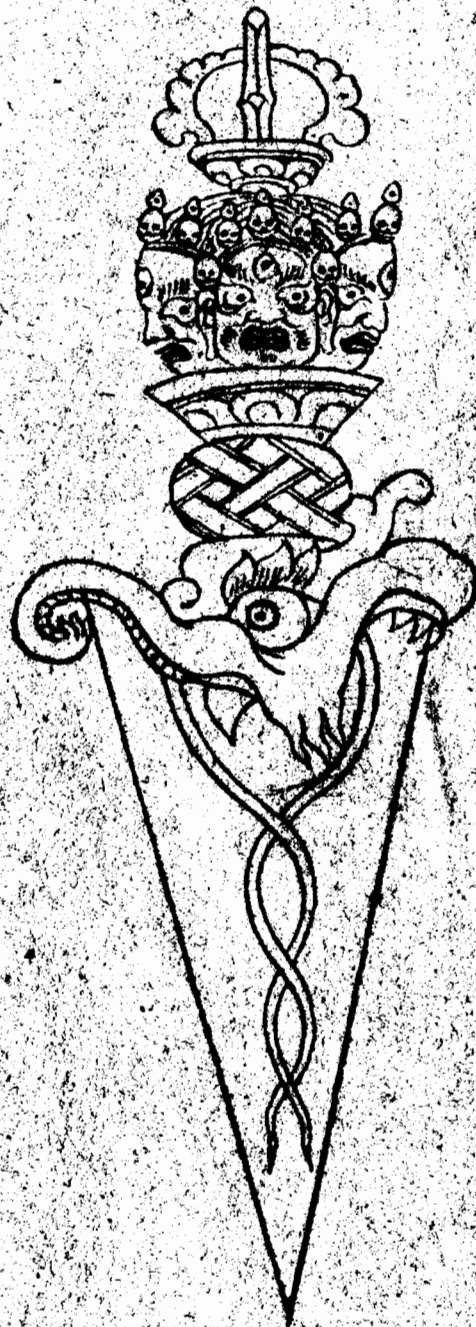


KAILASH

A JOURNAL OF HIMALAYAN STUDIES



VOLUME IX

1982

NUMBER 1



C O N T E N T S

| | |
|--|-----|
| 1. Miteri In Nepal: Fictive Kin Ties That Bind <i>Donald A. Messerschmidt</i> | 5 |
| 2. Impression Management and Economic Growth: The Case of the Thakalis of Dhaulagiri Zone <i>Andrew E. Manzardo</i> | 45 |
| 3. Tharus of Dang: Tharu Religion <i>Drone P. Rajuare</i> | 61 |
| 4. Letter of First Westerner to Visit Bhutan- Tibet-Nepal (Joao Cabral, S.J., 1599-1669) <i>Nancy M. Gettleman</i> | 97 |
| 5. SHORT REVIEWS | 111 |
| Marten Brauen : <i>Feste in Ladakh</i> | |
| Eva Dargay/Ulrich Gruber : <i>Ladakh-Innenansicht eines Landes</i> | |

DS
485
.H6
K26
v. 9
1982

KAILASH — An independent, interdisciplinary Journal of Himalayan Studies. Published three / four times a year by Ratna Pustak Bhandar, Bhotahity, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Editorial Board

Dor Bahadur Bista
3/213 Pulchowk
Patan, Nepal

J. Gabriel Cambell
c/o U.N.D.P. - Box 107
Kathmandu, Nepal

Hallvard K. Kuloy
c/o UNICEF
Rangoon, Burma

Per Kværne
Relig. hist. Institutt
Blindern, Oslo, Norway.

John K. Locke, S. J. (editor)
Box 50
Kathmandu, Nepal

Alexander W. Macdonald,
Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique
Paris, France

Boyd Michailovsky,
4, villa des Gobelins
75013 Paris, France

Michael Oppitz
c/o Nepal Research Centre
P. O. Box 180
Kathmandu, Nepal

Theodore Riccardi, Jr.
Kent Hall, Columbia University,
New York, N Y. 10027, U. S. A.

Dr. Prayag Raj Sharma
Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies,
Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal

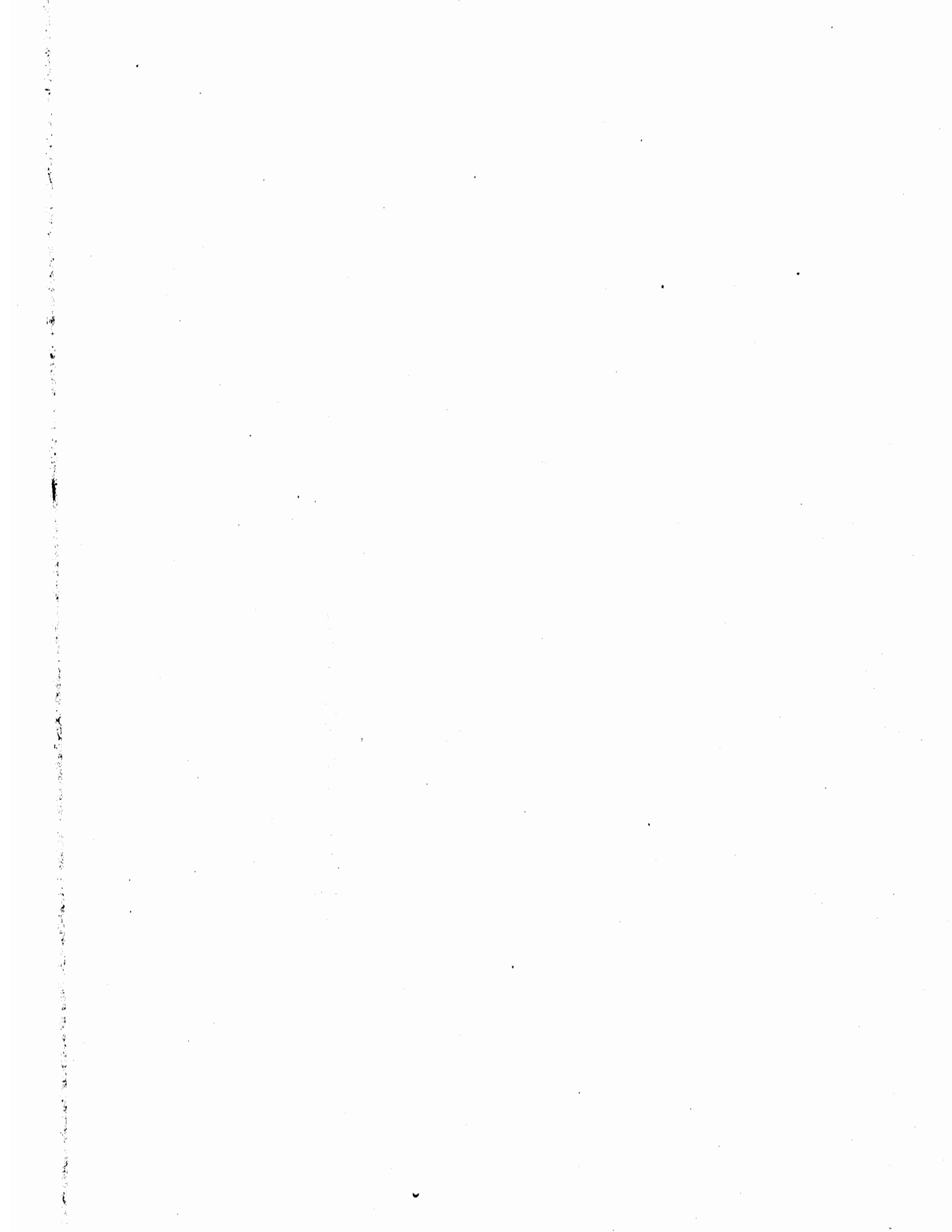
General Information

- * Authors retain copyright to their published material. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editorial Board.
- * Material may be submitted to any of the editors (two copies), and should be typed in double space, with complete references as follows:
 - (a) References to books should include author's name, complete and unabbreviated, title of the book, volume, edition (if necessary), place of publication, publisher's name, year of publication and page number(s) cited.
 - (b) References to articles in periodicals should include author's name, title of the article, name of the periodical, volume, issue number, year and page number cited.
- * Material in Tibetan, Chinese and Russian as well as musical scores must be neatly and clearly prepared on white paper with black ink, and the size of the written area should be 5" x 7½"
- * The following diacritics are at the moment available in 10 pt. light, only:
 Ā ā ā à Ć ċ ċ đ è é ē ē ê ε ħ í î ï J j k m m Ñ Ñ
 ñ ñ ñ ñ ô ɾ ɾ Š Š š š š ſ ł ł θ ū ū ū ū Ž ž æ ö ɜ
- * Authors will receive free thirty offprints of their published contributions. Additional copies at NRs. 0.30 per page must be ordered when submitting the material.
- * All business correspondence should be addressed to the publisher. Books, periodicals, records, etc. submitted for review should be sent to the Editor, Kailash, Box 50, Kathmandu, Nepal.
- * The subscription rates for surface mail are as follows:

| | | | |
|--|-----------------------|----|-----------|
| Nepal..... | NRs. | 60 | per year |
| Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burma, India, Pakistan..... | IRs. | 60 | per year. |
| Other countries..... | the equivalent of US. | 13 | per year. |
| Air mail: the equivalent of US \$18.50 per year. | | | |

List of Illustrations

| | Following Page |
|--|-------------------|
| 1. The Terracotta Horse Deities | 78 |
| 2. A Mahaton Offering Liquor to His Courtyard Deities | 78 |
| 3. The Chief <i>Gurawā</i> Praying to Gods before Performing <i>Laulā Gurawā</i> Ceremony | 78 |
| 4. The <i>Laulā Gurawās</i> Held Carefully by Others while in Trance | 78 |
| 5. The <i>Laulā Gurawās</i> Sitting in front of their Household Deities | 78 |
| 6. The Standing Drummers | 78 |
| 7. Artistic Wooden Planks Representing Village level Deities | 78 |
| 8. Marriage Procession Circumambulating Peepal Tree where Village Level Deities Reside | 78 |
| Line Drawings | |
| 1. Tharu Household Deities | 64 |
| 2. Seating plan for Tharu First Initiation .. | 82 |
| 3. Items needed for Bagan Bathannā Ceremony .. | 90 |
| 4. Map of Cabral's Journey | 98 |



MITERI IN NEPAL: FICTIVE KIN TIES THAT BIND

Donald A. Messerschmidt

Pullman, Washington

Abstract

The *miteri* is a form of fictive kinship widely encountered in the multifarious social setting of the Himalayas. It is contracted between individuals and sometimes, by extension, between kin groups, for both instrumental and affective reasons. This paper reviews the literature and presents field data on *miteri* and some closely related systems involving caste and ethnic groups in Nepal and neighboring northern India. It is argued that *miteri* serves to cement social interaction between levels of caste in a complex hierarchical system that otherwise separates the members of these endogamous groups, and in a difficult physical environment that forces people to interact closely for resource exchange. Nepal's caste oriented society normally restricts kinship to the horizontal ties of consanguinity and affinity. The *miteri* allows the alternative of forming fictive kinship ties between members of otherwise endogamous groups and allows bonds of association to flourish vertically, between all levels.

Systems of fictive or ritual kinship and ceremonial or bonded friendship have long held a certain fascination for anthropologists as students of social organization. Such systems of relationship are often modelled on real kin ties and tend to link individuals, networks of individuals, and larger solidary groups together for both affective and instrumental reasons

6/ *Kailash*

(Wolf 1966). They are often found at the forefront of social change movements, serving in some instances to buffer individuals from change, and in other instances to enhance social mobility and ease adaptation to change (Davila 1971). Close, non-kin bonds of interpersonal association are particularly prominent in tribal and peasant societies, and in bounded social units like villages, castes, or barrios in complex social systems (Keesing 1975: 129). They are also found in modern industrial society where they are assumed to exist in relatively attenuated form but where, for the most part, they have been neglected by anthropologists (Graburn 1971: 381).

This study focuses on forms of fictive kinship and close bonded friendship which exist among peasants of Hindu caste and ethnic identity in the Himalayan state of Nepal. Several interpersonal and intergroup associations, formal and informal, have been recorded and described for Nepal that tend to tie members of castes and ethnic groups together through bonds of friendship, close association, and mutual aid.¹

This paper deals primarily with the pan-Nepalese institution of *miteri* (literally "friendship"; Skt. *mitratā*), a form of ritual or fictive bonded kinship. Men who form fictive kin bonds are called *mit*; the female friend (of another woman only) is called *mitini*. The generic *miteri* is simply defined as an individualistic form of fictive or ritual kinship common among Hindu castes and hill-and mountain-dwelling ethnic groups of Nepal. Although *miteri* exists in various forms throughout the central Himalayas, data from regions outside of Nepal are limited.

1. For examples of other forms of indigenous mutual and cooperation associations in Nepal see Messerschmidt 1972, 1978, 1981a.

The Nepalese Context

The social and environmental context in which *miteri* flourishes in Nepal is, in a word, multifarious. The variety of ethnic and caste groups is large and interaction between peoples of varying status, cultural expression, language, religion, economy, and place is complex. The underlying principle of Nepalese social organization is hierarchy. A sense of ranked order and status permeates virtually all interpersonal and intergroup relations -- social, economic, political, and religious.

This nation of 15 million people covers an area of 141,000 km² (54,440 mi²). The people fall into two broad scientifically distinct social categories: Hindu caste, and ethnic; and into two broad linguistic categories: those (primarily Hindu caste) that are linguistically Indo-European, and those (ethnic) that are linguistically Tibeto-Burman (Sino-Tibetan). Within each of these categories there are scores of sub-groups and a large array of dialects and language groups. The common language of trade, education, and government is Nepali, a Sanskritic Indo-European language closely related to the contemporary languages of north India. The common frame of reference for social intercourse is the caste hierarchy, for Hindu caste groups and ethnic groups alike. It is elaborated below.

Besides linguistic and caste/ethnic distinctions, a third factor, the physical geography, has important effects that contribute to the complexity of life and interpersonal interaction. Nepal is a highly mountainous country with a difficult terrain and a climatological environment ranging from sub-tropical to alpine and nival. Geographically, there are three well delineated zones: the *terai* lowlands at the south, the Himalayan highlands at the north, and the middle hills between them.

The lowlands. The *terai* and inner-*terai* lowlands lie below 600 m. (2,000 ft.) and are rich agricultural regions. This zone

borders on north India and comprises the northern fringe of the Gangetic plain. The *terai* is home to such indigenous ethnic groups as the Tharu, Dari, Danuwar, and Majhi, as well as to various caste groups such as Maithili Brahmin, Rajput, Dom, and Chamar, and to a small population of Muslims. Little is known about the practice of *miteri* in this zone. The bulk of the discussion deals with fictive kinship as practiced in the highlands and middle hills.

The highlands. The northern Himalayan mountain and valley zone exists along the NW-SE axis of the Great Himalayan Massif. Habitation here ranges from 1,800 m. (6,000 ft.), at the upper limit of rice agriculture, to as high as 4,500 m. (15,000 ft.) in the northern arid region. This zone borders the Tibetan Autonomous Region of China and in its northernmost parts it shares the Tibetan plateau's environmental characteristics. High altitude farming, yak and sheep pastoralism, and long-distance trade are the dominant economic strategies of people living here, and they depend greatly on their neighbors in the lower elevations for certain resources. The people of this high zone are called Bhotia; they have strong Tibetan cultural affinities, practice the Tibetan religions of Buddhism and Bon, and speak local dialects of the Tibetan language.

The middle hills. Between the extreme lowlands and the northern highlands is the middle hills zone. This zone ranges from 600 m. (2,000 ft.) to 1,800 m. (6,000 ft.) and hosts the bulk of the Nepalese population. Most inhabitants of the middle hills are valley and hillside farmers, and their laboriously constructed terraced fields create a patch-quilt pattern on the landscape. This is home to both indigenous ethnic (tribal) and Hindu caste populations. The ethnic groups include the Gurung, Tamang, Magar, and Kiranti (to name a few). Their languages are generally classified as Tibeto-Burman and are rather more distantly related to Tibetan than those of the highland Bhotia

at their north. The Lepcha of neighboring Sikkim are a related ethnic group. The ethnic populations predate the arrival of the Hindu caste groups, some of whose ancestors migrated from northern and northwestern India only since the 12th century A.D. Three of the traditional categories of Hindu caste are represented in the middle hills: Brahmin (Bahun), Kshatriya (Chhetri and Thakuri), and Blacksmiths, Cobblers, and Tailors (Kami, Sarki, and Damai), most of whom are engaged in farming.

The distinction between Hindu caste and indigenous ethnic groups in Nepal blurs a fundamental point, that for purposes of analysis as in real life, the ethnic groups form an integral part of the Nepalese caste system (or systems, for caste is itself a variable and highly localized phenomenon). Individuals of caste and ethnic identity interact locally within certain hierarchical principles, sometimes flexibly, but more often under considerable restriction. The hierarchical ranking and caste rules are spelled out in the *Muluki Ain* (literally "country law," or civil code) of 1854 A.D. (and in subsequent revisions). This document provides the written rules of social interaction protocol, especially regarding interpersonal contact, commensality, sexual relations, and marriage.²

The basic structure of Nepalese society can be reduced to a simple dichotomy of pure and impure categories of people. These are in turn divided into five gradations, or levels, three of which are pure and two impure, into which all castes and ethnic groups -- in fact *all* social groups known to the

2. The *Muluki Ain*, in fact, covers a much larger array of topics, but the concern here and in the most recent analyses of it by Nepalese and Western scholars is with those parts of the code that affect or reflect the social system. The most detailed analysis of the code is by Höfer 1979; see also MacDonald 1975, and Sharma 1977. Note that untouchability is, today, illegal in Nepal.

10/ Kailash

Nepalese (including Muslim as Musulman, and European as Mlechh) are ranked. The five ranked caste groupings are these (from Höfer 1979: 45-46):

Pure or "water-acceptable" (*Pāni chalnyā*) castes (*jāt*)

1. Twice-born *tāgādhāri* ("wearers of the holy cord"): Brahmin (including Newar Brahmin), Chhetri, Thakuri, and others.
2. Non-enslavable *matwāli* ("alcohol-drinkers"): Gurung, Magar, some Newar, and others.³
3. Enslavable *matwāli*: Bhotia, Tamang, Gharti (freed slaves), some Newar, and others.

Impure or "water-unacceptable" (*pāni nachalnyā*) castes

4. Touchable: some occupational castes such as Kasai, Kusle, Dhobi, and Kulu, as well as Musulman and Mlecch.
5. Untouchable: occupational castes such as Kami, Sarki, Damai, Gaine, Badi, Pore, and Chyame.

Some groups have their own internal status distinctions ranging from the elaborate caste system of the Newars of Kathmandu Valley, to simple dichotomies of relative purity or pollution such as the Gurung Char Jat/Sora Jat moiety system which is discussed later.

While the *Muluki Ain* formally generalizes and fixes rules by which people and groups in Nepal are expected to interact, it also condones and encourages expression of local social custom,

3. The term "enslavable" (*māsinyā*) refers here only to penal enslavability from which the two highest caste categories are (were) excluded. Otherwise, "members of all caste groups can be reduced to slavery by sale or become bond-servants" (Höfer 1979: 126). Slavery in Nepal was outlawed in 1926.

especially that of the ethnic groups (Höfer 1979, Messerschmidt 1981b). *Miteri* is one such local custom, practiced by both caste and ethnic people. On *miteri* the code has virtually nothing to say, but the law does provide a framework flexible enough to allow inter-ethnic/caste *miteri* bonds to be formed and to function.

A predominant impression in Nepal is that many caste and ethnic groups intermix rather freely and with a certain tolerance for differences in language and religious expression (encompassing variations of Hinduism, Buddhism, Bon, shamanism, and Islam), but social interaction in the forms of commensality and contact and in sexual relations, for example, are strictly regulated and severely limited. Furthermore, the physical geography itself restricts social intercourse, by creating small isolated pockets whose inhabitants often have very narrowly circumscribed world views. It has only been very recent that any sense of a Nepalese national entity, incorporating the tremendous variety of peoples, has been strongly felt (Bista 1972: xii).

In addition to its social complexity, Nepal's broad altitudinal and climatic variation has encouraged some groups to inhabit and dominate very narrow economic and ecological niches. As a further consequence, each group, large or small, relies upon one or more other groups for exchange of vital resources. The high altitude Bhotia people, for example, have for centuries traded the products of their unique agro-pastoral industry (animal hides, yak wool, and butter, for examples) for lowland staples (e.g., foodgrains, such as rice and corn) and manufactured goods (such as cloth and cigarettes). Highland Gurungs and other ethnics of the northern middle hills zone have long filled an economic niche inaccessible to lower valley dwellers (caste groups, mainly) by herding sheep, cattle, and water

buffalo, and by processing and trading their by-products (such as woollen blankets and ghee) (Messerschmidt 1976a). Some ethnic groups regularly perform as middlemen in long-distance trans-Himalayan trade. One example is the Newars of Kathmandu Valley who are historically known for their role in Tibetan-Indian trade (Bista 1978). Another example is the Thakali of the upper Kali Gandaki River Valley. The Thakali and some neighboring Gurung are especially well known for their part in the Tibetan salt trade which influenced the economic and social life of west-central Nepal earlier this century (Messerschmidt and Gurung 1974). The Newar and Thakali trade flourished along the well travelled north-south trade routes and in regional bazaars and trading entrepots, such as Kathmandu and Pokhara (Fürer-Haimendorf 1975).⁴ The result of this long-distance commercial activity, as well as of small-scale, local forms of barter and exchange, has been a continuous intermixing of people and ideas, and a mutual respect and tolerance between many categories of caste and ethnic people. It is in the context of intense economic and related social and ideological exchange that *miteri* has flourished in the Himalayas.

Early Reference to Miteri

The earliest references to fictive kinship in Nepal and vicinity appear as brief remarks in the literature well before Nepal was open to modern scholarly research in the 1950s. Vansittart (1896) was one of the first to comment on "mith friendship" and "fictitious brotherhood." Northey and Morris (1928) also made passing reference to the "*mit* relationship," meaning "friend" or "blood brotherhood." They observed it in

4. Regional and local trade has expanded greatly in recent years, especially with the building of cross-country roads. For an example of such expansion along one trade corridor in west-central Nepal see Messerschmidt 1980.

the context of the British Gurkha military establishment which has employed thousands of Nepal's hillsmen (primarily from the Chhetri and Thakuri castes and from the non-enslavable *matwāli* groups). Turner (1931: 508a) defined *mit* (fem. *mitini*) as "friend," and "*mit lāunu*" as the action "to form a friendship with (by a partic. ceremony in which the two concerned exchange money, embrace, and are friends for life, one mourning the other's death as a relation's)."

