number of crafts which they have preserved for ages in their traditional ways. Widespread is the making of woollen jackets of sheep's wool, worn during the winter months. This type of half-sleeved or sleeveless, open-fronted thick woollen jacket is made by the Tamang women and found even in the markets of Kathmandu. Also woven are various types of bamboo baskets, receptacles for storing grain, and leaf umbrellas for protection against rain. There are carpenters, masons, builders and wooden plough makers among Tamang men. Some Tamang Lamas, the Buddhist priests, are well trained in painting Tibetan-type *thankas*, religious scroll paintings, and some others are expert in carving designs in wood.

Tamangs have not preserved Tibetan art, culture, or religion intact, but almost all that they have today is Tibetan in origin. Those living outside the traditional area retain very little of their original culture, art, or religion, and usually adopt the cultural patterns of their immediate neighbours.

The entire community of Tamangs is vertically divided into several subgroups, known as *thars*. Each *thar* has its own name, twenty-five of which I have recorded here. I suspect that there are more.

Bajyu	Goley	Moktung	Shyangbo
Blon	Gomden	Ngarden	Shamden
Bomjan	Grandan	Ngarpa	Thing
Chyawa	Lo	Pakhrin	Thokur
Dong	Lopchan	Payen	Titon
Ghising	Moktan	Shingden	Waiba
			Yonjan

All of these clans are exogamous, but each clan's members can intermarry with any other clan's except in the case of the two clans Goley and Dong, who consider themselves to be "brother clans".

Thami, like their Tamang neighbours, are subdivided into several *thars*—Rishmi, Angkami, Polorishmi, Dolakhe, Dumpali, Lhirishmi, Dangurishmi and Shirishmi.

All the members of one clan are said to be descended from the same ancestor. In the case of brother clans the common ancestors were brothers. But as among so many other people in Nepal these theories are open to all sorts of questions and no one so far has made any attempt to prove common ancestry genealogically, if it could indeed be done. Theoretically all the clans are equal in social and ritual status. But the offspring of marriages between Tamangs and non-Tamang women are considered lower and are not allowed to share the common cup with other Tamangs despite the fact that they take the clan name of their Tamang father. In some places the terms *bara jat* and *athara jat* are used to describe people of higher and lower status respectively. The terms mean literally "twelve clans" and "eighteen clans". Northey and Morris write that the *bara jat* is of higher status than *athara jat* and Professor C. Von Furer-Haimendorf mentions the same thing.¹ I have not come across these terms in actual use among the Tamangs in the areas I have visited. In any case intermarriage between these two divisions usually does not take place. This is the only horizontal division in the otherwise completely vertically divided exogamous and patrilineal clans of the Tamangs. Northey and Morris also refer to a clan called *murmi*. I have found no trace of this clan either. In some places, however, the headman of a clan is called *mulmi*.

¹ Christoph von Furer Haimendorf, "Ethnographic Notes on the Tamangs of Nepal", *Eastern Anthropologist*, Vol. IX, Nos. 3 and 4, 1955-1956, pp. 166-167.

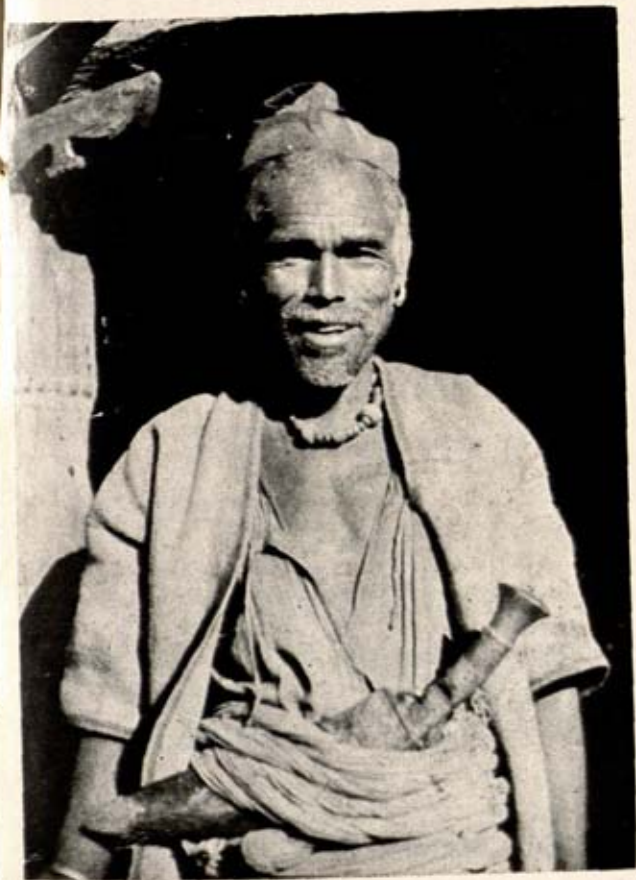
A Tamang man can marry any girl from any clan except his own and his brother clan. Preferred marriage is between cross-cousins, that is, to one's mother's brother's daughter or father's sister's daughter. Parallel-cousin marriage of a man to his father's brother's daughter or mother's sister's daughter is not tolerated. Sons and daughters of one's father's brother belong to the same clan as oneself.

A widow can marry her late husband's younger brother but not the elder brother. Polyandry is absolutely forbidden, but there are a few cases of polygyny found among some rich men. There is no stigma attached to a young man's marrying an elderly widow, or to a divorcee or to an unmarried girl's becoming pregnant. The love affairs of unmarried girls or boys do not prejudice their future marriages. If the lover of an unmarried pregnant girl refuses to marry her, he can take the baby after it is weaned and pay some compensation to the girl. Then the mother is free to marry anyone she likes. But marriage or sexual relationships between members of the same clan are never tolerated. Offenders are expelled immediately and have no other choice but to go to an entirely new area and settle there.

In cases of wife-abduction the new husband must pay sixty rupees as compensation to the former husband of the woman he has taken. Adultery is punishable by a fine of 40 rupees, which is given to the aggrieved husband as compensation. The husband can keep the wife with him if he so desires after receiving the payment from an adulterer.

Marriages are of the three standard types : arrangement, capture and mutual agreement. Only the very rich arrange marriages for their sons or daughters. Such arrangements are made when the couple is only fourteen or fifteen years old. When the arrangements are agreed upon, the boy's father takes the boy and goes to the girl's parents' house accompanied by 40 or 50 people and brings the bride back to his own house, where the actual wedding ceremony takes place. The wedding consists of putting the *tika* mark on the forehead of both the boy and the girl by all senior members of the family and relatives. The neighbours and relatives are fed boiled rice, mutton or buffalo meat, and given much spirit to drink.

A capture marriage usually occurs when the boy selects a bride who may not consent easily or when he wants to avoid the long procedure and expenditure of an arranged marriage. It is done even in the case of preferred cross-cousin marriages to save trouble, time and expense. If the captured girl persistently refuses to get married for three days, she is allowed to return to her parents. If she agrees, a proper wedding ceremony is organized, and friends and relatives, including the girl's



A Tamang Head-man



A Tamang wife goes to work.

parents, are invited. A girl may be captured from a fair or a market. If her parents take the offence too seriously, they approach the boy's family making demands for compensation. Once they are pacified the rest of the procedure follows smoothly.

Most Tamang young people get married by mutual agreement. When a boy and girl are in love and decide to marry, the boy asks his parents to approach her parents for their consent. Once consent is given, the wedding can be organized in the same way as in the case of an arranged marriage. If by any chance either the boy's or the girl's parents do not consent to the match the only choice for them is to elope and remain hidden until their parents either agree or totally ignore them.

In cases of marriage by capture and by elopement the bride and the groom go to the girl's parents' house only when the parents have given their consent. Usually they are accompanied on this visit by a party of 20 or 30 people, and their activities are known as *zendi*. The new couple must take a bottle of spirit as a gift to the girl's parents. The girl receives dowries from her friends, relatives, and parents. Her parents give brass and copper pots and utensils, clothes, ornaments and sometimes cattle, while the others give her a rupee or two or even five rupees each. These gifts are called *gordha*, and the husband must return any of them which he may have appropriated should he divorce his wife later. The amount of *gordha* usually depends upon the amount her parents are prepared to spend on the feast provided for the guests.

A *zendi* is usually held within three days after the boy takes the girl. The couple may stay for several days when they come with their friends to the girl's parents' house for *zendi*, while the party itself returns the next day. When the young couple return home, they are accompanied by a group of people and carry a bottle of spirit as a gift for the boy's parents.

If a man has only one daughter and no sons he can bring in a husband for his daughter to inherit his own property. The husband is not subsequently allowed to take another wife, but should he do so while he is enjoying the property of his first wife's father, it automatically goes back to his first wife. Should the wife leave the husband her father has brought in, she is not entitled to her father's property; if she dies, the husband can, with her parents' permission, marry another woman.

Interestingly, Thami marriage customs are very similar to those of Chepangs

living west of Kathmandu.¹ According to Kesar Lall, Thami marriage is a singular process, at once simple and complicated.

To seek a girl's hand for his son, Father Thami goes to a girl's house accompanied by the *mijars* (village elders and tax collectors). He takes with him four *manas* (about three and a half pints) of *rakshi* (rice or millet wine). Consent to the marriage by the girl's parents takes the form of a feast to the visitors and their own kinsfolk. After this ceremony, known as *chardam*, the girl simply goes to live with the boy.

However, years later, when the wife will have become a mother and when any one of her children is ready for his or her own betrothal, the mother must undergo a second wedding ceremony. Until she goes through it, *mijars* and relatives would not attend the *chardam* ceremony for her progeny.²

Lamas usually marry the daughters of other Lamas and teach their sons to act as Lamas. "In this way," notes Furer-Haimendorf, "a class of Lamas have grown up and though neither strictly endogamous nor formally privileged, this class now forms an upper stratum distinct from the ordinary cultivators."³ 'Lama', however, is a broad term. The priestly class among the Sherpas and all the disciples and monks of any monastery are also popularly called 'Lama'.

There is also a clan called Lama among the Sherpas. All non-Tamangs, when trying to be polite, use the flattering term 'Lama' for any Tamang individual.

The Tamangs are professedly Buddhists. There are *ghyangs*, Buddhist temples, in every sizeable village. The gods and the religious paintings in the temples are all in the Sherpa style; the religious texts are all in Tibetan script. The few festivals and the ritual ceremonies conducted in the *ghyangs* are in the proper Buddhist fashion like those of the Sherpas and other northern border people. The Lamas of the Tamang community are trained in these Lamaistic Buddhist ritual procedures and as the official priests conduct different kinds of ceremonies and funerals. In some of the *ghyangs* they perform *chho*, a worshipping ceremony on the first days of certain months; for example, *chho* is observed on the first day of Magh (in mid-January)

¹ Some Chepangs maintain the belief that they originated as an offshoot of the people in Dolakha of the east. Further study into this matter might disclose a relationship with the Thamis.

² Kesar Lall, "The Thami", *The Rising Nepal* (Kathmandu), March 18, 1966.

³ Furer Haimendorf *Op. cit.*

and in observance of *nara*, a feast ceremony for the full moon day in August. Most of the *ghyangs* have an endowment of lands for their maintenance and for giving occasional feasts.

Tamangs inscribe prayers and the names of gods on stone tablets and put them by the roadside framed by a stone wall. These are called *hiki*. *Hikis* and *manis* (*chortens* of Sherpa style) are built as memorials to dead relatives. When one is completed, a big feast is given to the villagers. All of this is supposed to bring some merit which will help both the dead and the person who spends the money and time in the building process. Lamas are employed for such occasions. At the wedding ceremony, however, Lamas are not necessary; they have no role. But they are employed in reciting religious scriptures for the general welfare and at the name-giving ceremony of a newborn baby. The name-giving ceremony is done on the seventh day for a girl and the ninth or eleventh day after birth for a boy. Many Tamang Lamas have studied in Sherpa monasteries and a few even in Tibet.

Other Tamang religious activities include Jhankrism. Jhankrism is not peculiar to the Tamangs but is found throughout the country among almost all groups of people. Tamangs call their Jhankri priest their *bompo*. He conducts *kyon gyalsi*, the 'driving away of the spirits', when people fall ill. He worships and sacrifices animals at the *shipda than*, a shrine for worshipping and offering sacrifices to the earth deity at the time of *bhumi puja* in the month of October-November, and he officiates at other seasonal agricultural rites.

The *bompo* propitiates gods and spirits whenever necessary. He decides when a *lha*, a clan deity, should be worshipped and which family has the responsibility. Each clan has its own *lha* and usually the richer members bear the expenses, but all members of the clan living nearby join in the festivities. Each family attending the ceremony brings its contribution of rice and other food and some money, so the family giving the ceremony is partly compensated. The *lha* is usually worshipped between November and February. When proper Lamas worship their clan deity and observe *bhumi puja*, they do so with offerings of vegetables only; they do not sacrifice any animals.

Tamangs also perform, on rare occasions, a ritual known as *phola lhasu*, a kind of feast of merit in honour of a clan god. This is extremely expensive. When proper Lamas perform it they avoid animal sacrifices of the type that the Jhankri priest would do, but they give a lavish feast to the villagers and make enormous

figures of cooked rice. A *phola lhasu* can be given either by one individual family or by all the members of a clan resident in one village.

Tamangs observe the Hindu festival of *dashain* in honour of the goddess Durga by sacrificing goats and chickens and feasting on them.

The Jhankri *bompo* is usually chosen from among the clan members and is considered the clan's priest, whereas a Lama can be of any clan. The *bompo* receives one *pathi* (six to eight pounds) of grain per year from each family in return for the services he renders. He also receives the heads of the animals he sacrifices. The *bompo* can call the spirits and becomes possessed in order to enable the gods or spirits to speak through him. When he dies, his spirit selects a new *bompo* to take his place.

Between the Jhankri and the Buddhist Lama priest, the Lama ranks higher, commanding greater respect from his clients and enjoying a greater income. But Jhankrism is not less important in the socio-religious life of the Tamang community. At funeral rites only the Lama is entitled to preside, and a Lama must be present at the time of cremation at the traditional site, which is always on the top of a hill. All villagers bring a bundle of firewood, incense, drinks and rice to the cremation. Then, within 7 to 13 days after death, a funeral ceremony called *syarku tongsi* is done at the convenience of the family survivors. They bring rice and fifty pice each as their contribution when they come to the feast.

Another ceremony is held sometime in the period beginning thirty-five days after the funeral and before six months have elapsed. This ceremony involves much greater expense. Many guests are invited, and they bring rice and a few rupees with them. All these gifts are reciprocal; each family, whenever there is a death within it, provides a feast for the villagers and receives some food and money. The food and money thus collected is usually not quite enough to meet the entire cost but is of considerable help.

The leader of most social activities of the village is the *mulmi*. He is selected by the people for a definite number of years in some cases, while in others the post of *mulmi* is hereditary. The office is endorsed by the district government. A new *mulmi* is officially appointed by the villagers on the day of *bhumi puja*, the worship of Mother Earth. The *mulmi* is the agent for collecting land revenue from the villagers, from which he receives a certain percentage when he takes it to the district revenue office. He is also entitled to one day's free labour from each household within his jurisdiction. The *mulmi*, with the help of the village elders, also controls the forest in his area, which is the source of firewood and timber for the village

houses. He is entitled to settle disputes, to levy fines and to mete out punishment, except in the case of a few extreme penalties, capital punishment, life imprisonment, shaving the head for degradation of caste, or loss of caste, all of which are discharged by a higher government official. Whenever the villagers have complicated caste disputes over marriages between members of unequal caste they invite Lamas to adjudicate.

Tamangs have, unfortunately, been greatly exploited. A few are sending their children to the new free primary schools provided by the government. Some Tamangs are even to be found studying in institutions of higher education, and a few seem to be taking increased interest in political matters.

The number of sophisticated and educated Tamangs living in Kathmandu is deceiving. Very few of them represent the Tamang community discussed in the present essay. In most cases the Kathmandu Tamangs of standing are totally detribalised and their families are most likely to have lived in India for two or three generations and to have lost all contact with their place of origin. In the case of Gurungs, Magars, Rais and Limbus, who have lived and been educated in India, contact is usually maintained with the parent community.

MAGAR

The Magars of middle and western Nepal lay claim to an exciting role in Nepal's formative history. Their kingdom was one of the very strongest of west Nepal in and around Palpa District during the time of the 22 and 24 *rajya* principalities (17th and early 18th centuries). Magars have long been in close contact with Indo-Aryan speaking Mediterranean-type people, namely the Khas (Chhetris) and Brahmins, and there are several instances in history where Magar and Khas have fought together under one banner, for one cause, to share the common victory. The 18th century king, Prithvi Narayan Shah, the founder of the modern Kingdom of Nepal, had great confidence in the Khas and Magar troops who together formed the bulk of his military forces. Some Magars believe that they have the same origins as the Thakuris, but this question cannot be settled without more research and exploration. It is quite possible though that the aristocracy among Magars assumed and acquired the Thakuri caste and status. The Bhusal Rana Magars of Gorkha are said to have been in possession of some old manuscripts and copper plates of the former Magar kings. It is also said that they have some genealogies written in the Magar language, and a study of these, if found, might shed more light on their origins.

In talking about the association of Magars with the Khas, Hodgson makes an interesting observation. He writes that although Magars still retain their vernacular tongue, tartar faces, and the like, through association for generations in the military service under the predominant Khas, and through the intermarriage of Khas males with Magar women, the Magars have acquired the Khas language, without losing their own, and Khas habits and sentiments, but with sundry reservations in favour of pristine liberty.¹

✓ The Magars have mongoloid physical features with well proportioned facial contours and a yellowish color.

✓ Their language, of the Tibeto-Burman family, consists of at least three mutually unintelligible dialects. As a mother language some Magars speak their Tibeto-

¹ Hodgson, "Origin and Classification of the Military Tribes of Nepal", *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, V. II, pp. 217-224 (1833).

Burman dialect, some speak Nepali, and a few speak Tibetan. Some speak all three, but all speak Nepali at least as a second language.

Today, Magar communities can be found in the traditional localities of western Nepal, from the high ranging Himalayan valleys to the plains of the Terai, and eastward well into the districts beyond Kathmandu. The original home of the Magars was called Bara Magarant, the twelve regions of Magars, which included all of the hill districts of Lumbini, Rapti, and Bheri Zones. Present day Magar settlements range from Tanhu District of Gandaki Zone westward to include the districts of Palpa, Argha-Khanchi, and Gulmi in Lumbini Zone ; Syangja, Kaski and Parvat in Gandaki Zone ; Dolpo, Myadgi, and Baglung in Dhaulagiri Zone ; Rukum, Rolpa, Piuthan, and Salyan in Rapti Zone ; and Dailekh and Jajarkot in Bheri Zone. The Magars have spread all along the hills of east Nepal and to a few places in the eastern Terai. Some people consider the Dura people of Lamjung district as Magars, but there is considerable question on this point and more study should be made regarding their origins.

The population report of 1961, although a little out of date, shows the number of people speaking Magar and the pattern of geographical spread. Of the total, 254,674, the majority, over 145,000, were counted in the western hills, with some 42,000 in the eastern hills. From the eastern Terai the number of Magars declined from over 15,000 to a mere 17 people in the far western Terai. There were 310 more found in Kathmandu Valley.

There are several reasons for this kind of distribution. First, there is the general trend of eastward migration due to the limitation low rainfall places on the expansion of arable land in the west. Second, there were land grants made to Magar soldiers in compensation for their service. Third, since many Magar men are skilled craftsmen in masonry, carpentry, building, stonecutting, quarrying, etc., they have tended to migrate in search of employment in these skills. As evidence of this, there are several sizeable Magar villages in the eastern hill areas near mines and slate quarries.

Generally speaking, Magars live in warmer areas than their northern Gurung neighbours, who stay near the high Himalayas for sheep pasturage. Yet there are a few places where even the Magars live at high altitudes and close enough to Himalayan people that they exhibit Tibetan influences in their dress, customs, religion, and language.

Their houses are built according to the style of the areas they live in, a standard

which varies from one locale to the next. Most traditional is the two-storey stone house with thatch or in some cases slate roofing. Many of the smaller houses in the western communities are round or oval in shape and washed with ochre or reddish mud. Magar houses in the eastern hills are never round and are most often whitewashed. They have stone walls and wooden shingle roofs, and are two-storeyed with a verandah along the front. Some of the northernmost houses have flat roofs and consist of three storeys, the bottom one being a shelter for animals.

✓ The basis of Magar economy in all areas is agriculture, which is largely self-sufficient. Besides many varieties of vegetables and fruits, they grow the standard food grains : corn, millet, wheat and buckwheat in the dry terraced fields surrounding the villages along the higher mountain slopes, and rice in the wet fields lower down and along the river valleys.

✓ Some Magars also keep sheep and goats, and some work as craftsmen, as indicated above. Since the importation of less expensive copper sheeting from India, however, the copper mines of Nepal have closed, curtailing this source of employment. Some of the northernmost Magars have become quite prosperous by engaging in long-range trading that takes them from near the northern border to the Terai, and even beyond to Darjeeling and Calcutta.

Were it not for their role in the Gurkha regiments of the Indian and British armies, their self-sufficiency might be endangered. Magars constitute the largest number of Gurkha soldiers outside Nepal. Most Magar villages have a number of Gurkhas on active duty in India and Malaysia remitting regular money to their families, as well as retired soldiers drawing pensions from various military sources. Quite a number of Magar Gurkhas have attained the ranks of commanding officers, as Colonels and Majors, in Indian and British regiments as well as in the Royal Nepal Army and Police where they are even Generals. They are renowned for their honesty, discipline, and good humour, which account for their military success.

In some areas Bhusal Rana Magars were the traditional authorities and leaders who decided cases and disputes among their people and advised them on many matters. They arbitrated disputes of commensality, breaches of tribal endogamy or clan exogamy in marriage, and the like; but some fifty years ago the Bhusals were deprived of their authority and forced by the then Rana government of Nepal to report to the central government whenever such disputes arose.

The Magar tribe consists of a number of clan divisions known as *thars*, the members of which are believed to have a common origin. These patrilineal *thars*



A Magar Woman

are further subdivided into strictly exogamous lineage groups. Some clans have many lineages ; others have few. As a rule all the clans and lineages are of equal status, although in some places one group may be considered higher or lower than another. Following are the names of some of the clans and their lineages :

Ale	Maski	Rakhal
a. Dudh	Murung Chan	Sidari
b. Fengdi	Pun	Thumsing
c. Torchaki	a. Tirkey	Thapa
d. Suryabansi	b. Prengel	a. Tanglami
Agri	c. Ramjoli	b. Aslami
Benglasi	d. Sabrey	c. Pulami
Burathoki	Rana	d. Darlami
Esmali	a. Khasu	e. Rakaskoti
Gurung Chan	b. Bhusal	f. Birkatta
Gharti	c. Martu	g. Sinjapati
a. Ramjoli	Dudh	h. Gaha
b. Rumkhami	Rewali	i. Saru
c. Baijali	Hiski	j. Ghyalang
d. Tirkey		k. Fewali
e. Fungja		l. Sinjali
f. Rokaha		

Magars as an ethnic group are endogamous, much as are all other caste or ethnic groups in Nepal. A few Magar women do marry outside of the group, but the men—unlike Chhetri or Brahman men—almost always marry within the group. Theoretically, they can marry anyone within the Magar community except members of their own patrilineage. Among all Magars, a man may marry his mother's brother's daughter, and among some it is a preferred marriage arrangement. Most Magars may not marry their father's sister's daughters, although for a few of the northern Magars this too is a preferred marriage pattern.

A great majority of Magars are in close enough contact with Brahmans and Chhetris to follow Brahman-Chhetri marriage traditions almost exactly. Marriage arrangements are usually made by the parents of the couple, although in some cases the young people select their own partners before their parents make the arrangements. In these marriages *swayamvara* is performed; it is the ceremony of formally

choosing one's partner and the exchanging of garlands and gold rings, followed by the wedding procession with the musical band of Damais (tailor caste). The rituals, including the *kanyadan*, or giving-away ceremony, and other observances of the Hindu form, are conducted by Brahman priests and are similar to those of Brahmans and Chhetris described above. Only this form is considered proper and is the standard followed by a great many Magars including large numbers who do not have Brahman priests and who do not strictly follow Chhetri marriage traditions.

The northernmost Magars practise marriage by capture exclusively, but this happens infrequently in the south. In a traditional marriage by arrangement, the parents of the boy take the initiative by sending their representatives to the girl's parents with a bottle of rice beer. When the proposal is accepted, the boy's parents can arrange a wedding procession consisting of friends and relatives of each party, and hire a musical band. The musicians precede the wedding party to the girl's house, and all are entertained with food and drink. A similar procession and feast sees the return of the new bride to the boy's home.

On occasion we find that a boy and a girl are mutually attracted without pre-arrangement and move quietly into the house of a friend or relative of the boy. The boy may or may not have asked his parents for their approval. If he has, then the parents make special preparations for welcoming the new bride. If the boy's parents have not been informed, the couple has to stay in the friend's or relative's house until his parents are willing to accept them, at which time they volunteer to send representatives to the parents of the bride to seek approval for the marriage. They then invite relatives and neighbours to welcome the new bride home and give the young couple their blessings. The bride and groom receive the red *tika* mark of curd and rice on the forehead from the groom's sister's husband and all others who are senior to the groom in relationship, including the father and mother. This part of the ceremony is also performed for properly arranged marriages. If a Brahman priest is not employed for the occasion, the boy's sister's son or cousin's son acts as priest.

After several days, when the girl's parents have given their consent, the young couple, in company with three or four friends and relatives, goes back to her parents in order to pay their respects. This is called *duran*, and can be done as late as several months afterward, if it is found to be convenient for the boy and his family. His family has to prepare gifts of *rakshi*, beer, a leg of mutton, and a goat for the bride's



Magar Girls Collecting Firewood.

parents, to be taken along to the *duran* observance. The new couple spends that night at her parents' house and returns home the following day.

A few months to a year later the couple returns to the bride's parents' house for *char time*, the 'paying of dues'. With this completed the marriage is fully recognized and given legality. *Char time* must be observed, however belated. Should the couple be of high standing they are accompanied to *char time* by a party of 35 to 50 people and must take along a leg of mutton, if not a live goat, and bottles of *rakshi*. A payment of one and a half rupees, called *kakh chodaune*, or literally "being separated from the lap", is made to the girl's father. He is also given 22 rupees to distribute among the bride's mother, mother's brothers and sisters, and his brothers. The couple also visits the mother's brothers' houses to pay their respects, and to present meat, *rakshi*, and other foods to them. The following day they return home.

There is one more visit to be made three days following *char time* to the bride's parents' home for the observance of *pailo farkaune*, the 'last return', which concludes the wedding formalities. *Gordha* (dowry) may be given to the girl by her parents and relatives at this occasion. It consists of copper and brass vessels, jars, silver and gold ornaments, clothes and mattresses, cattle, sheep, goats, etc.

Over a century ago Brian Hodgson wrote that the Magars are in the main Hindus only because it is the fashion.¹ The majority of Magars are Hindus, and as such they have Brahman priests who lead them in the same pattern of religious customs practised by the Brahman-Chhetris. With the exception that Magars do not wear the sacred thread, they are in every other respect exactly the same as the Chhetris in their attitudes and behavior. The fact, however, that there are Buddhist Magars living in the districts of Myagdi and Dolpo suggests that it is largely a question of association.

Most Magars worship the same gods and goddesses as Brahmans and Chhetris : Vishnu, Mahadev, Ramachandra, Krishna, Ganesh, Lakshmi, Saraswati, Bhagavati, etc. They observe the same festivals of *Dashain*, *Tihar*, *Sankranti*, and others, in addition to which they observe a number of tribal occasions and festivals for worshipping clan deities and other gods and goddesses. Many Magars join the Hindu Kali festival of Gorkha at the old fort of Prithvi Narayan Shah. Thousands of goats are slaughtered at the door of the temple of Kali. Bhatta Brahmans are the

¹ Brian Hodgson *op. cit.*

temple priests, while Bohra Chhetris and Bhusal Rana Magars are the attendants of Kali.

Hindu Magars observe birth pollution for ten days, with the name-giving ceremony conducted on the eleventh day. The ceremony for shaving the head of a boy is done at the age of five or six years. They always cremate their dead and mourn for thirteen days after the death of the nearest relative. A Brahman priest conducts the funeral and the yearly death anniversaries.

Those Magars who live near Hindus but who do not employ a Brahman priest have slightly different rules to follow on all occasions. In the place of the Brahman, one may employ one's sister's son or a daughter's husband to preside over the various religious ceremonies. This individual is given gifts of clothing, food, and money for doing the job. The practice of employing the sister's son or a daughter's husband as priest is not entirely peculiar to Magars. Many other groups, especially the occupational castes and the Brahmans themselves, follow this tradition. Those Magars who have not taken Brahman priests observe birth pollution for only three days, and the name-giving ceremony is done on the fourth day. Some among them bury their dead. Buddhist Magars employ Lamas to perform life-cycle rituals instead of Brahmans.

SUNWAR AND JIREL

The Sunwar and Jirel people of eastern Nepal are very small ethnic groups compared to the Magars, to whom they are considered to be related. Not much is really known of their origins. Some believe that they are offshoots of the Magars, others that they came from Simraungarh in the eastern Terai. In physical appearance they are quite similar to the Magars, to whom they are neighbours; they are as robust and their womenfolk as attractive, with their round faces and narrow eyes. The Sunwar language seems only slightly different from the Magar dialect, but Jirels speak a dialect which is more related to the Sherpa language. One theory which corresponds to the language distinctions is that Jirels are the descendants of mixed Sunwar and Sherpa marriages. Sunwars therefore place the Jirels a step below them in status, although Jirels maintain that they should be ranked as equals. Furthermore, the Jirels exhibit a strong Sherpa influence in social and religious customs, while Sunwars, like many Magars, have been under considerable Brahman and Chhetri influence.

The habitat of Sunwars is along the valleys of the Likhu *Khola* and Khimti *Khola*. Jirels are found mainly along the Jiri and Sikri Valleys. These areas lie in Ramechhap and Dolakha, two districts of Janakpur Zone, and a small portion of Okhaldhunga District in Sagarmatha Zone. These are the traditional areas of Sunwar and Jirel *kipats*, which have only recently been abolished and replaced by a more direct government control of lands.

The traditional figure for the number of Sunwar households, including Jirels, is 700. Now, in fact, there are many more scattered throughout the eastern hills. The total number of Sunwars and Jirels and their geographic distribution is shown in the 1961 government census report. Although considerably outdated, these figures are the only ones available and do show at least an approximate number and habitat pattern. At the time of the census, all Jirels, numbering nearly 3,000, lived in the Jiri area, and of the 13,362 Sunwars, just over 12,000 lived in eastern hill areas listed above. Of the remainder, the majority were registered in the eastern Terai, with six registered in Kathmandu Valley.

Sunwars and Jirels are peasant farmers who cultivate the hill slopes and river valleys. Many Sunwars are recruited into the Gurkha regiments of the British and Indian armies, as well as into the Royal Nepal Army. These military activities give

support to their meagre economy. Jirels, it seems, are not accepted or not attracted into the military service, leaving them at a comparative economic and social disadvantage. In a random sampling of one of the Sunwar villages, five per cent of the total population were found to be serving in the military. Another five per cent were drawing pensions from past service, and three per cent were at the time in India at various other jobs unrelated to the military.

During the Rana regime, 12 Sunwar villages united and approached the government with a petition whereby they would relinquish the taxfree status of the wet fields of their traditional *kipat* lands should they be given permission to practise Hinduism and to employ Brahman priests. To this effect the Shah King awarded them a *lalmohar* certificate. This was a status-seeking effort to Hinduize their erstwhile Lamaistic ritual practice.

Both Sunwars and Jirels grow enough rice, wheat, maize, barley, millet and corn, in addition to a variety of vegetables and fruits, to make them almost self-sufficient. With income from outside sources they can afford to buy necessary clothing and domestic goods. Many from these communities travel seasonally to Assam, Bhutan and Sikkim to work in road construction gangs and on other government projects, returning each spring. Some stay behind never to come home.

Since 1958, a SATA (Swiss Association for Technical Assistance) multipurpose development project has had some effect in helping to improve the conditions of the Jirel people of the Jiri-Sikri valley. A number of Jirels have been trained as carpenters, stonecutters and builders while employed by the project. With the wages earned they have been able in large measure to pay off old property mortgages to the money lenders. The money lenders there are mainly Newars, Chhetris and Brahmans, whose rates go as high as 24 per cent, although the official government rate is only ten per cent. In addition to the jobs created by the multi-purpose project, new schools have been opened up for Jirel children.

Sunwar and Jirel houses are solidly built and look very impressive from the outside, although the interiors leave something to be desired. The structures are of stone and mud and have one storey above the ground level with room enough for living space and storage. Sheds are built separately for keeping their few animals. Many houses have carved wooden windows painted black against the whitewashed walls. Roofs are usually of wooden shingles although a few have slate and others have thatch.

Traditional dress of these two groups is, for the men, the typical hill Nepali

clothing : tapered trousers tied at the waist and a tied or buttoned blouse sometimes topped with a western suitjacket; women wear velveteen blouses and colourfully designed saris, with gold ornaments in their noses and ears and on their wrists and fingers. The men usually carry a *khukuri* knife in their waistband when they travel out of the village. In a small purse inside the sheath of the *khukuri* they carry the necessary materials for making fire : a small flint, some dried flammable fibre and a small piece of striking iron.

Sunwars and Jirels, among themselves, use the classifying terms *bara thar* and *das thar* respectively. *Bara thar* and *das thar* mean literally the 'twelve clans' and 'ten clans', but in fact there are not just 10 or 12 clans. The names today are just used to show differing social categories. By tradition the *bara thars*, Sunwars, employ Brahman priests and practice Hinduism, while the *das thars*, the Jirels, practice Lamaistic Buddhism.

Some of the clans under *bara thar* and *das thar* are listed here :

BARA THAR (SUNWAR)		DAS THAR (JIREL)
Brachey	Halocha	Deppacha
Bamana yata	Jhainti	Devlinga
Chavey	Jijicha	Chhungpate
Dargarcha	Katicha	Jhupucha
Durbicha	Mulicha	Mayokpa
Garshe jata	Novliche	Sherva
Gongrucha	Rahachey	Thavo
		urpito

Each of the clans is exogamous within the two groups of Sunwar and Jirel which are themselves endogamous. A clan member must marry outside his own clan, but not outside the group as a whole. There are, however, cases where these marriage rules have been broken and *bara thar* clanspeople have married *das thar* clanspeople. Cases of Sunwar women marrying completely outside, with Chhetris, are also found.

Sunwars and Jirels do not allow cross-cousin marriages, a practice common among Gurungs, for instance, but there are allowances for one who wishes to marry his wife's younger sister or wife's brother's daughter. Even the junior levirate is practised, whereby a man can bring in his elder brother's widow in marriage.

Widow remarriage and the second marriage of women whose husbands have deserted them for several years are found quite frequently. In the village of Okhre along the Khimti river valley, 25 per cent of the total were found to be second marriages for women.

Most marriages are done by mutual agreement of the young people themselves, although the two other familiar forms of marriage, i.e. capture and agreement, are not unknown. It is not uncommon for Sunwars to bring in and marry somebody else's wife. In such cases of abduction the man always has to capture the girl involved even though she has consented previously to join him. In this way she is not considered a cheap woman by society for running off of her own volition. A compensation of 60 rupees is paid to the offended husband, the rate set by an old government law, but in fact the previous husband often demands and the abductor often pays a much larger amount.

If a Sunwar brings in a Jirel wife, contrary to the preferred endogamy of the two groups, he can take her into his kitchen with the consent of his collaterals if he summons them and gives them a feast as a fine for ignoring the rules of group endogamy.

A capture marriage, or a marriage by elopement, has to be formalized and given legal and social recognition by the boy's paying respect to the girl's parents within a fortnight or so. Until this formality is completed the young couple must remain hidden. They can return to their bridal home, his home, only after both pairs of parents involved give their approval. But the resentment of the boy's father does not present as serious a problem as the objection of the girl's parents. In some cases the parents of the girl go and retrieve their daughter from the boy and may give her away to another in marriage. It is no disgrace for a girl to be captured and retrieved by her parents; in fact, it often increases her worth and importance as a marriage prospect.

In the case of a marriage by arrangement the usual practices of the Chhetris are observed with a few minor variations. The arranged marriages have four stages of completion. First, *theke chardam* is observed, whereby the boy's parents send gifts to the girl's parents after knowledge of the girl's parents' consent for the match has been received. *Theke chardam* gifts consist of a goat, a chicken, millet beer, salt, mustard oil, tumeric and one rupee in cash. All items mentioned are given in specific and locally standard weights and measurements. These gifts confirm the future matrimonial relationship between the two families.

The intermediary who has taken the food gifts to the house of the prospective bride kills the goat and chicken, roasts the meat, and prepares the beer and mixes mustard oil with it. Then a priest, called a *naso*, invokes the ancestor gods of the girl's family and offers the food to them, after which the intermediary distributes the meat and beer to the family and any other relatives present for feasting. The rupee is given to the girl's father's nearest agnatic male relative, who is called *karsinge daju-bhai* and acts as the chief representative of the girl's father throughout the marriage transactions. He makes the formal speech announcing that the marriage negotiations have been settled, naming the boy and his father and the girl and her father, the date of the proposed marriage, and the auspicious hour.

Considerable time may pass before the actual wedding. Two or three months prior to the decided wedding date the boy's parents are supposed to send *biha theki* to the prospective bride's house. *Biha theki*, the "wedding gift", consists of more millet beer and a small basketful of dried fish or, even better, a dried pheasant if one is available. An *athapat*, which is simply a piece of paper on which is written the specific dates and hours of the wedding ceremony as prescribed by an astrologer, is included with *biha theki*.

On the wedding day similar gifts must be sent along to the girl's house in addition to many other things considered essential for a proper ceremony. An earthen jar filled with millet beer is sent with the same persons involved in the preceding transactions. The marriage procession consists of 100 or 200 people preceded by the groom and a musical band of *Damais*. Various specific gifts are taken with the groom to be presented to prescribed relatives of the girl: one bottle of *rakshi*, a leg of mutton and two and one half rupees are given to the bride's mother; a wooden jug of curd, a goat and one half rupee are given to the bride's father; and a goat is presented to the *karsinge daju-bhai* for his role as intermediary on her father's behalf. The bride receives ornaments and clothing from the groom.

From this point on the wedding ceremony and ritual is almost identical to the Chhetri standard. A Brahman priest presides.

The fourth and final stage of the arranged Sunwar marriage is the post-wedding observance. On the day after the bride is brought home to the boy's house, his family provides a feast for all the relatives to introduce the new bride. The groom himself goes round in the morning inviting people to come for the afternoon feast. He distributes areca nuts to all the male relatives as invitations. To the female

relatives he recites an oral invitation, but they receive gifts of five or ten pice from the bride when they arrive.

The feast is usually of beaten rice, boiled rice, mutton and pork, and large quantities of spirit for drinks. Following the afternoon festivities, the couple leaves for the bride's parents' home with gifts and spends a night or two there. They take a bottle of spirit, more beer and a basket of rice bread. On the 16th day after the wedding another such visit is made, and the wedding is formally considered complete.

A Sunwar bride receives dowries of pots, pans, ornaments, clothes, cattle and goats depending upon the economic status of her parents and her parents' relatives who present the dowries.

Sunwars are becoming increasingly Hinduised, while Jirels remain within the Buddhist tradition. The religious acts and performances of both groups have not changed much, and they retain the use of their respective Brahman priests and Lamas. The Jirels' Lamas are either Sherpas or Jirels who have been trained by the Sherpas. Both Jirels and Sunwars observe the Hindu-festival of *dashain* in honour of the goddess Durga, *tihar*, and other important religious festivals found observed by Hindu people throughout Nepal. In addition, each clan has its own deity which is worshipped once annually by all the clan members together at a specified site. Some clans gather to worship their deity in the forest, while others do it in one member's house. The date for clan deity worship is either the full moon day of *baisakh* (mid-April to mid-May) or the full moon day of *mangsir* (mid-November to mid-December). A priest from among the clan, called a *phompo* if Jirel, or a *naso* if Sunwar, presides and conducts the worship.

