THE THARU OF DANG : A STUDY OF SOCIAL ORGANISATION, MYTH AND RITUAL IN WEST NEPAL

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BY

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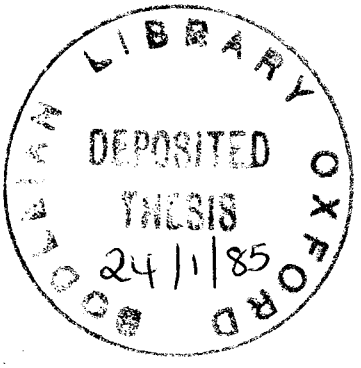

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CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS		viii
ABBREVIATIONS AND CONVENTIONS		ix
CHAPTER		
1	INTRODUCTION	1
	PART 1 : BACKGROUND	8
2	THE THARU AS A WHOLE	12
3	THE DANG VALLEY	36
4	ECONOMY	47
	PART 2 : SOCIAL GROUPS	57
5	THE VILLAGE	60
6	THE GOTYĀR	89
7	THE HOUSEHOLD	115
	PART 3 : KINSHIP, MARRIAGE AND PRESTATIONS	139
8	THE KINSHIP TERMINOLOGY	142
9	MARRIAGE	170
10	KINSHIP RELATIONS AND CATEGORIES	194
11	PRESTATIONS	215

PART 4 : DEITIES, MYTH, AND SOCIAL ORGANISATION 253

12 HOUSEHOLD DEITIES AND DOMESTIC SPACE 257

13 THE DEFINITION OF GOTYĀR AND THE HOUSE BY DEITIES 282

14 MYTH AND COSMOLOGY 309

15 THE HOUSE AS DEBI'S PALACE AND THE ROLE OF THE HOUSEHOLD PRIEST 338

16 THE VILLAGE : DEITIES AND RITUAL 351

17 CONCLUSION 374

APPENDIX A DRAWINGS OF THE HOUSE 379

APPENDIX B CREATION MYTHOLOGY 389

PLATES 394

BIBLIOGRAPHY 407

ABSTRACTS 415

ILLUSTRATIONS

MAPS

1 The Terai Districts of Nepal 10

2 Showing the Indian Districts Bordering West Nepal 11

3 Showing Rapti Zone West Nepal 392

4 The Dang Valley 393

5 Sukhrwar Village and its Boundaries 69

6 Sukhrwar Village : The Main Settlement 70

FIGURES

1 Sukhwariya 'House Genealogy' 94

2 The Gharguruwa--barin Division 98

3 Showing the rules of Inheritance 123

4 Partitioning of the house 126

5 Showing the Problem of Seniority in the Household 132

6 Showing +2, -2 Linkage 148

7 Showing additional +2, -2 Linkage 148

8 Showing Self-reciprocal Terms Linking +2, -2, +1 -1 154

9 General Diagram of Kinship Terms 156

10 Showing the Relation Between +1 and -1 159

11 Diagram of Affinal Terms : E(G) 161

12 Diagram of Affinal Terms : G(E) 162

13 Diagram of Affinal Terms : G(E) Showing Occurence of Affinal Terms (A) and Consanguineal Terms (C) 163

14 Showing a Woman's Links to her Laher, Maman, Jhaman 176

15 Showing Choice Between Bhaina or Bahanoiya Terms 200

16 Showing the Choice Between Mama and Phupha 201

17 Showing Houses Linked to a Male Ego 208

18 The Transmission of Jiura 220

19 The Transmission of Nisrau 234

20a Showing the Location of Household Deities 266

20b Showing the Location of House Phalluses 266

21a Showing the Pataha Dehri and Mannik Khamba 267

21b Showing the Deities of Maiya's Pata 267

22 Parbati's Children as Deities of the House 320

23 The General Model of Tharu Cosmography 330

24 Model of Cosmography Showing the Route of Debi via the House to Pāṭan at the Centre of the World 331

25 The Priests' Ancestor-Deities in the Dang Valley 332

26 Showing the Location of Village Deities 354

27 Showing the Daharcandi Shrine 354

28 Showing Plan of the House 380

29 Showing Cross-section of A-A, and B-B of the House 381

30 Showing Cross-section C-C of the House 382

31 Showing East Face of the House 383

32 Showing South Face of the House 384

33 Showing Dehri 385

34 Showing the Layout of Dehri in the House 354

PLATES

Plate 1 View of Dang Valley looking north 394

Plate 2 View of Sukhrwar Village 394

Plate 3 Māghi Dewāni Village Meeting 395

Plate 4 Dhwāk form of Greeting 395

Plate 5 Sewā Greeting 396

Plate 6 Kāthi Boknā in Māghi 396

Plate 7 Taking Jiurā to the Sasrār 397

Plate 8 Placing Jiurā behind the ear 397

Plate 9 Exchanging Jiurā with the Village Headman 398

Plate 10 Women doing Ṭikā to the Astimki mural 398

Plate 11 The Women's Astimki meal 399

Plate 12 The Men's Atwāri meal 399

Plate 13 Nisrau Kaharnā 400

Plate 14 Delivering Nisrau 400

Plate 15 Māiyā's Pātā 401

Plate 16 House Foundation Ritual 401

Plate 17 Preparing for Rath Lausārnā 402

Plate 18 Guruwā Banainā 402

Plate 19 Possessed men sitting on top of the Pātāhā Dehri 403

Plate 20 The Daharcandi shrine 403

Plate 21 The Daharcandi shrine of Hekuli Village 404

Plate 22 Hariyā Gurai 404

Plate 23 Binding the drums in Hariyā Gurai 405

Plate 24 The Kesaukā "dancing" in Hariyā Gurai 405

Plate 25 The Desbandhyā making Khirbān 406

Plate 26 Sankarryā Bhut Ṭhoknā in Dhuriyā Gurai 406

Plate 27 Model of the house viewed from above 387

Plate 28 Model of house viewed from the east side 388

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ABBREVIATIONS AND CONVENTIONS

- Unless otherwise indicated all foreign words underlined are Tharu.
- Nepali, Hindi, and Sanskrit words are signalled by N, H, Sk, followed by a colon and preceding the word, eg. N:sāno, H:paithnā etc.
- Occasionally to avoid ambiguity Tharu words are indicated in the same way with T: .
- Transcription of Tharu words follows Turner (1965), since the quantities of Tharu are the same as Nepali. Long 'i' and long 'u' have been omitted.
- Diacritics are inserted below the underlining of foreign words.

- Footnotes to the text are indicated by a capital N. followed by a number, with both enclosed in brackets, eg. (N.1), (N.2) etc.
- Footnotes are placed together at the end of each Chapter.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis is to present a descriptive analysis of the social organisation, myth, and ritual of the Dangaurā Thāru of the Dāng valley in south-west Nepal (N.1). Included under the ethnonym 'Thāru' are about 500,000 people living in districts throughout the Terai, the srip of land which runs along Nepal's southern border with India (Nepal Census 1971). There are also smaller numbers of Tharu in adjoining districts on the Indian side of the border. The Tharu do not share any collective identity, but are divided into a number of named groups of varying size, which are distinguished by locality, language and other cultural features. In the present state of knowledge, however, it is neither clear what these groups share in common nor exactly how they differ. In most of the eastern Terai the Tharu comprise only a part of the population , living as one group among many, often in multi-caste villages. In the central Chitwan disrict, and in districts further west, Tharu groups such as Rānā, Dangaura, Kathariyā, and Chitwaniyā, form large sections of the population, increasing as one moves west (for the districts mentioned here and later see Map 1).

Macdonald (1975: 286) has commented that "The descriptive ethnographical study of the different populations of Nepal remains our essential task". This is particularly true for

the Tharu, who, as the review of the literature in Chapter 2 will show, remain a virtual blank in the ethnography of the region. It was this fact which first drew my attention to the Tharu, and a general aim of this study is , therefore, to make a contribution towards filling this gap in the ethnography.

As Macdonald had advised, after arriving in Nepal I read the M.A. thesis of Rajaure (1978), an anthropological researcher at the Centre for Nepalese and Asian Studies, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu. Rajaure's thesis confirmed that the Dangaura, the largest of the more traditional western groups, would be a useful group for further research. After discussing the choice of a possible site for fieldwork with Rajaure, we agreed that Dang was a suitable area, and one which would give me the additional advantage of using Rajaure's work as a basis on which to build and develop my own research.

Macdonald had warned me that it was not easy to establish oneself as a stranger in Tharu villages in Dang, and that a good introduction through a trusted intermediary would considerably shorten the time spent in building rapport. Rajaure himself, though a native of Dang and fluent in the Dangaura Tharu language, had been unsuccessful in establishing himself in the first village he had chosen for fieldwork, since "...by failing to use an appropriate intermediary in approaching the villagers, their first impression of me was not favourable and they were suspicious"(1978: 23). I was fortunate, therefore, in having the opportunity of accompanying Rajaure, and obtaining through him an introduction to the village of Sukhrwār, where he had previously carried out some of his fieldwork. In addition to obtaining a bona fide introduction, Sukhrwar met all my

initial requirements for a fieldwork site. It is a large village, with a predominantly Tharu population, though like most Dang villages nowadays it contains several Brahman and Chettri Households. Accomodation was easily available in an empty house owned by the Tharu village Headman, and situated just beside the main Tharu settlement. A further point in its favour was that it contained a few young Tharu men educated to School Leaving Certificate Level, two of whom I was later able to engage at different times as assistants.

Altogether time spent in the field amounted to some twenty months between May 1979 and June 1981. Most of this time was spent in Sukhrwar, but having established myself in this village, I was able to work in other villages by in most cases moving through the existing network of kinship links. In fact I gathered the bulk of the material on myth and some on ritual in these other villages. I was also able to spend about one month visiting Dangaura Tharu villages in Kailali district in the far western Terai.

During the first stages of fieldwork I worked in Nepali, which is understood and spoken by most men, but not so well by the women in Tharu villages. After several months, however, with the help of Bal Bahadur Chaudhari, my main assistant, I began to work in Tharu, and by the closing stages of fieldwork the bulk of my enquiries were conducted in the local language.

The original aim during fieldwork was to collect material for a general ethnographic monograph covering most aspects of Dangaura society, but with an emphasis on social organisation. As enquiries proceeded, however, it became clear

that an understanding of the social groups entailed increasingly detailed consideration of ritual, which in turn, of course, is directly related to myth. It was not that my interest lay in particular in the domains of ritual and myth, or their relation to social organisation, and indeed it seemed in view of the lack of published material on the Tharu, the most useful starting point would be to give a description of social organisation. Analysis of the 'social' aspects of Dangaura society, however, has proved impossible without including the domain of 'ritual'. This is the fundamental theme of the study, and it is the approach adopted, not because of some preestablished interest or concern of the observer, but because the facts themselves dictate such a procedure. Nevertheless, as the manner and order of exposition will show, while ritual and myth have their place in the study, the emphasis remains on social organisation, which is taken as the point of departure in part 2.

Part 1 consists of three chapters which provide the general contextual background to Tharu society in Dang. It starts by reviewing the literature and presenting what is known of the history of the Tharu in general and the western Tharu groups in particular, while chapters 3 and 4 outline the main features of the geography, history, and economy of Dang.

Part 2 presents a general description of the principal groups, beginning with an outline of the types of village that existed in the past, and a description of the present organisation of Sukhrwar as it is today. This is followed by an account of the characteristics and function of the gotyār, a loosely structured patrilineal exogamous group, and an outline of household composition and organisation. In the course of part

2, and especially in connection both with the house and the gotyār it is pointed out that essential aspects of their definition and of their interrelations have to be understood in terms of the relations between these groups and the deities which are attached to them, and at the same time in terms of the relations between these deities themselves.

Part 3 continues with the treatment of 'social' relations and focusses on kinship and marriage, starting with an outline of the kinship terminology in chapter 8, and a description of the main features of marriage in chapter 9. Chapter 10 describes various forms of kinship behaviour and seeks to isolate the principal categories of kinship, while chapter 11, through an analysis of the exchanges of prestations and ritual services, discusses the differential treatment of links of affinity or consanguinity, particularly in the context of relations established between houses by marriage. Apart from chapter 8, all the chapters in this part introduce material on ritual, which is seen to prove essential to an understanding of the topics discussed. The general point is again made that relations to deities and relations between people are inextricably linked forming parts of a whole.

In part 4 chapters 12 to 16 are devoted fully to a discussion of ritual, myth, cosmology, and the deities of the house, gotyār and village, but always with a view to clarifying certain topics or problems which emerged in the preceding discussion of social organisation. In particular this section addresses the questions of: how the gotyār itself is defined and distinguished from other gotyār; how the system of deities associated with different gotyār provides the key

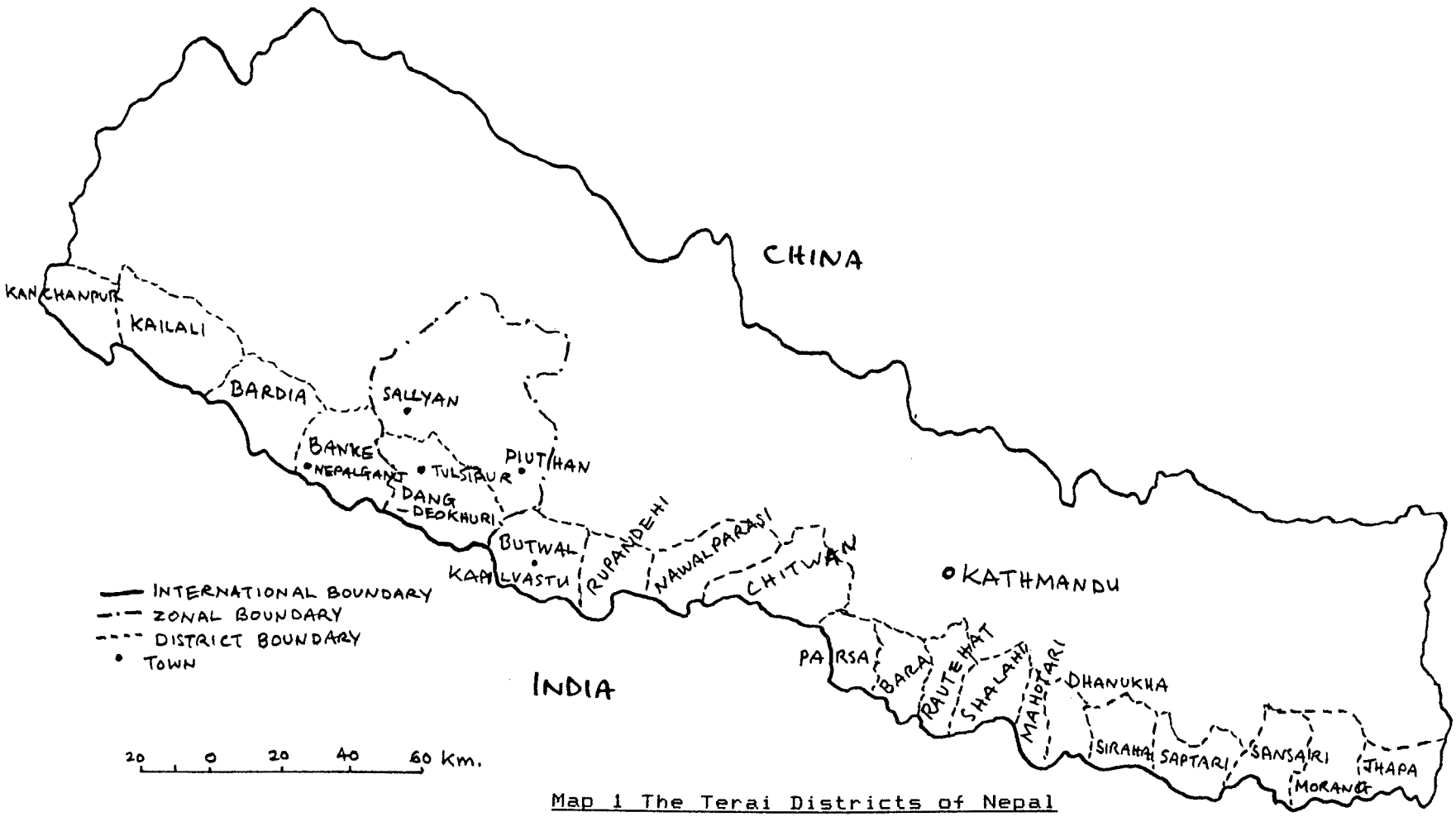
to understanding the role and function of household and village priests, who all belong to only four or five gotyār; how the relationship established between gods and men in possession rituals gives the house a particular and 'total' identity; and how important aspects of the village as a unit are revealed in village ritual.

Notes to Chapter 1

N.1. The term 'Thāru', the names of Tharu groups, and of less well known castes and places will only be spelt with diacritics the first time they appear in the text.

PART 1 : BACKGROUND

The purpose of this part is simply to present the necessary background material so as to situate the Tharu of the Dang Valley in their wider historical, cultural and social setting. The first chapter reviews the available sources, and gives a general outline of the history of the western Tharu groups and of their place in relation to the surrounding society. The second and third chapters focus more closely on Dang itself, bringing together the essential facts concerning the history, geographical environment, and economy of the valley. Together these three chapters provide the basis for the discussion in the following parts of social organisation and of the relation to this of the system of deities, and myth.



Map 1 The Terai Districts of Nepal

Map 2 Showing The Indian Districts Bordering West Nepal



CHAPTER 2 : THE THARU AS A WHOLE

This chapter presents an overview of the sources relating to the Tharu as a whole. Different named groups of Tharu are found all along the Terai on both sides of the Indo-Nepalese border, but the majority of reports describe the groups situated in India between Naini Tal in the west and the Gorakhpur region in the east, and in Nepal between the districts of Kanchanpur to the west and Kapilvastu to the east (for the places and districts mentioned here and in what follows see Maps 1 and 2). In reviewing the literature account has been taken of all the groups mentioned, but particular attention has been given to information which concerns the Dangaura Tharu. The chapter is divided into six sections. The first gives a critical review of the literature from the early nineteenth century to the present. This is followed by four sections which summarise what is known regarding origins, racial and cultural affiliation, language, and the ethnonym itself. The final section discusses the history of the Tharu and the position of different groups in relation to the surrounding caste society in India and Nepal.

2.1. Literature

Over the last hundred and fifty years there have been a number of reports on the Tharu but the bulk of this work has been superficial. It is only in recent years that more substantial work of a higher ethnographic standard has appeared. We can divide the material into two periods, pre and post 1931.

The literature of the first period consists mostly of reports and articles by British administrators and travellers. As is generally the case with the writing of that time, it is concerned with questions of history, origins, race, "survivals", and with the recording of miscellaneous customs. Nevertheless, from the vantage point of fieldwork one is better able to return to these accounts to evaluate and extract what information they do contain. Hamilton (otherwise known as Buchanan) was the first to provide details on the Tharu (Hamilton 1819, Buchanan 1838). His first work is particularly interesting for this study, in that he provides some information on the history of Dang itself. His second work (1838, 2:341 et seq) concerns the Gorakhpur region in India and contains some interesting information but most of what he reports on the place of the Tharu in the early history of the region is vague and highly speculative. There then follow a number of references to the Tharu in various census reports and gazetteers (N.1.). In the first account devoted wholly to the Tharu, Nestfield (1885) synthesised most of the informatoin then available from the early reports and added further information based partly on his own observations and partly on correspondence with local officials (N.2.). In the last decade of the century, Risely (1891) and Crooke (1890)

again collated earlier information, and further added to it with Crooke's second work (1896) superseding all that had gone before. In the early part of the twentieth century, the gazetteers of the districts of Uttar Pradesh while qualifying some of the earlier commentators' remarks on history, added little new (Nevill 1904, 1905a, 1905b, 1907, 1909). At around this time in their work historians of Nepal only mention the Tharu in passing (Lévi 1905, 1:42; 2:309; Landon 1928, 2:240). This first period ends with Turner's census report on the Tharu, in which he made a point of reporting only new information rather than again summarising what had appeared before (1931:599-606).

Since 1931 there has been a succession of reports of steadily improving quality, reflecting the growth of interest in the study of anthropology in India and Nepal. In contrast to the earlier work, these later accounts have been based largely on fieldwork research. Nevertheless much of this more recent work still suffers from the tendency to record and describe miscellaneous facts and customs, while the development of an analytical framework and the identification and discussion of significant problems tends to be neglected. Up to 1958 the most important contributions were made by Majumdar, Pradhan and Hu. Majumdar's earlier articles (1938, 1942) were synthesised in his later fuller account (1944). He deals only with the Rana Tharu, and by present day standards his ethnography has shortcomings due to its functionalist orientation, although at that time it marked a major improvement on earlier work. Pradhan in a series of articles (1935, 1937-8) described a variety of aspects of Rana Tharu society, including economy, and birth, marriage and

death customs. Hu's contributions are exceptional in that he restricts himself to discussing specific topics, namely demography (1955) and marriage patterns (1956-7), and presents detailed facts based on research in a single village. In contrast to previous reports which deal mainly with Rana Tharu groups, Hu's work is particularly interesting for us since he describes a Dangaura Tharu village in the north of Gonda district.

The first book-length study was Srivastava's (1958) monograph on the Rana Tharu of Naini Tal district in India. Srivastava's study, which incorporated the bulk of his earlier articles (1948, 1949a, 1949b) provides information on many aspects of Rana Tharu society, but is primarily concerned with "the dynamics of culture change". The book wanders between the description of traditional culture and a discussion of the effects of increasing contact with Hindu society, and in neither regard can it be said to be successful. Nevertheless it does mark a kind of turning point in Tharu studies. Reflected in both Srivastava's and Hu's work, as in much that came later, is a concern with more sociological questions. Attempts were made to present facts and statistics to identify certain fundamental structural features of Tharu society, rather than merely describing ceremonies and listing various customs. In the '60s this trend was continued by Kochar who analysed the size and compostion, and the process of fission of Tharu joint families (1963, 1965). Further studies were made by Mathur (1967) on marriage, and by Hasan (1969a, 1969b) on village economy. Hasan also provided two more general accounts of aspects of village life (1968, 1971), but these suffer from the tendency to cover

too much ground in too short a space, a criticism which also applies to the village census monographs by Sharma (1965a, 1965b).

In the field of physical anthropology several very brief studies have appeared (R.P. Srivastava 1964, Basu 1968, Kumar 1975), but of these it is only Majumdar's study of Tharu blood groups (1942) which is of interest here (see below) . At this time also there were a number of very short papers presenting examples of Tharu songs (Sohoni 1955, Chaubey 1957, Prasad 1959, Govila 1959).

As should be clear, until 1968 the literature had dealt almost entirely with Tharu communities living in India, whereas the vast majority are found in Nepal. With the growth of anthropological studies in Nepal this situtation began to change. The earlier reports were soon eclipsed by Bista's treatment of the Tharu in his ethnographic survey of Nepalese peoples (1967). Bista's work was the first attempt to describe the Tharu of Nepal and served to emphasise how little was known about this group. Further reports soon appeared, with Macdougal's work on village and household economy in Western Nepal (1968), and Macdonald's description of two Tharu festivals in Dang (1969). In Chitwan district, D. Leal and W. Leal carried out linguistic research (1972, 1973) under the auspices of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (N.3).

Within the last decade, there has been a growing interest among educated sections ofthe Tharu in publishing material on their traditions and culture. In 1977 the first issue of the journal "Thāru Samskrti" was published, and this and subsequent issues contain articles together with stories,

songs and poems written in a variety of local Tharu dialects and drawn from Tharu communities throughout Nepal. In Dang there had already appeared a book of Dangaura Tharu marriage songs (M. Chaudhari 1974), and a book containing excerpts of versions of the Tharu creation myth (Guru Bābak Janmauti) and their version of the Mahabharata (Barkimār) (N.4). Two further vernacular publications, again of the creation myth and of the Barkimār, came out in 1983 (M. Chaudhari 1983, M. Chaudhari and S. Chaudhari 1983). These publications will of course prove extremely valuable for further research on Dangaura Tharu myth and oral traditions.

We must now consider the recent work of Rajaure, who without any doubt has produced the fullest ethnography to date. His work is particularly relevant here since it concerns the Dangaura Tharu and provides the basis for this study. Rajaure's M.A. thesis (1978) follows a standard monographic format, with chapters on society, economy, religion, life cycle rituals, and festivals. It contains much valuable description including detailed accounts of several rituals and of the land ownership pattern. The study is based on material gathered in 1974 in Sukhrwar and several other villages situated in different parts of Dang. Rajaure's descriptive account, while surpassing anything written before, nevertheless suffers from the lack of any clear analytical framework, and tries perhaps to cover too much ground at once. The result is that a great deal of material is presented but in a rather unrelated manner. Though Rajaure does indicate certain interconnections, between the system of deities and that of clans for instance, there is no attempt to pursue such observations so as to establish relations systematically

between different areas of social life and thus arrive at some overall view of the pattern of order or structure in Dangaura society. Recently a considerbale part of Rajaure's thesis has been published in largely unchanged form in a series of long articles (1981a, 1982a, 1982b). Rajaure also produced a report on the status of women in Dangaura society (1981b) as a part of a larger USAID project aimed at reviewing the status of women in a number of different ethnic groups in Nepal. This report, based on research in the neighbouring villages of Sukhrwar and Kanaryā, clarifies and summarises his earlier findings on aspects of kinship and social organisation, and adds new material on the role of women in economic life, along with a considerable body of statistical data. Although this study further extends our knowledge of Dangaura society, it has shortcomings which result from the need to restrict itself to discussion of only one aspect of society, and from the predetermined format - a requirement imposed by the project directors in an attempt to achieve a measure of consistency and comparability between the different studies carried out by the members of the project.

To complete this survey of the ethnographic sources on the Tharu, mention must be made of the detailed description and drawings of the Dangaura house by a French architect (Milliet-Mondon 1981). Furthermore, since the Tharu house is a central part of this study, I have been very fortunate in obtaining permission to use the unpublished report and excellent drawings and photographs of the Tharu house produced by a team of Swiss architecture students (Baechtold, Menendez, and Peleraux 1982; see below Appendix A) (N.5).

As this survey of the literature shows, the majority of the sources deal in a very piecemeal fashion with the Tharu communities in India, and in particular with the Rana Tharu in Naini Tal and neighbouring districts. Inside Nepal the Tharu comprise a substantial section of the population, but, apart from the recent work referred to, they still remain a virtual blank in the ethnographic record of that country. This is in striking contrast to the growing number of studies on other communities in Nepal (N.6). Happily, however, the situation has begun to change: Mikame (1979) has begun to publish some of his material on the Tharu of Chitwan, and one looks forward to the appearance of the work of Krauskopf, a French researcher who has recently been working in Dang.

2.2. Origins and Racial Affiliation

Although I never heard such a claim in Dang, in several areas the Tharu claim a Rajput origin (Crooke 1896:402; Risley 1891:133; Hasan 1968:133). One version of this claim among the Rana Tharu is that they originate from Chittor, whence they were driven out by Akbar in 1567 A.D.. They later lost caste by eating fowls and using alcohol (Srivastava 1958:14). Another version, also current amoung the Rana, is that they are the descendants of Rajput women who fled to the jungles to escape the Muslims and later married with their servants, with the Tharus being the descendants of these marriages (Nevill 1904:107; Majumdar 1944:68). Such claims to a high caste origin are common throughout India as Carnegy already pointed out in

1868 (1868:8,9), and these claims have been built on by reform movements in an attempt to raise Tharu status. Other claims reported are that the Tharu came from the south (Crooke 1896:382) or that they originated from Ajodhya (= Ayodhyā, Rama's capital in the Ramayana; Carnegy 1868:10). On the other hand, in the Gorakhpur region the Tharu are said to have little idea of their origin, but claim to have come from the hills of Nepal (Turner 1931:599). In Dang few people had any opinion on the matter, but those that did also asserted that they came from the south and from Ajodhya.

All commentators report that the Tharu possess distinctly Mongoloid features, though there is disagreement as to the salience of this trait. A somewhat mixed racial appearance led some to suggest a Davidian origin (Crooke 1896:385; Risley 1891:313). Subsequently, however, Majumdar has established by anthropometric and bloodgroup studies that the Rana at any rate are of Mongoloid racial type (1942:33). This fact, combined with the earliest historical references which seem to place the western Tharu east of their present location, and may even associate them with the Koch and Mech in Assam, suggests perhaps that at some time they have migrated west along the Himalayan foothills from the Assam region (see section 6 below).

2.3. Language

The original linguistic affiliation of the different Tharu groups is uncertain. Some nineteenth century reports held that their language was different from the local dialects of the

caste populations (Oudh Census 1869, 1:111; Oudh Gazetteer 1877-78, 3:502). One source stated that their language was similar to that of the Magar and Gurung Tibeto-Burman speaking groups in Nepal (Beames 1869:58). In the Gorakhpur district even as late as 1931 we are told that within living memory they had great difficulty in making themselves understood (Turner 1931:606). According to another report, however, the Tharu language was a variant of other local dialects and was readily intelligible to the local castes (Atkinson 1886:705).

At present the Dangaura language, as seems to be the case for most other Tharu groups, is largely a mixture of Nepali and local North Indian dialects. Macdonald's (1975:273) opinion that it is a mixture of roughly 40% Hindi words, 40% Nepali words, with the remainder englobing borrowings from other North Indian dialects and languages, agrees with my own impression. It seems, though, that now Nepali is gaining ground, especially among the men (cf. Chand, Tuladhar, and Subba 1977:10,11). Recently, however, it has been stated for the Chitwan Tharu language that while it is "related to both Nepali and Bhojpuri, it nevertheless differs substantially from them" (Leal and Leal 1972:2). Until further linguistic research is carried out, this question must remain unsolved.

2.4. Cultural Affiliation

Language, therefore, provides us with no basis on which to establish the cultural affiliations of the Tharu. Their Mongoloid appearance, however, would seem to relate them either to the Tibeto-Burman speaking peoples to the north in Nepal, or,

as I have suggested, possibly to the east in Assam.

Allen has noted three cultural features which connect them to peoples further north:

> One of their (Rana Tharu) funeral ceremonies is closely similar to that of the Gurung and U.P. Bhotias ... Like the latter they have traditionally practised sister exchange (Hu, 1956-7) and their blood brotherhood or ritual friendship customs (Srivastava 1958:100) are very like those reported almost universally among the Himalayan peoples ... (Allen 1969:67).

Except for funeral customs, the other cultural similarities hold good for the Dangaura also.

Haimendorf on the other hand has stated that dispite the physical evidence of their Mongoloid affinities,

> ... Their cultural characteristics confirm that they represent the northernmost extension of the middle Indian aboriginal races rather than an offshoot of the Mongolian people of the Himalayan ranges (in introduction to Srivastava 1958).

Allen is probably correct in suggesting that the Tharu have lived in the Terai area for a very long time, incorporating elements from the cultures of their neighbours. He proposes that they may go back to the period when, before the coming of the Aryans, the Austro-Asiatic and Tibeto-Burman speakers may have lived in close contact with the Himalayan area. To the south they have been cut off from related tribes by the spread of the Aryans into the Gangetic plains and to the north they have been largely cut off from the related Mongoloid peoples by the slower spread of the Khas (Nepalese Hindu peoples)(Allen 1969:68-9).

The question of the cultural affinities of the Tharu will probably never be answered satisfactorily, and certainly cannot be at present; much further comparative work is first required among different Tharu groups. It is not the purpose of this study to address this question, but where striking

similarities or differences exist, these will be noted.

2.5. Ethnonym

A number of different etymologies for the ethnonym "Tharu" have been reported (N.7), but none are satisfactory, and as Nestfield commented it is safer to consider the name as deriving from the original language that they may have spoken at one time (1885:3). In the Dangaura dialect, at any rate, the word Tharu means husband and man as opposed to woman. The local term for Man in a generic sense is manai or manaiyā deriving ultimately from Sanskrit manu, but it is possible that the word Tharu may have had this wider meaning at one time and thus have come to be applied to the group as a whole. This phenomenon, of course, is widespread and occurs relatively nearby among the Austro-Asiatic speaking Ho and Munda tribes for instance.

2.6. Historical Background

The pre-nineteenth century sources only give us a vague indication of where people calling themselves Tharu were located, but the nineteenth century reports provide a fuller picture of the general patterns of society in certain districts, and how it was progressively being affected by the expansion of the Hindu plains population. I shall summarise what we can find out about the Dang Valley itself in Chapter 3.

The first reference (c. AD 1030) to the "... Taru, people of very black colour and flat nosed like the Turks"

places them in Tilwat, a region just to the south of Nepal (Alberuni 1888:201). The next reference from the thirteenth century Persian historian Mināju-s-siraj classes the "Th'rw" with the Mech and Koch as people of Mongol race and speech and places them in Kāmarūpa (Assam) or North Bengal (Chatterji 1974:101, 104) (N.8). Lévi's translation of a passage in Taranatha's sixteenth century history of Buddhism gives the Tharu as occupying Campārna, which is present day Champaran, a district of north Bihar contiguous with the Nepalese Terai on the main route from Patna to Kathmandu (N.9). It is difficult to place much weight on these references, but it does seem clear that they are referring to a group with a similar name, and this group was located either in or near to the Tharu's present habitat in the Terai.

The nineteenth century reports are rather more precise on Tharu history. They relate to areas south of the present Nepal-India border in the districts of Bareilly, Basti, Gonda, and Gorakhpur. Buchanan claimed that at one time in the distant past the Tharu were the ruling race in the area around Gorakhpur, and he identified a number of ancient ruins as originally Tharu (1838, 2:341 et seq.). Similar reports were later sumarised by Nestfield, who concluded that according to local traditions the Tharu used to inhabit areas (about 100 miles) further south than they did at the time he was writing (1885:84) (N.10). In so far as the Tharu seem to have been forest dwellers for a considerable period of time and considering that in the past the Terai did indeed stretch down much further into the Gangetic plains, this judgement may contain some truth. The fullest and most interesting accounts

concern Tharu settlements in Tulsipur pragannā of Gonda district, but these will be discussed in the context of Dang's history in Chapter 3. As for the substance of these reports we must agree with Nevill's conclusion:

> After the early Buddhist period, of which we know little, there was a period of darkness when ancient towns disappeared and the former cultivation gave place to jungle. Tradition relates that the Bhars and Tharus then held sway, and the same story is to be found in most parts of Uttar Pradesh. It has probably some substratum of truth, but more than this cannot be said, as no records exist to tell us in any certain form of the domination of these presumably aboriginal tribes (1907:142).

Although rather vague about the precise location of the Tharu populations on the Indian side of the border, the sources of this time all state that the Tharu were continually migrating away from the plains into the Nepalese Terai (e.g. Carnegy 1868: 10; Oudh Gazetteer 1877-78 3:502, 504; Nestfield 1885:34, 35; Turner 1931:605). There were several reasons for this continual migration. First, at this time it appears that the Tharu practised shifting cultivation, so as the plains population moved closer they retreated with the forest, preferring to keep their migratory villages in or on the fringes of the forest areas (Atkinson 1884:600, quoting a report of 1844; Carnegy 1868:10; Oudh Gazetteer 1877-78, 1:341-2; 3:502; Nestfield 1885:4). The extent to which they moved to clear new fields seems to have varied, and may have been coming to an end at least in India towards the close of the nineteenth century (Crooke 1896:402). The second reason for their migration northwards was to avoid the interference of new British conservancy laws with their freedom to select and settle new sites (Carnegy 1868:10; Nestfield 1885:4). Further reasons were to escape indebtedness to money lenders and traders (Nevill 1904:109), to avoid interference with their right to make their

own liquor (Nevill 1905b:129), and to avoid falling under the control of landowners (Atkinson 1881:386; Risley 1891:330; Turner 1931:605).

Corresponding to this tendency to migrate and remain on the margins of the larger society, the sources attest to the Tharu's love of independence (Nevill 1905a:197) and strong attachment to their own way of life (e.g. Turner 1931:606). These observers report that the Tharu were "a curiously shy, retiring race" (Crooke 1897:217), who never enter into disputes with neighbouring Hindus and who live in their own self-governing communities under headmen (Nestfield 1885:7) "... mutually helping eachother in cultivation and adjusting amongst themselves all the affairs of their little communities ..." (census of Oudh 1869:111) (N.11). In keeping with their marginal position, the Tharu apparently had the reputation among the neighbouring population for being adepts in witchcraft and possessed of supernatural powers so that " ... Thāruhat, 'the Tharu land', has an evil repute which makes the emigrant from the Plains carefully avoid it." (Crooke, ibid; cf. also Buchanan 1838, 2:445). This attribution of powers of witchcraft to marginal tribal people seems quite widespread in India (cf. Deliege 1981: 120).

Thus far I have been treating the Tharu as a block without attempting to distinguish between different groups. This for the most part is how these early sources described them. There were, however, attempts to list the various divisions and subgroups, but all observers conclude that this is an impossible task, since the number of subtribes seems to be great and the various names and distinctions are uncertain and probably

changing (e.g. cf. Crooke 1896:385, 388). It would not be useful here to reproduce the lists that have been given, since they vary considerably and no doubt confuse different levels of segmentation. If we restrict our attention to the country between the Nepalese districts of Kanchanpur in the west and Kapilvastu to the east we can distinguish roughly between the Rana, Kathariya, Deokhuriā and Dangaura groups (N.12), each of which is further subdivided into a number of subgroups some of which may be endogamous as in the case of the Rana (Srivastava 1958:64) while others are exogamous as in the case of the Dangaura (see below Chapter 6). If we attempt to trace only these major groupings in the lists it seems that their previous location in the Indian border districts corresponds roughly with their present locations in Nepal. Thus in Naini Tal the majority appear to have been Rana, though as now some Dangaura were found (cf. Turner 1931:598 on "Dhangra or Dangwariya"). In Nepal today the Rana are similarly concentrated in the contiguous western district of Kanchanpur, with some also intermixed with Dangaura in the adjoining district of Kailali. Most lists for the adjoining districts in India of Kheri, Bahraich, and Gonda include Kathariya and Dangaura (under various spellings) as major groupings, but mention also several other names. Today the contiguous Nepalese districts of Kailali, Banke, and Dang-Deokhuri predominantly contain communities of Dangaura and Deokhuria, but in Kailali at any rate, and probably in Bardia and Banke, one also finds some Kathariya. For the Gorakhpur region, again, we encounter Dangaura and Kathariya amoung various others, but here the majority were Kathariya (Turner 1931:600). In this region Nestfield reported an interesting

distinction between two major sections: the "Pachhami" or western and the "Purabi" or eastern. What is particularly interesting, however, is that the eastern section was again subdivided into two: the "Barka" or "upper" and the "chhutka" or "lower". As we shall see, the distinction between barkā and chotki is of fundamental importance for the Dangaura, though it does not serve as it does here to rank major sections or groups within society. Unfortunately I do not know the identity of the Tharu polulation presently in the adjoining Nepalese districts of Kapilvastu, but it seems probable that the Kathariya will be found there, perhaps forming the majority. As can be seen from map 1., the valleys of Deokhuri and Dang, the homeland of the Dangaura and Deokhuria groups, are not very far from this region, or from Gonda distict.

Despite the comparative isolation of the Tharu from the bulk of the caste population, all commentators remark on the influence Hindu customs were having on those of the Tharu. Moreover, this would appear to have been an influence that was steadily gaining ground and as we have seen it formed the main interest for some later researchers (Srivastava 1958; Majumdar 1944). In all the reports there are indications of how the Tharu are adopting Hindu practices in such areas as death and marriage rituals, and of course their developing concern with restrictions on diet, commensality, and intermarriage within their own groupings (e.g. Atkinson 1881:430; Nestfield 1885:9; Crooke 1896:393-8, 401-2; Risley 1891:313-318, 319). The development of restrictions on commensality and marriage reflects a preoccupation with status and one can see the various subgroups being ranked in relation to one another according to

criteria typical of caste society. This process may well have contributed to the emergence of more defined endogamous groups over time.

In the sources there is no indication of any clear form of group organisation, though apparently there were non-permanent "tribal panchayats" which met to settle disputes among the Rana (Srivastava 1958:104), in Gonda and Bahraich districts (Turner 1931:604), and for the Kathariya in the Gorakhpur region (ibid). Though these panchayats dealt with disputes, it is clear that they also dealt with "... matrimonial troubles, including cases of Tharus who contemplate marrying outside the tribe" (ibid). It would seem that these bodies were to an extent similar to other caste panchayats and so concerned with maintaining the status of the group. This was definitely part of the function of the Rana panchayat (Srivastava 1958:104-5; Turner 1931:603) and also of the Gorakhpur Kathariya panchayat (Turner 1931:604). These panchayats were to some extent linked with the later reform movements aimed at prohibiting certain practices so as to assert a higher caste status (Turner ibid; Srivastava 1958:106-112). So far, however, none of these reform movements have made much headway either in India or Nepal.

In terms of status the Kathariya seem to have been able to assert themselves as highest in relation to other Tharu groups, at least in Gonda and Gorakhpur districts, while the Dangaura were always near the bottom of the hierarchy (Crooke 1896:382-3 ; Carnegy 1868:11; Turner 1931:604). Though collectively the Tharu had ceased to be regarded as untouchables (Turner ibid), in Naini Tal Brahmans and Rajputs would not eat food but did accept water from Tharu, but in Gonda and Gorakhpur, the pure castes would not accept food or water from

the Dangaura (Sharma 1965:4-5; Turner 1931:604).

The status of the Tharu in Nepal, however, was different since, as Turner noted, there " even a Brahman has to take water from their hands on pain of prosecution" (1931:604). The nature of Hindu caste-tribal relations in Nepal was and is different from that in North India, partly perhaps because a much larger proportion of the population belong to tribal or ethnic minorities. In the process of nation building in the nineteenth century the attempt was made to bring all these different groups into a unified hierarchy, which was codified in the Muluki Ain (legal code) of 1854. According to Hofer's analysis of this code the Tharu are included in the third of five broad categories, belonging to the category of "enslavable alcohol drinkers" (Māsinyā Matwāli) which included various groups such as Bhote, Kumāl (potters), Hāyu, and Gharti (descendants of freed slaves). As such the Tharu ranked among the groups between whom water was acceptable (cokho jāt, pāni calnyā jāt) and above the lower two impure categories from whom water was unacceptable (pāni nacalnyā jāt) (1979:45) (N.13).

The situation today in Dang is much as it was in the code of 1854, though now the criterion of enslavability is no longer relevant. In broad terms the Dangaura rank above the untouchable impure castes such as Lohar, Damai, Bādi etc. and below the Brahman and Chetris. They consider themselves to be of the same status as the Magar and the Newar, though they know nothing of the internal ranked divisions of the Newar (N.14). In relation to the lower castes, the Dangaura are scrupulous in maintaining the rules of avoidance. The situation, however, is complicated by the marked differences that exist between the

Tharu and the neighbouring castes in terms of language, religion and other cultural traits. Thus the higher castes often depict the Tharu as dirty, backward, and uneducated, a stereotype summed up in the word jangali (primitive, of the jungle). In certain respects, then, the Dangaura stand outside the local caste hierarchy, though it should be remembered that they share the common terminology which uses the term jāt for distinguishing all groups, whether they are 'tribal' or 'caste'.

I do not intend here, or in this thesis, to embark on a discussion of the tribe-caste dichotomy in Nepal, and where we might situate the Tharu within this framework. It is difficult to classify a group such as the Tharu in terms of this dichotomy since, as Hofer (1979:46,47) has pointed out, in Nepal it is not at all easy to apply the criteria which have been proposed for characterising the ideal-typical tribal society in India (e.g. cf. Bailey 1961; 1960:263-6). The reader may be better able to form a judgement on this issue after reading this study. Whether or not one agrees with Hofer's preference for the term "ethnic group" as the most useful denotation for groups like the Tharu, he has proposed a useful definition of such groups, as those:

> ... who have a subjective ethnic identity i.e. conscious of a solidarity due to a (mostly mythical) common ancestry and of sharing specific linguistic and cultural phenomena. In the main this identity is expressed by an ethnonym often "covering" a certain local or regional range of dialectical and/or cultural features (1979:46-7).

We shall see that this is particularly apt as a general working definition for characterising the Dangaura Tharu, particularly if we emphasise the notion of a common mythical ancestry or origin.

Notes to Chapter 2

N.1 The references for these nineteenth century census and gazetteer reports in chronological order are: Carnegy 1868:8-12,26-27; Beames 1869:57,58,315-318; Census of Oudh 1869:109,111; Oudh Gazetteer 1877-78, 1:xxxiv,111,341-2; 2:125,126,208, 209; 3:372,502-507; Atkinson 1881:273,286,322,351,357,358,385-6,429-33,435,472,474,549, 681; Census of North West Provinces & Oudh 1882:5; Atkinson 1884:600; Atkinson 1886:705

N.2 There was also a book by Rev. S. Knowles: The Gospel in Gonda, Lucknow 1889, which apparently contains material on the Tharu, and this source is cited by later writers such as Crooke etc.. Unfortunately I have not been able to trace Knowles' account.

N.3 I have not been able to make use of Leal and Leal's 1973 report on Chitwan Tharu vocabulary. This vocabulary was never actually published as far as I know, nor was it circulated in mimeo format. For the purposes of this study the Leals' work is not particularly relevant, but it would be important for any proper comparative study of Tharu groups. It is also to be regretted that as far as I know W.Leal has not published any of his material on Chitwan Tharu oral traditions. To complete the bibliographic record I should also note here that some minor details regarding the Tharu have been reported in the Regmi Research Series (1969:I, 2, Dec:46-48)

N.4 I was only able to find one rather dilapidated copy of this second book, but it seems that the version of the creation myth is identical to that printed by Yogi Narahari Nath (1965:477-82). I am not sure who was repsonsible for publishing this book, but as far as I could gather it was put together under the auspices of a Kānphatā Yogi who was living in Narayanpur, Dang. This would provide the link with Naraharinath, who is himself an adherent of the Kānphatā sect, which has a centre in Chaughara, Dang. We should also mention a vernacular magazine called "Gotcāli", meaning 'friend' or'comrade', of which two or three issues appeared in the early '70s. This publication was popular, but was later suppressed by the government.

N.5 I was kindly allowed to use this unpublished material, in exchange for a copy of my thesis, and so long as I provided full information in my thesis of the source of these drawings and photographs.

N.6 For instance, to cite only a few : Sagant 1976; Hitchcock 1966; Pignede 1966; Macdougal 1979 etc.

N.7 Most of the various etymologies have been collected by Pradhan (1937:63-4). The derivations given are:

1. tahro = an order to halt which was given to the Tharu by their leader in their alleged flight from the siege of Chittor.
2. dāru = wine, to which they are addicted.
3. A mispronunciation of Thakur, by which term they were first known when they used to observe Rajput traditions.
4. tāru = residents of the Terai.
5. thar, from Sanskrit sthar = firm or stopped, because after they escaped to the jungles of the Terai they began to live in a more-or-less settled state.
6. thar = "in their colloquial language means 'below the hills'".
7. thār = forest, hence Tharu = 'a dweller of the forest'.
8. tharna= to paddle about, "and hence Tharu means a paddler".
9. tarhua = wet, in allusion to the swampy nature of the tract in which they live.
10. athvaru = "an eighth-day serf", a man who is bound to give one day's labour in a week.

I have also heard that the Rana claim to have come from the Thar desert in Rajasthan and hence trace "Tharu" to this origin. In Dang the only derivation suggested to me on one or two occasions was from thār meaning upright, erect, or straight. The term was applied to the Tharu because they had migrated into their present location by moving in a straight path through the forests from the Plains up to Dang. Cf. N:thāro and H:thārhā, "upright, standing, standing up" (Turner 1965:251).

N.8 Rajaure adds that according to Chatterji there was a Tharu dynasty called Khan ruling in North Bengal in the fifteenth century. On a close reading of Chatterji (1974 edition), however, it appears he does mention the Khan dynasty, but says it is one of a number of Koch chieftainships (1974:114-5).

N.9 As Lévi points out, there is some doubt about the translation of the relevant passage "Tharu-i-brgyud" which Schiefner has rendered as meaning "die Reihe der Erdgränze". Lévi adds, however, that according to another authority, Wassilief, "... Sumba Khutuku entend Tharu comme le nom d'une peuplade (d'où est issu Açoka)". Lévi concludes that this phrase must mean "le pays des Tharus" (1905, 2:67-8 n.4). A later translation by Chattopadhyaya translates this phrase as "of the border land" but he also notes the alternative interpretation of Wassilief (1970:50, n.2).

N.10 The additional references to the Tharu having once been a ruling race are: North West Provinces Gazetteer 1879, 5:645; Oudh Gazetteer 1877-78, 1:XXXIV,111; Atkinson 1881 :429-31, 718, 720, 737, 751, 772, 776.

N.11 Although not strictly relevant for this study, some of these nineteenth century generalised impressions are rather entertaining. For instance, one report describes the Tharu as:

> ... cheerful, brave, modest, and truthful, their character presents some pleasant contrasts to that of their of their more civilised neighbours (Oudh Gazetteer 1877-78,3:503).

On the other hand, elsewhere we are told the Tharu:

> ... will on no account take service as soldiers; they are a cowardly race ... (ibid 2:209; cf. also Morris 1936:125).

Crooke adds colourfully:

> The Tharus themselves are about the most ghost-ridden people in Northern India. Once the sun sinks below the horizon they believe the jungle is full of evil spirits. They sit cowering under their meagre huts in a state of abject terror, and the whistling of the wind in the trees or a rotten branch falling to the ground reduces them to an agony of fear (1897:217).

Without doubt, however, Lévi describing his journey to Kathmandu, during which he stopped for the night in the Terai jungles, has given the most vivid impression:

> Nous somme chez les Tharu, les énigmatiques Tharu. Derrière une cloture de paille, qui symbolise le mur de la vie privée, une femme chante une melodie sans fin et sa compagne d'un tambourin. A minuit! Par ce froid! Que fait-elle? Une adoration, une incantation? Comment le savoir? Enfermé dans le retrait que nul ne peut leur disputer, les Tharu ne s'engagent jamais dans les factoires voisines (indigo factories). Ils vivent entre eux, cachant jusqu'au secret de leur langue, ne s'addréssant aux étrangers qu'en hindustani (1905, 2:309).

N.12 The Deokhuria Tharu, though differing somewhat in their language and their dress, seem to be close to the Dangaura. The two groups intermarry and share villages both in Deokhuri and further west. It is not clear whether in this case we can properly speak of two different "groups", but as with the case of the Kathariya, further research is required before we can be more certain of how these named groups are or are not distinguished. It would appear that the Rana differ markedly from the others, not only in language, dress, house construction etc., but also in that they do not seem to intermarry at all with other Tharu groups.

N.13 As Hofer points out, the Tharu are classified in ethnographic/geographic terms in the category Awaliyā, a term introduced into the literature by Hodgson. The term derives from N:Awal meaning "lowland, fever", and reflects the fact that these groups primarily settled in the lowlands, formerly a malaria infected area. The Awaliyās, supposed to represent the remainders of an indigenous population, include various groups such as Danuwār, Darāi, Mājhi, Dhimal, Kumāl etc. (1979:44,45).

N.14 One way in which this relationship was expressed to me was that the Tharu and Magar are of the same "kind" or "sort" (ekai nās) and of the same stock, jar, cf. N:jari, "root" (Turner 1965:210).

CHAPTER 3 : THE DANG VALLEY

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first presents what I have been able to discover of the history of Dang from the earliest references up to the present. The second section gives an outline of the main geographical features of the valley and discusses the related topic of orientation in space. From this point on, unless otherwise indicated, when I use the term 'Tharu', I am referring only to the Dangaura Tharu.

3.1. History

Almost nothing is known about the political history of Western Nepal in the centuries before the early Muslim invasions (c. eleventh century). The far western hills region was populated by the Khas, a people of caucasian racial type whose language was closely related to Sanskrit. The language of the eastern Khas has developed into Nepali. To the east the Khas seem to have been juxtaposed with people of Mongoloid stock, mostly Magars, speaking Tibeto-Burman languages. Beginning in the eleventh century numbers of Brahmans and Rajputs left the plains in the wake of the Muslim invasions and settled in the hills. The immigrant Rajputs, taking the title of Thakuri, established small kingdoms, the largest and most powerful of which was the Malla kingdom centred in the Jumla area of the

Karnali basin. This kingdom, which had ties with Dang (Rajaure 1981a:157,158), later broke up into twenty-two principalities (the Baisi states), although some form of loose confederation continued among them until the Gorkha conquest (Macdougal 1968:8,9). It seems that Dang should be included in this list of twenty-two (Hamilton 1819:238; Hasrat 1970:lii), but except for stray references we know next to nothing of these small principalities.

According to Hamilton, the rulers of Dang used to have "a house called Chaugora" on a hill called Dang (1819:278). Today there is a Kānphatā centre situated on a small hill called Chaughara, a couple of miles east of the district capital Ghorahi (N.1). Later the rulers withdrew from the valley floor to Phalabang in the hills just to the north of the valley. Apparently, control of the Dang valley itself was divided between the Raja of Dang/Phalabang, and the neighbouring Raja of Sallyan (ibid). Both these rulers also had estates on the plain across the border to the south, in a region controlled by the Nawab Vazir, the ruler of Oudh. In fact, this land on the plain, consisting in the case of the Raja of Dang of the <u>pragannā</u> of Tulsipur, made up the most valuable part of his estates (ibid).

The partial control of this area by the Raja of Dang is confirmed by another report, which also throws some light on how the Tharus, in the past the main inhabitants of Tulsipur <u>pragannā</u>, were linked to higher authorities. Apparently, in Tulsipur <u>pragannā</u> the Tharu inhabitants lived "under their own rulers and peculiar laws", and "preserved a semi-independence" by paying tribute both to the rulers of Dang in Nepal and Balrampur nearby in India. These local Tharu

"rulers" were "hereditary Chaudharis" under whom "the original inhabitants had divided the pragannā into eight tappas " (Oudh Gazetteer 1877-78, 3:504,505). Later after certain upheavals this region came under the jurisdiction of the Raja of Balrampur and we are told that:

> Intermediate between the Raja and the cultivator were the old Tharu Chaudhris where Tharus yet existed, and in other villages the usually hereditary headman ... (ibid:507).

It would seem that the administration of Tulsipur pragannā and probably of the Dang and Deokhuri valleys, conformed to the general pattern of the Terai and the adjoining North Indian districts. The village and or maujā formed the fundamental unit linked to the higher authorities either directly through an hereditary headman or in some cases by intermediaries who had authority over several villages which were grouped together in parganнās or tappas. In the past Dang itself was divided into several parganнās. In the Tharu case the village headman was and still is called mahaton, while the higher level official was the chaudhari, but these terms may not have been exclusive to the Tharu, since they have been reported elsewhere (Regmi 1978:72; Buchanan 1838, 2:546, 553, 554,) (N.2). I shall disuss the position of the Tharu mahaton in greater detail below in Chapter 4.

After the Gorkha conquest of this region, the kingdom of Sallyan was annexed, while Phalabang in turn passed to the Sallyan Raja. The western half of the Dang valley was thus classified as Rājya, that is land that remained under partial control of a local ruler, and the eastern half became raikar, land controlled directly by the Gorkha kings. There were

also several small areas of birtā land in both parts of the valley (Rajaure 1978:20). Birtā refers to land granted by the king to individuals usually on an inheritable and tax exempt basis (Regmi 1978:161). In subsequent periods the Dang-Deokhuri valleys formed parts of various districts such as Butwal, Palpa, Taulihawa, and Sallyan, and they only came into existence as a separate administrative unit in 1951 (Rajaure 1978:17).

Local Tharu notions of the history of the valley are vague. Some, particularly in the western part, say that at one time there was a Tharu king and identify as his seat the remains of what may have once been a substantial house built on a small hill near the village of Sukaura. The Tharu, however, assert that they were the first main settlers in the valley (N.3). At that time the whole area was heavily forested and flooded in parts where the smaller streams and rivers had not established their courses, something which developed along with the progressive clearance of the land. The valley was then called Gauriyā Tāl (Cattle Pool?). Within living memory the valley was more heavily forested, with patches of bamboo and jungle throughout, separating the villages which were linked by narrow paths. In the nineteenth century as in other Terai districts the government encouraged deforestation to bring more land into cultivation and so increase revenue (Regmi 1978:139-147).

The Tharu used to make up the vast majority of the valley's population, even if for some time they have not always owned or directly controlled the land. An important reason for the reluctance of other people to settle was the prevalance of malaria. The "outsiders" who did have estates tended to visit the valley for a couple of months during the cool season, and

then retreat back to their houses in the mountains to the north for the rest of the year. A similar pattern of movement to and from the hills was followed by the service castes such as blacksmiths (Lohar), and tailors (Damai). In the past three or four decades, however, the combined effects of population growth and economic decline in the hill regions and the virtual eradication of malaria in the valley, have lead to a large scale immigration of hill people, mostly of Brahmans and Chetris, but including also some Magar and some service castes (N.4). This influx has in turn resulted in further extensive deforestation as the valley population increased and more land was required, so that now all the forest on the valley floor has gone leaving only patches on the surrounding hills and in the western end of the valley (see map 4). During this period the Tharu, of course, suffered from considerable disruption to their traditional pattern of existence, with the result that they too have migrated in large numbers, leaving the valley for uncultivated areas in the western Terai districts of Bardia and Kailali, and moving also to Deokhuri to the south. The population figures illustrate this process clearly. The 1971 census gives a total of 167,820 people for Dang-Deokhuri, of which 88,599 are Nepali speakers while 72,475 are Tharu speakers (Nepal Census, 2, pt. 2:14). Thus from forming the vast majority the Tharu now comprise only about 45% of the total population of the district (N.5).

3.2. Geography

The Dang valley is about fifty kilometres long and

twenty kilometres wide. It lies along an axis oriented roughly west by north-west to east by south-east. On its northern rim lie the first ranges of the Mahabharat mountains rising steadily up to the Himalayas, while on its south side are the much lower Siwalik hills (see plate 1). Beyond these and at a lower altitude is the somewhat longer but narrower Deokhuri valley, which to its south is separated from the vast North Indian plain by the Churia hills. The combined area of the two valleys is 864 square miles. The floor of the Dang valley reaches 600 metres at its highest point, and it slopes gently from north to south all along its length. Close to the hills along its southern side runs the Babai river, which is fed by several smaller rivers and streams flowing down across the valley from the northern mountains. There are hardly any streams which flow into the valley from the southern hills. The main Babai river leaves the valley by its south-west corner (see Maps 3 & 4, pp.392-3).

The climate is subtropical with the hottest period from April to June leading up to the monsoon. During the monsoon, which lasts up to September, the weather is cooler but very humid. Towards November the weather becomes cooler still, with the nights being cold, until around March the hot season begins again. One of the characteristic features of the year is the winds. During the monsoon the wind is easterly, bringing the cooler weather and, of course, the rain. In the hot season the prevailing wind from the west is hot, dry and dusty.

Tharu villages, situated a couple of miles apart, are dotted about throughout the valley, but tend to be concentrated along the main river and along the smaller rivers where they have cut deep into the valley floor creating lower lying areas

of fertile soil.

Beyond their immediate environment, Tharu notions of geography are vague. The dominant features of the environment are the mountains (pahār) to the north and the plains (mades) to the south. The former are associated with the pahāri peoples, including the Magar, Bhotia, Brahman, Chetris etc., and with the cold, while the plains inhabited by the dark Indians (desi) are a place of intense heat. Some will tell you that beyond the plains somewhere further south lies the great ocean (bāri samundrā), and that also in that direction is the island of Lanka known from the Ramayana epic.

A description of the local topography in terms of the cardinal points or directions corresponds directly with how the Tharu themselves describe their environment. Orientation in space is of considerable importance in ritual contexts and in relation to the layout of the house and village. Although it is not appropriate here to go into details of the wider significance of spatial concepts, because of their connection with local topography it will be useful to introduce the Tharu terms for the cardinal points and their primary associations.

The Tharu terms for the cardinal points are: uttar = north, dakkin = south, purub = east, and pachiun = west. These words come from the Sanskrit uttara, dakṣina, etc.. In the first instance, then, the Tharu concepts correspond to our western ones "... which are tied to the idea that one always moves within a world conceived as a plane held constant by four fixed poles" (Barnes 1974:78). At a cosmological level this idea is clearly represented in the creation myth. In terms of geography, however, the spatial plane is not simply a level or

flat abstract plane. For the Tharu the cardinal points are something altogether more concrete and are bound up with the dominant features of their environment. North is thus identified with the mountains and is consequently associated with "up" (uppar, tikra), while south is linked with the plains and "down" (tara). In our terms, the mountains to the north actually run along an axis west by north-west to east by south-east. Insofar as Tharu north is identified with the mountains it is actually north by north-east, i.e. lying along an axis at right angles to the line of the mountains. The importance of the mountains as a reference point for the 'north' is illustrated by a fact that must strike any observer of Tharu villages: all the houses, which are built to a long rectangular plan, are oriented roughly along this north-south axis, and the village, which usually consists of two parallel lines of houses, also falls along this axis.

Taken together with the facts of their environment, Tharu terms for the cardinal points, which form the basis of the system of spatial orientation, do not present quite the same problems for analysis encountered elsewhere, as for instance in the case of Kedang described by Barnes (1974). There the terms for direcion combine not only notions such as up, down, north and south,but also left and right. Furthermore, the Kedang terms ole and ote apart from combining spatial concepts have "far reaching usages", occuring in connection with bridewealth exchange and clan possessions among other things (ibid:87,88). The Tharu terms for the cardinal points may not have such a wide range of reference as in Kedang, but they do have a wider significance than simply ordering house and village layout. In

subsequent chapters I shall comment where appropriate on further associations of the cardinal points, but it is in Part 4 of this study that I shall attempt to bring together such comments in a discussion of the significance of spatial concepts and their associations in relation to the house and village, and Tharu cosmology.

Notes to Chapter 3

N.1 The Kānphatā centre in Dang has been described by Unbescheid (1980:18-28) who has also pointed to the close connection that existed between this sect and the local rulers in Dang and in other parts of Nepal, notably with the ruler of Gorkha. The presence of the Kānphatā Yogis in the area has influenced Tharu religious ideas, though in this regard the influence has extended not so much from the Chaughara centre of this sect, but from the larger "sister" centre at Pātan near Tulsipur across the Indian border south of Dang. In the past, and still to some extent today, Tharu attend the major annual melā in Pātan, which according to Tharu notions is the principal temple of Debi, the goddess, and her eldest son Saurā, an important Tharu household deity. The temple at Pātan is also in cosmological terms the centre of the world. (see below Chapter 14.). Further indications of the influence of this sect will be discussed below in Chapter 5, in relation to Tharu gotyār names.

N.2 For Gorakhpur district Buchanan in fact gives Brittiya or Sikmi as titles of hereditary chiefs of villages, while titles for temporary officers appointed to this position were Mahato, Katkindar, Thikadar or Mokuddum (1838, 2:553). The "Chaudhuris" who only existed "in some places, ... seem to have been intended to prevent disputes about boundaries with which they were supposed to be acquainted. But few pay any attention to these hereditary offices" (ibid:554).

N.3 In Sukhrwar I was told that the first settlers, who were already in the valley when the Tharu arrived, were the Dangaura Thāpā. They were supposed to have come from the north and to have settled in parts of the north-east of the valley. Today there still remain a few households of the Dangaura Thapa scattered in the valley.

N.4 The land reform programme has also contributed to this influx, since the laws setting a ceiling on individual landholding helped lead to the breakup of large estates. Land was sold to the new immigrants, though at this time a few Tharu also managed to purchase some land. With the steady rise in population the demand for land grew causing a rapid rise in prices. It would seem that the Tharu, unused to operating with cash, uneducated, and to some extent unaware of the effect of the new land and tenancy laws, rapidly found their position as the traditonal cultivators radically altered to their disadvantage. There is also much evidence of direct harrassment of Tharu tenants by the newer landlords to push them off their holdings. At the same time in many cases where Tharus did hold ownership deeds to land, by various nefarious means these were appropriated by "outsiders" and by revenue officials for their own advantage

N.5 More recent estimates of household numbers for Dang give: Tharu and Newar totalling 12,232 or 39.3%, while the high castes, Brahman, Thakuri, Chetri, Sanyashi, come next with 10,884 households or 34.08% (USAID/APROSC 1980:32). Regarding the migration of Tharu, Rajaure basing his calculations on the 1961 and 1971 censuses, explains that while in Nepal as a whole 1961-71 saw a 22% population increase among the Tharu, in Dang-Deokhuri the increase was only from 72,475 to 79,131. In Bardia, Kailali and Kanchanpur, however, the percentage increase in Tharu population has been greater than 22% (1978:22).

CHAPTER 4 : ECONOMY

In this chapter I shall outline the main features of the Tharu economy. As well as a description of economic activities and the stages of the annual agricultural cycle, this will include a summary of the prevailing pattern of land ownership.

The Tharu economy is based principally on subsistence agriculture, though animal husbandry and the sale of certain crops for cash are also important. The Tharu provide the bulk of their own food requirements in staple grains and vegetables, but the local market economy is a source of certain essential commodities, such as salt, cloth, kerosene and metal, as well as other items including vermilion powder (sindur), coarse sugar, soap, and tobacco. The cash for buying these items is obtained partly from the sale of animals and animal products, but the main cash source is from the sale of oil-seeds and occasionally surplus grain. Dang, like much of the Terai, but unlike the middle hills of Nepal, is a net surplus area, though most of this surplus is controlled not by the Tharu but by the land owning higher castes. To a lesser extent cash is obtained from the sale of local manufactures including ropes, mats, and baskets. Cash earnings also come from local seasonal work in house building, fencing and recently from road construction on a major road project financed jointly by the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank. According to figures from a recent

survey, agriculture accounts for 72.7% of total subsistence production and 79% of income from the market sector. Animal husbandry by comparison provides 12.3% of income from marketing while it represents betwen 4% and 5% of total subsistence. Food processing provides a further 2.1% and manufacturing another 2% of income. Similar figures are not available for income from labouring and from pack transporting using horses and buffaloes (Rajaure 1981b:81,90,92) (N.1).

The main crop is rice (dhān), which is planted once a year during the monsoon. The method of planting is still for the most part by broadcast sowing rather than transplanting, and the majority of the rice terraces (khetwā, khet) are irrigated by small canals though a fair proportion, especially on higher gound and to the south of the river, is rain fed. Maize (kokni), the next most important crop is planted in the unirrigated uneven fields (bāri) usually situated nearest to the main village settlement. Other grains include wheat (gahun) which is increasing in importance owing to the introduction of new seed and fertiliser, and there is also a small amount of barley (jaun). Mustard (lāhi) and linseed (arsi) are the two oilseed crops, used partly for domestic oil production but mostly sold for cash. Lesser crops include various pulses and a wide range of vegetables such as potatoes, onions, greens, radishes, squash plants, cucumbers, and cabbages. Certain spices including garlic, ginger, tumeric, coriander and chillis are also cultivated. The Tharu keep buffalo and cattle for ploughing and milk, as well as pigeons, chickens, sheep and pigs. Pork is generally the most favoured meat. Their diet is also supplemented by fish, snails, crab, and

occasionally by wild cat, field rats and larger birds trapped in the fields. They do not eat cattle or buffalo, or dogs, monkeys and snakes. Like most other tribal or ethnic groups in the region, the Tharu engage in a wide range of activities including fishing, which is especially popular, gathering in the jungle, and, in the past, hunting. The jungle provides a variety of roots, edible leaves and seeds, and honey. It is also the essential source of building materials, grasses for thatching and rope making, leaves for cups and plates, and firewood.

Rather than describe the annual economic cycle month by month which would take up a lot of space, I have presented the major activities in table form (see Table 1). This table includes only details of the principal activities typical for each month. In reality, obviously, activities overlap from one month to the next and certain activities, such as grass cutting to provide cattle fodder, take place more or less continuously throughout the year. In the table I have, therefore, recorded such activities in the months when relatively more time is spent on them. The entry "buffalo transporting" refers to the Tharu practice of transporting oilseed and sometimes other crops by buffalo (or occasionally by horse) to sell them in local markets. The traditional point of sale is Koilabas, a small town to the south of Dang on the Indian border. Since road improvements the town of Ghorahi in Dang is growing in importance as a commercial centre. Apart from carrying their own surplus for sale, the Tharu engage in some trading and also hire their services for transporting goods.

Although linked to the wider market economy, within the local village economy cash has not assumed primary importance as

a medium of transaction even if the trend is towards an increasing monetisation. Agricultural labourers (kamāiyā) retained by either Tharu or high caste households for a year or longer periods are all paid in grain supplemented with small amounts of cash and cloth. Land rents also are all paid on a share-cropping basis, the current arrangements being that the owner takes a half (adhiyā) or third (tin kur) of the crop. Depending on the arrangement, one of the partners has to supply seed and fertiliser. Similarly local service castes such as the blacksmith, tailor and potter are usually paid in grain. In some cases traditional hereditary links exist between Tharu households and families of certain service castes, who in this context are called cināro. In certain cināro relationships grain payments are fixed on an annual basis, whatever the amount of work supplied. In transactions with service castes, however, cash is beginning to replace grain as the medium of exchange, as it also is in the purchase of winnowing fans (supā), certain kinds of baskets (chitwā) and grinding stones (cakiyā) brought down by traders from the northern hills. Payment to the village headmen (mahaton) for certain services and to village employees such as the crop watchman (caukidār) are made in grain. The local village priest (desbandhyā) received payments both in grain and in cash, and occasionally priests may receive a small cash payment for certain rituals. The headman, and sometimes the village priest and the household priest (gharguruwā) are entitled to a certain number of days of free labour from villagers or the houses they serve. In the past this free labour (beqāri) was also given to landowners by their tenants.

The Tharu, then, use the services of several local castes. To the list mentioned above we can add the Bādi, who repair fishing nets and make and repair drums, and at the other end of the hierarchy the Brahmans who are employed in very rare instances in Tharu marriages and to perform the Satyā Narayan Katha Pujā for a few of the richer households. For all other ritual purposes the Tharu use their own priests, who occupy a positon of considerble importance in the society. They also perform for themselves a number of services which are carried out by other castes elsewhere in North India; for example, they do not use barbers, washermen or oil pressers.

Within the Tharu community the household is the unit of production, consumption and ownership of resources. The household, however, is usually a joint unit which occasionally can be of considerable size ranging up to eighty or ninety people, though in Sukhrwar the largest contained thirty-four people. For certain agricultural purposes, in particular ploughing, harvesting and threshing, households may exchange labour on an ad hoc reciprocal basis, but it is only for certain village level activities that there exists an organised system for communal work.

In Sukhrwar as in most villages with a substantial Tharu population, it is the Tharu who work the land, but usually they do not own the land. Sukhrwar seems typical of most of Dang: about 80% of village land is owned by higher caste landlords. Of the thirty-five Tharu households only the headman's owns enough land to be self-sufficient, four households work exclusively as labourers for others, and none of the remaining thirty own enough to support their needs. In fact, of the

remaining thirty, fourteen own virtually no land at all, and a further ten are hardly any better off. The large majority of Tharu households thus work land as share-cropping tenants (N.2).

The Tharu state that their economic position has declined over the last few decades during which many hill people have immigrated and the Tharu have lost their previous access to the land. While this is no doubt true, nevertheless it seems that in the past economic and perhaps certain status differences linked to control of or access to land, used to exist in Tharu communites. Without further research we cannot be sure, but it is likely that in the past in many villages the headmen and/or a wider group of households may have controlled access to land. At any rate, there is an indigenous and apparently traditional distinction between kisān households which own or work land in their own right, and bukhrawā households which work as labourers and do not cultivate land for themselves. While damaging the Tharus' economic position as a whole, the changes that have taken place, and particularly the new tenancy laws, seem to some extent to have levelled out the economic differences that may have existed between sections of the Tharu community in some villages (but cf. N.2). Bukhrawā households, however, still exist and this distinction remains significant for aspects of communal organisation as I shall explain in the next chapter.

This summary of economy brings to a close the first part of this study. One of the general points to emerge concerns the relation of Tharu society to the surrounding groups. This relation is complex, but it is worth remarking that the Tharu are interesting in that they have remined for some considerable time in contact with and yet separate from the surrounding

peoples both to the north and to the south. This separation has been related partly to their inhabiting a particular zone, which until recently has not been attractive to outsiders. Racially the Tharus seem related to people to the north and/or to the east, but linguistically and, as we shall see, to some extent culturally, they have links with the surrounding Hindu caste society. In economic terms too, for a long time, they have had ties with both north and south. At the same time, however, they have maintained and evolved a distinctive identity and social system. In the following section of this study I shall describe the main features of their social organisation.

Table 1. ANNUAL CYCLE OF ACTIVITIES.

Month	Agriculture	Handicraft, fishing, and gathering.	Village Ritual.	Building and maintenance, Trade, Social, etc.
Māgh	Irrigation of winter wheat. Transplanting reeds to stream beds. Rice threshing finished. Start of slack season.	collecting firewood and building materials and grasses. Fishing.	Māghi Festival.	Village meeting to discuss business of the coming year. Renewal of contracts and settling accounts. Visits of potters and basket sellers. Buffalo transporting.
Phāgun	Mustard cutting and threshing. Vegetable cultivation. Slack season.	Making ropes, pots, soap and women's mats. Fishing with traps and barrages.	Holi or Dhureri.	House building. Marriages.
Cait	Harvest of wheat barley, Lentils. Manuring & digging of bāri fields for maize.	Making baskets, ropes, and mats. Jungle trips to collect roofing thatch.		House building Buffalo Transporting.
Baisākh	Linseed harvest. Ploughing and sowing Maize. Planting chilly seedlings.	Rope making. Fishing preparing bamboo for making rain shields.	Dhuriyā Gurai Dagar Bathannā Auli Lenā (for wheat).	House reroofing.
Jeth	Maize weeding planting minor crops : Beans, turmeric, etc.	Collecting firewood and dung cakes for the monsoon.	Haroth Lenā.	Fence building aaround maize fields. Making new hearths and silos. cleaning houses.