Adam (1936) elaborated on *mit* (and other aspects of the social organization and customary law of Nepal) described to him by Nepalese Gurkha soldiers overseas. He called *mit* an "artificial brotherhood" and *mitni* (*mitini*) an "artificial sisterhood" (1936: 541). He indicates a key factor about *miteri*, that by means of a formal ceremony two unrelated people of the same sex are bound together socially as if they were real kin, as brother to brother or sister to sister, and that thereafter the two individuals involved must observe all obligations of consanguines (1936: 540-544). Pant (1936) describes *mitra* (the equivalent of *mit*) among the Bhotia of Almora district, north India (bordering Nepal on the northwest). *Mitra* is an instrumental form of friendship denoting "a privileged trade correspondent" (Pant 1936: 217n.). A brief comment about "brothers in blood" among Nepalese Gurkha soldiers also appears in Bishop (1952: 70). From 1960 onwards, many of the dissertations that deal with one or another form of Nepalese social organization, or which describe one or another caste or ethnic group, deal briefly with the *miteri* custom.

The first empirical study of *miteri* in Nepal was conducted by Okada (1957). His study provides a well researched baseline against which to examine all other accounts. Another detailed and more recent study was done by Shrestha in Karnali Zone of northwest Nepal (1971/72, in Nepali). Shrestha describes several forms such as *dharma iṣṭa*, *saingī mit*, and *sāini mit*. Each

is marked by progressively more formalized exchange of gifts and each variously functions to incorporate a *mit* into one's own kinship group (Shrestha 1971/72: 68-77, in Campbell 1978: 182).

More recent accounts of *miteri* appear in Hitchcock's description of the Hinduized Magars of west-central Nepal (1966: 66-68), in Prindle's analysis of caste and fictive kinship in a village of the eastern hills (1975), in Höfer's study of the Kami (Blacksmith) caste and the ethnic Tamangs of west-central Nepal (1976: 353), and in Börgstrom's account of interpersonal relations in a mixed caste/ethnic village in Kathmandu Valley (1976: 13, 51-52). Campbell also mentions the closely related *iṣṭa sambandh* (literally "friend relative") practiced by Brahmins (Jyulyal), Chhetris (Pabai), and Bhotias of Jumla in NW Nepal. This form of friendship is often formalized through rituals of fictive kinship, thereafter forming a *miteri* bond of "ritual 'siblinghood'" (Campbell 1978: 181-182).

Several other accounts describe *miteri*-like relationships among the ethnic groups. They are known by local terms, such as the *rosya* (fem.) and *leng* (mas.) among the Tamang (Adam 1936), the *ingzong* of the Lepcha of Sikkim (Gorer 1938), the *thowu* among the Sherpa (Fürer-Haimendorf 1975), the *ganye*, *tsok*, and *kidu* among Tibetans (Miller 1956, Aziz 1978a, 1978b, Messerschmidt 1976), and the *ngyelsyo* (fem.) and *ngyela* (mas.) bonds among the Gurung (Messerschmidt 1976b). A prevailing notion about most of these is that they are simply variations on, or in some instances derivations of, the standard form of *miteri* found in Nepali-speaking caste society. I return to them briefly, later in the discussion.

Organizing Principles of Miteri

Five categories or principles of purpose and organization of *miteri* are used as guides to understand, describe, and analyze the data. They are: (1) membership criteria, (2) reasons for

joining, (3) obligations and responsibilities, (4) ceremony and ritual, and (5) strength and duration of the bond. Each is described in detail.

Membership criteria. This includes the identity of participants by age, sex, and social status (class, caste, ethnicity), as well as number of participants and various terminology used in association with *miteri*.

By most accounts, two rules of *miteri* membership prevail: first, that the bond is made (*mit lāunu*) with someone outside one's own clan or caste, and second, that it is only made between persons of the same sex.⁵

As might be expected, there are exceptions to the rules. Northey and Morris tell us, for example, that the *miteri* relationship "can be contracted... between people who are already related to one another" (1928: 102), but the precise nature of relationship allowed is not specified by them. (Given all else we know about *miteri*, this early interpretation of *miteri* between relatives seems incorrect.) Okada (1957: 218) reports a Limbu man who took *miteri* in a formal ritual with a married couple simultaneously, thereafter calling the woman his *mitini-jiu* (-*jiu* is a highly respectful form). Likewise, Adam (1936: 542-543) reports that the Murmi Lama (Tamang) take *miteri* (or *leng*, in Tamang) between a single man and a married couple.

Among the ethnic Magars, Hitchcock describes a possible exception to the sex bar in his distinction between ritual

5. Observers almost exclusively describe *mit*, the masculine form of *miteri*. Little is said of *mitini*, between two females, beyond acknowledging its existence and indicating its relative impermanence. Hitchcock (1966) has presented the most information on *mitini* so far (among Magars). This is an area demanding considerably more and concentrated attention in the future.

brothers or sisters (1966: 66-68). This exception, however, is readily explained within the rule. The Magar ritual friend, on the one hand, "unvaryingly belongs to a caste other than one's own, and only persons of the same sex perform the ritual that establishes such a relationship" (66). The link between ritual brothers or sisters, on the other hand, is "between members of the same caste [i.e. Magar] and is formed between persons of the opposite sex" (66). Both ritual friend and ritual brothers or sisters are, apparently, called *mit* by the Magars. Hitchcock documents only one ritual brother-sister relationship involving the widow Jag Maya. Her father appears to have taken *mit* with a younger man who, upon the elder *mit*'s death, extended the bond and its attendant obligations to the deceased's daughter, Jag Maya (68). This case is not, then, an example of actually contracting *miteri* between a man and a woman, but only of the fairly commonplace extension of *miteri* to immediate kin.⁶ Inclusion of close kin in *miteri* relationships is also common among the ethnic Gurungs (Messerschmidt 1976b: 46-49). The case of Jag Maya was the only one that Hitchcock documented between two Magars; all other cases in his account were between a Magar and a non-Magar, for example with a Brahmin, Gurung, or member of the Tailor or Blacksmith caste.

Taking *mit* with someone outside one's own caste seems to be a strong tendency among some caste Hindus (Okada 1957: 219), while among others the restriction is reduced to taking no *mit* between persons of the same clan (Prindle 1975: 878). In contrast, individuals of the same ethnic group tend to take *mit* quite readily; Okada (1957: 219) documented Newar-Newar and

6. Höfer interprets Hitchcock's account slightly different: "It seems that the younger man assumed a step brother role in continuation of his ritual son role [vis-a-vis the widow, Jag Maya]... In the latter role, no *miteri* seems to be involved" (personal communication 1981).

Limbu-Limbu *miteri*. Elsewhere I have described Gurung-Gurung examples (1976b: 46-49), although Gurung *mit*-brothers are always from clans representing each of the endogamous moieties of Gurung society. Extra-village *miteri* also seems to be a common tendency in some instances, as among the Brahmins and Bhujels of Prindle's sample (1975), but it is not a hard and fast rule (Okada 1957).

Miteri is usually established between two persons of the same or nearly the same age. Okada indicates that most ritual brotherhoods among young men "at approximately the same age level" are formed "between two young men who have grown up together in the same village or have known each other for several years" (1957: 214-215). Nonetheless, cases of *miteri* are known between people of disparate age and between people who have met in adulthood. Stone notes that *miteri* bonds are sometimes arranged by parents for their children, much as marriages are arranged. The reason she gives is purely instrumental: "to insure a non-family source of support for their child" (1977: 172-173).

It is usual for men to take *mit* with others of the same relative socio-economic rank, with some notable exceptions. Okada documents examples where:

situations in which personal advantage plays a stronger role. Usually these involve a high caste and/or rich man, who initiates the action, on one side, and a low caste and/or poor man on the other. (1957: 214)

Prindle cautions, however, that "although the idea that one should become *mit* with [someone in] a much wealthier household is often expressed, in reality it rarely occurs" (1975: 880). As noted below, some bonds of *miteri* are deliberately established between people of unequal socio-economic and/or caste status for the express purpose of neutralizing the effects of a bad horoscope.

As for the number of *miteri* friendships an individual may take, there is no consensus, although there are practical limits. Okada feels that "for a man to have four or five simultaneously is considered to be about the maximum" (1957: 215). On the other hand, I knew a prestigious Newar merchant-trader in Lamjung District who claimed to have over a dozen *mit* brothers scattered throughout the region in which he maintained his long-distance business obligations. Even when only two individuals are involved, the number of interested parties may be much greater, extending to the self-interest of an entire household (Prindle 1975: 880), or to lineage, clan, or moiety (Messerschmidt 1976: 46-49).

Once a *miteri* bond is established, its participants no longer call each other by name, but simply as *mit* or *mitini*. This:

corresponds to the custom existing among natural born brothers calling themselves "daju" (elder brother) or "bhai" (younger brother), or, as a rule, only by their number, as "jetha," "mainla," "sainla," "kanchha," etc., which means "first," "second," "third," and so on. (Adam 1936: 542)

Similarly, the brother of one's *mit* or *mitini* is thereafter called *mit-dāju* or *mit-bhāi*, and a *mit*'s parents are called *mit-āmā* (*mit*'s mother) and *mit-bā* (*mit*'s father); a *mit*'s daughter and son are called *mit-chori* and *mit-chora*, respectively, et cetera. This terminology does not automatically imply a close *mit*-like relationship with these more distant fictive kin; relative closeness to a *mit*'s immediate kinspeople varies case by case.

Amit's or *mitini*'s children may also address a parent's *mit* or *mitini* by the fictitious kin terms, as *mit-bā* and *mit-āmā*. Höfer points out that among western Tamang "this practice of 'imitating' the children's terms of address is frequent in the realm of 'real' kinship, too" (personal communication 1981).

What has been described so far is the true form of that which is formally contracted and widely recognized in Nepalese society. In some instances less formal *miteri* is also found, as in the "drinking kin" among Bhujels and Brahmins of east Nepal (Prindle 1975: 879)⁷ and the "mouth *mit*" (*mukh mit*, Nep.; *ngyel sū*, Gur.) noted among the Gurung (Messerschmidt 1976b: 48). The Gurungs call true *miteri* by the term *bāh jorera mit lāunu* ("taking *mit* by joining arms"), implying the formal sealing of the bond by a ritual act which includes exchanging *tikā* (a spot applied to one another's forehead). "Mouth *mit*," on the other hand, is a casual friend, usually acquired with no ceremony, but distinguished by villagers as someone more than a mere passing acquaintance or ordinary friend (*sāthi*). The generic term for non-ritual friends and relatives is *iṣṭa-mitra*. Certain informal cooperative work associations among individuals were explained by my Gurung informants as types of "mouth *mit*."

Reasons for taking miteri. There are two general reasons why the Nepalese initiate and participate in ties of fictive kinship. They are affective and instrumental.

On the one hand, affective, emotive, or expressive reasons stand out. As Eric Wolf (1966) tells us from his study of Latin American fictive kinship, the association has both psychological and sociological aspects:

[It is] a relation between ego and an alter in which each satisfies some emotional need in his opposite number... We should, I think, expect to find emotional friendships primarily in social situations where the

7. It is unclear from Prindle's account what the "drinking kin" actually drink. It is unlikely that Brahmins (as *tāgādhāri*, and therefore non-drinking caste) engage in drinking alcohol with their *mit*. Bhujels, however, as former slaves were ranked in the *Muluki Ain* as an enslavable *matwāli* (drinking) caste.

individual is strongly embedded in solidary groupings like communities and lineages, and where the set of social structure inhibits social and geographical mobility. In such situations, ego's access to resources -- natural and social -- is largely provided by the solidary units; and friendship can at best provide emotional release and catharsis from the strains and pressures of role playing. (Wolf 1966: 10-11)

These observations fit closely the Nepalese situation, as well, where the solidary groupings of caste and ethnicity prevail, where social mobility is severely limited by the strictures of ascribed social position, and where physical mobility is inhibited by the mountainous geography.

Emotion is one of the strongest motivations for *miteri*. In Nepal, mutual affection is a commonly stated reason for forming these dyadic relationships within both ethnic and caste groups (Okada 1957, Prindle 1975, Hitchcock 1965, Messerschmidt 1976b). Prindle notes, however, that *miteri* "based on nothing more tangible than mutual affection... tend to lapse quickly" (1975: 880).

On the other hand, many fictive kin ties in Nepal are made for instrumental or practical reasons. Wolf comments, again from his Latin American studies, on this common rationale:

Instrumental friendship may not have been entered into for the purpose of attaining access to resources -- natural and social -- but the striving for such access becomes vital in it. In contrast to emotional friendship, which restricts the relation to the dyad involved, in instrumental friendship each member of the dyad acts as a potential connecting link to other persons outside the dyad. Each participant is a sponsor for the other. In contrast to emotional friendship, which is associated with closure of the social circle, instrumental friendship reaches beyond the boundaries of existing sets, and seeks to establish beachheads in new sets. (Wolf 1966: 12)

From Adam's (1936) perspective, *miteri* in Nepal is *entirely* instrumental. That seems to be an overstatement, but it can be

said that many *mit* and *mitini* bonds are predominantly instrumental. In some cases, however, both instrumental and emotional reasons for taking *miteri* are clear. Campbell (1978: 183) found that *mit* is often sought by business partners (instrumental) between whom there is a "deep affection" (emotive), thus satisfying both reasons. Often the participants in *miteri* seek very specific ends: better trade relations (Gorer 1938, Fürer-Haimendorf 1975), social advantage (Borgström 1976), or mutual aid of various sorts (Okada 1957, Messerschmidt 1976b). One Gurung informant told me that members of some castes and ethnic groups establish *miteri* bonds along instrumental lines "only for selfish purposes." A less cynical assessment is expressed about Gurung *miteri* by Doherty, who writes:

An alliance beyond ordinary friendship is formalized in this way to promote smooth social relations, and to state formally that the two *mit* "brothers" stand in positions of equality and complete reciprocity with each other. One looks for a *mit* on entering a new place to live, in establishing regular relations with another ethnic group, and so on. (1975: 114-115)

Even countering a bad horoscope is a possible reason for taking *mit*. Shrestha describes formally ritualized friendships that occur between high castes and untouchables in instances where "if after birth an astrologer determines that an evil influence by one of the planets can only be neutralized by such a relationship" (Campbell 1978: 182n., paraphrasing Shrestha 1971/72: 70-72).

Similarly, Okada writes that:

When misfortune and evil are predicted by his horoscope, an individual, especially a rich man, will form a ritual brotherhood with a low caste person, even at times an untouchable, to whom the predicted bad fortune can, at least partially, be shifted. He might pick the sweeper who works for him although the tendency is to select someone he will meet but seldom in the normal course

of events. An astrologer confirms whether his choice is suitable and sets a date for the ceremony. (1957: 214)

Hitchcock found many examples of *mitini* among Magar women formed for the express purpose of countering bad horoscopes. He writes that:

of the twenty-seven women who discussed their ritual friendships, something over one fifth said they had acquired the friend because the astrologer had advised them to obtain one belonging to a lower caste than theirs. The belief is that sickness or bad luck results from a poor configuration of controlling stars. This configuration often can be improved through ritual friendship with persons of a lower caste. (1966: 66-67)

In contrast, only one male *mit* out of twenty Magar men interviewed entered into the relationship to improve his stars (Hitchcock 1966: 66).^{8/9}

Whatever the instrumental or pragmatic rationale for establishing fictive kin bonds, "a minimum element of affect remains an important ingredient of the relation. If it is not present, it must be feigned" (Wolf 1966: 13).

Obligations and responsibilities. One of the basic principles of voluntary associations, including fictive kinship, is a sense of shared commitment. In all forms of *miteri* in Nepal the commitment is reciprocal and has both social and ritual, and sometimes economic, aspects.

8. It is unclear why so many more women than men among the Magars form *miteri* bonds to improve their horoscopes. Linda Stone informs me that she observed a similar tendency among Brahmin and Chhetri women in village of central Nepal (personal communication 1981).

9. These cases of *miteri* documented between persons of both high and low castes negates Adam's allegation that people of the lower castes (*sāno jāt*) cannot participate (1936: 543).

First of all, because the relationship establishes a kin-like bond with another person, most obligations reflect or overtly duplicate those which true consanguineal kinspeople must uphold vis-a-vis each other. They include mutual aid and assistance as needed, open and generous hospitality, and the observances of prescribed duties at life crisis events. The assistance of a *mit* or *mitini* may be specifically requested, or it may be offered and accepted without asking. It may come in the form of help with a construction project, agricultural fieldwork, a personal crisis, or in the form of financial or social or political support. Hospitality is especially important, whether between *mit* or *mitini* who are near neighbors or those who live at some distance from one another. It is especially useful for merchants who have instrumental *mit* brothers situated along distant routes of trade or travel. Arriving at the distant village of a *mit*, a trader is assured of a warm welcome, and meals and lodging.¹⁰

Perhaps the most important responsibility of an individual as *mit* or *mitini* is the performance of the requisite social and ritual acts attending the funeral of one's *miteri* partner, or of a collateral fictive relative such as a *mit's* or *mitini's* parent or child. The obligations at such occasions vary according to the social identifiers such as sex, class, and caste which tend to regulate the ritual and social status identity of one partner vis-a-vis the other. For example, when a *mit* brother dies, the

10. Travellers of all kinds rely on their *mit* and *mit's* (or *mitini's*) relatives and friends for support under all sorts of circumstances. In 1972, while travelling in the remote alpine region (*lekh*) of Lamjung Himal, in west-central Nepal, my Gurung research assistant encountered his MoBr's *mit* in one of the high sheep camps. That man's hospitality and generosity toward my assistant as his *mit's* nephew was unforgetably immense. Reciprocity was not immediately expected or possible, but would occur at another place and time in roughly equal measure.

alter *mit* may perform the ritual acts normally reserved for a real brother at the funeral. He also observes the requisite period of mourning and its attendant food prohibitions and sexual abstentions, according to the custom of the caste(s) or ethnic group(s) involved. On the one hand, for example, Okada (1957: 217) reports that among castes, the *mit* "must observe thirteen days' mourning (as with any close relative) when his *mit* dies, wearing old cloths and cloth shoes, refraining from shaving and abstaining from salt during this period." By comparison, among the ethnic Gurungs of my observation, mourning for one's *mit* brother is limited to two or three days, only.

A wedding provides another example of a life crisis occasion at which *mit* and *mitini* have special social and ritual duties to perform as if real consanguine relatives.

One reason given for the low incidence of *miteri* between ethnic and high caste Hindu people is that the status differential between them puts a considerable restraint on the otherwise expected close interpersonal relationship. It is especially apparent that a high caste *mit* would consider his lower status ethnic *mit* to be ritually impure vis-a-vis himself and his collaterals. This severely limits the ability of partners in *miteri* to carry out their requisite obligations at funeral or wedding events. Adam (1936: 543) alludes directly to the problem in the case of a "partner who belongs to the higher caste... [who is] forbidden to have his meals with his *mit*; that is to say, he cannot have any food which was made in the house or by one of the relatives of his partner."

As noted earlier, *miteri* partners address one another not by name but as *mit* or *mitini*, and their close kinfolk as *mit-bā*, *mit-āmā*, *mit-chora*, and *mit-chori* (*mit*'s father, mother, son, and daughter, respectively). But beyond normal terms of address, two *mit* or *mitini* friends honor one another in an especially

respectful manner by using such honorifics as *hajur* (term of respectful address, "sir" or "m'am"), the respectful post-position *-jiu*, and the *tapāi* (you, honorific) form of address.

Höfer sums up this expectation (and others) of privileged treatment in this observation from his study of *miteri* among the western Tamang:

A *mit*-ship implies mutual help and consideration of a *mit*'s need of privileged treatment. In my observation, however, factual cooperation tends to be less intense and less taboo-sanctioned as that between the agnates (*dajyubhai*) within a major lineage segment or between "wife-givers" and "wife-takers." A *mit*-ship is rather a matter of politeness, friendliness finding its expression (between *mits*) mainly (not exclusively) in things like: the use of the honorific language, the liberty of a person to stay as long as he/she likes in his/her *mit*'s/*mitini*'s house as a guest, the obligation to invite a *mit/mitini* to every life-cycle ceremony or the duty to sell him/her a certain good somewhat cheaper, etc. (Personal communication 1980).

It should be noted that it is not the friendliness so much as the expected politeness between *miteri* friends that the honorific language expresses. Under other circumstances, outside of *miteri*, the honorific *tapāi* form implies distance, respect, and formality, while friendliness is more appropriately expressed by using the *timi* (you, familiar) form of address.

In addition to respectful terms, ritual brothers and sisters also practice certain rules of avoidance, and are particularly cognizant of the incest barrier which the *miteri* bond creates. The definition of incest and rules of avoidance vary according to the caste or ethnic identity of the *miteri* partner. Okada, whose data primarily reflect the situation among the castes, notes for example that "the wife of a ritual brother is avoided. She stays in seclusion if her husband's *mit* comes visiting and he is not allowed to see her nor her ritual sister, should she have

one" (1957: 218).¹¹ Similarly, a caste woman and the husband of her *mitini* are untouchable and practice avoidance, although they may see each other (Linda Stone, personal communication 1981). Among the ethnic Gurungs, on the other hand, avoidance behavior is much more relaxed. A Gurung *mit* is not restricted from seeing his *mit's* wife; he is only prohibited from touching her.

The incest barrier is an important component of *miteri*. Universally, *mit* and *mitini* are considered as consanguines of their *miteri* partners, just as are their closest collaterals and descendents. This fictive consanguinity may last for several generations beyond the taking of the *miteri* bond. A *mit* cannot marry his alter *mit's* sister, nor can their sons and daughters intermarry. Among the Lepcha of Sikkim, the incest barrier is said to exist for nine generations (Gorer 1938: 119). Among western Tamang, it lasts only for three generations (Höfer, personal communication 1980). Among the Gurungs, Doherty speculates that the unique marriage prescriptions and prohibitions described for the four clans of the endogamous Char Jat division (moiety) of the society may have derived from an incest barrier based on ancient *miteri* alliances between groups (1975: 114-115; cf. Pignède 1962, 1966, Messerschmidt 1976b: 45-65).

Consanguineal expectations break down quite clearly in the case of such jural obligations as inheritance of property. *Mit* and *mitini* do not inherit from their *miteri* partners. Nonetheless, they are obliged to support one another financially (especially between *mit*, not so much between *mitini*) in times of need. Thus, according to Okada:

11. Okada's observations seem to be of a very strict avoidance practice. Linda Stone points out that it more likely that the woman in question might just slightly veil herself, just as she would in the presence of her husband's father or her husband's elder brother (personal communication 1981).

while it may not be a legal obligation, there is nevertheless a real obligation to come to the aid of a ritual brother, especially in financial matters. Financial assistance in the form of money freely loaned at no interest is apparently the chief obligation and a strong factor in adding to an individual's sense of security in a *mit* relationship. A man may contribute food, clothing, and money when his *mit* gets married and, if from another village, will provide food and shelter for a *mit* traveling through. He may help arrange the marriage of his partner's children and look after them in the best of his ability should their father die. Ritual brothers are very definitely obligated to help each other voluntarily in every way they can, particularly in times of crisis, danger, or financial stress.¹² (1957: 217)

Prindle (1975: 881) states to the contrary, however, that within fictive kinship in east Nepal, *mit* relations "do not generally serve as an important source for loans." And Höfer, in considering this question, writes that "among Tamangs and Kamis (Blacksmiths), *miteri* is not used as an important source for loans because it would be embarrassing to harass a *mit* in case of insolvency which frequently occurs and entails mortgage. The reason might be the same everywhere in Nepal" (personal communication 1981).

