Marriage, Household Cycles, and the Maintenance of Equality Among the Tamang of North Central Nepal

Thomas E. Fricke

Introduction

Classless societies have a special place in the anthropological imagination. Whether the result of inherent sympathy for tribal societies falling victim to colonial expansion or an attempt to grapple with the effects of empire back home, anthropological writing has been concerned with the nature of egalitarian social formations. The issue is not momentary existence of hierarchies or differentials in wealth and power during the given year of fieldwork. Rather, it has to do with the maintenance and reproduction of an egalitarian ethic in populations where sex, age, household wealth, and a number of other characteristics can create differentials in power and status. How is it that some differences remain temporary? What processes sweep aside potential status markers and prevent "the hardening of firm and enduring social strata" (McGuire and Netting 1982: 281)? What timescale and which cycles must we isolate to examine these issues?

A complete answe would include a consideration of the ideological and structural options made available to individuals in a given society. We would, for example, want to know why actors *fail* to exploit opportunities to strengthen the differentials that must be the inevitable side-effects of random processes in small-scale social formations. This paper stops short of such a complete analysis. Without assuming causal priority I opt instead to detail features of social organization and social process that help to maintain an environment in which egalitarian social relations can flourish.

To the extent that agrarian and peasant societies can be considered egalitarian, we arc justified in taking family and household as the key arena for such processes. Shanin, for example, refers to the household as "the basic unit of production, consumption, property holding, socialization, sociability, moral support and mutual economic help" (1971: 205) and these characteristics find their way into a number of subsequent definitions of the domestic unit (Macfarlane 1978: 105-106; Netting, et al. 1984: xxii; Netting 1981: 220). Such definitions have encouraged much important analysis at the household level and demonstrated important relationships among household structure, economy, and demography. Examples include Foster's illustration of the connection between population processes and the domestic developmental cycle (1978); there is also Cain's (1978) work documenting the link between household cycles and economic mobility.

This attention to household processes is a necessary part of our understanding although it cannot be the whole story. The problem is that households (or similarly cicumscribed units such as domestic groups) are the units of organization beyond individuals where social differentiation is most keenly felt. The very flexibility with which these units can respond to their environments provides material grounds for their variable fortunes (Sahlins 1972: 74; Netting 1981: 220). The reproduction of differentials arising from such random and strategic variations has been implicated as an important cause of incipient class formation in egalitarian settings (Hitchcock 1980; 104-105; Macfarlane 1976: 199; Fricke 1986: 200). Models based entirely on household processes, such as the developmental cycle, would give a great deal of weight to the demographic lottery. Those households able to produce the greatest number of laborers, preferably sons, for themselves should be the most successful (Cain 1978). One could imagine the advantage accrued in a single developmental sequence being passed on to succeeding households and generating the less permeable barriers of a class system.

One of the paradoxes of these egalitarian societies is the extent to which their members recognize "natural" hierarchies. Thus, there are "natural" differentials in the obligations flows of parents and their children. There are "natural" implications of hierarchy in the direction that daughters or sons travel in marriage. These hierarchies are implicated in the strategies that individuals employ at strategic life course transitions--both their own and those of the people whose choices they control.

This paper examines the maintenance of equality among an agro-pastoral people of North Central Nepal. It does so by first showing how household processes are a function of demographic processes and culturally structured behaviour. The possibilities for ramifying differentials across generations are then examined, by showing how marriage timing is itself a strategic decision with consequences for women's fertility and their household developmental cycles. Finally, the larger context of these decisions is looked at through some patriline histories and the pattern of marriages and household development these engendered.

The Tamang and the Study Population

The Tamang are a Tibeto-Burmese language population concentrated in the central districts of Nepal and around the Kathmandu Valley. They are generally divided into Western, Central, and Eastern groups based on differences in dialect. All Tamang practice some variant of Nyingmapa Buddhism together with an indigenous shaman tradition (see, for example, Hoefer 1981; Holmberg 1983, 1984). They live in nucleated villages at from about 3,500 to 9,000 feet above sea level, pursue variations of a basic agro-pastoral economy, and are organized into patrilineal excgamous clans.