Month	Agriculture	Handicrafts etc.	Village Ritual.	Building etc.
Asār	Tending Maize. Planting rice seedlings. Cutting reeds Start rice cultivation.	Making rain shields. Repairing ploughs & tools etc. for rice crop. Fishing.	Gaiyā – Berhnā.	Blacksmiths visit to make and repair tools. Canal repairs
Saun	Rice planting.	Cutting cattle fodder. Fishing with traps in canals & streams gathering crabs and snails.	Astimki.	Canal repair & maintenance.
Bhadaun	Weeding rice. Maize harvest Chilly harvest. Vegetable cultivation.	Making ropes, baskets and fish traps.	Hardhwar Hariyā- Gurai Atwāri. Gāndi- Hāknā.	Canal work continues.
Kuwār	Bāri fields ploughed and mustard sown. Reed seedlings planted.	Mat making by men.	Dasyā	Canal work continues. Repairing fences. Buffalo transporting.
Kārtik	planting onion seedlings. Harvest of squash plants.		Auli Lenā (rice).	
Aggahan	Rice harvest. Sowing linseed into rice fields. Planting wheat, lentils, beans, and tobacco.		Auli – Udhārnā. Kennwā- bādhnā. Gauri- Bādhnā. Dhariawan	Basket traders and potters begin to visit
Pus	Rice harvest.	Collecting grasses for ropes, & thatch. Collecting firewood. Fishing.		Repair of paths and bridges. Preparation for Māghi festival: beer making oil-pressing etc.

Notes to Chapter 4

N.1 The breakdown of household production in percentages is:

	Subsistence	Market
Agriculture	63.7	79
Gardening	9	4.8
Animal Husbandry	6.9	12.3
Hunting & Gathering	4	.6
Manufactures	1.3	1.2
Food Processing	14.6	2.1

These figures come from Rajaure 1981b:83, table 14.; for further details of the economy see also p 91, table 17, for a breakdown of the asset structure.

N.2 I do not have detailed accurate figures for land ownership among either the Tharu or non-Tharu households of Sukhrwar. The land situation and its relation to household wealth is, however, rather complicated and to present a useful analysis would require a different study from this one. Among the factors necessary to consider are: household size, form of tenancy agreement, and types of land. The situation is further complicated by the fact that a few Tharu households also own land in other villages, though never more than a few bighās (1 bighā = 8,100 square yards roughly). A few households also work land as tenants in other villages. If we want to take account of the Brahman and Chetri landowners, they too often own land in other villages. The data presented by Rajaure (1981b:84-6) is only partly helpful, and the table of Tharu land ownership is actually quite misleading (ibid:85), because of the way households are classified into three loosely defined categories, which actually in terms of landholding are not at all homogeneous. If one sorts through his data, which is actually based on a survey of households in both Sukhrwar and the neighbouring village of Kanarya, then the overall picture agrees with my own information which gives the following profile in rough estimates of land owned by Tharus in Sukhrwar:

Number of Households.	Area of Land Owned per Household
1	10 bighā
3	4 ""
3	2 to 3 ""
6	1 to 2 ""
4	less than 1 ""
18	0 or negligible amounts

Though the general situaton of land ownership is skewed markedly to the Tharus' disadvantage, there are some exceptional villages where somehow the Tharu have maintained or acquired control over the land. One such village, Dabar Gaun, is just to the north of Sukhrwar. In Dabar Gaun, however, it seems that the land is owned by a group of dominant households, with the remaining Tharu households working as tenants. In the past as far as I can judge these non-owning households worked as labouring households and so would have been classfied as bukhrawā.

PART 2 : SOCIAL GROUPS

In this part I shall describe the organisation of the three principal social groups that consitute Tharu society: the village, the gotyār, and the household. From one point of view a full description of these groups should include details of the various deities or sets of deities which are attached to them and which, I suggest, form their essential defining characteristics. Deities are in a sense markers or labels, in that each of these groups to exist as such must necessarily have its attached deities. Although the deities themselves represent much more than simply the entity to which they are attached, this way of looking at the system is not altogether removed from how the Tharu themselves think. To present, however, a description of the consistution of each group together with details of the relevant deities in each case would prove a rather cumbersome and unwieldy procedure. It would also require the exposition to continually zig-zag to and fro between analysis of social organisation and analysis of the system of deities. In fact the groups together form a large part of the whole, and to take them first allows us to set the scene for the following parts, which will be devoted to kinship and marriage (Part 3) and deities and myth (Part 4). In this and the next part the importance of deities will become increasingly apparent, and in Part 4 it will be seen that by reference to deities and certain rituals we can come to understand how gotyār are identified and distinguished, how the house itself is defined by deities, how marriage not only serves as the essential link binding houses of different gotyār together but also has the effect of constituting the house as a whole, how the village is in part defined by its relation to its

deities, and finally how it is only by reference to certain deities and to myth that we can identify something which represents the totality of Tharu society. In this part I shall begin with the largest group, the village, and then move on to consider the gotyār and the household.

CHAPTER 5 : THE VILLAGE

The bulk of this chapter concerns the village of Sukhrwar, though in the first section I raise some more general considerations. Tharu villages, or more precisely nowadays the Tharu settlements within villages, are remarkably similar in their layout and to some extent in their social organisation. This description, therefore, will hold good for many villages in Dang, though there is some variation in size and ethnic composition. The chapter is divided into six sections. First, I shall discuss some general aspects of the historical background to the village and the place of the headman. Secondly, I shall present what is known of the history of Sukhrwar. Third, I shall describe the physical layout of the village. In the fourth section I shall highlight the striking degree of village unity in social and political terms; considerations of space mean that these aspects can only be dealt with in a general way. The fifth section is devoted to the system of village communal organisation which both reflects and sustains this unity. The sixth section will discuss aspects of the role and position of the headman.

As noted above villages in Dang tend now to contain significant numbers of non-Tharus. When I use the terms 'village' or 'Tharu village', it must be understood that unless these expressions are otherwise qualified, I am referring only

to the Tharu component of the wider village community. In most cases the Tharu settlement is quite distinct from the other houses, and often still forms the largest part of a village. In Sukhrwar the Tharu comprise something over 85% of the total population. The question of the relations between the Tharu and the non-Tharu sections of the village is quite complicated, and though interesting in itself this topic will only be touched on where it seems relevant to the discussion of Tharu village organisation.

5.1. Historical Background: types of villages and the position of the headman.

In the nineteenth century Nestfield described the typical village in the Indian border districts as, "... a line of huts situated in the middle of a forest clearance" (1885:5). These villages were small, never exceeding 150 people, and were self-contained communities. They were governed by a "council of elders" and sometimes had a headman, whose position was not hereditary. The headmen used to be called barwaik (N.1), but was then called chaudhari. He was chosen by "tacit consent" and was a man "... whose age, experience and knowledge of the magical and medicinal arts entitled him to more repsect than the rest" (1885:7). The situation in Dang today, and probably in the past, is quite similar, but as we shall see the headman in certain cases at any rate seems to have been more powerful and his positon was and still is partly hereditary. Such nineteenth century villages formed ritual units with a village shrine (ibid:29; Crooke 1896:400), and they also formed one of the

exogamous units (Nestfield 1885:13; cf. Hasan 1968:137). Village exogamy, however, never seems to have been a characteristic of Dang. Such "forest" villages seem then to have been small, homogeneous, self-contained and relatively impermanent settlements with a loose form of internal organisation. In Dang, however, and in Tulsipur pragannā perhaps, villages were more permanent entities and linked into a wider system of control in relation to which the headman occupied a certain position.

The only account we have of the growth of a "forest" village is provided by Hu (1955) for the village of Chandanpur in India just across the border from Koilabas. This village was founded by "a very able and determined person" who brought others in to settle. Eventually this founder's lineage came to form the dominant group within the village, holding a position of economic and social supremacy. It is clear in this case that this dominance was related directly to control over village land (Hu 1955:7,20), and also to the fact that the households of this lineage formed numerically the largest group (ibid:6, 8). Hu says nothing about the material aspects of this dominance, but in similar villages in Gorakhpur district, "rent was paid to whoever was strongest" during the time before the introduction of Zamindars to the area (Turner 1931:605).

In Dang the situation seems quite variable, and has anyway undergone considerable change over the last fifty years. Here also, however, in some villages one can identify an association between the numerical strength of a local lineage, which may or may not be that of the village founder, and the exercising of a certain dominance within the village. As a part of this dominance the position of headman may have been and in

many cases still is hereditary and attached to this lineage, and the headman with his related households seems also to have controlled access to the land and in some cases perhaps even to have owned it. In Sukhrwar, for example, the headman belongs to the Sukhwariyā Guruwā lineage which forms the largest sub-group in the village comprising, twelve out of thirty-five households or 152 of 355 people (42.7%). Although the situation regarding control of land in the past is not clear, all villagers were unanimous in stressing that the previous headmen exercised a much greater influence and authority than is presently the case; this dominance seems to have been connected to the headman's role as intermediary between the village and the Brahman landowner and revenue officials. The situation in some villages in the west of Dang, in Hekuli for instance, is quite clear. There the descendant of the founder has maintained ownership of most of the land and now occupies a position of enormous influence. His household is also one of the richest Tharu households in the whole of Dang. This landowner no longer acts as headman himself, but instead appoints someone who is answerable to him.

The nature of village organisation and the position of the headman has varied according to the degree and form of linkage into a wider political and administrative structure. In relation to the outside the headman always had an important role. Rajaure has reported that even as early as 1336 A.D. we find Punya Malla, king of the Karnali region, issuing orders to mahatam and other officials in Dang. He suggests that the word mahatam, (correctly mahatama) a Sanskrit term meaning "great, superior, chief", may have been an earlier version of

the word mahaton (N.2). Unfortunately, however, we do not know the mahatam's status or administrative powers.

Before and at the beginning of Rana rule, in Dang as in other Terai areas, the administrative system seems to have been based, as we have seen, on the praganna unit composed of several villages (mauja). In this system the mahaton liaised between the mauja and the chaudhari, the functionary responsible for taxes in the praganna. In some areas, however, the mauja composed of a settlement with its surrounding land seems to have been used as the unit for granting tax free land (guthi or birta) (N.3). This was the case in Dang, and Sukhrwar itself was originally granted as birta by a Phalabangi ruler to a Brahman named Chandramani (Rajaure 1978:83-4). In guthi or birta maujas the mahaton acted as link with the landlord or his representative. The birta system continued until 1959, but in the early part of Rana rule the chaudhari was phased out for various reasons (cf. Regmi 1978:78) and was replaced by a new official, the jimidar, who was responsible for tax collection at one or more villages in taxable raikar areas. It would seem that in many cases local landlords were also jimidars. At any rate Tharus seem to have held these positions since: "At the time of the 1912 revenue settlement in Dang-Deokhuri, most of the landlords (and jimdars) were Tharus ..." (Macdougal 1968:88).

In most villages in Dang where the Tharu may have had conrol over the land they have now lost this position. The local administration is also wholly dominated by non-Tharus. The process of land alienation has been a complicated development whose history still remains to be written. As I have noted, it

has been especially marked over the last thirty or forty years. This has been accompanied by major changes in village organisation and the place of the headman. Introduction of the Panchayat system has further undermined the traditional role of the headman (cf. Rajaure 1981a:161).

To sum up, we can distinguish four types of headmanship, each entailing a corresponding difference in village organisation, or more precisely in the relation between village and headman. The four variants described here should not be taken as precise chronological stages of development. Nevertheless, they can be related at a general level to the underlying trends of clearing of the forests, growth in populaton, and abandonment of shifting cultivation, which have all contributed to the establishment of the village as a fixed territorial unit with defined boundaries (N.4). First we have the model of the village as a relatively isolated self-governing unit situated in or on the fringes of the forest, with a headman who holds this position for "internal reasons". He is a respected knowledgeable person and his position is not hereditary but based on tacit consent. Elsewhere the headmanship appears to have been hereditary and may have been passed down in the dominant lineage, which was perhaps that of the founder. Dominance seems to have been related to numbers and control of access to land. In a third variant, no doubt combined sometimes with the second, the headman was the link with superior authorities, both landowners and officials, and this role may well have strengthened his position in the village. In the fourth situation, which is current in many Dang villages, the headman retains some importance as a mediator within the

village, but has lost some of this role to the local Panchayat. Furthermore, he is no longer the principal link between village and landlords or government officials. The headman nevertheless still retains a position of considerable importance in Tharu communities, in particular as one of the village's priests (see Chapter 16). Currently in Sukhrwar, and in many other villages, the headmanship seems to have returned to something closer to the first situation outlined above. The headmanship is hereditary, being passed down on the basis of primogeniture, but his position depends on the general consent and support of the other households: the position can be given to another household by decision of the village meeting (khel), and indeed this has happened in a few villages in the vicinity of Sukhrwar. I shall discuss the position of the headman and of the khel more fully below.

5.2. History of Sukhrwar

The Tharus say they have been in the village for twenty-seven generations (pustā). There is no way of estimating a generation on a pan-village basis, but within a local lineage group the distinction of generation is clear, and this figure relates only to the dominant Sukhrwariyā Guruwā lineage. There is no recollection of an actual founder, but the close association of the Sukhrwariyā Guruwā lineage with the history of the village may suggest they were the founders. This lineage, of course, includes the name of the village in its own name.

Rajaure has accurately summed up the local etymology of the name Sukhrwar, which derives it initially from:

> ...'sukkhā', meaning 'dry' or 'drought'... In the old days most of the fields of Sukhrwar were rain fed and dry most of the time. Thus the village became known as Sukhrwar i.e. a dry settlement ... The meaning and the sense ... changed into 'a settlement or hamlet of happiness' (i.e. 'sukh' or 'sukkha', meaning 'happiness') when the villagers with the help of the people of other neighbouring villages, dug a canal and brought water for irrigation to the village (1981b:2).

There is, however, much more to the history of this canal.

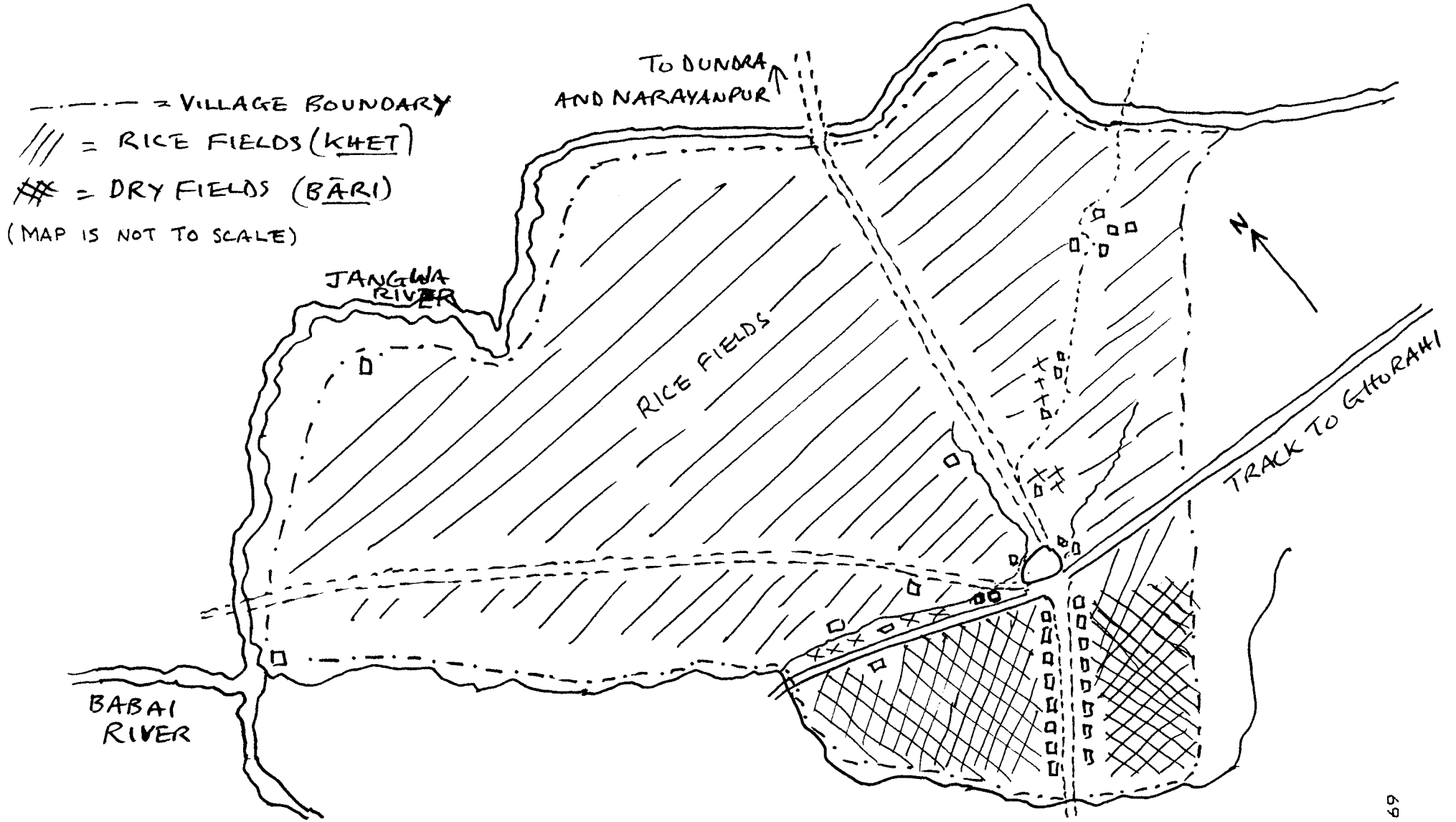
The canal's history is recounted in the only myth connected with the origin or history of the village. This myth tells how Dasaũt Baghaũt (N.5), who is now a deified ancestor of the Sukhrwariyā Guruwā lineage, brought the canal to the village. He managed to do this with the cooperation of Bherwā - or more properly Sukhwariyā Bherwā - another perhaps more important deity of this lineage. In the past some other villages were building a canal in the vicinity but the water kept flowing backwards. None of the surrounding priests (guruwā) could identify the agency responsible for this problem. Eventually they called Dasaũt Baghaũt who set about divining in the water itself, and managed to solve the problem. There is a suggestion in the myth that this whole episode was set up by Dasaũt Baghaũt together with Bherwā, who caused the irregular flow of water in the first place so that having succeeded, Dasaũt Baghaũt would obtain his reward. The people offered to give Dasaut any maujā he wanted, but instead he chose a canal and guided by Bherwā he took a plough and traced the line of the canal which he was to have (N.6). In this way water was brought to Sukhrwar and its future prosperity was assured. This canal in fact now feeds several other villages as well, and constitutes one of the

main items of village business. As I shall explain below in Chapter 16., the headman together with his lineage deities, which are those of the Sukhwariya Guruwā lineage, of course, has a special relation to the set of village deities as a whole, and this is surely appropriate in view of the fact that it was the two main deities of this lineage who were instrumental in ensuring the survival and prosperity of the village.

There is little to say on the factual history of the village other than that at some time the whole maujā was given as birtā to the Brahman Chandramani (as noted above p.64) and was confirmed to his descendants by king Rajendra Bikram Shah in 1820. Today part of the land is still owned by his descendants, while the rest has been donated or sold to others (Rajaure 1978:84).

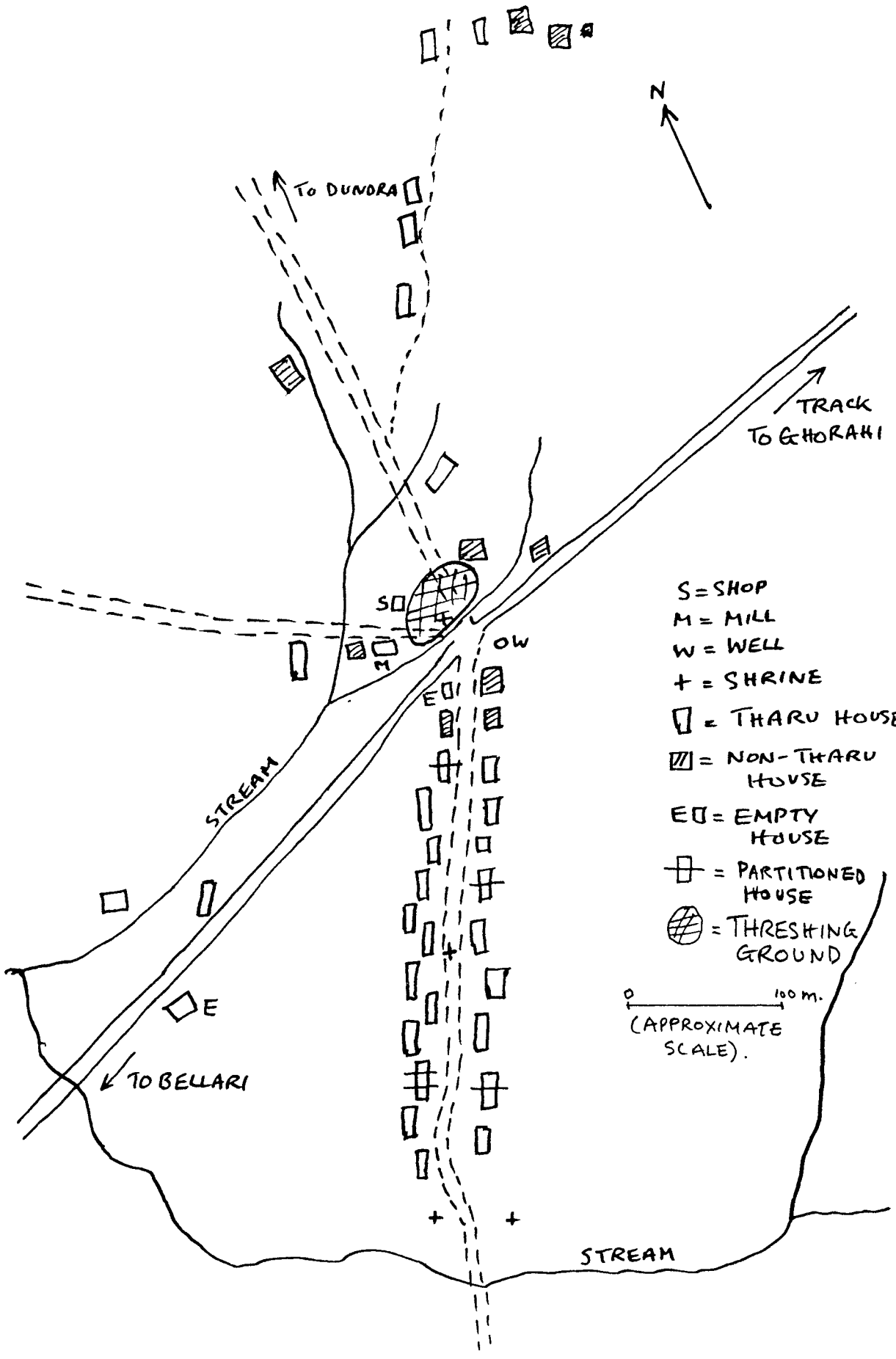
5.3. Description of the Village

The main Tharu settlement of the village (gaun) is fairly compact. The Tharu houses form two lines (pharkā) (see Plate 2) running north-south on either side of the broad central village lane (galli). A small stream runs down the centre of the village, cutting a gully to the east of the lane. The houses, set back several yards from the lane, have front courtyard areas studded with cattle pegs. Sometimes there are one or two small outhouses flanking the courtyard (āngan). In 1973 a fire swept through the village destroying about two-thirds of the houses, with the result that now several of the Tharu houses have been rebuilt in the fields outside the main settlement (see maps 5 & 6). The non-Tharu houses are built out in the fields or



Map 5 Sukhrwar Village and its Boundaries

Map 6 Sukhrwar Village : The Main Settlement



near the cross-roads and the communal threshing ground (kennwā). This difference in settlement pattern between the relatively clustered Tharu houses and the scattered non-Tharu houses is fairly chracteristic of most mixed villages in Dang. Also the majority of Tharu settlements conform to the pattern of two lines of houses on either side of a lane, though a few of the largest villages may consist of four lines or occasionally three.

The total village population is around 420, of which about 355 are Tharu. Altogether there are thirty-five Tharu households, though nine of these occupy buildings that have been partitioned internally. The non-Tharu community consists of seven Brahman and four Chetri households, and one migrant Muslim couple who set up a temporary shack near the cross-roads for a few months a year. At the western limit of the village land there is a small temple and a house for the pujāri and visiting sādhus. This was originally set up and endowed with land as a school for teaching the Vedas, but it has never attracted any students. Although this Ved Vidyālaya owns land in the village, contact between it and the Tharu community is very limited.

Viewed from a distance the village appears as a small oasis of greenery, since the grouped houses are surrounded by clumps of bamboo and various trees including papaya, banana and some mango. The kitchen gardens situated behind the houses contribute to this impression. The total land area is about 220 bighā (cf. Rajaure 1978:85-6). Directly around the main settlement are the dry uneven fields (N:bāri, T:dihwā) used for maize, mustard, some barley and lentils. Beyond these

to the north and west lie the terraced irrigated rice fields. Near the village are several streams which are divided up at certain times of year and planted as reed beds.

There are no communal buildings, though the headman's house acts are a forum for Tharu village meetings and dances. To the north of the galli lies the communal threshing ground on which each household has cutomary rights to a particular patch. To the east of the cross-roads is the village well, which is unusually substantial being stone and concrete lined (N.7). Other buildings include a mill, a small shop, a simple night-school house built by the Tharu and a small police post. These last two buildings were put up on the threshing ground for lack of other suitable sites. About twenty minutes' walk along the track towards Ghorahi to the north-east is the local cooperative society depot (sajhā) and the local panchayat school, which teaches up to grade 4.

The other significant features of the village are the various ritual sites and shrines, which I shall describe below in Part 4. We can note here, however, that the village burial ground lies in marginal barren land along a gully cut by a stream to the west of the village. This area is a sort of "no-man's land" (N.8) which forms part of the boundary between Sukhrwar land and that of the neighbouring village of Bellāri. As noted above, villages have boundaries which are marked by, for example, rivers, streams, and paths. For Sukhrwar the boundaries are marked by a stream, a river and a small irrigation canal and ditch (see map 5). The word for such a boundary is san or sankā (N.9), and forms part of such expressions as sankarryā bhut meaning " spirits of or

beyond the boundaries" and sankā pipra which refers to the large pipal tree (T:pipra) which is one of the village ritual sites and is nearly always located outside the main settlement, often to the south, but not necessarily on the actual boundary of village land.

5.4 Social and Political Aspects of Village Unity

In a general way the village is the forum for social interaction or a regular daily kind, but at this general level there is a noticeable spearation between the Tharu community and the other households. Between these two groups there is relatively limited contact, and much of what there is takes place within the framework of the landlord-tenant relationship. Cultural and linguistic differences, of course, contribute to this divide. The Tharu community itself exhibits a remarkable degree of unity, and this is certainly related to the complex web of kinship and marriage ties that link the households together. Rajaure's and my own figures indicate a rather high level of intra-village marriage (see below Chapter 9).

There is a noticeable degree of social separation between Tharu villages, which again tends to emphasise the distinctive nature of the single village community. This feature is difficult to characterise or describe, and should not be exaggerated, though in the past informants say the social separation used to be greater. In effect what this means is that contacts between villages follow links of kinship or marriage, or those formed between a priest's household and the houses he serves. In the vicinity there is also cooperation with several

local villages in the maintenance of their communal canal. In visiting other villages one tends to remain within one's circle of contact households, and it is difficult to make any headway as an unrelated person and especially as a stranger. Contacts established more recently between young men at school are becoming important in forging a new form of linkage. It is noticeable also in this context that in situations outside the village, on trading expeditions or at large dances, for instance, members of a village tend to keep together in a group (N.10).

It is not surprising, then, that the village is an important label of identity in external contexts. When strangers meet one of the first questions will be to ask to which village they belong (kaun gaunak huitho ?). The solidarity of the village is such that to identify different houses within it recourse is often had to in-marrying outsiders. Naming generally follows from the name of the natal village of the household head's wife. Thus Dolpurān ghar, 'Dolpur House', means that this woman came from Dolpur village, and this term may be extended to identify the household head himself, who in this case may be referred to as Dolpuriyā (N. 11).

In Sukhrwar, village unity is reflected in the virtual absence of faction. The role of the headman and the village meeting (khel) in discussing and organising village business and in sorting out minor disputes contributes to this solidarity, though inevitably certain disagreements and minor grievances do persist between some households. The eruption of disputes into larger scale and potentially more disruptive confrontations is inhibited by the strong social disapproval of

open displays of anger and quarrelsomeness. This sort of behaviour is especially disapproved in village meetings, where rather than taking sides in entering into a dispute the other men will ignore the quarrel as far as possible.The local social and economic divide between the high caste landlords on the one hand and the Tharu tenants on the other hand no doubt contributes to the absence of faction. The Tharu have a strong sense of all falling into one group which shares common interests and problems in relation to the economically and politically dominant landowners. In fact, this relation and the attitude surrounding it is complex and such a generalisation is bound to over simplify to some extent, but nevertheless this fundamental opposition between "us" and "them" is important and the solidarity partly engendered by it is reflected in the history of local disputes with the landlords. I cannot discuss these in detail here , but in the past the Tharu village has shown a high degree of unanimity and cohesiveness in the course of such disputes.

It is not to be expected that such unity will exist in all Tharu communities in Dang, yet it seems to be present in other villages and this is related to the general pattern of socio-economic relations of which Sukhrwar's situation is a fairly typical example. Nevertheless faction does occur, but as far as the Tharu are concerned this was usually due to the divisive influence of the pahāri landlords who seek either to split the Tharu village or to enlist the support of their Tharu tenants in their own disputes with other landowners (N.12). The highly apt term bigral gaun, meaning 'broken village', was used to describe those villages which were for some reason no

longer functioning well as a unity (N.13).

A final and most striking illustration both of Tharu village unity and of their attitude to conflict, is the migration of entire villages to areas in the western Terai. In the recent past, as a result of pahāri intrusion, in some cases a whole village has moved with all the Tharu abandoning their houses in the space of a few days. On such occasions it seems that though the village left more or less simultaneously, it did not resettle en bloc in the west, though groups of households did stay together. The neighbouring village of Bellari, now an all pahāri settlement, used to be a Tharu village of equivalent size to Sukhrwar, but between ten and fifteen years ago it moved away in this fashion (N.14). At that time attempts were also made to unsettle Sukhrwar itself, but there the Tharu decided to dig in and fight.

5.5 Village Organisation: Mahaton and Khel

In this section I shall describe the village meeting (khel) and expand on the role of the headman. Some examples of village business will be described to indicate the role of the headman in the organisation of communal village work (N.15).

Matters affecting the Tharu community are discussed and decided in meetings called by the headman and attended in theory by a representative from each Tharu household. These meetings are held in the hall (bahari) of the headman's house, usually in the evenings. For certain matters which involve the whole village, the headman in conjunction with the main landlords will summon an all-village meeting which is usually held at the

cross-roads. The presence at such wider meetings of the landlords, and the fact that discussions take place in Nepali, give these gatherings a rather different and formal atmosphere than the all-Tharu khel which is a much more relaxed affair.

The 'democratic' nature of the khel is clearly reflected in the procedures of the first official meeting held on the second main day of the Māghi festival. This meeting,(see Plate 3) called Māghi Dewāni (N.16), marks the start of the village administrative year and in it the headman tries to establish what plans the various households have concerning matters such as marriages and house building, which may involve assistance of the other Tharu households. This meeting is attended by all the household heads (ghardhurryā), who on their arrival in the headman's house exchange the sewā form of greeting with all the others present. This is the customary form of greeting appropriate between equals, and indicates that in the khel all these men are equals even if individually in other contexts they may be related in an asymmetrical way depending on the principles of generation and relative age (see Chapter 10). The second 'democratic' feature of this meeting is the confirmation of the headman in his position for the coming year. In theory a new man can be made headman but this is unusual and the matter is more of a formality (N.17). As noted above, if the headmanship remains within one household it is passed down to the eldest son. During the year, except for certain more important meetings, the headman may be substituted for by one of his brothers or his son, and similarly the other household heads may send other men of their households to attend the meetings. Though the khel has this 'democratic' aspect, this is balanced

by the hereditary nature of the headmanship, and as we shall see the headman himself occupies an important positon in the running of village affairs. Nevertheless ultimately to succeed he must win the respect of the other household heads.

The khel deals with a broad range of business, including house construction and reroofing, planning and administration of village rituals, repair and maintenance of village paths and bridges, levying of fines, raising payments for the village watchman, and settlement of minor disputes (cf. Rajaure 1981a:157; 1978:48,49) . The major item of business however, is the maintenance of the canal system, and this includes liaison with five other villages (N.18) which take water from the canal, and, within Sukhrwar itself with the non-Tharu sections of the village. Traditionally, recalling the mythical association between the Sukhrwariyā Guruwā lineage and the origin of the canal, the headman of Sukhrwar has been the agwā, that is the person in charge of the canal. Recent attempts to circulate this position among the headmen of the other villages have failed, and it has reverted to Sukhrwar, whose headman seems the only agwā capable of effectively mobilising and motivating the large number of men involved at the repair sites. Labour is raised for this work, as for other village activites, on the basis of the amount of land worked by each household. This land area is not precise but is estimated on a hal measurement which traditionally is equivalent to the area of land a plough team can cultivate during a monsoon. Households failing to send the required number of men for canal work, as for other village work, are fined at a rate of between five rupees and ten rupees per man day, but a general

all-village meeting is periodically required to obtain the support of the landlords, without which the Tharu headman would have difficulty raising fines from non-Tharu households. We can note here that the headman acting as aqwā has for the last few years been entitled to a payment of paddy raised from all landowners (not the tenants) who use the canal. This amounts to fifteen muri, which is equivalent to about 730 kg. of paddy and the khel also receives a share of this for its contribution to the aqwa's work. Unfortunately there is no space here to describe in detail the organisation of canal maintenance which reflects both traditional communal arrangements and the ways these are changing and adapting to the presence of landlords and non-Tharu cultivators.

There are two further significant points regarding the organisation of village business. First, since the basis of labour levies is usually related to area of land cultivated, this means that the non-cultivating bukhrawā households do not contribute; they are included within the other households for which they work as labourers. Related to this, the heads of such households do not attend the khel for many of its business meetings, since they will not be directly responsible for contributing to the implementation of its decisions. Secondly, for certain village rituals, however, contributions of labour and small amounts of cash and foodstuffs are raised from these bukhrawā households. For certain village business, therefore, these households are excluded, but they are nevertheless part of the village community and are included within it on what we may loosely call the ritual level.

The second interesting aspect of village organisation is

the role of headman as aqwā. This term is not reserved only for the organiser of canal work, but is more generally applied to the person who leads the other activities. The word reflects part of the role of the headman, and also certain of the qualities he should possess: an aqwā is one who directs and organises, and also someone who initiates and leads in an undertaking (N.19).

5.6 The Mahaton and his Household

In order to fulfil his role well as headman, a mahaton should therefore be possessed of certain qualities, but in addition he is also required to be knowledgeable in ritual contexts. As an integral part of his role, complementing his functions as chairman of the khel and leader-organiser in the actual carrying out of communal work, the mahaton also acts as one of the main priests for the village. For the most part he himself does not perform the principal stages of the majority of village rituals; this task is for the village priest, the desbandhyā. As I shall explain further below (Chapter 16) some village rituals and several household rituals, also require the participation of a man who acts as medium (kesaukā) becoming posessed by the deities summoned. For village rituals of this type in Sukhrwar there was one man who usually acted a kesaukā, whom we can loosely call the 'village kesaukā'. The mahaton acts as sacrificer (pujāru) in the main village rituals, and on several other occasions he has to perform lesser rituals involving offerings to the various village deities. To fulfil his ritual functions the mahaton has to be a guruwā,

that is to say, someone who has gone through the first stage of 'initiation' into becoming a priest. More than this, however, he has to be a guruwā who has a considerable amount of ritual knowledge and expertise, particularly concerning the various deities and spirits that collectively go to make up the village pantheon. I shall describe these ritual aspects of the mahaton's role in the village in more detail below (Chapter 16) but it is important here to note that together with his more secular duties he also has these important ritual functions.

The headman's household acts as a village forum on a number of occasions: for example, it is the site of the khel, it is where the desbandhyā priest is received and entertained and where the khel holds small feasts at the time of village rituals, and it is the location of major village dances. In the course of its duties this household, therefore, sustains certain expenses, though I was not able to estimate the extent of these with any accuracy (N.21). This household is further burdened by having to release one of its members to act in the capacity of headman in village rituals or village work, while at the same time contributing its own proper share of labour to such activites. In partial recompense the headman receives a certain number of days' work (begāri) from the other households in the village (N.22) at the times of sowing and harvesting the rice crop. In the fulfilment of its functions, therefore, a headman's household needs to be of a sufficient size and wealth to sustain the entailed expenses and to dispose of the required manpower.

The correlation between high economic status and the headmanship is complex and relates back to the discussion of the

relation between the headmanship and the village in section 1 of this chapter. In the rare cases where there are substantial Tharu landowners such households seem to monopolise the headmanship. In Baibang village, for instance, there are two wealthy Tharu families, both of which are mahaton; this dual headmanship is, as far as I know, unique. We have already seen that in Hekuli the Tharu landowner appoints the headman. In Sukhrwar, as in most villages, there is no powerful Tharu landowner, but the headmanship remains with one of the larger and wealthier households (N.23). Households that are of above average size and wealth do enjoy a certain status within a village and this, though very difficult to characterise precisely, no doubt contributes to their selection as headman, but it is more accurate perhaps to look at this the other way around. In other words, in most villages the headmanship is held by one of the larger and richer households because it is better able to fulfil this role. This also was the way that informants in Sukhrwar tended to view the situation.

Nevertheless, the extent to which one can say whether a large and relatively wealthy household is "given" the headmanship or whether by a combination of local circumstances over time such a household has been able to acquire or "take" this position, is not always easy to determine. In the far western Terai districts the mahaton household is one of those termed barghar, which literally means "large or big house", but it is interesting that the word bar or barā, which we shall encounter below, has wider connotations meaning also 'great' or 'senior'. The potential combination of ideas in this term (barghar) indicates that the attitudes surrounding the

headmanship are complex. After all, we have seen that the headmanship is both hereditary and yet has a 'democratic' character. In the past the headman may have held a position of more markedly higher status and there are indications that he may have been more powerful. Today, however, in villages such as Sukhrwar, the headman still occupies an important position, and with this he enjoys a certain status and authority, but his position is part of a traditional framework within which such status and authority is balanced by the 'democratic' element which underlies both the mahaton institution and the nature of the khel itself.

5.7 Conclusion

The village is the largest social grouping in Tharu society. In the past villages were grouped for external administrative purposes into pragannās. As we shall see below (Chapter 14) there was a loose link between pragannā and the areas of the valley within which certain gotyār had the right work as village priests (desbandhyā), but apart from this, beyond the village there was no wider unit or social grouping.

Some villages may have traditions of their founding, but there is no marked ideology surrounding the idea of a founding lineage which might, for instance, link the various households together around a kinship principle forming the village into an exogamous territorial unit such as we find in North India. As I have suggested, however, in some instances there may be a relationship between the instituion of headman and the lineage of a village founder.

The village nevertheless forms a cohesive and

distinctive unity with its territory, its boundaries, and its internal organisation centering on the mahaton and khel. I have pointed out that the headman has a certain status within the village, but that at the same time his place must always be seen in relation to the khel, which has a 'democratic' or 'egalitarian' aspect. Within the village we have also seen the non-cultivating bukhrawā households are excluded from much village business, but are included in ritual contexts.

We have now recognised a number of expressions of village unity, but the underlying principles on which it rests remain unidentified. To complete our description of the village we must discuss the deities and village rituals. We have already seen that the village clearly has a territorial dimension and it is significant that the collective term for the village deities, Bhũhyãr, specifically associates these with the soil (bhui). At the same time, of course, the very presence of this category of deities, with their respective shrines and accompanying ritual complex, acts as a kind of identifying label or marker for the village as a unit. Just as we shall be able to learn more about what the village means by looking at its deities and its ritual, so also it is in relation to these that we shall be able to clarify the position of the headman, who acts on behalf of the village in the ritual context. In fact his position is clearly and concretely symbolised in the main village shrine itself. Before we can explore the ritual aspects of the village, however, we must approach through the house, which consitutes the centre and core of the whole society. To arrive at the house we must first understand the gotyār, which, though not strictly a 'group', is in a sense the only enduring social entity standing somewhere between the village and the house.

Notes to Chapter 5

N.1 Nestfield wrongly cites Elliot as giving barwaik as a Tharu "tribe" (1885:36). In fact Elliot gives for this word "a hereditary class of chokidars introduced into the south-eastern foothills of the Kumaon for the purpose of patrolling and guarding this inhospitable area". Beames who edited Elliot's glossary explains that this office was given to certain Tharu headmen by Kumaon Rajas (Beames 1869, 1:57, 58, 317). Nestfield also points out that barwaik is the name of a Tharu clan in this western region (1885:40), a fact also reported by Turner (1931:598). Atkinson gives barwaik as the title for Tharu headmen who are also called chaudhari and he notes that Crooke thinks that like other tribes they also call their headmen mahto (1881:357, n.1). Unfortunately we do not have an indigenous explication of barwaik, but it could be formed from the root bar-, meaning 'great, large, senior'.

N.2 Rajaure renders the headman as mahaton. He suggests a most unlikely derivation from Persian mokkaddam, later on taken into Sanskrit as mahatam (1981a:157). Macdonald spells this word as mahatuã (1975:267-80). Informants spelt this as mahatãu, but I found it was also pronounced as mahatãn. In this study I have adopted Rajaure's spelling, which he has used in his various publications. The 1336 A.D. reference to mahatam is taken from a copperplate inscription of the Malla king, and the name of the other officials mentioned are: adai, adhikāri, mahar (Rajaure 1981a:157-8).

N.3 guthi: an endowment of land or other property for any religious or philanthropic purpose.

raikar: state-owned taxable land, which could be granted as birtā or assigned to government employees and functionaries in lieu of their emoluments. Such land given to officals is called jāgir (Regmi 1978:161-3).

N.4 It is possible that the use by the government of the maujā, the village and its lands, as the primary unit of revenue administration may have over time helped establish and define the village as a territorial unit with recognised boundaries.

N.5 The name Dasaũt Baghaũt was translated by one informant as deriving from Dasyā-mā bhaqat, referring to the fact that this ancestor deity is a pure deity (succā) cf. N: śuci, "pure, clear, undefiled"; and N:śucitā, "purity, brightness, cleaness, holiness; innocense" (qv. Turner 1965) who consequently did not eat meat and alcohol in the Dasyā (N:dasaĩ) festival. In other words he remained bhaqat, a word reserved for those who do not eat meat or take alcohol. There are indications, however, that this deity is linked to tigers (bāgh), and tiger

is also one of the spirits (bhut) associated with the Sukhwariyā Guruwā gotyār. Thus the name is more likely to come from das bāgh = "ten tigers".

N.6 One of the reasons why Dasaũt Baghaũt chose a canal rather than land was because land would get divided up into ever decreasing amounts among his descendants while a canal could never be divided up in the same way.

N.7 In some villages one can still find the traditional Tharu well which is square and lined with wooden boards on its upper section. For an early reference to this type of well see Nestfield 1885:6.

N.8 There is no special term for this area where people are buried. The term for any marginal uncultivated land is ailyāni.

N.9 For the Tharu terms san or sankā, cf. N:sãdh, "boundary, limit" (Turner 1965:596).

N.10 During the course of voting in local elections for the national panchayat representative, it was striking that in the crowded voting area - a large field - the Tharu arrived and kept together in village groups.

N.11 There are other reasons for house names. Some may have a name related to their particular location e.g. bhitrahān ghar means 'the inside house', referring to this house being set back further than the others from the central village lane. Other houses may be named from the title of their owner, so the headman's house is the mahaton ghar and in Sukhrwar the house of the chairman (pradhān) of the local panchayat was called Pradhān ghar.

N.12 One also finds similar faction and competition between large Tharu landowners, in the village of Baibang for instance.

N.13 The term bigral is interesting and occurs in a variety of contexts. For example, certain festivals such as Māghi can become bigral if someone dies in the household during the first day of the festival. Thenceforth the household cannot celebrate Māghi until something is born on this day in following years. Similarly participants in certain marriage ceremonies must not come from bigral households, which means that such people must have parents who are alive (cf. Rajaure 1978:307). In another context, referring to all the problems and changes which the Tharu have been undergoing in recent years, one encountered the question "why has the Tharu jāti become bigral?" Apparently also women who elope used to be called bigdhari (Carnegy 1868:10), a term which may derive from the same root.

N.14 This recent migration of Tharu villages recalls their tendency to move away from the encroaching plains population in the nineteenth century.

N.15 Elsewhere khel is a division of a village among the Ao Nagas (Mills 1926:82-83), where the word is said to be "Naga-Assamese". Also cf. Hutton (1969:113) who gives kelhu as an exogamous division of the Angami Nagas. Hutton adds that khel " is really an Assamese word signifying the exogamous division of the Ahoms. It has come to have a sense in non-Angami parts of the district which has no reference to tribal division, but only means the part of a village grouped for purposes of administration under a particuar headman"(ibid:n.4)

N.16 cf. N:dewāni, "a particular kind of civil court of law" (Turner 1965:318).

N.17 Nevertheless the headmanship does sometimes change hands. In the vicinity of Sukhrwar this happened in fairly recent times in Buraurā, Nainwār, and in Dundra villages. In Sukhrwar itself, while I was there, there was considerable dissatisfaction with the headman's performance. During the Māghi Dewāni khel the household heads decided to keep the encumbent mahaton as village ritual officiant, but insisted that one of his younger brothers in the same household should become the person responsible for organising other village business. The function of headman had already become to some extent shared in this way between these brothers, and the khel was in fact seeking to formalise this arrangement.

N.18 The five other villages involved in the canal are: Dabar Gaun, Bellari, Kanarrya, Sisanyā, Sauriyār.

N.19 N:aguwā, "guide; pioneer; go-between in marriage negotiations, match-maker" (Turner 1965:5). This term may also be applied more generally to the person who leads or comes first in an ordered sequence of people. It is interesting to note that of the two young girls (nenhariyā) who walk in marriage processions, the one who leads is the aghilki (Rajaure 1978:307-8). This word is related to T:āgha, "in front, first, previously in time", and ultimately to Sk:ágre, "in front".

N.20 The first part of this term probably derives from Sk:desa, 'country', and the second part may come from Sk:vand,' to praise, celebrate...show honour, salute respectfully' (s.v. Monier-Williams 1964). For further details on the desbandhyā see below chapters 15.2 and 16.

N.21 The headman complained that his position incurred certain expenses, but I was never able to establish the extent of these. Nevertheless, the cost of kerosene for lighting the khel and dances etc. was always mentioned as one of the main items of expenditure and from household budgets it would appear that while other households spend Rs 250-400

a year on kerosene, the mahaton household spent between Rs 600 and 800. The additional Rs 500 may not seem a large amount of money, but it in fact represents an appreciable amount especially in an economy which is only partly based on cash.

N.22 The labour given to the mahaton for sowing is called buini beqāri from buinā 'to sow', and for the harvest it is kaṭauni beqāri from kāṭnā 'to cut'. The labour contributions were also estimated on a hal basis and workers receive two meals a day while they work. For further details see Rajaure 1981a:160-61. In the past beqāri was also rendered by tenants to their landlords, but this system was abolished in 1951 (cf. Macdougal 1967:87-9). It is interesting that apart from the mahaton beqāri, some Tharu villages render beqāri also to the desbandhyā, and such labour service may also be called on by household priests (gharguruwā) from the households they serve. Although within the Tharu community beqāri is given partly in return for the services of the headman, village priest, and household priest, the rendering of labour service to these people marks them as having a special and perhaps superior status. Certainly in the past and still today the higher caste landlords had a higher status both in terms of their economic influence and their caste ranking. In contrast to these beqāri arrangements, labour is exchanged on an equal and reciprocal basis between Tharu households, and is then referred to as sakhlārā.

N.23 The wealth of a household is obviously related to land ownership, but it is also the case that larger households are relatively better off than smaller ones which are in a similar economic position in terms of actual land owned. On the correlation between household size and economic position see Bajracharya et al. 1980:43-5.

CHAPTER 6 : THE GOTYĀR

In this chapter I shall present the main features of the gotyār, the exogamous group which is a unit of fundamental importance in Tharu social organisation. In the first section I describe the general characteristics of the gotyār and its principal functions in the regulation of marriage. The second section describes the major distinction between priestly and non-priestly gotyār, and the third discusses gotyār names as identifying labels. The fundamental importance of deities in relation to the gotyār necessitates some mention of them in this chapter, but folowing the general plan of this study, the deities will be discussed in detail below in part 4.

6.1 General Features and the Function of the Gotyār in the Regulation of Marriage

Tharu society is divided into an indefinite number of exogamous gotyār, membership of which is patrilineal. As Tharu stress, membership is transmitted from a man to his children and one has to take a spouse from another such group. The first function of the gotyār, therefore, is to provide the negative rules bearing on marriage.

There is no Tharu word which refers specifically to this exogamous group as such. Tharu itself emphasises not the group

but the group member. Thus in identifying a member of the same group a Tharu does not say "he is of my group", instead the statement has the form "he and I are gotyār" or "we are gotyār". Similarly, to inquire about another person's group identity, the question is "kā (kaun) Tharu huitho ?" which means "what (which) Tharu are you?" (Rajaure 1981a:165) (N.1). A gotyār group can be identified by its name, but in some cases this is ambiguous since some groups may have more than one name. Sometimes also people are uncertain of the name of their group. This does not present a problem, however, because the determination of gotyār identity is only relevant in regard to marriage or in establishing a link with a household priest and both these situations only arise in the vast majority of cases in local contexts in which people are either well aware of or easily able to ascertain the gotyār identity of local households. Where marriages are contracted with households in more distant and unfamiliar villages, then, gotyār identity will be clearly established before negotiations begin, and in this case confusion will be avoided through the help of intermediaries who are conversant with the gotyār affiliation of the two households involved. The fundamental criterion for distinguishing between gotyār, however, is that each and every one has a different configuration of deities which are named, may be represented in some material form, and are present in every individual household of a gotyār. As will be made clear below (Chapter 13), reference to the set of household deities establishes also the household priest to which a household is linked.

Since every gotyār is distinguished from all others

by having a unique set of deities, for the purpose of marriage if there might be some doubt one can imagine that it would be logical to have recourse to comparison of the sets of deities of the households involved. I never encountered such a procedure since, for the reasons already stated, the situation simply does not arise; nevertheless, there is a story which illustrates this possibility and thus underlines the fundamental importance of the deities in distinguishing gotyār. This story tells of a marriage which was arranged between two households which did not know each other and were of different villages situated quite far apart. The marriage negotiatons were hurried and full and proper inquiries were never made. During marriage ceremonies there is an important stage which takes place in the deity room (deurār) in front of the deities of the bridegroom's house. When the bride was led into the deurār, her party noticed that the bidegroom's set of deities seemed very similar to their own. To everyone's consternation further enquiry revealed that the two households shared the same set of deities, and so according to the rule of gotyār exogamy the marriage was immediately called off.

At the highest level the gotyār can only be characterised in negative terms. It is not a localised group, and households of any gotyār are scattered throughout the valley and other districts inhabited by the Tharu. There is, however, a vague correlation between certain priestly gotyār and parts of Dang. It is not possible to locate all the households of a particular gotyār. Knowledge of the location of gotyār varies but nobody claims to know where all his gotyār may be. This is considered an impossible question and

people are aware that the wide dispersal of their gotyār means that there are households and branches with which contact has long since been lost. Corresponding to this indefinitely wide dispersal there is no effective sense of common identity or solidarity at the level of the gotyār group as a whole. Furthermore the gotyār is in no sense a corporate group: collectively it has no rights in land, and there are no group level shrines or rituals. Nor does the gotyār have any political significance as a group (N.2).

A final negative charactersitic of the gotyār is that it is not internally structured around an idea of descent from a common ancestor. Several of these groups, however, do have among their deities some which are also ancestors. The gotyār, therefore, does not have an internal ordered system of division into lineages. It is only at a local level that one can speak of lineages, but these are shallow since genealogical links can only be remembered up to around three or four generations. At points in this discussion I have been using the term gotyār to refer to a group, but insofar as it in fact refers to a member of a group, membership of which is transmitted patrilineally, all gotyār are in principle agnatic kinsmen. Gotyār of the same generation stand in relation to eachother as dādu-bhaiyā, that is older brother-younger brother. The dādu-bhaiyā category , however, also includes all consanguines of the same generation and may include unrelated people of the same village or may even be used to establish a relation between two unrelated strangers. This category of "brother", then, at its widest can include just about anyone (cf. Dumont 1961:28), but within it certain distinctions can be

made. Thus for instance an unrelated village "brother" can be more precisely referred to as a gaun bhaiyā, "a village brother", and similarly a member of the same gotyār is explained as a gotyār bhaiyā. Thus in the rare event of encountering a stranger who is also a gotyār with whom no genealogical links can be traced, this person will be addressed as dādu or bhaiyā, but for the purpose of clarification at the level of reference this bhaiyā will be explained as a gotyār bhaiyā (N.3). There is in fact no indigenous physiological idiom, such as the shaing of common blood or bones, which is used to express an agnatic relationship or indeed any consanguineal relationship. Though the gotyār exogamous group is patrilineal in terms of descent, its vague nature as a group, the core definition of which depends on the possession of the same set of deities, has led me to keep the indigenous term in this study, rather than translating gotyār simply as clan or clansman.

In the context of a village and its immediate neighbourhood, insofar as contact is maintained, gotyār are distinguished as lauwā or purān. Lauwā means "new" and refers to those with whom genealogical links are more recent and can usually be remembered, while purān means "old" and refers to gotyār with whom links are further in the past and have been forgotten. In a general way all those gotyār with whom connection cannot be traced, whether they are local or whether they live at a distance and are not known, belong to the purān category. As a result of household migration "new" gotyār may also be situated outside the locality, sometimes nowadays often at quite a considerable distance in the districts

of Bardia and Kailali. "New" gotyār can also be referred to by another term ghar-phutlak, which means "split from the same original house" (ghar). This expression shows that it is the house which is used as a unit for reckoning links further into the past. To begin with exact links may be remembered but after three or four generations they often become forgotten or uncertain, yet the looser system of reckoning in terms of houses can endure longer. Individuals will be forgotten, while the pattern of house splitting can be remembered. The example of a 'house genealogy' of some houses of the Sukhwariwā Guruwā gotyār will illustrate this:

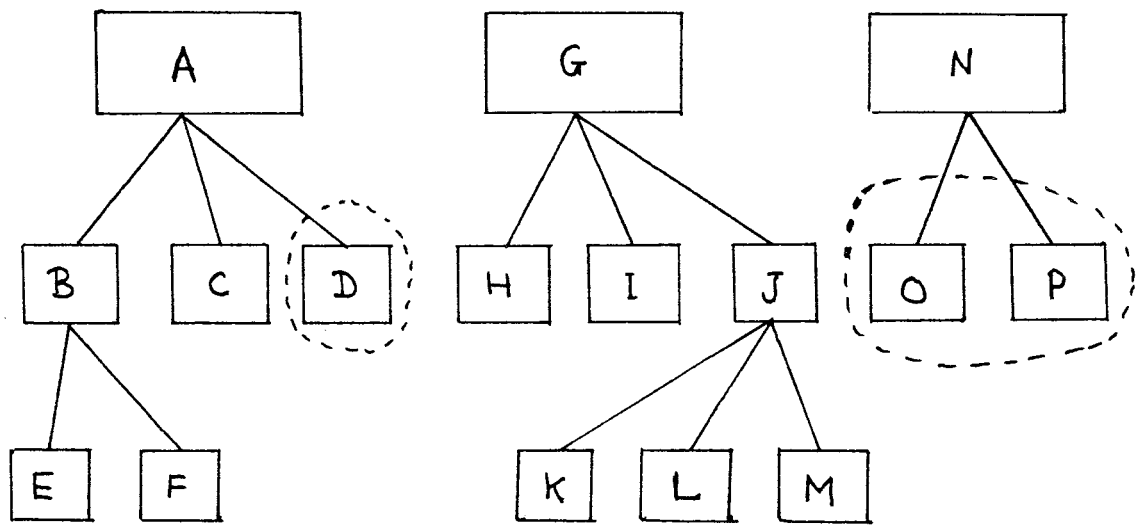


Fig. 1 Sukhwariyā Guruwā'house genealogy'

- When a house has split it is counted as having come to an end. In the case of the headman's household, however, the senior branch which keeps the headmanship also keeps the name (mahaton ghar).

- The dotted circles indicate households that have left the village.

Ghar-phutlak is a relative term. Houses E and F are ghar-phutlak both coming from B, but not long beforehand A split into B, C, and D. Thus E, F, C, and D are also ghar-phutlak by virtue of the split from A further in the past. The same pattern applies to the genealogy of G household. Informants could outline all genealogical links between B (E,F) and C, though there was some uncertainty regarding precise links with D. Houses A and G were thought to be fairly closely linked and so was N but nobody could remember the stages of splitting or the actual links between them. Although not properly speaking related as ghar-phutlak, A, G and N were felt to be more closely linked to each other than to four other households of this gotyār in the village with whom links had been forgotten and who were classed as purān gotyār. Over time as households grow and splits take place, the term ghar-phutlak becomes appropriate for the more recently split households such as those in the second and third lines of the diagram, but as noted this is partly a relative term and depending on memory, the pattern of splitting and the fact of migration, it may also be used to refer to a wider group of households related from a split further in the past. There is no clear point of transition where "new" or ghar-phutlak gotyār become purān gotyār. It would be logical to fill in the stages of this process by combining the terms to speak of "new" or "old" ghar-phutlak but I am not sure if this happens.

In addition to the term ghar-phutlak which refers us to the house, a local lineage can be referred to as konti, which is also the word for a room occupied by a man, with his wife and young children, in a house (Rajaure 1981b:24). When a

house splits usually each of the married men will set up their own new households. Thus in relation to the local gotyār group, the language of social structure derives from the house.

It is only at this local level that links between households of a gotyār take on any significance. The exchange of certain prestations between households linked through marriage may be extended to include the ghar-phutlak households on either side. The ghar-phutlak group has also certain rights over land, since land of lines which die out may pass to close collateral lines. In both these contexts the local purān gotyār households are not included (Rajaure 1981b:24). It is possible that local gotyār including perhaps purān gotyār may support each other in disputes within a village, but I have recorded no case of this. For disputes outside the village, however, it would seem that local gotyār are called on for support, but in the only instance I encountered, although support was initially mobilised from gotyār houeholds, in fact all the other households in the village became involved (N.4). Similarly, although where good relations exist gotyār households may help eachother in trading ventures and agricultural work, this is equally true of other households in the same village. In fact, where good links are established between affinally linked houses such cooperation and mutual assistance is particularly evident.

6.2 The gharguruwā-barin division

Apart from providing the negative rules bearing on marriage, the gotyār have an important function in organising

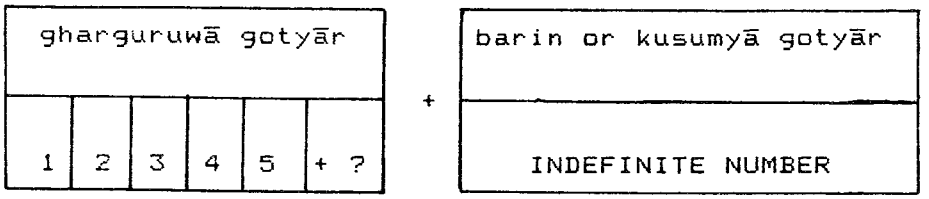
Tharu religious groupings, in particular the allocation of priests to clients. Corresponding to the wide dispersal of gotyār there is no notion of the number of gotyār groups which make up Tharu society. Unlike many other ethnic groups which express the totality of their society in terms of an ideal number of clans or component groups, the Tharu lack any such model expressed in terms of numbers of gotyār (N.5). Among this indefinite multiplicity of gotyār, the system of priests with their linked non-priestly gotyār is the only aspect of the different social groups which gives this society any form of overall structure.

There is a fundamental division of gotyār into two groups: the gharguruwā priestly gotyār and the non-priestly barin or kusumyā gotyār groups. The term gharguruwā means "house priest" and it is only members of these gotyār who may work as priests for other gotyār. There are five gharguruwā gotyār though there seems to be some variation depending on whom one asks and where one is in the valley as to the number and identity of gotyār included in this category. The names of these gotyār are discussed below in section 3, while the problem of variation in membership of the category, and the function of some of these gotyār as village priests are discussed in chapters 14 and 15 (section 2).

The link between a barin gotyār and its gharguruwā gotyār is hereditary and in theory cannot be changed (N.6). Although a barin household can change the individual priest who serves it, it must always take another priest from the same gharguruwā gotyār to which it is linked. This means that the system of priesthood provides an

overall structure for the gotyār, dividing Tharu society either into two groups or into five, depending on the point of view adopted (N.7):

(a) Two Sections



(b) Five Sections

gharguruwā:	1	2	3	4	5	+?
barin/kusumyā:	A,B C,D	E,F G,	etc.			

Fig. 2 The gharguruwā-barin division

It must be emphasised that the second figure (b) which shows a division into five or possibly more groups each consisting of a gharguruwā gotyār with its linked barin gotyār, does not correspond to indigenous representations of the society. It is my own model derived from the principle that barin are permanently and hereditarily linked to their particular gharguruwā gotyār. The first figure, illustrating a broad two-fold division of society, is closer to how the Tharu represent the situation. This model of a two-fold division, however, is also not without its complications. First, as already noted, there is some uncertainty as to which gotyār are to be included in the gharguruwā category. Secondly,

there is a smaller number of gotyār which do not belong to either division since they do not use household priests, but instead perform this role for themselves. Thirdly, there is at least one gotyār, the Bhagwariyā Mahaton, which uses gharguruwā but is clear about the fact that it is not linked to any particular priestly gotyār (N.8).

Unfortunately I have not been able to arrive at an indigenous derivation for the terms barin and kusumyā. All we can say at this stage is that barin is likely to be a plural since in Tharu the plural is formed by adding the suffix -n.

It is interesting also in this context that although the terms barin and kusumyā are equivalent in that they both refer to the same divison of gotyār, their use is not quite the same. If one asks the question "kā Tharu huitho ?", "what Tharu are you?", a man will either identify himself by his gotyār name or equally may simply say he is kusumyā. He is unlikely to describe himself initially as barin. This latter term is more appropriate for contexts involving gharguruwā. Thus a household priest may speak of his barin in identifying the gotyār or households he serves, and similarly a member of a non-priestly gotyār will refer to himself as barin when one is inquiring specifically about his status vis à vis priests. As we shall see when we consider gotyār names, however, the term kusumyā has the further complication that there are gotyār which include this term combined with other words in their names.

Among the barin or kusumyā there is a further small sub-division of gotyār groups called tel dihwā which

exercise a particular ritual funtion. Tel dihwā means "oil giver", and members of these gotyār are called on to perform a special role in post-burial purification ceremonies, which involves their annointing guests at a feast with mustard oil.

There is no institutionalised status distinction between the gotyār of these three functional divisions - gharguruwā, barin/kusumyā and tel dihwā - taken collectively. The tel dihwā gotyār are described by themselves as being "pure" (cwākhā, N:cokho) and a member of one such gotyār claimed that his and the other tel dihwā gotyār are the purest among gotyār (sabse cwākhā). What this statement means, however, is not clear since such distinctions appear to have no general significance in Tharu society (N.9). Although their specific function, and with it perhaps this quality of purity, is inherited by members of tel dihwā gotyār, their role only becomes significant in the specific ritual context of death cermonies. Similarly the distinction between priestly and non-priestly gotyār only becomes 'activated' in certain contexts. Members of priestly or tel dihwā gotyār do not share in their attributes all the time. It is rather, in certain contexts when individuals perform their function that any distinctions of status may be apparent. Distinctions then may be identified at the lower level of particular relationships between households, between an individual and another household in the case of the household priest, and between a village and an individual in the case of a village priest. Whatever status distinctions do exist between a priest and the households he serves operate at this lower level and one cannot say that barin households collectively view

priests gotyār as of a different and higher status than their own in all social contexts. Related to this is the important fact that it is only a small minority of households and individuals of the gharguruwā gotyār who actually work as priests, either for households or villages.

Just as one cannot identify relative distinctions of status between gotyār or groups of gotyār taken as wholes, so also at this level one cannot perceive broad differences in terms of relative wealth. At a lower level, however, there are indications that some local lineages and households of priestly gotyār may be relatively better off. The situation of these priestly households is in many respects parallel to that of headmen discussed in Chapter 5. Although such households inherit the potential right to work as priests, the possible link between wealth and the exercising of the priestly function is uncertain. I am not sure whether it is by virtue of their relatively larger size and wealth that certain households are able to function as priests, or whether it is partly by acting in this capacity that they are or have been able to add to and sustain their wealth. For a priest serving only a few households, so long his household is moderately well off and not too small, it can release him from agricultural work to pursue this other work, but this seems to bring little or no advantage in economic terms. To support one or more men working as priests on a larger scale, a household has to be on the larger side and perhaps reasonably well off, but whether it gains through this is uncertain. Household priests, it is true, receive small cash payments and certain small amounts of vegetables and maize in the course of a year, and they can call on their barin to help

with rice cutting (N.10). The household of a village priest, however, might gain more profit from his work. Village priests also inevitably work as household priests at the same time, which means that one or more men of such a household are almost continually engaged in priestly work. In addition to his perquisites as a household priest, the village priest receives small amounts of cash or grain and/or free labour from the villages he serves. It is likely that in the past the advantages of the position may have been more substantial. This is suggested by the fact that in the past certain desbandhyā had obtained lāl mohār or royal decrees granting them the right to work as priests in certain areas. As Rajaure has reported, these priests

> ... got their Shamanistic (N.11) rights by inheritance from one of their forefathers, who in turn had got theirs by royal orders either from a king or a magistrate as mentioned in lāl mohārs. Several persons had received such lāl mohārs. The duties of these desbandhyā guruwās were to drive away 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 decree, the desbandhyā guruwās were expected to pay some fixed annual payments to the administration (1978:223).

Today the village priests positon is no longer an official one recognised by the administration, but whether or not they benefit economically from this work, both they and the household priests still have an important position and special status as a result of their functions in Tharu society (N.12). Not unrelated to this, perhaps, is the fact that although the position of village headman is not reserved to any particular gotyār, in my part of Dang as far as I could tell the majority of village

headmen belonged to priestly gotyār and in particluar to the Dahit gotyār (N.13).

Finally, it must be noted that neither the distinctions in religious function between gotyār nor any other characteristic of gotyar themselves affects marriage in any way. Marriage can take place between any two gotyār. It is worth remarking that the absence of any marriage rule related to the distinctons of function means that despite a superficial similarity the gharguruwā-barin relationship is really quite different from the purohit-jajmān relationship in Hindu caste society (N.14).

6.3 Gotyār Names

Although the fundamental criterion for distinguishing gotyār is the fact that each gotyār has a unique set of deities, in most contexts a gotyār's name is a sufficient label of identity. Adding to Rajaure's work (1981a:166-72), I have compiled a list of about fifty gotyār names , and although I am not able to interpret all of these, analysis of them tells us something about the origins of certain gotyār. It is interesting and perhaps not surprising that in many cases gotyār names are related either to their deities or to some special ritual practice. The link with deities is especially important in the case of the gharguruwā gotyār.

In the first place there a number of names which refer to outsider castes or ethnic groups from which certain gotyār are said to have originated. These gotyār claim to have become incorporated into Tharu society by marriage or by an

adoption ceremony (N.15). Such gotyār are the Ahir who originate from the caste of this name, as also do the Dahit (cf. Rajaure 1981a:166-68). Similarly the Kahar gotyār originate from the Kahar caste, the Cwākhā Dom from the Dom caste and the Babhān or Bāmān gotyār from Brahman castes. Ethnic groups are alo represented, with the Satgaiyār descending from Newars, though I do not know from which Newar caste, the Karryā Magariyā and posibly the Magarauthen from Magar groups, and the Rāji from the ethnic group of the same name which inhabits areas to the west of Dang (N.16). Also to be included in this category are the Jogetthwā or Bhuiyā gotyār, and perhaps the Jogi-Tharu or Jogiyā. Although the names of these two gotyār are in one respect very similar, members of the former group carefully distinguished themselves from the latter. The Jogetthwā had nothing to tell me about their origins, but in all probability they are or were the same as groups variously called Jogi or Jugiā Tharu in earlier reports. According to these reports members of these groups were either adherents of the Kānphatā sect or descendants of a liaison between a Kānphatā Yogi and a Tharu woman (Turner 1931:598,599,602; Crooke 1896:399). The fact that the Jogetthwā at present worship Ratannath, who is the principal deity of the local section of the Kānphatā sect in Dang, would seem to confirm this assocation.

Some gotyār names derive from the names of villages, as for example, Sukhwariya Guruwā, while a few others are related to a very simple origin tradition such as the Nunbuwā meaning "salt-sower" whose ancestors reputedly tried to sow salt as a crop, or the Ghatcwār, which means "bell-thief", one of

whose ancestors was said to have stolen a cow-bell (N.17).

The largest proportion (fourteen out of fifty) of gotyār names, however, are linked either to deities or to some special ritual practice. The Gheckaṭṭwā for instance, whose name means "throat-cutter", claim that the household heads of this gotyār cut the throat of a chicken before going into a possession trance in the Dasyā festival (Rajaure 1981a:168). Similarly, the Ṭhokwā Pittar gotyār, whose name means "hammering or pinning down the ancestor" have an unusual way of seating a new ancestor in post-burial death ceremonies. The Nammwā gotyār whose name derives from namma meaning "long" explain that their ancestor offered a cat -nam puchi or "long tail" in Tharu slang - to their deities. They were later shown the correct offerings by the Sukhwariyā Guruwā gotyār who are now their household priests. The Bhaluguni (bear-priest/learned person?) gotyār have a deity of the same name, as do the Khargi or Khargyā gotyār. This latter gotyār is almost certainly the same as another called Manderryā or Khargi Manderryā whose name derives partly from mandal meaning drum. This clan is unusual in keeping a small drum hanging with the other standard ritual equipment in the deity room of the house (N.18). There is a group of four gotyār whose names include the word Ulṭhawā meaning "reversed or opposite" (N.19). This part of their names is linked to the fact that these gotyār build their houses in a reverse pattern to those of all other groups. For at least two of this sub-group, the kāwā Ulṭhawā and the Bakharryā Ulṭhawā, the other part of their names relates to a peculiar feature of ritual practice or equipment. Thus bakhari is the

word for a grain storage silo or container made out of reed matting plastered with mud and this gotyār is unique in keeping its household deities inside one of these constructions (N.22). The Kāwā Ulthāwā name is connected with the practice by members of this gotyār of climbing onto the roof of the house and cawing like a crow (Kāwā) during the Dasyā festival (ibid:170). The Duna Batthwā, one of the gotyār of the group which belongs neither to the barin or gharguruwā category, also takes its name from one of its main deities. We can note here that another of this group of gotyār sometimes calls itself Kusumyā Pandit, a name which appropriately reflects the fact that its members act for themselves as priests, i.e. as pandit, but at the same time it in a sense belongs with other barin or kusumyā gotyār since it is not linked to the mythical origins of the deities of the other proper priestly gotyār. Rajaure's classification of these gotyār as the "in betweens" is thus in this instance particularly apt (ibid).

There are five main priestly gotyār which are named: Demanraurā, Pachaldāngyā or Jagarnattyā, Sukhwariyā Guruwā, Dahit, Katkattwā or Madwā. Three of these gotyār have the same names as one of the deities they worship: Demanraurā, Jagarnattyā, and Madwā. The Jagarnattyā are also called Pachaldāngyā, meaning "of west Dang", because this gotyār is mythically linked with the west of the valley, and in fact this is the area where its households are mostly concentrated. The Dahit and Sukhwariyā Guruwā gotyār both have a deity called Bherwā, though these are distinguished by being called Sukhwariyā Bherwā and Dahitwā Bherwā. In a similar way the principal deities of all these priestly

gotyār are sometimes all referred to as kinds of Bherwā and this corresponds with their myth of origin in which these five (or four) deities were brothers (see chapter 14). Although not named after their deities, the Dahit and the Sukhwariyā Guruwā gotyār, like the other three priestly gotyār, have a special connection with their deities, and it is this which provides the basis for their ability to work as household priests for other gotyār. I shall discuss the gharqurwā-barin relationship and the deities involved, in greater detail in Part 4 , but let us note here that among its other deities every barin household includes in its deity room the particular deity of the preistly gotyār to which it is linked. The presence of the priest's deity in the barin household in a sense represents the relationship between the household and the priest who serves it.

As already stated, the number of gharguruwa gotyār is not absolutely certain. Three other gotyār were recorded as working as household priests: Jinguni Madwā, Pittar Guni, and Magrautyā or Magrauten. For Pittar Guni I have no information except that a priest of the Dahit gotyār claimed that this gotyār worked as priests. I never recorded this fact elsewhere and it is possible that this gotyār belongs to the group of "in-betweens". Similarly I know nothing else about the Magrautyā except that from my lists the only gotyār they serve is the Kotauryā and that the Magrautyā priests come from the village of Bijulipur which is in the Deokhuri valley to the south of Dang. Jinguni Madwā presents less of a problem since as the name indicates they too share the Madwā deity with the Katkattwā Madwā gotyār. It is possible that the "sharing"

of the Madwā deity by these two gotyār is a parallel situation to the Dahit and Sukhwariyā Guruwā links with Bherwā (N.21). In Part 4 when I seek to explain further the position of the priestly gotyār in Tharu society, it will be argued that the uncertainty as to the precise number of priestly gotyār presents no obstacle to an understanding of the system.