In the final analysis, regardless of how strictly *miteri* relations are perceived and how serious and how deep one's obligations as a *mit* or *mitini* are expected to be performed in the social and ritual spheres, there exists an overriding ideal of complementary and balanced reciprocity. And although a partner in *miteri* may not keep accurate track of favors received from, or bestowed upon, one's alter, the close relationship which *miteri* implies between individuals assures a mutual and generous reciprocity flowing in both directions.

12. In recent years, American Peace Corps Volunteers and other foreigners in Nepal have occasionally contracted *mit* or *mitini* bonds. Not fully understanding the sorts of obligations implied by *miteri*, some have found themselves in uncomfortable situations regarding requests for money or for schooling abroad for the partner's children.

Ceremony and ritual. There is considerable variation in the amount of ceremony and ritual observed in the formation of *miteri* bonds. Some initiations are quite elaborate, some quite simple. The principle difference between them is the requisite presence or absence of an officiating ritualist -- a Brahmin priest, Buddhist lama, shaman, or astrologer.

One kind of elaborate initiation ceremony is described by Okada. It incorporates rich symbolism and requires the presence of a Hindu priest:

The two principals, after removing their shoes and heavy curved knives (*khukuri*), faced each other across a sacred fire of special woods in which rice, clarified butter (*ghi*), and honey are burned. They greet each other with the Hindu salutation (*dhok dinu*), each bringing his hands, palms pressed together and fingers pointing up, in front of his face. Money -- one to five rupees in silver -- is exchanged through the *purohit* [priest] and usually such personal positions as caps, scarves, or rings. Blades of *dubo* grass¹³ may be sprinkled over the two men's heads and sometimes they may garland each other with flowers. Often a dab of rice grains and curd (*tikā*) is put on their foreheads. The *purohit* gives a talk referring to an incident in the Hindu epic *Ramayana* in which Ram, searching for his abducted wife, meets Surgriva who becomes his ritual brother and assists his. He announces that the two men in front of him are brothers from this day on and adjures them to help and protect each other, but adds certain strictures prohibiting them to sit together on the same bed or chair or to touch each other; though they are permitted to meet every day, if they wish, they can talk only at a distance.¹⁴ (Okada 1957: 215-216)

13. *Dubo* grass (*Cynodon dactylon*), also called Bermuda grass, is used in Hindu sacrifice, especially in the worship of Ganesh (Turner 1931: 315a; Nepal 1970: 148).

14. The reference to individuals who take *miteri* vows in relation to the story of Ram is reminiscent of the system of "ritual brother and sisters" (*gurubhai* and *gurubahin*, respectively) in the Malwa region of India. There the young people who "hear Ram's name" together under the tutelage of a guru become fictive kin in a somewhat elaborate ceremony performed annually on the full moon day of Asarh (mid-June to mid-July). This system typically links boys and girls of various castes together in the bond (Mayer 1960: 138ff.).

Adam (1936: 541) details a similarly elaborate ceremony officiated by a priest, in which the two initiates sit together in front of a ritual platform (*jagge*) made of cowdung, sprinkled with Ganges River water and flour arranged to symbolize the sun and the moon and other sacred figures.

A less elaborate ceremony is described by both Prindle and Höfer from two separate regions of Nepal, among distinctly different caste and ethnic groups. It lasts only a few minutes. In it, a cloth curtain is draped between the two individuals, and a priest announces their *miteri* bond, followed by a gift exchange between them. Each is then given a *ṭikā* mark on the forehead by the officiating priest. A feast is spread and friends of each *mit* are invited to join in (Prindle 1975).

In Höfer's account, the two candidates of the Tamang ethnic group sit together, likewise separated by a curtain. In front of them there is:

a *thal* [plate or dish] with some husked rice (symbol of prosperity and purity), a *bhatti* [lamp] and some *raksi* [liquor]. Then, the curtain is lifted and the two exchange 3 times a few rupees notes... Finally, both persons put on their *ṭopi* [hat] (male) or kerchief [*majetro*] (female) and make 3 times *dhok* [bow] to each other.

A simple form of initiation occurs among the Gurungs:

Two Gurung friends who wish to initiate a fictive kin bond simply call a few close friends and relatives together to witness the formal pact and share a small feast. An astrologer may be asked to select an auspicious day and a lama or shaman may be present to give his blessing, but neither of these ritualists is essential. The two initiates join arms (*bāh jorera mit lāunu*) and give each other *ṭikā* (or *āshik*), a daub of rice on the forehead as a blessing to solemnize the occasion. Thereafter, other persons present may give them each small gifts of a rupee or two and a white turban cloth (*kregi*). (Messerschmidt 1976b: 47)

Hitchcock describes a ceremony which represents what is, perhaps, the most casual form of initiation. His example is of two Magar girls becoming *mitini*:

One night when they and other young people had gathered to sing together, they decided to recognize the [*mitini*] relationship formally. They merely sat opposite each other and each placed a silver rupee and a *pice* [1/100th of a rupee] on a piece of banana leaf and set it before their friend. After picking up the coins, the girls completed the ceremony by rising and bowing to one another. (1966: 67)

Early on, Adam (1936: 541) suggested that *miteri* "has evidently a religious base, for the presence of a Brahman, or 'bahun' is required for the initial ceremony." Adam's understanding of this institution, however, was flawed by poor and inadequate data. In light of more and better understanding now available, his suggestion simply does not stand up.

It is true, of course, that the ritual-religious element, and particularly a Hindu element, is a dominant theme in the formalization of many *miteri* bonds involving caste partners. But religiosity varies greatly and is often quite weakly expressed or virtually ignored. It is also the case that non-Hindus participate quite freely in *miteri* and that occasionally individuals of different religions (e.g., Buddhist with Hindu) form *miteri* alliances.

It might be argued that the caste Hindus have used elaborate ritual in initiating *miteri* bonds in order to impress Hindu ideals on the non-Hindu populations they encountered when they arrived in Nepal centuries ago. Manipulation of distinctly Hindu symbols in the initiation ceremony varies according to the degree to which a particular individual or ethnic group has been Hinduized. But religiosity in *miteri* is not limited to Hinduism, and many non-Hindus who practice *miteri* call upon Buddhist lamas or

shamans to preside at the initiation ceremonies. Some people merely ask the resident astrologer for the most auspicious time to make the bond. And some types of *miteri* initiation, as we have seen, require no special officiant whatsoever. Thus, although religion may be a dominant theme in some instances, there is little evidence to suggest that it is the basis or even a necessary accouterment of *miteri*.

Strength or duration of the miteri bond. The formal *miteri* bond (that is, excluding the loose forms of "mouth *mit*" and "drinking kin" described above) are lifetime relationships. "As a rule," Hitchcock observes (1966: 66), "ritual friendships reach a peak of intensity right after they are formed and then tend to lapse." They are generally strongest between the two individuals involved, and weaker among any extended kin who may be drawn into the relationship secondarily. Shrestha (1971/72: 73) recorded the following saying which implies that a *mit* relationship is double the strength of a patrilineal (*sāk*) one:

pātānkā pālo patti / bhedile bhyā garyo
hitta milyo chitta milyo / jātle ke garyo

There are seven relationships (generations) among the *sāk*, and there are fourteen among the *mit*. (Quoted and translated in Campbell 1978: 183)

It appears that *miteri* established for instrumental reasons (e.g., trade partnerships) are stronger than those taken merely for affective reasons. It would seem to follow that *mit* is usually stronger than *mitini*. But there has been so little study of the female (*mitini*) form that it is difficult to adequately support or refute this assumption. Linda Stone feels that from her experience studying caste women in central Nepal, the situation is sometimes more complex regarding *mitini*. "For example," she writes:

it is not uncommon for a woman to arrange *miteri* with another woman with whom she suspects her

husband would like to have an affair. After [becoming *mitini*], of course, her husband and this woman are untouchable. In addition, a man might encourage his wife to do *mitini* with the wife of another man from whom he seeks political favor, etc. (Personal communication 1981)

In such cases, the strength and importance of *miteri* is deliberately used to effect a specific purpose.

Ethnic Variations on Miteri

Earlier in this paper, several variations on the *miteri* concept were mentioned by name -- Tamang *leng*, Lepcha *ingzong*, Sherpa *thowu*, Gurung *ngyela/ngyelsyo*, and others. These alternative forms, prevalent among the ethnic and Bhotia groups, need further elaboration, in order to highlight one of the primary functions of fictive kinship within the multi-ethnic/caste society of the Himalayas.

The *ingzong* is found among the Lepchas of Sikkim, a tiny Himalayan state in India bordering Nepal at the east. Gorer (1938: 118) describes it as an exogamous relationship through which a Lepcha man secures trade relations or partnerships "with all foreigners who had goods which he did not possess," particularly with neighboring Sikkimese and Tibetans. In comparison, the *thowu* is a form of "ceremonial friendship" found among the neighboring Sherpas of the Mount Everest region of northeastern Nepal" (Fürer-Haimendorf 1975: 295-298).¹⁵ The latter is "known as *mit* in Nepali" (296) and Fürer-Haimendorf describes it as more like the *miteri* practiced among caste Nepalese than like any other interpersonal associations known in Bhotia and Tibetan society, such as the bonds of *ganye*, *kidu*, or *tsok* (Aziz 1978a, 1978b, Miller 1956, Messerschmidt 1976c). The instrumental *miteri*-like relationship established in *thowu* is interpreted as enhancing the Sherpa's entrepreneurial

15. *Thowu* is probably a derivative of *thoqo* or *thogpo*, meaning "friend" in Tibetan (Melvyn C. Goldstein, personal communication, 1980).

opportunities with their non-Sherpa trade associates elsewhere in Nepal. Given this, it is quite likely that a Buddhist Sherpa may take *mit* with a Hindu person (see Okada 1957: 220). Unlike the Lepcha *ingzong*, however, Sherpas may take *thouwu* with co-villagers as well as with non-Sherpas. Fürer-Haimendorf also alludes (without elaboration) to other such friendship bonds between Bhotia traders in other parts of Nepal (1975: 212-213, 265).

In my own initial discussion of Gurung fictive kinship (Messerschmidt 1976b: 46-49), I have described the strictly Gurung form, hereafter called *ngyel chyāb* (to make a ritual friend, Gur.), interpreting it rather uncritically at that time as a simple variation on pan-Nepalese *miteri*. But whereas in *miteri* the relationship is essentially dyadic, between two individuals and only loosely involving their respective lineagemates, the Gurung *ngyel chāb* is clearly generalized outward from the dyad at the center to include their widest set of lineagemates, ultimately linking the two endogamous moieties (*jāt*) of Gurung society.

My research was among the northern Gurungs of Lamjung District of west-central Nepal, in Ghaisu (pseudonym), a village of 123 households, 621 population. Approximately two-thirds of the population was of the Sora Jat moiety (83 hh., 514 pop.), one-third was Char Jat (40 hh., 206 pop.) (1976b: 39, Table 3). My research assistant was a Char Jat man from a village a half day walk away. Practically speaking, when *ngyel chyāb* bonds are traced outward to the moiety level, they are loosely conceived and bounded by the outer limits of the village society. When my Char Jat assistant arrived to begin work in Ghaisu, however, the local Sora Jat members considered him to be their generalized *ngyela (mit-bhāi)*, in the same way that the local Char Jat considered him to be their putative "real" brother (*dāju-bhāi*).

The Gurung, then, like the Sherpas and the Magars, practice two forms of fictive kinship, one between individuals from other ethnic or caste groups, and one within their own ethnic community. Each form reflects distinctly different social structural relationships and each exists for different purposes. The Gurungs engage, on the one hand, in the pan-Nepalese *miteri* to bond themselves, *as individuals*, to non-Gurung individuals outside of the Gurung community. A Gurung may initiate *miteri* for instrumental and/or affective reasons. *Miteri* is important, for example, in trade relations between Gurung men and outsiders of a wide range of caste and ethnic identity. Or, it may be contracted on straight forward emotional grounds of mutual affection felt by two individuals who have met in school, in the military, or during travels away from home.

The Gurung ethnic *ngyel chyāb*, on the other hand, serves to partially bridge the central cleavage that exists between the endogamous and hierarchical moieties of the society. These two moieties, the Char Jat (reputedly higher status) and the Sora Jat (reputedly lower status), reflect differential access to scarce resources such as political power (Char Jat men are village chiefs), prestige (Char Jat claim higher social and ritual position), food (reflected in unequal land holdings between the moieties), and cloth or clothing (reflecting unequal purchasing power). The exchange of some of these resources and commodities, principally food and clothing, is accomplished through the built-in reciprocal obligations of *ngyel chyāb* at life crisis events such as weddings or funerals affecting one's *ngyela* (m.) or *ngyelsyo* (f.) and his or her relatives. The critical importance of *ngyel chyāb* in bonding the otherwise socially and ritually distant Gurung moieties was no more graphically demonstrated than the time in Ghaisu village when in the heat of a factional dispute, Sora Jat leaders banned all social intercourse between their kinsmen and the Char Jat. This

action led to the temporary breakdown of the fictive kinship system and caused great economic havoc and person stress in the society (Messerschmidt 1976b: 123-124).

Discussion: Why Miteri?

Fictive kinship is a kind of voluntary association, one which is contracted or otherwise fixed with more or less formality, between two individuals and in some instances by extension between wider categories of kin. In an essay on voluntary associations, Lon Fuller describes human associations as the "furniture of society"; concern with the principles of association, he says, is a concern "with the glue that holds [the furniture] together" (1969: 6). In a caste-oriented society like Nepal, however, the furniture is already well built and firmly glued together through the principle of hierarchy, and all the more so through the codification of rules about interpersonal and intergroup interaction in the *Muluki Ain*. And although the old *Ain* of 1854 that codified social interaction has since been abrogated by newer, more modern laws, the structures of caste and the norms of the hierarchical order are still firmly encoded in the lifeways of the traditional society. Any association that circumvents the prevailing and traditional social structure, as *miteri* does, deserves special consideration, for by examining the alternative structure that it provides, important points about the normal or regular structure may be highlighted and better understood.

Miteri provides a certain freedom of expression which is not condoned in normal social intercourse. It provides a measure of relief from the highly restrictive and hierarchical expectations of both caste and kinship. The hierarchical principle underlies virtually all social relations, but while it tends to draw people close together horizontally within each

caste or ethnic group, it leaves a formidable gap between endogamous groups on the vertical axis. The institution of *miteri* fills the gap and provides an alternative structure.

If Nepalese society were not so complex, if it had less social variety and less cause for economic interaction in the form of resource exchange between inhabitants of geographically isolated and ecologically distinct zones, then the existing hierarchically ranked social system might be sufficient. But economic and social interaction between individuals and groups, as strangers, is necessary, and it is necessary that they can trust each other implicitly. Ways to circumvent the separation caused by the geographical severity of the Himalayas and the strictures of the Hindu social system, whose origins are found in the more uniform conditions of sub-Himalayan north India, are naturally sought or invented.

The most important observation in conclusion is the social bridge that *miteri* and like forms of association make across an otherwise high variegated society. *Miteri* both mimics kinship and rigidifies the kin-like obligations it fosters. In correspondence on this point, Andras Höfer has commented that *miteri* is an alternative to kinship in that:

it allows for more personal affection than kinship with its fixed rules (and latent quarrels), it individualizes more than kinship, for a purely personal choice, as *miteri* is, is not possible in it: you are born and arranged into a kinship network (by birth or marriage), whereas you are free to follow your personal feelings and interest as a *mit*. (Personal communication 1981)

But *miteri* embodies strict regulations and obligations of its own, as well as the personal freedom and choice noted above. Linda Stone emphasizes this point in a comment based on her study of central Nepal Brahmins:

In one sense, *mit* is very much like caste and kinship. Like these, it serves to strictly categorize and define human interaction. To be sure, the institution of *mit* allows people to create, or cement, affective ties of a kind that caste and kinship do not encourage. At the time, *mit* ritually contains affection: it spells out how people involved *must* interact. (1977: 174)

It is clear that fictive kinship in Nepal deviates from the regular strictures and structures of social interaction and brings people together who are otherwise socially, ritually, and often economically far apart. This is a reflection of a well known fact that institutionalized deviation is common in complex social systems. *Miteri* allows a certain flexibility in interpersonal choice and intergroup relations. But it is well contained and controlled with its own protocol and expectations. Its existence not only provides an alternative to the impregnable hierarchical principles of caste and kinship, but it allows the existing systems of caste and kinship to continue strong and undiluted on their own. *Miteri*, in effect, fosters a measure of personal freedom and expression of need in its own little world, compartmentalized and set apart from some of the principle considerations of the regular status system. It gives strength and security to that other, overarching, dominant system and to the involuntary (ascribed) status set that each individual and group carries through life, by allowing voluntary expression of human association to solve some of the basic challenges of life.

Acknowledgements

Donald A. Messerschmidt is an Associate Professor of Anthropology at Washington State University in Pullman, Washington U.S.A. In 1981 he was assigned to the Resource Conservation and Utilization Project in Nepal as Project Social Scientist. He first lived in Nepal from 1963 to 1967, and has conducted research there on several occasions since, studying various aspects of social organization and cooperation, economy, resource management, and religion among both ethnic and caste groups. He is past editor of the *Himalayan Research Bulletin* of the Nepal Studies Association.

Special thanks go to Nareshwar Jang Gurung, who assisted in gathering the data on the Gurungs. Andras Höfer and Linda Stone read and critiqued an earlier version of this paper, and the author is indebted to Dor Bahadur Bista for his help and inspiration. The remarks and insightful contributions of all these colleagues are gratefully acknowledged.

REFERENCES CITED

Adam, Leonard

- 1936 "The social organization and customary law of the Nepalese tribes." *American Anthropologist* 38: 533-547.

Aziz, Barbara N.

- 1978a "Social cohesion and reciprocation in a Tibetan Community in Nepal," in B. Misra and J. Preston, eds., *Community Self and Identity*. The Hague: Mouton, pp. 45-75.
- 1978b *Tibetan Frontier Families: Reflections of Three Generations from D'ingri*. Durham: Carolina Academic Press.

Bishop, R.N.W.

- 1952 *Unknown Nepal*. Edited and augmented by J.E. Cunningham. London: Luzac.

Bista, Dor Bahadur

- 1972 *People of Nepal*. Second revised edition. Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak Bhandar.
- 1978 "Nepalis in Tibet," in James Fisher, ed., *Himalayan Anthropology*. The Hague: Mouton, pp. 187-204.

Borgstrom, Bengt-Erik

- 1976 *The Patron and the Panca: Village Values and Pancayat Democracy in Nepal*. Stockholm, Sweden: University of Stockholm, Studies in Social Anthropology, No. 1.

Campbell, J. Gabriel

- 1978 *Consulting with Himalayan Gods: A Study of Oracular Religion and Alternative Values in Hindu Jumla*. Ph. D. Dissertation, Columbia University, New York City. Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms.

Davila, Mario

- 1971 "Compadrazgo: Fictive kinship in Latin America," in Nelson Graburn, ed., *Readings in Kinship and Social Structure*. New York: Harper and Row, pp. 396-406.

Doherty, Victor S.

- 1975 *Kinship and Economic Choice: Modern Adaptations in West Central Nepal*. Ph. D. Dissertation, University of Wisconsin. Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms.

Fuller, Lon L.

- 1969 "Two principles of human association," in J. Roland Pennock and John W. Chapman, eds., *Voluntary Associations*. New York: Atherton, pp. 3-23.

Furer-Haimendorf, Christoph von

- 1975 *Himalayan Traders*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Gorer, G.E.S.

- 1938 *Himalayan Village: An Account of the Lepchas of Sikkim*. Second edition, 1968. London: M. Joseph.

Graburn, Nelson

- 1971 "Kinship in contemporary societies," in Nelson Graburn, ed., *Readings in Kinship and Social Structure*. New York: Harper and Row, pp. 379-381.

Hitchcock, John T.

- 1966 *The Magars of Banyan Hill*. Enlarged edition (reissued as *A Mountain Village in Nepal: Fieldwork Edition*), 1980. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Höfer, Andrés

- 1976 "A settlement and smithy of the Blacksmiths (Kami) in Nepal." *Kailash, A Journal of Himalayan Studies* 4: 349-396.
- 1979 *The Caste Hierarchy and the State in Nepal: A Study of the Muluki Ain of 1854*. Innsbruck: Universitätsverlag Wagner.

Keesing, Roger M.

- 1975 *Kin Groups and Social Structure*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

MacDonald, Alexander W.

- 1975 "The hierarchy of the lower *jāt* in the *Muluki Ain* of 1955," Alexander W. MacDonald, *Essays on the Ethnology of Nepal and South Asia*. Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak Bhandar.

Mayer, Adrian C.

- 1960 *Caste and Kinship in Central India: A Village and its Region*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Messerschmidt, Donald A.

- 1972 "Rotating credit in Gurung society: the *dhikur* associations of Tin Gaun." *Himalayan Review* (Nepal Geographic Society) 5 (4): 23-35.
- 1976a "Ecological change and adaptation among the Gurungs of the Nepal Himalaya." *Human Ecology* 4: 167-185.
- 1976b *The Gurungs of Nepal: Conflict and Change in a Village Society*. Warminster, England: Aris & Phillips, Ltd.
- 1976c "Innovation in adaptation: Tibetan immigrants in the United States." *The Tibet Society Bulletin* 10: 48-70.
- 1978 "*Dhikurs*: Rotating credit associations in Nepal," in James Fisher, ed., *Himalayan Anthropology*. The Hague: Mouton, pp. 141-166.
- 1980 "Gateway-hinterland relations in changing Nepal." *Contributions to Nepalese Studies* 8 (1).
- 1981a "*Nogar* and other traditional forms of cooperation in Nepal: Significance for development." *Human Organization* 41: 40-47.
- 1981b Review of Höfer (1979). *Journal of Asian Studies*, in press.

Messerschmidt, Donald A. and Nareshwar Jang Gurung

- 1974 "Parallel trade and innovation in central Nepal: The cases of the Gurung and Thākāli Subbas compared," in Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf, ed., *Contributions to the Anthropology of Nepal*. Warminster, England: Aris & Phillips, Ltd., pp. 197-221.

Miller, Beatrice D.

- 1956 "Ganye and kidu: Two formalized systems of mutual aid among Tibetans." *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 12: 157-170.

Nepal, His Majesty's Government of

- 1970 *Medicinal Plants of Nepal*. Bulletin of the Department of Medicinal Plants, No. 3. Kathmandu: Department of Medicinal Plants, Ministry of Forestry.

Northey, W. Brook and C.J. Morris

- 1928 *The Gurkhas: Their Manners, Customs and Country*. London: J. Lane.

Okada, Ferdinand

- 1957 "Ritual brotherhood: a cohesive factor in Nepalese society." *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 13: 212-222.