Both communities cremate their dead and employ Brahmans or Lamas, whichever the case might be, to conduct funerals. Birth rites, weaning rites and other such rituals are also conducted by their respective priests. The Brahman priests of Sunwars are said to only conduct rituals outside of the house, never within. If a Sherpa Lama performs religious ritual for a Jirel he is not allowed to touch anything. He is only to recite the appropriate books and instruct others in the necessary activities involved.

In the case of funerals, the son or nephew of the deceased person is supposed to conduct all activities necessary for the funeral, under instruction of the priest or Lama. Mourning is observed for eleven days by the nearest relatives.

GURUNG

Gurungs are a hardy hill people living along the southern slopes of the Annapurna Himalaya in west-central Nepal. Their traditional territories extend from Gorkha District east through Lamjung and Kaski to Syangja District, all in Gandaki Zone. Gurungs are also found north along the Kali Gandaki River above the important town of Baglung in Baglung District of Dhaulagiri Zone, along the Marsyangdi River in Manang District, and along the Buri Gandaki Valley. Of late many Gurungs have migrated southward into the Rapti Valley of the Inner Terai to take up a new life on fertile land recently cleared of malaria.

The Gurungs are related ethnically to their neighbours the Magars and Thakalis, and even to the Kiranti tribes of eastern Nepal. They, with their Magar and Khas counterparts, formed the bulk of the Shah armies of Gorkha, which swept across Nepal to conquer Kathmandu Valley in 1768 and to unite the Kingdom under one rule. Today every Gurung village boasts many young men in the Gurkha regiments of the British and Indian armies, and in the Royal Nepal Army and police forces as well.

The bulk of the Gurung population is centered in the two districts of Lamjung and Kaski. The census of 1961 recorded the number of Gurung-speaking people at close to 150,000, over ninety per cent of whom lived in the western hills. The remainder are spread throughout Nepal in small numbers east to west. These numbers are certainly inaccurate at this date, especially since the opening of the Rapti Valley to settlement, but they do point out that among Gurungs, as in every other group in Nepal, there has been some geographic migration.

This wide distribution of the Gurungs within the country is not as easily explicable as that of the Newar trading community or of professional groups like the Brahmans. Unlike Brahmans and Chhetris, very few Gurungs intermarry with non-Gurung women, so they remain very much the same in their way of life. Wherever they are, their economy is based mainly on agriculture and sheep breeding. They grow rice, wheat, maize, millet and potatoes. The lower parts of their terraced fields are irrigated and sown with rice in summer and wheat in winter. The upper parts of the cultivated area are dry and support the remaining crops. These higher dry fields surround the villages, which are usually situated either at the top of

a hill or on a slightly sheltered sunny slope near the top. In addition to growing cereals and potatoes they keep sheep as a source of meat and wool. High alpine pastures are occupied along the slopes of Annapurna, Lamjung and Himal Chuli during the warm months of the year. Each village has two to six flocks of sheep depending on its size. One flock usually consists of 200 or 300 sheep.

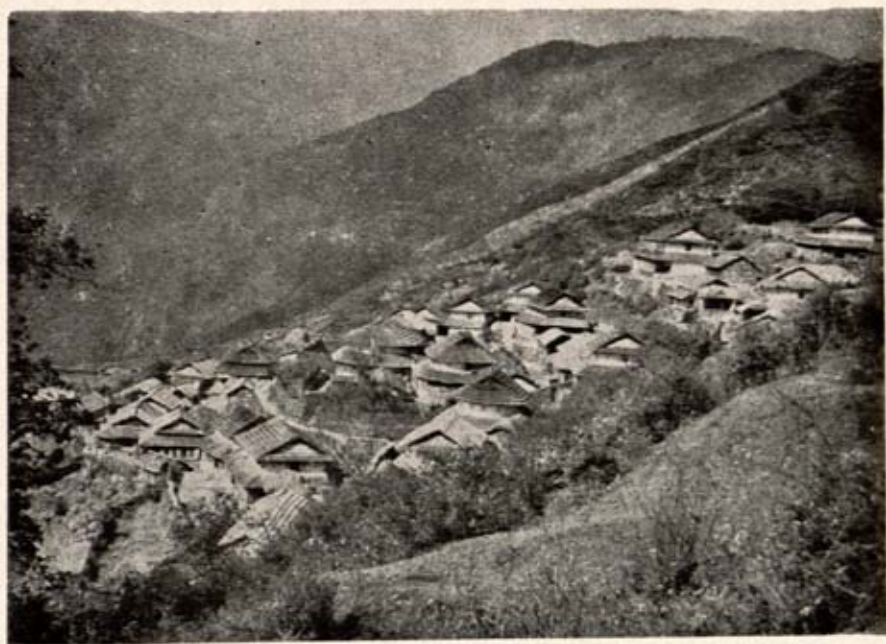
Every Gurung family owns a dozen or so sheep and they combine to employ three or four herdsmen who look after the whole flock. These herdsmen, who use fierce mastiffs as sheepdogs, travel along river valleys covering a large area from alpine grasslands to the warmer lowlands of the Inner Terai. They take their sheep to higher pastures in April and keep them there till September. At the beginning of October they take the flocks down to their villages, where they take part in the festival of *dashain*. During *dashain* every family slaughters a ram and has a big family feast with many other kinds of entertainment. As soon as the *dashain* festival is over, the flocks are taken down to the warmer valleys where they stay until February or March.

Whenever Gurung shepherds take their sheep to the pasture areas of the high Himalayas they have to pay taxes to the local villages which have the exclusive grazing rights in these pastures. But when sheep are kept on fallow land waiting to be ploughed, they need not pay any tax as the fields are fertilized by the accumulating dung and the urine. When shepherds are on the move they need not pay for stays of up to three days even in high pastures, but they must pay if they intend to stay for more than three days in one place.

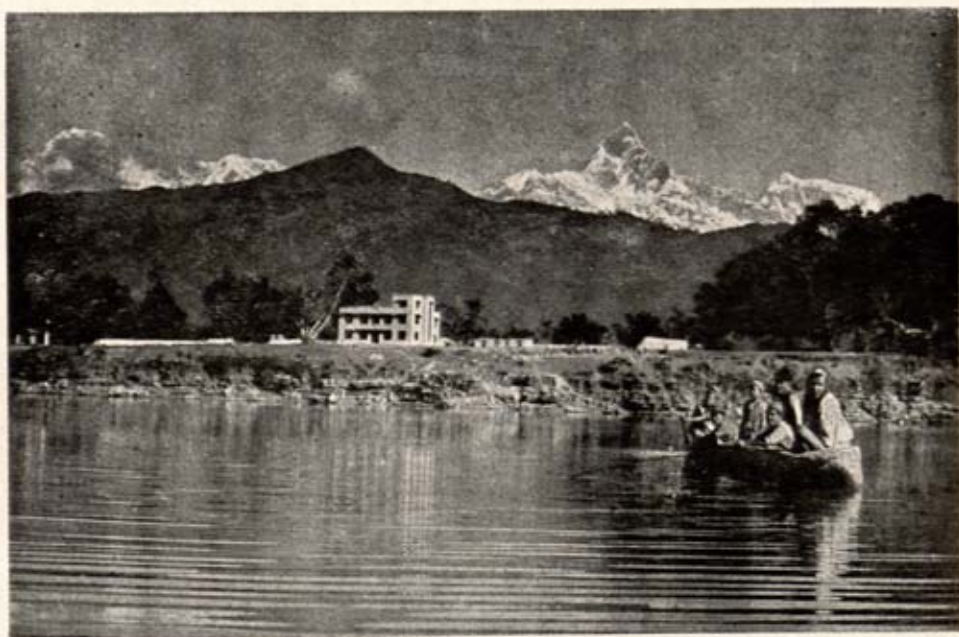
Shearing is done twice a year, in March or April and in September or October. Eighty per cent of the lambs born die each year due to lack of veterinary services, and this is a great loss. Gurungs also keep buffalo and cows in addition to their sheep. The cattle do not move with the sheep but are kept in the villages or close by in the fields all year round.

The most important source of Gurung family income is from the pensions and salaries of those who become soldiers. A great majority of Gurungs join the Indian and the British armies and go to various parts of India, to Malaysia, and to England. A small number join the Royal Nepal Army. Only an insignificant few take any other kind of paid employment.

Gurungs who do not go out in search of army service stay at home to look after their fields and livestock and make trips to the border regions, both Indian and Tibetan, to exchange salt for foodgrains and vice versa. Some people take



A Gurung Village.



Gurungs and their dugout canoe.

ghee north to exchange for Tibetan sheep's wool and Himalayan goat's hair. The rate of exchange has generally been equal weights of *ghee* and wool. Trade routes extend along the upper valleys of the Kali Gandaki, Marsyangdi, and Buri Gandaki rivers.

Traditional dress of the Gurung men includes a short blouse tied across the front and a short skirt of several yards of white cotton material wrapped around the waist and held by a wide belt. Gurung men and boys who have been in contact with the military, and they are in the majority, now wear neatly pressed shorts and shirts, and often a military cap or beret with their regimental insignia affixed. On special occasions, or when entertaining visitors to the village, the ex-soldiers turn out in their full military attire complete with an array of medals earned in battle. They are proud to have served overseas, many of the eldest during World War I in France and Germany, and others during World War II campaigns in the North African deserts, Italy, France and Germany, and in the battle areas of South-East Asia against the Japanese. Present day Gurkha contingents have seen action from Kashmir to Hong Kong to North Borneo in Malaysia.

Gurung women have not cast off their traditional costume, despite their own contact with the outside through husbands and fathers. They almost always wear a cotton or velveteen blouse tied at the front, and a sari skirt of printed material, usually of a dark reddish colour. Their ornaments include gold and coral necklaces, which represent the wealth of their husbands, and gold ear and noserings given to them traditionally at the time of marriage. Their ears and noses are pierced when they are small girls. Like almost all women of Nepal, they delight in coloured bangles.

The young women and girls are notably flirtatious with young men and even strangers; they will make jokes and coy advances to the traveller passing through a village or by the fields where they are working, and they can be heard laughing and joking loudly among friends of both sexes while fetching firewood on the forested hillsides. They are generally a very attractive people, with round faces, bright eyes and broad smiles.

A Gurung community is divided into two main groups known as *char-jaat* and *sora-jaat*, or literally 'four clans' and 'sixteen clans'. The *char-jaat* group is considered higher in status than *sora-jaat* people. These two groups do not intermarry under normal circumstances; they are distinctly endogamous units divided into strictly exogamous clans. *Char-jaat* do in fact have four distinct clans, but

sora-jaat, although they may have started at one time with sixteen, now contain more than sixteen exogamous clans. And, although a great many Gurung villages such as Lamjung house both groups, social intercourse is limited because the *char-jaat* villages, at times representing only one or two of the four clans, are more exclusive and are situated on the high ridges close to the alpine pastures. Lamjung's *sora-jaat*, on the other hand, are found farther south in close proximity with the Magars, and practice farming almost to the total exclusion of shepherding.

Char-jaat clans are Ghale, Ghodane, Lama and Lamichane. *Sora-jaat* clans include Ghyabre, Kyabchhe, Kurumchhe, Jangre, Thorje, Dorjali, Rilami, Foju, Chormi, Pom, Thin, Migi, Khatra, Yoj, Paingi, Kholali, Sogun and Thorjami.

Ghales are the aristocrats among Gurungs. They and Ghyabres observe many Brahman-Chhetri ritual taboos and do not, for instance, eat the meat of chicken or buffalo, as other Gurungs do. Some Ghale believe that they originally came from Tibet, while some other Gurungs maintain that all came from India. Both of these theories are questionable. Gurungs may well have been in the Himalayan regions for a considerable period of time, as so many other hill tribes of Nepal have been.

Some of the Gurung clans are subdivided into *pads*, 'families'. For example, Ghale-*pads* are: Tu, Puru, Ko and Kidu. For each *pad*, or sometimes for a whole clan, there is a headman whom Gurungs call *chiva*. His house is the 'leader's house', *chiva-ti*, or 'head house', *Kra-ti*. Members of the *pad* or of the clan assemble in this house on various occasions. On the *tika* day of *dashain* every clan member arrives with the head of a ram he has slaughtered, and feasting and festivities follow. To meet the expenses of this particular feast, a piece of land is set aside to remain in the charge of the *chiva*. The field is called *kra-marung*, the 'head field'.

Clan observances related to the *chiva* and his house are still a common practice among the Ghale, but other Gurung clans have given up the tradition and do not go to the *chiva-ti* with the ram's head. Some may send just the ears of the sheep and not bother to present themselves.

Should a feud or quarrel divide a *pad* or clan, and should the rebellious members wish to separate, they can establish their own head house, and divide the head field as well.

Marriage arrangements among Gurungs are unique. By tradition, the practice of cross-cousin marriage is preferred, but the young boys and girls are given full opportunity to make their own choice. All cross-cousins, that is both father's sister's daughters and mother's brother's daughters are possible marriage partners



Ghado dance of the Gurungs.



A wedding feast.

for a boy, but the father's sister's daughter is much preferred. Among some Gurungs it is even a custom to pay compensation of thirty rupees to the other party if one does not wish to marry one's own cross-cousin. Marriage partners can be found both inside and outside the home village. In one village where all the marriages were counted, some forty per cent had taken place within the village and sixty per cent with other villages.

There are a number of other tribes in Nepal among whom marriage is by choice. Members can marry anyone they like within their tribe except those who fall within prohibited categories, which usually include parallel cousins. Among the Thakalis, the preferred partner for a boy is his mother's brother's daughter. But marriage is by capture, not by mutual agreement (see Thakali). Among Gurungs, however, the institution of *rodi* gives ample opportunity for the young boys and girls to develop mutual understanding and love, but their minds have been so conditioned that they most often find attraction only in their cross-cousins. Marriages of parallel-cousins are, however, strictly prohibited. This means that a boy can not marry his father's brother's daughter, nor can he marry his mother's sister's daughter.

When a boy chooses a girl, whether the expected candidate or someone else, he informs his parents. His parents then send one of their friends or male relatives as their representative to the girl's parents' house with a present of one rupee and a bottle of spirit. The visitors are entertained with food and drink if the girl's parents accept the proposition but are curtly dismissed if they do not. When the girl's parents have agreed, the boy can make arrangements to fetch the bride at his convenience. Usually he goes out with one of his friends to the girl's house and escorts her home. But nowadays some people arrange a party and a musical band to go in a procession to fetch the bride.

After the bride is brought home a feast is given to the villagers and relatives. The bride stays for only two or three days and then returns to her parents' house where she stays for another four or five years. During this period both she and her husband keep going back and forth visiting each other and spending a night or two together in either of the two houses. This goes on until she has a child, after which the boy arranges to fetch the bride back to his house permanently. When the girl is finally taken to her husband's home she is given a dowry by her parents. The dowry consists of copper and brass cauldrons and water jars, sheep and cattle, and clothes and ornaments.

A year or two after the birth of a son to the new couple, the boys of the village

come together for the ceremony and dance of *putpute*, which is done in the courtyard of the house in which the couple are living. The dancers are paid twenty to fifty or sixty rupees according to the status of the baby's father. The money is spent later on a feast. The brother and other near relations of the baby's mother bring presents of clothes, ornaments and food for the child. There is one more ceremony, the first haircut, when the boy is five or six years of age. For this occasion the boy is tied with a rope round his neck to a wooden post as is a cow or a buffalo. His hair is cut and after he is untied his mother shouts, "suri, suri," from inside the house as if she were calling a cat. The boy enters the house responding to his mother's call saying, "mi-yaon, mi-yaon," as if he were a cat. A feast follows.

✓ Ghyabre are the priests of all except Lama Gurungs who have priests from their own class. One of the jobs of a priest is to officiate at the christening rite of a newborn baby. This is done on the eleventh day after the birth. Ghyabres also conduct the funeral service and a post-funeral service called *pa-ye*.

There are two ways of disposing of dead bodies, cremation and burial. By studying the position of the constellations at the moment of death the priest decides the method of disposal of the body.

There is a common burial ground for the deceased of a village. If the ground becomes crowded an old grave may be dug up and the bones removed to make room for the new body, but it must be a grave belonging to the same family as the dead person. When a grave is dug some rice grains are scattered before the body is lowered into it. A small piece of gold or silver is put into the mouth of the body and some food and liquor is put on top of the body before the grave is filled with earth.

For cremations a hollow, round stone structure is built with holes near the bottom through which firewood can be put in. The dead body is put on top and the wood thrust in from below and lighted. Gurungs have separate burials for those who die in an accident. The funeral shroud is always provided by a wife's brother or mother's brother for a male and a brother for a married woman. The funeral ceremony is attended by sisters and other female relatives of the deceased. Death pollution lasts for thirteen days, and affects all the brothers, brother's sons, and other close relatives, who observe mourning during this time. The descendant's son observes mourning for six months or a year. The mourner does not eat meat or drink any liquor. For the thirteen days of mourning after a death the close relatives do not eat any salt. The dead are offered food together with other

dead ancestors until the final ceremony of *pa-ye* is done for them. Their ancestor-god is offered food near the family hearth inside the house.

Pa-ye, the final rite for the dead relative, is performed about one year following death. It consists of making an effigy of white cloth on bamboo sticks three feet long. This effigy is draped with gold ornaments and is known as the *pla*, representing the dead person. The Ghyabre priest addresses the spirit of the dead and finally sends it off to a place called '*lanasa*'. *Lanasa* is somewhere in the north and is comparable to the *swarga*, "heaven", of Hinduism. Once the spirit is admitted to *lanasa* its surviving relations need not worry about it. Because the *pa-ye* is an expensive affair requiring the slaughter of sheep and a feast for neighbours and relatives, several families may perform it together at their convenience even several years after the death occurs.

As there is such a long interval between the death and the final ceremony of *pa-ye*, the spirit may give trouble to the surviving members of its family. To appease it the family makes a small shrine up on the hill and offers food to the spirit. The shrine is a small rectangular niche about one foot square and six inches deep. This niche is pulled down after *pa-ye* has been completed, as the spirit is supposed to have gone to *lanasa* and can not come back to give any more trouble.

Whenever there is a death in the village, members of the funeral party take food to the niches of their dead relatives. While the service of *pa-ye* is being conducted they tie the *pla* effigy with one end of a rope, while the other end is taken outside the house to the courtyard and tied to a lamb. The sex of the lamb must be the same as that of the dead person. The lamb is fed during the service and finally taken to a crossroads of the village where it is slaughtered. All the neighbours and relatives invited for the occasion bring clothes or ornaments and put them around the *pla*. At the end of the service all this is taken by the officiating Ghyabre priest. Finally the Ghyabre closes the way back from *lanasa* by sacrificing a chicken on a path lest the spirit become nostalgic and make an attempt to come back to this world and give more trouble to his surviving family members. Some male relatives arrange *syarga*, a dance in honour of the dead person, on this occasion. In some cases the *syarga* is done on the day of death before the corpse is taken out of the house. Some villages have a system of collecting people in their head house before they all go to a funeral procession and of coming back again to the same house once the funeral procession is over before they finally disperse.

Sometimes Gurungs build a stone *chantara* for resting along a main trail in the

name of a dead relative. They plant trees on it and dig a small water storage pond for cattle beside it. Many others build similar resting places in order to acquire merit. A big feast is given at the same time. So while travelling in these areas one finds quite a number of such *chautaras* and ponds. Some women never marry again after the death of their husbands, but widow remarriage is recognized. Those who observe widowhood break their glass bangles and take off their necklaces of small glass beads, both of which are the signs of a married woman. A man can marry the widow of his elder brother. Brothers get an equal share of the parental property although the youngest of the brothers gets a little more than the rest.

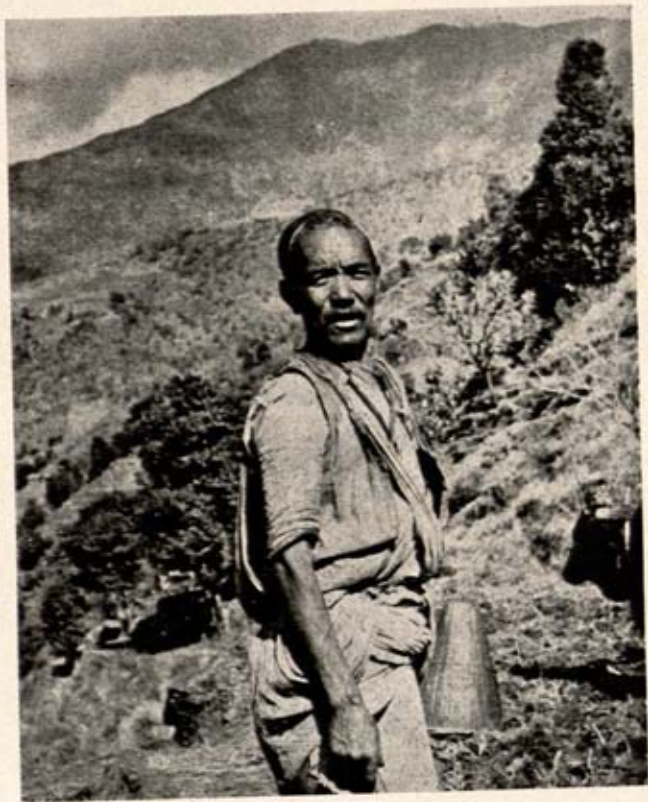
✓ Some Gurungs have now taken Brahman priests just as some other peoples, Magars for instance, have adopted the Lamaistic form of Buddhism. Even today there are a few Gurung Lamas educated in Lamaistic practice in the districts of Manang and Larkye. A Gurung boy has been recognized as an *avatari*, a reincarnation of a Lama of one of the monasteries in the border region. Some older villages still have *chortens* to be seen, but those who have come into contact with the Brahmans and Chhetris have become more Hinduized and caste conscious than others.

In Kaski and Lamjung Gurungs live in small round, oval or rectangular houses clustered together in a village. A village of average size has one hundred and fifty to two hundred houses. The biggest Gurung village, Siklis in Kaski, has seven hundred houses. The houses are built of irregular stones cemented with mud and have either slate or thatched roofs.

✓ Gurungs are clearly Mongoloid in their features and yet easily distinguished from the real Tibetans living further north in the border settlements. Those in the original districts of Kaski and Lamjung speak a Tibeto-Burman tongue while others who have settled elsewhere, especially those living to the east of Kathmandu, have lost their mother tongue and speak Nepali. Giving an account of both the Gurungs and Magars, Brian Hodgson, in one of his essays, says : "From lending themselves less early and heartily to Brahmanical influences than the Khas (Chhetri) they have retained, in vivid freshness, their original languages, physiognomy and, in a less degree, habits".¹

Besides the clan heads there are administrative headmen for every village. Their duty is to collect revenue for the government and take it to the district head-

¹ Brian Hodgson, "Origin and Classification of the Military Tribes of Nepal", *Op. cit.*



A Gurung Farmer.



Oval houses in a Gurung Village.

quarters. Their other duty is to cater for touring government officials. For both of these services they receive a certain percentage of the revenue income. They used to receive free labour for the cultivation of their own fields but now the people have been relieved of this obligation by the government.

The villagers sometimes form an *ad-hoc* council for settling small, local problems. But the institution has not been very effective so far. They go to the government courts for anything they can not settle themselves in the village. Some villages have a community house built in the middle of the village. This house, which is called *thandi*, serves as the village council's meeting house and also as a place for village girls to dance. Under the new Panchayat system the new village councils occupy these buildings.

The Gurungs have a very interesting dance tradition. They used to have two types of dance, *sorathi* and *ghado*. But in Kaski and Lamjung the *sorathi* is dying out. There is a season for dancing, starting on Shripanchami day in January and lasting through February, March, and April until the day of *chandi-purnima*. During this period they can dance at any time they like, but they usually do so on the days when they abstain from their agricultural work. They abstain from work on festival days, new moon and full moon days, the day following the first hailstorm of Spring, and whenever somebody in the village dies. The dance is performed by two unmarried girls. Before the actual performance starts, the floor is cleaned with cowdung and earth and the performers sit with their eyes closed and mouths shut. Then they are said to become possessed by ancestor-spirits, and the dance begins.

On the first day of the dance season the guardian-teacher of the dancing girls invokes several other gods. These gods are supposed to stay with them until he sends them back at the end of the season, which is the full moon day of April. In addition to the guardian-teacher there is a woman director who teaches the girls the movements of the dance. The girls are recruited into the dancing group at the age of nine, ten or eleven, and remain until they are eighteen or nineteen, when they get married. They must remain in the group for an odd number of years and should never leave when they have been in it for an even number. Most girls remain in it for five or seven years.

Rodi is another interesting Gurung institution. This is a club for boys or girls of more or less the same age—usually ten or eleven—under the supervision of an adult. The adult, an experienced elderly woman for the girls and a man for the boys, volunteers to help them and allows them to use his or her house as a dormitory.

This house is then called the *rodi*. It is not a permanent dormitory as some Indian tribes have, but the meeting place of one group only; other groups have other dormitories. Nor do all children in the village necessarily join a *rodi*. Those who are in a *rodi* remain together until they are seventeen or eighteen, when they get married. In the evenings girls bring their rugs and blankets and sleep in their dormitory every night except during the monsoon; the boys usually spend their evenings in the girls' dormitory and come back late to sleep in their own. The senior-most member of a *rodi* acts as *chiva*, the leader. The members are called *rogso me*. The male and female guardians of the *rodi* are known as *neva ava* and *neva ama* respectively. The membership usually consists of twelve to fifteen young people.

All the members of a *rodi* usually work together in the fields, or go together to fetch wood from the forest. Sometimes one *rodi* invites another *rodi* from a different village to help them work in the fields. Sometimes a boys' *rodi* makes a long trip to visit a girls' *rodi* in a distant village. However, they do not go to an entirely strange village where they do not know anyone, but always to a village where at least one or two girls are acquainted with the boys of the visiting *rodi*. The boys' *rodi* is there entertained for two or three days with buffalo or goat's meat, chicken, and other delicacies which the girls take pride in preparing. The *ama* and *ava* of the host *rodi* together help organise everything during such occasions of entertainment. During their stay the boys may work in the fields during the day, if it is an agricultural season, and enjoy the feast in the evening. At the end of their visit the boys make presents of money, bamboo-pipes for holding cigarettes, or bamboo-combs which they make with great skill. Whenever the *rodi* girls go to a fair or pay a visit to a place of religious interest, they are accompanied by the *neva ava* as a guardian. One such trip is made to Phewa Tal, a large lake near Pokhara on Magh Sankranti, the first day of *Magh* (mid-January to mid-February).

When one of the *rodi* girls gets married, all the fellow members of her *rodi*, except Ghale and Lamichhane girls, accompany her while she is taken to her future husband's house. Some of the girls stay overnight with her while others return the same day if the village is near enough. All these girls are presented with money by the bridegroom. Those who return the same day receive a rupee each while others spending the night receive five to seven rupees each.

In these hilly areas, where the type of entertainment or recreation found in cities is not available, the *rodi* is an ideal substitution and is, in fact, much more lively and entertaining. The young people in their free and frank intercourse without self-consciousness or inhibitions are in a much more enviable position than their counterparts in the cities.

THAKALI¹

The Thakali people come from Thak Khola, the high valley of the Kali Gandaki River four to six days' walk northwest of Pokhara in western Nepal. To the traveller in and around Pokhara on almost every main route Thakalis are familiar people and their *bhatti*, the trailside 'inns', are convenient stops for lunch, tea, or the evening rice meal and night's sleep. Few outside visitors realize, however, that these *bhatti* are only temporary establishments during the winter season of travel and are, in fact, only one facet of the interesting and adventuresome Thakali social and economic structure. The Thakalis' homes in Thak Khola lie along a valley which cuts its way between the Annapurna and Dhaulagiri Himalayas. It is in Thak Khola that we find the transition from Hindu Nepal of the middle hills to Buddhist Nepal of the mountains and northern border region, and the jump from lush subtropical vegetation to the edge of the high and dry Tibetan plateau.

The Thakalis have regular Mongoloid features with round faces, flat noses, high cheek bones, narrow eyes and yellow skin pigmentation. Their language belongs to the Tibeto-Burman family, along with related dialects of Gurung, Magar, and the like. This tribe has spread since the late nineteenth century all along the Kali Gandaki Valley from the present site of Tukche, and even from Jomosom to the north in Panchgaun, south through the middle hills into the district of Bhairawa in the Terai, and along several other tributary valleys, even to the upper Marsyangdi *Khola* in the east near Gorkha. There are two apparent reasons for this distribution. One is that some one hundred years ago in the mid-nineteenth century Thakalis were awarded a monopoly over the Tibetan salt trade. For these exclusive rights they had to pay over twelve thousand rupees annually to the government. Many Thakalis, however, who found it hard to pay such high taxes left the area and went to live in the middle range valleys where the people depended on agriculture, unlike the almost purely trading population of Thak Khola, and paid very little revenue.

¹ The present study of the Thakalis is based on research work done in Thak Khola by Professor Christoph von Fürer Haimendorf and myself as his research assistant. I am grateful for his valuable suggestions and for a generous grant of the National Science Foundation of the United States of America for research.

The second reason is that the Thakalis have developed into one of the most successful long-distance trading groups in Nepal and, as a result, they invest money in almost any undertaking which looks good to them, be it the purchase of cultivated land, money lending, opening a new shop, or bidding for a government contract. In so doing they spend more and more time outside Thak Khola and in time many have left the home area for good to settle wherever they found it most convenient for their trade and profession. Pokhara, in the bustle of new economic growth and development, has attracted many, but Thak Khola is still considered the homeland of Thakalis.

According to the census of 1961 the total number of Thakali-speaking peoples was 4,134, a few of whom were even registered from the mid-western Terai. This figure represents the actual number who spoke the language as their mother tongue, and it can perhaps be safely assumed that there are a few per cent more who, having lived for several generations in the midst of non-Thakali speaking people, have forgotten their Thakali language and speak Nepali as their mother tongue.

Thak Khola lies in the Mustang district of Dhaulagiri zone. The traditional area of the true Thakalis is known as Thak-Sat-Sae, or 'seven hundred Thak', although by now they have greatly increased in number and have spread much further afield.

At the northern end of Thak-Sat-Sae is Tukche, which has remained the main trading centre for about one hundred years. Tukche is the most recently settled Thakali village. The name is derived from a Tibetan term meaning 'the salt trading grounds', referring to the original site of salt trade and barter directly above the present town. Tukche used to be inhabited by the richest and most influential of the Thakalis and was called the capital of Thak-Sat-Sae. Of late, however, the richer and more successful families have gradually moved away from Tukche, and at present Thakalis do not even constitute the majority population of the town. Many of the Tukche houses are occupied by border peoples of the north and, of late, by refugees from Tibet.

South of Tukche there are other Thakali villages along the Kali Gandaki Valley as far as one day's journey. The last of them is Ghasa, where the valley narrows at the southern end of the beautiful pine forest of Lete.

Thak-Sat-Sae on the whole receives very little rainfall. For this reason the Thakalis build their stone houses with flat roofs, convenient for drying their grain and vegetables for winter storage. The houses stand against one another in a line

to form small alleys or sometimes tunnel-like passageways running along the entire length of the village. Khanti village is an excellent example of this.

The interior of a Thakali house is very large and spacious. In most cases there is a large enclosed courtyard in front used for livestock and storage. Behind it is the main living room, with long low benches lining one wall and a large ornamental fireplace at the end, in which no fire is ever lit. Shiny brass pots and goblets line the shelves above. To one side is the everyday kitchen and fire pit. One large back room is the family chapel where two copper jugs of water, symbolising the ancestor spirits, are kept. Other adjoining rooms are used for sleeping and storage.

The Thakalis, with their outstanding aptitude for business and trade, are among the most successful business men in Nepal. They could be more profitably encouraged in the fields of trade and industry than in any other field.

The economy of Thak Khola is largely based on the salt trade. As middlemen the Thakalis get their salt from Tibet, either directly or through neighbouring border traders, and in turn they exchange it for rice, wheat and barley from the lower hills. Because of Tukche's insufficient rainfall for extensive farming and its proximity to the Tibetan frontier a few days march north along the valley, it is almost entirely a trading centre. Villages south of Tukche receive more rain and are more self-sufficient, raising good harvests of barley, wheat, buckwheat, maize, radishes and potatoes. In fact, almost all the villages except Tukche do their own agricultural work, relying on a constant supply of cheap labour from higher and drier villages where farming is negligible.

While still in possession of the salt monopoly and of a government appointed feudal order called *amali*, which subjugated the regions of Panchgaun and Baragaun to the north as far as Lo, Mustang, Thakalis could conscript all the labour they might need. The government appointed headman, always an already important Thakali personality, was called *amali*. He had control of local administration, collected revenue, settled local disputes and maintained law and order. (*Amali* was quite common throughout Nepal, especially in the more remote, less accessible areas, until quite recently). Under this system, the Panchgaun and Baragaun people (see below) had no choice but to come down and work for the Thakalis during the harvest season, receiving grain as wages. Many of these neighbouring border villagers found themselves bound as bond-servants to the aggressive money-lending Thakali overlords. The economic domination of the Thakalis over the immediate non-Thakali population was, and is still to some extent, so effective that they have

always gotten their domestic servants from among non-Thakalis. Thakalis, however poor they may be, never work as domestic servants.

Tukche especially has always depended on outside labour for agricultural and other work. Besides the requirements of a main trading centre and a few acres of cultivated fields, there are peach and apricot orchards. Much of the fruit is allowed to rot, after which the stones are broken open to extract the kernels, which are pressed for oil. Often the fruits are dried in the sun and stored for winter eating.

Transportation to and from Thak Khola is of two varieties. Bulky loads of grain, and Indian, Nepali and Chinese factory-made goods, i.e. canvas shoes, cotton material, cigarettes, matches, oil, and other such oddments, are carried up from the middle hill regions from such important trade centres as Bhairawa in the Terai and from Pokhara on the backs of porters. But from Thak Khola northward the river valley is wide and flat enough for pack animals—mules, ponies, *dzopa* (dzopkyo), and even goats. Nothing is carried on the backs of human beings between Thak Khola and Tibet.

An interesting system of financial cooperatives has maintained the relative economic security of Thakalis. Several friends or relatives who need some ready capital for investment or to meet debts organize an arbitrary party of interested investors to form a *dhigur*. Members may sometimes number as many as twenty-five or thirty, and each is expected to contribute an equal share of money yearly, anywhere from one hundred to one thousand rupees each as decided among themselves. The year's lump sum is then given to one member, usually on the basis of immediate need, or by lottery or bidding. He only gets the money in one year, and he can do whatever he wants with it with no more responsibility to the group than to meet his yearly payment for as many years as there are members. The men who have less immediate need usually wait for their turn in a later year. Should a man invest and make a large profit it is all his; any loss is only his loss. The next year another man receives the renewed capital sum, and so on until each man takes his share. At the end of the period the *dhigur* is automatically dissolved.

The *dhigur* system is ideal for any trading community. In it no single individual is ever left without capital. The moment anyone needs money he can go around and collect enough people to form a new *dhigur* for his immediate benefit and take the first year's fund to invest where he sees fit. There are hundreds of *dhigurs* functioning at the present time, and every year a number of old ones expire and new ones come into being.

Thakalis form a strictly endogamous tribe which is divided into four exogamous clans. That is, one cannot marry other than a Thakali, but must marry outside one's particular clan. The four clans are equal in social and ritual status, but are arranged in order of precedence for such purposes as the worship of the clan gods. On such occasions the clan Gau Chan comes first, followed in order by Tula Chan, Sher Chan, and Bhatta Chan. These are terms of Sanskrit origin whereas the traditional tribal names are, in the same sequence : Chyoki, Salki, Dhimzen and Bhurki. Locally these latter terms are more commonly used than the Chan names which were adopted only recently. The whole tribe collectively identifies itself as 'Tamang', so called, but whether it has any affinities with the proper Tamang discussed earlier remains to be explored.

The general term 'Thakali' was derived from the place name 'Thak', and in common usage refers not only to the inhabitants of Thak-Sat-Sae, but to those of Panchgaun as well. However, the Chans of Thak-Sat-Sae are most specifically known as Thakali and they, more than any others, consider that they alone are true Thakalis and that no other group has a right to the name. Many Thakalis believe that their ancestors came from Sinja in the west where their close kinsmen were all Thakuris. It was only when they settled in Thak that they began to practice Lamaism and were known as Thakalis.

Each of the four Thakali Chan clans has its own gods which are worshipped collectively once every twelve years. This, more than any other single factor, contributes to cementing Thakali tribal unity. The gods of all four clans are represented in the form of animals, as listed here :—

<i>Clan God</i>	<i>Clan</i>
Dragon	Gau Chan (or Chyoki)
Elephant	Tula Chan (or Salki)
Lion	Sher Chan (or Dhimzen)
Yak	Bhatta Chan (or Bhurki)

The four clans are again subdivided into a number of family groups called *ghyupa*, or *phowe*, in the Thakali dialect. Each clan includes eight to ten of these family groups, which in fact are the most effective membership groups, each with an identifying name. The *ghyupa* name is referred to only when the Thakali talk among themselves and is never mentioned outside the clan. All members of the family unit come together for a feast during the worship of their ancestral god and

share a common *khimi* shrine. The *khimi* shrine is built of stones and mud, usually about three feet square and four feet high, with a little hollow inside. In the hollow must be placed a piece of bone of each family member at his death. Each *ghyupa* has its own *khimi* at a central place near the villages of Nabhrungkot and Khanti, about two miles south of Tukche, a site said to be the original settlement of the Thakalis. Besides this central concentration of *khimi* shrines, there are two to be found in each Thakali village within Thak-Sat-Sac, but none outside the area.

Thakali marriage customs are distinctive. They practise cross-cousin marriage, that is, the marriage of either one's father's sister's daughter or one's mother's brother's daughter a custom prevalent also among the Tamang, Gurung, and other middle hill peoples. Thakalis marry not only cousins of the same generation, but also of different generations.

Marriage is usually by capture. But, in spite of tradition, some young and educated Thakalis now prefer the arranged marriage, following the example of the caste oriented Hindus. The capture marriage is common among many Nepali tribes. Among the Thakalis a group of young men, usually friends and relatives of the boy, goes out in the evening and captures the girl in question when she comes out of her house. They take her to a house belonging to one of the boy's relatives and leave her under strict guard until the approval of her parents has been secured. The wedding cannot take place until her parents' approval is obtained, and the girl cannot be taken into the boy's house until the wedding is completed. The boy's party may or may not have informed the girl's parents previously about the capture of their daughter. In cases where the parents have given previous consent, the girl may find herself being dragged from her home. This is still considered a capture marriage and the boy's people must beg for forgiveness for offending the parents and secure proper permission to complete the wedding. Polyandry, as practiced among the neighbouring people of Dolpo, Baragaun, and Lo (Mustang), is not found among Thakalis, but the reverse, polygyny, where a man may take more than one wife, is occasionally found. Parental property is divided among all the sons, but the youngest receives the most, including the house. Elder sons usually go out on their own as soon as they are married.

The religion of the Thakalis is a mixture of Buddhism, Jhankrism, Bonpo and Hinduism, but they lay claim to Jhankrism, a kind of Shamanistic cult, as their original religion. Later they were initiated into Buddhism, and adopted Bon-po as well, but the latter is not at all strongly followed. The only Bon-po *gomba* in the

whole of Thak-Sat-Sae is found in Nabrungkot village. There are others in the adjoining region of Panchgaun, one at Jomosom and another in disrepair at Thini.