6.4 Conclusion

To sum up, we have seen that the gotyār taken as a group lack any clear internal organisation. The important constituent unit of the gotyār is the household, and at its lowest level the structure of the gotyār is conceived of in terms of the house.

Regarding its wider functions, the gotyār as a patrilineal exogamous group provides the negative rules bearing on marriage. In the sphere of religion, the gotyār system regulates the fundamental division in society between household and village priests on the one hand, and the barin or non-priestly gotyār on the other hand. There is also a particular ritual role in death ceremonies which is reserved for a small number of gotyār of the barin section.

Although the matter was not discussed in detail, it was noted that the critical distincton between different gotyār is the fact that each one has a unique combination of deities. From one point of view this again directs us to the house, since not having any collective shrines, every house of a gotyār has its set of deities which replicate those represented in all

the other houses of the same gotyār. It was seen that while gotyār names derive from several sources, a number are related either to the names of deities or to particular features of ritual practice or equipment. As their names partly indicate, the gharguruwā gotyār are specifically linked with certain deities. It was further suggested that these priestly deities have an important place in the gharguruwā-barin relationship, as is indicated by the fact that these deities are always included in the set of deities in barin households.

Two principal questions, therefore, remain to be answered. First, how it is that deities serve to distinguish gotyār. This matter will be discussed after I have described the layout of the house, with its shrines and deity room and the deities themselves. Secondly, the gharguruwā-barin relationship remains to be explained. Since this relationship hinges around certain deities as well as the ritual function of the priest, it too will be discussed in Part 4 when I shall discuss the priests' deities and their related mythlogy. At this stage, however, it is worth noting that this relationship can be only partly understood in terms of an analysis of the elements which themselves comprise the relationship. For a proper understanding we must look instead at the relations between the elements. We have already seen that this relationship includes the deities themselves. Thus the gharguruwā-barin relationship must eventually be seen as part of a system of relations the elements of which include social groups and deities. The deities themselves - or rather the relations between them - furnish the only perspective from which we can obtain a view of the society as a whole, and so ultimately the

priest-barin relationship will have to be taken as a relation between elements which form part of a greater totality. From this point of view - i.e. in terms of the relations between elements - the form and nature of this particular relation becomes fundamental, while the specific details of the composition of the elements, such as the problem of the exact number and identity of the priestly qotyār, becomes less important; whatever the number or internal composition of the elements, they fall into certain relations which are ordered by fundamental structural principles.

Notes to Chapter 6

N.1 Occasionally the Nepali terms thar and pad were used in discussions about gotyār, but these words are not in common use (cf. Rajaure 1981a:165). Thar means "clan, tribe, class, subcaste"; and pad means "clan, honour, rank, position, profession, occupation" (qv. Turner 1965). The term gotyār derives from Sk:gotra, "clan, family" (qv. ibid). Rajaure also notes that gotyār refers to a member rather than to a group: "thus gottyār can be used as a vague term referring to a distant patrilineal relative as well as to a more distant member of the same clan" (1981b:24). My spelling of gotyār differs from his, but transliterates the spelling given by informants.

N.2 The gotyār, therefore, contrasts with the lineage (kul) organisation of Chetri groups in Nepal, which have collective ritual sites for lineage deities (kul devata), (cf. Bista 1972).

N.3 The term gotyār can also be used as a term of address. This term was used between two men to avoid the discrepancy arising between them from the conflict of principles of relative age and generation, where the younger man was senior to the older in terms of generation.

N.4 This case involved a dispute over the ownership of a field, between two households of the nearby village of Dundra. One of the households involved was of the Sukhwariyā Guruwā gotyār and had migrated to Dundra from Sukhrwar. This household turned to its local ghar-phutlak gotyār for help, and these households in turn mobilised assistance from most of Sukhrwar village. Men went over to Dundra at night and harvested the maize in the field in dispute. This was a serious blow to its opponents but the dispute did not end there. The police became involved and ultimately several Sukhrwar men were fined. In fact the fines were payed by contributions from the whole village. This case thus illustrates that the support mobilised initially from ghar-phutlak households was soon extended to include the whole village. The dispute had taken place several years before I was in the village.

N.5 For some examples in the Nepal see Allen 1978a.

N.6 I did, however, encounter one clan, the Karrya Karangawā which had at some point changed its Gharguruwā from Jinguni Madwā to Dahit. They had no explanation for this, but this fact explains the composition of their household deities which includes the deities of both these gharguruwā groups.

N.7 Although I shall discuss the number of gharguruwā gotyār below in Part 4 , we may note here that opinion divides principally on the question of whether there were originally four or five such gotyār. The adherents of the fourfold model argue that the fifth was a latecomer which grafted itself into the system. I have given five in the diagram here because this reflects the present situation. In fact, however, there may be even more than five as I shall explain below, this is why I have allowed for the possibility of more than five in the figure here.

N.8 The fact that the Bhagwariyā Mahaton gotyār choose their gharguruwā is born out by the evidence from Dundra village where some households of this gotyār link themselves with the Sukhwariyā Guruwā gotyār while others use Dahit priests.

N.9 One would rather have expected these gotyār to be impure like oil-presser castes generally, and it may be that their impurity has to do with the use of oil at death rituals. This ranking of gotyār in terms of purity reflects the assimilation of Hindu ideology, and in a similar way one informant distinguished between certain gotyār as sāno or thulo, i.e. small or lesser and large or greater, and related such differences to the putative origins of gotyār from Hindu castes which are of higher or lower status in Hindu village society . This seems, however, to have been an idiosyncratic and extraneous notion.

N.10 One priest I knew claimed to have about 150 barin households and was continually busy with priestly work. At the end of the year when everything was taken into account he said he made no profit. Lesser priests claimed that their work was an economic burden, and said the only real advantages came from the good food and copious amounts of beer provided in the course of their work.

N.11 Rajaure uses the term "shaman" to refer to the guruwā whether gharguruwā or desbandhyā guruwā. I prefer to use "priest" since in the majority of rituals where these men officiate in their capacity as household or village priests they do not become possessed. In fact, in possession rituals they call on spririts and deities which possess a second officiant, the kesaukā. It is true, however, that any guruwā can also act as kesaukā. A second reason why I prefer to avoid "shaman" is because the possession rituals of the Tharu seem to bear no resemblance to those of other ritual specialists in Nepal (such as the jhānkri), who are more properly referred to as "shamans" because of their connection with the inner Asian "shamanism", on which cf. Reinhard 1976a.

N.12 An indication of the previously more powerful position of priests is suggested by one informant's statement that, "before, one had to honour (respect) a priest like a king", in Nepali: āgha gharguruwā rājā jastai mānnu paryo.

N.13 It must be stressed this observation is not based on any systematic survey, but derives from information gathered as the opportunity arose. The figures in fact are: of 42 villages listed, 29 had headmen from priestly gotyār, and of these 29, 20 were Dahit. In the remaining 13 villages, 9 different gotyār were represented as headmen.

N.14 This relationship is also different from the Gurung division between the cār jāt (four clans) and sora jāt (sixteen clans). This division is connected with distinctions of status and with the position of village headmansip, with the cār jāt group having a higher status and a preponderance of headmen; there is also a connection with the system of Gurung priests. The main difference from the Tharu scheme is that cār jāt and sora jāt in theory are endogamous groupings (see Pignède 1966 Chap. 5).

N.15 This ceremony of adoption was called pāt lenā, and apparently in the past certain Tharu "nobles" in the west of Dang were granted rights by royal decrees to adopt people into Tharu society by this ceremony (Rajaure 1981a: 171). Unfortunately I do not have any details of this ceremony. Cf. N: patiyā, " the ceremony of readmisssion into caste", qv. Turner 1965.

N.16 On the Rāji see Reinhard 1976b , 1973.

N.17 According to Rajaure this gotyār has a deity named Ghatcwār (1981a:168), but in my experience households of this gotyār do not have any such deity. Other gotyār names linked with village names include: Rautgaiyār from Rautgaun village, Karryā Karangawā from Karanga, Karryā Bhamkyān from Bhamki, and Bhagwariyā Mahaton from Bhagwar village.

N.18 There are two reasons why the gotyār recorded by Rajaure as Kharagyā or Dhakehar is the same as the one I recorded as Khargi, or Kargi Manderriyā or Manderriyā. First because Dhakehar derives from dhak,the name of a particular kind of drum, which is the same kind kept by both gotyār in their deity rooms, and secondly because both gotyār worship Khargi, a female deity, among their other deities. As Rajaure notes:

> The household deity of this clan is Kharagi (probably derived from the Sanskrit word kharga meaning a sword or dagger). This female deity is supposed to be holding a sword in one hand and a small drum (dhak) in another. The name of this clan is based on the words kharga (sword) and dhak (drum) 1981a:168).

N.19 For T:ulthāwā, cf. N:ulto (H:ulṭā), "opposite, reversed, turned inside out, contrary" qv. Turner 1965.

N.20 For T:bakhari, cf.N:bhakāri, "coarse matting made of split bamboo, often used for making the sides of a hut; - a basket for storing grain" qv. Turner 1965.

N.21 The Dahit, however, seem to be more complex. This gotyār is subdivided into several types, though collectively they form an exogamous group like any other gotyār. At least one of these subgroups includes the Madwā deity along with the Dahitwā Bherwā deity in its deity room.

CHAPTER 7 : THE HOUSEHOLD

The household is the fundamental social unit in economic and ritual terms, and in social terms it is the effective unit of which the gotyār composed. Like the gotyār it is patrilineal and exogamous. It is the unit for marriage: women born in the house leave it to marry into other houses, and through marriage new women enter it. This chapter focusses on the internal organisation of the household. It is divided into three sections and a conclusion. The first outlines the composition of the household, the second the internal organisation, and the third discusses the rules of inheritance and the causes of partition.

In the previous chapter it was noted that the gotyār is ultimately distinguished by its deities. A household is a unit of authority with a single head, but neither this nor the sharing of a common hearth are sufficient for defining a household; it is the presence of household deities which defines a house (ghar) as such. It is in relation to the deities that we can understand a household's links to its priests, to its affinal households, and to Tharu society as a whole. These "external" linkages must be approached in terms of how the deities are both distinguished and related to eachother. The house is defined as such by the deities but at the same time it provides the social and spatial framework within which

distinctions and relations between the deities take on their significance. The spatial location of different household deities is crucial for our understanding of how they are both interrelated and distinguished. The same is true for the spatial location of household rituals. In this chapter it will be necessary to make certain general observations about the spatial location of certain household deities and about their transmission and inheritance, but in keeping with the division of the material outlined for Part 2 , the discussion for the most part will be restricted to household organisation and the analysis of house space and deities with their wider sociological and ritual significance will be left to chapters in Part 4 .

7.1 Household Composition

The majority of Tharu live in joint households. In Sukhrwār of 35 households, five are nuclear and another five are nuclear but supplemented by one aged parent. Together these

ten households represent about 28.5% of the Tharu households, but only 16% of the Tharu population of the village. The average size of a household is just over ten, but the size of joint households varies considerably with the largest in the village having 34 people (N.1). The norm of maintaining a joint household is highly valued, so much so in fact that one occasionally finds households of very large size, such as one recorded in Maghai village with a population of 82 .

It is sometimes the case with the larger households that they are made up of more than one building with the sub-houses being located in other villages, often in the neighbouring Deokhuri valley. The various establishments of such a joint household, however, operate economically and ritually as one unit. Household members take it in turns to live and work in the sub-households while the household head always remains in the main house, where the household deities are located. In the vast majority of cases there is no "qualification" of this jointness, and this is clearly reflected in the fact that members of a household have only one hearth where food is prepared for all. Obviously the sub-houses each have their own kitchen, but the general principle that all the people living in one house eat from the same hearth holds good. One never encounters a situation described by Parry (1979:158-9) where women may start to cook on a common hearth at different times or may even construct newseparate hearths. For the Tharu, a house has only one hearth on which food is cooked for everyone and separate new hearths can only be made and set up after a joint household has formally split when each new household will have its own hearth. At the same time, however, because of the existence of these

sub-houses, the sharing of a single communal hearth is not a sufficient definition of a joint household. The crucial definition of a household as such, is that it has one single set of household deities, and as noted these are in the main house. The sub-houses do not have deities, and consequently for the Tharu they are not proper houses (ghar), though from external appearances and in terms of the hearth the sub-houses appear identical as buildings to any other house. In fact, however, such buildings without deities are not proper houses, but are equated with goth, the word for buildings, often temporary impermanent structures, set up in the village or near the jungle as cattle shelters (N.2).

The composition of a joint household consists most commonly of a man, his married sons and their wives and children. Sometimes there is more than one man in the senior generation, so that there are two or more groups of sons at junior levels. The ideal of jointness is strongest between a father and his sons, with splits taking place most often after the death of the father, though it is not unknown for one of the sons to split off before his father's death (N.3). Though married brothers may remain together, it would seem that the link between them is weaker than that between a father and his sons (cf. Kochar 1965:8). I shall return below to the causes and rules governing household partition.

The members of a household are in almost all cases agnatically related to the household head or, as incoming women are married to man who is so related. It is possible, however, to incorporate a boy into a household by adoption. This involves a minimal ceremony in which the new "father" takes his adoptive

son in his lap and feeds him cooked rice mixed with milk. Thereafter the adoptive son is a full member of the household and of the gotyār to which it belongs. Another procedure is sometimes used to bring in a man to replace the dead husband of a woman who is still relatively young and who by the preference of all concerned remains in the house after her first husband's death. The other instance where a man is brought in is as a husband for a woman who has no brothers and whose parents use this as a means to transfer their estate to their daughter and assure their security in old age. The man who joins a house uxorilocally in this way cannot be adopted since this would give him the same gotyār as his prospective wife. He never in a sense becomes fully a part of the original household. Although he eats, sleeps and works in the house, he cannot perform or participate fully as a household member in rituals for the household deities. If he himself has inherited household deities these will be kept in a small house built alongside or near his wife's house, and he will only install them after the death of his father-in-law. The father-in-law's deities are buried with him or disposed of when he dies (N.4).

7.2 Household Organisation

As already noted, the household forms an economic, social and ritual unit. Apart from a few minor personal possessions such as clothes and certain ornaments, everything is owned and consumed collectively by the household. In the distribution of money, clothes, food and other resources there is a strong emphasis on equality between household members,

though this is qualified to some extent by relative age and marital status. In social terms the household forms a unit in that links established through marriage with another household will connect the two as wholes though there is nevertheless a special link between an individual and his own immediate affines. The individual aspect of these affinal links is manifested in the initial exchange of post-marriage prestations (see Chapter 11). The household as a whole pays for the expenses incurred in the marriages of its members and is collectively involved in any arrangements of exchange marriage with other households. The possession of a single set of deities clearly marks the household as a ritual unit, and as such the members collectively participate in and are affected by the various life-cycle rituals of the individual members.

A fundmental feature of Tharu society is the distinction between men as senior (barā) and junior (choti), according to generation and relative age. This distinction is most clearly manifested within the household and its local gotyār households, since the generation and age of members of these households is clearly known and is not complicated by having to be reckoned through connecting relatives. A junior should respect and obey his senior. The words barā-choti which express this relation are contained in the terms which mark the first and last in a series of brothers ranked in birth order. Thus the eldest is barkā, followed in descending order by manlā, sanlā, kanlā, ranlā etc., with the youngest being called chotkā (N.5). These terms for brothers are parallelled by those for sisters, the eldest of whom is barki, manli etc..

Household organisation centres on the household head (ghardhurryā) who has ultimate authority and the final decision in all matters of work and expenditure. The ghardurryā is either the father, or when he becomes old or dies, the eldest son. The trasmission of this position by the rule of primogeniture can bring it into conflict with the rules of seniority based on age and generation, since in the household there may still be uncles senior in generation or their sons who may be older and more senior to the new household head. The conflict between generation and age, and the transmission of the headmanship in such instances may be a conributory factor leading to partition of the household.

The ghardhurryā has special responsibilities, but he also enjoys certain privileges. If food is scarce it is his task to obtain fresh supplies. He has control over household finances, keeping the cash box and dispensing money when required. Linked with this, he organises any trade, though women may on their own initiative sell baskets and mats they make and can usually keep the proceeds. The ghardhurryā represents the house to the outside world, both in the local government administrative offices where necessary, and in village meetings which consist as we have seen of an assembly of household heads with the village headman. Nowadays as a result of education certain tasks are sometimes divided, with an educated younger brother dealing with situations which involve reading and writing. It is the ghardhurryā who organises household agricultural activities, and in this respect he is privileged in that if sufficient labour is available, he does not have to do some of the heavy agricultural tasks. Often also construed as a

distinct privilege by other men is the household head's role as the principal host for entertaining guests, priests and relations. In regard to ritual, the household deities are made in his name, and he is the main ritual officiant from within the house, but again this role is sometimes shared with other brothers who have acquired the knowledge necessary for performing the rituals. More than anyone else, the ghardhurryā stands for the house as a whole. This idea is suggested by his name, which means "house-post". The central line of high posts which support the ridge of a house are called dhur and like these posts he is the pivotal support of the household.

The hierarchy of authority among men is paralleled among the women. After the mother, the eldest son's wife as senior daughter-in-law occupies a special position. To begin with she has to follow the directions of the mother, but later when her husband becomes ghardhurryā, she as ghardhurnyā assumes control of certain household affairs. She controls domestic matters, organising what food is to be eaten and apportioning work between the other women. Where agricultural work is directly involved, however, it is organised in conjunction with her husband.

Without going into a detailed description we can note here the broad lines of the division of household work according to age, sex, and hierarchy. The young men carry out most of the heavy agricultural tasks including digging and ploughing the fields and harvesting the crops. The old men and/or the household head look after the cattle and spend time making nets and ropes and mending or making tools, especially

the parts of the plough. In addition to the tasks of the ghardhurnyā noted above, with the help of other old women, she feeds the pigs and chickens, prepares the vegetables and looks after the babies and small children. It is the other women who share the rest of the domestic work including cooking, carrying water, fetching firewood from the forest (though men do this also), preparing cowdung cakes for fuel, dehusking grain and pulse, pressing oil, and in general keeping the house clean (N.6).

7.3 Inheritance and Partition

The rules of inheritance of land, cash, household implements and utensils, and cattle are relatively simple. They allow for the transmission of full shares of property to women in the rare cases when a son-in-law is brought in to live uxorilocally, but it is not possible for a father to exclude one or more of his sons from inheriting (N.7). The rules reflect two principles: the seniority of generation and the equality of male members of the same generation. A simple model will make this clear:

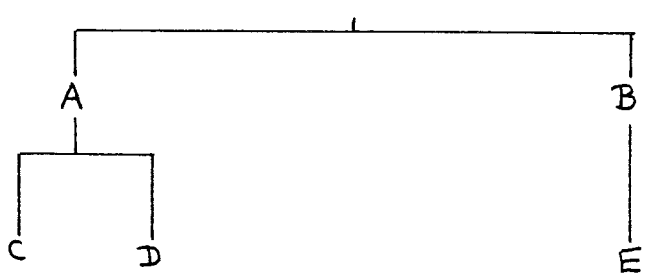


Fig. 3 Showing the rules of inheritance

If a house splits when either or both A and B are still alive

then the property will be divided into two equal shares. This will mean that if C and D split later they will each end up with one-quarter of the original estate, while E will retain one-half. If, however, the house splits after both A and B are dead, then the property will be divided into equal shares between C, D and E, each receiving one-third. The rules relating to the division of food stocks are different, with all the food reserves being divided equally between the total number of people of whatever age or sex living in the household at the time of splitting. We should note that in the past, and still to an extent today, these food reserves could be quite considerable, since the valley is in general a surplus producing area.

To these broad rules, however, must be added certain qualifcations. Traditionally, the ghardhurryā is entitled to inherit the entire contents of the largest of the rice storage containers (dehri). This container (pātāhā dehri, "altar dehri" N.8) is always the one situated beside the main household deities and forms part of the partition between the deity room and the kitchen. The youngest of a set of full brothers is entitled to the nose ring (natyā) of his mother. This ornament is supposed to be made of gold, though nowadays this is rarely if ever the case. Any unmarried young men of marriageable age at the time of splitting are entitled to receive a buffalo as a contribution to their forthcoming marriage expenses. There is, however, variation in the application of these latter rules which in practice are negotiable.

Inheritance is, of course, patrilineal, and women cannot inherit any of the major assets such as land or cash. We have, however, seen the exceptional case where a man marries uxorilocally and takes over the estate of his wife's father. This situation is rare and may involve some negotiation with other male collaterals who live locally and have a claim to the estate. It is nevertheless possible for daughters to receive certain ornaments, utensils, and particularly animals such as goats or calves, at the time of their marriage (cf. Rajaure 1981b:25). The transmission of such property to women, however, depends on the agreement of the household as a whole (N.7)

A further, not unimportant feature of inheritance is the division of the actual building itself, and the transmission of the household deities. When a group of brothers splits, the ghardhurryā usually remains in the original house, while the younger brothers move away and construct new buildings. Often, however, the original building is divided into equal sections in accordance with the number of new separate units coming into existence. In this case partitions are built east-west across the house and each section is reorganised so as to form a smaller replica of the internal layout of a house. The ghardhurryā always keeps the northernmost section of the house, with the other brothers taking the remaining sections to the south in descending order of seniority (N.10). The situation for three brothers is like this:

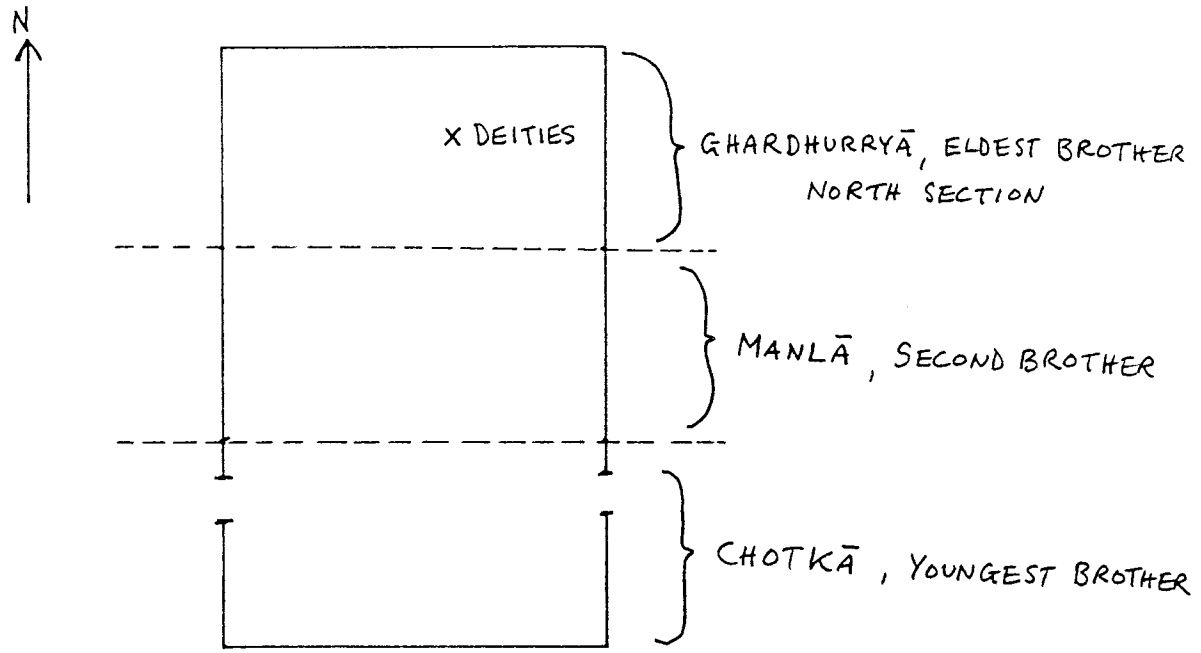


Fig. 4 Partitioning of the House

The ghardhurryā always keeps the household deities, which therefore in most cases remain where they already are. If for some reason these deities are moved, such as if the house is extended to the north, or if the ghardhurryā moves to a new building, then the deities have to be reinstalled in their new location always in the north-east room of the house. One of the first tasks of the younger brothers is to make and install a new set of household deities, which are an identical replica set of the original ones. This requires the participation of the household priest and involves certain expenses, including sacrifice of one piglet, a goat and several chickens (N.11).

Apart from the rituals surrounding the making of deities and their installation, there is no special ritual which marks household partition. In most cases, however, there is a customary procedure which regulates both the time of year and

the actual supervision of household splitting. Men who intend to leave a household announce their plans during the Māghi festival (around January 15th) that marks the start of the Tharu "administrative" year. The months of Māgh, Phāgun, and Cait comprise the slack season and thus the time for the celebration of marriages and for house partition and house building. When a household has decided to split, then a day is fixed with the other village household heads and headman, who come to organise events. The actual division of property is carefully worked out and organised not solely by the household members themselves, but by the other members of the village khel, and in this way accusations of unfairness or inequality in shares of utensils, cattle etc. are lessened. The arbitration of the village solves many problems of division and has the important effect of defusing tensions within the household. Nevertheless in some cases dissatisfaction with the allocation of shares may persist, and it seems that relations between newly split households remain strained for some time. Combined, of course, with dissatisfaction with the division of the estate, are the residues of the original quarrels and disagreements which precipitated partition in the first place.

In analysing the causes of partition I have found it useful to follow Parry (1979:193-4) in distinguishing between three distinct levels of causation: (i) the underlying, (ii) the predisposing, and (iii) the immediate. It is necessary to point out, however, that the factors taken into account by Parry are different from those operating in the Tharu context. In particular for the Tharu the situation regarding inheritance and marriage is simpler and rather different, and the extent of

outside employment is negligible. This last factor is of considerable significance in Kangra, where Parry has described the economy as " a remmitance economy backed up by subsistence agriculture" (ibid:45).

(i) "At the highest level of generality partition is a normal phase in the developmental cycle of any household whose membership expands beyond the stage of a linear joint or nuclear family" (ibid:193). Ultimately a house splits because of "the competing demands of individual (or conjugal family) interests versus joint family interests" (ibid). As Parry notes, however, this general point tells us little about why houses actually split at one time rather than at another (N.12).

(ii) The "predisposing" level of causation has to do with a whole set of material interests which on the one hand constrain a house to remain joint at certain times, and on the other hand at other times may make it attractive for particular segments to partition. In the history of a household, then, there occur a number of "fortuitous accidents of a primarily economic kind" (ibid) which result in an imbalance of interests between the constituent segments of a joint household.

One of the main material interests is inheritance prospects, as we can see if we go back to the very simple model given in Figure 3. p.123. In this example, all other things being equal, it will to be E's advantage if the house partitions while either or both A and B are still alive, since he will receive (with B) one-half of the estate as opposed to one-third if partition takes place later when both A and B are dead. As Parry rightly notes, however, an earlier partition would only be to E's advantage if land is scarce, while if labour is scarce

and land is plentiful then it may be better for E to remain part of the joint household (cf. Parry 1979:186). In Dang the Tharu opinion is that there is a tendency now to partition sooner and more often, and if this is true, as seems to be the case, it is very probably related to the rapid rise in population in the valley with the corresponding pressure on land as the valuable resource.

Our model is too simple, however, since again, as Parry has demonstrated, the relative sizes, ages, and sex composition of the component segments of a joint household have to be taken into account (ibid:187). Thus a marked imbalance in size and to some extent in the ages of members of the component units may for instance give rise to the feeling that one or other of these units is consuming relatively more than it is contributing. Similarly a man such as E in our example will only decide to partition if his family contains enough members of the right ages and sex to be able to manage the various daily household and agricultural tasks. The composition of the segments is also relevant in relation to marriage. Although dowry is not a consideration for the Tharu, marriage is effected in the main by bride-price or exchange. Thus an uneven balance between the sex composition of a household segment may be an incentive for it to remain joint, while the opposite may be true for a segment composed evenly of sons and daughters.

Bailey has suggested that outside employment is one of the aspects of economic diversification which he sees as leading to the breakdown of the joint family (1958). As Parry has noted, outside employment may also provide the employee with a powerful incentive to remain in his joint household (1979:181).

Apparently Kangra people realise this, and may even use it as a device to keep a household together by sending a troublesome young man to work outside (ibid). For Parry tensions arising from non-equivalence of each brother's contribution to the household arise independently from outside employment though they may be exacerbated by it. Such tensions are inherent in the different birth rates of the component segments of the household (ibid:185). For the Tharu outside employment is as yet a factor of minor significance, but it is interesting to note in the context of this debate that it is always only the largest joint families which in fact have men who work for cash outside, though in nearly all cases such men still live at home and do not maintain a separate establishment. It is only such large households which are able to release a man from agricultural labour so he can earn cash by other work. At the moment far from contributing to the breakdown of joint households, such arrangements are considered favourably by all concerned: the household as a whole gets extra cash, while the individual who works outside generally prefers his new kind of work and sees his cash contribution as a fair substitute for what he would contribute otherwise through agricultural labour. At present, however, the level of outside earnings is low, and the situation may well change if the outside workers' earnings rise.

In the Tharu context tension may alse arise from the material imbalance resulting from what a woman married into a household receives in gifts and prestations from her relations outside. Incidental gifts given to a woman on her visits to her natal home generally are in the form of food, and these will be distributed amongst all the children of her marital joint

household. During the Māghi festival, however, a woman receives a prestation (nisrau) from her brothers, her older sisters, her mother's brother and her father'sister's households. This prestation traditionally consists of husked rice, black gram, and salt, though nowadays it is sometimes given as cash. This prestation is explicitly the woman's personal property to be disposed of as she wishes and it does not form part of the common fund. In general a woman uses it to buy clothes, ornaments or small luxury items for herself and her children. It is difficult to estimate the amounts of cash realised through this prestation, but it is obvious that the amount a woman receives depends both on the wealth and the number of the giving households. If one woman is consistently receiving more than the others, this can be another factor leading to tensions in the joint household (N.13).

A final and very important fact that we can include in this category of "predisposing" causes is not directly linked with material interests, but results from the rules of transmission of the position of ghardhurryā. As we have seen above, the transmission of this position by primogeniture, in a joint household may bring it into conflict with the rules of seniority based on relative age and generation. The new ghardhurryā may in fact be younger and of a junior generation to other men of the houehold, who may come to resent his authority and his privileges. This tension may be sufficient to outweigh other more obviously materialistic considerations, as a case encountered clearly illustrated:

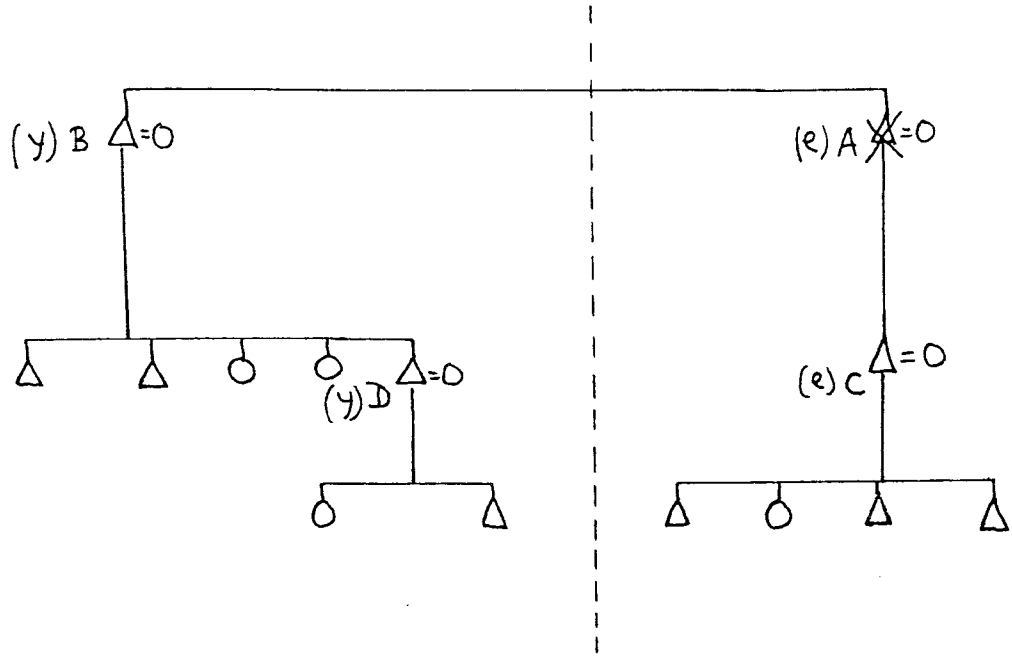


Fig. 5 Showing the problem of seniority in the household

C had become ghardhurryā after his father's (A) death, but his uncle B was still about 45 to 50 years old, and B's son D was about 25, only 8 to 10 years younger than C himself. Although B seemed happy enough to leave the household organisation to C, D increasingly resented C's authority, especially since from one point of view his father B was the most senior man in the household. Eventually the household partitioned with the estate being divided into two equal shares according to the number of men (A and B) in the senior generation. This split was in fact forced by D, though he knew that eventually if the household split after his father's death then he with his two brothers would inherit three-quarters of the estate, leaving C with only one-quarter. It is true that the household was relatively poor, having very little land of its own, but nevertheless, taking cattle, cash and household implements into account, material considerations were completely

outweighed by the clash between C and D.

(3) At the level of "immediate" causes of partition, it is usually a series of quarrels between individuals of a joint household which, combined with factors at the second level of causation, lead to a split at one particular moment. As Parry has noted for Kangra, it is usually the women who are blamed for these personality clashes, though "in fact quarrels between brothers are much more likely to have a serious disruptive effect on household unity" (ibid:194). We must stress here, however, that a great deal depends on the impartiality and the personal skills of the ghardhurryā. If it is felt that the ghardhurryā is being consistently unfair in the distribution of household resources, or if he continually takes important decisions and exercises his authority without consulting the other men, then tensions and quarrels are inevitable. A capable ghardhurryā, however, can do much to defuse tensions, and ensure the smooth running and survival of the joint household.

In conclusion, we can note with Parry (ibid) that which of these three levels of causation one wishes to emphasise will depend on the time-scale over which the household is viewed. At the first level partition appears as an inevitable stage in the cycle of a joint household if in any generation it has more than one son. Over a shorter time-span partition will result either from personal conflicts or from an individual taking a decision to realise his short term advantage. Most probably, however, partition will result from a combination of factors of both these second and third levels of causation.

7.4 Conclusion

In this description of the household we have seen that the ghardhurryā occupies a place of special importance in household organisation. It has been noted that the house is defined as such by the presence of the houshold deities, though these have not yet been discussed in detail. The ghardhurryā is directly associated with these deities which are made in his name and which he inherits. With the deities the ghardhurryā is linked with the northern part of the house, which he also inherits if the building is divided up on partition. Younger brothers take sections towards the south in order of birth. We may add here that according to the traditional pattern the ghardhurryā sleeps in the deity room at the north, or in those houses were this room is kept unoccupied, he sleeps in the room directly to its south on the same eastern side of the house (N.14). Although I have not encountered it myself, apparently in the traditional pattern, the second brother sleeps in the room to the south of the ghardhurryā and so on down the east side of the house, and then beginning again on the west side below the kitchen and descending in birth order to the south (for further details on the internal layout of rooms in the house see Appendix A). The oldest men in the house, such as the retired ghardhurryā will occupy one of the south rooms on either the east or the west side, or will sleep in the hall section (bahari). This association of seniority and the deities with the north in opposition to the points to the south which are appropriate for juniors will be taken up again below.

The discussion has also touched on the fundamental distinction between senior and junior or barā and choti, which is based on relative age and generaton. In the following chapters which discuss the kinship terminology, kinship behaviour, marriage and relations with affinal households, it will be further seen that this is a fundamental distinction of far-reaching significance in Tharu social organisation.

Finally, the ritual unity of the house, and the role of the ghardhurryā as the principal ritual officiant from within the household were noted. The organisation of household ritual, and the analysis of such ritual to show how it reflects and points to fundamental structural features of social organisation, are topics which will be taken up again in subsequent chapters.

Notes to Chapter 7

N.1 Rajaure's (1981b:22) findings from a survey which included some of the households from Sukhrwar, but also others from the village of Kanarya, for 35 households gives 8 nuclear families (22.9%), 26 extended families (74.3%) and one classified as other (1981b:22). Unfortunately he gives no breakdown of family sizes.

N.2 Although the situation described here is true of the vast majority of cases, I did record one example of a household in an intermediary stage. Two brothers had split to the extent that they established separate households but they still worked the land communally, dividing the harvest between them. In all other respects they ran separate accounts. The elder brother had the deities, and though the younger brother considered his to be a full house, he had made no deities and said that he did not intend to do so in the future. I was also told that in the far western Terai districts it was not unusual for households to function separately but not to have separate sets of deities, having recourse for ritual purposes to the deities located in the original household, usually that of the eldest brother.

N.3 There were two cases in Sukhrwar where sons had split from the household before their father's death. In one of these cases at the time of splitting, the father reserved a small part of the land for himself, while the rest of the estate was divided between the sons. The father remained with his younger son in the original house and his land was worked with that of his son as a joint household. I am not sure of he amount of land a father can keep in these circumstances, but I think it is estimated on the basis of the minimum he would require to support himself and his wife if she is still alive.

N.4 The adoption of a son by feeding him milk and rice is called dharam putkār lenā or simply putkār lenā. Cf. N:dharma-putra, "an adopted son"; and N:put, "son"; N:linu, "to take" qv. Turner 1965. The rice and milk is called simply dudh-bhāt. The Tharu do not cook the rice in milk, but add milk to the rice once it is cooked. The feeding ceremony is called kwārā baithnā, " to sit on the lap (kwārā)". When a man is brought in as a second husband for a widowed daughter-in-law this is called bhwār paithnā (derivation of bhwār is not known, for paithnā cf. H:paithnā "to enter"). This involves a marriage ceremony in which traditionally the incoming man dressed as the bride while the bride was dressed as the bridegroom. The incoming man becomes fully a part of the house replacing the previous husband. My information on this point differs from Rajaure who rightly gives bhwār paithnā for the case where a man marries uxorilocally a

woman who was born and remains in her parents' house. He adds mistakenly, I think, that the incoming son-in-law changes "the name of his clan or family into their (his parents-in-law) own" (1981b:42). This cannot happen since the man would then have the same gotyār (Rajaure's "clan") as his wife's, an impossible situation for the Tharu. This latter form of incorporation is called ghar damdā where damdā is presumably from damandwā the term for a son-in-law; the standard Nepali for 'married-in son-in-law' ghar jawāī is also used.

N.5 Cf. the Nepali terms for brothers in age order: (1) jetho, (2) māilo, (3) sāilo, (4) kāilo etc., with the youngest kāncho (qv. Turner 1965).

N.6 For further details on the division of labour see Milliet-Mondon 1981: passim.

N.7 The only instances where property is transmitted partly via a woman is where a man is brought into the house as her husband by the arrangements described above (N.4). If a woman who has had children leaves her husband's house after his death or after divorce, if she takes a younger son with her, this son still has a full claim to his father's estate. It is usual, however, for the son to remain in or to return to his father's house after a few years. If the younger son is adopted by another household by kwārā baithnā then he looses any claims on his father's property.

N.8 For a drawing of the dehri and for the position of these rice containers in the house see Appendix A. The ghardhurryā does not always exercise his right to the contents of the patāhā dehri. In one case, a sort of compromise was reached whereby the hole at the base of this dehri was opened and the rice was allowed to flow out. All that came out was shared equally, with the ghardhurryā keeping as an extra share what remained inside the dehri.

N.9 Apparently in the past a girl was entitled to an amount of rice to take with her when she married. This amount was equivalent to a set annual amount, considered as what she earned through her work in the house, multiplied by the number of years during which she was thought to have made a full labour contribution as an adult woman. This practice seems to have been abandoned, but it was suggested by informants that it was one reason why women are often older than their husbands, sometimes by several years. The idea is that fathers looked for older brides for their sons, since they knew they would bring with them a relatively larger store of rice.

N.10 I recorded one particularly striking example of the right of the household head to the north part of the house and to the deities. A household had decided to split and for various reasons it was decided not to divide up the original structure with internal walls. Instead the house was cut in half and the northern half was dismantled and moved to a new site where it was used for building a new house for the household head. With the north half of the house he also took the deities.

N.11 For details of rituals of house construction, see below Chapter 13.

N.12 Although partition would seem to be an inevitable stage in the domestic cycle, it is noteworthy that in a few cases large Tharu households remain joint for very considerable periods of time. It would almost seem as though once a household has managed to grow beyond a certain point while remaining joint, an "intertia" develops which mitigates against partition. Thus when I discussed the possibility of partition with members of the largest household I encountered they emphasised that in purely practical terms partition would be a nightmare since it could take weeks or months to sort out division of the property. In such a large household its very size and complications involved in partition may serve as additional constraints on individual segments to remain within the household. Such a large unit will probably only break up when the majority of its members are simultaneously in favour of partition, rather than as a result of single segments breaking away independently at different times.

N.13 For further details on nisrau and other prestations see Chapter 11.

N.14 My information differs on this point from Milliet-Mondon who reports "ici, (i.e. in the deitiy room) le fils le plus jeune habite la zone opposée a l'autel comme il est de coutume lorsque le nombre de cellules n'est pas suffisant pour tous" (1981:25). This suggests that if possible the deity room is kept unoccupied. Custom on this point varies, but it would be interesting to know where in Milliet-Mondon's case the ghardhurryā himself sleeps; I would guess in the room directly south of the deity room.

PART 3 : KINSHIP, MARRIAGE AND PRESTATIONS

In part 2 we have seen that membership in the exogamous gotyār is transmitted patrilineally, and correspondingly the house as the fundamental social unit, is also patrilineal as well as patrilocal. Having established, then, that the principle of patrilineality has a central place in the constitution of the groups which form the basic 'blocks' or 'molecules' of which Tharu society is made up, it now remains to explore the manner in which these are interrelated. The aim of this part, therefore, is to analyse kinship and marriage so as to establish the place of marriage in the society and to see how kinship and especially affinal links form a network which knits the various groups into a social fabric. The chapters in part 3 focus on aspects of relations at the individual level between different kin and affines, and at the higher level between groups. As we have already seen, and as will become clearer, the effective group is the house, and to some extent the larger group of ghar-phutlak houses. Apart from those houses which share common gotyār ties, it is marriage which obviously plays a crucial role in linking houses and to a certain extent groups of ghar- phutlak houses. The analysis of marriage, however, reveals no system of alliance which endures across generations and could thus structure the society. Strictly speaking, therefore, we cannot speak of groups which can be related as 'wife giver' and 'wife taker', not can we use such terms as part of an explicit ideology of marriage alliance. Even if we cannot speak of a clear system or ideology of alliance, it will be seen that affinity is treated in a particular and characteristic manner and that in order to understand the place of affinity we must identify the content and configuration of certain broad

categories through which marriage and affinity operate.It will be seen that one can employ the terms 'wife giver' and 'wife taker', though always with the important qualification that by their use we are not referring to a system or overt ideology of alliance. Although we cannot speak of a system of alliance as such, the analysis of prestations in particular will suggest that affinity does nevertheless have a diachronic aspect.

The first chapter of part 3 presents the kinship terminology, which though problematic enables us to identify certain broad features of the classification of kin and affines, the importance of the brother-sister relationship, and the characteristic position of the mother's brother-sister's child relationship. Chapter 9 presents a brief account of the rules and forms of marriage and provides the background for the discussion in Chapter 10 of wider aspects of kinship behaviour and of the broader categories of kinship, and in Chapter 11 of the pattern of prestations between houses and the wider groups linked through marriage.

In part 2 it was suggested, though not demonstrated, that groups and the gotyār and household in particular, have to be understood in terms of relations to deities. I shall return to this theme in detail in part 4 . Here in part 3 where the discussion centres on relations between categories of kin or affine, and between groups, it will also be seen that to understand 'consanguinity' and 'affinity', relations of a group to its deities and the relations established by marriage between deities of different groups, have to be taken into account.

CHAPTER 8 : THE KINSHIP TERMINOLOGY

This chapter will discuss the kinship terminology from a formal point of view. Further aspects of the wider kinship system such as attitudes, behaviour, and questions of the correspondances between terminology and the organisation of social groups, will be largely left on one side for subsequent chapters.

The approach adopted here is modelled on Dumont's (1962) analysis of a terminology of similar type collected in north-east Uttar Pradesh, and to this extent it will be apparent that I am not following the analysis of north Indian terminologies made by certain other students. Vatuk's (1969) analysis presents useful insights into the importance of the opposite-sex sibling link in the transmission of affinity, but her emphasis on a tripartite structure in the terminology she studied seems to be connected with the introduction into her analysis of the wider cultural factors of hypergamy and the impossibility of reversal in the direction of marriage between wife-taking and wife-giving groups. Ostor and Fruzetti (1976) analysing Bengali kinship agree with Dumont that the terminology reveals no structure in a strict sense, but they then proceed with an analysis of a "domain of kinship" which leaves the terminology largely to one side and concentrates on indigenous categories which are claimed to be segmentary and founded on

notions of substance (N.1). Dumont has argued that an analysis in substantialist terms makes it difficult if not impossible to identify the structural aspects of the kinship system and to show how these articulate with social structure at higher levels (1980:xxxiv-xxxv; 1983:153-56). In any case such an approach will not work for the Tharu since they do not appear to have any ideas of substances such as flesh, blood, bones or milk, the transmission of which could clarify the distinctions between 'consanguinity' and 'affinity' or the relation between categories in terms of a segmentary model. It is for this reason, therefore, that I have begun in this chapter with a formal treatment of the kinship terminology.

Dumont has suggested that in north India we should see the categories of kinship as hierarchically related, in a successive relation of encompassing and encompassed. In this way, for example, in his analysis of Vatuk's (1969; 1975) material he sees affinity in various ways and successive stages encompassed within consanguinity" (1975:214). It is premature at this point to propose a formulation for Tharu society in these terms, but one must remember that as a 'tribal' group their terminology may well be somewhat different in character from the north Indian.

8.1 Preliminary Comments

Before presenting the list of terms, certain comments on the method and the problems involved are required. As Dumont has said, the objective is to try to "reduce the system to as simple

a schema as possible" always in the attempt to "extract from the configuration of the system of kinship terms the definition of the fundamental categories of kinship" (1966:96,97). For Tharu terminology as for other north Indian terminologies, this is not an easy task since the vocabulary is not reducible to a simple system of oppositions and thus "it has no 'structure' in the strict sense" (ibid). Like Dumont we can only talk of its "configuration or texture" (ibid).

In the first place pairs of kinship terms which differ only in a gender suffix have been grouped together and will be treated as single entities.

Secondly this analysis is restricted to the terminology of terms of reference. In this case, in contrast to Dumont's model, the system of address does not diverge markedly from reference, and the main differences that do exist will be indicated in the list below.

A third and problematic point concerns the wide range of specifications which certain terms may have. This problem is only partly lessened by restricting attention to reference. In order to make a full and satisfactory analysis of the system ideally one should be able to fill in as far as possible all the specifications comprehended by one term. In this regard it must be admitted that the data presented here are incomplete, both in regard to the 'extension' of terms to distant affines in Ego's generation and in relation to more distant consanguines at the +1 generation. For instance, I cannot be sure of the classification of relatives such as MZHZ or MBWZ (N.2). During fieldwork I gathered the primary specifications of the terms and recorded wider specifications as they were encountered. It did

not seem that detailed study of the terminology itself would reveal much of significance, and my attention was directed rather towards the system of customary prestations which as we shall see do indeed point directly to the salient features of the kinship and marriage system as a whole. In order to fill in gaps in the data, however, I have been helped to some extent by corresponding with one of my field assistants, himself one of the few literate Tharu of Sukhrwar. Useful also has been information supplied by Gisèle Krauskopf, another researcher into Tharu society in Dang (N.3).

At the same time, however, it is important to point out that in practice the Tharu do not apply kinship terms to such a wide range of cognatically or affinally linked relatives as in parts of north India such as, for example, in the case reported by Vatuk (1969). We may note also that in Kangra Parry has remarked that the tendency towards "almost infinite extension to include the affines of one's affines and their affines, is much attenuated" (1979:300, cf. 309). The relatively limited extension of the terminology must be seen in relation to two factors. First the Tharu have no ideology of hypergamy like that operative in caste society. Reversal in the direction of marriage is possible and indeed many Tharu marriages take the form of sister-exchange. This is the main reason why Vatuk's tripartite distinction between wife-givers, Ego's group and wife-takers, although it can be identfied in the Tharu terminology, must be treated with caution both as a feature of the terminology and as an aspect of the wider kinship system. In addition Tharu villages are not exogamous units, and in fact some 40% of marriages take place within the village. This means

that for a great part the extension of affinal terms to distant affines is meaningless since it is usually the case that villagers will fall into consanguineal categories as a result of marriages in previous generations, or through common gotyār membership, and the network of affinal links established through marriages in any single generation is inevitably limited. It is true, of course, that affinal links could be 'extended' further outside the village, but this only happens to a limited extent. The analysis of prestations will clearly show the limits of affinity relevant for the Tharu. The inclusion within the terminology of distant cognatic and affinal relatives is thus partly hypothetical, yet nevertheless for the purposes of this analysis I have pushed the logic of the system as far as the statements of informants and the extent of the data gathered will allow.

There is a further reason why it is legitimate in the first instance to focus this analysis on the 'primary' denotations of kinship terms. This is because the Tharu themselves specify a primary genealogical referent for the terms, describing this as the sagga or "true" referent. We may note that in this respect the situation is directly parallel to Kangra where the people themselves speak of a succa or "true" genealogical referent for each term (Parry 1979:297). Furthermore the Tharu can distinguish certain cases where someone is included under a term but is classified as durse, which means "from or across a distance", indicating that the genealogical relation between Ego and this person is reckoned across several elementary genealogical linkeages (cf. Madan 1975:225). I am not, however, suggesting that we should consider

that beyond the primary referent for a term the wider range of specifications are 'extensions' derived from the 'true' specification. To the extent that the analysis here tends to focus of the primary specifications it must be incomplete. The problem of the wider denotation of the terms requires further study, but I do not think that this problem will undermine the conclusions to be suggested here as to the main features of the system.

8.2 The Terms

The terms are numbered. For a schematic representation of the system see Figure 9.

Generations +4, -4:

1. pājā, (fem.) pāji: all +4 and -4.

Generations +3, -3:

2. ājā, (fem.) āji: all +3, and -3.

Note: The occurence of such self-reciprocal terms between these generations and at other points in the system (see below terms 4, 10, 11) is not a usual feature of other similar north Indian terminologies.

Generation +2 and part of -2:

3. bubā } FP, FPG, FPGE.
3a. budi }

4. nānā } +2, MP, MPG, MPGE, FBWP, MBWP.
(fem.) nāni } -2, DC, BDC, ZDC, DHZC, DHBC.

Note: The full specifications for these reciprocal terms are uncertain. For instance, I am not sure if this includes at -2 SWZC, and SWBC. It is possible that the

latter specification is included because SWB is classified with DH (as damandwā, see below) and DC is definitely nānā/nāni. The classification of SWZC is not certain. For address the SWZ is son chai ("golden daughter") if she is younger than SW or patohiyā if she is older. As son chai, if this is also a reference term, her children should be nānā/nāni, but as patohiyā she should be classed with SW and her children should be natyā/natinyā (see below for these terms).
Similarly at +2 I am not sure if MZHP and FZHP are classed as nānā/nāni or bubā/budi. If SWZC-MZHP, and SWBC-FZHP are classed as natyā-bubā, then the relationship between +2, -2 is the same as that discerned by Dumont in Vatuk's case, which he represented as:

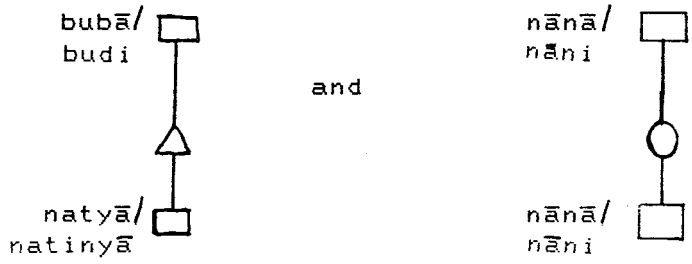


Fig. 6 Showing +2, -2 linkage

If, however, the specifications in question are classed as nānā/nāni we would have to redraw this as:

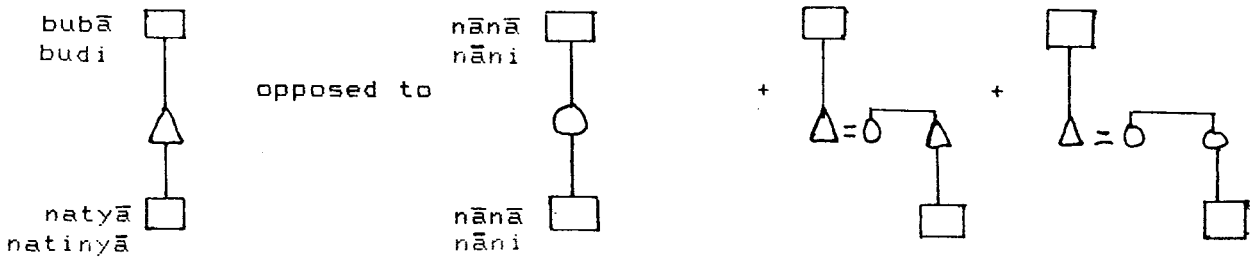


Fig. 7 Showing additional +2, -2 linkage

This would thus oppose ascendants-descendants linked directly through males to ascendants-descendants linked directly through a woman plus those linked through SWG. For the moment, however, until we can be certain of the wider specifications we must remain with Dumont's simpler formulation which acurately represents the link between +2 and -2 for the primary specifications of the terms.

Generation +1 (and -1 for terms 10, 11)

5. bābā: F

6. dai: M

7. kākā: FyB, FFBS

(fem.) kāki: FyBW, FFBSW

Note: the wider specifications for this term are again not certain. It is posible that we should include here MeZHB(W), MyZHB(W), and possibly FBWZ(H). The last two specifications, however, seem very doubtful since though the material is not entirely clear, these specifications may more usualy be classed as mausā/mausi or bārā/bāri (see below terms 10, 11). Other wider specifications which could come under this term are FFZS(W) FMBS(W), FMZS(W). We may note, however, that in general Tharu are not interested in classifiying these more distant specifications: if they live in other villages they are lost sight of, while if they are in the same village the existing network of ties will include them by much more direct linkages.

8. thulā: FeB

9. badai: FeBW

Note: the use of term 8 is variable: FeB was equally often

referred to as kākā, though sometimes thulā was reserved for F's eldest brother only. Badai may be derived from barā dai, i.e. "senior mother" (cf. Krause 1980:172 jethi muwā, "senior mother" for FeBW).

10. bārā: MeZH, WyZS, (ws.) yZS, (? MeZHZH, FBWeZH).
(fem.) bāri: MeZ, WyZD, (ws.) yZD (? MeZHZ, FBWeZ).

11. mausā: MyZH, WeZS, (ws.) eZS, (? MyZHZH, FBWyZH).
(fem.) mausi: MyZ, WyZD, (ws.) eZD, (? MyZHZ, FBWyZ).

Note: As the specifications indicate, terms 10, 11 can be self-reciprocal. These terms provide the only instances of an equation between members of alternate generations under one term. While term 11 can be used self-reciprocally it was much more common for (ws.) eZC and WeZC to be referred to as bhatijwā/bhatijyā (see below). Similarly, though less frequently, these terms could be used instead of term 10, for (ws.) yZC and WyZC.

12. māmā: MB, HMB, FBWB, HFBWB, (? MBWB, HMBWB).
(fem.) mai : MBW etc. (wife of any māmā + ? MBWZ).

13. phuphā: FZH, FZHB, FZHZH, (? MZHZH).
(fem.) phuphu (or often phui): FZ, FZHBW, FZHZ, (? MZHZ)

14. raut: (ms. only) WF, BWF, ZHF, WFB, BWFB, ZHFB.

15. mau: WM, (ms.) BWM, (ms.) ZHM, (wife of any raut); (ws.) HM, (? ZHM, BWM).

16. sasurwā: (ws. only) HF, BWF, ZHF, HFB, HZHF.

Note: as mentioned above in note to term 4, there is a curious age distinction here which operates for address, though for reference I am not certain. For a ws. eZHP are son dai/son bābā, "golden mother/father", while reciprocally SWyZ is son chai. I am not sure if the same

distinction operates between (ws.) eBWP and DHyZ.

17. māmā raut: WMB

18. phuphu sās: WFZ

Note: these appelations are made up of combinations of words and thus are not strictly speaking comparable to the other terms. Although these specifications are not included in the diagram representing the terms, I have included them in the list since they will be important later when I discuss prestations.

Ego's generation

(The wider specifications for affines are not given here. For these see Figs. 11, 12, 13)

19. dādu: eB, FBS, FZS, MBS, MZS, all older than Ego.

20. didi: eZ, FBD, FZD, MBD, MZD, all older than Ego.

21. bhaiyā: yB, FBS, FZS, MBS, MZS, all younger than Ego.

22. bābu: yZ, FBD, FZD, MBD, MZD, all younger than Ego.

Note: terms 19 to 22 include all members of Ego's generation except those with whom affinal links have been established. Certain 'affines' as will be shown, however, are also classed as siblings under these terms.

23. bhauji: eBW, eBWeZ (? wife of any dādu)

24. bhātu: eZH, (? husband of any didi).

25. bahurryā: yBW, HyBW, (? wife of any bhaiyā).

26. bahanoiyā, (also pronounced as bahanyuyā and banoihiyā): (ms.)yZH, (? husband of any bābu)

27. ban jawai̯: (ws.) yZH, (address term is bābu)

28. janni: W

29. thāruwā: H

30. jeṭhān: WeB

(fem.) jeṭhinnyā: WeBW, HeBW

31. sālā: WyB

(fem.) sāli: WyZ

31a. sāli bahurryā: WyBW

Note: again we have here a compound, which is not a full term but a subcategory of sālā/sāli. It has been included here as 31a to indicate that WyBW, though classed by implication with WyB and WyZ is nevertheless distinguished from them.

32. jesās mau: WeZ

33. sāru: WZH

34. jeṭhwā: HeB, (address term is barjana)

35. diurā: HyB, (address term is bhaiyā)

36. nanduiyā: HyZH

(fem.) nandiya: HyZ

Note: information from west Dang replaces nanduiyā with nanda bhātu.

37. ban dādā: (ws.) BWB

38. ban didi: (ms.) ZHZ

Note: these terms 37, 38 are interesting in that they appear to be compound terms, but not composed of combinations of other terms, at least in the initial component ban, which is said to derive from banailak meaning "constructed or made" denoting perhaps that this is in some way an artificially constructed relationship. We may note that in Vatuk's terminology these specifications have no term at all (1969:106). Though I never recorded it myself, apparently in west Dang where a man uses ban didi

a woman speaker says aro didi (N.4). The meaning of aro (or aru) in general is "other or another". A male speaker, however, does not use this prefix at all. Terms 37, 38 are not included in the Figure 9. but are given in the table of affinal terms below.

39. samdhi: SWF, DHF

(fem.) samdhinnyā: SWM, DHM

Generation -1

40. chāwā: S

(fem.) chai: D

41. bhatijwā: BS, WBS, HBS, (ws.) ZS, WZS, (see note to term 11)

(fem.) bhatijyā: BD, WBD, HBD, (ws.) ZD, WZD, (see note to term 11)

42. bhainā: (ms.) ZS, HZS

(fem.) bhaini: (ms.) ZD, HZD

43. damandwā: DH, BDH, DHB, SWB, (? all husbands of bhatijyā)

44. patohiyā: SW, BSW, SWZ, DHZ, (? wife of all bhatijyā) (N.5)

Generation -2

45. nātyā: SS, BSS, ZSS

(fem.) nātinyā: SD, BSD, ZSD

For the remaining specification in generations -2, -3, -4, see above.

8.3 Analysis

In the first place we may note that the general distinction between ascending and descending generations does not operate fully at the extremes of the system (+4, -4, +3, -3). The remaining cross-generation self-reciprocal terms seem to occur in the intervening generations on one side of the system. More precisely the self-reciprocal terms which link +2, -2, and +1, -1 (i.e. terms 4, 10, 11) operate between people linked through women:

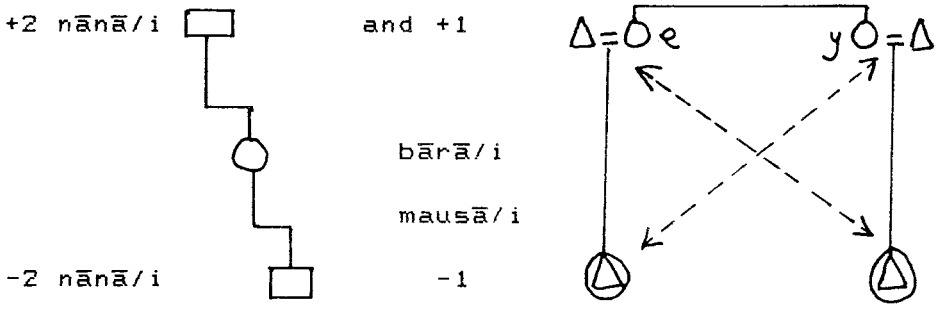


Fig. 8 Showing self-reciprocal terms linking +2, -2, +1, -1

Age distinctions are present in +1 generation, but are particularly marked in Ego's generation. The presence of age distinctions contributes to the relative complexity of this system, especially in relation to affines. It would seem that most other north Indian terminologies reflect less concern with age (e.g. Dumont 1962, Vatuk 1969, Parry 1979), but this is more common perhaps in Nepal where, for instance, the terminology reported by Krause (1980:172-3 and cf. 184) shows similar age distinctions in the central generation both for consanguines and affines.

In the system as a whole there is a marked stress on affinity assuming that this can be measured by the large number of terms for different categories of affines. At the same time, however, the system reveals no structure centered around alliance, as Dumont has pointed out in contrasting this type of terminology with that of south India (1962:21-2).

The comparison between +1, 0, and -1, shows that whereas close cognates and their spouses are carefully differentiated in +/-1, they are essentially unstructured (i.e. structured only by age) in 0. In +1 four sets of PG(E) terms are distinguished, while in 0 these distinctions disappear with everyone being classed as 'brother' or 'sister' in opposition to various affines. At -1, Ego (at least a male Ego as we shall see below) distinguishes between three terms: C, ZC, and BC.

As Dumont has noted in his material (1962:22-23; 1966: 97,98) where two terms share a root and differ only in suffix, they apply to married couples in ascending levels, and to siblings in descending ones. Dumont has suggested that this bracketing together of PG(E) as couples in +1 and the grouping of siblings as pairs in -1, has the result of stressing filiation upwards and downwards and serves " to bring the emphasis on Ego's generation with its 'brother' and 'sister' relationship" (1966:98).

Following Dumont's model (1966:97; 1962:25) I have attempted to set out the simplest possible comprehensive schema for linking together the various terms of the system (see Fig. 9 p.156-157). One can see, however, that even represented in this fashion the Tharu terminology is complicated enough, and is more so than the one analysed by Dumont. Dumont comments that in his

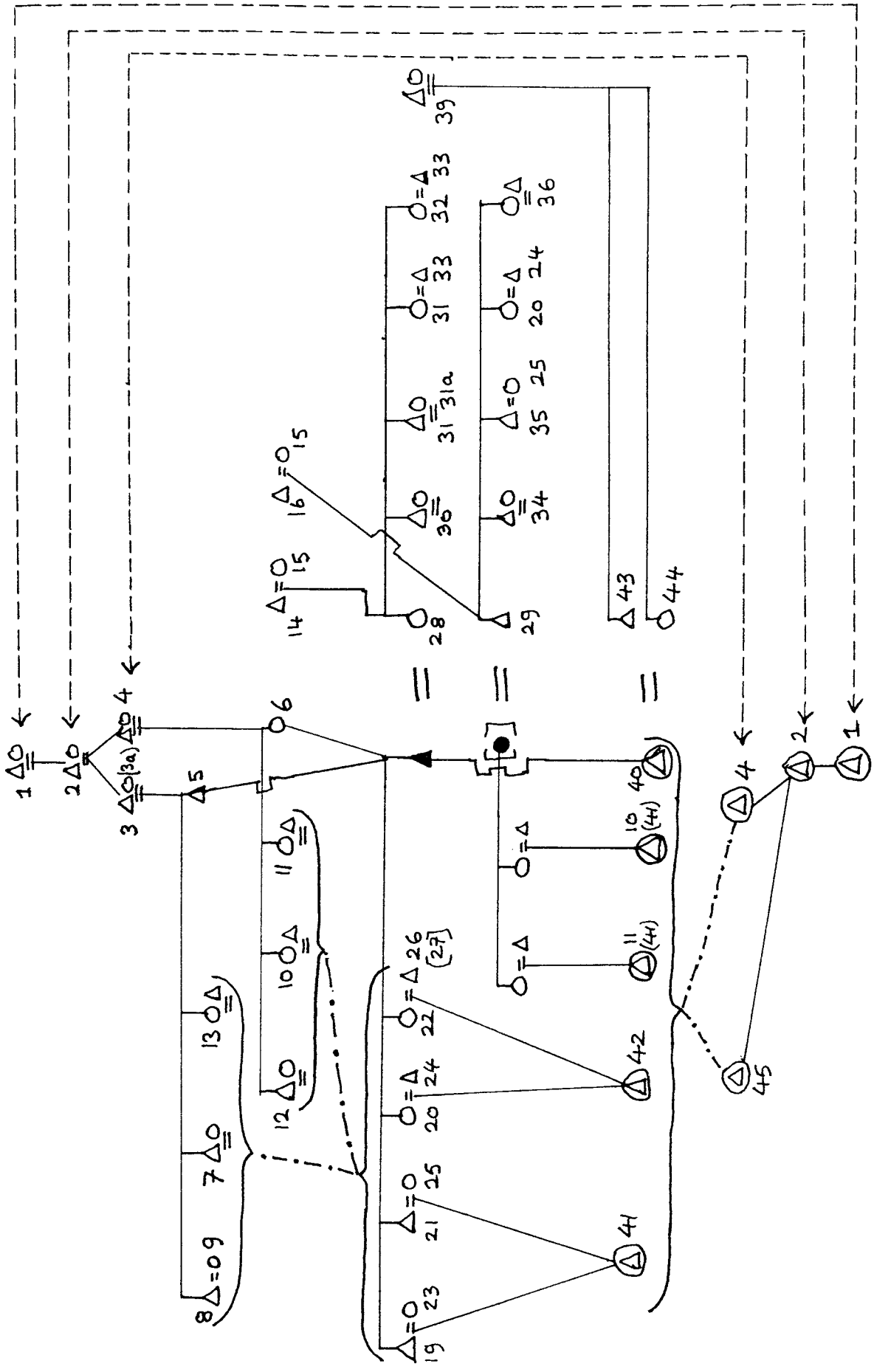


Fig. 9 General Diagram of Kinship Terms

Notes to Figure 9

 = A single term for brother and sister

 = A single term for both spouses

—•—• —•— = Links PG(E) in general with PGC=G, emphasing the fact that the children of all different types of PG are terminologically equated with G. It also links the children of all these classificatory siblings of Ego, together with Ego's own children, to <u>their</u> children; i.e. it links (G)C in general with (G)CC, but here there are two branches, because (G)SC≠(G)DC.

terminology the relationship of siblingship seems "to dominate the configuration of the system" (1962:24), but adds that the dominant "vector" more precisely consists of two parts according to the sex of sibling, "one part being something like 'brother and his spouse', the other 'sister and her spouse'" (1968:98). The term "vector" requires explanation. As we have noted, empirically terms often fall into pairs whose members differ only by gender suffix. A "vector", then, is that which makes sense of the pairing off. Thus if one examines such pairs,many of them consist of kin types who are osG to each other, while others (in +1) consist of kin types which are (parents') GE to eachother. Others again are straight forwardly E, eg. in +2. In the Tharu case the vector 'brother/sister + spouse' also plays an important role but it does not account for as many of the terms as it does in Dumont's case. Here it accounts for terms 7, 10, 11, 12, and 13 in +1, but in Ego's generation 'sister' is not classed with 'sister's husband', whereas in Dumont's material and often elsewhere in north India Z and ZH share a single root. This vector also accounts for terms 30, 31, 34, and 36, or a half of the total affinal terms in the central generation (excluding husband and wife, 28, 29).

We must now note a striking feature of the system which is that the mother's brother-sister's child relationship occupies a privileged position in the total configuration. The only complication for demonstrating this is linked to the fact that a woman and her husband can use self-reciprocal terms for her sisters' children (terms 10, 11). In the first instance let us see what happens if we class a woman's sister's children as term 41 (bhatijwā/bhatijyā). If we take the two

generations together we have the following:

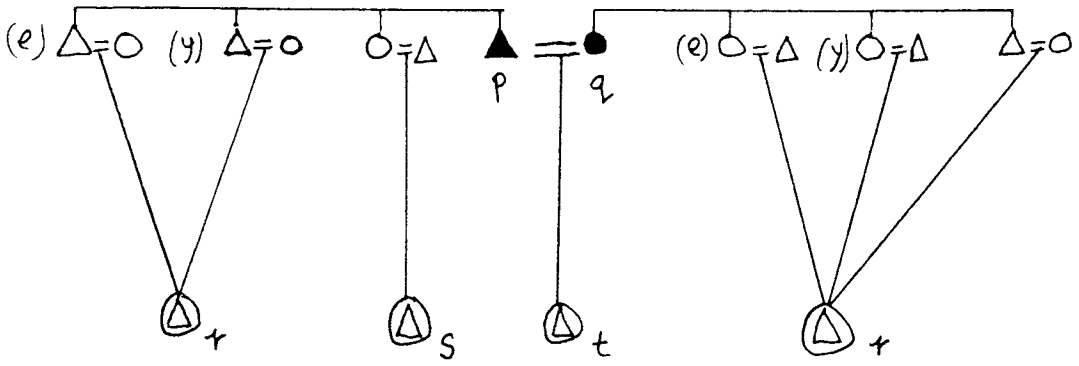


Fig. 10 Showing the relation between +1 and-1.

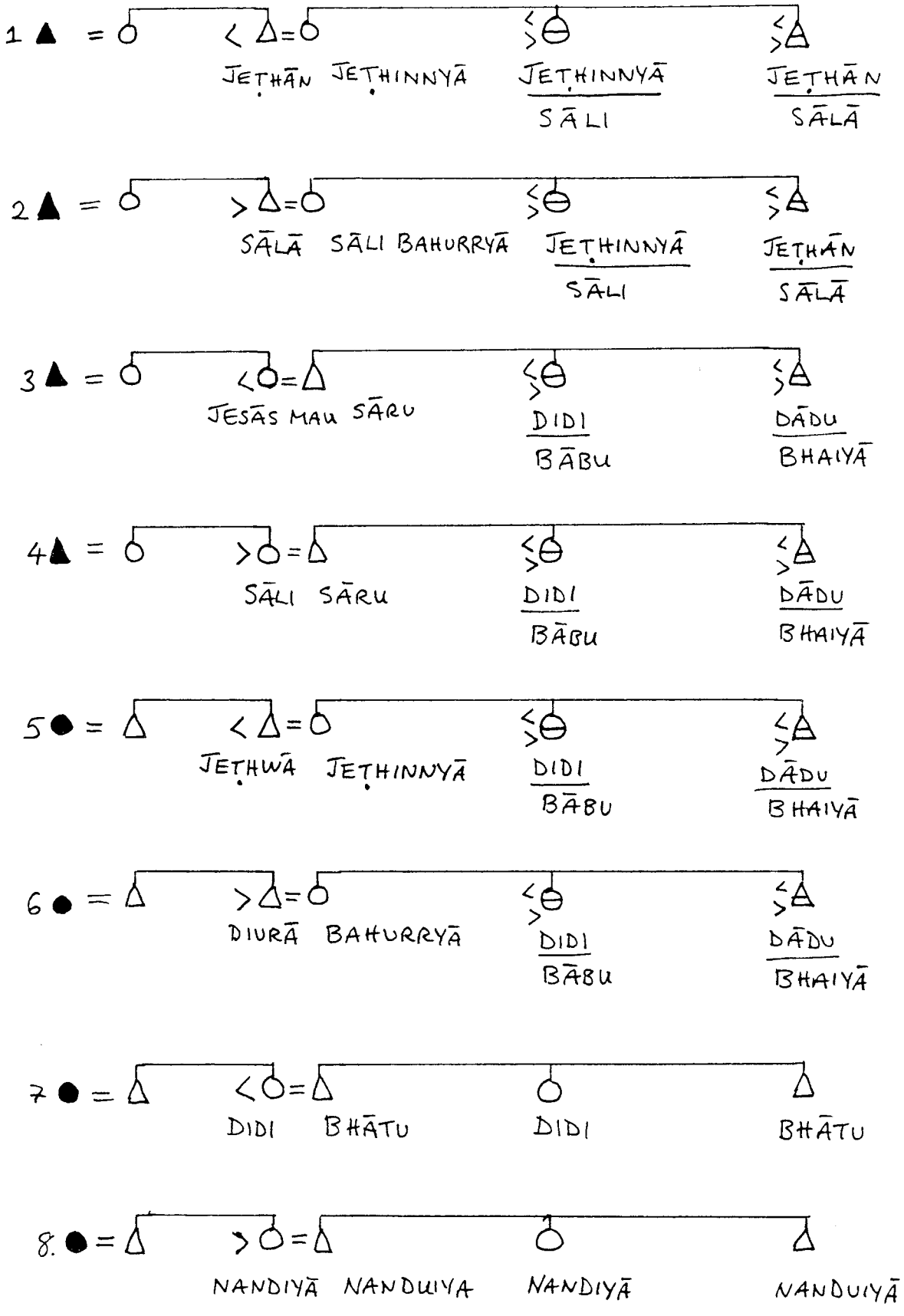
p and q both use term 41 for all r , thereby leaving only s classed under term 42 (bhainā/bhaini); (t is obviously term 40, chāwā/chai). Thus the relation p (+q) to s (MB-ZC) is distinct from all the others.

