

ECOLOGY, ECONOMY, AND SOCIAL SYSTEM IN THE NEPAL HIMALAYAS¹

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This paper will describe some aspects of the relationship of the economic and social system of the Himalayan highlands of Nepal to their ecological adaptation. Emphasis is laid on a comparison of the family, patrilineage and community in this area with those of the Hindu Paharis² in the lower levels of the Himalayas.

1. *Cultural Areas of the Central Himalayas in Nepal*³

The Kingdom of Nepal is located between Tibet and India. The great Himalayas and other ranges run east to west through this slim, rectangular country and contribute strongly to the diversity of the natural environment, the people, and their culture. These ranges divide Nepal, roughly speaking, into three major cultural areas: the "Indic," "Tibetan,"⁴ and "Himalayan."

The "Indic" cultural area is the southern half of Nepal where Hinduism is predominant. It is divided into two sub-cultural areas: the Tarai, an extension of the Gangetic plain in southern Nepal, which has almost the same cultural traits as the north Indian plain, and the Pahari, or hill area, which has a variation of the north Indian Hindu culture. However, "in emphasizing differences, care must be taken not to ignore the numerous and basic similarities common to the Pahari and other north Indians." (Berreman: 1960, 775) The main characteristics of the "Indic" cultural area are as

- ¹ The data of this paper were mainly obtained while participating in the Japanese Scientific Expedition to Northwestern Nepal in 1958. Acknowledgement must be made to Professor Jirō Kawakita, the leader of the expedition, Messrs Ryūzo Takayama, Osamu Namikawa, Keiji Nishioka, Masahiro Ogata, and Yasuo Sonohara on the expedition, as well as the inhabitants of the Nepal Himalayas who helped me collect the field data. I would like to thank Professors Gerald D. Berreman, Gordon T. Bowles, Shinobu Iwamura, Robert F. Murphy, and Dr Leo E. Rose for their helpful comments and criticisms of the paper. I must especially thank Leo E. Rose and the Himalayan Border Countries Project, the Center for South Asia Studies at the University of California (Berkeley) for the generous support of my studies of the Himalayas.
- ² The data and analysis are based on "Hindus of the Himalayas" by Gerald D. Berreman. This book deals with the Garhwalis in the lowland Himalayas in India. The general aspect, however, is applicable to the Hindu Paharis in the lowland Himalayas of Nepal.
- ³ *cf.* Iijima: 1964.
- ⁴ This term does not mean "Tibetan" in the political sense like the term "Indic," but is a convenient substitute for Bhote, Bhot, Bhutiya, Bhutia and some other connected terms.

follows :

- a) A caste system, which is somewhat more flexible among the Paharis.
- b) A strict avoidance of beef.
- c) An agricultural economy in which the inhabitants are sedentary.
- d) Sanskritic Hindu rites are performed.
- e) The inhabitants, who can be called the Indo-Nepalis, consist of north Indian immigrants, pre-Aryan indigenes, and their admixture.
- f) Nepali, a dialect of the Indo-Aryan language, is spoken as a *lingua franca*, along with other related Sanskritic-based languages in the Tarai.

The "Tibetan" cultural area lies in the northernmost section of the country where Lamaism and Bonism are influential. The "Tibetan" culture tends to be a reflection of the older cultural strata of central Tibet—*i. e.* Nying-ma-pa (a red-hat sect), Bonism, or other early Tibetan sects are more predominant here than the later developing Ge-lug-pa (yellow-hat sect).

The main characteristics of the "Tibetan" cultural area are as follows :

- a) A non-caste society, where women enjoy greater freedom.
- b) Consumption of meat, including beef, and liquor is permitted.
- c) Pastoralism, trade and agriculture form the basis of the economy with the first-named being most important.
- d) Lamaistic and Bonistic rites are practised (Kawakita : 1957, 87).
- e) The inhabitants are mainly Tibetan (Bhote) in origin.
- f) Tibetan is spoken as the *lingua franca*.