Pant, S.D.

- 1935 *The Social Economy of the Himalayans: Based on a Survey in the Kumaon Himalayas*. London: George Allen and Unwin.

Pignède, Bernard

- 1962 "Clan organization and hierarchy among the Gurungs." *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 6: 102-119.

- 1966 *Les Gurungs: Une Population Himalayenne du Népal*. Paris: Mouton.

Prindle, Peter H.

- 1975 "Fictive kinship (mit) in east Nepal." *Anthropos* 70: 877-882.

Sharma, Prayag Raj

- 1977 "Caste, social mobility and Sanskritization: A study of Nepal's old legal code." *Kailash: A Journal of Himalayan Studies* 5: 277-299.

Shrestha, Bihari Krishna

1971/72 *Jan Jivan: Diyar Gāũko Thakuriharu, Karnāli Lok Samskrit.*

Stone, Linda S.

1977 *Illness, Hierarchy and Food Symbolism in Hindu Nepal.*
Ph. D. Dissertation, Brown University. Ann Arbor,
Michigan: University Microfilms.

Turner, Ralph Lilley

1931 *A Comparative and Etymological Dictionary of the Nepali Language.* Revised, reprint edition, 1965. London:
Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Vansittart, Eden

1896 *Notes on Nepal.* Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing.

Wolf, Eric R.

1966 "Kinship, friendship, and patron-client relations in complex societies," in Michael Bandon, ed., *The Social Anthropology of Complex Societies.* ASA Monograph No. 4, London: Tavistock, pp. 1-22.

IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT AND ECONOMIC GROWTH: THE CASE OF THE THAKALIS OF DHAULAGIRI ZONE

Andrew E. Manzardo

Kathmandu

Berreman (1972) drawing on the work of Goffman (1959) uses the term "impression management" to describe status manipulation behavior and its effects on data gathering, among peoples living in the middle hills region of India's Garawahl district. Although many situations are considered, one of the most significant interactions, at least for the purposes of our argument, are those which took place between the villagers and Berreman's research assistants.

In those situations, the ethnic identity of the assistant has been shown to determine his status in the eyes of the hill villagers. This perceived status in turn plays a large part in determining what type of information will be made accessible to him and therefore to the anthropologist as well. In one case, for example, a high status assistant (a plains Brahmin) was given information which conveyed the impression that high-caste hill villagers tended to be orthodox Brahmins, at least in so far as these villagers understood orthodox or plains practices. A low-caste and therefore low status assistant (in this case a Muslim) had very little interaction with the high-caste villagers. At the same time, however, this assistant was given a glimpse into the fictions of the high-caste villagers by members of the village's artisan castes bent on exposing their high-caste neighbors. In both cases, however, the anthropologist was getting a controlled or biased image of the local culture which was

the result of local villagers managing information about themselves for the purpose of creating an image of their own religious behavior for the sake of impressing a perceived member of an audience.

If this is taken as an operational definition of impression management, then it should be obvious that to some degree all anthropological work involves impression management of many types. The anthropologist himself tries to act in a manner consonant with the culture around him, controlling his own learned behaviors and attitudes in order to behave "properly". The anthropologist who fails to act in this way and produces too much negative feedback toward his informants can at best expect having a great deal of information withheld from him.

For the research assistant (if one is used), the situation is even more complex. As a "culture broker" or go-between, the assistant must consider propriety at several levels of interaction. He must act, first of all, in a manner perceived as proper by his employer. Secondly, he must act "properly" within the expectations of his informants. Finally, he must meet the expectations of his own peer group, present in the field, perhaps, as teachers and low level bureaucrats. Each of these requires a "proper front" in Goffman's terminology and each interaction presents possible pitfalls in the gathering of ethnographic data.

In Berreman's example, the game of impression management was played against the assistant, but the assistant and the villagers could just as easily become "co-conspirators" out of fear, nationalism, hostility or, as we shall see, out of the desire to be helpful, leaving the anthropologist alone to try to sort out the bias. Since this is the case, it is to be expected that many distortions creep into even the most carefully done fieldwork. These errors of fact are generally of a minor

nature, of interest only to a limited audience of specialists as facts per se. As social phenomena, however, these distortions are of great importance within their functional milieu, for they demonstrate some of the most important features of inter-ethnic relations in the context of an multi-ethnic society. Corrections which I make for the ethnographic record must be looked at not as arguments over minutiae, but as an attempt to substantiate the purposeful distortions of a group's external image as a strategy for improving the position of members of that group *vis à vis* members of other groups in the area.

One of the best examples of the use of this type of control over information is found among the Thakalis of Dhaulagiri Zone in western Nepal. Living on one of the main trade routes across the Himalaya, the history of the Thakalis is one of gradual control of a large share of this trade, partially through the use of this strategy by the group as a whole. Through the manipulation of the group's collective image, the Thakalis were able to take advantage of opportunities for alliance which were not available to other less flexible groups and thus attain wealth and social prestige.

What is remarkable about the Thakalis is not that individuals or individual villages could manipulate their group image, rather it was that the Thakalis could cooperate in creating a consistent image for the group as a whole, which differed significantly from their own "back area" behavior. Even more remarkable, however, was the ability for the Thakalis to change their collective image, as a group, when that became historically necessary. Even later, the Thakalis developed a system which enabled them to put on several simultaneous, but internally consistent shows of impression management, yet at the same time maintain their own cohesion as a bounded group.

For the Thakalis, impression management involves more than

a limited show of orthodoxy for a high status audience. Instead, it is part of a struggle for political and economic power. The images which are created by the Thakalis have been formed to make alliances possible in order that a small, not very strong group could attain a large section of local trade. This fact is easy to lose hold of, for as in Berreman's examples, many of the cases of Thakali impression management involve the manipulation of religious symbols. It should be remembered, however, that in the larger Hindu and Buddhist world of the Himalaya, what is defined as religious is actually a context for the culture as a whole. Thus although the changes involve politics and economics, religion provides the arena for interaction.

One geographical factor should be added as well. At one time, the Thakalis lived within a single section of the Kali Gandaki valley. This area was located not merely on a major trade route, but also on the distinct boundary between the Hindu and Buddhist zones of cultural influence. Political control of the area seems to have shifted from one group to the other throughout the known history of the area. The Thakalis have had to modify their own social and religious practices, on the surface at least, in order to maintain a proper front within a changing situation. The control of the area by Tibetan Buddhists, for example, which lasted until 1860, apparently caused the Thakalis to react by imitating Buddhist social institutions, ritual forms, diet and their alphabet for the purpose of writing the Thakali language. The war between the Tibetans and the newly formed Rana government of Nepal brought a new master to the region and gradually the Thakalis exchanged their Buddhist elements for Hindu ones.

This change is not merely an example of acculturation, for there were never very many Hindus living in that region. Instead we have an example of purposeful external change for the creation of a new social image. Their were two major reasons for this

change. The Thakalis first wanted to minimize their identification with the Tibetan groups, since Tibetans had a very low status within the Nepalese legal code and since they were not considered trustworthy by the Ranas with whom they had just fought a war. Secondly, the Thakalis wanted to maximize their identification with the Hindu groups, thus enabling them to legitimize their presence within Nepalese society.

To do this, the Thakalis rewrote their origin mythology, arranging for certain older versions to be conveniently lost in a fire. According to this mythology, the Thakalis were now the descendants of the Raja of Jumla and a local "Magar" or "Gurung" princess. This would make the Thakalis Chhetri or Hamal within the system of the *Muluki Ain*. This attempt at status building is looked at as being laughable by some (cf. Sharma 1977), but if we break it down, it was actually a very sophisticated status building strategy.

The Thakalis began as "Bhotes", or Tibetans in the eyes of the Hindus, and "Bhotes" are beef-eaters and thus have a very low standing. The Thakali headmen ordered an end to beef-eating and called themselves Chhetri. If a merchant desires a certain price in the bazaar for a good, he does not ask the price desired, but a certain added amount as room for bargaining. The Thakalis did essentially the same thing in the case of status, since they wanted to move away from "Bhote" standing into the mainstream of Hindu society. Their bid for thread wearing status was rejected, as they knew it would be, but by asking more they managed to move their status up into the Matawali group, along with the Magars and Gurungs, leaving the Bhotes as a lower status group. It is clear that the Thakalis never hoped to be Chhetri, but by over-bidding let themselves be led back to the status they'd hoped for in the first place. This strategy is one of those mentioned by Festinger in his

theories of "cognitive dissonance" (1957) and is one of the techniques of western political propaganda.

Once the Thakalis attained respectability within the Hindu status sphere, their fluency with the Tibetans made it certain that they would soon have a role as local administrators for the Ranas. Through this role, that of *subbha*, the Thakalis increased their share of the local trade. With the expansion of their wealth and influence, an initially small class of Thakali merchants found it necessary to take in partners. By drawing on members of their own group, both through the Thakalis were able to expand themselves from what was initially a small group of wealthy individuals in to a network which involved nearly the entire group at one time or another throughout the year. The newer members of the group often had to travel into commercially pristine areas in order to avoid competition between Thakali merchants. In this way, the Thakalis brought shops and restaurants to many villages in the middle hills of Nepal. At the same time, close cooperation between Thakali merchants made it possible to drive out competition from other commercial groups organized into competing extended families.

At the same time, these Thakali families had to find a means of adapting themselves to their isolation from other Thakalis, and simultaneously find means to become part of the lives of other non-Thakali villagers who had become their neighbors and customers. The latter was handled initially through marriage alliances between Thakali men and local village women to ensure ties with local village notables. Thakali women, however, were reserved for marriage only with Thakali men. This served to strengthen ties between Thakalis living in separate communities and helped to maintain the network of ritual obligations between Thakalis that enabled the group to continue to exist in spite of the separation of its members. Thus a pattern was established of polygyny, with Thakali-Thakali

primary marriages and intercaste secondary marriages.

In these communities, impression management became a means for maintaining a proper front within non-Thakali villages. Since, as we have noted, religion presents an arena or context for daily life in the Himalayas, many of these changes appear religious in nature, but do in fact have a larger meaning. If one follows the Jomosom-Pokhara trail, one passes through territory dominated consecutively by Nepali high-castes, Gurungs, Magars and finally Thakalis. Each of these groups display differences in religious practices. Thakalis maintain hotels (Nep: *bhattis*) along the length of this road and thus live in contact with members of each of these other groups. It is significant that each group of Thakalis follow, overtly at least, the religious practices of their immediate neighbors in the area and thus Thakalis living along the road differ from each other in which religious tradition they publicly follow. Thakalis living in the Buddhist area are overtly Buddhist and Thakali lamas are highly valued in those areas, both by Thakalis and by the Buddhist Gurungs. In the Hindu Magar areas, the Thakalis are overtly Hindu and the lamas seldom visit, except as Thakalis. Brahmins are often used in these regions for religious rites.

To demonstrate the range of manipulation of proper fronts in religion, let me present two short examples.

Jomosom at the northern end of this trail until 1974 was the northernmost extreme of Nepali social influence. The town was essentially a desolate trading post maintained by a few Thakalis, with only one or two Nepalese government officials present occasionally throughout the year. Tibetans living further to the north came into Jomosom to buy snuff and other manufactured goods or to have documents recorded with the government. Since the Thakali traders in this area dealt primarily

with Tibetan customers, they overtly followed Buddhist religious and social practices, at least until recent years. In the post 1974 period, the Nepalese government began to take a greater interest in the area. Presently there is a garrison of soldiers and a unit of police near Jomosom, as well as a full-time bureaucracy made up of Nepalese urban types. One store owner in the area whose daughter had become a Buddhist nun in an earlier period, now hangs the symbol of the snake goddess on his door for the holiday *Nag Panchami*.

A second example of a similar vein comes from Pokhara. There is a Thakali woman, a divorcee, in that town who runs an hotel on a busy corner of the upper bazaar. Her establishment was once a gathering place for Peace Corps volunteers and with their business her hotel began to prosper. Several years went by and as these things sometimes happen, the older volunteers went home. As they had turned the place into a gathering point for their own clique, and as the younger volunteers were made to feel unwelcome, they went someplace else. The older ones left, and the woman began losing her business. Her restaurant had gone out of fashion.

Looking for new customers, she approached her sister-in-law, an older educated woman who was working for the missionary hospital at the time. The sister-in-law convinced some of the missionaries to take their meals at the hotel and business again improved. Soon after, I ran into the woman at the house of a friend. Not remarkably she had started wearing a small golden cross at her throat.

Each of these examples demonstrates the Thakalis' willingness to overtly change their religious practices for the sake of getting along with their neighbors. In spite of this, the Thakalis do maintain a set of ritual practices which are totally ideosyncratic and represent a guarded series of rituals which

help the Thakalis maintain their unity and identity in the face of all of this external change (see Manzardo, 1978 for an account of these practices and their role in Thakali society).

This type of localized image-building creates changes in Thakali culture from place to place, which can seriously effect the gathering of ethnographic data. If one were to select a single village, for example, one's data on the Thakalis might differ strikingly from that of another anthropologist working only a small distance away. Certainly differences in data and interpretation on Thakali shamanism from several different sources can be attributed to this effect. Iijima, for example, states that:

The process of Hinduization has also reduced the influence of *Dhom* (shamanistic) traditions in the Thakali community (1963: 51 ff. 7).

Bista, however, notes that:

The shamans who were the leaders in the traditional religions, still retain some influence, although their role tended now to be restricted to family contexts (1971: 54).

A still greater contrast can be found in the data of Kawakita who states the a revival of Thakali shamanistic traditions was then taking place (1957: 90-91 and 1974: 158), a statement which is supported by Bista in another context (1976: 92).

It is likely that the major cause of these differences in opinion was the difference in location where the various writers worked. In each area, the Thakalis were striving to create a different impression of themselves to their neighbors and in each place revealed their own traditions (themselves fairly uniform, but secretly kept traditions) to a varying degree depending on the local situation.

Another factor makes the data even more complex. The Thakalis have become strong believers in the importance of

education and many are quite well educated within the Nepali context. To the Thakalis, the anthropologist represents a member of the educational elite and thus is considered to be very important. The Thakalis, in trying to create a favorable impression with the anthropologist, will often try to second guess him. Because of their good education and their own sensitivity to others, the Thakalis are able to quite rapidly figure out the anthropologist's interests and seeing where his questions are leading bias their answers in such a way as to help the anthropologist prove his point. An anthropologist interested in Buddhist social institutions finds the Thakalis' continuing Buddhism stressed by his informants, even though for most purposes, Buddhism is nearly dead within the group. An anthropologist interested in Hinduization is impressed with the Thakalis' progress in that area. The anthropologist himself is therefore strongly subject to the Thakalis' facility with impression management and must use comparisons to keep his wits about him, for remaining detached from one's own interests and theories is one of the most difficult aspects of fieldwork.

Impression management also has an effect in the attempt to reconstruct the historical record. We have noted the rewriting of Thakali mythology and the loss of many of the most important originals (see Gauchan and Vinding, 1977 for an approximation of what is left). We are therefore left in a position where there are very few reliable documents.

It has been thought useful, for example, to use buildings and ruins in the Thak Khola area to try and establish the religious history of the Thakalis. It should be evident, however, that even if the buildings were properly dated (something which has not yet been accomplished), one can never be sure who built the building and for what reason. Fürer-Haimendorf points out that certain *gompas* might have been part of certain isolated monasteries and not associated with the Thakalis at all (1975:141).

It is even more difficult to assess the purpose of many buildings even when their association with the Thakalis has been established. Some buildings have been misinterpreted by those with a strong interest in Buddhism. The Narsang *gomba* is a case in point. It is listed as a Buddhist structure by Jest (1964/65), and its architectural mimicry makes its inclusion readily understandable. On closer inspection, however, the building turns out not to be Buddhist, but dedicated instead to the cult of the goddess Lha Nari Jhyowa, important to the ideosyncratic religion of the Thakalis, but "dressed up" to impress the Buddhist neighbors of the Thakalis, powerful in an earlier period. One wonders how many other Buddhist *gompas* were converted structures belonging at one time to other non-Buddhist deities.

It is even more difficult to gain a sense of time depth for nonmaterial culture. It is evident that the Thakalis changed their dietary habits for the purpose of impression management, but it is difficult to find out how long this change took to include the entire group. All we are left with is the knowledge that the change took place. There are also indications, however, that other changes had taken place, but the memory of those changes has been almost entirely lost. Let me give a possible example. The present Thakali inheritance system is one similar to the standard Hindu system which is part of the Nepalese legal code. In this system a son gets an equal share with all his brothers, a half-share goes to any sister unmarried at the age of 35 and reverts to the agnates on her death or marriage. An extra share is given to the youngest son (usually the parents house) to help him provide for a surviving parent.

In interviewing Thakali informants, I ran into an interesting variant. According to one Thakali living in a remote village outside of Thak Khola, a Thakali parent was allowed to leave his estate to anybody he wished and conversely cut-off anybody he

wished. In this way, a son or daughter was uncertain of his patrimony. This system fits in with what we know about the *dhikur* or the rotating credit system of the Thakalis (see Manzardo, 1978 and Messerschmidt, 1972), for the child's own uncertainty leads him to participate in this Thakali system in order to allow him to establish his own income.

I was unable to confirm this system with any other Thakali informant and thus I was left with two possible alternatives. The first was that my own interests were spotted by the informant and that he created, in effect, a hoax for my benefit, in order to please me and impress me with the Thakalis' cleverness. The second possibility was that there was a shift in Thakali inheritance patterns as a result of the Hinduization of certain group customs, but that the memory of this change has nearly been forgotten. Although this perhaps seems far fetched, I can give a confirmed example of this cultural amnesia. In spite of the fact that the origin myths of the Thakalis were most certainly created for a specific purpose, this fact is not known or is forgotten by many Thakalis. To these descendants of the myth writers, Thakuri origin for the Thakalis has become a 'fact'.

The creation of cultural 'facts' can come about quite simply. Krishna Pradhan once told me of a similar change among the Magars of the Bandipur region of western Nepal. Each year, a certain Newar family did ancestor worship. This family had a cat and in order to keep it from interfering with the ceremonies, they tied the cat up. A Magar watching the Newar ceremony noted the cat tied up near the sacred diagrams of the ceremony, and reported it to his people. Now each year the local Magars tie up a cat when they do their ancestor ceremony. The origin of this custom is a misunderstanding, but it soon becomes a cultural truth. Imagine how much quicker this can happen when a change is based not on misunderstanding, but on the imperatives of creating a favorable impression in order to create a new alliance.

In all of these cases, the 'facts' are much less important than the purposes and process of historical creation. That change takes place in all cultures is undeniable. People learn from and imitate people from other groups. Traders more than other types of people have opportunities for this type of learning, since their way of life brings them into contact with individuals from many other groups. In the case of the Thakalis, however, we are not talking about individual imitation or even mass acculturation. Instead we have an example of impression management, a purposeful type of "cultural chameleonism", involving the cooperation of nearly the entire group for the purpose of improving one's financial position, if not for survival itself.

Impression management, as Goffman uses the term, is part of all human interrelationships. All individuals maintain "proper fronts" according to the social situation in which they find themselves. Urbanization creates an increase in the number of possible social roles and therefore increases the number of social situations an individual may find himself in. Living in an urban situation makes us familiar with impression management from our own experience. Life in the villages of rural Nepal, however, involves fewer actors and although there is a variety of social situations, most of them involve repeated interactions with the same individuals. The trader, however, because of the necessity of his operating in many different areas, deals with a greater number of social situations and a greater number of actors than does the average rural Nepali. For this reason the Thakali more closely resembles the urbanite, than he does the farmers who are his neighbors. In addition, through his contacts with other traders, he is able to operate on the basis of a larger amount of information than his non-Thakali neighbors. The Thakali, therefore, operates in a different manner than his neighbors. Farmers are used to accepting certain things about a

man as being fairly constant, for they are used to seeing the same man in changing roles. The Thakalis, however, are creating temporary personas for specific pragmatic purposes, and these personas change as situations change at various points throughout the trade network. It certainly appears that the Thakalis are somehow dishonest in their dealings with others, but this is no different than one's change of language between, let's say, the locker room and the committee meeting. Relative to the simplicity of interrelationships in the average village, the Thakali comes out ahead if only because of his own flexibility.

Within the Himalayas, there are many factors which contribute to the survival of a group. The Thakalis' initial advantage lay in their presence on a north-south trade route which enabled them to cross the Himalayas. The Thakalis were not the only group in the area which had the potential to become powerful traders, nor were they the largest such group. The Thakalis were subject to pressures which were the result of frequent changes of rulers, because of wars between larger groups living in the area. Although much of their early history has been lost, it is apparent that because of this uncertainty the Thakalis have operated on two major principles for some time: cooperation and unity between the members of the group and opportunism toward those not in the group. Impression management requires group unity, but it is a major tool of the Thakalis' opportunism. By travelling to their customers' villages and by demonstrating their own "propriety", hence trustworthiness, the Thakalis managed to cut-off their rivals and take over much of the economy of western Nepal. By imitating their rulers, the Thakalis were made stewards of the land and greatly expanded their wealth. Cooperation helped them carry off their conspiracies against the rest, for they confirmed each others' religious fictions while keeping their own religious practices secret and their society private.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Berreman, Gerald
1972 *Hindus of the Himalayas: Ethnography and Change*, Second Edition, University of California Press, Berkeley.
- Bista, Dor Bahadur
1971 "The Political Innovators of the Upper Kali-Gandaki", *Man*, Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 52-60.
1976 *The People of Nepal*, Third Edition, Ratna Pustak Bhandar, Kathmandu.
- Festinger, L.
1957 *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*, Row Peterson, Evanston.
- Fürer-Haimendorf, Christoph von
1975 *Himalayan Traders, Life in Highland Nepal*, John Murray, London.
- Gauchan, S. and Vinding, M.
1977 "The History of the Thakaali According to the Thakaali Tradition", *Kailash*, Volume V. Number 2, pp. 97-184.
- Goffman, E.
1959 *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Doubleday, Garden City.
- Iijima, S.
1963 "The Hinduization of a Himalayan Tribe in Nepal", *Kroeber Society Anthropological Papers*, No. 29, pp. 43-52.
- Jest, Corneille
1964/65 "Les Thākāli", *L'Ethnographie*, Nos. 58/59, pp. 26-49.
- Kawakita, Jiro
1957 *Peoples of Nepal Himalaya*, Vol. III of the *Scientific Results of the Japanese Expedition to the Nepal Himalaya*, H.L. Kihara, ed. Flora and Fauna Research Society, Kyoto University, Kyoto.
1974 *The Hill Magars and Their Neighbors*, Tokai University Press, Tokyo.

Manzardo, A.E.

1978 *To be Kings of the North: Community, Adaptation and Impression Management in the Thakalis of Western Nepal*, Ph. D. dissertation submitted to the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Messerschmidt, D.

1972 "Rotating Credit in Gurung Society: The *Dhikur* Associations of Tingaun", *The Himalayan Review*, Vol. V, No. 4, pp. 23-35.