At present there is among Thakalis a widespread contempt for both Buddhism and Bon-po, which they refer to as "religions of the Bhotes". There is a strong move to completely disassociate themselves from the border peoples both ethnically and religiously and, as we shall see, even with restrictions upon current use of the Thakali language and traditional dress. Among the young men and women there is an attempt to establish some link between the present Thakalis and the Hindu Thakuri people of Jumla and Sinja in Nepal's far west. More for this reason than for any other they are very hostile to the Buddhist tradition and claim to be high caste Hindus. But even here there is conflict, and it is difficult to understand their hostility toward Buddhism generally, because the Thakuri kings themselves, in the past centuries of power, seem to have been under the influence of Tibetan Buddhism.¹ It has been clearly stated by Prof. Tucci that the Khas Malla kings of western Nepal who had expanded their empire to western Tibet must have been Buddhist: "(their) inscriptions bear always the Buddhist symbol of the stupa and start with the Buddhist Mantra."²

Besides the growing association with Hinduism, there is a renewed interest in a revival of the primitive religion of Jhankrism, again in direct opposition to any Buddhist leanings. Buddhism, none the less, certainly is the more sophisticated religion and has a more impressive tradition with its elaborate rituals. Several old Buddhist *gombas* still exist in Thak-Sat-Sae linking Thakalis with Buddhism in the past. Some of them used to have beautiful frescoes dating to the sixteenth century. For the most part the *gombas* have fallen into disrepair and many of the frescoes have either been pulled down or covered with new paintings of a lesser standard. A campaign of replacement has been undertaken by a group of some twenty nuns of Thak-Sat-Sae who are also active in the maintenance and the regular ritual services of the *gombas*. Thus Buddhism has now become the religion of professionals—lamas and nuns—and not of the common Thakali people. Only one or two young Thakali disciples are studying to become lamas.

There have been three *avatari*-lamas reincarnations recorded among the

¹ *Itihas Prakash* (History Publication), No. 2., Part 1, (Kathmandu, 1955), pp. 58-59.

² Guiseppe Tucci, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

Thakalis. The first was identified about fifty years ago, but his parents refused to let him be taken into the monastery to be trained, for he happened to be the son of the richest and most powerful family of Thak-Sat-Sae. This man's family later took the leading part in demonstrating hostility to the hitherto flourishing Buddhist religion. A second *avatari*-lama was found some thirty-five years ago, and he too does not act as a proper lama, nor does he command any respect from the Thakalis as a lama. The third reincarnation has abandoned his *gomba* and has taken an interest in trade.

Such as they are, the lamas, nuns and a few disciples, both Thakali and non-Thakali, hold many festivals and ceremonies in the local *gombas*. *Dyokyapsi* is a ritual ceremony of colourful dancing and performances with gorgeous dresses and masks. It is held in November in Kyupar *gomba* near Tukche. We are told, however, that of late even the most attractive religious festivals have been bringing smaller and smaller audiences from among Thakalis. But there are still quite a number of non-Thakalis from adjoining areas who find the *dyokyapsi* ceremony of considerable interest.

The Thakali tribal festivals are of more importance. The most significant is *lha feva* which falls in the month of November of every Monkey year of the twelve year cycle according to the Tibetan calendar. The last one was held in 1968 and the next observance should fall in 1980. *Lha feva* means 'the coming of god' in Tibetan. It has lately been referred to more often by the Sanskritic term, *Kumbha mela*, a Hindu festival name. During the festival, which lasts about a week, the images of the four clan gods are taken out of their temples, worshipped, and taken around with all the ritual paraphernalia, while the people are feasting and enjoying the fun. Four men called *pandes*, one for each clan god, recite and interpret the clan's book telling the story of the coming of each god and the journeys of the four original ancestors of the four clans.

There is another tribal festival called *shyoben lava*, or more commonly known by the Sanskritic name *kumar jatra*, the 'ceremony of the boys'. This is a kind of initiation ceremony for young boys and includes training in archery, riding, singing and dancing. The observance is held for four or five days during August, and originally included at least thirteen initiate boys between the ages of five to eight. Of late the number of participants has been dropped to five, and although it used to be compulsory for every Thakali boy, the practice has been considerably relaxed often overlooked.

Ancestor-god worship takes place in the main house, or *mha tim* of each group

of kinsmen. The ancestor-god, *dhu-tin-gya*, has no image. It is symbolized by a pair of small copper jugs containing water placed in an interior room of each *mha tim* where none but the nearest family kinsmen is allowed entry. The worship tradition includes an elaborate ritual and food offerings, and a great feast to which hundreds of relatives and friends are invited. The entire ceremony is presided over by a Jhankri priest, and as it is very expensive the annual celebration has been displaced by one every four or five years.

When an elder son separates from his parents, the *mha tim* remains the same until such time as the parents have died and the elder son has a family of his own. He may then share the original spirit by taking one of the copper jugs to his house. This involves installing a replacement jug beside the remaining original jug in the old *mha tim* and likewise in his own home, which then becomes the main house of his own offspring.

Thakali society is undergoing rapid structural change. There is a great deal of talk in Thak-Sat-Sae about reforms, such as have already been initiated in the changing marriage rules, the banning of gambling, and a ban on the respectful Tibetan custom of offering a *khata* scarf to an honoured visitor, friend, headman or lama. There is, surprisingly, even a ban on the speaking of the Thakali dialect when one is away from Thak Khola. Young people are not permitted to wear ornaments or the traditional Thakali dress, and as a result the common Nepali dress has been adopted by all. Religious reforms have been initiated by the pulling down of Buddhist *mani*-walls and a ban on the employment of lama priests for funerals. But in this regard there is a significant Buddhist undercurrent kept alive by the presence of Tibetan refugees and lamas and believing laymen. Administrative reforms are evidenced in the giving of a new secret constitution to the council of thirteen *Mukliyas*.

Traditionally, Thak-Sat-Sae is divided into thirteen village units, each headed by a *mukhiya*. The thirteen *mukhiyas* hold their offices by hereditary right, subject to the approval of the district government at Baglung. And since the advent of the current Panchayat administrative system, effective control of the *Mukhiyas* has increased. The *mukhiyas* convene their high council in Thak Khola twice yearly, once in July and again in October. At the July session they do the accounts of the grazing tax collected from the owners of sheep. Other matters are considered in October on the significant day of *tika* during the high Hindu festival of *dashain*.

The reform constitution, referred to above, was formulated by thirteen *mu-*

khiyas in 1952, thereby investing all administrative privileges of the former individual *mukhiyas* in this high council. But for unknown reasons, they have kept the contents of the constitution a complete secret so far. At any rate, it has filled the vacuum of the central and also the district government's meagre means of control in this specific Himalayan region. This institution is now gradually being replaced by the new Panchayat system.

PANCHGAUNLE

Between Tukche and the riverside village of Kagbeni of Baragaun lie the five villages of Panchgaun : Jomosom-Thini, Syang, Marpha, Chivang, and Chherok. The people of Panchgaun we shall call Panchgaunle, although they persistently refer to themselves as Thakali, and indeed speak a variation of the Thakali dialect. They look like Thakalis and have adopted much of the Thakali culture, but in the true sense of the word they are not Thakali. By their sentiment, on the other hand, and their adoption of Nepali dress and customs, they dispel any notion of calling them Bhote—it repels them.

Their house style is identical to the Thakalis'—whitewashed mud construction, flat roofed, with an inner courtyard for livestock and storage. Few Panchgaun houses approach the size and grandeur of some to be found in Tukche, and the villages seem not to be as neatly patterned.

Marpha is an interesting village in the centre of Panchgaun along the river trail up from Tukche to Jomosom. Approaching from either north or south the traveller passes by long well kept *mani*-walls and beneath a large whitewashed *chorten* built in the form of an archway. The village abuts the sandstone cliffs, with its fields stretching away toward the river below. The main cobbled alleyway takes one past the houses and courtyards from which issues the sweet smell of juniper boughs spread as bedding for the livestock.

In line with their neighbours, the Panchgaunle cultivate and trade, and a good number of families have taken to *bhatti* keeping, their familiar roadside 'inns' ranging as far south as the Terai and east to the Marsyangdi *khola* in Lamjung district. It is not uncommon to find several families keeping *bhattis* the year round for several consecutive seasons, although the majority return home to cultivate each spring.

Within the Panchgaun social structure one finds distinctions. The people of Marpha are divided into four exogamous groups, or clans, much the same as the Thakalis', complete with imitative names : Hira Chan, Juhar Chan, Panna Chan, and Lal Chan. (It is interesting to note that the titles Hira, Juhar, Panna, and Lal in order mean 'diamond', 'jewel', 'emerald', and 'ruby'.) Together they are called Punel, although they show reluctance to depart from the Thakali. One cannot marry with anyone but a Punel, nor within one's own clan. Likewise, the people

of Thini are Thinel, and those of Syang, Syangdan, et cetera, although in the latter cases there is considerable intermixing and intermarriage. On the whole there is little or no social intercourse between Panchgaunle and the Thakali people.

The religion of Panchgaun includes Buddhism, Bon-po and Jhankrism, with some limited recent adoption of Hindu ways in imitation of the Thakali. On a barren hill near Thini, with an inspiring view of the entire area, is the Buddhist *gomba* Ku-tsap-ter-nga, the quest of many Tibetan pilgrims who come to see five treasured relics said to date back to Sam-ye Gomba, the first Buddhist monastery of Tibet, built in the 8th century A.D.¹ Ku-tsap-ter-nga is named for these relics.

Another Buddhist *gomba* of interest is at Chherok, near Marpha. It stands across the river from the main route in a beautiful grove of evergreen trees. Thini and Jomosom both have Bon-po temples, although the one at Thini was the victim of religious feuding some years back and it stands now in decay and desertion.

1 David Snellgrove, *Himalayan Pilgrimage*, (Oxford, 1961), p. 186.

CHEPANG

The Chepangs are one of the least known groups of Nepal, and little formal study has been made of them. The first scholar to mention Chepangs was Brian Hodgson, more than 100 years ago. Grouping them with a related group, the Kusundas, he states that they were "living entirely upon wild fruits and the produce of the chase—" Later on he adds that the "Chepangs are a few degrees above their confreres (Kusundas), and are beginning to hold some slight intercourse with civilized beings and to adopt the most simple of their arts and habits."¹ Hodgson associated Chepangs with a people of Bhutan called Lho because of the proximity of their languages.

The second scholar to come across the Chepangs very recently was Dr. Rene Von Nebesky-Wojkowitz, who had met them on a trip a day and a half's journey west of Kathmandu. He thought those few Chepangs he had met "distinctly showed Mongoloid features, viz. slit eyes and prominent cheek bones; many had flat broad noses with a deep saddle and the skin of two or three was of a very dark pigmentation."²

In my own acquaintance with Chepangs in their home areas I also thought that their features were basically Mongoloid and showed more resemblance to the Rais of east Nepal than with any other people except that they were definitely darker than the Rais.

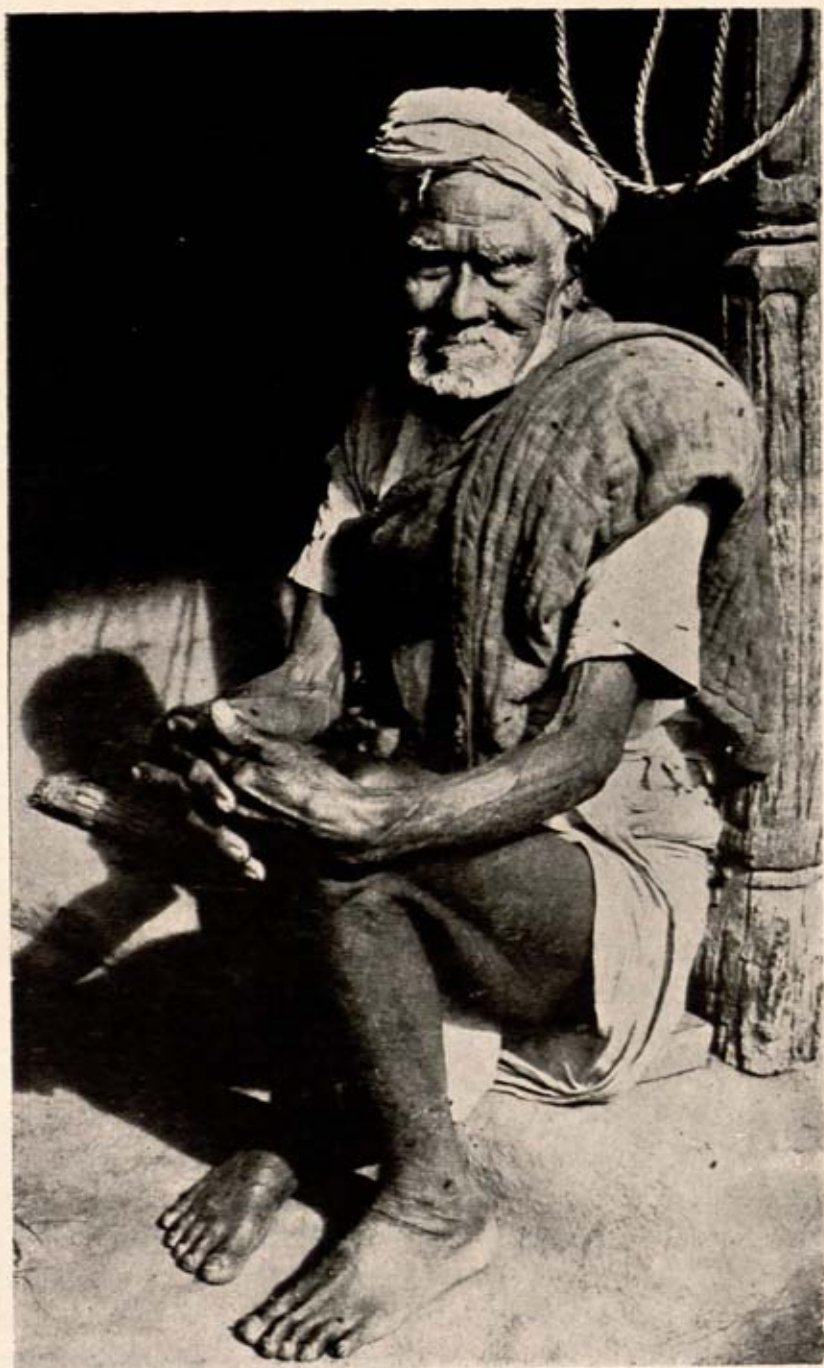
Some of the Chepangs believe that their community is an offshoot of the Kiranti (Rai-Limbu) group that inhabits Sunathali, in Dolkha in the east.

The Chepang language is a Tibeto-Burman dialect which is quite different from the language of the Tamangs living close to them in the same area. I do not know if the Chepang language has any affinity with the Rai language. Of further interest is the similarity of marriage practices of Chepangs and Thamis, who live in proximity with Tamangs.

One of their traditional stories maintains that they are descended from Sitajee,

1 Hodgson, "Chepang and Kusunda Tribes of Nepal", Vol. VIII, *Op. cit.*

2 Rene von Nebesky-Wojkowitz, "Kusunda and Chepang : Notes on Two Little-Known Tribes of Nepal", *Bulletin of the International Committee on Urgent Anthropological and Ethnological Research*, (London, 1959), No. 2, pp. 77-84.



Eighty-six year²old Chepang has 110 sons, daughters, grand children and great grand children.

the heroine of the famous Hindu epic *Ramayana*. According to the Chepang story, Sitajee gave birth to a son named Lohari while she was in exile in a hermitage near the Gandaki river. One day Sitajee took her baby out with her because she wanted to show it to the monkeys who were playing with their own babies. She went to the river without the knowledge of the sage Balmiki, her protector. After a while Balmiki saw the cradle empty and thought the baby was stolen. Thinking that Sitajee would be shocked and blame the sage for not watching it properly he created a living likeness out of *kusha* grass. Sitajee returned with her own child and was amazed to find another in the cradle. Balmiki then explained everything and advised her to raise both children as her own sons. The sage called the new boy by the name Kushari. When Lohari and Kushari grew up they were natural enemies of each other. The descendants of Lohari were called Chepang and of Kushari, Kusunda, the food-gathering and hunting people living in the forested areas west of the Chepang country. Chepangs say that the Kusundas use bows and arrows and kill the Chepangs on sight.

Some other Chepangs say that the Chepangs and the Kusundas have the same origins as the Thakuris. Kusundas are still in their primitive state. Only a few have been reported to have settled permanently and begun cultivation. Others gather wood and hunt in the forest. They live in caves or in temporary huts in the forests of the southern parts of Gorkha and the south central part of Tanhu districts. They are believed not to number over a few dozen.

Chepangs say that there were at one time four Chepangs rajas, who were subsequently defeated by the Raja of Patan. The four Chepang rajas were called Poney Raja, Gill Raja, Rini Raja and Raji Raja. Their common court was at Pukunthali and Raji Raja was the seniormost among them.

Chepangs seldom indulge in violence. But since they are all illiterate and ignorant, and most of them shy and timid, they are exploited by Brahmans, Chhetris and even Tamangs. No Chepang is known to live outside his traditional region, consisting of the southern part of Dhading District, the western part of Makwanpur, the northern part of Chitwan and the southern part of Gorkha. Their present population is over 9,000. They live along the steeper slopes of the Mahabharata range at elevations of between 2,500 and 4,000 feet. Tamangs live higher, and Brahmans, Chhetris, Gurungs and Newars live lower than the Chepangs along the same range of mountains.

Chepangs are economically at a disadvantage compared to the people living

around them. Practically every single family is indebted to the Kumain Brahmans and to a certain extent to Chhetri, Newar and Tamang neighbours. The amounts they borrow vary from five rupees to several thousand, depending upon the size of the land-holdings of the debtor. The land they cultivate was the Chepang *kipat* until 1928. But now it is all government *raikar* land.¹ Most of their lands are mortgaged as a security against the amounts they borrow from the moneylenders. Most of what they borrow is spent on wedding feasts and funerals.

Chepangs used to carry timber from the forest near their area to Kathmandu Valley where they sold it to housebuilders and furniture makers. The forest department has since restricted the felling of trees, and Chepangs now go to various national development project sites and seek temporary employment. They work at the Trishuli Hydro-Electric Project, on the road construction of Hetaura and the Rapti Valley, the maintenance of the Tribhuwan Rajpath, et cetera.

Chepangs make a distinction between two economic groups, those who have developed a purely agricultural economy and others who still partly depend upon food-gathering, hunting and fishing. The former group lives in the eastern part of the region and is known as the Pukunthali; the latter lives in the western part and is known as the Kachhare. Kachhare Chepangs are more backward and primitive than the Pukunthalis. The Kachhars like to be called Sunpraja and have no subdivisions, while the Pukunthalis are called Praja and have a number of exogamous clans. The clan names of the Pukunthalis are : Bhara, Jarng, Rum, Prosho, Bare, Saune, Jungrange, Rupakote, Jyamrange, Bangrange, Naike, Pod-bange and Ringbange.

Both Pukunthali and Kachhare Chepangs grow maize, millet, wheat, and a little rice. Kachhars also practise shifting cultivation. The yields of the land some of the Pukunthalis cultivate would make them self-sufficient if they were careful, but since they have to pay large amounts as interest on the money they borrow and also because they lavishly use the grains in making liquor which they consume in large quantity their conditions are pitiable. However, they take a great pride in being able to consume as much liquor as they do and criticise the Brahmans and Chhetris for not doing so.

¹ *Raikar* is "state landlordism; land on which taxes are collected and appropriated directly or through intermediaries by the state", according to Mahesh C. Regmi, *Land Tenure and Taxation in Nepal*, Vol. I. (Berkeley, 1963), p. 271.

The various clans of the Pukunthalis observe strict clan exogamy. They are free to marry with any member of the Chepang community, except with members of the same clan. The Kachhares, because they do not have any clan subdivisions, can inter-marry with any member outside the kin group of three or four generations. In fact there is no objection to either a Pukunthali or Kachhare's marrying even a non-Chepang, a Tamang, Newar, Gurung, Brahman or Chhetri. All people other than the Chepangs have a restriction against marrying outside their own community. All non-Chepangs marrying a Chepang come back to live among the Chepangs and call themselves Chepangs. I did not find a single example of a Chepang man married to a non-Chepang woman, but there were several cases of Chepang women marrying non-Chepang men. The children of such marriages were all considered Chepangs. There are several families known as Lamichhane-Chepang (Lamichhane being a Gurung clan), Gurung-Chepang, Kamar-Chepang (from Sanyeshi), Tamang-Chepang, and Newar-Chepang freely inter-marrying with the pure Chepangs.

Chepangs eat rice cooked by any one except the very lowest caste Hindus, while no other people except the lowest castes accept boiled rice from the hands of a Chepang. So, naturally, the children of a Chepang mother and non-Chepang father would come back to live among the Chepangs where they are easily accepted and allowed to intermarry with any member of the group.

Chepang men do not marry their father's sister's daughter's, but a man's marrying his mother's brother's daughter is tolerated although not encouraged. People having both a daughter and a son usually try to seek families where they can find spouses for both, to save trouble and expense. They can have one feast and one party arranged on the same day for both weddings and the exchange of brides between their houses. But this kind of exchange marriage can happen only in the case of arranged marriages, which are not so very common. Most of the marriages are either by capture or by elopement. Of all three types of marriage, elopement is the most frequent. There may be about an equal number of marriages by arrangement and capture. In some cases of arranged marriage the ages of the boys and girls are 12 to 15, or as high as 17. But it is usually after 20 or 25 years of age that a boy would capture a girl or a girl would elope.

In the case of an arranged marriage, a party of about 40 to 60 people is organized at the boy's house on the date agreed by both parties and preceded by a musical band played by Damais (tailors) to the girl's parents' house where they are

entertained with food and drink in the evening. The whole party spends the night in feasting while the band plays continuously.

The next morning a chicken is slaughtered to indicate the auspicious moment of the wedding, after which the invitees of the bride's parents put *tika* marks of mixed curd and rice on the foreheads of the bride and groom and give gifts of money, usually five, ten or fifteen rupees. The money thus collected is called *gorda*, dowry, which sometimes totals as much as 300 rupees. Part of this money is given to the bride to pay off the debt the groom's family incurs in buying gold and silver ornaments for the bride, and the remainder is used as gifts to be given by the bride's father to all the married sisters, daughters and nieces of the bride's parents' family, who come with gifts of liquor and food. The parents of the bride may give ornaments, utensils and cattle as dowry to the bride. The boy has to present a bottle of *rakshi* and 22 rupees as a customary payment to the parents of the bride and to pay respect before he takes the bride away to his own house, where a feast of boiled rice, buffalo meat and mutton, and a large quantity of spirit is waiting.

One of the more self-sufficient and important Chepang families spent 1,000 rupees for food and drink alone during the wedding of a son. They do not spend so much when they have a marriage by elopement or by capture.

When a boy brings in a captured or eloping wife he gives her presents of clothes and ornaments. He invites a few friends for a party with drinks and food and everything is settled peacefully. But if the girl of his choice does not elope with him willingly he may enlist the help of friends and drag her off by force from a festival, a gathering or from a field where she is working. A captured girl is allowed to go back to her parents' house if she refuses to be married. But in marriages by elopement and capture the couple afterwards have to go with a bottle of spirit and 22 rupees to pay respects to the girl's parents. Their wedding is not complete or legalised until they pay these respects. It can be done at any time at the convenience of the new couple. The wife's parents or her brothers can not be present at any kind of function at her new house until this ceremony is completed.

Tradition demands that at least at the time of the birth of a baby or at the head-shaving ceremony of a boy, and at the funerals of the wife or of the husband, the wife's parents' family must be present. But in most cases of marriage by capture and by elopement they will not bother to pay respect to the parents of the woman

either until there is a birth or, if not then, when the wife herself dies. At the death of the wife no funeral can be held until her parents are represented. Therefore, at this time the husband goes with the dues to the wife's parents if they are alive and if not he goes to her brothers and asks them to be present at the funeral. Thus in some cases the period between the capture or elopement of a girl and the actual completion of the wedding ceremony by paying respect to the parents or to their heirs can be as long as 50 or more years.

Marriages as a rule are monogamous but there are occasional cases of a man marrying two or more wives at the same time. Hari Chepang of Shilinge village married 11 wives at a time but at the time of this recording (August, 1964) two of them were already dead and the remaining nine were living in four different houses in the same village where the husband visited them in turn.

The Kachhare Chepangs have more simplified wedding procedures than those of the Pukunthalis. One important Kachhare wedding ritual is that the boy has to eat the remains of food his prospective bride has eaten. This precedes all other wedding activities. Kachhars also give cattle, a goat or a *chyuri* tree (an indigenous fruit tree, the kernels of which are pressed for oil) growing nearby as a dowry to their daughters. They can make money by selling the *chyuri* oil.

Pukunthalis have a name-giving ceremony on the ninth day for a newborn female and on the 11th day for a male child. They observe birth pollution for that period, and on the day of name-giving the priest sprinkles cow's urine in order to purify the house, names the baby, and ties a yellow thread blessed by him around the wrist of the baby and the parents. Then the pollution period is over for the family members except for the mother of the baby, who observes pollution for 22 days by not touching water and food prepared for other people.

Chepangs hold a head-shaving ceremony for their sons at the age of five or six years. The boy's mother's brother is invited for the occasion to shave the head of the boy, leaving a small tuft of hair at the top.

All the important Hindu festivals such as *dashain*, *tihar*, and *sankranti* are observed by the Chepangs in addition to their own tribal festivals such as *nwagi* and their clan deity worship. *Nwagi* is performed on a Tuesday during the third week of *bhadra* (first week of September). It is an occasion for offering new food and fruits of the harvest to the dead ancestors before the living members of the family can eat them. No one eats the hill variety of rice until he has performed *nwagi*. This is done in the house of one of the clan's senior members, and all the clans

people come together for the ceremony. A *pande*, or priest, belonging to the same clan conducts the entire ceremony. If there are more than one *pande* or if there are any young men wishing to learn to be a *pande* among the clan members they all come together to act and practise under the chief *pande* during the performance.

The *pandes* begin to recite and invoke the ancestors on Tuesday evening and continue throughout the night; on Wednesday morning they cook the food with the new produce of the year, and the seniormost male member offers the food and dedicates a chicken to the ancestors. Each household participating in the *nwagi* brings new dry rice, which is taken home by all present.

Each clan also worships its clan deity at a special annual observance. The worship of a clan deity is done at different times by different clans. The Bhara clan people do it on the full moon day in May; the Rums do it on the full moon day in February, and so on. Some have their deity at the top of the mountains while others have it at the source of a mountain river. Chepangs also worship at the temples and shrines of other ethnic groups living in the area. Such temples are of Devi, Mahadev, Mahankal and Kalika. They visit Devi Ghat, the confluence of the Trishuli and Tadi rivers, where a large crowd from all the surrounding districts comes together to bathe for the sake of merit. Chepangs perform *bhumi puja*, the worship of the earth deity, before they sow maize in March. Each family does this individually by offering a chicken's egg and some grains of rice. They do not require a *pande* on this occasion.

The *pande* plays an important role in a number of religious and social activities of the Chepangs, such as the name-giving ceremony for a newborn baby, worship of a clan deity, funeral, and *nwagi*. He is also a curer of illnesses. For all these purposes he invokes and propitiates various deities and the ancestor. He may beat a tamborine with a crooked stick or only recite on some occasions. A new *pande* can be trained by another expert or can be selected by the gods, in which case he receives *mantras* spells in his dreams.

A *pande* wears the kind of ordinary clothes that others do and is treated like any other laymen by the Chepangs. He is paid each time for services to his clients. His is not a full time job, so he runs his farm and keeps cattle as other people do. Although the Chepangs have been living very close to the Tamangs they do not employ a Tamang Lama nor have they borrowed any part of the Tamang culture or religion.



A Chepange Shaman treating his patient.



Man Bahadur and his share of maize beer.

The Pukunthali Chepangs seem to be emulating the habits of Hindus in observing *dashain* by worshipping the goddess Durga, and at *tihar* by sisters' worshipping their brothers. They observe birth and death pollution like Brahmans and Chhetris when someone dies. They cremate the dead body beside a river, unlike the Tamangs who cremate their dead at the top of a hill. The eldest or the youngest son mourns for 13 days after the death of a parent. The man in mourning shaves his hair, moustache, beard and eyebrows; he wears a white scarf, does not speak to or touch anybody, and eats only boiled rice and *ghee* for 13 days, after which he changes into a white shirt, white cap, and a white loincloth all provided by his mother's brother. A brother's son or a husband's brother's son does this in case there is no son of a deceased man or woman respectively. The brothers and close agnatic cousins also observe death pollution and mourn for 13 days by abstaining from eating salt, meat, millet, pulse, mustard oil, milk and curd.

On the 13th day the surviving family of the dead person performs a funeral ceremony presided over by a *pande*. The *pande* invokes the spirit of the dead person and requests it to join the group of other dead people. He offers a ball of boiled rice and beer. The family invites all the collaterals, the affinal kin, and the villagers, who are all given a feast of boiled rice, buffalo, goat and chicken's meat, beer and spirit. The invitees also bring some beer with them. The married sisters and daughters and their married daughters bring a goat and a bottle of *rakshi* each. The food is cooked by their husbands. The sisters and daughters, plus their daughters, who bring the presents of goats and drinks, are given a gift of five or ten rupees in return.

The fairly well-to-do family of the village headman at Gahiri Gaun spent 100 rupees in cash, 200 rupees worth of rice and beer, six goats, one buffalo and five chickens at the funeral of the headman's wife. The six goats and five chickens were gifts brought by the headman's sisters and daughters and the cash was spent in giving them return gifts at the end of the day before they left for their homes.

Once the funeral is done in the name of a dead person, the spirit is supposed to go and join the group of dead people and from that time onwards the spirit is offered food along with others only on *nwagi* days.

A great majority of the Kachhares build their low thatched huts along steep, almost vertical slopes thousands of feet apart from each other. Some maize and millet is grown around them. They have to work like serfs for the richer people

living in the fertile lower valleys and collect wild foods and fish to keep themselves alive. They keep a few goats and cattle which their children watch. They have a few earthen vessels and pots and utensils, and baskets made out of bamboo as household goods. The Kachhares cook their food in earthen pots and eat from green leaves. They never wash themselves or their pots and pans. Men wear a loin cloth and a vest or a waistcoat or just a scarf, and women wear a skirt and blouse. But the Pukunthali women wear saris and blouses and also some gold or silver ear and nose-rings and bracelets like Tamang women. The Pukunthali men wear the same costume as the Kachhares but much cleaner and in a better condition.

Chepangs do not possess artisan or artistic skills of any kind except the weaving of baskets and leaf umbrellas for protection against rains.

A few people are now interested in having a school for their children and they are also aware that the government is trying to help them improve their condition. The young men who go outside to work at government project sites hear various rumours and bring them back home. So even those people who have never been outside their own region—of whom there are many—are not entirely out of touch with developments in the country.

PART II TERAI PEOPLE

BRAHMAN, RAJPUT, AND OCCUPATIONAL CASTES

Nepal borders India along a strip of the plain called the Terai, and as the people living along the northern border with Tibet are of Tibetan origin and under the influence of Tibetan religion and social custom and speak Tibetan dialects, so are the Terai people of Indian origin, speaking languages akin to those spoken to the south and practising Indian religious and social customs. But in the Terai diversity is as great, encompassing several very different languages : Bengali, Maithili and Bhojpuri in the east, and Hindi and Urdu in the west in addition to a group of indigenous languages such as Tharu, Danuwar, Dhangar and Satar. Social customs, religion, Hindu and Islam, marriage practices and even economy to some extent vary according to ethnic group and to geographical affinity with corresponding regions across the political border in India.

The major languages of the Terai also vary according to the area and correspond to the languages spoken in the neighbouring parts of India. Thus the people on the border in Jhapa and Morang districts speak Bengali, the language of West Bengal and east Bihar; those in western parts of Morang and west to Sarlahi speak Maithili, the language in neighbouring Bihar. People west of Sarlahi all the way through to Rupandehi speak Bhojpuri, and to their west the main language is Hindi except for the slight influence of Urdu found in parts of Uttar Pradesh state.

The geographic environment of the Terai does not change as much east to west as it does north to south. It is a continuous flat plain, the northern edge of the vast Gangetic basin of North India. The altitude is barely more than 250 feet above sea level at any point, and the climate is of the tropical monsoon type—very hot and wet during the summer, with milder more pleasant winters. The temperature may reach as high as 120° F. in June-July in the western Terai, and during the summer months this same area receives even the famous hot desert air known as the *loo* in India. The monsoon starts in late July and lasts through September. The annual average rainfall is between 40 and 60 inches. The land is very fertile alluvium, supporting rice, wheat, jute, sugar cane, tobacco and various kinds of pulses, of which the major share is sold across the border of India.

The social and economic organization of the Terai people is similar to that

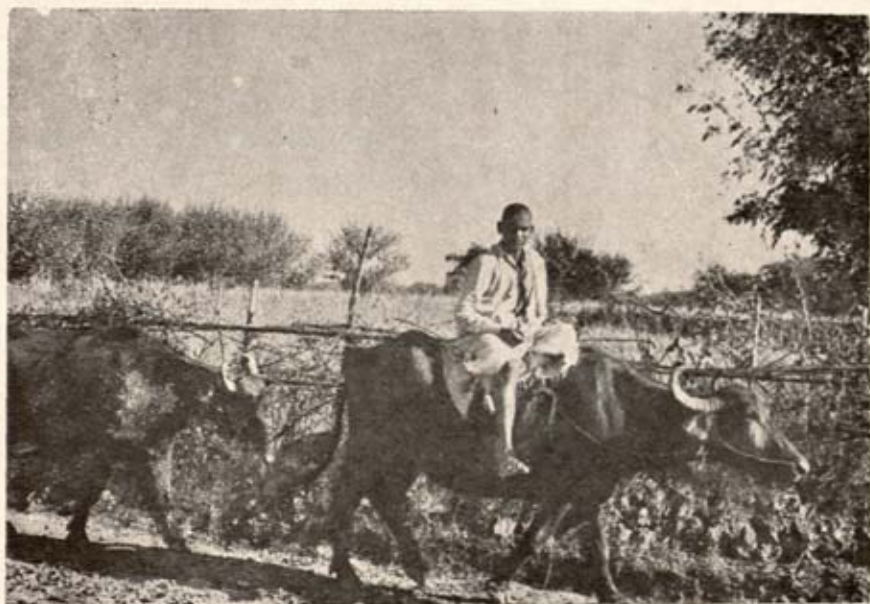
of Brahmans, Chhetris and the occupational castes of the hill regions of Nepal, but by virtue of their Indian origin their way of life is much more like that of North India than that of the Nepal hills. These border people have migrated up from India at various times in history, some 200 or 300 years ago, others more recently. The vast majority of them are Hindu, but there are many Moslems. In contrast to the liberal and often pseudo-Hindu hill people, these people of the Terai and border areas are orthodox in their beliefs following Hinduism and caste rules as closely as possible to the classical Hindu pattern. Except along the northern strip of the Terai near the forest zones and in the less developed areas of the western Terai—all of which are the indigenous habitat of the Tharu, Danuwar and other related Nepali people—the Terai is populated by people whose movement from one side of the border to another has been unrestricted. For marriage and other socio-economic relations the border is ignored. Social and kinship ties are much more important to them than political boundaries.

Agriculture is the primary occupation of all the border people although there are one or two areas which have been industrialized to a certain extent. The social organization of these agricultural communities is based on the Hindu occupational castes, a number of categories arranged in a vertical ladder of hierarchy. Caste status coincides almost exactly with economic status. The higher the caste, the more affluent an individual is; the lowest castes in the hierarchy are the poorest.

Prevalent Hindu castes of the Terai are listed here grouped roughly in descending order of ritual status position :

Brahman	Hajam	Kaluwar
Bhuinar	Mali	Dhobi
Rajput	Barai	
	Haluwai	Halkhor
Kayastha	Mallah	Dom
Nuniyar	Koiri	Dushad
Dhanuk		Chamar
Kurmi	Badahi	Tatma
Kewat	Lohar	Khatave
Gwala	Teli	

Although most of these castes have traditional occupations, most caste members are primarily agriculturalists. Many castes, especially Brahmans, Rajputs, and Kayasthas, have a number of sub-castes, each with a name of its own.



Riding a buffalo is slow but comfortable.



People going to work.

Brahmans fall into two groups : Maithili and Patra. Maithili sub-castes are rich land owners, money lenders, and *zemindars*—the village land registrars and revenue collectors. Patra Brahmans can act as priests only during the funeral ceremony and accept gifts given in the name of the dead.

Bhuihars are also land owners, money lenders, traders and *zemindars*. They claim the status of Brahman for themselves, but are not accepted quite as such by others. They never act in the role of priests.

Rajputs are Kshatriyas, the traditional warriors of Hindu society. Because of the Rajput glory in Indian history all Rajput Kshatriyas prefer to distinguish themselves as just 'Rajput', omitting Kshatriya or 'Chhetri' as the hill Kshatriyas call themselves. In any case, their background distinguishes them from the Khas-Chhetris and most Thakuri-Chhetris of the hill regions. Rajput physical features and skin colouring are different, and they are much more orthodox in their Hindu religious practices. Rajput subcastes include : Gautam, Raghubansi, Ujjain, Suruwal Gain, Pal, Garbhar, Kumar Chauhan, Bachhgoti Chauhan, Beduwar, Vaish, Karcholiya and Bisen. Each of these sub-castes is, ideally, equal to the others in social and ritual status, but in fact wealth and kinship play very important roles in deciding one's position in relation to fellow Rajputs.

Kayastha are also landowners and moneylenders, although professionally they are better known as clerks and accountants to the *zemindars* and therefore are addressed by the polite terms "Diwanji" or "Munimji". Kayastha subcastes are : Karn, Shrivastava, Amast, Saksena, Das, Bhatnagar, Jauhari and Mathur. Some of these sub-castes include further subdivisions known as *mul*; for example, Karn-*mul*s are Ardahi, Kewtar, Mullik, Kanth and Kharjpur. Shrivastavas and Amasts follow some Musalman (Islamic) customs while Karns and the others follow the Hindu tradition.

Nuniyars, also called Baniyas, are traders and shopkeepers. Dhanuk, Kurmis and Kewats work as personal attendants to rich Brahmans and Rajputs in the eastern Terai districts, where they are in a minority. But in Parsa and in the districts west of it there are many rich Kurmi *zemindars*. Dhanuk women also work as personal attendants to the women of rich Brahmans and Rajputs.

Gwalas keep cattle and sell the milk, *ghee* and curd. Gwalas belong to either the Ahir or Yadav subcaste. Hajams are professional barbers and their women are women's nail cutters. Besides this, they have very important roles to play during many of the religious ceremonies and weddings in the houses of high-caste

people. The Hajam is sent around the village distributing invitations for wedding or funeral feasts. During the wedding he has to see to a number of errands including washing the feet of the chief guest, arranging jars of pure water, collecting special wood for the sacrificial fire and carrying the groom on his back from the inside of the house to the *mandap*, the place in the centre of the courtyard prepared for the wedding ceremony.

A Mali is a gardener-florist. He cultivates and sells flowers and garlands, in addition to supplying flowers and garlands for weddings and other ceremonies for his higher-caste client families. He also has charge of making the *maur*, a ceremonial hat for the groom in a client's wedding.