The "Himalayan" culture area, inhabited by the Thakalis, Gurungs, Magars, and other similar ethnic groups, is sandwiched between the "Indic" and "Tibetan" cultural areas, usually at an elevation between 2,000 and 3,200 metres (about 6,600 and 10,500 feet) above sea-level. The cultural characteristics of these Himalayan ethnic groups are a blending of Hinduism and Lamaism to which is added an indigenous shamanistic animism. Naturally, the variation of Himalayan cultures is wide. For example, the Bhote-Gurung (Tibetanized Gurung) in the higher altitudes are under strong Lamaistic influence, while Hinduism is the more predominant influence among the Magar at a lower elevation. The main characteristics of the "Himalayan" cultural area are as follows :

- a) No caste system can be observed in the majority of the Himalayan ethnic groups.
- b) Consumption of meat and liquor is more frequent than among the Hindus, but the more Hinduized ethnic groups tend to avoid beef-eating.
- c) Pastoralism, trade, and agriculture are the basis of the economy, in which agriculture, generally speaking, is considered to be the most important.
- d) Syncretic ritual practices, a complex amalgam in which Lamaism, Hinduism and native animism can be observed.
- e) Mongoloid features are predominant among the inhabitants, although an admixture of the characteristics of Mongoloid and pre-Aryan indigenes is also relatively common.
- f) Although some of them preserve their own Tibet-Burmese native lan-

guages, the inhabitants in the northern part of the area tend to speak Tibetan, while those in the southern section tend to speak Nepali. Some of them are bilingual or trilingual.

2. *Vertical Structure of Ecology in the Central Nepal Himalayas*

It has been observed that there appears to be a close correspondence between cultural areas and altitude in central Nepal. In fact the ethnic identity of the occupants of the villages along the path of our expedition in 1958 could be predicted to some extent before entering the villages by merely consulting the altimeter. From what Kawakita has studied in this area, he (1957, 20) attributes this fact to the different crops and livestock which the land will support at various altitudes, and to the "great attachment to their combination of staple crops" among each of the ethnic groups.

We found a close correspondence between the Indic cultural tradition and rice cultivation up to an altitude of 2,000 metres (about 6,600 feet). Among the mid-montane Himalayan cultures, sub-Hindu culture (the Hindu-oriented culture) was found above the rice-growing region between 2,000 and 2,500 metres (about 6,600 to 8,200 feet) where barley, wheat, and buckwheat are grown. They produce two crops a year just as do people at all lower altitudes. A modified form of Tibetan culture, or sub-Tibetan culture, extended from 2,500 to 3,200 metres (about 8,200 to 10,500 feet) and the Tibetan culture was found above this level. At these higher levels only one crop of wheat or barley was produced annually, and yak and sheep replaced the conventional cattle and goats of lower regions as the most important types of livestock. Beyond the Tibeto-Nepali border live the Drok-pas, or nomadic Tibetans in Changthang, who have neither permanent homes nor agriculture.

Not only is there a close correlation between ethnic distribution and the combination of staple crops, but also between ethnic distribution and types of land-utilization. The Hindus prefer rice-growing areas where summer and winter crops are possible annually. During the summer, they raise rice in irrigated fields and African millet and corn in unirrigated fields, while in winter wheat (mainly) and barley are grown. The land-productivity of irrigated fields is high and the rice cultivation is also labour-consuming. Thus, the economy of the Hindus is agricultural, and the communities are sedentary. Although the Nepali Hindus, especially the Paharis, are not strict vegetarians, there is some prestige attached to vegetarianism in terms of Sanskritization.¹ Therefore, the Hindus seem to prefer to live in a natural environment which is favourable to agricultural production, and do not find it inconvenient to live in the sub-tropical lowlands where livestock breeding is unsuitable because of the warm and humid climate. Also, it is very difficult for them to practise

¹ Sanskritization is the process by which low caste or tribal people raise their status to a higher position in the hierarchy by adopting vegetarianism and abstaining from alcoholic beverages, and by making their rituals and pantheon conform to those of the high-caste Brahmans. This adoption of the Brahmaic way of life by a low caste seems to have occurred frequently, even though theoretically forbidden. (Srinivas: 1952, 30)

transhumance from the bottom of the Himalayan valleys to the high grass-land, in part because of the inaccessible topographical setting but also probably due to problems of "tribal" territories with the mid-montane Himalayans.

In the mountainous midland of Nepal, the inhabitants practise both agriculture and pastoralism. Their main emphasis is on agriculture since the climate is warm enough to enable them to grow two crops each year. However, the dry-field agriculture which they usually practise is not labour-consuming although land productivity is not so high as rice cultivation. Moreover, the cool and arid climate in this area is more favourable for pastoralism, so the Himalayans maintain a variety of livestock, *i. e.* cattle, goats, and water buffalo at lower altitudes, and *dzo* (a hybrid of cattle and yak more common among the Tibetans) at higher altitudes. The Himalayans, as mentioned above, are roughly classified into two groups: namely, sub-Hindu and sub-Tibetan, the former distributed in comparatively humid and warm areas, while the latter inhabit comparatively arid and cool areas. In this way it is natural that the basic economy of the sub-Hindu Himalayans is agricultural, while that of the sub-Tibetans tends to be more dependent upon pastoralism.