If, however, we replace the self-reciprocal terms between a woman (and her husband) and her sister's children the situation is more complex and I can only give a partially satisfactory analysis. First let us place these self-reciprocal terms within the wider context of the other self-reciprocal terms in the configuration as a whole. Terms 1 and 2 in a sense close the whole system. In the intervening generations it would appear that self-reciprocal terms only occur in one half of the configuration, which is to say, looking upwards to +1, +2, on the mother's side, while looking downwards to -1, -2, on the side linked through women. If we remain in this 'half' of the configuration then for an Ego looking up to +1, +2, the mother's brother is the only non-self-reciprocal term and thus again occupies a unique position. Looking down to -1, however, the situation is less clear. We have already seen that for a male

Ego there is a clear distinction between brother's children (41) and sister's children (42). For a female Ego, however, we have three terms: two self-reciprocal (10, 11) for her sister's children, and one non-reciprocal (41) for her brother's children. Looking down, the sister's child for a male Ego is distinguished from a brother's child. In other words there is a distinction between parallel and cross-sex siblings' children. The same is true (if we work through self-reciprocal terms) for a woman. She too distinguishes between parallel and cross-sex siblings' children, but uses different terms and there are the further differences that she distinguishes between older and younger sisters' children and that she classes brother's children with her husband's brother's children. The possibility for her to class her sister's children also with brother's children (41) would suggest, however, that in relation to -1 the system seems to accord a dominant place to the male Ego's viewpoint and thus tends towards giving the mother's brother-sister's child relationship a unique position in the configuration as a whole.

A notable feature of the classification of affines in Ego's generation is that certain 'affines' are covered by terms which also have the cognatic specifications of 'brother' and 'sister'. In the discussion which follows we shall refer to these as 'consanguineal' terms. Only the closer types of affines linked to an Ego through his or her spouse (i.e. EG(E)), and siblings (i.e. GE(G)), are presented here. This is partly because the data on the further extension of affinal links is incomplete, but as I have noted above the extension of terms to distant affines is anyway much attenuated in comparison to other reported cases.

Fig. 11 Diagram of Affinal Terms : E(G)



[NOTE: THE SPLIT SYMBOLS INDICATE AGE RELATIVE TO EGO'S EGE

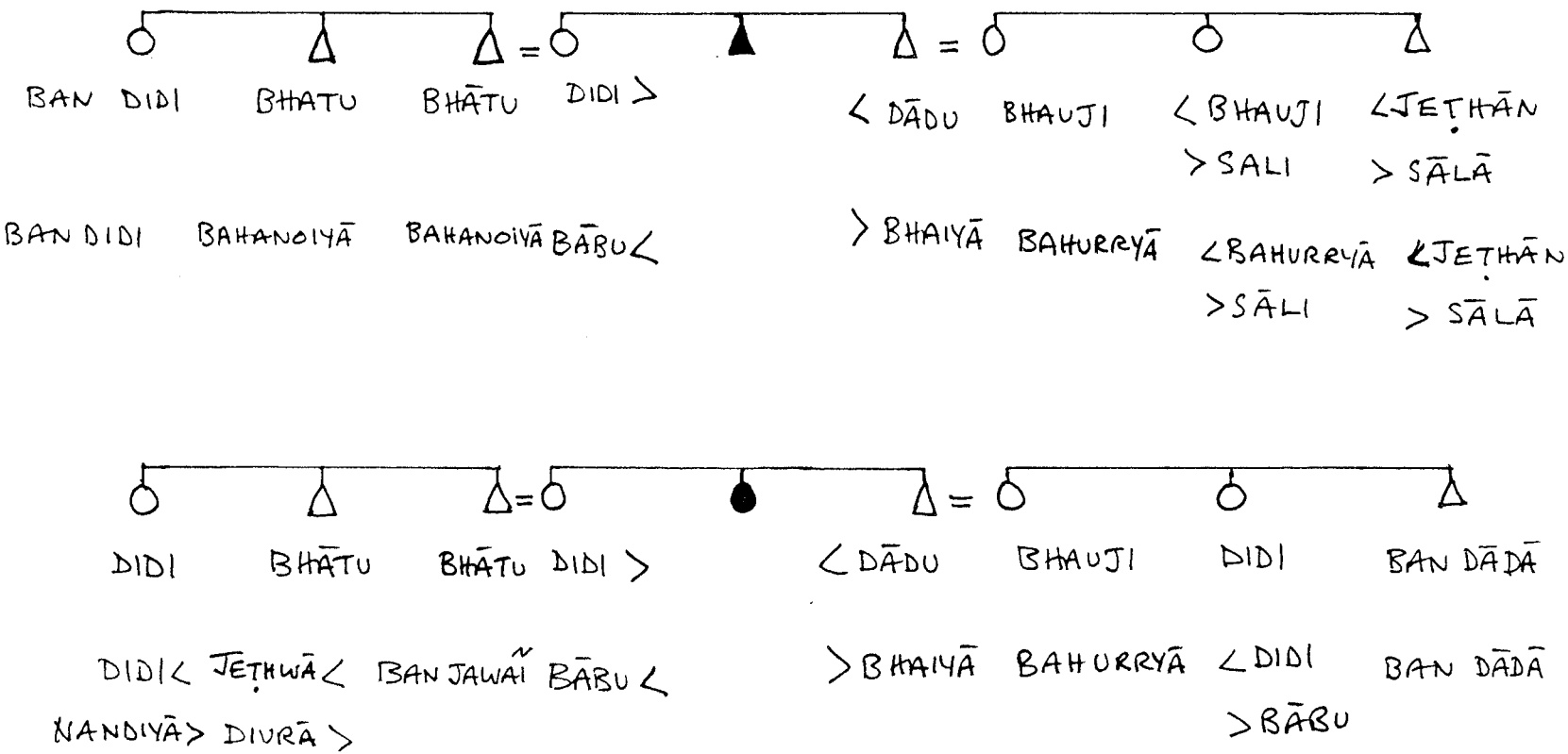


Fig. 12 Diagram of Affinal Terms : G(E)

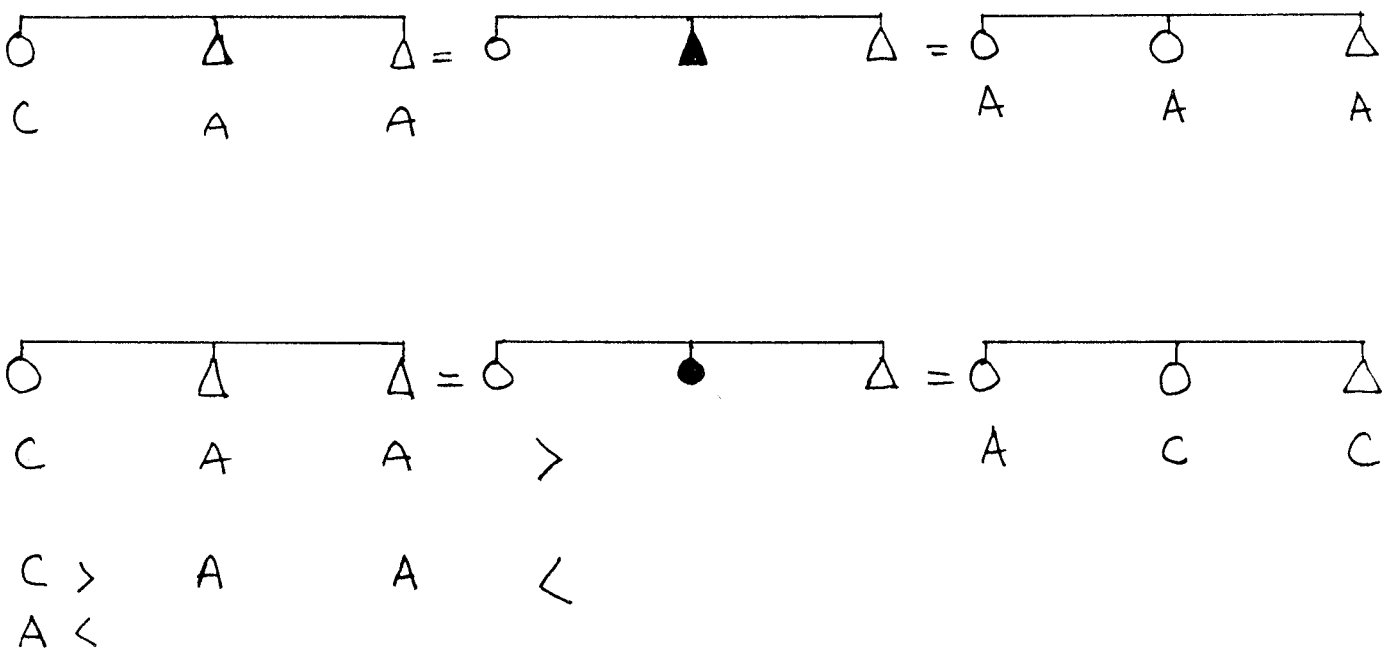


Fig. 13 Diagram of Affinal Terms : G(E) Showing occurence of Affinal Terms (A) and Consanguineal Terms (C)

The chains of terms linked to Ego by his or her spouse are set out in Figure 11. For a male Ego (lines 1 to 4), the 'molecule' of relatives linked via his WB are all 'affines', whereas those linked through WZ are 'consanguines' except for sāru (WZH). Sāru, however, is seen as a kind of 'brother', as has also been reported elsewhere in north India (cf. Parry 1979:308), though unlike other brothers who are all ranked as senior or junior, the sāru-sāru relationship is reciprocal and equal.

For a female Ego the 'molecule' linked via HyZ are all classed as 'affines'. The relatives in the 'molecule' linked via HeZ include women classed as eZ, while those linked via HB include an initial 'affine' with the remaining members of the 'molecule' classed as 'consanguines'. In these chains, then, starting from a male Ego's wife, a same-sex sibling link results in 'consanguines', while an opposite-sex sibling link results in 'affines', but as noted for a female Ego the same-sex or opposite-sex sibling links results in mixed groups except for that linked via HyZ.

The terms for relatives linked to Ego through a sibling (i.e. GE(G)) are given in Figures 12 and 13. The classificaton of 'affines' again depends on relative age and sex of linking sibling departing from Ego, and also on relative age of alter. The age distinction operates in two ways, either directly relative to Ego's sibling, or, within the group of 'affines', relative to the connecting person who is either BW or in one case yZH. For the purpose of tracing the classification as 'affine' (A) or 'consanguine' (C), we can eliminate those age distinctions which have no effect on a classificaion of a

relative as 'affine' or 'consanguine' and represent the terms as in Figure 13. A further asumption in Figure 13 is that we take ban didi and ban dādā as kinds of 'sister' (didi) and 'brother' (dādu).

In this case I am not able to arrive at any clear principles whereby classification of 'affines' by 'consanguineal' or 'affinal' terms is organised. There are, however, several piecemeal comments we can make. First, a male Ego classifies sisters' 'affines' in the same way that a female Ego classifies older sisters' 'affines' : both cases show AAC as one moves away from Ego, i.e. (ms) ZH(B) and (ws) eZH(B) are classed as 'affines', while (ms) ZHZ and (ws) eZHZ are 'consanguines'. Secondly, for a male Ego the relatives linked through his brother are all 'affines' and the same is true for a female Ego for those linked to her through her yZ. Thirdly, the oriented sister-brother relationship differs from all the other sibling relationships in that for a female Ego the BWZ is a 'consanguine' whereas tracing in all other cases Ego's GEssG are 'affines'. To put this another way, the oriented sister-brother relationship results in the group in which we find the greatest weight given to 'consanguinity' in comparison to all other groups of relatives linked by marriage through Ego's siblings. The fourth point is that two brothers classify eachother's wives' siblings the same way, in both cases all (ms) BWB(Z) are 'affines'. To this extent brothers are treated as a pair, in that in all other cases classification of Ego's GEG as 'consanguine' or 'affine' depends on relative age and sex of linking sibling departing from Ego.

8.4 Conclusion

The terminology is of the north Indian type and as such does not have any clear 'structure', as Dumont has pointed out (1966:96). It is "descriptive in the sense that its texture reveals a composition of elementary relationships starting from Ego " (ibid). The terminology, however, differs from others reported in the area, in the presence of several self-reciprocal terms. These reciprocal terms close the system at +3 and -3, and in the generations in between +2 and -2 they only occur on one side of the system, that is between kin linked through women.

In the central pivotal generation the major distinction is between opposite sex siblingship, and this is transferred to generation -1 in the distinction between brother's children and sister's children at least for a male Ego. It was further suggested that in the relation between 0 and -1 generations the terminology gives the male Ego a dominant position which results in according the mother's brother-sister's child relationship a unique place in this part of the system. It was noted that the 'vector' 'brother + spouse' and 'sister + spouse' accounts for fewer of the terms than in Dumont's case (1962), but nevertheless accounts for the majority of terms at +1 and for certain affines in the central generation. It was further seen that affinity, though not occupying a structural role, is accorded a major place in the system insofar as a large proportion of the terms are for affines.

Our comments on the classification of affines in Ego's generation revealed no clear structure or principles of order. The only partial regularity discernible occurs in the chains of

terms linked to Ego through his or her spouse (Fig. 11), where there is a tendency for a same-sex sibling link (i.e. Ego's EGssG) to result in a 'molecule' composed of 'consanguines', while an opposite-sex sibling link (i.e. Ego's EGosG) results in a 'molecule' of 'affinal' terms. If we abandon our formal approach and relate the terminology to the wider system of social groups, then one of the points to emerge from the discussion of the classification of 'affines' linked to Ego through a sibling (Figs. 12 and 13), namely that brothers act as a pair and classify eachother's wives' siblings as 'affines', can be seen to correspond to the patrilineal and exogamous nature of the household and gotyār, the groups operative for marriage purposes.

Comparing north and south India, Dumont has suggested that "the centre of gravity of a kinship system lies in the terminology only when it is simple and quite systematic (i.e. south India) ... There are other cases (i.e. north India) where the link between terminology and behaviour is much looser, signalled by the relatively unsystematic character of the terminology." The Tharu case appears to conform to the latter situation, and in such instances "the centre of gravity of the kinship system is to be sought elsewhere" (1966:103). In the three following chapters, therefore, I shall describe the wider aspects of the kinship system, examining in particular: marriage, certain aspects of kinship behaviour, the configuration of wider categories of kinship, and the pattern of prestations. Although the terminology is relatively unsystematic, certain features identified here will be seen to be congruent with the findings that emerge in the following

chapters. In this regard the particular terminological features to bear in mind are: the privileged position of the mother's brother's sister's child relationship, the importance of the brother-sister relationship in the general configuration of terms, and the pronounced presence of age distinctions.

Notes to Chapter 8

N.1 Cf. Krause 1980 on Chetri and Thakuri kinship and marriage in north-west Nepal for a similar kind of analysis.

N.2 In the Kinship symbols used here, Z= sister, E= spouse, G= sibling, C= child, P= parent, (ms)= male speaker, (ws)= female speaker, os= opposite-sex, ss= same-sex, e= older, y= younger.

N.3 It is to be regretted that Rajaure has never published a list of kinship terms.

N.4 Personal communication from Gisèle Krauskopf.

N.5 We do not find here the classification of SW with yBW as is reported elsewhere, e.g. by Parry (1979:299).

CHAPTER 9 : MARRIAGE

The institution and indeed the very concept of marriage (bihā, bhwāj) among the Tharu provide rich and complex material for analysis. The aim of this chapter is to outline some of the salient aspects of marriage, and inevitably, therefore, much ethnographic description will be omitted (N.1). The chapter is divided into three sections; the first discusses the rules and prefences governing marriage, the second examines the process of incorporation of a woman into her husband's house and gotyār, and the third provides an outline of the different ways in which marriages are actually brought about. This chapter will not deal with all the implications of marriage but will provide essential background for analysis of the treatment and recognition of affinity in greater detail in Chapters 10 and 11. Marriage also has important consequences for our understanding of the house itself, and this will be discussed below in Chapter 13.

9.1 Marriage Rules and Preferences

The main rule bearing on marriage is the negative one of gotyār exogamy. To this must be added the prohibition, common throughout the region, on marriage with yBW and WeZ. Marriage with real or classificatory FZD and MBD is acceptable, though

informants expressed a disinclination for such marriages claiming that they created terminological confusion. This reason is not wholly convincing since sister exchange, which is quite common, does so also. Nevertheless, MBD and FZD marriages appear not to be at all common, and records of 123 marriages of men in Sukhrwar show no instances of true (sagga) MBD or FZD marriages and only one example of each with classificatory MBD/FZD. To the list of prohibitions we should also add marriage between MB and ZD. This rule was never explicitly stated, but such a marriage would seem to run counter to the ritual connection between MB and ZD (N.2).

My information on marriage prohibitions differs from Rajaure's. He reports the rule of gotyār exogamy but adds that,

> Marriage with the maternal cousin (MZD, MBD) is forbidden, but after about seven generations marriage can be established between the descendants of such cousins (1981b:26).

I never heard of a marriage prohibition expressed in genealogical terms, and anyway such a rule would be impossible to maintain since the Tharu do not remember a woman's genealogical antecedents beyond two or three generations. We find something of this in Rajaure's report since in a note he adds "the exact number of generations is not known by anyone" (ibid) and a little later he says,

> Since many Tharu cannot trace their genealogies back beyond four or five generations, it is not unusual for them to establish marriages among descendants of cross-cousins after four or five generations (ibid:27).

In my view there is no prohibition based on genealogical proximity on the maternal side. Furthermore, the memory of a woman's matrilineal antecendents up to a minimum of two generations is preserved for ritual purposes as I shall explain below.

On the positive side there is a preference for marriage over not too great a physical distance, and for marriages with houses of a similar economic status. Further relevant considerations include the reputation and skills of the prospective spouse, the history of the family's health, and whether the influence of the woman's maternal deities is sound (N.3).

The figures clearly show the tendency to marry with nearby villages and even within the village itself. In Sukhrwar of 123 marriages of men, 50 or 40.6% were inside the village. This corresponds exactly with figures collected by Rajaure for 96 marriages of women and 92 of men in the villages of Sukhrwar and Kanarya (1981b:45). For Sukhrwar if we consider that 12 of the 35 Tharu households or 42.7% of the population belong to one gotyār (Sukhwariyā Guruwā), then a figure of 40.6% would seem to indicate a high level of intra-village marriage. In Sukhrwar's case this is possible because some 12 different gotyār are represented, but in a village where the large majority belongs to one gotyār with only one or two other gotyār present, then intra-village marriage will obviously be much lower. Rajaure's figures for distance to women's natal home show that 31.3% of his sample are less than one hour's walking distance away, 25% are one to three hours and only 3.1% are three to five hours. My records of marriages for 123 men and 88 women, though not measured so precisely in walking times, show a

similar decline in proportion to distance. We should note, however, that a three hours' walking distance from Sukhrwar encompasses a large number of villages and my records show that in three generations Sukhrwar has had marriage links both incoming and outgoing with at least 48 different villages. Within this network of villages it is notable that several marriages have taken place with certain villages, while with others, including several located within an hour, there have been few and sometimes no marriages at all.

Related to this localised spread of marriages is the tendency to repeat marriages that have been successful. It is not so much that households repeat marriages with each other, but rather that where a marriage has led to the establishing of good contacts then further marriages may be negotiated through these contacts with other houses in the same village. As the Tharu put it, sisters sometimes follow the same road. In a similar way marriages are negotiated in the opposite direction by affines, with a ZH or FZH often acting as go-betweens. Having a good knowledge of and understanding with prospective partners is especially important in exchange marriages when the exchange is delayed over a period of years, since it is necessary to be sure that when the time comes the wife-taker will keep his word and give a wife in return. The opposite is also true, in that if contacts are few or where relations have soured for one reason or another, then few marriages will be negotiated in that village. In general the spatial spread of marriages is both a reflection and a result of the extension of the network of cntinuing contacts of the households of a village.

The preference for marriage with houses of an equivalent

economic status tends to restrict the possibilities for richer households. Data here is limited, but it seems that in the search for suitable partners such households may have to look further afield, and they also repeat marriages more often with their partners once they have found them. The genealogy from Baibang village of one of the richest households of the whole valley reveals these features. Over three generations we find that women were almost always given to or taken from certain village headmen's houses, which were among the largest and richest in the vicinity. Moreover, women were successively given to the same households and taken from others: in one generation three from the headmen of Kachila village, and in the next three from Rautgaun village headmen; the women going out are especially interesting since they were given to the same households across two generations, three to the headman of Hekuli village and two to the headman of Tepramanpur village. Six other marriages took place much further afield than usual, with villages situated in the Deokhuri valley to the south and in Bardia and Kailali districts to the west. Finally, a total of 25 marriages includes no exchange marriages, a fact which certainly reflects the influence of the surrounding high castes' negative view of this practice (N.4).

A further probable reason for marriage nearby is to make visiting between the two households easier. This is helpful from the husband's point of view since after marriage he has to give a series of prestations at different times to his wife-givers, and though these prestations gradually become fewer over time, at least two visits a year will be kept up for several years (see Chapter 11). It is important also for a woman. During the

first year after the marriage ceremony she spends much of the time in her natal household, only staying for periods of a few days or weeks at a time in her husband's house (N.5). Subsequently also she continues to visit her natal home on the occasion of festivals or major rituals, and if near enough she may make frequent casual vsits for a day or two when she has time. The proximity of the two households makes it easier to include married siblings in the reciprocal ceremonial exchanges of food between brother and sister which take place during the year. Similarly on the occasion of certain festivals such as Holi or Hardhwār foods may be transmitted to married sisters as their "share" (bhāg), if they do not live too far away. It is difficult, however, to state a clear limit in terms of distance since the continuation of such links depends on a variety of factors, such as for instance the size of a household: whether it is able to spare someone for a day or two to walk to visit the married sister. Up to an hour or two's distance such visits are easily made, but beyond five hours it obviously becomes more difficult. Nevertheless there is no definite pattern since I encountered a household which continued to maintain full and regular contacts with two women married out into villages five or six hours distance from Sukhrwar, and these women also returned home at least twice a year on visits lasting sometimes up to a week.

There are two further considerations important for the wife-taking side which contribute towards the preference for marriage with people one already knows or about whom thorough inquiries can be made through trusted intermediaries. The first is that one must establish if possible that the wife-givers have

no history of serious physical or mental handicap. This is referred to as inquiring into the santān-kutān (N.6). Equally or possibly more important is to ensure that the influence of the wife's natal and maternal deities and spirits is not malevolent. This appears to be a matter of considerable significance since after marriage a woman's fertility, her well-being and to some extent that of her children, continue to be influenced by these deities. The deities involved are given offerings twice a year in the woman's marital home in a ritual called Rath Lausārnā. I shall discuss this very interesting ritual in greater detail below (Part 4), but because I shall refer in Chapter 11 and elsewhere to a woman's link with her natal and maternal deities it is necessary here to explain exactly which categories of deities are involved.

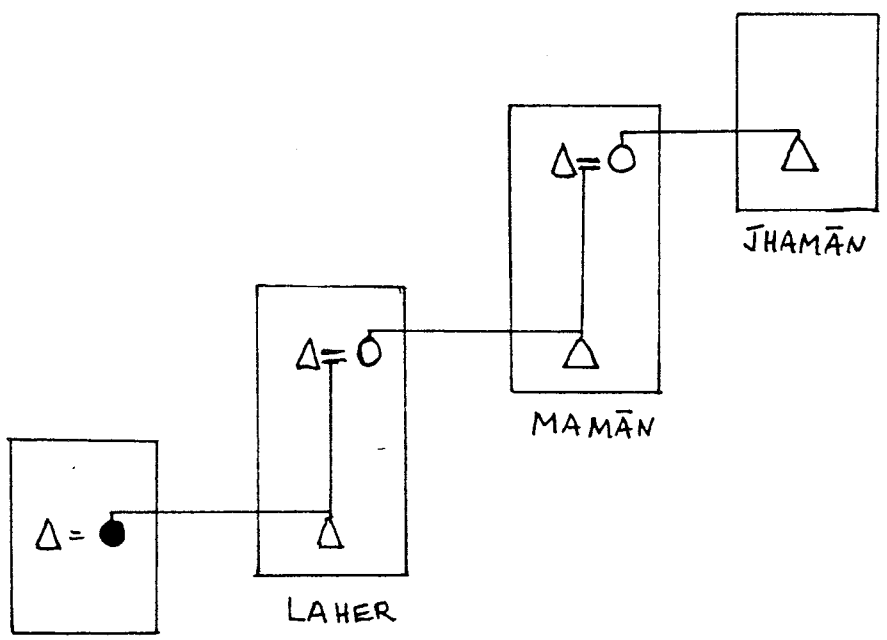


Fig. 14 Showing a woman's links to her laher, mamān, jhamān

In the figure rectangles represent households. The deities propitiated in Rath Lausārnā are those of a woman's (Ego's) natal household, her mother's natal household, and her mother's mother's natal household. Ego's natal household is called laher, her mother's is called mamān or sometimes mai-mamān and is as this term indicates the household also of Ego's mai (MBW) and māmā (MB). Ego's mother's mother's natal household is termed jhamān. Apart from laher, the other terms tend to be reserved for ritual contexts, and in these one also finds the term māmā-mahuli used for both the mamān and jhamān households (N.7). The categories of deities are those of three housholds, which beyond the laher are traced back along a woman's matriline. Since households of the same gotyār all share the same deities, the deities here are those of a woman's brother's (and father's) gotyār, those of her mother's brother's gotyār, and her mother's mother's brother's gotyār. The matter, however, is more complicated, as I shall explain below (Part 4 Chapter 13) when I consider gotyār deities in detail. It is not just the deities (deutā) of these households which affect a woman and are thus propitiated, it is also necessary to neutralise the influence of the malevolent spirits (bhut) associated or attached to these households. This is done in the Dasaiyā Bhut Thoknā ritual which takes place in every house before the annual Dasyā festival, a time of year when all categories of deities and spirits are said to be particularly active. The name of this ritual means "to hammer or pin down the spirits on the occasion of Dasyā", and this is indeed exactly what the officiants do. One officiant invokes all the various categories of malevolent

spirits, which are mostly those of "bad dead", of the woman's natal and other matrilineal households, and the other officiant becomes possessed by them, dialogues with the invoking officiant accepting offerings from him, and then hammers or pins the spirits using iron nails or chips of bamboo hammered into pieces of cactus (siuri) which are then thrown away into a nearby stream or river (N.8). It will be necessary to refer subsequently to a woman's continuing connection with these various categories of deity and spirits, and so for the sake of economy, unless the name of a specific household is given (e.g. mamān etc.), I shall speak of a woman's households and/or deities of "origin".

9.2 Incorporation of a Woman into her Husband's Gotyār

The incorporation of a woman from her natal gotyār to that of her husband is not a simple transition which is accomplished immediately on marriage. A woman appears to some extent to continue to belong to both her natal and her marital gotyār after marriage, and her final incorporation into her husband's gotyār must be seen as a long term process which unfolds through stages throughout her life. I have noted above that she continues to visit her laher often, but such visits gradually diminish in length and frequency as she gets older. This is clearly shown in Rajaure's data on time spent in their laher by women of different age groups (1981b:46). We have also noted that a woman continues to engage in a series of ceremonial exchanges with her laher, and I shall discuss what these reveal about her continuing relationship with her laher

in Chapter 11 when I analyse prestations to clarify the form of the relations established between households by marriage. Further indication, but at a ritual level, of a woman's links with her natal household is shown by her continuing relation with her deities of origin. In turn this line of influence is passed on, or carried on, by her daughter after marriage. For a son, however, this is not the case: his relationship is only to his household deities. There is then a fundamental difference here between men and women, with men maintaining a relationship with a single set of gotyār deities, while women are potentially linked with up to four sets: those of the husband, the laher, the mamān, and the jhamān. In fact the situation is more complex since a boy is also affected by his mother's deities of origin, but as I shall explain in Chapter 11, this appears to change as he grows older and is clearly ended at his marriage. As will become clear in Part 4, the gotyār (and other groups) are defined and distinguished by deities, and consequently therefore sharing a relation to a common set of deities is an essential asepct of sharing gotyār identity. I cannot here explore all the details of the forms and occasions in which relations exist and are maintained with deities, but let us trace some of the many differences between men and women in this regard, to show the difference between them as to membership of the gotyār.

The difference begins at birth. After the birth of a boy, minor offerings of popped rice, milk, rice spirit (mad), and water (jal), collectively called sataurā, are given to the household deities. For a girl, however, such offerings are not required (N.9). The different relationship of men and women

to the household deities, and hence the difference in their gotyār identity becomes clearer as they grow older. Women born in the house are not supposed to touch or in general have any direct contact with the deities. Men on the other hand have the opportunity of developing a relationship with the deities: they can make offerings to them and at some time in their lives the majority of men become possessed by the deities in a ritual called Guruwā Banainā (literally "making a guruwā") during which in trance they carry the deities around the interior and the courtyard of the house. The difference between men and women is most clear in death ceremonies. In the final stage of these ceremonies, men eat a meal in the deity room at the start of which they make offerings of food to the new ancestor (lauwā pittar). They can be joined in this meal by the women married into the house and by members of other households of the same gotyār. Women born in the house, however, are excluded: they do not participate in any way and must not touch those seated to eat this meal. It is explained that this is because such women are destined to leave the house and the gotyār on marriage.

A woman, then, does not have the same kind of membership in her natal gotyār as a man. Nevertheless for the purpose of marriage her membership is definite in that she must marry into a different gotyār. After marriage this does not change, since in the event of divorce or the death of her husband, for a second and subsequent marriages the rule of natal gotyār exogamy still applies. At marriage there is no specific ceremony which marks the 'entry' of a woman into her husband's gotyār. There are a number of ceremonies which go to make up an elaborate full-scale marriage (barkā bhwāj, see section

3), but there are two core rituals or ritual stages which are essential in that in simple marriages they must be performed while all the others can be dropped. The first core stage marks the first entry of the bride with the groom into the house, and this is performed just outside the threshold in the courtyard. The groom's mother officiates and she then leads the couple right into the house up to the deity room where they sit on a mat facing the deities. Just before the bride sits down, with the help of the groom's mother she pours a small quantity of rice from a fold at the front of her skirt onto the ground in front, or sometimes onto the altar itself, of the main deities (N.10). The bride brings this rice from her home, tied up in her skirt or waistband at the front. These rituals, therefore, not only mark the first entry of the bride, they also are the first and one of the very few occasions when a woman makes an offering to her husband's household deities. At marriage a woman is at once brought into some sort of relationship with these deities, and as an in-married woman, especially if she is the wife of the household head, she will have minor ritual roles to play, such as bathing the deities and marking them with spots of vermillion powder (sindur).

The new bride's incorporation into her marital household now seems to develop gradually as time passes. Rajaure has described the process of adjustment to her new role and the problems it brings (1981b:37,38). A woman's position becomes more established after the birth of children, especially the birth of sons. A further point of transition occurs when her children get married, and again the marriage of a son is more important since it is the mother who officiates in the essential

and indeed in several other ceremonies. Marriage is undoubtedly the occasion when a woman performs her most prominent ritual role. It is, however, at her death that a woman's incorporation into her marital home and gotyār is completed. In the final stage of death ceremonies, a woman just like any deceased man of the house is ritually "seated" as a new ancestor on the altar of the main household deities. This part of death rituals is called lauwā pittar baithainā, "to seat the new ancestor", and interestingly, in comparison to marriage ceremonies, the new ancestor is "seated" in the form of, or through the medium of rice. The ritual is performed by the household priest with one of the men of the house, who becomes possessed by the new ancestor and holding a handful of rice enters the deity room and pours the rice onto the central altar. The ancestors of the dead are not individually named or distinguished, but the ancestor of a woman is subsequently fed along with all the other ancestors in the meal which follows, and then regularly every year in the Dasyā festival. It would seem, therefore, that if after and even before marriage a woman's gotyār identity is partly ambiguous, after her death her incorporation is finally complete.

9.3 Types of Marriage

The purpose of this section is to outline the various ways in which marriages are actually brought about. The range of possibilities described will provide contextual background for subsequent discussion in Chapters 10 and 11 of the implications of marriage for relations between houses, and it will also give

an indication of the flexibility of the institution of marriage itself.

In the traditional pattern the preference is for arranged marriage. The initiative comes from the groom's side, with the groom's father or household head making inquiries and then approaching the bride's household to open negotiations. Traditionally this takes place around the beginning of Māgh, and once agreement is reached the marriage takes place later the same month or in the following month of Phāgun. In the past arranged marriages were arrived at without consulting the bride or groom, so that occasionally a man might not know who his prospective bride was or what she looked like until the day of the wedding ceremonies themselves. Today, however, it is more usual to take the opinions of the prospective couple into consideration. As we shall see, the possibility of divorce and remarriage, and of elopement, means that ultimately it is possible for one or other of the couple to thwart their parents' plans. The formal stage of negotiations is concluded in the bridegroom's house with a minor ceremony (thokauni) followed by a feast, and it is then that the dates are fixed for the transferral of bride-price - if it is to be paid - and for the ceremonies themselves (N.11).

From the point of view of their ceremonial content, marriages are classified into two broad types: barkā bhwāj and chotki bhwāj. The former type refers to the "greater" marriage which is celebrated with the full sequence of ceremonies, while in the latter type only the essential minimum of ritual is carried out. Barkā bhwāj lasts about two days and nights, and involves a procession to the bride's house and

in the evening of the next day the concluding ceremonies take place after returning to the groom's house. This type always requires full negotiations and is the most favoured kind appropriate for a marriage in which both the spouses are getting married for the first time. Chotki bhwāj is also called ek rāt or "one night" marriage and only includes ceremonies in the groom's house. This form is much less expensive. The difference between the two types has absolutely no affect on the status of the wife or that of the children.

Apart from their ceremonial content, marriages are distinguished according to how they are effected in the first place. I shall begin here by describing the arranged types.

9.3.1 Dāmāhā or Jhāngā Bhwāj

This refers to marriage arranged with the payment of bride-price. The terms derive from dām meaining "price" and jhāngā which refers to the bride-price paid but is also used more generally to refer to an investment from which a return is expected, such as in a commercial trading expedition to Koilabas on the Indian border. The bride-price consists of: 50 pāthi of paddy (dhān), one dharni of salt, one dharni of mustard oil, 22 arm-lengths (hāt) of white cloth (beis hāt barhwār), and a sum of between 700 and 1,000 rupees (N.12). In addition a small sum of 10 to 20 rupees is given to the bride's mother as the "milk price" (dudhak mol), and at least one pig's hind leg (phendwā) is given on the opening day of the ceremonies. A further two phendwā are sometimes transferred during the stages of negotiation. The contribution from the bride's side varies, but they may give some white cloth

for the bride, and they undertake to provide her with the natyā, the nose-ring worn by married women which is supposed to be made of gold. They may also give some cash or utensils, or a calf as dowry (daij). Both sides may also provide further ornaments (gahana) for the bride. We may note that the contributions from the bride's side are given to the bride herself, while in the other direction the jhānga is given to the bride's household as a whole.

9.3.2 Sattapatta

This is the term for exchange marriage. Although due to the influence of high caste attitudes the Tharu sometimes disparagingly equate this form with the exchange or bartering of cattle, this is perhaps the commonest type of marriage. Exchange has the advantage of avoiding the problem of assembling the bride-price and if, as often happens, the exchange is delayed it ensures the return of a woman after a few years when the level of bride-price will have risen due to inflation (Rajaure 1978:280). The arrangemets in sattapatta vary, most usually each side undertakes to provide the natyā and other ornaments for the bride they give away. Exchange occurs at all levels of society except perhaps among the very richest households, but it is commonest among the smaller and poorer households.

9.3.3 Tin Khut

This term means "three legs, supports, posts" (?), and refers to an arrangement involving three houses (N.13). The first gives a woman to the second houshold, which gives one to the third, and the circle is completed by the third giving the

bride-price to the first house in the series. I found no explanation for this practice, but it is regarded very favouraby, an opinion which seems linked to the fact that three different households are linked in the arrangement. One informant suggested that to organise a chain of four houses would be an even finer achievement. I have found only two tin khut arrangements in Sukhrwar, but the general view is that it was more common in the past.

9.3.4 Wusthāhā or N:Tyestai

These words mean "free" or "without payment", and thus refer to the arrangement whereby a bride is given without the transfer of bride-price. Usually the groom's side provide the natyā and other ornaments for the bride. It would seem that this form of marriage is less 'traditional' than jhāngā, and is partly the result of high-caste influence and recent attempts to reform Tharu practices by phasing out bride-price and exchange (cf. Rajaure 1978:417). It is likely, however, that there have for a long time been a few of the richest houses which have emulated high caste practices. At present it is unclear to what extent this trend is growing, but I encountered several examples of households, usually larger and richer ones, arranging "free" marriages and describing them with the conventional term as kanyā dān, or "gift of a virgin". In a few cases also Brahmans are brought in to officiate. Households which give a bride away have also begun to adopt other accompanying aspects of the hypergamous ideology by according the wife-takers (DH, ZH) a higher status than would traditionally be the case. By assuming a lower status in

relation to the groom, however, the giving houshold in fact seems simultaneously to be trying to assert higher status within the local community by virtue of its emulation of high caste practices. It is according to this logic that one can understand more easily why a household would adopt a status position lower than the groom. At that same time, of course, the wife-taker participates in this form of marriage not only because it is directly advantageous, but also because as a partner he shares with the bride's side the possibility of asserting the new and higher status. The matter is complex, since it would seem that such a viewpoint is not shared by the majority of households which still prefer the traditional patterns of bride-price when it comes to giving a woman away "free". On the other hand, it is difficult to estimate the frequency of wustāhā marriages because it became clear that several marriages reported as such were in fact elopements. Elopement is a fait accompli against which the bride's parents can do little, and since in such a marriage there is usually no transfer of bride-price, the effect is the same as in a "free" marriage.

9.3.5 Ghar Damdā or Ghar Jawaĩ, and Bhwār Pāithnā

These are the two possible kinds of uxorilocal marriage, and have already been discussed (see above Chapter 7, section 1, and Chapter 7, note 4).

I shall now briefly consider the types of marriage which are not arranged by the parents but are effected by the couple themselves.

9.3.6 Urārka Laigailak

These terms derive from the verbs urārnā, the causative of urnā "to fly" (cf. H:urānā and N:urāunu, s.v. Turner 1965) and laijainā, "to take away" (cf. N:laijānu s.v. ibid), and thus means "having caused to fly, taken away". This is the expression for one type of elopement, a course of action resorted to if one or other of the spouses are opposed to the parents' plans. The girl and boy usually leave the village at night and go to a house of a nearby relative. While they are away, go-betweens try to bring the bride's parents round to agree to the marriage which will take place anyway fairly soon after the elopement.

9.3.7 Pakārka Laigailak

This expression means "having caught, taken away" from pakarnā "to catch" (cf. H:pakarnā and N:pakranu, s.v. ibid), and is often used interchangeably with the previous expression. With its implication of capture, however, the expression is appropriate in the very rare case where something like a genuine capture or abduction takes place. I only heard of one such instance which involved the men of a house which had lost a sister by elopement. They immediately went to the husband's house and catching hold of the girl demanded her as a wife in exchange for their sister. In an elopement a man can be helped by friends to persuade the girl to go with him, and to transport her things and accompany her to the relative's house, but although the expression might suggest it, there is no practice comparable to marriage by capture described for other parts of Nepal (e.g. cf. Sagant 1970).

9.3.8 Jāri or Jārkhiyā Bhwāj

These terms refer to the marriage resulting from a woman leaving her husband to take another one (cf.N:jār, "paramour, adulterer" and N:jāri, "adultery" s.v. ibid). In effecting a jāri marriage a woman either elopes directly with her new husband or returns to her laher for a while before moving into another house. Divorce and remarriage do not present great difficulties, the only complication being the compensation the new husband has to pay to the original one, which is calculated on a descending scale according to the number of times the woman has been married (Rajaure 1981b:38-40). Sons usually stay with their father, or return to live with him after a few years. This is related to the rule that sons keep rights to inherit from their father unless they are adopted into another gotyār. Daughters are not entitled to inherit, and generally stay with their mother (N.14). Divorce, however, is much less common after the birth of children and is commonest early on in marriage.

To close this brief outline of the forms of marriage, mention must be made of three further factors: brothers and sisters in a household each get married in age order, polygamy though not common is acceptable, and the junior levirate is practiced (N.15).

9.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have only given the broad outlines of the pattern of marriage. Further analysis, particularly of the manner in which marriages are negotiated would establish more clearly the various factors which combine to produce the

characteristic pattern of local marriage networks. The important point ot emerge, however, is that there is no system of hereditary marriage alliance. Apart from gotyār exogamy and the other negative rules, there is no firm set of preferences or ideological considerations which could give marriage a transgenerational systemic nature. Each marriage is more or less a separate event, setting up each time a new series of affinal links. Marriage, therefore, does not provide a principle which serves to structure the whole society, in the way that a system of alliance or an ideology of hypergamy might. Even though marriage may not have a systemic structuring role, it nevertheless does have a diachronic aspect, or more precisely the links of affinity arising from a marriage are given diachronic recognition. We have seen that at a ritual level, a woman's links to her houses of origin, which are traced back two generations, are recognised. In the next chapter I shall discuss the distinctions made between kinds of relatives and their classification into broad categories. In Chapter 11 through a discussion of prestations, the relations established by marriage at the level of the household will be analysed, and it will be seen that affinity is indeed given diachronic recognition, but in a particular way which to a considerable extent corresponds with the pattern of a woman's ritual links with her houses of origin. Subsequently in Part 4 it will be shown how marriage, by the links it establishes at a ritual level, serves as one of the prinipal elements which consititues the house itself as a totality.

Notes to Chapter 9

N.1 It is worth indicating some of the aspects of marriage which will not be discussed in this study. An important feature, which will be touched on in Chapter 11 in relation to the Mur Bhwāj haircutting ceremony, is the complex set of ideas associated with marrige. The two terms bhwāj and bihā are used interchangeably, though the former is perhaps the more common. Bihā is directly related to Sk:vivāhah and N:bie meaning "marriage" (qv. Turner 1965), but bhwāj is relate to N: bhoj meaning "feast, banquet" (qv. ibid), and the word is used also with this meaning. Not only does bhwāj mean both "marriage" and "feast", but it also occurs in the name of the hair cutting ceremony cited above, and in certain other expressions relating to rituals. For details of Mur Bhwāj see Chapter 11, section 2, but let us note here that the ritual sequences that comprise it bear very close resemblance to marriage ceremonies. In other contexts informants describe certain rituals as forming pairs in which one was the bhwāj of the other. Thus the Chotki Bhut Mārnā ritual was the pair of the Barkā Bhut Mārnā. Both are village rituals whose purpose is to pin down or banish all categories of malevolent spirits, a purpose made clear by the name Bhut Mārnā which means "to kill spirits". The Chotki (lesser, smaller, junior) ritual lasts one night while Barkā (greater, larger, senior) lasts seven. Together these two rituals form the pair or bhwāj of the ritual for making a set of village deites and in particular those called Daharcandi Cabahwā. It is interesting, also, that a village without Daharcandi is considered less good than one which has these deities and such a village may be called kanyā gaun, or "virgin village". I suggest that this points towards a fundamental motif of Tharu thought which occurs in ritual and in myth, and is that the idea of a pair, expressed by or at least associated with bhwāj or marriage, represents something which is whole and complete and superior to a single element and especially a virgin who is somehow incomplete and therefore inferior.

Related to the elucidation of the complex of ideas associate with bhwāj or bihā, would be an analysis of the full series of marriage ceremonies which in an elaborate wedding make up possibly the largest single body of rituals. Rajaure (1982b:181-217) has given a fair description of marriage rituals but so far there has been no attempt to place them in relation to other life cycle rituals or view them in a wider comparative context. Finally a full study of marriage would have to consider the whole corpus of marriage songs (māngār, cf. N:māngal, "an auspicious song" and N:māngalya "auspiciousness; happiness; an auspicious ceremony or festival; s.v. Turner 1965), of which a representatve collection has been published in the Tharu language (M. Chaudhari 1974).

N.2 In the +1 generation marriage is prefectly acceptable with mausi (MyZ); although I never inquired I always took this to imply classificatory MyZ.

N.3 As regards marriage with other jāti (castes), the usual rules apply. Although I never heard of a marriage with an untouchable jāti, I was told this would result in effective exclusion from Tharu society. Marriage with higher status jāti is acceptable though very rare.

N.4 The example of this genealogy is in fact rather more complex, since the household eventually split into three units. The three components, however, split after the majority of marriages discussed had already taken place, and afterwards they anyway maintained the same network and affinal contacts as before. Hence, for clarity and economy I have presented the genealogy here as though it were of one household.

N.5 See below Chapter 11, N.2, for the occasions of a woman's visits to and fro in the first year after marriage.

N.6 Cf. N:santān "descendants, progeny; family, race" s.v. Turner 1965. Kutān (or khutān?) is less clear and I am uncertain of whether the k is aspirated or not.

N.7 The derivation of jhamān is not clear. For laher cf. naihar reported by Dumont as one term referring to a woman's natal home in the Gorakhpur region (1962:21). Rajaure spells this as laihar (1981b:140). The Nepali word maiti is also used interchangeably with laher. From a husband's point of view the laher of his wife is his sasrār as I shall explain below in Chapter 10.

N.8 This procedure of hammering or pinning (thoknā) occurs in several different rituals (e.g. cf N:1 to this chapter).

N.9 The remaining parts of birth rituals are simple and are performed by the mother with the woman acting as midwife (sorinnyā). On the day when the mother is purified, the mats and clothes used in the birth and afterwards are thrown away and the two women go to a stream to wash usually to the south of the village. This is called Ghaṭwā Jainā, "going to the ghāṭ or watering place". The women place red tikā marks on two pats of cowdung on the bank of the stream (for tikā see below Chapter 11). The only part of the birth involving men, apart from sataurā is immediately after the birth itself when the husband buries the placenta (purin) in the ground in the south-west corner of the house. Purin is also the word for lotus leaf, which is what Guru Bābā, the first being in the world was created on, floating on the primordial ocean (see Appendix B). For further details on birth cf Rajaure 1982b:177-179.

N.10 It is usually the groom's mother who officiates, and if not her then another senior woman of the household. For details of these stages of mariage rituals cf Rajaure 1982b:181-217. I shall describe the household deities in Chapter 12, when it will become clear what I mean by the "main" deities and in what sense they have an "altar".

N.11 For details of thokauni cf Rajaure 1982b:181-217.

N.12 One pāthi = 4.0 Kg.
One dharni = 2.27 Kg.
One hāt is the length from the tip of the middle finger to the elbow.

N.13 Khut here is probably related to N:khutti, "peg, stake", and N:khutto, "leg, foot" (s.v. Turner 1965).

N.14 Unlike a boy, a girl does not have to be adopted into her new father's gotyār. This is something about which I am not certain, but it would seem that a girl simply takes on her new father's gotyār identity.

N.15 The data from 123 marriages of men breaks down in the following way:

	Brideprice	Exchange	Other	Total
Marriages with women from other villages	32	19	22	73
Marriages inside the village	8	28	14	50
Total	40	47	36	123

Those marriages classed as "other" include: 13 unknown, 12 free, 5 definite elopements, 2 tin khut arrangements, 2 jāri, 1 levirate. The classes "unknown" and "free" probably include a number of elopements and jāri marriages. Altogether I recorded 5 cases of polygamy, 2 of which were current arrangements at the time of fieldwork.

CHAPTER 10 : KINSHIP RELATIONS AND CATEGORIES

Marriage itself does not provide a unifying principle which organises relations between groups in a diachronic and systemic fashion. Similarly the relatonship terminology provides no clear structure, though within it the brother-sister relationship appears central to the configuration of terms, and the mother's brother-sister's child relationship occupies a special position. There is a thoroughgoing age distinction especially in the central pivotal generation. In this chapter I shall examine Tharu distinctions between different kinds of kin and affine. A further aim is to elucidate the treatment of affinity: to see if there is a difference in the relation between those to whom one has given women and those from whom one has received women (N.1). I shall first discuss the fundamental distinctions such as that between senior (barā) and junior (choti) which is linked to age and generation, and then I shall examine the classification of relatives into broad categories.

10.1 Preliminary Comments: the Main Categories

In the first place all relatives are included under the term istamitra (N.2). Included here is anyone with whom one can trace a relationship (sohri) of consanguinity or affinity

(N. 3). Istamitra fall into two categories, either gotyār, that is members of the same exogamous group with whom one always has an irrevocable agnatic link, even if the connecting genealogical links have been forgotten; or kabila, which includes all consanguines and affines who are not gotyār. As we shall see in a moment one can distinguish within kabila those who are also sās. The second general point, which we have noted above (p.143) but which deserves emphasis here, is that the Tharu have no indigenous theory of substance by which they could classify kin. There is no transmission of blood, bones, flesh etc. which could serve for instance to distinguish gotyār from kabila, or one kind of kabila from another (N.4).

10.2 Distinctions between Kin: Rules of Address and Behaviour

Within this universe of kin divided into the broad categories of gotyār and kabila, although there are no distinctions based on notions of shared substance, there are certain distinctions made beween types of kin and affines which are manifested by various forms of address and behaviour, ranging from respect to avoidance or joking.

10.2.1 Barā-Choti

The first such distinction, and perhaps the most fundamental, is that between sohri who are barā, that is senior, and those who are choti or junior. This distinction cuts right across the other kinds of distinctions and categories of the system.

Within the gotyār this distinction is clear and is based directly on generation and relative age. Sometimes, however, these two principles can come into conflict, as when for instance a man is kākā (FB) to another who in fact is his senior in terms of age. The kākā in theory is barā in relation to the older bhatijwā who should receive his blessing in customary greetings. In practice in such a situation, other terms of address are used, such as gotyār, in order to get round the problem. I also encountered a case of two gotyār brothers who had adopted the reciprocal address terms samdhi-samdhi in order to avoid the elder-younger brother terms.

Between cognates the barā-choti distinction depends on actual age difference between Ego and alter, so that for instance FeBSy (i.e. younger than Ego) is choti. In regard to affines it is age relative to a connecting person which is what counts, but this operates in two ways, depending either on age of alter relative to Ego's spouse and Ego's sibling's spouse, or on Ego's age relative to a sibling. Thus EeG is barā and EyG is choti, and eGE is barā while yGE is choti. In relation to GEG, however, the situation is more complex. For a male Ego classification of ZHB depends on age of Ego relative to his sister, so that eZHB are all barā, while yZHB are choti, and the same is true for a female Ego in relation to her ZHZ. For a male Ego, however, classification of BWG depends on age of alter relative to the linking wife, so that BWeG is barā as opposed to BWyG; classification of BWZ by a female Ego works the same way. In the case of osGEosG, neither Ego nor alter are classed as barā or choti, but share a special relationship

(see ban didi-ban dādā below).

The distinction between barā and choti is expressed in the customary forms of greeting. The barā gives his blessing to the choti by placing his hand on the head of the choti who bows down slightly. Sometimes the choti may touch the feet of his senior with his hands or even with his head. These forms of greeting are called dhwāk; they do not take place every time two people meet, but are required when the meeting is the first for some time or is taking place in a ceremonial context. Such greetings or those of the sewā form (see Plates 4,5) are exchanged between everyone as they meet for the first time on or after the first day of the annual Māghi festival which begins on Māgh sankranti (N.5). Not all relations are asymmetrical, so sāru-sāru and samdhi-samdhi are equals and between these people the appropriate form of greeting is called sewā. In the sewā greeting the two men touch the fingers of each other's out-stretched and slightly raised right hand (N.6). Performed by women the equal form of greeting is called paiyā, and in it the woman places her hands briefly on the upturned hands of the other person.

10.2.2 Mukhiyā Kabila, and Forms of Address:

Ho, Ra, Ri, Re, Ru

Certain kabila are loosely termed mukhiyā or "important", and this qualification cuts across or combines with the barā-choti distinction. The class of mukhiyā kabila is rather vague, but includes immediate affines on both sides, i.e. ZH, WB, WeZ, and their parents, as well as māmā, bhainā/i, and for a woman her sāsurwā, son dai and

son bābā. It is the system of particles and the forms of the verb which distinguish these kabila from others. The particles are ho, ra, ri, re and ru, and are added to the term of address and to the verb in questions and short statements. The form of the verb can change, there being three registers which correspond to degrees of politeness and respect. The question "where are you going?" can be expressed as kāhā jaiti or jaito, or jaityā. The highest (jaiti) form is rarely used and tends to be reserved for strangers. The second form - jaito - is appropriate for ho relatives and for other seniors who may be addressed using ra or ri. Thus a question to a ho relative such as māmā is phrased: "E! Māmā ho! Kāhā jaito ho?". The particle ho signifies a mukhiyā relative. Although I am not certain of the precise categories of relatives who are addressed as ho, we may note that the list includes relatives who otherwise are choti, such as sālā, but in this respect it is the inclusion of the māmā and bhainā pair which is most striking. The bhainā is choti to his māmā and in customary greetings receives blessing from him, so the reciprocal use of ho between these two in a sense cuts across a barā-choti relation which is based both on age and generation, and to this extent it sets this pair apart from all other ho relatives.

Regarding the other particles, ri is used for women both senior and junior, while ra is used for men and usually for seniors. Re is appropriate for juniors, including sometimes young women, for children, and in the plural for groups of men. Ru is only used by spouses to address each other when absolutely necessary and is rarely heard. These

particles thus distinguish to some extent between sex and the ra/re and ri/re pairs allow for some distinction of senior-junior status. We may note that it would seem mausā/i or bārā/i, phuphā/u and kākā/i are included in the ra and ri categories along with parents, brothers, sisters, and people married into the same household, such as bhauji, bahurryā and diurā.

10.2.3 Majā Sohri

The word majā in general means "fine" or "good", and it is used to qualify certain relationships. These are relatively few, and include ban didi-ban dādā and bhātu-sāli, both of which are relationships characterised by relaxed behaviour and joking. In fact, the terms bhātu and sāli are used generally for address for anyone who is marriageable, so that in dances and gatherings all banter between men and women takes place using these terms. We may note here that the jethinnyā-nanduiyā relationship, though not a majā sohri, is also easy and relaxed, though it does not carry the sexual overtones of bhātu-sāli. The māmā-bhainā relationship is also in some sense majā. This was demonstrated in a case where a choice of relationship was possible: (see Figure 15 next page)

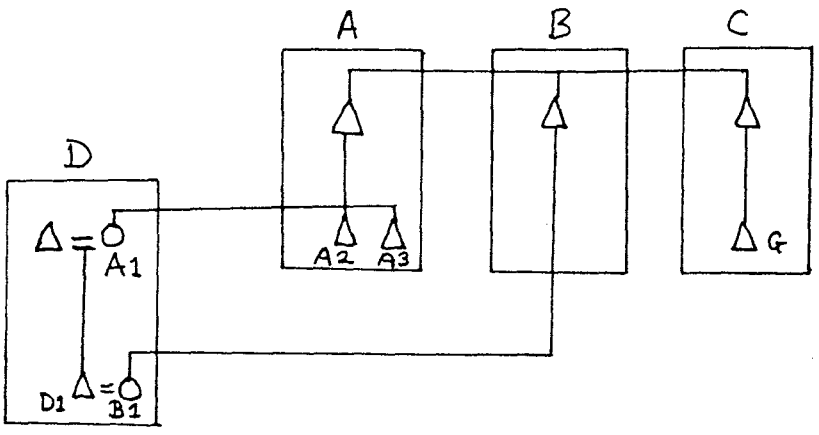


Fig. 15 Showing choice between bhainā or bahanoiyā terms

Houses A, B and C were all once part of the same household. A1 is the mother of D1, and A2 and A3 call him bhainā and he calls them māmā. D1 married a woman B1 who is from the same original household as houses A, B and C, though the marriage took place after it had split into these three units. C1 now calls D1 bahanoiyā, i.e. his yZH since B1 is his yZ, though he could call him bhainā as A2 and A3 do. The relative merits of the two possible terms was occasionally the subject of discussion, but the consensus was that māmā-bhainā is the preferred relationship. C1's argument was that kinship relations are continually changing, and that although in the past he used to call D1 bhainā, he now prefers to use the terms appropriate for the new relationship established by the marriage between D1 and B1. The preference for the māmā-bhainā relationship, which was favoured by D1, hinges on the fact that this relationship is one of mutual respect, and is relaxed, open and easy-going. The māmā in

particular has certain ritual functions in relation to his bhainā, but he is also considered as someone who will help and advise his bhainā, without there being between them any of the overtones of authority as is characteristic, for instance, of the relationship between father and son, in which the barā-choti distinction is much clearer. In contrast to māmā-bhainā the alternative here was a jethān-bahanoiyā relationship, which again is more clearly asymmetrical and oriented towards the jethān as barā, and as a respected person whose household receives prestations from the bahanoiyā (see below Chapter 11).

There is another fairly common situation which indicates a general preference to opt for the māmā-bhainā relationship, this time as against that of phupha-bhatijwā. As quite often happens, two houses exchange women:

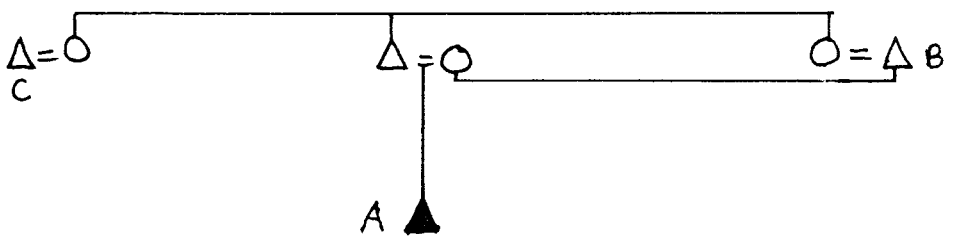


Fig. 16 Showing the choice between māmā and phuphā

B in relation to A can be either a phuphā (FZH) or māmā (MB), but B is always taken as a māmā. In this situation the preference is further explained by the fact that A has his saggā or "true" māmā through his mother and this is the māmā who is chosen for ritual purposes. In contrast, C, who is also FZH, is straightforwardly a phuphā and has no ritual function in relation to his bhatijwā (his WBS).

10.2.4 The Rules of Jutho, and Chalnā-Nāhi Chalnā Sohri

There are two further criteria whereby relatives are distinguished: first, the rule of jutho or pollution transmitted by contact with the leftover food of others, and secondly the rules regulating physical contact, or what is termed chalnā sohri, that is those who can be touched, and nāhi chalnā sohri, those with whom physical contact must be avoided.

It is somewhat artificial to try to classify systematically the whole kinship universe neatly according to the rules of jutho since the Tharu themselves do not do this. In many cases the possibility of such pollution simply does not arise, and in addition there are no specific cleansing rituals to be performed if the rules are broken, except that is for the rules between māmā and bhainā/i. In general one avoids the jutho of juniors within one's own genealogical level. One also avoids the jutho of wife's brothers and their wives and of the wives of younger brothers (bahurryā). For juniors, the jutho of seniors is not dangerous, including that of phuphā/u. On the other hand, however, there is the strictest avoidance of the māmā's jutho by a bhainā/i. This is the only instance which is accompanied by an explicit kind of sanction, in that if the rule is broken, the māmā has to make a gift to the bhainā of a cow, or a calf, or at least some money. It was only in connection with this relationship that I encountered a case where the cause of illness was thought to have resulted from transgression of the jutho restrictions (N.7).

The rules regulating physical contact are quite simple.

Those who must avoid contact are samdhi-samdhinyā, ban jawai-jesās mau, and jethwā-bahurrya. The restriction between the last pair is very widespread in north India and Nepal, and that between ban jawai and jesās mau also occurs commonly but varies to some extent (N.8). In the Tharu case, the jesās mau is a senior who is treated with repsect, but though contact is avoided, normal conversation is perfectly acceptable. As her name itself suggests, the wife's elder sister is to some extent classed with the wife's and sister's husband's mother as a mau and the root je- implies seniority deriving from N:jetha. While being then a senior and equated terminologically with the senior generations of affines, the other part of her name - sās - reflects the fact that she belongs with the other affines who are included in the sās or sasrār category, that is the affines linked to a man through his wife, as I shall explain in a moment.

10.2.5 Summary

To sum up so far, we have seen that the Tharu distinguish between kin and affines in several ways. These distinctions sometimes combine or cut across each other, and are all manifested in forms of behaviour, such as in greetings, in attitudes of respect, avoidance, or joking, and in forms of address.

The barā-choti distinction operates on the basis of age and generation within the agnatic gotyār and outside it in relation to kabila who are not linked through marriage. In relation to affines, this distinction operates differently and depends on age of Ego relative to his or her sibling, or of alter relative to Ego's spouse or sibling's spouse.

We saw further that the category of mukiyā kabila for whom the ho form of address is appropriate, includes affines on both 'sides', but this category also includes māmā-bhainā, a relationship which stands out from the others in that the reciprocal use of ho spans a relationship which in barā-choti terms is based on the double difference of age and generation. This relationship is also one of the majā or "fine" ones, and one may note that it is unlike other majā relations in that they are all between people of different sex. Finally we noted that in regard to rules of jutho this relationship again is stressed. In regard to rules of physical contact, the Tharu follow the usual rules common throughout caste groups in the region, though in their case the restriction between a jesās mau and ban jawaĩ is not accompanied by general avoidance in all contexts.

10.3 Old Gotyār, New Kabila

In this section and in the following two sections I shall examine further the content of the broad category of kabila. The purpose is to see if we can find within kabila any significant sub-categories and in particular to see if there is any difference in the orientation of the relationship of a household on the one hand towards those houses to which it has given women and on the other hand towards those from which it has taken women. We have seen already that for various reasons the house is the unit of fundamental importance, and one of the aims here will be to attempt to provide a simple model or map of the kinship universe in terms of houses, a map that will include

both ghar-phutlak gotyār and the various houses of kabila.

Distinguishing between gotyār we encountered the use of the qualifying terms purān, "old" and lauwā, "new". This "new-old" distinction is applied also to kabila. There is a simple but very important saying: purān gotyār, lauwā kabila, which means "old gotyār, new kabila". This saying sums up some of the essential features of the differences between these two categories and at the same time reflects fundamental aspects of the social system. The saying means that one has, or one seeks to have, good relations with old gotyār and with new kabila. Relations with households of old gotyār, that is those with whom one's agnatic links are long-standing but with whom one still maintains contact, are usually good. By contrast, relations with new gotyār, who may equally be referred to as ghar-phutlak, may be somewhat strained since the residues of the tensions which led to the original split may linger on. Old kabila, however, are forgotten; they fade into the distance over time as a jethān or sālā of one generation becomes a māmā to the next, then a nānā, and then disappears from view (N.9). This is unlike old gotyār with whom links are permanent and irrevocable. New kabila are continually being created anew with each marriage and in each generation, and it is with these new relatives that one seeks to establish good relations from the beginning.

Before going on to give a synchronic model of the various linked kabila households, I must first explain the distinctions made in this general category.

10.4. Sasrār and the Houses of Kabila

The term sasrār or sasrāli refers to the houses which have given wives to ones own. Included in a general way are the houses which strictly speaking are not a man's own immediate sasrār, but are sasrār to his brothers. In order to distinguish, however, one can use the expressions dādu sasrār or bhaiyā sasrār and āpan sasrār, the last meaning "my own sasrār". The transmission of prestations will later show that the relationship to a sasrār house exists both as a relationship between the two houses taken as wholes, and yet at the same time has a primary or focal aspect which is the relation between an individual man and his own wife's natal household. The prestations will also show that included with one's immediate sasrār are certain other households and to a certain extent also this sasrār's recent ghar-phutlak households. Without discussing the prestations here, however, we can see that the terminology itself indicates that we must include several other households: that of the wife's father's sister, who is a man's phuphu sās and whose house is called phuphu sasrār, the wife's mother's brother who is māmā raut and whose household is referred to as māmā sasrār, and the wife's older sister who as we know is called jesās mau. All these terms, whether they are for individuals or houses, contain the terms sas or sās, which is also a part of the term sasrār. We can roughly translate sās/sas for the moment as "affines who have given a wife or who are related by consanguineal links to the wife's natal household". I have noted that the term sasrār refers more generally to the

household of the wife's brothers and father as a whole. To this extent then it corresponds exactly with the Nepali term sasurāli which means "wife's father's family and house" (Turner 1965).

There are various ways of referring to the houses of linked kabila, apart from the sasrār. All houses are named and so the particular name of the house in question can be used, or if one is visiting a house and it is in another village, then one can indicate one's destination by giving the name of the relative (e.g. māmā, phuphu, etc.) preceded by the name of the village, e.g. "I am going to my 'x' phuphu" where 'x' is the village name. Commonly, to refer to the house of such kabila in a more abstract way one simply uses the relevant kin term plus ghar, the word for house: e.g. phuphu ghar, māmā ghar, didi ghar, sāru ghar, etc. One cannot press the analysis of such redundant turns of phrase very far, and it will be through the pattern of prestations that the significant distinctions between kabila will become clear, as will the difference in orientation of an Ego and his household to his sasrār and to his other kabila. Nevertheless, if we use these expressions, which all indicate the house as the relevant unit, to map the houses of kabila, I suggest we come up with the following scheme: (see Figure 17, next page)

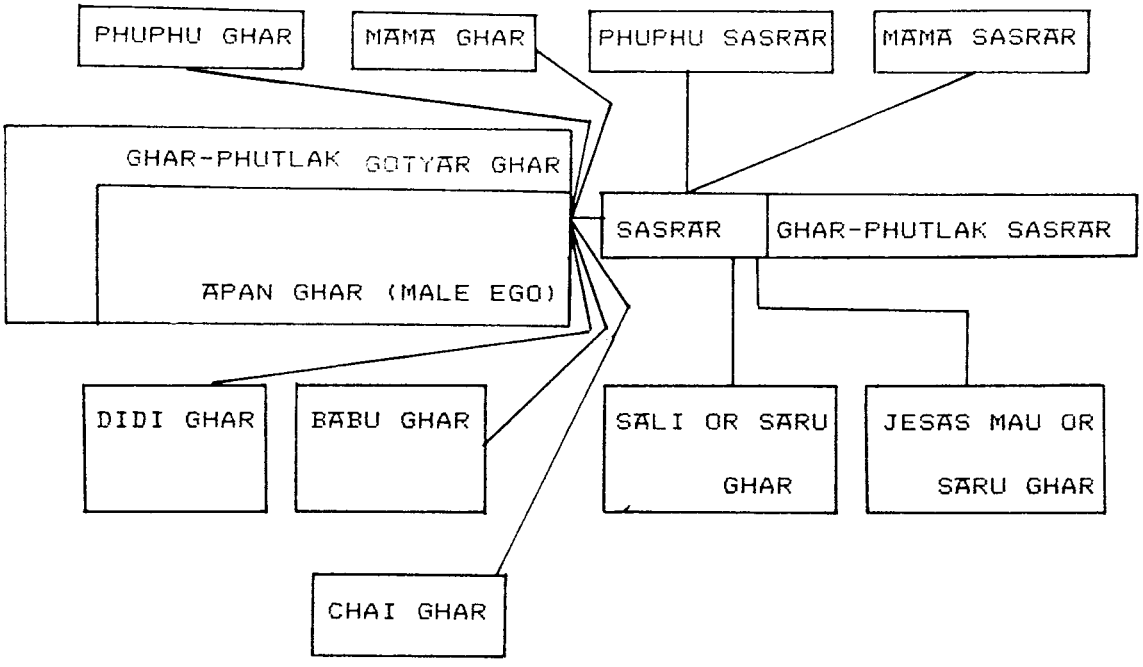


Fig. 17 Showing Houses Linked to a Male Ego

There are three comments we can make. First, the naming of Ego's wife's older sister is ambiguous. As jesās mau she is a sas and belongs with the other sasrār, but her house is not explicitly a sasrār house since it can also be called sāru ghar. Secondly, on the side of the sās or sasrār we do not include the house of wife's younger sister which is either sāli ghar or again sāru ghar. Thirdly, it is interesting to note that apart from the jesās mau, the terms for the other houses linked to a man's sasrār are a combination of two terms in the first of which the man is following his wife, i.e. in phuphu sasrār and māmā sasrār, the phuphu and māmā are not "his" phuphu or māmā but are in fact his wife's phuphu and māmā. I shall consider this category of sasrār further below in the next section and especially in the following chapter on prestations.

10.5 Pahuni Khānā and Maiti Mānnā: Eating as a Guest and Honouring the Maiti

There are a number of expressions to describe customary visits to houses of kabila and sasrār. Such expressions are often linked to the purpose of the visit and may for instance include the name of a certain type of prestation which one is giving. A common general expression is pahuni khānā meaning "to eat (khānā from khainā) as a guest (pahunā)". This expression can be loosely used, to describe visits to all kinds of houses, but for a male Ego there is another expression also frequently used, "maiti mānnā" which is only appropriate for visits to one's sasrār houses. The Tharu word for a woman's natal house is laher, but also commonly used by men is the Nepali word maiti. Mānnā means here "to obey, listen to, heed, observe, follow, respect, honour" (N:mānnu, s.v. Turner 1965) so we can translate maiti mānnā as "to honour the maiti" where honour has the sense of rendering something to a superior. One obviously cannot use this expression when visiting one's sisters' marital houses, for instance; in this case "pahuni khānā" is appropriate. In the region north of Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh Dumont reported that the term pahunā as a category of address is applied to the father's sister's husband, the sister's husband, and the daughter's husband, who in this context are "les alliés respectables" (1961:43). In the Tharu context, however, the orientation is the opposite: one goes pahuni khānā, "to eat as a guest", to the houses of one's wife-takers and to certain consanguines, while one goes maiti

mānnā, "to honour the maiti", to the houses of one's wife-givers, one's sasrār, though in such houses one is still treated as a guest. If the category sasrār isolates those we can term 'wife-givers' from the general category of kabila, these expressions indicate an orientation in the relationship towards the sasrār as superiors, which is the reverse of the north Indian hypergamic ideology.

There is a further aspect of the category sās, which also suggests a superiority of these households. Apart from one's immediate sasrār, that is the houses of one's wife's brothers and father, included as sās are the wife's father's sister, wife's mother's brother, and wife's older sister. In other words, this group includes one's immediate wife-givers and other houses linked to them as seniors, either by generation or by age relative to one's wife. The wife's younger sister, sāli, is not included as sās. I suggest that here we have an extension of the fundametal barā-choti distinction, which is carried over beyond the immediate sasrār to include these other seniors as sās, while those who are choti, the wife's younger sister, are excluded. If this is so it suggests again another feature of the superiority of the sasrār, which is that taken at the level of the house as whole the superiority of the sasrār as a principle is more fundamental than the individual age differences relative to the wife between a man and his wife's older brother (jethān) who is barā and his wife's younger brother (sālā) who is choti. As brothers who are both part of the sasrār household, at the level of the house such individual distinctions are overridden in favour of the collective superiority of the sasrār.

10.6 Conclusion

To sum up, analysis of the distinctions linked to behaviour showed the barā-choti distinction operates according to generation and age directly between gotyār and other consanguines, but relative to a connecting person in relation to affines. It was seen that this distinction is cross-cut by or combined with several others, in the analysis of which the māmā-bhainā relationship appears in most cases as special. This is consistent with the privileged position this relationship occupies in the kinship terminology. Below in Chapter 11 I shall argue that the stress on this relationship can be understood when it is placed in the wider context of the relations established at a ritual level between houses linked by marriage. Still at the level of norms of behaviour, it is interesting to note that there is a congruence between on the one hand the rule of avoidance of physical contact with and the respect accorded to the jesās mau, and on the other hand the fact that she is included in the category of sās. Her inclusion in this category will become fully clear in the next chapter which discusses the system of prestations. Her treatment is of course in direct contrast with that of the sāli with whom marriage is perfectly possible, with whom one has an open joking relationship often with strong sexual overtones, and who is not included within the category of sās.

At the level of the wider categories of kin, the general observation was made that kabila are in a sense continually being 'created' through marriage; they become consanguines to following generations and eventually disappear. The difference

in the relation of the men of a house to their sasrār on one side, and their other kabila including their sisters' marital households on the other side, was suggested by two general expressions used for describing customary visits. It was seen that these expressions implied a certain superiority of the sasrār vis-a-vis their wife-taking households. A further indication of the superiority of the sās and sasrār was suggested by the fact that the content of this category seemed to be based on the barā-choti opposition in that included as sās are the immediate sasrār and those related to it as seniors.

Notes to Chapter 10

N.1 There are no opposing categories which can be translated as 'wife-giver:wife-taker', but in discussions with me Tharu formulated this opposition by the expressions janni delak ghar and janni lelak ghar, meaning "a house to which a wife has been given" and "a house from which a wife has been taken".The former expression is what we would call 'wife-taker' and the latter is 'wife-giver'. We look at this from the point of view of Ego, the Tharu from that of alter. It is significant that lacking clear categories or groups in terms of which to express this opposition, they chose to express it in terms of the house.

N.2 N:ista-mitra means "friends and relations" (s.v. ista Turner 1965). Among the Chetris and Thakuris of Rara village in north-western Nepal the term istha-mit also refers to the most inclusive category of kinship (Krasue 1980:185).

N.3 The Tharu also use the term sainā for a relatonship, from N:sāinu, "kinship, relationship" (s.v. Turner 1965). In Kangra the term sohriye refers to HF/WF households (Parry 1979:299).

N.4 This contrasts with the situation reported for Rara in north-western Nepal (Krause 1980:174, 181-93), and for Bengal (Fruzetti and Ostor 1976). I suggest that the absence of any theory of substances may be related to the role of deities in defining groups and to a certain extent 'consanguinity' and 'affinity'. This will be discussed further below in Chapter 11 and Part 4.