Marriage preferences appear to be uniform across the Tamang territory although actual behaviour differs from village to village. Thus, while there is a marked preference for bilateral cross-cousin marriage, the actual percentages of marriages contracted with cross-cousins can be quite different. In one western Tamang village of 340 people studied by Kathryn March, cross-cousin marriages are reported to be 36% of the total sample of 86 marriages (1979: 209); in the western Tamang village I studied, cross-cousin marriages were 50% of the total.[1] Similarly, villages typically have high rates of endogamy but this varies with the number of resident clans and the number of households. Thus, I interpret March (1979: 181) to report that 60% of the marriages in one western Tamang village were con-tracted with patrilines from outside; my own work in a more northern part of this region in a village twice the size showed that over 80% of the marriages were village endogamous.

The data for this analysis come from the western Tamang village of Timling, located some 50 miles northwest of Kathmandu and near the China-Nepal border. Timling rests on a narrow shelf of the Ganesh Himal massif at about 7,000 feet. It's population of 639 people[2] live in 132 households and exploit an environment ranging from 5,000 feet above sea level to the high pastures at about 15,000 feet.[3]

Timling's is a natural fertility population; there are no con-scious efforts on the part of its members to limit their births with respect to parity. Nevertheless, the total fertility rate here is surprisingly low at 5.43 births per woman. Earlier analysis (Fricke 1985, 1986) uses Bongaarts' model for measuring the proximate deter-minants of fertility. The major behavioural factors lowering poten-tial fertility in this population are the pattern of breastfeeding on demand with late weaning and the reduced exposure to the risks of pregnancy because of relatively late ages at marriage. At the same time, mortality is relatively high in this population with about 20% of new births not surviving beyond the first year and about 27% dying before age 5. The age structure of the population and the mortality and fertility patterns computed from retrospective birth histories of all ever-married or pregnant women are consistent with an intrinsic rate of natural increase of about 1.2%, that is, a doubling time of roughly 60 years (Fricke 1986).

The underlying household developmental sequence in Timling is a product of the basic demographic processes of fertility and mortality and the social facts of marriage timing, residence, and the timing of inheritance and household fission (Fricke 1986: 147-156). Thus although the Tamang of Timling are distributed across household types with 67% nuclear households, 29% stem and extended, and 4% alterna-tively structured, the average sequence in the village is that of a serial stem family. Such a system results from older married siblings leaving the household at the marriage of younger siblings (cf. Foster 1975). The average household exists in a nuclear phase

for its first 22 years but spends the remaining 15 years in a stem phase consisting of the married parents and successive sons who marry and leave the household shortly after the marriage of the next son.

As Collier and Rosaldo have written for non-class societies in general (1981: 278), kinship and marriage are critical institutions for the organization of cooperative relations in Timling. The timing of marriage and cohabitation is, for example, intimately connected to the household developmental cycle. From the point of view of household fission, a woman's entry into a husband's natal home as daughter-in-law is the initial step in a process that proceeds through the birth of a child, the marriage of a younger male sibling, and the formation of a new household. In a natural fertility setting such as Timling's, marriage is further related to a woman's age at first birth as well as to her final fertility. Finally, household labour and the relative position of a household in networks of cooperation are both functions of the number of children born and the developmental trajectory.

Although the household is the central organizational unit beyond the individual, its bounds do not exhaust the possibilities for co-operation and work. Sahlins (1972) has persuasively argued the need for domestic units to be organized beyond their own level in any society and Timling is not without mechanisms for forming supra-household links (cf. Foster 1984 for a Thai example). These links can be formed both lineally and through affines among the Tamang (March 1983; Toffin 1986). Progressively more inclusive lineal organization among the Tamang moves from the individual, through the household, cooperative labour group or micro-lineage, patriline, and clan. The absolute limits of cooperation based on common descent can occur at the patriline level which is seldom more than seven genera-tions deep. It is much more likely, however, to include the set of neighbouring households in the micro-lineage which rarely have a lineal depth of more than three generations. These are likely to include the households of a grandfather, his independent sons, and their independent sons.

Marriage provides the second very important method of creating cooperative relationships in Tamang society. March has elaborated on the cultural representations of men and women relevant to their modes of fashioning links (1983). It is important to realize here that marriage has the central role of creating alliances and generat-ing cycles of obligation and reciprocity among patrilines. This point will be elaborated in the next section.