Sharma, P.R.

1977 "Caste, Social Mobility and Sanskritization in a Tribal Hindu Society: A Study of Nepal's Old Legal Code", in *Changing Aspects of Modern Nepal*, Shigeru Iijima ed. *Momenta Serindica*, No. 1 and Africa, Tokyo, pp. 93-118.

THARUS OF DANG: THARU RELIGION

Drone Pd. Rajaure

Kathmandu

1. Introduction

The religion of the Tharus, like that of other tribal peoples, is a complex system of beliefs and practices interwoven with the rest of their culture. These beliefs and practices are occasionally validated through dreams, visions or trances in which the deities and ancestral spirits instruct the ritual specialists in the practices and cult to be followed. There are also legends and myths telling the people about the creation of the world and ritual practices are not just taken for granted by the Tharus; they are learned from the elders in the same way as other patterns of culture are acquired. There is a hierarchy of ritual specialists who manipulate the supernatural and approach the gods and spirits on behalf of the people. They are also supposed to protect the people against the attacks of witches, chronic diseases and also some natural disasters.

According to Tharu beliefs, before the creation of this world the earth was burning hot. There was only fire and smoke everywhere but not a single 'strand' of life. After some time, water took the place of fire and there was water everywhere. The Almighty God flew all over, in the form of a bird, to see whether there was any trace of land to start the creation of the world. As no such land existed anywhere on the water, he sowed a lotus seed and, when the leaves of a lotus plant came out above the water, the Almighty God gave birth to Gurubaba

(the first Tharu god on earth) in the form of a *kwara* squash, (Benincasa hispida) that is to say, without limbs and sense organs. The Almighty God took pity on the creature he had made and gave limbs and all necessary organs one after another to Gurubaba. Gurubaba, after he had become like a complete man, ordered an earth-worm, named Dudhia, to bring some *ammar māti* (divine earth) from the *pātāl* (the world underneath) to start the worldly creation. The Dudhia, after having been thoroughly searched by the watchmen guarding the *amar māti* in *pātāl*, was somehow able to smuggle out a little bit of the earth by hiding it in his mouth. This *ammar māti* was scattered on the water, in the same way as a bit of curd is put into milk to curdle it. After that, the water turned into earth. Gurubaba then brought all earthly things into existence. Later on, when Gurubaba felt lonely, he created the goddess Maiya, who became his wife. All men and women on this earth today are the descendants of Gurubaba and Maiya.

According to the Tharus, the entire universe is peopled by several kinds of spirits. A human being can also become a spirit, after death. Spirits of all kinds, the Tharus believe, can be either benevolent or malevolent. The benevolent ones have to be approached with ritual performances, prayers and offerings for maintaining a happy and peaceful life for the people and security for their property. The malevolent spirits have to be checked either by pleasing them with occasional offerings, or by controlling them through spells, threats or other methods of magic. Some of the benevolent spirits which have proved very helpful to the people have been installed in appropriate places, for instance the deity-room of a house, the courtyard of a house, a village-level shrine (*deu thanwa*) or a region-level shrine (*pragannāk deutā*) of the district. There are some idols and artifacts, representing particular deities, installed inside the deity-room of a house. No verbal

distinction is made between a deity and a spirit. Both of them are called *bhutwā*. Powers and forces of Nature personified are also worshipped occasionally for protection and to help obtain a good harvest. The existence of a Supreme God is not denied, although he is known vaguely and is only mentioned occasionally, when Tharus seek to explain troubles or events beyond their control and understanding.

In order to understand the interwoven complex of Tharu religious practices and superstitions, we shall discuss various aspects of it separately under several sub-titles.

2. Deities and Ritual Objects Enshrined in the Deity-room

Inside each Tharu house there is a deity-room called *deurahar*. Among the Gamwa and Dhairahawa clans only a few deities and ritual objects are enshrined. They are kept at the base of the eastern wall of the deity-room. Inside this room, there are certain idols and artifacts some of them representing particular deities, enshrined near the north-west corner of the room, to the side of and below the *mani khambhā*. The *mani khambhā* is the first pillar fixed in the ground when constructing a Tharu house. Great importance is given to this pillar.

A. Deities and Ritual Objects Common to all Tharus

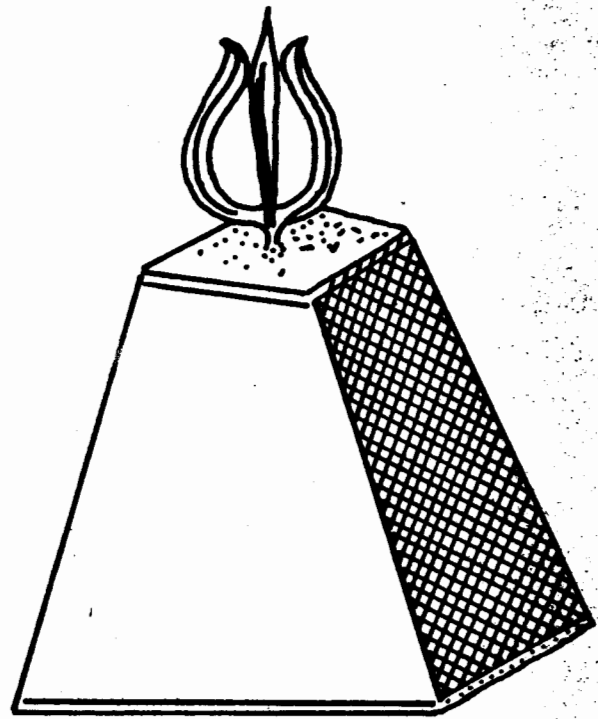
Except for the Gamwa and Bhairahawa clans, all other clans have the following divinities and ritual objects:

(i) Divinities

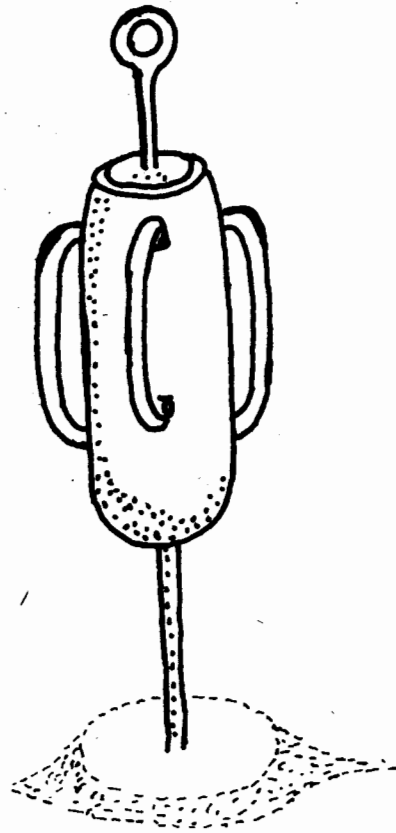
- (a) *Gurubabā* - He is a male deity and the first person created by the Almighty God. Later on Gurubaba created all other deities and also this earth, its contents and living beings. He is represented by a small, thumb-size piece of rough leather, fashioned into a human shape. A little



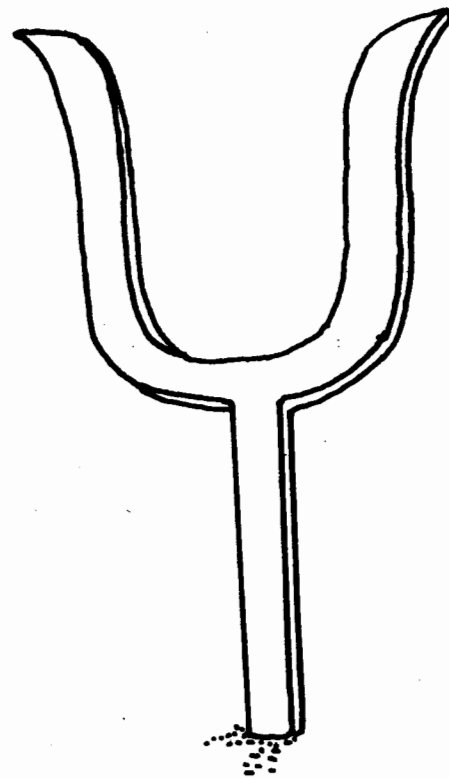
GURUBABA



MAIYA



KHEKHRI



HEGRI

string is tied round its neck, so as to make it easy to take it out of the holy sack (*jholi*). This Gurubaba is made and sold to Tharus by the *camārs* (cobblers of Indian origin) in return for some foodgrains or cash.

- (b) *Maiya* - She is a female deity, who was created by Gurubaba and later became his wife Maiya, is a very important goddess. She is linked to every shamanistic activity. She is the deity who controls a person when he goes into a state of trance, and to whom the chants and spells are directed when a person enters a trance. People being trained as new *guruwās* are brought and seated before Maiya.

An image of Maiya six inches long is made of clay and iron. The iron portion, which is the upper portion, looks like a trident except that all its three prongs join at the top. This portion is made by local non-Tharu black-smiths (*kāmī*). The lower part, which serves as a pedestal for the iron part, is twice the height of the upper part. It is made by the Tharus themselves out of unbaked clay.

- (c) *Khekhri* - She is a female deity but her role or function is not explicit. She is represented by a piece of wood resembling the handle of a screw-driver, with a small ring on top, four projections on the four sides of the handle, and a spike at the bottom. The ring, the projections and the spike are made of iron. The spike at the bottom serves to stand the deity upright on the ground. The total height of the Khekhri is about six inches. The wooden part is made by the Tharus themselves, and the iron parts are made by black-smiths (*lohār*).

- d) *Saurā* - *Saurā* is supposed to be a deity of valour and might and is represented by a thick, iron nail. Because of his valour and strength Tharus consider him a Tharu version of the famous monkey-god Hanuman of the Hindus. Whenever any important ritual or shamanistic performance is done, *Saura* is fixed in the ground just at the spot where the performance will occur; his presence is supposed to drive away the evil spirits from the spot. *Saura* is usually kept inside a *jholi* (a ritual bag). Only when the *jholi* is taken out of doors for a ritual performance, is *Saura* fixed in the ground.

(ii) Ritual Objects

- (a) *Byat* - This is a cane stick which is ritually handled by the *gardhurryā* (head of household) who is also the *gurawā* (household priest and shaman) of his house. This occurs on the ninth day of *Dasya* festival, when all *gurawās* of the village assemble in the deity room of a senior or more experienced *gurawā* for a mass trance. It is believed that this stick has supernatural power and protects the *gurawā*, and also his family, from bad spirits. It is also sometimes carried out of doors, along with *Saura* and other objects, for certain ritual performances. The rest of the time, it is kept inside the deity-room. Whenever other deities or ritual objects are worshipped or are given offerings, the *Byat* also gets its share.
- (b) *Jholi* (=bag) - It is a small bag, in which some of the deities, the *dhoop* (incense) and *bān* (lit.

"arrow" but here a mixture of husked rice and human blood) and a few other small items needed during worship or a ritual performance, are kept. Usually it is hung on the wall beside the deities and other objects which are kept on small circular clay platforms slightly raised off the floor.

- (c) *Barhani* (broom) - It is a ritual broom, also called *swān muth barhani*. It is made of a small bundle of *siru* grass strands which are supposed to be gold strands. It is the same quality as the *siru* strands which are used to sweep houses; a few strands of it are also offered to the deities or ancestors as tooth-picks during any offering. One similar bundle of this grass (like a broom) is tied near the top of the *dulāhā* post when fixing this post in the ground. This post is the northernmost post in the central row of posts planted when a house is built.
- (d) *Caitik Pathyā* - It is a very small or miniature basket. Some households keep this basket filled with rice as a symbolic token of prosperity. The word *pathyā* seems to have been derived from the word *pāthi*, a measure of volume for cereals.
- (e) *Either a Kharga (=a sword) or a Barchi (a spear)* - These are ritual objects carried by a bridegroom when he is wearing ceremonial robes during the marriage procession. The bridegroom is considered a king among Hindus for the day of his marriage. So, the sword or spear, taken by a Tharu bridegroom during his marriage procession, represents his royal status. The bridegroom carries one or

other of these objects to his bride's house during the procession. There he places the sword or spear in the deity-room of the bride's family; and brings it back with him when returning home. Before the bride is carried to the bridegroom's house by her party, the bridegroom fixes the sword or spear in front of the door of his house. There he sits like a door-attendant, as he must not enter the house until he is accompanied by his bride.

- (f) *Saksaki* - Some informants also called *Saksaki* *Latau Mahādeu*. *Saksaki* is represented by a thin, small bunch of peacock feathers about one foot in length. The ritual function or use of *Saksaki* is not explicit; it is not clear whether *Saksaki* is a deity or a ritual object.
- (g) *Curryā (bangles)* - There are a few glass bangles which are also hung on the nail where the *jholi* is hung. These bangles are put there in honour of the *curinnya* (witches). This is done to please the witches so that they will not trouble the family.

B. Optional Minor Deities and Ritual Objects

There are a few more deities or religious objects, some of which are kept inside the deity-room by different clans, according to their family traditions. There is no fixed rule or system about the enshrining of these minor deities, spirits and ritual objects. These deities and ritual objects are kept in the house to maintain prosperity and happiness. If anything bad happens to the family, and if any explanation (by any shaman or any experienced person)

relates this event or situation to any of these deities or religious objects, some or all of these deities enshrined in the deity-room (*deurahār*) may be neglected or abandoned in consequence of such advice. Sometimes such abandonment can take place because of instructions given by an ancestor, greater deity or any great shaman, in a dream, to the head of the family.

The following are some of these optional minor divinities, spirits and ritual objects found in some Tharu families:

(i) Divinities

- (a) *Lagubāsu* - Lagubāsu is the name given by the Tharu to the famous serpent Vasuki mentioned in Hindu literature. He is represented by a small iron hook, resembling the hood of a cobra. It is fixed over one of the miniature altars made in the deity-room.
- (b) *Ban Gaidu* - The nature and function of Ban Gaidu is not widely known. He is a male deity. Probably he has some relation with the Nepalese Hindu deity Gaidu.¹ The Tharu families of Dhairahawa clan in Lakhwar village of Dang worship this deity. One earthen horse is offered or his altar, probably as a mount for him.

(ii) Spirits


- (a) *Bhagmarrwa* - He is supposed to be the benevolent spirit of a saint or ancestor. A small unbaked

1. Turner, p. 147, Gaidu: "Name of the God of cowherds (to whom milk and ghee are offered in worship on the full-moon day of Magsir and Jeth)."

earthen horse, offered in his honour during Dasya ceremony, is kept on his altar as his mount.

- (b) *Ratanpurwa* - He is similar to Bhagmarra.
- (c) *Baidawa* (=a doctor or a healer) - He is supposed to be a benevolent spirit of a great traditional doctor or healer. One unbaked clay horse is offered to him as a mount. During every Dasya festival, he is given an offering of a cock.

(iii) Ritual Objects

- (a) *Hegri* - This is a small  shaped iron piece. Its presence in the house is supposed to give a good yield of fish. Previously, whenever the family set out for fishing, it covered the deity with a net (*helka*) for a while, then took the net to the fishing site. Thus they could catch a lot of fish. This deity is common among the Kathpaulya Demandaura clan only.
- (b) *Jakhani* - Jakhani is an object which enables one to enlist supernatural power so as to maintain the prosperity of the family, especially with regard to the abundance of foodgrains. A few of my informants claimed that they had seen Jakhani. According to them, Jakhani were twins, and looked like two glass marbles. The twins, a boy and a girl, came inside the house, rolling on the floor. When they came rolling into the room the boy and girl, according to my informants, were kissing each other. Some informants said that these marbles disappeared as they had come, while others said that though they had kept them and buried them inside a pile of rice, for some time, later on they disappeared.

In practice, either one single, apple sized clay-model of Jakhani, or two small models, the size of chess-pieces, are enshrined in the *deurahār*.

3. The Four Deities Associated with the Gharguruwa Clans

Apart from the above-mentioned Deurahar deities, there is a whole system of deities represented by terracotta horses.² These deities are ritually manipulated by the *gharguruwas*, professional priest-shamans who perform rituals and give advice to householders (Barins). That society is divided into two groups: (1) Barins (lay-households). All households of either group have a *guruwa* (priest/shaman), a male member of the household who acts as priest or shaman in minor rituals concerning the household. During major rituals and important shamanistic performances, a *gharguruwa* guides and helps the *guruwa*. A *guruwa* from a Barin household can never become a *gharguruwa*.

In the eastern courtyard of each *gharguruwa* family's house, there is a *marrwa* (a shrine inside a miniature hut) where the terracotta horse (deity), of that *gharguruwa* family is kept enshrined. But, in a *barin* family, the same type of horse (or deity), which is manipulated by its *gharguruwa*, is enshrined in the northern-most altar, inside the *deurahar*. These terracotta horses are less than one foot in length. The horses are made by *kumhar* or *kumhal* (=potters) either in Parseni village of Dang valley or in a few villages in Deokhuri valley like Garhwa, Kolahi, Bankatwa, Khaira and Patringa, where the potters live.

2. There is mention of a deity Hayagriva, in the Hindu and Buddhist pantheon (B. Bhattacharyya, *The Indian Buddhist Iconography*). Hayagriva literally means 'Horse neck' and is always depicted with a horse-head. For Hindus he is a god of Fever (p. 233) and for Buddhists, one of the 108 forms of Avalokitesvara (p. 394). Without more evidence, it is however, difficult to ascertain any relation between the Tharu horse deities and Hayagriva.

During the Dasya festival, these horses are bought from them to replace those in the *deurahar* or in the *marrwa*. The horses are of four types; each type being associated with one or more Gharguruwa clans. These four types of horses are known as:

- (1) Jagarnatthya
- (2) Bherrwa:
 - (a) Dahit Bherrwa
 - (b) Sukhrorya Bherrw
- (3) Madua.
- (4) Raura or Demanraura.

With the exception of the Demanraura type of horse, which is easily identifiable from others by its funnel-shaped open mouth, all other horses look similar. They can be distinguished from one another only by the marks engraved on their necks.³ For example, the Jagarnatthya horse has got two straight rows of marks. These marks are supposed to represent the jingling bells, as sometimes worn by horses. There are two types of Bherrwa horses, each recognizable by particular marks. Sukhrorya Bherrwa have three rows of jingling-bell marks, alternating with three rows of crescent-shaped marks. Dahit Bherrwa have only one row of such marks.

According to a legend, these four types of horses are brothers. The eldest is Jagarnatthya, the second, Bherrwa, the third Madua and the youngest Demanraura. Of these, Madua was born from a step-mother while the three others were born from the same mother.

Jagarnatthya (Jagannath) is also worshipped by Rajis in Far Western Nepal in the area of Surkhet.⁴ According to Tharu

3. See photo No. 1.

4. Johan Reinhard, personal communication.

informants in Baibang village of Dang, Jagannath is also worshipped in the Far Western Hills but in the form of a tiger. According to the same informants, Bherrwa is also worshipped on the Indian border where he is known as Bheru Baba. Furthermore, one informant (not from Dang) told me that the name of Bheru, who is also sometimes called Bherū, is a Saivite and Buddhist deity.

These four deities differ from other deities in this respect that they are part of both the Gharguruwa and Barin traditional beliefs. Each of the Gharguruwa clans is linked with one of the four deities. And each Barin clan is related to one of the Gharguruwa clans.

Traditionally the whole of Dang valley was divided into five shamanistic sectors under five different shamans known as *desbandhya guruwa*. These sectors were as follows:

1. *Pachilla Praganna*

This was the extreme western part of Dang valley beyond the Gwar Khola. Now-a-days Ram Sharan Chaudhari of Rautgaon who has Jagarnatthya as his horse-deity, is the *desbandhya guruwa* of this sector.

2. *Pātu Pragannā*

This is the territory around the Patu Khola. The present shaman of this sector is Krishna Chaudhari of Chis village in Dang who also uses the Jagarnatthya horse.

3. *Chilli Praganna*

The shamanistic rights of this sector now-a-days are in the hands of Tek Bahadur Chaudhari's family; they have migrated to Gabdahawa village from Daruwa. This family uses the *bherrwa* horse.

4. *Pachillā Sawāri*

Jholahā and Chillu Chaudhari of Jalhaura village are the joint shamans of this sector. Their deity is the *madu* horse.

5. *Aghillā Sawāri*

Now-a-days Teju Guruwa is the shaman of this sector. His deity is also the *madua*. He is now living in Bhaishkurma village where he migrated from Chainpur village.

For each horse-deity, as seen above, there was at least one sector allotted but not for *demanraura*, because, according to some informants, he was too young and stupid.

All six shamans mentioned above are supposed to be the shamans of their sectors and authorised to perform the *pragannā* level rituals. They got their shamanistic rights by inheritance from one of their fore-fathers, who in turn had got his by royal orders either from a king or a magistrate as mentioned in *lāl mohārs*. Several persons received such *lāl mohārs*. The duties of these *desbandhyā guruwās* were to drive away the evil spirits, wild animals, diseases and pests, and to help, ritually and magically, to trap wild elephants for royal needs. In exchange for the ritual rights and powers (to collect fees impose fines, extract gifts etc.) given to them and confirmed by the administration in the form of royal decrees, the Desbandhya Guruwas were expected to make some fixed, annual payments in cash to the administration.

4. Deities of the Cattleshed

There are two deities concerned with the cattleshed, which are known as Bagar and Dhamraj. The shrine of Dhamraj is usually located in the centre of the fence which separates the *ghari*

(cattleshed section) and the *bahari* section of a house (open to all-comers) from one another. So Dhamraj is also considered to be a deity of the *bahari* section; he is the protective deity of household pets. His shrine is represented by one of the pegs, fixed beneath the *bahari* side of the partition-making fence.⁵ The space, at the limit of the *bahari* section, opposite the *ghari*, is used to keep small animals like sheep, goats, small calves, pigs and also one or two horses. The name Dhamraj seems to have been derived from Dharmaraj, which is also one of the names of Yamaraj (the Hindu deity of Death); but without further evidence, we cannot identify Dhamraj with Yamaraj.

The shrine of Bagar, the other deity concerned with cattle and livestock, is supposed to be in the south-east corner of the *ghari* section. There is nothing representing the Bagar and his shrine. People just suppose his shrine exists there and offer some cow-milk diluted with water, called *dhār* (this offering is limited to Bagar only), by pouring it on that spot along with other items given in offering during every ritual event in the house. Occasionally (once every five to twelve years) a goat or sheep is sacrificed to Bagar on the occasion of Bagar Puja. Some event such as the sudden death of cattle or livestock, or certain dreams experienced by the household-chief, or again the advice of any experienced shaman, may cause Barka Puja to be performed.

5. Deities and Spirits of the Courtyard

The following deity and spirits are enshrined on the eastern side of the courtyard of a Tharu house.

A. *Deity*

Patnahi Bhawani - She is a female goddess from Patan

5. See Sketch

or Devi Patan, an Indian border town, associated with the cult of Gorakhnath. It is said that the ancestors of some Tharu families went to Devi Patan on pilgrimage and brought this cult back with them. Usually, no figure of Bhawani is made. Sometimes just a small stone, half buried in the ground, represents her. She is the only deity enshrined in the courtyard.