I shall now describe the ecological aspects of the Tibetan communities of northern Nepal, on whom I will focus as my present main topic. The Tibetans are distributed in the northern highlands of the Himalayas where the climate is cool and arid even in the summer season, and the winter is very long. Accordingly, their economy is far less agricultural and much more pastoral than any other Himalayan ethnic groups. However, the Tibetans as a whole can be classified into three major groups in terms of their basic economy. The first category is the sedentary Tibetan (Rong-pa) who lives in the valleys of the high Himalayas and is a little more dependent on agriculture than pastoralism. The sedentary Tibetans generally raise only one crop a year, but nevertheless, by Tibetan standards agriculture plays an important role in their economy. However, the breeding of livestock is indispensable for them. Another category of Tibetans is the semi-nomadic Tibetans (Sa.ma-Dro[́]k) whom I will describe in more detail later in this paper. The last group is the nomadic Tibetan (Dro[́]k-pa) who lives only in the high plateau area of Tibet. No nomadic Tibetans have been found so far in the Himalayan areas of Nepal. The nomadic Tibetans generally do not establish well-constructed settled houses even for winter settlement, but reside in large yak-hair tents. In the Changthang plateau of western Tibet, the nomads are said to live in such tents throughout the year, and permanent houses made of slate-stones are said to be found only in limited number in towns. Though some nomads in Tibet, like the Mew-Fantzu, are reported to grow oats for fodder (Stubel: 1958), the nomadic Tibetans in Changthang do not practise agriculture. They depend upon large-scale pastoralism and trade.

3. *Economy of the Semi-Nomadic Tibetans of the Tolbo Districts*

The whole region of the Tolbo high plateau district of northern Nepal is bounded on the west by the great water-shed Kanjerowa Himals and on the south by the Dhaulagiri massif. To the north-west, it is separated by several days of difficult travel from the nearest villages of the Mugu Karnali. To the south-west beyond Tsarka, it is likewise separated by barren mountains from the valley of the Kali Gandaki. To the north and the north-west it is bounded by the great Tibetan plain, which these people refer to simply as the "north". (Snellgrove: 1961, 82) Although the Tolbo district is part of Nepal, from the geographical viewpoint it is an extension of the great Tibetan high plateau. The average altitude of the Tolbo plateau ranges from approximately 3,500 to 5,500 metres (about 11,500 to 18,150 feet). The high plateau is generally covered with snow from the end of October to the following April, and it is reported that 1 to 1.5 metres (about 3.3 to 5 feet) of snow accumulates on the ground. The snow starts to melt around the beginning of April, and usually it has receded to the snow-line, approximately 5,500 metres (about 17,550 feet), by May.

The Tolbo plateau is located in the northern areas of the great Himalayan massives; therefore, the rainfall is more scarce and the climate is more arid than the southern part of Nepal due to slight influence of the summer monsoon from the Indian plains. However, it is very foggy, and hail and sleet fall even in the summer season. The hamlets of the Tolbo plateau are located on the river banks. Many rocks and stones are found in the fields of the villages, because of the rivers and glaciers. Due to the poor land productivity of this area, and inconvenience of traffic and transportation, the population density is extremely low, in some sections reaching only about 0.3 persons per square kilometre.

I will now focus on the economic life of the semi-nomadic Tibetans in Tsarka. They grow barley during the warm season. No other crop but barley and vegetables can be raised even during the summer due to the high altitude (about 4,150 metres, or 13,700 feet) and to aridity.

The semi-nomads, who endure the severe winter of Tsarka, and who have been to the lowlands to "eat sunshine" (Pant: 1935, 33), start to plough the fields as soon as the snow leaves the ground at the beginning of April. The ploughing is done by a yak in Tsarka.¹ Irrigation is indispensable for agriculture in Tsarka, because of the high aridity. Irrigation works are generally conducted by co-operative activities under the administration of a village head in the Tolbo district. In Tsarka, however, since there is no village head, a Bonist Lama decides the date to begin irrigation. The order of irrigation is determined by the villagers by means of throwing dice. All the irrigation works are undertaken by the participation of all villagers.

The time of seeding varies from one place to another in Tolbo according to the micro-climate. Generally speaking, the higher the elevation, the later the seeding. In Tsarka, the seeding of barley takes place from May to June.

¹ In Tibet proper, ploughing is frequently done by two yaks.

The definite date is determined by a lama, as mentioned before, following the lunar calendar.