The processes by which supra-household links are formed define the contours of obligation flows throughout an individual's lifetime. The average sequence of a household from its earliest independence until the death of its founding members is from a position in which the overall flow of obligations is outward to one in which it is the

centre of its own web of obligation flows. This change in relative position results from the death of members of senior generations to whom services and labour are owed. A man will continually be called upon to aid his father, for example, even after taking his inherit- ance. Similarly, he will owe labour service to his wife's family throughout the lifetime of her parents. As those to whom labour is owed age and die, a person acquires the obligations of others as the natural consequence of having children who themselves marry and move to new households.

Given the importance of marriage in a range of critical social arenas, it is not surprising to find it the scene of strategies for relating the household and family to wider segments of the community. The ideal Tamang marriage is that of sister exchange, the *sine qua non* of reciprocity and non-hierarchical marriage exchange (Fox 1967). Tamang marriages involve brideprice and, in Timling, bride service to the woman's patriline. Marriages contracted as sister exchange have the affect of cancelling out any implicit hierarchy and the indebtedness that comes of acquiring a wife (all of this is from the point of view of the male). In practice, these exchanges within the same generation seldom occur. Thus, the Tamang system can be classi- fied as a bilateral crosscousin system in which reciprocal relations between two patrilines are actualized in the exchange of daughters in repeating generations. The people of Timling express no preference for either the MBD or the FZD in these exchanges.

Strategy and Variation in Tamang Marriages

In spite of their bilateral cross-cousin marriage preferences, the Tamang permit a variety of possible spouses for their children. Other variations in the possibilities for marriage can occur along the dimensions of endogamy and the autonomy of spouse selection itself. Table 1 presents the distribution of 107 cases for these variables.

Information for the natal homes of married women in Timling demonstrates the high level of endogamy in this setting. In fact, we would be justified in taking the level to be higher than those 75% of marriages in which both spouses come from the village since both Lapdung and Lingjyo are daughter settlements with recognized origins from Timling patrilines. For this analysis, however, I have chosen to consider Lapdung and Timling as a single village since the household plots of these two settlements are in the same areas and there is ample opportunity for people to meet on a daily basis in the course of work. Other villages are from a few hours to 3 days walk away and can be considered truly exogamous. Alliances contracted with these families through marriage can win the use of winter pasture rights for Timling patrilines (a reason explicitly given for marriages between Timling and Kimtang, a village about 3 days south).

Table 1: Distribution of Cases for Selected Variables

Value	N	%
A . Natal Home of Married Women in Timling		
Timling	80	74.8%
Lapdung	11	10.3%
Lingjyo	3	2.8%
Sertang	7	6.5%
Others	6	5.6%
B. Landed Status of Marital Household		
Less than 22 Ropani	47	43.9%
At least 22 Ropani	60	56.1%
C. Parental Involvement in Marriage		
Arranged	38	35.5%
Choice	69	64.5%
D. Relationship between Spouses before Marriage		
Not Related	54	50.5%
MBD-FZS	38	35.5%
FZD-MBS	15	14.0%

Marital decisions can be made by a daughter's parents or be entered into independently. Although arranged marriages are the most obviously associated with the strategic ends of senior household members, independent marriages are similarly the result of strategic decisions-- deciding not to decide. Arranged marriages are not an all or nothing proposition. Sisters can have different levels of participation in their spouse choice, with some marriages arranged by parents and others left up to the future spouses themselves. Of the 107 first marriages considered here, 36% are arranged.[5] All marriages, choice or arranged, create important links between households.

Finally, spouses may be variously related prior to marriage. Since sister exchange is seldom practiced in Timling, MBD-FZS marriages are distinct from FZD-MBS marriages. The third possibility of uniting previously unrelated couples accounts for 50% of all marriages in Timling. The different percentages of marriages contracted with the different sets of cross-cousins is the first clear evidence that some marriages are more desirable than others. Because wife-givers have more status than wife-takers, the greater

number of MBD-FZS unions suggests that marriages are consciously used
to affirm status distinctions among patrilines. Repeated MBD-FZS
marriages across generations implies a continuing status distinction
between patrilines. An alternating exchange cycle would maintain
overall status equality between patrilines.

