

AN ETHNOGRAPHIC NOTE ON NAR—PHU VALLEY*

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INTRODUCTION

Nar-Phu valley is surrounded by the Peru Himalaya to the north, the high mountains called Gangla (NP) and Gangru (NP) to the east, and the Damodar Himalaya to the west. It borders on Tibet to the north, Nyesyang and Gyasumdo to the south, Gyasumdo and Larke to the east, and Mustang to the west. The valley ranges between 3820 m. and 8092m. in elevation.¹ Pine and fir trees are found around the elevation of 4000 m. As altitude increases, fewer trees are found. The valley looks dry, but nevertheless it is less windy than the Nyesyang valley. It is covered by snow from mid-December to the beginning of February.

Nar-Phu is the most remote part of Manang District. There are three routes into the valley, depending upon the season. The routes from Nyesyang and Mustang are open from March until the beginning of December, and the route from Gyasumdo is open from December to March. This last route is the one most utilized by the villagers of Nar-Phu. Travellers along this route must cross more than 15 plank-bridges over the Nar Phu Khola, which runs through the middle of the valley.

There are two villages in the valley: Nar (NP and ng.; T: NarmE) and Phu (NP and ng.; T: NARTH). Phu village is situated about 10 km. north of Nar. The total population of the two villages in 1971 was 850.² The people of Nar-Phu belong to an ethnic group locally called Nar-PhuthE (NP, ng, and G) Their dialect is different from the dialects of the Nyesyangba, Gurungs, and Tibetans.

SETTLEMENT PATTERN

Nar Village

Nar Village comprises approximately 55 households. In 1958 when David Snellgrove visited the village, there were approximately 30 households.³ The village is

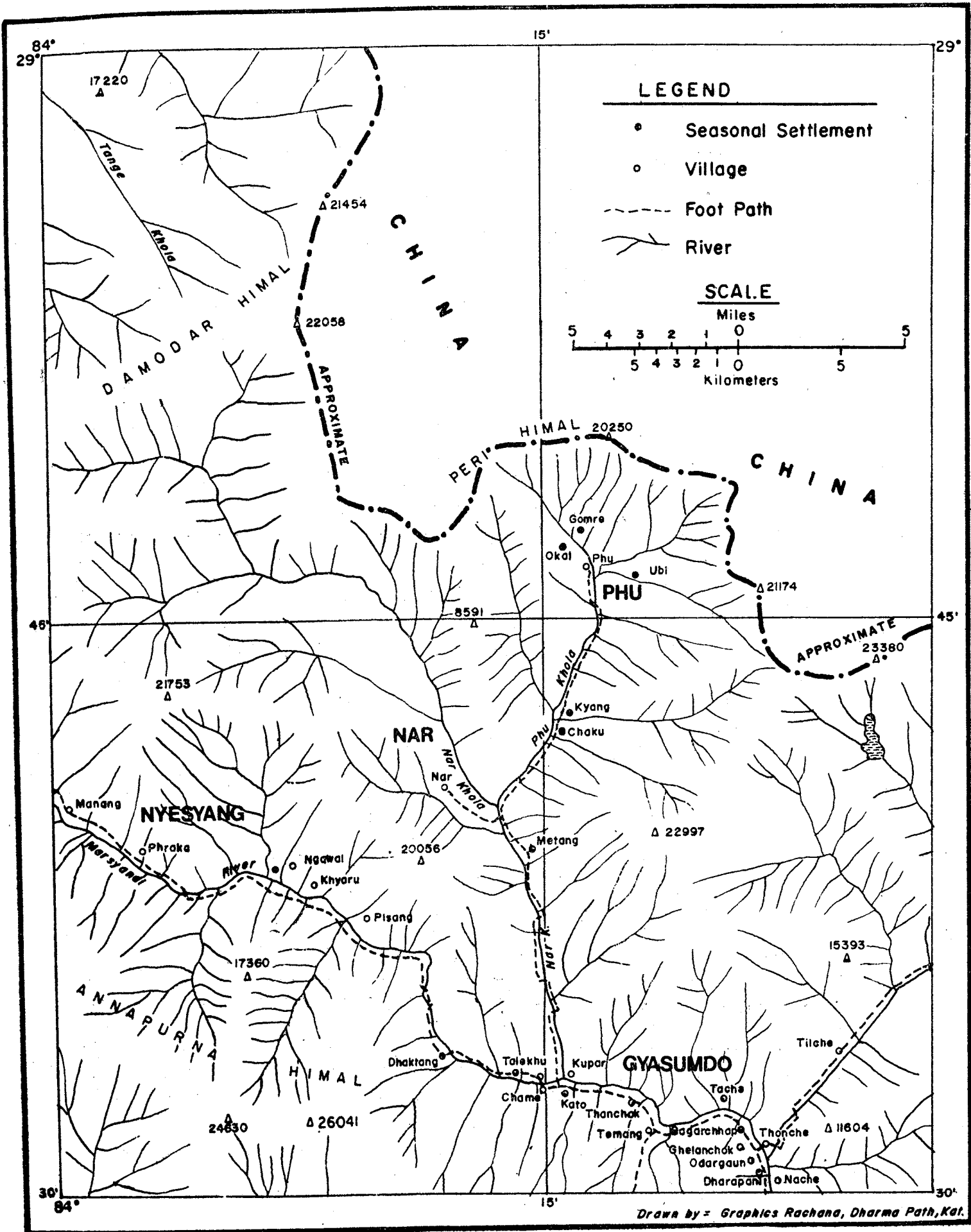
*Data presented in this paper were collected during fieldwork in Manang sponsored by the Institute for Nepal and Asian Studies of Tribhuvan University.