B. *The Spirits*

- (i) Kolhu Masan is an evil spirit associated with the *kolh*. *Kolh* or *kolhu* is the word for the oil-crusher (See illustration on page). The oil-crusher, which is always installed in the eastern part of the courtyard of a house, represents Kolhu Masan itself. So the houses which have not been able to install this machine, whatever the reason may have been, don't have to worship or make offering to this spirit.
- (ii) Raksa: 'Raksa' is the Tharu version of the Hindu word *Rakshas* meaning a demon. He is a malevolent deity or spirit, and must be pacified with ritual offerings. Only those families who have tame buffaloes have this shrine. The peg representing Raksa is similar to the pegs to which buffaloes are tied. The name and origin of Raksa seems to have derived from the buffalo-headed demon called Mahishasur in the Hindu pantheon.

All the household and courtyard deities are worshipped by the household priest/shaman who is also the household chief. Each household of whatever clan or sub-group of Tharus, has one of their male members as their household priest/

shaman (*gurawa*). He must know some of the shamanistic craft and also the art of going into trance. The ceremony in which novices are brought into trance under the guidance of experienced shamans is known as *laulā gurawā banaina* (=making of new *gurawā*) ceremony. It is performed every year, on a Monday night of the bright fortnight between Aswin (September-October) and Mangsir (November-December) months. After being trained in this ceremony the novices are considered fit to conduct all household worship. These household and courtyard deities are worshipped on various occasions which will be discussed later.

The Village-level Deities and Spirits

In every village, there are some village-level deities and spirits. The deities are enshrined either inside a tiny hut, beneath a tree, or in an open space. Some villages have two such shrines one at the northern end and one at the southern limits. Each shrine houses the same deities but one of the shrines is used for *dhurriya gurai* (annual worship during maize cultivation) and the other for *harāhā gurai* (annual worship during rice cultivation). The village-level spirits are usually enshrined beneath a tree or a bush, or sometimes in an open space in a field, or again alongside a path.

In Sukhrwar village, there is only one shrine for village-level deities. By way of exception, it is located in the centre of the village. Such a village-level shrine (*deuthanmwa*) contains a pair of artistically carved wooden planks and a few pegs fixed in the ground (see photo no. 7). One of the carved wooden planks with a single prong on top is a male figure, representing Cabahwa, and the other, with five prongs is a female figure representing Daharcandi. The literal meaning of Cabahwa is "four-

armed". So Cabahwa is the deity who protects the earth with his four-arms, covering the four directions. According to common belief, this deity protects all people living inside the village along with their animals and other properties. Daharcandi is the female deity (*candi*) guarding the trails (*dahar*). She is the deity who prevents epidemics and blocks unwanted natural events like drought or famine from entering the village, and thus protects the villagers from their incursions. There are also five small wooden pegs fixed in a row besides Cabahwa and Daharcandi. These represent the five Pandava brothers of the Hindu epic *Mahabharata*. There is one more, larger peg fixed in the ground besides the Cabahwa and Daharcandi. This peg is known as *murāhmahton* (village-headman's peg). A new *murāhmahton* is fixed alongside the old one in the ground each time a Mahaton is changed, and each time the household of a Mahaton builds a new house or adds some more rooms to the old one. If a single piece of this set of planks and pegs is burned, the whole set has to be replaced by a new one after a special ritual.

In certain villages such as Sukhrwar there are also some village-level spirits known as Bhayar. These are enshrined beneath two Pipal trees at the southern limit of the village. Altogether there are nine. They are known as (i) Jogethwā (=a yogi) (ii) Raksā (=a demon) (iii) Camārin (=a female cobbler) (iv) Jhakri (=a shaman from the hills) (v) Bahirā Raksa (=a deaf demon) (vi) Dasaut Bhagaut (-a shaman ancestor of the present village-chief) (vii) Maiya Bherrwa (=a sheep belonging to the goddess Maiya) (viii) Bhawani (ix) Isara Bisara (=the forgotten spirit).⁶ In addition to these nine spirits, there are two more spirits whose shrine is located in a field to the south of Sukhrwar, beyond a stream. Both of these spirits are

6. Worship occurs at this shrine to appease any spirit that may have been forgotten or left out of worship.



1. The Terracotta Horse Deities



2. A *Mahaton* Offering Liquor to His Courtyard Deities



3. The Chief *Guruwā* Praying to Gods before Performing *Laula Guruwā* Ceremony



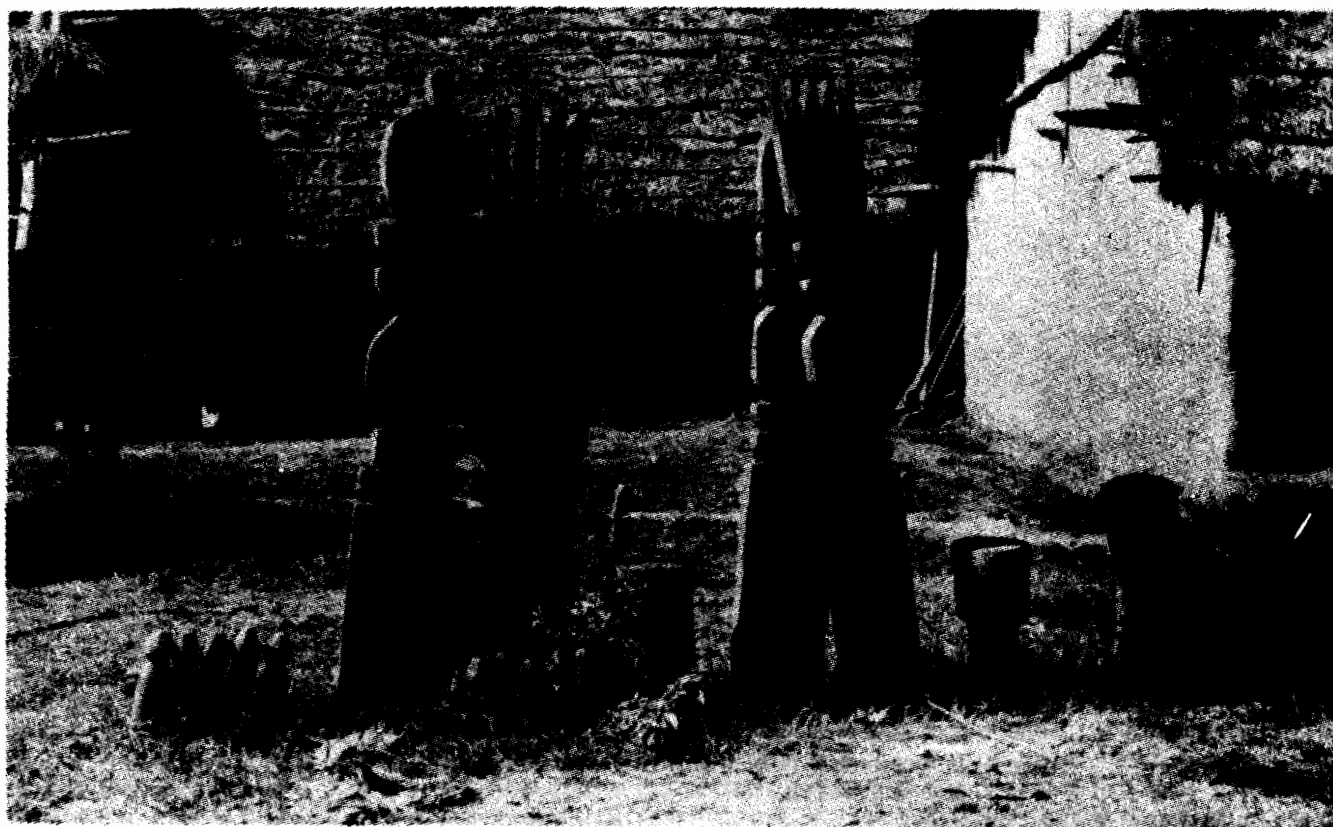
4. The *Laula Guruwās* Held Carefully by Others while in Trance



5. The *Laula Gwurws* Sitting in front of their Household Deities



6. The Standing Drummers



7. Artistic Wooden Planks Representing Village Level Deities



8. Marriage Procession Circumambulating Peepal Tree where Village Level Deities Reside

females known as (x) Saurinnya Pitarain (=the female ancestor from Sauri village) and (xi) Mari.

7. Modes and Occasions for Worship and Offerings

A. *Modes of Offering*

There are three main modes of offering each used on the appropriate occasion. These are as follows:

- (i) General worship made on occasions of minor ritual importance: The deities are simply offered liquor, *dhar* cakes and water. Such worship and offerings are made on occasions like Auli Puja (ceremony for eating new crop of rice), marriage etc. Such worship and offering is called *mad dharkainā* (pouring liquor)⁷ or *dhar denā* (offering (*dhār*)).
- (ii) Thanks-Offering: This is done when the worshipper himself or the household of the worshipper benefits from some unseen or unexpected event. For instance - the birth of a first son. Such offering is called Sarhauni or Barhanti Puja. *Sathyaura* (sweet balls made of parched rice flour mixed with raw sugar), which are especially prepared for this occasion, are offered to the household deities along with some liquor and water.
- (iii) Offering Made after contact has been established with a deity and/or spirit. This is called *gurai* (seance). After every stage of trance and dialogue with a deity or spirit offerings of water, milk and liquor are made to him/her. Such an

7. See photo no. 2.

offering is also called *minhi denā gurai* (seance for offering snacks). It is offered after rituals which are carried out in order to find-out the will of a certain spirit or deity. The deity or spirit concerned is pacified from time to time with *minhi* (=snacks) until the *pujā* (sacrifice) already promised for him is done.

- (iv) **Sacrifice:** A ritual, when one or more poultry or animal are sacrificed, is called *pujā* or *pujā carhainā*. Quite often, in consequence of the influence of the Hindu religion and the Sanskrit term '*pujā*' the word *pujā* is also applied to any kind of ritual, but, *pujā*, in the Tharu context means a "sacrifice", sometimes, to distinguish the Tharu meaning of *pujā* from that of the common Hindu term, the word *carhainā* (-to offer) is added immediately after the word '*pujā*'.

Pujā carhainā is usually done during Dasya festival and Dewari ceremony. Occasionally it is done during the ceremonies performed on the advice of some experienced shamans to fulfill the desires of unfed or ill-fed spirits and deities. The most important and elaborate *pujā* is the Barkapuja.

B. *Worship of the Household Deities and Spirits*

Though each clan has its own traditions concerning worship of its deities and/or spirits, generally they worship their household deities on the following occasions:

- (i) **Dasya festival:** A *pujā* is made during this festival. Most of the Tharus then sacrifice a cock at the base of the *mani khambhā* post. Some other

animals are also sacrificed, if the family can afford it.

- (ii) In Barkapuja.
- (iii) At the birth of a child: this is a *sarhauni* type of offering.
- (iv) At marriages: *Cuni* and *Barrya* dishes, along with liquor and milk, are offered.
- (v) When a house is being extended towards the north, or when a new house is being constructed, the household deities are offered *pujā* with a cock. In the case of a house being extended towards the south, (cattle-shed side) an uncastrated ram is offered as *pujā* to Bagar, the deity of the cat-tleshed.

C. *Worship of the Village-level Deities and Spirits*

The task of worshipping the village-level deities and spirits is that of the village-chief (Mahton). He worships these deities on behalf of the village. Some aged and more experienced persons may help and guide him in the worship. Apart from the two annual ceremonies (= *dhurrya* and *haraha gurai*) these deities and spirits are worshipped immediately before the start and at the end of the Dasya dances. The Mahton bears the general expense of such worship and offerings; but the animals and fowls needed for sacrifice are either collected from each house, or the money to buy them is collected from each house. Generally fowls are collected, and money is collected for buying pigs, goats, or sheep. During a marriage in the village, the worship and offerings to these deities are carried out by the Mahaton on behalf of the family

concerned and at its own expense. The ritual for these deities and spirits, unlike the magico-religious ceremonies to drive away any evil or disease, is very simple. In this case a vermilion spot is first applied to each of these deities. A thread of raw-cotton is wound round them three or five times. Next some holy liquor, holy water and, occasionally, some cooked items, are also offered. Lastly, some water is sprinkled in the *parchanā* manner.⁸ Meanwhile the blessings requested on that particular occasion are solicited from the deities and spirits.

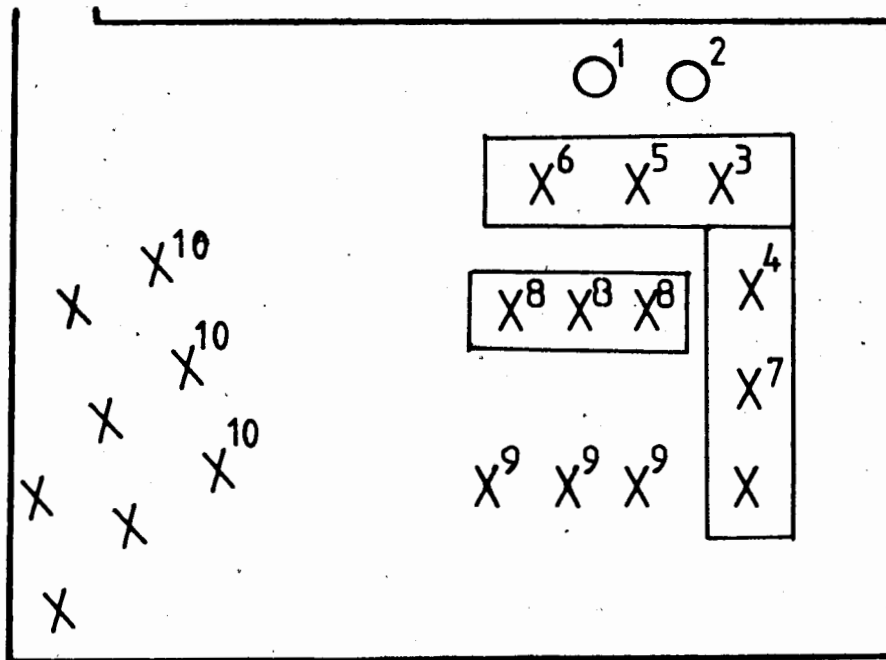
8. Laula Guruwa or the First Initiation

As every family needs a *guruwā* to perform its household rituals, it must have at least one of its male members trained as a *guruwā*. No man can become a *guruwā* unless he is brought into trance for the first time under some experienced *guruwās* in a ceremony specially arranged for this purpose. This ceremony is called the *laulā guruwā* (=new *guruwā*-making ceremony).

The *laulā guruwā* making ceremony must be performed on a Monday, during the bright fortnight of one of the three months of Ashwin (September-October), Kartik (October-November), and Mangsir (November-December). It is performed in the deity-room of one of the candidates. The number of *future guruwās* to be initiated is usually not more than five or six, all being members of the same extended family, including patrilineal cousins. I give a detailed description below of a *laulā guruwā* ceremony which I observed in Burhadabar village of Dhanauri Panchayat on the night of Monday, 4th Mangsir 2030 B.S. (November 1973).

8. *Parchanā*: Sprinkling of water over the offerings to a spirit. Made with both hands which are first dipped into water and immediately taken out in a praying posture: the drops are sprinkled to the right and left alternately.

All the men concerned gathered at about 8 p.m. Two experienced *gurawas*, especially invited for the occasion; and three other *gurawas*, invited for reasons of courtesy, had come. There were three drummers (their numbers must be either three or five, as an odd-number of drummers is considered more auspicious and more effective for bringing the novices into trance) and three or four persons to play the *majira* (small cymbals). There is no limitation on the number of *majira* players. There were also some more men who had come as spectators out of curiosity. After a while, all those concerned and the spectators went to the deity-room of the house. The seating plan was as follows:



Legend

1. Altar of Gurubaba, Khekhri and Maiya group of deities.
2. Altar of Jagarnatthya (the household deity of the *ghargurawa*) enshrined there, as the house belongs to one of the *barins* of Jagarnatthya *ghargurawa*.
3. The *ghargurawa* of the household who directs and leads the ceremony.
4. Another *gurawa*, functioning as the leader of the *pacara* (auspicious songs) singers.
5. One of the initiates.

6. The other initiate.
7. Persons playing *majira* and also singing *pacara* verses; some of them had problems as they had not yet learned the verses well.
8. Other invited guruwas.
9. The standing drummers.
10. The spectators.

Prior to the initiation ceremony the chief *guruwa* lit a lamp and worshipped the household deities. The initiates removed their caps, took some *acheta* in their hands and sat pressing their hands together before their faces, in front of the altars of the deities. The drummers, the *majira* players and the *pacara* singers then began to perform when the chief *guruwa* threw some *acheta* over the initiates, yelling out: "*Ca! Bhawani* (=act Bhawani)". The *pacara* singers began with the words 'Sri Ram (=Lord Ram)'. The *pacara* verses consisted of praises to Maiya and to Bhawani. The chief *guruwā*, encouraged by the beat of the drums and the *majirā*, continued his yelling, which got louder and louder, as the noise increased. The drum beats and *majirā* playing quickened. The face of the chief *guruwā* turned red and fierce; and his voice and spells resembled scolding until both of the initiates went into a trance after about fifteen minutes. Both of them were breathing heavily. A few other persons helped by holding carefully the initiates, who were going to lose control. Next, the noise of the drums and *majira* diminished but kept on in a slow rhythm. Then some of the other *guruwās* present there helped to collect all the household deities from the deity-room in two baskets. Each of the two novices was asked to carry one of the baskets in his hands. Then, all concerned (the novices, the *guruwās*, the drummers and the *majirā* players) came to the eastern courtyard where the novices danced and moved around the courtyard deities, making two anti-clockwise circumambulations. This act was called *kes pharainā*. Then both of the initiates were again taken to the previous site. Their heavy

breathing lessened and they seemed to be regaining consciousness. The voice, drums, and *majirā* were very low and finally stopped. Now the chief *guruwā* began to talk with the deities which had come on to the initiates. First of all, he asked whether the Maiya deity had come. When he was answered in the affirmative by the initiates, he again asked whether the ancestral deity⁹ had come or not. The initiates on behalf of the ancestral deities again replied in the affirmative. Again, the chief *guruwā* asked whether all of these deities were happy or not. The deities replied that they were happy. Then the chief *guruwā* asked whether the deities were ready to accept the offering of *minhi* (=snacks). The deities agreed. Then the conversation stopped. The initiates were asked to throw the *achetā*, which they held in their hands, over the baskets containing the household deities. During the conversation the voice of the *guruwā*, when putting questions to the deities, was normal except that he was using honorific speech each time; but the voices of the initiates, when replying on behalf of the deities, was a little different from their usual voices and they were using the speech used when talking to juniors. After this trance and conversation, all the household deities (including those in the cattleshed and the courtyard) were offered some liquor. The novices were served with some food and drink.

Early on the following morning exactly the same procedure was exactly repeated with the help of the *guruwā*, in order to check whether the initiates would again be possessed by the deities or not, and to verify whether they could again bring themselves into trance at will to contact the deities and spirits

9. Despite the fact that each lineage worships several ancestral deities, only one spirit comes (as representative of the other ancestral deities or ancestor spirits) to possess the novice.

and thus find out their desires.

To perfect their training as *gharguruwas*, the Gharguruwa clan-initiates are given further training in preparing *dhoop* and *bān*. They are trained to make small incisions in different parts of their bodies (the forehead, the tongue; the right side of the chest, the right thigh and the top of the right foot) with a sharp knife or razor, to draw out some blood which is then mixed with some hulled rice for making *bān*. They are also taught how to make incense (*dhoop*), which along with *bān*, has to be given to their *barin* families during the Dasya ceremonies. Such initiates have to learn several Mantras as well as other rituals, and also the herbal and mineral cures before becoming senior *guruwās*. Initiates from Barin group generally neither attempt nor do they need to go beyond learning how to go into trance and acquiring other skills needed for the performance of the minor household rituals.

9. Curing and Witchcraft

A. *Divination*

Apart from being possessed in order to converse with the deities so as to find out their desires, a *guruwā* also knows methods of finding out the cause of an illness. All these methods, including the most usual method of using hulled rice, are also common among the Raji people. As Johan Reinhard has described them well, I do not think it useful to describe them again here.¹⁰

B. *Preventive Cure Methods*

Apart from the curative techniques that are applied to the sick, Tharus have some prophylactic techniques too

10. Johan Reinhard, 1976 pp. 263-292.

which are performed to ensure protection from some particular types of illness. Some of these are as follows:

- (i) *Rath Lausari*: Rath is a malevolent spirit which, if angered, kills children. So, twice every year, during *kātiki puni* (bright fortnight in October-November) and *cāiti puni* (bright fortnight in March-April), a ritual is carried out in each household, where there is a woman of child-bearing age. It is practised by some non-Tharus also, who have been living alongside the Tharus in Dang-Deokhuri for five, six or more generations. But in any case, the shaman (*guruwā*) of *rath lausāri* is always a Tharu. The function of *rath lausāri* is not confined to the shamans from the Gharguruwa subgroup of clans only (like most of the major and the village-level rituals).

Rath lausāri is a ritual concerned with the worship and offering to the Rath spirit as well as to the spirits of the natal household of a woman. When a woman gives birth to her first baby, a certain set of objects is collected and preserved in a small bag on the advice and with the help of the *guruwā*. As I observed in a *rath lausāri* in Sukhrwar village this set consists of about twenty copper coins, as well as miniature replicas or symbolic objects, like a gun, representing the Shikari (hunter) spirit, a replica of *syāgu* (basketry-umbrella), and a small piece of *jābi* (a bag woven of threads) representing Magarahthen or a Magar spirit, and a replica of *dhak* (a kind of drum used by a deity or spirit). These objects may differ sometimes depending upon the

ritual practices of the clan or clans concerned.¹¹

In the ritual I witnessed in Sukhrwar, a little space, on the east-side courtyard of the house, was plastered with cow-dung. The *guruwā* then washed his hands, lit an oil-lamp and put some *achetā* on a plate in front of him over the plastered space. Then he sat facing east towards the plastered space, opened the bag and placed all the copper coins in a horizontal row from right to left. The coins in the row were kept in piles of two and four alternatively; but the last two piles consisted of two coins each. Next, the *guruwā* placed the miniature objects at the left end of the row and then applied vermilion to each pile of coins and to the other objects. Then the *guruwā* picked up one of the replicas in his left hand, along with three chickens. With the right hand, he poured some water and *achetā* over the chickens while saying Mantras. After this had been done, he put the replica back inside the bag. One by one he did the same with all the miniature replicas; sometimes he took a replica, sometimes a pile of coins. After each stage of the performances, he put the replica or the pile of coins inside the bag.