The facts of Tamang marriage suggest a number of strategic possi-
bilities and raise important questions about the reproduction of
egalitarian relations in Timling. In spite of extremely equitable
wealth distribution in the village[6] differential landholdings exist
as shown in table 2. Bourdieu (1977) suggests that the political use
of marriages will play itself out in ways that include the identity
of people connected by marriage and the timing of links created by
marriage. We would expect, then, that wealthier households would be
more able to enter into marriage arrangements of their choosing, that
they would be more likely to use repeated MBD-FZD marriages to ratify
their superior position across generations, and that they would
control the timing of marriages to maintain their position relative
to other households. In this natural fertility setting, variation in
the timing of marriage and cohabitation is expected to have a direct
relationship to the timing of first births with consequences for the
subsequent household developmental cycle and for longer cycles of
land partition.

Table 2:   Relationship between Land Value and Parental
           Involvement in Marriage
Landholding of Marital Households (Percentage Distribution)

Parental Involvement	< 22 Ropani	> =22 Ropani	Total
Arranged	25.5	43.3	35.5
Choice	74.5	56.7	64.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	47	60	107

Chi-square=3.65   Significance=.056

Specifically, this paper examines the relationship between house-
hold wealth and marriage strategies with the expectation that
wealthier households will:

a)   be more likely to arrange the marriages of their children;

b)   be more likely to arrange village exogamous unions to
     participate in regional networks;

c)   be more likely to arrange MBD-FZS marriages to maintain
     their comparative advantage in status.

To the extent that marriage timing has a strategic function, the following relationships are expected:

d) arranged marriages are expected to be at younger ages than those made by choice, since they must be made by parents before a daughter decides on her own spouse;

e) MBD-FZS marriages are expected to be the youngest, because they reflect a wealthier household's desire and ability to acquire obligations through giving daughters; conversely, FZD-MBS son marriages should be the latest because they reflect the reciprocity and essential equality of exchange—although wealthier households must be compelled by a variety of social sanctions to eventually accept the exchange, they will attempt to delay its timing as long as possible by marrying off their daughters and reaping the benefits of labour and goods prior to accepting daughters-in-law and owing obligations.

Marriage Strategies in Timling: Empirical Evidence

Tables 2 through 4 present cross-tabulations for the relationship between household wealth and marriage process. The measure for wealth is the necessarily rough indicator of land area per household since no other measure exists for all of Timling. One ropani equals about .13 acres. The division presented here characterizes households by whether landholdings amounted to less than 2.86 acres or not at the time of fieldwork. This is a figure close to the average holding of 3.16 acres (Fricke 1986: 68). None of Timling's households are completely landless and this is a matter of some pride to the Tamang who live there.

Apart from the crudeness of our wealth measure, a second issue has to do with using a contemporary measure of wealth (land holdings at the time of fieldwork) to partially explain past behaviour (marriage strategies). This is especially problematic when the marriage strategies being correlated with marital household wealth occurred years before. It is possible, for example, that a household's land-holdings have changed greatly in the time since marriages were being contracted. In the end, all of the results of statistical analyses that use the land variable must be accepted with caution. To test for the possibility that dramatic increases in land are a function of life cycle I performed a chi-square test of land category by women's cohort.[7] If household land tended to increase with the age of a household we would expect a positive relationship between amount of land and a woman's age. No such relationship exists for this data.

With these cautions in mind, the cross-tabulations presented in the tables suggest that some elements of the marriage process are carried out differently in wealthier and poorer households. Table 2 suggests that wealthier households are more likely to be involved in the choice of incoming wives than less endowed households. The small number of cases available for analysis together with the fact that

this represents the whole population of women who continued in the first marriage long enough to have a child leads me to allow significance at the 0.10 level as acceptable. It is also worth noting that even with the positive relationship between wealth and the propensity to arrange marriages, neither of the landed groups arranged a majority of marriages.