The languages or dialects for words and place-names cited in the text are abbreviated as follows: NP: Nar-Phu dialect; ng: Nyesyangba; G: Gurung; T: Tibetan; N: Nepali.

1 Nareswor J. Gurung, "An introduction to the socio-economic structure of Manang District", *Kailash* IV, 3: 295-6 (1976).

2 Central Bureau of Statistics, HMG, *Population Census of Nepal 1971*.

3 David Snellgrove, *Himalayan Pilgrimage*, London, 1971.



MAP SHOWING THE LOCATION OF NAR AND PHU IN MANANG DISTRICT

situated in the middle of a small valley. A stream called Sembang (NP) flows to the south of the village. The houses are clustered together like the houses of the villages of Nyesyang. All the houses are similar in design and much less decorated than the houses of Nyesyang. Most of the houses are two-storied. The second storey is used for the kitchen, storeroom, and sleeping room. The ground floor is used to keep cattle and for storing grass and firewood. The flat roof is used as a courtyard. The house is entered from the roof. Only a few houses are single-storied.

There are three Buddhist monasteries of the Nyingmapa (T) sect located in the fields close to the village. Flat land around the village is cultivated.

Phu Village

Phu Village is situated in a corner of a small valley. Streams called Lhodol (NP) and Phu (NP) flow through the middle of the valley.

The village comprises 48 households altogether. The houses of Phu are more tightly clustered together and less decorated than those of Nar. The sizes and designs of the houses of Nar and Phu are similar.

One large Buddhist monastery of the Nyingmapa sect is located right in the middle of the village. The other, larger Buddhist monastery, called Tashilhakang (T), is located across the Lhodol stream.

PATTERN OF SEASONAL SETTLEMENT

Nar Village

In addition to the land around the village, Nar has arable land in Chaku (NP) and Metang (NP), where the villagers keep their cattle in winter. Part of the land of Chaku and Metang is under cultivation. Persons who own cattle stay at these places in the winter.

Most villagers migrate from Nar to lower altitudes in mid-December and remain there until mid-February. But old people and one or two others from each household stay in the village in winter. Those who stay in the village or in Chaku and Metang during the winter take care of the cattle and houses.

At the time of sowing (from March to May) and of harvesting (October to November), villagers who own land in Chaku, Metang, and other surrounding areas stay at these places until the work has been completed.

Phu Village

Kyang (NP), Okal (NP), Ubi (NP) and Gomre (NP) are the seasonal settlements of Phu Village. At the time of sowing (March to May) and of harvesting (July to November) the villagers are scattered in all of these places. All Phu villagers migrate to lower altitudes from the end of December. First, the villagers move to Khyang. Old people,

children, herders, and cattle stay at Kyang from the end of December to mid-February. At least one or two persons of each household stay at Kyang in order to look after the cattle and houses.

E C O N O M Y

Traditionally, the economic structures of Nar and Phu are similar. Thus, they confront similar economic problems and requirements.

The economy is oriented towards agriculture and animal husbandry. Due to the high elevation and the lack of arable land, agricultural production is rather poorer than in the Nyesyang and Gyasumdo Valleys. The yearly agricultural production is only sufficient to meet food requirements for four months. Traditionally, animal husbandry is the major economic activity which contributes to sustaining the economy. The contribution of trade is meager. Even when trans-Himalayan trade flourished elsewhere, it never played a vital role in Nar-Phu. Thus, the reduction in trans-Himalayan trade since 1960 has had no serious negative impact upon the economy.

In order to meet their food requirements, Nar and Phu import grain from Nyesyang, Gyasumdo and Central Lamjung in different seasons every year. From Nyesyang they bring buckwheat, wheat, and barley; from Gyasumdo, maize and barley; and from Lamjung, rice, maize, and millet.

Nyesyang Valley has suffered from a shortage of labour for the last two decades because of a relatively high rate of seasonal migration. Thus, some Nar villagers find employment on the farms of Nyesyangba at the times of sowing and harvesting. They usually accept payment in kind rather than in cash for their labour. In Nyesyang a labourer is usually paid one pathi (about 4 litres) of grain or Rs. 8 in cash, plus two meals and liquor each day. Many Nar villagers work one to two weeks at a time for the Nyesyangba, and then take all of their earning in grain and in cash back to Nar. Few villagers from Phu go to work in Nyesyang.

Nar village has a larger population than Phu, and at the same time it is closer to the Nyesyang Valley. As a result, Nar is more dependent on Nyesyang than Phu is.

Nyesyang is the main market for the dairy products of Nar-Phu. I could not collect data on the proportion of the dairy products of Nar-Phu which goes to Nyesyang in exchange for grain, but so far as I know it must be more than half. This trade continues throughout the year, except in winter when the valleys are de-populated. In addition to dairy products, each year Nar-Phu supplies the Nyesyang Valley with approximately forty *phyarpa* and *lue* (NP: blankets of yak and goat wool. The *lue* is smaller in size than the *phyarpa* and of a different pattern.) These are sold for cash; the average selling price is Rs. 70 in Nyesyang and Rs. 60 in Nar-Phu. Thus, in a year the Nyesyangba purchase about Rs. 2,800 worth of blankets from Nar-Phu. But the

supply and demand of these goods fluctuates. More than half of the cash derived from the sale of these blankets is spent on purchasing grain in Nyesyang Valley itself. The rest is spent on purchasing grain in Lamjung and Gyasumdo.