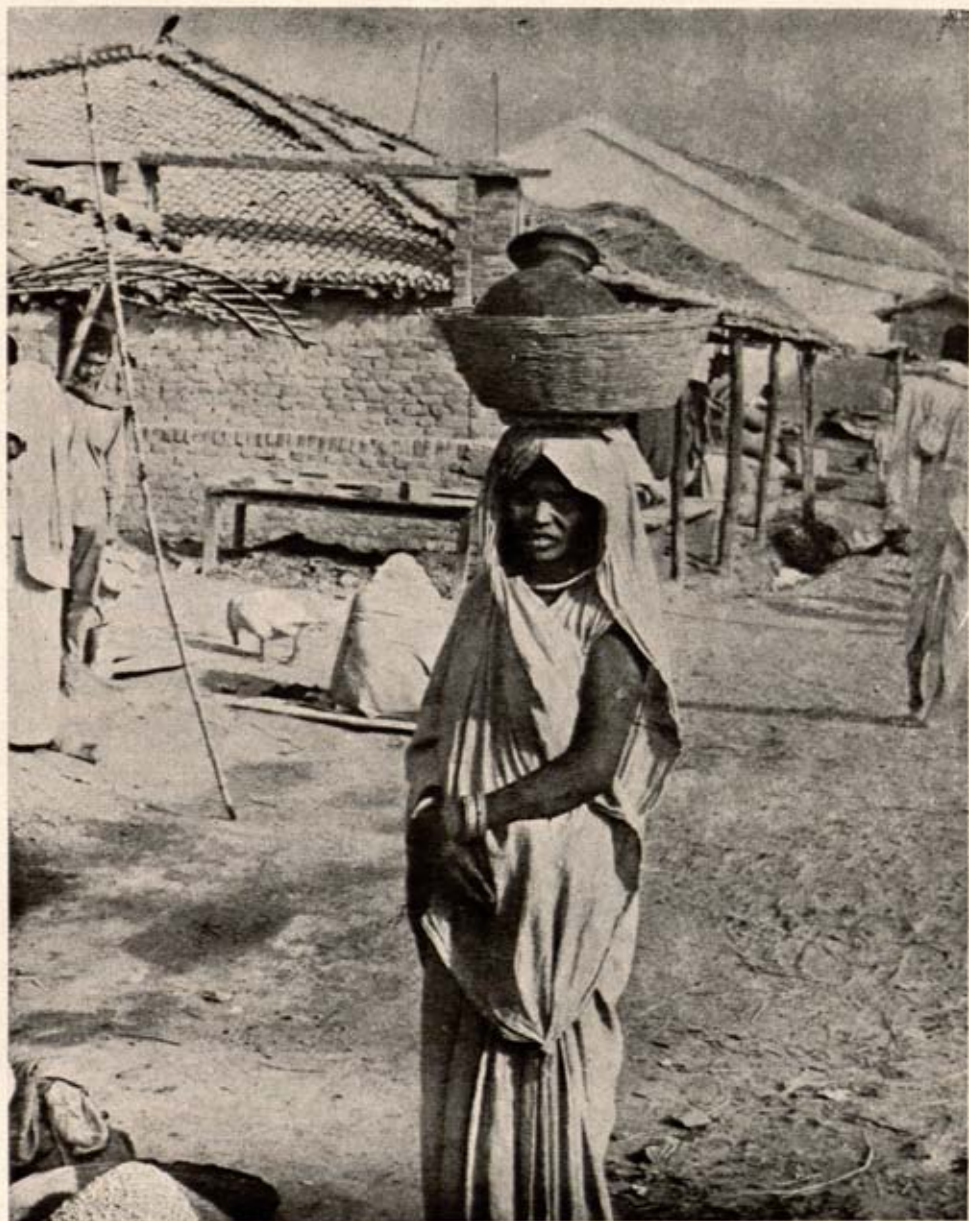
Barais prepare *pan*, betel leaves with spices, for their clients during the wedding and other ceremonies. Haluwais, or Kanus, are confectioners who make sweets for weddings and feasts. Mallahas are fishermen and boatmen of the community and also hire out as agricultural labourers for wages. Koiri are vegetable growers. They sell their produce in the village, or trade it for other needed goods and articles. A Badahi is a carpenter who makes wooden ploughs, bullock-carts and other such necessities in the farming and village community. The Lohar men are equal in caste to Badahi carpenters, except that they specialize in iron-smithing and make sickles, plough shares, and horseshoes.

The Telis are oil pressers. They collect seeds from the villagers and press them for cooking oil, which they in turn sell for cash or kind. They also sell fertilizer and cattle-feed. There are three types of Teli : Magadhiya, Kanu and Kannaujiya. The Kalwar and Sundhi castes are of the same social status as the Teli but are just general traders and do not press oil.

Dhobis are washermen. The Dhobi and his entire family wash clothes on a wage basis.

Halkhors and Mesters clean the village latrines and do several other equally dirty and menial jobs. During the wedding procession, however, they are hired to play pipes in the musical band. Dushad and Dom caste people are responsible for disposing of carcasses, taking care of the cremation grounds and selling wood for the funeral pyre. When a client of a Dushad or Dom practices charity in the hope of shaking off the evil affects of certain planets—especially during solar and lunar eclipses—the required observance includes giving gifts of food, cash or clothes to the Dushad or Dom. They are also employed as agricultural labourers.

Chamars have charge of dirty and menial works in the community and eat



A Woman carrying her wares.

any animal carcass except for that of a dog, cat or horse. The Chamars play drums in the wedding band.

Tatmas and Khataves are agricultural labourers working for wages. They specialize in ditch-digging and the like. In wedding processions they carry the palanquins of the bride and groom. Khataves are often called 'Mushahar', meaning one who eats rats, because they do just that without qualms. They are generally a poor lot, owning no land and often not even dwelling in the same village for any length of time but moving for hire from one village to the next, even back and forth across the border.

In only a few of the Terai districts can one find all of these castes in residence. Wherever they are found, members of the various occupational castes and the fewer higher castes form a socially and economically interdependent group. The higher-caste people are usually rich landowners in need of the services of most of the occupational-caste people. In return the occupational castes are tied to their respective roles because the income from the meagre land ownings of those who have land is not enough to maintain themselves.

Caste occupations may be practised only by caste members, and it is considered improper for one to do a job not specifically assigned to his caste. It is considered irreligious for an orthodox Hindu to give up his caste occupation for some other kind of work unless it is agriculture. This attitude, of course, is changing, but there is a vast number of caste-conscious people with traditional beliefs who cannot imagine life otherwise.

To give an example of the interdependence among these castes, a Hajam (barber) needs a Dhobi to wash his clothes, a Haluwai to make sweets on feast occasions, a Mali to make flower garlands for a wedding ceremony and so on. All of these people have well defined permanent relationships established with individual client families. The relationships are inherited generation after generation, and although it is not absolutely impossible to change ties, it is certainly very difficult and complicated to do so.

The various occupational families such as Dhobi, Mali, et cetera, are referred to by their higher-caste clients as *peuni pasar*. Some *pauni pasar* are relatively well off economically when they happen to be associated with affluent client families. This is not always the case, however. *Pauni pasar* families sometimes exchange clients or even sell them for cash if they happen to be moving to a different village. One Mali informant in the district of Dhanusha told us that he was offered 1,000

rupees by another Mali for his clientele in a wealthy Rajput village. This phenomenon explains to some extent the significance of the permanent relationship. The various *pauni pasar* families receive not only the market price of their services, but at the same time there is a regular payment in kind to be had at the time of harvest and during festivals. The amount of payment is determined not only by the quality of the service rendered, but also by the economic and social status of the client family concerned.

Social status in this society depends entirely on wealth and the ability to spend it. A Rajput's wealth, pride and vanity are his marked traits. The average Rajput will say clearly that all Rajputs are very proud to the extent that they are sensitive and prone to pick quarrels and fights. Especially during wedding parties, when there are Rajputs of several villages assembled, they become quite extroverted, offend one another and almost inevitably quarrel.

Manara Katti is one of the predominant Rajput villages near the border in the district of Mahottari, where "until a few years ago," Rajput informants said, "no outsider could pass through the village on horseback or elephant-back." The rider had to dismount and walk, thereby acknowledging the superior status of the Rajputs of that village. Anyone who dared ride through this village invited trouble.

Teraï villages are totally different from those found in the hill regions of Nepal. Groups of 30 or 40 up to 100 or more houses are situated in the middle of a vast and level cultivated area. The standard houses are on one level, with the ground floor having bamboo walls which are plastered with cowdung and mud. The roofs are thatched and a few tiled. The houses are usually rectangular with a small courtyard completely enclosed in the centre of the structure. This basic plan is improved upon by the richer householders who construct their homes of brick or concrete with flat roofs. The very poorest people have small huts with no enclosed courtyard.

Village streets are very dusty during dry weather and a muddy mire in the rains. There is no incentive to improve them, and only a few of the large and important towns have asphalt roads — Biratnagar, Birgunj, Bhairawa, Nepalgunj and Janakpur are the examples.

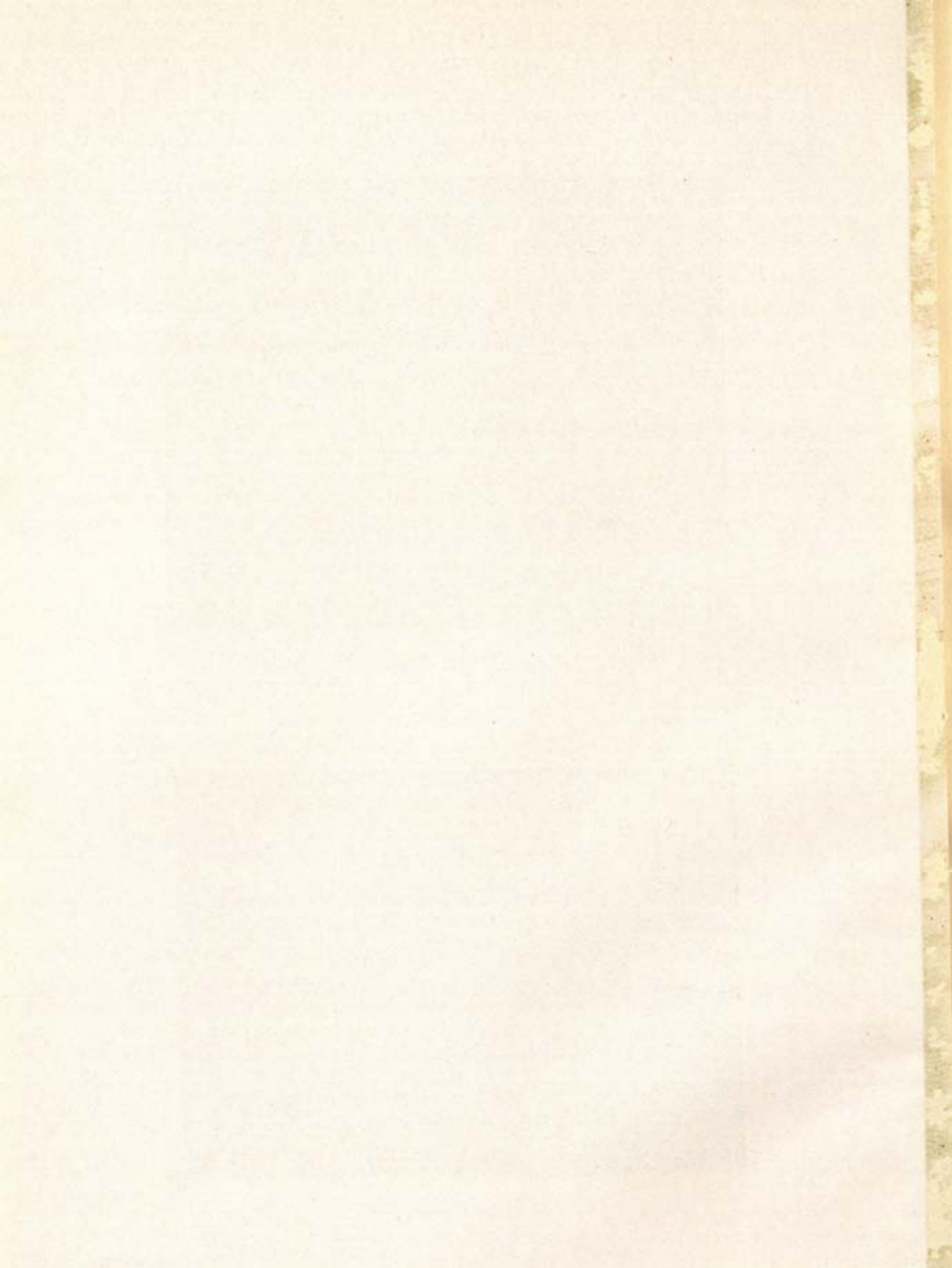
In some Rajput and other high-caste villages the standard house design is expanded to include a separate living hall quite apart from the main house where the womenfolk live and work. The outside living hall, known by the term *darwaja*, is where the men spend most of their time. Male visitors are entertained in



Women waiting to vote for their Pradhan Panch



Threshing paddy.



the *darwaja*, and all business is discussed there. The corresponding *haveli* is exclusively for women and includes the kitchen and dining place and always houses the sleeping rooms of the married men of the house.

Marriage among Terai people is, as a rule, arranged by the parents. It is also patrilocal and monogamous. Each caste is strictly endogamous; intercaste marriage is not tolerated. The popular and traditional practice is to marry at the early age of ten or twelve years, but now more and more young people, mostly boys, are sent instead to school until the age of 20 years or more.

Wedding procedures and ceremonies are basically the same as those of the hill Brahmans, Chhetris and occupational castes, with a few variations here and there. Rajputs have one outstanding peculiarity in marriage tradition. The Rajput of either Nepal or India is restricted to a particular geographic area when arranging for a partner. According to the rule, the bride is without exception taken from west to east; that is, all Rajput girls are married to boys living in the areas east of them. At the same time Rajputs giving their daughters are considered inferior in status to the families who draw brides for their sons. Thus every village is considered superior to the neighbouring village to its west.

A Rajput never marries a person related through common descent, but two brothers or cousins can bring in wives from the same family. A widower can marry the younger sister of his deceased wife. The higher castes—Brahmans, Bhuihars, Rajputs, and Kayasthas—do not practice widow remarriage nor do they ever recognize the second marriage of any woman. Lower castes, on the other hand, practice second marriages for widows.

There is not much intermarriage between the Terai people and related hill caste people, although hill and Terai neighbourhoods quite often overlap, and villages of one and the other are found in close proximity.

The higher castes, especially Rajputs, enforce very strict discipline upon their womenfolk. A woman would never appear without covering her face before men who are senior to her husband, or before other outsiders. Whenever she has to travel within or outside the village she covers her face and usually walks along back alleys. But once she is outside of her family circle or in a totally foreign place she may not follow these rules. The outside world is far removed and impersonal to her. She may be quite indifferent to it, while she is always very mindful of and sensitive to her domestic responsibilities and the code of etiquette within the circle of her relatives. From the time she enters her husband's house she assumes

the responsibility of the family completely and entirely for the rest of her life. There is no other alternative for her. She feels free and quite confident inside the domestic circle, outside of which there is uncertainty and insecurity.

In the eastern Terai the system of *tilak*, or bride wealth (the opposite of bride price), is very common among Bhuihars and Rajputs, and to a lesser extent among others. The worth and qualifications of a girl are weighed in terms of the amount of *tilak* her father can present to the boy before marriage. *Tilak* consists of gold ornaments, silver wares, and cash. The average person has to pay two to four thousand rupees before he can expect to have his daughter accepted by the parents of a boy of matching status. A few rich people pay up to fifteen thousand rupees. A young Rajput informant in the district of Mahottari claimed that he received ten thousand rupees worth of *tilak*. This payment is only the beginning of a marriage. Unlike the high caste Hindus of the hills, the Terai Hindus hire professional dancers and singers, usually from India, to entertain the guests during the wedding. The girl's parents and their relatives give her a dowry consisting of ornaments, clothes, furniture, pots, pans and cattle. The groom receives gifts of clothes, a bicycle, a wristwatch, et cetera.

The lower castes have the same type of marriage, only more simplified. Some Kayastha subcastes write an agreement between the two parties concerned prior to the actual wedding. Procedures from there on are similar to those of Rajputs and Brahmans with the exception that the Kayastha groom stays behind with his bride at her parents' home when the rest of the party leaves after three or four days. On the 16th day he returns home, usually with his bride. But in some cases, if the parents of both the boy and girl have agreed beforehand, the boy returns alone, leaving his bride to stay on with her parents. In such cases the boy's parents have to organize a party to fetch her after perhaps a year or so. During the groom's stay at his bride's parents' house he is treated with the utmost care and respect.

The lowest castes have the same principles of marriage as those of higher status but for them a sister's son or daughter's husband has to act as priest in place of a Brahman.

All of the castes under discussion are strictly Hindu, although the degree of orthodoxy declines as one descends the hierarchy. They worship all the deities of the Hindu pantheon : Brahma, Vishnu, Mahadev, Gauri, Parvati, Lachhmi, Saraswoti, Durga, Rama, Krishna, Ganesh, Bhimsen and so on. There are one or more



Two Ahirs.



An Educated Terai Man.

temples in each village, and the Terai boasts two particularly holy places of pilgrimage—the temples of Rama and Janaki at Janakpur in Dhanusha district, and the birthplace of Buddha at Lumbini in the district of Rupandehi.

Numerous religious festivals are observed. *Dashain* or *durga puja* is the most important of all Hindu celebrations, marked by the worshipping of the goddess Durga, eating good food, wearing one's best clothes and the like. This festival lasts for a whole fortnight in October but is celebrated with more festivity on the eighth, ninth, and tenth days of the fortnight as is the case in the hills as well. In some parts of the Terai the celebrants carry an image of the goddess Durga around the village during these three days, a custom not found in the hill regions. Any Hindu except those of the lowest castes can lend his hand in carrying this earthen image.

A fortnight after *durga puja* the festival of *divali* (called *tihar* in the hills) is celebrated. Various animals are worshipped as in the hills, and some people also observe the *bhai tika* festival of sisters' worshipping their brothers.

Holi is another important festival, observed in February or March. Everybody becomes gay and ecstatic at this time. Men and children go around singing and dancing and throwing coloured water and powders at each other. The women usually gather in a place apart and do the same quite independently of the men. At the end of the week an effigee of Holika, the sister of Hiranyakasipu, is burned.

Almost every family keeps a family deity called *gossain* in the home near the hearth. They worship their *gossain* daily, offering special food during festivals and family ceremonies, and set aside one special day each year for a special *gossain* observance. The *gossain* may be Durga, Bhagavati, Devi or any other such Hindu deity.

All Hindus cremate their dead and perform a funeral ceremony similar to that which we have discussed among the Brahmans and Chhetris of the hill regions. The lower castes who do not wear the sacred thread cremate their dead without the aid of a Brahman priest. Kayasthas are the only exception to this rule and employ Patra Brahmans for the funeral.

THARU

One of the largest groups of people living in the Terai is identified by one generic term 'Tharu'. Tharus, with a population of about 407,000, live throughout the length of the Terai, with a slightly heavier concentration in the middle and west. In fact, the areas of Tharu settlement do not terminate at Nepal's western border; they extend well beyond to the northern part of Uttar Pradesh state in India.

The traditional territory of the Tharus is called Tharuwan or Tharwot. It consists of the forested land along the southern base of the Shiva-lekh (Siwalik) mountain range and south a few miles into the Terai itself.

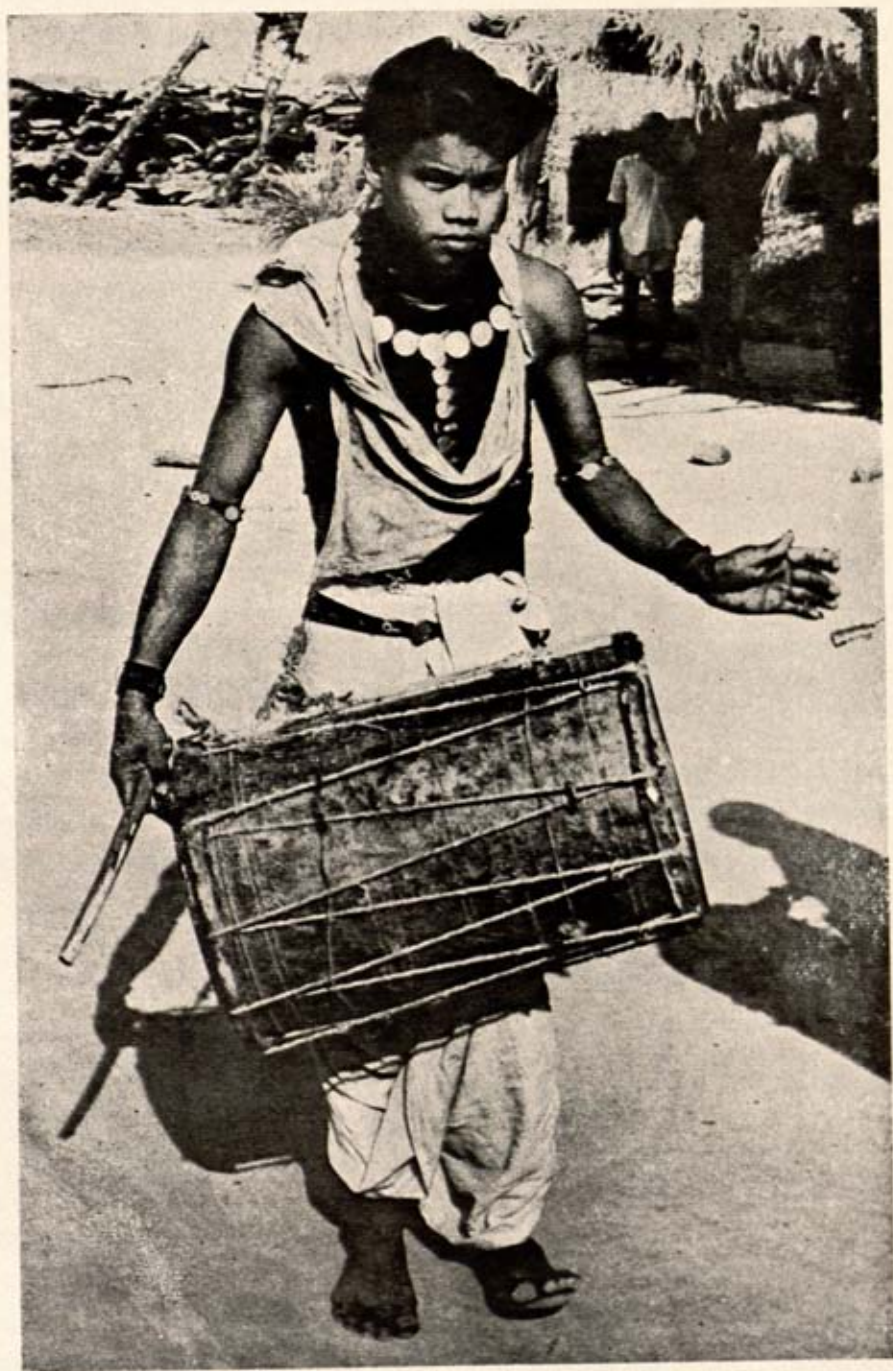
The Tharus are probably among the oldest groups to inhabit the Terai. They usually live very close to the heavily forested regions. A great number of the villages of Tharuwan are found in small clearings in the middle of the forest itself. Most of the large compact Tharu settlements are found in tropical malarial areas, infested with wild animals such as elephants, rhinoceros, bears, tigers and poisonous snakes. Easily accessible areas in the open are generally inhabited by other people.

The Tharu language has been greatly influenced by various north Indian languages found nearby—Urdu, Hindu, Bhojpuri, Maithili and Bengali. Since no one has studied the Tharu language yet we do not know what it is like. The Tharu people have dark complexions, muscular slim bodies and an average height of five feet two inches.

Mahalanobis, Majumdar and Rao¹ have found the Tharus to be definitely a Mongoloid tribe. In features they possess more or less oblique eyes, mostly brown or yellow-brown complexion, very sparse and straight hair on the body and the face, with a nose of medium size. Shrivastava does not think that they resemble any of the Australoid or pre-Dravidian castes and tribes. S. K. Shrivastava summarizes these statements: "Tharus are a Mongoloid people or predominantly so, who have successfully assimilated non-Mongoloid physical features as well."²

¹ S. K. Shrivastava, *The Tharus, A Study in Culture Dynamics*, (Agra, 1958), pp. 133ff.

² *Ibid.*



The drummer.

There are several popular stories about the origin and the racial affinities of the Tharus. Most of them sincerely believe that they came from Rajputana in India at the time of the Islamic invasions. Some Tharus maintain that they are descendants of Rajput women who fled with their domestic servants rather than fall victim to an enemy. Equally various are the stories about the origin of their name, 'Tharu'. But Nesfield writes,

it is safer to consider the name derived from the dialect of the tribe itself rather than search for it in Hindu etymology, because an aboriginal name underived from any Sanskrit or neo-Sanskrit source is the fit appellative of an aboriginal, casteless and un-Brahmanised tribe whose customs have been only slightly modified by contact with those of Aryan invader."¹

Tharus are by tradition peasant farmers. Some of them are rich landlords and a few in the eastern Terai have successfully taken up business. But a great majority of them are very hard-working tenant cultivators whose methods of cultivating in the central and western Terai are very primitive judged by the general standards prevalent in the plains. Most of the Tharus in Dang-Deukhuri have been very greatly exploited by ruthless *zemindars*, landlords and revenue agents. They are virtually slaves in the hands of the *zemindars*, sold and bought at will. Since most of them are landless sharecropping peasants, they have to rely entirely on the mercy of the *zemindars*. Every year they are buried deeper and deeper in debt until eventually they are sold to other *zemindars* trying to cultivate new areas of land. They also practise shifting cultivation wherever there is still enough room for clearing new sites in the forest. Tharus also keep cattle, sheep and goats.

It is said that most of these lands were originally cultivated by the Tharus and in course of time cleverer people came and got the better of them. It is also said that there were a few Tharu *rajas*. There are ruins of an old fort in Sukauragarh in the Dang valley which is said to have been built by the Tharu *raja*, Dangai-Bhusai. Some people say the name of the *raja* was Dangisaran.

In every village in Dang-Deukhuri there is an official called a *mahato* whose duty is to maintain law and order. He is in effect the leader of his village. He used to be elected by the villagers themselves, but now in most cases he is appoin-

¹ *Ibid.*, as quoted from J. C. Nesfield, "Description of the Manners, Industries, Religion of the Tharus and Bogsa Tribes of Upper India", *Calcutta Review*, Vol. XXX-1, 1885.

ted by the *zemindars*. A *mahato* receives two days of free labour during the rainy season and two days during the dry season from each household of his village. This is a service rendered by his villagers in return for the leadership he has provided them. The *mahato* also does the job of going round the village to collect representatives from each household whenever there is a common problem to be discussed, such as village disputes or the setting up of an order of precedence for irrigating the rice fields during the sowing season. The village council together with the *mahato* has recourse to a social sanction called *khada* under which it can fine an offender. The fine varies from one to twenty rupees. The money thus realised is kept in a common village fund which is eventually spent for a village feast.

Tharus are said to have been theoretically divided into two main categories, namely Pradhan and Apradhan. Pradhans are of six different kinds and are all considered superior in social status to the Apradhans. Apradhans are subdivided into 26 different groups, bringing the overall number of Tharu groups to 32. Since the division seems to be superficial, no one really seems to bother about who is a Pradhan or an Apradhan except for a few family groups. I have arranged some of the well known Tharu groups below, without differentiating between the two categories.

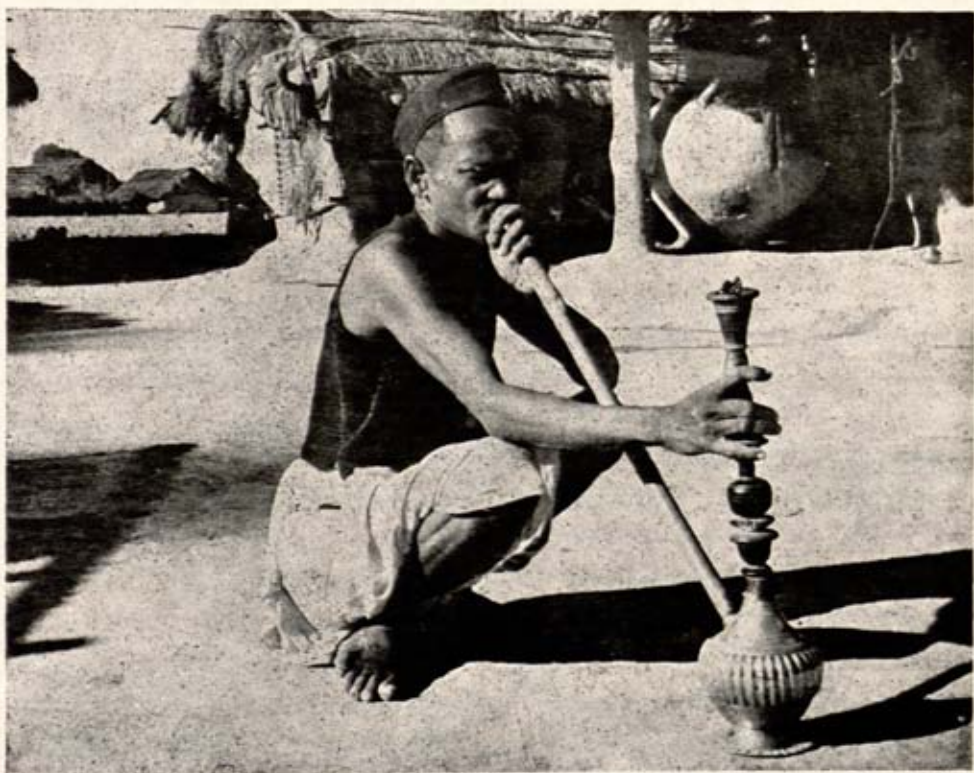
Chitauniya	Majhaura
Dangaura	Mardaniya
Dangbadiya	Morangia
Kathariya	Rajhathiya
Khas	Rana
Kochila (or Cooch Bihari)	Rautar
Lalpuria	Solariya
Lampuchhuwa	Sunaha
Mardaniya	

Each of these above mentioned groups is more or less confined to a specific area. For example, the Kochila, or Cooch Bihari, and the Khas live in Mahottari, Saptari, Morang and some in Jhapa. The Kochila are subdivided into the following *pad*, clans : Chowdhery, Kha, Singh, Prasad, Roy, Hujdar, Majhi, Dhami, Panjiyar, Khavas and Bauchhar.

Rana, Rajhathiya, Solariya, Dangaura and Kathariya live in Dang Deukhuri. Dangaura, for example, have a number of *pads*, among which are : Pachhal-



Tharu Women in Dang.



A Rana Tharu.

dangiya, Daheet, Demandaura, Kathkatuwa, Maduwa, Ultahawa, Dhaulahuva, Gamuwa, Dharkatuwa, Phunnahuwa, Padgainya and Nunhawa.

Mardaniya, Chitauniya, Sunaha, Mahauto, Bot, Batar and Banth *pads* live in Chitwan, Rapti Valley. Rana Tharus live in Kailali and Kanchanpur districts.

Some of the *pads* are further subdivided into a number of exogamous lineage units. For example, the Pachhaldangiya are divided into Jagannathi Guni and Khadgi Guni. Ultahawa, on the other hand, have four subdivisions : Bakhariya, Kawa, Tantahawa and Baukhahi. Some other clans are not subdivided by *pads*; they have, instead, a number of exogamous family groups of common descent.

Tharu marriages are monogamous and patrilocal. Most marriages are early, are arranged by the parents of the couple concerned and always take place within the tribe. The marriage partner can be anybody within the tribe except members of the same exogamous *gotra* unit. There are small regional variations in the basic marriage patterns.

Among people of modest means there is also the practice of exchange marriage. The families concerned decide to exchange brides for their sons. By doing this both the families concerned can cut down the cost of gifts, presents, dowries and other expenses.

Among the Tharus of Chitwan and some other areas there is also a system of working for a wife. A young man has to work for the parents of a girl of his choice for two or three years before he can get her for a wife. There are also occasional cases of marriage by elopement. In this kind of marriage the boy has to pay compensation in money and other materials.

In normal cases of marriage by arrangement among the eastern Tharus it is generally the girl's father who goes out in search of a match for his daughter. Among the western Tharus some relatives help the father to find a boy. In both cases the girl is usually older than the boy. Sometimes a girl of 15 or 16 years of age is given to a boy seven or eight years old. The main consideration is the wealth and the social status of the families concerned. When a suitable match is found by the girl's father he approaches the boy's father with his offer. He presents some money to the boy which is kept until the boy's father pays a return visit to examine the girl. The boy's father can return the money and dismiss the proposal if he does not like the girl. Once the negotiations are complete and both families agreed, the girl's father goes to the boy's father's house where he is received by the host

and his friends and relatives. The girl's father puts a *tika* mark of curd and rice on the forehead of the boy's father. Then one of the men elected for the purpose stands up and asks the girl's father to make a formal announcement of the engagement, whereupon the girl's father stands up and makes the public announcement, mentioning the names of the boy and the girl and saying that he is proposing to give his daughter to the boy. Then he also mentions the name of the boy's father. The same procedure is repeated by the boy's father. Both of them repeat the sentence three times. The party of the girl's father then returns home after being entertained with food and drinks and having fixed the date of the wedding.

On the day of the wedding the groom goes into the *deurhar*, god's room, of his own house and completes the ritual of worship under the direction of his family *guruva*, the priest. He also worships a dagger which he holds in his hand throughout the period of the wedding until the bride is brought back home.

At the beginning of the wedding day the family *guruva* blesses some mustard oil in which some black *dal* cakes are then fried and distributed to the family members to eat. Then the groom proceeds with a party of 50 or 60 people to his bride's house, preceded by a musical band of drums and pipes played by professional musicians. The people from villages along the way offer food and drink to the members of the procession. Those who accept the food and drink are expected to make gifts of one or two rupees in return according to the standard of food provided. Thus the procession takes a long time to get to the bride's house. When they arrive at the village they go round the temples or shrines of that village before they go to the bride's house.

Entering the house of the bride, the groom is taken into the *deurhar* of the family where he is offered food and homebrewed beer. The groom sticks the dagger he has been carrying into the ground. After this he comes back to another part of the house where his friends are waiting to spend the night. In the meanwhile the maidens of the village come to the house and sing. The songs consist of bad names and abuse addressed to the groom for taking their friend, the bride, away from among them.

The following morning the groom's party leaves for home. The groom is sometimes carried in a *doli* hammock. Two, three or four hours after the departure of the groom's party the bride is also carried to the groom's house, followed by a party of 40 or 50 people including a few women. The groom in the meantime waits outside his house, sometimes for several hours, because he cannot enter



Tharu dance in far west Terai.

his house alone without the bride. The bride is given a lamp and a cup of poison by her parents to take with her at the time she leaves their house. The cup of poison is given to the bride so that she can commit suicide in case she happens to fall into the hands of an enemy. This custom is attributed to their Rajput origin.

As soon as the bride arrives at the house of the groom the female members of the family bring a pot full of glowing embers, a lamp, a waterpot and some cotton seeds to the front of the main entrance of the house. They throw rice over the bride and the groom. The groom then sprinkles vermilion powder over the dagger he has been holding and over the head of the bride before they enter the house. The heads of the bride and the groom are knocked against each other three times before they enter the house. Both the bride and the groom enter the *deur-har* of the family, where the groom sticks his dagger into the ground. After this a short ritual of throwing rice grains and sprinkling water over the altar of the deity is done. Then the bride goes and sits among the women of the house, with whom she spends the entire period of her stay till she returns to her parents the next day.

The bride takes a bottle of liquor, a straw mat and a pig's head when she goes back to her parents' house as presents to them from her husband's family. Her husband's family also goes to pay respect to her parents at some stage once the main activities of the marriage ceremony are over. This is called the *nata pherie*, the changing of the relationship. Once the ceremony is over the bride goes back to her parents' house to stay for another few years. Only occasionally does she visit her husband's house during festivals with a group of her own friends.

During this period the bride keeps the gifts of ornaments and clothes given to her both by her parents and by her husband.

If by any chance the groom falls ill on the day of the wedding he can stay behind in his house and his dagger, which represents him throughout the wedding, is sent in his place.

In general, Tharus practice their own tribal religion which consists of worshipping a number of spirits and some Hindu deities which have been incorporated. The Tharus in the east Terai, who have been living in closer contact with high-caste Hindus, employ Brahman priests to perform a number of Hindu religious ceremonies. Brahman priests are also employed to conduct weddings and other domestic *puja* ceremonies.

Those who still practise their traditional Tharu religions have their own *guruva*, priest. Mainly the Tharus of Chitwan, Nawalpur, Dang-Deukhuri, Kai-

lali and Kanchanpur are the ones who still practise the traditional Tharu religion and employ a *guruva*. The Rana Tharus use the term 'Bharra' for their *guruva*. *Guruvas* are always men except among the Rana Tharu of Kailali and Kanchanpur where some women *guruvas* are employed. There are two different types of *guruvas* in Dang Deukhuri, Kailali and Kanchanpur, called 'Desbandhiya' and 'Ghar' *guruva*. The Desbandhiya *guruva* holds an hereditary office decreed by the *lalmohar*, the seal certificate given by the King of Nepal.

Desbandhiya *guruva* have an official position with a privilege recognized by the entire village whereas Ghar (home) *guruva* are family priests assigned to a few individual families only. Every lay family has an obligation to both of these *guruvas*, the Desbandhiya of the whole village and the Ghar *guruva* of the family. The former receives an allotment of paddy each year from each registered tenant of his village, while the latter receives one day's free labour per year from each client family. The payment of paddy from each family to the Desbandhiya *guruva* is not very much, since there are several families of tenants under each registered tenancy and all contribute to make up the total registered amount of paddy. Desbandhiya *guruva* can also act as Ghar *guruva* to a few families in addition to being the official Desbandhiya for the entire administrative village unit. The Ghar *guruva* also invokes the deities of his patient whenever he treats illness in the family.

Tharus have their *kul devta*, an ancestral deity, installed in their family house. This deity is either Kali Bhagvati, Mainyan, Parvatiya or Goraiya. Goats are sacrificed to Kali Bhagvati and Mainya, and pigs to Goraiya. The worship of *kul devta* is purely a family affair. Goraiya is an evil spirit which is symbolized in a small ball of earth without any image in it. The family deity, Mainyan, is represented by pure earth mixed with cotton and crude sugar, with a small piece of gold in it. It is shaped into a ball and a small iron trident is placed on top. Together with it is kept an iron sword called *saunra*, a small bag made of white cotton material, and a small box full of red vermilion. Beside all of these is kept a cane rod. The senior member of the family sleeps in the room of the *deurhar*, the family deity, which is always situated at the eastern corner of the house. Any kind of ritual religious activity in the family is always conducted in the name of the senior member of the family.

As in most parts of the Terai, the Tharu villages also have a village shrine of *barham* in the center of their village. But the Tharu villages of Dang-Deukhuri and Kailali-Kanchanpur call their village shrine *bhuinhar* instead of *barham*. *Bhuin-*

har consists of several wooden carved boards erected on the ground near a tree, whereas *barham* is a small platform. People worship and make offerings in the shrine when inhabitants of the village fall ill. Both kinds of shrine are worshipped in March and in August. All the villagers combine to contribute food and cash to purchase a chicken, a goat or a pig as a sacrifice for such occasions.

They also worship Shanker, Parvati, Durga, Devi and Satya Narayan, among other deities.

Almost all the Tharus living in the eastern districts of Sarlahi, Mahottari, Saptari and Morang cremate their dead, while most of those in the middle and western districts of Chitwan, Dang-Deukhuri, Kailali and Kanchanpur, Banke and Bardia bury them. Those who cremate take the corpse to a riverside, wash it clean with water, and smear it with *ghee* before they burn it down to ashes. All the Tharu villages in the west Terai have a common burial ground outside the village. They dig a hole a few feet deep in the ground and spread a piece of white cotton material at the bottom before they lower the dead body and cover it with another piece of white cotton cloth and earth. They bury men face down and women face up.

Death mourning is observed for three, five, seven or as long as, but not more than, eleven days by the survivors of the family, according to their convenience. The mourners abstain from eating vegetables, oil, turmeric, meat and fish. At the end of the mourning period the family *guruva* gives mustard oil, blessed by him, which the mourners put on their heads. The *guruva* also completes the last funeral rite in the *deurhar* of the family. He invokes the family deity by meditation and recitation and the soul of the dead person is then sent to live with its family deity ever after. On the last day of mourning the family gives a feast of boiled rice and *dal* to all the relatives and neighbours.

When an old member of a family dies the survivors throw all the articles belonging to that person outside the village. The belongings consist of earthen pots, pans, old clothes, wooden pounders, ladles, straw containers, dishes and boxes of woven cane.