There is a very interesting custom about crops in Tolbo areas, viz some crop seeds are exchanged every three years between several villages. Barley seed is exchanged between Tsarka, Tengur, Tarap, and Pordle. Wheat seed is also exchanged between Poe, Kubha, and Phijer. In the case of the former, the exchange of barley seed is not practised by the whole community, but by individual villagers. The barley seed cultivated for three years in Tsarka is called *tikser* and the "new" seed brought from other villages is called *lomo*. Such an association of certain villages, which is called "Kha chik-pa re" (mouth is the same), reflects a similar natural environment in which social interaction—for instance, intermarriage—tends to be more frequent than with other villages in Tolbo. Despite the availability of barnyard manure due to pastoralism, the semi-nomads in Tsarka are not diligent in agricultural activities. They do not work very hard in the fields. For example, the weeding of field grass is undertaken after the middle of August, only a short time before the harvest of barley.

In Tsarka, all the villagers began harvesting together on October 1, 1958. The day before harvesting began, September 30, a rite called "Tsangro" was performed by a Bonist lama, and some part of the barley in his field was harvested. The first day of harvesting is decided by divination, when all the villagers also begin to cut grass for winter fodder. Harvesting continued for four days, followed by two days of holidays. After the harvest, the livestock of Tsarka was pastured on the fields.

Pastoralism is one of the most important sectors of the economic life of the semi-nomadic Tibetans in the Nepal Himalayas. The semi-nomads in Tsarka breed yak, sheep, and goats. Of the domesticated animals, the yak is the most indispensable for the semi-nomads. Thus, they appear to have even a deep emotional attachment to the yak. For instance, the Sherpas in the eastern Himalayas give individual names to their yaks (von Fürer-Haimendorf: 1957, 226). The semi-nomads enjoy the task of herding. The livestock provides almost all necessary items for the inhabitants of Tsarka, *i.e.* hide, pelt, milk, butter, cheese, yoghurt, meat, hair, and horn; at the same time they are an important means of transportation and of ploughing fields.

All the households of Tsarka have domesticated animals. The richest family had 23 yaks, and the poorest had only half a yak, sharing one yak with another villager. The average number of livestock per household in Tsarka was estimated at 6.7 yaks, 6.4 dri (female yaks), and 20 sheep and goats.

In Tsarka, 24 of the 34 households possessed summer tents, and 10 households asked someone to keep their yak and dri for the summer pasture by paying in kind or cash. The prosperous families, generally speaking, have such tents.

As soon as the snow leaves the ground, they move the livestock from the winter pasture, 4,300 metres (14,190 feet), to the spring pasture, 4,400 metres

(14,520 feet), where they stay with the animals for nearly two months. In June, the semi-nomads again move to the summer pasture, 4,700 metres (15,510 feet), where they stay for about two months. At the end of August, they come to the fall pasture, 4,600 metres (15,180 feet), where they stay for approximately one month. They move to the "spring" pasture at the end of September when they wait for the completion of harvesting. In the middle of October, they return to Tsarka and the domesticated animals are grazed on the barley stubble of the fields for a while. Then the livestock, except kids, lambs, and some sheep and goats, are sent to the winter pasture where they remain during the severe winter season. This is the seasonal migratory process of the semi-nomads in Tsarka. Among the pastoral products, butter is the most important in the economic life. Butter is not only indispensable for their diet, but also for barter in which it functions as a sort of unit for measuring the quantity of things.

The isolated Tsarka is to a remarkable degree economically self-sufficient. The semi-nomadic villagers make their own necessary forms of equipment, *i.e.* dress, boots, tents and so forth, but that does not mean the economy is completely self-sufficient. They must import grain and some other things from the lowlands, and rocksalt and some other goods from Changthang. At the same time, the Tibetans are very fond of travelling, and enjoy the caravan life. They are "merchants" by nature. (Bell: 1928, 125)

The semi-nomads of Tsarka organize caravans to Changthang where they purchase rocksalt, wool, butter, and some other pastoral products from the nomads by cash or in exchange for grain, mostly produced in Tsarka. The semi-nomads of Tsarka carry the goods back to their own village and add some pastoral products to the commodities brought from Changthang. Then, they proceed to Tukuiche with those goods and exchange them for such things as rice, wheat, sugar, tobacco, metal utensils, cotton cloth, and so forth. The semi-nomads return to Tsarka with yak bags full of the commodities mentioned above. In some cases they organize large caravans on a village scale, but usually small groups of villagers go to Tukuiche and Changthang in individually-organized trade caravans.