TRADE AND MIGRATION

Nar and Phu villagers are not international traders like the Nyesyangba although in theory the international trading privileges of the Nyesyangba are supposed to cover them as well. The Nar-Phu villagers are economically unable to take advantage of these privileges, and they have no interest in international trade. Their trading activities have been limited traditionally to Lamjung, Kaski, and Gorkha Districts.

During the winter, more than 70 per cent of the total population of Nar and Phu migrates to central Lamjung. They do not settle in any one place, but rather they keep moving from one place to another. During this time they conduct their traditional business activities in the villages and small towns of Lamjung, the northern part of Tanahu, the eastern part of Kaski, and the western part of Gorkha. While visiting villages they exchange their *jimbu* (NP and N: an onion, *Allium wallichii*), *banlasun* (N: wild garlic), *sikridhup* (N: fir leaves) and other herbs for grain. There is no fixed rate of exchange for these commodities.

In addition, Nar-Phu villagers sell handicrafts like *phyarpa*, *lue*, and *syoba* (NP: rope made of yak and goat wool) and goatskins in the places they visit during the winter. The average selling prices are Rs. 80 for a *phyarpa*, Rs. 60 for a *lue*, Rs. 20 for a *syoba*, and Rs. 20 for a goatskin. The cash realised from the sale of these goods, together with any cash brought down from Nar-Phu, is all invested in small-scale trade to generate additional income. This trade begins with the purchase of chilli in the southwest of Lamjung and the southeast of Kaski districts. The chilli is then exchanged for grain in central Lamjung and in Manang, where the consumption of chilli is high. Rice is also purchased in Lamjung and supplied to Manang, where there is good demand, since neither rice nor chilli is produced in Manang. Thus, trading with Manang brings a good profit margin. Nar-Phu villagers conduct this business between mid-December and March; the profits are spent on grain and other goods for household consumption, which are taken to Nar-Phu.

While they are at lower altitudes, the Nar-Phu villagers meet their needs by begging and small trading. Begging is a part of their tradition, engaged in even by families that are relatively well-off economically. Begging is important in meeting the daily budget because the income from small-scale trade is meager and unreliable. The Nar-Phu villagers prefer to save all of their income from trading for the purchase of grain and other goods for household consumption.

During the winter, the lamas of Nar and Phu villages traditionally perform various household rituals in the houses of Gurungs. There is a saying among the Gu-

rungs of Lamjung that a person can not be a lama unless he has been trained in Nar. In Lamjung, Nar is still regarded as the traditional place for training Gurung lamas. The Gurungs of northeast Lamjung, especially, are much influenced by the Lamaism of Nar-Phu. The lamas of Nar-Phu still have pupils in the villages of this area⁴.

THE ECONOMY AND THE KHAMBAS

After 1960, the Nar-Phu area became a place of interest for the Khambas who were staying in Mustang and Nyesyang. But they did not penetrate the area until 1963. They settled in the valley in 1964. At the beginning they stayed at Kyang of Phu village. Two years later, they moved into Chaku, which belongs to Nar village. Those two places are flat and good for agriculture and cattle raising. In addition, they are safe from the point of view of security. Khambas settled in those two places without the permission of the villagers; the villagers of Nar-Phu could not confront the powerful Khambas. The Khambas cultivated all arable land in the area, and produced quite a large amount of wheat and barley on land which had never before been cultivated by the Nar-Phu villagers. In addition, the Khambas used all of the pastures of the two villages for their yaks, dzos, goats, sheep, and horses without permission. As a result, the villagers suffered from a shortage of grass for their livestock.

The Khambas mistreated and threatened the local people, who could not defend themselves alone. In 1966, Nar and Phu villagers took their complaint to Manang village. Later in the same year, Mano and Chhachhum villages rid themselves of the Khambas and from that time on the Khambas were unable to increase their exploitation of Nar and Phu and refrained from creating disorder there. But they continued to use the Nar-Phu land and pastures until 1975. In July, 1975, all of the Khambas were removed from Nar-Phu as well as from Nyesyang and Mustang. Only then did Nar and Phu villages recover their land and pastures. Two Khambas had married girls of Phu Village, and they tried to settle in the village with their wives. But they could not get permission from His Majesty's Government. Their wives and children have remained in Phu.

In 1968, an internal struggle for power took place between the Khambas of Nyesyang and Mustang. From that time until 1975, the Khambas of Mustang lived in Nar-Phu Valley. The Khambas of the two areas avoided visiting each other's areas out of fear. Thus the Khambas of Nar-Phu Valley and Mustang completely stopped going to the Nyesyang Valley.

The people of Nar and Phu suffered many disadvantages from the presence of the Khambas. However, this presence had some consequences for trade. Since direct trade relations between Nar-Phu and Tibet had been completely broken in 1960, the villagers used to have to go themselves to Mustang in order to get salt, which was

⁴ Donald A. Messerschmidt, *The Gurungs of Nepal*, London, 1976, pp. 6, 80, 82.

still imported on a small scale from Tibet. After the arrival of the Khambas in Nar Phu, the Khambas became the intermediaries of the trade between Nar-Phu and Mustang. The Nar-Phu villagers exchanged dairy products with the Khambas in return for salt. The Khambas would accept either grain or dairy products, but few Nar-Phu villagers had surplus grain.

The Khambas thus became a second market (in addition to Nyesyang) for the dairy products of Nar and Phu villages. The Khambas used to pay a good price, either in cash or in grain, for these dairy products. Thus the gross income of Nar-Phu appears to have increased somewhat due to the presence of the Khambas.