N.5 For dhwāk, cf N:dhok "obeisance, bow" and H:dhoknā "to bow down" (Turner 1965 s.v. dhok and dhoknu). Tharu sometimes commented jokingly that they performed these formal greeting much less frequently than the Brahmans who are forever bowing down to each other.

N.6 For sewā cf N:sebā, "service, attendance on a superior, homage, worship" (s.v. Turner 1965). The sewā greeting is used in death ceremonies when the tel dihwā gives oil to all present, and in the annual Māghi Dewāni khel in the Māghi festival. On the latter occasion it is exchanged between men who otherwise would exchange dhwāk.

N.7 The Tharu are scrupulous in avoiding physical contact and of course the jutho of the local untouchable castes (Damai, Lohar, Bādi, Sunār, Sarki). Tharu do not allow untouchable castes into the inner part of the house (bhitar) and they give them food in the courtyard or in the outer public bahari section of the house. They accept food and water and share pipes and cigarettes with the local higher castes. Some informants told me that they considered the Magar to be of equivalent status to

themselves but they would not eat in each other's houses. I have, however, never observed a situaton of Tharu-Magar contact in which the question of food arose; nor do I know how the local potter caste (kumhāl) are treated in this respect. I think this caste, though it is pure, is considered slightly lower by the Tharu.

N.8 Parry notes that in Kangra the distinction between WyZ and WeZ "has an important behavioural content in that a man jokes with the former, but is avoided by the latter, who is said to be like his WM" (1979:299).

N.9 Madan has reported a similar fading out of relationships among the Kashmir pandits where strangers become affines, kinship ties develop in the next generation and persist for another generation and then the relationship relapses (1975:226).

CHAPTER 11 : PRESTATIONS

In this chapter I shall analyse the pattern of prestations exchanged between households of the different categories identified in the previous chapter. The evidence of prestations will establish more clearly the form of the relationship between a household, and its sasrār and other sās households. Equally important is the relationship in the other direction, i.e. to understand how the sasrār views its wife-taking households. The bulk of the chapter will be concerned with the exchanges arising from marriage, beginning with the transmission of prestations to 'wife-giving' households in section one, and then in section two examining the prestations in the other direction. Section three will focus on the exchanges between households of different categories: the gotyār and the village.

By 'prestation' I refer to the presentation of a customary gift, of which the form and the occasion of transmission are determined by tradition. In some cases it is easy to identify a 'prestation' since it will have a particular name and its presentation may be accompanied by or form part of a ceremony. In other cases, however, the matter is not so immediately evident since either the prestation lacks a distinguishing name or it is not precisely determined in its form by custom. At the same time, some of the prestations, as

will become clear, show a certain amount of variation in their content.

A further aspect of the exchange of prestations is the exchange of services, consisting either of straightforward assistance on major ceremonial occasions, or of ritual services themselves. These exchanges of services are nearly always accompanied also by exchanges of gifts. In this account, therefore, where they occur such services are included in the analysis.

A final preliminary comment, and an obvious one perhaps, is that the analysis will not only aim to show the form and pattern of relations between households of different categories, but will also simultaneously provide further and conclusive evidence for the actual existence of the categories themselves (N.1).

11.1 Prestations to Sasrār and Sās: Jiurā

The link established by a marriage is marked and maintained by a series of prestations transmitted by the husband's household to the wife's natal household and to the other households which are included in the category of sās. In the first year following the marriage the full series is transmitted, and ideally it is the husband himself who should go to present these gifts to the various households concerned. The full series consists of the following items which are given as indicated at four different times in the year:

i) Two large bundles of firewood (kāthi). This is given during or soon after the Māghi festival (Jan 15th) and is

called simply kāṭhi boknā, 'carrying the wood' (see Plate 6).

ii) A rope-string bed (khaṭiyā). This is given during the months of Cait or Baisākh (April-May) and is called 'giving the bed'.

iii) A large round bamboo and leaf rain and sun shield (chattri) worn on the head. This may also be accompanied by a gift of small woven fans (byennā). This is given sometime around Saun (July-August) towards the start of the monsoon, and again the gift has no special name.

iv) A small pot (goldra) of rice-spirit (mad), a mat (dhacyā gondri) a chicken (murgā) and a small wooden stool with a seat woven from coloured string (maciyā). This prestation is usually called jiurā lagainā, which means 'to bring and present the jiurā'. Alternatively it may sometimes be called ṭikā luainā which means 'to apply or put on ṭikā'. I shall discuss the meaning of jiurā and ṭikā in a moment, but we can note here that this fourth prestation carries names which do not refer direcly to any of the items of which it is composed and this distinguishes it immediately from the other three prestations which are referred to only by expressions which include the words for the items given. This prestation begins to be given after the Dasyā festival (see below) (N.2).

All or only certain of these four prestations are conveyed to a number of different households, but in subsequent years the number of households declines and the form of certain

prestations also changes to some extent.During the first year at least, the full series is given to the wife's natal house, the sasrār proper. This is the essential minimum. The transmission to other households varies according to the means of the giver, but a fairly representative pattern is as follows:

- Households which have recently been part of the same unit as the sasrār (i.e. sasrār ghar-phutlak gotyār) receive only a reduced version of the jiurā prestation, consisting of only a mat and a pot of rice alcohol. Depending on the number of such households, their location, and the means of the giver, they may also receive prestations number i) and iii).
- Household of the wife's older sisters (jesās mau) receive the simple form of jiurā, and are more likely than the sasrār gotyār to receive numbers i) and iii).
- Households which are classed māmā sasrār (i.e.WMB) receive the simple jiurā and sometimes number i).
- Households of phuphu sās (WFZ) will receive the simple jiurā, but probably not the other prestations.

In the second year the series given to the sasrār proper changes in that the bed is replaced by a gift of rope (dauriyā) to be used for restringing a bed, and perhaps already the full jiurā will become the reduced gift of a mat and a pot of alcohol (see Plate 7). In subsequent years the giver will maintain the flow of prestations at this level for as long as possible, but eventually the whole series will reduce to the simple form of jiurā. The last of the other prestations to be discontinued is usually the firewood (number ii). The

factors which influence the continuation of transmission are the time available to make the mats, bamboo rain shields and rope, the spatial distance of the sās or sasrār households, and the economic resources of the giver.

The prestations to the other households are also reduced over time. The pattern seems to vary considerably, but in general after the sasrār proper, it is the jesās mau who will continue to receive more and for a longer time than the other households. In some cases the māmā sasrār and phuphu sās may be left out altogether after the first year. The different pattern of giving to different household is less explicable and, as noted, varies considerably. The differences are partly related to the relative closeness and strength of the ties between the two houses. Thus the sasrār proper clearly receives the fullest set of prestations since this is the wife's own home, and the household with which one has, at least to begin with, frequent contact and with which one seeks to maintain the best relations. Correspondingly the greater the distance both social and physical, then the sooner will the flow of prestations fall away (N.3). It is important to note, however, that it is only the jiurā prestation which is transmitted to all the various households, and which is in a sense the 'core' prestation in that it will continue to be given at least to the sasrār and perhaps to one or two other houses, after the other prestations may have been discontinued . These are thus further aspects, apart from the above mentioned linguistic ones, which set jiurā apart from the other prestations.

If we now map the transmission of jiurā (in either of its forms) from the point of view of Ego's household, we come up with the following scheme:

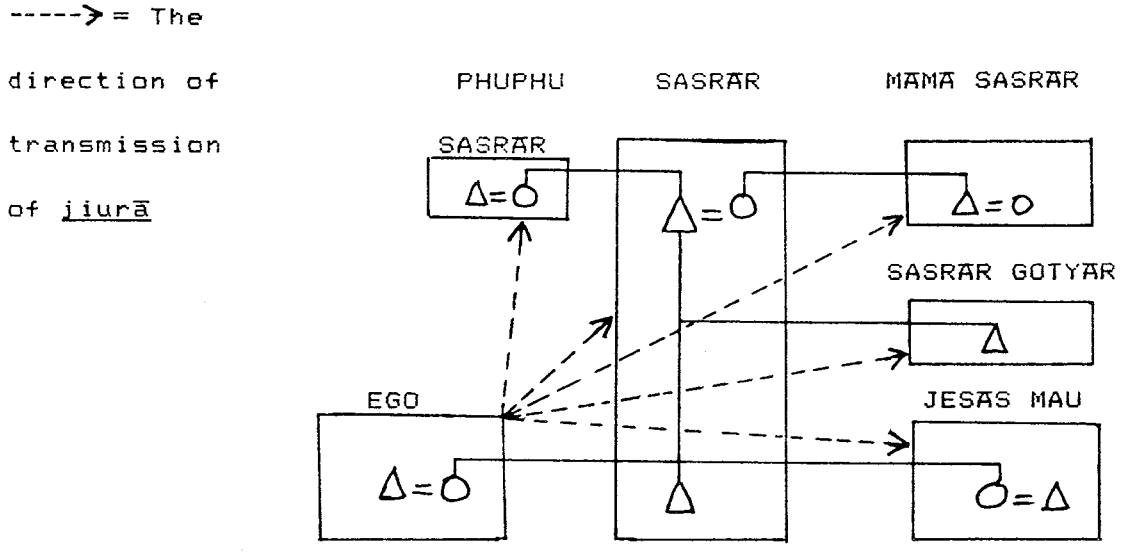


Fig. 18 The Transmission of Jiurā

The houses included as recipients of jiurā are exactly the same ones which were identified in the previous chapter as those which comprise the category of sās (N.4). The pattern of prestations, at least of jiurā, thus confirms that these households which were isolated on linguistic grounds, do indeed make up a significant social category. If for the moment we gloss this category as 'wife-givers', the question then arises as to how jiurā is reciprocated and whether there exists a corresponding category of 'wife-takers' seen either from Ego's viewpoint, or relationally from the point of view of any one of the sās households looking towards the house or houses from which it receives jiurā. The second section of this chapter will discuss this question.

There are three further observations to make at this stage about the transmission of jiurā. First as noted above during the first year after marriage it is the husband himself (Ego in Fig. 18) who must actually visit these households to give jiurā. This shows that the relationship established by the marriage has an individual aspect. Secondly, however, in subsequent years it is not necessary for the husband himself to visit his sās; any other man of his household may go instead. In addition on the one hand the assembling of the jiurā items may often be carried out collectively by the household, and on the other hand the jiurā prestation itself, is not given or presented to any specific individual. The three latter points clearly reflect the fact that the marriage also establishes relations at the level of the house as a whole with the other sās houses. This house to house relationship is of course consistent with the way the terms are used: thus a man's sasrār and jesās mau are also terminilogically sasrār to his brothers. These features of the transmission of jiurā suggest then that the marriage relation, which this prestation marks, operates both at the levels of the individual and of the house.

The third feature of the pattern of jiurā is that it would seem to give a certaim diachronic recognition to affinal links, by including as recipients the phuphu sasrār and māmā sasrār. The inclusion here of the māmā sasrār (WMB) is congruent with the manner in which links are recognized at a ritual level between a woman and her children, and the deities of her houses of origin, which include her natal, her mother's natal (or her mother's brother's) and her mother's

mother's natal houses, as I explained above, Chapter 9 section 2.

The sās households not only receive prestations, they also call on the services of their jiurā-giving houses in major rituals such as marriage, Barkā Pujā, and for the elaborate form of first hair-cutting Mur Bhwāj (see below) On these occasions the invited men will assist with tasks involved in the preparation and distribution of food and beer to the other guests. Men visiting sās houses for such purposes will often refer to this as maiti mānnā (see chapter 10) and will take with them a gift of a mat (dhacyā gondri) and a pot of beer (jār). Their wives if they also come bring a small amount of vegetables. In the other direction one will invite one's sasrār to such rituals, but they come as guests and are not invited to work. If they come then they will either bring nothing or simply a pot of beer, while their wives will bring a small amount of vegetables. In fact the sasrār invited on such occasions bring with them the same gifts as any other member of a house of the village, except for members of houses of the same gotyār. The pattern of gifts brought on these ritual occasions, from the point of view of Ego's house reveals three groups: houses of 'wife-takers' who bring mats and beer, houses of co-villagers who bring beer and with which we can include the sasrār and houses of Ego's gotyār (N.5).

We have seen in the previous chapter that the sasrār enjoy a certain superiority vis-a-vis their 'wife-takers'. The fact that they receive the bride-price, a variety of prestations, and also can call on their wife-takers for assistance conforms with this superiority, especially since they

do not render service or give equivalent prestations in return. Describing the prestations Rajaure has said that:

> The mat and the machiyā symbolize respect and honour, in that they are seats which raise the wife-givers from the ground, while the wife-takers must sit on the ground. The firewood and chicken symbolize the comfort and health of his (Ego's) wife's parents. The chicken represents the feasts they should enjoy, the firewood the protection against the cold winter. (1981:35)

This seems a reasonable interpretation of these gifts, but I was not given an explanation in these terms by the Tharu. Furthermore, while the seat and mat may indeed symbolize respect, it is going too far to say that in contrast the wife-takers must sit on the ground. This is not the case, since the wife-taker himself is treated as a respected and honoured guest by his sasrār. The 'core' jiurā prestation, however, which as I have argued is distinct from the other prestations, has further aspects that suggest the wife-givers' superiority, but through a religious idiom.

The jiurā prestation is not what its name might suggest it to be. The prestation consists ultimately of a mat of a certain type (dhaciyā gondri) and a pot of alcohol, but jiurā is the name for small white or pale yellow maize shoots which are sown in a pot and kept to grow in a dark corner of the house some days before the Dasyā festival. These maize shoots are later cut and included in offerings to the household and village deities and then exchanged between household members and co-villagers as ṭikā (N.6). In Nepali ṭikā is a mark or spot placed on the forehead, often as a sect mark. For the Tharu, ṭikā refers either to the mark worn by women as

decoration on the forehead or to tatoos carried in particular by women on the lower part of the leg, or again in ceremonial contexts it refers to ritual marks of red or black put onto deities or shrines. In certain ceremonies tikā consisting of grains or rice or rice flour are exchanged betweem people. usually it is first placed by a senior person on the forehead of a junior, who then in turn gives it back to the senior. When jiurā shoots are presented as tikā, they are placed behind the ears or tucked into the head band of the cloth cap (topi) worn by most men (see Plates 8, 9). When this jiurā or tikā prestation is given to sasrār, however, it does not include any actual maize shoots and no tikā prestation ceremony takes place. The naming of this prestation links it to the Dasyā festival in the context of which the meaning and connection of the terms become clear. Important also is that this prestation originates in this festival. It begins to be transferred after the ninth and tenth days of Dasyā. People may continue visiting their sasrār with jiurā during the following months, but it should be given before the Māghi festival which occurs about three and a half months later.

The Dasyā festival is the Tharu equivalent of the Nepali Dasai festival, and is held at the same time, during the light fortnight of the month of Asoj (or N:Āsvin, T:Kuwār). The Tharu have no myth about Dasyā, and I rarely heard it described as Durgā Purjā. For the Tharu Dasyā is a time when the ancestors (pittar), and spirits (bhut) in general, are active. The ancestors specifically, and some add the deities also, are said to come from their abode in Harikabilās (N.7) up to the boundaries of the village where they linger for a while

before coming up to stay around the walls and under the eaves of the house. During the festival they are led into the deity room right inside the house where they are fed. This is the only time in the year when pittar are ceremonially fed on a regular basis. The other occasion when they are fed is during post-burial ceremonies. Also during the festival the various household deities are fed. Unlike the Māghi festival, Dasyā cannot be 'broken' (bigral) by an inauspicious event such as a death in the household which causes the celebration of Māghi to be abandoned. The ancestors come and so they must be fed; the festival cannot be omitted by anyone.

The actual sequence of rituals spans several days and is too complex to describe in detail here (N.8). Offerings of various kinds are made to village deities, household deities,and to the ancestors. During the festival men also visit their household priest taking a prestation of alcohol, some maize cobs, and vegetables. Their priests give them ritual substances: incense (dhup) and rice grains mixed with human blood (bān) (N.9). This exchange confirms the link between priest and client household for the coming year, and this link is dramatically realised on the ninth and tenth days of the festival when possession rituals take place in these priests' houses. During these rituals the men of the priest's household, men of the same gotyār, and men of client households become possessed by and ritually handle the priest's household deities (N.10).

Another series of ceremonies involve the offering of jiurā to deities and the use of jiurā in tikā between

people. Jiurā are first offered to village deities and then to household deities with certain foods. The household head or senior man present then gives jiurā as ṭikā to the other men of the house who each in turn return ṭikā to him. Subsequently jiurā are included with food offerings to the ancestors, and are later taken by household heads to the village headman's house, where again they are used in ṭikā exchanges between the headman and all male villagers who wish to participate. The pattern of ṭikā exchanges follows the normal Hindu logic. The offering of jiurā to the deities and their subsequent use as ṭikā affirms the superiority of the deities. Similarly in the pattern of exchanges between people it is a senior and superior who initially gives jiurā as ṭikā to a junior and inferior who then reciprocates in his turn.

The total set of offerings and exchanges show that in Dasyā the Tharu affirm most important social and religious relationships: to the village deities, household deities, ancestors, household priest, village headman, co-villagers, household head, and between household members. The pattern also

restates the superior-inferior orientation of these relationships, affirming the superiority of the deities and ancestors, and of the village headman, and household head. In fact, however, jiurā or tikā is also transferred to sasrār, thus affirming the link to affines, but only in one direction, to 'wife-givers'. The actual giving of jiurā to the sasrār does not necessarily suggest their superiority, but the mat and the pot of alcohol when seen in the full context of the festival do suggest just this.

In most offerings to deities and ancestors, distilled alcohol (mad) is an essential item and in this the Dasyā rituals are no exception (N.11). During the festival mad is given to the deities, the ancestors, the household priest, and also the the men during their possession (susainā) on the ninth and tenth days. Tharu comment that Dasyā is the festival of alcohol while Māghi is that of beer ("Dasyā ma mad Māghi ma jār = in Dasyā distilled alcohol, in Māghi beer).

In the weeks leading up to Dasyā in the evenings men are busy making new mats. Fresh amd pure (cwākhā) mats are required in the festival to provide a seat for the ancestors when they eat their meal, and also for the possessed men when they are crouched in front of the deities in the deity room. New mats are also, of course, given to sasrār.

The fact that the prestation to sasrār is called jiurā or tikā indicates that by its transmission the link with these affines is being marked as one among the other relations which are affirmed during this festival. While placing the prestation firmly in the total context of Dasyā, however,its content of alcohol and mats suggests that the link

with the sasrār is being marked by objects which in terms of the total context are appropriate for ancestors and deities or men possessed by these agencies. The prestation thus has a religious or ritual reference, or to put this another way, it appears in the context of the festival to express the link with the sasrār in terms of a ritual idiom. One might almost suppose that the givers were providing a ritual service, or at least presenting objects for ritual use to their sasrār, were it not for the fact that the sasrār themselves do not use the mat or alcohol given to them in their own rituals.

The naming and the content of the jiurā prestation must thus be understood within the context of the Dasyā festival. By its name, jiurā or tikā lagainā brings the relationship to the sasrār into the general framework of the set of exchanges which mark or express other relationships during Dasyā. Jiurā is offered to deities and ancestors and then exchanged as tikā between men of the household and men of the village. By its content, however, the jiurā prestation extends to or includes the sasrār in exchanges which are more specifically oriented from men to their household deities and ancestors. I suggest that this prestation does not indicate that the sasrār are actually equivalent to the deities and ancestors, but the fact that they receive the objects which are appropriate for such entities is another indication of these affines' superiority. It is striking also that in all the exchanges which take place at this time, there is no prestation or exchange which is oriented towards or which specifically marks the relationship of a household to its wife-taking affines.

Finally there is the general point that analysis of the jiurā prestation has led us to place it in the wider ritual context of the Dasyā festival, and in this process we can see that all the various exchanges are in a sense first ordered in relation to or originate from the deities and ancestors. Examination of this prestation has ultimately underlined the primary and overarching importance of relations to the deities and ancestors in the wider pattern of social relations. The two, relations to deities and relations between people, are inextricably linked, together forming interrelated parts of a whole. As I have stated in Part 2, and in the introduction to Part 3, it is only in relation to the deities and their associated rituals that one can arrive at a satisfactory understanding of the groups and the relations between them in Tharu society.

11.2 Prestations between Brother and Sister, and to 'wife-takers': agrāsan and nisrau.

In this section I shall discuss the prestations which are transferred fom the sasrār to their 'wife-taking' households. The important point here is that there is no prestation in this direction which is equivalent to jiurā. The nisrau prestation is to a certain extent a reciprocal counterprestation to jiurā, but it differs from jiurā in significant respects. If jiurā can be said to be an 'affinal' prestation which arises from and marks the relationship established between two houses by a marriage, nisrau, on the other hand, stresses consaguineal relationships and in particular that between brother and married sister, though it

too has an affinal component.

There is an immediate but unmarked reciprocation by the sasrār of the jiurā and other prestations they receive. When the visitors who have brought jiurā are about to leave the house, one of them is sometimes given a small sum of money. The amount of cash varies considerably ranging from around 5 Rupees up to 25 Rupees, but this gift of money is not obligatory in the same way as jiurā appears to be and it may be omitted altogether. This cash gift also is not named and is given in a casual and even surreptitious manner, being slipped into the hand of the visiting daughter or sister's husband just before he prepares to depart.

In order to understand the other prestation, nisrau, which passes from the sasrār to the women who have left on marriage, we must first see it in the context of other exchanges between brother and sister. It was argued that the brother-sister relationship occupies a central place in the kinship terminology. The analysis of exchanges further shows that this relationship is marked or stressed, and in part reveals its dual aspects: it is both consanguineal and yet simultaneously the relationship which links houses together as affines (N.12).

The Tharu follow the Hindu calendar for celebrating the birth of Kṛṣṇa (Janmastami). This minor festival, called Astimki by the Tharu is wholly a woman's affair. It occurs in the dark half of the month of Saun or Bhadaun. In the evening the women of the village take a plate of rice (cāmal = uncooked husked rice), leaves, flowers and certain fruits to the headman's house. There they make offerings of these things before a large mural

which contains a small representation of Kṛṣṇa (T:kānhā) in the centre. The headman himself is responsible for drawing this mural during the day. The women do tikā, placing marks on the mural, and then return home where they sit together to eat a meal of cucumber, fruit and yogurt (see Plates 9, 10). Before eating each woman or young girl takes a portion of each of the foods and sets it aside in a plate. The next morning after a second visit to the mural, the women eat a full meal of rice with several vegetable side dishes but again before eating they set aside portions of each type of food. The action of setting these portions aside is called agrāsan kaharnā which means 'taking out the agrāsan' (N.13). The reserved portions of food which here are called agrāsan are given to dādu bhaiyan, that is to 'brothers'. This was what I was repeatedly told, but more detailed enquiries as to who exactly received agrāsan revealed that these foods were also sometimes given to bhainā (HZS) and phuphā (F2H). Unmarried girls give these foods to their brothers in the same house, but women married into the house send these foods to their brothers in their natal houses, though usually only within the village.

Some weeks later the men celebrate the minor festival of Atwāri. This takes place on a sunday (atwār, from which the festival takes its name), in the bright half of Bhadaun. The festival is in commemoration of Bhimsen (T:Bhewā) the second and strongest of the five Pandauas (T:Pando) of the mahābharat epic. In each house the men spend the day preparing wheat and rice breads (roti) which are cooked in oil. In the evening all the men and boys of the house together eat a meal of roti, mad (alcohol), and yogurt. Before eating they set aside shares

of the foods as agrāsan (see Plate 11). In the morning they do this again but with shares of a proper meal of rice and vegetables. The mens' agrāsan is given to didi-bābun, that is to sisters who are still in the house, and it is also sent to married sisters. A man may also take these foods to his phuphu(F2) if there is no other man of the senior generation available to do so. When the men visit to give these foods they are fed and in turn may be given some foods to take back home with them.

The reciprocal exchanges of agrāsan, a named prestation of foods, thus appears to be transmitted between brother and sister. This much is clear from the men's point of view, though for the women it is true that the ZS and possibly the FZH are included. In explaining the movement of agrāsan, however, both men and women emphasized that these foods are given by sisters to brothers and vice-versa. In fact gifts of food from a house to its outmarried women take place informally at other times during the year. So for instance women are invited to eat a meal of pork and rice during the celebration in their natal home of the minor Hardhwār festival which marks the end of ploughing of the paddy crop (N.14). If women cannot come at this time, then, a man of the house may visit the married women to give them their "shares" (bhāg) of the festival food. In contrast to agrāsan, however, such gifts of food are not specifically named, nor is it emphasized that the gift is from a brother to a sister. These informal exchanges seem rather to indicate the continuing relationship that a woman has with her natal house as a whole and in kinship terms this includes the parent-child, brother-sister, and brother's child-father's

sister relationship. The emphasis in agrāsan, however, is on the brother-sister relationship, without regard to marriage since it is given both to sisters who have left in marriage and to those who are still in the house.

The nisrau prestation to a certain extent resembles the informal exchanges of foods and the more formal agrāsan exchanges in that it too marks a woman's continuing relation with her natal home and in that it appears to centre on the brother-sister relationship, but nisrau also differs from these other exchanges in ways that will now become clear. Just as jiurā originates in Dasyā, nisrau belongs to the Māghi festival. On the first day of Māgh (Māgh Sankrānti) the men leave the house very early to bathe in the nearby rivers or streams (N.15). They then return home and before eating they enter the deity room of the house. Placed in this room are three baskets containing husked rice (cāmal), salt (nun) and whole black grain (urud). The men take five double handfuls from each basket and put these into three smaller baskets placed to one side (see Plate 12). There are as many sets of the three smaller baskets as there are generations (pustā) of men in the house. This action is called nisrau kaharnā, or 'taking out the nisrau'. The word nisrau itself refers to the three items (rice, salt, black grain). It is probably related to N:najarānā and H:nazrāna "a present" (s.v. Turner 1965); it is possible that this word has another meaning which could help us uncover the significance of these items, but I have not been able to discover what this might be. The nisrau is collected up by the women of the house who then add to it and divide it out into shares which are to be sent to a number of different

women. It is the men themselves who that day or later take the nisrau and give it to the women concerned (see Plate 13).

In explaining who the recipients of nisrau are, the men emphasized that it is given to married sisters. It was stated that men of each generation give to their sisters of the same generation. In addition, however, it appeared that nisrau is also given to other women: to the sister's daughter, the wife's younger sister, and the wife's brother's daughter. In all cases nisrau is only given to women who are married. It was explained further that nisrau is given to women in those houses from which one receives jiurā. The pattern of nisrau prestations can therefore be mapped like this:

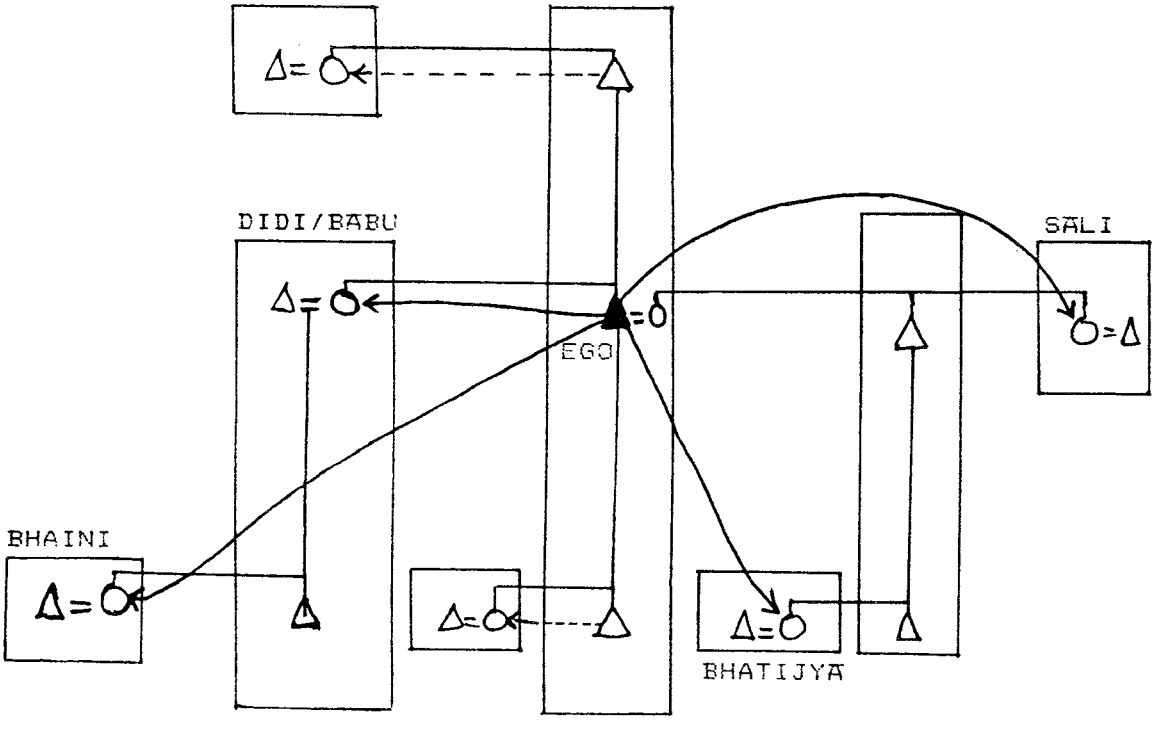


Fig. 19 The Transmission of Nisrau

In the diagram the dotted arrows represent the transmission of nisrau to married sisters by men of the generations above and

below Ego. This is to indicate that nisrau is given to sisters by brothers grouped by generation. The full arrows indicate the transmission of nisrau for Ego. He shares with his brothers in the nisrau given to his (their) bhaini, but in the other direction the bhatijyā and sāli who receive nisrau are linked to him individually through his wife. These arrows, unlike those representing the transmission of jiurā above in Fig. 18 link Ego directly to the recipients. In Fig. 18 (jiurā) the arrows terminate at the square outlines representing the houses involved. This difference reflects a most important distinction between jiurā and nisrau which is that whereas jiurā is given to a house as a whole, nisrau is given to a woman as her own personal property. It must be emphasized that a woman is free to do as she wishes with the nisrau she receives. Her nisrau does not become part of communal household property. In fact women often sell the rice etc. they receive and use the proceeds to buy clothes or ornaments for themselves or their children. Unlike jiurā, nisrau is personal property and it is significant too that cash can be given instead of the traditional rice, salt and grain. The substitution of the traditional items for cash seems to be becoming more widespread, though the amounts of cash given vary. In the cases I witnessed, the amount given was between 5 and 10 rupees.

According to the Tharu, and as the two diagrams (figs. 18 and 19) show, nisrau appears to be the exact reciprocal to jiurā. In stating this, however, informants generally explained that one receives nisrau from those houses to which one gives jiurā. This suggests that the nisrau prestation

follows from the initial jiurā and this is consistent with the ideal chronological order of events: the marriage traditionally should take place in Phāgun, the jiurā prestation will be sent in the following Dasyā, and it is followed three months later in Māghi by the return of nisrau. The two prestations, however, differ and are not directly reciprocal. Jiurā is a purely affinal prestation: it is given by men to households that in every case are linked to the givers by marriage alone. Nisrau, however, is given to specific women, who as a group include, from a male Ego's point of view, both 'consanguines' (Z,ZD) and 'affines' (WYZ, WBD). Dumont speaking of prestations in north Indian caste groups, has suggested that "un cadeau envoyé 'à la soeur mariée', dès qu'il deborde sa personne, est un cadeau d'affinité" (1961:26). Clearly this is not the case with nisrau, since it is given to specific women as their personal property. I suggest that nisrau is primarily, though not wholly, a consanguineal prestation to the married sister. We have already seen that the brother-sister relationship is reciprocally marked by the exchange of agrāsan, and in this connection it is significant that men in the first place explained nisrau as a gift to their sisters. Nisrau however differs from agrāsan in that unlike the latter it only concerns married sisters and is oriented , being only given by brothers to their sisters. If nisrau has a consanguineal aspect, it nevertheless is also linked to affinity: it is given to married women, it includes categories of women linked to a male Ego through his wife (WyZ, WBD) and it is explicitly said to be the return prestation of jiurā (N.16).

To sum up, jiurā is given to affines and to other seniors' households, while nisrau is given to married sisters, junior female consanguines related through the sister and junior female 'affines' related through a wife. The senior-junior opposition, however, does not hold in relation to the sasrār as recipients of jiurā or in relation to the married sisters. Insofar as jiurā is given to the sasrār household collectively, the recipients include among the wife's brothers those who may be both senior (jethān) and junior (sālā') in relation to ego and his brothers. In the other direction, similarly, nisrau is given by brothers to their married sisters whether older or younger than Ego and his brothers. I suggest that if we take only these two sets of households, the sasrār and the sisters' marital houses, we can see one of the essential features of the system which is that households recognise and stress affinal links primarily in only one direction towards their sasrār or 'wife-givers'. In the other direction, towards sisters' marital households or 'wife-takers', the affinal link establsihed by marriage is recognised, but is secondary to the emphasis placed on the continuing relationship of the woman with her natal household and with her brothers in particular. In other words, in relation to 'wife-takers' a household stresses consanguineal rather than affinal links.

A married woman's continuing relation with her natal household, indicated by the exchange of agrāsan and nisrau, is also evident from a number of other facts which were discussed above in chapter 9, section 2. Of these, I have already recalled in this chapter that a woman and her children are to a certain extent under the influence of her deities of

origin (i.e. her natal, her MB, and MMB's household/gotyār deities). It is against this background perhaps that one can see the ritual service rendered by a woman's brother for her children, as taking its logical place. In keeping with my intention to include with'prestations the exchange of ritual and other kinds of more mundane services, I shall here briefly describe the ritual role of a woman's brother.

Traditionally a woman's brother is called for the first haircutting of her son. This takes place several months or a year after the birth, and is called Chutiyā Butlā Kwornā which means 'to shave the polluted hair' (kwornā = to shave, butlā = hair, chutiyā from chut meaning 'pollution'; s.v. Turner 1965, chut, "touch, infection"). Sometimes, if a woman has had miscarriages or still births or if previous children have died, the parents may decide to postpone this haircutting until the son is four or five years old. At this stage the māmā (i.e. the child's mother's brother) is called to shave all the hair in the much more elaborated ceremony called Mur Bhwāj which means 'feast or marriage of the head' (N.17). From the time of the decision to perform Mur Bhwāj up to the actual ceremony, the parents' household keeps a pig which is killed for the ceremony to provide meat for the feast. The māmā himself provides a set of new clothes for the child, including a white turban and a length of white cloth worn as a kind of shawl. After the haircutting is finished the child is dressed in these, which are exactly the clothes of a bridegroom. The māmā himself receives one hind leg (phendwā) of the big pig.

It is difficult to interpret the māmā's role in this ceremony. From one point of view he can be seen as removing

pollution. This places him in an ambiguous position. As someone who removes pollutiom he appears to occupy a position inferior to his bhainā, and in this respect it is significant that the other two specialists required for the ritual are the leather worker (Sarki) and goldsmith (Sunār), both low caste untouchables. It may be that here we have an instance of influence from high cast practice, in terms of which the wife-giver (māmā) is inferior and therefore someone in an appropriate position to remove pollution for his superior affines. An alternative interpretation, however, is that here the māmā is playing the role of a Brahman priest (purohit), a role which would make him superior to his bhainā and to his sister's marital household as a whole. Neither of these interpretations is satisfactory and I suggest that the māmā's role in relation to his bhainā should be viewed as noted above against the background of a woman's continuing connection with her natal household and its deities and spirits which continue to influence her well-being and that of her children. In this context her brother, who is māmā to her son, is the appropriate person to act in certain rituals which assure the proper growth and health of her child. In the haircutting rituals, and in that for teeth which I shall describe, the māmā is the principal officiant and none of the Tharu priests (guruwā) are required.

The role of the māmā in assuring the correct and proper growth of his sister's children is clearly shown by another ceremony called Ultā Dāt Turainā which means "to check or stop the opposite or inverted teeth". Sometimes turainā is replaced by the verb katainā meaning "to cut

off". This ceremony is performed for sister's sons or daughters who when they get their second teeth, first grow upper teeth. It is unnecessary if the children first acquire lower teeth. It was explained that if a child's second teeth first grow in the upper gums, these teeth are called N:māmā lai khāne dāt, or "teeth for eating the māmā". To get top teeth first is a sign of incorrect growth and one possible reason for this can be that the child has been sleeping too often with its head at the foot end of the bed and its feet at the head end. Beds have ends appropriate for the head and feet which are marked by the pattern of the bed's stringing . Similarly the dhacyā type of mat (gondri) has top and bottom sides, and one should always sit or sleep on the top side. In funerary rituals the bed and mat for carrying the corpse are both used in inverted positions (N.18). The parents of the child take it to visit the māmā, and they bring with them a mat, pot of alcohol, a chicken, some dhikri which are steamed wheat or rice cakes, and sometimes a pot of beer. In this list we can identify the usual set of items included in the jiurā prestation, which the māmā receives anyway after Dasyā from his bhainā's household. The dhikri, however, are the most usual form of food which women take with them both when they visit and when they return from their laher, which in this case, of course, is the māma''s house itself. The parents and child stay for a period of one, three or five days. The māmā meanwhile buys a new metal plate. The ceremony takes place when the visitors are preparing to depart and are gathered in the courtyard. The māmā closes the doors of the house and speaks through them to his bhainā/i in the courtyard saying "dudh-bhāt khaibo ki āpan

mai-māmā khaibo?", which means "will you eat milk-rice or will you eat your own mai (MBW) and māmā (MB)?". The child replies "I shall eat milk-rice". The māmā pushes the new plate with milk-rice on it through the doors and reaches through to put some of the food into the child's mouth. He closes the doors again, leaving the plate with the child in the courtyard. The visitors then leave for home (N.19).

It is apparent then that the māmā has a special connection with his bhainā/i, as a part of which he has certain ritual responsibilities. I have already shown in chapter 8 and 10 that this relationship is set apart from others in the relationship terminology and in wider aspects of kinship address and behaviour. As also noted this relationship, especially with its ritual elements, is congruent with the continuing relation between a woman and her children, and the deities of her houses of origin. Furthermore, consistent with this scheme is the emphasis from a man's point of view on the link with his sister rather than on an affinal link with her husband and his household. In the other direction (i.e. from a man to his WB) we saw that the māmā receives certain prestations on the occasions when he plays a ritual role in his sister's son's haircutting and in 'turning' his sister's children teeth. The Mur Bhwāj ceremony has many similarities to marriage ceremonies, one of which is that the sister's son's dress is the same as that of a bridegroom. Other parallels include: the presence of musicians of the Damai (tailor) caste, the singing of māngār songs which are otherwise sung in particular in marriage ceremonies, the washing of the feet of the main participants in the ceremonies and of the guests who come to

attend, the kinds of prestations brought by different categories of guests which replicate exactly those they would bring to a normal marriage, and finally of course the fact that marriage ceremonies and this haircutting are both termed bhwāj, a word which means both "marriage" and "feast". It is not surprising then that the māmā receives a pig's hindleg, which is one of the items transmitted at least once and sometimes up to three times during the course of marriage negotiations and ceremonies. The pig's leg suggests that the māmā is seen as an affine, as a wife's brother, and the prestations of a mat, a pot of alcohol and a chicken which are presented to him on the occasion of Dāt Turainā confirm that he is being treated as an affine and a member of the sasrār household. A man's and his brother's relations with their marital sister's household are complex. As recipients of jiurā, brothers appear as one thing, as 'affines', but in return as givers of nisrau they stress their relationship with their sister as 'consanguine'. This brother-sister relationship would appear to be consistent with a man's special relatiom to his siter's children, but in the context of rituals involving his sister's children he receives 'affinal' prestations.It is perhaps this dual aspect of a man's relation to his sister's household, as being both a 'consanguine' and and 'affine', that engenders his very special role and relation as māmā' to his sister's children, his bhainā/i.

The relation of a māmā to his bahinā, however, is not the same as that to his bhaini. The māmā's ritual role for the bhainā only concerns the period up to the bhainā's marriage, and within this the early years of the bhainā's

childhood in particular. The māmā plays no special role in his bhainā's marriage, and none thereafter. It would seem as though their 'consanguineal' link is gradually weakened in favour of the distinction between them as men of different gotyar. In regard to his bhaini, however, although the māmā himself has no ritual role after her marriage, his household and therefore gotyār deities are still considered to affect her fertility and well being and that of her children. After his marriage the bhainā is no longer ritually linked with his māmā and is not personally responsible for any prestations to him, though he may carry his father's prestations to his māmā's house, but these are the prestations of affinity marking the relationship of his father to a wife's brother. The bhaini's continuing relationship with her mothers brother's household is marked by the fact that she receives nisrau from her māmā, while her husband gives jiurā to her māmā whom he calls māmā raut, clearly an affine. The difference here between bhainā and bhaini in relation to their māmā, is surely an aspect of another fundamental principle which is that gotyār membership is transmitted by men to their sons and daughters, but while sons remain in the gotyār and in the house, daughters leave the gotyār and the house. A son, however, begins life under the influence of his mother's deities of origin, but this influence appears to fade and end with his marriage. A daughter remains linked to her mother's deities of origin and transmits this with that of her own marital gotyār's (household's) deities to her own daughter in turn. There are thus two sets of persisting 'consanguineal' relationships: those within the gotyār, and

those between a woman with her children and her laher (which is her original gotyār), her mother's natal house (mamān) and her mother's mother's house (jhamān). In this system, then, after marriage a woman remains linked to her natal house and gotyār and so on back two generations to two different houses through the maternal line. To put this another way a woman leaves her gotyār on marriage, but at the same time she brings something with her to her husband's house. A woman's continuing link with her 'origins' is marked by the nisrau prestation given by brothers to married sisters, and is congruent with the continuing relation of these brothers as māmā to their sister's children. The complementary relation to these persisting relations of 'consanguinity' is that of affinity, which as I have shown is only emphasised in one direction towards wives' brothers and their households, in the opposite direction to nisrau.

Ultimately, however, we must recognise that these two sets of relationships, which in this analysis I have termed 'consanguineal', in fact are expressed in terms of, or better still, derive from and are ordered in terms of relations to deities. The gotyār as I shall show in part 4 is defined in terms of its deities, and as explained above a woman's continuing links for her laher, mamān and jhamān are bound up with the influence on her of the deities of these households. Marriage is the critical point at which the two sets of 'consanguineal' relations intersect. In part 4 I shall also show how just as the gotyār is to be understood in relation to deities, so also the house itself, the fundamental unit of the system, must be understood in relation both to the deities

which establish its gotyār affiliation and in terms of the deities which women bring with them, or rather which follow and continue to influence them after their marriage.

11.3 Balanced Reciprocity : Prestations Between Villagers and Gotyār

In this section I shall describe the remaining sets of prestations which are those exchanged between the houses of the same gotyār and of the same village. These latter exchanges are unlike jiurā and nisrau in that they are characterised by a balanced reciprocity.

When gotyār visit eachothers' houses on the occasion of marriage ceremonies, and certain other major rituals such as Mur Bhwāj and Barkā Pujā for instance, they bring a small basket containing rice, salt, and oil. Villagers who attend on such occasions bring beer. There is no record kept of such gifts, but the reciprocal exchange takes place over time when the host household visits its gotyār or co-villagers in turn. The pattern of exchanges is slightly different in death ceremonies, during which prestations are given on two separate occasions. On the first day after the death, a man and a woman from each house in the village come to assist with various tasks including the burial and cleaning out the house. They also participate in a meal when these arrangements have been completed. The men bring beer with them while the women bring some rice, salt, pulse, and chillies. Some days later there is the second and final stage of death ceremonies. On this occasion at least one and sometimes more men and women come from each house in the village to help prepare and eat a more elaborate

meal. Other relations, especially gotyār may also come from further afield. On this occasion visiting gotyār bring some rice, pulse (black gram), salt, oil, and beer. Other visitors will bring a little rice and a few crystals of salt. As before the host house will in turn bring the same foods when it visits other houses at the time of death ceremonies.

11.4 Conclusion

It was argued that jiurā is the only purely affinal prestation, and that it indicates that affinity is only stressed in one direction: towards the wife-giving sasrār and to other households related as seniors to a man's wife either by generation or by age. The jiurā prestation is to an extent opposed to nisrau, which is given as its return to 'wife-takers' and to juniors related either through sisters or through wives. These two prestations, however, are not equivalent. While jiurā is given to the household, nisrau is given specifically to married women (Z,ZD,WyZ,WBD) as their pesonal property. The nisrau prestation recognises affinal links but only indirectly, emphasising instead consanguineal links and in particular that between brothers and married sisters. The relationship between brother and sister,both married and unmarried, was further shown to be marked by the reciprocal exchange of agrāsan. It was suggested that the emphasis on this relationship has to be understood against the wider background of a woman's continuing links with her natal home (laher). The persistence of a woman's links with her laher is indicated by several facts, notably that she continues to visit it regularly, that she does not lose her

original gotyār affiliation immediately on marriage, and, of course that she engages in exchanges of prestations with members of it. In addition there is the very important fact that a woman and her children remain under the influence of her natal deities, and this influence extends back to the deities of her mother's natal home and to her mother's mother's natal home. The mother's brother-sister's child relationship is marked as special in a number of ways, and as a part of this relationship the mother's brother has certain ritual functions which ensure the proper growth of his sister's child. This relationship can now be seen to assume its logical place within the wider context of a woman's continuing relation to her laher and to her other houses and deities of origin.

In section 3, analysis of the prestations exchanged between households of the remaining social groups, the gotyār and the village, showed that households of these two groups are distinguished, but that in both cases the exchanges are governed by a balanced reciprocity.

Finally the general point was made that certain prestations and the social relations which they mark have to be understood in terms of the relations to deities. Analysis of the jiurā prestation showed that it has to be understood in relation to the Dasyā festival in which it originates and in the context of which it appears to affirm the link to affines in a religious idiom. This suggests the superiority of affines but more importantly it brings 'affinity' into the framework of relations between men and the deities and ancestors. In the same way it was suggested that ultimately the continuing relations of a woman and her children to her houses of origin and to her

brothers, relations which I have called 'consanguineal', have to be seen in terms of her relation to her deities of origin. At the same time it was proposed that the relation of 'consanguinity' between members of a gotyār has to do with their common relation to their deities. In Part 4 I shall develop this argument, in order to show that the gotyār and the house itself are defined in relation to deities.

Notes to Chapter 11

N.1 Many of the facts regarding prestations have been reported in passing by Rajaure (1978: Chaps. 7 & 8), and he has presented a brief and limited analysis of certain prestations in his study of women (1981b:35,51). In the analysis here reference to Rajaure's work will be made where either the facts recorded by me or my interpretation diverge from his accounts. The analysis of prestations and ceremonial functions is well established in South Asian ethnography particularly in relation to caste society (see Dumont 1957; 1962:14,26;1966:91-95,98;1975:209-214; Vatuk 1975; Parry 1979: Chap. 10). Within Nepal, it is interesting to compare the Tharu with the Tibeto-Burman speaking groups of the middle hills. There is no attempt at systematic comparison in this analysis, but at a superficial level it is striking that while the Tharu language of kinship is largely the same as that of the Nepali speaking caste groups, the actual form of the prestations resembles those found among the Tibeto-Burman speakers in the region, including such items as mats, alcohol, beer, pigs legs etc. (cf. Macdougal 1979: Chap. 6)

N.2 It is interesting that the timing of prestations to sasrār corresponds roughly with the timing of visits to and fro between the two houses by the new bride. The bride returns home after the marriage and is called back to her husband's house a few weeks later (usually at the end of Phāgun or in Cait) when she brings with her some steamed wheat cakes (dhikri). After a few nights she returns home and visits her husband again in the monsoon when she brings some baskets (dhakli, dhakyā, delwā), a mat (petār gondri), and some more dhikri. On this occasion she may stay two months before returning home. She comes again before the Māghi festival, and brings a pipe stem and some circular supports (berrā) used by women for carrying pots on the head (Rajaure:330-331).

N.3 The number of years during which prestations are given to affinal households depends to some extent on the degree to which these households reciprocate with the nisrau prestation (see below). Where efforts are made to maintain reciprocal exchanges the flow of prestations will of course continue longer. This point is also connected with what I mean here by 'social distance'. The 'social distance' between two houses does not depend on genealogical distance, but rather on the degree of contact which two houses maintain. This in turn may be influenced by physical proximity. The degree of contact depends on a combination of chance and contingent factors, but the result may be for instance that a house will continue to give jiurā to māmā sasrār after it has stopped giving to other sasrār gotyār households, even though the former category is genealogically more 'distant' than the latter.

N.4 Because of the rule of gotyār exogamy, the sasrār ghar-phutlak gotyār must always belong to a different gotyār from Ego. This is not necessarily the case with households of jesās mau, phuphu sās and māmā raut, and though it appears not to be common I have recorded cases where houses of some of these latter three categories are of the same gotyār as Ego.

N.5 The pattern of prestations between gotyār and co-villagers is described below in Section 3.

N.6 The word jiurā may be related to N:jamaro which is "A particular kind of barley-like plant used in the Dasai festival". The expression N:jamaro lāunu means "to press this on the head after it has been offered to Durgā"(Turner 1965). The tenth day of Dasai is also called either dasami or tikā (s.v."Dasai", ibid.). Barley is the plant used in Dasai throughout the region, and I have no explanation of why the Tharu use maize which is supposed to be a relatively recently introduced crop in South Asia. In other contexts the Tharu call maize shoots kokni (= maize) dāth (= stem, stalk, shoot).

N.7 Harikabilās is a place of considerable importance in Tharu cosmology, and I shall discuss it below in Part 4.

N.8 Rajaure has given a fairly detailed description of Dasyā (1978:387-402), but has made no attempt to relate the festival to other Tharu festivals and especially to Māghi with which it forms a pair. Similarly he has not attempted to analyse the festival in relation to social organisation.

N.9 For further details on bān and dhup see Chapter 15.

N.10 Possession among the Tharu resembles that of the Rāji on which see Reinhard 1973, 1976b. Some further details on possession are given below in Chapter 15.

N.11 There is, however, a category of pure (succā) deities which do not accept alcohol or meat. Succā is certainly related to N:śuci, "pure, clean, undefiled" and N:śucitā, "purity, brightness, cleaness, holiness, innocence" (v. Turner 1965). For further details on these and other household deities see below Chapter 12.

N.12 Dumont has drawn attention to the fact that in India the brother-sister relationship is ceremonialised in yearly rituals in rakshābandhan. In the Gorakhpur region this is replaced by bhaiyā dvīj during which there is "an exchange of small gifts between sister, especially married sister, and brother" (1966:98). The duality of roles of married women, though in ways rather different from the Tharu case, has been commented on by Dumont in his reanalysis of Vatuk's material: "Women in this system are Janus-faced persons" (1975:213), and for the Chetri and Brahman castes in Nepal by Bennett (1978).

N.13 It is interesting that agrāśan in Nepali means : "The small portion of food set apart at the beginning of a meal for the pitṛs or spirits of the dead" (s.v. Turner 1965).

N.14 The name of this minor festival probably derives from har = plough, and dhwār deriving from dhunā or duhunā = to wash, and thus means "washing the plough".

N.15 Bathing in a river and in particular at the confluence of two rivers at Māgh Sankrānti is a common practice throughout India and Nepal. For accounts of Tharu Māghi see Macdonald 1975:275-289; Rajaure 1978:381-387).

N.16 In this analysis I have emphasised the importance of the brother-sister relationship, and, as stated, in relation to nisrau this is what informants themselves stressed. There is, however, a problem of fitting the nisrau given to WyZ and WBD into this framework. The inclusion of these two categories of women can be explained by the fact that nisrau is viewed as the return for jiurā, since we know that jiurā is given to WeZ and WFZ households. The idea that nisrau is a return for jiurā is consistent with the ideal chronological order of events as noted above. It may be that we should also look at this from the woman's viewpoint i.e. that nisrau is going to her yZ and BD. This interpretation, however, does not accord well with the fact that it is men who 'begin' the prestation by doing kaharnā and who actually later present it to the women concerned. On the other hand it is the women of the house who gather up the rice, salt, and pulse from the deity room, add to it if necessary and divide it out into the required number of shares. The prestation, then, may be in a sense mediated by women. A further point is that in reply to my question as to from whom they received nisrau, women paired their elder sister together with her husband and their father's sister with her husband, i.e. saying they received nisrau from didi-bhātu (eZ-eZH) and phuphu-phuphā (FZ-FZH). In other words they included their eZ and FZ as 'givers'. This may mean that we have to view a man and his wife as a couple when it comes to giving nisrau, and that we should perhaps see the WyZ and WBD included because they are 'consanguines' of the wife rather than 'affines' of the husband. The matter is not clear and at the moment the suggestion that one should view jiurā as marking a 'consanguineal' link between certain women, as well as between a man and his sister and sister's daughter, must remain hypothetical.

N.17 For mur cf. N:mur, "head, poll" (qv. Turner 1965). The meaning of bhwāj has already been discussed above in Chapter 9. The ceremonial parallels between this hair-cutting ritual and marriage ceremonies, and the fact that both are kinds of bhwāj, provide further indications of the complexity and significance of the idea of 'marriage' and/or 'feast' in Tharu thought.

N.18 On the Thulung gundri which is similar cf. Allen 1972:86.

N.19 This 'teeth' ceremony was not observed and the description given here is based on informants' accounts.

N.20 Death ceremonies differ from marriages and other major rituals in that no particular category of kabila are invited to assist with arrangements. Participation is village based, except for a meal for the new ancestor eaten in the deity room on the final uddhār day, in which only gotyār and their wives are allowed to participate. There are two further facts relating to death which may be relevant for an analysis of prestations and ceremonial functions. First, Rajaure has reported that a gift of "bronze utensils like cooking vessels, dishes, bowls" is made to the bhainā of the dead person and also to the tel dihwā (1978:377). Elsewhere he says the gift may consist of "utensils, clothes, or cows" and it is given either to a bhainā or bhaini or damandwā (DH) (1981b:51). The gift is called dān (= "gift, charity, generosity"; qv. Turner 1965). On the only occasion I witnessed such a gift it was given to the bhainā and consisted of a new cloth cap (topi). Secondly, after the death of a child a woman visits her laher for a few days, and takes with her dhikri which she distributes to the household. She is later recalled by another woman of her husband's house. For the moment, however, I am unable to comment further on the significance of these facts.

PART 4 : DEITIES, MYTH, AND SOCIAL ORGANISATION

In the introduction and in Parts 2 and 3 of this study it was stated that for a complete understanding of social organisation account must be taken of the system of deities. The purpose of this part, therefore, is to describe the deities of the household and of the village, and to show how it is only by analysing the relations between the groups - village, house, gotyār - and their deities, and the relations between the deities themselves, that we can arrive at what constitutes the definition of these groups and of the relations between them. Entailed in this approach is consideration of ritual; already in connection with the household, the difference between men and women in regard to their natal group's deities, and prestations, it has been necessary to describe certain rituals. In this part we shall have to discuss in more detail further household and village rituals, since they reveal the nature of the relations between the groups and the deities. Here also the focus on deities will require treatment of myth and cosmology which provide the essential background framework for the deities, for certain features of social organisation and for some of the fundamental aspects of Tharu thought.

The analysis so far has described the main elements of Tharu society, and we have also seen something of the relations between houses arising from marriage. In this part, the attempt will be made to provide answers to five principal questions. First, we must establish how it is that deities serve to define and distinguish gotyār. It has been noted that there are no communal gotyār shrines, and that the deities which define a gotyār are present in every house of that gotyār. The second question, therefore, is to understand not only how the

presence of these deities establish the gotyār affiliation of a house, but also how together they define a house as such. In order to understand the implications for the house of the presence of the household deities, we must also take into consideration the links established by marriage between a house and the deities of origin of the in-marrying women. Thirdly, we must seek for the principle which distinguishes the set of priestly gotyār from the barin gotyār, and explain what it is about the priestly gotyār which enables them to fulfill their function as household priests. These first three topics are all related in one way or another to the deities present in houses, and it is through further consideration of these deities that we will be able to approach a fourth question, which is to identify something that at the level of the house represents the totality of Tharu society. It will be seen that this fourth problem concerns what I have termed the 'central' group of household deities and among these deities, Debi or the goddess in particular. The bulk of this study, and indeed much of this part also, concerns the house, which appears as the fundamental unit in social and ritual terms, but the village too has its deities and its associated ritual cycle. The fifth question, then, is to discover what village deities and ritual reveal about the village as a unit. It will be seen that although different from the house, a comparison between these two units reveals striking parallels, which in turn point towards certain principles of order common to both.

This part is divided into five chapters with a general conclusion. The first chapter introduces the household deities, and also considers the directly related topic of household

space. The second chapter addresses from various aspects the first two problems outlined above, that is, to show how the gotyār are distinguished by their deities and how the house itself is constituted as a whole entity by all the different household deities. The third chapter deals with myth and cosmology, presenting the essential background for following chapters. The fourth chapter discusses the place of Debi in possession and points to the implications this has for the house. This chapter also completes the discussion of the household priest - barin relationship. The fifth chapter describes the village as a ritual unit, introducing the village deities and analysing the organisation of village ritual; it highlights the parallels between the ritual organisation of the house and the village. Finally, the conclusion sums up the main findings of the study.

CHAPTER 12: HOUSEHOLD DEITIES AND DOMESTIC SPACE

This chapter describes the layout of the house and the location and characteristics of different types of household deities. Related to household space also are aspects of household construction, and the question of orientation of the house in relation to the village. The chapter is divided into two sections, with the first dealing with house space and the second with the deities.

12.1 House Space

Descriptions of the Tharu house have been provided by Rajaure (1978: 21-32, 35-41) and Milliet-Mondon (1981) (N.I.). Here, therefore, only the essential facts will be presented. Further details of layout and construction are given below in Figure 20 and in Appendix A, which includes also several line drawings and photographs of a scale model of the house.

The house is a single-storey structure built to a long rectangular plan and oriented north-south along its long axis. The house is erected on a level piece of ground and requires no special foundations. First a framework of wooden posts with linking beams is set up, with the main posts resting in holes dug in the ground. The posts support the large sloping roof, which is made of bundles of thatching grass (khar) tied onto a

light bamboo and wooden framework. The low outer side walls are made of wattle and daub, with a latticework of bamboo being subsequently filled in with a mixture of mud, dung, husk, and straw. In contrast to the darker thatch the outer walls are whitewashed. They may also be covered with a few embossed stylised designs depicting stags, elephants and peacocks. The wall on the street side is broken by two doorways, one leading into the southern section of the house and the other into the hall section, from which another door opens directly opposite on the rear side of the house. Set into the walls are several small round openings which resemble ship portholes and serve as windows. In addition there may be one or two small square windows with carved wooden shutters. The side walls are about 1.5 metres high, while the two end walls reach up to the full height of the house and are between 4m and 5m high. The width of a house varies between 5.5m and about 8m, though this depends on the number of posts used inside. These may be 5, 7, or 9 lines of posts, though 5 is now most common. The length of houses varies considerably ranging from around 13m to up to 80m in the longest cases (Milliet-Mondon 1981: 29).

The house is divided into three sections from north to south. The southernmost section is called ghāri and comprises about one quarter of the length of the house. This area is used as a shelter for sheep, cattle, poultry, and occasionally a horse. It is separated from the next section, the bahari, by a wooden fence running across the house. Below the roof area over the ghāri there often hang lines of old baskets which are used as nests by pigeons. Also hanging here are various articles such as mats, baskets, and bundles of the grass used for making

ropes. In some houses there is a platform constructed below the roof providing a general storage space, particularly for fodder for the cattle below.

The next section, the bahari, is a kind of semi-public area. Sometimes a few animals may be kept in here near the fence separating this section from the ghāri, but this hall is mainly used for other purposes. Members of the household sit and work here when they are not outside in the courtyards or fields. It is spacious and cool and it is not unusual for visitors or travellers to come in to sit and rest for a while. There is often a wooden bench placed near one of the doors. As a semi-public area villagers may pass through it on their way to the fields behind the house. It is mostly here that members of the household sit to talk and smoke during their free time. In the colder months in the early mornings and evenings a small fire is lit around which people gather. At night the bahari is used as a sleeping area for certain guests, for the young unmarried men of the house, and for the oldest men also. It is here that guests are first received and made at home, by being given tobacco, water, and mats to sit on. In order to reach the northernmost section of the house one has to pass through the bahari. This northern part of the house, which is called bhitar or sometimes konti, is the innermost and most private area, and so the bahari forms a kind of barrier or space protecting and separating it from the outside (cf.ibid:24). The contrast between these two sections of the house is clear from the terms bahari and bhitar, which derive from bahar and bhitar meaning 'outside' and 'inside' respectively (cf. N:bāhira and N:bhitra).

The bhitar section of the house contains the rooms used for cooking, eating, sleeping, and also the deity room. It is entered via a doorway situated in the middle of the wall forming the northern limit of the bahari. The door gives onto a narrow corridor (piryāri) running down the centre of the house up to the two northernmost rooms, which are the kitchen (bhitar, or bansā), always in the northwest corner of the house and the deity room (deurār), always in the northeast corner. Situated before these two rooms, on either side of the corridor, are smaller rooms (konti) which serve as sleeping quarters. Each room opens on to the corridor by a single doorway and is occupied by a man with his wife and their young children. Each room is the private space of the nuclear family which occupies it. The walls between these rooms and the wall separating this section as a whole from the bahari, are made up of large grain storage containers (dehri) shaped like rectangular bottles, with thin walls joining these dehri together. Both these grain silos and the walls are made of a mixture of mud, dung, rice husk, and straw. The walls and the silos are about 2m high which leaves a good space below the roof for air to circulate keeping the house cool in summer. For storage space in the rooms some of the silos are kept open on one side and have shelves built into them. In a small room near the bahari section the grain pounder (dheki) is kept, and either near it or in the bahari itself the grinding stones (cakiyā) are kept. (See Appendix A for drawings of dehri and their positioning in the house.)

The kitchen has an earthern hearth (culahā) divided into three horse-shoe shaped sections. Above it hang some small

baskets containing fish or vegetables which are dried over the fire. The other main items of equipment in the kitchen are large pots for water and beer, smaller containers for oil, and pots containing a kind of thin rice soup which is made daily and eaten cold at midday. There are also smaller containers for husked grains and pulses. The kitchen or one of the other rooms is used for eating in, but members of the local untouchable castes are not allowed to enter the kitchen and in fact are kept out of the northern section of the house altogether.

The deity room is separated from the kitchen by the usual combination of walls joining the large dehri together, but situated in this partition is the largest dehri in the house, called the pātāhā dehri or "altar dehri" (see below). This room is the location of the main household deities, and is in a few cases kept closed to everyone except members of the household, members of the same gotyār and the household priest. In these cases the deurār is kept empty, and used only for rituals and sometimes for storage of certain foods and possessions. More often, however, this room is used by the household head and his family for sleeping as any other konti. Together the kitchen and the deurār, in relation to the entrances of the house, are in fact the 'innermost' rooms, those that are most private and separate from the outside world. Although anybody will enter the bahari section completely unannounced, people as a rule do not enter the bhitar section so readily, unless they are invited or are entering to participate in some ritual activity.

As in the case above, the ghāri, the space above the

bahari and bhitar house sections is used for storage. Above the bahari are kept a variety of items such as: fishing nets, traps, small straw seats, mats, ropes, bundles of grass used for rope making, agricultural tools, baskets, bundles of leaves for making plates and cups, and the circular bamboo and leaf shields used in the monsoon. From the roof space above each sleeping room hang several large closed baskets, which contain clothes, ornaments, bedding, and other personal possessions of the occupants of the room. Also above the central corridor, either on a platform or simply hanging from the roof, are several of the items already listed, together with maize cobs, onions, garlic, chillies, other dried vegetables, cakes of soap, and more bundles of the grasses used for ropes and baskets.

The internal layout of the house is always based on the same plan and does not vary except in minor details. This is not affected by the situation of a house in terms of being in the eastern or western line of houses in relation to the central village lane. The bhitar or 'inner' section always lies to the north, with the kitchen northwest and deurār northeast. The bahari is always south of the bhitar (N.2). The orientation along the north-south axis is strikingly consistent (for the definition of 'north' see chapter two), but house layout is not usually described in terms of the cardinal points, except that the two doorways on either side of the bahari are sometimes called purub dwār and pachiun dwār, that is "eastern door" and "western door". We shall return to the siginificance of the north-south and inside-outside oppositions below.

12.2 The Household Deities

In this section I shall give a description of the nature and location of the various deities of the house. In addition it will be necessary to describe certain objects which are either used in rituals and are considered to be possessions of the deities, or which are themselves sometimes treated as deities.

In broad terms Tharu distinguish between bhut or "spirits" and deutā, "deities". The criterion for distinguishing these two categories is that deutā have thān, that is "places" or "sites" which are usually fixed, and where they receive offerings on a regular basis. The deities are to some extent distinguished one from another on the basis of what they "eat" (khainā). In describing deities Tharu will first explain how many and what kind of offerings such and such a deity "eats" (pujā khainā). Spirits (bhut) on the other hand have no thān and thus do not get fed. Consequently bhut attack humans in order to obtain propitiatory offerings. The distinction, however, is not as clear cut as it may seem. Collectively the household deities and all 'supernaturals' can be referred to as bhutwā, but in general those entities which as deutā have thān cannot be called bhut, and conversely entities which are known as bhut cannot be termed deutā. This distinction is not absolute, however, since in one ritual context, that of Rath Lausārnā, entities which usually appear as deutā, are referred to as bhut (see below Chapter 13).

The vast majority of bhut are not individually distinguished but belong to generic categories which include in

the main the spirits of people who have died various kinds of 'bad death' (akālqati mual) as opposed to those who have died 'natural' or normal death (kālqati mual) (N.3.). In rituals aimed at neutralising such spirits numerous categories are named such as those of people who have drowned (kholā-twala-uhaut-puhaut) or fallen from trees (rukhwak kasal) or killed by tigers (bāgh) or bears (bhālu) (bāghak jhaptal bhālak jhwāntal). The list is quite long and includes also other spirits, such as masān which haunt the burial grounds and are linked to the bones of the dead. A few bhut are named, such as Jamjut (N.4), a particularly mischievous spirit who nevertheless has a place in the village pantheon and Bāgheswari, a spirit which inhabits certain gullies in parts of the village land and appears in the form of a piglet. People who have seen spirits describe them variously as having long ears, wearing very large turbans (pagyā), or having coloured lights or red fire in their eyes and mouths. It is significant that in the major village ritual of Dhuriyā Gurai which seeks to banish all malevolent influences from the village, included in the lists of spirits are also female witches (boksi), male witches (tyenghā), and people who by their gaze (najar), or malevolent thought and intentions cause harm to others (birā-cāri, usahi-qusahi, chichandi-bichandi, asrahi-najrahi). The fact is that the bhut category is somewhat vague (cf. Allen 1976:536 ff). It may not be that witches and sorcerers are the same as bhut, but they act in an identical way, causing the same ills and are 'bought off' with offerings. Another aspect of the flexibility of this category is that certain bhut, notably

Curiunyā, the spirit of a woman who has died in childbirth, are given thān in some households.

In the description which follows the numbers and letters refer to those in figs. 20a, 20b, 21a, 21b. The layout of household deities varies from gotyār to gotyār, but this account represents the most usual pattern. Some of the deities are common to all houses and where variation occurs this will be indicated. In fact as I shall explain below the pattern of variation is itself of crucial importance. This account agrees in many respects with that given by Rajaure (1982) but it is necessary to repeat some of what he has already reported not only for the sake of completeness but also because my information differs somewhat from his in content and organisation.

We shall begin with the 'inner' deities situated in the deurār. These deities have their thān arranged in a line running north-south along the partition between the deurār and the kitchen. Some deities may have a thān, but others are placed on pātā (altars) which are small circular platforms about 15cm across and raised up from the floor by about 4 or 5cms. The deities which only have thān are rarely represented in any material form, while those which have pātā may or may not have some material from. There may be several thān or pātā, but in nearly all cases there are at least two pātā. Dominating the line of thān or pātā is the pātāhā dehri (A) always the largest dehri in the house. As its name suggests this dehri is associated with the deities. About half way up this dehri, hanging from a right-angled hook, is a small leather human-shaped figure some 5

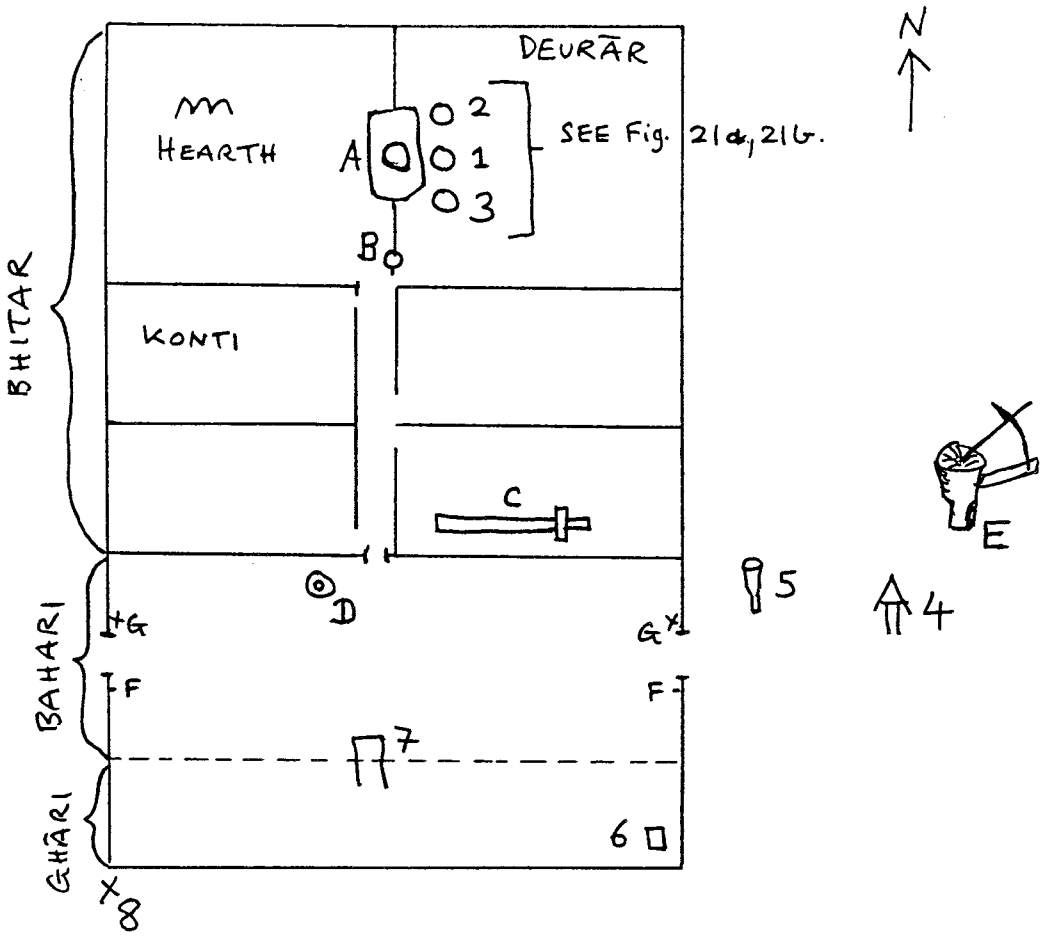


Fig. 20a Showing the Location of Household Deities

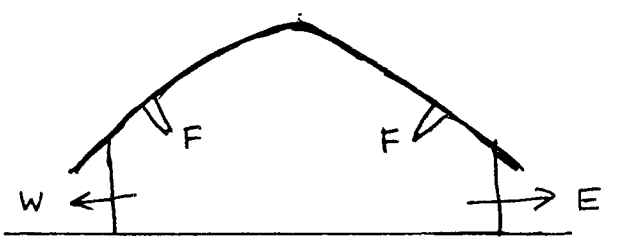


Fig. 20b Showing the Location of House Phalluses

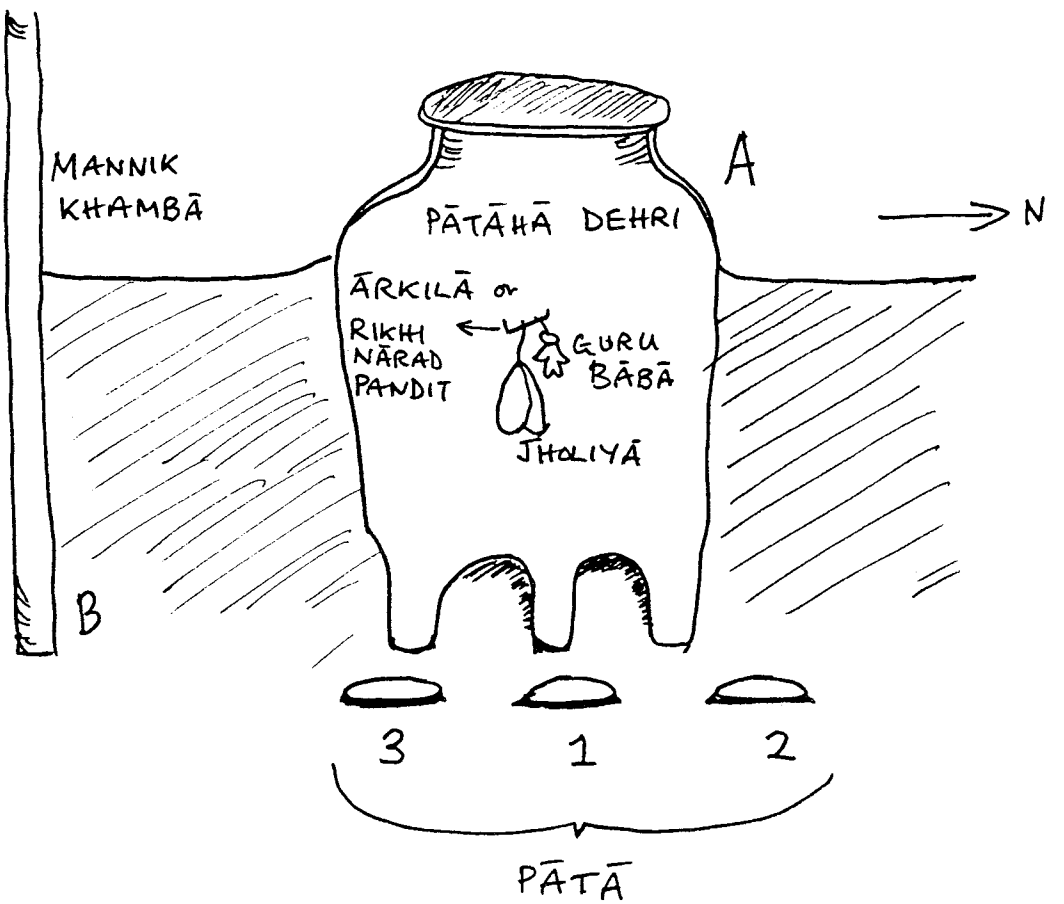


Fig. 21a Showing the Pātāhā Dehri and Mannik Khambā

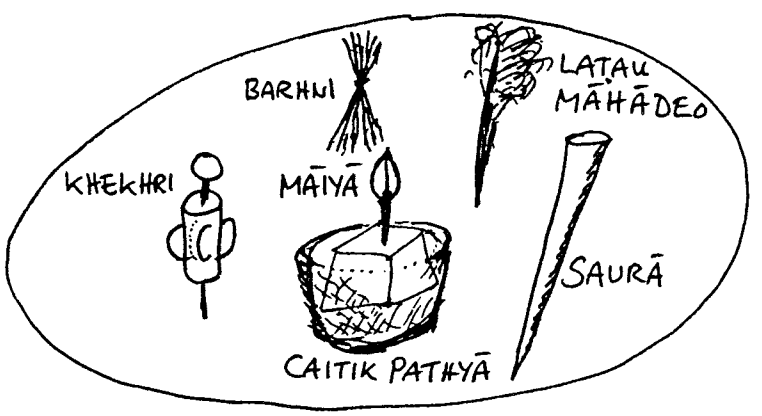


Fig. 21b Showing the Deities of Māiyā's Pātā
(see also Plate 15)

or 6cms long. This is Guru Bābā, or "teacher-father", a male deity. Guru Bābā is the first being to have been born in the world, and as the myth of creation (Guru Bābak Janmauti, "the cosmogony of Guru Bābā") recounts it was he who then created all other living creatures. Guru Bābā rarely receives offerings, instead he is content with the "smell" (bās) of those given to the deities on the pātā below him. When he does receive offerings, he is given a large squash plant called kohorā, which was his first body or incarnation (rup) (N.5.). Guru Bābā is a transcendent deity, whose influence is only benevolent, but he is distant and is associated in particular with a place called Harikabilās situated somewhere up to the north in the mountains. It will be necessary to discuss the place of Harikabilās in the context of cosmology in chapter 14 below. The small leather figure is made by untouchable leather-workers, and is not always present; sometimes it is kept inside one of the two cloth bags (Jholiyā) which also hang from the hook (N.6). These bags contain ritual substances including incense (dhup), and bān, a mixture of rice and human blood, both of which are supplied by the household priest each year during Dasyā. The metal hook itself called Ārkilā, or Rikhi Nārad Pandit, and is considered by some to be the younger brother of Māhādeo, himself a later transformation of Guru Bābā in the creation myth.