Table 3 takes the analysis a little further and shows that those households most likely to have daughters-in-law from outside of Timling or Lapdung are those with greater amounts of land. The relationship is, however, weak even though it might make sense to interpret it in terms of a greater need for regional networks. In the cases here, a number of these village exogamous marriages were explicitly contracted for political and economic links with patrilines in other parts of the Ankhu Khola watershed.

Table 3: Relationship between Land Value and Exogamous Marriage

Landholding of Marital Households (Percentage Distributions)			
Wife's Natal Village	< 22 Ropani	> =22 Ropani	Total
Timling-Lapdung	91.5	80.0	85.0
Others	8.5	20.0	15.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	47	60	107

Chi-square=2.74   Significance=.098

Table 4 shows the most robust relationship to be that between wealth and the tendency to arrange marriages with cross-cousins. In an analysis not shown here, land status was cross-tabulated with relationship between spouses for the whole population without a significant correlation. This table presents results only for arranged marriages since it is logical to expect "choice" marriages to be far more random. Arranged marriages must far more directly reflect the strategic interests of a household's senior members. We can interpret this table as reflecting the desire of wealthier households for maintaining affinal networks, and hence alliances, across generations. Another cross-tabulation intended to look at the tendency for wealthier households to unite particular kinds of cross-cousins (MBD-FZS vs. FZD-MBS) did not show a significant relationship.

These simple cross-tabulations, then, give us a picture of wealthier households relative to those with less land. The evidence supports our expectations that Timling's wealthier groups use marriage as a conscious strategy for securing alliances with particular households (as shown by their greater likelihood to arrange marriages at

all). These households are also much more likely to use marriages as a way to reaffirm already existing links among patrilines.

Table 4: Relationship between Land Value and Marriage to Relatives (For Arranged Marriages Only)

Landholding of Marital Households (Percentage Distributions)			
Relationship	<22 Ropani	> =22 Ropani	Total
Not Related	83.3	46.2	57.9
Related	16.7	53.8	42.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
N	12	26	38

Chi-square=4.66   Significance=.031

Do these strategic differentials translate into variation in ages at marriage, cohabitation, and first birth? Earlier analysis suggests that arranged marriages result in younger ages at marriage and cohabitation for Tamang women (Fricke 1986:137-39). If marriage age is closely associated with ages at first birth, as they are in natural fertility societies such as Timling's, we might expect wealthier households to have larger families on the average with consequences for their household developmental cycles and processes of land fragmentation.

Tables 5 and 6 examine mean ages at the events of marriage, cohabitation, and first birth along the dimesions we have been examining. The overall mean age at marriage for these Tamang women is 20.5. There is an average period of about 4 months between marriage and permanent cohabitation, followed by an average of about 2 years and four months before a women's first birth. These are already late averages compared to other groups, including other Tamang groups, in Nepal (cf. NFS 1976; Acharya and Bennett 1981).

The most dramatic differences in age at marriage occur between exogamous and endogamous marriages, arranged and choice marriages, and FZD-MBS vs. other types of relationship between spouses. The differences in age at which a woman marries are respectively 3, 2, and about 1.5 years, easily differences that could result in an additional child in a woman's completed fertility. These gaps begin to narrow, however, when we consider age at cohabitation--while marriage age represents the formalization of relations and the maintenance of cooperative alliances between households, it does not necessarily result in immediate cohabitation of spouses. Arranged marriages are especially likely to incorporate lengthy gaps before

Table 5: Women's Ages at Marriage, Cohabitation, and First Birth by Marriage Strategy Variables

Variable	N	Age at Marriage	Age at Cohabitation	Age at First Birth
A. Land				
<22 Ropani	47	20.6	20.8	23.4
>=22 Ropani	60	20.3	20.9	22.9
B. Village Endogamy				
Timling-Lapdung	91	20.0	20.4	22.7
Other	16	23.1	23.2	25.1
C. Parental Involvement				
Arranged	38	19.2	20.0	22.3
Choice	69	21.2	21.3	23.6
D. Relationship Between Spouses				
Not Related	54	20.5	20.9	23.0
MBD-FZS	38	20.0	20.2	23.0
FZD-MBS	15	21.7	22.0	23.8
Grand Mean		20.5	20.8	23.1
Total Cases	107			

cohabitation. Differences narrow to 2.8 and 1.3 years for the first variables and remain about the same for FZD-MBS vs. other relationships. Finally, ages at first birth are different in the same way with the magnitudes of these gaps at 2.4, 1.3, and 0.8 years. In all cases, the difference in the timing of first birth is the same or slightly reduced from earlier differences in cohabitation age.