The presence of the Khambas in the valley taught two lessons to the Nar and Phu villagers. The first lesson was that they were vulnerable to exploitation by outsiders besides the Nyesyangbas if they were not active in protecting their own villages and territories. The second was agricultural. Nar-Phu villagers were quite surprised to see the Khambas produce large quantities of wheat and barley on land which they had left uncultivated. The Khambas sold their excess grain to the villagers every year. Thus the villagers learned the value of their land and became jealous of the Khambas for cultivating it. Now the villagers have divided up the land of Chaku and Kyang equally among themselves. But I do not think that they will adopt the cultivation techniques of the Khambas, because they do not want to confine themselves only to agriculture.

Since the removal of the Khambas from Nar-Phu, salt is supplied from Mustang by *Dhokpa* (T: nomads). But the quantity supplied by *Dhokpas* is insufficient, so some Nar-Phu villagers go themselves to Mustang to exchange grain and dairy products for salt.

CLAN ORGANISATION

The villagers of Nar and Phu constitute an exogamous group divided into seven endogamous clans, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Clans of Nar and Phu villages

NAR:		PHU:	
Clan:	No. of Households	Clan:	No. of Households
Bandilam	10	Omsamja	16
Nhorpa	15	Lhata	20
Tonde	20	Ngochyo	12
Manden	10		
Total	55	Total	48

Marriage between two members of the same clan is strictly prohibited.⁵ Even sexual relations between two members of the same clan is regarded as incest and taken

⁵ Gurung, *op. cit.* p. 302 f.

as a serious social and religious offense. The Tonde and Manden clans traditionally regard themselves as lineage brothers, so marriages between members of these two clans are also avoided. Otherwise, members of any two clans may intermarry.

Marriage between cross-cousins is the most widespread kind of marriage in Nar-Phu, as it is among Gurungs and Nyesyangba. However, marriage by capture and arranged marriage are also practiced.

There is no great difference in social rank between the clans.

All of the clans state that their ancestral home was Tibet. None has any idea how long ago their ancestors settled in Nar and Phu villages.

VILLAGE ORGANIZATION

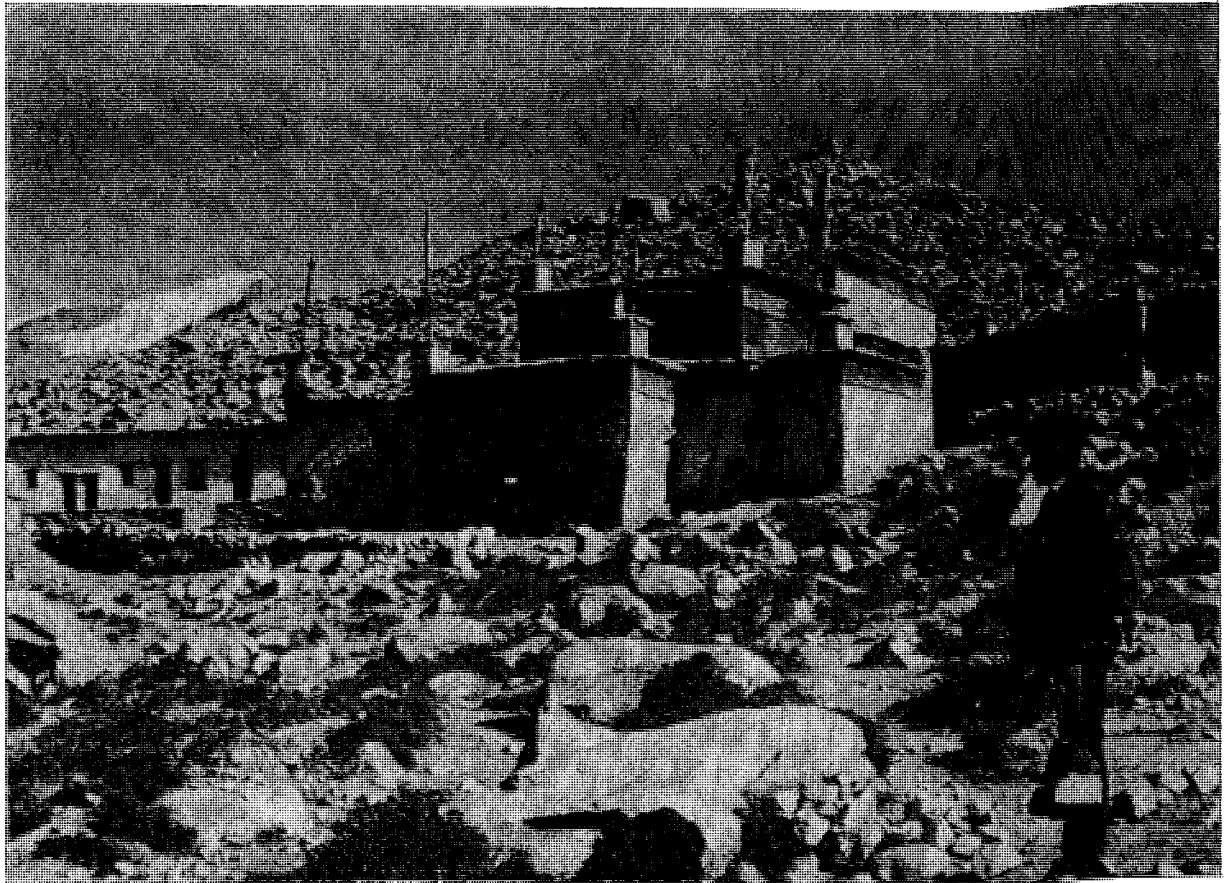
Nar and Phu villages have separate village administrative councils called Dhaapaa Shabaa (Ng, NP). The two Councils are independent of each other. The traditions regarding the organisation of the village councils in Nar and Phu are similar to those in the villages of the Nyesyang valley. But the Dhaapaa Shabaa Council of Manang village is at a more developed stage than the councils of other villages of the two valleys.⁶