4. *Social System of the Tsarka Village*

The villagers of Tsarka are Tibetans. They consist of Lamaists and Bonists. There is no distinction of sub-cultures between them except in religious activities. The villagers of both sects, for example, intermarry and interdine with each other, and live in symbiosis.

Family—The basic residential, social, religious, and economic unit in Tsarka, unlike that of the Hindu Paharis, is ideally the patrilocal nuclear family which consists of a man, his wife, and his unmarried children. This nuclear family usually occupies a house, and separate households are set up by the sons in the family at the time of their marriage. All members share labour, product, and profit within this unit. Generally they have only one hearth. The wife becomes the head of a household upon the death of her

husband, if her sons are too young and younger brothers have already established other households by their marriages. However, as the levirate principle is often followed among these Tibetans, the younger brother would marry the widow of the elder brother, if the younger brother is still unmarried. In such a case, he inherits the status of family head. Since they prefer ultimogeniture, the elder brothers and their wives often leave the parents' households in many cases and establish their own.

Although there are several types of deviation from the ideal pattern of household, the data of Tsarka show the villagers' preference for the nuclear family. While only 12 out of 35 households (34.5 per cent) consists of nuclear families or single individuals, 14 households out of 35 (40 per cent) are the "minimal extended family" which consists only of a nuclear family and the parents of either husband or wife. There is only one case of an ordinary extended family which consists of a nuclear family and the husband's parents. Accordingly, only 25.5 per cent of households are extended families, if we exclude the "minimal extended family." In this way, the number of people in a household is smaller in Tsarka than the Paharis lowland (which will be discussed later). In Tsarka the average number in a household is 5.2 persons, and the size of a family varies from 1 to 10.

SIZE OF HOUSEHOLDS IN TSARKA

Number of Family Members	Number of Households
10	1
9	0
8	4
7	3
6	6
5	9
4	5
3	3
2	1
1	3

Concerning the generations included in a household, the data of Tsarka also suggest that the Tibetans seem to prefer the nuclear family, or at the utmost the "minimal extended family," to the larger unit of the extended family. Although 14 households include three generations, 17 households span two generations, and 4 consist of a single individual.

Division of a household usually tends to take place even among real brothers. There are few cases of extended families which include first cousins except for a polyandrous family. Thus, division of a household into smaller units often occurs within two generations.

With reference to polygamy, no instance of it could be observed in 1958. It is probable that there were some polygynous marriage alliances previously: however, it is not certain whether such alliances were formal marriages or not. In such instances of Tsarka the women were apparently concubines

rather than wives.

There are two cases of fraternal polyandry and another instance of sibling polyandry. In some societies poverty is considered to be the cause of polyandry, but this is not usually the case in Tibetan society. Rather, polyandry is apt to be found in comparatively rich families. The same kind of information is reported by von Fürer-Haimendorf (1959, 204) on the Sherpas¹ in the eastern Nepal Himalayas. Von Fürer-Haimendorf says that among the Sherpas of Khumbu, polyandrous unions are more frequent among wealthy than among poor families. Since there were only a few cases of polyandrous unions in Tsarka in 1958, I hesitate to give a definite characterization of them; however, there appears to be a close correspondence with property ownership. The desire to avoid land division is strong, which seems to accelerate the tendency of polyandrous unions in levirate societies.

Patrilineage—In contrast to the Hindu caste system of the Paharis in the lowlands of the Himalayas, patrilineage is the basic system of Tibetan inhabitants. According to the villagers of Tsarka, a man has *rüiba* (bone), and *sha* (flesh) or *tha* (blood). *Rüiba* is considered to be exogamous patrilineage which is inherited by descendants from ancestors through the patrilineal line. *Sha* denotes matrilineal line but it disappears within the second kin. The incest taboo of bone is very strict irrespective of direct or indirect kinship, and even marriage with a non-consanguineal patrilineage member is completely prohibited. Violation of the incest taboo is called “khyi tang chik-pa re” (the same as a dog) by the Himalayan Tibetans (Kawakita: 1957). There is, however, no incest taboo for the “flesh” line, except with a real mother and sister. Bilateral cross-cousin marriage is allowed.

There are seven main *rüibas*; *Yangdhung*, *Awa*, *Rhingon*, *Kartü*, *Nubre*, and *Phuran* (or *Phura*) in Tsarka village. In addition, the *rüibas* of other villages, such as *Pordle*, *Hsymen*, *Tarap*, and *Thangdang*, are also found in this village. The *rüibas* of other villages tend to be collectively called not by the respective *rüiba* names but by the village name itself. For example, the *rüiba* names, *Pordle*, *Hsymen*, and *Tarap* are the names of villages in the Tolbo district. The name *Thangdang*, however, could not be identified.