The joint family system is common in the Tharu community. In joint families the father has full authority over all members of the family. When he dies his younger brother takes his place or, if there is no brother, the eldest son. However intelligent or bright a junior member of the family may be he can on no account act as leader, and even a stupid man, if he is the eldest, has to be responsible

for family affairs. The same principle applies among the women of the family. The mother is the highest in order of precedence, then the wife of the eldest son, and so on.

In a family where there are several married brothers with their wives, the family organization of household duties becomes quite complicated. The eldest brother's wife becomes the virtual commander of the household under the supreme authority of the mother, who hardly interferes unless a serious deadlock arises. The eldest brother's wife gives tasks to all the women of the family. The responsibility of cooking is entrusted to the youngest since this is the first job every daughter-in-law is given as soon as she comes into her husband's house. She may not, as a rule, eat anything cooked by senior members of the family. She is relieved of this obligation only when a new daughter-in-law comes to the house. Anything to be reported to the mother has to be done by the eldest daughter-in-law of the family. No other member is allowed to approach the mother directly. Any daughter-in-law who violates the rules or does not fulfil the job given to her is punished. The punishment may be physical; she may be given extra work or have to go without food. The main store of the house is under the control of the mother and normally only the eldest daughter-in-law is allowed access. But there are occasions of *pūja* and other festivals or wedding ceremonies in the family when all the daughters-in-law have access to the store. On such occasions the junior daughters-in-law need not wait for orders to be given by the mother or by the eldest daughter-in-law. They are expected to use their own initiative in doing whatever work comes their way and in fetching necessities from the store.

A little loss or a slight mishandling by the junior daughter-in-law is tolerated on such occasions. As all the junior daughters-in-law are responsible and pay respect to the eldest daughter-in-law, so all the younger brothers are responsible to the eldest brother.

The cause of separation of such families can be a family quarrel or a mutual agreement among all the brothers. The property is divided equally among the brothers. In some cases when the brothers divide their property peacefully and amicably they may decide to live in the same household and maintain separate accounts. Whenever they think that they would be better off living apart from the others they will quietly go out of the common house and since the property is already divided, there is no need to make any fuss.

Tharus live in one storey huts with bamboo walls and thatched roofs and



A Tharu Girl.

are well known for keeping their houses exceptionally clean in spite of the primitive structure of their buildings. Gusseppe Tucci, talking about the Tharus of Banke and Bardia, says, "The Tharu are not content merely to build their houses in a comfortable and spacious manner, such as is rarely to be found among peoples of their cultural level, but they also decorate them with great care."¹ The houses are built in groups of ten, up to twenty, on either side of the village lane. The walls of bamboo lattice-work are plastered with mud and cowdung both inside and out. As such they are very ill-protected against fires and burglary.

As with all other societies in Nepal, the Tharu community is undergoing tremendous changes. There is a wave of reform among educated young Tharus. They have changed their food habits, reformed their religious practices and introduced modern education. There is a Tharu organization known as the Tharu Welfare Society which provides hostels in Birgunj for school children and students of both sexes. It has also made an effort to publish information about Tharus. This society encourages education among the Tharus of the interior regions and teaches them clean habits, such as not keeping chickens and pigs inside the house. Some have given up pork emulating the habits of high caste Hindus.

1 Tucci, *Nepal*, pp. 75-76

DANUWAR, MAJHI AND DARAI

Among the indigenous Nepali people, in addition to the Tharus we find Danuwars, Majhis and Darais. They have striking cultural and physical similarities to the Tharus and inhabit neighbouring regions in the Terai forests and inner valleys. No doubt some individuals among them have invented interesting stories of their originally having been Rajputs who migrated to the forested areas of Nepal in order to escape the Moslem onslaught in India, but it is more likely that these people have been here for, at the least, several thousand years. They might belong to the group of aboriginal races inhabiting other more or less secluded regions of India.

In their appearance, attitudes and behavior, they are not much different from Tharus. They are very dark and seemingly bony, yet display great health and strength. Like the Tharus they are considered to have developed immunity against malaria. They live in hot, humid and very malarious areas in proximity with the Tharus but are more dependent on fishing and less on forest game and farming. They travel along the river valleys penetrating far upstream along the deeply cut narrow gorges and valleys where they have settled.

Living close to them along the river valleys are people called Barhamu and Kumhale, farmers and potters respectively. These Barhamu and Kumhales number very few; they appear more Mongoloid than Danuwars, Darais and Majhis, and speak a distinct Tibeto-Burman tongue.

Tharus, as we have said, live exclusively in the Terai and Inner Terai areas, notably in the Chitaun, Dang and Deukhuri valleys. Danuwars, Majhis and Darais have spread much farther upstream. There is a settlement of Danuwars in Duku, a village along the Bagmati river in Kathmandu Valley itself, and more of these people are found along the Bagmati south to the Terai.

'Majhi' is actually a term used by the hill peoples for those people called 'Bote' in the Terai (not to be confused with Bhote of the northern border regions). They are also occasionally referred to as Kushar. All are identical, Majhi, Bote and Kushar; they speak one language and follow the same patterns of life.

Danuwars are the largest of the three groups under discussion, numbering over 11,600 scattered throughout the low hills of eastern Nepal and in the Terai

in addition to those found in Kathmandu Valley. Very few are found in the areas west of Kathmandu. Comparatively, the number of Majhi is about 6,000 recorded throughout the low eastern regions and a few hundred in the west. No Majhi are found in Kathmandu Valley. Darais are recorded in Chitwan and in the low forested areas north of it. Their numbers barely exceed 1,600.

The settlements of these three peoples are very small, scattered, and generally far apart from one another. No single village ever has over five or six houses, with the exception of one or two numbering a dozen houses at the most. Those who inhabit the river valleys construct their homes with rounded river stones and thatch the roofs with rice grass. Those who live in the inner Terai have low thatched huts with wattled walls. Their huts stand quite apart from one another.

The Darais and Danuwars are equally dependent upon farming and fishing; Majhi are almost entirely fishermen or ferrymen on the rivers, where they use small dugout canoes for transport. These dugout log canoes are thick and shallow and never sink, although they may upset if a passenger becomes excessively nervous, whereupon the craft flips over throwing everyone into the river. Because so few hill people know how to swim, often only the boatman reaches shore.

These Terai dwellers own very little in the way of domestic possessions. One will find only a few earthen pots and hand-woven baskets made of bamboo and wild grasses in their huts.

The people are all very shy and provincial by nature. They are not scared of wild animals but very much frightened of other people. They dislike travelling; Majhis and Darais seldom leave their habitat more than an hour's walk. Many have made efforts to reclaim the forests near their villages, but should they get ahead the more advanced hill peoples living nearby, usually Brahmans and Chhetris, quickly exploit them for their own benefit. Consequently the river people have remained just that, and are landless. Those living in the forested areas of the Terai and inner Terai are likewise exploited by the merchant classes.

In my travels I observed an interesting transaction being made in one of the Majhi and Darai villages in Chitwan. Apparently a merchant had lent some money to one of the villagers some time back and in the interim seized part of the man's land. The villager went ahead, however, and harvested his fields, placing his paddy in storage where he kept watch on it. During the season of scarcity, July and August, the merchant came to the village and distributed this share of paddy from the confiscated fields to the hungry villagers. In February he retur-

ned once again to reclaim the entire amount of his loan in the form of oil seeds, with an additional charge of 25 percent interest on the original amount. Thus, in total, he had claimed four times the original amount because of the big difference in the market price of these commodities. This is just one example of the simplicity and the helplessness of the people and the attitudes of the cleverer classes living around them. And because of experiences of this nature, the village people are extremely suspicious of any and all outsiders, which gives them the appearance of shy and timid folk.

Traditionally, the Danuwar, Darai and Majhi wear very few clothes. The women have a simple sari and blouse. Men wear a loincloth and sometimes a blouse. Children run naked in the dust. Majhis and Danuwars living in higher and cooler valleys wear more clothing, usually made from coarse factory material. Their simple and almost non-existent costume is a result of climate, isolation and poverty combined.

Socially and ethnically these three peoples taken together are totally different from the rest of the Nepalis. None of them has any of the social subdivisions found in the majority of other Nepali groups. They appear a race apart, and none except Danuwars have reached the stage of organising their communities into social, religious, economic or political organisations. Consequently, whatever divisions and social rules we find we might suspect are largely influences from whatever other groups of people they live in proximity to.

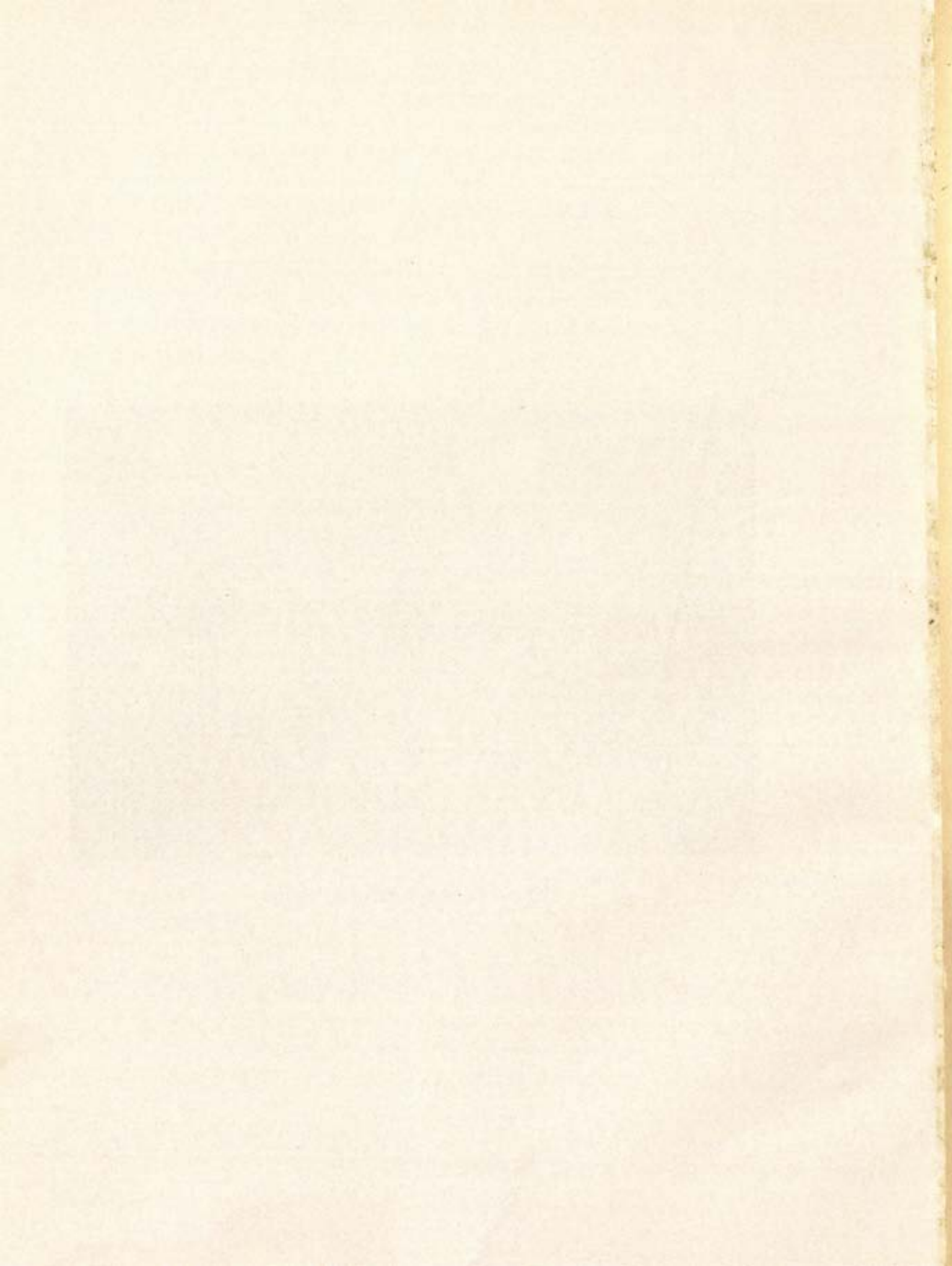
The Danuwars found in the northern part of Mahottari district seem to have followed the pattern of Tharu social organization. Their village councils settle disputes.

Danuwar informants, who are greatly influenced by the Rajputs and other Hindus of the adjacent areas, give the names of two distinct types of Danuwars. Those living along the upper river valleys are called Kachhare (living in Kachhar) and those in the Terai are termed Rajhan. A third type is also known called Bahaduriya. Rajhans are said to be superior and some of them even wear the Hindu sacred thread. A few of the Danuwar family names that exist in that area are : Kumar, Singh, Rae and Khan. They are the same names found among several other ethnic groups of Nepal, but are nothing more or less than family names in this context.

Majhi, in the same manner, have a few family names and also give the name Kachhare to those living in the upstream valleys. Majhi informants in the wes-



Danuvars, Lower Trishuli Valley.



tern part of Parsa district give the family names of Sundhuwan, Kachhare, Thar Bote, Mushar Bote and Kushar Bote.

The most common type of marriage among these three groups of people is by mutual agreement; that is, a boy and a girl usually between 29 and 30 years old decide between them to live as husband and wife. There have been some cases among the Danuwars of capturing a girl, but such marriages do not seem to work out well. So Danuwars and all others find it more suitable to follow the custom of marriage by mutual agreement. Some Danuwars also arrange marriages for their sons and daughters. Danuwar informants in Trishuli Valley expressed their view that marriage by arrangement is a very complicated thing. In the first place the boy's people have to approach the girl's parents several times before they are even asked about the purpose of their visits. After many visits the girl's parents ask formally why they have come, although they have known all along of the proposal in mind. Then they demand good clothes and ornaments for their daughter, and food and drink for themselves. It takes a long time before they actually get down to productive negotiations.

Once the wedding arrangements are settled favourably, the groom is taken by a group of people in company with several Damais playing drums and pipes to the bride's house on a prearranged date. The groom pays 16 rupees to the bride's father on this occasion. Following a few formalities, wherein the bride's parents give the bride and groom *tikas* on the forehead, the groom salutes his new bride's parents, and the whole company feasts and drinks with great pleasure, the groom escorts his new bride back home. The bride is carried in a hammock-like sling, covered and unseen by others. Among the Danuwars of the east the groom is "stolen away" by the bride's people as soon as he arrives there. Then other formalities are completed.¹

In cases of marriage by mutual agreement, the young couple does not have to inform and pay respects to their parents until they have actually started living together. But the boy must pay forty rupees to his father-in-law before the marriage is socially recognised. Forty rupees is a large sum for the majority of these people, and a young couple might have to wait for years or a whole lifetime before the payment is met. In the interim, so long as the payment is not made,

1 Poudel, Narendra Raj "Danuwar jati"; *Hamro Sanskriti*, Vol. 2, No. 3. 2025 B. S. pp. 48-49.

the husband will have no claim for compensation should his wife take another husband and leave him. Even more critical is the fact that if the payment has not been made by the time a child is born to the couple, or in the event of a death or other social or religious occasion of the couple, the girl's parents can not be represented as they should be. Every couple, therefore, tries as best they can to make the payment, but in fact there are many who die an unhappy death without having done so.

Danuvars living in the eastern Terai have adopted the system of paying dowries to their daughter's husbands in imitation of the Rajputs and Brahmans in that area. Some others have adopted the system of paying a bride price of 100 or 200 rupees.

The Bote-Majhis of the Terai also practise marriage by arrangement, since among them the mother's brother's daughter is the preferred marriage partner for her father's sister's son and arrangement is more practical than free choice. Should a girl then marry someone other than the preferred cross-cousin, the husband must pay compensation to the cross-cousin, the natural candidate. Neither Bote-Majhi nor Danuvars ever marry their father's sister's daughter. All of these groups allow marriage of one's elder brother's widow, but not of a younger brother's widow.

When a woman leaves one husband for another the amount of compensation due the first husband decreases by half each succeeding time. The third husband of a woman, then, pays half the amount that the second husband has paid, and the fourth in turn pays the third husband a quarter of the compensation paid to the first. If along the line the woman is widowed by the death of her husband the next husband is not required to pay compensation, nor are any succeeding husbands.

Danuvars living close by other peoples, including the Tharus, consider themselves the highest caste. They do not eat pulses cooked even by Brahmans, the highest of all Hindu castes. As a rule, then, Danuvars are not found marrying outside their group. In the case of the few individuals who break this tradition, immediate expulsion is the rule. Tharus, Darais, Bote-Majhis and Kushars all tolerate intermarriage, and the general rule is that the male children are accepted into their father's group, while the female children go with the mother's group.

Danuvars, Darais and Majhis maintain a family deity within their homes behind the hearth where no one except members of the immediate family is allowed entry. These family deities, their ancestor-gods, are worshipped, and chickens

and goats are slaughtered to them during *dashain*, the great Hindu religious festival and on the full moon day of *phagun* (mid-February to mid-March).

Bhaggu Bote (Majhi) of Thori in the south of Chitwan, while talking about the worship of his *kulkulayan*, the family deity, said, "My grand-father was said to have sacrificed buffalo every year at the shrine, but in my father's time it was more expensive so he slaughtered sheep instead". Then with a tinge of humour and half-credulity on his face he added, "But I have been so impoverished that I cannot even buy a sheep, so I sacrifice only a chicken."

These people also worship Ban Devi, goddess of the forest. Among Danuwars one's sister's son or a daughter's husband acts as family priest on these occasions, while among Darais and Majhis the old and experienced act as priests. They do not have any religious prayers, codes or spells of their own. Neither do they have a written language, and very few people are literate among them.

The Bote-Majhi observe birth pollution for four days and death pollution for 13 days. Danuwars observe both birth and death pollution for ten days. All of them cremate their dead. The Majhis perform a ceremony on the first day of the lunar month in August for the propitiation of their relatives dead within the year. The spirit of the dead relative is invited to speak through one of the surviving members of the family.

Their women do not inter-dine with any group of people than their own, although the men may not observe this rule strictly, at least within the various neighbouring groups, because they are more disposed to travel away from the home locale.

RAJBANSI

Rajbansi is the name of another relatively large and dominant group of people living in the eastern part of the country—namely Morang and Jhapa districts. They have often been referred to as Koch or Koche as this is said to be their historical and original name. In their physiognomy and racial traits they are more closely related to Tharus, Danuwars and Satars than to any other people living in the areas. But unlike the Tharus and Danuwars, who are widely distributed in the plains, the Rajbansi are found mainly in the two districts mentioned above, or more definitively, between the Kosi and Mechi rivers in Nepal and further east and south across the Indian border. The total population of Rajbansi as shown in the Census report of 1961 is 55,803. But this figure is only a fraction of the total Rajbansi population found in neighbouring India.

The Rajbansi, formerly known only as Koch, are said to have been a very powerful nation during the 17th & 18th centuries. About that time, however, they were absorbed and overcome by the British in India and in Jhapa and Morang their territories were annexed to the kingdom of Nepal by King Prithvi Narayan Shah in 1774. The Koch country, writes Hodgson, "once included the western half of Assam on one side and the eastern half of Morang on the other with all the intervening country—"1

Hajo, founder of the enormous Koch (Rajbansi) state, also tried to unite Koch, Mech (Bodo) and other groups by giving his daughters to Mech chieftains to form a powerful defence against intruders and invaders. His descendants, however, abandoned the policy and not only cast off the other tribes with scorn but despised their own religion, tribal name, culture, and language in favour of Hinduism and its Sanskritic culture. In the process, only the rich and powerful few were able to obtain Hindu Kshatriya status and were given the name Rajbansi. The poorer Koch, also having been induced to dislike their own religion and culture, turned to Islam and became Musalman instead. At present then we find three types of Koch : the Rajbansi Hindus, the Musalmans who were not officially given the name of Raj-

1 Brian H. Hodgson, "On the Kocch, Bodo, and Dhimal tribes", *Miscellaneous Essays Relating to Indian Subjects*, Vol. I, Section I, Part III, (London, 1880), p. 107

bansi but who call themselves Rajbansi nevertheless, and lastly the remnants of the old Koch community who did not convert to either religious tradition. Hindu and Musalman Rajbansis speak a language called Rajbansi or Tajpuri, while the Koch remnants speak their original dialect although not totally uninfluenced by local languages. Presumably only the very poor Koch remained in their original cultural state.

Bisu, one of the grandsons of Hajo, was a brave and powerful person who conquered a number of chiefs and their territories, built his capital at Koch (or Cooch), and gave the Sanskritic name Bihar to the territory (hence Cooch Bihar) while adopting Hinduism and its culture. The Brahmans, in deference to the wishes of this formidable chief, gave him and his people the title of Kshatriya, the warrior caste second to Brahmans in the hierarchy. Bisu himself was reported to have adopted the name Biswa Singh thereafter.¹

The original Koch, and now Rajbansi, are among the very oldest people of the area. They are mentioned in the Mahabharata, the famous Hindu epic which is believed to be more than 3,000 years old. Koch chiefs were recorded to have fought on the battle-field of Kurukshetra during the Mahabharata period.

There is a place of pilgrimage in Jhapa known as *Kichak Badh*, visited by both Nepalis and Indians, which is believed to be the spot where Kichak, the King of the Koch was killed by Bhimsen, as related in the *Mahabharata*.

They are a dark, hardy looking people of medium height, with short wide noses, round prominent nostrils, narrow eyes, large ears, thick lips, and thick dark hair. Their language and dialects have been greatly influenced by the Sanskrit group of languages about them, such as Bengali and Maithili. Swayambhu Lal Shrestha² believes that the basic Koch language has many common words with the Garo language of the Assam hills.

They are pacific toward their own people and their neighbours and appear totally free from arrogance, revenge and cruelty. They are fond of music and dance and sing on the occasion of festivals and wedding ceremonies.

Their main occupation is farming. They raise maize, rice, wheat and mustard. Some of them grow their own cotton and weave materials out of it. They live in

1 Swayambhu Lal Shrestha, "Rajbansitaegu Chhu Khâ", *Jbiji*, (Kathmandu, 2025. B. S.), pp. 138-146.

2 *Ibid*.

villages consisting of a cluster of 15 to 30 households. Only a few have tile roofs. All others are low thatched huts with wattled walls which are plastered with cow dung and mud afterwards. The women work very hard and keep their houses clean. Whenever a new house is built people join in to help each other with the construction. Almost every village had a council of elders for discussing and settling village affairs in traditional ways. Now the formal village panchayats and their elected members are taking up the responsibilities in a much more systematic manner.

Marriage as a rule is monogamous and polygamy by either sex is not tolerated except in the case of a man bringing in a second wife with the permission of a first who is known to be infertile. Women command a great deal of respect and confidence from their menfolk, and it is the responsibility of the mother to see that her daughters get married. Hodgson writes that the daughters inherit the family property when the mother dies, and that the husband lives with his wife's mother after marriage and obeys her. This custom is no longer found in common practice today. Rajbansis have been influenced by many other customs of the different people coming into the area.

The custom of paying a bride price is still to be found among the Rajbansi. The poor man who cannot pay for a bride must go and work for her parents. Sometimes a boy works for one, two or as long as three years before he earns his bride. This system is also prevalent among the Satars, Bodo and Dhimal of the area and of Tharus as far west as Chitwan. Bride price is paid also in the event the girl is a widow or a divorcee, although payment is much lower for them than for a girl in her first marriage, because popular belief is that the woman will be returned to her first husband after death. In the marriages by mutual agreement between the boy and the girl and in those arranged by parents a wedding ceremony is held when negotiations are completed. On an auspicious day a procession of the parents, other relatives and friends of the groom goes to the bride's house. The party is entertained with food and drink at the bride's parents' house and returns home with the bride. Afterwards the groom's parents provide a feast for friends and relatives.

The Hindu Rajbansi worship a number of deities and observe festivals common to all the Hindu people in the area. Musalman Rajbansi practise Islam as do those Musalman groups around them. There are many other Rajbansis who do not fall strictly into one or the other religious group. They worship a number of tribal deities including the Hindu gods.

Hindus cremate and Musalman Rajbansi bury their dead following the tradition of each religion. The members of the deceased individual's family observe pollution and mourning. They are restored to purity when they bathe at the end of the mourning and the priests or their elders sprinkle pure water over them. A funeral feast is given afterwards to the relatives and neighbours. Hodgson recorded that :

When the feast has been got ready and the friends are assembled, before sitting down they all repair once again to the grave, when the nearest of kin to the deceased, taking an individual's usual portion of food and drinks, solemnly presents them to the dead with these words, 'Take and eat : heretofore you have eaten and drank with us : you can do so no more : you were one of us : you can be so no longer : we come no more to you : come you not to us.' And thereupon the whole party break and cast on the grave a bracelet of thread priorly attached, to this end, to the wrist of each of them. Next the party proceed to the river and bathe and having thus lustrated themselves, they repair to the banquet, and eat, drink, and make merry as though they were never to die.¹

Popular belief maintains that all relatives and acquaintances will meet again in the next world.

1 Hodgson, *Op. cit.*

SATAR

The Satars of Nepal are believed to be the same people as the Santhals of Bihar in India. In Nepal their settlements are mainly concentrated in the districts of Jhapa and Morang. The Census report of 1961 shows about 12,000 of them living in Jhapa and 7,000 in Morang making a total of only 19,000, whereas roughly 20,000 of them were recorded in Jhapa district alone during the Census of 1951-54. This fluctuation must be due to the fact that they have not yet given up the habit of continually moving both within the country and back and forth across the Nepal-India border. Since many of them are landless and make only a temporary living in the middle of forest clearings they are quite mobile. Many of them seem to have moved from Jhapa across the district border to Morang during the past decade.

Their dark complexion, curly hair, and muscular well-proportioned bodies are very much like those of the Tharus. But they are much worse farmers than the Tharus. Their primitive agricultural tools and ploughs are not very efficient. They show more interest in maintaining their bows and arrows, spears and other hunting weapons than agricultural implements. They organize hunting expeditions occasionally for all the village people. They kill and eat tiger, jackal, deer, snakes and many other wild animals which are an important supplement to the diet of maize, rice and wheat they grow themselves. Lots of wild fruits and tubers are also collected which supplement their staple foods.

Some people keep cattle, goats and chickens but many of them never milk their cattle nor do they use milk or milk products in their diet.

Their women folk make their own coarse clothing and depend very little on factory made textile goods. They are also skilled in making straw mats, brooms and baskets. Their women decorate themselves with brass and silver bangles, bracelets, anklets and silver necklaces. Men wrap a loin cloth around themselves while women wear a skirt with a scarf over their breasts although very few of them use a blouse.

They inhabit small and simple villages in the middle of the forests, and their social life is well organized and strictly disciplined. But many clever people have taken advantage of their simplicity and disciplined peaceful nature and exploited them.

Law and order within the community is maintained with the help of a village council. The decision of the village council is obeyed without hesitation by the villagers. The council of the village elders is presided over by a *Majhi* who is appointed as the headman with the unanimous support of the village.

The Satar community is divided into a number of exogamous clan units. Some of them are : Baske, Basars, Hasda, Hemram, Kisku, Murmu, Saren and Tudu.¹ They are prohibited from marrying within the same clan. Anyone breaking marriage rules and committing other offences is excommunicated or made to pay a fine of one hundred rupees and a feast of one hundred meals of boiled rice. Once the convicted person pays this fine he is forgiven for his offence and is taken back into the community. This is symbolized by burying a stone under the ground to indicate that the damage is repaired and the offence has been buried for ever.²

Marriage, as a rule, is monogamous and patrilocal, and descent is patrilineal. But since the junior levirate—marrying an elder brother's widow—is a standard practice many households end up being ploygynous. The elder brother's widow retains her senior position within the household vis a vis the younger brother's wife even after her marriage with her deceased husband's younger brother.

Satars do not practice early marriage. Usually the ages of the bride and the groom are twenty years or more. The young people enjoy absolute freedom in premarital sexual activities. In case of pregnancy before marriage the lover is expected to marry the mother of his baby or at least it is his responsibility to find a husband for the girl, which is not very difficult. But in such cases he is also expected to pay compensation against the delivery expenses of the girl.

Most marriages are arranged by the young people themselves. But the parents occasionally have to initiate a negotiation or at least help formalize the negotiations. Even in the case of an arranged marriage the young couple are given enough opportunity to know each other beforehand. Once the young couple agree to be married the boy's parents have to pay twelve rupees to the bride, five of which goes to her father, five to her mother and two rupees to her grandparents. The day for the wedding is also fixed at this time. On the wedding day the groom's party spends the whole day at the bride's parents' house where they are entertained with food and drink. At the time of the wedding ceremony the bride

1 Swayambhu Lal Shrestha, "Jhapaya Satar", *Op. cit.*

2 Daulat Bikram Bista, "Satar haruko ritithiti", *Hamro Sanskriti*, Vol. 2, No. 1, (Kathmandu. 2024 B. S.) pp. 31-35.

and the groom are lifted in separate baskets five times towards the sky by five people each of the respective party.¹

There is also a custom of marriage by force among the Satars. Either a boy or a girl can force a partner to marry. When a boy insists that the girl marry him he puts vermilion powder in the parting of her hair, which automatically makes her his wife by tradition and popular belief. The boy risks a severe beating at the hands of the girl's people, and should the girl be unwilling to marry him she can leave him and subsequently marry another. But she is always considered wedded first and forever to the boy who first applied the vermilion powder to her hair. In the same way a girl can force the boy of her choice to marry her by forcibly entering his home and staying there. She cannot be forced out of the house but may be persuaded to leave. However, if she remains adamant the boy must marry her.²

Satars observe a number of festivals all of which are related to seasons of agriculture, game hunting and collecting of wild fruits and tubers. The important festivals are *Vaha* observed in February marking the spring season, and *Sohraya*, observed in November after the harvest of paddy and when they worship their ancestors³ and the cow. *Vaha* is also an occasion to worship the deities of the forest and to ask permission from them for hunting and collecting wild fruits. They do not eat anything wild before the observance of the festival for the year. There are many other festivals when they feast on chicken, pigeons, goats, pigs, rice and liquor and do a great deal of dancing, singing and rejoicing.

All of their dancing is accompanied by women singing and men playing the flute, cymbals and drums. The dancing and singing take place during the day as well as at night. But the moonlit nights are specially favoured by the youths when their duet songs and dancing take on a more romantic aura.

Satars never consume the first harvest or wild fruit or wild game until they offer them to their ancestors and gods. Among gods the most important are Thakur, Morang Buru and Moreko.

Birth and death pollution are observed equally seriously. The dead bodies are cremated on the river banks. The remains of the corpse are consigned in the river after three days. Death pollution is observed by the entire village by ab-

1 Daulat Bikram Bista, *Op. cit.*

2 Swayambhu Lal Shrestha. *Op. cit.*

3 Daulat Bikram Bista, "Satar jatiko nritya", *Hamro Sanskriti*. Vol. 1, No. 3, (Kathmandu 2024 B. S.).



A Satar Woman and Children.

staining every work in the fields. The annual funeral ceremony is conducted in the month of November by slaughtering goats and chickens and offering a feast to the entire village. Like many other people in Nepal they believe in life after death and also in a spirit world of the dead where they can meet their relatives, friends and acquaintances.

DHIMAL AND BODO

Sometimes people develop speculative stories which are difficult to assess without very thorough and systematic studies and yet they are too interesting to ignore altogether. Such is the case with the Dhimal story of their being the same people as the Limbus of the far eastern hills. The story as told by some Dhimals to Mr. B.P. Upreti¹ is as follows. In the old old days there were two brothers who were adventurous and enterprising. They had cultivated all the land there was to cultivate in the area in which they lived. So they set out in search of more land to cultivate, cutting their own way through a thick forest. One brother was leading the other who, being a little slower, was eventually left far behind. After a while the one in front entered into a forest of bananas. The banana trees in this forest grew very fast. The elder brother cut a passage through. But in no time the forest was just as thick and dense behind him as it was in front of him. When the younger brother arrived near the banana forest he was lost. He could not find the trail his brother had made. He thought that his brother did not want him to follow and therefore had run ahead. Having not much choice the younger brother decided to settle at the spot and gradually began his reclamation whereas the leading brother traversed the forest area and finally reached the hills. In the hills he founded his tribe of Limbus and the younger brother who remained in the forest of the plain of Jhapa is known as the first ancestor of the Dhimals. Mr. Upreti believes that there is a certain similarity between the Dhimal and Limbu languages too.

Whatever may be the validity and plausibility of this kind of story the Dhimals do have a mongoloid physiognomy as do the Limbus. And the Dhimals' comparatively dark complexion is, of course, attributed to the heat of the tropical sun, so unlike the favourable climate which their hill cousins live in. Maybe the hostile climate is another reason why there are only slightly over 8,000 Dhimals recorded in the census report of 1961 while there are over 1,38,000 Limbus. Whether cousins or not, the Dhimals certainly had one of the unfriendliest climates along with the scourge of many endemic tropical diseases and a variety of deadly animals to fight against until a quarter of a century ago. Now much of this has changed and indeed Jhapa happens to be one of the most promising districts for agricultural and indus-

¹ Bedh Prakash Upreti, "Dhimal tribe of Jhapa District", field studies report to USAID/N, Kathmandu. July, 1966.

trial development. Therefore these people are facing hostilities of a very different kind from clever, more advanced and exploitative people. It is a boom area for many Nepalis as well as Indian business people. Today the Dhimals and Bodo or Meche people consider themselves closer to each other both in origin and in their economic lives than with any other people. Certainly they do not like the Pahadi Brahman and Chhetris who are the worst and most direct exploiters of these simple people. The Rajbansi, the Tharu and the Satar, although more numerous than themselves, are not as much of a threat to them as the Brahman-Chhetri "pioneers" from the hills. They live entirely off the land, which is one of the most fertile in the country. A majority of them are landless wage earners or tenant cultivators of absentee landlords. A few are comparatively well off in ownership of land and cattle. Like most people anywhere they tell stories of the good old days, about the time when Dhimals were a prosperous group with their own Kings and government and plenty of their own land. Dhimals are said to be less timid and shy than Satars or Tharus. Mr. Upreti found more than a dozen Dhimals who owned land exceeding the limit set by the land reform laws and two of them had more than 150 acres of their own land in 1966. There are Dhimals in the public local offices and Panchayats to-day. And there are others who talk about political and social reforms. With the increasing number of outsiders coming into the area and encroaching upon their traditional territory they seem to have developed a stronger feeling of group identity than they had before. They consider themselves more progressive and advanced than Tharus living in the neighbourhood.

Brian Hodgson describes the nature and character of these people as shy at first, but after acquaintance boisterous and inquisitive. They are pacific toward their own people and their neighbours, and appear totally free from arrogance, revenge and cruelty. Bodos and Dhimals, he felt, are more like the mountain people in their straight-forwardness and honesty.¹

Until some time ago they were rather nomadic, practising shifting cultivation. But this kind of activity has stopped completely for some time as there are few areas left where they can move around. They grow and eat rice, wheat, and barley. They supplement their diets by hunting and fishing occasionally. They do not keep many cattle, sheep or goats, nor are they very fond of milking. But there are a few people nowadays who keep bullocks for ploughing and for pulling carts.

Like the Bodos and Satars they have traditional village councils. The head-

¹ Brian Hodgson, *Op. cit.*

man of the village council is called the *Deonia*. The *Deonia* wields effective authority in the management of their internal problems and activities. Of course the Village Panchayats are gradually playing more and more important and effective roles in community and other inter-community matters. But Dhimals still prefer to settle their own disputes and problems within their community council.

Dhimal and Bodo marriages are arranged entirely according to the choice of the couple involved. Boys and girls enjoy freedom of movement and association with each other as long as they wish. Once a boy and a girl agree to marry they run away quietly from their houses and hide for a day from their parents. Usually they employ a go-between to arrange this flight. The next day they request the boy's father to invite the girl's father over to the boy's parents' house, where he is entertained with liquor. He is also paid a certain amount of money—eleven rupees to a few hundred—depending upon the social and financial status of the parties involved. Once this is settled the entire village is invited to a feast. A lot of dancing and singing goes on in a light-hearted and hilarious mood. The musical instruments are big drums which men carry over their shoulders.

Nine or eleven days after the wedding the girl's father is visited with one pigeon, three chickens, one egg and some rice to complete the marriage formalities. For Dhimal boys or girls any one within their community except a member of the same lineage is a potential partner. The parents show very little interest in the choice of mates for their children. Bodos and Dhimals practise junior levirate as do other groups in the area.

They observe a number of local and tribal festivals in addition to the national festivals such as Durga Puja. Some of the important ones are *Dantabarang*, *Testapuri* and *Dolthakur*. *Dantabarang* is also the name of the most important god of all. They believe that the King must have the same god to worship. Since the King himself is an incarnation of *Bura Thakur*, another one of their gods that looks after their well being, it would not be proper for him to worship any other god except the highest. Dhimals worship *Dantabarang* in a shrine built in the open near their houses and kept pure by smearing cowdung and mud plaster on it. This god is worshipped with special preparations by slaughtering goats or chickens in June, just before planting paddy.

Testapuri is a new year's day celebration on the 1st of Baisakh. Normally rice and incense are offered to the god at this time. But sometimes if individuals have made promises to offer chickens or goats during the year whenever they had some

difficulty or asked for a special favour such as the birth of a son, they slaughter these animals too. The image of god itself is placed in a bamboo basket which is covered with red material at the top. On this occasion the women folk become less inhibited and enjoy themselves in dancing, singing, drinking and even in horseplay with their husbands and husband's brothers.

Dolthakur is a celebration mainly for driving off all diseases, epidemics, etc. from the village. The god is carved in a piece of wood and carried through the village, visiting each household on the day before the first full-moon-day in July. On the full-moon-day they erect a small thatched hut in an open place outside the village and set fire to it, shouting and behaving hysterically. They believe that their god in the very very old days went mad and behaved similarly.

People rejoice with drinking, singing and dancing in the evening. Their priest who presides over all of these religious festivals is called *Dhami*.

They also worship *Din* (the god of rain) every day within their house where he is buried underground. As for the behaviour of *Din* Mr. Upreti relates a story told to him by an old Dhimal lady. She told him that the god *Din* has a family of a wife and one son. Whenever the wife lights a fire in their kitchen we see lightning in the sky. When the food is being cooked in the kitchen the boy becomes pleased and begins to play his drum which causes the thunder we hear on earth. The god *Din* himself pours water from the sky to cause rain over the earth.

Some Dhimals are beginning to enlist Brahman priests for their birth and death rites and the name of the younger Dhimals are getting Sanskritized. But their funeral rites are rather casual. They bury their dead during the rainy season and cremate during the dry months. The immediate family observes mourning and pollution for eleven days. On the twelfth day a barber is employed to shave bald the heads of all the males and to cut nails of all the women who joined the funeral procession to the cremation ground or the burial and observed the pollution.

DHANGAR

It would seem very unlikely that a small pocket of as few as 9,000 people who have been living all along in certain parts of the eastern Terai would be closely related only to a group of people in Madhya Pradesh, Central India. And yet the Dhangars themselves and the few people who know anything about them seem to believe that they are the same people as the Bhitwa of Central India. This belief was apparently substantiated when a man from Madhya Pradesh employed in a land survey team was present in the Dhangar area for a few days and found that their language was very close to that of his people in Central India. Their language is totally different from nearby languages and therefore unintelligible to people surrounding their area within Nepal¹. In Nepal they are scattered in the river basins in the area between Sarlahi and Morang districts in eastern Terai.²

Dhangars are good agricultural workers but not many of them are even self-sufficient. Many among them are agricultural labourers. They keep cows, buffaloes, goats and flocks of chickens. They sell milk, goats, chickens and eggs in the market. Their agricultural products are paddy, wheat and barley and they eat what they grow. The tools they use include ploughs, hoes, and sickles. Both men and women work equally hard in their fields and enjoy equally important positions of authority within the family. Domestic responsibilities are divided between a man and his wife. A man does all the heavier work outside the house and provides livelihood for the members of his family, while maintaining the household by keeping it clean and preparing and distributing meals are the women's responsibilities. Women keep the income from chickens and goats. Their savings are kept in the form of ornaments and jewellery.