There are two classes of working members of Dhaapaa Shabaa Council, Dhaapaa, who have a higher political status, and Sherpaa. In Nar and Phu, both types of members serve one year terms. All of the indigenous clans of each village are represented, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Clans and Dhaapaa Shabaa Councils

<i>Village</i>	<i>Clan</i>	<i>No. of Households</i>	<i>No. of Council Members.</i>	
			<i>Dhaapaa</i>	<i>Sherpaa</i>
NAR	Bandilam	10	1	1
	Tonde and Manden	30	2	1
	Nhorpa	15	1	1
	Total:	55	4	3
PHU	Omsamja and Lhata	36	1	2
	Ngochyo	12	1	1
	Total:	48	2	3

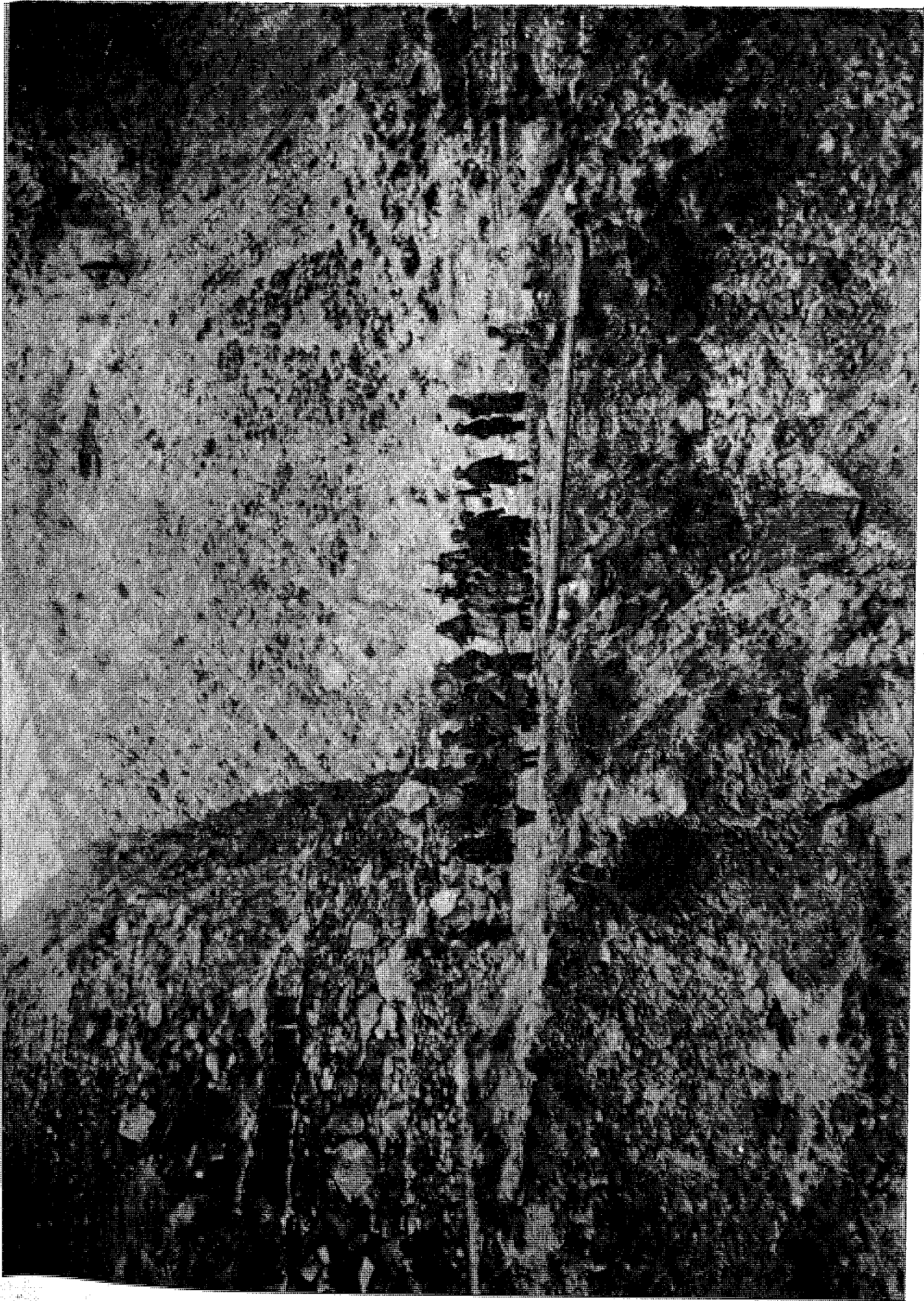
⁶ *Ibid.* p. 205 f.



3. Tashi Lhakang Monastery, Phu.



4. Kvang, seasonal settlement for Phu Village.



5. Dances at the Jor festival, held each December in Phu Village.

Dhaapaa are like chairmen of the Council, and thus have higher status than Sherpaa, who are ordinary members. The councils of Nar and Phu do not have any additional posts such as are found in the Councils of the villages of Nyesyang. These posts are Bhaladmi (N), Mukhya (N: mediator), Kathali (Ng: peon) and PoyO (Ng. clerk). Perhaps the small and peaceful villages of Nar and Phu never felt the need of these additional posts in order to administer the villages.

Succession

Dhaapaa Shabaa Council members are changed in March of every year. Each clan independently has a roll of succession which determines its representative to the Council. One male member between the ages of 15 and 60 represents each household in the clan on the roll of succession. Terms of service on the Council rotate among these household representatives in order of seniority. A council member in his first term of office is a Dhapaa; in his second term he is a Sherpaa. No member can be a Sherpaa without having first been a Dhaapaa. This differs from the system in Nyesyang, where a member serves first as Sherpaa, then as Dhaapaa.