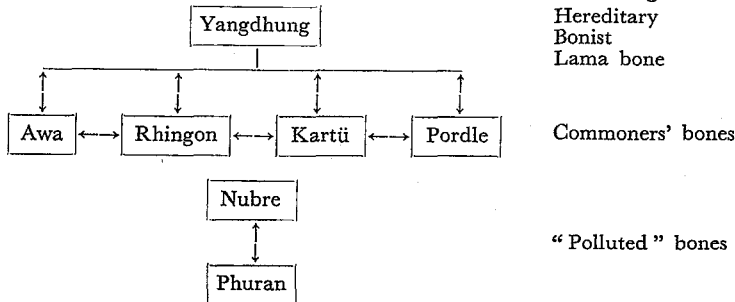
According to the legend current in Tsarka village, the places of origin of these *rüiba* are distributed over several areas of the Himalayas and of Tibet, *i.e.* *Yangdhung* is said to come from Kam-Kongbo (probably eastern Tibet) where there is the Yungon temple, *Awa* from Pharbung (Pharong) in western Nepal, *Rhingon* from near Kung-pass in the western part of the Tibeto-Nepal border, *Nubre* from the Kutang district in north central Nepal, and *Phuran* from the western Tibeto-Nepali borderland.

Each *rüiba* or patrilineage has its own symbol with which taboo is asso-

¹ The Sherpas are the descendants and their admixture of the early Tibetan immigrants with the native inhabitants of the southern slopes of the Himalayas. Their culture is basically an offshoot of Tibetan culture (Fürer-Haimendorf: 1962, 297) and they share common features in economic activities with other Tibetan inhabitants in the Nepal Himalayas.

ciated as in totemism. Horse (ta) is the symbol animal of the *Yangdhung* and *Rhingon* patrilineages; sheep (ra) of *Awa* and *Kartü*; dog (khyi) of *Nubre*; and pig (phak) of *Phuran*. The taboo associated with *riüba* is very interesting. For instance, the patrilineage-members of *Awa* and *Kartü* are prohibited from eating the meat of sheep in the day-time, but are allowed to break its bones. Contrarily, they can eat sheep meat but cannot break its bones during the night. This seems to be a sort of ecological adaptation of the semi-nomads to a cold and arid natural setting where agriculture alone is not sufficient for the economy. They cannot survive on such a high plateau without pastoralism, and without eating livestock.

Social stratification is found in Tsarka and the ideal ranking is as follows:



In this diagram solid arrows indicate preferable interaction among the patrilineages.

Yangdhung or the bones of hereditary Bonist lamas are considered the highest in ranking. Ideally, members of *Yangdhung* should intermarry with only members of the second rank patrilineages, *Awa*, *Rhingon*, *Kartü* and *Pordle*. All wives in the *Yangdhung* patrilineage are really from the second rank patrilineage. But one woman of *Yangdhung* has married a man of *Nubre* bone, the third rank patrilineage. One *Yangdhung* family has adopted a son-in-law from Hsyimen village.

The members of second rank patrilineages, *Awa*, *Rhingon*, *Kartü*, and *Pordle*, are supposed to intermarry within their own rank and *Yangdhung* only. All wives of those bones, except *Awa*, have adhered to this rule of marriage, but 7 out of 25 (28 per cent) of the wives of *Awa* bone are from *Nubre* and *Phuran*. Two *Awa*, 1 *Kartü*, and 1 *Pordle* women have married into the *Nubre* bone. Two *Awa* women have married into the *Phuran* bone. Moreover, 1 young man of *Rhingon* bone eloped with a *Phuran* girl to a distant village and is now living with her family in Tsarka.

Nubre and *Phuran* bones are supposed to be "inferior" to other bones and are considered to be "polluted". The rank of *Nubre*, however, is a bit higher than *Phuran*. Although these "inferior" bones should ideally intermarry within their own ranks, in fact 5 out of 11 wives of the *Nubre* bone (45 per cent), and 3 out of 5 wives of the *Phuran* bone (60 per cent) are from "upper class" bones.

According to the members of the "upper class" patrilineages, the relation

between them and the "inferior" patrilineages is also called "Kha chik-pa ma-re" (the mouths are not the same), and intermarriage and interdining should not be allowed between them. An informant from *Rhingon*, the second-rank bone, emphasized the exclusiveness of the "upper class" bones towards *Nubre* and *Phuran*. He told me that "we do not practise either intermarriage or interdining." One day, however, I saw him interdining with some villagers of the *Nubre*—a bone of interior status. After a while I asked him if it was not unlawful. He at once replied that the foods and beer he took contained water. "It purifies," he continued, "all pollution." Although inter-smoking is also prohibited, it is not uncommon among the villagers. I asked one of the "upper class" bones whether or not it is polluting. He replied that fire on tobacco also purifies all pollution, like water. These instances show a great difference of behaviour between the ideal and the actual among the semi-nomadic Tibetans.