Directly below Guru Bābā, is the 'central' pātā (1). This pātā is central in that physically it is always located in front of the centre of the base of the pātāhā dehri, but it is also 'central' in that it is the most important pātā, being the focus of most household ritual. It

is dominated by Māiyā, who is placed in the centre and towards the front of the pātā. The image of Māiyā is about 15cm high (see fig. 21b). Its base is made of ant-hill earth (termite-hill in fact) and contains three different kinds of wild cotton, a few particles of "raw" gold (kwārā-swān, "gold-dust"?), some pieces broken from the centre of stems of kus and dubh grasses, and when this base is made, the earth is mixed together with water and crude brown sugar (bheli) and smoothed down with mustard oil. The upper part of the image is metal and is shaped like a trident, except that the three prongs are joined together at the top. The metal part is made by local blacksmiths, while the Tharu themselves make the base. Māiyā is a female goddess, a manifestation of the Debi, the most powerful of deities in the world. She is invoked on nearly every ritual occasion and is linked closely with possession rituals. As Debi she began as the daughter, Dharmak Dhiyāri, literally "the daughter of dharma", created by Guru Bābā. In later transformations Guru Bābā became Māhādeo and married his daughter who had become Pārbati. Subsequently Pārbati took on a variety of manifestations, of which one is Māiyā. As Maiyā she appears as a "mother" and this is definitely her relationship to Saurā, one of the deities which surround her on the pātā (N.7).

Behind Māiyā is Latau Māhādeo, who is represented by a small bundle of peacock feathers (N.8). Latau Māhādeo was the first transformation of Guru Bābā in the myth, and is here said to be the husband of Māiyā. He does not figure prominently in rituals. Next to Māiyā, usually to her north, is Saurā, represented as a metal nail or spike up to 15cm long.

Saurā is Māiyā's eldest son, and is associated with strength and valour. He is the only deity which moves regularly, in that household priests when leaving to perform rituals for their barin, take their Saurā which is fixed in the ground at the ritual site. Saurā is carried in one of the small rital bags together with bān and dhup. One informant associated Saurā with Krsna, though Rajaure has reported that he is considered by some to be a version of Hanumān. To the south of Māiyā is Khekhri, a female deity whose identity is not clear. Some described her as Māiyā's daughter, but in one version of the creation myth she appears as an early incarnation of the goddess. Khekhri also does not figure prominently in ritual (for her form see fig. 21b).

There are two ritual objects placed on Māiyā's pātā, one is a small basket called Caitik Pathyā or sometimes Caitni Bahini (Caitni "younger sister"). Māiyā herself is often placed in this basket, but on other occasions it is filled with rice, particularly during Dasyā and the ritual for the first offering of husked rice from the new crop (Cārā Carainā) (N.9). The second object is a small handbroom made of a bundle of the firm siru grass. This is called Barhni. Rajaure reports that this is also called Swān Muth Barhni (?"golden handfull broom"), and he adds that the grass strands are supposed to be golden (1978:211). Normal household brooms, also made from this grass, are never supposed to leave the house, or more exactly, go to another house. If they do then the household's wealth will disappear. Small bundles of siru are tied onto the main house-post (see below) and are placed on top of food offerings given to ancestors in Dasyā. Every year

in Dasyā, Barhni is carefully thrown away and replaced with a new one. This is part of the full scale cleaning of the house which takes place at this time and in which the deities are included: they are "washed" by being sprinkled with water, and the pātā are cleaned and replastered with cow dung mixed with mud, the usual mixture used for plastering floors.

Sometimes Māiyā's pātā may include one or two other deities and/or objects. One is the snake deity called Sapwā, from sāp, "snake". This may also be called Lāgu Bāsu, or Bāsuki Nāg, and is clearly a version of the Hindu serpent god Vāsuki. This has the form of a small metal snake shape and represents the Tharu snake-god who occupies the underworld (pattāl). The other items sometimes placed on this pātā are Jākhni. These are mysterious and it is not entirely clear whether they are deities (deutā), as all the other objects are (except Caitik Pathyā and Barhni). Where they occur Jākhni are represented by two small clay or stone balls about half the size of an egg. Sometimes there may be only a single larger ball. They are clearly associated with fertility and the abundance of the household's rice. Informants sometimes claim to have seen 'real' Jākhni or say they know people who have. Though the accounts vary in minor details, the basic story is that Jākhni appear as two small shining glass-like balls, one male the other female, which come rolling along the ground bumping into each other and kissing each other. They may be found in the village fields or, according to Rajaure, they roll right into the house (1978:216). Another interesting detail is that they are caught by a man gathering them up in his loincloth by unfolding part of it, or by a woman gathering them up in her

skirt. As one might expect these mysterious things have not been seen recently, and no 'real' ones seem actually to exist. The reason for this is that they simply disappear or that they were put in the small rice container (kutli) in the kitchen which is used for storing the husked rice about to be cooked, and someone inadvertently scooped them up with the rice and cooked them. I was shown one Jākhni which was a stone shaped like a small phallus and kept in the kutli with husked rice in the kitchen (N.10). Both Sapwā and Jākhni may be placed on other pātā, but never on number 2, which is the household priest's deity's pātā (see below).

There are four comments to make about this central group of deities. First, all the deities, except Jākhni where they occur, include the principal characters who feature in the myth of the creation of the world. Secondly, as such these deities are directly associated with the time of origins, the age of sat, which as I shall explain below was a time of power. Certain features make clear this association with purity and prosperity. The termite-earth of Māiyā's base is considered the purest earth (sabse cwākh māti 'purest earth') in that it is unused and is brought up from deep down by the termites. As such it is associated with the "immortal earth" (amar māti) which Guru Bābā obtained from the underworld in order to transform the vast primordial ocean into land. Māiyā also contains kus and dubh grasses, the first plants to grow in the world and both considered pure and appropriate for rituals. The gold-dust and oil she contains are pure substances, but are also valuable, and thus appropriate for her elaborate status. It also seems that Caitik Pathyā filled with rice and Barhni the

"golden broom", suggest associations with prosperity and plenty. Jākhni, where they occur, are explicitly connected with abundance of rice, but the fact that they are caught up in loincloths or women's skirts and that the one I saw was phallus shaped, clearly suggests association with fertility. Thirdly, the deities (except Sapwā and Jākhni) together make up a family. Fourthly, and very important, again except for Sapwā and Jākhni, the deities of Māiyā's pātā are present in all houses (N.11).

The second pātā which is present in all houses except those of the 'in-between' gotyār (see chapter 6) is that of the household priest's deity (gharguruwak deutā No. 2). This deity is represented by its bahan or vehicle in the form of a pottery horse about 15 to 20cm long. Rajaure reports that there are four types of horses, those of Jagarnattyā, Madwā, Demanraurā, and Bherwā of which he classifies Sukhwariyā and Dahitwā Bherwās as sub-types. The Tharu do not classify these deities in the same way, distinguishing in fact at least five, with Sukhwariyā and Dahitwā Bherwā being separate deities. All these five horses are sometimes referred to as kinds of Bherwā. With the exception of the Demanraurā horse which is easily identifiable by its funnel-shaped mouth, the other horses look alike, though apparently they can be distinguished by marks engraved on their necks (N.12). The origin myths of these deities will be discussed below in chapter 14). The important point here, however, is that these horses are always present on a pātā in barin households. Sukhwariyā Guruwā gotyār households do not have any horse, keeping instead an empty pātā as Sukhwariyā Bherwā's thān.

Demanraurā households keep their horse in the marrwā, a small shrine in the eastern courtyard (see below No.5).

Number 3 in fig. 20a includes all the other thān or pātā which may be present in households' deurār. There may be one or several such thān or pātā which may be occupied by one or more deities, may or may not have objects placed on them, and may be positioned in between Nos.1 and 2, north of No.2, though most commonly such additional sites are to the south of No.1. (For the variation in order of these shrines and the names of their different deities see below Chapter 13, list of gotyār deities. Included among these are deity-ancestors, such as Dasaũt Baghaũt of the Sukhwariyā Guruwrā gotyār households and quite often Curiunyā, a 'deified' spirit which is sometimes represented by some broken pieces of women's glass wrist bangles (N.13). Some of these additional deities may also have small horses representing their bahan.

To complete this description of the deurār, we must mention the main house-post (B) and certain other ritual items. This post, the northernmost one that falls inside the area of the house is called Mannik Khambā or Dulāhā Khutā, meaning "the post of Man" in the generic sense, or the "bridegroom post". Sometimes it is referred to as the jethā or barkā khambā, the "eldest or most senior post". This post is sometimes treated as a deity, as during the Auli Lenā "first fruits" ceremonies for rice and wheat, when the household head ties sheaves of the new crop onto it. It is also included along with the other deities when their names are listed in ritual chants. As we shall see below, this post is ritually marked out

in house construction. Other equipment includes a length of cane (Byāt) which is kept leaning up against the pātāhā dehri just beside the central altar. It is considered one of the deities' possessions or paraphernalia (sāmān), though I am not certain whether it belongs to a particular deity. This cane, like Saurā, is taken outside by household priests when performing rituals for their barin, and seems, like Saurā, to represent the priests' deities. It was described sometimes as deutak latthi, "the gods' staff or walking stick". In possession rituals involving the household deities, this cane is picked up and manipulated along with the other objects and emblems. Priests generally have their own latthi of cane or wood which also possess a kind of ritual power. Some priests take these latthi with them as well when performing rituals, and village priests in particular place their sticks with their Saurā, Byāt and Jholiyā in front of the village shrine where they are bound with white thread and marked with red sindur spots in the same way as the deities are in preparation for the ritual. These sticks also provide protection for the priest from attacks of spirits, since they have generally had spells (mantra) spoken over them. Also kept in the deurār are an iron spear (barchi) and sometimes a sword (tarwāl). These are usually kept up in the north-east corner of the room and may be handled like the deities in major possession rituals. The spear is carried by the bridegroom during marriage ceremonies. Other minor items kept near the deities include small pottery saucers and some mustard oil used for providing lights for the deities in rituals, a small wooden pot used for offering milk, and a pot of rice-alchohol (mad) both also used for offerings.

We must now consider the remaining thān, Nos. 4 to 8. Number four is only present in the houses of certain gotyār. The shrine, called marrwā, has the form of a small hut-shaped construction raised from the ground on posts. This marrwā contains usually one deity, but occasionally up to three. The deities, if they are represented at all, are represented by their bahan in the usual form of small horses. It would seem, however, that these deities of the eastern courtyard usually receive offerings inside in the deurār where they sometimes also have thān, and are only given offerings in the courtyard on the occasion of certain major rituals and especially in Dasyā when the shrine is cleaned and repaired and the horse, if present, is replaced. In contrast to the deities in the deurār all the other thān (4 to 8) are not hedged around by rules restricting access to them and consequently do not seem open to pollution (juthā) or contagion in the same way that the "inner" deities are. These restrictions will be explained in the next chapter.

Deities numbers 5, 6, and 7 are called Raksā, Damrajwā and Bāgār respectively. All these deities are associated with livestock, and are not necessarily present in those households which do not have cattle of buffaloes. It would appear that Raksā is associated with buffalo, while the other two are both linked with cattle and possibly sheep. Raksā and Damrajwā do not figure prominently in rituals, simply receiving minor offerings along with all the other household deities, including Bāgār, during household rituals. Bāgār, however, receives a more elaborate offering of a sheep once every five years (N.14)

The deities marked number 8, do not have thān in the

same way as the other household deities, and they do not carry a single name which identifies them clearly as deities. This is, in fact, where what we have termed the women's deities of origin are located. For each woman married into the house, a gourd (laukā) is suspended under the eaves of the house at its south-western corner on the outside. These gourds are said to contain the deities of origin of the women. These women's deities and their associated ritual, Rath Lausārnā, will be discussed in the next chapter, when it will be shown that they differ in important respects from the other household deities, but that together with them they enable us to see how the house is constituted as a totality.

We must complete this description of the deities and ritual equipment of the house by describing briefly items C, D, E, F, and G. C and D are the rice-pounder (dheki) and cakiyā. These two items are not called deutā, but in marriage ceremonies they are the focus of certain rituals during which they are treated partly as if they were deities. During certain major village rituals, the village is 'closed' to outsiders and all work is forbidden. When the village is 'opened' again and life returns to normal, this is signalled by one of the officiants of the village ritual 'opening' the dheki and cakiyā in the headman's house and one or two other nearby houses. He 'opens' them by working them for a few moments in the usual way that they are used by women (N.15). E is the large wooden oil press (kol). This is not present in all houses, and is usually only kept by one or two houses in a village. The kol is treated as a deity only on certain occasions in particular in Dasyā, when it receives minor

offerings. As Rajaure has pointed out the kol seems to be associated with a masān spirit, usually malevolent entities, which is called Kol or Kolhu Masān (1978:226). The objects marked as F, are two wooden phalluses (landa) which as fig 20b shows, project down from the roof into the hall section usually over or near the two doorways. These phalluses are not always present, or there may be only one. In one case one such phallus was set in the southern wall of the house protruding outwards from the upper part of the wall. The phalluses are set in place when a house is built and a house lacking them when it is constructed is called a kanyā ghar or "virgin house". One informant gave as an explanation that the phalluses were placed near the doors in order to attract and divert the attention of spirits and witches which enter the house at night to attack those sleeping inside, and especially children (N.16). Over the years the phalluses may rot and fall off, but people do not bother to replace them, which may explain why they are not present in all houses. The other items (marked G) which are sometimes present over the doorways are eggshells impaled on sticks, and suspended pieces of cactus (siũri). Both these items are for spirits, the former being a sort of offering, while the latter is intended to ward off their entry into the house.

There is much else that one could add regarding the deities and related ritual objects of the household, and in the next chapter the significance of some of these will be further discussed . Here, however, it will be sufficient to note only three points. First, the deities are in general benevolent, so long, that is, that they receive their regular offerings.

The deities, and in particular the inner ones, protect the household from external malevolent spirits and witches. The notion of a boundary enclosing a protected and safe space is reflected also in the objects placed over or near the doorways to ward off or appease malevolent entities. Secondly, the women's deities of origin are in some sense placed outside the house at the south-west corner. The only other external deities occur in the eastern courtyard, but these are not present in all houses as the women's laukā are. Moreover one of these, Raksā, appears to be linked with buffaloes, while the deities of the marrwā, which are linked to the household as a whole, sometimes have additional thān, and receive offerings along with the other deities inside the house. The woman's deities, thus, appear as outside or external to the house. The particular character of these deities and the contrasts they present in relation to the other and especially inner household deities will be considered in the next chapter. Finally, we may note that just as the spatial plan of the house does not vary in relation to its position in the village, so also the layout of the various deities does not vary, so that for example Bāgār when present is always in the south-east corner, and the deities of the eastern courtyard are always to the east of the house, even for those houses in the eastern line of the village for which these deities are therefore placed in the courtyard at the back of the house, the side which faces away from the central village lane. The layout of the house, then, is constant and not ordered in relation to the village or the position of the house in relation to other houses. When I discuss the village and its deities, however, it will be seen that there are striking parallels between the village on the one hand and the house on the other.

Notes to chapter 12

N.1 See also McDonaugh 1984a: 103, 106-109; 1984b.

N.2 The exception to this are the houses of the four Ulthawā gotyār which are built in reverse order to the normal pattern. I could find no explanation for this, and it does not appear to be related to any particular role or status associated with these gotyār.

N.3 cf. N:kāl "time, death, fate", N:gati "condition, circumstance, fate" (qv. Turner 1965). T:mual is from munā "to die" for which cf. N:marnu.

N.4 For Jamjut cf. Sk:yama-dūta, the messenger (duta) who accompanies the dead soul to Yama in Hindu belief.

N.5 cf. H:kohrā and N:kubhindo, "A partic. kind of large gourd" (qv. Turner 1965), Rajaure gives this as kwara 'Benincasa Hispida' (1978: 202)

N.6 The use of leather to represent Guru Bābā is curious. It is perhaps related to his subsequent incarnation as an ascetic. This connection with asceticism is, of course, suggested by his name, Māhādeo, an epithet of Sivā.

N.7 Māiyā is related to N:mā "mother" and ultimately to Sk:mātā. She is also sometimes addressed as mātā, but she does not appear to be associated with small-pox as this term might suggest (Turner 1965).

N.8 Laṭau may be related to N:laṭṭo "cluster, lock of hair" or possibly N:laṭṭha "intoxicated, drugged" (qv. Turner 1965). This derivation is suggested by the fact that in the creation myth Latau Māhādeo is described as a leprous ascetic with long tangled filthy hair. In another version in his later incarnation as Māhādeo or Isrā Māhādeo he consumes quantities of alcohol and hemp.

N.9 Cārā otherwise means food supplies which are carried on a journey, (cf. N:cāro "food" qv. Turner 1965). Pathyā is possibly related to N:pāthi "a measure of capacity" (qv. ibid), though for measuring purposes Tharu employs this Nepali term.

N.10 These Jākhni are probably connected with Jākni Bahini ("Jākhni younger sister", who in the creation myth gives the first rice seed to Pārbati. Jākhni Bahini is not only the source of rice but also is associated with plenty since the seed she gives cannot be used up but increases as it is sown (see below ch. 14 for details of this myth). Nevill mentions "curious little posts known as Jak and Jakni which are seen outside most of the villages (in Basti District of U.P.) and which are set up by the village 'Sokha or exorcist' who is usually a Tharu" (1907: 107), and Crooke mentions Jāk and Jākni which are "field

godlings" and receive an offering of some oilcake and a chicken "after sowing the autumn crops" (1896: 400). It is likely, however, that these two latter Jākni are linked with the major village ritual called Jākheri performed at intervals of about 15 years for the fertility of village land. This ritual involves the dramatic enactment of the creation myth and at the end of it posts are erected at the 'four corners' of village land. These are called Caukhut or Khetarpal.

N.11 Another student of Danqaura Tharu society has informed she has found some houses which do not have Māiyā's pātā, but which have something equivalemt (personal communication from Gisèle Krauskopf).

N.12 For details of the horses' decoration see Rajaure 1978: 219-220.

N.13 For details of certain further kinds of deities, such as Gwaria and Hegri see Rajaure 1978: 215-216.

N.14 For Bāgār, cf. H:baqār "pasture" and N:baqāl "flock, herd", (qv. Turner 1965).

N.15 The phenomenon of 'closing' the village has been discussed by Macdonald (1975:81-101). Today the 'closing' is largely symbolic; when travellers pass through the village at the time of a ritual which requires closure, a small fine of a cigarette or some tobacco is sometimes extracted. Equally often, however, the strangers have gone past before anyone manages to stop them.

N.16 My main assistant, who had a very limited grasp of English described these phalluses as the "house husband".

CHAPTER 13 : THE DEFINITION OF GOTYĀR AND THE HOUSE BY DEITIES

In the account of the gotyār in chapter 6 it was emphasised that it was deities which provided the essential distinguishing feature of gotyār. Making reference to deities in order to determine gotyār identity was shown to be recognised as a theoretical possibility, although in practice such a situation would be most unlikely to arise. Subsequently in chapter 7 it was argued that the possession of a set of deities provided the definition of a joint household, rather than living in one building and sharing a single hearth, and furthermore that the presence of deities defined a house as such in contrast to those buildings which lack deities and which are equated with goth. In the discussion of the relations established by marriage, it was shown that the wife-taker stresses affinal links in one direction, towards his wife-giving household (sās and sasrār). Correspondingly wife-givers stress the consanguineal link with the women who have left the house. Part of the continuing relationship of a woman to her natal household was seem to be related to the influence its deities have on her. Furthermore, the prestations (nisrau and jiurā) show that marriage relations are given a diachronic recognition, and parallel with this the relation of a woman to her deities of origin extends back across three households and

two generations. The purpose of this chapter is to analyse certain rituals and further describe the deities, so as to demonstrate more precisely how a house is defined by and in relation to its deities, how the deities provide the identity of gotyār and thus by their presence in the house establish its affiliation to a particular patrilineal exogamous group, and finally how, beyond the definition gotyār identity, the inclusion of the women's deities in the analysis reveals the totality of the house, the fundamental unit of Tharu society.

The chapter is divided into four sections with a conclusion. The first section examines the way in which deities are not only essential for a house, but give a particular character to the northern and inner part of the house. The second section discusses certain household rituals, and rules surrounding access to the deities, to show how the relationship of kinship of members of the same household and same gotyār is expressed and established in relation to the deities. The third section develops this idea to show how deities themselves actually define the gotyār. The fourth section analyses the women's deities and their associated ritual. The conclusion shows the implications of the women's deities for the house by drawing out the contrasts between the south and outside in relation to the north and inside of the house.

13.1 Deities and the Definition of the House

Having stated that deities are essential in a general way for establishing a house as a proper ghar rather than a goth, we must now examine more closely how this works.

The first ritual in the 'life' of a house, and the first introduction of the deities occurs during construction. When the central line of high posts (dhur) is erected, the first post to be set up is the Mannik Khambā, the northernmost one that falls within the area of the house. It is only after this post has been set in place that the other dhur further south are erected. The setting up of this post is attended by a minor ritual, the only one which accompanies the actual construction of the house. First, two handfulls of siru grass are tied to the upper part of the post and a couple of coins are placed in the hole before the post is set in it. Then the household head's wife prepares the ritual site by smoothing a spot on the ground, to the south in front of the post, with cow dung. She then continues by setting up a leaf-lamp on the ground, sprinkling water on the post and marking it and the ground in front of it with a tikā mark of red vermillion powder (sindur). The household head puts a plate containing a few coins and husked rice on the ground, and then his wife places a further tikā of wettened rice grains on the post. The ritual is completed by the household head making an offering of rice-alcohol (mad) on the ground beside the leaf-lamp (N.1) (see plate 16).

After completion of house construction, there follows the ritual of Pariwār Paithnā, which means "the entry of the family",and as its name suggests marks the 'first-entry' of the family and of the deities into the house. Before this ritual, the kitchen hearth may not be used for cooking. The family gather in the eastern courtyard and enter the house in a procession led by a female calf followed by a young girl carrying a fresh pot of water, then by the household head who

carries the deities in a basket, and the rest of the family. They go into the kitchen first and circumambulate the hearth in an anti-clockwise direction, and then enter the deurār, where the deities are set up in their places by the household head (N.2). First the deities and objects on the pātāhā dehri (Ārkilā, Guru Bābā etc.) are set up, then the horse of the household priest followed by any other deities which are represented in material form in the deurār. The household head then puts out small leaf-lamps and makes an offering of mad in front of all the various pātā or thān beginning with Māiyā's pātā and the other pātā in the deurār, before moving on to the deities in the bahari and then in the courtyard. The household head then leaves the house and sets up lamps and offers mad at all the various sites of the village pantheon (Bhũhyắr). The only deities which are not given mad are those which are succā or 'pure' in the sense that they do not "eat" alcohol. In the house Bāgār is succā and sometimes one of the inner deities may also be (see list of gotyār deities below). The next morning the household head gives an offering of milk to all the household and village deities except that this time the order is changed in that the succā deities (Bagār etc.) receive this offering first in the house and are then followed by Māiyā and the others in the same order as before. The village deity order is also changed, with thesuccā village deities receiving milk first. This milk offering occurs in many rituals and is called Dhār Denā, or "giving Dhār", and to give it the household head must not have eaten that day and must first wash before visiting the various house and village thān. In the event of not having a set of

household deities already made, as happens for a younger brother setting up his house for the first time, a metal plough share is set up in place of the deities. This is set up leaning against the pātāhā dehri on the spot where Māiyā's pātā would otherwise be. In this instance no other deities are set up during Pariwār Paithnā, but the offerings of lights, mad, and dhār are made as usual at the sites where the deities will later be placed. The deities themselves, are made and set up in the Deutā Banainā ("making the deities") ritual, but this may take place months or even a year or two later because of the expense it involves (N.3).

These rituals indicate that the presence of deities is a primary requirement for establishing a house, but more that this they point to the north of the house as a fixed point of orientation where the house in a sense 'begins'. This is marked by the ritual setting in place of the Mannik Khambā, the first of the dhur posts to be set up. Furthermore when putting the deities in their places amd making offerings (except dhār) one begins in the northern inner deurār and in particular one begins with the deities of the pātāhā dehri and Māiyā and her pāta. There is in general a very close association between the household and its deities, in that almost all changes in the status of the household members and indeed in the structure of the house itself, are accompanied by the appropriate rituals for the deities.

When a house is extended to the south, it entails moving Damrajwā and Bāgār's thān. Rajaure reports that this requires Bāgār Pujā in which an uncasted ram is offered to Bāgār (1978:236). This ritual usually takes place every five

years, though practice varies to some extent. As noted already, there is no material representation of Bāgār and the thān is not kept apart and protected as a permanently sacred area. Apparently Bāgār initially occupies this thān at the time of Bāgār Pujā, and is subsequently present when other minor offerings are made. According to my information, however, the full Bāgār Pujā is not required and only minor offerings are made. Bāgār Pujā sould be performed at some point after the extension southwards, but it is not clear when, and I suspect that the previous five year cycle is maintained. It must be emphasised that extension northwards is most unusual. Rajaure reports that when a house is extended northwards, or when a new house is built, "the household deities are offered pujā with a cock" (ibid), which suggests that extension northwards is equivalent to building a new house. The north of the house appears again, then, to be thought of as fixed and permanent.

13.2 Rules Governing Access to Deities and Participation in Rituals

We have already noted the main aspects of the rules governing access to deities, and those relating to participation in death rituals. Here, therefore, it will be sufficient to recall these and where necessary expand the discussion to bring in other relevant facts.

In general only men of the household, of the same gotyār, and the household priest may touch, make offerings, and ritually handle the deities. In addition women married into the household have minor ritual functions, with the household head's wife in particular being responsible for "washing" the deities, cleaning and replastering their pātā, and marking them with sindur spots on certain occasions. Women born in the house and men of other gotyār should not touch the deities, though such men may sometimes come to assist in the rituals for making household deities or 'initiating' a man as guruwā (see below chapter 15). The exception to the prohibition on handling the deities is during Dasyā possession rituals which take place in the houses of household priests. On these occasions members of barin households attached to the priests may come and participate in the rituals which involve carrying the deities around the house and courtyard. There is no specific ritual or sanction required if these rules are transgressed, but the deities may consider that they have been polluted (juth or juthā) and this may manifest itself by the household subsequently suffering some misfortune. This is how the deities reveal their displeasure and through divination it is discovered

what offerings are required to put the matter straight.

The rules governing divination provide another clear instance of the categories of people who may have access to the household deities. Divination is called Pāti Baithnā, or "to sit in front of the pātā". The procedure involves the diviner sitting in front of Māiyā's pātā and holding an earthen saucer lamp with its wick lighted. The lamp is suspended from three strings held in the diviner's hand, and it swings slowly to and fro or to the right and left in circular motions while the diviner chants. In this chant he takes the names of all the deities and categories of spirits of witches and identifies which agency is responsible for the misfortune involved by the movement of the lamp which according to Tharu belief moves independently and is not contolled by the diviner himself. Without doubt this is the most often performed of all rituals, resorted to continually for diagnosis of most kinds of misfortune. It is only men of the house or of the same gotyār, or the household priest who may divine in front of Māiyā's pātā. If other priests are called in they have to divine seated in another of the rooms of the house. Again access to the deities is restricted to men who share common gotyār identity, and to the household priest.

The pattern of participation in death ceremonies in the final meal for the new ancestor held in the deurār, has been described already, and provides one of the best examples of who is included or excluded. This case is the clearest instance of the exclusion of women born in the household. Two further espects of death, neither of which I was able to observe at first hand, again underline the common

connection between households of a gotyār and between them and their linked household priest. When households hear of the death of a member of a distant household of their gotyār, if they have not participated in the death ceremonies, it is necessary to perform a minor purification ritual by "washing" the inner deities. As noted above, after death the new ancestor is "seated" on Māiyā's Pātā. When a household priest dies, however, not only is his spirit "seated" on Māiyā's pātā in his own house, but his barin households also "seat" his spirit, but on the pātā occupied by his deity (represented by the horse as bahan) in their deurār.

It is clear, then, that the members of the same gotyār share a common relationship to each other's household deities. These sets of deities are, of course, identical. We have noted that the position of women in terms of their gotyār identity is complex in that they belong to their natal gotyār from the point of view of exogamy, but as a result of this seem to be largely excluded from access to the deities and from rituals. This is true, however, for women's position in general, in that relative to men they only have very limited contact with the deities and perform no ritual function at all in their natal households. Nevertheless, they too are protected by their natal deities, before which for example divination will be carried out and to which offerings will be made as necessary on their behalf by the men of the household or the household priest. It is only in their marital households that women have any ritual functions in relation to the household deities, such as at the marriage of their children, or in the ways noted above if they happen to be the household head's wife. As married women,

however, they are also linked with their natal household's deities of origin, and rituals are performed for these deities on their behalf in their husband's house - though these rituals actually take place outside the house as I shall explain further in a moment. The other person who participates in household rituals, and indeed whose presence is essential for certain rituals, is the household priest. This connection between a barin household's deities and its priest in fact potentially includes also any men, who possess the requisite ritual knowledge, of the household priest's gotyār. The priest's deity is present in the deurār, and the women's deities of origin are 'present' in some sense at the south-west corner of the house. Before we examine these two categories of deities, however, we must demonstrate which deities serve to define and distinguish one gotyār from another and how this actually operates. That the deities ultimately define gotyār has, of course, been stated already, and as this section has shown, it is implied by the common access to deities and participation in rituals that households of the same gotyār enjoy.

13.3 Definition of Gotyār by Deities

The Tharu state that no two gotyār have the same deities. It is not all the household deities which count in this respect, since those linked with livestock (nos. 5, 6, 7, fig. 20a), do not vary in their presence according to gotyār tradition, but according to whether a household has livestock or not. Similarly we must leave out of consideration the women's deities (no.8), since these vary independently of the gotyār

identity of the households into which women marry. The information gathered concerning the remaining deities of gotyār are presented in the following list:

List of Gotyār Deities

- The thān or pātā are represented in order from north to south.
- Where thān occur in the babari this is indicated.
- Deities of the marrwā in the courtyard are indicated thus: ⋔
- The barin gotyār have been grouped together under their linked houshold priest's gotyā.
- Certain details, such as whether a deity is succā or an ancestor-deity have been added.
- The household priest's deities which are present in barin households are abbreviated as indicated below in the table.
- The term "Māiyā" stands for this goddess and all the other regularly occuring deities of her pātā; where extra deities are present on this pātā they are indicted e.g. Māiyā + Sapwā.
- Where deities are represented by their bahan as a horse this is indicated thus: S.B. (horse).
- The following symbols are used:

  O: represents a pātā on which no objects are present;

  *: a pātā with objects;

  #: a thān with no objects;

  $: a thān with objects.

1. Sukhwariyā Guruwā (gharguruwā)
   - O Dasaũt Baghaũt (succā, ancestor)
   - O Sukhwariyā Bherwā (= S.B.)
   - * Māiyā

2. Thokwā Pittar
   - * S.B. (horse)
   - * Māiyā + Sapwā
   - O Curinnyā

3. Manderriyā (or Khargiyā manderriyā)
   - * S.B. (horse)
   - * Khargiyā (horse)
   - # Biseriā
   - * Māiyā + Dhāk (a kind of drum)

4. Nammwā (Barikā)
   - * S.B. (horse)
   - # Bedā (or Bedāwā)
   - * Māiyā
   - # Satteriyā
   - ⛩ $ Satteriyā (horse)

5. Gheckattwā
   - * S.B. (horse)
   - # Akharek
   - * Māiyā + Goriyā

6. Namkohlyā (Kotalwā)
   - * Patnahi (horse)
   - * S.B. (horse)
   - * Māiyā
   - O Bedā

7. Baghwariyā Mahaton
   - O Biseria
   - O Patnahi
   - * Māiyā
   - O Chedu Guni (Succā, ancestor?)

   Note: this gotyār chooses its own household priest. In Sukhwar households had chosen Sukhwariyā Guruwā, but elsewhere this obviously varies.

8. Dahit (gharguruwā)
   - * Dahitwā Bherwā (horse) (=D.B.)
   - * Māiyā
   - ⛩ (in west courtyard) $ S.B. (horse)

   Note: I was not able to map the deurār of this gotyār at first hand so I am not certain if there are any other deities in the deurār. The marrwā in the western courtyard is looked after by women of the house. This came about because once a Sukhwariyā Guruwā woman married into a Dahit household and decided to take her natal house's horse - that of Sukhwariyā Bherwā - with her. Her husband's house refused to allow her to install this horse inside the house, so she put it in the west courtyard, where ever since it has been looked after by women of Dahit households. This is

interesting when we consider that the women's deities (no. 8 fig. 20a) are also on the west. This myth explains why no horse is present nowadays on Sukhwariyā Bherwā's pātā in Sukwariyā Guruwā households (see no. 1 above).

9. Ghatcwār
   * D.B. (horse)
   * Māiyā
   O Satteriyā
   (Bahari) # Dwariā (beside eastern doorway)

10. Balguni
   * D.B. (horse)
   * Māiyā + Sapwā
   * Balguni (horse)

11. Karryā Angrawā
   * D.B. (horse)
   * Māiyā
   * Gangwā (horse)

12. Dwār Dablahwā
   * D.B. (horse)
   * Māiyā
   O Bandi Markhiyā

13. Cildrahwā
   $ Bāgār
   * Māiyā + Sapwā
   O ?
   * D.B. (horse)
   Note: This gotyār appears to have reversed the standard order of deities, bringing Bāgār from the south-east corner up to the north of the deurār, and putting the priest's deity, which in most cases (but not all) is northernmost, to the southernmost position in the deurār.

14. Karryā Karangawā
   O Jinguni Madwā
   * Māiyā
   * D.B. (horse)
   Note: This gotyār is exceptional in having changed its priest at some time. It used to have Jinguni, a priestly gotyār that appears to be part of or split from Katkattwā Madwā (see below), but now uses Dahit as priests. Perhaps this explains the reverse order, with Dahit in the south.

15. Rautgaiyār
   * D.B. (horse)
   * Māiyā
   O Satteriyā
   O Khargi
   # Mangrā
    # Barhā, # Bāgār, $ Satteriyā (horse)

16. Jagarnattyā (gharguruwā)
    * Jagarnattyā (horse) (=J.)
    * Dāth Guni (horse)
    * Māiyā + Sapwā

17. Damlahwā
    * J. (horse)
    * Dumki
    O Sauwha (ancestor)
    * Māiyā
    * Mangrā
    ⋔ $? Satteriyā (horse)

18. Bakhariyā Ulthāwā
    * Ghantawā
    * Māiyā
    * J. (horse)
    Note: This gotyār and three other Ulthāwā gotyār build their houses in the reverse fashion to all other gotyār, which is why the priest's deity is to the south.

19. Katkattwā Madwā (gharguruwā)
    O Curinnyā
    O Akharyā
    * Madwā + ? Jinguni (two horses)
    * Māiyā + Jākhni
    ⋔ $ Satteriyā (horse)
    Note: I was not able to observe this gotyār's deurār myself.

20. Karryā Kusumyā
    * Madwā + Jinguni (two horses)
    * Māiyā + Sapwā
    * ? (horse)

21. Dukarpuchyā
    * Madwā (or? Jinguni) (horse)
    * Māiyā +Sapwā + Jākhni
    # Partab Guni
    O Curinnyā

22. Demanraurā (gharguruwā)
    * Akharek
    * Māiyā + Jākhni + Sarsatti Goriyā
    ⋔ $? (succā, horse), $ Demanraurā (horse)
    Note: I was unable to find any barin gotyār of this priestly gotyār though they do exist.

23. Jogethwā
    O Ratannath
    * Māiyā
    - ? (or Ratannath here, south of Māiyā)
    ⋔ $ Tatu (horse cf. N:tattu: "pony" qv. Turner 1965)

24. Dunubatwā
    * Dunubatwā + Bātā (two horses)
    * Māiyā + Sapwā
    O Patnahi
    (Bahari) # Bedā
    Note: numbers 23 and 24 do not have any household priest, acting as their own priests instead.

It would appear from this list that what the Tharu say is true, in that no two gotyār have exactly the same combination of deities. It is not that each gotyār possesses one distinctive deity, though it is possible that some do. It is rather that in each case the particular combination of a set of deities is unique. This is suggested perhaps by what is sometimes actually said, which is "harek gotyārak deutan pharak pharak bā" or "harek gotyārak deutan chuttai chuttai bā". This means literally "every gotyār's deities are (bā) different (pharak, chuttai)", but I suggest that the repetition of the words pharak and chuttai gives the idea that there is a differential distribution of deities in each case.

In practice there is considerable flux: gotyār names can change, the location of houses changes, and the genealogical links between houses are soon forgotten. It would seem, however, that the set of deities which is characteristic of a gotyār does not change. These deities, then, provide an unchanging principle for the definition of the affiliation of a house to an exogamous group which is otherwise amorphous and very loosely structured. This is consistent also with another aspect of the gotyār which is that ideologically there is no possibility of segmentation over time. The gotyār is permanent and its permanence is anchored in the deities which distinguish one

gotyār from another.

There are three further points regarding these deities. First, one of the household priest's deities is present in all his barin's households (and, therefore, gotyār), and to this extent the priestly gotyār and their particular deities are unique in that they both 'belong' to certain specific gotyār and yet are present in houses of other gotyār. In addition these priests' deities are in most cases placed northernmost in the series in barin households. Secondly, the central group of Māiyā's pātā, sometimes with some additions, is present in houses of all gotyār. Thirdly, the deities which identify a gotyār are in fact the inner deities, in the deurār, though there are two cases of a deity present in the bahari (gotyār nos. 9 and 24). As noted, the deities of the marrwā in the eastern courtyard receive offerings inside in the deurār where they also sometimes have thān.

Although the fundamental principle that gotyār are defined by their deities is clear enough, the situation as described is not complete, since it appears that gotyār can be additionally identified by other entities, about which, because my information is incomplete, I can only make some general comments. The existence of such further identifying 'agencies' is apparent in the Rath Lausārnā ritual for women's deities of origin, and so I shall discuss this problem in the next section, which focusses on this ritual.

13.4 Women's Deities of Origin, Rath Lausārnā, and the house

A woman's deities of origin, which influence her fertility and the well-being of herself and her children, are propitiated regularly twice a year in the months of Jeth and Kartik in the Rath Lausārnā ritual. As has been stated these deities are those of the household's and therefore of the gotyār of a woman's laher, her mamān, and her jhamān (her natal, her mother's natal and her mother's mother's natal households). These deities are said to be contained in the gourd which is suspended for each woman at the south-west corner of the house. The ritual is performed outside the house on the ground. The gourds are taken down and placed on the ground in front of the officiant who sits facing north (see Plate 17). Certain other items are brought from inside the house where they are kept in small purses with the woman's other possessions. These items include some coins (N.4), a pig's hair,and sometimes some small symbolic objects which represent the gotyār deities of the households involved. An egg is also required, and all these items are placed in front of the officiant, between him and the gourds (N.5). During the ritual all these items form offerings to the various deities invoked, and in addition the priest offers chickens, by holding them up in the air as he chants; the chickens are never actually sacrificed.

The expression Rath Lausārnā means "to change or replace the rath", a ritual chariot or vehicle. It is not clear what the rath is, but it is said that the purpose is to renew the woman's rath. In one sense the gourd itself is a rath for the woman's divinities of origin, but at the same

time the woman herself may be a rath or vehicle, and I suggest that the gourd also represents the woman's womb, though this was not stated.

The connection of these deities with the woman's fertility is stated clearly in the ritual in which through a language based on plant imagery, the continued 'fruitfulness' of the woman is repeatedly asked for (N.6). This connection is further suggested by the fact that the ritual is performed for a woman some 15 days after the birth of a child. A woman and her deities arrive in the house through marriage, and that this ritual recognises or marks the links established, at a ritual level or in terms of deities, by marriage rather than simply recognising a woman's actual 'biological' genealogical links with her houses of origin, is indicated by the fact that if a woman or her mother had more than one 'mother' as a result of death, divorce, or her father having two or more wives simultaneously, then these additional women's households of origin are included in the ritual. In this way a woman may have more than one mamān or jhamān. The connection with marriage is also reflected by the fact that performance of the Rath Lausārnā ritual continues until the marriage of a woman's youngest child, which, of course, may be some years after she herself has ceased to be fertile. After a woman has passed the menopause, however, I believe, though my information is not certain on this, that her gourd is removed and the ritual is performed without it, using only the coins and other items required as offerings.

A number of features of Rath Lausārnā distinguish it from the rituals performed for household deities. One such

difference has to do with the identity and the symbolic representation of the gotyār deities of the households concerned. These suggest that gotyār - or certain gotyār- have additional deities or perhaps spirits attached to them. The matter is rather complex and remains unclear; clarification would require further intensive investigation of this ritual, the importance of which only became apparent to me towards the end of field work. When the deities of a particular household are invoked, such as the laher or mamān for instance, the usual gotyār name, or names if there are more than one, are not usually spoken. Instead certain deities are named, but what is problematic is that not all a household's inner deities are named and among those that are, sometimes there are some which do not appear to have thān or pātā at all. This is the case of Sukhwariyā Guruwā households, the deities named are Magrā Guni (? 'Magar priest, knowledgeable man') and Jutthri Pitrāin (? Jutthri female ancestor) and sometimes also Dasaũt Baghaũt. Neither Magrā Guni nor Jutthri Pitrāin have thān, but analysis of deities invoked in household rituals revealed that they were named in these also. I cannot say if this is the case in households of other gotyār. In other words it may be the case that certain deities are invoked in Rath Lausārnā which do not otherwise have thān and are not named in other household rituals. The matter is further complicated by the fact that for some gotyār, names used in Rath Lausārnā appear to refer to some sort of identifying entity which may not be a deity at all. For instance for households of the Dunubatwā gotyār, the entities named are Bedai (from bedā cf. no. 24 in list of gotyār deities), Purbi, Dengrāhwā, and Lāti

Gongi. The first three could be names of deities but the last name seems unlikely since it means literally "stupid or foolish snail". A further difference from normal practice is the use of symbolic objects which seem both to represent the gotyār and to constitute a sort of offering. These objects are not used for all gotyār, but where they occur they are explained as the sāmān orcina, the "paraphernalia" or "signs", of the gotyār deities. Such objects include for instance a small rope-noose trap on a stick, a model of a boat, a piece of root, a small basket container worn on the hip and used for carrying fish when fishing, a small wooden knife, a piece of a broken pot, a chicken whose feathers grow in the wrong direction, and a particular kind of small fish. These objects are identified with certain deities or with certain gotyār, and some appear more clearly as offerings, such as for instance the chicken with reversed feathers, which is held up as an offering with the other chickens used, when the deities of Sukhwariyā Guruwā households are being invoked; for these households the small rope-noose is also required and it is placed out on the ground in front of the gourds by the officiant at the appropriate moment. In addition to these deities, entities, and objects, the particular household priest's deity which is present in a household's deurār is also named.

It must be clear from this description that there is much that remains obscure about the treatment of gotyār deities in Rath Lausārnā. As a general comment, however, I would tentatively suggest that it would seem as though to some extent gotyār have a set of deities which are the focus for ritual and which provide an identifying label in 'internal'

contexts, but that in addition they may have certain deities, and sometimes 'entities' and objects which are appropriate and distinguish them in the special 'external' context Rath Lausārnā. We shall now see in what other respects this ritual is different from other household rituals and in what sense it is 'external'.

Rath Lausārnā is external in that it concerns the deities of other households and for the most part other gotyār (N.7). This idea is clearly expressed by the explanation that the gourds could not be hung inside the house or the ritual performed inside, because the household deities would not countenance such a possibility. What was said was "gharak deutan kastari mannthā?" which means "how could the deities of the house agree to or allow (such a thing)?" Not only is the ritual performed outside the house, but it also takes place at the back of the house. This means that its location depends on the position of the house in relation to the central village lane, and in this regard it differs from other household rituals which take place inside or at a particular thān or pātā. A further difference from the rituals for the household deities (deutan) is that the women's deities of origin are often referred to as bhut: it is generally said that the gourds contain the women's bhut (janni manaik bhut) rather than deutan. The location of the ritual outside, at the back of the house, and the use of the term bhut would seem to associate it with rituals for witches and spirits which also take place at the back of the house, though slightly further away that Rath Lausārnā. In both types of rituals the manner of offering chickens, by holding them up

rather than sacrificing them, is the same. Perhaps what these rituals share in common is that they all concern entities of the outside, of other houses, or parts of the village. The Rath Lausārnā ritual is also distinguished from other household rituals in that the officiant who performs it, the dhareriyā guruwā may come from any gotyār, whereas household rituals require as officiants either a member of the household or the household priest who belongs to one of the gharguruwā gotyār. The function of dhareriyā is, of course, also open to household priests who often combine this with their other ritual roles. Finally, another difference is that in Rath Lausārnā, apart from the gotyār deities, offerings are given to seven goddesses (sāt Debi), but not at all to Māiyā or any of her pātā, as occurs in other rituals. The origin and role of these seven Debi, who are sisters, is explained in one of the Phulwār or "flower-garden" episodes of the myth, (see Appendix B and Chapter 14) when Debi in the form of Pārbati gave birth to seven eggs of which she threw one in each of the six directions, north, south, east, west, sky (akkās), underworld (pattāl), and the last of which she kept hidden in the fold of the waistband at the front of her skirt. As she threw the eggs she told them that in the future they were each to be a certain named Debi and that they were all to be responsible for the fertility of women. Māiyā's non-presence in the ritual may be connected with her association with the house and in particular with the inside of the house. She is often called Gharki Māiyā or "Māiyā of the house", and she occupies what I have termed the 'central' pātā in the deurār.

13.5 Conclusion

The gotyār, the loosely structured patrilineal exogamous group, is defined by its deities. These deities are present only in the house, where they establish its gotyār affiliation and contribute to the definition of a house as such. Marriage is the link between houses. Through the movement of a woman from one house to another a series of links are established between her deities of origin and her natal household, thus linking the house through each woman to at least three other houses. The network of 'social' relations established by marriage has a corresponding network of 'ritual' links.

The house , however, is more than simply a constituent element of a gotyār. After all a place is given to the women's deities. The house is ordered in its spatial layout and in the position of deities by an opposition between north and south, or inside and outside. The place of women's deities, in terms of this opposition, has important implications for understanding the house. The interior deities are those that are fixed and permanent. They establish a house's irrevocable gotyār identity. Together with the principal post they mark the fixed point of orientation, inside and at the north, from which the house begins and extends to the south and outside. In contrast the women's deities are outside, in the south and they move: they come with women, and they are removed if a woman leaves on divorce. The opposition north and inside : south and outside, thus has the additional aspect of fixed, permanent, unchanging versus transitory and potentially impermanent. This

corresponds with the fact that it is women who move from house to house while men stay put, and it is further reflected in the term rath, meaning itself a ritual chariot or vehicle for the movement of a deity. The inside : outside opposition, seen as a contrast between a fixed point of orientation in the north and a moving point to the south suggests how women's deities complete a house. A house begins in the north, but it must also have an end, a southern limit of extension where it meets the outside. I suggest that this limit and point of juncture with the outside is defined or marked by the women's deities, which thus completes the house forming it into a whole. From one point of view a house is defined by its internal deities which mark it as a proper house and give it its permanent and unchanging gotyār identity. From another point of view, however, a house is relationally defined - by the two poles: the inner northern deities, and the outer southern deities which mark its extension and limits and represent the links established with other houses through the women married into the house.

There is, however, a third and most important viewpoint, which is that of the centre, which is Māiyā. Māiyā's pātā is spatially central in being situated in the centre of the base of the pātāhā dehri in the deurār, and we have noted that this pātā is 'central' in that it is the focus of most household ritual. It is difficult to characterise the north : south, inside : outside opposition, but it would appear to be an asymmetrical opposition in that even in a general way the northern deities in the deurār are more permanently sacred, and access to them is carefully controlled. More importantly perhaps, the asymmetry between north and south,

or inside and outside may be suggested by the fact that Māiyā and her pātā are included among the other deities in the north and inside. In order to understand in what sense Māiyā, as a manifestation of Debi, truly does constitute the 'centre' we must first look at myth. An examination of myth and cosmology will also provide the essential background for the discussion of the fundamental division between priestly and barin gotyār.

Notes to Chapter 13

N.1 It is normal on other occasions for the household head's wife to "wash" the deities, to clean and prepare their altars, to place tikā marks on them, and to set out lamps. Nevertheless her role here appears to go somewhat further, particularly in regard to her marking the post with a rice tikā. It is interesting to note that the only other prominent ritual role a woman has within the household, is when her sons marry, when she introduces the bride and bridegroom, again as dulāhā, into the house.

N.2 Ritual circumambulation of the house and in other contexts is always anti-clockwise. For the Tharu this is described as moving by or to the right.

N.3 When the new deities are made, their metal parts must be made from this plough share, of which nothing may remain. Similarly if Deutā Banainā is performed to replace an old set of deities then their metal parts must be melted down and dissolved in the blacksmith's forge.

N.4 The coins usually include some old copper coins, though I could find no explanation why these obsolete coins were used.

N.5 For a fuller description of this ritual see Rajaure 1978: 247-251.

N.6 For example a recurrent phrase used by the officiant is: "... bihyā dhāri jāhā pari sonke dhāni phulā par bhẽthi māgtu bhẽthi par phārā māgtu sau phul par jagindā māgtu ..." which means "having sown the seed, wherever it falls, (golden?) for the flower I ask for a stem and for the stem I ask for a fruit, I ask for a hundred living flowers ...". In this imagery there is a play on the words phulā which means both flower and menses. The Nepali word phul is also used here which has the same association of meaning: "Egg, testicle, flower, the menstrual flow" (v. Turner 1965). It is significant in this context to note that the placenta is called purin, also the word for the lotus, the plant on which Guru Bābā was created as the first being in the world. The association appears widespread. For the Tamang, Hofer describing the cen, a particular kind of spirit, reports "There is a mystic linkage between a particular kind of flower, a particular kind of cen and the genitals of a female - the latter being called 'flower'. Each (botanical) species of flower is inhabited by, or closely associated with, a certain cen. Thus, once the shaman has discovered which flower corresponds to his patient's 'flower', he can identify and placate the cen held responsible for the woman's barrenness or menstruation trouble." (1981:15). Thāru priests as a cure for menstruation problems make an amulet containing flowers which blossom throughout the year, speak mantras (spells) over it and give it to the woman to wear. There are also methods for stealing or

interfering with a woman's fertility - with her phulā - but unfortunately I do not know these. A similar but more general association between flowers and life or well being has been reported for the Limbu, among whom every individual's soul and life-force is linked to a particular soul-flower (ame-fleur, phuriq sām) (Sagant 1981:154). cf. also Allen 1972:92-3.

N.7 The deities of a woman's laher are obviously those of a gotyār different from her husband's, but this need not necessarily be the case for her mamān and jhamān, since as a result of FZD or FFZDD marriage these may be of the same gotyār.

CHAPTER 14 : MYTH AND COSMOLOGY

This chapter presents an outline of the creation myth together with other related myths concerning the goddess (Debi) and the deities of the priestly gotyar. The myths form a sizeable body of rich and complex material which alone could provide the subject for a full-length thesis. The significance of the material presented here is considerable, since at one level or another it is related to Tharu thought and this constitutes an indispensable background for understanding Tharu society. The broad purpose here will be to extract from myth and from related ritual texts the main features of cosmology. These topics would demand treatment in any general descriptive study af Tharu society, but as noted at the end of the last chapter, it is necessary to discuss this material at this point because it will bring us a step further both in clarifying what I mean by describing Debi as the 'centre' and in explaining the priest-barin division in society. In particular the analysis will show how the house and the Dang valley are linked into a wider cosmological scheme, and related to this it will be seen that Debi and the priestly deities provide the critical connections between the mythical age of the gods and the world of men.

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first discusses Tharu notions of 'myth' and introduces the fundamental

distinction in Tharu thought between the age sat and the age of kal. The second section gives a brief synopsis of the myth of creation and the myth describing the descent of the goddess into the world. The third section presents the myths of the priestly deities and discusses the implications of variation between different versions of these myths. The fourth section synthesises this mythical material to provide a model of Tharu conceptions of the cosmos.

14.1. Preliminary Comments on Myth and the Two Ages of the World

There is no Tharu word which corresponds exactly to our 'myth'. When enquiring into the myths or traditions which lie behind rituals, in reply to questions employing such terms as N:itihās, "history, chronicle, tradition", N:kathā or N:kissā, "tale, story" (q.v. Turner 1965), I was usually referred to people who were said to know the relevant song. The principal category, then, is "song" (git) and this is understandable in view of the fact that most myth is sung, either in ritual or dances. In this way Guru Bābak Janmauti, the creation myth, is sung in various forms: it is chanted in a major annual village ritual (Hariyā Gurai) when it is called Barnakhnā, but it can also be recited or sung in the rhythmic form appropriate for the usual type of mens' dance (chokra nāc) (N.1). Similarly, the traditions concerning Kānhā (Krsna) are contained in a long song (Sakiyā git) sung by women in the weeks between Astimki and Dasyā, while they perform a particular dance (Dasyā nāc) every evening in the village

headman's courtyard. The Tharu version of the Mahābhārata is contained in the Barkimār song, of which verses are sung by men in dances and casual gatherings in the months from the end of the monsoon up to Māghi. The Barkimār can also be accompanied by a major dance, the barkā nāc, or "senior dance", which is put on by a touring group of Jellaurā village about every twelve to fifteen years. There is, therefore, a relationship between myth as song, and both ritual and dance. This is clearest in the Pacrā song, an important text which I shall summarize in the next section. Unlike other songs, Pacrā may not be sung except during certain possession rituals in Dasyā and in Guruwā Banāinā, the ritual for initiation as a priest. This is because singing Pacrā brings on possession (susāina) and this is dangerous unless it takes place in the controlled and appropriate ritual context. Significantly, as shall be explained below (Chapter 15 section 1), this song calls on Debi and the possessed men to dance.

'Song', however, is not precisely coextensive with the mythical narratives of the Tharu, not only because there is a rich repertory of profane and non-mythical songs, but also because certain traditions which appear as myths are not contained in song form. These are the priests' myths, which are not easy to classify according to the indigenous categories of oral traditions. These traditions are neither songs, nor are they classed as batkahi, the term given to stories, often rather long (N.2). 'Mythical' songs are individually named as are the various batkahi, but the priests' myths are not. In general terms they were classed as itihās or simply as bāt, the broadest category meaning "news, speech, language".

Nevertheless they too are what we should classify as myth. Ultimately it would seem that myth is any tradition, spoken or sung, which relates to the sat jug, the age of sat.

The Tharu view the history of the world as composed of two ages (jug, N:yuga), the first age of sat and the contemporary kal jug. It is not easy to explain, especially in a short space, what sat and kal represent, though this view of the history of the cosmos is a familiar feature of Indian thought. The classical model is of four ages in the following order: satya, tretā, dwāpar, and kali yug the present age in which the present cycle of world history (kalpa) will end . The four ages represent stages of progressive decline and degeneration. The Tharu scheme corresponds in broad terms to the classical model, but they only have two ages. The sat jug was the golden age, the time of creation and origins. It was a time of power when the world began and the order of things was established for the present imperfect age of kal. For the Tharu it was the deities who created the world and first performed the different kinds of agricultural work and ritual, laying down the pattern for men. Sat is thus the age of the deities and of myth. Ultimately, then, all traditions concerning the deities belong to the age of sat and thus constitute myth.

In contrast to sat, the age of kal is one of imperfection, of disease, death, and scarcity. The relationship of sat and kal, and thus of men and the deities, is a fundamental theme in ritual. In kal, the deities have in a sense retreated from the world, or at least they are not present in the way that they were before, though they still sustain and

control what happens. For men, in a general way, ritual is a continual attempt to reach back to sat, to bring the deities into the world and thus through contact with sat to achieve renewal and fertility (N.3).

Not only do the Tharu not work with a set of four ages, their view also differs from the classical idea of progressive degeneration culminating in the dissolution of the cosmos and a return to sat to begin a new cycle. For the Tharu there has been a degeneration from sat to kal, but this is constant and not conceived of cyclically. The present kal jug appears more as a permanent condition in which men seek to achieve recurrent renewal to maintain life.

The transition from sat to kal is one of the dominant motifs of the creation mythology. Throughout Guru Bābak Janmauti and in parts of the subsequent Phulwār "flower garden" episodes concerning the Debi, the deities, whether Guru Bābā himself or in his incarnation (autār) as Māhādeo, or Debi under her various manifestations, lay down the fate (karam, N:karma) of all manner of animals, and deities, and, of course, of men as it is to be in kal. Throughout the myths, and especially in Guru Bābak Janmauti after every episode concerning a different creature, there is the continually recurrent phrase: "Sat jug, kal jug jāi (or āi), kali manwā mān pati autār lehi ta..." which means "the age of sat goes, the age of kal goes (or comes), man of the age of kal will take his place (or rank) in creation and then...", and the phrase is completed with a description of the fate of the creature concerned. For example the bird (probably a dove), created by Guru Bābā to search for land when the world was

covered with water, is told that it will lay eggs and make a nest, and will be caught and roasted by men when it goes in search of food. For every one which dies, however, many more will be born and it will increase and multiply. As regards deities, we shall see in the next section, in relation to the house, an example of how deities are given their place in the age of kal, in this case by Debi.

There is no clear point marking the transition from sat to kal, and as noted one purpose of this chapter is to examine this question to see how through certain deities the two worlds or ages meet. There is a sense, however, in which sat has not ended; the world has changed but the deities are still there and so is also sat. Related to this is a characteristic of myth, which is that although different songs and episodes of myth are named and distinguished, from another point of view all myth is one. The relationship between different 'myths' is not always clear, but for the Tharu at the highest level of abstraction all episodes are linked and furthermore it is not possible to say where one myth ends and another begins. It would seem that at this level 'myth' is potentially vast, including a description or an account ultimately of the way everything that is in the world came about.

In any attempt to order the different named myths we must undoubtedly begin with Guru Bābak Janmauti. This is followed by several episodes, the names and number of which seem to vary, which are called Phulwār or "flowergarden(s)". Sometimes these episodes, which all relate to the goddess, are called Phulwār konti, or "the rooms" and hence "parts" of the "flowergarden(s)". Though not one of the Phulwār, the Pacrā

song belongs with these episodes concerning the Debi, and like them follows on from Guru Bābak Janmauti. The scheme thereafter is confused and variable and cannot be ordered in the same way, there being instead a number of songs which concern Hindu deities including the Sakiyā git, also sometimes called Sake phulwār, about Kānhā (kṛṣṇa), the Barkimār about the Pānc Pandu, the Pāṇḍavas of the Mahābhārata, and a number of songs classed as Māngar (marriage songs) (N.4) or individually named, concerning Rām Laxman and Sita of the Hindu Ramayana epic (N.5). The priests' myths are not named, but they too appear to trace their origins to Guru Bābak Janmauti.

For the most part it is the older and more experienced priests who know these traditions, and in particular Guru Bābak Janmauti and Pacrā which are directly used in ritual. The Phulwār episodes, although they too lie behind parts of the Rath Lausārnā ritual, are much less well known, while parts of the traditions of the Pānc Pandu and Rām-Laxman are more widely known with the former being perhaps the most truly popular of all such traditions. The Sakiyā song is known by certain old women who teach it in parts every day to the girls who sing and dance it; it would seem, however, that this tradition is losing ground in some villages. In the past and today also the Tharu have written down their myths and songs. As noted in Chapter 2 section 1 recently several books of these have been published in the Dangaura dialect. During fieldwork I heard of several hand written texts and myths, but attempts to track these down were rarely successful since there was a marked reluctance to allow me or indeed other Tharus to read and copy such books (N.6). Nevertheless from what was found, it is Guru

Bābak Janmauti which was most often written down, though texts of Pacrā, parts of the Phulwār, and long songs concerning Māhādeo and Pārbati called Sundri-Māhādeo, were also found. (N.7).

The texts summarised in section 2 and in appendix B, where a fuller account is given, are those recounted by Mantri Guruwā of Hekuli village. Rather than sing the myths, which Mantri said would take far too long, this priest agreed to render them in story form interspersed at intervals with examples of the various original song forms. I was certainly fortunate in having this opportunity to record such a full account of myth from a priest with a high reputation for knowledge in his area of west Dang. There is no space here, nor is it appropriate for this study, to consider in detail the question of variations between different versions of these texts, but anyway there appears to be relatively limited variation in Guru Bābak Janmauti and less still in Pacrā. In the summary, however, certain of the main differences will be indicated. The myths relating to the origins of the priestly gotyār are much more widely known and versions also differ. In section three, versions recorded from three priests, Mantri of Hekuli, Cillu of Jellaura and Mohan Lāl the headman of Sukhrwar, are presented, and the differences between them are also discussed.

14.2. Guru Bābak Janmauti and Pacrā Git

This section presents a short summary of the creation myth and the Pacrā song. In the summary here the emphasis is on

presenting the details relevant for understanding the relationship of different deities to eachother and the models of cosmology which will be developed below in section 4.

1. In the beginning the world is covered with water. The first being, Guru Bābā, is created in the form of a large squash plant (kohorā, N:kubhindo). He is created by an original pair, Jāngā Rājā (king) and Jangā Rāni (queen) or Ekchat Rājā/Rāni, who come from Indrāsan in the sky. According to some versions the pair take the form of birds which come to look at the world. The birds copulate and the seed falls onto a lotus (purin) floating on the primordial ocean. In all versions Guru Bābā's first incarnation (autār) is as kohorā on a lotus. Guru Bābā is then given his senses (hansā) of sight, speech, touch etc.

2. Guru Bābā creates a dove, to fly in search of the source of the water and land. He creates the bird and subsequent creatures from dirt he rubs from his body. The dove cannot find land and rests on a fish (Rāini Macheriyā) which appears in the ocean. Subsequently Guru Bābā creates a number of crabs and worms (12 and 12 or 14 and 7) which he sends to the underworld to obtain immortal earth (amar māti) from the immortal flowergarden which is guarded by a variety of spirits and demons. All fail except the last worm, a glow worm (aqiyā kecnā or dudhi kecnā) which succeeds in bringing back a tiny morsel of earth. Guru Bābā uses this to churn the ocean and make land. He pins down the four covers of the world with four metal pegs. The land does not cover the whole world, leaving a great sea to the south. Under the world, supporting it are in order: a tortoise, an ox, a snake and a fish (Baram Kās Kecuiyā, Basāhā Bardā, Ses Nāg, Rāini Macheriyā).

3. Guru Bābā creates a number of different animals, dogs, cattle, horses etc. He then creates a daughter, Dharmak Dhiyāri, either by making an incision in his thigh or by becoming pregnant when Dharmak Dhiyāri enters one of his nostrils in the form of a fish. His daughter grows up and demands a husband or threatens to marry him, her father. Guru Bābā assumes the form of Laṭau Māhādeo, a leprous ascetic, in the hope of putting Dharmak Dhiyāri off the idea. Eventually after undergoing a series of ordeals which involve passing in the reverse from normal direction through several objects, such as entering the oil press at the bottom where the oil drips out and exiting at the larger opening at the top, Dharmak Dhiyāri takes the ascetic as husband. She washes him in the river and he emerges transformed as Isrā Māhādeo, beautiful as a lotus flower (kiũlā). At this point she also changes into Gauri Pārbati.

4. They move together through a forest where they see monkeys copulating and copy them. Pārbati becomes pregnant, and they call Sāi Deo Māi Deo Ghanpat Guruwā, the first priest, to diagnose her stomach ache. (Ghanpat Guruwā) either simply appears or is created by Guru Bābā). They throw the monkey-child away in the forest, and move on to open ground (sometimes called surkhet, "the first fields").

5. Isrā Māhādeo and Gauri Pārbati now decide to have a proper marriage feast. They invite the five Pandu (Pāṇḍavas) and are assisted by Rikhi Nārad Pandit, Māhādeo's younger brother (who appears at this point). The feast is not complete until Pārbati has distilled and served the first alcohol (mad) to the guests.

6. Māhādeo now begins to cultivate fields, but is unable to manage anything until Pārbati teaches him. she teaches him how to make a plough using the model of their genitals and copulation to show him how to assemble the parts. She teaches him how to make terraces and to control the plough team. She goes to Jākhni Bahini ("Jākhni younger sister") to get rice seed which increases steadily as it is used.

7. Pārbati grows jealous of the time Māhādeo spends admiring his crop. He is late for meals. She causes disease and insects to attack the rice. Mahādeo is distraught so Pārbati tells him to call Ghanpat Guruwā to perform the Hariyā Gurai ritual for the fertility of the crops. They perform the cycle of rice rituals and end with a feast at harvest time when Pārbati makes beer and Māhādeo, Ghanpat Guruwā and Rikhi Nārad Pandit get drunk. Pārbati tells Māhādeo that this is how to do things in future, laying down the pattern for men.

8. They make village deities (Bhũhyãr) in the likeness of Bhagwān (God). (This is the end of the Barnakhnā)

The narrator now continued with the song which describes how Debi came from Kailās. This place is otherwise known as Harikabilās, but is clearly also their version of Mount Kailāsa, for Hindus the abode of Lord Siva and his spouse and for Tibetans the location where Padmasambhava defeated the Bon priests and the supernatural powers hostile to Buddhism. The Pacrā song, as noted above, is sung during the ritual of initiation of guruwās, and this connection was made by the

narrator who said that now Ghanpat Guruwā began to make guruwās, so that in the kal jug when he dies others can do his work. He explained that the song describes how Debi came from Kailās to Pāṭan, or more precisely to Debi Pāṭan, the site of a temple of Debi near Tulsipur south of the border from Koilabas. This is "undoubtedly one of the oldest seats of Sāivite worship in northern India" and also a centre of the Kānphatā yogis (Briggs:90,91). "A temple was erected here by Ratannath, a disciple third in descent from Gorakhnath", and the site used to be under the authority of the kānphaṭā monastery at Chaughara in Dang, which also worships Ratannath (ibid:92). The main event is the annual melā in April when the abbot of the Dang monastery arrives carrying a stone linga, said to contain the spirit of Gorakhnath (ibid:96) (N.8). The Tharu, in the past, though less so today used to attend this melā; apparently also the priests who sacrifice goats and buffaloes in front of the temple, used to be yogis of Tharu origin, the Tharu being "particularly clever in using the cleaver with which the heads of animals for sacrifice are severed at a single stroke" (ibid:93). Pāṭan is a place of considerable importance in Tharu cosmography, and the goddess known to them as Pāṭan Debi Pāṭan Bhawāni is worshipped, sometimes being given a thān or pātā in the deurār (see list of gotyar deities) as Patnahi, but usually having no specific thān and simply being given an offering on the ground in the eastern courtyard of the house. As the myth will show, however, the manifestation of Debi at Pāṭan as Pāṭan Debi coincides in certain contents with her manifestation as Māiyā. The narrator began his account with a particularly interesting episode that does not itself appear in

the texts of the song that I have found. The episodes included in the song are indicated in the summary.

1. Pārbati has five sons and one daughter. Isrā Māhādeo takes a second wife and Pārbati quarrels and leaves for Kailās with her children.

2. In Kailās Pārbati lives from the scent of flowers, but her children cannot manage this and ask to leave. She agrees and decides to go to Pāṭan which is the centre ('navel') of the world. She establishes that it is the centre by taking a length of thread and measuring from the four cardinal points.

3. On their way, her children demand their shares of the inheritance. Pārbati then gives each one, except the eldest son, their place as one of the deities of the house, as which they will receive offerings from men in kal jug. Her eldest son, Saurā, she keeps with her, while the others become the following deities: the second son is Gharki Māiyā or Māiyā of the house, the third son is Mannik Khambā, the house post, the daughter is Damrajwā , the fourth son is Bāgār, and the fifth son receives the outside, where he will "eat" 36 pujās, and have 36 forms and will control sicknesses.

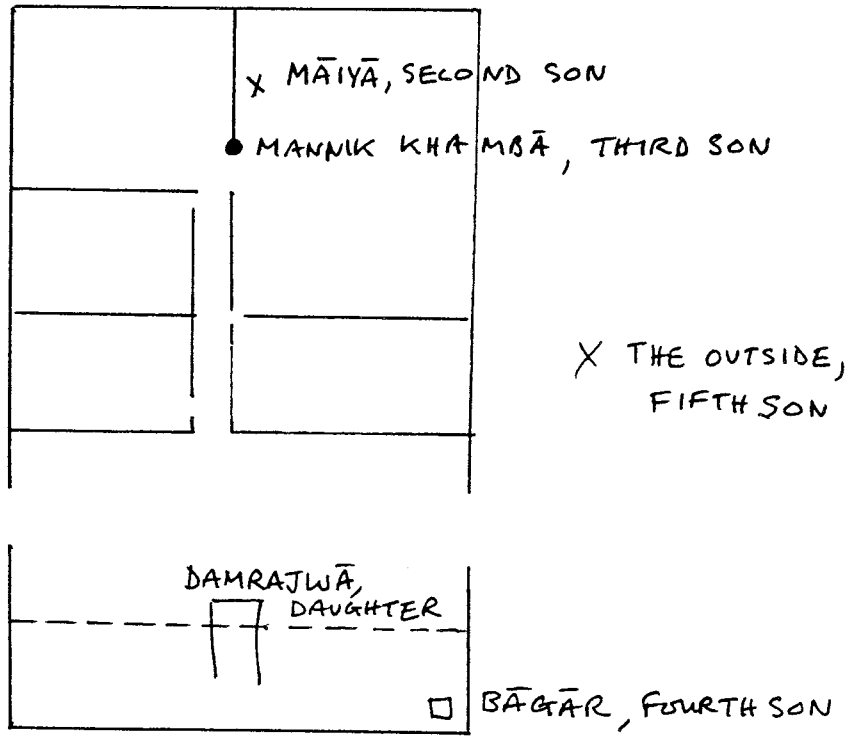


Fig. 22 Pārbati's Children as Deities of the House

On her journey, therefore, Pārbati through her children constitutes the house (see fig. 22), moving from north to south down the house in descending age order of her four children. It is at this point that the song proper begins. The substance of the song can be summed up briefly.

> 4. Pārbati and Saurā continue on their journey to Pātan. She becomes tired and rests; it is a long journey. Saurā protects her from the dangers of the jungle and eventually begins to build her a shelter. Then he builds her a temple. He plants trees, and a flower garden, and makes a pool for the temple.