Functions of the Council

The essential function of the Council is to enforce traditional rules and regulations and to maintain peace and order in the village. In addition, it administers any development programmes in the village. It is the key administrative organisation of the village.

Origin

Neither the Nar-Phu villagers nor the Nyesyangba could give any account of the origin of the Councils. Such Councils are found only in Nar-Phu and Nyesyang, not in Mustang, Gyasumdo or Nhubri, the closest neighbouring areas, which have a rather undeveloped system of village organisation.

The Council may have first developed in Manang over 300 years ago, with the other areas of Nyesyang and Nar-Phu following the example of Manang. In a Lal-mohar (N. royal decree, especially a grant) given by His Majesty King Ran Bahadur Shah in 1841 B. S. (1789 A. D.)⁷ concerning the trading privileges of the Nyesyangba and a dispute between the leaders of Baragau in Mustang, the term *Dhaapaa* has been used to address the representatives of Manang village and other villages of Nyesyang and Nar-Phu.

The Nyesyangba have a free and aggressive society, and traditionally believe in an egalitarian society, not one based on rank. Perhaps villages could not have been ruled by a family, lineage, or individual on the basis of heredity. The Dhaapaa Shabaa Council must be the result of their egalitarian political ideology.

⁷ Ibid. p. 299. See Bal Chandra Sharma, ed., *Nepali Sabdakos*, Kathmandu, 2019 V. S. p. 916.

Marriage alliances between Nar and Phu villages are limited in number. This is largely because of the distance between the two villages.

NAR-PHU AND GYASUMDO

Nar and Phu villages have close relations with the villages of Gyasumdo, as well as with those of Nyesyang. Among the villages of Gyasumdo, they traditionally have the closest relations with Thanchok (N) and Tache (N). These two villages supply the largest quantities of grain to Nar-Phu, and they also serve as moneylenders to Nar Phu. In the winter, the villages of Nar-Phu store all the grain they obtain from Lamjung in Thanchok and Tache until they are able to take it to Nar-Phu.

The Bandilam lineage of Thanchok claims Nar as its ancestral home, although most recently they migrated from Khyaru village in Nyesyang. Nar villagers confirm this claim.

The Ghale clan of Thanchok and Tache still employ lamas from Nar village to perform funerals and household ritual.⁸ Traditionally, the Nar lamas only perform funerals of those Ghale lineages who identify themselves as the descendants of Khhe (Ng) of Ngawal village.

NAR-PHU AND NYESYANG

Nar and Phu villagers traditionally have closer relations with the villages of Nyesyang than with those of Gyasumdo. Nar has closer economic and political relations with Nyesyang than Phu. Both villages belong to the Mano-Chhachhum Khuwa (Ng). This political union has brought the villagers of Nyesyang and Nar-Phu into closer contact in the economic, social, and political fields.

Economic Relations:

I have already given some clues about the economic relations between Nar Phu and Nyesyang above. I will elaborate on some of those points here.

The villagers of Nar and Phu get half of their total yearly grain requirements from the Nyesyang valley. In return, Nyesyang is the main market for their dairy products and for their labour at sowing and harvesting times. The Nyesyangba leave their yaks with the Nar-Phu villagers, because Nar-Phu has better pasture-land. For this, the Nyesyangba pay a nominal salary in grain to Nar-Phu villagers.

Nar-Phu exports yak, goats, sheep, and handicrafts like *phyarpa* and *lue* to Nyesyang. Table 3 gives an idea of this trade, with its cash value in 1976-1977.

⁸ HMG, *Mechi dekhi Mahakali*, Kathmandu, 2031 V. S., Part 3 p. 128.

Table 3: Estimated Annual Exports from Nar-Phu with 1976-7 value.

Item	Unit Value (Rs.)	Annual Supply	Total Value (Rs.)
Yak	900	9	8,100
Goat	250	20	5,000
Sheep	250	25	6,250
Blankets	70	40	2,800
			Total 22,150

It is hard to determine the exact quantities of grain and dairy products exchanged between Nar-Phu and Nyesyang each year. However, a general study of this trade suggests that the value of the grain that goes from Nyesyang to Nar-Phu is greater than that of the dairy products that go from Nar-Phu to Nyesyang.

The Nar-Phu villagers spend about half of their income from the trade shown in Table 3 buying grain in Nyesyang itself. The rest is spent buying grain in Lamjung during the winter.

The increase in income in Nyesyang has apparently led to an increase in the demand for livestock and dairy products from Nar-Phu. The Nar-Phu villagers estimate that the demand has doubled in the last decade.

The Nyesyangba monopolized the trade of Nar and Phu until ten years ago, and fixed the prices of livestock and dairy products. Thus the villagers of Nar-Phu were forced to sell these items to the Nyesyangba at low rates. The Nyesyangba imposed heavy fines on any villager of Nar-Phu found selling livestock or dairy products elsewhere for a higher price.⁹ But these restrictions on trade were lifted ten years ago, and now the Nar-Phu villages may trade as they please.

The Nyesyangba are also traditionally moneylenders to the villagers of Nar and Phu. I found seven households of Nar village in debt to villagers of Ngawal and Khyaru in Nyesyang in December 1975. This relationship has given the Nyesyangba the opportunity to dominate Nar-Phu economically and politically.