The *rath lausari*, performed by a *guruwā*, is done for several other reasons. First of all, Tharus are much attached to their traditions

11. The ritual traditions of the maternal family of the pregnant women are also enquired after and honoured in this ritual.

and try to follow them, as did their elders. So the elder son or the younger brother of a *guruwā* tries to become a *guruwā* of at least the same experience and wisdom as his elder. Again, *guruwās* have high social prestige, so men want to become *guruwās*. Thirdly, it is an obligation for a *guruwā* to look after and to help his clients. Each time a *guruwā* performs *rath lausāri* for his client, he is served with good drink and good food, chicken or pork being included in the menu. He is also recompensed with a little money, maybe half a rupee or one rupee, although this will not be of much importance in his budget.

- (ii) Dagar Bathanna: *Dagar bathannā* means literally "to watch or to guard a trail". In fact, it is a ritual performed to check the penetration of certain epidemics or evil spirits into the village. This ritual is performed on an auspicious day (as suggested or fixed by experienced *guruwās*) during the bright fortnight of Chaitra (March-April) month. It is performed on the last day of the fortnight when the people go to participate in the Patan Mela, an annual fair in Devipatan village near Tulsipur, a border-town in India.¹²

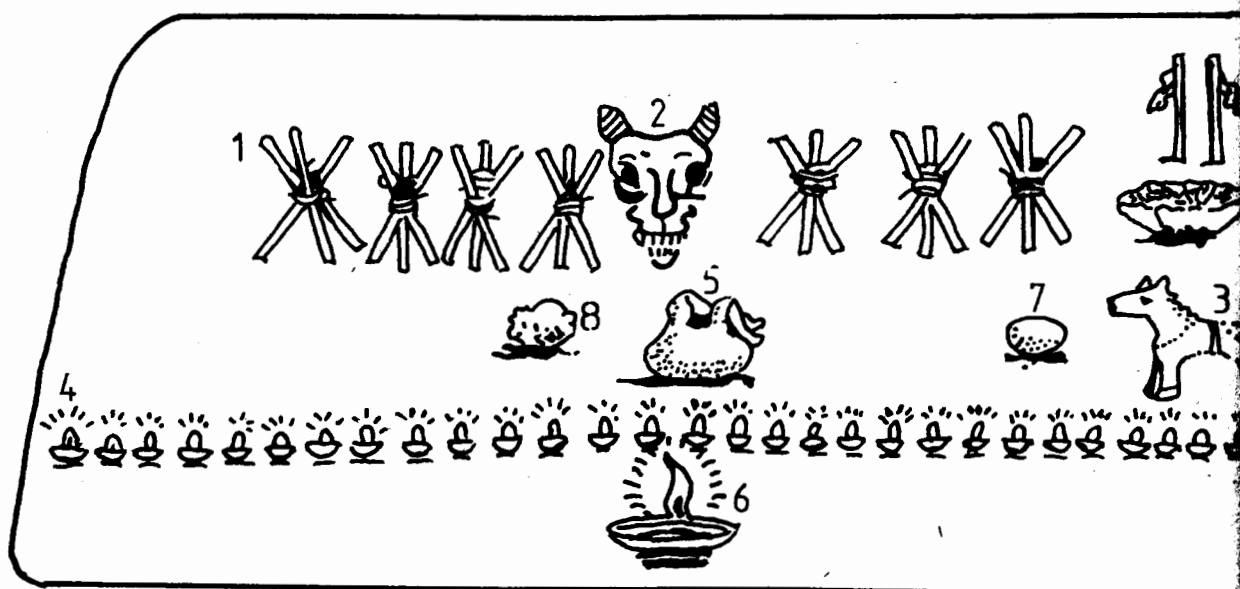
Here is the detail of a ceremony which I observed in Sukhrwar village on Friday, the 27th of Chaitra 2031 B.S. (second week of April 1973).

On the morning of that day, preparations began for *dagar bathannā*. Three men, Penal Chaudhari

12. See *Census of India, 1961*, volume XV, Uttar Pradesh Part VII B Fairs and Festivals in Uttar Pradesh, p. 110.

(a *guruwā*), Bhakamlal (a Patrilineal cousin of his, here performing as *kesaukā*)¹³ and Mohanlal Mahton took the leading roles though the congregation of the *gardhurryās* also helped them in many ways.

All these men, carrying various items needed for the performance, went to a plot of a field, at the south-east corner of the village, immediately after taking a bath. The necessary items for the ceremony were carried to the spot. There they were placed by the *pujari* (Mahton) as in the following plan:



ITEMS NEEDED FOR A DAGAR BATHANNĀ CEREMONY

Legend:

1. *Khappar*: tripods supporting leaf-cups, containing rice and other things, placed on them.

13. A shaman-assistant to a *gharguruwā* or a *desbandhya guruwā* whose role is somewhat similar to that of the *bijuwa* among the Limbus; through possession and trance he acts as a *nedivar* to communicate with the desired deities and spirits. See Sagant P., 1976.

2. Cow-skull.
3. Small clay horse.
4. Small leaf-cup oil-lamps.
5. The ritual bag containing some of Mahton's household deities and also the ritual cane (*byāt*).
6. The big oil-lamp.
7. The egg.
8. Termites 'nest'.
9. Clover, nutmeg, and *neem* seeds, soaked in water in a leaf cup.

To begin the ritual, the Mahaton sat to the west of the plastered space, and facing it. Other men sat on either side of him, keeping a few feet away from him. The Mahaton lit the big oil-lamp, and placed it in the centre of the plastered space, along with the ritual bag. He fixed the Saura deity there in the ground; and put the ritual cane down there. In front of the ritual-bag he put the cow-skull and then the seven tripods on either side. In front of the skull, the miniature-flags were hoisted in a row above the ground. The termites' 'nest' and the packet of black collgium and vermilion were placed near the deities. The leaf-cup containing the *neem*, the nutmeg and the clove soaked in water, along with the egg and the clay-horse, were put on the extreme right of the Mahaton inside the plastered space. Of the thirty-seven leaf-cup lamps, thirty were placed by the side of the main big oil-lamp, while six were put towards the left, out side of the plastered space. Then, the tripods (*khappar*) were erected and one leaf-dish containing rice and a coin was put upon each tripod, inside the plastered space. After that the Mahaton lit the leaf-cup lamps and applied vermilion spots to the ground, in front of each lamp.

Then, a seance (*gurai*) was performed to enter into contact with the deity. The *guruwā* (Penlal) threw some *achetā* over the *kesaukā* (Bhakamlal), who went into trance, very quickly. Then the *guruwā* and the *kesaukā* began to converse. The *kesaukā* began to reply on behalf of the deity. The conversation (*boli lagainā*) started like this:

- guruwā* - "Please, will you protect (the villagers) from contagious diseases or not?"
- kesaukā* - "Yes, I will do so."
- guruwā* - "Who is going to make a fence against the 'air' (*paun*; polluted air that blows and spreads diseases)?"
- kesaukā* - "I am going to do that."
- guruwā* - "Who is going to turn aside the resources of the enemy?"
- kesaukā* - "Myself".
- guruwā* - "Please, lead the tigers and bears away to the *kajari* (dark) forest and the serpents to *pātāl* (the under-world)".

After this, the *kesaukā*, still in a trance, picked up the clay horse, the leaf cup containing the three types of seed, the ritual cane, Saura and the miniature flags and moved further east to a new location in a field. A few *gardhurryās* also followed him carrying one *golrā* (pot) of holy liquor, one leaf-cup lamp, one chick and a few other things to be used there in the ritual. The *kesaukā* then fixed Saura in the ground, in that new spot, and put the ritual cane and the clay-horse on the ground. He held the chick in his left hand, and sprinkled the contents of the leaf cup (the three seeds soaked in water) over the chick with his right hand while quietly murmuring certain spells. He then left the spot, abandoning the chick as an offering to the evil spirits responsible for contagious diseases. In return for the

chick, these spirits were supposed to remain outside the village. The abandoned chick is usually picked up later on and eaten by vultures.

The *kesaukā* then took some liquor in a leaf and poured it over the ground, immediately after which some more liquor (now diluted with water) was poured there. Finally he performed *parchanā* and then returned with Saura and the cane to the original place, where the Mahton was. He then went to take a bath before beginning *pujā* (sacrifice). First he sacrificed seven chicks, by beheading them and then another one by knocking it down; one pig was also beheaded, all this being done inside the plastered area. Moreover, on the unplastered space too, where six leaf-cup oil-lamps had already been lit, the Mahaton slaughtered six chickens. Next, milk, diluted with water was offered as *dhār* and was immediately followed by the offering of two types of liquor - the *sukhla* (undiluted) and the *panihā* (diluted with water) over the plastered area. Finally incense (*dhoop*) was lit (as must be done as a complement to a sacrifice) and *bān* (rice mixed with human blood) was sprinkled on the ground by the Mahton. All the parts of the sacrificed chickens and pig, except one chick's head were picked up, to be consumed later by the men, present there. The parts of the chickens sacrificed over the unplastered area were kept separate. The men then moved to a bamboo grove where the Mahton put his *jholi* and the ritual-cane on the ground, sacrificed one chick and again offered *dhār* and the two types of liquor. Offerings were also made there along with *dhoop* and the scattering of *ban* followed by *parchana*. Now the *dagar bathannā* ceremony was ended. The sacrificed parts of

the six chickens, which had been kept separate, were eaten on the spot after roasting, while the remaining parts were cooked and eaten in the Mahaton's house. The *gardhurryas* then brought some rice-beer from their homes which was drunk by them when they ate the meat of the sacrificed chickens.

9. Recent Trends in Tharu Religious Life

Tharus, though they are still much attached to their local religious traditions, have been influenced to some extent by the great tradition of their Hindu neighbours. However, it is not clear when this influence began. Stories from the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* have become the themes of some of their songs. Songs sung in many villages during *Dasya*, or at the group dances performed at the same time, illustrate some of the scenes and stories from the *Mahabharata* or from the *Krishna Caritra*. Some of the *māgar* (auspicious) songs sung during weddings also contain themes from the *Ramayana*.

Besides these Hindu influences on the common religious way of Tharu life, Hindu manners are also spreading among the rich and literate Tharu families. As Hindu religion and culture is the religion and culture of the elite, so rich Tharus, while trying to upgrade their social status, have been adopting the Hindu way of religious life. They no longer want to be linked to the tradition of the poor class Tharus. At least they pretend not to follow the major Tharu tradition, nowadays associated with a backward and inferior class. The Tharus from prosperous and educated families try to direct the people under their influence towards change and higher standards. Even during the Rana regime, when some highly educated Tharus from Saptari and the adjacent Eastern Terai districts had impressed the then Rana Prime Minister with their erudition, they were

given permission to form the Tharu Kalyankarini Samiti (Welfare Committee for the Tharus) and to arrange talks and debates on Tharu welfare in order to influence the people in different parts of the country. Such a spirit continued even after the downfall of the Rana regime. In February, 1955 a big rally was organized in Gobardiha village of Deokhuri. This rally lasted for twelve days. Many Tharus from Dang, Deokhuri and other parts of Nepal participated. Tharu representatives, like Kewal Chaudhari from Saptari district, and Ram Prasad Chaudhari, from Butawal, were the chief figures in this rally, and had been especially invited to make speeches. The result of this rally was that many Tharu families began to give up the practice of taking liquor, pork and chicken and to introduce Hindu manners of worship or devotion.¹⁴ Meanwhile, some rich Tharu families of Dang and Deokhuri had already adopted the Hindu way of life. Some of them had adopted Vaishnavism strictly; they were wearing *dhotis, rudraksa malas*,¹⁵ applying Vaishnava *tikas* to their foreheads, and performing daily worship of Hindu deities in the Hindu manner. People like Dharnidhar Chaudhari of Hekuli village of Dang (who has married a Brahmin wife, along with other wives) and elders, such as Mr. Parsunarayan Chaudhari's family in Gobardiha village of Deokhuri, continue to maintain Hinduized traditions. But now with the influence of Western culture and English education, as well as the social changes taking place in Nepalese society, the rules and ideals of the Tharu Kalyankarini Samiti itself are also changing. The people, especially the modern educated young people, who play an active role, do not follow blindly the old reform ideals. Now they do not see any harm in eating pork and chicken, and less harm in liquor than other intoxicants like hashish and *bhang*.¹⁶

14. Compare Srivastava, p. 107-8.

15. A rosary made of 108 *Elaeocarpus ganitrus* seeds often worn around the neck by orthodox Hindus.

16. An extract from a plant like marijuana; it is mixed as a drink or put in sweets.

As the Tharu Kalyankarini Samiti was much concerned with reforms in dietary and religious customs, its effectiveness later diminished. Poor Tharus were least influenced by these reforms and continued with their own old traditions. While the old generation in the aristocratic and educated families has kept strictly to the proposed reforms, the young generation is more interested in high-lighting and publishing Tharu literature and folklore.

LETTER OF FIRST WESTERNER TO VISIT
BHUTAN - TIBET - NEPAL
(JOAO CABRAL, S.J., 1599-1669)

Nancy M. Gettelman
Seattle, Washington

Among the many dedicated and adventuresome early Jesuit missionaries, few have a more colorful and strenuous history than Padre Joao Cabral, born in Celorico, Beira, Portugal in 1599. Cabral died in Goa, India, on July 4, 1669, and between those two dates lies a story seldom paralleled.

After joining the Society of Jesus at the age of sixteen, he left for India in 1624, and until his death was engaged in mission work in such far-off places as Cochin, Tonkin, Malacca, Macao, and Japan.

But before those experiences Cabral's first undertaking was an attempt to open a new mission-field in central Tibet¹ with Father Estavao Cacella, also a Portuguese, and 14 years his senior. In April 1626 they journeyed from Goa to Hooghly, then to Dacca and Cooch Behar on the Brahmaputra waterways, assisted by the many Portuguese trading posts along the way. However, from Cooch Behar to Paro, in western Bhutan, they continued unassisted--the very first Westerners in that hitherto

1. Father Antonio Andrade, who had opened the first Christian mission-field in Western Tibet in 1624, at Tsaparang, had written to his Goa superiors suggesting the attempt to reach Utsang should be made from Bengal. Wessels: p.120.

T I I B E T

KHAM

DBUS

G T S A N G

N E P A L

M Y B H U T A N

M O G G O R

B E N G A L

INDIA

ADAPTED FROM
C. WESSELS, 1924

Leh

Sutlej R.
Tsaparang

Shigatse

Lhasa

Tsang R.

Gyantse

Kathmandu

Agra
Ganges R.
Jumna R.

Patna

Rajmahal

Ganges R.

Dacca

Hugli

Calcutta

Brahmaputra R.

Jumna R.

unknown country,² as well as in central Tibet and Nepal, through which country Cabral, alone, traveled on his return to Hooghly.

During their stay in Paro, from February to October 1627, the two Jesuits had met, and come to know quite well, the first King of Bhutan (Zhab-drung), described at length by Cacella in a letter already examined by Wessels, and partially translated by Aris. (See bibliography.) The King was the reincarnation of the famous Padma-kar-po, the greatest scholar of the 'Brugpa sect, whose authenticity as the reincarnation was contested by a candidate in Tibet supported by the Gtsang rulers, causing the Zhab-drung's (the Lama Rupa of Cabral's letter) flight to Bhutan and the King of Gtsang at this period is attested by Cabral's account.

Both men sent letters describing their journeys to their Provincial superior, Father Alberto Laertius, head of the Jesuits at Malabar, on the east coast of India. Their letters were discovered in the Jesuit archives in Rome by Wessels only in 1924. It is with Cabral's Portuguese letter, the only one of his extant, that this paper is concerned. It is the first complete English translation of the earliest Western account of Shigatse and its King. The account is annotated with further information concerning the people, places, and events which Cabral encountered after he left Paro and went to Shigatse, the then-capital of Tibet, goal of their mission.

2. The reference in Bhutan's own earliest history (1759), the *Lho'i chos-'byung* (fol.34a), to the men who visited the Zhab-drung from a country called "Pur-dhu-ka," and offered presents of guns, cannon and powder, and an eyeglass, from their king can rightly be said to be Portuguese, but hardly referring to Cabral and Cacella. This is not only because of the peaceful nature of the Jesuits' mission, but because all their goods were stolen from them enroute to Paro from Cooch Behar, as Cacella describes. See Wessels, p. 137. A more likely understanding would be that the route which the two missionaries opened up was seized upon by Portuguese traders, who already were established in Bengal. See Campos.

[Tibetan spellings for Cabral's Portuguese pronunciations and their English equivalents]

Cam (Kham) = Khams
Chaparangue (Tsaparang)
Deba Camba = Sde-pa Chen-po
Gigaci (Shigatse) = Gzhis-kha-rtse
Lama/Lamba = bla-ma
Paro = Spa-gro
Ucangue (Utsang) = Dbus-Gtsang

Account of the mission to the Kingdom of Bhutan,
written by Father Joao Cabral of the Company of Jesus

In the letters of last October we wrote Your Reverence about the success of our mission up until our arrival and stay with Droma Raja³ or Lama Rupa, which is his proper name. In this letter I will account for our move to the Kingdom of Ucangue (Utsang),⁴

3. Dharma-raja is the Sanskrit for "religious king" (Tib.: chos-rgyal), an ancient title for a king dedicated to spreading the Buddhist teaching. It refers to Zhab-drung (Ngag-dbang rNam-rgyal), who was born in mGar-grong, Tibet, in 1594. He fled to Bhutan in 1616 because of the dispute over the legitimacy of his reincarnation of Padma dkar-po (1527-92), one of the early reincarnations of the 'Brug-pa school, and its greatest scholar. It is with this Zhab-drung that Bhutan becomes a political entity. For a complete history of Bhutan, see Aris' *Bhutan*.

4. Dbus-Gtsang (Utsang) is central Tibet, i.e., Gtsang comprising the area south of the Tsangpo River, with Shigatse and Gyantse as its principal cities, and Dbus the area north of the river with Lhasa as its capital. At the time of Cabral's visit the King of Gtsang was the most powerful ruler and had as his official allies the Karma-pa sect. As there was little unity in Tibet at the time, some of the Tibetan sects were seeking the aid of Mongol armies to gain power--an intrusion of foreign help decried by the Gtsang rulers. It was Gushri Khan who had been impressed with the fifth Dalai Lama, and who gave support to the Gelugs-pas. By 1642 they had defeated the King of Gtsang and made the Great Fifth Dalai Lama the first spiritual and temporal ruler of Tibet, with Lhasa as his capital.

(ruled by a king) called Deba Camba⁵, which we have already mentioned previously. I will relate everything in brief summary as this is going by the (next) ship (patamar).

We decided to move ahead because we found that all the favors of Lama Rupa, in the zeal of his false sect, were only excuses to hinder us in our intent. We outfitted ourselves for the journey through another Lamba (bla-ma), his enemy, whom Father (Cacella) met when he had to visit a site for the homes and church he (Lama Rupa) promised to build us. The Father used the cooperation of this Lamba who, incidentally, was a subject of the King of Ucangue, and for that reason, knowing our intent, he spared nothing to help us on our way; that is to say, he supplied people for guards, food, horses, and all that was necessary for making the journey to Gigaci (Shigatse), the court of this king. The Father arrived after 20 days' journey⁶ and was well received by the King and all his people. Immediately, he (the King) sent a man with letters of appreciation to the Lama who helped the Father, and others, also, to Lama Rupa in which he asked him to enable me, (Saying) that everything to prepare me should also be done at the house of the Lamba, his enemy, at the cost of the King himself. But the Lama Rupa would not deliver himself of any reply, and stood firm in great annoyance, declaring himself our enemy. I tried to appease him with entreaties, but everything was in vain.

5. Sde-pa Chen-po, or Sde-pa Gtsang-pa is the title used by the kings of Dbüs-Gtsang at this time. It literally means "the great man of the district." "Deba Camba" would be the Portuguese attempt at pronunciation. The title refers to Karma Bstan-Skyong (1599-1642). Cf. Tucci TPS pp.58-64. Petech, Vol. II, part I.

6. Cf. Map. "No route is mentioned in either case; but taking Paro as their point of departure the obvious route would be by Phari and Gyantse, the same as that followed by Younghusband's expedition (1904) on the march to Lhasa." Wessels, p. 153.

I left (Paro) on December 18 and arrived January 20, after being detained a few times along the way before arriving in the King's territory. On January 21, next morning, knowing of my arrival, the King sent for us, showing much joy at our arrival in the "vineyard" of his kingdom. The following day we formally explained the reason that moved us to undertake this journey, and he listened with much attention and pleasure. He informed us that we should learn his language well since he wanted to converse with us often about these matters; and in our practice-sessions, this was always confirmed. His chief Lama made a statement in which he said that our Holy Law is the best of them all,⁷ and that it is good for everyone to earn the salvation of their souls. Of this statement the King was informed, and he confirmed it.

He immediately commanded that we be given very good housing in a very pleasant place, and also be provided with utensils and people, all with much generosity. For our needs he ordered that we be given a daily ration which is provided to everyone in the fortress from the King's stores, and beyond this that rations for each month be only from his supplies. This was not only sufficient for ordinary eating, but also to give many alms. Since the King did not know our customs and what would be necessary for us, he assigned a man to inform him of what we lacked. Above all, he gave us many honors, ordering us to call on him almost every day, and encouraging us in the months of work to learn the language. Our relationship with the King was quite sincere, and much spoken about between the King and his people since this King does not easily do this, even with the principal people.

7. Cabral was perhaps overenthusiastic regarding the approval of their "Holy Law" (chos-dam-pa) by the Lama, who could easily have understood Cabral's translated explanations as simply another sect of Buddhism.

In connection with this, we met two Lamas at the court who were disciples of Lama Rupa, and as it would seem, sent there by him to prevent our staying at that court. They tried to talk to the King personally, but not being permitted⁸ to do so, they did so through his officials. They also tried to turn all the Lamas in the city-- and they are countless--against us, saying that the Fathers were sent only to destroy their pagodas, and were bad people who were going to destroy and blaspheme their Law. Thanks to the goodness of our Lord on this occasion, they did not meet at the court any of the great Lamas who speak with the King, but it got to his hearing enough so that he showed us less enthusiasm at our coming ... not in our treatment, which was always the same, but in the graciousness and affability which seemed (and not our imagination) somewhat lessened. We have to thank our Lord that a greater change was not caused, allowing that the King did not know us well, and he was much afraid of the witchcraft of the Lamas.

In the days in which that change went on, we gave him our prayers--at which he was much *quadravao* (?) and always responded with a smiling countenance, agreeing with us in everything; (that) the Lord in his infinite mercy would wish to save him also, that there will be no less favor than we had at the beginning, wherefore, that alone is enough for us to be able to hope for great fruitfulness.

I left in the month of January⁹ from the (royal) city of

8. The period held much political rivalry between the Sa-skyapas, Dge-lugs-pas, 'Brug-pas (Lama Rupa's sect), and the Karma-pas (allies of Karma Bstan-Skyong), as well as the hostility between Gtsand and Bhutan. Tucci, I, p. 62.

9. Cabral stayed a relatively few days in Shigatse. He left Cacella there and started back to Hoogly, anxious to find a better route, as well as get support for the new mission. Lack of money and supplies were often the reasons for mission failures. See Note 11.