The biggest Dhangar settlement of the Janakpur area was recorded by Mr. Upreti in Nau-Saya Bigha village.³ The 50 Dhangar homesteads of Nau-Saya Bigha comprise a fenced in homogeneous settlement separate from people of other origins in the village. The Dhangar village is a relatively well-maintained, clean

1 Kent Gordon and Richard Hugoniot of the Summer Institute of Linguistics have recently studied and have confirmed the Dhangar language as Dravidian.

2 Bedh Prakash Upreti, "Dhangar tribe of Jnkapur, Dhanukha District"; a field trip report to USAID/N. August 1966.

3 *Ibid.*

and quiet area. But because of the deterioration of their economic condition many Dhangars are leaving the place to settle further east in the Terai. The reason for the worsening of their economic condition is their exploitation by the merchants of Janakpur town who advance loans in cash and kind and realize them with 60% annual interest. This situation is rapidly changing to the advantage of the Dhangars after the introduction of Land Reform by His Majesty's Government.

The richest Dhangar of the settlement has five bighas of land, goats, chickens, nine buffaloes and two pairs of bullocks, all of which provide a source of sizeable cash income.

Additional cash income is provided by selling skilfully made bamboo baskets. They also make large bins of bamboo for storing grain. These bins are plastered with cowdung and mud on the outside in order to protect the grain from moths. They are always on four or six legs with an open hole at the bottom for letting the air in so that the grain keeps dry all through the year.

Their homesteads are constructed on the drier ground. But in order to make them damp proof they spread a one to two foot thick cushion of dry hay and then plaster a thick layer of mud and cowdung on top of it so that the whole floor becomes springy soft and dry all the year round. The open front and a verendah used as a sleeping place for men let enough air and light in to keep the house dry and well ventilated. The walls are made of bamboo matting which is also plastered with a mixture of mud and cowdung. All the roofs are thatched.

Although they are not very different from many others in their economic condition and way of life, traditionally they are treated as untouchables by the caste Hindus of the area. This puts them at an added disadvantage vis a vis any other group of people in the area both socially and psychologically. Probably for this reason none of them has so far ventured to make an inroad into local Panchayats. Whenever they have to settle any of their minor disputes or misunderstandings they seek the help of their own headman within the settlement. Each Dhangar settlement has its own headman who is called a *Maijan*, and a cluster of 12 to 14 settlements has one chief headman called *Mukhye Maijan* over all the individual settlement *Maijans*.

Dhangar marriage is an expensive affair for a boy's family since a boy's father has to make a payment to the bride's parents and provide feasts for the entire Dhangar community living nearby. The search for a bride and wedding arrangements are usually the responsibility of the parents. The father of the boy has to appoint a

match-maker to look for a suitable bride, and once having determined who would make a good couple the match-maker invites the boy's father to the house of the girl's father, whereupon the bride price is settled and paid to the father of the girl. The bride price can be as much as Rs. 200/-. The date of the wedding is announced formally by the four elders of the village who are invited for the purpose. On the wedding day the groom goes on a bullock cart accompanied by a procession which is stopped short of the bride's parents' house by the representatives of the bride's parents' family who demand betel-nuts, which signify the betel-nut chewing high status of the groom's family. For a while the party is led to a different house from that of the girl's parents because in the meanwhile the bride has already run away from her house. She has to be "searched and found out". But as soon as she is led back to her house by one of her relatives the groom's party is invited to her house. The wedding ceremony involves exchanging vermilion between the bride and the groom under the cover of a big shawl. After this the party is entertained with food and liquor provided by the bride's parents. Dancing singing and merry-making go on the whole night until the boy departs with his bride along with his own people early next morning. The bride receives gifts from her parents and relatives according to their financial positions. She also receives a sickle from her parents as dowry. They may also give her cattle or a goat.

At the boy's house a big feast is provided for all the Dhangars in the area.

There are a number of other occasions when the Dhangars enjoy themselves in dancing, singing and feasting. The most important of the festivals is worshipping the Goddess Durga in the month of February-March. Once every twelve years the Durga festival is observed with more festivity and seriousness than in other years. During this festival people fast for a day to purify themselves for worshipping the Goddess. Buffaloes, goats and chickens are sacrificed and later on feasted upon.

Another festival is the occasion of worshipping the god of wisdom, called *Karma Dharma*. This is observed on a full-moon day in August, when the *Maijan*, headman of the village, makes the preparations and invites the villagers to participate with their contribution of expenses for the sacrifice of pigs, goats and chickens. A feast is given afterwards. This is observed in an open meadow near their village by erecting two green branches of a *Karma* tree, worshipping and making sacrifices to them, and finally singing and dancing around them for a day and a night.

Still another important festival is that of the *Kalipuja* celebrated after the har-

vest of paddy in October. They offer newly harvested paddy to the goddess before they start consuming it themselves.

Dhangars celebrate Holi as much as all other Terai inhabitants and in the same manner. Dasain is the most popular festival throughout Nepal except in very high Himalayan settlements, and it is also observed by the Dhangars. Some of these festivals and family occasions are presided over by their own *Dhamis*.

Dhangars bury their dead and observe mourning for twelve days. At the end of it they provide a feast of goats, chicken and liquor to all their relatives. Then their pollution is terminated by shaving the heads of all the males and by cutting the nails of all female members of the immediate family.

MUSALMAN¹

The first Musalmans to arrive in Kathmandu were Kashmiri traders who came from Tibet during the reign of Ratna Malla in the late 15th and early 16th centuries. It is believed that they were traders of rugs, carpets, shawls and other woolen goods and that they travelled back and forth from Kashmir to Lhasa via Ladakh. A few of them were invited to Kathmandu by an envoy of Ratna Malla in Lhasa. Soon after that some more Musalmans seem to have entered into the western hills. They are locally known as *churaute*, bangle sellers.²

During the 17th or 18th century other Musalmans were brought from India to Nepal in the service of some of the Chaubisi rajas of Nepal's western hills to train soldiers in the use of firearms. In these early times, however, the total number of Musalman traders and instructors could hardly have been more than a few dozen. Today's large numbers of Nepali Musalmans are descendants of yet another group who migrated into the Terai areas as agricultural labourers and into the hills as sellers of bangles, glass beads and leather goods during or after the Indian Mutiny of 1857.

In physical appearance Musalmans do not look any different from other Mediterranean physical types living in Kathmandu and throughout Nepal, and they are not easily distinguishable from Brahmans, Chhetris and some Newars of Indian origin. In dress and customs, however, some Kathmandu Musalman men distinguish themselves either by growing beards or by wearing a Turkish hat, or both. By far the large majority do not dress much differently from the non-Musalman Nepalis around them.

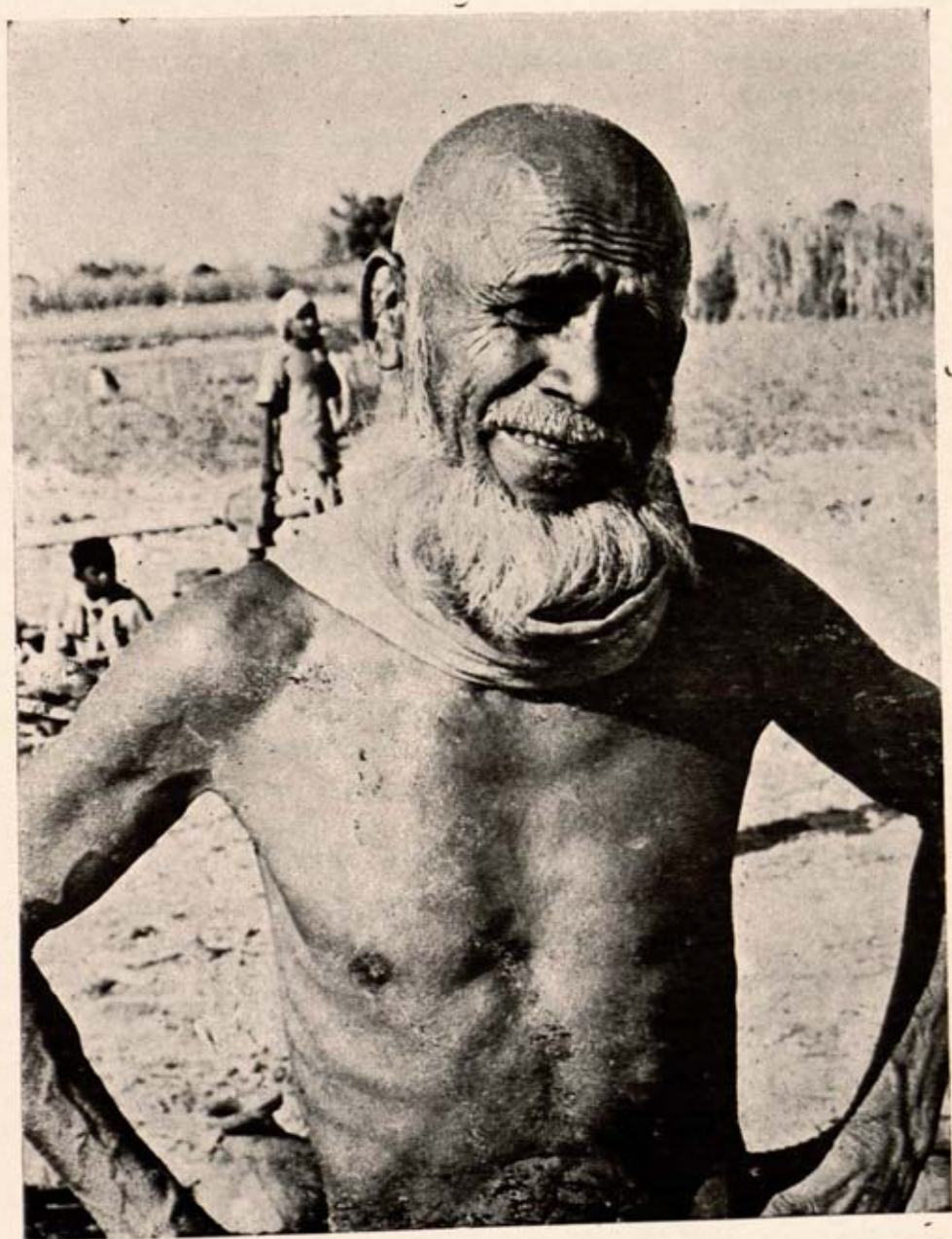
Most Musalmans in the western Terai speak Urdu as their mother tongue, a language quite closely related to Hindi. In other parts of Nepal they are greatly influenced by the languages spoken in the areas where they happen to be living. The Musalmans of the Western Hills hardly speak any Urdu. They speak Nepali as their mother tongue.

The most recent census, that of 1961, gives the total Musalman population

1 Although there are many Musalmans living in the hills, because the great majority live in the Terai they have been placed among the Terai Peoples.

2 Marc Gaborieau, "Les Curaute du Moyen Nèpal", *L'Homme* VI, 3. 1966, pp. 81-91.

"Les Musulmans du Nèpal", *Objects et Mondes* VI, 2, etc 1966, pp. 121-132.



A Mussalman Farmer.

in Nepal as 280,590. Over half of these are found in the eastern Terai region, the western hills and Kathmandu Valley. In the western hills they are scattered all the way from Kathmandu to Doti. Those in Kathmandu Valley today total approximately 1,300. These Kathmandu Valley Musalmans consider themselves more sophisticated and of a higher social order than those of the outlying districts. The few people of Kashmiri descent consider themselves of an even higher social and cultural order than the Hindustani Musalmans or those who arrived later in Nepal.

Most Terai Musalmans are farmers. A very few of them are tailors and bangle-sellers. Most of them are fairly self-sufficient farmers; a very few are landless wage earning labourers and even fewer are rich.

Those who live in the western hills have little land but support themselves by selling bangles throughout the hills during the dry winter season. They are known as *churaute*, bangle sellers, in rural areas.

Kathmandu Musalmans do not farm. They are most often traders and shopkeepers, and a few of them have achieved affluence and a higher education and have found positions in government, as teachers and in other professional jobs.

Musalmans have maintained their traditional style of architecture in mosques found both in the Terai and in Kathmandu Valley. Their houses, however, are not different from the styles common in the particular localities they inhabit.

Musalman society in the Terai is usually organized into units from districts through subdistricts to the village level. A headman of hereditary status is found at each level, and he enjoys a great deal of respect and authority over those within his jurisdiction. These headmen are officially recognized by the government. They settle disputes, punish offenders, and preside over important transactions and some social activities. Their income is realized from commissions on money transactions and the sale and purchase of properties and from fines for particular offences.

With the growing political consciousness of the people hereditary institutions are weakening. The people want to have a say in the choice of their leaders and are turning to popular election rather than accepting traditional leadership per se. In the hills, however, they have no communal hierarchy. They have been participating in social and political affairs with their neighbours, because they have been living much closer to them.

There are two Kathmandu-based Musalman reform and social movements, the All-Nepal Musalman Reform Council and the Anjuman Islah. The former has a small following primarily around the capital, while the more influential Anjuman Islah claims adherents and maintains branch organizations throughout the country.

The education of Musalman children is advancing as well. Until about 25 years ago Musalman children were not allowed to attend any Nepali school then existing. They were considered of unclean low caste by orthodox Hindus. The Rana government eventually opened a Musalman primary school and by the 1940's Musalmans were allowed to attend secondary schools and soon after, college.

Meanwhile traditional Urdu schools developed. Some Musalmans went to study Urdu and Persian in India. Higher degrees in those educational institutions are Maulana, Hafiz, Kari and Fazil. A Hafiz, Kari or Fazil graduate must be able to read properly the Koran, the classical religious text, and a Fazil should also be able to translate and interpret the original Arabic text.

Two groups are recognized in the social ranking. The first consists of four divisions : Saiyad, Seikh, Pathan and Mogul. Saiyad and Seikh have Arabian origins and as such are descendants of the original followers of Mohammed, founder of Islam. It is believed that Pathans came from Afghanistan and that Mogul are descendants of the Turks.

A second class consists of occupational groups, later converts to the Islamic religion. They are found throughout Musalman areas in Nepal but the majority are in the Terai and western hills. They are : Ansari (weavers), Sabji Farosh (vegetable vendors), Dhobi (washermen), Naddaf (cotton teasers), Daffali (tassel and bangle sellers) and Mochi (cobblers). Both of these groups have family subdivisions. Descent is patrilineal and therefore family names are reckoned along the father's line. In the western hills, however, only two categories are prevalent, Miya and Fakir. The latter have lower social positions. Musalmans of the Terai further distinguish themselves as northern Musalmans from their southern Musalman neighbours in India.

Like Musalmans the world over, they believe in one god, and in Mohammed his prophet. However, in the course of history Islam has been divided into two main sects known as Shia and Sunni. The great majority of Indian and Nepali Musalmans follow the Sunni beliefs, and in particular the Hanfi school, one of four subdivisions. They are more traditional and respect their prophet Mohammed more than some others.

The Prophet Mohammed was born in Mecca and died in Medina in Saudi Arabia in 632 A.D. These two places are considered holy and are goals of Musalman pilgrims the world over. At least once in a lifetime the devout Musalman should visit these shrines. For a Nepali this trip costs about Rs. 4,000 and is considered an

obligation only for those who have more than Rs. 10,000 in savings. There are other obligations as well. Musalmans pray regularly to god, observe the Roza fast in the month of Ramzan, and should give at least two and one-half percent of their income regularly to a common Musalman charity.

All good followers of Islam observe these and a number of other obligatory rules. They all should worship the one god, Khuda, and follow the teachings of Mohammed who alone received the particular Islamic insight. A Musalman disobeying these rules is considered *kafir*, a heathen, and is rejected by the community. Mohammed's teachings demand of individuals loyalty to god and religion, honesty, truthfulness, and patience, and condemn as a sin stealing, inflicting injury, deceit, adultery, debauchery, anger, and the like. The good Musalman drinks no alcohol, eats no meat slaughtered by anyone except another Musalman and may touch no pig. Sinners will be sent to hell and the devout to heaven by one of four angels, Iz-Ra-Il. The angel Jib-Ra-Il brought the holy text, the Koran, from god to Mohammed; Ni-Ka-Il is responsible for providing daily food to the people; Is-Ra-Fil will announce the time of destruction of this world.

Musalmans of Nepal observe a number of religious occasions traditional in Islam. The most important of them is Roza, observed by fasting and praying five times daily through the entire lunar month of Ramzan. Since the lunar months fall short of the solar months there is a difference of ten days at the end of each year and an entire month after three years. To make up for this the month of Ramzan is moved back by one month every third year. It is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. This occasion fell in the months of January-February in 1965, and in December-January in 1967.

The months begin on the first day of the bright fortnight. But Roza starts only when the crescent moon is visible in the sky and lasts until the crescent reappears at the end of the month. Every able-bodied Musalman is supposed to observe Roza by fasting from sunrise to sunset and by praying at a mosque five times daily. During the fasting hours they abstain from eating and drinking and also observe various other austerities but still perform their routine occupational work. On the first and concluding day of Roza a festivity called Id-Ul-Fitra, the breaking of fast, is observed. Friends and relatives are invited for feasts and prayers.

Roza is the most important but not the only religious observance. There are several others which we will discuss briefly here in the order in which they occur in the Islamic calendar.

Moharrum is primarily celebrated by Indian Musalmans and those in Nepal's Terai. The occasion marks the assassination of Hassen Hussain, grandson of Mohammed. Ten days during the first month are set aside during which food is offered each morning in the name of Hussain. Musalmans in the Terai also play a special game with sticks at this time.

Rajjav is the name of the seventh month, during the last week of which another festival, Meraj, is observed. The 27th of the month is important as the day when Mohammed was called by god up into the sky. Mohammed is said to have travelled the realms of the universe in a few seconds, returning with the message of the Islamic god to earth. People believe that Mohammed rode on a very fast winged horse called Burrak during this journey.

On the 14th of Shavaan, the 8th month, the Shab-I Barat festival is observed by eating fine foods, keeping a vigil for the night, visiting the graves of dead relatives and praying for the welfare of both the living and the dead.

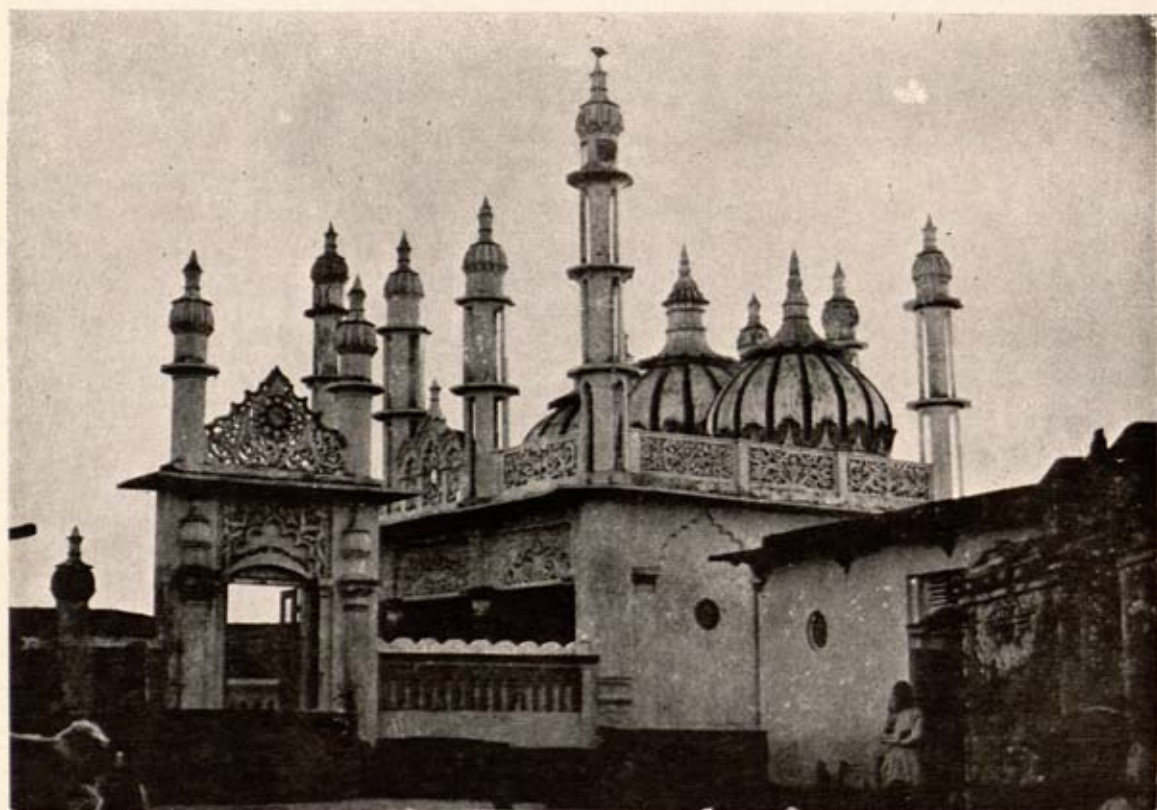
Bakra Id is an important observance of three days, beginning on the 10th day of the 12th month. Many people sacrifice animals, usually goats in the Terai and buffalo in the hills, and enjoy the ensuing feast. Some rich people offer to buy entire animals at times to share with the poorer members of the community. Prayers are read at specific times during this observance.

Bakra Id is also the time to begin the Haz, or holy pilgrimage to Mecca.

Weekly religious observances include the assemblage of all Musalmans in the mosques on Fridays for mass prayers. Various ceremonies during the cycle of life require the reading of *namaz*, prayers. The father or a guardian reads the prayers for the welfare of a new born baby at the time of birth. Special washing of the baby and the mother is performed along with religious ritual and prayer on the sixth, twentieth and fortieth days after birth.

Musalman boys are circumcised in an important religious ceremony between the ages of four and eight. *Namaz* are recited and a feast is prepared for family members and close friends and relatives.

Musalman marriage is very different from other marriage traditions in Nepal. Musalman individuals can marry with almost any other Musalman except a sibling. That is, the only partners technically unacceptable are those who have suckled the same breast. Parallel- and cross-cousin marriage is acceptable. In reality, however, Musalman social stratification is rigid and plays an important role in actual selec-



A Mussalman Mosque in Jaleswar.

tion for marriage. One tends to remain within his own social group, particularly among those of higher standing.

Marriagable age is twelve to sixteen for a girl and sixteen to eighteen for a boy. Most marriages are monogamous, but there is no restriction on a man's keeping up to four wives if he so chooses. Once divorced, however, remarriage to the same spouse is prohibited.

Marriages are always arranged and negotiated by the parents of the couple concerned. Once the parents agree to establish the relationship the fathers of both the boy and girl meet at her father's house where a formal offer of the girl is given. The boy's father accepts before witnesses. The occasion is called *nisvat*, engagement.

The formal wedding takes place sometimes up to a year after *nisvat*. The two families involved exchange some gifts of food in the meantime. On the day of the wedding the groom goes out to the bride's house with a party of friends and relatives. He also brings gifts of clothes and jewellery for the bride. The girl's parents give as many pots, pans, clothes and jewellery as they can afford as dowry. In the case of Terai Musalmans Rs. 50 or 60 are given to the groom's father by the bride's father as a further dowry.

In a contract signed at the wedding the groom promises to pay a certain amount of money to the wife in case a divorce is desired in the future. This is like bride-price, called *mahr*, and can range from Rs. 50 to several thousands depending upon the financial and social status of the families involved.

There is no stigma attached to widow-remarriage or a second marriage. Adultery is punished and fined, although tradition demands that an adulterer should be "flogged 100 times, dead or alive."

Musalmans always bury their dead. A dead body is washed clean with water, then anointed with camphor and perfumes before being taken to the grave. Washing and anointing is done immediately after death and male relatives then carry the body to a common graveyard. The grave is dug right away and the corpse is lowered fully clothed. Rich Musalmans erect a memorial over the grave.

PART III
HIMALAYAN PEOPLE

HIMALAYAN PEOPLE

Introduction

Nepal's northern border with Tibet is high Himalayan country. Its valleys and mountain slopes are inhabited by Himalayan people who speak various Tibetan dialects and whose cultural and religious roots are Tibetan. The most famous among them are the Sherpas of Solu-Khumbu —the Mt. Everest region. Traditionally all of these Himalayan people, Sherpas included, have been collectively identified as *Bhote* after the Nepali term *bhot*, i.e. Tibet. *Bhote*, then, for these northern Nepalis, is not only inaccurate, but has come to be an offensive and derogatory term in somewhat common usage.

The Himalayan people, when examined closely, are so different one group from another that using any one name to refer to all of them means little more than the term *Pahadi* given to people living in the middle hill ranges of Nepal, or *Madhise* for those living in the plains of the southern Terai bordering India. The Himalayan people, scattered among the many high river valleys, east to west, have ways of life and dialects that are often totally unintelligible to their neighbours.

The latest available census, that of 1961, gives the total number of Himalayan people (*Bhote*, *Sherpa*) as 84,229, of whom the majority live in the eastern hills (60,370). Of the remainder about 20,000 are found in the west and over 1200 in Kathmandu Valley.¹ Their settlements are high, from just under 9,000 feet to over 16,000 feet above sea level. The climate at these altitudes is cold and brisk. Rain-fall varies from less than 10 inches per annum at Mustang in the west to 40 inches in the eastern district of Sankhuwa-Sabha along the upper Arun Valley, and slightly less in Solu-Khumbu.

¹ Department of Statistics, *Op. cit.*

SHERPA¹

The famous and colourful Sherpa people live in the northern districts of Sagarmatha Zone along the Dudh Kosi River and its tributary valley and in the Helmu and upper Trishuli valleys. They are found spread out all along the eastern hill districts, although their original homeland is traditionally the district of Solu-Khumbu. Solu-Khumbu Sherpas are among the best known Himalayan people. Solu-Khumbu is also called Shar-Khumbu, *shar* meaning 'east' in Tibetan. The word Sherpa is derived from the term *sharva*, meaning the people 'living in the east'. Through the course of time the name Sherpa has gained so much currency that it almost acts as a tribal name, and it does in fact define a specific group of people. Before Sherpas were so highly publicized by mountaineering expeditions they introduced themselves to other societies by the term 'Shar Khombo', i.e., the inhabitants of Shar-Khumbu.

Nepal's Solu-Khumbu is the natural habitat of the Sherpas, although they retain much of the Tibetan culture. Despite their close affinity with the Tibetan language, culture and religion, Sherpas feel as much Nepali as any other people. In line with this they dislike being associated with the term 'Bhote'.

In the subdistrict of Solu there are considerable numbers of non-Sherpas living side by side with Sherpas, just as some Sherpas live in other non-Sherpa communities of the eastern hills. But wherever Sherpas live, their settlements are higher than those of other communities living in the area. Nowhere in their region are there other communities settled above them. In Khumbu, villages range between 10,000 and 14,000 feet above sea level, clinging to the steep mountain slopes. The big rivers Dudh Kosi, Bhote Kosi and Imja Khola flow through deep-cut narrow gorges leaving some of the villages at the top of steep escarpments.

There is much snow in Khumbu, usually two to four feet during a winter, and the weather is very cold. No kind of work can be done in the open during these months. Only the old people stay in the villages, while almost all able-bodied Sherpas come down to warmer regions at least for the winter. During this period

¹ For a detailed study of the Sherpa people see Christoph von Furer-Haimendorf, *The Sherpas of Nepal: Buddhist Highlanders*, Calcutta: Oxford Book, Co., 1964.

they may trade, or find some work. They travel much more extensively than any other community in the middle ranges, and it is quite common for the whole family of a Khumbu Sherpa to leave the house locked up for four or five months during the winter, often until the first part of spring. In this time they travel down to the lower, warmer valleys or keep on south as far as Kathmandu or the plains of the Terai or Darjeeling. They normally return for the festival of *losar* (new year) in February. From *losar* onwards the days get warmer and the snow begins to melt. March, April and May have the most pleasant days, coloured with flowering rhododendrons, azaleas and other plants.

Tradition ascribes four seasons of three months duration each to the 12 month Sherpa year. Beginning in February the seasons adhere roughly to the natural weather changes and agricultural periods. The first, *chika*, is a fine season when winter fades into spring, and when the people go out under clear skies and sunshine to plough and sow their potatoes, buckwheat and barley. *Yarbu*, from about mid-May to August, is the rainy season. Solu-Khumbu receives about 30 inches of rainfall in these three months. The third season, *tyun*, is beautiful again when the meadows sport bright carpets of violets, primulas, gentians, edelweiss and other blossoms, and the harvest is gathered. But winter snows are near and finally dominate land and life through the last season, *ghumbu*, November to February.

The Sherpa economy is directly related to their mountain environment, and falls into four distinct categories: field agriculture, animal husbandry, trade, and a recent innovation—mountaineering. Recently more and more Sherpas are being employed as guides to trekkers. The people of Solu have considerable latitude for agriculture and raise the staples maize, wheat and potatoes, in contrast to the more pastoral activities of Khumbu. Solu people export large quantities of potatoes to the areas south of them. Farming in Khumbu is limited to only a few patches of sandy soil on ledges. Consequently, Khumbu Sherpas concentrate their efforts on animal husbandry, keeping cattle and yak and grazing them along the vast and grassy alpine slopes. In 1957 we counted as many as 2,900 head of cattle, yak and cross-breeds, divided among a population of 2,052 in 411 households. Yaks provide wool and important milk by-products, especially butter. The womenfolk make mats from the wool and sell them in the lower regions in exchange for grain or money, while the butter is used to meet their own needs. Butter is used in the traditional salted Tibetan tea which is drunk in great quantities.

Of as much importance as cattle raising is cross-breeding, cow to yak, for their

valuable offspring, the male *dzopkyo* and the female *dzum*. *Dzopkyo* are very strong and durable beasts, ideal for carrying loads and coping with both the cold and relatively warm climate, in contrast to the wilder pure yak bulls accustomed to the severe higher altitudes. *Dzopkyos* are docile enough to be easily tamed and used as plough bullocks. They were in great demand in Tibet and were exported across the northern border and to similar areas of Nepal at the rate of more than 600 yearly in exchange for *nak*, the female yak. A *dzopkyo* in Tibet brought more than twice the price of a yak. But the complicated procedures in transactions have caused many Sherpa traders to look for other alternatives inside Nepal than trade with Tibet in recent years.

Dzums, extremely valuable for their milk products, have a good market in Solu and other similar areas. Thus the breeding of these hybrids in Khumbu was, and still is in a lesser degree, constantly stimulated by demand for males in Tibet and females in other regions of Nepal. Khumbu is considered ideal for their breeding; Solu is not high enough for keeping yak, and it is said that such cross-breeding was not allowed in traditional Tibet. This was a fortunate situation as it had helped to maintain the economy of the Khumbu Sherpas more than any other enterprise until Sherpas relatively recently began specializing in mountaineering.

Khumbu lies on one of the important trade routes linking Nepal with Tibet through the Nangpa La (Nangpa Pass). Namche Bazaar, at 11,000 feet above sea level, is the main trading center, a village of about 100 substantial stone houses with wooden roofs. Salt, sheep's wool, meat and yak cross Nangpa La from Tibet to Namche. Trade for Tibetan sheep's wool used to be very necessary as sheep were not kept locally. Lately, however, homemade sheepwool garments are gradually being replaced by factory-made articles. The salt trade is still active, with Khumbu Sherpas as middlemen. They in turn exchange it with the people of the middle regions, mainly Rais, of Nepal for foodgrains.

The scope of Sherpa employment as guides and high altitude porters is gradually increasing as the number of tourists and expeditions, both scientific and mountaineering, increases yearly. There is a growing traffic of Sherpas from Khumbu for jobs and for the purchase of more factory made goods from outside. This has brought the Sherpas into closer contact than ever before with non-Tibetan speaking peoples of Nepal and with foreigners.

The standard Sherpa house in Khumbu has two storeys and is built of stone with a shingle roof. On the ground floor the livestock, firewood, and potatoes



A Modern Sherpa Girl.



A Sherpa Family.

are kept. The living room upstairs is patterned with a fire pit, shelves lined with shining pots and the eldest couple's bed all near the entrance leading up from the stables. Along the front wall are several windows, a long low bench and low tables. The side and back walls have shelves and cupboards for storage. A simple corner latrine and refuse dump opens to the stables below. Employed help spread this refuse and night soil on the fields. Houses of rich families include a small, colourfully painted chapel room at one end with gold and bronze Buddhist images.

Sherpa traditional dress, and that of the other eastern border peoples generally, varies little from that of the Baragaunle, Lopa, and Manangba of the west described later.

Sherpa society, unlike that of some other groups of the northern border region, is divided into a number of exogamous clans, and so a person must marry outside his or her clan. Clan membership is in fact important only as it relates to marriage rules. Beyond this there is no other real significance of the clan as a unit. The community settlement usually acts as a unit in the various festivals and other village activities. Some important clan names are : Chhusherwa, Chiawa, Gardza, Gole, Goparma, Hircgoma, Lakshindu, Lama, Mende, Mopa, Ngawa, Paldorje, Pankarma, Pinasa, Salaka, Shangup, Sherwa, Shire, Thaktu and others.

These many clans fit into two endogamous groups, *khadev* and *khamedu*, the former being of higher status. All members of one or the other of these divisions are equal. They can share a common cup among themselves and can intermarry freely, so long as they do not violate the restriction of marrying within their own clan. If, for example, a *khadev* man or woman marries or lives for a long period of time with a *khamendu*, he or she will lose the higher status and be forced to live as a *khamendu*. An isolated incident of co-habitation may be ignored or tried by the village council, including the village headman, and a fine realized before the offender is taken back to his original caste circle.

Fraternal polyandry is found among the Sherpas, that is, two brothers may marry one joint wife. Sometimes two brothers marry two common wives together. Their attitude toward sex is very relaxed in general, except where it violates the clan restriction. Cross-cousin marriage, marriage with a father's sister's daughter or a mother's brother's daughter is not allowed. Since only two brothers, and no more than two, can marry one wife, parents of three sons usually make a celibate monk of the middle child. The elder and younger sons can then take a common wife. A family with more than three sons is uncommon. In one case only did we

see four brothers, of whom the first and the second had taken one wife and the third and fourth another. Among some other people of the northern border region the eldest brother marries, and he also receives the sole right over the property. Other younger brothers are free to join him later on (see, Lopa of Mustang). But among the Sherpas the two brothers go out together in the wedding procession and take part in the formal activities, thereby establishing equal rights over the wife and the parental property. Solu does not boast as many polyandrous marriages as the Khumbu region. The main reason is close and continual contact with so many ethnic groups of different cultural traditions. The Solu people, consequently, are more self-conscious than the relatively isolated Khumbu Sherpas. Although Khumbu Sherpas travel widely in Nepal with expeditions, and visit many types of people on their way, once they arrive home in Khumbu they are amidst their own people and prefer to retain their particular customs. The outside contact does not change them much, it seems, in contrast with the Sherpas of Solu.

Polygyny, the taking of more than one wife at a time, is also found on rare occasions among the Sherpas. A fair number of marriages begin as polyandrous ones but not all of them are successful.

Among Sherpas not only do the younger brothers have rights to their older brother's widows, but even a younger sister has the right to marry her deceased elder sister's husband. In the latter case the widower cannot marry someone else without the permission of his younger sister-in-law. In the same way a wife can demand compensation from an adulterous woman who has had sexual relations with her husband, just as the offended husband of an adulterous woman can demand compensation from the man involved.

Normally Sherpas choose their own marriage partners although occasionally parents arrange partners for their sons and daughters if they are to be married very young. The Sherpa marriage is done in four stages. *Sodene*, the first stage, is the choice of a partner; as in an arranged marriage some relatives of the boy's parents go to the girl's parents with a gift bottle of *chhang*, rice beer, from the boy's parents. The girl's parents may instantly refuse without touching the *chhang*. Then, of course, the matter is closed. But if the parents accept the *chhang* it is implied that they accept the relationship, at least for the moment, provided no difficulty crops up later. The most important result of this rite is that the boy, if he is of age, has the right to go and sleep with the girl in her parents' home. This arrangement may last for several years or until the couple has a child, preferably a son. Then they will proceed

with the next stage, *demdzang*, or, if some difficulty has arisen in the meantime, they may break up and each of them will seek another partner and start all over again. Marriage partners are usually sought within the same village or at least in a neighbouring village, so that the boy can travel in the evening to sleep with his fiancée and hurry back early next morning to his own house.

Preparations for *demdzang* begin when everybody in both the girl's and the boy's family is satisfied that the marriage will work out well and successfully. For this ceremony a party of 50 to 60 people—men and women in their beautiful dresses and ornaments—go out in a procession to the girl's house. They will be entertained with *chhang*, rice, and meat, not only in the girl's parents' house but also in a few other houses of their relatives. The party will have to sing and dance in return at each house. Thus they spend two or three days in feasting, singing and dancing before going back to their homes. The boy and the girl do not take part in the ceremony, but the girl may do her normal work about the house. *Demdzang* in this way formally confirms the marriage negotiations. Several months or even years may pass again before anything more happens.

The third stage of marriage, called *thedzang*, begins when the boy's parents feel that the girl should be brought home in the near future. They send some relatives with a bottle of *chhang* to discuss the date of the wedding, namely *zendi*. The girl's parents may give a date or, if they think the time has not come, they may just postpone it indefinitely. In that case the boy's parents will have to make another approach to fix the wedding after some months or even a year. This will be called the *pedzang*.

Zendi heralds the actual wedding day. Except for the addition of *ghen kutub*, the wedding rite, it is like *demdzang*. *Ghen kutub* means putting the mark of butter on the forehead of the bride and groom. The party spends a day and night in dancing and feasting as in *demdzang* and finally leaves with the bride. The bride's parents give her a dowry not only from their house but also from relatives and friends who are asked to contribute. The dowry usually consists of rugs, woollen carpets, yak-wool mats and even cattle in some cases.

One interesting change takes place in the social position of a man as soon as he brings his wife home. He is addressed from then onwards by his juniors and his equals as 'so-and-so's-father,' not just by his own name. He must have at least one child before his wife comes to live in his house. Hence the first child is very important for a man because it raises his social position.

Sherpas observe a number of gay and colourful festivals during the year. Most important of them are *losar* and *dumdze*. *Losar* is observed to celebrate the new year. According to the Tibetan calendar the new year begins sometime toward the end of February. It is the first day of the bright fortnight of the lunar month of *phagun*. Sherpas celebrate the festival with lots of feasting, drinking, singing, and dancing. Most Sherpas who go to the warmer regions during the cold months of *ghumbu* turn back hurriedly for the occasion.

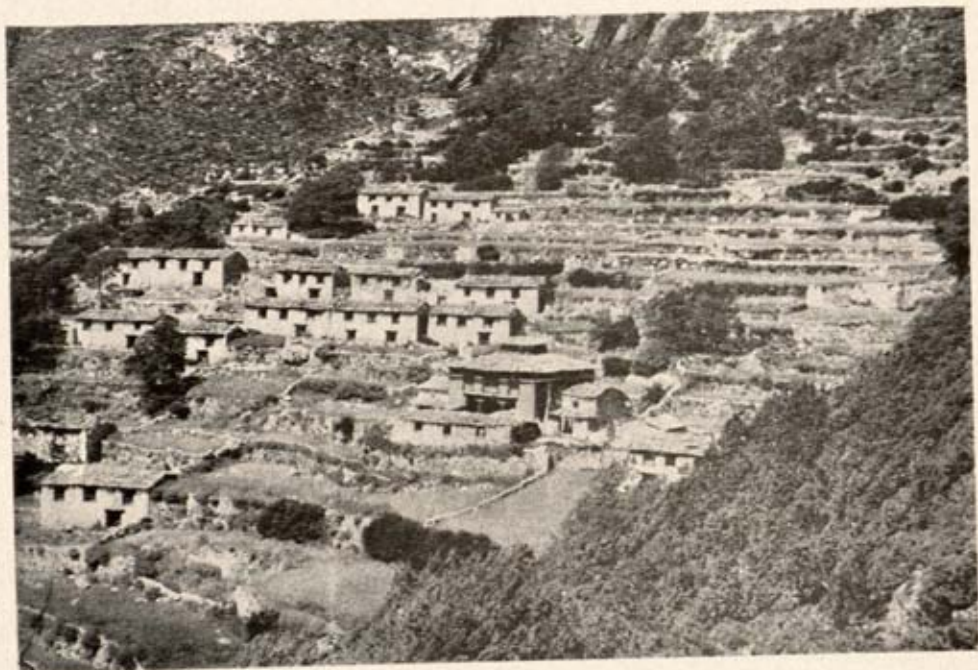
Dumdze is an interesting and gay festival celebrated for seven days in the village *gomba*, or monastery, during the month of July. By then the agricultural work is finished, trips to Tibet have been completed, and the people are preparing to take their livestock to the very high alpine pastures. The village lamas conduct the ritual by recitation and worship of Guru Rimpoche, Phawa Cheresi, Tsamba and a host of other deities while the villagers collect in the evenings at the *gomba* and have their share of food and drink. The young people have their fun by singing and dancing while the old ones enjoy their jokes.