The methods by which the villagers of Nar-Phu exploit their economic resources are traditional and extensive. As the marginal productivity of these resources diminishes, they are unable to meet the requirements of a growing population. Hence, the economic condition of the two villages, like that of neighboring regions, is deteriorating each year. In order to improve the economy, it is essential to innovate scientific methods in the exploitation of economic resources.

⁹ Snellgrove, *op. cit.* p. 227.

Nar-Phu is the most backward area of Manang district. But no development programmes except schools have been introduced in the area by the district panchayat. Development programmes have been concentrated only in Nyesyang and Gyasumdo.

Social Relations:

Although the Nyesyangba consider themselves socially superior to the people of Nar and Phu, the latter claim the same origin as the Nyesyangba and equal clan status. They say that the far superior economic condition of the Nyesyangba also led them to claim social superiority as well. New claims of social status appear frequently among communities which are emerging from a backward condition. For example, the Tibetans of Gyasumdo and Baragau in Mustang call themselves Gurungs instead of identifying themselves as Tibetans.

The villagers of Nar and Pisang agree that they had marriage relations until thirty years ago. Since then there have been no marriage alliances between the two villages. The improved economic status of the Pisang villagers led to the break in marriage relations with Nar.

Except for Pisang, the villagers of other villages of Nyesyang valley deny that they ever had marriage relations with Nar-Phu. But the villagers of Nar disagree.

The Bandilam (NG, NP) clan of Khyaru village is an offshoot of the Bandilam clan of Nar.

Nar-Phu villagers claim common ancestry with the Gurungs.

Political Relations:

Traditionally, Nar and Phu villages are members of Mano-Chhachhum Khuwa. Thus, they can never divorce themselves from the politics of this organisation. The political life of Nar-Phu had been heavily dominated by the villages of Nyesyang valley. Among the villages of Nyesyang valley, Manang plays the dominant role in the politics of Mano-Chhachhum Khuwa.¹⁰

Every village of Mano-Chhachhum Khuwa must offer a goat or a sheep or cash equivalent to the Dhaapaa Shabaa Council of Manang village every year. This offering is called *sepur* (NG). Nar village also offers Rs. 100 as *sepur*, but Phu village is traditionally exempt from this obligation, nor does it have to share the expense with Nar. But Phu is also a member of the organisation. *Sepur* is offered to the Dhaapaa Shabaa council of Manang for its leadership in the politics of Mano-Chhachhum Khuwa.

The Dhaapaa Shabaa council of Manang traditionally supervises the politics of Nar-Phu and settles disputes which the Nar-Phu villagers themselves are unable to settle. For example, a dispute between two families of Phu village in 1966-67 could

¹⁰ Gurung, *op. cit.*, p. 5f.

not be settled in Nar-Phu . It was later resolved by the Dhaapaa Shabaa Council of Manang.

The villages of Nyesyang also protect Nar-Phu from external invasion. In 1965 there was a dispute between Nar and Phu and the Khambas in the Nar-Phu valley. The Nyesyangba joined together and suppressed the Khambas for the sake of the Nar-Phu villagers.

Nar and Phu villages pay Rs. 254.92 and Rs. 83.54 respectively as *sirto*¹¹ to the land revenue office of His Majesty's Government, at the district headquarters. Traditionally the Dhaapaa Shabaa council of Manang must lead all the small villages which belong to Mano-Chahachhum Khuwa when they go together to pay *sirto*. None of the villages can pay *sirto* individually, according to the rule adopted by His Majesty's Government of Nepal.

These are more or less positive aspects in the relations of Nar and Phu with the villages of the Nyesyang valley. But in Mano-Chhachhum Khuwa the two villages of Nar-Phu lack political independence from Nyesyang. By tradition, they must report any serious conflict to the Mano-Chhachhum Dhaapaa Shabaa Council; they cannot report directly to agencies of HMG without the permission of the Council. If they broke this rule, the Council would impose a heavy fine. Thus the villages of Nyesyang interfere in the internal affairs of Nar-Phu, and Nar-Phu also traditionally endured such ill-treatment because it does not have the power to counter it.

There are two reasons for the domination of Nyesyang over Nar-Phu: geographical and economic. The geographical remoteness of Nar-Phu contributes to its economic backwardness, and both together make it dependent on Nyesyang. However, the villagers of Nar-Phu are still making every effort to escape from the political and economic domination of Nyesyang.

NAR-PHU AND THE GURUNG SUBBAS

The trading activities of the Gurung Subba families of Lamjung Ghanpokhara expanded into the northern part of Lamjung and Gyasumdo, beginning in the early 19th century. By the middle of the century these trading activities extended all over Manang district, Thak Khola, and Lamjung. Previously, the Thakali Subba families of Thak Khola had monopolized the trade of Manang. With regard to the competition between the Gurung and the Thakali Subba families, Messerschmidt and Gurung have written:

“Certain Lamichhane Gurung clansmen of Ghanpokhara village in

¹¹ Sirto means “tribute payable by a few categories of vassal states to the government”. Mahesh C. Regmi: *Land Tenure and Taxation in Nepal*, University of California, Vol. I, Berkeley, 1963, pp. 272.

northern Lamjung entered the trade scene in the 1890s. They rose in a few short years to entirely dominate the economy, politics, and social life of the Bhot Khola and northern Lamjung regions. Their leaders challenged not only the Thakali agent in Tingaun and drove him out, but seriously threatened the relative autonomy of the Thakali Subbas in their own Thak Khola.”¹²

The Gurung Subbas maintained their political influence on the people of Gyasumdo, Nyesyang and Nar-Phu valleys by their monopolistic trading activities. They still retain some political influence in these areas.

PANCHAYATS

There have been no village panchayats in Nar-Phu so far. But this year His Government has designated both Nar and Phu as village panchayats. Elections are to be held in March, 1977.