It is at this point that the song can be lengthened to suit the singer, by adding verses for every kind of tree that can be thought of, making the list as long as is required. In the song the goddess is named as Debi, and as Māiyā particularly in the last few verses. The narrator explained, however, that when she got to Pāṭan, she became Pāṭan Debi. The last few verses directly address Māiyā, and ask her to dance through her palace or temple, and into her kingdom and country. These verses are the most sung and are widely known, while the preceeding verses can only be correctly sung by a few priests. The last verses are particularly sung during certain stages of possession in the Guruwā Banainā ('making the guruwā) ritual, and I shall discuss them below in Chapter 15.

14.3. The Myths of the Priests' Deities.

In this section three versions of myth are presented, and the texts are then followed by the discussion. The first text is that of Mantri of Hekuli, the second comes from Cillu of

Jellaura and the third from Mohan Lāl of Sukhrwar.

> 1. First Sāi Deo MāI Deo Ghanpat Guruwā was created by Guru Bābā. Later Madwā, Dahitwā. Pachaldangyā, and Demanraurā were created. (The matter is not clear, but these were either the sons or the disciples of Ghanpat). They went to Bāro Bhoṭ Bangālā to study . The youngest, Demanraurā , was the potter and pot cleaner, but he was clever and managed to learn by eavesdropping through the wall while he worked. On their return from Bangālā they stopped at a river where they found a man who had died from a snake bite. They all tried bringing him back to life with mantras (spells) but only Demanraurā succeeded. (When they came to Dang) Madwā was thirsty. They gave him liquor (mad) and he became drunk (hence "Madwā") and stayed in the east. (At this point the account is confused because the narrator is trying to reconcile the actual existence of five types of priests with his original list of four deities). Then the three of them become four. Then Bhēru Guni came to Madwā's house, this was Sukhwariyā Guruwā and he was given a seat to sit on. One (another one?) was given yogurt (dahi) and rice which he ate up greedily and he became Dahitwā Bherwā. Then there were two brothers. Pachaldangyā took his place in the west of Dang in the forests. Demanraurā was told he would settle and have barin in all his brothers' areas. So, Madwā settled in the east, next there was Dahitwā Bherwā in Sawāri praganna and in the west was Jagarnattyā (now Pachaldangyā is being referred to by their main deity) and Demanraurā settled in all his brothers' areas.

The narrator, Cillu, a Dahit desbandhyā of Jellaura village, begins by explaining how the Dahit gotyār came to be. It originated from the Āhir caste of cattle herders.

> 2. This is how Āhirryā came to be. A pregnant woman was herding cattle in the forest. She gave birth to a son which she left in the forest. A king hunting in the forest heard the child and took it home. It grew up and was fed yogurt (dahi) and so became Dahit. That was the origin of the Dahit gotyār. Now this Dahit married a girl of the Sukhwariyā Guruwā gotyār from Sukhrwar. In the past there was no empty pātā in Sukhwariyā Guruwā houses, but this girl stole the house of Sukhwariyā Bherwā (which now is always missing in households of this gotyār) and took it to her husband. That was when the Dahit was made into desbandhyā guruwā (i.e. village priests, who serve

> villages in their areas (des) and who rank highest among priests). Her husband rebuked her angrily and would not allow the horse inside the house, so she kept it in the courtyard. Now about Demanraurā and the others. They went to study in Bāra Bhoṭ Bangālā. Then they came back, and they drunk liquor. The eldest drunk too much, that is why he is called Madwā. (It is implied that 'they' are brothers). Then there was the one called Bherwā. He had killed a sheep (bhẽrā), and he ate a lot of it so he is called Bherwā. Then there was Jagarnattyā. A tiger came and he fled (to the west). They decided that the youngest, Demanraurā, would not have any villages or pragannā, but would have barin wherever he could find them. He overheard them talking and decided to kill them with a gun. That is why the Demanraurā horse has a mouth shaped like a gun.

This account is given by Mohan Lāl himself a Sukhwariyā Guruwā priest.

> 3. There were four brothers in age order: Madwā, Suhkwariyā Bherwā, Jagarnattyā, Demanraurā. Three of them quarrelled with and insulted Sukhwariyā Bherwā, so he went to Bāra Bangālā, where he studied. He came back but his brothers would not give him any area of Dang, neither Sawāri, Aglapath, nor Paclāpath (these are parts of Dang, possibly pragannās (see below for discussion). He went off to Jumla Bhoṭ , in the white mountains and visited Khas houses, Kuiri (?), Camār and Kumhār houses. There he cured many of the sick and defeated many spirits. After a while, in order to test his brothers he began to inflict illness and disease in Dang. His brothers divined and found him to be the cause. They decided that to appease him they had to give him a little, so they gave him Sawāri pragannā.

The narrator now continued with an episode relating to the relationship between Sukhwariyā Guruwā and Dahit priests in the part of Dang near Sukhrwar which apparently used to be in Sawāri pragannā. The important background is that today the Dahit are the desbandhyā village priests in this area, while the Sukhwariyā Guruwā only work as household priests. The latter priests, however, claim that they used to work as desbandhyā but have lost this position to the Dahit priests, who significantly are not included in the Sukhwariyā version of

the original four brothers. The Sukhwariyā Guruwā are no longer desbandhyā but in this area they act as agwā kesaukā, or 'first, leading' kesaukā, acting as medium in gurai rituals performed on certain major occasions by the local Dahit desbandhyā priests.

> Now this is what happened in Sawāri pragannā. There was going to be a hunting expedition so first they had to do a gurai at the village shrine. The Dahit was wearing a dhoti, while Sukhwariyā Bherwā was only wearing a cloak of coarse cloth (bhangrak gādā) (i.e. the Dahit was dressed in finer clothes). Sukhwariyā Bherwā said to the Dahit "you are wearing a dhoti , you be desbandhyā, you take the superior position (literally, sir, "head"). I shall take the inferior position (literally, puchār from puchi, "tail"), and act as kesaukā.

In any gurai ritual there are two officiants: the guruwā who is senior and superior and the takes the right hand position. He invokes the deities which possess the kesaukā, who is seated to his left. In any gurai at the village shrine, the guruwā has to be the desbandhyā, while the kesaukā may come from angotyār, though in Sukhrwar, and for certain gurais in other villages, the kesaukā must come from the Sukhwariyā Guruwā gotyār. Once the kesaukā becomes possessed, the guruwā speaks with him and gives him offerings treating him as though he were the deities, which are possessing him and which speak through him. As we shall now see it is this feature of gurais rituals which the Sukhwariyā Guruwā as kesaukā uses to turn the tables on the 'superior' Dahit.

> Our ancestor (Sukhwariyā Bherwā) thought to himself, 'so, you Dahit take the head position, and I'll make you into a bābā, we'll see indeed' (bābā here means "senior, superior"). The desbandhyā Bherwā could not see the trick that Sukhwariyā Bherwā was going to play

> on him. The guruwā began to chant invoking the deities. The kesaukā became possessed, and the guruwā addressed him saying "now bābā, you are a god of the age of sat. I am only a man of the kal age, dirty and disgusting (literally "stained with dirt and urine"). Your promise and power (sat) is superior, mine is inferior". (The first part of this address is the conventional formula used in gurais). Then Sukhwariyā Bherwā as kesaukā said "Right, you fool. You are the one wearing the dhoti! You wanted to be bābā! Now if you don't call me bābā, I shall not leave. (i.e. the possessing deity would not leave, as it does normally), come on, call me bābā!".

It is clear that the deities of the priestly gotyār are brothers, but it is not entirely clear how many brothers there are. The commonest pattern in these, and in other versions recorded, is that there are four brothers. Of these the youngest brother is always Demanraurā and he is underprivileged, having to act as porter, and receiving no part of the valley as his des, "country" to work in as desbandhyā. Though not a village priest, Demanraurā like the other gotyār acts as household priest (gharguruwā), but he has to find his barin wherever he can. All these versions have problems adjusting to the actual existence of at least five main priestly groups, and the problem centres on the two types of Bherwā, Sukhwariyā and Dahit. In the second version, the second deity in the list is simply Bherwā, but it is implied from the first episode of this version, that Dahit were incorporated by adoption and their position as desbandhyā is related in some way to their marriage with a Sukhwariyā Guruwā woman who stole the Bherwāhorse from her natal gotyār. The problem is clearest in the third version, where Dahit are represented as interlopers who somehow became desbandhyā; the rivalry between them and Sukhwariyā Bherwā/Guruwā comes across from the curious episode concerning the reversal of positions that takes place

between guruwā and kesaukā in gurai rituals (N.9). The problem is further complicated by the fact that sometimes all the different deities, Madwā, Jagarnattyā etc., can be referred to as types of Bherwā and it is very likely that there are other priestly groups, certainly smaller than the main five, in other parts of Dang;these other groups probably are grafted into similar local versions of the general myth. If one wants to identify a fundamental structure, however, it most likely consists of an original set of four brothers, of which the youngest is partly excluded from enjoying the same rights as the older three (N.10).

The birth order of the three brothers also varies to some extent. In these versions it would appear that Madwā is eldest, Jagarnattyā is third, and Demanraurā youngest, but the second position is uncertain. In other versions recorded age order varied considerably with claims being made for Dahit and Jagarnattyā as eldest. In general, however, the consensus seems to be that Madwā is eldest and Demanrarā youngest, but the intervening positions vary according to which informants one speaks to. The variation in this regard in fact reflects competition for relative status, which is directly linked to age order in Tharu society.

The brothers divide up the valley. Madwā takes the east which is called Aglapath, Jagarnattyā takes the west, called Paclāpath, Demanraurā has nowhere and what happens in the centre, in Sawāri pragannā is not entirely clear: it may have been Sukhwariyā Guruwā's but now it is Dahit's area. It is not clear how these mythical divisions are related to historical divisions of the valley into kingdoms or pragannā.

Rajaure reports that the valley was divided into five "shamanistic" sectors, which are from west to east: Pachillā pragannā, Patu, Chilli, and Pachillā-Sawāri and Aghillā-Sawāri pragannās. In each of these pragannās a certain priestly lineage had the right to work as desbandhyā, a right granted from the king by royal decrees (lāl mohar) (1978:221-223). It may have been the case that at some point priestly rights were organized on the basis of administrative pragannā divisions, but exactly which these were or how many there were is uncertain. There is doubt as to whether Aglapath was a pragannā (Aghillā) or was a part of Sawāri pragannā and similarly the location of Chilli pragannā is uncertain; informants had no clear opinions on this matter. This question may become clearer after further historical research, but we can note that the mythical divisions may have been modelled on pragannā divisions, or more likely perhaps, they may have been linked to earlier divisions of the valley which was at one time divided between two local kings (see above p. 37). In line with this it is interesting that Hamilton includes a local kingdom called Chilli in his list of the Baisi (22) states in West Nepal (1819:279). Today, the divisions of priests' rights corresponds largely to the mythical model, with Madwā in the east, Dahit priests in the central areas, and Jagarnattyā (Pachaldangyā) in the west. The distribution of households of these gotyār) appears also to conform broadly to this pattern; though Dahit households are spread throughout the valley.

The general point to emerge from these origin myths, is that they provide a model, which through the deities of the

priestly gotyār unites the various gotyār of Tharu society into a whole in terms of kinship and in relation to geographical space. The priestly gotyār are unique in having deities from which they originate, which are conceived of as ancestors, and which are present in the houses of the barin gotyār. These deities are related as brothers and they are linked in one way or another to the different areas of the valley. In addition, we may note that according to one version given here, and as was sometimes recounted in other versions, these deity-ancestors are either the disciples or the actual sons of Ghanpat Guruwā, the first priest. Ghanpat himself is associated with Harikabilās to the north, and it is from this place, or sometimes in a vaguer way from the north in general, that the priestly ancestor-deities are thought to have come, when starting their journey which took them via Bangālā to Dang (N.11).

14.4. Cosmology and Cosmography

The first picture we have, after the creation of land, is of a plane pinned down at its four corners and supported by the tortoise, ox, snake and fish. To develop on this, we have to take into consideration a text which precedes most major rituals and is called Samrauti.

Samrauti varies little in its content. It is recited before rituals and before major dances. Essentially it calls on the gods of the four cardinal points and the sky and underworld to protect the proceedings. After those have been called on, a variety of other hostile entities, such as masān, witches, and sorcerors are bound. On certain occasions the list of

deities called on is lengthened to include the whole village pantheon of around thirty different deities and spirits. The usual order of Samrauti begins as follows:

-In the east, Suruj Bhãrār, 'the treasure-room, storehouse' of the sun (cf. N:Bhãrār).
-In the north, Harikabilās.
-In the west, Debi Khārtār, (goddess Khārtār).
-In the south, Syu Jagarnāth.
-In the sky (akkās) Indrā Cha Indrā Deo, 'the deity Indrā'.
-In the underworld (pattāl) Bāsu Nāg, 'Bāsu snake'.

The deities of the south, sky, and the underworld have obvious Hindu parallels, but in the Tharu context I have little information on them, except that Indrā and Bāsu appear in the creation theology, and Jagarnāth may be related to Jagarnattyā of the Pachaldangyā gotyār. Debi Khārtār of the west is also rather obscure. This goddess is responsible for sicknesses and is propitiated intermittently with a gurai at the village shrine performed by the desbandhyā, who told me that this is necessary from time to time when things go wrong in the village. This goddess contrasts with the sun in the east, who is equally vague but clearly benevolent. The most important point is the north, Harikabilās. That Harikabilās is in some way distinct from the other points is suggested by the fact that while five of the points refer to a deity or an entity (the sun), the north is the only point which is linked to a place.

Harikabilās is where Guru Bābā, the "most important" and the "biggest" deity (sabse mukhyā, N:thulo), is seated on a golden seat. There are lights burning all around. There are also flowers, with bumble-bees buzzing, peacocks, and wild geese. Harikabilās is where the ancestors come from during Dasyā, and where Debi is sent, along with the various

categories of malevolent spirits in certain village rituals (N.12). Harikabilās is the "most important" place: it is the abode of the first and "most important" deity Guru Bābā, and of a large variety of deities and spirits including the spirits of ancestors, and Debi and of malevolent spirits which are sent there to be neutralised. It is the place then, which appears in a sense to encompass or contain potentially all deities and supernaturals, and as such, though this idea was never explicitly stated, I suggest it is the location par excellence of sat, in relation to the world in the age of kal.

If we combine these six points with the topographical features of the enviroment which lead to the association between north and up, and south and down, we have the following model:

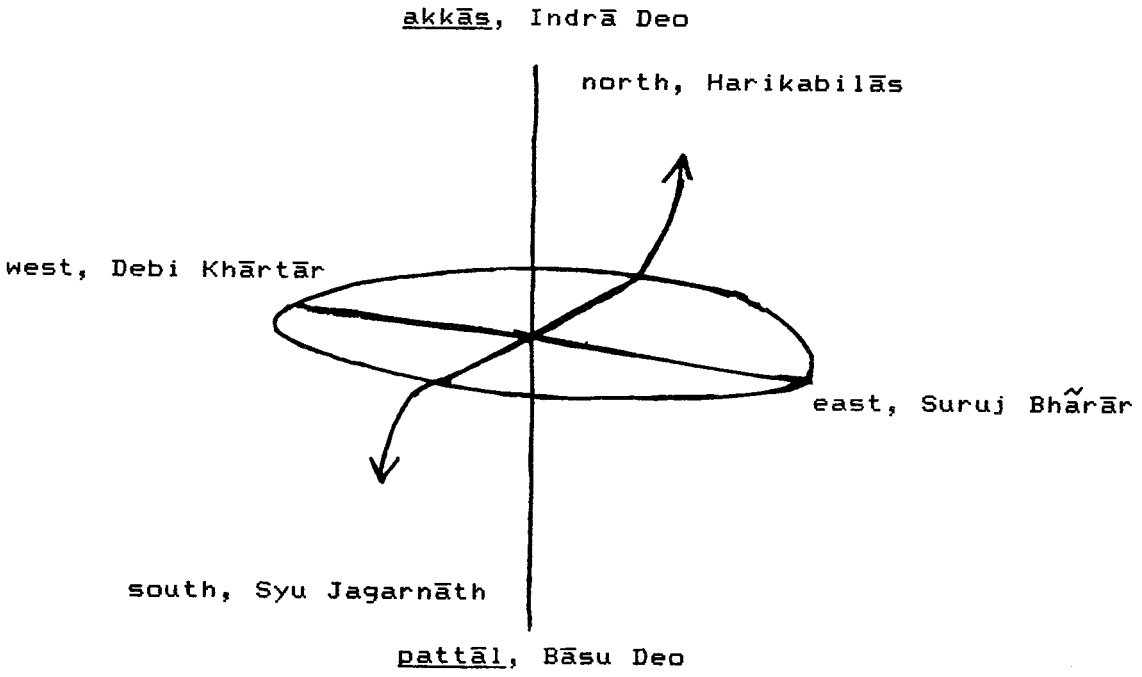


Fig. 23 The General Model of Tharu Cosmography

There is, however, a second or a further model of cosmography which must incorporate the Debi at the centre of the world, at Pāṭan, and her descent via the house from Kailās or Harikabilās to her temple at Pātan:

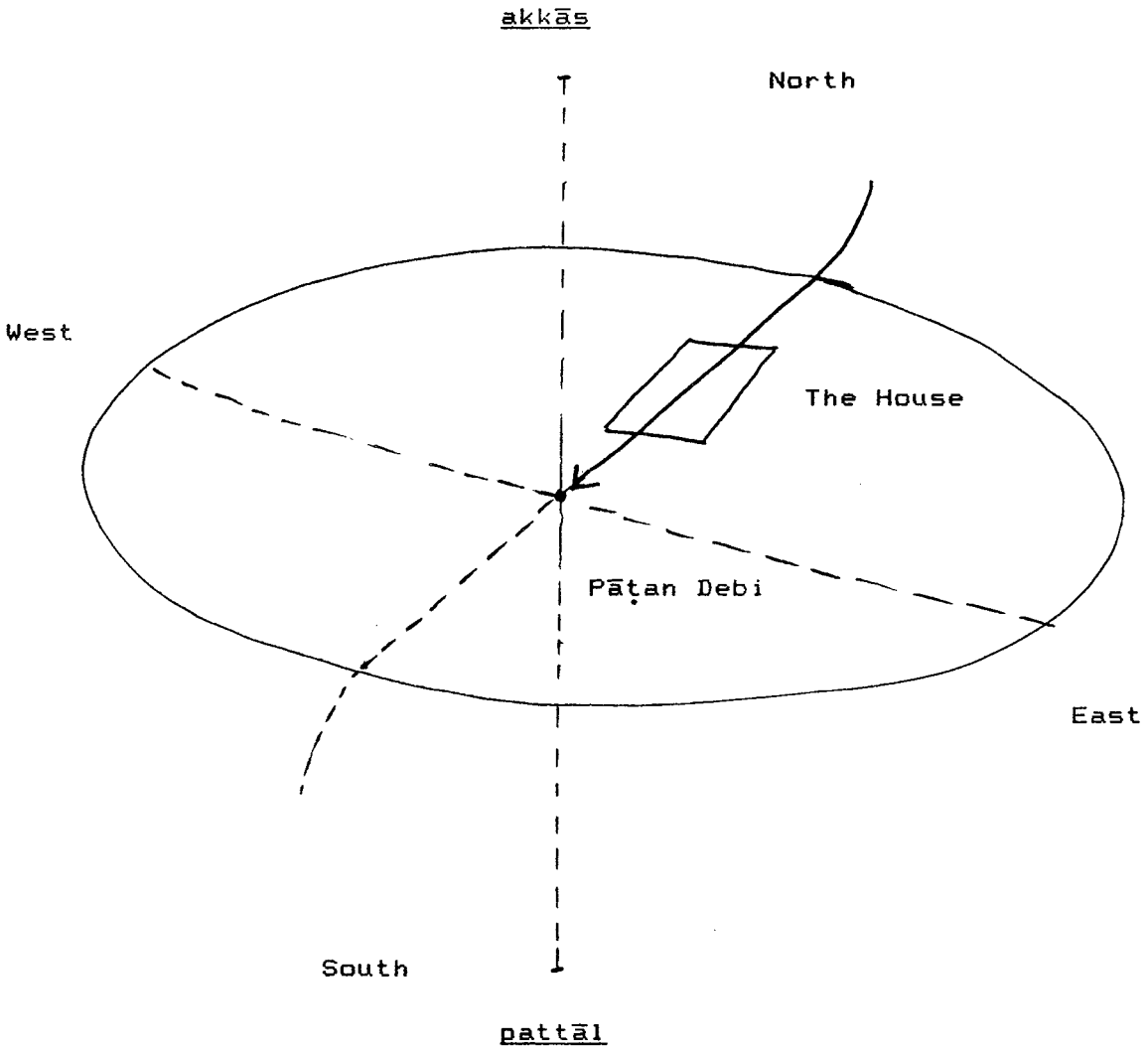


Fig. 24 Model of Cosmography Showing the Route of Debi via the House to Pāṭan at the Centre of the World

The house itself is located in the Dang valley, which is represented in Figure 25, with its geographical divisions associated with the priestly deities:

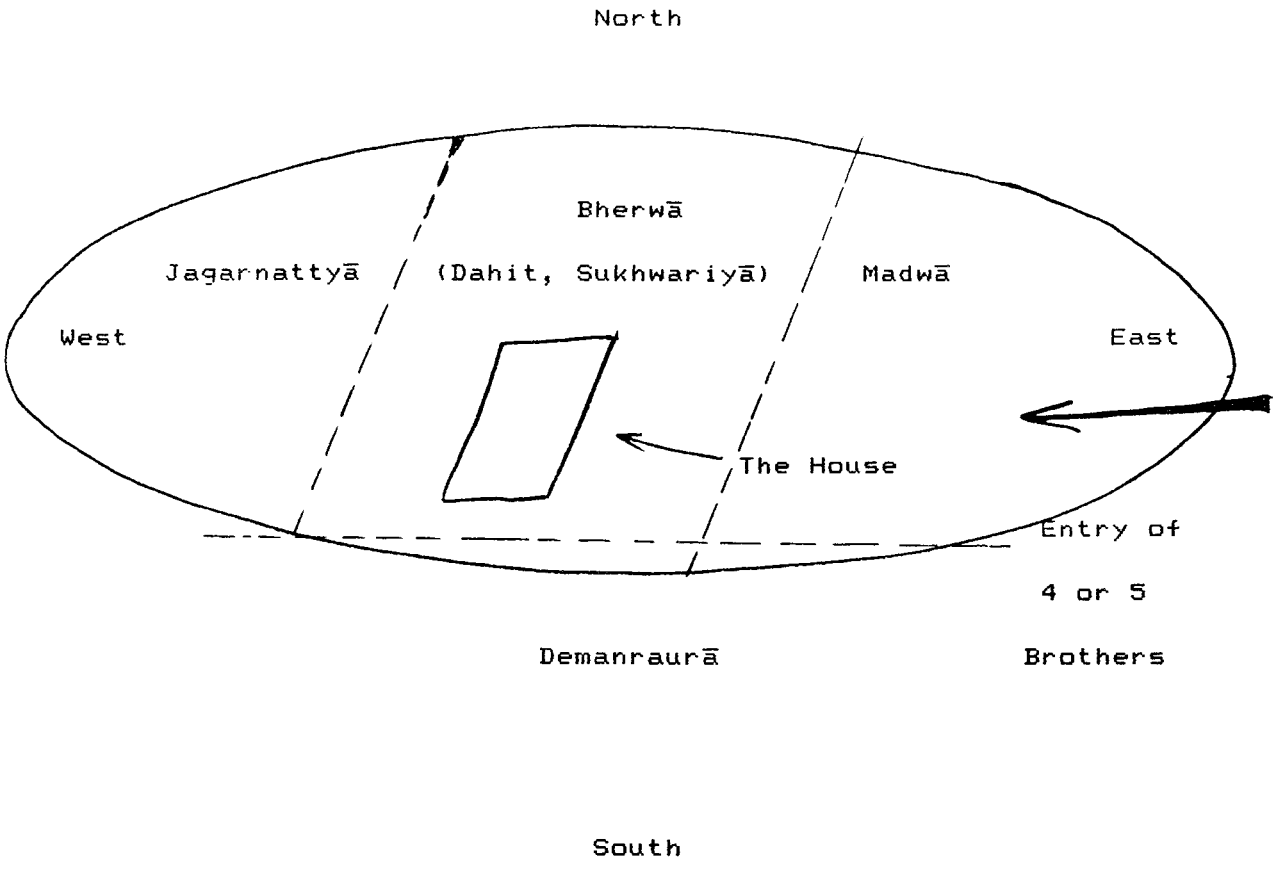


Fig. 25 The Priests' Ancestor-Deities in the Dang Valley

14:5 Conclusion

Tharu cosmology differs from the classic Indian model in that it only consists of two ages, sat and kal, and these are not part of cyclic system. Sat is the age of origins, when the deities created the world; it is the age of myth. In the creation mythology everything traces its origin ultimately to Guru Bābā, the first and "most important" deity. Debi too has her first manifestation as Guru Bābā's daughter. In the myths, however, Debi appears as the active agent. It is by her insistence that Guru Bābā transforms into Isrā Māhādeo to marry her in her own transformation as Gauri Pārbati.

Subsequently as Pārbati Debi is the one who initiates activity, teaching Māhādeo everything to do with agriculture. Between them the pair lay down the order of things for men, in the scheme of which Ghanpat Guruwā as priest has an important role. Debi through her children constitutes the house on her descent to the middle of the world. Her movement from Kāilās (Harikabilās) and her place at the centre reflect her immanence in the world, in contrast to Guru Bābā who appears transcendent and somewhat remote in his abode in Harikabilās. It was suggested that this rather vague but very important place in the mountains in the north, is the principal location of sat in relation to the world in the age of kal.

The origin myths of the priests' deities, which are ancestors of the priestly gotyār, reveal a model in which through their kinship as brothers and their association with parts of the valley these deities unite the priestly gotyār, and through them their barin, into a whole in terms of origin and in relation to space. The four or five priests' deities are the only gotyār deities which trace their origins back to Ghanpat Guruwā as his sons or disciples. To this extent these deities have a link back to the age of sat, to the time of origins to which Ghanpat himself belongs.

If we consider the relation in cosmographical terms between sat and kal, the links between those ages or aspects of the world are provided on one hand in relation to the world and the house by Debi and her children, and on the other hand in relation to the Dang valley by the priests' deities. In the next two chapters this background will contribute on the one hand to

our understanding the gharguruwā-barin relationship, while on the other hand discussion of possession will show that the 'centrality' of Debi has significant implications for the house.

Notes to Chapter 14

N.1 barnakhnā may be related to N:barṇu and H:bāṛhnā "to grow, increase, flourish, prevail"(s.v.Turner 1965). This connection is further suggested by the purpose of Hariyā Gurai, which is explicitly to assure the fertility of the growing rice crop.

N.2 batkahi, probably derives from H: and N:bāt "thing, matter; talk" plus N:kahanu (H:kahnā) "to speak, say; tell"(s.v.Turner 1965)

N.3 The contrast between sat and kal as associated respectively with gods and men is frequently made in rituals, especially in gurai rituals when the priest addresses the deities possessing the medium. The priest often opens with a phrase such as "sat jugak deutā huitho... mai kaljugak manai huithu" meaning "you are a deity of the age of sat.....I am a man of the age ofkal" (cf. also priests' myths No.3 below p.325). The term sat does not merely refer to or label an age of the world, but has a wider range of meaning, including "power, promise" (cf. N:Satya, s.v.Turner 1965). Related to the idea of "power" is the notion of sat as fertility or fecundity, so for example one will hear the comment "wakar sat aurāgail..." meaning "its sat (fertility) has run out..." in reference to land which has become infertile and no longer yields good crops. The essence, or 'life-force' perhaps, of rice and wheat is not referred to as sat, but is sāi. The sāi of rice can be "stolen", in which case no matter how much such rice one eats it is neither satisfying nor nourishing. To protect newly harvested paddy from this danger, while it is stored in heaps in the house before being put in dehri, axes are stuck into the mounds of grain; the metal, and perhaps also its shape or form as an axe, serve to protect against the "theft" of sāi.

N.4 For Māngar, cf. N:māngal, "an auspicious song" (s.v. Turner 1965).

N.5 Traditions concerning Rām are also contained in long songs named Rām Jalam, (from jaram "birth" hence "the birth of Rām") and Rām Bihegrā. These songs appear not to be widely known, and though I heard of the existence of written texts of them I was unable to track them down.

N.6 Initially when I asked to see Tharu books, my requests were always refused. This was partly because I was a stranger, there being no such texts in Sukhrwar itself, but was also because the government had suppressed the popular Tharu magazine called "Gotcāli" meaning "friend" or more accurately "comrade" with its left-wing overtones. Apparently owners of Tharu books suspected me of being some sort of investigator perhaps looking for issues of Gotcāli, and thus saw me as likely to bring them trouble.

Later I had some success by emphasizing I wanted only to see old books. A further reason, however, for people's reluctance to show me their books was because possession of the knowldege contained in the texts brought with it a certain respect or status and hence was carefully guarded. Priests for the same reason guarded their ritual knowledge, making them reluctant to divulge it to me; on several occasions priests half-jokingly commented "yo belāyti sab hamār gyān laijaihi" meaning "that Englishman will take away all our knowledge". In this way one priest always made me turn off my tape-recorder for the start of certain rituals, during the whispering by the officiants of powerful spells (mantra), and another priest refused to teach me the whole of one ritual song, explaining that he deliberately kept a few lines from me since it was not proper for me to have the whole text.

N.7 It is hoped to publish translations of some of the written texts collected. The translation of such texts is difficult, however, because of their often poor and erratic spelling.

N.8 See Unbescheid (1980:24-25) for details of this journey.

N.9 On the few occasions when Cillu, the Dahit desbandhyā and Mohan Lāl, the Sukhwariyā Guruwā headman, were both present in discussions (always accompanied by copious amounts of beer) this topic tended to be avoided, but when I brought it up most agreed in the end with Mohan Lāl's version that the Dahit were interlopers. It was generally the case that guruwās did not talk much in eachother's presence. There was some reluctance in case one revealed one's ignorance or lack of knowledge compared to the other guruwās present (an attitude directly related to the considerations discussed above in N.6).

N.10 Allen (1978a) has drawn attention to other examples of fourfold classification of society in the Himalayan region. The classifications he discusses, however, are altogether more comprehensive, providing an order for the whole society divided into, for instance, kings, ministers, priests, and priests' servants. It is notable, nevertheless, that the Tharu model of the priests corresponds to these other examples in that the fourth brother, like the fourth function, is in some sense underprivileged or excluded.

N.11 Macdonald (1975:279) has reported a version of the priests' origin myth, in which "five brothers, (Madvā, Bẽrrwā, Jagadnattiya, Jinguni and Demodaũrā), come from the region of Harikabilas (the area of Mount Kailas) where their gurvā was Ganpat Gurvā". This version provides an example of how the deities change, with the inclusion here of Jinguni, and interestingly it recounts that on their journey to "Bengal" the brothers passed by Pātan, where they made offerings to Patān Devi and to Saurā.

N.12 In the village ritual of Dhuriyā Gurai, for instance the priest continually asks that various categories of malevolent spirits be taken away, saying "yi sewānse, par sewān, par sewānse harikabilās laijaiho!" which was explained as meaning "From this village (or area) to the next village, and from the next village to harikabilās, take (them) away!" for sewān cf.N:simānā (or s̃iwānā) "Boundary, limit; landmark" (s.v.Turner 1965).

CHAPTER 15: POSSESSION, THE HOUSE AS DEBI'S PALACE AND THE ROLE OF THE HOUSEHOLD PRIEST

This chapter addresses two of the five questions outlined above in the introduction to this part of the study: it examines the gharguruwā-barin relationship, and shows how in the context of possession Debi as Māiyā gives the house its ultimate and transcendent identity. It is because priesthood, possession and the Debi are all related that it is appropriate to discuss these two questions together in one chapter. As pointed out in the previous chapter it will be necessary to view the role of household priests and the place of Debi in possession in relation to the mythical and cosmological background. The chapter is divided into two sections, with the first discussing the ritual of Guruwā Banainā and the place of Māiyā in this; it will be necessary to make detailed reference to the Pacrā song. The second section explains the crucial role of the household priest in relation to barin and seeks to relate this to the myths of the priests' deities.

15.1 Guruwā Banainā and the place of Debi in possession.

In the first place it must be made clear that all men can become guruwā, which we can translate as 'ordinary' priest.(N.1). According to my estimates in Sukhrwar somewhere in

the region of 65% of men of barin gotyār and around 70% of men of the Sukhwariyā Guruwā priestly gotyār had become guruwā. Initiation as guruwā may take place at the early age of between ten and twelve, but it is more usual after the age of about sixteen and may take place up to almost any age, though it seems that older men rarely go through this ritual after they have reached forty-five or thereabouts. At whatever age, the large majority of men become guruwā at some stage in their life.

The implications of becoming guruwā will be outlined in more detail in section two, but let us note here that as guruwā a man is able to make the full series of offerings to his household deities, and is also able to divine (Pāti Baithnā) men who have become guruwā, particularly as a result of practising divination, are able to develop a relationship with their household deities, so that for example they learn to know, or discover in dreams, what a particular deity may want at a particular time. In general, as a guruwā a man is enabled to participate fully in rituals for the household deities.

In order to become guruwā one must enter into trance, becoming possessed (susāinā) for the first time in a controlled ritual situation. The ritual, guruwā banainā (making the guruwā), is conducted in the deurār in front of Māiyā's pātā in the initiate's house or in another house of the same gotyār (N.2). The presence of the household's gharguruwa is essential; he conducts the proceedings and begins the invocations to the deities to come and enter the initiate, who takes up a crouching position on a

mat in front of the deities with his hands joined over his head or stretched out in front of him (see Plate 18). The presence of at least one drummer is essential, standing behind the initiate. Usually several other priests and 'ordinary' guruwās attend as well. Possession is brought on by recitation of chants, drumming, and the singing of the Pacrā song, which is sung by the other men attending. The inititate himself remains silent. Possession of experiemced guruwā, acting as kesaukā (medium) in gurāi rituals, follows a conventional pattern and is manifested by trembling, jerky movements of the arms, slight jumping up and down in the crouched position and uttering "Kyo kyo kyo, hā sukyo!" For an inititate these movements and sounds are exaggerated, sometimes to a dramatic extent. These trembling and jerky movements reach a climax when the initiate siezes hold of one of the deities on Māiyā's pātā. In fact it is explained that the deities seize the initiate, attracting his hands inexorably and irresistibly towards them. The seizure of the initiate by the deities is shown by his rapid and uncontrolled bounding backwards, sometimes crashing into the wall on the other side of the room, unless as usually happens he is caught and supported by someone. Having been siezed by the deities, all the remaining deities represented in material form are gathered up by the priests and other men and the possessed inititated is accompanied on an anti-clockwise tour of the rooms of the house, beginning in the deurār and ending in the eastern courtyard where the initiate 'dances' several times around the Raksā deity. He is then led back into the deurār where the deities are replaced on their pātā. The priest then dialogues with the initiate giving him offerings of rice,

alcohol and water. The deities are then called on to leave the initiate, to seat themselves (baithāinā) and the possession ends. The whole ritual is repeated again the following morning.

For the Tharu Debi is the active and apparently all-powerful deity in the world; everything is her khel or "game". In keeping with this is her quality of ambivalence combining both good and bad aspects and her ability to be simultaneously one and many (N.3). We have said that Māiyā or Debi is the centre. She is placed centrally below the pātāhā dehri. In general in household ritual this pātā is the point of orientation where ritual sequences begin and end. This pātā is the primary channel or point of communication within the household with the deities. As Pāṭan Debi, the goddess is also in cosmographical terms at the centre of the world, with her eldest son Saurā. The goddess is also on Māiyās pātā as Māiyā and again with her son Saurā. Although an initiate may be seized by any of the deities on Māiyā's pātā, it is explained and emphasized that it is Debi who in fact possesses him. This is clear also from the Pacrā song which accompanies the ritual, and this song shows that in this context Māiyā and Pāṭan Debi are identified together as one Debi.

When the initiates become possessed and circulate through the house out into the courtyard and back into the deurār, the last verses of Pacrā are sung to a different rhythm from the preceding verses. These verses address Māiyā directly using throughout the imperative form of the verbs. The text can be translated as follows:

Ye, lead and divine (them) Māiyā, lead (them)
(through) your kingdom's palace, lead and drive
(them). Take (them) away Māiyā, take (them) away
(through) your storehouse of plenty, take (them) away.
Ye lead and drive (them) Māiyā, lead and drive
(them) (through) your storehouse of plenty, lead and
drive (them). Take (them) away Māiyā, take (them)
(through) your corners (i.e. through or around the
corners of the house), take (them) away.
Ye lead and drive (them) Māiyā, lead (them)
(through) all your corners, lead and drive (them).
Take (them) away Māiyā, take (them) (through) the
doorway to your country, take (them).
Ye lead and drive (them) Māiyā, lead and drive
(them) (through) the doorway to your country, lead and
drive (them). Dance and play Māiyā, dance and play,
(in) the doorway to your country, dance and play.
Just as the hawk hovers and dances, so danced my
Māiyā, lead and drive (them) (into) your kingdom's
palace, lead (them).
Put (them) back down Māiyā, put (them) back (in)
your kingdom's palace, put (them) back. Lead and
drive (them) Māiyā, lead and drive (them) (into)
your kingdom's palace, lead and drive (them).

These verses are not easy to translate. The pronoun 'them' has been included since the singing appears from one point of view to speak to Māiyā calling on her to direct the actions of the initiates. This need not be the only correct interpretation. The song need not make such directly clear sense, since in the very nature of this and other songs the language is used quite freely, certain words are omitted altogether, and the language and images may have a broader more poetic scope evoking various levels of meaning and ideas. The alternative interpretation, which fits better with the passage calling on Māiyā to dance, is that the song is addressed directly to Māiyā calling on her to perform the various actions. If this is the case the possessed initiates have become completely identified with Māiyā. In the same way the house has become the palace of Māiyā, and the courtyard her country. Māiyā, with her son Saurā, as we have noted and as

she is addressed in earlier verses of Pacrā, is equated here with Pāṭan Debi. At this point, then, the house has become Debi's palace or temple and is thus equivalent to the centre of the world.

The lists of household deities show that Māiyā and the deities form a core group present in all houses. If the particular combination of deities identifies the households of a particular gotyār, then the presence of Māiyā's pātā identifies a house as Tharu. At a certain level, then, the deities of Māiyā's pātā, with their identity as the principal characters in the creation mythology, can be said to represent the totality of Tharu society. Furthermore it is by the relationship established in possession between men and Debi, through Māiyā's pātā- the centre- that the house finds its ultimate reference or identity. It is no longer merely a building occupied by men, defined in different respects by deities of the inside and the outside, the north and the south. Through the equivalence between Māiyā and Pāṭan Debi the house becomes much more: it becomes the palace of Debi herself, at the centre of the world (N.4).

15.2 The Role of Gharguruwā

Once he has become a guruwā a man can begin to act in other capacities as a priest. A number of rituals involve gurai in which the senior officiant, usually the gharguruwā or desbandhyā, acting as guruwā invokes the deities which then possess the second officiant, the kesaukā or medium. Any man who is an 'ordinary' guruwā may act as kasaukā, though

this role is resticted to household members in certain household gurais and members of certain priestly gotyār in village gurais. Beyond this, an 'ordinary' guruwā of any gotyār can train as a dhareriyā priest, if he can find another dhareriyā to teach him. This is the priest who performs the Rath Lausārnā ritual and certain dhareriyā guruwās may become specialists in other curative rituals associated with Rath Lausārnā (N.5). As an 'ordinary' guruwā, as noted above, a man can perform divination, and if he acquires a reputation as an efficient diviner his services may be constantly in demand. An 'ordinary' guruwā can build up a substantial reputation and clientele, but he cannot function as household or village priest. These functions should be fulfilled by members of the priestly gotyār. The common pattern, however, seems to be that most functions, including that of dhareriyā are carried out by members of the priestly gotyār.

We have commented on the status aspects of the gharguruwā-barin relationship (above p.100). It seems that one cannot identify permanent status distinctions at the level of the gotyār, but the high status of the priest is apparent at the individual level of the relationship between a priest's household and those of his barin. The priest is not usually paid for his services in cash, but receives a prestation of alcohol, maize, and vegetables every year in Dasyā, and he may call on his barin for labour service (begāri). In his barins' households he is an honoured and respected person who receives the best they can offer in food and especially beer. The position of gharguruwā, desbandhyā and of dhareriyā

is in general an important one, and perhaps one of the main positions whereby men can acquire a publicly respected status and reputation. The reputation of a leading guruwā, however, is tinged with a certain ambiguity, since powerful priests may also be tyenghā or sorcerors. The guruwā, apart from for his specifically ritual services, is also often turned to for advice and to act as a mediator in a variety of daily situations. A summary of the ritual services of the gharguruwā, however, will make clear in what way this specialist is nothing less than crucial for his barin.

In the first place the gharguruwā is required for the making and installation of the household deities. He does not himself make all the deities, but he makes Māiyā's base and inserts the metal upper part, and he conducts the rituals involved in the installation (Deutā Banāinā). The household head's presence is also required; he participates in the making of Māiyā and has to make certain offerings to her and other deities. When the deities are made and set up, they are said to be made in the name of the household head. The gherguruwā is also required for a number of household rituals, and in particular for life-cycle rituals, performing the gurai to seat the new ancestor after death (Pittar Baithainā), and in the full elaborate form of marriage ceremonies he performs gurai to ensure the protection and well-being of all concerned. As we have seen, the gharguruwā is also required for initiating or "making" men of the household into guruwā. In Guruwā Banainā, at the end of the second possession sequence, the household priest teaches the new guruwā to make bān. This is made by the initiate cutting tiny incisions on

his body, on the forehead, top of the tongue, underside of the tongue, middle of the chest, upper right arm, little finger of the right hand, right thigh, and top and bottom of the right foot. Bān consists of rice-grains rubbed into these incisions and then mixed with the initiate's blood (N.6). These grains are collected up and kept in the ritual bag (Jholiyā) together with bān and incense (dhup) supplied every Dasyā by the gharguruwā himself. Offerings of bān, dhup and hair pulled from the tuft of hair (cutti) on the crown of the head are considered particularly pleasing and are always given at the end of the series of offerings after any sacrifice to the household deities, and these final offerings can only be given by men who have become guruwā. After the possession sequences of Guruwā Banāinā have ended, the household priest gives the initiate his divining strings (? kāin) and gives him his first lesson in divination, seated in front of Māiyās pātā. The household priest, then, acts as the mediator between a household and its deities: he makes amd installs the deities, he initiates men as guruwā, enabling them to act as 'ordinary' priests and to participate fully in rituals and offerings to the deities and to enter into communication with them in divination. Ultimately the gharguruwā mediates between this world and the next, seating the new ancestor on Māiyā's pātā and sending him on his way to Harikabilās.

The ritual role of the household priest is connected with his own deities, and especially his particular priestly deity (Madwā, Bherwā etc.). Whenever a priest travels to perform gurai rituals for his barin he takes with him his Jholiyā, his Byāt and his Saurā. He sets this equipment up at

the ritual site, for instance placing his Saurā next to the barin's Saurā on Māiyā's pātā. It appears that the priest requires the presence of his own deities, which after all were those that first possessed him. Saurā represents the deities of the priest's Māiyā's pātā, but he does not have to bring his own particular deity, since represented by its bahan, this is already present in the barin deurār. The place of the priests' special deities in ritual is not fully clear, but the pattern of gurai rituals may suggest something of their importance. A gurai consists of two or three separate stages of possession in each of which different categories of deities are invoked. The first stage is called kes pāt guni pāt (N.7) and appears to include the priest's particular deity as well, perhaps, as the other inner deities except those of Māiyās pātā. The second stage calls directly on Māiyā and is termed Gharki Māiyā, while the third stage varies depending on the particular context. In death gurais for instance, the final stage calls on the new ancestor (lauwā pittar) to possess the kesaukā. The invocation of the priest's special deities thus appears to be required as the initial stage in gurai rituals and this applies equally in household and village gurais (N.8).

In a general way the special power of the priestly deities is indicated by the phrases a priest always uses when concluding rituals. A typical such phrase, in the case of Sukhwariyā Guruwā priests is "meg garji, patthar doli, dharti hili, mwār Bherwak kāran kaisa dagi ", which means "the clouds may crash, stones may roll, and the earth may tremble, but the word of my Bherwā cannot be shaken."

It is notable that in the series of deities in the deurār, the priest's deities in most cases occupy the northernmost pātā in barin households. Their pātā may be referred to as gharguruwak pātā, "the household priest's altar",or, if it is northernmost, as uttarak pātā, "the northern altar", or sometimes as sirak pātā, "head altar". Their location in the north position corresponds with their origin from the north, but in view of the association of the north of the house with seniority as being where the household head sleeps and the section which he keeps in the event of house-splitting, the northernmost location of these deities may be a further indication of their 'seniority'.

Reference to the origin myths of the priestly deities shows that these deities, which are conceived as ancestors, are linked to Ghanpat Guruwā and the original age of sat. The priestly gotyār are unique in having deities which are specifically 'theirs' and which are present in houses of other gotyār, and which establish such an explicit connection with the age of sat. It is appropriate, therefore, that these gotyār should work as household priests. The household priest is the essential link or mediator between a barin household and its deities, but in a parallel fashion through their particular deities the priestly gotyār are mediators at a mythological level between the age of sat and the Dang valley in the age of kal. I suggest that once we have established this structure it is possible to change the elements: it is possible to have more than four or five priestly gotyār and deities, and these themselves may vary as I suspect they do. The deities may change to some extent, but the model endures.

Notes to Chapter 15

N.1 In this respect, as in many others, possession closely resembles that described for the Rāji by Reinhard (1976b)

N.2 For a fuller description of Guruwā Banainā see Rajaure 1978:238-246.

N.3 A good example of Debi 'dividing' herself into a number of manifestations occurs in one of the Phulwār episodes.(See Appendix B).

N.4 The possession rituals during Dasyā show an association between the Mannik Khambā, the pātāhā dehri and Māiyā's pātā, and introduces the notion of verticality. In Dasyā possession, as usual accompanied by drumming and the singing of Pacrā, begins in the bahari, where the guruwās are seated on a mat. They become possessed and enter the inner part of the house where they climb up via the Mannik Khambā onto the top of the pātāhā dehri. There they smoke a hukkā pipe, before leaping down on to a mat placed in front of the base of the dehri (see Plate 19). They are then 'seized' by the deities and circulate through the house and into the eastern courtyard as in Guruwā Banainā. Having 'danced' round Raksā, they reenter the deurār and replace the deities, whereupon possession ends. The association here of the house post and dehri with a vertical descent, suggests perhaps that here we have another version of and axis mundi, but combining the three elements of the post, the dehri and Māiyā's pātā, the centre. The close association of the post, the dehri and all the pātā appears from the layout of deities in Bakhariyā Ulthawā houses, where the pātā are placed at the base of the Mannik Khambā, with Māiyā's in the centre, and the whole group is surrounded by a bakhari, a temporary circular grain storage container made out of mats, and about two metres high. In this case the dehri is replaced by the bakhari.

N.5 Unfortunately I know virtually nothing of these curing rituals performed by dhareriyā guruwā, but I believe they will be discussed in work soon to appear by Gisèle Krauskopf.

N.6 bān has three meanings: i) the mixture or rice grains and human blood, ii) it refers to the magical action of witches and sorcerors against others (fire, illness) iii) it also means 'arrow'. The connection of ii) and iii) with i) is less clear. Cf. also N:bān "arrow, paralysis....caused by jungle spirits who shoot the sufferer" (s.v. Turner 1965).

N.7 The A B C B structure of this ritual term is common in ritual contexts in the Himalayas; cf. Allen 1976b:250-253.

N.8 It is difficult to tell precisely which deities are being invoked from the chants which accompany stages one and two since the different deities are not clearly named, and anyway the chants for both stages include all the household deities, and appear to be largely identical. The third stage chant is often equally difficult to follow, but occasionally one can tell that a particular category or deity is invoked, such as in the case of death rituals and also in village rituals when the village pantheon is called on. To clarify these problems requires further detailed analysis of these chants, but comparison of them has already revealed the additional complication of considerable variation between different officiants.

CHAPTER 16 : THE VILLAGE : DEITIES AND RITUAL

We have described the deities of the house, and discussed the definition of the house and the gotyār, and the relations between houses and between priestly and non priestly gotyār, by reference to their deities. The purpose of this chapter is to describe the ritual aspects of the village, the remaining social unit of Tharu society. The chapter is divided into four sections and a conclusion. The first section introduces the village pantheon of Sukhrwar, and comments briefly on the various categories of deities it contains. The second section describes the organisation of village ritual and the roles of the village officiants, in order to identify the structure of the relations between the village and its deities. The third section describes certain village rituals, so as to isolate the dominant characteristics of village ritual and the principal ideas that it embodies. The conclusion summarises the main findings of the chapter, and by comparison with the house, points to common patterns that underlie both household and village ritual. It must be emphasised that a full description of the not inconsiderable number of rituals which involve the village deities directly, or which are performed on behalf of the village as a whole, would be a major task. The aim, however, is to identify only the principal aspects of village ritual and its organisation, and consequently much ethnographic material

and certain of the problems it raises for analysis will not be dealt with here.

16.1 The Village Deities

The village deities are collectively called Bhũhyār. They are generally considered to protect the inhabitants and the cattle, but they are also connected with the fertility of the land and the crops. The word is certainly related ethnologically to bhuĩ, meaning "soil", and belongs in the general category of Bhumiya or Bhume deities (see Crooke 1896) (N.1.). Their association with the land corresponds to the territorial nature of the village, which, unlike the other groups discussed, lacks any principle of unity deriving from kinship.

The identity and location of the various thān, and the more elaborate shrines of the deities of Sukhrwar are given in the list below. In the list, the numbers and letters correspond to those in Figure 26 which shows the layout of all the thān, and in Figure 27 which gives details of the main site of worship (A). The numbering of the deities from 1 to 28 follows the order in which their names are recited in Samrauti chants on certain occasions during the year. This is also the order in which they receive offerings of distilled alcohol (mad) and water (jal) on occasions such as Pariwār Paithnā (see above Chapter 13). On the occasion of the two most elaborate annual village rituals (Hariyā Gurai and Dhuriyā Gurai, see below), the order in which offerings are given follows the same sequence, except that numbers 15 to 19 form a break in the sequence, receiving their offerings last of all, at

a site (F) across the stream which marks the southern boundary of the village land.

The precise details of the identity, order, and thān locations of the deities are not known to most people, and it is the special knowledge of the headman and of a few other older knowledgeable men. In Samrauti chants, it is the headman who always leads the recital of names.

16.1.1 List of Bhũhyār Deities (N.2)

1. Murāhā Mahaton. This deity, as its name suggests, is associated with the headman. It has the form of a large wooden peg about 35 to 40cm high. There are three such pegs in the central village shrine (1, x, and Y in Fig. 27), all of which are called Murāhā, a term which may be related to mur (as in Mur Bhwāj) meaning 'head'. They are thus the 'head' pegs, and the mahaton peg is the northernmost one in the series of carved wooden boards and pegs which make up the shrine. Such 'headman pegs' are present in all villages, though I do not know if they are always north of the shrine consisting also of the wooden boards (2 and 3, Fig. 27), with which they are usually placed. In Baibang village, which has three 'headman pegs', these are northernmost in the shrine. The shrine consisting of the boards (2, 3) and pegs is collectively called Daharcandi or Daharcandi-Cabahwā after the names of these boards (see below), or it can also be refered to as deuthannwā, "the thān of the deities". The Murāhā Mahaton must be changed or a new one added every time the mahaton changes, or whenever he builds a new house. The peg should be made from the same tree used to make the Mannik

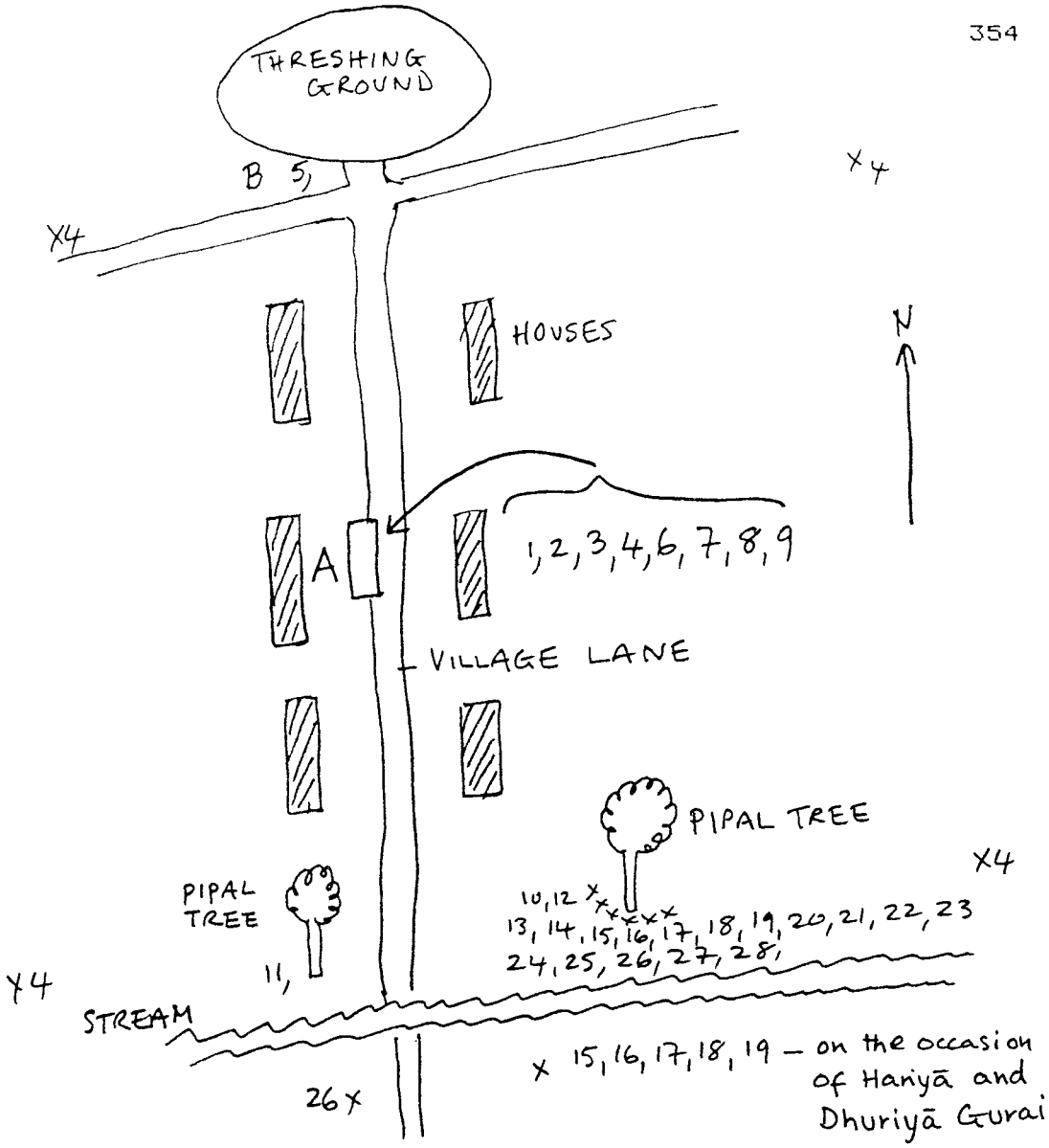


Fig. 26 Showing the Location of Village Deities

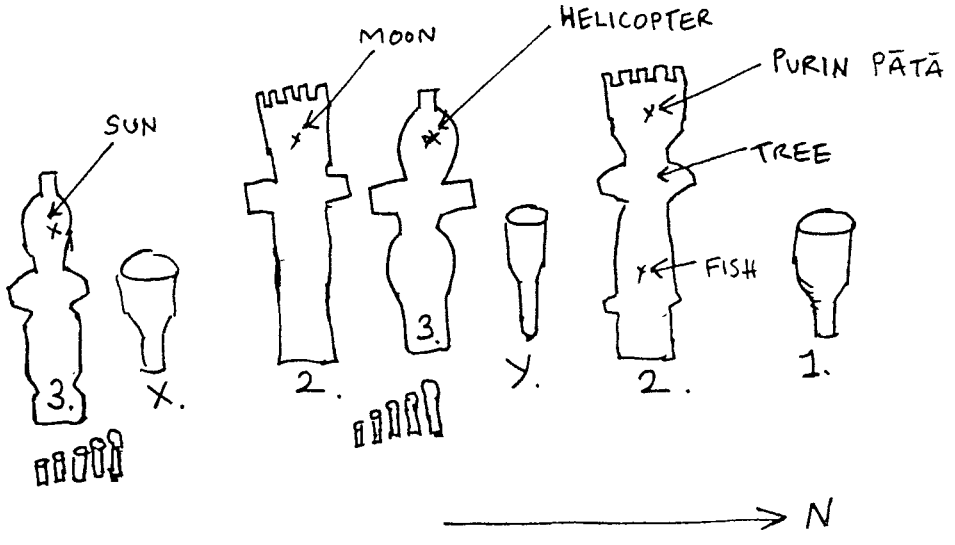


Fig. 27 Showing the Daharcandi Shrine

Khambā of the headman's house (Rajaure 1982:77-79).

2. and 3. are respectively Daharcandi and Cabahwā (N.3.) These have the form of roughly carved wooden planks, representing a man and a woman, and always occur as a pair, or sometimes as in Sukhrwar as two pairs. The female, Daharcandi, has five prongs on top, while the male Cabahwā has a single prong (see plates 20,21). These planks are usually covered with engraved designs representing, the sun, the moon, fish, trees, the lotus (purin), and sometimes also animals, and human figures. Those in Sukhrwar have representations of sun, moon, a tree, fish, a helicopter, and are engraved with the names of the village priest Cillu Caudhari, the headman Mohan Lāl and Pen Lāl, the villager of the Sukhwariyā Guruwā gotyār who usually acts as kesaukā in village rituals. Macdonald reports that Cabahwā watches over the harvests while Daharcandi protects the inhabitants and their cattle (1975 : 268). Rajaure reports what is possibly a folk etymology of Cabahwā as "four-armed", and therefore as "the deity who protects the earth with his four arms covering the four directions" (1982 : 1978). This deity also protects the inhabitants and cattle (ibid). Rajaure adds that Daharcandi guards "the trails (dahar)", and protects the village from epidemics, drought and famine (ibid). My impression was that they are thought of as a pair whose protective functions include all those cited, but informants were uncertain as to the precise allocation of protective functions.

4. Khetarpāl Burhi Deu. This deity is considered to guard the fields as its name suggests, deriving from Sk:Kṣetra-pāla, "field guardian" (cf N. Ksetrapāl, s.v.

Turner 1965). It has no marked thān, receiving offerings along with a number of other deities at the Daharcandi shrine. Apparently, after a major village ritual called Jākheri held every fifteen years or so four posts representing Khetarpāl are put up around the village settlements, (marked (4) in map 26). These posts, also called caukhut or cārkhut meaning "the four quarters" do not form the focus for subsequent ritual and soon fall over and disappear.

5. Gāwarkā Gāwar Bandhi, or Gauri. The thān of this deity is marked by a row of plough-slades placed in a line east-west to the South of the threshing ground (B. in fig. 26). This deity appears to be specially connected with cattle, and the shrine (B) is the focus for the annual village Gauri bā̃dhnā ritual for the well being of all village cattle (N.4). On other occasions this deity receives offerings at the Daharcandi shrine.

6. Pā̃c Pandāwan Deutā. These are the five sons of Pāndu or Pāndavas of the Mahābhārata, and are represented by two sets of five small wooden pegs in descending size corresponding to the birth order of these five brothers. The pegs are placed just in front of the Daharcandi-Cabahwā boards in the shrine (see Fig 27).

7. Chatte Nārāyan Deutā. No further details are known about this deity, which has no marked thān, but receives offerings at the Daharcandi shrine.

8. Des Bandhyā Deutā. As its name indicates this is the deity of the desbandhyā. It too has no specific thān but shares the Daharcandi site. It is infact the Bherwā deity of the Dahit village priest.

9. Sukhwariyā Bherwā. This is the Bherwā deity of the Sukwariyā Guruwā gotyār, and again has no separate thān, receiving offerings at Daharcandi.

10. Madwā Bherwā. This is the Bherwā of the Katkattwā (and Jinguni) gotyār, according to local tradition, the eldest of the four priestly deities. It receives offerings at a thān, not marked in any way, below one of the large pipal trees to the south of the village (see fig. 26).

11. Baram Deu Barhā. This is a succā deity which receives offerings at its unmarked thān below the western pipal tree (see fig. 26).

12. Kumhār Guni. This deity has an unmarked thān at the base of the south-eastern pipal tree. From its name, however, it would appear to be a deity of the potter (Kumhār or Kumhāl) caste. Guni is a term sometimes used to address the kesaukā when possessed in gurai rituals (N.5).

Little is known about this or the remaing Bhuhyār deities. All of 12 to 18 receive minor offerings at unmarked thān on the ground at the base of the south-eastern tree, except that as noted above on major ritual occasions numbers 15-19 are given offerings further across the village boundary to the south (see fig. 26).

13. Sāwar Guni.

14. Bhujkalwā. The meaning of numbers 13 and 14 is not known.

15. Jamjut Guni. This deity is more often referred to as bhut, and is relatively harmless but highly mischievous. A possible derivation for the name has been given above (N.4 to Chapter 12).

16. Tarak Bhawāni. To the Tharu this means literally "the lower goddess", perhaps related to the fact that she sometimes receives offerings across the stream to the south, the direction generally associated with down.

17. Pārak Mari. This again ia a female deity, the first part of whose name derives from pār meaning "on the other side of" or "across", which is probably related again to the fact that she receives offerings across the stream marking the southern boundary of village land. The term mari refers to usually fatal epidemic disease and to small-pox in particular (N.6).

18. Mari Pitrāyan (or Pitrāin). This is again a female deity, the second part of whose name means "female ancestor".

19. Saureryā Caudharnyā. Another female deity, the second part of whose name was said to be the feminine form of Caudhari, the surname adopted by the Tharu. Informants linked the first term with the nearby village of Sauriyār, though the reason for the connection was never clear to me. This deity is also known as Pitornyā (or Pitwornyā), which was explained to me as another feminine form of the term for ancestor. All the deities grouped together south of the stream are considered distinctly ambivalent, except no. 26. Pitornyā herself is associated with disease and in particular outbreaks of boils all over the body and also possibly small-pox.

20. Lauwā Bhũhyãran. These terms appear to refer to a group of deities, since the second term is a plural. The terms mean "the new Bhũhyãr (deities)".

21. Jogyāth Guni. This is a Jogi or Sādhu deity, which

is succā and receives in addition a special offering of a leaf chillum full of hemp (gāñjā) in major rituals.

22. Camrāyan. Little is known of this deity, except that informants connected it with the untouchable Camār leather-worker caste.

23. Bahirā Raksā. Again an obscure deity, whose name may mean '? outside Raksā'. Raksā may be related to the household Raksā. Rajaure translates this as "a deaf demon" (1982:79), deriving demon from Sk:rakṣas.

24. Jhākhri. As its name suggests this is a deity of, or a deified version of the magico-religious specialists of the same name, found over much of Nepal (see Macdonald 1962, and 1975:113-128). These specialists do not usually operate among Tharu villages in Dang.

25. Baram Deu Baram Pitrāyan. Another obscure deity; for the meaning of Pitrāyan see above no. 18.

26. Baram Deu Baram Barhā. This deity would appear to be another version of no. 11, but unlike that one it is not succā.

27. Ahirā Guni. As its name suggests this deity is linked to the Ahir Caste; nothing else is known of this deity.

28. Isrā Bisrā. This name does not refer to a specific deity but includes all those that might have been forgotten when chanting Samrauti or making offerings. The second term derives from bisrainā "to forget".

The elements which go to make up the visible thān of Bhūhyār occur in different locations and combinations in other villages. Sometimes all will be placed together, i.e. the plough

slades, the Daharcandi figures and various pegs near one or more trees. In some villages the Daharcandi shrine is separated from the thān located near the trees , of which there is often only one. From general observation it appears that often but not always the tree, sometimes called sankarryā piprā or "the pipal of the boundary", is situated to the south of the village settlements. Sukhrwar is unusual in having its Daharcandi shrine located roughly in the centre of the main settlement. These shrines are often placed on the side, usually to the west since the deities face east, of one of the paths leading to a village (c.f. Macdonald 1975:268). They are thus usually just to the north or south of the main settlement which in most cases lies north-south. Sometimes the thān around the tree is further marked by a small hut (marrwā), which is associated with Bhũhyār as a whole, and which also seems to contain the deity of the village priest sometimes represented by its horse bahan (vehicle). Bhũhyār marrwā are common in western parts of the valley, especially in villages served by Jagarnattyā priests (see Plate 21). They are rare in central and eastern areas, but the idea has not disappeared, since in Sukhrwar for example, a couple of tiny 'houses' are built for Bhũhyār at the base of the two pipal trees just before the villagers begin the annual reroofing of village houses.

The list of Bhũhyār contains a number of obscure deities about which I was unable to obtain any information, nevertheless there are certain observations we can make. First, as noted there is a 'headman deity', which is northernmost in the Daharcandi shrine and which is associated with the headman's house and in particular with the Mannik Khambā. These facts

will be recalled below when we have considered the role of the headman in village ritual. Secondly, the Daharcandi-Cabahwā deities are not present in all villages, but as noted above (.N.1, ch. 9) these villages are thought of as "virgin" and somehow incomplete. Though I do not know the rituals involved in making and installing these deities, as noted above their installation is a kind of bhwāj or marriage, which is surely related to their identity as a male and female pair. The position of the two sets of Pandāwan in front of them suggests perhaps the image of a family, in a parallel fashion to the family of Māiyā's pātā in the house. Thirdly, the deity of the village priest is represented, as is also that of the Sukhwariyā Guruwā gotyār. The presence of the latter is probably related to the fact that the headman belongs to this gotyār. In addition the senior priestly deity Madwā is present while the junior ones are absent. Fourthly, we may note that like the house there are succā and cattle deities included. Fifthly, unlike the house, deities of other castes (Camār, Khumhār, Ahir) and of external specialists (Jogi, Jākhri) are included. This feature may suggest that Bhũhyār has a wider range of reference than household deities, including elements of the outside society, but this interpretation raises the problem of why only these and not other caste's deities are represented. Finally, there is a group of deities, mostly female and ambivalent, some explicitly connected with diseases, which though included in the list of Bhũhyār recieve offerings on the major ritual occasions across the boundary of the village land and to the south.

Comparison of this list with those of other villages

would doubtless provide useful insights, particularly perhaps into those elements which may remain constant. It is not easy to obtain this kind of information, few people know accurately the identity and thān of their village Bhũhyãr and it is not always possible to pin down those who do. Partial information from three other villages suggests that Daharcandi-Cabahwā (when present), Murāhā Mahaton, Pãc Pandāwan, Gauri, Pitornyā, Barhā, Jamjut, Ahirā, Camrāyan, Raksā, and the village priest's deity are always represented. Beyond these, however, there appears to be some variation.

16.2 The Organisation of Village Ritual

Village ritual is organised by the headman with the village khel. The khel meeting decides the day, and apportions tasks between its members. Some men for instance are detailed to collect necessary items, such as fish, and distilled alcohol for offerings. Others will go to the forest to collect leaves to make the leaf lights and plates for offerings, while one or two will leave to call the desbandhyā priest. The important point however is that unlike other village activities such as canal maintenance, all households including the bukhrawā houses participate in and contribute to the collection of the various items required for all village rituals. It is, then, in the context of the ritual that all the households are involved and the village as a whole community, composed of equivalent household units finds its expression.

The headman himself has a prominent role in all village rituals. In minor rituals which only involve making offerings

diectly without any gurai sequence, it is he who is responsible. A good example of this is the offering of dhār, consisting of milk and water. This is given by household heads on the occasion of Pariwār Paithnā as we have seen, but the household head also makes this offering to household deities at other times whenever he feels they desire it, or when it is indicated by divination. Similarly the headman is responsible for giving dhār at intervals he feels appropriate to the village deities The headman's house itself is the site for certain village rituals, such as during Astimki when the headman paints a fresh mural depicting Kānhā on a dehri in the bahari of his house. It is there that the women of the village come to do tikā to the mural and make offerings of fruit, flowers and rice, which are kept by the headman's household. In a variety of rituals the headman leads the activity, such as in the singing of Samrauti for instance. The Auli Lenā ritual for the offering of first fruits of rice and wheat provides a simple but clear example. First a man from each household goes to one of his fields to cut a sheaf of paddy. The men then assemble in silence on the threshing ground where they form into a line with the headman at its head. He leads the way past Daharcandi, where some paddy is offered by each man, and down to the pipal trees, where the same offerings are made. The village 'component' of this ritual is now concluded, and each man enters his house, ties some paddy on to the Mannik Khambā, places some by Māiyā's pātā, and then makes minor offerings to the household's deities.

In gurai rituals, either at the Daharcandi shrine, or at other sites, the headman acts as pujāru and is responsible

for sacrificing the animals (pigs, chickens, goats, sheep) offered. On such occasions he also scatters before the deities parts of any cooked foods included as offerings. In such gurais, the headman never acts as guruwā or kesaukā, roles which were fulfilled by other knowledgeable guruwā of the Sukhwariyā Guruwā gotyār, or for gurais held at Daharcandi by the village priest. The link between the headman and the village deities is further indicated by the fact that for all rituals, including gurais, which are not held at Daharcandi, the headman's Saurā, Byāt, and Jholiyā are set up at the site of the ritual. For example in the Pindyā ritual, which marks the end of paddy threshing, the headman sets up his Saurā etc. on the threshing ground and makes offerings before them on behalf of the whole village. On other occasions when sacrifices are made, these are followed therefore, by offerings of the mahaton's ban and dhup, taken from his Jholiyā.

The presence of the village priest is essential for major gurais held at Daharcandi, in particular on the occasions of Hariyā and Dhuriyā Gurais (see below section 3). For these gurais this priest brings his own Saurā, Byāt and Jholiyā, which are set up in front of, and on the wooden boards themselves (see Plate 20). On such occasions, then, the mahaton's 'moving' deities are not required, and it is the desbandhyā's bān and dhup which are offered after the concluding sacrifices. We should note a further important fact, which is that the desbandhyā is required when Daharcandi itself is made and installed, an occasion which also involves gurais at the shrine, followed by sacrifices.

In sum, the headman is responsible for leading and

performing a number of minor village rituals, while in all gurais he acts as sacrificer on behalf of the community. In non-Daharcandi gurais the invoking guruwā is a member of the Sakhwariyā Guruwā gotyār; as sacrificer neither the headman nor anyone of his household may act as guruwā. On such occasions it was said that anyone who had become an ordinary guruwā could act as kesaukā, but on every occasion witnessed, though the kesaukā varied, he was always of the Sukhurariyā Guruwā gotyār. In the regular annual and other periodic rituals, which involve gurais at Daharcandi, always the most elaborate rituals, the desbandhyā has to be called to act as guruwā, while the kesaukā should be a Sukhwariyā guruwā.

16.3 Further aspects of Village Ritual.

Like the house the village has boundaries which enclose a safe space, protected by deities. The boundaries of the house are marked by the hanging of egg-shells, as offerings, and of pieces of cactus to avert spirits, over the two main doorways. The idea of securing the boundaries, and expelling unwanted malevolent influences is clear also from the annual Ghar Bā̃dhnā (literally "binding the house") household ritual in which the household priest hammers protective pegs inside the house into the ground at its four corners. He also hammers protective nails under all the windows and into the main thresholds. Village boundaries are physically marked by streams, ditches etc. and are known to the inhabitants. While there is no ritual exactly equivalent to Ghar Bā̃dhnā, the existence of

the boundaries is marked in a number of ritual contexts. For example twice a year, once in the Dagar Bathannā ritual in the month of Baisākh at a point just across the boundary to the south-east, and once in the Dhariāwan ritual in Agghan at a point to the north-west, identical ceremonies are performed to bar the entry into the village of a particular set of seven malevolent manifestations of Debi (N.7). The clearest example, however, is provided by the Dhuriyā Gurai ritual in which all varieties of malevolent agencies are pinned down and neutralised in a gurai at Daharcandi, and Samyā, another malevolent aspect of Devi is led out across the village boundary. The following day a gurai is held on the boundary to the north-west of the settlement for the purpose of pinning down, warding off, and expelling the spirits "of the outside" (sankarryā bhut). A further indication of the ritual importance of the boundary is that the dead are buried in marginal land on or across the boundary, usually to the south or west of the settlement. Finally, though not actually on the boundaries, the village also has four corners marked from time to time by the setting up of the Khetarpal posts.

In relation to the house, the inside : outside opposition coincides with that between north and south. This latter opposition also operates in certain village rituals, but articulates a rather different set of ideas. To undestand this we must briefly analyse the two annual rituals of Hariyā Gurai and Dhuriyā Gurai, which as we shall see embody the principal themes of village ritual.

Several facts show that Hariyā and Dhuriyā Gurai together form a pair and are distinct from other regular annual

village rituals. In the first place these are the only two rituals which both contain the word gurai in their names. Secondly, these are the only two annual rituals which require the presence of the desbandhyā who acts as invoking guruwā in both, in front of the Daharcandi shrine, which forms the focus for both rituals. That they form a pair is shown not only by their names, but also in the chants of the rituals themselves, in which the pharse "Dhurek melā gail, Harek melā ail" (or vice-versa), meaning "the Dhuriyā ceremony has gone, the Hariyā ceremony has come", explicitly associates the two together (N.8). Not surprisingly therefore, informants classed these two rituals together when discussing them.