The function of patrilineages in Tsarka is quite different from that of the Hindu castes. Since the patrilineages are not occupational, no *jajmani* or occupational barter system is observed. Indeed, they do not seem to play, directly, an important role in economic activities. Only rarely could co-operative activities based on the patrilineage system be found in their pastro-agriculture. For instance, summer camps for herding and the harvesting of barley are conducted not by patrilineage co-operation but by the casual association of villagers. This is quite different from some nomads, for example the Basseri in south Persia, in which kinship plays an important role in economic activities (Barth: 1961, 35). Contrarily, it is apparent that the important functions of Tibetan patrilineages are in socio-religious activities. Whenever the village councils meet, the order of seats is decided by the ranking of patrilineages in the village. Age has significance only within a patrilineage. Upper seats are occupied by high-rank patrilineages, and the seat order within a patrilineage is generally decided by age, from elder to younger. Thus, I would assume that every council decision is influenced by the charismatic atmosphere which seems favourable to the upper-rank patrilineages and elder generation, even though the Tibetans have an equalitarian tendency in their behaviour. In such councils decisions are made not only about ritual activities but also at times about economic activities, such as irrigation, trade-caravan, and so forth.

Community—Like other villages in the high Himalayas, Tsarka is so isolated and inaccessible that it takes nearly two days to get to the nearest neighbouring villages. Therefore, in spite of the high mobility of the villagers due to pastoralism and trading, village endogamy is predominant in marriage alliances. Twenty-four out of 29 couples (82.8 per cent) are village endogamous and only 5 (17.2 per cent) are village exogamous. This high percentage of village endogamy shows how the village community of Tsarka is tightly organized around the consanguineal tie, which is further strengthened through affinal alliance by patrilineage exogamy.

There is no strong social solidarity of "tribe" among the Tibetans in

the Tolbo district. The percentage of village endogamy as mentioned above, however, is so high that the feeling of a "quasi-tribe" solidarity can be found to some extent among the villagers of Tsarka. Among other distinguishing features, they have a peculiar Tibetan dialect which is quite easily distinguished from those of the neighboring villages and the Tsarka women have a special hair style of their own. Also the villagers hold two sets of village councils, one consisting of househeads (usually males) of Buddhist families and the other of those of Bonist families. These councils, as mentioned above, play an important role in the socio-religious activities of the villagers. In consequence of its common territory and of the independence of its constituent families, the community becomes the principal focus of associative life (Murdock: 1960, 82). Thus, although there is no formal organization of "tribe" among the villagers of Tsarka, the community is the core of their social and economic life.

5. Discussion

There is a broad difference between the social systems of the Paharis in the lower hill area and the Tibetans of the highlands. The most interesting one is the family structure. The former prefers the extended family and the latter the nuclear family as the ideal pattern, although both of them are patrilocal. In a Pahari village, Sirkanda, where Berreman has studied, household membership varied from 1 to 25 individuals with an average between 8 to 9, and a household usually included three generations. In the Tibetan village, Tsarka, however, the numerical range of households is 1 to 10 persons with an average of 5.2, and a household should cover only two generations.

The facts mentioned above would probably be related to the economic organization of both groups. Agriculture requires many hands to make it productive, and it will feed many mouths. It seems that larger extended families are usually retained when it is advantageous or necessary to do so, and they break down more readily when they perform no useful or necessary function (*cf.* Berreman: 1963, 147). Thus, it is very natural that the Paharis, engaged primarily in agricultural activities, tend to have a more extended family than the Tibetans whose economy is more dependent upon pastoralism and trading than agriculture.

At the same time, the rule of inheritance seems to play an important role in deciding the size of a household. Property is normally passed down within the patrilocal extended family in Sirkanda. When a man dies, his property goes to his sons as a group. If his wife is living, it stays in her custody until her death or remarriage, at which time it goes to his sons. If a man has no sons and designates no son surrogate, his nearest male relatives (in order: brother, father's brother, father's brother's sons) take their place in the line of inheritance (Berreman: 1963, 78). Since agriculture is the basis of livelihood in Sirkanda, land is of utmost importance. The high castes, by restricting land-ownership to themselves before British dominion, ensured their own

economic dominance (Berreman: 1963, 245). The high castes consequently hold more property in land, and thus were more likely to have formed the extended family associated with Hindu inheritance law.