Ucangue and arrived in Golim¹⁰ in April, due to some stops on the way. The reason for my coming was principally to discover this new way through the Kingdom of Nepal to enable ourselves to continue our mission since Cocho (Cooch Behar)¹¹ was so dangerous and hazardous. I came, also, in order to negotiate a few things for this mission, which, as I understand, can be one of the most glorious of this Company of Jesus and the door to all of Tartary, China, and many other kingdoms of the gentiles.

This king (in Shigatse) is a youth of 22 years, very well educated, fair, very affectionate, and, above all, very generous and liberal to the poor. The royal city, as this one of Gigaci, (Shigatse)¹² is situated at the foot of a mountain, on top of which is the fortress where the King lives with all his officials and a guard of soldiers. The building and plan are like the ones in Portugal, and the only thing missing is the artillery. The homes inside are all gilded and painted, and the King's quarters are worth seeing, especially the many rooms of curios of all kinds; because he is a very rich king the best of everything comes to him. He uses many tapestries in all his apartments. The plainest ones are damask from China. The others can compare with any of the good ones of Portugal. The people who serve him dress very cleanly and can be seen everywhere. The common

10. "Golim" is Cabral's spelling of "Hooghly." "The Portuguese obviously originated the name. Bocarro (1612-17 has 'D'Ogolim', 'Golim', 'Dogolim', and Faria y Souza speaking about the Siege of Hooghly has 'Golim'. Towards the end of the seventeenth century and after, 'Hughly' 'Hooghly' began to be adopted." Cf. Campos, pp. 64-65.

11. Cacella's letter describes their journey to Paro from Cooch Benar during which they were deceived and robbed. Wessels: pp. 123ff. In 1632 Cabral was to witness the siege and fall of Hooghly which was brought about by Shah Jahan's army. Campos: p. 129.

12. Shigatse, the capital of the Gtsang rulers, was the principal city of central Tibet, superior to Lhasa, prior to the Vth Dalai Lama and the Gtsang King's downfall in 1642.

people are a bit more or less (like) what we have written about the people in the first kingdom, which we now know is called the Kingdom of Mon.¹³

The Kingdom, which is named Ucangue, is very large, and from whatever direction one enters, it is said, it takes at least one and a half months to cross, and is so densely populated that in the 20 days that I traveled from the court to the border of the Kingdom of Nepal (which is the new way I went), I always went past and through villages. The climate is cold, and in January and February I crossed many frozen rivers on horseback. However, the snow is not excessive. They have great fields of wheat, and I never saw land that looked more like the Alemtejo¹⁴ in Portugal. To the north it borders with the Tartars, with whom this king is sometimes at war¹⁵ and there are many who say that their Law (religion) is the same as here. Towards the east is Cochinchina, from where a lot of merchandise comes, as well as from China, which lies to the northeast. The two latter countries border on the Kingdom of Cam (Kham),¹⁶ from where the musk comes. Xembala,¹⁷ as far as I am concerned, is not Catayo

13. "Mon" had been called "Cambirasi" by Cacella in his earlier letter. Wessels: p. 143.

Mon is an area south of Yarlung, southeast of Lho-brag, traversed by Cabral and Cacella to get to Shigatse. Cf. Map, and Wylie; p. 119, Note 51.

14. Alemtejo is the fertile area of Portugal, southwest of Lisbon, and above the Algarve.

15. Five years before the arrival of Cabral and Cacella, the King of Gtsang, in his minority, and a 10,000-man army were pursued and beseiged in Lhasa by a Mongol army in collaboration with the Dge-lugs-pas. Tucci, Vol. I, p. 58.

16. Kham is in eastern Tibet, bordering on Szechwan. Cf. Map.

17. Xembala is Shambala, in Buddhist tradition a mythical country somewhere to the north, where the famous Kalacakra Tantra came from. (See Candra, Intro., p. 7.) Cabral would have heard of Xembala not only from Tibetans but also, previously, from Jerome Xavier. (See note 24.) Cabral was correct in identifying it with Mongolia. His observations were apparently accepted by the missionary cartographers of the following century. A map found in the Vatican archives, dated 1728, depicts and names regions of Asia just as Cabral describes them here. See Petech, Vol. I, P. LXXXII

(China)¹⁸ but the kingdom that our maps call Grand Tartarea, lying more to the north.

In this Kingdom of Ucangue are all the heads of the castes (sects) of Lambas, and for this reason they call it the school of their Law. Their monasteries (here they are called Combas)¹⁹ and are not like ours, but each Chief Lama has his city where he resides with only his Lambas. The Comba of the Chaparangue Lama²⁰ is on a slope of this fortress at a distance of about two cannon shots and because of it each day we receive news of the priests²¹ who are living about a month's journey from here. The King does not pay any attention to these Lamas claiming that they belong to a bad caste.²² The Chief Lamas are treated almost like kings and among them, Lama Rupa, about whom we have written so much, is about the fifth²³ in importance, by which Your Reverence can judge what the others will be, but they are held to be so great that none of them attends upon the King. The law and the sect in these kingdoms, I now conclude is

18. Macro Polo's "Cathay" was proven to be the same as Ricci's "China" by another Jesuit, Bento de Goes, in 1606. Wessels:p.36.

19. Tibetan: dgon-pa, "a solitary place."

20. The monastery described is Tashilhunpo, a Dge-lugs-pa monastery founded in 1447, where monks from Tsaparang in Western Tibet, bordering what was then India, would have resided while studying. The custom of all large Tibetan monasteries was to have "colleges" in which monks from a certain district lived together. Tucci, Vol. I, p.63.

21. Cabral is referring to Father Andrade and five other Jesuits from Agra who were in Tsaparang. See Wessels' account of the Tsaparang mission, p. 69ff.

22. The reference is to the Lamas of Tashilhunpo, who were Dge-lugs-pas. See Note 14.

23. 'fifth in importance' probably refers to the heads of the major monastic orders, e.g., Karmapa, Gelugspa, Bka'-brgyudpa, Saskyapa, and 'Brugpa. The "importance" would have been both political and spiritual.

gentile,²⁴ because they say they are, and I have found that they have the same pagodas as the Kingdom of Nepal and some of Bengal. Only in the superstition of castes and eating habits, which they do not hold, are they different.

About Catayo (China), the more we know about that land, the less we know about it; a Lamba of the King told us only that there is a land called "Cata," whose Law he did not know for certain, but which he had heard was an ancient Law, different from the ones in these kingdoms. And the way to that kingdom, he said, was by Coscar (Kashgar), a well-known city, and that agrees with the information from Father Hieronimo (Jerome) Xavier,²⁵ in which he speaks of this same city.

This is what I can say right now to Your Reverence about this mission, from which it can be well-seen what great effects can ensue with our Lord giving us a foot in this Kingdom of Ucangue, wherefore, not only in this as I have described, but also a door to all the greater kingdoms that follow it. It remains for us to request Your Reverence to recommend us greatly to our Lord that the prayers of His servants may overcome our defects and that He bestow His blessing on what is planted and emerging.

The road to these kingdoms is not through Cocho, but through Nepal, which borders on the lands of Mogor.²⁶ In Patana and Rajamol the road is safe frequented by many merchants.

24. "gentile" was a term used at this period to designate anyone who is not a Muslim or Christian, or, in other words, one who does not hold a monotheistic religion.

25. The Jesuit, Jerome Xavier, was invited to the court of the Mogul Akbar, in Lahore, which he reached in 1595, and where he met, in 1598, a Muslim merchant, who had come from Cathay and mentioned Xambala and Kashgar. Wessels: pp. 10-11.

26. "Mogor" was the common Portuguese name for Hindustan during the Mughal rule.

The King gave me a captain to conduct me to Nepal with letters and presents for the King of Nepal,²⁷ asking him to help me in everything which he asked, since I was a person whom he respected greatly.

The King of Nepal complied with the request, and helped me as far as Patana, where I found the Portuguese with whom I traveled to Golim, from where I am writing this to Your Reverence.

About the Kingdom of Nepal I shall write to you at greater length later on as I hope to receive some news from Father Cacella about further happenings, which I shall transmit to Your Reverence.

I commend myself and us to Your Reverence's Holy Sacrifices.

June 17, 1628.

27. Which of the kings of Nepal Cabral refers to cannot be specified as the Nepal valley was divided into three kingdoms at the time.

Laksminarasimhamalla, Kathmandu (1620-41).

Jagajjyotirmalla, Bhatgaon (1613-37).

Siddhinarasimhamalla, Patan (1620-61).

See Regmi, pp. 55, 215, 268.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Aris, Michael

Bhutan. (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1979).

Campos, J.A.

The Portuguese in Bengal. (Calcutta: Butterworth, 1919).

Chandra, Lokesh

Kalacakra Tantra and Other Texts. Vol. I. (New Delhi: Int. Acad. Indian Culture, 1966).

Correia-Afonso, John

Jesuit Letters and Indian History. (Bombay: Indian Historical Research Inst., 1955).

Guerreiro, Fernao

Jahangir and the Jesuits. (London: Routledge, 1930).

Levi, Sylvain

Le Nepal. 3 vols. (Paris: Leroux, 1905-8).

Maclagan, Edward

The Jesuits and the Great Mogul. (London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1932).

Petech, Luciano

I Missionari Italiani nel Tibet e nel Nepal. 7 vols. (Roma: Libreria dello Stato, 1952).

Regmi, D.R.

Medieval Nepal. Part II (Calcutta: Mukhopadhyay, 1966).

Tucci, Giuseppe

Tibetan Painted Scrolls. 3 vols. (Roma: Libreria dello Stato, 1949).

Wessels, Cornelius

Early Jesuit Travellers in Central Asia. (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1924).

Wylie, T.V.

Geography of Tibet according to the 'Dzam'gling Rgyas-bshad.
(Roma: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente,
1962).

In Tibetan:

Bstan-'dzin Chos-rgyal

Lho'i chos-'byung bstan-pa rinpoche'i 'phro-mthud 'jam-mgon smon'tha'i
'phreng-ba. (Bhutan: 1759).

BOOK REVIEW

Martin Brauen: *Feste in Ladakh*, Anademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt Graz 1980, 105 photographs, 12 line drawings, 186 pp.

Eva Dargay/Ulrich Gruber: *Ladakh - Innensicht eines Landes*, Diederichs Verlag, Dusseldorf 1980, 41 photographs, 300 pp.

The tourist boom on Ladakh and Zangskar in the second half of the seventies has transformed this area, once the unveiled dreamland for scholars, adventurers and Tibet-freaks, into one big bazaar. The Golden Hordes, steaming in from all countries, led by the French and the Germans, were to become the proper rivals of the Indian Army in trampling down the unique culture and landscape of Little Tibet. The tourist hordes were followed by the authors of books. These, however, came hardly as the chroniclers of this international form of neo-imperialistic destruction. They came as the discoverers of yet another Lost Kingdom of the Himalayas : The Peissels had and took their chance. Or they came as slide-romanticists, filling coffee-table book after coffee-table book with radiant moonscapes, wild rock architecture or smiling children with turquoise ear-rings. (Some books of this kind are: K. Storm/S. Wahid: *Between Earth and Sky*; H.P.S. Ahluwalia: *Hermit Kingdom Ladakh*; R. Bedi/R. Bedi: *Ladakh: The Transhimalayan Kingdom*; or H. Harrer: *Ladakh*.)

Some, like Eva Dargay and Ulrich Gruber came as modest travellers, who were taken by the poetic environment of the place and carried off. Their travelogue became hymnical. Of those, finally, who came as researchers, only three have so far shown their results in books to a wider public. T. Skorupski and D. Snellgrove published two volumes of varying technical quality under the demanding title: *The Cultural Heritage of Ladakh*.

And Martin Brauen came up with his *Feste in Ladakh*, so far the best, though scanty, anthropological account on the region.

The content of the book is expressly limited on the lay festivals of Upper Ladakh. This limitation is an advantage, for it saves the author from touching complicated Buddhist ecclesiastical matter. The book is a descriptive ethnography of folklore and popular beliefs and practices as reflected in the festive events of the life cycle and those of the annual cycle.

These descriptions are preceded by a chapter on social stratification in the population of Ladakh and on such socio-ceremonial bodies as the *pha spun* and the *bcu tshogs* (see below). The sociological description of the classes is meagre and a bit unsatisfactory, because no inside look is taken into either of them. In Ladakh, society is stratified into the following classes: the royal families, *rgyal rigs*, the nobility, *rigs ldan*, the commoners, *mi dmangs*, and the "miserables", *rigs ngan*. The last mentioned category, according to Brauen, is subdivided into two artisanal classes, the blacksmiths and the 'carpenters', *mgar ba* and *mon*, and a class without landed property, the *be da*, - all three ranked on the social ladder in this sequence. The two artisanal classes, the blacksmiths and the carpenters, do not only work in a *jajmān*-fashion for their higher ranked clients, they also participate in the passage rites of the latter with fixed roles: the blacksmiths by handing over selfmade tools of iron, the *mon* by making music, very much in the way as the *damai* or tailors do in the Nepal Himalayas.

More detailed than the treatment of the socially ranked classes is that of the corporated socio-ceremonial bodies. Brauen offers us a new view on the *pha spun*, which consist, according to Jäschke's lexical definition of 1881 of "several neighbours or inhabitants of a village that have a common lha and thus have become *rus-pa-çig-çig*, members of the same family

this tie entails on them the duty, whenever a death takes place, of caring for the cremation of the dead body. "Brauen, who does not quote Jäschke, reviews the statements of other scholars on this highly significant functional unit of Ladakhi society and concludes that it should be discussed from a point of view of residence rather than of descent. And with this perspective he discards formerly made claims that the *pha spun* is a consanguineal group of relatives in the paternal line, very much like the Tibetan *rus* or 'bone' = clan and stresses the fact of *pha spun* being neighbours, connected either by consanguinity or by alliance. I doubt whether his position is the last word on *pha spun*. The other corporated socio-ceremonial body described in Brauen's book is the *bcu tshogs*, the 'assembly of ten'. It has a variety of political and calendrical functions.

The following three chapters are the core of the book. The first of them deals with passage rites, those of birth, marriage and death. With a language as arid as a technical manual the author guides his readers through the first year of a newborn Ladakhi. One interesting cultural item that figures in the birth ceremonial is the *mda' dar*, a bamboo arrow of three knots and an iron point at one end. This arrow is stuck into a bowl of grain and visitors come to attach auspicious, multi-coloured strips of cloth into it. This ritual arrow carries cosmological connotations. The Ladakhi say it reaches through the sky, the air and the soil, the three spheres. As a symbolic mediator it is associated with the world-tree. Amongst the Sherpa of Eastern Nepal, it may be noted in parenthesis, the *mda' dar* arrow symbolizes power and longevity. There, as in Ladakh, it is used predominantly during another passage rite: the bringing home of the bride. During this sumptuous event the ritual arrow is carried by the main functionary of a ritual group called *nyo pa*, men who accompany the bridegroom to buy and guide home the bride to her new, virilocal residence. The marriage ceremonies of the Ladakhi which, as elsewhere in the

Tibetan cultural sphere, are broken up into a series of subsequent phases, marked by special beer-offering events, are described meticulously in Brauen's book. Here, as in other sections, the author enlivens his descriptions with ample quotations from the oral body of folksongs.

In his dealings with the last group of passage rites, those of death, the author concentrates on the sociological, rather than the transcendental side of the phenomenon. Special attention is paid to the responsibilities of the *pha spun*-relatives who, after a death has occurred, have to inform an astrologer to come to the house of the dead. It is their duty to prepare the dead for his final resting place, by bending the corpse into a squatting position, covering his eyes with his hands and closing the nostrils with the small fingers. Then they have to cook and serve the funerary guests; and it is their job to carry the dead on a bier to the cremation place, a cylindrical oven outside the village, *spur khang*. There they have to burn him and throw his ashes into a river. Several days later they repair the oven and serve the mourners a final meal. Later, when the dead has turned ancestor, it is again the *pha spun* who carry out the ancestral rites.

Among the festivals of Ladakh connected with the annual cycle, those related to New Year, are the most elaborate. And as the Ladakhi recognize two calendars, - the proper Tibetan one and one of their own - they also celebrate two New Years, each of them with distinct features. In simplifying the facts, those features can be classified as such: The Tibetan New Year displays predominantly Lamaistic elements, the indigenous Ladakhi New Year predominantly pre-Buddhist ones. From this distinction Brauen concludes that the Ladakhi calendar must be the older one, thereby contradicting a popular legend, according to which the local calendar was introduced about four hundred years ago by a Ladakhi king who advanced the New Year by two months,

for he and his men had to go to war and it was not sure whether they would return before the Tibetan New Year. As to the antiquity of the Ladakhi calendar, Brauen's arguments seems sound, whereas the local legend, historically false, points to another truth: New Year is so important that even an army going to war should not miss it at home. Moreover, the Ladakhi New Year customs display a number of similarities with those of the ethnic groups of the Hindukush, such as the Kalash. Thus, Brauen compares his descriptions with those made previously by Jettmar in *Die Religionen des Hindukush*, Stuttgart 1975, a standard opus, (which will soon be published in English). Some of the similarities he mentions are: making a special bonfire to expel an enemy king; commemorating the souls of the dead and the ancestors with offerings, *shi nu*; fabricating dough figures, in the shape of the ibex, *skyin*, their display inside the houses and their final ritual killing; honouring the deities of the hearth, *thab lha rgyal mo*; performing the pantomimic dance of an old couple, *api meme*, to expel the evils of the old year; and expressing a greater sexual freedom in words and actions, thus relating the New Year to the wish of fertility.

As agriculture plays an important role in the economy of Ladakh, a number of ceremonies and rites related to its phases accompany the agricultural cycle of the year. One of them is the first ritual ploughing in reverence to the god of the soil, *sa bdag*. It is fixed by an astrologer. Formerly, this inaugural ploughing used to be performed by the local kings. Another is the festival of the First Ears of Grain, *shrub lha*, which are cut by members of each family and hung onto the central pillar of the kitchen in honour of the gods of the hearth, the soil and the region. In former times folksongs used to be recited in the course of the *shrub lha* festival, dealing with the creation of the world and the origin of grain and beer. In the absence of a recent recording Brauen quotes a very interesting song on this subject, first published in 1923

by Francke, the great precursor of Ladakh's ethnography. As a whole, the descriptions of Brauen concerning the agricultural festivals are relatively poor and I am not in the position to decide whether this goes on the author's account or whether it reflects a general decline of agrarian rituals in Little Tibet.

Feste in Ladakh is concluded by a chapter on the oracles. As the activities of the oracles are not fixed to the dates of festivals, they are not immediately related to the subject of the book. Only the temple oracles act on set calendrical dates, some of which are festive days. The house oracle, *khyim lha*, on the other hand, can be called in by anyone at any time. The house oracle also acts as possessional magical healer. The author tells us some case histories of the Ladakh oracles: real people tell their vocational biographies. It is these presentations that are the liveliest part of the book.

It remains to be mentioned that each subject of the book is followed by a series of black and white or colour photographs which illustrate well what has been previously said in the descriptive, though artless language of Ladakh's first contemporary ethnographer of their festivals.

Michael Oppitz





SOME OF OUR ENGLISH PUBLICATIONS

| | | |
|--|--------------------------|----------|
| Introduction to Nepal | : Rishikesh Shah | 45-00 |
| Introduction to Nepalese Economy | : Dr. B. P. Shrestha | 45-00 |
| Short History of Nepal | : N. B. Thapa | 35-00 |
| Tibetan on Tibet | : G. A. Combe | 55-00 |
| Vocabulary of the Limbu Language of Eastern | | |
| | : W. H. R. Senior | 65-00 |
| Manual of Colloquial Tibetan | : Charles Bell | 180-00 |
| Naturalist's Adventure in Nepal: Search for | | |
| Spiny Babbler | : Dillon S. Ripley | 90-00 |
| Hindu Monasteries in the Western Himalaya | : Romi Krishna | 275-00 |
| Illustrata | : Athanasius Kircher | 450-00 |
| Journal of a Journey Across Tibet | : Hamilton | 95-00 |
| Research in Nepalese Education | : Kamal Prakash Malla | 2-00 |
| Tales of Nepal | : K. K. Vaidya | 12-00 |
| Tales from Tibet | : W. F. O'Connor | 60-00 |
| Way to the Temple: A Guide to Tibetan | | |
| Monastic Architecture, Dances, Festivals & | | |
| Customs | : Thubten Legshay Gyatso | 100-00 |
| Deities & Goddesses of Nepal | : Desmond / Rebel | 50-00 |
| Key to Mustang | : Giuseppe Tucci | 75-00 |
| Life of Maharaja Sir Jung Bahadur of Nepal | : P. J. B. Rana | 100-00 |
| History & Legend of Nepal | : Kesar Lal | 12-00 |
| Land Tenure and Taxation in Nepal | : Mahesh Chandra Regmi | 250-00 |
| Language Spoken Tibetan: Lhasa Dialect | : Geldstein / Norrang | 130-00 |
| Map of Nepal | : D. B. Bista | in press |
| Population and Family Planning in Nepal | : Tuladhar / Others | 35-00 |
| Mount Kanchenjunga | : Douglas Freshfield | in press |
| My Sisters and Other Nepalese Tales | : Kesar Lal | 90-00 |
| Peasants and Householders: A Study of Hindu | | |
| Life and Myth Among the Kangra Rajputs | : J. G. Campbell | 75-00 |
| Annual Report of a Mission to Sikkim and the | | |
| Chinese Frontier, with a Memoir of our relations | | |
| with Tibet | : Colman Macaulay | 55-00 |
| Travelling through the Himalayas | : Austine Waddell | 110-00 |
| Modern English Dictionary of Modern Tibetan | : M. Goldstein | 250-00 |

- | | |
|--|-------------------------|
| 29. Travels in Nepal and Sikkim 1875-76 | : Sir Richard Temple |
| 30. Teach Yourself Nepali | : Karunakar Vaidya |
| 31. The Traditional Architecture of the Kathmandu Valley | : W. Korn |
| 32. The Rise of the House of Gurkha | : L. F. Stiller |
| 33. The Judicial Customs of Nepal | : Kaisher Bahadur K. C. |
| 34. The Kiratarjuniye Canto I-VI | : " " |
| 35. " " VII-XII | : " " |
| 36. The Fiscal System of Nepal | : S. K. Singh |
| 37. The Customs & Manners of Nepal | : Kesar Lal |
| 38. The Nepal Festivals | : Dhurba Krishna .Dee |
| 39. The Kulunge Rai: Study in Kingship & Marriage Exchange | : Chanes McDougal |
| 40. Three Years in Tibet | : Ekai Kawaguchi |
| 41. Views of Nepal 1851-1864 | : Oldfield & Oldfield |
| 42. Wild Animals of Nepal | : Mishra & Mierow |
| 43. The Abode of Snow | : Andrew Wilson |
| 44. Newari Root Verbs | : I. Shresthacharya |
| 45. Western Himalaya & Tibet | : Thomas Thomson |

RATNA PUSTAK BHANDA

PUBLISHERS & BOOKSELLERS

Bhotahity, Kathmandu