Between 1962 and 1967, the zonal commissioner of Gandaki Zone used to nominate one person to represent the two villages as a member of the Manang districts assembly. The same individual, a man of Nar village, was nominated during all of this time. In 1967, he was elected as a member of the district panchayat as well. He got the opportunity to become a member of the district panchayat in the absence of the Nyesyangba, who did not participate in the organisation of village panchayats in their villages due to political disputes among themselves. But he did not last long, because of his inactivity on the district panchayat.

In 1970, a new political trend emerged in Nyesyang valley with regard to the organisation of village Panchayats, and Nar and Phu were influenced by these developments. Although it was not possible to organise village panchayats in these areas at that time, the zonal commissioner nominated five members to represent them on the district assembly where previously there had been only three. One of these members was from Nar. In addition to the nominated members, the villagers were allowed to nominate an alternate village-level member from each village of Nyesyang and from Nar and Phu. The function of the village-level alternate members was to assist the official district assembly members in implementing development programmes in the villages. These posts were maintained until 1976, but the structure will change with the election of village panchayats in 1977.

From the beginning, Nar and Phu villages wanted to have two separate village panchayats. They also believed that if they had village panchayats, they could escape

¹² Donald A. Messerschmidt and Nareshwor J. Gurung, “Parallel trade and innovation in Central Nepal” in C. Von Fürer-Haimendorf, ed., *Contributions to the Anthropology of Nepal*, London, 1974, p. 202.

from the political domination of Nyesyang. But the Nyesyangba opposed the establishment of village panchayats in Nar and Phu, and for some time the villagers of Nar and Phu were forced to give up the idea because they feared the Nyesyangba.

RELATIONS BETWEEN NAR AND PHU VILLAGES

Nar and Phu traditionally share common economic, social, and political problems and requirements. Neither village usually interferes in the internal problems of the other. But if a serious problem occurs in one of the villages, both cooperate to settle it. The two villages unite to confront external forces.

However, the fact that a man from Nar was continuously nominated to represent the two villages in the district assembly created some friction between the two villages. The villagers of Phu were not happy to be represented only by a man from Nar. But this problem will be solved with the election of village panchayats in both villages, since each village will have the right to send two representatives to the district assembly.

The political and economic pressure of the Nyesyangba led the villagers of Nar-Phu to establish close political and economic ties with the Gurung Subba families from the mid—19th century. The Nyesyangba could not interfere in the relations between Nar-Phu and the Gurung Subbas because they themselves had good relations with the Gurung Subbas. The Gurung Subba families had assisted the Nyesyangba on several occasions in the mid—19th century in their struggle with the Thakali Subba families of Thak Khold to gain free trading privileges.

Until the mid 19th century, the villagers of Nar-Phu had to pay *nirkhi* (N: sales tax¹³ called *harsaala* (N: each year) to His Majesty's Government of Nepal through the Dhaapaa Shabaa council of Manang village. This tax was paid by the villages of Mano-Chaachhum Kuhwa in return for free trading privileges. But since the Nar-Phu villagers were not active or mobile traders like the Nyesyangba, they did not benefit from these privileges for which they were taxed. They did not dare approach the government themselves for relief. Subba Man Lal Gurung (1857-1907) assisted them greatly in this matter. He lent them Rs. 300 to go to Kathmandu and present their case, and at the same time he used his influence with the contemporary Rana Prime Minister on their behalf. As a result, the Nar-Phu villagers were relieved of the obligation to pay *nirkhi*. In return, they built a house in Thonje and nominated Subba Man Lal Gurung as their *Jimuwal* (N)¹⁴ The Nyesyangba raised no objection in the matter, but HMG never recognized him officially as *Jimuwal* of Nar-Phu. After his death, his two sons, Subba Nar Jang (1878-1941) became *Jimuwal* of Nar village, and Subba

13 Mahesh Chandra Regmi, *A Study in Nepali Economic History 1768-1846*, New Delhi, Mañjuśrī, 1971, p. 205.

14 Messerschmidt and Gurung, *op. cit.* p. 205.

Dilli Jung (1907-1965) became *Jimuwal* of Phu village. But they were never officially recognized either. Since their deaths, the villagers of Nar and Phu have not nominated any Gurung Subbas to succeed them. But the Gurung Subba families still retain political influence in Nar-Phu, and they are still consulted, particularly with regard to problems which cannot be settled by the Mano-Chhachhum Dhaapaa Shabaa council.

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CHANGE IN NAR-PHU

The villagers of Nar-Phu have been in favour of holding village panchayat elections since 1968, because they believe that it will give them independence from the politics of Mano-Chhachhum Khuwa. But in 1968, the villages of Nyesyang were opposed to the holding of elections, although they did want to increase the number of village panchayats from one to nine. This was because rivalries within Nyesyang made the holding of elections seem undesirable. The Nar-Phu villagers could not express their desire for elections for fear of offending the Nyesyangba.

The active involvement of the Nyesyang and Nar-Phu villages in the organisation and election of village Panchayats is the most recent political development in these valleys. The current elections and the organisation of village Panchayats will certainly affect the traditional political structure of Mano-Chhachhum Khuwa, which Manang and Pharaka villages apparently do not want changed. Nevertheless, all are actively participating in the organisation and election of village Panchayats at present. Some of the Nyesyangba are participating in order to get their traditional international trading privileges, which were cancelled in September 1976, renewed by HMG. Nar and Phu villagers hope to gain independence from the Nyesyangba through the village Panchayats. However, it is not clear that any immediate social and economic changes can be anticipated in Nar and Phu villages.

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