The differences in ages at these events for the two landed groups are even smaller with most events occurring at slightly younger ages for the better endowed households. For marriage, the better landed households tend to contract the alliance at an earlier age, but cohabitation ages between the two groups hardly differ. Age at first birth, on the other hand differs in the direction of half a year earlier for the more landed group.

The marriage variables most deeply implicated in larger contexts of patriline relations have to do with the degree of relationship between spouses before marriage. Village endogamy is so dominant that exogamous marriages affect very few households and are largely insignificant in the day to day affairs of the village. Table 6

Table 6: Women's Ages at Marriage, Cohabitation, and First Birth by Relationship to Spouse by Parental Involvement and Land

Variable	N	Age at Marriage	Age at Cohabitation	Age at First Birth
A. Relationship by Parental Involvement				
Not Related	54	20.5	20.9	23.0
Arranged	22	19.4	20.5	22.3
Choice	32	21.3	21.3	23.5
MBD-FZS	38	20.0	20.2	23.0
Arranged	10	17.4	18.1	21.8
Choice	28	20.9	20.9	23.4
FZD-MBS	15	21.7	22.0	23.8
Arranged	6	21.2	21.5	23.0
Choice	9	22.1	22.3	24.3
B. Relationship by Landed Status of Marital Household				
Not Related	54	20.5	20.9	23.0
< 22 Ropani	26	20.8	21.0	23.3
> =22 Ropani	28	20.2	20.9	22.7
MBD-FZS	38	20.0	20.2	23.0
< 22 Ropani	16	20.1	20.1	23.3
> =22 Ropani	22	20.0	20.2	22.7
FZD-MBS	15	21.7	22.0	23.8
< 22 Ropani	5	21.2	21.6	24.2
> =22 Ropani	10	22.0	22.2	23.6

provides a more fine-grained look at the timing of these events. Again, we can see that arranged marriages, regardless of the degree of relationship between spouses are younger than choice marriages in the same category. This has been explained as a result of the need to make arrangements before children decide the issue for themselves.

An interesting pattern emerges from this table, however, when we look only at arranged marriages and compare the ages of women for these events across categories of relationship. MBD-FZS marriages are the earliest for women at 17.4 years while arranged marriages to nonrelatives are 2 years later, followed by the FZD-MBS marriages 3.8 years later than marriages to the other set of cross-cousins.

The differentials continue to age at cohabitation with MBD-FZS spouses cohabiting when the women is 18.1 years old, followed by previously unrelated spouses 2.4 years later, and FZD-MBS spouses 3.4 years later. This finally translates into women's ages at first birth of 21.8 for the MBD-FZS spouses, followed a half year later by the unrelated spouses, and 1.2 years later by the other cross-cousins.

Reasons for the Patterns and Concluding Comments

Differentials in Marriage age are easily explained in terms of Tamang politics and the structural implications of marriage. Far younger ages at marriage for women related as MBD to their husbands must result from two features of Timling society. First, there is the special relationship between a brother and sister that translates into a special set of obligations between a mother's brother and her son. Women are themselves interested in procuring their brother's daughters for their sons and might be expected to attempt to do so before the potential daughter-in-law marries elsewhere. Households providing these daughters, on the other hand, would not be expected to decline the opportunity to reaffirm their implicitly superior position for another generation. There is no reason from their point of view to delay an alliance based on marriage.

FZD-MBS matches are later for the same sets of reasons that the others are early. There is no ritually buttressed connection between a man's sister and his son--she has no responsibility for his life cycle rituals such as first haircutting. Further, the only possibility for taking in a FZD is to provide the reciprocal exchange in a connection begun in an earlier MBD-FZS match. This exchange results in a reversal of implicit status and, even when the exchange is expected, there is no hurry on the part of wife-receivers. Hence the very late marriages.