The *Dumdze* festival signifies various things. It brings prosperity, good health and general welfare not only to the whole village but to the entire nation including the King, by the merit acquired in the worship and the prayers sung, and by fighting and warding off evil spirits. It is a great occasion for feasting and merriment and for bringing all the otherwise scattered villagers together.

The local deity, Khumbu-hyulha, is worshipped on every religious occasion. Khumbu-hyulha is a 19,121 foot mountain surrounded by villages on three sides and the pasture land of Khumbu on the north. This deity is symbolized by a white-faced anthropomorphic figure riding on a white horse.

Equally important and most colorful of all the festivals of Solu-Khumbu are the *mani-rimdu* celebrations. They are observed by the monks of the monasteries and watched and enjoyed by several thousands of enthusiastic people, not from just one or two villages, but from the entire region of Solu-Khumbu.

Mani-rimdu is celebrated twice yearly in Khumbu, in May at Thami monastery and in November at Tengboche, and twice in Solu, in November, at Chiwong and Thaksindhu monasteries. Old people have great satisfaction in seeing the religious dance of the monks in various costumes and masks of the various deities, while the adolescents have their own fun. It is indeed a great occasion for Sherpas. The festival lasts about a week altogether, but the outdoor performances which are enjoyed by the laymen last only for two or three days.



A Sherpa Village in Khumbu.



Fresco in a Gumpa.

In addition to these big festivals there are a number of other smaller occasions which are no less important from the social point of view. *Yardzang* is celebrated in the high pastures in July when the people are tending their cattle, and the corresponding *fa-ngi* festival is held at the same time in the lower villages. All of these festivals have two aspects in common, the worship of deities and merry-making—singing, dancing, drinking and feasting.

There is one occasion when the people not only abstain from drinking and dancing but even fast, either for the whole day or with only one light meal a day. This is *nyungne*, which is observed for three days by laymen and for a whole fortnight by monks and nuns. The participants of *nyungne* attend *gomba* services and recite sacred texts with the Lamas, if they can; those men and women who cannot recite the texts just repeat the mantra : *om mani padme hum*. This is a kind of penitence for all sins committed during the preceeding year.

There are about two dozen *gombas* in the whole of Solu-Khumbu and the closely allied area of Pharak, of which four have 20 to 30 monks each residing permanently under one abbot. Of these four, Tengboche monastery is the best known and commands the greatest deference from the people. This is entirely because of the learned *avatari*—Lama reincarnate—in residence there, an abbot who imposes strict discipline upon his juniors. There are about 30 young disciples presently at Tengboche. Every morning the monks hold a very impressive service, in addition to a number of special services throughout the year. Tengboche is the most magnificently painted and best maintained *gomba* in the area and has in its possession several thousand volumes of the religious texts, the *tenjur*, *kangyur*, etc., and other possessions like *thankas*—intricately designed religious paintings—and beautiful images of deities and Lamas.

A short way north of Tengboche is the Buddhist nunnery called Debuje. There are less than two dozen nuns in residence, several of whom are old and learned and preside over the many young disciples. The functions of Debuje are very similar to those of Tengboche and on several occasions the two join together at one *gomba* or the other in religious observances. But there are certain months, days and even hours of the day during which a nun is not allowed on the grounds of Tengboche and the monks are not permitted to see them. Some young disciples, however, make nocturnal expeditions to Debuje, and should a nun become pregnant both parties are immediately expelled from their *gombas* and relieved of

their vows. Many of these truant couples have settled in the nearby village of Milingbo, where they set up households together.

Chiwang *gomba* is the largest in size and in property holdings. It has been maintained primarily through the donations of one rich family in Solu. At present Chiwang monastery has 32 monks in residence including one reincarnate Lama from the Thatyo monastery of Tibet.

Sherpas are non-violent and will not kill any animal. Their whole code of behaviour is in keeping with the code of the Ningma-pa sect of Tibetan Buddhism. All of the *gombas* of Solu-Khumbu are presently Ningma-pa, although one, Pangboche, is said to have been of the Sakyapa sect at one time.

Sherpas eat meat regularly, so they employ Tibetan butchers who come once a year to Khumbu to slaughter old animals. At other times animal victims of accidents are butchered.¹

Modern education is gradually being introduced into the Sherpa region of Solu, Khumbu and Pharak, with an increasing number of primary schools. The expedition Sherpas, of course, have picked up a minimal command of English through which they communicate with their foreign employers. There are several Sherpas who have been to Europe, America and even around the world.

They never sit idle, but are constantly on the move in every season, either travelling to Tibet, to the Terai, or to other villages for this or that or on up to their higher pastures to tend the herds. And the agricultural season keeps them active in their home fields. They pay no mind to severe weather or difficult conditions—the key to their success in mountaineering and their great popularity among foreigners in Nepal.

¹ It is well known that some Sherpas at times develop misunderstandings with their expedition 'Sahibs' by refusing to slaughter a chicken, whereas they do not mind buying, cooking or eating it.

LHOMI

The upper Arun valley in the district of Sankhuwa-Sabha, east Nepal, is perhaps one of the roughest and most difficult regions of the entire northern border. There live the Kath Bhote people, sometimes called Kar Bhote, an independent and hardy lot who call themselves by the term Lhomi. Their half dozen or so scattered villages cling to the steep mountain slopes above the Arun river, which has cut a deep narrow gorge through the mountains. The settlements are often completely cut off from one another, and effectively blocked from easy communication with Tibet. Trade, then, is almost entirely to the south reaching as far as the Terai. Unlike the Sherpa community, which depends to a great extent on trade and animal husbandry, the Lhomis subsist almost entirely on field agriculture and manage to raise enough maize, barely, wheat, potatoes and especially millet—their main diet—to be considered self-sufficient. Besides a simply prepared millet gruel they drink great quantities of millet *chhang*, which resembles European and American beer only in its after effects.

Cattle, *dzums* and sheep are kept in numbers by the villagers, the former for plough bullocks and the latter for wool and meat. The *dzum* are bred and sold to Olangchung Gola people. Only very recently have some Lhomis learned to milk their cows. Field ploughing is done entirely by bullocks, and the villagers are never found pulling a plough as is sometimes seen among the Sherpas of Khumbu. What woollen clothing they have has come from Tibet, but they make some cotton-like garments out of a plant fibre, sisal hemp, which grows wild.

The needs of these Lhomis are very limited. They do travel as far as the Terai plains in winter, to the districts of Saptari, Mahottari and Sarlahi, where they maintain themselves partly by trading and sometimes by begging, a not too uncommon practice among various border people.

Social structure includes a division into several clans called *rhu* : Nuppa, Thikappa, Khombua, Pungsua, Bauchha, Nava, Chyangba, et cetera. These *rhu* are in turn subdivided into several exogamous extended family groups. To mention one as an example, the Nuppa *rhu* includes three extended family groups called Hamo, Hyugok and Thongdo.

Lhomis do not practice polyandry as the Sherpas in Solu-Khumbu do.

Marriage is always by choice and is completed in several stages. At first a girl is taken into a boy's house without any fuss or particular ceremony. After a few years when the young couple have issue they go to the girl's parents' house with their children and the traditional bottle of *chhang* and the boy's payments of sixteen rupees for the father, fifteen rupees for the mother, one rupee for each of the maternal and paternal uncles of the girl, and one rupee for the *pembu*, headman, of her parental village. This ceremony is called *chhyo-chang* and is highlighted by the signing of an agreement between the two parties. The girl's parents may then give some dowry, usually of cattle or sheep. At any time after *chhyo-chang*, but usually shortly following its completion, the ceremony of *bhalin* is conducted in the groom's house. This consists of putting the butter mark, or *tika*, on the heads of both the bride and the groom.

Lhomi women have equal rights with men. If a man takes a second wife he cannot stay in the same house with his first wife. He must leave his home and property to the first wife and find a new place for himself and his new wife. Such a second marriage is not a very common procedure. If a male adulterer is caught and the aggrieved husband demands payment, *chinara*, a fine of eleven rupees, must be paid to him by the guilty party. But the people generally take little notice of such offences. Divorce can be achieved by either party by paying forty-two rupees to the other partner if *bhalin* has been completed, or if not twenty-two rupees.

Each Lhomi village is governed by one headman called a *pembu*. The group of villages from Tunkhaling in the south to Ritak in the north has an official with the title *gova* ranking above the individual *pembus*. All the remaining villages, Hatiya, Hangaun, Sakshilla, and others, have a second *gova* of their own. *Govas* and *pembus* are the administrative agents of the government charged with maintaining law and order in their domain, collecting government revenues, and making proper and necessary arrangements for touring government officials. They are also entitled to settle disputes and levy fines. They receive as a commission for their work three days' labour from each household in the case of each *pembu*, and two days' each to the *govas*. The offices of *pembu* and *gova* are hereditary. One *gova* who resides in Chamtang village can trace his title to his great-great-grandfather¹.

¹ He showed us a *lalmobar*—an authoritative certificate bearing the King's red seal—dated 1796 A. D., which was for the renewal of the offices of an ancestor of his.



Lhomi people dancing.

Lhomis are very kind and friendly people. But they are not as economically well off nor do they have as rich a culture as the Solu-Khumbu Sherpas or the Shiva people of Olanchung Gola, their neighbours to the west and east respectively. They seem an extremely happy and cheerful people nonetheless. Their relative cultural-economic status is apparent from the appearance of their villages and the like. Village houses are erected on piles, with walls of bamboo and roofs thatched with wild straw. The Sherpa house, in contrast, is a very strong and permanent stone and wood structure.

With one exception, Gomba, each village is charged with the responsibility of maintaining at least one bridge over the river nearest to it. Some have responded very well to this responsibility and some have not. The bridges are not of the sturdy wooden design seen in Solu-Khumbu, for example, but are built entirely of native bamboo and rope in spans swinging high over the canyons. They are tricky to cross and require frequent repairs. Falls and loss of life are not infrequent.

Buddhism among these people is not very refined. Shamans, or Jhankris, called *loben* in the local dialect, are as active as the Lamas themselves. Lhomi society has at the same time no feeling against the killing of animals as so many similar tribes have. In fact, the Lhomis have special occasions for animal sacrifice. At a special ceremony in May, preceding the sowing of crops, three sheep are traditionally slaughtered by each village by the side of the river Arun. And in the same way they slaughter one sheep in September before the millet harvest commences.

The new year's celebration, *losar*, is observed in February. Pigs, chickens, and other livestock are slaughtered for feasting. Every family invites daughters and their husbands and children to observe *losar* together and entertains them with food and *chhang*. On such social occasions the people sip *chhang* from a large wooden vessel through bamboo tubes.

There are only one or two very poorly maintained *gombas* in the region. One of these is found in the village of Gomba and all of that village's revenue assigned to its maintenance and the conducting of its religious festivals. A *lalmohar* certificate to that effect was given to the Lama about one hundred and sixty years ago by King Rajendra. Inside, at the altar of this old *gomba*, are kept many images.

The patron deity of Lhomi villages is not found in a mountain, as is the Khumbu-hyulha for the whole of Khumbu, but instead there is a specially-named *hyulha*

deity for each village, for whom a shrine is erected just outside the village. The village of Chepua, for example, has Dorze Forpa as its *hyulha*. Each extended family group, in turn, claims one common serpent-like deity, *lu*, which is worshipped any time between the new moon of the seventh Tibetan month (June) and the full moon of the ninth (August).

The dead are cremated, and a *chorten*, called *pukang*, is erected in memory of the deceased. In the case of the cremation of an important *pembu* or a Lama, a Lama must put fire to the pyre. The son of the deceased should on no account put fire to his parent's pyre. Mourning is observed for three days. Property is divided equally between the sons, as is the custom also among the Sherpas, and if a man has no sons his property is inherited by his brother's sons.

Although the Lhomi people are a small, isolated, and relatively insignificant tribal entity, they do stand out as an interesting piece in the total picture of the Himalayan people.

THUDAM AND TOPKE GOLA PEOPLE

East of the Lhomi of Sankhua-Sabha in the administrative district of Taplejung dwell the related people of Thudam and Topke Gola. Thudam and Topke Gola are place names, villages, the latter being mainly a trading center on the route connecting Chainpur in the south with Sar in Tibet. The people of Thudam have no lands of their own to cultivate so they have rented some farm land east of the Arun river belonging to the Lhomi village of Chemtang, where they raise millet and potatoes.

To help make ends meet the Thudam people make incense by pulping juniper wood. The incense of juniper is a pleasant scent in great demand in Tibet. Each of the twenty wood-pulping water mills produces about two hundred rupees worth of incense yearly which is traded north across the border. The mills are owned by individual families of Thudam. The industry provides a good subsistence economy for the people, but they are in great need of training to avoid waste and destruction of the juniper forest if they keep up the present rate of cutting.

The wood-pulping machines consist of a wooden shaft a few feet long turned by water power and a block of rough sandstone fixed to the ground. A small juniper log is fastened to an arm at the end of the shaft and as the shaft turns the log is scraped to and fro over the sandstone block and ground to a fine pulp, which, after being dried in the sun, is the finished product.

Yak are kept by the Thudam people, the bulls being used mainly as pack animals. As in the villages of similar peoples there is a *pembu* headman, although he lives in Olangchung Gola, a neighbouring village. He is represented in Thudam by a *ngorimba*, an assistant.

OLANGCHUNG PEOPLE

As we have seen before, trade with Tibet by the Sherpa and other Nepali northern border communities is of considerable importance. The most important trade route in eastern Nepal passes along the upper reaches of the Tamur Valley. The Tamur, unlike the rugged Arun, is a pleasant valley in which we find Olangchung Gola, or locally, Holung, the main trading centre. The people of Holung and of the surrounding villages are very closely related to the Thudam and Topke Gola people.

Holung is a trading centre of just over one hundred houses; no field cultivation is practised. Many successful and rich traders are in residence here. Holung houses a government customs office controlling the export and import of goods to and from Tibet. Exports to Tibet include grain, cotton thread and material, sugar, *gur* (a crude brown sugar), cigarettes, matches and other such goods generally of Indian origin, in exchange for wool, woollen carpets and Tibetan salt. Until a few years ago several hundred yak and ponies were imported yearly into Nepal. But this trading of livestock has ceased.

Yak, mules and *dzums* are used by traders as pack animals. Sar is the nearest town in Tibet, about a four or five day's journey from the border. The route from Holung leads north to Tibet and south to Taplejung, Tehra Thum, Dhankuta, Dharan and Biratnagar. The traders travel extensively in Tibet as far as Lhasa and in India to Delhi, Bombay and Calcutta. They are well-informed about the outside world, and although they have had no formal education many have learned to read and write. Possession of transistor radios, with which they tune in to music and daily news broadcasts, is not at all uncommon.

Formal education among the Olangchung Gola people is gaining ground. There were, at the time of these field studies in 1958, four boys from Holung enrolled in the missionary schools of Darjeeling.

The houses of Holung and related villages are built with stones up to the floor and with wood beyond that. The ground floor is used for storage, while the people live, dine and sleep in the room above. The inside living room arrangement is somewhat similar to that of the standard Sherpa house. These village houses though, in contrast to the scattered arrangement of the Sherpa settlements, are built in a row on either side of a cobbled street.



A Gateway.



A mask dancer of an old legend.



Watangchung Gola.

The village of Holung is said to be about two hundred years old. It is governed, along with four other nearby villages, by a *gova*, the headman, who collects government revenues, maintains law and order and settles disputes. He is assisted by a *Karvari* who helps carry out his duties. The four other local villages—Yangma, Ghunsa, Lengdep and Lungthung—are agricultural. The villagers cultivate the staples barley, wheat and potatoes, and keep *dzum* and *dzopkyo*.

Socially, the people are divided broadly into three categories somewhat comparable to the two Sherpa groups. Here in Olangchung Gola the first and highest in social status are Shiva, said to be the first inhabitants of the region, and second are the Fedzava who came later and are lower in the social order. The people called Longme stand lowest, in a position similar to that of the *khamendu* of the Sherpas. Each category consists of a number of families who have a common main house, called the *manang*, where they gather every month for *lhasu*, a worship for general welfare and a time for feasting.

In marriage, monogamy is the rule. But the younger brother has the option of marrying his elder brother's widow. Quite a number of the men here marry girls from the Tibet region of China.

Unlike the Sherpa tradition of the youngest son's occupying the parents' house, in this system the eldest son inherits the parental home. Otherwise all of the sons get an equal share of the parental property. Families with a daughter but no son bring in a husband for their daughter, who then inherits the property the way a son would.

Religious tradition is represented by an old Buddhist *gomba* about 90 feet long in Holung, built by an *avatari*—a reincarnate lama—called Ho-Syo-Dorje. The *gomba* is very beautiful but presently in great need of maintenance and repair. It boasts several sets of the *tanjur* and *kangyur* scriptures comprising several hundred volumes, and a number of beautiful *thankas* painted in gold. There are many large images and a lifesize statue of Phawa Cheresi (Avalokiteswara) whom the local people refer to as 'Krishnaji' when speaking to an outsider, presuming that all outsiders and non-Buddhists would only understand the Hindu god Krishna.

The *gomba* possesses a large white 'mushroom *mani*' inscribed with a beautiful script reading : *om mani padme hum*. It is called Cheresi (Avalokiteswara). They tell the story of a man who some forty-five years ago picked the mushroom while it was growing, little realizing that God meant to grow all three deities together, Cheresi along with Guru Rimpoche and Hopame. For his mistake the unfortu-

nate fellow was punished by God and died soon thereafter. The Cheresi 'mush-room *mani*' has remained in the *gomba*.

There is also a butter lamp which has burned continuously since the *gomba* was built. Outside near a stream are a dozen or so *mani* prayer wheels kept constantly spinning by the water power which drives them.

The festival called *foṭuk* is celebrated at the *gomba* on the eve of the full moon in November. Lamas give a dancing performance with masks and costumes representing different deities. On the last day they throw a *torma* into the fire and have a mock fight between Palden-Maksung Gyabo, the god of the locality, and Thudama-Gyabo, the god of Thudam. *Torma* are sacrificial figures usually made from barley flour to represent deities or evil spirits. In this case the *torma* are made of buckwheat to represent an especially evil spirit.

Losar, the Tibetan New Year, is observed during the month of February. In the third month of the Tibetan year on the day of the full moon and for two days preceding it, there is an occasion called *nhesu* for a dancing performance of some Tibetan legends. The stories of Dowa Sangmu and Aji Lhamu and other myths are performed. Ten managers are elected yearly to collect money from everybody who passes along the trade route, including Tibetan travellers, and to prepare food for the dancers. The local *gova* also gives food for the performers.

Nyungne is observed in July with fasting and recitation of texts in the name of Cheresi.

In the village of Ghunsa is found another *gomba* called Nupe *gomba*. An avatari Lama is presently in residence there.

LOPA OF MUSTANG

We jump across Nepal now from east to west to take up yet another set of northern border tribes concentrated along the upper Kali Gandaki river—the west's main trade route to Tibet—and in surrounding high valleys north of the middle-range Thakali, Gurung and Magar areas.

The first of these and the most northerly are the people of Mustang, one of the two northern districts of Dhaulagiri Zone. The development district of Mustang consists of Lo, Baragaun, Panchgaun and Thak Khola.

The inhabitants of Lo are called Lopa. Their capital is a small fortified town known locally—and properly—as Manthang, but referred to commonly by outsiders as Mustang. The town includes over 200 houses and many *gombas*.

Geographically, Lo is part of the high Tibetan plateau and in the rain-shadow of the main Himalayan range. The land is arid, dry and very cold. The grey and reddish-brown surface of the landscape is fantastically eroded in places, and to a traveller coming up from the vegetation-rich middle ranges of Nepal there is a feeling of remoteness here, very strange and different from anything else in the rest of the country. Most of the district is a rock desert swept by a very strong, cold, dry wind throughout the year. Fortunately, there are a number of streams, including the headwaters of the Kali Gandaki river. Wherever the people have found a slightly sheltered valley or ledge they have dug canals and by irrigating the land have made small cultivated areas. These oasis villages in the middle of the barren landscape look very attractive especially in autumn when the buckwheat is ripening. Their fields produce wheat, barley, potatoes and buckwheat.

Naturally life is hard, and without the facility for trade between Nepal and Tibet region of China to supplement farming it would be impossible to live there. Life was even more difficult when the people had to form the retinue of the local Raja, performing domestic services and labouring on his lands without wages in return. Since being freed from these obligations recently the people have shown a good deal of initiative and a new spirit to improve their lot.

The villages of Lo lie between 10,000 and 12,000 feet above sea level. The houses are built of mud and whitewashed outside. Inside they are rather crude

and dirty looking. The villages of mud-walled, mud-roofed houses usually stand at one end of the cultivated area. Caves, once prehistoric dwellings, are seen in rocky cliffs at frequent intervals.

The Lopas traditionally trade cereal grains from the middle ranges of Nepal for salt and wool from Tibet. In the mid 18th century the Thakalis to the south of Lo were granted a monopoly on salt trade by the government and in time they controlled every other article of trade as well, making the efforts of the Lopa hardly worthwhile. The monopoly was abolished some 30 years ago, but it was not an easy task for the backward, already impoverished Lo people to develop trade quickly to their advantage. Competition with the more expert and affluent people to the south was so severe as to be completely discouraged. Thus exploited both by their Raja and by clever businessmen, Lopas lived a very pitiable life in spite of the key position they occupied along the main trade route.

Unlike the inhabitants of other border regions, not many of the Lopas come down to lower and warmer districts during winter. Instead they make their trips to Tibet at this time and fetch salt and wool. During the summer months they transport their trade goods down to Thak where they store what they have or sell it to their Thakali counterparts. The Thakalis in turn exchange the salt with the middle range people for grain, and until a few years ago, the wool was taken to the Indian border and sold to agents of Indian woollen factories. The little wool traded now is used in Nepali manufacturing centers.

Lopas keep large herds of sheep, yak, donkeys and mules as a means of transportation. But when refugees from Tibet poured into this area in 1959 the economy of Lo was greatly altered. Suddenly there were more people to feed on the already limited food resources. The great number of cattle, sheep and horses brought in by the Tibetans encroached upon the meagre pastureland of the arid area, and as a result thousands of cattle either starved or died in epidemics. To give an example, the village of Ghemi alone, which has less than 100 houses, lost some 600 yaks and several hundred other animals.

Socially, the people of Lo can be divided into three different classes. The highest, Kutak, sometimes referred to as Bista, constitute the Raja's family and the nobles. These Kutaks are few in number and used to be concentrated around the town of Manthang. Today they have moved out and live scattered among the other villages of Lo.

The second group of Lopa, called Shelva, constitute a majority of the popu-



A Lopa girl of Mustang.



Halji Village in Limi, Humla.



Humla People.

lation. They are equal in caste status to the Kutaks but are not quite as important socially.

A third group known as Righin are the lowest in ritual status. They are comparable to the *khamendu* among Sherpas.

The Raja of Mustang was the de facto administrator of Lo until 1952. His title thereafter has been only honorary, along with which he holds the rank of Lt. Colonel in the Nepal Army. The Raja is referred to by his people as *Lo-pembu* or *Manthang-pembu*. He no longer lives in the original house within Manthang town but at Thekar, about a mile to the northwest.¹ He has lands and large houses in almost every village of Lo, most notable of which is the 400 year old castle in Charang.

The whole of Lo is divided into seven administrative units called *tso*, and each *tso* has one or more villages within it. The administration of each *tso* is controlled by a body of four or five men elected in yearly rotation from among the villagers. Each village pays a certain amount of revenue according to the number of houses based on an old and currently inaccurate accounting.

Population expansion is slight, mainly because of practice of polyandry and a high infant mortality rate among Lopas. Of a man's sons, the second is usually made to become a monk by his parents and all the remaining sons marry a common wife.

There are several Buddhist *gombas* in Lo. One or two of them are regular monasteries and the others are just village temples. There are also a number of *shrung-khang* temples to a patron deity usually of fierce aspect, called either 'Gombu' or 'Shrung-ma'. All of the *gombas* are of the Sakya-pa sect except one in Samdoling which is Karma-pa, a sub-sect of the Kagyu-pa sect of Tibet.

Young boys used to go to Tibet for initiation before they became monks of a monastery. But because of waning interest and the strictly enforced discipline, all of the monasteries in Lo have been deserted and are in very poor repair. However, following the exodus of monks from Tibet in 1959, several of the declining monastery *gombas* have been reoccupied and improved and a new spirit is noticeable. Some have been rebuilt and repainted, but there are still two very large *gombas* in the town of Manthang and one of 17th century vintage in Charang which need urgent attention.

¹ The Raja who has been referred to here has died and his son who inherited the office now lives in Manthang town itself.

Gomba Thuk-chen in Manthang is the largest in the whole of Nepal. It stands 35 to 40 feet high and has seven rows of five huge wooden pillars each supporting the ceiling. On the far side of the vast hall there is a 20 foot high image of Buddha flanked on either side by equally high images of Avalokiteswora and Maitreya, the future Buddha. The 300 year old *gomba* at Charang village has beautiful frescoes on its walls and several priceless *thanka* paintings.

These *gombas*, and the village houses as well, are built only of mud but are capable of standing several hundred years in such a dry and rainless zone.

BARAGAUNLE

The people living in Baragaun, the area between Lo (Mustang) in the north and Panchgaun and Thak in the south, we shall call Baragaunle. Both their language and physical type closely resemble those of Lo. They are called Baragaunle for want of a generic term, and the designation Bhote is as much repellent to them as to the other Himalayan people. Actually, they would prefer to be called Gurung, if only other people would do so. In general these Baragaunle are a little more advanced than the Lopas because they travel more and are, therefore, in closer contact with other communities in Nepal and India.

Traditional dress of the Baragaunle is the same as the general costume pattern and ornaments of their neighbours in Lo and Manang (but not including Panchagaunles, Thakalis or the Dolpo people). The men dress in a light blouse shirt and light cotton or woollen pants topped almost always by a long dark cloak. The cloak is often slipped off the right shoulder, or both shoulders, and tied around the waist in warm weather, leaving back and chest bare. Their high Tibetan boots of leather, or of cloth with leather soles, are bound tightly at the calves. The hair is traditionally tied in a single long braid. They often wear the Tibetan hat trimmed in fur, and most of the men string a small turquoise stone from the ear lobes, a turquoise or precious *dzee* stone, or both, around the neck, and tucked into the waist band is a long dagger in its silver scabbard.

The women wear their hair with a centre part and two braids, on special occasions topped with a small cap. Over their silk or sometimes cotton blouses they wear a sleeveless full length dress with large pleats folded at the back and a plain waistband. A colourfully striped apron adorns the front—after the Tibetan fashion.

Baragaun houses and villages are very similar to those of Lo. The houses are all mud-walled and mud-roofed with equally poor ventilation and just as dirty. Almost every village in this region, as well as in Lo, has an old fallen *dzong*, or fort. There must have been considerable feuding among these little principalities in days long gone by which required the people to erect such fortresses and maintain them until peace and order were finally guaranteed by the Shah rulers of Nepal during the 18th century.

Kagbeni is an interesting village and undoubtedly the most frequently visited by outsiders in Baragaun. It appears as a tiny fortress straddling the junction of main routes up from Thak, down from Lo (Mustang) and Tibet, from Dolpo, Muktinath and from Manang, at the site of one of the upper Kali Gandaki's few bridges. The local Tibetan name is just Kak, or 'block'—which it certainly is. The Nepali term *beni* refers to the confluence of two holy rivers, here the Kali Gandaki and the Muktinath Khola.

The town of Kagbeni has an old tumbledown look, with medieval looking alleys and covered passages, and stone houses built close together. Behind the outer doors are airy courtyards for storage and livestock, and the living quarters in back. This was once a feudal kingdom, but today both the descendants of the old nobility and the remains of their ancient palace are in poor condition. There are also remains of an old *gomba* of the Sakya-pa sect and a large image of Maitreya, the future Buddha.

The landscape is less arid and less dry than in Lo, but irrigation is still necessary for cultivation. The people grow wheat, barley, buckwheat and some potatoes. They also keep goats and sheep, mules and donkeys. They are more successful in trade than the Lopas, but less so than the Thakalis.

Until very recently Baragaun villages supplied a large number of bond servants to the rich Thakalis. It is said that Purang alone, a village of 100 houses, had 35 men and women working as bond servants to a single rich Thakali household in Tukche at the same time. Baragaunles say that almost every household in the villages of Baragaun had to supply an adult member of the family to its Thakali money-lending masters.

There are now 18 villages altogether, including the six Muktinath villages, but they may have started at one time with only 12; hence the name Baragaun, meaning 'twelve villages'. Some villages have three different caste groups, as in Lo, while others have only one caste divided into a number of intermarrying family groups. While some villages are strictly endogamous single units, others join to form groups of two or three intermarrying villages.

Marriage practices are of three types: capture, elopement, and by agreement with parents. Nine rupees must be paid as compensation by the boy to the girl's parents in all cases, and in cases of capture or elopement forgiveness must be obtained from the parents before the wedding formalities. Any man other than a member of the highest caste group has to pay 100 rupees if he wishes to marry a girl from the highest caste known as Bista-Thakuri.

Of extreme importance in the marriage formalities is the asking of forgiveness after having captured or eloped with a man's daughter. In both cases the girl is kept in the house of one of the boy's relatives either within or outside the village. On the second day some relative of the boy is sent (with consent of the girl in the case of capture) with a bottle of *chhang*, beer, to the house of the girl's parents to apologize. This messenger does not go directly to the house, but stops at a distance of about 100 yards and shouts at the top of his voice, begging forgiveness for the offence and asking the parents to accept the new relationship. Then he walks 50 yards closer and repeats the same plea a second time. Finally he enters the house, anticipating a quarrel or even a fight. The whole day is spent in brawling, abusing each other, or even fighting with knives. In certain cases it takes as long as seven days to calm the offended parents of the girl. Once this is done the payment can be presented and the wedding ceremony proceeds immediately.

Baragaunle practise polyandry but, unlike the Sherpas, only the eldest brother has the right to marry. Younger brothers can join in later on but have no rights over the wife or the parental property if they separate from the eldest brother. The practice of marrying cross-cousins is quite common.

Baragaun is primarily Buddhist, but there are also some Bon-po influences. Bon-po is said to be the pre-Buddhist religion of Tibet, but it appears after recent study that Bon-po absorbed much Buddhist art and ritual when it came into contact with the latter. Therefore it looks like nothing more than a defiant imitation of the Buddhist religion to-day. Bon-po *mani*-walls and *gombas* are circumambulated counter-clockwise in direct opposition to Buddhist tradition. That is, the Bon-po believer must walk to the right of his shrine, whereas the Buddhist approaches from the left. Likewise, the Bon-po prayer wheels are spun clockwise, the Buddhist counter-clockwise.

Mani is the shortened form of the mantra : *om mani padme hum*. The *mani*-wall is a collection of stones or one large rock face inscribed with the mantra. The Bon-po *mani* does not read as one would expect, but instead is inscribed as : *om mati mu a sale du*. It is nevertheless called *mani*. In further imitation of Buddhism, Bon-po has deities similar in appearance to those of the Buddhists, but with different names.

Of the Buddhist *gombas* there is one of the Ngak-pa sect and a second of the Karma-pa sect in Baragaun. All others are Sakya-pa *gombas*. There is a large Bon-po *gomba* in Lubra. All of these *gombas* are very old and with the exception of one

Sakya-pa *gomba* in Dzong village not a single one of them is in good repair. *Gombas* are usually maintained by individual families of the village who are entrusted with a piece of land belonging to it. This land is looked after by the second son of that family who is expected to be a monk and who on no account is entitled to the parental property.

Muktinath is the scene of an interesting fair, as one of the most important places of pilgrimage for Hindus, Buddhists, and Bon-pos alike, on the full moon day of August. Hundreds of horses are brought to the Muktinath fair, called *yartung*, as it also serves the purpose of a horse show in addition to its religious significance. It is a very colourful sight to see thousands of people scattered all over the green grassy slopes of this high mountainside at 13,000 feet, beside the grove of *pipal* trees and the swift flowing icy cold stream.

Other equally colorful and gay occasions are the festivals of *dyokyabsi* celebrated in various *gombas* usually during October and November. They are reminiscent of the *mani-rimdu* festivals of the Sherpas of Solu-Khumbu. One village, called Tetang, which has no resident monks, observes the occasion as a village festival of drinking and dancing. It is customary for boys and girls between 18 and 25 to come and sleep in the village *gomba* for five days during *dyokyapsi*. All inhabitants of the village are expected to return home for the occasion, and anyone failing to arrive without proper and acceptable reasons is liable to a fine of 20 rupees.

For their village administration Baragaunle elect representatives from among the village people in rotation. Each village has a council-house called *chi-khang* and whenever necessary a larger grand council of all Baragaun is held in either Dzarkot or Kagbeni. On such occasions the high caste Bistas preside. Bistas of Dzarkot and Dzong, two of the six Muktinath village, rank highest in status and are sometimes called *pembu*, a term for headman.

DOLPO PEOPLE

Beyond the mountains west of the upper Kali Gandaki river valley lies the remote and fascinating mountain region of Dolpo. The area is confined by the Dhaulagiri Himalaya on the south and Tibet on the north and includes the headwaters of the Karnali river, important to extreme western Nepal. The infrequent visitor to this out-of-the-way maze of villages and mountain peaks cannot help but wonder at the unique, attractive and most unusual landscape. From the scattered villages of Dolpo, some as high as 13,000 and 14,000 feet above sea level, the surrounding 20,000 foot peaks do not have as forbidding a character as from other locations. But the overall magnificence is inescapable. The terrain is rather bare, with almost treeless grassland valleys. But they take on a colourful lustre in July and August with a carpet of bright alpine flowers. The rough stone houses of Dolpo are all clustered into a narrow space, making the villages look like forts. Some of them are probably among the highest human settlements in the world.

The Dolpo people do not have a tribal name as, for instance, do the Sherpas, Lhomis and others, nor do they call themselves after their district name as do the Lopa. Here, for our purposes, we shall refer to the inhabitants as the Dolpo people. The area consists of four separate subdistricts called Namgung, Panzang, Tarap and Chharbung, cut off from one another by high mountain passes. Close to two dozen tiny villages lie scattered in these subdistricts spread out over 500 square miles. Their houses contain two storeys with a dark and poorly ventilated living room built directly over open livestock stables on the ground level.

As one stands in awe of the geography, one might also wonder at the appearance and behaviour of the Dolpo people. Physically they look no different from the Lopa, although their costume, especially that of the women, is somewhat different. Dolpo women wear colourful aprons with a pair of trousers underneath made out of locally woven woollen materials of dark brown colour, a short blouse of plain imported cotton material, and a waistband of attractive design. (The contrasting plain women's dress of Lopa includes a full sleeve tunic over a long cotton skirt, the tunic tied around by an ordinary waistband.)

The married Dolpo woman wears a brass headdress of two rectangular plates with turned up edges on the top and back of the head, tied around with a small

leather cord. On festival occasions they turn out with most colourful and attractive dresses adorned with silver and brass ornaments. But daily dress and appearance is dirty.

The whole of Dolpo region lies away from main routes, affording the people very little contact with outsiders. Some of them go south to Tichu-rong along the Barbung Khola or Tarap Khola for a few months of the year, but seldom beyond. Rather, they stay at home during the winter when the men spin and the women weave woollen blankets, which have a good market throughout the western hill villages.

An outsider visiting the area feels as if he is in a different world beyond normal standards of behaviour. The people are very pleasant by nature. They are not unfriendly or hostile, but may behave in a manner which seems unreasonable to an outsider at one moment and sensible the next.¹

The villages are administered by village officials elected by the people and approved by the district government. These headmen settle small village disputes themselves, but leave in abeyance the more serious problems or questions which they cannot settle until a government official comes to the area. These higher government officials have in the past usually been Thakalis appointed for a three or four months' term by the district government.

Although the Dolpo people are in general illiterate and ignorant, they are not very poor. They grow barley, potatoes and wheat in their fields, but their main occupation is cattle and sheep breeding. They derive considerable income from selling yak, sheep, goats and their locally woven woollen blankets. These transactions are most often settled on a barter basis. Very little money is in circulation in

¹ For example, they might not let anyone into their homes until he pays a rupee, but once given entrance the visitor is not treated as a stranger but takes part in the life of the family. Or, if asked to carry a load for a day the Dolpo worker may demand 30 rupees; when this is refused he may turn up a few hours later and work for half a day merely in return for a cup of tea. Someone might ask 15 rupees as the rent for a night's shelter in his home, or he may provide the shelter, with food and all sorts of delicacies for a half dozen lines written on his behalf to some remote government office. This does sound like an eccentricity of the people. But it is easy to understand if all the incidents of payment by foreign tourist or anthropologists for odd jobs, services and artifacts to these people are taken into consideration.

the region. Even land is bought and sold in exchange for cattle or sheep. For example, one *ropani* of land (approximately 1/8th of an acre) is reckoned at 14 sheep or two mature yak bulls.

There used to be a trickle of salt trade through Dolpo but it has stopped in the last six or seven years because of Tibetan brigands who ambush traders along the border. A more serious loss for them has been the abrogation of winter grazing rights for their livestock in Tibetan pastures. All the Dolpo people used to send their animals for three to seven months of the year to graze on the grassland of Changthang. There the western Tibetan Drokpa tribesmen tended the cattle, for which they received compensation in grain as well as some share of the animal products. At the time of the Tibetan exodus, several thousand cattle were brought down into Nepal and the area of Dolpo was so overcrowded that all of the Tibetan animals perished from starvation and epidemics. Tragically, Dolpo people not only lost the privilege of grazing in Tibet, but also the limited pastureland in their own district was encroached upon by ten times more animals than it could support.

Dolpo society is divided into a number of exogamous clans, the names of which include Hava, Syuro, Lama Yandung, Bura, Dhara, Thanni, Anni, Pura, Nupri, Roka, Gugi and Lama. Some clans have animal totems. The Hava, for example, have a sheep totem, Syuro have a goat, and Lama Yandung a horse. In these cases a clan member cannot slaughter and eat the meat of his totem animal, and no one eats horse meat. They worship their totem animals when someone within the clan is ill.

Marriage is both by choice and arrangement. Tibetans who have settled there have intermarried with the Dolpo people. Divorce can be achieved either by husband or wife with the payment of 80 rupees to the other partner. There is no prejudice against pre-marital or extra-marital sexual unions. If an unmarried girl becomes pregnant her lover must pay the villagers some barley which is then made into *Chhang*, beer, and enjoyed by all. He must also pay something to a Lama priest who celebrates a ritual service for the polluted village called the 'purification of the village'. Brothers usually marry a common wife, no matter what the number of brothers. In some cases even two friends have married a common wife.

Both Buddhist and Bon-po religions are practised in Dolpo. One does not choose which of these to belong to, but is born into whichever tradition one's family follows. A man knows whether he is Bon-po or *chhe-wu*, the term for a Buddhist,

but beyond the acceptance in principle of one or the other religion there is little or no difference in his practice or behaviour.

For funerals or other such occasions a person may employ either a Buddhist or Bon-po Lama, whichever is available at the time. The ritual, of course, is not exactly the same and the Lamas have different books to recite from and different deities to invoke and worship, but either is equally acceptable.