Equally important, however, are the differences between these two rituals. Hariyā Gurai means "the Green gurai" being related to N:hariyo "green" (s.v. Turner 1965), while Dhuriyā gurai means "the Dust gurai", deriving from dhur meaning "dust" (cf. H:dhurrā). The former is performed in Bhadaun and marks the end of rice planting; it is explicitly performed to secure the fertility of the new rice. The latter takes place in Baisākh, the hottest time of the year before the monsoon, when the landscape is indeed dry and dusty. This is the time particularly associated with disease, and the ritual as a whole is intended to drive out malevolent agencies which among other misfortunes also cause disease (N.9). Informants also sometimes refered to Hariyā Gurai as the "important" (mukhiyā) gurai and as the one which comes "first or before" (suru), while the other gurai is antim or "last".

Hariyā Gurai begins at Daharcandi with the desbandhyā chanting Guru Bābak Janmauti in the Barnakhnā

form. This must be chanted at least up to the point when land was created, or if time permits up to when the first couple begin cultivating the fields. There then follows a gurai in which through the kesaukā the deities are asked to protect and sustain the fields. It is not entirely clear exactly which deities are involved, but the invoking chants include the names of Bhũhyā̃r as well as those of Māiyā's pātā. A number of offerings are made, which include three large leaf plates containing various foods. Two of these three plates are placed towards the northern part of the shrine. Also as part of the ritual offerings, three tripod structures holding conical leaf cups containing rice and one or two coins are set up at the start of the ritual. These objects are called kappar and two of them are placed on top of the wooden boards in the north of the shrine, with the other one to the south. There then follow a series of offerings at the thān to the south of the village, around the trees and across the stream. In the evening, in the mahaton's bahari, the desbandhyā 'binds' a large pile of drums brought from the different households. He says mantra to protect the drummers and dancers from witches and spirits. A number of men then form a line and play the drums, while the kesaukā becomes possessed. He "dances", and it is Debi who in fact dances through him. This "dance" opens village dances which have been banned since the minor Haroth Lenā ("taking the plough") ritual which marks the start of rice cultivation in Jeth. Following this the men of the village may sing the dance version of Guru Bābak Janmauti, while they dance late into the night. The next morning the desbandhyā makes khirbān, a mixture of milk and khus and dubh grasses. He makes this

with the assistance of a young girl of the mahaton's household, who must not have reached puberty. This khirbān is then emptied into the village irrigation canals by a boy, who again must not have reached puberty. This brings to a close the series of rituals (see Plates 22,23,24,25).

It appears from this brief synopsis that Hariyā Gurai is concerned with introducing fertility into the village. This is effected by the Barnakhnā, and the gurai, and later by the pouring of Khirbān into the canals. The young boy and girl involved in this are equated with Māhādeo and Pārbati, and the desbandhyā explained that in the beginning, in sat jug, when this couple first made Khirbān, for the time it took to do so, they became young children. The "opening" of the dance too in a sense marks a reawakening of activity in the village, which has been busy, completely taken up with rice-planting during the monsoon. Not only, then, does Hariyā Gurai involve a return to sat, to the time of origins and fertility, it also marks the start or beginning of village life. The possession dance of Debi, however, is also related to fertility, since in the course of his "dance" the kesaukā moves on his back through the legs of the drummers and as he does so he grabs at their genitals.

Dhuriyā Gurai also begins with a gurai at Daharcandi, but this gurai involves the calling of all categories of malevolent agencies which are then hammered with nails into the southernmost of the three Murāhā in the shrine. In the course of the gurai, Samyā, a malevolent form of Debi is led out across the village boundary to the north-east of the settlement. A series of offerings then follows at Daharcandi, which are

mostly identical to those made in Hariyā Gurai except that two of the plates of food are placed towards the south of the shrine. Following this the usual offerings are made at the other thān to the south of the village. The following morning the desbandhyā and kesaukā again perform a gurai at the boundary of village land to the west, during which the spirits and malevolent agencies are pinned into a cactus hedge. This concludes the series of rituals (see Plate 26).

In contrast to the Hariyā, Dhuriyā Gurai is, therefore, primarily concerned with neutralising and expelling malevolent spirits from the village. Its emphasis is on preventing the incursion of disease, misfortune, and death. These two rituals, then, form a pair, but also together comprise the two principal themes of village ritual: on the one hand the expulsion of evil, on the other hand the introduction into the village of new life and fertility for the land. The opposition between these rituals is symbolised by the placing of certain offerings to the north and to the south of the Daharcandi shrine, a fact which is not fortuitous but was explicitly pointed out to me by the mahaton who is himself reponsible for setting out all the ritual equipment and making the offerings after the gurai sequence has ended.

In the context of these two rituals, which form a distinct pair and are the most elaborate annual rituals, the north : south opposition is again manifested. Furthermore this opposition is also directly associated with the inside : outside opposition, in that the 'north' Hariyā Gurai is concerned with bringing fertility into the village, while the 'south' Dhuriyā Gurai seeks to drive disease and death out across the

boundaries. This opposition is not equistatutory. For the house, the north was seen to mark a fixed point of orientation where the house begins, and from which it extends south and to the outside. The north is the part associated with the 'inner' deities and with seniors and in particular the household head. In relation to these two village rituals, the 'north' Hariyā Gurai is similarly the "important" one, and is the suru or "start" in contrast to Dhuriyā which is the antim or "end". It is perhaps not going too far to suggest that at the level of the village, the north : south opposition here articulates the opposition between the age of sat, associated with beginnings and fertility, and the age of kal, characterised by death, disease, and scarcity. The former is the prior and superior age, and is associated with Harikabilās, the abode of Guru Bābā up in the mountains to the north.

16.4 Conclusion.

This chapter has shown that in many repects the house and the village resemble each other. Both social units have their particular deities, which include common elements, such as deities related to cattle, deities of priests, and a focal family group, though the deities are different in both cases. The village pantheon, of course, comprises a much larger number of deities, and includes several related to other castes. In both cases the deities establish a bounded space, within which they protect the inhabitants. In both cases also the social units realise important dimensions of their identity in relation to the deities. This is clearest for the house where the

deities' presence establish a building as a proper house and mark its gotyār affiliation. Every village, however, also has its pantheon, and it is only in village rituals that each and every house is included as a distinct and separate unit.

There is also a common pattern in the structure of the relations between the social groups and their deities. The mahaton acts as spokesman and leader in village administrative business, and in ritual contexts he is the officiant who performs sacrifices and makes necessary offerings. He has a special deity, Murāhā Mahton, associated with him, and this is northernmost in the Daharcandi shrine and is linked with the Mannik Khambā of his house. In a parallel fashion, the ghardhurryā is spokesman and principal ritual officiant from within the house, and he too is linked with the north of the house. The house has its outside priest, the gharguruwā, whose particular deity is represented in the deurār, who makes the household deities, and whose deities are brought to the house for certain rituals. Similarly at the level of the village, the desbandhyā is required as officiant in addition to the mahaton, he makes Daharcandi, his deity is included in Bhũhyā̃r, and he too brings his deities for gurai rituals at the Daharcandi shrine.

Finally it was seen that the related north : south and inside : outside oppositions which are so important for the house, are present again in the context of the two major village rituals of Hariyā and Dhuriyā Gurai. In these two rituals, the north : south opposition is connected with inside and outside, but it was suggested that in this context this opposition ultimately articulates the fundamental contrast between sat and kal.

Notes to Chapter 16

N.1. Reinhard (1973:231) reports that the Rāji to the west of Dang also have Bhuyar; cf. also Srivastava (1958:180) on Bhumsen among the Rana Tharu.

N.2. Rajaure (1982: 77-79) has given a list of some fifteen deities for Bhuhyār in Sukhrwar, and his list differs somewhat from that given here. The list here, however, is taken from Samrauti chants and was checked with the headman.

N.3. Daharcandi was mentioned as a deity by Nestfield in 1885 (1885: 29).

N.4. For Gauri cf. N:gauri/gaurā name of the goddess Parbati, perhaps associated with gau 'cow', (s.v. Turner 1965)

N.5. cf. N:guni,"skilful, gifted, valuable" (s.v. Turner 1965)

N.6. The presence of smallpox Goddess usually called Sitala Mata is common in India (cf. Mayer 1973:101).

N.7. Dagar Bathannā literally means "to block the path (dagar)". Rajaure has given dahar as meaning a path or trail (1978:229), and this may be related to Dhariāwan. I did not encounter the term dahar. Rajaure has given a description of the latter ritual (1982:89-94).

N.8. cf. N:melā, "religious fair, celebration" (s.v. Turner 1965).

N.9. Reinhard (1973:229-233) reports that the Rāji have two annual rituals, Dhuria Bhuyar puja and Lawangi or Luangi Bhuyar puja. Lawangi was translated by his informants as "new rice" (ibid: 232), and is certainly the same word as T:lauwā, "new". Reinhard also notes that Tharu defined Dhuria as "Trockenheit" (ibid:232), adding that this has to do with the season when ths ritual occurs.

CHAPTER 17 : CONCLUSION

The main aim of this study was to provide a descriptive analysis of Tharu social organisation. Although social organisation was taken as the starting point for the study, consideration of myth and ritual has been necessary for building up a complete picture. These topics have been discussed here principally in their relation to social organisation, and it is hoped that we have shown that their inclusion in the analysis is essential for understanding the character of the principal social units - the village, the gotyār and the house - and of the relations between them.

The first part of the study discussed the general historical and cultural background of the Tharu (in chapter 2) and gave a brief outline of the geography and economy of Dang (in chapters 3 and 4). Part 2 introduced the three main groups, describing village organisation (chapter 5), the nature and functions of the gotyār (in chapter 6), and household organisation (chapter 7). It was seen that the village is a territorial unit exhibiting a high degree of cohesiveness; its organisation centres on the headman and village meeting of household heads. By contrast the gotyār appears as a relatively amorphous and unstructured grouping, but it nevertheless has important functions for marriage as a patrilineal exogamous unit, and for ritual in terms of the

division between priestly and non-priestly gotyār. The household, also patrilineal, patrilocal, and exogamous, was seen to be the fundamental constituent unit which makes up the village and the gotyār. In this part it was emphasised that ultimately the identity of the house and gotyār, and the broad twofold division between gharguruwā and barin gotyār has to be understood in relation to their deities. It was noted also that the village too has its own deities and ritual cycle.

Part 3 focussed on kinship and marriage relations. An outline of the kinship terminology did not reveal any clear structure. It was noted that the mother's brother - sister's child relationship occupies a special place, and that the classification of affines by affinial or sibling terms appears to be related to the opposite-sex sibling relationship. In chapter 9, discussion of marriage showed that there is no alliance pattern, but there appears to be a preference for marriage within the locality. In addition the chapter described the ambiguous position of women, who maintain links with their natal home but simultaneously become assimilated over time into their marital home. It was seen that to understand the position of women in the system their relationship to their household and other deities of origin had to be taken into consideration. It was also pointed out that women and men born in the same house have a markedly different relation to its deities. Having explored a number of different aspects of kinship behaviour and isolated the principal categories of kinship, we suggested that the sās, and sasrār from and man's point of view, enjoy a superior status, in comparison to the households of sisters' and

daughters' husbands. Chapter 11 described the exchanges of prestations and ritual services. It was argued that the jiurā prestation recognises affinity but only in one direction, towards the sās and sasrār households, while in the other direction, the nisrau prestation marks the consanguineal link between brother and sister. It was found that it was necessary to place jiurā in the ritual context of the Dasyā festival in which it originates; seen against this background the prestation was argued to accord the sasrār affines a superior status, but one couched in a ritual idiom. The continuing relationship of a woman to her natal household and her brothers was seen to correspond with the continuing influence on her and her children of their deities, and this influence was also shown to correspond with the ritual sevices performed by a man for his sisters' children.

Already in part 3 it became increasingly necessary to include ritual and the relations between men and the deities in the analysis of social relations. Part 4 focussed directly on ritual and myth, but largely with a view to clarifying how the house and gotyār are defined by deities, how the relationship between priestly and non-priestly gotyār is to be understood by reference to deities, and how the village itself functions as a ritual unit. Chapter 12 describes the layout of household space and the identity and location of the different categories of its deities. Chapter 13 showed that the presence of the deities establishes a house as such, and that the house as a whole is defined in terms of the relation between the 'inner' deities, which together label its gotyār affiliation and mark the fixed point where the house begins, and the 'outside'

women's deities, which mark the southernmost extension of the house, where it ends and where in a sense its relationship established through marriages to other houses is recognised. Consideration of the lists of gotyār deities showed that each gotyār, though it may not have one specific identifying deity, is nevertheless distinguished from others by its unique combination of deities. Chapter 14 introduced the fundamental distinction in Tharu thought between the age of sat and the age of kal. From analysis of the creation mythology, and of the priests' myths of origin, it was argued that the principal links between the age of sat, the mythical time of origins associated with the deities, and the present age of kal, are provided by the Debi in relation to the world and the house, and in relation to the Dang valley by the priests' deity-ancestors. This discussion was continued in chapter 15 which argued that the priests' role as mediators between households and their deities corresponds to the unique position of the priests' deities in terms of tracing their origins back to the first priest, Ghanpat Guruwā, and the age of sat. Analysis of possession rituals showed that through the relationship established in possession between men and Debi, the house takes on its ultimate and transcendent identity as Debi's palace at the centre of the world. Chapter 17 gave a description of the village deities, and the organisation and form of village ritual. It was shown that in ritual contexts the non-cultivating bukhrawā households are included fully as houses, whereas for other aspects of village business they are not. The structure of relations between the household and the village and their deities was seen to conform to a common pattern in which the

ritual functions are in both cases divided between an internal officiant (mahaton and ghardhurryā) and an outside officiant (desbandhyā, gharguruwā) who is always a member of one of the priestly gotyār. Finally it was noted that the north : south opposition, which was identified at the level of the house as ordering the relations between senior and junior and between inside and outside, was also manifest at the level of the village in the context of the two major annual rituals. At the level of the village, this opposition is again related to that between inside and outside, but is was suggested that in this context it articulates the fundamental opposition between the ages of sat and kal.

It is apparent, then, that in the attempt to describe social organisation we have had to discuss myth and ritual in some detail, and we have also touched on certain of the fundamental aspects of Tharu thought. Much further work, of course, remains to be done on all these topics. At a general level, however, this study provides another example of how these elements which the analyst may distinguish as 'social' or 'ritual' are in fact inextricably interlinked, forming a complex whole. In this regard, for the Tharu one of the main conclusions to be drawn is that membership of a social group is always accompanied by sharing a common set of deities, and that within the house and the village, the senior spokesman and leader has important ritual functions as a part of his total role.

Finally, it is hoped that, in keeping with the general purpose of this study from the start, it provides a useful contribution to the ethnography of Nepal, and in particular to that of the Dangaurā and other Tharu groups, who until recently have remained so little known.

APPENDIX A

The diagrams (Figs.27-33) and the Plates (28, 29) presented here were made by students at the Ecole Polytechnique Federale de Lausanne (Baechtold, Menendez, Peleraux :1982). The drawings and the Plates of a scale model of the Tharu house were based on information taken from Milliet-Mondon 1981.

These illustrations provide a clear representation of the layout and structure of the house. The locations of the various household deities are not included but they have been given above in Figs. 20a, 20b, 21a, 21b.

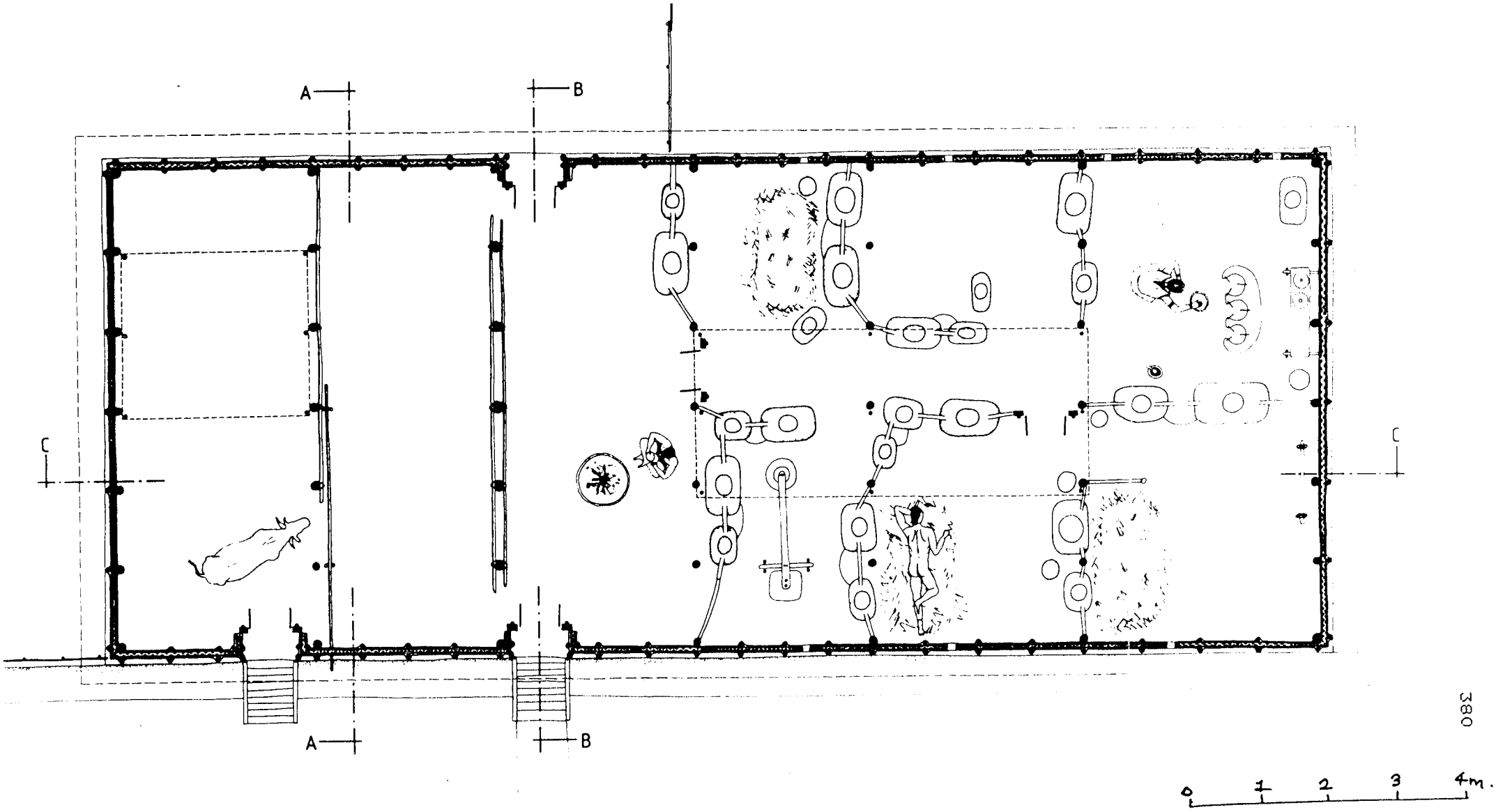
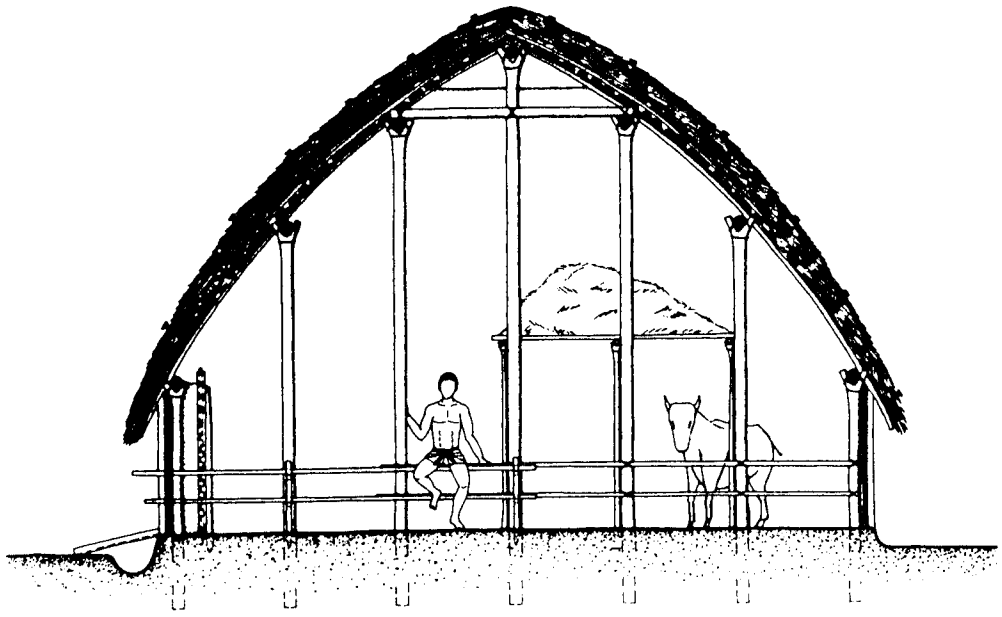
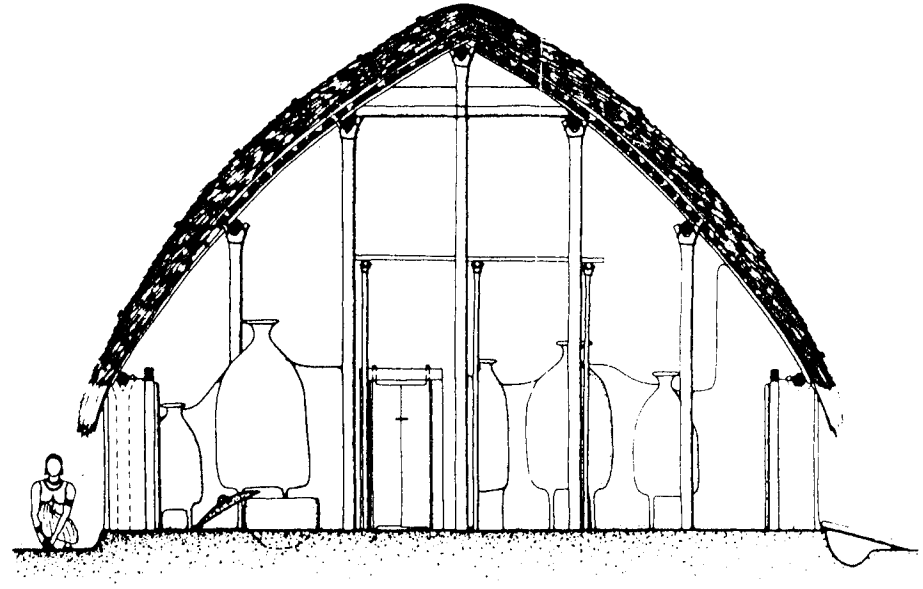


Fig. 28 Showing Plan of the House



SECTION A-A



SECTION B-B

0 1 2 3 4m.

Fig. 29 Showing Cross-sections A-A, and B-B of the House

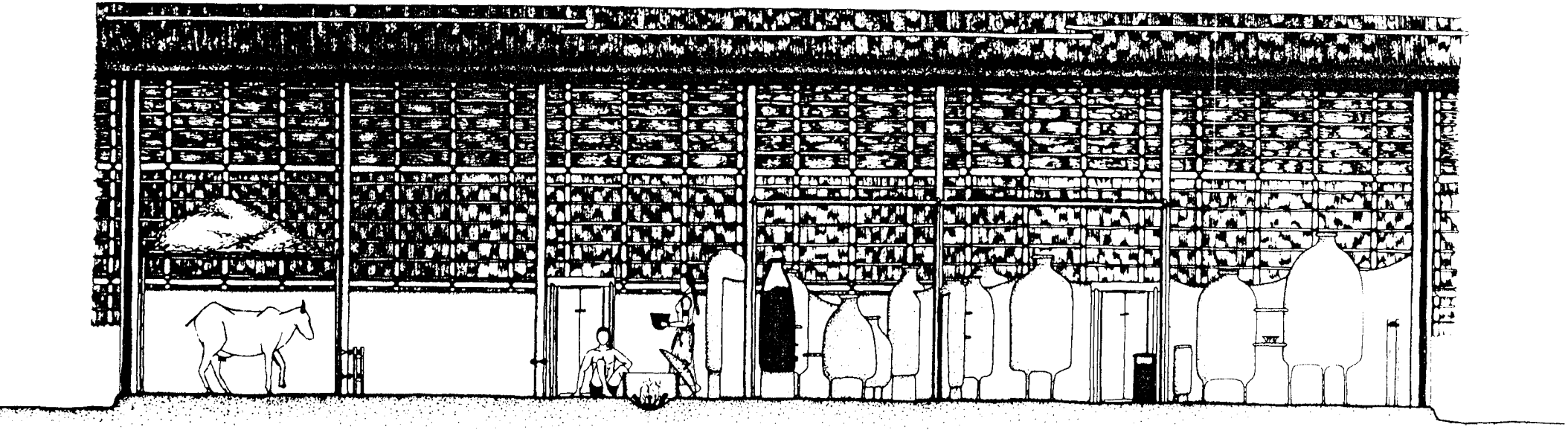


Fig. 30 Showing Cross-section C-c of the house

0 1 2 3 4m.

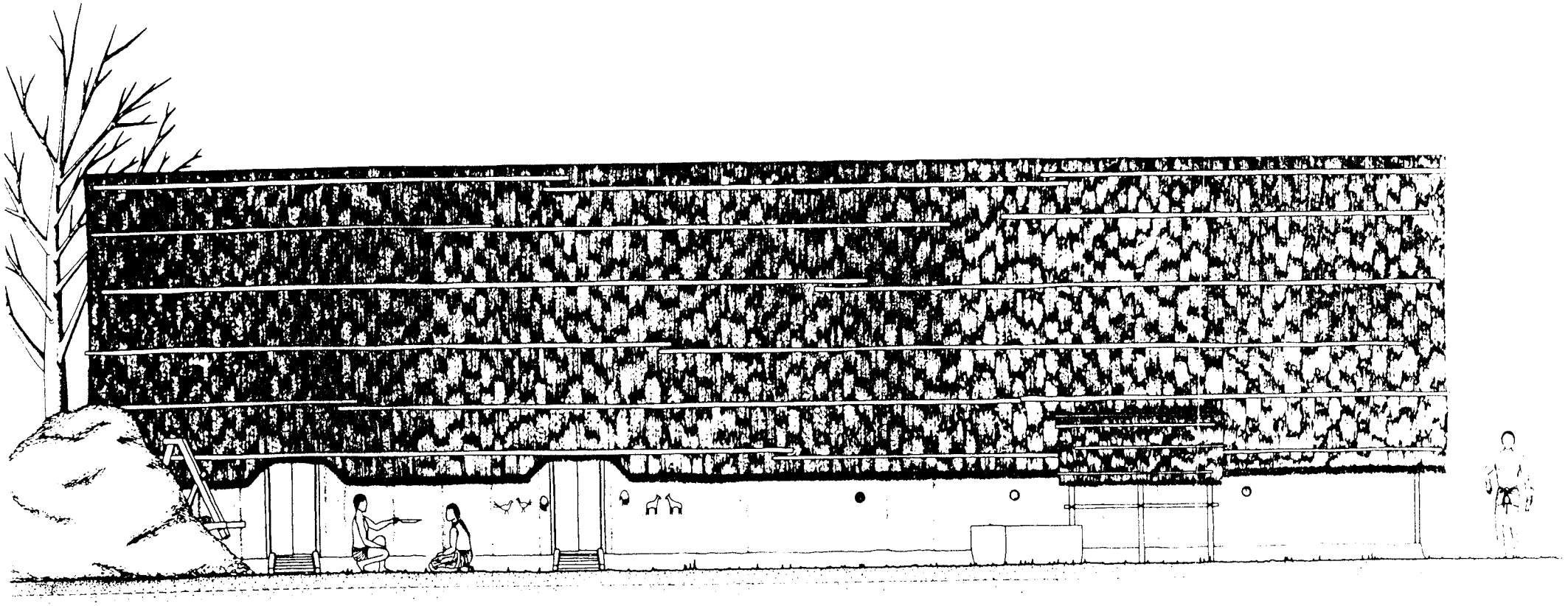


Fig. 31 Showing East Face of the House

0 1 2 3 4m

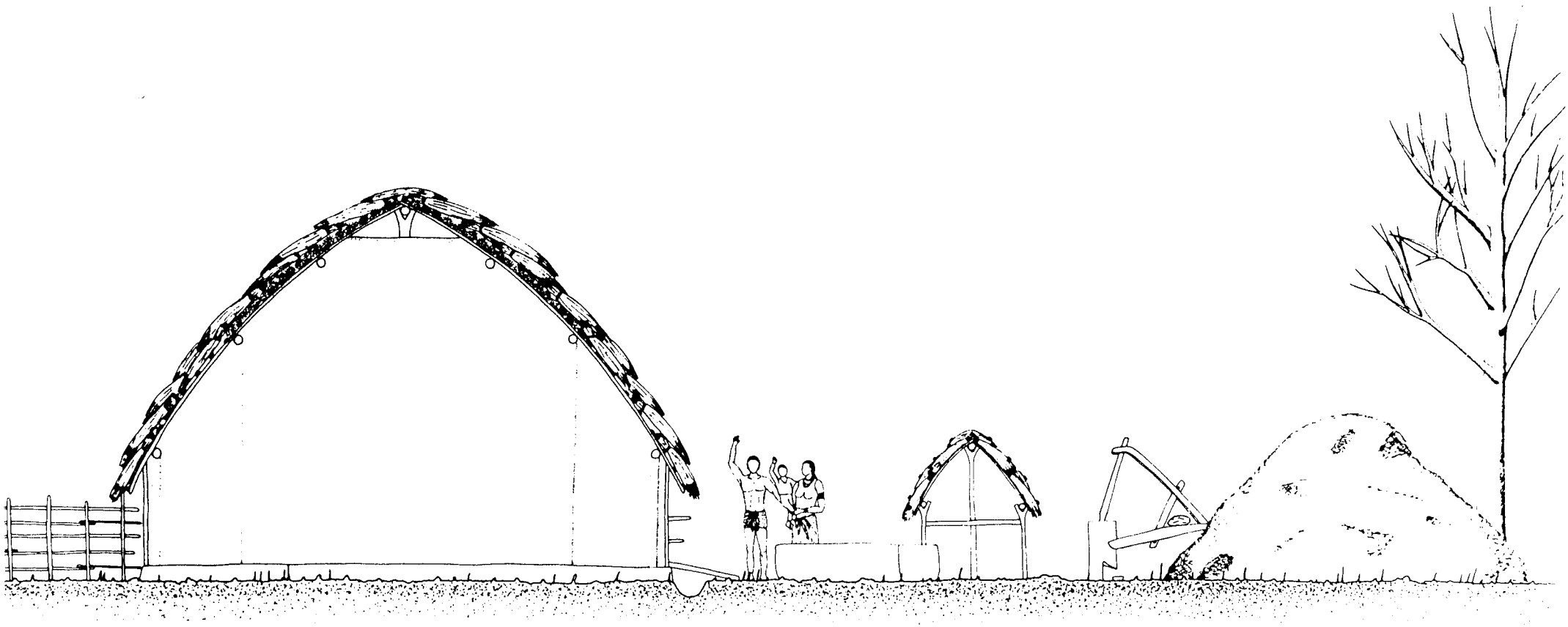


Fig. 32 Showing South Face of the House

0 1 2 3 4m.

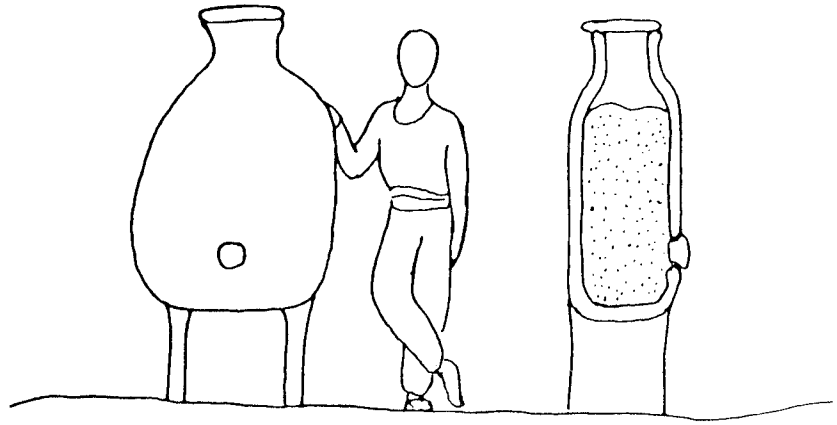
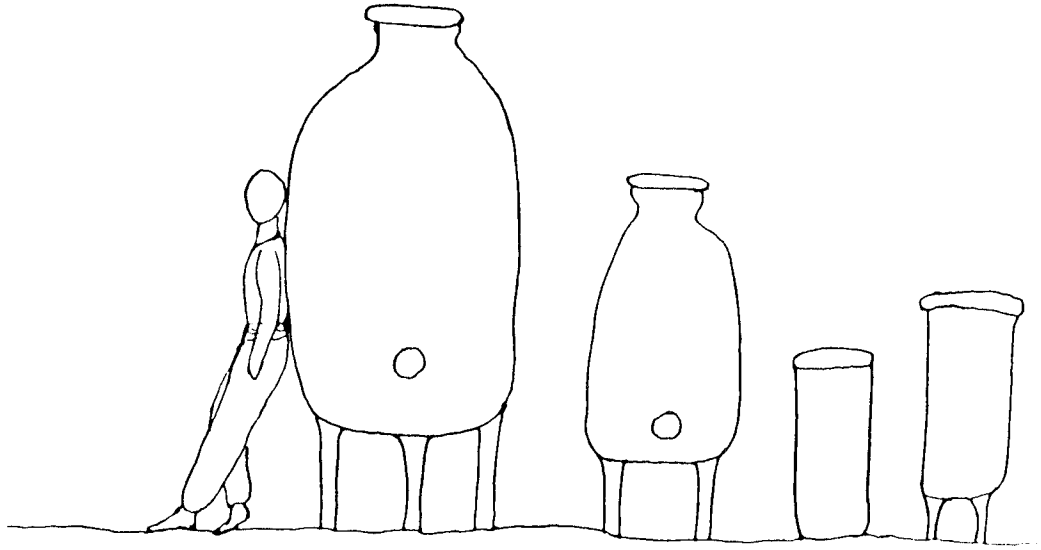


Fig. 33 Showing Dehri

The dehri are filled with grain at the top and then the upper lid is resealed. The grain is taken out via a small opening at the base which is also resealed after use.



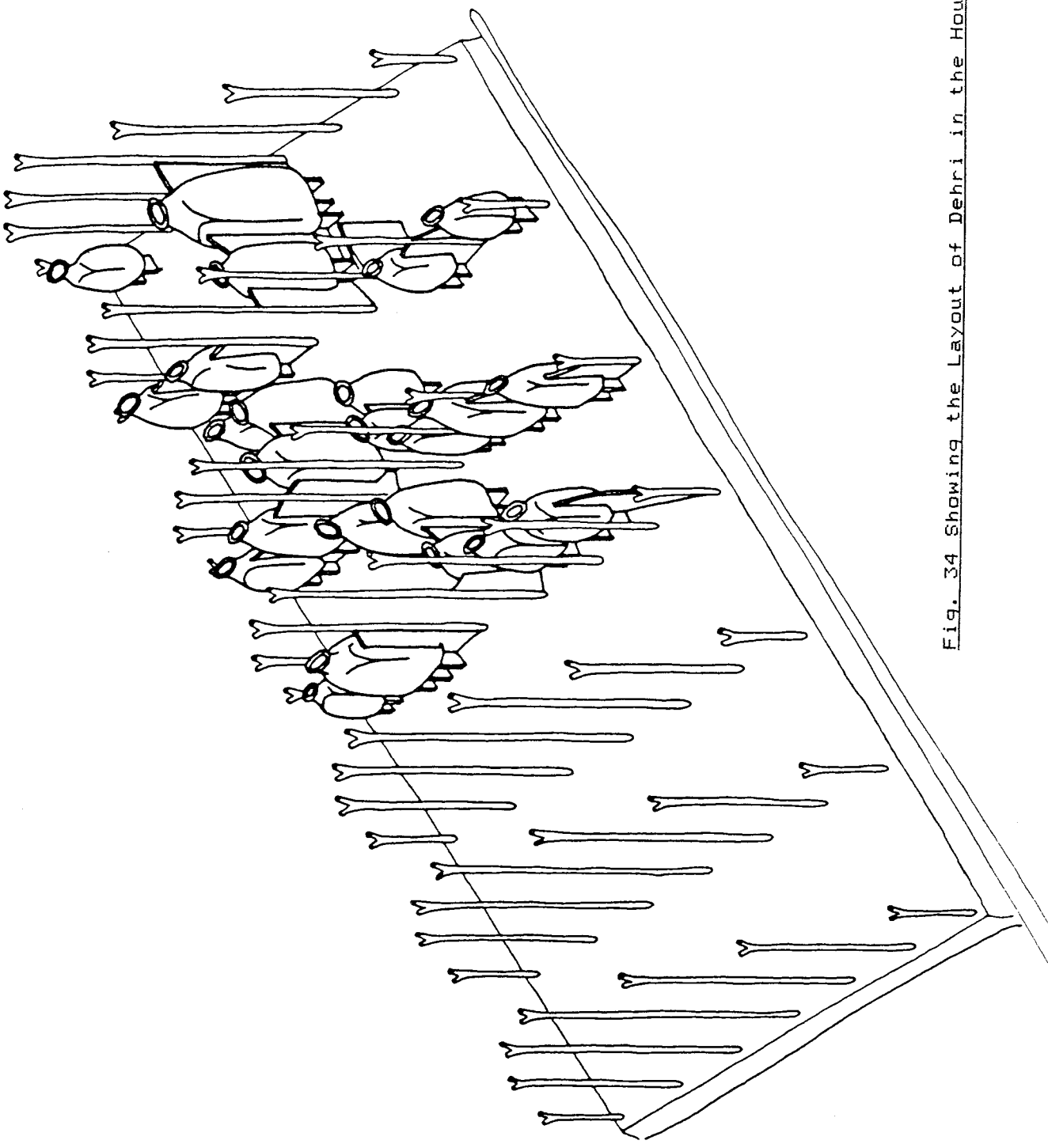


Fig. 34 Showing the Layout of Dehri in the House

Plate 27 Model of the house viewed from above

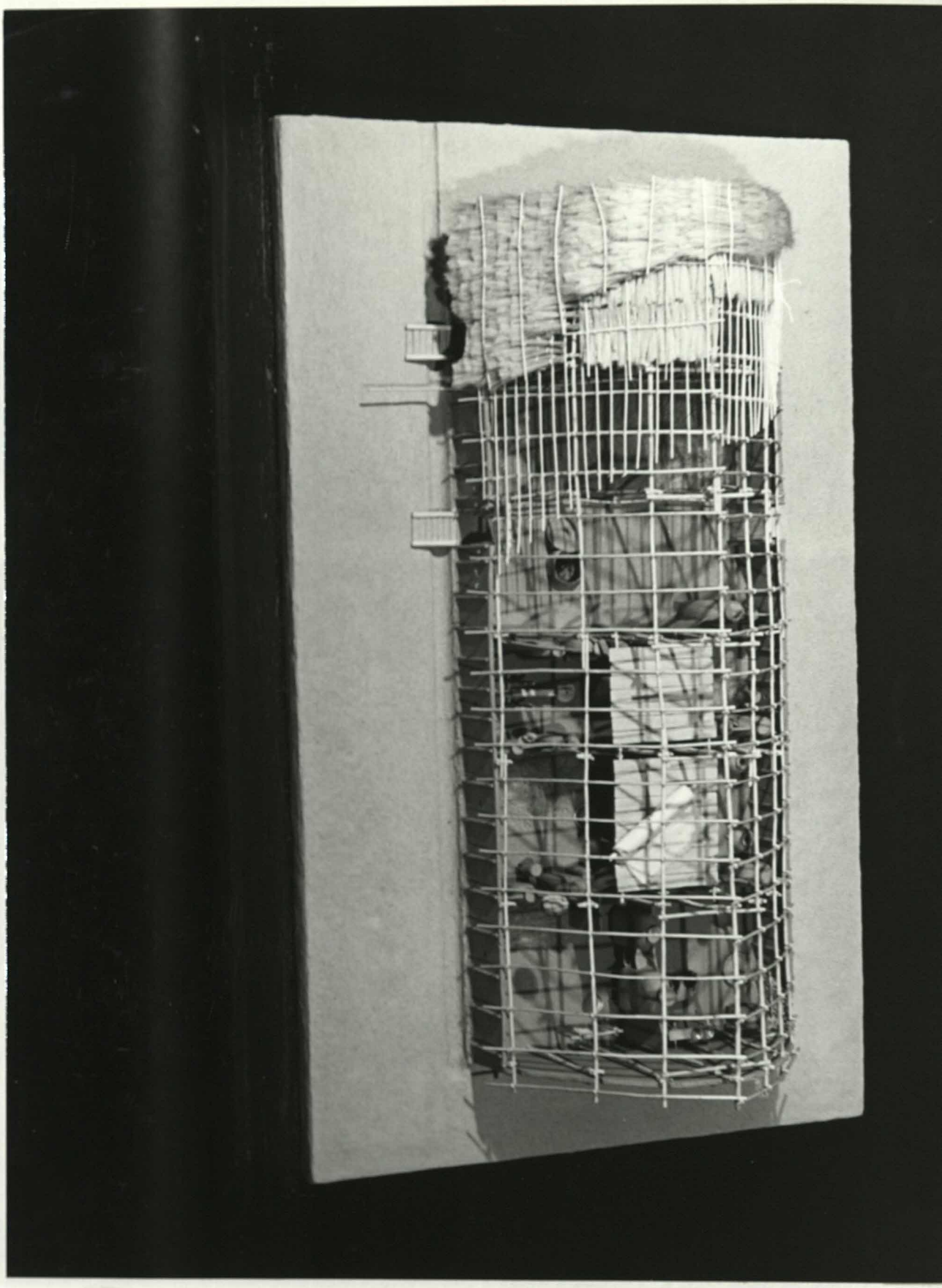


Plate 28 Model of house viewed from the east side



APPENDIX B : THE CREATION MYTHOLOGY

A synopsis is presented here of the main version recorded of Guru Bābak Janmauti and the Phulwār episodes. This will provide contextual background for the excerpts given in Chapter 14. It is not possible to give here a full word for word translation of these texts as together they amount to some 25,000 words. Consequently only the principal stages will be outlined.

The summary closely follows the order of events as they were narrated by Mantri Guruwā of Hekuli village, and only minor changes have been made to avoid confusion where in the original narration there was backtracking and repetition.

1.For the opening episodes there is little to add to what has already been given above. When Guru Bābā is given his senses, these begin with the eyes and descend down his body to his legs; effectively it is his whole body which is created since his first incarnation is as a squash plant.

2.In addition to passing in the reverse to normal direction through the oil press, Guru Bābā makes his daughter pass through a number of other objects in the attempt to get her to abandon the idea of marrying him. She succeeds in passing through the blacksmith's bellows, a pot, and a particular kind of rope basket.

3.Having survived her ordeals Dharmak Dhiyāri finds her father by a river and they decide to return home, but still as father and daughter, not yet as husband and wife. On the way Dhiyāri has a fit of epilepsy in the forest and "creates" the goddess of epilepsy. She then begins to drown in another river and "creates" the various categories of spirits associated with water and a certain type of masān in particular. Continuing on their way, she meets the caste specialists she met before during her ordeals : the blacksmith, potter, oil presser, and rope maker. She gives them their "fate" or "destiny" (karam).

4.Dhiyāri demands a husband again and Guru Bābā tells her she will find her husband by the river. She finds a leprous ascetic dressed in tiger skins, which is the form Guru Bābā has taken to put her off the idea of marriage. Dhiyāri, however, decides to go ahead and wash the ascetic in the river, but she ties herself to him so he cannot escape while they are in the water.

5.Guru Bābā emerges from the river transformed as Māhādeo, she makes him clothes and they go off together as husband and wife. From this point on Dhiyāri becomes Gauri Pārbati.

6.They copy the monkeys in the forest, copulate, and Pārbati becomes pregnant with a monkey child. They call Ghanpat Guruwā who divines and tells them what sort of child they are going to have. The child is born and they leave it in the forest. It eats the sun and Māhādeo has to go to get the sun out of its mouth.

7.Māhādeo and Pārbati now decide to have a proper marriage feast. She prepares food and they invite the Pāc Pandāwan but the feast is not considered to be a proper one until she has given the guests distilled alcohol. Pārbati prepares strong alcohol using a mad elephant, a mad dog, and a madman. She "cooks" the liquor without fire or water. The guests drink the alcohol, become drunk, and the feast is considered to have been celebrated correctly.

8.There then follow the events described in Chapter 14 : Pārbati teaches Māhādeo to make a plough and to cultivate the fields; she obtains rice seed from Jākhni Bahini. Pārbati becomes jealous of the time Māhādeo spends in the fields watching his crop and causes the rice to be diseased. They call Ghanpat Guruwā to perform Hariyā Gurai and the other rice-cycle rituals. This is where the Barnakhnā ends.

9.The narration continues with the Pacrā episode of which there is nothing further to add beyond what has been given in Chapter 14.

10.There now follow the series of Phulwār episodes, beginning with Citrang (vari-coloured) Phulwār (flower garden). Gauri Pārbati thinks she is barren and tells Māhādeo to leave her. He refuses. They then play hide-and-seek and when it s Pārbati's turn to hide she ties a blindfold on Māhādeo with many knots. While he is busy undoing them she leaves for Citrang Phulwār.

11.Rikhi Nārad Pandit, Māhādeo's younger brother sees Māhādeo and asks what he is doing blindfolded. He tells Māhādeo that he saw Pārbati leave. They wait for her for days then months. Finally Māhādeo becomes impatient and sends Rikhi Nārad to look for her.

12.Meanwhile Pārbati picks flowers in Citrang Flower garden. She meets a black snake which is guarding the flowergarden. She catches the snake and washes its poison away in the river but a little remains on her finger and affects her making her feel drunk when she pricks her finger on a thorn. She decides to leave now that her bag is full of flowers.

13.Pārbati sees geese playing on a lake and assumes the form of one to join them. She copulates with a goose and becomes pregnant with seven eggs. She sees Rikhi Nārad who has assumed the form of a bird and is watching her from a tree. Realising that Māhādeo has become impatient she sets off home quickly.

14.Pārbati looses her way in a forest, becomes confused and "lays" her eggs having made a resting place for herself out of kus grass. She is fearful of Māhādeo's reaction to her eggs and so throws one in each of the six directions : sky, underworld, north, south, east, west, and she keeps the seventh with her in the front of her waistband. All the eggs become different goddesses which are to be responsible for women's fertility in the age of kal.

15.Pārbati returns home and Māhadeo asks her where she has been. She replies hat she was only picking flowers to offer to Bhagwān. She offers her flowers in pujā but they all droop and fall over. Māhādeo then knows that she "went astray" while she was away and tells her that now she must stay at home. She agrees.

16.The next episode is Daha Phulwār. Māhādeo took some co-wives. They quarrel and Gauri Pārbati says she will leave but Māhādeo decides to leave. Pārbati finds him living as an ascetic in the forest and brings him home.

17.The Wives quarrel again and Pārbati leaves with her children. On their way they encounter beside a river all the poisonous creatures (snakes, mosquitoes, etc.) who are quarrelling over the division of the poison. Pārbati settles the dispute by sharing out the poison between the creatures.

18.Pārbati continues on with her children to Mansi Phulwār to pick flowers. There is a river there which turns people into stone and in the evening there are swarms of buzzing insects. The children are afraid and cannot find anything to eat so Pārbati returns home with them.

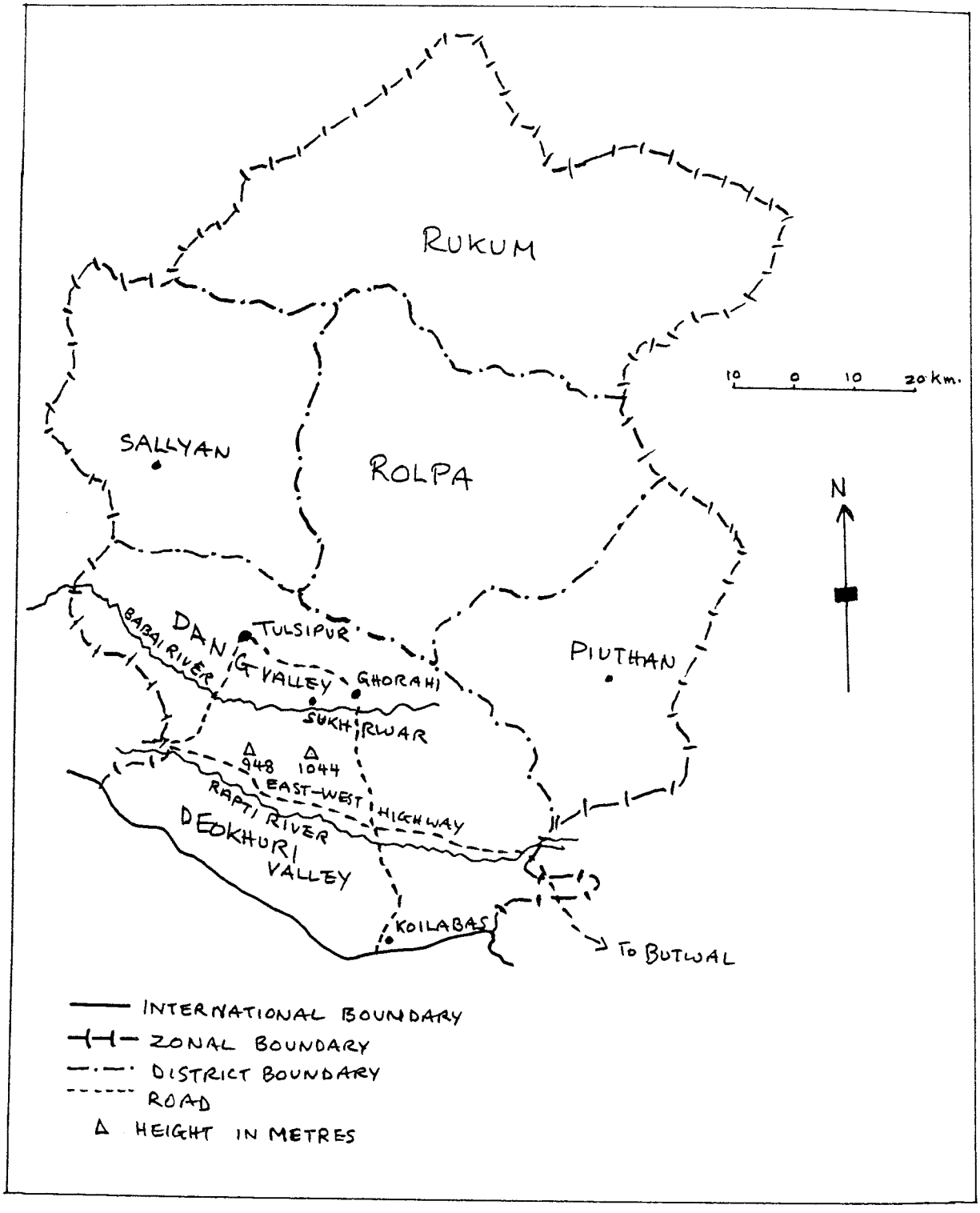
19.The final episode recorded, Ghan Phulwār, introduces further new characters but seems to echo certain of the previous episodes. It begins with a pair Hiutā king and Hiutā queen Hiutā queen thinks she is barren and so decides to leave the king. She rests in the forest under a pipal tree. In the night Hiutā king comes to her in the form of a stag and the queen becomes pregnant by him. She remains under the tree and after 14 months she gives birth to Dharmak Dhiyāri. Dharmak Dhiyāri grows up and prepares to leave for Ghan Phulwār.

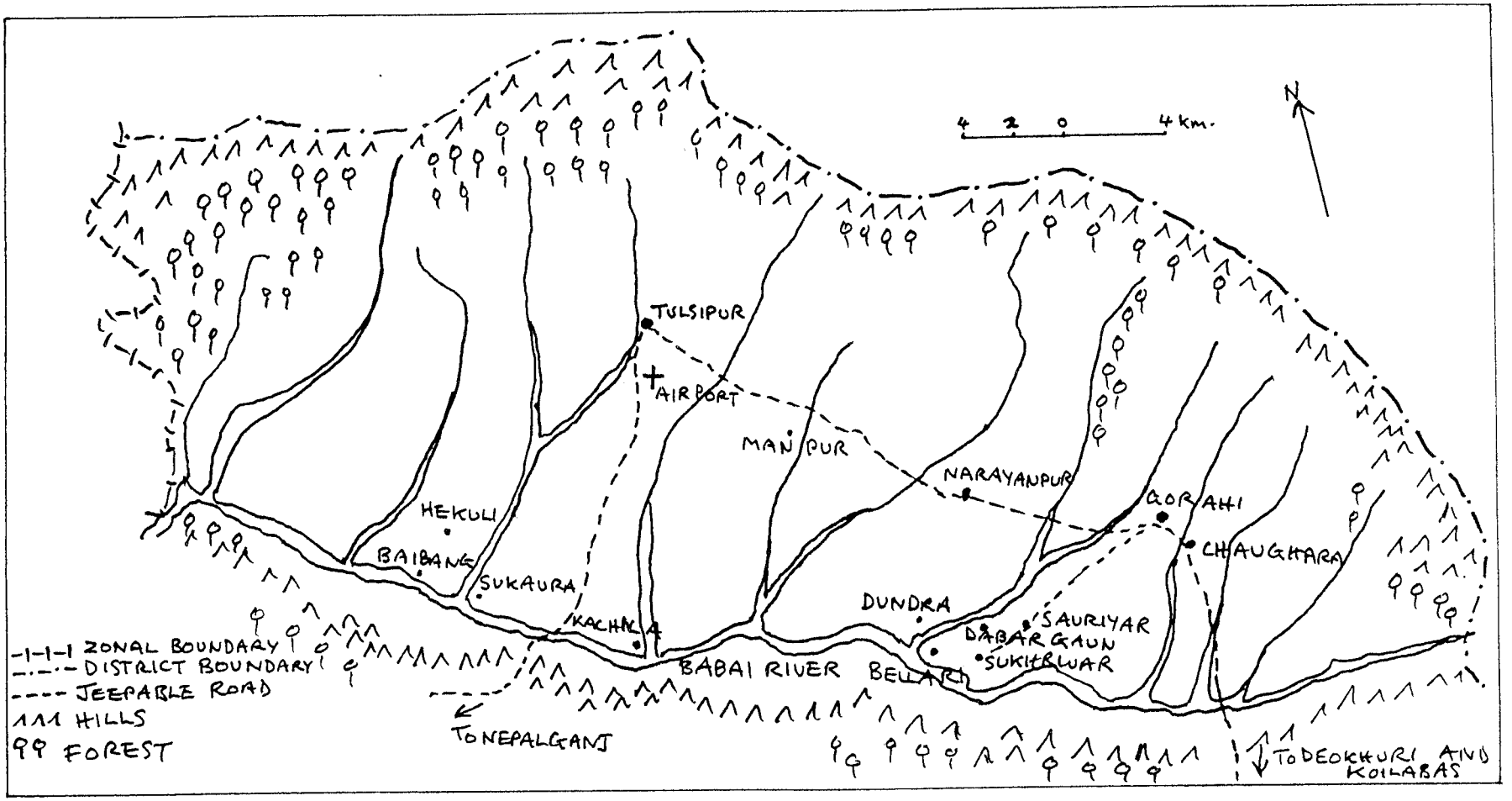
20.Dharmak Dhiyāri calls on various service castes to make her golden clippers, a shoulder bag, and a special bamboo basket (soban delwā). She leaves for the flower garden and to get there she has to cross forests and mountains.

21.Dharmak Dhiyāri sees a cuckoo which she shoots with a pellet bow. Full of remorse, she wants to bring it back to life. In order to do this she has to go to ask for medicine from Bāsu Māmā in the underworld. She plays dice with Bāsu, loses, and it is implied that she sleeps with him. He gives her a Byāt with which she touches the cuckoo bringing it back to life.

22.Dharmak Dhiyāri returns home to her parents, Hiutā king and queen. She explains that she had been to pick flowers which she will offer in pujā to Māhādeo. The flowers droop and fall over and her father then knows that she had "gone wrong" with Bāsu Māmā. She says she cannot make her offering today, but will try again tomorrow.

Map 3 Showing Rapti Zone West Nepal
(Taken from Rajaure 1981b:6)





Map 4 The Dang Valley

(Taken from Rajaure 1981b:7)



Plate 1 View of Dang Valley looking north



Plate 2 View of Sukhrwar Village



Plate 3 Māghi Dewāni village Meeting



Plate 4 Dhwāk form of greeting



Plate 5 Sewā greeting

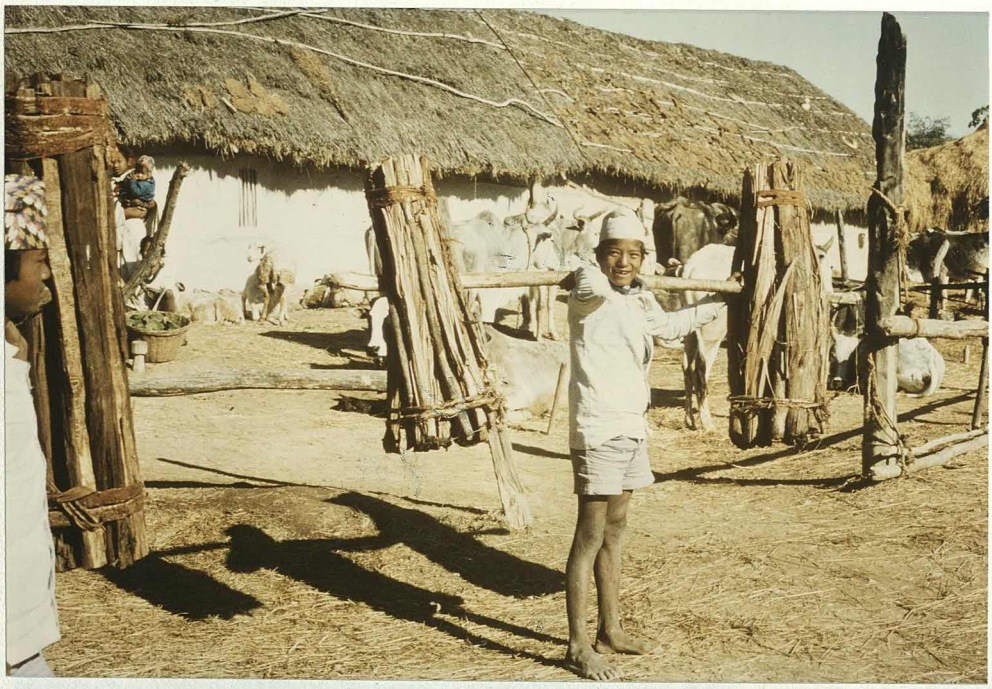


Plate 6 Kāthi Boknā in Māghi

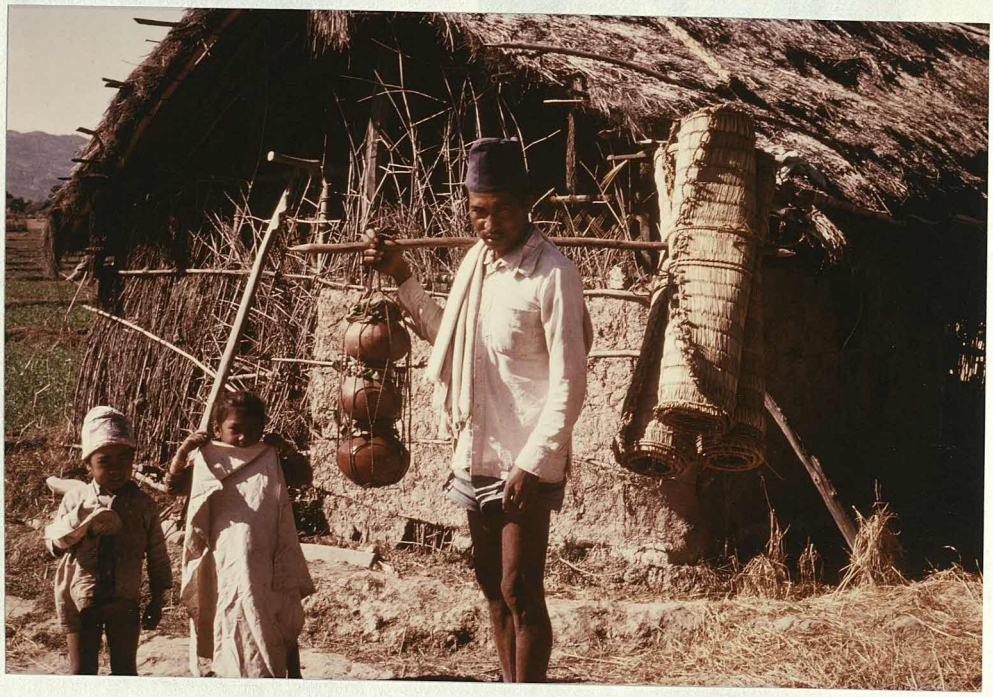


Plate 7 Taking Jiurā to the Sasrār



Plate 8 Placing Jiurā behind the ear



Plate 9 Exchanging Jiurā with the Village Headman



Plate 10 Women doing Ṭikā to the Astimki mural



Plate 11 The Women's Astimki meal



Plate 12 The Men's Atwāri meal

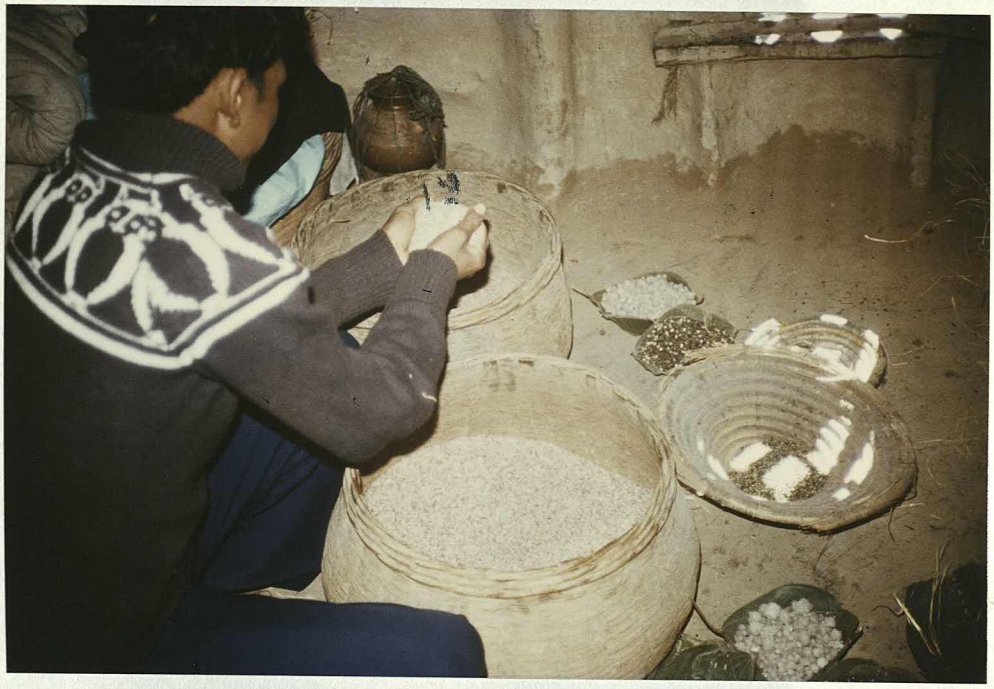


Plate 13 Nisrau Kaharnā



Plate 14 Delivering Nisrau



Plate 15 Māiyā's Pātā



Plate 16 House Foundation Ritual



Plate 17 Preparing for Rath Lausārnā



Plate 18 Guruwā Banainā

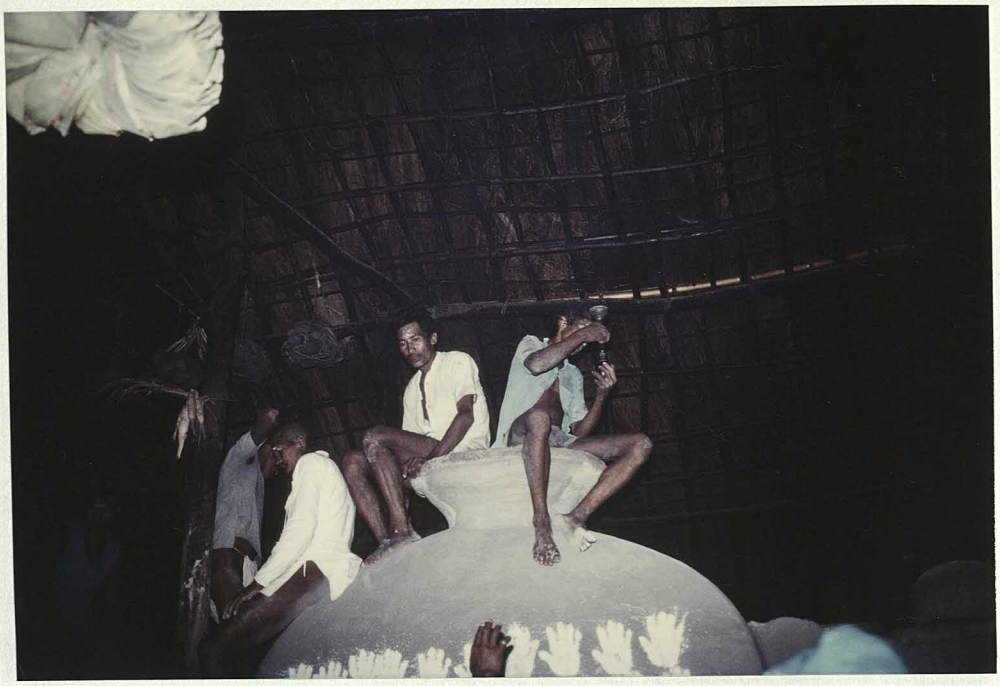


Plate 19 Possessed men sitting on top of the Pātāhā Dehri



Plate 20 The Daharcandi shrine



Plate 21 The Daharcandi shrine of Hekuli Village



Plate 22 Hariyā Gurai



Plate 23 Binding the drums in Hariyā Gurai



Plate 24 The Kesaukā "dancing" in Hariyā Gurai



Plate 25 The Desbandhyā making Khirbān



Plate 26 Sankarryā Bhut Ṭhoknā in Dhuriyā Gurai

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Abstract

The Tharu of Dang: A Study of Social Organisation, Myth and Ritual in West Nepal.
Thesis presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
C.E.J.S. McDonaugh, St. Edmund Hall, Oxford. Trinity Term 1984

The main aim of the study is to provide a descriptive analysis of Tharu social organisation. Although social organisation is taken as the starting point for the study, consideration of myth and ritual is found to be necessary for building up a complete picture. These topics are discussed principally in their relation to social oragnisation, but it is shown that their inclusion in the analysis is essential for understanding the character of and the relations between the principal social units : the village, the house, and the gotyār, a patrilineal exogamous group.

The thesis is divided into four parts. The first part of the study discusses the general historical and cultural background of the Tharu and gives a brief outline of the geography and economy of Dang. Part 2 introduces the three main groups, describing village organisation, the nature and functions of the gotyār, and household organisation. It is seen that the village is a territorial unit exhibiting a high degree of cohesiveness; its organisation centres on the headman and village meeting of household heads. By contrast the gotyār appears as a relatively amorphous and unstructured grouping, but it nevertheless has important functions for marriage as a patrilineal exogamous unit, and for ritual in terms of the division between priestly and non-priestly gotyār. The household, also patrilineal, patrilocal, and exogamous, is seen to be the fundamental constituent unit which makes up the village and the gotyār. In this part it is emphasised that ultimately the identity of the house and gotyār, and the broad twofold division between priestly and non-priestly gotyār has to be understood in relation to their deities. It is noted also that the village has its own deities and ritual cycle.

Part 3 focusses on kinship and marriage relations. An outline of the kinship terminology does not reveal any clear structure. It is noted that the mother's brother - sister's child relationship occupies a special place, and that the classification of affines by affinal or sibling terms appears to be related to the opposite-sex sibling relationship. Discussion of marriage shows that there is no alliance pattern, but there appears to be a preference for marriage within the locality. In addition the discussion indicates the ambiguous position of women, who maintain links with their natal home but simultaneously become assimilated over time into their marital home. It is seen that to understand the position of women in the system their relationship to their natal households' and other deities of origin has to be taken into consideration. It is also pointed out that women and men born in the same house have a markedly different relation to its deities. Having explored a number of different aspects of kinship behaviour and isolated

the principal categories of kinship, it is suggested that the households which have given women in marriage to one's own, from a man's point of view, enjoy a superior status, in comparison to the households of sisters' and daughters' husbands. Analysis of the exchanges of prestations and ritual services shows that affinity is recognised but only in one direction, towards the wife-giving households, while in the other direction, the prestations mark the consanguineal link between brother and sister. It is found that it is necessary to place the main prestation to wife-giving households in the wider ritual context of the festival in which it originates; seen against this background the prestation is argued to accord the wife-giving affines a superior status, but one couched in a ritual idiom. The continuing relationship of a woman to her natal household and her brothers is seen to correspond with the continuing influence on her and her children of their deities, and this influence is also shown to correspond with the ritual sevices performed by a man for his sisters' children.

In part 3 the analysis of social relations entailed reference to ritual and the relations between men and the deities. Part 4 focusses directly on ritual and myth, but largely with a view to clarifying how the house and gotyār are defined by deities, how the relationship between priestly and non-priestly gotyār is to be understood by reference to deities, and how the village itself functions as a ritual unit. A description is given of the layout of household space and the identity and location of the different categories of its deities. It is shown that the presence of the deities establishes a house as such, and that the house as a whole is defined in terms of the relation between the 'inner' deities, which together label its gotyār affiliation and mark the fixed point where the house begins, and the 'outside' women's deities, which mark the southernmost extension of the house, where it ends and where in a sense its relationship established through marriages to other houses is recognised. Consideration of the lists of gotyār deities shows that each gotyār, though it may not have one specific identifying deity, is nevertheless distinguished from others by its unique combination of deities. The fundamental distinction in Tharu thought between the original mythological age of creation and the present imperfect age of men, is introduced as necessary background for further discussion of the deities attached to the social groups. From analysis of the creation mythology, and of the priests' myths of origin, it is argued that the principal links between the the mythical age of creation associated with the deities, and the present age of men, are provided by the Debi, the goddess, in relation to the world and the house, and in relation to the Dang valley by the priests' deity-ancestors. The priests' role as mediators between households and their deities is seen to correspond to the unique position of the priests' deities in terms of tracing their origins back to the first priest, who belongs himself to the age of creation. Analysis of possession rituals shows that through the relationship established in possession between men and Debi, the house takes on its ultimate and transcendent identity as Debi's palace at the centre of the world. A description is given of the village deities, and the organisation and form of village

ritual. It is shown that in ritual contexts the non-cultivating households are included fully as houses, whereas for other aspects of village business they are not. The structure of relations between the household and the village and their deities is seen to conform to a common pattern in which the ritual functions are in both cases divided between an internal officiant, the village headman and the household head, and an outside officiant, the village priest and the household priest who are always members of one of the priestly gotyār. Finally it is noted that the north : south opposition, which is identified at the level of the house as ordering the relations between senior and junior and between inside and outside, is also manifest at the level of the village in the context of the two major annual rituals. At the level of the village, this opposition is again related to that between inside and outside, but it is suggested that in this context it articulates the fundamental opposition between the ages of the world, the original time of creation and the present age of men.

The conclusion notes that the attempt to describe social organisation has required discussion of myth and ritual in some detail. It is pointed out that the study provides an example of how those elements which the analyst may distinguish as 'social' or 'ritual' are in fact inextricably interlinked, forming a complex whole. In this regard, for the Tharu one of the main conclusions is that membership of a social group is always accompanied by sharing a common set of deities, and that within the house and the village, the senior spokesman and leader has important ritual functions as a part of his total role.

Abstract

The Tharu of Dang : A Study of Social Organisation, Myth and Ritual in West Nepal.
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The aim of the thesis is to provide a descriptive analysis of the social organisation of the Dangaura Tharu of the Dang valley, south-west Nepal. Social organisation is the focus for the study, but it was found that consideration of myth and ritual was essential for the character of the principal social groups: the household, the village, and the gotyār, an exogamous patrilineal group.

The thesis is divided into four parts. The first part gives a general introduction to the Tharu as a whole. It reviews the available literature, summarises what is known of the history and cultural affiliations of the Tharu, and describes the geography and economy of Dang.

Part two describes the main social groups. The village appears as a tightly knit unit with its organisation centering on the headman and household heads who also hold an important position within the household. In contrast the gotyār appears as a loosely structured group but one that nevertheless has the important functions of providing the negative rules for marriage and for regulating the allocation of priests to clients.

Part three discusses kinship and marriage. While marriage is not governed by an ideology of alliance, analysis of prestations shows that affinal links are stressed towards wife-giving households and in the other direction the emphasis is on the continuing link of consanguinity with the women who have left the house on marriage, a link which corresponds at the ritual level to women's continuing relation with their natal households' deities.

Part four examines ritual and myth showing that it is deities which define a house as such and distinguish gotyār. Similarly the role of the priestly gotyār has to be understood in terms of the relation of their deities to the creation mythology. Finally it is shown that the village realises essential aspects of its identity as a unit in the context of village ritual.