

SARKI MAN'S RECOLLECTIONS OF CORNEILLE JEST AS RECOUNTED TO BERNADETTE VASSEUX

Through Professor Dor Bahadur Bista, Sarki Man Majhi, of the village of Timal in Kabhre District, met Corneille Jest in 1960; Sarki Man was then 17 years old and worked for a Swiss cheese-making project in Lainchaur, Kathmandu, Langtang and in Jiri. Since 1964 he has regularly accompanied Jest on his missions to Nepal, and together they have traversed the country, from Bhajang in the far west to Ilam in the east, and Dolpo and Mustang in the north, as far as the Terai along the Indian frontier.

He remembers a long mission of 40 days in 1973 between Dolpo and Mustang, when food ran out on the 35th day; they found no place for supplies until they reached the town of Jarkhot, and they had lived for five days on tsampa, water and tea without sugar.

The following year, during a mission with Corneille Jest, Jean-François Dobremez and five of his students they were caught in an avalanche in Dolpo. Sarki Man first led Dobremez and then Jest who were tied to him with a rope. With the help of their piolets, they were able to climb up to the path and to retrace their steps with the rest of the group.

Sarki Man recalls the year 1969 and a mission somewhere between Dharan and Taplejung in eastern Nepal where they had gone to meet some Tibetans. Jest at this time smoked a lot and constantly had a pipe in his mouth. They had a difficult time stocking up and could not find cigarettes anywhere. It was then that Jest decided to stop smoking!

Sarki Man fondly remembers missions to Helambu, Khumbu to Jomson, where they helped with the restoration of temples and monasteries and the inhabitants of the villages expressed their joy and satisfaction.

In 1980 Jest invited Sarki Man to France. He stayed two months, July and August, and visited Paris, Boulogne and the country house of the Jest family, the Pyrénées and Alsace. In Paris he felt like a prisoner because he did not know the city, had no reference points and could neither express himself nor be understood. However, he adored the country and is still impressed by the farms he visited.

Today, Sarki Man is 55 and has five children from 12- to 20-years-old. The second, Harka, accompanies CNRS missions and will probably carry on in his father's footsteps.



Sarki Man's family, Thimal (C. Jest).

From left to right : the son of his eldest son, his youngest son holding his own child, his brother's two sons, Sarki Man, his two grand-daughters, two of his daughters.