It is an amusing sight to watch the villagers zig-zagging through the maze of Buddhist and Bon-po chortens that have been built together in one place : at Buddhist *chortens* both believers circumambulate clockwise after the Buddhist custom, while at the Bon-po *chorten* they both circle from the right.

The so-called Lamas are not very learned but know just enough to practise the ritual services. They let their hair grow into long, uncombed bundles which are tied around the head giving the appearance of a big brimmed hat.

The dead are disposed off in different ways. Some throw the corpses into the river, while others, after the manner of Tibet, cut the flesh into small pieces and crush the bones to feed to the vultures.

MANANGBA

Manang is a pleasant little valley on the upper reaches of the Marsyangdi Khola, north of the predominantly Gurung districts of Kaski, Pokhara and Lamjung, and east of Panchgaun and Baragaun. Manang, as the name of an entire development district, is a misnomer. It is no more than the name of one large village at the head of the valley. Instead, the immediate vicinity is called Nyeshang locally, and its people are likewise called Nycshang, although they are commonly referred to by outsiders as Manangba. The Manang district encloses three distinct areas : Nyeshang, Nar and Gyasumdo, all culturally interrelated.

The valley of Nyeshang lies above the 10,000 foot mark along the northern flanks of the Annapurna Himalayan range. It is a beautiful setting, boasting large pine forests which descend directly from the snows of Annapurna to the upper Marsyangdi Khola. Unlike the Sherpas around Mt. Everest, Manangba have never served as guides to mountaineers and in fact were renowned as being especially intolerant of all outsiders including neighbouring Nepali people who ventured into Nyeshang. But the increasing government control of the area and the gradually changing pattern of economic life of the people has brought the Manangba into more frequent contact with the administration, which has caused their attitude to change considerably in recent years.

They claim to be Gurung but are not accepted as such by their proper Gurung neighbours to the south. Their language has been described by scholars as being very different from any other Tibetan dialect.¹ It might be a Gurung dialect as they insist, but proper studies on these ethno-linguistic matters have not been made.

Manangba have effectively monopolized the trade of the upper Marsyangdi valley including the route north into the neighbouring Nar Valley. The eastern part of the district is inhabited by Gurungs and other Himalayan people who practise mixed farming, pastoralism and a little bit of trade independent of the Manangba.

Physically the Manangba appear more stalwart and taller than their Kali Gandaki neighbours. But they wear the same Tibetan fashion in dress, although their womenfolk tend to brighten up a little by sporting blouses and aprons in

1 David Snellgrove, *Himalayan Pilgrimage*, (Oxford, 1961) p. 205.

pastel blues and pinks. Of late the men are adopting western shirts and slacks which they bring from their trading ventures throughout southeast Asia.

Nyeshang embraces seven villages, the largest of which are Manang and Braga with about 500 and 200 houses respectively. During the 1950's these particular two villages had an often violent running feud which spread a situation of anarchy for some time in the area. Like all other Himalayan people, Manangbas are facing problems in trade. The traditional conditions, which they had taken for granted, have changed to their disadvantage. Many Manang people have left their traditional homes for Kathmandu, Pokhara and other places, even abroad.

The houses of Nyeshang and Nar are alike, one storey mud and stone flat-roofed structures with open stables below and an open porch and living rooms above. These houses are built along the steep slopes so as to form a terrace at every floor. Notched logs are used as ladders. The houses are not very clean and spacious.

They keep cattle and yak and a few horses for travel, and raise barley, potatoes and buckwheat, the main diet. Rice is a luxury portered in during the winter months from southern districts. In contrast to other Buddhists, they slaughter and eat meat and even occasionally hunt several species of wild goat and deer, the hides of which they trade farther south in Nepal and India.

Manangba men above the age of 15 or 16 are ardent traders, their travels taking them as far as Calcutta, Rangoon, Singapore, Hong Kong and North Borneo. It is remarkable that they are familiar with the modern conveniences of jet air travel, railroads, elevators and automobiles, considering their illiteracy and their primitive way of life and remote home environment. They trade in semi-precious stones, silks, and gold, and return from abroad with transistor radios, wrist watches, cosmetics, silk and general merchandise. They can often be seen in Spring travelling from village to village in the middle hills of Nepal selling semi-precious turquoise and coral stones. They are experimenting with new economic ventures such as fruit growing with the help of the government.

Their trips away from Nyeshang usually begin in the fall after the harvest, and most of the men return by Spring planting. Not infrequently some of the young men stay away for several years at a time. While the men are abroad the women are busy on trips south into Lamjung and Gorkha districts, and even to Narayan Ghat in Chitwan. They return with loads of rice, corn, oil and *suntala* oranges in season. Access routes to Manang take one along the precipitous track up the Marsyangdi Khola from Lamjung district, a trail which skirts the cliffsides often on shaky wooden platforms supported by wooden pegs driven into cracks in the rocks.



Manang People.



Manang Houses.

The only other routes are over an 18,240 foot pass in the Lamjung Himal, or down from Tibet from the west above Muktinath over the 17,500 foot pass, Nyeshang La, or over the 16,400 foot Larke pass from the east.

The Manangba practise polyandry, whereby the wife may have several husbands. They are nominally Buddhist, but give little thought or care to religion and have allowed their few temples and old monasteries to fall into general disrepair. Bo-dzo *gomba* below Manang village is of fair size and appears at one time to have supported a large community of monks. The *gomba* at Braga, built dramatically amidst high cliffs and crags, is of the Kagyu-pa sect and possesses images estimated to be from 400 to 500 years old,¹ suggesting that the area was at one time strongly and actively influenced by Lamaist Buddhism. There are signs of a revitalizing of Buddhism, especially as in the past few years so many Tibetan refugees have settled in the valley.

Recently a small settlement of Manangba has been founded in Mate Pani on the outskirts of Pokhara bazaar, a week's walk south from Nyeshang. They have established respectable shops selling all sorts of Indian and Nepali manufactured goods and clothing. Enough interest has been generated now for the building of a Buddhist *gomba* on a hill in Mate Pani, with a view of the entire Pokhara valley. During the winters since 1964 a monk from Nyeshang has travelled to Mate Pani to oversee the beginning of construction. This gives proof of a new and rising interest in religion among the Nyeshang people.

1 *Ibid*, p. 214.

LARKE AND SIAR PEOPLE

Larke is the northern border region of Gorkha district in Gandaki Zone lying between Himal Chuli and Manaslu Himal on the west and Ganesh Himal on the east; and Siar is the northern part of Dhading district in Bagmati Zone. Larke includes the upper reaches of the Buri Gandaki Khola, and is locally known as Nup-ri; Tsum is the local name of the Buri Gandaki's tributary valley of the Siar Khola, the 'East River'. These upper valleys are as high as the Kali Gandaki above Thak Khola, with the one difference that here the monsoon rains are not blocked and as a consequence the landscape is lush and green, and the fields support good harvests of corn in addition to the staple grains.

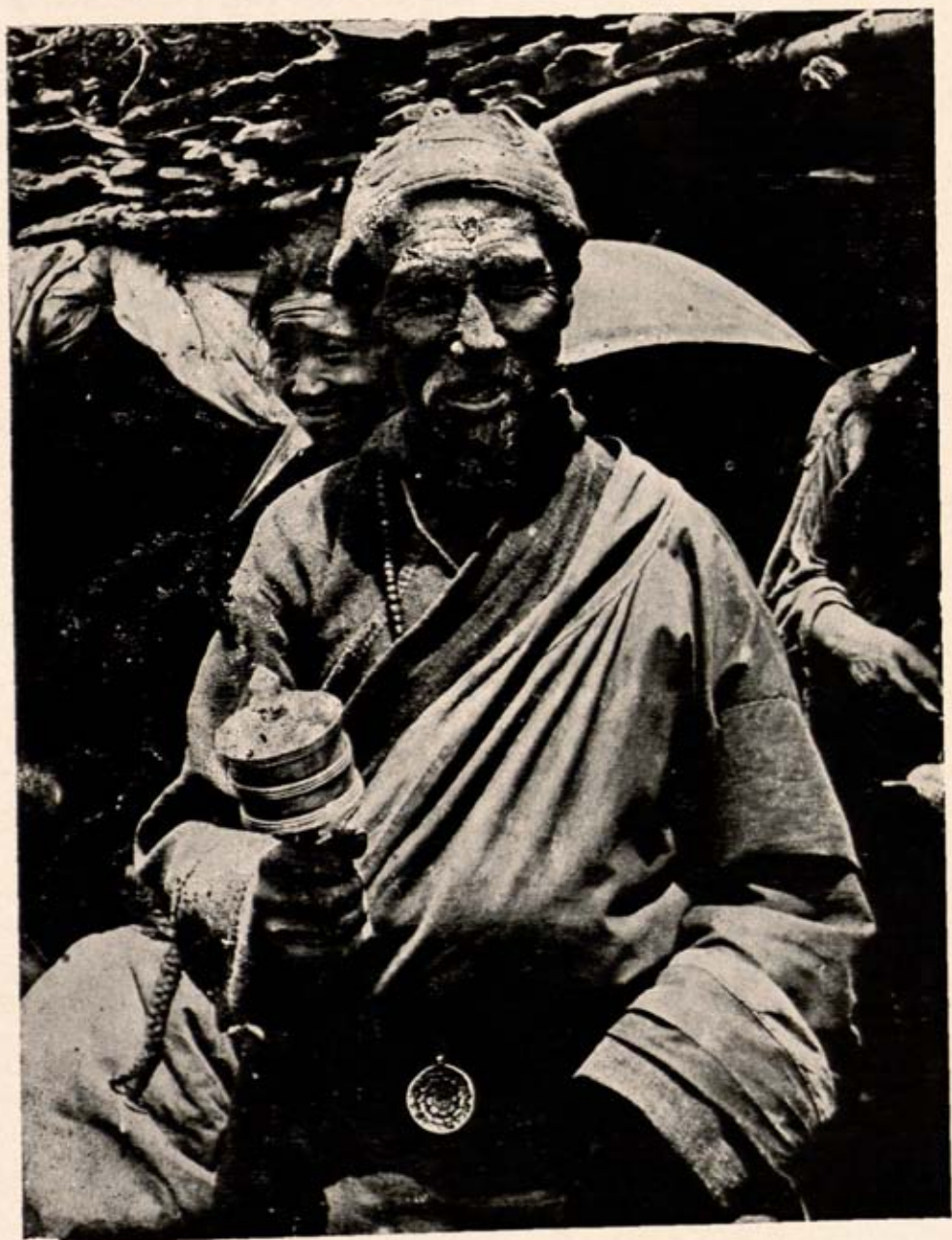
The ethnic diversity of the Larke people reminds one of the neighbours in Manang district. The high valleys along the two streams are inhabited by Tibetan type Himalayan people. Their ethnic affinity to the Gurungs who live further south and lower has yet to be studied in depth. Like the Manangba of Nyeshang, these people of Nup-ri and Tsum are Buddhists, but they are more actively so, quite possibly because of their closer proximity to and greater commerce across the northern frontier with Tibet. From the junction of the Siar Khola and the Buri Gandaki southward we find proper Gurung people who practise Buddhism and whose general culture has been greatly affected by Tibetan influences. David Snellgrove writes :

In appearance these Gurungs are easily distinguishable from the Tibetans of the higher villages ... One observes at once their softer features, which are enhanced by a rather higher standard of cleanliness. But their way of life is the same, set within the same physical conditions. They practise Tibetan religion and speak Tibetan as well as Gurung.¹

The economy of these Larke people is based on agriculture and trade. The Sherpas of Solu-Khumbu frequented the area bringing *dzopkyos* to sell when their entry into Tibet was not so difficult and closely scrutinized. On the southern slopes of Himal Chuli there is reported to be a village of Sherpas who migrated westward several generations ago.

The Buri Gandaki and Siar Valleys serve the two important trade routes north to the Tibetan frontier, being here in close proximity with the Tibetan towns of

¹ *Ibid*, p. 254.



A Lama of Larke.

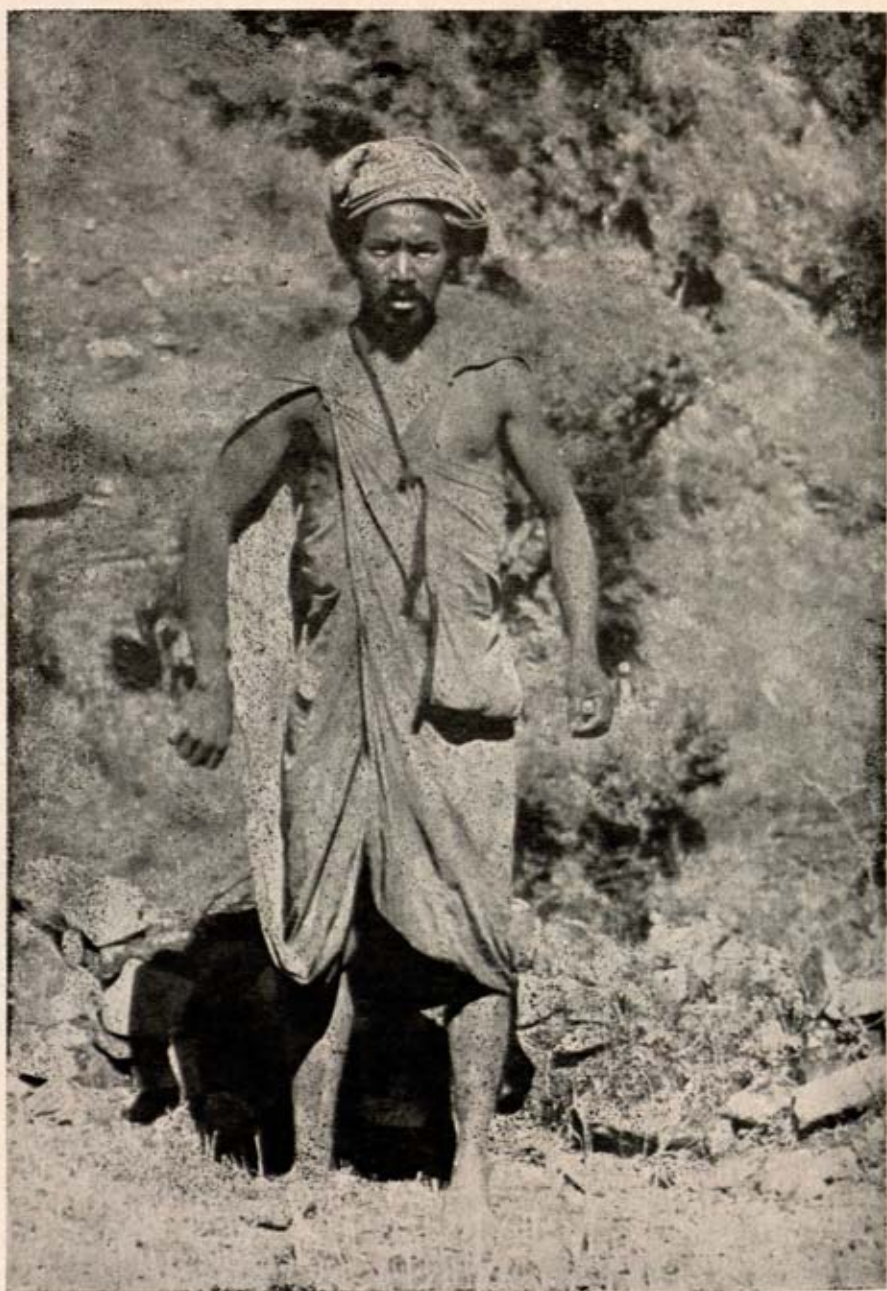
Tradom and Kyirong. The routes pass along the Siar Khola through Tsum, or through Nup-ri to the trading village of Larke at the border. At Larke village the trails up from the Marsyangdi and Dudh Khola also converge. Salt and wool from Tibet are exchanged for the food grains and merchandise of Nepal.

There are a number of Buddhist *gombas* in Larke region, but none has a more interesting story than Pung-gyen monastery of the Nyingma-pa sect on the high east slopes of Manaslu Himal. This *gomba* was destroyed and all its inhabitants killed by an avalanche during the winter of 1953 shortly following an unsuccessful attempt by Japanese mountaineers to scale Manaslu peak. Immediately the local people concluded that the mountain god had become angry at them for allowing foreigners to trespass upon the holy sanctuary and had hurled the avalanche down upon the *gomba* in his fury. The following year the Japanese returned but were not given passage to the slopes, and it was not until 1956 that they finally succeeded in conquering Manaslu, at the same time contributing a large sum of money toward the building of a new Pung-gyen *gomba*.

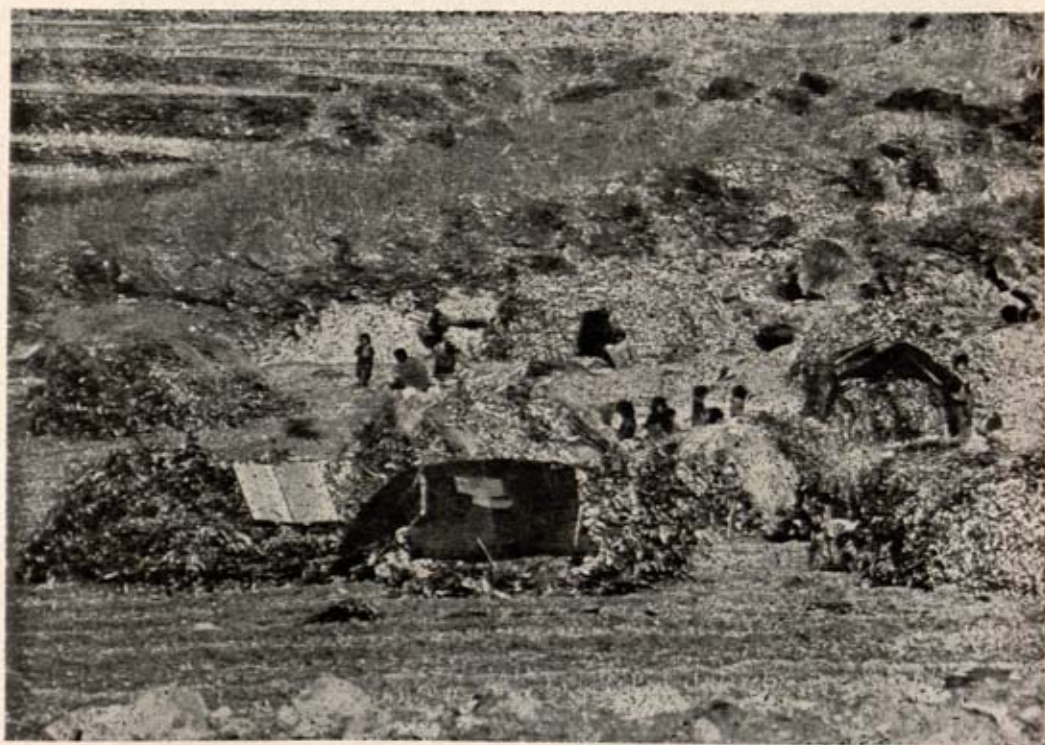
RAUTYE

The dramatic contrast of Nepal's landscape, altitude and climate has attracted and retained waves of human migrations from different directions from the very early days. Some of these groups were large and others, small. They must have come into conflict, over-lapped with each other and integrated throughout the ages. In the process the stronger and aggressive groups must have dominated and pushed the weaker and timid ones into marginal and isolated areas. A great many of the weaker and submissive groups must have adopted the ways of the stronger or must have shied away into less frequented areas. These groups could not expand and flourish. Some of these smaller groups of people are leading a very marginal and precarious existence in some parts of the country to-day. One of such groups leading hunting, food gathering-partly food bartering nomadic life is that of the Rautyes. Since they number only about 200 individuals they had largely been ignored by most Nepalis. Their language has not been recorded in the national census report so far.

The Rautyes traditionally lived by hunting and food gathering. But recently their food gathering style of life have been severely threatened by the increasing population, expansion of cultivated lands and the depletion of the forest areas. They have been more exposed and forced to come to more frequent contacts than ever before. They have to wriggle their nomadic courses through the ever expanding settlements rather rapidly. This causes them to travel faster and farther than before. There are no substantial forest areas left for them where they could live on its own resources. This offers them no other alternative but become more and more dependent upon the settled agricultural economy. Gradually, therefore they are getting more used to and becoming less shy of other people. The villagers are beginning to know more and more about them too. However there are still lack of understanding between them. The Rautyes would never let any one stay or camp other than a Rautye near their own camp nor would a Rautye ever stop for the night or even for a social chat in any settlement other than his own. This makes both the sides suspicious of each other. In fact in the area where I met them in the Western part of Dailekh district in 1972



The Startled look of the Rautye Headman.



Rautye Camp.

they dreaded and hated each other. The surrounding village people believed that the Rautyes enchanted youthful girls of the village and turned them into Rautye. Everybody believed that the Rautyes had very effective magical power which they used in catching monkeys and in luring pretty girls into their group. There are people who, very unjustifiably though, believe that the Rautyes offer human sacrifice to their deities. Despite these rumours the Rautyes still manage to make wooden bowls and boxes and barter these against rice with the village people near their camp. The supply of monkey meat which they hunt frequently subsidizes their diet of other forest products. They can not afford to stay in any single camp for more than two to four weeks as the supplies are getting scarce.

The temporary sheds of the Rautyes are very simple, four feet high huts of twigs and leaves with enough room inside for two adults and one or two infants' need for the night. Their belongings are few. A hatchet, a chisel or axe to work on wood and a pot for cooking are the average. Their constantly mobile life does not permit acquisitive attitudes.

The area they frequent are the borders of Piuthan and Jajarkot in the east, Accham and Doti in the west, Jumla and Dolpa in the north, and Dang-Deukhuri and Banke in the south. The warm temperate valleys of the hills in summer and lower inner Terai in winter are the extremes they can endure.

Their Australoid appearances with Tibeto-Burman tongue seems rather paradoxical as they claim their social and caste status as Thakuris. The villagers would never let them enter their house although they are not treated as untouchables.

EPILOGUE

In previous chapters the various ethnic groups have been discussed as if they were completely isolated cultural entities, as they might be if they lived apart from the rest. But in fact very few groups have lived in complete isolation, independent of each other, although the degree of group interaction and interdependence does vary according to geographical proximity, cultural similarity and other such factors. In varying degrees most Nepali people have been influenced by several groups other than their own. When looked at from this point of view their group norms, values and standards are not as pure, indigenous or original as in some cases they might at first seem to be. There is a great deal of social intercourse, economic interdependence, and cultural reciprocity between the various ethnic, caste and cultural groups. These are manifest in various aspects of inter-caste, inter-ethnic and intercultural relations.¹ Some of the factors that have played important roles influencing inter-group relations are discussed below :

(1) The widespread movement of Brahmans has influenced various basically non-Hindu groups through Brahmanic ritualism. A majority of the Magars, a great many Gurungs, almost all of the Sunwars and many Rais, Limbus, Tharus and Danuwars have adopted social values, caste attitudes, wedding procedures and the like of the Brahmans.

(2) The economic predominance of Brahmans and Chhetris in many parts of the country, except in some remote areas and in places where climatic conditions are too severe, stands out very clearly. Since economic success in an entirely agrarian society depends on owning land and lending money to the peasants, economic interdependence is imperative. This also leads to a very close mutual understanding and to imitations on both sides of certain habits and customs. The teetotaling of the Brahmans and Chhetris along with their natural intuition and shrewdness has encouraged ambitious individuals from other ethnic groups to emulate their habits of cleanliness and abstinence from drinking alcohol, while many well-to-do Brahmans and Chhetris have taken up the habit of drinking alcohol.

(3) Newars have likewise made a significant impact upon other people. The more advanced material and artistic culture of the Newars has been adopted by

1 See Dor Bahadur Bistā, "Hindu Kingdom and its social aspects". *Nepal—a profile*; Nepal Council of Applied Economic Research; Kāthmandu 1970. pp. 53-63.

many others across the land. Their contribution has been mainly in the fields of architectural style and trade skills; and there is a great demand for the artifacts they produce such as pots, pans, pottery, bronze images and the like. Newar settlements are scattered throughout the country, but mostly concentrated around district headquarters. Newars are there as shop keepers, civil servants in the administrative offices, and school teachers and as craftsmen such as carpenters, builders and metal workers. They also lend money occasionally. For all of these things they have to depend very heavily upon the people living in the surrounding areas.

(4) Intermarriage between different ethnic and caste groups to a certain degree has always taken place. High caste people were allowed to bring wives from almost any group except the very lowest, who were considered untouchable until recently, but there was a restriction against marriage between a male of a lower caste and a female of higher caste or of an ethnic group considered to be of higher social status than that of the male. But the abolition of any legal sanctions against marriages between different castes and ethnic groups has encouraged free choice of partners.

(5) Government efforts affecting intergroup relations include the Panchayat system. Panchayat Democracy, the current basis of Nepal's government, has gone a great way in bringing people of different regions and of different origins together by providing institutions of local government in the form of panchayat assemblies at various levels. The entire country was divided into fourteen zones and seventy-five administrative districts within recent years. Each district is comprised of a number of village assemblies depending upon the size of the population. The elected councils hold responsibilities for framing rules, collecting taxes and administering their specific jurisdiction for both regular government and special development activities. These executive bodies are called Village Panchayats and District Panchayats. The Zonal Council at the zonal level is an advisory body. The National Panchayat at the top of the pyramid serves the purpose of a national parliament. Thus for the first time in the history of Nepal the entire population has been brought into play under a scientifically organized, modern administration. With increased responsibility for their own development through their own panchayats and through the gradual process of administrative decentralization, the common people throughout the country are beginning to realize that they are members of a nation rather than only of one or the other ethnic group or one caste group. The democratic

panchayat election procedures at various levels have cut across caste and ethnic, religious and linguistic lines.

Second of the government efforts to amalgamate Nepal is education. Under His Majesty's Government primary education has spread countrywide, helping the younger generation to break through the walls of caste, ethnic group, or geographic isolation, thereby uniting the entire nation in knowledge and understanding.

The legal code bestowed by His Majesty, the King, has all the features of a democratic legal system. It guarantees for the first time equal rights and opportunities for all the people of Nepal, regardless of ethnic origins, caste, creed, or sex. This legal code also prohibits all types of polygamy and allows inter-caste and interethnic marriages. In this short time there has been a surprising degree of response especially through inter-caste and inter-ethnic marriages.

Most recent in the government's efforts is the land reform movement. Rich people can no longer benefit by controlling vast land holdings, as the ceiling of twenty-five *bighas* (forty acres) in the Terai and of eighty *ropanis* (ten acres) in the hills has been fixed. New farmers' cooperatives are being established to offset the shift in property and financial holdings.

Likewise, anticipated industrial development within the next ten to fifteen years is expected to influence the various levels of society, and eventually to draw all kinds of people together in the industrial centres of the country.

By all appearances, Nepal has a bright future. Even as the workings of the Nepali nation are being developed from within, a further step has been affected within the larger community of nations. As a member of the United Nations and an elected member of the Security Council the voice of Nepal is being heard on important world-wide issues. The growth of this one people, this one nation, has been very encouraging.

LIST OF LANGUAGES

Language	Number of Speakers	Percentage	area
1. Nepali	47,96,528	51%	all over the country
2. Maithili	11,30,401	12%	eastern terai
3. Bhojpuri	5,77,357	6.10%	eastern terai
4. Tamang	5,18,812	5.5%	
5. Awadhi	4,47,090	4.7%	western terai
6. Tharu	4,06,907	4.3%	
7. Newari	3,77,727	4%	
8. Magar	2,54,675	2.7%	
9. Rai	2,39,749	2.6%	
10. Gurung	1,57,778	1.7%	
11. Limbu	1,38,705	1.5%	
12. Bhote (Himalayan)	84,229		
13. Rajbansi	55,803		
14. Satar	18,840		
15. Sunuwar	13,362		
16. Danuwar	11,624		
17. Chepang	9,247		
18. Jhangar (Dhangar)	9,140		
19. Thami	9,046		mentioned in the same chapter with Tamang
20. Dhimal	8,188		
21. Majhi	5,895		
22. Thakali	4,134		
23. Jirel	2,757		
24. Urdu	2,650		spoken by Musalman
25. Darai	1,645		
26. Bodo	938		

The Census has been adopted from the Result of the National Census 1961 and the percentage has been worked out by Dr. Harka Bahadur Gurung.

GLOSSARY

<i>avatars-lama</i>	reincarnate Buddhist monk
<i>bbot</i>	Tibet
<i>bhumi-puja</i>	worship of the earth deity
<i>cbautara</i>	rest platform at a trailside
<i>chhang</i>	Sherpa or Tibetan term for home brewed beer of cereal grain
<i>Cborten</i>	Buddhist shrine
<i>dsl</i>	pulses
<i>dev or deva</i>	god
<i>dzopkyo, dzopa</i>	hybrid bull; the cross between a yak and a cow
<i>dzum</i>	hybrid cow; the cross between a yak and a cow
<i>ghat</i>	riverside platform for cremation and bathing; ferry landing
<i>ghee</i>	clarified butter
<i>gomba</i>	Buddhist temple or monastery
<i>gordba</i>	dowry
<i>jajman</i>	client of a Hindu priest
<i>janti</i>	groom's party in a wedding
<i>jat</i>	caste or ethnic group
<i>jatra</i>	festival
<i>Jhankrism</i>	shamanism, animism
<i>kbola</i>	river or stream
<i>kbukuri</i>	traditional Nepali knife
<i>kipat</i>	a form of communal land tenure
<i>kipatiya</i>	one member who shares the communal right to the <i>kipat</i> land
<i>lalmohar</i>	document with the red seal of the King with authority of land right, trade, business monopoly, et cetera.
<i>lama</i>	Buddhist priest or monk
<i>mani</i>	Buddhist stone inscription from the mantra : <i>om mani pede bum</i>
<i>mantra</i>	religious incantation
<i>pad</i>	Tharu term for clan
<i>puja</i>	worship
<i>punya</i>	merit
<i>rakshi</i>	Nepali home made liquor
<i>sadhu</i>	Hindu mendicant
<i>saimundri</i>	Part of wedding festival among Limbus
<i>shudra</i>	Hindu word for low caste
<i>swarga</i>	Hindu word for "heaven"
<i>thanka</i>	Buddhist scroll painting
<i>shar</i>	clan
<i>thari</i>	division or classification
<i>tike</i>	coloured mark on the forehead
<i>tilak</i>	gift of money and valuables given to a boy by the parents of a bride as a condition of marriage
<i>zemindar</i>	landlord, and government authorized revenue collector
<i>zendi</i>	Sherpa for <i>janti</i> , or wedding

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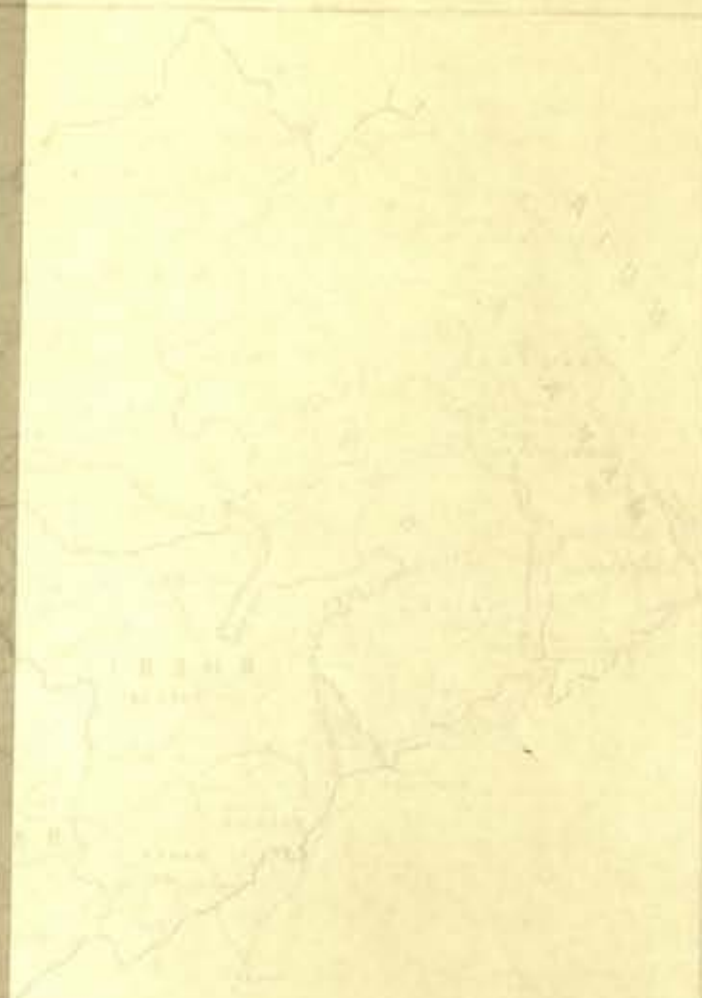
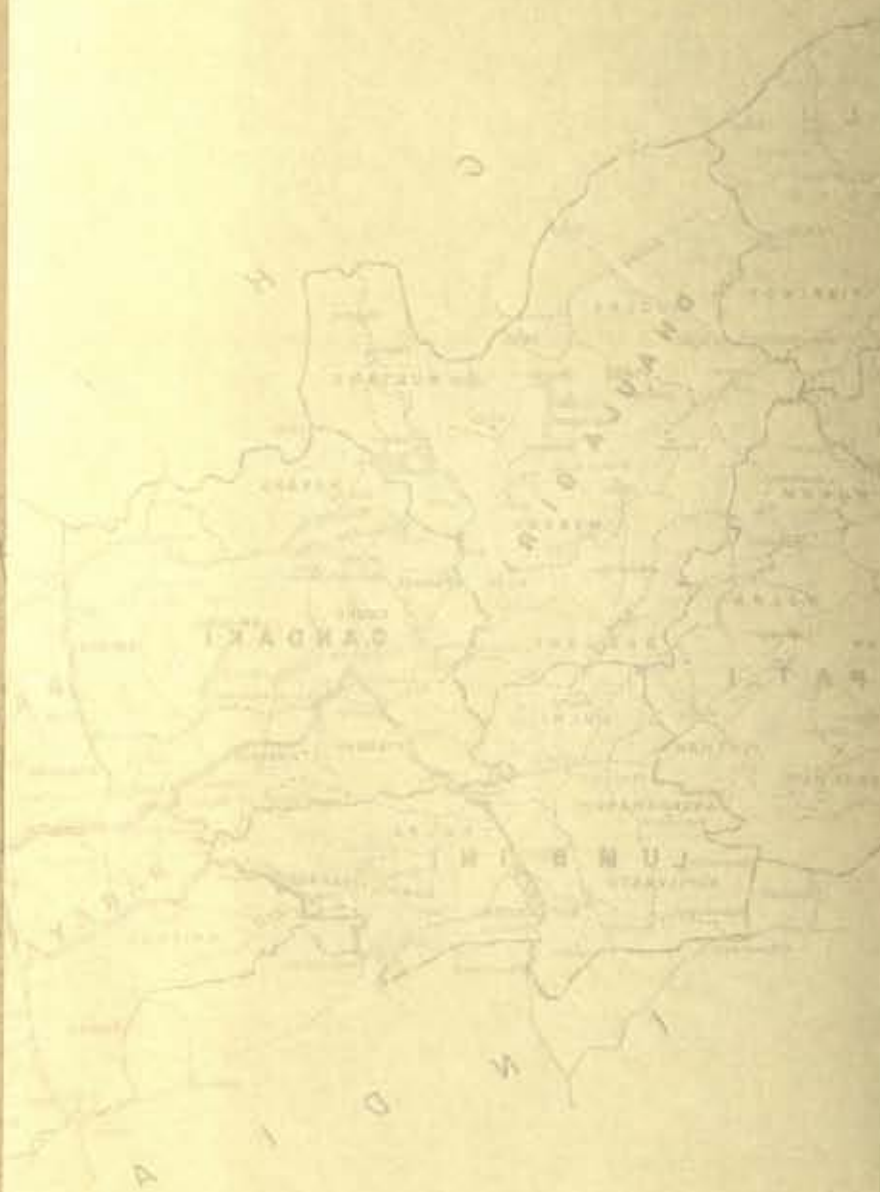
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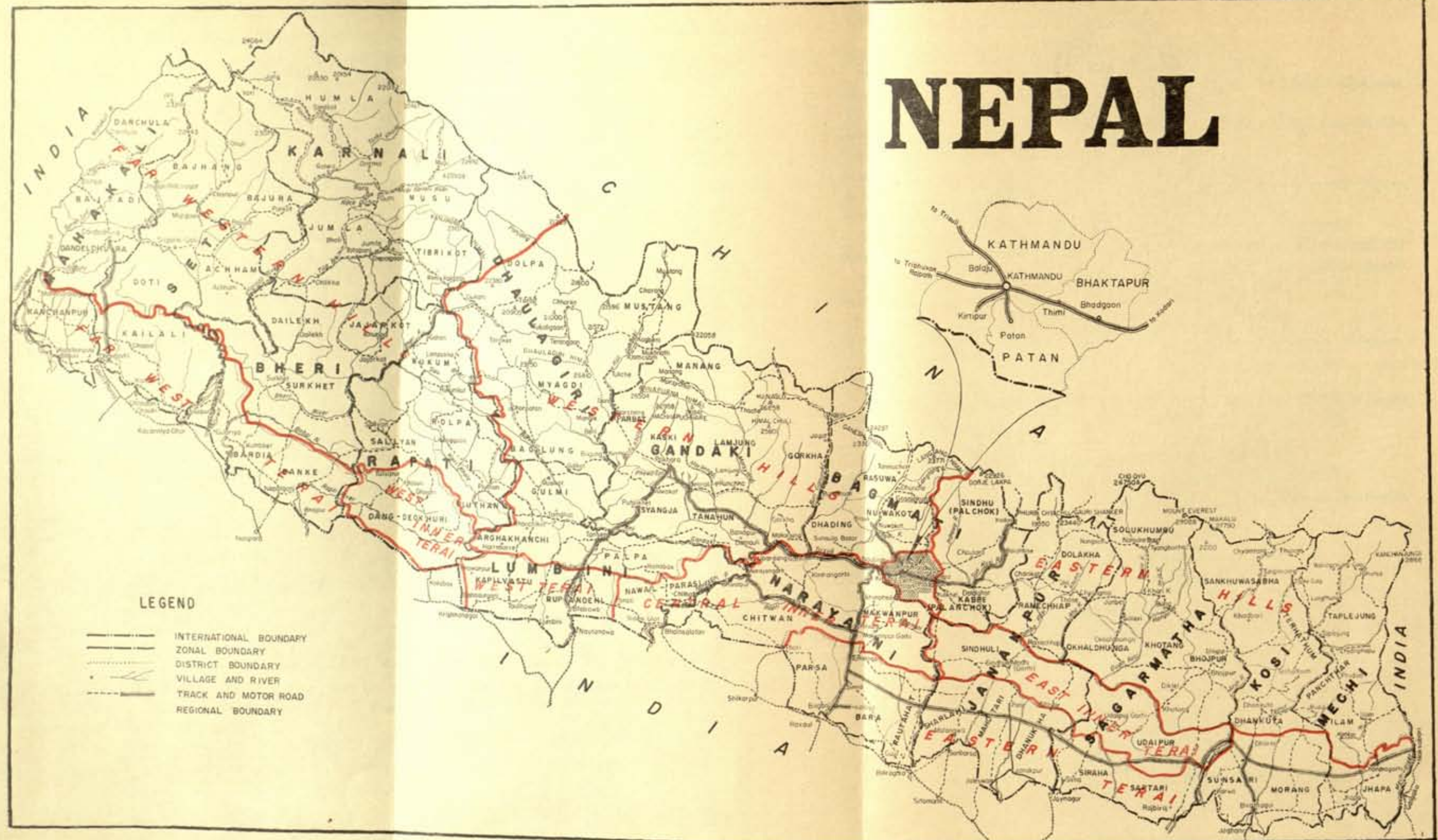
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