The variant forms of Hindu inheritance law of the Paharis shows quite a difference from those of the Tibetans of Tsarka. In Tsarka, the most important property is said to be the herd, even though the number of herds among the poor semi-nomadic inhabitants is comparatively small. Their inheritance law is observed in terms of livestock. Although the livestock of a household is administered and utilized as a unit, individual members of the household may hold the herd separately. Therefore, on the death of the father, if a household is dissolved, his heirs divide the livestock approximately equally, though a bit less advantageously for the female heirs. If the deceased father was living with a married son, or even a married daughter, all the herd seems to be regarded as property of the resident spouses. As far as land property is concerned, ultimogeniture is apt to result, since one or both parents tend to live with the youngest son. In such a case, probable adjustments are made by redistributing the livestock of the household among the non-resident brothers and unmarried sisters. The size of a landholding is generally so small that each individual holding is the minimal standard of cultivation from the economic viewpoint. Thus, reluctance to divide landed property is evident in polyandrous marriage alliances. I assume that the polyandry of semi-nomads in Tsarka is a sort of cultural adaptation to the social system of the nuclear family type, since polyandry tends to be observed more frequently among the well-to-do families having landed property than the landless poor villagers. Thus, the egalitarian trend of Tibetans concerning inheritance would accelerate the development of single households. If the male heirs marry several women, the property, and in particular land, would be apportioned among their plural households. Contrarily, the tendency of primogeniture in terms of Hindu inheritance law seems to facilitate the formation of the extended family among the Paharis.

The trend towards the formation of a nuclear family among the Tibetans would also be helped by paucity of materials for house-building and by the topographical setting. Wood is extremely scarce in the Tolbo high plateau where Tsarka is located, as Tsarka is far above the timber line. The upper limit of the forest is approximately 3,600 metres (about 12,000 feet) and the elevation of Tsarka is 4,150 metres (about 13,700 feet). Accordingly, the distance from the village to the forest zone requires at least two or three days strenuous journey, even without load, on foot. Therefore, timber is not easily available and is precious in this area. In this way, it is not unlikely that the size of a settlement is limited by the topographical setting, and the marked scarcity of timber which is indispensable even for building a house of slate stones. Thus, it would be probable that the ecological setting of Tsarka influences the social system of the semi-nomads by limiting the size of the households.

An outstanding feature of Sirkanda as a community, in contrast to many

plains communities, is the absence of village exogamy (Berreman: 1962); however, despite the absence of formal exogamy in Sirkanda, in 84 per cent of all marriages the wife comes from outside the village (Berreman: 1963, 264). Caste is an important tie which extends throughout the immediate cultural area across community boundaries and transcends community loyalties (Berreman: 1963, 340). In this connection, the patrilineage system of Tsarka functions in quite a different manner. Marriage in Tsarka is predominantly village-endogamous. In spite of the extreme high mobility of the villagers in terms of pastoralism and trading, as in the case of other Tibetans, more than 82 per cent of the marriage alliances are village endogamous. This is probably because of the isolation and inaccessibility of the village from the neighbouring villages, and the characteristics of the patrilineage system which encourages such a high percentage of village endogamy. The Pahari caste system is not as rigid, perhaps, as that found on the plains, but barriers limiting contacts between the castes, and the nature of interaction among them are in general similar to those characteristics of the Hindu caste system throughout India (Berreman: 1963, 201). Thus, the marriageable sphere of the Paharis in Sirkanda is more limited than that of Tsarka. Contrarily, among the patrilineages in Tsarka, social interaction is frequent and intermarriage is practised. Although there is a social distance of sorts between the "upper class" patrilineage group and the "polluted" patrilineage group, the ban on contacts between them tends to be ignored in many cases. In this way, the social distance between "upper" and "polluted" groups is not actually as wide as it is in the Hindu caste system in the lower levels of the Himalayas, and the strong consanguineal tie in Tsarka is further strengthened through affinal alliances by patrilineages. However, the territorial cohesiveness of the semi-nomadic Tibetans is rather loose, because many of the inhabitants of Tsarka are apt to be out of the village for pastoral and commercial activities.

In short, the cohesive power of the Tibetan community of Tsarka depends mainly on the consanguineal ties of the villagers through village endogamy rather than on the territorial ties in Sirkanda where there is a high percentage of village exogamy. Thus, Sirkanda seems to be better integrated into the immediate cultural area, while Tsarka is more culturally isolated.

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