Arranged marriages to previously unrelated households are desirable to the extent that they forge new alliances and cooperative links. They have the disadvantages from the point of view of wife-receivers of creating an implied hierarchy where none may have existed before but they hold out the promise of continuing exhange and reciprocity. It is interesting here that arranged marriages between unrelated spouses result in the longest periods between the formal marriage and actual permanent cohabitation. While the alliance is desirable for the household head, there is evidence here that daughters are not themselves as resigned to moving.

Marriage timing, with its implications for status and Tamang politics is clearly the event of greatest strategic interest and the greatest variance. Dummy regressions of age at marriage, age at cohabitation, and age at first birth on this range of variables related to marriage process resulted in R squares of .15, .11, and

.08 respectively with the only significant results being for age at marriage. This suggests that, while there are implications for age at first birth and for the consequent household developmental cycle, people are not pursuing their strategies with these results in mind. Thus, the household's possibilities with respect to its members are partly contingent on the natural fertility of resident women.

The indications here are that those families with more land take women into their households at slightly younger ages and that their first births occur slightly before the others--half a year. Unfortunately, the numbers of households with complete developmental histories is too small to pursue the ramifications for household developmental cycles here. We are assured, however, that this small difference in the timing of age at first birth would result in trivial differences in family size--at least for the few generations necessary to the smooth functioning of the marriage exchange cycle.

Finer grained analysis of particular patrilines is necessary to complete the picture. While households clearly pursue strategies with some of their daughters, a large number of marriages (more than half) are left up to the more random processes of spouse's making their own decisions. These obviously have the affect of leveling some of the differences found in arranged marriages. Examinations currently in process show that a number of additional features of individuals must be considered for a fuller understanding of these processes. There is some possibility that marriage arrangements are related to the sib position of children, for example. Further, political maneuvering through marriage is not entirely related to the rough dichotomy of landed status used in this analysis. Households in the wealthier category arrange marriages with each other and with households from the poorer category. Again, the particular daughters singled out for these connections may be related to their sib positions.

Preliminary analysis of patriline data shows that even those wealthy groups that try to maintain dominance through a series of MBD-FZS marriages, eventually take a woman back in reciprocal exhange

It is not clear to what extent this reciprocal flow is related to the formerly wife-receiving patrilines rise in material status, couple with a decline in the other patrilines through household fission and partible inheritance.

The answers to our questions here are that the key institution for relating to household strategies for alliance revolve around marriage. Egalitarian relationships in Timling appear to have much to do with the expectations of the Tamang themselves--a household or patriline refusing to *eventually* respond with a reciprocal marriage exchange would eventually find itself with negative sanctions at a

number of other levels. This need to respond, together with the quite different marital styles of different daughters helps to level the potential inequalities that could arise from marriage strategies.

NOTES

1. The total marriages included in the present analysis is 107. This includes all of the 150 ever-married or child-bearing women of Timling who had a child in their first marriage. I have made this selection criterion in order to carry the discussion through to effects on age at first birth.

2. The ethnographic present for this study is 1981. Timling is the name by which the village is known by its inhabitants. It is rendered differently on maps.

3. A more detailed description of this setting appears in Fricke (1986). The important point to make here is that Timling's village economy is mainly subsistence-oriented with relatively little market economy influences. The consequence is a high reliance on traditional cooperative links.

4. A term I borrow from Toffin (1986) and for which he reports the indigenous term *nangi bhai* (brothers of cooperation).

5. In the total population, 42% of the first marriages are arranged (Fricke 1986: 137). The smaller percentage here reflects the daughter's veto power over her parents' decisions about her lifecourse and the apparently higher likelihood of divorce in arranged marriages. Divorce has no negative implications for a woman's status although the possibility that a woman will leave her husband increases the risk of arranging marriages. While marriage can create and reaffirm alliances, divorce can break them.

6. A Gini coefficient calculated for the distribution of total wealth among 30 randomly chosen households was .22. This compares to .40 for a Gurung village noted for its egalitarian relations (Fricke 1986: 162-63; see also McGuire and Netting 1982 for other comparisons).

7. Women were divided into two cohorts: those born prior to 1943, and those born in 1943 or later. The land categories for marital households were allowed to remain the same as above.

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